No. 453-Graduation

Focus on Glory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 23, 1993

*SCRIPTURE:"**Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14***

Introduction

Have you ever started doing one thing, but found yourself doing something else before you finished the first task? In such instances we usually exhaust so much time and energy on the secondary task that we never get back to our original task.

Consider the young hound dog who was eager to go on his first hunting trip. He pleaded with the old dog for a chance to go on the next hunt to show off what he knew. He was young and his instincts were sharp and fresh. Being young he could pick up a scent in the air and trail it to the ground and get to his prey long before any of the old dogs. His first hunt was a bear hunt. The young dog picked up the trail and moved ahead of the others barking and running. The old dogs sniffed the ground and kept running. Soon, the young dog picked up the scent of a young deer that had cross the trail. He stopped, changed directions, and went barking after the deer. As he neared the deer, he caught scent of a rabbit that had crossed the deer trail. He stopped, changed directions and ran after the rabbit. The rabbit carried him through dense forest areas and thick brush, but the young dog never gave up, that is until he caught another scent in the air and and chased after it. In this fashion, the young dog continued all day until at the end of the day the old dog came upon him, having successfully cornered the bear, and told the young dog these words, "Son you're a good dog, I've known you since you were a pup, but if you're going to track bear and you don't want to fail, you must keep your nose to the ground and your feet on the trail."

Remaining focused is a difficult task in life. Many young people graduate from high school and college and begin life with great dreams of success and fortune. Many never accomplish their dreams. Often the reason for their failure has nothing to do with their ability or skills, intellect or attitude. Many fail to succeed because they are unable to remain focused on their original goals and waste time and energy on

frivolous preoccupations that divert their attention and energies from their original intent.

As Christians, we have set a goal for ourselves in life. That goal is to receive a golden crown of achievement from the savior. We are often tempted along the way to meander to the left and right, we have decided to press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi. While imprisoned in Rome he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

Paul remained humble, throughout his life. Obviously, God had endowed him with great talents and gifts, but he always received them with an attitude of humility. Although Paul was a learned scholar who spoke many languages fluently, and was well versed in the scholarship of his day, he told the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended," that is to note that while he had learned much in life, he was keenly aware that he did not know everything. He counted heavily on the Holy Spirit to reveal many things to him and to call others to his remembrance. Knowing that God spoke and moved through him, Paul was always humble to know that he had not accomplished anything alone, but it was always God working through him.

Secondly, Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus Road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. Whatever was done in the past remains as history, he chose, even in a moment of crises to always look to the future.

Lastly, Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as witness to the power of God .

Focusing on Life's Challenges

With respect to life's challenges, what does it mean to focus? It means to

concentrate all of our energies on one objective or goal. It is the intense pursuit of a single aspiration by directing our time, talents and resources toward achieving its end. When life's goal is clear and the direction of our energies is sure, we are said to be in focus. We are in focus when we know what we want in life and we direct all of our time and energy and talents to achieving that end, avoiding any efforts that side track us.

It is easy to focus on a goal in life. It is more difficult to stay in focus. Those who have tried to take pictures with a camera know that an image in the lens can be sharp and clear, but if the subject comes closer or moves away, adjustments have to be made to keep the image in focus. Likewise, in life it is easy to focus on a goal while standing still, but as the constant ebb and flow of life impacts our points of reference,, adjustments have to be made to stay in focus.

AVOIDING BLURS. If we lose sight of our objective, our energies and activities are spread out over a variety of patterns that are blurred and unclear. Moreover, even if we keep our objective in sight but fail to concentrate our energies, our lives still become a blur. These two truths are best represented by the considering the nature of the:

NEAR SIGHTED: The near sighted can't see their goal because they can only see things that are close to them; they live for today. Therefore their energies are not concentrated on achieving a goal because all they can see is today. They follow the general creed that they should eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow may never come. The result: a blur.

FAR SIGHTED: The far sighted person is just the opposite. He or she is able to see the goal, but can't see how to manage the daily flow of time, talents and resources to achieve the goal. They see their goal but can't discipline themselves to make it happen.

ASTIGMATISM: These are those who can't see the goal and neither can they direct the energies of their lives. They wander aimlessly in a blurred existence.

The young begin life with a focus on success in all of its varied qualitative and quantitative measures. The achievement of these objectives will require an intense concentration of time, talent and resources. The objective must always stay in sight and the focus clear.

Focusing of Glory

While succeeding in the secular world requires us to maintain a focused life, this text today, reminds us that the Christian's primary focus is to achieve the prize of the high calling of God which is in Jesus Christ.

Paul said simply that he was pressing on toward the mark! He chose to focus on Heaven and its promise of joy everlasting!

He chose to focus on Jesus and his promise of everlasting life!

He chose to focus on Glory!

Those who focus on glory never lose sight of what they really want to do with

their lives and that is to serve and please God. When in focus their daily activities, the use of their talents and monies and everything they do will work to help them achieve their ultimate goal of entering into that blessed city one day.

Staying in focus may mean getting closer to some things and moving away from others. To stay focused on glory will mean avoiding ungodly activities of every kind. It may even mean backing away from some job opportunities because they will take you away from your main goal, which is to see Jesus.

But staying focused may also mean that from time to time you need to get closer to keep yourself in focus with God. There will be times when the swiftness of the world takes you so fast that you lose sight of glory. As life begins to blur that's when you bring it back into focus by walking closer to God.

Walking closer to God helps keep life in focus when the world becomes a blur. Walking close to God builds strength for troublesome times and answers troublesome questions. No wonder the songwriter says, "Just a closer walk with thee. Grant it Jesus if you please, daily walking close to thee. Let it be, dear Lord, let it be!"

Daniel's life journey took him thousands of miles from home, but he never stopped looking toward Jerusalem and praying three times a day because he was focused on glory!

The Three Hebrew Boys' lives took them in and out of the fiery furnace, but they remained focused on glory!

Paul was beaten, jailed and criticized, but he declared, "Nothing shall separate me from the love of God." He was focused on glory!

Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, endured the hardships of life, temptations of Satan and the rejection of man, but he never lost his focus on glory!

He was so focused that he died on Calvary for the sins of men and arose from the grave in victory!

Graduates, press on toward the victory, but stay in focus!

Achieve high heights in life, but stay in focus!

Dream the impossible dream, but stay in focus!

Beat the unbeatable foe, but stay in focus!

Focus on Glory and the power of an almighty God will move within you and lift you up ...to higher ground!

No. 452-Communion

D.W.I.

(Daily Living While Under The Influence)
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe

March 29, 1983

SCRIPTURE: ***"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Ephesians 5:18-21***

Introduction

Have you ever seen a drunk driver? Drunk drivers drive erratically and often cause pain and suffering to themselves and others. In fact, nearly 40,000 people a year lose their lives because of drunk drivers. Police officers pull them over by the thousands daily and issue citations charging them with D.W.I or driving while under the influence of Alcohol. Despite the high fines, many return and do it all over again.

It is estimated that nearly 15 million Americans live daily under the influence of alcohol. It destroys families, careers and lives. Because it is a depressant, many who drink, do so even when they don't want to, or don't even like the taste. They are hopelessly hooked.

While we know of millions who are influenced by liquid spirits, how many church members could really get a ticket for D.W.I.-that is "Daily living under the influence of the Cross?" How many of us are so influenced by the cross and the Christian life that it noticeably affects our daily living? Consider the true story of a St. Louis lawyer who lived daily under the influence of alcohol. It controlled him and almost ruined his great legal mind. One day a client, at the end of their business session, asked him a question: "Why aren't you a Christian?" The lawyer confessed that he knew a lot about the bible but he was a slave to alcohol. He daily lived under its influence. The client talked to him about Jesus, Calvary and salvation and together in their law office they prayed the prayer of faith. The lawyer said, "Lord, forgive me and help me to overcome the power of this terrible habit in my life." From that moment forward the lawyer felt a new power in his body. He never drank another drop, but influenced by another power, he applied his great knowledge of the bible in ways he never expected and today the C. I. Scofield Bible, which bears his name is one of the most respected reference Bibles in the world.

As Christians, we have seen both sides of life. We have been influenced by the world and we know the joy of living for God. Under the influence of the spirits of this world we will never achieve all that God has in store for us. However, if we are led daily by the spirit of God, the prospects for living a full and happy life are as sure as the rising of the sun.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the church in Ephesus giving instructions about the Christian lifestyle. Paul urged Christians to walk in love, avoid uncleanliness of body and mind and to keep themselves focused on God. Those who are in the faith are encouraged to make the "walk of love" (v2) avoiding certain pitfalls that have trapped others. Among the habits of the worldly that should be avoided are: 1) Fornication, which involves a wide range of sex sins including incest, male and female prostitution, 2)Uncleanliness, 3)Covetousness 4)Foolish daydreams about doing ungodly things, 5)Vulgar jokes 6)Whoremongering, and 7)Idol worship. All of these should not be a part of the lifestyle of the Saints.

Paul warned that many have had the wrath of God poured upon them because they have involved themselves in these kinds of activities (v6).Paul characterized these acts as the works of darkness (v11) and should not be a part of the lifestyle of those who claim an inheritance in the kingdom of God. The abominations he referred to characterized the lifestyles of those who were influenced by the spirit of Satan rather than the spirit of God.

What happens when we are influenced by the spirit of God? Paul urges Christians beginning at verse 14 to awaken themselves to the light of God's love and walk circumspectfully (v15), not wasting time but living according to the will of God (v17). Therefore, the life that is under the influence of the spirit of God is not characterized by drunkenness or excesses, but by exhibiting the qualities of those who are saved by the grace of God. Our conversation should be inspirational and refreshing, clean and wholesome, as are the psalms of David. Our hymns and spirituals should give praise and thanksgiving to God. They should be exemplary of our faith. Those who live under the influence of the Holy Spirit exhibit temperance, moderation and a generally clean life whether in the language they speak, songs they sing, or activities in which they choose to engage themselves.

Those who are empowered by the Holy Spirit may appear strange to others. In Acts 2 the Apostles were filled with the spirit of God and were able to speak in languages they had not studied and were excited. The people thought they were drunk at first, but then concluded that they were being led by the power of God. Under the influence of the spirit many of them went on to accomplish great works for God, resisting temptations, bravely tackling evil leaders, and building up the kingdom of God.

Living under the Influence

Today, every Christian should strive to live daily under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Satan is wagin a constant battle for control of our lives even when we are at peace with God. Just as he tempted Jesus in the wilderness with dreams of power, fame and personal accomplishment, he never gives up trying to control us as well.

He gains influence over us by using the people and the things around us. A co-worker that constantly tells dirty jokes, can influence even the best person to join the crowd and laugh along with a foul joke that has no redeeming value. An associate who always fantasizes about doing some "unseemly" thing can influence the weak in spirit to go along. Many good natured people have found themselves in worlds of trouble because they have been influenced by evil forces to do that which they would not normally do. There are many who are influenced by such abominations and turn to lifestyles that involve homosexuality, beastiality, and fornications of every kind. When they are under the influence of evil spirits, the end is almost always predictable.

Under the influence of Satan the world has become a confused place where right is substituted for wrong.

Consider the rising demand for homosexual rights. While every person is given the right by God himself to choose a life of obedience or defiance, homosexuals have organized themselves into massive blocks of voters in an effort influence lawmakers to endorse their deviance. They constantly promote the passing of laws that go beyond acknowledging their right to deviate, but actually place the general society in a posture of giving legal approval to lesbianism, sodomy and homosexuality.

Consider the rising divorce rate in our nation. Influenced by new age thinking, the sanctity and permanence of marriage has been diminished to a trial and error partnership that lasts as long as it feels good. As a result, the definition of family has changed and its strength weakened. The idea that Paul referred to in verse 31, that of a man leaving his mother and father and cleaving unto his wife and becoming one flesh, has been substituted for a disposable relationship that can be discarded like a used paper napkin.

As the world continues to be influenced by Satan it has become drunk under his influence. It wobbles and weaves and cannot walk a straight line.

Maybe that's why James Weldon Johnson in his epic song "Lift every voice and sing" cried out in prayer to God "Thou who has by thy might led us into the light, keep forever in the path we pray. Lest our feet, stray for the places our God where we met thee. Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee.."

There are many who are living under the influence of Satan. Under the influence of the devil we want to be:

—Loved but we can' stop hating; Paid, but we don't want to work.

—Lead, but we don't want to follow; First, but we don't want to be last;

—Go up, but we are always pulling down; Forward, but we are always looking backward

Influence of the Cross

While Satan influences, we are reminded that there is another, more powerful influence in the world, it is the influence represented by the cross.

There are many influences, but none of them equal the influence of the cross.

The Moon influences the rising tide, but the cross influences the failing soul.

The Sun influences the ripening of the crop, but the cross influences, the fertilization of the spirit.

The clouds influence the quantity of rain, but the cross influences the quality of our character

The seasons influence the condition of the weather, but the cross regulates our feelings and brings us all together.

If the World lived daily under the influence of the cross:

—Jailhouses would become prayer houses; Bitter words would become Sweet Whispers;

—Dissenters would become agreeable; Peace breakers would become fence menders;

There is power in the cross! At the cross, I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away!

Those influenced by they cross are influenced by Jesus:

—Heaven's proclamation and the Epitome of Power!

—Proximate Cause of perpetual motion

—Protagonist of every story; provider of needs

—Protector of rights; paternal father, Propeller of Good

—Procurator of Justice, Prosecutor of Evil;

—Proponent of Eternal Life and Mercy's Probate Officer

I don't know about you, but I've decided to live for Jesus, who died for me!

Live for Jesus and don't turn back!

Live for Jesus and don't turn back!

No. 451-Mother's Day

As An Eagle Beareth Them On Her Wings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 9, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deuteronomy 32:11-12

Introduction

Motherhood. It is remarkable, unfathomable, and mystifying! Have you ever considered what it must take to be a good mother? Beyond health and strength, it takes love, patience, courage and a plethora of other virtues that are all needed to make a successful mother. How can anyone say thanks to good mothers for all of their sacrificial service?

Consider the three daughters who pondered what they would buy their mother for Mother's Day. She had everything she wanted and her house was a maze of whatnots and gadgets received over the years. They looked at jewelry boxes and perfume; things they had given before. They considered mother's rings and appliances, but they had done that too. Between them, they had bought their mother the best that money could buy. Then one day they stumbled upon a picture of an eagle in its nest. There were three baby eagles in the nest with their mouths wide open. The mother eagle hovered over them with her wings spread as she fed them one by one. They saw the look of need on the faces of hungry eaglets. They saw the look of love in the face of the mother eagle that said what they wanted to say. They wrapped the picture and wrote their mother a note inside of the card. The card read: "As this Eagle stretches forth her wings to protect her young, you have helped us, fed us and protected us. When we were in need of food, you loved us. When we needed protection from the frailties of life, you fought off colds, diseases, and enemies. When it was time for us to leave the nest, you loved us enough to push us out and taught us to soar in the sky!" The mother saw the picture and sat with tears in her eye. One daughter asked, "What's wrong mother, did we do something wrong, why do you cry?" The mother answered, "I just praise God that he helped me to teach you to fly!"

Good mothers often spend a great portion of their lives protecting and nurturing

their young. Their greatest joy comes when they watch their little ones stretch their own wings as they claim their future.

As Christians, we know that the Bible compares God's love to his love for his people. Like a mother eagle hovers over her young, feeds and protects them, God does the same for his own. Even when it's time to move on, God stirs the nest but stays close by to catch us if we fall.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he gives his final sermon and instruction to Israel before they depart to enter the Promised Land. He paints a picture of the nation's long struggle under the watchful care of God and compares their present situation to that of a Mother Eagle stirring her nest.

For Israel, the nest had been the sheltered care of "Goshen" a special land next to Egypt that God seemed to personally nurture and protect. When plagues came upon Egypt Goshen was protected. When Egypt's waters turned red with blood, waters in Goshen were clear. When food supplies dwindled, and locust devoured Egypt, Goshen was a haven of safety. Even though they suffered the humiliation of slavery, they found a sense of comfort each night as they returned to Goshen. What began as 70 people who came to Egypt to wait out a famine had grown to over 500,000 and the nest of Goshen was becoming crowded.

Moses said God stirred the comfortable nest of Goshen and was leading them toward the Promised Land. Like the ever protective mother Eagle, he would spread forth his wings to bear them up if they fell along the way.

It would not be the only time that God would draw similarities between the realities of life and the eagle. The days of man are compared to the Eagle: "They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." (Job 9:26) Riches, no matter how hard to come by are said to fly with wings of eagles. " ..for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Proverbs 23:5). The righteous are reminded that if they are patient they shall take the wings of eagles. Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." Using the reference to the eagle as a symbol of God's love is therefore not unusual.

In this text, God's love for Israel is compared to that of a mother eagle for her eaglets. The mother eagle stirs them, protects them, and then as they stretch their wings for the first time and take their journey, flies beneath them to catch them if they fall. It was God's assurance to Israel that though they were going to a different land and taking on new challenges he would still be there to protect them whenever they needed him.

Nature of the Nest

Eagles are peculiar about their nests. They are usually built with sticks high on the mountains. Those who study eagles report that they are not simply satisfied with sticks, but while they are in use mother eagles attempt to decorate their nests with fresh green leaves. Every year the nest increases in size as the mother eagle continues to decorate and beautify.

The instinct to make a house a home must be shared by all good mothers. It is something about a mother's hand that can take a shotgun house with ugly wooden floors and unpainted walls and turn it into a home. It's something about a mother's hand that can take a rundown apartment and turn it into a place of warmth and love. The instinct to make her house livable, presentable and clean seems to be a great characteristic of mothers. It is rare to find a good mother who can tolerate a dirty, unkept house. Whether the mother is a housewife or a professional working mom, her natural instinct is to decorate, clean, and beautify the nest, by whatever means necessary.

Fluttereth Over Her Young

Mother eagles are protective. They sit in their nests until their eaglets are 11 or 12 weeks old. They are fed with food that is brought by the father eagle, but she never leaves because she knows they cannot fly. During this time, she cuddles them beneath her wing, keeps them warm and protects them from elements by absorbing rain, snow, sleet, and heat into her own body.

There are many mothers today who have given of their strength, youth, and health to provide for their young. Often the sacrifices made were without thought of pain, injury or death, only the safety of a child. Consider the little boy who was going to kindergarten for the first day. He did not want his mother to bring him because she was disfigured, with burns on her face and hands. Hurt, the mother sent the boy to school by a neighbor. But along the way the neighbor had a talk with the little boy. "You really hurt your mother." She said, "You are right, she is disfigured, but do you know how she got that way?" The boy shook his head saying, "no." The woman explained that when the boy was only six weeks old there was a fire in their house and he was trapped in a room that was blazing. Firefighters were fighting the blaze, but they couldn't find the boy. The mother braved the flames, found her son on a floor and threw herself on top of him to protect him from the flames. They both survived, but she suffered burns on her face and hands. After hearing the account, the little boy said, "stop the car!" He got out and ran down the street to his mother and said, "Mama, I'm sorry. You can take me to school any old time!"

Countless mothers have endured personal sacrifices while fluttering over their young. Some have given up careers, passed up fortunes, injured themselves in a variety of ways, all for the sake of their children.

Stirreth Her Nest

Probably the most difficult part of mothering is stirring the nest. When an eagle stirs its nest, it pushes the inexperienced eaglets out of the nest and teaches them to fly. First, they learn to flap their wings a bit. Then they fly in circles that get wider in distance, while the mother Eagle flies beneath them to catch them if they fall. When the eaglets can fly and feed themselves, the mother eagle turns away as her siblings fly off into the sunset. When they can fly, her job is done!

After many years of protecting and caring for the young, many mothers find it hard to let go of their little ones. Some find it hard to stir the nest and teach them to fly. Even after some have established nests of their own, sometimes even good mothers can't resist the temptation to continue to dabble in the affairs of their children. However, the good mother is always concerned and will be there in time of trouble. She resists the temptation to interfere as their children attempt to soar, and glide through life as they have been taught.

Every good mother hopes to inspire optimism and faith in her children. Every mother's desire is to see their children fly through life with the grace of eagles and the assurance that if they fail, God will be there to catch them.

Mothers, the love you share with your children is the same kind of love that God has shown to the world. He loved us so much that he gave his only begotten son who came, died and rose again that we might have the assurance that come what may, "Lo I am with you alway, even until the end of the earth"

It is an assurance to know that God is with you always.

In the midst of blessings or despair, he is always by your side!

In the midst of riches untold or poverty and despair, he is always by your side!

No wonder the songwriter declares: "Be not dismayed what er' betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, through every day, over all the way; he will take care of you!

In moments of frustration, he will take care of you!

In moments of sadness, he will take care of you!

God will take care of you!

No. 450-Funeral

Grandma's Faith

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." 2 Timothy 1:5-6

Introduction

If there is one quality of life that you could pass on to your children, what would it be? If given an opportunity to select a trait of a parent or grandparent and claim it as your own, what would you select? Every person that passes through life exhibits an array of character traits for the world to see. Some are enviable; others are not. Parents often try to teach admirable personality traits to their children. The lessons seem endless: be honest, be positive, show gratitude, don't boast, stay clean, etc. Our children and grandchildren see our lives and many of them will try to duplicate what they perceive to be our finer qualities in their own lives.

Consider the grandchild who had always been impressed with the way grandma made pound cakes. Now a newly married microwave bride, the grandchild decided to make a pound cake, just like grandma made. She went up and down the aisle at the grocery store getting ingredients that she remembered sitting on the counter at grandma's house. When she came to the spices, she stood there for a long time reading every box and bottle, searching for something. An elderly woman stood nearby and watched the young woman who seemed frustrated at her inability to find for which she searched. Finally, the elderly observer approached the young woman and asked if she could help. The frustrated grandchild turned quickly and said, "I'm trying to find something grandma use to put in her cakes, but I can't find it!" Puzzled, the woman asked what it was, only to hear the young lady respond: "She called it scratch!" The old woman responded: That's love and patience baby, you won't find it on a shelf, it came from her heart.

The enviable qualities about every person are often difficult to emulate and recreate. The life of a good mother, grandmother and Christian woman has all the makings of a good pound cake. The children and grandchildren who are left behind who want to reproduce that life must find the one ingredient that made it all work for her.

As Christians, we know that there is one ingredient that, when mixed with all of the challenges of life, produces peace and happiness. That ingredient is called faith. Like "scratch," it does not come in a package and can't be found on a shelf because it comes from within. It is based on an unfaltering trust in God. Christian mothers and grandmothers seem to have it and depend upon it dearly. Those who follow them should aspire to get it because life could be much easier if they just had a touch of "Grandma's faith."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's words of advice to young Timothy, who was about to begin a ministry of service. Paul, writing his last epistle while under Roman arrest, was about to be executed for crimes he did not commit by order of Nero, the emperor. His advice to young Timothy was designed to leave the lad some inspiration and encouragement to continue in the work of the Lord, even after his death.

In this text, Paul told Timothy three important truths: 1)That he had unquestioned faith in God; 2) That the type of faith he possessed was the same as that of his mother and grandmother, and; 3)He should stir up the gifts and use this great faith for the benefit of the kingdom.

Timothy was a young man of great faith. Since Paul's first missionary journey to teach and preach about Jesus, he had grown in the faith. He even journeyed with him as he traveled and watched as the man of God withstood hardships and persecution to deliver the word of God. Being young, Timothy had to draw from those around him who were examples of faith in action. Apparently, he learned well, for Paul said he exemplified "unfeigned faith" meaning it was free of dissimulation and pure. It was a unique and unusual faith for a young man to possess.

Paul noted that the faith that Timothy displayed was familiar. He first saw it in Timothy's grandmother Lois and in his mother, Eunice. Lois was a grandmother who stepped out on God's word, lived in obedience to his command and lived a Christian life. Her great faith implied that she trusted in God completely. What grandmother learned, she passed it on to her daughter Eunice who emulated her mother's faith in every way possible. The great trust that each of them had was passed on to Timothy, who was now being challenged to emulate the faith of his mother and grandmother in his own life. Paul encouraged Timothy to "stir up" grandma's faith which was now a part of his own being and use it to do great works for the Lord. He was challenged to do more than simply refer to his grandma's faith or to his mother's faith. He was challenged to use that which they had taught him for the great work that God had in store for him as well.

In retrospect, Paul recognized the great spiritual qualities of this grandchild, reminded him that these virtues were taught by his grandmother and mother, and then he was told to use them. In verse seven he charges the lad, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind." In faith, Timothy was challenged to act courageously, keep a spirit of love always applying sound

thinking and doctrine to every situation.

This was not a new lesson that Paul gave Timothy because the young man had heard it before because it was a part of "Grandma's faith."

Know What You Have

Those who knew our parents and grandparents can recognize their traits in us. There is an old saying that an "acorn doesn't fall far from the tree." This is a great truth, especially as it relates to what we learn from the example of our parents. Paul told Timothy that he recognized his faith, to let him know that he too had great faith. Timothy knew his mother had it, and so did his grandmother, but it was important that he knew what he had.

The children of Christian families need to be able to recognize what they have. The clean lives they live, the goals to which they aspire, the manner in which they handle tragedy, all exemplify a lifestyle of devotion and obedience to God. It is good to know that mother has the love of God in her heart and that grandmother trusted God more than anything else in the world. It is good to know they had it, but it is even better to know that you have it too. Often we live it, speak it and act on it without recognizing it, until somebody who knew grandmother tells us that we too share her strength of character as well.

Know Where You Got It From

If it is important to know what you have, and it is equally important to know where you got it from.

Unlike salvation and eternal life that are gifts of God through Jesus Christ, faith is not given from God. (Romans 6:23) The very nature of faith is ambiguous. By definition, faith is, "The substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Where does it come from? Romans 10:17 says "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Where does a child first hear about trusting God? Not at church, but at home! Where does a child see faith and trust in God in action? He or she sees it in the example of his mother and father. Since faith is acquired by the precept and example of those around us the first, and most influential, teachers that we have, Concerning faith in God, are our parents. Sometimes children may be irritated by the faith that our parents keep talking about. Sometimes their repetitious sermons may seem monotonous: "Trust in the Lord, child, and he will provide;" "The Lord will make a way somehow;" "I know the Lord will answer prayer." They all seem like empty phrases until you watch how mother or grandmother steps out on that faith and stands tall, even in the face of danger, sickness, and death. They remain confident that all things will work to the good of them that love the Lord. If you are a man or woman of faith today, know where it came from, and give God the praise.

Use what you have

Paul told Timothy what he had and where it came from, but he didn't stop there, he told him to use it!

If our mothers and grandmothers have taught us the value of Christian living and what can be accomplished when we completely trust in God, we should use that faith in our daily living. What was good for mother, and what was good for grandma should be good enough for us. No wonder the songwriter would declare, "Gimme that old time religion it's good enough for me!"

Grandma's faith carried her through a depression and great periods of war..it's good enough for me!

Grandma's faith helped her to be loyal to her husband and a pillar of strength for her family ... it's good enough for me!

Grandma's faith gave her courage in the midst of sickness and helped her to smile in the face of death ...it's good enough for me!

Those who mourn today should face the sadness of this hour by reflecting on Grandmas' faith. Even as the tears roll from your eyes declare with an unfeigned faith "I trust in God, wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. For come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

"I trust in God, I know he cares for me. On mountains bleak or on the stormy sea, Though billows roll, he keeps my soul, my heavenly father watches over me!"

—

On Tuesday May 4, 1993, Willie Mae Dyer Williams went home to be with God. She left behind a perfect example of a grandma's faith.

No. 448-Usher Anniversary

The 212 Member Usher Board

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 28, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "Altogether, those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds numbered 212. They were registered by genealogy in their villages. The gatekeepers had been assigned to their positions of trust by David and Samuel the seer." I Chronicles 9:22 (NIV)

Introduction

Have you ever wished there were more people on your usher board? Have you ever had an occasion to serve when there weren't enough ushers to go around? That was a time when the same usher who held the door, collected the offering and greeted guests as well. Somehow it's always on such days that Sister Cassie Bell decides to shout, and there's no one to take her out or Brother Bubba says he wants a fan, but he never takes one from a man. It wouldn't be so bad, but Miss Jennie keeps asking for her change and Lucretia keeps looking at you strangely. We got to put chairs down the aisle, we can't let the visitors stand...oh Lord if you can hear us, we could use a few more hands! Being short handed is a frustrating experience for church ushers. One prayer that most ushers have in common is please Lord, send us a few more willing hands.

Most Usher boards today are small groups of faithful workers who serve as gatekeepers for the Lord. They are servants of the congregation, who have accepted the responsibility of making worshippers comfortable and happy during worships. The nature of the station causes many people to shy away from what appears to be a menial place that is often thankless and without honor. The average board may have 10 to 20 active ushers at a time, depending on the congregation's size. Some large congregations may have as many as 50 in the service on any given Sunday. Today that would be considered a remarkable accomplishment for any local congregation.

If you think a board of 20, 40 or 50 members is great, then how would you like to be a part of a 212 member usher board? Not only to be a member of the board, but to be commissioned by the king! That would be an honor! Believe it or not the forerunner of what we would call an usher board is noted in 1 Chronicles 9:22 when it refers to the 212 "porters" or gatekeepers appointed by the king to serve the house of God. These "ushers" were commissioned for life to serve the house of God with all of their mind body and soul. Because it was a royal appointment, the 212 members, of this

unique, all male, usher board, served every day of their lives gladly.

Today, those who usher on various boards may not have a board of 212, but they all have been selected by the king. They too have a royal appointment and they have responded to the call by saying, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me."

Exposition

This text considers a small number of Israelites as they return from exile in Babylon to re-establish the worship and ritual at the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews had been conquered and scattered throughout Assyria and the Babylonian empire and had been given leave to return to Jerusalem. The Book of Chronicles, which is a brief history of the Jewish people, highlights their return. A more detailed account is also contained in the Book of Ezra.

Ezra, like Nehemiah before him, had a difficult time getting Jews to return to Jerusalem. They had become comfortable in Babylon and a generation grew up that had never known their homeland. Of the millions of Jews in exile, however, there were some who came forth and answered the call. To be properly maintained, those who returned for this purpose had to be Levites because they were a special tribe selected for this special work.

When he returned Ezra came with 1,760 chief priests, 1 Chronicles (9:13), 220 temple attendants, an unnamed number of singers and 212 doorkeepers and their families.

The assignment of duties in the house of the Lord was one of the last great works of King David before he died. He spent his entire life trying to secure the land and build a temple for God, but was unable to complete the job. Beginning at 1 Chronicles 23 there is a detailed account of David's assignment of duties to the Levites. The descendants of Moses were the priests. Other groups were subdivided and assigned tasks for their families by the toss of a coin. Among the duties decided were: singers or canters, priest' attendants, and doorkeepers.

The family of Levites selected as doorkeepers was a large one. There were 212 major families involved. The head of each family was designated a doorkeeper and his family was charged to assist him in carrying out his duties, thereby involving literally thousands of people. These 212 families were subdivided into four smaller groups and assigned specific duties that included: 1) Oversight of the doorways and gates (v23) 2) Collecting the offerings (26), 3) Opening up and closing up after each day's worship (v27), 4) Storing and caring for the vessels and instruments of worship (v28-29). When a family's head died, the next head of the family took his place and the remainder of the family served as usual.

Those who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra were Korahites, descendants of Korah whose family drew the responsibility of being doorkeepers. Verse 22 refers to them as "porters" which is translated from the Hebrew word "Sho'er" which means doorkeeper. As Levites, the doorkeepers were called out from among the general community to serve the house of God. They were exempted from taxes, military

service, or common labor. They only had one job to do and that was to serve the House of God.

Serving The House of God

The job of doorkeepers has changed over the years, but generally it was expected that their service be restricted to serving the House of God. As each family took its turn in service, they meticulously took care of the details relating to serving the temple itself.

In that tradition, we too have seen the job of ushering change over the years, but as its Old Testament predecessor, it has remained restricted to serving the house of God itself.

Long before any of us could remember our forefathers were ushers in the old country church. Their duties involved 1)Heating up the stove to have the building warm for meetings 2) Insuring an ample supply of catalogs for the outhouse 3) Keeping the horses and the wagons for the worshipers, 4)Marching the congregation for offerings, 5)Carrying out shouters, and 6) Seating and helping visitors. The duty of the usher was taken seriously.

In all of its seriousness, however, these dedicated servants did not envision themselves as doing anything that did not relate to serving the house of God proper. Many saw no need to attend Sunday school because it wasn't germane to what they perceived as their area of service. Neither was bible study essential because they were not planning to be teachers, neither was prayer meeting because they weren't planning to be deacons, neither was evangelism because they weren't planning to be preachers!

Many ushers today, do a great job on the board, but they do not tithe, attend Sunday school, prayer meeting, Bible study or otherwise commit themselves to any Christian service other than ushering.

As we grow in the faith, hopefully, more will come to see the post of doorkeeper as springboard to service rather than a service within itself.

Serving The Lord

The first ushers perceived themselves as men and women who were chosen by God to serve the building and that's all!

Our service should go beyond just service in the building, but should extend to the bounds of the great commission to "Go ye therefore" and "teach, preach, and reach" men and women for the Lord.

The first temple they served was built by Solomon, but it was destroyed and the 212 member usher board found itself without a job.

The second temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel but it too was destroyed by invading armies and the doorkeepers had no doors to keep.

The third temple was built by Herod, who restored it to much of its original beauty,

but it too was destroyed leaving the 212 ushers with nothing to do.

When these 212 ushers found that there was no temple to serve they were in a bind.

But, I hear Jesus declare in Matthew 12:6 as he talked with men and women married to the ritual of the temple, "That in this place is one greater than the temple."

The temple that man builds is made of rocks and stones!

The temple that man builds is held together with mortar and clay.

Jesus reminded them that there will come a day when not a rock or stone of this man-made temple will stand.

Jesus pointed them to himself as the temple that would be everlasting. In John 2:19 he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Somebody answered that it took 46 years to build this building, how can you raise it in three days?

Jesus wasn't talking about a building made from rocks or stones, but he was talking about a building not made with the hands of men, but was touched by the hand of God.

If you've chosen to serve in the house of God:

— Don't let your service get limited to mortar and bricks!

— Be determined by the color and style of the uniform!

— Don't be selective about which places you will serve!

— Don't worry about whether you can hold an office

— Don't restrict your service to things made by man!

I heard Dr. Watts declare, "To serve this present age my calling to fulfill, oh may all my powers engage to do my master's will!"

I don't know about you, but I've found out that good things happen when you serve the Lord.

Serve the Lord who can take the darkness and turn it into light!

Serve the Lord who can take defeat and turn it into victory!

Serve the Lord who can take sadness and turn it into gladness!

Serve him as an usher, but also serve him as you teach in the Sunday school!

Serve him as an usher but also serve him as you minister to the needy!

Serve him as an usher but also do the work of an evangelist and tell a dying world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose on Sunday morning!

Tell them he's alive today and forever more!

No. 447-Youth

Dragon Fighter

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 25, 1993

SCRIPTURE: *"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." — Psalms 91:13 "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years," — Revelation 20:2*

Introduction

Monsters and Dragons! Every childhood is filled with the story book tales of great beasts, angry monsters and the great heroes that rose to fight them and save the day. Most who hear these stories aspire to grow up to fight dragons, become a hero, and save the day.

Dragons did not really exist, but people believed in them. According to legend, dragons were giant fire breathing serpents with wings like a great bat. Dragons were said to be so ferocious that they could swallow a man in a single gulp.

If there were dragons, every country seemed to have its dragon slayer. In Greece the great dragon slayers were Hercules, Apollo and Perseus. The Germans and the Norse said Beowulf and Sigurd were the great dragon slayers. The English were so captivated by the legend of how Sir George saved the princess from the mouth of a dragon that he was named "Saint George."

Although Sir. George was a real man, the legend about the dragon slaying was make believe. Sir George was a Christian and he often had to fight the forces of evil to keep his faith. On April 23, 303 he was put to death and became known as St. George the Dragon Fighter.

There are dragons in the bible too. Usually dragons are used as symbols of evil things, evil acts and evil people. Satan is described as a dragon repeatedly as he brings trouble, confusion and death on the people of this earth. He is even pictured in some places as being a dragon with many heads, hard to kill, and ferocious. Without a doubt Satan does cause us many problems and difficulties. He is a horrible dragon that breathes the fire and smoke of hatred, confusion and death.

However there is a way for us to fight the dragon. There is one who is on our side that can and will defeat the dragon that pesters us now and prevent them from every bothering us again.

Brothers and Sisters, boys and girls ...Meet Jesus, the dragon fighter!

Exposition

This text focuses on David's Psalm of praise which emphasizes confidence that God will empower us to be successful in overcoming the impact of evil.

Evil forces are represented in this psalm as a "terror by night" and the "arrow that flieth by day" (v5); "pestilence" of darkness and the "destruction" of the day (v6). In verse 13 lions and serpents or young lions and dragons are used as metaphors for the great presence of evil. God, speaking through David, reminds the righteous that many of their contemporaries will fall prey to influences but he will empower the righteous to be strong enough to escape. This point is emphasized in verse 7 *"a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."*

The reason the righteous will overcome evil is cited in verse 9: *"Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation."* Evil will not be able to make us fall (v 10) and will avoid the places where we live and spend our time if we continue to abide in the place of the most high.

Dragons have been used in scripture as metaphors of symbols for evil. The common people believed in the myths of two kinds of dragons: sea monsters and giant land serpents. The Hebrew word *"Dragon"* is "*Tananin*" which means a great serpent. At the very least, when the term dragon was used it referred to something big and evil. So it was often used as a symbol for evil presences on land and at sea. In Psalm 74:13 the drowning Egyptians in the Red were described as "*dragons in the water."* In a similar comparison, Isaiah 51:9 calls upon God because he "wounded the dragon" of Egypt in times past. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is compared to a dragon in Jeremiah 51:34 because of the way he swallowed up and conquered through the Babylonian conquest. Whatever the evil presence God promises to be such a powerful presence with us that if we will abide in him he will help us to overcome its influence.

Young dragons

Young Christians should pay close attention to verse 13 of this text because it is within this passage that God has a word of encouragement and inspiration:"..the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." When faced with lions and dragons of youth, young believers can and will be victorious. Important spiritual battles that are won in youth last a lifetime. Youth who slay dragons will be able to stand against monsters in later years.

Matthew 4:6 shows Jesus as a young adult fighting his own dragons. Satan, quoting from Psalm 91, tempted Jesus to stray from his course and seek worldly power and fame. While Satan quoted verses 11 and 12 of Psalm 91 he tactfully left out verse 13, which would have reminded Jesus that he would trample Satan by the power of God. Jesus overcame his temptation, slew the dragons of his youth, took on the

monster of Calvary, death and the grave.

What are the dragons of youth? The dragons that youth face are on the inside, hidden from the eye. Theses dragons include fear, and insecurity. Many of the problems associated with youth can generally be traced to fear, and insecurity. They are monstrous dragons that work from the inside to destroy every young man or woman.

Millions of youth live with fear daily. Many are stricken with the fear of being laughed at by their friends, and will do almost anything to belong. It's the fear of being called chicken that prompts some boys to drink or take drugs to prove their manhood. It's the fear of being called names that prompts some youth to involve themselves in delinquent behavior. Verse seven of this text reminds us that thousands of young people fall prey to this evil, but young believers can and do overcome their fears, with God's help.

It takes courage for a youth not to involve themselves in wrong doing, even though everyone else is doing it. It takes courage to say no to "popular evils" knowing that you will be criticized and ostracized because you do. There is a certain amount of fear that you feel on the inside, but each time it comes we combat fear by remembering the word of God from Psalm 27:1 "*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*

Insecurity is the next dragon that growls at every young believer. Every youth wants to belong and be accepted. Youth need to feel secure at home, to know that they are loved and that their position in the home is not threatened. They also need to feel secure in their interpersonal relationships and group associations. Even more importantly, youth need to be secure within themselves, knowing who they are and where they are going in life. Youth who are conquered by this dragon are not sure of themselves. They feel the need to impress others by extravagant dress and frills. Some involve themselves in pre-marital sex to hold on to someone that's important to them. Some become delinquents at school and eventually wind up in jail.

Only those who are sure of themselves will be able to conquer the dragon of insecurity. Those who believe and trust in God will be able to trample on this dragon because they know they are special people, chosen by God to do a good work. Believers, whether young or old, have the assurance from our master that he will work it out.

Jesus The Dragon Fighter

Finally, youth should remember that they cannot fight spirit dragons themselves because the nature of the enemy is spiritual and not physical. Paul writing in Ephesians 6:12 reminded them in these words: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".*

The dragons of fear and insecurity on the inside that threaten our spiritual lives cannot be defeated by our own power, but we need a spiritual dragon fighter.

Israel when faced with the approaching armies of Egypt found that our God is a dragon fighter as he opened up the red sea.

Gideon surrounded by enemies on every side with just three hundred men in his army proved that even when out numbered that the Lord is a fearsome dragon fighter.

E lijah waged a spiritual war against the prophets of Baal and proved that when pitted against the forces of evil our God is an awesome dragon fighter.

The great hope of every Christian is that one day our Lord will come back again and take hold of Satan, lock him away for a thousand years, then he will be released, defeated and thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will burn forever.

Glory Hallelujah! This is our faith. This is our hope!

In these troubling times the only hope we have is in Jesus!

When the dragons are reaching out and trying to claim your soul, stand for Jesus!

When temptation is all around you..stand for Jesus who died for you on calvary and rose triumphant.

I don't know about you but I share the song writer's testimony, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid, rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

No. 446-Membership Improvement

Lifestyles of the Save & Sanctified

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 18, 1993

SCRIPTURE: ***"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42***

Introduction

Have you ever been curious about how other people live? Have you ever wondered about how your favorite actor, sports hero, or other celebrities live? If you have, you are among millions of people who are generally curious about the life styles of people in the public eye.

This curiosity we have about the lifestyles of those in the public eye has spawned whole industries. Magazines like Ebony show us the lifestyles and beautiful homes of famous African Americans to satisfy our curiosity. Magazines by the thousands pour out countless pages of photographs that paint a picture of the luxurious lifestyles for us. There is even a late night television show called the "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" which shows us the fabulous living arrangements of the rich. We see everything from golden bathtubs to glass homes in the mountains. We are shown how the rich entertain themselves with get-a-way vacations to far-a-way places. The entire idea is to arouse our curiosity and pander to our desire to know more about how people with money spend their leisure.

We know a lot about the life styles of the rich and famous, but how much do we know about the lifestyles of those who may not be materially rich or nationally well known. What about the lifestyles of the those who know the Lord. The lifestyles of the saved and sanctified are snapshots of joy. These lifestyles reflect the peace that comes with knowing Jesus and assurance of his promise to be with us continually.

As Christians, we are comfortable with our lifestyle. It is one that involves the study of God's word, fun and fellowship, breaking of bread with fellow believers, as well as worship and prayer. Our lifestyle differs from that of the rich and famous in that while we may have many material goods at our disposal, we can be just as happy without them. Ours is a wonderful life, and we gladly spend it in the fellowship of our lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on the members of the early church in its first weeks of operation. Chronologically it takes place after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Jesus appeared to his disciples on several occasions after his resurrection instructing them to teach and preach about the kingdom of God and to show love for him through service to others. As Jesus left he promised them a special empowerment to carry out the mission (Acts 1:8). Strengthened with power from on high, they began to live the powerful life of a Christian in their own communities in such a way that in its first days it drew thousands to the fold. On one occasion 3,000 united on the first day (Acts 2:41).

As members of the body of Christ each person discovered that he or she had been saved to serve. They set about immediately developing a lifestyle that reflected these ideas. There were four traits that generally identified the life styles of the saints. 1) They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They constantly studied the word as taught by the apostles. In a nutshell, the apostles taught them to obey and trust God (Acts 5:29 "We ought to obey God rather than men.), use the power he gives them to demonstrate good works (Titus 2:7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works:), and to bear witness to the power of God (Acts 1:8 "ye shall be witnesses unto me). 2)They continued in fellowship. They shared experiences, leisure, and learning together and thus drew strength and inspiration from each other as the entire church drew from the Lord. 3)They continued in the Breaking of Bread. They came together to remember the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ by observing the communion service on a regular basis. 4)They continued in prayer as they prayed for the sick, and the building of the kingdom. Those who saw the saints were able to recognize them instantly by their lifestyle for it was unique and peculiar. The lifestyle of the Christian is one of study, good works, fellowship, communion and prayer.

What is the Christian Lifestyle?

The early church clearly set the pattern for the lifestyle of the saved and sanctified. That pattern has not been altered by time. It is the same today. The lifestyle of the Christian should be one that is consistent with the word.

LIFE STYLE OF STUDY AND SERVICE. Every Christians should continue in the doctrine of God, demonstrate good works and praise God continuously. No Christian should neglect bible study. Sunday morning bible study is an essential part of our growing process. As we learn to understand the word of God and its meaning for us. Any additional bible studies that the church offers should provide even more opportunities for us to study and learn. Moreover, our works in the community should also be an example of the Christian lifestyle. The lifestyle of every Christian should contain some element of Christian service. The type of service may range from helping provide shelter for homeless people to volunteering for the Red Cross. It may

be as simple as serving as a hospital volunteer, or in serving on governmental panels and boards. Each provides an opportunity for the Christian to demonstrate the force of character and sensitivity to people that identifies him or her as a Christian servant. In every thing we do we give God praise continuously for his mighty works.

LIFE STYLE OF FELLOWSHIP. A unique quality of the Christian is that he or she is usually in the company of other Christians frequently as they fellowship and share life experiences.

A man or woman comes to the cross alone, but once there he or she finds millions of others who are also standing at the foot of Jesus. Those who share a common faith should fellowship frequently with one another. The old colloquialism is true in this respect as well "Birds of a feather, flock together."

The idea of frequent fellowship goes beyond just shaking hands and exchanging hugs but it extends into the daily lives as well. Fellowship is a sharing of mutual concern. Fellowship means we rejoice in each others victories and accomplishments, support each other in moments of frustration and failure, and comfort each other in moments of personal loss. Frequent fellowship requires frequent informal contact. The advantage of the Christian fellowship is that others who stand at the cross know how difficult your journey is and share every aspect of your life with you.

Remembering the Cross

If there are final aspects to the lifestyle of the saved and sanctified they are that they know how to pray and they never forget the cross.

Never has there been a faithful believer in God who did not believe in the power of prayer. Show me a Christian woman and I'll show you a woman who knows what prayer can do. Show me a Christian man and I'll show you a man who can testify that prayer can change things.

Moses learned that even when faced with the Red Sea that a small prayer can build a bridge over troubled water.

Joshua learned that even when the sun is about to set on your victory that prayer can make the sun stand still

Hezekiah learned that as time dwindles and life fades away, that prayer can add years to your life.

Daniel prayed three times a day and he learned that prayer can turn lions into kittens.

The Three Hebrew boys learned that even when faced with the fiery furnace that prayer put a fourth man in the fire.

Show me a Christian and I'll show you a man or woman who knows the power of prayer.

Prayer can change enemies into your friends!

Prayer can turn midnights into noon days!

Prayer can reduce mountains into molehills!

Prayer can make rough places plain and crooked places straight!

A Christian prays because he can never forget the Cross.

Show me a Christian and I'll show you a man or woman that can never forget the agony of the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary is always on his mind.

Show me a Christian and I'll show you somebody who can never forget his body which "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Show me a Christian and I'll show you somebody who can never forget the blood. No wonder the song writer declares "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that save me. One day when I was lost, he died upon the cross, I know it was the blood that saved me."

Show me a Christian and I'll show you somebody who can tell the old story like it was yesterday.

How Jesus died on Calvary but rose on Sunday morning!

He rose giving us the promise of a new life filled with power! I'm glad that he gave me a new lifestyle!

I'm glad that he gave me a new walk and talk!

Because of Jesus, I have a brand new life!

No. 445-Easter

Why Seek Ye The Living Among The Dead?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 11, 1993

SCRIPTURE: ***"And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Luke 24:5***

Introduction

Do you serve a living God is your god counted among the failed faiths of lost generations? Many today serve a god of some kind. Often they find their gods powerless to help them to live better, climb higher and achieve their goals.

Consider the man and his daughter who visited a museum of great religions while on their summer vacation. In the museum, there were statues of the founders of many of the great world faiths. There was Buddha who taught his followers about inner peace. He has 245 million followers. There was Confucius, the great Chinese thinker and wise man whose ideas dominate the Eastern part of the World. There was Muhammad who taught Islam to millions saying he was the last prophet of God. As the little girl moved from statue to statue depicting even the mythical Greek gods: Zeus, Thor, Hera and others. After strolling down many hallways and reading the notes on the religious shrines of the past, she asked her father a question:" Father, where is the statue of Jesus?" The father responded: "These are the failed gods of the past. Buddha was great but he's dead. Confucius was wise and influential but he's dead. Muhammad was a mighty leader but he is dead. If you want to find Jesus, you can't find him here because he is alive. He lives within your heart."

Today there are many who entrust their faith to dead gods that offer them only defeat and failure. Even though the things they have trusted have proved empty and valueless, many still cling to them in vain efforts to find happiness and success. Whether these gods are represented by great ideas, or mere creature comforts, all of them have proven to be void of life.

However, we serve a living God that is with us every day. That is the joy of Christian Life. There is no place where the body of Christ is on display. There is no crypt that holds his body for awe stricken crowds to file by in wonder. Those who travel to the place where he lay in the Holy Land expect to find just what they see,

an empty tomb, for he is risen.

This season of the year reminds us of the living faith we have been given as sons and daughters of God. It is a faith that keeps us looking toward the future and helps us turn our backs on the dead works of our past.

As Christians, we remind ourselves constantly that we serve a risen savior who has given us new life and power on this earth, as a foretaste to the great rewards that are to come after this life is past. When we want to realize the power of God, we don't look in the powerless, dead experiences of this world for we can find him in a moment because he's only a prayer away.

Exposition

This text considers the events that took place immediately after the crucifixion of Christ. Three days and three nights earlier Christ had been crucified and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph, a friend of the cause. The women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the Mother of James (Luke 24:10), prepared spices to anoint his body and waited until both the Sabbath involving the Feast of the Passover and the Weekly Sabbath had past then came to the tomb to complete their task "very early" in the morning on the First Day of the week. They found that the stone had been rolled away and that the body of Jesus was missing.

The women were perplexed. They fully expected to find a body in the tomb because they came prepared to anoint it. When they found no body, the women were disturbed. John's record of this same event (John 20:13) shows Mary Magdalene telling the angel that the body of Jesus had been removed and they did not know where it had been taken. It never dawned on her that Jesus had risen from the dead. She wept because she could not find the body. Mary wept and the others were afraid. In their fear, two angels appeared, and told them not to be afraid. Then they were asked the probing question: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The tomb was the place of the dead. The angel's question and explanation prompted them to remember the words of Jesus. Had they believed them when he spoke them they would not have come expecting to find a body, but an empty tomb. However, since they did not believe him fully, a body is what they fully expected to find. If they had accepted the truth that Jesus was the Son of the living God and was the same as the father they would have come expecting an empty tomb. However, they came to the place of the dead, looking for the dead.

The angel told them "he is not here, but is risen." The angel explained how Jesus predicted his resurrection and how its fulfillment resulted in the empty tomb. When the women remembered his words, they returned to the disciples excited an inspired as they told what they had seen. They had come to the place of the dead seeking a dead leader and they left knowing that they were serving a living God.

Dead gods only frustrate the living

Today many people spend their lives in frustration devotion to dead gods. They bow at the altar before them and pledge to them their time, talent and resources. How many have given their all in pursuit of fame and glory, only to find that it is a dead god? How many have sought wealth with all of their might only to learn that wealth is a means to an end, not an end in itself? How many have bowed themselves low before the god of career success and have devoted all of their time and energy to achieve the ever elusive "success" without considering once that success is relative and its degree depends upon the standard of measure. Fame, glory, wealth, power, and success are among the dead gods of this generation. Each of them is powerless to bring a living faith to adherents that goes beyond frustration.

Our present dilemma is like that of ancient Israel that sought to achieve success by looking to the dead gods worshipped by others around them. Since others seemed successful worshipping "Baal" they too gave everything they had toward the worship of this dead god. God caused a great showdown of faith between the false system of gods represented as "Baal" and the living God. 1 Kings 18:21 finds the prophet Elijah challenging the people atop Mt. Carmel in a demonstration of power that should have proven finally the power of the living God. His words were striking: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Two altars were erected with sacrifices and the real God was asked to respond by consuming the altar with fire. The living God responded with fire from heaven. Too many today seek to find a living God from among the available "dead" gods of modern times. Good times and juking has become a god to some. Inebriation, whether by drugs or alcohol, has become the god of others. While still others worship at the altar of their fishing boat or some other leisurely pursuit that, in order or priority, always comes before the living God. If the Mt. Carmel test were applied today and each of these were called upon to fully satisfy our longings and desires, they would all prove themselves "dead" for all practical purposes.

There is no life in dead works. There is no joy in living unless our living is in union with the divine end. All of our works are "dead" if we do them in pursuit of a dead god. That's why Hebrews 9:14 challenges us to let the blood of Christ "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Serving A Living God

Unlike the women who were at first discouraged by the empty tomb, we are encouraged by its emptiness. It reminds us that we serve a risen Lord who has not been held down by the powers of death and grave. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:10 "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

It was faith in a living God that prompted Abraham to prepare to sacrifice Isaac

before he found a lamb in the bush.

It was faith in a living God that led Moses and Israel across the Red Sea.

It was nothing but a living God that:

—Encouraged Daniel though thrown into the Lion's den

—Protected the three Hebrew Boys while in the fiery furnace

—Kept a widows woman's barrel from running dry

Today there are many who can testify that we serve a living God because only a living God could:

—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops

—Take midnight's and turn them into noon days

—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers

—Defeats and turn them into victories

—Take our losses and turn make them work for our gain

If the resurrection has any real significance it is that it reminds us that we serve a living God.

Because Jesus rose, those who believe on him have an opportunity for new life today and continued life in the hereafter.

Because there was a resurrection morning we have the assurance that the God we serve is not just another relic of religious history, but a living presence with us every day.

It is no wonder then that the songwriter would say, *"Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know, he holds the future and life is worth the living because he lives."*

Today we celebrate the victory of life over death and joy over sadness.

Today we celebrate because we know the God we serve is alive and well!

Though Satan tempted him in the wilderness, betrayed him in the garden and crucified him on an old rugged cross.. he lives!

I serve a risen savior; he's in the world today. I know that he is living no matter what men may say. I see his hand of mercy. I hear his voice of cheer. And just the time I need him, he's always near.

H*e lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. ...Ask my how I know he lives, he lives within my heart!*

No. 444-Palm Sunday

Hosanna!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 4, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And the multitudes that went before, and that followed,cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Matthew 21:9

Introduction

What kind of people are worthy of praise? People are praised when they display a variety of admirable traits including: heroism, benevolence, and mighty achievements. We salute such traits in a variety of ways. Our heroes are showered with ticker tape parades like those given the returning soldiers from Desert Storm or the winners of World Series or Super Bowls. Those who show outstanding benevolence and charity are give public accolades such as those given to Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King. Those who perform mighty works are praised in the media and great awards programs. On such occasions give accolades and sometimes we sing: "For he is a jolly good fellow" and we shout "hip hip hurray" and we give three cheers and other signs of our appreciation for their work.

When it's time to praise a hero we know exactly how it is done. There are books and manuals that lay out the routine step by step. When its time to salute a benevolent person or to award a person for an accomplishment, we have an idea what to do. But how do we praise someone who has been heroic, benevolent and performed mighty works at the same time? Suppose that same person was the Son of God?

That was the dilemma of the people of Jerusalem when they heard that Jesus was coming to town. It was a heroic act because there were plots to kill him. His compassion in healing the sick and feeding the hungry was well known. His mighty work in raising Lazarus from the dead was witnessed repeated as those who attended the funeral of Lazarus watched him walk and talk among them. They were excited at the prospect that a man from God was among them to save them. Even the Harvest feast of the fall they restaged the festive and joyous spirit of the Feast of the Tabernacles, cut palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" to Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. It was their way of saying "For he's a jolly good fellow! and Hip Hip Hurray!"

As Christians, we know that Jesus is worthy to be praised. He is worthy because of his mighty works. He is worthy because he has shown use mercy everyday. He

is worthy because he heroicly died for our sins. The people on Palm Sunday shouted Hosanna but soon forgot him. We strive to shout his praises daily and never forget him.

Exposition

This text focuses on the praise and acclamation that Jesus received when he made his entrance into the city of Jerusalem. It occurred shortly after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. On his way to Jerusalem he stopped again in Bethany to eat supper with Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 12:2). The word spread among the crowd of people which had grown to hundreds of thousands because of the upcoming Passover celebration. As he approached Jerusalem, the crowds praised him and took branches from the palm trees and went forth to meet him shouting "Hosanna!" and praising him.

The term "Hosanna" is an Aramaic transliteration of the Hebrew word hoshi-ah-na which means save us. It appears a total of six times in the Gospels and each is connected with Christ's entry into Jerusalem. In this text and in Mark 11:9 it stands absolutely. In Matthew 21:9,15 it is followed by the phrase "to the son of David". Matthew 21:9 and Mark 11:10 follows it with the phrase "in the highest." It was a term used only during the Feasts of the Tabernacle. During this time the people would bring the first fruits of their harvest to the temple in a great celebration. During the celebration the people would repeat Psalm 118:25 once each day for six days as they made a solemn processional around the sacrifice. Psalm 118:25 says:"Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity." On the seventh day repeated it seven times. It was a solemn chant like recitation that was given in hopes of salvation and prosperity to come. Their plea to God was that he would hoshi-ah-na or save them and bring them prosperity.

The Old Testament ritual which drew from Psalm 118 was prophetic because while it appealed to God for salvation and prosperity in verse 25, other verses pointed with prophetic accuracy to the coming of the Messiah. Verse 22 which says "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 21:42 as referring to himself. The people sensing that Jesus was the promised one of Psalm 118 quoted the Psalm but this time with joy instead of solemnity. Then they added verse 26 of the Psalm which says "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They shouted it instead of chanting it in dry monotones. They rejoiced greatly and took their cloaks and threw into the street to welcome one they expected to save them and bring them prosperity. It was no longer a dry empty ritual but a living hope and therefore a reason for joy!

As the people praised Jesus they took what was a sad and solemn expression which was more like a plea "Hosanna" and turned it into an expression of joy and hope for salvation and prosperity. This new hope was supplied by the coming of Jesus who was the object of all their praise.

Praise Him Because of His Mighty Acts

Jesus was praised because of his mighty acts among the people. They knew about his raising of Lazarus from the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding thousands with handsful of fishes and bread, and therefore they praised him and shouted Hosanna!

Today we should praise him because we too know of his mighty acts in our own personal lives. We have seen him take the jangling discords of our lives and bind them into a bond of meaning and purpose. We know about his mighty works. We, who have suffered defeat and felt the sting of failure and have been lifted to our feet again by his amazing power, can tell you of his mighty achievements. We, who have risen from our sick beds in defiance of science, know that he has done mighty works in our midst. We, who have overcome frustrations caused by Satan and side stepped the ditches and potholes he has created for us by the grace of God, can testify that he can truly move mountains of adversity. We who have felt his warm embrace in times of loneliness and his strong hand of assurance in times of weakness, should gladly join the throngs that praise him, because he is worthy to be praised.

Salvation & Prosperity

When David, through the inspiration of God, penned the 118th psalm he was looking for salvation and a chance for prosperity. He turned to God and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah that would bring perpetual salvation. They marched around the sacrifice in a sad empty ritual looking for salvation. However, the Saints of the New Testament rejoiced because the source of salvation had come.

Today those who are looking for salvation have a reason for hope. There is a reason to be of cheer because Jesus is in our midst.

Jesus came to this world so that he could save us and show us the way to abundant living.

John 3:16 reminds us that *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

Not only did Jesus come to save the lost but he also came to provide every believer with the power to live fruitful and happy lives. In John 10:10 he said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

When the new Testament saint cries out Hosanna it is not a plea for God to save us, but it is a shout of joy because he has saved us! It is not a pitiful cry from a hopeless creature looking for happiness and prosperity but the joyful exclamation of the exuberant and triumphant who have already experienced the abundant life!

Matthew 21:10 says the people began to shout Hosanna and somebody in the crowd asked: "Who is this?" that the people are shouting about.

David answered it in Psalm 24:8 *Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*

A blind man answered by proclaiming, that he is the light of the world because I was once blind, but now I see.

A lame man answered, he told me to take my bed and walk

Lazarus testified, I was dead and in the grave and he gave me a brand new life.

Hosanna! Hallelujah! Praise The Lord! The King cometh!

The Jews rejoiced when Jesus came into their city, and they shouted Hosanna!. But every saint's testimony is that "I'm so glad that one day Jesus made a triumphant entry into my life."

Since that day I have found out that there has never been:

—A battle that he could not win! *Hosanna!*

—A burden that he could not lift! *Hosanna!*

—A heartache he could not feel! *Hosanna!*

—A loneliness he could not comfort! *Hosanna!*

—A Promise he could not keep! *Hosanna!*

He died for me on Calvary! Hosanna!

Rose after three days! Hosanna!

He's alive today!

Hosanna in the highest!

No. 443-Youth

A Good Name

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 28, 1993

***SCRIPTURE**: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold." Proverbs. 22:1 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:10-11.*

Introduction

Have you ever forgotten someone's name? That's a time when personal names are reduced to "whats-his-face", and things become "thing-a-ma-gigs" and "what-cha-ma-call-its." On occasion, everyone has forgotten the name of someone or something.

There are some names we wish we could forget. They are like nightmares before us staring and glaring at us. They bring haunting memories and recall moments we would rather forget. There are other names we always want to remember because they bring to mind pleasant thoughts, inspiration and encouragement.

Consider the new teacher whose first day at school was a challenge. She did not know a single child in the class and expected to get acquainted on her first day. Then she met an incorrigible kid named Dennis. He threw spit balls and she said politely "Dennis, sit down!" He pulled a little girl's hair and she quietly but forcefully said "Dennis, please stop." Every five minutes or so her class presentation was interrupted by an ever ending chain of commands "Stop Dennis! Quit Dennis! Sit Down Dennis" finally at the end of the day her husband asked did she get to know her students she replied, "I'm sorry to say there were 30 children in my class, but I only got to know one name: "Dennis."

What do people think when they hear your name? Do they smile? do they frown? Do they laugh in ridicule? Do they stare in space with a blank expression? When people hear the name Homer Simpson, they think of a dead beat dad. Bart Simpson is a smart mouth, scheming son. When we hear the name "Urkle" we think of nerds. "Sting" means strong, "Vandross" means love and Michael Jackson means dancing machine. That's what people think about their names, but what about you?

As Christians, we strive to live before men in such a way that they will proudly

refer to us as children of the most high God. When the world sees us, hears us and deals with us, it should bear a good reflection upon our Lord. After all, we do wear his name!

Exposition

This text is one of the bits of wisdom given to King Solomon by the inspiration of God. It speaks of the importance of maintaining a good reputation, referred to as a "name." In two references to the importance of maintaining a good reputation, Solomon compares a good name to riches in this text and in *Ecclesiastes 7:1* it is compared to an expensive ointment. Riches and precious ointments were both desirable in biblical times and both were hard to come by. A family reputation on the other hand was inherited and difficult, if not impossible, to alter.

The importance of a good family name is underscored when the tough standard of the law is applied. Breaking the law of Moses was the way to get a bad name both in the eyesight of God and with the people. Breaking the law gave a family a bad reputation that, in some instances, took 200 years or more to live down. *Deuteronomy 23:2* says people who conceived children outside of marriage brought a curse or a bad name on their family. For 10 generations, roughly 200 years, the children and grandchildren of the offending couple bore the stigma of their grandparents indiscretion. *Deuteronomy 27* went further describing other ways to bring a curse or a bad name on one's family through: worshiping idols, stealing land, adultery, incest, crimes against nature with animals, and murder. These were just a few of the ways that people could bring a bad reputation on their families. Offending parties would often cause their children and grandchildren to bear the brunt of criticism, jokes and ostracism for years afterward.

In this context, Solomon found that a good name was more valuable than money because it was something that could not be bought or sold commercially. A good name is earned and is a valuable asset to pass on to succeeding generations.

Under the Mosaic law there was no way for a person to absolve himself of a bad name. It was his tag of infamy, a part of his inheritance, regardless to his own deeds, he was simply stuck with a bad name and doomed by the faults of his ancestors. However, under the new covenant, no person is held responsible for the deeds of another. Paul writing to the Romans said: "*..we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*" (Romans 14:10). He went further in verse 12 and added: "*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*" (v12). While the stigma of previous misdeeds of the family may never be forgotten in the minds of men, Christ does not consider the spiritual state of others in determining whether he will save us, neither will he consider the deeds of others in judging the extent of our reward. Under the new covenant, every person gets a chance to establish his own name and is judged accordingly.

Keeping a Good Name

Many young people are not aware of the value of a good name. Some are frustrated at the attempts of their parents and other adults to help them develop a good reputation. Despite the best efforts of parents there are some youth who have already begun to develop reputations among their peers. Some are known as cheats, thugs, thieves, gangsters, dealers, hot mama's and cool daddies. Some have already developed reputations of being unreliable, uncontrollable and even incorrigible. Unfortunately, once that reputation has been established in a peer group, it is very difficult to change.

A good name opens doors of opportunity that would be otherwise closed. Opportunities for advancement, employment and secular success avail themselves to those who have a good name. Those who follow in the path of brothers and sisters who have left a good name find doors have already been open for them, while those who must follow in the footsteps of a relative that left bad impressions have a hard time because they must expend extra efforts to prove that they are not the same as the ones who came before them.

Getting a new name

While it may be difficult to rid ourselves of bad family names among our friends and neighbors, there is a way to get a reputation change that will be recognized even in battlements of glory. There is a name which, when spoken, means forgiveness and compassion. There is a name which means understanding and salvation. That name is the name of Jesus.

The Lord can and will give you a new name. *Jacob* developed a reputation as a trickster and cheat. All who knew him whispered at the way he acquired his property and success. He even cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright. He had a bad name, but one night he wrestled with an angel of the Lord and was blessed with a name change and he became known as "Israel." Saul persecuted the church and spent a great part of his life trying to destroy Christianity, until one day he was traveling down the Damascus Road and met the Lord in a blaze of light, his past was forgiven and he was given a new name, Paul. When Jesus met Simon he was a rough cut, hot tempered, fisherman who was doomed to mediocrity, but Jesus changed his name to "Cephas" or Peter because he saw something in him that resembled the strength of a rock.

If youth of the today are trying to develop a good name, there is no better name to be called than to be called a child of God.

It's good to be identified with a strong school mascot such as a Bulldog, Wildcat, Tiger, or Lion, but its even better to be recognized in heaven as a child of the King.

Brothers and Sisters those who are in the family of God are blessed with a powerful family name, the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:12 says *"neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

The name of Jesus opens doors of opportunity. For Jesus said in *John 14:13 "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*

The name of Jesus is known around the world and even in heaven. For *Philippians 2:10-11 says: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Some call on Buddha, Krishna and Muhammad and bow down before them, but brothers and sisters, there is nothing like calling on the name of Jesus.

You may be sinking in the sea of life but when you call on Jesus you'll be able to sing *"Love lifted me, when nothing else could help, love lifted me!"*

Jesus, the King of Glory;

Jesus, the Lord mighty in battle!

Died on Calvary on rose on the third day. He established a name upon which we can call.

Call him in the morning! Call him in the midnight hour!

Call Him!

.. And tell him what you want!

No. 442-Communion

A Cup, My Cup & This Cup

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 21, 1993

SCRIPTURE: *"...This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:20*

Introduction

What has been your lot in life? A crystal stairway? A rugged road? What have you chosen to do with that God has given you? These are important questions for every person to answer. What we have been given to work with is considered a "lot" in life, or our cup. Some have cups filled with sweet nectars satisfying flavors, but all have a few bitter dregs.

The late Daisy Godwin was a saintly soul who spent her life humbly working in the service of others. She often spoke of her youth when she served as a maid in the home of her rich employers. Sister Godwin said she noticed that at each of the social gatherings of the affluent that she served coffee and tea to the guests from thin tea cups. These cups were entirely different from the cups at her home. They were white, thick and heavy. Somehow, she connected the size of the tea cups to social status. Those who drank from thin teacups appeared affluent. Those who drank from mugs were poor. Her goal in life became to work to where she was a "thin teacup" person. In her old age, she reflected on those years and her youthful quest to reach "thin teacup" status. When she died, her house was decorated with literally scores of fine porcelain teacups from around the world. She never became materially rich, but she had grown to a level of spiritual wealth that was unmeasurable. She died with very few earthly possessions except her teacup collection. She had been the recipient of a, happy and prosperous life. Her cup of blessings overflowed. Spiritually she had become a "thin teacup" person in the eyes of the Lord.

When God gives gifts and blessings the type of receptacle we have is not a consideration. A silver cup, a thick mug, porcelain china or a tin drinking cup, are all the same in his sight. It's not the kind of cup we have, but what's in the cup that counts. Whatever God has put in our cup is our lot in life. We can take what he has given us and use it or we can complain that our cup is not as pretty as those of others. What is for sure is that the premium is on the contents and not on the cup.

As Christians, we have learned to accept the mix of blessings, challenge and struggle that God has given us. Whatever challenge life has placed in the cup before us we should freely drink from it,for it is good to the last drop!

A Cup

In Psalm 75:8-9, David depicts God as holding "a cup" in his hand. The contents of God's cup are the elements that contribute to the quality of life. There is the sweet red wine, representing our joys, successes, achievements, and victories. This mixture when received results in happy days, success in business, love, and social affairs. Most of the contents of the cup in God's hand is filled with this mixture. However, the cup also contains a small portion of "dregs" which represent the discomforts of life. The dregs result in hatred, racism, murder, theft, ill feeling, war, uncertainty, distrust, and deceit.

As God pours from his cup, every person receives a large portion of the sweet opportunities for success and happiness and a small sprinkling of dregs as well. No person receives only the red wine, neither does any person receive only the dregs. Each receives a fair portion of each. David declared that the godly man is keenly aware that the successes of life always carry with them the propensity for evil.

The godly receive the blessings of life fully aware that with each blessing there is the prospect of evil if he becomes careless. With each victory, there is the fear that we may become lifted up in pride. With every success, there is the prospect that we may become conceited. As we prosper materially there is the prospect of becoming miserly, selfish and possessive. 1 Peter 5:8 warns the godly to be careful or sober in our handling of prosperity and circumstance and to be "vigilant" because " your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." In the next verse we are encouraged to resist steadfastly in faith.

The ungodly man receives certain initial blessings and opportunities from God. The difference between the ungodly and the godly is in the way they drink from the cup of life. The ungodly man makes no effort to separate the prospect of evil from each opportunity and drinks down the blessing and the dregs too. He drains the cup! The ungodly seize each blessing as an opportunity for evil, because they did not separate the dregs from the blessing.

God has a cup in his hand from which he pours out opportunities for good and tendencies toward evil. We must be careful, as we freely receive, that we do not drink the dregs as well.

My Cup

The second text verse focuses on an individual testimony as David testifies to his personal blessing received from the hand of God. He declares "thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

My cup represents the blessings that we have received from the providence of God. It is individualized and serves as a testimony to God's goodness to all who do not know him.

Has God done anything for you lately? Certainly! That's why David was so quick to respond that his cup runneth over with bountiful blessings from God.

Considering God's benevolence the song writer wrote: *"Count your blessings, name them one by one, count your many blessings see what God has done."*

Counting our blessings doesn't require a mathematics degree, it only requires us to look around and see how the Lord has taken our:

—Darkest nights and turned them into our brightest days

—Most despairing weaknesses and followed them with our most profound times of strength

—Most difficult circumstances and turned them into blessed accomplishments

—Fiery furnaces made seven times hotter by adversaries and has always been the fourth man in the fire!

—Empty cupboards and filled them with his everlasting supply

No wonder the song writer declares: "I get a blessing every day!"

My cup runs over daily as God takes the bitter and makes it sweet; the foolish and makes it wise; childish and makes it mature; and the hateful and makes it love.

We thank God for the blessings he gives us and for the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us to discern the blessings from the dregs.

I've had some good days and I've had some bad days, with many hills to climb, but like the song writer "I won't complain" because the Lord has been good to me!

This Cup

The final text verse focuses on Jesus as he speaks not of "a cup" in the hand of God, or "my cup" of blessings that over flow, but of "this cup."

In sharing the final meal with his disciples Jesus told them that he would not eat with them until the kingdom building mission is complete. He broke bread and blessed it and urged his disciples to eat bread in this way as a memorial to the sacrifice of his body. He presented them with a cup of wine and urged them to view it as a memorial of his blood which would be shed to seal the new agreement that God was making with all men of every race and nationality who believe.

"This cup" was to become the cup of salvation. It would be sweet and savory to every one who tastes of it because Christ will have drank the bitter dregs himself.

"This cup" would seal the promise of power and greater blessings made to every Christian.

"This cup" when shared in true faith by believers would make:
forgiveness possible, hope thinkable, the past bearable, the present liveable, the future faceable, heaven obtainable.

"This cup" shared by every believer washes away the sins of the world. For Galatians 4:4 declares "for in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem to redeem them that were under the law..."

"This cup" answers the song writer's question: *"What can wash away my sins?"* by answering *"Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"*

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, the burden bearer because he lifts the burdens of oppressed!

Jesus, the good shepherd, for he searches for his lost sheep

Jesus, the faith friend, for he was willing to lay down his life for a friend

Jesus, the bright and morning star, for he guides lost travelers along the way!

Jesus, the fountain of living water, for he refreshes those who are weary. No wonder the song writer declared "I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad"

Jesus who died out on Calvary and rose early Sunday morning!

Jesus, who has all power in his hands!

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 441-Inspiration

Hang Out Your Sign

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 14, 1993

SCRIPTURE: *"And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Mark 15:26; Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

Introduction

What is your witness for God? How do you let men know that you serve a risen savior whose power is evidenced in your life daily? By your words? By your deeds? How?

Just before leaving this earth Jesus commanded his disciples to be witnesses of him throughout the world. The witness Christ wanted was not a slick marketing strategy or advertising campaign, but a testimony evidenced by great works that he makes a difference in their lives.

Consider two men who set up a shop at the end of death valley. Both decided that they would meet travelers who had crossed the desert with a message of hope. The desert was hot and the journey was long. The travelers would certainly be drawn to a message of hope. The two men set up small booths at the desert's end and each put up a sign to attract hot, tired, travelers. As the day progressed one man noticed that all of the travelers were stopping at his friend's booth and not at his. They were both located at the edge of the desert and they both distributed the same materials, yet a crowd gathered at the other booth. What was the difference? He walked around and looked at the signs. His sign read "Jesus Loves You." The other sign quoted John 7:37 "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."* He gave them materials about the love of God while he gave them cool glasses of water. One talked about love, then gave cooling water. The difference between the two booths was not in the signs but in the service.

Today there are signs everywhere. Along the road, on curb sides, on houses, atop buildings and even on space ships. Each is trying to get a message across that will reach as many as possible. In secular life the public is attracted by a sign to a service being offered. That service may range from auto repair to medical treatment. Usually its the sign that attracts the public to the service. The general rule is: to attract a crowd, put up a sign.

As Christians, we know that if our intent is to witness for Christ, the emphasis

is not on the signs, but on service because the "service" is the "sign." That's why Christ says "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." The best sign of the Christian life is not what we say we are with our lips, but rather what we do with our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he tells his disciples the nature of the people of God. Included in the sermon on the mount, Jesus made two general comparisons or similitudes that describe the children of the faith. He said they should be "salt" that savors and seasons the earth (v13). Since salt both seasons and preserves foods, the people of God are expected to be a presence on earth that both gives new spiritual flavor and acts as a saving moral preservant as well. In verse 14 Jesus said believers were to be the light of the world, bringing hope and inspiration to an otherwise dark and hopeless experience. At the center of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world is Jesus' emphasis on "good works." In the community of the unsaved the acts and deeds of the saved are expected to be bring savor and light to a world that would normally go lacking otherwise.

The purpose of these good deeds is to glorify God. This theme is repeated through the New Testament. Titus 2:14 reminds us that Jesus gave himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In Titus 3:8 we are encouraged to do good works constantly *"that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."* Paul writing to the Ephesians said in Ephesians 2:10 that we reflect the workmanship of God "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Every good deed or act of benevolence we perform is like hanging out a sign that advertises the goodness of God. Our challenge is to hang out a sign with our deeds that bears witness to the goodness of the Lord.

Points of Light

George Bush, during his presidency, challenged Americans to rise and brighten the hopelessness of the national dilemma by becoming what he described as one of what he described as "a thousand points of light" helping to brighten life in the community where they live. Almost daily some citizen was noted for being a point of light. Lord Baden Powell, in forming the Boy Scouts, challenged every boy to "do a good turn daily," thus in a small way they improve the world around them.

Jesus challenges us to bring light, savor and inspiration into the world.

Hanging Out Your Sign!

What sign do you hang out for the world to see? Does it glorify God and serve as a positive example of what the love of God is all about? Some signs we displayed before we met the Lord included:

DO NOT DISTURB: It is the sign that suggests that we are unavailable to help or to serve. Too often it suggests that we are occupied with our own pursuits and get frustrated when our leisure is interrupted. In Luke 4:34 the devils that disturbed a man told Jesus to "Let us alone."

KEEP OFF PRIVATE PROPERTY: It was the sign that suggested that we considered our possessions as our own and reserved for our personal use. Our talent, time, and money were considered our private property, until we learned what 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 meant when it said "ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

When we came to know God we took down our old signs and started hanging some new ones:

GOING OUT OF BUSINESS: It is the sign that announced that we have turned from our worldly ways and have begun anew. Philippians 3:13-14 "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: It is the sign that lets the world know that we may be in the same building but things won't be the same because we are under new management. 2 Corinthians. 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

There Must Be A Sign Post

Finally brothers and sisters we are challenged to be men and women of good works spreading light and love through the quality of our works. Each good work we do helps us to hang out a sign to the world that testifies to the greatness of our God.

When you bear the burdens of the weak, you hang out your sign!

When you help the sick and afflicted, you hang out your sign!

When you help somebody as you pass along, you hang out your sign!

If we are going to hang out a sign, we must have something to hang it on. If there's going to be a sign there must be a sign post.

The sign post holds up the sign for all every one to see

We need a signpost that is strong enough to withstand the wind and rain.

We need a signpost that is lifted high enough so that it can draw all men and women

We need a signpost that is secured with a firm foundation.

Brothers and Sisters our signpost is Jesus.

He's a signpost because, not only can he withstand the wind and rain but the wind and waves obey his will!

He's a sign because he draws all men for he said *"And I if I be lifted up from the earth will I'll draw all men unto me!"*

He's a signpost because he is a sure foundation.

No wonder the song writer declared "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but holy lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!"

I talking about Jesus, the signpost, that the prodigal son saw welcoming him back home!

Jesus, the signpost, that Saul saw while riding down the Damascus road, that pointed in him a new direction

Jesus, the signpost, that the woman at the well saw and cried out come see a man!

When Jesus was born the world hung out a sign and declared there is no room!

When Jesus died on calvary they hung a sign over his head ridiculing him as the King of the Jews.

It was a sign that became a signpost!

He died and rose from the dead, but he's lifted up high for all men to see, showing them the way.

I don't know about you but I've decided that "this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!

Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine!

Let it shine!

Let it shine!

No. 440-Inspiration

Cursed Blessings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 7, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." -Malachi 2:2 " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. " Gal 3:13-14

Introduction

Have you ever wished for something, received it, and once you received it, wished you didn't have it because it caused you so much trouble? That's one of those times when what should have been a blessing turned out to be a curse. Sometimes it's a car, a house, a job, or even the companion of your dreams that causes all of the trouble.

Consider the Greek Mythological character Midas. According to the Greek Legend Midas was granted one wish from the gods in return for a favor he had performed. Midas loved gold, and although he was king of Phrygia and had plenty of gold in his treasury, wanted more gold. He used his one wish from the gods to have bestowed upon him the golden touch; the ability to make gold of everything he touched. Instantly his wish was granted. He touched the cushion on his throne and it turned to gold. He touched the draperies, and furnishings and they turned to gold. He walked through the garden which was filled with hundreds of beautiful roses and touched them all and they turned to gold. Midas was fascinated with his new blessing from the gods. That evening however, he learned that his blessing was really a curse. He ordered food to eat, but as the food touched his lips, it turned to gold. He tried to drink water, but it turned to solid gold in the golden cup in his hand. His sadness was complicated more when his daughter ran into the throne room holding a golden flower and cried "father, someone has changed all the beautiful flowers in the garden to gold. They were so full of life but now they are just cold and lifeless." She ran to her father to embrace him and the moment he touched her she turned to gold. Midas, saddened, turned to the gods and asked them to take back the blessing. As his roses began to bloom again and his daughter began to breathe he learned an important

lesson: blessings without an appreciation for the important matters of life can very well be a curse.

As Christians, we receive the blessings of God with humility and in obedience. The sacred trusts of time, talent and resources are blessings he has given us for our happiness and spiritual growth. However, should we choose to use what he has given us in a way that is inconsistent with his will, our blessings could very well be our curse. Let us resolve to give God our best and to keep him first in our lives. In this way we avoid the prospect of "cursed blessings."

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Malachi as he warns the people of Israel, including their religious leaders, to maintain their faithfulness to God. Malachi, often called a minor prophet, because he did not commit many of his prophecies to writing, constantly challenged Israel to remain holy before God. In Malachi the people are reprimanded several times for polluting their worship (1:7) replacing it with hypocritical acts of public crying and pronouncements that were not being received in heaven (2:13). They had even begun to use that which belonged to God for their own personal use and generally robbed God (3:8). The priests, in this text were verbally chastised for their tendency to support the people in their disrespect for the things of God.

The people were warned by God, through Malachi, that if they did not repent from their rebellious actions that he would curse them in a very unusual way. He would not take their blessings away from them and strip them to nothing, but he would simply curse their blessings. "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings," said God in this text.

This was a different approach than that which had been taken on other occasions. Generally, when Israel sinned he stripped them of their possessions and desolated their land. A once profitable kingdom was torn into and the people were carried into slavery. Now Israel had returned to their homeland, restored the city of Jerusalem, with its worship, ritual and law. God said, their new punishment for disobeying him would not be the loss of what they had, but what they had would lose the blessings it enjoyed from God.

So they remained in Jerusalem, the worship continued, but it turned out to be a curse. The city of Jerusalem with its high walls and material wealth became a prize for conquering nations. The Greeks came and left them with the city and their ritual, but without the freedom to govern themselves. The Romans came and dominated them. The temple stood and life appeared as usual, but they were generally unhappy with their plight. The sheer beauty of Jerusalem itself had become a curse, attracting a succession of conquering nations and second-class citizenship. Truly, what was designed to be a blessing for them had become a curse. They still had material possession of the claim, but without God's sanction upon it, they were unable to enjoy it as freely and fully as before.

How does a blessing become a curse?

A blessing is a gift from God that brings peace and joy. Sometimes blessings involve physical things, at other times they involve the aesthetic. A new car, a house, clothing, jewelry, a rewarding job, are examples of a physical blessing. A creative mind, a driving spirit, and a compassionate spirit are examples of aesthetic blessings, which are real but cannot be seen.

A Blessing is only a blessing when it brings peace and joy. When either of these elements is missing, a blessing becomes less of a blessing and more of a curse. A new house is a blessing, but stops being a blessing if struggling to pay the monthly note becomes a source of confusion and pain in the home. A good job is a blessing, but it is less of a blessing if its demands rob you of peace of mind and an enjoyable spirit. A good-looking husband or wife is a blessing, but despite how well they look, they become a daily migraine if neither ceases to bring peace and joy.

Peace and joy come from God; they are not bestowed upon us by the mere possession of things. Jesus, speaking to his disciples had them to know that peace comes from belief in him and obedience to his Lordship. In John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Paul writing to the Galatians reminds us that peace and joy are a part of the "fruit of the spirit." Galatians 5:22 says "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

A blessing becomes a curse when it is used wrongly. The people had been given financial gifts from God but they refused to obey God and while allowing them to keep their resources, he took away the peace and joy that should have come with having it.

There are no absolute blessings or curses. Whether something is a blessing or a curse depends upon God and our relationship to him. If we are experiencing prosperity at the moment, that prosperity is not an absolute, whether we get all from what we have depends upon the quality of our relationship with God. Peace and Joy flow from the throne of heaven.

God can take cursed things and make them blessings.

Just as God can curse our blessings and make them empty at the least or work against us at the most, God can also take cursed things and turn them into blessings.

Those who consider themselves dogged by misfortune because it seems to follow them every day of their lives can get that curse turned into a blessing.

Those who feel that life is going against them every day and there is no way out, can get that curse turned into a blessing.

Those who feel trampled upon by circumstance, rejected by fortune, and cast aside by fate, can get that curse turned into a blessing.

Friends, we serve a God who specializes in turning the curses of life into blessings. Jesus said, “I come that they might have life and have it more abundantly”

Jesus came to take the curse of our:

-Tragedy and turn it into triumph!

-Defeat and turn it into victory!

-Despair and turn it into hope!

-Sadness and turn it into joy!

-Failure and turn it into success!

-Weakness and turn it into strength!

A blind man, cursed with blindness from the day of his birth, found that Jesus can change the curse darkness into a marvelous light.

A lame man, who never made a step in his life, found that Jesus can take the curse of lameness, and give a crippled soul and brand new walk.

A woman standing at the well found that Jesus could take a soul lost in sin and save it and make it whole again.

Lazarus, who died and was buried in his grave found that Jesus can take the curse of death and give a brand new life.

Jesus took the curse of the cross and changed it from a symbol of defeat to a sign of eternal triumph.

That which was once a curse is now a blessing!

The cross says to the world that there is power in the name of Jesus!

No wonder the songwriter declares, “At the cross at the cross where I first saw the law and the burden of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I’m happy all the day.”

When Jesus rose on Sunday morning, the curse of death lost its sting! The curse of the grave lost its victory!

When Jesus rose from the grave the curse of weakness vanished forever; for all eternity heard him declare:

“All power is in my hands!”

“All Power”

“All power is in my hands!”

No. 439-Youth

What Is That In Thine Hand?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 28, 1993

SCRIPTURE: ***"And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod."***
Exodus 4:2

Introduction

What will it take for you to be a success in life? What will you need to claim the prize that awaits you just beyond the horizon? Many of those who have succeeded in life found that they had what they needed for many years and often didn't know it. Once they discovered that they had the key all along, the rest of their story became a historical footnote.

As we study the history of our people this month, a common thread runs among many of the heroic deeds of our ancestors: they were able to use what was available to them and shape it into the materials for success.

Booker T. Washington became nationally famous for a speech he gave in Atlanta Georgia in which he urged African-Americans not to complain but to use what was available to forge a future. Included in his speech was the memorable illustration of a ship lost at sea. Mr. Washington said a ship that became lost at sea contained many sailors that were dying of thirst. Seawater was not drinkable and they were completely exhausted. As their ship drifted upon the waters, they came upon another ship that was passing by. The thirsty dying sailors sent out a signal that said, "Water, Water, send us water!" The men on the other ship sent back the message: "Cast down your buckets where you are!" The thirsty men sent back another message "Water, water, send us water" but they received the same answer again: "Cast down your bucket where you are!" Finally, after receiving the same message several times, the thirsty men let down their buckets and pulled them up. To their astonishment, they were filled with fresh water. Their ship had drifted into fresh water and while they were dying of thirst on board, there was fresh water all around them. All they needed to do was "cast down their buckets."

As a people, our history tells us that we have drifted through the bitter and salty waters of slavery, legal proscription, segregation and racism. We have survived our three hundred year drift clinging to the hope that one day we would enjoy the fresh flowing waters of justice, freedom and opportunity. Today, a generation of youth is pleading for an opportunity to succeed, literally thirsty for a chance at success. They

are crying out "Opportunity, Opportunity, give us a chance!" The response echoes across the centuries: "Let down your buckets where you are!"

As Christians, we know that God has given each of us special gifts, talents, and personality traits that we can use, with his help, to grow in the faith. Christian youth who are looking for a bright future, should first look to God for help and then "let down your buckets where you are."

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he learns how God can take weak things and make them powerful.

When God told Moses to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage, Moses was an 80 year old, former prince of Egypt who had been a shepherd for the last 40 years. Moses, looking at his situation, thought it was impossible so he began to give reasons why he could not succeed. He offered God four major excuses: 1) He said he was not important (3:11); 2) He lacked authorization (3:13); 3) He did not have the power (4:1); 4) He was not a good speaker (4:10). These four excuses formed the basis of Moses attempt to convince himself that God had chosen the wrong person.

When Moses complained of a lack of importance and authorization, God had an answer for him. God told Moses (3:12) that He would be with him in this great undertaking. Though he may have considered himself a lowly shepherd from Midian, he would be much more when the God of the universe was by his side. Even though people might question his authority, God told Moses, to simply tell them that "I Am That I Am" (Yaweh) sent him. When Moses complained that he could not speak well, God commanded his brother Aaron to talk for him.

This text focuses on how God overcame Moses' complaint of a lack of talent, power and ability. When Moses complained he would not have the power to convince Pharaoh or the people that he was from the Lord, God answered by asking him a question, "What is that in thine hand?" What Moses carried was a simple shepherd's rod, hardly any thing that could be considered a tool for the liberation of an enslaved people. However, God told Moses to take the rod, throw it down and watch it become a snake when it is on the ground and a rod when in Moses' hand. A hand that became leprous, and water that turned to blood were other signs of how God was going to use Moses to do a great work.

God's question to Moses recognized that He knew more about Moses than Moses had recognized himself.

While Moses complained about what he did not have, God looked at what he had. Moses had 1)Forty years of training in the best schools of Egypt 2)Military experience as the conquering prince of Ethiopian conquest 3)The ability to lead men 4) A Humble spirit that caused him to move at God's command. God wanted Moses to do a great work. He did not call upon him to use anything he did not already have, but simply to use what he had at his disposal.

Young America, What is That In Thine Hand?

Today there are millions of young African-Americans who are pondering their future. Some have been challenged by their parents, teachers and admirers to tackle big dreams. However, there are still some youth who are not convinced that they can do great things because they constantly focus on what they don't have rather than what they have.

Those who feel insignificant and powerless to do great things, are in Moses' dilemma. Those who complain that no one will give them a chance, or believe in them should hear God responding to Moses: "Certainly I will be with thee.." (3:12). They should hear the voice of Christ saying, "And lo, I will be with they alway." When God is with you, you can do much more than you ever expected because he takes the simple things in life and uses them for his purpose. God often takes simple, insignificant, foolish and weak things and uses them for his purpose. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

What is that in thine hand? The world may laugh at the insignificance of what is in your hand, but consider what it can become when its used for God:

A Pencil-in the hands of men like Alex Haley became a tool for great writings which have shaken the world. It was only a pencil, but when touched by God it became the Autobiography of Malcom X and Roots. What is that in thine hand?

A Child's Poem-in the hands of Women like Maya Angelou became an outlet for intense and powerful ideas that have inspired our nation. It was only a poem but when touched by God it became "Still I Rise." And God raised a simple poem so high that should on the same platform as the President Bill Clinton to declare its "Morning" time. What is that in thine hand?

A Sense of humor-in the hands of men like Bill Cosby became a tool to teach and reach millions with a message of pride, brotherhood and accomplishment. It was just a sense of humor that seem stupid at the time but when blessed by God it became "Fat Albert and The Cosby Kids" and "The Cosby Show"

A Will To Run-in the hands of Wilma Rudolph became a quest to be a track champion despite polio, scarlet fever pneumonia and legs strapped in braces. However, her crippled legs when touched by the hand of God were healed and she rose to win three gold medals in the Rome Olympics.

What is that in thy hand? For Malcom Jamal Warner it was a television script. For Sugar Ray Leonard it was a boxing glove. For Micheal Jordan it was a basketball. For Whitney Houston it was a silky sensuous voice.

Youth of America, what is that in thy hand? God has great things in store for those who will trust him to take the little that they have and turn it into fulfilled dreams.

Touched by the Master's Hand

Finally, every child of God should remember that successful service in the kingdom of God does not depend on what you have in your hands, but whether or not your hands are in God's hand.

When your hands are in God's hands the impossible becomes possible; the improbable becomes probable and the unthinkable becomes thinkable.

When your hands are in God's hand there is no limit to what you can do and to how far you can go! "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

Consider the drunk who searched the garbage for a taste of wine and found what he believed was an old fiddle. "It's nothing but an old fiddle" he thought and tossed it aside. A second scavenger came and found the old fiddle, he tried to play it but he got was screeches and scratches and he threw it away because it had no value. A third scavenger sold the fiddle to an antique store whereupon a great violinist happened upon it. The violinist tuned its strings and gently rubbed the bow them. Out came the finest sound, much to the amazement of all. As the violinist bought the fiddle and walked out of the door, the owner remarked "it was just an old fiddle, until it was touched by the master's hand."

Brothers and sisters, it is not important what you have in your hands. However it is important that what you have has been touched by the master's hand.

It does not matter that you only have a little with which to work. It does matter that you let God work with what you have for his service.

When you've been touched by the master's hand, nothing can stand in your way! Feel free to dream the impossible dream! Fight the unbeatable foe!

I heard the song writer declare: "He touched me! He touched! And oh the joy the floods my soul. Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole!"

He touched me, and sadness turned to joy!

He touched me, and failure turned to success!

He touched me, and defeat turned into victory!

He touched me...

..and now I am no longer the same!

No. 438-Men's Day

A Good Looking Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 21, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. — 2 Samuel 14:25

Introduction

There are many women today who spend a tremendous amount of time looking for a man. What are they looking for? Depending on the person asked, what women are looking for varies. Some are looking for a man that is dependable, hard working and honest. Others are searching for a Romeo who has talent, charm and a romantic flair. Still others are looking for someone with money and can offer them a ticket to the easy life.

One common characteristic that all women seem to want in a man is one that is "good looking." At the least, they want him to have a pleasant physical appearance. Bulging muscles, a broad chest, soft clean hair, dreamy eyes, sensuous lips are physical attributes that fall on most want lists. Every woman has her own definition of a good looking man: Tall, short, stout, or slinky.

What makes a man look good? Clothes? Car? Jewelry? Hairstyle? No one can deny that a fine set of tailored or designer clothes, expensive jewelry and a sleek hair cut actually enhance a man's appearance, but they don't make him a good man, only a good looking man. A good looking man has an attractive outer appearance which may or may not be equaled by an attractive character. Some of the best looking men in history were good looking, but inside they were sinister and evil. The old saying, "never judge a book by its cover" might well apply to the search for a good man.

When God looks for a good man he doesn't judge by the appearance. In picking a king for Israel he rejected the tall good looking brothers of David and chose the younger, smaller and "ruddy" shepherd boy to be king. Why? The scripture says man judges on the outward appearance, but God judges from the heart.

So it is when God searches for a good man to stand with him, he looks at the heart.

As Christians, we should always be mindful that God is not impressed with our clothing, jewelry or ornaments. These only enhance our appearance. God evaluates us by the content of our character, which cannot be changed by what we wear. When

he looks for a good man or woman to serve in the kingdom of God, he starts by looking for a heart that "is" good rather than a face that only "looks good."

Exposition

This text focuses on Absalom, the third son of King David. It gives a striking example of a man with the beauty of presence without the added dimension of beauty of spirit.

Absalom is described in scripture as a man whose beauty had no equal in Israel. He has been described as being tall of statue, with long flowing hair which he cut only rarely. His hair was so long that when cut it weighed over three pounds. Absalom had the unique gift of personal charisma. However, his character came into focus as he reacted to the rape of his half sister by his brother Amnon. Absalom brooded with anger for nearly two years. One day, at a banquet, he rose from his seat and cut his brother's throat in full view of all the guests. He fled to Gershur in Aram for three years and then returned to Jerusalem to make up with his father only to talk against him for four years.

Finally, Absalom led a rebellion against his father in hopes of making himself king. Despite Absalom's rebellion, King David refused to lift a finger against his son, hoping that he would have a change of heart. When he heard that Absalom's forces were coming to storm Jerusalem, David even left the city rather than fight his son. Absalom and his army caught up with David in the woods of Ephraim and it became apparent that while Absalom had a beauty of presence that could attract crowds, he did not have military skills because there in the woods the generals of King David defeated his powerful army. As Absalom fled for his life, his head became entangled in the fork of a tree limb and he hung literally by his hair, dangling in the air. Alone and defenseless, the generals of King David, killed him as he dangled by his hair.

Absalom was killed by arrows of soldiers that day in the field, but he was killed by his own looks, many years earlier.

What It Takes To Look Good

Eddie Murphy in the Movie "48 Hours" played a character that was a criminal and a hustler who made it a habit to dress impeccably and to drive fancy cars. When called to task about the apparent conflict between his lifestyle and his dress, Murphy's character responded, "Yeah but I looks good!" Typically, there are many today, both men and women that are fascinated with "looking good" for their friends, regardless of whether or not it is a reflection of their true character.

Ideally, what we see on the outside should be a reflection of our character, values and status in life. Many of us work hard to acquire the symbols of success rather than success itself. Having the symbols without the substance is the tragedy of the man obsessed with "looking good." It suggests a distorted value system that puts more emphasis on the superficial than the real. Many men (and women) spend dispropor-

tionate amounts of time trying to look good rather than "be" good.

What good is it to buy a Porsche, one of the ultimate symbols of financial success, and then park it in front of a shotgun rent house every night? What good is it to wear designer clothes on top of dollar store personalities? Too many people forget that clothes, jewelry and fine cars don't make the man, they only enhance inner qualities.

Absalom had the works. Being the king's son he had money, clothes, popularity and an appearance that was unequaled in all the land. Absalom had looks but he did not have "the look." What is "the look" that measures a real man? The look that God searches for in every man is on the inside, not on the outside, because God searches the heart.

What God looks for can't be seen by the human eye, but it can be discovered given time. Consider the case of Bertha Mae who was the prettiest girl in the neighborhood who married the ugliest man in the neighborhood. All the women laughed at Bertha Mae and said she had a paper sack husband; because he was so ugly that he needed to keep a paper sack over his head. They would often shake their heads and say "what a waste." After many years one neighbor asked Bertha Mae why she married the ugliest man in the neighborhood. Bertha said "At first he turned me off. Then I learned that he was gentle. I liked that. In time I learned that he worked hard, and saved his money. I liked that. I also learned that he lived clean, was honest and faithful and that he loves me. I liked that. While I have seen some good looking men in my time, none of them looked as good on the inside as he does. "The more I got to know him, the better he looked." Bertha turned with a look of confidence in her eye and said, "I don't care what other people say; he's a good looking man!"

What It Takes To Look Good To God

Good looks without the love of God is nothing!

The best looking man is but an empty shell if the love of God is not in his heart.

Samson was a good looking man who not only had good looks, and long flowing hair, but he had rippling muscles, and a body that could not be matched anywhere in the world. Yet one morning, as he lay on Delilah's lap with his hair freshly cut, he awoke to find that he still had his looks on the outside but the power of God, which moved on the inside of him, was gone. Good looks without the Lord is nothing.

Solomon was a good looking man who found that though he had 300 wives and 700 concubines that it was all "vanity" without the Lord. He resolved that what really counts and makes one beautiful is obedience to God. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13

Men and women who want to look good to God must present themselves with a clean heart. No wonder David declares: "Create in me oh God a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

How do you tell a good looking man?

Watch his eyes. Don't look at their color or size, but watch where they look. David

declared, “I’ll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.”

Watch his lips. Not their size or shape, but what comes out of them. For Psalm 51:15 declares, “O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Watch his hands. Don’t look at their size, but watch what they do. The man who looks good to God declares, “Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, oh whether shall I go?”

Watch his feet. Don’t look at his shoe size but watch where he goes. Psalm 37:23 says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.”

Watch his knees. A man with strong knees is a praying man. He believes that when things are difficult “just a little talk with Jesus makes it right.”

Watch what he wears. Don’t consider the fine jewelry and designer clothes on his back. Don’t consider the golden cross that he wears. For it’s not the cross that he wears, but the cross that he bears that makes the man.

Jesus said any man who is willing should deny himself, pick up his cross and “follow me.”

A good looking man is a man that is willing to follow Jesus!

If we follow Jesus, he’ll lead us beyond the problems of this world into his marvelous light!

Follow Jesus! Take no chance in getting lost!

If Jesus can’t take you to the top, there’s nobody else who can!

No. 437-Black History

A Freedom That Lasts

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 14, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36

Introduction

When will we really be free? That question has been asked by oppressed people throughout the ages. African-Americans have also been asking the same question of our creator, "Lord, when will we be free?" Our heroes and champions have kept us looking to the day when we will be able to stand and universally declare that we are truly liberated with a lasting freedom.

The African-American experience is uniquely similar to that of the Old Testament Jews. Our struggle for freedom and independence, as well as our subsequent meanderings has closely paralleled that of the ancient Hebrews. What biblical history has revealed is that the Jews thought they would be free if they could escape the chains and shackles of slavery in Egypt. Real freedom for them meant to leave Egypt and to enter a new era where they would have an opportunity to enjoy the good life. Externally the oppressor was Egypt, which they saw as the cause of their bondage. In the wilderness, Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with 10 commandments that would set the tone of their morality, which would help them fight an even more powerful oppressor, the internal forces with the potential to destroy them with moral decadence. Largely, the Jews embraced the call to fight oppression externally, but often failed to acknowledge the need to defeat the enemy within. Once, in the Promised Land, they soon found themselves enslaved again, not by one oppressor but by a series of oppressors that dominated them. In Egypt, they found freedom but it was not a freedom that lasted very long.

African-Americans have a similar story. For generations our main quest was to free ourselves from external slavery. Our leaders, including Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman and others fought against a system that legalized slavery. To many of us freedom meant the ability to walk out of Egypt. Like the Jews however, we soon found that though the chains were gone, still we were constantly facing the risk of re-enslavement. On one hand, our enemies were seeking to re-enslave us by political disenfranchisement, social segregation and economic deprivation. On the other hand we, like the Jews, strayed away from the God who delivered us, and began to deteriorate internally, thus re-enslaving ourselves. On

January 1, 1863 we were freed from slavery. However, the years since have proven that it has not been a freedom that was lasting.

As Christians of African-American descent, we have come to learn that we will never truly be free until both the external and internal vestiges of slavery are abolished. To this end, we look to Jesus, the source of our faith and hope. In Jesus, there is neither physical or spiritual slavery nor the desire to enslave. In Jesus, Satan is defeated and true freedom exists. As more people turn to Jesus, the propensity for slavery is diminished and the day is quickened when all humanity will be able to sing with new meaning "Free at Last, Free At Last, thank God almighty, I'm Free At Last."

Exposition

This Text focuses on Jesus as he explains to the Jews the nature of real freedom. He explained to them that his ministry on earth sought to show them how to free themselves from their servitude to the law and its ritual. In verse 32, he noted that those who believe the truths he taught would be truly free of the influences of sin and spiritual death.

The Jews, hearing Christ speak about being truly free told him that they were descendants of Abraham and "were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" (v33). The fact that the Jews considered themselves free was a part of their problem. Even at the moment, they spoke they were a conquered people, living under Roman authority. In their history, they had been taken into bondage and slavery by the Egyptians, Philistines, Midianites, Ammonites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and the Greeks. Nationally they had a long history of periods of slavery and short periods of freedom and subsequent returns to bondage. After leaving Egypt and making a covenant with God in the wilderness, all of the times that they were re-enslaved were directly related to their return to sinful lifestyles.

In the book of Judges alone the Jews were enslaved seven different times, enjoying moments of freedom and then periods of slavery that ranged between eight years and 40 years each. Sprinkled throughout the Book of Judges is the cause of their repeated bondage: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord..." (6:1,10:6;13:1) They were free and then re-enslaved in an endless cycle that began in Egypt and continued to the moment they spoke to Christ. Yet, standing face to face with the master they lied about their present and past condition saying "we have never been in bondage to any man?"

Even though the statement they made was far from the truth, Christ ignored it and gave the definition of spiritual servitude: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."(v34). The cause of the repeated troubles of the Jews was their tendency to do "evil in the sight of the Lord." Enslavement to sin kept them individually and collectively committed to a way of life that would keep them in bondage. Jesus noted that those that believe on him would be set free from sin and would be truly free.

History of Recurring Enslavement

If the experience of the Jews of the Old Testament were types of the African-American experience, then their attitudes about freedom in the New Testament must also be typical.

We have had a history of recurring enslavement. Once freed from slavery in America, we found that we were free but yet we were still enslaved. We were re-enslaved by ignorance. Unable to read and write, without cultural graces, and vocational training, with few exceptions, we were re-enslaved. Share croppers worked for years only to find that at the end of every year, they still owed their souls to the general store. There rose from among our ranks one Booker T. Washington who challenged us to train our hands, work hard, and be honest and formed a school at Tuskegee that the African-American ex-slave might rise from his own dust and become a truly free man.

As we found ourselves rising from cotton fields and enjoying new freedoms the case of Plessy vs Fergurson in New Orleans would make new laws in America that legalized segregation when the Supreme Court in 1896 agreed that "Separate but equal" facilities was the law of the land. We were re-enslaved to a second class status that meant colored schools, colored waiting rooms, and colored facilities that were everything but equal. Some among us like Marcus Garvey, said "let's leave America" and go back to Africa to be free. Others like Daddy Grace and Father Divine and Elijah Muhammad turned to religious cults as a response. But from among the ranks of disillusioned came men of the caliber of Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Thurgood Marshall who challenged the law in 1954 and broke the legal hold of segregation on America. Once again we thought we were free at last. Some thought the 1954 decision gave us freedom but others said, we are not truly free.

Young Martin Luther King joined coalitions of African-American leaders such as A. Phillip Randolph and others to push for passage of civil rights law and a voting rights act that would give us freedom in the eyes of the law. King pushed with crusade tenacity pointing to the day when we would be free at last. In 1964-65, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were passed respectively. Yet we still were not free.

We registered to vote in large numbers and elected African-Americans to public office as mayors of big cities, judges, and thousands of local officials in our struggle to get free. We even made serious bids for the presidency, broke through barriers in corporate America, integrated formally all-white neighborhoods, corner shops and space ships.

Today, like the Jews, there is a generation that believes the struggle has ended and we are truly free. Some ignorant of the past, claim never to have been in bondage at the most and brush aside the impact of their bondage at the least. They are in a pitiful estate because they don't even know the nature of their enslavement.

We have been exposed to moments of freedom, but our history has proven that none of our experiences have given us a freedom that lasts.

Our quest is to be free at last, but first we must secure a freedom that lasts!

A Freedom that lasts

Today there is only one hope for a freedom that is truly free! That hope is in Jesus.

True freedom comes when all of mankind accepts the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

True Freedom can come only when the world turns to Jesus.

When Jesus reigns as the supreme Lord, freedom bells will ring for "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess." He will bring a freedom that lasts!

I heard Jesus declare in Luke 4:18, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.." Jesus came to bring us a freedom that lasts!

The sting of slavery may linger for a while, but the freedom found in the love of God will continue forever, because it's a freedom that lasts!

The nauseating stench of racial prejudice may pollute our times, but the sweet smell of a God who is no respecter persons will free us forever, because it's a freedom that lasts!

To secure our freedom many have given of themselves, but to secure the freedom that lasts Jesus laid down his life and picked it up again.

He died out on Calvary and rose in triumph with freedom in his hands!

Those who want to sing "Free at last" with a new meaning should get to know Jesus and get a freedom that lasts!

No. 436-Black History

Reclaiming The Missing 5th

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 7, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Luke 18:22

Introduction

Do you ever get the feeling that, as a race, something is missing in the social and moral fabric of African-America? In our homes, our community, and spiritual life, as a people, is there something missing? Is it possible that we are struggling on the social order because something is missing? Is it possible that we are struggling on the moral order because something is missing? If so, what happened? We, who formed the cradle of civilization and introduced into the world the marvels of the pyramids, science and technology; we, who once sprang forth from God fearing homes, raising high our hopes while bowing low before our Lord, are missing the crucial elements that have contributed to our past success. If we are missing something, what happened to it? We either lost those elements crucial to our survival or someone stole them from us. At any rate, we must reclaim the missing elements that help us to truly be free men and women.

Some things were taken from us. We were stripped from our motherland and brought to America as slaves. The U.S. constitution in 1787 indelibly inscribed our fate into history, stating that we were only three fifths of a man in the eyes of the law. Since that time we have spent generations trying to reclaim the missing fifths. With the passage of the 14th amendment, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the election of thousands of African-Americans to posts across the nation, it has become obvious to many that we have reclaimed one of the missing fifths, our legal status as American citizens.

While our legal status was taken from us and we have worked hard to reclaim it, there is a fifth estate, which was not been taken from us, but we have lost on our own. This fifth estate relates to our love of God and the family of man. It is the moral order. Though our rights were taken from us and we were trampled under foot, we never let go of our love of God. Though beaten and hung from trees, sprayed with water hoses and thrown in dingy jail cells we never let go of our love of God. However, in recent

times it appears that what generations of slavery and persecution could not take from us, we are losing, little by little.

As Christians, our struggle is to work to help the lost know that our salvation will come when we acknowledge and accept Jesus as our Lord and follow him from day to day. It is through Jesus and the truth of his being that we can truly expect to be free men and women.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he encounters the rich young ruler. This young man had spent the entirety of his life striving to meet the demands of the Mosaic law with its moral laws and hundreds of social, health, ethical rules as well. Jesus had raised the curiosity of many as he spoke about the kingdom of heaven and the prerequisites for life in its realm. The young ruler wanted to know what it took to measure up to the kingdom's requirements.

Jesus began with the obvious: Do you obey the law of the land? He listed five of the ten commandments as examples of the mosaic law to which he referred: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (v20).The young ruler responded that he had obeyed the law since he was a child and felt that he measured up to any standard that Christ might set. He boldly asked what more is required of him to meet the savior's requirement.

Jesus told them there was still one thing missing out of his life. To become a part of the body of Christ it would be necessary for him to humbly follow Christ in blind obedience to his word. Jesus said it bluntly, "Yet lackest thou one thing:" The ruler had every thing necessary except for one missing element. Complete and total obedience to the word of God. The test was in the command to "sell all you have and, give to the poor." We know it was a test because poverty is not a criterion for discipleship. Christ does not require us to be poor to be Christians. In fact, he wants just the opposite because he said, "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly." When Jesus said blessed are the poor in spirit, he didn't mean blessed are those who are poor in their pocketbooks. In reference to the rich he noted he would be hard for many to enter kingdom because they trust in their riches. Further emphasizing that there is no ban on possessions among Christians, Paul in 1 Tim 6:17-19 said, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

When Jesus gave the command to sell all and distribute to the poor it was a test of whether or not he would put obedience to God before anything else. Faced with a choice between following Christ and his material possessions, the ruler chose the latter and missed his chance to make heaven his home. He left Jesus with his head

down. He had all of the pieces necessary for the abundant life, except the companionship of the almighty God.

One Thing Missing

The quest of African-Americans has been to reclaim that which was taken from us through years of slavery, and segregation. Legally we have reclaimed one of the missing fifths that have stripped us of citizenship. Most of us, with a few exceptions, are doing better now than we have been in the past. Very few of us still go to the outhouse or keep slop jars by our bed side. Very few of us ride in mule drawn wagons, or swat mosquitoes with smoke from burning rags while sitting on the garrett on hot summer nights. We have achieved a level of prosperity that has become so dangerous for us that the pursuit has become the sum total of our interest.

Our zest for conspicuous consumption has too often resulted in a shift in our priorities. To get more, have more and live more comfortably, many of us have joined the ranks of millions who have put treasures of this world before our love of God. Is it possible that in our zeal to get more, that our desire for the things of God has diminished? Is it possible that we are putting more trust in our jobs, the courts, and our investments than we do in God. Is it possible that in all of our accomplishments as a people that there is still one thing missing?

We have made great strides in reclaiming our legal rights, but what about that last missing piece, our obedience and allegiance to God? Rising crime, suggests that there is an increase in persons willing to disobey God to get what they want. Murder, robbery, illegal drugs, and prostitution are growing among us at epidemic rates. Violence is increasing. Husbands are beating their wives, children are being abused, and even at school, teachers are becoming jail keepers just to have a few moments to give a few words to the wise. It is becoming painfully obvious that there is something missing.

Despite our great accomplishments as a people there is still something missing.

We have African Americans on the Supreme Court. We surround and advise the president, make decisions in corporate America, command the armies of the nation and soar into space, but there is still something missing.

We Must Trust The Lord

Three fifths of our quest has been to gain acknowledgement as human beings. One fifth of our quest has been to gain equal opportunity under the law. With four fifths in hand, however, it is extremely important that we don't neglect the last estate. We won't ever truly be free until we know and trust the Lord.

Jesus told the rich young ruler "one thing thou lackest...come and follow me."

Today, more than ever, we need to reclaim that which many of us have lost along the road to freedom and prosperity. Despite our troubles, we have always put our trust in God, we should reclaim that lost faith.

When the master's whip slashed across our backs we sang, "I will trust in the Lord until I die."

When the depression dropped the nation to its knees and the rich and powerful committed suicide, we kept on singing, "I know the Lord will make a way somehow!"

When war troubled the land and fear spread everywhere we kept singing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

If we have learned anything from our historical journey it should be that our God is able to deliver us! If we trust him, he will provide!

God will take our pain and turn it into pleasure.

God will take our doubts and turn them into assurances.

God will take our failures and turn them into successes.

God will take our sadness and turn it into joy.

No matter where our journey takes us we need to trust in the Lord. Job said, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

We made it through trouble times, when were not recognized as human beings because we trusted in the Lord.

We made in through dangerous times, when we had no rights of citizenship, because we trusted in the Lord.

If our history teaches us anything it should be that we need to keep telling the story..of how Jesus..

—The Lily of the Valley

—The Bright and morning star

—The Fairest of 10,000

...died for our sins and rose early on Sunday morning

I don't know about you, but I've decided that come what may, from day to day, I will trust in God. Wherever I may be, out on the land or on the raging sea.

Though billows roll, he keeps my soul

My heavenly father watches over me!

No. 435-Inspiration

Caught Between A Rock And A Hard Place

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 7, 1980

SCRIPTURE:"And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh." — 1 Samuel 14:4

Introduction

Have you ever had to make a decision in a tough situation? A tough decision is one made in the midst of a dilemma where you are surrounded with adversity on all sides and crucial choices must be made. Deciding what to do comes easy for some, but for others it is a difficult situation.

Consider the Farmer who hired a man to work. The man was young and strong and appeared quite able to handle any chore that he was given. First, the farmer assigned him to paint the barn, a job he thought would take about three days. To his amazement, the hired man finished the work in one day. The next day he asked his worker to cut a pile of wood and store it for use in the woodshed. It was a large pile, so he assumed that the job would take at least four days to complete. However, the worker, completed this job too in just one day. Finally, the farmer presented the worker with a pile of potatoes and told him to sort them into three stacks. In one stack he wanted those that could be used as seed potatoes and replanted in the field. The second pile should consist of those that were good enough to be sold in the market. The third stack was to consist of those that were not fit for seeds, or to be sold, but could only be fed to the hogs. The farmer figured this task should take a few hours, especially since his new worker was so quick on the job. However, at sundown the farmer returned and not a single potato had been separated. Instead of three piles, there was still only one large pile of unsorted spuds. The farmer was baffled. This was the worker who painted the barn in one day and did four days wood cutting work in one, but yet he had not sorted the potatoes by the end of the day. When he asked the worker the reason, his stumped worker responded: "I can work hard and fast and do anything that I am told. I'm sorry sir, but I can't do anything if I have to make a decision." Likewise, many people have considerable trouble making a decision.

The bible presents us with many examples of people who had to make great

decisions, some were good and some were bad ones, but yet they had to make them. Adam and Eve decided to disobey God and brought sin into the world. Jesus decided to obey God's plan of salvation and went to Calvary to bring salvation to all who would accept him.

As Christians, we are often called upon to make decisions. At times, we feel as if either choice we make will be insufficient. It's like being caught between a rock and a hard place. In such situations, we have learned that the best decisions are those we make after we let God guide us in the decision making. When caught between a rock and a hard place we have found that the best way out is to "lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jonathan, the son of King Saul, as he finds himself between a rock and a hard place trying to free Israel from its oppressors.

The new nation of Israel was constantly at risk of invasion or was the subject of invasion by outside enemies. Chief among its enemies were the Philistines. At the time of this text, the Philistines were the conquering forces in Israel. The swords and spears of the people had been taken from them. All Blacksmiths had been removed from the land to prevent them from making swords and spears to wage war against the Philistines. Very few in Israel had weapons, including the soldiers in King Saul's armies. As the Philistines pressed the people of Israel on every side, King Saul stood powerless with 600 of his weaponless soldiers. According to this text, the only person in this group that had a sword was Jonathan, the king's son.

When a Philistine scouting patrol was spotted on a mountainside, Jonathan considered their vulnerable estate and decided that even though he had only one sword that he would take on the entire garrison of Philistine soldiers. With his amour bearer at his side, he began to climb the rugged terrain to the Philistine camp. He soon found himself in a physical strait that was symbolic of his political position: either way he turned in his climb to the top there was a hard rock on both sides. It was the same dilemma he faced in reality; death at the hands of his enemies at the top, or death at the hand of his enemies at the bottom. He was between a rock and a hard place. Faced with that choice, Jonathan chose to go up. Once on the mountain top he took on the Philistines single handedly, slew 20 men himself, and sent the others running in a panic. He was in a peculiar and awkward position, but he chose to go forward in faith and God rewarded him with the victory.

Double Adversity is Hard To Handle

There are many today who are quite capable of handling adversity..as long as problems come one at time. One problem at a time, makes problem solvers out of many. However, many do not fare very well when problems come from all sides and plummet

us with a rapidity that is mind-boggling.

Double density problems are mind-boggling. The man that is working hard to deal with financial misfortune in his family has a big problem. He is trying to find a source of income to maintain his family and is trying to stay economically alive. It is extremely difficult when that problem is compounded by another major problem at the same time, such as ill health, which complicates matters even worse..

The woman that suffers sex discrimination in the work place and is persecuted outside her home has a major problem. At work, she has to fight to maintain her respect and keep the forces of institutionalized sexism from diminishing her worth as a human being. However, if at the same time that she is fighting battles outside of her family she has to come home and fight battles in her family or with her family, the situation is made even worse.

Add to situations similar to these: failure and death, and there is a mixture of situations that many people find impossible to handle. Some give up. Some take their own lives. Some drag alone in awe.

In such situations, we are undoubtedly between a rock and a hard place. What we should do when caught with double density adversity coming from every side, is follow Jonathan's example: when he couldn't go to the left or right because rocks were on every side, he chose to go up. Likewise, we should go up into the consolation of God.

Some Have Climbed Down

Even the best people on occasion were not able to make strong decisions when they were caught between rock and a hard place.

David, when caught between the possible public scorn of a king that had committed adultery and the wrath of God climbed down to murder and killed Uriah.

Peter faced with the apparent destruction of the cause of Christianity and his own possible persecution, climbed down and disowned Christ three times before the cock crowed

Aaron faced with the disappearance of Moses into the top of a mountain for 40 days and the cries of the people for a god they could see, climbed down and helped them with their ungodly acts.

There are many when caught between a rock and a hard place choose to do the wrong thing as the right choice. Instead of climbing up they climbed down.

Some have climbed up

While some falter when caught in tough situations, others have decided to climb up.

When faced with the tough decision about leading the people, Moses climbed up into the mountains to talk with God, and God spoke to him and showed him the way.

Abraham, a man of great faith, took God at his word that his family would be blessed and would multiply and went up into God's will.

Daniel refused to be intimidated by the prospect of hungry lions and went up into God's protection.

The Hebrew Boys faced with death in a fiery furnace or eternal shame before God chose to go up into God's perseverance.

These men, when caught between a rock and hard place, with no place to turn, decided it was best for them to go up to God.

When we go up to God, he will show us the way!

When we go up to God, he will take our:

—Questions and give us answers!

—Problems and give us solutions!

—Indecisiveness and give us decisions!

—Rough places and make them plain!

—Mountains and turn them into molehills

I don't know about you, but I am convinced that no matter what the problems, God has a solution!

No matter how big the battle, God has a victory!

No matter how wide the chasm, God can help us to cross it!

No matter how big the adversary, God can help us to defeat him!

We serve a God who takes hollows out valleys and levels mountains!

We serve a savior who walks on water, floats on clouds and sits on the right hand of God.

When in distress, just call him.

Remember, God is still on the throne!

No. 434-Funeral

After the Rain
The Son Will Shine

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 23, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." — Hosea 6:3 (KJV) Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.— James 5:7-8 (NIV)***

Introduction

How do you feel when the rain comes? These are the times in your life when your greatest plans are dashed, hopes are suspended and anticipation wanes. These are also times when activity is interrupted, progress ceases and life marks time and anxiously waits. What do you do when the rain comes?

Consider the townspeople of a certain village who were devastated by a lengthy thunderstorm that went on for days. After the first day the waters had risen and their crops were flooded. After the second day the river overflowed its banks and waters crept up the steps of their homes, took possession of their valuables and carried them floating atop the currents. By the third day the townspeople were in sheer panic, everything they had was gone and it seemed as though all their life work fruitless and wasted, washed away with the torrents of rain.

As the townspeople assembled atop of the one single hill that was not covered with water and saw only the rooftops of what was once a beautiful valley, the minister of the village stood holding his bible in his hand, which was the only thing he was able to salvage from the storm. The people mourned and cried out and one woman came to minister with a water drenched faced looking for a word of hope from the aging preacher, who only stood and watched the waters. "Tell us man of God, what shall we do?" The elderly man of God looked at their faces, drained of hope or faith and said, "After the rain ..the sun will shine!" And he continued to look at the waters. That day the rain ceased, the clouds dispersed and the warming waters of the sun began to shine again. As they began to clean up one of the neighbors came to minister and said, "Thanks preacher, for reminding us that despite the rain, God is still in control.

The troubles of life vary from failure and defeat to sickness and death. When they come, sometimes it is hard for us to see our way out and we wonder whether we will survive. Storms, no matter how strong only last for a little while and they too will pass.

As Christians, we pride ourselves in our faith in God. We know that into every life a little rain must fall and sad moments will dampen our day. However, those who know the Lord have one great reason for hope ..."after the rain, no matter how great or devastation is...the sun will shine!"

Exposition

These text verses focus on instances when people of God have been told to hold firm in their faith in God, despite the rains and storms of life.

Hosea was a prophet whose message was directed toward the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom. About 200 years before Hosea arrived on the scene the people had broken from the two tribes of the South and formed their own, separate nation. In their new nation, Israel underwent a dark period in its history. In was gloomy, misty and hidden from the promising sunshine of God's love and favor. Hosea came with a message to the faithful who remained among the nation of Israel that despite the rains of the spring and autumn, the sun would shine again on Israel as a nation. His coming forth is as sure as the sunrise in the morning and a new and brighter day was promised.

Similarly, James in the New Testament writes a word of encouragement to the faithful. The faithful were experiencing hard and difficult times. They were being oppressed by hard economic times, persecuted as believers and it became hard for them to see the light. James rose to remind the faithful not to lose faith in God when frustrating and difficult times come, but to be patient and faithful. Just as the farmer endures both the rains of the spring and autumn with full knowledge that the harvest will be great, every Christian is encouraged to look beyond the rains of this life to the bright promise given to us by Christ our Lord.

The promise for Old Testament believers is symbolized by God's promise to Noah after 40 days and nights of rain and flooding. God promised the world that he would never destroy it again by water and gave his rainbow as a sign of remembrance. The message of the rainbow is quite simple: "If the rain has brought you low, don't give up hope, remember the rainbow!" Even today, following every rain shower, when the sun appears, the rainbow makes its appearance as well.

Together, these old and New Testament examples show how God urged people of old and Christians today to keep the faith, despite set backs and difficulties, storms and rains. The faithful of the Old Testament were promised that they would once again see the light of God.

The faithful under the new covenant are given an even stronger reminder. That when the frustrations of this life flood our souls like great rivers of despair that we should remember that after the rain the "SON" will shine.

Rainy Seasons Expected

Today, just as in biblical times, we should expect and prepare for rainy seasons. In Palestine, there were two rainy seasons: the early rains of October and the latter rains of March. Between autumn and spring the Jews expected the rain to fall in large quantities and prepared themselves for its coming. The winter rains often brought thunder and lightning, strong winds that toppled houses and caused destruction. However, knowing how God operates they prepared themselves. Jesus told his followers to become doers of the word for by so doing they would build for themselves houses built upon strong foundations that would be able to stand when the rains came. Hosea, in this text verse, suggests that those who know the Lord know how to respond when the latter and former rains come, for they know that after the rains have passed, the sun will shine again.

Every Christian family knows and expects life's rainy seasons. Sometimes it is represented by personal struggle, economic survival and sometimes it is the presence of sickness and death that paints blue skies grey. Families that have enjoyed the sunshine of life, experienced its moments of renewal, joy and happiness, know about the goodness of God. Many of the fondest memories held are from these happy days when youth abounded and health was without measure. But just as each family has its days of sunshine; it also should expect its rainy season, a period of crises, death, and sadness.

The Christian's response to these moments when they come, reflects his or her faith that God's love for us has not been diminished by the circumstance of death. Faithful patience will prove that even though the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls and the rain pours ...after the rain, the sun will shine again.

This faith is evidenced by the Christian family's resolve to be still until the storm is passed. In the not so distant past, many families had the habit of stopping all activities when it rained. Mirrors were covered, children stopped playing and whole families sat quietly waiting for "God to finish his work." Though they sat still in the storm, each knew the sun would shine again. In the crises' of life, we should also resolve to be still and humble ourselves before God, confident that he has not abandoned us.

When the storms of life begin to rage the Christian responds "my soul is anchored in the Lord" as we trust in his word. His word reminds us that after the rain, the sun will shine again.

When the rains come, we remember Romans 8:28 that "all things work to the good for them that love God."

When the rains have fallen for a long time and we have become weak; we are strengthened when we remember that God said "my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"

When the rains come, we remember that even in death Romans 8:37 still remains true: "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

When the rains come and the storms rise, it is important for every Christian family

to have Jesus on board. When his disciples were traveling by boat, Matthew 4:37 says a storm of wind and rain broke out. Many began to panic and lose heart because of the fierceness of the storm and pounding of the rain. After awakening the savior he stood and spoke to wind and the rain saying "peace be still."

As long as Jesus is on board, we have the assurance that no matter how rough the storm, the sun will shine again!

Even death, whose sting seems eternal and the grave whose victory seems final, lose their power in face of the savior for he asks: O death, where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory?

Even in death, those who keep the faith, know that the sun will shine again!

Today the rain paints a trail of tears on our soul, but after the rain, the sun will shine!

Today the rain burdens our hearts makes our souls heavy, but after the rain, the sun will shine.

After the rain, storms will pass and crying days will end

After the rain, sadness will fade and storms will subside

After the rain, the SON will shine!

When the Son of God shines hope is renewed!

When the Son of God shines faith is revived!

When the Son of God shines Happiness is restored and joy will never end!

Storms may rise, strong winds may blow, the rains may come, but I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ because..

...After the rain, the SON will shine again!

_____

On January 13, 1993 Jerry Leola "Lola" Little went to be with God. Her sickness and home going marks a rainy season in the life of this family, but after the rain will SON will shine again!

No. 433-Black Heritage

The Black Father's Burden

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 21, 1981

SCRIPTURE:"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! 2 Sam 18:33 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Mal 1:6

Introduction

The day is coming when millions of Black children will say, "I don't have a father." Likewise, the day is also coming in which Black mothers will say, "I don't need a man." Whether we believe it or not, that day will be upon us sooner than we think.

A growing tragedy in the Black family is the lost presence of the Black father. Across America, millions of Black children are told each day "You don't have a father," "Your father is dead","Your daddy is a no count and a no good." What was once a national embarrassment is no longer a badge of shame, as families proudly own the fact that there is no father in the home. Female headed families have become an acceptable standard in our community. Equally acceptable is the idea of absentee fathers. These are the fathers who have abandoned the family physically or have remained but have not assumed their place of family leadership. Their absence has become expected at places where families usually gather: Church, school and civic activities. Too often, it's the mother who brings the children to church, attends school meetings and oversees the family's involvement in civic activities. Fathers are too often absent, or uninterested. This absence of Black fathers in the life of the family soon leads to a family that learns to operate without him. It also leads to children who develop a coping mechanism that accepts as truth that fathers are not important to the growth of the family. Mother is expected to be constant. Father is rarely depended upon because too often fathers are perceived as transient, temporary or at the least irrelevant presences in the family.

The burden of the Black father is to be the strong presence in his family that God intended him to be. Each father has the responsibility to chart a course for his family that involves his physical presence in the joys and triumphs as well as the failures and sadnesses of each family member. The absentee Black father must assume a

greater role in his family if the Black family is to survive as we know it today.

As Christians, we know God has given a divine blessing to the family. Any father, regardless of color has an awesome responsibility that cannot be shrugged off or set aside. It is a responsibility to lead, share and care for his family as Christ cares for and loves the church. That is the goal of every father, and it is also the burden each is called to bear. Praise be to God however, it is not a burden that is too heavy for us to bear because with Christ, all burdens become light!

Exposition

This text gives us the picture of David and Absalom as an example of a failing relationship. Absalom was the third son of David. He loved his son greatly but was often consumed with the affairs of state. He provided for his education training and care but was rarely present in the purest sense of the word.

Absalom was ambitious and at times hot headed. He killed his half brother Amnon to avenge the ruined honor of his sister Tamar. He was exiled for his misbehavior and he gathered all of the miscontents of the nation into a force that would fight against his father in an attempt to seize the throne. In battle however, he was killed as his hair snagged in a tree leaving him dangling at the mercy of David's soldiers that killed him.

The strained relationship between this father and son developed over years. Part is attributed to the fiery nature of Absalom himself. The other part is attributed to David's personal failure to play a leading role in the personal development of his family. While he served with honor as a king, his role as father, often left much to be desired. He was present, but uninvolved in the nurture of his children. The result, at least on one of them,
was fatal.

Black men can't afford the Luxury...

Today, more than ever, the fate of Black America will rest squarely on the shoulders of millions of Black families who, for the most part, have survived through 400 years of bondage despite the conspicuous absence of the Black man in the family unit as patriarch. The challenges that face our people, the endless succession of setbacks, heartaches, obstacles and road blocks, make the need for a strong Black family more pressing today than ever before.

No longer can the Black man enjoy the luxury of allowing the Black woman to pull the plough for his existence, but the challenge of these times dictates that the Black man must strap himself into the harness and begin to till the infertile soil of despair in the field of destiny.

This need for the Black man to come forth is the Black father's burden. It is the need for Black men to assume their place of leadership in the Black family circle. Too many like David, are present in their families but are busy with the affairs of state. Others have abandoned their families altogether. There is too much at stake for Black

men to continue the luxury of absentee fatherhood, and absentee husbandhood.

There is a pressing need for Black men of this generation to address the social ills that face our people, but too few are answering the call. Our children are failing in school, but yet our Parent Teacher Organizations, where they exist, are female dominated. Very few schools expect to see Black fathers present in parent counseling sessions and when something is needed teachers send notes home saying "tell you mother to send...." The champions of the rights of tenants,welfare recipient and senior citizens in many areas of the country. The same is true for Sickle Cell Anemia, Heart Fund, March of Dimes and other social outreach efforts. Most of them are represented by our women.

As the social ills of the day intensify, increasingly it has been the Black woman, even today that has shouldered the burden, working for change. When Black men, protective of their social position, jobs, and sacred leisurely pursuits, have failed to come forth, the Black woman has surfaced to pull his burden as family, civic and community leaders.

Undoubtedly, it is the time for the Black man to share his portion of the burden and assume his rightful role.

Fathers in the Family

While there is a pressing need for Black men to become involved in the resolution of social evils, there is also an immediate need for the increased presence of the Black man in the family unit. There are simply too many families in the Black community that are being headed by women. Instead of the number of female headed households diminishing they are gradually increasing.

Jacquelin Jackson reports in her book "Family Organization and Ideology" that in 1960 only 22 percent of the Black families were headed by women. However, by 1977 the figure had increased to 39 percent. Most of the increase of female headed households has been attributed to an increase in illegitimacies..children born to mothers, not married to their fathers.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in his famous report to Congress noted that illegitimacies among Blacks was 25.5 percent in 1965 but by 1978 the rate had increased to 53.2 percent. The national Average rate for illegitimate births is 16 out of 100 but for Blacks it has risen to 53 out of 100.

The figures are staggering but they indicate that more and more, Black Americans are beginning to adopt a new social more' that first, accepts the fact of illegitimacy, secondly the absenteeism of the father and thirdly, the denigration of the fatherly role from loving provider to that of romantic stud.

We should remember that boys who get the babies might be daddies, but it's the daddies who stay and take care of the babies that are fathers.

When the man is absent from the family he causes a peculiar set of problems. His children have only a female role to emulate which affects directly their aspirations and desires. Discipline often becomes weak as the ability of the mother to administer

needed chastisement and correction gives in to inner feelings.

The bible is very clear on the role of the man in the family. He is the undisputed head of the housyehold. Wives are urged to submit themselves to his leadership and children are urged to
obey and honor him as temporal father even as they would their heavenly father.

In Louisiana, even the law designates that the man is the head of the household. It names him as the "head and master" of the home, much to the dismay of the women's right advocates. He is
the trustee of the family's fiscal integrity and the official agent for its legal affairs.

Such responsibility is immense, it is staggering and the possibilities for failure are unfathomable.

The Father is our Guide

We only have one to look to as our guide and that is our heavenly father.

He gave us the road map and the plan.

Our father, stood with us in the wilderness of our despair and brought us through.

Our father, has seen that there is was always bread on our table and shoes on our feet.

Our father, has wiped tears from our eyes and has strengthened us in times of weakness!

Our father loves us!

He loves us so much that he " gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Our father is our guide!

Black men are challenged to love!

Black men are challenge to rise up!

..And when things get tough, we should never forget that ..

Our Father is always by our side!

No. 432-Member Improvement

Blessed Are the Pure In Heart

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 10, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Proverbs 30:12 (KJV) "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you could not feel the presence of God in your life? Has there ever been a time when something seemed to stand between you and God? Has something or someone ever clogged up the flow of power that comes to you from heaven? If so, then you know what its like not to be able to see God.

Among the many legends that surround the great artist, Leonardo da Vinci, is one that focused on his painting of the Lord's Supper. According to the legend, da Vinci painted the picture quite freely and easily. On occasion however, his attitudes interrupted his work. Angry with an associate, he tried to punish him by giving the image of Judas his associate's face. Each time he tried it, it would not work, the flow of inspiration that drove his great talent stopped. When he repented, the flow began again. Just before he began to paint the face of Christ, some boys came into his studio to admire his works. One of the boys knocked over a stack of canvases. The artist was upset and angry. He threw his brush and some harsh words at the little boy who ran out of the studio crying. Returning to his painting the artist tried to resume his work. He tried to paint the face of Jesus, but he could not do it. The image that he saw so clearly in his mind was fuzzy and blurred. Instantly he knew what was wrong. He put down his brush and walked the streets until he found the little boy. He told the boy "I was wrong for treating you that way, please forgive me even as Christ forgives. I have done something worse than you. You knocked over the canvass in my studio, but when I became angry I cut off the flow of God into my life. Now I cannot see his face." He brought the boy back to his studio where they talked and he showed him many of his works. Later that day he took his brush in hand and the face of Jesus came naturally from his brush. His anger had stopped him from seeing Jesus.

Zacchaeus climbed in a tree where he could see Christ passing by. Isaiah declared that "in the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." The crowd blocked Zacchaeus' way. The fear, threat and magnitude of the power of Uzziah stopped Isaiah from seeing

the Lord. Sometimes even less stops us from "seeing God."

As Christians, we know that we can feel the presence of God only if we have a pure heart and a clear conscience. Our desire is to live before him in a way that always makes it possible for us to see him in our work, in our worship and in our daily living. Let us strive therefore to keep a clean heart because the "pure in heart shall see God."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he begins his great "Sermon On the Mount." In it he lays out the basis for the kingdom of God and tells the nature and character of those who desire to be citizens in the new heavenly order. The Old Testament ends with a curse, but Christ begins his New Testament ministry with blessings that are to be shared with every person who is willing to walk in the way of holiness and humility.

The eight blessed or "happy" states that Christ lists in Matthew 5 are directly opposite to the common opinion of the world. The general opinion of the world is: "Blessed are the proud for they shall never go crawling before their enemies; Blessed are they who never show emotion for they shall be called pillars of strength; Blessed are the strong for they shall never be called weak; Blessed are they who hunger for victory at any price for they shall go down in history; Blessed are the hard hearted for they shall obtain much; Blessed are the hypocritical for they shall deceive the masses; Blessed are those who trouble the waters for they shall be known as revolutionaries; Blessed are those who persecute their enemies and say all manner of bad about them for they will eliminate their competition." When Christ gave his version of the Christian's character and attitude in these situations, it was just the opposite of what the world commonly expected. Generally, the world believed that happiness meant riches, honor and many days of easy living. Christ gave a different formula that caught many of them off guard.

Christ promoted the idea of humility, or being poor in spirit and meek; compassion, or being merciful and peacemakers. He promoted a lifestyle that was completely opposite of that promoted by the high and wise of his time, and even today.

Among the ideas that Christ preached was the truth that "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see, God." In this truth, Christ promises a present and future blessing to all who will follow his teaching. Those who are pure in heart will be happy in this life and they will be able to enjoy fellowship with God in the kingdom of heaven." Things which are pure are unmixed. In stating that the pure in heart shall see God, Jesus forged an unbreakable relationship between holiness and happiness, purity of lifestyle and the blessedness of living in the presence of God.

If we want to see God and feel his presence in our daily living and in the life to come, we must approach life with pure motives, and honest intentions.

Give Up-

Today there are millions of people who cannot see the beauty of God because

something is in the way. They have a faith in God but it is not a pure faith. They have a religious life, but it is not a pure religious life. At best, they are a mixture of mostly good and a little bad, or vice versa.

We will be able to see and feel the presence and influence of God in our lives when we approach him with a pure heart. A thing is pure when it contains only its constituent elements in the right proportion. Water is pure only when there are no other chemicals present and when its elements: hydrogen and Oxygen are present in the right proportions. Even though it may have no other contaminants present, water is not water if it does not have two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, it is something else! Approaching God with a pure heart means to be free from the contaminating influences of the world and also to keep those elements of faith and service that make us pure in the right proportions.

To become pure in heart, we must be willing to give up anything that is hindering us from pursuing the faith wholly. Giving up a hindrance is a personal experience that humbles us before God. That which we need to give up may not always be something evil, but it may be a hindrance toward your faith building experience. Gold is considered pure when all other elements are removed by fire. A diamond is considered pure when there is nothing in it that hinders the reflection of light. We can be considered pure when there is nothing in us that hinders God from using us for the advancement of his kingdom.

Some people seem to be happier in the Christian life than others. They seem to get more out of the worship service, the sermon and even the devotion than others. If that is so, it may be that they have removed the hindrances that have kept them from praying, studying their bibles and serving God actively. Now they are able to see and feel his presence better than before. Their hindrances may include business, profession, education, romance, politics, leisure or a number of other innocent but cumbersome undertakings. Hindrances have a way reducing our service to God to a blur. We are not able to see him clearly. To see him clearly we will need to give up our hindrances.

Take Up

It is difficult to give up something, unless there is something greater in sight! That's where many people find the Christian life difficult. They see the "give up" but they don't see the "take up" of our faith. To maintain a holy relationship with God, that is two parts faith and one part service and free of contaminating influences, we must take up a Godly cause. To be faithful and unworldly is one part of our role but service is the other. James reminds us that "faith without works is dead." We must take up a Godly cause with the intent of making a difference in the name of our Lord. The types of causes may involve the homeless, feeding the hungry, teaching children, aiding the sick, fighting injustice and a plethora of other ills. Once we have plunged into a godly work we easily give up time, money and talent to it, without even thinking about it.

Martin Luther King, reflecting on his life's work that was plunged into the pursuit of freedom and justice, said, "If a man has not found something he is willing to die for, he is not fit to live." To be holy requires us to give up something, but being pure in heart also requires us to take up something.

Robert Schuller in his book the "Be Happy Attitudes" put it this way, "You can live without something, if you have someone to live for."

Brothers and Sisters, I suggest to you that we have someone to live for.

He is the one who lit the fire of the sun; and put the glow in the moon.

He is the one who:

—Puts the twinkle in the stars and put clothes on the lilies of the field

—Knows everything about everything!

—Taught the birds how to sing, and paints the grasses of the field with the morning dew!

—Can shut the mouths of hungry lions, unlock prison doors and tear down the mighty walls of fortified cities!

—Can take the heat from fire, walk on water, and cause the dead to live again!

—Who can lift your burden, no matter how heavy they may be!

—Who can build your confidence, no matter how shaky it may seem now!

We have someone to live for and He is Jesus!

Jesus said blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. I want to see:

Jesus, the mediator between God and man!

Jesus, whose blood is sufficient to redeem us!

Jesus, whose power is sufficient to keep us!

Jesus, whose touch is sufficient to heal us!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose on Sunday morning!

Jesus is someone to live for!

I don't know about you, but I want to see him, see him face to face. Tell him all about my troubles trying to run this race!

No. 431-Funeral

It's Morning Time!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 5, 1993

SCRIPTURE: For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Psalm 30:5 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. Mark 16:2

Introduction

Have you ever been offended when someone failed to greet you in the morning? Among the remnants of Southern tradition is the custom of saying "good morning" to those we meet at the beginning of the day. It's just considered the neighborly thing to do. Many people are offended if they are not greeted with a hardy "good morning" from those they meet, so "good morning" is an expected greeting in many quarters. A hardy "good morning" can also set the tone for the day, indicating the nature of our mood.

In some places, saying "good morning" can make you feel silly. Consider the country boy that was visiting in the city. He noticed that everywhere he went people looked at him strangely. In every shop, in the buildings, on the elevator or in crowds the city people kept staring at him. He thought his dress might be a tell tale sign that he was not a city boy. He checked himself in a mirror and his dress was similar to countless others that passed. He checked other particulars and couldn't find anything different. Finally, after getting hundreds of strange stairs, he stopped the man he had been walking with and asked, why so many people looked at him so strangely. "Why am I standing out?" He asked. His associate answered: "When you got in the cab you said 'good morning' to a driver you didn't know. As you walked along the streets you said 'good morning' to everyone you met even though you didn't know them. In the elevator, on the halls and all along the way you greeted everyone you saw by saying 'good morning.' This is the city. Nobody speaks to anyone unless they know them, saying good morning identifies you as country boy and you stick out like a sore thumb." The country boy told his friend he didn't really know there was something wrong with saying "good morning" so immediate he stopped saying 'good morning' to each person he met; he started saying "Have a nice day" instead.

Good morning means the night is past. Good morning means a new day has begun that we have never experienced before and we enter it in gladness. As Christians, we

travel the dark paths of this world feeling our way, one step at a time. We look forward to the morning, for the night will be gone and we will share the glory of it all together. It may be out of place in some circles but those who are bursting with joy find nothing wrong with saying "good morning." After all, Saints have to keep in practice, because where we are going it will always be "howdy" and never "goodbye."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he gives a variety of reasons why he should give praise to the Lord regardless of our circumstance. He reflected on the various stages of his life to show that regardless of our condition there is a reason to praise the Lord. Each of the reasons that he offered were personal and were an indication of the attitude of worship that permeated David's life.

In Psalms 30:1 he noted that God should be praised because when he was down God lifted him up. During the course of his life that was certainly a reality for he was hunted as a vagabond and treated as a common criminal yet he was lifted up to become king. The fact that God lifted him is a reason for praise of his name, David said.

Moreover, in verse 2 David noted that God had been a healing and consoling presence in his life, which was a reason to praise him. When he was dispirited and had given up hope for surviving the tricks and plots of his enemies, meditations on God encouraged him. When he was physically wounded, God healed him and put him on his feet again.

In verse three David remembers the times in his life when he was standing at the brink of death because of the adversities that he faced, but yet God helped him to triumph. When faced with bears and lions he overcame. When faced with Goliath the giant, he overcame. When faced with enemies in battle, he overcame. The Lord helped him survive. This too is a reason for praise, he concluded.

What should a child of God do when enduring a hardship, trouble of heavy burden? David concluded in verse four that we should "sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." The reason David suggests that we should continue to praise God even in the middle of our sadness is that such difficult days last but a moment, like a watch in the night. The joys that come with his favor last for a lifetime.

Therefore David concluded by noting that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

The image of the morning is one that depicts freshness, life, renewal and a new start. It suggests a period of prosperity, health, and happiness. The coming of Jesus is represented in the Old Testament as a "morning without clouds." The glory and hope of the resurrected Lord is best witnessed when Christ himself is characterized as the "Bright and Morning Star." The morning is a time worth waiting for because whatever ill suffered in the night will be forgotten in the brilliance of the morning light.

The night he pictures is a picture of trouble, frustration, pain and death, but in the morning it will all end.

Three Cycles of Christian Life

The Christian life has three cycles, that encompass the entire framework of the Christian experience.

MORNING: The morning of our life represents our youth when our strength is at its greatest level and thoughts are virtual incubators of wisdom and idealism. In the morning we see endless possibilities and experience great triumphs. David conquered Goliath in the morning of his life. Solomon built the grand temple and displayed his greatest wisdom in the morning of his life. Hosea shined in the morning and Joshua led hundreds of thousands in the morning of his life.

No matter who we are, we soon find out that morning doesn't last. After the morning of life, there will be an evening.

EVENING. In the evening of life we are strong, but not as strong as we once were. Reflection becomes one of our greatest assets as actions diminish. Sometimes the evening even represents a decline in health and mobility. It was in the evening of life that David told his son, "I go the way of the earth" but "be strong and show thyself a man." It was in the evening of life that Paul said, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.."

This life encompasses just a morning and an evening and it is completed. However, the Christian has another dimension of life, he enjoys the prospects of one more morning! It will be a morning that will never end. It will be a morning that will never see a sunset or see its brilliance diminished.

MORNING AGAIN: What will this new morning be like? The women found the answer to this question when they went to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection. The scripture says they went "early in the morning" and 1) Found that the grave was empty. In the evening a body was laid in the grave, but in the morning that body had risen to a new life. Jesus promised every believer that thou death would overtake this body, they would enjoy eternal life with him. In the morning, when he comes back, there will be millions of empty graves because the Saints will be risen to new life. 2)The women were excited and filled with joy. The women saw an angel of the Lord that told them to fear not and this presence excited them. They ran to tell others of the great news that Jesus had risen. We don't know all the details about what the morning of the Christian life will consist of, but we do know that there will be some empty graves and happy souls, in the morning.

In the Morning

When there has been a long hard night, nothing is more welcomed than the morning!

When we have endured sickness, discomfort, pain, that's a night time experience. Sometimes we even find ourselves checking our clocks in the middle of such nights to see how much time is left before morning. When darkness and clouds cover the

sky we look for the morning star and we can see it shining through we know everything is going to be alright.

In the morning there will be:

—Blessing for my burden; Deliverance from my failures

—Strength for my weakness; a Home for my wandering soul

In the morning, crying days will be over!

In the morning, My mountains shall be made low!

In the morning, my valleys shall be exalted!

In the morning, the crooked places shall be made straight!

In the morning, the rough places shall be made plain!

In the morning, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

No wonder the song writer declared: One glad morning when the this life is over, I'll fly away!

One of these mornings we'll hear the Lord say, "Servant have you been through the night!

You have you given me your best in on the battlefield of life!

I have seen your tears, I have watched your earthly climb, come on up its morning time!

No more heartaches and pain ...it's morning time!

No more troubles and sorrows...it's morning time!

No more shedding of briny tears..it's morning time!

Joy will never end, its morning!

Come on up servant, its morning time!

———————

On December 29, 1992, Leonard Polk stepped out of the night to await a new and glorious day where every Saint shall find, "joy in the morning"

No. 430- New Year

Stand By Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 3, 1993

SCRIPTURE *"..thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." Psalm 27:9*

Introduction

What will you need in the New Year to have peace and happiness? More money? A bigger house? A better job? Many have already made resolu tions to make changes in their lifestyles that will position them for greater success.

Consider the three homeless men who sat on the park bench musing about their lives. The first, who had been homeless for many years, said "If only I could get me a good cardboard box this year, I'd be happy just to have a roof over my head." The second agreed that having a cardboard box would be a luxury, but he added that he would also like to have a nice fire to warm him every day. They both agreed that such things would make the new year much more prosperous for them. The third man, just like the others had neither a place to stay or warm fire but he told his friends all he wanted was a church bench to sit on. Puzzled his friends asked him why. He told the men "at one time I was close to God but I left him, chasing my own rainbows. Since that time I've had my ups and downs. I've slept in the rain and have come through the cold of winter. I have survived hunger and the threat of death. As we were talking about what we need, I considered that if the Lord has kept me through the cold and rain and I haven't even tried to give him anything back, I could have been much more if I'd been a little closer to him. If I get close to him I won't need a cardboard box because he'll be my shelter in a time of storm. I won't need to pray for a warm fire because he'll be like a fire shut in my bones. I don't want a cardboard box because I can find one anywhere. I don't want a fire that goes out with the first rain. I am saying a church bench to sit but what I really want is to get closer to God and praise his name. He's helped me before I know he can do it again."

Among the resolutions that millions make at the beginning of a new year, most involve temporal things such as "cardboard boxes and warm fires." Few actually resolve to give themselves over to God and let him have his way. We should meet the new year with one resolve: that whatever it brings we will stay close to God. He has helped us in times past, and he can and will see us through this year as well.

As Christians, let us renew our commitment to give God our best. When we give him our best, he'll take care of the rest. Even in a new year we have never seen before, his promise still remains true. He promised never to leave us, never to leave us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on the expressions of confidence in God that were verbalized by David. David's life is a type of the Christian experience. As a youth he grew up in the fear of the Lord. He sung his praises in the fields as a shepherd boy, keeping his father's flocks. He was confident that with God as his guide that the most ferocious of adversaries could not defeat him as he stood to protect his father's flock

This 27th Psalm of David is an expression of his confidence that as long as God remained by his side that no danger, whether seen or unseen, nothing would destroy him. He felt confident that whatever problem would arise God would empower him to overcome it and he would arise victorious. He began this series of confident expressions by noting that "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (v1). David did not expect to be shielded from trouble, but rather he expected God to deliver him out of trouble. He wrote in verse 5 "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his Tabernacle shall he hide me..." In verse 9 he looked back over the years and remembered that God had helped him so many times. The lions and bears that attacked his father's sheep were just types of the big enemies he would face as he assumed the leadership of God's people as their king. God helped him then, he would be successful in this new endeavor as well, as long as God stayed by his side. David said "thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." His confidence is expressed even further as he pointed out that he expected God's support even when his parents couldn't come through for him.

David's conclusion as he faced the new challenges of his life was to face the unknown with courage and confidence. He said he would "wait on the Lord" (v14) because God would strengthen his heart and empower him to triumph over any adversity that might come his way.

Expect A Little Trouble

As we enter a new year we should carry the three attitudes of David, expressed in this psalm, with us. The first of these three attitudes is that we should "expect a little trouble" but we should also expect to be delivered out of trouble.

We don't know what the new year will bring, but experience has shown that no year comes without bringing with it a portion of trouble, adversity and difficulty. We should not be so naive that we believe we will be shielded from any trouble. Even some of God's best people were surrounded by trouble. Job suffered health problems, financial difficulty and death in his family. David fell into temptation. The three Hebrew Boys were thrown into the fiery furnace. The prophet Elijah experienced a

lapse of faith. Peter was jailed and Paul was persecuted. Even Jesus was surrounded by trouble unto his last day.

God will deliver us out of trouble. Job was delivered out of trouble and was happier than he had ever been. Elijah was fed by raven and called out of the wilderness. The Hebrew Boys were delivered out of the fiery furnace, Peter was released from jail and Jesus rebuked every single attempt of Satan to spoil his mission.

We don't know what the future holds, but we do have one assurance that if we let Jesus lead us we will make it through. The songwriter said, "I do not know how long twill be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me. I will get home, someday."

Remember What God Has Done

The second attitude of David we should take into any new and untried situation is our memory of God's help in times past. David said "thou hast been my help." As we face the uncertainty of a new year we should remember the lions, bears and giants that God has helped us overcome in the past, knowing that he can help us do the same this year.

Over the years we have seen sickness, but God brought us through. We have experienced family problems that have troubled
us in the night, but God brought us through. We have suffered the pain of death, but yet we have survived. Some of us failed in certain efforts but like a ball thrown down hard, we have bounced up even higher. Our past experience with God has shown that when we needed him, he has been there for us. He didn't stop the lion from attacking David, but when it did, David got a few scratches and won. Good memories help us to count our blessings and build our faith for the unknown. Maybe that's why the song writer said, *"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed. When you are discouraged thinking all is lost. Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings and see what God has done."*

Go Forward With Courage

Finally David expressed an attitude of Confident Courage. He asked God to stand by him and not forsake him and concluded in
verse 14 that we should take courage for as long as God is by our side, he will strengthen our heart.

Moses found himself faced with the Red Sea, but found that sea waters can roll back and make a dry path, when God is stands by
your side.

Joshua found himself faced with the high walls of Jericho, but found out that even high and well fortified walls can tumble down
when God stands by your side.

A widow woman whose barrel of food had run low found that, there is always

bread from heaven when God stands by your side.

Hezekiah received his death notice and all the family was called in, but he found out that even death has no power, when God stands by your side.

When the Lord is with you, it won't matter how rocky the road or how high the mountain. When the Lord is with you there is:

—**Peace** in the midst of your Problems

—**Calm** in the midst of your crises

—**Gladness** in the midst of your sorrows

—**Assurance** in the midst of affliction

I don't know about you but I have decided that I need the Lord to stand by me. If the Lord stands by me, he'll give me a:

—**Light** to shine in my darkness

—**Straight path** to walk, when I can't find my way

—**Lift up** when I've fallen down

—**Strong hand** to hold, when I'm feeling weak

No wonder the old warriors sing *"Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race, I can't run this race alone!"*

As the new year begins, we should make ourselves a commitment to stay with the Lord.

Jesus, is a way maker, bride builder and problem solver

Jesus, who died and rose from the grave will stand by your side if you'll just call him!

When the storms of life are raging, stand by me!

When the world is tossing me, like a ship out on the sea, thou who rulest wind and water...

Stand by me!

No. 429-Christmas (After)

Returning Gifts

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 27, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)full of grace and truth. John 1:14; "He came to his own and his own received him not." John 1:11***

Introduction

Have you ever received a gift you did not like? On occasion, everyone receives a gift from a well-meaning friend that simply does not suit his or her fancy. They were glad to know they received a gift but they just did not like it for one reason or the other. As the Christmas season ends the lines in stores and shops will be filled with customers returning gifts.

Why do we return gifts? Sometimes it's because the gift is the wrong size. Many receive pants that are to narrow in the waist, dresses that are two sizes too small and shoes that fit too tight. Sometimes gifts are returned because we don't like the way they look, or the way they make us look. We want to look thin and the new dress makes us look larger. We want to be in style and the clothing we received only makes us look ordinary. Still others return gifts because they already have one of the same kind and have no need for another. There are still others who return gifts to get a cash refund. They valued the gift only for what they could get out of it. No sooner than they received it, they were in line the next day trying to redeem it for cash. There are many reasons gifts are returned, all of which are logical and understandable.

God gave the world the gift of his son, but unfortunately, there are many who return the gift as soon as it is offered. Why? Some say they don't like the way salvation makes them look to their friends, you know, it makes them look "holy." Others say Christianity has too tight a fit and it cramps their lifestyle. They feel there are too many places to go and things to do and they need room to explore rather than binding spiritual relationships. Some use their gift for what they can get for it: social promotion, business contacts, so they cash in on being members of the right church to get the most for their religious commitment. Still others return the Lord Jesus because they already have a Lord and have no need for another.

As the Christmas season ends and a new year dawns, Christians should remain committed to keeping the gift of Jesus as a real and valued presence in our lives. God

gave us the most valuable gift of all, his son, that we might have a chance to know him and be saved. He was the greatest gift of all, let's keep him in our hearts, all through the coming year!

Exposition

This text considers John's account of the incarnation of Christ and the response of the people to his birth and life.

John's account differs from those of the other Gospel writers. Matthew focused heavily on the genealogy of Joseph. Luke detailed many of the events surrounding the birth of Christ. Mark skipped the first three decades of Christ's life and began his account with John the Baptist in the wilderness. John started at the beginning, with the WORD and details how the WORD took on the form of man and became flesh when Christ was born of Mary.

Jesus came as a light from heaven to show men the way to salvation. Verse 5 characterizes him as a light that shines in the darkness but the "darkness comprehended it not." He came as a gift from God to an undeserving world, given by God out of love. This love is spelled out by John in 3:16 when he declared, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

He was not wrapped in special paper, but swaddling clothes. He was not an object to be admired but a person to love and be loved. He was, by any definition, a gift to man. He was the embodiment of man's hope to reconcile himself with God and live with him forever. The law, which could not be kept perfectly, only brought the prospect of death. However, Christ brought man the hope of renewed life. This is what prompted Paul to write to the Romans in 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus." He was a gift because he was being offered freely out of love. There were no strings attached. He only wanted the people to accept him as their Lord and Savior.

Jesus was the perfect gift, given by God. Despite his perfection, the people rejected him as expected. Hundreds of years before he came, Isaiah painted the picture of the coming world rejection when he said: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." — Isaiah 53:3. David pictured him as "The stone which the builders refused" in Psalm 118:22. Even in his own home town the people would not accept him. Matthew 13:58 concludes with these words "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

At his birth in Bethlehem the people admired him. However, just eight days after he was born the people started trying to re-wrap and him and send him back to God. His family had to flee to Egypt to hide. His hometown shunned him. Some of his brothers and sisters doubted him. The leaders planned to kill him and one of his disciples deserted him, another betrayed and those who he came to save shouted "Crucify Him!"

He was a gift from God but he found many people more than willing to exchange him for something else. The more they heard the more they concluded that his was a gift that should be returned.

The Gift Returned

Jesus comes to us as a gift from God containing four special presents from the father, all wrapped in one package, and offered to each of us out of love:

MIRROR: The first of the gifts that Christ gives is a new look. Our old look was worldly and it appealed to the base instincts that the world recognizes. While this mirror shows us the same physical features we had before we accepted the gift of God, it reflects a part of us that has changed for the better. One of the great gifts that God gives us is a change in character and spirit, which affects the way we appear to others. Galatians 5:22-23 puts it this way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." With these new qualities, God gives us the gift of a new look. This new look is guaranteed by 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

GLASSES: The second element that the gift of Christ gives is sharper vision. In the world, our eyes were open but we could not see. We saw but we could not understand what we saw. We were often confused and frustrated. This is what Isaiah 42:20 describes as "Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not." Later Isaiah explains that Satan shuts the eyes of those who follow him. Isaiah 44:18 puts it this way: "They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand." Jesus, referring to Isaiah's conclusions, said in Matthew 13:13-16 that closed eyes and ears keep people from knowing the real truth. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." he added (Matthew 13:16)

LIGHT: A third element that the gift of Christ includes is light. We didn't really know how to live because we were in the dark. We couldn't have a good time without a drink and couldn't be happy unless we were in a smoke filled night club-in the dark. We were in the dark about the real meaning of life. When we accept the gift of God which is Jesus,he lights up our lives and shows us how to really live. Then he reminds us in Matthew 5:16 to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

CROSS: The last element of the gift of God is what really makes the difference. He gives us the gift of salvation, through his blood that was shed on Calvary. It is the gift of eternal life that can only be received by trusting and believing in his word. The cross is a symbol of his great sacrifice for us, and he calls upon all of those who will accept his gift to bear the cross with pride. Matthew 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,

and follow me."

Many Have Returned The Gift

There are many today who have returned God's gift. They were not ready to accept him and each time he has offered it they have refused.

Nicodemus came by night and asked how a man could be born again. He secretly believed but publicly returned the gift.

A rich young ruler came to Christ one day and learned that he had many of the qualities needed to equipt him for the kingdom of heaven. But when he heard Jesus say "one thing thou lackest...sell all you have, take up thy cross and follow me." He returned the gift unopened.

The gift of God is available to men today. It is free to all that will accept him

Jesus came as the gift of God to a dying world. He came, saying to the:

—CORRUPT, if you accept my gift, I'll make you pure.

—FOOLISH, if you accept my gift, I'll make you wise.

—WEAK, if you accept my gift, I'll make you strong.

—TEMPTED, if you accept my gift, I'll help you overcome.

—LOST, if you accept my gift, I'll help you find your way.

—SINNER, if you accept my gift, I'll save your soul!

Jesus met a woman at the well and told her that the gift of God stood in front of her. He offered her living water that she would never thirst again.

She didn't talk about giving it back!

She didn't talk about what it would cost!

She rain through the city shouting, "Look what I got, Come see a man!"

Come see a man, who died out on Calvary!

Come see a man, who rose on Sunday Morning!

Come see a man who saved my soul!

No. 428-Christmas

In The Still Of The Night

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 20, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." — Exodus 12:42 "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." — Luke 2:8,10,11***

Introduction

How do you tell the night from the day? Some probably answer by saying, the night is distinguished by darkness and the day by the presence of light. Whenever it is dark, except for an eclipse, it is night and when it is light it is day. Right? That answer is only partially true.

People who live in the Northern areas of the world, such as Iceland, Alaska and the Arctic Circle know that night does not always mean darkness. These areas undergo what is known as "white nights." Between March 21 and September 22nd every year people who live in these areas never see any darkness. It is always light for exactly six months, even at night. Then starting on September 23rd just the opposite happens, darkness begins, 24 hours a day. Even at high noon it is pitch Black outside. For the Alaskans, Eskimos and others who live in this region, darkness and light are not the same as "day" and "night."

Whether things are light or dark depends on how close the area is to the sun. If it is close to the sun it is always light, even at midnight. If it is away from the sun, it is always dark, even at high noon. Whether it is day or night is insignificant in Alaska. What is more important is whether the region is close to the sun, because that will determine light or dark.

Today there are many people who have "white nights." In the midst of the day they are in darkness, because they are so far away from the source of light. In spiritual terms that source is the SON not the SUN. Those who find themselves in this predicament are the worst of sorts. In the middle of the day they are in the dark.

As Christians, we too share a part of the "white nights" syndrome, but our situation is just the opposite. Even when in the midst of the night we have learned that if we stay close to the SON and it will never get dark.

Jesus was born into a world that suffered from day-time darkness. He came with a message that if we would draw close to the SON and his message of peace and salvation, that even in the still of the night, he would be the light of the world.

Exposition

These texts focus on Israel at two episodes in its long and colorful history. In each instance the nation is waiting patiently but eaglerly to step out of a long dark period into a new and glorious era.

Israel had been in bondage in Egypt for about 400 years. It suffered humiliation, physical enslavement and rejection at the hands of the Egyptians. Its national morale had been low, but on this night it was high. God sent a great leader to the people in the person of Moses. Moses challenged Pharaoh nine times to let the people go but Pharaoh would not listen. As a result God prepared to send his 10th and final plague on Egypt. Expecting to see an end to their 400-year span of spiritual darkness, Israel was packed and ready to go forth.

As Moses commanded, they killed a lamb and took its blood and spread it over the door posts of their doorways. When the death Angel of God came through the city, those who gathered beneath the sign of the blood would be saved. Those who were not under the blood would die. As the screams of death went out all over Egypt, the Israelites stood firm bursting with hope that soon they would be leaving. God told Moses that this night, a night when Israel stood still in silence and watched the salvation of the Lord, should be remembered for all times. Accordingly, a feast was inaugurated to remember the day. It was called the feast of the Passover. It marked that special night when God passed them over and gave them a new life.

The New Testament passage finds Israel about fourteen hundred years later. The nation had been freed from slavery in Egypt, returned home built a mighty nation under David and Solomon only to see it fall as the great armies of Assyria and Babylon rolled over them. They were the vassals of a steady stream of conquering nations including Persia, Greece and the Romans. As the New Testament opens Israel had run the complete circle of being free, great, defeated and now they were subjugated again. It was another dark period in their history. But even in the darkness, Israel retained hope because they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, as promised in the scriptures.

In the still of this long, dark era, Israel still had hope! No matter how dark it appeared for them, their hope rested in God that he would send them a savior. When the shepherds heard the announcement from the angels their joy echoed in the silence and quite of night, it was an announcement that the savior was born. He was coming to bring light to a nation groping in darkness for hundreds of years.

Darkness in the Day

Like Israel, we have seen many dark periods in our history. We have seen wars,

depressions, and destruction everywhere. Our hearts have been troubled by this long dark era where ungodliness is flourishing and faith is on the decline. It is certainly dark in these times. The normal expectancy of life is that there will be a little darkness, matched by an equal amount of light. We expect a few tough times, matched by an equal number of great times. That is the expected order of things when we maintain the proper relationship with the SON. It doesn't work that way when our relationship with him is out of balance.

Nationally, we are gradually moving further away from God. The further our nation gets away from the SON the darker our times appear and the longer our night of pain and suffering lasts. Our courts have made it almost illegal to call on the name of God in public places. Our homes are without moral strength. Crime is rising. Murder and death are everyday occurrences. Our food supply is contaminated and our water is polluted. Jobs are scarce, money is tight and times are tough. We are in a long, dark and painful period of our national history as we move further from the Son.

Some have a personal dilemma that is similar. There are some among us who have moved away from God during the past year. The further they moved away from God, the longer their periods of darkness. Instead of a few bad times and a few good times, some have entered a long dark period. This is characterized by riotous living, ungodliness of assorted kinds and a general decline in our respect for the things of God. David endured this kind of darkness when he sinned with Bathsheba. However, David knew that the darkness in his life came primarily because he had moved away from the will of God. He said "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth." When he turned his face to God asking for a clean heart and a renewed spirit, David concluded that "weeping endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The long night of our spiritual despair ends when we move closer to the SON.

In the Still of the Night-Jesus Came

Despite the darkness of Israel's dilemma God never abandoned them. In Egypt he sent Moses. In Canaan, he sent Joshua. When faced with the Philistines, he sent David. When Baal corrupted them he sent Elijah. When faced with persecution he sent Esther.

When the walls needed rebuilding he sent Nehemiah.

In the still of the night, with darkness everywhere, God sent his only Son Jesus, to bring light to the world.

In the still of night he came. He came:

—Not dressed in fancy robes but wrapped in swaddling clothes

—Not to a royal palace, but to a lowly stable, tucked away in a cave

—Not to a silk and satin lined crib, but to a straw filled manger

—Not with wealth and riches, but in poverty and humility

—Not to hurt but to heal; Not to cast down but to lift up

—Not to bind up but to deliver; Not to condemn but to save

—Not to frustrate but to clarify; Not to hate but to love

He came to bring light in a dark world that those who would believe on him might walk in the light.

No wonder the song writer declared: “We’ll walk in the light, beautiful light, ...shine all around me by day and by night, Jesus the light of the world!”

I don’t know about you, but in the still of my own night, Jesus came and gave me a mission and meaning.

He came to save us from our sins and to be our eternal sacrifice.

He came to help the blind see!

He came to help the deaf to hear!

He came to help the mute to talk!

He came to help the lame to walk!

But, he also came to go to Calvary!

He was born to die, but he died to rise!

If it’s dark in your life, get close to the Son. It won’t matter whether it’s day or night, because Jesus will light your
life with the light of his love!

In the still of the night, call on Jesus!

Call on Jesus!

Call on Jesus.. and he’ll answer every time!

No. 427-Christmas

Born To Be King

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 20, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." — Isaiah 9:6 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." — Acts 5:30-31 (KJV)*

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what you were cut out to be? These are the times when you look at all the possibilities and wonder why God put you here. Often we spend our entire lives trying to be something that we were not cut out to be. Sometimes we even think we have failed because we didn't do what we planned for ourselves. We never stop to consider that just maybe God's plan for our future is different from our own.

Consider the two little trees that wanted to be important. The first tree dreamed of being a fine piece of furniture, smooth and well polished, it would sit stately in a well kept living room. One day some people came to the forest and cut the tree down. The tree was hewn into rough pieces and carelessly put together to form a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. The little tree was disappointed because it was shoved into a dark cave with no one to see it but some cattle. The little tree complained and thought itself a failure until One day however, God laid there His own Babe — the Son of God. The manger quivered with delight "If I had been a stately piece of furniture in a well kept living room, I would not have had the chance to hold a baby like this. This is what I was cut out to be."

The second tree only wanted to sit on the hill and point to heaven. That was his dream! Many years after his friend had become a manger some workers came through the hillside looking for a good tree. One yelled "This one is perfect for the job." The tree cringed. This tree just wanted to remain on the hillside and point to heaven. But the men did not leave the little tree alone. They cut it down and rebuilt it into a cross. The tree felt humiliated because now he was a symbol of disgrace and shame. One day in Jerusalem giant nails were pounded into it and a man being crucified on him died and gave up the ghost. The man was the Son of God. The tree quivered and thought: "On the little hill I would have just pointed to the sky with a pointed finger. But I was cut out to be a cross, and now I point to God with an outstretched hand

to all!"

There are many today who cut out for greatness in life, but they have yet to discover what it is that God wants them to do. Such a discovery is difficult if all we see for ourselves is what we want instead of what God wants for us.

As Christians we know that each person has a purpose that is divinely appointed. Daily we surrender ourselves to God and say to him "not my will but thine be done." That is when God can use us best to be what we were cut out to be.

Exposition

These text verses focus on the nature of Christ's mission on earth. Combined they show that the birth of Jesus and his sojourn on earth was not a mere accident but a planned arrival.

Isaiah, seeing the difficulties of his times, made prophetic projections about the future. He told the people that God would send a Savior to Israel that would save the people from destruction. In Isaiah 7:14 he said the birth of this savior would be a sign: "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." In the main passage of this text he expands further by adding: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) The Christmas story opens with all of Israel anticipating the coming of the savior promised by God through Isaiah as the Prince of Peace.

In the New Testament passage, Peter and the Apostles were brought to trial for witnessing about Jesus after being warned to keep silent. Peter told his accusers that Jesus was one who had been "raised up" by God himself for the purpose of saving sinners and to be a mighty ruler. He described him in the words of Isaiah the prophet, as a "Prince."

Both the Old and New Testament refer to Jesus as a prince. A prince in biblical idioms, was a mighty ruler, great power, and one destined to be king. Both the Old and the New Testament bear witness to the truth that Christ was born with twofold purpose in mind, to save people from their sins and to become a mighty ruler in the kingdom of God.

Without any doubt the preponderance of scriptural reference points to the fact that Jesus was born to be king.

Born to Serve

The Christmas story focuses on the birth of Christ who came to this earth for two reasons: to save men from their sins and to establish himself as Lord in the spiritual domain called the "kingdom of God."

The double intent of the earthly life of Christ is not uncharacteristic of God but it is unique. Just as Christ came to earth with a special purpose, so does every child that is born today.

Even though sometimes we may feel that our lives have little purpose and meaning, we have a special purpose; to be instruments of the divine will of God. Often we judge ourselves by worldly standards and feel that we have failed without considering that we may just be doing exactly what God intended for us to do.

The woman who is depressed because she hasn't become a starlet, but has ended up caring for her husband and children should consider that maybe it is not her purpose in life to be a starlet, but to be a great mother.

The man who feels like a failure because he didn't succeed at his self appointed mission in life but is doing well in another should not feel bad. He should consider that his self appointed mission may not have been what God intended for him to do in the first place.

We are equipped for our mission in life from birth. When God called upon Jeremiah to begin a great mission as a spokesperson for righteousness, he told him that he was given his divine appointment while he was still in his mother's womb. In Jeremiah 1:5 God says "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and
I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." It was many years before Jeremiah did what he was put on earth to do, but he had the character traits and talents that were necessary from birth. The same is true with people today. God has given us a mission and our job is to discover what he wants us to do and then commit ourselves to doing his will.

When our mission is in line with his will then all the powers of heaven are unleashed for us giving us unmeasured success at what we do. People will marvel at the relative ease in which you do what you do, but it is only because God moves through you to carry out his purpose. Consider what the Word of God says:Rom 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Born to King

There have been many who have been born to fulfill the purposes but none of them equal the purpose for which the savior came.

In the midst of the darkness of his time, with slavery and racism everywhere, God heard the cries of his people and for freedom and independence. Moses arose despite the national genocide to lead his people to freedom. Moses was born to be a great leader, but he was not born to be the savior of humanity.

In the midst of the sin and Baal worship of his day, Elijah was born with a steel will and temperament tough enough to challenge a king and queen to repent or suffer the wrath of God. Elijah was born to be a prophet but he was not born to be Lord of Lords.

The young boy Josiah (1 Kings 13:2) was predicted to be a ruler 322 years before his birth. He was born to be a ruler but not to be a divine authority.

David was born into a shepherd's family and was called a man "after God's own

heart." He ruled Israel for 40 years. While he was born to be king of Israel he was not born to be king of Kings.

Those who are born to be king, have royal blood flowing in their veins. Jesus was born to be King of Kings because he has royal blood. Matthew 1:2 begins by tracing his royal blood. Abraham begot Isaac and Isaac begat Jacob. This royal line includes Booz and Ruth, Jesse, David, Solomon, Eliud and Eleazar all the way down to Joseph the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. Through 42 generations the royal line was unbroken proving Jesus was born to be king of kings.

When a king is born, the people shout "long live the king." But when the king of kings is born, not only do people shout, but all of heaven rejoices. When Jesus was born the angels in heaven began to shout "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." There is another day important to the saints and that's the day Jesus was born into their lives. That was the day that they sang with new meaning"

"What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought, since Jesus came into my heart. I have light in my soul for which I long sought, since Jesus came into my heart...floods of joy over my soul, like sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart." When Jesus, who died and rose for my salvation, came into my heart, my soul joined the heavenly chorus when it declares: King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and every where. Tell every body that Jesus Christ is born.

But not only that but tell them that he was born to be king!

No. 426-Inspiration

Short Bed With Narrow Covers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 13, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." - Isaiah 28:20

Introduction

What kind of bed do you like? Some like beds that are soft and cozy. Some like tall beds that reach from the floor and allow their feet to dangle. Some like a bed to themselves with plenty of room. Others like single beds with just enough room. In the winter, there is nothing better than a warm bed with plenty of covers.

We have experienced many kinds of beds in our history. From the corn shuck beds of slavery, called pallets, to cotton mattresses on crude bedsteads made of wood. We have moved up to bunk beds, single beds, king size and queen size beds with feather filled pillows. Each kind of bed we acquired represented a stage in our growth and prosperity.

Some, who are from large families, know about sharing beds. In such instances, it was not unusual for three or more people to sleep in the same bed. There was a constant struggle to hang on to a comfortable corner and for your share of the cover. There always seemed to be a foot uncovered or an arm that couldn't quite squeeze under the warmth of grandma's homemade quilt. One of the first luxuries desired of those who spent sleepless nights in crowded beds, was to get them a big bed with plenty of cover!

In the Bible a great Black King named "Og" (Duet. 3:11) had himself an especially constructed iron bed that was 13 feet long and six feet wide. He had to have a big bed because he was a giant. He thought himself secure in the Canaan land and secure in life, just as he felt safe in his big bed. However, he found out that even his 13-foot bed was too short to secure him from the wrath of God. He had a short bed with narrow covers.

Today there are many who are like King Og. They have great lifestyles that they are developing for themselves and they have creature comforts that designed to protect and give themselves comfort. They have large homes, good jobs and fine soft beds. However, some today, do not have the love of God in their lives. These will be those who will learn, the hard way, that all that they have, when it really comes down

to the point of reckoning, is “a short bed with narrow covers.

As Christians, we give God thanks for every privilege he has allowed us to enjoy. We thank him for the pallet and we thank him for big beds and soft pillows of life. Most of all we thank him for Jesus, who gives us the assurance that in the time of our trouble we won’t find ourselves in a bed too short, with covers too narrow!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he prophesied to the people of Israel warning them that dependence on material things for security would spell trouble. Israel understood that it enjoyed a favorite nation status with God. Because he loved the nation so much he handpicked it from among the nations. He freed the people from slavery, cleared out a homeland for them, and built them into a great nation. For the most part, Israel was unaware of its relative smallness compared to other world powers of the time. These national powers included Egypt on one side and Assyria on the other. They were so huge that Israel was a minuscule presence before them. Despite the prospect of utter destruction at the hand of its enemies, Israel depended on God to destroy them. They considered themselves protected against political failure because these invading countries were the “foes” of God and therefore he would defeat them. Isaiah, in the 28th chapter prophesied to Samaria warning of its impending doom at the hand of the Assyrians. They listened and laughed because the reasoned that they were the chosen people of God and he would defend them.

The truth that Isaiah spent many years trying to get them to see was that God would not defend Israel just because they were his people, but that God would be on the side of righteousness. It never entered into their collective mind that God could or would support a nation that normally would be his adversary against his chosen people. They believed that their favorite nation status with God gave them a comfortable position. They believed God was compelled to support them against all enemies because he was the God of Israel only and not a God for other nations. This belief made them comfortable and safe. It was a warm bed of security against any danger, because of who they were, not what they were doing. Isaiah warned them in this text that such misguided comfort would prove to be a bed too short with covers too narrow.

This idea of God supporting righteousness and not a special people was new. Since Abraham, they knew they were God’s chosen, but Isaiah was suggesting that God could actually use evil forces and conditions to work against his chosen people. Isaiah noted that this idea would come to service when the Messiah comes. In verse 16 he says “behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste.” It was a picture of Jesus who would come to call and accept anyone willing to do right and accept him, whatever his or her race or national status.

Short Beds

There are many today who have short beds that will prove unable to hold them and give them rest and security when the chips are down.

HARD PALLET ON A COLD FLOOR. (CHURCH MEMBERSHIP) Many, like Israel, believe that there is a certain protection they receive by being a member of a church. They think it's like a good luck charm that can be worn around the neck and will bring them good luck. Church membership is seen as a means of shielding ourselves from difficulties and guaranteeing success.

Those who are counting on their church membership alone to gain them the favors of God will soon discover that what they thought would be warm, safe and secure will be no more than a hard pallet on a cold floor. At its best its makes for restlessness and anything but a good night's sleep.

ROLL-A-WAY RELIGION: Others consider God a God of convenience. They feel they can simply call on him whenever they need him, and despite their lifestyle, he will simply provide them with a soft bed of security. When they are finished with him they feel they can "roll him away," tuck him out of sight and sit on their religion until they need him again. At such time they will simply roll him out again. God is not a roll- a-away God.

BUNK BED RELIGION: There are still others who have a bunk bed concept of religion. Bunk beds are designed to allow a person to have two beds in the same floor space. This is done by simply making the beds so that one can fit atop the other. The use of two bunk beds allows more space for other things in a room.

There are many today who have a small amount of faith in both God and Satan and they try to worship them both at the same time. Sometimes they sleep in Satan's bunk on the bottom or God's bunk on the top. This arrangement, they feel leaves them plenty of room in their lives for the best of both worlds. But Jesus said no man can serve two masters! Those who want bunk bed religion will soon find that it is a bed too short with narrow covers.

BIG BED IN A SMALL ROOM: There are still others who desire God to provide for them a big bed of comfort and security but they are not willing to provide enough room for God to act. King and Queen size beds take up plenty of space. They require larger rooms than doubles or singles. However, many are not willing to make enough room in their lives for God to act. They can't seem to find enough time to serve or enough money to give in support of God's program. At the least, those who expect big things from God need to make room in their lives for him to act and move.

A True Foundation

Isaiah pointed Israel to a new truth that it had not discovered that God was not supporting their status but commitment to him. They learned the hard way that God expects righteousness from his people. Those who expect his support on their behalf otherwise are sleeping on a short bed with narrow covers.

There are some who have trusted in the world and found that the world has let them down.

It's dangerous to count on the worldly means for help and support because it can only give us a short bed with narrow covers.

But I heard Isaiah declare: "Behold in Zion..there is a foundation" Over in Zion there is a tried stone! Over in Zion there is a sure foundation!

This sure foundation is none other than Jesus!

Jesus, who can take those who are:

-sad and make them glad!

-losers and make them winners!

-slaves and set them free!

-weak and make them strong!

Anything less than Jesus can't bring real rest. It's a short bed with narrow covers! But, I heard Jesus declare, "Come unto me all ye that burden and heavy laden and I will give you rest!"

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house, there is rest, peace and joy!

No. 425-Inspiration

Madness, Murder & The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. — Genesis 4:8; "And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. he that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matthew 10:38-39.*

Introduction

Crime and violence are increasing across the nation. Burglaries, armed robber ies and murder are becoming so common place that they are reported in statistical lists in obscure corners of the nation's newspaper. There is seldom a day that goes by when we do not hear of senseless murders, mass killings and destruction across the land. Why is there so much violence? What, if anything can be done to change the collision course on which we seem to be headed?

Some of the violence that we see is a response to social conditions. Just as much of the rioting and disturbances of the 60's in Watts and other areas was prompted by mounting social frustrations, to a degree, much of the violence we see today is a response to social conditions. Poverty, unemployment and hard times create conditions where violence is cultivated. However, poverty and unemployment and hard times do not always spell violent responses. As a people we have seen hard times but have not always resorted to violence. We have survived slavery, depressions, race discrimination and extreme poverty, yet as a whole, we have not resorted to violence. Even when we considered a violent response to our frustrations in the 50's and 60's God sent great men such as Dr. Martin Luther King, A. Philip Randolph and others to show us better ways to respond. Adverse social conditions can breed violence only if the moral fabric of the society has degenerated to point that respect for Godly principles and human life has declined. As respect for Godly principles decreases the incidence of violence increases.

Society's immediate response is to build more jails to house the criminals and murderers and get them off the street. This is a response to the symptom. As these are jailed the valueless society in which we live is producing still more to take their place. The values of honesty, loyalty, kindness, thrift, cleanliness, helpfulness,

obedience and respect are slipping away from us and the resulting product is violence and crime.

As Christians it would appear that the solution is to vigorously promote the values of God. We should help helpless homemakers, wandering children and the thoughtless come to know and respect God, themselves and their neighbors. It is an awesome task that will require the church to roll up its sleeves and compete for the mind and soul of a lost generation. The only hope we have is Jesus...persecution is great, but we have this hope, in its in Jesus!

Exposition

This text focuses on Cain and Abel the first two sons of Adam and Eve as they presented the fruit of their labor for the approval of God. Cain, a farmer, brought before God the first fruits of his crops and offered them in a sacrifice. Abel was a herdsman and brought a sacrifice to God from the best of his flocks. Both men presented God with a grand sacrifice. However, God found one sacrifice acceptable and the other unacceptable. God showed respect to Abel's sacrifice and received it while rejecting Cain's. God explained to Cain in verses 6-7 that he had no real reason to be upset. If he came before God in the same way his work could be blessed too. He warned him in verse 7 however, to beware because the presence of evil was waiting for an opportunity to seize him. He was warned to be on guard.

Rather than reorder his sacrifice and make himself more acceptable to God Cain lured Abel to an open field, talked with him for a while, and then killed him. In the aftermath Cain tried to hide his sin from God who asked "Where is Abel thy brother?" Cain answered God's question with a question: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Thus Cain became the first murderer. Abel, his victim, was his own brother, who crime was that he was hard working and humble and presented his best self to God and it was accepted. Cain remained unrepentant and a marked man for the rest of his life, just as his descendants were after him.

Three Questions

The tragedy of rising crime, murder and disrespect for human life is epitomized by the three questions asked in this text.

Why art thou wroth? This was the question that God asked Cain. Why are you angry? Today the same question can be posed to those disposed to bring hurt on others: Why are you angry?

Cain's anger was rooted in the fact that Abel was successful at getting God's blessing and he was not. What made Abel's sacrifice acceptable was not the type of offering but Abel's attitude of faith and humility. Hebrews 11:4 says "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous..." Rather than change his attitude, Cain became jealous and envious of his brother.

Even today there are people who are angry with others because they seem to live a blessed life. God appears to accept your sacrifice and he has given you a few comforts to make life easier and there are those who are angry, envious, and jealous of you because God likes what you are doing. Some of them become so angry with you that they work to destroy you. Sometimes that destruction is literal, in the case of physical murder, sometimes it is more subtle as they work to destroy your life's work, reputation and image.

Most of the murders which are occurring today are the result of anger and frustration. Involved in the anger, in many instances, are envy, fear, and jealousy. Many are choosing to go the way of Cain in that they are attempting to improve their condition by worsening yours. Somehow they think status life is graded on a heavenly curve.

"Why are you angry? **Why is thou countenance fallen**?" God asks. Cain and none of those who follow him, never fully answered.

"Where is Abel thy brother?" This is the question that God posed to Cain after the murder. Cain's response indicates a second underlying cause of murder and violent behavior in our society. Cain responded to God's three questions by asking "Am I my brother's keeper?" He felt no obligation for the protection and care of his brother. Neither was there a respect for the value of his life.

Among this present generation there is little appreciation for the value of human life. Incidental to that increase in murders that we see are the thousands of unsuccessful attempts that do not make the headlines. When one man beats another with a steel pipe and wounds him, and another is stabbed several times but lives, these hundreds of thousands of attacks on human life suggest that we think nothing of ending a life in our moment of anger. Cain's circumstance had one advantage over our present dilemma: "at least he accepted Abel as his brother!" Today many do not accept the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all men. We extend brotherhood to some people of the same neighborhood, family, gang and race. The other millions that make up the world community are simply nameless, faceless targets.

God asked the questions, Cain would not answer but only asked another question.

One Answer: Jesus

There are three questions at the root of our present dilemma but there is only one answer and that is Jesus. The world may be growing more violent and man's insensitivity to man may be getting worse, but there is still an answer! The answer is Jesus.

Who is Jesus? He is the essence of truth, honesty and Godliness.

Who is Jesus? He is the embodiment of kindness, love and mercy.

Who is Jesus? He is the sum total of everything good that exists in our world.

Since Jesus is the answer his followers must vigorously promote him in the midst of a generation that only knows him at a distance. We can no longer afford to be "just" the people that go to church down the street, but we must become a vibrant living force for change in the name of Jesus!

When Abel recognized his own unworthiness he came before God humbly. He brought the first fruit of his flock (maybe a lamb) and gave it for his sin. God accepted it.

Today our nation is troubled by the madness of murder, but I still hear a voice from heaven saying: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Brother's and sisters, the only hope we have is in Jesus!

Jesus, who has never found a

—**BATTLE** that he could not win!

—**DARKNESS** he could not brighten!

—**PROMISE** he could not keep!

—**HEARTACHE** he could not heal!

—**PROBLEM** he could not solve!

—**MOUNTAIN** he could not move!

—**LONELINESS** he could not comfort!

Jesus is the answer for the world today, without him there's no other, Jesus is the way!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose Early Sunday morning!

When it seems like there is no way, call Jesus..he can make a way out of no way!

No. 424-Funeral

My Appointed Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 3, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." — Job 14:14*

Introduction

Have you ever been impatient; impatient to the point that you could not or would not wait your turn? There are many who have experienced this feeling. It is the desire to move quickly, act now, even if poor timing would make such a move inappropriate. Such feelings often come with excitement or when we experience unpleasant circumstances such as pain, sickness, or failure. In such cases we want to hurry and end it all. It is precisely at such moments that we should exercise our faith to let God move in his own way in his own time.

Consider the grandmother who sat at the train depot with her granddaughter waiting for the passenger train. The girl, who had never ridden a train, was excited at the prospect of riding a train for the first time. She had seen pictures of trains and had watched them rumble past her neighborhood, but she had never ridden one herself. It was hard to contain her excitement. Finally the train came down the track and she tugged at her grandmother's hand to get on board. However, the grandmother would not move, and the train passed. Time passed and the girl became even more impatient. Finally the train came again, yet the grandmother would not move. On the third and final time the train came the grandmother looked at her watch and her ticket stub and stood to her feet. She and the girl boarded the train. As the train pulled off the little girl looked at her grandmother with a puzzled eye and asked: "Granny, why is that when the train came the first time you would not get on. Then it came the second time and you would not get on. Then when it came the last time you got on." The grandmother looked at the puzzled little girl and pulled out her ticket that had 11:00 a.m. stamped as her time of departure. She said "it was the right train, but it was the wrong time."

In a similiar sense there are many today who want to act prematurely instead of allowing God's plan to work itself out. Especially when impatience is prevalent, we are tempted to get on the right train but at the wrong time. Such an error can put us on the right train but could carry us to a totally different direction in life.

As Christians we strive to "move at God's command" and to march to cadences

set in glory. God has great blessings in store for all of us. However, we have come to know that we only receive them fully when we are patient enough to wait for our appointed time.

Exposition

This text considers Job, a man who had reason to be impatient with life but chose to wait on God.

Job is described as a righteous man who lived in the land of Nod. He was the subject of a trial of faith. God allowed Satan to test the strength of his faith by removing all of the comforts that sustained Job's hope. Satan described these comforts as a "hedge" God built around him. The purpose of the test was to demonstrate that Job's faith in God was not artificial but was rooted in a belief that God would not forsake him, regardless of the circumstance.

As Satan began to move, tragedy struck Job's family. Members of his family were killed. His vast fortune, invested in cattle and huge herds, was stolen by bandits. Almost overnight his entire financial situation changed to the point that he was no longer wealthy but bordered on poverty. Still, however, he refused to curse God or to forsake him.

Going even further, Satan decided to attack Job personally. He infected his body with boils. Job physically deteriorated to the point that his entire life was so painful that he wished himself dead. He cursed his mother's womb. He cursed the day on which he was born. He lashed out at his friends. His patience grew short with his friends, his wife and all who tried to comfort him. He was in pain and was terribly impatient with life. He wanted an end to his situation.

Refused to Blame God

Despite all of the trouble that he endured, Job refused to blame God for his troubles and he refused to reject him as his wife and friends advised. He concluded that though he was troubled by his circumstance, that it would be better for him to wait until God changes his condition in his own appointed time. The pain he felt could be relieved in death, and he was tempted toask God for a speedy death to end it all, but he decided it was better to wait. His words, therefore, comprise the basis of this text: *"If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change comes."*

Time for Everything

Solomon, in Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 reminds us that there is a time for every thing because everything has a season. There is a "Time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time

to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones together;a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing..." In essence, Solomon made it clear that there is an appointed time for every phase of life. Each phase and event has its own appointed day and hour. God has an appointed time for every phase of our lives. He has ordered our steps and numbered our days, just as he has counted hairs on our heads.

A time to be born

There is an appointed time for every man to be born. Generally, it is believed that a woman can carry a fetus to term in nine months. On occasion however, God has his own appointed time. When it is time for life to begin, God gives the nod. Life and all of its activities all operate by the command of God, for it is in him that we have our life and being. The moment when life begins is determined by our creator and only he knows the secret moments that will determine the events of our lives once it has begun.

A time to die

If there is an appointed time for man to begin in this life, then there is also an appointed time for him to die. Nothing happens in this life before its appointed time. People have been shot in the head, but they lived, then died years later of a cold. Men have survived the ravages of war, only to come home and die in an auto accident. The point is nothing happens before its appointed time.

While we cannot make things happen before their appointed time, neither can we extend life or its experiences beyond their appointed time. When its time to begin, it is time. When it is time to move on, it is time.

A time to live again

For those who are unsaved life just has two phases: birth and death. However, for those who know the Lord, there is more than simply life and death. There is a third dimension and it comes after death. There is a time to live again!

Jesus promised every believer the gift of eternal life. He said those who believe in him have the hope of the resurrection that will bestow upon them eternal life. He gave us a hint of the possibility of this promise when Lazarus, who had been dead for several days, was raised to new life. The difference is that what he promises believers goes beyond the Lazarus experience, because he promises that we shall rise to everlasting life. In God's appointed time, even the dead shall rise again. The unrighteous shall rise to judgment and the faithful shall rise to their reward.

The knowledge that there will be a resurrection is the Christian's motivating force. It is what allows him to face the pain, sorrow and loneliness of death, with pleasant patience as he resolves to "wait until my change come."

When we have everything in order it is not difficult to be patient. When we have

prepared for life and prepared for death as well, we can stand with a strong face and say to God "I am ready."

A pilgrim traveled alone as he went on his way to an unknown land. Without any essentials he moved from town to town on his never ending journey. One night he stopped at a hotel to rest and get a good night's sleep. Without a watch he worried how he would wake up on time the next morning. Then a thought came into his mind, check in at the front desk! He made a call to the front desk and the shortly after laid down to a peaceful sleep. At five o'clock the next morning the phone rang in his room. The desk clerk said "it's 5 a.m. sir, this is your wake up call!." He couldn't wake himself but he was confident that he would get a wake up call.

We are pilgrims traveling through this life. We don't know whether or not we will wake up or not so we say our child's prayer "Now I lay me down to sleep.I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake. I pray the Lord my soul to take."

I don't know about you, but I know that if I register at the front desk over yonder, one glad morning, when this life is over, I'll fly away!

I'll fly away!

When my appointed time comes, I'll fly away!

———

Sister Bessie Taylor Brownfield, waited for her appointed timeand then she flew away!

No. 423-Funeral

Be Strong And Show Thyself A Man

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: — 1 Kings 2:2-3*

Introduction

What does it take to be a man? A pair of pants? A check book? The capacity to father a child? There is one truth that we have all come to know: all who are males are not necessarily men.

A tall pine tree stood for many years in the great forest. Its branches spread in all directions. It loomed high over the other trees and its thick trunk suggested it had endured many years. At the foot of the pine there was a little pine cone that lay around on the ground. He boasted to the other seeds that lay around that he was a mighty pine and would someday grow strong and tall. Meanwhile, he simply lay around and enjoyed the shade from the father pine's strong branches. The father pine constantly talked to him to show him what life was all about. However, the cone was content to know that he could one day be a pine and he idled away his time.

One night, lightning struck the mighty pine and down it fell with a mighty thud. In the days that followed the pine cone stood in same place where the mighty pine stood and tried to take his place. He stretched out his arms, but they were not huge branches. He gave off no shade and did not tower over the other trees as did the mighty pine. His heart dropped in frustration. Then he heard the voice of the mighty pine whistling through the wind, "within you is the potential for greatness, for you are the offspring of a pine. But to achieve your greatness, you cannot lay around. You must bury yourself in fertile soil, take root, sprout and grow with a made up mind. Then you will be a tree my son, then you will be a pine."

Three things contribute to the making of a man: The right crowd, strong roots and a made up mind. Many young men with great potential are lost because they plant themselves in infertile soil, have no strongly rooted principles, or cannot discipline

themselves to do what is necessary to achieve their life goals. Every good father tries to teach these three truths to his children. With a monotonous redundancy his words ring in the ears of his sons even when he is no longer able to speak them himself: “Be strong, and show thyself a man.”

Exposition

This text focuses on David in the closing days of his life. It targets the advice that he left with his son Solomon who would have to stand in his shoes and carry on the kingdom work after his death. His advice to Solomon was that he should “be strong and show thyself a man.” He then explained what he considered necessary for Solomon to “be strong.” In verse three he begins to list off the requirements for the strength that he urged Solomon to acquire. He told Solomon to: 1) Walk in the Way of the Lord, and 2)Keep his commandments. The reward for living a life in fertile circles based upon Godly principles was noted: “That thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whitersoever thou turnest thyself.”

David’s advice came from his own experience. He was raised in a God fearing home. He was blessed to have a good father and mother that provided for him in every way. David was taught the way of the Lord when he was young and he exemplified courage and faith at a young age as he took on the giant Goliath. He was both courageous and humble. In his own life he tried to do what was right, but also learned a very good lesson: that despite age or experience that a man never out grows temptation. Even inhis flirtations and weaknesses, David talked privately with God and asked for forgiveness, a clean heart and a clean spirit.

David could advise his son about strength and character because they were hallmarks of life. He was honest, hard working, humble, and a man of principle himself. In the latter years of his life he achieved a degree of comfort. However, he spent a great part of his life in the humility of pasture and in the company of the common people. He was not always in line with the will of God, for on occasion he strayed. Yet he was the kind of man that was “after God’s own heart.”

By any sense of the word, David was a man. He had earned the designation not by the mere fact that he was male, but because he proved he could shoulder responsibility, remain true to his word, admit and correct his mistakes, and humble himself before God and men. Although others saw him as king and ruler, David saw himself as father and husband. His constant advice to his two remaining sons: Adonijah and Solomon, was that they should strive to live lives of virtue and value, tempered with discipline and respect. These were the essentials of being “strong.” As the grand old man went to his grave the words of their father echoed in their ears: “Be strong and show thyself a man.”

Strength is One Measure of A Man

How do you determine a good man? Is it by looks, physical attributes, money?

One measure of a good man is strength. While there is great value in physical strength, it is not the strongest measure of a real man. Some men can bench press weights and lift 300 pounds easily, but crumble under the weight of the first family crises. Some can out wrestle the strongest competitor but cannot wrestle with challenges that life brings.

Measure a man by his strength of character. If the chips are down, can he think straight and keep his family on a steady course? When he himself faces life threatening sickness, failure or defeat, can he weather the storm? Can he resist the temptation to succeed by evil devices or triumph at the expense of others? These are questions which form the basis for an analysis of strength. A man of strength displays character when it is needed most. It is an inner strength that is hidden from the naked eye but is displayed in moments of crises.

Measure a man by the strength of his commitment. There are many men who have come up short with respect to commitment. A
real man has a commitment to his wife and children. Measure him by his faithfulness to his wife. Measure him by his willingness to stand by her in sickness and health, for better or worse, and to protect and provide for her with every ounce of his being. Measure him by his willingness to forsake all others and put her first. Also measure him by his sense of commitment to his children, to provide for them and to care for and protect them. There are many men who have weak commitments to their wives and some have even weaker commitments to their children. A strong man assumes the responsibility for the care and protection of his family, despite circumstances.

Measure a man by the strength of his faith. Faith, is acting on the unseen in hope that God will take over and make a way. Strong men are good planners, providers and sober thinkers. However, strong men are also men of faith. They are men who know and acknowledge that there are some things they cannot control that God must provide. These are men who learn to lean on the Lord. These are men who join with the song writer and declare: "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. And I found out that if I trust him he will provide." Faith is being told that you have a cancer, but being confident that God would put you back on your feet again. Faith, is holding the hand of a sick mother knowing that despite her age, God would make a way. Faith is holding the hand of hospitalized son, knowing that God would give you another chance to talk with him. With faith, we can achieve the impossible! With faith, the improbable becomes probable! With Faith all things are possible.

Measure him Right

If we are to truly measure a man, we must measure him right. We must not measure him by how he died, but how he lived? We must measure him not by what he gained in life, but what he gave to others!

We must measure him not by asking the question "what was his
station in life?" but rather by asking:" Did he have a heart? Did he play his God given part?"

We must ask whether he was one to complain and pout or did have something positive to talk about?

When we measure him, we must not measure him by the size of the church to which he belonged, but by the strength of his creed. Has he befriended those who were in need?

Measure him by whether he believed in the power of an almighty God.

A God who told us that weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning!

A God who gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

Measure him by his hope -built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.

Measure him by his commitment to say come what may: "on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand! All other ground is sinking sand!"

—

On Friday, November 27, 1992 Herbert Reed went home to be with God. He was a towering pine in his family. He was a faithful husband and an example of manhood for his sons. This essence of his message to them will whisper in the rustling of the wind in the trees: "Be strong, and show thyself a man."

No. 422-Pastor's Anniversary

After All These Years What Shall I Preach?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Trenton Baptist Church
West Monroe, La.
November 15, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." 2 Timothy 4:1-3*

Introduction

An old Native American proverb says that people should never judge a man until they have "walked a mile in his moccasins." The same is true for the pastor of a church. Ministers are the most talked about personalities in the local church, which is rightly so, but most of the talk is sometimes negative and untrue. He is often called a variety of names, and charged with a variety of faults. He gets the blame for all of the bad and the credit for some of the good that the church does.

Those churches that pause occasionally to salute their minister, do a good work because it encourages him along the way. In so doing, the church also honors the minister's wife because often she is subjected to more unintentional abuse than her husband. Visitors to her home expect to find it immaculately kept regardless to the hour of day or night they arrive. They expect for her to be immaculately groomed and dressed, even if they don't always expect the same from her husband. In fact, sometimes the women of the church expect more from the minister's wife than they do from the minister himself in this respect. So it is good that the church should give a word of praise occasionally to its spiritual leader-family.

If we could walk a mile in the pastor's shoes we would see him answer the calls for help and assistance that come in the middle of the night from members, their relatives, their friends, and friends of friends of relatives who are referred to "my pastor." One mile in the pastor shoes would usually reveal a man who spends much time helping other families grow, sometimes to the neglect of his own, and solving problems of his membership until he is worn thin in many respects. If we could walk a mile in his shoes we would find a man who wakes up earlier each morning or stays up later each night just to find a quiet time to talk to God to get direction and guidance.

As Christians we should praise God for good pastor's wives. We should pray for them constantly and hold them in high esteem. Each day they walk a long mile on

behalf of others. Our prayer should be that as he makes each step along the way that God would be with him all along the journey. The song writer declares *"While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me."* So it should be with for the good pastor.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul at the close of his personal ministry giving advice to a young preacher, Timothy. His advice served as both encouragement and a charge for young Timothy. Earlier in 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul had encouraged Timothy to "study" so that he could rightly divide the words of truth. Now his attention turned to the matter of consistency in the preaching of the Gospel and the full intent of his ministry.

Timothy was encouraged to "preach the word." To preach or prophesy means to speak to people in ways that will edify or build them up, inspire them or comfort them. However, to preach "The Word" means that Timothy was to preach, but always in the context of the Word of God. His teaching, instruction and words of comfort were to always be based on the Hord of God as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

Not only was Timothy encouraged to "Preach the Word" but he was also encouraged to be "Instant." To be instant is to be sharp, quick and always prepared. "Instant," in this context, suggests that Timothy was to be constantly prepared for whatever situation that might arise with a ready and suitable response from the Word of God. The instantaneous nature of his response further suggests he should be ready for any occasion or situation. Paul told him to be instant "in season and out of season." He was to constantly be prepared with a ready response. This response may come at times when people want to hear. At other times they may not want to hear, but Timothy was encouraged to preach anyway, regardless to whether the people wanted to hear what he had to say or not.

His message to the masses was to span a variety of areas including: reprove and rebuke, that is to take issue with ungodliness and urge correction. Not only was Timothy to correct and rebuke but he was also urged to inspire and encourage the people, being careful always to stay within the confines of proper doctrine.

Paul's admonition to Timothy therefore, was that he should continue to study and preach the word to the people. He should continue to rebuke when necessary but constantly encourage and inspire them to continue in the faith by giving them words from God. Even after many years in the Gospel, Timothy was encouraged to simply "preach the word."

Words to Preach

Many members of a church congregation feel that they know what the preacher is going to say before he says it. Some have heard him so much that they can almost recite his proverbs, illustrations and colloquialisms to the letter.

Pastors usually struggle to find a fresh, new approaches to tell the same story because there are those in the congregation that need the inspirational strength that comes from hearing the Gospel message fresh and anew.

After a pastor has served in a congregation for many years, what can he preach that has not been preached? What biblical texts can he expound on that have not been preached before?

As the years go by, many a pastor finds himself asking: "What shall I preach?' Pastors who study the word always have a message. Often their struggle is not what to preach but "How" to present it in a way that is fresh and inspirational. Often they draw on the scholarship and works of others for fresh approaches.

The careful pastor always waits to be guided by the Holy Spirit, even though he may be using resources from a variety of areas.

I am reminded of the young preacher that went to the national convention and heard one of the great national speakers use an illustration that sounded great. The speaker said "I spent the night in the arms of another man's wife!" The speaker gave a long pause and looked at the audience's surprise. Then he repeated his claim: "I spent the night in the arms of another man's wife!" After another pause the speaker added "..and that woman was my mother!" The young preacher saw the response of the audience and he said to himself "I'm going to use that!" No sooner than he came home, he popped that line into his Sunday morning message. He stared at the members of his congregation and said "Members I want you to know that I spent the night in the arms of another man's wife." His congregation looked at him in shock, especially when he forgot the joke and said "..I spent the night in the arms of another man's wife, but for the life of me I can't remember who she was?"

The preacher needs words to preach, but they should always be Words from God!

Sometimes Frustration Sets In

Even the strongest minister often gets frustrated. The stubbornness of some church members can cause some ministers to give up and throw in the towel, especially after several years have passed and it seems that no one is gaining from his ministry. Consider the preacher who announced to the congregation that he was retiring after 20 years and was going into the funeral home business. When one deacon asked him why, the pastor responded:

"Well I spent five years trying to get John to stop drinking but he still is an alcoholic and won't straighten out. I spent another five years trying to get Willie to be faithful to his wife but he's still an adulterer and he won't straighten out. I spent 10 years trying to help mother Jones' children stay out of trouble and they ended up in jail and wouldn't straighten out. With all of my preaching the people just wouldn't straighten out. At least as a funeral director, when I straighten people out, they stay straightened out!"

After many years of preaching pastors should not be discouraged but should

continue to preach the word and plant the Gospel seed, God will do the watering.

After all these years, what shall I preach? The answer to the question is simple, Preach the word!

After all these years, tell them that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life!

After all these years, tell them that God is a good God who is a shelter in a time of storm and bridge over troubling water!

After all these years tell them that the God we serve can scale the highest mountain and span the widest valley. He can lift a bowed down head and can traverse the loneliest wilderness!

After all these years, tell them about Jesus!

Jesus,the lily of the valley and the bright and morning star!

Jesus,the fairest of ten thousands and a rock in the wilderness!

After all these years, tell them about Jesus!

After all these years, tell them about Calvary!

After all these years, tell them that Early Sunday morning Jesus rose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Tell them about Jesus!

No. 421-Communion, Revival

Strong Medicine For Tough Times

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 1992

***SCRIPTURE**: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22:42. "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:27-28*

Introduction

Have you ever had to take bad tasting medicine? If so then you know what it means to hear someone say "It may not be good to you, but it sure good for you!" That's what they say just before they start giving you a variety of bad tasting medicines that make you sick just to think of them. Today, most medicines are coated and treated to make them more palatable. However, there was a time when the best medicines were those that tasted worse! Despite a plethora of modern cures, many older homemakers still cling to the old treatments for colds, fevers, and internal disorders.

Chief among the bad tasting medicines was Castor Oil. One comedian once joked that Castor oil was so nasty that even the spoon held its nose! It was so nasty that the taste lingered in your mouth for days, no matter how it was diluted by drinking juices or other liquids later. Almost equally as nasty was something that tasted like it was straight from the devil's medicine cabinet, called "666" or three sixes, the number of evil. It made your face curl up! It made your tongue hang out and various other facial expressions of disgust. There were others too. They weren't as bad but they didn't win any popularity contests. These included Cod Liver Oil, Black Draught and Epsom Salts. They all were handy remedies that got the job done for homemakers of yester-year.

It appeared that the worse the condition, the nastier the medicine. However, it was also true that the "nastier the medicine the surer the cure." Castor Oil could clean out the insides, cut fever and resolved a host of problems. It was nasty but it got the job done. It could not be sugar coated or mint flavored. It contained no tiny time capsules or chocolate taste, it was just plain nasty. But it got the job done!

As Christians, we have come to know that the sins of the world required a remedy

that the sweet idealism of philosophy or the sugar coated compromise of government could not provide. It required the shedding of blood which was strong medicine. On our behalf Jesus took the cup of suffering and drained every drop. We thank God every day that Jesus was willing to drink from the bitter cut of pain and sorrow to give us another chance. The cup of suffering was strong medicine! It was a bad tasting medicine! However, it was the only cure!

Exposition

This text verses focus on Christ as he prepares to take some bitter medicine. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, just before the crucifixion, to pray. He left his disciples behind and he went alone and talked to God. John gives a more detailed account of what he said to God but Luke simply sums it up by saying that Christ talked to God trying to find another way to provide salvation for mankind other than the way of the cross. He referred to his crucifixion and death as a "cup."

The prospects of death on the cross was a bitter thought. He would be ridiculed, beaten, nailed and killed in a horrifying experience that was necessary for the redemption of mankind. It was necessary because mankind had sinned and the law required a sacrifice. As the lamb of God he had come into the world to become the eternal sacrifice to provide hope and forgiveness for the lost. However, the sins of the world were so great, that only the strongest medicine possible could cure its ills. The death of Christ on the cross and his eventual resurrection was strong medicine. It was bitter medicine. He looked for another, equally effective, alternative but there was none. His final conclusion was: "never-the-less, not my will, but thy will be done." As he reached this conclusion, Jesus decided that Calvary, although a bitter experience, would be good for the healing of the nations.

Diagnosis: World Is Sick

Today, we are faced with a sick society. It is sick in the sense that the cancer of sin is growing daily and the patient won't come in for treatment.

Diagnosis: There are some who on occasion get sick and go to see the doctor. The doctor usually takes steps to diagnose the problem. A diagnosis is a process where he or she checks the nature of a sickness. To assure accuracy, numerous tests are run, before the doctor finally reaches a conclusion about the extent of the problem. At the end of the process the doctor will diagnosis the problem and tell what is wrong. Today we know there is something wrong in our society. Crime is escalating at an all time high. People are becoming prisoners in their own homes with bars on their windows and burglar alarms on their cars. Women and the elderly are purchasing guns to protect themselves. Some teenagers are acquiring guns too and they are dying in record numbers. Pornography is on the rise. Daytime television, once rated G because it was clean melodrama for lonely housewives, is now rated X. Rarely a day passes without hot love scenes, murder and crime in the daily "stories" that never

end. Teen sexual activity is on the rise, as even children from God-fearing families fall prey to lure of sexual activity under the guise of safe sex. Murder is becoming an every day event and the value of human life is diminished to the point that murderers get less time in jail than armed robbers. Violent attacks on the person of another are considered so lightly people think little of solving a dispute by taking a pipe and hitting another across the head. The fine is small and some think its worth the small fine to teach their enemies a lesson.

What is the diagnosis? Doctor what is the problem? The problem is that as a nation we have strayed away from God and are wallowing in sin. Godly values are no longer promoted in school, homes leave decisions about religious training to their children, and each coming generation grows progressively worse than then the one preceding. The diagnosis is that this world is sin sick.

The **prognosis** or the prediction of the outcome is simple. If uncorrected eternal doom is the result, but if treated properly it can be turned to a different direction. Romans 6:23 puts it this way: *"The Wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Prescription: Jesus!

Following any diagnosis, there is usually a prescription which spells out a course of action. The doctor will tell the patient exactly what must be done to counter effects of their sickness.

What is the prescription for a sin sick world? Solomon asked that same question and in 2 Chronicles 7:14 was given this prescription:"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

When we are sick in body, we can go to drug store and get prescriptions filled.

When there is a headache....Extra Strength Excedrin

When there is a stomachache ...Pepto Bismal

When there is a fever ...Tylenol

When there is irregularity ..Ex-Lax

Our Lord has given this world a prescription that can only be filled at calvary.

What this world needs is medicine strong enough to counter to effects of sin, but it can only be found at one place; at the foot of the cross!

At Calvary there is strong medicine! At Calvary the:

—WOUNDED CAN BE HEALED. Isaiah said "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

—BAD IN ATTITUDE CAN BE CHANGED: A centurion soldier who had heckled Jesus had an attitude change at Calvary, for he cried out "Surely, he must be the Son of God."

—GUILTY CAN FIND FORGIVENESS: For I heard Jesus cry out "Father,

forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

—**BURDENS OF THE WEAK CAN BE LIFTED**: For Jesus said come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

—**SINNER CAN FIND SALVATION:** The song writer declares "There is a fountain, filled with blood that flows from immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus decided to drink the bitter cup to save us from our sins.

I'm also glad that he didn't stop there. He told us that he has drunk the bitter cup but he has left us a little reminder, to keep us in good spiritual shape, reminding us of the strong medicine of calvary.

Some people give credit to the doctor when they healed. Some thank the hospital. Some call it luck!

But I heard a song writer declare: "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that save me. One day when I was lost, he died upon on the cross. I know it was the blood that saved me.!"

It was Jesus who died out on Calvary!

It was Jesus who rose on Sunday Morning!

I know it was the blood that saved me!

No. 420-Revival

What Time Is It?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 8, 1992

***SCRIPTURE**: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21; "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up..." Ecclesiastes 3:1-3.*

Introduction

Do you remember when you first learned to tell time? That was a difficult task. The system seems confusing because it never made sense that although the big hand was pointing at "2" it was 10 minutes after the hour or if it pointed at 11 it was 5 minutes before the hour. The little hand always made sense, if it pointed at eight then it was eight, but the big hand was always complicated things and made telling time awkward.

Learning to "tell" time was a major task for a child. A sign of maturity and responsibility came when a child received his first watch, complete with Mickey Mouse's big hand and little hand. As children became men and women the Mickey Mouse brands were traded for Seikos, Elgins and diamond studded Rolexes. No matter what the age, the watch helps them to keep time.

Learning to tell time is important. As simple as it may sound, it is also important for every person to know the hour of this age and to understand the times in which he or she lives.

There are many adults today who can't tell time! Not on their watches, but in their lives. Many have experienced great blessings from God, yet they remain outside of an active service in the church. Many have survived tough times and endured the droughts of depression and storms and winds of war, yet they still live separate from God.

As Christians, we learned long ago that we need the Lord on a daily basis. We reached a cross roads in our lives and we decided that it was "time" for us go a different route.

"What time is it?" It is time for those who have not committed themselves to the service of God to accept him ...while there is still time.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Elijah as he challenged the people of God to make a decision. This text is in response to a great drought that God had caused upon the land to show his disapproval for the ungodly acts of Jezebel and King Ahab. There was no rain for three years and there was devastation everywhere. The people of Israel had strayed from God. They were worshipping one or more of the idol Gods of the land all described as "Baal." The rains were stopped to give them a sign that God was displeased, yet they persisted in Baal worship.

Elijah staged a demonstration atop Mt. Carmel that was designed to show the people the real God. He assembled the 450 prophets of Baal on one side and himself on another. Each built an altar and placed upon it a sacrifice. Elijah's challenge was for the real God to respond by consuming the sacrifice with fire. His challenge to the people was that they should "choose ye this day." He said the people should consider the demonstration and then make a decision about whom they would serve. Making it more difficult, Elijah drenched his sacrifice with water many times to prove to the people the power of God. After many incantations and dances the prophets of Baal gave up, receiving no answer. Then Elijah prayed a small prayer and God answered from heaven, consuming the sacrifice completely.

When the people saw it, they were able to understand the sign and verse 39 records that they "fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Elijah's demonstration helped them to understand that it was time for them to make a decision. They believed in God, but they were fascinated by Baal too. When they saw the signs, however, they knew it was time for them to move.

The Little Hand-God's Anger

Knowing the times spiritually is a simple as telling the time on your clock. Consider the little hand and the big hand.

The little hand suggests God's anger. Just as the little hand on a watch points to one of 12 hours, there are 12 conditions of the spirit that can anger God.

Today there are many who anger God by their lifestyle but they don't know it because they can't tell time.

STUBBORNESS. (Exodus 4:14) God had a job for Moses to do but yet he stubbornly gave excuses. Stubborness angers God for even today he has a job for many to do but they stubbornly refuse to respond.

IDOLATRY (Exodus 32:19-22) God is angered when other things become more important than he, just as he was with Israel for its occasional idolatry. Even today there are many who put other things before God and he is angered.

MURMURING (Num. 11:1,10) Israel complained tremendously, though God had blessed them immensely, just as some today continue to complain about what they don't have and refuse to give God credit for that which has been given them.

LUSTS OF MEN (1 Corinthians 6:9) God is angered by sex sins, and immorality, but

yet there are many who continue despite his anger daily.

PRIDE (Proverbs 16:18) We are reminded that "pride goeth before destruction." Although we know God despiseth the proud we boast daily of our personal accomplishments, void of the intervention of God.

DISOBEDIENCE (Numbers 22:22) God was frequently angry with Israel for its disobedience and even today we anger him by our tendency to disobey him whenever it is to our convenience.

REBELLION (Numbers 32:10-13) God is angered when we fight against his will and resist his direction, just as he was angry with Israel for its rebellious nature when he tried to help them in the wilderness.

BACKSLIDING (Galatians 4:9) Those who have known the things of God anger God when they turn from them.

HYPOCRISY (Job 42:7) It angers God for his people to be hypocritical, to profess one thing but live another.

WICKEDNESS (Psalm 7:11) Those who are wicked in their character and dealings with others anger God "every day."

DRUNKARDS (1 Cor. 6:9) Those who are either drunk with liquor or the wine of the world, anger God.

SIN (1 John 5:17) Sin is any transgression of God's law and it angers him in all forms.

There are many who see how the little hand points, but yet they still cannot tell the hour.

The Big Hand Points To God's Grace

It is clear that the little hand points to God's anger and wrath. However, I'm glad that the clock of salvation doesn't just have a little hand. Because while the little hand may tell us the general hour in which we stand, the big hand tells us where we are right now.

I'm so glad that the clock of Salvation, doesn't just have a little hand that condemns me for what I use to do, but it also has a big hand that tells me where I stand right now. I'm so glad that Romans 6:23 doesn't stop with the little hand that says "wages of sin" is death but there is also a big hand that points out that the "gift of God is eternal life."

The big hand of God's grace points to the outstretched hand of God that we see in our lives every day.

At 1 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **sadness** and turned it into **joy!**

At 2 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **weakness** and turned it into **strength!**

At 3 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **burdens** and made them light!

At 4 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **loneliness** and told you he'd be with you **always**.

At 5 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **sickness** and put you on your feet again!

At 6 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **failure** and gave you the **victory!**

At 7 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **tear drops** and dried your weeping eyes!

At 8 O'CLOCK God's grace, took you from the **gutters** of life and gave you a **new glory!**

At 9 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **fears** and gave you **courage**!

At 10 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **confusion** and gave you **peace!**

At 11 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your **darkness** and gave you his marvelous **light!**

At 12 O'CLOCK God's grace, took your despair and gave you new hope!

Although we have angered him hour by hour, God's grace has continued to bless us, minute by minute.

Somebody is able to tell the time. They can see that "I have sinned, but God has blessed me" If God has been a good God then I need to stand up and give him my life.

What time is it?

It's time for those who are:

—Asleep to wake up; Behind to catch up; Without Courage to stand up; — Downtrodden to look up; unchurched to join up!

It's time for the undecided to make a decision for Christ!

Recognizing that all we had was the little hand of God's anger, Jesus decided to that in the midst of these troubling times he would go to Calvary to give us a big hand.

He died on on Calvary with his head at 12 O'clock and his feet at 6 O'CLOCK. He died with hands stretched wide at 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

But he rose on Sunday morning to let the world know that he is with us every minute and hour!

No. 419-Revival

A Good Nail In A Sure Place

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
November 1, 1992

***SCRIPTURE**:"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." Isaiah 22:23*

Introduction

Have you ever had a good plan but you knew something was missing? This is one of those instances where no matter how you tried the things you tried to do would not work out because there was something missing. What was the missing element?

Consider the builder who sat alone side the road with his head in his hands looking despondent and sad. As he sat, a peddler came along and asked about his sad mood. "Why are you sad?" The peddler asked. The builder said "I am a builder but I have no materials with which to build." The peddler sought to cheer him up and opened his wares and gave him tools that included a hammer, saw, and level and then went on his way. The builder sat again with his head in his hands looking despondent. Soon a lumberjack came by and asked why he was so sad. "Why are you so sad?" came the question to which the builder responded "I have tools, yet I don't have what it takes to build." The lumberjack gave him some lumber from his wagon. "This lumber is fresh from the mill. This should help you to build." The builder arranged the wood according to plans but soon sat with his head in his hands. The peddler returned and asked "why are you still looking so ill, did I not give you what it takes to build? The builder responded that he had tools and lumber but could not put them together. Looking in his wagon again the peddler presented him with a leather bag. "In answer to your plea, I have what you need. Your effort to build will not prevail unless your hammer has a good nail." At that he handed him a bag of nails and the builder happily began to build. He had tools and materials, but something was missing.

There are many today who try to build lives for themselves by simply assembling all of the tools and materials in front of them. These tools and materials may include education, job training, and life experiences. Alone however, they are no good. Something is needed to hold the pieces together, to bond the diverse timbers that comprise our hopes and dreams.

As Christians, we have found that "something" to be Jesus. He is like a good nail that holds us together to work successfully. Similarly, so should we allow ourselves to become the nails that hold together the work of kingdom building. Whether we are railroad spikes or just common nails, the Lord needs a good nail in his service!

Exposition

This text focuses on Shebna, a man who held a position of power and influence under King Hezekiah. In comparison to modern times he could be called the Secretary of State of the administration of King Hezekiah. Shebna had power, influence and control in his position of power. He was surrounded by people who moved at his command. He even began the building of his personal tomb, carved out of stone for his final resting place in his death.

For all practical purposes, Shebna had everything a man could want. He felt that he was safe and secure in his position. However, the prophet Isaiah came to prophesy that God was not pleased because he was not operating according to the will of God. The prophet foretold how this great man, with instruments of power at his fingertips, would be brought down.

Shebna's sense of false security was like a nail fastened in an unsure place. However, Isaiah prophesied that God would remove him and replace him with Eliakim, another man in the king's court that was faithful to the cause of God's people. Those that depended on Shebna, thinking he was a sure thing, would also fall.

Shebna fell and Eliakim rose to a position of prominence in the kingdom. However, unlike Shebna, Eliakim rose to become one whose hopes and aspirations were linked not to his political wits but to will of God. He was a good nail, in a sure place.

God Is Looking For A Good Nail

Today God is looking for some good nails. Men and women of faith, like Eliakim in this text. He is looking for people that are willing to use their lives in his service and give him their best. The nails that God seeks are not all the same, but have different gifts and roles that he needs them to play.

GOOD NAILS: The Lord needs nails that can be used. What makes a good nail? A good nail must be straight, have a sharp point, and a good head.

Straight. If we want to be used by God, we must be straight. Being straight means that we are not walking a crooked path. It is almost impossible to use a crooked nail. However, lives once bent out of shape by life's tough times, can be straightened by the power of God. The word reminds us that all who accept Christ are "new creatures" and old things are passed away and all things become new.

Sharp points are needed to do God's work. After accepting him, the next step is to learn as much about God's word and kingdom work as possible. It begins with Sunday School and bible study and special studies that help sharpen our points. 2

Timothy 2:15 reminds us that we should always "study to show thyself approved."

God needs those who are willing to come to him with a good head. There are many today who have their "heads bad." They are drunk with the wine of the world and they forget about God. God needs men and women that are willing to come to him with a clear thinking "good head" that can withstand the pounding temptations that the world will give.

COMMON NAILS: These are nails of various sizes that are used in the ordinary work of building. They have different lengths and sizes that range from the number two common to the giant sized number 50. If God needs anyone, he needs people with plain common sense. Jesus was often criticized because he made his headquarters among the common people. He did so because there is a need for people who have the common touch in the service of the master.

FINISHING NAILS: These are small nails with small heads. They are often used by carpenters when they need a nail that can do what a nail is supposed to do, but not be seen. God needs people in his service who don't have the "big head." He needs those who are willing to be a good follower, carrying out a mission without thought of whether their name will be called. Such a person requires a humble spirit that places service to God before self glorification.

CONCRETE NAILS: These are tough nails. Ordinary nails will bend when faced with concrete. But these nails are so tough that they can bore through solid concrete and hold fast. In the same sense, God needs followers with a will of steel that can shatter walls of resistance and push his kingdom building plans through. These are not intimidated by a challenge and will go forward despite opposition.

GOOD NAILS MUST BE GALVANIZED. Even the best nails can get rusty when exposed to the elements. Some nails, especially those used in roofing are: "Galvanized" or specially treated to make them rust resistant. A nail that is exposed to the storm and the rain and then rusts and gives way is not much good. God needs men and women who are willing to be dipped in the blood of the lamb, and sealed by the holy spirit.

Even Good Nails Need A Sure Place

While it is good have all the right qualities of personality and spirit, to be of service to God they must be properly applied. Shebna, in this text, thought only of himself and relied heavily upon his on his own abilities. He was a good nail, but he hung his hopes in an unsure place.

Even the best nail needs a sure place. One of the first lessons that amateur carpenters learn is that nails that are driven into a secured surface may drive harder, but they hold sure.

Too many today have good qualities but they are trying to make a place for themselves in life the easy way. They are like good nails, in unsure places.

I don't care who you are and how much you know, everybody needs something to hold on to.

A good nail needs a sure place!

If you are looking for a sure place, I recommend Jesus. I hear him call out: *"Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden I will give you rest." He'll give you a safe, sure place to rest "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

He is a sure place because no matter what your condition, he can give you something to hold on to.

If you are *crooked*, Jesus can straighten you out!

If you are *unclean*, Jesus can wash you up!

If you feel like you are a *loser*, Jesus can even up the odds and make winners out of losers, champions out of weaklings, and victors out of victims.

He's a sure place, because when you have Jesus you have somebody that can:

—*Out-run* the wind; *Outshine* the Sun; *Out-shout* the thunder; and *Out-Shake* an earthquake

He's a sure place because only Jesus can take a:

—Sapling and turn it into a tree; an egg and develop a chicken

—A boy and turn him into a man; Sinner and turn him to a saint!

Jesus who died on Calvary!

Jesus who rose with the victory over death and grave!

Jesus, he is a sure place that will never let you down!

No. 418-Youth, Revival

Totally Crossed Out!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 25, 1992

SCRIPTURE:*"A double minded man is unstable in all his way" James 1:8; "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleans your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded;"-Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up." James 4:8,10.*

Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation where you could not make up your mind? Those were the kind of situations where you found yourself torn between two directions, each compelling you to make a choice. Today many young people find themselves in that situation. Many have become totally confused and have freaked out.

This indecision is best reflected by the popular singing group Kriss Kross. These two young men emerged from the plethora of rappers in today's music world to become instant hits with young people across the nation. Their songs are simple and rhythmic, but what gets your attention is the fact that they wear their clothes backward. Their shirts, hats, pants, even their underwear are worn backwards. They present a picture of confusion, and indecision as they sing about "Jump" and "I missed the bus." Their album "Totally Crossed Out" has been scooped up by millions of young people, making these two Junior High School students instant stars and millionaires. Like long hair became youth's symbol of the sixties revolution against the traditional materialistic values of the times, Kriss Kross has caught the imagination of many young people. Many would wear their clothes backward if it were not for school rules and the stern eyes of their parents.

There are many young people who are, to say the least, "totally crossed out." They are totally confused about life and find it difficult to make decisions. Some give up on school, family and even their personal goals in their confusion. Frustration is the end result of the dilemma and troubled spirits is the final product.

Christian youth, while *in* the world are not *of* the world. They hear and listen to the songs of their peers but are not impacted by the negative messages. As Christians, they don't suffer from double mindedness. They know whom they serve, where they are going and what it will take to get them there. Though the world may be totally crossed out, confused and troubled, they have decided to live for Jesus.

Praise God for Christian youth that serve God with love, commitment and a made

up mind!

Exposition

This text focuses on James, the brother of Jesus, as he writes words of encouragement to Jewish Christians and to others that were scattered abroad. His message encouraged them to be strong in the faith and exemplify their faith through their good works.

In the first eight verses of James 1 he encouraged Christians to expect many temptations and tests that would serve to build their faith in Christ. In verse two he began by explaining that Christians should expect moments of temptation and should be ready for them. His phrase *"divers temptations"* is used to suggest that the world will attack persons trying to live the Christian life from all sides. Verse 3 addresses the attitude that Christians should have when the tempting moment comes. We face temptations with the full knowledge that the *"trial of our faith worketh patience."*

James' message to Christian Jews was that they should ask God for wisdom and faith to face their moment of trial with a made up mind, without wavering from one side to another.

In a very blunt statement, James told the Jewish Christians that they should approach their faith with a made up mind. He warned that a *"double minded man is unstable in all his ways."* His message was directed to members of the church who knew the right way to go but were often victims of temptations and tricks of the devil. He reminded them that double minded people were unstable, unsure and unpredictable.

In Chapter 4:7 he urges those who tend to be doubled minded to submit themselves wholly to God and *"resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* One way to resist the devil is suggested in verse 8: *"Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you."* Those who are confused, living in both the world and the church at the same time are urged to *"cleanse your hand ...purify your hearts"*

Finally James suggests that the double minded person should make up their minds, and *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up."* There is no blessing in being mixed up, confused and crossed out. There is a blessing in making up your mind to live for Jesus no matter what.

As for James, historians tell us that in the year 62 A.D. that the Sanherin Council commanded James, who was the leader of the Church, to proclaim from the galleries of the temple that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead James cried out that Jesus WAS the Son of God as loud as he could. His enemies reportedly hurled him to the ground and stoned him to death. *Even in the face of death James refused to turn back.* He had decided to follow Jesus and there was no turning back.

Criss Crossed lives

In the early days of the telephone, operators connected calls by taking the wire

from your phone line and placing it in the jack of the caller. Sometimes when busy, the operators would get the calls criss crossed and the right call was sometimes plugged into the wrong jack.

Today there are many people who have their wires crossed. They have the right line in the wrong jack. As a result their lives are just the opposite of what they want them to be. They may not wear their clothing backwards, but they are strange aberrations of what they claim to be.

Homosexuality and lesbianism are clear examples of criss crossed values. Although the word of God clearly speaks against the homosexual life-style, there are hundreds of thousands of men and women who claim to be Christians and at the same time publicly announce their pride in being. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 plainly says that the effeminate or others with such crisis crossed values cannot not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Even clearer than that, there are millions of people who claim to be Christians but engage in sex without being married, drown themselves in alcohol, steal from their employers, and backstab their friends. The fact that they know about Jesus and have pledged to live for him is the right line, but when they become practicing sinners, it's the right line in the wrong jack. The result is criss cross lives.

Today that same challenge is given to those who are living the double minded life.

Those who are filling the night clubs and discos on the weekends and filling the church pews on Sunday morning..how long halt ye between two opinions?

Those who are wrinkling hotel sheets with another man's wife, then sit angelically in church beside your own, how long?

Those who boogie and disco until the wee hours of the night and then shout all day in the name of the Lord, how long?

The end result of the Criss crossed life is confusion, frustration, death and destruction

Criss Crossed Lives Can Be Straightened out

Those who are totally crossed out, live their lives inside out, bottom side up, top side down, backwards, sideways and every way except the right way.

But I'm so glad that a life that has been totally crossed out, can be changed. Paul told the Corinthians that while they were practicing sinners they could not get in the kingdom of heaven but in 1 Corinthians 6:11 he added *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.."*

James in 4:8 showed us how to untangle a criss crossed life. *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you..cleanse your hands, purify your hearts...humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall, lift you up."*

I'm so glad that I'm not what I use to be!

I'm so glad that the Lord saved my soul!

There is a way to untangle a criss cross life! You can trade your criss cross for the old rugged cross!

The old rugged cross is not a crissed cross, for a criss crossed life only brings evil while the old rugged cross brings you good.

A criss crossed life brings you:

—*Confusion*, but the cross of Jesus brings you understanding

—*Defeat*, but the cross of Jesus bring you the victory

—*Tears you down*, but the cross of Jesus builds you up

—*Sadness*, but the cross of Jesus brings you joy

Don't worry about crissed cross, but get your mind on This cross!

No wonder the song writer declared "*At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"*

At the cross, there is hope in your moment of despair!

At the cross, there is strength for your moments of weakness!

At the cross, there is love when the whole world hates you!

So much love that Jesus, picked up an old cross and died out on calvary and rose early Sunday morning with all power in his hands.

Power to raise up a bowed down head!

Power to straighten out a criss crossed life!

All Power!

All Power!

No. 417-Revival

A Blank Check On The Bank Of Heaven

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 18, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"But my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19*

Introduction

Suppose someone gave you a blank check, how would you feel? Consider the young boy about to leave on a journey of great distance. There was a sickness in his family and his presence was needed. He didn't have much money and was unsure of his finances for the journey. He decided to go anyway. Just before his departure a woman came to his home. The lady told him that she was aware that he was about to make a journey with meager means. The lady was strange to the neighborhood, but heard of the boy's plight.

After talking to him briefly she placed a check in his hand. It was made payable to him and signed, but there was no amount filled in. "If, along the way you need something, use this check and fill in the amount." The boy looked at this strange woman with skepticism and amused her by pretending to believe her words. He folded the check and went on his journey. Along the way he encountered many obstacles that challenged him. At the close of each day he had not place to lay his head because the hotels required money. He hungered. Finally he became sick almost to death. When his family located him and brought him home, he was a frail and puny. On his sick bed the woman came to see him. "When you were hungry, why didn't you use the check to put bread on your table? When you had no place to lay your head, why didn't you use the check?" The boy said "I didn't believe anybody would just give me blank check, I thought it was a joke. I never used it because I didn't think it was any good." The woman shook her head as she told him "Son, my father is the head of the bank. This check is drawn on his account. I am a signer on his account. If this check, with my name on it, would have been presented at my father's bank, regardless to the amount, it would have been paid. You had it, but you wouldn't use it, what a shame."

Did you know God gives each of us a blank check drawn on the bank of heaven? It's a promissory note that pledges to save us from sin and to provide unlimited blessings from heaven. Unfortunately, some of us have it, but we don't use it.

As Christians, we are grateful to God for the opportunity of salvation. We know that God has promised to save and protect us and has given us the assurance that whenever we need him, he'll answer our call. It's a blank check, waiting to be used!

Exposition

This text focuses on a letter, written by Paul, while imprisoned in Rome. He wrote to the Church in Philippi with an urgent tone. He encouraged them to remain full of joy despite their circumstances. It had been 10 years since their sufferings and persecutions began. Paul wrote them words of encouragement to rekindle the flame of joy that burned in their hearts.

Throughout all of his life Paul cared very little for financial gain. He worked as a tent maker and supported himself by his trade. He never requested or burdened any of the congregations he founded to sustain him. However, he knew it was legitimate for any bearer of the Gospel to live out of the Gospel. Some used the fact that he never asked for anything as a rational and theological basis to claim that nothing was due to others. Therefore on occasion, Paul accepted donations from those who wanted to help him. In this letter, Paul was under house arrest in Rome and had received one such offering from the Philippians. They had sent two when he was in Thessalonica and seemed constantly concerned about his welfare. In his words of thanks, Paul said he was grateful for the offering not because he needed the money but because it was an evidence of fruit credited to their account (4:17).

Imbedded in his response is a great truth: every believer has an account in heaven which is increased by the exercise of his fruit. In this specific instance Paul suggested that they were blessed by their kind act of trying to help him. It added to their account, as did any deed that reflected the attributes of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

However, if their accounts were somehow overdrawn, Paul reminded them that "My God shall supply all your needs.." In essence Paul told the Philippians: Your faith in God and works builds up your account in heaven. But if for some reason, you are faced with circumstances that are too large for your stores of faith and boldness, remember, God gives you a blank check. This blank check is an unlimited line of credit to obtain all of your needs.

A Blank Check From Heaven

Today, many people use checks for the convenience of making purchases without carrying large sums of cash with them. The first consideration about the worth of a check is the name of the bank.

NAME OF THE BANK. The name of the bank suggests its stability and dependability. Large American Banks such as Citibank and Chase Manhattan bank are known for their stability. The probability that they can weather financial storms is great so people feel safe when they get a check drawn on a stable bank.

If we feel safe with a check from a stable bank then we should feel even safer with a check from the bank of heaven. It is older than time and is supported by the riches and glory of God. Unlike man's bank, which only responds to financial demands, a check from the bank of heaven is good for many things. God told Moses "I am that I am" and certainly the bank of Heaven is good for exactly that: finances, "I am that,"; healing, "I am that!" Whatever you need, the bank of heaven can make it happen.

DATE. The date of the check is important. It lets the bank know when it is authorized to pay the check. It is a common practice today to "Post date" a check. This means that the person issuing the check does not have enough funds to back it up at the present but will on a certain day. The check is no good until that day.

The date on God's blank check to those who believe in him is dated "NOW." 2 Corinthians 6:2 reminds us that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." The blessings that God offers each of us is not postdated to some later date, but is available exactly when you need it, right now!

PAY TO THE ORDER OF: This line on any check tells the bank the name of the person that can collect. Businesses, organizations and individuals can cash commercial checks, but not checks on the bank of heaven.

The blank check that God gives us is made payable only to believers! John 3:16 reminds us that God loved the world so much that he would give his son to save the world. Whosoever believes on the Son would receive a blank check, made payable to him, drawn on the bank of heaven. The check is made payable to "Whosoever Believeth" which means me and you!

AMOUNT. An important part of the check is the amount. It tells exactly what you are to receive. The top line says in numbers how much you are to receive, but the second line spells out in words, exactly how much you are to get, so that there is no confusion! Romans 6:23 says the gift of God to all believers is eternal life. To be sure that we understand that, on a check from heaven it is spelled out "Eternal Life." This includes all of the blessings and gifts that come with eternal life.

SIGNATURE: If a check has no signature it is completely worthless. It could be made out for $1 million, in your name, payable today, but if it has no signature it is worthless. Banks are responsible only for paying checks that bear the signature of an authorized signer on the account.

John 1 tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelled among men. In so doing, he countersigned a blank check for anyone who believed in Christ. In John 1:12 he gave them access to the riches of the bank of heaven as if they were direct sons and daughters of God!

Why We have this check

The “For” line on a check explains the reason the check was or identifies the account to which it is to be applied. At your local bank this line might indicate rent, utilities or groceries. However, the “for” line on our blank check says we have received it is because of the love of God.

Romans 5:8 notes that *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

He loved us with a love that was:

—Higher than the heavens; Deeper than the oceans!

—Sweeter than honeycomb; Greater than the universe!

—Stronger than the wind; Fresher than the morning dew!

It was love that prompted him to pick up and old rugged cross and die for our sins! It was a love that challenge to taste death for three days and nights, but to rise in victory!

He arose with all power in his hand, offering blank checks to any that will receive him!

But when you go to a bank to cash any check you must submit some identification to prove who you are!

You need to be able to say “I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow!”

I know I am a child of God because I heard his call and responded “If the Lord needs somebody, hear am I, send me!”

No. 416-Revival

Give The People What They Want

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La., 71202
October 11, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. — 1 Sam 8:7 "For God So loved the world,that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16*

Introduction

How do you distinguish between your wants and your needs? In 1938, noted sociologist H.A. Murray in his work "Explorations in Personality" estab lished that our needs involve both physical and social concerns. Needs are those aspects of life that are essential to survival. Physical needs involve: food, clothing, shelter. Our social needs may involve our need for achievement, recognition, status, power etc. Dr. Murray describes our wants as "psychogenic" secondary products of our needs. Wants are linked to needs, but are not necessary to satisfy needs, except in our own mind. We need a place to live, but we want a big house with five bathrooms. We need to eat, but we want to dine lavishly on fine cuisines. We need clothes to wear, but our want for designer clothes is linked to our need for recognition and status.

One mark of spiritual maturity is to know the difference between needs and wants. This maturity also enables us to set our priorities in a way that will meet our needs and satisfy our wants. Unfortunately there are many people who spend their entire lives chasing after their wants and neglecting their needs. Want based happiness is derived from the desire to keep up with Joneses. "Keeping up with Joneses" is a life draining experience that leads to unhappiness and discontentment. The story is told of Abraham Lincoln who was once seen walking down a street with two little boys who were screaming and yelling. A friend yelled out the window at the man who would be president and asked "What are those fellows yelling about Abe?" Mr. Lincoln looked at the two boys and answered "One of the boys has some nuts and the other one is going nuts trying to get them." Many today are "going nuts" trying to get wants that far exceed their needs.

As Christians, we have learned the crucial difference between our needs and our wants. We are not tempted to spend our time in meaningless competition to achieve more "wants" than others. We constantly remind ourselves of Philippians 4:19, that

“my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory..

Exposition

This text focuses on Samuel who served as a judge over Israel for 40 years. In meeting with the people Samuel always kept them focused on God’s will. The leadership he provided was a theocracy in that God led them in every aspect of their lives.

Samuel established a school to teach young men beginning in the prophetic field. As he began to age, he appointed his sons as Judges but that proved a failure since they were wild and greedy. The leaders of the tribes, who had watched the nations around them for years, wanted to emulate the national organization of their neighbors. They seized upon the failed leadership of Samuel’s sons and demanded a king for Israel. Since Samuel was about 60 years old, they reasoned that it was in the nation’s best interest to establish a government that could protect the people from its enemies. Samuel was displeased at the request of the leaders. He felt it was a rejection of his leadership. He had called upon the Lord for them in battle against the Philistines and had given them his best. It appeared that they were rejecting him as their leader and he was hurt. God told Samuel to give the people what they wanted but not without warnings of the impact of their decision.

Despite his reservations Samuel did as God ordered. He told the people that if they established a monarchy that it would place a heavy burden upon the people because of the costs. He warned them how they would be taxed, brought into military service. He told them that their tradesmen would be called upon to use their skills in the service of country and king as they provided the food for his table and diplomatic guests.

Although Samuel’s warnings were clear the people still insisted on having a King. 1 Despite his own inclinations, Samuel listened to the voice of God and told the people that God would give them a king.

Some Don’t Know What They Want

Today there are many who have difficulty choosing between their wants and their needs. As frustrating as that may seem, they are fortunate because at least they have something to work toward. There are too many people today who don’t know what they want!

Solomon didn’t know what he wanted. One day he was into building projects. He built a fine palace, temple and other great works. The next day he was studying astronomy, where he studied the sun, moon and stars. One day he was into music and hired the finest musicians of his time to play for him. The next day he was deep into the world of commercial investment and chasing after the dollar. One day he was into parties and good times and hosted grand parties and feasts.

Like Solomon, there are many today who do not know what they want, but they are looking for something. They jump from one thing to another trying to find happiness. They are not exactly sure what they are looking for, but they feel compelled to keep looking ,hoping to recognize happiness when it comes. Solomon spent his entire life searching and concluded that what he was looking for was right there all the time.

Some Don't Want What they Have

If it's frustrating not to know what you want, consider those who have something, but don't want what they have!

The prodigal son was at home with a family that loved him. There was a roof over his head and food on the table yet he didn't want what he had. He wanted something else and went into the far country where he wasted his life in riotous living.

Similarly there are many today who abandon what they have while they spend their time chasing after rainbows and mirages.

Homes have fallen apart and personal fortunes have been lost as some have simply walked out on families, careers and productive futures. They don't want what they have, and don't know what they want.

God Gave the people what the Needed

They confuse what they want for what they need. They use "want" and "need" interchangeably as if both had the samemeaning. There are many who need:

—love but they want sex, from any warm body that will provide it.

—joy but they want goodtimes. They look for it in an endless succession of nightclubs, discos and bars.

—Friendship but they want sunny weather buddies who share with them as long as the sun is shining but disappear when storms rise.

—Character but they want an image of respectability.

—Salvation but they want a denomination

—A cross to bear but they want a cross to wear.

A long time ago God looked down on the world and found it to be in need. He heard the prayers of Israel as it asked for what it wanted. Israel wanted a leader that would help them in war. Israel wanted a revolutionary that would be their champion against the Romans. They wanted an earthly kingdom to rival the splendor of Solomon.

However, God decided to answer their prayer. He decided to give the people what they needed instead of giving them what they want.

The world needs

—patience in the midst of its problems;

—Support in the midst of its suffering;

—Hope in the midst of its hardship;

—Shelter in the time of its storms

—Song in the middle of the midst of its midnight hour

God's response to the world was simple. Basically what he said was "I know what you ask me for, but because I love, I not going to give you what you want but, I'm going to give you hat you need.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The world wants laughter, fun and excitement, but what it needs is Jesus who brings genuine joy that is unspeakable, unmatchable, unmistakable and unmeasurable!

The world wants possessions, luxury and wealth, but what it needs is Jesus who offers treasures from heaven that are, unlimited, unfailing, unreserved, and unconstrained!

The world wants position, power and prestige, but what it needs is Jesus who offers:

—Assurance in the midst of affliction

—Strength in the midst of weakness

—Courage in the face of a challenge

—Boldness in the midst of a battle

No wonder the song writer declared, "You can have all this world, but give me Jesus!"

Jesus, the Lilly of the Valley!

Jesus, my rock in a weary land!

Jesus, who died on Calvary and rose on the third day

You can have all this world, but give me Jesus!

Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy,my all. He is my strength from day today, without him I would fall. When I am sad he makes me glad, he's my friend!

No. 415-Revival

Out On A Limb

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
October 4, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." — Jeremiah 23:5; "And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. — Luke 19:2-4*

Introduction

When was the last time you took an action on pure faith alone? Were you a little anxious about the outcome? If so, then you know what it's like to be "out on a limb."

Consider the little boy whose home caught fire in the middle of the night. As the stairways leading to the ground collapsed, he soon found that there was no exit except to climb out of his window. Afraid, the boy could not move and stood motionless in the window as people below screamed. An unknown man climbed up a drain pipe to reach the boy's room, but the pipe fell under his weight just as he reached the top. The man spotted a limb hanging close to the window and recognized it as the only way down. He told the boy to hold onto him as he made a desperate leap for that limb. As the man's hands held onto the limb, the boy realized he had burned them severely, but the man said nothing. Once on the ground the man disappeared. No one knew who he was or where he came from. He appeared and simply disappeared into the night.

Weeks later, the town's people gathered in a meeting to decide who would care for the little boy since his parents had died in the fire. A wealthy man, a farmer, and a businessman came forward to offer to rear the boy as their own. The little boy simply gazed at the floor as each of them talked. Then a man entered the room and stood in the crowd. When he removed his hands from his pockets the boy who had never seen his face, recognized those hands as the hands of the man who saved him. The little boy ran to the man and hugged him with great compassion. The others competing for the child sat as the town leader spoke to the little boy. "Son," why do you want this man to raise you? The little boy answered: "All I know sir, is that when I was in trouble, he went out on a limb for me." Custody of the child was given to the man, without comment.

As Christians, we can appreciate the love that Jesus has shown for us. He loved

us so much that he put his own life on the line that we might have a chance to a better life. He did more than just go out on a limb. The little boy's testimony could very well be our own: "When I was in trouble, he hung on a tree for me."

Exposition

This text focuses on Zacchaeus, a tax collector who lived in Jericho. Jesus chose to pass through Jericho as he preached about the kingdom of heaven. Jericho was a city of priests and religious leaders, known for its large population of clericals and others who ministered to the law of Moses. Zacchaeus, on the other hand was a hated tax collector and a publican. He was classed with the prostitutes and harlots because he collected taxes for the Romans.

When Jesus made his arrival into Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted to see him and learn about him. He was pushed aside and lost in the crowd as people pressed from all around. However, for just one look, Zacchaeus climbed a Sycamore tree and from its limbs saw Jesus as he approached. With all the priests and clerical types surrounding him, Jesus saw Zacchaeus, out on a limb. He told him to come down because he would sit with him that evening. The priests were insulted that this great teacher would come to their city and shun them to dine and fellowship with a tax collector and publican. They wanted to know what redeeming qualities did Zacchaeus have that cause Jesus to take such note of him. Jesus never gave them an answer to their satisfaction. He simply went about his way.

Zacchaeus, met the Lord, because he went out on a limb.

Some Have Been Left Out On A Limb

There are many people today who have had bad experiences in the past and are hesitant about going out on a limb. Most of these bad experiences have involved misplaced trust. There are those who went against their better judgment and co-signed loans for friends and relatives, only to have them abandon their commitment. The same is true for people who lent their good name to causes and enterprises and then found that others misused them. Some have taken the lead in civic causes and social issues as the masses encouraged them. Later, they discovered that sometimes "people will put you there on that limb, and then saw it off."

Going out on a limb requires considerable confidence and trust. Those who go out on a limb with men, run the risk of getting left out there alone, because men cannot control the variables that impact their lives. This is not to suggest that we should become virtual paranoids, suspecting everyone and trusting no one. It does suggest however that we should seek God's guidance before we climb out on a limb. Such was the case with Gideon who wanted to be sure that he had God's support before he led an army of men into battle. He asked God to send him an undeniable sign that his decision was the right one. Samson would have lived longer if he had not gone out on a limb and trusted Delilah with the secret of strength. He went out on a limb

and she cut it off. Had he talked it over with the Lord, his decision might have been different.

When we are deciding to whether to go out on a limb in life, it is better to talk to God about it first. Otherwise we might find ourselves out there all by ourselves.

Some Have Trouble Trusting God

Once a person has been left on a limb alone, it is difficult for them to trust again. Those who have loved and had their affections trampled by others, are hesitant to love or marry again. Those who have confided in friends only to have their friends betray them, are hesitant to trust others again. Having been hurt once, they do not want to be hurt again.

It is understandable, therefore, why some hesitate to make a decision to turn their lives over to God. Some have been let down before and they don't want to be hurt, dumped, or rejected again. When they hear the voice of God urging them to arise and take active service, some turn a deaf ear, out of fear that they will lose more than they will gain from another misplaced trust.

There is a big difference between trusting in men and trusting in God.

Men will let you down, but God will hold you up!

Men will leave you by yourself, but God will never leave you alone!

Men will abandon you when the going gets tough, but God will be a shelter for you in a time of storm.

David when out on a limb for God and built a great nation. Listen to his conclusions trusting God:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Proverbs' 3:5

"Oh Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust, save me from all them that persecute me and deliver me." Psalm 7:1

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee..."Psalm 56:3

Today, Jesus is calling for men and women, boys and girls to put their trust in him. He will save their souls, lift their burdens and guarantee them place in the kingdom of heaven. This is the same Jesus that Jeremiah referred to as the righteous branch of David.

Jesus, as the righteous branch, wants to take our:

—Worse and give us his best

--Hatred and give us his love

—Burdens and give us his blessing;

--Sorrows and give us his joy

—Guilt and give us his grace;

--Weakness and give us his strength.

Those who want to get to the branch, must be willing to go out on the limb of faith and reach for him. You can't get to the righteous branch without first going out on a limb! Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he had to climb the tree of faith and

go out on a limb!

Those who put their trust in the Lord and accept him have found that there has never been a time that he has left them out on a limb!

Strong winds may come, but he'll never leave you alone. He promised, never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

Before we were asked to go out on a limb for him, Jesus went out on a limb for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Jesus went out on a limb when he came to a cruel world to offer himself as a sacrifice.

Not only did he go out on a limb, he went even further. For one day he picked an old rugged cross and went out on Calvary and died. He died that he could rise on the third day with victory and assurance that those who trust in him will have victory too!

Go out on a limb for Jesus, he'll be by your side!

Go out on a limb for Jesus, he'll wipe tears from your eyes!

Go out on a limb for Jesus, he'll make way out of no way!

I f you want to see Jesus, step out on faith and he'll never let you down

No. 414-Youth

Cinderellas & Cinderfellas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
September 27, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he." 1 Samuel 16:12; "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." Esther 2:17; "..Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which god hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians. 2:9*

Introduction

Is it possible for a person, born in poverty and obscurity to rise to high heights in these times? Are the rags to riches accounts of great men and women exceptions to the rule or examples to be studied and emulated? Can today's Christian really expect to overcome the odds and reach plateaus of success? It is being done every day by men and women who believe in the power of God!

Most of us are familiar with the story of Cinderella, the poor girl who had a chance to attend the prince's ball with a little help from her fairy Godmother. While there she danced with and enchanted the prince before rushing back home before midnight. We are familiar with how the prince sought after her and found her by matching her feet to a glass slipper she left behind. She provided the stuff dreams are made of when the prince married her and they lived happily ever after. Likewise, we are familiar with Oliver Twist, the poor boy who was living in poverty in England, struggling for food every day but rose to prominence as the child of a wealthy English family once he was discovered. Stories such as these have fed the imaginations of young people for years.

But there were some real lives, touched by the hand of God, that the Bible presents as example of God's ability to make cinderellas and cinderfellas out of every true believer. The life of David and Esther, two Old Testament characters who rose from obscurity, overcame racial and social barriers and succeeded in life with the help of God. Just as these young people were chosen to rise in biblical times youth today can rise to high heights as Christians if they will allow the attitude of Christian service to take first place in their lives and give life their best shot.

What God has in store for those who trust him dwarfs anything we can imagine. The sky is the limit for our potential with God on our side because "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath

prepared for them that love him."

Exposition

This text focuses on two special biblical characters that are clear examples of God's history of blessing those who trust him, despite the limitations of their circumstance.

Esther was a beautiful Jewish girl. She was bright, intelligent, and one of the most beautiful women of the land. However, she was a Jewess. She was part of a captured race that was ward to the Persians. When Xerxes ordered a beauty pageant held from which he would select a wife, Esther entered, confident that despite her race, she could win and become queen of all Persia. She entered and won. In 476 B.C. she became queen of all Persia. While on the throne she influenced the king to save the Jewish people from plots to destroy them. She arranged for another Jew, Mordecai, to move up and become the prime minister of the country. Their influence paved the way for the return of the Jews from exile. Hers is the story of a teenager who never doubted that God could make things happen for her, despite her social circumstance. She did the unthinkable and achieved the impossible. It was a real life cinderella story.

David was a shepherd boy who was courageous, poetic, and ingenious. He guarded the fields of his father and spent weeks at a time in the mountains. He was far removed from the glories of battle, the pomp and pagentry of the royalty and thoughts of such things were just faint dreams. Even in his family he was the least likely of his brothers to achieve great success. They were older, better known, and were soldiers. He was just a shepherd boy. However, God sent the prophet Samuel to the House of Jesse to anoint a future king. When this ruddy, but handsome young man came in from the hills, God told Samuel, he was the one that would one day be king. It did not matter that he was a virtual unknown or that he was just a teenager, he would be king. It would not matter that the only battles he had fought were with wild animals and were not against enemies of the kingdom, he would be king. Years later, this young man rose up from obscurity and became one of the greatest king's of Israel. He was not a member of the royal family. He was not from an influential family. He was just a farm boy who became king. It was a real life cinder-fella story.

Each are clear examples of what can be done by those who trust and believe in God's word. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said no one can even imagine the good things God has in store for those who trust him. He can take the obscure and bring it to full recognition. He can take rags and turn them to riches. He is a mighty and powerful God.

Blessings Waiting To Happen

Today there are millions of rags to riches stories that have unfolded in front of our very eyes. It is evidence that God is still in the rags to riches business, taking those

who were least likely to succeed and making successes out of them.

The roll call is endless:Arthur Ashe, who started playing tennis on a segregated playground in 1950 learned to succeed at what is generally respected as a white man's game. Over a 30 year career he climbed over racial barriers and stereotypes to become the first Black man to win Wimbledon in 1975. Bill Cosby was born in Philadelphia during the depression, when people were having a hard time keeping their heads up but he became successful making them laugh. A comedian, who never uses rated x scripts, he never stopped studying and earned a Ph.D in education and today earns over $100 million a year. John Johnson rose from the obscurity of Arkansas City Arkansas, overcame racism and poverty to become publisher of Ebony, Jet and president of Johnson publications. He is listed as one of the 400 richest men in the world by Forbes magazine. Cicely Tyson, whose character "Miss Jane Pittman" and scores of other noble Black women rose from the poverty of New York City to become an Emmy award winning actress summed up her account by saying that one day it became apparent to her that God had something big for her to do "I pushed myself away from the desk and announced to the world that I was sure God didn't put me on the face of this earth to bang on a typewriter for rest of my life...I wasn't sure what else was out there for me to do, but I certainly was going to try to find it." She stepped out on faith and found an exciting career on stage without nudity, profanity or taking any role that would detract from her proud African-American Heritage.

The list of rags to riches accounts is endless from the five brothers who danced and sang their way out of Gary Indiana as the Jackson Five to Mega stars Micheal Jackson and the Jackson family. The list could include the Jordans, Sugar Ray Leonards and even Ray "You Got the Right One Baby" Charles, who overcame blindness and drug addiction to make it to the top.

Todays youth can see examples all around them of men and women who have risen from obscurity, overcome obstacles and have become successful in their respected areas. But it is not necessary to go as far as New York of Philadelphia to find such accounts. Look around in your own family and the imprint of God's powerful hand on your family can be seen. Your family may not be listed in the Forbes Magazine top 400 richest families, but look what the Lord has done for you. Listen to the accounts of your grand parents as they tell of the hardships and barriers they endured in their youth.

Look at grandpa, who had doors slammed in his faced, opportunities denied to him, but yet he had enough strength to raise up his children and lift them on his shoulders so that they would have a better chance.

Look around you and see where God has brought you from! He has lifted our families from obscurity and isolation to the threshold of success!

Look where he has brought us from!

Eyes hath not seen

Youth today should remind themselves that God is still in the blessing business. In every generation there are some Cicely Tyson's who conclude: that God has

something more for me than a life of welfare, food stamps, unemployment and obscurity. I don't know what it is but I'm going to find it!

The same words Paul said to the Corinthians ring true today "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"

If you trust in the Lord, he will make a way for you!

He started making that about 2000 years ago. He made that way when he died on Calvary and rose on Sunday morning!

He will lift you and your family out of your social circumstance and bring you to a better day!

If you trust in the Lord, He will..

—Open doors when you knock!

—Satisfy you when you are in want!

—Reward you when you give him your best!

—Give you your dreams when ask

—Hear you when you pray!

No wonder the Song writer declared "I will trust in the Lord, till I die!"

No. 413-Membership Improvement

For Whom Do I Carry This Cross?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 20, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matthew 4:3*

Introduction

What motivates you to serve God? Why do you sing in the choir? Why do you want to be a deacon? Why do you preach, usher, serve on a committee, witness or teach in the church? Is it out of love, commitment or dedication to the cause of Christ or is there another reason, kept secret that only you know.

Consider the ancient teacher who was known for the strange ways that he taught his students the important issues of life. One day he and two of his students walked along a stony road as he lectured to them about the importance of serving others. He stopped and asked each student to pick up a stone and carry it for him. The first student picked up the largest stone he could find. The second picked up a small pebble. The teacher said nothing but simply walked and talked about commitment and service. About noon the teacher sat his students down and gave each of them bread and water in proportion to the size of the stone they carried for him. To the first who had been carrying a huge heavy stone he gave an entire loaf. To the second, who only carried a pebble he gave a crumb of bread, about the size of a fingernail. They ate silently and the second student hungered. As they walked along the road the teacher talked about obedience, service and commitment. Again he asked his students to pick up and carry a stone for him. The first student did as before he picked up a relatively large stone and placed it under his arm. This time the second student picked up not one but two large stones and placed one under each arm. At the close of the day, after walking many miles the teacher asked each student to throw their stones along the roadside. The first bowed humbly to his teacher and went home. The second complained. "I carried these stones all that way and there is nothing? No bread?" The teacher stared the young student in the eye and asked "*For whom did you carry the stones?"* Nothing more was said.

As Christians we must always strive to keep "service to God" as the reason that

we work in the church, serve our fellowman, and give of our time and energy. That which we share with others is not for personal glory, quest for power or for personal advancement, but only for the advancement of the kingdom of God. Jesus has asked every disciple to pick up his cross and follow him. We must daily ask ourselves the question: "For whom do I carry this cross? For myself or for the glory of God?" No one can provide the answer for us, we must answer that question ourselves.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ during his wilderness trial. Just before he began his public ministry Jesus retreated into the wilderness to pray, think and make important decisions about the course of his ministry. This lasted 40 days during which time Satan appeared and posed several alternative courses of action which were available to him. Each alternative showed Jesus how he could use his great faith and powers to promote himself. If he was willing, said Satan, he could submit himself to Satan's direction and bow down to him and the result would be fame, glory and power. In another instance, Satan tempted Jesus to use his invincible nature to rise above any opposition, army or foe that man could bring against him because if any harm would come to him the angels of heaven would quickly come and protect him from danger. The prospect of being a leader, impervious to pain and death would make Jesus the most powerful man on earth. The most tempting of all however, was Satan's appeal to Jesus to use his power to satisfy his own carnal needs. Satan challenged Jesus to take stones and turn them into bread.

Jesus' response to all of Satan's challenges was simply to quote scripture and to put Satan's thoughts out of his mind. The reason for his wilderness retreat was to make a commitment that would carry him all the way to Calvary. His was a decision of whether or not to pick up the cross of salvation and carry it to the end. Moreover, he had to also decided whether the ministry he would begin would be for himself or for the sake of fallen mankind. If his ministry was to be self promoting then he could use his powers to build great armies, world empires and remain invulnerable to death at the same time. If his ministry was to provide a means of redemption mankind doomed to punishment because of its sins, then he would have to reject all of Satan's appeals.

His ultimate decision was wrapped up in his dismissal of Satan by saying "Get thee behind me Satan. It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He decided to carry the cross, not for himself but for fallen mankind.

These Stones

The stones with which Satan tempted Jesus represented personal opportunity. His dilemma was to choose between obedience to God and his chance to rise to fame, fortune and power. Today there are many that find themselves in the same dilemma.

In the wilderness of introspection each of us is called upon to decide whether or not our service to God is out of obedience or other personal reasons. Do we give because we believe it is right to do so or is our giving limited to special efforts headed by special friends of ours. Do we seek membership in a church because of its networking potential and propensity to help our career or do we do so because we want to study the word of God. Do we work in our auxiliary that men might see our good works and praise us, or do we do what we do because we want to glorify God?

Just as Jesus took time to consider his motivation for ministry and service, each of us should do the same. Each should ask, "Am I am doing what I do in church for the pastor, a favorite deacon or friend, or am I doing it for the Lord?" When we answer "for the Lord" then certain things become unimportant. It is unimportant if:

—We do not receive publicity for our effort.

—We are not showered with praise for our involvement

—Our names are not called and highlighted

Those who serve for the praise and glory of God carry out their responsibilities not for personal glory and fame but they carry them out to serve the Lord.

Today individual church members are called upon to choose between "these stones" and "this rock", personal glory or unselfish service.

There is a difference between the what stones can offer and what the rock offers. The stones can award service, but the rock can reward service.

These stones can award with:

—Praise of men, but cannot reward with glory from God.

—Medals and awards, but cannot reward with a crown of Life

—Crowds and companionship, but cannot reward with friendship and fellowship

—Applause and cheers, but cannot reward with a "well done" from the Lord of Host.

These stones offer hallow glory void of a heavenly endorsement.

This Rock

At the conclusion of his wilderness trial Jesus looked out across time and saw millions of lost souls and decided against personal glory. He decided to pick up the cross for the lost generations of mankind.

For whom do you carry this cross? Jesus carried his cross for those whom the world:

—Curses, to show them that God is still blessing them

—Rejects, to show them that God is still receiving them

—Forsakes, to show them that God is still upholding them

—Condemns, to show them that God is still forgiving them

—Hates, to show them that God is still loving them

John 3:16 says God loved us so much that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

In times like these we don't need empty stones, but we need "this rock." Millions

have found that there is power in this rock.

This rock:

—Revives the weak and makes them strong

—Reshapes tragedy and turns it into triumph

—Restores faltering faith and rekindles the flame of hope

—Reduces mountains and turns them into molehills

—Relieves pressures and eliminates pain

—Replaces despair and rebuilds lost hope

No wonder the song writer declares: *"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!"*

In times like these, stand on the rock!

This rock is Jesus, whose perfection never declines

Jesus, *whose goodness never decreases*

Jesus, *whose truth never changes*

Jesus, *whose peace never ceases*

Jesus, *whose faith never fluctuates*

Jesus, *whose power never weakens*

I'm so glad that Jesus carried the cross for me!

I'm glad that he rose on the third day!

I have decided to stand on the rock!

Come what may...Stand on the rock!

No. 412- Funeral

A Good Old Age

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La
September 19, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. — Genesis 15:15*

Introduction

What is the secret to a long and fruitful life? Is there a special diet or manner of living that can produce longevity as its end product? How do you live to a "good old age?" Some say exercise keeps them going. Some point to a special diet. Some say its their energetic spirit that allows them to defy time and live beyond their expected three score and ten.

Consider the little boy who came to his grandfather while he was working in his garden and asked "Grandpa, how do you live so long, you must be about a hundred?" The old man kept working in his garden and didn't answer. The boy asked repeatedly and finally the grandfather looked at a row of Purple Hulled peas he was planting and said "peas." The boy thought that was a strange answer and a while later he asked the same question again. This time the old man looked at the row of squash he was planting and said "squash." When the boy asked a third time the old man answered "Lettuce." By this time the boy thought his grandfather was growing senile saying peas, squash and lettuce were the secrets of long life. When the grandfather finished, he took the little boy on his knee and said "If you want to live a long life plant yourself a row of p's that is Patience and Prayer so that you can wait for God to move in his own time. Plant you a row of squash, so you can squash out wild and loose living and squash evil thoughts and deeds. Plant you a row of Let-us: that is "Let us praise God every day." "Let us live by his law." "Let us have faith that no matter what comes he will provide for your needs." The little boy stared at the garden then looked at his grandfather as the old man said "It's all in what you plant, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Those who desire to live to a good old age should prepare themselves by living lives committed to service to God and mankind, temperate but optimistic and secure in the knowledge that God will provide for their every need if there is faith, trust and obedience to his word.

As Christians, we place our faith and trust in God. We sow in faith, wait with patience and pray for God's will. We work diligently to squash evil from our lives while always facing life with an optimistic spirit that helps us to weather the storms that

life brings. How can we live a long life? The answer is simple. Peas, squash and Lettuce give us a clue.

Exposition

This text focuses on a promise of long, fruitful and abundant life that God made to his servant Abraham. Abraham, who has been characterized in scripture as a man of great faith and trust in God was only one of three men in scripture that have been described as men who lived to see a "good old age." Gideon, the great warrior who reduced his forces to 300 men on the command of God and faced his enemy on faith alone,was described as one who died in a "good old age." David, whose life was characterized by strength, action and humility before God was also described as one who died a "good old age." The only other person described in this manner was Abraham. Abraham lived a life devoted to God and his family. Even in his golden years he found favor with God and learned that even in his 90's there was still work for him to do.

There is apparently a difference between "old age" and a "good old age." This is clear when it is noted that Abraham was in his mid 90's when God spoke to him in this text and made him a promise that he would have a child, a great family and many blessings. Abraham was elderly, but there was still work for him to do. The description of a "good old age" was applied to the three men whose dedication, service and faith excelled above all others. In Genesis 25:8, over 80 years later, Abraham died and his death is recorded this way: "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full years; and was gathered to his people."

Act on faith

Each of the three men who were described as dying in a "good old age" shared common traits that could be helpful to those today who desire to do the same.

All three were men of great faith. Perhaps one truth that time teaches all people is that God is true to his word. What is for us we will receive. Many spend most of their lives squandering time, struggling to acquire, climb, achieve and get ahead of the next person. Our accomplishments are often achieved at the expense of our health, family and personal well being. We act, but we seldom act in faith, but on total dependence on our own capabilities.

Those who lived to see a "good old age" exercised faith in trying moments realizing that God had the capacity to bring all of his promises to fruition. It took faith for Abraham to part with his family and follow after a promise of land and prosperity given to him by God. It took even greater faith to prepare to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command, knowing that God would provide a way for his will to be executed. It took faith for Gideon to take on huge enemies with just a handful of soldiers. These men shared this common characteristic of faith in God.

Therefore, one key characteristic of those who live to a "good old age" is the exercise

of faith in God. This is the kind of faith that allows us to weather storms, and endure hardships.

It's the kind of faith that helps us to look adversity in the face and proclaim "It is well, with my soul."

Constant Praise

These three men constantly praised God. Among them David was the best known for his praise of the almighty. He enjoyed praising God and wrote scores of Psalms to praise him for his goodness, mercy and benevolence.

Those who live to a "good old age" seem to get a special joy from teaching, discussing and testifying about the goodness of God. We are blessed when we tell about the goodness of God. We are blessed further when we take time to teach and witness to others about his benevolence and goodness. Those who have experienced the goodness of God have no problem talking about him. Whether in a Sunday School class, sick room or in a convalescent home, a Saint of God who has felt the touch of his hand will seize every opportunity to tell what the Lord has done for them.

Abraham praised God for every thing. He built altars and bowed before God. In a similar sense, those who know the Lord enjoy being in his presence and they constantly bow to his will. Their testament seems to be "Thy way oh Lord, not mine. Thy will be done, not mine."

Those who live to a "good old age" seem to enjoy praising God. It is the kind of praise that is based on a history of mountain top experiences wherein each person has recognized the role that God has played in his or her life.

At peace with God

The final quality that all three men shared is that each of them lived lives "at peace with God." The text verse finds God promising Abraham *"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.."*

To be at peace with God is to have a life that is in accord with his will. Such peace requires that jangling discords, frayed relationships, and questionable lifestyles be brought in line before we go to meet the Lord.

To be at peace with God is to know that if death comes this very hour every thing is in order and our lives and souls are aligned with the will of God.

This peace provides hope in the midst of despair!

This peace gives stability in the midst of transition!

This peace gives us courage in the face of danger!

Those who live to a good old age all seem to be at peace with God.

It is a peace that declares *"yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me."*

It is a peace provided for a Saint that has been washed in the blood of the lamb, by Jesus himself.

It is a peace that perpetually gives thanks to God for every good thing and even in the face of death declares: *"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."*

It is a peace rooted in the knowledge that when this life is over and crying days have ended, there is land over yonder where tear drops will never fall and joy will never end.

Over yonder, the wicked will cease from troubling!

Over yonder, the weary will be at rest!

Over yonder, every day will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never goodbye.

Down here some may live to a good old age, but "I've heard of a land on a faraway strain, it is the beautiful home of the soul ...tis a land where

—The streets are made of Gold!

—The ambulance wheels won't roll

It's a land where we'll never grow old.

—

On Sunday September 14, 1992 Earling Little, Sr. , like Abraham, "gave up the ghost and died in a good old age. He was an old man, full of years, who was at peace with God.

No. 411-Women's Day

Come See A Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 13, 1992

SCRIPTURE: *"Come see a man that told me all the things I have ever did. Is this not the Christ?" John 4:29*

Introduction

Where did you meet the Lord? At Church? In a hospital room? At work? What did it take for his message of love and salvation to get through to you?

Dale Evans, wife of famous cowboy star Roy Rogers, wrote the story of her life and her conversion to Christianity in an autobiography that caused quite a stir with her publishers. She told the story of how she and Roy found Christ and were saved from what she described as a life of sin and shame. Her publisher objected to the title of her autobiography's title "The Woman at the Well." Her publisher insisted that she was not an immoral woman like the woman at the well in bible and she should not called her life's story "The woman at the well." Evans insisted that while she was not immoral or unfaithful like the woman at the well that Jesus broke through all the barriers that separated her from him and saved her soul, just like he did the woman at the well. Despite the objection of her publisher, the book hit the markets and was a success. It's title: "The woman at the well."

Many people have distanced themselves from personal encounters with Christ. They have avoided his touch by avoiding his presence. They are involved in questionable lifestyles that trouble them so they keep their distance the savior's presence. Some can't find him by no reason of their own, but because barriers have been erected by society that prohibit them because of their race or sex. The great opportunity that salvation offers is often missed because the barriers around us keep it out of reach.

Wherever Christ broke through the social, racial, and moral barriers that separated you from him and touched your soul with his message of salvation, that place is your well. For the woman in the scripture, it was Jacob's well. For us that place could have been a restaurant, a bus stop, or quiet moment at your kitchen table.The place we meet the Lord is not as significant as the meeting itself. That meeting will hold a special place of importance in your life for years to come. The woman at the well was so excited about her encounter with Christ that she ran through the city

asking everyone to “come see a man!”

As Christians who have met the Lord at the well ourselves, we too should be excited by Jesus and seize every opportunity to tell the world to “come see a man” who saved our souls!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he met with a woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria. Traditionally, Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. They were viewed as traitors to the faith and social contacts were forbidden. The division between the two had developed over several centuries. The Assyrians had conquered Samaria in their sweep of the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians then sent colonies of Assyrians to live in the formerly all-Jewish towns of the region and began to spread Assyrian culture throughout the area. Priests who had been captured were sent back to Samaria to conduct Jewish religious ritual, but with an Assyrian twist. Many of the Assyrian religious rituals were incorporated into the Jewish ritual. In time, a generation of Samaritans grew up with Assyrian and Jewish social and religious standards. They worshipped Jehovah and also recognized the gods of Assyria as well. They were considered social and religious half breeds, guilty of spiritual miscegenation. that had desecrated the faith. Jews cut off contacts with them. Although journeys from the North to the South would have been shorter by traveling through Samaria, Jews crossed Jordan and went around Samaria rather than meet or speak to them.

However, Jesus came to Samaria and broke through several barriers to bring his message of salvation to the woman at the well. He broke racial barriers but he also broke gender barriers. Jewish women were the subjects of many prohibitions that treated them as second class. They were subjugated, and their prohibitions were so strictly enforced that they were not even allowed to speak to a man in public places. Only in the privacy of their homes could they speak, and even there with extreme caution. Jesus engaged in discussion with the woman at the town’s most visible meeting place, Jacob’s well, thus challenging long standing taboos that were centuries old.

Moreover, Jesus broke the morality barrier as well. This woman was marked for her low morals. She had been married five times and was living with a sixth who was not her husband. By Jewish standards she was a harlot. Priests and the devout of the city had no contact with her. She was considered an outcast. Jesus offered her the living water of salvation and an opportunity to everlasting life. The woman was so that she ran through the streets of the city proclaiming “Come see a man that told me all the things I ever did, is this not the Christ?”

Social Barriers Separate Some From Christ

Today there are many barriers that separate us from Christ. Among those barriers are racial and class differences. Some Blacks will not follow Jesus because they

contend that Christianity is the "slave master's" religion. They say Jesus is white and therefore we should have no part of a faith based on belief in him. This line ofthinking, made famous by the late Elijah Muhammad and Malcom X, separates some Blacks from Christ racially. In reality, Jesus while a Jew by nationality, was composite of many races that range from Moabites, to Jews (Matthew 1). His message is not restricted by race. He ordered his disciples to go to "all nations" with his message of salvation. He removed the racial barriers that separate men from himself. Although we consistently try to rebuild them he continues his appeal: "any man who will, let him come."

Class barriers have divided us as well. Many only want people of a certain class to follow Christ. They accept those in their social and economic class and reject others. The middle class only appeals to others of the middle class to accept Christ and is reluctant to extend that appeal to others outside of their circle. Jesus broke down the class barrier. He ate and socialized constantly with the poor and dejected. He embraced the ostracized and the uncultured too. James 2:1-9 underscores his teaching that we should not be respecters of person but should treat all people equally before God, regardless of their position in life.

Gender is also a great barrier to discipleship. Women, enslaved by hundreds of years of discrimination, are generally forbidden full fellowship in the faith. Although Christ commanded all of his disciples to preach, teach and reach, society has excluded women from the formula by tradition, not by scriptural mandate. In scripture God has called upon women to be warriors such as Deborah, deacons (Greek for servant is "diakonon" same word used for deacon) such as Phebe *(Romans 16:1)* or church leaders such as Priscilla, who along with her husband played a leading role in the church that met in their home *(Romans 16:3)*. Galatians 3:28 finds Paul tearing down racial and gender barriers when he proclaimed: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, thee is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* All are equal partners in the faith within the context of the "Eden restrictions" where God cursed the man to shoulder the responsibility of leadership and the woman to have pain in childbirth and followship *(Gen. 3:16)*. Jesus removed all gender barriers that excluded women from the faith.

While social and class barriers are erected by others to exclude some, moral barriers are self imposed. There are some who have been rejected so much by the world that they cannot envision themselves acceptable to God. However, Jesus made it clear that there is no sin, short of disbelief, that is so great that it can keep a person out of the kingdom of God.

Come See A Man

Once the barriers that separate us from Christ have been removed there is excitement and joy. We are completely filled and refreshed at knowing the power and presence of God in our lives. The woman at the well ran through the city shouting and proclaiming "Come see a man!"

Today when we think about the goodness of the Lord we too shout a great testimony, “come see a man!” Come see a man who took my:

--**Loneliness** and gave me comfort!

--**Midnights** and turned them into noon days

--**Defeats** and turned them into victories

I don’t know about you but I’ve found out that there is nobody like Jesus. Come see a man who is like:

--**Coke**, because he is the real thing

--**Ford**, because he has a better idea

--**Allstate**, because when you’re with Jesus you in good hands

--**State Farm**, because like a good neighbor, Jesus is there!

--**VO5,** because he holds through all kinds of weather

--**Scotch tape**, because you can’t see him but you know he’s there

--**Tide**, gets out the stains that others leave behind

--**G.E**.,because he lights our path

--**Sears**, because Jesus has everything

--**Rolaids**, because his name, J.E.S.U.S, spells relief!

--**Hallmark Cards**, because he cares enough to send you the best!

--**Ever Ready Batteries**, because he’s got power to spare!

--**Dial Soap**, aren’t you glad that you know him!

I’m so glad that I know him!

No. 410-Christian Education

Except Some Man Should Guide Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 6, 1992

***SCRIPTURE**: "And Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." Acts 8:30-31*

Introduction

When you read the bible, do you understand what you read? Can you comfortably explain the meaning of what you read to others without fear of contradiction? Do you understand the nature of the church, its mission and your role as one of its members? Increasingly, people are answering "no" to at least one of these questions, pointing out the need for instruction and training in bible study and the application of its principles in the life of the church.

Those who read the bible and don't understand what they read should consider the butterfly and the bee as they talked about their adventures at the end of the day. The butterfly bragged that he had touched every flower and plant in the garden and knew them by name. "Wonderful" said the bee. "I too have been to every bloom in the garden, but I refused to leave until I dove into the bell of the flower and came forth with my thighs laden with pollen and my stomach filled with honey to take back to my hive. Mr. Butterfly, it's not how many times you can flit over the flowers that matters, but how much you take home that counts."

There are many today who have read the bible stories and passages for many years, but have gained little understanding from their reading ..no honey to home to the hive.

Christian Education's main purpose is to teach Christians to be Christlike. Through bible study and leadership training Christians learn the principles of God's Word and then how to apply these principles in the operation of the church and in service and witness for Christ outside of the fellowship of the church. Those who are members of the church have an obligation to learn all they can about God's word and how they can best apply what they have learned to real life situations.

Those who lead, bear an even more important responsibility to know the nature of their service and how it is applied in daily living. Church leaders who are too busy

to train themselves in the doctrine of our faith and the application of doctrine do an injustice to themselves, the church, and to those whom they lead. Jesus spent much of his time "teaching" those who followed him. When he selected 12 disciples he taught them. When he left this earth he commanded all who followed him to "Go ye therefore and "teach" all nations.."teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.." (Matt 28:19-20). The command to teach implies that we all have an obligation to study and learn as much as we can.

As Christians, we must strive to study both the word of God and the best ways to apply what we learn in the word to real life situations. We should strive to become spiritual honey bees, leaving every worship, Sunday School Class, or study session with honey to take home and savor.

Exposition

This text focuses on how God emphasized the importance of the training of one man by another man who was important to many people. The central characters of this text are Philip and an unnamed Black man. Philip had been conducting great city wide revivals in Samaria wherein thousands came to know Christ, evil spirits were cast out and "great joy" was brought into the area. In the midst of the great revivals God spoke to Philip and challenged him to go from Jerusalem into the wilderness of Gaza. In obedience, Philip did as a the Lord commanded and came upon a Black man, described as a Eunuch and a person of high position on the continent of Africa in his native country of Ethiopia. The Eunuch was riding in a chariot and reading from the Book of Isaiah.

The spirit of God moved Philip to approach the chariot and talk to the man and in the course of their conversation Philip learned that the man was reading from the Holy Word but was not clear about what he read. Reading from the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah he wanted to know the identity of the person referred to by Isaiah. Philip taught him, then preached to him about Jesus and then upon the Eunuch's request he man was baptized.

Historians note that not long after the message of Christ reached the African continent. How it got there, no one is certain, but many point to this African convert in the middle of the desert, a Black man who wanted to know, as the source of the message.

It is important to know that Philip left a revival involving thousands to teach one man in the wilderness who carried the Gospel message to tens of thousands. Without instruction the eunuch would not have received the inspiration of the Gospel account. Without a willingness to teach, Philip would not have left the crowds to teach in a classroom with just one student, in the heat, in the middle of the desert. Because of there was both a desiring student and a willing teacher to guide, the Gospel message was continued and many souls were saved.

Some People Want to Know

There is a growing trend among African-Americans which is shifting away from a desire for a general education to utilitarian schooling wherein we learn just enough to get by. This trend is leading us to acquire only as much education and training as fits our peculiar purposes. Thus, a race which once placed education high among its priorities now has a different view about it. Once every child aspired for a college education, now that aspiration has dwindled to getting only that amount of education that is required to make a living. People are reading less, focusing only on those materials they need for their purposes.

Unfortunately that trend is moving into the church. Although congregations today are more literate than ever, they read the bible less than previous generations which had fewer reading skills. Many read the bible only when its necessary, ie. for class, sermon preparation or public worship. The trend is to know just enough to get by. With respect to training in the doctrine and methodology of the church, many look for utilitarian instruction (just enough to get by).

There is still another group among us that sees no need for training in church work at all. Some feel their secular education is sufficient. Some public school teachers, trained in methods of preparation and presentation of subject matter, feel they need no further training for the church. They forget that secular methods are definitely useful, but their college training did not orient or prepare them for service in the kingdom of God.

However, there are many who sincerely want to know. Like the Eunuch in the chariot they desire to learn, not just enough to get by but all they can about their faith. Some are trying desperately to teach themselves and are confused and frustrated. There are people today who want to know more about Jesus. These are those who understand the song writer's words: " More about Jesus let me learn, More of his holy will discern; spirit of God my teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me. More, more about Jesus, More,More about Jesus; more of his saving fullness see, more of his love who died for me."

Someone to Guide Me

The eunuch confessed that he could not understand the things of God without someone to Guide him. Philip, a man accustomed to great crowds of people, sat down to teach one man and show him the way. This underscores the need for men and women who know the way to make themselves available to show the way to others. Philip heard the voice of God and moved at his command, we must do the same.

While Philip taught the Eunuch directly, it was not Philip's words or instruction that really motivated this man to go home and tell others about Christ. It was not the charisma of one teacher in the desert that provided the ground swell of enthusiasm that set this man's soul on fire. It was the power of the holy spirit.

Those who study and train in God's work look for more than just enough to get

by, they study about, pray for and wait for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

College and vocational school give us certificates to hang on our walls, but the Holy Spirit gives us a stirring in our Souls.

When the Holy Spirit comes even the smallest amount of training is expanded upon and enlarged upon. When the Holy Spirit comes we understand what was once confusing, and go beyond our limitations.

We can't successfully function in the kingdom, except there is someone to guide. That someone is not the preacher, or the deacon, but our prayer should be Lord, guide me, show me thy way!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that I can't do it by myself, but I need somebody to lead me. I need somebody to guide me.

No wonder the song writer declared *"Lead me, guide me, along the way, Lord if you lead me I will not stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee, lead me oh Lord, lead me."*

When the way gets tough call on him and he will answer. *"Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me in thou powerful hand."*

Christian educators, keep telling the story about Jesus!

Tell the world that he died on Calvary!

Tell them that he rose on the third day and is alive for ever more!

No. 409-Youth

Dream Weavers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
August 23, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "The Lord appeared to him in a dream that night and ***told him to ask for anything he wanted, and it would be given to him! "— 1 Kings 3:5 (TLB)In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.*** *— 1 Kings 3:5 (KJV)*

Introduction

Do you have a special dream that you want to come true? What are you doing to make it happen? There are many who are working very hard to make their dreams become realities. There are others who seek short cuts and quick tricks that can help them find success. Those who seek the short route will always find someone that is willing to steal their dreams.

Consider the children's story of the Emperor's New Clothes. The Emperor of a small nation had a dream of being the best dressed man in the nation. Two swindlers came up with the idea of getting rich from selling the Emperor clothes made out of invisible material. The Emperor was told that people who could not see the material were ignorant.They said he would achieve two purposes with his new clothes: he would achieve his dream of being the best dressed and he would also be able to know the ignorant people in his kingdom. Each day the swindlers presented the king their empty palms which they said contained fine material. Not wanting to appear ignorant himself the Emperor raved about the quality of the material and acted as if he saw the material. Those who stood in the court yard also pretended to see the material. On occasion, the Emperor would go to the swindlers' work room. They pretended to weave the material that would make the Emperor's dream come true. Of course the Emperor said he saw the invisible cloth. When completed, the Emperor put on his invisible garments and called a great parade to show off his new clothes and to discover the ignorant people in his kingdom. As he marched naked through the city, the people raved at his new clothes and pretended not to see his nakedness. That is until one little boy yelled out "He doesn't have any clothes on" then the Emperor realized the swindling weavers had tricked him and had stolen both his dream and his reputation at the same time.

As Christians we trust God to weave the fabric of our daily experiences and opportunities into dreams come true. We can trust
him with our dreams. If we put him first and seek to do his will, our dreams can become our realities.

Exposition

This text considers Solomon at the beginning of his reign as King of Israel. Solomon, who succeeded his father David on the throne of Israel, became King at a very young age. He was awed by the complexity of the job of being King and was troubled by his lack of leadership maturity in such a capacity. One night God spoke to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask anything that he wanted from God and he would receive his request. Solomon asked God to give him wisdom and understanding to lead the people in the ways of God.

God was so pleased that Solomon did not ask for riches or fame, but only asked for wisdom that he decided to give him what he asked for, in addition to some of the things that he did not ask in his request. With the wisdom he received from God, Solomon was able to attain all of his life's ambitions. He dreamed of building a kingdom the splendor and grandeur of which could not be equaled in the world. He dreamed of building a great temple for the worship of God, and a great palace second to none in the world. He dreamed and God made it happen for him, although at the time it seemed impossible for him to accomplish.

Don't Let Anyone Steal Your Dreams

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States, did not begin school until he was nine years old. Despite that slow start he harbored a dream of being the President of the United States. Once educated and matured he became a college president, governor and was finally his name was submitted for as a nominee of the Democratic Party. The party turned Wilson down 46 times until he was finally nominated and elected President of the United States.

Concerning the achievement of dreams Wilson said:

"*We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day, or in the red fire on a long winter's evening. Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nourish them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light* ***which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true." Don't let anyone steal your dreams!***

Today there are many young people who will begin to weave the fabric of opportunity on the loom of life to make their dreams come true. As school bells begin to ring again, young people are faced with the challenge to seize the opportunities provided in school and weave them into learning experiences that will help them move closer to realizing their goals.

However, youth should be careful and remember Woodrow Wilson's advice: "Don't let anyone steal your dreams!" There are many ways that your dreams can be stolen from you, but the ones that happen most often involve negative self talk, misplaced opportunity, and twisted visions.

NEGATIVE SELF TALK: Negative self talk refers to "putting yourself down" or under estimating your own ability to achieve. The young man who dreams of being

an airline pilot must not convince himself that he can't achieve his goal. If he constantly tells himself it can't be done, he steals his own dream. The young lady who considers the amount of study required to become a nurse, steals her own dream if she starts to tell herself that she's not as good as others who have achieved the same goal.

The road the leads to your selected dream may be bumpy and difficult, but it begins with Positive self talk. I can make it. If they can do it, so can I. The secret is to learn your dream as possible, find out what you need, and then be willing to set out on a course to make it happen, regardless of what others say.

As Christians we constantly feed ourselves with positive self talk. *"I can do all things through Christ that strengteneth me."*

MISPLACED OPPORTUNITY: Some miss the chance to realize their dreams because they failed to use the opportunity to prepare themselves. Though it may not appear important, all information you learn today may help you seize an opportunity tomorrow. There are millions today who are singing a sad song. They are saying "If only I hada" each time they see theiropportunity pass them by. Today the subjects you learn in school may seem unnecessary and even boring, but learn them anyway. It is better to have it and not need it than it is to need it and not have it.

TWISTED VISIONS: Some have their dreams stolen from them. Like the Swindlers who cheated the emperor some will never achieve their dreams because they are convinced that taking a short cut can make it happen faster. Some athletes have lost dreams because they took short cuts, taking steroids to boost their natural capacities. Some professionals have chosen to steal and cheat their employers ruining career. Some sell drugs. Some use drugs. It is the devil's nature to attempt to steal your dream. When the devil steals your dream, it is no longer a dream, but a nightmare.

God is Our Dream Weaver

There is a great truth we should all know. God can take dreams that seem impossible and make them come true. Joseph dreamed that one day he would be so important that all the people of the land would bow down to him. His brothers ridiculed his dream and talked about him. Finally they tried to steal his dream and placed him in a pit. But God showed how he could take the jangling ends of circumstance and weave them into opportunity. Joseph was raised from obscurity to an important place in the kingdom.

I am reminded of a young girl who was talented and smart but who refused believe in God. One night she dreamed she paid a visit to the shop of a man called the "dream weaver." His shop was filled with a variety of cloths of different colors, which he explained was the "stuff" that dreams are made of and the cloths represented the dreams of the world including hers. The girl asked to see hers and the made, with nail scarred hands, reached into a box and pulled out two pieces of cloth. "This red

cloth represents your dream of happiness. This gold one represents your dream of success." The weaver told her that he has not worked on her dream for a while and the girl asked why. The mans ansered: "If you notice in this room, every set of dreams has a patch of blue, which represents your faith in God. Well, between success and the happiness that you ask for there must be a lot of faith in God. I can't make your dreams come true because you haven't sent me any blue!"

There are many young people who dream about happiness and dream about success, but they haven't sent up any blue!

There are many who are placing their hopes on material gains and have forgotten about God. But I hear the song writer declare "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness."

God is the eternal dream weaver!

He makes the impossible possible; the improbable probable; the unthinkable thinkable, and the unreachable reachable.

Call him what you will: Dream Weaver, Way Maker, Problem Solver

Jesus! He came, died and rose from the dead that we might have the opportunity to dream and hope of the abundant life. Give him your dreams!

Therefore, climb every mountain! Search high and low. Follow every by way every path you know. Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow until you find your dream!

No. 408-Communion

Soul Food

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 16, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Introduction

What comes to mind when you think of "soul food?" Immediately we see images of neck bones, pig ears, pig feet, pig tails, ox tails, chitterlings, hog jowls, hog maws, tripe, mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, corn bread oozing with butter, black eyed peas, and bar-be-que ribs dripping with sauce. That's the first thing that comes to mind when most of us think of soul food. "Soul Food" in the common vernacular refers to the foods peculiar to African-Americans, greasy, spicy and tasty.

This unusual diet of African Americans can be traced to our slave roots. Masters, who ate the choice parts of a hog would throw the guts, feet, ears and stomach linings away or feed it to their slaves. With the choice of eating or dying, the slaves took what was thought to be discards and, by the grace of God, cleaned, boiled and spiced the scraps into gourmets. Eventually, the entre' list got longer, including: brains, tongue, hog head cheese, and even chicken feet. As slavery continued succeeding generations of African-Americans grew up on diets that could have killed them with high blood pressure and heart disease alone, but somehow our entire race emerged in tact, sheltered by the hand of God. Therefore when we think of soul food we think of people who took nothing and made it into something that could sustain them while their souls cried out to God.

While there is soul food, there is also food for the soul. Food for the soul has nothing to do with food types in the physical sense, but it refers to those experiences that feed the soul and bring us into a closer relationship to God. In this respect soul food would not include physical items such as butter beans or fried chicken, but spiritual delicacies that would tend to make the soul stronger. Food for the soul is any experience that helps us grow in our understanding of, and appreciation for, the things of God. As Christians, we may or may not like soul food, but we should all strive to acquire as much "food for the soul" as we can. The better we know the Lord, the more able we are to stand for him and witness to his goodness to an unbelieving world.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the early portion of the Jesus's ministry in which crowds of people followed him wherever he went in hopes of catching a glimpse of one of his famous miracles, or better still to be a participant in a miraculous event. On this occasion, a crowd of several thousand people had gathered to hear him and there was no food available to feed them. One lad in the group had brought along two fishes and five loaves of bread. Jesus had the men in the crowd to sit and he took the little fish and bread that was available, gave thanks for it, and began to distribute it to his disciples. As they distributed it among the crowd it never ran out until all had been filled; and even then there were leftovers.

The people were so excited about what they had seen that they immediately wanted to make Jesus their king because they envisioned feasts for everyone under his administration. They wanted more fish and more bread. Jesus rebuked the crowd for following their growling bellies, seeking food. He offered them food, but it was not of mere fish and bread. He told them that just as Moses gave them manna or the "bread from heaven" in the wilderness so had the father made it possible for them to have a greater bread.

He summed up this truth by telling them *"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* What Christ told the crowds was simple: "if its fish and bread you seek, keep looking; but if its food for your soul that you want, I can satisfy your needs."

Vitamin A

Beside its appeal to the pallet, one of the chief functions of food is to provide nutrients, carbohydrates and vitamins to the body. Without the proper nutrients the body would soon shrivel and die. The main vitamins for human growth are vitamins A, D, C and B; without them life would be difficult if not impossible.

VITAMIN A: Without vitamin A the physical body would develop dry and hard skin. In addition a condition develops called dry eyes and the eyes are unable to see the light when things get dark. Often blindness can occur. Vitamin A is found in certain food types that include: Carrots, Sweet Potatoes, Spinach, and milk. Spiritually there are some that have a Vitamin A deficiency. They have a bad case of hard, cold, and dry personalities. They lack a sense of humor, touch of compassion and visible emotion. They suffer from the dry eyes. It's bad to have a vitamin A deficiency because when things get dark, you can't see the light and lose all hope.

Spiritually, Vitamin A is found in the A-nointing of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit anoints it is hard to have dry eyes, dry personalities and cold dispositions. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit made His arrival there people were shouting and rejoicing every where. Their souls had been fed, food from heaven and they were ready to meet the challenge.

Vitamin D

VITAMIN D: Without Vitamin D in the physical body the bones would fail to harden. Conditions such as bow leggedness can develop. The key foods that provide Vitamin D include: Milk, Butter, Eggs, and Fish Liver Oil. However, even though a person may consume sufficient quantities of all of the right ingredients, the Vitamin D component is not triggered unless the person is exposed to the sun. Without sunlight, even though a person eats the right foods, a VITAMIN D deficiency will still exist.

Spiritually, there are many people who never get rooted in their faith in God. They grow up in the faith with brittle bones that are broken with words rather than sticks and stones. They live a clean life but are not as strong as they should be.

Spiritually, Vitamin D is obtained by attending Worships, Sunday School, and bible study. This is the way to take in the right vitamins, but they can't be triggered without the SON. When we have been regular in our worship, bible study and prayer, and we are exposed to the presence of the Lord, we grow stronger in the faith. Carrying a bible in our hands without the Lord in our heart is worthless because its Jesus in our life not the book in our hand that is the moving force.

Vitamin C

VITAMIN C: Without Vitamin C the body would lose its ability to fight against colds and influenza. It would also lose its ability help in the healing of wounds. The key foods that provide Vitamin C include: Oranges, Cantaloupes, Strawberries, apples, cabbage, or potatoes. Vitamin C is different from the other vitamins in that it cannot be stored in the body, it must be ingested daily. We cannot fight today's cold without yesterday's orange juice. We cannot heal today's wound with yesterday's fruit supply. Each day needs its own supply of nutrients. This gave rise to the old saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."

Spiritually, there are many people who have problems living the Christian life because they only have the fruit of the spirit occasionally instead of daily. Galatians 5:22 says the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are sources of spiritual vitamin C. We can't fight off Today's:

—hate with yesterday's love; confusion with yesterday's peace.

—Troubles with yesterday's longsuffering; rudeness, with yesterday's gentleness; Wrongness with yesterday's goodness; despair with yesterday's faith;

—belligerence with yesterday's meekness; temptation with yesterday's temperance.

Spiritually that famous old saying could be modified to say "The fruit each day, keeps the devil away!"

Vitamin B

VITAMIN B: Without Vitamin B which is a group of vitamins, the body would fail to grow, there would be a loss of appetite, hardening of the arteries and nervous conditions could develop. The components of the vitamin B complex come from foods such as: lean meat, whole grain cereals, milk products, and fish.

Spiritually, there are many people who have been in the church for a long time but they have failed to grow, have lost their appetite for active service and have become set in their ways. They get a nervous condition when asked to pray, witness or testify about the goodness of God. It all indicates that they have a Vitamin B deficiency.

Spiritually, Vitamin B1 could be called the body of Christ and Vitamin B2 could be the Blood of Christ. Both of these spiritual vitamins help us to remember our commitment to Christ, continue to grow in grace and maintain our appetite for the Christian struggle.

When we remember the body and blood of Jesus, it is food for the soul. Jesus said "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger" The bread of heaven is soul food!

No wonder Dr. Watts declared: Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

Jesus, bread when I'm hungry!

Feed me till I want no more!

No. 407-Inspiration

And I Promised Him That I

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 9, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. Psalms 66:13-14.***

Introduction

Have you ever made a promise to God? How well are you keeping that promise? Many people make promises to God when they face troubling situations only to go back on them after the moment of crises has passed.

Consider the man who took on the tough challenge of climbing a mountain alone. As he moved carefully up the side of the mountain the ground became distant and he realized that there was no turning back. Suddenly his foot slipped, his line broke, and he was tumbling down the side of the mountain. As he was falling he called out to God. "Lord if you save me, I'll change my life!" Despite his plea he continued to fall. He cried out again "Lord if you save me, I'll come to church every Sunday!", but he continued to fall. The ground came closer and he could see his life slipping away as he tumbled in the air. Finally in one last desperate plea he called out to God again "Lord, if you save me, I promise you I'll serve you till I die!" After he made that promise, the man's fall was interrupted by a tree limb that caught his clothing. As he realized that he wasn't going to die he suddenly thought about all that he had promised and quickly shouted "That's alright Lord, a tree limb has saved me first!"

How many of us today make pledges and promises to God and then back down with it seems as if the conditions have changed. In essence we say "That's alright Lord, I didn't need your help after all the doctor made me well" or the "Lawyer won my case!" God delivers on all his promises in ways that we rarely expect, but the question that faces us is whether or not we will deliver on the promises that we have made to God. Though our pledges may seem unnoticed in heaven, God read our thoughts and hearts in our moments of trial. He heard our secret prayers and pledges and answered them often even before we have finished thinking. In good faith God delivered for us, but often we fail to make good on our commitments to him. As Christians we have promised him that we would serve him faithfully. In return for our promise, God has blessed us abundantly, and showered us with substance, support

Exposition

This text considers David as he reflects upon the goodness of God and re-dedicates himself to the service of God. In this Psalm David sings about the abundant blessings that he has received from God and he invites men to to consider the reasons why he has decided to keep his vows to God.

First David challenges men to "Come and See" the goodness of God at verse 5. He lists some of the mighty works of God: he dried up the Red Sea, he watches the nations, he holds our soul and suffereth are foot not to be moved, and through afflictions, hardships, fire and water he delivers our souls. David said these mighty virtues alone made God worthy of worship and praise. Morever, at verse 16 he continues to note the goodness of God by challenging all who will to "Come and hear" about his goodness. David said when he "cried unto him with my mouth" he heard his cry despite his own feelings of inadequacy God attended unto his needs.

David, who experienced the full gamut of service to God, made several promises to God following his great sin with Bathsheba. Here he reflects on how good God has been despite his own iniquity and pledges to keep his promises to God as God has kept his promises to him. Like David, those who made promises to God in biblical times took them very serious. In fact they were viewed so seriously that entire sections of the Book of Leviticus deal with the procedures for persons to use to keep their vows to God. Hannah vowed to God that if she could receive a child she would return him to God. Nazarites made vows to God neither to drink strong drink or cut their hair. When they broke their vows they usually suffered dearly such as Samson's loss of strength when he broke his vows by both drinking and finally allowing his hair to be cut.

On Occasion there were some who made foolish vows such as Jephthah who in Judges 11:30 promised God that if he was victorious in battle he would sacrifice the first person that walked out of the door of his house. When he returned home his daughter ran out to meet him, and Jephtah had to offer her in sacrifice to keep his vow. Annanias and Sapharri pledged to sell all of their property and give the proceeds to the church, but they lied about their actions and dropped dead because of their deceit. Vows in scripture were taken seriously by God and by those who made them. Children were not allowed to make vows and wives who made vows without the consent of their husbands could have the annulled. Moses warned in Deut 23:21 *"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."* Solomon, underscoring the seriousness of vows, put it this way: *"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Eccl. 5:5.*

Many Have Made Vows

Today there are many people who have made vows to God to secure favors or

blessings. Like Jacob, who made a vow to sanctify himself and to pay a tithe if the Lord helped him make it to his father's house in peace, many of us have made vows to God. Sometimes the vow was made in connection with our personal persuit of a job, position or attainment of a particular goal. Often in crises, we make vows to God that we would make certain changes in our lives or great promises. Some of us promise God that we would give up certain bad habits and reform ourselves significantly. In such cases we told the Lord either verbally or internally that we would do certain things if he allowed us to realize our expectation.

In the biblical record, in every instance where vows are made, God delivered that which was requested, but held those making the vow responsible for breaching their vows. Solomon made it clear that no believer is required to make a vow, but a vow, once made, is expected to be paid. The Word of God makes it clear that the Lord takes vows seriously and is prompted to act quickly in response to a request made through a vow. Likewise, the record shows that God is angered when vows are not kept. Many have made vows and once they have received what they requested have had second thoughts about keeping their vows. Today men attempt to rationalize and put forth great reasons why it should be acceptable that they not fulfill their vows. Proverbs 20:25 echoes the warning that it is folly to receive a blessing from God and then worry about what you promised to receive it. Jesus reminded those who were vowing to take up the Christian struggle to "count the cost" before beginning. He warned those who join the Christian community not to put their hands on the plough and then turn back on their decision.

Reasons to Keep Our Promise

Those who keep their promises recognize that God has been good to them and has answered their prayers. The entire 66th Psalms testifies to the mighty works which God has done for David personally and for his people. He pledges to keep his promise out of gratitude for the mighty blessings God has showered upon him. Today brothers and Sister we keep our promises to God because it is our way of saying "thank you" for being so good to us!

We give thanks to God for:

—Muzzling the mouths of lions that came to devour us!

—Quenching the flames of fires that tried to destroy us!

—Conquering the enemies that came to destroy us! —Penetrating the walls built to divide us!

—Unlocking the prisons designed to hold us down.

The Lord we serve is worthy to be praised and worthy of the fulfillment of any promise that we make.

A traveler approached three men he passed on the road and gave them each a small key and made each one promise him that regardless of what they met along the road they would take the key and hold onto it until the morning. As the night passed they came upon a forest fire that raged with a fiery. Consumed by the heat one of the men turned around, the other two continued. However they came upon a great storm which bent the trees and nearly buried both men in torrents of water. The second man

turned back. However the third man clinched his fist around the key and kept going. In the morning he met another traveler who asked him *"Have you been through the fire? Have you been through the storm? Do you still have the key?"* To these the man answered yes. The traveler responded "you have earned the reward of Gold that this box contains. But tell me, what made you go on?" The man answered "I've been through the storm and the rain. I've been through fire, but I had to keep going because I promised that I would hold out till the morning comes!"

I don't know about you brothers and sisters but I promised the Lord that I would hold out until the morning comes!

When the morning comes, crying days will be over

When the morning comes, lonely days will come to an end

When the morning comes, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

I heard a song writer declare: "I'm on the battlefield for my Lord, and I promised him that I, would serve him till I die!

I've got keep telling the story!

Strong winds may blow, but I must tell the world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning

I started in Jesus and I'm going through!

No. 406-Inspiration

When The Fish Won't Bite

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing — John 21:3

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you went fishing and didn't catch a thing? What was wrong? Was it the pole? The bait? The Spot? Or was it just the wrong day of the week? Even the best fishermen have had a time or two when it seemed that the fish had posted an "out to lunch sign" and were not biting. Good fisherman check out all the possible causes for their failure, revamp and try again, most often with better luck.

Consider the city boys who decided to have some fun by fishing in the country side. They went to a sporting goods store and purchased expensive and flashy fishing gear. There was a fly reel, a cabinet full of lures, hip boots, and other fancy equipment designed to make fishing exciting and fun. Once in the countryside they came in an area where an old man was fishing. He did not have a fancy reel or any of the equipment to equal that of the boys. In fact, all he had was an old cane pole and a can full of bait. The two boys cast their lines and were dazzled at their shiny rods as they reflected in the sunlight. They turned their music up high and laughed and played all day as they tried out more of the gadgets. About noonday they noticed that while the old man said nothing he had pulled in several large fish with his cane pole while they had caught nothing. They changed sides of the pond, changed lures and continued to cast, but still they caught nothing. At the close of the day they went to the old man and asked. "Sir we noticed that you sat in the same place all day with just your cane pole and caught many fish. Why is it that we have all of this fancy fish equipment and we caught nothing?" The old man looked at their shiny gear and their empty buckets and responded "You see son, you boys were fishing for fun and counting on your rod and reels but I was fishing for my dinner and counting on the Lord." What do we do if the fish don't bite? Perhaps we should re-evaluate the reason we went to fish in the first place.

As Christians, we are keenly aware that all blessings comefrom God. If our goal is in accordance with the master's will, then we can expect to catch big fish. If, for some reason, we have gotten off track, even our best efforts won't make the fish bite.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he shows himself to his disciples after the resurrection. He had appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb. He had also appeared to ten of them during a Sunday gathering which was missed by Thomas. In this text Christ appears for the third time to seven of the disciples as they returned to their daily occupation which was fishing. This was the first time that Jesus had made an appearance, after the resurrection, on a day other than Sunday. He appeared to these disciples on a regular weekday while they were occupied in their personal profession.

Each time Jesus appeared to these fishermen at work, it was at a time when, for whatever reason, the fish were not biting. In Luke 5:1-11 Jesus appeared to them after they had toiled all night and caught nothing. They had given their best efforts but were empty handed, but following his command they "launched out into the deep" and caught so many fishes that other boats had to be called to haul them to shore. After that encounter, Jesus challenged them to "follow me." Now, in the context of this text, Jesus appears to them again but after the resurrection. Again they were at their daily profession and were in a situation where the fish were not biting despite their best efforts. These seven depressed fisherman, who thought their glorious mission was lost since the crucifixion, were fishing to reflect and think, but not with a zeal to catch fish. They aim was more to pass the time and forget their tragedy of losing their moment of glory than anything else.

After they fished all night and caught nothing, Jesus came. He called out to them "children, have ye any meat?" When they answered no he responded by telling them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship. When they heard the voice of Jesus, and obeyed his command, instantly the fish starting biting and they caught a "multitude" of fishes.

They Heard The Voice of Jesus

Like these disciples, there are many today who are meeting frustrations as they attempt to pursue individual goals. The disciples were frustrated because Jesus was not there. Their enthusiasm diminished and they soon found that their work was becoming unproductive. Sometimes our circumstance is similar. We can't seem to get motivated to do our best work.

The occasions when you try your best but nothing seems to "click" for you, are days when the fish won't bite. These are days that you seek employment in scores of places but never get a response. These are times when your business is sagging and you can't seem to get a handle on the decline. These are days when your best efforts to improve the quality of life of your family seem to miss the mark. These are times when the fish won't bite. It is not because there has been no effort, often we show great effort, but yet we are fruitless. We should remember that effort alone does not produce success. There is no success in life without the help of the Lord. We may plant the seed by our effort, but its germination is totally dependent upon the power

of God.

The disciples, who were able fishermen, were having a dry spell. They were dispirited until they heard the voice of Jesus on the shore, calling out to them.

There are many today who are going around in circles, with plenty of activity but are accomplishing little. Those times when the fish won't bite may be the times when we need most to listen for the voice of the Lord.

Elijah was troubled by indecision and sought to hear from the Lord. When the Lord spoke it was in a still small voice.

Samuel heard the voice of God in the still of the night, calling him to serve.

Saul heard the voice of Jesus in a blaze of light on the Damascus Road as it called out to him "Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?"

When we are besieged by failure all around us, and frustration and defeat pace along the horizon ..listen for the comforting voice of God.

No wonder Dr. Watts would declare: "I heard the voice of Jesus come unto to me and rest. Lay down, the weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast."

They Obeyed His Command

But not only did the disciples hear the voice of Jesus calling out to them from the shore, but they immediately obeyed his command and cast their nets on the right side of the boat.

One reason the fish won't bite for us could be that we work hard but we are not fishing from the right side of the boat. The disciples worked hard but they worked on the wrong side of the boat and caught nothing. It didn't seem significant to consider which side of the boat to fish from. A school of fish underneath a boat had no boundary line which they observed, so there was no obvious reason to think anything would come from obeying Jesus' command. However, without thinking or argumentation, they started fishing from the right side, in obedience, and immediately they caught fish!

When we consider why the fish won't bite, therefore, we must consider whether or not what we are doing is according to the will of God. Are we obeying him? We are working and making money, but are we showing that we are ready to handle large sums, by giving him the tenth that he requires? We are busily pursuing admirable goals in life but have our goals become so all consuming that we have little time for prayer, bible study, and worship? We are helping people in our service, but is our work because we love the cause or to benefit our private agenda? If we ever find that we are not obeying him then we need to cast our net from the right side of the boat. Those who obey God and act with pure conscience usually find that there is a greater reward or catch, from fishing on the right side of the boat.

When you fish on the right side of the boat get ready for a great blessing.

When you cast your net from the right side of the boat:

It won't matter how many are against you because Romans 8:31 reminds us that *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

It won't matter how great your need because Phillipian 4:19 says "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus."

It won't matter if you seem all by yourself because Hebrews 13:5 says "*..For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"*

When you obey the commands of God get ready for a down pour of blessings because 1 Corinthians 2:9 says *"..eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*"

I don't know about you but I've found out that when things don't go right and all you have to do is call Jesus.

When you call Jesus, he can take:

—**Failure** and turn it into success; **Discouragement** and turn it into inspiration

—**Pain** and turn it into pleasure; **Burdens** and make them light

—**Sorrows** and turn them into joys!

Jesus, in the midst of my loneliness, **he is my friend!**

Jesus, in the midst of weakness, **he is my strength!**

Jesus, in the midst of my hunger, **he is my bread from heaven!**

Jesus, in the midst of my troubles, **he is my rock in a weary land!**

Jesus, in the midst of darkness, **he is my light!**

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on the third day!

When the fish won't bite, **call Jesus, and he'll make it right!**

No. 405-Youth

I'll Be There

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 26, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." — Isaiah 43:2 "... and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. —Matthew 28:20***

Introduction

Mariah Carey has a hit song on the charts that has caught the imagination of a generation of young people, it is entitled "I'll be there!" It is a song of a young woman's love and commitment to a boyfriend that has not returned that affection. Carey sings of her unwavering love for her boyfriend, even though he has found another. In her song she tells him that if the other girl disappoints him in anyway she will be waiting for his return. She cries out to him soulfully "just call my name, and I'll be there!"

Long before Mariah Carey spoke those words about her boyfriend, Michael Jackson put that same song on the charts. Of course he gave a male version of the words, but the thought was the same, his love was never ending and would stand despite being jilted by his girl. He mouthed the immortal words "just call my name and I'll be there!"

However, long before Mariah Carey or Michael Jackson even thought to make such expressions of love and commitment, our Lord spoke those same words to every generation of believers. When Israel abandoned the love of God and went after others, God ordered one of his prophets, Hosea, to marry a prostitute to illustrate his love for the people who went off with other gods. His message to them was simple. Though you have abandoned me, I have not abandoned you "just call my name, and I'll be there." Jesus in his parting words to his disciples sent them into the world as missionaries, and his words to them were encouraging because he told them that whatever conditions they would face in life he would be with them always. God's love for us is unconditional. His desire is that we return his love with obedience, and faith. Sometimes we don't meet his expectations and fall considerably short in comparison to the love he has shown us. Despite our shortcomings however, his love for us is constant.

As Christians today we should be encouraged to know that the God we serve is always by our side. He will not abandoned us, although at times we have not been as faithful to him as we should have been. His constant reminder to us has been: "Just call my name, and I'll be there!"

Exposition

This text brings into focus two examples of the divine commitment to stand by, protect and empower the people of God. The first example shows God's commitment to the children of Israel. . Isaiah reminds Israel of God's commitment to be with them regardless of their circumstance. Nationally, Isaiah looked toward rough times which were ahead. War and captivity loomed but God wanted the people to know that even though rough times were coming he would still be with them. God's words to Israel were clear: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee..when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." These words emphasize a clear commitment by our Lord to be with his people in their time of need.

Likewise, Jesus giving a final charge to his disciples before he returned to heaven charged them to go, preach and teach what they had seen and heard in all parts of the world. Regardless of the difficulties that were to come he reminded them that he would be with them always, even unto the end of the earth.

In Over Your Head?-He's With You!

The complexity of life today makes it easy for anyone, especially young person to get in over his or her head. "Getting in over your head" is an expression that refers to getting into situations too tough to handle. There are at least two kinds of deep water situations: those prompted by tempting circumstances and those prompted by mounting anxiety. The increase usage of drugs, alcohol and other stimulants by many young people poses a peculiar challenge to those who are striving to live the Christian life. The challenge is to know just how far to go, when to say yes and when to say no. Youth who are not careful can easily get themselves into situations that are difficult and entangling. Experimenting with a little booze, a little dope and a little sex can soon get you in over your head. These can easily be described as quick sand situations because the "more you wiggle, the deeper you sink." God told Israel that when it went through the waters, he would be present with them to keep them from being drowned, "they shall not overflow thee." Since God is the same for every generation, youth today can expect him to be with them in tough situations when they appear to be over their heads. These are the situations where one voice says "stop, don't do it" and another voice says "do it, baby do it right now." Deep water represents those tempting moments when opportunity makes it easy to indulge a variety of sins and the will to resist is weak.

Moreover, deep water can also represent those moments in life when you just don't know what to do or where to go. These are moments when it appears that only

a few people understand your situation and all are powerless to help. Some face life-decisions and are afraid of making a mistake. Some are afraid of the future and others are just uneasy about life and seem overwhelmed by all the problems that it seems to present. Its deep water. However, no matter how deep the water, God is still with us and he will be our guide.

Today young people should know that when they feel themselves getting into the deep water of temptation they should follow Jesus' example and remember the words of Christ "Get thou behind me Satan." When discouraged, Christians should remember that the Lord will carry them across the flood to dry ground. When the waters of circumstance appear to deep, I hear God saying "even in deep waters, just call my name, I'll be there!"

In the Fire-God is There!

Have you ever had troubles? Real troubles? That's a time when you reach out for somebody, anybody, to help you. Troubles are always around, lurking behind every corner, waiting for an opportunity to besiege the unsuspecting. Troubles cause us plenty of worry, hardship and anxiety. Some people age before their time because of trouble. When trouble comes, even the strongest Christian can feel the heat of the fire.

If even mature Christians need extra strength to handle troubles, think how tough it must be for young Christians when they find themselves -in the fire. The three Hebrew Boys were young believers who were trying to believe in God. Their faith was tested when they were challenged to pledge allegiance to the king rather than God. When they refused they were thrown into a fiery furnace, but the flames did not consume them or even singe their clothes. God was with them in the fire. Young Christians should always remember that God is with them and will not abandon them regardless of their circumstance.

If you are falsely accused-God is with you!

If you are the victim of cruel jokes-God is with you!

If you are ostracized from the crowd-God is with you! Like the three Hebrew Boys, they may talk about you, call you all kinds of names and ridicule you but they won't be able to hurt you because...I'll be there! When you get to where it seems unbearable, "Just call my name and I'll be there!

Just Call Him-He's Right There!

Finally Brothers and Sisters, Christian youth should remember that whatever the circumstance the Lord is always present and is only as far as a prayer away.

The world will continue to put you in deep water situations, making you feel like you can *"Warm It Up"* (Kriss Kross) by *"Giving him something he can feel"* (EnVogue). That's the time you need to do like Shanice and say a *"Silent Prayer"*

as you remember Luther Vandross and Janet Jackson's words that *"The Best Things in Life are Free."* That's when you can tell the world like Patti LaBelle *"When you've been blessed"* you can do just like CeCe Peniston says and *"Keep on Walking."*

When the world presses, Jesus says just call my name, I'll be there! "Lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth."

I hear the Lord declaring, wherever you go I'll be there! Psalms 139:7-12 declares *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?...If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there!"*

He was there when:

—The Sun first began to shine; and the moon first began to glow! —Moses led Israel across the Red Sea; When Hezekiah received 15 more years!

Paul and Silas called to him in a midnight prayer meeting! —John was shipwrecked on the Lord's day out on the Isle of Patmos.

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that Jesus is still there!

When your burden's get heavy "just call, my name and I'll be there!"

When you facing an extreme danger "just call, my name and I'll be there"

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross.

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose from the grave after three days, is still saying "I'll be there!"

Whenever you need something from the father, just call my name ...and I'll be there!

No. 404-Homecoming

How Long Before You Come Home?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 19, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. — Ezra 1:3;"..For How long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return?.." Neh 2:6;"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Revelation 6:10.***

Introduction

When are you coming home? Have you ever heard that question asked before? It is a universal question that is asked millions of times a day by people in all walks of life.

Consider the young man who had become successful in New York and was heading a successful corporation. There were hundreds of people on his staff and his responsibilities were immense. He called his mother on a routine basis to tell her of all his accomplishments. The mother listened quietly as he told of her great meetings with the presidents of corporations, million dollar budgets, and the powerful people he meets daily. He was a rising star in his industry and his mother sat quietly and listened at the great accomplishments of her son. Finally the young man noticed that his mother had not said anything as he listed his triumphs, so he asked "Mother are you there? Did you hear about all of the great things that I have done?" The mother responded "All that's good son, and I'm proud to hear you're doing well, but when are you coming home?"

If a loved one has been away for a while, the question will be asked "When are you coming home?" If you're late getting home from work your spouse will ask: "When are you coming home?" In today's mixed up world occasionally children have to ask an absentee parent: "When are you coming home?"

People who have been outside of the church for many years, having drifted for one reason or another often run into a church member who asks them them a similar question: "When are you coming coming home, we need you." Like a proud parent who watches with intense interest the various secular accomplishments of his children our Lord occasionlly interrupts our hurried chase for success by asking

directly or sending someone to ask on his behalf that very important question: "When are you coming home?" Many respond: "I am building a business" or "I'm working on my degree and it has tied me up" or "I've been involved in a very important undertaking." Still however, the question comes "When are you coming home?"

As Christians we want to keep our hearts focused on the kingdom of God. Our goal is to make it to heaven one day. Our course is set our journey has begun and we won't stop until we get home.

Exposition

This text first considers three questions posed in three separate circumstances, In Ezra, Nehemiah and the Revelation. The first question posed was put forth in Ezra. Israel had been in exile for many years in Babylon. The mighty temple built by Solomon had been destroyed and the people were given permission to go home and renovate or rebuild the temple. Ezra's question to Israel was simple: *"Who amongst you is willing to go up to Jerusalem and help rebuild the temple of God?"* Many came forth to answer that challenge. Bringing their gifts and sacrifices they made the journey home and completely renovated the building and restored it so well that it was a sight to see and testament to the greatness of God.

The second question is in Nehemiah. About 70 years after the temple had been rebuilt, Nehemiah received word that while there was a beautiful temple in Jerusalem the people had become slack in their service and the remainder of the work that had to be done was being neglected. What was left was the rebuilding of the walls. Nehemiah asked and received permission from the king to go home and help with the work of rebuilding the walls. The king asked him a question: *"How long will it take you to get home? and when are you coming back?"* Nehemiah gave no answer but he was prepared to get home as quick as he could and work until his job was done.

The third question is found in the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John. The Saint's of God who had been slain and persecuted during the great tribulation were waiting under the altar in the this vision. Impatient to receive their rewards in glory the Saints asked *"How long?"* They wanted to know when the gates of glory would swing open and they would receive the reward for their sacrifices. Together the three questions address our occasion: Who is willing to come home? How long will it take for you to get here? and "How long before we all go home?"

Where Is Home?

Every Christian today has three questions to answer with respect to home. Where is home? When are you coming home? Why should I come home? Where is home?

In the broadest sense of the word, home is where the heart is. In the spiritual context home is the place where the flame of faith first began to flicker. It is the place where you learned the meaning of being saved and gave your committment to serve God without hestitation. You may climb the prodigious hillsides of New Hamshire,

discover the meandering valleys of the Mississippi or bask in the sunshine of warm beaches of California, but there is no place like home. Your soul may be lifted high with power of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir or rocked with the rhythm of the Florida Mass, but there is no place like home. You may consort with kings, be greeted by great princes and feast your eyes upon the Tajah Mahal. You may visit the Pyramids of Egypt, and dine in splendor atop the Eiffel Tower, but there is no place like home. Home.

The transplanted urban cowboy, confined to city life sings about it. "Home home on the range where the deer and the antelope play, where seldom is heard a discouraging word, and skies are not cloudy all day." Home.

The lonely Christian pilgrim muses about it and understands what the song writer means when he writes "I've got a new home over in glory and its mine, mine, mine!"

When Are You Coming Home?

While its good to know where home is, it is even more important to answer the question, when are you coming home? The elegance of the temple was a sight to behold, but there was so much work to be done. Nehemiah was asked the question: "How long will thy journey be, when wilt thou return?" How long will it take you to get home?

Today our churches have beautiful and comfortable structures with all of the modern conveniences, but there is so much to be done. The same conditions that troubled Nehemiah call out today "When are you coming home?" Hungry minds gather to stare at your empty teacher's chair every Sunday morning, when are you coming home? Trembling voices slump without your strength and talent; beneath the melody of their song I hear the echo in hearts "When are you coming home?" There are young people wandering aimlessly, without enough leaders. There are sick and despondent masses, who yearn for a visit or a call. The elderly are starved for a moment of attention; the homeless cry out for a crust of bread and a corner to sleep in. The social deterioation of times demands a collective Christian response. Our babies are having babies. Our young men are dying while they are still boys. Our children are failing in school. Many of the saints of God who have the gifts and talents that God requires are occupied in Babylon and have turned deaf ears to the cries of the masses who are asking: "when are you coming home?"

Why Should I Go Home?

Finally, there is a third question that must be answered, "Why should I go home?" The question "why" prompts us for an explanation, rationale, and reason for an action. "Why should I go home?"

Nehemiah, though successful at landing a big job with influential friends, decided he needed to go home because there was work to be done. Today there are

many who need to come home to help with the work. I should come home because I told the Lord that I would be a soldier in his army. I promised him that I would serve him till I die.

Jacob answering the question "Why should I go home?" would respond: "I need to go home to mend a few fences and to rebuild a few relationships with my family." Somebody here is doing well in life, but there need mend a few fences with the Lord. The Lord has been good to them but they have not given him their best. Somebody here needs to say Lord you have been better to me than I have been to myself, starting this day, I'm coming home!"

The Prodigal son responded in his destitution: "If I go home there will be food to eat. If I go home, there will be somebody to love me. If I go home, somebody will help me!

If you ask Jesus to answer he would tell you *"I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also."*

I've got to go home *and get your mansion ready!*

I've got home to get a *polished shine on your starry crown!*

I've to go home to get your robed pressed and ironed!

I just just can't go straight home!

I've got to stop by upper room and share my least meal.

On my way home, I've got to meet some brutal soldiers and let them whip me all night long.

On my way home, I've got to carry an old rugged cross!

On my way home, I've got to be crucified on Calvary's Hill!

On my way home, I've got to be resurrected after three days!

On my way home, I've got to catch a cloud and go back to glory!

But one of these days I'm coming back again!

I'm coming for my church!

One of these old days, I'm going home!

No. 402-Deacon Ordination

God's Dream Team

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

July 5, 1992

*SCRIPTURE:**"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." — Matthew 16:24; "And straightway they forsook their nets and followed him." Mark 1:18***

Introduction

How would you like to assemble a team of the best of the best? Some have played local athletics either in school or sandlot. Occasionally some players mused over the prospects of having some of the best players in the area on your team. Imagine what could be done if the best bowlers, football or baseball players around were all on the same team, it would be awesome! Such a team would truly be a "dream team."

As the United States prepares to enter the 1992 Olympics in Basketball that's exactly what has been done. It has assembled what is being called a "Dream Team." Some of the nation's greatest basketball players have been named to the squad, including: Patrick Ewing, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, and other basketball legends, all assembled on the same team. Fans say its a team made in basketball heaven, that is sure to win the gold in the Olympics.

Today God needs a dream team! Not a basketball team, but a team of believers who can work together effectively to defeat Satan and win the world for Christ. The church needs a "dream team" of elders and leaders who are giving 100 percent to making the kingdom of God a reality. Moreover, it needs members who have a spirit of followship that prompts them to work together in such a way that God's team wins, regardless to who attracts the cheers of the crowd.

As Christians we are reminded that God is still looking for men and women who are willing to give of themselves for the kingdom of God. He has selected us and we have responded by answering his call. We must continue to work for the development of the kingdom, giving God the best that we have.

Just as Christ walked through the countryside assembling the best men he could find for his "dream team" his call is still going out today "take up your cross and follow me."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he selects and gives the criterion for the selection of those who would share in the kingdom of God. Matthew 16:24 sets the main criterion for kingdom builders: he or she must be willing to deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow after him. The true believer must be willing to follow Christ.

Christ personally selected 12 men who were to help him to initially build the kingdom of God on earth. Later on he would select 70 others in 35 pairs and send them in various direction with the same message. Of the initial 12, four were fishermen, one was a publican, one was a political militant and the others were just ordinary God fearing men whose peculiar occupations were not identified.

As Christ approached each of them his appeal to them was simply to "follow me." The 12 of them, impressed with the mission, decided to follow Christ in his quest to establish the kingdom of God. Although it might seem peculiar, Christ also hand picked Judas Iscariot who would betray. Judas had a role to play in the building of the kingdom. As the devil's advocate, he initiated a string of activities that helped Jesus accomplish his main purpose for coming in the world, to provide salvation to mankind through death on the cross.

This special team had all the qualities Jesus needed to help build the kingdom. Peter, whom Jesus called the "Rock", became a strong force in holding the church together, along with his brother Andrew. John kept the faith boldly and often referred to himself as the one Jesus loved. James and John who Jesus called the *"Sons of Thunder"* stood boldly for the faith. James was the first to die at the hands of King Herod in A.D. 44. Philip constantly sought ways to bring others to Christ. He brought in Nathaniel whom the Lord saw first while he sitting under a fig tree. Thomas the cautious skeptic in the group was slow to be convinced but a fireball once he was sure he was right. James son of Alphaeus, called "little James" because of his statue but was big in faith. Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector were complete opposites in belief but sent a message to all that the kingdom of God was free of secular and political biases. Thaddaeus carried the message to Syria, Arabia and Mesopotamia at the cost of his life. It was a dream team of the finest order.

Followship Is Important

Peter, in this text, took issue with Christ's main mission and challenged it. Verse 22 notes that when Jesus announced that his main mission was to go to Jerusalem, suffer, die and rise on the third day, Peter "took him" to the side and rebuked him for taking that course. At first he frequently objected to Christ's program. Christ would say "I'm going to Jerusalem", Peter took issue with that. Christ decided to wash his disciples feet, Peter took issue with that. Christ surrendered himself to the temple guards and Peter took issue with that too and cut off a soldiers ear.

It took Peter quite some time to understand the importance of followship. Sometimes he'd follow up close, and when things got rough he followed at a distance

and even denied he knew Christ.

The deacon, as a member of the leadership team, recognizes God as the owner and manager of the team and the pastor as its coach. One of his greatest virtues will be his ability to catch the vision and assist the pastor in carrying out the mission of the church according to the game plan which has been revealed to each individual pastor. That's why the Apostles in the selection of deacons suggested that they should be men who are "full of the Holy Ghost." Men who are directed by the Holy Ghost will be able to sense the influence of the Holy Spirit in any undertaking and will be guided accordingly.

The duties of the disciples ranged from providing a buffer between Jesus and the crowds, allowing him time to retire to the mountains, to preparing the table for the last supper. Likewise, the first deacons were in a similar posture. Their duties ranged from settling squabbles among Greek women over "tables" to teaching, prayer and church management. In every instance, whether it was a disciple that followed Christ directly, or a deacon that served as the Apostles assistant, followship was key essential to the call.

Following Christ in Duty

What is a deacon's duty? Put in the common vernacular, his job is simply to "D.E.A.C." At his best the deacon is a:

(D)EVOTIONAL LEADER: The deacon leads the church in devotion and worship. Whenever the church gathers to sing, pray or to hear the word preached the deacon leads the way and is instrumental in involving others in the praise and glorification of God.

(E)DIFIES THE WORD: The deacon assists the pastor in edifying, or building up the spiritual strength of the church. To edify means to promote those things which will promote finer Christian living and to point out those things which are inconsistent with the will of God. The deacon must be strong enough to stand up for that which is right and stand against that which is wrong.

(A)DVISOR TO THE PASTOR: As an assistant to the pastor, the deacon is an advisor to the pastor with respect to church affairs and the execution of the details of the church's mission. The deacon owes the pastor the benefit of his best thinking, private reprimand and public support. His ultimate aim, with respect to his pastor is defined by three P's: Protect him from danger, Provide for his sustenance, and Promote his well being.

(C)HRISTIAN GENTLEMAN: More than anything else the deacon is a Christian gentleman and an example in Christian living. He is not expected to be above others, for he is human, but is expected to be a model to others of his age and generation of Christian living in success, failure, suffering, temptation, and hard times.

Following Christ To Glory

Every good deacon follows Christ in carrying out his duty. Following Christ is not without its rewards, for those who follow him in duty can expect to follow him in glory. I hear Jesus telling his disciples in verse 27: For the son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

All the righteous of all generations have taken a firm stand for the Lord and have chosen to be on his team!

I hear Joshua declare "As for me and My house, we will serve the Lord." Isaiah announced to the world "if the Lord needs somebody,here am I send me."

It means if I follow Jesus, when I am:

—STUMBLING in the dark, he'll be my guide

—DISCOURAGED and feeling low, he'll be my inspiration

—VULNERABLE and defenseless, he'll be my strong tower

—TROUBLED by the storms of life, he'll be my refuge!

—BURDENED he will lift my heavy load

—SURROUNDED by adversaries, he'll prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies!

No wonder the song writer declared "Where he leads me I will follow. I'll go with him, with him, all the way."

I don't know about you but I've decided to follow Jesus.

On mountain peaks or on stormy seas I'm going to pick up my cross and follow Jesus!

I'll follow him to Calvary!

I'll follow him to the lonely tomb!

I'll follow him to the resurrection morning!

No turning back!

No turning back!

No. 401-Funeral

The Missing Link

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 19, 1992

Scripture:"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. — Psa 143:5-8

Introduction

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There are many today who have no link to their past. They are completely cut off. They know where they want to go but have forgotten where the came from. Consider the poor farmer who by chance became a great statesmen. He was known as a peculiar kind of fellow because he always carried a hoe, a coin, and prayer book nearly every where he went. After many years a friend asked him privately, why it was it that he always carried these items wherever he went. The statesman responded: The hoe reminds me that I must always appreciate the value of a hard days work. The coin reminds me what it feels like to be down to my last penny. The prayer book helps me to remember the long walk to success began on my knees. These, said the young man, are my links to the past. If I ever lose my way, they'll always get me back to the right path.

The pioneers among us are our links to the past. They share the experience of their journey with many who are not familiar with earlier trails. They remind us of times when men conquered and succeeded with fewer opportunities and conveniences. They inspire us to overcome our petty grievances and strive for higher goals. They remind us of times when we have succeeded with fewer resources. They are constant reminders of the power of prayer and preserving power of God. The pioneers among us help us to remember. They are the important link that keeps us in touch with ourselves.

As Christians, we should always remember the great works that God has done among us. We should revel in his greatness and always remember how far he has brought us along this tedious journey.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as King of Israel as he meditated upon God and expressed his desire to reclaim the joys of past relationships with him. David's rich past had a great many joys and sorrows. There were the joys of his boyhood as a shepherd, guarding his fathers flocks playing on his harp and singing his own songs. There was the excitement of defeating Goliath and hearing the people call his name and sing about him: "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands." There was also the sadness and loneliness of being a vagabond, moving through the hills running from the king's army while being protected daily by the power of God. There were also the lessons he learned about sin and its penalties when he stole another man's wife, and suffered diseases and pain. This text, written in David's old age remembered the old days, not necessarily as the "good old" days, but simply the old days. David declares that his remembrance of God's mighty works from the past inspired him to continually lean upon God's Grace because his soul thirsted for his presence. Moreover, in the closing years of his life, he declared that he "lifts up" his soul to God when he thought about his goodness.

The results of David's reflection on God's great works was a spirit which humbled itself before God. He said *"I stretch forth my hands to thee..I thirsteth after thee."* Such is the nature of anyone that remembers the great works of God and has experienced his goodness in their lives, they want to feel his powerful presence again and again.

Links to the Past

George Satayana said in 1905 *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."* This is most important because every generation needs its link to the past such that it might know the great lessons that can be learned from prior experience.

Many in the church today enjoy fine buildings, beautiful sound systems, computers, electronic musical instruments and a plethora of other modern conveniences. Most of what we have was foreign to the membership that comprised its previous generations. There are some who remember the cold nights when the smell of firewood circulated through the building and the whistle of the wind in the rafters sent a chill down their spines. There are some who remember the joyous days when ministers wore preaching suits with tails that dangled to the ground and preached until the whole house would shout. They remember the pride of the people and their desire to own something of their own; fondly recalling how they saved pennies and dimes and bought land, erected buildings and paid for it all without much formal education or schooling in high finance.

There are many who have been with the church through the immorality of the 20's, the anxiety of the depression, the fear of death brought on by the great war, the civil rights marches, assassinations of great leaders, the restoration of our race and

even through the present day. These fine soldiers are our links to the past. Each time we complain that our budget of $100,000 or $1 million is insufficient, their presence reminds us that there was a time when we had much less and did more, for it was a time when we believed that "my God shall supply all your needs." Each time we complain about the color of the carpet of the fabric of the drapes, their presence reminds us of time when there was hardly a floor and no place to hang drapes, but yet we found the Lord, not in the instruments of worship but in our hearts. As we worship God today in the silence of our intellect, their presence reminds of the time when "church was church" and people knew the joy of the Lord; they knew how to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

Sometimes when the pioneers tell us about the past they wet our appetite for the spirit of simpler times when life seemed less complicated, faith was unquestioned, and the spirit of God was unquenched. Their words stir a thirst and a growing hunger for the essence of the good times they speak of to be realized today. They remind us constantly that true believers get their strength from God and not from the things we bring before God.

The Show Us How We Got There

The old warriors keep reminding us how we arrived at our present destination, and sometimes when we get off track, they show us the way back.

David himself got off but he found the way back and declared "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

We, who often look for solutions to problems in the complexities of compromise, negotiations, budgets, and agreements, sometimes forget that the simplest answers usually come in a moment of prayer.

We, who are often stumped by the difficulties of operating in these complex times, sometimes forget that the tallest mountains can still be moved at God's command, if we keep the faith.

Every now and then its good to hear from somebody who has been there to remind us that God is still on the throne!

It's good to hear from somebody who has been there, that there is no valley that's too wide for God to cross!

It's good to hear from somebody who has been there, that there is no hunger that God cannot satisfy; no burden that is too heavy for him to bear.

It's good to hear from somebody who has been there, that there is no problem too complex for God to solve!

When we forget the majesty and power of God, it's good to have somebody who in the quietness of their own faith, remind us that we serve a God who has never seen a:

—Request that is too impossible for him to grant

—Mountain so steep that he could not climb it

—Battle so tough that he could not win it

—Soul so lost that he could not save it!

It's good to have somebody who has experienced both sides of the pendulum's swing; who has been on the mountaintop and also knows the loneliness of valley but yet is able to rise and declare "Oh Lord how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

The great pioneers of the church link this generation to our past. They show us where we have been and how we got where we are. But if there is a joy in knowing where we've been there is a greater joy in knowing where we are going.

The great testimony of every pioneer to the young is "find the missing link!" Get wisdom, knowledge and understanding, but find the missing link! Get houses, land, and material wealth if you will, but be sure to find the missing link!

The word teaches that there is one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus.

If you don't have Jesus there is something missing! You have a past and a present but you don't have a future!

I hear the old warriors declare "You can have this whole world but give me Jesus!"

If I have Jesus, yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me!

If I have Jesus, my past or my present state won't matter any more because "one glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away!"

On Wednesday June 17, 1992 Sister Leola Davis Fortson went home to be with God. She was a pioneer member of this congregation;a link to our past, who shall never be forgotten.

No. 400-Youth

"Keep Within The Reach Of Children"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 14, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy ***children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and*** *when thou riseth up." Deuteronomy 6:7*

Introduction

When you were a child were there ever things that you wanted toget into but they were always out of your reach? The things that were high on the shelf seemed more interesting. Those little bottles that parents always told us to stay away from carried a special fascination. Then there were certain books and magazines we were not supposed to read and some kinds of movies were forbidden. Today medicines come in child proof bottles that are designed to require a level of strength and dexterity that would prevent little children from getting into them. It is good to keep dangerous things out of the reach of children. Every parent's nightmare is perhaps the fear of the day that a child may get into a dangerous substance or in harm's way without being aware of it.

But what if there is something good for you? What do you do then? Consider what happened a few years ago when the "Save The Children" Foundation decided to raise money by selling bottled water from the River Jordan. In return for a generous donation to the foundation each donor would be given a small bottle of water that had been blessed and which came from the very waters of Jordan. An aide quickly went out to find some bottles. He found a friend of the cause who donated thousands of unused medicine bottles and the water was packaged and sent around the world. Months passed and the officers noticed that not a single donation had come in, Not one! Concerned, he inspected the label on the bottles and found they had pharmaceutical labels that read at the top: "Save The Children", but at the bottom the label read inbig read letters: *"Keep Out Of The Reach Of Children!"* It was a blessing for the children, but no one purchased a bottle because of the warning!

As Christians, we know that there are some things in this world that should be avoided. However, there are many aspects of life, and faith that should always be within our reach. As we teach our children the ways of the Lord, we should keep faith,

prayer, and God's word always within their reach; for in them is the secret of life.

Exposition

This text is extracted from the commands that Moses gave Israel concerning teaching and inspiring Godliness and respect for God in children. Historically, it occurred at the close of Moses' life as he reflected on the entire scope of Israel's experience in Egypt, its wilderness journey, and its survival. The Book of Deuteronomy itself means a "second look." In it Moses repeats earlier commands he had given the people in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. After repeating it all for a final time Moses instructs parents to teach its central theme and particulars to the children.

The central truth that parents are encouraged to teach children by precept and example is found in verse 5: "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.*" Moses commanded Israel to teach Godliness to children while they are young and to make it a perpetual teaching process such that they will hear it every where they go. Verse 7 notes that we should talk of God's truths when we sit down at home, when we walk along the way, when we retire for the night and when we wake up in the morning. These truths will serve as frontlets or blinders that will help to focus them upon the important matters of life, without which they will go astray.

Religious and moral instruction should always be kept within the reach of children such that they will be able to draw from it later in life.

Keep Out Of Reach

Children are extremely vulnerable to the influences of the world. Many who think of themselves as wise and smart are none- the-less gullible to every influence of life. This increases the importance of training and guidance in their lives. This training comes from parents who, in many instances, think for them when they are unable to think for themselves.

For the first 12 to 15 years of a child's life, parents spend considerable time and energy trying to keep dangerous associations out of the reach of their children. Knowing that they will experiment with any and every attractive curiosity, without the ability to read and comprehend the warning label.

RAT POISON. Bad Company should be kept out of the reach of children. When the elderly suspect a person is evil or that something is wrong they respond "I smell a rat." Unfortunately children are often unable to smell the rats and parents spend considerable time keeping them way from individuals and experiences that will be poison to them. It is frustrating for children when parents are selective about the company they keep. In many instances it is simply a parent trying to protect their children from bad associations and reputations by screening the company they keep. The simple truth is, we are known by the company we keep. The old maxim's are

usually true: "Birds of a feather, flock together." Children who associate with thieves, drunkards, dope heads, or rowdy individuals will be influenced to some extent by their behavior. Bad company needs to be kept out of the reach of children until they are able to read the warning labels of life and choose friends and associates by character rather than by popularity.

EX-LAX EXPERIENCES. Experiences that appeal to prurient instincts should be kept out of the reach of children. Like Ex-Lax, it looks good on the surface. Its sweetness is often mistaken and many children have become seriously ill after being caught by its appeal. "Prurient" refers to the desire for lewd and lusty things. Encounters that appeal to these interests stir up an "Itch" to pursue them. They usually present themselves in movies with a heavy sexual content, sexually oriented literature and suggestive music. They have an appeal that is difficult for young people to resist without help. Some want help because they can't say "no" by themselves.

DRANO EXPERIENCES. Influences that will encourage young people to consume substances that are unsafe and unhealthy should be avoided. These are draino experiences. Drano is helpful for opening clogged drains, but it is not to be consumed. Likewise draino experiences should be kept out of the reach of young people. They should be taught the dangers of smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, taking cocaine, crack, heroin or even sniffing glue and other intoxicants. These are draino experiences that lead to sickness and dependency. The word of God asks: "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of Holy Ghost..and that ye are not your own but were bought with a price." Intoxicants and hallucinagents should be kept out of the reach of children until they are able to understand life's warning labels and avoid them on their own.

Keep In Reach

If there are experiences that we should keep out of the reach of children, there are some things that we need to keep within their reach. These are the experiences in which they demonstrate their love and respect for God and family.

ONE-A-DAY VITAMINS: Every child should have within his reach, access to some spiritual One-A-Day Vitamins. 1)Attitude. We should help our children foster positive attitudes about life and living by demonstrating our faith that come what may, God will provide for his own. Its an attitude that assumes that the God we serve is able to save and deliver his own. 2) B-Bible. Every child should have a basic understanding of the Word of God. Scriptures should be committed to memory and bible study should be regular. The Word declares that we should *"study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the words of truth."* In times of need he'll remember *"The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."* When he has strayed he remember "Create in me oh Lord a clean heart and renew in me a right spirit." When he can't see his way he remember *"I'll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the help Lord who made the heaven and earth."*

But every day a child of God needs vitamin C-that comes from Calvary.

When I think about Calvary, I think about Jesus and I'm glad that he's always within my reach, for he's only a prayer away.

He's so close that he can bring: Joy to the saddened; hope to those who despair; freedom to those who are in bondage and salvation to those who are in sin.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus is always within reach. Call him in the morning! Call him in the evening! Call him in the midnight hour and he will hear and answer pray.

Tell the children about Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Tell the children about Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Tell them how he died, but early Sunday morning rose from the dead!

Tell them that he has all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 399-Blessings

Blessings From Blunders

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
June 7, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

Introduction

Have you ever made a mistake? Most people have. The question is not so much whether we have made mistakes but whether we able to turn our blunders into blessings. The same is true with misfortune or "bad luck" occurrences; whether we are able to turn them to our advantage is a matter of supreme importance.

Even the worst blunders and misfortunes can actually turn out to our advantage. Consider the story behind Ivory Soap, which is known as the "soap that floats." It is the oldest and one of the most successful soaps on the market today, but its success was the result of a serious blunder. Years ago this soap was just another brand among many. Then a factory foreman blundered by leaving a batch of new soap unwatched in the cooking vat during noon hour. His lunch was delayed and the soap overcooked.

Rather than report the mistake and run the risk of dismissal, the foreman decided to make the best of it. He shipped out this new batch anyway. It seemed to clean just as well — although now much lighter. The results surprised everyone. Rather than complaints the company was deluged with orders for this floating soap. The foreman was not fired but promoted when he cooperated with company chemists to revise and modify the old formula for "the soap that floats."

The same was true the Thomas Edison as he labored for 10 years
trying to make his idea for a storage battery work, someone's blunder in his workshop burned the entire company to the ground
and with it 10 year of notes and labor. Starting from scratch, Edison rebuilt his company and without his old notes, found fresh ways to attack his problem and came up with a way to invent the storage battery that are so prevalent today. It was the blunder that caused the fire that was a blessing in disguise.Charles Colson a former presidential aide went to jail because of his illegal activities. In jail he found the Lord and has since become one of the most energetic revivalists in the country. His mistakes at the White House landed him in the jail house and now he witnesses for Christ from house to house. His blunders turned out to be blessings.

As Christians we know that it is possible to make something better out of something bad. When things look their worst is when they can actually become a resource for our improvement.

That's the way God works with us. We don't often do right the first time, but He's always ready to salvage the situation no matter how bad we make it. He can take our blunders and make them blessings if we will trust him as our Lord and Savior.

Exposition

This text finds Paul explaining to the Romans the nature of the Christian experience as it relates to setbacks and persecutions. He explained to the Romans that the entire life of man is a suffering experience designed to move him toward a glorious end which is in heaven. The entire 8th Chapter of Romans, believed by some to be one of the most inspirational books of the bible, focuses on the Christian's need to be guided by the spirit. It is the spirit of God that will guide and keep us, despite the frailty of the human flesh and will.

In verses 12-17 Paul notes that while we are saved by grace, we should strive with every fibre of our being to live right and do the right things. When we are striving to do right, the Holy Spirit automatically locks in on a spiritual cruise control that insures that we maintain the right course. Verses 18-25 emphasize how setbacks, mistakes and adversities should be expected by every Christian because it is the nature of the struggle.

Paul notes that we should concentrate on the end, rather than the means of any experience. The central thought of this text verse is that we should focus on the final outcome of a matter rather than the troubling details of the moment. This powerfully short verse, when coupled with the rest of the 8th Chapter suggests that the Christian should approach each event of life looking at the end rather than the means, confident that as long as he is guided by the spirit of God that all things would work "together" for his good and he will eventually profit from every situation not matter how frustrating in appears at the moment. In verse 31 Paul summed up the central conclusion of the chapter, "What shall we say then to these things, If God be for us, who can be against us?" With that knowledge and assurance concluded that nothing would discourage him in his service of God, not prospect of life or the threat of death, the power of governments, fears of past failures and present trials, nor any other situations would be successful in separating him from the love of God. His focus remained on the end and rather than the means. He always projected that we are "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Good Intentions

What is a blunder? Simply put, a blunder is a side tracked good intention. It is an effort which had a noble and rightful intent but somehow got off track an ended

in trouble, adversity, persecution or heartache. We have seen many examples of good intentions leading to serious troubles once they were exposed to human frailty.

No one is immune to blunders in judgment, but the key element in the analysis of the crises, is the "intent." Paul's writing to the Corinthians suggested that if the Christian is guided by the Holy Spirit and his intent was to do the right thing, but somehow it became tangled and backfired, God will work it out for the Christian's advantage in the long means. We may foul up the "means" but God controls the "ends." He promises us that it will be to our advantage end the end.

Think about the last big mistake you made in your life? How can you know whether or not it will work out to your advantage? the concluding phrase of verse 28 gives the key: "according to his purpose." The question to ask is whether or not the action we made was in line with the general purposes and will of God? If we are trying to act in accord to God's will and fouled up, God will take care of it.

Overcoming Blunders & Hardships

Christians who have made blunders and mistakes in life should not wallow in self pity, but remember that those who make honest mistakes won't be completely devastated unless they lose hope. In verse 24 Paul makes it clear that we keep going because we are "saved by hope." This hope is rooted in our faith that despite circumstances, no matter how frustrating they may be, God will work it out to my advantage in the long run.

God will show us the way to capitalize on apparent failures, mistakes and wrongs. Consider the young man who went to work in the Potato fields of Idaho and found out on pay day that he was not paid in money but in Potatoes. It was a mistake not to find out how he would be paid. With hundreds of pounds of potatoes around him the young man said "Lord, show me a way, I have hundreds of pounds of potatoes, what do I do." Suddenly he had a great idea, thanking the Lord as he loaded the potatoes. He cut up some of the potatoes and fried them in grease and sold them as "French Fries". He mashed up some of them and sold them as mashed potatoes. He thinly sliced others, deep fried them and sold them as potato chips. Still others he marketed as hash browns. Before long he had a thriving business and more money than he could count because he capitalized on a mistake and turned it into a success.

No wonder Paul would say "all things" work together for the good of them that love God."

God has given us many great blessings out of the blunders and mistakes of life.

Paul,as a young man made a blunder when he set out to persecute the church, but along the Damascus Road, the Lord turned his blunder into a blessing.

Peter, hid himself and denied Christ three times in a great blunder that was both troubling and humiliating, but the Lord took that blunder and turned into a blessing so great that Peter became the head of the church. It was blunder turned into a blessing.

David, described as a man after God's own heart, made a blunder when he fell

prey to temptation and took another man's wife, but it was a mistake that he recognized and told the Lord "Create in me oh Lord a clean heart and renew in me a right spirit." It was blunder that was turned into blessing.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God can take my blunders and turn them into blessings!

I'm glad that he can take my failures and turn them into successes!

I'm glad that he can take my weaknesses and turn them into strengths!

But the most glorious blessing that mankind has received is the blessing of salvation as a result of the blunder of Calvary!

Mistaken for threat to Rome, Jesus was sentenced to death!

Mistaken for a great prophet who challenged Moses, Jesus was given an old rugged cross!

It was mankind's blunder which God turned into a blessing!

It was a blessing because Jesus died, but rose up early Sundaymorning with the victory in his hands!

No. 398-Missionary Duty

Going on "Lo!"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Greater Ideal Baptist Church
Dallas, Texas

May 31, 1992

SCRIPTURE*: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20.*

Introduction

Have you ever been given a job to do, but at the same time received little to do it with? What was your response? Did you shy away from your mission because you had little to work with, or did you go forth in faith?

A certain cook was famous for his fine recipes and gourmets. One day he received an order from the king to prepare the food for the king and his lords. It was both an honor and a scourge at the same time because whenever a lowly cook was selected for such an assignment he had to provide the food as well as prepare it, which made it even more difficult. The cook had only one egg in his pantry, but he was so honored to be selected that he set out on his journey confident that providence would help him. On the way, he met a man who offered to trade him a cow for his egg because he had broken one of his master's dozen and would rather part with his own cow than face his master's wrath over the loss of a single egg. They traded.

Later the cook met a farmer who was holding his favorite cat. The farmer complained that the cat had nothing to drink, all he had was fields of vegetables, none of which the cat would eat. The cook traded the farmer a pail of milk from the cow, which he traded for the egg for a wagon of vegetables that he pulled along by hitching it to the cow. On the way he met a butcher and a baker who had walked many miles, they offered to work for him if he would just give them a ride. So the cook gave the butcher a ride in the wagon of vegetables that he traded for a pail of milk from the cow he traded for the egg.

The king saw the arrival of the cook, laden with a cow, a wagon of vegetables and a butcher and he was amazed at the variety the cook brought with him. As the cook prepared to make the king's bread he realized that he had no eggs, but then there was a knock on the kitchen door and lo, there was the lad who traded him the cow delivering the dozen of eggs for the king's pantry. With beefsteaks from the cow, cold milk, bread and an assortment of vegetables, the king rewarded the cook, who gave all the credit to a little faith and a single egg. "I was running low, but I was on a mission

a mission for the king, and I knew the Lord would make a way." said the Cook as he smiled and received his honors.

As Christians, we are on a mission for the king, we may have reservations about resources at times but, we should always remember that the Lord will make a way while we go forward on his promise never to leave us alone.

Exposition

This text is known as the great commission. It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the eleven disciples giving them their final assignment. He told them to get the word out about salvation and redemption to the entire world, to baptize believers and then teach them the way of life prescribed for Christians. While Jesus gave his disciples a mission he did not give them any special equipment except his words of promise in these closing commands. This commission inclues two important words: "Go" and "Lo." As Jesus gave his disciples the command to go, inclusive of all of the hardships and sacrifices that "go" would entail, he also gave them a "Lo" which was a promise of his perpetual presence with them regardless of their circumstances or peculiar situations.

This commission that Christ gave his disciples, in a few short years resulted in the expansion of the faith to Asia Minor, the Cities of Greece and to nearly all of the known world of their time. It appeared to be an impossible mission, given to penniless disciples who had nothing to move on but faith and the "Logo" of God.

Today's Mission: "Go!"

The church today still has only one mission, to spread the good news about the kingdom of God to all the world. It has a mission to "Preach," "Reach," and "Teach" the world about Christ through administration of the Word and through the example of our Christian compassion.

PREACH THE WORD.The Church has a responsibility to provide for the preaching of the word of God. At home it is done through providing for ministers to administer the word and declare it to us. But the responsibility for the preaching of the word goes beyond the home front. It also extends itself to the missionary field in distant places.

There are still places in the world, despite all of our modern technology, that have not heard the word of God. Our mission, is to provide for the preaching of the Gospel on foreign shores. Today there are missionaries who are working in Africa, Europe, South America and on every continent of the earth trying to get the message across. The supplies they need, including bibles and materials must be supplied by believers back home. Our mission is to "go" and if we can't physically "go" the next best thing is to "send -go" and contribute freely to the missionary efforts of our convention.

REACHING THE LOST. The church also has a responsibility to "Reach out" to those who are both lost and hopeless. While our mandate to "Preach" extends both

far and wide, our mandate to "reach" begins at home. It begins with the lost members of our family and neighborhood. It begins with the lost in our own community. That mandate suggests that the church must promote Christian Charity at home, or home mission. Unlike foreign mission, which primarily supports the preaching of the gospel in foreign lands, home mission combines the gospel message with Christian action on the home front. Home missions includes: Food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless. It includes education, crime prevention, and a show of compassion for children, victims, and the helpless of every race and nationality. In this regard, we follow Christ's example by first meeting the people at their point of need, responding to that need and then working to save their souls. People are more inclined to listen and respond when the church seems to respond to their peculiar needs. Missionaries who carry out this charge can sing with real meaning: "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living is not in vain....If I cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living is not in vain."

TEACHING THEM. Preaching and reaching the lost are two essential elements of the command to go, but there is also the command to teach them "whatsoever things I have told you." This introduces the third missionary objective of the church, which is Missionary Education. Those who come to the church must be taught what Christ wants them to do and trained so they can reach others themselves. 2 Timothy 2:15 reminds us to *"Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needth not be ashamed."* That underscores the importance of Christian Education and Mission Education in the missionary process.

There's No Go Without "Lo!"

Today there are many who are striving to carry out the mission that Christ has given them. Though their treasuries are meager, there are many who do the best they can to support the work of missionaries, help the poor and needy and to teach the masses.

While some complain constantly that they have no resources and moan about how it can't be done, there are others who heard the voice of Jesus calling for laborers and responded "Here Am I send me."

One truth that every saint who has step out on God's word has discovered is that if the Lord gives you a "Go" there is always a "Lo." For every "Go ye therefore" there's is always a "Lo, I'll be with alway."

Lo represents the promises of God:

When storms rise, "Lo" means he'll say peace be still.

When sickness comes, "Lo" means he'll be a doctor in your sickroom

In the middle of failure, "Lo" means he will give you victory.

In the middle of doubt, "Lo" means he'll give you assurance. No wonder the song writer declared "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine"

A traveler drove his automobile through the plains and the desert. But when he came to the mountains his passenger wondered how such an old car would make the

high mountains. The traveler looked at his passenger and said “When I travel the plains, I can make alright, but when I make it to the mountains, I put it in low and away I go”

I don’t know about you, but I have found out that you can do amazing things when you remember the promises of God and count on lo!

A Widow woman who was down to her last barrel found she could eat on lo!

A woman sick with an issue of blood found she could be healed if she touched lo!

Peter found that as long as he kept his eyes on Christ he could walk on lo! When your mountains get high, just remember Jesus said, “Lo” I’ll be with you!

When your burdens get heavy, just put it on Lo! and remember Jesus “Come unto me all ye that are burden and heavy laden and I will give you rest!”

Lo, I’ll be with you, even until the end of the world!

No. 397-Usher Anniversary

Hands On The Plow

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
May 28, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62.

Introduction

A phrase from an old Dr. Watts hymn says "to serve this present age, my calling to fulfill, oh may all my power's engage to do my master's will." The words seem to epitomize the need for people who are willing to serve in the service of the master. Some have mixed up notion about service. They think the work of servants should be done by somebody, anybody, and everybody but them.

Consider the city boy who inherited 500 acres of prime farm land which he was told was worth a fortune, but could not be sold. The city boy asked a neighbor what he needed to claim his fortune. "What you need is a plow" said the neighbor and the city boy bought a shiny new plow and set it in the field. He watched if for several days and still nothing happened.

The neighbor said "of course you'll need some mules for the plow" so the city boy acquired mules, hitched them to the plow as he spread out his handkerchief on the ground and sat waiting to see his fortune appear. The neighbor passed by and saw him sitting on the ground watching the plow and mule and laughed. "Son, you're going about this wrong, you have 500 acres of rich farm land that could make you rich one day, but us ain't worth a dime to you if you don't put your hands on the plow!"

Unfortunately there are many who assume the city boy attitude about work in the church, and especially activity in any of its service components such as ushering, singing in the choir or committee work. They want to watch from a safe distance, but they don't want to put their hands on the plow. They want the benefits of a successful program but they are not willing to put their hands on the plow.

As Christians, we made a commitment to live for Christ on a daily basis. There is a great reward for those who plow, sow and plant in the kingdom of God. Those who work faithfully in the kingdom have put their hands on the plow and they have decided not to quit until their day is done.

Exposition

This text considers Christ as he explains the commitment necessary of those who

choose to serve in the kingdom. It involves three individuals that are presented with an opportunity to serve in the kingdom, one requested to serve and two were asked to serve but all were awed when they discovered what was expected of a servant in the kingdom.

One man volunteered to serve and made a bold pledge to go wherever he was needed. He pledged to follow Christ "withersoever thou goest." It was a bold pledge and Christ sensed that he may not have understood the extent to which he was committing himself, so he explained the prospects of hardship, poverty and homelessness that might come upon those who truly follow him. He noted that even foxes have holes and birds have nests, but Christ, and those who follow him have neither. Whether the man was intimidated by these conditions it is not said, but no one that is truly a Christian would be dissuaded by the price of following Christ.

The second man was asked to serve, but he had family concerns and wanted time to take care of them. The immediate concern was the death of his father and he wanted time to bury him, which by Jewish would have taken a week because of the purification period required in the law. Jesus responded that he should "let the dead, bury the dead" as a way of saying that the things of the world should be taken care of by the people of the world, but those in the kingdom must concern themselves with kingdom building.

A third man was also asked to serve, but he took his service as a suicide mission of sorts and needed time to say farewell to his family and friends. He wanted time to set his affairs in order because he considered that he may never return. Jesus rebuked him for his hesitation and his slow response to heaven's invitation.

In these three examples Jesus underscored that those who commit to serve and go back on the pledge for reasons of family, business, or friendship are not fit for the kingdom. The greatest servant is the one that puts his hands on the plough and does not turn back.

Ushering Calls for Commitment

Today there are many who volunteer or are asked to serve in the ushering ministry of the church, who offer a variety of excuses for not completing their commitment.

Some Make bold commitments without counting the cost. These join the board and pledge to attend meetings, serve when needed and go whenever the board needs them. It is a bold commitment that requires a great sacrifice on behalf of ushers because when there is a funeral, church program, special activity or worship service, ushers are expected to be present. They are the church's "Minute Men and Women" who are ready to move in a minutes notice to their field of service. Wherever the church goes, ushers are expected to be present. Whenever the pastor is on to preach it is usually expected that his ushers will follow him. Whenever other ushers are celebrating anniversaries or special events the usher is expected to be on the move. Many make ambitious commitments to follow "withersoever thou goest" only to find that it boils down to "sometimes", and for some its even "seldom." Christ's warning

to the ambitious young man who volunteered is the same that could be given to any new usher, "this is not an easy road, it will require many nights away from home and extended stays at worship.

Some are Fair Weather Servants. While most ushers are dedicated to the their field of duty some are fair weather ushers, who come to serve only if the conditions are perfect and if there is going to be a large crowd. When the crowd leaves, they leave and the lonely job of returning chairs, picking up and storing extra bulletins, and other *unspectacular but necessary job is left to others.* These ushers are reminiscent of *"Old Charlie" the mule*. Whenever Old Charlie was hitched to the plow he dropped his head and grudgingly pulled that plow. He did it, but appeared such a drudgery.

But when he heard the master say, "Hook Charlie up to the buggy, we're going to town" Old Charlie lifted up his head and he pulled that buggy with a lively trot and raised up head. People were amazed at Old Charlie's the beauty and grace of when he pulled the buggy. It seemed he got a chance to show off and liked it. Back home however, when hitched to the plow again, Old Charlie dropped his head and grudgingly trudged through the furrows. There are many "buggy ushers" that are good for the show, but they don't like to serve when there is no crowd, limelight, pretty uniform, or chance to showcase. Today, we should remember that the reward is not for the buggy but for the plow.

The call for committed ushers is a call for men and women who are willing to be servants despite the demands on their time by their family, community and friends. What Christ wanted from each person he asked to follow him was a total commitment. The harvest is truly great but the laborers in the field are few.

To Plow Straight, Keep Jesus In Sight!

Today, Jesus is still looking for servants who are willing to put their hands on the plough, and serve him without regrets. He is searching for the usher, choir member, deacon, teacher, or member at large that is willing to answer his call and give him a full and dedicated life in the Christian service. It's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "Jesus is tenderly calling thee home, calling today, calling today!"

However, simply putting your hands on the plough won't guarantee that you can plow a straight row, and do the job of a Christian service well. Those who have served as ushers for many years have learned the secret and spiritually they know how to plow.

It's the same secret that the small boy learned as he watched his father plow the fields with a one man plow. He noticed that his father put his hands in on the plow, stirred the horse and plowed straight ahead. His rows were always straight, it seemed easy. One day the father gave the boy his chance to plow a straight row. His father went to the end of the field and said, "keep your eye on me." The boy stirred the horse and the plow moved. He kept his eye on the blade of the plow and watched out for stumps and rocks. He looked back to see how far he had come and amused himself at what an easy job it was. When he made it to the end of the row his father showed

him his handiwork, instead of a straight line, the boy had plowed an "S" because he took his eyes off his father, looked down, around and back. His row would have been straight if he had kept his eyes on his father.

I don't know about you brothers and sisters but I've found out that the only way to make it in this Christian journey is to keep your eyes on Jesus. The Lord will guide your footsteps and take hold of the reins.

If you keep your eye on Jesus, you'll find out that the Lord will be a Lighthouse that will guide you in the stormy bay. I hear Jesus declare *"I am the way, the truth and the Light, no man can enter into the kingdom, except by me."*

I've decided to follow Jesus, there's no turning back!
Storms may rise, but *there's no turning back!*
Winds may blow, but *there's no turning back!*
I've started out in Jesus and I'm going through!.

No. 396-Graduation

Rocks In Your Pocket

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 24, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:40. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones.." Ecclesiastes 3:1,3a.

Introduction

When opportunity knocks, be ready to answer! When your chance for success comes, be ready to seize the moment and step into tomorrow! We spend a fourth of our lives gathering information, learning skills, and gaining experiences that will prepare us to do one thing: be able to answer when opportunity knocks. If we learn as much as we can while we can, we are better prepared for the great opportunities that will come our way, once we step out into the world on our own.

A young boy walked along the trail one day and he heard a voice speak to him. The voice said: "Gather as many stones as you can and tomorrow you will be both glad and sad." Seeing no one, the boy kept walking and he heard the voice again, repeating the same message. After hearing the message a third time, the boy decided to pick up a few small stones and put them in his pocket. After doing so the voice stopped. The next day the boy walked along the trail and he heard the voice again, with the same message. He decided he had spent enough time picking up stones and wasn't going to spend any more. On the third day as he was going through his pockets he found the five stones he picked up the first day and turned to diamonds, rubies and emeralds and were extremely valuable. He jumped up with joy. He was excited over what he had. Then he felt his pocket from the second day and remembered that he didn't pick up any stones that day. It was then that he heard the voice again: "Gather as many stones as you can and tomorrow you will be both glad and sad. Glad that you picked up some, but sad that you did not pick up more."

Students who have reached the point of graduation have listened to the voice of their upbringing and picked up a few stones of learning on their journey through life. Some will continue to study and learn as much as they can while they can. Others will stop. Tomorrow they will be both glad and sad.

As Christians our quest is always to strive for the best without fear of failure because we know our Lord is always by our side. If we learn all we can while we can, he will help us turn what we have learned into great opportunities for success if we trust him and put him first in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on young David as he went forth to challenge the giant Goliath. As a young shepherd boy David had many encounters with wild animals that were trying to destroy his father's flock. He had successfully defeated them because he asked God to help him and then used what was available, usually rocks or stones, and killed animals as large as lions and bears. When David visited the camp of the Israelite soldiers and heard the challenge of the giant Goliath in the enemy camp he was amazed that the soldiers were afraid to go and fight him. He went to the king and volunteered to fight the nine foot tall Goliath and win the victory for Israel. He tried on the king's armor and tried to hold the king's sword and shield but they were too heavy. He told them he would not use their methods but he would trust in the same Lord that helped him ydefeat lions and bears. He picked up five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his pocket and moved toward Goliath.

As the mighty giant laughed at the pint sized David, the young boy used one of the stones in his pocket, put it in a leather slingshot and felled the great giant with one great effort. He had selected five stones, he only had to use one, because he was not even counting on the stones themselves, but on God to guide them to their mark.

Many years later David's son, Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes in which he mused over opportunity. In chapter 3 he noted that there is an appropriate time and special moment for everything under the sun. In the 5th verse he noted that there is a time to cast away stones and a time to gather them. The opportunity and the special moment is represented as its time and in the course of his life, Solomon noted that doing the right thing at the right time pays off with great rewards for the wise.

The Right Equipment

Today more than ever, there is a need for preparation, training and skill. The world is increasingly dependent upon technology, which is requiring a highly trained individual to master its demands. While the demands of the work force are changing the demands of life are constant. Young people making another step in life today need the same traits as those of past generations.

If there were some stones that young people could pick up along the way that would magically change their lives they would most certainly include:

—APTITUDE: Aptitude refers to ones capacity to learn and grow. There have been many attempts to measure aptitude with a variety of Intelligence Tests that try to measure whether or not a person has acquired enough knowledge to enter certain areas of work.

While there are few tests that can accurate measure all you know, it is extremely important that youth learn all they can while they can. Unfortunately the things we need most are those we dislike. Reading is essential and young people must strive to read any and everything of value they can get their hands on.

—MAGNITUDE: Magnitude refers to capacity and volume. It refers to size. Today we need young people with big dreams and an even bigger willingness to put out the time and energy it takes to make big dreams come true. What propels us through life is the dream that lingers on the horizon. We must never lose the capacity to dream big. While its alright to dream of owning a house, don't rule out dreaming of a mansion. It's good to dream of having a job, but don't rule out the dream of owning the company! Only few have been able to go beyond the dreams, but even fewer have achieved big successes with small dreams. Aim for the moon, if you miss at least you hit the stars!

—LATITUDE: Latitude refers to distance, or how far you can go to the left or to the right. In the quest for success. Many people have failed because they could not handle latitudinal situations. Dealing with latitude means that you know when to say yes and when to say know, when to come and when to go. Many have ruined themselves in life because they went too far to the left or the right. Some could not achieve their goals because they were not willing to go far enough. Latitude judgments require us to know the boundaries and then move safely within them.

—ATTITUDE: Attitude refers to our viewpoint about life. It refers to how we interpret the events of our lives and what they mean to us. Two attitudes prevail: positive and negative. Those who see things negatively believe they are doomed to failure, accept second class status and suspect that the world is out to get them. Those with a positive attitude see everything for what it could be. They are the eternal optimists, they see the good in everything and everybody. They even see difficulties as another opportunity for success. Obviously, attitude will have a great bearing on the success of any young person, the wrong attitude will mean defeat.

—ALTITUDE: Altitude refers to heights and expectations. Altitude refers to your desire to climb higher and constantly reach toward something better. It is a constant quest for excellence in everything you do whether it is being a shoe repairman, computer specialist, or school teacher. Strive for the best! When you have reached a summit in your climb, reach for the peak! Go for the Gold!

What Is Most Important

As Christian young people, you will face Goliath. The Goliath you will face will not be a flesh and blood giant 9 feet tall, but it will be a future full of unknowns and uncertainties. With what will you try to defeat Goliath? Sword and spear? That's unlikely, what you will need will be five stones!

You will need a Christian aptitude. A knowledge, rooted in the word of God, that no matter what comes against me, if I am right, God is on my side. Study all of God's word that you can, pick up a stone and put it in your pocket!

You will need to know that there is no dream so big that you and God cannot accomplish it. He has the whole world in his hands. Dream big and expect big things from God, pick up a stone and put it in your pocket

Whatever direction you go in life, keep saying "if I will put him first he will direct me" for word declares "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths." Let him guide you and advise you, pick up a stone and put it in your pocket

Even when things don't go right for you, never forget that God is by your side. He never put more on you than you can shoulder, because he knows how much you can bear. Pick up a stone of Christian optimism and put it in your pocket.

Success will be yours if you put God first, no altitude will be beyond your reach for I heard Jesus declare: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all of the other things will be added unto you!" Put God first and pick up a stone!

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The voice that spoke to the little boy on the trail now speaks to you: "Gather as many stones as you can ...and tomorrow you be both glad and sad. Glad that you did, but sad that you did not gather more."

No. 395-Revival

Close Encounters Of The Third Kind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 10, 1978

SCRIPTURE: ***"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17***

Introduction

There are many people who believe in extra-Terrestrials, or beings from outer space. In one form or another people have reported spotting them in places around the world and some have even claimed to have been in contact with them mentally or physically. Books have been written about the subject and people around the world have been fascinated by the possibility of life on other planets coming to this earth.

Capitalizing on this fascination, a recent movie entitled "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" depicts a situation where the movie's hero has a "close encounter" with space beings. His close encounter goes beyond mere sightings and reaches the third level in which he actually meets and comes in physical contact with a being from another planet. This encounter of the third kind is said to be the ultimate experience and far exceeds all of the others because it is physical and personal and leaves and impression that will never be forgotten. The desire of many star watchers is to have a close encounter. Not simply a close encounter however, but a close encounter of the third kind.

How can we really get to know God? There are many who are familiar with him on a superficial level. They read about him and know of his presence subconsciously. They encounter him at a distance which only requires them to sense his being. Others see the handiwork of his creation and know him on the level of acknowledgement. Still Others have had personal experiences with him and their encounters are much closer and more personal than any others.

As Christians, we know God personally. We have had several close encounters with him, especially the close encounter of the third kind, where we have come to know him as our own guiding hand and light. Our quest is to show his love and grace to others who do not know him as we do. Our desire is that they too might have a close encounter of the third kind.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the Corinthians for the second time and emphasizing the nature of the Christian experience. He underscored the spiritual nature of the Christian life, noting that after having known Christ in the spiritual level that we respond to life in general on a spiritual level.

Paul addresses the level of our involvement by indicating that when we were in the world we approached life from a carnal viewpoint, but after having experiences with Christ personally we now approach life in a different, more spiritual context. This close experience with Christ has given us a totally new perspective on life and our relationships with people have changed.

The conclusion that Paul reached was simple: People who have had the ultimate experience of really knowing Christ, on the level of belief and acceptance, are different from those who may simply know him but have not accepted him. He described them as new creatures, because their close encounter with the Christ has led them to accept him as both Lord and Savior. This encounter is such a strong experience that "old things are passed away and behold, all things become new."

First Encounter: Sensitive To The Presence Of God

There are many today who have shared in the first level of encounter with God, they are conscious of his presence. Those on this level recognize the existence of God and they are sensitive to his presence. In a sense they "hear" God in a variety of ways.

Some hear God by studying their bibles regularly and through prayer and meditation. The study of the Word of God allows God a chance to speak to the soul in a way that is audible to the spirit. Bible study opens that channel of communication with God. While some hear God through bible study; others hear God by listening to the preaching of the Gospel. The preached word is another way God communicates with his creatures and shares his message of love and salvation with them. Many attend church services regularly and listen to sermons on television and radio. In this way they hope to hear God's message.

In Bible history the great and the small have heard God in similar ways. The Ethiopian Eunuch rode in a chariot reading God's word from the book of Isaiah. His desire was to hear God and once hearing it and having it explained, desired to be baptized. Jesus told the parable of two builders who built houses on the sand and on the rock respectively. The builder on the sand were like people who only heard the word but did not live by it. The builders on the rock were people who applied what they heard to their lives.

The first encounter with God is to hear him and do what he says. Hearing God gives us a sense of connection with God and with the universe. No wonder the song writer would declare: "I hear God in robin that sings, I hear God in every church bell that

rings. Billows may roll storm clouds assail, my anchor holds, God doesn't fail, he's in control the captain of my soul, I hear God."

Second Encounter: Believe in God's Power

While there are some who have experienced the first level of encounter with God, there are others who have gone beyond just being aware of God's presence and listening, but they have accepted the evidence of God's handiwork and believe.

There is considerable evidence in the world of God's power. The sun, moon and stars all give proof of his majestic power and awesome nature. The universe itself inspires belief. It's that kind of inspiration that prompted the song writer to declare: "Oh Lord, my God as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands hath made ..then sings my soul, my savior God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art!"

When we consider the work of God in our own lives we know that he is real. We have seen him move in our moments of sickness and distress. We have seen demonstrations of his love for us as he constantly blessed us although we have consciously worked against him. The blessings keep coming day by day and it lets us know that we are the recipients of his favor. This continuous flow of blessings may be what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "Count your blessings, name them one by one, count your many blessings, see what God has done."

Those who have the second level of encounter with God have seen the evidence of God's benevolence and power and have reacted with reluctance. Although they have seen his blessings, know of his power and believe it they constantly put off making the final step and accepting him as their personal Lord and Savior. It is the same situation as Felix and Drusilla that heard the word of God and believed it but put off making a decision for him until a "more convenient season." It is the same procrastinating spirit of Agrippa who heard the word of God, believed it in his heart but refused to accept it saying he was "almost" persuaded to be a Christian.

Third Encounter: Accept And Believe

While it is good to have close encounters with God where he talks to you and also where you acknowledge his goodness and blessings, it is better to have the close encounter of the third kind.

Those who have the close encounter of the third kind are those who accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. These go beyond the mere hearing of the word, but they want to be doers of the word. They want live for Christ completely and turn their entire life around that they be new creatures for him.

This was the experience of Paul on the Damascus Road, who encountered the Lord in a blaze of glory that changed his life forever.

There have been many close encounters but none of them have been like the close encounter of the third kind.

Moses had a close encounter as he faced God at the burning bush, but it cannot compare with the close encounter of the third kind.

Elijah had a close encounter as the Lord rained down fire for him atop Mt. Carmel, but it could not compare with the close encounter of the third kind.

Jacob wrestled with an angel in a close encounter but it could not compare to the close encounter of the third kind.

Peter, James and John had a close encounter on the mount of transfiguration, but it was not comparable to the close encounter of the third kind.

When there is a close encounter of the third kind there is a:

—Stream of loving flowing from your heart

—New spirit in your song

—New fire in your prayer

—Vigorous clapping in your hands

—New running in your feet

When there is a close encounter with God we are guided daily by his still soft voice. One song writer said: "I met God one morning, soul feeling bad. Heart heavy laden, with a bowed down head. He lift my burdens and now I'm so glad, all that I know is, there is something within."

When you know Jesus you have something within!

You can't read about it, or get it from watching or listening, you must have a born again experience and know him personally.

"You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself. If you know Jesus you don't need nobody else"

Try him!

Try him!

Try Jesus!

He will never let you down!

No. 394- Inspiration

Empty Water Pots

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 17, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"His mother said to the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." John 2:5-7.***

Introduction

Looks are sometimes deceiving! Sometimes the happiest person on the outside is really sad and lonely on the inside. Sometimes the people who appear to lead exciting and full lives are actually empty shells of happiness.

Have you ever felt empty? The times when you felt that way only a very few people knew it, those close to you and know you well, others only saw the outside which was presented to them in a warm package of happiness and joy.

Such was the case when the artist that was asked by a church group to paint a picture of an unhappy family. The artist worked on the picture for several months giving it his best interpretation. The group members amused themselves speculating on how the artist would paint an unhappy family. One expected to see a picture of a husband and wife screaming at each other. Another expected a picture of rebellious children, or perhaps a family on drugs or alcohol. Still another suggested a cheating wife or husband as the perfect picture of an unhappy family.

Finally the artist completed the picture. On the day of the unveiling the committee waited anxiously to see the results of the artist's work. They wanted to know which of them was right. As the canvass came back they saw the picture of a husband, wife and two children smiling and embracing each other warmly. In the background were symbols of the family's success: their home, jobs, degrees, and bank books. Puzzled, one of the committee members asked: "How is this a picture of an unhappy family?" Everything is in place, nothing is wrong in this picture." The painter told the group that the picture was a study in paradox. The unhappiness of the family could not be judged by what was in the picture but by what was missing. Although all of the symbols of secular prosperity were present, those do not make a family happy. This was a picture of a family without Christ. It is bound together by a thread of trinkets instead of the eternal love of God.

As Christians we constantly seek to fill our lives with the love of God. Whenever we feel empty, we pray for his Holy Spirit to fill us with his love. It is through the love

of God that we can hope for lives filled with happiness and love.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he performs the first miracle of his ministry. His mother called upon him at a wedding to provide wine at a wedding they attended when the wine ran out. She told the servants of the house to do whatever Jesus commanded them to do. In a short while they brought before him six huge water pots. Each water pot was made of stone and was empty. Each had a capacity to hold about two or three firkins apiece. A firkin is 9 gallons so these pots were big enough to hold between 18 and 27 gallons of water each. There were large water pots like these at the wedding because the Jewish ceremonial laws required frequent washing of the hands so they could cleanse themselves. They believed that evil spirits could be warded off by constant washing of the hands. The crowd, so large had used up all the water in the ceremonies.

Jesus commanded the servants fill the water pots with water and without question they took the pains to fill the pots, no doubt making frequent trips to the well to fill them. Once filled, Jesus performed the miraculous work of transforming plain water into the finest aged wine. The guest marveled at the wine, and praised it. They had no idea at all where it came from, how it came about. All they knew is that they were drinking mighty fine wine!

This text shows the spiritual emptiness of Israel. Like the wine that ran out at the wedding, Israel had lost its inner joy and had lost its hope. All it really had were empty Mosaic ceremonies and rituals that could not satisfy their hunger for a lasting hope. Christ showed them through this symbolic act, that a working faith in him could change their empty existences into meaningful ones.

What the crowd never saw

Today, it is possible for a man or woman to be running spiritually low and the rest of city not even know it. Like an empty gas tank doesn't show to the public until a car spits, sputters and stops running, many people can never tell from just looking that one's life is empty. The guests at the wedding never knew the wine had run out. The servants knew. Jesus and his mother knew. The guests simply enjoyed the party unaware that the spirits were about gone.

The word of God acts as an indicator for us and lets us know when we are riding on empty. There are at least six signs that indicate that we may be running low on spiritual fuel. 1) Our prayer life disappears. Either at home or in public our appreciation and respect for the importance of prayer diminishes. We begin to avoid prayer like a plague and unless called upon in a group situation, pray very little on our own. 2) Industry slackens. Our work in the church slackens. Our service diminishes. Our places of service are abandoned. 3) Bible Study slips. We begin to neglect the study of the bible. We neither read it in our own quite time, study it in class, or even bring

it to a worship service with us. 4) Compassion wanes. Our feeling for the condition of others has becomes impersonal. Increasingly we become insensitive to the needs of the sick, poor and hurting who are around us and limit our involvements to only those acts which are absolutely necessary for our station. 5) Increased insensitivity to sin. We become more tolerant of sin and less disturbed by its intrusions into our lives. 6) Decreased joy. We do more but enjoy it less and very few things bring us a surge of satisfaction that is real and from the soul.

All six of these measures give us a gauge of our spirit level.

The people at work or in our community may never know, when they look at us, that we are running low, but those who are close to us will, especially those who frequent the word of God, because they know how to read the gas hand.

What do you do in such a case? Turn it over to Jesus!

Do What He Tells You!

Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. They immediately followed his instructions to the letter, even though it was tiring and difficult and seemingly meaningless. They did what he said.

If we want to fill our lives with the spirit of God we should bring our empty vessels before God and do exactly as he says.

If we want lives full of joy, happiness and purpose, then we should do exactly what he tells us to do to fill our vessels. What he wants us to do may be require us to put forth more effort and it may seem lack a useless exercise, but do it anyway. Studying your bible requires extra time on your part, but do it anyway. The perfect place for bible study is Sunday School because it provides a forum to get questions answered from your week of private study at home. Give some time for service in your area of church work. Spend more time in prayer, personally and with others. Never lose the feel for the needs of people who are more than simple statistics but human beings with needs and cares. Serve God with a zeal according to knowledge and he will give you a great joy and thirst for living and serving that will never die.

When about to run low, find Jesus

A family had considerable trouble as they took their summer vacation. A child injured herself at a theme park. The car's engine developed a malfunction and it seemed everything else that could go wrong was going wrong. As they were driving along the highway the father became aware that he was running low and looked and looked for a place to stop. Finally he saw a church on a hill and pulled to its front door. He and his family filed into the church and sat on the back seat there was a meeting in progress. He told the deacons that he had just run out and they looked for a place to stop. The deacons met quickly and between them they handed the man enough money to fill up his gas tank. The man responded, "Sir, my daughter has been in an accident, my car's been down, my wife has taken ill and trouble is all around me. When

I said I had just run out, I meant our family's spirit is running low and we looked for the first church we could find, we don't want your money, we just want to talk with the Lord, because just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!"

I don't know about you, but I've found out that when I'm running low, Jesus can fill me up! When I'm drained he can revive me!

No matter what kind of empty water pot you bring before Jesus, is able to fill it with what you need!

In sorrow, he is joy in the midst of despair!

In weakness, he is strength in midst of failing faith!

In Heartache, he is hope in midst of a broken heart!

In darkness, he is a light, because weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning.

In a time of storm, he is a strong tower and a shelter in a time of storm.

In loneliness, he is a constant friend, for he declared "and lo I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the world.

I don't know about you, but every now and then when I get low I cry out in my soul "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, oh whether shall I go!"

I'm so glad that there is a fountain for empty cups!

I'm so glad that there is a filling station for empty souls!

It's on Calvary, at the cross!

There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Emmaneul's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood; lose all their guilt and stain!

No. 393-Inspiration

When Justice Miscarries

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 3, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"But let justice run down as waters, righteousness as a mighty stream" Amos 5:2***

Introduction

How did you feel when you first heard the jury's verdict in the Rodney King trial? If you were among those who disagreed then you probably felt frustrated, angry, and helpless. Police stopped Mr. King in March of 1991 for speeding in Los Angeles. Police shot him twice with electric stun guns, and beat him mercilessly with their nite sticks. One officer hit him 45 times, others kicked him with their feet and pushed him. All of America watched the events via a video taped recording by a citizen that was aired around the world. When a jury, that had no African-American members, returned not guilty verdicts there was a national outcry. Riots broke out in Los Angeles, which reported over 1,000 fires. Atlanta, New York, and many other cities witnessed the largest public outcry of pain, violence and frustration since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968. The reaction of nearly all African-Americans was one of shock and dismay at what obviously was a miscarriage of justice. Some took to the streets, others screamed and yelled at authority figures. Still others, in frustration, gave up all hope that African(c)Americans would ever receive just consideration in America.

The violent reaction to the decision in the King case reflected a break down in what every American expected from the criminal justice system, that: 1) Victims of crimes will be vindicated 2) Offenders will be held responsible, and 3) The common good of all will be promoted. Instead of being vindicated, Mr. King was made the villain of his own assault. Instead of being held responsible for their actions, the police officers involved were exonerated. Instead of thinking of the common good, the jury ignored the need of the public for reassurance that the victims of police brutality can receive justice. All three public expectations failed. Order is maintained by either a show of force or respect for the system of justice. When justice failed and the force and will of the law enforcement became questionable, public rage spilled over into the streets.

As African-American Christians we share in the frustration of this moment, however we do not endorse the violence and destruction that has come in the aftermath of the "just(c)us" of the King verdict. Though we are frustrated, we should not give up hope, because the God we serve is still on the throne. We must continue

to constructively work, fight and pray until the day comes when "justice will run down like waters and righteousness as mighty stream."

Exposition

This text considers the prophet Amos as he prophesies to Israel about its evil nature and hypocrisy. Unlike the other prophets of the Old Testament who came with messages condemning Israel for its sins against God, Amos had a glaringly different message. While Isaiah, Hosea and others spoke of the sins of the people that were against God, Amos spoke of the nation's sins against the poor and disenfranchised; pointing out in commanding imagery that their unjust treatment of each other was not acceptable to God.

Wile some of the prophets seemed to address many subjects in the course of their ministries, Amos only had one: oppression and injustice. He walked the streets of the cities, saw it, and appealed to the leaders of the land to eliminate its effects upon the people. The injustices inflicted upon the people was a subject addressed by all of the prophets, however, it was the only subject addressed by Amos. Daniel had visions of the 70 weeks of seven and the last days, but Amos focused on injustice. Hosea targeted the backsliding ways of the people and how they had abandoned God for other gods, but Amos focused on injustice. Isaiah made majestic prophecies about the sufferings of the Messiah and how he would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities while he trumpeted God's disfavor with the idolatry of the times; but Amos only talked about injustice. Jeremiah envisioned the fall of Jerusalem and worked to save it from destruction. During its fall, he wept and a lamented over its demise, but Amos had just one focus (c)(c)the oppression of the people. Amos's message therefore was not unique, but he was the only prophet that had this single subject as the focus of his entire ministry.

Amos stubbornly pointed to the inconsistency of Israel's show of religious zeal while at the same time working to oppress and suppress the efforts of the poor and the oppressed. He prophesied against those who acted as judge and jury over the oppression of the poor and though able to counteract and stop oppression allowed it to continue and even promoted it for their own ends. Amos talked against those who filled the synagogues on the Sabbaths, conducted great religious feasts and programs but at the same time were supporting an atmosphere that endorsed the subjugation of the poor and oppressed. He projected widespread destruction would come if the oppression and miscarriages of justice continued. He painted pictures of a prosperous nation that would be destroyed from the inside if it could not develop a taste for justice and fair play for all of its citizens. His plea for justice rather than empty religious symbols is the same truth of the New Testament which reminds us that all of our efforts to appear and sound religious are empty if it does not reflect itself in our relationships with people we can see, while professing a love for God whom we cannot see.

A Plea for Justice

Many years ago Ephraim Tyler of Shreveport, La. wrote a book of poems that caught the imagination of African-Americans because they seemed to say what many felt so close to heart. Among his collection was one that was recited in Negro school rooms across America. The closing lines of his poem entitled the "Black Man's Plea" for Justice reads:

"I seek not for special favors, what I seek for is no task,
I seek not for social dealings, justice men, is all I ask.
I seek better education, in a better Negro School"
I am seeking no relations, save those in the Golden Rule.
As ye would that men should treat you, do ye unto them likewise,
Every man within your domain ought to have a chance to rise.
At the Shrine of this great nation, reverently I meekly bow
Ruling powers of this nation, will you give me justice now?

Hear me statesmen, I am pleading to defend the Black man's cause
Will you give me the protection outlined in your domain laws?
Will you let my colored lawyer plead my case within your courts?
I'm a citizen; I'm loyal; will you recognize my vote?
I pay dear for transportation over all your railroad tracks.
I come up to all requirements, and I always pay my tax
When I don't fill in the blanks correctly, will you kindly teach me how
Ruling powers of this nation, will you give me justice now?

Amos called for Justice in the land. His plea was for our claims of religious fervor and respect for God to be reflected in our relationships with each other. The land should be watered with judges, juries, and government officials who desire to insure that the demands of justice are served. Justice once achieved should flow like mighty streams, purifying itself; unstoppable as it moves with a mighty force to set at balance the wrongs afflicted against innocent victims.

Langston Hughes asked a probing question: "What happens to a dream deferred, does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or does it fester like a sore and run? Or does it explode?" The Black Man in America has dreamed of a day of justice but too often he has seen that dream dry up like a raisin. A Bureau of Justice report released in 1989 gave startling figures that trouble us: There are 609,690 Black men in the criminal justice system, 23 percent of all Black men between 20-29, compared to only 436,000 Black men of all ages enrolled in college. Most of those on death row are Black, all are poor and nobody seems to care. Many of us live in fear of our system of justice. We are so afraid that some of us panic when a policeman stops us because we don't want to be another victim. Some of us have seen arms and legs scarred by police dogs,

ribs crushed, permanent injuries inflicted often unnecessarily at the hands of those responsible for justice and panic at the thought that we might be the next statistic. We dream of a day when we shall receive justice, but the picture we see from the Scottsboro Boys to Rodney King is one of a system of laws that is Just-For-Us. Hughes put it this way: "Justice is Blind goddess; to this we Blacks are wise: Her bandage hides two festering sores, that once perhaps were eyes. What happens when the dream of justice turns into a nightmare? Some dry up in disgust and shake their head. Others fester like a sore and run sour with hatred. Some explode.

There is hope

What do we do when that which we dream about evades us? Dry up? Fester and become bitter? Explode? None of these. We should continue to work to change conditions, but never give up hope that the dream of a just society can be achieved.

The man who has lost hope in both God and man lashes out at everyone; his neighbors, friends, and anyone near as he vents his rage. He does so because he has no place else to turn and is frustrated.

Amos, after telling Israel of his distaste for injustice, always ended his prophecies by reminding them that there is a reason for hope. In his closing chapter, Amos says the day is coming when all of those responsible for injustices against God's people will reap what they sow and they shall be removed. Out of their demise will rise the fallen Tabernacle of David(v11). When the destruction of cities, brought on by hate and injustice has ended, from the rubble and waste will rise a new and restored land and people.

Amos' message seems so fitting for our times. There is injustice everywhere but there is hope! There is oppression of the poor and aggression against minorities in our land, but there is hope!

Our hope is not in the powers of this land. Our hope is not in the influence of government, the electoral system or the Congress of the United States. Our hope is alive because we know the Lord is still on the throne. I heard a songwriter declare: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

"I have hope when trouble comes my way!" Storms may rise, but I have hope! Winds may blow, but I have hope! It's a beautiful hope that sets me free.

We don't have to burn buildings, or loot to show our frustration because "We are our heavenly father's children..in times such as these "just ask for strength and keep on toiling though the tear drops fall. We have the joy of this assurance, we're never left alone to bear it all for he knows, yes he knows, just how much we can bear!"

No. 392-Youth

Get on the Goodfoot

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 26, 1992

SCRIPTURE: Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.— Prov 4:27; Psalms 1

Introduction

In the late 1960's one of the many hits of R and B singer James Brown was a selection entitled "Get on the Goodfoot." Included among the screams and grunts of the song were Brown's urgings that we should do what is right, get our act together and walk upright. In combination with other hits which described lifestyle as a "bag" he suggested that everyone should get themselves a new "bag," get on the good foot, say no to drugs and be Black and proud. He called it all getting on the good foot. At the time Brown was praised for his positive message to young people. It was clear, and because it had a beat, it was heard.

However, Brown's message of getting your life in order and walking in the paths of righteousness was not new then and it is not unique now. MC Hammer, Brown's contemporary to this generation, also sends messages to the young about staying clear of the obstacles that can get them in trouble or misdirect their ways.

Starting out on the right foot has nothing to do with literal feet or walking specifically. It has a lot do with lifestyle, living, how we choose to live it and with whom. These are important life choices that every young person must make at some point. There are many influences in the world that are at work trying to urge young men to be criminals or thugs and young ladies to be women of the night or some hybrid in between. Drugs, sexual promiscuity, alcohol, cigarettes, and a plethora of other evils await them on every corner. The images on television popularize temptation and the messages of some songs make vulgarity amusing and acceptable while forcing youth to lower themselves to gutter lifestyles to achieve any element of popularity and acceptance. Some youth have fallen prey to the influences that tempt them and are walking on the "wrong foot." They are dropping out of school, running in gangs, stealing, fighting, and killing. Others are developing attitudes of defiance that are leading them in the same direction. Now, more than ever, it is important for our young to get on the good foot and stay on it throughout their lives.

Christian youth are not immune to the temptations of the world. Church membership does not insulate them from temptations. Even though they have begun life on the

right foot, they must always be aware of the influences in life that get them off track and on the wrong foot. There is a blessing for those who walk in the way of the Lord, but those who walk through life on the wrong foot can expect an end that is not desirable. Christian youth, stay on the goodfoot and God will bless your life richly!

Exposition

This text first considers David, writing in the Psalms, giving advice to the godly about life choices. He writes the first of what is called the "beatitudes" of the Old Testament which prescribe blessings for those who choose to live godly lives. He compares those who choose to live according to God's will to a tree that is planted by the river; its roots grow deep into the fertile soil and it is nourished regularly and withstands the great winds that sometimes topple other trees. The fertile soil is his study and meditation upon the word of God, upon which he reflects day and night. However, He compares the ungodly to dry grass which grows in the dust and then is blown away by the wind. It is withered, unwatered and unrooted and therefore blows away with the first wind that blows because it is not rooted in eternal truths.

David suggests that those who want a secure future will not take advice from the people who are themselves without root or godliness. His verbiage put it this way *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."* It was not to suggest that we are to avoid contact with the ungodly but rather that we should not take advice or pattern ourselves after those who are on the wrong foot themselves. The ways of the righteous are known and are pleasing to God, but the unrighteous shall perish.

Solomon in proverbs makes David's message even simpler: Don't turn to the left or to the right, don't put one foot on an evil path. Solomon's advice was to follow the right path and stay on the "goodfoot."

Both David and Solomon spoke from experience, having seen what happens when they lived on the "badfoot" and walked evil paths as well as having walked the paths of righteousness themselves. Both fell into adulterous relationships at one time or another and both felt the wrath of God upon their kingdoms for the error of their ways. They learned to fear God and keep his commandments for this was the whole duty of man.

Getting Off On A Badfoot

How do you get off on the badfoot? It usually starts with a negative attitude. Bad attitudes and low self esteem set the tone for the direction youth take in life. Youth who think little of themselves, have low aspirations and have lowered their self expectations to fit their self image. Some have accepted failure as their plight in life and have given up on school, dreams and their own personal success. They usually remain mad with the world and assume an apathetic attitude toward life. It usually shows up in their behavior in school and in other social contacts.

Marva Collins, the great Chicago teacher, in her book "Marva Collins' Way" describes how she and a troubled young student started out on the badfoot but ended up on the goodfoot. A nine year old boy sat in her class with evil eyes and refused to take of his coat. He had a history of expulsions and transfers and fully expected to prompt another expulsion. When he brought his defeatist attitude into Ms. Collins' class he came in on the badfoot, but she charmed and disarmed him and before the school year ended he was on the goodfoot, quoting Emerson and doing well in school.

Youth who pursue life with negative attitudes are starting out on the badfoot. Like weeds that blow in the wind, they have no rooted convictions or truths upon which to build their futures and are swept away by the ill winds of life. Negative attitudes color your opinion about life. Consider *Big Buddy* who lived on the farm and was a hard worker. However, Big Buddy had a bad leg that pained him on occasion if he pressed on it in a certain way after sleeping on it at night. He went to great pains to insure that he always got out of bed on right side so his good foot would hit the floor first, but sometimes he slept on his wife's side and when that bad foot hit the floor first he was mad all day and nothing was ever right. People would see him and say "Old Buddy musta got up on the wrong side of the bed today, he's on his bad foot again." When youth enter life expecting anything but success they start off on the badfoot. It's as if everyday of their lives they get up on the wrong side of the bed and step out on their bad foot.

Those youth who have decided to live the Christian life should beware of taking advice and suggestions about life, from those who are on the badfoot themselves. What wisdom is there in patterning after people who have failed themselves and don't even know it? It makes little sense to ask the student who has failed every test since school began for advice about test taking! It is not wise to ask the dope dealer how to have a good time! When you ask the hottest mama on the school campus how to become popular the answer is predictable. When you ask the sugar daddy how to have fun, the answer won't be something you'd talk about in Sunday School. Those who are on the badfoot in life are doomed to perish even though they appear to succeed at perish. David said it bluntly *"The way of the ungodly shall perish."*

Get On The Goodfoot

If the way of the ungodly shall perish, there is a blessing for those who strive to live life on the goodfoot, ie.,according to God's word.

What are the advantages of pursing life on the goodfoot. David said in Psalms 1 that those who strive to do right shall: 1)Bright forth his fruit in his season 2)His leaf also shall not wither 3) And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Anxious youth who aspire to achieve success should be patient. Those who follow the godly way know that what God has in store for you will come, but only at the right time. Plums, peaches and pears are common fruits, but none of them can be obtained until the right season comes. The greatness that youth want from life is

approaching, but it will only come in due season. Those who put God first will find that their success will be lasting and will not wither with fleeting fame or notoriety. Those who choose to walk with God shall prosper because he gives them a great appreciation for even the smallest accomplishments in life. Even so, they shall prosper both physically and spiritually.

Walking with God begins with putting your best foot forward and deciding that you can't walk this way alone that you need, the Lord to guide you and protect. Walking on the goodfoot begins when you say in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God and you accept him as your savior and commit yourself to live by his rules. Walking on the goodfoot begins when you decide to put God first in your life and to give him your best.

I don't know about you but I've found out that I need the Lord to walk with me. When the Lord walks with me my attitude changes. Instead of:

--FAILURE, I think of success, for "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

--INSECURE SHAKY GROUND, I think of the Solid rock, for "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

--DARKNESS, I think keep seeing the bright and morning star. No matter how dark my times I remember that weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning!

--SADNESS, I think about unspeakable joy. I heard a song writer declare: "This joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!"

I don't know about you but I want Jesus to walk with me! All along life's tedious journey, I'm going to put my best foot forward, but I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 391-Easter

I Will Rise Again

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 19, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" Phil. 3:10 And they shall scourge him and put him to death and the third day he shall rise again." Luke 18:33 "

Introduction

What do you think of when you think of Easter? Bunnies, bonnets, eggs? There are a multitude of symbols associated with Easter that catch the imagination, but the one that means the most is the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. It is a reminder to us that despite the apparent victory of evil over good, that truth crushed to the ground will rise again. It is a testament that the struggle for that which is right will eventually be triumphant.

The resurrection of Christ wasn't the original intent of Easter. Originally, Easter was a pagan fertility ceremony saluting the goddess Eostre who was the god of the dawn and of the Spring. The direction in which the sun rose in the morning was named "East" after her and the celebration of the freshness of spring was named "Easter." The Jews celebrate the Passover during the same time every year because its date is fixed in the Mosaic law. Easter is a floating holiday that always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of Spring. Spring begins on March 21 Easter always comes between March 22 and April 25th every year. When it began Easter had nothing to do with Christ or the Resurrection. In fact, when it began it had nothing to do with Christianity at all.

The resurrection of Christ gave Easter a new meaning. While the Jews see this period as the Passover and celebrate their deliverance from Egypt and the Pagans still pay tribute to the goddess of the East, Christians look around and see the renewal of life all around us and use the day as a grand opportunity to celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead and triumph over failure, doom and gloom! Christians around the world simply took over the Easter celebration and changed its focus. Easter did not begin as a Christian celebration, but today only a few people think about the goddess Eostre, most have never heard of her. What they do know is that Easter salutes the victory of Jesus Christ over death and the grave! Today, Easter

and the Resurrection have come to share the same meaning.

As Christians, the resurrection of Christ stirs our spirit and renews our faith in God and in ourselves. The Easter story, wrapped in its trappings of personal failure, tragic defeat and ultimate success stirs us when see how Christ overcomes and rises above what even his best disciples thought was a failure. We are inspired because his resurrection gives us encouragement to handle similar failures with an air of hope. Because he was successful despite apparent failure, we who follow him can also expect to triumph over failure and defeat. That, my friends, is a pretty good reason to celebrate!

Exposition

This text considers Christ as he makes a prophecy about the remainder of his life. He notes that he would be delivered into the hands of Gentiles, ridiculed, scourged, and put to death, but he would rise again. The disciples, who heard him as he talked about his coming troubles were confused. Verse 34 indicates that the true meaning of Jesus' statements were hidden from them until the proper time.

When Paul wrote to the Phillipians in 3:10 he said his desire was to know Christ, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. The great inspiration of every Christian comes when we read the three truths of this text backwards. Read in reverse order what Paul said was: 1) Like Christ we have died to this world and sin and through Baptism have shared his experience. 2) Since our Baptism and the emergence of this new life we have suffered in many ways. 3) These things serve as reminders to us that we have been buried with him in Baptism, suffered with him through sacrificial living that we can also expect to share in the power of his resurrection. In short, every Christian should be inspired since the one we serve has endured and conquered defeat, we who are recipients of the same power he received can expect the same.

Conquering Failure

Any account of the life of Christ that ends with the crucifixion is incomplete. Ending at Calvary focuses on what appears to be the failure or the low point. The beauty of the Christian experience is both the agony of Calvary and the ecstasy of resurrection morning. One talks about the failures and shortcomings of mankind and the other focuses on man's triumph over his own inequities.

How do you assess your own life at this point? Are you a winner or a loser? There are many today who feel the world has crucified them and burdened them with crosses too heavy to bear. Some have stumbled under the load and marriages have crumbled, businesses have failed, friendships have dissolved, and hopes for the future have dissipated. Some are not excelling as they should, while others seem to be at a standstill. Some see themselves as the victims of a terrible knockout punch and they are down for the 10 count. How do you keep going, when it is so obvious to everyone

around you that you are defeated, washed up and through? How you assess yourself depends upon how you are connected with God!

Those who have been baptized into the faith expect to encounter a flurry of disappointments and setbacks as a part of life. Consider the country mouse who came to visit his cousin in the city. He had heard about the ease of cheese in the city and wanted to see for himself. On one occasion his cousin had him to feast on some cheese but before they could get back to their hole they stumbled on two traps, were chased by a cat and almost poisoned to death. The country mouse said "Cousin, you are right, there are plenty of opportunities in the city but it looks a little dangerous." The cousin simply replied: "It comes with the territory!" In a similar sense, setbacks and frustrations come with the territory of every Christian. Christ suffered many setbacks and disappointments but he knew they did not spell the end. While Calvary was part of the story it was not THE story, it simply came with the territory. It was necessary to provide redemption and salvation for men. If Jesus had to endure sufferings we, who have become like him, should expect no less.

The great joy every Christian shares at Easter is the reminder that though life sometimes gets us down, we shall overcome! Though we are frustrated by circumstances beyond our control we shall prevail! Though we are setback in the pursuit of our goals we will eventually triumph! Though we have failed on occasion, we are encouraged because our Saviour's triumph over defeat helps us to say "I will rise again!" The world laughed at Christ as he hung on the cross. He was counted among the failures. Sometimes it appears that we have failed as well, but everytime we think of the resurrection of Christ we say to the world, don't count me out: "I Will Rise Again!"

Look at the people the world has counted out, but they rose again! Baseball's Ty Cobb was known for his ability to successfully steal basis, but he was thrown out more times than anyone in history. Each time he was thrown out he came back and tried again. Babe Ruth was a great home run king, but he struck out more than 99 percent of the players in the major leagues. The crowds laughed at his strike outs but no one laughed at his home runs. Thomas Edison's teacher said he was a dunce and he failed 14,000 times in his efforts to perfect the light bulb. Abraham Lincoln failed twice in business, had a nervous breakdown, lost his sweetheart, and lost seven elections but kept coming back until he became president of the United States. Albert Einstein the worlds' greatest mathematician, flunked out in math in elementary school. Henry Ford died a millionaire but at age 40 he almost gave up on life because he was broke with only a dream in his heart. Anita Whitaker lost nine pageants before she even made it to the Miss Louisiana pageant which she lost twice before finally becoming the first Black woman to hold that title.

Each of these people had a never give up spirit that said it's not over until it's over!

I Will Rise Again

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is the same power that saves,

inspires, and motivates Christian's today. Jesus did not raise himself from the dead, he was raised from the dead by the power of God. Likewise we cannot rise above our circumstance alone, but we need the power of God to raise us and lift us higher!

As Christians, our hope to triumph over defeat and death is tied to the resurrection of Jesus! When we see the empty tomb, we are reminded that he lives. Because he lives I know there is no:

--**Battle** the Lord cannot win; **Burden** the Lord cannot lift

--**Loneliness** that the Lord cannot comfort; **Promise** the Lord cannot keep.

--**Dark Cloud** the Lord cannot brighten; **Heartache** that the Lord cannot soothe.

No wonder the song writer declared: "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know, who holds the future, ..and life is worth the living just because he lives."

I don't know about you but I'm glad there was a Calvary, but I'm even happier to know that after Calvary there was a resurrection morning.

Jesus told his disciples that he would be talked about and crucified -"but I will rise again!"

When Jesus told the scribes that his temple, once destroyed, would be rebuilt in three days, they laughed. But I can hear him say in essence "go ahead, laugh at me if you please, but I'll rise again"

As they drove nails in his hands I can hear him declare: "go ahead, drive the nails in my hands and lift me up, but if I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all men until me. You might nail me to a cross-but I'll rise again!"

Bury in a borrowed tomb! Put a seal on my grave, but early Sunday morning I'll rise again!

Go ahead drive the nails in my hand, laugh at me where you stand.
Go ahead me and say it isn't me, the day will come when you will see.

Cause I'll rise again, ain't no power on earth can tie me down.
Yes I'll rise again, death can't keep me in the ground

Go ahead and mock my name, my love for you is still the same
Go ahead and bury me, very soon I will be free,

Go ahead and say I'm dead and gone, but you will see that you were wrong
Go ahead and try to hide the Son but all will see that I'm the one
Cause I'll come again. Ain't no power on earth can keep me back. Ye's I'll come again, Come to take my people back.

No. 390-Palm Sunday

When The Crowds Call Your Name

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 1992

SCRIPTURE: ***"And when the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Matt 21:9-11; And they cried out again, crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, why, what evil hat he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him." Mark 15:13-14.***

Introduction

How do you feel when people praise you? Important? Happy? Success ful? Among the various feelings you experience should be caution, because one of the weakest moments of a person's life is when he is the object of flattery!

Julius Caesar returned to Rome after a great victory and heard the crowds yelling his name and praising him. It is said that his attendant noticed that as he rode along he waved to the crowd but his smile was half hearted and without spirit. Later the attendant asked him why he seemed so shallow as the crowds showered him with wreaths and called out his name. His response was: Today the crowds would raise me high and praise me, tomorrow the same crowd would hang me high and scorn me. A short while later Caesar was stabbed to death by Brutus and several other close associates who were among the crowd that praised his greatness.

Praise, especially when it becomes flattery can be dangerous. Consider the nit-witted bullfrog who sat on the giant lily pad. It was the best pad in the pond and all of the other frogs wanted that spot but could never get it while the bullfrog sat on his pad. So a crowd of the small frogs paid a daily visit to the nit wit and they made it a point to tell him what a great frog he was. Each time they praised him his head inflated and he puffed himself out in pride. The more they praised him the bigger his head became. One day his head got so big that he burst wide open and the other frogs quickly pushed his remains aside and happily sat on his giant pad, made available by a successful frog who died from a bad case of the big head.

We should never be consumed by the praise of men. The praise of men is like perfume, we should smell it and enjoy it but never swallow it. It is not the praise of

men that we seek as Children of the King, but rather the praise of God. So we work for him diligently, knowing that if we are faithful there is a crown for us in the end.

As Christians, let us continue to work for the kingdom, unmoved by the scorn or the flatteries of men. We should keep our eye on the prize, which is the high calling of Jesus Christ and heaven will be our reward.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he makes what has been called a "triumphant entry" into Jerusalem. Jesus had taught and healed for three years throughout the region and his reputation had spread from village to village. Many thought of him as a great prophet, healer and divine teacher and were drawn to greet him as he entered Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem riding a colt. As he entered, the multitudes greeted him and threw their garments along the road to honor him. Others cut down branches from the palm trees and waved them in the air and shouted praises to him as he passed. They shouted "Hosanna" which was Aramaic for "Save Us." The shout of Hosanna was customary for the feast of the Tabernacles that was celebrated at this time. According to the law, during this feast they were to march for seven days around the altar with palm leaves in their hand. The eighth day was described as the "Great Hosanna" where the people marched and shouted praises to God and "Hosanna." The shout of Hosanna therefore, was hardly unusual, but it was unusual for them to shout such praises to a carpenter, riding a donkey, that they had never seen before and knew very little about. Their perception of him was based on their own agenda and not the true reason that Jesus came to Jerusalem.

Upon his arrival into the city the people praised him as the one who would save them. However, just a few days later the same crowd that praised him shouted demands for his death. The high priests and other religious leaders were displeased at the praise he was receiving and they consorted on ways to turn all the shouts to doubts. They accused Jesus falsely, produced false witnesses, and used their political influence to destroy him. Ultimately the same crowd that called his name in praise also called out his name in condemnation. The lips that shouted Hosanna on Palm Sunday cried out "Crucify Him" a few days later.

Praise of Men-Empty Shouts

What were the people shouting about? Most of them didn't know why they were shouting because they did not understand Jesus, his purpose or his message. They were shouting to be shouting. Often that is the case today, people are shouting on Sunday and crucifying the Lord afresh after the Sunday service ends. In a humourous way this poem characterizes the situation:

What You Shouting Bout?

When the singing gets good and; preaching comes to a head
When your hearts been lifted and your soul's been fed
When the spirit is moving and there's music in the air
When your soul gets lifted and there's a feeling everywhere
It's time to have yo' self a shout
But you better be sho,
what you shouting bout!

Miss Lucy got a good one, she dives across the pew
Miss Lula gets as stiff as board after a song or two
Miss Annie throws her purse and gives the ushers a fit
Ushers are kinda scared of her,They scared they might get hit
It's great to have yo' self a shout
but you better be sho
what you shouting bout!

Ain't no harm to shout on Sunday, if the spirit is for real
But if your shout can't last to Monday then it wasn't such a big deal
You can whoop and holler all you please but if the spirit is not there
Then you wasting time, jumping pines and spitting snuff everywhere
It's great to have yo' self a shout
but you better be sho'
What you Shouting bout!
Wright '92

Often the praise that we offer God doesn't go beyond Sunday Shouts and Amens. Like the people in Jerusalem, some of us are singing his praises but we have no idea what we are singing about. Some are calling him Lord, Lord with no idea what that entails.

Jesus Not Influenced By the Crowds Words

Despite the beauty of their sound Jesus was not influenced by the words of the crowd. Certainly it was good to hear the crowd yell: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" It must have been pleasing to hear them shout "Hosanna" but Jesus was not carried away by the empty praises of men, he knew his mission and while he enjoyed their praise, he was not consumed by it.

As we look to his example the Biblical record gives us a clear indication of the fickleness of public praise. When Moses came forth to champion the cause of Israel in Egypt they sung his song and praised his name. However, no sooner had they reached the Red Sea than did the people scorn him for having led them out of Egypt.

The praise and flatteries of men are momentary.

When men give us too much praise other men can get jealous. When David Killed Goliath the people shouted "Saul has killed his thousands but David his 10,000" and David became enraged with jealously because someone received more praise than he. Even today many people will lose friendships because someone cheated them out of praise that they thought they deserved. If their names are not listed concerning a successful project and they are not recognized in some special way they are offended. There are others that wouldn't be offended at all if their names are not called, as long as no one else is praised either. In verse 15 the high priests were displeased because the crowd praised Jesus instead of them.

Praise Of God Preferred

Although it was good to hear the crowd calling his name, Jesus knew it was only for the moment. What he wanted to hear was the praise of his father saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

When the crowds call your name, don't get carried away at what they are saying and the beauty of their words, always remember that what we really want to hear is not the praise of men but the praise of the father who is in heaven.

I don't know about you but I'm listening for another crowd to call my name, because this crowd can love you today and crucify you tomorrow!

The crowd at Jerusalem called his name but that wasn't the crowd that Jesus heard. He was lifted by the voice of a different crowd across the horizon.

In Jerusalem Jesus heard the crowds call his name and ask in mystery, "Who is this?" But he heard the voice of a different crowd asking a different question. John said he saw a great throne room, surrounded by the four beasts and the 24 elders. They all shouted who is worthy? And the crowd cried out "Thou art worthy because thou was slain and has redeemed us to God" By thy blood and stripes we are healed.

In Jerusalem the soldiers made him a crown of thorns and shouted "A King needs a crowd", but Jesus heard a different crowd shouting over in glory "All hail the power of Jesus name, let Angels prostrate fall, bring forth the royal diadem and crown him, crown him, Lord of all"

In Jerusalem Jesus heard the people shout "Crucify him, Crucify him" but Jesus heard the Angels declare "He's is not here, he has risen from the dead!"

No. 389-Mother's Day

The Hand That Rocks The Cradle

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 10, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"Then said his sister to Pharaoah's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, go. And the maid wend and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it." Ex. 2:7-9

Introduction

The lives and careers of most successful people have been guided by the unseen but ever present hand of someone who made great sacrifices that they might have a chance to achieve. In many cases that hand is that of a loving mother.

When Harry and Ada Mae Day had their first child, they had traveled 225 miles from their farm to El Paso for the delivery, Ada made brought her baby, Sandra, home to a difficult life. The four-room adobe house had no running water and no electricity. There was no school within driving distance. Harry had a dream of going to Stanford University but it never materialized as he and his wife were trapped in a life on the farm. Ada Mae determined that little Sandra be great despite their circumstances. Although there was no school around, she taught her all she knew at home. As Sandra grew she bought newspapers, magazines, and books for the child to read. She wanted her to see life beyond the farm and so one summer Ada the entire family crowded into its car and traveled to the state capital of every city West of the Mississippi. They saved and scrapped and enrolled Sandra in the school of her father's dream, Stanford and Ada Mae told young Sandra that the she was destined to be great one day. With those words ringing in her eyes Sandra Day O'Conner became the first woman justice on U.S. Supreme Court. On the day of her swearing in with millions looking on, Sandra looked through the crowd and found her father and then fixed on her mother and smiled. It was a smile that instantly remembered a mother reading to her as a child, scampering up the steps of state capitals and telling her "you're going to make it one day." Her smile recognized the influence and contribution of the "hand that rocked the cradle."

As Christians we recognize the influence of Christian mothers, those who give

of themselves to provide the best for their families. Their influence is phenomenal and far reaching. Mothers, who themselves are guided by hand of God, can shape the future, change lives and make an impact that change the quality of life the world for years to come.

Exposition

This text focuses on the role of a mother who was an unsung hero in the lives of three people who influenced the destiny of an entire nation. Her name was Jochebed, the children she birthed were Aaron, Miriam and Moses. She is scantly mentioned in the chronicles of history, but she had the opportunity to birth, nurture and shape the attitude, personality and direction of her son in a way that God could use him for a great and mighty work.

Historically, the Pharaoh of Egypt had become disturbed at the rapid increase in Hebrew slaves and he feared their potential to over throw the Egyptian government since there were several hundred thousand of them. First he ordered the mid-wives to destroy all males born but the mid-wives refused. Secondly, he ordered he soldiers to take all baby boys and drown them in river. This destruction of potential fighting men was meant to head off any eventual rise of the slave class in revolt as thousands of boys became men. While there may have been other babies that survived Pharaoh order, the biblical record only focuses on one mother's great faith and ingenuity. Jochebed acting on shear faith alone made a basket for her son of three months and placed the basket to float on the river where it would pass near Pharaoh palace. Pharaoh's daughter found the basket, was impressed with the child and decided to adopt it as her own. Moses's sister, watching on the side, quickly asked whether or not the princess would need Hebrew woman to nurse the child and she was ordered to get one, and thereby Moses' own mother was selected to nurse him and get paid for it at the same time.

While the great mathematicians, scholars and educators of Egypt taught Moses all of the learning of Egypt, there was another influence in his life that many had over looked, the influence of a Hebrew woman who had rocked his cradle as a baby and perhaps served as his nanny for many years. Exactly how Jochebed influenced Moses is not written, but it is evidenced in character traits that were not easily associated with the Egyptians. He had compassion for rather than hatred of the Hebrews. He often defended the weak against the strong as he did when an Egyptian was about to kill a Hebrew and when some helpless women were being attacked by rowdy men in Midian. He came to the knowledge of his Hebrew heritage and chose to associate with them as brothers. Acts 7:22 sums up Moses' education by saying: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." What was not written was that his attitude and personality had been influenced forever, by the hand that rocked the cradle.

A Mother's Influence

A mother's influence on the life of her children is immeasurable. She teaches subtle lessons about life that inscribed on the invisible subconscious in ways that leave an indelible imprint. This is perhaps the idea Dorothy Holt referred to when she suggested that: Children who live with criticism learn to condemn; when surrounded by hostility learn to fight; when bombarded with ridicule learn to be shy; when raised amidst shame learn to be guilty. But if a child lives with tolerance he learns patience; lives with encouragement, learns confidence; lives with praise, learns to appreciate; lives with fairness, learns justice; lives with security, learns faith; if he lives with approval he learns to like himself; if he lives with acceptance and friendship he learns to love the world! All of these are attitudes which are shaped, especially in early youth, by the hand that rocks the cradle, mother.

It took forty years for most of her teachings and influence to reveal itself. Without revealing her identity Jochebed impressed on her son the inequity of man's injustice to other men. She gave him a perspective of slavery that no Egyptian could have given him and though he continued in Pharaoh's court for 40 years, her message was deep in his mind. Each day he assumed his role as a prince of Egypt and seemed oblivious to the pain and suffering of the Hebrews. Jochebed, no doubt, thought she had failed. There are many mothers who at time feel they failed to make an impression on their children only to find out many years later what an impact they actually had. It took 40 years for Jochebed to know the effect of what she taught Moses as a child.

Jochebed taught Moses to know himself. Mothers, more than any other influence in life, help children to realize their own potential. She shares her hopes and dreams for her child and then latches on to his dream and does her best to help him bring it to fruition. To accomplish this end mothers influence them to know that despite their humble ancestry, God can use them to do a great work. They set the course for attitude adjustment today that will help them advance in the future. Moses, once he came to a full knowledge of himself, accepted his destiny and turned his back on a life strange to his own destiny and responded to the influence of the hand that rocked the cradle. There are many Jochebeds today, who have lived to see their sons or daughters come to the full knowledge of their potential, change their whole attitude about life and step out in new and challenging directions. When Moses acknowledged his kinship with slaves, Jochebed knew she had accomplished her mission. It took 40 years, but she had been successful.

When Jimmy Carter was president, he acknowledged that his mother "Miss Lillian" was a great influence upon him, even as president. Likewise today, many great many who influence cities, states or even entire nations, acknowledge that they are still guided by principles instilled in them by the unseen hands that rocked them in the cradle of youth.

As our society becomes less personal and delegates an increasing amount of its responsibilities to others, it is dangerous for mothers to delegate their responsibility to influence their children in a positive way to others. Pharaoh's daughter delegated

her responsibility to someone else, just so happened God was in the picture. Moses could have grown up with Egyptian attitudes and beliefs, but he reflected the values of the hand that rocked the cradle. Today, mothers may not be so fortunate if they delegate that responsibility to the day care center, next door neighbor or baby sitter. The person who teaches the child its values, rocks the cradle. Young mothers might consider the importance rearing children, setting good examples and spending quality time teaching, and sharing values as they consider career and lifestyle choices. Each mother must be keenly aware of the impact of the hand that rocks the cradle.

A Mother's Faith

All he knew about the God of the Hebrews he learned from his mother. Moses would not know God for himself until late in his life when he would encounter him at the burning bush. What he knew about God was reflected in the faith of his mother. It was her constant life of godliness before him that led him to know that there was something greater, and more powerful in the world than the lifeless statues of Egypt. In many ways the faith of mothers today is the best witness for a growing child. More than the lessons of the classroom or formal lectures, the active faith of a believing mother inscribes on the heart of her children that there is something important about belief in God. It may be years later before the child knows fully what is meant but the truth of that is learned lasts forever.

It is impossible to be a good mother in these times without a strong faith in God. These are times when people steal your children from the playground and put them pornographic films. These are times when children are molested by people in their own homes. These are times when death waits around the corner in the form of a potential rapists, drug dealer, or mugger. Mothers more than ever, need the Lord.

No wonder the song writer declared: "In times like these, you need a savior. In times like these you need an anchor. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock."

The hand that rocks the cradle is stronger if it is holding on to God's hand. When you hold on to God's hand there is no:

--No mountain you cannot climb
--River you cannot cross
--Problem that you cannot solve
--Obstacle you cannot overcome

No wonder the slaves chanted: "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone."

Precious Lord, take my hand lead me on let me stand, I am tired I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand precious Lord and lead me on!

No. 388-Cross

Bearing The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
April 5, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:23-24.

Introduction

Have you ever considered what it really means to be a Christian? Have you ever gone beyond simple church membership and denominational association to find out what it really means to follow Christ? As Christians each of us is a cross bearer for Christ, but there are too many who have no idea what that means.

Consider the two wealthy women who sat in a parlor discussing their jewelry. Each wore very expensive clothing and wore diamonds, pearls and other precious stones rather freely. The first pointed to a dazzling 24 karat gold plated cross that dangled from her neck on a chain of gold so thin it could hardly be seen. She said it was imported and belonged to an English duchess. She bragged because it was so precious. "I paid $5,000 for it" she said admiringly. Her friend also wore a cross. It was made of pure gold and studded with diamonds and rubies. It was dazzling to see. "Of course" she said, "it is a masterpiece and I paid $10,000 for the designer's touch." The two ladies laughed and talked as their servant came in the door. She was a poor woman who attended a quaint little Baptist Church out in the country. The women showed the maid the gold and the diamond studded crosses and asked her opinion. The maid asked to speak frankly without the threat of being fired and once given permission she said, "Well you paid $10,000 for your cross and all you can do is count its diamond crowns. And Ma'am you paid $5,000 for your cross and all you can do is look at the gold. But a long time ago I gave myself to the Lord and he gave me a cross. I can't wear it but I sure can bear it." It don't shine like gold but its good for my soul. And you want to know the best part for me? Jesus paid it all and it was absolutely free!"

As Christians we know that while it is not sinful, there is no salvation in wearing the cross. Our salvation comes from bearing the cross of Christ daily. Crosses of gold, silver and special designs may make beautiful ornaments to symbolize our faith, but they are from the cross of faith we bear everyday. We bear the cross gladly because we know that if there is no cross, there is no crown for us in glory!

Exposition

This text considers Jesus in three circumstances: as he enquires what men think of him, as he considers his own suffering and death, and as he prompts his disciples to consider their sufferings for him. In considering public opinion Jesus found that the public saw him in every image except the one he wanted to project. The public saw him as Elijah, John the Baptist or another great prophet, but his disciples recognized him as the Son of God. Concerning his sufferings, Christ told his disciples not to dwell on the fact that he was the Christ, his works through suffering, death and resurrection would testify to his deity. His disciples were told to prepare for a life of self denial and suffering, noting that any that were not willing to make sacrifices to help build the kingdom could make no claims to salvation.

In these three instances Christ painted a picture of the nature of the work, the manner of the testimony and attitude of the disciple. The nature of the Christian service will often be misunderstood as the public forms its own opinion of what a Christian is supposed to be, regardless of the facts. Christ healed many, fed crowds, and performed miracles and public opinion put him in every category other than the one he wanted.He was often frustrated by what people thought but was consoled to know that those close to him understood the true nature of his work. Moreover, he encouraged his disciples not to devote their time to shaping his image because his deeds and eventual suffering on the cross would make his sonship evident to all. So he “straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.” He wanted the works to testify of his sonship in a way that the people came to conclude that he was Lord. Thirdly, he told his disiciples that if they were to share in the kingdom it would require considerable self denial on their part. The disciples took the challenge and went far beyond what Christ required and even gave their lives. The disciples and the Apostles that followed him knew the meaning of self denial and took it at face value:

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia. Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets. Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece. John was put in a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward branded at Patmos. Peter was crucified at Rome with his head upside down. James, the Greater, was beheaded at Jerusalem. James, the Less, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller’s club. Bartholomew was flayed alive. Andrew was bound to a cross, where he preached to his persecutors until he died. Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies. Jude was shot to death with arrows. Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded. Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica. Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

The public had no idea, but Jesus knew the cost of bearing the cross and he wanted each of his disciples to know that bearing the cross could be costly, but there was

no reward unless they were willing go all the way.

Public Opinion

While Jesus was curious to know public opinion, he was not influenced by the crowd. Today there are many whose direction in life is too easily influnced by public opinion. In places of high government and even in local communities there are still men and women who are leading us who wait to test the popularity of a cause before acting rather than evaluating its rightness. The public was wrong about Jesus, and often the public, based on limited information gets and gives mixed signals about the issues of the day.

It's good to know what they say, but it is not good for any person to chart his course in life based on the opinions of others. If you build a house, in the minds of others its too small, to far removed or in the wrong neighborhood. If you buy a car it is the wrong brand, too old or too new for you. If you take a job they say you should have waited, and if you wait they say you should have seized the opportunity. Trying to please the public only frustrates and complicates life. Jesus knew the direction he was headed and he held stedfastly to his mission, despite what the crowd thought.

Testimony of His Works

The disciples knew Jesus intimately as the savior, but Jesus commanded them not to spend time arguing with people trying to convince them that he was the savior. He said his works: miracles, suffering and death, and his resurrection would tell the story. If you have done a great work there is no need for anyone to say that you are great- they can simply point to the work and it will speak for itself. Greatness is not a title that is conferred but is earned by accumulated good works. That's why Jesus warned his disciples not to focus on building his image, the work would be the image.

Today those who would follow after Christ, would do best to concentrate on the work rather than the image. You don't have to say "I'm a good choir member" your service with the choir speaks for itself. The same is true in any area of work, the work shapes the image. Maybe that's why the Consolers words carry so much meaning: "May the work I've done, speak for me."

Bearing the Cross

What is the work of a Christian? It is promoting the Christian ideal even in unpopular circumstances. It is giving of oneself until it hurts. It is resisting the temptatation to go with the flow and do that which is right at any cost. Being a Christian sometimes requires costly choices. The Christian Businessman may lose a profit edge because he refuses to sacrifice quality of goods and service for quantity of profit. Professionals may lose out on advancement chances because they refuse to compromise principles for a promotion. Some are ostracized in social circles

because they simply will engaged in certain kinds of unChristian activities.

Jesus never said to his disciples that bearing the cross would be easy, only that it was necessary.

Jesus was not afraid of the cross and he carried it to Calvary! But must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? There have been many who have turned down the cross!

There are many who turn down the opportunity to bear the cross, despite its many blessings.

The Rich young ruler turned down salvation because he wanted it without taking up the cross. Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

Felix and Drusilla turned down the cross because they wanted to wait until a more convenient season. Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

Agrippa turned down the cross although he was almost persuaded. Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

I don't know about you but I found out that "there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me!" Brothers and sisters there is power in the cross. At the Cross the:

—Neglected get attention and the outcast finds a new home!

—Problems find solutions and lingering questions find evasive answers.

—Heartaches go away and hurts will be healed

—Crying eyes will be dried and burdens will roll away!

No wonder the song writer declared: At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away, it was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

No. 387-Funeral

Something To Sing About

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 25, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"..But be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" Ephesians 5:18b-20.;"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God king and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Rev. 5:10

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that on any given Sunday there are scores of people who never sing? Ever wondered why? Consider the case of Sad Sally who came to church frequently but rarely moved her lips whenever the congregation sang. She sat politely and stared at the choir and other members, but never sang a word herself. She continued this practice for many years and it disturbed some members who entertained bad thoughts about her because she would never sing. One Sunday however, the entire church was pleasantly surprised when they saw Sad Sally singing. Her face lit up and she was beaming with enthusiasm. After the service several members surrounded her and asked why she seemed so jubilant. Sally told her friends that she had been fishing the day before and was caught out in middle of lake when a storm suddenly came up from no where. It blew the waters and topsized her little boat. She prayed to God for mercy because she knew she was seeing her last day. Just as quick as the storm started it stopped and soon she could see the sun again. When she was plucked from the water and brought to shore she thanked the Lord.

"This morning I had to sing along when I heard the choir say 'When the Storms of life are raging..stand by me.' I've heard it many times but somehow I understood it when we sang 'I was sinking deep in sin far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within sinking to rise no, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I.' I almost shouted when I heard the words "Love Lifted me!"

When you saw me grinning, it was because the choir was singing "There's a bright side somewhere. My lips couldn't be still when I heard the choir say "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Because I was lost but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

At that point the church members knew why Sally was singing so much in the service ....She had found something to sing about.

As Christians we have plenty reason to sing. We serve a loving God who has showered us with blessings. Even in our moments of difficulty, frustration and pain, we can still sing his praises because he has given us his Son, Jesus, and that's something to sing about.

Exposition

Paul writing to the Ephesians encouraged them to praise the Lord continuously by being filled with the spirit and singing his praises. He urged them to sing one of three kinds of songs when moved by the spirit of God: Psalms, Hymns and Spirituals. These were offered to Christians as alternatives to the drunkeness and lewdness offered by the world. In them, Paul notes Christians who walk circumspectfully in the world "redeem" their time and use it wisely using every opportunity to witness for Christ, which includes the songs they sing.

The first of the three kinds of songs Paul mentioned are Psalms. These are great collections of poems, mostly written by David, that express gratitude and thanks to God for his mercy and goodness. When the early church sang Psalms the reference was to the 150 selections that were taught in the synagogues. These included: "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want" of Psalm 23 and "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" of Psalm 46. These songs, in modern times, are called anthems and sing to God and praise him for his goodness, greatness and graciousness to mankind.

Paul also noted the Hymns. These are expressions of faith in the cause of Christ whose ultimate purpose is to inspire us to continue in the Christian struggle. They often speak of his trial, suffering and triumph as well as our continued faith that his victory will lead us to a better and brighter day in the kingdom of God.

Thirdly, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to sing spirituals. These are songs that express the mood of our soul and spirit in hard times, frustration, failure, and death. They tell how we feel at the moment, but also express our faith that despite the frustrations of the hour, hope still lingers on the horizon.

Paul encourages every Christian to make melodies in their hearts that give praise to God, and express our faith. Even in our darkest hour, he suggests that we should give "thanks always for all things unto God."

A few years ago noted Blues Singer B.B. King wrote a song entitled "Why I sing the Blues." He said the song was in response to the many questions he received about the thousands of songs he's written that are best described as "somebody done somebody wrong songs." The blues, said King, reflect the poverty of spirit and body that touches the lives of so many people. At best the blues is depressing because it offers no hope, only a way to cry out in pain.

Christians have difficulty singing the blues. We continuously look forward to peace that follows the storm, the stilling of troubled waters, and the opening of closed doors. In contrast to B.B. King, there are the sentiments of the late Mahalia Jackson who turned down lucrative contracts to sing Rock and roll by explaining "Why I sing Gospel Music." She said she sang about the Lord because he had been such a wonderful God and blessed her in so many wonderful ways. She noted that every day she woke up she found another reason to sing for the Lord.

People who enjoy singing in the church, usually have something sing about! When they sing "Count it all Joy" with a smile on their face, it's not because they like the beat of the music and the chords, but because they can witness to the truth of the message. They have seen hard times. They know what's like to squeeze your family into a small trailer, cook on a hot plate, and shiver in the winter when there is no gas. They have seen the waiting rooms of countless doctors offices and suffered the painful discomfort of surgeries, pills and hospital beds.They understand hard times, but also know that "all things work to the good of them that love the Lord." Those who have shared that experience can reach out with bellowing alto's and tenors and say "everything in Christ is joy."

When you have seen both sides of life and have come to know the joy of the Lord, you have something to sing about! When you have experience emptiness of living for the weekend, squeezing in crowded smoked filled clubs, surrounded by fair weather friends, foolish fantasies and wasted opportunity; you have something to sing about when you leave it all behind. A person who has witnessed others become alcoholics, drug addicts and criminals when they chose to live without the Lord, can sing with a spirit of committment "I moved from my old house, I moved from old friends, I moved from my old way of life...I got a brand new life." When you have come through the experience and found a better life, "you've got something to sing about!"

When the Lord blesses us we have something to sing about! If we count the ways that God has blessed us, all of us have should have something to sing about. However, there are special blessings we have received we have even more to sing about! When you ask the Lord to give you a job and help you stand on your own two feet and he does it, you have something to sing about! When you ask the Lord help you point your children in the right direction and place in safe hands and he does it, you have something to sing about. When you ask the Lord help you keep a smile on your face, despite the pain and frustration you feel repeatedly, and he does it, you can sing like nobody else can sing "I know the Lord will answer prayer because I've tried him for myself" you've got something to sing about!

In a Jail cell Paul and Silas found something to sing about. I don't what they sang but it must have been something like "He'll open doors for you!" They could sing because they had faith, and faith gives you something to sing about!

Jesus finished the Lord supper and sang a hymn before going out to the garden. As he carried the cross up to Calvary the women cried and sang. I don't know what they sang but the words of Dr. Watts would have been appropriate: "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free, no there's a cross for everyone and there's

a cross for me."

Is there sadness all around you? Sing! "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul!"

Is there trouble in your life? Sing! "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always"

Is it dark right now and you can't see your way? Sing: "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

When you have Jesus you have something to sing about. You have:

--Peace in the middle of confusion; Hope in the midst of despair

--Strength in midst of weakness; Inspiration in the midst of discouragement!

When you have Jesus you have something to sing about because he promised "never to leave me, never to leave me alone"

"Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come. Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he, he's eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me. ...

I sing because I happy!

I sing because I'm free!

For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!

On Saturday March 21, 1992 Thelma Dianne Coffey moved from her old house into a brand new house not made by hands. Even in her sickness she kept a smile on her face and kept singing, because she had something to sing about!

No. 386-Youth

There Is Room At The Cross For You

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 22, 1992

SCRIPTURE: So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. — Luke 14:21-22

Introduction

Have you ever had a problem but failed to bring it to the attention of someone who could help because you thought your problem too small? If you called your mayor, governor or senator do you expect to get an answer, or do you consider your matter insignificant. Often people find that officials and people of importance have little time for small concerns therefore they consider their problem insignificant. Soon they stop asking altogether and miss opportunities for help.

Consider the poor boy who found the prince in the woods, hungry, hurt and lost. Together with his family they took the prince into their one room house, fed him and nursed him to health again, without knowing he was a prince. Upon leaving, the prince gave the boy his medallion and thanked the family for making room for him in their home. Two years later the family fell upon hard times and they faced starvation. The boy, full of optimism, decided to go to the king and ask for help. His family members were amused because they felt the king was busy dealing with the affairs of state and had little time for the concerns of a peasant family. However they allowed him to go anyway. Once inside the palace the boy noticed the long lines of dignitaries that commanded the king's attention and felt awed by his little problem, but he started to walk toward the king anyway. The palace guards caught him by the arms and dragged him as he was streaming and yelling "I want to see the king."

The prince saw the boy and from a distance recognized the medallion hanging around his neck. He ordered the guards to bring the boy to the front of the line. The prince turned to his father the King and said "This boy and his family made room for me in their one room shanty. There is always room for him in the palaces of the kingdom." The king heard the boy's trouble and said to him. "Because you made room for my son, and you bear his medallion, you shall have the desire of your heart!" The

king ordered the boy and his family to be housed and employed in the palace for as long as they wished because "they made room for my son."

As Christians we have made room in our lives for the son of God. He has given us his seal and assurance that whenever we need him he will be there. No problem is too small for him and there is always plenty of room for us at the front of the line!

Exposition

This text considers Christ as he gives another explanation of the nature of the Kingdom of God. The context of this parable finds Jesus giving instructions that true believers should show kindnesses to all and make room for even the poorest and the least expected. Since he was in the home of a Pharisee and knew full well that every word he spoke was being inspected, Jesus gave an illustration of the Kingdom that had both a primary and secondary meaning. He told of a certain man who had a great supper and invited many of the nobles and important people of the kingdom to share. However, each had excuses that ranged from business demands involving land purchases or newly purchased oxen, to a man who was a newly wed who wouldn't be available for a year. None of the invited came. The master then told his servant to go into the street and invite those who least expected an invitation: the blind,halt, maimed and the poor. The servant issued an invitation to all he saw and after all who were coming were in the hall, the servant reported that even though great numbers had responded to the call, "yet there is room." The master ordered them to go into the highways and byways and seek others until the banquet hall was filled, because there was plenty of room left for more.

Jesus' initial application of this parable was to the Jews themselves. His offer of the kingdom of heaven had been made first to the Jewish people, but they were rejecting him in every theological circle. As the "certain man" of the parable he offered Israel an exclusive claim to the kingdom but it refused. So the Gospel message was extended to include all races, creeds, nationalities and persuasions, because of Israel's rejection. The secondary application has to do with us today. It points out that many people have been offered the opportunity for salvation, but have rejected it. The gospel today has been offered to people all over the world. While millions have responded to its call, even 2000 years later, "yet there is room" for more.

Plenty of Room For Youth

A young lady was once asked, "Why don't you become a member of the church?" and she responded: "I have to wait until I get older and tomorrow becomes today." She said stopped attending church because she felt there was no place for her generation, because adults always sees her generations as seeds of the future rather than flowers about to bloom in the present.

Today's youth have often been erroneously referred to as the "church of tomorrow" and have generally been ignored as an important part of the church's program in

congregations across America. The "church of tomorrow" label has usually meant that youth are generally shut out of the church's emphasis today as they wait "their turn" to come tomorrow. The level of importance we place on our youth sometimes leaves the impression that there is no room for them in the church of today.

Youth have an insatiable appetite for activity. In the social attitude adjusting years of their life they require frequent opportunities for Christian fellowship and fun. The frequent words they speak are "go","do" and "what's next?" What the church does not satisfy leaves a void that the world promises to satisfy all to quickly. Knowing this many church budgets and calendars still plan youth activities on an adult body clock-once per month or once a quarter or even less. The calendar is full of plans and programs important to adults that some youth get the impression that there is "no room" for them.

Youth who want to participate in the affairs of the church require extensive transportation. How many find that they can neither get to Sunday School, rehearsals or other fellowship opportunities because the church offers no transportation mechanism to get them there. Very few young people drive and among those that do, only a few have their own cars. When the church plans an activity without considering the transportation of its youth and others similarly situated, it suggests to them that there is "no room."

The truth of the matter is that there is plenty of room in the kingdom for all people who want to give God their best.

In Christ's parable, the servant reported that even though many had responded to the call to come to the master's banquet table, there was still plenty of room. That truth still rings true today: There is plenty of room for any and all who want to be fed at the table of the master and enjoy his fellowship.

You Must Have Room

The reason the servant had trouble getting people to come to the master's banquet wasn't because of a shortage of room, but it was because most of those he invited had no room for him.

Today, the question is not whether or not there is enough room in the kingdom for you, but whether or not you have room for Christ in your heart. The servant looked in the highways and byways trying to find any person of any age that would come to fellowship with the master, but found few who had room. Today there are still many who have no room.

Why is it that so many people have no room for Jesus? Maybe the 3 year old's answer to her mother can explain the reason. A mother was surprised when her three year old said to her: "I've got Jesus in my heart." The mother said it was good that she had Jesus in her heart. Then the child asked "Does daddy have Jesus in his heart?" and at hearing that he did she said "I thought so!" Then the little one came to her mother and looked into her face and said "I wish Jesus was in your heart too!" The mother was troubled. What had she done that would suggest to her daughter

that she was not a Christian? “Why do you think Jesus isn’t in my heart?” Then her daughter shifted her eyes down to her mother’s abdomen, which had swelled in the eighth month of pregnancy and pointed a little finger and said: “Well, mommy, that baby’s getting so big, there’s no room for anyone else in there.”

We can’t make room for Jesus if our lives are already full with the world ...there’s no room for anyone else in there! Jesus says “Behold I stand at the door and knock.” He wants to come into your life if there is room! If you have room in your heart for the Son of God and decide to accept his invitation, you’ll find plenty of room at the cross.

I’m so glad that there is still room at the cross!

--Matthew was a hated tax collector but he found there was room at the Cross.

--Peter denied Christ three times, but he found that there was room at cross.

--The woman at the well lived sinfully but found there was room at the cross

--Saul persecuted the church with a passion, but he found there was room at the cross!

--A jailer tried to lock up the Saints of God, but he found there was room at the cross!

--A soldier who doubted Jesus and questioned his deity, found there was room at the cross.

There’s room at the cross for you! Though millions have come, there’s still room for one. Yes there’s room at the cross for you!

No. 385-Inspiration

Weight Lifters

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 15, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "..Let us lay aside every wight, and the sin which so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1b

Introduction

Have you ever been burdened by a heavy weight? The weight of daily burdens has sidelined many good people who found it increasingly difficult to live under the heavy frustrations of life. What do we do when the combined weight of our problems and cares seem to get us down? The best thing to do is to look for a weight lifter!

Consider the woman who was frustrated because she had no way to provide another meal for her children. In the middle of the night she prayed to God to lift this heavy weight from her shoulders. Just before daybreak she arose and read a passage from her bible. Quickly, she wrote down the words and as she wrote the words it seemed as if the weight of her burden shifted to that piece of paper. Later that morning she entered a grocery store and asked the owner for enough food to make a meal for her children. When he asked how much she could afford, she answered, "My husband was killed in an accident. Truthfully, I have nothing to offer but a little prayer." Although the man was unmoved at first, he thought of a clever response to the woman's simple request. "Write your prayer on a piece of paper and you can have its weight in groceries," he said sarcastically. To his surprise, she plucked a folded note out of her pocket and handed it to him saying, "I already did that during the night while I was watching over my sick baby." Without even reading it, he put it on one side of his old-fashioned scales. "We shall see how much food this is worth," he muttered. To his dismay nothing happened when he put a loaf of bread on the other side. He was even more upset when he added other items and it would not balance. When all of the items she needed to make several meals were finally placed on the scales, it balanced. The owner was puzzled at how such a small piece of paper could balance the combined weight of her groceries. He opened the paper and read the words she had written: "My God shall supply all your needs...Amen." That owner commented: "That was a mighty heavy prayer!"

If you are carrying a heavy load, give it to Jesus and he will make your load lighter. He said "My yoke is easy and my burdens are light" he will gladly help you carry your

load! He is the world's best weight lifter!

Exposition

This text tracts Paul's letter of encouragement to the Hebrews. It follows on the heels of the entire 11th Chapter which encouraged them to have faith. There he detailed the examples of great faith that have been demonstrated by all of the great patriarchs of the Old Testament: Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, David, Gideon and Rahab. These were given as clear examples of how keeping the faith would eventually result in victory for the Saint. With the 11th Chapter as an introduction, Paul begins the 12th chapter by saying "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about so great a cloud of witnesses.." or put another way: "Since we have so many Old Testament Examples of God's mighty power to deliver despite adverse circumstances.." let us continue in the struggle to live the Christian life, patiently.

Paul suggested that as we strive to live the Christian life there are two things that we should lay aside: weights and sin, both of which easily come to any person who is trying to be a Christian. The Greek word for weight in this verse is ONKOS which means a bulk or mass that proves to be an encumbrance. In 2 Cor. 4:17 the word BAROS is used to explain that weights cause us to stand stronger. Talking to the Corinthians about the weights of afflictions verse 16-17 read: For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If weights trouble us along the way, so will sin. Paul encourages every Saint to lay aside sins too, if they intend to successfully run the race of this life with patience.

The prime example for every Saint striving to lift and set aside every weight that comes before him is Jesus Christ himself, who is the author and finisher of our faith. Jesus, on earth as a man, had even greater weights and temptations than we, but yet endured and is now at the right hand of God in glory. With Jesus as our example, Paul declares, that we should proceed boldly after the prize that comes to the victors's of life's Christian race.

Lifting Weights

If we glean the truths of Paul's message to the Hebrews in this text, we come away with the feeling that every Christian should learn to lift and remove weights, or encumbrances that get in the way of a Christian life. Like it or not, every Christian must become a spiritual weight lifter. To get an idea of what we must do spiritually we only need to look at what Olympic Weight Lifters do to train and gain increased strength.

WEIGHT LIFTERS ARE DIET CONSCIOUS: They eat foods that build muscles and avoid those that contribute to fat. So it is with the Christian who is spiritual weight training. The foods of the soul are related to the study of the word of God and prayer. Prayer is the appetizer of the Christian diet. It creates a climate and hunger for more

food, but it slows the consumption rate because you are partially full already. Bible Study and the Preached Word make up the main entre' of the Christian's spiritual diet. A little Gospel music, a few hymns, Christian dramas and other artistic expressions are a few of the deserts that help us take in ideas and truths that will help us build strength. Unfortunately, some Christians are becoming spiritual fast food junkies. Our bible study is limited to occasional scanning, we hear the preached word only occasionally and spiritual diet gets completely out of balance. To gain strength to lift weights when they come we must consume the truths of the faith that build strength.

WEIGHT LIFTERS START WITH THE LIGHTWEIGHTS FIRST. Olympic weight lifters have amazing strength, but none of them began by lifting huge weights first, they began by mastering small weights. They increase the weights they can lift as they master smaller ones. We are unable to handle major weights in life unless we have first learned to master small problems. Some heavy weights of life involve: Death, major sickness, extended illness of a love one, and failure in life, love or occupation. These are big league heavyweights. Success in handling smaller weights prepares us to deal with heavy weights. A person who has experienced the death of friend once is better equipped to handle it if it comes again. Those who have undergone surgery or mastered a family problem once are better prepared to handle them again should they occur. This gives a clear meaning to 2 Cor 4:17 "For our light affliction...worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory." These small weights that we have today prepare us for even greater weights should they come.

POWER LIFTERS CAN HANDLE TREMENDOUS WEIGHTS EASILY. Olympic Power lifters are able to lift tremendous weights in three different ways. Some use the dead lift in which the lifter picks up hundreds of pounds and snatches it above his head in one sweep. Such a lift takes tremendous power. Those who are strong in the Lord can do the same. No matter what comes their way they simply grab hold and lift it out of the way. Elijah was a master of the dead lift. He challenged the prophets of Baal head on at Mt. Carmel and rose the victor. The second measure of weight lifting ability comes in the bench press. It shows how much strength the lifter has when he is flat on his back because he must lift the weights to an arm's length while on his back. If dealing with problems and the weights of life is tough when you are on your feet, it is even tougher when you are on your back. How much can bench press? Hezekiah, flat on his back, faced death and bench pressed until he received 15 more years on his life. The third measure of the weight lifter is the Knee bend. When given his weights the lifter must bend his knee to a squat, get under his load and then rise. There are some problems in this life that will bring down the strongest of Christians, but the man or woman who is powered by the spirit of God only goes down as far as his knees.

Power From Bended Knees

Strange things start to happen when you get down on your knees.

--Samson in his blindness found renewed strength, when he got down on his knees.

--Daniel in the Lion Den found renewed courage when he got down on his knees.

--The Hebrew Boys found protection in the fiery furnace when they got down on their knees.

Prayer changes things!

Paul said when the weight of the world starts to get you down, Look to Jesus and follow his example!

With the weight of the world on his shoulders, Jesus went to the Garden and prayed to his father, saying "let this cup pass, but nevertheless not my will, but thy will be done."

Father, the sin of the world is a heavy load for one man to bear!

Father, the redemption of mankind is a heavy load for one man to bear!

Father, the burden of saving the lost is a heavy load for one man to bear, but I will lift that load until salvation's price is satisfied.

But I hear Jesus saying "And I, if I, be lifted up I will draw all me unto me!"

The buried him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning he bench pressed the grave and the stone was rolled away! He rose and took death in his hand with dead lift and raise it for the world to see!

Oh Death, where is thy sting? Oh Grave Where is thy victory?

Are you struggling with a heavy load? Don't give up the faith but keep on struggling.

Remember no matter how strong the weight lifter, there is always a spotter standing right by him in case he falters under the Lord. Every child of God has the assurance that our heavenly father knows the load we are trying to carry and is right by our side.

No wonder the song writer declared:" Though the road gets heavy, you're never left alone to bear it all. Ask for strength and keep on toiling though the tear drops. You have the joy of this assurance. The heavenly father will always answer prayer and he knows.."

Yes, he knows!

Just how much you can bear!

No. 384-Inspiration

Bethesda (House of Mercy)

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 8, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheepmarket a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." John 5:2-3.

Introduction

Have you ever cried for mercy? That was the time you knew you deserved punishment but you appealed to a compassionate spirit. "Lord, Have Mercy" those are the words that every Saint has whispered at least once. They are words of indictment as well because they suggest that the person who speaks them knows they deserve a harsher penalty than they request.

This was perhaps the case of the three thieves who were brought before an infamous hanging judge. This judge was hated lawbreakers but was known on occasion to spare the lives of criminals who appealed to a certain weak spot in his hard nature.

The first thief, who was caught stealing a horse, notice that the judge was Black and he struggled to appeal to the judge's slave ancestry by crying out: Freedom! I stole the horse so I could ride to freedom for there is nothing so precious to a man as his freedom. The judge stared at him and remarked, "you sought freedom but you stole to get it and so now what freedom you had will be taken away" and he ordered the man hanged.

The second thief, who was caught robbing the bank, that foreclosed on his farm, noted the judge's humble beginnings and cried out: Justice! I stole the money from the bank to get justice. It was wrong for them to take a man's house and home in the name of profit. The judge peered at the man and remarked, "You may be right that the banks are wrong to take the properties of the poor but stealing from them in retaliation is not justice it is vengeance." The judge saying angrily,"Now justice demands that you be punished for your crime!" He ordered the man hanged.

The last one was a woman, who was caught stealing milk from a neighbor's cow. She didn't have a trick to try but just fell on her knees and cried out: Mercy! Your honor I stole the milk. My children were ill and I didn't have anything to feed them. I stole the milk from the cow so that they might have a chance to see another day. I was wrong and I know I may pay with my life. Please have mercy on me." The judge peered down at the woman whose tears streamed down her face and said: "You broke the law and

stole from your neighbor. You had freedom and you abused it, but yet you don't seek justice?"

The woman looked up and responded: "No sir, I don't want justice. If I received justice I'd hang with the others. But when you decide my case, let your heart be your guide."

The judge found the woman guilty. But instead of hanging, he sentenced her to repay the price of the milk, and to never steal again! Her cry for mercy had saved her life!

When we are distressed and feeling low, let us turn to Jesus and bow humbly before him. When we say with a sincere heart "Lord, have mercy on me!" he will hear our prayer!

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he heals a man on the Sabbath at Bethesda. According to the text many people lay ill in one of the five porches, or large empty rooms, that surrounded a pool of rising mineral water. According to Jewish tradition, this pool was known as Solomon's Pool in the Old Testament and received its waters from the Fountains of Shiloh, all of which was traced back to the Fountain of Miriam that was provided for Israel in the wilderness. Any pool or water supply that was fed from the Fountain of Miriam, even remotely, was thought to be a special pool with healing capacity.

On occasion the water in this pool would bubble and rise and it became known that those who desired healing could receive it if they moved quickly for length of the troubling of the waters was brief. The people in this text came to the pool waiting for its healing movement. The subject of this text had been waiting his opportunity for 38 years, but had been unable to get there before the time lapsed.

The focus of this text is on the place and the types of people who came to the place, rather than on the single man and his healing. This place became known as a place of healing and hope and it attracted people from all spheres of life.

It is called Bethesda, which means "house of mercy." The Hebrew prefix "beth" means "the house of." Jacob, after seeing the wonders of God in a vision of a great ladder extending to heaven, named the place of his vision "Bethel" which means the House of God. Jesus was born in the City of Beth-lehem, which means "House of Bread." That was fitting since the Christ child would become the bread of life, filling the empty souls of the lost. Since it was a source of healing and hope lame, halt, blind and deaf, this pool surrounded by its porches of waiting souls who often found help was called "Bethesda" for it was a place where God's mercy was shown in a great way.

The Weak Seek God's Mercy

Bethesda is clearly a symbol of the merciful nature of the God we serve. Many are drawn to him because he dispenses help and salvation with mercy and compassion.

Like the people of this text many are drawn to the Savior because it is known that when there is an outpouring of the Spirit of God, great things have happened. The church attracts many kinds of personalities, all of which desire to be present when there is a moving of the spirit in a mighty way.

The Impotent come to the house of mercy. Impotent, means without power. Many today come to Bethesda because they don't have the ability to accomplish their goals. They have the will but not the strength that goes along with the will. They have a plan that can work but they can't work the plan. Sometimes this lack of power is evidenced by apathy and a general lack of motivation. This is the feeling we get when we can't seem to get going. How can we receive power from God? Samson, lost his power and strength because of sin but he turned his dungeon into Bethesda a "house of God" as he pleaded for a renewal of his gift. David lost his moral force when he fell into sin with Bathsheba but he turned his prayer room into Bethesda, a house of God, and cried out to God for a clean heart and right spirit. The Apostles received power when the Holy Ghost was upon them. Those who come to God seeking power can find it, if they allow the Holy Spirit into their lives.

The Blind come to the house of mercy. At Bethesda the blindness suffered was physical. Today that blindness is not so much physical as it is psychological. There are some who want to see with spiritual eyes what they have not been able to see with their physical eyes. They want God to give them great insights into the meaning of life and its circumstances. Helen Keller, the great lady who was born deaf and blind but who became one of the world's greatest scholars, was asked how it felt to be blind her response was always "It is not so bad not to be able to see because you have no eyes. What is bad is to have eyes and still not be able to see." Many today have eyes, but still can't see! They see someone in need and instead of seeing an opportunity to serve, they see only the beggar who appears disgraceful. When they receive a reward, a raise or a bonus in life, they don't see a blessing that comes from God, they see only a necessary payment for their own hard work. They see, but they can't see. Saul had a sight problem too, until he came to a spot on the Damascus Road that could be called Bethesda and God gave him a new way of seeing things that changed his life forever. There are many who come to Bethesda seeing life one way, but when they have understood the Grace of God, leave singing "I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

The halt and the withered come to the house of mercy! The halt at Bethesda were so called because they often had to stop walking because of lameness. The withered were those who simply deteriorating and literally drying up. Today the halt and the withered still come to the house of mercy. These are those who have come to abrupt stops in life, literal dead ends. Something has happened to cripple them financially, emotionally, or physically and they have halted all productive activity. Others have been inactive for so long that they are beginning to wither away. The lame man that Jesus healed was both halt and withered but at Bethesda he found what it took for him to get on his feet again and so can those who come to Bethesda today.

Waiting on the Lord

At Bethesda there was a multitude of people of all walks of life, but they all came for the same purpose, to wait "for the moving of the water." When the water moved it meant that God's angel was in the building and they had a chance to receive God's mercy.

This lame man received God's mercy when Jesus said take up thy bed and walk!

A blind man received God's mercy when Jesus made him whole again.

The woman at the well received God's mercy and she cried out "come see a man" who told me all I've ever done.

It's a good thing to receive the mercy of the Lord. God's mercy looks beyond our faults and sees our needs.

God's mercy turns our:

--Torments into triumphs;weakness into strengths

--Rags into robes; darkness into light

--Hurt into healing; Losses into victories

--Heartaches into Hallelujahs; Sins into fountains of forgiveness.

The mercy of the Lord was so great that he took an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary and cried out "Father forgive them for they know not what they do.!"

I don't know about you but I'm glad the Lord had mercy on my soul!

No. 383-Christian Education

Majoring In Minors

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 13, 1980

SCRIPTURE:"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Psalms 32:8-10.

Introduction

Have you ever plowed with a mule? It is an interesting experience to watch those who have done it for years work with horses and mules on the farm. Mules that have been around for a while seemed easy to work with, but those that were young had to be taught the way. The old farmer said: "You see, after the mule has been taught all I have to say is 'Haw' or 'Gee' and that mule with turn to the right or to the left. I don't even need the lines any more he just hear's my voice." So the old mules worked well moving at the commands of their owners. Giddi-up mule! Whoa Mule! Gee Mule! Haw Mule!

It wasn't so easy with the young mules. They had to be trained and working the field was a difficult task for them. A bit had to be placed in their mouths. To get them to go left or right the owner would have to pull the bit and say Haw or Gee at the same time until the mule began to understand. Sometimes the young mules were stubborn. They refused to move to the left or the right and owner had to pull at the bit to get them to move, instead of simply stating his desire.

The word of God in Psalms 32:8-10 notes that people who are taught and are willing to be instructed in the ways of the Lord find a happier experience. However, those who refuse to accept instruction are like those mules and horses that have to have bit and lines about them to get them to move at their owners command. David in giving this instruction said: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.."

There are some people with Common sense, that leads them to make rational decisions. There are some who have "Horse sense" that has been learned in the school of hard knocks by bridle and bit. However, there are others who have spiritual sense, which has come from a serious study of God's word and leading a life of prayer. Spiritual sense, is knowing when to following the commands of God, without the need of a bit and bridle. Spiritual sense is knowing the will of God and following it on

command.

If the mule can learn to respond to "Haw and Gee" then Christian Education can help us to know the will of God such that we can carry it out with all of our soul and being.

Exposition

This Psalms finds David giving instruction to the those who would follow about the wisdom of obeying God. David himself spoke from experience since he was a penitent and had been forgiven by God for a number of sins which included adultery. He notes with metaphoric words the same truths that God says to his people today: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in thy way. I will instruct thee in the way in which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye." It is a clear metaphor about the way that God teaches us today, by guiding us with his eye. According Matthew Henry: God teaches us by his word and guides us with his eye, by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of Providence which he enable his people to understand and take direction from as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye." From his ignorance and foolishness David learned the error of being as stubborn as a mule and he warns others to learn God's way such they follow him freely without requiring and bridle and bit to force to go in the right direction. The people, according to David, must be taught such that they can be better followers of Jesus Christ.

Universal Pursuit of Knowledge

Following the instructions of the Psalmist, believers around the world have delved into the pursuit of biblical knowledge in addition to secular knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is universal. Many view it as the panacea for the world's problems. Those who have mastered it have revered in literature and the sciences. These include the great minds of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Confucius, Kent and Rousseau. Knowledge brings information to the mind. However, it does little to affect changes in the world without a regenerated heart. What should go along with knowledge is understanding and submission to the will of God. It is incumbent upon the church to transmit to its components the knowledge of God, coupled with understanding and the necessity for submission to the Will of God.

Focus of Christian Education

The primary focus of Christian Education should be to help believers know the will of God and to differentiate between the majors and the minors. The main focus of Christian Education is to teach Christians how to be Christ-like. Beyond that is a secondary focus which is leadership or membership training in the particulars of operating in the structure of an organized church.

Christian Education which focuses on the majors helps the believer know those things which are important to his salvation and those which are strictly ceremonial. This is important because many times believers spend a great deal of their time majoring in minors which have nothing all to do with our main goal as Christians.

Believers who seek to avoid the Christian Education process are like the mule of this text that cannot be made to go in the right direction with a bridle and bit. Those who attempt to live the Christian life without a knowledge of the word of God and the sustenance that is derived from it and empty. Those who try to go through life without ever attending Sunday School, bible class, or other study opportunities rob themselves of the opportunity to know and understand the word and will of God.

Leadership Training Gives Understanding

What is the purpose of leadership training? Is it just to clasp a tender sheepskin that will later be folded away or stuck against a wall? Is it vain and idle pursuit of a course card, gold seal or a certificate? No, it is more than that. Leadership training is the way we learn to apply the principles of Christian Education to the practical operation of the church in all of its various ministries. The cards, certificates and proofs of study are all superficial, but the important focus is on learning to apply Christian values as we function as Christian in God's Church. Through study, the pursuit of knowledge about the way of God, through discussion and the realization of the word of God we become trained Christian workers, more able to defend the faith as move in today's challenging times.

It is Difficult To Teach Yourself

Leadership training is necessary because it is difficult for an individual to teach himself. An Ethiopian Eunuch rode along his chariot reading the 53 chapter of Isaiah. He could read the words well but he did not know what they meant until he met Philip. After the word was explained to him and he obtained a full meaning of God's plan, the Eunuch wanted to be baptized. However, despite his learning he was not able to understand without someone to teach him.

Likewise, it is difficult for any Christian today to learn the word of God by being self taught. Just as it is difficult to hear the word of God declared without a preacher.

Focus on Ministries

Christian Education also teaches us to focus on the major areas of the church's responsibility instead of simply looking at the minor areas. What are the church's major ministry responsibilities. There are many ways to perceive them but generally the church ministries are defined as: Cultivating Worship, Promoting Christian Education, Equipping Others To Serve, Missions, Saving Souls, Christian Charity, Fellowship and Church Administration.

What Christian Education does is to sharpen our focus on the needs of these various ministries and wets our appetite to do more in each of these specific areas. The more we know, the more we do. The less we know, the less we do.

We Learn Humility

Without the need for a bridle, Leadership training teaches us to be good stewards of our time, talent and finances. In short, it teaches us to be humble. Those who have been trained understand their role and observe it parameters. Their testimony is the same the song writer that declared:"Thy way o Lord, not mine, thy will be done not mine. Since thou for me didst bleed, and now doth intercede. Each day I simply plead, thy will be done."

We must avoid the danger of majoring in minors.

Able majored in humility rather than the minor of pride.

Abraham majored in faith rather than the minor of doubt.

Moses majored in the pursuit of freedom rather than the minor of painless slavery

Joshua majored in forward progress and spent little time on the minor possibility that the walls of Jericho might not fall down.

Samson majored in strength until the sweet titillating voice of Delilah caused him to major in his minor weakness.

Nehemiah majored in determination instead of minoring in Despair.

Job majored in Longsuffering rather than the minor of rejecting God.

Jesus majored in self sacrifice rather than the minor of self engrandizement.

He majored in Calvary!

He majored in Salvation!

And Early Sunday morning he majored in Victory rather than defeat for he declare: "All power" is in my hands!

No. 382-Inspiration

Anointed Lives

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him, and lo, a voice saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:16-17

Introduction

What do believe about your baptism? For many people baptism is simply a ceremony or meaningless ritual that is a requirement of church member ship. Others may not know what to believe.

Consider the old wineo that came to a country church revival. The preaching was good and the wineo was moved to go and sit in the chair and join the church. The church didn't want to pass up a chance to save this old wineo so they hurriedly prepared to baptize him. The deacons got their poking sticks and waded into the river and staked it off. They dressed him in white and moved out into the river. The old wineo was a little nervous because the water seemed high and he couldn't swim. After the singing and praying the preacher took the wineo under the water and brought him up quickly asking "Do you believe?" The wineo responded "No sir I don't". So they prayed and sang some more and the preacher took him down again but held him a bit longer. When he came up the preacher asked again: "Do you believe?" The wineo said "No, sir I don't! This time the church sang extra hard and the deacons prayed an exceptionally long prayer and the preacher took him down one last time. He held him so long that the wineo's arms began to flap and he began to struggle. Bubbles came up from the river! Finally he brought the wineo up and asked "Now, do you believe?" The wineo responded "Yes I believe. I believe you trying to drown me!"

There are many who don't know what to believe and they have adopted a childlike understanding of the entire process. That's what the children demonstrated one Sunday when they rushed home from a church baptism service to play church at home. One child played the preacher and tried to reenact the ceremony, saying: "I bapi-tize you in the name of the father, in the name of the Son, and 'In the hole you goes!"

As Christians, we understand that our Baptism is a symbol of the change in our lives. It tells the world that we have turned from our wicked ways and have accepted a new lifestyle and manner of living that is based on our faith in Jesus Christ. The water

baptism is a symbol to world, but we pray constantly for the baptism of the Holy Ghost that will empower us and help us as we struggle to live for Christ from day to day. We know that there is no salvation in the water itself, but the real power is in the anointing of the Holy Spirit that comes for every true Christian as a gift from God.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he is Baptized in the River Jordan. John The Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea urging Israel to repent from its sinful ways. His watch words are now known universally: "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Those who came to John for Baptism acknowledged their sins and expressed a desire to turn from them. Their baptism was a sign of their repentance. As Jesus began his public ministry he found John Baptizing in the wilderness and stepped forward to be baptized. John recognized him and was humbled by his presence. Those who stood in the baptismal line were confessed sinners, but Jesus knew no sin. He desired to be baptized so that he could begin his ministry properly. Another record of this event, John 1:29 finds John the Baptist saying: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." John felt unworthy to Baptize Jesus. He felt Jesus should be baptizing him instead.

John told those who heard him that he baptized men with water, but the Savior would go even further, he would give them the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Never-the-less John Baptized Jesus in the Jordan. His procedure was simple, he went down into the water with the candidate and carried them under the water momentarily and then brought them "straightway out of the water" (v16). Following Jesus' water Baptism he was acknowledged and anointed by God and empowered to do some great things. The voice of God spoke as Jesus came out of the water say "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Empowered by the spirit of God, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tested, performed great miracles, went to Calvary for the sins of mankind, and was risen by the same Spirit to live eternally!

What's In The Water?

Many people today have the mistaken notion that there is great power in being baptized in the water. They feel that after being baptized in the water that they are empowered by God to become stronger Christians and to do mighty works. Moreover, there are others who believe that the act of being baptized itself saved them and guaranteed them a place in the kingdom of heaven. Both are mistaken notions that have led to confusion and misunderstanding.

Water baptism is a symbol of a repentant life. Baptism does not save, it is sign to the world of a saved life. Those who are baptized are not baptized such that they can be saved, but because they are already saved. The two key requirements for

baptism are belief in the saving power of God through his Son Jesus and repentance of sin. Those who are baptized without both elements are simply dunked in the water. It is incorrect to suggest that they were baptized. The water in which they are baptized does not save them, because their faith and repentance saved them, long before they were baptized in the water. The water baptism is an outward sign of an inward change of life.

Water Baptism is not essential to salvation. It is possible, as the thief on the cross proved, to be saved without being baptized in the water. Water baptism does not save people, neither does it lead them to be saved. Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 1:14-21 addressed this issue noting that while many look to their baptism as the saving power, it is the preaching of the Gospel moves men to salvation. Once a person hears the Gospel truth, repents and believes he can be saved without being baptized in water, but he will neither believe or repent unless the Gospel is preached. Romans 10:14 asks the question: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Clearly, water baptism is not essential to salvation, but the preaching of the Gospel is essential. All activity in a church should cease when the Gospel is preached. Money counters should stop counting, meetings should cease and all other activities should be halted when the Gospel is preached because we recognize it as the power of God unto salvation.

Those who have been baptized in water have stated their belief in God, their repentance from sin and their desire to live the Christian life. Having made that statement, they should expect nothing further from water baptism, because it is not a saving agent.

Baptism of the Spirit

More important than water baptism is baptism of the Holy Ghost or the baptism of the spirit. The baptism of the spirit is the empowering presence of God in your life. This baptism can come before or after your water baptism, there is no special time to receive the Baptism or the Holy Ghost. In Acts 10:44-48 Peter preached the Gospel to the Gentiles and they were baptized with the spirit first, and then they were baptized with water. However, the usual order is: water baptism and then the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

What is this Baptism of the Holy Ghost? What does it do? When we are baptized with the spirit we are given special spiritual power from God to do great works for the advancement of his kingdom. This special power does not come with water baptism as it is general thought, but it comes from the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 Paul lists the gifts that can be bestowed upon persons who are baptized in the Holy Ghost. These gifts include: Increased wisdom about life, knowledge of the Word of God and the world around you, intense faith, capacity and aptitude for healing, the capacity to do that which men think is impossible, to communicate with others (prophesy), an understanding of the nature of the human

spirit, and the ability to understand and speak in the languages and tongues of diverse cultures.

Those who have been baptized with water should pray for the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Water Baptism is great but the anointment of the Holy Spirit is even greater.

Powerful things start to happen when the Holy Ghost comes.

--PETER WAS IN JAIL, But when the Holy Ghost came jail doors swung open!

--JOHN WAS ON THE ISLE OF PATMOS, but when the Holy Ghost came, he saw great revelations of the kingdom of heaven

--SAUL WAS WALKING THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS, but when the Holy Ghost came, he walked a new walk and talked a new talk.

--THE APOSTLES WERE WAITING PATIENTLY, but when the Holy Ghost came, they went all over the world.

When the Holy Ghost comes the:

--TIMID become BOLD; and the PROUD become humble!

--ENEMIES become FRIENDS; and HOUSE WRECKERS become HOME BUILDERS!

--UNUSUALLY QUIET become UNUSUALLY NOISY

No wonder the song writer asks: "Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me, Mold me, Make me, bend me, shape me, spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me!"

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that I've been baptized in the water, but I'm more than that I'm so glad that I've been baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Every now and then I can feel him moving in my hand! I can feel him moving in my feet!

When the Holy Ghost comes I've got to tell somebody about Jesus! Tell them how he died!

..Tell them how he rose from the dead!

I don't know about you but every now and then I can feel the Holy Ghost moving...

Moving!

Moving on the altar of my soul!

No. 381-Black History, Communion

Can You Hear The Voice of the Blood?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

February 16, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"..The voice of thy brother's blood, crieth unto from the ground." Gen. 4:10b;"And he said unto them, this is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many." Mark 14:24;"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not jude and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev 6:10.

Introduction

What is the price that has been paid for liberty? Has it come as a cheap, clearance sale commodity, or has it been purchased with a high price? The freedoms that Americans enjoy generally, and Black People share specifically, were purchased by the blood of thousands who stood at the forefront of physical confrontation at the risk of the their lives and fortunes.

James Weldon Johnson's classic hymn that symbolizes our quest captures the enormity of the sacrifices of our forefathers in the second stanza of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" when he wrote: "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered. We have come, treading our path thro the blood of the slaughtered. Out from our gloomy past, till now we stand at last, where the white gleam of our bright star is cast." As Johnson's poem depicts, we have come to this point in the journey with the blood of our forefathers fresh on our shoes. Those who died for the cause are limitless: Nat Turner, Malcom X,Emmitt Till, Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King, are but a few of the African-Americans that gave their lives in the struggle, but they were not alone. Hundreds of abolitionists lost their lives in the fight against slavery, scores of white freedom riders were beaten, bombed and murdered as they came South to join in the struggle against segregation.

Their blood painted the pavements of the South like crimson colored mosaics. Even the simplest freedoms we enjoy today such as eating a hamburger at a public lunch counter, riding on the front of a bus, or reading a book from a public library, were not purchased without the blood and tears of many who fought in their own ways to make it happen. No wonder then that Johnson would write: "We have come treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered." What semblance of freedom we enjoy today has not come without the shedding of much blood for our benefit.

But there is a voice crying out to us today. It is the voice of the blood of our fathers.

The blood of the slaughtered cries out for a continued response from those who walk today's new paths. It is a voice that cries out for a thirst for justice and freedom from succeeding generations. It is the voice of those many races who sought equality and freedom for all, even at the expense of their own lives. This voice commands and demands that we do not walk forward without a sense of appreciation for the quest that paved the way.

As African American Christians, we are aware of the price paid for our liberties as Americans. We are equally aware of the power of the blood of Christ to bring all men to the truth and freedom that salvation brings. So we continue to promote the cause of Christ and to seek truth knowing that "the truth shall make you free."

Exposition

These three text verses consider individual instances of shed blood and a collective expectation of a response for that shed blood.

Cain and Abel both made approaches to God by making sacrificial offerings. Abel's offering was accepted, but Cain's was, for some reason, not acceptable. Cain rose up against his brother in vengeance and killed him. When God asked of Abel's whereabouts Cain asked a question that has been asked many times since: "Am I my brother's keeper?" God said that Abel's blood cried out from the ground for God to make a response. Abel's blood cried out for God to take action to avenge his death.

John looking into the future envisioned the saints waiting in glory, asking "How long?" before their deaths would be avenged and they would receive their reward. They, like Abel, were the innocents. They were the ones persecuted for righteous causes. They were the ones whose blood, sweat and tears, were given sacrificially to help achieve the kingdom's end.

In both instances the blood of the slain expected a response, the question was not will God respond, but "how long?"

The blood of the Slain

There have been many people who have given their lives for the struggle for freedom. Like Abel, they have been struck down unjustly, and their blood cries out for a response, not only from God but from succeeding generations.

What is the response of this generation when it hears the voice of the slain masses?

Thousands have died for the right to vote. Our history paints a gloomy picture of thousands of our fathers and grandfathers who were carried off into the middle of the night by hooded klansmen and hung from trees because they chose to demand the right to vote. Our homes were burned, husbands shot, and children maimed and tortured because of our quest to go to a ballot box and cast a vote as American citizens. But the blood of those slain for this precious right cries out from the ground! Was

it shed in vain? Today, there are millions of the grandchildren of those who gave their lives for this right who think little of their forefathers sacrifice. Among this generation of the grandchildren of men and women who could not read and write but were motivated by an inner pride and dignity, are some who trample on the blood of their forefathers and for reasons of their own, will not register to vote. They give reasons such as: "My vote won't do any good. I don't have time. I haven't got around to it yet. But the blood of our ancestors cries out even to this generation asking "how long" will it be before this generation appreciates our sacrifice and responds accordingly.

If thousands of our people have died in the quest for the right to vote, then even more died to get the right to a sound education. Our history shows a picture of a people so hungry to learn that they would go to great extremes to learn to read and write. Booker T. Washington, in his autobiography told of his desire to learn to read after living as a slave and becoming free. He noted how he worked all day in a coal mine and then took his earnings and walked ten miles every night to a teacher he hired to teach him to read in write. Slaves who learned to read were tortured and even killed. Whites who taught slaves to read were scorned. We built our own schools and operated them in our churches. We paid for community schools out of our shares of the crops, and cried bitter tears when we saw them burned to the ground. The blood of those who died trying to acquire this precious privilege cries out from ground: How long? Was this blood shed in vain? Today there are millions who have little respect for the privilege of education. Today there is a generation that rides to school rather than walks, Writes on paper, rather than slates, eats hot breakfast and lunch rather than cold biscuits and syrup carried in crude buckets and has the finest of everything. Despite the opportunities available today there so many who trample on the blood of their mothers and grandparents who gave all they had to achieve but one goal, to see their children get an education. Today the student drop out rate is staggering. Many who remain learn more about violence and guns than they do about their studies. Yet the voice of those who work so hard in the past cries out: "how long" before this generation gets an appreciation for the educational process and responds to let us know that we did not die in vain?

The quest for freedom has had many who were willing to give up their lives in the endless battle against injustice. Some we read about in history books, but many are the silent heroes of each of our families: Fathers who gave up their lives defending the honor of the wives and children; grandparents who went barefooted to send their children off with a descent chance to live. But have all these sacrifices been in vain? Is there a sense of appreciation for their offerings to us, or do we simply trample upon them?

The Response Of The Blood

Abel's blood in Genesis is a testimony to the crimes of men. It testified to man's insensitivity and to man's inhumanity to man. It testified to an injustice given to a

righteous man.

Naboth's blood cried out in a testimony against Queen Jezebel and Ahab as they killed him to seize his vineyard. Naboth's blood gave a testimony to God of how the righteous have been over powered by the strong and wronged.

Uriah's blood cried in a testimony against David, who put him in the front of the battle so that he could steal his wife. It testified to the treachery and deceit of mankind.

But there is another blood that cries out today. It is not the blood of Able, Naboth or Uriah, but yet it cries out with a testimony.

The voice I hear comes from the blood of the lamb!

The blood of the lamb gives us:

--Help when we are helpless; Inspiration when we are discouraged!

--Confidence when we are afraid; Guidance when we are lost

--Victory when we are defeated; Joy when we are sad!

No wonder the song writer declared: "I come to the garden along, while the dew is still on the roses, and I the voice I hear falling on my ear the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, but I hear the voice of another blood, saying "forgive them for they know not what they do"

The blood of the lamb was shed for the remission of sin, it cries out even today with two watch words, "forgive them" and "go ye therefore."

This blood began to speak about 2000 years ago when Jesus went to Calvary!

It cried out then and it still speaks today "come unto me all ye that are labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest!

No. 380-Black History

Strange Samaritans

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright,Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.
February 9, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.— 2 Ki 17:24

Introduction

Do you get the feeling that we have lost something as a people? Despite our advances and successes, there seems to be a void we have left unfilled. Though African-Americans today are more educated than our ancestors, we don't know as much about life as our great grandparents. Many of us have kitchens full of food, but we can't cook in our traditional way because the techniques are being lost to modern conveniences. We have money, but unlike our great grandparents who would save for years to own a piece of land, we spend ours as quick as we get it in our hands. We claim a national brotherhood, but yet we destroy each other with Black on Black crime and we murder each other daily.

With respect to our afro-centricity, or our focus on our African-American Heritage, we have lost much. We run the risk of becoming strangers to our own heritage and enemies to our own culture if we are not careful to keep it alive. When Carter G. Woodson started the idea of Negro History Week, it was promoted as a week of celebration and focus on our cultural accomplishments. It was a week when teachers and churches focused all of their year's teaching into a celebration of our greatness. It was not designed to be the only week of the year in which afro-centric expressions were made. Even in our celebration of Blackness we have lost something over the years.

Even when it comes to our relationship with God it seems we have lost something. We sing with power and volume, but we rarely sing from depth of the soul. We pray, but the greatness of our education, has sterilized our prayers to the point that we no longer pray with our mind on God, but on the selection of our words and the proper use of the rules of speech. We go to church, but we don't go to participate in the worship, we now go to observe from a distance. We have bibles, but instead of being tattered and torn from constant use, they are seldom carried, read or studied despite the increase in our education. When it comes to our relationship with God there are many signs that suggest we have lost something.

As African-American Christians, there is one common strand among us that still unites us in the faith, it is our belief in Jesus Christ. We should never lose that

relationship. While we change and the world changes, our Lord does not change. He is the same today, yesterday and forever more, let us continue to celebrate his mighty works in all we say and do.

Exposition

This text introduces the historic developments that led to the cultural miscegenation of the Samaritans. The Jewish kingdom was generally thought of in three sections: Galilee, Samaria and Judea. The Judeans were received better than all three. People from Galilee were not frowned upon but neither were they respected for great potential. The Samaritans were considered the trash of the race. The rest of Israel had little to do with Samaritans and all went out of their way to avoid contact with them.

Though of the same race, the Samaritans were culturally diluted. They looked like Jews and had Jewish ancestry, but very rarely did they act like Jews. They were rejected completely because of their difference. This text marks the beginning of their hatred for Samaritans because Samaritans were not always hated among Jews. Once Samaria was the capital of the Northern kingdom. It was the political and religious center of the North as Jerusalem was the center of the Southern Kingdom. The Samaritans were strong, God fearing people, who strayed on occasion, but were never-the-less proud of their ancestry and heritage.

When the Northern Kingdom was defeated by the Armies of Assyria the victors carried their conquests back to Assyria as slaves. Others were shipped to other cities. Wherever they were moved, the Samaritans maintained a stubborn pride and rose up in rebellion. To eliminate any possibility of further rebellion the Assyrians began an elaborate plan to rob the Samaritans of their culture and religion. The Assyrian plan, generally referred to as cultural miscegenation: sent in people from Babylon, Cuthah, Hamath and other cities to live in Samaria as colonist. They brought with them the Samaritan gods and customs and their purpose was to control the conquered people by permanently changing their view about the enemy, while secretly keeping their own culture untouched. The end product of this invasion of the Samaritan culture is called "Cutheans" in the Hebrew manuscripts. In the New Testament they are called Samaritans.

It was an elaborate plan which resulted in the enemy working side by side with the conquered in an arrangement that appeared friendly and congenial. Their ungodly practices were slowly worked into social fabric of the people of Samaria. Whenever it appeared that they were being rejected they sent for captured priests to come and teach them the Samarian customs and traditions so they could learn the proper approaches to win them.

Cultural miscegenation worked for the Assyrians. It isolated the people of Samaria from other Jews and cut them off from their god. It worked so well that when Assyria was later conquered by Alexander the great that he sent in Greek transplants and mixed in Greek mythology and beliefs. Now the people of Samaria were part Jew, part Assyrian and part Greek in their culture. Making matters worse the Romans repeated

the same practice. The Samaritans lost every semblance of their culture, religion, and national pride. They worshipped god when it was convenient. They became tolerant of deviant lifestyles and as a result were hated by all Jews. They were strangers among their own people. Their alienation reached the point that one of the best ways to insult a person in New Testament times was to call him a Samaritan. They were strangers in their own land.

A Strange Generation

As African-Americans we should constantly beware of attempts by those outside of our culture to rob us of those things which make us who we are. Some among us have already forgotten their roots and behave strangely.

Cultural miscegenation has always been a tactic of conquering people. This is the process where our enemies approach us as friends, convince us to shun our heritage and to revel in the culture of our oppressors. The Babylonians tried this approach with the three Hebrew boys. They brought them to Babylon, taught them Babylonian manners and even tried to change their taste for food to Babylonian cuisines. They resisted and were eventually thrown into fiery furnace because they would not go along. They were able to survive because they knew who they were and refused to allow their cultural integrity to be infiltrated.

To survive, the culture of our people must be promoted and taught regularly. The school system should promote multi-cultural activities on a regular basis. We should learn an appreciation for the major cultures of our community as a part of the planned school activities and curriculum. Churches should promote cultural awareness through programs, music, drama, and instruction on a year round basis, not just during Black History month. The ranks of our community must ban together and promote our culture throughout the year and not simply one month when white America says its O.K. to sing “Lift Every Voice and Sing” at an assembly program, or to promote programs of Black awareness.

Ideally, what we should seek to achieve in America is not a melting pot, where all cultures blend together, lose their hue and become a pale shade of white, but a salad where every culture brings its own unique flavor and attributes to the blend and making a pleasing entre. When standardized tests reflect elements of intelligence respected by one culture over another it implies that the cultures not included are not important. It suggest that the only way to survive is to abandon the least important and learn the dominant culture of the land.

Once a people loses its cultural identity, it loses its will to fight. When we lose our own culture we take on the culture of the oppressor. We identify with the enemy, but the enemy doesn’t identify with us. Our oppressors have mastered the art of, as Malcom X called it, “shooting us with sugar coated bullets.” When we get so mixed up that we think the enemies are really our friends, we lose the will to resist and to struggle. Frederick Douglass’ words still ring true to day as they did over 100 years ago “Where there is no struggle, there is no progress”

Samaritans Meet Jesus

In New Testament history, Jesus was a great equalizer. He never saw a man or woman as a Samaritan or a Gentile, because he knew that it was the system of evil that made them what they were. When Jesus encountered Samaritans he shocked everyone by treating them as brothers and sisters.

Ten men who were filled with leprosy were healed by the master, only one of them returned to say thanks to man from Galilee. He was a Samaritan.

Of the three travelers who passed an injured man on the Jericho road, only one stopped to help, he was a Samaritan.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, and gave her a chance for new life she ran every where shouting "come see a man!"

As a people we are losing much of our rich heritage. Much of our rich past is drifting from us, but we should never turn loose our love for God. In Jesus, there are no Galileans or Samaritans, no whites or Blacks. In Jesus, all men are brothers under the fatherhood of God.

I don't know about you but I have concluded it has been the goodness of God that has brought us this far and his goodness will see us through.

The last stanza of our national anthem should be our creed: "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who hast brought us thus far along the way. Though who has by the might, led us into the light, keep us forever in the paths we pray. Lest our feet, stray from the places our God where we met thee. Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee. Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land."

No. 379-Funeral

It's So Hard To Say Good-Bye

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 3, 1992

SCRIPTURE:"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"; "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Tim 4:7-8; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." 1 Cor 16:23

Introduction

How do you say good-bye? As simple as it is, "Good-bye" is a hard word to say, when it marks the parting of loved ones, friends and close associates. Every nationality has its own peculiar way of saying it: "Bon-voy-age" might the word the French would use, while "A-ree-va-der-chi" may be the Italian response. "Gooten-Tach" might by the German way and "A-di-os" may be the Spanish response. All people have their way of saying good-bye, and depending on the circumstance "good-bye" means different things to different people. A woman searched for a get-well card for a friend who was ill. She looked under the section labeled Get-Well and picked a cute card with "Snoopy" on the front and rushed to purchase and sign it without taking time to read its message. When the friend received the card she was shocked at the message which read "Sorry to see you go, good-bye from all of us!" Embarrassed, the woman later found out that the card had been misplaced and was actually a card for a person retiring. It was a clear case of a misplaced "good-bye."

The word good-bye has its roots in biblical history. Among other variations, it is also a shortened version of the common New Testament closings of the Epistles of Paul which asks that the Grace of God "be with you." "God be with you" soon came to be "good-bye" in the common usage. There was nothing solemn about the saying it, it was an expression of good will. Upon leaving, one friend said to another-"God be with you." So in his Epistles to the Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and others Paul traditionally closed with his trademark expression "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

As Christians, we are able to handle benedictions and good-byes with the same grace that we handle salutations. When the moment of parting comes we can still find the strength to say "God be with you" to those that we leave behind. Though the tears roll from our eyes, we know that the God we serve is wise and understanding. Therefore, even in our sorrow we are able to ask for his peace and grace upon those

left behind.

Let us praise God for his abundant mercy and blessings for it is his grace that has allowed us to make it thus far. In moments of sorrow let's ask him for strength, for even the saved soon discover that "it's so hard to say good-bye."

Exposition

This text considers the Apostle Paul as he sits in a Roman prison writing a final letter to a young minister Timothy. He had written many letters in the course of his life but this was sure to be his final communication with the Saints because his execution date had been set. After living a full life, on both sides of the cross, Paul reflects on his life with no regrets and puts things in order. He gives Timothy a list of instructions, advice, and warnings that he is asked to remember. Moreover, Timothy is charged not to worry but to carry out the mission set before him.

As for his own life Paul concluded: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course." In these short verses we see the picture of a man who is satisfied with himself and content to accept the realities of death and the glories of life to come.

This text is Paul's final good-bye. He had made other farewells on other occasions, but this was his final benediction. But even with death in sight Paul somehow did not find it hard to say good-bye because he was moving on to receive his "crown of righteousness" that has been prepared for all the Saints. At the close of his final letter to Timothy he left is signature closing "Grace be with you. Amen." His encouragement to the young Timothy was "God be with you, Amen." Amen, means so be it. It is an acceptance of the will of God. Paul suggested to Timothy that he go forward with his life, overshadowed by the grace of God. After writing his last lines and preparing his letter for delivery, he waited his appointed hour.

Having Things In Order

Paul's departure from life is marked by many salient features. One of those outstanding points is that he was able to make such a grand fare-well to his friends because he had things in order. What does a man have to do to have his life in order with God? First, at some point he must have had a personal encounter with God himself and made a decision to turn from his wicked ways. For Paul, it was a moment on the Damascus Road when he met the Lord in a blaze of a sunlight that changed his life forever. Every person should have a similar experience, or special moment when he decided to give his life to Christ. That would be the moment that he decided give up the world and walk a different path. The personal encounter with God is different and is rarely the same for every person. Some share a Damascus Road trauma where they met the Lord suddenly. Some grew to know him out of tragedy. Some learned of him while they were children. Regardless of how one achieves the encounter with God, it is essential if one expects to get his house in order with God. When Paul met the Lord he acknowledged him, asked for forgiveness and then gave

the Lord his commitment to carry out his will. Once that commitment was made the scales fell from his eyes and he was given a new vision and a new purpose in life.

To have one's life in order is to have an assurance about things to come. Paul could write and talk confidently about his departure because he was sure that when this life ended that he would leave and go to a better place. In his final letter to the Corinthians (5:1) Paul wrote: "For we know that if our earthy houses of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Likewise it is easy for a person to say goodbye if he is confident about his destination and is sure that he has left things in order for those whom he leaves behind.

When a man prepares to leave this world, he can say good-bye with ease if he is sure of his own salvation, has arranged his own affairs, and is confident and comfortable with his destination. The unsaved have difficulty at death because their entire life has been committed to this earth and the things they possess. Their treasure is on this earth and they don't want to turn loose. They find it hard to say good-bye because they have given their entire lives to preparing to live on earth, giving no time or thought to their final destination. When that moment approaches they are neither willing or ready to say good-bye. The sinner finds it hard to say good-bye because sin has:

--Polluted his mind
--Disturbed his peace
--Hardened his heart
--Weakened his faith
--Damaged his character

It is hard to say good-bye if our affairs are not in order, but it's easy if they are fixed and ready.

Until We Meet Again

Pastor Jeremiah Rankin, was pastor of the First Congregational Church of Washington D.C. in 1882. He was preparing a study on these words Paul wrote so often: "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you" and understood this to suggest that God would be with those who have departed. Pastor Rankin, a noted hymn writer, thought of the hope of every Christian for life to come and wrote these words: "God be with you till we meet again. By his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you. God be with you till we meet again. Till we meet, till meet. Till we meet at Jesus feet. God be with you till we meet again." What his song said epitomizes the survivors hope. It is what we look forward to and it helps us to bear the burden of the loss of a loved one. Though we hear the words of our loved one's final instructions and words ringing in our ear; though we hear his final prayer for our safety and happiness; though we hear his final good-bye; we also hear the voice of the angels declaring: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall

rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1Thes. 4:16-17).

When the Christian says good-bye, he says God Be with you, till we meet again! I am leaving this place, going to a better home. God be with you, until we meet again! I have my life in order and I'm waiting on my appointed hour. God be with you, until we meet again!

Till we meet on the other side of Jordan..
Till we meet in the city that is bordered by 12 gates.
Till we meet in the city that has streets of Gold
Till we meet in the city that sits on 12 foundations
God be with you, till we meet again!

A short while ago Robert Carter saw his appointed time coming. He set his house in order, and gave his wife his final advice and a good-bye. On January 29, 1992 he closed his eyes for the last time. God be with you, till we meet again!

No. 378-Youth

2 legit 2 Quit

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 27, 1992

Scripture:"We are pressed on every side by trouble, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. 2 Cor 4:8-9 (LB)

Introduction

The popular rap singer MC Hammer and James Brown recently combined their talents to produce a popular song entitled "2 Legit 2 Quit" in which Hammer raps about his decision to continue in his profession despite his critics and detractors. Brown, who plays an Oz like character, challenges Hammer to live up to the challenges of the world, rise above his critics and "bring back the glove." Mixed between the driving pulse of Hammer's music style, daring special effects, laser lights, aerobic style dance steps, and sweat is a subtle and powerful message to young people. Unlike the messages of Smut rappers like Two Live Crew, this message, when repeated by youth gives them some positive "self talk" when seen in a Christian perspective.

What is the message? It is that "I'm too legit to quit." While many young people sing the words to the song as they ride the bus to school or as they chill out at home, some are not aware of the deeper implications of that short message "I'm too legit to quit." "Legit" is an abbreviated version of the word legitimate. Legitimate means a legal or rightful claim. It is best understood in contrast: Millie Vanilli had risen to the top of their profession as great singers and were awarded Grammy for their music until it was revealed that they were fakes. They had a Grammy but no rightful claim and were stripped of their fame and award. Those who have a legitimate claim are those who have a right to possession by virtue of circumstances prompted by inheritance or hard work.

Christian youth are often the subject of jokes, abuse and ostracism in school. Some young people are discouraged at the difficulty of living the Christian life on campus because it often puts them at odds with the crowd, which appears to have more fun. Frustrations come like a flood, while encouragements are few. Despite these difficulties, Christian youth should say to themselves "I will not give up the faith." Why? Because they have a rightful claim on the kingdom of God, which is their goal.

When the world gets its tentacles into youthful enthusiasm, the best response is "I won't turn back" because "I'm too legit to quit."

Exposition

This text finds Paul writing to the Corinthians examining the nature of the Christian ministry. He writes words of encouragement to them, addressing those who might have been considering the difficulty of the Christian life-style and its seemingly impossible task. He stressed that the Christian life is an honest ministry which every Christian has received out of the mercy of God (v1). In verse two he lists some acts of Christians who have: 1)Renounced hidden things. Christians have ceased dark and secret activities which they once did in the dark and tried to hide from public view. These might have included immoral or illegal activities that punctuated their life-style before they met the Lord. 2)Not Walking in Craftiness. Seeking ways to cheat and deceive others was once the life-style of many Christians before they learned a better way. 3).Not handling the Word of God deceitfully. Some sought to twist the truths of the bible to fit their ungodly activities to no avail. 4)Living By Truth. Christians have decided to base their lives on the truths of God and be guided by conscience in every deliberation.

In short, Paul tells the Corinthians that the Christian life is right, and necessary. He establishes the legitimacy of our ministry and message in verses 3-6, pointing out that we are witnesses of Jesus to a world that is blinded by a preoccupation with its own self perpetuation.

Because of our legitimate role as witnesses for Christ and the reward we expect to receive in the end, Paul reminds every Christian that though we are troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and knocked down, we should never quit, because we are ambassadors of the King of Kings. We are troubled, but not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. We arise from every circumstance with new determination to go on, because, in the common terms we are "too legit to quit."

Don't Give Up

Today there are millions of young people who are under estimating the value of their talents and gifts and are willing to abandon them when faced with pressure from their peers. These gifts represent their legitimate claim to success in life yet others criticize them unfairly. Honor students have a hard time in school. Other students, often jealous of them talk them down and suggest that they are nerds because they excel scholastically. Honor students have a legitimate claim to whatever rewards they receive and should not be intimidated by the sneers and jeers of those who could do the same but lack the initiative and discipline to achieve success. Youth who choose a moderate life-style are also given a hard time by their peers. Those who don't drink, smoke, party hard, engage in sex, or take drugs are often frowned upon by the

infamous “in crowd.” They stare at them as if they were freaks and snicker behind their backs. However, Christian youth who choose a life of moderation should be commended for not selling themselves cheap simply to win the praise of the masses. Because Christ died for our sins and Christian youth have accepted him as their savior they have a legitimate reason to expect a reward from God for their life choice. It is too legitimate a claim to give up in frustration.

Giving up a legitimate claim can be costly. Consider Jacob and Esau who were twin brothers. Esau, the oldest brother had a legitimate claim, by birthright, to the estate of his father and to the promised blessing for the family through his grandfather Abraham. He was a skilled archer and hunter by trade and usually brought home plenty of venison for the supper table. Once, however, he was not successful and in hunger and frustration sold his birthright and inheritance privilege to his brother Jacob for a bowl of porridge. In one failed swoop he gave up his rightful claim to the family and his future for a plate of food that could only satisfy him for a few hours. He was legit, but he quit. Because of his decision, the blessing that should have been his was transferred to his brother Jacob. The great generations which are remembered today as the legacy of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” could have been “Abraham, Isaac and Esau” except that Esau quit.

Those who have begun to live the Christian life should become even more determined not to quit. Why? Because winners don’t quit, and quitters never win! Success, both spiritually and secularly, comes in “cans”: “I CAN” be an honor student! I CAN become a successful athlete! I CAN achieve my dream! I CAN be a Christian! If success comes in cans then failure comes in “Cants”. I can’t succeed, I can’t achieve, I can’t be an honor student, I can’t be a Christian. Negative self talk develops a negative self image that leads to failure and defeat. The best strategy for success in any sphere of life is to study the things that failures don’t like to do and then make a habit of doing them yourself. For example, spiritual failures don’t like to read the bible so they quit. They don’t like attending worship services, so they quit. They don’t like to pray, so they quit. Whatever a failure doesn’t like to do is the key to your success, if you make it your habit.

As a Christian, success is your birthright! As a member of the family of God you have a legitimate reason to expect the best out of life. Jesus told his disciples in John 10:10 “I am come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” In Matthew 7:7 he says: “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” In Philippians 4:19 Paul declares: “But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” As a Christian youth, you have a legitimate claim to expect to succeed in life because you are backed by the powers of heaven as long as you trust in God and give God your best.

No wonder the song writer declares: “Give of your best to the master, give of the strength of your youth, clad in salvation’s full armor, join in the battle for truth.”

Too Legit To Quit

There is a good reason not to quit. John told the seven churches of Asia minor

"he that overcometh shall inherit all things."

If we overcome our fears and doubts we shall receive a blessing from the Lord that can:

--Build hope out of the rubbles of hopelessness

--Reduce mountains of discouragement into molehills

--Reshape tragedy into triumph

--Regenerate troubled souls

The Christian youth who stands at the cross roads should renew his commitment to God by affirming that "That I've decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning."

In closing, I'm reminded of the teacher who gave the final exam to three of her students. She told them not to be intimidated by the 100 questions on the test but to do their best. "Whatever you do, don't quit" she told them and the outcome would be better than they expected. The first student saw the difficulty of the first page and quit and failed. The second breezed through the first page but did not know a single answer on the second page. Realizing that missing 33 answers meant failure the student stopped and turned in his paper. The last student struggled through each page, frustrated but determined to finish. He remembered that the teacher said the outcome would be better than expected. On the last page, item #100 contained these words:"The race is not given to the swift, nor to the strong, but to those who can endure to the end. This test was not about knowledge but about determination. Give yourself an A because you did not quit."

I don't know about you but I've decided not to quit!

I'm determined to live for Jesus. Through hard trials, tribulations, persecutions, I am determined to live for Jesus!

I going to live for him because he died for me. One evening he carried a cross up Calvary's hill and refused to quit until my salvation was secured.

Somebody said "come down" but he was too legit to quit until he finished the work and early Sunday morning he rose from the grave!

I've decided to follow Jesus, no turning back!

No Turning Back!

No. 376-New Year

Living On The Right Side of Jordan

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 12, 1992

SCRIPTURE: "For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward." — Num 32:19

Introduction

Have ever had an opportunity to make a needed improvement and failed to make it because you were satisfied with your present situation? There are some people who find it extremely difficult to let go of old practices even if their quality of life depended upon the decision.

Consider the three drunk fishermen who fished all day in a rickety boat. When the boat sprung a leak they tried their best to bail out the water. The more they bailed the faster the water filled the boat. Finally one drunk man said "Somebody better pray because none of us can swim." Two of the men looked at each other strangely. Neither of them knew how to pray. Since they had never been to a church and knew nothing about God, they appointed the third man to pray because he was once a church member. "I stopped going to church because I love to drink and party and I have no intentions of quitting." The third man said. "That's fine" they answered "but right now we are drowning and you are the only one who knows how to pray." "But its been 15 years since I've been to church or even said a prayer" he said trying to get out of his task. His friends were unrelenting. They demanded that he pray, so finally the drunk backslider stood and offered this prayer: "Lord, its been 15 years since I bothered you the last time, but if you get us out of this mess, I promise you I won't bother you for another 15 years!" Some people find it hard to turn loose, even if turning loose could mean a better life.

Although a new year has begun there are many people who have brought their old natures over into the new year. They have a special liking for their peculiar habits and despite the promises of the abundant life that the Godly life offers they have chosen to hold on where they are rather than let go.

As Christians, we take every opportunity to rid ourselves of things that will burden us down. While the new year is a unique opportunity for resolutions to surface we are constantly reminded that this world is not our home. We are on our

way to Canaan land and nothing we have is worth giving up our chance to make it to heaven one day. Life on this side of Jordan is great, but we do whatever is necessary to make sure that we don't lose our stake on the "right side of Jordan."

Exposition

This text considers Israel a while before crossing the Jordan river to claim the promised land. Reports had been received of the beauty of the promised land and all of the opportunities that it offered. Each tribe numbered and armed its men of war to join the armies of Israel as they prepared to march and claim the future that had been promised to them by God.

As Moses prepared the people for what lay ahead, the leaders of three of the tribes: Rueben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh approached him to say that they did not want to go to the promised land. They had come to enjoy life where they were. They explained that there was land enough for them to graze their cattle and for them grow food on this side of Jordan. They notified Moses that they would not go. Moses found himself in a predicament and after they reasoned about the impact that this decision would have on the others, they concluded that the three tribes would bear the expense of battle, fight and otherwise do their part to help the nation win its inheritance, but even in victory they still wanted no part of the promised land. They insisted on territorioal grants on the "wrong side of Jordan."

Moses granted their request with regret. He had regret because he knew that the land they were choosing for an inheritance had not been promised by God. It was not a part of the blessing promised to Abraham and though they enjoyed it, it was not their destiny. The promise was made and Moses saw to it that Joshua understood the promise. When Israel crossed into Canaan the three tribes sent its soldiers to fight, but when the fighting was over they refused to claim an inheritance in the promised land and insisted that Joshua honor the word of Moses. Joshua allowed them to live on the other side of Jordan, which they did for many years.

On the other side of Jordan they soon ran into problems. They found themselves constantly at war as they tried to secure the area. The lands they were able to secure were not enough for all of them. They returned to Joshua and asked for more land, but were told to return to what they claimed and be happy with what they had. When the enemies of Israel began to pounce upon the nation, the tribes of Rueben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh that lived on the "wrong side of Jordan" were the first to be destroyed by the Assyrians and taken into captivity.

They rejected the land of promise and lost all claim to that which they had. Though Israel also experienced considerable problems in the years to come they always had a home to return to because they staked their claim on the "right side of Jordan."

Staking A Claim

Many today have staked a claim on one side of Jordan or the other. Some have

considered the rewards that this world offers and have decided to stake their claim in this world. All of their energy, resources, and talents have been committed to prospecting for the rich life in this world.

Two prospectors panned for gold in California during the 1849 gold rush. One staked a claim in a pretty valley with plenty of running water. The other staked his claim in an adjacent hillside. After a short while the valley prospector realized that the gold vein he sought was in his partner's claim so he plotted to cheat him out of it. Each night he went into his own claim and spread nuggets of fool's gold all around. The next day he allowed his partner to see him as he discovered "gold" and attempted to hide it. He did this daily until he caught the eye of his partner who became jealous because he had not found a single nugget. The partner came to supper one day and made him a great proposal:"I hate to see you struggling so hard, why not sell me your claim and I'll sell you mine?" The valley prospector attempted to resist then said "Alright, you sold me, but don't come back later hankering to switch." The valley prospector had to work hard to find the vein in the hillside, but he found it and struck gold. His poor partner came up with handsful of dirt and a few nuggets of fool's gold, because he staked the wrong claim.

Abraham and Lot experienced a similar situation. As the two of them parted companies Abraham told Lot to choose a direction and he would go the other. Lot chose the beautiful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were well watered, secure and well constructed. There was considerable sin in them but it did not matter. Abraham took the hillside. In a short while God came and destroyed the wickedness of the Sodom and Lot lost all his personal goods. He staked his claim in the wrong place.

On which side of Jordan are you staking your claim? Have you decided like the Reubenites, Gadites and Manessah: "I'll come to church occasionally. I'll even pay some money now and then to help you, but I like it in the world and I'll stake my claim there?" The three tribes were allowed to do as they wished and they prospered a bit, but they never achieved what the other tribes achieved. While Israel enjoyed nation building, peace and prosperity for hundreds of years, these three tribes were struggling on the other side of Jordan. They had a bit of success but not like those who staked a claim on the right side of Jordan.

There is a danger in staking our claims on the wrong side of Jordan. Lives built on the wrong side of Jordan, eventually become:

--Victims of their own circumstances and Products of their own problems.
--Casualties of their own choosing and Servants of their own shame
--Fugitives of their own fears and prisoners of their own passions
--Creations of their own corruption and a mess made out of their own mistakes.

Right Side of Jordan

If there is danger in building on the wrong side of Jordan, there is security when you stake your claim on the right side of Jordan.

If there is despair for those on the wrong side of Jordan, there is hope for those who stake their claims on the right side of Jordan.

The right side of Jordan represents the promised inheritance to every child of God.

The right side of Jordan represents the place and the reward promised to us by Jesus himself.

On the right side of Jordan there is:

--Wisdom to solve our problems; Assurance to calm our nerves

--Joy to relieve our sadness; Hope to dispel our despair.

On the right side of Jordan mountains will be made low and valleys will be exalted, crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

On the right side of Jordan the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

No wonder the song writer declared: "I'm on my way to Canaan land"

I don't know about you but I've decided to stake my claim on the right side of Jordan because over yonder, bye and bye, crying days will be over!

I heard the song writer declare: "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wishful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land, where my possessions lie. O who will go with me? I am bound for the promised land!"

It's alright down here but "I have heard of a land on a far away strand its the beautiful home of the soul. Built by Jesus on high, there we never shall die. Tis a land where we never grow old!"

No. 375-New Year

Ye Have Not Passed This Way Before

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 5, 1991

Scripture:"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." — Josh 3:4

Introduction

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans became famous as a television cowboy and cowgirl. At the end of each show the duo would ride off into the sunset singing "Happy Trails to you until we meet again!" The next week they were on television again on another trail that always ended happy.

Each new year places us on a new trail. In the year before we left a trail that others will follow. Whatever we did or said left a clearly marked path of deeds and misdeeds that will be recited, rehearsed and studied by others curious about the path we walked. Such trails cannot be hidden. Where we have trod, the lives we have touched and the way we touched them cannot be relived, retouched or repeated. Last year's trail, with its strange twists of successes and failures, glories and embarrassments has been permanently recorded in the annals of history.

Today we stand on new ground. There is no trail for us to follow because no one has passed this way before. At the beginning of each new year we become trailblazers, going into new frontiers where no man has been. We don't know what lies beyond the next horizon. If asked to go back, we know that trail well, because we have walked that path before. However, faced with the prospect of the future many are uneasy. News reports of job layoffs, and expected difficulties give reason for apprehension. The prospect of clearing a path and making a trail through hostile territory is often unsettling. Breaking new ground on this frontier will be challenging but it will not be impossible.

Our hope is that the new trail we blaze this year will be a "happy trail" filled with victory, joy and happiness. We have been given the right to expect the victory by our Lord who has given us the victory. We expect joy because we know that all things will work to the good of them that love the Lord according to his purpose. Regardless to what we encounter along the way we will count it all joy.

As Christians we have a right to expect "happy trails" this year. We serve a God who helped us blaze unknown trails in year's past and he is the same today as he was yesterday. As long as God is still on the throne we should not worry about the future or what it will bring because is still in control.

Happy Trails!

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it prepared to enter the land of Canaan. It had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and was ready to claim the land God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. It's journey had been long and hard. It's path was filled with triumphs and failures: The Red Sea, Quail meat in the Wilderness, Bread from Heaven, and its many faith lapses of faith. All these combined to make this final step a historic one because God was about to act for this generation as he had for generations past.

Joshua told Israel how it was to be done. The Ark of the Covenant was to go just over a half mile in front of the people and then they were to follow. It was a different command because the Ark was always in the center of the people as they camped or moved, it was never in front. Since Egypt, there was always the Pillar of Cloud by Day and the Pillar of Fire by night. It led them in the right direction and at times protected them against the advance of enemies. That was the way God symbolized his presence with past generations, but God had a new way of symbolizing his presence for this new generation of people. The pillar of fire and cloud would no longer be present. They would be going into a different situation but God would still be with them as in the past, through the medium of the Ark of the Covenant.

It was a point of uncertainty for them because their old leader was dead and generally they had a new leadership commanding them. Only two men from the generation of their fathers were with them, Joshua and Caleb. Despite their insecurities they were told how to get over Jordan: "Keep your eyes on the Ark." The Ark, for the most part, was simply viewed as an instrument of worship and sacrifice. It marked the spot where God resided among them as they worshipped, but was rarely revered for symbolizing the power of God himself. However, without the cloud and the fire, Israel was challenged to reach within itself and find the presence of God and bring it to the forefront. In telling Israel to follow the Ark, Joshua was telling them to follow the Lord. They were urged to follow the ark because they had never traveled that way before and only the guiding had of God's presence could insure that they would make it safely through.

Traveling New Paths

Many people are creatures of habit and travel the same ground routinely. Some travel at the slow pace of a millhorse, going around in circles slowly, while others travel at the speed of the race horse on the track, but never-the-less traveling the same

ground, just faster. A new year for such individuals comes as just another page torn from the calendar, crumbled away and tossed into the basins of time. Since they plan to do the same this year as they did last year with little change, the New Year is a pleasant novelty that brings inspiration but little impetus for apprehension, since they have few plans of changing their course.

There are others who are taking a new path in life altogether and are uncertain about the future. Some young couples are making important decisions about life, career and family. Those leaving school are preparing for a totally different experience. Those who are just entering are dealing with the butterflies in their soul as they face the unknown. Some are traveling this new path alone and have not fully adjusted to their new walk.

While the path for some may not change, they share the same dilemma as those facing a new direction. The path itself may not change but what lies around the corner makes even the well traveled path, an unknown path because we face unseen dangers. Unseen dangers make all of us cautious about the future. Even if you walk the same path it's the prospect of trouble or failure that makes even the beaten path a trail which has never been blazed before. The traveler on the Jericho road knew the road well, but he never knew when a highwayman would attack and make him a charity case for the Good Samaritan. Likewise we don't know what the future holds for us although we may follow our same routine faithfully. We may begin this journey and stumble along the way, or find new strength and climb even higher.

Every day of our lives is actually the first day of a new year, because it is the first day of the rest of our life. Each day God protects us from and through the unseen dangers on our path. If we could have seen the unseen dangers that God has protected us from, just today, we could better understand the nature of our Journey because then we would know the many ways that God has already made our journey safer because we are under his protective care.

Reach From Within

What was Israel's prescription for anxiety about traveling a new path? They were told to reach within themselves, find the presence of God, put him in front and follow him! All through its wanderings, Israel kept the Ark of the Covenant in the center of the people. Now it was challenged to reach within itself and put God in front and follow him.

The command to Israel is our command today. Reach within and find the God you have respected, and loved, and go one step further: put him in front and follow him! Many of us know the Lord and keep him in our lives. We try to be faithful and religious because we can feel the presence of God in our soul and he tugs at us regularly. We pray to him at night, meal times and other times of the day. We sing about him and discuss him in Sunday School. The Song writer adequately describes our feeling when he wrote: "Jesus, you are the center of my life." We know him and all that's good and perfect comes from him. However, as we face a path we have not traveled before,

we are challenged to keep the Lord in our lives but to move him from being the object of our respect to the person we will follow into untraveled territories.

The coming year will demand that we put Jesus first, because he alone knows the way!

Put Jesus first, because he can guide us safely through.

We don't know what Jordan's we'll have to cross, but we do know that we have an ark, which is Jesus, who can lead us through.

I'm reminded of the story of some travelers who followed a trail to a town high in the swiss mountains. They were warned that sudden snows could wipe out the trail and they might get lost. The guide told the travelers not to worry but to keep looking for the cross! Soon a storm came and the paths were covered. The people panicked because the covered trails and because their guide was walking in the horizon looking for a cross. They felt doomed. As they all gave up hope the guide returned shouting: "Follow the cross, follow the cross." He pointed to a giant lighted cross high on a hill in the horizon. It had been erected by the townspeople to guide travelers lost in the storm.

The storms of life might cover your path, but keep your eye on the cross!

Ye have not passed this way before, so keep your eye on the cross. I heard the song writer declare: "Follow Jesus, take no chance in getting lost ...if Jesus can't take you to the top nobody can!"

Another song writer put it this way: "Where he leads me I will follow. I will follow, follow, fallow him!"

Follow Jesus: the truth that never lies; friend that never forsakes, fountain that never runs dry, the way that never deceives, and anchor that never fails!

I don't know how long twill be nor what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I shall get home someday!

No. 374-Funeral

What Doth The Lord Require?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 21, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"..What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8

Introduction

A young boy asked his grandfather: "Grandpa, how will I know I am a man?" The grandfather showed the boy a chest filled with gold. The old man said "You will be a man my son, when you have passed the tests of the box of gold. You will pass the first test when you know the value of the box." The boy only saw shiny coins but did not understand their value. As years passed he came to his grandfather and said: "I understand that these gold coins represent the important issues of life. They are precious to all that possess them." The grandfather nodded his head and smiled. The young man who was now in his teens asked: "Am I a man now grandfather?" The old man responded: "You must grow strong enough to carry the box before you can become a man." Although the boy was in his early teens he was still quite thin and he labored every day to become strong enough to pick up the box and carry it from place to place. After a great while the young man burst into his grandfather's room carrying the heavy gold filled chest on his shoulders and said "Look grandfather, I can carry the box from room to room and across the yard." The grandfather sat in his chair, his breath was short and sensed that his time was near. "Carrying the responsibilities of life is one trait of a strong man my son. You have done a good thing." The young man who had grown tall and muscular realized that his grandfather was dying and he asked: "Am I a man now grandfather?" The old man responded: "It takes wisdom to understand the chest. It takes strength of character to carry the chest. However, it takes humility to carry the chest and not let the chest carry you. You will be a man when you know when you know the necessity of carrying the chest and when to put it down. You will be a man when you know when to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on and when to let go." With that the old man closed his eyes and went to glory.

With tears rolling from his eyes the boy looked at his grandfather who have never traveled far or attained many worldly accomplishments and responded "My grandfather, was a great man!"

Among the measures of the Christian life are our capacity for love and mercy, justice

and humility before God. While many spend their entire lives trying to discover the meaning of life or struggling to shoulder their load, there are others who have discovered the joy of life, lived it fully and then graciously and humbly put it down with gratitude to God for the privilege of the experience.

Many great Christians may never see their names illuminated in lights or recorded in the annals of history. Their deeds may never be sung in ballads or form the substance of legends, yet their greatness is recognized in heaven for every true Saint knows that greatness before is measured by what God requires. What God requires is that we do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.

Exposition

The text considers the prophet Micah who spoke to Israel about the three essential elements needed for the nation to meet the approval of God. Micah prophesied while three kings were on the throne: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Of the three, Ahaz was a wicked king, which gave Micah the opportunity to experience life under a good king, watch its fall from goodness and see how it returned to goodness under Hezekiah. In the midst of its wickedness and apostasy Micah made the declaration that has become known as a standard by which the righteous are judged. With wickedness all around, Micah raised the question: "What doth the Lord require?" He answered it by noting that God requires from his people that they do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God. These three elements comprise the measure of the godly man.

To "do justly" means to do those things which "right" requires. According to Micah, God requires that his people strive to do the right thing in matters pertaining to family, business and inter-personal relations. For Israel these were principles that were becoming old fashioned as the nation abandoned its allegiance to God and adopted a "succeed at any cost" philosophy of life. Doing right was equated with doing the necessary, so the scales were weighted, the people cheated and the poor oppressed. Yet Micah came calling for men of conscience to adopt a godly lifestyle that would encourage them to "do the right thing."

If "do justly" means to do those things which right requires, then to "love mercy" a man must do those things which "love requires." The laws of Micah's time permitted certain injustices. It was legal to take the land of widows, or to leave children homeless and orphans. It was legal to suppress the oppressed and to subjugate the weak. It was right, by legal standards, but Micah called upon the people to do what love requires, show mercy and compassion to the poor, hungry and to all who stand in the need of help. His call was for the people to rise above the legalisms that perpetuated poverty and despair and respond to a higher law that came from God. This law was the law of love that is dipped in mercy and compassion.

Micah's final call was that the men and women of Israel and Judah would return to a spirit of humility that they showed under King Jotham. His advice to them was to keep God foremost in their lives and humble themselves before his will and they will

receive his blessings daily. His challenge was for every father to lead his family back to a humble walk before God. It was for every husband to lead his wife in walking the godly path. It was the final measure of righteousness that would decide whether the people would succeed in regaining the grace and protection of God.

The Qualities of the Righteous

In retrospect, what are the qualities of a righteous man? How do we assess the life of an individual whose experiences reach deeper than we understand and farther than we can imagine? As mere mortals, we do not know. However, we do know what God requires of any man. As New Testament Christians we also know the requirements of salvation. We know the answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" When we look at what God expects of the lost to be saved, and of the saved to receive his favor we can only conclude that God requires that we: Accept Christ in the pardoning of our sins, be fair in dealings with our fellowman, respond to the needs of others with love, and always bow humbly before the will of God.

The epitaph of the Christian husband and father is that he dedicated his life to meeting God's requirements. His life story will speak of the moment that he himself met the Lord and gave his life to Christ in the pardoning. Reflections upon his life will suggest that he tried to be just and fair in his dealings with others and taught that principle to his daughter and grandchildren. His words will ring in their ears, "do right", obey the law, stay out of trouble, be honest and don't steal from or cheat any man. His epitaph will tell how he gave of himself to help others, even when he himself had little. Compassion and mercy were hallmarks of his life.

The godly father and husband's epitaph will also record his willingness to worship, praise and obey God. The godly father knows that he cannot carry the responsibilities of this life with just his intellect, wit and knowledge. The godly father knows that he cannot shoulder the awesome responsibilities of life, complete with its heavy loads, deep valleys and tall mountains, by his physical strength alone. The godly father knows that life's journey must be a walk with God and he tries to teach that, by example to his wife, child and grandchildren.

Before his wife he stands as a loving husband, provider and friend. Before his daughter and grandchildren he stands as a shining example of what it means to be a Christian. It is more than simply knowing what's in life's chest, or being strong enough to pick up a few duties and carry them out, but it is also knowing that regardless of his strength, or knowledge and wits he cannot carry the load by himself! The godly man knows that even if her lips never speak the words, that the eyes of his daughter study him to learn what it takes to stand on the gospel truth. Her heart seeks to glean from his life experience what it takes to be a woman of the word in these troubling times. His grandsons watch him in strength and in weakness, in life and even at the point of death and they ask "Grandfather, what does it take to be a man?"

The message that every godly man seeks to leave to those who mourn him is: Live justly, love mercy but most of all "Walk with the Lord." Through trials and troubles,

mountains and valleys keep your hand in God's hands.

If we walk with the Lord he will give us:

—Glory instead of gloom and Strength instead of weakness!

—Joy instead of sadness and hope instead of despair!

—Lighter burdens, because he declared "my yoke is easy and my burdens are light!

—Comfort in the face of death, for I heard John declare "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

—Control of our fears, for David declared "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear, the Lord is the strength of my life, whom shall I fear?"

I heard the song writer declare: "Walk with me Lord, Walk with, while I'm on the tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me. You walked with my husband, my father, grandfather ...now walk with me! While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!

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Wednesday December 11, 1991, Amour Beavers went home to be with God. He understood the nature of life, picked up his chest of responsibilities and carried it with pride. He knew when to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on ..and when to let go!

No. 373-Christmas, Communion

Born to Die-Died To Rise

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 15, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11;"..The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Luke 24:7

Introduction

Have you ever asked yourself the question: "Why am I here?" At some point each person wants to know the reason for their existence and some spend lifetimes trying to find an answer. Sometimes we might feel like the two fryers on the chicken farm that pondered the same question. "What are we doing here?" asked one young fat fryer. The other one just stared and looked as he cackled on. "We get up every day, they feed us, clean our coop and we roost at night. We do the same thing repeatedly day after day. Why are we here?" The other one never said anything, he just listened and occasionally looked down the road. "We get the best of everything, food, shelter. Why? We don't lay eggs, and they won't even put us on the ground to scratch worms. There has to be some reason for our existence!" he complained. The other fryer kept watching the driveway, but never said a word. "Life has to be more than just sitting around all day and getting fat, why are we here?" The young fryer asked. As he spoke a giant truck turned into the driveway loaded with hundreds of empty crates. On the side of the truck were the words "Church's Fried Chicken." The young fryer's beak dropped in shock. The silent fryer finally looked at the speechless young fryer and asked "Does that answer your question?"

Everyone has a purpose in life although it might not be completely clear to us at the moment. Each of us has a manifest destiny, or divine purpose for which we were place on this earth. This was explained by Jesus when Scribes and Pharisees asked him about a blind man who was blind from birth. Was he blind because of his parents sin or his own? Jesus answered them by noting that the man was born blind for one purpose, that he might be standing in a certain spot on a certain day in his life to provide an opportunity for Christ to glorify God by healing him and giving him back his sight. That was the whole purpose of his blindness and the purpose of his life to accomplish that one single objective. Likewise, each child is born with a purpose in life. Often it is not clear for many years as the grand scheme of heaven unfolds, but God has a reason for everything that happens to every person on this earth.

As Christians we realize that God had a purpose in mind when Christ was born.

This little child was born to die, but not just to die, but also he was born to rise again. This great purpose would provide salvation for the lost and an opportunity for believers to enter into the kingdom of heaven. What a blessing it is to be a recipient of this great blessing that we celebrate on Christmas day!

Exposition

This text, in two short verses, summarizes the entire story of the life of Christ, encompassing his birth, life's purpose, death and resurrection in just 42 words. It begins with an angel announcing his birth in Luke 2:11 and ends with an Angel announcing his resurrection in Luke 24. There has never been any doubt in scripture why Jesus was born. It has never been hidden and the reason was told by Isaiah hundreds of years before his birth and foretold by Angels months before his birth, even to the day he was born. Jesus had one purpose for coming to this earth and that was to save men from their sins and give them a chance to enjoy eternal life. His mission is explained in the familiar words of John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." His purpose was to provide the opportunity for eternal life for all men. His birth in Bethlehem was a means to achieve that end.

Even more insight into the reason for Christ's coming is found in Galatians 4:4-7. Galatians records that Christ came "made of a woman" and under the law of Moses that he might save us from the penalties of the law and give us a chance to rejoin the family of God as adopted Sons and Daughters. The law of Moses set the penalty clear: "The wages of sin is death." The conclusions were simple: break the law and suffer the ultimate penalty, death. Men who broke the law were out of communion with God, for the Mosaic law came from God. Lawbreakers had no way of returning to God's good graces. Jesus came to give us a way back. Instead of simply the "wages of sin is death" Romans 6:23 gives us "..but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How can we return to the family of God? Through spiritual adoption. We rejoin the family of God when we accept Christ and commit to live by his principles daily. As adopted sons and daughters we enjoy 1)Unobstructed access to God or the ability to come "boldly to the throne of Grace" Hebrews 4:16. 2) Being the objects of God's divine care and protection. We are able to say the "Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" Psalms 23:1 or "..my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Phil 4:19. 3)Chastening of the Lord's guiding hand because we know "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" Hebrew 12:6. As his adopted sons and daughters God punishes us and brings us into repentance by his ordering of circumstances and events that effect us. 4)A Glorious Inheritance as his adopted children because we know that "he that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Rev. 21:7.

The purpose of Christ's coming was to provide this chance for spiritual adoption

for us. To accomplish this end he had to pay the penalty for sin that the law of Moses required which was death. That is why our text verse in Luke 24:7 says "The son of man MUST be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Christ was born to die, but he died to rise again to give us hope of renewed life in the kingdom. His life on earth had great purpose. Today his life offers even greater hope to those who live according to his purpose for their lives.

Lives With A Purpose

What is your life's purpose? Have you ever thought about it? Is it to make money? Build a fine home? Become successful? Generally a person's life purpose consists of the main reason he thinks God has placed him on this earth. It's easier to discover the life purposes of others than in ourselves. Martin Luther King's life purpose was to champion the cause of the downtrodden and to quicken the day of their liberation. Marian Anderson had one talent that she felt was a gift from God and she used it to benefit her race. Jesse Jackson seems to have one purpose and that is to lift the aspirations and expectations of African Americans to achieve their highest potential in life. It is easy to see the purposes for the lives of others, but what about me? What is my purpose in life? Jesus was born to die, and died to rise again! That was his purpose, but what about me?

Every person should have a "mission statement" which summarizes why you think God put you here and the mission you feel obligated to accomplish before you leave this earth. You may not know your mission but God has often ordained you and equipped you with the tools for your mission before you were born. Jeremiah complained that he could not be a prophet and God reminded him that "before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee.." Jeremiah 1:5. It is certain that God has never given anyone a mission to be a drug dealer, thief, crook, alcoholic, adulter or some other deviant life type. If your mission is from God it will have reedeming characteristics that will uplift, build and strengthen life in one or more persons. Often the Saint finds himself agreeing with the Song Writer who pleads "Make me a blessing, make me blessing. Out of my life let Jesus Shine. Make me a blessing oh Lord I pray, Make me a blessing to someone today." Another song writer put it this way: "If I can help somebody as I pass along ...if I can cheer somebody with a word or song then my living will not be in vain."

A Child With A Mission

There have been many babes born with great missions as their purpose, but there has never been a child like Jesus who was born to die and died to rise again!

Jacob and Esau were twins, both became fathers of great nations. Esau headed deviant tribes and Jacobs 12 twelve sons became known as the children of Israel, they were born with a mission but their mission was small when we think about Jesus!

Moses was born in slavery but rose to become a prince of Egypt, and a deliverer

of his people. His name is repeated throughout history as a man whose mission it was to redeem his people. His mission is small when we think about Jesus!

John the Baptist was born with a mission to be one crying out in the wilderness, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. His mission was small when we think about Jesus!

Down in Bethlehem a little child is born with a mission. His mission was to Bring:

--Hope to disillusioned and Salvation to the Lost

--Life and provide it more abundantly

--Peace on earth and goodwill toward men

--Comfort in the midst of calamities & Strength in weakness

--Assurance in the midst of agonies & Power in the midst of problems

--Safety in times of trouble and Shelter in time of storm!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born, his name was Jesus!

Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and every where that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but that's not all, tell them that he died on Calvary.

Tell them that Early Sunday morning he rose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 372-Christmas

Christmas Lights

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 8, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:8-9.

Introduction

What is Christmas without lights? One unique feature of the Christmas season is the presence of beautiful lights everywhere. On city streets, Parkways, boulevards, and front lawns there is an abundance of lights at Christmas time. Some homes are trimmed with bright colored lights, and the skylines of many cities reflect a Christmas spirit as giant skyscrapers light up to send a Christmas message of cheer to those who view it from airplanes above. Some go to great extremes when they light up at Christmas. Al Copelin, the New Orleans owner of Popeyes's Chicken, creates a great stir in his neighborhood every year when he puts on a lighting display that consists of millions of lighted ornaments and decorations that draw tourists and visitors from all across the country. Copelin had so many lights and so many visitors that his neighbors went to court to try to stop him from lighting up at Christmas time. Truly Christmas lights are an important part of the celebration. Without its brightly colored lights, some people believe Christmas wouldn't be Christmas.

The Christmas season points to the birth of Christ who is the "light of the World." While there are many decorative lights in our homes and neighborhoods, the real light of the Christmas season is Jesus. While we anxiously set up hundreds of lights around our homes and businesses to light up the season, we should remember that the real Christmas lights don't hang on a string of wire and are not powered by electricity. The real Christmas Lights are the lives of men and women everywhere that radiate the love and joy of Jesus to men and women everywhere.

What is Christmas without lights? As Christians we know the answer to that question. Jesus is the light of the world, and without him there isn't any reason for the season. As each of us lets the light of God's love shine in our heart, we light up the season. Without the love of God shining everywhere, Christmas would be a dark and dreary occasion filled with doom and gloom rather than joy and hope. Let us keep our lights shining this Christmas, not so much on the tree or around our homes, but in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the historical setting and condition of the world at the time Christ was born. John, described it as a world of darkness, so dark when Jesus the light of the world came that it comprehended him not. To describe the times as darkness was not an overstatement. The Romans domaninated the world. However, with all of their learning they had over 300 gods in the city of Rome, one of which was the Emperor himself. The Greeks speculated in religion so much that they became convicted with their own ignorance about God. In Athens they erected a statue with the inscription, "To the unkown god" noting that their wisdom and philosophy had burned itself out. The Jewish religion had become a dry and empty ceremony that was filled with pomp but offered no hope to those who looked to heaven for an answer. Truly it was a period of darkness. It was during this period that Christ, the true light, came to shed light upon the confused state of the world. In his coming however, so many were not able comprehend or understand the meaning of his presence. "The light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." He came to bring a message of hope to those who were struggling in the despair of darkness, but those who were in the dark, could not see him.

Christ's function was universal yet personal. He would provide light for the darkness of the world by causing every man who receives him to light up and bring light into an otherwise dark world. John in verse 9 says Jesus was the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." As each man or woman who is touched by the master lights up, he becomes a microcosm of the light of Christ. He lights up the world through the faith and action of his believers and followers in every generation.

Lighting Up The World

In the context of the Christmas season, each Christian should be a Christmas light. President George Bush talks about a spirit of volunteerism that exists among Americans. He refers to each person who displays the spirit of charity and concern for humanity as one of a "thousand points of light" that shine across the country. If Christmas is dark and drear around the world its because there are no Christmas lights. Not those that twinkle around our homes or wink at us from Christmas trees, but those that live out the creed of Christ daily.

In 1966 Ron Kerenga challenged African-Americans to light up the seven principles of a great people and let them live in our lives daily. He called the celebration Kwanzaa, which is a seven day Black Heritage celebration which focuses on our decision as a people to light up our conciousness and appreciation of our heritage and destiny. During Kwanzaa, each Black family meets daily for seven days and lights a candle to discuss the seven ways in which we, as a people, can light up the world.

1) Unity. The first candle is unity. As Black Americans we can bring no light to the world without a unified spirit. Unity is the sense that what happens to a Black man

in Chicago happens to me. What happens to a Black woman in Soweto South Africa also happens to me. We must shine a light of unity for all the world to see. 2) Self Determination is the ability to decide your own course without the manipulations of others. We deserve the right to chooose our own leaders, decide our own educational curriculums, set our own cultural standards. 3)Collective Work and Responsibility. We must emphasize to each succeeding generation the importance of industry and work. Whether a man or woman is a stock broker in New York or a ditch digger in Mississippi there is value in work. Concerning industry we should also emphasize the importance of responsibility for our actions and resist the temptation to blame our failures on others. Responsibility means taking the credit and the blame for our successes and failures. 4)Cooperative Economics, the idea of supporting our own economically, is an essential point of light in the Black community. If we are to survive as a community we must develop a consciousness that seeks to work with others of our own culture. The modern extension of that idea also hinges on the idea of reciprocity, getting something back from those who we support economically who are not a part of our community. Unless we as Black Americans continously nurture this flame, it will be blown out with the first gust of mesegenated wind. 5)Purpose. Our motivation for the struggle should always contain an element of unselfish comittment to the "movement" or our cultural purpose. That is important today, since so many are directing themselves toward an upward social climb without ever once raising the question whether they will be useful to the movement toward liberation of our people or whether they will assume the role of oppressor with a Black face. Our cultural purpose should be in the subconscious of this generation as it was the goal of every person in the past generation to be a "credit to his race." 6)Creativity flows from the soul of African Americans. It is a light that should never go out. The expression of our soul in art, music, dance, theater reflects our rich heritage. It is a source of light for this world and we should resist all attempts to abandon our creative expression for the empty shells that have become the tombs of other cultures.

Light of Faith

The final light that every Black American must ignite is the light of faith.

No people have been able to endure and survive the hardships of our people on their own power. The only way we have been able to survive is by faith. Faith is a great light that we bring to this world that is covered with darkness and disbelief. Faith is that glimmer of light that speaks to the world and says there is still hope.

Faith in the power of God has helped us:

—Move the unmovable and Endure the unendurable

—Love the unlovable and Forgive the unforgiveable

Faith has:

—Delivered us in times of difficulties and disasters

—Strengthened us in times of trials and temptations

—Sustained us in times of sickness and suffering

—Kept us in times of poverty and persecution
—Led us in times of darkness and despair

What is Christmas without the true light? What is Christmas without Christ?

Jesus said "Ye are the light of the World" a city that cannot be hid. He is expecting every child of God to brighten up your corner of the world. "Let your light so shine that men might see your good works and glorify the father which is in heaven."

I don't know about you but I've decided to be A Christmas light and a New Year's Light and an every day light for the Lord. The Song writer declared: "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. ..Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine"

Let it shine!
Let it shine!
Let it shine!

No. 371-Stewardship

How Much Do I Owe Him?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 7, 1976

SCRIPTURE:"So he called every one of his lord's debtor's unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my Lord?" Luke 16:5

Introduction

Can we ever repay God for all of his kindnesses to us? What's his charge? The story is told of the little boy who was always angry because his mother kept giving him a list of chores to perform. He felt it placed too many demands on his time and therefore should be paid for what he did. So the little boy left his mother a bill on the kitchen table that read: "Johnny's Bill: Emptying the trash, $1.00; Sweeping the Floor, $1.00; Making my bed, $1.00; Washing Dishes $2.00; Dusting, $1.00. Total you owe me $6.00" It was signed Johnny. The mother came home and read the note on the table and sat down and cried. After a few moments she pulled herself together and decided to write her son a bill. With tears dropping from her eyes she wrote: "Mother's Loving Bill: For carrying you in my womb nine months, no charge; For tucking you in at night, no charge; For holding your hand when you fail and cheering you on when you succeed, no charge; For all the little things that I do for you that you never see, no charge. For loving you with all my heart, no charge!" She signed your loving mother.

God loves us more than a father or mother loves their children. In fact, John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In return for that great sacrifice, God has no charge for his goodness or for the expressions of love he has shown us over the years. Salvation is free, but as Christians we always remember that we are bought with a price, and therefore we are in constant gratitude to God for all his blessing.

How much do we owe God? The question itself implies that there is a point in which we repay him and be completely free of any obligation to him forever. Better stated, the question would ask:"In what ways can I show gratitude to God?" We show gratitude to God by obedience to his word and loving a fellowman. That's the best way.

As Christians, we know we are indebted to our Lord for our salvation. It is a debt we can never repay. But we can give him the best of time, talent and resources and

return for his list of blessings which are all marked: “No Charge”

Exposition

This text gives insight into the actions of a sorry steward who tried to hide his slothfulness from his master’s knowledge. This parable of Jesus’ is usually called the parable of the “Unjust Steward” because it involves an overseer or steward who had been trusted to run the farm of a rich man but tried to cheat him in the process. The steward had a free hand in giving, collecting and enforcing contracts. His job was to maintain the land in a profitable manner for the owner. However, this steward had become lazy. He had not be frugal with the affairs of the land’s owner and he feared that the master would discover his flaw and fire him. He pondered his choices if he were fired and concluded that he could not beg or resort to hard labor. He decided to cover his bases by making friends among the tenants insuring that someone would take him in if he were fired at worse, or that they would not tell of his laziness at best.

The steward called in all of the tenants and gave them new contracts. Some of the new contracts were as much as half of the original contracts. With collected new contracts in hand, the steward would have the appearance of having done a good job with the master’s property. The master would never know because the tenants would not tell about their great fortune. If the master did discover his folly, certainly some among the tenants would glady take the steward in. It was a good plan and he pursued it carefully. He succeeded in fooling the master who commended him for his hard work. He was an unjust steward because he had misused the authority and property which his master gave him.

Jesus told his disciples that people who have been given small responsibilities as they are represented by our land, finances, time and talents are judged on the bases of how they are used. Those who “have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” If a man cannot be trusted to handle the small affairs of another, he should not ever expect to receive larger sums to manage under the same conditions of his own.

Levels of Stewardship

Each Christian is a steward of a portion of God’s estate entrusted to his care. We are expected to use what he has given us wisely that we can be a good report when he returns to estate. This estate that God has given us involves 1)Real Estate 2)Intellectual Estate and 3)Moral Estate

Real Estate. Each person is entrusted to a certain portion of God’s real or material estate. This estate includes the lands we own, car we drive, house we live in, and the money in our pockets. He has entrusted us to handle that portion of his goods for him. Some have been given more in this respect than others. Some have great farms consisting of thousands of acres, others have just a 50x100 lot. Some have great sums

of money while others have little. Each person is given a different portion of God's real estate holdings of land and resources. Each is expected to multiply his holdings and use it wisely. Jesus illustrated this fact when he told the parable of the talents in which he rewarded servants that took their talents and multiplied them and reduced the holdings of the servant who would not use his talent.

What portion of God's Real Estate does God require for his use? His instructions are that 10 percent of his real estate holdings be placed in the care of the church. The steward is instructed that 90 percent can be used at the Steward's discretion. However, many today have become modern versions of Ananias and Sapphari who chose to lie to the church about the amount of their giving. Too many today are mismanaging God's property and keeping for themselves portions designated for the church. How Much do I owe Him? We owe God complete obedience to his instructions and the best use of that which has given us.

Intellectual Estate. Each person is endowed with varying levels of intellect and wisdom. There are many people who excel in various areas of pursuit: arts, science, scriptures, or history. This ability to excel in the intellectual estate is a gift from God because all knowledge belongs to him and he has control of it all. But whatever intellectual talents God has allowed us to use must be used according to his purpose. How much do I owe him? We owe God the benefit of our best thinking, and wisest deliberation. We owe him the most creditable use of our intellectual faculties that is possible. In this respect young Solomon prayed to God for "wisdom" to act fair and justly with the people. Wisdom is a great estate of God, entrusted to each of us. We owe him the prudent use of this great estate.

Moral Estate. Each of us has a moral responsibility to God. This responsibility demands that we live according to a higher law. This higher law demands that we do right even though others do wrong. It demands that we look beyond the superficial and seek truth over untruth. It also demands a high degree of abstinence from passions that disrespect the fact that our bodies are the temple of God. 1 Cor. 6:9 reminds us "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own?" The fact that we are not our own, that we belong to God, suggest that we have a stewardship trust over our moral estate. We owe God our best in this respect: to "Flee fornication" and imperfections of every kind and seek to achieve a level of moral integrity that will be acceptable to God.

Spiritual Estate

If there are three estates to which we are directly held accountable to God as stewards, there is a fourth estate for which we are also responsible: Our spiritual life. The spiritual freedom that God has given us demands that recognize that we will be held accountable for how we use it. God never forces us to do right, but he gives us a choice. He does not drag us to the cross, but he gives us the choice. We will be accountable for the choices we make.

Every Christian can testify that once he was spiritually dead! Lost and living wayward, until he found the Lord!

Saul worked against God and was spiritually dead, until he met the Lord!

The demonic man ran through the grave yard naked, until he met the Lord!

We all can share the testimony of the song writer who declared: I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I."

I don't know about you but today I'm safe on the peaceful shore because of Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who took away my sins!

Jesus! Died in my place!

Jesus! Who saved my soul!

How much do I owe him? More than I can pay! But every day of my life I'm going to give him my best because he died for me!

I'm going to keep on praising him because he was buried for me!

I'm going to keep on praising him because Early Sunday morning he rose from the grave with all power in his hands and announced to the world, come unto me all ye labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest!

What's the cost?

No Charge!

No. 370-Christmas,Blessings

He Did It Once, He Can Do It Again

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1, 1991

SCRIPTURE: But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. Luke 1:13

Introduction

What are the chances of great opportunities coming your way repeatedly? Some would say looking for that to happen is like looking for that "fat chance." They ask, does lightning strike the same place twice? Some describe their good fortunes as anything but miraculous and attribute them to everything except divine intervention. When others see a truly amazing accomplishment, they won't believe it until they see it again.

The Great Harry Houdini is recognized as the greatest magician and escape artist of all times. He repeatedly mystified audiences with his ability to escape almost magically from all kinds of safes, jails, and locks. A boy who watched him perform one of his tricks was amazed at how he was locked in hand cuffs, tied with ropes, chained at the feet and then held upside down in full view of the public and then escaped. Thinking it was a freak chance, he walked up to Houdini after the demonstration and said "I bet you can't do that again!" With the news media and hundreds of people watching, Houdini promptly had himself rechained and did the trick again. What he did once he could do again.

One thing we learn as Christians is that what God does once he can do again. God is not a "one time use" deity that acts miraculously once but cannot do it again. As we enter the Christmas season we focus on the great blessings that Christ gave mankind. We have seen his handiworks in the lives of others. This evidence recalls the words of the song writer who wrote: "It is no secret what God can do, what he's done for others, he'll do for you"

Exposition

This text first shows how God repeated a miracle he performed in the old Testament

in answer to a devout believer's prayer. Zacharias belonged to a priestly family. His was one of 24 family divisions that routinely took turns tending to the necessities of the temple. He was married to Elizabeth, which was permissible for priests if they married within the race, and preferably someone who was also from a family of priests. Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron.

Despite their goodness however, the couple was not able to have children. It distressed them greatly that others who were not as righteous as themselves could have children but they had none and as their old age advanced they thought the possibility of ever having a child was completely gone. What they did not know is that God had a plan in mind for them. They were to have a child, but not just any child, one who would have a special purpose in life. They would know he was special from the very beginning from the circumstances surrounding this miracle baby.

Many people have been caught off guard when they learned that they would have children at age 40 or 45. Some had to take a break to get a grip on themselves. Imagine then the shock that this old priest had when he heard the news that he and his wife were going to have a child, in their old age, with his wife barren as well. Being a priest, Zacharias knew very well not to doubt the Word of God delivered by his angel. Having read the record of Abraham and Sara he also knew the folly of laughing and making fun of God's timing. He knew God knew exactly what he was doing. He had blessed Abraham and Sara with a great blessing, and if he gave a miraculous blessing once, then certainly he was powerful enough to do it again. He was told to name the child "John" which means "Jehovah shows favor" or "God Blesses."

Multiple Blessings

One year a gray haired great grand father had the joy of having all of his family gather at their farmhouse for Thanksgiving. Nearly 100 people had crammed onto the farm, sleeping in cars, hallways, and anywhere they could find a space with the single purpose of making GrandPa's dream come true. As he sat across the table and stared at all his descendants a flood of tears rolled from his eyes as he gave thanks to God for such a blessing. One of his great grands asked "Why are you crying grandpa? " and he answered "Because the Lord has blessed me so much, my cup runneth over." Trying to be helpful the little girl picked up a coffee cup off the table and said "don't cry grandpa, here is another cup!"

After thanksgiving many people have full cups. They have counted all the blessings that God has given them and are full. Thanksgiving is nostalgic, it causes you to look backward and give thanks until your cup runs over. It prompts you to count the blessings that God has given you with miserly precision and to rejoice in every great miracle God performed in the past. With grateful hearts, Thanksgiving carries us on a trip down memory lane that wells joy in our soul and inspiration in our hearts.

Now that Thanksgiving is over and our cups are running over, there is good news from heaven: Get another cup because God is going to do it again!

The entire purpose of John The Baptist's life was to announce to the world that God was about to bless Israel again! God blessed them once with Moses who brought them from Egypt, but he would bless them even greater this time with one greater than Moses.

The message to Israel was to prepare for even greater blessings in a very short while!

The message to Christians as we look toward the Christmas season is similar: God is about to do it again! Get another cup!

As the word begins to focus on the birth of the Christ Child it suddenly realizes that there are more blessings to come. It realizes that if God:

—Stopped wars in the past, he can do it again!

—Put food on the table of hungry before, he can do it again!

—Untangled troubling circumstances, he can do it again!

As Thanksgiving passes and the birth of Christ dawns, the world looks forward with great anticipation to bigger, better and greater things.

Every Christian has the same expectation. Whatever God did for us that filled our cups in this year, he can do that and even more next year. If you enjoyed a margin of success in business, family relations or spiritual growth, this year: The message of the Christmas season is:"Get another cup!" The blessings were not by chance or freak accident of nature, but flowed from the very fountains of heaven themselves, so get ready, for what God did once he can do again and bigger!

Three Times is Sublime!

When God blessed Abraham and Sarah that was good. When he blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth with another miracle child that was even better. But God was about to do it again: Twice is nice but three times in sublime!

Isaiah declared it: "His name shall be called, Wonderful! Counselor! Almighty God! Prince of Peace"

His name is Jesus. He blessed me once by his birth, twice by his death and resurrection and everyday with the presence of his spirit.

I don't know about you but the Lord has brought me through:

—Valleys of loneliness and vales of tears

—Winds of Persecution and Storms of Opposition

—Nights of Despair and Days of Frustration!

But I'm so glad to know that if he did it once, he can do it again!

Thank you Lord for turning my:

—Failures into success

—Enemies into friends

—Sorrows into Joys

I'm so glad that there is still a fountain filled with blood that has not run dry. Thanksgiving has past and my cup ran over, but I need you today more than I did yesterday.. Here's another cup!

No. 369-Youth

Copping the Right Attitude

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
November 24, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

Introduction

What's your attitude about life? While there are many definitions the story of the father and the sailboats tells it best. A father took his son sailing for the first time and the son learned an important lesson about life. They noticed that there was a strong wind blowing to the East but most of the boats on the water were going West. "If the wind powers the sails, then why are the boats traveling East?" Asked the boy. The father explained that sail boats are made so that the sails can swing around and catch the wind, despite its direction and use it to their advantage. Therefore even if the wind blows West, by changing the set of the sails, a sailboat can go East, said the father. He recited to his son a poem that said:

"One ship drives east and another west,
with the self-same winds that blow;
Tis the set of the sails and not the gales
that determines where they go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways
of fate
As we voyage along through life
Tis the set of a soul that decides the goal
and not the calm or the strife.
Rebecca Williams.

Your attitude is the "set of your sails" in life. It represents the state of your mind, behavior and purpose in life. The optimist has decided to take the high road to success in life. If the winds of chance blow in a different direction his course is still set toward success. The Christian has decided to take an even higher road toward heaven. The set of his sail, or his attitude, is not affected by what others say or do or what may come against him in life. When a person's state of mind and behavior changes abruptly, it is said that he has "copped an attitude" or has developed an "attitude" problem. Those who "cop attitudes" are overwhelmed by the situation and allow it

to blow them in directions they don't want to go.

As Christians, our purpose in life is to glorify God and prepare for life in the kingdom of heaven. That is the set of our sails. We have copped an attitude but its an attitude toward making heaven our home.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's words of encouragement to the Christians at Corinth. The essential message he gave them was to keep the faith. He assured them that Christ died on the cross, rose from the dead and is alive. He went further to remind Christians that we have a great hope in this faith because one day we shall all see him again face to face. In reassuring the faith of the Corinthians he reminded them to keep the right attitude about Christ and not be influenced by critics of the faith or persecutions that would come. Paul focuses on three aspects of the Christian attitude that help us to continue despite obstacles. They are characterized in the phrase: "steadfast, unmovable... abounding in the work of the Lord."

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be steadfast. The word translated here as steadfast is from a Greek word which means "Firm in purpose." The message to be "firm in purpose" was an important one for the Christians at Corinth because it was a seafaring city where the "vices of east and west met." Strange ideas flourished among them and immorality and decadence were common place. Many who started out in the Christian faith were influenced to change their attitudes about Christ by the loose morals of the world. Paul's encouragement to them however was: be ye steadfast.

He also urged them to be unmovable. The word unmovable here is distinguished from the word immovable. In this context "unmovable", which is drawn from a Greek word that means "firmly persistent", refers to the mind set or attitude of the believer. Immovable would refer to vain efforts of outside influences to affect the believer. When Paul suggests that Christians be "unmovable" he points to an attitude that is "persistent" in the believer. It is a frame of mind that speaks to circumstances and says "I will not be thrown off course" and firmly sticks to it.

Pointing to the last aspect of Christian attitude Paul urged the Corinthians to "abound" in the work of the Lord. To abound in the Work of the Lord refers to behavior and actions. He urges them not simply to do the work of the Lord but to "abound" in it. He urges them to excel, exceed, and to be such a glaring example that people take notice. This attitude of displaying the Christian attitude in our behavior was important because of all others, it was the most visible witness of the truth of our salvation.

Wrong Attitudes Lead to Failure

There is a danger in copping the wrong attitude. There are many young people today who have copped an attitude about life that is dangerously affecting their potential

for success. Some have assumed bad attitudes about their homes, church, school and aims in life. Their attitudes are often reflected in their words and behavior. 1) Young people who are unwilling to participate in the team effort of their family by sharing in their part of the household responsibilities have adopted a selfish attitude. Selfishness simply means "if its not something that I can gain from in some way, I won't do it." However, the Christian attitude encourages "unselfishness" to the point of assuming a responsible role even in areas that may not be of interest to us personally. 2) At school, some young people have copped an attitude of rebellion in the classroom. Such students constantly "sass" or talk back to their teachers, cause disturbances, fight, crack jokes during class time, or otherwise disrupt the learning process. They have selected a course in life that is doomed to failure. Christian youth are different. Their attitude is that teachers are trying to help them succeed, rules are necessary for order and respect is due to those who have rule over them. 3) With regards to the faith, there are some youth who have assumed an attitude of tolerance rather than acceptance. When it comes to church there are some who have copped an attitude even about worship. They come to church because it is a requirement of their family and they dodge every church activity possible that is not required. It reflects a mind set that believes success in life can be obtained by belief in God, but worship, tithing, praying, bible study and Sunday School are not necessarily components of the good life. So they assume an attitude of tolerant clock watching, biding their time until they can do what they really want to do. The Christian youth has learned however that belief in God is just the beginning. Knowing more about his word, praising him in worship and obeying his commands are also essential parts of our salvation.

Copping a bad attitude leads to a destructive end. Cain and Abel both began with positive attitudes about God. When Cain found that Abel's sacrifice was more acceptable to God than his own, he copped an attitude of jealousy and killed his brother. Absalom was a favorite son of King David and Absalom loved his father. However, when he was punished by his father for killing his half brother, Absalom copped an attitude of rebellion that eventually led to his death hanging in a tree by his own hair.

Jonah was a believer in God and was faithful until God told him to preach salvation to Israel's enemies. Then he copped an attitude of defiance forcing God to have him swallowed by a fish and other hardships before he changed his mind.

There are many in the world who have copped an attitude on the Lord. Bad attitudes have made:

--Honor students turn into failing fools
--Model youth turn into embarrassing examples
--Favorite Children a source of family shame

Not only that but a bad attitude can take a:

--Rich man and make him a beggar, Wise man and make him a fool!
--Brilliant man and make him stupid, Trustworthy man and make him dishonest!
--Young girl and make her live like an old woman
--Young boy and make him think like a dirty old man

Copping bad attitudes can only destroy all the good that God intends for his people. They are negative influences wherein God wants us to focus on the positives of his love.

Right Attitudes Lead Us to Jesus

Paul told the Corinthians that there is a reasonable basis for the platitudes of our attitudes. We assume the Christian attitude of surety of purpose, firm persistence, and abounding work because we have an assurance that there is a higher reward waiting for every child of God.

Paul told the Corinthians that the Christian attitude and lifestyle is not in vain because we know that the Resurrection of Christ is real and just as sure as he rose from the grave he's coming back again!

Our attitude is positive and forward looking because we he's coming back again and we want to be ready when he gets here!

Christian youth, keep a positive attitude at home, school and in worship, your labor is not in vain!

Set your sails toward success! When the winds of peer pressure blow in another direction, keep your sail set toward success!

Paul told Christians to remember his creed: Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ. Paul said my sail is set and "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth or any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the Love of Christ!"

When the classmates at school act fool, say in your mind, the wind is blowing wrong, but I'm sailing right, because I'm on my way!

When challenged to use foul language, steal or behave in an unchristian like way, say in your mind, the wind is blowing wrong, but I'm sailing right, because I'm on my way!

I've decided to follow Jesus! No turning back!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, the light of my soul and my guiding tower!

I've decided to follow Jesus! No turning back! No turning back!

No. 368-Communion

Man Doth Not Live By Bread Alone

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 17, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed them with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Deut. 8:3

Introduction

A Self Made Man had one focus in life, earn money and nothing else mattered. One night he had a dream that he was being served in a fine restuarant filled with rich and important people. He ordered a variety of fine cuisines and dishes for himself and his guest that were expensive and prepared by the world's finest chefs. However, each time the waiter brought out his tray instead of the fine foods he ordered, all he was served was a slice of bread.

"There must be a mistake" he told the waiter noting that he had ordered several fine selections. The waiter said there had been no mistake. Angry, the man left and went to several other restuarants and at each place all would receive was a slice of bread. Finally the man went to the owner of the restuarant and asked for an explanation.

The owner said the customers of the shops in this land can only be served by the concerns of their heart. "You see customers here with meats and sweets because their lives are concerned with substance and compassion. You see some with cooling drinks and tasty entres because they drink from the fountain of life and commune regular with the Saints." The man looked ate his plate and asked "But why did you give me just a slice of bread?" The owner responded, "because your sole interest in life is making a living and acquiring the material possessions that life has to offer." The thought "I have to have more than just a slice of bread every day!" Then the man looked at the face of the owner and recognized the face of Jesus and he woke up from his dream. Disturbed, he opened his bible to read and fell upon this verse: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

As Christians we know that there are things in life more important that posses-

sions, money, power and influence. These things come from God. They are means to achieve an end but they are not an end in themselves. We cannot live happily with just what this world offers us. There is a more evasive but substantive truth we all know, that to be really happy we must walk in the Lord, and cling to every word that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Exposition

This text focuses on God speaking to Israel explaining the reason he caused them to endure the hardships of the wilderness and the good things that can follow if they obey his commandments.

At the time of this text Israel had wandered in the wilderness about 40 years on a journey that should have taken weeks. They were moving from slavery toward a brighter future. Along the way they were exposed to a variety of troubling setbacks that frustrated them, troubled them and delayed their entrance into the promised land for years. Enroute to the promised land they were pursued by enemies, scorched in the desert, exhausted from the lack of food and water, and plagued by internal rebellion. God in this text says all of these hardships were intentional. They were part of grand design that was arranged to teach Israel the one lesson they would need to enjoy the great things that would be availabe in the land God was preparing for them. They would need to learn humility.

In the midst of each struggle God had to teach Israel, just as it stood on the border of the promised land that it should always remember the source of any opportunities that come its way and never become high minded. When they feared that they would be recaptured and returned to slavery, God opened up the Red Sea and saved them. When they feared that they would starve to death for lack of essential nutrition, God sent them quails for meat, rained down bread from heaven and caused water to spring out of a rock when there were no streams. In total disorganization, disputing among themselves, he caused them to wander into they could number and organize themselves, establish a system of leadership, repell rebellious influences and band together behind one leadership for a common cause.

God's intent was not to destroy Israel but to humble and season Israel as a nation that it might be prepared for the great opportunities that were going to be available to them and still be God's people at the same time. So, although it appeared at once that they would be recaptured and returned to slavery, God opened the Red Sea to allow their escape to let them know, that they survived only because there is a God in heaven. They complained about meat and water and God supplied it in a way that they knew had to come from God and him alone. They had no bread and God did not lead them to green pastures where they could grow the wheat themselves and mistake the source of their blessings, he rained down bread from heaven, such that there would be no mistake. He made his purpose altogether clear: "that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

Preparation for the Promised Land

How do we understand the climate of our times, in light of God's word? As African-Americans how do we explain the sudden resurgence across America of racial hate groups, reactinonary forces and political lynch parties? Is there a word from the Lord? For an answer we only need to look at Israel. They were a people enslaved for 400 years and God had miraculously freed them but before they were ready for the promised land they had to be taught a few lessons which are sources of evaluation for our people today:

--The only thing that separates us from the enemy is the presence of God. While Israel marched to freedom Pharoah attempted to put them back in slavery but could not get to them because of a Pillar of Cloud by Day and Pillar of fire by night. We should never be lulled into thinking that Pharoah has given up on trying to enslave. Some of us, fresh from Slavery already have lost sight on the nature of the enemy. The enemy is not a color, it is a system of things that is postured to survive at our expense. That system never sleeps and seizes every opportunity to keep the disadvantaged, disadvantaged. It is only God's presence standing between Pharoah's army and Israel that keeps it going. This was a lesson Israel had to know.

--A united effort would be required to realize the promise. Israel was a mass of about 600,000 people unorganized and disrespectful of leadership. They had a commonality of origin and circumstance but did not share the same agenda. They had to organize themselves with every man registered and counted for battle-that's what the Book of Numbers is all about. They had to put down rebellions among themselves, prompted by those who wanted to return to the old days and those who wanted to go after the future. There was also internal strife among the leaders. God destroyed those who lead rebellion among the people and once Miriam and Aaron stopped speaking against Moses they were able united behind a common agenda.

The ill winds that blow across the land today are perhaps more by design than by chance. If we understand God's word clearly, it can only be a sign that God is using evil presences to keep his people humble. Faced with the perception of an evil presence his people unite! Faced with the perception of an overpowering enemy about to destroy them, his people will rally behind a common agenda and realize that their only hope for making it is in a united effort powered by the Spirit of God himself. Without God there isn't any pillar of fire or cloud, or opening of the Red Sea! Without God there is no bread from heaven, only the dry morsels and crumbs of human know how that are insufficient to get us to the promised land.

Not By Bread Alone

All of these serve to remind African-Americans that we cannot achive what we desire by our own strength, wisdom or ability. We cannot gain it through attaining the material goods and methodology of this world alone, but by depending totally

on the truths of God as they relate to our specific circumstance.

When we get jobs, we must always remember where it came from!

When we sit down and eat a steak, we must remember where it came from!

When we enjoy new found freedoms, we must never forget from whence we have come.

I heard a song writer declare: "We have come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord.

Trusting in his Holy Word, he has never failed me yet. Oh, can't turn around we've come this far by faith"

Along the way we have learned that we can't depend on this bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God which is the bread of heaven!

The bread of heaven is the power of God!

The bread of heaven is Jesus!

Jesus: My help in time of touble! Comfort in times of Crises, Glory in times of grief! Victory when it looks like defeat is all around me! Jesus!

"Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

No. 367-Revival

Have You Lost Anything?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 10, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Luke 15:9

Introduction

Have you ever lost anything? Consider the couple that struck it rich and decided to celebrate by renting a Penthouse on the 29th floor of a luxury hotel and then painting the town. It was beautiful layout with several rooms, exquisite furnishings, a breath taking view and an atmosphere that was heavenly. Dressed in new clothes they sped off in limousine to see the town. On their return they learned that the elevator was out of order. They were given the option of sleeping in a first floor room without the elaborate trappings of their Penthouse or climbing the steps to the 29th floor. Considering the beauty of their Penthouse the couple decided to walk the 29 floors. There was exhaustion, frustration, fatigue, and disgust as they moved from floor to floor in what seemed an endless succession of steps that spiraled for miles. Finally at the top, the husband searched his pocket for the key and realized that he must have lost the keys in all of the merriment. Through all of their hard work to get to the top, they had lost the key!

Likewise there are many people today who are working hard to succeed in life. They are striving to acquire the American dream of financial security, leisure and freedom of opportunity. To achieve this dream many are climbing the steps to success in an often tiring, and frustrating climb. However, some who are making the climb have forgotten the key to happiness. It is still at the front desk.

As Christians, we are ever mindful of the fact that the essential element to happiness, success and joy is Christ. We have discovered that houses, cars, finances, romance and other incidentals contribute to comfort but not joy. We have also learned that church membership is desirable, but aside from salvation, a sanctified soul and service it is a long hard climb without the key! Jesus is the key to salvation! In your climb up have you misplaced the key?

Exposition

This text is the second in a trilogy of parables Jesus used to explain why he spent

so much time with publicans and sinners. In verse two the Pharisees and Scribes criticized Jesus for "receiving" or associating with the low class people of the community who were generally viewed as deadbeats. He was even criticized because he was often seen eating with them in their houses and receiving them as his guests. It was believed that if Jesus was the Son of God as he claimed that he would make himself available to the elders of the community and associate with those who had more to offer the kingdom building process.

To explain the nature of his mission and the nature of man's relationship with God also, Jesus told three parables. One spoke of a shepherd who had 100 sheep and realized that he had lost one and went out to find it. Another spoke of man who had two sons and one went into far country and wasted his life in riotous living. Another, which is the focus of this text involved a woman who had ten coins and lost one in her house. The woman searched and swept her house until she found the lost coin and celebrated thereafter. The coin itself was called a "drachme" and was equal to about a days wages for their times. It would be same today as if someone had $500 in $50.00 bills and had lost one somewhere in the house. The woman could not rest until she had searched everywhere in the house and brought light to every dark place as she searched.

The sheep wandered away from the fold. The prodigal son left home. However, the coin neither wandered away or ran off into the world. The coin was lost "in the house." Using these three parables Jesus showed that his mission was to find the lost and to search for them. At the same time he showed that there is concern in heaven for lost things. With the sheep, Christ showed that God will go after those who have lost their way and are simply confused and don't know the way back. With the prodigal son, Christ showed that God patiently waits for those who leave the faith for the world and will warmly welcome them back. With the coin, Christ shows that God is disturbed at the loss of those in the faith and seeks to shine the light of hope into whatever darkness that has caused them to hide in the corners of the kingdom instead of actively enjoying its fullness.

Losing Things Can Be Frustrating

Losing things can be frustrating. Perhaps some of the most frustrating moments in life are those when we can't find something we have lost. Losing keys or other valuables troubles the mind and there is no rest until they are found. Usually losing things causes more worry for the owner than for lost object because that which is lost usually doesn't know that it is lost. The sheep that wandered away from the fold did not know it was lost, but the shepherd did. The coin that was lost in the house did not know it was lost, but the woman did. The prodigal son did not know what he had lost until he came to himself, but his father knew all the time. Sometimes those who are lost don't know it, while others all around them see it sharp and clear.

As a people, have we lost anything? Is our sense of community the same as it was a generation ago? Dr. James Evans, president of the Colgate Rochester Divinity

School said recently that one of the causes of the rise of Black on Black crime is our loss of the spirit of fraternalism that existed during slavery and came to its height in the 1960's. This sense of community recognized every Black person as either a fellow slave or a "Soul Brother" or "Soul Sister." Since the idea of the "Soul Brother" has faded, the new generation does not perceive every Black person as a brother. Those who commit Black on Black crimes view their Black victims as just convenient targets. As a people, the loss of the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood has affected us in many ways. Today the Black community has lost much of the spiritual energy that has made us strong. Those new to the community probably don't know that anything has been lost, but those who have been around know that we have lost something.

In our relationships, have we lost anything? In our marriage or courtship do we still have the same sense of commitment that we once had? Is there still a fire that burns deep in your soul or has the blaze withered to smoldering ashes, only a vision of what it once was? There are millions today who live in marriages and other interpersonal relationships where at least one partner knows something has been lost. It's not what it use to be! It is frustrating because the partners that are lost do not perceive of themselves as lost although all around can see it as plain as day.

Personally have we lost anything? Has there ever been a time when we felt spiritually stronger? Has there ever been a time when we read our bible more, attended Sunday School, sang in choir, or served in a special position of service with intensity and vigor? Has there ever been a time when you actually enjoyed serving the Lord, looked forward to meetings with other brothers and sisters in the faith and were excited about the fellowship? There are millions of church members who share the circumstance of the lost coin, they are lost in the house. They have not wandered into the highways and byways nor roamed into the world they are lost in the house!

Those who are lost in the house have misplaced the key to spiritual happiness! When we evade Sunday Bible Study, sleep through the worship, endure the singing and constantly glance at our watches it suggests that we are lost in the house. We have misplaced the key! David has been described as man after God's own heart, but yet there was a time when David lost something! He lost the key to joy. It was a long time before David realized that he had lost something but once he came to himself he cried out to the Lord: "Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit." (Psa. 51:10-12).

Jesus is the key to our joy!

Those who are tiring of their service have misplaced the key! Why do you attend Sunday School? It's not to sit in a chair for 45 minutes and be present, but to learn about Jesus! Those who sing don't sing for show or fashion but they want to worship Jesus! Those who teach and are involved in outreach do so out of a sense mission for Jesus! Take away Jesus and Sunday School is boring, church service is a burden, and your singing becomes a show which emphasizes the performance rather than expressing a relationship with Jesus. Take away Jesus and you soon start feeling that

the entire church experience is a waste of time.

Brothers and Sisters its dangerous to misplace Jesus!

When you misplace Jesus there is no:

--Light in the middle of darkness or hope of Success in failure

--Forgiveness for faults or strength in midst of weakness

--Direction for travels or joy for your sorrows

Jesus like the good shepherd is looking for the lost!

Jesus, like the loving father is waiting for the prodigal to come back home!

Jesus, like the woman searching for her lost coin is searching for a lost soul that needs to be found.

A little girl was lost in a shopping mall and refused to answer when she heard the page: "Will the little girl named Mary who is lost, please come to the courtesy desk, your mother is looking for you!" When asked why she would not respond the little girl answered, they asked for a girl that was lost, I knew exactly where I was, so I figured it must have been somebody else. The mother responded: when I said lost I did not mean being lost from yourself, but being lost from me, I worry when you are not by my side."

When the voice of heaven rings out: "Will all lost souls report to the nearest church!" there will be some who will hear the message but respond: "it's not for me, because I'm not lost!" When the Lord seeks the lost he means those who have misplaced the key to salvation and happiness and are distanced from him.

I heard the song writer declare "Jesus is tenderly calling today, calling today, calling today, Jesus is tenderly calling today!"

I don't know about you but I know what it means to be lost on the sea of life and I'm so glad that Jesus gave another chance. Maybe that's why the song writer declared: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the water lifted me now safe am I."

Love lifted me!

When I was lost and could not find my way, Love lifted me!

When I was sinking in the world, love lifted me!

When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

No. 366-Revival

Sealed Until He Comes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 3, 1991

Scripture: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" Ephesians 1:13; "Grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30

Introduction

The hearts of Americans were touched a few years ago when they learned of the dilemma of a little boy who had to live in a bubble or die. It appeared that the boy was born with a congenital immune deficiency that made him highly susceptible to disease. The smallest sickness, a cold, virus, or even a cut on the finger could have meant death for him. To protect his life, doctors encased him in a plastic-like bubble, where the air was purified and he was safe from diseases. His toys, games and other distractions were placed inside the bubble. Inside the bubble he was safe. Outside the bubble his chances of survival were nearly non-existent. The boy continues to live and grow, but only because he's safe inside the bubble, without its protection he would contract a disease and die.

In a spiritual sense, all people all born with certain deficiencies of character that make them susceptible to sin. We were born with these vulnerabilities. We are threatened by their presence everyday because even the smallest infraction of God's law, unredeemed, means eternal death. Romans 6:23 paints a two part picture of our dilemma: "The wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Without Christ our very nature will cause our spiritual death. With Christ we are placed in a protective "bubble" that protects us from the influences of sin. The Christian's protective bubble is not made of plastic. Neither can it be seen with the eye of felt with the hand. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in his or her life that constantly protects the saved man or woman from the death dealing influences of sin. It is the moving force of God within us that leads us, corrects us, revives us and motivates us to live the Christian life. Thank God for the bubble! Thank God for the Holy Spirit! We are safe as long as we are surrounded by the bubble. Outside of the Holy Spirit's protection we would surely face spiritual death.

As Christians, we know that it is impossible to live a decent and upright life without the guidance, encouragement and protection of the Holy Spirit. He is our guide and

our defender in times of trouble. He keeps us safe and secure until our Lord comes back again.

Exposition

This text considers Paul writing to the Ephesians reminding them that they have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit that has sealed them in the faith until the return of the Lord. In biblical times the use of seals was common from Babylonian antiquity to Roman civilization. Paul's use of the term "seal" to indicate the presence of God in the life of a Christian, drew upon a common practice familiar to most people of his time, that being the use of seals. Paul's distilled thought on this matter is that the seal of the Holy Spirit serves a threefold purpose for the Christian: authentication, identification, and destination.

In the purest sense, the seal was originally a sign of authentication. Usually made of wax, letters and other documents were authenticated when the king placed his ring or signet into the warm wax to signify his consent to the contents. If it was sealed with the king's ring it was assumed official. When Jesus was buried the stone placed in front of it was sealed with the mark of the pharisees to prove that it had not been opened. If it bore the seal it was the real McCoy.

The seal was also a sign of ownership or sanctification. Items that bore a certain seal were considered owned by the person whose seal they bore. Therefore Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:19 saying "..having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." Paul suggested to Timothy in this text as he did to the Ephesians that those who have the seal of God should sanctify themselves or set themselves apart from the world because they belong to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 19-20 he reminds Christians "..ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.." The presence of the Seal of the Holy Spirit in our lives shows Sanctification.

The seal is also a sign of destination. In Ezekiel 9:4 the Lord told Ezekiel to go through the city and to find those faithful to God and put a mark on their foreheads to protect them from coming destruction. These, who bore the mark, were destined to make it through the tough times ahead in safety. For Christians, the presence of the Holy Spirit is the promise of our future destination in heaven with Christ. The seal of Christ is our hope for a place in the kingdom of heaven when Christ returns.

Insufficient Seals

Today there are many people who have good hearts, and the best of intentions but they are missing something. They are in the same predicament as the Rich Young Ruler who lived a decent and obedient life but found out from Christ that there is "one thing thou lackest" before his spiritual life could be complete. He had to be born again of the water and of the spirit. Likewise, many today try to live the good and decent life, without the sealing power of the Holy Spirit.

What effect does the Holy spirit have on our lives? It directs, guides, corrects and

inspires us. But it also helps to protect our spiritual strengths. The sweetest cake or the freshest light bread won't last long if they are not sealed tightly after use. The influences all around us will corrupt us and make us stale and hard. Many people today have become hard. They lack the vitality that freshness brings and their real sweetness or vitality cannot be appreciated. They have become hard because they lack God's moving presence in their lives.

While there some who have never been sealed and grown hard, there are others who have what appears to be the seal of God but it is only a weak substitute. These are man made seals that prove insufficient to sustain us, even in the strongest of times.

LIGHT BREAD SEALS. Some church people have light bread seals and not the seal of God. Light bread is sealed, but it allows the user to remove the seal and put it back on again indefinitely. Even with the best of care, light bread becomes dry and stale if the loaf packaging is often opened and closed. Many church people have a light bread seal instead of the Seal of Christ. They are in and out! They are in for a while and they are out for a long time. Their seal is opened and closed so much that they have grown stale in the faith. Is our allegiance to God and in and out affair? Is it desirable for us to meander in the faith so frequently? 1 Corinthians 15:58 answers these questions this way: "..Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain."

POP TOP SEALS: Some church people have pop top seals, rather than seals from God. These seals are like soft drinks that are strong and powerful as long as their tops are never popped. They have plenty of power: If shaken it builds; if things get hot it builds even more, as long as they are sealed. If the seal is broken all of its power is lost in one flurry and fizzle. Likewise many Christians have a great testimony to tell, song to sing, and prayer to pray. They appear to have plenty of power until something or somebody pops their top. It may be an angry response, or even a failure that pops their top but when it happens they lose all of their power and have as much spirit as day old soda pops: every now and then they can work up a bubble or two! In verses 25 through 5:18 Paul enumerates a variety of situations that can cause us to pop our top: Lying (v25); Letting a day close in anger with someone (v26); Stealing (v28); Ill feelings toward others (v31); fornications and filthiness (5:3-4); and drunkenness (5:18).

CANNED FOOD FAITH: Those who are truly sealed have discovered that there is safety, security and strength for those whom God protects. The old mothers knew how to make ends meet and one way they did it was to can food. The essential element to canning food required removal of all harmful organisms and an airtight seal. Food was often precooked and placed in hot sterilized Mason jars. Once the food had cooled down the moveable center on jar top was pressed down to remove the air that help any organism from growing. Once sealed canned foods could last for years. Those who are sealed in Christ are like canned food items, which in modern times are placed cans. The tough seal that protects them allows them to remain intact even though they may be dropped, kicked, rolled around or tossed. They may have a dent or two but they are almost indestructible.

When you have been sealed in the faith nothing can separate you from the Love

of God. In Romans 8:35 Paul asked the question:"Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" He answered his own question with our testimony: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the Love of God which is in Jesus Christ."

Seal Shows Your Destination

While the seal shows who you are and to whom you belong to, it also shows where you are going. If you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit you are being kept and protected until the Lord comes back again.

It's important to have the right seal, because its the seal that will tell the conductor which way you are traveling and where you are going.

In Revelation 7 John said he saw 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel all bearing the seal of the lamb. Beyond that he saw another crowd which no man could number, whose robes had been washed in the blood of the lamb.

If you bear the seal of the lamb, it lets the world know that you are on your way to the Canaan land.

I don't know about you but I'm on way to a place where:

--Graves never open and gates never close

--Hearts never break and dreams never fade

--Tears never fall and tempers never rise

--Hopes never diminish and Happiness never sorrows

--Friends never part, flowers never fade

--Doubts never rise, Joy never ends

When Jesus comes again the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

When Jesus comes again we'll be caught up to meet him in the air!

Oh don't you want to be in that number!

Crying days will be over!

Joy will never end!

No. 365-Youth, Revival

My Mind Is Playing Tricks On Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 27, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" Romans 1:28

Introduction

Suppose you had two brains and both of them tried to tell you what to do? That was the subject of a 1972 movie entitled "The Thing with two Heads" in which Roosevelt Grier played a Black convict whose head was transplanted onto the body of a white racist doctor. The two heads could not get along. If one said go left the other said go right. In 1983 Steve Martin was in a similar dilemma in his movie, "The man with two brains." In either case, the presence of two minds in the same body caused considerable trouble for everyone involved.

While most of us don't have the "two heads" or "two brains" to trouble us, we do have two spirits within us that struggle constantly to gain control of our mind. One spirit represents all that is moral and just. The other spirit is a reflection of all that is immoral and evil. Both are competing for control of our mind.

Satan is a cunning deceiver. To get control of our mind and soul he will use whatever deceptions are necessary to accomplish his goal. A popular song by the Geto Boys entitled "My Mind Is Playing Tricks On Me" has this idea in focus as it suggests that there is a deception underfoot that is making it hard to believe what you see and hear. In the garden Satan deceived Eve into thinking she would not die if she ate from the forbidden fruit. In the wilderness he tried to deceive Jesus to worship him and to turn stones into bread.

Many youth today have believed the deceiver. He has presented them with a mirage of life, an exaggerated caricature of possibilities, that does not reflect reality. They live daily by his rule: Live fast, move quick, and don't look back. Following Satan's deception some youth are failing in school, getting in trouble with the law, and dropping out of life.

However, some have realized the deception and now say "My mind is playing tricks on me" as they look for a better way.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that we once had a mind to practice sin.

However, we have renewed our mind through Christ and have turned to a better life. Our collective mind is staid on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Exposition

This text considers Paul's writings to the Christians at Rome. It was written three years before his actual arrival in the city and is generally accepted as a treatise that fully explains the Gospel. He told the Romans that all men are guilty of some infraction of God's law but some had demoralized to a state that their actions have been totally rejected by God. Their actions were so offensive to God that in three places Paul says God "Gave them up" to themselves. In verse 24 God "Gave them up" to uncleanness. In verse 26 God gave them up to homosexual and lesbian behavior and in verse 28 God gave them up to a "reprobate" mind.

The term reprobate usually refers to a state of mind or character that is not acceptable to God. Jeremiah 6:30 speaks of the ungodly as "reprobate silver" because God had rejected them. 2 Timothy 3:8 refers to those in the church who have mixed their own views with those of the faith to justify their actions and have become reprobate. Titus 1:16 speaks of those who acknowledge God but are constantly disobedient to him and fail to show good works. They are characterized as reprobates because their actions are conflicting with the spirit of Christ. Each speaks to a different variety of reprobation: Outright rejection of God (Jeremiah 6), Mixing ungodly ideas with the truths of the scripture to justify ungodly behavior (2 Tim.); and professing to know God in speech but denying him in practice (Titus 1).

The reprobate mind is one that sometimes switches frequently between good and evil. It often thinks good thoughts but does bad things. On other occasions it thinks and does ungodly deeds. The reprobate himself is often a confused personality that does not know which way to turn or go. He is often the victim of his own degenerated mind playing tricks on him.

When Your Mind Plays Tricks On You

Often what we describe as our "Mind playing tricks on us" is the result of one spirit or the other trying to speak to us and we are confused. Pharaoh dreamed about seven fat cows swallowing up seven skinny cows repeatedly. He could not sleep at night and was disturbed about it and his mind played tricks on him, until he learned the meaning of the dream from Joseph. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great tree that was cut down to the stump and found out that God planned to punish him with insanity for several years. Soon afterwards he lost his mind and started thinking he was an animal and began eating grass walking around on all fours. His mind played tricks on him. Jesus ran upon a demonic man who ran naked through the graveyards screaming in the night. Demons were running him wild and his mind played tricks on him. Even Jesus had the same experience. In the wilderness Satan appeared before him and played with his mind showing him all of the possibilities available if he would

serve the "dark side" of "the force." Therefore it is not uncommon for today's Christians, especially youth, to be victims of the mind games of the world.

Often young people are torn between the voices that speak to their mind. I hear America' youth cry out:

There is the voice of God and morality, but its sandwiched between VH1 and MTV. They've changed my channel, erased my tape, messed with my fate and my mind is playing tricks on me.

Preacher say don't and my partners say do. If I could I would but I don't, not because I won't, but because my mind is playing tricks on me.

Safe Sex, No Sex, Free Sex and AIDS if I do. Everybody's knows what's good for you: the Sunday School teacher and Two Live Crew. Nine minutes, 9 months and a date with VD, and I'm all messed up because my mind is playing tricks on me.

The school says don't be a fool, be cool, obey the rules, you got the tools, but its easier to cop out, dropout, grab a ball and have a ball, and through it all my mind is playing tricks on me.

Boom boxes preach, videos teach, and the world is filled with sneaks and freaks, and stomping Greeks saying party down to eternity. My Christianity sees absurdity and I resist with all ability but my mind is still playing tricks on me.

I want to let go, but "its so hard to say goodbye." I wanna fly beyond the sky. I want a new home when I die, but every day I hear a voice from hell saying come here son let me ring your bell..and my mind keeps playing tricks on me.

I'm scolded, folded, molded and blindfolded and can't see what I want to be. The faithful are hopeless, Catholics are popleless, Nighttime T.V, is soapless. Jails are full, pockets are bare, people with pull won't even share, nobody cares, and my mind is playing tricks on me.

Paul referred to this dilemma in Romans 7:15-20 when he noted that with one mind he wanted to right but with another he wanted to do wrong. He recognized that it was the voice of evil that kept him confused. He asked a question in verse 24: "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He answers (v25) by giving thanks to Jesus for freeing his mind to follow the will of God because in the flesh he would always follow the law of sin.

The answer to those who are suffering from confused minds, is Jesus!

If there have been two voices speaking to you and pulling at your soul, confusing and frustrating you, we invite you choose Jesus.

Romans 12:2 says "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and love and of a sound mind."

The Answer to A confused mind is a Made Up Mind

While there are many young people who are confused by the world, there are others who are not touched by the confusing signals the world gives them, because they have a made up mind. They have decided to follow Jesus.

Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind, but when he decided to listen to the Lord, his mind no longer played tricks on him.

The demonic man ran naked through the graveyard but when he met Jesus, his mind no longer played tricks on him and people were amazed at how his life had changed.

Amazing things happen when a man or woman meets Jesus. When you meet Jesus:

--Proud become humble, discouraged are inspired

--Weak become strong, and lonely get a friend

--Questions are answered, and bad habits are broken

--Doubts are settled, and lost joy is restored

I don't know about you but I've found out that when you know the Lord he gives you:

--Courage to fight your battles

--Rest for your weary soul

--Peace in Middle of your storms

--Success in the midst of failure

--Gladness in the midst of Grief

--A song to sing in the midnight

No wonder the song writer declared "I woke up this morning with my mind staid on Jesus. Walking and talking with my staid on Jesus, he's my friend!"

If your mind has played tricks on you, try Jesus!

If the world has confused you, try Jesus!

Jesus, who died for you on Calvary, will give you a second chance!

No. 364-Church Anniversary

Thank God For The Rock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Peter's Rock Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 20, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? Psalms 18:31

Introduction

A little girl was traveling with her parents on a boat down a certain river. The water was moving at a brisk pace and the boat began to rock to the left and right. Suddenly the small boat capsized and the entire family spilled over into the water. All of the family members made it to shore except the little girl. The mother panicked as she saw her daughter, held up only by her life preserve, floating down stream. All through the night they searched for her and could not find her. Exhausted, they had almost given up. As the sun rose they looked down the river and saw what looked like a red life jacket and the moved toward it quickly. Sure enough they found the girl with her arms wrapped around a huge boulder in the river, holding on tightly. Just beyond the boulder was a waterfall. As the father pulled his daughter to shore, he hugged her close to him and cried. The mother looked at the water fall and then looked at the boulder and her only response was "Thank God for the Rock."

Where would we be today if it were not for the rock?

We have traveled many dangerous paths and meandered many torrential streams.

We have flirted with failure, frustration and death so many times we cannot count them. The only presence that has sustained us in the middle of our struggles over the years is the presence of the almighty God. When we failed he encouraged us to go on. When we stumbled he picked us up. When we were confused he showed us the way.

It is no wonder then that the Psalmist would write: "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." Psalms 27:5. Most of us would have gone overboard if it were not for the rock of our salvation standing firm in the midst of troubling water giving us something hold on to.

As we celebrate our accomplishments and achievements in life we should always give thanks to God for being there for us. His constant presence in the life of the church and every member, gives us all, something to hold on to that is secure and lasting.

Exposition

This text is best described as David's hymn of thanksgiving. It was written on the occasion of his ascension to the throne following the death of King Saul and his sons. It was a particularly grand moment for David because he had been a fugitive from Saul for so many years and was unable to enjoy his freedom or popularity. The people sang "Saul hath killed his thousands and David his 10,000" but yet he was unable to enjoy it all because of his constant flight from Saul. Now at a very important moment in his life he looks back over his long journey from a shepherd boy, harp player to the king, fugitive and slayer of Goliath and gives God the glory and the praise. The thoughts of this psalm are repeated in II Samuel 22. Both texts repeat the same truth, that whatever accomplishments David made it was not his own doing but God's.

In explaining his praise David said God was a rock, his strength, his fortress, his deliverer, shield, horn and high tower. Whenever he need God he found him to be rock in the wilderness and a shelter in a time of storm.

What Accomplishments Have We Made?

As churches celebrate anniversaries there is a tendency to become nostalgic. We often attribute to the founding fathers, past pastors or outstanding members the credit for the successes that the church has enjoyed. While it is good to remember the veterans who helped paved the way we should always remember that they were only the instruments God has used to bring us to the journey. The real strong rock of our past and presence is God.

He has been and will be our high tower, refuge and strength.

As every church celebrates the milestones of its journey we must keep our eye focused on the nature of the challenge ahead. We may have come a long ways, but there is still along ways to go.

As long as there are lost souls the church still has work to do. As long as there are needy, spirits hungry for the word of God there is still much to be done. The accomplishments we note today should not be tombstone markers but milestones that simply note the completion of another phase of the journey.

Old Testament Rocks Types of Christ

The symbol of the rock in the Old Testament, in many instances are types of Christ. As a symbol of security and protection the writings show these rocks as prototypes of what the Christian sees in Christ.

There were times when this journey seemed impossible when this congregation cried out for leadership, inspiration and guidance.

There times of confusion and doubt, but thank God for the Rock!

Israel made a great journey from Egypt to the promised land, but in the wilderness it became thirsty and complained to Moses about having no water. When Israel

complained to Moses, he talked to God and God told him to go to Horeb and there to "smite the rock and there shall water come out of it." Moses carried the people to Horeb and although he became angry and took credit for the great miracle of water God caused it to come out anyway. When there stomachs were filled the people looked back and responded in kind "Thank God for the Rock!"

When David often found himself in trouble he retreated to the rocks and hills of his homeland for safety. He wrote countless Psalms he which he said he would run to "the rock that is higher than I." In the 121 Psalms he declared: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from which cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made the heaven and the earth." When troubles come your way its good to know that you have the rock.

Israel drank from the rock and David hid in the rocks, but today brothers and sisters I'm glad that we can stand on the rock of salvation and not be moved.

Jesus told Peter that "thou art Peter and upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Which means that come hell or high water the church will stand because it stands on the rock.

Those who are here today can remember times when this church experienced difficulties. There were times when it looked as if the road was dark, but yet today the church still stands,because it is built on the rock.

No matter what comes your way, stick with the church.!

No matter how strong the opposition, stick with the church!

No matter how tempted you are to leave, stick with the church!

Stick with the church because God' blessing is upon it. If you stick with the church you there will be:

—Answers to spiritual questions
—Defeat for your demons
—Help in carrying your burdens
—Victory rather than defeat
—Stability in your crises
—Freshness in your testimony
—Depth in your devotion
—Power in your prayer

The church has survived the crusades and dark ages!

The church has survived civil wars and depression because it has the rock!

Every Christian should see to it that you have the rock, because the rock can open doors for you.

I'm reminded of the traveler who moved from city to city without ever carrying money for food. When asked why the traveler took out a large palm sized rock from his pocket and said this rock feeds him three times a day. Puzzled a friend watched as he knocked on the first door he encountered. "Madam would you give me food" he asked but "no" was his response "My cupboard's are bare and I have no food in my house." As the woman was closing the door he took out his rock and said I want to show you how to make rock soup. Her curiosity aroused the woman invited the

man in and asked for his recipe. He asked for a pot of water which she prepared. Then he asked for spices and a few vegetables which she found a prepared. Then he said the recipe called for a little meat and some potatoes too. She quickly added those to the brew. After it had boiled for a while he took the rock from his pocket and washed it clean. Then ever so gently he put the rock in the pot. They talked for about an hour until she poured the both of them a big bowl of soup. She went outside and invited his friend in as well and they all were amazed at this great tasting food. Upon leaving he scoop up his rock, washed it and put it back in his pocket. Outside he looked at his friend and said "She said there was no food, but thank God for the Rock!"

I don't know about you today, but every day I say "Thank God for the Rock!"

He wakes me up in the morning and he lies me down at night, "Thank God for the rock!"

This rock is Jesus, he is the one. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

Thank God for the Rock!

Thank God for the Rock!

No. 363-Revival, Communion

Hung Up For Our Hangups

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 20, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Introduction

What's your hangup? There are two ways to describe hangups. First a hangup can be described as preoccupation or keen sensitivity to a particular persuasion. In the colloquial, it is often called a "thing." Some people have a "thing" about wearing certain colors, making their bed in a certain fashion, wearing stylish clothing, dating people of a certain color, or driving certain kinds of cars.

Some have a "thing" about tidiness, efficiency, cleanliness and a wide range of ideals that range from the simple to the sublime.

This preoccupation even involves political thought, and philosophies of life as people develop a "thing" about Democrats or a "thing" about Republicans. Their philosophy is often prefaced with the phrase "My thing". An expression of individualism is often called doing "your own thing." In this sense hangups are not bad or good they are just expressions of individual taste.

There is a second kind of hangup.

This kind of hangup refers to acts or thoughts that obstruct the smooth flow of our lives. These hangups destroy rather than build, confuse rather than explain and contribute to failure rather than success. These are the kind of hangups that snag us and force us off the right course in life. This kind of hangup can have a destructive effect upon our lives, especially if we cannot come to grips with its impact.

Sometimes our hangups cause us to transgress God's law. It is at these times that our hangups become spiritually dangerous.

When our hangups push us across that invisible line that separates right from wrong we draw the scorn of heaven and lean toward disfavor with God.

As Christians we have we have some "good" hangups. We are hungup on loving God and our fellowman. We are hungup on the goodness of God. We are always grateful for Jesus who considered our helpless state and allowed

himself to be hungup for our "bad" hangups that we may enjoy the benefits of everlasting life. Because he was hung up, we are caught up, wrapped up and tangled up in the faith every day of our lives.

Exposition

This text was written several hundred years before the actions it depicts every happened. It was written by Isaiah, under the inspiration of God, to paint a prophetic picture of the nature of the life and suffering of Christ. Isaiah himself has generally been regarded as the prophet of Jerusalem. Born in the year King Uzziah died, he continued to urge Judah to repent or face the oncoming vengeance of God.

The vengeance came 150 years after he spoke these warnings as the nation of Babylon destroyed the great city, partly because of its sinful living. Isaiah himself was punished for his morbid predictions and was tied between two planks and sawn in half.

This text paints a picture of Christ suffering for our sins. Although it does not mention Christ by name, there is no other person in history that so fully met the requirements of this prophecy from its very beginning at verse one with a suggestion that he would grow up among men as a tender plant in dry ground (v1)to its conclusion at verse 12 with his crucifixion on the cross between two thieves. (v12) It continues with the notation that he was despised and rejected among men who were ashamed to own him. (v3)

The reasons for his suffering are listed beginning at verse 4. He was afflicted for our: grief, sorrow, transgressions, and iniquities. The words "grief" and "sorrow" might suggest to some that Christ was crucified because of our sadness. But the Hebrew term for griefs,"choliy" (Khal-ee), also means bodily pain. In the same sense the Hebrew term for sorrows is "makobah" (mak-o-baw) means both sadness of spirit and physical pain.

The words transgressions and iniquities in this text both refer to the sins of mankind. Isaiah therefore projects that Christ withstood physical pain originally intended for us because of our sins. In that all men are like sheep and have gone astray, the crucifixion of Christ was one universal sacrifice for the common sins of all. In essence, he was hung up for our hangups.

Hungup on Hangups

Today there are many people who are hungup on their hangups. They have difficulty overcoming lifestyles that put them at odds with Christ. Christ met the rich young ruler who would have been saved were it not for his hangup about his power and position.

Solomon, with all of his wisdom had a hangup about women and collected 300 wives and seven hundred girl friends over the course of his life.

Jezebel had a hangup about power and dominance and acted to destroy anyone who got in her way.

The wise fool had a hangup about accumulating possessions and tore down his barn to build bigger barns only to the master ask the question:" What doth it profit a man to gain to the whole world and lose his own soul."

Like these biblical examples, many today who have spiritual hangups that are keeping them from living the Christian life. Some have had bad experiences in the past and have chosen to live outside of Christ. Some are more concerned with the opinions of their friends than they are the Lord, so they refuse to accept Christ because they are ashamed.

There are some who simply do not believe there is a God, and if they do accept his existence do not believe that their obedience and worship is necessary to gain his favor. Then there is the final set of people who are caught up so tightly in their lives outside of Christ that they have little time or interest in salvation.

These four hangups have hungup generations of people but today I suggest that it is time for us to hangout the hangups. If anything stands between us and the Lord we should get rid of it. The scriptures teach that if our eye gets in the way we should pluck it out, because it is better to have one eye and be saved and have both eyes and be lost.

In the rural areas people still use the old fashion method of washing and drying clothes. Clothes lines and clothes pins are used to hang out the wash. Today maybe we need to take our sins to Jesus and let him wash them in his blood and hang them out to receive the presence of the Son held tightly in place by the clothes pins of faith and grace.

1 Corinthians 6:9 gives us a clear listing of some hangups we should rub out and washout so we can hang them out: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor

idolaters, nor adulterers nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, nor covetous, drunkards or revilers or extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." We need to hang out our hangups once and for all.

Hung Up For Our Hangups

But there is a unique truth about hanging out clothes, that is just like our faith and that is: that you don't hang out dirty clothes, but only those that have been washed and rinsed and are ready for the sun.

How can you wash and clean the sins of men?

If it were simply dirty clothes we were talking about we could wash it with Tide, New Blue Cheer or Oxydol.

If there were stains we could "Shout it out." But when it's not clothes but souls that concern us, what can cleanse the souls of men.

I heard a song writer ask: "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the Blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus took the penalty for my sins out on Calvary. Sin gave me a:

--Burden but I'm glad that Jesus gave me a blessing!
--Rain but I'm glad that Jesus gave me sunshine!
--Weakness but I'm glad that Jesus gave me strength!
--Miseries but Jesus gave me Miracles
--Foolishness but Jesus gave me Wisdom
--Darkness but Jesus gave me the Light
--Cares but Jesus gave me comfort
--Losses but Jesus gave me the victory
--Sadness but Jesus gave me unspeakable joy

When Jesus died on Calvary what he told heaven is "today is Heaven's wash day. Bring me you dirty spiritual laundry and dip in the cleansing flow".

No wonder the song writer declares: "There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain."

When Jesus died on Calvary he washed out our:

--Failures and hung them out!
--Short comings and hung them out!
--Mistakes and hung them out!
--Misunderstandings and hung them out!
--Bad judgements and hung them out!

I heard Isaiah say he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace is upon him.

After hanging out our sins on the line of salvation I heard Jesus voice ring across the heavens' "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.!"

I'm so glad that Jesus lifted me!
Satan had me bound but Jesus lifted me!
I'm glad!
I'm glad!
I'm glad that Jesus lifted me!

No. 362-Revival

High Rollers At The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 13, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And they crucified him, parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Matt. 27:35

Introduction

How often do you take chances? Americans are fascinated with the prospect of gaining something for nothing and indulge in a wide range of speculative ventures from the stock market to street corner dice games. We enjoy taking chances!

In 1865 Mark Twain wrote a story called the "Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" in which he described a character that was a betting man. He fact he'd bet so much that if he saw two birds sitting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly away first. In the depression era Black people devised ghetto lotteries call the "numbers" and many placed their hopes on hitting the right number as they used every number they could think of from numbers in the bible to telephone numbers to hit the jackpot.

They put Blacks in jail then, but today the government does the same thing, under the guise of supporting a good cause.

Today people bet on horses and dogs that race, chickens that fight, rats that run, frogs that jump, football, basketball, fights and wrestling matches. We bet on who will win, who will lose and how much they will lose by. Churches promote bingo, clubs promote raffles and governments promote casino gambling as a way of raising revenue. We enjoy taking chances!

While there are many people who take chances with their money, there are some who are taking chances with their souls. These are the ones who put off making a change in their lives until another time. They take a chance that they have time. They play Russian Roulette with their souls and gamble that they can make a change before their time ends.

As Christians we recognize that God has given us two chances. Most of us botched up our first chance taking chances. We are happy though because God gave us a second chance, which was a sure thing. Now we sing with great joy: "Follow Jesus, take no chance in getting lost" because we know our salvation is secure.

Exposition

This text considers the soldiers at the cross of Jesus as they cast lots to decide who would receive his robe. Traditionally, it has been thought that the soldiers gambled for the robe in the sense of modern explanations of "shooting dice." Howver, casting lots had a different, almost spiritual, meaning in biblical times even for those who were not Christians.

There were three ways that the ancients sought to learn the will of the gods, through: dreams, prophets and the casting of lots. It was believed that whenever God spoke to man it would be revealed in his dreams as with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue; or through prophets, such as Daniel and others who were used as instruments to send a message to mankind. The way final God spoke was through the casting of lots. The highpriests carried a special set of lots called Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30) which they used to ask God's will on difficult matters.

When they sought to identify criminals both the Gentiles and the Jews had a practice of casting lots to consult the gods.Jonah tried to hide on a Phoenecian ship and when the storm broke out they cast lots to identify the person who caused the storm. Lots were cast to make appointments. Many times the ancients have cast lots to learn the will of God regarding appointments. When a vacancy was created among the apostles because of the suicide and treason of Judas, they prayed and cast lots to choose Matthias the newest member (Acts 1:26). Lots were used to divide property. When Israel came into the promised land Joshua cast lots by divine order to decide how the promised land would be divided among the tribes (Jos. 13:6)

The soldiers at the cross, one of whom had expressed his faith that Jesus was the Son of God, wanted his robe. They cast lots to determine the will of the gods as to ownership.

Taking Chances

How can you discover God's will for your life? Is it as simple as a roll of the dice, consulting your horoscope or a palm readers projection of your fortune? When Israel wanted to know the will of god they prayed and cast lots. Today people are rolling the dice of fate but it is not to ask God's advice. Many are staking their futures on the chance that they can live recklessly but still straigten up in time to gain God's favor.

Those who try to live outside of Christ take a terrible chance with their souls. They gamble with the devil without considering that he always plays with loaded dice, stacked decks, and marked cards. Those who cheat on their husbands or wives take a chance that they will not be caught. Those who steal from supermarkets, buy hot merchandise, or give a false witness against their neighbor take chances. Those who choose to ignore the teachings of the savior about the reality of hell's fire, take a chance. Those who choose to believe that the bible has been tampered with and that its truths are questionable, take a terrible chance with their souls.

Then there are those who are waiting until they have had all the "fun" they can have before they give their lives to God. These are the ones who say there is one more party, one more drink and one more fling I need to make before I come to Christ. They are like the eagle that saw a piece of meat floating ontop of a chunk of ice. The eagle swooped down and began to eat the piece of meat. He noticed that the chunk of ice was floating toward a water fall but the eagle did not fly away because he summized that "I have time." Little did he notice that the longer he sat, his talons became imbedded in the ice. Just as the ice began to go over the side, the mighty eagle tried to flex his wings only to learn that he was hopelessly stuck. He had waited too late. No wonder the songwriter then writes: "Don't wait too late before you get your household straight, the Lord is coming back real soon. If you hesitate it might just be too late, won't you be ready when Jesus comes."

Getting A Second Chance

The soldiers at the cross stood at the feet of the cross. They rolled dice to find out which of them would have his robe, but none of them wanted Jesus.

There are many who are taking a chance that they can make it without the Lord. But I heard a song writer declare: "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord. I can't even raise my hand without the Lord. I can't even say my prayers without the Lord!"

Somebody has taken a chance on the world but found that when they play poker with the devil they always get a losing hand. We need to be careful to avoid taking chances with sin. If we give sin a chance it will take your:

--Love and give you hate; Joy and give you sorrow

--Comfort and give you pain; Peace and give you confusion

--Hope and give you desperation; Virtue and give you vice

--Blessings and give you burdens; Light and give you darkness

--Friends and give you enemies; Life and give you death

If you have been taking chances but have somehow missed the mark, there is a way to get a second chance.

This second chance is not a gamble because the odds are all in your favor.

This second chance is not a speculation because you don't have to guess, you know what the end will be.

Romans 10:9 reminds us that: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

If you want a second chance come to Jesus!

A jailer found the lord at midnight and asked Paul and Silas what must I do to be saved. In the middle of the jail, that jailer received a second chance!

The woman at the well received a second chance and ran telling the world, come see a man who told me all I've ever done!

The blind man received a second chance and must have told the world in the words of Dr. Watts: "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was

lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see!"

When Jesus gives you a second chance he takes your:

--Anxiety and turns it into assurance! Blessed assurance Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine!

--Despair and turns it into hope!

--Sorrow and turns it into joy!

--Pride and turns it into humility!

--Frustration and turns it into patience

--Sins and washes them away

--Despisements and turns them into love!

No wonder the song writer could declare: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the water lifted me now safe I am I"

Love lifted me! When nothing else could help Love lifted Me!

We have a second chance because Jesus took our failed first chance and carried it to calvary!

I'm glad that God gave me a second chance!

No. 361-Men's Day

God's Mountain Men

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Piney Grove Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 6, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Now therefore give me this mountain.." Joshua 14:12

Introduction

What do you think of when you think of mountain men? The first images that usually come to mind are those rough and rugged looking characters we have read about in American Folklore. These were such men as Grizzly Adams and Jeremiah Johnson. They were rugged men who spent their entire lives living in the mountains. They learned to survive in the mountains and to adjust their lifestyles to the peculiar demands of the mountain.

In biblical times mountain men were common. Entire clans lived in the mountains. It was not unusual for men to leave their homes for days as they climbed mountains to herd sheep, pitch their tents or just search them out of curosity. Mountains were often scaled to make sacrifices. They were familiar sites of worship. Sometimes the people that lived on the mountains were safer than those on the ground, because the mountain provided them with protection from enemies. In biblical times, therefore, Mountain men were common.

Today, there are not many mountain men left, especially of the type of Grizzly Adams. They are a rare breed that has diminished in number with every generation. As modern technology takes over the desire and skills for mountain living have also deminished. If you can find a mountain man today, he will be a rarity.

While there may not be many mountain men today in the physical sense, if mountains represent the obstacles and troubles that we face in life, God still has mountain men. For every mountain there is a mountain man. For every trouble, God has a solution. For every problem God has a solution.

As Christians we are faced with many obstacles in life. Sometimes these obstacles seem very difficult. We should remember, however, that no matter what mountain we face, God has a man for every mountain who is able to lead to a great victory in his name.

Exposition

This text considers Caleb as he stakes a claim for a piece of ground that was promised

him when he was young. The Israelites, now having passed over Jordan were in the process of dividing up the land. As each tribe was given its particular stake in the promised land Caleb, although at the age of 85, insisted on being given a mountain for his inheritance.

The younger men thought it was foolish of him to request a mountain at his age because it would be difficult to settle and would require much more energy and strength than Caleb would have to give. However, Caleb was not intimidated by the size of the challenge he simply insisted repeatedly "Give me this mountain."

His request was a statement of his personal faith in God's ability to deliver, protect and save him from harm. The size of the challenge did not bother him. He wanted to claim that which was rightfully his.

Three Mountains for Black Men

In the spirit of this text Black men today face three peculiar mountains which represent the challenge before our people. Like Caleb, we should not run from the size of the mountains but rather we should claim them and tame them so they can be used to our advantage:

Moses-Mountain of Survival

Moses was a great Mountain man. On Mount Sinai he talked to God and received instructions about challenging the physical and institutional slavery of the Jewish people. It was a challenge because Egypt was a great power of the world. Its military arsenals were packed and its might chariots, 600 in number, had been used to destroy many armies. Moses went to free them from slavery and bring them to the promised land. That was a tall order for one stuttering man and his brother to accomplish. But despite the difficulty of this problem, God had a man. If there is a mountain, God has a man!

We face a similar mountain. Our race is the subject of national genocide attempts by our government. Drs. Nathan and Julia Hare have detailed in their book "The Endangered Black Family" how the government is working to destroy the Black man through a plethora of institutionlized steps that will lead to smaller Black families, sterlization of Black women, and denigration of the Black man. The fact that it is a government plan may surprise many, but it is not unique. When Pharaoh considered the growing size of the Jews he set out on a course to destroy all the boys to rid them of future warriors. Herod tried to kill all Jewish children under two years old to stop the rise of the prophesied king. So there is biblical precedent for such practices. Today, Black men are victim of a system that is designed to destroy them through unemployment, ignorance, jail, miseducation.

Aware of this delimma our forefathers devised many plans to counter the plots to destroy our people. They worked to develop the boys and promoted boy building programs like Boy Scouts, Junior Laymen, and other leadership activities such as

Boys State and other activities. For the last 25 years or so, most churches have allowed their boy building elements to diminish. Boy Scouting only exists in Black churches. Junior Laymen, Shepherd Boys Trail Blazer, Ambassadors or other leadership programs are none existent in many of our churches. These are the same churches that promote finer womanhood through Young Matrons, Mission Circles, Red Circles and Young Women's Auxiliaries. Today there are many young women's groups but little effort or money is spent on the men.

This is a great mountain we face. Countering the conspiracy to destroy our men folk is a great challenge but we should rise to the challenge and resolve like Caleb "Give me this mountain!"

Noah-Mountain of Family Building

After the flood Noah found that the ark he rode for almost a year had settled on Mount Aaarat. With the flood waters gone along with the population of the earth, Noah found himself facing the challenge of becoming a mountain man.

With his small family he repopulated the world and kept his family focused on God.

The destruction of the Black family is a mountain for our people. Central to that destruction is the destortion of the image of the Black man. The Black man is presented to the world as a shiftless, lazy, ignorant, sex machine that is incapable of making decisions, or long term commitments. That image, presented to a generation of boys serves as their role model. Gradually, the boys grow up to imitate their mothers because mothers are the visible role model that are present for them to see. They grow up looking for a woman to pay their bills, take care of them and provide for them. They perceive religion as the woman's role. As children, they often so mother go to church and read the bible and in their minds they accepted religion and faith as something peculiar to women.

Complicating the problem is the message that many women are giving their daughters. It is best characterized as the "Parachute" mentality. This is the suggestion that women should go into relationships prepared to bailout. Some mothers tell their daughters to "keep you some money on the side and don't let him know what you have." Combined with other advice, some mothers contribute the destruction of the future family by the very advice that give.

The destruction of the Black family, especially as it relates to our men folk is a mountain. But if there is a mountain, God has a man. Today men must rise to the occasion and reclaim our families and encourage our boys to emulate the best among as they provide for their families. It is a great mountain, but it is not too great for mountain men.

Elijah-Reclaim Past Glory

Elijah was a mountain man. He was a tower of strength as he challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. His victory there was unquestioned and his influence

was broad. But soon after Mt. Carmel, Elijah lost his confidence and hid from the king under a Juniper tree. God sustained him for a while in his retreat but soon God had to cut off his food supply to prod him to move again.

Often we suffer the same delimma. Black men who have survived slavery and depressions and wars in mountain top experiences are now under Juniper trees in retreat. We who built the periods in Egypt and pioneer the intricacies of medicine, embalming and mathematics, have given into the myth that we cannot succeed.

Our challenge is to reclaim our lost glory and come back to the mountain. If there is a mountain, God has a man!

Jesus and Mount Calvary

But there is one final mountain man that every Black man should consider and that is Jesus, the ultimate mountain man. Jesus was a mountain man!

When he began his ministry he went in the wilderness for 40 days and night and Satan carried him into a high mountain and showed him the world, but his response was "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

When the world pressed him too hard he often went up into mountains to pray.

One evening 2,000 years ago he climbed a mountain called Calvary carrying the sins of the world on his shoulder. The next morning he rose from the grave and 40 days later he stood on a mountain and ascended to his father.

The Lord needs some mountain men today!

He needs men who will claim the challenge and will rise to the occasion.

Will you be among those who respond:

"If the Lord needs somebody, send me!"

No. 360-Revival

Let The Good Times Roll

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 6, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die .." Isaiah 22:13

Introduction

What is a good time? It means different things to different people. If you think not, consider the boy and the grandfather that went to the amusement park together. They road the roller coaster around curves and peaks. Next they twisted and turned in barrels, splashed into ponds of water, bumped cars, dropped 200 feet in parachutes, screamed and yelled as a swinging pirate ship soared 100 feet in the air, gasped for breath on the double ferris wheel and were flattened in space age style flying saucer. As the day ended the boy told his grandfather who was aching from head to foot, "Boy we had a good time, didn't we grandpa?" The grandfather dragged himself to a nearby bench and eased himself down for the first time that day. When he was off his feet the grandfather felt the comfort of the bench and said "Now that's a good time!"

Whether an activity is a "good time" is relative. One man's good time is another man's misery. One thinks fishing is a good time and another thinks its a waste of time. One thinks spending an evening skating is a good time. While another thinks skating through the mall and spending is a good time.

There are some who speed through life in their search for new thrills and chills. They relentlessly hunt the "goodtimes" and live as if there will be no tomorrow. Often they squander their health, wealth and opportunity in their search for the "goodtimes."

Christians know there will be a tomorrow. We live temperate lives of moderation because we may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. We live the "good life" and experience the "good times" every day of our life. When we see our family, home, and personal life as a Christian we thank God for the "Goodtimes."

Exposition

This text considers Isaiah as he spoke to Judah about its sinful lifestyle despite dangerous times. His challenge to Judah was to turn to God, but instead the people chose to lead lives of revelry and Godliness.

Judah had watched for months as the approaching armies of the Assyrians surrounded the city of Jerusalem. The combined armies of Assyria assisted by the Medes and Persians had converged on the city of Jerusalem and had surrounded the city. People ran to the rooftops to behold the site of the invading armies camped in the horizon. They had depended heavily on their alliances with the Black nations of Egypt and Ethiopia to help them, but received word that both of their allies had been destroyed by the armies of Sennacherib (Isaiah 20). They knew that there was no help coming. With no way to escape, many people in Jerusalem assumed that they had no hope of escape and no future. Instead of turning to God they began to party, feast and have a general good time. As Isaiah walked the streets urging them to turn to God for he could deliver them, the people ignored him and danced and partied for days. The attitude they assumed is reflected in this text verse: "Eat and drink for tommorrow we die!"

Their actions were based on their conclusion that life, as they saw it, was hopeless. The only recourse they saw available to them was to "have a good time now because there won't be another chance to enjoy life later". However, God held them to account for their actions. In verse 14 God told them, through the lips of Isaiah, that their sins would be held against them until their dying day. The large armies were soon after scattered by the hand of God without the lost of a single Jewish soldier in battle. When the enemy fled the people saw the foolishness of their ways and were embarassed. They ignored God and focused on themselves and fell into sin.

Living Without Hope

Today there are millions of people who share the sentiments of the people of Judah.

They witness the frustrations of this life and conclude that it is hopeless to anticipate anything but disaster for the future. They reason that if we escape the threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union that we will be destroyed by AIDS, which is finding its way into the bloodstreams of people who have never lived a deviant lifestyle. They see starvation disease, homelessness, pollution, and environmental disasters all around. Those unmoved by those prospects see the earth's destruction as the ozone layer that protects it from the sun is destroyed daily by our insistence on using products that weaken this protective shield.

Still others are frustrated at their own inability to pull things together. When unemployment hits, bills increase, personal problems multiply and trouble seems to surround them on every side they conclude that it is hopeless to struggle because destruction is coming. In this situation they respond Like the South Louisiana Cajuns who party constantly saying: "Let the Good Times Roll!" South Louisiana is known around the world for its parties with the biggest coming each year on Fat Tuesday as they get as drunk as they can get in wild parties that last until the midnight bell rings in Ash Wednesday.

There are some today whose lifestyle suggest that they have adopted this attitude

about life. They seek the goodtimes. These are those who run from party to party, bar to bar and even many travel miles to attend the next blowout. They have adopted the Budweiser philosophy of life "You only go through life once, so grab all the gusto you can!"

This is the attitude that many have assumed: "Let the Good times roll!"

—I'm young, I have plenty of time, let the good times roll!

—Why deny myself the pleasures of life, let the good times roll!

When I let the goodtimes roll:

—The lights will burn brighter, and the music will play louder.

—Laughter will ring out harder and the excitement will raise higher

The voice of God cries out "come home" but it cannot be heard because the world is chillin', illn' and yelling "Pump up the volume!" Let the goodtimes roll!

Despite the wantomness of our times the word of God still cries out: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world love of the father is not in him..." (1 John 2:15)

The goodtimes that this world offers seem right to man but God still frowns on it. Proverbs 14:12-14 says "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.."

The Goodtimes

The unsaved seek the goodtime because they are frustrated and hopeless, but the saved live a good life because they are just the opposite. Instead of being hopeless, those who know the Lord have hope.

Those who know the Lord don't live as if there will be no tommorow because we know there is a bright side somewhere. We have the assurance that despite the difficulties of the moment that "our God is able to deliver us."

A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father "give me my portion of the inheritance." Once given his inheritance he went to a far country and enjoyed what he thought were the goodtimes.

But as he spent his money and used up his high priced popularity he found that without God his:

—Hope turns into despair and Joy turns into sorrow

—Love turns to lust and delight turns into disappointment

—Faith turns futility and Confidence turns into confusion

—Comfort turns into calamity and Virtue turns into vice

—Blessings turn into cursings and beauty turns into ugliness

He came to his father declaring: "I wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home, too long the paths of sin I've trod, now I'm coming home"

When a lost soul comes back to God there is a celebration in heaven. Like the father who told his servants to kill the fatted calf and bring out his best robe, there is a

celebration on the way!

If you want to have a "real" good time then you need to Jesus. He's planning a good time for all the Saint's and his invitation is universal "any man who will, let him come!"

When you let the goodtimes roll it makes you:

—A Loser, but Jesus can make you a winner

—A Slave, but Jesus can set you free

—Poor, but Jesus can give you an abundant life.

I don't know about you but I've found out there is nobody like Jesus! He is a:

—A table that can never be bare

—A fountain that can never run dry

—A rock that can never be moved

—A shield that can never be penetrated

—A Blessing that can never be cut off

—A Way that can be made out of no way

I'm glad that he died for my sins and rose early Sunday morning.

I'm glad that he's coming back again!

When he comes back to call us to Glory, I want to be there to hear the heavenly command "Let the good times roll!"

What a time!

What a time!

What a Time!

No. 359-Youth

A More Excellent Way

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
September 22, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "Oh Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Psalms 8."But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." 1 Cor. 12:31

Introduction

How many ways can you say great? Every generation has its way of describing its best. They range from the obvious to the ludicrous.There was a time when students called stylish clothing "boss." If it really stood out and caught everyone's eye it was "out of sight." An idea or song that was unusually stimulating was "heavy." "Cool" described young men who were abreast of the times. Those who really had it together were "groovy." If a party, social gathering or any type of entertainment was a success it was "live."

Recently a movie caught the imagination of many young people and introduced a new terminology. The movie, Bill and Ted's Excellent adventure, found the stars describing every stimulating experience as either "Excellent","Bodacious", or "Radical." The expression "excellent" spread like wild fire. It is still being used by young people as a synonym for everything that is heavy, live, out of sight, boss, groovy and cool. If it's great it's excellent!

What term can we use to describe the greatness of God?

How can we describe the Christian life style to others who may not know it? The Bible gives us one answer for both questions: "Excellent!" Psalms 8 expresses the excellency of God. 1 Corinthians 12:31 describes the Christian life as "more excellent" than an other.

As Christians we know that there is but one way to describe our God and our experience in the faith. It is rewarding, fulfilling and satisfying. In short, the Christian life is just "Excellent!"

Exposition

These two text verses express the greatness of God.

They also point to the greatness of following God and exercising the gifts we have as believers in Christ Jesus.

The greatness of God enthralled David.

He observed his handiwork and was amazed at his omnipotence. He was awed by his power and marveled at why God would even consider man to play such an important role in the universal order. In comparison to the immensity of the universe man appears to play such a small part, but God chose to make him "a little lower than the angels."

As David considered God's greatness he could only say "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him.." With his analysis of God's work complete David concluded that God is simply amazing and in both verse 1 and verse 9 of Psalms eight declared "How excellent is thy name in all the earth."

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, talked them about the gifts of the spirit and how they empower Christians to live a profitable and fruitful life. Whatever gifts Christians we have come from God. While there are many talents and endowments that each person has, he listed several spiritual gifts that should be sought by Christians. Among them are: Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, and tongues. These gifts help us to glorify his name. He urged Christians to strive to attain God's best gifts, apply them and live more abundantly.

Paul's teaching about the Christian lifestyle is simple. It is a life of love, happiness and respect for an all powerful God.

It is one that acknowledges the excellency of God's power.

It is also a lifestyle that prompts all of us to seek the best gifts of the spirit that we can acquire to help us to live the Christian life. Doing so will help us to find what he described as a "A More Excellent way."

Striving For Excellence

Among the many challenges that youth face today is the challenge to pursue excellence. Excellence is a level of achievement that is above just passing, barely getting by or "getting it over with." Excellence is a thirst to climb higher and to do better despite setbacks or obstacles in your way.

Often, many youth have only inklings of their potential. They don't know what they want to be or where they want to go. Repeated failures have frustrated some in their attempts to strive for higher goals.

History tells the story of a little boy who wanted to achieve excellence and never gave up, although others gave up on him. This little boy was slow to learn. He was slow in everything including learning to talk that his parents thought he was abnormal. In school his teachers called him a misfit and categorized him as studen doomed to failure. The boy kept trying, with almost no help from anyone he pulled from energies on the inside and tried continuously to achieve excellence. After finally graduating from high school he tried to enter college and flunked his first entrance exam. A year later this young man tried again and passed. From that point forward is history. He went on to unveil his theory of relativity, and give the formulas that help create the atomic bomb. He became known as the world's greatest scientist. His name was Albert Einstein. He accepted the challenge of excellence.

There are thousands of people like professor Einstein.

Joseph Johnson, publisher of Ebony magazine faced unbelievable odds when he set out to start his first magazine but he strived to achieve excellence.

Frederick Douglas could neither read nor write as a slave but became a statesman, ambassador and advisor to presidents.

Wilma Rudolph came from a poor background and overcame racial prejudice, and poverty to become a famous Olympic champion.

The one common denominator of all of those who succeeded in life was their thirst for excellence. They wanted to be the best.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, urged them to consider the many gifts that God made available to them and seek the "best gifts." In a similar sense the message to young people today is the same: seek to use your gift to be the best. Aspire to excellence! Whether that talent is singing, art, creative dance, music, athletics, academics, writing or the dexterity of manual skills, strive to achieve the best with whatever talents who have.

Our Gifts Come from An Excellent God

Christians aspire to excellence because, more than other people, we know what we have, comes from an excellent God. Our God expects our best. He does not want more from us than we are able to give, only our best. That's why the song writer declares "Give of your best to the master, give of the strength of your youth, clad in salvation's full armor, join in the battle for truth."

God knows what you are able to do, but he won't except anything less than your best. Cain and Abel both brought sacrifices before the Lord. God accepted Abel's sacrifice and Cain became jealous and killed him. God wanted Cain's best too, but what he got was mediocrity. Likewise there are many students on campus and in the community that are jealous of the efforts of Christian youth

to achieve. Like Abel, you are striving to give God a living sacrifice, but others are jealous. Many call you names because you don't wear an earring in your ear, drink, smoke dope, curse or participate in the foolishness that sometimes takes place in the classroom. If you do well in class their jealously makes them call you a variety of names that all mean "nerd","square", or "oddball."

To you who are striving to give God your best, and become frustrated along the way, we remind you to "be not dismayed, whateve' betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. Through every day, over all the way, he will take care of you."

He will take care of us because "we are our heavenly father's children ...and he knows just how much we can bear."

When the world:

--Kicks you down, the excellence of God will, pick you up!

--Ties your hands, the excellence of God will, set you free!

--Tries to defeat you, the excellence of God, will give you victory! victory!

--Only gives your criticism, the excellence of God, will give you praise!

--Doubt, the excellence of God will give you confidence!

When the world talks about your roach stompers and laughs because you can't fly high in "Air Jordans" tell them "I serve an excellent God who told me I don't need Air Jordans to fly high because 'One glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away!"

I don't know about you but I've decided to give God my best because he is the epitome of excellence!

The song writer declared: "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands have provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

The Lord has been good to us. There is no:

--Valley that's too wide for him to cross, he's just excellent!

--Road that's too rough for him to walk, he's just excellent!

--Burden that's too heavy for him to bear, he's just excellent!

--Storm that's too mighty for him to control, he's just excellent!

He's so excellent that there is:

--Problem he can't solve, or Night he can't turn into day!

--Question he can't answer, or lost joy he can't restore!

--Mountain so big that he can't move it, or battle he can't win!

No wonder the song writer declares: "Oh Lord my God, as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands hath made. I see the stars. I hear the rolling the thunder and marvel at the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my savior God to thee, how great thou art! How great thou art!"

Many people call his greatness by many names. Some call it wonderful, others call it amazing. Some call it unbelievable others call it miraculous. But those who know the Lord call him Jesus!

When you say Jesus, it means help in a time of trouble

When you say Jesus, it means strength in a time of weakness

When you say Jesus, it means joy in a time of sorrow!

"Oh Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

You're so excellent that one evening you took an old rugged cross and went to Calvary!

You're so excellent that you died for my sins!

You're so excellent that early Sunday morning you rose up with all power in your hands!

No. 358-Promotion,Graduation,Youth

Passing On Condition

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 28, 1976

SCRIPTURE:"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and arrayed him in vestures of linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.." Genesis 41:41-42

Introduction

How do you get from one grade to another in school? If you ask some students they will say do nothing, and you will pass "on condition" What's "pass on condition?" That's when you get promoted because you are too old or too well known to stay in the same grade.
Social promotion is a common occurence in modern public schools. Some youth spend an entire year in a grade level and fail every step of the way. However, at the end of the year they are promoted to the next grade right along with other students who have worked hard. Others are promoted because of their social status. It would be unthinkable for the children of prominent families to repeat a grade so they are passed on "social" conditions.

Crowded conditions also prompt social promotion. If students stay in the same grade too long there is no room for others who are coming into that same grade level. Some schools have reported students as old as 17 years on in the seventh grade. Social promotion is used to eliminate what educators call the middle school bottle neck. Resultingly these changes have contributed to an attitude among many youth that they need not work because they will pass on condition.

What does it take to promote in the Kingdom of God? What is required to receive the blessing of heaven? Some think the Kingdom of God is like school, all we have to do is be present and promote on the condition of age. Some youth see the advancements that make from one class to another in Sunday School, without a test or a recitation and think that gaining entry into the kingdom of God is obtainable "on condition" that of their preseverance.

As Christians, we know that our Salvation is free, but it is not available without certain conditions. The most prominent of those conditions is that we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and repent for our sins.

Exposition

This text considers Joseph, a favorite son of Jacob. As a youth Joseph had dreams of being in high places of authority and power. His dream pictured his brothers and humbling themselves before him. He often told his brothers about his dreams and it angered them. They devised a plan to kill him and end his persistent talk about excelling over them. He was put into a pit and his brothers told his father that he was killed by a wild animal.

Joseph began a jaggered rise to success. Sometimes he rose sometimes he fell. In the pit Joseph reached a low point in his life. He was rejected by his brethern, alone and abandoned. But he was soon sold to some traveling merchants who carried him to Egypt. In Egypt he was promoted to head of a household's servants. He refused to compromise his integrity no matter how he was falsely accused of sexual improprieties and was jailed wrongly. He made a step up, then was knocked back.

In jail he rose to prominence as well. He was given charge over the other prisoners and so well liked that he was trusted beyond measure by the keeper of the prison because the keeper perceived that God was with Joseph. In prison he interpreted the dreams of fellow inmates and those dreams ultimately came true.

When one inmate he helped became free and was in the presence of the Pharoah, he told him about Joseph. He told of Joseph's amazing gift to interpret dreams and the King was so impressed with David's abilities that he was given a high place in the king. He was promoted from the dungeon to a palace in a moment.

The uniqueness of Joseph's rapid rise is that in each instance he did not ask for any promotions. He did not seek to rise high or to gain pominence, it came as a result of his work. He had proven himself to be a man that could be trusted to do a job well. He also was promoted because people, like the jailer, were able to see that God was working through him to do a great work and they went far beyond their normal responses to help him in the work.

What does it take to Pass?

What does it take to pass God's spiritual inspection? The example of Joseph suggests that today if we expect to pass it must be on the condition of our faith, service and dependence on God.

Joseph gave his all in every area of service. Although he was jailed for it, he gave his best while in the service of his master. When in jail he served so well that he was entrusted to lead other prisoners as a trustee. There is no place in God's service for those who would give God second best. Choir members who sing "somtimes" and ushers who rarely attend worship are but two examples of people who give lackluster service. God's needs our best service. If we pass inspection, it will be because we had faith and gave good service. James reminds every Christian that faith without works is dead.

Joseph depended heavily on God and so should we. Here was a young man who

was deluged by a mountain of setbacks. Thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and jailed unjustly. Everything seemed to go wrong for him. It appeared that he was failing on every hand. Yet, through it all he continued to count on God. He had faith in God and God came through for him. Likewise we should have faith in God, for it is such faith that helps us to endure hardships.

Every person endures hardships that often feel as great as those of Joseph, but we should all keep the faith. Through all of our trouble we should remember that people who maintain their virtue find that man will recognize it in the end and it will bring them honor. Without an abiding faith in God it will soon appear that your:

—Burdens outweigh your blessings
—Troubles outnumber your triumphs
—Sorrows out last your joys
—Perplexities out distance your peace
—Weaknesses Out Measure your strength
—Failures out range your successes
—Disappointments out live your delights

If you depend on the Lord you may be in the darkest pit but he will hear your cry!

You may in the loneliest jail, but he will hear the meditations of your heart and jail cells will open for you!

I heard a song writer declare: "We are our heavenly father's children and ...he knows, yes he knows, just how much we can bear!"

God Wants To Promote Us

I am convinced that God wants to promote someone today. He wants to elevate some to a new level of living, thinking and existing. He wants to promote someone from:

—Failure to success
—Being down to standing on their feet
—Going backward to walking forward
—Slipping in the dark to walking in the light
—Sadness into gladness
—Pity into Glory

God will promote you on condition that you believe in Jesus, confess your sins and repent, be baptized then go and sin no more.

I don't know about you but I think I want to pass God's inspection!

I want to move up a little higher every day and get closer to the promised land. No wonder the song writer declares: "I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day. Still praying as I'm onward ground, Lord plant my feet on higher ground!"

Higher! So high that the world can't do me no harm!

Higher! So high that I leave my troubles behind

Lord lift me up and let me stand, plant my feet on heaven's table land, A higher plane than I have found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground!

No. 357-Deacon Ordination

Holding Up Heavy Hands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 15, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Exodus 17:12

Introduction

How do you get the strength to continue when your load is heavy? Strength to bear the load is one great benefit of the Christian life. When it appears that we have exhausted our means God sends us a little help to bear the load. Often we are not aware of the source of that help when it comes, but inside we know all good things come from God.

The story of the widow woman's waving hand emphasizes this truth. It appears that a certain widow learned that king was giving audiences to his subjects and granting their request in a very unusual act of charity. The king announced that he would scan the audience and select from the raised hands subjects to hear and reward. The old lady waved her hand but being old and feeble was lost in the crowd and out of the sight of the king. As the day wore on the king rewarded hundreds of people but did not see the widows hand. She waved it from sun up until the evening closed. As the crowds began to disperse the king saw the widow woman still sitting by herself waving her hand. He asked how she was able to wave her hand so long. The woman responded: "In the morning I said 'Lord hold my hand, while I run this race." At noon I tired and said "Lord lift me up and let me stand.' But when the evening came I cried out "Father I stretch my hand to thee.' Every time I cried out, I got a little help holding up my hand." Her great faith impressed the king so much that he granted her request for food and shelter for the rest of her life.

In this life God has his way of helping us hold up our hands, heads and spirits until we realize the great blessings he has in store for us. If your burden seems unusually heavy, call out to God and he will answer. If it appears that all your efforts are in vain, just keep waving an optimistic hand, and the Lord will help you carry the Lord.

Exposition

Our text considers Moses in the wilderness as Israel begins the first of five wars it

would fight on the journey to the promised land. Moses, almost eighty years old, tried to lead the people to the promised land but complaints from Israel within and enemies without slowed his pace. In this text Moses encounters the Amalekites and Israel engages them in war. Perched atop a high mountain Moses held high his hands and his rod, a symbol of the presence of God. As long as Moses was able to hold his hands high the people, led by Joshua were victorious in battle. When his hands came down, Israel suffered losses.

Realizing that the fate of Israel depended heavily upon Moses' ability to hold high the rod of God, Aaron and Hur came to his side. They placed stones underneath them and held his hands high until Israel had completely won its victory.

Moses learned from this experience and Numbers 11:16 records how he selected seventy men to help him carry the burden of the people. These 70 men shared the same spirit and vision as Moses. God empowered them to help him lead the people. In a similar sense the Apostles, in Acts 6, appointed the first seven deacons, and laid hands on them. They consecrated them as men dedicated to the same spirit for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

Whether in the old or New Testament, God has provided for men of the same spirit to help hold up the hands of those who proclaim his word. In the Old Testament Moses held up the rod of deliverance. In the New Testament the Church holds high the cross of Jesus. In the old testament they fought as long as they could see the rod. In the new, every Saint wants to Jesus and the vision of hope. Those who help him, do a great work because "without a vision, the people perish."

The Deacon's Service

What is the role of the deacon? The deacon is a servant of God, the church, and his pastor. The Greek word diakonos means "servant" and accurately describes both the minister and the deacon. His service, like that of the first seven deacons, is to give the pastor relief from attention to details. This gives him more time to study, pray, and carry out the full vision that God has given him.

Moses tried to lead Israel without any help at the offset. He soon found his hands burdened by the immense details of leadership. He wisely decided that if the people were to advance much of his responsibility would have to be delegated to others. He was dealing with several hundred thousand people and selected seventy helpers to help him in carrying out the work. They were men who shared his spirit of loyalty to God and the vision of hope. The Apostles tried to operate the three divisions of the church by themselves and soon found that they needed help. They appointed seven men to help them in carrying out their responsibilities. Both old and New Testament helpers were designated to help the leaders carry out their responsibilities.

A certain backwood preacher gave his new deacon a package on the day of their ordination. It contained a worn out pair of shoes, a worn out bible, and a box of strike anywhere matches. Puzzled, the deacon called the pastor aside after the service asked the meaning of the gifts. The preacher responded, as an ordained servant of the

church your tenure will be judged in three areas: How many pair shoes you wear out visiting and serving the people, how you wear out your bible as you study and live by the word, and how much fire you bring to service.

Worn Shoes. Good deacons visit the membership regularly. They know each member assigned to them by name. They also guide the pastor to families that need or want his help in times of trouble or presence in time of celebration. Deacons wear out many pairs of shoes knocking on doors. They wear out many cars performing services for the membership. Before their tenure ends their shoes will tell the story.

Worn Prayer Books. Deacons are men who are spiritual. They support the worship of the church. They lead the church in worship in Sunday School, regular worship, prayer meeting, or whenever the church gathers to worship. The deacon seek's God divine guidance in matters in decision making and always seeks to do his will. Personally they do what they ask others to do. They receive tithes in worship, and show their faith by tithing themselves. They encourage family worship and lead by worshiping with their families. Deacons wants to do the will of God. For that reason the deacon is a bible student. He studies the word regularly and learns to rightly divide the word of truth. The worn out bibles and song books of deacons tell the story of the service.

Strike Anywhere Matches. In the simplest sense, deacons are also God's cheerleaders. They show the congregation how to sing praises to God with radiant faces. When its time to hear the word they are up front to encourage the preaching of the word. They are like strike anywhere matches, they are ready to light a fire for God anywhere, any time and any place.

However, you don't have to be a deacon to be on fire for the Lord. Anytime you:

—Listen to what is being said about him, its hard not to catch on fire.

—Observe the good the things the Lord has done for you, its hard not to catch on fire.

—Accept the great blessings that the Lord showers down on you, its hard not to catch on fire.

—Consider how good God has been to you, its hard not to catch on fire.

—Hear the the word of God declared, its hard not catch on fire.

Ezekiel said the word of God lights him up, like fire shut up his bones.

The old sisters sang a hymn when the spirit was high that said "If I can't say a word then I'll just wave my hand!"

Deacons Help The People See Jesus

Finally, brothers and Sisters the deacon does whatever is necessary to help the people see Jesus.

Moses held up the rod so that the people could see it and know that God was in their midst. When Moses hands got heavy they held up his hands, not so they could see Moses but so they could see the symbol of God's presence in his hand.

As long as Israel could see the Lord, they were able to keep on fighting. But when

they couldn't see the Lord, the lost every battle.

If the modern deacon has a task today, its to hold up the pastor's arms. He holds up his arms not so the people can see the greatness of the pastor, but so the people can hear the word and see Jesus. When there is confusion and trouble its because the people can't see Jesus. When doubt and misunderstanding rises to an all time high its because the people can't see Jesus.

When you can't see Jesus:

—Tranquility becomes trouble, Composure becomes sorrow

—Courage becomes fear, Boldness becomes retreat

—Fellowships are strained and Friendships are canceled.

—Suffering becomes punishment and Inspiration becomes desperation.

—Your song becomes empty words and your prayers become meaningless ritual.

The church is in a battle against Satan and sin. We shall rise the victors because we keep our eyes on the Lord. The song writer declares: "We are soldiers in the army, we've got to fight although we've got to cry. We've got to hold up the blood stained banner, we've got to hold up until we die."

We've got to lift up Jesus because Jesus said: "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

We've got to lift up Jesus because when we lift up Jesus there is:

—Light for those in darkness and Blessings for the cursed

—Glory for those in gloom and Victory for those are defeated

—Hope for those in despair and Joy for those in sorrow

—Strength for the weak, and Peace for those who are confused

—Healing for those who are sick, and Salvation for the Lost

Lift up Jesus so the world will know that he is the:

—Fountain of our joy, and Bread on our table

—Song of our midnight hour, Pilot of ship

—Answer for our questions, and solution to our problems

—Lawyer on our case, the doctor who never lost a patient

Lift up Jesus and show us how Jesus took an old rugged cross and turned it into a symbol of our salvation.

Lift up Jesus and tell the old story of his death on Calvary and how he rose early Sunday morning triumphant from the grave!

Lift up Jesus and let the world know that he lives!

He lives!

He lives!

No. 356-Preacher's Ordination

The Mailman's Mission

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Zion Springs Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 14, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:2

Introduction

Have you ever known a mail carrier? For many years the Black community considered the job of mail carrier a prestigious position. It was hard to get, paid well and provided good benefits. The first Blacks who became mail carriers were a source of pride for their neighbors and friends.

However well the job pays, being a mail carrier is a bit dangerous. There are vicious animals to consider such as dogs and other strange pets of their neighborhood. Weather conditions often make the mailman's job even harder. The post office motto: "Through wind, rain and snow, the mail must go" reads well but people really expect mail delivery, despite the weather. If its not dogs or the weather, then it is often the residents on the route that give the mail carrier his biggest headache. He is the bearer of good news and bad news. He is hugged and kissed when he brings good news and monthly checks. He is cursed and kicked when he delivers bad news, or the checks don't come.

The postal service has thousands of mail carriers who carry the mail in the backwoods on wagons, in swamps on boats and in Alaska on dog sleds. Wherever there are people, there is a mail carrier to serve them.

Did you know that God has a mailman? God is heaven's postmaster general and he has millions of mail carriers all over the world. These mail carriers are the ministers of the Gospel who, like the mail carrier has the job of delivering a message from heaven. Sometimes the message is encouraging and uplifting. Sometimes it reprimands us for the way we live our lives. The message, is not from the preacher, but from heaven.

As Christians, let's keep watch out for a message from heaven. Let us continue to praise the feet of them who bring us a word from the Lord, for this is truly a great work.

Exposition

This text considers the Apostle Paul as he writes a final letter of advice and support

to his Son in the ministry, Timothy. Paul wrote this letter while a Roman jail awaiting execution. He was arrested by the Roman government under Emperor Nero. Nero, had a reputation as a great builder and wanted to rebuild Rome to an even greater city. To justify the expense of the undertaking he sat fire to Rome and played his fiddle as it burned. He blamed the fire on the Christians. Paul, who had been released from an earlier confinement on charges brought by the Jews, was arrested again since he was the world leader of the Christian faith that was illegal in Rome.

From his jail cell, Paul told Timothy to: 1) Accept whatever donations given him for his work in the ministry because the laborer should be a partaker of the fruits (2:6). 2) Study the word that he correctly teach the truths of God. Come what may he is encouraged to "Study to shew thyself approved a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth." 3) Use personal discretion in living. Paul urged young Timothy to avoid the lusts of young men but to follow "righteousness, faith, peace with them that call on the Lord with a pure heart." (2:22)

In closing comments Paul reminded young Timothy that his final responsibility was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He encouraged Timothy to preach Jesus when the public wanted to hear it and when his truths become unpopular, outdated, or old fashioned, preach it "out of season." He told Timothy to preach because: "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (4:3-4).

Paul's encouragements to Timothy were clear and inspirational, but, without a doubt, they encouraged him to keep the faith and champion the cause of Christ.

Study The Word

The words that Paul wrote to Timothy are the same for any minister today. The minister is an ambassador for Christ, a man of God and defender of the faith. His obligation to God is to give God his best. Therefore, he should study the word.

The study of the word should not be restricted to sermon preparation alone, but should be a regular part of the prayer life of every pastor. Study aids, books and materials should be used to help in glean more truths from God's word. Such study will require considerable quality time alone with God. While most members are not aware of it, nearly every minute of the Sunday sermon reflects an hour of prayer, study and preparation. Young men in the gospel are encouraged to study the word that they may rightly divide the word of truth.

Exemplary In Deportment

Ministers are encouraged to avoid the lusts of the flesh. As ministers of the Gospel they will have many opportunities coupled with convenient excuses to walk the wrong path. Invitations to private homes will be frequent so ministers reminded to avoid sins of the flesh because they are ambassadors of Christ. Strong drink,

gambling and other youthful lusts should be avoided. The minister is an ambassador for Christ.

Consequently Paul encouraged youth Timothy to be serious minded and not to become entangled in foolish activities that will later be an embarrassment to the cross. The morals of the minister should be unquestioned and should be a standard by which others can be proud.

Preach The Word

While Paul gave young Timothy many words of advice on many areas of the ministry, his final advice was to "preach the word." Then as today, the final measure of a preacher is summarized in the question "can he preach?"

He may have degrees from seminaries, colleges and universities, but one question remains: "can he preach?"

He may be a good man who raises his children well and is a kind neighbor however that nagging question will always be asked: "can he preach?"

Among Black folk the worse thing that can be said about a preacher is that he can't preach. If he can preach, he can weather any storm, overcome any opposition, withstand any criticism. However, the preacher that can't preach is doomed.

What people want to know is can he carry the mail?

The people are waiting for a message from heaven and they want to know, can he carry the mail?

God's mailman brings us news from heaven that brings us:

--Strength for the journey
--Peace during our storms
--Courage for our battles
--Deliverance from our shackles
--Solutions for our problems
--Rest for our weary souls
--Guidance for our daily walk

God's mailman has one charge and that is to preach the word! Carry the mail regardless to personal persuasions and physical conditions. Preach the word:

--When tears fill your eyes
--When burdens stoop your back
--Although trials will test your patience
--Pain will afflict your body!
--Although your valleys may seem lonely
--Although your way may seem narrow
--Although your nights may seem so dark
--Although your heart may sometimes be broken

God's mailman should tell a dying world about God's Love. Tell them that God's:

--Love is eternal and his Mercy is everlasting
--Grace is sufficient and his goodness is overflowing

--Power is omnipotent and his truth is without end

But there is a special delivery that has been delivered by express mail...

Tell them this message is not coming C.O.D. and no postage is required for 2000 years ago Jesus, my wonderful savior, paid it all!

Tell them that Jesus died on an old rugged cross, but early Sunday morning he rose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 355-Church Anniversary

The Church That Christ Built

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Triumph Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 8, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

Introduction

In the late 60's Aretha Franklin produced a very popular song entitled "The house that Jack built." It was a snappy ballard about a woman who talked about all of the material possessions she had gained since she met her husband. She pointed to her fine house, car, clothes and money with great pride. However, because of marital problems, her husband left her for another. Although he left her with every possession she owned she was sad because what really made it all enjoyable was the presence of Jack. She concluded "I got the car, clothes, and the house, but I ainÆt got Jack!"

Today there are many people who have lost sight of the fact that houses are not homes and buildings are not churches. What makes the unique character of each is the presence of love, respect and happiness. Thousands of couples every week are saving to build houses and forgetting the essentials necessary to build happy homes. Hundreds of churches are building elaborate edifices with special attention to design and detail while ignoring the spiritual tenets which transforms any group of people into a church. A home without love is just a house. A church meeting place without the love and respect of God is just a building. In cases such as these FranklinÆs words come to mind: WeÆve got the house but we ainÆt got Jack!

As churches celebrate milestones of longevity it is good sometimes to evaluate its progress not in material terms: new building, renovations, expansions, and budgets, but perhaps we would be better off to consider whether we still have "Jack." That is to consider whether the fellowship has fostered an atmosphere where GodÆs presence can be felt and his love can be shown. That measure is not quantitative but qualitative. It cannot be measured in dollars and cents but only in the growth of GodÆs spirit in the body of Christ.

As Christians, let us continue to celebrate the victories that Christ has given us along our journey. Every milestone is important. But most important to any church is that Jesus is in its midst every step of the way.

Exposition

This familiar text explores the foundation of the church. It occurred after Jesus had been teaching and preaching for a while and had asked his disciples who knew him well, what was being said of him. His question: “Whom do men say that I, the son of man am?” made some of them uncomfortable. They remarked that he was thought of as John the Baptist, Elijah or even Jermiah. After hearing the report of publicÆs opinion Jesus brought it close to home and asked “But who say ye that I am?” The truth that was revealed came from the lips of Peter who acknowledged Christ as “the Christ, the son of the living God.”

Upon this truth Christ put the pieces together to build his church. His statement “Thou art Peter and upon this rock” has been misinterpreted by some to think that Christ was building his church upon Peter. It is understandable how some religions could make that mistake since the name Peter in Greek is “Petros” which means a small rock or a piece of a rock. But the word for rock in this text is not petros but “Petra” which means a large immovable stone. Christ was building the church upon the truth of his sonship. He was building it upon himself and not Peter. Ephesians 2:20-21 expands on this truth by noting that the foundation of the church is “..built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” Christ is the chief cornerstone and 1 Peter 2:5 reminds us that each member is a living stone that makes up the temple of God.

It becomes easy to see then that those who build churches of wood and stone may do a good work but that work is not essential to salvation. If there is wood and stone without the presence of Christ then the builders are faced with FranklinÆs delimma: They have the steeple, the pews, the pulpit and the parsonage, but they don't have Christ.

The Church That Man Builds

It's a good thing that the Lord didnÆt build the church on Peter. If he had it would have been subject to all of subtle shades of his personality. In one instance it would have drawn its sword to cut off the ear of sin and in another would have shrunk in cowardice denying the Lord in the face of persecution. In one moment it would boldly declare the Sonship of Christ but when wading in deep waters would find itself sinking in despair. This would be the problem of the church if it was built upon Peter or any people.

The church transcends any man. The church supercedes the mortal capacities of mere humans because it is a spiritual entity, built upon a foundation that is sure and strong.

This difference is essential because the church that God builds is different from

the church that man builds. The church that man builds is a:

—MOTEL: for people just passing through on Sunday on their way to someplace else.
—VACATION SPOT: where people come only once or twice a year.
—ZOO: Where people come to watch other folk eat like hogs and act like monkeys
—MUSEUM: Where people only remember "what it used to be like" and the good old days.
—FASHION SHOW: Where people come to display the latest styles and their new wardrobes
—PICTURE SHOW: Where audiences sit quietly as the deacons, preacher and choir put on a show
—CERAMIC SHOP: Where everyone becomes easily chipped and have to be handled with care
—ICE HOUSE: Where people with cold hearts give each other the cold shoulder.
But the church the God builds is different from manÆs church. The Church that Jesus built is a:
—LIGHTHOUSE: Giving light to a dark and stormy world
—HOSPITAL: Ministering to those who are sick of sin and shame
—DIVINE FLOWER SHOP: Only in the church can you find the sweet Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley in the same place at the same time.
—LIFE BOAT: Rescuing victims from the raging sea of life. The song writer declared:

"Tis the old ship of zion, get on board, get on board!"

—SIGN POST: Guiding the lost to the straight and narrow path. ThatÆs why thousands cry out:

"Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand"

Only One Mission

Christ had a purpose in mind when he established the church. Its purpose was not to be an ornament but to show men in a dying world that there is a loving and forgiving God. Through the church the:

—RUINED find a remedy and the CURSED find a cure!
—HURT find a healing and the BROKEN HEARTED find love!
—BURDENED find a blessing and VICTIMS find a victory!
—ANXIOUS find an answer and the GUILTY find grace!
—RUTHLESS find redemption and the DOOMED find deliverance!

—POLLUTED find a pardon and the IMMORAL find an invitation to the banquet table of the Lord!

The church that Christ built may have many parts but it only has one mission.

It may have a choir but it has only one mission!

It may have an usher board but it has only one mission!

It may have a youth department but has only one mission!

It may have a Sunday School and Training Union but it only has one mission.

That mission is the same mission which Jesus gave 2000 years ago: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The Church that Christ built has one mission and that is to tell the story!

Tell them about Jesus! Tell them about Calvary!

Tell them that he died! But early Sunday morning he rose from the grave with all power in his hands!

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 354-Inspiration

When God is Holding Your Hands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
September 8, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee" Isaiah 41:13

Introduction

What do you do when life's journey takes you down a bumpy road? Complain? Grumble? Brace yourself for a rough ride? Perhaps you might consider Old Charlie's Answer. It seems that Old Charlie was a slave on a plantation in rural Alabama. He had the job of driving the master's wife into town each week in the family's buggy. The master's wife had studied old Charlie for a number of years and she noticed that he had a peculiar habit of holding the reins while the buggy was on a smooth section of the road but he turned the reins loose when there were bumpy sections. Finally, she decided to ask him the reason for his peculiar habit. "Charlie" she said. "I notice that you hold the reins when the wagon is on smooth ground but when the road gets bumpy you start talking to yourself and let go. What's the reason?"

Charlie answered his master's wife by saying "Well Ma'am, you see it don't take much to keep dis here team straight when the de road be smooth, just a gee and a haw. But when it gets bumpy I talks to the de lawd and then I lets him take over the lines. It may look like nobody's driving but when the road gets rough I put the reins in the lawd's hands."

When we travel the meandering paths that this life has in store for us, many have found it best to let the Lord hold the lines, especially when the road gets bumpy. Whether it is family, business, personal or community affairs, experience has taught that when the road gets bumpy its best to let the Lord hold the reins. It doesn't require much to hold the reins when the going is easy, but when times are difficult a much steadier hand is required.

As Christians, our determination should be to let the Lord hold the lines, and he will see us through, no matter how bumpy the road.

Exposition

This text considers the prophet Isaiah as he brings inspirational words of hope to Judah. Isaiah spent the bulk of his adult life extolling the dangers of continued sin by the people of Israel. He lived to witness the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Armies of Assyria and warned of their approaches upon the Southern Kingdom. He told Judah that Jerusalem would not be taken by the Assyrians. However he ventured far into the future and predicted the enslavement of the people and the eventual release under King Cyrus of Persia.

In this text Isaiah reminds the people that their social and economic trials may become uneasy, much like a bumpy road, but he assures them that God has no plans of abandoning them. In fact, in difficult times, God plans to strengthen them (v10), help them, and uphold them as he leads them through their varied difficulties. He promises to confound their enemies and utterly defeat them. Though their way will be rocky and difficult they are assured safe passage because God himself has promised to take them by the hand and lead them every step of the way.

Bumpy Roads Require God's Strength

The difficulties of our present time require strength. No matter how strong we think we are it gets hard to hold things in line when their are bumps in the road. The finest automobile, with the most elaborate suspension system, is difficult to steer on a bumpy road. Just keeping it straight requires extra energy. When difficulties beset us as we run upon those bumpy roads, we need the strength of God to keep us on the path. Alone, we don't have the strength, but when God puts his hand on the wheel he puts things under control. A marriage that has run into bumpy ground runs into trouble without God to hold it in place. A personal pursuit, no matter how sure it appears, can get pretty hard to handle once it runs upon bumpy roads.

Isaiah projected that Israel should expect God to come in and even handle enemies that would make the way difficult and bumpy. Likewise, we should expect the power of God to strengthen us to face the bumps in the road knowing that God will strengthen us to tackle the enemies that make our way difficult. In fact, David mused about GodÆs goodness and said “thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” When others tried to make his road bumpy God strengthened him to survive even their plans and contrivings. He summed it up by saying “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalms 27)

Bumpy Roads Are Easy if God Leads

Since bumpy road circumstances are inevitable in life, it would be wise if all of us would allow God to lead us through to smoother paths. Too many of us speed through

bumpy roads and vibrate and shake until we almost fall apart. When God guides us however, he takes us around and through each bump at the right speed. It may be slower getting through, but we will make it. This virtue of patience, is what Isaiah talked with Israel about in the 40th chapter verse 31 when he said "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount on wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

God spoke to Israel and said "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

When God holds the lines or takes over the steering wheel he literally takes us by the hand and leads us "by the still waters" and makes it possible for us to lie down in green pastures.

A widow woman found out that even though the cabinets are bare and the family is down to its last cup of meal and cruse of oil, that things will work out if you put it in God's hands.

A lame man discovered that though he had trouble making it to the pool for 38 years that, things worked out when it put it in God's hands.

Aunt Mandy was an especially famous backwoods midwife. She had successfully helped scores of women deliver hundreds of babies. Aunt Mandy had seen nearly every child of birth from breach births to premature births, she had seen many. After one particularly difficult delivery Aunt Mandy sat on the front porch and read her bible rocking. Family members wanted to know if she was going to do something else to help the baby survive, since they had heard so much about her reputation for never losing a baby. They waited but Aunt Mandy never moved. Finally they pressed her for an answer and the old woman looked up with a steel eyes and said: "When that child came in the world he was in my hands. I took him from my hands and put him in his mama's hands. I have done all I can do and I have put them both in the good Lord's hands." Both baby and child lived long and healthy lives.

Great things happen when we put it all in his hands.

I don't know about you but I've found out that miracles happen when we let Jesus hold the line! When we let Jesus hold the line:

—CIRCUMSTANCES have been changed
—DOORS have been opened
—ENEMIES have been defeated
—PROBLEMS have been solved
—DOUBTS have been dissolved
—FEARS have been conquered
—FRIENDSHIPS have been restored
—MARRIAGES have been salvaged
—SOULS have been converted
—LOST lives have been saved
...When we put it all in his hands!

If there is trouble in your home, put all in God's hands!
If there is confusion on your job, put it all in God's hands!
If there is misunderstanding among friends, put it all in God's hands!

I heard a song writer declare:

“Lead me, Guide me along the way, Lord if you lead me I cannot stray, Lord let me walk each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord lead me!”

Brothers and Sisters if you let Jesus hold the line he will make a way!

If you let Jesus hold the line somehow the:

—Weak will become strong!

—Foolish will become wise!

—Proud will become humble!

—Fearful will become courageous!

I don’t know about you but my daily prayer is “Lord hold my hand, while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!”

Precious Lord, take my hand. Lead Me On Let Me stand. Through the storm. Through the night. Lead me on to the light. Take my hand precious Lord and lead me on!

No. 353-Youth

And The Child Grew

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 25, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." Luke 2:40;"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I though as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish thing." 1 Cor. 13:11

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to be big? Tom Hanks starred in a recent movie called "Big." It was about a boy who was frustrated with being a little boy. He wanted to be big. He thought about it constantly and wished that he could share in the apparent good times of all the big people. At an amusement park he ran upon a strange machine that could grant wishes and he told the machine he wished he could somehow become big. He woke up the next morning to realize that overnight he had assumed the body of a young adult while keeping his child's mind. He learned fast, in the course of the movie, that it was better to enjoy life as it presents itself rather than push it too fast. He searched desperately until he found the machine and wished himself back small again.

Most kids have dreams about being big. A 10 year old dreams about being a teen-ager. A teen-ager dreams about getting a driver's license. Those with a driver's license dream about owning a car. The desire to be big is natural and normal. Being bigger brings more privilege. Those who are bigger and older go more places, stay longer and seem to have more fun. But, as Tom Hanks learned, being big also brings additional responsibilities which take some of the fun out of being big.

The desire of Christian youth, should be to grow in faith commensurate with their growth in statue. They should grow strong in their spirit. They should grow stronger in wisdom and in their understanding of the important things in life. They should also gain a greater appreciation for the power of God to direct and influence their lives and invite him to lead them every step of the way.

As Christians, let us pray that our youth will grow in statue and in spirit that they may become men and women ready to witness to the world about the greatness of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the known childhood of Jesus. There are several records that attempt to account for the first 12 years of Jesus' life, the most notable account is in the Lost Books known as the Apocrypha. However these are not inspired accounts. What is known is that Jesus as a boy grew up with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, and following Jewish tradition, learned the trade of his family which was carpentry.

Once each year his family, including his brothers: Joses, James, Simon and Judas, his sisters (Matt. 13:55) and all his relatives, made a journey to Jerusalem to participate in the feast of the Passover. On this particular journey they supposed Jesus was with another relative and returned home and after a day they realized that he was not with them. They returned and found the young man, at the age of 12, sitting in the temple debating the issues of the law with the doctors and professors of religion. When he was approached by his parents Jesus responded:" Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?"

his text notes that Jesus grew in spirit, wisdom and grace. It became evident at the age of 12 that he knew his mission and he prepared himself for it over the next 18 years while he lived with his parents in subjection (v51) to them until he left home.

Growing in Spirit

The growth of a girl into womanhood or a boy into manhood is an amazing phenomenon to observe. After only a few years boys begin to look like men as their voices change, they get taller and take on the appearances of men. Girls develop physically and have all of the bodily features of a woman. But there is something missing. The bodily equipment is all there but three elements are needed before a boy can be called a man or a girl can truly be called a woman: Sprit, Wisdom and Grace.

HE GREW IN SPIRIT. The spirit is the higher part of our nature that makes us reasonable. It is the action of the spirit that prompts us to think of God, respect him and worship him. Growing in spirit refers to growing in the perception of God and our relationship to him. To grow strong in the spirit does not refer to getting taller and physically stronger, but it does refer to growing in matters of conscience. The child that grows in spirit becomes more aware of right and wrong and of God's presence.

Until he or she matures in the spirit, it is the obligation of every parent to insure the religious instruction of their children while they are young. The scriptures teach that if we "train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it." That is one of the most difficult tasks for parents because many children resist such instruction. It is a normal resistance, that is where the parents come in, to guide them in matters of conscience and spirit until they have demonstrated an ability to act on matters of right and wrong and faith, without the assistance of their parents.

Growing in Wisdom

Not only did Jesus grow up in body size and in spirit, but he also grew in wisdom. There are many smart children in the world. Youth today have been exposed to more information at age 12 than their parents were exposed to in the first 30 years of their lives. Today's youth digest information faster and have a greater body of knowledge at their disposal than any generation before them.

But while it is certain that Jesus increased in knowledge, it is important to note that he increased in wisdom. Generally speaking, knowledge is simply accumulated information. But wisdom is the prudent and wise use of knowledge. Jesus grew in wisdom.

Depending on the education of the parents, it won't take long for a child to know as much about mathematics, science and English as his parents. In fact, many children are more proficient at handling information than the parents. They have information, but what their parents have, in many instances, is the ability to use that information wisely.

Wisdom comes from God. For some it is a special gift, (1Cor 12:8) and they have it in great proportions. As children grow they learn information in school, but they will need the power of God to wisely use the information they learn. The schooling may teach them to make a dollar, but wisdom teaches them what to do with it have they get it.

Growing in Grace

Finally, Jesus grew in Grace with God. To grow in grace with God is to grow in favor with God.

How does a child gain favor with God? First by believing in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. But beyond that we gain favor with God by obedience to our parents while we are under their care. We also gain favor with God by avoiding sin, resisting temptation and living the Christian life at home and at school.

It is a good thing to have the grace of God. God's grace supplies us with what we need to live life abundantly. 2 Cor. 9:8 says "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." When we grow in grace, God gives us what we need to live the abundant life.

It is marvelous to experience the grace of God because his grace supplies the:

—Soul with salvation
—Heart with joy
—Mind with peace
—Hands with tenderness
—Feet with Strength
—Eyes with compassion

The sweetest song that was ever sung was about God's grace!

The greatest sermon ever preached was preached about Grace!

The most gratitude ever expressed was expressed about Grace!

The best knowledge ever attained was knowledge about Grace!

Most children who have not traveled far in life whisper among themselves and want to know why the old people, those over 30, like sing Amazing Grace.

We sing about Grace because Grace has brought us through

—Valleys of loneliness, vales of tears, winds of persecution, storms of opposition, nights of despair and the trials of suffering.

Through many dangers toils and snares, I have already come. Tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home!

Young people grow in spirt! Grow in Wisdom. Live the Christian life and you'll grow in Grace:

—That touches that untouchable

—That reaches the unreachable

—That loves the unlovable

—That comforts the uncomfortable

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see!

No. 352-Communion

Cutting Off Your Bread

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 18, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "And the Manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land Canaan that year." Joshua 5:12; "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Introduction

Have you ever needed a little motivation? A little something to get you started? If so you can relate to the story of Freddy Frog. The great frog called Freddy was known by all of the other creatures of the bayou as one that seldom moved off his log. Daily he sat on the log and caught flies and mosquitoes with his tongue. Freddy Frog sat so long that he became fat and fussy. He refused all attempts to get him to move from that log and griped and complained that the other creatures should mind their own business. But one day all of the animals of the swamp were amazed when the saw fat, fussy, Freddy frog, furiously fanning and swimming across the swimming. "What could have made fat, fussy, Freddy frog, furiously fan and swim so fast?" Asked the spider. "Well, I think Greedy, grumpy, growly, Gary Gater decided to have frog legs for supper and when he snapped Freddy's log into, Freddy Flew, and you would too, if you were about to be the main course on the menu!

Sometimes it takes it little misfortune to get us going. At the time it appears as if it is bad thing but when it accomplishes its purpose it works out to our good. A lost job sometimes works out to be an opportunity in disguise because it opened a door for a better job. A failure at a task, sometimes gives inspiration to find more creative ways to accomplish the same end.

It is possible to become so satisfied that it is difficult to get us to move or act. But we are able to act quickly if there is an unexpected adversity. Usually we display more initiative and spunk in such instances than we even knew we had.

What motivates the Christian life? Why do we serve others unselfishly and give so much of ourselves. Is it fear? No. We are motivated by the ever present love of God which prompts us to humbly serve with the full knowledge that he is with us every step of the way.

As Christians, let us continue to work untiringly to move through life with a benevolent spirit, motivated by the love of God rather than by the presence of growling, greedy, Gary Gator. It shouldn't take hard times to get us to show

compassion, but only the whisper of our master's voice in our ear saying "go ye therefore" to keep us going.

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it moves into the promised land. It considers how God prepares them to receive a blessing by cutting off a blessing. Israel had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. In the wilderness there were no trees, green grasses, pastures, wells or any sources of food or water other than that which God himself supplied. God directed flocks of quail to rest among them daily for their meat, provided water from a rock and fed them daily with a miraculous bread from heaven called "Manna." Manna was a flaky substance which tasted like a honey wafer. It appeared every morning, except the Sabbath, as if with the morning dew. They knew it was from God because of its cycle of appearance and how it would not spoil if kept overnight on the Sabbath. Manna, which means "What is it?", was certainly a blessing from heaven.

Israel had become dependent upon manna. None but its old men had ever tilled a field, planted a crop, or experienced a harvest, and even they were just small children at the time. They wandered in the wilderness and were provided their existence from God himself. But as they approached the promised land they were about to receive a greater blessing: a new and fertile land that was flowing with milk and honey. It was to be a great blessing.

But in the promised land manna would be a crippling presence for them. Some would not learn the farming skills necessary nor apply themselves to industry. There obviously would be many that would simply wait on the manna every day. To motivate them to industry and prepare Israel for a greater blessing God literally cut off their bread. As most of them tasted corn for the first time and realized the promise of the new land God cut off the flow of manna. After 14,600 consecutive days, Sabbaths excepted, Israel's bread was cut off.

They were eating "old corn" stored by the Canaanites from recent harvests, but they now knew that God was preparing them for a greater blessing which was the ability to maintain themselves in a new and prosperous era.

Dependent on Manna?

Have you asked God to show you a better way, but yet you refused to seize the opportunity when it presents itself? If that is our circumstance then we are among millions who who suffer from chronic manna dependency. The Manna dependent fails to progress because it may mean following the unbeaten path or trusting in the untried. Such a person believes in the colloquialism: "A bird in the hand is better than two in the nest." It is the philosophy of life that says why take a chance and risk losing what you have.

Israel was stricken with Manna Mania when Moses sent 12 spies into the

promised land and they reported that it was filled with fresh fruits, fertile soil and great opportunities, but it was risky. Israel considered the manna that appeared daily and decided to keep what it had. For 40 years the opportunity for a better life slipped through their fingers. But as Israel began its journey into the promised land a miraculous thing happened, its manna supply was cut completely off. They were able to survive a while on old corn but the people would have to use their imagination, invention and initiative to claim the great opportunities that lie ahead for them. By cutting off their bread, God actually blessed them. It was a blessing in disguise.

Today there are millions of people who pray to God to show them a better way, but when they receive their answer they choose to hang on to what they have. Some cling to welfare though they know that training and a job is the ultimate way out of poverty. Some cling to "getting by" when they know that they should complete their education and seek a higher goal. Some hang on to unhappy personal situations because they are afraid to reach out and claim the great opportunities which present themselves as answers to their prayers.

Some today have already moved higher in life and have grown stronger in the Lord, but only after he cut off their bread. Many are in the church, living in better homes, making more money and are generally happier, because at some point in time, God blessed them by cutting their bread. Some lost a job and were hurt. But after retraining or completing their education are better off because of it. Some have had their freedoms stripped only to rethink their lives and rise stronger and greater men and women because of the experience. Some were jilted, abandoned and crushed in failed relationships and have found greater joys than they ever would have known had not they received this peculiar blessing in disguise.

Running for Our Lives

Sometimes we are not motivated to reach inside ourselves for the power of God to achieve until our life depends on it. These are the times when we are like the Hound and the rabbit that were involved in a great hunt. The hound bragged that he could catch the rabbit and bring home the prize for his owner because there was no place for the rabbit to hide. The rabbit said nothing. On the day of the great hunt the rabbit took off and the hound was close behind. After several hours of chasing the rabbit the hound returned with his tail between his legs unable to catch the rabbit. When asked to explain his loss the hound was philosophical: "Well, you see. I was running for sport, but that dang blasted rabbit knew he was running for his life!"

Brothers and Sisters are you running for your life?

When Israel was in the desert they had the bread of the wilderness. But once in the promised land the old bread was cut off as they were introduced to a new bread prepared in a new way.

If you are running for you life there is a new bread for the Christian traveler on this side of Jordan.

This bread is a bread that brings:

—Assurance when there is doubt

—Acceptance in the midst of rejection

—Acclaim in the midst of scorn

—Happiness in the midst of sadness

—Joy in the middle of the storm

In John 6:35 Jesus said: “I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

No wonder the song writer cried out: “Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

This bread went up to calvary!

This bread died for our sins!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he rose on his own self rising power, with all power in his hands!

No. 351-Funeral

A Renter's New Home

A Funeral Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 10, 1976

SCRIPTURE:"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have another building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 1 Cor. 5:1;"Let not your heart be troubled, ye that believe in God believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever rented a house or an apartment? Renting has its advantages but it also has its disadvantages. Those who rent, generally don't have the responsibilities of ownership. Since they don't own the building they don't have to worry about insurance and major maintenance items. Renters don't have to worry about paying property taxes and are usually not concerned without the cost of elections that mean higher property taxes, since they don't pay property taxes. In some areas, renters don't even have to worry about mowing the grass or clipping the hedges because that all comes with the rent. A renter, by nature, is expected to be a transient. He or she is a person just passing through. They pay the cost of their month's stay in advance and are under no obligation to stay more than one month at a time.

If renting has its advantages, it also has its disadvantages. Since renters are transients, they never know when they will be asked to move on by the landlord. Some tenants have lived in their apartments or houses for years only to have the landlords tell them that they have decided not to rent the premises any longer. Since renters do not own the property it cannot be used for collateral for loans and though a renter may have paid thousands of dollars in rent he will never own the building in which he has lived. The renter usually pays for the Landlord's property.

People choose to own homes when they have decided to stay in an area and have abandoned immediate plans to move elsewhere. They have no future movements in mind so they put down roots where they are. Without a doubt, a homeowner has decided to stay put for the long haul.

There is a parallel in the Christian experience between the renter and homeowner which should prompt each of us to ask the question: "Are we renters are homeowners?"

On this earth every Christian is a renter, but in the world to come each of us looks forward to being a homeowner. Since this life is just a meager sojourn for us, our hope is anchor on heavenly horizons. Our hope lies in getting the final deed to our heavenly

home.

As Christians, let us continue to look forward to our home beyond this life. The song writer's words should continue to inspire us: "I've got a new home over in glory and its mine, mine, mine!"

Exposition

This text gives us a peculiar insight into the separate spiritual concepts of tenants and homeowners. In Corinthians, Paul explains the nature of the spiritual home of the Christian. Using references to the tent of the Tabernacle used by the Jews often as they traveled in the wilderness, the tent-life represented a nomadic culture that moved from place to place. It was very insecure and unstable. The Tabernacle of the Old Testament had no permanent resting place and its design indicated that it was intended for movement. There was no permanent temple until years later when Solomon built the temple.

Paul indicated that the Christian's life is nomadic, like the tabernacle, but when this body or building is no longer able to sustain the life force and presence of the Christian soul, then there is another building available to the Christian, not made with hands, but by the hands of God himself. For the Christian therefore, this life is a just a sojourn or a temporary stay. He is here for a while and then expects to move on.

John goes one step further in showing us the words of the savior himself. Jesus tells each Christian who has lived a span of time in an impermanent, insecure arrangement, that there is a secure place for them to live, in glory. Christ's promise was simply that he was going to prepare for every Christian a permanent, beautiful home in his father's house. There the Christian should not expect to be a tenant, but a homeowner among the suites of heaven.

Thus, the two pictures are clear: Paul shows us the Christian on earth as a tenant, and Jesus encourages our hope by showing us the images of the Christian in his permanent home in Glory, where he is no longer a renter.

Homeowners on Earth

While there are many people who struggle to own a home in the world, the Christian does not strive to make this life his home. There are many people who have accepted this earth as their home and their lifestyle and attitude reflect the fact that they don't expect to make a move soon, or in the next life. Such people spend most of their time beautifying their spiritual homes in this life. They become preoccupied with possessions and pursue the collection of an expanded number of material things as a life's pursuit. Addressing a similar situation Jesus often referred to such people who build barns and then tear them down to build bigger barns. He asked a questions: "What profit it a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Those who view this life as their home build their treasures on earth. However, Jesus warns every person, not to build up treasures on earth where rust and corrosion

can destroy them, but to invest in a spiritual life that is secure.

If we choose to build homes here, our lives are subject to the destructive forces that destroy homes such as:

TERMITES: those little sins that keep eating away at the building blocks of our homes, giving us the appearance of beauty but destroying us on the inside;

LEAKY ROOFS, those circumstances that make it difficult for us to endure rainy days because we are not properly prepared, we appear secure while the sun is shining but cannot sustain the rainfall;

BROKEN WINDOWS, which block our view, let out the cool air in the summer and let in the cold air in the winter, keep us from seeing clearly to communicate with God and from communicating with him with the proper attitude.

Owning a home spiritually is a bad investment because its resale value is low. Instead of increasing in value, those who invest in this life find that it loses value the closer one comes to the end of life. Things that at one time mattered are no longer important. Ideas and persuits that once occupied our thoughts no longer dominate our thoughts as life nears its close.

Spiritual Renters

While the goal of the secular citizen is to acquire a home, the goal of the spiritual man is to rent on earth with an eye toward ownership in heaven. The spiritual renter does not see his existence on earth as the final step and does not attach any permanence to his brief sojourn. Instead, the spiritual man, lives his life with a view toward making heaven his permanent home.

The Christian is not a spiritual homeowner, he is a tenant. As such he wants to have a clean dwelling. He wants it to be respectable, comfortable and pretty. However, he won't make any major expansions to his spiritual tabernacle and won't spend too much time trying to accumulate possession for it either. The reason is because spiritual man is always expecting to move at any minute.

There is a slogan that says: "Home is where the heart is" and for the spiritual tenant. "Home" is not here on earth. Home is wherever Jesus is. A Christian's desire is to make it to heaven one day. That's why he views this life as a journey from the:

—Valley of despair to the mountain tops of victory
—Wilderness of the World to the Palaces of Glory
—Bondages of Egypt to the liberties of the Canaan land
—Paths of sin to the highways of heaven
—Dungeons of defeat to the Courts of the Conquerors

Those who trust in the Lord have a home not made by hands. No wonder the song writer declares: "Build your hopes on things eternal, and hold to God's unchanging hands."

I don’t know about you, but I have decided that I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord because over yonder, I have a home, not made by hands!

Over yonder, it’s always howdy and never goodbye!

There’s a great camp meeting over yonder on the other shore! Bye and Bye I’m going to meet him, on the other shore!

——

A few days ago, our dear Lord saw fit to cancel the rental lease of brother Amos Johnson and give him a new home in glory!

No. 350-Missionary Duty

Helpless Helpers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 4, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight,and say unto him at midnight, and say unto him friend, lend me three loaves for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Luke 11:5-6,9.

Introduction

A hermit sat in his little cabin at the top of a hill during a drought one summer. His barrel of water was running low but he always found enough water to sustain him day by day. Each day travelers came by his hut and asked him for water and he told them he had only enough for himself and sent them away. After many days the hermit asked one of the travelers who was directing so many to come to him for water. The last traveler responded that there was a gentleman in the general store who pointed them in his direction. Upset, the hermit mounted his donkey and came into town and met the gentleman in the store. "Why are you telling people to come to me for water, when I barely have enough for myself?" The gentleman responded: "I tell each person to come see you, not because you have water, but because you know the way to the well."

Today, there are many people who look to the church for a response to the need of the masses for food, clothing and shelter. They come to the church because they heard somewhere that the church may not have plenty of what they need, but the church "knows the way to the well." The hungry, homeless, helpless and hopeless all look to the church for answers and for a response.

Some church members, irritated at the constant pleas of the world, respond: "Why come to us, do we look as if we have enough money to house the homeless or feed the poor masses of the nation? Does it appear that we have the resources to solve the plethora of social ills that plague us?" The response of the masses is simply, that it comes to the church becomes it "knows the way to the well."

We may not have the material resources at our finger tips, but as children of the king we have a father who is rich in houses and in land and holds the wealth of world in hands. We may not have it, but we know where to get it, and therefore it becomes our responsibility to respond to need not in proportion to what we have but in proportion to what we can get through initiative, imagination and industry from the

treasures of heaven.

As Christians, we should always remember that the world looks to us for a response because it recognizes that in its spiritual thirst, it is the Saints of God, who know the way to the well.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he makes an illustration of the importance of prayer. It begins with teaching the disciples the model prayer, known today as the Lord's Prayer, and then concludes by emphasizing the importance of importunity with the parable of the helpless helper.

A man was awakened in the middle of the night by a friend who came to him asking for lodging. The man was helpless. He did not have anything to serve his visitor, but he knew where to get it from. In the middle of the night he beat on the door of his next door neighbor until he got his attention and begged him for three loaves of bread. The neighbor was reluctant to give at first but because his neighbor was so persistent, he went to his pantry and gave him, not just three loaves of bread, but whatever he needed.

Jesus gave the parable to illustrate that sometimes we have not because we ask not. He encouraged all to "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

The helpless Come To The Church

By every social indicator, it is midnight in the social order. Crime is rising, morals declining, people are hungry for food, and shelter even though abundance is all around. Jails are over crowded, as murder, rape, incest and other social ills continue to plague. As people are plagued by their troubles their first response is to look for help. In the midnight, they come to the institution that has promoted itself as the friend of the downtrodden and knock feverishly on our door.

Why do the helpless come to the helpless? They come to the church because each church sports a lifted up cross which is a sign of salvation and hope. When traveling on the highway, a hungry pilgrim looks for a clean, reliable place to eat where he will be treated fairly and fed at a reasonable cost. When he sees the golden arches, he goes there expecting certain service because that's what the arches symbolize. So it is with people who see the cross, the come to the church for help because Jesus said: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burden and I will give you rest." They come to the church because he said "I come to give you life and to give it more abundantly." They come because Jesus said "and I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

In the midnight of these times abused women are knocking at our door? Orphan children are knocking at our door? Teen-aged boys and girls who need leadership and direction are knocking at our door? The alcoholic and drug addict is knocking at our door? Troubled husbands and wives, and the homeless and hungry are

knocking at our door? What shall be our response?

Many churches have forgotten that their mission is to reach the masses. Many have concluded that they are helpless against the social evils of our times and so they redefine their mission. To some the mission is no longer "go ye therefore" but "stay ye right here." Their mission has become to build fine buildings, polish their Sunday ritual and fill their discussion groups with genteel talks about what they should do. While it is desirable to build fine buildings and enjoy the luxuries they afford, the church should never once consider building buildings as its mission. Reaching the lost, confused, hungry masses with the word of Salvation is the mission of the church.

The problems we know won't go away, no matter how we try to ignore them. They keep coming to our front door because the world knows that the church "knows the way to the well!"

Alone we are helpless Helpers. But the beauty of the church is that "I may not be able to help you, but I have a father who can!"

The song writer said: "I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land, but I have father who can! I cannot take a piece of clay and shape it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

It is that testimony that brings the world to our doorstep! We may not have water, but we know they way to the well!

Tapping God's Treasures

In the parable the helpless neighbor went where he knew there was bread and through persistence ended up with more bread than he needed. His neighbor had it, he knew it was there, and he would not give up until he found a way to help his friend!

The storehouses of God are full of everything that the church needs to solve the social problems we experience. But gaining access to those storehouses requires pietism and activism from the church. The pietist is the praying man who will fervently ask God for blessings. This is the "Ask" that Jesus spoke of in his formula for answered prayers. But pietism is only one-third of the formula. The other two thirds requires activism: Seeking and Knocking. After asking God for the resources we need to help others, then we must actively seek and knock until we find that unlocked door into the "vaults" of heaven. The power of prayer unlocks doors, but it is the energy of activity that helps us capitalize on the open door.

Churches of America, somebody's knocking at your door! Why don't you answer? Are your mission groups dying because you talk more than you do? Have you organized to seek resources to help the helpless? Why don't you answer? Have you begun to tap the storehouses of heaven? Is construction of housing for the homeless, counseling for battered women and orphan children on your agenda? Is the establishment of programs to provide food, clothing, shelter and education to the downtrodden masses in your plans for the next few years?

Churches of America, somebody's knocking at your door! Why don't you answer?

We may not have much, but we know the way to the storehouse, and we know

how to gain access to the treasures of heaven.

Every now and then we should all be reminded that as we were saved, we are expected to save others!

If we have experienced

—Christ, then we should share Christ with others!

—Hope, then we should offer hope to others!

—Courage, then we should inspire courage in others!

—Love, then we should show love to others.

—Blessings, then we should bless others.

—Help, then we should be willing to help somebody!

I heard the song writer declare: "If I can help somebody as I pass along...if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain!"

No. 349-Funeral

The Courageous Servant

A Funeral Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 3, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "..Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." 1 Chron. 28:20; "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." Psalms 31:24

Introduction

What is courage? Webster suggests that courage is a quality of character that makes it possible for a person to face danger or difficulties without fear. However, a more utilitarian definition does not suggest the courageous are fearless, but in the face of fear are "soothed and sustained by an unfaultering trust" that empowers them to proceed, despite their fears. Courage, at its best, is the mastery of fear. It's coming to grips with the unknown and forging forward confident that fear and uncertainty will always bow before faith and determination.

Courage is personal. It cannot be transferred to others. Those who think it is transferable are like the two little boys who went to see the dentist. One boy spoke boldly to the dentist looking him squarely in the eye: "Doctor, I want the tooth taken out. Use no gas. Don't deaden the gum. Just yank it out quickly." The doctor was amazed at the courage the little boy displayed and commended him for bravery. Just as he was about to put the little boy in the chair, the boy said: "Oh not me doctor, I was talking about Joey here!" Many people find it easy to be courageous for other people. Arm chair quarterbacks and back seat drivers are famous for playing the game from a position of comfort and safety without facing its difficulties themselves.

As Christians we share the same fears and difficulties in life as other people, with one exception: the Christian is able to master fear and uncertainty because of his faith in the God's ability to deliver and protect him. Let us keep that faith forever before us as we tackle life's innumerable problems.

Exposition

These two text verses address two separate situations that involve the same family. One involves a young man facing the unknown. The other involves a parent face with adversity. One involves advice for a youth facing life's unknowns; the other

is an expression of faith in God despite difficult times.

In Chronicles David advises his son Solomon who is about to tackle the unknowns of life in a roll he has never played. Among the great tasks that lay before him was to build a temple and rule wisely. Facing the unknown, David suggested to this young man to be of good courage, fear not, nor be dismayed at what life will bring. David told Solomon "God will be with thee, he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work" that he has set out for you to do. The young man was encouraged to tackle life boldly, face its challenges with the assurance that come what may God would not leave him, until his work was finished and purpose fulfilled.

The advice that David gave Solomon was based on his own experience. In Psalms 31 David was faced with many difficulties himself but in them he resolved to trust in the Lord. In verse 7 he says "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities." When he reached a low point he cried out the words of verse 5 which were repeated even by Jesus on the cross "Into thine hands I commend my spirit!" It was this determination to put matters in God's hands that prompted verse 24: "Be of good courage, he shall strengthen your heart..."

Combined, the text verses find David giving his son advice from his own experience: Put difficulties and tough matters in God's hand and face the unknown with the full knowledge that God will be with you every step of the way until your work is done.

Facing Life's Unknown

King Hezekiah, in the Old Testament account, was ill and received notice that he was going to die. In prayer, Hezekiah asked for more time and God gave him 15 more years. In that 15 years he finished what he set out to do and then God called him home.

Today there are some of us who are living on borrowed time, and we are surviving on grandma's prayers. We have been granted a grace period of a few years to accomplish our end. What are we doing with our years?

There are many young people today who have the gift of perfect health, sound mind and body, and reasonable strength, but yet they have failed to use their gifts to their maximum potential. How many waste their school years with lackluster performances and are satisfied with below average grades and low achievement? How many spend their years in a maze of confusion, like little pac-men running furiously, hoping to be sustained in life by stumbling upon a power pill of luck? Too many young people, living by the grace of God alone, are dropping out of life, to pursue a life of drinking, partying, drugs, crime, sex and riotous living. There other youth who, facing the unknown are frightened. They don't know about the future and are terrified with the prospect of failure. Some don't know which way to turn or what to say so they lose themselves in the make believe world of television and video game heroes.

Many youth facing the future have discovered that "I may not know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." These youth choose to follow Christ.

It is a courageous decision. Choosing the high road in life takes courage. This is the kind of courage that makes us cut way from the crowd, do the right thing, even though we may be laughed at or ridiculed by others. This is the kind of courage that makes us say no to evil and yes to the cause of justice and righteousness.

David told Solomon to tackle life with courage knowing that regardless to what comes God would stand by him until his purpose was fulfilled.

What is the testimony of the life we salute here today? It is a young life which was lived fully committed to making a difference in the world. It was a life of joy, expectation and courage, which was fully aware that every single day was.. borrowed time.

A fully committed life such as this one is perhaps what the song writer had in mind when she wrote: "Give of your best to the master, give of the strength of your youth, clad in salvation's full armor, join in the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example, dauntless was he young brave, give him your loyal devotion, give him the best that you have."

David told Solomon, to keep a good spirit regardless to what comes..be not dismayed!

Though we face a mountain of misery, be not dismayed!

Though confined to a bed of sorrow, be not dismayed!

Though we face the furnace of affliction, be not dismayed!

Though we endure times of tension, be not dismayed!

Though we are lowered into the pit of despair, be not dismayed!

I heard the song writer declare: "Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. God will take care of you."

Strengthened Hearts

Those who suffer loss, pain and emptiness should also be encouraged by David's words, for God will strengthen weakened hearts. That strength is drawn from our hope in the Lord.

The faithful who feel a great losses are strengthened when they remember the words of 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.."

Why is it that the faithful can remain courageous even in the face of despair? Because we have hope! Hope in the risen savior!

I don't know about you but I have hope when trouble comes my way! It is a hope that helps me:

-Bear the heaviest burden!

-Carry the cruelest crosses!

-Cross the loneliest of valleys!

-Endure the saddest of sorrows!

-Face the greatest of dangers!

It is a hope that looks beyond the agonies of the present moment but fixes upon that glorious day in glory when we will march across the battlements of heaven and graduate to a new and better life.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name! On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground, is sinking sand!

I want to hear heaven's welcome song: "Hello friends! Gee but it's good to see you, glad to see everyone smile. We're glad you came to heaven with us, we know you came to help us praise the Lord in Song and Prayer. Wright is here. The Choir and Morrison.. and there is Kim and all of the rest! We'll praise the Son till day is done as we live throughout eternity!

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On Sunday July 28, 1991 Kimberly Crane went home to be with God. We she was a courageous saint!

No. 348-Youth

What Mean Ye By These Stones?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 28, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "And he spake unto the children of Israel saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying "What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land." Joshua 4:21-22.

Introduction

When visiting many of America's great cities many families have toured historic sites on their list places to see and things to do. Almost always, the places that mark a historically significant activity display a great stone that tells its story. The Lincoln Memorial, a huge stone building, tells the story of Abraham Lincoln and his effort to save the union. The Vietnam War Memorial is a ground level wall that contains the names of thousands of men who died in the Vietnam War. While the Washington Monument rises high into the sky and gives tribute to George Washington, the Booker T. Washington epitaph is encased on a small stone, level to the ground atop his grave. An Awe inspiring site is the thousands of headstones at Arlington National Park, and tiny unnamed headstones of thousands of Colored Civil War soldiers who died in their glory in the battle at Port Hudson Louisiana. Each stone tells the story of a life lived, a battle fought, or a victory won or lost.

The stones that mark the graves of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King are just a bit different. Near each of them is an eternal flame that signifies that their ideals live on for the future.

When children visit these sites they ask questions. What's that? What did he do? What was that all about? The stones give parents an opportunity to tell the story of the events lives and deeds associated with the stones.

Is there an important event in your life that you could mark with a great stone? What is the story would your stone tell? Some stones might tell of victories such as graduations, marriages or advancements. Others might tell of defeats or failures. Each one has a story to tell as we mark the trail we have walked in this life.

As Christians, we have had some important spiritual events to happen in our lives.

We have noted each event testify about it on every opportunity. One of those occasions involve the events surrounding our salvation. We talk about it freely anytime we are asked because of the joy we shared that Jesus has saved our soul.

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it crosses the River Jordan and enters the promised land. The crossing of Jordan was the first new miracle that was performed under the leadership of Joshua. It required the waters of the mighty Jordan river to roll back and hold still for a day as nearly 600,000 people crossed over on dry land.

Joshua commanded representatives of the 12 tribes to take 12 stones out of the river and place them in a heap in the river and to carry 12 other stones with them from the river bed to the other side. Once on the other side the stones were set up on the bank as a permanent tribute to God for his wonderful works. When children, in future years, come to the site and see the huge stones standing in a pile in the midst of Jordan and another, just like them, on the right bank of Jordan, they will ask the meaning of the stones. Their questions will give the elders an opportunity to tell them of the great things God did for Israel when he helped them cross Jordan. Those on the bank also stood as a sign of their expectation of great things to come from God in future generations. Together, the stones symbolized the presence of God in the past and the need for God's presence on the other side of Jordan as well. It was the children of Jordan generation recognizing the great work God has performed for their fathers and expecting the same for themselves.

Respect for the Past

An old lady was often teased by the children in her neighborhood because in the winter time she wore a coat made of patches. There were scores of patches of mixed materials and colors; nothing matched and it was obviously a contrast of styles and fabric. Yet she wore that coat every day. Finally one little girl came to the old lady's house and over milk and cookies asked her why she wore the patches. "Each patch" says the old lady "tells the story of my life." There was a red patch for times when she partied and enjoyed the night life. There were faded patches from the dresses she wore to work for nearly four decades. A black lace patch was made from the handkerchief she used to cry at her husbands funeral. There were several little patches made from the baby socks of her grandchildren. In the middle of the coat was large white patch. It represented the day she gave her life to Christ and he washed her pure as snow. The little girl ran and told the other children the meaning of the patches. From that day forward they looked at her with a stare when she wore her patches, but not a single child laughed because they knew the story behind the old lady and the patches.

There are some things in life which look peculiar, until you know the whole story. Children should be told the family story. It should be repeated in their ears until they

know it from memory. Each place where God has performed a great miraculous deed for them should be noted.

Children, there is not a family today that can say it has come this far, on its own. Many families can relate to the people Israel because they have shared a wilderness experience. Many have endured segregation, discrimination and hard times times. The pains of sickness, the threat of death and the haunting shadow of poverty was always near by for many families and it was only God that brought them through.

A little boy asked his grandfather: "Why don't you get you a new bible, this one is old and tattered. It's got writing on the pages and the back is stuck on with tape." The grandfather said to the little boy: "Son I had this bible when I fought in the great war. When bullets were flying over my head in the night I talked to God. In the mornings I'd read it. This mark here is what a wrote in that hour: "yea though I walk through the valley of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Every mark in that bible showed a place where God had answered a prayer, moved a mountain, or performed a miracle. "I could buy a new one son, but it wouldn't tell my story."

Israel set up stones in middle of Jordan as a memorial to the great things God did in the past.

There are some things we should remember. We should remember how God has brought us from the grips of slavery to a new era of opportunity.

Hope for the Future

Just as there were stones erected to remember the past, there was a second set put up on the back to represent Israel's dependence on God in the present and future.

With the use of drugs on the rise, escalating incidences of gang violence, murder, and rape; this generation, needs to know that that the God of their fathers will be there for them. Youth today should be reminded that even though there is a diminishing moral character among their peers and alcoholism, incest, teen parenthood, school drop outs and delinquency are on the rise, God is still on the throne!

It's good to know that there are stones in Jordan telling Grandma's story, but it's also good to know that there is rock on this side of Jordan upon which I can stand. "What mean ye by this stone?" The stone upon which this generation stands is same stone upon which your parents stood. This stone is Jesus, the chief cornerstone of the church. He is the stone which the builders rejected.

These stones remind me our youth that when the world is 'illn and chilling that the Lord will make a way!

These stones say to :

-A world Troubled by the boys in the hood, that the Lord is still good!

-Youth jamming on Heavy D, that there is a message from the man who calmed the sea! "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

-Young people surrounded by homelessness in the land, "My father is rich in houses and in land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hands!"

Despite the troubles of today, youth should know that the God of yesterday is God in this present age as well.

I don’t know about you but I’ve found out that the Lord is still in the blessing business.

There is no:

-Weakness that the Lord cannot strengthen!

-Pain that the Lord cannot ease!

-Burden that the Lord cannot lift!

-Loneliness that the Lord cannot comfort!

-Door that the Lord cannot open!

-Prayer that the Lord cannot hear!

I’m glad that there is a rock on this side of Jordan.

of trouble! Our song in the middle of the night!

I heard the song writer declare: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name! On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!”

No. 347-Homecoming

The Last Homecoming

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 21, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste,and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach." Nehemiah 2:17; "After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb clothed with white robes and psalms in their hands;" Rev. 7:9;"And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? and I said unto him sir thou knowest. And he said to me. These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Rev. 7:13-14

Introduction

A young man who had been distant to his family had been gone for many years. When he left he felt like an outcast to his family and vowed never to return. Years later he wrote his mother and said he was coming home on the next evening's train. He said if he was still welcome that she should tie a yellow ribbon around the old oak tree in the front yard. As the train neared the depot the son worried as to whether or not he could still go home. But as he looked out of the window miles up the road he saw yellow painted sheets hanging from his neighbors clothes lines. Every fence post had a yellow ribbon. The limbs of the trees had yellow ribbons that dangled like fruit. As the train rolled past his house he saw yellow ribbons on the old oak tree, the pine tree, the cedar tree, and his mother and father standing in the yard waving. By this he knew it would be a great homecoming!

What a great thing it is to come home and know that you are welcome. It is a great feeling because homecoming is a time of celebration and reflection on the unique trilogy of history, heritage and hope. When soldiers come home there is a homecoming. When loved ones who have been away return there is a homecoming. Schools and colleges have homecomings that play up the contribution of alumni and memories are stirred as walk through the halls of fame.

But none of the celebrations that we are accustomed to on this earth can compare with the last homecoming that God has in store for all of his saint's, it will be a great a joyous occasion, when the Saint's go marching in. As Christians, we look forward to the last homecoming with great anticipation, it will be a time of great rejoicing and celebration, because then we will see old friends and loved ones and rejoice before the throne forever more!

Exposition

This text focuses on three homecomings of Israel detailed in the Old Testament records and the last homecoming of the Saint's as detailed in the New Testament record. It is the story of a majority that forgot about home, and a few who chose to rebuild their heritage.

Israel's national prominence had been destroyed with its captivity. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah detail its long journey home under three visionary and inspirational leaders over a 96-100 year period. Led by Zerubbabel, they returned home for the first time in 70 years. The first homecoming involved 42,360 Jews, and 7,337 servants. At the first homecoming the job was to rebuild them temple which was completed after 17 years.

Many years later Ezra, an exile in Babylon, gained permission from the Persian government to take back any who wanted to return to Jerusalem and resume their national life. Ezra had a hard time finding people who wanted to go back home. They had become comfortable in Babylon. They were making money and living good and they were not interested in going home. When he returned only 1,754 men went with him whereas the first homecoming group had 42,360 men. The second homecoming was smaller than the first and the job of its leader was more difficult because those at home had learned to live in sin and resisted change.

The Third homecoming came many years later when Nehemiah a cup bearer to the king gained permission to return home to rebuild its walls. By this time very few of the Jews in Babylon wanted to go home. Nehemiah returned with a handful of men and a Persian army escort. He led the people in rebuilding the walls and government of the city while Ezra the prophet continued to re-establish the worship and spiritual life of the people. The third homecoming was so small that the number of men participating was not worth a numerical notation.

Forgetting About Home

Israel's interest in Jerusalem diminished as it became comfortable in Babylon. Increasingly, fewer of its people showed an interest in going home and even sending support home to maintain its national heritage.

The church is the "Jerusalem" of the New Testament. Instead of stones and gold and silver the church is comprised of millions of "living" stones with Christ as its chief cornerstone. For the Christian, being with Christ is home. But like Israel, many today have lost interest in home.

Some have lost interest in the church because of Prosperity. Like Israel that became comfortable in Babylon, there are many today who have learned the ways of the world and have become comfortable in them. Sundays, once reserved for worship and praise of God, are now dedicated to fishing, television and enjoying the comforts acquired in Babylon. We are doing well in Babylon. Nearly every home has a television, phone, electrical appliances of some kind, running water and inside

baths. Some are doing so well that they have automobiles, air conditioning and American Express. Prosperity is dangerous because if we are not careful we can get so caught up in it, that we forget about home. The quest for prosperity has destroyed families where a husband or wife get so busy chasing the dollar and climbing the career ladder that they forget about home.

Some have lost interest because of sin. When Ezra and Nehemiah returned they found people in Jerusalem were wrapped up in sin and had lost their spiritual focus. There are many today who share the same dilemma. They have forgotten about home because some sinful lifestyle has distracted them. Some are captivated by the night, others by the smell of sweet perfume. Some have become slaves to alcohol, coke and crack. Their addictions have become so great that they have neglected themselves, their homes, and the church. They cannot focus on home because they are trapped in the vicious circle of worldly living that will not turn them loose.

Yet the clarion call is sounded: "Come Home!"

Come home where there is:

-Remedy for the ruined; Healing for the Hurt

-Hope for the hopeless; Love for the lost

-Victory for the victims; Grace for the guilty

-understanding for the misunderstood

-Compassion for the Condemned

Jerusalem's call echoes across the centuries: "My son, come home!"

Some Would Not Forget

While many Jews refused to go home because of lost interests there were some who never took their minds off Jerusalem.

Daniel prayed three times a day facing Jerusalem and talked to God about his desire to go home. He braved a lion's den and the prospect of certain death rather than forget about home. The three Hebrew boys faced a fiery furnace because they refused to pledge allegiance to Babylon. Their hearts were back home and the fire that burned inside was hotter the those of the fiery furnace.

Today the church is celebrating homecoming, with preaching and singing and fine foods but this celebration is just a preparation for the last homecoming! The world thought it had canceled homecoming when it crucified Jesus on the cross. But he rose from the grave passing out invitations to the last homecoming

Jesus told his disciples in John 14:2-3 "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also."

The Angels declared in Acts 1:11 "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The last homecoming will be celebrated at the return of Christ.

We need to be ready for homecoming day because Matthew 24:42- says "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come."

In Revelation, John painted a picture of the Last Homecoming. The Old Testament believers and departed Saints had been resurrected from the dead. Living Saints had been raptured in the air! Tribulation converts had received the mark of lamb in their foreheads and 144,000 Jews marched toward the throne.

Then John said he saw another number that no man could count, on their way to the last homecoming? What are these? These are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb?

At the last homecoming:

-Doubts will be dissolved
-Longings will be satisfied
-Tears will be dried
-Hearse wheels won't roll
-Problems will be solved
-Thirsts will be quenched
-Burdens will be lifted
-Debts will be canceled
-Mountains will be made low
-Valleys shall be exalted

I don't know about you but I don't want to miss homecoming day, when we all get to heaven. What a day of rejoicing it will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory!

No wonder song writer declared: "Come and go with me, to my father's house for there is joy! Joy! Joy!"

No. 346-Usher's Anniversary

Why Stand Ye Here

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 16, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "..Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11; "..for by faith ye stand" 2 Cor. 1:24

Introduction

What you want to usher for?
Got to stand up all the time
Every body else be sitting and
enjoying de service so fine

What you want to usher for?
Got to stand up on your feet
Choir members sing songs so sweet
but when they finish singing
they sits down on they seat

What you want to usher for?
You better hear these blues
Deacon prays a good prayer
what stirs and what soothes
but when de prayer is over
he sits down on the pews

What you want to usher for?
Too much walking for me!
'livering fans, and shaking hands
that's not my cup of tea

Ushers got to have a good soul
Musta been dipped in fine pure gold
Ain't no way I'd stand dat long
dey'd look for me and I'd be gone!

Though humorous in style, this little poem makes a clear point: An usher is a special person in the church. It is a thankless job, that requires a spirit of humility that transcends the ordinary. The usher is our most glaring example of Christian service because among this band of dedicated men and women come people from all walks of life including the wealthy and the poor, the highly educated and the under educated, the old and the young, they all step out of their roles in the secular world to meet as equals on the common ground they share in the service of the king.

What motivates a person to want to serve another when our nature is to be served? Why, of all the places of services in the church that are prestigious, comfortable and influential, would anyone want to be a doorkeeper? Why do ushers choose to stand and walk and wait on others hand and foot when they could easily choose to be the ones served?

Ushers know what all Christians know, that there is a reward in store for every servant both on this earth as God blesses them with health and strength, and in the kingdom to come as he gives us the best of the kingdom of heaven. Ushers and every other Christian, stand daily on the promises of God that he will bless good and faithful servants with eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus' disciples watching the savior as he was caught up on a cloud and slowly ascended into heaven. Each disciple stood on his feet and gazed as the master drifted out of sight. When he could not be seen anymore they were still gazing into the heavens. Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into the heavens trying to see Jesus when he will be coming back again. "Why stand ye?" was the probing question that jolted these believers from passive amazement to active service. It was a question that challenged them to act on that which they knew was right and build the kingdom of God among men. Rather than stand gazing these were awakened from their amazement and inspired to stand together, on one accord and work to build the kingdom Christ envisioned, as servants of the Lord. Rather than stand aimlessly gazing, they chose to stand for the master in prayer and in supplication.(v14). They stood continuously in faith that one day that the same Jesus which they saw ascend would come again and give them their reward.

Why Do Ushers Stand?

Today there is a demand for servants in the kingdom of God. However, despite the demand there are too few people who respond to the call. Among those who respond, an even small number chooses ushering as a field of service. It might be that people observe the trials of ushers and are reluctant to become one themselves. Sometimes people give ushers a hard time.

Consider the usher that has to deal with the "Seater" family which attends every

church each Sunday. Eddie End-Seater is a stubborn fellow. He sits on the end of the pew and makes people crawl over him to get to their seats. The usher that dares ask him to move may not have a head when its over. Molly Middle Seater must sit in the middle and creates quite a disturbance when she enters late and then insists that the middle seat has her name on it. She considers any usher that won't help her to her favorite spot as inhospitable. Then there is Sam Same Seater who has sat on the same pew for 20 years and is irritated because the usher won't ask a visitor to move out of his seat! When ushers must deal with so many personalities that are not always warm and respect, why would they choose to stand?

Ushers stand because they have heard the call of the master looking for workers in the vineyard. Their response was then and is now "if the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me." It is the same stand that Moses took when God spoke to him from the burning bush and challenged him to serve as a leader of Israel. It's the call that prompted Hannah to bring her child to the temple and dedicate him to the service of God. It's the call that the disciples heard when Jesus said "follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

The servant of God today has chosen to do more than simply wait on the Lord's kingdom to come, gazing aimlessly into heaven as bench members and living idly. They have heard the voice of the angel who asked "why stand ye here gazing" and have chosen to be an active part of the service. It might have been the servants commitment to God that inspired Dr. Watts to write: "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save and fit it for the sky."

Why stand ye? Because we have a charge to keep!

Why stand ye? We stand because we have heard the voice of Jesus say come unto to me and rest,lay down lay down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!

Why stand ye? We stand because we serve an almighty God who can:

—Supply all our needs
—Comfort our sorrows
—Loosen our shackles
—Strengthen our weaknesses
—Lift our burdens
—Forgive Our Sins
—Hear our Prayers
—Change our Circumstance
—Fill our emptiness

But more than that, we stand by faith! Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen!

Faith is not gazing in the heavens trying to see Jesus, but serving in in the kingdom until he comes back again!

Every servant of God stands in faith that one of these old days Jesus is coming back again!

As I close, I am reminded of the old lady who had served on the usher board for

over 50 years. She had gained the nicknamed “old stone foot” because every Sunday for 50 years she came to church with a large grocery bag. In the bag was a large stone that she placed beside her stand and she placed her foot on it and welcomed visitors as they entered. Though people stared and talked about her she always brought her stone and placed one foot upon it. Most of the older members of the church knew her well but a child came and asked why she put her foot on the stone. She responded “Jesus told Peter, Upon this rock I’ll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Son this rock is Jesus and on Christ the Solid Rock I stand, because all other ground is sinking sand”

I don’t know about you but I believe I’ll keep standing on the rock!

Stand.. because the is a life to be lived!

Stand, because there is work to be done!

Stand, because there is a fight to be fought

Stand, because there is a victory to be won!

Stand, because there is a testimony to be shared!

Stand, because there is a fire to keep burning

Stand, because there is a prayer to be prayed

Stand, because there is a story to be told!

Tell the old story, how Jesus, Mary’s baby, died and rose from the grave!

I’ll stand right here and tell them that he rose from the dead and is coming back again!

No. 345-Inspiration

The Old Landmark

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 14, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set." Prov. 22:28

Introduction

Landmarks are objects in the landscape that are striking and familiar and serve as guides. A land mark may be a tree, a stump, a brightly painted house, a store, a fence or some other item that is visible and appears to have permanence. Often landmarks are included in directions to certain locations to assure travelers that they are going the right way. Have you ever tried to find a location by directions that included landmarks you could not find?

Consider the man who had been away from home for nearly 30 years. He didn't bother to look up directions to find his old homestead because he had lived in the area for 40 years and every trail was etched in his memory. The way was marked clearly in his mind: take the mill road until you reach Big Bill's store, follow the dirt road around the bend until you come to a big Oak tree at the cross roads; take the road to which the Oak tree leans. Along that road there will be a white house on the left and a red barn on the right, when you see those you know you are on the right road.

Though the route home was clear in his mind he was quite disturbed when he found that the mill road was not there any more, a highway had replaced it. Big Bill's store had been torn down 20 years earlier. The man was frustrated further when he reached what used to be the crossroads and found no oak tree. There was no white house, and no red barn. He found his way to the old homestead, but his way was made difficult by the removal of the landmarks.

As we travel in life there are a few land marks that let us know we are going in the right direction. They are the traditional values of society that clearly mark the difference between right and wrong, good and bad. Landmarks increase in importance as clearly marked choices diminish. When there are no road signs, travelers look for land marks to guide them and reassure them.

The signs of these times are unclear. The line between right and wrong is a smudged merger of self expression, personal choice and traditional canons of behavior. Without clear direction, many have found that there is a constancy in following that which is tried and true: the old land marks.

As Christians we still cling to the old land mark of faith in God and obedience to

his word. It is the foundation of our faith. It guides us and reassures that we are traveling the right direction.

We take no chance in getting lost. We find our way with God as our guide. He is the perfect spiritual land mark because he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Exposition

With respect to land marks the Bible refers to them in two different ways, both of which are important to modern Christian living.

First landmarks are referred to as inheritance markers. This text from Proverbs reiterates one of the basic tenets of the Mosaic law, that landmarks were sacred and protected. This was an important law to the Jews because the boundaries of an inheritance were usually marked by a pile of stones or a deep trench in the ground. As they moved into the promised land and it was divided between the tribes, each boundary was indicated by a landmark. Even as the land was subdivided to individuals each person still marked his inheritance with a land mark. The law discouraged the removal of landmarks because it caused the owner to lose sight of his inheritance. On occasion a dishonest neighbor came and moved the pile of stones giving himself a larger inheritance, diminishing the claims of his neighbor. The Mosaic law protected such land marks by giving severe penalties to persons who tampered with the ancient land marks.

The second category of land marks in the bible are those that indicate sites where God performed a miraculous deed. One such case is illustrated when Jacob returned to his homeland he met God in a vision that showed angels descending and ascending a giant stairway or ladder. He arose and took the stone which had been his pillow and erected it as a land mark of his spiritual encounter. He named the spot Bethel.

Together, the ancient land marks were important to the people because they helped them to claim their rightful inheritance and to remember the great and miraculous acts of God himself in helping them reach their goals.

Danger of Moving Landmarks

Today, we should be keenly aware of the danger of tampering with the old landmarks. In the sense that the old landmarks help us to know the extent of our inheritance, all of us should be sensitive to erosions of the faith caused by our laid back attitude toward God. Our inheritance is the kingdom of heaven. But little by little it is escaping many of us because the social demands of our time has moved the landmark!

Church attendance and Bible Study is an old land mark. Yet today society dictates that worship of God is optional and Bible study is unnecessary to live a full Christian life. As a result many people make periodic appearances at church worship services out of obligation to custom. An even smaller number attend Sunday School or have regular bible study habits of their own. Because our inheritance claim to the kingdom

of heaven is based soley on the word of God every Christian should have a general working knowledge of the bible and know how to defend their faith against critics and skeptics. Every Christian should worship regularly and sing praises to the power and majesty of God. Obedience to God's command to assemble on the first day of the week, is a landmark of our spiritual inheritance. When Sunday worship becomes optional, and bible study is replaced with emotional experiences, then we know that someone has tampered with our inheritance and we need to get back to the old land mark!

Faith in the Christ and the saving power of the blood of the lamb is an old land mark. There is no substitute for the fulfilling presence of Christ in our lives. Knowing Christ for yourself is an old land mark. Today there are many who have turned the church into social clubs, and extensions of their fraternal organizations. Others embrace it because of its political possibilities, economic strengths, and self help capabilities. While the church does have many avenues of expression as it carries out its mission, it still has the same mission that it was given by Christ when he said "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." Teaching about Christ is the old land mark. Preaching about Christ is the old land mark! Saving souls in the name of Christ is the old land mark. Those who suggest that the Church has any mission other than saving the lost, preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the brokenhearted, preaching deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind (Matthew 4:18) have moved the old land mark. As church men and women we need to stay close to the old land mark, which is the cross of Jesus.

When we go back to that old rugged cross we discover a new sense of power and being. We should tell the world that the cross is the old land mark. Tell them that the cross:

—Doorway of deliverance
—Hallmark of Hope
—Seal of Salvation
—Anchor of our Assurance
—Rock of our Refuge
—Fountain of our Forgiveness
—Foundation of Our Freedom

No wonder the song writer declares: "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away!. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

Landmarks help you Remember God's Goodness

It's good to go back to the old landmarks because they help us remember what the Lord has done for us!

When Israel crossed the River Jordan, Joshua placed 12 stones in the river bed and another 12 on the edge of the river as land marks. He said when the children of

future generations see the land mark and ask “What mean these stones” that they should then be told the story of how God brought them through the sea and the wildnerness to safety on the other side.

David went back to the old landmark and concluded in Psalms 126:3 “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad”

When we go back to the old land mark we see how the Lord has taken our misfortunes and turned them to our advantage. At the old land mark we see how the Lord took our:

—heartaches and turned them into hallelujahs
—sorrows and turned them into joy
—deficiencies and turned them sufficiencies
—frustrations turned them into faith
—Perplexities and turned them into peace
—miseries and turned them into miracles

I don’t know about you, but I have found out that it’s good to try new methods and experiment with new ways, but whatever I do and wherever I go, every now and then,

I’ve got to come back to the old land mark!

When I go back to the old land mark I can make sure that I’m going in the right direction. No wonder the song writer would declare: “Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand!”

No. 344-Membership Improvement

Remember Lot's Wife

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La 71201

July 7, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Gen 19:26; "Remember Lot's Wife" Luke 17:32

Introduction

One of the famous selections of the late Nat "King" Cole was "Looking Back." The ballad described a man who reviewed his past successes and failures and focused on his love for his mate as the central point of his life. While many today may not be familiar Mr. Cole's song, there are many who spend an inordinate amount of time looking back.

There is great wisdom in looking back. But the man who dwells on looking back must remember that those who look back and walk forward at the same time will bump into something or fall over the future in a very short time. Such people run the risk of becoming slaves to their memories denying the future and focusing on the past alone. The marriage that focuses on past problems won't be able to claim future successes. The businessman that spends all of his time remembering when times were good, can't focus on keeping his business in the black today. A man or woman that is haunted by past failures will find it difficult to move forward today. The past, even one rich with pleasant memories, can be a stumbling block to progress, if it has a sharper focus than the vision we have for the future.

As Christians, we rejoice in the triumphs and failures of the past. However, we pause occasionally to reflect on the past, but our march is ever forward. We are new creatures in Christ and as such "old things are past away and all things become new."

Our resolve is to live for Jesus and to follow him without regrets. A song writer put it this way "I have decided to follow Jesus..no turning back, no turning back."

Exposition

This text focuses on words of Jesus as he warned his disciples about becoming too attached to the things of this world. His urging was that they should never be caught, even for a moment, outside of obedience to God because his return could be any moment. He illustrated his point with three words: "Remember Lot's Wife!"

Genesis 19 gives the account of Lot, a righteous man, who lived in the city of

Sodom with his wife and two daughters. Sodom was a city of decadence, homosexuality, and willful disobedience to God's will. Lot had chosen the cities of the plain because they offered exciting opportunities. Since there is no record of his coming to Sodom with a wife, it is believed that he met and married his wife in Sodom, a city that made its fortune from the mining of salt. Salt mining and the profits made from its sale made for comfortable living in Sodom. The people lived and dressed well, lived prosperously, and enjoyed themselves because of the thriving salt business. When God sent angels to deliver Lot and his family from destruction in Sodom, they were told the leave the city, run for the mountains and don't look back. On the day of the destruction angels took Lot and his family by the hand and pulled them to the outskirts of the city and pointed them toward the mountains. But as the rain of fire came down from heaven, destroying the prosperity of the city, Lot's wife stopped going forward and looked back as she watched all of the pleasant memories of her past go up in smoke. At that point God turned her into a pillar of salt, the embodiment of her hopes and dreams. Lot and the remainder of the family kept walking and did not look back.

Don't Look Back

Throughout the word of God, there is repeated encouragement for everyone to "look back" and to remember. Moses took the whole book of Deuteronomy to tell Israel to remember. Many of the prophets challenged Israel to remember. But the instance of Lot's wife gives us an example of what not to remember.

Today, there are many of us which have been delivered from worldliness, sin and lusts. Like Lot's wife, God's guiding angel took us by the hand and brought us out of damnation to a better life. But despite our deliverance there are many today who still look back with nostalgia on the life left behind, and lose themselves in the meantime.

Many have been delivered from alcohol and cigarette dependences that turned them into alcoholics and threatened their health. Many have been delivered from the need to spend endless hours in bars and discos trying to find happiness in smoke filled rooms. Many have been delivered from lives of drugs and crime that destroyed the moral fiber of their existences. But yet, though delivered by the hand of God himself, some "look back" and glamorize these days and characterize them as the "good old days." Some, as they reflect on the "good old days" are snatched back into the past by the offer of just one more drink, just one more smoke, just one more hit, just one more dance, and just one more stickup. To such, "looking back" is dangerous.

Lot's wife turned into salt because it symbolized her unwillingness to turn loose the "old days" or good times made possible through salt profits. Today if we were given the same fate, some of us would become whiskey bottles, packages of cigarettes, dollar bills, or automobiles. Some of us would become fishing poles! Some men would become women! Some women would become men!

Lot's wife was delivered, saved, but looked back!

We are not told not to tell of our past in testimony. We are warned not to look back on the sins of our lives with nostalgia. We are warned not to yearn for past worldliness.

Christ's warning was short and simple: "Remember Lot's wife." She was a woman who could not turn loose the past. Though thousands of years have passed since, there are many today who cannot turn loose the past. For them it is not a focal point upon which to pause and reflect but it is the essence of "real life" as they knew it, and desire it, and would return to it, if they could. To such yearning's Christ says: "Remember Lot's wife."

Just as Lot and his family were told to keep walking and don't look back, so should the modern pilgrim do the same. Keep walking; going forward without regrets.

Seek Higher Ground

Lot and his family were saved from destruction, but were told not to hang around that from which they had been saved. They were told to head for the mountains, to go to higher ground!

Likewise we, who have been saved by the grace of God, should never have second thoughts about our salvation, but constantly move toward higher ground.

David declared: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made the heaven and the earth." We should seek higher ground. Perhaps that's what Johnson Oatman had in mind when he wrote these words of a great hymn: "My heart has no desire to stay, where doubts arise and fears dismay; thou some may dwell where these abound, my prayer, my aim is higher ground. Lord lift me up and let me stand on heaven's table land; a higher plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

I don't know about you but there is nothing in my old life I'd like to go back to. Our past is a good place to be from but should be no place to go. Our testimony is that of the song writer who said: "Look where he brought me from...He brought me out of darkness into the marvelous light, look where he brought me from!"

He brought me out of:
-Guilt into his forgiveness, and I won't go back!
-Foolishness into his truth, and I won't go back!
-Shame into glory, and I won't go back!
-Sing into salvation, and I won't go back!
-Disgrace into amazing grace, and I won't back!
-Hatred into love, and I won't go back
-Worry into joy, and I won't go back

-Loneliness into friendship, and I won't go back!

I don't know about you but I've decided like Paul to forget those things which are behind and press toward mark of the prize of the high calling!

When you look back, look back to calvary and see:

-Love at work!

-Mercy manifested!

-Hope developed

-Faith given the victory!

Look back to Calvary and find joy of your salvation...it's Jesus!

No. 343-Inspiration

Ask for the Old Paths

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 7, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." Jeremiah 6:16a

Introduction

Reunions stir memories! Many people attend class and family reunions in the summer months. This is the time they return to the old stomping ground, meet old friends and reflect on fond memories. Class reunions become more important with age. The class of 91 probably won't really feel the need to reunite until 2011. As time passes more class members will desire to fellowship and remember the old times. Family reunions offer a different dimension, bringing together family members who are distant and introducing younger family members to relatives they do not know.

The common denominator of all reunions is that they prompt us to discover and rediscover the old paths. They give us an opportunity to think about tradition, heritage and the good times. It is a time when we sift the good from the bad and seek to find ourselves amidst an ever growing tide of "progress."

Progress is inevitable and so is change. But there is much to be gained from walking the old paths and listening to the voice of history as it speaks through the voiceless dust of the beaten path. In the wealth of the past there is strength for the future, therefore it is good sometimes to ask for the old paths.

As Christians, we understand the full meaning of the old path. We stand on principles that are as old as time but yet as fresh as the morning dew. We walk in the old path that is rooted in faith in God and service to our fellowman. If, in the name of progress, we are encouraged to walk away from our God, the Christian shall always find it necessary to "ask for the old path."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah as he speaks of Judah's impending destruction because it had abandoned the moral principle upon which it stood and had began to walk a new path that was distant from God.

The three world powers of the time were Assyria, which ruled the world for over

300 years; Egypt, which 1000 years earlier had been a world power and was jockeying for renewed prominence; and Babylon a rising world power. Judah had abandoned its devotion to God as its leaders pressed it to depend more heavily on its political alliances, idol worship, and oppression of the people for its salvation. The nation was traveling a new path which was totally foreign to the paths it had known for so many years.

Jeremiah lashed out against the moral decadence that the new attitude was promoting. Idol worship and its focus on sexual freedoms and the minimization of moral codes was a new path. Depending more on a political alliance with Egypt to save the nation from its enemy, Babylon, was a new path, especially for a nation that once depended solely on God for its deliverance, even in matters of politics. Oppressing the widows, robbing the public treasury and the tolerance for low morals among the leaders, were all new paths for Judah.

Jeremiah warned that any path, practice, life-style or attitude that directs the people away from God is undesirable. In this text verse God pleads with the people, through Jeremiah, to seek the old paths or principles upon which they once stood and once they have found them, he will give them protection and rest.

Something Old & Something New

Today, our times parallel the social conditions of this text. There is a general decline in morality as homosexuality comes out of the closet, and shacking, and promiscuity gain acceptability. Children are becoming adults at age 13 and an increasing number of people are becoming grandparents before they are 40. People today are making more money and saving less. Recent department of commerce reports revealed that only 30% of Americans under 40 have access to $2,000 or more without borrowing from family, friends or lending institutions. Welfare has become acceptable as a permanent life-style for many in this new generation.

There are too many in the work place who place the emphasis on the quantity of hours they work rather than the quality of the work performed. This is the meandering manner of the new path our society is taking. This new path, lined with the forage of individual freedom and self expression has led many away from God. As prosperity rises an increasing number of people, even church members, have less interest in studying God's word or public worship. As a result, Sunday school attendance is down, prayer meeting attendance is down, and public worship is down. People are preoccupied with smooth, free, life in the fast lane on the new path.

Against such a backdrop we find modern day Jeremiah's still sounding the appeal: "Ask for the old paths!"

Asking for the old paths, is not to suggest that everything that is old is divine. Neither does it suggest that every new innovation is evil. But it does suggest that every new path should take us in the same direction as the divinely inspired trails of old.

Asking for the old path suggest that the modern family, although redefined because of the changing role of each parent, must still be based on love, respect and a sense of community. It's something new, based upon something old.

Asking for old paths suggest that though new understand has given us access to greater sums of money, there is still some virtue in the old virtue of "saving for a rainy day." "A penny saved is penny earned" is an echo from the old path but it is valid even in this new day.

Asking for the old paths suggests that despite the rapid pace of our times there must always be quality time set aside for the worship and praise of God. It's an old fashioned idea that does not lend itself to the quickness of microwave technology, or the convenience of tuning out messages we don't want to hear by remote control. Giving God first place in our lives is an old path that is well worth following.

In our new circumstance there must be a delicate combination of something old and something new that gives us a modern way of accomplishing age old goals while living principles of truth and morality that have existed since the beginning of time. One without the other is counter productive. Following old methods alone contributes to stagnation and death. Following new methods that ignore the experience of the past is an invitation to failure.

Every generation must hear the words of the prophet "Seek the old paths!" Study them and reflect on them for in them is the way!

Divinely inspired Old Paths Lead to Glory

Finally, every man or woman should consider where the path selected will end. Jesus told his disciples that the path to destruction is broad and many people travel upon its pavement. But the path to glory is narrow and few are they that travel therein. The divinely inspired old path is a narrow path, but it is the highway to heaven.

Jeremiah told Israel that walking in the old paths was their only salvation because it would give them rest. By so saying, he gave us the clue to what lies at the end of the old path: rest!

The old paths will lead us to rest because the old paths, lead us to the Lord. I heard Jesus declare "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest!"

It might seem a little old fashioned but every now and then every good Christian looks for old paths. It's what the song writer meant when he wrote: "Take me back, take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received you. Take me back, to where I first believed."

Every now and then we like to close up the fancy hymn books and neatly arranged chords and listen to an old sister declare "I love the Lord, he heard my cry!"

When we are weak..look for the old path, for there we heard the word declare' "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost be upon you"

When we are hopeless..look for the old path, for there we heard the song writer

declare “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, old what foretaste of glory divine!”

When we are defenseless.. look for the old path, for there we remember that “A mighty fortress is my God, ..a very present help in a time of trouble”

When I travel the old path I remember that the Lord is ABLE:

-To encouraged the faint!

-To Strengthen the weak!

-Clothe the naked!

-Protect the Feeble!

-Notice the Neglected!

Every time I travel the old path it leads me to calvary!

Every time I travel the old path it leads me Jesus!

Jesus! The same yesterday, today and forever more!

My testimony is sure: “Walk with me Lord, Walk with me, while I’m on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!”

No. 341-Funeral

A Good And Faithful Servant

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 8, 1991

SCRIPTURE: "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the lord." Matthew 25:23

Introduction

Wake up servant there is work to do
There's a great plan that I have for you
I have considered others, but you are my best
You can do what I want, others will do less

Stand up servant there is work to do
A cobbler's wife, and a mother is chosen for you
Serve him and raise them and teach them my way
Do it faithfully, prayerfully, until your last day

Lay down servant you have finished your day
You've kept the faith, you have earned your pay
With finished task, done very well,
you have the joy of the Son
Now Lay down servant, you've finished your course
It was a job well done!

What is your purpose in this life? There are many who go through their entire lives without a focus on their mission and life purpose. These are souls that waste aimless years searching and wandering from place to place never settling on their peculiar mission. They bury their opportunities and fail to use them because uncertainty makes them fearful of failure.

One of the joys of the Christian life is the certainty of purpose that the Holy Spirit inspires in each of us. Somehow, the Saint can sense his purpose, understand it clearly and devotes his life's energies to fulfilling its demands. Sometimes that purpose calls for us to do great and mighty things that change the course of history and effect the lives of millions. Sometimes that purpose is simply to light one candle

in one dark corner of the world and show a few others how to keep it burning.

Good parents have a noble purpose. They provide the nurture, substance, strength and fiber for their growing children until they are able to stand on their feet. Good mothers are virtuous women, who with humility have accepted their life's purpose and have placed the welfare of their family well above their own aspirations. Good fathers work hard to see that their families have provisions and protection. It is a humbling purpose, which once assumed, will consume the remainder of our days on this earth.

As Christians, we are comforted to know that those of us who finish our course, completing our mission successfully and with honor, will reap rewards in heaven, and enter joyfully into the presence of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he gives a parable to illustrate the nature of the enterprising servant. In this parable Jesus depicts three servants, two of whom take their charge from their master seriously and courageously do all they can to carry out their mission. A third takes his opportunity for service and buries it, fearing it might be lost. The master returns and calls each servant before him to get a report on their stewardship. Each of the first two servants reported a great work for their lord. The third did nothing with his opportunity to serve and failed to use it. The servants that carried out their mission were rewarded. The one who failed to act was punished and forbidden the praises of his lord.

This parable presents the only place in the bible where the phrase "Well done, good and faithful servant" is used. It is the phrase used to describe the servant that had both strength of character and conduct to carry out the mission. It is unique because it signifies a servant that had two of the greatest virtues necessary for the Christian life: Character and Conduct.

There are many in the world who have character, but come up short on the ability to follow through on their life's purpose. Others work hard at their life's purpose but are visibly short on the character end. The good servants of this parable had both the character and the conduct that would earn them the praise of their lord as "Good and Faithful" servants.

Character

Character is best described as moral strength or excellence. It is those personal traits that identifies them as men and women of the world or men and women of the Lord.

Christian character is generally Christ like. It is humble but yet strong. It is sensitive but yet bold. It stands for right, opposes evil, and works to promote the cause of justice everywhere.

How can you recognize a woman of Character? She will exemplify the traits of

Godly women! Like Hannah, she will bring her children before the Lord. Like Naomi, she will embrace her daughter in law as her own. Like Mary, she will be obedient to the will of God. Like Ruth she will devote her life to God and conclude "your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God."

In the most common sense, character is the ability to live before your family and friends marching to beat of a heavenly cadence. Character is listening to God rather than man. Character is teaching Sunday School on Sunday and living the lesson seven days a week. Character is singing about God's grace in the church choir and then living gracefully when the singing is over.

Jesus describes the good servant as a person with character and inner strength that allows them to stand tall with God while never losing the common touch.

Conduct

While Jesus pointed to the "goodness" of the productive servant he also praised the "faithfulness" of the servant. Faithfulness is a reference to conduct and performance. Those who are faithful are those who carry out their mission with diligence despite handicaps, discouragements, and setbacks. There are many servants who have great character but are unable to be faithful for various reasons.

Faithfulness is what Abraham displayed when he was willing to sacrifice his son at the command of God. Faithfulness is what Mary and Martha displayed at the crucifixion when they were willing to stand by the Lord's side even though many of the disciples and gone into hiding. Faithfulness refers to the ability to pursue the mission with every ounce of energy available, with every breath of life.

When each of us comes into judgment it won't be the service we began that will be rewarded, but the service that we completed. Like there is no virtue in cake that was never baked or pie that never made it to the pan, a service that is only begun and never completed receives not accolades in heaven. What brings joys in heaven is the completed race! That's why Paul could write: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Faithfulness is the willingness to go on despite advancing age!

Faithfulness is the willingness to continue in prayer for others, if not in person then over the telephone!

Faithfulness is the willingness to carry out the mission even though sickness invades your person and aches and pains make life uncomfortable.

Faithfulness is undiminished loyalty to the mission! That's probably what Isaac Watts had in mind when he said "A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save and fit it for the sky!"

The Servant's Reward

Christ reminds us that each "good and faithful servant" has a reward in store. For the servants in the parable it was to be given authority over many things after being

faithful over a few.

Today each of Christian servant wants to hear that final judgment given to the loyal servants: “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of the lord.”

The great reward of the good and faithful servant is to enter “into the joy of thy lord.”

When we enter the joy of the Lord we exchange:

—Earthly pains for heavenly perfection
—Earthly crises for heavenly comfort
—Earthly sadness for heavenly happiness
—Earthly toils for heavenly rest
—Earthly gloom for heavenly glory
—Earthly rubble for Heavenly riches

The faithful servant works until the mission is complete. That’s what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: “I’m going to work until my day is done. I’m going to work until the setting of my sun. I’ll cease from sorrow, there’ll be no tomorrow. I’m going to work until my day is done.”

When this life is over and our work is done the saint wants to hear the praises of the Son saying “Well Done!”

The Christian mother’s quest is to hear the Lord say: You have accepted the mission! You remained faithful to your vows! You reared your children in the fear of the Lord! You kept the faith! Well Done!

———

Seventy nine years ago God spoke to a sleeping soul and said:

Wake up servant there is work to do
There’s a great plan that I have for you
I have considered others, but you are my best
You can do what I want, others will do less

Stand up servant there is work to do
A cobbler’s wife, and a mother for two
Serve him and raise them and teach them my way
Do it faithfully, prayerfully, until your last day

On Monday June 3, 1991 the Lord said to Sister Eliza Davis Pierce

Lay down servant you have finished your day
You’ve kept the faith, you have earned your pay
With finished task, done very well,
you have the joy of the Son.
Now Lay down servant, you’ve finished your course
It was a job well done!

No. 340-Inspiration

Talking Money

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright,Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La

June 2, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things." Ecclesiastes 10:19

Introduction

There is a poster on my wall that reads: Money talks, but all mine says is "Goodbye!" Money does talk. Listen to what we hear when we listen to a dollar bill talk: "You hold me in your hands and call me yours. Yet I may as well call you mine. See how easily I rule you? To gain me you would all but die. You will work yourself to death to get me. Your marriages have fallen apart as you argue over me. You have sold yourself to keep me. You do so much to get me, but I'd be only paper, if it were not for your desire to have me. I go no place you do not send me. I keep strange company. I go to church and to bars, sometimes in the same pocket. My power is terrific. Handle me wisely lest you become my servant rather than I yours."

Obviously money has a lot to say and people stop to hear its words. A familiar television commercial boasted about the financial advice of E.F. Hutton and it promoted the idea that when E.F. Hutton talks, everybody listens. Money talks and the impact of its words to affect the lives of men, depends a great deal upon whose listening to what it has to say.

As Christians, we know that money talks. It takes money to live and move freely in a commercial society. But we are not overly concerned with what money has to say. We spend our lives listening to the talk of our Savior, because our father is rich in houses and land, and holds the wealth of the world in his hands. While money talks, we keep listening for the words of the savior who keeps reminding us that the "Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

Money talks, but let us keep listening to God!

Exposition

This text finds Solomon, in his old age, reflecting on the power and impact of money on the lives of men. He warned against extravagance of parties, drinking and feasts at the expense of the people, because they all cost money.

Solomon's wisdom is reflected in the depth of this truth: With respect to things,

money has much to say. He says it clearly "but money answereth all things." In essence, what Solomon said was that when it comes to "things", money talks. Things, refers to Matter and matter is defined as anything that takes up space and has weight. With respect to the material things of this world, Solomon concluded that money has a lot to say.

When Money Talks

What does money say to the average man?

When Balaam the prophet of God heard money speak it said to him that he could be rich and powerful if he simply prophesied against the children of Israel and caused them to detour away from the promised land. Money spoke loudly for him and he was enroute to follow its dictates until God caused a mule to speak to him on his way. There are many people who have heard the voice of money speak and gone against their own principles and better judgement to acquire what they believe to be a better life.

When Money spoke to Delilah, she betrayed a strong man and made him weak. How many people will betray their husbands and wives because of the love of money. There are some who marry, not for love but for financial security. Money spoke louder than love. Such was the case with Delilah as she left her lover in the hands of his enemies.

When money speaks to the average man it speaks in dreams. Money shows us visions of fancy homes, long cars, jewels, and the luxuries of life. When money speaks, it talks about power and control and dominance over the destinies of man. When money speaks, it usually reaches to the the lowest, emptiest parts of man and finds his lusts and whispers in their ears. Such was the case when Jesus was in the wilderness alone with himself and God. But in his solitude Money talked. Satan showed Christ the prospects of riches, fame and fortune, power and dominion. Money spoke loudly to Christ but his response was "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When Money Talked, Jesus simply said "Get thee behind me Satan."

There are times when money can't talk loud enough. These are the times when the voice of prosperity comes face to face with principle. Men and women of principle turn a deaf ear to money talk, if it means giving up something that is more important to them.

Queen Jezebel wanted Naboth's vineyard. She admired it and wanted it to be a part of her own. She offered Naboth enormous sums of money for his vineyards and the price kept getting higher. No matter how much she offered he would not sell, because the vineyard was important to him.

The general idea of most people is that every man has his price and if offered enough even the best man will turn against his principle. In the Black community we have seen good men become the mindless puppets of politicians and power brokers outside of community because someone found their price and they listened to money talk. Churches tolerate a lower standard morality because some of those who give

well don't live well, and their money talks loud enough to buy the church's silence toward their sins. Many in the work place suffer humiliation and injustice because of the paycheck they receive each week. It speaks louder than the principles upon which they believe.

1 Timothy 6:10 reminds us that the "Love of money is root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves throught with many sorrows." When we fall in love with money we listen when it talks. We recognize money as only a means to accomplish an end and not an end in itself then we are free from its dominating power. The love of money has brought down nations and peoples.

Judas was carried away with the love of Money. When a poor woman took expensive oils to bath and wash the feet of the master, he complained that the oils could have been used better if they had been sold and the money put in the treasuring for feeding the poor. His love of money over ruled his comittment to the kingdom of God and he betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of Silver. While many frown upon Judas' action, there are millions today who sellout the Lord for much less ...especially when money talks.

Money Can't Buy Salvation

When the Apostles moved from place to place they ran upon one Simon who was a sorcerer of sorts. He saw them heal people in the name of Jesus and he came to them and offered them money to buy the power to heal. It was then than he learned that while money talks loudly with respect to "things" and can't be heard when it comes to things of the spirit.

Jesus warned men not to invest their treasures in silver and gold which can be corrupted but to build their treasure in heaven. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all of the other things will be added unto you" was his advice.

Solomon said money talks with respect to things and that is a true statement, but when it comes to salvation, money has nothing say!

Money can buy temporary happiness, but it cannot buy Joy! David who had money, had no joy and cried out to God "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!"

Money can buy companionship, but it can't buy love because "God is love" and God is not for sale.

Money can get you a front row seat in churches and high places, but it can't get you back seat in the king of heaven because I hear the word declare "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Money talks but when it came time for the salvation of men, heaven would only listen to the blood of the lamb!

When the Lord speaks, burdens are lifted!

When the Lord speaks, cares are removed!

When the Lord speaks, fears are banished!

When the Lord speaks, doubts are destroyed!

When the Lord Speaks, confusions are cleared!
When the Lord Speaks, crooked paths are straightened!
When the Lord Speaks, Failures become success!
When the Lord Speaks, Tragedies become triumphs!
Money talks but I heard the voice of Jesus say come unto me and rest. Lie die, lie down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!

No. 339-Inspiration

My Grace Is Sufficient

A **Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.**
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Cor 12:9

Introduction

Have you ever felt drained and worn out? Have you ever felt like you just could not go on? If so then you can probably relate to the story of the pilgrim in the wilderness.

A pilgrim, so the story goes, was on his journey home and had traveled through beautiful green valleys, and rested in the cool of the day. But after a while his journey carried him through the desert, which was without water, shade or even a cool breeze. Soon he began to thirst and he cried out to God: "Lord, I'm thirsty. Help me find water." In response he heard the Lord reply: "My Grace is sufficient." God led him to a pile of rocks and told him to pick up one and carry it.

Troubled by the additional burden, the traveler, called out to God: "Lord, I'm thirsty!" Again his answer was: "My Grace is sufficient." God showed him a large dried gourd and told him to carry it. Nearly exhausted, the pilgrim carried the rock and the gourd, frustrated with God. "I asked for water and he made my load heavier by adding a rock. I asked again and all he gave me was an empty gourd."

Under the cover of night the pilgrim stopped and rested against what appeared to be a large tree. He cried out to God that he could not go on. As he closed his eyes, completely drained, God's response was the same: "My Grace is sufficient for thee."

When the pilgrim opened his eyes the next morning he was laying against a great cactus, bulging with juices. God said "take the rock and cut the cactus. Take the gourd and catch the juices as they flow. When you have finished, fill your gourd and it will be enough to carry you home." The pilgrim gave thanks to God and rejoiced for truly God's Grace was sufficient for his need.

As Christians we feel drained at times, because we are human. It appears that instead of getting lighter, our load gets heavier. Sometimes we are frustrated because, the help we ask God for only seems to bring additional burdens. These are frustrating moment. But it's in moments like these that we should remember that God supplies our needs as we need them. If we continue to obey him he will prove to us that his Grace is sufficient for us to have life, and have it more abundantly.

Exposition

This text considers the Apostle Paul as he writes his second Epistle to the Corinthians. It addresses a peculiar moment in his life when he was frequently frustrated by what he called a "thorn in the flesh." There are two schools of thought with respect to his thorn in the flesh. One holds that it refereed to the presence of a physical illness that made his ministry more difficult. This school of thought suggests that the illness is Chronic Ophtalmia, a disease of the eyes. It was not extremely painful, but it made him repulsive in appearance. He referred to this illness in Galatians 4:13-15 and thanked the Galatians for tolerating his presence which must have been troubling to gaze upon. The second school of thought suggests that the "thorn" was not an illness but the presence of a "Messenger of Satan" which followed him everywhere he went. It focuses on the word "messenger" from the Greek word "Aggelos" which means "Angel of Satan." This school supposes that Paul believed that the troubles he faced in town after town were caused by this "messenger" which was a "thorn in his flesh."

Whichever of the theories is correct, they both have one thing in common; they point out that Paul was frustrated by something that made his work for God difficult. On three different occasions he asked God to remove the thorn, but God's answer was always the same "My Grace is sufficient." It appeared that the more he asked, the more troubles kept coming and always the response from God was "My Grace is sufficient for thee."

Paul concluded that God had good purpose in his actions because the constant frustrations that he felt kept him humble when it would have been easy to be caught up in pride. In his weakness, he wrote in verse 9, he became whole or complete. He resolved to glory in his frustrations knowing that if he does not give up that the glory of God will eventually rest upon him and give him the victory.

Three Thorns

Today there are many like Paul who are trying to live the Christian life but are troubled by a messenger of Satan which acts as a thorn in their flesh. Even the strongest Christian has experienced the presence of this thorn. Consider the various kinds of thorns:

ECONOMIC THORNS: There are some who are trying to live the Christian life, but they can never seem to get their finances in order. They try to save and something depletes their savings. Expenses keep mounting: Household appliances break, the car won't run, and the children need new shoes. Financially problems follow many of us around like a magnetic cloud. We worry so much about our finances that we can't think straight enough to talk to God effectively. Like Paul, who asked for the removal of his thorns, we have begged the Lord, on more occasions than one, to remove this thorn but it remains. After asking the Lord to remove it three times, Paul considered his thorn had never stopped him from accomplishing what he set out to

do, but it was humbling. In dealing with our finances, perhaps God is allowing us to accumulate just enough to keep us humble, knowing what we would do if we had more.

SOCIAL THORNS: There are many who live as Christians despite the frustrations we face in the community of men. Race discrimination, class differences, social injustice, and police brutality are just a few of the thorns that collectively effect many Christians as they try to live for God. Life would be much easier if we did not have to face these unfavorable conditions daily. They make our relations with men more difficult and they make it hard to be a Christian. Like Paul, we as a people have asked for their removal, but they still exist. In hindsight, the very presence of these social thorns help us to remember who we are and what others really think of us. We continue to progress, as a people, but these thorns tend to keep us humble, lest we forget our African ancestry and roots in the Black American community.

PERSONAL THORNS: These thorns involve our health and emotions. There are some of us who do well for the Lord, but feel we could do much more if we were not plagued by ill health personally or in our family. Sickness slows our pace. At times it drains our energy. We could do so much more without its presence. Likewise with our loves and enemies. Problems in courtship and marriage seem to plague some Christians and follow them from year to year. Others are always plagued by enemies who twist their words, misinterpret their deeds and impute bad motives on their actions. It is at least frustrating. How many times have Christians prayed for the removal of such thorns, but yet they seem to persist. Paul's answer here is that they keep us weak or in other words humble. They serve a purpose that is to our good for "all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord, according to his purpose."

Enough Grace For Our Needs

God's response to Paul was his grace was sufficient. When God says "My Grace is sufficient" he means that he gives us blessings and assistance in proportion to our daily need and in proportion to our ability to handle it.

Israel complained to God that there was no bread, so God's Grace rained down bread from heaven. But it was only enough grace to carry them from day to day and a double portion on the weekend. If there had been more grace than was needed, Israel would have stocked piled it decided they no longer needed the Lord.

Jesus taught us how to pray and in his prayer he said "give us our daily bread." Not tomorrow's bread, or enough to carry us until next year,but give us our "daily" bread.

If we are burdened by the presence of troubles that frustrate our Christian journey we should hear the voice of God speaking to us saying "My Grace is sufficient" for thee!

"My Grace" can take the worse and turn it into the best!

"My Grace" can take the least and turn it into the most!

"My Grace" can take the lowest and turn it into the highest!

“My Grace” can take a prison and turn it into a paradise!

“My Grace” can take a shadow and turn it into sunshine!

“My Grace” is sufficient for the lonely, no matter how pitiful they may seem!

“My Grace” is sufficient for the weak, no matter how feeble their steps!

“My Grace” is sufficient for the tired, no matter how exhausted their body!

“My Grace” is sufficient for the soul for it brings it to salvation

“My Grace” is sufficient for heart for it fills it with Joy”

No wonder the song writer declared “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like. I once was lost but now I’m found, blind but now I see.”

It was grace that carried a cross up Calvary’s hill!

It was grace that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning it was grace...that rose from the grave and grace will lead me through!

No. 338-Graduation

Giant Steps

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 26, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou has enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." Psalm 18:35-36

Introduction

Have you ever played the children's game "Father May I?" It's an interesting little game where one child is the caller and others line up some distance away and attempt to tag the caller by moving forward to touch him. The caller calls on the players and gives them a set number of steps to take, and instructions about how those steps are to be taken. The steps a player is given include "Baby Steps","Leap Frogs","Side Steps","Back Steps", and "Giant Steps."

When given an assignment of steps the player must respond "Father May I?" Once given permission to move the player executes his steps, moving closer to the caller. Any player that forgot to say "Father May I?" lost his chance to get more steps and fell behind in the line. The first player to tag the caller was the winner, and those who were fortunate enough to get giant steps made it to the caller the fastest.

To win a player needed two things. First he needed the favor of the caller because the caller almost certainly determined who won, with his ability to give side steps or leap frogs. Secondly, no player could expect to win without acknowledging the caller. No matter how many steps they were given, if the player forgot to acknowledge the caller he missed a turn.

There is a parallel to this children's game and our progression through life. There are many who begin the walk through life with success as a goal. They take baby steps and leap frogs as they move forward. Some are slowed in the progress by side steps and back steps and still others move quickly taking giant steps. The Christian youth learns the rules of life early. He learns that he can gain favor with God if he acknowledges him, respects him and follows his instruction. In a literal sense the Christian youth learns early that one secret to winning in life is never to forget to ask "Father May I?"

As Christians we keep our eye on the goal of seeing Jesus one day. He moves in us and we have our strength in his being. We can take giant steps in life and make it to our goals if we never forget Proverbs 3:6: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Exposition

The 18th Psalm is a psalm of reflection and deliverance. It was written by David at the close of his life as he reflected on his successes and failures. Chronologically, it is numbered "18" but was actually his last psalm. It is extracted from his experience in 2 Samuel 22:26-28 as he reviewed how God had advanced him, step by step, through life.

David rose from a mere shepherd boy to a mighty warrior as he fought against Goliath with only a slingshot and five smooth stones, that was a giant step from shepherd to king. He was hunted as a criminal by jealous King Saul and spent a great deal of time hiding in hills and caves, that was a side step. He went from fugitive to King of Israel in a mighty leap. He involved himself with murder in his sin with another man's wife, that was a step backward. He repented and gave God the praise for all his mighty works, that was another giant step in the right direction.

This psalm recounts the strides and steps of David's life, small ones, leaps and even steps backward. He gave all of the praise and glory to God for his final triumph.

Baby Steps

Pre-teens today begin their service to God with baby steps. The baby steps begin by coming to Sunday School, bible school, learning bible passages and learning to praise God in small ways. These small experiences build hope and faith for the great things to come. They even give courage in the face of family trouble, and trouble at school.

Baby steps begin with a very simple truth: "Yes Jesus loves me, for the bible tells me so." Knowing that God loves you and wants the best for you certainly helps you to move forward with confidence.

Leap Frogs

If the pre-teen years represent baby steps then moving from pre-teen to Adolescence is a leap frog. It is a big jump. It's the time when hairstyles, clothing and being popular suddenly become important. It's the time when interest in the opposite sex arouses, the body changes, and minds begin to wander.

It is a confusing time when youth are torn between choices and values taught by the home and church and the values of their peer group. Home and church says fear God and respect him every day. But the real world on the school campus gives confusing signals: It's O.K. to go to church, but those who try to actually live by God's rules are usually called Nerds.

Leaping into teen-age years is a big jump for anybody. One day you are wearing ribbons in your hair and the next day you are wearing stockings on your legs, make-up on your face and gloss on your lips. One day a boy talks in a high shrilling soprano

and a few days later he is a rumbling baritone.

Christian adolescents jump into their teen-age years with the words of Eccesiastes on their mind: "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them."

Sidesteps and Backsteps

But if there are baby steps and leap frogs, every teen, before he finishes high school, will face some side steps and back steps.

Sidesteps are those times when teens lose their focus. They do not go forward and do not go backward they move to the side while others pass them by. These are the times when they do not give their best, and they are not proud of their grades and general school performance. Some lose interest in school because of family or personal problems and step aside as the rest of their generation passes them by. Some get involved with gangs or delinquent activities that take them off the right track and they are sidestepped. Those who sidestep can never make it to the goal!

If sidesteps are troublesome, then backsteps are worse. These are teens who get involved in crime, drugs, and alcohol. Those who take a step backward are those who become fathers and mothers while they are still children themselves. Those who are stepping backward have an impossible time going forward. Continuously walking backward will not end in success it will only put you in the back of the growing crowd of competitors in your generation.

A side step or two does not have to mean the end. Those who have ventured in the wrong direction can profit from it. We can turn from gangs, crime, drugs and alcohol. Although you may have fathered a child or become a mother, you don't have to do it again. Many people have made backward steps, but the key is whether or not they continue moving backwards or correct their course and move forward again. For David his backward steps involved adultery. But he repented and asked God to "Create in me oh Lord a clean heart." Youth today who have made backward steps can get back on the right track just as easy.

Giant Steps

Today's graduates, between them, have realized the entire range of David's experiences. They have taken baby steps, leap frogs, sidestepped and some may have backstepped a little. But as they ponder the impact of graduation they realize that it is one of the giant steps in life.

While graduation is one giant step, graduates should remember that this step is just one in a progression of steps that they will take in life before they make it to "home base."

Now, as young adults, they begin again in a new phase of life they have not experienced before. It has new challenges, pitfalls and dangers. But, just as they have successfully moved through their pre-teen and adolescence, we challenge them to

move ahead one step at a time, one day at a time.

But every graduate should keep in mind the cardinal rule of the game of life, before you move, don't forget "father may I?" Don't forget to talk to God! You may become engineers, doctors, union workers or soldiers, but never make a step without acknowledging God.

If you acknowledge and trust the Lord he will:

—Hear your prayers
—Forgive your sins
—Solve your problems
—Fulfill your dreams
—Satisfy your soul
—Calm your nerves
—Direct your footsteps

As you take this giant step in life remember the words of the great hymn "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land ..I am weak but thou are mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand!"

Take this giant step holding on to the faith that God will guide you every step of the way.

The song writer was right when he declared "Step by step, we'll make this journey, even though the way seems hard, hard, hard! Step by step, we'll make this journey, if we just put our trust in God.!"

No. 337-Funeral

A Teacher's Evaluation

A Funeral Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 22, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." Proverbs 4:11

Introduction

Is there a fair way to evalute an educator? Today, there is considerable public sentiment in favor of teacher evaluations, although there is no clear consensus on just how it can be done effectively and objectively. There is a wealth of subjective evaluation already in process.

In the course of his career, the educator is mixed bag of sentiment from those he works with and the public in general. If he asks others for advice-he's incompetent. If he gets things done his way-he's a dictator. If he sticks to fundamentals-he's antique. If he insists on discipline-he's too firm. If his pupils run wild, he's too easy. If he has a sense of humor, he's not intellectual. If he can't take a joke, he's cold and heartless. If he greets the ladies with smile, he's fresh. If he doesn't, then he lacks finesse. If he agrees, he's a rubber stamp. If he disagrees, he's hard to get along with. Everybody has their own opinion about educators, and if teachers were evaluated by the standards of some, most of them would always come up short.

The prospect of facing subjective evaluators who could ruin brilliant teaching careers with the stroke of a pen has caused many educators to abandon their profession rather than undergo evaluation of their performance with an imperfect instrument. Certainly the incompetent fear evaluations, but even the best educators desire impartial and objective review.

Whether we want it or not, there will be a teacher's evaluation. Just as there will be a lawyer's evaluation and a plumber's evaluation and laborer's evaluation, there will be an evaluation day for every living soul. The evaluation will be performed by a just and fair judge, using a uniformed standard.

When life's final school bell rings and tests, pupil assignments, inservice workshops and faculty meetings have ended, the educator will most certainly be judged by the same standard as everyone else: Was he true to his God? Was he true to himself? Was he true to his calling?

As Christians we look forward to evaluation day. Unlike the sinner who worries about it, we know our work will be judged by a just God who understands our

shortcomings, has forgiven our corrected mistakes and wants us to join him in the glorios Kingdom of heaven.

Exposition

The Book of Proverbs, written by King Solomon, is a collection of truths that he learned about life, the hard way. His own personal life was a merry-go-round of trial an error, truth and consequences. Although he was a wise man and had many virtues he had his weaknesses. He had a plethora of marriages: 300 wives and 700 girl friends. Though he was great and wise he built his elegant lifestyle with an extremley high taxation of the people. He experienced both success and failure. The truths he recorded in Proverbs were a summation of his experiences in life. His conclusion about the importance of his life was not in the vastness of his education, the number of houses that he built and accumulated, or what semblance of prosperity he had achieved. In his declining years Solomon concluded that the most important things in life were not possessions but were those things which reflected the fear and respect of God.

He became a great teacher. He taught his children from his experiences, both the good and the bad. He wrote a whole book about the successes, mistakes and trials of his life, named it Ecclesiastes, and taught it to his children. The proverbs were taught to his children and the children of the kingdom. Solomon was the first and only king who provided the curriculum materials for and encouraged the instruction of the young in such a way. For all practical purposes he was perhaps the world's first supervisor of elementary education.

In Proverbs 4 Solomon talked with one of his children as his life neared its end. He explained that he has taught them the best that he could, from the wisdom of his experience. He emphasized that he lead his children in the right path, even in areas where he himself had failed. His desire was for his children to gain wisdom and understanding from his experience. To the best of his human ability Solomon explained to his children "I have led you in the right path" or "I have pointed you in the right direction."

The Three Dimensions of Wisdom

The greatest job of any teacher is to help his student use life wisely. The best teachers are those who catch the imagination and hearts of their students. The mystical instruction and wisdom of experience is an invaluable talent that is difficult to measure. It's a balance that cannot be achieved within the rigid structure of bulletin 741, a curriculum guide, or tightly packed time tables that allow a few minutes for teachers to machine gun information, but no time to creatively share the wisdom of their knowledge and experience in pratical applications. The danger to such a sterile and clinical approach to teaching is that we graduate generations of of educated fools, armed with knowledge without wisdom.

Solomon taught his own children before he attempted to teach or supervise the instruction of others. The wisdom that Solmon shared was simply that they should Respect God, be true to yourself, and give life their best shot.

The first wisdom-lesson any father teaches his children is respect of God. He shows them by precept and example exerpted from his own experience, that there is a higher being to whom he is responsible. He teaches his children that the moral cadence is set in a distant horizon and it determines the pace of our march through life. The good father teaches his children to respect the power of God, appreciate the love of God, and to pray for the mercy of God.

One of byproducts of knowing God is that it helps you develop a second dimension of wisdom: to know yourself. Only when we knows ourselves as reflected in the perfect will of God do we come to grips with the fact that we are prone to sin and mistakes, and doomed to self destruct without him. When we learn who we are and accept our fallibilities, we are humbled at our unworthiness. When a man knows that he does not chart his own course that's when he can say like the song writer: "Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and shape after thy will, as in thy presence I'm yielded and still."

The third dimension of wisdom is to be true to your calling. It is wisdom to pursue excellence. To tackle your life's calling with everything you have is wise advice. This is that old fashioned wisdom which says: "If you can't be the pine at the top the hill, be a shrub in the valley. But be the best little shrub in the valley." If you are teacher, then teach with everything that you have in you! Good teachers always remember the maxim: That to TEACH they must REACH! Reach for the student who is lashing out at the world because nobody cares..Reach! Reach into the mind and soul of the intellectually abandoned and pull out their best..Reach! While it is true that you must teach to reach, it is also true that to REACH you must TEACH. Despite the complaints and troubles that make it difficult...Teach! Despite the headaches and obstacles that come your way! Teach! Despite frustrating bureaucracy, troublesome paperwork and disinterested parents...teach!

Teacher's Evaluation

It is a good thing to be a teacher. It is even better to be a Christian who is a teacher. Christian's who are teachers do their best in service and don't worry so much about the evaluation of men, but focus on that great evalution they will receive when they stand before God.

While others worry about it, the Christian can't wait for his "STAR" evaluation.

The evaluator may ask: Does he know the Lord? I hear the saint respond "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I tried him for myself!" -Give him a star!

Has he been Saved? Just the other Sunday I heard him sing "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore; very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me!" —Give him a Star!

Has he been faithful to his calling? The saint declares: I've done my best. The songwriter said: "When I've done the best I can. If my friends don't understand then my Lord will carry me Home. After I have done my best I will find a peaceful rest, when my savior carries me home. When my best I've tried to live, my mistakes he will forgive, when my savior carries me home!" —Give him a Star!

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On Sunday May 19, 1991 Charles Edwards, a father, and a great educator, was called for his final evaluation. If respect for God, a repentant born again spirit, and service to others are the measures, there is most certainly a star in his crown.

No. 454-St. John's Day

Along Came John!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 24, 1993

SCRIPTURE: ***There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. John 1:6-8***

Introduction

How would like to have the same name as someone else? It Could be confusing, especially if both are known by their first name and rarely their last name. Such a case would be similar to the little girl that walked in the crowded train station with her father and held tight to his hand. There were people everywhere and she held tight because she did not want to let him out of her sight. However, when her father let go of her hand to get the tickets she was bumped in the crowd and lost sight of her father. She began to panic because she could not see her father anywhere. She ran to a police officer and told him that she was lost from her father. She described him as a man with an Afro.That stumped the police because the station was filled with any number of African-American men who could fit her description. The little girl wondered why they seemed so confused and asked the nature of the problem. "We don't know where to begin" said one officer. The little girl innocently responded "That's O.K. call over the loudspeaker and ask for 'daddy' and you'll find him." "Is there anyone here that answers to the name 'daddy'" asked the police. Immediately a dozen hands went up; nearly every hand in the station. It seemed that everyone answered to the same name. When the girl was more specific, they found her dad.

That is the dilemma that many bible students have trying to tell the difference between the two Johns of the Gospels, John the Baptist and St. John, often called the evangelist. Both were highly important men to the ministry of Jesus, but novice bible students and beginners in the faith usually get the two mixed up. Sometimes John the Baptist gets credit for the fourth gospel and St. John gets credit for the wilderness revival. The two men both are important, but their roles in the development of the faith are uniquely different.

Free Masonry uses the life of each man to commemorate symbolic important steps in masonry. There are two distinct festivals that honor both men. On June 24th John the Baptist and his wilderness message is honored. On December 27th, St. John the Evangelist is honored in a separate and special festivity. Combined, those who

share in the fellowship come to know the difference between St. John and John the Baptist. They also know the important role that each of them played in the life of Christ, fostering of the Gospel message to all generations.

Exposition

This text focuses on two men named John in the bible. One, John the Baptist, was a forerunner of Christ announcing to the world that he was about to come. The other, John the Evangelist, spent his life following Jesus and telling the world that he has already come.

John The Baptist

John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. Though John was the son of a priest, he forsook the opportunity to become an important member of the acknowledged religious community and assume his role as a priest. He grew up in the tutelage of the priests. He was trained to be a priest because his father was a priest and it was expected that he would do the same. He studied the scriptures, learned the ritual and was probably privy to many private conversations and dealings of the priests.

However, John did not have any intention of becoming a priest himself. He was drawn to another mission and constantly retreated to the wilderness where he prayed and studied for long periods of time, surviving on locust and wild honey. As he grew older, his retreats into the wilderness became extended. He patterned himself after the prophet Elijah. He focused on reforming the evils and wrongs he saw in society and prepared himself to be a forerunner for the coming savior of the people. After many years of self preparation, sacrifice, study and prayer in the wilderness, John began his public ministry, just before Jesus was to begin his public ministry.

The main scene of most of his activity was the Jordan River. He baptized, or literally took converts completely under the water, as a symbol of their repentance and readiness to accept the Messiah when he made his appearance. Thousands came to hear John and were baptized. Many became his disciples. They learned how to fast, pray and live humbly. Many were dedicated followers, so much so that some, like Apollos, continued to baptize with John's Baptism 25 years after his death.

John The Evangelist

John the Evangelist or John the Apostle was a son of Zebedee, who was a Galilean fisherman. John was one of the earliest disciples called to follow Jesus. He and his brother James were known for their fiery natures. Jesus called the two of them the "sons of thunder." John constantly referred to himself in his gospel account as the "beloved disciple." He is seen involved with Jesus closely: 1)At the Last Super he leaned on Jesus' breast 2) At the cross he alone was faithful, and was entrusted

with the care of Jesus' mother 3)At the tomb he was the first to believe in Jesus' resurrection 4)At the sea of Galilee he first recognized the Lord.

As the beloved disciple, John worked to interpret the new faith that Christ gave for a new age and time. He came at a time when bonds with Judaism were being broken and many gentiles came into the church. He worked to transplant the gospel into Greek soil. He taught men and women about the incarnation of Christ and how he became flesh that he might show men the way to eternal life. He spent his life preaching Jesus as both a historical person and as the invisible Lord who is ever present with his people.

The Baptists of Today

The two Johns of the gospel accounts have one thing in common, both talked of and were influenced by the same man, Jesus of Nazareth.

Today brothers and sisters, there are many new trends that will come among us, but it is imperative that as a new age dawns that we make sure that the focus never strays away from Jesus.

John the Baptist, constantly told his followers that he was not the light but he only bore witness to the light. We too should continue to bear witness to the power of the resurrected Lord.

Our primary function as witnesses is to tell a dying world that there is hope. Like John the Baptist, we must serve as God's advance man, warning a doomed society of approaching death and destruction and the coming of the kingdom of God. We must speak out against evil, learn to fast and pray and be willing to stand firm for God even at the expense of our own lives.

Our times are much like those of the two Johns of the Gospel accounts. There is racism and sexism in the land. Tyranny and corruption in government have made life unbearable for many. Religious leaders, instead of speaking against the evils of our day have chosen to become introverts, focusing on the rituals of their religion rather than speaking out against corruption. These difficult times call for modern day Johns to speak out against murder, robbery, sex sins, and a plethora of other problems that seem to beset us. We should constantly point the world to the second coming of Christ, the defeat of Satan, and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven by Christ himself. We should not preset ourselves as the light, but we should bear witness to the light.

Like John, Stay close to God

F inally, every Christian should follow the pattern of John the Evangelist and stay close to God. John constantly referred to himself as being close to the Lord, either by laying on his breast or being with him at the cross. Today every believer needs to take his example to heart and learn the strength and encouragement that comes from staying close to the Lord.

In the midst of praise and adulation, John was close to the Lord

In the midst of dangerous times, John was close to the Lord.

Today, in the midst of our battle against sin and Satan, the victory is certain if we stay close to the Lord.

When our burdens seem unbearable, we can bear them with great strength if we stay close to the Lord.

When you stay close to the Lord he will take the:

—bitter and make it better

—weaker and make it stronger

—childish and make it mature

—barren and make it fruitful

—poorer and make them richer

The Hebrew Boys learned that those who stay close to God, can get a "fourth man in the fire."

We should stay close to the Lord and give him our love, because he first loved us.

John's greatest testimony about the love of God came in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"

He loved us so much that he came to a sinful world and died on an old rugged cross.

He loved us so much that he laid down his life, but picked it up again after three days and nights! He loves us so much today that he offers salvation to anyone who will accept him!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me, for the bible tells me so!

No. 455-Inspiration

A Declaration of Independence

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 4, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.."Leviticus 25:10 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19.

Introduction

What is the Fourth of July? For many it is a time for feasting, drinking and festivity? To others it is a time to participate in their favorite pastimes, try their hand at bar-be-Que and relax. Others find it a convenient time for school and family reunions. Children see it as a joyous time of fun, firecrackers and freedom to do many things out of the ordinary.These are parts of our nation's Fourth of July celebration. The day marks the signing of the Declaration of Independence by 56 men who represented the 13 original colonies of the United States. On May 17, 1776 all colonists were asked to pray for God's blessings on deliberations of colonial leaders as they put into words their feeling about the need for freedom for all men. The phrases they coined as they articulated their thoughts were lofty: "that all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

On July 4th, when the document was signed, the words of Leviticus 25:10 were inscribed on a large bell, known as the Liberty Bell, which they rang so hard, legend says that it cracked down the middle. The words on the bell read: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." People ran through the streets announcing colonial freedom. Nearly a century later Frederick Douglass would ask "What, to the American Negro, is your Fourth of July?" as he contrasted the irony of those who demanded personal freedom but still held human beings as slaves in the back of their mansions.

American Liberty did not come with the Declaration of Independence, but the process began. Freedom would be won only after the shedding of blood and the sacrifice of many lives. The freedoms we enjoy today have been bought with a price, first paid by an African-American, Crispus Attucks the first to die for American freedoms. Though we still fall short of the ideal, we are closer today to extending liberty to all than ever before.

As Christians we also celebrate the liberty of our nation and we are keenly aware of its cost. The forefathers of this nation gave their lives for independence but, we know that there is a greater freedom which we have all achieved, and that freedom is in Jesus. As we join the celebration of our nation's independence, let us forever keep in mind that we are totally dependent on our Lord to maintain the liberty he has given us through his act of sacrifice on Calvary!

Exposition

This text focuses on two independence declarations recorded in the Bible. One was short lived, the other was revolutionary to the point that it changed the entire world.

Leviticus 25 records God's Declaration of Independence for all who were enslaved, in debt, poor or otherwise physically entangled. It is generally referred to as "Jubilee." In short, Jubilee involved a series of Sabbath years, in patterns of seven, which required all of Israel to allow its fields and land to rest every seventh year. There was to be no work during this time and the poor were allowed to gather food from the fields freely. After seven such Sabbath years the nation was to observe a special year on the 50th' year called "Jubilee." On Jubilee day God made a "Declaration of Independence" that canceled all contracts, settled all debts, and freed all slaves. The original intent of the Jubilee was to remind man that everything belongs to God and nothing belongs to man permanently, whether it was land or personal property. True liberty and independence could only come from obedience and loyalty to God himself. As time passed however, men found tricky ways to get around the spirit of Jubilee and it became one of the few laws of Moses that were rarely observed. When Jubilee came, most people knew that they would be declared free in theory, but not in practice.

The idea of Jubilee seemed to fade into obscurity. Why? Because it required a spirit of brotherhood and compassion for others that did not exist. Despite being ordered by God, the selfishness of men was the order of the day. In Jeremiah 34:13-16 it becomes obvious that the people did not observe God's law. In fact, they openly defied it. Jubilee was a law that preceded the morality of men and was among the few that was generally ignored, although many hoped for its implementation. To be effective however, laws must reflect the general morality of the people. The idea of Jubilee was great, but in reality the people found it impractical and there is no evidence in the Old Testament that it was ever observed. Jubilee was a Declaration of Independence and freedom in word only, because its basic tenets, brotherly love and compassion, were not in the hearts of the people.

In Luke 4 Jesus announces his ministry to the world after 30 years of preparation and 40 days and 40 nights of prayer. He announced that he had come to set free the captives, and declare the acceptable year of the Lord. Rather than force men to follow laws that did not issue from their hearts, Jesus sought to change their morality. After changing their morality their laws would follow. His would be a revolution that would

change the world by changing the hearts of men. Love, compassion for others and respect for God would be the key elements of his ministry. Those who follow Jesus, one by one, announce their personal "declaration of independence" and begin to live new lives, free from the slavery imposed upon them by others.

Dependent People

In 1776 the Colonist found themselves dependent on England for everything from military protection to the simple things of life such as "tea." Dependence however, suggested control, and they found the dominating control of England too much, so they declared their independence.

Today there are many who are more dependent than they would like to be on things of this world. Some have become totally dependent upon artificial sources of happiness and peace. To these, happiness has become a lively party in a crowded night club and peace is B.B. King on the juke box and a cold bottle of wine. Some have become dependent upon legally prescribed drugs to wake up in the morning, to keep them awake in the day and to put them to sleep at night. Some have become intoxicated with possessions and have become slaves to the marketplace, living from moonlight madnesses to blue light specials. Many have become slaves to their homes and cars, literally working themselves into the ground with two and three jobs to acquire them. Most of those who are overly dependent on the world, know it but have found themselves powerless to do anything about it. Some have accepted it as their fate in life and have sentenced themselves to a life of perpetual dependence.

Declaration of Independence

To those who have found themselves burdened by this world the words of Jesus are good news! He has come to bring us an opportunity for liberty! He has come to free us from the shackles placed upon us by the expectations of this world! He has come to set us free! Hear his words: "he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

The liberty that Christ offers is not rooted in a plethora of laws, judicial edicts, or executive orders. It is one that comes from freeing us on the inside from our dependence on things of this world for happiness and peace.

It's the kind of inner peace and contentment that comes from loving God and obeying his commandments!

It's the kind of freedom that would make our ancestors sing "You can have this whole world, just give me Jesus!"

To some that might sound illogical, but to those who know him Jesus is the real meaning of liberty, peace and happiness.

They have found that there is no:

—Pain that afflicts us that Jesus cannot ease

—Weakness that envelopes us that Jesus cannot strengthen
—Fear that surrounds us that Jesus cannot calm
—Loneliness that invades us that Jesus cannot comfort
—Burden that encumbers us that Jesus cannot lift

Somebody here can testify that Jesus has set them free! Somebody here can declare that the world Shackled me in:

—Anxiety but Jesus gave me assurance. Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine!

—Despair but Jesus gave me hope! Now I can sing "I have hope, when trouble comes my way. I have hope when Jesus comes to stay. It's a beautiful hope that sets me free!"

—Curses but Jesus gave me blessings! I get a blessing every day. Blessing in the morning! Blessing in the Noonday! Blessing in the midnight hour!

After a Declaration of Independence, some blood must be shed. As a nation we fought and died but it didn't free us on the inside. We died at Lexington and Concord! We died at Bunker Hill! We suffered at Valley Forge. But all of our suffering didn't free our souls!

I'm so glad that when Jesus signed my declaration of independence to set my soul free and that he backed it up with his own blood!

He carried an old cross to Calvary's hill!
He died an unsightly death on a unsightly cross!
But he rose after three days to write my title clear!
As the world celebrates let us continue to sing!
I sing because I'm happy!
I sing because I'm free!
For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me!

No. 456-Homecoming

At Home, I'm Not Alone

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 18, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:32-33(NIV) "...and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20

Introduction

Have you ever been home, but felt alone? These were the times when your house may have been full of people and the signs of life were everywhere, yet you felt alone. It was an unsettling feeling of vulnerability and that made you uncomfortable and insecure. There are many people at home, but they are home alone.

The movie "Home Alone" featured a small boy whose parents left him alone to fend for himself. Somehow his parents left on a trip and did not notice that they had left him alone at home until they were miles away in an airplane. While at home alone burglars came and tried to invade the premises. Their attempts were repeatedly foiled by witty tricks played on them by the little boy. One of his tricks was to make the burglars think that he was not alone. He turned on lights, and created movements in the house that appeared authentic, but the burglars continued as they saw through his guise. They were never quite able to capture this smart kid whose parents left him alone and.

There are many who have thrown their entire lives into the service of this world and its Satanic master. Many have discovered that he cares little for them and always leaves them alone. When trouble comes in its varied forms, they try to pretend they are not alone, but it never seems to work, because inside they know they are hopeless. However, we who love the Lord have his assurance that at home with him, we will never be left alone. On leaving this earth Jesus told his disciples: "Lo, I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth." As long as we stay close to God, we will never be alone. Our home will be a place of happiness, peace and love because Jesus is there!

As Christians, let us strive to keep the love of God burning in our hearts. When we do so that we can rise above the troubles of this earth, knowing that as long as we are at home with Lord, we'll never be alone!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he as spoke to his disciples about his approaching trial on Calvary. He warned them about an approaching time when they would be scattered and persecuted by the forces of the world, sending each person to his own home in retreat. In the midst of persecution, however, he gave them an example to follow and a reason to be of good cheer. Although times will come when even at home, hidden from the prying eyes of the world, they will feel alone, they are not alone, as long as God is near.

This truth was best exemplified in the trials of Christ himself. The prospect of Calvary was a lonely proposition. Though surrounded by disciples, he was almost constantly alone, for few of them really understood the nature of his mission. As he neared completion of his task on earth Jesus projected that even more of his disciples would desert him. However, he knew he would never be totally alone, because the father was always with him. Jesus' predictions came true. Judas betrayed him. Peter denied him. Many of his disciples kept their distance from him as he suffered the humiliation of Calvary. Through it all, however, the father was with him and he was never, really alone.

Upon his return to heaven he assembled his disciples and told them that he would not leave them alone saying: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:18. His final charge to his disciples was to remind them that whether they were at home or on foreign shores, he would be with them constantly. "..and lo; I will be with you alway, even until the end of the world." Matthew 28:20.

At home or on the stormy sea, Christ's reminder to his followers is still the same "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." His words of faith and confidence now become the watch words of his followers: "I am not alone, because the father is with me.!"

It's lonely Away From Home

There are many who have left home for one reason or another and have found themselves lonely for home. Some traveled to distant places and their eyes have feasted on the wonders of the world, only to feel a yearning for home. Thousands of miles from the Orient, the Chinese have China Town in every major city. Little Italy is a bastion of Italian culture for those who want to remember home. Yes, even thousands of miles from home there is always a place where the aroma of soul food fills the air and there is somebody there who can give some news from home.

Daniel was taken into captivity by the Babylonians and though he was thousands of miles away from Jerusalem he still worried about home. Three times each day he opened his window and looked toward Jerusalem prayed for himself and the folks back home. Though surrounded with the splendor of Babylon, he still was lonely for home. Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the king, enjoyed his job but his face was constantly sad. He found it hard to be truly happy, so far away from home.

Jeremiah was so lonely away from home that he cried daily and a whole book of the Bible called "Lamentations" was written about his lonely yearnings for home. The Prodigal son in his poverty considered the hired servants back home and decided that there is "no place like home."

Just as it is lonely away from our hometown and our family, it is even more lonely when we have strayed away from God. Some, like the Prodigal, have drifted into the far country and found themselves lonely. Just as beautiful houses don't make happy homes, neither do the trappings of success guarantee us the feeling of fulfilment and happiness that comes from doing God's will. Outside of God the finest house, the shiniest car, and the most prestigious job, still leaves a feeling of loneliness, insecurity and emptiness. Conversely, those who are at peace with God find comfort, security and joy in even the smallest things. Paul explained this peace in this way in Philippians 4:11-13 ".. for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

There are many who are away from God who try to appear as if they are not alone. They vainly participate in an abundance of "churchy" type activities in a desperate masquerade to veil their separation from God. Some sing in the choir, or usher, or give a variety of services. They appear at peace with God, when in actuality they are "home alone." Many are like King David whose adulterous relationship with Bathsheba estranged him from God. He appeared at peace to his constituents but inwardly he cried out to God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." Psalm 51:10-12

When we distance ourselves from God we may be at home, but we may as well be alone, because outside of God there is no:

—Comfort in times of sorrow; or Encouragement from the Word of God

—Strength gained from worship; or Assurance received after prayer

—Satisfaction from your church; and No relief from despair

When we are outside of God we may be home, but we may as well be home alone because we have shut out the one person that give us assurance, Jesus, the Son of God.

At Home, We're Never Alone

If there is a loneliness associated with being apart from God, there is a comfort and assurance that comes from being with God.

Jesus displayed this clearly with his disciples. Although his friends and associates would be scattered in many directions and some would betray him and leave him alone, he knew he would never really be alone, since the father was near.

I'm reminded of three elderly ladies who had to stay at home alone. One of the

women grew confident and bragged that she had a .357 magnum to protect her if anyone came to bother her. The second lady said she had a .44 and knew how to use it. The third lady said she had 1-44 and a 27:1 and she was ready no matter what came her way. That night burglars came to all three homes and the women met the next day talk about their experience. The first woman said "I tried to use my .357 but I forgot to load it and the burglar took all my belongings. The second woman said she fired her .44 but it knocked her through the door and the burglar got away. The third woman said "Nothing happened at my house, nobody came in." The two ladies wanted to know her secret and she replied: "While you carried a .44 I carried Psalm 144 which says 'Blessed be the Lord my strength...my goodness, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield, in whom I trust.." To her friend she said "You carried a .357, but I carried Psalm 27:1 ' The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid.?' When you went home you were alone, but I've got somebody who will never leave me alone!"

I don't know about you but I've got somebody who knows what lurks around every door and corner! I've got somebody who knows what hides behind every unseen door! Better still I've got somebody who will never leave me home alone for I heard him declare and "lo I am with you alway, even until of the earth"

"I've seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll. I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which tried to conquer my soul. I've heard the voice of my savior he bid me still fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

No never alone!

He promised never to leave me ..never to leave me alone!

No. 457-Youth

Family Feud

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 25, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Genesis 37:18-20 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

Has there ever been trouble in your family that resulted in bad feelings? How long did it last? How did you resolve it? There are many families today that are divided and broken because of bad feelings that have divided them over the years. Angry families hold grudges for years and treat blood relatives like outcasts and worse than strangers. Its all a part of what is known as the "family feud."

On television, family feuds appear to be simple games where everyone leaves smiling. A host introduces two families that are all smiling and cheering, hugging and kissing each other as they play against another friendly family for prizes and awards. In real life, family feuds are no fun. Sometimes they continue from generation to generation. Take, for example, the notorious Hatfield-McCoy feud.

It hit newspaper front pages in the 1880's, when the Hatfield clan feuded with the McCoy clan from across the border in Kentucky. Historians disagree on the cause of the feud — which captured the imagination of the nation during a 10-year run. As many as 100 men, women and children died.In May 1976, Jim McCoy and Willis Hatfield — the last two ceremony dedicating a monument to six of the victims. McCoy died Feb. 11, 1984, at age 99. He bore no grudges — and had his burial handled by the Hatfield Funeral Home in Toler, KY.

Most family feuds can be traced back to rivalries among children who all sought to win the affection of a favorite authority figure. The quest to outshine a brother or sister that has lingered into adult life is often at the root of many family feuds.

There was great disagreement even among the disciples of Christ as to which of them would get special places of honor in the kingdom. As James and John sought special favors with the other Christ the seeds of a bitter rivalry were sown but was quickly dispelled by the master. His message to them and to us to day is that God loves us all, and gives favor to whomever he pleases in whatever way he pleases.

As Christians, we have learned to love our brothers and sisters, and family members. We celebrate their accomplishments, mourn their failures and give God the praise and the glory. In the families that know God, "Family Feud" should only be a television show!

Exposition

This text considers Joseph and his brothers as envy and jealously causes a bitter family feud that almost ended in Joseph's death.

Joseph,a son of Jacob, was his favorite son, having been born when Jacob was 91. He was the son of Jacob's true love: Rachel, and although he had other sons by his other wife, Leah, it was Rachel that was close to his heart. When Rachel died, Joseph took a place of importance in Jacob's life, moreso than the other sons. Joseph's favorite position was symbolized by a gift from his father of a "coat of many colors." This angered his brothers who were jealous of the special attention that he received. At Gen. 37:4 their hatred is noted this way: "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him." They did not like to be in his company and whenever they spoke to him it rarely in a peaceful tone.

Making matters worse was the fact that Joseph was gifted with visionary talents from God. He visions of future events for himself and had the ability to interpret the dreams of others. One of his dreams involved his own future, which was to be a great ruler. His dreams disturbed his brothers because they always pictured them in a subservient role, either bowing down to or serving Joseph. This angered them further. Each time they saw Joseph they saw his coat of many colors and rekindled their hatred. His new revelations about dreams of rising fame and influence made them increasingly bitter.

Ultimately the brothers decided to kill their brother. They planned to kill him and tell their father that some evil beast had caused his death. Joseph's death was only avoided when one of the brothers, Reuben, talked the others into putting him in a pit instead of killing him. While Reuben was jealous of Joseph, he hadn't reached the point of murder, but he did want to teach him a lesson.

The feud between the brothers led to Joseph's eventually being sold into slavery, freed from his imprisonment and given a high status in the Egyptian kingdom. In return, Joseph ended the feud by refusing to return evil for evil, forgave them and caused them to be special guests of the nation for many years.

Competing for Favor

Today there are millions of feuding families in our nation. Brothers and Sisters who literally hate each other. Jealousies which began in childhood have continued into their adult life and life for them has become a bitter experience. The need to outdo or do-in a sister or brother is what psychologists call "sibling rivalry." By definition,

sibling rivalry is "Two or more persons born of the same parents, or sometimes having one parent in common who try to equal or surpass one another in some way and who enter into competition with one another for the affection, the regard and or preference of one or more of the parent figures." During the course of this competition, sometimes hatreds and jealousies can develop that carry over into adult life.

We have seen it biblically on many occasions. Cain and Abel competed for the favor of God by presenting sacrifices. Jealousy resulted and Cain killed Abel. Jacob and Esau were in constant competition for the birthright that was to be given by Isaac. Esau hated Jacob most of his life because he was cheated out of his inheritance. The prodigal son's brother was disturbed at the favor shown his brother when no such favors were bestowed upon him. In each instance, family members competed for the favor of a a parent. The competition that began as children continued into their adult life.

Today the threat of bad feelings between family members exists as brothers and sisters compete for the favor of their parents. The competition is subtle but real as they vy to see "Who is the smartest?" "Who is best behaved?" "Who is most likely to succeed?" Sometimes bad feelings are fueled when parents constantly bestowed favors on one child over the other. Jacob's mother favored him over Esau. Jacob gave Joseph special gifts. David chose Solomon over his older sons to follow him as king, etc.

One of the many lessons that youth learn as they become adults is the love of family. As family members, brothers and sisters we should not be in competition with each other for their parent's love, because their parents love all of their children. When your brother or sister makes an accomplishment in life, you should celebrate. When they fail, should her with them and for them, because when all others have turned their backs on you, all you really have is God and family. Family members that feud among themselves, end up hating each other so much that they would give a stranger a cold drink of water become giving a starving brother a crumb from their table.

Unmerited Favor of God

Sibling rivalry exists because children want to out do each other for a special favor. When it comes to our spiritual relationship many of us feel that we must compete for blessings from God.

James and John, two of Christ's disciples, lobbied for good positions in the kingdom of heaven, above their comrades. Their request caused dissention in the group, but was denied by Christ who reminded them that all blessings are given by God for his own reasons.

Likewise, today there are many adults who are still trying to get themselves high praise from God by out-doing someone else. To sponsor a bigger program, chair a more important committee, or otherwise co-ordinate some great work for the kingdom, is seen as the key to divine endorsement and favor.

God gives the perfect model. He does bestow grace upon us because we have out done someone else, but because he loves us. There is nothing we have to do to earn it. We don't have to be the head of anything, over anything or at the front of anything, he will do for us simply because he loves us.

In the same sense, every parent should create an atmosphere in the home where competition between siblings is unnecessary. It should be an atmosphere that accepts the value, worth and contribution of each family member that is both recognized and appreciated on its own merits. We should try, as best we can, to love as God loves, with unmerited grace.

In closing, I'm reminded of the little girl and her brother who had argued all day long about first one thing then another. They never seemed to get along. She screamed at him "I wish you were dead!" and he ran out into the cold. Lost and alone, her brother shivered in the cold. As time passed and it became obvious that something was wrong, the little girl went into the blizzard, calling out his name as she went. When she finally found him, curled in a small ball, covered by snow and shivering she somehow reached down and put him on her back and walked against the wind to get him back home. She staggered under his weight, but step by step she continued. She made it to the house of the village doctor still holding him on her back. The doctor rushed to help her and said "I know he must be heavy." The little girl replied "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

This is the kind of love Jesus showed for us when he born an old rugged cross up calvary. With a bloodstain brow and whip marks on his back he carried the cross to make it plain what real love was about "that he would lay down his life for a friend." He died and he rose again to demonstrate to us the love of God.

Jesus, how heavy is that cross? the skeptics ask. Redemption responded: "It ain't heavy, its for my friends!"

No. 458-Revival

Runs In Your Stockings & Holes in Your Soles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 10, 1977

SCRIPTURE:"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:" Isaiah 1:18-19.

Introduction

Have you ever had a run in your stockings? What about a hole in the sole of your shoe? One thing that ladies dread most, with respect to grooming, is a run in their stockings. After all, of what value is an expensive costume, beautiful makeup and a lavish hairdo, if there is a run in a stocking. Men have the save dilemma. A hole in a pair of socks is an embarrassing sight, especially if it appears beneath a very expensive suit. Holes in the soles of shoes are equally embarrassing to the man or woman that dresses elegantly, sits in a crowded room and crosses their legs only to receive the chuckles of people across the room because there are big holes in the soles of their shoes.

Runs in stockings, socks and holes in shoes usually suggest that there there has been some abrasive activity. Runs are normally assumed to be irreplaceable. Although there are brands on the market that claim to be run free, they have proven to be bulky and too thick for comfort. All stockings, socks and shoes are subject to runs, and holes. No matter what the price, fabric or design, all of them are subject to runs and holes. It doesn't matter whether they are high priced, medium ranged, two for a dollar or buy one get one free. It doesn't matter whether they are Black, white, brown, beige, sheer, seamed or unseamed, all stockings are susceptible to runs.

Runs call attention to themselves, the same as holes in socks and holes in shoes. They are like neon lights that are flashing announcing to the world "here is a run." A woman who knows she has a run in her stocking is self conscious about it. Men sometimes try to twist their socks to keep their hole from showing. Those who have holes in the soles of their shoes try hard to remember to keep their feet flat on the ground when they sit. They are so conspicuous that they may as well have a large "X" marks the spot painted on them with red paint.

That is the way sin is in the lives of men and women. Just as a run in the stocking

calls attention to itself and disfigures an ordinarily perfect appearance, sin disfigures the way we appear to God. No matter how we try to hide them, our sins always seem to creep up. Numbers 32:23 puts it this way: "..and be sure your sin will find you out."

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that though our sins were once as conspicuous as an ugly run in our stockings or socks, we have been forgiven by our Lord. I hear the word of God from the lips of Isaiah saying: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," Isaiah 1:18.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he prophesied to the people of God concerning the nature of their sins and the manner of their reconciliation.

Isaiah issued a call to repentance to Israel, challenging them to repent and reform their ways. He told them, plainly, that their elaborate worships, sacrifices and rituals were meaningless. He said their acts of piety were unacceptable unless they were obedient to the law of God. They were encouraged to change their direction and to display the compassion and spirit of God in their dealings with each other. At verses 16-17 (NIV)Isaiah declared: "wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Here he called for a reformed action that issued from a contrite and repentant spirit.

Doing evil was the sin of the people. Injustice, oppression of the poor and neglect of the orphaned and widowed were the specific offenses for which God held the accountable.

Though they appeared very religious in their ceremonies and rituals God sent notice that their sins were flashing like a neon sign. They were standing out like a run in the stocking. There were as conspicuous as a hole in the sock. Invisible to the eye of man, God was able to see the inconsistencies of their lifestyle when compared to the expectations of their faith.

However, Isaiah reminded the people that their sins could be forgiven no matter how glaring and entrenched they appear to the eyes of men. His message to them was consistent and persistent: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:" If the people were willing to exhibit an obedient mind, though their sins were like scarlet and crimson, a deep red dye that is difficult if not impossible to remove, they would be purified by the grace of God and become as white as snow.

Isaiah reminded every believer that simply professing God and going through rituals would not insure salvation. Those who continue in sin will never be successful in hiding their sins from God because they call attention to themselves. However, once sins have been abandoned and the love of God accepted, even the worse sinner can enjoy the uninterrupted love of God.

Runs Call Attention To Themselves

Runs in stockings, as well as holes in socks and shoes call attention to themselves. Not matter how we try to hide them they seem to always show. The same is true with sins; they cannot be hidden from the eyes of God.

Today there are many people who are trying to do wrong and hide their sins simultaneously. While it is possible to fool some of the people some of the time, it is virtually impossible to fool all of the people all of the time. It is impossible to fool God anytime. Our sins have a tendency to show, despite our best intentions. Some have successfully covered sins such as adultery, fornication, drunkenness and theft for many years, only to discover that despite their best intentions what they thought was hidden was actually known by many people who simply didn't say anything about the matter ...to their faces. Sins have a way of leaving telltale marks. First among these is the inability to look into the eyes of others. Even those who are not aware of the nature of our sin are aware that something is wrong when we are not able to look them in the eyes. We may not have told a living soul about our sin, but our eyes testified against us. Our sin called attention to itself.

Cain killed his brother Abel in the garden of Eden and attempted to hide his sin from God. Hiding behind a hedge of philosophic reasoning he asked "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" in an attempt to change the subject in another direction. His secret could not be kept for God said he heard his brother's blood crying out from the ground. His sin called attention to itself.

David arranged for the death Uriah so that he could hide his sex sin with Bathsheba. His adultery with Bathsheba was an abomination to God but he tried to hide it from the eyes of his critics by having her husband killed in battle.While he thought his plan was well concealed the prophet Nathan had to condemn David as he revealed the truth of his wicked ways. Nathan's powerful indictment served notice that even the King's sins cannot be hidden from God, for they cry out for justice from a merciful God.

Despite our best intentions, our sins cannot be hidden from God. He knows all, and cannot be deceived. Paul, writing to the Galatians, puts it this way: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Galatians 6:7-8

Runs in The Soul Can Be Repaired

Unlike runs in stockings, spiritual runs can be repaired. When stockings are damaged most ladies simply throw them away. But when a soul has been damaged by sin it does not have to be cast aside and thrown away like yesterday's news, it can be repaired. It can be made just like brand new!

We run the serenity of peace with the boisterous voice of confusion and debate. But it is not fatal.

We run the sweetness of love with the bitterness of envy and hate.

We run the compassion of helping by resolving to only help our own.

We run the joy of happiness by constant recitation of our pain.

We run the challenge of the future by anchoring in yesterday and trying to keep today the same.

We run the kindess of giving by hoarding every nickel and dime.

We run the spirit of service with the mercenary plea for pay.

We run the nobleness of humility by demanding to have our own way.

We run the transcendental power of prayer with the limited scope and vision of man.

Isaiah told Israel that although its sins stood out like scarlet and crimson, they could be made white again! All was not lost.

We should be grateful that we serve a God who can restore us when we have fallen short of his standard. Not only should we be grateful that he is able to restore and forgive but that he is willing to give us another chance.

Only the love of God can restore a broken spirit. Only the love of God can:

—Lift up a bowed down head!

—Wipe tears from despondent eyes!

—Fine tune a life being played in the wrong key!

—Elevate a life sinking in despair!

No wonder the song writer declares "Love lifted me, Love lifted me. When nothing else could help, love lifted me!"

Our sins may have been like scarlet, beaming like spotlights pointing to flaws and failures, but I'm so glad that we serve a God who took the spotlight off our sins and focused on himself. No wonder song writer declared: "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity."

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of 10,000

I'm glad that decided to give me another chance!

I'm glad that he overlooked my sins which were flashing like a neon sign and gave me a brand new start!

I'm glad that he gave me a new song to sing

I'm glad that now I can praise him all day long for he picked me up and turned me around!

I'm glad that he died and rose after three days!

I'm glad that he is alive today!

Do you have runs in your stockings?

Come to Jesus!

He's a stocking mender!

Come to Jesus!

He'll make everything all right!

No. 459-Love

Four Dimensions of God's Love

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 1, 1993

*SCRIPTURE:"**That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:17-19***

Introduction

How much does God love us? That is a question that is often asked of those who are trying to understand the nature of God's compassion toward us. Elizabeth Barret Browning wrote "How do I love thee, let me count the ways. I love you to height, breath and depth of my soul." Maybe that's the way God loves us. What we know about God's love is that it is shown to us, even though we don't deserve it, every day of our lives.

Consider the townspeople of a certain small town that decided to erect a weather vein to help them detect the direction of any approaching strong wind. The vein, equipped with a gyrating arrow that pointed in the direction of the wind's movement, was perched atop a huge tower that rose high above the ground. When the vein was completed one worker, who was a preacher in a storefront church, placed a sign above it that read "God is love." Curious townspeople saw the sign above the weather vein and could not understand why the old preacher would put a sign above the weather vein that appeared to suggest that God changes when the wind changes. They found the old preacher and chided him for placing such a sign and for the negative message that it sent. The worker looked at the sign slowly and carefully then said: "The sign does not mean God changes with the wind. If you notice the sign sits above the arrow. That means that whatever way the wind blows, God is still love. If the chilling Northern winds of hard times and despair come, God is love. If the sweltering heat of the southern winds bring desperation and sorrow, God is love. If, from the east, the wind brings prosperity or the west

wind brings failure, God is still love." At that the townspeople voted to let the sign stay, for it reminded them that regardless of their circumstance, God still loved them.

God loves us more than we will ever understand. Even when difficult moments, problems and failures come, he still loves us. Even when we have embarrassed ourselves, strayed away and fallen into disgrace, he still loves us.

As Christians, we rejoice constantly when we think of the height, breadth, length and depth of God's love us. As we become rooted and grounded in the word of God, we grow in our appreciation for the wonderful and matchless love of God which he showers on us daily.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians in Ephesus. He expressed his desire that they fully understand the four dimensions of the love of Christ. This full understanding, which would come after being fully rooted in the knowledge and love God, would help them to receive and appreciate the "fullness of God." Only through understanding the full nature of God's love can Christians comprehend the value of Christ's sacrifice and the beauty of the Christian life.

Paul said a Christian can consider that he has comprehended the fullness of God when he knows about God's love in four different ways. This differs from our knowledge of the four types of love: Agape, or God's unconditional love; Filia, or that which is shared between friends and family; Eros, or that which is shared erotically between persons of the opposite sex; and Storge', or that special parental bond such as the one between a mother and child. Simply knowledge of these forms of love is not sufficient to understand the fullness of God's love for us. Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus was that they would comprehend and fully understand the full meaning of God's love.

To fully comprehend all aspects of God's love the Ephesians were told that they should know the:

Breadth of God's Love

What is the breadth of God's love? It refers to his compassion for the entire world. It signifies that his love reaches beyond national boundaries, geography, topography, race, sex, creed or color. Jesus' extends the

circumference of this world and includes all creatures great and small. Jesus' love is not exclusive; it does ignore the value and worth of any of his creation.

The breadth of God's love is best described by the simple children's song that says: "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red, yellow, Black and White, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world." His loves takes in the whole world, but that does not mean that he ever loses sight of the importance of the individual. While Jesus' love is expansive enough to take in the whole world, it is narrow enough to focus on my personal estate. He cares about the world and about me too. That is why the song writer declared: "Yes Jesus loves me. Yes Jesus loves me. For the Bible tells me so."

Paul expressed to the Ephesians, who were entrenched in the old Jewish belief that God loved Jews only, that they should know this first side of God's love: that he loves everybody, both Jews and gentiles.

Length of God's Love

What is the length of God's love? It refers to the persistency and consistency of God's love to man. It is a measure of course that God's love has traversed to reach each individual. God's love is so long that it has reached from the infancy of creation through the ice age, stone age, creation of man, the great world flood, the rise and fall of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome. It has withstood the inquisitions of the dark ages, survived the American civil war, two world wars, Korea, Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm. God's love is so long that it has extended from the beginning unto this present moment. The trail of his love leads right to your doorstep. Unlike some smoothly paved roads that run out at the county line, God's love does not run out when it gets to us. God's love goes beyond our doorstep and extends so far ahead of us that he has provided a paved expressway to glory for us when our journey in this life ends. His love is inexhaustible and it is patient. It is visionary and it reaches further than we can imagine.

Depth of God's Love

How deep is God's love? The depth of Christ's love further demonstrated when we consider how far he had to travel from his throne in glory to finally get to us. It was also shown by what he was willing to give up to reach down and save a dying world.

There are many in life who love, but they have limits on how far they will go for love.

There are many who love, but the depth to which they are willing to reach to pick up the pieces of a shattered life or a broken heart are constrained by their unwillingness to lose anything, endure any pain, or expose themselves to risk.

There are many who love, but their love is shallow and superficial.

There are many who love genuinely. They exemplify the breadth of love and show respect and love for all people. They show a length of love in that they have loved for a long time without giving up.

However, the depth of love is shown not by how many people you love, or how long you have loved, but how much risk you are willing to endure for the person you love. This is the kind of love displayed when a mother sees her child standing on a railroad track with a speeding train only seconds away and dives to save the child at the risk of her own life.

This is the kind of love Jesus spoke of when he said in John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

So Paul suggests to the Ephesians that they will never know the fullness of God until they can comprehend the depth of his love.

The Savior could have remained in the celestial realms of paradise, yet he chose a lowly birth in a Bethlehem stable.

He could have remained seated in the courts of heaven, yet he pulled off his royal robes walked the dusty streets of Galilee.

He could have spent the remainder of eternity, listening to angels extol the greatness of his name; but yet he chose to suffer humiliation and insult at the hands of people he came to save.

There are many who have loved, but there is nobody who has been able to equal or surpass the love of God.

God's love has length. The length of God's love is infinite. It has no beginning and it has no end. From the beginning of time to this very moment God has loved us every second and every hour.

God's love has breadth because he loves everybody everywhere. John declared "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God's love has depth because he was willing to give up the glories of heaven to save the souls of a sinful world.

I don't know what you think about but if somebody has loved me from

the beginning of time; and loves everybody but me especially, that's love.

That's the kind of love that Jesus display when he died out on Calvary for our sins, and rose to give us the victory.

Paul said there was one final diminsion to the love of Christ: not only that he showed breadth by loving the world, length by loving us constantly, and depth by being a sacrifice for us, but he also showed us the height of his love.

When he showed us the depth of his love, he came down to save us. But when Jesus showed us the height of his love, he showed us by lifting us up higher than we have ever been been before.

He came to lift us up!

He came to lift up a bowed down head!

He came to lift up a broken spirit!

He came to restore joy to a broken heart!

No. 460-Inspiration

Ladders That Reach Glory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 8, 1993

SCRIPTURE:" And he dreamed and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Genesis 28:12

Introduction

Have you ever tried to reach something and found that you were just a little too short? Perhaps you tried to reach a certain cabinet item and found it was just beyond your reach. That is when you discovered that a ladder would make the job easier. Painters, carpenters and just about everyone have found it handy to use a ladder occasionally.

It does not require a great deal of skill to use a ladder but it does require a little common sense. Consider the preacher that decided to paint his house. He braced his ladder next to his house and climbed high. As he painted a little boy from the neighborhood watched as he stroked carefully. The preacher noticed the little boy staring at him but continued to paint. He leaned to the right to get a tough spot and the ladder almost tilted. He leaned to the left to get another and the ladder almost tilted again. For almost an hour the preacher continued to paint. The boy watched him the entire time.

The preacher began to feel proud of himself because the boy was obviously impressed with the fine paint job he was giving his house. As he stood atop the ladder leaning out again, he called out to the boy: "You've been watching me for a long time." He said, "Are you admiring my work?" He asked. The boy shook his head. Puzzled the preacher yelled down to the boy "then why have you been watching me?" The boy folded his arms, leaned against a tree and said "I just want to see what kind of words a preacher says when he falls off a ladder."

We climb ladders occasionally, but we climb life's ladder continuously. For the Christian, it is a journey from time to eternity that must be scaled one rung at a time. There are many skeptics that are watching as Christians climb the ladder of life. Even the best of us can lean out a little too far, or stumble as we miss a rung. The world is waiting patiently for an opportunity to laugh at God's people when and if we falter.

As Christians, we should remember that we are climbing the mountain of destiny one step at a time. Like a mountain climber, we are secured by the safety line of grace,

secured by the knowledge that if we slip, our God is able to deliver us. Just in the nick of time.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob's vision at a place he named Bethel. Jacob had been away from home for two decades. During this time he had amassed a small fortune and married two wives. Despite his material success he still had one more obstacle that stood between himself and happiness, mending his relationship with his brother Esau. The relationship had gone sour many years before. Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright when both of them were children.

Later as young adults, his mother helped him to make it official and he cheated his brother out of his blessing and inheritance. Jacob's life as a trickster haunted him. As he prepared to return home, he worried about his safety, since his brother had threatened to kill him when he left two decades earlier.

Jacob's journey in life had come full circle. He had been a trickster who had been the victim of tricks himself. No doubt he worried whether his luck was taking a change for the worse. He was unsure about his future and his life. In this context God showed him a vision at night that revealed to him that there was great promise to his life. He saw a great ladder in his dream. Angels both descended and ascended the ladder in a regular pattern between earth and heaven. It was a hint that the promises God gave him would end with one that would give access to heaven freely to all. Angels go from heaven to earth and vice versa suggests free access, which was unusual considering the distance that every man kept between himself and God in Jacob's day.

The separation that Jacob envisioned would be fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Jesus himself said in John 1:51 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The prophetic picture Jacob saw was but a sign of the mediation role that Christ would play between God and man.

Christ projected himself as the link or ladder between God and man. Separated by a gulf of sin, Christ came to offer humanity a way back to heaven. Our sin was so great that no mere animal sacrifice could substitute for us. Nothing short of the blood of the lamb of God could suffice. Jesus became our mediator. He became our ladder to glory. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 puts it this way: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The vision that Jacob saw was just a glimpse of things to come. To him it was a sign that God had not abandoned him. It was a sign that he should continue his journey, step by step, mile by mile, until he returned home. For us, Jacob's vision is a reminder that the only link we have to God is Jesus. With him we have the continued assurance, just as Jacob had, that if we climb each rung of life's ladder, one rung at a time, we will get home someday.

Reaching High On A Short Ladder

Today there are many who are trying to reach glory but they are standing on ladders that are too short. Reaching the perfection of God's glory is a high aspiration that requires us to constantly reach beyond ourselves to a higher plane. Understanding the fulness of God's glory is unattainable by mere human efforts alone. David in Psalm 139:6 said: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

The spiritual levels of completeness and happiness that come from glory include: joy, peace and love. These are spiritual states that are impossible to achieve outside the spirit of God. Paul, writing to the Galatians, reminded them that these states are only achievable through the spirit of God. Those who know the Lord can reach them if they abide in him. Paul said:"..The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Without the spirit of God they are impossible to achieve.

There are many today, who are making some dangerous falls because they are reaching for high spiritual states on ladders that are too short. Some resort to:

EDUCATION: While education is essential for a productive life in our secular life, it is still just a step ladder. A quality education can open doors for us in the community of man. It help sus to get jobs that were once out of our reach. It can improve the quality of life as we know it. However, education alone, cannot bring us love, joy or peace. These sit on a higher shelf. Though we may use all of education's steps, B.A., M.A., and Ph.d., it still proves to be too short to reach glory.

FINANCIAL SECURITY: Some depend on economic opportunity, but it too is just a step ladder. Financial security brings certain assurances in this life. It insures that we have a place to live, food to eat, and clothes to wear with some level of comfort. Those who are financially solvent realize a degree of peace of mind that frees them from future worries about their ability to survive. Peace of mind, with respect to finances, is a first shelf item, which can be reached by wise financial planning. However, peace of soul, is on a higher shelf and no amount of financial planning can help achieve this goal. We may stand atop every rung of our stepladders with bank accounts, stocks, bonds, savings accounts and insurance policies and still be unable to reach it. It is higher than our stepladders can help us reach.

Step ladders have a purpose, but when it comes to attaining spiritual goals they always prove themselves too short. Those who use them as they try to achieve joy, peace, happiness and love will find that they usually stumble.

A Ladder long enough to reach

Jacob in his vision saw a ladder that reached from earth to heaven. There was a direct line between himself and glory because he saw angels ascending and descending. At last Jacob knew he would be able to achieve peace of soul, and real joy, but he had the promise of God to assure him.

The same ladder that Jacob saw in a vision is available to us today. It is the ladder of salvation and spiritual power offered to us by Jesus himself. As our mediator Jesus intercedes for us with the father and whatever we want or need he will make our petitions known. As our savior he has removed our sins. As our Lord he has bridged the gap between earth and heaven on our behalf. He has become a ladder for us. A ladder that reaches into glory.

Education can only go so far, but Jesus is a ladder long enough to reach! All of my degrees have not prepared me for what awaits the saints in glory."Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Financial security can only go so far, but Jesus is a ladder long enough to reach! This world can bring me wealth, but it cannot compare to the riches that exist in my father's house. "My father is rich in houses and land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hand!

Are you reaching for joy? Jesus is the ladder to unspeakable joy!

Are you reaching for peace? Jesus is the ladder to peace that flows like a river and says "it is well with my soul!"

Are you reaching for love? Jesus is the ladder that brings into the love of God. A love so strong and abiding that he gave his only begotten son out on Calvary!

He died and rose again that whenever we need, on this pilgrim journey we could just call him!

I don't know about you but I'm reaching for glory, standing on the ladder of faith!

While I'm on the tedious journey, I know I need Jesus to walk with me!

Walk with me Lord! Walk with me!

While I'm on this pilgrim's journey, I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 461-Communion

For Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 15, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20

Introduction

Have you ever had anyone to do anything especially for you? Perhaps it was a special recipe they prepared just for you. Maybe someone went out of their way to surprise you or to make you happy. There is unique feeling that comes with being the object of special attention. Everyone enjoys it. Some crave for more. It is a part of our nature.

Nothing makes us appreciate being the object of special love and care more than kindness shown to us at great expense of time and trouble. It is a humbling experience. Consider the widower who worked his farm at the outbreak of the Civil War. The Union sent out a call for all able-bodied men to report to military service. The widower was depressed. He had several children and a farm to tend and was not in any position to leave. As he sat with his head in his hands the town drunk sat next to him on a bench. As he shared his problem with the drunk the drunk had a revelation. "Why don't you let me go in your place?" The drunk asked. He explained that he had never done anything important in his life, but this would certainly be important. Reluctantly the widower agreed. After a few months word came to the widower that the drunk had been fatally wounded in battle. The widower hitched up his wagon and made the long journey to the battlefield. He found the remains of the poor drunk and brought them back home. At the foot of the hill, he buried the drunk and marked his grave with an expensive marker. The townspeople questioned why he would spend so much money on a marker for a derelict. The widower answered "He may not have seemed important to you, but friends, that man died ..for me."

That is exactly how every Christian feels about Jesus Christ. When we were helpless, lost, and without hope; he died for us. He gave of himself that we might have another chance and we thank him for that decision every day of our lives.

As Christians, we can never forget that God loves us. He showed that love by willingly sacrificing his only son, so that we could have another chance at a more

fulfilled and abundant life. More than that, he died and rose from the grave, especially...for me!

Exposition

These text verses focus on Jesus and Paul as each reinforces the understanding of Jesus' motive for his sacrifice and our motive for faithful living in him.

Jesus, at the last supper assembled his disciples and told them that his time was drawing near. The bread and wine they ate and drank were to become symbols of his body and blood and the new agreement. Jesus said his blood would be shed "for you." It indicated his clear motive in going to calvary. It was for power, personal interests or fame, because all of these had been offered to him by Satan in the wilderness. He only had one reason to go to calvary "for you."

Paul talking to the Galatians, reemphasized the same point. He narrowed down the broad generality suggested by "you" to a more inclusive "me." He lived by faith because Christ lived in him. He served the Lord because Christ loved "me" and "gave himself for me."

Paul underscored the idea of Christ as a personal savior and friend rather than a distant diety, void of feeling and compassion. To say that Christ loved "me" is to say that he knows me and cares about me. To say that he gave himself for me is to recognize the individual nature of his great sacrifice. It was for the whole world as recorded in John 3:16, but it was also for "me" indivually.

There are many Users

There are many people today that perform a variety of noble deeds for neighbors and friends. Many do so out of a spirit of brotherhood and compassion, others have ulterior motives that are difficult to uncover. They have created a new category of people known in today's vernacular as "users." Users generally have selfish motives for any action they take. Their associations and relationships are generally predicated upon future hopes of personal advantage. Once the chance of future advantage disappears, a user drops a relationship quickly and moves to another.

Some have learned this lesson the hard way. Uriah learned everything done to me is not necessarily "for me." David called him into his throne room and showered him with praises and commendations. Then he was given a commission to lead the armies in battle. The appointment appeared to be a "for me" situation, but turned out to be a "for David" circumstance. David wanted to protect his own misdoings, his promotion of Uriah was a means to achieve an end. There was a point in David's life when he was a "user."

Samson believed the sweet words of Bathsheba were sincere and from her heart. He fell for her sweet words, believing that she loved him and revealed to her the secret of his strength. She betrayed him to his enemies in return. The affections she bestowed on Samson were not "for" Samson, but were designed to discover his

secret and earn her pay. Delilah was a user.

Today there are many people who are users. Sometimes their acts are as subtle as the computerized birthday card that comes from the local merchant. Initially we are impressed to have a birthday reminder from our local businessman. In our excitement we forget that it is often our capacity to make another loan or another purchase that elicited the card, not a real affection for us. If we become bankrupt or permanently incapacitated, usually the cards stop. In the same way, the local Romeo pretends affection and concern for the unsuspecting Juliet. His sweet words and charm often hide his ultimate goal of sexual success.

Even whole races of people can be used. When Abraham Lincoln freed the Negro slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation, many thought he did so because he loved the Black man. In reality, Lincoln freed the slaves to save the United States from destruction. His act of emancipation benefited "me" but it was not "for me."

Users view the entire world from the perspective of the chess player who values the game pieces by their ability to move, capture or sacrifice. Some game pieces are "pawns" and are expendable. They are moved from position to position, always with the understanding that unlike, Bishops, Knights, Kings and Queens, pawns are of little value unless their loss can help win the game. Our society often views racial minorities, the poor and the undereducated as its expendable pawns. Courtesies shown to these groups are rarely "for" them. If it becomes politically expedient any one or all of them would be sacrificed to protect the interests of the party.

Jesus Died "for me.."

It is no wonder then that Paul would be excited when he wrote to the Galatians, expressing his faith in Christ who made great sacrifices; with no other purpose than to do it "for me."

Jesus made sure his disciples understood that his approaching death had no other motive than to secure the salvation of all believers. His blood and life were being given "for me." Christ had no ulterior motives and nothing to gain himself. His sacrifice on Calvary was a pure act of love and affection. It was, without a doubt, "for me."

The people of Mesopotamia built a great tower to make a name for themselves. But when Jesus decided to die it wasn't to make a name for himself. It was already written that "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" that he is Lord of Lord. When Jesus died it wasn't for a name but he died "for me."

Solomon built a great palace to have a beautiful place to live. But when Jesus decided to go to Calvary it wasn't to secure a palace in glory for himself the heavens were already his throne room and earth his footstool. I heard him declare in John 14:2 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Christ carried an old rugged cross, not for himself, but he carried it for me!

They drove nails in his hands, not for crimes he had done, but he did it, for me!
He died out on Calvary, not for himself, but he did it all for me!
But early Sunday morning, he did something else for me. He rose from the grave with a victory over death and the grave.
Because he died for me, I have a right to the tree of life!
Because he rose for me, I have a new claim on the future! No wonder the song writer declared: “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.”
Sin used me and did things to me; but the grace of God did something for me.
Sin did something to me and pushed me down, but grace did something for me and picked me up.
Sin did something to me and left me filthy, but grace did something for me and washed me in the blood.
Sin did something to me and placed me on sinking sand, but grace did something for me and placed my feet on solid ground.
Not only has the Lord done things for me in the past, but every day he’s doing something “for me.”
In the morning, he’s doing something for me!
In the noon day, he’s doing something for me!
In the midnight hour, he’s doing something for me!
Storms may rise, winds may blow, but whenever I need him..
He’s there for me!

No. 462-Inspiration

Sleep Walkers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 22, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"..it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11

Introduction

Do you know of anyone who walks in his sleep? A sleep walker is often not conscious of the fact that he or she is walking around. Often they move from room to room in their houses while sound asleep. Sleep walking is a strange phenomenon that continues to baffle modern science. Sleep walkers, called somnambulants, appear half conscious and half sleep, doing things and going places without any thought about what they do. Somehow they avoid falling down stairs, or bumping into doors, without injury. Some have been known to walk on rooftops and stroll down busy streets, all without hurting themselves or remembering a single thing they did.

People who walk in their sleep are sometimes humourous. Consider the case of Walking Willie. Walking Willie was a member of the church but there was a time when he drank whisky and wine with a vengeance. He joined the church during a great revival and came to church each communion Sunday. During each Sunday service

Willie would doze off to sleep and begin to walk in his sleep. After a while the members ignored him because it was usual to see him walk down the isle soun asleep. Lately however, Walking Willie started talking and walking in his sleep. One Sunday the preacher was exponding on the evils of drinking. "We need to take all that whiskey and pour it in the river." The preacher shouted! "We need to take all the wine and pour it in the water, and the gin and vodka. We should pour it all in the river." At that point Walking Willie stood on his feet and started walking for the back door. Folks thought he was sleep walking again but had their doubts when he started singing "I'm gonna Wade in the Water, wade in the water children.." Walking Willie woke up when he thought gin and whiskey were near!

There are many people today who are literally walking in their sleep. Murder, crime, disease and castastrophe are happening all around them yet they move about aimlessly as if did not exist. Those who ignore the deterioating condition of our times and live oblivious to their impact are sleep walking. They move about and display activity, but they are sound asleep.

As Christians, we know that we cannot afford to sleep in these dangerous times. We must be awake and on guard constantly against the onslaught of evil, which is all around us. The word of God reminds us clearly, it is time to "awake out of sleep" cast off the works of darkness and move into the light.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Romans urging them to awaken themselves to the urgency of the moment. The message he gave them is similar to the message he sent to the church at Ephesus. In Ephesians 5:14-16 Paul said "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." He encouraged them to use their time wisely and walk carefully because they were living in dangerous times.

Paul told the Romans that the time of Christ's return is closer than anyone expects. He urged Christians to be on guard. "The night is far spent and the day is at hand" he said as he urged the Romans to come out of the darkness and take action for the cause of Christ. He warned that we should awaken ourselves to the seriousness of the Christian life and walk "honestly" which is from the Greek word "Eu-sche-monos" that means "decently." Those who are aware of the seriousness of the era and the lateness of the time will walk fully awake and avoid: "rioting" which means wild parties and juking; Drunkenness and "chambering" which means whoremongering, frequenting of prostitutes; and "Wantonness" which refers to general sexual uncleanness. In addition, he reminded them that Christians have little time for petty envyings and strifes because of the lateness of the hour. Paul encouraged the Romans not to walk in these paths but to put on the "armor" of light.

The challenging nature of this present age requires that we rise above the walk of the carnal man and walk fully aware of the lateness of the hour. Some are walking and talking every day but they are sleep walking, unaware of the lateness of the hour.

Sleeping in Church

There are many today who are literally sleeping in church. It can be dangerous to sleep in church.

When Paul came to Troas he stayed for a week. People assembled to hear him nightly as he tried to explain to them about the nature of the church. Acts 20:9 tells how one night a boy was listening to his sermon while perched in a window on the third floor loft. Paul preached until about midnight. However the sermon was so long that the boy went to sleep, fell from the window and killed himself. Here was a lad who died because he went to sleep in church. Paul immediately went to the lad and stretched himself over him and brought him back to life again. Soon as the boy was revived Paul continued his sermon which lasted until daybreak. It was a 10 to 12 hour

sermon. There is no indication as to whether or not the boy went to sleep again. Verse 12 only notes that they when the meeting broke up the boy departed with them alive and comforted.

While our immediate attention quickly focuses on those persons we know who tend to nod during worship services, the idea of sleeping in church goes beyond simply nodding in a worship service. There are many who are literally asleep when it comes to heeding the word of God. Many do not nod, but their attention is someplace else. They sit politely and stare forward, stand machanically, and mouth the words to hymns, but they are not aware of the lateness of the hour. These are those who meet with the church weekly but are sleep walking: singing in the choir, ushering, preaching, serving as deacons, and serving in several capacities as members without any real motivation. They move in a trancelike state that can only be described as spiritual "sleep walking."

Yet Paul sounds the clarion call "Awake oh sleeper!" The time is at hand! Let us fight the battle that is before us with vigor and alertness, not void of enthusiasm and spirit.

Sleeping in Crises

While there are some who sleep in church, there are others who sleep in the midst of crises.

Jesus concluded the last supper and went to the garden to pray. It was a crucial time for him. An enemy within had betrayed him. Enemies outside his circle were trying to defeat his purpose. As he went to the garden he asked Peter, James and John to watch out for him while he prayed. Though they were aware of the seriousness of the hour, all three of them went to sleep in less than an hour. In Matthew 26:40 Jesus returned from his hour of prayer and found them asleep. He said "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"

It was a time of crises, but those he needed to protect him, were asleep.

Today there are many who sleep walking through the crises of time. Many who have the gifts and talents to impact the social ills around us are walking, almost trancelike, around and through the problems as if they did not exist. Our youth need adult leaders willing to give of themselves until it hurts to save them from the social destruction. Our neighborhoods are becoming unsafe. We need men and women of God who can give help organize and promote the development crime free neighborhoods. Our schools are in trouble. We need young men and women of God to join the ranks of those in our history who have given of themselves to insure that our children learn. Our future is in jeopardy. Yet in the midst of this crisis, there are those who still find it hard to awaken to the need to respond with all we have. Too many of us have simply rolled up the windows of our Lincolns, Cadillacs, Volvos and Mercedes and quietly tucked ourselves away in the comfort of our homes, to settle down for a continuous life long sleep.

In the midst of the crises of these times, Christ still asks "could ye not watch

with me one hour?" "Isn't there some place of service that you can find for yourself where you could consistently stand with me against the evils of the day?" There are many who fail to respond because they are sleep walking.

Sleeping through the Vision

While there are some who sleep walk through moments of crises there are still others that sleep through great inspirational moments. Jesus took the same three men, Peter, James and John into a high mountain to show them a vision of the kingdom of God and the things to come so that they could fully understand. As Jesus prayed for the vision, all three men went to sleep. God rolled by the canopies of heaven and revealed the complete vision. In the presence of the father, Jesus' countenance was changed. His clothes turned white and started to shine and glow. Moses and Elias appeared in the vision and talked with Jesus. At the end of the vision the three woke up and saw the tail end of a vision planned for them. Excited, but half sleep, Peter wanted to build three Tabernacles and stay on the mountain. He was babbling aimlessly. Luke 9:33 noted that he was "not knowing what he said." He missed most of the vision of because he was sleep. He talked in his sleep about what he did see.

In a similar sense, many of us have missed the vision. Frequent absenteeism from worship, Sunday School and our field of service has put us out of contact. We are sound asleep while the vision is unfolding in front of us. Sometimes we do catch the tail end of what is going on but miss the whole picture as we talk "aimlessly" in our sleep.

Brothers and Sisters, if ever there was a time when we need to see clearly the vision of the Lord, that time is now!

If ever there was a time when we need to become serious about battling the rise of crime, drugs, juvenile delinquency, family dissolution and many other problems, that time is now!

The church extends to the world the outstretched hand of the savior, saying "come unto me all ye the labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The church holds up the beacon of hope for the world to see. The only we have is in Jesus! Confusion is great in the world today but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!

When the sons and daughters of broken homes and teenaged parents wander aimlessly through our city streets, let them feel the warm and welcomed embrace of those who know the Lord. Give them Jesus!

When our children failing to make the grade in life and give up on themselves, let us roll up our sleeves, dig deep in our pockets, and give of ourselves to show them that God cares. Give them Jesus!

When the homeless need a roof over their heads and the hungry need food, let us respond with a heart touched with the love of God and show them that God cares. Give them Jesus!

The challenge for us to day is to awake from our sleep and tell somebody through

word and deed, about Jesus. We need to tell somebody that Jesus came, died and rose from the dead and is alive today. We need to awake from our sleep and help somebody! We need to awake from our sleep and cheer somebody!

If I can help somebody as I pass along ..then my living shall not be in vain!

No. 463-Funeral

In Times Like These

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 28, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Psalm 9:9-10. "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." Psalm 27:5 "But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalm 37:39

Introduction

How do you respond when trouble comes? Do you shrivel in the face of danger, adversity or difficulty or do you stand tall with confidence. Trouble is inevitable. It cannot be avoided. The great question in life is not whether there will be troublesome times but how will we respond to the trouble. Herein marks the difference between the Christian and the unsaved. One is able to stand with confidence, the other is at a complete loss.

Consider the military officer who took a voyage on a ship along with his daughter. Throughout the duration of the trip they were constantly barraged by a never ending storm. It caused the ship to rock and reel endlessly. Those on board were anxious. They worried that the storm would eventually take their lives. One night as the storm grew worse the military officer stood on deck and gripped the railing tight as the winds and rain whipped about him. His daughter found her way to him and held on to him as she asked "father aren't you afraid in this storm?" At that, the father turned, drew his sword and stepped back a few feet as he pointed the tip of the blade at his daughter's heart. "Are you afraid of this sword?" He asked. Of course not, she responded. "Why not?" The father asked. "Because the sword is in your hand. I'm your child and I know you love me too much to do anything to me that is not in my best interest." The father sheaved his sword and turned to face the storm. "I am not a afraid of this storm for the same reason you were not afraid of the sword. I know the man that holds the storm in hallow of his hand. I am his child and he will not put more on than I can bear." At that the two of them returned below deck and settled down to a peaceful sleep.

We are living in dangerous times that threaten us like a great storm daily. Violence, murder, and other incidents of crime are becoming common place. The fingers of disruption and trouble are poking into every city, family and household. No one is exempt, despite their best efforts otherwise. The question is how will we respond when trouble comes?

As Christians, we have learned that we have but one response and that is to trust in God. Whether we are out on the land or on the raging sea, we confide in him for strength to weather the storm as we stand confident that the God we serve knows how much we can bear.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expressed his confidence that regardless of his circumstance that God stands with him in times of trouble.

This psalm was written out of the wealth of David's experience with God. It was not theory, or the product of idle speculation. He had experienced many successes and failures in the course of his life his and findings were conclusive. As a Shepherd boy he courageously stood before wild animals. As a young man he stood heroically in front of Goliath. As king he faced many hostile armies. Each represented what he has described as a "time of trouble." In his time of trouble he faced all of the challenges as they came with great confidence and unwavering faith.

The conclusion that David reached is that trouble and misfortune cannot be avoided. In the 27th psalm he spoke of the "time of trouble" as inevitable. Rather than expect God to keep trouble away from his door he expected God to be with him in his time of trouble. David projected that every believer should expect to be placed in a secure position to deal with trouble, hidden in the "secret of his Tabernacle" but not expect to be exempt from trouble itself. This lesson was clearly defined by the experience of Job, a righteous man who had done nothing wrong, but yet was the victim of death of family members, poverty and sickness, all caused by the influence of Satan. Yet in his trouble Job declared "yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him." David's assurances in these three psalms are that God will be with every believer in a time of trouble.

The "time of trouble" to which David refers was almost always the result of Satanic influences. He was hunted as a vagabond because evil thoughts entered the mind of Saul. He was constantly at war because Satan stirred the hearts of his enemies to attack and raid on a regular basis. The "times of trouble" that David referred to were not always of his creation, but were the

result of Satan's using the people and circumstances around him to cause trouble.

David's conclusion should be that of any believer: when trouble comes, God will be my refuge and my strength.

A Time of Trouble.

In Psalm 9 David makes three important points that are relevant to our present circumstance. The first of these observations is that even today, nearly 3000 years since David wrote these words,under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, every person still experiences a time of trouble.

We are living in some very troubling times. The respect for human life is at an all time low. Murders are escalating at an unbelievable rate and just below them is an equally dangerous propensity for violence that is spreading throughout the nation. Drive by shootings, drug related hits, and a general attitude that violence is the way is becoming the norm of our society. Children carry guns to school. Those who don't have guns have knives, razors and other weapons. There is a diminishing respect for life and the property of others. The evidence is before us in a striking way today that even those who are willing to gamble with their lives and win, can end up losers. These are times of seven year olds who cuss their teachers; eleven year olds who steal cars; 13 year old drug dealers; 15 year old murderers and 28 year old pot smoking, crack dealing grandmothers. These are dangerous times!

The troubles that we face in these times are not created by our youth, but they are the certainly the victims. They are the victims of society prone toward conspicuous consumption. It is a society that constantly suggests that happiness comes in things. We present these "things" to a generation of have nots who want to "have" and many will do just about anything to acquire what they are told is the good life.

The result is burglary, robbery, and murder.

The result is a community so unsafe that we have bars on our windows, burglar alarm systems on our cars, and we sleep with pistols next to our beds.

The result is such a total disrespect for life that a perpetrator could shoot a man in the head, pry a handful of bloodstained dollars from his hand, strip him of his valuables and leave him to die, without giving it a thought. A person with such a perception cannot see the value of a life, only the value of the possessions around his neck and in his hand. These are some dangerous times!

God's People Will Trust Him

This is David said in verse 10 "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.."

If there was ever a time when we need to know the Lord that time is now. There are many great and powerful people in the world and it is good to know them, but more than anything else, we need to know the Lord.

Those who know the Lord are not intimidated by the violence and insensitivity of the times. Those who know the Lord are not so despondent that they lose hope in all people. Those who know the Lord are not bitter, even when they have been wronged by the times. Those who know the Lord know that "all things work to the good of them that love the Lord", according to his purpose in Christ Jesus.

Knowing the Lord means to know that no matter how the storms rage, He is in control. Knowing the Lord means to trust him.

You might know mayors, governors and presidents, but you need to know the Lord!

You might know kings and emperors, but you need to know the Lord!

The young people sing "You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself. If you know Jesus you don't need nobody else."

But the old warriors put it this way: "I know the Lord will answer prayer, I tried him for myself."

He has not forsaken thee

Finally David points us to the truth that experiencing misfortune does not mean God has forsaken us.

It is so easy for us in a moment of despair to become bitter against God thinking that he has forsaken us. David reminds us that God never forsakes us, even though the times in which we live make life unbearable.

Even Jesus hanging on the cross, suffering the pains of crucifixion cried out in his humanity "father why hast thou forsaken me" while the divinity within him knew all along that God never forsakes his own. It is a human response to think God may have deserted a family or a particular believer when tragedy strikes. However, we are reminded that those who know the Lord are never left alone. Jesus declared "and lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Despite the storms that these times bring, those who know the Lord rest assured that he never leaves them along. Maybe that's what the song writer

had in mind when he said: “I’ve seen the lightning flashing, and heard the thunder roll. I’ve felt sin’s breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I’ve heard the voice of my savior, he bid me still fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.”

Yes, it is true that these are dangerous times. But there is a refuge from the storm!

In times like these, you need an anchor! In times like these you need a savior! Be very sure, be very sure; your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

This rock is Jesus! A rock in the middle of the storm!

In times like these ...look to Jesus..he is the one!

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Sunday, August 22, 1993 Patrick Johnson gave up the ghost and died. He was a victim of these cruel times.

No. 464-Christian Education

Listening When The Word Speaks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 5, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." 1 Kings 19:11-12; "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" 2 Timothy 3:16; "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Introduction

When you study God's word what method do you use? Is it systematic and exhaustive or casual and superficial? There are many people who express a belief in the word of God, but too few have a grasp of the the power of God's word for their individual lives. Having the power of the word of God that close and not knowing what to do with it is like finding Alladin's lamp, carrying it around for years, but never rubbing it the right way and unleashing the power inside.

There are many people who have a superstitious approach to the word of God. They believe in the "hunt and poke" method of bible reading, thinking that God has a special message for them in whatever verse they happen to open to on a given day. Consider the man who bragged about his fool proof bible reading method that had always shown him the right thing to do. One day he woke up feeling he could not get what he wanted in life. He opened his bible to a verse that said "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." He went out confident that's what God wanted him to do, be satisfied. On another day he was financially in need. He worried about his fate. In distress he opened the bible again and pointed his finger to a verse that said "my God shall supply all your needs." He was reassured. For years he read a bible

verse each day and did what it said. One day however his finger fell on Matthew 27:5 “and went and hanged himself.” He was startled by this message so he pointed his finger again and came to John 13:27 that found Jesus talking to Judas saying “That thou doest, do quickly.” Guided by what he thought was the word of God, the man went out and hanged himself.

The word of God is a source of inspiration, encouragement, correction and salvation, for the world. However, we must listen intently to hear the spoken word of God. We must study intently and search the scriptures daily to understand the written word of God. Moreover we must open our hearts daily to receive the offer of salvation given to us by the Living Word.

As Christians, we know the importance of the word of God. We study it daily, apply it prayerfully, and rely on it completely. The promises of God and our hope for the future relie on the truths it reveals. Let us continue daily that the word of God is the same today as it was yesterday. It is a reliable constant in our lives that remains a source of truth.

Exposition

This text focuses on three passages of scripture which depict three ways mankind receives the word of God: The spoken word, the written word and the living word. Each shows us clearly the power of God’s word revealed in three different ways.

The Spoken Word

Elijah was a great prophet of God. While hiding from the forces of the King in the mountains, Elijah waited to receive the word of God. There was an earthquake, but God was not in it. There was a strong wind, but God was not in the wind. There was fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, there was a still small voice that spoke to him and asked “Elijah,what doest thou here?” Elijah was given specific instructions by the spoken word of God himself.

God has used many methods to communicate his truths. The most obvious of his ways has been to use the spoken word. His power is so great that he can simply speak and the elements of creation hear and obey him. In Genesis, God spoke and said “Let there be” and there was light, fishes and fowls and beasts of every kind. He spoke the world into existence by the power of his being. Israel found that when God spoke to them directly they were not able to stand and they begged God to talk to Moses for them. Many have received direct communications from God himself. One such instance

was the boy Samuel who heard the voice of God whispering to him in the night, calling him to be a prophet. Saul heard the voice of God on the Damascus Road and heeded its challenge to change his direction in life.

Today, when God speaks to the multitude he speaks through the preached word. Paul, writing to the Romans, emphasized the importance of the preached word of God when he asked " How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14 He continued in verse 17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God has a message for entire nations, states, cities, communities and even respective races. Many do not hear the message because they neglect regular worship and listening to the preached word of God.

While God speaks to the multitude through the preacher, God still speaks on the individual level. Modern Christians have the same problem Elijah had: trying to discern the true voice of God from all of the earthshaking, fire breathing, voices that are heard today. The boy Samuel heard God calling his name, but he thought it was Eli's until he finally understood that God was talking to him with a special message. His answer should be our response "Here am I Lord."

When God speaks the birds hush their singing.

When God speaks storms are silenced!

When God speaks even the winds and waves obey his will!

The Written Word

Paul, writing to young Timothy encouraged him to study the written word of God. In 2 Timothy 2:15 he said "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the works of truth." The study of the word of God is essential to Christian life. It is not sufficient to read the word of God, but it must be studied with an able teacher and proper study aids to get the full meaning. Sometime things are not quite what they seem. The late Rod Serling author of the "Twlight Zone" featured an episode in which out of space travelers came to earth. The earthlings received them well after the space travelers gave them a book which had written on the cover "to serve man." Earthlings took this as a sign of friendship even though they could not read the other pages within. After the space ship took off carrying thousands of Earthlings to visit the outer space planet, scientists were finally able to break the code and read the rest of the book.

The book was a "cook book" containing recipes of how to cook and serve humans for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

There are many today who read the various idioms and expressions in the bible and and misread what they mean. Like the poor man who thought he was blessed for being poor when he read "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Similiarily some conclude that there is no need to waste time trying to fight poverty because the bible says the "poor ye will have with you always." Such misunderstandings usually come if the reader contents himself with "reading" the word instead of studying it. Paul told young Timothy to "Study" the word. Through reading and studying the word of God, God is able to speak to the individual. The powerful truths and visions of hope his word contains for us are revealed through ardent study. He reminded Timothy that all scripture is written by the inspiration of God and therefore is an authoritative source for doctrine and church discipline.

The Word of God is a source of hope.

The Word of God is a source of great strength and encouragement. David declared "They word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. ..these words have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God."

The Living Word

There is one final way to hear from God; through the presence of the living word in our lives daily.

John recorded that in the beginning there was the word which was with God and was God. He told us that the Word came alive, dwelled among men for the expressed purpose of showing mankind the path to the kingdom. That Word was Jesus.

On leaving this earth Jesus reminded believers that he would not leave them comfortless but would send a comforter which is the Holy Spirit to dwell with every Christian. The Holy Spirit is the Living Word which directs and corrects, encourages, informs and inspires every believer on a daily basis.

Although they have the spoken word of God, his written word and the living word, many still claim they have never heard God speak to their souls.

Consider the man who was drowning in flood waters and he prayed to God saying "Lord, I'm out here on your word, please save me. Let me hear from you." As the flood waters rose a man in a boat came to help but the drowning man refused saying "I'm waiting to hear from God." Soon after, another boat came and the man refused again. Later a rescue crew in a helicopter came to save him but the man refused again saying "I'm waiting

to hear from God." As the man began to drown, he saw the glories of heaven open up and an angel appeared. He asked the angel, why is God letting me drown, why didn't I hear from him?" The angel responded, "He sent you two boats and helicopter, what more do you want? He answered you just didn't hear!"

We must listen to the word of God. Sometimes he speaks directly to our souls. Sometimes he speaks through the preached word! Sometimes he speaks to us in his written word. He speaks, but we must listen because the Word of God is:

—A Light to walk by, without it we'll stumble in darkness!

—A Sure foundation, without it mankind builds on sandy foundations!

—A Two Edged Sword, without it man fights a losing battle

—A Refreshing Fountain, without man's thirst is unquenchable.

The Living word of God offers: bread to the Hungry, comfort to the lonely, assurance to the anxious, hope to hopless, strengtht to the weak and peace to the troubled soul, rest to the weary!

This Word which existed from the beginning ..became flesh and dwelled among men.

This Word died out on Calvary, but rose after three days!

He's alive today!

No. 465-Women's Day

More than Spare Ribs!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 12, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:22-23
"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

Introduction

What does society in general think of women? Do we consider women as equal partners in creation or a miscellaneous after thought? Women are struggling to achieve a sense of identity and self worth in a male oriented society that treats them as something less than a full human being. Men, on the other hand, seem a bit baffled by the female quest for personhood, some even find it amusing.

Consider an article in the February 1991 issue of Reader's Digest which indicates the level of sensitivity of a male oriented society toward females. The article proported to report a fictitious conversation between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam complained to God that he was lonely and needed a helper. Adam laid out a detailed description of what kind of woman he wanted. Adam wanted a woman that was beautiful, shapely, intelligent, industrious, and. imaginative. In addition he wanted her to be a good cook, good at keeping the garden clean, and willing to listen to names he gave all the animals, keep and slim figure while obeying God's command to be fruitful and multiply at the same time. After hearing Adam's list, God said that's a tall order, but this will cost you? "Just how much will it cost?" Asked Adam. "An arm and a leg" the good Lord replied. "An arm and a leg?" Adam said as he scratched his head. "Do you think you might have an economy model I could possible get for say a ...spare rib?"

Spare Ribs! That's just about sums up society's attitude toward women: a convenient but non-essential complement to man. As women study God's word and learn its real truths they begin to share famed biblical scholar Matthew Henry's assessment of their relationship to man:"Eve was made by God not out of His head to rule over Him, nor out of His feet to be trampled upon by Him, but out of His side to be equal with Him, under His arm to be protected, and near His heart to be loved."

However, Christian women have learned that while society may see them as just

utilitarian extras, in the eyes of God, they are more than just "spare ribs!" There is good news for the Christian woman! Our Lord does not discriminate! Whether male or female, all of God's creatures have equal access to the mercies and blessings of God. From God's perspective, there are no spare ribs! His invitation to share in the abundant life is open to anyone that will receive it and join him at the banquet table of paradise!

Exposition

This text focuses on the nature and role of woman in the Old and New Testaments of the bible.

Genesis gives us the biblical account of the creation of mankind. It focuses on God's creation of a male and female man, whom he named Adam and Eve. The female was called Wo-man because she was intrinsicly a "man with a womb" which is what the word woman means.

There are two accounts of the creation of mankind in the Genesis. Genesis 1:26-30 describes the creation of mankind in general terms. In Genesis 2:7-25 a more detailed account is given focusing on the order of creation. Adam was created and given dominion over the earth. A while later God decided to make a partner for Adam. He took a rib from Adam's side and created woman.

The use of bone tissue from Adam to create Eve is significant. Using bone tissue is important because bones contain a substance that creates and makes blood forming cells, called "marrow." Having been given blood forming cells identical to those of Adam, Eve and her mate were "bone of bone" and they became one blood. Had God chosen to create Eve using the same method that he used to create Adam the results may not have been the same. At the very least they would have been partners but not "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

In the beginning both Adam and Eve shared the same charge: to have dominion over the earth. The distinctions came when sin was introduced into God's perfect order. As a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden several punishments were made. Eve was given two punishments 1)Increased pain in childbirth and 2)Subordination to her husband (Gen. 3:16). Adam was punished with the curse of "responsibility" and labor.(Gen 3:17-19). From this point forward the relationship of men and women was defined and woven into the fabric of society. The Edicts given in Eden formed the theological basis for the subjugation of women for thousands of years.

Old Testament View of Woman

The subordination of women began immediately in the Old Testament. In family and community circles she was completely ignored. In marriage she was traded on the whim of her father in lieu of dowries. The laws were written for men. Women who married but were found not to be virgins could be stoned to death (Deut 22:13-21). Husbands could divorce their wives for any reason by simply giving her a written

release and putting her out of his house (Deut 24:1) Women could not do the same. Even though the Edict of Eden required women only to be subject to their own husbands, the laws and customs of the Old Testament made it clear that women were forced into subjugation to all men.

Women were subjugated but they were also venerated. As mothers and wives they were constantly praised. Proverbs 31 is a lengthy description of what has been described as the virtuous woman. The love of a mother for her children was often used as a type of God's love for his people. Women were subjugated but highly respected at the same time. On occasion there were some women who rose above the stereotype and became leaders. Women such as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Esther, stood tall as leaders of the nation in times of national crises.

However, for the most part, women in the Old Testament were considered second class citizens. They did not stand equally before God in the eyes of men.

Women in the New Testament

There is a bright side to the plight of women in the world. While the world viewed women as insubordinate objects, Jesus came recognizing them as equals before God.

Jesus caused considerable controversy because of his views about the equality of women. First, Jesus talked to women in public which was forbidden. He included women in his parables and stories about the kingdom, which was unusual for his times. Though it angered many of the men around him, Jesus received emotional and financial support from both men and women. He responded to the touch of a woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years. He healed women and he broke with Jewish tradition by affirming Mary's right to follow him as a disciple rather than wash dishes. He even gave expanded insight into the laws about adultery and divorce which favored men only. Jesus added that men who were casually divorcing their wives for reasons other than impropriety were guilty of adultery. Moreover, he added that men who even look at a woman with lust in their hearts were already guilty of adultery. All of Jesus's interactions with women indicate that he saw them as persons equal to men.

Paul, continuing the example of Christ, taught the Church that racial and sexual differences are not to be considered because in Christ there is neither "Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female." On occasion when there were problems in a Jewish congregation, Paul fell back on Jewish customs and urged the women of that particular church to keep silent. Even the idea of a wife submitting herself to her husband in the New Testament is voluntary in nature. Wives are depicted as types of the church, and husbands as types of Christ. Wives who submit do so willingly just as the church willingly submits to Christ. In return for her respect husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Ephesians 5:22-25 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own

husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; The preponderance of New Testament teaching about women is that there is no partiality among persons with God.

Christ did not come to change the law but he did come to remove the curse!

I stopped by today to tell you, that women are more than just spare ribs!

Like Lydia, women are encouraged to become partners in teaching, building and sharing the gospel message.

Like Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchrae, (Roman 16:1) women are expected to minister to the spiritual needs of church.

Like the woman at the well, women are expected to tell somebody "come see a man"

Come see a man who saw the sick and healed them.
Come see a man who saw the poor and empowered them!
Come see a man who saw children and blessed them!
Come see a man who saw the weak and strengthened them!
Come see a man who saw the lonely and comforted them!
Come see a man who saw the enslaved and set them free!
We ought to be glad to tell the same story!
Come see a man who died out on Calvary!
Come see a man who rose and set me free!
His name is Jesus!
Jesus!
Jesus!

No. 466-Communion

Gaining Access To God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 19, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:" Exodus 26:31 "And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Mark 15:38 "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" Hebrews 10:19-24

Introduction

Have you ever felt isolated from God? These times may include moments when you pray, but you don't think your prayers are heard. They are times when you worship but you leave without a meaningful experience. They are times when God seems always just beyond your reach. There is no place on earth that keep us from the presence of God, but there are many things that prohibit us from enjoying the full access to God. Some are real and others are figments of our imagination.

Consider the two pilgrims that were ship wrecked on an island filled with wild and dangerous animals. The two men pulled many of their belongings to shore, but the younger of the two was a superstitious. He believed it a bad sign from his god to cross a line drawn in the sand. As they were pulling their wares in the darkness several lines were drawn in the sand and the young man awoke the next morning and found himself surrounded on all sides by lines in the sand. He refused to move, held firm by his belief about lines in the sand. He rejected every effort by his friend to get him to cross the line and begin his search for a way home. Weeks passed but the young man refused to move. One day his old friend heard the sound of wild beasts approaching. As he hurried along the beach to warn his young friend he was attacked by a wild beast that mauled him badly. As he stumbled toward his friend his lifeless body fell near. The pool of blood that drained from his body ran like a stream and washed away the line drawn in the sand. Seeing the line erased

from the sand, the young man picked up the body of his friend and ran to safety. When he finally made it home again, he looked back in thanks for a friend that gave his life to erase his line in the sand.

Many of us today are boxed in by the limitations of life and we never really get close to God because of self imposed or societal limitations that deny us access to his mercies and blessings.

As Christians, we rejoice because there is good news for those who are boxed in! We have a friend who loved us so much that he gave his life that we might have a chance to make it home. That friend is Jesus, who shed his blood for us, to erase the lines in the sand that separate us from God.

Exposition

These text verses focuses on the veil of the temple, the purpose they served and the new dimension that Christ brought to its consideration.

In Exodus God instructed Moses to build a Tabernacle. Inside God himself would dwell in a special place called the "Holy of Holies." Only the priests could enter the Tabernacle. The Holy of Holies was separated from the rest of the Tabernacle area by an outer and inner "veil" or curtain woven in red, blue and purple colors. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and then only on the day of Atonement which came once a year. Behind the veil stood the Ark of the Covenant which contained the Mercy Seat of God, a pot of manna, the 10 commandments and Moses' budded rod. They all represented the mercy, authority and blessings of God available to men. However, only one man was given access, only one day a year.

Mark records the events surrounding the death of Christ, one of which included the fact that when Jesus died the veil of the temple was split from top to bottom. This signified that there was no longer any barrier that separated God from man.

In Hebrews, Christians are reminded that Christ came and died that we might be able to go through the veil and realize the full glories that are available to us as Christians.

Knowing that we have full access to God daily, we are encouraged to walk by faith because we now have the ability to talk with God for ourselves to let him know our needs.

We are encouraged to approach him boldly, as sons and daughters of faith, knowing that all things are possible, if we put our trust and confidence in him.

Veils That Hide Us From God

Today there are millions who yearn to gain greater access to God but are prohibited by self constructed and societal veils. These obstructions prevent even the most devout from knowing the full joy of the Lord. Each approaches him but falls short of a full revelation of his greatness in their lives.

Societal veils separate us from God because the importance of ritual and appearance become more important than people themselves. Many who believe in God are limited in their ability to get close to him by the traditions and customs of men. Within the religious world itself our loyalty to ritual, tradition, and intellectualism, often supersedes the need of individual believers to express themselves to God. We say pray, but only in a certain position. We say make a joyful noise unto the Lord, but only if it's not too noisy. We say let everything that hath breath praise the Lord, as long as it doesn't involve a guitar or a tambourine. We say forsake not the assembling of yourselves, as long as women don't wear pants and men wear a tie. In many instances the man made traditions are based upon our own beliefs and tastes but have no scriptural foundation. Sometimes our rituals and tradition act as a veil to prohibit believers from fully accessing the power of God. Jesus observed many traditions during his life on earth, but whenever tradition and custom appeared to be more important than people he challenged tradition, much to the dismay of his critics. It angered people that he was changing things, yet he continued tore down any barrier that separated men and women from God.

Self constructed veils. Among the varied veils that separate us from God are some that are self constructed. These involve our inability to get close to the power of God because of spiritual limitations.

Lack of faith keeps us from realizing the power of God. Our lack of faith does not limit God's power to act miraculously, but it does reduce what we get from God because we don't believe enough to ask. God can act and perform his will regardless to the quantity of our faith. It is a certainty that many of us have received rich blessings from God that we never dreamed were possible. We hoped for them, but we never expected them to come about. That means God decided to do it for us anyway, even though we didn't have the spiritual strength to believe it could happen. It is like the man who constructed a "pet entrance" on his kitchen door so his cat could go and come at will. Each night he let the cat out he would put a healthy portion of cat food and milk near the entrance so that he could be refreshed when he returned. However, each night the cat sat on the steps in the cold and never came in

the new entrance. Finally realizing there was a problem, the man caught the cat in his arms and push him through the entrance to show him what was waiting for him. From that night forward the cat went straight for the entrance and always enjoyed a fresh bowl of milk and good food. In a similar manner God has given us blessings that we have hoped for, but did not have enough faith to ask for and expect them to become a reality. Our lack of faith does not limit God's ability to bless us, but it does extend the time of "wanting" beyond that which is necessary.

That's why the Word of God in Hebrews 10: 19-24 reminds us daily that we should act on our profession of faith and walk daily with the assurance that God will take care of all our needs, according to his will for us. To walk in faith is to walk knowing you are on the right path. Although you can't see every thing clearly, you know the path will take you home. If you trusted only in what you could see you would stop walking immediately. That's why 2 Corinthians 5:7 says "We walk by faith and not by sight."

Sin. Sin separates us from God. If there is any one entity that keeps us from enjoying the fullness of God's blessings it is sin. When we are practicing sinners, we simply cannot get close to God in good conscience. People who are shacking, stealing, adulterous, dealing in drugs, and living wildly will have difficulty getting close to God. They may attempt to come before him but, always stop short. They come to worship, but can't meet God, because of the veil that separates them spiritually. They may even live religiously, but fall short, because of the veil. The only way to truly know God is remove the veil that separates us from him. That's why Hebrews 12:1 says:".. let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Removing sin removes the veil that separates us from God.

When Barriers are removed

If you have been hampered in your efforts to gain access to God, there is good news today! The moral authority for man made veils has been removed! The permanence and lasting effect of the veil of sin has been canceled by the forgiveness of Christ. The power of God for those who walk by faith can be realized!

Those who draw near to God can realize the fullness of God and benefit fully from their access to the spiritual treasures of heaven.

Powerful things start to happen whenever we get close to God.

When Abraham got close to God he grew in spiritual strength and

material wealth.

When Israel got close to God, it survived the wilderness and made it to the promised land.

When Moses got close to God, he watched with amazement as God rolled back the waters of the Red Sea.

When Isaiah got close to God he answered the call to serve by said "If the Lord needs somebody, here I am, send me"

When David got close to God he defeated enemies and built a great nation.

When we get draw close to God we have access to his storehouse of blessing.!

No wonder the song writer declared "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to the cross where thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

However, there is no way to draw close to God without Jesus. For the word teaches us that "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5)

Access to God is possible because of Jesus.

Jesus, who somebody called the Prince of Peace!

Jesus, who somebody called the Wonder of Wonders!

Jesus, who somebody called the Lamb of God, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, The King of Kings, The Lord of Lords!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

When he died the veil of the temple of was split into, letting the world know that God was now freely available to all.

When Jesus died he torn down the veil, but when he rose he reaffirmed our hope!

Yes he died, but I'm so glad that he's alive today!

Whenever I need him, I just call him...and just a little talk with Jesus will make it right!

No. 467-Youth

Use It Or Lose It!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 26, 1993

Matthew 25:28-29 "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

Introduction

What is your attitude about success? Do you believe that all things are possible or do you put limits on your abilities? Many people never achieve their potential because they are unwilling to risk the possibility of failure if they make an effort and fall flat on their face.

Consider two friends that started out in life together as young men. Each adopted a motto or slogan that defined their approach to life. One of the friends was troubled by the insecurities of the world. He moved into a shack in the woods and lived their in peace. One day his friend came to visit him and as they talked he noticed a banner on the wall that read "To keep from failing —don't try!" When asked to explain the sign, he told his friend that the most practical way to insure against losing what little he had was to hang onto what he had. My idea is simple "nothing ventured, nothing loss." The two friends parted company and it was 20 years before they saw each other again. This time the hermit friend paid a visit on his old pal. He noticed that he lived in a spacious house and had all of the things associated with comfortable living. He told his friend "you seem to be doing well for yourself, what is the key to your success." His friend said "Well it all began when I came to visit you 20 years ago. I saw your sign that said "To Keep from failing, don't try" and I heard you say "nothing ventured, nothing loss." I decided to get me a motto." He pointed his friend to a large banner over the mantle on his fireplace that read "To Keep from succeeding, don't try!" The difference between us is you trusted in yourself and focused on avoiding failure. I trusted in God and focused on success!" In a similar sense, there are many who never succeed because they never try.

God gives every person a measure of talent and ability and expects each

person to use what they have been given to achieve optimum return. Some have been given more than others, but everyone has been given something. What we do with what we have been given determines our success or failure.

As Christians we should approach life with a positive attitude. No matter how high the mountain, or formidable the opposition, we know that if God wills, it can be accomplish. With that knowledge we courageously try, counting on God to help us every step of the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on one of two parables Jesus gave that emphasized the expectation that every person in the kingdom would use abilities given to maximum potential.

The idea of faith and industry is suggested in both the parable of the "minas" in Luke 19:12-26 and the parable of the "talents" in Matthew 25:14-30. In Luke, a nobleman went away on a journey and gave each of his ten slaves a "mina" which was about $8,500 each by modern standards. When he returned he each person was asked to account for their management of their "mina." One had taken his "mina" and turned it into ten and the master praised him for his industry and made him a ruler over ten cities. Another had produced five and was made ruler over five cities. At least one however, had taken his "mina" and kept it in a handkerchief and gave it back. The master was angered at his unwillingness to use his "mina" and took it from him and gave it to the one who demonstrated his industry best."

In Matthew, Jesus repeats the same theme with the parable of the "talents." This time the nobleman gave each of his servants a "talent" which was about 60 times the value of a mina or about $500,000. Unlike the parable of the "minas" in which every person was given the same amount to work with, Jesus draws an even clearer picture in this parable noting that some of the servants were given more talents than others. Each person that used their talents in ways that showed an increase were praised and rewarded. However, the servant who refused to use his talent because it was small and feared failure was scorned. In fact, the master took his talent from him and gave it to the one who had demonstrated that he could get the most out of what was given.

The Greek word used for "talent" is "Talanton" which means "a weighed amount." Our English word "talent" is drawn from this parable. It refers to "weighed ability" or a gift committed to one's trust to use and improve. It refers generally to natural faculty, ability or power.

In that context the parable of the talents suggests that everyone is entrusted with varying abilities. Each is expected to use those abilities to in a productive and positive way.

Discovering God Given Gifts

Many young people are discovering new realities about themselves. Some are learning about new skills, abilities and interests almost daily. One truth that many have learned and others have yet to learn, is that they have at least one and possibly more than one ability from God. Some gifts and abilities are easy to recognize. Those who sing, dance, act, play musical instruments or excel in sports are easy to identify. Those who are not gifted with these talents may even feel that they do not have a talent. However, talents are not limited to singing, artistic expressions and athletics. Talents also involve innate abilities. Those who have the ability to focus on a problem and resolve it have a talent. Those who can organize, arrange and orchestrate are talented. Those who can carry out an assignment with precise attention to detail are talented. Those who are gifted with great imaginations and always have a flood of ideas are talented. Obviously, the list of talents is endless. Some people have more talents than others, but everyone has at least one ability.

The quest for the Christian youth is to discover talents that have been given by God. For some young people, this is a difficult task in itself. Some may say: I don't sing, dance, play a musical instrument, play sports or speak well. Why didn't God give me a talent? Sometimes you don't see your talent neither does anyone else. Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read. People said he had not talent but turned to be one of the world's greatest physicists. Issac Newton did poorly in grade school. No one believed he had the ability to discover the principle of gravity. A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had "no good ideas" and yet Disneyland, and animated cartoons proved that he had the gift of imagination. Haydn gave up ever making a musician of
Beethoven, who seemed a slow and plodding young man with no apparent talent yet Beethoven became one of the world's greatest musicians.

God has given everyone an ability. Those who have not discovered it should ask God to show it to them and then help them to appreciate the great gift he has given them. One of the great advantages of Salvation is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit helps us identify and then empowers our special ability. 1 Corinthians 12 details this whole experience, giving us the

various categories of talents and then reassuring us that everyone does not have the same talent, but when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, our ability is amplified so that we can be of great service to the kingdom.

Using Your Talents

How many talents have you been given? Like the parable, do you have five? Two? Suppose you have only discovered one talent? One of the first truths we learn in life is that everyone does not have the same gifts or the same number of gifts. Every person should use whatever gifts they have been given, to the best of their ability. We should never feel sorry for ourselves because we only have one talent. Sometimes we want big things and God intends for us to take little things and make big things out of them. George Washington Carver (1864-1943) said that he once asked God to tell him about the universe. According to Carver, the Lord replied, "George, the universe is just too big for you to understand. Suppose you let Me take care of that." Humbled, Carver asked, "Lord, how about a peanut?" The Lord said, "Now, George, that's something your own size. Go to work on it and I'll help you." When Carver was done studying the peanut, he had discovered more than 300 products that included: a milk substitute, face powder, printer's ink, and soap.. that could be made with that tiny bit of God's world. He had only one talent, but he used it well! The question that should concern us is not how many talents we have, but what we will do with the talents that we have been given.

Using your talent requires that you both improve and move! Improving involves training to bring out the very best in what has been given to you. For some that may mean college, for others vocational school. For everyone it means learning as much as we can, while we can. To improve your talent is to polish it and increase it in every way possible.

Not only must you improve, but you must move! You must be ready and willing to move, take action and react when opportunity knocks. To have the tools and fail to move at the right time is fruitless. Seizing opportunity requires a great deal of faith. Faith in God produces courageous progress. What stopped the last servant in the parable from progressing wasn't his lack of ability, it was his lack of faith and his fear of failure. He would not seize opportunities when they presented themselves and played it safe. In playing it safe, he eventually lost his opportunity and it was given to the man who demonstrated he had the tools and was willing to move!

Those who stand well with God are those who don't spend time

complaining about what they do not have, but use what they have to best of their ability!

Those who succeed have concluded that "no matter what comes my way in life that God will make a way", and they step forward in faith!

The Lord can take one talent and multiply it, but I must use it!

If I make just one step the can take my dirt and turn it into diamonds. He can take my pebbles and make them pearls! He can take my rags and give me robes. He can take my failures and give me success!

I don't know about you but I'll continue to say: "Thank you Lord, for blessing my soul!" Thank you Lord for dying for me on Calvary! Thank you Lord for giving me the opportunity to go forward in faith!

468-Church Anniversary

The Purchase Price of A Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Mary Goss Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 22, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28;"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:20;"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" 1 Peter 1:18-19

Introduction

What is the purchase price of a church? Often when church congregations are remodeling, financial institutions are interested in knowing the value of the church's real estate. They send out inspectors that consider the building's age, community surroundings, fixtures and other tangible assets. The evaluation is then computed by the lending institution and a report is given as to the marketability of the church's assets, in case it defaulted on its loan agreement. Generally called the "loan value," the amount cited is considered the value of the church. Sometimes the report mistakenly suggests that the number cited is the value of the "church", rather than the value of properties owned by the church.

The church is more than simple mortar and brick. Consider the rich man and the old preacher who learned this lesson the hard way. The rich man noticed that the old preacher worshipped each Sunday in an old warehouse that was barely standing. Despite its size the old warehouse was packed full of people every Sunday and the people seemed to enjoy themselves. The rich man resolved that the old preacher was a good bible thumper but he needed a lesson in building a church. The rich man bought a piece of land in a highly traveled area. He hired the best architects that money could buy and imported the finest materials for draperies, seating and finishing. Each day as the building was going up the preacher stood across the street with his foot resting

on a large stone. As the fine seats, hanging chandeliers and air conditioning were installed, the old preacher simply watched. When the building was complete the rich man was proud. He hired him a preacher, complete with a seminary degree and bought advertising on television. However, on Sunday morning there were no people in attendance at his new church. He was puzzled.

He went across the street to the preacher and asked "Didn't I do everything right?" The old preacher said: "You've built a mighty fine building, I'd love to have it myself, but there is one thing you forgot." What's that?" Asked the rich man. The old preacher beckoned for him to follow him down to his warehouse church. Once there the old preacher took the same rock that he rested his foot on each day and put it in the pulpit. He then placed his foot on the rock and said "You tried to build a pretty building to draw men, but Jesus said 'If I be lifted up, I'll draw all men unto me. ..Upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' If you want to build a church, you need to stand on the rock!

Today there many who also think that the church is simply mortar and bricks, but they are mistaken. The church is the body of Christ which was purchased with his own blood.

As Christians, we should always remember that the works of men don't last long, but the works of God are everlasting. Building on the hopes of men in vain so we should "build our hopes on things eternal" and hold to God's unchanging hand.

Exposition

Each of the three verses that comprise the theological basis for this text emphasizes the same basic truth: that the salvation enjoyed by Christians today has be purchased or redeemed by the blood of Christ.

The idea of redemption is not unique to the New Testament. In Old Testament custom and tradition the concept was also used. Slaves and other properties lost in trade or through an act of war could be redeemed by the payment of a set price. Sins committed required the shedding of blood for redemption to be fulfilled. Whether the sinner brought offerings of animals or the first fruits of their crops, a price was paid for their redemption. It did not come without a heavy duty attached to secure it permanently.

Luke, recording the events of Acts 20, tells how the entire church of God was purchased with a price. It has been redeemed by Jesus himself out on Calvary. Ministers are encouraged to feed the church of God and nurture it,

because it was purchased by God himself through the sacrifice of his son on Calvary.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians reminds them that not only has the church been purchased by God at a high price, but each individual has also been purchased by God. Our bodies, said Paul, are not our own for every member of the body of Christ has been purchased by Christ.

This is important because Christ's sacrifice cannot be seen as one that was made for the body, as a whole, and not for individuals. Christ died, that he might save the individual, who when combined collectively with all other believers, makes us the body of Christ which is the church. Knowing this to be a fact, Paul urges everyone to keep in mind that we do not live for ourselves, but rather for him who gave his life that we might live. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." All that we do and say should be to the glory of God. We are his, because he has purchased us.

Peter, reminded members of the church that they were not given their liberties as Christians as the result of some financial transaction. He wanted them to know that it was not silver and gold which was responsible for their salvation, but the blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish, sacrificed in our stead. Our sins had become so great that only the blood of the lamb could suffice.

Taken together, these three text verses underscore the truth that we have been purchased with a great price and are not our own. As members of the body of Christ, we owe him our allegiance in mind and body because we are not our own.

Not For Sale

A couple had saved their money for many years to buy the house of their dreams. Once they had what they believed to be an acceptable down payment they decided to drive through a neighborhood which had many beautiful homes. As they drove down the street however, they saw so many beautiful homes that they instantly fell in love with not one, but many of them. Soon after, they found a broker and they brought him to the area to show him the homes they like. However, as they showed each home they had to drop their heads in sorrow as they heard the agent say regretfully "It's not for sale." Whether the homes were large or small, every single home they saw was "not for sale." How could this be? The broker told them that a large developer wanted the land in the area for a new project that he planned and

so he purchased them all and although they were once on the market, the houses were no longer for sale.

In the same sense, the church is not for sale! There are many who think that it is, but they are wrong because the church is not for sale. It cannot be for sale because it has already been purchased by Jesus a long time ago.

There are many who think the church and its benefits are available to the highest bidder. Some members stay away from worship services frequently, but are quick to send financial gifts, as if to purchase their salvation. Finance can't purchase salvation, its not for sale because it has already been purchased. Others think they can buy themselves a place in heaven by giving large sums to the church, but they too are mistaken because our places in the kingdom have already been confirmed. We know they have been confirmed because Jesus said "I go to prepare a place for you..." We can't buy ourselves a place in the kingdom by showing up in a worship service and putting a dollar in the offering tray as a down payment on eternal life. We can't buy it, because it has already been purchased. Salvation cannot be purchased because it is given to any who want it absolutely free. Romans 6:23 makes it clear: "The wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life..." The church cannot be purchase because membership is given free of charge to anyone that is willing to respond to the invitation of God and answer the call!

High Purchase Price?

What is the purchase price of a church? Obviously it is not any currency known to man!

The Russian Ruble cannot purchase the church! Neither can the French Franc, the Mexican Paso, the German Mark, or the Yen! Despite their value in the common market, nothing made by hands can purchase the church.

I'm glad that Jesus purchased the church and not man, because would have been different.

If man had purchased the church, its doors would be closed to certain people!

If man had purchased the church, grounds would be off limits to all its enemies, but Jesus says "come all ye that are heavy laden."

If man had purchased the church, its music would have been confined only to certain refrains, but our Lord declares "if these hold their peace, the rocks will cry out! ...let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

If man had purchased the church, communion trays would be filled with

wine, but Jesus said this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you!"

If man had purchased the church, he would lock its door at the first sign of trouble, but Jesus said "upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!"

I don't know about you, but I've decided to stick with the church!

The church, will stand when great monuments of man topple and crumble to dust!

The church, will stand when its enemies have fallen along the wayside!

Institutions rise and institutions fall, but the church rolls on!

No wonder the song writer declare: "This the old ship of Zion, get on board get on board!"

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, is the captain!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning, is in control!

Get on board!

Get on board!

No. 469-Revival

The Formula For Action

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 3, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"Wilt thou know oh vain man, that faith without works is dead" James 2:20

Introduction

How strong is your faith in God? Is it strong enough to prompt you to take action despite the odds? Is it a deep and enduring faith or is it superficial? There are many people who profess faith in God, but their expression of faith, often does not reflect itself in their deeds.

Consider the man who constantly told all of his friends of his great faith in God. Among friends and in public, he constantly reflected a wealth of words that seemed dipped in faith. One day as he toured a famous mountain in a cable lift, the lift somehow got off track and the man dangled hundreds of feet in the air. As he hung on for his life he cried out "somebody up there help me!". No one else could hear it, but shortly after he heard the voice of God speak to him and ask him: "do you have faith?" The man cried out "Yes, Lord!". Again the voice cried out: "Do you have faith that I have the power to catch you if you fall?" The man answered "yes Lord, I believe! I tell all my friends about my faith every day!" The line began to snap and the tram dangled by just a thread. The man was even more frightened. Again the voice said calmly: "Do you believe?" The man said "Oh yes Lord, I believe!" At that the voice gave the man one final instruction: "Let go of the cable and I will catch you before you fall" The man looked around and saw no man around and immediately was filled with doubt. Before he could think he cried out: "Is there anybody else up there that can help me?" He said he had faith, but it was not great enough to prompt him to let go and wholly trust the power of God.

Today there are many people who share a similar dilemma. They have great faith under safe and normal conditions, but they don't have enough faith to fully and completely trust in the power of God. The great blessings that God has in store for us are released when we exhibit a faith that works.

As Christians we know that it is not enough for us simply to talk about faith. Neither is it sufficient for us to talk about our faith. We know that great faith is shown through our willingness to demonstrate faith in our words and in our deeds. Faith and works form a catalyst that usually result in positive, God centered, action that can change our lives forever!

Exposition

This text focuses on the book of James, which was written by James the brother of Jesus. It focuses on the utilitarian nature of our faith, which is to serve our fellow man.

The book of James is a striking contrast to the preponderance of teachings in the Pauline Epistles. Paul, preached to the Christians in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus and various other localities that they should strive to justify themselves before God. Paul emphasized one principle: "How to present yourself before God in a way that is both justified and acceptable to him." To accomplish this end Paul taught that men should follow the outline of Romans 10:9 "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Paul's formula seemed to be: "C+B=S" or "confession, plus, belief equals salvation." As far as being justified before God, Paul taught that personal faith and an expressed belief in God is all that is necessary to straighten things out with God.

James on the other hand does not focus on being justified before God, but he focuses on what it takes to glorify and exemplify God in our lives as we live before men. James reminds us that all that is needed to be acceptable to God is a confessed born again life! However, we have been charged to do more than seek our own salvation, but we have been charged by our savior to "let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

James teaches us that to glorify God in the presence of men we need a new formula which is based on the premise that our faith plus our works will be a living force for change. Additionally Jesus commanded us to "go ye therefore...and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I'll be with you alway even unto the end of the world.

What is taking place here is the formation of a new formula or prescription for God centered change. James gives us the first part Faith plus works. Add to that the command of Jesus to let our let shine and then to go to as many people as we can with that message what we have is a new formula: (F+W)X U2=Action. In words, God's formula for actions seems to say "Your Faith plus your works multiplied by the number of people you can influence will result in God centered Action.

The main theme of the Book of James is active faith. His lesson to us is simple, believing and worshiping God is only beginning, service to others is the test of whether or not we really believe what we talk about.

Working The Formula

How do we work this formula? What does it mean in practical terms for our lives?

First God's formula for action is a powerful! It involves:

FAITH: Hebrews 11:1 tell us that "Now faith is the substance of things hoped

for and the evidence of things not seen." Faith is trusting in God to provide a way even though we don't quite know how it will happen. Faith is essential to God's formula for action because unless we trust in God we will never have the strength to go forward in his name.

WORKS: Our works include the words we say and the things we do on a daily basis to respond to human need in the name of Jesus. Our response to human crises, poverty, homelessness, the infirmed, the bereaved, and social ills are but a few of our works.

U2: Represents the number of people we influence with our faith and works. It is the sum total of our personal evangelism to let others know about the power of our God and his empathy with our needs.

ACTION: Action represents our desired result, a powerful response from God's people to the crises of our times. Such a response will be so overwhelming that the best efforts of our detractors will not be able to diminish its effectiveness.

God's formula, as taught by the preponderance of New Testament Scripture suggest that when men and women of God act on their faith that powerful things begin to happen in the community of man.

To work the formula we must do what is inside of the parenthesis first! (That's the way equations are solved). That means we must first have faith and works ourselves.

Then we must multiply our faith and works by influencing as many people as we can. The net result will be God centered action. It is a simple plan that spells "action" anyway we look at it.

The danger of Tampering With God's Formula

There are some skeptics that believe they operate outside of God's formula. They believe they can simply leave out certain key elements and achieve the same results. What happens if we tamper with God's formula?

Because it is an equation, whatever we do on one side of the equal sign must also be done on the other side. If non-believers choose to take action but remove "faith" from the formula, faith must be taken away from action leaving a formula that reads W X U2=Action-F or faithless action. Taking action without faith usually results in a cause that "fizzles."

If non-believers choose to remove "Works" it results in Many people with great faith with Workless Action (F X U2=Action-W).We see this often when we see people who profess great faith but rarely take action.

If non-believers choose to keep the faith and works but not go out and influence others to do the same the results is action that is reduced by the number of people we "could have" influenced if we had not chosen to sit down on God. F + W=Action/u2. We see this best exemplified in people who are satisfied to keep their faith and works reduced to as small a scale as possible. What could have been is reduced by

the number of people these people could have influenced if they had listened to the command of God.

Faith and Works In God's Hands goes a long way!

Brothers and sisters, we should not be discouraged because we only have little faith and small work! A little faith in God's hands, can go a long way.

The apostles were discouraged when they saw that the crowd was large but their provisions were few. They soon learned that a little faith and action, placed in God's hands can go a long way. God baffled modern science when he multiplied by dividing!

Israel was discouraged when it was faced with promised land, but Joshua and Caleb kept reminding them, that a little faith and action, placed in God's hands can go a long way, and walls came tumbling down!

Gideon was troubled that he only had 300 soldiers to fight an army of thousands, but he soon learned that a little faith plus a little work, when placed in God's hands can go a long way, and his enemies were defeated with the loss of one!

Somebody here today is troubled in their spirit, wondering which way to go! The God you serve is a god of action, put your faith to work and let God do the rest!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that a little faith can go a long way!

So I've resolved to sing with the song writer: This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!

All In my home!
I'm going to let it Shine!
Everywhere I go!
I'm going to let it shine!
Let it Shine!
Let it Shine!
Let it Shine!

No. 470-Faith

A Faith That Worketh Patience

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 10, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let faith have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:4

Introduction

Has your faith ever been tested? Has there ever been a time when you felt challenged by a series of circumstances that have frustrated you? What was your response? The ideal response to challenging moments is to approach them with confidence, endure them with courage, and arise from them with an even stronger faith.

A striking example of this truth is Nelson Mandela's quest to eliminate racial segregation in South Africa. As leader of the African Nation Congress, Mr. Mandela was confident that the South Africa's system of Apartheid was morally wrong. He worked to change that system, even though at the time it appeared he was fighting a losing battle. Despite the hopelessness of this situation he entered with confidence.

His activism resulted in a 27 year imprisonment during which time he demonstrated unparerelled courage and commitment to his cause. He educated himself in prison, refined his thinking, and took the very walls that were supposed to demoralize him and used them as spring boards to renewed hope.

A few years ago he arose from dungeons of segregationist ideology with an even stronger faith. He used the new courage he gained from his prison and experience to face the final obstacle of finally dismantling the remaining vestiges of the apartheid system in South Africa. Today, apartheid is legally dead in South Africa, largely because of one man's faith, courage and commitment to the idea of freedom.

The stages of Mandela's struggle represent the same stages that every person faces when pressed to put his faith in action, against the odds: Enter with confidence, endure with courage, and arise with renewed faith.

Whether the person is Ghandi or Martin Luther King. Whether it is Rosa Parks or the man and wife facing the difficulties of a troubling marriage, the principle is the same: Those who exemplify great faith are those who enter a troubling situation with confidence that it cannot overwhelm them, cannot frighten them and will not break their resolve to proceed toward their established goal.

As Christians, we have learned that simply having faith is not the same as acting

on it. We know that to talk about faith and to act on faith are expressly different. Therefore we should continue to resolve that we will face every difficulty that life presents with confidence and optimism that God will work things out to our advantage in his own due time and in his own mysterious way.

Exposition

This text focuses on James, the brother of Jesus, as he explains to the church that works, which evidence our faith, have several dimensions, one of which is patience.

James' general message is that professed faith in God should equate to action. It is exemplified best by his statement in James 5:20 that "faith without works is dead." The general idea is that those who have faith will show it in their works. In this passage, James helps us to categorized and classify just what he means by "works" as the idea of patience is explained.

James seems to say that faith is a matter of strong belief that can be professed with the lips. Patience is not a matter of belief it is a product of belief plus trial. James' formula seems to be: F+T=P or Faith Plus Trial equals Patience. James says that trials should be welcomed by every Christian because they are an opportunity to develop patience. Listen at verse 2 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Divers Temptations is simply an old fashioned way of saying "diverse kinds of troubles." We should count it a joy when we are exposed to the different kinds of troubles that life brings. Why? Because "the trying of your faith, worketh patience."

To some, James' assertion that we should rejoice when trouble comes is troubling. They don't understand why anyone would want to rejoice when trouble comes. They see life as the world sees it. The world rejoices when trouble leaves. The Christian rejoices when trouble comes! That is not to say that Christians go and seek trouble. James does not suggest that we spend our days looking for trouble so we can prove how much faith we have.

A careful reading of verse two says when we "fall into divers temptations" meaning when trouble finds us. When trouble finds us we approach it with an attitude that it is another opportunity to let our faith work and for Christ to work through us to achieve another victory.

The key element of James formula is assurance. He equates patience with the quiet assurance that when faith is tested in the life of a person committed to life according to the will of God, victory is inevitable. "All things work to the good of them that love the Lord, according to his purposes in Christ Jesus."

James says every Christian should approach life's troubles with an air of confidence that helps him to say "I can't lose, with the stuff I use." That stuff is my faith and trust in Almighty God.

How to Develop Patience

How can we develop that quiet assurance that is well in our lives? How can we acquire this evasive quality of patience? It comes through repeated application of our faith in moments of trial and trouble. In the beginning, we do not enter trials with patience. Most of us enter with faith alone. However, we come out of trials with faith and patience.

Job did not enter his trial with patience. He entered his trial with an unfaltering trust in God. Despite the fact that we know him as a great man of patience, he did not have it when it trial began. However he did have it when his trial ended. We know he did not have it because he spent considerable time frustrated with his friends, his wife and with himself. During the course of his trial he came to grips with some truths about himself, God and life in general and came forth out of his trial with a renewed faith and trust in God. When he came forth, Job was a man of patience.

In a similar sense, we do not enter into troubling situations with patience. We enter with faith alone. However, when we come through, we evolve a more patient person because we have seen how God has parted the waters of the Red Sea and allowed us to walk on dry ground.

We develop patience by winning small battles at first and then winning great victories in the name of the Lord!

Patience has two key elements that are essential to its understanding they are:

PERSEVERANCE: Perseverance is the ability to endure the storm, without being washed overboard. Those who are able to endure troubling situations are likely to achieve a portion of patience when its over.

PERSISTENCE: Persistence goes beyond perseverance. Perseverance only seeks to survive the storm. Persistence proceeds toward accomplishing the will of God despite the storm. Persistence seizes the wheel and guides the ship through the storm toward the goal. Even if thrown overboard the persistent person, floating on the life preserver of hope, keeps paddling toward mark of the high calling of God which is in Jesus Christ.

The persistent person sings the words of the old Negro Spiritual "Sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes level to the ground, but at the cross I'm going to bow, and I going on to heaven anyhow. Through the storm, through the rain, Lord I'll make just the same, at the cross I'm going to bow, and I'm going on to heaven anyhow!"

The key to developing patience is to endure small storms and never lose sight of our goal, while gaining strength for bigger storms that are sure to come.

No Patience Until We've Been Tried

James makes it abundantly clear that there can be no patience gained without trials endured. There can be no victory unless there is a battle. You can't enjoy the sweetness of ecstasy until you have tasted the bitterness of agony. You can't appreciate the gain, until you've known the pain.

If you ask Daniel he'll tell you that you may prayer all day long. But you really don't that the Lord will answer prayer until you been in the Lion's Den. When you have faced the growling fangs of death and been in the grasp of adversity and watched the Lord quiet down angry lions, only then you can say "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried him for myself."

If you ask the Three Hebrew Boys they'll tell you may believe that your God is able to deliver you. But you really don't know that the Lord is able to deliver you until you have been in the fiery furnace. When you feel the heat of opposition burning seven times hotter than it normally burns. When you feel the protecting arms of God surround hear the voice of the world ask "didn't we put three men in the fire, behold I see four, and the fourth man looks like the son of God."

The same man that was in the fire with the Hebrew boys!
The same man that was in the lion's den with Daniel...
That same man is with us today.
Jesus, the lily of the valley!
Jesus, the bright and morning star!
Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!
Died out on Calvary but rose on Sunday morning!
He was tried in the fire!
When you've been tried in the fire you know there always room for optimism!
When you've been tried in the fire, hope waning is restored again!
When you've been tried in the fire, love lost is revived again!
When you've been tried in the fire, the weak in heart get new strength!
Have you been tried in the fire?
Did you...
Did you...
Did you come forth as pure gold?

No. 471-Youth

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 24, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. James 1:23-24; But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Introduction

Have you ever taken a good look at yourself in the mirror? What do you see? Was it the face of the most beautiful girl at school? Was the handsome physique of the school s most handsome young man? Did you like what you saw so much that you kissed your mirror? What did not do when you were not pleased? There are times when we like what we see in the mirror. There are times when we don t like what we see. When we see something wrong or ugly we try to change it. Sometimes there are pimples and bumps in our faces and we reach for a variety of creams and salves to remove them. If a hair is out of place it will quickly be combed into place. Rarely do we leave the mirror without responding to what we see. The question is how we respond.

In the children s tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs a wicked queen made a practice of going to her mirror daily and asking the question mirror on the wall, who s the fairest of them all. For many years the mirror always answered you are, my queen which was much to her satisfaction. However, when a beautiful young lass ventured into her kingdom and came to live with the seven dwarfs, the queen got a different answer when she asked the same question. As usual, the vain queen came to her mirror and asked the question Mirror, mirror on the wall, who s fairest of them all? Instead of its usual answer this time the mirror responded in truth Snow White. The queen was infuriated at the mirror and she was infuriated at Snow White. Rather than improve upon her looks she sought to kill Snow White by giving her a poisoned apple. She looked into her mirror, did not like what she saw and immediately

tried to change the condition of everyone except herself.

There are some who see themselves in a mirror and do nothing. That is why some walk around daily without combed heads and with yesterdays milk stain still on their mouths. They saw it in the mirror but it did not matter to them. They did not change.

As Christians we thank God for showing us a true reflection of ourselves in his word. In his word we see not only our imperfections and places that need improvement, but we also se your finer qualities. We leave from his presence assured that every is correct and in order as we live our lives in the world each day!

Exposition

This text focuses on the James, the brother of Jesus, as he emphasizes to the Church, the importance of being doers of the word. Throughout his epistle James underscores the importance of going beyond simply verbalizing faith, but to acting upon it. His themes are repetitious. Faith Without Works is dead , Faith Leadeth to Patience ,and Effectual Faith in Prayer. They all say one truth: Those who have faith in God should act upon it rather than simply talk about it.

In this text, James encourages the church to peer into the perfect law of liberty, as if it were a mirror, and to compare itself to the perfect truths of God. In places where it finds deficiencies the church should take corrective action. It should, according to James, never leave without taking steps toward improvement.

The Formula seems to be: What I Am, Plus An Active Faith, equals what I ought to be (A+F=O).

The word translated glass is from the Greek word Esoptron. In the King James Version Esoptron has been translated glass.

Most mirrors in biblical times were metallic and not made of glass. Such mirrors did not give true reflections because their surfaces gave reflections that were sometimes out of proportion to reality. A true mirror had to have certain properties to be the best possible. It had to have 1)Sufficient smoothness and regularity, and; 2)Ability to reflect light uniformly producing images of things that stand in front of it. Esoptron interpreted as Glass narrows down the kind of mirrors that were available to the one that is most likely to give a true reflection.

The word of God is compared to a true mirror which meets both tests of a true mirror: it is consistent and regular, and has the ability to reflect upon

the life before it a true image. James notes that those who stand before the perfect law of God can expect to see a true reflection of themselves as they compare to his expectations.

Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians notes that those who know the Lord can stand boldly before the glass or mirror of God s word and can see how they are gradually changing, with the help of the Holy Spirit into the kind of people that would be acceptable to God.

Both text verses underscore the importance of seeing ourselves in mirror that gives us a true picture of ourselves and then adjusting, with the help of the Holy Spirit, little by little until we become what God wants us to be. Both frown upon the idea of seeing ourselves deficient and leaving without making any changes.

Man Made Mirrors Are Deceptive

Today s youth should pay close attention to the truths of this text, especially Christian youth.

The first truth revealed is that man made mirrors are deceptive. James, in this text makes sure that he uses the term glass to differentiate the quality of God s word as a reflector from other kinds of mirrors in use. It is important because depending on the quality of the mirror, the way we look can actually be distorted.

Man made mirrors can make you look little in your own eyes. Many young people have a low estimate of themselves because they see themselves reflected only in the eyes of mankind. Many look at the fine homes and lifestyles of the rich and famous and then look at where they live and think that its impossible for them to do anything because they don t have what the stars have.

Some youth have dismissed themselves as failures because they are from poor homes or because they live a the project. Some are beginning to believe the reflection that the world gives them. Sometimes even in their home they are told that they are nothing. How many boys have been told You ain t gon never mount to anything, you just like your old daddy! How many children have begun to believe that they cannot achieve because of their race! Blackness is equated with ailure.

In the book of Joshua, the Children of Israel had reached the banks of the Promised land. Spies were sent over to see the potential of the new land. The spies returned with a report that they land was flowing with milk and honey, but it was filled with Giants. The giants were so big that they made

them feel like grasshoppers. Despite the urging of Joshua and Caleb, the entire country began to see itself as grasshoppers before giants, unable to achieve a victory.

In a similar sense the world makes youth feel little in their own eyes. When some youth have a perfectly good pair of shoes on their feet, the world tells them that because their tennis do not have the name Air Jordan ,or Nikki on the label that the shoe is worthless. So, children who can t wear name brands feel bad about themselves and lose hope.

Man made Mirrors can also make us appear bigger than we really are. While many youth think little of themselves, there are many who striving to give the appearance that they are bigger than they really are. The quest to appear successful rather than be successful is all consuming. Many want the trappings of success without the hard work and preparation that goes with it. We want the symbols without the substance. A Porche is the symbol of success.

It implies that the owner has reached a certain level of financial security and can afford an $80,000 luxury car. It would be counter productive to buy a Porche with food stolen food stamps, that gives us the symbol without the substance. There are many youth who are attracted to the symbols of success they see around them. A Drug dealer drives a fancy car and has a roll of money in his pocket. It is a symbol of success, but without substance.

The truth is that there is a high probability that a young drug dealer will end up dead or in jail before he is 30 years old. His life has no substance, although it has the symbols. He appears bigger than he really is in life. We should be careful about appear bigger than we really are.

God s Mirror Reminds Us Of Who We Are

Man ‘s mirrors distort how we see ourselves, but God s mirror helps us to see ourselves, certainly flawed, but improving every day.

God ‘s mirror reminds us that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 1 Peter 2:9

Man ‘s mirror often shows us how we are nobodies, but God s mirror shows how, in the eyes of God, everybody is somebody!

Man’ s mirror encourages us to be something we are not, but God s mirror shows you what you can be, with God s help!

There s no limit to what can be done when you get a little help from the

Lord!

Joseph was the Black sheep of his family, hated by all of his brothers, but with a little help from the Lord, he became a mighty man in Egypt.

David was an obscure shepherd boy but with a little help from the Lord, he rose to kill Goliath and become of the King of Israel.

Esther was a beautiful woman, blessed with good looks and charm. With a little help from the Lord, she used her good looks to become queen of Persia!

I don t know about you but I ve found out that when you trust in the Lord amazing things happen!

When you trust in the Lord:Doubts turn into confidence; fear turns into courage; failure turns into victory; and weakness turns into strength

No wonder the song writer declared: I will trust in the Lord until I die!

When the world starts showing us reflections that make us seem small, every child of God should say to himself, I m a child of the king!

Who is this king of Glory?

He s Jesus, the lily of the valley! Jesus, the Bright and morning star! Jesus, who died out on calvary, but rose up early on Sunday!

Get up every morning and look into the mirror and say Get ready world for here comes a child of God!

No. 473-Thanksgiving

How Can I Say Thanks?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 21, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalms 50:14-15

Introduction

How do you say thanks when someone shows you a kindness? Do you buy them a present? Do you send them a card? What about a phone call? In each instance you attempt to express your feeling of gratitude in a small but noticeable way. Our social custom dictates that persons who are recipients of kindnesses should respond by saying "thank you." It is an expected cordiality, whether it is heartfelt or not. Saying thanks is easy for some, but there are others that find it considerably difficult because they find gratitude a humbling experience.

Consider two men who received their fates in sealed envelopes. The first received an envelope which contained the sum total of his life's experiences. The envelope was marked: thrills. He felt fortunate to have received such a prize lot in life. As he opened it his life was showered with exciting events. He traveled around the world and experienced every known sensation. After a while he had seen everything and done everything. His thrills were dulled to meaningless, boring moments. He returned to his benefactor and complained violently. "Life is boring. I've been everywhere and done everything, but there is nothing else to do. I owe you no thanks, for this miserable state." Complaining of boredom he left unhappy. The second man had an envelope marked "frills." As he opened his envelope his life became surrounded by a mixture of experiences. He had moments of joy followed by moments of sickness. For every minute of joy there was also a few seconds of pain. After many years the second man also returned to his benefactor and offered his thanks. "Why do you thank me?" The benefactor asked "I gave you friend thrills and he complained. I only gave you frills and you give me thanks." The man answered with a air of gratitude: "If you had given me only thrills, I would

have soon become bored as he. But you gave me a package of thrills, ills, and chills and called it frills made my life complete. The nights you gave me, made the sun look brighter the next day. I thank you for the frills. I thank for the ills. Together they have made me a better man." His benefactor smiled and said "I have finally found a grateful man" and he showered him with both health and wealth.

As Christians we have learned the spirit of gratitude. We give God thanks for the sunshine and the rain, the joy and the pain; for our losses and our gains. We have found that we can show our thanks best by keeping our promises to God and continually praising him in the congregation of men.

Exposition

This text considers David as he continues his praises of God. David, referred to as a "man after God's own heart," learned in the course of his life to give God praise and thanks for every blessing and good fortune. He also learned to praise God for his moments of trial and difficulty as well. This text includes David's dialogue with God. It includes his words of praise and commitment and God's response. This simple passage forms the basic structure for a complex body of theology that explains the believer's relationship of gratitude to God. It has four parts which encourage us to: 1)Give Thanks to God 2)Keep Our Promises To Him 3) Call upon him in times of trouble and expect Deliverance 4) Praise and Glorify his name. This contains the basic ingredients of a life that demonstrates gratitude to God.

Giving God Thanks

The first suggestion of this text is that we should always offer thanks to God. In giving thanks the emphasis is always on the spirit demonstrated in the offering rather than the offering itself.

Cain and Able both gave offerings of thanks to God. The two brothers came before him with gifts that represented the best of both the fields and the herds. Yet God received Able's offering and rejected Cain's. It was not that Cain's offering was better than Able's but his actions after his was rejected indicate that he may have brought his offering with anything but a humble and obedient spirit. Jealous because his offering was not received, Cain killed Able. Had he come before God in humility and found his offering rejected he would have sought ways to have his offering better received rather than killing his brother instead. His actions betrayed the real motive of

his offering which was pride.

Today we should give thanks to God out of gratitude for his goodness. The spirit of humility is more important than empty outward expressions. Consider three men who were asked to give thanks to God for something. Two of the men were believers, the third was a non-believer who liked to appear a part of the group of the moment. The first man held up his hand and said "I want to thank God for holding my hand, for when I was sinking he lifted me up." The second man held up his glasses and said "I want to thank God for opening my eyes to his goodness, for I was once blind, but now I see." The third man had no testimony but recalled something he heard somebody else say. He reached down, took off his shoe, waved it in the air and yelled "I thank God for saving my sole!" He said the right words, but they came more from the bottom of his foot than the bottom of his heart.

When God has been good to us, it should not be difficult for us to give him thanks. That thanks should always come from our heart!

Keeping Our Promises To God

One way to show thanks to God is to say it with words. Another way, we learn from this text, is to keep our promises to him! Often we make unlimited promises to God in moments of infirmity or trial, only to retract them once the cloud has lifted. God keeps his promises to us, we can show our gratitude to him, by keeping our promises to him.

Young Hannah prayed earnestly to God for a child. Her promise to God was that she would give the child up for service to the temple if God would hear her prayer. God answered and young Samuel was born. True to her promise, Hannah brought the boy to the temple, kissed him goodbye, and left him in the hands of Eli the prophet. She kept her promise to God and thereby displayed her gratitude for his kindness.

Has there ever been a time when you promised God you would take a certain action? Did you keep your promise? If not, then you, like millions of others, have shown ingratitude to God. He kept his end of the bargain, but we abandoned ours. We can show gratitude to God, not by a shower of words, but by simply keeping the private vows that we have made to him. Sometimes these promises involve personal life style changes. Sometimes they involve increased service. They almost always involve some action on our part.

When we labor to keep our vows we show gratitude to God. We express to him in the only humble way that we know, that we are truly

thankful his benevolence towards us.

Just as the Savior has demonstrated his love for us by not abandoning his promise to keep us, hold us and be with us always. We demonstrate our gratitude by showing him through our deeds that we are truly grateful for his goodness.

Call Upon Him In Times of Trouble

A third way to show thanks to God is to call upon him in times of trouble. That may seem odd that God would list calling upon him as a way show gratitude, but in reality it isn't strange. There are many today who call on God with their lips but, in times of trouble put their trust in everyone but God. There are some, when trouble comes, who turn to quack doctors, voodoo, palm readers, special potions, magic candles, mystical oils and hoodoo. They seldom look to God.

God told David in a time of trouble, "call upon me." He told David then and tells us now, show your trust, confidence and faith in me by calling on me when you need help, not some other. David found that God was true to his word. So much so that he wrote in Psalm 27:5 "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

There are many today who have discovered what David found out, which is that God is a very present help in a time of trouble. Whenever we need him all we need to do is just call him. Call him in the morning! Call him in the noonday! Call him in the midnight hour!

Glorify God With our Testimony!

We can show thanks to God by telling the world about his goodness! What he has done is to good to keep to ourselves. In Psalm 105:1-3 he said: " O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD."

When God has done something good for us we should be willing to glorify him and show our gratitude. We should tell it on our jobs! Tell it in the songs we sing! We should tell it in the joy that bubbles in our soul! We should never back down from a chance to say to the world, "I just want to thank God for being so good to me!"

Thank you Lord, for taking my:

—Bitterness and turning it to sweetness;Sadness and giving me joy!

—Loneliness and give me companionship; Emptiness and giving me fulfillment!

—Failure and showing me the victory; Discouragement and giving me encouragement!

More than that, I want to thank you Lord for saving me soul!

I don't know about you, but every now and then I wan to tell somebody that I serve a good God!

I want to tell somebody that he carried an old cross for me!

I want to tell somebody that he died out on Calvary!

I want to tell somebody that early Sunday morning that he arose from the dead!

Thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord!

...for you've been so good to me!

No. 474-Inspiration

Dumb Things

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 7, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." Mark 9:17-18

Introduction

Have you ever done something that was dumb? Really dumb? Most of us at one time or another have done at least one dumb thing. If we are honest, we have probably done several dumb things over the course of our lives. Contrary to popular opinion, dumbness is not the unique province of the intellectually barren. In fact, dumbness has nothing at all to do with intelligence because even the most intelligent people we know often do dumb things.

Consider the college professor who was an expert in the physical sciences who had the unfortunate occasion to have a flat tire on his automobile. He brought the car to a halt in front of an insane asylum and just as he stopped his left front tire dropped to ground. He jacked up the car and replaced the tire only to learn the reason the tire fell off ...he had lost all of his lug bolts. The college professor was baffled and began to scratch his head. As he pondered, a resident of the asylum stared at him as he tried to figure out what to do. Despite his best attempts the college professor was stumped. Without lug bolts the tire would only fall off again. The insane resident yelled to him "you have a flat tire!" That obvious observation ruffled the professor who responded "That I can very well see. You stay in the asylum and let me take care of this." After an hour went by the professor had no luck. Finally the insane man yelled "Why don't you take one lug bolt off each of the other three tires and that'll be enough to hold you until you can get help!" Amazed at the simplicity of the suggestion the professor followed it to the letter. Just before pulling off he went to the insane man and said "That was a good suggestion, I thought you were supposed to be crazy?" The insane man

responded “I am, but I’m certainly not dumb!”

Obviously dumb things or the lack of them are not indicators of our intelligence. Neither can our education and intelligence protect us from gullibility, or the stupidity of doing those things which are just plain dumb!

As Christians, we know that we are susceptible to the wiles of the devil at any give time or moment. If we give him any place in our lives he’ll have us doing “dumb things.” Thank God for Jesus who has given us the victory over Satan. As long we let him lead us we will avoid the tendency to do “dumb things.”

Exposition

This text focuses on an incident during the public ministry of Jesus in which he was confronted with a man who was described as being possessed by a “dumb spirit.”

Traditionally, “dumb” in the biblically context usually refers to an outward condition of men and women in which they are unable to speak. In that time the common feeling of the people was that persons who could not speak were empty headed and imbeciles.

Hence they were referred to as “dumb.” Repeatedly the word “dumb” referred to the inability of a man or a woman to speak.

In Isaiah 35:6 Isaiah says “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing:” referring to the inability of a man to speak. In Isaiah 53:7 a projection is given of the coming of the Messiah. In his description of the Messiah Isaiah said: “...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” “Dumb” was scripturally equated with speaking.

With the passage of time, the word “dumb” has taken on a new meaning. Today it is politically incorrect to refer to the vocally handicapped as “dumb.” Their condition is referred to as being “mute.” The term dumb has taken on a new meaning of its own, generally referring to “thoughtless action.” In this context, the dumb may be able to speak, but they may not be able to act with any degree of control.

This text is unique because it is the only place in the bible where the descriptive phrase “dumb spirit” is used. Unlike other places where “dumb” refers to the man or woman impacted, this text finds the phrase being used to describe the source of their problem. In the short verses that describe this episode, there is a litany of the problems that this young man faced, but none of them included an inability to speak. It is said that he often fell down, threw

himself in the fire and pined away.

What is said is that he often acted in self destructive, irrational, illogical and erratic ways. It is never said that the man himself was not able to speak. Muteness is not listed in his maladies.

The reference to "dumb spirit" here is a reference to the cause of spiritual inadequacies such as spiritual deafness, the inability to hear the word of God; spiritual lameness, the inability to walk in the right path; spiritual blindness, the inability to see the glory of God.

This is the spirit that Jesus referred to in verse 25 when he called upon the dumb and deaf spirit to leave the man. The evil spirit left him and Jesus lifted him up by the hand. There is never once an indication that the man spoke or heard anything, but this instance is a referral to the nature of the spirit rather than the condition of the man.

Many Do Dumb Things

Today there are millions of people who are influenced by "dumb spirits" to do "dumb things." Often those who would not normally engage themselves in self destructive behavior are led by dumb spirits. In this text the father tells Jesus "wheresoever he taketh him he teareth him." Indicating that the "dumb spirit" actually led the son to places and situations that would cause him to do dumb things and to harm or endanger himself.

It was a dumb spirit that led Jephthah in Judges 11:30 to promise God that if he won the battle with Ammon that he would kill the first person that walked out of his door when he returned home. He realized it was a dumb thing when he saw his daughter come out to met him.

It was a dumb spirit that prompted David to believe that he could have an adulterous affair with Bathsheba and it would not be detected. It was an even dumber spirit that made him believe he could have her husband killed and no one would discover his sin. It was dumb thing to do.

It was a dumb spirit that told Annanias and Sapphira that they could take credit for giving richly to God when they had only given a small portion. It was dumb thing to do.

Likewise today, there are many people, led by "dumb spirits" that are going to dumb places and doing dumb things.

Dumb spirits suggest that night clubs and honkey tonks are fun places to be. Never mind that I increase the likelihood that I might get shot,killed or otherwise injured!

Dumb spirits suggest that we can slip off with another woman's husband

or another man's wife and have an affair that will go unnoticed.

Dumb spirits suggest that we shoplift valuables from stores and despite the presence of surveillance cameras and plain clothes detectives we can get away with it. Only dumb spirits make such suggestions.

Dumb spirits led us to do dumb things!

Dumb Acts And Ignorant Acts Differ

There is a difference between dumb acts and ignorant acts. Those who act out of ignorance don't know any better. However, those who act out of dumbness, know better but act "dumbly" against their own better judgment.

Paul made it clear that those who want to do right but eventually do wrong are not doing so because of a lack of information but because of sin. The sin that he referred to is the same evil presence in our text that made the young man do "dumb things." In Romans 7:20 he said "if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Today there are many, some perhaps here today, that know the difference between right and wrong. They have been taught on their mother's knee and it has been drilled into them by their fathers and grandfathers. They know that it is wrong to steal or lie. They know they should respect God and put him first in their lives, but despite what they know they do the opposite. When they do the opposite of what they know, Paul says sin controls them and makes them do "dumb things."

When dumb spirits prevail, find Jesus!

Finally brothers and Sisters, when this father found that his son had been overtaken by a dumb spirit, he set out on a journey to find Jesus!

He had tried the disciples and no doubt the philosophers, doctors and counselors had failed too, but he probably thought to himself, "If I can just find Jesus, everything will be alright!"

One of the great underlying truths of the Christian life is that when everything seems at its worse, there is always hope, if you can just find Jesus!

The woman with an issue of blood for 12 long years didn't expect to hear him call her name or to have him lay hands on her, but she thought if I can just touch the hem of garment I can be made whole. She knew the power that could come if she could just find Jesus.

The disciples were riding in a boat out on the raging sea. When the storms began to rage, somebody said "find Jesus." Shaking him one disciple asked

“Master, the tempest is raging ..carest thou not that we perish” Jesus spoke to the wind and waves and said “Peace be still”

If there are storms raging in your life, just find Jesus!
When you find Jesus, he’ll take your misery and turn it into delight!
When you find Jesus, he’ll take your sadness and turn it into joy!
When you find Jesus, he’ll take your pain and turn it into gain!
When you find Jesus, he’ll take your cross and replace it with crown!
If you’ve been following the advice of dumb spirits in your life, find Jesus!
He’ll pick you up and turn you around!
He’ll plant your feet on solid ground!
Find Jesus! The lily of the valley!
Find Jesus! The bright and morning star!
Find Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!
Find Jesus! Who arose early Sunday morning!
Find Jesus!
..he’ll make everything alright!

No. 475-Revival

A Place In The Son

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 14, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:8-10

Introduction

Have you ever searched for your place in the sun? Your "place in the sun" is a colloquialism which refers to achieving a desirable level of joy and peace. Many spend their entire lives looking for their proverbial "place in the sun." Poets allude to it; song writers write about it; and dreamers ponder about the happiness they will know when they find their place in the sun.

Each generation looks for its place in the sun. Generations of African-Americans have sought a place in the sun by migrating in large numbers from one place to another. We sought freedom in the North.

We sought the future in New York, economic opportunity in Chicago and Detroit; and the freedom to achieve in California. Even today another generation of our young is looking to Atlanta as their "Place in the sun." By the thousands, young African-Americans are moving to Atlanta seeking job opportunities and prosperity.

It is impossible to find "a place in the sun" without the Lord. Consider the young song writer who took his new song to a publisher for consideration. It was entitled "Over Yonder with Jesus."

The publisher studied the lyrics and concluded that the song had great potential because it talked going to heaven. However, the publisher said it would be more marketable if the references to Jesus would be removed.

"The bottom line is son, you could make more money without Jesus." The young man paused for a moment, then picked up his papers and began to leave. As he was leaving the publisher asked why he wouldn't sell his song.

The young man responded: "I could make more money without Jesus, but without Jesus, I am nothing. Without him I could do nothing. Without him I'd surely fail. Without him I would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

As Christians, we know we have place in the sun. It has been secured for us by the Savior himself. This world can offer us money and opportunity and a place in its sun. We have found however, that there is no real happiness anywhere under the sun without Jesus!

Exposition

This text focuses on Abraham, the Patriarch of the Hebrew nation and his many travels in search of a land in which he could be happy to serve God and enjoy life. As a child, Abraham grew up in Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a prominent city in the Babylonian and Sumerian cultures.

It had all of the conveniences and distractions of the big city of its day. As a child Abraham learned the ways of the city and became frustrated by its ills. When his father Terah moved from Ur to Haran, he saw more of the same but just a little worse. In Haran there were large temples constructed for the worship of the Moon god named "Sin." It was a prosperous but yet god forsaken place.

From the midst of a life rooted in the fast life of the big city and moon god worship, Abraham learned about God and sought him. Following the commands of God, he moved out of Haran and came to the land of Canaan where he settled first in Shechem which was located in hill country of Ephraim. Even here though, Abraham was still searching for something. He heard of a new city that was developing.

It was located in the hill country at the intersection of the North and South road to Jericho, this new place had great prospects.

It had international travel, fertile land and abundant springs. It appeared the place to be, so he packed up his family and moved to a place called Bethel.

Even though he prospered in Bethel, Abraham still searched for something. He heard of a place in the plains that had rich fertile soil, available salt, and fine cities. He and Lot and their families traveled to the area and Lot chose Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of the plain and Abraham went back to the hills again, this time in Hebron. Later, he moved to Beer-Sheba a dry, semi-desert region which was a cross road to Egypt. It was a desert city, but was the commercial center of its times.

Abraham settled there, dug a well for his family and prospered more. When hard times developed and famine spread through the land Abraham

packed up and moved to Egypt where he lived for a short while.

When his travels ended, Abraham came right back to Palestine where he spent the remainder of his days, happy in the Lord.

At age 100 he had a son by his wife Sarai. When she died, he remarried and had more children and lived happily pleasing God. At the age of 175, Abraham died, having found at last his "place in the sun" and peace in his soul. He spent his life searching for his place.

He found that inner peace came when he accepted the promises of God and acted on them in faith. He ended his travels after perhaps discovering that wherever he finds God and trusts in him can be his "place in the sun."

Looking for a Place In the Sun

There are millions today who are desperately looking for their place in the sun. They are in search of that elusive experience called "happiness" but, like the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow they seem never able to find it.

Abraham moved from city to city looking for a community which had foundations. Certainly, "foundations" in this context has no reference to material foundations, but it obviously referred to the spiritual fibre. Like Abraham many of us have traveled from city to city looking for our place in the sun. Los Angeles, once the Mecca of Black Americans is now experiencing a great exodus, thousands are moving out, trouble by crime, drugs and a feeling of fear. Detroit is deteriorating. Harlem is but an empty shell of its past glory and millions are on the move. Even those who stay put in the same city, move around frequently looking for something. Some change from church to church, looking for something. One day they are shouting with the Baptists, the next day they are speaking in tongues with the Charismatics. Later they are on the street corner selling Muslim newspapers. Some move from sobriety to drunkenness, trying to find happiness in a bottle of alcohol. Some are looking for the perfect man or woman so they keep moving from mate to mate in an endless cycle that begins with romance and ends with divorce. It begins and ends but starts all over again. They are looking for something and can't seem to find it. Millions today are looking for meaning in their lives and can't seem to narrow it down and so they keep searching.

What are we looking for? It may be the same thing that Abraham was looking for. It was not big city life, that's for sure. He grew up in Ur, the New York City of his times. Although his father took him a way when he was a teen-ager, he knew the way back. It wasn't opportunity, because in Haran

and Bethel he had opportunity. In fact, Abraham had money, big money. His staff of employees got so big that he had to part company with Lot, just to keep the peace. He wasn't looking for a place to make money he had a business sense that made him prosper wherever he went. What was he looking for?

He was looking for foundations! He was looking for something that was sure and secure. He was looking for a place where he could be at peace with God with as little interruption as possible. Today there are millions who are looking for the same thing. They want peace of mind and spirit. They want to be in the presence of God with as few interruptions as possible.

The only entity known to man that is sure and will never fail is God. Hebrews 13:8 puts it this way "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He is a sure thing. While millions search aimlessly for their "place in the sun" there are a few who have what they are looking when the came to know Jesus. He gave them a new hope and a new spirit. He is a sure foundation. No wonder the song writer would declare: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!"

A Place in the Son

The last part of this text suggests why Abraham had such difficulty finding what he was looking for. He was looking for a city whose "builder and maker was God." Abraham stopped traveling, perhaps when he discovered that what he was looking for could not be found in architecture, governmental bodies or in the fast pace of the metropolis. What he wanted could only be achieved when he himself, regardless of his locality, was touched by the hand of God. Those today who are searching, can find what they are looking for when they come to Jesus. What they seek is a place in the "SUN" but they what they need is a place in the "SON."

If we get a place in the SUN, trouble always seems to follow; but when we get a place in the SON, we can sing "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

If we get a place in the SUN, we have to cry in the midnight hour; but once we find place in the SON we know "weeping may endure for a night, but there's joy in the morning!"

If we get a place in the SUN, we still want more; but once we find a place in the SON we begin to day "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

Abraham sought a city made with the hands of God. Today friends we

have the joy of knowing that not only can those who accept Jesus have spiritual happiness but they can look forward to literally having "a place" in the Son.

Jesus told his disciples in John 14:2 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

In Jesus, We have a place in the kingdom of God!

It is a place with foundations! For I heard John say he saw the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven. It will be a city sitting on 12 foundations, each one a precious stone!

Our place in the Son, will be surrounded by 12 gates, each one made of a solid pearl!

Our place in the Son, will have streets paved with gold!

Our place in the Son, will have a tree in the midst of it that will bear all manner of fruit that will eliminate all sickness and disease!

Our place in the Son, will be a place of joy, unspeakable joy!

It will be a place of unending happiness!

It'll always be howdy, and never goodbye!

Bye and bye, when the morning comes, we'll tell the story of how we've overcome!

We'll tell the story of Jesus and how he saved our Souls!

We'll tell the story of Calvary! How Jesus died and arose!

We'll tell lost men and women, "There is a place in the Son for you!"

No. 476-Revival

Hanging on to Bad Things

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 28, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." — 1 Samuel 15:9

Introduction

Have you ever held on to something that you should have discarded? Have you ever been bogged down in a crippling situation but were hesitant to make a move for the better? Have you ever worked hard to achieve a dream, goal or level of success only to find out that achieving your goal only brought you more problems? If so, then you know frustration and the difficulty of hanging on to bad things.

Consider two fortune hunters who had spent their lives searching for diamonds and gems. After many years, they learned of a secret treasure hidden away, thousands of years ago, in the mountains. They climbed the mountains, risking their very lives at every turn, until they reached the site. Once there they discovered more diamonds, rubies and sapphires than they had ever seen before. The two men and their staff packed all the jewels they could into huge trunks. Each of the men filled their back packs with jewels, which posed a tremendous burden. As they returned through the narrow ledges of the mountain side a ledge gave way and both men toppled over the side and dangled on the end of safety ropes attached to the waists of their guides. The guides could not pull them up because of the weight of the back packs. "Let go of the back packs" came a cry from above. Instantly the first man dropped his pack and watched the jewels roll down the mountain side as he was pulled to the top. As the second man thought about the value of his jewels he could not part with them although his rescuers continued to shout "Let go the pack!" He refused to let go and when he tried to pull himself up dropped back, pulling both himself and his rescuer to their deaths. Two men died that day, because one couldn't let go.

Today, there are many who simply can't let go. Although they are involved in circumstances and life styles that are draining the life from them, they can't let go. They seem hopelessly caught up in a network of temptations and relationships that threaten their destruction.

As Christians, we have learned that God is willing and able to give us a helping hand in life. To get his help however, we must be willing to discard our attachments to any weights or burdens that hold us down and let him take us by the hand. Free from the burdens of this world we can find peace, joy and security, in the loving arms of our Lord. Let us "let go" and let God have his way.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's instruction to Israel to rid itself of a evil presence and the King's response.

King Saul, the first king of Israel found himself engaged in a war with the Amalekites. Saul was given instruction, by way of the prophet Samuel, concerning the Amalekites. In verse three Saul is ordered to destroy the Amalekites and everything that they owned. He was ordered to destroy every man woman and child, all of their sheep and cattle and everything else they owned.

The Amalekites had made themselves enemies of Israel by being the first nation to attack them as they left 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Though Israel won the first battle with the Amalekites they continued to threaten them and attack them over the years. God was angry with the Amalekites for their attacks on his chosen people and in Exodus 17:14-16 he promised that they would be completely exterminated. There would be no peace between Israel and the Amalekites, from generation to generation, until they were completely destroyed. The Amalekites were persistent and continued to plague Israel on every turn. Numbers 14:39-45 gives an account how the Amalekites formed a coalition with the Canaanites and drove Israel back into the wilderness of Sinai. The conflict between the two nations continued by Ehud (Judges 3:13-15), Barak (Judges 5:14), and Gideon (Judges 6:3). In each of these encounters the Amalekites were defeated or held at bay as the guerrilla war between the two nations continued.

Historically this text occurs at a point when Israel was stronger than ever before. It no longer had separate independent tribes led by judges, but was headed by a king. There was a national army which had assembled enough force to completely rid the nation of Amalekites and their influence

forever. Therefore God commands Saul to destroy them completely. Saul proceeded in battle against the Amalekites and their King who was called "Agag." He was victorious because God was with him.

Although God had commanded that Saul destroy everything and everyone in Israel, the soldiers complained that it was a waste. Listening to his men Saul ordered that only worthless items were to be destroyed. Everything that had little or no value was destroyed but the best was saved for themselves. For his refusal to destroy all, God became angry with Saul and rejected him. The people paid as well, for the warfare with the Amalekites continued throughout the remainder of Saul's reign and through the reign of King David. However, under King Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:43) that they were finally destroyed as God promised.

Today there is no archaeological evidence that the Amalekites ever lived on the face of the earth. There is not a building, pot or a scroll that survived. God promised that they were be removed from remembrance and exterminated and his promise was kept. As for Saul, he paid a dear price for trying to hang onto a bad thing.

Bad Things are burdens

There are many today who are carrying heavy burdens that are frustrating their lives, but they find it extremely difficult to let go. For some it is a crippling addiction to drugs or alcohol. For others it is a weakness for the fast life or illicit affairs that trouble them. Whatever the case, "bad things" are fatal flaws that work against even the strongest among us. Samson was a strong man but was burdened down by his insatiable taste for women, especially those outside his race. David was a man after God's own heart, but nearly every soul wrenching problem that plagued him had to do with another man's wife that he could not get out of his system. It was a bad thing and it had such a hold on him that he killed for it and lost the joy of his salvation. The rich young ruler had been a good man all of his life, but he had a love for his possessions that stopped him from gaining eternal life. It was a bad thing. Jesus pointed to many who put their trust in riches and finance and allowed their pursuit of money to destroy them. Paul talking to Timothy warned him of this bad thing saying "..the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10

Beyond this, there are others that are carrying a plethora of bad feelings

that are becoming burdens to them. Jealousy is a bad thing. It has destroyed marriages, relationships and friendships. Hatred is another bad thing that can destroy us. It causes us to act irrationally, respond recklessly and tints our personality with pessimism.

Hatred has caused wars, destroyed nations and killed millions. Hitler's hatred for the Jews resulted in millions of people being gassed to death and buried in open trenches. Nikita Kruschev's hatred of America caused him to slam his fish upon a table and say "we will bury you" escalating a cold war that would nearly bankrupt Russia and strain its economy to its limits. Hatred is a very bad things.

Those who are possessed by "bad things" find it difficult to let go. "Bad things" appeal to a craving, need or emptiness that cries out for fulfillment. Whether it is drugs or the company of a forbidden lover, each is difficult to let go because they appear to meet, at least temporarily, the need of the person that is hooked.

It is hard to let go of something, when you think you can't live without possessing it, achieving it, or answering its demands. Saul, in this text, discovered the consequences. Hanging on to a bad thing cost him his position, kingdom, and eventually his life. Not only that, it cost his entire family its future as well. Those possessed in a similar manner should expect the same results.

Burdens bring you down, but Jesus lifts you up!

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that while the burdens of "bad things" can bring us down, there is a man who can help us get rid of our burdens and lift us up!

While it is true that those who wrestle with bad things are satisfying insatiable needs, there is a man who can give us all of our needs and most of our wants!

The prodigal son was a good young man, who was troubled by a bad thing, he wanted to enjoy the fast life. After losing his fortune and slopping hogs for a living "he came to himself" and thought about his father's house.

Today there are many who are generally good, law abiding people who are troubled by bad things that are making their lives miserable. A bad thing can take your:

—Happiness and turn it into sadness; Peace and turn it into confusion

—Success and turn it into a failure; friends and make them your enemies.

—Can take your love of life and turn it into a secret storm!

—Can tear your marriage to shreds and send you to the divorce courts.

But I heard a voice from heaven crying out "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest!"

No wonder the song writer declares "Jesus knows the pain you feel. He can save and he can heal, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there! If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

If you can let go of your fear, there is a hand that will lift you up!

If you can let go of your anxiety and troubling spirits, there is a hand that will lift you up! It's the hand of Jesus!

If you let go of this world he'll give you a new song to sing. That's what the song writer had in mind when he said "You can have all of this world just give me Jesus!

Jesus! Our shelter in a time of storm!

Jesus! Our rock in a weary land!

Jesus! Who died out on Calvary, but rose early Sunday morning!

Jesus! Who is alive today cries out to a pilgrim on this life's journey let go of the world and take my hand and I'll lead you on!

No. 477-Christmas

A Present For Jesus

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 12, 1976

SCRIPTURE: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:9-11

Introduction

If it were your birthday, what kind of gift would you like? Some would prefer gifts of clothing or jewelry. Others would prefer snugly things while others might answer, "forget all that and just give me the money!" As the Christmas season continues and the world prepares to celebrate the birth of Christ, there are millions getting ready to buy gifts for children, father, mother, sister, brother, next door neighbor and even their puppy dog. In fact there will be gifts for everyone except the subject of the special occasion, Jesus.

What kind of gift could anyone possibly hope to give Jesus?

Consider two children who went to a department store with their grandfather at Christmas. Grandpa told the kids that since it was Christmas he wanted each of them to go through the store and find a gift that represented what Jesus meant to them and he would do the same. The first child wandered through many of the isles until he came upon a large globe. His face lit up and he ran to find his grandpa. The second child searched longer, but finally came upon a picture. Smiling, he dashed through the store looking for his grandpa. After a short while the two boys bumped into each other, but neither of them could find grandpa. After about a half an hour in the crowded store they found grandpa sitting in a chair by a counter at the rear of the store. The first boy said "Look grandpa, I found a globe, because Jesus has the whole world in his hands." The second boy said "Look grandpa, I found this picture of a lamb, because Jesus is the lamb of God." The two boys asked

their grandpa what he had found. Smiling grandpa said "Did you boys have a hard time finding me?" The boys nodded their heads. "Were you glad when you found me?" They nodded their heads. "That's what I found for Jesus." He pointed his finger to a sign above his head that read "Lost and Found". Grandpa said "I was once lost but Jesus found me and I've been happy every since."

As Christians we are keenly aware of the importance of giving of our ourselves to Jesus everyday. We can never repay him for the love he has shown us through his incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Neither can we repay him for the benefits of his grace that we enjoy each day. However, we can give him the gift of our unwavering devotion every day. That would be the greatest gift of all.

Exposition

This text focuses on the search of the wise men from the East for the Christ child. Officially, the wise men are known as "Magi" or astrological wise men. They studied the stars and claimed to be experts in interpreting dreams and other magical arts. The wise men in this text saw the star in heaven that indicated the birth place of Christ. They chose to follow it although the journey would take them outside of their own land. Most theologians believe that the wise men in this text were from Babylon, Persia or the Arabian desert. They were not Jewish by religion or nationality. Popular folklore claims that there were three wise men, but the text does not cite a number. Many believe the number of three came as a result of the three gifts that the wise men brought to the Christ child. About 600 years after Christ, a document claiming to be the "Armenian Infancy Gospel" named the wise men "Melkon" which was later changed to Melchoir, Balthasar and Gaspar. However, these names or the fact that there were only three wise men are not supported in scripture.

The wise men brought the Christ child gifts of Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Since these items were of immense value and were brought such a long way, they suggest the importance that the wise men placed upon the Christ child; who was even recognized by the great leaders of other lands as well. The fact that they came to see Jesus and that they brought him gifts as well, attests to the importance they placed on the deity of Christ. They gave the gifts and departed, asking nothing of him but returning filled with the joy of having seen the Lord for themselves.

The Gift of Gold

The first gift that the wise men gave to Jesus was the gift of Gold. Gold was valuable and used because of its rarity in biblical times. It was used in religious practices of both the Jews and pagans. It was generally a standard of finance and a symbol of physical prosperity.

Today there are many people who should consider the wisdom of giving to God from the stores of their resources. This season, many church members will spend large sums of money far beyond their regular resources to enjoy Christmas activities. Unfortunately, some will even reduce the amount they give to the church, to acquire the other extras that the season demands. The gift of gold is seen as something needed so they can better exchange gifts between each other, rather than something that should be given to support the work of Christ whose birthday is the reason for the season.

However, giving the best of our prosperity is not limited to our finances. It also includes giving him the best of our talents, and time, in addition to our financial resources.

No matter what we give God, it cannot match what he does for us daily. The song writer said it best when he said "You can't beat God giving, no matter how you try. The more you give the more he gives to you. Just keep on giving because its really true, you can't beat God giving, no matter how you try."

The Gift of Frankincense

The second gift that the wise men gave was the gift of Frankincense. Frankincense was an ingredient used in making perfume for the most holy place in the Tabernacle. It has always been associated with worship in the temples of Jews and the pagan alike.

Christians can give Christ the wonderful gift of worship, just as the wise men did. Praising God in the sanctuary. Singing his praises in songs and testifying to his greatness among the people are great ways to worship him. Unfortunately, there will be many, during this season, who will be too busy or too tired to worship Christ as they should. Many will miss church services as they prepare festive meals and celebrations. Some who normally attend Sunday School or bible studies will be absent because they are caught up in the festive atmosphere of the season.

We give God our devotion and show appreciation for his great works

when we worship him and testify to his greatness. No wonder the song writer encourages us to "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and every where! Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.!"

The Gift of Myrrh

The last gift that the wise men gave to Christ was the gift of myrrh. Myrrh was an aromatic resin that had many uses in ancient times. In some areas it was used as the main ingredient of anointing oil. In other areas, it was used as perfume and clothes freshener. Still other areas used its freshening qualities in preparation for embalming. Myrrh is associated with freshness, sweetness, even in moments of sadness.

The Christian can give to Christ, during the celebration of his birth, a freshness and newness of spirit that dwells in his heart each and every day. There should be no such thing as a sad Christian. Just as myrrh is used in funerals, even in the moments of death a Christ still brings to the sadness and melancholy of death a gentle, fresh and sweet spirit.

The sweetness of the Christian life which is found in Christ is probably what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "There's a sweet, sweet, spirit in this place. ...it must be the spirit of the Lord."

We give God sweetness because he give us it to us daily. We sing about his sweetness in our songs and talk about it to our friends. "He's sweet I know! He's sweet I know! I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

Today brothers and sisters, people will give many things to each other but it would be great if we could give the Lord our love. It would be wonderful if we would give him our trust and devotion. He even asks us to bring him our burdens.

This Christmas the Lord would certainly be pleased if we gave the Lord a little more attention and a little less neglect.

It would be great if we gave the Lord a little more love and little less hate;

-A little more peace and little less confusion;

-A little more gratitude and little less ungratefulness;

-A little more prayer and little less lip service;

-A little more compassion and a little less heartlessness;

-A little more real Christian love and little less imitation;

-A little more "do as I do" and little less "do as I say"

-A little more "bended knee" and little less "crooked hearts"

I don't know about you but I decided a long time ago, to give the Lord the best I have. "Use me Lord, Use me in your service"

Wherever he wants me to go, here am I Lord!
Whatever he wants me to do, here am I Lord!
Go tell it on the mountain!
Tell everybody about Jesus! He's the lily of the valley!
Tell everybody about Jesus! He's the chief corner stone!
Jesus! The Stone carved without hands!
Jesus! My rock in weary land!
Tell them how he was born in manger and died on a cross!
Tell them how he arose on the third day!
Go tell it on the mountain ...Jesus Christ is born!

No. 478-Inspiration

A Wheel In The Middle Of The Wheel

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 5, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." Ezekiel 1:15-20

Introduction

Why do you do what you do? What makes you tick? Why are things the way they are? Just as each of us is driven by an inner force that moves us to take action, the events of the universe are also guided by unseen hands. Individually we are often driven by unseen forces that prompt us to act. Ambition pushed Howard Hughes to become a billionaire eccentric. Greed prompted Dickens' character "Scrooge" to squeeze every penny. Hatred moved Hitler to murder millions of Jews; and the love of a beautiful woman was the reason behind the Trojan wars. As we attempt to understand ourselves, our circumstance and how we relate to our God, perhaps it might benefit us to know that "Why we do what we do", is more important than "what we do itself". Sometimes when we know the "Why" the "What" is amplified and made clearer.

Consider a pilgrim who traveled through a desert and stumbled upon a spring of fresh flowing water. As he drank from the water he noticed that despite the heat that its waters were cold and sweet. He thought to himself "this is such a treasurer, I must bring some to the king!" He took out a leather pouch and caught up as much of the water as he could, intent upon sharing

his find with the king. He traveled for days across the blazing sand. His lips were parched with thirst, but he would not touch the pouch of water. When he finally made it to the palace, he told the king of the wonderful spring that he found. He told of his sacrificial journey through heat and exhaustion, to bring the gift to the king. Excited, the king opened the pouch and began to drink but noticed that the water was stale, hot and bitter. The king smiled and praised his servant, who left fully rewarded. After he left the King's steward's asked: "Why did you reward him, this water is obviously stale, hot and bitter?" The king responded: "What he gave me turned out to be hot and stale, that I tasted with my tongue; but the reason why he gave it to me was still fresh and sweet; that I felt with my heart.! The water was bad but his motive was good."

As we survey the seemingly endless stream of problems and frustrations that face our community we must remember that "what" is happening to us is governed by a "why." At the center of every action there is a driving force; a motivating factor that prompts, urges, encourages and empowers. This driving force provides a narrow definition of "why" in such way that only discerning spirits can know.

As Christians we are always mindful of the importance of being guided by the Holy Spirit in all of our endeavors. We should never be discouraged about what is happening around us because we know in the midst of it all there is an unseen hand that still contols and guides us each and every day.

Exposition

This text considers the prophet Ezekiel as he prophesies about the movement of God's will in heaven and on earth. Ezekiel, was among the prophets of Israel's exile. They had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians and were distressed over their condition. Generally, their hope was strained, and they were devastated at what had happened to their nation. It was once great and powerful under David and Solomon and had begun subjugated under the Babylonians. It was once perceived as one of the greater nations of the world, so much so that the Queen of Sheba would travel thousands of miles to observe its splendor. This once powerful nation of God fearing people were reduced to defenseless wards of another sovereign who hung their harps on willow trees, unable to sing Zion's songs.

In their frustration God sent the prophet Ezekiel to offer them some explanation of their dilemma and some rays of hope. In various visions through Ezekiel, God told the people that their dilemma was not permanent.

The most memorable of Ezekiel's visions was that of the dry bones in the valley. It suggested that just as dry bones of the vision, which were scattered, dry and broken, could be reunited, they too could be reunited if they would hear the word of the Lord. For Israel, which was broken, and frustrated, Ezekiel's vision came as refreshing news from heaven.

This text focuses on Ezekiel as he first began to receive the visions from God. Though filled with symbolisms about creatures with wings of angels and the hands of men, wheels with rims filled with eyes and other startling depictions, Ezekiel's vision can better be understood if we note that in verses 1-14 he details how he received a vision from God and how he saw the movement of God's power and spirit in heaven, represented by four winged creatures (v5). The will and providence of God, was instituted in heaven as quick as a flash of lightning in heaven (v14). At verse 15 Ezekiel explains how he saw God's providence extending to the earth as well, because each of the creatures had a set of circular, gyroscopic wheels, that extended down to the earth. The huge wheels, stood one inside the other. One represented "What" was occurring in the affairs of Israel, and the inside ring represented "why" events occurred as they did.

As the creatures, representing the movement of God's will, moved from one place to another (v19) the wheels, representing an explanation of "what" and "why" were not far behind. Wherever God's will was instituted, the wheels were there, for the "spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels." (v21).

For Israel, this was important. It explained that the will of God is performed in heaven and is also carried out on earth. Through the symbols of the vision they also were reminded that whatever happens in the course of human events is prompted by a reason. Lying dormant in the "reason" is the solution and their hope for better days. In the remainder of his vision Ezekiel pointed to Israel's sin as the reason for their dilemma. Renewing their faith in God is projected as their hope for recovery.

We are often preoccupied with life's Whats

Today our community, like Israel of this text, is in a state of devastation. We are a subjugated people. We are free, but we are not free. In our exile from ourselves, some have become comfortable in Babylon. We think like Babylonians. We talk less about our own culture and state of affairs and adopt the concerns of Babylonians. Many of our better minds have been integrated into the corporate structure of Babylon so tightly that although they

look like us, and talk like us we can hardly recognize them as our own.

On the individual level we have reduced ourselves to interpersonal relationships where we categorize each other. Some of us see ourselves as big wheels, those who move and shake and are major players. These see everyone else as little wheels, whose activities are meaningless unless they impact a big wheel that is on the roll. Between the big wheels and the little wheels of life there is a steady stream of paddle wheels, those who are barely etching out a living every day; pinwheels, those who are just whistling in the wind; steering wheels, those who are jumping up trying to become over night leaders and a whole plethora of people who are just spinning their wheels every day and getting no where.

These are the wheels that are turning in our community everyday. Crime is escalating among us at enormous rates. We are attacking each other, beating each other with sticks and clubs and are murdering each other. Our homes are falling apart. Our men are disappearing from the ranks of leadership our women are being left to fend for themselves as our men wind up in jail, put on dresses or wind up dead. Socially, we are in the same dilemma as Israel of Ezekiel's time.

We are so pre-occupied with the "what is happening to us" syndrome that many of us are overwhelmed. Some have lost their willingness to serve others; to roll up their sleeves and rebuild the decayed lives and reunite the jangling discords of our community. Like Israel, some have hung their harps on the willow trees. Instead of singing the songs of Zion, they are singing the blues.

A Wheel in the Middle of the Wheel

The whole point of Ezekiel's vision was to remind Israel that although the wheel of providence was at work in the events of their lives there, there is not just one wheel at work, there is a wheel in the middle of the wheel. Ezekiel's message to Israel was that it should not become pre-occupied with the "Whats" or their present dilemma. The solution was not in looking at the wheel and singing the blues, but it would come when they considered the wheel in the middle of the wheel; the reason why things were happening. Ezekiel generally characterized spiritual failure on the part of the people as the reason. He projected that when they returned to God, he would revive them.

Today, brothers and sisters I suggest to you that although the wheel of providence seems to be destroying the very fabric of our community, I've

come to remind you that there's still a wheel in the middle of the wheel!

There may be metal detectors in our schools, drugs on our streets and prostitutes on every corner, but there is still a wheel in the middle of the wheel!

The wheel of misfortune may be rolling in your own life and hard times seem to follow you every where you, but there's still a wheel in the middle of the wheel!

The wheel of tragedy may be bringing pain and suffering into your life, but there's still a wheel in the middle of the wheel! The wheel of misunderstanding may be straining relations in your family and setting family members at odds with each other but there is still is a wheel, in the middle of the wheel!

The wheel of racism may be squashing your efforts to improve yourself in your professional life, but be of good cheer, there is a wheel, in the middle of the wheel!

Ezekiel this wheel is none other than the hand of the Lord!

While Ezekiel called him the Wheel in the middle of the wheel, others know him for different reasons:

—Abraham taught us not to worry, because he's ram in the bush!

—Samuel learned that he's a voice in the middle of the night!

—Solomon discovered that he's the lily of the valley and the bright and morning star!

—Daniel will testify that he's the handwriting on the wall!

But I heard Acts 4:12 declare "there is none other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved" except the name of Jesus! Jesus, the wheel in the middle of the wheel! Jesus, the Lamb of God Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early on Sunday morning!

I don't know which way the wheel of life will roll, but I know, there is a wheel in the middle of the wheel! I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future and I know who holds my hand!

No. 479-Christmas,Communion

The Manger and the Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 19, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12; "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Colossians 1:20

Introduction

Do you ever feel insignificant? That's a time when you conclude that your contribution or worth is so small, when compared to others, that it is of little consequence. Sometimes those who work for large companies feel lost in the corporate maze, reduced to social security numbers and pay check stubs and void of identity or importance. Sometimes those who come from humble backgrounds feel awed by those who have been nurtured in affluence. Then there are times when we think no one cares whether we live or die, succeed or fail. That's when we start to know what it means to feel insignificant.

What do you do when you start feeling this way? Consider the eccentric woman who collected cans. Although she was obviously of middle class means, well educated and reserved the community thought it quite odd that ever so often she could be seen picking up cans in the neighborhood. Sometimes she would pick up entire sacks of cans and store them on her car port. Then one day she would take them and sell them, pocketing $15 or $20.00. Everyone thought she was a bit miserly, collecting cans to save money until one day a neighbor decided to ask her why she picked up cans. "Miss Mary" the neighbor began, "I notice that every so often you go up and down the street picking up cans, then we don't see you again. Like the time, right after your husband died, you picked up cans then we didn't' see you anymore." Miss Mary thought for a moment then said: "Those times you saw me picking up cans I was feeling pretty low. I felt unimportant, like those cans throw on the side of the road. Everybody walks by them and ignores them. When I pick up the cans I hold them in my hands, store them at my house and

then take them to be recycled. When I'm feeling real low I just think about how Jesus walks through the world looking for people like me. I know if I just hold out he'll pick me up, hold me in his hands, take me to his house and give me a new start!" No matter how insignificant we might feel Jesus cares.

As Christians, we rejoice because the humble birth of Christ reminds us of a God who has come into the world looking for the lost, lonely, frustrated, troubled and burdened. Like those cans on the side of the street he will pick us up and give us a new start. At Christmas we see a manger and a cross, but what we really see is God stooping reconcile lost humanity unto himself by way of the manger and the cross!

Exposition

These texts focus on two inanimate biblical symbols that represent important truths about the Christian faith. The manger and the cross each carry important symbolic messages to Christians because they represent inspiring and encouraging principles about the nature of our faith.

The manger, standing alone is just an animal feeding trough. In biblical times mangers were often made of stone and were connected to the one room houses that had been constructed, usually as a lower tier. The family lived in the upper tier of the construction but the lower tier was reserved for the family's animals, usually on the back of the building. Some mangers were usually about 8 feet long and were made of stone. Some mangers were not connected to the homes at all but were actually in caves. In modern depictions of mangers there is usually a wooden manger, probably because in our time animal toughs were made of wood.

Standing alone, the manger has no significance. It is simply the place where the lowest of God's creation, the animals, go to feed. It is inanimate, cold and lifeless. What made the manger an important symbol for Christians is not the manger itself but "who was in it." The fact that the manger came to represent the coming of Christ into the world gave it a new meaning, because it represented the arrival of hope to the world. Moreover, because mangers were usually associated with the lowest of creation, God's son being born in a stable environment, lying in a manger, represented the depth of God's love for even the smallest of his creatures. The manger shows Christ, establishing from the offset, that he would be concerned about the poor, the maimed, the incarcerated and the disenfranchised. It is a clear picture of God stooping low to touch every facet of fallen humanity. When we see the manger it should say in no uncertain terms that no matter how poor we are,

dejected we are, or loney we feel, God is with us too.

Likewise, the cross carries no meaning for Christians until we consider who was crucified on it and for what reason. In itself, the cross is just wood. It was originally a single stake placed in the ground, used by victorious armies to display the heads of conquered enemies. Later, as a method of crime control, slaves who were sentenced by Roman tribunals were bodily placed upon the stake, in open public, to both punish and humiliate them for their crimes. Roman citizens, were genearally spared execution on the stake. As improvements were made, a cross piece was made that was carried by the condemned to the place of crucifixion. His hands were nailed, at the wrist, to the cross piece and he was lifted to the top of the stake as it locked into place. The condemned usually died from blood loss or gangrene because normally soldiers would break their legs with a club to speed up death.

In itself the cross represents the worse. It was a symbol of shame and failure. However the cross takes on a new meaning to the Christian because of one man who died on it and why. Jesus's death on the cross was the second step in a triolgy that would eventually spell new life to the Christian. The first step was the manger, or the incarnation of God among men. The second step was the cross, the reconciling of fallen men unto God and the third step was the empty tomb which seal his victory over death and the grave. Paul, writing to the Collosians reminded them that the cross was in reality the embodiment of a loving God reconciling, or putting together in a perfect way, the strained relationship by he and mankind, prompted by sin. When a Christian sees the cross he should see a symbol of hope that, in Jesus, he can be restored into good favor with God.

Together, the manger and the cross team up to represent God stooping down to even the lowest with the aim of making things right between God and his creation.

No Matter How low, Jesus Cares

The great inspiring hope that the Chistmas season brings is that no matter what our estate, Jesus cares. Those who suffer from impact of darkness are reminded that Jesus cares. Those who are struggling from day to day to make ends meet are wrestling with the impact of darkness. Racial discrimination, police brutality, homelessness, and fears within us tend to keep us in the darkness.

The birth of Jesus, brought light into a world of darkness. The poor saw a reason for hope; that because of Jesus, poverty does not have to be a

permanent condition, there is a way out. The imprisoned saw a reason for hope; that because of Jesus, past criminal mistakes can be forgiven and the future is unlimited.

There are others who are private low points at Christmas, their faces beam on the outside but their is a certain emptiness on the inside. Those who have lost loved ones, during this season experience a special lowness too. It is a certain loneliness prompted by memories of Christmases past that would make it a sad time, if it were not for Jesus. One song writer asked: "What do the lonely do at Christmas?" The answer for the Christians is "they praise God for the good times and go forward!"

At Christmas we should see God in his magnificence, stooping down and picking up crushed, broken lives that have been buried in self pity, bruised by deceit, and cast away by society. We should see him as bright light in the darkness of these times, telling even the lowest of his Creation that ..God cares!

No Matter how bad, Jesus forgives

If the manger showed God stooping down to reach fallen humanity, even the lowest; then the cross goes one step further because it shows God's willingness to forgive and reconcile the lost to himself by sacrificing his own son on Calvary. The cross is the epitome of God's saving grace and willingness to forget past discretions to bring the creation and the creator back together again.

The manger helps us see that God does stoop down and pick up a life, but the cross shows us what God does with it after he picks it up!

The cross shows us how God can take our:

—Worse and turn it into our best!

—Failures and turn them into successes!

—Low spirits and raise them up again!

—Broken hearts and make them happy again!

The cross is special to us, not because of who made it but because of who carried it!

The cross is special to us, not because it was used to crucify, but "who was crucified"

The cross is special to us, not because of what it was intended to be but because of what it turned out to be!

The cross is important because, on the cross he who was:

—Precious, died for those who were worthless

—

Lowly, died for the proud

—Loving, died for the hateful

—Holy, died for the defiled

No wonder the song writer declared: At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and burdens of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

It began in a manger, but ended on an old rugged cross!

It began in Bethlehem, but ended up on Calvary!

It began in obscurity, but now the whole world knows the story!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to tell the story about Jesus, the lamb of God,

Jesus, the prince of peace,

Jesus, Almighty God, Immanuel

Tell the story of how he was born in a manger but evening he died on an old rugged cross!

Tell the story how he arose after three days and nights!

Tell it everywhere you go..Jesus Christ is born!

No. 480-Christmas

The People Who Missed Christmas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 26, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"He came unto his own and his own received him not." John 1:11

Introduction

There has been plenty of activity during the Christmas season, but did you know there are some people who missed Christmas? How can that be? Obviously Christmas has come and gone. It is just another memory, so how is it possible for there to be some people who missed Christmas? If they were alive, it would seem logical to suspect that they could not have missed Christmas! For a variety of reasons there are people who lived the experience of December 25th, but they missed what Christmas was all about.

Consider the little boy who wrote Santa Claus a letter on good faith that Santa and Santa alone could grant his wish. On Christmas morning he ran through the house and there were gifts everywhere. He had a bicycle, a game boy, super nintendo, a computer, several clothing outfits and gifts galore. As he opened his packages he could hear his mother and father yelling and arguing at each other again this Christmas as they had every Christmas he knew. His father drank heavily and his mother cried a lot and it made her sad. As the little boy opened his presents he sat down in a chair and began to cry. His father saw him crying and became disturbed. "You mean we bought you all this stuff and you still aren't happy?" his father asked, shouting to the top of his voice. The little boy began to cry "He didn't come, he didn't come, Santa didn't come."

Puzzled his parents tried to find out what was on the boy's mind. Just about that time grandma walked into the room and listened as he explained. "I wrote Santa and asked him to take away daddy's whiskey and bottle. I asked him to stop mommy from crying all the time. All these things are nice

but they are not what I asked for!" The boy dropped his head and sobbed "he missed us this year, he missed us!" The father and mother looked at each other, with guilty spirits. Grandma hugged the little boy and wiped the tears from his eyes. "Son, you asked for the right thing but you asked the wrong person." Next time, tell Jesus, he'll never pass you by. Stricken by the sadness they caused their son, the parents worked out their problem. The next year the little boy only received one gift, which he opened after his family prayed and gave thanks to God. When the boy saw the happiness in his parents he slipped off into a empty room and looked up into the air and said "Thanks Jesus, grandma said, you wouldn't let me down!"

As Christians we are grateful that we never miss Christmas! The only real way to miss out on Christmas is to lose our faith and trust in God. If we keep trusting in him not only will Christmas be a great day, but the day after, and all others will be sweeter than the day before!

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he describes the reason for Christ's coming into the world and the reception he received among men.

In just 14 verses, John reaches back to the beginning of time and spans the whole experience of creation as he explains the reason why Jesus was born in the world. Jesus is first described as "The Word," an integral part of the trinity. As the "Word" he always existed and will continue to exist. However, because of the sinfulness of mankind the "Word" decided to become flesh. Contrary to popular opinion, God did not have a son in the beginning. In the beginning there was only The Father, The Word, and the Holy Spirit, each being an equal component of the God head. God had a son when Jesus took on the mortality of mankind and was born of Mary.

John noted that although Jesus had created the world, once he came into his own creation, it received him not. For varied reasons they either rejected him, or missed the truth about his being altogether. He came as a light in a world of darkness, but many who were all around him remained in darkness because they missed the light.

Some Were Too Busy

The Innkeeper is the first type of person that missed Christmas. The time when Jesus came to Bethlehem was an extremely busy time for anyone that operated an Inn. The decree had been given that all of the Roman Empire

would be taxed. Each family was ordered to return to its city of origin to enroll for taxation. There were, no doubt, thousands of people in Bethlehem on the night Mary and Joseph arrived. Innkeepers were busy. The few rooms that were available were obviously going at premium prices as the affluent staged bidding wars to acquire a decent place to live.

Among the hundreds of people that probably came to his Inn looking for shelter was one obscure couple from a small city of an even smaller reputation, called Nazareth. They were obviously not able to pay a large amount and neither did their station or position command any special attention. The Innkeeper brushed them aside, told them he was full and pointed them to his stable out back. As the Christ child was born, the Innkeeper missed it, because he was preoccupied.

Today there are many who missed Christmas because they were like the Innkeeper. No, they were not attending a motel or a hotel, but they were preoccupied with their own activities. There were many so busy shopping and cooking and visiting, that they missed the reason for the season. Many children awoke on Christmas morning and rushed to their Christmas trees tearing paper from presents, tossing boxes here and there, and never stopped for a moment to consider the Christ Child. There were others who missed Christmas because their holiday schedules were filled with entertainment drinking and partying. They missed Christmas because they were too tired or still hung over from Christmas eve to even think about Christmas. Like the Innkeeper they had no room for Christ and they missed Christmas.

Some Were Afraid Of Christmas

The Innkeeper missed Christmas because he was too busy to take note, but there was another who knew Christmas was coming but was afraid.

King Herod knew Christmas was coming. Wise men came to him from the East seeking directions to Bethlehem. He learned that there was a child to be born that would one day become king. That thought made him afraid. Herold, who was not a Jew himself, had been placed in his position by the Roman government. As their puppet leader he assumed the title “king of the Jews.” When he heard there was one that would be born that would be the real “king of the Jews” he was afraid. His entire life was one that was filled with paranoia. He was so afraid that someone would dethrone him that he ordered his two oldest sons to be slain, just five days before he himself died. When the wise men told him that a king would be born, Herod sent out word that all of the boys under two years old would be slaughtered. Not only did

he miss Christmas, he tried to top it from happening altogether.

Today there are many people who are similar to Herod in their fear of Christmas. Like Herod, they are afraid of anything, anyone or any faith that will dethrone them and take over their lives. They were afraid of anything that might interrupt their career, their position, their power or their ambition. They missed Christmas each year, because Jesus has never been an integral part of their lives from the start. They know about him. They join others in observing the holiday festivities. They may even call on him in times of trouble. They may even join a church and sing about him in the choir or otherwise acknowledge along with others. However, they are afraid to let him be the "king" of their lives. They are afraid of changing their lifestyle, and what it might cost them, if he truly becomes king. They are just as afraid as Herod, so, like Herold, they fake a love for Christmas but miss it every year.

The Whole City Missed Christmas

Not only did the Innkeeper and Herold miss Christmas, the entire town of Bethlehem and the city of Jerusalem missed Christmas. The shepherds, who were watching their flock by night, were the only citizens of area who observed Christmas. Wise men followed a star for thousands of miles, yet in the place where Jesus was actually born no one commemorated his birth except a handful of shepherds and some strangers from another land. All of the people in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which was only a few miles away, missed Christmas! They were occupied with worship at the temple and their religious affairs. They were so occupied with the ritual that they could not look above their heads and see the sign of the star in the air. Today there are many who missed Christmas because they simply could not look around them and see the signs of the times. These are difficult times in which we live. These are times when bible prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes. Yet with all of the signs we have around us, there are many who still miss Christmas every year. They continue their lives as usual, unmoved by the times.

What Did They Miss?

Those who missed Christmas missed a great opportunity. The Innkeeper missed the joy of knowing that the Lord of the Universe and come within his walls. Herod missed a chance to know King of Kings and the people missed a chance to rejoice at the coming of the savior.

Even worse than missing Christmas, is missing a chance to know Christ for yourself!

If you don't know the Lord, not only do you miss Christmas, but you miss something every day!

If you don't know the Lord, you'll hear the music, but you'll miss the meaning of every song you sing!

If you don't know the Lord, you'll hear the words, but you'll miss the message if every sermon you hear!

If you don't know the Lord, you'll read the bible but miss the truths that are hidden in its pages!

--You'll pray a many prayer, but miss the chance to get a single one through

--You'll have a like of associates, but miss the chance to have a real friend!

Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to town and decided 'I'm not going to miss Jesus!" even if it means climbing in a sycamore tree.

A woman with an issue of blood heard that Jesus was coming to town and decided "I'm not going to miss Jesus" even if all I can do is just touch the hem of his garment!

I don't know about you, but I've decided not to muss a single day with Jesus! Everyday with Jesus is sweeter than the day before!

Jesus, the Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, was born in Bethlehem, died on Calvary and arose on the third day!

One of these day he's coming back again..I don't want to miss a single Christmas day and I sure don't want to miss out when he comes back and gets his own!

I won't miss when he says: Servant! Servant! Well done!"

No. 481-Funeral

A Pastor's Evaluation

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 28, 1993

SCRIPTURE:"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." — 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Introduction

How do you evaluate a pastor? The answer to that question depends largely on whose conducting the evaluation. There is one standard by which man judges a pastor but there is yet another that the eternal father uses. Man's evaluation will, at best, be superficial, because he can only judge what he sees. God, who can see the heart, will evaluate that which cannot be seen by the eye.

If pastors were evaluated by the members of their congregations to determine their heavenly reward, there would sheer confusion because the definition of a "good" pastor changes, depending on who is asked. A recent survey asked church members to write one phrase to describe what they considered to be the attributes of a good pastor. The results were that a good pastor must have: The strength of an ox, the stubbornness of a bulldog; the daring of a lion, the wisdom of an owl, the harmlessness of a dove, the industry of a beaver, the gentleness of a sheep, the versatility of a chameleon, the vision of an eagle, the hide of a rhinoceros, the perspective of a giraffe, the endurance of a camel, the bounce of a kangaroo, the stomach of a horse, the disposition of an angel, and enough sense to know that he can not please everybody!"

Whenever men evaluate a pastor there is always a conflict between the ideal and the real; between what we want and what we will settle for. If man were to evaluate the pastor he would always come up short because:

If the pastor is young, he lacks experience; If his hair is gray, he's too old for the young people.

If he has five of six children, he has too many; If he has none, he's setting

a bad example.

If he preaches from notes, he has canned sermons and is dry;

If his messages are extemporaneous, he isn't deep enough.

If he uses too many illustrations, he's neglecting the Bible; If he doesn't include stories, he isn't clear.

If he preaches the truth, he's too offensive; If he doesn't preach the truth then he's a hypocrite.

If he fails make everybody happy, he's hurting the church

If he does make them all happy, he has no convictions.

If he drives an old car, he shames his congregation;If he buys a new one, he's stealing the church's money

If he receives a large salary, he's in it for the money!

If he gets a small one — It's because he can't preach anyway and that's all he's worth!

If man evaluates the pastor, it will no doubt be by man's standards! As Christians we should be glad that we will not be judged by the standards of men, but by the standards of God. Every Christian should rejoice in knowing that our heavenly father will evaluate our service in this life, and when it is ended will give heavenly rewards to those who are faithful until death.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he gives advice to young Timothy on the expectations of the ministry. It also focuses on his evaluation of his own ministry. Writing from a Roman jail cell as he awaited his execution Paul calmly reflected on his life and gave himself a self an evaluation. We have the privilege of observing as this grand old man of the faith evaluates his own life's work. Since his conclusions were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we get a clue as to how God will evaluate any Saint's work at the close of his life.

Paul measured himself by answering three questions: Did you fight a good fight? Did you finish your course? and Did you keep the faith? His answer to all three was "Yes" and he concluded that there was a crown waiting for him in glory and for all others who could truthfully answer "yes" to all three questions.

The Good Fight

The first measure that Paul gave was that the Christian should engage

himself in fighting the "good" fight! What does Paul mean by injecting the adjective "good" to describe his life long fight? Why not describe his quest as a valiant or courageous fight? Why not an exhausting or a demanding fight? Why would he say he had fought a "good" fight. In Greek the word translated "good" is Kalos which means "beautiful or virtuous". Thus Paul said I have fought a beautiful and morally pure battle for that which was right.

Unique to his style, Paul always referred to the battle for the moral high grand as the "good fight." In 1 Timothy 6:12 he called upon young Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." In Ephesians 6:12 he describes this quest as a battle between good and evil. He said "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." When Paul spoke of a good fight he was not just talking about "a" fight but a "good" fight, where that which is right is forced to challenge that which is wrong.

Today, more than ever, the people of God need pastors who are willing to fight a "good fight" against corruption, racism, poverty, homelessness, violence and crime. We need to lead the people of God to speak out against and take action to improve the degenerating social conditions that are corrupting our communities. We need to join the growing crescendo of voices that cry out for pastors who are not afraid to stand for that which is right and fight a good fight.

Finish My Course

The second measure of Christian service is his commitment to the course. Paul said "I have finished my course." By emphasizing "My" course, Paul made it clear that each person has to run his course, complete his task in life.

Paul completed his course, before he ran out of time. His mission was to establish the church in the Gentile world. In thee missionary journeys, with ill health plaguing him, and funds lacking he traveled around the known world setting churches in the homes of believers wherever he went. He accomplished his mission with months to spare and thus had time to write to young Timothy.

Every pastor that God places in a congregation is given a mission, or a course to run. Some are just relay runners, expected to carry a congregation to a certain point as another receives the baton. Others are marathon pastors, given large assignments, and thus a long and challenging course with little to

run with but faith and hope. There are many who run out of time before they complete their assigned course. Note that Paul emphasizes "my" course. He completed his assignment, without being envious of others who were given more glamorous assignments, such as the great Apollos who always seemed to draw praises for his work, while Paul often landed in jail or was stoned. Paul finished his course, before he ran out of time. If we run out of time it is not because God has miscalculated, but its because we have misused our time meandering from place to place trying to run a course other than "my course."

When a pastor is evaluated the question will be asked? Did he finish his course? Those who can answer "yes", will certainly be rewarded!

Kept The Faith

The final measure of the pastor will be whether or not he kept the faith. For Paul that was not a tongue and cheek phrase, used loosely. Keeping the faith meant perserverance. It meant keeping his eye on the prize even when others could not see it. It meant keeping the vision in sight and pursing it without losing hope.

Today there are thousands of pastors who have lost faith in their mission. Frustrated by stubborn congregations and bureaucratic deacons and trustees that sometimes sound more like politicians and lawyers than assistants to the man of God, many pastors have thrown in the towel and have given up. Some began their ministries with fresh idealism, confident that they could do anything, but along the way lost that faith. Now they say to themselves "I can't do anything." The lost the faith. However, Paul said, "I have kept the faith." Keeping the faith is what is rewarded. Staying close to God is the ultimate end.

There will not be a reward for starting out with faith, but to those who keep the faith. Pastors must realize that its not until the last:

—Battle has been fought; Tear has been shed

—Enemy has been conquered; Fear has been faced

—Hill has been climbed; and the last cross has been carried ..that we can claim the victory. The race is not given to swift or to the strong but unto those that endure to the end.

I'm reminded of the metropolitan church that was looking for a pastor. It had list of applicants with impressive resumes. However, among the applicants was an elderly country preacher who came to stand before the pulpit committee. "What are your qualifications? Where is your resume'" the

preacher was asked. He then opened a large paste board box and said "this is my resume" He pulled out a "rub board", a pair of knee pads, and a compass with stone glued to its backside. When asked to explain the country preacher, with fire and eloquence said "This rub board is the first page of my resume' it tells you who I am. It says that I'm a child of God, washed in the blood of the lamb." Holding up the knee pads he said "These knee pads suggest to you that I know and believe in the power of prayer, for prayer changes things. This compass says when things get dark and we can't see a way, that I know how to follow the direction of his word and find the rock that is higher than I. Brothers and sisters I know how to find Jesus!" When he finished an old member of the committee stood and said "One of our applicants is from Harvard, another is from Yale, but this man knows how to find Jesus, and that's enough"

Oh brothers and sisters the world wants to know about Jesus! Every pastor will be asked did you fight the good fight? Did finish your course? Did you keep the faith? But he'll also be asked "did you tell the story!"

Tell them about Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who arose from the dead!

Tell them that he's coming back again to claim his own!

I don't know about you, but I want to hear him say "Servant, Servant ..Well done!

—

On Wednesday December 22, 1993 Pastor E. L. McClanahan went home to glory. He fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith.

No. 482-Funeral

What God Leaves Behind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 30, 1993

Scripture: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Job 1:21

Introduction

Why does God take a loved one? That's a question that has plagued mortal man for generations as he has struggle to the find the meaning of life and an explanation for death. Why does God take that which is precious to us and claim it for his own? Why would God take our loved one and leave us with an empty abyss in our hearts that appears unfathomable? In answer to the question "Why someone precious to us?" God answers in Psalm 116:15 "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his sights." They are precious to him as well. There are beautiful flowers in the garden of life, all of which belongs to God. Occasionally he decided to pluck a few precious ones and keep the in a special place.

Consider the man who was once rich but by a stroke of fate ended up homeless on the street. He often carried around his neck a solid gold medallion for good luck, but it didn't seem to work. As hunger and cold came upon him he went from place to place to try to find food and shelter, but was unsuccessful. He tried to cash in his coin but small shops either believed it stolen or worthless. After weeks of hunger and exposure to the elements the man went into a grocery store and assembled several grocery items including bread, milk and some packaged meat. Looking to see that he was not being watched he put the food under his coat and slipped out of the door. Sitting in an alley way he began to eat a meal at last. However, before he could finish his meal police cars surrounded the alley and the store owner pointed him out as the thief. He was caught in the act. His entire theft was captured on video tape. In court the man refused to say anything, though he faced certain imprisonment. The judge reviewed the video tape, but he noticed something peculiar. After the man put the bread, meat and milk under his coat, he went

into his pocket and hid something under the next loaf of bread. The judge recessed the court and ordered marshals to search the shelf. When court resumed they brought him a solid gold coin, valued at hundreds of dollars. The judge looked at the poor man and said "Case dismissed. This man is not a thief, he left behind, much more than he took."

As Christians, our focus in the season of death, perhaps, should not be on what God has taken, but it should be on what he leaves behind. A full inventory would reveal that he always leaves much more than he takes.

Exposition

This text focuses on Job as he struggles to analyze the circumstances surrounding his sudden rise and fall. Satan, traveled throughout the land looking for mortals that could be tested. When he came upon Job, Satan was given the opportunity to test the faith of this God fearing man,who was described as perfect.

Satan believed that the only reason Job was a righteous man was because he had great possessions. He summized that it was not difficult to be pious, religious or holy, as long as one possessed all of the creature comforts of the world. He challenged God to take away his possessions and Job's position would be different. God gave Satan permission to afflict Job's body and to create havoc in his life. All of the great things God gave him, including his large family, cattle, immense wealth and health, were taken away from him. In a moment, they were all gone as carrier after carrier ran to Job to report that his children had been killed and his cattle had been stolen by enemies. Then Job himself, broke out in sores and was in constant pain.

Looking at his circumstance, Job came to one conclusion. That it was God that gave him the pleasures that he enjoyed and God allowed them to be taken away, for some reason he did not understand. He still blessed the name of God anyway.

In the aftermath of his trial, Job received greater blessings than he lost. He had a larger, happier family. He regained his wealth and health. His life was richer and fuller because of his experience.

Through it all he learned that God had surely taken something from him when he took family members that were close to him and possessions that were dear to him. However, he learned that God really left him more than he took. Job arose from his crises with a renewed faith, and an invigorated hope that helped him stand even taller in the eyesight of God. Because of his experience he was now able to stand any test, and weather any storm, even more

confident that God would provide.
When it was all over Job discovered a great truth, previously hidden to him, that God leaves more than he takes. That which he leaves has an even greater significance, because of the experience.

What's Left Behind

Immediately following the death of a loved one there is a solemn review of those things which are left behind. An empty bed turned back; flowers immaculately kept; folded towels, dresses and glasses, everything it its place. These are things left behind that can be seen with the eye. Each brings back a memory. Each is an important source of reflection and releases a flood of mixed emotions that we carry with us daily.
We know what God has taken from us but what has he left behind?
Job was left with a reassurance that God is still in control. Abraham was certainly discouraged at the thought that God was taking from him a precious son. But high on the mountain Abraham found that God had a ram in the bush. He left that mountain top experience with much more than he ascended. He had the knowledge that God would never take more than he will left behind. Noah was plucked from a sinful world that was an abomination to God. His home was uprooted and that which he knew was completely destroyed under water. He arose from the circumstance confident that God had not wronged him or deserted him. He left the ark and started a new and better world with what God left behind. Lot saw his possessions and his wife destroyed in the blazing fire from the cities of the plains. Yet with what God left behind he started a new a better life that was greater than the one before. Moses was one of the great leaders of the Hebrew people. Yet at the age of 120 God took him. He left behind Joshua and a renewed destination. Elijah stepped on a fiery chariot and was swept away into the heavens. But God left behind young Elisha, who caught Elijah's mantel and gained a double portion of his strength. Certainly God left more than he took.
When we consider our loss on this occasion, we must survey what has been left behind. Beyond the possessions and creature comforts which are left behind, what are the greater truths that we inherit?
The spirit of independence, that desire to do for oneself without dependence on others, has it been left behind. Seize upon it and take it to heart! The spirit of volunteerism, that inner desire to give of oneself to help others, without pay, above and beyond the call of duty, has it been left behind? Seize upon it and take it to heart! The eye for beauty and order, the unwillingness to see a dying

flower or fading bloom and the endless search to cultivate beauty; has it been left behind? Seize upon it and see the world with an eye for beauty and order! The spirit of worship and devotion, that's the part of us that believes in God and cries out to be in his service! Has it be left behind? Seize upon it and take it to heart.

There is so much that God leaves behind that it often overwhelms us. If we seize upon each opportunity, God can help us to use that which has been left behind to improve our own lives.

That's why Job did not concentrate on what God had taken away, he simply concluded "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Today, we should not worry so much about what has been taken away from us, but we should consider what we will do with the intangibles that God has left behind and how we will use them to improve our own relationship with him. Is there a way that we can take what has been left behind and get closer to God? Is there a way we can build on that which is left behind and become spiritually stronger. Is there a way we can collect all of these leavings and apply them to our lives in a productive way. If there is, then do it! Seize the moment and act upon it.

He never takes what he can't give

While it is true that God always leaves more than he takes, there is an even greater truth: "God never takes more than he can give."

Job learned an invaluable lesson from his experience. Anything we need, God has it. Anything God takes, he can give it again.

Today that truth remains. Anything we need, God's got it!

If we are lost God gives direction; if we are confused God gives peace!

If we are lonely God gives comfort; if we are burdened, God gives a lighter load.

Whatever we need God can give it!

If life has taken from us anything that is precious, we should remember that God never takes what he can't give.

Martha was angry with Jesus at the death of Lazarus. She complained that if had been present that his life would not have been lost. She forgot that Jesus was there when his father said "Let us make man" and when Lazarus rose from his grave she remembered that God never takes more than he can give.

When the daughter of Darius rose from her bed as one that had been asleep, the world saw another example of how God never takes more than he can give life.

Jesus can give life because he gave his own life that we might have a chance to life eternal. His words ring out with clear resonance even to this day “I am the resurrection and the life!”
“He that believeth on me shall never die!”
When our loved one is taken from us, yes, look at what is left behind, but look at what he keeps giving us every day!
God gives love to those who are hated!
God gives assurance to those who doubting
God gives inspiration to those who are frustrated
God gives salvation to those who are lost!
And when the weight of death drops our heads in despair as we count our losses, God lifts our spirit by reminding us that he leaves more than he takes..
..and he never takes more than he can give!

No. 483-New Year

Which Way Is Up?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2, 1994

SCRIPTURE: Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." -1 Kings 12:28 "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,"— Mark 10:32

Introduction

What are your plans for the new year? Have you made some serious decisions about the direction of your life in the coming months? Millions of people make resolutions annually, as they resolve to take new directions in the coming year. Nearly every resolution verbalizes an inner desire to climb higher, achieve more, and expand our horizons further than we did in the last year. We want do go up. Up town! Up state! Up Country! As we make our resolutions to move "up" in 1994, let us make sure we know exactly where the road to "up" will take us before we start our journey. Before we go another day in this new year, maybe we should stop and ask ourselves "Which Way Is Up?"

Consider the country boy who became fed up with backwoods life. In all his life, he'd been no further than the country store and he decided that it was time for him to move up. He packed his suitcase and bid his parents farewell. Before leaving his mother, aware that he'd never been anywhere before, advised him to "keep your eye on the Silver Eagle, #402 it passes here every day going straight to Chicago." The boy kept his mother's advice in mind. He never took his eye off the Silver Eagle. Even in the huge depot with scores of other Silver Eagles, he kept watching train number 402. He boarded the train and laid down in the sleeping car and fell fast asleep. When he awoke the next morning he expected to be near Chicago. However, instead of Chicago he learned that the train was pulling into New Orleans. Upset he ran to the conductor and said "I kept my eye on the train just like mama said, #402.

What I am doing here in New Orleans?" The conductor answered. In the mornings the 402 is South Bound on Track 2, in the evenings its Southbound on Track 1. I'm sorrow to tell you young fellow, but it looks like you're on the right train, but you're on the wrong track!"

As Christians when we consider the direction we are going to take for the new year, we need to make sure we don't get our priorities confused and miss the mark. If we stay close to God in the year to come, we will be on the right train and on the right track in 1994.

Exposition

This text focuses on an ambitious young king who want desperately to move up in the world, but took the wrong road.

Jeroboam I was a man of great talent an ambition he desired. We rose to prominence as the chief formal of Solomon's laborers as they worked to build the temple. He did such a great job that he was quickly promoted. He desired however, to go even higher. He capitalized on the complaints and grumblings of the people and tried to organized them to revolt against the king but was discovered. He ran away to Egypt until after the death of Solomon. When 10 of the 12 tribes revolted against the rule of Solomon's son Rehoboam, they remembered Jeroboam and made him king.

Jeroboam had moved up fast. He had position, power and money but to maintain his position he went to serious extremes. First, he was aware of the loyalty that the people attached to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. The people loved to worship God so much that they walked for days and weeks just to sit within his presence at the temple. Even though most traveled down from the Northern Kingdom to worship at Jerusalem, they always referred to their journey as going "up" to Jerusalem. In nearly every scriptural passage in the bible that refers to journeying to Jerusalem, the journey is referred to as going "up." They referred to Jerusalem as "up" for two reasons.

First, because the city sat on squarely on two mountains, Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion. Any person coming to Jerusalem would have to climb up. Secondly, the designation of "up" to Jerusalem indicates the high esteem that the people placed on the city as the place where they worshiped God.

This posed a problem for Jeroboam. If the people of the North held a spiritual tie to his rival in the South eventually, he felt, they would once again become a part of the Southern kingdom. His solution was to change the direction of 'up." He erected two golden calves for the people to worship. He placed one at Dan in the North and the other at Bethel in the South.

These were to be the shrines of public worship for the people. Theologians differ as to whether he intended to introduce idol worship or to give his people a visible shrine before which to worship. No one doubts however, that he intended to dissuade Israel from going "up" to Jerusalem.

In his zeal to move up and stay up, Jeroboam led the people to idolatry. It was purely a political decision void of any consideration of the will of God. Following his lead, many of the people, with good intentions, were led astray. They wanted to worship God but they did so before idols. They were on the right train, but on the wrong track.

Which Way is Up?

Today there are many people who are similar to Jeroboam in that they are ambitious and desire to move up. The desire to move up was not Jeroboam's problem. There is no scriptural ban on prosperity, ambition and success. His problem was that he was willing to do just about anything to move up and then once up, would compromise himself to stay up. In that respect there are many today who are just like Jeroboam who concluded that the ends justify the means.

There should be no confusion on our part as to "which way is up." Every Christian should know exactly where he or she is going in life. That implies that we should also know where we are NOT going as well. In our quest to move up we should be careful to avoid undertakings that might help us to move up but put us on the wrong track.

Career opportunities often place many young adults in awkward positions. Many take on great responsibilities to advance their careers, usually at the expense of their family life. If we move up on the job and make more money but lose our family, which way is up? Sometimes our careers seriously disrupt our religious life. Families accustomed to worship, working in the church, bible study and other activities are placed in the cumbersome position of choosing between their careers and their religious life. If we move up on the job but lose our relationship to God, which way is up? Sometimes our careers force us to make moral decisions that affect our advancement. The accountant that doctors the books as a favor to the boss; the press agent that lies to cover mistakes of the company; or the politician that makes a politically expedient move that is morally questionable, are all examples of people who must answer the question: "Which way is up?"

While we have a long list of resolutions each year with respect to things that we are going to do. There should also be another list, which sets the limits

on things we will not do, if they will get us off track.

"Up" Is Where God is!

Jeroboam's problem was complicated because the people saw Jerusalem as the place where they found God. Although he built statues and gave royal decrees he found that he could not successfully change the direction of "up" because going "up to Jerusalem" represented going to be with God.

In today's perplexing times many are really confused and do not know which way to go. They are asking themselves the question: "What shall I do? Which road should I take?" In essence they are asking the question "Which Way is up? In answer to that question the answer comes: "Up is where God is?" If God is not in it, it's not up. If we make millions, but God is not in it, it's not up, it's down. If we build a great house but God is not in it, its down. If we get a new car, but God is not in it, it's a lemon. If we get married without the godly values of truth, honesty and love, then God's not in it, it'll fall apart. If we graduate from school this year but God moves out of the picture, it will be a worthless effort. If we succeed this year, but God is not in the success, then it's a failure. "Up is where God is!" If we move up without God then we are on our way down! No wonder the song writer declares: "Without God, I could do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without God I would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

Joshua, if asked the question "Which Way is Up?" might have answered, up is family devotion to God. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Job, you are suffering a long period of difficulty, which way is up? I can hear Job answer, "up" is waiting on God, "All the days of my appointed time, I wait until my change comes."

David declared "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord, which made the heaven and earth."

Ruth, which way is up? "Up" is following God for "Your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God."

Isaiah, which way is up? Up is rising to answer the call of service "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me."

To Joshua "up" was a stronger family devotion; For David "Up" was a higher place of refuge; For Ruth, Up was a commitment to follow; for Isaiah, Up was an answer to service...but there is one other we must consider ..what about Jesus?

Jesus, which way is up? It's the road to salvation for Acts 4:12 say

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Jesus, which way is up? “Up” Is the road to answered prayer for John 14:14 says “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Which way is up? Up is self denial Matthew 16:24 “If any man would come after me let him take up his cross and follow me.”

If you take up your cross, I will lift you up. For one of these days I’ll be lifted up, but don’t worry about for “I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all me unto me.”

Which way is up? It’s up Mt. Calvary!

Which way is up? Rising on Sunday morning!

I don’t know about you, but I’ve decided that I’m on my way!

I’m Going through!

I’m Going through!

I’m going where Jesus is!

No. 484-Inspiration

Glowing In The Dark

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 9, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." — John 8:12;"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:" 2 Peter 1:19

Introduction

Have you ever walked in the dark? How did you feel? If you were unfamiliar with the path, you probably felt uneasy, a little frightened and tense. It's a scary feeling to be alone in the dark on an unknown path. That's probably how some people feel as they begin new ventures, start new years and walk unknown paths in life. They feel like they are walking along a dark path and are frightened by the prospects of so much darkness. A new year brings a certain uneasiness and feelings of uncertainty. It lingers like a dark cloud and hides the path to success.

What do we do when faced with the prospect of the unknown? Consider the city boy who spent some time in the country learning fascinating new things about nature. One day he ventured into a pasture catching beautiful butterflies and bugs. As he caught them he placed the butterflies in one jar and his bugs in another. He became captivated by the bugs and butterflies and did not notice how fast the time had passed. Soon nightfall was upon him and he could not find his way back home. The pasture seemed an endless maze in the pitch darkness of night. Afraid, he curled up in a ball and went to sleep. His father, worried about him, searched through out the woods and meadows. The boy could not be found. Then as the father was just about to give up his search and return home he saw a flashing light from the pasture and proceeded to follow it. Shortly after, he found the little boy balled up in a knot asleep on the ground. The little boy was glad to be found but wondered how his father was able to find him in pasture in the darkness of the night. His

father said, well it looks like you caught butterflies all day and put them in this jar. But in your other jar you stored lightning bugs, and instead of going to sleep in the night, they glow in the dark. I just followed the glow until I found you.

In life it is possible to get lost along the way, but there is certainly quality about the saved saint that should make him sleep easily at night, that is the truth that when the things get their darkest, he is able to glow in the dark.

As Christians, we should thank God for giving us Jesus, who is our light in the darkness. When faced with the darkness of difficulty or indecision we can be assured that regardless of blackness of the midnight, that we can glow in the dark!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus and Peter as they explain to the believer the nature and source of their power to shine in the darkness.

In John, Jesus used one of several comparisons that he often gave to illustrate to believers how he related to them. Here he is seen as the light of the world. By precept and example and saving grace, Jesus said "I am the light of the world." Those who follow him will not walk in darkness but will have the "light of life." The promise to believers here is often mistaken. Some believe that if they follow Jesus there will never be a dark day. However, Jesus notes that those who follow him will have periods of darkness but because they have followed him they will have their paths brightened by the "light of life." So, Jesus does not promise endless sunny day experiences, where everything is fine, but he does project that when darkness comes that those who follow him will be able to see their way because of an eternal light within them that will help them to see the path that leads out of darkness and adversity.

When Jesus spoke he was in the early stages of his three year ministry on earth. It might have been understandable to those who heard him how following him could lighten their path, because they could see him. However, once he died, rose and ascended to heaven, where was the light going to come from? How could any individual expect to receive light for the dark journey after Jesus had physically left this earth? The answer comes when we remember that Jesus said he would not leave the world comfortless, that he would send a comforter, the Holy Spirit, to be a guiding presence in the life of every believer. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer provides a charge or power source to energize a believer to "glow" in times of darkness.

Explaining further, Peter noted that the prophecies of the past and the truths contained in the word of God should be stored in our hearts. The word of God possesses eternal truths that are valuable to every believer, like lights in the dark, for those times when trouble is imminent. Peter uses a word in his explanation that is the key to understanding what Jesus meant when he promised us that if we follow him we would be guided by the eternal light. In his explanation, Peter said the word of God that is believed, acted upon and hidden in our heart will be the "day star" that will rise in our hearts in times of darkness. What is this "day star?" It is an English translation of the Greek word Phosphorus. Phosphorus or Day Star is often used to refer to stars, especially the morning star that shines at the peak of darkness, just before the rising of the sun. But deeper inspection brings out another important truth because "phosphorus" also means "any substance that has the capacity to give off light after being exposed to a power source."

Combined, the truth of these two texts tell us that those who follow Jesus will be given a power source, the Holy Spirit, which when combined with an active faith and belief in the Word of God will become a "phosphorus" substance that will cause us to light up or "glow" even in moments of darkness. Jesus told us that if we follow him we will have an eternal light for dark paths, and Peter told us how our Lord will fix it for us to "glow in the dark."

How To Glow In the Dark

Today every Christian should be excited about the prospect of being able to spiritually glow in the dark! But how does it work?

In school many of us learned about the nature of light. Our primary light source is the sun. We have some artificial light sources, made man, that help us to see in the dark. We have a whole category lights called incadesence. These are the kinds of lights represented by light bulbs. A piece of metal inside an empty glass that is energized by electric current that gives off light and heat." As long as there is an active current flowing through a light bulb it will give out light. Thomas Edison's first light bulb burned for 40 years before it went out. Today there are light bulbs that can burn for 1000 hours before they give out. Light bulbs are great until the burn out or until the power is turned off then we are left in the dark! No matter how powerful the bulb, when the power is off, we are in the dark.

When Jesus walked the earth he was light giant spirit light bulb. As long as people followed him there was light. Jesus constantly warned them that

now you have heat and light because you see me, but in John 14:18 he said "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." By giving each believer the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life, each was given a power source that would help them in times of darkness. How?

Because Incandescence is not the only way to create light. There is also luminescent light. Luminous light is light that comes from materials made of phosphorus. Phosphorus material, once exposed to light is energized and continues to glow even when the light source has been disconnected. We know how they work. We have seen key chains that glow in the dark. Some telephone dials glow in the dark. The numbers on watches glow in the dark.

Many of these are not battery or electric operated but are made with phosphorus materials that cause them to glow in the dark.

A Christian, who has received the power of the Holy Ghost, combined with his faith and bible study, becomes spiritually phosphorus, or able to shine in blackest of midnight, because the power of our Lord causes him or her to "glow in the dark." Things that glow in the dark cannot shine on their own, but shine only because of constant exposure to light.We glow when its dark, only to the length and degree that we have allowed ourselves to be exposed to the Light of God's love. Therefore we make every attempt to walk in the light that comes from Jesus the light of the world.

There will be darkness, but

We have found that despite our best efforts there are times when we find ourselves in the dark. The causes of our darkness may vary but the effect is the same: darkness. Economic hard times is a dark period that puts us in such serious financial straits. When bills mount up, commitments become due and our resources are short, it gets dark. Failure is a dark time that causes many to give up hope and throw in the towel as they accept defeat. Frustration is a dark time that seems like an endless irritation making life difficult. Sickness is an extremely dark time that challenges the faith of even the strongest amongst us.

There is no doubt that there will be darkness, but we should be encouraged to know that if we continue to walk in the light of our Lord, we can glow in the dark.

When we are able to glow in the dark, we are not intimidated by our circumstances but resolve to walk on by faith, confident that the Lord will make a way.

Paul and Silas were in the darkness of a jail cell, but at midnight, as they

began to sing and pray they found out they could glow in the dark!

A widow with a cruse of oil and a cup of meal, faced the darkness of hunger and despair, but as she stepped out on her faith in God, she found that she could glow in the dark!

Job faced economic loss and physical sickness and went through the darkest nights. However he too discovered that he could glow in the dark, for I hear him declare, "yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him!"

Brothers and sisters we should be reminded that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

When we glow in the dark our:

—Darkness turns into light; and our Burdens turn to blessings

—Sorrows turn to joy; and our Misery turns to glory

—Desperation turns into hope; and our defeat turns into victory!

—Pain turns in to comfort; and our sadness turns into gladness!

Who is this light?

It isn't Isaiah, he prophesied about the light!

It isn't John, he came to bear witness to the light!

This light is Jesus, the son of God!

I heard a song writer declare: Jesus is the light of the world. He's light out of darkness, the brightest way out!

I don't know about you, but Jesus gave me a light and I'm gonna let it shine!

This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine!

Let it shine!

Let it shine!

No. 485-Martin Luther King

If Dreams Die...

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 16, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Genesis 37:20

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed a dream and then forgot it? Did it trouble you that you could not remember it. In it is a troublesome and frustrating feeling to forget a dream. If that is a frightening thought, consider what it must be like not to dream at all. It's not an instance where dreams are forgotten, but have been lost or abandoned altogether that impacts us most. Dreams forgotten can be revived. Dreams lost or abandoned are gone forever.

Consider the man who was once a fancy dresser and known in the social circles of the city, but had become the town bum. After many years of watching him wallow in his failures, someone finally asked him what happened to him. He answered by saying "it began when I attended the funeral of my dream." Puzzled his friend asked the meaning of his statement. The man said "Since I was a boy, I had a crush on Mary Lou. In the first grade, I pulled her hair. In the sixth grade we held hands. In Jr. High School we held hands. In high school we dated and shared the senior prom. In college, we promised to share the future together. Then it happened." The friend asked him to go on. "I went off to work and when I came back, a friend of mine met me at the train station and said I should rush to the church. When I got there I heard Mary Lou say 'I do' to another man. It was supposed to be a wedding but it was the funeral of my dream. That's why I'm here today." The knot Mary Lou tied marked the day his dream died.

What happens to us if our dreams die? Langston Hughes wrote that we should "hold on to our dreams, for if dreams die, Life is like a broken winged bird that cannot fly." He later asked, in an a classic poem, the timeless question: "What happens to a dream deferred, does it dry up like a raisin in

the sun, or does it fester like a sore and run..or does it explode?" Dreams are the substance of the being of every man and woman. They are the motivating force within us that inspire to act. Without a dream, we are like a broken winged bird. We have a crippled existence that goes no where and simply limps along until it dies. If our dreams die, that which motivates us dies as well.

As Christians we cling to the hope given to us by Jesus Christ. We dream of a better life, peace, joy and happiness. We dream of a land where everyone respects the fatherhood of God and the kindred nature of all humanity. Thanks to Christ that dream will never die, but soars daily in our souls as we eagerly await his return!

Exposition

This text focuses on the boy Joseph as he became the victim of the futile efforts of his brothers to kill his dream. Joseph, a favorite son of his father Jacob was the object of scorn among his brothers both because of his favored treatment and because of his dreams. Joseph constantly dreamed a series of dreams that portrayed himself as a superior and his family members as subordinates. In one instance (v7) he saw his family binding sheaves in the field, but Joseph's sheave stood up straight while those of other family members bowed before him. In another instance he envisioned the Sun and the Moon and eleven stars bowing before him. (v9). His dream angered his brothers and disturbed his father. His brothers were so disturbed that they decided at one point to kill him, to stop the endless litany of dreams that depicted Joseph's rise and their subjection. Joseph was eventually thrown into a pit and left for dead. One of his brothers came back and sold him to traveling merchants who sold him into service in Egypt. He was imprisoned but was later released and given a high station in the kingdom. Years later as the entire land suffered from a famine and his brothers came to buy food. He stood in royal garments as a ruler of Egypt and they bowed before him, fulfilling the dream. He forgave them, enriched them and protected for the remainder of their days. His was a dream that refused to die.

If Dreams die..

Dr. Martin Luther King is often remembered for his historic speech entitled "I have a dream." In it, he embodied the hopes and aspirations of an entire people. He promoted the idea of a nation where race and color would be recognized for their uniqueness but would not be discriminating factors.

It was a dream of peace and brotherhood for everyone. It was also a dream that America would recognize and live up to the true meaning of its creed that "all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among the these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

In that respect Dr. King's dream should become personal, because that dream, if it ever dies, would suggest that a time would come when our rights would be curbed, our lives and liberty would cut short and happiness would be an unachievable goal. Therefore it is good to keep that dream alive. If America ever loses sight of that ideal we will plunge ourselves into an existence that will be crippling. We will become a broken winged bird that cannot fly.

It is important to have a dream. It marks a goal or an aspiration that we have set for ourselves. A man without a dream lives aimlessly from day to day. A woman without a dream loses a sense of direction.

A teen-aged boy who has no dream will carry a gun to school. Why? Somewhere long before he stepped foot on that campus he lost hope that he would ever become a businessman or a professional. Somewhere, way back he saw himself, tagged and placed on a track in life that suggested that he would not succeed. He lived in poverty and was constantly told he was a failure. His dream died. Once his dream died he became a broken winged bird that could not fly. He has resolved that he cannot achieve or excel and is doomed to failure and is not intimidated by thoughts of police, violence or death. He died the day his dream died.

It is similar in other instances. The man who sells crack, the woman who prostitutes or teenagers that birth children before they are old enough to sign a legal document for themselves, often do so, because somewhere along the way, they watched their dreams die.

Much of the violence, crime and drugs that we witness in our community today are the results of a generation of people who have lost their personal dreams. Very little matters after that point, they just survive from day to day, like a broken winged bird that cannot fly.

Our quest as Christians should be to help people revive their personal dreams. Our quest should be to help lift them form their desperation to their aspiration, from lowest point to their highest potential through showing them the potential and power they possess as children of God.

When dreams die, joy turns into sadness; success turns into failure; peace turns into confusion, sweetness turns into bitterness and love turns hatred.

We must use every ounce of our being to keep hope alive, for once we lose our dream, we become a broken winged bird that cannot fly.

When Dreams Live

Despite his hardships and difficulties, Joseph excelled because he was propelled by a powerful dream. In the darkness of the pit he continued with hope because of the power of his dream.

Though he was falsely accused and ostracized because of his refusal to betray his moral standards, he never lost hope because of the power of his dream.

Though confined to a jail cell he clung to the pictures evoked in his dream and rose above his circumstance.

Joseph rose because his dream refused to die!

It's a good thing to have a dream that refuses to die.

Abraham had a dream of the land of promise, though he wandered for many years in strange lands, his dream refused to die!

Moses had a dream of freedom and sovereignty for Israel, though he never made it to the promised land himself, his dream refused to die!

Martin Luther King had a dream of equality and brotherhood, though he was slain by an assassin's bullet, the dream refused to die.

But even greater than Abraham, Moses and Martin Luther King, there is Jesus, who went beyond merely having a dream, Jesus IS the dream. He is the dream that refuses to die!

Jesus is our dream of moving out of our:

—Hunger and acquiring a satisfied soul!

—Darkness and walking into the marvelous light

—Sinking sand experience and standing on the Solid Rock!

—Spiritual Slavery to complete spiritual freedom!

—Defeat into glory of victory!

—Despair to unspeakable joy!

He is our dream of moving from "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world to 'I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

He is the dream that refused to die!

He was rejected by the people in his own home town, but the dream refused to die!

He was persecuted by the scribes and pharisees, but the dream refused to die!

They whipped him mercilessly all night long and tried him in hostile courts,

but the dream refused to die!

They hung him on a cross, stretched out between two thieves, but the dream refused to die.

Though buried in a borrowed tomb and guarded by soldiers the dream refused to die, for Early Sunday morning the Vision of Bethlehem, and the nightmare of Calvary became the resurrected dream of the world!

Because he lives, I can see tomorrow!

Because he lives, I can face whatever this world brings with a renew hope!

Life is worth the living ...

Because he lives!

No. 486-Youth

Looking for A Hero

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 22, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"I will make the godly of the land my heroes and invite them to my home. Only those who are truly good shall be my servants." Psalms 101:6;"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2

Introduction

Do you have a hero? Most young people have a hero, someone that they admire and desire to emulate. The pictures of our heroes decorate our walls as we identify with them in our homes. Whether its a basketball or football star, entertainer, actor or some other person, most of us have a person or persons that we identify with as a model by which to pattern ourselves as we tailor our own lives. Today's youth are no exception.

What does it take to be considered a hero? Fame? Wealth? Popularity? Consider the school girl who came home from school one day crying because of a bad grade she made on an assignment from school. As she tried to explain her dilemma to her parents the tears began to flow like a river. The teacher had given them an assignment to look through magazines and books and to write a report about three people who were their favorite heroes. The little girl had looked in many magazines and found pictures of many great people who were super stars. Mariah Carey, Janet Jackson were both great singers. Debbie Thomas was a famous ice skater and there were many great women of history too. However, when she sat down to write her report she remembered the teacher's topic which was to write about her FAVORITE heroes. The little girl looked up with tears in her eyes and begged her mother not to be angry because she made an "F" for not following instructions. She said "Mother this is what I wrote. I have three favorite heroes they are: My mother because she always does everything she can to provide for me; my grandma because no matter what I do, she never stops loving me; and Jesus because no matter what, he will never let me down." The little girl looked and said "I'm sorry mama, but I had to tell the truth." The mother hugged her

tightly with pride and whispered in her ear. “Baby, there is a hero inside of all of us. Stick with Lord and he will help her to rise higher than the sky..you are mama’s little hero.”

As Christians, we know that while their are heroes all around us, the best example that we have is that of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He is our hero because he helps each us realize the fullness of our dreams. If you are looking for a hero, we suggest that you don’t look for one on television or in a sports arena, try Jesus, he’ll never let you down.

Exposition

This text focuses on King David as he sets the standard for his new tenure of office as king of Israel. David, recognized as a man after God’s own heart, used this short Psalm to raise high the standard of associations and emulations that he had set for himself. He pledged to God that he would surround himself with people of virtue and to strive for excellence. In verse two he promises God good behavior. In verses 3-5 he pledges to avoid bad associations that will cause him to develop a perverse or “forward” heart. In verse six he pledges to make the godly or faithful of the land his heroes and gives his pledge to invite them into his house. David chose to emulate the good qualities of godly people and make them his heroes. By saying he would invite the godly and the faithful into his home as his heroes, David set the standard for selecting a hero, be sure he or she knows the Lord.

In Hebrews Jesus Christ is presented as the author and finisher of our faith. He is raised up as example of bravery, unselfishness and love. He willingness to die on Calvary to save his friends is the chief characteristic that make him the hero of all heroes. Not simply that he died, for many heroes died for their beliefs, but that he arose, and is coming back again.

Youth seek a hero

What is a hero? Generally, a hero is any person that is admired for their achievement and is considered a model of outstanding qualities. Our heroes often reflect our personal hopes and aspirations. The poor man is attracted to the man who overcomes the odds and rises out of poverty to become a success. Minorities are attracted to other minorities that succeed despite racial barriers that block their way. Women, the handicapped and even senior citizens have heroes as they are attracted to people who represent their best efforts to achieve despite adversity. We are attracted to them because they

trigger a feeling of hope in us that inspires us to strive harder until we too achieve our goals in life.

Each generation has its heroes. For some, Mary McCleod Bethume, Joe Louis, Mahalia Jackson, Jackie Robinson, Nat King Cole and Willie Mays were heroes. Others saw James Brown, Wilma Rudolph, Aretha Franklin, Roy Wilkins, and Martin Luther King as their heroes. The names vary, but every generation has its heroes.

This generation is also looking for a hero. The pictures of teen heroes usually plaster the walls of youth as they read, watch and cling to every public and private action of the people they admire.

Christian teens are encouraged to remember that anyone selected as a hero is still a human being, and as such comes with flaws and short comings. We must emulate the good in each person, but we should discard the bad. As the lives of the great are studied we should learn from their mistakes, not repeat them. Our heroes rose to success in spite of their flaws, not because they did not have any or because they did not matter.

Secondly, teens should remember that there is a hero inside of each person, waiting to be released! Each person has within them the capacity to achieve greatness, it is just waiting tapped. There is a great leader, teacher, doctor, advisor, parent, or preacher inside of every person, like tiny seeds, just waiting for an opportunity to grow and blossom.

The hero in you can be released if three variables are present: Will Power, training, and opportunity. Will power is your own desire to succeed in life. Not simply to get by but to really be among the best. Once you have a made up mind one third of the hero in you is released. No matter how much will you have, you must be trained. The rigid discipline of study and practice makes the difference between those who succeed and those who failure. Those who want to succeed but are unwilling to study or practice will be doomed to live their lives as dreamers and "could have beens." Will power and preparation are no good without opportunity. You can't create opportunity, that comes from God, but you must seize it when it comes or it will pass you by, unfortunately it rarely comes twice.

The Christian youth's faith in God is the key resource to release the hero inside. Prayer is the key to the kingdom, but faith unlocks the door. If you are looking for hero, you have to look no further than your own mirror, for every day God is getting you ready for a mighty work that even you won't understand!

Jesus Is Our Hero

There are countless heroes among us whose exploits and deeds are worthy of emulation, but there are none that can even hold a candle to the greatest hero of them all.

Our final word to you today is this: "If you are looking for a hero, try Jesus!"

George Patten, Dwight Eisenhower and Colin Powell, were great military generals with many victories to their credit, but none were better generals than Jesus! Gideon testifies that with only a handful of soldiers he defeated thousands when he followed God's direction. Jesus, commander of angelic legions, will fight with us in battle! Because Jesus is our hero, we can proudly sing "I am on the battlefield for my Lord, and I promised him that I, would serve him till I die, I'm on the battlefield for my Lord!"

Michael Jordan can float through the air and save the game at the last moment, but Acts 1:11 testifies that when his ministry on earth was over that Jesus declared that it is "air time" and put one foot on a cloud and ascended into heaven. The angels declared "ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens, this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Luther Vandross, Criss Cross, and Boyz in the Hood are heroes because of the way they sing, but Jesus is our hero because of the way he makes us sing. When Jesus comes into our lives, he gives us a new walk to walk, a new talk to talk, and a new song to sing! The song writer declares "I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free, for his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Evander Holyfield, George Foreman and Muhammad Ali are heroes because they have punching power, but Jesus is our hero because he's got all power in his hands.

Power to take our sorrows and turn them into joys!

Power to take our burdens and turn them into blessings!

Power to take our minuses and turn them into pluses

Power to take our cants and turn them into cans!

Jesus is our hero because, in times of trouble you can call on him and he will answer!

Jesus is our hero because, in moments of weakness he is our strength!

Jesus is our hero because, whenever we need him he's always there!

Jesus is our hero because when we were sinking in the sea of sin he lifted us and saved our souls!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

..is the greatest hero of them all because, he loved me enough to die for me. No greater love than a man have than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friend.

He's our hero because one evening, almost 2000 years ago, he picked up an old rugged cross and championed our cause!

He's our hero because despite being nailed to the cross and being buried in the grave, that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

No. 487-Funeral

Who Is My Sister?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 5, 1994

Scripture:"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Mark 3:35

Introduction

Who is your sister? Is she simply the one who happened to share the proximity of birth or is there more? Some would answer that sisters are those whose shared experience goes beyond the superficial incident of birth and reaches deep into the heart and soul of our being. To have or be a sister is to share and exchange and feel the heart throb of another deep within ones soul.

We don't always appreciate sisters early in life. Sometimes we think they are an irritation. Consider the two sisters who, as little girls were always at odds. It seemed that one always used the others items. The brush would never be replaced just right. Clothes would be borrowed without permission. And it appeared that one was always in the other's living space.

The little girls screamed at each other a lot and seemed to stay angry although they really loved each other. Once in a Sunday School class one of the girls was asked to tell which of the ten commandments related to their parents and she responded "honor thy father and thy mother." Asked to tell which of the commandments she thought related to her sister and the little girl who had just finished another fresh screaming session with her sister before she came to church, fumed "thou shall not kill.!" As the years went by and the two girls grew into women, they shared each others joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats. They were so close that the little spats they had as children seemed so small and insignificant.

The two of them sat on a swing one day reflecting on their childhood. "You know my Sunday School teacher asked me to describe a bible verse that

described my feeling for you. I told her that it was "thou shall not kill." If I had to answer that same question today it would be "no greater love than this, that a man would lay down his life for a friend." Sisters ..when we are young it's hard to live with them. When we are older, its hard to live without them!

The experience of sisterhood is unique. It is a blessing from God that reflects a bond of love, sharing and caring that goes beyond mere biology. It is a caressing of souls that have, by mutual experiences, become one.

As Christians, we thank God for brothers and sisters that have shared the fortunes of fate and divine appointment with us. We enjoy the blessings of today and always look forward to the time when we shall one final experience of sisterhood, eternity with our Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he answers the question "Who is my mother, my brother or my sister?" The question was posed on the occasion that Mary, Jesus' brothers and a least one sister came to a place where he was teaching and wanted to see him.

A message was sent into the meeting room and given to him. It indicated that his mother, brothers and at least one sister, were waiting for him outside. Jesus used the occasion to teach a lesson to his followers about the nature of brotherhood, sisterhood, and parenthood. In his familiar way, he answered a question with a question.

The obvious answer to many that heard Christ was simply that a sister or brother, is simply a person that shares an incident of physical birth. A mother is one who gives birth to a child! Sisters and brothers are those who shared that same experience. Jesus went far beyond that. It was the obvious, but it was also superficial.

He understood the nature of natural sisters and brothers for he had several. We know Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters because that fact is recorded in scripture. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James, Joses, Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us..." Matthew 13:55-56. Obviously he understood the nature of natural family relations.

His answer had nothing to do with natural ties. In fact, his answer ignored natural ties altogether. He wanted them to see a greater truth so he expanded upon a known concept with an unknown response. When Jesus explained his definition of brother and sister, he connected it to another binding factor: "shared experience."

Those who share the common desire to obey God and do his will, develop a spiritual bond and become sisters and brothers. Those who work together to achieve the common goal of realizing the will of God become sisters and brothers.

The idea of "shared experience" rather than simply incidence of birth as a definition for brotherhood, sisterhood and parenthood, made it plain that persons who were not your biological kindred could very well share a spiritual bond because of shared experiences.

Those who share the experience of Christ and his love, easily refer to themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is that "shared experience" that makes those who profess Christ brothers and sisters, despite not shared the same biological history.

Who is my mother? My sister? My brother? Anyone who does the will of God!

How to show yourself a Sister

Today there are many siblings who have the same family origins, but are not sisters and brothers in the real sense. How can one show herself to be a sister? It's not by pointing to a position on the family tree or by drawing connections to family history, we show sisterhood by "sharing the experiences" of our sisters.

A true sister shares joys and happiness. The great moments of success and achievement are shared together by sisters. As one sister basks in the spotlight and climbs high, there is, in the crowd of well wishers, a sister who is just as happy at the moment. Mary traveled to be with Elizabeth during her pregnancy and the child she carried leaped in her womb. The two women shared the happiness of the moment and talked, laughed and enjoyed the excitements together. Those who would show themselves true sisters should not neglect the importance of sharing the important experiences of another sister, it builds strength and unity and feelings that go beyond just the mere title of "sister."

A true sister also shares pain and hurt. It is easy to share the great moments in life because they are followed by laughs and smiles. It is more difficult to share the painful moments. The true sister is one who is willing to share those lonely moments when failure, disgrace, or loss is most imminent. When sickness comes true sisters cannot be satisfied to allow one they call sister to share it alone. Even if there is nothing they can do but just be there to share their pain, a true sister, must share that experience too. So often, we

find ourselves surrounded by many who are willing to share our great moments, but few who will sit with us and stand by us in our pain and hurt. That's when a sister is needed most. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha were hurting. They shared the experience of death together. They cried on each other's shoulder. They both went to Jesus at the same time and shared their grief with him. The two sisters, as they mourned together heard Jesus remind them "I am the resurrection!" He promised both sisters that their family would be together again. Hence, they shared the hope of family renewal together!

A true sister shares joys and success, as well as pain, failure and hurt. It is this shared experience that makes them sisters in more ways than things simply biological, because each experience makes them sisters of the soul!

Sisterhood goes beyond family

Sometimes sisterhood goes beyond family and extends to others who also share our experiences. The bonds extend to any relationship where there are those who share a mutual experience.

Sorors who share experiences become sisters. The word "Soror" is a Latin word which means "sister." Those who claim such sisterhood pledge themselves to share the experiences together as they live by codes that illicit the respect of others. Some cling together as they strive to achieve the "nine virtues of Sigma" which are: Compassion, courtesy, dedication, fellowship, fidelity, honesty, justice, purity and temperance. In their experience they become more than mere names on a roll, but they evolve into a relationship that makes them a "soror" ..a sister!

Church members who share the experience of doing the will of God are sisters and brothers as well! This is the bond that Paul referred to when in Romans 16:1 when he referred to Phoebe as "our sister." What made Phoebe a sister wasn't that she was biologically related to Paul. What made her a sister was that she was a "servant of the church." She shared in the work of spreading, fostering and promoting the kingdom of God. She shared in the experience of worship, evangelism, and standing up for our Lord. She earned the designation of "sister!"

Friends, I hasten to point out to you, that there is nothing like being a sister that knows the Lord!

A sister who knows the Lord is stronger than one who does not!

A sister who knows the Lord, knows that whatever discouragements life brings, God is still on the throne.

A sister who knows the Lord can sing with cheer "be not dismayed what ere' betide, God will take care of you!"

Such a sister can stand firm in the midst of dark times because she knows that "weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

A sister who knows the Lord, can brave difficulties because she knows, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

A sister who knows the Lord can stand in the face of death and declare "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me"

A sister who knows the Lord, looks up with eternal hope because she knows "one glad morning when this life is over I'll fly away!"

..If you get there before I do..

Tell my sister...

Tell my Sister..

I'm coming there too!

———

On January 29, 1994 Hazel Marbles Dumouil went home to her reward. She was a friend, a soror..a sister in the faith!

No. 488-Black Heritage

Now and Then

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 6, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13:12

Introduction

Suppose you knew then what you know now, would you do things differently? If you could turn back the hands of time and go back and relive some of the events of your history, but carry with you the knowledge and experience that you have today, would you do it the same way or differently? Knowing what we know now, there are some things from our past we would work to insure that they are preserved. There are other things we would reject. As we reflect upon the models of life that make up our historic past, it is advantageous to compare what we have now with what we had, but we should not stop there, we should also compare what we have now to what we desire in the future. A close look at both "now" and "then" will help gain a clear focus on who we are, where we've been and where we are going.

Consider the case of Heloise the Hen. She was a beautiful young hen that moved around the barnyard daily. Even as a young chick she resented all the lectures the mother hens gave to the young chicks about barnyard life and often found her own way. One day she saw the cow eating hay and she started eating hay, much to the amusement of the others. Next she saw the pig eating slop and she started pecking in the slop trough. One day she passed by the window of the farmer's house and heard him say to his wife, "my dear we must have more of that soup that you made the other day, it was delicious." Heloise went among the other chickens and announced that she was fed up with hay and slop and scratching for worms, she wanted to eat the same soup that the farmer eats. It became obvious that Heloise knew virtually nothing about life in the barnyard. One of the mother hens pulled her

to the side and said "I know you don't like hearing us cackle all the time but I think you should know that you are talking dangerous talk that could be your own ruin." Heloise felt the old biddies didn't know how to enjoy barnyard life "I want soup, just like the farmer!" she declared. Finally the mother hen said, girl be careful. The other day the farmer said "I want soup, and your friend Gertrude disappeared. A few days later, he wanted soup again and Caldonia disappeared. The farmer's favorite soup is chicken noodle." Heloise was ashamed at her ignorance. The old hen had one last word "You walk around eating hay like a cow, pecking slop like a hog and even dreaming about chicken soup. If you are going to survive you better learn who you are, where you are, and where you are going..otherwise you won't be eating soup, you'll be chicken soup!"

As Christians, we often don't understand all that goes on around us. It is dark and difficult to unravel. However, we know that if we keep the faith, our Lord will reveal the truth to us that will us to see life and our future clearly. Now we see life darkly and fumble around, but then we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the nature of the Christian historical experience.

This passage is generally remembered for its emphasis on the importance of love in all we do.

The Corinthians like other Christians were moving from their Old Testament experience to their new covenant life in Christ. They had been accustomed to gauging every act by the standards of the law. Paul, however, suggests that charity rather than the law should be the guide.

Charity, which means love, is the guiding principle now, the law was the guiding principle then. Then, one's only responsibility was to speak in a tongue, give to the poor and obey the strict letter of the law. Now, the criterion has changed, we must love.

Paul concluded from his comparison that then he was a child, he thought like a child and spake as a child, but when he grew up in the faith, he put away childish things.

The principles that guide the here are now may appear dark and unclear, as if we were looking through a foggy mirror, but when we see Jesus, face to face, then we will understand it all.

Who Am I?

As a people we should always know the answer to three questions, in the context of then and now: Who am I? Where Am I? and Where Am I Going?

Who are we? We are Americans of African descent. In the context of "then," we originated from the continent of Africa, where most of our people were muslims and worshipped Allah among hundreds of other religions before we saw the light. We are the Black hands that carved stone for the pyramids and the Black minds that designed them. We are the Egypt and Ethiopia of the bible. We are the Canaanites, Eunuch's driving chariots, and the Queens of Sheba. We are the strong arms of Simon of Cyrene as he carried the cross for Jesus. We are nation of slaves who survived two centuries of bondage by our sheer will and the power of God.

We are the people that have been called "Niggers, coons and jig a boos" We are have called ourselves coloreds, Negroes, Afro-Americans, and Black. We are the offsprings of proud people that have withstood the stings and whips and spit that this world has given us and still continue to rise.

Collectively we declare: You walk on me, but still I rise! You trample me, but still I rise! You lynch me from trees, but with stubborn consternation, still I rise!

Who are we? In the context of "then," we are a people with a heritage rich with success and beauty. In the context of "Now" we still have the same propensities of our past.

We are still producing great music, literature and our great minds are still inventing, building and thinking. However, we must be warned that unless we continue to pursue excellence today, as we yearned for it in the past, we are in danger of losing our capacity to build upon the greatness of the past.

We who were the hardest workers that history has ever known are being crippled by a growing welfare mentality. It started with the Freedman's Bureau established just after the civil war, when the government took care of everything for us. It started when some of us sat around waiting for United States to give us 40 acres and a mule. It continues today as growing numbers in each generation become satisfied with a welfare mentality that seeks to live on handouts until taken out of this world.

We who burned coal oil lamps at night and crowded into one room school houses just to learn our ABC's, must not lose our thirst for knowledge. The education of our children must not consist of Gangsta rap, video games and MTV. Now, we still need doctors, lawyers, engineers, auto mechanics, teachers, and fathers. We needed it then, and we need it now.

Where are We?

In the context of "then," we have had a rich experience. We have been in the heights of riches and in the depths of poverty. We have been rulers and we have been slaves. We have been cast down and put down. We have lived on nothing and survived on anything we could find. Despite those draw backs we continued to rise.

Where are we now? Despite the common thinking, we are a long ways from where we were back then. Just 20 years ago there were only 104 Black elected officials in the entire country, today there are over 8,000 Black elected officials. Where are we now? We are in positions of power and influence from the Senate to City Hall. We who were once sharecroppers and slaves now spend $350 billion a year in every area of commerce in America. Surveys have show that there are nearly 400,00 Black businesses, 50 Black banks, and over 500 credit unions. We spend tons of money in America: $450 million a year on records and tapes, $1.4 billion on cold drinks; not to mention that we buy 10 percent of air plane tickets, 40 percent of all the whiskey, and without Black folks every church's chicken in America would shut its doors!

Like Heloise the hen, we are progressed to the point that we would make pretty good chicken soup! To get our dollars, Music companies pander our kids who think its cute to call our women hoe's, wear clip on gold teeth, and to be a menace to society. Those who promote the products don't care about the life of the hen or its destiny, they want chicken soup! In our prosperity we must be careful in the "now" to exercise the same caution they used "then." We must save some of our money, invest well, scrutinize the businesses we support for reciprocity and build upon what we have!

Where Am I Going?

Finally brothers and sisters we should, look at where we have been as a guide to charting a course for the future. Then, when a Black man was asked where are you going? the answer was simply "freedom!" We answered I'm on my way to the canaan land!

Now the pursuit should be no different. We should still be on our way to the Canaan land!

"Then" our fore parents understood the necessity of calling on God to help them make it through and "Now" we must do the same.

Now as it was then, we are on a journey from time to eternity!

Now as it was then, we strive to keep our faith in tact and press toward the mark of the high calling!

Now as it was then, we must keep our hand in the winding chain and our shoulder to the wheel.

In the midst of slavery and misery our fore parents always made doing God's will and making it to heaven their goal. They sang "I got shoes, you got shoes, all God's chillun's got shoes, when I get to heaven gon' put on my wings and walk all over God's heaven!"

As we consider our heritage its good to think about now and then. For every now and then, I see something in our past or present that reminds me of the goodness of the Lord.

Every now and then I see:

—Sadness and how the Lord turns it to happiness!

—Failure and how the Lord turns it into success!

—Valleys and how the Lord turns them into mountaintops!

—Broken hearts and how the Lords mends them all over again!

—Rainy days and how God brings in the sunshine!

Every now and then I see the distress of our people and then remember the song writers words "when in distress, just call him. Within your bosom, you have phone, remember God is still on the throne"

He's the same God now and as he was then!

Back then when great grandma couldn't get clothes to put her children's back she'd drop down on her knees and call on the Lord.

He's the same God now as he was back then!

Call him!

Call him in the morning, in the noon day or in the midnight hour!

Every now and then you ought to call him..

...and tell him what you want!

No. 489-Black Men

The Black Man's Choice

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 13, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do you eat. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which you father served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:13-15

Introduction

As we consider our past and look toward the future, what choices are available to us? Some think we should go backwards. Others think we should discard the past and take a totally new approach. What route do we take? How do we decide?

Consider the three old men who sat around on their porch, each holding a good luck charm. The first carried a rabbit's foot on a key chain. "This rabbit's foot" he said "has brought me more good luck than anything I know, I don't leave home without it." The other had a horseshoe. He had one hung over each door in his house and one covering all the entrances to his barn and other buildings. "If there is a horseshoe over the door, there will always be good luck" he said. The Third man pulled out a small piece of paper and waved it. "What's on this paper is all I need. I don't need a rabbit's foot, because it didn't bring the rabbit any luck. I don't need a horseshoe to hang over my door to fall and hit me on the head. What's on this paper is my good luck charm." Curious, the men insisted that he read the note on the paper. It read: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and shall direct thy paths." The old man looked up and said. "You don't need luck, when you got the Lord."It's a pice of advice that will always be remembered.

As Christians, we know we have many options that are before us. Many have been tried by the generations before us, but one has remained true..when we give our lives to the Lord, he will never let us down.

Exposition

This text considers Joshua as he assembled the men of Israel to give them his last challenge. Joshua, the successor to Moses, had led Israel in miraculous battles that resulted in the victorious conquering of the Canaan land. Now in his declining years, Joshua called all of the men of the nation together to talk with them about their duties as men.(v1)

As the men gathered in Shechem, Joshua reflected on the long journey of the people and the challenges that lay before them. He reminded them of their history, pointing out that often the men of the nation, even the mighty and famous worshipped other gods when it seemed convenient to them. In verse two he cites Terah, the father of Abraham as an example of a man who choose to serve a false god as a necessary evil. In Egypt, some Israelites thought it a matter of survival to worship the gods of the Egyptians, hoping to gain favors and concessions from their oppressors.

In painstaking detail, Joshua noted that the journey of the people from a small meandering tribe to a great nation was not by accident but it was a carefully guided journey toward their destiny. Each step of their journey was a planned execution of the will of God. Beginning at verse three, Joshua, speaking as an instrument for God, recalls the details of the plan. He showed what God promised Abraham's seed and how it was fulfilled. In verse six he showed how God brought them out of slavery and destroyed efforts to re-enslave them. In verse 8 he details how Israel as a small untrained, unorganized nation of former slaves, was able to defeat forces superior to them because "I fought with you and gave them into your hand."

Now, in the promised land, the Israelites were enjoying a prosperity that was unparalled. In verse 13, God, reminds them that they now owned land for which they did not labor; cities, they did not build; and resources they did not develop themselves. Yet even in light of such prosperity there was still an inclination by some men to follow after the gods of the Ammorites, out of necessity. Before slavery, during slavery and even after slavery some men found it necessary, for whatever their reason, to serve gods other that Jehovah.

Joshua's challenge to the men was blunt. Choose the false gods that some of the patriarch's served out of convenience, or the gods of the present circumstance, or stick with the one true God that has brought them from mediocrity into a land flowing with milk and honey. Joshua's was conclusion was predictable, yet historic: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Black Man's dilemma

If African-American men were assembled today in the same manner as the men of Israel were assembled by Joshua, the discourse might be the same.

As leaders of our nation, communities, and homes, African-American men have much for which to be grateful. God has been good to us. Yet, before slavery and even during our nearly 200 years as slaves in America, there were some among us that chose to serve gods (small g) other than the true God. Some made their choices out of ignorance perhaps looking for good luck charms, others out of necessity, and some were just plain greedy. They were willing to do anything and put up with anything, just to get by.

Today,there is a generation of Black men who are standing on the shoulders of their ancestors. We are able to access many of the finer things in life only because they have given us a better vantage point. Our fathers built communities, homes, and codes of honor. Our fathers, with God's help, fashioned programs to discipline our children, educate our people, train our boys, groom our girls and protect our homes. Without dissuasion, we have successfully come through the middle passage, survived slavery, depression and wars, only to come to this point in our history and watch some our men follow after the same path the Israelites took in biblical times, the path to least resistance.

Black men today face the same challenge as the men of Joshua's time. It was a matter of choosing whether to follow God and lead their families and communities in his footsteps or whether to seek their personal ambitions and allow their families to stray after false gods.

What are the false gods of our times? They are not statues before which we bow prostrate and humble. They are more than likely ideals and lifestyles that cause us to abandon the values of our people. Two false gods are eating away our community from the inside. One is drugs, alcohol and crime. These three combined have done more to diminish the effective presence of African-American males than anything else. How can we have fathers, husbands, and leaders if they are all shot up, locked up, doped up, boozed up. It is a false god that has threatened us before and during slavery and now in this generation it threatens us still. Another among the false gods is "upward mobility." There are many of our men who are not drunks, or dealers, but are just as absent from their families as those who are because they worship the career ladder, which absorbs all of their time, interests and energy. They often find themselves mere shells of men because the worship of their true

god has drained them.

The Ultimate Quest

The quest of every Black man should be what Haki Madhubuti describes in his book "Black Men" as the ultimate quest, which is to: be responsible, loving and an effective husband and father in an ocean of white supremacy. We should be committed not to allow racism to destroy our memories, spirit, drive, integrity, convictions, or values.

As we build upon the past, every Black man should commit himself to building his family insuring that he is not a casual visitor, but an integral part of his home. Perhaps these nine points might be a guide: 1) Work hard at being a father, learning from mistakes, growing as you go 2) Teach by example in your home: marital fidelity, integrity, and racial pride are ideals best taught by living models 3)Promote opportunities for your children to develop creativity in the arts: music, dance, drama and visual expression 4)Create and participate in activities as a family, resist the temptation to allow members of your family to fragment and go in different directions without the support of the family; 5)Never appear intoxicated before your wife our children or use language unbecoming of an intelligent and serious father; 6)Never beat your wife. Period 7)Maintain a home that is culturally in tune with best of African-American culture with libraries and collections of books, periodicals and visuals that reflect the best contributions of our people. 8)Teach your children, no matter how painful it may seem to them, to be disciplined, focused, fair, honest individuals who strive to achieve their best.

The final challenge to the Black man is to point his family in the direction of the one and true God. Each man should realize that his daughter idolizes the ground he walks on. His son desires to emulate his best qualities, he should show them an active faith in God.

Joshua decided: "As for me and my house" we will serve the Lord."

The reason Joshua could make such a statement on behalf of his family was because he knew they would follow his example, not because he said it, but because he lived it.

Every Black family today needs a BMW ..or Black man worshipping!

It's good to be a man who knows how to work with his hands, but its even better to be a man whose got his hands in God's hands.

It's good to be a man who knows how to put food on the table but its better to be a man who knows from whom all blessings flow!

It's good to be a man who knows a lot of people, but its better to be a man

who knows the Lord!

Men who believe in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and accept him as their savior and Lord and live by his creed daily are men who know the Lord.

Men who know the Lord:

—Refuse to give up when times are tough, because they know tough times never last, but tough people do!

—Refuse to accept defeat, especially when God has promised the victory!

—Refuse to allow problems to get the best of them, because they know the Lord will make a way!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that the Lord will make a way!

He'll pick you up when you fall down!

He'll dry your weeping eyes!

He'll open doors that have been closed in your face!

In a time of trouble, he will hide me! He's a shelter in a time of storm!

..As for me and my house..we will serve the Lord!

No. 490-Black Women

Unchosen Crosses

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 20, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Mat 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross."

Introduction

Have you sometimes felt that fate has dealt you a bad hand? Maybe you've concluded like Paul Lawrence Dunbar that life is a "crust of bread and a corner to sleep in, a minute to smile and an hour to weep in, a pint of joy and peck of trouble, never a laugh and the moans come double and that is life!" There are many today who feel that the circumstance of their birth has given them an unfair burden that is cruel and different from what others experience. These are those who moan because they were not born rich, smart, good looking and white. There are even those who look at their lot in life and become bitter because life did not meet the expectations of their fantasies. Among these embittered are those who may be bitter because they were born tall or short. Some are resentful that they were born women and not men or vice versa. The circumstances of fate are beyond our control. What is within our control is that which we can do ourselves, which is not limited to the confines of circumstance.

Consider two men and a woman who stood before their benefactors to receive their destinies. One of the men received a golden apple, worth millions of dollars. The second man received a golden pear, equally worth millions. As the woman was coming to receive her golden gift the two men quickly took what was hers and exchanged it with something that was yellow but was not gold. Later as each went their separate ways they opened their gifts. The men took their golden gifts and made great successes for themselves. The woman sat in her room for many days crying after she opened her gift and found that instead of golden fruit that she had been given lemons. She sat the lemons on her mantle and looked at them daily. One day a big smile came on her face and she stormed out of her room and was not

seen for many years. By chance the three came upon each other years later. The two men were doing well but they were really surprised when the woman appeared. She was quite wealthy and was a great success. "How could this be?" one of the men asked. The woman answered "I found out that it was you that gave me lemons. But it was the Lord that showed me how to take lemons and turn them into lemonade."

As Christians, we know that life comes with triumphs and failures, difficulties and victories. The quest for wholeness and completeness reaches its apex when we master the ability to take failures, difficulties, setbacks and challenges and use them as stepping stones. Such has been the case with African-Americans in general and African-American women in particular. Society has given our race and our women the bitterness of lemons, a cross they did not choose to bear. But because they have borne their cross with pride, God has shown them how to turn lemons into lemonade.

Exposition

The text focuses on Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross a portion of the way for Jesus. Little is said of Simon, other than then fact that he was from Cyrene and was "compelled" to carry the cross of Christ.

The message in this text is not obvious. It requires the reader to hear with a keen voice and to read beyond the simple words which are on the page. This has been the Black Man's burden for centuries as he attempted to find himself in the scripture. Who was Simon? He was a man who was from Cyrene a country in North Africa. He was among thousands of Africans who had come to Jerusalem, the center of Judaism to study. There were other Africans in the Christian struggle. Acts 2:10 details the nationalities that were present in Jerusalem during the time,included in the list are Cyrenians, Libyans and Egyptians, all Africans. Even among the prophets and teachers of the Christian Church there were Africans: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Acts 13:1. The point is that there has been an African presence in the Christian struggle from its beginnings.

If it is difficult for African men to find themselves in the Bible because of cultural biases, imagine the frustration of African-American women, who seek to hear God beneath the racism that hides their presence as a race and even deeper to pierce the veils that hide their places as a women. Some

African-American women have been frustrated in their search for person hood in the bible. Some have dismissed the bible as collection of texts by men, and for men, disregarding women altogether. Those who study the bible seriously, search for truth and many have found the truth and have been set free from the frustrations of the uninformed. There is an African female presence in the bible. The key is in the geography. Don't look for the word "Black" or "African" but look for "Egyptian, Ethiopia, Cyrene, Libya, Alexandrian, Canaanites" and other geographical designations that identify the nationality of biblical characters. With that view Hagar is not just a single mother who was the pawn of Abraham and Sarah but an African woman who was sexually and economically exploited by a vindictive mistress, who survived only because God took care of her (Genesis 16)With this view women see how God punished those who criticized Moses for marrying an African woman (Numbers 12:1) or how the beauty of Africa was brought to Israel by a visit from the Queen of Sheba of Ethiopia. Mark Hyman in his book "Blacks who died for Jesus" details a long list of African women who fought for the cross, From Saint Patricia who spent 28 years in a cave studying the word until her death in 567 A.D. to Saint Appollonia who walked into flames rather speak a word against Jesus in A.D. 249. The African female's struggle to serve the Lord and shoulder the cross is great and noteworthy.

Speaking of how the bible speaks to African-American women noted biblical scholar Cain Hope Felder says the bible still describes a world where "the oppressed are liberated, the last become first, the humbled exalted, the despised are preferred, those rejected are welcomed, the long-suffering are rewarded, the dispossessed are repossessed and the arrogant are prostrated."

Whether the believer is male or female, African-American or white all serious students of the bible find that while there are instances of subjugation, racism and sexism in the biblical history, the bible's final word on racial and gender matters is summed up in Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Women have been compelled

The African-American woman, like Simon of Cyrene has been compelled to carry crosses she did not choose to carry herself, but once the burden was put on her shoulder, carried it with strength and honor. She turned lemons into lemonade!

In many ways the African-American woman has had to carry the cross of segregation and racism away from home and the cross of sexism as well. Frowned upon because of her color and shunned because of her sex the African-American woman rose despite the obstacles set before her, turning disasters into opportunities and mountains into molehills.

When Black men could not find jobs because of racism, women were compelled to carry to the cross of labor. By the millions they put on uniforms and became domestic workers and nannies for pennies a day, sometimes walking miles to and from work only to come home and do the same work again. In recent years, white women have joined the work force and recognize the hardship of working and raising a family at the same time hence the call for day care, family leave and other family oriented work laws. But for decades African-American women carried this cross, quietly and nobly.

As many Black men abandoned their families or pursued their own agendas, many women today are compelled to carry the cross of family leadership. Nearly half of all African-American homes are headed by females. In addition to her role as mother and home manager, many African-American women have been compelled to become the bread winners of their families because the fathers of their children either could not or would not underwrite the expense of the nurture of the family. Many women are wearing themselves out trying to be fathers and mothers to their children. They are working jobs, managing the home,attending the P.T.A., assisting with school work, supporting the children in girl scouts, boy scouts, school programs and extra-curricula activities. After doing all that they come home and are some irritated when they hear someone complain that they have gained a little weight in the process.

Obviously women are carrying “unchosen crosses” that have been placed on them by society.

One Chosen Cross

While women are carrying many unchosen crosses, they like all true believers have one cross they carry by choice.

The cross they have chosen to carry has not been selected for its beauty or utilitarian purpose. It has not been selected because of its ease of use or availability. It has been selected because of its power.

Out on Calvary, three crosses sat on the hill. One represented a thief dying in his sin, for though he had a chance to come to god he refused to do so.

The second cross represented a thief dying to sin, for he called out to Jesus, “remember me when you enter into your kingdom.”

But the final cross, represents the savior dying for sin!

Today there are millions, both male and female of all races and walks of life who have chosen this cross, because it is the cross of salvation!

Brothers and Sisters there is power in the cross! We have chosen this cross because, at the cross:

—Darkness turns into light; Burdens turn into blessings

—Nobodies turns into somebodies; Sadness turns into gladness

—Despair turns into delight; and defeat turns into victory!

No wonder the song writer declared: “At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!”

The world may have given you many unchosen crosses, but there ought to be one cross you choose to carry for yourself.

It’s the same cross that Jesus carried up calvary!

It’s the same cross that became so heavy that the song writer would ask “Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free?” then answered “no there’s a cross for everyone and there’s a cross for me.”

I’m glad that Jesus carried the cross for me!

I’m glad that he died out on Calvary!

But I’m so glad that early Sunday morning that rose from the grave all power!

All power ..

All Power...In his hands!

No. 492-Youth

It's In Your Hand!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 27, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Ephraim's stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him.'Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.When your countrymen ask you, 'Won't you tell us what you mean by this? say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim's hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah's stick, making them a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.'" — Ezekiel 37:16-19

Introduction

Have you ever you considered your future and wondered what was in store for you in life? Often youth dream about what their lives will be like. Some see themselves as great athletes winning victories on playing fields. Some see themselves as doctors, lawyers and teachers. As we consider the future, those who expect to be a part of it continue to dream about the role they will play in the drama of life that is about to unfold.

Consider the little boy who went to fortune tellers at a carnival to find his future. One woman had a crystal ball and after she had collected his money proceeded to tell him that she saw "hands doing great things." The boy was puzzled but could get nothing else from her. He went to another and this one dealt him a set of cards. After moments of ceremony the fortune teller said "You have a great future in your hand." Still puzzled the boy went to yet another fortune teller who was a palm reader. She told him to look at the lines in his hand. "Each one tells the story of your life before it is lived. Your fate is written in your hands. Lines that extend across your palm mean long life. Lines that are crossed by another mean a loss. Lines that curve and do not go straight show times when you will stray from your mark." The boy was dazzled by what the fortune tellers told him. He thought about their words constantly. He could think of nothing else as walked around gazing at the lines in his hands. When he got home he decided to ask his grandma the same question that he had asked the fortune tellers: "What is in my future?" His

grandma reached for an old tattered bible and told the boy to hold it as she said: “I don’t know about the future, I know who guides me every day. The man who knows tomorrow has a plan for you today, and you’ve got it in your hand.” The answers we seek are not written in crystal balls, tea leaves, four leaf clovers, magic cards and palm reader’s lines. They answers we seek must come from God, for he alone knows are future.

As Christians, we put our lives into God’s hands. He gives us the peace and understanding that comes with knowing him and knowing him fully. When we know him fully then we know that our future is truly bright as trust God to lead us and tell him Lord, my life is “in your hands!”

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Ezekiel as he foretells the future of the Jewish people. The nation had been divided, enslaved and broken for many years. Ezekiel, known as one of the major prophets because of his numerous writings, constantly gave them glimpses of what God had in store for them, despite their present condition of being a scattered broken people. He spoke to a new generation of the people who had heard about the glories of the nation’s past but were being frustrated by what seemed to be a hopeless cycle of subjugation, and exploitation. At the time of Ezekiel’s prophecy Judah was in exile in Babylon, Jerusalem had been decimated, and Israel had been scattered by the Assyrians.

Ezekiel had given the people, on the command of God, many signs that their future would be bright even though it appeared hopeless. The most famous of his prophecies was the “dry bones in the valley” prophecy in which he depicted the entire nation of Israel rising up out of its scattered, dry and broken experience to a new and fuller life. The key to this resurrection would be the willingness of the people to “hear the word of the Lord.”

This text follows on the heels of the “dry bones” prophecy. In it Ezekiel is told by God to pick up two sticks, which represented the two parts of their nation that had been divided and to hold them together in his hands and to carry them around with him. He was told to write the names of each respective nation upon each stick. As he walked among the people, Ezekiel was told by God to be prepared to answer questions when people asked why he was carrying two sticks in his hand. God said when asked Ezekiel should respond: That he would take the two parts of the broken nation and put them back together again, and in his hands they shall become one!”

The central message of the text to the new generation of Jews who were

pondering their future is that if they put their lives and futures in God's hands, he would rebuild, renew and reshape their circumstances to mold them a bright promising future.

What does the future hold?

Today youth are pondering their direction in life. Life Judah and Israel, African-American youth are a new generation frustrated by the difficulty of our times. They have studied about the glories of our past through a variety of heritage experiences, yet today they see a people broken, divided and wandering. What is the future for such a circumstance?

The answer, just as it was in Ezekiel's day, is the same today, it in the sticks!

What could these two sticks mean for this generation? In Ezekiel's time they meant an enslaved, hopeless people coming together again to a great future. What can they mean today?

They mean the exact same thing! We who have been slaves and sharecroppers, treated as second class citizens and pushed to the back burner of life now have the opportunity to rise and stand tall despite the difficulties of our time.

For youth the two sticks comprise the major elements that shape their future:

EDUCATION: There is no doubt that a good education is one of the most important elements that contributes to a bright future. Without it, hope dwindles and the light of inspiration dims.

Too often however, young people take for granted the value of their education and are content to do just enough to get by. Many have become satisfied with mediocrity and fail to push themselves to learn and to achieve.

Education is multi-faceted. It is not limited to just books. It doesn't just focus on how to make a living, but it also includes "how to live." A lion cub in the jungle has to have a good education to survive. The lion cub is taught everything necessary for it to survive in the jungle. What to eat, what not to eat. How to hunt and how to avoid hunters. The lion learns how to live! Likewise, a good education goes beyond just teaching what's in a book, but it teaches how to live.

Education involves preparation for careers but it also involves preparation for life. The youth who attempts to have a great and prosperous life who has not learned how to survive and thrive will almost always take the big dive!

SELF-DISCIPLINE: Central to education is discipline. It is one of the

most difficult lessons of adolescence.

Small children are not expected to have self discipline. Their failure to follow the rules or to do things in the proper way is dismissed to their immaturity. Sometimes youth who do not exercise discipline are given reminders by their parents in the form of spankings, and privilege denials to suggest the importance of discipline. As youth grow older, the need for corporal punishment and other forms of discipline should diminish as youth exercise self-discipline.

Self-discipline means doing the right thing without having to be told. It is studying regularly, obeying the family rules, avoiding trouble, and acting responsibly without waiting for someone to give a signal. Many young people, unfortunately, have not mastered self-discipline. Many are smart, but deviant. Their attitudes and actions suggest that they are untamed and wild, which could spell disaster.

It is the disciplined youth that becomes an honor student. It is the disciplined athlete that becomes a success! It is the disciplined youth that avoids drugs, crime and jail by scrutinizing the crowd he runs with and knowing when to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on and when to let go.

If youth today had two sticks that they could carry with them, these two should remind them constantly of what is needed to succeed. Both of these essential elements are within the reach of every young person. Whether there is success or failure it depends upon how youth use that which is placed in their hands.

In God's hands

There is a Latin phrase that says: "Vis unita fortior" It means the force of God, added to my own force is powerful. This is the essential truth of the final component of Ezekiel's vision. Not only did it show the two sticks together rising to prosperity, but he showed what held them together by the force of God.

The sticks were not bound by any chord, ropes or ties. They were held together in God's hands! If at any time they fell out of God's hand they could not and would not work together to bring the bright promises that the future offered.

Education and discipline are fine things to have but neither of them can help us if our lives get out of God's hands.

Whether or not youth get a good education and exercise self discipline, for the most part, is in their hands. However, our success depends on our willingness to say to God: “Here’s my life Lord, it’s in your hands!”

Young Jeremiah told the Lord, “I do not understand all of life’s challenges, and I’m afraid of their faces, but Lord it’s in your hands!

Young Isaiah told the Lord he felt unworthy to serve, but if they Lord needs somebody, Here am I send me!

Every young person should say: “Lord, I’m putting it in your hand because your..:

—GLORY is much greater than mine; POWER is much stronger than mine

—METHODS are much wiser than mine; UNDERSTANDING is much broader than mine!

—WAYS are much safe than mine; HEART is much bigger than mine;

—BURDEN is lighter than mine; and LOVE is much deeper than mine!

It’s in your hands because I don’t know what the future holds but I know who holds my hand!

It’s in your hands because one day out on Calvary I heard you cry out:

Father, Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit!

It’s in your hands because early one Sunday morning you rose up from the grave with ..all power!

No. 493-Membership Improvement

Shacking With The Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 6, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." — Revelation 19:7 (NIV)"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." — 2 Corinthians 11:2-4 (KJV)

Introduction

Have you ever loved someone and felt they didn't love you? Have you ever felt totally committed to a person but felt the feeling was not mutual? Have you ever shared a relationship with someone but secretly felt that they did not trust you fully? Though it may seem odd, there are millions of people today who live together, enjoy each other's company but do not share a relationship of mutual trust and commitment. On the outside they look happy, but on the inside they are unwilling or unable to make a full commitment.

One of the unique contributions African-Americans have made to the English language is a wealth of colloquialisms. One of these colloquialisms is the term "shacking." It is a phrase that describes a man and woman that live together as husband and wife, without benefit of marriage. The legal systems refers to such arrangements as common-law or unofficial marriages, we call it "shacking."

In its broadest meaning "shacking" is an expression of fear, or distrust. It occurs when one or both partners refuse to commit themselves, even in private, to a life of mutual sharing. Consider what could easily be described as the "Shacker's Wedding Vow:"

"Dearly beloved we are gathered here today because this man and this woman refuse to join themselves in holy wedlock. Since marriage is holy and acceptable to God, we are here today to acknowledge that this man and this

woman have decided to live together without a commitment to each other even if it is unacceptable and unholy to God. There are no rings or symbols of a marriage because others who might see either of them will know they are no longer available. They pledge to be together as long as sickness, poverty, and bad times escape them and their relationship does not become inconvenient. They don't promise each other anything and they only pledge to be together as long as things work out or until a better looking more successful person comes along. With that the shacker may now salute the shackee." The shacking relationship that exists between some couples is one based upon receiving without giving, and sharing without trusting.

Just as there are some persons who shack with their partners there are others whose relationship to Christ and the church bears a striking relationship to "shacking." They seek to get all from him that they can without making a full commitment to him, and without trusting him totally. While there is a large number of people who are shacking with each other, there is an even larger number of people who are "Shacking With The Church."

As Christians, we know that our Lord loves us totally and completely. Christ's love for us is not the question, but our love for him is questionable. The Christian's relationship with Christ is one of full commitment and trust. It is the marriage bond between the bride and bridegroom that we seek to achieve. Anything less would make us guilty of "shacking with the church."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the church at Corinth about his desire for them to remain fully committed to the cause of Christ. Paul expressed his desire that the Corinthian church would remain faithful to Christ such that it could be presented as a spotless "virgin" to the bridegroom, which is Christ, when he returns.

The imagery of the bride and bridegroom is often used in scripture to represent the sum total of believers and their relationship to Christ. Generally the bride is always symbolic of the people of God. In the Old Testament the prophets often used the imagery of the bride to suggest the repeated adulteries of the people against God who acted as a loving husband. Hosea's marriage to a harlot was one striking example of how an adulterous relationship exist between a backsliding people and a loving God.

In the New Testament the image of the bride often refers to the church and its relationship to Christ. The bride, in Revelation also represented the sum total of all believers: those before Christ, the church, and the 144,000

Jews and large mass of people that John saw coming out of the tribulation having washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. All believers, whether Old Testament or New Testament are represented by the image of the bride.

In the Old Testament, God was represented by the loving father. In the New Testament Christ is represented by the image of the bridegroom. Both the bride and bridegroom are spoken of as preparing to meet each other. The bridegroom has gone to prepare a place for the bride and the bride is waiting patiently for his return.

Paul told the Church at Corinth that he wanted it to remain faithful to Christ and not to simply run after every new doctrine that came along. He wanted a full commitment from Corinth, setting the stage for the perfect union between Christ and his spotless congregation that remained faithful until he returned.

In Sickness and In Health

There are many people in the church today whose relationship to the church is similar to the relationship of "shacking" partners in that they have no full commitment. Those who marry for example, pledge to be together in sickness and in health. However, those who shack don't make that pledge. Shackers usually enjoy each other's company in health but cannot be expected to be around in sickness. Obviously there are a few exceptions to the rule, but generally shackers assume the attitude that "I may be around if you get sick, but don't count on it."

In a similar sense there are those whose relationship with the church is the same. When the spiritual health of the church is threatened by the onslaughts of Satan, there are many who will leave the church and find other partners. They enjoy the church's company in times of health, but when it is spiritually sick they can't be counted on to stick with the church. If a bad spirit comes along in the choir, or usher board or among the deacons or some committee they usually disappear because they are committed only to the point that the church is in good spiritual health. Like those who shack, they say they will come back to the choir or the ushers "when Y'all get it together." When you are well again they will return, but don't expect any help from them in getting rid of the sickness through fasting and prayer. Those who relate to the church in this way are "shacking with the church."

For Better or Worse

Those who shack commit themselves to each other only to the extent that

conditions are both convenient and mutually enjoyable. A shacker can only expect his or her partner to be present in good times. There is a possibility that they may be around in bad times, but even then they should not be expected to stick with the relationship through the long haul. The very nature of the shacking relationship is to get as much out of the relationship as possible, without committing to make an equal return. Therefore, when things turn bad, one shacker will probably disappear or look for another partner that is not having such bad times. Unemployment, misfortune, and other problems, usually suggest hard times. They are also times when shackers usually break up because there is nothing for them to gain from the "deal" so they drop their partners and move on.

There are many people who relate to their church in the same way. When the church seems to prosper and things are going well they are proud to be associated with the church. They brag "look at Us's church" and they can't stop talking about the church. When there are anniversaries and celebrations when friends from around the community will be present they enjoy the applauds and the accolades. However, when difficulties arise they disappear. When workers are needed to clean the bathrooms, mow the lawn or to repair broken furniture they disappear. When there are problems to be solved and difficulties to overcome many of them disappear.

Paul told the church at Corinth that he was fully committed to the cause of Christ. At verse 25 and beyond he listed off a long list of hardships he endured for the sake of the church. His point was clear, in good times and bad times he stuck with the church. Though he was beaten, stoned and ostracized, he stuck with the church. His was not a shacking relationship that was only for good times but it was a permanent commitment that would last through hard times until things became better.

Likewise, those who want to be a part of the bride of Christ should commit themselves for the long haul. In good times and hard times they should resolve that "nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ."

Waiting For the Bridegroom

While there are some who have assumed a shacking relationship with Christ, only seeking to get from him what they can get without giving fully of themselves, there are others who have given the Lord their all, and are living each day, waiting for the bridegroom.

Those who are waiting for the bridegroom don't get weary and are not intimidated by the times. They wait because the word says "They that wait

on the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not get weary; they shall walk and not faint." They are waiting on the bridegroom because when he returns he will bring them joy and happiness and will set them free.

Consider the slave couple that was allowed to marry even though the master had plans to sell the husband. When the husband found out he was about to be sold he met with his new wife and told her that he was going to run away to freedom. She remembered the power in his words when he said "No matter how long it takes or how far I have to go, I'm coming back for you. Wait for me.!" With that the husband dashed into the night running for his freedom. Many years later after slavery was abolished, his wife refused to remarry or to take on suitors. She looked out the window of her cabin waiting for her husband to return. Her hair turned gray. Her eyes became dim, but she waited. Then one day she saw a fancy buggy coming up the road. The man driving it looked like a angel from heaven. He was wearing a derby hat with a .50 cent cigar in his mouth. Then she realized it was her husband. She ran to meet him and as they hugged he told her that he wondered whether she would wait and he she said "You told me to wait, and I been waiting right here until you returned!"

Brother and Sisters, Jesus, the bridegroom told his bride "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also. In my father's house are many mansion's!"

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house there is Joy!

In my father's house there is Peace!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

I'm so glad that he's coming back again, so I'll wait right here ..until he comes!

No. 494-Inspiration

If You Don't Know Me By Now

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 17, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" John 14:8-9 "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Acts 17:23

Introduction

Have you ever thought you knew someone, only to find out that you didn't? Often we live in the midst of people for many years, thinking that we know them, only to learn that we really didn't know them as well as we thought we did. Often a husband or a wife discover and decades of married life that they really don't know each other. Sometimes parents discover that they don't really "know" their children.

It is true that sometimes we can be deceived by what we think we know. Consider the little toad frog that defied the instructions of the bull frog and played daily with the crocodile. "Son, stay away from the crocodile, he is dangerous" said the old Bull frog who had been around for a long time. "Nonsense" replied the young toad who played with the crocodile daily. "That may have been true in your day, pop but this crocodile is different. He takes me for rides through the Bayou. I dance on his back and often using it for my diving board." The old bull frog kept warning him to stay away from that crocodile because he could be dangerous. The young toad felt safe with the crocodile. He knew he was strong and powerful but he wasn't afraid because the crocodile was so gentle when he was around. One day the toad frog came to play. The crocodile was in usually grumpy mood. He would not lay still and his stomach seemed to groan. Suddenly without notice the crocodile open his huge jaws and snapped at the frog who barely got away as he hopped home to his papa the big bull. "Pop, I don't know what got into the crocodile, he snapped at me and almost killed me." The old Bull frog

looked at the little frog and said. “You thought you knew the that old croc. You probably did. But what I know that you didn’t know, is that when he gets hungry he’ll eat little toads like you for an afternoon snack. You don’t know a crocodile until you know what he eats for lunch!”

In a similar sense there are many today who don’t know others as well as they think. Even worse, there are still others who do not know themselves well and daily surprised with their own inadequacy. Shakespeare in Hamlet wrote: “This above all- to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.” If others are to know us that we should make sure we know ourselves.

As Christians, we have come to know God and in so doing, to better know ourselves. If we know him and are true to him, then those who strive to know us better will get to know him as well.

Those who know God have come to trust him, and that trust makes all the difference in the world.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he talks with Philip about the nature of his relationship with God the father.

During the course of his ministry with his disciples Jesus was often frustrated by the fact that the people were having difficulty accepting the idea that he and the father were one. They accepted him as a miracle worker of sorts and they respected him as a great teacher, but many did not perceive of him as being one with God. On one occasion Jesus even asked his disciples to tell him how he was being received by the people. The reports varied: teacher, resurrected prophet, and miracle man. Peter stood to attest that he was the son of God. Peter stood, but Philip did not readily get the connection. Here, Philip who had been exposed to his teaching for the length of his ministry had not accepted the oneness between Christ and the father. The essence of Jesus’ discourse to him was to chide him for being around him so long, yet not fully understanding the nature of his being. “You’ve been acquainted with me for all these years, but you still don’t know me” is what Jesus seems to have said.

In the Acts text, Paul was in Athens observing the worship and beliefs of the Greeks. He noticed that they had a statue erected to the “Unknown god” among the other gods that they worshipped. Paul took the opportunity to tell them about Jesus, the unknown God that they never knew.

The Greeks had many gods, many of which were altered to fit their circumstances. There was ZEUS who was the Lord of the earth and sky. He controlled the destinies of men and their political fortunes. ATHENA was second in command. She was the protector of the cities. Her statues usually depicted her in full battle armor. POSEIDON was the god or protector of the waters. The fishermen and mariners prayed to him for calm waters. HERMES was a god of the Shepherds and was associated with wealth and prosperity. APOLLOS was the god of agriculture. Those who were farmers prayed to him for protection against insects and plagues. He was also the god of youth and strength. ARTEMIS was the god of wildness of nature. The lakes, rivers and wild animals as well as the wild spirit of all life were her domain. APHRODITE was the god of fertility, sex, charm, beauty.

As the Greek empire spread throughout the world its mythology had a way of absorbing the gods of conquered people and giving them a subsidiary place among the Greek gods that had a similar functions. It is said that before Paul arrived in Athens that the city had endured a series of violent storms and the Greeks prayed first from one of their gods to another: from Zeus to Athena to Poseidon but the storms did not cease. Thinking they may have missed a god that was important they erected a statue to the "unknown God" and the storms cease. The statue remained thereafter.

Paul took advantage of the occasion to help them to know the God they referred to as "the unknown God."

Attitudes About God

There are many today that have the Greek attitude toward God. Though the names may be different, they still accept various gods as the controlling forces of the universe. They do not erect statues to these gods, but they bow before them reverently.

Like Zeus we have many who worship the political process as if it were a god that controls the destiny of man in itself, instead of being a tool of God for the orderly governing of men. To some, politics comes before anything else. Everything is defined by its political value: what church you attend, what fraternity you join and what charities you support, all defined by the god of politics.

Like Aphrodite, there are many who worship the enchantment of sex. The pursuit of sex has become a god to many instead of a blessed union of man and wife in confines of marriage. It controls their actions. If they worship, it will be at a church with large pool of possible "relationships." If

they dress, sex appeal is more import than image. If they fellowship and socialize, who might attend of the opposite sex is deciding factor. Their lives are controlled by the pursuit of pleasure, desire and sexual fulfillment.

Like Hermes, there are others who worship the pursuit of wealth. Money, instead of being a means to an end becomes and end in itself. To some making money comes before anything else. Everything is defined by its propensity to make money. If we join a church or club we consider who's there that can help us make the big deal. Friendships and associations are based on their ability to help us make money. Their lives are controlled totally by the pursuit of dollars, legally or illegally.

Like Apollos, there are others who worship their youth and strength. They reject anything that is traditional as "old" and constantly seek that which is new and "youthful spirited" as if youth and new meant the same as righteous and correct and traditional and old meant wrong and incorrect. Instead of seeking a blend of the old and the new, those who worship newness usually seek to discard anything traditional, replacing it altogether.

The Unknown God

Like the Greeks there are many today that switch from one of their gods to another. Depending on the situation, some who worship politics may also worship, sex, youth, or money. However, like the Greeks at Athens, when the storms came, the answer to their problems did come from Zeus or Athena or Poseidon, but from that unknown God. When Paul came to tell the Greeks about this "Unknown god" they were willing to listen, for they had seen his works but knew nothing about him.

Like the Greeks today there are many who worship various gods of their choosing, but when the storms come they find that power and politics can't help them. Neither can sex, youth or money solve their problems. They usually find that storms that rise in their lives are resolved by the unseen, unidentified hand of the unknown God.

The false gods of this generation are like crocodiles in the bayou, they will take you for a refreshing ride in the pod and let you take dives from their backs, but sooner or later they will snap you up and swallow you whole!

Our real salvation is in what the world calls that "Unknown god."

I hear Jesus saying to the world today the same thing that was said to Philip "I've been with you all these years, and you still don't know me."

To you I'm an unknown God, but when you:

—Failed, I turned your failure into success, if you don't know me by now,

you'll never know me!

—Were Afraid, I turned your fear into courage, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Cried in the middle of the night, I dried your weeping eyes, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Were Lonely, I gave you comfort when you were all by yourself, If you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Felt as thought you did not have a friend in the world, I was your friend when you were friendless, mother when you were motherless, father when you were fatherless, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

I heard the song writer declare: "You got to know Jesus, you got to know God for yourself, if you know Jesus, you don't need nobody else!"

We're talking about Jesus, fountain of our joy!

Jesus, Our shelter in time of storm!

Jesus, Our wheel in the middle of the wheel!

Jesus, The answer to our prayer!

No wonder the old warriors sang: "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried him for myself!"

Have you tried him for yourself?

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!

Jesus, who is always by your side!

If you don't know him by now....

No. 495-Funeral

At Peace In Old Age

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 17, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."Genesis 15:15 "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." — Isaiah 46:4

Introduction

What does it mean to be at peace with God? In times of doubt, insecurity, misfortune and distrust, there is a yearning by most people to be at peace. In its most general application, peace is simply the absence of trouble, confusion, or division. Mankind works desperately to achieve world peace and national peace. However, there is another peace which is just as important; that is peace with God. Being at peace with God is internal and spiritual. It is almost impossible to have peace with other men unless we have also achieved peace with God.

Consider the old migrant worker who approached a farmer and asked him for a job. The farmer asked: "What can you do?" The old farm worker answered "I can sleep when the wind is blowing!" Puzzled by such a description of his working ability, the farmer asked for more. "Can you tell me what all you are able to do around the farm; you look pretty old." The old worker who had worked on hundreds of farms during his life, took his knapsack and sat it on the ground and looked the farmer in the eye and repeated his statement again "I can sleep when the wind is blowing." Although he was not sure what the worker meant, the farmer played a hunch and hired the old man anyway. Soon after a great storm arose and the farmer became concerned about his family. Hurriedly he called in the worker and shouted "get all the chickens and put them in barn" and the worker replied "it's done." He thought about the well and shouted "put the lid on the well" and the worker said: "It's done." "Cover the windows and get the children in the storm cellar" to that too the worker replied "It's done!" As the winds began to blow increasingly harder, the worker looked the farmer in the eye and said "I told you I can sleep when the wind is blowing" and went to the

barn and closed the door and fell fast asleep on the hay.

Today there are many who are at peace with God. They are prepared for life and they are prepared for death. Come what may from day to day, they are at peace with their fellowman and with God and can retire with a good conscious. They can sleep when the wind is blowing.

Exposition

This text focuses on promises God made to two old and faithful servants of the Old Testament, Abraham and Isaiah. Both men received promises from God that because of their faithfulness that they would live to achieve a "good old age" and enjoy its fruits. They were promised the sustaining presence of God in their strength, in their retiring years and in their death.

Abraham lived a life of faith in God. His life was marked by great displays of loyalty to and faith in God. God promised him great lands, a large and prosperous family and the blessing of being the family through which the opportunity for salvation would come to the earth. Abraham was promised that he would live to see a good old age. When Abraham's life ended he was 175 years old. By comparison, Abraham died at a relatively young age. Adam lived 930 years. Seth did not have his first child until he was 105 and died at age 912. Methuselah lived 969 years. Enos lived 905 years and Cainan lived 910. Therefore by comparison, Abraham's mere 175 years would have to seem something short of the life expectancy of his time..physically, 175 years old was not considered the time to die. Yet Abraham was described as having died at a good old age. What made his old age good was not the numbers and the length of his life, but the quality of the years lived.

Isaiah received promises from God that even in his old age that he would still be the same God. For his commitment to serve as a prophet for him God promised him that he would carry him in his youth, bear him in his infirmity and be with him when the hairs on his head had turned white. God promised Isaiah peace in his old age. It was a pleasing thought for one who had spent so much time being criticized and ostracized by the people for his various pronouncements against the sins of the people. God promised this faithful servant that he would be with him constantly as a source of peace, hope and joy throughout the course of his life.

Combined these text verses make one concerted point: That those who live faithful lives will enjoy the presence of God in their lives in their youth, in their strength, in their infirmity and in their declining years. Whether they reach ages traditionally considered old or whether they die young, they will

enjoy as peaceful a death as they enjoyed a peaceful life. His promise to the old patriarchs is the same promise today: be faithful and enjoy peace your old age.

How old is old?

How old is old today? At one time it was believed that a person was old when he or she reached a certain age. Those who were 64 were considered middle aged, but the next year they became "old" instantly. Those who made it to 80 or above were called "real old." Those who lived beyond 80 were called lucky and those who passed 100 were considered "blessed." How old is old? In modern times people in their 60's are not considered old. The nation has had presidents who served into their 70's and seniors have been known to function fully well into their 90's. Many people chuckle when they see elderly couples marry. They couples muse that people think because there is "frost on the roof that there is no fire in the oven."

Often people confuse, health and age. Having a wealth of years is a blessing. It is even more a blessing to have the health to go along with the years. Sometimes the two are not necessarily combined.

For Abraham old age was 175 but ther were others in his time who lived much longer. By today's standards he would have been considered a young man of about 30 or 40 chronologically. Perhaps he was described as dying at a good old age because of his mature relationship with God, not because of his years.

The premium in life is not how many years are lived but what is done in the years that are lived. Abraham lived 175 but accomplished a great service for God that is remembered to this day. Methuselah, on the other hand, lived 969 years and all that is said of him is that "he died." Moreover, we should strive to mature in our relationship with God. That is the main ingredient for living to a good old age at peace with God.

God is Present In Any Age

Isaiah learned what many today have learned, that God is with the faithful through all stages of life. God's words to Isaiah were definitive: "I made you, I carried you, and I will bear you up, even when the hairs on your head have turned hoary white."

Whatever we become in life, God is responsible for it. We climb and strive for greatness, but all of our success is due to the benevolence of God.

Those who have achieved peace with God have accepted the fact that all blessings from him. They are content because they know that whatever the need God has it and will provide it. God's words to Isaiah are germane today, "I made you." Solomon, in all his greatness, recognized that God made him. David rose to greatness but he never forgot that God made him. When his friends were upset over his losses in life Job remained at peace with God and said "The lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Those who are at peace with God also recognize that God has carried them through life and has borne them in the midst of their infirmities. No matter how successful we become, the time will come when every many, woman or child will need to be carried for a while. If we are not carried by someone else we are sustained by God. The familiar story of the footprints in the sand makes the point clear. A man who walked with the lord looked back at his footprints in the sand and noticed that some points there are two sets of footprints and in others only one. The man asked God why he left him alone. The Lord's response was that in his prime he and God walked side by side, but in the places where there were only one set of footprints marked the points in his life where he was weak. "There was only one set of foot prints" said the Lord "because those were the times when I carried you." Those who are peace with God, know that in their strength, he is there and even in their infirmities he is there as well and they are secure in their faith that come what may, God is always by their side.

In old age, God is there

Finally God reminded Isaiah, even when the hairs on your head turn white, "I am he." The use of the phrase "I am he" is perhaps not accident. The use of "am" instead of "will be" or "was" suggests the present. It also suggests a God who is present constantly, not somewhere in the distant future or somewhere in the past.

When old age and the inconveniences that accompany it come, God reminds us "I am he."

In old age it should be an assurance to all to know that the God we serve is still the same and is unchanging.

We can live in peace when all is well with God.

We can endure in peace when we know that God will quiet whatever storms that may rise.

We can die in peace when we know that even our soul is in good hands

with the Lord.

It should be a joy to every child of God to be able to say “It is well with my soul.”

There may be confusion everywhere, but it is well with my soul!

There may be trouble in the land, but it is well with my soul!

There may doubts in the minds of some, but it is well my soul!

It is well because the God we serve has made a way for us. He has given us the hope of a brighter day.

Even as this tabernacle deteriorates with age with still rejoice because we have another tabernacle, not built by hands!

Even though this life is made miserable by the infirmities associated with old age, we still rejoice because we hear the song writer’s words: “I have heard of a land on a far away strand, tis the beautiful home of the soul..tis a land where we’ll never grow old!”

I don’t know about you but I’m looking for that land where everyday will be Sunday and it’s always howdy and never goodbye!

I’m looking for that land where the streets are paved with gold!

I’m looking for that land where there is peace for the soul! Where time shall be no more! Where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

I’m looking for that land...where we’ll never grow old!

——

A few days a good Sister Hattie Wooten Cassey went home to be with God. During the course of her 105 years she was carried and sustained by God. She died at peace with God, at a good old age.

No. 496-Pastor's Anniversary

Get The Word Out!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Zion Hill Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 27, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Ezekiel 33:7-8,13; "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Introduction

Have you ever had something in you that you just had to get out? That's a time when you are literally bursting for a release. For song writers it is a melody in the heart. For writers it is a moving thought or idea that must be placed on paper. The artist is compelled to paint such impulses. The singer must sing the music in his spirit. No matter what the circumstance those who have such a spirit within them must get them out. Like Ezekiel, these feelings are like "fire shut up in my bones." They must come out.

Consider Sanctified Sally, a spirited woman who loved to praise the Lord in a mighty way. Sally and her son had moved one year to a quaint little town that had no Baptist Church. She could only join a rather formal and quiet Methodist Church. Sally stood out because she routinely shouted "Amen" to the preacher and would often yell "Praise the Lord." This worried the Methodists because their new member was obviously out of place, but there was nothing they could do to keep Sally quiet. On one occasion Sally's son got in trouble with the law and was in serious trouble. The local judge was inclined to help the boy because it was a minor offense but could not pass up the chance to keep Sally quiet. He called Sally in and told her that he would give her son a break if she could sit through one church service without saying "Amen" "Praise the Lord" or any other loud expression in the church service. Sally reluctantly agreed. It was the only way to save her son. That Sunday she and a friend attended the church service. There was a visiting preacher. A real down home, from the woods Baptist Preacher who was full fire and spirit was the guest. As the preacher talked about the love of God Sally tried her best to hold her peace. She rocked to the

left then to the right. The preacher talked about blessings from God and her feet began to click against the hardwood floors. The more he talked, the more excited she became. Suddenly she jumped up and started waving her arms. Her friend stood and shouted out for her "If I can't say a word, then I'll just wave my hand!" Sanctified Sally had to get it out!

As Christians, we know what it means to have something in us and the need to let it out. God has been good to us and daily we look for a chance to tell somebody about his goodness. Like the most dedicated preacher, every saint has to "get the word out!"

Exposition

This text focuses on God's instruction Ezekiel as his duties as a prophet are further explained. Israel was in Exile in Babylon. The people were scattered throughout the region and hope was lost. God used Ezekiel as an instrument to inform the nation that its exile was not permanent.

The prophet was compared to a "Watchman" or guard on the wall. His job was to give advance notice of approaching enemies and to warn the people. In this text Ezekiel is told that he is God's watchman to the people. He is to warn the people of impending danger and should they choose to ignore the warning their fate would be of their own choosing. However if they were not told their fate would be in the hands of Ezekiel.

The Watchman's responsibility was to accurately tell the people what he was told by God. The message might not be what the people wanted to hear, but he is charged to deliver the message anyway. The premium for the watchman is that he delivered the Word of God such that the people who know the will of God for their particular circumstance.

He Must Know the Word

The watchman must know the word in two respects. He must know the truths of the written word of God and he must the know Word through his own experiences in life.

The watchman must know the word through study. Every pastor spends a great deal of time studying and praying. However, in these trying times, time gets to be a premium. The costs of study materials has risen astronomically. Books that were once $5.00 are now $50.00. Seminars and classes that once were free now have fees that are staggering. Yet the mandate to the watchman is to study the word. Congregations could help the pastor by providing him with an adequate library, or assisting him in purchasing of up to date study materials and to attend seminars and works designed to strengthen his knowledge of the word.

But even there is no library or seminars or study materials, each pastor still has an individual responsibility for prayer and study. It is impossible to get the word out

if one does not know the word himself.

Beyond a knowledge of the written word is the pastor should have a personal experience with the Lord. He might possess a Ph.D. from Princeton but he has to know the Lord for himself. He might have study in every pastor's seminar of the National Congress for decades, but he still has to know the Lord for himself. When it comes to personal experience, you can't get the word out from what you heard, but only from what you know yourself!

Get the Word Out

Finally brothers and sisters, while it is important that the watchman be acquainted with the Word, it is also important that he is able to get the word out!

It does not matter how long he has pastored his congregation, every Sunday morning there are hungry souls that are waiting to hear a word from the word!

Different ears and different generations have waited to receive "a word from the Lord"

Abraham took his son Isaac upon the mountain top and prepared to sacrifice him, until he heard a word from the Lord that told him to "be still" because he had a lamb in the bush. When there's a word from the Lord, you've got to get the word out!

Moses climbed Mt. Sinai and stood before the burning bush until he heard the Lord declare "tell pharaoh, the Lord God of Israel says, let my people go!" When there's a word from the Lord, you've got to get the Word Out!

For Joshua the word was to march around the Jericho seven times and to blow mightily upon great trumpets and the walls would come tumbling down. When there's a word from the Lord, you've got to get the word out!

Jeremiah complained that he was unqualified and unable to get the word out. But I hear the Lord saying "While you were still in your mother's womb I ordained you. I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Now Jeremiah, you have received the word, now go and get the word out!

Hezekiah waited to get the word, the word was that he would be given 15 more years of life! Now that you have 15 more years, go and get the word out!

Ezekiel, you are in a valley filled with dry bones, tell the people if they will hear the word of the Lord that they can come together again. So Ezekiel you got to get the word out!

Every Sunday morning Saint's around the world want to know, "Watchman, Is there a word from the Lord?"

Every pastor has the duty to declare to Zion, the word of the Lord!

Sometimes it is bitter. Sometimes it is sweet. However, Zion still asks the question, is there a word from the Lord?

You've got to get the word out to Zion that when they are:

-Weak, that the Lord will give them strength!

-Sad, that the Lord will give them joy!

-Falling, that the Lord will pick them up again!

-Distress, that the Lord will be a shelter for them in a time of storm!

-Crying in the middle of the night, that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!

-Lost and can't find their way, that the Lord will make a way out of no way!

Finally we've got to tell them that the Word, became flesh and dwelled among men. The word took on a name. They called him Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

They took the word and nailed him to a cross!

They buried the word in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away as all creation declared "we got to get the word out!"

"The Word is, he lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me, he talks with me along life's narrow. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart, ask me how I know he lives, he lives within my heart!"

No. 497-Easter (Palm Sunday)

Some Did, Some Didn't
Some Do, Some Don't

Some Will, Some Won't
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church

Monroe, La.

SCRIPTURE:"And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strowed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:" Mark 11:8-9

Introduction

Have you ever tried to get everybody to do everything the way they should, when they should, how they should? What was you success rate? Half? A majority? No doubt you share the frustration of millions who are perturbed at their inability to get everybody to do their part, or at the very least, join in the celebration. One of the realities of life is that there will always be some who, for varied reasons, will refuse to do their part. No matter how great the idea, there will be some who will doubt its workability! No matter how loud and clear the message, there will be some that will refuse to hear it. No matter how joyous the occasion there will be some that refuse to share in it. When some do their part but others fail along the way, it usually spells difficulty up the road.

Consider Mickey and Maude the two city mice who visited in the country for a vacation. These two had a great idea. Since they had been raised in the mouse holes of a great university they explained to the country mice an elaborate plan to avoid getting being snared in trap each time they tried to get cheese. The plan was simple. Some mice would check the house to insure all humans were out of sight. Another set would keep watch and signal when the coast was clear. And finally Dopey was given the task of taking a pencil snapping the traps so Mickey and Maude could dash through them all, take the cheese and share with everyone before the humans discovered anything. As the plan unfolded Mickey and Maude made a mad dash for the cheese but were stopped abruptly by a painful snap. They were caught. As they

squealed they tried to figure out what went wrong. The lights were out, the coast was clear, but Dopey didn't snap the traps. He didn't believe in the idea so he refused to do his part. As a result Mickey and Maude sat with their tails in a trap having learned an old fashioned country lesson "some do, some don't, some will and some won't."

While there are millions in the world that celebrate the life of Christ and strive to carry out his mission that are other millions that refuse to glorify him, reject his missionary call, and deny him completely.

As Christians, we should be as the "many" who threw their garments and shouted Hosanna and praise to our Lord as Jesus entered Jerusalem. We should not be frustrated or intimidated by the few who refuse to praise him with their lips or serve him with their hands. It is true today that there are those who do and those who don't, but one of these days that faithful be called to receive their reward; there will be some who will and some who won't.

Exposition

This text focuses on a familiar text which draws attention to the events surrounding Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on what has traditionally become known as Palm Sunday. Jesus had become instantly famous among the Jews because he raised Lazarus from the dead. Many who had not seen him, heard of his mighty work and came to see him out of curiosity.

As Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem the crowd that greeted him was mixed, to say the least. There were some who believed him completely. They were convinced by the raising of Lazarus that he was the Messiah. There were others that were among the crowd, but yet they did not believe completely and fully. John 12:9 notes that many of the crowd came not to see Jesus but to see Lazarus who had been risen from the dead. They did not know what to think about Jesus fully. Some believed and followed him. Some did not. Even some of the officials believed him but they chose to keep silent for fear it would not be popular at the time.

As Jesus entered the city "many" of the people cast the coats along the way and waved palm branches, a symbolic gesture which was a part of the many ceremonies associated with the Passover. There were words of praise offered for Jesus as he road in on a donkey. There were shouts of "Hosanna" in the highest from the crowds. Many shouted and praised him. Some did, but some did not. There were those who had not quite committed to serving him and still others that did not believe it all.

The shouts of praise in the crowd have been recorded by history, but the

record indicates that not everyone that was in the crowd believed the report. John 12:38-40 details how there were many who saw what Jesus was doing, heard what he said and still would not believe, prompting the recall the words of the prophet Isaiah when he asked "Who hath believed our report." There were some who did and some who didn't. Neither were all of his disciples fully loyal. Some were, at least one was not.

In all, Jesus was praised by many, but not by all, which is a reflection of his entire ministry. Thousands heard his message of love of God and service to mankind, but believed it, but there were some who didn't.

Some Do, Some Don't

Today, just as in biblical times there are many who have heard of Jesus and have observed his mighty works from a distance but hesitate to welcome him into their lives. There are three controlling factors that indicate the extent to which we "do" or we "don't" with respect to following Christ, they are: obedience, service and praise. Combined, they indicate how we stand, there is no middle ground.

OBEDIENCE: God expects each of those who follow him to obey his laws. Some do, some don't. "Honor thy father and thy mother," some do and some don't. "Thou shalt not steal," some do and some don't. "Thou shalt not kill," some do, some don't. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," some do, some don't. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," some do, some don't. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself," some do, some don't.

There are many who know the moral law of God but choose to ignore it and pretend that it does not exist. As others go about the business of obeying his laws, in essence waving palm branches and throwing their coats in the way, they stand firm and hold tight to their own desires.

SERVICE: Service is expected of every person who believes in a living God. Service to God is reflected in our willingness to serve our fellowman. The poor, the needy, the illiterate, the broken hearted and lonely, they and multitudes like them comprise our missionary field.

Service to God is often misconstrued with worship. A person who comes to Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. and stays with the church until 2 p.m., goes home rests for an hour or two and then returns for more worship until 8 or 9 p.m. has had plenty of worship, but has not done one minute of service. Peter was taken to the top of the mount of transfiguration and he enjoyed the worship so much that he wanted to stay and build three Tabernacles, but he

could not because the service was not in the mountain top experience but in the valley. To serve God fully, he had to come down.

Many have allocated very little time to service, yet that is the very essence of Christianity, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man reflected in compassionate service to humanity. It's that spirit that prompts nameless volunteers to tutor children, to minister to prisoners, to clean up litter in their neighborhoods. It's the spirit that motivates millions to build homes for the homeless, provide meals for the hungry, and give countless hours of service to girl scouts, boy scouts, senior citizens the aged and infirmed. Service is sometimes as complex as serving on volunteer board and commissions. Sometimes it is as simple as ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. Jesus put it this way in Mat 23:11 "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." When it comes to service, there are some who do, some who don't.

PRAISE: God expects public praise an adoration from those who follow him. There are many who are obedient to the command of God and who loyally serve humanity but neglect public praise and worship. These are those that say "I live right and I help other people, I can praise the Lord at home." Thus as the crowds shout Hosanna, they stand with their palm branches behind their backs. As the crowds shout "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" and throw their garments along the way, there are some who stand silently.

As Jesus moved through the streets of Jerusalem. The crowd shouted Hosanna in the highest! The leaders came to him complaining about the loudest of their praise and asked him to quiet them but Jesus responded: "If these hold their peace, the rocks will cry out!"

There should be something that the Lord has done for us that we can shout about!

There should be something that God has done in your life that makes you want to tell somebody!

No wonder the song writer declares "Let those who refuse to sing, who never knew our God, join in a song with sweet accord, and thus surround the throne."

Some Will and Some Won't

While there are many who did, some didn't. While some do, some don't, but brothers and sisters be reminded that one of these days the Lord will reward the faithfulness of his followers with crowns in glory. When it comes

time to receive our rewards, some will and some won't!

Some will walk the streets of glory with golden crowns on their heads! Some will, some won't.

Some won't, but not because the can't, but because they won't confess the Lord Jesus with their mouths; they won't obey his commandments; they won't serve their brothers and sisters in love; they won't praise him in the congregation of the saint's.

I don't know about you but I want to be in the number of the saint's that declare "I will."

If you are in the "I will" crowd you are in good company!

Isaiah 25:1 "O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things"

Job declared "All the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change comes!"

David said "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil" Psalm 23:4

I Heard a song writer declare "I will trust in the Lord, until I die"

I will because the Lord has been the:

—Fountain of my joy; bread on my table!

—Strength of my weak days; Shelter of my time of storm!

—Answer to my questions; the source of my hope!

Some will, and some won't, but I've decided that I will stay on the battlefield for my Lord!

I will keep telling the story about Jesus!

I will tell everybody that he died, and that he is alive today!

Some will, some won't but I will..

Serve the Lord until I die!

No. 498-Easter

Who Shall Roll Us The Stone Away?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 3, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great." Mark 16:3-4

Introduction

Have you ever worried about something, only to find out that what you worried about really wasn't worth the while? That's when we discover that our worst worries were simply figments of our imaginations that were the embodiments of our fears and insecurities. Worry, at its best, dramatizes our anxieties, and parades our doubts about what has been, what is now, and what will be. Sometimes the things we worry about can be down right ridiculous.

Consider the man who sat on a park bench one day. Another man who sat across from him stared as he watched the strangest actions coming from the gentleman in front of him. Suddenly the first man grabbed an imaginary stirring wheel with his left hand, turned an imaginary ignition switch with his right hand and pumped an imaginary accelerator with his right foot. As he did all this he made whining sounds that a car would make that was having difficulty starting. The man did this for a few minutes and then stopped and cried. Then he would do it again. The man who sat across from him was amazed. Finally he asked "Beg pardon sir, but what seems to be the trouble?" The man looked frantic. As he continued to pat the imaginary accelerator and turn the imaginary key, making whining sounds he said: "I don't own a car, but if I did it could get me in to serious trouble. It could get me out on a country road somewhere and stop running. A robber might rob me and injure me forcing me to be hospitalized. I might become comatose. I'd lose all my savings because my insurance would be exhausted and my family would be

left with all of these bills and headaches. So I'm trying to start this thing!" His friend never said a word. However a few minutes later his friend started thrusting his arms in front of him in the air, as his friend continued to try to start the imaginary car. The two of them were a sight see, so much so that a passerby stopped and asked the friend what was the problem. The friend responded: "See that man over there, I think he's crazy. He thinks his car has run out of gas in the middle of the road...and me? I don't want people to know he's crazy, so I'm pushing him off the road!" Sometimes what we worry about is just plain comical.

Our worries are the embodiments of our fears. They are the Freddie Kruegars of our dreams and Jason's of our worst nightmares. The thought of what might be and what could be is often worse than what it is. Often what we worry about proves unworthy of our concern.

As Christians we have learned not to worry, but to trust God. The great truth that the resurrection of Christ brings to mind is that the will of God cannot be short circuited. Every obstacle or stone that is put in front of his will, without a doubt will be rolled away and truth trampled with rise again! Are you worried about tomorrow? Don't worry be happy..God is still on the throne!

Exposition

This text focuses on events that took place after the crucifixion as the women came to anoint the body of Christ. According to the text, Christ had been in the grave for three days and nights as he predicted in Matthew 12:40. Early on the first day, which was Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome set out to anoint his body with spices. While enroute the thought came to them that there was a stone covering the entrance of the tomb. This was no small pebble or lightweight rock. It was a huge stone, taller than a man, and requiring the services of several men to move. It had been placed in front of the tomb to keep Christ's disciples from coming in the middle of the night, stealing the body, and claiming to the world that he had risen from dead. The intent of the stone was to keep believers away from Christ. As they walked toward the tomb they became concerned about "who shall roll for us the stone away?" Although they were concerned, the women were not dissuaded, the went forward anyway! Once there, they learned that the stone had already been rolled away. An angel, which appeared as a young man, told them that Jesus had risen and invited them to see the place where Jesus had lain.

The text notes that the women proceeded with great confidence throughout the entire experience. They never flinched or became afraid. While the men hid themselves and worried about their fate and future, they courageously went forward.

Stone Was Meant To Keep Believers From Christ

Today there are millions of people who are frustrated by the presence of stones that stand between them and their goals. Sometimes the stones are the work of enemies that seek to prevent our success in a venture or achievement of some particular goal. At other times the stones are the work of our own hands. They represent our mistakes in judgment, bad habits, and weaknesses and tend to stand between us and success. Whether they have been placed by enemies or come as the result of our own mistakes, stones are hindrances in our secular life.

There are many today who have failed to rise to their potential because of stones. Racism is a stone that has stood between success and our people for centuries. Poverty and ignorance are stones that have plagued us in the past. Today, crime, violence and the deterioration of our families are increasing the size of the stone before us. Many have given up on their personal quests to achieve because of the stones. They have concluded that "I can never achieve because I'm Black." Some think their poor backgrounds or lack of formal training have doomed them to mediocrity. They have been overwhelmed by the size of the stone and therefore have not achieved the highest aspirations. It is not the stone that has stopped them, but the fact that they have been intimidated by the stone that has stopped them.

Likewise, there are millions who want to come closer to God, but have found their way blocked by great stones, put in our way by Satan to keep us away from God. Sometimes its a weakness of the flesh like drinking or drugs, adultery, or greed. Sometimes its the presence of friends and associates who keep us from Christ as we follow their agenda. Like the women on the morning of the resurrection, some have even approached this Easter Sunday morning worried about "Who shall rolls us the stone away?"

God took Care Of the Unknown too!

The women were concerned about the stone in front of the door, because that's what they knew was there. What they didn't know is that not only was there a stone in front of the tomb, but it had been sealed and there were

soldiers in front of it. The purpose of the soldiers was to keep believers away from Christ, even at the expense of their lives. The women knew about the stone, they didn't know about the soldiers! It was an unseen danger!

Today many of us worry so much about what we think are possible dangers ahead of us, without even knowing the unseen dangers that God has protected us from, just this day alone. Sometimes they are noticeable, such as the times we barely missed an accident or were spared a misfortune and called it lucky. Those are the dangers we see, but there are countless dangers that we do not see every day, and never experience them, because they have been removed by an unseen hand on our behalf.

If God is taking care of the unseen dangers that we do not know to worry about, doesn't it seem self defeating to worry about the few dangers that we know of. The same God that removes the unseen soldiers, can roll the stone away?

The Stone Is Already rolled away!

Finally, we must note that the women were worried about the stone but when they arrived, they found that the stone had already been rolled away. God had taken care of the business for them! They went in and heard an angel tell them "the one you are looking for is not here, he has risen!"

Today many of us are looking at the stones in our lives and asking "Who shall roll us away the stone?" When we should be trusting in God, claiming the victory, knowing that the stone is already gone, only our fear remains.

On this Easter Sunday morning, Someone is worried about a stone that has already been rolled away!

Worry makes us look at meager finances and ask "Who shall roll us away the stone?" and help my ends to meet. But I hear faith answer from Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus."

Worry makes us look at our loneliness and ask: "Who shall roll us away the stone?" and be a constant friend; but I hear faith answer from Hebrews `13:5 "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"

Worry makes us look at all of our troubles and ask: "Who shall roll us the stone away?" and faith replies from Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work for good for them that love God, for them who are called according to his purpose."

The joy of the resurrection is that we don't have to worry about the stone in front of the tomb because it's already been rolled away!

The same power that rolled back the stone on Easter Sunday morning can roll back the stones in our lives. No wonder the song writer declared "King Jesus will roll our burdens away!"

When the question is asked, who shall roll the stone away?

Lazarus, who shall roll the stone away? "I was in my grave, but I heard a voice declare, Lazarus come forth!"

Blind man, who shall roll the stone away? "I was once blind, until I met a man helped me to see again!"

Woman at the well, who shall roll the stone away? "Come see a man who told me all that I've ever done!"

Today the invitation is the same, "Come see a man!"

Come see a man who was crucified for our sins!

Come see a man who was buried behind a stone of rejection

Come see a man who rose up on Sunday morning with all power in his hand!

Who can roll the stone away? Jesus!

Who can wipe the tears from our eyes?

Jesus, the lily of the valley

Jesus, the bright and morning star

Because he lives, I don't have to worry

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow

Because he lives, all fear is gone!

Who shall roll the stone away?

King Jesus!

King Jesus shall roll our burdens away!

No. 499-Inspiration

When Opportunity Knocks!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

April 10, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. John 20:26 "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Rev. 3:20-21

Introduction

Have you ever been afraid to open your doors? There was a time when people were more trusting and neighbors were more trustworthy. This was a time when people slept with their front doors open and could even leave home and simply pull their doors shut without locking them. This was possible because they felt safe, secure in the knowledge that their neighbors were friends and all visitors came with good will. Today that feeling of security does not exist. The prospect of danger and hurt is real and many live in fear. Not only do we keep our doors shut, but they are usually locked, bolted and chained. Despite our fears, there are times that we lose out, if we fail to answer the door.

Consider the eccentric old man who kept his fortune in his home but worried constantly about someone taking it. He rarely left his home and as he advanced in years became so paranoid that he would not leave at all. Living on bread and water he locked himself inside of his home and refused to answer the door. Neighbors, concerned about him, started coming to check on him. Each time they would knock he would shout "go away, you can't have my fortune!" and the neighbors would leave. The women, noticing that he must be running low on food started bringing bags of canned food to his garage door. But again, as they knocked he answered "go away, you can't have my fortune!" The cans of food began to accumulate at his garage door. The grass grew in his yard, and he home was generally unkept. It became obvious the man was in trouble. The neighbors called the police. They

knocked and received no answer and finally decided to break the door down. Once inside, they found the old man, dead on his bed, having starved himself to death. His mattress was stuffed with $100 bills and just a few feet from the garage door there stood hundreds of cans of food. As the coroner filled out his death certificate he wrote in the space marked "cause of death" the words "he wouldn't open the door."

Today there are many people who miss opportunities in life because they have shut themselves away from life's opportunities out of fear, doubt, or distrust. Their refusal to avail themselves of the opportunities that Lord offers them has made them virtual recluses. They cannot achieve because they will not. As Christians, we might lock the doors of our homes, but we should always keep the doors of our hearts open to receive the Word of God and to allow his spirit to move in our lives. If we miss the opportunity to share in the experience of his presence it won't be because opportunity didn't knock, but because we wouldn't answer!

Exposition

This text focuses on two closed doors and the response of Jesus to each situation.

In John, the text verse occurs a week after the resurrection. It was the Sunday following Easter. On Easter Sunday Jesus appeared to his disciples in a miraculous way. They had locked themselves behind closed doors out of fear. They were afraid that the temple guards would come and arrest them, accusing them of stealing the body of Jesus. They feared they would be crucified. They literally feared for their lives. So they shut the doors tight and would not let anyone enter or leave. Verse 19 notes that in the midst of their fear Jesus came, despite the closed doors and appeared among them physically. His announcement of faith to them was simple: "Peace be unto you!" They were afraid of the Jews, but not of Jesus and he appeared to them to calm their fears.

A week later despite having seen the risen Lord and talked with him in their midst, they still met behind closed doors. This time, Thomas who was absent from the first meeting, was with them. They may have wanted to unlock the doors but there was one among them that doubted the resurrection. He had not seen the Lord as the others had and protested that he would not believe until he saw the nail prints in Jesus' hands and could put his fingers in his wounded side. In the midst of this atmosphere of doubt, Jesus came, although the doors were locked shut, with the same announcement of faith

"Peace be unto you!" He encouraged Thomas to touch him, but it was not necessary because Thomas dropped to his knees saying "My Lord, and my God."

In each of these instances Jesus appeared to men even though the doors were locked. They were locked to keep the world out, but they wanted him present and he came. No doors or locks could stop him from coming to those who wanted his presence. However, in the Revelation text verse Jesus sent a message to the church at Laodicea and to the modern church as well. His message was that they had become wealthy, confident and secure in their own ability and were refusing to answer the call to mission. They were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm, a condition the Lord found unacceptable. They had shut the doors of their hearts, confident that they were in control. He was knocking, but they were not answering. He was knocking but they were not answering the door. Unlike the disciples who locked their doors out of fear of the world, but welcomed the presence of the Lord, these Laodiceans simply refused to answer the knocks at their door and Jesus refused to come in.

Jesus said any person that hears his knock and opens to him will share in the sweet communion of his fellowship. Those who do no share in the fellowship will miss out, only because they "wouldn't answer the door!"

When Opportunity Knocks

Opportunity knocks in two ways, materially and spiritually! The question today, is not whether opportunity will knock, but how we will respond when it knocks.

The opportunity to succeed in life knocks on the door of every life. Some respond by opening quickly and grabbing their chance to climb high. We watch them rise with wonder and amazement and how quickly they seem to have risen.

If opportunity knocks for everyone why doesn't everyone answer? If the chance to succeed in a chosen area presents itself, why doesn't everyone answer? The reasons given are various.

SOME CAN NOT HEAR OPPORTUNITY KNOCK: Many times our chance to rise and make it comes but we miss it because we couldn't hear the knock. The noise and distractions of the world have ordered our lives in a way we cannot recognize the advent of new opportunities and miss the chance to act upon them. Like many who have placed ear phones in their ears and turned the music up loud, we can't answer the door because the music

of celebration makes it impossible to hear the knock. While there is nothing wrong with fellowship and festival, there are many who have missed great opportunities in life because their lives were like one continuous party. Some have been to drunk to hear the knock. Some have been to high on drugs to hear the knock. Some have been so high on themselves that they have miss the knock of opportunity in their lives.

SOME ARE AFRAID TO ANSWER THE DOOR: Some have heard the knock but are afraid to answer. These are the individuals who are presented with great opportunities but turn them down because of the fear of failure. It may be a new job, career or direction in life. It may be a new way of living that is healthier, cleaner and safer. Whatever the case there are many who reject it because they are afraid they will fail. That was the case with the prophet Isaiah who thought himself unclean and unworthy to be a prophet. Jeremiah considered himself too young and was afraid to answer his calling in life. It was only after God appeared to them in the midst of their fears that they decided to go forth and respond to the opportunity. One of the great tragedies of life is to live to achieve an old age constantly reflecting on missed opportunities wondering what would happened "if" you had answered the knock of opportunity years before. The first step to defeating failure is to try.

Jesus Knocks at the door

While opportunity knocks for us concerning secular matters, we should also remember that there is a spiritual knock at the door as well.

A famous painting shows Jesus standing outside of a home knocking on the door. On the outside the door has no knob or latch, for these are on the inside. He cannot come in unless the man on the inside unlatches the door for him to enter. In the same way, our Lord must be a welcomed presence in our lives.

While he has come as a reassuring presence to those who have retreated in fear of the world; he will not come to those who refuse to open their hearts to him.

It is necessary for us to open our hearts to him and invite him in our lives because then we acknowledge that without him we can't do anything, but with him we can do anything!

We should open our hearts to him because without God:

—Life loses its luster; Joy loses it song

—Peace loses its serenity; beauty loses its wonder

—Love loses its touch, hope loses its desire and heaven loses its glory!

Without God I could do nothing, without him I surely fail, without him my life would drifting,like a ship without a sail!

When the Lord knocks how will you answer?

Ruth answered saying “your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God.”

Isaiah answered that if the Lord needs somebody “here am I send me”

Joshua answered “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

The three Hebrew Boys answered “Our God is able to deliver us!”

When there is a knock at your door it is customary to ask “Who knocks?” And if there is a familiar voice then to open the door. Today brothers and sisters “Somebody’s knocking at your door!”

Who knocks?

It’s Jesus, who builds up hopes that have been torn down in despair.

It’s Jesus, who renews the strength of those who wait on him, so they mount on wings as eagles, run and not get weary, walk and not faint!

It’s Jesus, who picks up the broken pieces of our lives and puts them back together again!

It’s Jesus, died out on Calvary and rose after three days and nights!

Oh sinner, why don’t you answer?

Somebody’s knocking at your door!

No. 500-Communion

Our Daily Bread

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 17, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." — Exodus 16:15 "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." — Numbers 11:5-6;"Give us this day our daily bread" Matthew 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever asked for something, received it, and then complained about it after you had it a while? There are many today who have asked God for special blessings, which they have received both materially and spiritually. Sometimes their requests involved necessities like food and clothing, and shelter. Sometimes they involved a few luxuries such as jewelry, gourmet foods or stylish attire. Sometimes we have asked for a mate. We are often fortunate to get answers to our prayer request, but soon after we receive our request we start to complain about it and want more or find fault in it although the blessing has neither changed or diminished in anyway. Sometimes such dissatisfaction gets us in real trouble as we reach out for more.

Consider the young fish that enjoyed the good life in the pond. There always seemed to be a sufficient supply of worms in the water for some reason and daily all he had to do to satisfy himself was to simply open his mouth and take one in. He grew big and fat over the months and his life became boring. He started to complain to the other fish in the pond about eating nothing but worms everyday. "This pond has worms everywhere, I don't know where they come from, but I get so sick and tired of worms every day" he said. He tired of the same old thing. One day as he swam around he saw a different kind of worm. It zipped through the water, standing still for a moment then, dashing from one place to another. "Now that's more like it" he thought as he dashed to catch this new delicacy. As he caught up with it

he opened his mouth in a quick gulp but was horrified when he bit down on a sharp hook. In an instant he was yanked from the safety and security of the pond destined for a frying pan. When the other fish in the pond missed him and asked about his whereabouts and old barracuda summed it up this way: "There were worms everywhere ,but he got cooked because he was hooked, when he bit the wrong bait."

As Christians, we have learned to appreciate the blessings of God which we enjoy daily. His blessing bountiful and apparent. We should never take them for granted, but always be grateful for what he has given us without complaint, even as we seek new and creative ways to expand upon them, use them and multiply them. Let us be grateful for our daily bread, even if today's bread is the same as that we received yesterday. After all, some bread, is better than no bread at all.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after leaving slavery. Though freed from slavery the Jews quickly found that they were in the wilderness without food or water and they complained to God about their condition. God answered their prayer by causing the appearance of small wafer shape flakes that were tasty, nutritious and in great enough supply to feed nearly a 500,000 people daily. When the Israelites saw the first appearance of the flakes they called in "manna" or bread from heaven, because they didn't know where it came from. All they knew is that when they needed it, it appeared each day.

Moses was commanded by God to take a tenth of what was collected and to put it in a pot and keep it before the Lord in the Ark of the Covenant. For the entire journey that "manna" that was kept before the Lord never spoiled from the first day, even after they entered the promised land.

Since they were hungry from their journey they were excited about the "Manna" as it was called. They collected just enough to last each day because it would spoil otherwise. On the sabbath God preserved what they collected so that it would last without spoilage. In this manner, for forty years, the Israelites were fed and kept alive. Quail meat, manna and water were the essentials of the diet of two generations of Jews. Miraculously, they neither died, of suffered because of it, but in fact remained strong and grew in numbers.

However, there were some that complained that they were tired of the manna. They wanted some the fine delicacies they enjoyed in Egypt such as

garlic, cucumbers, and leeks (tasty vegetables). They tired of "manna." They began to complain about their simple diet of manna and yearned for a good plate of leeks or green vegetables. They complained that all they had before them was this "manna" or bread from heaven and it was not enough.

Jesus in speaking to the New Testament believers reminded them that their prayer to God is that he would provide their daily bread according to their needs, through him, the bread of heaven. Israel had the presence of Manna daily to sustain them. Today's Christians as Christ, the living bread with them, day by day.

Today there are many who can recall times in their experience when they had less than they have today. Some scuffled to make lives out of meager existences, sustained only by the hope of a better day. There was a time when we prayed to God for the essentials: a good mule, a tractor, a roof over our heads, coal oil for the lantern, good laying hens, and plenty of chickens and hogs. A generation later we prayed for a decent car, a comfortable pair of shoes,electric lights, a good window fan, the luxury of a black and white television set, plenty of home made biscuits, fried chicken and pork chops. Today we pray for brick homes, color television sets with cable, air conditioning, canned biscuits, canned hams and Church's Fried Chicken. Whatever the nature of our blessings we must conclude like the Israelites, "It is manna!" It is a blessing from heaven! Like the Israelites, many today do not know the source of their blessings. All blessings come from God.

—If it's your Volkswagen or your Mercedes Bentz, all blessings come from God.

—Whether its "leather" or "pleather" all blessings come from God.

—Whether it's a natural or a weave, all blessings come from God.

—Whether it's an ice box or a frigidaire, a fan or an air conditioner blowing cold air ..all blessings come from God!

—Whether she's fine and stacked or built like a paper sack, all blessings come from God.

—Whether he's tall and handsome like midsummer dream or short and scrubby like a midnight scream, all blessings come from God!

Our response to our daily manna should not be grumbling and complaints about what we don't have, but a spirit of creative gratitude. What is creative gratitude? It is simply taking what God has given us and maximizing its potential. Creative gratitude is being given a bag of meal each week from God, receiving it thanks, and then applying a little imagination and creativity. Instead of saying Lord all you ever give us is a bag of meal, the person who is creatively grateful makes cornbread on Monday, Dressing on Tuesday,

Sweet bread on Wednesday, Hot water bread on Thursday and Cush (meal mix and gravy) on Friday, and bread sticks on Saturday. Our history has been one taking the blessings that God has given us and making them beautiful. If we all we have received so far is a shot gun house, a card board box and to empty coke cases then, clean your floors, put you a towel over that card board box and make you a coffee table, paint those coke cases and make you two fine stools and praise the Lord the coke cases and the card board box? The idea is not to complain about what we don't have but to give thanks and praise to God for what we do have and then creatively use what we have been given.

Israel complained that all they were getting were getting was their daily bread and that made them unhappy. They should have been happy that it continued but sought ways to creatively use it as a base from which to creatively build and expand.

Our Daily Bread

For the Israelites, their daily bread was that which appeared before them each morning as the dew vaporized. Their daily bread was manna. Our prayer to God however is that he would give us "this day our daily bread." What is our daily bread?

Our daily bread is the daily blessing of health, strength and sustenance we receive from God. Our daily bread takes in the entire scope of essentials necessary for our survival and nurture. It is our food, clothing, shelter. It is our health, and state of mind. Our daily bread is our uninhibited opportunity to grow and mature.

Most importantly our daily bread is the daily presence of the spirit of God in our lives. Jesus reminded the Jews that the Israelites had manna in the wilderness but he is the bread from heaven that refreshes every believer.

When Jesus broke the bread and blessed the cup he reminded them that they symbolized the new covenant agreed, that everyday he would be our bread and the power of his blood would forgive our sins.

John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

As our daily bread he would be a lawyer for us in our courtroom!

As our daily bread he would be a doctor for us in our sick room

As our daily bread he would be the enabling presence that would put food on our table!

No wonder the song writer declared "Bread of Heaven, Bread of

heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

It's the same bread every day, but Hebrews 13:8 reminds us that "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever"

It's the same bread every day, but I heard a song writer declare: "Every day with Jesus, is sweeter than the day before, Everyday with Jesus, I love him more and more."

I'm glad that he's the same Jesus, day after day, because I've never had a:

—Cross that he couldn't help me to bear!
—Mountain that he couldn't help me to climb!
—Doubt that he couldn't help me to remove!
—Burden that he couldn't help me to carry!
—Battle that he couldn't help me to fight!
—Trial that he couldn't help me to get through!
—Test that he couldn't help me to pass!

I'm glad I get the same bread every day. I'm glad I get the same blessings every day.

I heard a song writer declare: "I get a blessing everyday!
On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday..
I get a blessing everyday!

No. 501-Youth

What's In It For Me?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 24, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."
2 King 5:20 A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.Proverbs 28:25

Introduction

Have you ever known people who wanted more than they needed and sought more than they could have? Perhaps one of the most difficult values to teach young people is how to resist the temptation of greed. It is difficult because greed is all around us every day. There are more examples of greed, or conspicuous consumption as sociologists call it, than there are of frugality. Instinctively young people learn to be greedy, not by what they are taught but by what they observe around them. In the long run, greed can be costly as it exacts its toll upon individual character.

Consider the story from Negro folklore of the dog and bone. It seems that a certain dog hungered for something to eat and one day stumbled upon a sizeable bone that was fresh and juicy. The dog was excited about his good fortune. It was a great bone and would satisfy him fully because it would be enough for him to gnaw on for the day, bury and leave some for the next day. As he walked to carry the bone home he passed by a pond. The water looked fresh and he was thirsty, so he decided to stop for a drink. This particular dog had never seen his reflection before so he was very surprised when he leaned over to take a drink and saw another dog in the pond. The dog looked bigger than himself. He also seem to have a bone that was bigger than his bone. The bone in the water looked enticing and inviting. He knew he was fast enough to snatch it from the dog in the water and make a run. The more he stared at the bone in the water the more he wanted it. Finally, he couldn't stand it any longer. He dropped the bone in his mouth and snapped at the bone in the water and only received a mouth full of water. Trying to get more he lost the

bone he had and he went home a hungry and disappointed dog.

Likewise, there are many people today who spend their lives trying to accumulate more, much more than is needed for a comfortable life. The quest itself has often ended in defeat, failure and sometimes death.

As Christians, we have learned not to be greedy, but to take life one day at a time, giving God thanks and praise all along the way. Our question is not "What's in it for me?" but rather "is there an opportunity in it, for me to better serve the Lord." We who are cared for daily by the providence of an all loving God, have no reason to be greedy, because we know that regardless of the circumstance, "God will take care of you."

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in which a young assistant to the prophet Elisha became greedy and was punished for both his greed and his deceit.

Elisha had gained great respect as a man of miracles just like his predecessor Elijah. He had a young man who was his assistant who was named Gehazi. No doubt the young had traveled far and wide with Elisha and was well aware of his spiritual abilities. He also noticed that despite his abilities, Elisha would not use his talents to enrich himself, which frustrated him obviously, because some of the people Elisha performed miracles for were grateful enough to show him liberal kindnesses if he would accept them. This text shows one such occasion after Naaman, a rich and powerful man, had come to Elisha to be healed of leprosy. He received instruction from Elisha, who was so unimpressed with his wealth that he would not even come out of his house to meet him, but sent him instructions by his young assistant. The instructions were simple, bathe seven times in the river and he would be cleansed. He was reluctant, but he complied with the instruction, and Naaman was healed.

Naaman returned to Elisha bearing great gifts for the old prophet but Elisha refused them. Gehazi his servant thought Elisha was ill advised to turn down such riches. He waited until Naaman had gone aways from Elisha's home and then chased him down. He made up a story that some hill country scholars were coming to study with Elisha and on second thought some of the gifts could be used to help accommodate them. He saw the large sacks of money Naaman carried and asked for the equivalent of $2,000. Naaman was so happy about being healed that he doubled the amount. Gehazi had his servants to take the money into his house and hide it as he returned to Elisha with a straight face and tried to hide his act. The prophet however, was able

to read his heart and told him of his deed. He was punished by being given Naaman's disease leprosy because of his greed and deceit.

Greed is a Temptation

One of the greatest temptations for youth today is to succumb to the desire to get more than is needed.

Many have bought into the idea that says "I have more, therefore I am more. I have less, therefore I am less." Thus begins the never ending race to get more, somehow believing that the more I get the closer I come to becoming "somebody." It begins in youth and carries over into adult life. It begins with feeling the need to own a new pair of jeans even though the 10 pair you already own are in perfectly good shape. It's feeling the need to have your 30th pair of earrings. It's having blouses that haven't been worn in months, but constantly buying new ones. It's closets full of handbags and shoes. Its owning enough jewelry to open a jewelry store. Its owning enough fairly new and unused items to run a one family flea market.

What is greed? By definition greed is an excessive desire to have more than one needs or deserves. It is not being greedy to desire a pair of shoes. It may be greedy to desire a different pair of shoes for every day of the week. It is not greedy to want a full plate of food. It may be greedy to walk through the buffet and get more food than you can possibly eat, just because it is there. It is not greedy to desire a girl friend. It may be greedy to desire everyone else's girl friends too. Greed is the desire to be excessive. There are other words we use to describe greed as well: gluttonous, piggish, voracious, and covetous. Greed prompts every person to consider every circumstance from the standpoint of "what's in it for me?" The desire to have more, and get more becomes a motivating factor that guides our actions.

The bible is clear about greed. In no uncertain terms the bible characterizes greed as a sin against God. It is included in the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:17)"Thou shalt not covet" which means we should not desire anything that is beyond what is needed for our survival, especially those things that belong to others. Prov 15:27 "A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live." Prov 28:25 A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper. Greed is so distasteful to God that Christians are warned that church members who profess Christ but are still greedy are to be avoided. We are not even to sit down and eat with a "greedy" so-called Christian. (1 Cor 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator,

or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.) Jesus warned about greed. He told about the man who had filled his barn and was prosperous but decided to tear down his barn to build a bigger barn and get more. Paul warned Christians to beware of greed because it will cause them to leave the faith.

1 Tim 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Teaching young people against the evils of greed is awkward for some parents who give in to the whimpers of their children who want more, more and more. These are clear examples of the folk sayings "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach" and "Your reach exceeds your grasp." It is the duty of every parent to demonstrate moderation in their homes and to insist upon it, despite the wails and howls of your children that they will be outcasts if they don't have more of everything. Teaching children against greed is important because they will become adults who approach life with that question "what's in it for me?" instead of "In what ways can I help?" These children become adults, like many of us, with over charged credit cards. They become adults who take bribes, cheat, steal and swindle, in an effort to get more, more and more.

What's In It for me

The late John F. Kennedy energized the youth of his generation when he made a great challenge to younger generation by saying "ask not what my country can do for me, but what can I do for my country." It was a challenge to rise above greed and personal gain to sacrificial service to help others. Millions of young people of all races rallied to his call joining the peace corps and other volunteer organizations to give of themselves, freely, without thought of personal gain. They served not because they expected to gain, but because they wanted to help others.

That, brothers and sisters, is the Christian ideal, to be of service to others without thought of gain for oneself. Those who have conquered greed usually find life more agreeable. They have more money, not because they make more, but because they throw away less. They enjoy more because they have what they want and what they need. Those who have conquered greed usually find that in most cases their wants are their needs.

Those who serve the Lord however, do not serve in vain. There is something in it for them. John said it clearly "he that overcometh shall inherit

all things."

Those who give sacrificial service to the Lord and work in the vineyard are expecting the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made when he said "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also."

Those who labor for the Lord don't ask that question when they serve in the community of men because it has already been answered by he who sits high. What's in it for me is the promise of eternal life.

A child of God does not have to be greedy, because he already knows that whatever he needs the Lord will provide. He doesn't have to be greedy because if he's:

—Hungry, the Lord will put food on his table

—Naked, the Lord will put clothes on his back

There is something in it for me, but the world can't give it to me. What's in it for me, can only come for the Lord.

The world gives:

-Sorrow, but the Lord gives joy; Sadness but the Lord gives gladness;

—Burdens, but the Lord gives blessing; Despair, but the Lord gives hope

What's in it for me is a home over yonder; where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

No wonder the song writer declared: "I got a new home over in glory and its mine, mine!"

I know its there because I heard Jesus say "In my father's house are many mansions!"

Come and go with me to my father's house!

To my father's house!

To my father's house!

No. 502-Funeral

In Memory of Her...

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 28, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Matthew 26:13

Introduction

Have you ever had a pleasant experience that ended quicker than you desired? It may have been a great vacation, an exciting accomplish ment, or a moment in the spotlight of glory. Perhaps the experience involved a relationship with a favorite person or loved one. When such experiences all to quickly come to an end we are saddened because we want them to last forever. While the experience itself is often short lived, the memory lasts a life time. When the sun sets on a bright and beautiful sunny day, there is for a moment, in the horizon, an afterglow that signifies this was a good day. The sunset was final, but the afterglow lingered long after. It is afterglow, or the memories that sustain us and motivate us as time passes.

Consider the young girl who spent a romantic day with the man of her dreams sitting in a flower garden next to the sea. They shared their thoughts, hopes and their dreams as they smelled the fresh flowers and watched the beauty of the sea. As they talked, occasionally she would pick a flower and hold it in her hand, smell and embrace it she listened and shared the meditations of her heart. It was a grand experience. She felt closer to the man of her dreams. Indeed she felt as if they were one. As the day ended she reluctantly went home, but took her flower and closed it in the pages of her bible. She never saw him again, he was the victim of a fatal accident. After several weeks had passed she sat on her porch and opened her bible to read and her hands fell upon the section where she had placed the flower. A smile came to her face, and she seemed to drift to a distant time as she read the words "I am the rose of sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (Song 2:1). For years, she did the same thing: look at the flower read the verse and smile.

Puzzled as to why she always turned to that same verse and smiled as she stared at the dried and crumpled flower on its pages, her friend finally decided to ask for an explanation. She looked down at the flower and said "Though its petals are dried and lifeless, the moment it recalls remains fresh and full of life. Like the pages of God's word fold neatly around this flower, I am comforted to know that his soul is cuddled safely in God's hand. I smile because I know that though he's gone, he lives."

As Christians, we are comforted in times of sadness and grief by the full knowledge that we and our loved ones are eternally with us as we recall their words and deeds and the great experiences of their lives. Our greatest joy comes when we remember that because Christ lives, they live ..and that is a comforting thought!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he talked to his disciples about the lasting effects of a life of dedicated service. It is the first of two biblical accounts of the women pouring anointing oil on Jesus to signify their faith in him. In Luke 7:37 Jesus was eating at the home of a Pharisee and a woman described as a sinner came and began anointing his feet and wiping them dry with her hair. In this instance Jesus was criticized for allowing a sinful woman to approach him in such a manner. Her act was not further acknowledged. It is not the same instance as the anointing that is referred to in this text, although both involved an anointing with oil and an alabaster box of oil.

The occasion of the text is a supper at the house of Simon the Leper, just days before Jesus was to be crucified. The disciples had assembled themselves with Jesus to eat and fellowship. As they ate a woman called "Mary of Bethany" came into the room with an alabaster box or jar filled with expensive oils and she began to anoint the head of Jesus as they talked. The disciples instantly recognized the value of the oils and were disturbed that the oils were "wasted" on anointing Jesus' head when they could have been sold and used to expand their work, helping the poor, and supporting their ministry. Jesus immediately rebuked them for troubling the woman. He characterized her act as a "good work" that was done "for him." Any such work was never a waste of time, resources or energy.

Jesus, while referring to his own death, spoke the woman's eulogy, long before her death. It was a unique and special pronouncement of her epitaph, regardless to how it may have been forming before she entered the room. He said her act of anointing him was a symbol of what was to be done in just a

few days. She was, in essence, rehearsing the anointing of his body for burial. In just a few days women did actually come to the tomb bearing fine spices and oils to anoint his body. They were the first to know that he had risen. He announced how she would be remembered: "..wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told, in memory of her." She would be remembered because of good works performed for and in the name of the Lord. It was a fitting epitaph for a woman who placed her faith completely in his hands.

Living Your Eulogy

Jesus said Mary of Bethany would be remembered because of the good works she performed. Each time accounts of the gospel are told, her works would serve as a living memorial to her life, for her work would be remembered as well.

Many today worry about how they will be remembered. They ponder what will be said at their own funeral and how they will be eulogized. Some have even ventured to leave instructions as to the events that will take place on that day and have written their own eulogies in attempt to influence how they will be remembered. However, the truth is..”we live our eulogy” every day. News gathering agencies can attest to this fact. Some have entire departments whose job is to write, in advance, the obituaries of great and famous people in preparation for any sudden or catastrophic death. At the death of a president or some prominent personality, their life story is instantly told, complete with video clips and photographs covering decades of public life. Each new deed is simply added to the collection. It will end with one final line..the date of death. Eulogies are lived day by day.

Like Mary of Bethany, those who expect to be remembered favorably by our Lord are those who first acknowledge him as their personal savior and then perform good works in his name. For Mary the work she is remembered for, even today, was nothing earth shattering. It was no great philosophical achievement. It was not a great conquest. It was a simple act, a small thing, but never-the-less important. Those who are remembered today are remembered for their good works and acts of kindness to others. Within the family circle, in the church, in the community, its the little things that many people remember. Sometimes the acts of kindness performed are considered wastes of time by others who could envision more practical applications of both time and resources. Why bring food to a hungry person..sell it to them and make money! Why, sit with a sick or injured person without charge when

this could be a fine source of income? Why volunteer time to help others when the time could be used to improve our own impoverished state? These are the questions the world asks of those who commit themselves to the "good work" that Christ speaks of in this text. Instead of praise, those who are perform the "good work" are usually characterized as "fools" because of the "good work." However, it is the very good works "that we perform" that will form the basis for our own, praise worthy, record of service that will recorded in the annals of glory.

Good Works are expected of every Christian because the glorify the father. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In Acts 9:36 Tabitha was praised among believers for her "good works." All she did was to sit in her home and to make coats for and clothing items for needy people, but it was her good work. When she died Peter was called and after prayer God restored her life again, because of her "good work." Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we are created with one purpose and that is to perform "good works." Not necessarily great works, but good works. Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:10 reminded him that the Sainted widows of the church must first be considered for their "good works" before anything else. In Titus 2:7 we are encouraged to live a life that demonstrates a pattern of good works. Without a doubt good works are expected of every Christian, and it is those good works that make up the lines of our eulogy which we write every day of our lives.

Rest from Our Works

Those who work in the vineyard of faith can also expect a peaceful rest from their works and a blessing from God. Revelation 14:13 says "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

There is a reward for the faithful. Paul writing to Timothy looked back on his life of good works and concluded:"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:.." 2 Timothy 4:7-8a

For those who labor in the vineyard, there is a crown!

For those who live the Christian life in word and in deed, there is a crown!

Today we eulogize a friend that has lived an enviable life, full of good works: small kinds acts to her family, church and friends.

We offer a eulogy that has already been given by our Lord to any saint who lives a life of service. The works themselves give the testimony.

The works testify..she visited the sick!

The works testify..she was a friend to the poor!

The works testify..she gave of herself to help others!

The works testify..she was a witness to the power of almighty God.

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when the wrote: May the work I've done, speak for me. When I'm resting in my grave, there is nothing that can be said, may the work I've done speak for me. The work I've done it seems so small. Sometimes it seems like nothing at all.

But when I stand before my God, I want to hear him say well done,

... may the work I've done speak for me."

—

A few days ago Ozella Strawder went home to rest from her her. The words of Jesus ring in our ears: "What this woman has done will be told, in memory of her."

No. 503-Usher Anniversary

When He Comes In

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 27, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Luke 14:23 "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Psalm 24:9

Introduction

The church has an open door policy! It is open to any and all who will come! Through its doors come people from all walks of life. The teacher, the preacher, doctor, lawyer and the home decorator, all walk through its doors. Those who stand at the door and greet the masses of men and women who come to assemble before God have an awesome task because they are often the first personalities that are encountered along the way. They know the importance of every man, woman and child that walks through the church's doors and it is evident in their warm smiles, firm handshakes and expressions of cordiality. Every person that comes to a worship service measures high in the estimate of our Lord, for each is a soul seeking to be fed with bread from heaven.

Consider the young usher who was new to his church usher board. The chief usher gave him instructions to reserve the first seats in the auditorium for the important guests who were going to arrive and to escort all others to secondary seats. The young usher was eager to carry out his task and to carry it out to the letter. As he stood at the door a man the community called "Silly Willy" came to the front door. The young usher smiled when he saw him and immediately carried "Silly Willy" to one of the first seats. A while later another man who wore a tattered coat and crumpled hat came through the door; it was "Begging Bob." A smile came to the young usher's face and he immediately carried "Begging Bob" to one of the first seats. Finally "Praying Penny" arrived with her prayer book under her arm, much to the disgust of many of the members who thought she was quiet uncultured to go around town praying for complete strangers in the oddest places. The young usher

carried her to a first seat as well. When the chief usher returned he was upset that the best seats in the service had been given to "Silly Willy", "Begging Bob" and "Praying Penny." He pulled the young usher aside and asked him why he chose to do such a thing. The young usher said "You told me to save the first seats for important people. That's what I did. When my grandpa was sick, Mr. Willy quit his job to sit with until he was well. Not only my grandpa but others too. Folks called him silly. When I was in college, I ran out of money, I didn't know it but Mr. Bob went from house to begging money to help me with my tuition. No for me only, but for others too. Folks call him a begger. I was sitting on the bus one day feeling all by myself when Miss Penny sat next to me and prayed for me even though people stared. To me these ARE important people. Doesn't the bible say he that is great among let him be your servant?" At that the chief usher was speechless. He put out three additional chairs and that night, sitting besides the governor, the mayor and council president were "Mr. Willy, Mr. Bob and Miss Penny" servants in the kingdom of God.

As Christians we know that everyone who enters a church building is special in the sight of God. There are no little people or important people, for all share equally in the grace of our Lord. While we never know who may walk in our doors, we do know that every soul we see, is a child of the King.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable in which Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is available to men and women of all walks of life.

This text is one of three of teachings in chapter 14 about the kinds of people who are invited to the kingdom of God and how they are to be treated. He had been invited to the home of one of the rulers of the Pharisees for dinner on the Sabbath. However, he noticed how they struggled among them for the finest and most important seats at the table. Therefore in verse 8 he gave the first teaching in which he said persons invited to a feast should not seek the seats of importance but wait to be seated. "When ye are invited go and sit down in the lowest place." Doing so, he said, would save the embarrassment of having to move when someone of more importance enters. It is better to be asked up than to be asked down. In verse 12 he makes a second point by noting that those who plan banquets usually have an invited guests list, including some and excluding others. However, he said they should invite even those people who are not favored guests who cannot repay the kindness with reciprocal banquet.

At verse 16 he told a parable that indicated the nature of the people who are invited into the kingdom of God. A certain man gave a supper and invited many people, who all, for one reason or the other began to make excuses for not attending. One said he had just bought a piece of ground and had to go see it. Another said he had just bought five yoke of oxen and he had to test them. Another said he was a newlywed and could not come. Angered at their excuses the master sent out word for his servant to bring in the poor, maimed, lame and the blind. When that was not enough the master then ordered that he go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, "that my house may be filled."

Initially the text shows how the opportunity to posses the Kingdom of God was initially presented to the Jews alone. However, the Jews rejected its message and it was thereby taken to the entire gentile world, to anyone who would hear. Secondly, it showed the importance of every person who comes to the banquet table of the Savior. Whether blind, lame, maim, Jew or Gentile, each is important and should be treated as such because they have a special invitation from the master.

We Never know Who's Coming In

The position of usher in the church is one of vital importance, because those who are greeted are first met by the ushers. Each usher should remember that everyone who walks in the doors of the church has an open invitation to worship and has a right to be present, regardless of personal opinions. Because of the universal nature of the people who attend any given worship service, ushers "never know who's coming in the door." The guests could range from the homeless man on the street to the richest woman of the city. The troubled hooker on the street who sees the sign of the cross and enters or the famous evangelist who comes to preach are all welcome in the house of God. Ushers never know who's coming in the door, therefore it behooves them to remember that everyone is welcome in the house of God.

Since ushers don't know who may walk in, it is best that they treat everyone royally by being a positive presence in the service. Sometimes ushers can repel visitors by rude and distasteful remarks that were meant in good faith but unpolished. Dr. Leslie Parrot author of the "Usher's Manual" suggests that ushers should accentuate the positives by saying "we will seat you in a moment" rather than "you can't go in now." In another example he noted that saying "Since the service has started we have a place for you near the back" is better than saying "you're late, you'll have to sit in the back."

Since first time visitors may not know the church or its members, even the tone of the ushers voice can make all the difference in the world in whether or not a person feels welcome or rejected.

Tone of voice can make a great difference. Consider the poor farmer who could neither read or write who received a letter from his son in college. He went to a friend who was disturbed at being interrupted and asked him to read the letter to him. The friend, noticeably angry, read the letter in a rough crude voice "Dear Dad, I am in college I need some help. Some money please." The father heard the rough sound of his friend's voice and said "I'm not giving him anything if he gon' talk to me in that tone of voice." So he took the letter to another friend and told him about the rude way his son talked to him.

This friend was very soft spoken and patient when she read the letter it had a very pleasing sound, almost pleading. After the father heard the second reading he responded "That's better, I believe I'll help now." Tone of voice can make all of the difference in the world. Usher's never know who is coming in the door, therefore they should speak to everyone in a pleasant tone of voice.

The usher is a doorkeeper, but more than that, the usher is a child of God. His love should beam from them each and every day.

Who's Coming In?

After the usher has greeted and seated the guests, its important that he or she remember that not only is an usher a "greeter, meeter and seater", but the usher is also a "singer, prayer, and shouter." Just like those who come in the door come to worship the king, so does the usher. No usher should get so busy that they themselves never hear the gospel preached or the Lord's praises sung by the choir.

While the usher never knows who may come in the front door, he or she does know who will be in the midst, if worshipers are in the right spirit. In that respect, both the usher and the worshiper have one thing in common, they have both come to meet the king.

So every usher should remember the words of Psalm 95:2 "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

You may be an usher but that doesn't mean you can't pray "Our father which are in heaven"

You may be an usher but that doesn't mean you can't sing "Father I

stretch my hands to thee."

You may be an usher but that doesn't mean that you can't lift your voice and proclaim "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I've tried him for myself"

While it's good for us to keep our eyes on the door and watch who's coming in, we need to keep our spirit focused on the altar waiting "for the Lord to come in."

I know he will come in because Jesus said in Mat 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Rev 3:20 he said "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

I don't know about you, but I've found out that powerful things happen in the life of a church "when he comes in." When he comes in:

—Sons and daughters start to prophesy; old men dream dreams; young men see new visions

When he comes in, he will:

—Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties

—Strengthen us in our weakness; Encourage us in our trials

—Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties

—Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles

I heard David declare:"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Who is the king of glory? The Lord Strong and Mighty!

Who is the king of glory? The Lord mighty in battle!

We never know who comes in because the world wants to know about Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith!

Open the door of your heart..and he will come in!

No. 504-Funeral

A Good Man's Steps

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 30, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delights in his way." Psalm 37:23

Introduction

Have you ever followed in someone's footsteps? Did they leave a clear and visible trail? As you attempted to follow them did their steps always lead you to your desired destination? Most people have been mentored by someone who was older, wiser and more experienced. Whether it was a teacher, preacher, parent or neighbor, almost everyone has had someone to act as a role model for them. There is no better role model for a man than the life lived by a good father. His trail may not have taken the same direction in terms of careers and aspirations, but a man who studies the steps of a good father's trail will most likely find happiness.

Consider the boy whose father died before he grew to knew him. All his life he had heard accounts of the noble life his father led and he wished that he could have known him. One night he dreamed that a pair of magic shoes was given to him. These shoes would allow him to walk in his father's footsteps and show him the course of his father's life. The boy put on the shoes and suddenly began to walk in an endless circle, round and round at a dizzying pace. Quickly the boy took off the shoes in frustration until he heard a voice say "to know the trail, you must walk in the shoes." Trying the shoes again the boy found himself walking to the left and to right, bumping into walls until suddenly he dropped to his knees. He could not get up no matter how hard he tried. A second time, he took off the shoes until the voice spoke again "to know the trail, you must walk in the shoes." In his third try he found the shoes walked in a straight steady path, there were no circles or meanderings to the left or right. The direction was clear. After he walked for a while the shoes stopped and began to sparkle on his feet. The voice said "Your father's path was confused at one time. He moved with indecision and a made a few

mistakes, until he met the Lord. After then, his path was clear and his way straight. If you desire a quest in life, no matter what direction you take, you must remember his trail, and walk in his shoes."

As Christians, we understand the value of good role models. They live lives before us that epitomize our quest. While we pattern after them and revere their lives, we always remember that those whose steps we follow at times may wander but we remain focused on Jesus completely, and take no chance of getting lost.

Exposition

This text focuses on David at a point when he is reflecting on his life's trail, reviewing his steps, and assessing the accuracy of his course.

David, described as a man after God's own heart, led a life whose trail took him in many directions. As a shepherd boy he learned to keep his father's flock, displaying courage as he fought off wild animals in its defense. He displayed courage as he defeated the giant Goliath and became an instant celebrity in the land. As a young adult his life took another course when he became an innocent fugitive from the rage of King Saul. Hiding in the hills and moving from place to place, he was hunted as a criminal, without having committed a crime. As a young man, he found himself anointed three times to serve as king: once by God, once by Judah and another by Israel. It was a new step, serving as king of the land he had worked as a shepherd. He was administering rule over the hills which had become his refuge, but he rose to meet that challenge as well. He meandered and walked a crooked path for a dark period in his life. He took another man's wife and killed her husband in an attempt to hide his sin.

He was depressed, sick in his soul and afflicted with venereal disease in punishment for his deeds and his soul cried out "create in me oh Lord a clean heart and renew in me a right spirit." Now, in his old age, after reigning as king of Israel for 40 years, David leaves his spiritual memoirs for his son Solomon who would follow him as king and to all others who would read them. His word of wisdom to those that followed him was: "those who are characterized as "good" are those who allow God to establish the pace of their journey;" which is the meaning of this text verse.

It was not the journey itself that David focused upon, because for each person may take a different direction, but the pace of the journey made the difference. Ordered steps, are those that have been established by God.

The man whose steps are ordered is that man who tries to live his life in

line with the will of God. Regardless of his profession or direction in life, David's words suggest that God delights in the way of those whose steps are governed by his law.

He added that such a pace may appear without its benefits. It may appear unprofitable. It may appear that others succeed at a faster pace and rise higher when they choose to ignore the life of principle and discipline. He warned in verse one of the same chapter to: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers nor be envious of the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass."

He noted that those who choose to walk in the path of the Lord need not fear material loss because of the choice. David concluded in verse 25: "I have been young, and now I'm old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed, begging for bread." It was a word of advice to a son that would follow. It was a word of wisdom from one who had lived a full life, giving advice to others who must pick up the trail..

Steps in Life

Why is it so important to have our steps ordered by God? Why would David suggest that the only man that can be called "good" is one whose steps are established and maintained by the power of God himself? Perhaps it is because without God's guidance, we are likely to follow the standard patterns of steps that men follow today. Without the intervention of God, the steps men have taken many directions which include:

BABY STEPS: There are many men today, who despite their adulthood still approach life with baby steps, afraid if they step out on their own they may fail in some small way. They are unsure of themselves and they move through life never going far because they approach life with baby steps. These are men who never achieve their potential or rise to lofty heights. They are deigned to mediocrity and a life of baby steps.

SIDE STEPS: Those who side step are those who attempt to avoid life's challenges. The road to success is difficult and filled obstructions. Many have found it easier to simply side step the challenges and ignore them in hopes that they will go away.

MISSTEPS: Missteps are those instances in life where we attempted to make a step and stumbled. Our missteps are our mistakes, errors in judgment and miscalculations. They are the children we abandoned, jobs we forfeited and the money and resources that we recklessly threw away.

Our missteps may also include the opportunities we missed, the educa-

tion we lost, the goal we abandoned and the love we allowed to sour. Every life has a few missteps.

FANCY STEPS: There are many who try to make it through life with a variety of fancy steps that border on the unethical and illegal. There are **TWO STEPPERS:** Those who play both ends against the middle, lead double lives to the hurt and injury of others; **SHUFFLERS**, those who attempt to achieve by the quick con, cheating others with smooth talk and the ability to shuffle in and shuffle out; **MOONWALKERS,** Who appear to be walking forward but are actually going backward. They dress good, look good, and drive fine cars, without an education, or a legitimate source of income come. Unfortunately, there are too many among us who live their lives dependent on fancy steps.

HOPS AND SKIPS: These are they who try to make it through life by taking short cuts. They sacrifice quality for quantity. They substitute symbol for substance. They hop or skip around the meal to get to the dessert. They want material success, but they skip the idea of employment. They want a child, they skip the idea of marriage and hop into bed. Many skip school daily in hopes of hopping a ride on a fast train that will carry them no where.

With all of these possibilities, no wonder it is important to have our steps ordered by the Lord.

A Good Man's Steps

Finally, brothers and sisters, it is important that we consider a good man's steps. These are steps that are ordered by God. They are not fancy shuffles, moonwalks, hops, skips, sidesteps and fearful baby steps. They are the ordered strides of a man who is confident that no matter what life brings, God will make a way.

The good man's steps are measured. They are steps rooted in confidence that each step made in the spirit of truth will draw closer the goal. Men who measure their steps are not in a hurry, but are willing to wait for God to provide the opportunity at the right moment and at the right time. The man whose life is measured knows the importance of prayer and devotion to God. Through prayer he can:

—Reach out for the intangible; look up for the invisible

—Listen for the inaudible; Long for the incomparable

—Believe in the incredible; Wait for the inevitable

A Man who lives a life with ordered steps lives a life of faith as well. His faith prompts him to:

—Follow where God leads him; Listen when God speaks to him

—Claim what God promises him; Receive what God gives him.

Such a man knows that prayer is the key to the kingdom but faith unlocks the door. The trail of men who have been men of prayer and faith shows places where they have taken GIANT STEPS. Those were great leaps of faith and trust in the Lord.

Giant steps are made by those who begin to fight the unbeatable foe, climb the unscalable mountain, and achieve the impossible dream.

Those who make giant steps do so because they have a great confidence in themselves and in God. They are willing to make giant moves because no matter how big the quest they know there is "someone greater" who can carry the load.

A good man doesn't worry as he walks through the wilderness of hard times, because he knows the Lord will make a way somehow!

A good man doesn't worry whether his steps take him from the mountain peak or to the raging sea, because he knows that come what may from day to day "my heavenly father watches over me!"

A good man doesn't worry when his steps lead him through the valley of the shadow of death, "for thou art with me."

A good man doesn't worry when it comes time to step out of this life's shoes. He just keeps singing "I got shoes, you got shoes, all of God's chillun' got shoes, When I get to heaven gon' put on my shoes and ..

Walk!

Walk!

Walk all over God's heaven!

—

For eighty seven years Eulos Dyer, Sr. blazed a trail. He was a good man who walked with ordered steps. If you would share the path he blazed, you must walk in his shoes!

No. 505-Inspiration

Beauty Is As Beauty Does

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 1, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Introduction

Have you ever seen what appeared to be beautiful people, only to find out that despite their appearance, they were just the opposite? Ideally, the way we appear on the outside should suggest what's on the inside, but that is not always case. While there are many who take meticulous care of their outer appearance they neglect the inner qualities that contribute to real beauty. The world is rarely interested in inner beauty, only what it sees. Often the substance of spirit is sacrificed for the symbolism of the superficial.

Consider the old man who walked through the park one evening and came upon a frog. The old man who moved very slowly was startled a bit because the frog began to talk. "If you pick me up and kiss me, I'll make your every dream come true." The old man was amazed, he stopped and sat on a park bench and watched as the little frog jumped upon his lap and continued to talk. "I am a beautiful princess and I have been cursed to remain as this ugly frog until someone recognizes me for who I am." The old man turned his head to the side and again stared in amazement. "If you pick me up and kiss me, I can make you happier than you ever dreamed." The old man remarked "I'm suppose to believe you are a beautiful princess." The frog chirped "that's right, just pick me up and kiss me." The old man leaned over picked up the frog, stuck it in his pocket and started walking out of the park. The frog yelled "you picked me up, but aren't you going to kiss me? Don't you want a beautiful princess that can make you happier than you ever dreamed?" The old man answered "At my age, despite your beauty, nothing can make me happier than owning the world's only talking frog!" So many people today are only interested in the outside, they are not interested in the

inside at all.

The care of the outer appearance is the profession of cosmetologists, plastic surgeons, fashion designers and others who specialize in making men and women look their best. However, even the best beauticians are powerless to change those qualities of character and personality that make one beautiful on the inside. That requires the master's touch.

As Christians we praise God daily for helping us to appreciate the value of inner beauty that has come from being blessed spiritually with a saved soul and a loving heart.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's selection of David to serve as the second king of Israel. It illustrates graphically, the idea that God judges beauty of character, rather than beauty of appearance.

Israel had a failed experience with King Saul, its first king. According to 1 Samuel 9:2, Saul was a good looking man on the outside. He was a "choice" man, suggesting that he was among the cream of the crop of the eligible men of his generation. Not only was he among the "choice" men, he was also a "handsome" good looking man. He was easy to look upon. Thirdly, he was a young man full of strength, energy and stamina. He was the best looking man in all of Israel. In terms of physical appearance, he was head and shoulders above the rest. The selection of Saul was not accidental. The people clamored for a king and rejected God's leadership through the religious leaders. They wanted a hero king that would lead them like other nations. God decided to give the people what they wanted. They were given a leader who had all the outward appearances of attractiveness and charisma that pleased the crowds. The people were happy. Soon however, they discovered that what Saul had on the outside did not match what he had on the inside. First they found that despite his manly physique, that he was a coward before the dreaded Goliath. As Goliath raged to fight just one Israelite and save the lives of others, Saul sent a young shepherd boy to fight, rather than go himself. Later, they found that he possessed a jealous spirit, a vengeful and violent personality and an uncontrollable anger. All of these combined to make Saul, despite his outward beauty, an ugly man in the sight of God, which resulted in his loss of the kingdom and fall from grace.

This text introduces the next king, David who was selected, not because of the strength of his physical appearance but because of his strength of Character. Samuel went to the home of Jesse and without announcing his

purpose reviewed all of his sons. First to come before him was Eliab who appealed to Samuel because of stunning physical presence (1 Samuel 16:7). God warned Samuel not to concern himself with the outer looks, but to be guided by the character. Other sons came: Abinadab, Shammah and four others. One son did not come, because he did not have the look of a king. He was a shepherd boy who loved to play the harp, write psalms and sing. In the eyes of his family, he certainly couldn't rank as leadership tender. However, when Samuel saw him, bright eyed, with sun tanned rough skin (v12) the Lord said "arise, anoint him, for this is the one." While he was nice looking and healthy, David was selected to serve as king of Israel because of his character rather than his outward appearance. The beauty of his heart began to show itself soon. In the face of danger, he displayed courage and killed Goliath. When persecuted by Saul, he demonstrated a capacity to love his enemies. When he had fallen in sin, he demonstrated a repentant spirit. He was truly a beautiful person.

Beautiful People

The word cosmetology comes from the Greek Word "Kosmos" which means adorning or order. Cometologists are people who specialize in reordering appearances to promote attractiveness. Generally they focus on the skin, hair and nails. Their wares include: conditioners, permanent waves, shampoos, sprays, straighteners and cuts, makeup blushes, face powder, lipstick, rouge, eyeliners shadow, mascara, nail polish and a variety of other services. All all designed to promote attractiveness. However, while the assistance of a good cosmetologist can help increase attractiveness, there is nothing your beautician can do after someone meets you and finds out that the pages of the book are not equal to the cover.

Beauty must come from the inside.

Those who have been gifted with good looks, must be extremely careful, both males and females. There are many who take advantage of good looking people and want to use them for their own purposes. There was a time when only men were predators, sizing up women from the head to the toe, looking for what Lionel Richie and the Commodores called a "Brick House." Today, however even women are among the predators as they search high and low looking for the perfect "Hunk." Those who are blessed with good looks must be extremely careful. In scripture, Joseph was a good looking man who was hired to work in the home of Potiphar. While the boss was gone his wife was awed by his good looks and chased him down. She set a trap for him and when

he refused sex she went to her husband and charged him with rape in her anger. Proverbs 11:22 says giving a woman good looks without self control is like putting a gold ring in hogs nose. It is wasted. Good looking people must exercise restraint because the world is filled with those who could care less about the heart, but only think of "Knocking the Boots" as the "Bump and Grind."

Absalom was a good looking man, but was evil on the inside. Jezebel was a beautiful woman but is known as one of the world's ugliest women because of her evil ways.

What makes beautiful people? Galatians 5:22 holds the key. Beautiful people are those who demonstrate the fruit of the spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control." When you find a person who has these virtues all in the same package, regardless to what the outside looks like, you have a beautiful person.

Christian Beauticians, barbers and others who specialize in making people physically attractive have a great opportunity to witness for the Lord in the most fertile evangelism field in the world: the barber shop and the beauty shop. People come to both expecting to listen to something. They usually hear the latest gossip, but wouldn't it be enriching if between the wash and the dry, Christian beauticians found ways to suggest peace, joy, self control, and kindness, to their customers. What about the patrons? Wouldn't the beauty shop or barber shop be a good place to witness and help a person leave more attractive inside as well as the outside?

The Master's Touch

There are some beauticians and barbers who are so good at what they do, that when people leave their shops they look like brand new people. When a cosmetologist can take a hard luck case and turn her into a beauty queen, it's obvious that he or she has that special touch that makes the difference. It's the master's touch.

Today friends I want to introduce you to the world's greatest cosmetologist, who has the master's touch. He is a cosmetologist because the "Kosmos" is the world and setting the world and its people in order is his business. He specializes in hard luck cases. He specializes in taking that which is:

—Ugly and making it beautiful; Deplorable and making it adorable; Weak and making it strong; failing and make it victorious.

I want to introduce you to somebody who can:

—

Wash you in his blood

—Set your feet on solid ground

—Give you a permanent, new walk, talk and song to sing

—Straighten our Crooked lives

—Press out rough places

I want to introduce you to somebody who has shops in every, country, state, and city. Not only does he have shops for you to come to him, but he also makes house calls, 24 hours a day. Call him in the morning. Call him in the evening. Call him in the midnight hour!

If you want to know how good he is, just talk to those who been touched by his hands!

Woman at the Well: He made me beautiful on the inside. Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!

By what authority does he operate? Where did he get his license? When did he pass the state board?

I hear him answer: Before Abraham was I am. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, The author and finisher in the faith, all power is in my hands!

What's the name of his shops? "Jes-Us" His name is Jesus and he operates Just for Us!

Jesus, the lily of the valley

Jesus, the bright and morning star

He died out on calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

I hear him declare: "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest!

No. 505-Mother's Day

That's A Mother For You

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof." 1 Kings 3:26-27

Introduction

How do you know you are a mother? Is it by the fact that you have given birth to a child? Does that qualify one for motherhood? Those who are mothers and have been for some time have no problems knowing whether they are mother's or not. Some give the answer humorously. You know you are a mother when you girls both come home with notes for you bake cookies for the school P.T.A. You know you are a mother when your daughter comes home from college with a U-Haul trailer filled with clothes for you to wash. You know you are a mother when you three year old calls you to retrieve his toothbrush out of the toilet. You know you are a mother when your freezer is packed with 10 cases of Girl Scout Cookies that your daughter couldn't sell to anyone else. You know you are a mother when you find yourself singing the theme song from Barney all day long. Those who are mothers have no trouble finding out whether or not they fit the general description.

A homeless woman and her daughter came upon a man who gave them a place to stay for the night. The man's home was next to a busy intersection that was always filled with noise. The woman closed her eyes and slept soundly. A train passed. She slept soundly. Children yelled as they ran down the streets. Horns honked. A car sporting giant size "boom box" speakers shook the building, but yet she continued to sleep, although the radio blared, the television was sky high and there was general pandemonium everywhere. However late over into the night, a remarkable thing happened. The woman set up straight on the edge of her makeshift bed and moved quickly to a back room where her little girl was sleeping. Despite the noise and the

constant drain on the patience of the sane, she heard her baby cry. The man looked at her as she embraced the child and said "Now that's a mother for you."

The love that a mother displays for her children is the same kind of love that God displays for his people. Despite the size and complex nature of the universe, he still hears the smallest baby cry. His ear can distinguish our prayers and he knows each of his children by name. We praise him and thank him for just being himself, we also praise our mothers for taking care of us better than we take care of ourselves.

Exposition

This text focuses on King Solomon as he gives a powerful test of motherhood.

The original intent of the text is to demonstrate the wisdom of Solomon. He had become king at an earlier age although he was not the direct heir to the throne of David by family protocol. Now, as king, he would have to serve as the military leader of the people, lawmaker, chief executive and the nation's only supreme court judge. As a new and young king he would have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the learned mean of the king's court that he could make fair and wise decisions as the nation's chief judge, as well as prove himself as a lawmaker, executive and military leader.

God talked to Solomon in a dream and gave him the opportunity to realize any dream of his heart. Sensing the enormity of his new position, young Solomon asked God for wisdom. God was so impressed with Solomon that he gave him wisdom, wealth and fame as well. As the nation's only lawmaker, he ordered the construction of the temple of the Lord and placed taxes on the people to underwrite its costs. As chief executive, he executed treaties with the enemies of the nation, often bringing peace by marrying the daughters of foreign kings, forcing delicate alliances that insured the integrity of his reign. No doubt, Solomon was leadership material, for even at a young age, he was dynamic in his vision and commitment to building the kingdom.

The supreme test of Solomon's ability came when it was time for him to act as the nation's supreme judge. At regular intervals, at his own choosing, the king had to sit and listen to the appeals of persons unsatisfied with decisions made by some of the king's appointed lower court judges. Acting as a judge was the ultimate test of Solomon's ability to lead as king of Israel. If he made foolish decisions, the credibility of his reign would be in question.

The first difficult test of his wisdom involved deciding the dispute of two

mothers that argued over a baby. Both women shared living quarters and both had babies about the same age and the same sex. However, one of the women rolled in her sleep and smothered her baby to death. The dead babies were switched in the night and the two women disputed between themselves as to the identity of the real mother. The case was so difficult that none of the lower courts could decide it. What they had before them was the word of one woman over another with no clear cut way of making a decision about which one was telling the truth. They both talked with pain in their voices. They both appeared angry at each other for the deed. Both appeared to be the rightful mother of the living child. Baffled, the lower courts sent the case to Solomon. It drew considerable attention, because it would be the first great test case of his administration. It would set the tone of public perception of this young king. After hearing the case, Solomon decided the matter by ordering the living baby to be cut in half, giving a portion to each woman. One woman accepted the decision without debate. She thought it was fair. One woman pleaded with Solomon not to kill the child but to give it to the other. She would rather see the child alive, but in someone's care than to die unnecessarily. To Solomon, that was the deciding factor. It identified the real mother and he ordered the baby to be given to the pleading mother.

The episode drew initial attention to the wisdom of Solomon, but it also focused attention on the nature of true motherhood. The virtues of a real mother were exemplified and demonstrated uniquely in this short text. "Love" became the single virtue that decided this case. It is also the single virtue, demonstrated through action, that decides real mothers in any generation.

Virtues of Motherhood

What are the qualities that identify good mothers? Is it that she simply raises and feeds her children? Hogs and pigs are raised. With just a little slop in a nasty trough, they grow big and fat. Certainly just raising children does qualify one for motherhood. Just having children without being there for them is not a virtue either. What are the virtues that identify a woman as a mother?

Compassion. Women who demonstrate compassion and feeling for their children are demonstrating motherhood. Isaiah 49:15 asks the question: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" By nature, mothers show concern and care for their children. They are concern about their health and safety and demonstrate it daily. There are many women who have given birth to children,but have no

compassion for them. Some give birth for hire, such as surrogate mothers. Others are reluctant mothers who have no compassion for their offspring. However, a real mother is compassionate.

Comforting Spirit. Women who demonstrate a comforting spirit exemplify another virtue of motherhood. Isaiah 66:13 points the way real mothers comfort their child, as an example of God's relationship to his people. The good mother has an open door policy and a good listening hear. She is a comfort to her children in times of difficulty and stress. She is an understanding and supportive shoulder to lean on, but yet realistic about life and its difficulties. Good mothers comfort their children.

Virtuous Spirit. A good mother demonstrates a range of qualities that the bible describes the attributes of "virtuous" woman. Proverbs 31 gives a listing of these attributes that range from caring for her family's nurture to helping others in the community. She is extolled as mother for her children a good wife to her husband. A virtuous woman is worth her price in rubies. She is invaluable. However, Proverbs 12:4 notes: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones." The spirit of industry is a character trait of the virtuous woman.

That's A Mother For You

It is easy to talk about motherhood, but it is best taught by example. Young girls learn about motherhood from watching their mothers. Young boys learn what motherhood is about from watching their mothers, not from reading books. They watch the actions of good mother's they know and they conclude ..."that's a mother for you."

When Jochebed heard that Pharaoh was about the kill all of the boy children of Israel, she risked her own life to hide young Moses in a basket floating on the Nile River (Exodus 2:3). She may have lost her life, but she was going to save his, "that's a mother for you."

A widow woman that was down to her last cup of meal and cruse of oil, (1 Kings 17:12) put her trust in God when the man of God came by, and the Lord made sure that she never ran out of food. She trusted in God to provide her daily bread, "that's a mother for you."

Although Hannah was barren and prayed hard for a child, she took her young son and placed him in God's hand at the temple (1 Samuel 1:22). She loved him, but she wanted him to be in God's hands, "that's a mother for you."

A good mother knows, that while its important to see to it that her children have clothes on their backs and shoes on their feet, it is also important that

they put on the whole amour of God, girding their loins with truth, wearing the breastplate of righteousness;covering their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;taking with them the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. (Ephesians 6)

A good mother knows that while it's important to have a house in which their children can live, it's also important that their children know their way to the house of God.

A good mother knows, that while it's good to insure that her children get a good education and learn their school lessons, its more important that they know the Lord for themselves.

Every Christian mother something about the Lord!

When you know the Lord, it doesn't matter:

—How deep the waters of affliction may flow, for old ship of zion has landed many a thousand.."ain't no danger in God's waters!"

—How strong the winds blow, because we serve a God who speaks to the winds and they obey his will

—How rough the road becomes, because we serve a God who specializes in making crooked places straight and rough places plain.

—How high the mountains we encounter, because our God specializes in turning mountains into molehills

—How dark our lonely hours because, because we know that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning"

Mother's keep the faith! Hold on to God's unchanging hand!

When you way gets dark, hold on!

When you feel discouraged, hold on!

When you feel all alone, hold on!

God is still on the throne!

No. 507-Communion

Worthy Is The Lamb

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 15, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." — Matthew 10:38;"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." — Revelation 5:11-12

Introduction

Have you ever been told that you were not qualified for a position? Those who have been in the employment market or have sought special opportunities, no doubt, have heard that statement made. Many have lost jobs, missed promotions and other chances to advance themselves because they were not "qualified." Sometimes that did not have enough education. Sometimes they lacked training. Sometimes they were disqualified because they were over qualified! Many people spend their lives trying to qualify, only to discover that qualification standards, among men, seem to change frequently, making it even more difficult to measure up.

Consider the former slave who had been told that he had the right to vote. It was an honor for a man who had been a slave all of his life to be able to go to the ballot box and a cast a vote like his former masters. The day he went to register there was a large crowd of former masters standing in the door. "Where you going uncle?" The former slave stared at them and said "I'se come to register to vote." Before he was given enrolled however one man told him: "Uncle, you can't vote unless you recite the preamble to the constitution." The old man knew nothing about the constitution, but was determined to vote. He went home and paid a school teacher to teach him the preamble. As he worked the fields he recited to himself: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union." Finally, he had it committed to memory and he went to register to vote. The same men were there chuckling. The smiles removed from their faces as the old man started

reciting the preamble. Instantly, one the men said. “But Uncle, you also got to tell us what it means.” The old man went back and studied for two years to learn the meaning of every word in the Preamble. He returned to the same grinning faces that announced: “We forgot to tell you, you got to pay a poll tax of $1.00” The man went home and found a silver dollar and picked up his double barrel shot gun. He walked back in the door and slammed the silver dollar on the table with his finger on the trigger of his shotgun. “What you got that shotgun for uncle?” The old man, with a cold and serious sound in his voice, said: “I spent nearly all my life as a slave and I’m pretty near meeting the Lord, so I got nuthin to lose. For nearly five years I’ve been trying to qualify to vote, but the line keeps moving no matter how hard I try. I ain’t got much time left, I just wants to make sure the line don’t move ..this time!” At that, one of the nervous former masters yelled “He’s qualified, let him through!”

Historically, we have been victims of the word “unqualified” so long that the word itself has become an enigma. It has meant shifting standards, and an excuse to deny equal opportunity. When applied to our people, too often, qualified means we must be “25 years old, with 26 years of experience.”

As Christians, we know our Lord does not have a double standard. He offers salvation to all who are willing to accept him as Lord. In two thousand years the standard has not changed. The invitation still reads: Any man who will, let him come.

Exposition

These text verses point out how we can become worthy of salvation, through him who is the lamb of God.

Jesus spelled out the conditions of being his disciple. Those who follow are considered “worthy” when they put the service to the kingdom foremost in their lives. Its importance supersedes personal goals and quests. Shouldering the cross must become the supreme goal of the worthy follower. He who is unwilling to shoulder the cross is immediately deemed “unworthy” to be a disciple of Christ.

In Christ’s Revelation shown to John, Jesus himself is pictured as the Lamb of God, who is worthy of all praises because he alone paid the blood price for the redemption of mankind. Jesus, even before his birth, has been characterized in scripture as the “Lamb of God.” Since Old Testament ritual required the sacrifice of a lamb or other animal to consummate their forgiveness, Jesus came as the only person “worthy” to die for the sins of the

world, because he had not known sin himself. Isaiah 53:7 said: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." The fact that he came, died and rose, to insure the salvation of mankind, established Jesus as being "worthy" of all praises and glory. John saw millions of angels and heavenly hosts proclaiming "Worthy is the Lamb!" He alone is worthy of the kingdom of heaven. He alone is worthy of its great rewards.

Those who believe in him, however, have consolation in knowing that Jesus has said "where I am, ye may be also." When Jesus is crowned, we shall be crowned. When Jesus enters his kingdom, we shall enter the kingdom. Because Jesus is declared worthy, we are worthy, despite our sins, because we are his disciples.

Who Is Worthy?

Today there is a constant quest for worthiness, but who is worthy? What does it mean to be considered worthy. Those who are worthy for any endeavor meet two criterion: They are first eligible; then they are qualified.

Eligible: Those who are eligible are those who meet the moral or legal requirements to participate in an activity or share in a resource. You are eligible to run for president of the United States if you are an American citizen who is at least 35 years old. You are eligible to negotiate a contract on your own behalf at age 18. When you are eligible, you meet the general legal requirement that applies to everyone. Those who are eligible are those who have a right to participate or a right to share in a resource.

In this respect Jesus announced that anyone in the entire world who is willing to believe and follow him is "Eligible" for the kingdom of heaven. John 3:16 notes that God loved the "world" that "whosoever believeth" among the world's people becomes immediately eligible for membership in the family of God. John 3:16 seems to say you are eligible if you are: "living, breathing, and believing! Anyone who is willing to believe that Christ is the son of God is eligible for the kingdom of God.

Being eligible, does not make one automatically qualified.

QUALIFIED: The qualified are those eligible persons who meet certain conditions. Qualifications, by their very nature, are designed to limit participation. Qualifications are designed to narrow the participants to those persons who meet arbitrary conditions set by men and women.

Those who set the standard, usually set it to keep out undesirables. There

are many that believe that standards for admission to certain professions are set to exclude certain groups by setting performance expectations above the traditional levels of performance of even the better applicants of a certain race, sex, or nationality. They suspect that women, and racial minorities are the victims of manipulated standards that exclude them on the basis of arbitrarily selected performance levels that tend to exclude members of an entire class.

When it comes to the kingdom of God, Christ sets the standard. It has not, does not, and will not change. There should be no fear of double standards, shifting requirements or prejudice. The requirement is the same for men and women, Blacks and Whites, African-Americans or Asian-Americans, the standard is constant. Those who "qualify" for the kingdom of God, regardless of race, sex, or national origin, must be willing to pick up their cross and follow Christ. When we meet that single qualification Jesus describes us as "Worthy." Not, by our goodness but by his grace.

Thank God for Grace, without it we wouldn't qualify!

Thank God for Grace, without it we wouldn't have a chance!

But because there is grace, we are made worthy to share in the inheritance of the kingdom of God.

Worthy is the Lamb

Finally, John gives every Christian a panoramic picture of things to come. He saw the great throne room of God, with floors shining like a sea of glass, and 24 elders sitting before him. In his hand he held a book that was bound together with seven seals. The question went forth: "Who is worthy to open the seals" that will pour out the wrath of God upon the world in the time of tribulation? Who is worthy to usher in the closing events of this present age? None could answer for themselves, but all recognized the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. They were looking for the lamb.

Isaac, as he climbed to the top of the mountain of sacrifice asked Abraham his father: "Where is the lamb?"

As Jesus approached the River Jordan, John The Baptist declared for all the world to hear: "Behold the lamb of God"

Now John in Revelation declares "Worthy is the lamb!"

The lamb is worthy because is both eligible and qualified!

Salvation required someone who was able to live a life without sin!

Salvation required someone who was able to bear the criticisms of men and suffer the sting of their hatred!

Salvation required someone willing to lay down his life in payment for the sins of the world!

Revelation 5:9 gives the answer “Thou are worthy ..for thou was slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation..”

What makes the Lamb Worthy? because he was “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity, and the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his stripes we are healed!”

What makes the lamb worthy? Because he and he alone has taken our:

—Darkness and turned it into light; Sadness and turn it into joy!

—Failure and turned it into success; Defeat and turned it into victory!

—Weakness and turned it into strength; Misfortunes and turned them into opportunities

He’s worthy because one even he picked up a old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary! There he died!

But Early! Early, Sunday morning! He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

His name is Jesus!

The lamb of God!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Worthy is his name to be praised!

No. 508-Graduation

Wonders Tomorrow

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 22, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." — Joshua 3:5

Introduction

What do you plan to do tomorrow? Tomorrow is one those elusive moments that never seems to come. It looms in the horizon and stares with a blank gaze upon the moments of today. For the procrastinator, it is the best time to do what should be done today. For the Pessimist it offers only a repeat of the doom and gloom of yesterday. However, the optimist looks forward to tomorrow, for it represents opportunity, growth and a chance to achieve. Without tomorrow, today is meaningless and yesterday becomes a blur. Without a doubt, we need tomorrows.

Consider the three young devils that were graduating from the Devil's Academy of Troubles and Trials. As a final test each devil was required to prove that he had learned the tricks necessary to stop a man or woman from reaching their fullest potential. They were given one person who was walking forward and told to use what they had learned to stop his forward progress. The first devil was confident he could stop him, and he took his pitch fork and took away the man's yesterdays. Without them the man started the man started walking in circles, traveling the same path repeatedly, however, occasionally he found the right path and moved forward, thus the first devil failed his test. The second devil was more resourceful, he took away his todays by placing obstacles in his way and finally cut his feet from beneath him. To his amazement the devil noticed that though he crawled on his belly, the man continued to slowly move forward. The second devil failed his test. The third devil was confident. Instead of tampering with yesterdays or stealing todays, the third devil took away the man's tomorrows. Without touching him, the man who was lost without yesterdays and slowed by

troubled todays, came to a complete stop. He never made another step forward and spent his life standing in the same place. The master devil complimented the third devil and said: "If you want a stop a man, don't take away his yesterdays, he'll eventually find the way; don't take away his todays, it'll just slow him to a crawl, but take away his tomorrows and he want move at all."

Tomorrows represent hope. They represent the promise of better times and improvements over the present. Without tomorrows there would be no incentive for today.

As Christians, we look forward to tomorrow! The future for us offers a bright promise, beyond what this world offers today. Regardless to what we have today we know that with Jesus, tomorrow will be a better day!

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he began a new experience in his life. In this passage God reassures Joshua that his experiences on the other side of Jordan would be great and rewarding. The other side of Jordan, represented the unknown future. For some it was fearful and they approached it with apprehension. They doubted their own abilities and decided that the huge size of the inhabitants made them feel like grasshoppers in their own eyes. They shrank as the thought of tomorrow was presented to them. They chose to wander around in circles for 40 years rather than go forward. For Joshua, tomorrow, represented a Plethora of challenges. First, there was the impossible task of carrying 600,000 people across the river Jordan, without a bridge. Second, the cities of Jordan were well fortified. Jericho and other cities of Jordan had great walls, military equipment and experience in such matters. Third, in Jordan, Israel would have to feed and provide for itself. This generation had been feeding from manna and quail for 40 years. They had never planted a crop or brought in a harvest. Tomorrow represented the uncertainty of providing the necessities of life for themselves. Obviously, Israel was anxious as it stood on the banks of Jordan, wondering about tomorrow!

Now God speaks to Joshua and gives him a word of advice and a promise. The advice was simple: "Sanctify Yourself." The promise was equally simple "tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." The advice to sanctify himself meant to prepare himself. When something is sanctified it is set aside, or reserved for a special work or purpose. For Joshua, it meant

to be prepared and ready for the mighty wonders that were to come tomorrow. Even though God was about to perform great wonders for Israel it was still necessary for them to be prepared to do their part, however great or small. The promise that accompanied the advice was that tomorrow, wonders would be performed! "Tomorrow" was both a literal and figurative term. The next day God actually performed a wonder for Israel. He caused the waters of the River Jordan to roll back such that the nation crossed on dry land. That was its literal application. However, figuratively "tomorrow" went even further, it applied to a series of wonders that God would do in the future to make his promise come true. Not only did the River Jordan roll back, but weeks later, the walls of Jericho fell, the earth stood still in its orbit causing the sun to lock itself in the sky, countless victories came their way as God performed wonders for them. Tomorrow was not just one day, but it also referred to their future.

Therefore Israel faced tomorrow with fear and uncertainty, but they were assured by God that if they prepared themselves he would do mighty wonders in their tomorrows. They were encouraged to go forth today, expecting "wonders tomorrow."

Sanctify Yourself

Christian youth who are launching their futures should heed the words of this text to: "Sanctify yourselves."

In the context of the modern experience, the advice to sanctify has both spiritual and secular applications. Spiritually, to sanctify oneself means to set yourself aside for the special purpose of answering God's call, whatever it is, in their lives. It means to reserve your life, talents and ambitions for those things which will glorify God. Further it means to have a spiritual mindset that will prepare you to move at God's command as he prepares to perform wonders "tomorrow." Paul writing the Philippians in 4:8 said: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." His advice was they focus their lives on pure and just causes, and to concentrate their energies on them. To be spiritually focused meant to aspire to highest and finest virtues of life.

Secularly, being sanctified, means keeping yourself away from anything that might keep you from being ready when God performs "a wonder tomorrow." Many youth have reached the point of high school graduation,

only to come to a complete halt. They have closed their books are resolved not to study another day and to spend the rest of their days chilling out. As opportunity knocks, looking for someone with their background, race and experiences to assume an important role they will be passed over, because they were not ready. The "wonder" will come, but they won't be ready. Still others have enrolled in college but have idled away their time, roaming from party to party, chilling, cruising and otherwise neglecting their studies. Unable to discipline themselves, many have dropped out of vocational school, universities and other training programs. When God performs the wonders promised for them and their door of opportunity swings open, they will be unable to take advantage because they won't be ready. The advice to sanctify yourself, is advice to set yourself apart from the rest of the crowd, to remain focused, so that you can be ready for the great wonder that God is going to perform in your life tomorrow.

Wonders Tomorrow

Finally, friends, we should keep in mind that there will be wonders tomorrow! That was God's promise to Joshua, it is God's promise to this generation as well: "Tomorrow, the Lord will do wonders among you!"

Christian graduates should step into the future, confident that if they put God first, and sanctify themselves in spirit and lifestyle, that God will perform wonders in their tomorrows! They should expect it and claim it, because God has promised it!

When he stepped into the unknown and challenged Pharaoh, his faith was accompanied by wonders and signs. His rod turned into a snake, the water turned to blood, the daylight was turned to darkness, and the first born died.

When they journeyed out of Egypt his faith was followed by wonders and signs, the Red Sea rolled back, there was bread from heaven and they never changed shoes for 40 years.

Young Elisha began his new experience wearing the mantle of Elijah, and God showered upon his life great success as he performed wonders from cleansing lepers to restoring hope to starving widows.

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a wonder working God. We serve a God who can take:

—Tomorrow's uncertainty and turn it into today's assurance

—Tomorrow's fears and make them todays courage

—Tomorrow's doubts and make them today's hope

A blind man met him one day, and he gave him new sights to see! He's a wonder working Lord!

A lame man met him one day, and he gave him a new walk to walk! He's a wonder working Lord!

Lazarus, dead in the tomb for four long days, found out that he gave him another life to live! He's a wonder working Lord!

As I close, I'm reminded of the young man who was leaving home for a job interview in the big city. His family only had enough money to get him one suit, a typed resume' and few days food. Not knowing what to do he sought advice from his mother who said: "Let Jesus lead you." After prayerful thought he decided to walk the 100 mile journey up the dirt road to the city and save his money for food and lodging. Others were also applying that flew or drove expensive automobiles. Along the way the young man ran into a rain storm and muddied his suit as he fell in pot hole after pot hole. As he saw the mud on his only suit he kept remembering his mother's words "Let Jesus lead you!" When he came to apply, his suit was muddied, resume' crinkled and he looked a mess. As the interviews ended the contractor called him in with good news. "Young man we are looking for an engineer with your qualifications. We saw your resume, but what made you different from the others is that appear know the importance of good roads. We are building a roadway in the countryside and we need a man who is good, but also knows how important a good road is to regular people. You're hired!" As the young man thanked his new employer the boss said "These other men flew in on air planes and drove the super highways. What made the difference with you son is the way you came, don't thank me, but thank the Lord for putting you on the right road."

Let Jesus lead you, and everything will be alright!

I heard a song writer declare: I do not know how long twill be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me. I shall get home ...someday!

No. 509-Inspiration

There's Always A Bright Side

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 5, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them." — Job 37:21 "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." — Romans 15:13 (KJV)

Introduction

Have you ever seen people who have given up hope? These are those who have abandoned the possibility of achieving their dreams and rising to great heights. What happens to a people when they lose hope? Do they swelter in the heat of their depression? Do they wallow in the pools of their own failure?

Do they drown themselves in alcohol? Do they lock themselves into a world of where they strike out against each other, and rebel against even the notion that life outside of their own world is possible?

Without hope, the hopeless have no future and social disorder is a result.

Consider the cripple man who sat in front of the court house every day every begging for money. Each person that passed would give him a dime but none of them would accept the cripple's pencils he offered in a cup. Each person that passed him expressed their sympathy for a poor man who had no legs and was forced to beg on a street corner. Their expressions were the same everyday: "Poor man!" "Isn't it a shame" and "I feel so sorry for him." Each person that passed felt sorry for him and treated him as a beggar. All, that is, except one. Every day a gentleman in a fine suit came by, gave him a dollar and demanded a pencil from him. As he left each day, the gentleman would say "I demand a pencil because you are a merchant that is in demand!" Soon the cripple man looked forward to the gentleman

coming every day, which he did, until one day he did not return. Several years passed before he saw the man again, but by this time he was operating a concession stand for the handicapped inside the Post Office. One day the gentleman returned and bought one pencil with a smile. The cripple man responded, "it's on the house. You did something for me that no one else could do. When others saw nothing in me, you gave me hope that I was more than a cripple beggar but a merchant who happened to be cripple. Thanks to you I began to think of myself different and here I am today!"

Today there are many who have given up on themselves. They have lost hope, but thanks to Jesus, they have found a renewed hope that despite the darkness of their situation, there is always a bright side.

Exposition

This text considers the final product of a never ending hope.

In the broadest sense "hope" can have two definitions. Outside of the biblical context, hope refers to a feeling that "what we want to happen will happen." We are said to have "hope" as long as we have that feeling.

Hope, in this context, is baseless because it offers no rational reason why something should occur other than the fact that we want it to happen. For some this is baseless optimism, a futile exercise that will yield nothing.

Hope in the biblical context takes on a different character. To those who believe in the bible and trust in God, hope is confidence that what God has done for us in the past, guarantees that he can and will do similar acts in our future. Therefore, without God, hope is simply an empty feeling not supported by any evidence of probability. However, with God, hope is based on confidence gained from past experiences.

The story of Job in the bible gives us a picture of one man's hope that God could and would act to address his adverse situation. Job, in the midst of poverty, family sadness and personal sickness, was covered by what we might call a dark cloud.

This text peeks into his situation at a point when he was at his lowest. He was frustrated. He felt there was no place to turn. Here Job is reminded that the clouds and the sunshine that come into our lives are keenly balanced by God.

Verse 15 makes it clear that it is God that makes the "light of his cloud"

or the sun to shine.

Verse 16 refers to the "balancing of the clouds" as a wondrous act of God. Balancing the sunshine and the clouds suggests that there are times when clouds overshadow the sky, but yet the sun continues to shine. The balance is struck when, at the appropriate moment, the clouds are removed and the sun shines again.

The key truth for believers is that God is in control and that clouds will be dispersed.

The text verse, verse 21, notes that "now", that is when we are under a distressing situation, it is difficult to see the "bright light" or the sunshine because of so many clouds. However, the man or woman that has hope knows that one day the wind blows and moves the clouds and fair weather returns because of the mighty works of God.

In this context, hope is knowing that although there are clouds in the sky that are dark and dreary, that beyond the clouds there is always a bright side!

Paul, writing in Romans 15:13 emphasized that Christians should expect situations to improve and work towards that end. Specifically he wrote to the Christians in Rome, but generally his message was to all Christians: "The God of Hope" is urged to fill each person with joy and peace "in believing" or because they believe, to the point that they never lose hope, despite the adverse circumstances they endured. That hope is sustained in every person through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Together, the preponderance of scripture in both the old and the New Testament suggests that clouds or adverse circumstances will come for the faithful, but while they may block the sun they never stop the sun from shining.

We are encouraged to keep working in faith, with a positive spirit, because there is always a "bright side."

Impact of hopelessness

Today we see all around us the impact of hopelessness on a whole community of people. In thousands of cities across the nation, the seeds of hopelessness have sprouted into full blossomed rage and self hatred. Crime is escalating at an all time high. Why? Murders and aggravated assaults are

increasing so fast that newspapers have started a daily count down of murders like they use to count the days remaining until Christmas. Why are we killing each other at such an alarming rate?

Why are our youth disposed to violent natures?

Like a caged animal that has given up hope of ever being free, many of us have succumbed to the notion that we are a doomed generation and we live accordingly.

The rules and procedures of our society are predicated on a belief that everyone has hope and a dream. A penal system is predicated on the idea that the threat of locking a person away from the chance to achieve his dream should be a sufficient deterrent to criminal activity. The death penalty is seen as a way to deter murder because it says to murderers that their hope of a long life will be aborted. Jail, death, and other punishments that our society has ordered, are all predicated on the idea that the people involved have both hope and a dream. One of the hard realities we are now facing is that there are many among us who have neither hope nor a dream.

There are many who cannot picture themselves living any better. They have accepted the image of mediocrity, failure, and poverty or ghetto life as the image of their future.

Many young men have accepted the often recited statistics that say four out of every ten young Black men will be dead or in jail before they reach age 30. With that as an accepted truth, they could care less about going to jail or facing the death penalty, there is nothing else available anyway. Once robbed of hope, a desperate people will ignore laws, rules and the social order.

That is not an excuse for lawlessness, but an explanation and starting point for corrective action.

To restore broken dreams and shattered lives, the desperate and the destitute need renewed hope. They need to see that someone cares about them. As a community we need to help those who have lost their hope and their dream.

The Only Hope

There are many who have tried to restore lost hope only to replace hope restored with bitterness as noble purposes are revealed to be veiled

attempts to promote secret agendas.

Moreover, A plethora of social programs have sought to create projects that dealt with the symptoms of crime, teen-aged parenthood, and family dysfunction, only to discover that in many instances, those who administered them were interested as long as a pay check existed. The money and programs keep coming, but hope is not restored.

The church must continue to tell a hopeless society, that times may be difficult and trouble surrounds us, but there is still hope. There is always a bright side.

We must tell the 10 year old boy that has been a resident of the detention centers all his life, that there is still hope!

We must tell the 15 year old impoverished girl who has no hope of ever being anything but a welfare mom, that there is still hope!

We must tell the 40 year old crack addict that despite what the world says, there is still hope!

We must roll up our sleeves and be prepared to give of ourselves to help restore hope!

It doesn't matter whether the voice of hunger is Black or white! It doesn't matter whether the crying child is from the North Side or the South Side.

It doesn't matter whether the wounded soul listens to Rap, Country Western, or Punk Rock ...we want them to know there is hope because of "this rock!"

This rock, represents the faith of Job who said "all the days of my appointed time, will I wait until my change comes!

This rock, represents the confidence of the Three Hebrew Boys who said "Our God is able to deliver us."

This rock, represents the persuasion of Paul who declared "Nothing shall separate me from the love of God"

This rock is Jesus, who takes our darkness and turns it into light!

This rock is Jesus, who takes our failure and turns it into success!

This rock is Jesus, who takes our anxiety about the clouds that overshadow our path and reminds us ...there's a bright side somewhere!

This rock is Jesus, my shelter in a time of storm!

This rock is Jesus, my hope in times of trouble!

No wonder the song writer declared "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but

wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand ...

"...All other ground.."

"...All other ground.."

"...All other ground, is sinking sand!"

No. 510-Youth

Proverbs for Children

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 12, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Proverbs 1:7-9

Introduction

Have you ever listened to a grand parent or a great grand parent as they talked about the truths of life? Perhaps you have noticed that many of them have a collection of proverbs or old sayings that have become very familiar in your family. Children are the ones who first notice these proverbs because they are short and compact. In fact, that's just what a proverb is, a great moral truth compressed into a single statement, that when remembered and applied to life situations: protects from danger, avoids tragedy, and leads us in the right direction. Seldom do we hear preface their remarks by saying they were about to use a proverb they just seem to flow from those who have been blessed with the spirit of wisdom. In fact the bible in 1 Corinthians 12:8 notes that some people have been given the special gift of wisdom. The general word for these wise sayings is "Proverbs" but in our neck of the woods, children usually refer to them as "foggisms." Some have suggested that the proverbs of their parents, grandparents and even those recorded in the bible are old and foggie, and not relevant to modern living.

Consider Foggie Freda, the old lady that sat on her porch each day watching the children play. She made it a ritual to bake cookies for the children and talk to them as they came around for snacks. They laughed at her funny sayings and because she dipped snuff. When she noticed that one youth had become friends with a neighborhood thug she gave the young man a raw fish. What for? "Because fish and friends smell in three days." When they laughed at her rolled up stockings and spit can she'd say: "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words never hurt me." The little boy who ignored her warnings not to climb out on the dead limb of the big oak tree, saw her sitting on the

porch when the limb broke and fell to the ground. He remembered her words when she spat in her little silver can and said "A hard head makes a soft behind." One day the children came to see Foggie Freda, but her chair was empty. Much to their surprise a few minutes later she emerged from the house dressed immaculately. The spit can was gone, here hair was done and he looked 20 years younger. "Where you going Miss Freda?" Asked one booth. "I'm going on a date!" The children laughed hard at the thought Foggie Freda on a date. As a handsome retired gentleman came to pick her up, Freda gave the children one more proverb: "Just because there's snow on the roof, don't meant there ain't no fire and oven!" Foggie Freda wasn't so foggie after all.

As Christians we know that there are great truths in the word of God. Although they have been recited for thousands of years, they are never-the-less, still true. If we commit them to memory in youth, their meaning can be applied to life situations as long as we live.

Exposition

This text is extracted from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings that with the exception of chapter 30 and 31 were written by King Solomon. Chapter 30 is attributed to Agur and chapter 31 is attributed to Lemuel.

Solomon was known throughout the world for his wisdom and learning. Though he was yet a young man, kings and heads of state traveled around the world to hear his wisdom and to be taught, as he lectured them on the great truths of life.

The Proverbs is a collection of some of thousands of wise sayings of King Solomon. Each proverb is unconnected to the other. The truth listed in one verse may not be connected to the truth cited in the next.

Proverbs were generally written for children. They are written in short catchy phrases designed for easy memory. They address many subjects: Fear of God, Trust in God, Riches, Control of the Tongue, Honesty, Laziness, Justice and just plain common sense.

Among the proverbs of Solomon that are most memorable are:

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov 1:8-9 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Prov 6:16-19 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Prov 6:27-29 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbors wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

Prov 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Prov 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The point of the Proverbs is moral instruction based upon the truths of God. Many view them as old and outdated, but God's word has withstood the test of time.

Today's Proverbs

In biblical times parents had the responsibility to teach their children by precepts such as proverbs and by example. That is still true today. We hear many biblical proverbs but our society has some of its own that have been collected over the years but which carry immense truth:

BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER: Youth are warned to watch
the company they keep. Close association with the rowdy, unruly and the ungodly usually brings an unwanted bad reputation because it is generally believed that association brings assimilation (take on the habits of others).

YOU DON'T MISS YOUR WATER UNTIL THE WELL RUNS DRY: You are
advised to advantage of every opportunity while it exists. Sometimes the value of opportunities are not appreciated until they no longer exist.

YOU SHALL REAP WHAT YOU SOW; IF YOU SOW THE WIND YOU SHALL REAP THE WHIRLWIND: Based upon Hosea 8:7 this old saying points out that whatever we sow will come back to us in a mightier form. Good deeds will reap better good deeds. Bad deeds will come back to haunt us.

WHAT STRAPS ACROSS THE DEVIL'S BACK, BUCKLES UNDER HIS BELLY: Old saying uses the analogy of saddling a horse wherein the saddle is thrown across the horse's back and fastened under his belly, to make the point that evil actions will come around to haunt us one day.

WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE GOOSE IS GOOD FOR THE GANDER: Meaning if a law or rule or privilege applies to one segment of the social order then it should apply to the other. Don't make rules that apply to my situation but they don't apply to yours.

DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU: It is folly to disrespect the persons you are depending upon for help and support.

AN EMPTY WAGON MAKES LOTS OF NOISE: Those who have little brain power usually talk loud and make noise.

THE POT CAN'T CALL THE KETTLE BLACK: People who are guilty of an offense are not in a position to criticize others for doing the same thing.

YOU CAN'T FLY WITH EAGLES IF YOU RUN WITH TURKEYS!: Those who aspire to lofty goals and aspirations, can never reach them if the keep company constantly with those who have can't fly!

HASTE MAKES WASTE: Those who hurry through life usually make mistakes that requires a considerable waste of time to repair.

YOU MAKE YOUR BED HARD, SO SLEEP IN IT: Our decisions in life can decide our future if we are careful we make a soft bed if we are reckless we make a hard bed, whichever,we must sleep in the bed we make.

BE CAREFUL THE PEOPLE YOU WALK ON, ON YOUR WAY UP, BECAUSE YOU'LL MEET THOSE SAME PEOPLE ON YOUR WAY DOWN.

Always be thoughtful of those who help you climb the ladder of life.

It May be Foggie But..

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider the wisdom of this text: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

If young people learn anything in their experience in life it should be that they can't do anything without God.

Often it may appear to be a worn out redundancy, but no matter how many times they are said there are some proverbs about the Lord that are just as true today as they were yesterday.

It may be old and foggie, but it is still true that the Lord:

—Will be a bridge over troubled water!

—Will be a doctor in the sickroom and a lawyer in the courtroom!

—Will take our darkness and turn it into light!

—Defeats and turn them into victories!

It may be old and foggie, but its still true that the Lord will put food on your table and clothes on your back!

I'm reminded of the old man whose son had traveled to a foreign country as a missionary. He wrote to his son regularly and heard news of many great works. One day however, he received a telegram that said his son was lost in the back country and could not be found. The man took the letter he was about to mail and put it in his pocket and sat in his favorite chair. Those around him worried about him and asked his feelings. All he would say is "The Lord will make a way." As years passed the old man kept the letter in his pocket and explained to friends that the "Lord would make a way." They said it was foolish to cling to vain hope after 20 years, reciting empty slogans such as "The Lord Will Make A Way!" However one day he received a telegraph from a foreign relief agency that said he son had been found, but it would take $10,000 to cover the costs of getting him home." The man folded the letter and said to himself "Although I don't have a dime, the Lord will make a way." He took his few possessions to a pawn shop but they were not enough. As he talked, the shop owner spotted the letter he'd been carrying for 20 years. He noticed that the stamp on the letter had been printed upside down; it was a collector's item. The shop owner said the stamp was valuable. The old man said:"Before you look, let me tell you what its worth..$10,000" Surprised the shop asked how the old man knew...and he answered "Because the Lord will make a way!"

It might be old and foggie but the Lord will make a way!

It might be the old story, but its still true today, that Jesus came and died for our sins!

He died and rose again!

It might be old and foggie, but I believe he's coming!

He's coming again!

No. 511-Inspiration

Where There Is A Will, There Is A Way

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 3, 1994

SCRIPTURE: For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isaiah 50:7; "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. 1 John 5:14-15

Introduction

Have you ever been frustrated in your attempt to accomplish a goal? What was your response? Did you give up in bitterness like the fox and the proverbial grapes? Did you become despondent? Did you question God? Frustrations are an intricate part of progress and success. Sometimes life can get so cluttered that we simply cannot see our way. Our activities and goals sometimes become faint sketches against the horizon. No one succeeds without first encountering a few frustrations. Those who are determined usually find that "what's for them, they will surely get." The key is to remain focused on your real purpose and goal.

Consider the old man who fed the pigeons in the park everyday and talked with his friends as they fed the pigeons. One day his friend asked a very deep and challenging question: How do I get my life back on track?" His friend asked. The old man did not say anything except he simply kept throwing bread crumbs to the pigeons. After the question had been asked several times, finally the old man said: "Watch the pigeons walk." The friend thought that to be an odd answer but again the old man answered: "Watch the pigeons walk!" as threw out more bread crumbs. Frustrated the friend asked the meaning of his phrase and the old man said:

"Pigeons have trouble focusing when they walk. To see where they are going, they put their head out first, stop, focus, bring their head back, and then make another step. So the move with what appears to be a silly walk: head

out,stop,focus, head in. It may look like a silly walk to others but it helps the pigeon make sure that every little step he makes is in the right direction." Then he turned to his friend and said: "If you want to get your life back on track stop, check your direction, and make sure you walk like the pigeon and don't waddle like a duck!"

Today many people are trying to succeed in life without every stopping to consider whether or not the success they seek is in line with God's will. They constantly go forward, working, climbing, pursing and striving. They have set the aim on a high and lofty goal and they are giving it pursuit their best effort.

As Christians, however, we know it's wise to walk the walk of the pigeon: stop, focus, check our course and continue walking the Christian walk. If we walk in the light of the Lord and in line with his will, no matter what frustrations may come, the Lord will make a way.

Exposition

This text considers the truth that all things, which are within the will of God are possible for the believer to achieve.

Isaiah Chapter 50 is Messianic in nature. Messianic means that it is written in the Old Testament but its reference is to Christ who would come centuries later. Isaiah made many prophecies directed to Israel specifically. Many others, however, were Messianic, such as Isaiah 53:5 (He was wounded for our transgressions).

This particular Messianic text shows the hardships that Christ would suffer and his resolve to continue courageously, despite the humiliation, embarrassment and physical pain that confronted him because he was carrying out the will of God.

It is a unique example of spiritual will power. The Messiah's resolve is noted in Isaiah 50:6-7 wherein he said that although he would be beaten and spit upon (verse 6) "therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like flint, and know that I shall not be ashamed." He was courageously firm in his determination to accomplish his purpose despite the scorns and hatreds that were heaped upon him.

The way of the cross was not what Jesus wanted. He did not want to die on cross. That fact is evidenced in Matthew 26:39 "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." A second time he made the same request: Matthew 26:42 "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not

pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Although the cross is not what Christ wanted for himself, he lost himself in the will of God.

Being totally submerged in the will of God, he was confident that God would help him achieve his purpose, according to his will.

This same thought is expressed in John's epistle, except that it is not referenced to Christ but to believers. It reminds believers that requests made of God, that are according to his will for us, will be accomplished.

The key phrase is to note that what we ask, must be according to his will. If what we ask is according to God's will, it does not matter how improbable or unlikely it may seem to others, if it is according to God's will it can be accomplished. Mat 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Combined, these texts represent the preponderance of New Testament teaching on the subject. A request, if it is in line with God's will, is possible. Our quest is to follow the example of Christ and lose ourselves in the complete will of God. Once that happens there is no limit to our abilities.

Where the will of God exists...there is a way.

Our Will Must Be God's Will

There are millions who are troubled by the increasing number of frustrations they face as they attempt to achieve their goals. Many pray to God and ask him to remove the stumbling blocks or problems. With great faith, many sit back and wait for their problems to disappear, remembering that Jesus said :John 16:24 ".. ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

While it is true that we can ask what we want of our Lord and expect an outpouring, it is also true that we cannot expect to receive anything from him unless what we plan to do is in line with what God wants us to do.

The very first step to attaining the kind of power with God that John spoke of is to stop being a practicing sinner. Why? Because a person who is a practicing sinner is out of synchronization with God's will and will not be heard when he or she makes requests from God. John 9:31 "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

No matter how loud we call upon him or how eloquent our appeals, if we are living outside of faith or in contradiction to the faith, we cannot expect our appeal to God to be successful.

While the first step is to become both a worshipper of God and a doer of his will, there is a second step.

Our second step is to discern whether our requests of God are for our own purpose or for his purposes. Is it for our own "lusts" or is it for God's purposes. Some can't get answers because what they ask for is outside of the will of God.

James 4:2-3 "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

When we ask God to grant a prayer request is the request for ourselves or is it for the furtherance of the kingdom? When we ask God to help us win the lottery, is the request so that we can become rich or is it so that we can take the proceeds and give it all to the furtherance of his kingdom, if necessary. When we pray for a Lexus, BMW or a Cadillac, is the request for our own pride, so that we can show our friends that we have succeeded, or is it an expression of a true need for transportation to assist in the growth of the kingdom?

There are many that have been turned down in selfish requests by God and have turned to Satan, who also answers prayers...usually the selfish kind, because these advance HIS kingdom.

Those who accumulate worldly possessions and live outside of God are those who have been blessed by Satan because their will is tied into his will. They are not to be confused with true believers.

Where There Is A Will

When our will is outside of God's will, it is difficult to get help from heaven. However, when our will is in line with God's will, there is a way.

There is no mountain so high that God cannot climb it; no river so wide that God cannot cross it; No ocean so deep God cannot fathom it!

1 Cor 2:9 " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Every now and then we should spiritually walk the pigeon's walk: stop, refocus and walk the walk of the Lord.

Where there is a life committed to the will of God, there is a way! It does not matter who is for you. Neither does it matter who is against you! I hear Rom 8:31 ask the question "If God be for us, who can be against us?

Where there is a will, according to God's purpose, there is a way!

Joseph testifies that he was thrown into a pit. But God had work for him to do and proved that where there is a will, according to God's purpose, there

is a way!

Daniel was thrown in a lion's den, but when roaring lions purred like kittens, it proved again that where there is a will according to God's purpose, there is a way!

The Hebrew boys faced the terror of the fiery furnace, but once again the proved that even the heat of the furnace could not alter the will of God, for where there is a will, according to God's purpose, there is a way!

A widow woman was down to her last cruse of oil and cup of meal, but she found out that as long as her will was in line with God's, that the barrel wouldn't run dry. Where there is a will, according to God's purpose, there is a way!

Somebody here is frustrated over lost direction!

Somebody here is confused over missed opportunity!

Somebody here is worried over future prospects!

Be not dismayed, for if your objectives are in line with God's purpose for your life, the Lord will make a way!

The Lord will, take your failures and setbacks and turn them into successes

The Lord will, minimize your weaknesses and maximize your strengths

The Lord will, inspire your imagination and energize your actions!

No wonder the song writer declared "Oh teach me from my heart to say ..thy will, thy will be done!

Jesus gave us the example in the garden all by himself. I heard him declare "not my will, but thy will be done!

He died out on Calvary and rose early, with all power in his head!

He's alive today and he's able...to make a way!

No. 512-Homecoming

Be So Glad When I Get Home

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 17, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Revelation 6:9-11;"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:3-4

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself in a hurry to get away from home, only to find that you couldn't wait to get back? There is something about home that creates a yearning within us that grows stronger with absence. The unique nature of home permanently conditions us to an aesthetic environment that can be imitated but never duplicated.

The finest motels, even those that offer the comforts of home or those that leave the light on for you, cannot substitute for home. After a few days at even the finest hotel, the urge to go home returns. The difference cannot be bridged with mere creature comforts. Home is important because it is the cradle of our affections. Dorothy of "The Wizard of Oz" couldn't wait to get away from Kansas, but even in the Emerald City all the people looked like folks she knew, and she found her self saying repeatedly "There's no place like home."

Where is home for the Christian? It's not in the inner cities, suburbs or palatial mansions in which we dwell. Homes are not constructions. There can be no "parade of homes" for house shoppers to peer into. Neither is

there a "home buyers Guide" for homes cannot be bought and sold. Home is where the heart is.

For the Christian home lies beyond this life. Home is with the fellowship of the Saints with the Kingdom of God today. In the life yet to come Home is the eternal existence we shall share in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whenever and wherever Jesus is in the midst, a Christian is at home.

Whether in a palace or a shack; a barn yard or a court yard, a Christian is at home, if Jesus is in the midst.

Exposition

This text considers the both the Christian's home, the kingdom of heaven. The Revelation records glimpses of the future that were revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos by Christ himself. In its 22 chapters we are given a panoramic view of what will happen during the last seven years of this world order. Of particular interest to believers are chapters 21 and 22 because these two chapters contain the substance of our hope. They tell us about the New Jerusalem, the new heaven and the new earth, which will be the home of every believer.

In viewing the final scenes, John foretells the impatience of the saints who will come to Christ during the tribulation. As God, tired of the wickedness of this world order, prepares to finally avenge the wrongs done to believers, John heard the cry "How Long?" from those who had been martyred for the cross. These who would only have been waiting for a year or two when the events of Revelation Chapter 6 occur, express impatience. What of those who had been waiting for centuries before the tribulation, certainly they too were crying "How Long?" Their question "How Long?" was an anxious expression of anticipation of things to come. They lived and died waiting for the return of Christ, the establishment of his kingdom, and their entrance into their eternal home. In essence they expressed longing and an excitement that said, "be so glad when I get home."

The nature of the Christian's home is suggested in Revelation.

The Christian's home is not to go to heaven but to live eternally in a heaven. Heaven The part of God's creation above the earth and the waters including "air" and "space" and serving as home for God and His heavenly creatures. It's a single planet of God's universal creation, beyond the reach

of the telescopic eye of this solar system, which is used by God as his divine work place, from whence He 1) sends blessings to His people: "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey." Deuteronomy 26:15; 2)sends punishments to wicked: The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. V6) Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. Psalm 11:4,6.

Moreover, heaven is the temporary dwelling place of departed believers. 2 Cor 5:8: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Those who die in Christ are temporarily reside in heaven awaiting their final reward and station in the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, heaven is not the Christian's home because heaven won't be forever! The millions of solar systems, galaxies, and planets that now exist, including the planet heaven will be destroyed by God. Isa 34:4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

However that which is destroyed will be recreated, fresh and new, and that will be the place where believers will spend eternity. Not up in God's heaven, but on a recreated, glorified, purified, earth..where even God himself shall be. Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.
Isa 65:18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Isaiah said "It's going to be" but John said "I saw it happen!" John said: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1

The Christian's home is not in heaven, the present work place of God, but in the kingdom of heaven which will be created on earth, with the New Jerusalem serving as its capital city. While its true that wherever Jesus is will be heaven, it is not true that we will be living forever in the celestial realms that today we call heaven.

Isaiah notes that there will be a great rejoicing and celebration among the

saints when we get home. The former things shall not be remembered! It will be a happy day!

What We Expect From Home

As believers we look forward to going home with great anticipation. It is the subject of our songs, prayers, lessons and conversations. We want to go home! The kingdom of heaven offers us the three essential ingredients that any home offers:

Fellowship with God: Revelation 21:1-8 gives us the picture of the Tabernacle of God coming down to be among men. That suggests fellowship with God and with each other. Any home that is really a home has fellowship together. Fellowship simply means friendship and fun. At home we expect to find friends and enriching experiences, and that's also what we expect when we get home!

Protection from Harm: Revelation 21:9-27 describes the physical strength of the New Jerusalem, its foundations, walls, gates and sheer size. It suggests that we will be safe and protected. At home people should feel safe from attacks, intruders and enemies. One of the special qualities of home is that is inspires in us a sense of security and safety. We expect safety when we get to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Provision of Resources: Revelation 22:1-5 describes how God will provide for our health and welfare. By eliminating all sickness, pain and providing for every temporal need, including something as simple as light. That suggests that provision will be made for anything necessary for our health and happiness. The same is true of our homes today. We know that if we can just get home, there will be something to eat and somewhere to lay our head. There's always seems to be plenty at home. Christians perceive the kingdom of heaven in the same way, a place where God will provide for us.

It's no wonder then that Christians sing that old Negro slave song: "Be so glad when I get home. Gonna jump and shout when I get home!

When I get home!

Every believer knows that there is a great reward awaiting him when he

gets home, although others are hailed today.

Consider the missionary who returned to America after many years of service in the backwoods and jungles. His life had been totally dedicated to serving the Lord. As he sailed home he was on board a liner with a famous movie star that was known around the world. As the boat pulled into the harbor, a large crowd had gathered outside. They had gathered with bands, ticker tapes and banners to greet the movie star. As she walked down the ramp, Photographers flashed cameras and there were hugs and kisses for the movie star. As the music faded into the air and the crowd dissipated. When the old missionary walked down the rap there were no crowds or bands, or ticker tapes. He walked by himself.

A dock worker came to the missionary said: "Isn't it a shame that they would make such a fuss over a movie star when she comes home, but no one would even paint a sign for a man of God like yourself?" The missionary responded: "I don't feel bad at all, you see, when the movie star walked down that ramp she was at home, but I won't get home until I walk the streets of glory! But when I get home, there will be great rejoicing!"

When I get home, the heavenly choir will be singing!

When I get home, the hosts of heaven will meet me!

I don't know about you, but "I'll be so glad when I get home!"

"I'll be so glad when I get home because, when I get home:"

—The wicked will cease from troubling!

—The weary will be at rest

—Everyday will be Sunday! Always howdy and never good bye!

When I get home we shall see his face!

When I get home, I'm gonna shout and tell the story: how I made it over!

When I get home I'll sing that old song .."So glad, done got over! Done got over at last!"

No. 513-Youth

God's Licking Stick

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 24, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening—it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, a quiet growth in grace and character." — Hebrews 12:11 (TLB) Hebrews 12:11 (KJV) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Introduction

Do you remember the last time you punished by your parents?What was the punishment? Did you lose a privilege? Get a cut in your allowance? Were you grounded? Perhaps you were like millions in the African-American community that lost privileges, allowances and got a licking too boot. Discipline, regardless of the method has one purpose: to make one a better disciple. The manner of discipline depends upon whether one learns from reading Dr. Benjamin Spock's book "The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care" or from Grandma's school of experience. The ultimate goal is the same, producing an offspring that is God fearing and law abiding.

No child enjoys being punished. However, those who know that the punishment is being given in love, for their best interest are better able to handle receive it.

As children of the King, we too are often chastised by our Lord and Master. He chastises us because he loves us. For that reason we are able to endure, knowing that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of discipline to development of the

Christian life.

Paul, writing to the Hebrews explained the importance of developing good discipline as Christians. He points out in Hebrews that often God moves to discipline those, who are by acceptance of Christ, his own children. The word "chastise" in this context, refers to punish. When believers stray God punishes them, because he loves them. Ironically, in biblical history, those who were not among the chosen people often escaped punishment and seemed to get away with just about anything. Those who were God's elect however, were always being punished for their indiscretions. When the Canaanites worshipped Baal they often prospered, but each time Israel moved in that direction they were punished with droughts, famine and pestilence.

According to Holman: the word "discipline" comes from a Latin word "disco" which means to learn or get to know, a direct kind of acquaintance with something or someone. Discipline refers to the process by which one learns a way of life. Discipline requires a relationship between a person who knows the way of life (discipline) and an apprentice who is trying to learn the way of life. The idea is for the experienced person to lead the learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner can imitate and live like or better than his teacher.

Each believer is a disciple or a learner of the Christian life style. Our goal is to learn, through a gradual process, the Christian way until we can live it like the master lived it. To help us, God often chastises us, to help us develop discipline.

The chastisements of God have taken two forms: Physical and denial of privileges. When Israel sinned in the wilderness, God sent serpents among them to bite the them with poisonous venom. That was physical punishment. When Moses sinned in the wilderness by taking credit for God's act of providing water for the people he was punished by being denied access to the promised land. That was denial. God has used both methods of punishment in dealing with his people, depending on the circumstance. It appeared when they had either a dream or a possession denial of either the dream or possession was used. When they had neither, physical punishment was given.

This text makes it clear that whenever God punishes us we should know that it is because he loves us and we should be happy because we know

the outcome will be good. The preponderance of biblical teaching follows this line:

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:" -Job 5:17

"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." — Proverbs 3:11-12

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." -Hebrews 12:6

Those whom God loves can expect to be discipline, either physically or by denials to help them learn the Christian way of life.

How to Discipline

In recent years African-Americans have been puzzled by the response of mainstream America to what is considered "tradition" discipline in our community. Our tradition approach to discipline is extracted from what the bible teaches: "spare not the rod. "Prov 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 23:13-14. Over the years, we have developed an unwritten set of rules of implementation of the biblical demand for discipline. Generally, punishment administered with a barber's strap, belt, paddle, switch or with the open hand is considered acceptable. Punishments which leave permanent scars, maim, or disable or frowned upon. While, with a few exceptions, we believe in applying the rod, there is no support among African-Americans for parents who burn babies with cigarettes, beat children with clothes hangers, or disfigure or injure children. Each family applies the level of punishment deemed necessary to respond to the situation. However, there is an invisible line over which we should not cross; a point in which we move from punishment to abuse. It is the law of our people. It is a law written in the African-American culture and has been passed down for generations.

Many are frustrated when laws, with roots in the Eurocentric culture, label as "child abuse" that which has been traditional to our people for centuries. Parents who spank their children or attempt to discipline them risk arrest as child protection agencies come to the defense of sometimes

devilish kids who escape punishment for wrongs by calling "the number."

How should a Christian parent discipline a child?

Discipline, is teaching a child a way of life. It involves more than punishment. To help children develop, discipline parents should: 1)Guide them by example, in Godly ways (1 Timothy 3:4; 2)Tell them what is right and what is wrong (1 Kings 1:6); 3)Love them unconditionally (Luke 15:11-32); 4)With love, Correct them either physically or with denial in response to their age and the circumstance. (Proverbs 29:17); and 5) Pass your faith along to them (2 Timothy 1:5)

In this sense, the Christian instills discipline in children with this five step approach. Mere punishment, without the other four elements, falls into the category of spiritual child abuse.

Christ took our Punishment

Very few people enjoy administering disciplinary actions. They are necessary means to achieve a desired end. Parents get no great thrill out of punishing a son or daughter. In fact they often feel more pain, internally, than the offending child.

Neither does God enjoy disciplining us. He gets no thrill when it comes time to correct us for our missteps, but because he loves us, he corrects us. Consider the poor mother who learned that her son had stolen some merchandise from a local store. The mother screamed at the child. Her blood pressure rose. She was angry, disappointed, frustrated and afraid for the future of her chain. After she screamed and cried until she couldn't hardly talk she told her son to go outside and "get your licking stick. "Don't get no little one either, get a big one."

The boy went to a bush outside and broke off a limb and pulled off its leaves. He fully expected what was coming. He decided he would be tough and take it, after all, it would only last for a few minutes. Trembling, the mother told her son to hold the switch. She turned her back to him and peeled back her blouse to reveal her bare back. She yelled to her son "Hit me." The boy was reluctant to hit his mother, but she demanded that he do so. As he struck her over and over, whelps and scratches formed on her back. Blood began to appear.

She turned to him with tears running from eyes and said: "Son, when you

disobey me you hurt the dream I have for you. You may as well take a switch and whip me because I hurt inside. She turned her scarred back to him and tearfully said "Look at the stripes on my back and remember this day." The boy left the room. For the first time he understood what his mother meant when she said "this hurts me, more than it hurts you." The mother never had to lift a hand to that son again. He spent the rest of his life trying to make sure that his mother would never feel that much pain again.

As Christians, we know that God disciplines all believers much like parents discipline children. When we sin, we cause God great pain and anger.

Then one day, on an old rugged cross, Jesus told a sinful world "go and get me a licking stick." "Go and get me an old rugged cross."

It was a cross that should have been our punishment!

It was a cross that should have been our condemnation!

It was a cross that should have been our degradation!

Instead of condemning the world and punishing us, he took its punishment upon himself. He allowed himself to be stripped, and beaten with 39 lashes. He allowed crown of thorns to be placed upon his head ..nails to be driven in his hands and feet!

He bled and died and took our punishment upon himself looking forward to a glorious resurrection, restored hope, and a second chance!

Isaiah put it this way: " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed!" Isaiah 53:5

And with his stripes, we are healed!

..And with his stripes.. we are healed!

No. 514-Revival

O.J.
(Only Jesus)

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 24, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And when they looked, only Jesus was with them." — Matthew 17:8 (TLB) "Then suddenly they looked around and Moses and Elijah were gone, and only Jesus was with them." — Mark 9:8 "And the Jewish leaders slipped away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until only Jesus was left in front of the crowd with the woman." — John 8:9 "and become one with him, no longer counting on being saved by being good enough or by obeying God's laws, but by trusting Christ to save me; for God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith— counting on Christ alone." — Philippians 3:9 (TLB)

Introduction

Have you ever stood alone and felt that everyone is against you? Have you ever been in a situation where, in your own mind, you felt that you were being falsely accused? In such times it looks as though the whole were is against you. Standing alone is a painful thing. It is a terrible thing. It is a humiliating thing. It is a troublesome thing.

Standing alone can also be embarrassing. Consider the boy who sat on the back row of his school classroom and watched as his teacher stood from behind his death and posed a challenge to the class: "If there is anyone in this class that considers himself stupid, will you please stand up!" There was a long silence. Not a student moved. The teacher bellowed his challenge again: "If there is anyone in this class that considers himself stupid, will you please sand up!" After a long silence the boy slowed rose from his back row seat and stood tall." Taken aback, the teacher asked the boy "Son do you consider yourself dumb?" They looked at the teacher and dropped his head in a half smirk and half smile then said, "No teacher, I just hate to see you standing all by yourself!"

You can feel awkward sometimes when you are standing alone.

In our nation we have had two glaring examples of individuals standing

alone. The confirmation hearing of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, found one man standing alone. Whether or not he was guilty is not germane to this thought, but what is important that when he was being accused he was standing alone. Now, O.J. Simpson, who is close to the hearts of many in America is also giving us a picture of another African-American man standing alone. The intense media coverage has prompted many people to wonder how they would stand, faced with such a great host of accusers. Sometimes each person wonders how they would react given the same circumstance. Some would have given up, if it had not been for the Lord, a long time earlier.

These moments when we are standing all by ourselves could easily be characterized as O.J. moments. A Kodak moment is characterized as a memorable moment of happiness. But an O.J. moment is a moment when you are standing by yourself.

As Christians we are reassured that we are never standing alone. Our O.J. moment simply means that then its "Only Jesus!" that can help us make it through the day!

Exposition

These three text verses characterize special moments in which Jesus and Jesus only is the answer to the dilemma.

O.J. Moment: When We Succeed

There are at least three circumstances in which a belief might encounter an O.J. Moment. In Mark, Peter got a chance to climb to the top of the mount of transfiguration. While there they were present a vision of the glories and grandeurs of heaven. Elijah was seen. So was Moses. It was so beautiful that the Peter wanted to stay and build three Tabernacles. However they had to come down because the service is not on the mountain, but in the valley. As the descended the mount, all of the other glories that had enjoyed on the mountain were gone. There was only Jesus.

This presents us with the first circumstance that can be described as an O.J. moment: The moment of success. It may seem peculiar but we all should be extremely careful of mountain top experiences. We should

remember that the joys of such moments are fleeting because when the crowds are gone and we are alone, its still "only Jesus!" Many people are overly exited over the joy of the moment. They function only when there is an exciting circumstance and there is glory to be gained. However, many have learned that when the crowds are calling your name, it is one of the most dangerous times in your life. They will often praise us to the point of flattery, telling us that ugly hats look good and suits that are too small fit just right. They do that until they get what they want or accomplish what they are trying achieve.

In moment of success, when we are at the zenith of achievement, we should never forget that all we really have is "only Jesus." We should remember this because when the crowd goes away there is still Jesus. When the accolades have faded, there is still Jesus. When the praise of men has faded into the distant horizon, there is still Jesus!

O.J. Moment: When we fail

There is a second O.J. moment. It is best characterized when we consider Peter as he walked on the water. Peter was one who witnessed the power of Jesus. When he saw Jesus walking on the water he forgot what may have learned in school about the laws of buoyancy and how solid objects can sink in water. He set out to walk on water. As long as he kept his eyes focused on Jesus he was able to defy the laws of science, logic and all of those who doubted that it could be done. However, when he looked down and took his eyes off Jesus, he started to sink.

As he started to go down he forgot about the crowds, science and ..all he could see was man standing in front him. It was only Jesus. That was an O.J. moment.

There are moments in our lives when have experience failure and frustration. It is a lonely feeling when we face failure. Failure is an O.J. moment. Sometimes when we fail and watch those who are less dedicated to the faith than we are succeed we go into a depression and start feeling sorry for ourselves. However in moments when the ungodly seem to excel we should remember the scripture that says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Psalm

37:-1-2. Sometimes failure creeps into our interpersonal relationships and creative endeavors. At such times we shrink into an O.J. moment. When Peter found himself sinking he puts eyes on Jesus. Peter's prayer was short and to the point, but yet it was powerful. He didn't say anything about the cooling board, the winding sheet, coming to press a dying pillar, or crossing over the chilly Jordan. All he said was "Lord, Save me." That prayer got through and he was able to arise from his O.J. moment. Sometimes even in the church there are moments when those who are promoting the program feel as though they are sinking. Even in the church, if we keep our eyes on Jesus, he will save our waning enthusiasm and carry us across the treacherous waters. That's why the song writer declares "there ain't no danger in God's water. Get on board! Get on board!

O.J. Moment: When Caught Up In Sin

The third O.J. moment is especially important in the season of revival because it has peculiar interest to those who may feel themselves unworthy to come to God.

Here, Jesus speaks to a woman who had been living an adulterous act and had been caught in the very act. Her accusers brought her before Christ as a test of his faithfulness of the law asking his judgment of her situation. The Mosaic law required a person caught in such an act to be stone to death. Now the crowd had found itself a victim and wanted Jesus to indicate her status in the new kingdom that he spoke so much about. Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground and looked beyond the strict codes of the law and beyond the letters which had been written on the scrolls and peered into the heart of the woman. Challenging the conscience of her accusers directly he said "Let he that is without sin among you, cast the first stone." It was the first instance of the "stone that was never cast." The woman's accusers started leaving one at time. The woman soon found that in the midst of her accusation there was only Jesus. He responded by asking her "woman where are thy accusers?" There were none.

There are many people today who yearned to be forgiven for past indiscretions. The doubt the possibility of forgiveness because they have seen the cruelty of people in general. God forgives past sins, but one sage says "Negroes never forget." Someone always brings up the past and

rattles hidden bones in the closet. We should be careful about rattling bones however, because everyone has a closet, and everyone has some bones! Jesus looked at this woman in an O.J. situation and forgave her.

Today there are many who may have found themselves in an O.J. situation: alone, lonely, unforgiven and troubled.

If you are in O.J. situation, don't be despondent, but keep your eyes on the Lord. It's not the crowd or the opinion of men that counts, it's only Jesus!

Only Jesus can forgive your sins!

Only Jesus can give you a new lease on life!

Only Jesus can be with you always. In Matthew 28 Jesus told all believers "and lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth!" When every one else deserts you, there's only Jesus!

When your husband lost faith in you, there was only Jesus!

When your church members doubted you, there was only Jesus!

Only Jesus can answer our questions!

Only Jesus can heal our sicknesses!

Only Jesus can wipe the tears from our eyes!

The lame man testifies that he was sitting by the pool for 38 long years and could not be healed. Then one day he met the master and he told him to take his bed and walk. It was only Jesus!

A blind man had been blind from birth, but after he met the Lord he was able to declare: "I was once blind, but now I see." It was only Jesus!

A wild man was running through the graveyard being filled with demons, but was settled down by the spirit of God. He testifies that it was, only Jesus!

When you or your loved one were laying in the hospital. Many doctors came to your side. There were many nurses and attendants. But when you walked out of that hospital room, you looked back and realized that it was "only Jesus" that made it possible for you to leave.

When tears fell from your eyes, it was only Jesus, who wiped them away!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Died out on Calvary that we might have everlasting life!

But early Sunday morning he arose from dead!

If you are looking for someone to lift your burdens today, It's only Jesus!

No. 515-Revival

Look What You'll Miss

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 27, 1994

Scripture: "And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:" Psalm 105:43 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1The 4:17

Introduction

Have you ever missed out on an exiting event? How did you feel when those who returned told you about all of the exciting things they did and saw? Those are moments when you are sorry that you didn't go or participate. No one likes to be left out of a good thing or miss a grand opportunity, especially when it looks like it is going to be fun!

Consider the sinner who stood before the gates of heaven as he heard his life story read to him. "It appears" said the tall angel, "that you have led quite a life outside of the church. In fact, you seldom came, but when you did you sat in the back and slept." The man nodded his headed fearfully. He was distracted for a moment by some loud music he heard coming from hell. The angel told him to ignore it, it was coming from the evil doers. The angel told that despite his bad record on earth he was going to get a chance to make to the sweet serene streets of the new Jerusalem. There would be soft church music, pink lemonade, and milk and honey cakes served daily. As they talked the man saw some men carrying trays. The angel told him to ignore them because they were carrying food to the evil doers: chittlin's, greens, corn bread, sweet potato pie, and hot tea. The man kept staring. But before another word could be said, a bus load of the finest women he had ever seen drove by. The angel said, "Ignore them, they are evil doers, they are going to the daily party. It's millions of them down there." Finally the angel told the man, we are giving you one more chance to make to the quiet streets of heaven, but if you you do one more thing wrong, you are out! The man, keep looking down and listening to all the

goodtimes going on below. He became so excited that he hit the angel with his suitcase and shouted: "Hurry up and put me out, so I can get there before the party is over!" Nobody likes to miss out on a good time, even it carries them straight to hell!

There are too many people whose impression of the Christian life is that of a boring succession of sad faces, dull speeches, long classes and endless programs. They perceive the Christian life a pitiful excuse for happiness by those who couldn't cut it in the real world, or who have become to old to really enjoy themselves. While they are tolerant of the church and its members, such persons, do not perceive the Christian life as something that is to be desired.

As Christians, we know that there is a great joy in serving the Lord. Our way of life is filled with happiness, contentment and the beauty of knowing that our lives edify and glorify God. It is a happy experience. Those who never really know the Christian life will miss the greatest experience of their lives!

Exposition

This emphasizes that joy that is shared by Christians, while showing the detailed picture of atrocities that they will miss because they are part of the kingdom of God.

The Christian expects Joy

The great reward of every believer is eternal life and eternal joy. Unlike happiness, joy flows from the spiritual to existential. It moves from the inner being to the out being. Because of its unique nature, joy does not depend upon superficial supports to survive. Happiness depends upon the material to survive. It is momentary in nature and lasts only as long as the superficial supports exist. Momentary happiness can be derived from money, possessions, power, prestige, or sexual gratification. However, it disappears the moment these supports are no longer available.

Eccl 2:26 suggests that Joy comes from God: "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is

good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit." Even those who are able to heap up much usually find that God takes it away and gives it to those that please him.

Being a Christian means to be person that if filled with Joy. Acts 13:52 : "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." In fact, Gal 5:22-23 notes that one of the true signs of a saved life is the spirit of joy: " But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The unsaved can be happy, thrilled, titillated, enthused, enthralled, excited and merry, but only the saved can have joy, because Joy comes from the Lord!

If you miss the Christian life you'll miss the great chance to know true joy!

Too much emphasis on negatives

True Christians are people who believe that anything that God is for, can be done! They are optimists!

Too often we are trying to attract people to the Christian life in the midst of our complaints. "Church service is too long." The preacher never knows when to sit down." "He prays too long" are negatives that suggest that even the Christian is bored with his own lifestyle, it's not something that others should want to emulate.

Moreover, there are many Christians who spend a great deal of time talking with none Christians about things they don't like about the church. The negatively criticize everyone from the preacher to the deacon. They gossip about church members and criticize every aspect of the church's program. Such negative talk suggests that even the church's members have not joy.

Teachers that don't prepare their Sunday School lessons are boring. Preachers who don't prepare their sermons are boring! Choir members who do not rehearse are boring. Members who sit through church services as if they were attending a funeral service are boring! No one is attracted to a lifestyle that appears to be not worth preparing for, not worthy rehearsing for, not enjoyable enough to even keep you awake for an hour or too!

More Emphasis on the Positives..joy!

The Christian experience should be an endless stream of joy! In celebration there should be joy. Even in sadness there should be joy. No matter what the situation James 1:2 says we should "Count it all joy."

The adult perception of the Christian life is formed in childhood. If the church provided enjoyable experiences for its youth then the youth grew up thinking that being a Christian can be fun! If those experiences were dull, and boring, then the youth waits for the day he is old enough to turn his back on the Christian life. Many have resolved in their own minds "I swore when I was a child, that I would never attend Sunday School, or church again."

That means churches must work hard, spare not expense, and used every means at its disposal to insure that those who are in its care perceive the Christian life to be one which is rich and full of enjoyable experiences. Camps, retreats, social events, fellowships and other outings show those who are growing in the faith that there is joy in the Christian experience. Churches who are so budget conscious that they ignore the importance of acitivities run the risk of teaching by example that the church and the Christian life is a dull experience!

Those who are outside of the church will Miss Out!

Those who are outside of the church will miss out on the glories of being a Christian. They will never know what it means to experience real joy in their lives. At best they will only know happiness, which is fleeting.

Even worse those who are outside of the church will miss out on the rapture. When Christ returns and prepares to initiate the final seven years of this present age he will raise the sainted dead and transform those who remain, in the twinkling of an eye!

Those who are not saved will miss out on the rapture! They will be left behind!

During those seven final years there will be great tribulation, trouble and anguish on earth! It will be a difficult time! However, those who are saved WILL miss out on the trouble that will occur during this period because they will be caught up in the air with Christ!

Only the saved will miss the the final judgements of God!

That judgement will be so great that the earth will quake, the sun will become black like sack cloth and the moon will become as blood! The stars of heaven will fall to the ground like figs off a tree. Heaven will roll up like a scroll! Mountains and Islands will be moved out of their places!

The judgement of God will be great! But if you are saved, look what you'll miss!

Look at how terrible that great day will be! Rev 6:16-17 says the tribulation period will be so bad that people will wish to die but won't be able to die: "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6:16-17.

Look what you'll miss! Because you came to Jesus you'll miss this terrible moment!

Not only will those who come to Jesus know the Joy of Salvation and be protected from the adversities of the tribulation, but those who are save will experience eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you don't accept Christ, look what you'll miss!

John paints us an inviting picture in Revelation 21! "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Rev. 21:1

John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Look what you will miss!

It had streets paved with gold. Look what you will miss!

It had a tree standing in its midst that was good for the healing of the nations. Look what you will miss!

There will be joy there for all of eternity. Look what you will miss.

Every mountain will be made low, every valley shall be exalted and the rough places shall be made plain!

Every day will be Sunday. It will always be howdy and never goodbye.

If you don't accept Christ ...

Look what you will miss!

No. 516-Revival

God's Message To The Hip Hop Generation

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 29, 1994

Scripture:"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Introduction

Does God have a message for your generation? Is he just a God of the old folks? Is he important to the young people of your generation? There are many who think God is old fashioned. They believe that he had a level of importance for people of a different time but he has no revelance for today's challenges. Yet, even in the difficulty of these times, God still has a message of hope and inspiration.

The present generation of youth are no different from those of the past. Each had its own peculiarities and idiosyncracies that were frown upon by he generation preceding. Whether or not we hailed from the Charleston generation with its finger waved hair, short dresses and beads or whether it was the Boogie Woogie generation of Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and the jitterbug, each has know its own peculiarites. There are some who came from the Bobby Sox generation. It was a time of black and white shoes, thick socks, Elvis Pressly, Little Richard, and the 55 Chevrolet. There are some who hailed from the Woodstock Generation. It was marked by long hair, anti-war protests, Afros, stage plank shoes and dashikis. Some came from what has been called the "Pepsi generation" who feasted on Kentucky Fried Chicken, listen to Prince and the Purple Rain, Bobby Brown, and Run DMC. Now there is before us a new generation, similar to those of the past but is yet different. This new generation is generally described as the Hip Hop Generation. It is a generation of rap music, ear ringed ears, baggy clothing, R. Kelly & Snoop Doggy Dog. This is the generation that today's youth are encountering. The temptations they face are similar to those of previous generations, but the advent of technology makes extremely more difficult to resist and to handle.

Christian youth, faced with this delimma are being called upon by the millions to rise from the their generation and choose to serve a mighty and powerful God who

has chosen them to be his witness. The challenge to rise up and witness for Christ is what lies before this generation. The challenge to know him in every way and tell others what we know faces every Christain youth.

As Christians, we know that God has a special task for us. We may not know exactly what it is, but we that has something for us to do. Let us ask him for strength to rise from our generation and give God a chance, not as a part of the Hip Hop Generation but as a part of his glorious elite, the chosen generation.

Exposition

This text considers Peter as he explains what believers are to God.

In previous verses of the same Chapter Peter had painstaking laid out a blueprint of how Christians are to grow from being babes in the faith to mature adults as they grow in the word (v2). He presented pictures of what Christ is to believers and what Christ is to practicing sinners. To those who believe Christ is like the corner stone of a building and each person a living stone of the same building. To those who live lives of sin Christ is like a stumbling stone which prompts which identifies their disobedience and obstinence.

After speaking of those who reject the teachings of Christ and the Kingdom of God in verse 8, Peter begins verse 9 with "but", a conjunction, that connects the two ideas together. While there are those who reject Christ and the Christian lifestyle, ye tells believers that they are a special chosen generation that has been called from among the legions of non-believers to bear witness to his marvelous works.

Peter identified the believers as a Royal Priesthood, indicating that they were elevated high among their peers, with each person serving as a priest, preacher, minister or evangelist of one to spread the word about the most high God. He also told them that they were a holy nation, a people who although they existed in the world had a holy look and character about themselves. Thirdly, he suggested that they were a peculiar people, noting that their ways were sometimes viewed as strange to those who walk in darkness.

The mission of this chosen generation, according to Peter was to emphasize to live in such a way that our very lives give praise to God. Our lives witness to the fact that he has brought us out of the darkness into the marvelous light of his word.

Thus, this new chosen generation is compelled to carry itself as a holy and different kind of people in the world. It is challenged to be in the world but not of it. To be fully and totally committed to making their lives a living example of the wonder working power of God.

Satan's Plan For Youth

Satan has a plan to gain new recruits among today's youth. It is designed to lure them into one of two subcultures called: Hip Hop and New Jack, turn them against mainsteam morals and culture and ultimately destroy them.

Satan has been busy.Recent studies have revealed that by the age of 16 the average child will watch 200,000 acts of violence on television; in addition to 33,000 murder, 20,000 sex acts, 35,000 naked bodies and will hear 150,000 songs that will urge him to have sex, drink alcohol, shoot someone, or get high. These are the statistics for the average American youth. Consider the fact that African-American youth spends 50 percent more time watching television and listening to radio than all others and it is not hard to understand the complexity of our situation.

This generation is developing a taste for things that are vulgar, violent, and sexy. It is reflected in the movies youth like most. Though there were scores of new movies in the last three years the ones that were favorites of African-American teens were those most violent or had plenty of cursing and sex. The top movies among African-American teens recently were: Boyz in the Hood, House Party, Juice, New Jack City and Talk Dirty after Dark. New Jack City alone grossed over $60 million, mostly from African-American young people.

In the midst of all these influences a new counter culture has developed over the last few years, called Hip Hop. It is a music driven voice of youth rebellion that reflects a languague, culture, fashion and hairstyles that are counter to mainstream influences. The new counter culture attempts to teach youth to go against mainstream cultural standards. If, for example, boys are expected to wear their pants fitted on their waists, Hip Hop urges them to wear them loose on their hips. Instead of wearing shirt tails in, Hip Hop suggests that they wear them out. Instead of buckling belts, Hip Hop suggests that they be worn unbuckled or no belts at all. Since it is expected that men do not wear ear rings, Hip Hop suggests that men wear ear rings. Rather than take hats off in the building, Hip Hop suggests that they keep hats on, and turn them backwards. At one point they were even being urged not only to wear their hats backward but their clothes as well.

Since there are no books, classes or literature on the Hip Hop movement, where do the young people learn about it? They learn about it through rap music, and music videos. Rap music itself is not the culprit. It is simply a style of music. However, rap has been used to get messages of defiance, violence and sex across to our youth. Some groups have positive messages in their songs such as as: X-Clan, KRS-One, Arrested Development, Queen Latifh, and Soldiers for Christ. However, there are others that send our dangerously venemous lyrics that encourage youth to buy guns, become violent, steal, degrade women,drink alcohol and use drugs. Some of these groups include: American Made Gangstas, Dr. Dre, Too Short, Two Live Crew, NWA, Ice T, Ice Cube and the most popular and one of the most venonous: Snoop Doggie Dog.

The Hip Hop movement is supported financially by the cigarette and alcohol movement that has targeted African American youth as easy prey. Many of the rappers are secretly backed by alcohol companies to influence youth to drink. The rap group 8-Ball is backed by Eight Ball Old English 800 Malt Liquor; Ice Cube is promoted by St. Ives Malt Liquor; and it is no coincidence that when Snoop Doggie Dog started singing about the joys of “Gin and Juice” that packages of gin and juice

began showing up in liquor stores around the country.

Even sadder, hundreds of thousands of youth are graduating from Hip Hop to the next worse stage, New Jack. New Jack, mostly affects the young men. It is a close fraternity of young men who must prove that they are willing to anything to prove that they have the "juice" or ultimate courage. This includes, drugs, promiscurity, even murder. It is the kind of "juice" that served as the basis for the movie "New Jack City." Those who moved down to the New Jack dimension have already decided that being "New Jack" is more important than life itself so the threat of death or jail does not frigth then more than the thought of being told that they don't have the "juice." Satan has a grip on millions of young people who are caught up so tight they cannot turn loose.

Come Out

However, Jesus is calling out to the young people of this generation reminding them that he has great work for them to do and step out of their generation into his elite group of young Christian warriors as a part of the Chosen generation.

When Satan starts influencing our young they must be prepared to answer. When Satan plants the idea that there is "nothing wrong with a little bump and grind" the Christian youth remembers that the word of God says "the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost".

So the Christian answers R. Kelly by saying "I don't see nothing wrong with waiting until the right time."

Christian youth have their own *"12 play."*

There were 12 tribes of Israel, 12 Apostles and there will be 12 gates to the new Jerusalem that will sit on 12 foundations that's 12 play!

Youth who become members of God's chosen generation will serve a God who turns:

Darkness into light; failure into success

Weakness into strength; lost hope into fulfilled dreams

You'll serve a savior who loved you so much that he picked up and old rugged cross, marched it up golgatha's hill and died.

But Early!

Early Sunday morning!

He Arose from the dead!

Crying out to all who will..

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house there is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 517-Inspiration

It Is Well

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 14, 1994

SCRIPTURE:2 Kings 4:26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:11-13

Introduction

What is your worry quotient? That is the point in which present crises minus available solutions equal zero. Most people fare well in crises situations if there are more solutions than problems. Your worry quotient is the point in which at which you begin to become overly concerned about the problem. Some trouble themselves at the slightest problem. Some worry only when their options run low. Then there are some that seem confident that their lives are guided by unseen hands and refuse to worry.

Consider the man who was driving his custom made truck along the highway with a neighbor. The truck drove and rode well. Everything went well until the neighbor notice that the gas needle pointed to "E." Even though the needle pointed to empty the driver never seemed to flinch. There wasn't a service station for miles, but yet the driver was so cool and collected. His passenger didn't take it so calmly. He kept watching the needle and looking desperately for a gas station. As the needle dived over into the red, he saw the driver push a little red button and he kept driving. When they finally reached a station the passenger said "why weren't you worried when your gas tank hit empty." The driver smiled and said, "When I custom made this truck I installed two tanks. When my regular tank runs out, I just switch to my auxiliary tank and keep driving. The "E" means exchange tanks. It means "Everything is under control!"

That's the way it is in every Christian life. Those who know the Lord travel on their own power for as long as they can. When problems arise they apply their education, skills, and experience to the situation, but when they the hand points to "E" instead of worrying they switch tanks and live daily on Auxiliary power supplied by the Holy

Spirit.

Just as with the truck, "E" doesn't mean "Empty" it means exchange tanks and give the situation to God. A song writer put it this way: "If the world from you withhold, of its silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word, how he feed the little bird, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

Are you spiritually on "E"? Switch tanks, everything will be alright!

Exposition

This text focuses on how lives that operate on faith display confidence, despite circumstances, that God will meet the needs of those who are called according to his purpose.

The prophet Elisha's life was illumined by mighty miracles. Each had a special purpose and served as a demonstration of the power of God. On one occasion Elisha came to say regularly at the home of an elderly god fearing couple who had no children. At verse 16 Elisha, acting as God's emissary, announced that she would have a child within a year's time as a reward for the kindness she had been shown. The next year the woman conceived. She had a son that grew old enough to walk and play. One day the child became ill and then died while sitting on her lap (v20).

Even though her child had died, the woman did not panic. She carried the boy into the room used by the Elisha on his overnight stays and shut the door. As she left to seek out Elisha she told her inquiring husband "It shall be well." When she reached Elisha his servant asked: "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child?" Though her son lay dead upon a bed in her house she responded "It is well.

Her statement suggested that she looked beyond the tragedy she saw earlier in her home. She looked to the God of Elisha. She felt if she could reach Elisha he could intercede with God and the situation could be reversed. She was so confident that she refused to leave until Elisha accompanied her home. Once there the prophet inspected the situation and then after a short while walked from the room with a living boy.

To the woman it was no surprise, she was confident that God would supply her need.

That is exactly the point that Paul makes as he writes to the Philippians. He noted that in his life time he had experienced abundance and periods of depravation. Through it all he has learned not to get excited, but God has always supplied his needs.

Together these two biblical passages give a clear picture of confidence in the power of God to deliver. Like the Hebrew Boys facing the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the lion's den, they serve to remind us that despite the difficulty of the moment, our God is able to supply all of our needs.

Is it Well With thee?

Today there are millions of people who are troubled spiritually. They look well to the eye, but secretly they are confused and tormented.

Some are troubled over the economics of life. Opportunities to land a job or to advance seem to evade them and they are constantly depressed. Some are failing in business efforts and career choices. There are some who are faced with impossible circumstances in their educational pursuits.

It is almost as if their dreams in life have died in their laps? What do you do with a dead dream?

The woman in this text watched her dream, her child, die in her lap. However, she never lost hope. When questioned by her husband she responded "It shall be well!"

That should be our answer. When dreams begin to die on you...don't despair! Keep the faith! It shall be well!

The key in understanding the text is to understand the full meaning of "well." Two conditions must exist before anyone can truly respond: it is well.

First, there must be a confidence that there is a power that is great enough to resolve our dilemmas and we have access to that power. If we are sure that no matter what comes along in life that we are in contact with a greater power than our difficulties, we can boldly say "it is well." When the disciples were aboard ship one day a storm broke out and they thought they would sink, as they all prepared to die, somebody remembered that Jesus was asleep below deck. When Jesus awoke he spoke to the winds and the waves and said "Peace be still." It does not matter how difficult the storm or ferocious its waves, we know we can ride out its fierce winds if Jesus is on board.

The first step to developing an "it is well" attitude is know Jesus, the power greater than any frustration that may come your way. When it comes to facing life's difficulties, it is not what you know, but who you know. You may know economics and accounting but when your checkbook balance is zero and your pockets are empty, you need to know the Lord. You may know science and medicine, but when you are laying on your sick bed, its best to know Jesus. Knowledge, training and information allow us to say "it is well" only when those words are explaining what is. When we know Jesus we can say "it is well" because it is expression of what "can be." No wonder the song writer declares: You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself, if you know Jesus you don't need nobody else.

Secondly, developing an "it is well" attitude requires us to understand that whatever the outcome of a situation, it will work out to the advantage, but not necessarily as we would have to be. A recent movie showed a woman who was a marketing executive who was fired from her double digit salary job because she spent too much time raising an orphan child. She was almost shattered by her firing. However, she bought a home raised the child from her savings. A special apple pudding she made for the child became locally popular. She used her marketing skills, mass produced it and made millions, from her home. She even received an invitation

to return to the company, which she turned down. At the moment the situation appeared fatal, but it worked out to her advantage, she was richer, freer and happier than she would have ever been, had she not been fired.

An "it is well" attitude says regardless of how bad the situation, even if my dream dies in my lap, the God who supplied one dream, can supply another. The person who can respond "it is well" is sure that God never "closes one door" without "opening another." However, more important than that, the "it is well" person has faith in the word of God. This person remembers that Romans 8:28 says "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." With that faith the "it is well" person resolves in the words of the song writer "if even if the storms don't cease, my soul is anchored in the Lord."

It is well

The faith that God is still in control is the "extra tank" that every Christian carries through life. It helps us to weather every storm with a positive outlook becomes we know that it will work out right. When we have done all we know how to do, that's the time we should "switch tanks."

Switching tanks is depending on the power of God!

Switching tanks is leaning on the everlasting arms!

Switching tanks is what the song writer meant when he said "if the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare, just remember in his word how he feeds the little bird, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there! If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

A Centurion soldier met Jesus on the street on behalf of a sick servant. He told Jesus, 'you don't need to come, just speak the word and my servant will be healed.' That's tank switching faith.

A woman with an issue of blood, saw Jesus coming up the street she said in her mind, "if I can touch the hem of his garment, I can be made whole!" That's tank switching faith.

Faith in God takes an ugly situation and makes it beautiful

Faith in God finds

—Strength in the middle of weakness; success in the midst of failure; peace in the midst of confusion; joy in the midst of sadness; comfort in the midst of loneliness.

In closing, I'm reminded of the true story of Horatio Spafford, who was a successful businessman who suffered extreme financial failure. His son died and the world seemed to topple around him. To take a rest he sent his wife and four children overseas on a boat to later join them. But the ship had a wreck and his four children died along with others. As he joined his grieving wife, Spafford read his bible and considered all that had happened to him and looked at the waters that had buried his children. His whole world had been destroyed, but yet he sat down and wrote these words "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows

roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul!”

I don’t know about you but I have learned how to say “it is well!”

Storms may rise, but it is well!

Winds may blow, but it is well!

It is well because Jesus, my fortress in the storm is on board!

It is well because he died, and rose for my salvation!

It is well! It is well, with my soul!

No. 518-Communion

The Right Blood Type

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 21, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"And he said unto them, this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you." Matthew 14:24

Introduction

Do you know your blood type? Many people don't know their blood type and are not aware of its significance. Those with a military background, or who have had an occasion to be hospitalized or become blood donors have probably learned their blood type. Most people, especially the young are not aware of their blood type or its importance. Many think, any red blood will do, but that is not entirely true, red blood is not red, its really blue. Just any old blood will not do.

Consider the man who was the victim of a serious accident in a remote village without benefit of modern medicine. The man had lost plenty of blood and the villagers feared he would die. As a last minute act the village chief ordered the people to find blood for him from somewhere. After a short while a man returned with a container of blood. It was infused, but more was needed. A second container of blood was brought. Finally a third container was brought. After several days the man miraculously recovered. But in a few days they noticed strange behavior on his part. It was hard to understand. Finally, the chief called in the men who supplied the blood and asked where it came from. The first man said I got it from my stallion in the pasture. The second said I got mine from a pig in the pen out back. The last man said I got mine from a Chimpanzee in the forest. The chief said "That explains it!" "Explains what?" "It explains why he's been running like a horse, eating like a hog, and acting a monkey all day long!" Just any blood won't do!

Since 1900 modern science has divided human blood into groups. Scientists noticed that certain groups of blood would cause clots if they were mixed with others. They isolated the types into groups called A,B,AB and O. While there were some exceptions they generally recommended that if blood is exchanged from one person to another, that both parties should have the same blood type, otherwise the recipient of the foreign blood could die.

As Christians we have received an infusion of blood that gives us a new spiritual life in Christ. There are many sources of bad blood in the world that want to give us transfusions. However, we must constantly be on guard against allowing spiritually

bad blood into our life stream. Jesus gave us the right type: "My Blood." It's not just any blood, but it's the blood that was shed for the remission of our sins.

Exposition

This text considers blood and the types that were required for the forgiveness of sins in both the old and new covenants.

There has always been a level of importance placed upon blood in the scripture, primarily because life itself is derived from the blood. Blood and "life" or "living being" are closely associated. The Hebrews of Old Testament times were prohibited from eating blood. "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water" (Deut. 12:23-24). For agricultural people, this command stressed the value of life. Though death was ever-present, life was sacred. Life was not to be regarded cheaply.

Even when the Old Testament speaks of animal sacrifice and atonement, the sacredness of life is emphasized. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). In giving what was of great value, the person offering the sacrifice showed that reconciliation with God involved life—the basic element of human existence. Atonement was costly. Only the New Testament could show how costly.

Not only was blood required, but certain types of blood were required for certain types of sins. Moreover, social strata also decided the type of blood required. Leviticus Chapters 4 and 5 describe two categories of sinners and the types of blood required for the forgiveness of each. In the context of this message that might easily be described as types A and B.

Type A can be described as the sins committed out of ignorance. These would include mistakes, blunders, oversight, and misinformation. When the priest sinned he was required to bring a young bullock and sacrifice it to God. No other blood offered would be sufficient. (Lev. 4:3). When the people, as a community or nation, sinned they also required a young bullock. (Lev. 4:13). A leader or an official required a young male goat for his atonement. (Lev. 4:22) When the common people sinned their atonement required the blood of a young female goat. (Lev 4:27-28)

Type B can be described as sins that were committed with full knowledge that they were against God's law. These are called trespass sins and usually involve offenses against either God or another person. These would include: swearing, stealing, lying, and other non-capital offenses. Those guilty of swearing were required to sacrifice a female lamb or goat (Lev. 5:6) Those whose offenses were against holy things and commandments such as failing to give a tithe, first fruit offerings, and other laws required a ram plus 20 percent interest.(Lev. 5:16) Those guilty of stealing must make full restitution plus 20 percent interest (Lev. 6:4-5) to their victims and then bring a

young ram before God. In some cases the extremely poor were allowed to bring pigeons and turtle doves for their trespass offerings (Lev. 5:7). Regardless to whether the sin was committed out of ignorance or out of willfulness, the shedding of blood was required. However, just any blood wouldn't do. While bringing the blood of two pigeons for lying would be acceptable they were unacceptable for theft. In the case of murder the only blood type that was acceptable was the suspect's own. Blood offered had to have the right type to be acceptable for the forgiveness of sin.

When Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant after His last Passover with the disciples, He declared: "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Jesus, the God-man, gave up His life and experienced the reality of death so that those who identify themselves with him might experience His life and never taste death as He did. He shed his blood, which was a universal type, for the remission of sins of many categories and types of people. His blood covers all sins.

Blood Types Among Us

Today we know that before we can enter the kingdom of God we must have the right blood type. 1 Corinthians 15:50 reminds us that: "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." To be acceptable to God we need to assure ourselves that we have the right blood type.

There are many who have adopted attitudes toward life that can only be described as A-Negative, B-Negative and O.

A negative attitude is destructive, especially when it relates to the kingdom of God. Negativity forces us to concentrate on what is wrong; not on what is right. It drains our energies from a "what are we going to do next" attitude to a "why we can't do it" mode.

Whether in our personal lives or with the church, those who constantly display negative attitudes do more damage to themselves than anyone else. It's like the little boy who stands on the track and plays chicken with an approaching train. He says "I'm not going to move" and the train can't stop. Who will feel the most hurt by his attitude? Many lose opportunities because of their negative attitudes. Many shoot themselves in the foot and doom themselves to failure and frustration because of their negative attitudes.

Generally, "A-Negative" people think negative. B-Negative people act negatively. These are the kind of people who think and talk destructively. B-Negative people rarely act alone. They are miserable, angry, and frustrated and they want others to feel just as angry, miserable and frustrated as they are. They generally bring in as many people as they can to share their misery because "misery likes company." B-Negative people usually make phone calls and visits encouraging others to make negative action. Christians should excercise extreme care as they decide whether or not to be influenced by negative voices. Acts 5:38-39 holds the key. If a matter is from men, it won't go anywhere. If it is from God, nothing can be done to defeat it. Negative

actions indicate B-Negative blood.

"O" people are on the sidelines. They could go either way. They rarely take an action for or against anything. They are not
"O" positive or "O" negative, they are just on the sideline. They are what the bible describes as lukewarm, neither hot nor cold.
"O" is not acceptable either because Revelation 3:16 the Lord will spew the lukewarm out of his mouth.

What's The Right Type?

Physically we cannot change our blood types. If we are born with A-Negative Blood then we'll die with the same. That is not true spiritually. We can develop a negative spirit and it can be changed into "A-Positive" spirit, by the working of the holy spirit.

The right type of blood for the Christian is not A-Negative but A-Positive: A-positive viewpoint in life, A-Positive glimpse of the future, A-Positive view of yourself and others. The Christian's blood type is not B-Negative, but it is B-Positive. Be positive about actions that will build the kingdom of God. B-Positive about the possibilities of accomplishing the impossible with the help of God. B-Positive about our commitment to work in the vineyard.

Those who have been crippled by negative, defeatist blood, need an infusion of new blood.

Those whose potential has been stifled by lagging self confidence, pessimism and negative self talk, need some need blood.

Those who have been literally destroyed spiritually because of the bad blood need new blood?

What is this new blood? Where can it be found? How much does it cost?

The song writer heard the question "What can wash away my sins?" and answered "Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

To those who are searching for it I remind you that "there is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vein. Sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilt and stains."

To those who worry about its cost we remind them that "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow."

There is power in the blood, wonder working power!

If you need a blood transfusion, try Jesus!

He died out on Calvary! He rose after three days and nights!

Try Jesus...and get the right blood type!

No. 519-Christian Education

Without Knowledge People Perish!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 4, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Hosea 4:6

Introduction

Have you ever been the student of an unprepared teacher? Have you ever played on a team with an unprepared coach? If so, then you know the frustration associated with such circumstances. While there are millions of copies of bibles and Christian literature published each year, there is an amazingly small number of Christians who read the Bible, subscribe to Christian magazines or involve themselves in serious Christian life instruction.

Many are fine men and women who live clean, law abiding, morally upright lives. Their home libraries are filled with the works of Plato, Ariostole, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Alex Haley, James Baldwin, and Niki Giovani, Maya Angelou. Besides these there are volumes of reports, notes, theme papers, dissertations, surveys, proposals, and critical reviews that crowd their shelves. Without exception they are examples of intelligence, education and moderation. Many have spent their entire lives studying education, politics, government, science and social studies. They have concentrated their lives on learning to identify and combat the wicked things of the world as they impose themselves on humanity. Although there are millions who are obviously highly skilled at identifying and combating the evils of society, the word of God declares that the people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge.

How is it possible with a growing proliferation of PhD's, Master's Degrees, high school diplomas, and experts in cosmetology, criminology, health care, auto mechanics, and popular sciences..that the people can perish from a lack of knowledge? For the answer let us consider two sheep dogs that were acquired to guard the sheep of a certain shepherd. The shepherd told the sheep dogs to guard the sheep with their lives because there were dangerous wolves in the hills that would destroy simple and powerless sheep. The sheep dogs went to work. One sheep dog prided himself in the

fact that he could spot a wolf a mile away. He studied the ways and sounds of wolves. He felt qualified to stand guard over the sheep. The second sheep dog had heard about, but had never seen a wolf. He was new on the job and felt uneasy. While the first sheep dog lay back against the tree and watch for fanged teeth, pointed ears, and cold deadly eyes, the second dog just watched the sheep. As days passed, the routine was the same, the first dog watched for wolves, the second never took his eyes off the sheep. One day the wolf decided to dress up in sheep skins and slip pass the sheep dogs. The first dog, looking for tell tale signs, missed the wolf. But the second dog immediately began to bark and growl and attacked the wolf and ran him away. Later the first dog asked: "How were you able to discover the wolf and you'd never seen one and I missed it?" The second dog answered: "You spent your time studying wolves, I spent my time studying sheep. I know how a sheep sounds, looks and moves from head to toe. I didn't know what a wolf looked like, but when I saw those big O' feet, I knew it wasn't a sheep!"

The people perish if they are led by individuals who know more about the wolves of this world, than they do about the nature, attributes and the will of God.

Every Christian should study the word of God directly. Moreover, each has the responsibility of studying, discussing and discovering the nature of God's mighty working in lives of others of the same faith.

The world through its schools, colleges and universities teaches us to know the wolves. However, it is the job of Christian Education to teach every saint, to know the perfect will and way of the Lamb of God.

Exposition

This text considers the biblical meaning of knowledge.

Knowledge is generally defined as "a clear and certain perception of something." In the Old Testament, knowledge and knowing God are synonymous. In most instances believers were urged not to seek the rewards of knowing God until they knew him themselves. For example in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To have such knowledge available to them before the understood and knew the will and nature of God was unwise. They wanted to bypass the slow and painstaking process of knowing God and reached for the fruit and brought sin into sphere of human existence.

Knowledge of God is known because God makes himself known through his actions. Those that have come to know him live in respect for him and in obedience to him. Psalm 25:14 says "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

What a man knows, believes and accepts about God indicates his level of knowledge in the biblical context. His secular training is considered inconsequential and incidental. Only what he knows and has experienced about the nature of God is considered real knowledge. The quest is that "knowledge of God" would reach every person on earth. Isaiah 11:9 says "..for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the

LORD." The same theme is repeated in Jeremiah 31:34: "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest."

In the perception of the Old Testament, knowing God was to have a clear perception of his nature, what he demands of each person, and what he can and will do.

In the New Testament, Jesus builds on this foundation adding that it is impossible to know God unless you first know him. In John 8:19 he declares:"... Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." To know Jesus is to have a clear perception of what the Christian life is all about and to accept it as truth. To know Jesus is to know God. To know God is to have knowledge.

Therefore this text in Hosea 4 makes its abundantly clear that for the lack of Knowledge of God the people perish. It is assumed that once one knows God he will both trust him and fear him in every aspect of life. Because they have no knowledge of him their destruction is imminent.

Knowledge of God Needed

Today there is an increasing need for knowledge of God. While there is a growing respect for secular education, there are many that do not feel that same level of respect for the importance of learning about God.

There are some parents who insist that their children learn their lessons in school, but do not insist that they study their bibles, and learn the things of God. Believers who strive for excellence in the secular community, demand the best qualified doctors, governmental leaders and teachers, yet are willing to accept incompetence and mediocrity when it comes to those who lead and teach within the church.

There are many who believe acquiring a "knowledge" of God is crucial to their economic and social success. They conclude that while it is a desirable novelty, it is not a necessity that equals the importance of a high ACT score or a terminal college diploma. There are even times when those who have this attitude will even suggest that secular training can substitute for a knowledge of God. These are situations when people are selected to teach a Sunday School class, serve as deacons, trustess, departmental heads and otherwise lead the people of God, on the basis of the number of degrees on their wall, irrespective of their unwillingness and sometimes stubborn refusal to study and learn the knowledge of God.

A Musician with secular skills can teach a choir songs but that sound good to the ear. However, the singers don't get the full power of the ministry until they have music directors that know God. The testimony of a director who knows God transforms what could have been an operatic performance or show to an expression of witness. Any secular teacher can make a lesson plan, read a teacher's manual and teach a Sunday School lesson. But only the person who knows God can go beyond what's in the commentary and testify to the truths it outlines. That's when secular skills are inadequate. Any person can sit on a deacon board or trustee board and make business decisions, only secular skills are required for that. But those who know and trust and God go beyond what their secular training have given them because they

know the will of God and trust him completely. Anyone with a good heart can lead an auxiliary in terms of pure mechanics. But in terms of being an example of a man or woman that knows and trusts God, secular training alone is insufficient.

We gain a knowledge of God in two ways; both are intertwined: through study of his word and related works, and through our personal experience of trust and obedience. We must study the word of God regularly, accurately and persistently. We must also study the works of God; that is, the methodology used by the people of God in doing his work.

Each local church has an obligation to teach the knowledge of God to its members, who study and learn of their own free will. However, the church must insist that those who rise to teach or lead in the congregation must be persons who have a knowledge of God that goes beyond their secular training. Paul writing Timothy was emphatic "Study to show thyself approved!" It was a command. It was a prerequisite to service.

You must know God

Finally, we must know God from our personal experience as well as our studies.

To know God is to trust him. To trust him is to put it all in his hands. That's why Proverbs 3:5-6 says "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Those who know God that he will make a way! This is not what they have read, or heard, but from their own experience!

I don't know about you, but I've found that God can make a way out of no way!

Those who trust in God have found out that God can take:

—Bitterness and turn it to sweetness; failure and turn it to success

—Defeat and turn it to victory; Broken hearts and mend them in love!

When you get to know God better you trust him more!

No wonder the song writer declares "I trust in God, wherever I may be. On mountain peak or on the stormy sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

Trust him because he's worthy! He loved us enough to give his own Son that we might have a chance to everlasting life!

I will trust in the Lord until I die!

I want to know more, more about Jesus! The more I know, the more I trust him! The more I trust him, the more he's able to do for me!

More, More about Jesus! More of his saving fullness see, more of his love who died for me!

No. 520- Inspiration

God of the Hills & Valleys

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 11, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2; "And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD." 1 Kings 20:28

Introduction

Have you ever doubted whether the good fortunes shared by others can ever come your way? Have there been times when you concluded that while listening to accounts of God's past works were inspirational, they were meaningless to your present situation? If so, you are among millions who have failed to receive the fullness of their relationship with God because they doubt him. The record of God's accomplishments in the life and times of previous generations is not limited to the circumstances of that time. God is a God of all generations. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

Sometimes we lose blessings because we don't understand the nature of our God. Consider the nit wit country boy who bought his first car new car, but was walking in the Arizona Desert with a bucket. A passerby stopped and asked him why he walking with an empty bucket in the desert. "I gotta find some water" He answered. "I saw a sign that said 'check your water before crossing the desert,' so I pulled over and raised the hood on my brand new car and guess what those stupid people put in the radiator? Anti-Freeze. It's 120 degrees and they put antifreeze in my engine." The passerby stared at him puzzled and asked "What was the problem?" The country boy answered: "The problem is that antifreeze is for the winter, not for the desert. Those guys up in Detroit sure are stupid." The passerby then asked "Why are you walking?" The country boy wiped the sweat off his brow and said "Well I used my head, I let all of that green stuff out of my car and I'll walk till I can find me a well and draw me some real water!"

Just as the country boy did not understand the properties of antifreeze or the nature of the Arizona desert, there are many today who do not understand the nature of God.

He is universal, omnipresent, and all powerful. The same power that heats an iron hot enough to press out wrinkles, cools a freezer cold enough to make ice cubes. Whatever our circumstance, God is able to supply our need.

As Christians, we know God's power is not conditional, limited or restrained. We rejoice in the knowledge whether we are on the mountaintop or in the valley, our God is able to supply our needs according to his riches in glory!

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it wins a great battle because its enemies misunderstood the nature of God.

King Ahab engaged in a battle with the Syrians under King Ben-hadad as he defended the region of Samaria. Ben-hadad was a drunken, warlike and superstitious king. He sent threats to the king of Israel, who himself was less than ideal. The Lord sent word, by the prophets, that Israel would defeat Syria in battle, despite its massive armies led by 32 kings.

When the battle ended, Israel was victorious. As the Syrians analyzed their defeat they concluded that they lost because they fought Israel in the hills, which is the strong hold of Israel's God. Their scholars produced writings from the great Israeli King David who wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." This was evidence that God was a God of the hills and mountains. Their conclusions seemed valid when their scholars pointed out that Psalm 87:1 says: "His foundation is in the holy mountains." When they read scriptures such as Psalm 15:1 "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" or Psalm 24:3 "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?"; they concluded that their mistake was to fight Israel in the stronghold of their God.

The Syrians decided to wage a battle against Israel again with an even mightier army, replacing the 32 kings with trained military commanders and more soldiers. The power of the new army that faced Israel the next year was awesome. They felt confident because they had more than 127,000 soldiers, chariots, horses and machinery of war at their disposal. Most importantly they were fighting Israel in the valley this time, not in the hills. They felt the God of Israel would be powerless in the valley and his people would be vulnerable to defeat.

God sent a message to king Ahab that Israel would win this battle. His victory over such a huge force, in the open fields of the valley showed both Israel and its enemies that God was not limited to just the hills, but that he is a God of the valleys as well.

God's Power is Universal

Today there are many who have the misconception that God's presence and power are conditioned on locality. There are many who have great reverence and respect for God when they perceive themselves to be in his presence. The ancient Jews

believed that God dwelled inside the Tabernacle and sat on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. They did not and could not comprehend the idea that they could come before the presence of God outside the confines of the Tabernacle and later the Temple of Solomon. They confined God to what we would call the "church building."

As Christians, we join regularly to worship God in a sanctuary dedicated to that purpose. However, no one should get the impression that the church building is the only place where we can come before the presence of God. We can meet and talk with God while driving our cars, sitting on a park bench, or while we are standing over an ironing board. While we may have certain places in our homes and church community where we go to meet him, he is not limited to the places we choose. He is not limited to a certain place because he is everywhere!

God's Power is without Limit

Just as God's presence cannot be confined to a certain locality, neither can his power be limited.

Too many today hear the accounts of God's wonderful actions in the lives of their grandparents and parents, but doubt that God still does that today. We hear testimonies from those whom God has healed and we try to explain it in medical terms that makes it less miraculous and more a reasonable outcome limited to that particular situation. We read in the bible of cases where the terminally ill were healed, the life longed blind were given sight, and the permanently handicapped were given abilities to hear and walk again.

When many of us read those accounts we confine them to that particular time period and circumstance. Some read them with interest, but doubt that they would ever become a reality in their own lives. In essence, they conclude that God performed miraculous works in that time, but he doesn't do that today.

God's power is limitless. We who worship and serve him, should never underestimate his ability. The Hebrew Boys, faced with the threat of the fiery furnace, never doubted the power of God. Though faced with certain death they declared "Our God is able to deliver us."

Faced with life and career threatening situations, modern Christians should show the same kind of faith; that God is able to deliver them from persecution, false accusations, layoffs, sickness and hardships. No matter what the situation there is nothing too hard for God to do! His power cannot be limited for he has all power in his hand!

He God of Both The Hills and The Valleys

Finally, we remind ourselves that God is a God of both the hills and the valleys of life.

The hilltop and mountaintop experiences mark the special moments of our success.

It was in a such moment that Moses came before the presence of God and was told

to take off his shoes for he stood on Holy Ground.

It was in a hilltop moment that Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, but learned that God had a "lamb in the bush!"

It was in a hilltop experience that Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and called out to the people "How Long Halt Ye Between two opinions? If the Lord be God then follow him" Choose ye this day.

It was in a hilltop experience that Joshua assembled true believers on the side of a mountain and declared "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

The hilltop represents those times when we are closest to God and have stood tall in victory. God is a God of the hill top experience!

However, God is also the God of the valley experience!

The valley experience represents the ordinary, the mundane and the routine. The valley also marks special times when we are afraid, lonely, friendless, disturbed, and sick in mind and body.

Job was familiar with the valley, having experienced the hilltop of wealth and health, in poverty and sickness he declared "Yea though he slay, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15)

David knew about the hills, but he was acquainted with the valleys, having fallen into disgrace, sin and shame. Even in the valley David declared "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me!"

A widow woman was familiar with the valley. Hungry and facing certain death, she discovered that even in the valley of despair God can fix our barrels such that they never run dry!

Paul and Silas were familiar with the valley. But confined to a jail cell, accursed and accused, and locked away, they discovered that the same God they prayed to in the sanctuary on hilltop was still available in the prisons of the valley. At midnight they sang and prayed, and at midnight they got an answer, in the valley!

It's good to have some hills, but you learn a few things in the valley! Some have found, love, joy, peace and security, in the valley!

Our Lord knows about the valley, because he had to walk this lonesome valley, he had to walk it by himself. Nobody else could walk it for him. He had to walk it by himself!

The Lord knows all about our troubles!

He knows all about our trials!

He is Lord of the valley, because he was also Lord of the hill!

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame! On that hill, Jesus died to show the world that he is Lord both the hills and valleys with all power in his hands!

Power that cannot be limited!

Power that cannot be controlled!

Power that is available to everyone!

Whether rich or poor! Call Him!

Whether Black or White! Call Him!

Whether College Educated or a high school drop out,Call Him!
Call Him Up and Tell him what you Want!

No. 521-Cross

A Good Battery With Loose Cables

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 18, 1994

Scripture: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

Introduction

Have you ever seen the Energizer battery commercial on television? That's the one where the little bunny appears beating a drum and the announcer says "still going!" Across deserts, over mountains, on lonely highways ..nothing seems to stop that little bunny. The point of the commercials is not the bunny, but the battery. The company wants everyone to know what keeps that bunny going! It operates on a fully charged, fully energized battery. It's important to have good batteries. Weak batteries cause problems. Cars with weak batteries have trouble starting. Once the motor starts the car usually runs, but it takes a good battery to get it cranked. Tape recorders with weak batteries usually drag. Flashlights dim, transistor radios fade, and Game Boy video games come to a complete halt when the batteries fade. The battery is the power source.

Getting a good battery is only half the job. Consider the woman who was having trouble getting her car to start. Each time she turned the ignition switch strange clicking sounds came from beneath the hood. She figured that the battery of her car was going dead. Without checking with anyone she bought a new battery and had her young son to replace it. When she tried to start the car again, all she got was the same clicking sound. Finally, she called in a mechanic who took one look at her cable ends and analyzed her situation. "Ma'am, you have a good battery, but you have bad cables." She learned a good lesson about her car that day: "its important to make sure the battery has good connections."

Corroded battery cables have stopped the flow of power in the best automobiles. Even brand new batteries are useless if the contacts are rusted. In the Christian life the cross, as it represents the power of God through Jesus Christ, is our power source. The blood of Christ, like the energizing fluids inside a battery energizes and empowers us. The cross represents the power of God unto salvation. It also represents the power

of God for every believer to live in the power of the spirit. However, we must keep clear contacts to keep the power flowing. We must be in complete connection and in harmony with the will of God to benefit from the immense power that is available to us. It is of little value to us to have the power of almighty God instantly at our disposal if we let our connections get rusty and corroded. Far too many believers go through life hearing the "clicking" sound that suggests that there is power under the hood but it can't get through. Many have the capacity to achieve greatness through the exercise of their gift, but each time they turn the switch all they get is that "clicking" sound.

As Christians, let us resolve to stay in close, clear, uninterrupted connection with God. Though others might think we are foolish for doing so, we who are saved know that our power comes through the cross, for it represents the power of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the church at Corinth about the wisdom of preaching about the cross of Christ.

Paul explains that those who are saved recognize the Christ as a symbol of the power of God. To those outside of the faith the church is involved in foolishness. There are several key words in this single verse which should be noted for fuller understanding:

Preaching

PREACHING:(Greek: Logos) Preaching is the expression of divine truths through the spoken or printed word. It takes on various forms such as: sermons, lectures, talks, narratives, speeches, drama, commentaries. Sometimes when we do not hear the words, situations preach to us. Jonah tried to avoid his mission from God, but his three journey in the belly of a fish let him hear a long sermon. The situation preached to him. Actions preach much louder and more effectively than spoken or printed words. A sermon lived is better than one preached any way. Preaching, according 1 Corinthians 14:3 has three purposes: edification, that is to build them up, enlighten and improve them; exhortation, that is to inspire and life them; and comfort. To those out of the faith preaching is unnecessary, foolish and wasteful. However Romans 10:14 reminds us that the first step to releasing the power of God is through hearing the preached word: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Singing, praying, testimonies and other forms of worship are inspiring but preaching is the source of our power, because in those moments we hear inspired expressions that direct us in the Godly path.

Cross

—**CROSS**:(Greek: Stauros) Is simply a stake, pole or post in the ground that was used for capital punishment. When Paul spoke of the cross as the power source of

Christians, he was not referring to the wooden stake itself, but the entire range of ideas associated with symbolized by the cross which include the sacrifice of Christ, his blood shed, his death, burial and resurrection. Some denominations teach that the cross should not be a Christian symbol because it symbolizes death, but the word of God says it is a symbol of the power of God. The crucifixion of Christ transformed the cross from a symbol of shame and embarrassment to a symbol of the power of God. The cross has this symbol because Christ's death on the cross blotted out our sins and obligation to ritual, in effect, nailed them to his empty cross. (Col 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;)

Moreover, the cross is the means by which we are able to make peace with God. (Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.) Christ, because of Calvary is able to justify us, to make peace for us before God.

The cross symbolizes the establishment of the Lordship of Christ and therefore his ability to intercede and mediate for us before God.(Phil 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11.)

Paul said the preaching, teaching, and promoting the cross and the power it symbolizes believers glorify God because we recognize the cross as a symbol of the power of God himself.

Foolishness

—**PERISH**, (apollumi) FOOLISHNESS (moria): Those who do not share the faith of believers think that the inordinate amount of time spent studying the word, listening to sermons, attending classes, and otherwise sharing in the expression of the word is a literal waste of time. When Paul preached about Christ and his crucifixion the Jews considered it a stumbling block or an obstacle the interrupted their routine and threatened the status quo. The Greeks simply considered the possibility of the resurrection from the dead, a risen Lord, and divine intervention by a once crucified leader as absurdity and "foolishness." (1 Cor 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;) Those who perish are those who reject the power of the cross. They have heard the story but they do not accept it as truth, therefore they consider preaching in all of its forms, is a waste of time.

It is not foolish to talk about God!

It is not foolish to preach and teach about his wondrous works! It is not foolish

for us to believe that God hears and answers prayers It is not foolish for us to believe that God performs miracles It is not foolish, it is faith, that God is the same today as he was yesterday!

Power

POWER:(Greek: Denims) Those who are believers know that the cross is the source of ability, energy, inspiration, and imagination. However, the word "Denims" suggest more than the ordinary. It suggests miraculous power supplied by God. The word Denims is talking about the spiritual Energizer! The spiritual "bunny rabbit" that just keeps going and going and going! Those who are anointed with the power of God act in miraculous ways! Abilities are expanded when anointed by the power of God! Energy seems endless, inspiration flows, and imagination seems boundless when anointed by the power of God.

We are serve a God whose power is endless and infinite. He is all powerful! He is by any definition a good power source; a good battery. However, we need to be sure that we have the right connections.

DETERMINE THE TYPE OF CONNECTION REQUIRED: Before connecting to any power source we must determine what kind of connection is required. There are some powers sources which require A/C connections, alternating current; others require D/C or direct current. There are many church members who are A/C in nature they are alternating church members. The attend church on Alternating Sundays; pray on alternating occasions, give on alternating seasons.

We serve a God who demands a D/C Christian or dependable Christian. Who does not alternate but who has concluded that "I'm on the battle field for my Lord and I promised him that I would serve him till I die."

CONNECTIONS MUST BE TIGHT. Batteries must free of interfering corrosion but they also must have a tight fit. There can be no space that separates the cable end from the battery post. Maybe that's what Paul was talking about when he said "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

BOTH CABLES MUST BE CONNECTED: Two connections are needed for batteries to operate, one goes to the power source the other is a grounder. You can't have power unless both are connected. There are many today who are trying to connect with the power source through "Paying, Praying, and Praising" plugging up the "hot" wire without a grounder. We are grounded when we understand that all blessings come from God. We are grounded when we understand that despite our rise in wealth and health, our feet remain humbly planted on the ground. We our grounded when the words of the song writer become our testimony: "Lord, if I get too high, please bring me down."

GET THE RIGHT BATTERY: We must be sure that we have the right battery for

the job. There are many who are trying to use their 6 volt transistor college educations to empower a 12 volt cadillac dreams. Education is good, but its a battery to small for the job. Training is good but, its a battery to small for the job. Intellect is good but its a battery to small for the job! When you need power to get a transistor battery, but go to the power that created the earth in the palm on his hand, spangled the night with the moon and stars, and caused the pine tree to point its finger to the sky. Call on the Lord.

If you are looking for a good power source, let me introduce you to God's original power source.

Before there was a 36 month Good Year Power Source; Before there was NAPA 40 month Power Horse; Before there was a Sears 60 month Guaranteed Power Source. Before Sears and Roebuck every thought of the name, God created the original "Die Hard" his name is Jesus!

Just like Everyready, he's got power to spare!

They crucified him on a borrowed cross and buried him in a borrowed tomb, thinking his power had been drained.

But early Sunday morning, they found out that he was a die hard, because he rose declaring to the world that he has "all power! in his hands"

Wonder working power!

Soul Saving Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 522-Youth

Living Doggie Style

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 25, 1994

SCRIPTURE: ***What can David speak more to thee for the honor of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 1 Chronicles 17:18 (KJV) "What more can David say to you for honoring your servant? For you know your servant,(NIV) What else can I say? You know that I am but a dog, yet you have decided to honor me! (LBV)***

Introduction

Have you ever envied a dog's life? Sometimes dogs seem to have it made! They lay on the porch until its time to eat. After they are fed, they go back into a comfortable spot, lie down again until its time to eat again. Sometimes dogs seem to have it made in life without a single worry or trouble. They seem to live life freely without a hitch.

Consider the little boy and his dog Rover. The little boy was fascinated by the dog's life. It seemed that his little dog had so much fun. He decided to live Rover's life for a day. He went where Rover went and he imitated Rover all day. He did some strange things. Imitating Rover, he barked and howled, chased after cars and rolled in the grass and then lay on the porch. His mother became upset when she saw the boy going through weeds and bushes with the dog and started to stop him. However, his grandmother said "let him play, he'll learn from it." At the end of the day the boy had done everything Rover had done. Then he noticed that Rover raised his leg and started scratching himself feverishly. Strangely, the boy couldn't stop either. They were both scratching. As his grandmother pushed him into the bathroom and ran his bath water she said, "Let this be a lesson to son, if you live like a dog, you will get fleas."

While we muse humorously about the dog's life, there are people who actually try to live the dog's life. Men who treat women harshly and cold are said to "dog" them. Those who are selfish, heartless and vindictive are said to be "dogs." Some who try to explain their tendency to chase after the other sex respond that its just the "dog in me."

A popular rap singer known as "Snoop Doggie Dog" promotes the doggish way of life. In his popular album, "Doggie Style" he promotes violence, illicit sex, and deviant behavior associated with the doggish style of life. His records sell millions as he encourages young people to rebel, drink gin and juice, and to generally live

"doggie style." Millions of young people are taking his cue and have decided to live doggie style, rejecting the instruction of their parents, teachers and the wisdom of the word of God.

Some young people have not been drawn in by the lure of living "doggie style" because they have heeded the word of God which says " be thou not envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Psalm 37:1b-2.

Of Course grandma made it real simple..if you live like a dog, you will get fleas!

Exposition

This text considers David as he reflects that despite the lowliness of life before God, yet he is considered for blessings.

The main theme of this passage begins at verse 16 in which David considers his unworthiness to receive rich blessings from God. He asks "Who am I or Lord God, and what is mine house.." Considering the wretched life that he lived David was awed that God still loved him enough to make great blessings available to his immediate household and his posterity. The Living Bible paraphrase transcribes David's words this way: "What else can I say? You know that I am but a dog, yet you have decided to honor me!"

God knew David very well. He knew him as an innocent man hunted as a criminal for no fault of his own. He knew him as the dog hearted man who would kill a woman's husband to claim her for his wife. But he also knew David as a man who tired of living the dog's life of deceit, misery, violence and disrespect and cried out in his agony "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." Psalm 51:10-12 God knew David as a man after his own heart.

This passage finds David in awe of the benevolence of God to love him, bless him, and make great promises to himself and his family despite having been a "dog" among men. God made great promises to David and his family because of his decision to rise above his doggish nature, repent, resist evil and to stand firm for God.

From verse 16 to verse 22 David recounts how God has shown benevolence to both himself and to Israel, selecting them, despite their doggish ways, as his own. At verse 23 he rises and asks God to allow the blessings of his grace to flow upon his family.

David experienced the reality of living the dog's life. He sinned in the worse way. He murdered, brought shame on his family, contracted a venereal disease, and reached a point of spiritual bankruptcy before begging God to restore him. In repentance, he rose from a man who lived like a dog, to a man described as being "after God's own heart."

Thanks to a forgiving God, he was not condemned to the dog's life but was given another chance, which he used to the glory and praise of God for the remainder of

his life.

Living Doggie Style

Many young people are attracted to a doggish lifestyle that is being portrayed as the "Flava" of the month by subculture heroes and rap stars. As a result some have begun to act like dogs. Some fight like dogs. At football games, school events and otherwise some find it necessary to fight and growl in an endless succession of fighting and shooting. Young people carrying knives and other weapons, prepared to fight is common place.

While some fight like dogs, there are others who talk like dogs. Vulgarities, once thought the domain of uncultured men are now common place among females. Four letter words, talking under each other clothes, and beginning each sentence with two words that begin with M.F. is becoming common place.

Some enjoy living like dogs. Too many youth are comfortable living in filth. It begins with a room that is never cleaned. It extends itself to a house that is never clean, garbage that is never emptied and dishes that are never washed. It grows into a neighborhood filled with trash and debris, graffiti on the walls and beer bottles on the streets.

Some young people have accepted living "doggie style" as their personal motif. However, youth don't have an exclusive claim on living doggie style, there are many adults who live doggie style as well. Many adults are the role models for young people.

Perhaps you have seen:

FRENCH POODLE: The poodle is rarely seen in public unless it has a fresh cut and jewels. In the church there are some french poodles, who cannot come to a worship service without a new dress, fresh hair cut, or a visit to the beauty shop.

BULLDOG: It is both mean and ugly. There are those whose who try to bring their mean and ugly ways into the church, they growl and bark at everyone and never have a smile.

IRISH SITTERS: There are many who join the church but have no place of service. They serve on no committees, don't sing, usher, or otherwise serve, they are sitters. Not Irish Sitters but African-American sitters.

POINTERS: Is useful to hunters because he points to the location of the fallen prey. There are many pointers in our society. They place the blame on everyone but themselves. The pastor, deacons, choir director, everyone but themselves.

HOUND DOGS: Once they get a scent they will stay on the trail. There are many who spend most of their time tracking down gossip, and juicy information. Once they get on the trail they are more relentless than Colombo or Sherlock Holmes, they never lose their trail.

WATCH DOGS: They watch every move made. There are many who spend most of their time watching others. They watch what time they come home, leave, whether their lights are on or off, and everything their neighbors do. Be warned however while

the watch dog is watching others, “somebody’s watching you!”

Giving Up The Doggie Style

While living doggie style has its attractions, those who know the Lord know that living doggie style compels us to live in opposition to God. G.O.D. spells God. However, if turned backwards, it also spells D.O.G.. Even the spelling suggests that the doggish nature of mankind is opposite of God’s loving and divine nature.

David discovered that though he was a king he was living doggie style.

Though he wore royal robes and lived in splendor, he was living doggie style!

Though he was admired by all of Israel and praised by thousands David was condemned because he was living doggie style.

When David stopped living like a dog, he got rid of his fleas!

When the Prodigal discovered that though he came from a fine family, he was living doggie style!

Though he had good home training and fine parents, he was living doggie style.

When he came to himself he said “I will arise and go to my father.”

When stopped living like a dog, he got rid of his fleas!

There are millions today who are living flea bitten lives, filled with alcohol, drugs, violence and promiscuity. They souls have become mangy. Their eyes have sunk into the sockets of their heads. They have lost weight and have shrank like prunes. Flea bitten and despairing, many have given up hope!

Today brothers and sisters we remind you that if you are willing to stop living like a dog there is a man who can get rid of the fleas!

There is a man who can take our:

—Fallen estate and raise them up again!

—Failures and transform them into successes!

—Defeats and turn them into victories!

His name is Jesus! He’ll pick you up and turn you around. He’ll plant your feet on solid ground!

He’s name is Jesus and he’s alright!

No. 523-Revival

Pearls Around a Pig's Neck

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2, 1994

SCRIPTURE: ***"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:45-46; "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matthew 7:6***

Introduction

Have you ever played dress up? That's where you put on the costume of a character and play their role. Sometimes girls dress up like their mothers, complete with high heel shoes, ear rings, long dress and lipstick. Boys stick their feet in oversized shoes, hang a tie around their necks and play daddy. Playing dress up is fun for children. However, there are many who have become adults but still play "dress up," thinking that looking the part is the same as being the part. There are even people who dress up as Christians, complete with suit, tie and bible, but still have the same old habits on the inside.

Consider the farm animals that decided it was easy to be human. As they laughed at the funny ways of humans Callie the crow said it would be easy to be human, all it would take would be some clothes. To experiment, they pulled straws to decide which one would get to be a human for a day. Ponsella the Pig drew the short straw. All the farm animals went to work to help Ponsella be human for a day. Cassie Bell the Cow took a blouse off the clothes line. Shirley the Squirrel brought four shoes and put them on Ponsella's feet. Henrietta the hen bought a funny looking hat with a daisy protruding from the top and tied it to Ponsella's head. Harry the Hound brought some eye glasses. Dilsey the Duck brought a long string of pearls and put them around Ponsella's neck. She was a sight to see, grunting and whining with shoes on her feet, spectacles on her eyes and an expensive string of pearls on her neck. Everybody cheered and praised their accomplishment except Ollie the wise old Owl, who never said a word, she just watched and shook her head. Ponsella had one whole day to be human. So she walked around the barn yard and much to the praise of all the animals. Things went well until she came upon a puddle of mud that she had never seen before. It was big, muddy and empty. Ponsella grunted and whined and then made a mad dash for the puddle. She rolled in the mud,burying her hat and shoes. The pearls slipped from around her neck and she rolled and grunted with joy.

All the farm animals were sad and dropped their heads low. Ollie the Owl then said: "Let this be a lesson to you, it is easy to take a pig out of the pigpen, but the hard job is getting the pigpen out of the pig."

As Christians, we have found our faith in Christ to be a pearl of great price. It has given us a rich experience and an inner joy that it is immeasurable. It is not a superficial string of pearly experiences, worn on the outside for a public display. It is a deeply rooted spirit of salvation that is in our heart.

Exposition

This text examines the importance of the gift of salvation to every Christian.

Jesus gave a series of parables designed to teach the nature of the kingdom of heaven. The entire 13th Chapter of Matthew portrays the kingdom of heaven in a variety of ways. At verse three it is compared to a sower sowing seeds. Some seeds fall on good ground, other seeds fall on bad soil. At verse 24 the parable of the wheat and tares characterizes the children of God as good seed being threatened by the presence of evil. At verse 44 the kingdom is compared to a man that finds a treasure in a field, hides it and then sells all that he has to buy the entire field. The value of the kingdom of God is so immense that it is worthy of an all out pursuit to get it.

This text is a two verse passage that gives another example of the kingdom of heaven. Here it is characterized as a pearl, found by a merchant who sold that he had to buy it.

Each example Christ gave emphasizes the importance of the kingdom of heaven. It is a pearl of great price. It is extremely valuable. A merchant, a person who traveled from place to place to place, was seeking good pearls to buy. When he finally stumbled upon that which he sought, the merchant was willing to sell all his possessions to get it. He would do because he knew and appreciated the value of what he had found.

Faith in God, a saved soul and the spiritual gifts associated with a believer's life are holy possessions. It is the very substance of the kingdom of heaven. Once acquired it is more precious to the believer than anything else. However, belief and faith should not be squandered on vain and useless efforts. In Matthew 7:6 Jesus, in a one verse passage, makes it clear that the pearls of faith and belief should not be cast before dogs or swine because they will trample them out of disbelief or through fault finding and evil speaking.

Christ's statement does not mean that spiritual gifts should not be used to help save the lost or relieve the poor, for then they would have no use in kingdom building. However, he does mean that such gifts should not be wasted on fruitless efforts where it is obvious that they are neither appreciated or welcomed.

Those who have found this great pearl should share the joy of their experience with all who want to hear of the goodness of God, but waste little of their time and resources on those who will only trample their belief under foot

Pearls & Pigs

Every believer who knows the love of the Lord has certain spiritual gifts available to him that, like great pearls, are valuable and rare. Each should be careful not to squander their spiritual gifts, time, talents and resources on fruitless efforts. To do so will be the same as putting pearls around a
pig's neck.

We are commanded to teach and reach and many as we can with the Gospel of Christ. We are also warned that we should not waste our efforts on the superficial, but to lift up Christ. To do anything else would be like putting pearls around the pig's neck.

Consider the nature of pigs:

PIGS EAT SLOP: By nature pigs enjoy eating slop, and garbarge. Many people who have adopted this nature also enjoy the consumption of garbage. They enjoy trashy literature, movies, records, comedians and other forms of communication. As a Christian our responsibility is not simply to take such a person, dress him in a suit and bring him to church, but to show him the value of thinking on better things.

Philippians 4:8 puts it this way: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good
report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." To do anything other than this would simply be to put pearls around a pig's neck.

PIGS WALLOW IN THE MUD: Pigs enjoy wallowing in the mud. Likewise there are people who enjoy wallowing in sinful activities. They enjoy running clubs, one night stands, juking, adultery, drinking, drugs. They enjoy this lifestyle. We should go beyond dressing this person in a choir robe and getting them to sing a song on Sunday, because the piggish nature will force them to find a mud hole at their first opportunity.

We should help those in this situation reach a point in their lives similar to that of the prodigal son. When the prodigal had wallowed in the mud and mire of life he made a pigpen decision to change his life. He did not decide to go home to his father, live in his house but continue wallowing in the mud. He decided that this life was not what he wanted. He took the pigpen out of his
life and then went home.

We must help the lost to reach pig pen decisions to do just like the prodigal son. When he reached that point he "came to himself" and decided to go home.

The Pearl Of Great Price

So brothers and Sisters, we should not squander our time trying to get the lost to join one church or another. We should tell men and women that we have found a pearl of great price!

Don't tell them they need to be in church, tell them about the joy you have found in the Lord. Tell them how serving the Lord has made difference in your life.

Since Jesus came into my life, he took my:

—Dark Days and turned them into light days

—Sadness and turned it into gladness

—Failures and turned them into success

Don't ask anybody to come join the choir, but tell them that the Lord gave you something to sing about. When I opened my eyes this morning I began to sing: "Woke up this morning with my mind staid on Jesus!" When I looked at how good the Lord has been to me I start to sing "I get a blessing every day!" I'm not asking you to join our choir, I just want you to know that "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

Don't tell them to come hear a certain preacher. Just tell them your experience when you hear the word of God. When I hear the word of God sometimes:

—I am encouraged to a little further

—I am inspired to run a little harder

—I get angry with myself

—I am lifted a little higher

—I am submerged a little deeper in the joy of the Lord

When I walk in the church door my heart cries out "Watchman, is there any word from the Lord!"

When talking to the lost don't tell them about your church, tell them about Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell, them about Jesus who is alive today!

Don't brag on your church, tell them about Jesus!

No. 524-Funeral

Great Teachers Teach Forever

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 13, 1994

SCRIPTURE: ***" And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Isaiah 30:20-21***

Introduction

Have you ever had a great teacher? Not simply a teacher but a "great" teacher? How do you define a great teacher? Some would define them by the number of years they taught. Others would define them by the number of students they taught. Others would define great teachers as those who were the master of technique, preparation and presentation. William Arthur Ward put it this way: "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. But the great teacher inspires!" Pulitzer Prize winning poet Maya Angelou said it differently: "Idols encourage people to be like them. Heroes and heroines encourage to people to be their best." Great teachers are heroes and heroines because they inspire their students to
achieve, long after they leave the classroom.

Consider the three teachers who all had to deal with the toughest boy in the second grade. He was so bad the other students called him jailhouse Jimmy because he stayed in trouble so much. The first teacher had Jimmy at the beginning of the year. After one week in her class the first teacher stormed into the principal's office demanding that Jimmy be removed from her class. She painted a picture of a boy whose waking moment was destructive, disruptive and without hope. The principal transferred Jimmy to the second teacher's class. After about a week she took came storming into the principal's office, holding little Jimmy by the hand. She complained that he was incorrigible, disrespectful and had an attitude. She said he was doomed to failure and was pulling
all of the other students down.

Finally, Jimmy was transferred to an old teacher who had been on the job for several decades. She had seen many like Jimmy and was not intimidated by his antics. A week went by then two. The weeks rolled into months and finally the school year ended. As Jimmy stood on the stage, dressed neatly in shirt and tie reading a speech

to the class, the other two teachers looked at each other with amazement.

After the program they were too embarrassed to speak to the old teacher, so they asked the principal to tell them her secret. “Well, said the principal. The difference is probably because you spent your time repeating what Jimmy knew about himself : that he was bad, and doomed to fail.
That tore him down. She spent her time helping him discover what had never known about himself. That built him up!” The principal then looked both young teachers in the eye and said “That’s the difference between a teacher and a “great” teacher!

As Christians we follow the master teacher, Jesus. He does not tear us down looking for our faults and reminding us of our frailties. He helps us to discover what we have known about ourselves and builds us up. Every great teacher is like Jesus, they build up and inspire when others give up and put down. They teach with a voice lingers after the class has ended and their voices whisper in the corridors of the mind.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he reminds Israel how they will be preserved in approaching difficult times as they listen to the silent voices of their teachers speak to consciences. For many years Judah had become reliant upon political treaties and support from friendly nation. Even though the Northern Kingdom had suffered defeat under Assyria, Judah felt confident that it could survive because of its alliance with the African nation of Egypt. It felt the
mighty chariots and horses of Egypt would be sufficient to help it ward off any attack. Their dependence upon the alliance was attacked by God because despite the superior numbers the alliance would create, they would not be successful.

Isaiah prophesied that when the difficult time arrived that God preserve a remnant. Those who survive will return to the teachers of old that had been hidden away in corners and discarded as they pursued ungodly interests. Often when Israel attempted to pursue other gods it would
ostracize its teachers and prophets. When Jezebel tried to promote Baal worship, she ordered the death of all of God’s prophets and teachers. They survived only because Obadiah hid them by the hundreds in caves, 50 at a time. (1Kings 18:4). Turning its back on the old way and the wisdom of
those close to God caused Israel to take a course that would eventually bring its downfall.

However, it would be the wisdom of the old teachers, that taught them about respect for God, obedience to his word, and directed their path, that would help them through the difficult period of trial. The remaining teachers would be called out of corners of retirement, retreat or exile to
stand before the masses and teach them the way.

Isaiah’s prophecy said Judah would see their teachers with their eyes, referring to those who were called up again to stand before them, but their ears would hear the instruction of those gone before, following close behind them. It would be the words

of the godly teachers standing before them and the memory of the instruction of those who were no longer with them, that would help them to survive tough and difficult times and see better and brighter days. When Judah reached a point of decision in life, deciding whether to turn to left or to the right, the voice of the old teachers, tempered in moral law of God, would speak to their souls as a whispering conscience and give direction: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6

The Old Teachers

Like Judah, our society is facing a great period of adversity. The adverse circumstances are multifaceted. There is crime, poverty and a growing irreverence that is deteriorating the quality of life as we have known it. In the face of this plunging morality our society has turned deaf ears to the voices of reason and temperance. Supreme Court decisions have placed muzzles on Christian teachers and has made it unpopular and illegal to even mention godliness to an entire generation. We have place our teachers in a corner and have forbidden them to tell us about the old paths. Now as godless generation grows up in our midst many are puzzled as to how so many people could be so far away from God.

The teachers of old had very little to work with, but somehow they managed to teach much more than their lesson plans reflected. Without benefit of computer labs they taught mathematics. Without benefit for science labs, closely connected to NASA, they taught science. Without benefit of theaters, scenery of elaborate stage props, they taught drama. Without benefit of plain paper copiers, computer spelling checks, and photo scanners, they taught millions, trudged through terrible handwriting, checked every paper, gave weekend homework, discipline the unruly and led the class in prayer every day. In addition to course requirements, somehow they also taught, the essentials of civilized behavior, manners, obedience, discipline, cleanliness, and godliness. These
were essentials that almost required good teachers to be godly themselves. The great teachers were those who successfully inspired students to aspire to higher ideals.

These were teachers who looked upon education as a calling rather than a job. It was an honorable profession, a ministry that had a divine blessing.

These were the teachers who challenged their students to quote Shakespeare, but not before they learned to quote the bible.

These were the teachers who lessons, became sermonettes on morality and life. They were preached so many times that everyone fortunate enough to have been taught by one can recite the words over and over in the corridors of their mind.

Even today there are still great teachers, who defy the supreme court and still talk about goodness, mercy, obedience, cleanliness and godliness. Even today there are still great teachers whose calling is not to stand in line for a monthly paycheck, but to join the caravan of sainted souls who like Thoreau have decided to march to the beat of a different drummer.

Great Teachers

While there are many teachers that have succeeded in teaching their students the fundamentals of life, the great teacher goes beyond the mere essentials for survival. The tools for survival are those bodies of knowledge needed to make a living. However, the great teacher goes one step
further. The great teacher is one who has mastered the art of showing others how to live.

Living and making a living are not the same. Making a living only requires enough skills to secure food clothing and shelter in this life. Learning how to live requires that we have the essentials necessary to live in the this life and beyond. It requires that we develop the strength of character and soul that will carry us beyond the limitations of this life, into the hereafter.

Great teachers know the secret to living forever.

At the funeral of Lazarus, Martha was disturbed that Jesus had not come the moment that she had sent for him, but had tarried. Jesus responded that Lazarus would live again. Martha did not understand so Jesus went further: ".... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" John 11:25-26.

Great teachers are those who know the Lord!

Good teachers know the hypotenuse of a triangle, but great teachers also know the Lord!

Good teachers can figure the radius of a circle, but great teachers also know the Lord!

Good teachers can recite the preamble to the constitution and know the Gettysburg Address, but great teachers also know the Lord!

Good teachers can recite Shakespeare, unravel world history, and explain complex economic principles, but great teachers also know the Lord!

Great teachers go beyond learning the literature of the bible, they allow the truths of the bible to become a part of their very lives.

Great teachers trust in God!

Great teachers live by faith!

Great teachers labor with a missionary passion!

Great teachers know that while there are many great names in history that evoke images of courage, valor and strength, there is no name that equals or surpasses the name of Jesus!

Great teachers know how to call on Jesus!

Those who believe in and trust the Lord, know that time may take its toll on their earthly tabernacle, but they have another building not made by hands!

Those who believe in and trust the Lord, know that when this journey ends, it's not over, because one glad morning with this life is over, I'll fly away!

Great teachers, know the Lord and those who know the Lord...live forever!

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On Sunday morning October 9, 1994 Eula T. Williams took her last breath joined that inumerable caravan that moves toward the mysterious realm where joy shall never end. She was a great teacher!

No. 525-Communion

Look A Like Cups, Look A Like Crosses

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

SCRIPTURE: "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" Mark 10:38-39; "Likewise also the cup after supper saying this cup is the new testament in my blood which is she for you." Luke: 22:20

Introduction

Have you ever purchased a look a like? In today's times we are accustomed to look-a-likes. Those who cannot afford designer clothing and other merchandise often purchase imitations. In Hollywood there are whole companies that specialize in providing Look-A-Likes of the stars. There is a Bert Reynolds Look-A-Like. There's a Micheal Jackson Look-A-Like and there is even a Billy Dee Williams Look-A-Like. Whenever companies have a promotion that could benefit from a star being present and the star was not available or could not be afforded, a Look-A-Like was hired. Therefore, many are familiar with the idea of getting a substitute for the real thing.

Look-A-Likes are in demand whenever the original is not available or out of reach. Therefore instead of salt there is a salt substitute. Instead of sugar there is a sugar substitute. There are many people who have constructed their entire lives around Look-A-Likes. Their clothes, shoes, watches, and appliances have a designer look but are actually imitation.

There are also individuals that have carried the Look-A-Like mentality over into their spiritual lives. They reason that since they have found Christianity out of reach because of their unwillingness to follow, they have adopted a Look-A-Like religion. This Look-A-Like religion has all of the appearances of the real thing, except it is an imitation.

Consider the little monkey in the jungle that always wanted to be a lion. Every day the little monkey would watch the lions in the jungle and was awed by their immense courage and strength. One day the monkey found a lion skin laying around and he put it over his body. He jumped through the trees scaring all of the other animals, convincing them that he was a lion, even if he did look a little strange and a little small. The little monkey enjoyed being an imitation lion until one day all of the small animals

ran up to the lion, which was the king of the jungle and begged to be protected from the tiger than was threatening to eat them for dinner. “Please save us oh Lion King” they shouted to the monkey. The monkey was completely powerless. As the Tiger approached the little creatures the ran behind the monkey, thinking he was a lion. He looked like a lion. He had skin like a lion. But as the tiger grabbed the monkey and snatched off the skins and prepared to gobble him up for lunch, the little creatures realized that he was an imitation lion. When the real lion appeared the Tiger recognized him immediately and ran away. The lion said to the monkey : “Let this be a lesson to you, its better to be a little chimp, rather than let the world see you live a lie and make a monkey out of yourself.” There are many today who are making monkeys out of themselves trying to look like and be like someone else.

As Christians we are challenged to make our relationship with Christ a real one. The time will come when those who are lost will turn to us as men and women of faith. We sure let the world know that we are genuine in our faith and obedience to the commands of God. Let’s be the real thing instead of cheap imitations.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he responds to a request of two of his disciples for high positions in the kingdom once it is established.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus to gain a favor from him. Their understanding of the nature of the kingdom of God was incomplete. They perceived it to be one of a temporal nature. They considered it to be immediate and they wanted assurances that of all of the disciples that they would receive positions of honor and power. They approached Jesus and asked him to give them whatever they asked. What they wanted was the right to sit on his right and left in the ruling of the kingdom. Once the other disciples heard of the request they were disturbed at their vanity and desire to rise over them.

However, Jesus’ response was to ask them whether or not they were willing to drink from the same cup that he would taste. The two said they could, without considering what Jesus meant. He did not mean just a simple cup of wine or liquid, but the term “cup” was symbolic of the suffering, humiliation and embarrassment that he would suffer.

As Jesus explained the nature of the kingdom and the suffering it would require of all who chose to follow him, the request subsided. The brothers were intimidated by “this cup” which was the blood of the New Testament. They continued to follow Jesus however, they were unwilling to drink from “This Cup” experiences and from that time forward were satisfied with Look-A-Like cups.

Many Have Look-A-Like Cups

There are many today in the Christians experience who, like James and John are willing to drink from “a cup” but are not willing to drink from the same cup of sacrifice

and suffering that Jesus referred to when he spoke of "this cup."

Each person has a cup, representing the sum total of their experiences. Included in that cup is an element of suffering. Many believe that when Jesus refers to drinking from the cup that they mean their own cup, which is not necessarily the case.

When the cup of our experience contains suffering, we must consider whether or not our suffering is a result of our Christian life. There are many that are suffering, not because the Lord placed a heavy burden upon them as Christians, but because their own sinfulness, neglect or negativity placed it upon themselves. Many have a cup, but its not "this cup."

Sometimes we are sleeping on beds that we made hard ourselves. There is an old saying which puts it this way, "If you make your bed hard, then sleep in it." These hard beds are "cups" but they are not the same as "this cup" that Jesus talked about.

Often we misinterpret hardships and burdens we share as one that is coming from the Lord and we consider it the same as the one Jesus labored under. For example, with the rise in crime in most communities murders are becoming common place. Whenever someone is killed as a result of murder or robbery, we tend to say the "Lord took them" at the funeral. In reality, the Lord did not kill the innocent victim, it was the work of Satan. That burden was placed on the immediate family and the community by Satan, not by the Lord. The cup of suffering that results from crime and murder is cup filled with dregs, but it not same as the cup of suffering we drink from spiritually when we choose to follow Christ. It is a cup, but it is not the same as "this cup."

In addition to "this cup" the New Testament generally refers to cups in two different ways:

When called upon to drink from the cup of sacrifice, there are many that find "this cup" too demanding, so they search for Look-A-Like cups.

When we learn that we owe God a tenth of our resources, we find that a bitter cup. Many attempt to present God a Look-A-Like tenth. It is a sizeable amount, but it only looks like a tenth.

Many have a Look-A-Like spirit of worship. Many come to worship but not with a sincere spirit and inclination to worship. Many bow their heads while the deacons pray but file their fingernails, fill our church envelopes or find hymns in the hymn books. Many want to look like they were worshiping by simply being in the building, they nod their heads during prayer and never open their eyes again until the benediction.

There are some, in every worship service, who even go to the extent of moving their lips during congregational singing, and saying "Amen" but all the time they are thinking about what they are going to cook for dinner.

In each of these instances we looked as though we were worshiping. We dressed for the part and we came to the right place, but it was not in the same spirit. It was a Look-A-Like worship.

There are many that are seeking a Look-A-Like Christian experience. When among other Christians, there's an extra light in their halo. They look real religious. In fact they appear so religious that their wings protrude from beneath their dresses and

suits. Their self righteousness is apparent in so many ways, when they are among Christians. However, during the remainder of the week they show no signs of this religious nature. Their wings disappear. Their halo disappears. Their self righteousness disappears. Their religion is an imitation, a cheap Christian "Look-A- Like."

There are also those who are carrying Look-A-Crosses. These are persons who are carrying crosses and burdens not as the result of their Christian lives but because they chose to live otherwise.

A Christian cross is a burden imposed because a person chose to exercise Christian principles. Some have lost jobs because they refused to condone an illegal practice of the company. Others have failed to receive promotions because they would not sleep with their supervisor. Some are ostracized because they choose to live the Christian life.

There are many however that are bearing crosses, but not because they are doing right, but because they are doing something wrong. It is a cross, but it is a Look-A-Like Cross.

Christ asked his disciples however, "Can you drink from the cup that I drink of?" Not the cup you drink of, but the cup that "I" drink of. Not a Look-A-Like, but can you bear the real cross of suffering?

During communion services, there are many across America, that perpetrate a big lie. They eat from the same plate and drink from the communion cup in a Look-A-Like experience, knowing that they are not willing to drink from the real cup of sacrifice and faith with Christ asks of us.

This Cup Is Not a Look-A-Like

Finally, allow me to remind you that the cup that Christ drank from and the cross that he bore should be something that we cherish all of our lives.

For many, it has been years since they have had an honest talk with the Lord. For some, the last talk came when they were in a car wreck or at a funeral, but not since. We should have an honest talk with God about giving him our best in service and commitment.

When Christ talked about a cup of sacrifice he was talking about a sacrifice that requires us to give him the best of our lives.

When Jesus talks about "this cup" he is not talking about a superficial Look-A-Like, but he's talking about the agony and struggles that it would entail.

When Jesus talked about "this cup" he referred to the coming time when men would persecute for his name's sake.

When Jesus asks "Can ye drink from this cup?" He's asking whether or not we are willing and able to give our all to him, rather than a cheap imitation of service?

There are many who know what it means to drink from this cup because they have been to the valleys and they know the real meaning of suffering.

Those who share in "this cup" are in communion with him! They are not imitations but the real thing!

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus decided to drink from "this cup" and not an imitation.

I too want to be able to say I'll drink from "this cup!" I want to be able to say for the Lord I'll live and for the Lord I'll die. I'm on the battlefield for my Lord, and I promised him that I would serve him till I die"

I'm so glad that Jesus didn't bear a look-A-Like cross or die a look-A-Like death, because then I'd have a Look-A-Like Salvation!

I'm so glad that he died on a real cross!

I'm so glad that he rose from a real tomb!

I'm so glad that he's alive in my soul!

He's real! Jesus is real today!

He's not an imitation! He's not a Look-A-Like!

Jesus!

Jesus!

Jesus is real!

No. 526-Revival

Love At First Sight

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 16, 1994

SCRIPTURE: ***"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Genesis 24:67 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. Genesis 29:18; For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16***

Introduction

Do you believe in love at first sight? That's the kind of love that evolves from the very first contact. It is instant. There are many who met the man or woman of their dreams on Monday, courted them Monday evening and married them on Monday night. They were content that they had finally found the man or woman of their dreams and they knew the first moment that they lay eyes on each other. Many argue that "love at first sight" is superficial and does not last, but there are others who point to long relationships because their mate was the ideal. Love at first sight is often called the dream relationship, but it is not alwasy the ideal.

Consider three old men who sat on a park bench watching the young couples go by. They decided that day to try and identify couples that fell at love on first sight. A young couple passed that appeared happy and content. They snuggled an smiled and held each other's hand as they walked. Two of the old men pointed and said. "Tha't love!" It must be love at first sight" The third old man shook his head and said nothing. A second couple strolled past them. They stopped and kissed in the park and the look in their eyes suggested that they were engrossed in each other. The two old men shoulted "That's it!" "It must be another case of love at first sight!" Again the third old man said nothing. Finally an elderly couple walked by. She was on a walking cane and he took steps that were shorter than a baby's first strides. In the middle of the park the two stopped to rest on a bench. While they sat, the old gentleman leaned over and kissed the woman on the cheek. Instantly the third old man began pointing, shouting "that's it!" The other two men were surprised that he was pointing at this couple and they asked the reason why. The last old man responded "Love at first sight may seem like a big deal, but when two people have been looking at each other for years and still love that's not only love, that's a miracle!"

Love at first sight is important if it translates into love every time we see, regardless

of the condition. Charles Swindow in his book the "Original Match" tells the parable of guy who fell in love with an opera singer. He hardly knew her, since his only view of the singer was through binoculars — from the third balcony. But he was convinced he could live "happily ever after" married to a voice like that. He scarcely noticed she was considerably older than he. Nor did he care that she walked with a limp. Her mezzo-soprano voice would take them through whatever might come. After a whirlwind romance and a hurry-up ceremony, they were off for their honeymoon together.

She began to prepare for their first night together. As he watched, his chin dropped to his chest. She plucked out her glass eye and plopped it into a container on the nightstand. She pulled off her wig, ripped off her false eyelashes, yanked out her dentures, unstrapped her artificial leg, and smiled at him as she slipped off her glasses that hid her hearing aid. Stunned and horrified, he gasped, "For goodness sake, woman, sing, sing, Sing!"

As Christians, we recognize that Jesus loved us one step better than at first sight, he loved us before we existed. His love is an unconditional love that has saved us and given us a new life.

Exposition

These three texts give us three striking examples of love at first sight and point us to the key ingredients that make real relationships last.

Isaac and Rebekah

Genesis 24 records the classic love story of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham became concerned that his son Isaac had no wife. Since it was the custom of the time that fathers would arrange for the marriages of their children, Abraham sent his trusted servant to look for a wife for his son. The servant traveled to a distant village. He did not know how to pick a bride for his employer's son so he turned the matter over to God. At verse 42 he asks God to show him the right woman. The servant told God that he would say "Give me, I pray thee, a ittle water of thy pitcher to drink" and the girl, if she's the right girl should respond "Both drink thou, and I will also draw for they camels." As it happened the servant looked around a a beautiful young woman came to the well to get water. He asked his coded question and to his surprise the woman answered the exact words that he had chosen as a confirmation of his blessing. The servant hurredly found his way to the girl's father. He produced expensive jewelry, fine necklaces and other presents for Rebekah. The family members were also given great presents. At verse 58 Rebekah was finally called in and asked whether or not she would go, sight unseen, to marry the stranger and she said "I will go."

On the return trip the servant moved hurredly. Isaac had been away and was not aware that his father had sent for him a wife. At verse 63 Isaac was meditating in the

field one night when the camel caravan returned. As he walked to meet the caravan, Rebekah saw him and instantly got off the camel. When she was told who he was she veiled her face as was the custom. When Isaac looked at her and then was told the story of his father's selection of her Isaac married her on the spot and loved her the rest of his life. Throughout the rest of his Isaac provided for her, protected her and honored her. She became the mother of Jacob and Esau and even though she tricked and deceived him concerning which of the sons should receive his blessing, he loved her until death.

Isaac's love for Rebekah on the surface appears to be at first sight. In reality it was a gradual love that developed through the years by successive action. Since love is an action word, the phrase "he loved her" implies that he took actions that showed his love. While there may have been an attraction, the love he bestowed was an act of the will and not of the emotion.

One key element of the success of this relationship is that it is a union that God brought together. Two partners who both willingly agree to submit themselves to the will of God. Even today, love must go beyond mere physical attraction. Love has to be a spiritual attraction. It is an instance where God has opened the eyes of two people to the point that they peer into each other's souls, and decide to love them despite what is seen. It's that inner person that lives forever. That's why it is important to look beyond the physical into the soul and look for God. We should avoid being uequally yoked, that is having a mate who has not love of or respect for God, for it makes the Christian life incomplete at the least and unbearable at the worse.

Issac and Rebekah did not fall in love at first sight. They decided to love at first sight and never backed away from their decision.

Jacob and Rachel

The story of Jacob and Rachel is another classic biblical love story. Jacob, the son of Isaac left home and travel to lands inhabited by his uncle Laban. While there he met a beautiful woman at the well and instantly kissed her and cried with joy. It was love at first sight. She was so beautiful that it didn't matter to him that she was his first cousin and he made a bargain with his uncle to marry her in exchange for seven years of labor. He worked daily, driven by the thought that after seven years Rachel would be his prize. However, at the end of the seven years Jacob learned that it was the custom for the oldest daughter to marry first, so in order to get Rachel he had to agree to work another seven years. Disappointed, Jacob worked another seven years to win the hand of the woman he fell in love with at the well. After 14 years and two wives, Jacob finally married Rachel and she kept a special place in his heart all of his life. Even after she died Jacob showed special favor on her children Benjamin and Joseph.

What is striking about this case of love at first sight was what Jacob was willing to do to win the hand and affection of Rachel. She was willing to work 14 years to get the woman he wanted.

What woman in her right mind could refuse the affection of a man who was willing to go that far just to win her hand? Would she have a problem submitting to leadership? Could she learn to love him? The love that developed between Jacob and Rachel was sparked by his actions toward her. His love was shown by his willingness to risk all to provide for her and to win her hand.

Paul writing to the Ephesians spoke to wives about submitting to the leadership of their husband but he had these words to the husbands:" Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Ephesians 5:25-28

The divorce courts in America are filling today because people who were attracted at first sight stopped loving after they had looked each other for a while.

Relationships grow that are based on real love. Real love has a lot to do with feelings and little to do with sex.

I don't love you because of the way you look, but because of the way you make me feel about myself. -If I ever stop loving you it won't be because of the way you look but the way you make me look to myself.

I don't love you because of what you have or what you have made for yourself, but because of what you are making of me! I love you because of the part of me that I know is there, but I can only find and bring out when I'm with you! If I ever stop loving you, it won't be because you fail in life or come to have nothing, but because stop showing me that undying spirit that keeps bringing out the best of me.

The relationships of these two texts are instances of attraction at first sight. The love that developed was punctuated with actions that spoke louder than any words.

Jesus Loves

Rebekah loved Isaac because of a meeting at the well. Jacob fell in love with Rachel, a woman at the well. The love that God has for his people, is also symbolized by a woman at the well. This woman met a man at the well, who looked beyond her faults and saw her needs. She ran and told everyone "come see a man who has told me all I've ever done."

When Adam met Eve, it was love at first sight!

When Abraham met Sara, it was love at first sight!

When Isaac met Rebekah it was love at first sight!

When Jacob met Rachel, it was love at first sight!

When Samson met Delilah, it was love at first Sight

When Boaz met Ruth, it was love at first sight!

But brothers and sisters I want to tell about another love story, its story of bridgegroom that fell in love with his future bride and has waited to marry her for 2000 years. This bride is the church and the bridgroom is Jesus.

It's a case of love at first sight! "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

It's a case of love backed up by action for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

It's a love so strong that prompted Jesus to pick up an old rugged cross and die out on Calvary!

It's a love so persistent that he arose after three days and declared all power is in my hands!

Oh how I love Jesus!

Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me!

No. 527-Youth

Riding The Witch's Broom

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 23, 1994

SCRIPTURE:***"When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:3-5***

Introduction

Have you ever known superstitious people? These are people who place great confidence in superstition. They believe in Black Magic and Voo-Doo. They consult fortune tellers, hire mediums, and have a general belief in witches, goblins and ghosts. The superstitious have a variety of beliefs that include: a black cat crossing a trail will mean bad luck; walking under a ladder is a bad sign; sweeping the feet means going to jail, horseshoes and rabbit's feet bring good luck, but Friday the 13th is a day of bad luck. Unfortunately there are many that place great confidence in superstition. Some trust superstition more than the trust God. When distressed, rather than pray they consult their horoscope or look for a "psychic connection." When given a choice of having faith or climbing on the "witch's broom," many have chosen the latter.

There is no time when superstition is more obvious than Halloween. In the United States it is a day when children dress up as witches, ghosts, goblins and other scary characters and move from house to house in search of candy and treats. Halloween actually began thousands of years ago in England, Scotland and Ireland and neighboring countries. November 1 was the beginning of the New Year and the first day of winter. The people believed that there was a war between the cold and darkness of winter and the warmth and brightness of summer. On October 31 the people felt the army of darkness: ghosts, goblins and witches grew so strong that they overcame the army of summer and Winter began on November 1. October 31 became a frightening time. Fires and lanterns were lit to scare away wicked creatures that would be out in full force.

Hundreds of years later Christianity came to these countries and November 1 was celebrated as "All Saint's Day." This was a day to honor all deceased saints; holy people. The night before became known as Hallowed Saint's eve or Halloween for short. While the Christians celebrated the memory of Saints most other people remembered that ghosts, goblins and witches were supposed to be powerful on October 31. They continued the old tradition of lighting fires, and putting on frightening costumes that might scare away the witches, goblins and ghosts.

Today, few people even know that November 1 is all Saint's Day. The Halloween tradition however has been elevated into a day when an entire country salutes evil, monsters, death, murderers, and the grotesque. Halloween is a day when all of America invites its young to "ride the witches broom."

As Christians, we should be very careful about trivializing the symbols of evil. Witches, goblins and ghosts may make cute door decorations, but the presence of evil and its influence on our society is no trivial matter. Let us encourage our youth to step out on faith in God rather than join the millions who will "ride the witch's broom."

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as God gives a warns them not to put their trust in witchcraft or sorcery, but to put their trust in him.

After 400 years of slavery in Egypt the Israelites were not prepared for the mysterious beliefs and customs they were to encounter outside of their protected province of Goshen in Egypt. God gives warning to them that when they enter into he land of promise that they were to reject the fanaticism of the Canaanites who had stooped to all manner of superstitions to guarantee themselves good crops and to discover their immediate futures.

The range of activities covered in this text involve: Divination, or practicing evil magic, Observer of Times, those who claimed to call up evil spirits from the dead; Enchanters, mediums who purported to talk to the dead; and witches, those who specialized in the dark magic arts that included, fortune telling, hexes, spells and evil incantations.

Once in the promised land Israel ignored the command of God. Too often they quickly learned the ways of their neighbors and involved themselves in witchcraft and sorcery. Saul the first King of Israel found the practice of consulting witches and mediums so widespread that he immediately issued an order the arrests of all witches and mediums (1 Samuel 28:3). Soon after he ordered the witches he disguised himself and consulted a witch himself (1 Samuel 28:7).

Though God blessed Israel tremendously, the nation continued to put its trust in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic. Jezebel was condemned in 2 Kings 9:22 from promoting witchcraft as queen of Israel. King Manasseh openly practice witchcraft. He sacrificed his own children as burnt offerings and consulted fortune tellers, witches and wizards (2 Chronicles 33:6). Even when Judah was under siege by the

Babylonians and their destruction was imminent the people turned to the witches and diviners and sorcerers for answers, prompting Jeremiah to warn them not to listen to false prophets and witches (Jeremiah 27:9)

There was no doubt that God was opposed to utilizing witchcraft, sorcery and fortune tellers. The Mosaic law repeatedly placed heavy penalties on offenders.

"You shall not practice augury or witchcraft" (Lev. 19:26 RSV). "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:27 RSV).

While the law of Moses told Israel not to put their trust in witches and fortunes, the text of Psalm 37 encourages every believer to trust in God, wholly and completely. The Psalm begins by warning believers not to be influenced by those who practice evil. Their methods appear correct, but soon they will be destroyed.

Believers are encouraged to trust in God for their food, protection and the desires of their heart. Trusting God, means placing in God that whatever he does is in their best interest. In this context Israel underwent considerable difficulty never losing hope that God would restore them to their homeland. They were encouraged to trust God and to commit their way to him, rather than search for the answers they wanted to hear from fortune tellers and magicians and witches.

Combined, these texts summarize God's warning to Israel: not to involve itself in witchcraft or to participate in the observance of divinations, but to trust him alone. Despite God's warning, the people repeatedly decided to ignore God and literally ride the witch's broom.

Trusting In Evil Means

Today we are witnessing what happens when a society promotes evil and invites everyone, including its children to ride the witch's broom. Crime has increased, morality has decreased and respect for the life and properties of others has reached an all time low. Our youth are bombarded with invitations to ride the witch's broom and the results have been staggering. In the 30 years between 1960 and 1990 hours spent watching television increased from 5 hours a day in 1960 to 7 hours a day in 1990. The average high school SAT score in 1960 was 975 but dropped to 899 in 1990. Only 5.3 % of American youth birth children out of wedlock in 1960, but it increased to 26.2 % in 1990. Only 3.5% of all children were on welfare in 1960 but that grew to 11.9 % in 1990. Teen suicides increased from 3.6% to 11.3%. Violent crime increased from 16 acts of violence for every 10,000 per people to 75. While the crimes increased the number of people in jail increased but the amount of jail time given for crimes such as murder, rape, robbery and assault decreased by 35%. On television Beavis and Butthead invite them to use vulgar language, smoke and react violently. Snoop Doggie Dog invites them to drink gin and juice; while Gangsta rappers tell them to shoot, kill, deal drugs and murder.

The efforts to combat these violent and evil invitations are minimal but become useless when once a year we suggest to our youth that we should forget all that has

been said about evil and promote evil for the sake of Halloween! Murder, death and violence which is bad all year is celebrated at Halloween as, murderers and the most evil elements in society become heroes. It's a hard invitation for youth to resist! Their Christian teachers decorate their walls and bulletin boards of symbols of evil and darkness and invite their students to "ride the witch's broom" for extra points! Businesses, and civic groups join in and the invitation becomes irresistible!
The masses of our entire country are inviting our young to join in and "ride the witch's broom!" Many have been riding that broom for a long time. They do so because they trust in evil ways. They do so because they are superstitious. They trust in everything and everyone ...except God!

Get Off The Witch's Broom!

While there are millions that are riding the witch's broom, trusting in magic and living by evil means, that are others who have given up riding the broom and have begun to trust in God.

Many have found that their rides on the witch's broom have carried them to bars, saloons, dance halls, and hide-a-way motels.

The witch's broom has caused many to put their hope in voo-doo dolls, palm readers, newspaper horoscopes and television psychics.
But there are others who have learned about the futility of placing hope and trust in witches and palm readers, they now declare "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean of Jesus name!"

Many ride the witch's broom and sell drugs and commit other crimes to put food on the table, but there are those who can testify like David "I have been young and now I'm old but I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seen begging for bread!"

Many ride the broom for fear of being ostracized by their friends, but there are those who boldly say "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

Many ride the witch's broom to get a few things they want, but I hear David's voice echoing over the centuries "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

I don't know about you but I've found out it is better trust God than to ride the witch's broom!

When you trust God even adverse circumstances can be reversed.

When you trust in God: enemies can become friends; failures become successes; defeats become victories, mountains become molehills and valleys are exalted.

No wonder the songwriter declare, "I trust in God no matter wherever I may be. On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!"

I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord!

...until I die!

No. 528-Funeral

A Builder's Reward

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 24, 1994

SCRIPTURE: ***"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:10 "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Corinthians 5:1***

Introduction

Have you ever hired builders to construct a home, add a room or to make home improvements? Did you watch them work? With skilled eyes they surveyed the area, studied the plans and then began to piece together the skeletal framework that made up your dream project. The experienced builders seemed never to miss a cut, exercised extreme care and knew how to resolve problems unanticipated by the plans. Good builders seem to take pride in their work, will not be rushed and insist on quality, even if their painstakingly slow pace irritates us at times.

This attitude toward excellence is important for every builder, otherwise mediocrity is the result. Consider the three brick layers who were hired to build the brick walls of a new church in the community. The three men worked diligently each day. After a while the foreman noticed that there was a difference in the work habits of the three. The first brick layer slapped each brick in place and moved along at a steady pace, he never took his eyes off the bricks. The second worker, did the same, but he stopped on occasion to measure the height. The third worker did the same. However, each day before he began, he walked around the entire site, stepped back and took a deep breath, bowed his head and said a prayer. While he followed the same procedure as the others, he seemed to handle each brick with greater care than others. It was if he were praying for them as he put them in place.

The foreman was curious about the three workers, so one day he went to each and asked them to explain to him what they were doing. The first worker said "What does it look like? I'm laying bricks." He quickly replaced his earphones on his head went back to his job. The second responded: "I am building a wall" and he too returned to work. However, the third answered the foreman in this way: "I'm not just laying bricks. I'm not just erecting a wall. I am building a cathedral. With each brick I ask God to guide me so that he might get the glory from the work of my hands!" Two of the

men approached their work as just another "job." The third however, saw it as a testament to the glory of God.

As Christians, we too are builders. We are building and shaping lives in preparation for the kingdom. Our tools are hope and faith. Our reward will be the approval our heavenly father, who will provide us with an even greater building, not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains his role in the kingdom building process as being that of the master builder, laying the foundation.

The immediate circumstance addressed by this text involved the relationship between Paul and Apollos. Apollos had gained fame among the Corinthians for his oratory and some considered him greater than Paul. Addressing this sentiment in his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul made it clear that his work in the kingdom was that of laying the foundation, setting the tone, and pointing the direction. Others who would follow him had the task of building upon that which he began and expanding. He warned however, that any that should attempt to follow him should attempt nothing short of leading the people in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

In explaining his relationship, Paul constantly characterized himself as a master builder, who followed the plan given to him by the grace of God. As a master builder he recognized that he was not the architect or designer of the plan, but the one who saw to it that the plan was carried out in all of its finest details. The master plan he received was that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to be spread throughout the known world. It would apply to both Jews and Gentiles, breaking down racial and sexual barriers, forgiving sins and helping believers to build new lives. During his life he moved from church to church with this message, building the spiritual strength of believers at every stop, according to the master plan. Even while imprisoned he spent his confinement writing letters to believers, constantly encouraging them to build, build and build!

As he perceived his life's work drawing to an end, he wrote them a second Epistle called Second Corinthians. In it he continued to characterize himself as a builder of the kingdom of God. He noted that when his personal tabernacle, or body, is dissolved that he expected another building, made by God himself that would be eternal in the heavens. He perceived the reward for his life of kingdom building to be a home, eternal in the heavens.

The Master's Plan

Essential to the success of any building project is the ability of the master builder to understand and follow the master plan. The master plan looks strange to the untrained eye. It has several pages of squiggly lines and numbers that describe the electrical, plumbing, and building specifications of a project. Each set of specialists

does a certain part of the plan under the watchful supervision of the master builder. However, the master builder must know and understand the plan!
Those who are striving to live the Christian life are builders in the kingdom of God. We are striving to build lives that are consistent with the design and purpose of God. We, like temporal builders, must become familiar with the master's plan for our lives. We must strive to see how every component or event of our lives works together to complete the entire plan that God has for us.

When we are happy, that is a part of the plan. We thank God for every moment of happiness and joy. We thank him for our accomplishments and mountain top experiences. These are the times when are at our best and we praise him. Happiness is a part of God's plan for us. No life is without its moments of happiness, however fleeting. Happiness, joy, victory and ecstasy are all a part of this experience that we call life. They are integral parts of the plan.

Just as happiness is a part of the plan, moments of sadness are also part of the plan of things. Into every life some rain must fall, without rain there could be no crops or continuation of life. No one knows the joy of the mountaintop until they have spent some time in the valley. The man or woman that has experienced the night, learns to appreciate the sunshine. When we experience misfortune, that's a part of the plan. When there is death, even that is a part of God's master plan for our lives. When we understand the master plan of life, that's when it becomes easier for us to say "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

The Right Tools

While builders must be able to read and understand the master plan, they also need the right tools to work the plan. Those who work in the kingdom building program of our Lord need tools as well. The tools used were numerous but always included:

MEASURING LINE: The distances in the master plan are drawn to scale. One inch on paper equals several feet in practical distance. Those who build in life must be able to practically apply the principles of the Bible and our faith to real life situations. These truths prevent the believer from going off course or making steps in life that are off course. The good builder measures his actions and knows just how far to go. Psalm 37:23 puts it this way: " The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

PLUMBLINE: For the building to stand solidly every part must be level. An instrument called a plumbline was used in the bible to allow the builder to know whether or not a board, a window, or wall for example lined up correctly. Similarly each believer needs to check himself against the standard of God's word to make sure his action lines up with the will of God. Like a building, it is possible to nail down a board that is out of line, but it will show up later. That's why the psalmist wrote: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be

any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23

The Builder's Reward

When the building project is complete the builder submits it for approval. It is checked against the master plan and a list called a "punch list" is developed of things that need to be done before it can be accepted as complete. When the punch list is complete then the builder gets his final payment.

Believers who spend their lives building in the kingdom of God reach a point in which all they can do has been done. Physically they are exhausted. Their bodies have become weak and frail. Their strength is gone. At the close of their lives they submit their work to the master for his approval. However, there is one more punch list that must be checked. For a believer's work to be accepted he or she must:

—Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and have publicly acknowledged him by confessing him as their personal Lord and savior.

—Have repented for all sins and made it their quest to live a godly life.

—Allowed the spirit of God to lead them during their lives.

Builders who spend their lives working with their hands to building the kingdom of God will get their reward. They will be given another building, not made by hands.

This old building, no matter how well constructed, one day will spring a leak. No matter how well maintained, this old building, will begin to wear out!
That's why the song writer sings: "There's leak in this old building and my soul is passing through, I'm going home to be with the Lord!"

The builder's reward is a building that is of God himself. Solomon constructed a temple FOR God. Zerubbabel built a temple, but it was FOR God. Herod built a temple but it was FOR God. The believer's reward is a temple made BY God.

The builder's reward is another building, not made by hands!
Solomon's building was constructed with 163,850 pairs of hands that chiseled stone in absolute silence, but God is preparing the believer another builder greater than Solomon's, for it's a building not made by hands!

The builder's reward is another building, eternal in the heavens. Solomon's temple was grand, but it was destroyed. Herod's temple was beautiful but it was ram shackled. Herod's temple was elegant, but it too was toppled. But the believer's reward is greater for he is promised a building that is eternal in the heavens.

This frail Tabernacle is maintained by medicine bottles, nursing homes and doctors, but I have another building!

This frail Tabernacle is wracked with pain and misery, but I have another building!
When this Tabernacle is dissolved, I have another building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!

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On Wednesday October 19, 1994 Watson Crane, a master builder, turned in his final punch list. He now has another building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

No. 529-Funeral

Her Own Works Praise Her

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 28, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." Proverbs 31:10-11. Her children arise up, and call herblessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. (v28)Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.(v31)

Introduction

How would rate your success as a Christian wife or husband? If a final evaluation was given and your experience was analyzed how would you fare? There are many who begin the journey of matrimony and live long, and productive lives filled with happiness and joy. There are others, however who somehow miss the mark and fall along the wayside as their marriages crumble into streaked water colored images of what could have been. What can we learn from the careful observation of the lives of those who successfully weathered the course marriage? What is the common characteristic of the successful Christian marriage that is responsible for its quality and longevity? Scholars respond that they had communication, respect, passion, understanding, comfortable spirits, and compatibility. Yet, even with all these, there is something missing.

Consider the daughter who wanted to know how to be a good wife to her husband. The young lady was just a few days before her wedding day and she came in for a mother-daughter talk. As she talked confidently with her mother she said: "Mother, tell me the secret to having a happy marriage!"

The mother's response was "sit here between my legs and let me do your hair." The daughter was a little disturbed that at such a crucial point in her life all her mother seemed concerned about was braiding her hair. "I know you are a grown woman now" said the mother "but let me braid your hair one last time and you will get your answer." Like she had for nearly 20 years, she sat between her mother's legs and allowed her to plait her hair. She combed her hair into three separate strands and then began to explain: "One of these strands represents you and another represents your husband. If I braid these two together, they will not hold tightly and in a very short while they will come apart. A good braid, however, has three strands although it looks like only two. The third strand keeps the other two from falling apart."

"In your marriage, the third strand is God, for God is real love. That is the secret to a happy marriage." The girl was so happy that she refused to take down her hair. As she marched down the isle, beneath her veil and headdress, tucked snugly in a full head of well-dressed hair, was one single braid, a reminder that...God was there! As Christians, we should strive for the perfect union represented by a happy marriage. God's presence in a marriage is a source of strength that binds a husband and wife forever. It is a bond that goes beyond this life and extends into eternity.

Exposition

This text focuses on the attributes of what is described as a "virtuous" woman.

Virtue in this context refers to moral and mental qualities, combined with a spirit of love and industry. The entire chapter is devoted to the advice given to a son searching for the ideal woman. The ideal godly woman is described in four dimensions, her character, capacity to love her husband, care for her children and serve others. With these four ideals in mind the entire 31st chapter of Proverbs describes the virtuous woman in a very detailed analysis that leaves little to the imagination.

CHARACTER: Four character traits are unique to the virtuous woman. Verse 26 notes: strength, honor, wisdom and kindness as the marks of the ideal woman. Strength, in this sense, is not a physical measure. It is a measure of will and fortitude. It is the capacity to continue when it appears impossible or improbable that success will result. Likewise the virtuous woman is one who has a sense of honor and impeccable integrity. It is her quest to do the right thing and to carry and present herself in an honorable fashion. An important part of her character is her ability to act wisely and to make prudent decisions that are in the best interest of her family. Wisdom is not a measure of her intellect or her scholarship, but her ability to weigh available options and act responsibly. Finally her character is marked by her capacity to show kindness to everyone, in words and in deed.

LOYAL TO HER HUSBAND: Her loyalty and Devotion to her husband is another identifying trait of the virtuous woman. Verses 11 and 12 say: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Despite her other qualities a good woman is measured by her loyalty to her husband, according to the scripture. Her actions toward him are of such a nature that he can "safely trust her," meaning that his trust will not be breached. Moreover, her loyalty to him is not conditional, but is permanent, encompassing the full range of life's experiences: prosperity and hard times, sickness and health, good times and bad times. Her loyalty to her husband is "all the days of her life," until death separates them.

LOYAL TO HER FAMILY: She is also measured by her loyalty to her family. Verses 13-21 describes a very industrious woman who seeks ways to provide the best for her family yet be economical. She considers the meats and foodstuffs needed for her household and secures them. She saves, pinches and economizes in every way

possible to make the family's resources go further. When she cannot buy what her family needs she makes it herself, to the best of her ability. Neither weather or seasons will stop her from providing for her household. Verse 21 says "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet." Her children are never seen without proper clothing or grooming. Her family is well fed and provided for, because of her tireless and energetic labor.

A FRIEND TO THE NEEDY: Not only does she care for her husband and family, but she also works very diligently to help the poor and the needy. Verse 20 says: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." The virtuous woman is concerned about the sick. She visits the hospitals, prepares food for shut-ins, gives to help the less fortunate and gives of herself to help lift the burden of those who are in a position of need. "She reacheth forth her hand" suggests that she does not wait until the needy make an appeal to her, but takes the initiative to reach out and touch someone with compassion.

These four characteristics together describe the attributes of the virtuous woman. Together they present the picture of a woman of dignity, honor, wisdom, strength, compassion and loyalty to her husband and family. A man who finds such a woman has a priceless jewel.

Though verse 28 says her children will rise up in the morning and praise and her husband will praise her, they won't be alone. Those who know her will praise her and those whom she has touched will praise her as well.

Those who rise to praise the virtuous woman will not have to say much. Verse 31 says "her own works praise her" and testify to the accomplishments of her life.

The Good Wife

The quest for a virtuous woman continues. While modern definitions of the virtuous woman are making such a woman hard to find, there are still women who believe that it is no shame to be a loyal wife, personally raise their children, and manage their homes.

By today's standard the virtuous woman is one who has learned the art of discretion: looking and talking polite in public but doing otherwise in private. She is hailed for her ability to keep up appearances in social circles, even if she cannot afford the appearances.

Loyalty to her husband is considered a negotiable commodity, conditioned on his willingness to promote her career objectives. Loyalty is not required for a life long period but as long as it is mutually advantageous for the two of them to be together. If she acts civil in her divorce proceedings and maintains appearances afterwards, she is considered virtuous.

With respect to her children, she is considered virtuous if she gets them to the day care center on time, pays the bill and gets them at least one microwave meal a day. She is considered a good mother if she makes an occasional appearance at the school

P.T.A., takes them to church on Easter Sunday and special occasions and gets them to grandmother's house for the weekend.
Today's virtuous woman's charity work is confined to the projects of her club, and making donations of old clothes to the Salvation Army.
Despite the declining presence of the biblical virtuous woman there are legions of women who are privately striving to live up to God's expectations of the ideal woman. This is the woman who carries herself with dignity and honor and works hard to see to it that her children look well every day.
This is the woman who stands by her husband, even to the point of death, drawing on reserves of faith from unseen sources, and single handedly nurses him back to health, by the grace of God.
This is the woman who, gives of herself to help others in a flood of deeds that flow from the pots of her kitchen, to the depths of her meager resources, to the strained extent of her health and strength; even to the point of rising in the middle of the night to sit at the bedside of the sick and infirmed.
This is the woman whose every move is empowered by an unseen source. It's the same help that David talked about when he wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth"
This kind of woman can only do what she does if she knows the Lord!
This is the kind of woman knows that prayer changes things!
This is the kind of woman whose epitaph is inscribed in the hearts of those who knew her, for every day of her life is a testament of faith and courage!
When the chilly finger of death touches the life of such a woman, what can be said about her?
A thousand litanies only dwarfs such a life!
What can you say about her?
All we can do is sing the words of the song that says "May the work, I've done, speak for me! May the service I give, speak for me! May the life I live, speak for me!"
What do you say about such a life?
The Words of God gives us the answer:
"Let her own works praise her in the gates!"

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On Friday October 21, 1994 Esther Little took her last breath and went to her reward. Her own works praise her name, for she was a virtuous woman!

No. 530-Funeral

What We Shall Be

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 29, 1994

SCRIPTURE: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2; But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor. 2:9

Introduction

Do you know where you are going in life? Is your life headed in some clear direction or do you seem to wander aimlessly in a flurry of activity that gets you nowhere? When our lives have direction, our actions are necessarily aimed at achieving certain goals. Those who live without a sense of purpose and direction waste valuable years drifting aimlessly, moving fast but getting nowhere, talking loud and saying nothing. Sometimes it's hard for us to understand the changes we go through to get where we are going. We know they eventually get us there, but we are not quite sure how. Consider the small boy who was sitting by himself crying after the death of his father. The boy cried constantly as he complained that "everything he loved, seemed to die." His mother talked to him alone one day. The boy said he and his father went to a pond a while back and caught some tadpoles in a jar. He enjoyed playing with the tadpoles, but when he returned to play with them a while later the jar was empty, on little webbed feet made a trail from the jar. He cried when the tadpoles left. Another time he and his father found some caterpillars and we watched them every day. Then one day the caterpillars had drawn up in a cocoon and were not crawling anymore. He cried when the caterpillars stopped crawling. Now, his father, whom he enjoyed so much, was gone. The boy cried.
Trying to console the boy the mother said: "The tadpoles in the jar, what do you think happened to them? They changed and became little frogs. All that was left behind was the empty jar and a trail of webbed feet. They are happy somewhere do what little frogs do. The caterpillars, what does you think happened to them, they came out of that cocoon and turned into beautiful butterflies. They left their cocoons behind and now they are happy somewhere doing what little butterflies do. What do you think happened to your father? He changed the other day and became a spirit daddy. All

he left behind is this body and trail of memories for us to hold on to. The little boy wiped a tear from his eye, smiled and said: "and he's happy, doing what spirit daddies do!"
As Christians, we know that there is a great blessing in store for every child of God. We know where we've been. We know our present condition. We are not sure of all the details of what we shall be, but we know that whatever Jesus is, we shall be in his likeness, one day!

We are familiar with the distance we have traveled to reach our present state. We are also familiar with our present circumstance.

Exposition

This text explores the future state of those who are called the "sons of God."
John, writing his first epistle about 57 years after the resurrection of Christ, explains to believers the nature of the Christian relationship to God. He explains first that we who are believers are the sons of God. We are the sons of God; not in the same sense that Christ was the only begotten son, but in the sense that we have been adopted into the family of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Being a part of the family of God has its advantages and its disadvantages. Because we are believers we tend to be stigmatized and ostracized as was Christ himself. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" refers to the unfamiliarity of the world with the nature of the Christian's life.
John, speaking to believers in this text, affirmed that while believers were certain of their relationship as "sons of God," not everything is known about what we shall be in our future state. What is known is that believers will:
—Have a body that is similar to the glorified body of Christ's, able to be recognized, be touched, and to eat and drink. After his resurrection, Christ gave his disciples, and through them the whole world, a sneak peek at a glorified body. While they were locked in a closed room, Christ appeared to them in the flesh. He ate fish and bread and even gave permission for Thomas to touch him, proving that he was not a spirit. While his body was physical, it was also spiritual because it was able to materialize itself through the closed doors. We are promised a glorified body just like his. (.Phil 3:21 "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...")
—Everyone will have his own body, with its distinct characteristics of color and features, with the exception that the glorified body will be a spiritual body with the look and feel of the natural body. The natural body ages, deteriorates and changes for the worse. However, while the spiritual body will have the look of our natural bodies it will not be susceptible to the frailties of this body, ie rheumatism, arthritis, heart trouble, cancer, high blood pressure, Sickle Cell Anemia, Lukemia, AIDS, and

a plethora of other maladies (1 Cor 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...")

Beyond these two glimpses into our future state, little is known about how we shall look in the life to come. However, John points out that while we don't know every detail as to how we will look, how we will get around and what we will do every day, we do know that when Jesus makes his appearance we shall understand many things that we don't understand now. Today, it is difficult for any of us to visualize all that God ha in store for us. We cannot picture it. We cannot imagine it because there is nothing in this life comparable. There is no scene so beautiful that it can approach a description of the heavenly life. There is no thrill or joy in this life that can adequately equal what we can expect in the kingdom of Heaven. There are no words that paint us a mental picture of our heavenly estate. That is why Paul wrote: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We can only imagine caricatures of what will be. Even these are just dark images of what God is planning. Paul summed it this way: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12

What We Have Been

The one truth each of us knows, is where we have been. Our appreciation of today comes only because we have the backdrop of what we "use to be" as a point of reference.

We know too well the trail that we have walked in life. Sometimes it has carried us to mountain peaks of success. Sometimes it has carried us to the deep valleys of failure or around the meandering streams of adversity. We know both what we have been and what we have been.

Our lives are a like a tale that is told. Some of us have been adventurous, to put it mildly. Our paths have taken many directions.

The one thing that all believers have in common is that their paths crossed in the same place. Like Paul, who met the Lord on the Damascus Road, and took a new direction, we too met the Lord one day. That was the day that we changed our lives and our direction.

We who were once citizens of the world and dues paying members of the Devil's Doomed Society, have come a long way since we met the Lord. We are not what we want to be, or what we hope to be, but thank God we are not what we were. That's what Paul meant when he said: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11

That is why the song writer declares: "Look where he brought me from. He brought me out of darkness, into the marvelous light, look where he brought me from!"

The beauty of the Christian life is that is does matter what we were, even in the months that precede our exit from the life, but what we became. Most notably that we became

"sons of God" through accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

What We Shall Be

While we are familiar with our past, we know even better, our present. What we are now.
A believer is a man or woman who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He or she has confessed him with his mouth, repented for whatever sins he or she may have committed and begins to trust him for the remainder of this life into the next.
A believer trusts God. We have reached the point where we now understand that we don't control our destinies or the future. What lies in store for us cannot be changed by our efforts but can be changed by God. Therefore, we trust God daily.
Where are we now? We are in the position of leaning daily on the Word of God. Is this what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. I found out that if I trust him, he will provide."
We trust God in our prosperity!
We trust God in our adversity!
We trust God even in moments of death. David Declared "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me."
When tears run down our faces like mighty streams, the believer still declares "I trust in God!"
When the weight of the world presses mightily on our shoulders, believers still declare "I trust in God!"
When sorrow like sea billows roll, and buffets the soul, believers still declare "I trust in God!"
"I trust in God. Wherever I may be. On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea. Though come what may from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me! I trust in God, I know he cares. On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea. though billows roll, he keeps my soul, my heavenly father watches over me!"
I don't know about you but I've decided to keep trusting in God!
I don't know what tomorrow will be but I know who holds tomorrow and I know who holds my hand!
I don't what life will be like over yonder, but I've been told that over yonder that:
—There is a city with 12 gates that sits on 12 foundations
—The streets are paved with Gold!
—There is a tree that will be good for the healing of the nations
—The mountains will be made low and valleys shall be exalted
—Rough places shall be made plain and the crooked places shall be made straight
—Every day will be like Sunday; it'll always be howdy, but never goodbye!
I don't know all about it, but one of these days, bye and bye..
Jesus is coming back!
When Jesus returns, he'll dry every weeping eye!
When Jesus returns, replace our sadness with gladness!

When Jesus comes back again, there will be joy!
Joy!
Joy!

531-Revival

Sick Feet Treated by the Wrong Doctor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 6, 1994

SCRIPTURE: And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. 2 Chronicles 16:12-13

Introduction

How do you find a good doctor when you are sick? Some look in the yellow pages for a particular type of doctor and pick a name. Others select a physician based on what they have heard from acquaintances. There are a few that take the trouble to check out the credentials of the prospective physician, including checks to the Better Business Bureau and Medical Organizations. However, the overwhelming majority of people select the treatment for their illness, and their doctors, on the testimonies of friends. Many have tried home made tonics, dips, salves, teas and totties. Others have followed everything from herbs to acupuncture as they attempt to find a cure for sickness. When they select a doctor, most folks go to a doctor recommended by a friend or family member, based on what they heard about the doctor's record.
Selecting a doctor based on hearsay can be dangerous. Consider the country rabbit that became sick. This rabbit had always outwitted the wolves, bears and other creatures that laid traps for him. One day as he sat in his rabbit hole he heard voices above. The voices were talking about a special brew that always helped them feel better whenever they were sick or weak. The rabbit listened closer. The two critters seemed to be sold on this special brew. He heard them say that the secret place they get the brew was through a hole at the bottom of the tree trunk. The rabbit thought his luck was changing. This brew they talked about seemed to help other creatures, so he decided to get himself some.
When he slipped to the tree trunk he climbed in a dark hole until he saw two doors marked "Foxes, wolves, bear cubs, & Reptiles " and "rabbits and groundhogs." He entered the one that said "rabbits and groundhogs" and proceeded down another

long hall like hole until he saw two doors marked “rabbits” and the other marked “ground hogs.” He entered the door marked rabbits. As he hopped down the hall he saw a row of baskets with signs above each that read “take one.” In one basket there were onions. In another there were potato wedges, and assorted peppers. As he hopped along with an arm full of items he suddenly came to a drop off and he fell into a long winding tunnel that was about to end up in a huge pot of boiling, salted water. As the potatoes, onions, and peppers fell into the pot the rabbit heard the two voices he heard outside his door laughing and yelling. They were the disguised voices of Mr. and Mrs. Fox clattering: “When we feel sick, there is nothing that make us feel better than ‘fresh rabbit soup!” Realizing he’d been tricked, the rabbit jumped passed the pot and found his way out to safety. From that day forward he decided that whenever he was sick again to “check out the doctor first, before you wind up in his soup!”

There are many today that are sick in body and in spirit, but they turn constantly to quacks and ripoffs that literally have them for lunch.

As Christians, we have come to know that our God is a mighty good doctor. We know this because we have tried him for ourselves. He’s a mighty good doctor both for the body and soul. Thank God that Doctor Jesus is always on the case!

Exposition

This text considers King Asa, a good king who let his faith in God withering the prosperity of his kingdom and his own health.

Asa was the King of Judah. He ruled for 40 years and for the most part is remembered as a good king who tried to obey God. Generally, Asa was described as a man who wanted to do what was right in the sight of God. When he became king he worked to destroy the people’s dependence upon the idol gods. He destroyed idols and even removed his mother, the queen, from a position of prominence, when she erected idols. He felt obligated to depend upon God only for his existence.

When his country was a peace he built up his faith in God. His great faith was tested when his country was invaded by the African nation of Ethiopia. Asa called upon the Lord in 2 Chronicles 14:11 “And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.” When he called upon God, he was given the victory by great margins.

God wanted him to know that his victory wasn’t a mistake or a feat of his own military genius. A prophet was sent to king Asa with these words in 2 Chronicles 15:2 “And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”

Asa remembered that advice, and for many years he put his trust only in God. However, a period came in his life when he doubted that God could do him any good,

and his trust faltered. King Baasha of Israel made a move against his country. Asa had spent much time rebuilding the spiritual life of the kingdom that he had neglected his army. He had very little confidence that his army could stop those of King Bassha. Rather than trust in God as he had in the past he chose to buy the support of a foreign army which successfully helped him fight off his enemy.

God sent the prophet Hanani to tell the king he had demonstrated a lack of faith in God. If God had helped him fight off overpowering enemies before, he could have helped him again. King Asa became angry and threw the prophet in prison. He then took out his anger on the people and brought hardships on them.

In the midst of it all he developed a disease in his feet that brought down his health in the last two years of his life. The scripture does not tell the name of the disease, but the most common foot disease of the time, that was life threatening, was "gout." Gout was incurable at the time. There were no known medicines or treatment for the condition that were known to man. However, God knew what to do, but Asa, refused to go to God, but to the physicians of his time, who were totally inadequate. His sin was not that he consulted doctors and physicians that was a logical recourse. His sin was that he trusted them for the cure rather than ask God to use them as the instruments for the cure. He would not ask God for help. He contracted his foot disease in the 39th year of his reign. He died in the 41st year, having had sick feet treated by the wrong doctors.

Millions At The Cross Roads

Today there are millions of people who are at a cross roads in their lives. Like King Asa, they have not lead evil lives, but on the contrary have led lives that have been filled with faith in God. Some have reached a weak point in which they now doubt God's ability.

In times past they have watched as God worked mighty miracles in response to their faith. Many have overcome great physical weaknesses and sicknesses that crippled their ability to move and praise God effectively. Some have been so sick that they were not expected to live, while others have been in so much pain that they begged to die. Yet in their sickness, God proved himself able to deliver them. God delivered them from their infirmities and put them back on their feet, through his grace! It is good to have the best doctors and nurses in the country, but don't forget about Jesus! It is wise to seek the best medical assistance you can afford, but don't forget about Jesus!

He's a mighty good doctor! The lame are now walking! The mute are now talking! The sick are now well and the blind have a story to tell! Don't forget about Jesus!

Likewise there are many who have displayed great faith in God in moments of spiritual crises. These were the times when we wrestled with temptations, frustrations and obligations. These are the times when, like Christ, we endured our wilderness experience, reached our lowest point and then survived the testings of Satan. Sometimes we wrestled with great spiritual decisions about service to God, giving, and acting on our faith. These were the times when we almost gave up, only to see

the miraculous faith renewing power of God spring up in our lives.

In many ways we are like Kings Asa, in that we have seen what God can do and have, in the past trusted in God without fail.

However, there are some who also share Asa's weakness. He was a great man who reached a point when his faith ran low and started putting his trust in men, rather than in God.

There are many, even as we worship, who are busy trying to take care of their circumstance all by themselves. Note that there is nothing wrong with initiative. The man or woman that takes steps to resolve a difficulty or problem is not guilty of rejecting God. It is the man or woman that places all of his hope in individual abilities or the abilities of friends that has a problem. The believer who trusts God, takes care of the particulars within his control and then turns the matter over to God, makes the correct response. His response is the same as David's when he faced Goliath, that God had helped him defend his father's sheep and he could do it again.

That may be what the song writer had in mind when he wrote "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there. If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

God Is Able

Someone today believes that they are facing an impossible situation in their own lives, but today you are reminded what God has done before, he can do again! Do not lean to your own understand, trust in the Lord and he will make a way!

Many make themselves miserable when they lean to their own understandings. They see the options available to them and worry that all appear dismal. When the options are not appealing that's the time that we draw on our faith and remind ourselves that God's power is not limited by our options. We serve a God who supersedes the options available to man because God can create more options.

Joshua faced the prospect of defeat in battle because he was running out of daylight. It appeared to his captains that the only option was surrender. Joshua, refused knowing that God had the power if he chose, to create another option! God stopped the earth from moving around the sun and froze the day light in the sky until it looked like the sun stood still! He gave Joshua ..another option!

Hezekiah had received word that his time was up. There were no more options. It was time for him to die. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and talked to God, and God created another option and gave him 15 more years!

A widow woman looked at her food supply and felt she was out of options. However, in faith she obeyed the will of God and God created another option for her, giving her an endless supply of food throughout the hard times!

As the Hebrew boys faced the fiery furnace they said in their hearts "our God is able to deliver us!"

No matter what your circumstance happens to be, "our God is able to deliver us!

He's able to take our bitterness and turn it into sweetness!

He's able to take our disappointments and turn them into renew hope!

He's able to take our sadness and turn it into gladness!

King Asa went to the foot doctors, who specialize in treating gout and gangrene, but I know a doctor who can put a tap in your toe, starch in your arch and pep in your step!

King Asa was being treated for his feet, but the problem was in his heart!

But I know a doctor that is a mind fixer and a heart regulator!

I know he's a heart regulator because I heard David ask him to "create in me oh Lord a clean heart, and renew in me a right spirit!"

Who is this doctor?

His name is Jesus!

—The great physician! The Master Doctor!

—Mender of broken hearts!

He has taken silent tongues and given them a new song to sing!

He has straightened out crooked feet and gave them a brand new walk!

No wonder the song writer wrote "Jesus is one the mainline, tell him what you want! If you sick and you want to get well, tell him what you want!"

Just call him up and tell him what you want!

532-Church Anniversary

The Future of the Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Zion Traveler Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 6, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." John 16:13;"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:1-4

Introduction

What do you think of when you think of the immediate and distant future? Do you see a church victorious, or a church in decline and defeat? Do you see a growing church of faith and power or do you see a church that will struggling to hold on. In the distant future, do you see a glorious church? Do you see yourself in the number? There are many people who have notions about the future but they have different ways that they perceive themselves in the future. Consider the slave master who made a point of trampling on any hopes that his slaves would ever have of becoming free. Those who appeared to yearn to be free were told how hard life would be as freeman having to work, provide for themselves and the learn laws. Even when it came to the slaves hopes the master thought important to trample those dreams too.

One day he called in his favorite house slave Tom. "Tom" said the master. "I had a dream last night." The old slave who had a reputation for being quick witted and wise bowed his head, faked ignorance and said "you did Massa, lets hear bout' yo' dream!" The master said "I dreamed that I died and there was some sort of mixup and I ended up in Nigra heaven. It was an awful looking place. There was Nigras everywhere. The streets were muddy. The buildings were falling down. Watermelon rhines and pig's feet were laying everywhere. It was a horrible looking place." The old slave was quick to answer but he had to find a way to say it just right where the master, who wasn't too bright, would not get the point.

"Massa. I'se glad that you mention that, because it be a strange thang because I had a strange dream too. I dreamed I died and there was a mixup and I ended up in slave master's heaven. It was a real pretty place. It had streets that were shiny and yellow like Gold. It had 12 pretty gates that smooth and pearly white. They had rows and rows of big houses called mansions and they lined every street. There wasn't no trash laying around, no water melon rhines and no hog pens. It was a real clean place.

There was just one thing thang that looked kinda strange ...there wasn't a single soul in the whole place!"

As Christians, we know that everybody talking about heaven "ain't going there." We seek to live lives of faith with the assurance that our savior has gone to prepare the same place for all of true saints, that where he is, we will be also.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Holy Spirit's work to help believers prepare for the future life.

In John, Christ paints a picture of a time when he bodily would not be with the faithful. However, he promised that while he would be absent physically that there would be a "comforter" or a divine presence in the guise of the Holy Spirit. The function of the Holy Spirit would be numerous, including convicting the world of sin and convincing the world of the righteousness of Christ. It would be the Holy Spirit's function to help the world know itself better, through knowing God better.

In the body, Christ was limited to being in one place at one time, but in his physical absence the comforter could be in many places at the same time, comforting advising and giving hope to millions simultaneously.

The Holy Spirit has one additional function, according to Christ; not only will the He guide you daily, but he will speak whatever He receives from God and will "show you things to come." The Holy Spirit will reveal to believers the nature of things to come with respect to their faith and their future. With respect to their faith, he would reveal his power through miracles, an outpouring of the spirit, and the amazing ability to spread the word about his goodness to people of every tongue and nationality.

The immediate future for the Jewish believer was to be drastically different from what was traditional. The church would be expanded beyond the traditional "For Jews Only" philosophy. It would be extended to all nations. That was a radical idea because it challenged racial and nationality barriers. Jews believed that they were God's chosen people and they did not relish the idea of extending their faith to "Gentiles." Not only that, women would play a different role among them as prophecies of Joel were fulfilled "that their sons and their daughters shall prophesy." That too was a radical idea because it challenged long established gender barriers that excluded women as equal partners in the faith. Without a doubt the direction of the church was set in a direction that would ultimately go against traditional beliefs, chart new ground, and establish the Lordship of Christ in the hearts of men and women

everywhere.

Christ said the Holy Spirit would show believers "things to come" and he remained true to his word. In Revelation 1 John said he was in the spirit on the Lord's Day and God showed him a picture of "things to come." It was a panoramic picture of the last seven years of this world order, of the rise of the anti-Christ, the defeat of Satan, death and its powers, and of the eventual victory of the Christ over all of the forces of evil.

Revelation 21 shows the ultimate future of the church in its grandiose, beauty and splendor. The New Jerusalem, pictured as the bride of Christ, would be inhabited by a composite of all believers: Old Testament faithful, the church, and those who accepted Christ during the tribulation period. The greatest hint that believers have about the future state of believers is found in Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." John said the Holy Spirit will "show you things to come" and those things will be beyond our fondest imagination!

Of Things to Come

Many today are worried about the future of the church. They worry because they have noticed that the church is not what it used to be! They see a church that appears to be more worldly, less God centered and in decline. That prospect bothers some people who are concerned about the future of the church.

Jesus, speaking about the immediate future of the church, said things would get worse before they got better. In Matthew 24 Jesus projects a time when false prophets will come within the church deceiving the very elect, home life would be unsettled and parents and children turn against each other, and war, rumors of wars, famines and pestilences increase in frequency. He projected that true friendship and compassion will disappear as real "love" waxes cold and is replaced mutually beneficial relationships. When we see these things happen, Jesus says this is just the beginning of sorrows.

Without a doubt, we are approaching the last days of this world order. As African-American believers we are seeing changes in the church that are coming as culture shock to many.

Racial barriers that have nurtured our growth are toppling. The distinct advantage of segregation was it kept African-Americans together. We supported our own business, filled our churches and generally espoused a sense of community. As barriers have fallen, each of these areas has diminished. Black businesses have declined, our sense of community has declined and our churches are emptying as a generation of the young and the educated flock after New Age religious theories in sectarian groups called "non-denominational" and "Full Gospel." Even within the same faith, white churches are evangelizing our neighborhoods, taking in our people at a high rate without a reciprocal response. As racial barriers fall, the church of the future will have great challenges to face.

Sexual barriers are falling everywhere. As the prophesy of Joel comes to pass, women are responding to Christ's challenge to teach, preach and reach the world with the Gospel message. This is an especially painful period for African-Americans who have suffered from racial discrimination, now faced with issue of sex discrimination, while at the same time suffering losses of Black men in leadership. More women leaders means less men. Diminishing the number of Black males in leadership, adds another nail to our social coffin. Thus is the nature of the challenge: how do we respect the equality of all without negatively impacting fragile state affairs with Black men. Dealing with changing role of women in the church is a real challenge for the future. New weapons are being employed against our children. One of the greatest challenges of the church is to protect its young people from immoral influences of the world until they reach a level of maturity that they can fend for themselves. Drugs, crime, promiscuity, and a plethora of other temptations are claiming too many of our youth. In the wake of declining revenues the church must decide whether it spend funds to protect its youth or continue business as usual as, one by one, they become victims of the wolves waiting to devour them.

God Is The Same

While the challenges for the church are great, we have one great consolation, that is that we serve a God who is greater than the challenge!

The methods and personalities we may employ to preach, teach and reach the world for Christ might change, but we should be reminded that God himself never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever more!

While we may be concerned about the direction of the church, I've come to remind you today that future of the church is in good hands!

We don't need to worry about the future of the church, for while Jesus told of the great challenges that lay ahead for the church in Matthew 24:13 he said " But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The church will stand!

There may be wars and rumors of wars, but the church will stand!

There may be false prophets and false doctrines that arise, but the church will stand!

There may be times of turbulence and uncertainty, but the church will stand!

The church will stand because it is founded upon a rock!

I heard Jesus tell Peter "Thou are Peter, and upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"

Who is this rock?

This rock is Jesus, yes he's the one!

Jesus who died out on Calvary, but rose early Sunday morning!

You don't have to worry about the future, because he's coming back again, after his church!

John said if you are worried about the future of the church, look over yonder! I saw a new heaven and new earth! Coming down out of heaven, like a bride adorned for her husband was the New Jerusalem!

In the New Jerusalem, the church will spend eternity!

The New Jerusalem, will be built on 12 foundations
The New Jerusalem, will have 12 gates made of single pearls!
Over yonder, the streets will be paved with gold!
Over yonder, hearse wheels won't roll! Tears won't fall! Sadness will be unknown!
No wonder the wonder the song writer declared! Come and go with me to my father's house!
Peace and happiness there, in my father's house!
In my father's house, there is joy, joy, joy!

No. 533-Gratitude

I Won't Complain

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 20, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.1 Corinthians 10:10;"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:11-13

Introduction

Have you ever complained about one thing or another? What was your complaint about? Was it about someone or was it about something? Did someone hurt you and pose a stumbling block to your goals and ambitions? Is there something that makes life uncomfortable for you. Some complain because they don't have enough money and thereby can't get any friends. Others complain that they have too much money and don't know if they have any friends. Some complain that no one loves them, while others complain that they don't know how to love. Complaints are universal, crossing sexual and racial barriers. Whites complain. Blacks complain.Native Americans complain. Men, women, boys, and girls..it seems that everyone complains. There something always too long or too short.

Consider the farmer who was known for being a constant grumbler. He never saw a single reason that he should give thanks for anything. He was known as "Complaining Charlie." Charlie's farm was large and successful when most of his neighbors were struggling. But he was complained about that. His tractor had air conditioning, compact disc, and stereo sound when his neighbors were sweating in the heat, and he complained about that. He complained so much that none of his friends wanted to be around him. He complained too much. Many people tried to show him the bright side of things but failed. All he saw was the worse.

One year he planted a field of potatoes. For some reason Charlie's potatoes

grew into a bumper crop. All of his neighbors had mediocre yields. Charlie went to church the next Sunday following the harvest looking very sad as usual. His friends surrounded him and praised him for having such a wonderful crop of potatoes, certainly this would be something to praise God for. For the first time in history, a farmer had a 100 percent harvest, nothing was lost. Despite that Charlie complained. When asked what was wrong with his life Charlie said: "I got this giant farm that it takes me all day to work. I got this air conditioned tractor and the sound only comes out of the left speaker. And now I got a perfect crop of potatoes." What was wrong with a perfect crop of potatoes? Charlie answered: "I don't have any bad potatoes to feed my hogs."

There are some people who are never see the blessings God has given them, all they see is the difficulty that remains.

As Christians, we have learned to constantly give praise and thanks to God for everything that he has done for us. We have resolved that whether sunshine or rain, good times are bad, that we will continually give thanks to God for he is good and his mercy endures for ever. Come what may, our resolve should be: "I won't complain!"

Exposition

These texts combined explain the nature of complaints and murmurings and show the appropriate Christian response.

Murmuring is defined by Vines as "indignant complaining" Indignant means: angry, incensed and offended. Indignant complaints are those rooted in anger or are in response to feeling of having been offended. Paul, writing to the Corinthians urged them not to murmur. He referred them to their history, showing them how the Israel constantly murmured and complained in the wilderness.(Numbers 14) They complained of no water and God provided them water. They complained about a lack of meat and bread and God provided them these needs. Their clothing, health, and all other physical needs were provided for, despite the fact that there were 600,000 people wandering in a dessert without vegetation or animal life to feed, nourish and sustain such a large army of people. When they reached the Jordan river, again they complained. Some wanted to go back to Egypt. Some complained and murmured against Moses, Aaron and God. Many were destroyed in their anger and anxiety as the Lord opened up the ground to swallow some and caused snakes to destroy thousands of others.

Their murmurings did not stop at the Jordan. In the promised land they complained that the crops of the Canaanites were more prosperous than theirs and began to worship idols. They complained that they did not have a king like all other nations and God gave them exactly what they asked for when he named Saul their first king. They complained in their prosperity

under King Solomon because the taxes were too high. They complained in their exile, weeping for the deteriorated condition of Jerusalem. Their complaints were endless. Almost always, the underlying sentiment of all of their complaints was their feeling that God had wronged them in some way.

So, Paul warned New Testament Christians against complaining. The tone of his teaching was simple: God will always do that which is best for us, even when we don't understand or appreciate the circumstance. Therefore, we should labor with a spirit of gratitude for what we have while we strive to reach higher heights. Whether we have an abundance of material things or whether we get along with meager fare, in "every thing give thanks!"

The attitude of perpetual thanks supersedes and overrides complaining because complaining by nature requires us to believe that God has wronged us, while gratitude comes from an attitude that God cannot and will not wrong us in any way because it is against his nature. Therefore, the believer is urged to give thanks "in every thing."

Many Complainers Today

Today there are many people who are murmurers. Murmurings or complaints have varying shades. All complaints, in this context, are rooted in the feeling that someone or some cause has been wronged. Therefore, those who complain most usually do so out of a inner feeling that in some way, form or fashion, they have been wronged, slighted, wounded or otherwise offended.

The Godly Complaint

INJUSTICE: Prompts complaints because the offended rightly feel they have not received equal treatment. Those whose circumstance or condition is adversely impacted file grievances, petitions and otherwise protest their condition. Civil rights groups of all kinds make passionate pleas for justice, demand that wrongs be corrected.

The prophets of God have been the chief complainers in this context. They were not complaining against God but against the governments of men for the wrongs inflicted upon the people. Nathan complained of the wrong inflicted upon Uriah by King David. Amos constantly chided the nation's leaders for unjust actions and looked forward to the day when "Justice runs down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." From the ranks of the oppressed the flow of prophets complaining continued through Nat Turner, Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson and thousands of others whose combined voices complain about the condition of the oppressed.

Godly Complaints

Those who complain about social injustice, complain to God about injustice. However, there are those whose complaints are aimed at other people directly and at God indirectly.

DOUBT: Comes from the belief that one may suffer an evil or a wrong because of the inability or unwillingness of another to make good on a promise to provide for or protect them. Some complain about their condition in life feeling that they are condemn to remain in it by fate. They feel powerless to change the condition and feel it is beyond the ability of any.

They are not unique. In Israel the people murmured because they doubted they could cross the red sea, find food in the wilderness or defeat the people of Canaan. Sarah doubted that God could give her a child in her old age and complained of an unkept promise. These doubted until reminded that there is nothing too hard for God to do.

ENVY: Is rooted in the feeling that another person has possession of something we secretly desire and think we deserve. A neighbor gets a new car, home or excels in business, instead of praising the accomplishment, the envying person murmurs about it and finds fault in it.

Envy has been the source of many complaints in the bible. Joseph was sold into slavery because his brothers envied him (Acts 7:9). Pilate was hesitant to condemn Jesus because he knew that "envy" had delivered him up for condemnation (Matthew 27:18). There were murmurings and complaints because those complaining saw themselves being injured in some way by the success or prospect of success of their victims.

INGRATITUDE: Results when one feels that even though many blessings have been received, each was deserved and more were due than those which were delivered. The ungrateful person feels worthy of all blessings and murmurs when he does not get more. The suffer from the Imeda Marcos syndrome: that of having 100 pair of shoes and being upset because one more pair was not obtained. It's the case of having much but feeling no need to show thanks because you "worked" for it and obtained it yourself.

Jesus healed 10 lepers but only one came back to say thanks. God blessed Israel immensely but instead of showing gratitude, they felt they were his chosen people and were obligated to help them. On every hand they turned away from God showing their ingratitude.

Nothing to Complain About

While it is good to complain to God about our problems, our complaint should never be WITH God.

When we consider all that God has done for us, we should conclude that we have no complaint with God.

I'm reminded of the church that held a special "complaint" Sunday where all members were told to march around and put their complaints about the church in a box and they would be read out loud. On complaint Sunday hundreds of members marched around and posted their complaints which seemed to fall in three categories: The choir's singing wasn't good enough, the preacher's preaching didn't make them shout, and there were too many offerings. Every member marched around except an old sister on the mother's bench. When asked why she wouldn't make her complaint she said:"Brother pastor, if the choir don't sing to my fancy, I remember that "God gave me a song that the angels can't sing, I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb. It doesn't matter whether the preacher's sermon pats me on the back or steps on my feet as long as he calls the name of Jesus, for at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. I'm not bothered by the offerings because every time I see that plate I ask "What shall I render unto God for all his mercies? I didn't come by the box because, I don't have a complaint. The Lord has been good to me, and I won't complain!

I don't know about you but I've decided that I won't complain! God has been good tome!

I won't wallow and doubt and fear because, like the three Hebrew Boys, I know "Our God is able!"

I won't be envious when I see God blessing you, because I know that what he's done for others he will do for me!

I won't be ungrateful for all of his blessings, but every day of my life I'll say "thank you Lord, Thank Lord" I won't complain!

Thank you for taking an old rugged crossing and carrying it up Calvary!

Thank you for dying for my sins!

Thank you for rising after three days and nights!

Thank you for saving my soul!

Though the world may murmur with discontent...

I won't complain!

No. 534-Inspiration

Something On Your Mind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 4, 1994

SCRIPTURE: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Isaiah 26:3

Introduction

Have you found yourself doing one thing while thinking about another? Were you sitting at the red light with your mind a thousand miles away, only to be snapped back to the present by the honk of the horn behind you? Have you ever found your mind wandering to other interests during meetings, class, or even during conversations? If so, then you know what it means to have an occupied mind. As holiday seasons approach, many people are distracted and lose their focus. Vehicular accidents are high during holidays. Productivity on the job is low as well. It is difficult for many people to stay focused when their minds are wandering in other areas.

Distractions can be costly. Consider the case of the distracted rabbit. This little rabbit left home with his mind set on finding many green things for lunch. He heard the warnings of the other rabbits about the dangers of the forest and was determined not to be fooled by any of the creatures he met. As he hopped through the forest he was greeted by many of the animals. "Morning Bro. Rabbit" said the Eagle. "Won't you join me today?" The rabbit refused, he had his mind on lunch. The sly fox met him with a grin and an invitation, "won't you come in to my den?" "Not today" said the rabbit as he hopped along. One after another he received and turned down invitations from the bear, hoot owl, robin and many others. He hopped along with an undisturbed pace. He ignored every attempt to get him off the path, until he saw the most amazing thing. It looked to be a carrot dangling in mid air. He stopped and looked with amazement. If the carrot moved to the left or right, so did the rabbit. He was amused. By the time he noticed the thin string attached to its top, it was too late, he was snapped up into the paws of the hungry lion, who unlike the distracted rabbit, never took his mind off getting his lunch!

There are many people who began this year with the best of intentions. They hopped along for months avoiding temptations and flirtations, until someone dangled the right carrot in front of them. Once distracted they took a path that led to destructive activity.

There are others however, who have remained focused and refused to be diverted.

They have been preoccupied with one quest and have not strayed to the left or to the right.

As Christians, our minds should be occupied with doing the will of God. We strive daily to avoid distractions and remain focused. By doing so we have found that even in the confusion and frustrations of the seasons, we have perfect peace!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he points to the ultimate reward of those who keep their minds directed toward the things of God.

Isaiah, considered a major prophets because of the length of his writings, spoke to Judah in two veins. In his first 39 books he spoke of the judgment that the nation would endure for his infidelities to God. He also peppered those predictions with glimpses of the rewards that would be forthcoming to the righteous. Prophecies that fall into this category are all contained in chapters 1-39. The remaining 27 books are Messianic, in that they generally contain references to the coming Messiah, his life, trial, crucifixion and resurrection.

This text is among those that speak of the judgments of the wicked and the rewards of the righteous. In the first passage of Chapter 26 Isaiah tells of the coming reward of belivers specifically to Judah during the 1000 year reign of Christ. It also is a promise to all believers who trust in God. This is the case with this text. It is a promise from God for all believers who remain focused on God, completely trusting him.

Two phrases unlock this text: "Perfect Peace" and the "Stayed mind."

PERFECT PEACE: The promise of peace has been made before, however the person who meets the requirements of this text can look forward to "perfect peace" which is different from simple "peace." Generally we think of peace as the absence of war. Peace is conditional on both parties participating. Peace, in this context, is conditional. It depends on both parties. Perfect peace, on the other hand, is non-conditional. It exists regardless to the action of others. Those who abide in the Lord are promised perfect peace.

STAYED MIND: Perfect peace is the reward of the believer who keeps a stayed mind. "Mind" in Hebrew is " yetser", (yay'-tser). It refers to one's purpose, imagination, and work." Therefore the word "mind" involves more than just the thoughts, but also includes the sense of purpose, creative energy and deeds that work to praise God. One prerequisite to the "stayed mind" is complete trust in God. That is, to rely on the willingness and the ability of God to provide a way for his will to be accomplished.

A person whose mind is stayed on God is one that devotes everything he or she has to accomplishing his purpose, without distraction or diversion, depending and trusting completely on the power of God to sustain him.

Avoid Distractions

There are many people who began the year with clear cut goals and priorities for themselves and for their families. So far, many have been successful at keeping themselves focused on achieving their personal and spiritual goals. They have resisted the temptation to wander and squander. They have been more involved and attentive to their spiritual lives as well. However, there are certain times each year that even the strongest person is vulnerable to distractive elements that can derail our best intentions. Therefore we should be on guard when those occasions, which include Christmas and New Year's Eve, arrive.

FAMILY DISTRACTIONS: Many will be distracted from their family priorities. Some have struggled all year to keep their family debt load within reason. Others have persistently pursued goals of increasing the quality time the family spends together or supporting the special involvements of family members. In short, many have worked hard to control family finances, time and involvements.

As festive occasions approach opportunities for distraction will also increase. As you hop along through the forest, advertisements, telephone appeals, easy credit, and a plethora of other activities will serve to distract the weak. The constant appeals to buy more furniture, appliances, automobiles, clothing and toys than your finances can handle will definitely distract some, who have done well all year. Many people have Merry Christmases only to feel depressed and gloomy when they realize that the ad that said "No payment till next year" didn't give them as long as they thought. Next year is just a week after Christmas.

The enticement to party, drink and get drunk will distract many. There are some who have successfully avoided such distractions all year, but under the guise of club functions and respectable social gatherings, many are distracted. Some begin a whirlwind round of partying and drinking that get's them so far off track that they cannot find the trail again. Bro. Fox says come and sit at my table, you don't need any money, I'm buying. Bro. Bear says come over to his "Happy Hour." With all of the distractions that will appeal to us, we should beware that do not respond to ungodly appeals and lose our focus.

Some will be distracted from their commitments to God. Shopping, cooking and buying presents are distractions of this season. Many will find themselves skipping worship, Sunday School, bible study, and praise season as they respond to the distractions of the season. Others who have faithfully obeyed God and have given regularly in their churches will cut back as they respond to the appeals and demands of the season. Christmas morning, there will be many who will be so distracted that they fool themselves that they are celebrating Christ's birth at home exchanging gifts, instead of assembling with the Saints to praise him in the sanctuary.

As believers we should stay focused and remember the reason for the season. Jesus is the reason for the season. Therefore, we should keep our minds focused on him, not just during this season, but every day of our lives.

We should not be deterred from our purpose, because our minds our stayed on Jesus!

We should not be distracted from our prayer or worship, because our minds are

stayed on Jesus!

We should not be distracted from our faith, because our minds are stayed on Jesus!

He kept Us On His Mind

Finally it is important that we note that while at times we are distracted in our service to our Lord, he was never distracted, he kept his mind on us!

Though tempted in many ways, he was never distracted because he had salvation on his mind!

In the wilderness, Satan offered him self appeasement and challenged him to turn stones into bread. However, Jesus refused saying "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!" He couldn't be distracted, because he had salvation on his mind!

Satan dangled fame and glory in front of him, but could not get him off track, "Get thee behind me Satan" was his response. He had Salvation on his mind!

Every child of God should draw strength from knowing that you always on his mind!

When you are right, you are always on his mind!

When you are wrong, you are always on his mind!

When you are enjoying success, wallowing in failure, relishing strenght, pondering weakness, you are always on his mind!

Even when you are asleep at night you are always on his mind! I know its true because Psalm 121 says "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps, he will not suffer the sun to smite you by day or the moon by night!" You are always on his mind!

When Jesus left the garden his plan was to obey his father's will, which was to provide a means of salvation for every believer. He was never distracted, his mind was stayed on the purpose of God!

I so glad that Jesus kept his mind on me!

Though they judged him in midnight trials, his mind was on me! Though whipped and ridiculed, his mind was on me!

When he died out on Calvary, he mind was on me!

But early Sunday morning arose, with all power in his hand!

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I woke up this morning with mind, stayed on Jesus! Walking and Talking with my mind stayed on Jesus! Singing and shouting with my mind stayed on Jesus!"

Everywhere I go, I'm going keep my mind ...

Stayed on Jesus!

No. 535-Inspiration

He Shall Be Great!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 11, 1994

Scripture: Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Luke 1:32-33

Introduction

How do you become a great person? Accident of Birth? Hard work? Doing well in that which God has purposed you to do? People measure greatness by varying standards, making it conditional. In a society of thieves he who steals most is the greatest. In a nation of sluggards and lazy, he who works least is the greatest. Among the law abiding, the great are those who live their lives without a single arrest. However, there are others who are counted great because of the number of times they have been arrested. What is least considered in one social order is considered an outstanding quality in another. Greatness therefore is relative.
Sometimes aspire to the appearances of greatness without counting the cost. Consider the monkey who always wanted to be king of the jungle. The monkey watched the lion everyday. He watched how the lion walked proudly through the jungle, smiling and nodding his head, roaring and basking in the glory that comes with being king. Atop his head sat a giant golden crown, and the Lion wore it with pride. The monkey wished that he could be a great king, just like the lion. On the occasion of his birthday several of his chimpanzee friends decided to give the monkey a present and make him king. In the quiet of night the stole the crown from the king's head, wrapped it in a package and brought it back to give to the monkey . When the monkey saw the crown he was thrilled. Finally, he would get to be king. He placed the crown on his head and walked proudly like the lion. The same day when all of the animals assembled for their monthly meeting, the monkey walked in with the crown on his head and all the animals laughed at him. When the lion entered the room, the animals bowed in respect. That amazed the monkey, because the lion had no crown. The old owl tried to explain: "The crown doesn't make him the king, but because he is the king, he wears the crown."

The monkey still looked confused, so he went further. “If the chimpanzees placed a crown on your head then you are just a monkey wearing a crown. However, if the creatures of the forest bow before you, you are the king, with or without the crown.” With that the monkey understood returned the crown to the king and joined the rest of animals and bowed in humble respect.
There are many today who want to be great without paying the price for greatness. James and John came to Christ and wanted great positions in the kingdom of heaven, only to learn that simple positions don’t make people great, but its the service they give that elevates them to positions. Jesus articulated an important formula for greatness that still remains true among believers “He that would be greatest among you, let him be your servant.” Therefore, your greatness is evaluated in terms of the quality of your service to God through your service to your fellowman.
As Christians we should remember that the measure of our individual greatness will not be measured by positions that we attain in life or by titles or secular promotions. Our greatness shall be measured by the quality of our work in doing the will of God.

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Exposition

This text focuses on a message given to the virgin Mary by the Angel Gabriel announcing that she would be a son who would be great in the sight of God. Mary was engaged to marry Joseph and was a virgin. She received a message from the Angel Gabriel that she was to conceive and have a child and that he would be great. Six months earlier, an angel had spoken to a relative of Mary's, by the name of Elizabeth, and a similar message was given to her as well. Verse 15 records the message of the Lord speaking to Elizabeth's husband Zacharias telling him that his wife would bear a son in her old age. Moreover that the son "shall be great in the sight of the Lord." That son turned out to be John the Baptist who was respected and revered by thousands as a great teacher from God.
Mary's message was similar, but not only would her son be great in the sight of the Lord "he shall be called the son of the highest." Both young men would be great, but Jesus would be greater. Jesus would be given the eternal throne of David and would reign over the house of Jacob forever in the kingdom of heaven (v32-33) John would be great, but Jesus would be greater.
The annunciation of greatness in both of these passages typifies the nature of their greatness. Both would be great in the sight of the Lord. However, their greatness was not universally accepted. John was considered great only

among some Jews. The Scribes and Pharisees feared him because the crowds loved him. He was not great by their standards. The Romans considered him a threat and they constantly watched him. The affluent considered him eccentric. He lived in the desert, a locust and wild honey for food and wore crude clothing. They considered him a bit weird, but certainly not great. While he was highly visible and vocal, the religious leaders or Romans did not consider John great. However, in the sight of the Lord, John was considered great because he carried out the will of God in a grand way.
Jesus wasn't considered great by everyone. At his birth, Herod perceived him as a threat and sought to have him killed. The religious leaders considered him a common criminal and blasphemer. The Romans considered him a nuisance, the center of a problem that would not go away. Even among his disciples there was one, Judas, that would not consider him great unless he used his potential to build himself a worldly kingdom. Otherwise, he was useless to the cause. Yet the angel Gabriel told Mary that "he shall be great." At some unknown point in the life of John he decided to focus his life on doing those things which would be considered great in the sight of the Lord. He would not be bothered if his service to God lowered him in the eyes of some of those who knew him. Jesus in the wilderness, came to the same conclusion. His greatness would not come from the selfish pursuit of riches, power and glory but by doing the will of God.

In Whose Sight Will I Be Great?

Today, millions must answer the probing question: "In whose sight, will I choose to be great?"
Many young people have already made the decision to be great in the eyes of the boys and girls of the hood. In the hood greatness and popularity are determined factors that are frowned upon by others. In the hood greatness may be conferred upon women on act like men and cuss like sailors. Boys who wear their pants below their behinds, refuse to wear belts, and decorate their necks and teeth with layers of gold, are considered great. Those who don't do well in school but can slam dunk on the backyard basketball court may be considered great by the boys in the hood. In the hood education is considered nice but not necessary, while looking, talking and dressing took is considered necessary but not nice. In the hood you may be considered great if you are "Naughty by nature." You may be considered a complete failure if you get a job, be faithful to your wife and have no jail record, and don't wear a beeper.
Youth who have decided to be great in the eyes of the Hood have shut out all other influences. Teachers, preachers, parents and everyone else have been completely shut out. Their opinions, sermons and lectures do not matter because it is not their goal to be considered great in any eyes except those of

their peers in the hood.
The paradox is that many youth are aspiring to be great in the eyes of the hood before they learn that there is another world beyond the hood. That world doesn't measure greatness by how well they curse, how many rap songs they know, whether they can rap, or whether they carry a 9 millimeter weapon. Some spend the majority of their youth becoming great in the eyes of the hood only to find out that the university of life won't accept transfer credits from students of professor Snoop Doggie Dog.

No Transfer Credits

Come here youngster work for me and don't take less
I offer you a desk, the best, and American Express
I've never heard of your university, it name an origins
are a mystery to me
Though I've checked every list and browsed every log
I can't seem to find professors
Sky Walker and Snoop Doggie Dog
You must have been great in school of the hood
You must have studied your lessons and learned very good
All A's, no c's, not a single D
you must have been great in this university
You got a rock in your pocket
A lean in your walk
A hand on your socket
A growl in your talk
In fact you can hip hop around the clock
You can Chill Out Drop and Hang with Too Pop!
What you have here is hiding the truth with a real thick fog
The University of life Doesn't accept transfer credits from
Professor Snoop Doggie Dog!
Wright '94

The question that must be answered by every young man and lady is in whose sight do I want to appear great?
David writing in Psalm 19:14 made his position all too clear: " Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."
Let my deeds words and actions be acceptable in thy sight and in this context, let me find greatness.

Great In God's Sight

No. 536-Christmas

The Meaning Went in Before The Name Went On

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 18, 1994

SCRIPTURE:Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.Mat 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Introduction

Suppose your parents were told in advance what kind of person you would be; and were told to give you a name that would describe you. What would your name be? Suppose you could name a person near you, what would the name be? What about your next door neighbor? What about your boss? What about your enemy? There would be a wide range of names that some would be called. Some of us would like what we are called, some of us would be very upset. In fact, there are many people who dislike their names because the names seem to misrepresent how they see themselves or seem to expose them to ridicule. Some have changed their names and in fact named themselves.

The famous singer Jerry Butler was called the “Ice Man” because he could not dance and stood still during his concerts. He made the name a part of his act and produced a popular album called “The Ice Man Cometh.” Malcolm Little substituted an “X” for his last name. He said the “X” represented the name he never knew and “Little” was his slavemaster’s name. The singer formerly known as Prince changed his name to a sign that cannot be pronounced. Now when he is introduced he is called the man that was “formerly known as Prince.” Asked why he changed his name to an unpronounceable sign he said once that “there were no words that could describe him.”

If by divine intervention we were miraculously given the power to name ourselves, what name could best describe us? Some could correctly describe themselves as “Joy!” Some we could be described as “Precious!” You have perhaps met a few

people named “Faith” or few named “Hope.” There are even few named “Charity.” These are names that seem to suggest that the persons who wear the names exhibit these fine character traits. What names do our friends use to describe us when we are not around? Smart or Smart Alec? Confident or Cocky? Talkative or Big Mouth? Diplomat or Traitor? Loyal or Backstabber? Winehead? Canehead? Wiseman or foolish? The terms used to describe us is the way we are seen in the eyes of our peers.

As Christians, we bear the name of “Christian.” Our daily goal should be to see to it that the label we wear accurately describes the people who are called by that name!

Exposition

This text causes us to focus on the truth that the personality characteristics of Mary’s child were already predicted and foretold before he was given the name of “Jesus.”

The coming of the Messiah was one of the central themes of the book of Isaiah. In the first six verses of this chapter Isaiah paints a picture of a world that would be groping in darkness. It would be literally walking in the shadow of death, looking and searching for the light of hope. In just a few words he scans the history of the Jewish struggle and conflict with its enemies comparing it to a great purging or cleansing that eventually lifts the yoke of oppression off the shoulders of people. For the nation of Israel this deliverance was accomplished with a sword.

Isaiah pointed to the same purifying presence that would come in the future with the birth of the Messiah, the very presence of God among men.

In verse 6 Isaiah appears to give several names that the Messiah would be called. However, in the context of the Hebrew, these were not intended to be understood as the literal names of the Messiah, but were to be descriptions of the characteristics he would possess.

Jesus was not actually named any of the names that Isaiah mentioned. In Matthew 1:21 an angel told Joseph that he would be called Jesus. The angel noted that the child Mary would bear would be the one described by the prophet as “Emmanuel” which means God with us. The prophet referred to Isaiah.

Isaiah describes the Messiah’s qualities and nature. Matthew tells what name he would finally bear.

He would be called wonderful because he would be both God and man. His life would be marked with wonderful works. He would be called counselor for he would consult with God on the behalf of men and plead their case as a lawyer in a courtroom.

He would be almighty God because the mighty work that he would perform would be of such that only one with the power of God could bring it to pass.
Because he would be one with God, he too would be described as the everlasting father.

The kingdom that he would usher in would rest upon his principles, examples, wisdom and power. It would literally be upon his shoulders and not those of men and therefore an era of perfect peace will exist. The failed efforts of men to create world

peace will dwarf before and the world recognizes that he is truly the Prince of Peace.

This description of the nature of and qualities of the savior was given for the chief benefit of those of the future, who be present when he actually became "Emmanuel" or God with us. This character description also served to confirm the presence of the Messiah as the one truly anointed by God.

When Joseph received word in Matthew to name Mary's child Jesus, he was being told to give him the actual name to which he would answer. Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew "Joshua" meaning he would save his people.

Thus Jesus came among men with his nature, qualities and purpose already predicted, before Joseph actually named him "Jesus."

Christian Qualities Before The Name

Today there are millions in the world who wear labels that do not accurately describe them.

Some are registered Democrats but they act like, talk like and vote like Republicans. Some call themselves Americans but speak evil against the country. Some wear the label of being African-American but some other label would be more accurate.

In a similar sense there are many who call themselves Christians but betray the label with their actions.

The quest of many people is to get the label and the look even if it's not the real thing.

Those who want to follow Christ should recognize that in the Christian life the qualities go in before the name goes on.

The qualities of a true Christian are:

Moral living: Those who are Christians strive to live by the moral standards of God. They obey the commandments referring to stealing, killing, adultery and the like, but also follow the higher commandment of brotherly love, which supersedes and envelopes all of the commandments. Those who seek to wear the name Christian without adhering to the moral values it represents are hypocritical. The morality goes in before the name goes on!

Prayerfulness: The true Christian is a man or woman of prayer. That means they strive to pray and talk to God about their needs and his wishes for them. Those who pray consult God and listen to his advice. The quality of prayerfulness goes in before the name goes on!

Compassion: The true Christian is also compassionate. He or she is concerned about the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. The true Christian cannot turn a deaf ear to the trials and sufferings of others. It is not his nature. This spirit of compassion goes into the heart of man before the label goes on.

What Christ brought to the world was the spirit of compassion and love for others. Those who follow him must incorporate that spirit into their hearts before they set out to call themselves "Christians." The qualities must go in, before the name goes on!

Isaiah made it plain that the Christ child would be "Emmanuel" or represent the very presence of God with us. That should be comforting knowledge for any today who are troubled by the ills of times. The comfort should come in knowing that no matter how bad the times God is with us!

Whether it is a rise in crime, famine or world unrest, we are reassured that we serve a mighty God who is able to balance the inequities of these times with the perfect peace that he offers.

Every child of God is confident in these times because he knows that whether its good times or bad times, our God is able!

This confidence leads them to conclude that though

—tears may fill their eyes; thorns may line their path

—burdens may stoop their backs; clouds may hide their sun

—Disappointments may break their hearts; pain may inflict their body.

...despite it all...our God is able to deliver us!

We know he is able because his name tells the story! His name is so powerful that it is only name under the heavens whereby men must be saved!

I hear the scripture declaring that "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess!"

We trust in the name of Jesus because the qualities went in before the name went on!

Because the power went in before the name went on

The architect calls him the Chief Cornerstone.

The astronomer calls him the bright and morning star!

The baker calls him the Living Bread and the banker calls him the Hidden Treasure.

The Qualities went in before the name went on!

To the carpenter He is the Sure Foundation.

To the doctor He is the Great Physician.

To the educator He is the Great Teacher.

To the florist He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

The qualities went in before the name went on!

To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.

To the editor He is the good news of the Gospel!.

To the oculist He is the Light of the Eyes.

To the philosopher He is the Wisdom of God.

To the Sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

To the Christian, He is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer!

After he went Calvary and rose from the dead the world recognizes him as king of kings and Lord of Lords!

The qualities went in before the name went on!

No. 537-Funeral

Show Me Thy Path

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Honorable Charles Johnson
Monroe Civic Center

December 22, 1994

SCRIPTURE:"Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." Psalm 25:4-7

Introduction

What kind of path do you walk in life? Where is it taking you? Perhaps life offers each of us three choices with respect to our paths. We can be trailblazers, pathfinders or simply walk the beaten path. Those who walk the beaten path simply do what everybody else does and follow the path of least resistance. Pathfinders seek out the paths that have been blazed correctly and walk in them. Trailblazers make paths and cut trails, in territory that has never been explored. Whether we are trailblazers, pathfinders or simply walking the beaten path, every day of our lives, we leave footsteps and tracks that, when studied by those who come behind us, will reveal great truths about us.

Sometimes a lot can be learned about a man by studying the path he walks and the tracks he leaves behind. Consider the case of Country Joe the famous tracker. In the back wood areas there was no one that was as successful at tracking than old Country Joe. In his lifetime he had tracked bears, wolves, possums, coons, deer, rabbits and just about every living creature that could leave a trail. He was so good he could look at a bear's foot print and tell you his approximate height, weight and age. He could tell if the bear was walking or running, well or injured. Country Joe's skill was legendary to say the least. Occasionally the authorities often called on Country Joe to help them find a criminal that had escaped. Joe had a great reputation for always being able to find suspects by studying tracks and things left behind.

One day a man had burglarized a house at night and left running in the

dark. The police had no idea how he looked, but they knew which way he went. The Chief decided to go out in the back woods and bring in Country Joe. Country Joe went in the forest and found the path of the man's footsteps and stopped at the first track and studied it. The police watched with amazement as this master went to work. A few minutes later Country Joe came to the Chief and said "I think I can help you." The police chief listened as Country Joe told him "The man you are looking for is six feet tall. He's got blonde hair and blue eyes. He weighs about 170 pounds, he's got a scar on the left side of his face and he lives at 1407 West Main Street." The chief was amazed! As he paid old Joe for his service he said "Joe you are amazing. Did you get all of that from one track?" Joe answered "Not really sir, he dropped his driver's license as he was running up the trail!"

As Christians we strive to walk a path that has been blazed by the master. Our goal is to step off the beaten path, and find the path blazed for us by our creator. Our prayer daily should be "Lord, teach me thy paths" that I may walk in them and have peace.

Exposition

This text focuses on King David as he requests God to direct his path, protect him from his enemies and forgive his shortcomings.

David was a complex character whose personality was a mix bag of faith in God, occasional irreverence, action, strength, weakness, and conviction. His faith in God was so great that he is described as a man after God's own heart. He was described this way, although he once displayed irreverence by eating the shewbread from the temple and had an adulterous fling with Uriah's wife. David is described as a "man after God's own heart" because when his strengths and weaknesses were compared, in balance he arose as a man whose heart was honest, convictions were strong, and whose path was straight.

The path that David walked had humble beginnings. As a youth he learned responsibility shepherding his father's flock. He learned to walk courageously because of the constant prospect of attacks by lions, bears and other creatures. His was a path that took him along the trail of valor, as he courageously fought Goliath and won the praise of the people.

His path was also a lonely path. He was hunted by King Saul as if he were a criminal and often hid himself in the mountains. When almost captured or surrounded in the plains of life he constantly sought solace with God. In in Psalm 121 he wrote "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." Having walked the path of persecution and victimization, he developed a keen sensitivity to dangers that await all who must travel that way.

His path was one of humility. Those who study David's life know that there were times when he took a path that strayed. However, these brief meanderings were always followed by swift returns to the right path. Whenever David did wrong it bothered him. This was the occasion in which he prayed to God Psalm 51:10 "Create in me oh Lord, a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." He was aware that he could not adequately set examples for others, if he himself could not master the spirit of faithfulness. In Psalm 51:13 he noted that only after he came back to right path himself could he speak to others from a position of strength. By walking the path of humility, David proved himself rose even taller in the eyesight of God.
His path was a path of accomplishment. The trail he walked carried him to great life accomplishments. David made history. He spent most of his time fighting the enemies of the people. He defeated Goliath as a boy. He rallied the downcasts, the poor and hopeless of the land and gave them hope. He championed that cause so greatly that he was named King three times: once by God, once by Judah and once by Israel. As king his greatest accomplishment was to fight for the people. In the closing years of his life he had finally created an atmosphere where the things he wanted to do for God could be done. He had cooperation, trust and peace. He forged a coalition of trust with his generals and leaders and set out to build the land.
This text summarizes his life's quest to walk in the right path and to know the ways of God. Hear his words echoing across the centuries: "Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths!"
His request of God was that he would forgive his "transgressions," and judge him by the path he walked.

Find the Path

There are many today who aspire to greatness in life. They dream of the glory and honor of moving in high circles and dream about mountain top experiences. In their quest to reach their destinies many make the mistake of taking the road to least resistance. They walk the beaten path.
The beaten path means different things to different people. For the educator, the beaten path is a truncated that leads from home, college, school room, bank and home with nothing in between, including students. The educator who walks the beaten path does only what's necessary to put in the required number of years, take retirement and take it easy. No more. No less. For the politician the beaten path is to do whatever it takes to win, even if winning means sacrificing your pride, principle, and people.
In every walk of life the beaten path is often a road that leads to mediocrity. It is a proliferation of those who "talk the talk, but can't walk the walk." Thus from the serenity of Walden Pond I hear Henry David Thoreau's challenge to the ages whispering to this generation: "March to the beat of a

different drummer!"

If we want to be truly great we must get off the beaten trail and find the path!

Even a casual study of the lives of those who have achieved greatness shows that at some point they had to find the right path!

As this generation comtemplates taking its place in the halls of leadership, its challenge is to find the path!

Among African-Americans, those who were great among us were those who found the path. Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth achieved freedom themselves. However they got off the beaten path of finding personal freedom for themselves and being satisfied, they used their positions to keep working until others were free as well. Booker Washington, Dubois, Garvey, Malcom X, Martin Luther King, and nameless others were all individuals who found the path. They remembered the cries of the Israel in Egypt were not ashamed to request, plead, implore and demand that Pharaoh would let my people go.

The worse thing that can be said about an African-American preacher is the phrase "he can't preach!" The worse thing that can be said about an African-American leader is "he forgot where he came from." He lost the path.

Those who aspire to excellence must prepare themselves through intense study and preparation. Find the path!

Those who desire roles of leadership must face issues generically, without losing their focus on who they are and where they have come from! Find the Path!

Those who walk in the footsteps of the historically great must find the path!

Jesus Blazed the Trail

The beaten path is followed by many. There are other paths that are only traveled by a few. However, every path had to be created by a trailblazer. The trailblazer is the one who makes the path that others follow. David, in this text, recognized that only God can blaze trails and make right paths. So David says, Lord show me thy path!

Today we know many who have historic reputations as trailblazers, but I know a trailblazer!

We know about Lewis and Clark the great Americans who blazed trails through the hills and valleys of this country, but I know a trailblazer!

We know about Wild Bill Hicock, Daniel Boone, and Jim Bowie, men who had reputations for blazing trails from the mountains of Tennessee to the plains of West, but today I want you to know that..I know a trailblazer!

We know that Susan B. Anthony, Nannie Helen Burroughs and Mary McCleod Bethume blazed trails for women in civil rights and education, but I

know a trailblazer!

We know that Alan Shepherd, Scott Carpenter and John Glenn blazed a trail in outer space going where no man has gone before, but I know a trailblazer!

I know a trailblazer who cut a trail through 42 generations of time!

I know a trailblazer who heard the cries of a people sweltering in the heat of oppression and lifted them to freedom!

I know a trailblazer who mapped out a path of feeding the poor, healing the sick, and lifting the broken hearted.

I know a trailblazer who mapped out a path for others to follow and said "I am the way, the truth and the light. No man comes to the father except by me!"

If you want to get to the kingdom find the path!
The path to the kingdom of God is to know Jesus!
No wonder the song writer wrote: "You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself. If you know Jesus, you don't need nobody else!"
Somebody found the path on Monday! Somebody found him on Sunday!
But you must know Jesus, he is the path!
The path to everlasting life is to know Jesus!
Jesus, the lily of the valley!
Jesus, the bright and morning star!
Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days and nights!
Jesus, who put a foot on a cloud and blazed a trail back to glory!
I can see him in glory calling those who walk the right path, one by one,
Come on up!
Come on up!
Come on up!

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On Sunday December 18, 1994 The Honorable Charles H. Johnson, councilman, and principal answered a higher call. He marched to the beat of a different drummer. He found the path.

No. 538-Inspiration

Hope Despite Impossibilities

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 25, 1994

SCRIPTURE: " And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. Luke 1:35-37.

Introduction

What do you do when you face impossible situations? Do you shrivel up in fear, shore up in faith or shrink up in defeat? Many, when faced with impossible situations throw up their hands and decide that it is not worth the effort. When faced with impossible situations, the faithful are at their best, because they are not intimidated by challenge. In fact, without a challenge, most people are satisfied to remain unchanged and seldom progress to their highest potential.

Consider the man who had recently accepted Christ, but traveled from church to church trying to decide which one he would join. For a while he attended a medium sized congregation that had great testimonies about God's work in its spiritual life. He was impressed with the congregation but never joined. Several of the church's leaders visited him to ask why he had not joined them after visiting so regular. He told them that the building was beautiful and awe inspiring. Its decor was breath taking and it worship was majestic. He said one Sunday he saw a note in the bulletin announcing a reduction in its ministries for the next year because of expected tough times. After reading that note he never returned.

Many of his friends were surprised when they learned that he had joined a little church with unpadded seats, an old outdated, untuned piano, and hardly enough funds to keep the lights on. He was asked what made a man of his position unite with such a small church. He answered: "When I first visited them they were worshiping in the park and the preacher said God would put a roof over their heads, a few months later they were inside. The next time I was with them they had no music and and a choir member said God would send a piano. A few months later they had one. The third time I dropped by, the pastor said God would bless and multiply their efforts to build a new building in one year. Without batting an eye, the small

congregation rose to its feet and shouted Amen." His friends were still puzzled "That's it?" They asked. He answered "The big churches I attended acted on probability and put their hopes in their budgets and their plan. That little church tackled the impossible and put their trust in the Son of man!..I joined them because they reminded me that with God, there is no such thing as impossible!"

Christ was born in a way that seemed inconceivable, under conditions that were improbable with a mission to do the impossible. In the midst of all this impossibility he gave the world hope!

As Christians, the birth of Christ stirs a feeling of joy, happiness and renewal. It should rekindle in every believing heart a renewed faith that despite the impossible conditions of this world, our God is still able to do the impossible!

Exposition

This text shows how an angel reassured Mary that though the circumstances surrounding her conception seemed unbelieveable, they were not only probable but also highly possible, with God.

Mary was told by an angel of the Lord that she would birth the Christ child into the world. That was highly unlikely, especially since Mary was engaged to be married and remained a virgin. Considering those facts in verse 34 Mary asked a question: "How can these things be?"

A great future was laid out before her that appeared impossible. The son she would birth would be called the Son of the Highest and he would inherit the throne of his father, David.

The terminology used may have been confusing to Mary just as many today who read the account are confused. In verse 32, Mary is told that King David is the father of child. That must have been confusing, because King David had been dead for several hundred years. The term "father" in verse 32 did not mean that David would be the literal father of the child, but as head of great royal line of the family of David all of his descendants are said to be his "children." In his lifetime, God had promised David that one from his family would reign forever. 2 Sam 7:16 "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." It appeared to be an empty promise because not only had the kingdom of Israel fallen from power but they were the subjects of the Roman Empire. The prospect of Mary birthing a child that would rule on David's throne was considered highly impossible, since there was no literal kingdom to rule.

In that same context, Elizabeth, in verse 36, is referred to as Mary's cousin. "Cousin" is a term synonymous with "countryman" not blood relatives as we know it today. Both Joseph, Mary and their parents were descendants of the house of David. Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron or the house of Levi (v5). They were not blood cousins but were persons of the same country.

All of this must have sounded impossible: An old woman she knew would have a child. She would have a child in her youth, but without sex. The child would be the

Son of God. That must have had an impossible ring to it.

Mary learned that this string of impossible events was going to happen through the intervention of the "Holy Ghost" (v35) or the spiritual presence of God himself. If it all appeared confusing and impossible she was given one clear thought to ponder in verse 37: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Dealing With Impossible Situations

Today there are many people who are troubled with impossible situations in their personal lives, family and in the community. The odds appear stacked against them and there is no way to succeed.

Sometimes economics creates impossible situations. Money problems worry many people. On any given day there are millions who are considering their meager finances an impossible situation. For some, debts are increasing and income is decreasing. Some have lost jobs or experienced investment losses. Even at this very hour, while many are sharing the joy of Christmas with their families, someone is quietly wondering how to get enough money to beat their checks to the bank and cover the costs of Christmas revelry?

Many people think their finances are such a shambles that it is impossible to repair. They owe the bank, loan company, the mortgage company, the auto manufacturer, the credit union, and the lady next door. They have thrown up their hands in defeat. Economic trouble is a verse 37 situation. That is when we remember that nothing is impossible with God. A widow woman faced this same situation, having used everything she had and prepared herself to die. She learned that though it did not sound practical at the time, obeying God made the impossible possible.

Troubling Interpersonal Relationships create impossible situations. Many have reached crucial points in their marriages and relationships. Some marriages seem beyond repair. Understanding, love, peace, and every other ingredient necessary for a happy marital experience seem to have disappeared. Even some who are simply dating are experiencing hardships. Many have argued and wounded each other so often that the success of the relationship appears to be an "impossible situation." Divorce in America is escalating at an alarming rate. Modern children are learning the art of being juggled from house to house and seeing their parents on schedules decided by a court and observed to the letter of law. Divorces result when one or both of the partners decide that they are faced with an impossible situation.

Relationship Trouble is a verse 37 situation. Even in marriage and relationships, there is nothing too hard for God to do, if we want him to handle the situation. Mary and Joseph were in the most embarrassing and potentially explosive situations imaginable. There have been divorces in modern times for even the suspicion of infidelity, not to mention a wife coming home one day pregnant and blaming it on the Holy Ghost. Both Mary and Joseph heard the voice of God and learned that nothing is impossible for God. Those with relationship trouble should attempt to hear the voice of God before they see their lawyer, the advice is better and it's free.

Moral Imperfections Often Create Impossible Situations. Many are unhappy with themselves morally. Some are involved in illegal activities. Someone is embezzling from their employer. Someone is selling or using illegal drugs. Some have had abortions. Some had committed adultery. The list of moral imperfections is long and detailed.

There are many who consider their moral predicament an impossible situation. They feel they have made such a shambles out of their lives that they are beyond salvation. These feel like they are beyond repair.

Dealing with moral imperfections is another verse 37 situation. The truth of the matter is that there is no sin or immoral act that God does not have the capacity and willingness to forgive commensurate our ability to repent. If we can repent for a sin, God can forgive. That's it plain and simple.

Jesus met a woman at the well who at the very time she talked with him was shacking with a man and had called five men her husband. Even her situation was not repairable. She ran everywhere telling everyone to "come see a man."

The message the angel gave Mary as she pondered the birth of Christ is the same message that God gives today "With God nothing shall be impossible."

God Specializes in Impossibilities

As believers around the world celebrate the joy of Christmas, there should be an atmosphere of renewed hope among us. When we consider the extent to which God went to bring the Christ Child into existence and accomplish his will, it should say to us that as long as we do what is in the will of God, nothing shall be impossible for us!

When we consider the details of the birth of the Christ child, it should remind us that we serve a God that specializes in doing things which are impossible.

If we are plagued by empty pocketbooks and billfolds, we should remember that God specializes in filling empty pocketbooks and stuffing billfolds. My father is rich in houses and land! He holds the wealth of the world in his hand!

If we are plagued by interpersonal relationships and feel that nothing can be done, we should remember that God specializes in solving problems of the heart. I heard a song writer declare "I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece of clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!" When things seem impossible I may not be able to handle it, but I have a father who can!

If you believe that your life is beyond repair you should remember that God specializes in restoring lost souls. The spiritual anthem of millions is epitomized by the words "I was sinking deep in sing, far from the peaceful. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me now safe am I!"

Love lifted me! When my head was bowed down low, love lifted me!
When my eyes were stained in tears, love lifted me!
When my heart was heavy with guilt, love lifted me, now safe am I!

Have you any rivers that seem incrossable? Have you any mountains that you cannot climb? God specializes in doing things impossible and he can do what no other power can do!
Go tell it on the mountain that an impossible thing happened in Bethlehem!
Go tell it on the mountain that an impossible thing came out of Nazareth!
Go tell it on the mountain that impossible things happened among men for 33 long years!
Go tell it on the mountain that an impossible thing happened out on Calvary!
Go tell it on the mountain that early Sunday morning that an impossible thing happened in the garden!
Jesus rose from the grave and is alive today!
God did an impossible thing on Christmas morning and I'm so glad that he's still doing them today!

No. 539-New Year

It Depends

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 1, 1994

SCRIPTURE: "We depend upon the Lord alone to save us. Only he can help us; he protects us like a shield. No wonder we are happy in the Lord! For we are trusting him. We trust his holy name!" Psalm 33:20-21 (TLB)

Introduction

Have you made plans for the New Year? Have you decided to have a more fruitful experience. Have you made personal commitments to improve yourself or your relationship with others? Sometimes we make plans but often find that we are unable to carry them out. Usually our best plans depend upon circumstances that we do not control. Our plans to have increased financial security this year may depend upon getting an increase in pay. Our personal happiness may depend upon whether a person we love is happy. Sometimes even our simplest dreams depend on things that are far beyond our control. Health and wealth are over riding factors in personal achievement, just as faith and hope are the foundation for spiritual growth. Everything we plan to do depends on something.

Consider the city boy who finally gave in to the pleas of his country relatives to spend a summer with them. The city boy had become accustomed to the order of things in his city environment. In his home the beds were neatly made, the floors were mopped and everything was always cleaned. The servants in his home wore plastic caps when they cooked, the silverware was polished and the table was always neatly set. He was not sure that he would enjoy an entire summer in the country, with his distant and unrefined relatives.

Once in the country he was greeted by his uncles and aunts who made him feel warm and comfortable. So far so good. It appeared he could make it through the summer. Inside the home he found the hardwood floors whitewashed, the beds neatly made and the table setting was neat. All silverware was polished and in order. This second test met his approval.

As he moved to his room he passed the kitchen door and saw Aunt Mabel mixing ingredients for a large pan of dressing. She stopped, pulled out a small tin can, pulled out her bottom lip and loaded it with Bitter Garrett

snuff. As she hummed and prepared the dressing, the snuff juice started running down the side of her mouth. He watched with amazement as the juice began for form a large juicy ball at the tip of her chin. Just below the snuff ball was the pan of dressing. A movement of her head to the left or to the right could be fatal.

As he watched one of his uncles approached him with a question: "Well my boy, have you decided to spend the whole summer with us, or will you high tail it back to the city." The city boy took a long look at the snuff juice on the tip of Mabel's chin and said "That depends." The uncle asked "Depends on what son?" He looked at the dressing bowl and answered "On where the drop falls!"

There are many factors that control the future that are beyond us. Whether this year is a good one or a bad one depends..on where the drop falls!

As Christians, we should remember that it is best to depend upon God for he is a reliable source of help in times of trouble and uncertainty. Men may prove undependable, but even in the face of the unknown, God will not let you down.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he concludes that is better to trust in the Lord than the implements of men.

The 33rd Psalm is a tribute to the wonderful works of God, which should give reason for continuous trust and praise by those who believe in him. Each new and successive year causes new challenges and new opportunities for believers to demonstrate their faith and for God to show his power. Each new victory should be complemented with a new song, sung loudly, proudly and victoriously because it marks the victory God has given his people. In verse three David notes that we should sing a "new song" for every new chapter of our existence.

God is worthy of this new round of praise because he made the heavens and the earth by simply uttering the words (v6). His majesty is displayed in the universe in ways that constantly display his greatness. He has proven himself both dependable and consistent even when the devices, philosophies and counsels of men have proven themselves insufficient (v10-11).

The people who depend upon God and not their own resources are blessed. They are blessed because their trust has been placed in a dependable source that will not forsake them. Even the most dependable devices of men have proven unreliable. In verse 16 he notes that mighty kings, though surrounded by multitudes of people and soldiers are not invulnerable to attack or assassination. A king that depends on these devices for his security alone will find them useless without God.

In verse 17 he notes that though a warrior may go into battle riding a great

war horse, it cannot protect him in battle, either by shielding him with his great size or by carrying him to safety by its great strength. The protection comes from the Lord, not from the horse itself.

God keeps a close watch on all those who believe in him and trust in him. Those who look to God for deliverance and mercy; those who depend upon him, have the assurance of knowing he can protect them from life threatening situations and bring them through any hard times that might come (v19).

Therefore David said he would continue to "wait" or "depend" on God in the present as he has in the past for he has proven himself to be a shield and a very present help in a time of trouble.

We will rejoice in his great works again because we depended upon him. He will not let us down, because he is a God that is dependable!

Don't Depend On People

As we make plans for the future we should consider the futility of basing our plans on anything other than our faith that God will bring them to reality, according to his purpose.

Last year, many felt secure with jobs at Boeing Aircraft and other major military related companies, only to discover that without the threat of war that companies started cutting back and laying off workers. Thousands watched jobs in what was considered "secure" sectors eliminated as whole agencies and giant companies collapsed.

There are millions who are breezing through life without a care in the world depending on the various forms of welfare that range from AFDC to a plethora of social programs for their security. The poor are looking for their monthly welfare check and the rich are looking for their welfare grants, empowerment zone designations, subsidies and set asides, that supply them with jobs and profits. Many are unaware that the forces of change are already threatening that "security" net as the government prepares to pull the rug from under millions. Whether it is right or wrong is debatable, but the mere prospect of such an occurrence should make those who are depending upon it become concerned.

We should not base our futures on our relationship with any person. There are many who are secure in their positions because they "know" somebody. While it is true that "who you know" often gets doors open, you should not count on "who you know" to maintain your position. The "who you knows" of life change so frequently that they cannot be depended upon. A strong man is here today, but he may be gone tomorrow.

It is not even wise to depend upon your husband or wife. Many wives are beginning this new year without the husband they had at the beginning of last year. Many husbands, who counted heavily upon their wives, are finding

out what life is like without them. Relationships are generally "flesh" by nature and therefore not dependable.

It is even unwise to base your future upon yourself. Many have concluded that they will not trust others because others will let them down, or betray them. They have decided to trust in themselves alone. Since we cannot control our health or the circumstances that affect it or impact our lives, it is dangerous for us to even consider depending on ourselves. Some of us have found ourselves to be highly undependable. We couldn't keep our word to stay on our diet, stick to our schedule, be more attentive to the needs of others, and groom ourselves spiritually. Certainly its unwise to depend upon such a frail creature for our future.

Depending on the devices of men to make it through the next year is not a reliable prospect. It is a formula for defeat.

Depend on God.

If depending on the devices of men is the formula for defeat, then depending on the devices of God is the formula for success!

This was David's position in the text, the devices of men are undependable, but God never fails.

Pharaoh depended upon his 600 chariots and the watery wall of the Red Sea to contain the departing Israelites, but Moses declared in faith "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" who breaks chariots and makes dry paths through watery seas.

The inhabitants of Jericho depended upon their high walls for security, but Israel depended upon God to make the walls come tumbling down.

The three Hebrew boys entered the fiery furnace depending upon the power of God. As they felt the heat of the flames their words ring out across the centuries: "Our God is able!"

Alarm clocks are generally dependable, but every now and then, they fail to sound the alarm!

Trains and buses usually follow a rigid schedule, but occasionally, they are late!

Federal Express, UPS and the Postal Service are fairly dependable, but every now and then, a package is lost in the mail.

The best devices of men are sometimes late, but God is "always on time!"

When David considered the devices of man he concluded in Psalm 31:1 "In thee O Lord, do I put my trust"

I will trust him because I've found out that there has never been a:

—Mountain he could not move; Door he could not open!

—Battle that he could not win; Burden he could not lift!

—Loneliness he could not comfort; heartache he could not heal!

—Promise that he could not keep; a soul that he could not save!

I don't know about you, but I've decided to keep my hands wrapped in the winding chain and walk into the new year depending on Jesus.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I learned how to lean, and depend on Jesus. He's my friend and he's my guide. I found out that if I trust him, he will provide"

As you walk through the meandering byways and unseen paths of the year to come, let Jesus walk with you.

He's a doctor in your sickroom, a lawyer in your courtroom, a bridge over troubling waters..let Jesus walk with you!

You can depend upon him for I heard him declare "Lo I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth!"

Depend on Jesus..and everything will be all right!

No. 540-Stewardship

Holes in Your Pockets

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 8, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Haggai 1:6-7

Introduction

Have you ever wished you could have all the money you earned in a single year in your hand at once? As many receive their tax statements and see the amount of money they earned in the previous year they can't help but muse, "it didn't seem like that much?" Where did the money go? What did you earn last year? Was it $5,000, $10,000, $20,000, $40,000? What about $75,000 or more? Where did it all go? What did we do with what we had? Some was spent on food clothing and shelter. Some was spent on our leisurely passions. Some was lost on our vices: drinking, smoking, gambling, drugs, sideline women and sideline men. Despite our best efforts, sometimes it appears that there has been a funnel attached to our checking account draining away our resources with a huge Peroian "sucking sound." It's almost like having a giant hole in our pocket. Everything we put in seems to drop right onto the ground.

Many approach matters in a miserly way. They believe they can hold on to it even after they are gone. However, even then it gets away from you because you can't take it with you. Consider the man who had saved $30,000 and decided to disprove the idea that "You can't take it with you." He called in three friends and asked them to make him a solemn promise that $30,000 would be buried with him. The first was a preacher, the second was a doctor and the third was a close friend. When the man eventually died years later, the three friends met outside the funeral home to discuss the envelopes they had been given. The preacher said, well I have to confess that our church needed a new roof and I used $8,000 of my envelope." The doctor said he also had a confession to make. Since there was so much poverty in the area of his clinic he used $5,000 of the money to help poor people buy medicine. The

third man said he had a problem going into the envelope. He kept it unopened for 10 years. Since the other two had broken their promise he came up with a brilliant idea to make their words good. He said "I'll keep my envelope, pick up what's left of your envelopes and write him a check for $30,000. He can cash it when he gets where he's going." It gets away from you even when you die!

As Christians, we know that everything we have comes from God. We show him our love and respect through our stewardship of the resources he has given us. We empty our hearts, souls and pockets to further his kingdom, because everything belongs to him!

Exposition

This text focuses on five messages given to the prophet Haggai as Israel enjoyed life after exile.

The Jews had been in captivity for many years in Babylon. During that time that had wept, mourned and prayed that God would deliver them from their exile. Daily they watched and prayed for Jerusalem and yearned to see its walls. Daniel opened his windows facing Jerusalem and prayed. The Three Hebrew Boys refused to abandon their culture and identities and were thrown unsuccessfully into the fiery furnace. In all of their troubles the Jews never stopped hoping and praying that they would one day return from their exile.

While they managed to maintain their faith in God and some semblance of their culture while they were in Babylon, their formal worship life disappeared. Their weekly routines of attending the Saturday meetings at the synagogue and studying the Torah, paying their tithe and making their sacrifices was abandoned.

This text, penned about 16 years after Cyrus decreed that Jews could return to Jerusalem from the Exile and take, money, and materials to rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1-5). The returning exiles made it to Jerusalem, but once there spent their time building a life for themselves. Even though God had blessed them for a purpose, they ignored the purpose of their return and paid attention to their own growth and prosperity and ignored their original purpose.

They built themselves fine homes with ceiled roofs. They planted themselves fine crops and prospered. They made and bought for themselves fine clothing. Those who labored made an enviable wage. In retrospect, the Jews were living better than they had ever lived before. They had more, ate more, drank more, looked better and were generally in better shape than they had ever been.

In the midst of their of their prosperity God raised up the prophet Haggai, who must have come as an unpopular presence. Haggai was given five

messages to give the Jews from God. They were short and to the point, but all said basically the same thing "Consider your ways." The five messages were:

1)Haggai 1:1-11: The people are living good but they have forgotten their commitment to the House of God. Their charge was to renovate the temple, then to maintain it with tithes and offerings as they worshipped sang and gave sacrifices. Instead the people indulged themselves. Therefore, God said as long as his temple stood in need, they would begin to have holes in their pockets or "bags." (v6). They were sternly warned to give their decision not to obey God serious consideration.

2)Haggai 1:12-15: About 24 days after Haggai's first message the leaders of the kingdom responded by deciding to obey God (v12). In response the Lord sent them word that I am with you (v13). When the leaders decided to obey God, then he stirred up the spirit of all of the remnant of the people and they all decided to work, restore and maintain the House of the Lord. (v14).

3)Haggai 2:1-9: About four years later as the work progressed, God sent the people a word of hope. To the leaders he said "Be strong." To the high priests he said, "Be strong." To the people he said "I am with you." (2:4). He reminded them not to be intimidated by the apparent lack of resources because "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." He promised that the work they undertook would excel any work done in the past.

4-5)Haggai 2:10-23: The people were reminded that when they cheating God, refusing to support the temple building and carry out their purpose, every work of their hands was unclean in his sight (2:14). He responded by sending each person various signs, mildew, hail, and other hard times, yet the people did not respond. However, Haggai said if they would make a committment to God to respond beginning that very day "from this day, I will bless you." (v18) Even Zerubbabel himself was promised that he would be an example of what God can do because God would make him a "signet" for all the world to see (v23)

The essence of the entire book of Haggai is that those who lead the people were commanded to lead the masses away from selfish motives toward the renovation and maintenance of the temple, otherwise their prosperity would be cursed with "holes in their pockets."

Holes in your pockets

Today there is an increasing number of people who are living in prosperity. We are driving finer cars, living in better houses and making more money than we have ever made in our lives. Yet in all of this prosperity, churches around the nation are going in need, scraping, begging, selling chicken dinners, washing cars, playing bingo and plethora of other gimmicks, just to

make ends meet. The people of God have been blessed, but in their prosperity have decided to indulge themselves with that portion of their resources that should be dedicated to the restoration and maintenance of the temple.
Just as in Haggai's day, the word of God is just as meaningful today: "Consider your ways." If God has blessed you with 24 hours of health every day, but you have increasing less time for his service, Consider your ways! If God has given you a special talent that can be used in building of the kingdom but you find yourself using it less, consider your ways. If God has blessed you with an income and you are giving less than 10 percent to the support of the church: consider your ways.
If we ever begin to indulge our own agendas and motives and neglect the things of God, the warning we have received is clear, God will cut holes in our pockets and we'll hear a huge sucking sound. Let us consider our ways.

I am With You

While God had a word for those who were neglecting their responsibility, there was also a word for those who heard the word of the Lord.

While there is a word for those who have neglected their purpose, there is also a word for those who have faithfully answered the call!

While there is a word for those who have meandered along the path of spiritual mediocrity, there is a word for those whose obedience has never wavered!

That word is the same word of Haggai 1:13 "I am with you saith the Lord!"

It's the same word repeated again in 2:4 "I am with you saith the Lord of Hosts!"

Powerful things start to happen when God is with you. Romans 8:31 sums it up this way " What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

When God is with you:

—The impossible becomes possible!; the improbable becomes probable

—The inbearable becomes bearable; the incomplete becomes complete

—stumbling blocks become stepping stones!; high mountains are reduced to molehills

—Weak spirits become courageous souls; apparent defeat is turned into unexplainable victory!

Don't let anything separate you from the Lord!

Don't let your personal possessions separate you from God!

Don't let your dislike for a particular preacher or deacon, separate you from God.

Don't let your frustration with the way the choir sings, the deacons deac or the way the ushers usher, separate you from Christ!

I hear Paul ask in Romans 8:35:" Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I will trust in the Lord and I will serve him until I die!

I don't care what other people do or say "A charge to keep I have a God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save and fit it for the sky!

Iwill!

Iwill!

Trust in the Lord until I die!

No. 540-Martin Luther King

Behold Thy King

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 15, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Zechariah 9:9

Introduction

When you think of the dream of Martin Luther King, what comes to your mind? Dr. King was a complicated, charismatic and influential personality who inspired millions to demand justice without stooping to hatred. His insistence upon nonviolence and love was a cornerstone of his movement. While he urged millions to love their enemies he also urged them to passively resist unjust laws, demonstrate, march and even go to jail to call attention to evils inflicted upon the masses.

While Dr. King is heralded today for his faithfulness to nonviolence, he was the center of controversy during his time. Malcolm X ridiculed Dr. King for insisting that we love our enemies. However, he moderated his position to include nonviolence as one means of achieving freedom. He believed we should get freedom by any means necessary. Stokely Carmicheal, H. "Rap" Brown and other young militants of the day insisted that America would only respond to power and they promoted "Black Power," ridiculed nonviolence and stirred crowds to burn entire neighborhoods in protest. Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton promoted self defense as they carried rifles and guns to defend themselves in the Black Panther Party. While thousands followed Dr. King, there were countless others who perceived nonviolence as a cowardly slave approach to freedom conditioned on Dr. King's belief in the "white man's" religion, Christianity.

While there were some who thought Dr. King was too passive, there were others who thought he was too militant. The National Baptist Convention split, in part, over whether to join King in civil rights movement. It's president, Dr. J.H. Jackson, warned that freedom must come gradually. He feared King was taking our people too fast. In communities across the South many people secretly hoped that Dr. King would succeed but were afraid to be associated with his movement publicly. Many communities closed their doors to his visits as they put chains on meeting halls and distanced themselves from the movement. Without a doubt, during his lifetime his message was not universally accepted.

When we reflect on King the man, we must also see the similarities in his role as prophet, preacher, and biblical parallels. Like Amos, he came promoting justice and righteousness. Like John, he challenged the status quo. Like Jesus he was slain for his ideas.

As Christians, we do not idolize Martin Luther King, Jr. He was a man like all other men, with frailties and weaknesses. We do pay homage to the ideals for which he lived and gave his life. That ideal promotes the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Dr. King is a king by virtue of his family name. Our allegiance goes deeper. It is to one who is King by virtue of his deity as the son of God. For real freedom we must respect the legacy of the dream, but look to Jesus as our ultimate deliverer. We hear the word of God declare "Behold thy King!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophecy of Zechariah concerning the coming kingdom of the Messiah, the eventual triumph of justice and righteousness.

Zechariah was a contemporary of the Prophet Haggai. Both prophesied during the restoration after the return of Israel from captivity. Perhaps more than any other prophet, in so short a space, Zechariah made constant projections about the coming of Christ, the king of Glory.

The coming of the king is the recurring theme of this prophet, distinguishing him from other prophets. Moses helped Israel see God's vision for their liberation from Egypt, but none of Moses' projections went further than the Canaan land. Samuel was one of the greatest prophets, but even his visions were limited to Israel immediate circumstances. Elijah and Elisha spoke of things that would affect the nation as it stood.

Only a handful of prophets were given many visions about the coming of the Messiah in any depth of detail. Daniel, telling of stone carved from a mountain that would destroy evil nations, began to project the coming of the kingdom of God in seventy weeks of seven years. Isaiah made vivid descriptions of the Messiah, especially as he asserted that he was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity." Isaiah made prophecies about the birth of the Messiah. He predicted that He would be called wonderful, counselor and Prince of Peace.

In a very short space, Zechariah predicts the second coming of Christ, His reign, His priesthood, His kingship, His humanity, His Deity, His building of the Temple of the Lord, His coming in lowliness, His bringing of permanent peace, His rejection and betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, His return to Israel as the crucified One, and His being smitten by the sword of the LORD.

Not only does Zechariah predict the second coming of Christ but he even predicts events that will occur in the end-time. In the last chapter alone the prophet tells of the last siege of Jerusalem and the ultimate holiness of Jerusalem and her people.

In short, Zechariah saw a day when a king would come that would usher in a time and era of eternal peace and joy. Many kings came and made great progress toward

moving the people toward improved condition's. However, Zechariah's message was still "thy king cometh."

Many Great Leaders

In our quest for freedom there have been many eloquent and influential personalities that, like the great prophets of biblical times, have championed our cause. The names of the great ones flicker through our minds: Frederick Douglass, SoJourner Truth, Booker Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Mary McCleod Bethume, A. Phillip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Malcom X. These personalities have had a tremendous impact on our direction as a people.

In their time they rose high as Davids fighting the Goliath of slavery or institutionalized racism. During their time, each of them was raised to a level of respect that bordered on prophetic reverence. Frederick Douglass was respected by presidents and diplomats and revered by the common man for rising above his slave status. Booker Washington became so influential that very little was considered for the Negro in America unless it met his approval. Millions of Blacks pooled their money to join Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement. The love and respect that the masses of our people had for him frightened the establishment so much that it sought to destroy him.

The most revered and respected of all African-American Civil Rights leaders however, is without a doubt Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Because of his eloquence as a Baptist preacher, courage as a front line activist, and commitment to nonviolence, he stands high in the memory of the world.

Dr. King's prophetic ministry was uniquely similar to that of Moses. While other prophets had the liberty to declare the word of God and leave the job of implementing it to others, Moses had to both declare it and then stand in the front to facilitate the process. In a similar sense, Dr. King was thrust into the forefront of the struggle as both prophet and leader. Like Amos, he preached about the day when Justice would run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream, but then he had to put on his marching clothes and jail clothes and lead the masses in directions that would make the dream happen. Like Moses, he climbed to the mountain top and saw the vision of the promised land. For Moses it was Canaan. For Dr. King, it was a day when America would be a great salad bowl of cultures, thoroughly mixed, without regard of race or creed, or loss of individual identity. Both having completed their missions, did not make it to the respective promised lands they saw, but were sure that the people would ultimately get there. In his last message, the night before he died, Dr. King said "I may not get there with you, but I have been to the mountain top, I have seen the promised land!"

While some hailed Dr. King as the savior of the Negro people, he himself shunned those adulations. He asked that he be remembered not for his Nobel Peace Prize, college degrees or other accomplishments, but only that he be remembered as a drum major for truth. Even as he looked forward to his death, Dr. King recognized that some would attempt to raise him to a status higher than that of simply being a modern day

prophet of God, carrying out his mission.

Thy King cometh

When the crowds saw John the Baptist preaching against injustice, baptizing and standing boldly for righteousness they came to him and asked whether he was the one. John rebuked them and said that another was coming that was greater than he.

Today, as we salute Dr. Martin Luther King for his life and his contribution, we must remember that while his was a great life and his name was king he is not THE king. Zechariah reminded us "thy king cometh!"

While Dr. King shook the walls of injustice he brought down a few stones, but when THE king comes, every mountain shall be made low and every valley shall be exalted!

When thy king comes, it will truly be a day when justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

When thy king comes, rough places shall be plain and the crooked places shall be made straight!

Who is this king? Not Saul, though he stood head and shoulders above the rest! Not David, even though he was a man after God's own heart! Not Solomon though he was the wisest of them all!

I hear David ask in Psalm 24: "Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

When thy king cometh, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

When thy king cometh, it will certainly quicken the day when all mankind will recognize the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man!

When thy king cometh, we will sing and shout with renewed fervor Free At Last, Free At Last, Thank God almighty, I'm Free at Last!

No. 542-Youth

A Higher Learning

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 22, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

Introduction

Have you ever known people who were influenced by the thinking of others? There are many who have few opinions of their own. They wait to echo the thoughts, opinions and actions of others. Such individuals lack the ability to think or reason for themselves and depend wholly on the actions others to decide their own direction. Those most vulnerable to the opinions of others are young people. In the fragile years of their social development, many find it difficult to speak or act independently from the crowd. Some find it an absolute "must" to be "in" or socially accepted, no matter what actions are necessary to make happen.

The person who is unable or unwilling to think for himself is easily influenced. Sometimes they are influenced by life's positives.. These are the people, places and things that help us to grow and feel good about ourselves. Some are influenced by life's negatives and they develop negative attitudes as a result. Consider three men who often shared views about life. One was very positive. He saw the beauty of all of God's creation. It moved him. The second saw only the ugliest aspects of everything. If there was a flaw he spotted it and brought it to light. The third rarely thought for himself but always echoed the opinions of whomever he was accompanying for the day.

The first man saw the rain falling and said "Isn't it wonderful how God is cleansing the air and earth with the rain." The second man answered "Yeah, but if it keeps raining its going to start a flood." The third man answered, "that's right its going to start a flood." When the sun came out the first responded: "Isn't it great that the sun has come out nice and hot?" The second man answered "Yeah but if it stays like this it will scorch all the crops." The third man answered "That's right, it will scorch the crops."

Finally, the first man decided to give the two of them something that they had to accept as something good. He decided to teach his hunting dog how to walk on water. As the two friends joined him they shot a duck that fell in the water. "Go get em!" Said

the first man. The dog tip toed across the water, retrieved the duck and returned with only his paws wet. The first man said "What do you think of that?" The third man had been around the second man so long that he instantly answered just as he would have answered "It's too bad. Poor dog didn't learn how to swim did he?"

Today there many who have stopped thinking for themselves are being negatively influenced by the opinions of others. Some commit crimes, develop attitudes and lose great opportunities in life because they fail to think of themselves.

As Christians, we are encouraged not to conform to the world or be changed by its negative influences. We are called to a higher learning that challenges us to renew our collective mind with the transforming spirit of God. When we do this we will do the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians in Rome about several practical doctrines for Christian living.

In this short, two verse passage, Paul notes that Christians offer God a new sacrifice, as compared to the former practice of offering animals, which is themselves. In the past Jewish believers spent great time finding animals that could be sacrificed for a variety of sins. Bullocks, lambs, doves, all were among the various animals sacrificed to atone for sin. Much attention was paid to the cleanliness and holiness of the sacrifice that was to be brought before God. The person bringing the sacrifice did not necessarily make changes in his mind or heart. The emphasis was on the sacrifice itself.

However, Paul reminded Christians that we present ourselves as living sacrifices to God daily. Instead of coming to worship with doves, and oxen and bullocks and inspecting them for perfection, we present ourselves holy and accpetable to God.

To accomplish this "acceptable" state, Paul said we must not be "conformed" to this word. The word "conformed" here is from the Greek "suschematizo" (Soos-kay-mat-id-zo) which means, in this context, to fashion one's self like another. We are encouraged not to fashion our lives in any manner like those of unbelievers or the world. This includes our sympathies, inclinations, dress, speech, actions and manner of thinking. The command is simple and straight forward, "be not conformed to this world", its perception of life and its adverse action. We are in this world but not of it.

Paul challenges every Christian to step up to a higher learning or a higher calling that is in response to the renewing of the mind. The higher learning opens new channels of thought and actions that are not dictated by the routine, mundane and the traditional, but by the word of God. In essence, Paul challenged the Romans to dare to be different, if being different meant freeing themselves to fully prove what is good and acceptable to God. He challenged them to get off the beaten path of and do that which is acceptable to God, regardless to whether it is acceptable to the social order.

The transformation that is mentioned refers to the complete metamorphosis of words and actions that spell a new person for Christ, clearly different from he that is in the world. This transformation however, does not come from simply following the crowd and doing what others do, but it comes from seeking a higher level of expression, living and feeling that allows us think and live independent of the negative influences of others.

Thinking for Yourself

The movie "Higher Learning" shows several young people who went to college supposedly to get a higher learning. Most of them had no opinions of their own but were influenced by groups that told them what to think. The Nazis, Black separatists and even feminist groups were all attempting to tell them what to think, while a single professor challenged them to learn to think for themselves, which is what a higher learning or higher education is about, critical thinking.

Teaching youth to think critically is extremely important. Unfortunately our educational system does not focus on critical thinking skills as much as it should. School home work is filled with fill in the blanks and matching. Neither requires much critical thought, simply rote memory. Instructors who provide students with lists to memorize and simply want students to retain it long enough to put it on a test paper do very little to stimulate critical thinking. Such a process simply requires students to give back the same information that was given to them. As a result, thousands of students are doing well in school, making A's and B's but are scoring less than 20 on ACT examinations which test competence in critical thinking and reasoning skills. Independent thinking is what we need more of, not simply repetition of the meaningless and mundane.

Youth who are unskilled at critical thinking run the risk of being "conformed" to the world. As a rule they are unable to reason and exhibit creative patterns themselves. They generally follow the crowd. They dress like the crowd. Talk like the crowd. Originality is difficult for them. Even in their personal love conversations, many have difficulty being original. They generally recite words from records to get their points across.

Youth who lack critical thinking ability usually underestimate their own worth and potential. Some never achieve their potential because they simply follow the crowd. You've heard the story of the eaglet that grew up in the chicken yard. The chickens saw the ugly looking eaglet and told him that he was a chicken and therefore he must act as a chicken acts. The eaglet followed suit, scratching, clucking and eating bugs and worms. As he grew increasingly larger he still did the same because he was told that he was a chicken. One day he saw some eagles flying overhead and he said to himself "I can do that" but was instantly told that "chickens don't fly." A while later he was positioned high upon the chicken coop but lost his balance, as he was falling he instinctively stretched his wings and soared in the air." It was then that he realized that he must be an eagle, because chickens don't fly. In the same sense many youth

don't achieve their potential because they are eagles running with chickens.

If the truth of that parable is applied to this scripture then what we have is a message to our young people that says you are an eaglet in a world of chickens who are spiritually scratching to get by. Learn who you are! Stretch your wings on God's word and soar!

Youth should strive for a spiritual higher learning. Sunday School teachers usually focus on the Who, What, When and Where of biblical study. Those who are growing spiritually however require two more essentials: How and Why. Good teachers inspire critical thinking and are not afraid of that question that youth always ask "why?" Good teachers who inspire critical thinking read a scripture that says "Go ye therefore" and inspire their students to think critically and come to class with "how" to "go ye therefore." When students sense that their teachers are not prepared to deal with the why and the how they become uninterested and e m p t y classes are a result. Beyond that, youth themselves must develop a thirst for a higher learning regarding spiritual matters. Youth must study the word of God. Ask questions. Request scriptural evidence. Youth must build their lives with renewed minds that rooted in the word of God. Otherwise they will be doomed to follow the crowd, walking the traditional path as mindless clones of the traditions and methods of previous generations.

A Higher Learning

There is a higher learning than that which comes from man. This learning comes when all of us, both youth and adult, recognize that God is supreme and his will is the controlling factor in life. The higher learning to which we aspire comes from God.

There is a higher learning!

You might know mathematics, English and Science, but there is a higher learning!

You might be know literature, history and political science, but there is a higher learning!

You might be able to calculate the hypotenuse of a triangle or interpret the geometric theories of angle side angle and side angle side, but there is a higher learning!

You might be able to discuss the the political theories of Thomas Paine, the scientific significance of Pavlov's dog, or the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, but there is a higher learning!

You might be able to quote the Gettysburg Address, recite Shakespearean sonnets and Martin Luther King's I have A dream speech, but there is a higher learning!

You might be able to prominently display your high school diploma, college degree, Master's plus 30 and your PhD, but there is a higher learning!

The Word of God is the textbook, the Holy Spirit is the teacher and Jesus is the subject.

Those with a higher learning know answers to all the right questions!

Who is he? He is the son of God.

What did he come to do? He came that we might have life and have it more

abundantly.

Where did he come? He came among his own and his own received him his not!

When did he come? He came nearly 2000 years ago in town called Bethlehem!

Why did he come? For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!

How can I become one of his?If thou shalt confess with thou mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved!

The Holy Spirit is the teacher of those who have a higher learning!

When the holy spirit teaches, things begin to change! Lives are transformed by with renewed minds!

That's when saints declare "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning Back!

No turning Back!

No. 543-Black Heritage

How Far Is The Promised Land?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 5, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. Exodus 13:17-18; "And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Numbers 14:7-8

Introduction

Have you ever taken a trip but it seemed like it would take forever to get there? Perhaps it was just a few hours journey, or maybe even a day's ride. There are times when even short trips seem to take too long. It appears that the more we want to get to our destination the longer it takes. Conversely, when we are reluctant about the journey, it seems we get there too fast! When we really want to get there badly....it takes forever!

Consider the runaway slave who was making his escape from a Louisiana plantation to the North via the underground railroad. A woman was leading the escape. She had come down from the North often and had a reputation for never losing a passenger or letting them return to slavery. The young slave was quite scary and changed his mind several times, but he took the journey anyway. After they traveled a day or so he heard the sound of dogs. Frightened, he turned to the woman asked: "Are we there yet?" All she said "Hold on, just a little while longer!" Several days passed. They crossed streams, rivers, and swamps. They moved through rocky mountains and hid in caves. Each time the young man tried to go back, the shotgun was pointing in his face saying "Hold on, just little while longer!" No matter how often the young man looked back, the shotgun was forever in his face!

After a month of traveling the slave was tired, he looked back one final time and asked: "Are we there yet?" This time there was no shotgun in his face. The woman put her hand around his shoulder, pointed to a safe house up the road and she walked away. He cried out "Are we there yet?" The woman answered: "You will know you

are there when there is a hand of friendship around your shoulder and no shotgun in your face!"

African-Americans have been journeying toward the promised land for 132 years. The promised land is an elusive state in which we will be recognized as equals under the law and in the brotherhood of man, while being appreciated as culturally unique. Most of our journey thus far has been to acquire equality under the law. On a federal level much of that has been accomplished, but there is still work to do. Sometimes we get comfortable along the journey and think we have arrived, but sobering events occur that shock us into the reality that we still haven't arrived.

As Christians, our quest is to pursue complete freedom and equality for all people, without regard to race, creed or color. Reaching the promised land is a life long journey. We'll know when we have arrived when the hand of brotherhood is around our shoulders and there in no longer a shotgun in our face!

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it prepares to leave the Egypt and travel to the promised land.

Israel spent 400 years in bondage in Israel. During this time they prayed constantly that God would bring them out of the enslaved condition and deliver them to freedom. Their desire was to return to the land that God had promised Abraham, a land that was flowing with milk and honey. However, during their long enslavement the people had lost their sense of independence. Their food, clothing and shelter were provided by their masters. Every major decision of their lives was made by their masters. Their ability to govern, provide for and protect themselves had been completely lost.

When God decided to free them from slavery and bring them into the promised land their survival abilities had diminished to the point of nonexistence. They had become comfortable with their slave status to the point that the smallest obstacle they faced would defeat them. Since God knew their weaknesses more than they themselves, he lead them on a journey that was more difficult and would take them longer than usual. This longer route would provide a strengthening period for Israel. It would also insure that they understood clearly that their liberation was the result of the power of God.

The journey from Egypt to The land of Canaan should have taken about a month at the longest. Initially Israel would have marched out of Egypt into Canaan, engaged in battle with the Philistines and would have been in the promised land. However, God led them on a different route. It was a difficult route that challenged them both mentally and spiritually. It was a route that took them down in a valley, across the red sea, and through a wilderness. They would avoid war with the Philistines but would be snared by conditions that would make it obvious to them that their salvation came from the Lord.

The text in Numbers occurs after Israel came close enough to the promised land to send 12 spies to inspect its resources. This was just months after they left Egypt. Ten of the spies reported the difficulty of taking the new land. However, Joshua and

Caleb gave a minority report. They said the land was fertile and could be taken because the power of God was moving in their favor. The people ignored the minority report. In fact they became so angry with Joshua and Caleb that they almost stoned them for suggesting that they could actually enter the promised land.

The journey from Egypt to the promised land took 40 years. Israel's lack of faith in God caused them to wander. While just a few days journey away from the promised land it took them 40 years to get there. The promised land wasn't far in actual miles, but in terms of Israel's determination to get there, it was at least 40 years away.

How Far Is Freedom

The African-American experience bears a unique resemblance to that of historic Israel. Its history of enslavement and persecution is familiar to our people. Just as Israel caused much of its own misery after its freedom from Israel, we too share that same experience. The promised land evaded Israel for 40 years and today we have been out of our Egypt experience for 132 years and still have not reached the promised land.

What is the promised land? On a broad scale it is a point of existence in which color differences exist but are not factors that matter. It is a point in which racial discrimination ceases to exist and race based mitigating factors do not prohibit the pursuit of happiness. It is a point where the neighborhood in which you live or school you attend, is not determined by the poverty of opportunity or means that is conditioned on skin color. The promised land represents equal opportunity for all, without regard to color or race.

How far is the promised land? Obviously we have not reached the promised land yet. The day will come when we will be granted housing loans to build a home in any neighborhood we want. Until that time comes we still need laws forcing lending institutions to be fair with us. The day will come when companies will hire the best workers without regard to race, but until that day comes we still need affirmative action laws that keep doors from shutting in our faces. The promised land is close enough to achieve instantly, but because of realities of our times, is years away. It is only a distant goal if we choose to believe that it cannot occur.

Some have been fooled into believing that we have reached the promised land. There are many, even in our community, who mistake our bare survival on the grace of God to being in the promised land. They see the water, quail and the bread from heaven that is flowing for the poor and hungry masses and echoing the sentiments of Justice Clarence Thomas say eliminate the supports, helps and laws that sustain the masses of the impoverished and historically deprived. Eating manna every day was a blessing, but it was not the ideal. Having food stamps is a blessing, but the masses would prefer to have money in their pockets to buy it for themselves. Welfare for the needy is a blessing, but impoverished families would prefer a job where they can pay their own way without baring their soul to a case worker. We are still in the wilderness experience. We have not made it to the promised land!

Israel became comfortable with the blessings from heaven and remained in the wilderness longer than necessary. We must not become comfortable in the wilderness. Let's not become comfortable with welfare, the longer we depend upon it, the further we get from the promised land. Don't become dependent on government set asides, the longer we count on minority set asides, the further away the promised land becomes.

How far is the promised land? It is as far away as our determination to achieve it? A college education, a successful career, a happy marriage..all are promised lands looming in the horizon! How long it takes us to get there depends on our willingness to get up and make it happen.

Can't Make It Without God!

The journey to the promised land for Israel began with prayers in their distress. They expressed hope and faith that God would free them. They were freed from slavery and literally sustained in the wilderness by outright acts of God, however, they only entered the promised land when they themselves acted on their faith. When Israel stepped out on faith in God, all of the supportive props they were given in the wilderness were unnecessary.

Our journey to the promised land must be rooted in our faith in God.

If we are to get there without wasting another generation in the American wilderness we must put our trust in God and tackle the future.

Are you pursing your own promised land? If you are, it is as far away as your faith that if you can believe God for it, you can achieve it!

The first step toward the promised land is to trust God! God toward Joshua, if you want to enter the promised land put one foot in the water and step out on faith.

Trusting in God, Israel crossed the river Jordan!

Trusting in God, they fought and won the battle of Jericho!

Trusting in God, they won scores of battles as God locked the sun in the sky!

As we travel toward the promised land we should tear a page from our history and keep trusting in God!

Despite the hardships of slavery and poverty the old slaves kept calling out to God "It's me, it's me, it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer!"

We need prayer on the journey because prayer can:

—muzzle the mouths of lions!

—Quench the flames of our enemies

—Conquer the strongholds of devils

—Penetrate the walls of the deceitful

—Still the raging storms of the scornful

That's why the old warriors still sing "I know the Lord will answer prayer, I tried him for my self!"

Down here we are striving to reach the promised land of peace and happiness on this.

But brothers and sisters, I've heard of a land on a far away strand the beautiful home of the soul!

It's a land where the wicked will cease from troubling!

It's a land where the weary will be at rest!

It's a land where every day will be Sunday and it's always howdy and never goodbye!

It's a land where we'll never grow old!

I don't know about you...but I'm on my way to the Canaan land!

Hold on, just a little while longer! Everything will be all right!

No. 545-Men

Find Me A Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 12, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. Jeremiah 5:1***

Introduction

Have you ever felt like your life was one endless succession of mountains? If mountains represent obstacles, difficulties and challenges, sometimes it appears that the world's tallest mountains are in our back yard. As a people, we have faced many mountains, one rapidly following another: Slavery, reconstruction, lynching, segregation, integration, and internal disintegration. We have had our share of historic mountains. The path we have walked seems littered with them. In moments of weakness we pray that God would move the mountains. On our better days however, we ask God not to move them, but to give us strength to climb them or go around them.

Whether our mountains are personal, family related or community related it is good to remember that for every mountain God has a man and a plan!

As we study the history of our people, we see the mountains we have crossed. Associated with each mountain there was always a man and a plan. The man and the plan were fitted for the mountain. During slavery Frederick Douglass was the man, slavery was the mountain, abolition was his plan. Removing the shackles of slavery was his immediate focus. After slavery Booker T. Washington was the man, an untrained people was the mountain, and industrial education was his plan. He sought to earn the respect of our former slave masters through hard and skillful labor. At the turn of the century W.E.B. Dubois was the man, legal lynching was the mountain, the NAACP was his plan. During the depression, A. Phillip Randolph was the man, exploited laborers was the mountain, union organizing was his plan. In 50's Thurgood Marshall was the man, school segregation was the mountain, desegregation was the plan. In the 60's Martin Luther King was the man. Denied civil rights was the mountain, and nonviolent protest was his plan. For every mountain we have faced, God has had a man!

What if during these great periods of trial the man God had chosen would not come

forth? Suppose, like Jonah they chose to run away from God's mission, throwing themselves at the mercy of fate. Suppose that when our next mountain of struggle or turmoil appears that God is unable to find a single man to whom he can give the plan! Suppose every ma, because of either indifference, fear, or otherwise refuses to come forth? What would be our outcome?

As Christians, we know that God has a plan for every troubling period of our personal and collective experience. We should strive to stay ready to respond to his call. While God can move mountains, in all likelyhood he has someone prepared to lead us around them or through them. Whatever the mountain, God has a man!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah as he delivers a message from God to Jerusalem to find a single man who would stand for what is right.

Jeremiah was one of the most controversial of the prophets. He was loved, yet respected. He was both feared and revered at the same time. He lived in constant friction with the authorities of his people. At one time or another he would challenge religious leaders, political leaders or both of them together.

Jeremiah prophesied to the Southern Kingdom and to Jerusalem in particular. He warned the people that they were abandoning the old way and were adulterating themselves so much that God was becoming angry and would use their enemies to humble them. He encouraged leaders to keep promoting truth and providing leadership, but they would not hear him. He warned them that they had morally degenerated to the point that there was not one man in whole city that would stand up to champion the cause of truth.

This text finds Jeremiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, challenging the city to find just one man who would stand against the moral degeneration of the city and God would save it from destruction. In verse 1 Jeremiah charged the people to look in the broad places and find just one man that would "execute judgment", that is, one man that would do something. If one man could be found, the city would be saved.

This was an easier task than that discussed between Abraham and the Angels in Genesis 18:24. Here Abraham begged the angels not to destroy the city. The angels response was that the cities of Sodom and Gomarrah would be spared if 50 men could be found. Abraham, knowing the condition of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah begged for 45, then 20, then 10. Once in the city the angels could not find even 10 men who would stand. The city was destroyed as a result.

However, in this text Jeremiah challenges Jerusalem to produce one man. One man who would stand for something and the people could be saved!

Unfortunately for Jerusalem not one man would step forward and Jerusalem fell victim to the Babylonians. The people were carried off into exile. The temple was ruined. In Exile, God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel to tell Israel that he attempted to save them if he could have found one man to stand up. In Ezekiel 22:30-1 God says:

" And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD."

The devastation of their homeland and exile of their people was a painful part of the Jewish experience. However much of it could have been avoided if just one man had risen to stand for the Lord.

Finding One Man

If there is a dilemma in the African-American community it is the declining presence of men in the leadership of our homes, churches and civic involvements. While the reasons for this decline are varied, its effects are having a devastating impact on our community as a whole.

Historically, African-American women have risen to fill the spaces whenever our men could not meet the demands of the circumstances. In such instances the emphasis was on "could not." Often opportunities for men were limited out of fear and/or prejudice. Women rose to fill the gap temporarily, doing what must be done.

Today the dilemma is not that men "cannot" but that many "will not" rise to the occasion, forcing women again to shoulder the responsibility of leadership.

Many men have found it easy to abdicate their responsibilities and leave it to the women, who have more than their share of responsibilities already. Our homes are being left to our women to run. Many of them are frustrated that not only must they bake the bread but they must make the bread to bake as they head homes by themselves.

In our churches, civic leadership and the nurture of our children, it is our women that are rising to fill voids created by men who refuse to shoulder their responsibilities forcing them to do what they must do.

The mountains of problems faced by every family, could be scaled much easier if there was a good man with a plan!

Why did Jeremiah in this text, have such a difficult time finding one man? There were plenty of men in the city. All of the Jews! They all believed in Jehovah. Why wouldn't anyone respond? They had grown comfortable in their way and adulterated themselves with personal passions foreign to the will of God.

Why are we finding it difficult to find men in this generation? The easy answer that is less self incriminating is to say they are all in jail or have killed themselves in drug or gang disputes. The filled jails and expanding grave yards are symptons of the problem. Good men are groomed for manhood by the generation that precedes them. The responsibility to teach values and responsibility falls on the adult men of every generation. When a single generation of boys misses that instruction chaos is the result. That is the problem.

When boys miss value instruction they become young adults with twisted value

systems that suggest that they should steal but don't get caught, find a woman to support them, kill or fight anyone that crosses them, curse and use foul language to get their points across, and place blame for the failures on someone else. When a generation evolves with this value system, crime, rape, murder, teen pregnancy and plethora of other social ills develops. When we see the graves, jails and rising crime, we see the symptoms of the problem.

What is our response? This generation must organize itself to teach manhood values to our sons. We cannot afford to be distant, indifferent or stingy with with our time or resources. We should agressively promote programs that teach leadership, values and creativity to our young men. We must minister to our young men in jail. We must not shun those who have fallen victim to drugs. We must have an organized response to salvage those who are shipwrecked in life through the development of counseling, job placement and referral programs. We should spare no expense to prepare this generation young men for the mountains they will face.

One Man Makes a Difference

Finally, friends we must be reminded that one man can make a difference! It may appear that one solitary man standing up against a tidal wave of indifference cannot have an impact, but that's exactly what God has looked for throughout all history. One person who was willing to stand. His challenge to the men of Jerusalem was not an isolated instance, he has worked through one man on many occasions!

Abraham was just one man. He was a poor man who had one thing going for him, he had great faith in God! His faith was so great that he gave birth to a nation. One man made a difference.

Israel walked out of Egypt a free people because of the efforts of one man. Moses was a stutterer who lacked self confidence, yet God used him to lead 600,000 people to freedom. One man can make a difference!

Joshua was just one man. A mere stone cutter by trade he was not a scholar or educated man but because he was strong enough to stand on the side of a mountain and say "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" one man made a difference!

Caleb was just one man! At eighty years old he attested to fact that despite his age there was work to do. He stood on the side of a great mountain and declared "Give me this mountain" as he gave witness that even one elderly man can make a difference!

David was just a young man, but one man who made a difference. When Israel could have been destroyed by the Philistines, David rose to slay the Giant Goliath. One man made a difference.

There are many today who believe one man can't make a difference! But one man can make a difference!

When God considered the deteriorating state of spiritual affairs in the world poses a mountainous problem, he looked for a man!

Elijah was a good man who wrestled with prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, but he was not man for the job!

Moses was a good man who saw the burning bush on Mt. Sinai, but he was not the man for the job!

Noah was a good man who built an ark and worship on Mt. Ararat, but he was not the man for the job!

Isaiah volunteered, saying "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!" But he was not the man for the job!

Brothers and sisters I want to tell you about one man who made a difference his name was Jesus!

Jesus, who was born in obscurity!

Jesus, who lived in poverty could have said Father, not me! I don't have anything to offer. I sleep in borrowed beds. I reside in borrowed houses. I eat in borrowed dining rooms. I cross over lakes in borrowed boats. In fact "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the son of man hath no place to lay his head."

But if you need somebody....here am I send me!

He died out on Calvary on a borrowed cross. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. But early Sunday morning, he rose from the tomb!

I don't know about you, but I started out in Jesus and I'm going through!

I'm going through!

I'm going through!

I started in Jesus and I'm going through!

No. 546-Women

Return That We May Look Upon Thee

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 19, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"I am Black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tens of Kedar as the curtains of Solomon." Song of Songs 1:5 "Return, Return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies!" Song of Songs 6:13.***

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself so busy being busy that you neglected things that were important to you? It doesn't take long to fill a daily calendar with busy items that all seem important at the moment. Club meetings, dinners, conferences, appointments, reports due, assignments to complete. They all tend to fill our day in an all consuming way. Sometimes we can get so busy being busy that we lose track of those things which are important to us.

Women especially find this to be true. As more women become heads of households by divorce or single parenthood; or enter the time gouging world of corporate career pursuit, many are finding it increasing difficult to attend to those particulars that they consider important in life. The task is even more difficult for African-American women, many of whom are shouldering the burdens of motherhood and fatherhood at the same time. In the maze of activity associated with womanhood, the desire to return to that which is important is imminent, but elusive.

Consider the little girl who put an ad in the paper looking for a mother. The little girl lived in nice home. She had all of the trappings of comfort: television, private accommodations, nice clothes and toys. Her worked, appeared caring, but never seemed to have enough time for her. One day the little girl decided to put an ad in the paper under the heading "Lost." The ad read: "Lost- One African-American female. 30 years old. 5' 4" tall. She likes to read stories to her daughter. She likes to listen to her tell about important things in her life. She likes to spend time with her. She lives at 2202 Main Street. She answers to the name of mommy. If you find her please bring her back to me." The little girl took the ad and placed it on her mother's work table to be sure it would be seen. The next day the mother read the ad, circled in red. She

felt ashamed and answered the ad the next day under the heading "Found." Her ad read: "Found-One African American female who wants to read stories to her daughter, listen to her talk and spend time with her again. She answers to the name mommy." When the little girl read the ad she was happy. A few days later the mother asked her daughter why she found it necessary to put an ad in the paper when she saw her everyday. The little girl answered "You lived here, but you were never home. Welcome back!" They embraced warmly and were never seperated again.

There are many who who are leading successful lives but are being listed under the "lost" headings by their children, spouses and a family. They are rising stars on the job, in their social circles and in the community at large. Many have achieved their success at the expense of family and faith. The community as a whole is beginning to list African-American women in the "lost" column as they pursue different agendas that keep them busy being busy, while other concerns important to the survival of our race become secondary.

As Christians, we know how easy it is to get sidetracked, therefore we steadily pray that he keep us on the path. If we stray we should ask him to help us return to him who first loved us!

Exposition

This text focuses on the Song of Songs, traditionally attributed to Solomon in a unique dialogue with a Black woman who was among his hundreds of wives and concubines.

The Songs of Solomon is a collection of love poems, mostly attributed to Solomon. They were the subject of considerable debate among theologians as they labored over whether they should be a part of the Canon of Sacred writings. Many argued that these were simply love stories. They saw the references to hugging and kissing, breasts, thighs, and other suggestive phrases as earthly with no special connection to God's purpose for the church.

However the majority concluded that the Song of Songs, which is the original Hebrew title of the writings, had allegorical significance. When a writing is considered allegorical, that means that it is comparable to something else. In this instance the scholars concluded that the love and affection shown between Solomon and the Black woman in Song of Solomon is comparable to the love that Christ has for the Church. So, while the words of Song of Solomon speak about flesh and blood, the spiritual eye sees a connection between the believer and his Lord.

There has been considerable debate as to color of the Shulamite woman who is the subject of this text. One school of thought is that she is referred to a black, only in spirit. Her Blackness is attributed to the lowly position she held in her family, forced by her brothers and sisters to labor in the heat of the day, keeping vineyards. In this view, her Blackness or darkly tanned skin was a sign of her lowly background, not of her color.

Whatever the reason, it is obvious that Solomon is talking to a Black woman. This

is not unusual. In his harem of over 1,000 wives and concubines Solomon displayed a attraction to women of the darker races His harem included: Moabites, Amorites, Edomites, Zidonians and Hittites. These were women of ebony skins, brown eyes and broad and strong lips. He loved women of many races. He appeared to have a special attraction to darker colored women.

Throughout the Song of Solomon, there is constant reference to the beauty, grace and dignity of this Black woman. By the 6th Chapter she is described as "fairest among women" in 6:1;"beautiful" in 6:4 and in verse 10 she is one that "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with barriers."

Solomon makes an appeal this beautiful Black woman to return to those things that made her beautiful. The word "return" is used four times, "Return, Return, O Shulamite; return, return!"

Why? "That we may look upon thee!" This Black woman who had been the subject of praise and honor is being encouraged to return to and stay with those virtues that made her beautiful in the offset. When the Black woman returns what will the world see? "As it were the companies of two armies." Genesis 32:1-2 describes a situation where Jacob, while surrounded by a host of his followers but was met by another host of angels who ministered to him. The presence of these two armies, one militant among men the other triumphant and ministering from God he called "Mahanaim." This has special significance to this text because this Shulamite woman once returned to her natural beauty an virtue would exemplify "Mahanaim."

The Black woman of this text was urged to return such that the world could look upon her and see "Mahanaim", a woman at war with the forces against her, but being ministered by the angels from Heaven.

Four Things to Return To

When Solomon spoke to the Black woman of this text he challenged her to return four times. He did not what to return to. The what is defined by circumstance and time. But the need to return is underscored. Perhaps there are four areas that are increasing being neglected by African-American women that should be the subject of return.

A Return to Parenting.

Our history is replete with efforts to turn the African-American woman into breeders. In slavery the master often valued the slave woman by her ability to breed. Having children was job, raising them was her obligation, and rearing them was unnecessary.

Today, 132 after slavery has ended, many women still have a concept of themselves a breeder and feeders rather those who mother and nurture. Increasingly, each succeeding generation of African-American women is leaning heavily toward this idea of being breeders and feeders rather than parenting. In part, our welfare system is a cause. Another cause is a breakdown in the traditional teaching mechanisms of

the African-American community that teach and promote parenting skills to each generation.

Is it possible that we have become so busy being busy that we have neglected to teach parenting skills to our daughters? Are these the same daughters that we blame shameless for their lack of parenting skills? Should our church groups, sororities and women's groups respond with workshops and clinics for the underclass as well as the middleclass? Our shows its what we did at one time. Shouldn't we return?

Return to Marriage

Single Parenthood and divorce are problems that are plaguing the African-American community. Nationally, six out of every ten homes is headed by a single female, and four out of every seven marriages are ending in divorce. That is causing a dilemma for the Black family

An increasing number of youth are turning to "shacking" as an alternative lifestyle. Divorce is becoming common place. Child support and Alimony are becoming increasing burdens on second and third marriages trying stretch an income built for one family over two or three.

At one time church mothers were advisors to young couples. They counseled them on how to have successful marriages and avoid divorce. With our increased education should we return to the practice of teaching marriage skills to young couples? Or should be we be satisfied serving as white clothe ornaments, trophies of past marital success rather than instruments to be used in God's hands. What about our social orders? Couldn't marriage be promoted and taught as a part of the annual program? Shouldn't we return?

Return to Finer Womanhood

We have before us a generation of youth who are increasingly losing their social graces. The virtues of finer womanhood must be taught to all of our young ladies. We can no longer afford the luxury of charm clinics that teach grace and manners to the middle class while refusing ignoring the masses of girls who need to be taught finer womanhood if we are to turn the tide.

What good is a debutante ball that presents the already refined and charmed?

Those girls who are being duped by some rappers into believing that its O.K. to call themselves whores because they pronounce it with an H. or that to refer to themselves as "B" (The "B" word) need help. Girls who cuss like sailors, walk like men, smell like bears and fight tigers need help. Wouldn't it help, if sororities, just one year would reach out and get 20 or 30 of the ungroomed and groom them. Shouldn't we return to promoting finer womanhood?

Return to God.

Finally friends, we need to return to God.

Solomon said the when the Black woman returned that the world would see two armies within her. One struggle with the social ills surrounding her, and another army that was maintaining her coming straight from the battlements of heaven.

The Christian woman needs the "Mahanaim." She needs to fight the social ills of our her times with an army of the faithful. But she also needs the support from the power of the almighty!

We should not get so busy, being busy, that we have no time for God!

Some have little time for worship on Sundays! We need to return to God!

Some have little time for prayer or Sunday Bible Study, but we need to return to God!

We cannot approach the problems of this generation without the Lord. We cannot deal with 12 year old mothers and 24 year old grandmothers, without the Lord.

We can't deal with molested daughters, abused children and battered wives without the Lord. We need the Mahanaim, an army of friends and whole lot of help from God!

I don't know about you but I've found that whatever your problem God can solve. Whatever you need, God's got it!

I've found out that no matter what the problem God will make a way.

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "Be not dismayed whatere' betide, God will take care of you! Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, through everyday ore' all the way, he will take care of you!"

He will take care of you!

He will take care of you!

I know he will, because one evening out yonder on Calvary, he died for me and you!

He will take care of you because one morning he rose for the dead with all power in his hands!

Return to God and he will take care of you!

No. 547-Stewardship

Indian Givers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 5, 1976

SCRIPTURE:"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things." Acts 5:3

Introduction

Have you ever had anyone to give you something then take it back? Perhaps it was a financial gift? Maybe it was a lover's token such as a ring or a bracelet? Maybe it was something intangible such as a commitment of support and a promise to perform a service. Whatever the case, whenever someone, for whatever reason, refuses to honor a commitment it is discouraging at the least. Generally persons who give something, whether it is tangible or intangible, then take it back, are described as "Indian Givers." The term came from American folklore in which white men who had broken treaties with Native Americans placed the blame on the Native Americans themselves, saying they had given their word by accepting the terms of treaties and then taken it back. Although it was incorrectly applied, the term stuck as a means of describing a person who gives something of value and then takes it back. By any definition, very few people like Indian Givers.

There was a time in our history when a man's word was his bond. If the commitment was made, regardless to the circumstance, if it was humanly possible he could be counted on to keep it. Unfortunately that attitude is not the prevailing sentiment of our times. A man keeps his word only if it is convenient or if he feels good about it. That makes every person distrustful of the next as people move to protect themselves against future, expected losses. Consider the country preacher and the leaky roof. The country preacher had a great belief in the power of the Lord to move on the hearts of people. However, of late it seemed that the power of Satan was doing a mighty moving in their hearts and pocket books. People were holding on to their money, not paying in church and everything was falling down. The roof on the church began to leak badly, but the people still wouldn't budge. They put pots on the floor and moved benches around so that the water didn't mess up their new clothes. Finally the preacher made his appeal. "Members we need a new roof on this church. All of us can see the need. I'm going to pass my hat around and I want you go give a generous

offering to help us get this roof fixed. The preacher passed his hat and bowed his head. After the service the deacons came to him and asked. "Reverend how much did we get?" The preacher dropped his head and said "Not one dime. In fact, I was lucky to get my hat back!" There are many churches in America that are going in need becomes people have made promises to God, but are sending the hat back empty.

One reason that we have so much paperwork attached to every promissory arrangement we make in business matters is distrust. The papers simply verify the arrangement made and provide a paper trail to force us to honor our commitments. In these instances, if we don't honor our commitments we will be forced to do so. It doesn't matter how we feel.

As Christians we have made some commitments to God. Among those is our promise to give liberally to support his benevolent work and to spread his word. In return God has given to us liberally. While God has never failed on his end of the bargain, we have often become Indian Givers with respect to God. He gives and gives and never takes back. We should do the same.

Exposition

This text considers two members of the church at Jerusalem Ananias and Sapphira, who gave the appearance of giving to God, but were actually holding back.

The Jewish community of biblical times followed two lines of thought with respect to property. The primary philosophy followed by most was that all things belonged to God. They considered themselves stewards of their personal possessions, cattle, crops or anything on the land. Their attitude toward the land was a different matter. They considered the land purely a business matter, not subject to the general idea of "belonging to God." For example, they accepted the idea of returning a tithe of the fruit of the land, but never entertained the idea of giving a tithe of the land itself. Land ownership was not negotiable. It was considered a permanent asset of the family.

This divided view of ownership had its origins in their history. They generally viewed the land as something that belonged to them by virtue of a promise from God in Genesis 12. When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, they divided up the land promised to them for a permanent inheritance. After the division of the land among the twelve tribes, individual plots were given to family groups or clans. If the occasion demanded it, the land could be redivided later. Land sales and transfers were recorded by scribes on leather or papyrus scrolls, on clay tablets, or in the presence of witnesses with the symbolic removal of a sandal (Ruth 4:7) or the stepping onto the land by the new owner. Land passed from father to son but could be given to a daughter. The law of the kinsman-redeemer (Lev. 25:25) was developed to assure that land belonging to a particular clan did not pass out of its hands despite the death of an heirless husband. The next-of-kin was required to purchase the land and provide an heir to the name of the deceased. The impoverished widow would not be forced to sell her land to outsiders, thus diminishing the tribal area of the clan. It was obvious,

land belonged to the family. It was not to be seized, sold or given to anyone outside of the family.

As Jews became converts to the Christian faith one of the first challenges to their new faith was their belief about the land. The early church required all members to sell their land and give the proceeds of the sale to the church. For many this was a difficult thing to do. They believed in giving the tithe, because they accepted that as returning to God something that was already his. However, selling the land was a matter of them giving up something that they rightfully believed was their own. Despite their reservations about this new belief, most of the early Christians did as required.

This text focuses on two individuals who had trouble parting with something they considered their own: Ananias and his wife Sapphira.

Ananias (an uh ni' uhs) is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Hananiah, which means "Yahweh has dealt graciously." In response to the demand to sell all their property and enter the communal relationship the two acted deceptively. First, they did not sell all of their property as required. Acts 5:1 says they sold "A" possession. This suggests that they owned other properties but only sold a part of what they owned. Secondly, they only gave a part of the proceeds from the sale of that possession, claiming it was the full price. Both were struck dead for having lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3,10)

The actions described in the text, suggests that they promised to give to God and lied to him in two ways: Not giving what was required, and then not even giving their rightful share of what they did acknowledge earning. Their punishment was death. They promised to act then went back on their promise. They were perhaps, the first Indian Givers.

Indian Givers Today

Today there are millions of Indian Givers in the body of Christ. These are those who follow the attitude of Ananias and Sapphira with respect to their support of the kingdom building work of Christ.

What could possibly contribute to the development of an Indian Giver attitude among members of the body of Christ?

Generally Indian Givers are those who make emotional promises, based on the ecstasy of the moment without a real spirit of commitment. Therefore, many make commitments based upon their feeling at the moment. After a fiery sermon in which all have been carried to the mountain top, many like Peter want to build three Tabernacles, until they come down into the valley. Even Peter followed at distance when the emotion wore off. The danger of establishing our giving based upon emotions are predictable. The man that is happy today is sad tomorrow. He that is pleased today is angry tomorrow. Those whose giving is based solely on emotion have a roller coaster pattern of giving. Some churches even place the offering after the sermon such that members have an opportunity to give as they are feeling good.

However, if they are unpleased with the message they rebel in the offering tray.

Those who have difficulty giving as God has commanded usually assume an attitude that the finances they refuse to give belong to them and it is their right to determine the ultimate disposition. They believe they earned their monies and therefore, they not God or his church, should expect, require or dictate to them how or when they should give. At the core of their inability to obey God is a general disbelief that everything belongs to God. Conversely, they believe like the early Jews that it belonged to God, until he gave it to them. They believe once resources are given to them, it is no longer God's right to dictate.

Those who claim this attitude would be right if God actually transferred the ownership of what we have to us. We know that God has retained ownership of everything by briefly surveying his word. The preponderance of scripture reflects the thought of Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." This truth is repeated in the New Testament in 1 Cor 10:26 "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

God does not give us a house to do with as we please, he allows us to use a house which belongs to him.

God does not give us a car to claim as our own, he allows us to us a car that belongs to him.

God does not put money in our pocket that belongs to us to do with as we please, but he provides us with money to manage our affairs, according to his instruction. His instructions provide that we use 90 percent of that he puts within our reach for the management of our personal affairs. His final instruction is that we transfer 10 percent of that to accounts established for the management his affairs on earth. If we have been blessed richly we can give even more, but only 10 percent is required.

Many have promised to accept Christ as Savior but not as Lord. These same people have given the pledge of loyalty to Christ and have taken it back.

God Love But Never Took It Back

While many believers have become Indian Givers with God he has never been an Indian Giver with us. John 3:16 reminds us that "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loved this world so much that he gave his son to die for its salvation.

The way God gave should be an example to all of us. He gave, but he never took back.

Thoughmen did not return his love, he gave but never took back.

Though men were adulterous in their relationship with him, he gave, but he never took back

Though men trampled upon the blessings he provided so freely, he gave, but he never took back.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God sent his son to give his love for the

world. I'm really glad that he gave and would not take it back!

Jesus had many chances and reasons to take back his love!

Crowds that once loved him called out crucify him; but he gave and wouldn't take it back!

The beat him and nailed him to an old rugged cross, but he gave, and would not take it back!

He died out on Calvary! He gave, but he would not take it back!

He rose up early Sunday morning with all power in his hand!

He paid the price for my salvation and never once took back anything because of my weakness!

No wonder the song writer wrote: "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left a crimsom stain, but he washed it white as snow."

Jesus, paid it all!

Jesus, marked my debt fulfilled!

He gave his life for me, and he never..

He never..

He never took it back!

No. 548-Inspiration

It Will Surely Come

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 5, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:3***

Introduction

Have you ever had a vision? Not simply a dream but a vision? Our dreams represent our hopes for the future. However, a vision is a glimpse into the unknown paths that meander beyond the horizon. A vision, is a picture of what is to be. Certain people, placed in unique situations, have been burdened with visions directed toward their peculiar circumstance. Individuals have visions for their future although others can't quite see what they see. A father or mother is given a vision for the home he she leads. The great presidents of our country saw visions for America of the future, long before those who supported them even remotely understood what they were talking about. Pastors are given visions for their congregations that baffle those who hear them, to the point that they are often ridiculed because they seem so outrageously futile. The pictures are as clear as day, yet no one seems to grasp the full direction of where they are going. Those who have not been given a vision cannot see it. A natural response is to deny that such visions exists at all, and to dismiss them as the vain babblings of fools.

In art stores across the country there are some odd looking pictures that have appeared in the last few years. These pictures vivid types of a delicate art form that hides one picture beneath a maze of patterns, colors and forms that is recognizable only by a few. Many people buy these patterned pictures and hang them on the walls of their homes and shops. The become quaint conversation pieces. as friends stare at them trying to see the picture beneath the picture. Some squint and cross their eyes. Some place their heads against the picture. They even turn their heads to the side, or turn the picture up side down. They try very hard to see the elusive image. No matter how they try, there are some who can't seem to see what is there. Those who cannot see the hidden image are frustrated when others come and apparently with no trouble are able to see and describe it in intricate detail. Those who cannot see it, must trust the insight of those who can.

In a similar sense many of us can see God's vision for the future while others cannot. There is nothing wrong with those who can't see it, they simply have not been placed

in a position where they can see through a maze of patterns that hide the true picture of things to come. In such cases, God always provides a way for the vision to be seen and capitalized upon. In every generation God has visionaries. In every family there is a visionary. In the church God always provides one he has anointed with the vision. Those who cannot see it, should not deny that there is a hidden picture, but should trust God completely and pray that they too may be able to fully understand.

As Christians, we know we are not able to understand all of the workings of these times. However, we know that if we continue to trust God "farther along, we'll know all about it. Farther along we'll understand why." Until then, we who are "just" continue to walk by faith and not by sight.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Habakkuk as he is that God's promises may seem slow coming but they will come.

Historically the Jewish nation had been divided into to parts. Israel the Northern Kingdom, and Judah the Southern Kingdom. The Northern people had been destroyed by the Assyrians. They had threatened the Southern kingdom but were unsuccessful. The Southern kingdom was happy in its apparent success but it became evil and the prophet Habakkuk was given a vision from God about how God intended to resolve the situation.

Habakkuk saw the difficult times(1:3) Around him he saw violence, strife, contention, lawlessness and the success of the wicked over the righteous. He saw wrong judgments being made everywhere. They were confident of their security. They had made alliances with Egypt and were sure that the combined strength of the two nations could ward off any enemies. In their merriment they abandoned the word of God, depending heavily on the instruments of men. What Habakkuk saw disturbed him to the point that he complained to God about it.

God's response. God told Habakkuk that he would "work a work" in his life time that will seem unbelievable even to God's prophet, not to mention how it would sound to the people; but it will happen (1:5). A problem existed and God's solution to it was already in the works. The method he would use would be so completely unorthodox that it would be unbelievable. However, the novelty of his approach is what would make it succeed. God said he would raise up a nation called the Chaldeans (1:6). Chaldean is a term used for Babylonians because this the region in which they lived. They would be used to punish Judah for its sins. Although they are nonbelievers, evil in nature, terrible and dreadful God planned to use them to cause a day of judgment for his people. In the remaining verses of Chapter 1 Habakkuk describes the terror of the Babylonians and questions why God would use a nation that is worse than Judah to teach God's people a lesson. They would be used, came the answer, but their own treachery would destroy them, after God's purpose had been accomplished.

The Vision Given. In Chapter 2 God gives Habakkuk the vision of the rising of the

Babylonian Kingdom. The plan God revealed was not immediate, it was long ranged, but would happen in Habakkuk's lifetime. The injustices, wrong doing and problems that Habakkuk saw would be avenged as the vision came to fruition. It would be a slow, steady development until it was done. When it is finally realized the results will speak for themselves "and not lie." Though it appeared slow in coming "it will surely come."

They were warned that as the will God will began to work itself out, certain developments, counter attacks and slick moves would serve to discourage those who are faithful, they are reminded not to be discouraged at anything they see, because the just live by faith not by sight.

In the aftermath of the vision God raised a young Babylonian king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. His mighty armies moved toward Jerusalem and surrounded the city in a great siege. In the year 597 B.C. Jerusalem fell and every component of God's vision to Habakkuk was fulfilled, including the ultimate destruction of the infamous Babylonians who fell to the Persians.

Living by Faith

The declining state of morality in our nation often discourages some believers. We see so much crime, violence, murder and destruction that it becomes disturbing. In the African-American community we see our men disappearing from the leadership of our homes, church and community. We see drugs, lawlessness and a decimated family destroying us while many of our leaders fiddle as Rome burns.

In the text Israel was given a vision of God's plan, but they ignored it. Yet it came to be. He later sent Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Nehemiah and others with other visions that showed the people how God would raise them up again. Of course, many of the people not believe these visions either, they were beyond comprehension.

God has provided a vision for these times too. It is a vision that his been repeated in the New Testament for our modern times. There are three key words in verse 4 that contain these repeated truths:

Just. (Romans 1:17-28) Reminds believers that the wrath of God will be visited upon any person that is unrighteous. Despite the injustices they inflict upon everyone, those that know and trust God live by faith that he has a plan to resolve our problem. We cannot see it but, we know he has a plan. Others mock God's vision completely and "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Romans 1:22). Those who want to do right, trust God. Those who have difficulty trusting God develop their own plan and become fools in his sight.

Live. (Galatians 3:11) Reminds us that the key to real life is not in rituals and traditions and laws of men. Real life comes from believing and trusting in God continuously. God will not bless our lives because we trust in our rituals or rules, but because we trust him enough to live daily depending on his benevolence.

Faith (Hebrews 10:38) Reminds us that like Israel our salvation is in trusting in the Lord. We live by faith, however, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure

in him." God is not pleased with those who first step out on faith then turn back the hands of time to return to their former state. Those who live by faith do not go backwards but forward. Hebrews 10:39 says "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

What is faith? "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) It is the sum total of everything that we hope for, even though we cannot see how it will be done.

In today's time God has given a vision, those who hear of it and live by faith will follow God's plan. Those who trust in their own knowledge will develop their own plans in a futile effort that will get them nowhere.

It Will Surely Come

Finally, I'm reminded of a recent movie entitled "Field of Dreams." It depicted a man who heard a voice saying to him "If you build it, they will come." Moved by that moment the man built a huge baseball field in the middle of a corn field, miles from a city. Sure enough thousands came from miles around to see the great baseball game. While the character of the movie did not profess that the voice he heard came from God, it is strikingly similar to real life instance of God speaking to believers and charging them to do impossible sounding tasks, counting on faith alone.

Moses was charged to lead Israel out of Egypt. His only resource was a rod and a stubborn faith that God would make it happen. Though the people revolted against him, called him a dictator and tried to get rid of him, he marched forward with a vision of promised land in front him.

Noah was given the impossible task of building a ship on dry land and filling it with specimens of every living creature. How could this be done? How could the animals be found? Yet the answer seemed to come "if you build it, they will come!" So at age 600, Noah set out on a 100 year mission to build it, in faith that they would come." When the boat was completed, they came, two by two of every specimen on earth.

Solomon was charged to build a temple. Though Israel did not have the fine cedars needed or many things needed, he went on, not knowing where it would come from and soon the great building was erected. People came from all over Israel.

Has God given you a vision for your personal growth. Are you frustrated because no one seems to see it but you? Be sure what you see is from God, ask for confirmations, then step out on faith. If you build that dream, it will certainly come to pass.

Has God shown you a vision for your family? Can you see it as clear as day, but others think you are foolish? If you begin building on it in faith, it will surely come!

When God gives a vision for the church, build upon it, even though you can't see it will surely come!

When God gives a vision for your life, build upon it..if it's according to God's will, it will surely come!

Envision a day when our homes and churches will be overflowing with young men

who believe and trust in God..build upon it and it will surely come!

Envision a day when the Gospel message is preached into thousands of homes and souls by the thousands are pricked to serve God, build it and it will surely come!

Envision feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and ministering to the imprisoned. Build it and it will surely come!

Envision a generation of young people who enjoy drug free, clean, moral and chaste lives and do everything that is fun with their church family, build it, and it will surely come!

Envision a day when dead pews, will be jumping for Joy!

Envision a day when everything that hath breath will praise the Lord, and it will surely come!

I don't know about you but I've found out you can't trust people. Deacons will sometimes disappoint you. Trustees, ushers and choir members might let you down.I've found out that its best to trust in God.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I trust in God, wherever I may be. On mountain peak on or on the stormy sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me."

Though billows roll!

He keeps my soul!

My heavenly father, who sent his son to die on Calvary!

My heavenly father, who sends the holy spirit to sustain me!

My heavenly father watches over me!

No. 549-Inspiration

Stuck In The Mud

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 11, 1995

SCRIPTURE***:" He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:2-3***

Introduction

Have you ever been stuck in the mud? Most of us have some horror stories that we can tell about the time or two we were stuck in the mud. It may have been the time that our automobile became stuck and there was no help around. It may have been a time when our feet just lodged themselves in the mud and we couldn't get free. When we are stuck in the mud, we feel helpless. Very few times are we able to get out of the mud without doing something different.

Those who get out of the mud go through some changes to get out. Sometimes it's unbelievable. Consider Lying Larry's conversion. Lying Louie lived in what was described as the "mud" of life. He loved to drink, gamble, smoke and chase women. Anytime he was asked about any of his vices his response was always: "Not me, I wouldn't do a thing like that?" He'd lie and walk off. After many years of lying and living in the mud of life Larry decided to clean himself up and be baptized. Everybody watched with suspicion when Larry told the church that he was tired of the mud and wanted to clean up his life. They looked around to see what pretty woman he was trying to impress. No one could believe Lying Larry was telling the truth. On his baptizing day Lying Larry stood in line at the river. Lying Larry edged his way to the front of the baptism line in 25 degree December water. The people watched looking for a sign that Lying Larry was really saved. The preacher and deacons took hold to Lying Larry and took him under the water and held long enough to get the sin out. When he came up his face was blue. His teeth were clattering and ice was forming on his eyelids. The preacher asked: "Are you cold son?" Larry answered "No Sir!" Immediately the preacher said "This Negro is still lying, take him under again!" People who get out of the mud go through changes to get out.

When our automobiles get stuck in the mud, they need a little help to get out. What about us? We are no different! When we get stuck in the mud we need a little help too! Life's challenges often prove overwhelming sometimes, even for the best of us. Sometimes we take chances thinking we can make it through small puddles without

difficulty. Sometimes the ground is softer than we imagine. As a result, we get stuck. That is when we need a little help.

As Christians, we are not immune from getting stuck in the mud of life's concerns. However, we have access to a towing service that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When we are stuck in the mud, we call Jesus, because he a very present help in a time of trouble.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the joys of his relationship with God.

David lived a life that is best described as a spiritual roller coaster, complete with times of great faith and spiritual strength and other times of great weakness. Here he looks intently upon the way that God caught him at one of the weak moments in his life and lifted him to a new and better experience.

The allegory used in this text is that of a mud filled pit and rock.

In describing his spiritual state David said he had been in a horrible pit. In today's context, "horrible" connotes scary, insufferable, or terrifying. Today "horrible" suggest imminent danger and the presence of pain and suffering. However, a closer look at the word "horrible" in this passage reveals that it had an additional meaning in this specific instance, which was "noisy" or "confusion." The descriptive term preceding "pit" therefore suggests that David was in a pit of confusion, hearing the noise of many voices..The result of this confusion is great fear, which is the root cause of horror.

Moreover, the situation was further complicated because not only was he in a confused state, but his was standing in "miry" clay. "Miry" is distinguished from regular clay because the term "miry" means "dregs" or "muddy." His spiritual state had deteriorated to a point of reaching the "dregs." He was standing in the mud of life. It was unsure, unsafe and dangerous.

A third allegory is that of a rock.

David said his feet were placed upon a rock. There is no descriptive adjective preceding "rock" because it is not necessary. The meaning is in the word itself. Rock, in this context, is the Hebrew word "Cela" which means a high or lofty place. A fortress. David said God set his feet upon a rock. It is important to note that the rock upon which he stood was not in the mud, or in the pit, but it was outside the pit. In fact, it was high above the pit. In his struggle to get out of the pit, his feet did not find a rock in the middle of the mud. He was lifted out of his circumstance by a power outside the confusion and mud of the pit.

Thus David stood at a point in his life where he was confused by different voices or noises, caught in the dregs and mud of life. From this circumstance God lifted him to a new and joyous life, high above the pit and the mud. This experience gave him a new song to sing. It is a great testimony to the goodness of God because those who see it will know that it comes direct from God.

Pits and Puddles

Even the best person can find himself in a pit or puddle in life. These are the confusing moments in life when direction is unclear and signals are being received from all sides.

Today there are millions who are frustrated because of personal dilemma. They are confused by a myriad of voices giving conflicting instructions about what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and why. Sometimes the voices are those of parents and relatives. Sometimes it's a spouse. While family voices are saying one thing, our employers are giving different instructions. All of the voices coming simultaneously soon become a perplexing noise. Not only are we in a pit, but we have so many voices trying to tell us what to do that we don't know what to do. It's like being lost in a car without a road map and four passengers in the car start giving different directions trying to solve the problem. It's totally confusing.

Sometimes we can find ourselves in a low pit, besieged by the inner voices of indecision as we wrestle with personal doubts, and private issues that demand our response. The louder the circumstances yell for a response, the deeper we sink. Deeper the pit appears. Like David, our pit becomes a horrible pit.

We can also get miserably stuck in mud puddles. Often we innocently try to tiptoe through the mud thinking we can avoid the deep parts only to find that we have misjudged the situation. Unlike the pit, where we reach a low out of confusion, the puddle is usually something we stepped right into, thinking that we could get out.

What prompts us to walk or drive through the mud? If we know that we can get stuck, why do we keep going into the mud?

MISJUDGMENT: Often we misjudge the depth of the puddle. We conclude that it is too small to cause us any danger and we trudge right in. Many have been lured into the mud puddles of life thinking they had the capacity to remove themselves at will or that the wheel base of their vehicle was too large to be stuck in such small puddles. There are many alcoholics today who approach the puddle of alcohol consumption thinking they could skip through it without becoming an alcoholic. They found the puddle too deep and became stuck in the mud. Other drugs such as heroin and crack, posed the same invitation. The results, unfortunately, were the same, millions became addicted and stuck in the mud. Not just substance abuse, some have flirted with the idea of infidelity and have cheated on their wives or husbands, thinking they could stop, only to find themselves stuck in the mud of an adulterous relationship. Misjudgment has been the cause of many people being stuck in the mud, even big wheels.

CONVENIENCE: Sometimes we choose to go through the mud because it is convenient. Crossing a small puddle that lies between where we are and where we are trying to go seems less of an inconvenience than going around it. We often wind up in the mud trying to save time or make money. How many have brought trouble upon themselves taking short cuts. Whether it's the builder who contracts to construct a home with shoddy materials or the student who chooses to cheat on the test rather than learn the information, short cuts have caused millions of people to

become bogged down in the mud. Millions of people have been bogged down in the mud trying to make or save money by splashing through the mud. These are those who furnish their homes with stolen merchandise or cheat their friends and acquaintances for financial gain. It is easier to splash through the mud than it is to go around it.

IGNORANCE: It is possible to get stuck in the mud out of ignorance. These are those situations wherein we became stuck because we did not know the ground was muddy. These are the cases where we were deceived by appearances. Because of our deception we took steps into muddy areas and were stuck before we knew it. How many millions have become the victims of scams, pigeon drops, false sales pitches and a plethora of other shady deals without really knowing that they were getting into a muddy situations. They simply did not know.

Getting Out of the Mud

Finally, we must consider how to get out of the mud. Getting out of the mud is more difficult than getting in. If you are walking in mud, your shoe often sticks while your feet splash. If you are driving, your wheels spin splashing mud on everything behind it. Cars slide and spinning wheels make deeper holes. The more you spin the wheels, the deeper you sink.

Getting out of the mud is easier if there is assistance from someone, or something that is not a part of the mud. A car pulled or pushed enough for the tires to catch hold to something solid can get out of the mud. A person who is able to catch hold to a limb or hand can pull himself up and get out of the mud. It is difficult to get out of the mud without that extra push or extra hand.

Eventually even the best of us gets stuck in the mud! But there is good news! There is someone who is willing and able to lift us up from the mud and the mire! There is someone who is outside the mud and slime who can lift us and place our feet on solid ground.

When we get out of the mud the whole world knows you've been through the mud because there is mud on your shoes, pants, and dress tail. There is mud on your tires, fenders and bumpers. To get rid of the mud we go to a car wash or wash our hands and feet.

But I heard a song writer ask: "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

David said "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.....he put a new song in mouth!"

The new song we sing is a song of testimony!

The new song we sing is a song of witness: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry.

From the waters lifted me now safe am I.
Love lifted me!
Love Lifted me!
When nothing else could help, love lifted me!”

No. 550-Victory

He That Overcometh

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 19, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:57-58 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4-5; "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."Rev 21:7***

Introduction

How would you like to participate in an event in which you were guaranteed to be a winner? Wouldn't that be great? Suppose you knew in advance that your team was going to win the Super Bowl, World Series, or an NBA Championship? What about Wimbledon, The Indianapolis 500? Suppose you knew, without any doubt, the name of the next President of the United States? Such knowledge would be wonderful, valuable and enriching to say the least. There are many who have attempted to enrich themselves by fixing the outcome of such events. Players have been bribed to shave points and throw fights. Candidates have been "convinced" to drop out of political races to change the outcome. Those who control the outcome of an event have a great advantage because the element of risk is eliminated. Some stake their entire fortunes on the outcome of such events, when they are assured that the "fix is in." Fixing the outcome of an event is illegal, unless of course, the one that is "fixing" the outcome is God himself.

Those who believe and trust in God are living fixed lives. The outcome of the Christian life is already fixed and determined. We already know what the end will be! When Henry "Hank" Aaron stood at bat with the world watching him, there were butterflies in his stomach. The national media was watching to see if he could break the home-run record of the legendary Babe Ruth. It was an especially important moment for Aaron because he had risen from the humble ranks of the Negro Leagues to the point of becoming a legend in Baseball history. When the pitch came, "Hank" made a powerful swing and sent the ball sailing high into the air and into the stands. Although the ball was off the playing field, the scoreboard did not register his home run. Everyone knew that it was a home run. Everyone knew that Babe Ruth's record had been broken, but "Hank" had to run the bases and touch home base before the

score could count. So, as the fans cheered "Hank" made his rounds, touching each base and finally touching the home plate. When he touched home, the scoreboard reflected what everyone knew the moment the ball left the park: The Babe's record had been broken, the victory was won!

So it is with the Christian life. We already know that we have the victory, because Christ who batted for us out on Calvary, knocked defeat out of the park. The home-run won't count however until we run the bases, one by one and finally touch the home plate.

As Christians, we know what our end will be! Therefore we are encouraged to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain! We already have the victory, because Jesus has insured it through his life, death and resurrection!

Exposition

This text focuses on three passages of scripture that tell believers that a victory is assured, describes its recipients, and tells what they shall receive.

In Corinthians Paul reassures believers that each has a right to expect victory over every enemy and foe. This was written in the context of great persecution of Christians by both Gentiles and Jews. They were ostracized, humiliated and suffered great losses of freedom and property. Many lost their lives. Many worried about whether their sacrifices were in vain.

Repeatedly, Paul reminded all believers that no obstacle they encountered would stop them from achieving victory because Christ had insured it through his life, death and resurrection. That even applied to death. When the Romans were concerned about the same problem Paul wrote in Romans 8:35-37 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

He encouraged the Corinthians to continue doing the work of the Lord with the full knowledge that their labor is not in vain, but would be rewarded by Christ who has guaranteed the victory to every believer.

Saint John, in his epistle, identifies those who are guaranteed the victory. Generally, those individuals that are "born of God" are the victorious. To be born of God is to have the mysterious rebirth that Christ spoke of to Nicodemus as he reminded him that to enter the kingdom of God he must be "born again."

According to John, those who are born into the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus Christ, are those who are guaranteed the victory.

In Revelation, after the tribulation and the judgment, John saw the reward of the believers. Jesus revealed to him the events of the last seven years of this world, called the tribulation. He also showed him the events of the Millennium, the thousand reign of Christ. Beyond that however, John saw the eventual reward of all believers.

John saw believers inheriting all things. What does "all things" include? Paul writing to the Philippians described "things" suitable for Christians as: "...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.." Philippians 4:8 John saw believers in triumph sharing in every good thing in the kingdom of heaven. Since his vision was a vision of future events, the outcome has already been planned and prepared. It is simply waiting for believers to claim. Combined, these three texts suggest to believers that Christ and his kingdom will be victorious in the end. Those who believe and trust in him will overcome, despite any difficulties they endure on this earth. Their reward has already been prepared in glory, consisting of every good thing that is imaginable.

The Fix Is In

Faced with the growing mass of social evils in this world it is easy to be overwhelmed by the weight of the problem. It is easy to simply throw up your hands in defeat and resignation. Problems are not diminishing, they seem to be increasing. Those who are not grounded in the word of God could easily be disillusioned by the events of our times. However, believers are not disillusioned because we know that the social evils that we see must be. At the same time we know what the outcome will be.

Concerned about social conditions, Christ warned his disciples that many problems are imminent, but not to be dismayed by them.

In Matthew 24:6-8 we are clearly warned when Christ says: " And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

Though this seems to be a gloomy picture, we are assured when we learn that the fix is in for believers. Verse 13 reads: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

No matter the difficulty, we who are faithful should endure, for the final outcome will greatly benefit us.

Who Shall Overcome

Who is the man or woman that overcomes? Is overcoming simply longevity? Living a long time but doing nothing with a life is rusting, not overcoming! What is overcoming?

Overcoming is "enduring service, despite adverse circumstances, that achieves a desired end." He that overcomes doesn't just sit down and rust, but he or she works. That's why Paul in the text says: be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

That which discourages is not always something outside of your circumstance. Sometimes, that which discourages you the most is something that is happening in you, or happening to you. Sometimes its not the crime, violence, hunger and poverty around us that discourages us, but its our inability to respond because we are hurting emotionally or physically. When you can't move like you want to move, it can sometimes discourage even the best of the Saints.

Paul was constantly plagued by what he described as a "thorn in the flesh." Whether this was a physical ailment or the constant presence of evil around him is often debated, but what is sure is that it bothered him. Three times he asked God to remove it, and his answer was the same "My Grace is Sufficient." (2 Corinthians 12:9) We do not over come if there is no struggle. If God moves every obstacle then there is nothing to overcome. Those who desire to enjoy the rewards without the struggle would change the words of the song "Lord Don't Move That Mountain." They would say "Lord move the mountain, I don't feel like climbing it. Please move that stumbling block, I don't feel like going around it." The great African-American statesman Frederick Douglass wrote: "Without Struggle There can be no progress. He that wants progress without struggle wants the rain without the thunder and lighting." John said the man or woman that overcomes believes in Christ, and is committed to building the kingdom every day of his or her life.

What The End Shall Be

Finally, we must consider the reward of those who overcome. The final triumph of those who work constantly in the vineyard in hope of the great reward. The old warriors sing a song that says "I believe I run on and see what the end will be.." While it is a familiar tune, the song is actually a misnomer because we who know the Lord, already know what the end shall be!

We may not know the day or the hour, but we know what the end shall be!

We may not know the minute or the second, but we know what the end shall be! I hear John declaring in Revelation 2:11 He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. We may not know the time of day, but we know what the end shall be. Revelation 2:26 "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:" We may not know when its coming, but we know what the end shall be!

Rev 3:5 He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

I like that "I will" because that's the fuel of the Christian's faith, the "I wills" of God. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "thou hast been faithful of a few things, and I will make you Lord over many.."

Run on, but don't be discouraged for Jesus said in John 14:18 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Storms may rise! But he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here!

He that overcometh will keep telling the story! He'll keep telling the world about Calvary!

One of these days Jesus, who died on Golgotha's hill, and rose after three days and nights, is coming back again!

I just want to hear him put his hands on my shoulder and declare!

Servant!

Servant!

Well done!

Well done!

No. 551-Youth

A Close Cut In the Wrong Barber Shop

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 26, 1995

*SCRIPTURE:"**And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. Judges 16:19-20***

Introduction

Have you ever had to get your hair styled of cut by someone other than your own barber? Did it come out the way you expected? Did you give the right name but the cut didn't seem to look just right? Today, it's extremely important to go to the right barber shop. The right head in the wrong barber's chair could be a disaster. The era of simple air cuts has passed. Those who have men in their homes know those simple cuts such as Ivy Leagues are in a class by themselves. A man from the boogie woogie era who makes the mistake of sitting in a New Jack barber chair could come out with a high top fade, low fade, ramp, box cut, duck tail, Mississippi Side Walk or a Michael Jordan Fling! If you want the right cut it's important to go to the right barber shop and get in the right chair!

It's important to get in the right chair. Consider the man who had an argument with his wife and worried about whether she would forgive him. All day he worried because she appeared unusually angry. She wasn't speaking to anyone and her mood appeared somber. When the man got home, he looked for signs that might show how his wife felt. A few minutes after he got home, he called a friend and with excitement said: "I know my wife has forgiven me, she bought me an electric tooth brush and left it in the bath room all wrapped in ribbons." Immediately he felt more comfortable. When he turned around, he saw another gift wrapped in a beautiful paper and topped by a red ribbon. He called his friend again and said: "I know she has forgiven me, my wife gave me another present, this time it it's an electric razor!" When he made it to his living room he called his friend the third time and said "I know she must have forgiven, she has given me an electric toothbrush and an electric razor, but guess

what? She's topped it all off by giving me giant electric chair!" It's definitely important to watch the chair!

Satan is working hard to get believers, especially young believers to sit in the wrong chair! His intent is to give each believer a cut so close that they won't be recognized as children of the king. Therefore we must constantly be on guard, that we do not fall victim to Satan's tactics.

As Christians we are constantly aware that Satan is working to break our relationship with God. We must resist every attempt, stirring away from tempting situations, such that our relationship with God is not adulterated! As Satan invites, lets resolve to resist and give God our best!.

Exposition

This text focuses on Samson, a young man whose purpose in life was cut short because he allowed himself to be separated from the source of his power.

Samson is heralded as the strongest man that ever lived. His feats of strength were unparralled. He picked up the gates of a city and carried them away. He caught 300 foxes and tied torches in their tails and loosed them in the fields of his enemies. He killed a lion with his bare hands. He killed thousands of Philistines, including one instance when he killed over a thousand using the jawbone of a donkey as his weapon.

He was born with a purpose and dedicated as a Nazirite. Israel was dominated by the Philistines and Samson was chosen by God to accomplish the great purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine Domination. He was consecrated by his parents before his birth to become a Nazirite. The Nazirite's vow had two forms. One was based on a vow by the individual for a specific period; the other was a lifelong devotion prompted by God making special revelations to the parents before the child is born.

Nazirite's were noted for three things. They never cut their hair, drank wine, and avoided contact with any dead things. These were symbols of their devotion to God. If, by chance, a Nazirite broke his vow in any way he was to generally shave his head for seven days and then make a peace offering before the Lord and begin his vows all again(Numbers 6:1-21). No special strength or power came from being a Nazirite. Any special gifts they exercised came because of God being with them.

Among the best known Nazirites of the bible are: Samuel (1 Samuel 1), John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17) and Paul who took the Nazirite's vow for a short period (Acts 18:18).

Although Samson was a Nazirite, he did not live a devoted life. He was careless in his vow. He broke two of his vows frequently but guarded the third, intently, the cutting of his hair. Though he was dedicated to God, he show little more than ceremonial devotion to God. While he rose to fight the Philistines as a Judge or leader of Israel, each instance was really the result of his exploits with Philistine women.

While he had a huge physical frame, his actual strength came from the presence of God in his life. When he did mighty works, it was because God was with him. The

less he allowed God to use his life, the weaker he became. His final downfall came when he became fascinated with Delilah. The lords of the Philistines offered her eleven hundred pieces of silver from each of them to find out the source of Samson's strength. Although she failed three times, finally, she coaxed the truth from him. As he lay asleep on her lap she called in the Philistine Barbers who cut off the seven locks of his hair.

He had broken his vows. Shaving his head was the thing to do, but he was in the wrong place for the wrong reason. He got the right cut, but was in the wrong barber shop. Samson was captured and blinded. On the day of his capture he rose to fight as usual but he "wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

While Samson killed many Philistines, he never accomplished his purpose of freeing Israel from domination. His dying act of faith displayed what he could have been, had he allowed God to use him throughout his life.

Cutting Off The Power

Today we are dangerously close to becoming what Elton Trueblood described as a "cut-flower" civilization. He reasoned that a flower once cut retains its beauty for a while but then begins to lose its beauty because it has been separated from that which gives it life. We are becoming increasingly less focused on our relationship to God. The spiritual lives of too many people have been reduced to the performance of ritual, void of prayer, bible study and real devotion to God.

The picture of Samson being cut off from his power source is demonstrative of Trueblood's cut-flower idea. It is also symbolic of the plight of people that allows themselves to be cut off from God by worldly influences.

Youth especially should be keenly aware of the importance of maintaining a close relationship with God. It is easy, in youth, to become overwhelmed with youth itself. Strength, beauty, swiftness, quick thought, long memory, and great dreams are all part of being young.

These natural tendencies, when empowered by the spirit of God, go even further. God puts wings on the feet of the runner who lives close to him, such that he runs like chariots of fire. The singer whose voice reaches extraordinary heights, goes even higher, when God is with her. The artist sees the hidden beauty of the sunset when God guides his eyes. The writer and story teller makes great truths plain when God tells the story. God's spirit empowers believers who should not allow themselves to be separated from their power source. Christian youth are connected to their power source by: Regular Bible Study, Worship, and Moral Living. These are essentially the Christian youth's life vow to God. These symbolize a young Christian's devotion to God. His power does not come from mere participation or observance of certain customs, but from his private comittment to live for God. As that comittment diminishes, it reflects itself in the symbols.

Just as Samson's power was not in his hair, neither is the Christian's power in the symbols themselves. With Samson, his complete devotion to his purpose and to God

was gone, long before his hair was cut. While he was laying on Delilah's lap, he still had his hair, but his devotion to God was gone. It was just a matter of time before the hair would go too. Even though his hair grew back quickly, it wasn't until he renewed his devotion to God did he renew his real strength.

There are many who still participate in the ritual of religion, but it really has no meaning. They come to Sunday School, but rarely read the lesson before they come. They participate in worship, but idle their time away writing notes, cracking mumbled jokes, drawing pictures, or sleep. The respect some have for moral living extends as far as the eye of the nearest chaperon. For too many, devotion to God is already gone. All is left are the dangling braids of symbolic service, which the world is waiting to snip away.

The power of the Christian life is not in the ritual. It is not in sitting in a Sunday School class, or enduring a worship service, or in singing a hymn that we secretly consider boring. The power is in our devotion to God that is the secret of our strength.

When God is With You

When Samson rose he "wist not" that God had left him. It is a frightening thing for anyone whose talents or skill has been blessed by the power of God and then discover that "something is missing!"

Samson knew instantly what was missing, God had left him!

Brothers and Sisters, terrible things happen in your life if God leaves you!

If God leaves you, your:

—Happiness turns into sadness; Joy turns into sorrow!

—Victories become defeats; Strength turns into weakness!

—Home becomes a house; Husband is reduced to just another man!

—Upward climb becomes a downward fall!

When God is in your life, beyond just rituals and symbolic religion, things are different.

When God was with Saul he conquered enemies and rose to fame, but when God left him, he fell on his own sword!

When God was with David he became a man after God's own heart, but when God left him, he lost the joy of his salvation!

When God is really in your life he takes your:

—Despair and turns it into delight; Failure and turns it into success

—Loneliness and turns it into friendship; Hatred and turns it into love!

—Shame and turns it into glory; sin and turns it into salvation!

Jesus is a mighty powerful God!

Jesus is a very present help in a time of trouble!

Jesus is like American Express you should "never leave home without him!"

No wonder the song writer declares "Without God I could do nothing, without him I'd surely fail. Without him I would be drifting, like a ship without a sail"

Another song writer put it this way: "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord!...I

can’t even wave my hand, without the Lord!”
Everyday of my life I’ve got to tell the story!
Tell the world about Jesus!
Tell the world about Calvary!
I’ve got to tell somebody that he died and he lives today!

No. 552-Inspiration

Who Is This?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Matthew 16:13

Introduction

Do you ever get the impression that people don't see you the way you see yourself? Is it possible to see yourself as intelligent, while others think you are a lame brain? Is is possible to see yourself as the beauty, while others see you as the beast. Is it possible to see yourself as worthless, while others see you as a diamond in the rough. As a general rule people rarely see themselves as others see them. On some occasions our self concept is directly the opposite of our actions. Sometimes, because we are so close to ourselves, we can't see it, but our friends can. Everyone is curious to know how others perceive them and on occasion seek public opinion. Sometimes we like what we hear. Sometimes we don't.

Consider the townspeople of Donowrong City. They had great pride in the fact that theirs was the only town in America that had fine upright, law abiding, truth telling, God fearing people who did absolutely no wrong. In fact that was their claim to fame. Protecting their image, folks of a different color, religion, or who didn't like chewing tobacco, hunting dogs or blue grass music weren't allowed. They hired no police officers because there was no crime. There were no locks on any doors, no jails and no unrighteousness of any sort. Curious, people from all around came to visit Donowrong City. Here, at last, appeared to be an honest set of people, and folks from everywhere just wanted to see how such a place operated.

One day the people of Donowrong City were upset. Tourists were coming to town and looking at each of them strangely. Sometimes they got in small groups and laughed, much to the consternation of the proud people of Donowrong City.

As days went by and the townspeople found themselves increasingly the object of stares and chuckles. The town mayor mustered enough nerve to ask the visitors what they found so amusing. "It's your sign" said one woman who was truly amused. "What about our sign?" Asked the mayor. The woman laughed as she walked him to the outskirts of the town and showed the town's welcome sign. They mayor read the familiar sign out loud: "Welcome to Donowrong City, population 300, God fearing, bible tot'n, and crime free" But to the mayor's surprise someone had added a hand

painted line that read 27 dog, 18 cats, 2 gold fish, and one self righteous hypocrite. Find him if you can"
Outraged, the mayor called all the townspeople together in a meeting. He demanded to know how anyone could insinuate that Donowrong City could have a hypocrite as a citizen. He demanded to know the identity of the person responsible for the line. An old man seated in a corner answered the mayor this way: "If its the truth you seek, in the mirror take a peek, and there you will find the one described in the line."
As Christians we constantly search ourselves to make sure that we are becoming what God wants us to be. We don't claim to be more than we are, but we keep looking at what we will become. Sometimes we are not what we seem. In our weak moments we even doubt ourselves. Then we remember the words of the song that says "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet. When God gets through, I shall come forth as pure Gold."

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he enters the coast of Caesarea Philippi, surrounded by his disciples. Constantly plagued by doubters and detractors, there were always people asking "Who is this?

In Luke 5:21 the scribes and the Pharisees asked "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"
In Luke 9:9 Herod said, "John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him."

Even Saul on the road to Damascus, when stricken by a blinding light asked "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5) People were always asking "who is this?" They studied Jesus with curiosity, to try to learn who he was and what he came to do.

Christ inquired of those who followed him closely as to their impression of him. The answers Christ received reflected both reluctance and faith. Those who were reluctant, did not tell about their own beliefs but chose to report what others believed while keeping their own beliefs behind a thin veil. The answers were that " Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.(Matthew 16:14). This was interesting because John the Baptist had recently been beheaded by King Herod at the request of a dancer. While John was a vocal personality, preached against wrong doing and baptized, he was not claiming the same things that Christ claimed, which was sonship with God. In all of his great work John claimed no miracles. Elias had been carried to glory in a chariot. He made no great promise of returning, but only left his mantel and a double portion of his miracle working faith to his understudy Elisha. In all of his great works, Elijah never claimed to be a savior, redeemer or a promised Messiah, yet the people thought Jesus was Elias returned. While Jeremiah was a great prophet of ancient Israel whose writings of prophecy about the future of Israel were unequaled, precise and true, there was never any inference on his part that one day he would return.

The comparison between Jesus and these great men indicated what the people saw,

which was the superficial and not the great design. They heard the things John the Baptist said, the miracles the Elijah preformed and the prophetic power of Jeremiah and instantly concluded that Jesus must be from this set. They did not see the purpose of any of those they named. Jeremiah prophesied about the sins of Judah and his purpose was to warn them of God's anger. Elijah's purpose was to stand tall for God amidst a generation led by the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel. John the Baptist's purpose was to announce to an entire generation that the Messiah was coming. He was not the saviour but a forerunner that would bear witness to his coming. Not only did "some" not understand the nature of Jesus' mission, but they didn't understand the prophets and their ultimate purpose either. Jesus was characterized on their level, as one who was doing mighty works and drawing great crowds, like John, Elijah and Jeremiah.

Jesus sensed that his disciples were evading and asked clearly: "But whom say ye that I am?" The answer would have to be personal. Not what others think or say, but what they thought personally. In answer to the question Peter rose to affirm his belief that Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be, the son of God. Whether Peter spoke for himself or for all of the disciples is debatable. What is sure is that he spoke what he believed, that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God.

Dual Personalities

Many years ago there was a television program called "To Tell The Truth." It featured three individuals who attempted to fool contestants about their identity. Each would answer questions from contestants that would give clues about their real identity. After a short period the host would ask the "real" one to please stand up. Often the contestants were surprised that the ones they had chosen had successfully fooled them into believing that they were something other than themselves.

Today, the world is asking the question "Will the real Christian please stand up?" When that question is asked there may be a lot of chair shuffling, but only those who are doers of the word of God can really stand.

If we were judged by our conversation, most of us could easily be identified as Christians. In our conversations, bible studies and Sunday School classes, we expound on the theory of Christianity. We speak of love, service to mankind, forgiveness and compassion. These three virtues are indicative of the Christian experience. If we could be identified as Christians by our Sunday school discussions or philosophical exchanges, most of us could "stand up."

However, we are not judged so much by the theory that we subscribe to but by our actions. While there is a level of importance placed upon verbal testimony in scripture, it is expected that our testimony will be backed up by our actions. Emphasizing this point Jesus, in Matthew 7:20-23 said: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many

will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The only aspect of our lives that identifies us as Christian is the fact that we are willing to do the will of God. Those who are unwilling to do his will find themselves posing and masquerading as Christians but will be unable to stand up at the final roll call. It's the church in action, carrying out the will of God that identifies us as Christians. It is the church responding to the hunger of the masses with food for both the body and spirit, that shows us to be a people willing to put our faith in action. One of the tell-tale signs of a church's priorities is its budget. The money usually supports those areas that are considered of real importance. Unfortunately, an increasing number of churches expend much of their resources on items not related to service to others. Jesus makes it clear that it is not so much our fine, dignified and orderly worships that will identify us to our Lord but our service to others. That will be the premium. Without service we will stand before the judgment bar and hear the savior say "who is this?" or "I know you not!"

Knowing Jesus

It will be extremely difficult to do the will of God if we do not first know God for ourselves. In no uncertain terms, we must know the master. We must be able to affirm without a doubt that we know the Lord.

Those who know the Lord do not speak from second hand experience. They speak from their own experience. Those who know the Lord do not tell what God has done for their neighbors or friends, they testify of goodness in their own lives.

They testify in the words of the old warriors, "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried him for myself!"

Peter stood and answered Jesus with an affirmative response: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God!"

Likewise, those who know the Lord can testify to who he is.

Lazarus can testify that he was in a grave for four days, but he heard a voice that spoke to him in death, Lazarus come forth.

The blind man can testify that he met the Lord wandering in darkness, but he touched his eyes and he was able to see.

The lame man can testify that after 38 years of stumbling and trying he found healing for his legs when Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk.

When we answer the question who is this? We should be able to tell the world that he is the one who stepped into our lives and brought:

—Sunshine to replace the rain; noon days to replace the midnights;

—Smiles to replace the frowns; and consolations instead of loneliness

When we meet God and know him for ourselves, sometimes it's hard to explain to others, although we know he's real in our lives. Maybe that's what the song writers had in mind when they wrote: "Yes God is real for I can feel him in my soul!"

Another testified by saying “I met God one morning, soul feeling bad. Heart heavy laden with a bowed down head. He lift my burden and made me so glad. All that I know, there is something within.”

Who is he? He is my all and all!
Who is He? He is the king of kings!
Who is He? He is the Lord of Lords!
Who is He? He is the one who died out on Calvary but rose in glory!
Who is He? They call him Jesus, the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star!
Jesus!
Jesus!
He’s my friend!

No. 553-Palm Sunday

When It's Hard To Hold Your Peace

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 8, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.Matthew 20:30-31; And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out Luke 19:40; Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD..Psa 150:6***

Introduction

Have you ever had a great experience and found that you had to tell somebody! Did you tell your friend? Did you tell a relative a great distance away. The very nature of great moments is that they are worthy of being shared with others. It is difficult to keep a good thing secret! No matter how you try, when something good happens it just comes out. Gold miners in California should "Gold!" In Alaska they should "Eureka!" In Texas they shouted "Oil!" Whatever the source of the joy, it is extremely difficult in such moments to hold your peace.

Consider the children who decided to play church. Imitating their parents, they spent an enormous amount of time arranging the chairs, paying particular care that they were evenly aligned. Once done they sat quietly in their respective areas. Some, with arms folded, looked down. Others stared into space with deep thought and still others sat quietly. After 30 minutes they got up from their chairs, congratulated themselves on how still and proper they sat and went home. The children played church in this manner for quite a while. However, one Sunday their parents happened by and watched them as they sat quietly in their chairs. One parent asked: "Children, what are you doing?" The children answered in a rather formal tone: "Why isn't it obvious, we are playing church?" As they answered the parent noticed that there was one child tied to a chair with a handkerchief in her mouth. When asked to explain, the child responded: "She's one of the noisy Baptists. If we take that handkerchief out of her mouth, she'll be shouting and yelling " praise the Lord" and clapping her hands and will destroy the quietness of our service." At that the children sat and

resumed playing church in their dignified way. Twenty-five years later, those same children entered their beautiful church sanctuary. The seats were beautifully arranged. They assumed their positions and quietly listened. But as the minister mentioned the goodness of the Lord, one woman started to moving around. Finally, unable to contain herself she jumped and shouted: "I know we're supposed to be playing church, you can tape my mouth if you want to, I just can't hold my peace, Jesus is real!"

As Christians, we know the joy of the Lord. It is extremely difficult for those who know him to keep it to ourselves. When we think of the goodness of the Lord we can't keep it to ourselves.

Exposition

These passages of scripture illustrate the response of people who have found the Lord in an exciting way.

The text New Testament texts occur on and just before Palm Sunday, the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. Palm Sunday, by tradition, is one week before the resurrection or Easter Sunday.

The two texts illustrate the attitude of people before they find the Lord and after they find the Lord. In Luke 18 Jesus on his way to Jerusalem was followed by a huge multitude. As he walked, he passed a blind man sitting beside the road and immediately the blind man began to shout out "Have mercy on us O Lord!" The blind man shouted so loud that the multitude "rebuked" him and told him to hold his peace. Sensing that he was in the presence of God, the blind man shouted louder and louder. Evidently his shouting made Jesus stand still in his tracks because he stopped and healed the blind man.

The attitude of the multitude that had followed Jesus was philosophical. They followed him to hear the richness of his teaching and out of curiosity. They had seen him bless little children. They had heard his discussion with the rich young ruler. The even listened quietly as he talked of his approaching death. However, after they saw the blind man receive his sight there was a new attitude in this quiet crowd. Verse 43 says after being healed that the blind man followed Jesus glorifying him and praising God. He was making plenty of noise. When the people saw what God had done they no longer told him to be quiet they joined him in praising God themselves for the text says "..the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

Their attitude did not change after that moment. They followed him as he made his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Luke 19:37 described their deportment in this way: "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen"; Most of this multitude was the same people who had followed him from Jericho. The quiet folks had become noisy because of what they had seen. It was too wonderful to be constrained by formal rules they noised their joy abroad.

Thus, Jesus in verse 40 said if the multitude, after having seen the great and

powerful works of the Lord forced themselves to remain silent that the very rocks themselves would cry out in respect and recognition of his greatness. In saying this, Jesus underscored the utter futility of expecting those who had seen evidence of or have benefited from the power of God to keep silent.

David whose life had been touched by God in a mighty way concluded that everyone and everything on earth should praise God for his mighty works. He suggested that musical instruments, dance and every other form of expressions should lend itself to the praise of God for his excellence and for his greatness. David concluded that everything that hath breath should praise the Lord!

Combined, these texts show that the excellent work of God deserves praise. Noisy praise. Loud praise. For he is great and his mercy endureth forever!

Something to Shout About

Every where Christ went he gave the people something to shout about! They followed him philosophically and marveled at his intellect. However, when they witnessed a mighty out pouring of his work with their own eyes, they had something to shout about! When he came into Jerusalem, they had seen his mighty works and were praising him loudly and openly. He had given them a reason to praise him.

Even today as the Lord makes a triumphant entry into the lives of believers, each of us who know him, has something to shout about. We who have witnessed his power and mighty works close up know that he has done great things for us and in us. We have something to shout about!

The people of Jerusalem shouted because they had witnessed a mighty work of God for themselves.

They shouted “Hosanna” also because they expected Jesus to do even more in Jerusalem.

Similarly, we shout praises to God for what we have seen him do in the past, and because we expect him to do more in the future.

Rituals, tradition and the opinions of society often have the net effect of reducing the praise that saints give to God. Those who have a formal education should be careful that what we have learned in academic circles about order and decorum does not muzzle our ability to praise God. In academia, we sit quietly and listen. We are taught to listen intently, take note, and avoid any verbal responses doing a presentation. At the end of a presentation academia teaches that it is appropriate to with applause and to give standing ovations. When a presentation is exceptionally pleasing, academia suggests that a few shouts of “encore” are tolerable, but not too many.

In religious circles, it gets terribly difficult to praise God by academic standards. Those who have seen his mighty works tend to say “Amen” in places that academically inappropriate but spiritually well placed. They tend to shout their approval of God instantly instead of waiting to the end. Instead waiting until the end of a song to express their appreciation and joy, they sometimes stand during the song,

clap their hands, stomp their feet, and sing along! Although academia suggests that the appropriate phrase is “Bravo!” They’d rather say “Praise the Lord.” Instead of “Encore” some saints will yell to the speaker:”Make another round! “When saints who know the Lord come within his presence, they have problems holding their peace. Though they try to follow the rules, it’s just hard to hold your peace!

When it’s Hard to Hold Your Peace

When is it the hardest to hold your peace? It is the hardest to hold your peace when something good has happened in your life and you feel compelled to tell someone.

When Jesus met a man filled with devils and removed them, the man wanted to follow Jesus and tell the world. Although Jesus told him to go home and tell his family what had been done the man just couldn’t keep it to himself. He went home but he told the whole city. (Luke 8:39)

When Jesus met a deaf man who also had a speech impediment he put his fingers in his ears, touched his tongue and healed him. After the healing, Jesus told him not to tell anybody about what was done. However, the man had a problem holding his peace. Mark 7:36 “And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;” he couldn’t hold his peace!

These were some of the hardest commands that Jesus gave: to hold their peace! Some did what they were asked, but most found that it was hard to hold their peace!

When the Lord has done a mighty work in your life, it’s hard to hold your peace!

When you have felt the chilly fingers of death creep into your family, and watched how God replaced them with his warm and compassionate hand, it’s hard to hold your peace!

When you have experienced the low side of life and have discovered the joy of salvation, something stirs inside you. Like the woman at the well you want to shout “come see a man!” It’s hard to hold your peace!

When you have failed miserably and the power of God gives you a second chance in life, it’s hard to hold your peace!

When you labor under the burden of life’s heavy load and the power of God lightens your load and lifts your bowed down head, it’s hard to hold your peace!

When you think about the goodness of God, it’s hard to hold your peace!

It’s hard to hold your peace when you remember how the Lord took your:

—Misery and turned it into delight; Failure and turned it into success!

—Weaknesses and turned them into strengths; Fear and turned into courage!

—Sad times and turned them into good times; Sorrow and turned it into joy!

Though the world says keep silent, everything within the saints says: high school diploma or not; college degree or not; PHd or no degree, I’ve got to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

I’ve got to tell somebody about Calvary!

I’ve got to tell somebody that he rose after three days!

No. 554-Easter

As He Said...

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 16, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matthew 28:6***

Introduction

Do you know anyone who bit off more than they could chew? "Biting off more than you can chew" is a colloquialism that means a person took on a responsibility he was not able to fulfill. Often we make promises that we cannot keep. These are the times that we say what we'll do later, but know while we are saying it that it can't be done. Whenever we promise to do the impossible or the improbable, we may be guilty of biting off more than we can chew.

While there are some who make promises they can't keep their are others who go out of their way to keep their word. Some have lost their lives, liberty and personal ambitions because they chose to keep their word.

The story is told of a family that moved into a new community. They were promptly visited by two elders and the pastor of a nearby church who cordially invited them to attend the services on the Lord's Day. The man assured them that he would come just when he straightened out. Several months passed, and he still hadn't put in an appearance, so the minister called again and repeated his invitation. But he received the same reply. The fellow hadn't yet gotten everything straightened out, but he'd be there just as soon as he did. A few weeks later he died, and his widow asked to have the funeral services in the church. The preacher graciously agreed. It was indeed a sad affair. Later when a member of the congregation asked the pastor if the man was a Christian, he answered, "He never attended services here, and no one can recall ever hearing him give a testimony of his faith in Christ, so I can't say. I only know he was a man of his word. He promised to come to church just as soon as he got straightened out — and he did!" At least he kept his word.

Exposition

This text focuses on the words of the angels as they told the women who came to the tomb that Christ had kept his word and was truly risen from the grave.

Christ rose from the grave in keeping with his own prophecy that he would rise which

was given on numerous occasions. The angels, noting his resurrection, tagged a parenthetical phrase to the end of their pronouncement. “As he said.” This was a reminder to the women that the empty tomb was not by chance, but by design.

Christ said many things with respect to his destiny. Sometimes what he said was vague in nature and could be misunderstood. When the Jews asked him for a sign of his deity, he told them in John 2:19 “..Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” They mistook what he said to mean rebuilding the temple of Zerrubabel and Herod in three days, when he actually meant reclaiming his life after three days. They may not have understood what he meant at the moment, but his prophecy that he would rise was still true.

While some of what Christ said was vague, there were other things he said about the resurrection that were as clear as day. In Mark 8:31 he told his disciples that after three days he would rise again.”And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” In Matthew 12:40 he said as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights so would he stay in the earth.

Even his enemies remembered what he said. In Matthew 27:63 the scribes and Pharisees went to the authorities and pointed out that he said he would be in the grave three days and three nights, therefore they wanted a guard put around the tomb to prevent his disciples from taking his body and claiming that he had risen.

Jesus told his followers and skeptics that his deity would be confirmed by the rabbinical “third day” test. According to Jewish custom, a person’s death was followed by three days and three nights of mourning. They were called the “Days of Weeping.” These three days of weeping were followed by four days of lamentation, making a full week of mourning.

The Rabbis also taught that at death that a person’s spirit walked around inside the tomb trying to get back in his body. After three days however, the spirit left and corruption set in. Death was not officially confirmed until after three days and nights.

Therefore, Jesus said his resurrection would occur after three days and nights to remove any doubts from the minds of skeptics that he had actually died.

Early Sunday morning, after three days and three nights in the grave, Jesus rose, just as he said.

What he promised he delivered.

What Has He Said About Us?

The significance of the resurrection to modern believers is that it confirms that everything that Jesus predicted would happen, concerning his own life. actually happened, just the way he said it would. That is significant because if he had not been able to fulfill prophecy relating to himself, then he will not be able to fulfill promises that he made for to others.

The resurrection proved that Jesus was not simply “biting off more than he could chew.”

Today the resurrection should reassure Christians that the promises Christ has made to believers are not empty but are valid and viable because he has always done exactly what he said

The empty tomb reminded those in Jerusalem that Christ did as he said, today it should remind us that because Christ still lives we have renewed hope that he will do "as he said."

What has he said?

HE WILL SAVE THOSE WHO COME: Anyone that will come to Christ with a commitment to live for him, will be saved. That is what he said. We must openly confess him before other people and then begins the process of our salvation. Matthew 10:32:"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 10:33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Jesus made it clear, that regardless our past lifestyle that he is willing and ready to receive us into his kingdom. That's what he said. In fact, speaking to Christians in the Revelation 3:20 Jesus said:" Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

HE WILL BLESS THOSE WHO COME: Those who come to him will be blessed with peace of mind and soul.

Some have misinterpreted what Christ has said with respect to blessings and have become frustrated because of their misinterpretation. They read where Christ said in Mark 11:24 " Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." They heard what they wanted to hear which was "If I ask, I get. If I don't get it must be my unbelief."

Just as it is important for us to know what Christ said, it is also important to know what he did NOT say. Sometimes we get frustrated because we heard only a part of what he said. Consider the man who stood before the judge to be sentenced for his crime. After receiving the pre-sentence investigation that revealed that the man was a fine citizen the judge ruled: "The court finds that the defendant is a fine man who has worked in his church, shown charity to his neighbors, given freely of himself, and has lived honorably. In fact the court is impressed with the defendant's long history of self sacrifice and service to others. The court finds that he is a good man." At that the defendant smiled and started to walk away only to be interrupted by the judge turned the page of his written ruling and said "However, the law is clear about horse thieves. The defendant is sentenced to hang!" The defendant was disappointed. His hopes were hanging on the wrong page. Likewise there are many people who hear some of what Christ says and have their hopes hanging on the wrong page. To know what he said, we must consider all that he said which is sometimes in the next verse or chapter.

What did Christ say about blessing? He didn't say that we can simply ask for anything and then turn around and look for it. We must be willing to lose ourselves in the will of God and willing to forgive others to expect answered prayers. In the very

next verses (Mark 11:25-26) Jesus said we must be willing to forgive our neighbors first. In the Lord's prayer he instructed us to pray first that God's will be done "in earth." When we lose ourselves in his will THEN what we ask will be according to his will and we can expect to receive it. John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The blessing that he promised was not prosperity, perfect health, good looks and a big house. What he promised us was peace of mind and spiritual rest regardless to our circumstance. Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's what he said.

The burdens and concerns that we share in this world are too difficult for us to bear alone. Combined with personal weakness, these burdens can be a heavy load. However, Christ has said that those who bring their burdens and concerns to him would find rest.

Significant here is that there is no limitation on how many can bring burdens or on the nature of the burden itself. "All ye that labor" that is inclusive not exclusive. Any one of any race, sex, nationality or creed that is willing to come him will be received equality.

Whatever the nature of the burden, Christ promises a relief to the faithful. If our burden is financial, physical, or concerns relationships with others, those who turn their burdens over to the Lord, find a sweet peace.

No wonder the song writer declared: "If the world from you withhold of its silver and gold and you have to get alone with meager fare. Just remember in his word how he feeds the little bird. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

As he said

Everything that Jesus has said he has done. Everything he has promised he will do, will be done. That's why the resurrection has such meaning to believers. We know the implications for the future, because he lives.

Because he did what he said he would do, we are assured that his promises to us are not in vain.

Because he did what he said we know that our salvation is insured.

Because he did what he said, we know that our joy in him will be unlimited.

Because he did what he said, we know that we are more than conquerers over the enemies of the cross.

When the angels declared that "he is not here he has risen, as he said" it sent a message to the entire world that when the Lord says something you can count on it.

I'm reminded of the old lady who had a reputation for being able to predict the weather. Her grand children counted on grandma's toes help them make it through the seasons. When grandma's little toe quivered it meant a cold spell was coming and the cut a lot of fire wood. When her middle toe quivered it meant a dry spell was coming and they bottled up water expecting a drought. Whenever grandma's big toe

quivered, it meant rain was coming. Since they had holes in the roof the children put out the pots to catch the water.

Brothers and sisters I know a man who is much more dependable than grandma's big toe. If he said it, you can count on it!

If the Lord says there's a cold breeze coming, you may as well chop the wood and build fire!

If the Lord says he's going to shower down blessings, you better put your buckets out!

Many people heard him but they didn't listen to what Jesus said.

He said he would be judged and crucified and would die the death of the cross.

Friends it happened just like he said. The crucified him on an old rugged cross. They buried him in borrowed tomb. Just like he said.

He said that after three days and nights that he would rise again.

He said "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"

Friends what the angels said that Sunday just confirms that he did just what he said he would do.

That why we sing "He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today, he walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, he lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives, he lives within my heart!"

No. 555-Pastor's Anniversary

Worthy Of His Hire

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 23, 1995

SCRIPTURE ***" For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." 1 Tim 5:18***

Introduction

How much should a person who serves a ministry of the church be paid? How much should a minister or professional servant be paid for his service? The value of a minister's service varies depends upon who is doing the evaluation. There are some who believe ministers are overpaid. Others think ministers are not paid enough. Others think they should do just what the word "minister" means "serves" without pay. The answer lies somewhere in between. They should be supported reasonably from the fruits of the ministry, while simultaneously serving without demand for compensation.

The opportunity to serve is both a burden and a gift. It is a burden for those who minister and it is also a pleasure to carry out the will of God in ways that often make great differences in the lives of those who are touched. Those who labor in the ministry should be very careful not to give the impression that they labor for the pay of men rather than the pay of God.

Consider the great preacher who had been sought after to preach across the country. He was in such demand that he had become accustomed to the hundreds of dollars he often received for preaching a single revival. One year the citizens of powater were successful in getting the great preacher to come to their town to preach. Powater was really a poor town. It had very little money. So after the great preacher finished a week of preaching the people passed the hat among them to raise an offering to pay him. They brought him two fine baking hens, a bushel of potatoes and a several jars of preserves. Finally, the local pastor holding all of the offerings in his hand, tied in a handkerchief, made a presentation to the great preacher. "My friend." He said as he began his ceremony. "We are not trying to pay you for all of your fine preaching this week, this is just a token of our appreciation for all of the good things you have said for us this week." After the great preacher received the offering, he peeked into the handkerchief and counted a total of $8.57. He beckoned for the pastor and whispered in his ear. "You said you were not trying to pay me?" The preacher said. The pastor nodded in agreement. The preacher returned the handkerchief and

said “Well, I think you’d better try.” With that he made it known that as far as he was concerned the Gospel might be free, except when its delivered first class!

Those who serve in the church do so out of a love for the Lord. We don not serve for thought of pay, praise of promotion. Those who serve God do so out of compelling need to carry out a divine mission. Whatever rewards we receive in the process are incidental. Our real reward comes when we will receive the reward of our Lord upon his return. His “well done” will be all the reward we need.

Exposition

In the Old Testament it was a general rule that the priests and other Levites who worked in the temple or kept the altar were maintained from its proceeds. Numbers 18:24-26 “But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.”

Each person was ordered to give a tenth of their wheat and bread stores (Heave Offerings) for the maintenance of the Levites who were responsible for the maintenance of the worship of God. Since the Levites had no inheritance and spent all of their time maintaining and operating the Tabernacle they were supported by the other 11 tribes that gave to maintain them.

A tenth of all of the heave offerings collected was for the spiritual leader, the high priest.

Not all of the tithes were for the Levites and the Priests, only the Heave offerings were designated for their support. A Heave offering is described in Numbers 15:20-21 Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD an heave offering in your generations.

It was generally expected therefore that those who spent their lives in the service of the temple should be supported by their work. This support was not restricted to just the priests. The Levitical service involved the ushers and musicians of the temple as well.

The New Testament Teaching

This text focuses on advice that the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy concerning compensation for his services. His advice summarizes the bible’s teaching concerning compensation of those who function as servants in the ministries of the church. His advice also mirrors similar advice Jesus gave as he sent out his disciples in Matthew 10:7-10

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

Those who are sent to preach by Jesus himself were charged to preach the Gospel and carry out compassionate ministries that would relieve the suffering of the people. Their chief concern should be to carry out the ministry and not their personal concerns. Therefore, they were told not to busy themselves with concerns of finances or clothing. They were told to receive freely as it is given because the "workman is worthy of his meat."

The idea of receiving freely is echoed by Paul in his advice to Timothy. Those in service of the church preach, teach, and do good works. They work without charge or demand for pay. However, those who perform such work are justified in receiving freely that which is offered them for working in the ministries of the church. The emphasis in both Jesus' statements and those of Paul is on receiving "freely" without demand.

Ministers Travel Light

Those who hear the Gospel are reminded that the minister travels light, often unable to provide for himself or his family like others. He is worthy of the support of believers because of this reason.

When Jesus moved from town to town he carried very little with him. He was supported generally by believers who ministered to him from their substance.

Luke 8:1-3 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Every movement Christ made was sustained by individuals who literally gave him everything he needed to survive. He lived in borrowed homes. He Ate in borrowed dining rooms. Was crucified on a borrowed cross. He was even buried in a borrowed tomb.

Those who minister are not required to take vows of poverty to survive, but their concerns are obviously of a higher order. The focus of their energy is to be toward accomplishing their mission. Those who minister to them help them to remain focus as they minister to the ministers from their substance.

Ministers are authorized to live out of the Gospel, but they are not required to do so. Paul, was a tent maker and his general rule was to accept support but not require it. He avoided asking for support so that none would have the opportunity to accuse

him of being a money grubber and thus make his "glorying void."
1 Cor 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Therefore in both the Old and New Testament the support of those who work in the temple or the church is considered ordained and encouraged by God.

In biblical times the Levites handled the cleaning and storing of utensils. Repairing the tent, keeping its doors, storing its wares and attending to the sacrifices and worship.

Today those who work in the church, as a vocation (as compared to an avocation), perform similar tasks within a more modern setting. Those who devote their lives and talents to the service of the church can and should be supported by the church through liberal donations commensurate with the blessings God has bestowed upon the membership.

However, ministers and others should take note of Paul's decision not to ask or demand assistance, lest such demands give Satan a chance to impute bad motives on otherwise sincere efforts.

Worthy Of His Hire

Those who declare the word of God are most certainly worthy of their hire. No wonder the gospels declare: "How beautiful are the feet of them that declare the gospel of peace."

They are worthy of their hire because they bring good news of hope.

He is worthy of his hire because he inspires us to be:

—Happy in a world of sadness; beautiful in a world of ugliness

—Optimistic in a world of pessimism; free in a world of bondage!

Every child of God should be grateful that there is a man of God who is willing to boldly declare the good news of how to be:

—Calm in the midst of the storm

—Strong in the face of weakness

—Fearless in the midst of apprehensions!

He is worthy of his hire because the world depends upon him to preach the word of God!

Though people criticize him, he continues to preach the word!

Though storms rise in and out of the church he continues to preach the word!

Though adverse circumstances surround him, he continues to preach the word!

He is worthy of his hire because without wavering he continues to tell the old story!

He tells us about Jesus!

He tells us about Calvary!

He tells us that Jesus is coming again!

He's worthy because he inspires us to keep holding on!

Keep holding on!
Keep holding on!

No. 556-Missionary Service

Why Jesus Wept

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 7, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it"Luke 19:41;"Jesus Wept" John 11:35***

Introduction

Have you ever felt like crying? Has there ever been a time in your expience when the weight of the load you carry seems unbearable? Has it brought you to the point of tears? Have you had children to disappoint you? A spouse? Have you ever watched your fondest dream dry up like a raisin in the sun? Have you ever failed miserably and felt humiliated? If so, you probably have reached a point when you felt like crying. That is the point when even the strongest person is emotionally full, the heart wells and the eyes overflow. Whether in public or in private, most people cry sometime.

Often the condition of the world can bring the concerned to tears. Consider the new pastor who was given the tour of the community in which the church was located. As he drove around the neighborhood he was appalled when he saw a neighborhood in spiritual and social decay. After a few months of reviewing the church's budget, program and calendar of activities, one day the pastor started to cry, seemingly without reason. In the church office he stood and stared out the window and cried, almost daily.

Finally a deacon, concerned about the sad state of his pastor approached him and asked: "Brother pastor, why are you crying. Every day you stand and you look out that window and you cry. What is wrong?" The pastor stared out the window and said:"Look at what is around us. There are prostitutes on the streets. Drugs are being sold in front of our eyes. Alcoholism is rampart. Violence is growing. Children are making babies. Homes are being destroyed. People are living in card board boxes. People are scavenging for food in trash cans. It's terrible." The preacher started crying again. The deacon, trying to console him said "Oh don't let that bother you brother pastor, you'll get use to it, we have!" The pastor dried his eye and said "It's not the trouble outside that makes me cry, it's the fact that God's people have gotten use to it, that brings a tear to my eye!"

As Christians we should always be concerned about the plight of our community

and the well being of others. Poverty, ignorance, and oppression should prompt tears of sadness. But just as adverse circumstances bring us tears of sadness we know that compassionate people who act in faith and love can turn the tears of sadness into the tears of gladness.

Exposition

This text focuses on two instances in which Jesus openly wept and why. As Jesus prepared to make his entrance into Jerusalem he paused outside of the city and was moved at the sight. The emotional expression that follows was directed at Jerusalem proper but was an indirect expression of sympathy for all of the Jewish people. His entrance into Jerusalem would mark his final days on earth. For three years he had preached to the Jews about the kingdom of God and the coming kingdom of heaven but they did not listen. He offered them the opportunity of the coming kingdom before it was offered to others, but they constantly rejected all that he offered them. He offered Israel the opportunity of the royal priesthood exclusively. Categorically, however, they rejected him and turned him down. The opportunity for spiritual greatness had been within their grasp and they had failed to seize it.

Jesus referred to their missed opportunity on two different parts of this text. In Luke 19:42 "Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." In essence Jesus said, in this your day, if you could have seen all of the great things God had in store for you, but now never will. It was a great opportunity for the nation. Israel missed its opportunity because of its lack of faith in either the man or the plan. Some could not bring themselves to see him as anything more than the little boy who worked in Joseph's carpentry shop on the dusty streets of Nazareth. They never received him as the Son of God. Others never believed he was the Messiah, simply the reincarnation of a great prophet of the past. They rejected the man. Others surrounding him received him as the man of God but they couldn't believe in the plan. He wanted to establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. They wanted to establish it with sword and spear. Even among those who surrounded him there was at least one who couldn't believe the plan and caused so much trouble in the group that it resulted in Jesus' crucifixion.

Their lack of faith in either the man or the plan, kept them from seizing the great opportunities that lay before them. Luke 19:44 "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" is a phrase that repeats the idea of missed opportunity. They failed to act at the time God made the opportunity available to them and the glory of the city would be lost.

John gives us the second instance when Jesus wept. Because the occasion was the death of Lazarus, a great friend of the master's, many suppose that he wept in this instance because Lazarus was dead. However, we only need to read a few verses before this to learn that Jesus wept, but it was not because of Lazarus. Beginning at John 11:23 Jesus spoke to Martha about the resurrection. It is shown here that

Martha accepted that there would be a resurrection in the life to come, but she had not fully accepted Christ as the source of the resurrection's power. That disappointed him. Later, when he met Mary and saw that she was weeping and all of her neighbors were weeping while looking at the power of the resurrection. That trouble Jesus so much that he "groaned in the spirit"(v33.) Since he knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, there was no reason for him to weep over Lazarus, that would have been a waste of tears. It was their unbelief that prompted him to tears in verse 35.

Thus these texts suggest that both instances in which Jesus wept were prompted by the failure of the people to grasp divine opportunity and to exercise complete faith in him.

Missing Opportunity

Nothing makes you want to cry more than knowing that you missed a great chance. That is why Jesus cried for Israel and that is also why many people today are weeping. There are parents who are groaning in the spirit over children that are missing the golden opportunities that youth represents. They see youth squandering their health, failing to perform in school and generally accepting mediocrity as their standard and it makes them feel like crying.

Jesus called this moment in this text "thy day" and "thy visitation." Certainly, in every life there is a great day or period of opportunity. There is a time when God is providing opportunities, connections and chances in your life, like he never has before. It's that one period in which everything that needs to fall into place does. For Israel it was a chance to be sole heirs to the kingdom of God. For believers today opportunities present themselves in many ways, but those special moments are lost by so many who "drop the ball."

When the Lord visits he often comes to bring blessings and opportunities. We must be ready to seize upon those opportunities whenever they appear. The window of opportunity, called "thy visitation", does not stay open permanently for any given blessing. The young man blessed with athletic skills has a window of time that he can seize his chance. Soon both time and circumstance will close that window. Whether in sports, business or in our personal lives, there are special times that or "visitations" that represent our big chance. The question is whether we will have the courage and faith necessary to seize the moment. While one person may receive thousands of blessings from God, except for salvation, it is rare to find the same window of opportunity open twice for the same person.

Believers have special "windows of opportunity" too. These represent the times when God has positioned both time and circumstance to make it possible for a believer's prayer to be answered. When God opens the window and pours out your blessing don't be afraid to grab it before it passes by! There is a good chance that while there will be other blessings, this blessing may not avail itself again.

Nothing is sadder than watching a believer miss an opportunity because he or she

lacks the faith to act when it is time to act. These are moments when God puts everything in place for you to advance in life, but you fail to seize it because you thought you would fail. Did you ask God for blessing? Is it hovering in front of you? What stops you from acting upon it, except your disbelief? Unbelief can diminish our blessings. The people of Nazareth were desperately in need of the Lord's mighty works, but he couldn't do much at home because of their unbelief. (Matthew13:58) It is fruitless to ask God for a blessing, live according to his will, then be blessed with an answered prayer and then lose it because, taking it requires a giant leap of faith.

When Israel failed to act in faith, Jesus wept.

When Mary and Mary failed to act on their faith, Jesus wept.

When we fail to seize our opportunities, carefully prepared in heaven, our Lord weeps.

Tears of Joy

There are many who work in the vineyard who become frustrated as they watch opportunities missed. They shed secret tears of despair as they ponder what could have been. There are many mothers, spouses and concerned that have shed tears of concern over the part of Jerusalem that lives within their walls. Moreover there are even some that have shed tears of frustration over the failure of the organized church to seize its opportunity. The tears are flowing like rivers from tear stained eyes.

In the midst of our despair there is a word of hope. David said in Psalm 126:5-6 "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. No wonder the song writer wrote: "We shall come rejoicing bringing in the sheaves!"

In Psalm 30:5 David put it another way: "...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Thank God for the morning!

In the midnight sadness is everywhere, but in the morning, sadness will become gladness

In the midnight weakness is everywhere, but in the morning, weakness because strength!

In the midnight sorrow is everywhere, but in the morning, sorrows shall be changed to joy!

Saints of God, dry your weeping eyes, lift up your heads, there is a blessing on the way, be ready to receive it.

Mighty things can happen if you believe. If you believe:

Mountains can be made into molehills; Valleys can be exalted

Rough places can be made smooth; Crooked places can be made straight!

I don't know about you, but I've decided to step out on faith, that with God all things are possible!

Only believe!

Only believe!

All things are possible, if you only believe!

No. 557-Mother's Day

The Jocebed Syndrome

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 14, 1995

SCRIPTURE:" ***Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. Exodus 2:7-8***

Introduction

Do mothers ever stop being mothers? No matter how old children get they never seem to out grow the need for mothering. Somehow, no matter how old they are mothers never seem to forget how the art of "mothering." From a thousand miles away mothers give instructions to their children over the phone. And even when they can't be seen their spirits seem to hover in hidden places, reminding, admonishing, and encouraging. The qualities of motherhood are universal and they are never forgotten once learned.

Regardless to what people think a woman never loses her motherly instincts. They are God given. Consider the time the women's committee paid a visit to sister Lucy who lived down by the creek. The committee of young women had heard a lot about Sister Lucy back in the days. The folks said although she was a kind of wild she was nevertheless a very good mother in her time. When they came to the porch they saw an old lady in rocker and mistook her for Sister Lucy. The lady said, you must mean want my mother "big Lucy" she's down by the creek taking a bath. The women on the committee said "Isn't it a bit dangerous for her to be taking a bath by herself she must be about 100 years old." Little Lucy said "well you got the age right, but she got to take a bath today, she's getting married." Surprised the committee members said "Isn't that a little too old to be getting married?" Little Lucy responded "It ain't like she wants to get married but she wants to be a mother again before he got too old!"Big Lucy.. there were some things about life she never forgot.

As Christians we know that godly women have a divinely inspired instinct for mothering. It is a gift from God and is characteristic of all women who fear the Lord. It does not wither with time and is the same through all generations. Good mothers around the world share the same common traits when they humble themselves before God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jocebed, the mother of Moses as she acted in blind faith to put her son in the hands of God.

Historically Israel was a subject nation of the African nation called Egypt at the time of this writing. For nearly 400 years Israel had been the subject of its African oppressors. God heard their cries for deliverance and sent them a deliverer in the person of a baby child. Hearing that a deliverer was to be born among the Jews, Pharaoh ordered every new born male child of the Jews to be drowned in the river. Babies by the hundreds and thousands were drowned in the river. In face of the penalty of disobedience to the Pharaoh, an entire generation of men was drowned in the river, except for the child Moses.

Jocebed was the wife of Amram, a Levite, whose outstanding faith and trust in God, resulted in the birth of a Son that changed the course of history for her people. The way God worked in this mother's life and her response reveals to other mothers the mysteries of God's providence. Jocebed was a woman of poor means, living in the most difficult period of Jewish History. She was a slave woman who became famous for example of motherhood and trust in God.

"A Goodly Child"

Jocebed recognized the child Moses as being a "goodly child." The term "goodly" is used as an adjective. It suggests that the child Moses was fair to look upon and exceptionally fine. It is a word used sparingly to describe a person who posesses gifts that far exceed those naturally expected. In 1 Samuel 9:2 Saul is called a "goodly" man. In 1 Samuel 8:16 the finest, most promising young men of the kingdom are called "goodliest." A goodly child is one that has been especially favored by God.

When Jocebed saw her son she recognized his potential as a "goodly" child and decided to risk her own life and that of her other son Aaron, to protect her new born. She saw beyond the tiny infant withering on a Hebrew blanket. She saw beyond the bundle of nakedness that lay in her arms. She saw the child's "goodliness."

This is the first aspect of the Jocebed syndrome, the ability to see the potential of her children. This characteristic of Jocebed's nature is shared by every godly mother. Somehow God allows her to see and to appreciate the inherent value, worth and potential of her children. Long before the world knew that the boy Samuel would grow to be a powerful Judge of Israel, his mother Hannah knew there was something special about him. She took him and gave him to prophets for training and education. She didn't know exactly what but she sensed he was destined for greatness. Elizabeth knew that the son she bore was destined for greatness. God had shown it to her. When that young man grew to be John the Baptist she publicly rejoiced over what she privately knew all along, he was something special.

Good mothers are imbued with this unique sixth sense, the ability to perceive and sense the potential of their children. It is a quality so characteristic of good mothers

that King Solomon could resolve a dispute between quarreling mothers by ordering that a living baby be cut in half and instantly gauge the response of the true mother. Even Pharaoh's midwives, who were mothers themselves, found it impossible to carry out his orders to destroy all new born male children. As they looked upon every newborn child, though it was Hebrew, they saw its potential worth, although the Pharaoh only saw its potential danger to the nation.

Sensing the propensity for greatness of every child, good mothers would rather face humiliation and banishment rather than abort the chance for their children to realize their potential. This was circumstance of Hagar who acted as a surrogate mother for Abraham. Even though her role as a surrogate conditioned her estrangement from her employers she nurtured her son Ishmael in exile. Though he did not become the heir to Abraham, he nevertheless became great. She knew it before others could see it. It is a trait of character peculiar to good mothers and separates these from those who simply wear the title of "mother."

Never would the real mother lose sight of the potential of her children. The real mother sees the potential doctor in her child, not the devil. She sees the king not the con artist. She sees the inherited beauties of her children and ignores the ever present flaws that are conditioned to all humanity. Consider the old sharecropper mother who lived in backwoods in real tough times. She had never heard of electricity, rode in an automobile or used modern conveniences. She understood things plainly. She raised her twelve sons with an iron hand. She taught them to bear responsibility for their mistakes, but most of all to live respectfully. One day after her sons had become men, the Sheriff brought one home in handcuffs. He had been sentenced and was being brought home to see his mother. She was relieved to learn that even though her son was guilty of a grave offense at least they wern't going to hang him. The Sheriff mumbled some words she couldn't understand. The old Sherrif asked the mother to say a few last words to her son and the mother grabbed her son by the ears: "If I told you once I told you a thousand times, have some respect about yourself. Now go on down there and get yourself electrocuted and when you come home, act like you got some sense!" Her life is spent cultivating the potential even in the presence of failing, fragile human performance. It's the Jocebed syndrome in every mother that prompts those whose children rank among society's worst offenders as a "good boy." Such mothers cannot help it. It is a part of their nature.

Her Ingenuity

The second aspect of the Jocebed Syndrome is Ingenuity. In the face of danger, this mother exhibited a trait that is characteristic of good mothers in all generations, that of ingenuity.

What were the odds of successfully guiding a child condemned to death by the circumstance of birth, to a full life? They were slim to none. Yet despite the odds Jocebed found a way to bear the child in silence and to nurse and keep in it absolute seclusion for three months. How she managed to silence its cries in the midnight is

not explained. How she managed to work in brick quarries or fields by day and make it home to care for her child by night without being detected is not told. All we know is that she found a way.

When it became obvious that she would be unable to care for the child she thought up an ingenious plan to save the child's life. She did it by constructing an ark and placing the child in it for safe keeping, with the child's sister not far behind for safe keeping.

It was an example of the spirit of ingenuity that is unique to every good mother. Somehow the good mother will find a way to help her children. It is the spirit of the Shunammite woman whose son died on her lap after complaining of a headache. When others were mourning and wailing she lay her son on a bed and went looking for Elisha. When others asked all she would respond to their questions was "it is well." When she was penniless and hungry this woman refused to give up and God filled her empty vessels. When her son died she refused to take no for an answer and her son was given new life. (1 Kings 4)

Good mothers search for ways to provide for their children. It is instinctive. Throughout the generations good mothers have scratched for food, begged, borrowed and even compromised themselves for the benefit of their children. Many children wear new shoes on their feet while their mothers feet are nearly bare. Many girls wear new dresses to school and college without noticing how rarely their mother's get new clothing items. Many children realize their dreams, which are sometimes financed by a mother who sacrifices her dream for that of her children. Such mothers cannot help but to respond in this way. It is the nature of all true mothers that exhibit the Jocebed syndrome.

Trust in God

The third and most important characteristic of the good mother is her unfaltering trust in God. It is the key component of the Jocebed syndrome.

When she could do all that she knew how to do for her child, Jocebed placed Moses in the very river that she had protected him from. When she sat the basket afloat however she was not releasing him to an unprotected unguided and uncertain future, she placed her child in the hands of God.

In God's hands the little ark floated right to the very point where Pharaoh's daughter was bathing. It could have tangled in the bush or sank, but in God's hand the river that would have drowned him three months earlier, carried him to a caring spirit.

Similarly, every good mother knows that there is just so much that she can do for her children.

She can teach them and train them, but only so much.

She can carry them and push them, but only so far.

Despite her best efforts to protect or son or daughter from the rising tide of social dangers, the good mother knows that there comes a point when she must set her child

afloat on the waters life, trusting in God to provide for and protect them.

The good mother trusts God continuously. It comes as second nature to her because she, like all other good mothers has the Jocebed syndrome.

Thats why Hebrews 11:23 points to faith and trust as the salient element of the Jocebed experience. You must trust in God.

In a world where confusion is primary and peace is secondary, you must trust in God.

In a world where children are being stolen from cars, abducted from playgrounds and made the stars of backroom porno movies, you must trust in God.

In a world where drug dealers are selling death, our daughters are prostituting on street corners and children see gangsters as role models, you must trust in God.

When you trust in God:

—The impossible become possible; The improbable become probable

—The unsolvable becomes solvable; The unreachable becomes reachable

—That which is beyond reach is brought a little closer

—That which is too low is raised a little higher

No wonder the song writer wrote:"I trust in God wherever I may be, on mountain peak or on the stormy sea. Though come what may from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!"

No mother can make it, if she doesn't keep her hand in God's hand!

No mother can make it unless she first learns how to lean on the everlasting arms.

I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. I found out if I trust him, he will provide!

Lean on Jesus!

Lean on Jesus!

Lean on Jesus and he will provide!

No. 558-Inspiration

Jail House Rock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 21, 1995

SCRIPTURE:***And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." Acts 16:25-26***

Introduction

Have you ever been jailed? Most church people instantly respond with pride:"I have never been to jail a day in my life." Many boast that the closest they have ever been to jail is on monopoly board when they drew a card that read "Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass Go. Do not collect $200.00" What if the question was revised to ask "Have you ever done something that could have put you in jail if you had been caught, convicted or not well connected?" Phrased that way, most of us instantly recognize that it is only the grace of God that has kept us from being locked up. While we may have never been to jail, most of us have committed at least one jailable offense in the course of our lives.

While imprisonment is a reality, it is also a state of mind. There are many who have never been inside a penal institution but they daily live in prison, chained, shackled and locked behind bars of fear, apathy, addiction, hatred, inner suffering and hopelessness. These prisoners are not chained arm and leg, locked away in a cold cell at night and scourged to the chain gang by day. These prisoners appear to be free, but inwardly condemned.

It is difficult to get a person in jail to admit his guilt. It appears that everyone and everything is responsible for the prisoner's confinement except himself. Consider the judge who awakened in the middle of night when he heard a voice that told him there was a man he should free from jail. The man's name was not given. He was told that he would know him when he came upon him and know he deserves to be free. The judge dismissed the thought but couldn't sleep. Then one day the judge decided to do the unthinkable, he took off his robe and decided to visit the prisoners one by one. He spent an entire week listening to the stories of prisoners. As his week was almost ended he was amazed that every prisoner he talked to said he was innocent. Some blamed their confinement on their lawyers. Some blamed the crooked police force, unbalanced juries, lying witnesses, poverty, and mistaken identity. Some even

blamed the judge himself for their imprisonment. That made the judge's job hard, he had to free someone but all of them claimed they were wrongfully accused. As he was leaving the judge saw one prisoner who sat the corner of cell privately reading a bible. He asked the man to explain his circumstance. The man answered: "I am here because I committed a crime. I deserve to be here. I am doing my time." The judge discovered the man had been found guilty of stealing food to feed his children and was a model prisoner. Instantly the judge signed an order to have him freed. When asked to explain his reason the judge said: "I talked to over 100 prisoners and all of them claimed innocence. I'm releasing him because it seemed wrong to have a guilty man locked up with all those innocent people." For this man, the first step to being free was to admit that he was guilty.

As Christians we rejoice in the knowledge that our Lord has freed us from the bondages of this world. We give him praise and thanks for giving us the truth of his word and that truth makes us free.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul and Silas during their stay in Phillipi. During this time he ministered to three types of imprisoned people and led each to a greater life in Christ.

LYDIA: (Acts 16:13-15) Was a prominent merchant woman who was from the city of Thyatira. She was generally a well to do person who had become a new convert to the Jewish faith, abandoning the idol worship customary to her community. Paul stumbled upon her down by the river bank praying. He found her to be a religious woman with an open heart and mind. He told her about Jesus and instantly she was freed from the bondage of religious ritualism. She became his first convert to Christianity in Phillipi.

POSSESSED SLAVE GIRL:(Acts 16-18) They also met a possessed slave girl that followed them around shouting that they were men of God that would save people from their sins. The words were correct but she was motivated by a demonic spirit that was attempting to turn their work against them. Paul and Silas recognized that she could not help herself. Her actions were being directed by Satan within her. They turned and rebuked the devil within her and set her free.

JAILER IN JAIL(Acts 16:19-40) Because their preaching and revival efforts were saving souls, the merchants of the city complained that Paul and Silas were bad for business. They were beaten and thrown into prison. Even there they were placed in the inner dungeons and their feet were locked in stocks. They were prisoners but were not in prison. They were locked up but not locked out. They were guarded by a man who did not know Jesus. He was not in prison but he was a prisoner. He was not locked up but yet he was locked out of the favor of God.

Though their feet were in stocks and bonds, Paul and Silas prayed and sang at midnight. The Lord heard their prayer the jail house began to rock and shake. The stocks that held them came loose. The jail doors began to open and the bands that held them were loosed.

What is significant here is that every person in prison that night was freed from what really held them. What flaws of character that may have plunged them into jail were removed and they were set free. Verse 16:26 says "And everyone's bands were loosed." Not only were the bands of Paul and Silas loosed but all those who had heard their preaching, prayer and singing had been touched and loosed from what really kept them in bondage." Had this not been the case, the doors would have been opened and every prisoner would have made a break for freedom. However, when the jail house rocked and the doors were opened, not a single prisoner ran for freedom.

The jailer was afraid of the consequences of his eventual report, that all of the men had escaped and prepared to take his own life. Acts 16:28 "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." They were all loosed from that which really bound them which was sin! The jailer himself came to accept Christ as his savior. His family believed and they were all loosed from the individual prisons because of what happened the night the jail house rocked.

Freedom To Live

Many people today are walking prisoners. They are free, but yet they are not free because they cannot move freely.

What shackles keep us from achieving that which we desire? What walls really confine us. Most often we are held back by prisons we have designed.

Prisoner of Fear. Fear is a great prison that has kept many people locked out of their future. The great blessings that God has in store for so many are never realized because they have locked themselves into tiny cells with bars marked "We can't" protected by the guards of doubt.

Prisoner of Passion. These are those who are confined to the narrow cells of life because their passions have restricted them. The dope addict is a prisoner of drugs. The alcoholic is a prisoner of his insatiable taste for alcohol. Millions are condemned to the dungeons of ill health brought on by their addiction to nicotine. Some are prisoners of hate. It locks them out of the future because they would rather not succeed that succeed with the help of an enemy. Some are prisoners of greed, neglecting all that is important in life to achieve more and get more. Some of us are prisoners to debt. Our desire for material things has built a towering wall of statements, invoices and credit card due bills around us. We owe so much now that the very home we work so hard to pay for is becoming our prison.

Prisoners of Tradition. Many people can't move forward because they are comfortable moving in circles. They are creatures of tradition. While there is a certain element of desirable security and constancy in traditions, there are many that cannot make a non-traditional move and are doomed to spend their lives within the shadow of past progress which is the essence of tradition. Consider the seven caterpillars that marched in a circle around the top of the flower pot. They moved with vigor and excitement around the flower pot. After a week of marching the only accomplishment they had made was plenty of movement, but they had actually gone no where.

Progress requires getting off the beaten path. It requires us to dare to march to the beat of a different drummer. Those who sentence themselves to the traditional will never build the better mouse trap that leads the world to your door.

Prisoners of ungodliness. People who do not know God, are actually spiritual prisoners. They constantly feel defeated. They constantly feel like failures. They are prisoners of Satan who keeps them locked away from the goodness of God. That's why it's important for believers to know that those who are imprisoned today are really prisoners of Satan. The ultimate solution is for those behind bars to know the redemptive power of God and to be set free from their criminal tendencies. Buildingmore and bigger jails contains the problem without a propensity for resolution. Those who want to be really free must come to know the Lord.

In the solitude of the night the guard and the prisoners of this text came to know Jesus. When the Jailhouse Rocked, they truly became free.

For Every Jail House, There Is A Rock

A generation ago the late Elvis Presley sang a popular tune called the "Jail House Rock" but today brother and sisters we've come to offer you a jail house rock. Not a hit record or popular movie, but a word of hope that says for every jail, there is a rock!

For every jailhouse of fear, there is a rock! Psalm 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?.." for every jailhouse there is a rock!

For every jailhouse of weakness, there is a rock! Isaiah 40:31 "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." For every jail house there is a rock!

For every jailhouse of danger, there is a rock! Psalm 27:5 "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

I know there is a rock because Psalm 62:7 says " In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. For Every jailhouse, there is a rock!

Joseph was in a jailhouse codemned in his innocence, but he found out that even in an Egyptian jail house, there is a rock!

Daniel was locked up by Nebuchadnezzar, but he continued to pray three times a day. Nebuchadnezzar found out that even in a Chaldean jail house, there is a rock!

Paul and Silas were locked away in a Philippian jail but they began to sing and pray. I don't know which one prayed and which one sang, but the power of their testimony touched the hearts of all who heard.

At midnight, the jail house rocked! Cells began to shake, rattle and roll!

It was a case of the jail house being rocked by the rock!

This rock is Jesus! Yes he's the one!

Be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No. 559-Graduation

Doing A New Thing

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 28, 1995

SCRIPTURE:Isa 43:19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Introduction

Have you ever started something new? How did you feel? Many people are uneasy when they begin a new endeavor. The prospect of facing the unknown makes them anxious and uncertain, despite their excitement. Whether its changing jobs, starting a business, moving to a new city or graduating to a new level of life, new starts are unsettling. When a senior faces the prospect of graduation and becoming a freshman again, that's unsettling. When a college scholar finally gets a diploma in hand and faces the full responsibilities of adulthood for the first time that's unsettling. Whatever the situation, there is a delicate mix of anticipation and anxiety present at the start of any new venture.

No matter how familiar we are with the path we have traveled, at certain points along the way, it becomes necessary to travel and unknown road. Consider the little rabbit that was comfortable in the wood. He knew his way around despite the predators he lived with daily. He felt himself safe and secure. Each day he hopped along the same trail to find himself fresh foliage and food. His was a serene and safe life, free of fear. One day he heard the coyotes, bears and other big animals having a meeting. They made a truce and decided it would make the forest safer if they would stop eating each other. In return, they agreed to share the smaller animals. Each began to tell of available morsels in their sector of the woods. The food pool would consist of possums, coons, and squirrels. The little rabbit became alarmed when he heard Bro. Bear say "In this part of the woods we have plenty of rabbits. They all hop along this trail every day. We'll contribute rabbits that's what we'll do." Hearing that, the little rabbit became alarmed. He didn't know what to do. He'd either make some changes or end up a rabbit stew. For days the bears sat waiting for the rabbit to hop along. But no matter how they waited, the rabbit had come and gone. After months the bear spotted the rabbit, down in a vegetable patch. He yelled, "I've missed you hopping along your familiar path, come share some soup I've made a fresh batch!" The little rabbit wiggled his nose and raised an ear, and spoke loudly so all could hear: "I've hopped that path and done it without fail, but there comes a point when we have to

blaze a new trail!" At that the rabbit hopped off again, leaving Bro. Bear with an empty pot and a stomach full of pain. Sometimes it's better to take a new path.

As Christians, we walk confident and comfortable that despite our direction in life that God will make a way. Whether there are dangers or obstacles, we trust in him. His word has said: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he reminds Israel of God's promise to be with them in return for their faithfulness.

Much of Isaiah's prophecy deals with warning Israel to trust in God rather than its own devices, political allegiances, knowledge or ways. The nation faced the prospect of destruction at the hand of the Assyrian army. The Assyrians were a devastating world power. They were destroying all that came in their path. Israel spent decades trying to secure themselves against possible attacks by the Assyrians. Israel made alliances with Egypt and other smaller countries. It built its own military army to its maximum potential. Israel rested upon what it had learned and its connections in the world of diplomacy to protect the nation.

However, they heard from the prophet Isaiah that they should not depend heavily upon the alliances, knowledge or their military strength, but to "wait on the Lord." His constant theme was let "the Lord lead you."

To reassure them, Isaiah began to remind them of the great wonders God had done for them in the past. He reminded them how God had made a path for them that carried them through the red sea and across the desert. He urged them to look back at the victorious journey of their ancestry and take heart because that same God was still with them with undiminished power and ability.

This chapter of Isaiah focuses on his attempts to show the people the mighty acts God has done for them in the past and to point them to the future. His purpose is to reassure them that their future is safe in his hands. Isaiah 43:2 is a clear example of God's words of hope to them, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It is both a prophetic statement and a vision of hope. It is a statement of fact because it suggests that there would be a time when Israel would pass through the water and walk through the fires of life. It is prophetic because of the assurance in his words: "I will be with thee."

After rehearsing how God's power had been displayed in times past and reminding them of how God broke the powers of mighty nations opposing them in the past (v17) God tells Israel at verse 18 not to dwell on the past, because he would do a new thing for the people. Just like he had blazed a path for their forefathers he was about to do a great thing in their lives as well. God promised to "..I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." (v19)

These were references to his great work with their ancestors in providing food, clothing and protection for them while they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. During this time they completely depended upon God who provided the bread from heaven every day and meat. When they were thirsty God provided water for them that flowed from a rock like a mighty river. That is what he did in the past. The fact that he was talking to a new generation is evidenced by the phrase "I will." The wilderness experience was sure to come, but promised to sustain them regardless to the difficulty of the journey even to the point of providing for their food, clothing and shelter in life's wilderness, and rivers of waters to satisfy their thirsts.

This 43rd chapter of Isaiah is important to believers because it recalls God's promise to Israel and to every believer faced with the prospect of the unknown, that whatever the circumstance, those who trust in him will find that God will make a way.

A Way In The Wilderness

The not so distant future is certain to be a challenge, even for the strongest. If a wilderness is a place of diminished opportunity, hot and difficult sands, and sweltering adversity, then it will be a challenge, but not an impossible challenge. Young African-Americans who plunge into the wilderness must approach their journey with the wisdom of the Bro. Rabbit: "Knowing what to do to keep from ending up in the stew."

Personal Discipline: The immediate challenge to most young adults is that of personal discipline. This refers to the capacity to do that which is necessary to achieve a desire goal. For years, most youth have been disciplined by their parents who stand guard of their roughly undisciplined lives. It has been parents who pushed them out of bed, kept them from wasting time, plunged them into one goal oriented activity after another and kept them going. For the most part, the ever watchful eye of parents has been the stimulus for controlled behavior. There is a point however, in which each person assumes control of their own destiny, sets their own wake up call, decides their own course and assumes responsibility for their own lives. The freedom that accompanies young adulthood is accompanied by the awesome responsibility of living a disciplined life.

Many people define a well disciplined person by what is not done. Those who do not drink, smoke, curse, steal or deal in drugs are considered disciplined. Those who are not rowdy, not drunkards or rude, may also be considered well disciplined. However, discipline also deals with developing an ordered life that is characterized by the things actually done. The disciplined person provides time for himself to think, pray and plan. The disciplined person can set a goal and move toward it with wavering until it is accomplished.

Those priveleged to pursue a higher education should discipline themselves to read extensively. Read the classics, literature, history. Read the works and biographies of the great people in your chosen profession. Study, critique, observe, improve upon every idea you find.

Biblical terminology refers to discipline as leading an "ordered" life. An ordered life is one in which each step made is according to the will of God. Psalm 37:23 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." To be well disciplined we must also discipline ourselves to study the word of God and keep his praise on our lips. That is the only way he can order our steps.

Fearless in the Wilderness. Young adults should not be intimidated by their wilderness years. The wilderness years represent the first four or five years of majority. It's the period between childhood and adulthood. It's a time of uncertainty, changes, and self development. It is a time of spiritual purification and rethinking. It took Israel 40 years in the wilderness to get ready for the great things God had in store for the nation. It took Jesus 40 days in the wilderness to get his priorities straight. It takes the average youth four years in the wilderness to come to know himself.

During this wilderness experience you will learn much, receive your greatest challenges and make decisions that will either make a better you or land in the stew. At first the responsibilities of adulthood will begin to seem awesome. For the first time you will have bills to pay, diminished time, and the self-imposed pressure to succeed. At times the wilderness will seem hot, dry and life threatening. However, you should not be intimidated by the wilderness. Approach the wildnerness with fortitude and courage, knowing that on the otherside is the promised land of opportunity and success.

God will make a way

For Israel the prospect of the wildnerness was both a challenge and an opportunity. It was a challenge of their faith and an opportunity for God to reveal himself in their lives.

There are three times a person needs to be especially close to God: At the wilderness, at the river and at the cross. At the wilderness of uncertainty he is unsure about the future. At the river of death he is uncertain about the life hereafter.

But Before we call on God at the wilderness or seek him at the river, we need to meet the Lord at the cross.

Before any man or woman attempts to cross the wilderness of life he needs to be sure he has met the Lord at the cross.

The challenge is to remember that what God did for your mother or grandmother, he will do for you!

What God did for the grand father and your father, he will do for you!

God has brought our families through the wilderness of oppression and hard times.

He has brought through slavery, depressions and world wars!

He's bought us from a nomadic life of moving from place to place and set our feet on solid ground.

He's put food on our table and clothes on our backs.

But what God did for our parents, he will do for us! No wonder the song writer declared "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you.

With arms wide open he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God will do."

As you begin your journey through the wilderness of life, remember the Lord will make a way!

In the wilderness of:

—Despair, I know the Lord will give you hope!

—Weakness, the Lord will give you strength!

—Danger, the Lord will guide you to the other side. No wonder the song writer declared "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land!"

—Sorrow, the Lord will bring you comfort! "Beneath his wings of Love abide God will take care of you!"

It doesn't matter whether you are in the wilderness or on the mountaintop.

It doesn't matter whether you are doing a new thing or the same old thing.

If you call on the name of Jesus! He will make a way for you!

He will provide rivers of hope in the middle of your deserts!

Call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose from the grave in victory!

Call on Jesus...

He will make a way for you!

No. 560-Inspiration

God's Can Openers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 4, 1995

SCRIPTURE:Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. Matthew 13:52; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13

Introduction

Have you ever thrown away something, only to learn later that what you threw away was of great value? Often in the spring and summer months there is a general house cleaning. We throw away many unwanted things and take pains to preserve that we feel have value. The things we throw away sometimes include shoes, clothing, furniture and other household items. As a general rule, that which is thrown away has not lost its value, but it has lost its usefulness to us. Therefore, neighbors are amazed at the things we throw away, wondering whether we have lost our senses or whether it was an oversight on our part.

What really determines whether a thing is kept or thrown away? When do we decide to keep an item or to discard one? What is the determining factor? For the answer, consider the man who was shipwrecked on an island. He was all alone on a vast Island, the sole survivor of a great ship. Even though there were no trees or edible fruit bearing vegetation on this island the man was not worried because there were enough canned food items on board the ship to carry him for years. There were peas, carrots, greens, canned hams and a variety of food stuffs everywhere. On the second day of his experience the man began to panic as he rambled through the goods at his disposal. He found a chest of gold coins and threw them aside. He found a chest of pearls, but he threw those aside as well. He searched through boxes and found some filled with thousands of dollars in cash. He found expensive China plates and threw them in the sea. There were fine pieces of clothing that he crumbled and threw away. By the third day the man had completely gone mad. Surrounded by so much he was miserable. He had money, fine things, food and complete control of the island yet he was frustrated. He took the chest of coins and threw it into the sea. He ripped threw boxes, throwing the contents here and there.

Finally, with his head in his hands, the man dropped to his knees in despair. He picked up a can of beans. That can of beans and the thousands of other food items

symbolized his frustration. He had everything anyone would ever want, but he didn't have what he needed. What he needed was a can opener.

Herein lies the key to why some things are thrown away and others are kept. We keep those things which are useful to us, regardless of their age or condition. We discard those things which can no longer serve any useful purpose. Often, what we throw away is scooped up by someone else because its real value is not intrinsic, but related to whether or not it serves a purpose. One man's trash therefore, is another man's treasure.

So it is with religion. Many today have decided to throw it away because it serves no useful purpose. Worship, praise, bible study, and faith are view by some as relics from the past, that served a useful purpose in our past, but in modern times proves to be a cumbersome relic based upon an antiquated value system that is not conducive to living in modern times. Among the things they discard as useless, is old time religion.

As Christians, we know the value of our faith in God. We may be surrounded by rubies, diamonds, and hundreds of ideas for fame and wealth, but know the real value is not in the "cans", but in the can opener. It's not in the millions of opportunities that exist, but in the ability to open those opportunities for us. The key to opening the cans is faith in God. It may be a little old fashioned, but it is good enough for me.

Exposition

This text explores the depth of Christ's teaching that New Testament believers have double treasures. They have the wealth of the old covenant at their disposal but also get the benefits of the new as well. Without discarding the old they are better accept the activist challenge of the new.

Christ constantly spoke to his followers, many of whom were familiar with Old Testament teachings about the kingdom of heaven. He was giving them a new vision and a new hope that was based upon all that they had learned in the past. Beginning at verse 44 he told them four short parables to illustrate the new faith: a man who found a treasure in a field and bought it. A merchant that found a pearl of great price and fishermen who found great catches when they cast down their nets. In the last example, which is the basis for this text, he noted that those who were schooled in the teachings of the Old Testament had great opportunites available to them. They knew the old and were learning of the new. They suddenly found available to them a greater treasure, a new thing that was supported by the old..

The old testament scripture represented the prospects of the great things that God had in store for his people. It represented their hopes. It represented their dreams and it represented the promises of God, all wrapped neatly into Old Testament Cannon, or *"can"* for the benefit of this text.

If the old Testament or the old way represented the *"can"* then the New Testament represented the *can opener*. The New Testament represented how the promises of God, made in the old Cannon, would be implemented. Jesus showed them

how the promise of a new kingdom, new life, and happy living that was made in the old Testament would be opened to them. In John 14:6 *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

If the word "*can"* represents the possibilities of the old Testament, then the word "do" represents the new. The old taught us to believe in the possibilities. The new teaches us to belive on the possibilities and then "act" on our belief.

Thus Jesus makes the point that those who have the greatest treasure have both the old time religion and the new action based faith that the kingdom of heaven represents. He did not intend that the old religion would be discarded or destroyed but fulfilled.. In Matthew 5:17 -18 he said: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* In the text, he connected the old with the new generation with the conjuction "and" which suggests that the new does not exist without the old and the old is never fully appreciated or fulfilled without the new.
Together they project an unbeatable combination: Old Time Religion and an activist faith. Combined, they open the door to great opportunities for true believers. They represent a "*can do"* attitude that is the hallmark of every Christian: that "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

Old Time Religion

Today, there is a tendency to discard those elements of our faith that represent the essence of our struggle. Many have concluded that the old time religion is out dated. In the African-American community many young people look to other sources for their spiritual growth. Some are becoming mystics, some skeptics and others have abandoned the faith completely.

Many have decided that there is no need for Sunday School. They suggest that it is boring. They have also decided that worship and prayer meeting are also antiques. Bible study and training classes are viewed as a waste of time. They have concluded that the old songs of our past are dead, prayers are too long, and sermons are uninteresing and pointless. Even the moral standards of our religion are challenged, amid suggestions that prohibitions against sex, drinking and rowdy night life are from a different time and age. There are some in this generation who have adapted an attitude of tolerance rather than acceptance. Their song is *"it was good for my old mother, but there something else for me."*

Those who want to discard the old time religion have failed to appreciate its usefulness in their lives. No one throws away anything that is useful to them, no matter how old it is. If it helps me make it throw the day, I need it. If it helps me live life better, I need it. If it helps me realize my potential, I need it. If it helps me overcome my weaknesses, I need it.

An active faith in God opens the cans of opportunity that are available to believers. Throwing away the old time religion, is the same as having the munchies

for a can food item, but then throwing away the can opener! Without a can opener of some sort, we cannot get to that which is in the can!

We who are the created handiwork of God, cannot access the great things that God has in store for us without an active faith in God. Three passages of Bible scripture illustrate this truth. In John 5:19 *"...The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* Jesus said even though he is the Son of God there is nothing he can do by himself. He depends upon the father to empower him. Everything Jesus did was empowered by God. The feeding of thousands, raising of the dead, healing the sick, even the resurrection itself, all came from God.

Jesus had a *"can do"* life because he allow his faith in God to open miracle doors of opportunity. Jesus then taught those who followed him a similar truth in John 15:5 he said *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."* In essence, we cannot afford to throw away our relationship with Christ, without him we can't open the can! Without him we cannot succeed in any of our endeavors. "Without me ye can do nothing." The old time religion represents our continued faith in God through Christ, if we throw it away its like throwing away the opener! That's why Philippians 4:13 says " *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*." Without Christ to strengthen us we cannot expect to get to the goodies in the can.

It's Good Enough For Me

There are millions today who are ready to testify that they are not about to throw away the old time religion. They have found their faith in God to be invaluable to their happiness.

Though they studied the New Age philosphies of this present generation and understand its emphasis on the individual experience, but they've decided to stick with the old time religion, its good enough for me!

They have been tempted to experiment with alternative religions which promise prosperity and good times only to learn that it's better to accept the providence of God whether it brings good times or bad times.

They''ve decided to stick with the old time religion, it's good enough for me!

It is good enough for me because, the Lord has opened doors for me that I could not see!

It is good enough for me because, because the Lord has been better to me than I have been to myself!

It is good enough for me because when I lost, he he found me and placed my feet on solid ground.

"Give me that old time religion, it's good enough for me!

No. 561-Anniv.-Men, Father's Day

My Father is a Can Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 18, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***"And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Mark 14:36" For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" Romans 8:15-16***

Introduction

What is your image of the ideal father? Do you see him as a provider? Protector? Friend? Over the years, the image of father has changed dramatically in many homes in the African-American community. The ideal picture of a man who serves as the high priest of his home, defender of the family, and best friend to his children, has diminished in many instances to that of a powerless no-good who spends his time complaining that his child support payments are too high. The idea of having a father who *"can"* is being replaced by the image of fathers who *can't, won't* and *don't*. Without a doubt, our image of father is changing.

Whenever our image of father changes it impacts our image of God. In times past, a child who wanted to know what God was like could be told: *"God is just like your daddy, son, he just lives on another street, way up there in the sky."* Because many men are neglecting their duties to their families today, there is a natural tendency for some to transfer their images of their father to God. If their fathers were loving, caring, strong, and concerned, then our heavenly father is seen the same way. However, if their father is simply a distant voice on the telephone, a name on a court order, an occasional visitor on the stage of their lives, then the heavenly father is seen the same way: distant, unconcerned an occasional visitor in their lives who interrupts the normal flow and generally upsets the status-quo after he leaves.

Images of fatherhood are conceived when our children are young. In the tender years of their lives they are impressed by nearly everything they hear. They believe nearly everything they are told. Consider the boys who sat on a street corner and bragged about their fathers. "My father owns a grocery story" said one boy who was obviously proud. The grocery store sat on a corner and was highly visible. The other boys started bragging too: "My father owns a Mercedes Bentz" said one, and another said "My father owns a big house on the avenue" One little boy jumped up

quickly and shouted "My father use to own hell!" Surprised the other boys turned to hear further:"Ma ma says every time he comes to make his court visit, he tries to give it to her, so he must own it.!" It's sad when children see their fathers as symbols of trouble, failure and neglect.

Fathers are still essential to the family. Children need to be around them, know them and learn from them. They are important because they help shape our images of God as we translate the images of our earthly father to that of our heavenly father.

As Christians we know that our heavenly father is a good. He provides for us and he protects us. As earthly fathers, we should strive to be more like the savior everyday so that our wives and children can see images of God within us.

Exposition

This text underscores the image of father as viewed by believers under the new covenant.

Peculiar to this text is the idea of God as he is perceived in the New Testament context and in the hearts of believers.

The text notes the words *"Abba"* and *"Father"* being used together. The latter is translated into English while the former is not translated at all, but remains in its Greek form. A key to a greater understanding of biblical teachings about father, and God's role as father is indicated by the two words.

Abba is Greek word which means *father*. In fact, it is closer to "daddy" than father, because of its personal implications. Abba is used in the New Testament because it is written in Greek. The Old Testament, which is written in Hebrew, only has one word that comes close in meaning and that is "Ab." which refers to "father."

The Old Testament idea of father differs from that of the New Testament. In the Old Testament father was Lord and Master of his home, closer to what modern times would describe as a dictator. He was a provider, decision maker and ruler. It was permissible, in the old Testament context for a father to have many wives. So Abraham, Jacob, and many other patriarchs had several wives, as their resources allowed. Fathers were also given permission to destroy their children if they sinned, pick their marriage partners or to sacrifice them to God. Such authority is why Abraham could take young Isaac, bind him hand and foot, and place him on the altar of sacrifice without thinking of any legal retribution. The father's right to sacrifice was understood.

The image of father in the Old Testament was one of respect, but rarely of love and compassion. "Ab" usually refers to a human father in the old testament. While there are only a few occasions in which "Ab" is used to refer to God in the old testament, they serve to paint a picture of God as a mean spirited, vindictive personality that is willing to punish generations of the innocent for the sins of a few.

The New Testament idea of God's intimate relationship to humanity is a distinct feature of Jesus' teaching. God relates to believers as a father relates to his child.

In the New Testament context fathers are perceived differently. They are perceived as one wife husbands, loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Instead of being head and masters of their homes, they are perceived as equal partners in the family, who assume the leadership role by common agreement as both husband and wife try to symbolize the relationship between Christ and the church. Instead of being a terror to his children, empowered to kill them if necessary, fathers are urged to provoke not their children to wrath. They are perceived as personal, friendly and concerned about the wives and children.

It is in this context that Jesus began a litany of teachings, different from the Old Testament view, referring to God as "Our father." His was a different view of father. It was a compassionate, concerned father who was strong, yet willing to do whatever is necessary to promote, protect and provide for his children.

When Jesus used the term Abba he referred to a personal God. He was talking to daddy! Father characterized God has a man of compassion and love for the entire family of God.

Paul, writing to the Romans used the term "Abba" to remind believers that they had been adopted into the family of God by their faith. Because of their belief in Christ and their willingness to accept him as their Lord and Savior they could claim membership in the family of God with all rights and privileges.

Jesus redefined the meaning of father. We recognize God as our father and humbly submit to him as the stern but loving commanding presence in our lives.

Defining Father

What is the expectation of a father in today's context? Today the definition of father is constantly evolving. Perhaps there is litmus test that can be used to measure a father, if so these four areas might apply:

PROVIDE: Good fathers provide for their families. The essentials for survival in the common era are food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Good fathers see to it that their families are provided for in this respect.

A good father is one who insures that there is a sufficient supply of all essentials for his household. Fathers who are estranged, divorced or otherwise separated still have a responsibility to their children. Court ordered child support payments may not provide often do not scratch the cost of providing for children. The good father goes beyond what is required by court agreement and insures that his children are never in want for anything.

IS THERE FOR THEM: Good fathers go beyond simply providing for their families. A good father is "there for his children." The good father is involved in the events important to his children. In school or community, fathers must be present to support their children. This is a challenge, requiring an intricate balance career tasks and family needs. Career success is important, but a daughter's speech in the school play is important too. A son who is on stage to say a poem, considers that as an important moment. A good father says, its important to me too.

CREATES MAGIC MOMENTS: The good father creates magic moments with his children. These are family rituals or good times that carve special memories in the minds of a child. The serve to bond father and child and bring them close together. These magic moments may include bed time stories or other family rituals which give him a special place in his family's heart.

GOOD FATHERS LOVE AND SUPPORT THEIR WIVES: A good father's relationship with his children, in many instances, is tied to the way he relates to his wife. A good father is an example to his sons and daughters of marital fidelity. Even if, for some reason, they separate the good father continues to respect his former wife, speak well of her before his children and admonish them to obey her wise instructions. A good father will never withhold support and love from his children because of ill feelings toward his wife.

GOOD FATHERS ARE MORAL EXAMPLES: A good father is source of moral strength for his family. He exemplifies the idea of doing that which is right, even though it is difficult. Although he himself may slip along the way, he acknowledges the error of his way and redirects himself. Thus by example, he teaches his children to seek the high road and avoid the fast track.

Our Father

The greatest advantage of having a good father is the feeling he creates among his family members that says: "If I can't, I have a father who can!"

This is the feeling that there is no problem that besets me that is beyond my father's ability to work it out.

No matter how great our earthly fathers may be, experience has taught us that there are some things that our earthly fathers cannot do. Despite the best of their intentions, even daddy can't solve some problems.

But I'm so glad to know that when mother can't make it happen, and daddy throws up his hands, that I have a father who can!

My father doesn't reside in Monroe or New York or Kansas City, but he sits high and looks low and he's with me wherever I go!

My father is a can man!

I have a father who can take

—Sadness and turn it to gladness; Misery and turn it into delight!

—Failure and turn it into success; Loneliness and turn it into happiness!

—Poverty and turn it into riches; Defeat and turn it into victory!

No wonder the song writer wrote: *I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece a clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!"*

I reminded of the little girl who had nightmares when she was young and was always afraid in the night. In the middle of the morning when her fears got the best of her she'd cry out "Papa, It's dark, hold my hand!" No matter how many times she called him papa would get up and hold her hand every night. That picture of her

papa sitting by her bed holding her hand, never left her mind, even after he died. Many years later she came to God. When the troubles of the world surrounded her she cried out "Lord, it's dark outside!, Hold my hand!"

No wonder the song writer declared *"Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race. I don't want to run this race alone!"*

I don't know about you but I want Jesus to walk with me! He walked with my father, but I want him to walk with me!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose after three days!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 562-Funeral

What Time Does The Last Bus Leave?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 27, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." 2 Tim 4:6

Introduction

A little girl was excited about riding the city bus. She had seen them pass by many days, but she had never ridden on a city bus herself. One day her grandmother decided to take her for a ride on the city bus. They sat at a bus stop and the little girl was anxious. She saw a pretty shiny bus come up the street and jumped up and down with excitement. "Here comes the bus!" she shouted, pulling on her grandmother's arm. The Grandmother sat quietly, saying nothing. The bus passed by. The little girl repeated this routine several times and was dismayed as the same bus passed her several times but her grandmother never attempted to get on board. Finally the grandmother looked at her watch and rose to stand at the bus stop, paid their fare and they sat comfortably in their seats. Puzzled, the little girl asked:"Grandma, this bus passed us several times but we didn't get on, why?" The grandma, confident in the wisdom of her years said: "Right bus, wrong destination!" There are many today who have boarded life's bus, but are not careful to make sure its headed in the right direction.

As Christians we strive to make sure that we are following in the footsteps of the master. By doing so we take no chance of getting lost.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he awaits his execution, anticipating his departure from this world. Paul's life was eventful to say the least. For the most part it can be divided into two parts, both pursued with the same vigor and commitment that is characteristic of his personality. Before he met the Lord he was the complete opposite of the Christian ideal. Although he had religious roots, he actively persecuted the church. In Jewish circles he was considered the very antithesis of Christianity. However, after

meeting Christ on the Damascus Road in a dramatic, soul shaking, experience he began a new experience that was different from his past.

Those who knew him watched him with skepticism. They could not believe that the Paul they saw speaking as an advocate for the church, was the same "Saul" that had persecuted the church. They listened as Paul frequently told them of the error of his ways in the past, but then told them of the depth of his commitment to Christ after his Damascus Road experience.

Having spent his life establishing churches throughout the known world, this text finds Paul in Roman imprisonment for a second time. This time however, he had been given a sentence of death by the Roman Emperor Nero. In his final days, Paul penned this letter to the Christians in Rome expressing his readiness to depart this life, having given his best for the kingdom.

When the words of this text are amplified in the Greek its special meaning takes on an even greater emphasis especially in light of the words *"Now","Ready"* and *"offered."* Taken separately they give even greater meaning to Paul's affirmation that he was ready to be sacrificed.

The Greek word used for *"now"* in this application is *"Hedista"* which means *"with great pleasure."* In English "now" implies "the present moment" but in this context "now" means "with great pleasure." It expresses Paul's attitude facing the moment of departure, to paraphase William Cullen Bryant, "not as the quarry slave at night, scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, wraps the draperies of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams." When Paul said "I am now" he could have easily been saying *"I anticipate my departure with a joyous and appreciative attitude."*

The two versions of the Greek word *"Spendo"* are used for *"ready"* and *"offered."* The first application in the word "Ready" means to devote one's life or blood as a sacrifice which is poured out, commonly called a libation. Paul characterized his life after the Damascus Road as one that was committed to building the kingdom of God. It was a life of devotion to the cause of kingdom building, praise and worship. The second application of "Spendo" refers to his readiness to be offered further for the cause of Christ. For Paul this meant a dignified death, without complaint or denial of the faith. To be ready was simply to stand prepared to take his life of devotion to its logical conclusion.

Taken together this text finds Paul saying *"With great joy and pleasure I have devoted my life to building the kingdom of God. I now stand ready, even in the prospect of death, prepared to carry it to its logical conclusion."* The time of his departure was drawing closer but his commitment to the cross remained undiminished.

Which Bus to Ride

Today, we labor in the kingdom of God with the full knowledge that our time on this earth is limited and that there will be a time of departure.

Sometimes our lives resemble a person who rides a city bus. There are many buses that go in many different directions. Following a variety of schedules, sometimes the same bus goes to several different destinations in any given day. Those who ride the bus know that three things are essential: knowing which bus to ride, its schedule, and to have the proper fare.

THE RIGHT BUS: It's important that those who journey in life catch the right bus! There are many that have simply stood at the bus stops of life and caught the first bus that came along, without regard to where that bus would take them. Many began with intentions to live honorable and noteworthy lives, but somewhere along the way they caught the wrong bus! Jails and prisons are filled with people who caught the wrong bus. Crime and violence have escalated in nearly every community in America because of people who have caught the wrong bus!

The right bus is to live a life devoted to the worship and praise of God and to the service of others. Jesus said in John 14:6 *".. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Those who follow Jesus are on the right bus, it leads them to kingdom of heaven.

TRANSFER: A unique feature of bus service is the transfer. It allows a person to transfer from a bus going in one direction and take a bus that will get him where he wants to go. That is precisely what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road. He was headed in one direction and transferred in the middle of his journey to another bus. There are many in life who discover that the life they are leading will carry them some place they don't want to go, if they don't transfer to the right bus. The rich young ruler missed his chance to transfer to the right bus. However, the woman at the well changed buses quickly and told everyone to *"come see a man"* who told me all I've ever done. Those riding through life on the wrong bus can tranfer if they will accept Christ.

FARE: Bus rides are seldom free. A fare must be paid. Whether it's a coupon, cash, debit card or otherwise, the fare must be paid before a passenger can get on board. No matter which direction a person chooses in life, he must be prepared to pay the price. In Luke 14:28 Jesus suggests to his disciples that those who choose to follow him must *"count the cost"* in terms of personal sacrifice, and commitment of time, talents and treasures. While there is a price to pay for those who ride the Christian bus, in terms of time, talent and treasures, there is no fare to get on the bus. Every Christian has been provided with a free boarding pass, given to them as a gift from a loving savior. Romans 6:23 describes this free pass in this way *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* The fare for the Christian journey has been paid by our Lord out on Calvary. Maybe that's why the song writer declared: "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow."

Knowing The Schedule

Finally, it is extremely important to know the schedule of the bus you choose to

ride. You must know two things: The time of your departure and the time of your arrival.

Paul said "the time of my departure is at hand." This indicated that he knew the schedule was evident. "At hand" suggests that he did not know the exact minute or hour, but he knew it was close. Therefore he readily stood at the right bus stop, determined to catch the bus to glory when it depart.

Moses stood on a mountain top and waited for his departure.

Elijah waited for his bus to sweep down as a mighty chariot and carry him home!

Many saints wait for the bus in the solitude of their homes, or in the sanctuary of a hospital room. Whether on an airplane, boat, train or car, or sitting on a fish pond, many saints are waiting for the bus! Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind with the words "When he calls me, I will answer, I'll be somewhere listening for my name!"

I don't know about you, but I'm waiting for the bus and listening for my name!

I may be at home, but I'll be somewhere listening for my name!

I may be driving my automobile or reading a newspaper, but I'll be somewhere listening for my name!"

We don't know the day or the hour but brothers and Sisters, like Paul, we know the time of departure is "at hand." Therefore we need to stand at our bus stop and keep watching for the bus because we never know what time the last bus leaves!

We should do all the good we can do, for we never know what time the last bus leaves!

Sing while you can sing, for we never know what time the last bus leaves!

Work while it is day, for we never know what time the last bus of life leaves!

The song writer declares "I'm gonna work until my day is done. I'll cease from sorrows, there be no tomorrows..I'm going to work until my day is done!"

" I do not know how long it twill be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me I will get home some day!"

While it is important to know what time the bus leaves, its is equally important to know, the time of arrival.

It's important that every Christian remembers that the time of our arrival in glory is already printed on the schedule. 2 Corinthians 5:8 reminds us that when we are absent in the body we are "present with the Lord." The time of our arrival is in an instant, a twinkling of an eye!

No wonder the old slaves could check their schedules and sing "Swing low sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home. If you get there before I do, tell all my friends I coming there too!"

While the departure is a sad moment for those who are left behind, the arrival is the most important thing to a Christian traveler!

Every saint is looking forward to his arrival in the kingdom of heaven!

That will be a day when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

That will be a day when the mountains will be made low and the valleys shall be

exalted!

That will be a day when every day will be Sunday and it's always howdy and never goodbye!

That will be the day that we see Jesus face to face!

I don't know about you but every day I'm checking my schedule and asking: "What time the does the last bus leave?"

I want to be ready! Ready! Ready!

...When Jesus comes!

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On Thursday June 22, 1995 Stella Hayes departed from this life. She was a devoted Christian worker and a friend to many. She boarded the right bus, grace paid her fare, and she made her arrival on time.

No. 563-Homecoming

Go Home and Tell the Story

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 16, 1995

SCRIPTURE:Mark 5:19 "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel. Mark 5:19-20

Introduction

Have you ever listened to the conversation of a person who has been away and recently returned home. Usually they have exciting stories to tell of their adventures and travels. Sometimes the dramatic accounts of sights and deeds seem unbelievable. Somehow, their accounts give us a feel for what the journey must have been like as we attempt to place ourselves along the back roads and highways that they have traveled. To a great extent, a great part of any journey is the story told back home!

Sometimes the report given is not about a place seen or deed done. Sometimes it is about a change of attitude or spirit that occurred while away from home. Consider the man who left home disgusted with what he concluded was an absence of godliness everywhere. It appeared to him that God was absent. He assumed the attitude that "God is no where" which became his slogan. Many years later, much to the surprise of his family and friends he returned home with a bright smile on his face. There was a glow about him. When asked about his new found glow he said: "It was a case of a misplaced W." Puzzled, his family members wanted to know what he meant. "When I was home all I had was W's. I wanted to know Who was God and if he existed. Why God didn't make things better. When God would change things. Where was God. I was plagued by a misplaced W." He explained that one day he read John 3:16 and saw that God loved the World and Whosoever that believed on him would have everlasting life. That day I accepted Christ. The "W" found its right place and my motto changed from "God is no where" to "God Is Now here." I left home thinking God was gone, but I've come home to say "God is now here!"

There are many today who have never left town but have a misplaced "W". Those who have found it have a story to tell.

As Christians, we have a story to tell. It is a story of Salvation. It is a story of answered prayers. It's a story of blessings. Each of us has a testimony about the

goodness of the Lord. We truly have a story to tell. At home and any where we go we proudly stand and testify "God is now here!"

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in the ministry of Jesus in which he instructed someone not to sit at his feet but to go home and witness.

The occasion of this text was a visit that Jesus made to the country of the Gadarenes. As he preached and taught he came upon a man whose life had been dominated by legions of evil spirits.

Jesus denounced the presence of evil and allowed them to put themselves in a herd of swine that immediately ran over a hill and killed themselves.

The once demonic man was immediately sane. It was a miracle at the least. A remarkable thing had been done in his life by the power of God. The demonic was so grateful that he wanted to sit at Jesus' feet and follow him around constantly as a witness and disciple. However, he was told to go home and tell his friends what had happened to him.

Although reluctant, the man returned to his own home town and other areas and declared the goodness of God.

Worship is A Privelege, Service A Duty

Today there are millions who have a story to tell but are caught between the privelege of worship and the duty to serve.

The demonic man was released from the possession of an evil spirit. A mighty work had been done in his life. He wanted to spend his entire life in constant worship and praise of Christ, thus he requested to stay in his presence daily. However, he was pointed away from the privelege, represented by his constant desire to worship, toward his duty to serve.

In a similar sense there are many today who have a great witness but they are basing their faith encounter completely on the worship experience rather than service.

It can truthfully be said that most churches, whether Baptist, Charismatic, Methodist or other orders spend the greater part of their resources and time perpetuating the worship and praise. These resources are connected to singing praises to God, praying, discussing, debating and conducting formal worship programs. The attention paid to the personal emotional experience is extraordinary. The Baptists want something to shout about. The Charismatics wait for every opportunity to raise holy hands and speak in unknown tongues. Like the saved demonic, we want to be in the presence of the savior constantly. Like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration we are overwhelmed by the sheer beauties of heaven and want to build tabernacles and stay there forever.

While worship experiences have their place, it is a privilege of the saved that is

best exercised after the duty of service has been accomplished. Worship and praise of God is an inseparable part of the Christian faith. However, the premium, in the sight of God is on kingdom building or serving others. Our daily devotion is a moment in which we pause to thank God for the new opportunity to serve him through the coming challenges of the day. The daily devotion prepares us for a day of service or gives thanks at the conclusion of a day of service. The devotion itself is not the object, it is a privilege, a moment to thank God for his empowering presence. The weekly devotion is the same. It is not the object but a privilege.

Those who want to worship constantly have little appreciation for service. Perhaps that is why Jesus' words to the demonic still ring in our ears "tell them how great things God has done!"

The challenge to the demonic was to return home. It would have been easier if Christ had challenged him to go to some distant place. But he was challenged to go home and tell the story. Home is the hardest place to do a good work. The people at home are skeptics, doubters, hard hearts, hard headed, strong willed and set in their ways. It would have been easier to tell the story somewhere else. Certainly it would be better received. Rather than rejoice at the great change in his life, back home the people would probably conclude that he was never possessed in the first place, just acting foolish running around naked for all those years. Going home was the hardest challenge.

Many church members have left their church homes, frustrated over the perceived stubbornness and insensitivities of a small handful. Some are meeting in hotels, store fronts and back rooms. Some are wandering from denomination to denomination looking for a place where they can simply sit at Jesus' feet and feel his presence. They are grateful to a God that has saved them and lifted them and they want to praise him with uninterrupted peace and joy. At Jesus's feet they would constantly be in the physical presence of the master, safe and secure from the world. At Jesus feet, they could be filled daily with power of his presence. Yet the words of the savior still ring out, "go home to thy friends and tell them what good things God has done!"

When Jesus sent the demonic home he did not send him home alone. He wasn't a helpless crazy man being sent defenseless to the slaughter of his home folk. He had the power of the holy spirit to guide him. Likewise those who return home to witness to the poor, needy, and downtrodden about the power of God do not go alone, they are followed by an unseen comforter, the spiritual presence of Christ to guide and sustain them.

We have A Story To Tell

Finally, we must consider that the demonic was challenged to witness because he had a story to tell.

Anyone who has had an experience with the Lord has a story to tell. We are called by God to witness where we can do the best good! The greater your experience with

the Lord the more compelling the need to help others by letting God use you to do for them what was also done for you.

The man who has been hungry but is now filled has a story to tell and duty to help feed others!

The woman was thirsty but found the living waters has a story to tell and a duty to help others find that same crystal fountain!

The man who was destitute, jobless and homeless, has a story to tell and a duty to help others find the same saving Lord that they found!

Every saved saint has a story to tell!

Jonah had a story to tell. He didn't want to tell it to the people of Ninevah, but he had to tell the story!

Ezekiel had a story to tell. He had to tell the people that although they were dried up like dry bones in the valley, God could give them life again! He had to tell it because it was like fire shut up in his bones!

David had a story to tell. He had risen to lofty royal heights and had fallen to depths of despair, yet he declared "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want!"

The lame man had a story to tell! He had been sitting by the pool for 38 long years but always missed his chance until one day Jesus told him to "take up that bed and walk!"

The woman at the well had a story to tell! She met a man who peered beneath the thin veneer of public perception and saw her soul. She ran through the city shouting "Come see a man who told me all about myself!"

I hear the savior challenging believers to "go home and tell thy friends the good things" that the Lord has done for you!

Even though there may be legions of the apathetic sitting on boards and committees, go home tell those dependent on drugs how God freed you from a life of drug dependency!

Go home and tell the indigent how reordering your life saved you from a life of poverty as you take their hand and show them the way out!

Go home and tell those who are medically deficient how God healed your body. Show them a better and healthier way to live with Christ as their guide!

Go home and minister to the victims of disaster and show them the bright side of every storm!

Go home to wayward children and show them that someone cares. Take them by the hand, teach them, take them, nurture them with an effection that would come from the divine father himself.!

Go home to a circle of friends that may not know the goodness of the Lord and tell the story of the risen Lord!

Tell them how he suffered out on Calvary!

Tell them how he died on an old rugged cross!

Tell them how he rose early Sunday morning!

Tell them about Jesus!

No. 564-Revival

Hook Me Up!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 22, 1995

*SCRIPTURE:" **And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?Mat 19:16 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?Luke 10:25 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:30-31***

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to belong to something and found yourself black balled for one reason or another? There have always been special groups that have appealed for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it was just a group of children who were popular. Maybe it was a college fraternity or sorority. Perhaps it was a Masonic order. There have been times when even the best of us have been kept out of certain clubs and organizations because we did not fit. It was a humiliating experience, because no one likes rejection.

A popular phrase from today's "rap" subculture is "Hook me up!" It refers to making a connection, getting what is needed to qualify, or otherwise doing what needs to be done to get what you need. It is generally a term associated with druggies who meet their dealers in alleys and street corners with the plea "Hook me up, man! Please, hook me up!" A person who is hooked up is one who has a connection. If' he's hooked up his supply is guaranteed. "Rap" which reflects this subculture, has colloquialized the phrase "Hook me up" to become synonymous with "help me get what it takes!"

Many people have found themselves barred from participation in many things because they were not "hooked up!" Those turned down by certain groups were often rejected not because of a lack of qualifications, but because they were not hooked up!

In this life there is one thing for sure you, if you plan to make it you must be hooked up. Otherwise, no matter how you try you won't make it in. An old slave parable said both the slave and the slave master died and were standing in line at the gates of heaven. Folks were carrying bags of vittles, fiddles under their arms and all sorts of things for the good time they were going to have in heaven. The slave master was surprised when he stood in line because all of the people looked like some of his slaves. He didn't see any of the other masters around anywhere. When the master

finally made it to the gate a tall angel stuck his head through the gate and asked: "Weren't you one of them slave masters?" The master responded with pride:"Yes sir, but I treated my slaves well. They got a change of clothes once a year, and presents at Christmas time." The angel looked in his book and said "It says here that you always told them that you would free them for a price but it kept changing." The master dropped his head and answered "That's true." The angel then asked. "Are you walking or riding?" The master answered "walking!" Quickly, the angel answered sorry, you can't get in, we ain't takin' nothing but riding people this week." On the way over to the station to catch the train to hell the master ran up on one of his slaves who was on his way to glory. "Boy, you wastin' yo' time, they ain't takin nobody in glory that's walkin', you got to be riding." Just then the master got a bright idea. "I ought to be able to get in cause I been riding people all my life." He said. He invited the slave to get on his back and he'd play the hoss and both of them would get into glory together. When they made it to the gate the angel saw the slave and said, "Are you walking or riding?" The slave answered "I'se riding suh!" Instantly the angel said "We'll you can come in but, but your hoss will have to stay outside!" Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there! You gotta be hooked up!

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we have the right hookup! Regardless of our color, social condition or otherwise we know we have the right connection to guarantee our salvation and citizenship in the kingdom of God. That connection is Jesus. He was lifted up to hook us up to everlasting life!

Exposition

These texts present three examples of persons who wanted to be hooked up and what they were told to do.

In Matthew 19 Jesus is confronted by the Rich Young Ruler who wants to be a part of the kingdom of God. He thought entry could be gained by counting the good deeds performed. Therefore he thought it wise to ask advice about the nature of the good deed necessary for him to gain entry into the kingdom of God. In response Jesus pointed him to a higher demand. It had nothing to do with deeds or his obedience to the law, but in his willingness to put the interests of the kingdom before any other interest. While he was told to sell all of his property and give it to the poor, this was not a general requirement of all who come to the kingdom of God. It was a test of his willingness to part with things he considered valuable in obedience to the command of Christ. If he wanted to be in the kingdom, the love of God and obedience to God had to be centermost in his life. The rich young ruler found that too demanding. His possessions were great and he could not bear to leave them

In Luke 10 a lawyer is presented asking Christ essentially the same question as the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. However, while the rich young ruler desired to get into the kingdom, the lawyer was trying to devise a trick question to trip Jesus on his own words. Jesus gave him a different response than he gave to the rich young ruler. He was not told to sell all he had, but was told to obey the commandments and

love God with all his heart and mind, and then to love his neighbor as he loves himself. Obeying the law was not a problem for the lawyer. Neither was loving God. However, he had extreme difficulty with the requirement to love his neighbor like he loves himself. He raised the question of the identity of neighbors only to be told the parable of the good Samaritan. Those who want to gain entry into the kingdom of God must see and perceive people without distinctions of color, class, or other barriers. This posed a considerable challenge to the young lawyer.

In Acts 16 a jailer asks the question after witnessing the humble spirit of Paul and Silas in his jail. Though the jail doors were opened and they had opportunities to escape they remained. Impressed by both the power of God to open closed jails and the witness of Paul and Silas who prayed and sang with jubilation, the guard wanted to know more about being a Christian. He found out that the only real requirement is to allow Christ to become the center of your life, accept him as your savior and Lord and salvation is guaranteed. Unlike the rich young ruler, there was no property to be sold. Unlike the calculating lawyer there were trick questions waiting to be revealed. The answer was simply. Believe and be saved.

Those who wanted to be hooked up, or guaranteed a place in the kingdom of heaven need only to be willing to put God first, obey him completely in every respect and salvation is guaranteed.

Jesus Must Be First

The first requirement to be hooked up, or to become a member of the kingdom of God is that we must be willing to put the cause of the kingdom first.

There are many people who have great possessions. These possessions include our material holdings but also include our passions and persuits. Sometimes our passions and possessions can get in the way of kingdom building.

Jesus' response to the rich young ruler is the same today. Those who want to be hooked up in the kingdom of God must be willing to make their talents, possessions, and time completely available for the master's use. The rich young rule went away without getting hooked up, because he could not, in good conscious, part with his possessions.

Today those who want to be hooked up are faced with the same delimma. The demands of time, talents and resources that come with membership in the kingdom are enormous. Our comittment to the kingdom must be of such that we are willing to sacrifice all for the sake of the kingdom.

There can be no hook up unless you are willing to give up! Give up some time. Give up some of your resourcefulness and talent! Give up some of your treasures!

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "Give of your best to the master. Give of the strength of your youth. Clad in salvation's full armour, join in the battle for truth!"

Love of God and People Must be Central

To get a spiritual hook up, there must be a love of God and people!

The young lawyer presented the Lord with a check list of things he had done in obedience to the law. He was told however, that the love of God through service to people, all people must be most important in his mind! When asked to explain the nature of what was expected of him Jesus told him the story of the good Samaritan, with the emphasis on the point that his neighbor was not defined by locality but by his condition.

Those who want a spiriual hook up must love God with everything in their soul. There is no debating this point. The love of God must be foremost!

Our love of God is reflected in our willingness to serve people, regardless to the degree of our association with them. We must serve people, not just Black people. People! We must serve people; not just our next door neighbors, fraternity brother and sorority sisters, but all people.

The kingdom of God is a people serving community and those who desire to be in its ranks must be oriented toward service to people, especially the poor, downtrodden and disadvantaged.

The Advantages of being hooked up!

Being hooked up has its advantages! The jailer saw the power of God open closed jail doors and saw the spirit of confidence in Paul and Silas and he immediately wanted get himself hooked up!

It pays to be hooked up!

Those who are hooked up are free blame for the past wrongs.Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Those who are hooked up receive the gift of eternal life. Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

Those who are hooked up receive power from God to carry out his great work.Acts 1:8 *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* These are powers to discern spirits, use healing hands, communicate with others in languages unfamiliar, intense optimism, and to pray fervently.

Being hooked up has its advantages, but brothers and sisters you must be hooked up to get them! Jesus said in John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

You must be hooked up!

If you buy a phone to get messages from friends, it's no good if it's off the hook.

Even if it's on the hook it's no good if it's disconnected! You gotta get hooked up!

Beautiful chandliers, crystal lighting fixtures are nice, but they are no good unless the electricity is hooked up!

Although there is a cable line going to your house, you can't get a picture unless you get hooked up!

You can have a computer with all the right equipment, but you can't get any information or surf the World Wide Web or Internet, unless first get hooked up!

A boxcar may be able to carry a heavy load but it can't go anywhere unless its hooked up to a good engine!

Many people are having problems in life because they have unhooked themselves!

Too many things are getting unhooked!

Our homes are being vandalized because some doors are left unhooked!

Teen pregnancy is on the rise because too many zippers are being lowered and dresses are being unhooked!

Fathers are trying to get out of child support payments, vainly trying to get off the hook!

Our resolve should be that nothing will unhook us!

"Nothing shall separate me from the love of God"

You can get hooked up if you simply believe on the name of Jesus and accept him as Lord of your life!

Jesus was lifted up so we could get hooked up!

Jesus was hung up for our hangups!

Jesus was raised up on a cross such that we could be lifted up in glory!

Jesus, the lily of the valley! The bright and morning star!

Died out on Calvary that we might have a chance to look up and lift up our eyes to to the hills from whence cometh our help!

But early Sunday morning he woke, got up, and stood up! With all power in his hands!

If you want to be hooked up! Come to Jesus today!

No. 565-Revival

The Danger of Dialing The Wrong Number

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 24, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. 1 Kings 18: 27-29 "But I called upon the Lord in my distress, And he heard me from his Temple. My cry reached his ears." 2 Samuel 22:7

Introduction

Have you ever dialed a wrong number? No matter how we try, even the best of us dial a wrong number on occasion. We buy notebooks to keep up with the numbers, then lose the notebook. There are pocket phone books, computerized reminders and phone number logs, but they seem to do little good as well. We still seem to forget the number we are calling and dial the wrong number. We write phone numbers on pieces of paper, on notes stuck to the refrigerator with magnets, on envelopes and any place else that is necessary. However, despite our best efforts, we still seem to dial the wrong number.

Dialing the wrong number can be troublesome. Consider the man who had been at odds with his girlfriend and stayed up all night long trying devising a makeup speech that he would recite to her in his best romantic voice. Late one night he got enough courage to dial the number. When he heard the voice on the other end of the phone, he jumped right into his speech: "Baby, I want to show you how much I care about you. I want to take you out to dinner. I'm going to buy you a dozen of the finest roses. I'm going to bring you a special present from Victoria's Secret. I'm going to wine you and dine you and lift your soul to Cloud 9." He continued in his rehearsed speech for another five minutes. Finally he said: "Mary, baby, I love you." The woman on the phone answered "Mary? My name is Alice, you have the wrong number." Before he could say anything the woman added: "But you can still take me out on that date!" Dialing the wrong number can cause many problems.

In life there are many people who are looking for the right thing but they are dialing the wrong numbers. They have meandered into drugs, crime, and deviance,

seeking to find fulfillment. After giving life their best shot, they learn that they have spent their energy and life substance, dialing the wrong number.

As Christians we are assured that we have not dialed the wrong number. We have made the right connection and the source of our blessings is Christ. We dialed the right number and got an answer every time!

Exposition

This text focuses on two historic episodes that illustrate the rewards of calling on God and the futility of calling on false gods.

King Ahab and Jezebel were wicked leaders of the land. God's anger had been displayed by causing a great drought that was threatening the very life of the nation. Water sources were drying up everywhere and the people were in great anguish. Privately, people were calling on one of two deities worshiped in the land: Baal and the true and living God. The prophet Elijah decided to bring the division to a head. He asked "how long" the land would be divided between two opinions and he challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to a contest atop Mt. Carmel. The contest would pit the 450 Baalist prophets against Elijah to decide which God was the real one. An altar and a sacrifice was built for each deity. The prophets would call upon their god to respond in a public demonstration of power. The one that answered by fire would be recognized as the true and living God.

During the contest the prophets of Baal danced and chanted in front of their altar, but there was no response. Though they cut themselves and did their very best, their efforts were futile. Elijah ridiculed them and suggested that their god was probably on a journey or was asleep. At any rate, Baal did not answer. Elijah made a dramatic demonstration by not only calling on God to devour the sacrifice with fire, but to do so after it had been drenched with water thoroughly.

In the time of their trouble the entire nation found that it had been calling on the wrong god. Elijah's demonstration helped them to conclude that they should give their complete loyalties to the one and only God.

2 Samuel records a memoir of David that is also reflected in Psalm 18. It was written at a time when David had been delivered from the hands of Saul's armies as they attempted to kill him as enemy of the king. He noted that while he was surrounded by trouble and possible death, that he called upon the Lord. He called on God and received an answer from heaven

The prophets of Baal called the wrong god and got no answer. Elijah and David called on God and got an answer!

Dialing Wrong Numbers

There are many people today whose lives have become complete wrecks because they are seeking happiness, but are mistakenly dialing the wrong numbers, or seeking the wrong sources to find it.

Many are looking for fulfilment and self esteem, but they are dialing the wrong number. Many youth look for it in the brand name clothing. They feel unfulfilled unless they own designer labeled clothing and will pay unbelievable prices to obtain the label. A tennis shoe that does not carry the "Air Jordan" label is unwanted. Neither are other products. They want happiness, but they are dialing the wrong number. Youth are not alone. Many adults are also dialing the wrong number. Some women feel they need a Guicci purse to hold the items they bought from K-mart. However, a K- mart purse is not good enough.

Many have drifted into lives of crime trying to find material success. They are dialing the wrong number. Drug dealers have huge amounts of cash, gold necklaces, fine cars and a public subculture persona of success. There are some who are impressed with the apparent "success" of the criminal elements of our society and have decided to dabble in criminal activities. They are dialing the wrong number.

Many are looking for emotional support and love, but they are dialing the wrong numbers to find what they seek. Real love, evolves from a godly character that is shared with others. Without God there can be no love because God is love. Those who are looking for love but find themselves seeking or giving sexual favors instead are dialing the wrong number. In the 1960's Isaac Hayes wrote a song in which he suggested that those who wanted sex should call him at "Good Love 6969." Unfortunately there are many today who are following that advice and are dialing the wrong number.

These are those who dial the wrong number by mistake or out of ignorance. These are those who want the right thing but are simply going about it in the wrong way. However, there are others who are dialing wrong number intentionally! They are not making a mistake because they know exactly what they are doing!

David had several wives. He knew how to get in touch with them. However, one day he looked out his window and saw the beautiful Bathsheba and wanted her. When he sent for her to come to the palace for a romantic interlude he dialed the wrong number. What's worse, he dialed the wrong number intentionally!

When a man calls your house to make romantic overtures to your wife, knowing full well that she is married, he intentionally dialed the wrong number! When a woman flirts with a married man, she intentionally dials a wrong number!

Satan has set up an entire network for those who want the explicit out of life. In effect he has his own 900 number system. However, those who dial Satan's 900 number must be warned that you pay by the minute for every call made on Satan's number. Romans 6:23 reminds us that: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is tragedy to dial the wrong number in life. However, it is even worse to know it's the wrong number and dial it anyway!

Dialing the right number

While there is a danger to dialing the wrong number, it is a good thing to dial the

right number!

When you dial the right number, you don't make a mistake. You always get the right party.

Those who are spiritually in trouble need to know how to get the operator by dialing O.

When we think of O, it can only remind us of the omnipotence of God, the fact that he is all powerful!

We dial O because we serve an Omniscient God who knows all about us. In fact, he knows our down sitting and our uprising. He knows the thoughts of our mind before we think them!

We dial O because we serve and Omni-present God who is everywhere at the same time!

Those who have been washed in the blood, not only know how to dial O for the operator but we know how to dial direct. When you dial direct, each phone number is preceded by a 1.

To dial direct to heaven every person needs to know the ONE.

We need to know the ONE, who hears and answers prayers!

We need to know the ONE, who lifts up a bowed down head!

We need to know the ONE, who will hear us even in the midnight hour!

Every phone number consists of seven numbers, we must make sure we know the right numbers!

One is the number of the father, who made the heaven and the earth!

Two is the number of the Word that became flesh and dwelt among men!

Three is the number of the Holy Spirit which the Lord left as a comforter for us!

Four is the number of creation suggesting the four squared nature of God's creative work!

Five is the number of hope in the promises of God!

Six is the number of faith in the dependability of God!

Seven is the number of completeness, suggesting how every promise of God will be fulfilled!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that I have an access number to get into glory!

If I dial 911 all I get is a fire truck, ambulance or a police officer, but if I dial 1-2-3, I'll get the father son and the Holy Ghost!

In closing, I'm reminded of the young man who left home estranged from his parents. After many years he married but rarely talked about his past with his wife, who knew little about his life at home. The young man's mother had grown old but worried about her son daily. One day she his phone number and called him in the middle of the night. The wife answered the phone and heard the mother ask "Is my pookey there?" The wife answered: " There is no Pookey here. You have the wrong number." The mother called back two more times and received the same answer. "There is no Pookey here!" The last time she said it so loud that the young man awoke at hearing the name Pookey which is the name only his mother called him. He reached

for the phone and breathlessly said “Mama, you didn’t dial the wrong, my wife just didn’t know the right name!”

Friends, when we try to get through to heaven we must be sure that we know the right number and the right name. For there is none other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved except the name of Jesus!

Jesus, we must know the name!
Jesus, the lily of the valley!
Jesus, the bright and morning star!
Jesus, call on him!
Call on him in the morning!
Call on him in the evening!
Call on him in the midnight hour!
Call him up and tell him what you want!

No. 566-Inspiration

Nothing's Free Anymore!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 5, 1981

SCRIPTURE: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Introduction

Have you ever been given anything free? It's a good feeling to receive something free! It's like a special, well deserved treat; the desert that tops off a day. Sometimes a person is treated to a free meal, by a friend who volunteers to "pick up the ticket." Sometimes its something as simple as the free tasters distributed in stores that advertise a new few product or free samples in the mail. The lure of getting something for nothing as always attracted many people who are vulnerable to the pitch to "come and get something free."

Some merchants solicit customers by offering something free. A shoe store that is selling its shoes at a 50 percent discount, promotes the sale as a "buy one get one free" sale. People who would not respond to the 50 percent discount appeal, respond immediately to the thought of getting a pair of shoes "free." Extras are often added for shopping on certain days. Free soft drinks are given at some fast food restaurants if customers must wait for food to be prepared. Some even give customers special cards to carry with them that are punched with each purchase. After so many purchases the customer gets something "free" whether its a free airplane trip or a bag of potato chips. To some people it doesn't matter what the free item is, as long as it is free they are attracted.

Everybody wants something free!

However, is there anything that is actually free? Something is really free when it is offered with "no strings attached." These strings would mean that you are neither obligated or expected to return the favor. The buy one get one get promotion is not a give-away, otherwise the store would simply give away the second pair of shoes regardless to whether or not you bought the first pair. Few things are free.

Everything that is given free has its hidden cost which may not be paid by the recipient directly, but it has been paid for by someone. Our American freedoms are free to all, but they were paid for with the blood of those who died in the American Revolution and other challenges to liberty. The right to vote for Blacks and woman is a freedom that did not come free. Desegregated public facilities with the right to

sit at a lunch counter and eat a hamburger is a freedom that did not come free! Even food stamps, the government program that helps millions avoid starvation and hunger, are not free. Behind every promotion that is advertised as something free, somebody pays the price!

As Christians we enjoy an immense amount of spiritual freedom. We are not bound by an allegiance to the Mosaic law. However, we know that the freedom we enjoy has not come without a price. Although it is free to us, it is only free because

Jesus paid the price out on Calvary.

Exposition

This text points to salvation as a free gift from God in contrast to death as a payment for sin.

Paul writing to the Romans explained the results of sinful living as compared to the results of following Christ.

The cause of sin is laid at Adam's feet. His disobedience in the Garden of Eden ushered sin into the world and all generations that follow are now compelled to suffer the punishment for his sin .Romans 5:12 "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned."

The payment for sin has been spelled out in scripture in undeniable terms. Those who sin will suffer the scorn of God. Nearly every prophet has been a voice against sin. Each raised their voice against sin and spelled out the doom of those whose practice sin. Isaiah 3:11 " Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The prophet Ezekiel went even further: Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Paul, writing to the Corinthians spelled it out in no uncertain terms by listing off the various categories of sinful behavior that will draw the wrath of God. He then told them repeatedly that the payment for that behavior would be exclusion from the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

The unrighteous will receive his ultimate punishment which is a cruel and horrible death.

Those who are righteous will receive the reward of eternal life. Paul notes on numerous occasions that the righteousness that Christians have is not of their own. They have been made righteous or justified by Christ who has taken the punishment for any unrighteousness they may have previously committed. Their daily effort to live for him, despite occasional slips, will be rewarded. It will come as a free gift to them because the penalty for their sins was paid for by Christ himself on Calvary. John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son

shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Those who obtain salvation therefore, acquire it free of charge, but it did not come without price. The salvation they enjoy has been purchased by Christ himself at the expense of his suffering and blood on Calvary.

We Pay for Our Lifestyle

Today there are millions of people who are choosing to live lifestyles of varied sorts. Many are amazed at the diversity of these lifestyles. There are homosexual marriages between male partners as well as between female partners. Promiscuity is at an all time high. Even criminal activity is on the rise. Add these to the rise of seemingly innocent deviations from the norm and we get a plethora of diversity that baffles the imagination.

The general mentality today seems to be: "If it feels good do it. If it doesn't bother you, keep your nose out of it."

Some of the lifestyles we choose are in direct conflict with the word of God. As we become more liberal in our interpretation of freedom we have applied that liberality even to our interpretation of the scriptures. We are exercising our freedom to deviate.

There are many who have made it their self appointed duty to spend the entirety of their lives judging the lifestyles of others. They campaign against choices of others and waste enormous amounts of energy trying to force them to accept the biblical standard for a normal lifestyle.

However, we must remember that even God himself does not campaign against deviance. He gives everyone the free choice to follow his will or to disobey him. The outcome of their decision is preset, but the choice is theirs. As followers of God we should not go beyond what God himself does. Our efforts should be contained to informing the lost what the word of God says and then leave the decision up to each individual. Moreover, we should never lose sight that regardless of the their decision every person should remain an object of friendship and love. We should not hate people because they choose to deviate.

Our role, as Christians is to remind the world that there is nothing free! There is a price to pay for their choice of lifestyle!

We should remind the drunkard, that while he is free to drink, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the drug addict that while he is free to shoot up and get high, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the dealer that while he is free to market packaged death at a healthy profit, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the homosexual that while he or she is free to engage in sodomitic sexual encounters that this freedom does not come without a price!

Everything has a price!

Sometimes the price is hidden and cannot be seen, but there is a price!

Sometimes the tag is marked "free" but the real price shows up later!

Whatever the case, there is nothing free anymore!
Somebody must pay the price!

Salvation is Free but Paid for!

Finally, we must consider the spiritual gift that Jesus offers to anyone who will believe on him. It is salvation. It is offered free, but it too has been paid for!

For many years Herbert W. Armstrong sent copies of his magazine "The Plain Truth" to millions of people around the world absolutely free! There was never a request for a donation or solicitation of any kind. Many were puzzled at how he could afford this "free" magazine. What many didn't know is that the magazine had been paid for by members of the World Wide Church of God, which Armstrong founded. It was free to the recipients, only because Armstrong's church members paid the price!

So it is with our salvation.

Salvation is free not because its cheap or without worth, but because it has been paid for by Christ himself and presents it to us as a free gift!

Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when these words were penned: "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!"

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to know that Jesus paid it all!

I'm glad to know that he loved me enough to absorb the punishment for my sins!

I'm glad that he suffered humiliation for me!

I'm glad that he shed his blood for me!

I'm glad that he died out on Calvary!

But I'm even happier that early Sunday morning that he rose up from the grave offering me the free gift of life!

Nothing's free anymore, but that's to Jesus, Salvation comes without a price!

No. 567-Inspiration

What God Has Prepared For Us!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

SCRIPTURE: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Introduction

How do you prepare yourself for an important activity? Some argue that the answer to that question runs in close proximity to how a person prepares himself spiritually. Are you a person that carefully plans the route, anticipates difficulties and alternatives? Or do you just hit the road, confident nothing will happen. Are you a person that studies regularly to pass exams or do you simply wait until the night before and cram? Are you deliberative in your buying habits? Do you see what you want, save for it and then purchase it, or do you buy impulsively regardless to whether it plunges you in debt? Do you plan your day or week, or do you let every day plan itself? Our life preparation habits run parallel to our spiritual preparation habits as well. There are many who hit the spiritual road without thought of the dangers that some routes present. Others are living their lives wantonly, waiting to reach what they perceive to be the closing years of their lives to "cram" for heaven. There are others who have no spiritual plan for their lives at all.

Perhaps one of the worst feelings is to think you are prepared then find out that you are not. A preacher was invited to this outstanding church in view of a call. They were trying to impress him and they said, "Whatever you want, just ask, you'll find us well prepared."

There was a luxurious study, fleet of buses, elaborate and expansive kitchen, libraries, and every modern convenience. "Yes sir, you'll find us well prepared."said the trustee.

The minister, "Well, I'd like to visit the Sunday School in the morning."

They said, "Oh, we have the best Sunday School with the finest teachers. We are well prepared and the students are really into the Word."

They took him to the adult department and he said, "That's fine." Then they went to youth class and he said, "I'd like to ask a question."

"Well just ask, these students can take care of any question you want to ask."

"All right, boys. Who tore down the walls of Jericho?"

One bright student said, "I didn't."

The preacher said fine. When they got outside, the trustee said, "Now pastor, I know these boys very well and they all have good parents and if that boy said he didn't tear down that wall he didn't do it." The superintendent, all of the church deacons and most of it prominent members agreed. If the boy said he didn't tear down the walls then he didn't.

So after the sermon, the trustee said, "Now brother, we've just had a meeting and we understand that there is a problem about some walls... and we don't want you to be burdened... and we just decided that regardless to who tore them down... we voted to build them back.!" One of the worse things in the world is to think you are prepared and are not.

Our plans are often inadequate. Despite our efforts, sometimes our best preparation is flawed by conditions we cannot control. However, when God plans, there are no mistakes. He prepares every detail and unfolds his plan just a little at a time. We don't understand it as it is happening, but we soon learn that God always has a perfect plan.

As Christians, we have learned to trust God. We know he has prepared great things for our lives. Though we don't see all of the ways he's doing it, we are confident that when God plans the program, it will turn out all right!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Corinthians presenting the cross as God's plan for man and the doorway to blessings he has prepared for humankind.

The Christians in Corinth were fascinated with the eloquent preaching of men. They loved fancy preaching. However, Paul wanted them to know the mysteries of God's plan. He came to them simply and without eloquence, even though he was quite able to do so. His motive was to explain to them how God had prepared, from the beginning of time to give the blessing of salvation.

In verse 7 (seven) Paul refers the grand plan of God as a mystery. 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*

With a few exceptions, generally the word "mystery" refers to a truth about the plan of God hidden in the Old Testament. These mysteries are revealed to New Testament believers by inspiration of the Holy Spirit as they search the scriptures for great truths and listen to the preached word. 1 Corinthians 2:10 *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* He frequently refers to these mysteries in his conversations with the saints. 1 Corinthians 15:51 says *"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* His frequent reference to the mysteries of God was to the great plan that God has for mankind. These mysteries include God's plan of

salvation, and the great mystery of eternal life, the rapture and the kingdom of heaven.

Those who are saved into the kingdom of God are at the first stage of their spiritual development. The spirit of God leads them through the mysteries of God's plan, step by step, as they study the word and listen to the preached word. Paul said those who study God's word and let the spirit reveal truths to them soon find that " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

The great truth of this text is that God has prepared a mysterious plan for mankind collectively. Since God is personal, he has also prepared a mysterious plan for each individual. We learn the nature of God's plan for us by studying his word and listening to the preached word. As it is revealed we understand with a stronger conviction that God's plan for us, is the best plan.

Ways Our Enemies Prepare For Us

The enemy of every believer is Satan. He uses people and circumstances to destroy our enthusiasm and commitment. Satan prepares for us therefore we should be ware.

PREPARING WAYS TO HANG US: Esther 7:10 tells us how Haman prepared to destroy Mordecai by hanging him on a gallows but hanged on the very gallows that he built for Mordecai. Satan is planning ways to hang us! We should stay in the word and beware of his attempts!

DIGS DITCHES: Psalm 57:6 reminds us that Satan has prepared snares and ditches to entangle us. But only by the grace of God have we escape them and they have fallen into their own ditches. *"They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves."*

Ways God Prepares For Us

God has a prepared plan for each of us. We are not required to follow it, but if we do, he promises us great rewards. Look at the ways God has prepared for us:

A PLACE TO LIVE, A MATE FOR LIFE: God prepared a beautiful Garden for Adam to live. He prepared him a wife to share his life with him. The two of them were placed in the garden, a perfect match. Genesis 2:8. They lost their Garden home because of disobedience, but they never disobeyed again and Adam held on to Eve for over 900 years. God has prepared a place and a person for everyone. Sometimes we take a long time getting to the right person because we won't let God do the choosing. Even today, God has the right apartment or house already planned for true believers and he has the right mate or no mate already in the plan. True believers will search the word and listen to the preached word for God to reveal the mystery!

VICTORY OVER ENEMIES. God has prepared to help us achieve victory over our enemies when we are unjustly persecuted. Psalm 23:5 "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" reminds us that God has pre-arranged

for us to share in a victory celebration over our enemies. That victory may not always be the defeat of our enemy, but it could be the retreat and salvation of a former enemy. The victory is prepared because the battle is anticipated. Believers who search the word will under the mystery of Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

MISSION: God has a prepared a mission for each of us to carry out. But he has also prepared for the fact that we might try to evade the mission. When God gave Jonah a mission to go to Ninevah he made four preparations anticipating that Jonah would drag his feet. In Jonah 1:17 he prepared a fish to swallow him. In Jonah 4:6 he prepared a gourd plant to protect him from the heat for a day then in very next verse prepared a worm to eat up the gourd. In Jonah 4:8 he prepared a vehemently hot east wind to scorch him. God anticipated Jonah's resistance and prepared to deal with it.

Many people today are resisting their mission. Jonah didn't like the people in Ninvevah he didn't want to do anything to make them improve themselves in God's sight. So are many in the church with respect to some department or program they don't like. However, God has prepared for it.

God Has Paradise Prepared

Not only does God have a plan for us in this life, but he also has a plan that goes beyond this life into the next life.

He has prepared a way for our salvation. Romans 10:9 *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

When the world was rocking and reeling in despair, the cry went out through time and eternity...the Lord needs somebody!

Abraham couldn't go; he had to deal with the lamb in the bush!

Moses couldn't go; he had to administer the commandments!

Elijah couldn't go; he had to wrestle with the prophets of Baal!

Ezekiel couldn't go; he had to envision the dry bones in the valley!

Daniel couldn't go; he had to spend the night in the Lion's Den!

Malachi couldn't go; he was possessed by a people that were robbing God!

John the Baptist couldn't go, because he wasn't worthy to untie his shoes!

Down the halls of time I hear a voice saying "prepare me a body" I'll go!

He came to a prepared body!

He died on a prepared cross!

He was buried in a prepared tomb!

He arose after three days. He went up into the heavens. He went up to prepare for us!

I know that's what he did because in John 14:2 *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto*

myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

What God has prepared is:

—Better than good; richer than rich!

—Softer than soft; and sweeter than sweet!

—Eye hath not seen, nor has it entered into the heart of man to understand the many things God has in store for us! For Hebrews 11:6 says: "for he hath prepared for them a city."

John saw the "*the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" Revelation 21:2

I don't know about but I've decided to trust in God's plan. We may not understand it now, but bye and bye when the morning come....

We'll tell the story how we've overcome, we'll understand it better bye and bye!

No. 568-Inspiration

Satisfaction Guaranteed

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 13, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. Isaiah 58:11***

Introduction

Have you ever been guaranteed satisfaction? Most people are bombarded with promises that include the phrase "satisfaction guaranteed" or your money back. Some say "if you are not completely satisfied in 30 days your money will be refunded." To the consumer, such a promise is a very strong statement of confidence in the product. Especially when the phrase "if you are not satisfied for any reason" is added. Laws provide certain amounts of time for sales contracts to go into effect. If, after reading the contract, a consumer is dissatisfied. Some department stores have a "no questions asked policy concerning returning merchandise." Consumer satisfaction is of considerable importance to the merchant. Successful businesses go out of their way to insure that customers are satisfied.

Despite our best efforts however, there are some people that are hard to satisfy. If banks were giving away free silver dollars there would be somebody complaining that silver dollars look like quarters so they should have been giving paper dollars. If grocery stores were giving away fryers somebody would complain that they should have been hens.

Consider the grumpy husband who had the reputation of being one of the hardest men in the world to satisfy. No one had ever done anything that met his satisfaction. Everything was either too long or too short. However, after hearing his complaints for several years, his wife had listed everything he had complained about and finally she knew she could bring him his morning breakfast and he would be completely satisfied. She made him toast, browned just right, buttered and cut in half. He once complained that the toast was too dark, margarine should have been butter and slices were too big and should have been cut. His coffee was peculated instead of instant. There was sugar instead of sweet N low and real cream instead of preme. The bacon was dry fried, no greasy spots anywhere, because he didn't like greasy bacon. She prepared him two eggs, one scrambled and one sunny side up. They were perfect; no running yellows or chipped whites. She brought it to him after he was

awake for a few minutes because he complained she brought it too early. This time everything was perfect. As he sat in bed and prepared to eat she stood with a look of accomplishment on her face to read his reaction. He looked at the perfectly prepared plate and said: "This is good, but you fried the wrong egg!" Some folks simply can't be satisfied!

There are many people who unhappy with God. They complain that they should have a bigger house. They want a bigger car. They think they deserve more money. They unhappy with lifebecause they think God has cheated them in some way. Daily they stand in the complaint line. Some have returned God for Satan, who seems to offer the satisfaction that meets their expectation.

While there are some who are not satisfied with God, we should remember that God is not jumping up and down with joy with some of us either.

As Christians, we have learned that our God satisfies all of our needs and most of our wants. Anything we need God's got it. We are satisfied. However, the words a familiar song linger: "I am satisfied. I am satisfied. But the question comes to me as I look at Calvary. Is my master satisfied with me."

Exposition

This text focuses on a series of observations made by the prophet Isaiah that addressed a reason for God's dissatisfaction with the people and what they could do to satisfy God and get satisfaction themselves.

This text comes as Isaiah pointed to the deteriorating moral state of the people. They had reached a point where they were becoming increasingly worldly in their outlook and less godly. In their sinful living they had tried to keep the form of their religious life without its substance.

In particular, this passage addresses God's dissatisfaction with his people.

Verse 1: Isaiah is told to *"cry aloud"* and show the people their *"transgression"* that displeases God.

Verse 2: They appear to be going through the right motions. They "seek me daily" and enjoy discussing the ordinances and laws. They *"delight in approaching God"* by their regular attendance.

Verse 3-4 The people question why God is not satisfied. They remind him that they fast regularly and attend unto every component of the ritual. They do not understand why God should be dissatisfied if they are doing all of the required things and going to all of the required places obediently.

Verse 5: God asks in effect *"is this the fast that I have chosen?"* Is it a mere going through the motion that satisfies me, or is it true praise? True service.

Beginning at verse six God gives a list of the actions of believers that would truly please and satisfy him.

REPENT: God would be pleased if they would truly repent and *"loose the band of wickedness."* Fasting, bible study and worship do not please God if there is no repentance. (v5)

LIFT BURDENS: God is pleased when believers help lift the burdens of the poor and the oppressed (v5)

FEEDING THE HUNGRY: God is satisfied when believers are feeding the hungry and giving shelter to the homeless. He is also pleased when we are helping clothe the naked, even to the point of giving the needy of your own ward robe (v7).

THEN: Verses 8 and 9 both start with the word "then" which implies that the things promised are conditioned upon what was mentioned in verses 5-7.
God says he will be satisfied with believers when they repent from sinful activity and begin to act on their faith. THEN he says, we will have light in the midst of darkness, our *"health shall spring forth speedily";* your good and righteous reputation will go in front of you and God will get the glory. Moreover, when we move away from ritualism toward action, then we will be able to callon God with expectation of a positive response. "Then shalt thy call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and he shall say here I am." (v9).

IF: Verses 9 and 10 are highlighted by two IF's. IF we would lift the burdens that we may have placed on other people, remove our accusing fingers and stop our boasting; and IF we would put our faith into action and help others, God would bless us.

SATISFY: In the previous verses God tells how we can satisfy him, through repenting and truly serving. Here he tells how we can gain true satisfaction: When we work to satisfy others. "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity.." (v10).

We will be truly be satisfied when we will do the will of God and show his love to others. Then he will "satisfy thy soul in drought." He will make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (v11).

We are satisfied when our will is his will and we are carrying out his will to the best of our ability. If we do the master's will, satisfaction is guaranteed.

Why Many are Unsatisfied

There are many reasons some people are not satisfied with God, but the main reason is:

THEY EXPECT MORE THAN WHAT WAS PROMISED: Many expected their relationship with God to be a good luck charm that would protect them from sickness, death, misfortune and persecution. However, we have never been promised freedom from trial. In fact Jesus warned us to expect just the opposite as Satan tries to attack you because he himself was attacked. John 15:20 " ...The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.."

Some expected prosperity. They "named it" but they couldn't claim it! They asked for a big job and did not get it! They asked for a new car and did not get it! They gave, worshipped and studied but lost their job! They asked but received not and they became dissatisfied. They heard what Christ said about asking and receiving,

but they didn't hear ALL that he said. In John 15:7 he said *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* In other words, if your will is lost in my will then what you ask for is only what God wants you to have. Whatever he wants you to have you will receive. Whatever you have satifies you because it is what God wills for you. It's not a matter of name it and claim it, it's a matter of claim it, if it's in God's permissive will.

Tired of Pacifiers

Finally we must consider those who have spent the majority of their lives seeking an elusive satisfaction. They have sought fullness but they have sought it only in the context of the superficial. The world, at its best, can only offer us pacifers.

A pacifer is "simulated satisfaction." It carries us through the motions but leaves us empty. When a baby cries in hunger sometimes it is given a pacifer, which takes it through the motions, but nothing comes out. Soon the baby cries again, because it has not been fed.

There are many who are not satisfied because they've been pacified!

Some wanted a home but they spent their energy building a house. The house pacifies but it does not satisfy!

Someone wanted a good husband but they settled for a good looking man. The man pacifies but a good husband would satisfy. An "old lady" will pacify but a good wife will satisfy!

There are many whose lives are characterized by huge sucking sounds!

But pacifers are for babies. After a while even a baby won't take the pacifer, you may put it in its mouth, but the baby will spit it out! Maybe that's what Paul had in mind when he said *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* (1 Corinthians 13:11).

If you are tired of pacifers, I know a man who can satisfy!

If you are tired of going through meaningless motions, I know a man who can give your life new meaning!

If you tired of sucking up to the world, but getting nothing out of it, I know a man who says ":. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

I have tried him and I know he satisfies! I'm satisfied because there has never been a:

—Mountain that he didn't help me to climb; Cross that he didn't help me to bear

—Battle that he didn't help me to fight; Enemy he didn't help me defeat!

—Darkness that he didn't help me see my way through; Crises he didn't help me confront!

—Trial that he didn't help me endure; Burden he didn't help me to carry!

If you're tired of pacifiers, try Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!
Try Jesus, he will satisfy your soul!

No. 569-Inspiration

Is Thy God Able To Deliver Thee?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 21, 1995

SCRIPTURE: *"And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel 6:20*

Introduction

Have you ever tried to do something that seemed impossible? Have you begun a venture where success was improbable? Have you ever challenged a foe that seemed invincible? Have you ever faced a fate that seemed inescapable? How did you fare? There are many who find themselves surround by impossible circumstances daily but tackle them one by one with a certain air of confidence. Unintimidated they appear soothed by an unseen trust that gives them the courage to face each day boldly. This is the way that true believers approach the difficulties of life. They view each day as another opportunity for them let the will of God work through them. Doing so, nothing is impossible. No goal is unreachable. No objective is unreachable!

Consider the three men who were locked in a room and told that the key was taped to the ceiling. The first man jumped for a while but could not reach the key. He sat down in a chair in frustration. The second man tried too, but he was unable to reach it. He leaned against a stack of old books. Both men began to complain in their frustration. The third man looked at the ceiling, then looked around the room. He borrowed the chair that the first man sat on and the books the second man leaned against and stacked the books in the chair. He carefully climbed to the top, retrieved the key and came down. As he unlocked the door and left the room the third man told his two friends: "To achieve the impossible we must climb upon the possible and trust God to keep us from falling!"

There are many who fear falling so much that they never achieve the impossible! That is the difference between the believer and the nonbeliever. The believer enters every situation with faith that he serves a God who is able to make the impossible possible. Such faith helps him face danger, and the prospect of failure. Though literally surrounded by hungry lions, he is confident that with God

all things are possible.

As Christians, we approach life with confidence that our God is in control. Come what may from day our God is able to deliver us to higher plane!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Daniel as he faces death trusting in the power of God.

Daniel was a great prophet of God who had found fame in Babylon because of the way God used him to interpret dreams. He was also praised because of the strength of his character. He was brought to Babylon, as a teenager, at the time of Babylonian conquest of Judah because it was their practice to deport the "cream of the crop" to be retrained for service in Babylon. He refused to eat from the king's table and maintained a life of prayer and devotion to God.

He was a famous leader under three different kingdoms: Babylon, Media and Persia. He served as a prominent official in these kingdoms under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. He did all of this although he was generally an old man, nearing 90.

Daniel's life is highlighted by his gift of interpretation of dreams and his potent faith in God.

In the closing years of his life King Darius established a leadership structure that involved 124 leaders. It consisted of the king, three presidents and 120 princes. Of the three presidents Daniel was the most favored. When Darius discovered that he was losing much of his treasure due to the wickedness of some princes he proposed to reorganize the government placing Daniel, a man he could trust, over all of the others.

The 120 princes and remaining two presidents were not happy. They wanted Daniel removed. They tried to use his religion against him. As a result they devised a decree for the king to sign, forbidding anyone to pray to any God or person other than the king for 30 days. This was a trap for Daniel since he routinely prayed three times a day. The penalty for disobedience was to be thrown in the den of lions, which were kept hungry and caged for the purpose of serving as natural executioners.

Daniel refused to follow the order. He could not endure a single day without prayer, let alone 30 days. Reluctantly the king ordered him to be placed in the Lion's Den. He ordered a stone placed over the mouth of the pit and it was sealed to prevent anyone from removing Daniel in the night. Darius, however, could not sleep all night. Early the next morning he had the stone removed and called out "Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" When Daniel answered the king rejoiced.

God had shut the mouths of the lions who were still moving around in the den.

Daniel was immediately removed from the pit in triumph. God had delivered him. He was at peace, not because he knew that God would deliver him but because

he knew God was able to deliver him, if that was his will. Whatever God wanted, Daniel wanted.

Is thy God Able?

Today the world questions every believer with the Darius' question: "Is thy God able to deliver thee?"

Millions of Christians are wrestling with a plethora of problems that seem endless. The problems range from wrecked finances on one hand to the dissolution of personal relationships. The list never seems to end: Not enough money. Things keep breaking down. Love life is threatened. Insecurity. Dreams escaping. Add to these the frustrations faced when enemies assail and meticulously plan ways to destroy the very essence of your quest and the recipe for a trouble society is the result.

In the midst of all this, believers are asked: *"Is thy God able to deliver thee?"* When the Three Hebrew Boys faced similar circumstances their response was recorded in Daniel 3:17 *"..Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,.."* Dan 3:18 *But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."*

That is the key to the believer's response to difficult times. Our response is not that we will not endure difficult times, but that the God we serve is able to deliver us from these difficulties if it is his will. Since our will is the same as his will, we live at peace. Paul reemphasized this great truth in 2 Corinthians 9:8 *"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"*

We do not expect to be kept from the lion's den, but resolve daily that even though we go into the very mouth of adversity that God is able to shut the mouths of the lions.

Even God's strongest and most faithful believers spend a day or two in the lion's den. Sometimes the circumstances of life make us feel as though we were in a lion's den. These are times when lies are told that present us in a false light! These are the moments when gossip about us increases and is reduced to whispers and cutting stares when we enter a room! These are times when family members treat us as enemies and friends ostracize us. These are times when danger surrounds us and we hear the roar of poverty, crime, disease, and hunger! In the midst of these times the question is asked: "Is thy God able to deliver thee?

God is Able

When we consider the difficulties of our present age many are asking is thy God able?

Crime is all around us and appears to increase daily. Is thy God able?

Moral decadence is tightly interwoven into the fabric of our society. Is thy God

able?

The poor are getting poor while the rich get richer. Is thy God able?

Those who are troubled by the roaring of the lions and are intimidated by the gnashing of their teeth apparently are not familiar with the power of our God.

Anyone who asks the question is God able, is not acquainted with the Lord and his mighty works.

Is God Able? Ask Abraham and he will respond that when there was doubt that his wife could give him a son in his old age he found out there was nothing too hard for the LORD? "

Is God able? Ask Moses who will testify that God can be a bridge over troubling water!

Is God able? Ask the widow woman who was down to a last cup of meal and cup of oil how God keep the barrel from running dry!

Is God able? Ask The three Hebrew Boys who were protected in the midst of the furnace by the cooling wings of the Son of God!

Is God able? Ask Ezekiel who will remind us that God can take dry bones and make them live again!

Brothers and Sisters be of God cheer, there is an answer to the question. Yes God is able!

Eph 3:20 He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"

Philippians 3:21 He *"is able even to subdue all things unto himself."*

2 Timothy 1:12 *"He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"*

Heb 2:18 He is *"able to help them that are tempted."*

Heb 7:25 He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God

Jude 1:24is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory

Is God Able?

He's able to take my darkness and turn it to light!

He's able to take my failure and turn it into success!

He's able to despair and turn it into delight!

I know he's able, because one evening, 2000 years ago, he picked up an old rugged cross...

I know he's able because he died out on Calvary!

I know he's able because early Sunday morning he rose up from the grave!

He's able!

He's able!

He's able to make everything all right!

No. 570-Funeral

I Want To Be At The Meeting

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 3, 1995

***SCRIPTURE** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.:1 Thessalonians 4:17 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. Rev 7:14-15 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:3-4*

Introduction

How do you like the idea of attending meetings? Depending on the purpose and nature of the meeting, the answer to that question could be bad or good. There are different kinds of meetings. Business meetings, discuss the details of the operation of an entity. Social meetings give opportunities for fellowships. Some meetings are private, while others are open to the public. We dread meetings we are obligated to attend, even if they are short. However, we enjoy those that promote our personal goals, no matter how long they last. There are some meetings we could live without but there are some we enjoy so much that we actually look forward to them. When circumstances force us to miss a good meeting we are disappointed. Very few like to hear that they missed a very upbeat, information packed, meeting!

Some have strange reasons why they attend meetings. Consider the time when the rabbits decided to have a prayer meeting in woods. They posted signs all over the forest announcing their prayer meeting. Nearly all of the forest animals promised to come. The lion looked at the plump little rabbit and quickly agreed to come the meeting. The tiger was fascinated by the idea of a rabbit sponsored prayer meeting. The rabbits were excited by the positive responses they were receiving from all of the animals. On the day of the meeting however, all of the seats were empty. Not a single animal showed up. No lions, tigers or bears. Puzzled as to why no animals came to the prayer meeting the wise old owl answered: "Well since we were inviting some

real tough characters to the meeting, I became concerned about their reason for wanting to come to the meeting. Was it prayer or something else? So, I took the liberty of going behind you and telling all of the others that there would still be a prayer meeting, but the rabbits wouldn't be there. Since the lions, tigers and bears were always very hungry, they chose not to come because they knew their prayer wouldn't be answered!" There are many who go to the meetings but their reasons for attendance are far from pure!

So it is with meetings of the Saints. Some come for a variety of reasons, while others come with one thought in mind: they want to be in the presence of the Lord. Those who want to be in God's presence enjoy worship and they yearn for every opportunity lift his name in praise. To them, getting to the meeting is important. Missing the meetings, to such people, is a fate worse than death.

As Christians we have had our own private meeting with God. In that meeting we gave our lives to him. Now, we live our lives daily waiting for his return. That's a meeting we don't to miss.

Exposition

These texts focus upon three meetings that will be important to saints of God.

Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, addresses the subject of death by reminding believers that those who have passed on are not eternally lost. In verses 13-18 he underscores the biblical truth that when the Lord returns he will call all of the saints on earth to a meeting in the sky. Generally, the meeting is called the "rapture" or the being caught up! Paul noted that those who are alive at the time that Christ returns will not "prevent" or go before those who have passed before them. The dead in Christ will rise first and then be caught up to meet him in the air. "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

The attendance roster at the great meeting in glory however is still incomplete. The first group to arrive will be those mentioned in Thessalonians. During the final seven years of time, called the great tribulation there will be others who will come forth and accept Christ. This is what John refers to in Revelation 7. When a long procession of Saints, which included 144,000 Jews and a number so large that it could not be counted came forward the question was asked "these who are in white robes, who are they?" The answer was "these are they" that have forward out of the final seven years of tribulation, and they like those before them have also washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. This multitude of people of all races, nations and tongues will be preparing to go to the same meeting in which the Godly dead and the transformed faithful will be in attendance.

The third group to be in attendance will consist of the angels and heavenly host who will come bringing the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, whose inhabitants would make up what is known as the "bride" of Christ will be the meeting place for all of the participants, which will have grown to include even the

heavenly hosts. John said the guest of honor at this great meeting will the Lord himself who will dwell among human kind forever.

The final meeting of the Saints won't have a time limit because time will be no more. Its agenda will consist of love, service and constant praise of God. Every problem, hurt, woe and concern that would make life difficult will no longer exist. Whatever hurts the Saints may have had will be a thing of the past as God wipes away all thought, memory or perception of anything that will diminish their joyful existence in heaven. John heard the promise clearly: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Whether among the godly dead, the transformed faithful, or the tribulation saved, every saint of God will be at the meeting around the throne and "so shall they be with the Lord forever!"

The Point of Conviction

One of the first ways that we meet the Lord is at the point of conviction. This is the point in our lives in which we come to accept Christ as both our Lord and Savior.

Jacob met the Lord one night as he wrestled with an Angel. He refused to let go of the Angel until he was blessed with a new perception of life and a new name!

For Saul, who led a life of persecution against the church, the meeting with the Lord came on the Damascus Road when he heard a voice saying "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" As a result of his meeting, both his name and his life changed!

A woman who had been accused of many sins met the Lord at her lowest moment, when he asked those without sin to cast the first stone, she found herself in a private meeting with the savior. Her accusers had gone away!

When the woman at the well met the Lord, while still in her sins, she ran to tell the whole city to "come see a man" who has told me all I've ever done!

Just as these met the Lord in their moments of spiritual weakness, many believers had their first meeting with God at the point of spiritual weakness. It is at the this point that we are convicted of our sins and accept Jesus as our savior. It is also at this point that our sins are forgiven and we become citizens in the kingdom of God.

When we meet God at the point of conviction, He saves us from drowning in our own self defeat. He lifts us to a higher plane. Perhaps that's why the song writer declared: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I!"

Point of Service

The second place that believers meet the Lord is at the point of service. Here they respond to the command of the Lord to go into the highways and byways and feed the hungry, relieve the poor, and work until the day is done.

Believers who have met the Lord in this context may not stand in front of a burning bush like Moses; have hot coals pressed to their lips like Isaiah, or hear voices in the night like Samuel, but nevertheless like Jeremiah, they go out on a mission to help others with a zeal the pushes them like "fire shut up in their bones."

That service takes many forms. Sometimes it is evidenced through volunteer community service. In other ways it is a willingness to give of oneself to help the poor and needy. It is reflected in a willingness to work with young people, or to teach the word. Those who give of themselves as ushers, Christian Education leaders, mission workers and a plethora of other areas of service in the kingdom, do so because at one point they had a meeting with Lord, in which they responded: "I'll go! I'll go! If the Lord needs somebody, here am oh Lord, I send me!"

Point of Need

The third place that believers meet the Lord is at the point of need. This is the point in which they are physically or emotionally drained and need his presence. Believers who have reached this point know what it is to meet with God.

A woman who had an issue of blood, knew if she could just touch the hem of his garment he would meet her at her point of need.

A man who had been lame for 38 years found that the Lord met him at his point of need and told him to "take thy bed and walk!"

Likewise believers who have endured lengthy sicknesses, death of loved ones, and decades of hard times, know what it means to meet the Lord. They yearn to meet the Lord. They relish the idea of being in His presence because He can take the burdens that trouble them and make life more enjoyable.

This meeting with the Lord comes daily as the Holy Spirit communes with believers. That's why the song writer says: "I walked through the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses and the voice I hear, falling on my ear the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me that I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known!"

Point of Death

The final place that believers meet God is at the point of death. This is point at which they prepare to step out of this life into the next. For the unbeliever it is an unthinkable moment, because death is an imposing, wide and dangerous river to cross. The Saint at the point of death is instantly absent from the body on his way to the meeting in glory!

At the point of death, Enoch walked with God and was not! He was on his way to the meeting!

At the point of death, Moses was ministered to by Angels on a mountain top and was never seen again. He was on his way to the meeting!

After a life of service, Heaven sent a chaffered chariot to bring Elijah to the meeting!

No wonder the song writer declares “I looked over Jordan and what did I see, coming forth to carry me home! A band of angels coming after me! Coming forth to carry me home!”

I don’t know how long it will be! I don’t know what the future holds for me! But “if you get there before I do, tell all my friends I’m coming there too!

I want to be at the meeting!
I want to be there when they declare him king of kings!
I want to be there when they crown him Lord of Lords!
I don’t know about you, but I want to be at the meeting!
I want to be there when the saint’s go marching in!
What a Time!
Every day will be Sunday! What at Time!
It’ll always be howdy and never goodbye! What a time!
Over yonder, the hearse wheels won’t roll and crying days will be over! What a time!
We’re going sit down by the banks of the river!
What a time!
What a time!
What a time!

On Saturday August 26, 1995, Rosa Carter Crane packed up and left this world. She met God at the point of conviction, service, and need. She’s at the great camp meeting on the other shore!

No. 571-Inspirational

Untapped Power!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 3, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."Acts 1:8

Introduction

Have you ever felt backed into a corner, only to have someone show you a way out? Have you ever felt helpless, then found out there were many opportunities for self help? Have you ever felt powerless, only to find out that you had untapped potential just waiting to be used? There are millions of people in the world who live in a constant state of depression over what they don't have, when they haven't used all that which is available to them. Many are walking gold mines of potential, but they are busted because they have not chosen to use their inherent powers to reach into themselves and pull out the raw ore that is the "stuff" of their potential. We have power, but it's untapped! We have the resources but often that which we have is either never used or at best is under utilized!

Consider the aging grandmother who had spent considerable time living in the back hills. She was content with her almost hermit like existence and her grand children had considerable difficulty getting her to use modern conveniences. After years of persuading, they talked grandmother into getting electricity and running water in her home. The family threw a great party. After decades they had finally brought grandmother into the modern era. After several months passed family members started getting phone calls from the utility company, which was concerned that there may have been an error in the grand mother's meter readings. The readings showed only a very small amount of water and electricity had been used over a three month period. They wanted to arrange to have the meters checked. When the grand children visited grandmother they asked about the problem. "Are you using your running water? What about your electric power?" The grand mother proudly responded: "Oh I use both of them every day. I draw down enough water to prime the out door pump and I turn on the lights every night to see how to light my lamps!" Poor grand mother, she had access to all the power she ever needed, but rarely used it!

Often we fail to achieve the greatness that God has in store for us because we

simply don't use what is available to us in the way God intends. If we don't achieve our highest potential, it's not because God has failed us, or the power of God has diminished, but that we have simply failed to tap into the immense power of our God in a way sufficient to meet our needs.

As Christians, we know the power of God is immense. We know that with him all things are possible. Let us resolve to let him move freely through us every day, that we may realize the awesome power of his being in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the disciples as they received empowerment to carry out a mission to carry the gospel to all the world.

In Matthew 28, Jesus gave his disciples a great mission. He charged them to *"go ye therefore and teach all nations"* the gospel message. This was a challenging charge to Galilean commoners who were not schooled in languages other than their native tongue and the Aramaic, which was the language of commerce and diplomacy. Since the confusion of the languages at Babel in Genesis 11:9 people of different nations were not able to communicate. To bridge the gap, persons who moved from country to country were able to vaguely communicate with each other by speaking Aramaic which was the closest to a universal language, but was still crude and useful only in the basic sense.

Jesus himself often spoke Aramaic when he moved to different regions. He used the terms: Abba (father) (Mark 14:36), talitha, qumi (maiden, arise) (Mark 5:41), lama sabachthani (why hast thou forsaken me?) (Mark 15:34) all of which were Aramaic phrases.

Despite the absence of an ability to command foreign tongues, Jesus commissioned his followers to go to their immediate neighbors and then spread out around the world and preach the gospel. Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) until they had received the power to carry out this mission. In obedience they waited faithfully until, on the day of Pentecost, the power came! They were given the extraordinary gift of communication! They were able to speak in such a way that people of every nation under the heaven (Acts 2:5) understood what they were saying. It was a remarkable gift!

Just as the Apostles were given this special power to carry out their mission, so is every believer endowed with one or more gifts, given not for private worship or enjoyment, but for the purpose of furthering the kingdom! As believers themselves were baptized with the Holy Spirit each found that their special gift had been given the "master's touch." Some became concerned that some members had gifts that they did not have and jealousies developed. Some who had been given the gift of speaking foreign languages would show off their gift in public worship services. Addressing the subject, Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 reminded believers that there are many kinds of gifts ranging from intense faith, healing hands, insight and wisdom to speaking fluently in foreign languages but all come from the same spirit. Moreover in 1

Corinthians 14 he warned those who had been given the gift of languages not to use their gift in public worships unless a person was present to interpret what was being said.

Paul made it clear that after Baptism with water each believer prays for the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is the special power from God to help carry out the mission of preaching, teaching and baptizing in all the world. Armed with the knowledge that the power of God is available, every believer is charged to carry out the great commission of Jesus which is to "go ye therefore!"

The power to carry out the mission does not come from ourselves, but it comes from God himself!

Having It But Not Using It

William James once wrote: "Everyone knows on any given day that there are energies slumbering in him which the incitements of that day do not call forth.... Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are damped, our drafts are checked. We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources.... Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives far within his limits; he possesses powers of various sorts he habitually fails to use." What we are able to achieve is only limited by our willingness to draw on the resources of power and faith that are within us.

For many years men were content to collect only one egg a day from chickens. Now modern technology has proven that the body clocks of chickens can adjusted to produce two or more eggs in a single day. Science has found ways to get cows to give more milk each day. Thanks to George Washington Carver, agriculture has found ways to revitalize the soil to get bigger and better crops than ever before. The discoveries which made each of these accomplishments possible built on conditions that already existed, but were simply untapped.

Even the human potential has been proven to be able to do much more than originally imagined. There have been recorded feats of miraculous strength, great mental accomplishments, and courageous moments that far exceeded what was normally thought to be human capacity.

This is especially true for Christians. Not only do we have untapped human powers but we also have the added power of the Holy Ghost within us that makes it possible for us to do anything that God wills for us to accomplish.

The power of the Holy Ghost can work inside of a believer to help him accomplish anything that is within the will of God.

It Can Be Dangerous

The power of God within us is immense when released to further the kingdom of God. It is too much power to unleash for our own agendas. Balaam was tempted to use his prophetic gift for profit and would have been destroyed had it not been for

a talking mule. A crooked magician tried to buy the power of healing in the New Testament only to find out that powerful gifts from God are not for sale.

Have you ever wondered how a bird sits on a powerline but is never consumed by its power? A young boy wondered the same thing and one day reached from his window to grab hold to the powerline and sit on it like the bird. Before he touched the wire his mother yanked him from the window and explained that the bird was able to sit on the wire because he touched nothing in the process. However the boy's body hanging out the window would have touch the house and the power that supported the bird would have destroyed him, because of the house served as a ground a diverted the power.

We who strive to live for God, must use the power of God freely for the purpose of furthering his kingdom and let go of our worldly pursuits. That same power that supports a gift that rests freely on the power of God can destroy the person who tries to hold on to the power of God while holding on to the world at the same time.

Power In the Holy Ghost

Without a doubt there is power in the Holy Ghost!

The man whose life is a picture of fear, becomes a brave heart when the Holy Ghost comes!

The woman whose voice squeaks in a whisper, becomes a resounding soprano, when the Holy Ghost comes!

The defeated are lifted into victory, when the Holy Ghost comes!

The exhausted are given new energy when the Holy Ghost gives them power. No wonder the scripture declares: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles, the run and not get weary. They shall walk and not faint!"

When the Holy Ghost comes the frightened and trembling soul looks upon the unknown with confidence saying *"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"*

There is power, power, wonder working power is the blood of the lamb!

This the same power that created earth out of nothing!

The same power that spat out the seven seas and spangled the night with moon and the stars!

This is the same power that lifted Jesus from a borrowed grave and gave him life eternal!

Go and tell the world about the power of God!

Tell them that he died and that he's alive today!

Tell the world that he's got all power!

All power!

All power in his hands!

No. 572-Communion

When Bread Is Not Enough

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La. 71201

September 17, 1995

***SCRIPTURE**: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:" Amos 8:11; But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4*

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself surrounded by plenty but still felt something was missing? Have you ever looked in your cupboard and saw scores of canned food items but closed the door saying "I don't have anything to eat" because what you were looking for was not there? Have you ever found yourself buying meats at the market although your freezer is full? Have you searched for more items to purchase although you know you have plenty? Sometimes you look for something else because what you are looking for is not there. Though surrounded by plenty, many often find that there are still looking for that one additional "thing" that will complete the set and bring them satisfaction.

There are many in life who are constantly looking for that key element. Some mistakenly think they will find it in accumulation of "things" or the attainment of some elusive goal. This is especially true among those who have achieved some level of success. They live in a decent house, drive a decent car and have a few creature comforts that suggest that happiness is within their reach. Yet with all the trappings of success that we possess, there are many who still find themselves looking for something that they can't quite identify. They hunger for more. They thirst for some unseen truth that makes sense of their lives and brings balance and peace.

Consider the thief who made a profession of stealing the valuables of his neighbors. He stole everything that he could get his hands on: jewelry, appliances, furniture, even automobiles. He had become quite successful at his craft avoiding capture for many years. Finally he was nabbed coming from a house in the middle of the night. In court, his whole history of thievery was revealed. The judge, in a surprise judgment, gave him a choice of life in prison or 10 days in a golden cell. The thought of a golden cell appealed to the thief and he took the latter. In his golden jail cell everything was lavish. The walls were golden. The bedstead was studded with rubies

and diamonds. The pillows were stuffed with $100 bills. The carpet was made from mink skins. He was impressed and happy. However, as the day passed he noticed that despite the luxury of his surroundings, he had not been given anything to eat. He banged on the door and demanded food. The guard appeared holding a single loaf of bread and cup of water which was put on a table in full view of the cell. The jailer said "You said ten days please, thinking it to be ten days of ease. Though surrounded by silver and gold, ten days is like 10 years when there is no food for the soul." As the thief watched the bread and water on the table, by the 4th day he was willing to trade it all for just one loaf of bread and a cup of water. The jailer's words rang in his ear, "what good is silver and gold if there is no food for the soul.!" Those who have plenty won't know true happiness until they know God. Though surrounded by the trappings of success, they will find themselves starving for his presence. Only then will they realize the fullness of life.

As Christians we put no trust in material things. Neither do we build our hopes and faith on worldly success. We may have a few symbols of success, but we know that we will never be able to appreciate them fully unless we enjoy the daily presence of God in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Amos as he reminds Israel that despite its prosperity they will hunger for the word of God.

Amos was a herdsman who became a spokesman for God during one of the most prosperous times in the history of the Northern Kingdom Jeroboam II was the king. Under his leadership the country had secured its boundaries against foreign enemies. A time of relative peace and prosperity was underway. The economic climate was great. Money was flowing. Politically, there was peace. He had even devised a way to pacify the demands of religious leaders, by setting up golden calves in key cities that would ward off the possibilities of unrest caused by citizens trying to travel to Jeruaslem to worship. It was an era that rivaled Solomon's generation in its stability and economic prosperity (2 Kings 14:23-27). Israel, despite its complaints was enjoying good times.

Yet, it was precisely the social, moral, and religious problems associated with this period of prosperity that became the focus for Amos' voice of judgment, which he characterized as misdirected prosperity. In its prosperity, the people found little time for real and meaningful worship, but only that which was sufficient to meet minimum requirements. In the absence of a sense of morally they became increasingly self centered as the worked to increase their comfort even at the expense or others. Exploitation of the poor occurred throughout the land. In 2:6 Amos chided the people for neglecting the poor, selling them *"for a pair of shoes."* Justice was a mockery in the land. Only the rich could acquire it and the poor were doomed. In 5:24, Amos viewed the injustices that existed even in a prosperous time and prayed that God would *"let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."*

Spiritually the people did that what was convenient. Kneeling before golden calves in special centers of worship designed to be politically correct, they had a form of religion but no substance. He spoke against this emptiness so much that the priest asked him to leave the country in 7:12 because his words were disturbing their prosperous and peaceful times.

In Chapter 8 Amos begins to list the sins of the people in their prosperity. Beginning at verse 4 he begins a litany of indicting charges againstthem for their sins against God. At verse 11 Amos announces the verdict of God. God promised to bring a famine upon the land.

It would not be a famine of food or water. It would not be a period of economic depression or war. It would not be a famine of "bread" at all. It would be a period when God would leave them to mercy of their own devices and render them victims of their own prosperity. It was a strange and paradoxical indictment. God decided to use their wealth and prosperity against them. Generally, prosperity is seen as an evidence of God's blessings. However, this text gives one of those rare instances in which the method of punishment is to allow prosperous times to continue.

God would allow them to continue but without his presence. Their income would not be affected. Their posssesions would not be affected. In fact there would be no noticeable differences in their outer condition. But just as the mythical Midas was given the golden touch and it proved to be his downfall, God decided to leave the people to the mercy of what had really become their gods.

Amos projected that despite prosperity that people would notice that something was missing from their lives. They would go from place to place searching for it, but will find it elusive. In the days of such prosperity the young women and young men would be especially vulnerable as they fall faint in their search for that one missing component.

In 9:13-15 Amos projects that there will be a time of restoration. This will be a time of even greater prosperity. It will be a time when there will be more planting than reaping, more growth than destruction and the glories of the Lord will be fully appreciated by all. First, however, they had to learn the same truth that Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

Prosperous Times Are Dangeous Times

Despite the difficulties of the present, undeniably we are enjoying unprecedented prosperity. Even those who complain occasionally, secretly admit that compared to generations past, generally we are enjoying a better standard of living than ever before. Generally, the threat of nuclear war has diminished. International trade is flourishing. The economy is vigorous. These are good times.

Yet it is in such periods of good times that the people of God should be careful. Like, Israel in the time of Amos, we must not lose track of that which is necessary for our joy, living by the word of God.

Whenever believers get off track, God has a variety of methods he uses to nudge us in the right direction. In fact, every believer expects a good whipping from God when he strays because Hebrew 12:6 says *" For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* Among the methods God uses is to lower the hedge of protection he has built around us and Satan gets busy bringing sickness, financial trouble, and bad times. On occasion however, God steps back and allows our prosperity to punish us. That's what happened in Amos' time. The people were punished by their own prosperity!

When we reach a point that the possession of "bread" becomes all consuming for us, that is a time when we should be reminded that God has in the past allowed belivers to try living by bread alone. There are many who are trying to live by bread alone. They no longer have time for the things of God because their pursuit of bread takes all of their time.

Without God, the symbols of our prosperity become the source of our misery. Many devote all of their time and energy to acquiring homes, cars, money, or promotions on the job, only to find out that most of their anxities, worries and disputes involve the very symbols of their prosperity. When the pursuit of prosperity takes the place of our service to God the very essence of truth that brings fulfillment is diminished. When we neglect hearing the preached word. When we get to busy for personal bible study and devotion. When we neglect public worship, and the communion of the saints because of the demands of prosperity. When we have little or no quality time that we can give to help the poor, needy and afflicted because all of our time is reserved for the pursuit of our prosperity, we are treading on dangerous ground.

If God chooses to punish us like Israel in this text, we won't *lose* our houses, but be *burdened* by them. We won't lose our jobs, but be frustrated by them. We won't lose our money, but it will be a constant source of bickering and hard feelings. We will become prisoners in golden cells, victims of our own prosperity.

Truly the word is correct, *"man cannot live by bread alone!"*

More Than Bread

There is a fate worse than not being prosperous. That fate is to live a life without God.

There is a fate worse than not having a new car, and that's not having a living God on your side!

There is a fate worse than not owning a new home, and that's losing our claim to your heavenly home.

To paraphrase the words of Aretha Franklin: there is a fate worse than not having the house that Jack built, and that's not having Jack!

Without God we may acquire the bread of existence but we do not have the source of life.

Jesus said in John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven:

if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

When you have the living bread, life takes on a new meaning! When we have the living bread:

—Troubles, become opportunites. The living bread reminds us that in *" the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."* Psalm 27:5

—Fears and turned into courage as we remember: *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Psalm 27:1

—Famines of despair become showers of abudance. Jesus said *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* John 10:10

The living bread is what John referred to when he said in John 1:1 *" In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* And when he said: John 1:14 *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*.."

The living bread is Jesus, the lamb of God, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days

No wonder the song writer declared: Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

I don't know about you but I think I could survive famine, but I know I couldn't make without the Lord.

I could survive if I lost my house, but I couldn't make it without the Lord!

I have survived long periods without any money, but I can't make it a day without the Lord!

Maybe that's what the song writer meant with the words: "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord! I can't even wave my hand without the Lord!"

I got to have the bread. When I've got the bread, I've got a:

Bridge over troubling water; Table in the wilderness
Way when there is no way; doctor in my sick room
Lawyer in my courtroom; Solution to all my problems
Bread of heaven! Bread of heaven! Feed me! Feed me!
Till I want no more!

No. 573-Anniv.-Men & Women

No Longer For Men Only!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the St. Luke Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 17, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:"Acts 2:17; As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.Acts 8:3; "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 8:12;

Introduction

Can you remember the period of our national history in which signs were posted in every public place for "whites only?" In restaurants, stores, restrooms and doctor's offices the signs were always there. Even when there were jobs being issued it was stipulated or understood that only whites need apply. As African-Americans we felt belittled, insulted and estranged from the rest of America as we approached each of those circumstances. With the distasteful memory of racial segregation clearly in mind, imagine how women feel when they face the same types of circumstances. Instead of the signs reading for "whites only" the social order posts an unwritten "for men only" sign. It is even more frustrating for modern women when the come to worship and serve God and find the same signs posted in the church.

Traditionally, men have relegated women to positions of second class citizenship and have allowed them to tread the sacred domain of the masculine world only in supportive roles. In the biblical context, much of the role played by women in the Old Testament has been underplayed. The overwhelming conclusion that one gets from reading the Old Testament is that faith, strength, courage, leadership and rewards are marked "For Men Only."

Over the centuries a great division developed between men and women as women began to assert themselves and reject the stereotypes placed upon them by men. Men claimed that women were gossipy and too talkative. Women claimed that men moved to slow and were indecisive at times. Consider the church that had appointed a man and a woman to co-chair an important church event. The man refused, saying "I'm not going to serve with a woman, if I tell her anything, the whole town will know." Not intimidated, the woman quickly responded: "By the time a man tells me something to do, the whole town will ALREADY know it."

Sometimes divisions are deepened as even the smallest courtesies are suspect. When a young woman boarded the city bus it was obvious that she was a part of the new generation of liberated women. Soon she realized that there were no seats and she stood holding her brief case in hand. An old man rose and said "Here ma'am, you can have my seat." The woman took the gesture as patronizing. She immediately chided the old man. "I realize that you are from a different generation that believes women to be a weaker sex, so you feel obligated to give me your seat. Sir, you don't have to get up!" The old man put on his hat and stood "Well young lady, I got up, but it didn't have anything to do with what you said. You see the bus is at my stop and I gotta go. As for the seat, you can take it or leave it!"

Recognizing that a barrier between men and women would stunt the growth of the church, Jesus began to attack traditional customs. He spoke to women in public and associated with varied women at wells. Paul expanded on Jesus example noting that in Christ there is either male or female. In essence, Jesus began the movement to take down the "For Men Only" signs and replace them with "whosoever will."

Men and women throughout the New Testament are encouraged to work together as equal partners to extents consistent with the commands of God. The phrase "men and women" appears four times in the New Testament, all in the Book of Acts, showing that the first church operated with both men and women believing, suffering and serving side by side.

Exposition

This text focuses on how the relationship of men and women were viewed in the early church.

Women by social custom were second class biblical citizens. In the Old Testament a household followed the lead of the man of the House. Regardless to her individual belief if the father chose to serve an idol god, the woman was obliged to follow. If he chose to serve God, it was perceived as her duty to blindly believe what he believed and change when he changed. Thus, there was no need to indicate how women stood on issues of religious conviction, they would automatically stand with their husbands. If they didn't no one would recognize them anyway. However, as citizens of the kingdom of God both men and women worked side by side, often performing the same duties. Luke, in writing the Book of Acts, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made certain that it was underscored that women played an equal part with men throughout the early church.

Together In Faith

In Acts 8:12 he noted that when Phillip preached many came forward to accept Christ. Luke took pains to note that those coming forth were not just men, but men AND women. These were not instances where the men, who were heads of their homes, confirmed the allegiance of an entire family to kingdom. This was not probable

because the very nature of the church suggested that every person had to speak for themselves. Both men and women came forth by the thousands to demonstrate their faith in God. The same truth was acknowledged in Acts 5:14 when the Apostles preached Christ to great crowds. Afterwards *"multitudes"* came forth to accept him but Luke again underscored the presence of women: *"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."* It was not a men only affair.

Belief in Christ is not dependent upon sex or race or any other criterion other than faith. Today, women and men who work in the faith share one thing in common. Their faith. It is both men and women that believe. Just like in biblical times, belief is not just a men's thing, it's whosoever will..

Shared Persecution

In Acts 8:3 it is noted that when Saul persecuted the church, he did not just persecute men only.

In this passage it is noted that he was *"entering into every house, and jailing men and women committed them to prison."* The fact that women also shared in the persecutions of early believers is significant. One of the advantages of "not counting" in Old Testament times is that men were held responsible for their households and it was men and not women that executed and imprisoned for debts or certain civil offenses. The woman was assumed to be acting on the direction of her husband, placing the blame entirely upon him. When the early church began believers were persecuted, jailed, fed to lions and ostracized. Luke notes that both men and women shared equally in the persecution. Suffering for Christ was not for men only. Bearing the burdens of the cross was not for men only! Women by the thousands were jailed, executed and sold into slavery for their part in building the kingdom of God. Without a doubt, it was a far cry from a private club for men only.

Today when Satan attacks believers, he does not attack men only. He does not have a preference for one sex or the other. Women are persecuted by Satan just as men. In this respect women are equal partners with men as they are persecuted by unbelievers for their faith and Christian lifestyle. Both women and men partners in the faith, even in persecution.

Equals in Dispensation of Spirit

Not only were women visibly among the first believers and first persecuted, but they shared an equal dispensation of the spirit of God. With a few exceptions noted, most instances of God speaking and directing humans to act involved men. While there are a few Deborahs of record the overwhelming majority of those selected were men. When God had a message to give the people, or a service to be performed he found an Abraham, Moses, or Elijah to carry it, speak and act through. However, as the New Testament began and a new order unfolded women found themselves equal partners spiritually as well. God started calling women to prophesy, serve as servants

(Diakonos in Greek means minister, servant or deacon) and to generally share in the teaching, witnessing and promotion of the kingdom of God. The prophecies of Joel were being realized in a new way for he had announced God's prophesy: "that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Even in the area of teaching, preaching and serving in the church, it has became obvious that it was no longer "For Men Only!"

Paul finally resolved the questions as to how men and women were to relate to each other in the faith when he wrote in Galatians 3:28 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."*

We are one in Jesus, that's the way God sees us. Not men. Not women. Not white. Not Black. But one in Christ Jesus.

Both Men and Women Will Be rewarded

Finally, we must consider that because both men and women have believed the same faith, worshipped the same God and endured the same persecutions, both men and women will share in the rewards of the kingdom.

Both men and women have worked to build the kingdom. Both men and women have worked to help the:

•Lost become saved; Saved to become more mature in the faith

•Indifferent become involved; Lazy to become laborers

•Irresponsible parent responsible; and the disobedient children become obedient

•Enemies to become friends; Friends to become brothers and sisters in Christ

•Both men and women have worked to help the

•Sad to rejoice

•Tempted to overcome

•Discouraged to be cheered

•Skeptics to Believe

•Confused to understand

Those who have worked in the vineyard will be rewarded, not based on the sex but on their service. There won't be lines in glory, one reserved for men and another women. When Christ comes in the fullness of his majesty the world will be a different place, void of racial sexual distinctions.

In that day Isaiah said every mountain shall be low, valleys shall be exalted, crooked places will be made straight, rough places will be made smooth and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and *"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."* Luke 3:6

I'm glad to know that when the roll is called it won't be just the men but all flesh.

When Moses is called, it won't be without Mariam!

Abraham will be called, but not without Sarah
When Lazarus is called it won't be without Martha
When Boaz is called it won't be without Ruth
When Isaac is called it won't be without Rebecca
Both men and women will be there when the roll is called up yonder
Until the roll is call both men and women must keep telling the story!
Tell them about Jesus!
Jesus who died!
Jesus, who rose from the dead!
Jesus, who calls both men and women to follow him!
Jesus!
Tell them about Jesus!

No. 574-Youth

Gangsta's Paradise

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 24, 1995

SCRIPTURE: And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."Luke 23:43 " And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Rev 20:10

Introduction

How do you define the good life? When, in your own estimation, will you achieve success? Will it be measured in terms of the number of material goods you have accumulated? Will it be when you are able to go where you please, when you please, with whomever you please wherever you please without depending on others? To many young people, having an apartment of their own is paradise. To others it's a car. For still others, being as far from their parents as possible (but not too far from their credit cards), is the essence of living in paradise. Paradise is an oasis of freedom in the desert of parental domination. Paradise is seen as the good life.

The movie *"Dangerous Minds"* speaks to the present generation about a dangerous lifestyle that is filled with murder, violence, crime and the constant prospect of death. The theme of the movie is the capacity of youth to use their minds to create a better life for themselves through study and hard work. The theme song of the movie became an instant number one hit in the African-American subculture. It is entitled *"Gangsta's Paradise."* It describes a depressing scenario of violence, death and fear that define the best that can be expected of those who choose the Gangsta life. It is their paradise.

Just a few of the words of the song by Coolio paint the picture of the gangsta's paradise:

" As I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I took a look at my life and realize nothing's left. Cause I been blasting and laughing so long that even my mama thinks my mind is gone. But I ain't never a crossed a fool who didn't deserve it. Me being treated like a punk you know that's unheard of. You betta watch how you talking and where you walking or you and your homies will be lining chalk. .....Been living this way so long... living in the gangsta's paradise."

If art reflects life, then the words to this number one song seem to reflect a sense

of futility in the youth of Afr-America. The words: "Tell me why are we so blind to see that the ones we hurt are you and me" cry out for something better than the "Gangsta's Paradise."

Thankfully, there is something better than the life of the gangsta. There is a life that offers more than a succession of "gank moves," "4-5's","3-8's",5-0's"Dissin'", "Chillin'","Homies" and "G's." There is something greater and much more fulfilling than the prospects of spending an entire life in "Gangsta's Paradise." It is hidden behind a door called opportunity. Education is the key to opportunity. Faith in God unlocks the door to paradise. Not a Gangsta's paradise of death, dred and doom, but a saintly paradise of peace and living on a higher plane.

As Christians, we know our Lord offers us a place in paradise. In this life he can help us to rise above the mediocrity of poverty to a new level of freedom. In the life to come he offers an uninterrupted flow of gracious that can only be described as paradise. We don't relish the idea of living in a Gangsta's Paradise. However, we look forward with great enthusiasm to the point in time in which we live in the Saint's paradise.

Exposition

This text focuses on two separate fates that await the believer and the non-believer in the future state of the world.

In Luke, Jesus is crucified on a cross between two thieves. The identity of the thieves was not given but the scripture in Luke simply refers to both of them as malefactors. At best both of these men represented a dangerous lifestyle that wreaked with the fear of detection and death. On the cross one of them challenged Christ, if he was actually the Son of God, to save himself and the unrepentant thief as well. He wanted another chance to return to the world he knew, perhaps with more care and caution the next time to avoid detection.

The second thief accepted Christ as Savior. He sensed that Christ was not a guilty person and was truly the Son of God as he claimed. Instead of asking for another chance to return and do the same things again, the second thief was repentant. He acknowledge that both thieves deserve the punishment that they received, but Christ had done nothing wrong. In a sign of humility, he asked Jesus to remember him when he entered into the king. Christ's response was *"This day, you shall be with me in paradise."*

The idea of paradise was familiar to Jews. Their immediate thought was that of Adam and Eve in the garden. It was a true paradise. There was no death. No violence. No fear. It was a pure state of uninterrupted bliss. However, that garden was destroyed after both Adam and Eve sinned. For Adam and Eve the key to paradise was obedience to the command of God not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Obedience kept them in paradise and disobedience locked the door.

The second paradise that Israel considered was the Canaan Land. It was described as a land that was flowing with milk and honey. It was ripe and fertile.

Twelve spies returned to Joshua to report to him that the land would truly be a paradise for them because it offered such great prospects. The key to obtaining this paradise was their willingness to trust God to roll back the waters of Jordan and to topple the walls of Jericho. When they stopped trusting God and began to trust Baal, the god of Canaanites, the door to paradise was closed on them forever. Their kingdom toppled, split into and was literally decimated by its enemies. Disobedience took their paradise away.

The third paradise looms in the future. It is represented by John's vision in the Revelation 21. It is a picture of the final paradise that awaits the righteous. It is onne where life will never end and joys shall be eternal. The key to obtaining this paradise is to accept Christ as both Lord and Savior and follow him. Those who gain access to this paradise, gain it only through Christ who has said *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the father, but by me."*

The future state of the repentant thief was to this last paradise. This is the place where Jesus immediately took his soul upon death to await the general day of judgment when all saints shall receive their reward.

The non-repentant condemned himself to an awful destruction in the lake of fire and brimstone, where Satan, the Devil and False Prophet are. It will be poetic justice. This will be the place where Satan will live for ever and ever. He will be tortured and tormented. Those who follow him can look forward to joining him in *"Gangsta's Paradise."*

Gangsta World

It is becoming increasingly more difficult for modern youth to live the Christian life, especially in the gangsta subculture of the African-American community. In the 1970's entertainment industry discovered the African-American subculture. In the name of profits, the owners of these mediums began to lift the subculture to a level of acceptance that dominated our existence.

Its effect became devastating. The worst elements of our community were raised up as role models for our children. Pimps, pushers and dope dealers became the subject scores of movies. In the 80's radio decided to take the music of the subculture and legitimize it. Grammy Awards were given for subculture singers and self censorship of the airways disappeared.

As a result, youth of today are facing the difficult task of defining themselves while being surrounded by wall poster images of the worst of our community. The *"Gangsta"* lifestyle comes complete with its own language. If you don't live in it or study it by means of digesting hundreds of compact discs, it is entirely possible for you to dismiss the "Gangsta" lifestyle as a passing fad. The language of the "Gangsta" subculture is completely gang and drug related. "What up G?" is a gang greeting. A "G" is a gangster. "Gank" is bad cocaine. A "4-5" is a .45 calibre pistol. The "5-0" is the police.

Its dress is epitomized by sloppy attired, pants that hang below the behind,

under wear that shows, caps worn backwards and shirts and tee shirts worn almost to the knees, among other noticeable features. Writing has been reduced to graffiti style combinations of letters and number. Life expectations are reduced. Life spands are even shorter as violence, sex and killing are elevated to all time highs. Youth are being pressured to look like "G's", talk like "G's", walk , dress and act like "G's." Many succumb to the pressure and step out of their doors on their way to Gangsta's Paradise.

The key to reaching beyond "gangsta's paradise" is education. Youth must be taught the essential skills for survival and the essentials for an elevated level of thinking. The first and most important influence is the home. Parents must not throw in the towel. Insist that your children study. The second influence is teachers. Educators must learn the nature of the problem and its source and approach the process with a missionary zeal. Principals and teachers should not lower the standards of their schools in dress and behavior. Learn the gangsta language so you can communicate with those already trapped. Resist the temptation to just "do your job" without a willingness to go further than your paycheck demands. A thorough education of the mind and the heart is the key to saving our youth. We are in a war for the minds of our children. We must arm ourselves for the battle, or we will lose them by the thousands as they stray away in search of "Gangsta's Paradise."

Another Paradise

The ultimate end for those who aspire to the gangsta's paradise is dismal. The gangsta on the cross who refused to accept Christ even in his dying hour, what happened to him? He went to gangsta's paradise.

Where is Gangsta's Paradise? It is a miserable place where trouble never ends and torture is endless!

Where is Gangsta's Paradise? It is place where there will be misery and despair for eternity!

Revelation 20 paints the awful picture of the future state of those who choose to live apart from God. They will be condemned to gangsta's paradise. Obviously, they will share the punishment of the chief gangster, Satan himself! *"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*. Rev 20:10 That's the gangster's paradise.

While some young people have resigned themselves to living in gangsta's paradise, there are thousands of others who have decided that there is something more to life than simply waiting for the day they will be the next drive by victim.

There are thousands in our city and millions across the nation who don't relish the idea of living in gangsta's paradise. They do not see themselves as "G's" and are not defined by the standards of the hood.

There is an army of young people in this city who are marching to the beat of another drummer!

Where are they marching? They are marching to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Tulane, Grambling and Southern.

They are marching to the corporate board rooms of General Motors, Microsoft, and Boeing.

They are marching to the statehouse and white house and councils of leadership across this country.

Yes, they are marching to beat of a different drummer! This drummer says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all of the other things shall be added unto you!"* So they are marching!

They are marching because their drummer has set a cadence and pace designed to get bring them into a fulfilled life on this earth and a literal paradise in the world to come. I hear this drummer declare "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly."

Not only are they marching toward a better lifestyle, they are also marching to a better life!

They have turned their backs on the Gangsta's Paradise and they are marching toward the Saint's paradise.

They are marching toward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

In the Gangster's paradise:

There is worry about the Cripps and the Bloods; But in the Saint's Paradise there is no concern about Cripps and Bloods but only those who've been washed in the blood. I heard the Word declare "These are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb!"

There is concern about the wicked and crooked; but in the Saint's paradise the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

There is concern about crime; but in the Saint's paradise "justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Life is a dangerous New Jack City, but the Saint's paradise will be safe and secure in the walls of heavenly city!

In the Saint's paradise there won't be any "G's" only J's because Jesus will be everywhere!

There will be Jesus in the morning; Jesus in the evening!

In the Saint's paradise there won't be any gangs to join. There will only be one crowd in paradise because "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess" that Christ is Lord of Lord!

I'm on way to the Saint's paradise!

No turning back!

No turning back!

No turning back!

No. 575-Member Improvement

Put On Your Running Shoes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La. 71201

October 1, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.1 Cor 9:24***

Introduction

Have you ever undertaken a task only to find out that you were not in shape? You know that you are out of shape when you walk two flights of stairs and have to take a break. You know you are out shape when you try to enter buildings by the handicap ramp. You know you are out of shape when you spend thirty minutes in the grocery store and have to rest three hours from fatigue. When you try to sing your favorite song and can't know hold out to the end, that's when you know you are out of shape.

How does one go about winning the race of life? What are the essentials. To a large extent our success in any endeavor depends upon advanced training, conditioning, and mental attitude. Three three are the essentials for success. No one can expect victory in a competition without taking the time to train and condition themselves for the race. Even with training and conditioning, one's state of mind during the race will impact the outcome.

As we enter life's race we must always consider why we are running? The reason for entering the race will greatly effect the outcome. Are we entering to win, just to make it across the line, or are we running just to be running? Some people run to help others. There are others who run to help themselves. Consider the two men who were walking through the woods and they heard a roaring sound in the distance. The roar came closer and they realized that just a few feet from them there was lion that was approaching at an ubeleivable speed. Instantly one of the men reached in his back pack and pulled out his tennis shoes and put them on quickly. His friend asked "You don't seriously think you can out run a lion do you? What's the point of the tennis shoes?"His friend yelled back as he ran away "I don't have to out run the lion. All I have to do is out run you and I'm safe.!" There are many people who are running to save themselves alone as they leave the rest of the world to die at the hands of

Satan's hungry lions.

Today the church must put its running shoes on and prepare to run the race of life. It is a race that has but one purpose and that is to claim the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ. We must train ourselves. We must condition ourselves. We must keep a positive attitude. We cannot stand on the sidelines of life we must enter the race and run to win.

As Christians we must shod our feet with the gospel of preparation and run the race that is set before us. We know that if we run our race well, there is a crown of righteousness waiting for us in glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he gives an explanation of the nature of the Christian struggle, using the comparison of runners in a race.

About eight miles outside of the city of Corinth was the Isthmus. It was the site of the Greek games which were held every two years. The Greek Athletic Festivals were five day events in which each city state in the empire sent its best athletes to compete against those of other states. The events included wrestling, boxing, chariot racing, horse racing, javelin throwing, and running. The games were held in many of the Greek city states such as Delphi and Nemea. The most famous of all of the games was the one held every five years at Olympia. It became the forerunner of what we know today as the Olympics.

Paul, aware that the Corinthians were famliar with the the athletic festivals compared the Christian struggle to the competitors in the Olympic games. Runners were also required to maintain a special diet. Their instructors insisted that they refrain from foods and drinks that would diminish their possibilities of winning the race. Similarly, Paul suggested that Christians should consider themselves in training and tailor their diets and tastes to conform to the word of God.

Those who were victors in the games were given a wreath to wear upon their heads and the honor of being their city's champions. On occasion, the winners were given money from their hometown. On others, they were relieved from paying taxes. Mostly however, they were given a wreath to wear.

Paul said those who compete in the games, trained and competed for the soul purpose of winning a material wreath upon their heads. However, those who run the Christian race do so to claim the crown of righteousness reserved for the victors. The Christian competitor competes for the prize of salvation and glory before God. He trains and conditions himself to enter the race and to perservere until victorious.

Getting In Shape

Today there are millions of out of shape Christians. These are persons who are trying to run the Christian race, in search of the prize, without the training, conditioning and mental attitude necessary for victory. Those who are attempting

the Christian marathon without getting in shape are finding it extremely difficult. Getting in shape requires:

TRAINING: In the Greek festivals athletes were given an instructor who trained them for their particular event. The type of training depended upon the event. Wrestlers were trained in a way that would build strength. Boxers were trained to punch with power and to sustain a punch. Runners were trained to develop speed and endurance.

One of the first steps in training was to learn the nature of the event and its objective. Short distance runners had to focus on speed, while long distance runners focused on endurance. The training regimen for each event was different because each was different.

It was extremely important in Paul's mind that each Christian understand the nature of his or her opponent in this life. That's why he wrote: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* Ephesians 6:12

Each Christian must engage in the training process associated with its event. The church with which a believer associates participates in the overall event but trains its members with a specific objective in mind. A worship oriented church trains it members in all forms of worship, both public and private and works to develop extensive preaching and singing ministries. A mission oriented congregation trains its members for mission work. It promotes the preaching of the gospel on foreign shores and home mission work at home. A teaching oriented congregation specializes in teaching the word and its members are trained extensively to do the same. A service oriented church specializes in reaching out to the poor, needy and helpless with the love of God. While most churches train for all events every church has an event in which it excells. That is usually the event in which it brings home the gold medals.

The trainer or coach of every congregation is its pastor. One of his roles is to help each Christian understand the nature of the event in which they are competing and to train them for that event. *"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."* Jeremiah 3:15
Under direction of the Holy Spirit, he sets the training regimen designed to help the members get ready for the race. Athletes without a coach have difficulty in the games. Even worse are those who have a coach but ignore his instructions. Untrained athletes usually find that while they have some skills they are not ready for their own event. A runner who spent his time lifting weights, has plenty of muscles but can't run a mile. A wrestler who who spent his time driving the chariots found himself unprepared for his own event.

CONDITIONING: If training involves strategy, objectives and a regimen, then conditioning focuses on a narrower part of the training process. Runners who condition themselves for the marathon, begin by running short distances until they build up strength and endurance. They may begin with a mile run. It may increase

to three, five, ten and thereafter. Boxers spar with individuals who have a style and build similar to their opponent. Football players scrimmage. In any event, there are small test runs that get the athletes ready for the big challenge.

The only way to condition oneself for the marathon is to run. It can't be done by reading books or discussions. It can't be done by constant talking. Runners get in condition by running! On a daily basis, they push themselves out of bed and force themselves to run harder and longer. They check their pace, stride and breathing patterns as they run, but it can only be done as they run.

In the same way Christians condition themselves for kingdom work. They begin with short runs. They help a neighbor or friend in need. They graduate to longer runs when they volunteer for causes that help others without thought of pay or recognition.

They make even longer runs when they organize efforts to teach and reach the lost masses, relieve the hungry, visit the jails, visit the sick and champion the causes of the oppressed.

Members who find themselves talking more and visiting the jails less are out of condition. Those who are doing more discussing than they reaching the lost masses with the word of God are out of shape. Those who are pontificating about theory and doctrine but are not actively involved in championing the causes of the oppressed or reaching out to the hurting masses with the love of God are out of condition.

MENTAL ATTITUDE: The successful runner, while in perfect physical shape, must also possess the right attitude. Runners must be focused. Therefore a large part of their training deals with their attitudes. They must have the goal on their minds and be free from distractions.

In Philippians Paul wrote: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 3:13-14

Those who intend to run the Christian race must prepare themselves mentally for the race. They must surround themselves with positive reminders of the race and the possibility of victory. As much as possible they should avoid negative conversations, negative self talk, and non-productive discussions. Any involvement that has the net effect of distracting them from the race should be avoided.

We must think on those things which will help us win the race. In Philippians 4:8-9 Paul says "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. We are thus encourage to think positive thoughts and then act on them.

Run the Race

Although the runner always feels he needs more training, a time comes when the race must be run. As believers, we must run the race. Our Sunday School lessons are preparations for the race, they are not the race. Our prayer meetings, bible studies, and Sunday worships are preparations for the race, they are not the race.

The race begins when we reach out to the nameless faces that cry out out for help.

The race begins when we minister to the imprisoned, embrace the oppressed, and reach beyond our walls in an organized effort to make a difference in the name of our Lord.

In closing, consider the true story which happened a few years ago at the national special olympics for the physically challenged. Runners had come from around the country to compete and it was an important race. When the gun was sounded however one of the runners fell. Tears mingled with the dust of disappointment as she rolled on the track wallowing in her failure. The other runners looked back and saw her wallowing and crying. Although the crowd urged them to continue, all of the contestants went back to help the fallen runner. They picked her up, wiped the tears from her eyes. Then in an amazing show of unity and love locked their arms under hers and carried her to the finish line. They all crossed at the same time. All winners.

A long time ago we started out in life and stumbled along the way. Somebody stopped along the way and gave us a second chance! That somebody was Jesus!

Put on your running shoes! Tell somebody about Jesus!

Put on your running shoes! Show the hungry masses that he is bread when you are hungry!

Put on your running shoes! Visit the imprisoned and show them that the love of God extends behind locked doors!

Put on your running shoes! Tell the lost everywhere about Jesus! Tell them that he died and he lives today!

Put on your running shoes and tell the world about Jesus!

No. 576-Church Anniversary

We've Only Just Begun

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 8, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed." Isaiah 65:20

Introduction

If a church congregation is 100 years old how old is it? Some would argue that the church, like a fine wine, gets better with age and seasoning. Whether 100 years is old would depend upon what the congregation had done in past years and what its doing now? A young historic congregation is one whose membership has made history despite it years. An old historic congregation is one that has simply been around for 100 years and instead of making history is history.

Young Historic congregations offer a peculiar perspective and witness in a community. The advantage of living through storms of troubles, winds of difficulties and spiritual and secular droughts is unique. It is one that allows such a congregation to make history as it serves humanity, despite the difficulties of the times. It offers a sense of quiet reassurance, while shouldering a burden, that despite the problem, God is in control. It draws upon the rich heritage of a community and the legacies left behind by the many giants who have blazed clear trails, to continue making history. It analyzes and benefits from the mistakes of the past and takes definitive actions to influence the future.

Old Historic congregations share in the basic tenets of younger historic congregation but are troubled by several peculiar disadvantages. Many become comfortable with tradition and what was once a blazed trail becomes a rut from which they find it difficult to move. Old congregations are slow to change. The also have a tendency to live on past accomplishments and revel in "what use to be." Many have tremendous difficulty adjusting and readjusting themselves to remain relevant to the present circumstance. Old historic congregations find difficulty relating to the swift change that shift the very nature of the families they serve. Old Historic congregations enjoy telling history, while youthful congregations enjoy making history. The difference defines the nature of both.

Is 100 years old? It depends upon the nature of the relationship. The experience may have been enjoyable and pleasing and lifting to some. To others, it may have

been unbearable. If it was a pleasing experience, 100 years is not long enough. If otherwise, it was too long. Consider the elderly couple who had reluctantly celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Young couples praised them for their longevity and expressed how great it was to have been together for 50 years. After the ceremony the wife and the husband had an argument. She responded "I don't know why I let you talk me into this silly ceremony anyway. For 50 years all we have done is argue, fight, and disagree. For 50 years we've been miserable. I'm a praying every day that God will take one of us home. When he answers my prayer I'm gon' shout 'Hallelujah' and move in with my sister in Memphis!" Some may be just biding their time waiting on time.

As Christians we have come to know that 100 years is not a long time in God's sight. We should strive to actively work, day by day, to build the kingdom of God making history as we live each moment. When we are aggressively working to build the kingdom we know that 100 years does mark history made, but history in the making because ...we've only just begun!

Exposition

The text paints aclear picture of life in the Millennial kingdom over which Christ will rule.

Isaiah projects the future state of believers, pointing to a time in the not so distant future when believers will rule with Christ for 1000 years on earth in a prototype of the perfect kingdom that would finally come. This 1000 year reign of Christ is the time in which he and the saints will return to earth and will generally run its government for 1000 years free of Satanic influences because Satan will be bound. It is a time when the church's work on earth is done!

During this time certain changes in the way the world operates will take place. 1) Christ will be the ruler of the kingdom, assisted by the Saints who will return with him to lead the millennial kingdom. When Christ was born an angel told Mary "and the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of his Father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33) 2) All living creatures, including the animals will be at peace (65:25) in such a way that even the wolf and lamb will feed together. Those which are natural enemies will become friends. 3) Life spans of people shall be like trees, living hundreds of years to the point that a man of 100 will be considered a mere youth and those who don't live to be a hundred will be accursed. (65:20) 4) People will enjoy the fruits of their labor, living in houses that they build and feasting on crops they produce (65:21-23) The millennial kingdom is what Christ referred to in the model prayer he taught his disciples when he said "thy kingdom come." 5) The people will not be in want for anything because before they ask for it God will have delivered it. Before they can even speak the request he will have heard and responded.

This 65th chapter of Isaiah is called Messianic because it speaks of the future kingdom in the Millennium. Before that time a considerable task lay before the church.

The savior would have to be born and that would take about seven 700 years to occur. The church would have to be established, which from its inception in A.D. 30 to Paul's imprisonment marked a 33 year incubation stage. It would need to survive persecution and attack, which it did during the Roman persecutions as members of the church were fed to lions and crucified for the belief in Christ.

Having survived all of the persecutions and attacks from within and without, the church still stands a young historic spiritual body working vigorously to change the face of the world in the name of a risen Lord. It's ultimate goal is to reach the kingdom of God. Reaching the millennial kingdom and enjoying the beauty of its nature will be a source of rejoicing for the saints. (65:18- 19). It is the ultimate goal of the church. To preach, teach and evangelize until the kingdom comes.

Despite being nearly 2000 years old, the millennial kingdom does not yet exist. The world has not heard the gospel declared. Satan is still unbound and sin is prevalent. Despite its years the church continues to declare the Gospel message because the times indicate that we have only just begun.

Just Beginning

Today the church must continually be aware of the challenge it faces. It cannot be content with any level of growth or success it has achieved in the past. No matter what has been done, there is still work to be done.

Though the church is teaching the word in its Sunday Schools and bible study ministries there are still thousands in just the local community alone who have not been taught the word. With advances in technology the church is faced with challenge of using new techniques to teach the old story to new generations. Though we have come a long way, we have only just begun.

Though the church is reaching thousands with the Gospel message through the broadcast media, there are still millions who have never really heard the word of God. Broadcast ministries need to be expanded in focus to carry the message to all the world. While those who have ventured in this arena have made a great step, we have only just begun!

Though the church responds in a small way to the needs of the imprisoned our ministry to those behind prison walls should reflect our best effort. We may be satisfied with what little we are doing, but we have only just begun.

While we make occasional forays in areas of health care and preventive care, our community is literally being decimated by health ignorance, destructive habits and misinformation. Diabetes, heart disease and others are growing at alarming rates. We may have made some efforts to address these concerns in the past, but we have only just begun!

While the church's ministry to youth involves many from across the community in a multiplicity of activities, it too is only a beginning. The forces working against Christian youth are immense. Youth by the thousands are being swept into a gangsta mentality that is distorting the minds, corrupting their values and leading them astray.

The resources we apply toward molding their lives for Christian service will require expansion. We have made great strides, but we've only just begun.

Though we send an occasional donation to foreign missionaries and host an evangelical period on occasion it should not imply that all we can do is being done. There are still too many who have not been touched by our revival and foreign mission efforts who yearn to know the salvation of the Lord.Though we may be doing something in this respect, we have only just begun.

Despite the availability of food stamps, public housing and low income housing assistance, there are millions nationally and hundreds in every local community that go hungry every day and seek desperately for a place to stay. The church has responded in a minimal ways providing housing for some and a meal for others. However, as long as there are thousands who are hungry, and still more who are homeless, living in card board boxes in alley ways and street corners, we have only just begun!

The church does not have the luxury of resting comfortably on its past. It must work vigorously today to reach, save and teach the lost masses in the name of our Lord.

When Christ comes he will ask whether we fed the hungry, visited the sick, ministered to the imprisoned, showed concerned for the oppressed and sheltered the homeless. He will ask and the church must answer.

As the church celebrates its longevity, it must always remember that, we have only just begun!

Is 100 Years Old?

While the church celebrates it longevity we must consider that a congregation that reaches the age of 100 is not 100 years old, but 100 years young. In God's estimate of time, 100 years has little significance, it is only a point of beginning.

Psalm 90:4 says *"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* 2 Peter 3:8 says *"..that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* In the context of God's estimate of time 100 years is just a beginning. As far as God is concerned "we've only just begun."

We may have survived World War 1, but we've only just begun

We may have endured the ravages of the great depression, but we've only just begun

We may have overcome the hardships of World War II, but we've only just begun

We may have lived through the Korean conflict, Vietnam War and Desert Storm, but we have only just begun!

At age 100 Abraham found that instead of nearing the end of his life he was at a new beginning. Ask Abraham and Sarah with a child in their twilight years is 100 years old and they will answer: "We've only just begun!"

Noah was 500 years old when he began work on the ark. At the age of 600, 100 years after he began the work his family celebrated its completion. After working for 100 years on the ark, he then heard a command to fill the ark with seven pairs of every clean animal and one pair of every unclean animal. When Noah looked up and saw the empty ark in front of him and the rain clouds in the air he realized "we've only just begun!"

The church today must realize the same. The ark is empty and the rain clouds are gathering over out heads, we have only just begun!

The church must continue to declare the word of God to a world that has not heard!

Buildings may burn, but the church will be powered by a fire within!

Organizations my die, but the church will live!

Book stores may close, but the Word of God will stay open!

Leaders may backslide, but the church will be led by the Lord!

The church has only begun to tell the story! The world needs the church!

For a world at its worst, we need a church at its best!

For a world full of sin, we need a church full of holiness!

For a world full of sadness, we need a church full of joy!

For a world that's full of war, we need a church that is full of peace!

For a world that's full of despair, we need a church that is full of hope!

For a world full of darkness, we need a church full of light!

For a world that's going down, we need a church that's going up!

For a world that's full of defeat, we need a church that's full of victory!

For a world that's taking it easy, we need a church dressed in its work clothes!

We must work until our day is done!

We must work until the setting of the sun!

We must tell a world full of bad news, the good news about Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them that Jesus is coming back again!

When he comes back the wicked will cease from troubling! The weary will be at rest! Every day will be Sunday, always howdy and never good bye!

Tell the world!

Tell the world about Jesus!

No. 577-Inspiration

It Comes With The Territory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 15, 1995

SCRIPTURE: Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. John 15:20-21

Introduction

Have you ever complained about difficulties accomplishing a goal? Most people indulge themselves in moments of wishful thinking in which they wish for better circumstances. The Father who has to work for his family in the day and then come home to a list of "honey do's" sometimes grumbles. Wives sometimes complain about the enormity of their work and the pittance of support they get from their families. Sometimes children complain about their chores and wish they could live without them. While there are some that complain, there are others who never seem to complain about the difficulties associated with their roles in life because the are an expected .

Kings in ancient times conquered other lands for their resources and manpower. However, having once conquered a land the king was also obligated to defend its boundaries, police its affairs, listen to the complaints of its citizens, as well as handle its social problems. Whenever his advisors would complain about the costs of such undertakings, the king would remind them that they fought battles to claim the new kingdom for its treasure. If a problem occurs, said the king, they should remember, it comes with the territory.

Every endeavor has its advantages. However, each also its peculiar irritations and disadvantages. Consider the country mouse who wanted to live in the city. He became tired of the boring country life. He wanted to move to the city and live like the fat rats. In the country he was constantly scratching around for food, but in the city there were opportunities for little mice to be grow to be fat rats. Once in the city, he was given the grand tour by his uncle who was a real fat rat. He showed him restaurants where food was dumped at the end of a day. He saw grocery stores with shelves stocked full of food, including plenty of cheese and all the nice things mice love to eat. Certainly, the city was the place for mice to grow and gain opportunities. He became alarmed when his uncle started giving him warnings. "You must sniff your

food before you eat it" said the old fat rat. "People will try to poison you if they can." Later he said, "be careful to keep a low profile, in some buildings people will try to shoot you squash you with brooms." As the tour ended uncle fat rat said. "Being a rat in the city has its advantages, but not without a price. Everyday you must take care, not to get your tail caught in a trap." So it is in life. We have many advantages, but there are some disadvantages as well, we must be aware of them and work daily to stay away from the traps.

Sometimes Christians complain about life's difficulties, but some of those difficulties should be expected, because they come with the territory. Sometimes we complain that we are being talked about, persecuted and falsely accused, but such destructive conversation comes with the territory. Football players expect to get hit. Plumbers expect bad conditions. Coaches who lose expect to get fired. Doctors run 24 hour shifts. Golfers expect a few rough greens and sand traps. Those who live in the kitchen expect a lot of heat. It all comes with the territory.

As Christians we anticipate the joys of heaven. We strive to obey God's Word as members of the kingdom of God. The kingdom has its merits, but not without a price. When Satan causes difficulties to come, we should not grumble to God but resolve not to be discouraged because if there is no cross there is no crown.

Exposition

This text finds Jesus dealing with the nature of the Christian Experience with respect to struggle and reward.

Jesus, is the speaker in this text. His words come on the heel of his presentation to believers about the nature of their relationship to him. In verse 1-8 he describes that relationship as similar to a branch and a vine. In this illustration believers are portrayed as branches of the vine which is in Christ. Each believer is an extension of the vine, being fed and sustained by the vine. To be a branch means that one is fully sustained by the vine. It also means that one is fully controlled by the vine. A believer in such a relationship loses his own will and finds himself only as it relates to something that vine wants done. Since each of us is a branch of the vine, his will becomes our will.

If, at some point, we are not willing to abide in him and go our own direction, for whatever reason, then the branch is cut off.

Having said that, in the next eight verses from 9 to 17, Jesus says the key component for every Christian is to love God and your neighbor as you love yourself.. He points out in verse 14 that those who love him will be willing to do whatever he tells them to do. Those who love him are willing to allow themselves to become instruments for his service, willing to do anything, say anything, or go anyplace for the furtherance of the kingdom.

The third passage begins at verse 18. Those who have lost themselves in the will of God, such as a branch and vine and set out to do whatever God commands can expect difficulties from the "world." Jesus said if you meet resistance in your

pursuit to live the Christian life fully do not be alarmed. He met the same resistance. If people hate you, don't be overly upset, they hated Jesus as well. If they talk about you, don't be overly concerned, they talked about Jesus as well. Listen to his words, John 15:18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

The essence of Christ's teaching was that believers should not expect smooth sailing as they sail the sea of Christian life. They should expect a few storms, because storms come with sailing. They come with the territory.

The Territory

Today there are many people who are troubled by life's difficulties and question God as to why life seems to be so hard. As Christians we have chosen a difficult path that will often be misunderstood by others. Therefore we should not expect to win any popularity contests when we stand for that which is right.

The territory is the kingdom of God which we are trying to help build and expand among those who do not see or understand they nature of our effort. Sometimes we can be injured emotionally by the way people respond to us or the way we are treated. We are reminded today, not to be easily injured, but to understand that such treatment is expected, because it comes with the territory.

Are you attempting to teach children in school but are often discouraged because of the way both the student and the student's parents respond to you? Does it frustrate you to the point that you want to quit? Remember teaching is missionary in nature. Teachers strive to instill values of godliness, industry and excellence in minds that may not yet fully understand the nature of your effort. A rude response from the six year old child of an 18 year old mother should not frustrate you, because it comes with the territory. You know the nature of the struggle neither he nor his mother may understand what you are all about?

Did you try to help someone only to discover the person you helped the most was first among those who criticized and talked about you? This is extremely frustrating when you have spent great sums of money and time to resolve a problem for the person only to watch them bring you down. However, don't be discouraged, many that Jesus helped were perhaps among the crowd that called for his crucifixion. While it is sometimes discomforting to continue helping others, remember that sometimes when the hand that feeds is bit by the mouth being fed, it comes with the territory.

Jesus urges us to do what he has commanded us to do with a spirit of love as our motivation recognizing and expecting resistance. It comes with the territory, but love anyway.

In 1989 the following thought appeared in Reader's Digest:

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway. It comes with the territory!

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway. It comes with the territory!

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway. It comes with the territory!

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. It comes with the territory!

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. It comes with the territory!

The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest pride. Think big anyway. It comes with the territory!

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for some underdogs anyway. It comes with the territory!

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight Build anyway. It comes with the territory!

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you've got anyway! It comes with the territory!

When Jesus prepared his disciples for their mission he warned them to not discouraged but to go forward despite the hardships that would meet. The difficulties he seemed to say then and today, come with the territory.

Preachers, frustrated by disinterested masses who would rather watch a ball game than listen to the word, don't be surprised, preach anyway! It comes with the territory!

Choir directors struggling with complaining singers who don't want to rehearse, don't be surprised, direct anyway. It comes with the territory!

Sunday school teachers frustrated by apathetic students who rarely study their lessons, don't be surprised, teach anyway. It comes with the territory!

Mission leaders, don't be surprised if some in your mission are more interested in talking mission than doing service for others, serve others anyway, it comes with the territory!

Expect a little rainfall and every so often a storm, but behind every cloudy day a sun beam is born!

There might be a little frustration along the way, but it comes with the territory!

Victory Comes With The Territory

If all that came with the territory was an endless litany of frustrations, disappointments and persecutions, then one might conclude that this Christian life is not worth while. If all that came with the territory was doom and gloom, storm clouds and strong winds, then it working in the kingdom would be a useless venture.

There has to be something else that comes with the territory!

A beautician stands on her feet all day. She endures aching feet and legs and strains in her back because when its all over she's going to be paid, both aching feet and her fee, come with the territory!

The trash collector deals with foul smelling odors and unsanitary conditions every day because it comes with the territory, but when its all over, there is something

else that comes with the territory! He knows that payday is coming after while!

The plumber may crawl around the mud and slime repairing leaking pipes or sewerage lines, he doesn't complain because it comes with the territory. He knows that payday is coming after while.

Brothers and sisters don't get discouraged with the frustrations of Christian service they come with the territory!

You may try to love, but all you get is hate; it comes with the territory!

You may promote progress, but others want is regress; it comes with the territory!

You may try to build up, while others try to tear down, it comes with the territory!

You may try to bring peace, while others bring about confusion; it comes with the territory!

You may try to climb up while others try to bring you down; it comes with the territory!

There is something else that comes with the territory!

Revelation 2:7 *"..To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."* It comes with the territory!

Rev. 2:11 *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.* It comes with the territory!

Rev 2:26 *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:* It comes with the territory!

Rev 3:5 *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* It comes with the territory!

Rev 21:7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* It comes with the territory!

There can be no cross without a crown!

That's why Jesus said *"never the less, not my will but thy will be done"* because it comes with the territory!

Well Jesus they're saying *"Crucify Him"*, but that's all right because it comes with the territory!

They have put crown of thorns on your head and a purple robe on your shoulders ...that's all right because it comes with the territory!

The have spit in your face...I won't say a mumbling word because it comes with the territory!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning! He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

All power!

All power in his hands!

No. 578-Thanksgiving

Only One Said Thanks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 19, 1995

SCRIPTURE:And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Luke17:15-16

Introduction

Have you ever gone out of your way to help someone, then found they wouldn't even say thanks? There are many people who try to help others with no thought of pay or praise. These are people who help out when the car won't start, give rides to the market, or run errands for us whenever we ask. These people make up the invisible army of the compassionate who work daily to make life better and easier for others. Most of the time they accept no pay and rarely expect any compensation for what they do. However, most people do expect to receive a word of thanks from the people they help. Sometimes they get it. There are times when they get nothing. Some have never learned that you catch more flies with sugar. A word of thanks reaps tons of rewards

Everyone has something for which to be thankful. No matter how self sufficient a person is, he owes at least a part of his success to someone who helped along the way. We should have a spirit of gratitude toward those who help us, whether what they do is big or small. Aesop told us the tale of the mouse and lion. In this little story the mouse was captured by the lion and was spared when the mouse pledged to help the lion one day if given the chance. The lion, amused at the thought that a mouse could help him one day, decided to release the mouse anyway. Not soon after the lion was trapped in the hunter's net. He was wound up tight. He could not break free. However, just before the hunter came to get the lion the little mouse came along and returned the favor to the lion. He nibbled at the ropes with his sharp teeth until he was free. The lion did him a favor and the little mouse got a chance to say thanks in a way the lion understood.

Sometimes what we thank God for may seem silly to others. They do not know our situation or from whence we have come, so they wonder at the wisdom of our expressions of gratitude. Consider the little boy who had to stand in his school class at Thanksgiving time and tell the reason he planned to give thanks. He listened as others gave thanks for fine clothes, money and big houses in which to live. He didn't

have any of that, but he knew what he would give thanks for. When his turn came, the little boy told the class "I want to thank God for my eyeglasses." The class roared with laughter, especially since the glasses were about an inch think and detracted immensely from his appearance. The boy was not bothered by the laughter. He said, "I thank God for my glasses because when I'm wearing them the big boys won't fight me and the girls won't kiss me. Thank you Lord for my glasses." Everybody has something for which to give thanks.

The question in life is not so much whether we have been blessed with something for which we should be grateful, but rather or not we will express gratitude to our friends and family and to God for his goodness and mercy.

As Christians we make it our business to give thanks continuously to God. We do so because his great and his mercy endureth forever.

Exposition

This text focuses on an expression of gratitude which was given to Jesus by one of 10 men that he healed of a crippling disease.

The men were among a group of men who were crippled by the disease of leprosy. The group was composed of both Jews and Samaritans, who were normally segregated from each other by Jewish custom. However, since they all had leprosy, all shared the same treatment by the general community.

Leprosy is a generic term applied to a variety of skin disorders in biblical times. Its symptoms ranged from white patches on the skin to running sores to the loss of digits on the fingers and toes. For the Hebrews it was a dreaded malady which rendered its victims ceremonially unclean—that is, unfit to worship God (Lev. 13:3). Anyone who came in contact with a leper was also considered unclean. Therefore, lepers were isolated from the rest of the community so that the members of the community could maintain their status as worshipers.

Jesus did not consider this distinction between clean and unclean valid. A person's outward condition did not make one unclean; rather that which proceeds from the heart determines one's standing before God. Therefore, Jesus did not hesitate about touching lepers and even commanded His disciples to cleanse lepers.

When Jesus decided to socially mix with Lepers he made a statement about the nature of the kingdom. When he decided to heal 10 of them of their leprosy, that made an even bigger statement.

Once the ten men had been healed they left shouting and rejoicing.

Their lives had been changed.

Cured of leprosy they would be able to enjoy life fully.

They left with great excitement.

They all forgot about the man who healed them and changed their lives forever. However, as they left one of the ten, a samaritan, returned and gave thanks to Jesus.

All of the men were healed but only one returned to give thanks.

Ingratitude

Today, there are many people who have been blessed immensely by God, but are very ungrateful for his blessings. At first suggestion that ingratitude is possible among those who have been richly blessed our response is, such a thing is unbelievable. In reality however, there are many who show God on a daily basis that they do not appreciate his benevolence toward them. We show ingratitude by:

DISOBEDIENCE: The most obvious way that we show ingratitude to God is through disobedience to his commands. We have been commanded to refrain from supporting or being a participant of ungodliness. Despite God's command to us, many of us have chosen to do so anyway. Israel, once into the promised land, disobeyed God constantly. When it was economically or politically expedient they worshipped Baal, constructed idols and participated in a wide variety of activities that pushed them further away from God. God blessed them even during their ungodliness. They took his compassion and benevolent spirit for granted and did what they wanted to do.

There are many of us, even today, that have assumed the same attitude. While we have not chosen to erect statues or altars to false gods, like Israel, we have nevertheless decided to be disobedient, especially if economic, social or political involvements suggest that we could profit from our disobedience.

Disobeying God while he is blessing us is the epitome of ingratitude.

SHUNNING HIM: Another way we show ingratitude to God is by withdrawing from his presence. When opportunities are given for us to be in God's presence we ignore them and generally refuse to participate. This is best shown by those who refuse to attend or participate in Sunday School, worship services, praise services or any other service in which God would be lifted up and praised. It is an indirect way of saying that they want the blessings but would prefer not to be in the presence of the one who provides the blessings.

Consider the pigs who enjoyed eating apples that were on the ground every day. They constantly ate apples and gobbled them down without a thought. Each day they came to their favorite spot, the apples were always on the ground. One day the animals had a meeting and many complained about the abundance of trees in their part of the farm. The pigs joined the conversation, voicing their disapproval of the trees that took up so much space that they hardly had room to wallow in the mud. After a lengthy discussion the animals voted to chop down the trees and assigned the pigs to do the job.

As the pigs were chopping they kept their eyes on the trunk of the trees. Soon they all fell one by one and the other animals dragged them away. The next day, when the pigs came to eat apples from the ground, the noticed that they were all gone. In their haste to gobble up the apples they never stopped to consider where they came from. The apples were gone because the trees were gone. They had chopped down their sources of their blessings.

Many today never stop to consider where their blessings come from. They

refuse to study their bibles, attend worship, hear the gospel preached or pray. By doing so they show ingratitude to God and "chop down their tree."

Like the nine lepers who received blessings from Jesus who never stopped to look at the source of their hearings, too many people are receiving without saying thank you!

MURMURING: Some show ingratitude by murmuring about what they have while complaining about what they don't have. These are those who receive blessings from God and complain because its either not enough, too big or too small. While Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years they were fed manna from heaven with a sufficient supply of meat. Even as Israel was picking up the manna every day, there were many who were complaining. They complained because it only came six days a week. They complained because it was just manna and did not have any meat. When they had meat and bread they complained that they didn't have any water. They constantly complained, regardless to how God provided for them.

In a similar sense many today complain regardless to God's bountiful blessings toward us. Constant murmuring and complaining is a sign of ingratitude. It indicates that we are not happy with what God has done. We treat him as if we are doing him a favor by receiving his blessings.

When God has given us his sweetness, we give him bitterness!

When God has given us his love, we give him our animosity!

When God has given us his concern, we give him our apathy!

Plenty Reason For Thanks!

Just like one of the lepers remembered that he had plenty to be thankful for, we need to remember that we have plenty to be thankful for!

We may not have millions of dollars, but we have millions blessings!

We thank the Lord for turning our:

—Midnights into days!

—Sorrows into joys!

—Doubts into confirmations!

We thank God for Jesus, who died for our sins and rose to give us the victory!

Thank you Lord, you've been so good to me!

No. 579-Revival

Whosoever Will Let Him Come

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 22, 1995

*SCRIPTURE: **And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Mark 8:34***

Introduction

Have you ever been ostracized? When you are ostracized you are disowned by others, shunned and rejected. Ostrascism is peculiarly cruel because it causes its victims to feel lonely, and hated and reflects the worst character traits of it perpetrators. When others around you ignore you and form friendship circles that exclude you, you are being ostracized. When very few pepole talk to you and few want to be associated with you publically, you are being ostracized. Those who ostracize others do so with the intention of hurting them. They enjoy a good laugh at the expense of others. Those who are victims are wounded and scarred because they desire to be accepted by others.

The need to be accepted is greatest among teen-agers. Many teens will go to any extent to keep from being ostracized by others. They want to wear the clothing that will be accepted. They want to wear their hair, and other ornaments in ways that will be accepted. In fact, one of the worse catastrophe's that can happen in a teen-ager's life is to be rejected. It is a fear that is so real among some teens that they will spend any amount of money or go to any length to avoid rejection.

Sometimes those who have great talents to offer never use them because they feel what they have to offer is not important. Consider the young man who was the waterboy for the college football team. He loved football, but he was small in statue although he was almost 20 years old. As a boy he'd watched his favorite heroes and then play "pretend" as he kicked drink cans along the street. One day the team was in the final minutes of a championship game. Its main players had been injured. Its relief players were also injured. The team found itself in a dilemma. It was short one player or it would have to forfeit the game. The coach suddenly got an idea. He called for the waterboy, put him in a uniform and told him to just stand on the field. There was a wild hike of the ball that somehow landed in the waterboys hands. With seconds left in the game, without thinking, the young man kicked that ball just as he had a thousand empty cans in the afternoon. It sailed 60 yards for a touch down and

victory. Afterwards the coach said, “Son, why haven’t you ever tried out for the team?” The young man said “Nobody ever asked.” The team members learned a lesson that day because everyone saw the crazy kid who loved to kick the can. He never played ball because they saw the waterboy, but couldn’t see the man!

There are many who are excluded from the best opportunities in life by those who falsely judge them superficial qualities. They are never given a chance to prove themselves and they remain excluded and ostracized.

As Christians we have the joy of knowing that while the world often ostracizes us, there is a loving God who sees more than the “waterboy.” When the world excludes us, we know that there is a God who loves the whole world, that includes us too!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of kingdom of God.

When Christ came he offered the opportunity of the kingdom exclusively to the Jews but it was rejected. That was the offer Israel rceived from heaven. They had enjoyed being God’s chosen people since God promised Abraham in Genesis 12 that future generations would be blessed because of his family. Since that time Israel enjoyed special attention from God. It has enjoyed special blessings as well as special punishments from God because of its “chosen” status.

The nation of Israel was an exclusive group. Divine favor was showered on it, often to the exclusion of others. There were times when Israel appeared to take advantage of its favored nation status as the people strayed to other beliefs and worshipped other Gods, feeling that nothing could really happen to them because they were God’s elect or chosen ones. Being God’s elect had its benefits. Under Moses it meant freedom from slavery and deliverance from a 40 year wilderness journey. Under the Joshua it meant success in securing the promised land. Under Saul and David it meant military success in defeating the nation’s enemies. Under Solomon it meant a reign of glory and splendor. Being an Israelite had its advantages, however, they suffered considerable dismay because of their favored status. God required complete obedience from them and when they strayed, the were often punished with subjection to other nations, military defeat and exile.

This history of being the favored ones of God made Christ’s use of the word “whosoever” peculiarly challenging. It appeared that Christ was broadening the membership of the kingdom of God to include people other than Jews. In the beginning he came to bring a message of hope only for the Jews. In Matthew 10:5-6 he ordered his disciples not to minister to Gentiles (non-Jews) or even to the Samaritans who were despised Jews, but only to the “lost sheep in the House of Israel.” In fact, Christ’s whole ministry was originally directed to the “lost sheep” who were Jews alone. However, in Matthew 22:1-10 he gave the parable of the marriage supper, an alusion to his offering the kingdom of God to Israel and being rejected by those who were invited. He then ordered his servants to go into the highways and

byways and invited any who would come to the feast.

In this passage, Jesus used the term *"whosoever"* repeatedly. It was not a reference to just Jews, but anyone of any race, nationality or persuasion who is willing to take on the burden of the cross can become a part of the kingdom of God. The objective of the kingdom of God is place the burden of being excluded upon each individual. If a person is excluded from the kingdom of God, it will not be a result of it being an elect group that rejects certain kinds of people, but just the opposite. The only people that will be excluded from the kingdom are those that exclude themselves by refusing to accept Christ.

Not only did Christ talk about the inclusive nature of the kingdom he demonstrated it often. When he chose to enter into Samaria and talked with a woman at the well, he defied tradition, which said he was not to have dealings with Samaritans because they were excluded. In John 4:9 the Samaritan woman was surprised that she was being approached by Christ she said, *"How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."* Not only Samaritans were included, but tax collectors, poor people, prostitutes, publicans and a large variety of people generally characterized a sinners were included as he ate with them and broke every traditional rule regarding associating with them.

"Whosever", therefore, meant anyone, of any race, nationality or persuasion welcome to join the kingdom of God. It is no longer an exclusive club for Jews only, but is now open to the world.

Being Excluded Is No Fun!

If there is anything that makes being a teenager difficult it is being excluded from the group. Desiring to belong is a natural tendency that is not uniquie to youth, adults also want to belong. Youth are more sensitive to being excluded than adults in some areas, especially those who are experiencing their Jr. High and High School years. No one wants to be on the outside.

Sometimes young people will accept mediocrity, just to belong. For fear of being called "nerds" some intentionally perform less than their ability in schools. Nerds make A's. Nerds study. Nerds read books. The honor rolls are filled with Nerd names. Nerds are shunned by the other students, because they demonstrate what every student could do if they applied themselves. While nerds perform well scholastically, those who are under achievers exclude them from the group. Nerds become the object of jokes. Nerds are unpopular and are often ostracized. Some youth go out of their way to appear acceptable to their peers. Some have intentionally performed less than their best just to be accepted. A "B" or a "C" student is accepted more than the "A" student so some intentionally do less, to be accepted. However, no young person should ever be happy with anything less than the best, just to be a member of a certain school group.

Patterns of dress and behavior are sometimes tailored to belong. What youth

wear and how they act is often designed to win the favor of the "in" crowd among their peers. Many youth judge their self worth by their ability to dress according to the standards of the "in" crowd. The "in" crowd says "Tommy Hillfiger" or "Gibard" or "Guess" is the standard, thus youth feel worthless if they wear perfectly good clothing that does not bear the acceptable brand names. Those who cannot meet the standard of the "in" crowd are excluded and become the brunt of jokes and teasing, which is tantamount to being condemned to hell in the youth world.

Morever, the standards of dress dictated by the "in" crowd are acceptable among youth. Sloppy attire and a generally untidy appearance is acceptable. Pants without belts, and sagging trousers that hang below the waist are seeen as a standard. Many youth, afraid of being different, dred wearing a dress and boys dred even the thought of wearing their shirtails in their pants. Those who appear too neat will be singled out and ostracized.

Even those who choose to obey the rules have a hard time. Those who refuse to endorse dirty jokes, engage is sexually explicit conversation, or break the rules are usually excluded . All of this makes life tremendously difficult for modern youth.

What youth need from their parents, even though they may reject it at the time, is a guiding hand that will lead them through the maze of pressure that comes with adolescence. They need parents who work to build their self esteem at home, making it unnecessary to depend upon the "in" crowd for support. They need parents who will help them take the middle road in dress and the high road in scholarship and decorum rewarding them along the way.

Youth need to belong to church and youth groups that encourage them to perform well, and strive for excellence. Somehow the church must say to struggling young Christians that while they are diffferent from their peers they are not worse, but wiser and more disciplined. Christian youth must remember the truths of two biblical texts: Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." The second text is: 1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" Both of these passages point out that God is expecting youth not to conform to whatever one else is doing, but to elevate their minds to higher goals. Christian you are already a part of a special in crowd, a chosen generation. If pressed to make a choice between doing that which is pleasing to God and what is pleasing to the crowds at school, Christian youth choose to please God, even if it means displeasing their friends.

The Christian youth's desire is not to be included in the world's "in crowd" but to make sure they are doing what God wants them to do.

Whosoever Will

The good news is that while the world may exclude Christian youth from its circles and call them names, Christ includes them in his kingdom and calls them children of

the king.

When Christ said whosoever will, he extended an invitation to both the young and the old, Black and white, Jew and Gentile to come and to follow him and be a part of the *"in"* crowd.

The world may exclude but savior includes. When Jesus said "whosover will" he included me!

The world may say "members only", but when Jesus said *"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* Mark 8:34 he included me!

The world offers bread and water, but excludes those who can't pay; but when Jesus said in John 6:35 " I am the bre*ad of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."* He included me!

When Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* He included me!

I'm so glad to know that when I read John 3:16 that says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" I'm glad to know he included me!

I'm glad to know that when Jesus died on Calvary for forgiveness of sin that he included me!

I'm glad to know that when he said in John 14:2-3 *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* I'm glad he included me!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house, there is peace!

In my father's house, there is joy, joy, joy!

No. 580-Revival

Switching Families!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
At Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 5, 1995

*SCRIPTURE:**But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:4-7***

Introduction

How would you rate your family on a scale of one to ten? Is it everything you would like for it to be? If given the opportunity would you switch? Very few families have the perfect combination. While most people admit that their families are not what they would like them to be, few would be willing to trade them for another. Those who complain about their families, should consider the alternative, which is to have no family at all.

As times change the picture of the ideal family also changes. The social factors impacting families are staggering. Russell Chandler in his book *"Racing Toward 2001"* notes that by the year 2001: a) More than half of all children will spend part of their lives in single parent families b) By 2010 one in three married couples will have a step child or an adopted child c) As moral standards decline, more children will be wards of the state after being abuse, abandoned or neglected by immature parents. Even more staggering are the realities that as the African-American extended family disintegrates, the pool of African-American children up for adoption will continue to increase at astronomical rates to the point that while African-Americans are less than 20 percent of the American population they will comprise more than 60 percent of children looking for a home. As more children stand outside of the nuclear family waiting to get in, the need for a higher consciousness among our people is extremely important.

Many children live in good houses. But it takes more than a house to make a home. Many are orphans within their own families as the live in comfort but are starved for that the one essential ingredient that creates a family and that is love. An orphan boy ran away from the children's home and decided to find himself the family. He had often dreamed of belonging to the "perfect" family, but no one ever seemed to select him despite his best efforts to impress them during interviews and visits. He came to a fine house, with beautiful furnishings and landscape. As he peeped in the

windows he saw the husband and wife screaming at each other, slamming doors and throwing things. A while later he saw another couple that looked friendly. When he rang the door bell he asked, "Can I come and live with you?" They thought he was cute, fed him like a stray cat, but then called the authorities. He slipped away before he was found and wandered from house to house. Finally he stumbled upon a little house on the other side of the track. It was not beautiful and was in need of repair. He saw a widow woman sitting on a sofa with 12 children laughing and smiling all around her. He rang the doorbell and the woman embraced him like he was her own son. She washed his face and sat him on the sofa with the other 12. Immediately he recognized the others. They all had been at the orphanage with him. "You ran away too huh?" Asked the woman. The boy nodded. "I'm looking for a home!" The woman explained that she had adopted all 12 children. "Just like you, they came here looking for a home. If you don't mind living with a widow woman, I don't mind sharing my house, but only the love of God can make this a home." With that the little boy soon became the newest member of the family of the old widow woman who said "God, I'll keep the house, if you'll turn it into a home." There are many today who are working to buy houses, but won't allow God to build them a home free of charge.

As Christians, we rejoice to be a part of the family of God. We were born into the spirit of sin and death. However, thanks to Christ we have been reborn and adopted into the family of God as heirs to his kingdom. How would we rate our new adopted family in Christ? We wouldn't trade it for anything that the world has to offer!

Exposition

This text finds Paul trying to explain to the Galatians the relationship each believer has with God as "adopted" sons and daughters of God.

Paul addressed a tendency of the Galatians and other new Christians to embrace Christianity while at the same time embracing the law of Moses. They felt they could operate under the freedom that the cross provided while at the same time continuing to observe the rituals of the Old Mosaic law. The essence of Paul's discourse was to help them to see that by being Christian that Christ had freed them from seeking favor with God through rituals and ceremonies. The rewards offered to the children of God were not predicated on ritual and ceremony but on faith.

Thus in this text Paul says Christ came in the "fulness of time" and died to save or "redeem" us from the necessity of alignment with the law. Through him, any that believe can be adopted into the family of God and become full heirs to all of his benefits without an allegiance to a ritual. He compared the Christian's relationship to the Mosaic law to that of a child who is the heir to a kingdom. Until the child reaches the age prescribed by the parent, Paul said, he is little more than a slave or servant subject to all of the instructions and rules given by tutors and instructors (4:2). He has to do as he is told even though he is heir to his father's fortune because his time hasn't come. However, when the time comes, he is no longer under the authority of the rigid rules of his tutors.

When Christ came to earth, died on the cross and rose from the dead, he ushered

in a new period where all who follow him are immediately adopted into the family of God becoming heirs to the kingdom. Any person who accepts Christ as his Lord and savior is instantly adopted into the family of God. He or she instantly becomes a son or daughter of God (4:5). God's spirit enters each believers life and they become a child of the king (4:6 "*God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts*). This same idea was emphasized in John 1:12, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*" As sons of God each is a full heir and is thus, freed from the need to observe the ritualism of the law to gain the respect of God. Believers are heirs to the kingdom of God because they have been adopted into the family of God.

Worldly Family

In a spiritual context, there are generally two kinds of families. There is a worldly family and Godly family. By our very nature we are born into a worldly family. It is rooted in selfishness, greed, lust and a long list of self oriented descriptions that promote a sinful agenda in the name of individual freedom.

However, many are spiritual orphans, abandoned by their worldly spiritual family as they search for real home. Many have become orphans in a variety of ways.

Neglect: There are some who have found that the world has not provided the joys and excitement that was promised. They have tried to clubs, bars, saloons and juke joints on too many occasions only to find that they are still missing fulfillment. No matter how much they dance they are still not happy. No matter how many parties they attend, they never seem to really find the key to what they seek. Often they find themselves alone, feeling neglected and abandoned by a world that made them many promises.

Abuse: There are some that have been completely used and abused by the world. Alcohol and drugs have chained them to a destiny that left them in poor health and with little hope. An increasing number of young adults are falling victim to drug abuse. While the name seems to suggest that they are inflicting injury on the drug by abusing it, in actually the drugs are abusing them, inflicting a cruel penalty upon their families and relations.

Abandonment: There are some that have simply been abandoned by the world. These are those who have given the world their best efforts, talent, time and resources only to find themselves abandoned as they fell between the cracks of life. These are the lonely, the broken hearted, and confused. They gave the world their best shot but found themselves on the doorstep of destiny as an unwanted orphan. These are those who reacted to their primal survival instincts. They stole. They killed. They reacted the way the social order conditioned them. They have been locked away in prisons, jails and institutions and the world has dismissed them as incorrigible and unsalvagable and has thrown away the key.

Today there are many who smile on the outside but on the inside they sing the sorrowful words of the old Negro Spiritual, "*Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,*

a long ways from home. A long ways from home."

Indeed, for these who feel abandoned they are a long ways from home!

Switching Families

For those who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected by this world there is good news! The good news is that anyone who is unhappy with his spiritual family can switch families. Those who accept Christ can be adopted in the family of God.

When a child is adopted into a family, all ties that bind him to his old family are cut and he becomes essentially a member of a brand new family. That's what 2 Corinthians 5:17 meant by, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* I heard the song writer declare: "I moved from my house, I moved to my new house, I changed my old way of life. Thank God I moved to a brand new life!"

When a child is adopted he also has a new relationship with those who adopt him. His name changes. The rules of the house change. He lives within the context of the freedoms that his new family provides. Likewise, those who accept Christ enjoy a new relationship with God. Revelation 3:12 finds Jesus saying "I will write upon him, my new name." When a man accepts Christ the Saints begin to sing "There's a new name written down in glory and its mine, mine, mine!"

While there are many comparisons that can be made between adopting a child and the love of God there is one comparison that cannot be made. A Family that adopts a child, looks at all of the children that are available and chooses one that touches its heart. They take one or two children home, and they leave the rest, because these touched their heart.

That's what happened when Pharaoh's daughter saw Moses drifting on the Nile in a basket. Though there were thousands of children dying, one touched her heart and she took him.

That's also what happened when Mordecai looked down on little Esther and found her to be so "fair and beautiful" that she touched his heart and took her in as his own daughter!

But when God looked out on his creation, he saw a world that was filled with suffering souls, trying to find their way back home.

When God looked at the world, he didn't pick just one soul! The word of God tells me that *"..God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life!"*

No wonder the song writer declared: *"I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore! Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry! From the waters lifted me, now safe am I."*

I'm so glad that when the world abandoned me, that the Lord gave me a brand new home!

I'm so glad that when the world gave me burdens, that Jesus said, "come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give your rest!"

I'm so glad that when the world knocked me down that Jesus picked me up! Everyday I'm singing "I'm so glad that Jesus lifted me! Singing glory, glory hallelujah, Jesus lifted me!"

I'm so glad that in the fulness of time that Jesus came down on this old earth!

I'm glad that he died on Calvary!

I'm glad that he rose after three days!

The reason I'm glad he adopted me is because when one is adopted he becomes an heir to everything in his father's house!

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof!

In my father's house are many mansions!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 581- Anniv.- Deaconess

Up Popped The Devil!

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Light Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 15, 1995

SCRIPTURE: Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves tile LORD, aud Satan came also among them. Job 1:6; "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh but against principalities, against powers, against tile rules of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God. that ye may be able to withstand in that day; having done a1l, to stand. Ephesians 6:11-19.

Introduction

Have you ever had occasions when everything was going right then suddenly everything started going wrong? Do you ever get the feeling that despite your best intentions that calamity, trouble and confusion enters into even the most prayerful activities? Those are times when everyone is on one accord until the devil shows up. This marks the time when the operation is running smoothly, then up pops the devil. Sometimes he comes as a person. Sometimes he comes as an evil idea. Sometimes he comes as a serious destructive action. Sometimes he comes disguised as temptations. Whenever he comes and however he comes, life can be miserable for the saints when the devil decides to pop up!

As Saints we are constantly on guard against evil. While the devil has influenced many men to undertake ungodly activities, he has also influenced many women. Some of the best saints have been spiritually destroyed as Satan popped up at a weak moment in their lives. Many marriages and families have been ruined after Satan popped up. Even churches have had difficulties when Satan popped up among the women.

One of the chief roles of deaconess of the church is to assist the pastor in ministering to the women of the congregation, arming them with spiritual strength and fraternal support such that they can be aware of the many ways which Satan uses to try to destroy them. The deaconess, as female deacons of the church, have a unique ministry among the women which includes lifting up the Lord in worship, and helping fight Satan as he attempts to enter into the lives of the women of the congregation. It is a unique ministry that only women can undertake. No one knows how Satan enters into the lives of women like women. Therefore they work as equal partners beside the male deacons to help prepare the entire congregation to stand for God while resisting Satan at the same time.

As Christians we are always aware that Satan is busy. Therefore we work to build up the congregation of God by preparing them for the day that Satan visits them personally as an uninvited visitor in their individual lives, marriages and spiritual relationships.

Exposition

This text finds Paul writing to the church at Ephesus encouraging its members to prepare themselves to withstand the works of evil that may come upon them.

In the early church believers were persecuted for their faith in Christ. The members were assaulted, killed for sport and otherwise ostracized for their belief in Jesus. Each person was encouraged to be sure in the faith and arm themselves with the power of God to withstand the evil attempts of the devil to destroy them.

Paul wanted to be sure that the Ephesians knew the nature of the evil one and how easy he could plunge himself into their affairs. To insure that they were not deceived, Paul reminded them that the evil one was not a, flesh and blood person, but was spiritual in nature. As such he could influence individuals, powers, and the very governments that operate the nation thus they were to constantly be on guard.

They were encouraged to put on the whole armour of God and then be prepared to withstand the evil one's influence.

Initially, the bishops were responsible for preparing. Later, they were assisted by a group of men and women referred to in the Greek as Diakonos which meant: minister, deacon or servant. Translators of the King James version carefully selected the word *"servant"* each time *"Diakonos"* referred to a woman but chose deacon or minister each time the same word applied to a man. Thus in Romans 16:1 the text reads *"I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:"* While Philippians 1:1 refers to Bishops and Diaknos, but it is translated deacon. The implication of the choice of words supported the belief, in the time of King James, that women were less important than men, it was a socially acceptable translation. However, the original Greek used the same word *"Diaknos"* to refer to both men and women indicating that the only difference between the two is that one is a male and the other is a female.

The message of warning given by Paul was taught by the bishops and deacons (male and female). That message was clear: Be on Guard to protect yourselves from the tricks of the devil for he is subject to appear without notice even among the saints of God.

Individually, Devils Pop Up!

The deaconess, as she ministers to female members of the body of Christ, must work to help them understand that Satan is waiting for an opportunity to pop up in her life! Therefore, she prays with and works with other Saints that they might be aware of certain habits or activities that invite the devil to pop up.

Deaconess teach the female members of the church how to develop a prayer life. It is said that an apple a day keeps the doctor away. It is also true that a prayer a day keeps the devil away! Thus, the deaconess, by her own personal example, is a praying woman because without prayer her own Life falls apart. When a woman begins a day without prayer . Up pops the devil!

She teaches women in the congregation about moderation in their dress. Sexy dresses are designed to accentuate a woman's positives and attract attention to various ways that God has blessed her physically. Well endowed women who choose to display their endowments invite the devil's attention. 1 Timothy 2:9 suggest that women should modest in their apparel, displaying sobriety in their choices of clothing and jewelry. When a woman leaves home dressed to be socially attractive.. up pops the devil!

In Marriage, Devils Pop Up!

A peculiar role of deaconess as they minister to females is the role of marriage counselor. The deaconess teaches the married women ways to avoid Satan popping up in marriage. Many women have become weak in their service to the church because the devil has popped up in their marriages and they have become dispirited. The deaconess helps every woman protect her marriage by showing her the importance of loving her husband and being loveable herself.

By example the deaconess shows other women how to be a Christian wife. While being an equal partner in her marriage, the deaconess shows her how to respect the leadership of her husband because he symbolizes the relationship of Christ to the church. While male deacons teach the men to love their wives like Christ loved the church, the deaconess teaches the women the essence of Ephesians 5:24 *"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."* When a husband and wife dispute about the direction of their family they are obviously being inconsistent to the word. When that happens ..up pops the devil!

The deaconess as she ministers to the women of the church shows them the importance of Christian parenting. She teaches young mothers the benefit of her experience in nurturing the young. She reminds them that word of God says: *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'* (Proverbs 22:6) Thus, at home the Christian mother teaches her child the importance of being polite, neat, studious and mannerable. In addition she teaches her child to obey God regardless of the cost. When a woman neglects to teach godliness to her children, .. . up pops the devil!

Moreover she also warns every wife to heed the Word of God as it relates to sexual matters avoiding long periods of abstinence, because such long periods give opportunity for the devil to pop up. 1 Corinthians 7:5 puts it this way: *"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to lasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your*

incontinency." When a marriage partner decides for whatever reason, to retire from marital intimacies... up pops the devil!

Up Pops The Devil

The deaconess also teaches women be on guard for the devil in their daily affairs. On the job, in the community or even in company of friends and family the devil looks for a chance to pop up!

Women are taught to prepare to withstand the evil day when Satan will stick his hand into their affairs and make things miserable.

While much of what has been said has been addressed to women by virtue of the occasion, we must not leave with the notion that the Devil only pops up in women's affairs. He will pop up anywhere he is given an opportunity.

No matter where you go or what you do the devil is sure to come!

Eve enjoyed the beauty of the Garden of Eden. Her life was free of any entanglements, troubles or problems. Every day was beautiful and her home was a paradise. Then one day she walked through the garden, and up pops the devil!

The Angels were meeting in heaven, discussing the glories of God's creation and according to Job 1:6 out of nowhere, up pops the devil!

Mrs. Job was happy. Her children were safe and her husband was prosperous and in good health. Then suddenly, out of nowhere . . up pops the devil! Death came in the family, the finances were shattered and Mr. Job broke out in boils and sores.

In the millenial kingdom, for lOOOyears people will enjoy the Savior's reign. There will be peace and perfect world government. But when the 1000 years has ended, up pops the devil who causes bitterness, war and the destruction of millions! No matter where you go the devil will be there! He comes to church on Sunday. He arrives in Fords and General Motors, German and Japanese made automobiles. He never misses a Sunday because if his ride doesn't come, he'll hitch hike a ride with someone else. No wonder the song writer said: "Don't let the devil ride. if you let him ride, he'll want to drive, don't let him ride."

If you are having a peaceful meeting and everything is going smooth, it won't be long before "Up Pops the devil!"

If you are involved in a project that is going exceedingly well, don't get over confident, it won't be long before "Up Pops the devil!"

Everywhere a saint goes the devil wants to go too.

John said he looked in the distant future and saw the general day of judgment when Saints were lining up to receive their rewards. He said he saw an amazing sight, the devil, the great deceiver, popped up his head one last time.

John said when the devil pops of from his dungeon and tries to poke his nose in the Saint's affairs in that day that he'll be in for a surprise. Revelation 20:10 says *"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. "*

When the saints get to the kingdom it'll be the first time we'll get together without wondering when the devil will Pop up! Over yonder the devil won't pop up and give Us:

—Lust disguised as love; Laughter disguised as joy.
—Nosiness disguised as Concern; Gossip disguised as information
—Lies disguised as truth; Excuses disguised as reasons
-Filthiness disguised as fun; sin disguised as innocence
Over yonder! The wicked will cease from troubling! The weary will be at rest!
Every day will be Sunday! It'll always be howdy and never good bye!
Until that day comes, keep telling the story!
Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Tell them haw he arose and is alive today!
Tell them!
Tell them!
Tell them about Jesus!

S

No. 582-Inspiration

My Soul Shall Be Satisfied

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 12, 1995

SCRIPTURE"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:" Psalm 63:5

Introduction

Has there ever been a time in your life when you just didn't feel like it? You know you should have, but you just couldn't or wouldn't. There are times when even the best of us get dispirited. We know we should go, but we stay. We know we should speak ,but we remain silent. We know we should act, but we take no action. Usually we don't "feel like it" in times of distress, strain or worry. Such circumstances rob us of our enthusiasm and spirit and even at our best we can only offer lackluster appearances.

Sometimes opportunities come when we don't feel like it and we miss them. A job is offered but we don't feel like going to apply. A chance for success may be missed if it comes when we "don't feel like it." Consider three young men who stood on the corner waiting for the girl of their dreams to pass by. The first saw a beautiful woman and married her. For several years there were only two men left standing on the corner until the second also found a beautiful mate. For many years the third man stood on the corner by himself. A pretty woman winked at his broad shoulders and full head of hair, but he didn't feel like it. As time passed another winked his cute graying mustache and temple, but he didn't feel like it. Many years later another was attracted to his balding head and glassy glaze as he sat on the park bench. Even then he didn't feel like it. Finally, a pretty woman winked at him and said words of praise for his shiny new walker. That was it. She was the one. When he finally did feel like it, he struggled to his feet and sat back down. His nurse asked him to explain the matter and he said, " For years I didn't feel like it. When I finally did feel like it, and feel how I felt, I felt like I should sit back down, and stop waiting to feel like it!" Opportunities come, but they won't always come when we feel like it!

There are times when the pressures of the world get next to even the strongest believer. When going through the wilderness of family problems and personal stress they reach a point where they just don't feel like it. Some who are usually upbeat and high spirited take low profiles. They just don't feel like it. Some who usually praise God from the mountain tops get deathly quiet. They just don't feel like it. Some

Sundays they may miss a worship service because they just don't feel like it! They don't sing, because they don't feel like it!

As Christians, we should never reach a point where we don't feel like serving or praising God. Even in our wilderness moments God stands beside us to protect and guide us. We should praise him on the mountain top and praise him in the wilderness. Always remembering that the day he carried the cross for us, he didn't feel like it either, but he did it anyway!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expresses his yearning to return to the presence of God.

The words of this text reflect a point in David's life, before he was King of Israel, while he was yet a wanderer and vagabond. King Saul hunted him as a criminal because of a jealous rage and fear that David's popularity would one day catapult him to the throne.

The background of events that prompted this text is found in 1 Samuel 22 and 23. These chapters detail David, with a small band of 600 friends, attacking Philistines and defeating the enemies of Israel while at the same time hiding from Saul's armies. He is said to have been hiding in the wilderness during this time.

David was in a wilderness in the promised land. 1 Samuel 22 and 23 records David as hiding in Hareth (1 Samuel 22:5). Here, the term wilderness referred to the thick forests of the region. It was not a wilderness because it was dry, desolate or uninhabitable, but because it was removed, and hidden. When David attacked Philistine armies he was in Ziph, which is in the Judean hill country. It too was described as a wilderness, in a broad sense, because the area lacked access to the finer conveniences available at the time.

The fact that David's hiding in the forests of Hareth or in the caves of Ziph are described as wilderness experiences, suggests that a wilderness is defined not so much by its locality as it is defined by the actuality of the experience.

The wilderness is a circumstance in which one is removed from that which sustains him.

The wilderness is a situation in which in which difficulties persist and life is threatened.

Both these definitions apply to David's circumstance. He had been removed from the sanctuary of God, where he worshipped freely. He thirsted for a renewal of that privilege. Moreover, he was being persecuted by King Saul and his very life was threatened on a daily basis. Though surrounded with food, friends, and fellowship, he was in a wilderness.

Yet, in the wilderness, David found satisfaction in the Lord. Though he was in the wilderness he sought God daily, called upon him and praised him. In circumstances he could easily have dismissed as reason to abandon the faith, David resolved "my soul shall be satisfied." Though he yearned for a time when circum-

stances would be better David said "my soul shall be satisfied." David said despite his wilderness circumstance he would praise God "as with marrow and fatness" or the same as I would if I were in a better circumstance enjoying the good times.

David's response is exemplary because it is not the expected response to a wilderness circumstance. Israel, in the wilderness, complained constantly. The people complained about lost conveniences, the quality of their food, the length of the journey and the quality of their leaders. Very little is said about their praise of God while they were in the wilderness. Plenty is said about grumblings. Later in their history, while exiled in Babylon, they were in another wilderness experience. There the worship stopped and they even found it difficult to sing Zion's songs because they were "in a strange land." Much is said about Israel's Lamentations and mournings about being exiled. Very little is said about their praise of God during their exile. David's practice of praising God even while he was in the wilderness is an tribute to his faith in the power of God.

Despite the wilderness, David resolved "my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." He resolved to rejoice because each time he reflects on his life he remembers how God has helped him in times past.

David found satisfaction in the wilderness because he knew that wherever his journeys took him he would be under the shadow of God's protective hand. In verse 7 he says "in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

David's resolve should be an inspiration to every believer: "Even in the wilderness, I shall be satisfied."

In the wilderness

Today, like David, there are many who are encountering wilderness situations. We are in a wilderness when we are removed from that which sustains us, or brings us peace, joy and fulfillment. We are also in a wilderness when we are attacked, betrayed or persecuted by adversarial circumstances. The exact definition of the "wilderness" will vary from person to person, but if each is not careful, they may find themselves victims of "I don't feel like it-itis" as they deal with their wilderness experience.

While there are some new teachings that suggest that believers will have no wilderness experiences as long as they do right, the fact is every believer will have at least one wilderness experience in the course of a lifetime. David, was a man after God's own heart, yet he found himself constantly in the wilderness of persecution and separation from God. He even wandered into the wilderness of temptation. Job endured the wilderness of misfortune.

After Mt. Carmel, Elijah fled into the wilderness for fear for his life.

John the Baptist's entire ministry was in the wilderness.

Moses was tried in the Wilderness, and Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.

The question is not whether we will have a wilderness experience, but rather, what shall we do when we find ourselves in the wilderness?

Shall we complain and grumble against God as Israel did?

When we suddenly find ourselves in a financial wilderness shall we grumble against God?

When trouble seems to surround your family and one bad thing seems to happen after another, is that grumbling time?

When health problems invade your family circle, is that grumbling time? Is love life strained to the limit? Is that grumbling time?

While these certainly suggest a wilderness, they don't suggest that it's grumbling time. David suggested that we should remember that a believer is always in the shadow of God's hand, regardless of the situation.

When wilderness experiences get you down : "pray your way up, and praise your way out!"

Look at David. When caught in the wilderness of temptation and knocked down by adultery he cried out: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."* Psalm 51:10. When he was down, David looked up in prayer. In Psalm 121 he said *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and earth."* When knocked down by life's cruelties pray to God for forgiveness and power to overcome. Pray for power to withstand the trials of wilderness and to overcome the evils that seek to devour you. Pray your way up!

Once on your feet, praise your way out! Many of the Psalms were written by David while he was in the wilderness. They were written while he was running, dodging, being persecuted. A key word of all his 150 psalms is "praise" which is used 160 times. When we read the psalms we can see David Praising his way out!:

Psalm 9:1 "*..I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works."*

Psalm 22:22 "22 *"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."*

Psalm 150: 6 *"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."*

When we are in the wilderness we can't grumble our way out we must praise our way out!

My Soul Shall Be Satisfied

We should pay special attention when David says "my soul shall be satisfied."

Why should we be satisfied in the midst of the wilderness? To be satisfied means:

_To have our needs met. We should be satisfied because despite our wilderness God continues to meet our needs. Philippians 4:19 makes it clear, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

_To be free of doubt. Despite the wilderness of the moment we are assured that the promises of God will be fulfilled. 2 Peter 3:9 *"The Lord is not slack concerning*

his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

No wonder the song writer declared: Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of his spirit. Washed in his blood!"

_To feel that what you have is sufficient. Despite the circumstance. Every believer shares Paul's testimony in 2:Corinthians 12: 9 *"..My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* Grace makes it easy to be satisfied. In verse 10 Paul elaborates: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

In the wilderness of life every believer should be able to say like David, "my soul shall be satisfied!" Difficulties may rise, but my soul shall be satisfied!

-Thorns may line my path, but my soul shall be satisfied!

-Clouds may cloud my skies, but my soul shall be satisfied!

-Friends my sometimes betray me, but my soul shall be satisfied!

-My pockets may sometimes be empty, but my soul shall be satisfied!

What does it mean to be satisfied? Regardless of the discipline Jesus is the answer?

Ask Thurgood Marshall, the Supreme Court Judge, "What does it mean to satisfy?" He will answer, to satisfy is to meet the requirements of the law! We can be satisfied because we serve a savior who met the requirements of the law on our behalf and nailed it to the cross.

Ask Albert Eienstein, the great mathematician, "what does it mean to satisfy mathematically?" He would answer to satisfy the demands of an equal, whatever is done on one side of the equal sign must be done on the other. We cam be satisfied in the wilderness because what we see God doing for our neighbor, we know he'll do for me too. One song writer said "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others he'll do for you!"

Ask the bill collector, "what does it mean to satisfy a debt?" He will answer that to satisfy a debt it must be paid in full with an acceptable currency!

We should be satisfied because "He was wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

He paid the debt with the only acceptable currency, the blood of Calvary!

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, paid it all!

Jesus, who rose after three days and nights, paid it all!

Come what may, from day to day, as long as I have Jesus, It is well with my soul!

No. 583-Funeral

Consider the Lilies

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 13, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Matthew 6:28-30

Introduction

Have you ever received flowers as an expression of sentiment? Giving flowers to express a range of sentiments from joy to sadness is an age old custom in most parts of the world. Their beauty and fragile nature seem to suggest the mood of the moment. Those in love send flowers. Those who want to be in love, send flowers. Those who want to make up, send flowers. We send flowers to congratulate performers, celebrate victories and to mark special occasions. We also send flowers to express our grief. The flowers, in so many ways, often say what we are unable to articulate.

While sending flowers is a gesture of sentiment, those who send them must take pains to insure they send the right message. Consider the man whose friend enlarged his business. His sales had increased to the point that a larger warehouse and sales office were needed. Even though the move was a rather complicated and burdensome process, it was really a thing to be celebrated. For this reason, the man sent his friend some flowers on the day of his grand opening. The flowers, however, were poorly handled and the businessman received a bouquet that was intended for a funeral. It was accompanied with a card which said: "My deepest sympathy during this time of sorrow." When the man called his friend on the phone to wish him well, he was confronted with the error, "Why in the world," said the businessman, "did you send me these sympathy flowers?" The man went immediately to the florist to demand an explanation. The florist met him outside the shop and was obviously upset. "I am terribly sorry about the mixup with the flowers," he said, "but I hope you will be understanding. Your situation is not half as bad as the one down at the funeral home. The folks there received your flowers accompanied by the card which read: BEST WISHES IN YOUR NEW LOCATION."

Life, like a flower, is fragile and short. At the same time it is a thing of beauty, grace and dignity. We enjoy its beauty while it lasts. We spread its joy around for the few

fleeting moments that we grace this earth, expecting, any second, to be plucked and trimmed, to form a divine bouquet in the heavens.

As Christians, we know our heavenly father considers each of us as beautiful lilies of the field. He clothes us, cultivates us, waters us and harvests us, according to his divine will. We strive each day to shed as much beauty as we can, to as many people as we can, reflecting the love of God every day of our lives. He is the Rose of Sharon. We are the lilies of the field. With him, we make the world a more beautiful place to live and love.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of God's care for his people.

Jesus urged his followers to live by faith and to give of themselves to others. He urged them to spend less time providing for themselves and more in personal service. He reminded them that God provides for care of all his creation.

The fowls of the air were given as example in verse 26. They were depicted as neither sowing or reaping but receiving their daily provision.

At verse 28 Jesus compares believers to the lilies of the field. The Galilean landscape was often filled with wild Gladiolas which grew between the grain and formed a blanket of pink petals in the valleys. Gladiolas, while not lilies were generally described as such by common word usage. Christ's allusion to the lilies of the field was not restricted to what grew in Palestine, but went further, including all wild flowers of God's creation.

In suggesting that we "consider" the lilies, Christ challenges us to probe deeper into the nature of the lilies of the field to get a better understanding God's providence. In Proverbs 6:6 we are told to, *"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."* In Luke 12:24 we are told to, *"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap."*

Here we are being told to consider the lilies, which suggest that there are deeper meanings that what could be drawn from simply a simple "behold" such as we get from verse 26 about the fowls of the air. To "consider" means to look deeper into what you see in search of greater truths.

The phrase *"consider the lilies"* referred to a wide variety of flowers that were unique to Galilee. The lilies of the field, as opposed to water lilies represented a wide variety of God's creation on earth. They were common in nature, but yet they had a widespread beauty.

The lilies of the field had a variety of uses beyond just beauty. Some were used for medicines, spices and other uses each had a purpose in God's design of things.

God's care for the lilies was used as an example of his care for believers. The lilies are beautiful and plenteous, but God takes care of them.

Just as the lilies of the field are the object of God's love and care, so is the life of every believer.

Just lilies

Today, each believer can draw understanding, encouragement and hope from Christ's characterization of our lives as similar to the lilies of the field.

Believers are of all types and sizes and have different purposes, all distinguished by a unique 'fruit of the spirit" that marks them as a peculiar people with a special purpose. Christ who participated in the creation of life, knew the nature of things. When he compared us to the lilies of the field it was no accident.

The Lily is a family of flowers composed of more than 250 genera and 4000 species of herb like plants with pretty flowers. Among the lilies that common usage categorizes as lilies are tulips, and daffodils. Christ knew something about the nature of people. Which is perhaps why he called us the lilies of the field, for included in the lily family are onions, garlic and chives.

In life we seem to meet all of the lilies of the field in the course of our journey. The tulip people amaze us as they stand tall straight and proud in the spring of the year. Their red bulbs satisfy us. Their straight stems remind us of the beauty of men and whom who stand firm for that which is right. They stand beside the Yellow Daffodil people. Their bright cheery colors remind us of the warmth and friendship of people who openly express the love of God.

Sometimes we meet Smilax people. Smilax is kind of lily from which we get sarsaparilla, a sweet flavored drink. These folk are kin to Lily of Valley. The lily of the valley is a kind of lily used to make perfume because of its sweet odor. It's good to meet Sarsaparilla people, the make like sweet for us. We cling to them because the bring us joy.

On occasion we meet the Saponins. Saponin is extract of the Soap lily. Native Americans use it to make detergents. Soap Lily people keep their eyes on us. They push us to clean up our act. Thank God for Soap Lily people, what would the world be without them.

We don't always meet the tulip and daffodil people in our journey. Sometimes we meet other members of the lily family including onion, and garlic people. These serve a useful purpose, they add flavor to any preparation, but sometimes they will make you cry.

When Jesus said consider the lilies of the field he referred to all of God's creation: The tulip people, the daffodil people, as well as the onion and garlic people. They all have a purpose and a place in God's creation.

A unique quality of lily people is their ability to adapt. Even if the climate is dry, lilies do well. While the world looks at their large bulbs as objects of beauty and praise, they are actually storage tanks. The lily stores food and water in its bulbs and stem when it is available, and uses it during dry seasons. They survive even in the driest of climates.

Lily people endure because they store the word of God in their hearts. In times of want they draw upon their storehouse of reserves and remember that *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."* In times of need they recall that, "my God shall

supply all your need, according to his purpose..." Lily people endure tough times by faith.

Lily people are everywhere. While some flowers grow only in some areas of the world, lilies grow everywhere. In the fields, the hillsides, valleys. Some types of lilies even grow among the thorns and thickets. Any place you turn God has some lily people, growing, working, serving adding beauty, flavor and a special touch to all they embrace.

In the church, God has some lily people. These are the ones who are willing to bring their special contribution to the arena of Christian service, carrying out their calling meticulously, sometimes anonymously, with painstaking care to detail. Lily people take church work seriously. They attend, contribute, study, work and do their part to build the kingdom of God

What would the world be, without lily people?

The Fate of Lilies

There is one final aspect of the lily that must be considered. That is its fate.

While it is true that lilies bring beauty, joy, love, seasoning and flavor to an otherwise ugly landscape, it must also be considered that lilies live a little bit at a time.

Lilies blossom and give beauty for a time and then they fade away. In fact, the life span of lilies is very short in comparison to other families of flowers. In verse 30 Jesus characterized the lily as *"grass of the field which today is"* and tomorrow is not. Psalm 90:5-6 puts it this way, *"Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."*

Those who know anything about lilies don't get worried when their blossoms are not seen. Because they know the nature of a lily.

When the bulb of the lily takes root deep enough, it won't matter if the blossom fades away!

When the bulb of the lily is deep enough, it won't matter if the weather gets a little chilly!

After a spell that same lily that first appeared dead and lifeless starts to bloom again because the life is in the bulb not in the blossoms.

No wonder Christ says consider the lilies for like the lilies a time will come when our blossoms will not be seen.

A time will come when we will not be able to share the beauty of our existence with our friends.

When that time comes those who are left behind should consider the lilies and remember that *"life is not in the blossoms but in bulb."* Life is not in this flesh and blood. Life is not in this body. Life is in the bulb!

John 11:26 *"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die..."*. The life is in the bulb!

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-Paul explained the same concept. The body is only the

blossom the spirit is the bulb. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

We who are lilies of the field understand this idea because we've been following a man that somebody called the Lily of the valley!

He lived and brought beauty to the world!

After a short while his blossoms were clipped and he was buried in the borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning the bulb began to blossom and he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

On Thursday November 9, 1995 Lottie Mae Stewart was plucked from the garden of life. A dutiful servant who brought inspiration to many, she was a beautiful lily in God's field.

No. 584-Communion, Thanksgiving

The Last Thanksgiving

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 19, 1995

SCRIPTURE: ***And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. Luke 22:17-18.***

Introduction

What would you do if you suddenly found out that this Thanksgiving Day would be the last one you would ever share with your family and friends? Would your plans for the day change? Would you spend the day watching Christmas parades on television? Would you spend it all cooking fine foods and fellowshiping with friends? Would you sleep all day? The response to the question depends upon what purpose and distinction you place on Thanksgiving Day. If you view it as a day to relax, kick back, and eat fine foods, you might do a few things differenly. If you view it as a day to sleep or watch football, you might change a few more things. However, if you view it as a day to praise the Lord, you will probably gather your family together under one roof and reflect upon a year of activity and give God praise and thanks for the good times. Your last thanksgiving would be spent like all others, giving praise and thanks to God for his mercy and his goodness.

There are many who feel that life as given them a bum deal and they have nothing for which to give thanks. Consider the boy who sat down to thanksgiving dinner with his family. The food was piping hot and it appeared that this thanksgiving would be one to remember. The table was covered with all kinds of foods! There were meats, pies, cakes, dressings, ducks, hens and turkeys. The food looked delicious. Except for the broccoli. He hated broccoli! When his mom prepared his plate she killed his appetite when she put the biggest spoonful of broccoli on the plate. His stomach turned. Soon his father asked him to bless the food for the family. All heads bowed, but the boy never said a word. They waited and despite his mother's urging, the boy would not bless the table. Finally his father asked him what was the problem. "I don't know what to do. I can't give thanks for the food because mama put broccoli on my plate. If I had given thanks for broccoli, I'd be telling a lie-and what's worse, he might give me more!" Like this little boy, some people are unhappy with some aspect of their lives and they believe giving thanks might bring more of it, so they don't give

thanks at all.

When the pilgrims came to America, their first year was not all pumpkin pie. Many of them died of disease and cold. They endured hardships and difficulties. However, when the harvest came they looked beyond their difficulties and saw all of the other ways God had blessed them and gave him thanks. That was the first Thanksgiving Day in America.

As Christians, many of us have shared similar moments. The first Thanksgiving Day you spent as a married couple was special. So was the first one after you began a new phase of your life or bought a new home. The first Thanksgiving was truly significant. If the first Thanksgiving was significant, the last thanksgiving will be even more important. The Last Thanksgiving referred to is not of this earth. It will be the time when the Kingdom of Heaven becomes a reality. The last Thanksgiving will be when all of the Saints give praise and thanks to God for reuniting broken family circles and ushering in an era of peace and love.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he shares the last passover with his disciples, giving thanks in his usual way, but refusing to share it until they eat together in the kingdom of Heaven.

In a large upper room, Jesus sat down with his 12 disciples to share with the a passover meal which has become known as the Lord's supper. Note that in 22:14 the text refers to the 12 as apostles, rather than the "12" or as disciples as they had been referred to in most references in the Gospel. The distinction is important to understanding this text.

Initially the 12 were referred to simply as "disciples." A disciple is a person who follows the teachings of another. On the other hand an "Apostle" is a person who has been sent on a mission and charged to represent him. Moreover, Apostles are also given the authority to act on the sender's behalf.

In Matthew, Mark and John, the term "Apostle" is mentioned only once in each respective book. However the book of Luke characterizes them as apostles after 9:1, in which they were transformed from mere followers to authorized representatives. In 9:1 reads *"Then he called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases and he sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."* Given such a mission, Luke describes the 12 as apostles, not disciples.

In the text Jesus is celebrating the passover with the 12 apostles. They had been charged to go out and evangelize and build the kingdom of God. In celebrating the meal, Jesus used what was apparently a trade mark procedure associated with him. He gave thanks. The habit of thanksgiving each time he broke bread was so unique that his disciples readily associated it with him.

His method involved giving a prayer of thanksgiving, then breaking the bread. In Mark 8:6, it is recorded: *"And he commanded the people to sit down on the* ground:

and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake and gave to his disciples." They remembered that Thanksgiving because immediately after, the seven loaves of bread and two fishes that he blessed multiplied enough to feed five thousand or more people. They saw him use this method of giving thanks and breaking bread so much that they readily identified the method with him.

His practice of offering thanksgiving was so unique to him that after the resurrection two of his disciples were walking down the road to Emmaus talking with Jesus who walked along with him without being recognized. It was only when he sat down to eat with them and took bread at Luke 24:30 that they realized who had been among them. When they saw how he offered thanksgiving over the bread then broke it, 24:31 says "And their eyes were opened, and the knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

In the upper room Christ offered his last thanksgiving prayer with his apostles. However, he refused to share the meal with them. He said he would not drink with them until the work was completed and all of them had entered into the kingdom of heaven. His part of the mission was to place them into service, preach the gospel and to sacrifice himself on Calvary. The apostles were also given a mission, which could not be truly celebrated until completed. The assignment was issued in Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Their charge was to reach and teach as many as they could with the Gospel message and build the kingdom.

When the work of the church Christ established is completed and the kingdom of heaven becomes a reality, the great celebration of the Saints in that day will be the last thanksgiving! Until that day comes, every day for Saints is a day of thanksgiving and praise to God for the great things he has done!

Every Day is Thanksgiving!

Those who are working in the kingdom know the importance of giving thanks to God everyday. That is what was unique about Jesus' practice. He offered thanks everytime he broke bread. We, who follow his footsteps, do exactly the same thing. We thank God every day for every blessing we have received from him. While Thanksgiving is noted as a special day of thanks and reflection, those who know the Lord see it as a continuation of their own personal tradition.

We Give Thanks For Blessings: We thank God for blessings. Certainly, all that which we have achieved and attained was not because of our deserving character. We thank him for blessing us, despite the fact that we don't deserve such blessings. We recognize some of the ways that we have been blessed immediately. We see material evidences such as homes, cars, and a resonable portion of health and strength. We thank him for those. However, there are blessings we have received that are unseen. We have been protected from unseen dangers and miraculosly steered around them. We have no way of knowing all of the unseen dangers that we have been spared from, just this day alone. Every day we give God thanks for blessing us!

We Give God Thanks for Burdens: Not only do we give God thanks for blessings, but we also give him thanks for our burdens. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The word "everything" includes our burdens and problems. We thank God for everything, because we know that all things work to our good, if we are in Christ Jesus. Thus, we thank him for everything. Consider two men who had the unique practice of thanking God for everything. When they sold water in their village they yelled through the streets:" Thank God for cool water!" A mean leader decided to test them. A law was passed prohibiting anyone from selling water. The men started selling old rags. The men yelled "Thank God for old rags!" The mean leader passed another law that made it illegal to sell old rags. The two men switched again. No matter what they did the mean leader passed a law making it illegal. But they they always thanked God for every law against them.

One day the mean leader ordered one of the men to be drafted into the army and was given a shiny silver sword. His friend was hungry one day, and without telling anyone he sold the sword and bought his friend food. They rejoiced: "Thank God for the food!" He replaced his steel sword with a wooden one to disguise his deed. The next day the mean leader had the captain to capture the young man's friend who was to be executed by his friend. Instantly God gave the young man a direction. The young man announced loudly "I am no murderer. I will not take an innocent man's life. If this man is innocent I pray that God would turn my sword to wood." At that moment he pulled the wooden sword and the crowd yelled "Set him free!" As the two men looked at each other they both turn to the crowd and said "Thank God for wooden swords!" We Give God thanks for everything, even if it appears there is nothing for which to be thankful, thank him anyway!

Thank God for the bill collector!
Thank God for the dentist!
Thank God for your enemies!
In everything give thanks!

The Last Thanksgiving

The first thanksgiving in America was celebrated by the pilgrims but it was not the first thanksgiving.

Abel set up an altar and gave thanks to God with an an acceptable sacrifice. God was pleased with what he offered. It was a great day of thanksgiving because God had accepted his sacrifice!

Noah floated in a huge ark for a year and 17 days. When he touched ground he built an altar and gave thanks to God! It was a great day of thanksgiving because God had saved them from the flood and place their feet on dry ground!

When Israel left out of Egypt and crossed over the Red Sea, they took 12 stones from the river bed and set up a marker on the altar side. The gave thanks to God for bringing them over the desert into the promised land! It was a great day of

thanksgiving because God had brought through the wilderness to better and promising land!

When Solomon built the the Temple at Jerusalem he offered thanksgiving to God. That's when he heard God respond: "If my people, which are called by name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." It was a great day of thanksgiving because God had promised to heal the land!

When Israel returned to Jerusalem from captivity they offered thanksgiving to God. It was a great day of thanksgiving because family and friends who had been away for a long time had returned!

While these were the first thanksgivings of record, the word indicates that we are to offer thanks to God every day!

1 Chronicles 16:18 says *"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds upon the people!"*

Psalm 92:1 says *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name!"*

Psalm 106:1 says *"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever!"*

Psalm 140:13 says "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence."

When we wake up in the morning, give thanks! But Psalm 119:62 says even *"At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments!"*

When we break bread, give thanks!

When we close out a day, give thanks!

We give the Lord thanks for giving us a:

—Peace that can never be troubled!

—Foundation that can never be moved!

—Promise that can never be broken!

—Refuge that can never be conquered

—River that can never run dry!

—Victory that can never be lost!

—Wealth that can never be stolen!

We offer thanks for Jesus who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

We look forward to the last thanksgiving!

That will be the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord of Lords!

That will be the day the wicked cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest! That will be the day when Christ shall enter his kingdom!

On that last thanksgiving day the earth shall rejoice in a single "Thank You Lord! Thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord!

No. 585-Funeral

Return Unto Thy Rest, O My Soul

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 29, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living." Psalm 116:7-9

Introduction

What do you do when life treats you well? When your bucket has been filled at the well of opportunity and most of your life's ambitions have been achieved, what do you do? The unsaved will hunger for more and spend the remainder of their lives trying to hog the trough. The saved soul will lift up his eyes to God and gives thanks for everything, living in peace with himself and with God.

One of the unfortunate realities of life is that many people spend their whole lives searching for happiness and contentment and never find what they seek. Despite massive accumulations of properties and financial resources, there are literally millions of miserable people in the world who have achieved, but are not happy. They cannot rest. They are never at peace.

Consider two men that sat beside each other on the train a few days after Thanksgiving. One man wore a Brooks Brothers suit and carried an expensive brief case filled with stocks and bonds. The other wore work clothes and carried a bologna sandwich in a paper bag. "How was your thanksgiving?" Asked the working man. "What have I got to be thankful for?" Came the rich man's response. "The stock market dropped and my portfolio is valued at less than $1 million now. I had to sell one of my vacation homes, my butler died, my flight has been canceled and now I'm riding the train like a common man." The working man said "I feel sorry for you!" The rich man was puzzled by the response and asked, "What do you mean?" The working man answered "I don't know what its like to have a million dollars. I've never owned a house, hired a butler or rode a plane. I'm riding this train like a common man but I feel good about life." The rich man wasn't moved by that testimony but was drawn to the confident smile on the working man's face. He asked the working man to explain his disarming smile. Then the working man said, "The difference between us is that

you dream of a leather briefcase filled with stocks and bonds. I pray for my daily bread. No matter what else happens in life I give God thanks for the bologna sandwich!" Many of us have succeeded in life and fail to see it. Others give God thanks for every achievement, even our bologna sandwiches, and he blesses us with peace!

As Christians, we understand the importance of praising God for every thing we have. Health, strength, a job, and career successes are just outer tokens of his bounty toward us. Inner peace with ourselves, our families and with God comes when we approach life with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness that recognizes God as the source of all blessings and reason for our being. When we approach life with a spirit of thanksgiving and humility each day will be a blessing and our souls will be at rest!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he reflects upon the bounty that God has given him both materially and spiritually.

This Psalm was written during a period in which the entire nation of Israel was celebrating a period of thanksgiving for the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant had great significance to Israel. It was a golden box, elaborately designed to represent the presence of God in the nation. It contained the original ten commandments carved in stone and a pot of manna which Israel survived upon in the wilderness for 40 years. For the nation of Israel the Ark was so important that wars were fought to protect it, retain it or get it returned.

The enemies of Israel stole the Ark on many occasions. The ark was captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4). When the stolen Ark came to rest in the cities of Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron the enemies of Israel came to fear it because they were plagued with disease, sickness and death because of its captured presence. The Lord vanquished Dagon and spread bubonic plagues among them until they eventually returned the Ark to Israel.

Once the Ark was returned to Israel David attempted to bring it back to Jerusalem but was stricken with fear when of the son's of Abinadad touched and dropped dead. David hid the ark in the home of a friend for three months. When he learned that the friend had been blessed because of the Ark's presence he had it brought back to Jerusalem.

A national Thanksgiving celebration was underway as David came home to give thanks to God for the return of the Ark and for all his mercies shown to the people. He asked at verse 12 *"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"* At verse 17 he responds *"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call upon the name of the Lord."*

The three sections of this text serve as an outline for David's life, especially when viewed in reverse order.

Psalm 116:9: "*I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,"* notes David's resolve to walk before God while he has health and strength.

Psalm 116:8 "For thou hast delivered by soul..."; notes the point in which God

forgive David for his spiritual indiscretions, and calmed his fears and guided his footsteps during the course of his life.

Psalm 116:7 "For thou has dealt bountifully with thee," finds David responding to the success God gave him in life. Starting from a lowly existence and rising to a position of prominence.

Finally David notes that such a soul can return and be at rest. The initial statement of the passage, is a summary of his spiritual journey. He had reached a point in which he was spiritually at rest having lived and achieved. He gave thanks to God for being at peace with himself and with God.

Walking Before God

David's attention in this text to how he walked in life is important for all who study the strengths and weaknesses of his life.

While in the land of the living, it is important that every person strive to walk before God in such a way that he need not be ashamed. At one point in their lives Adam and Eve hid from God in the Garden, because of their sin. Jonah tried to run from God to avoid his responsibility. In this life's walk we should all be careful to walk the path that is pleasing to God.

Walking before God means living a Godly life. It means adhering to the finest aspects of life and striving for the highest goals.

It means taking the talents that God has given us and using them to the best of our abilities, always giving him the praise and thanks for whatever achievements that are made in life.

Walking before God means that our lives suggest innocence of intent. Adam and Eve hid because they knew they had done wrong. The hid because they were aware of breaking God's law. We can walk before God when we can honestly say that we have attempted to live the godly life. When we have given our best. When we have striven to achieve excellence by honorable means. When we have sought and attained a sense of spiritual balance we answered the demands of Micah 6:8 ".. what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Delivered Soul

Those who give their lives to God have an extraordinary reason for thanks and gratitude. It is because of the delivered soul that every believer can rejoice despite his own ability to life a completely flawless life.

The delivered soul is the soul that has made mistakes but has been forgiven. Certainly this is what David had in mind because his was a soul that was sprinkled with personal flaws, occasional doubt, and imperfection. However, he rejoiced because God saved and revived his soul. In Psalm 51:10 in cried out: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

David notes that his soul was delivered from death. Every believer has the same testimony. Without Christ our destiny is death because death is the punishment for sin. Romans 6:23 makes it clear that the payment for sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:8
makes it even clearer that we have been delivered from death when it says " For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"

The man or woman who has received a delivered soul has received the supreme blessing from God. It far exceeds any other blessings he could achieved.

It is the delivered soul learns that God shall wipe all his tears away!

It is the delivered soul that enjoys the daily walk with God!

David said "thou hast delivered ..mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling!"

This combined spirit of need and gratitude must have been what the song writer had in mind when he wrote "I want Jesus to walk me with me! While I'm on the tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!"

David gave God thanks for saving his soul!

David gave God thanks for wiping his weeping eyes!

David gave God thanks for guiding his feet along the way!

Dealt Bontifully With Me

Finally we must note that David took special pains to thank God for his bounty!

At no point in his life did he ever come to the conclusion that he what he had achieved came as a result of his own efforts.

When we have been blessed to grow up in a Christian home, we know the Lord has dealt bountifully with us!

When we have graduated from high school and pursued a successful career rising higher than even our childhood expectations, we know the Lord has dealt bountifully with us!

When we have had the opportunity to share a happy family life, with a loving mother, father and brother, we know the Lord has dealt bountifully with us!

With such a life, though not sprinkled with mansions and limousines, yachts and vacation hideaways, there is a confidence that God has been good to us and given the opportunity, like David we return to Jerusalem at the season of Thanksgiving to give thanks to God for all his benefits!

Perhaps it was a premonition, a slight glimpse in the future, but in the middle of all of his praise and thanksgiving to God, David also saw the prospect of death. At verse 15 he notes "Precious is the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

But even with that prospect David came home to give thanks!

David came to celebrate Thanksgiving!

David came home to rejoice with his family!

David came home to worship God in his sanctuary!

David came home to celebrate the abundance God gave him!

We too, standing between on the threshold that divides yesterday from

tomorrow, must look at how God has blessed us and say thank you!

Thank you Lord, for turning my moments of sadness into reasons for rejoicing!

Thank you Lord, for reminding me how bountifully you have blessed me, despite my occasional disappointments

Thank you Lord for sending your son that I might have hope!

It's a hope made possible on Calvary and confirmed by the empty tomb

It's hope that one glad morning when this life is over...

I'll fly away!

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On Sunday November 26, 1995 Edgar Oliver Savannah spoke his last words to his mother. He came home to give thanks to God because he hath bountifully dealt with him. His soul is at rest!

Thank you Lord,

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No. 586-Inspiration

Pick Three

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 3, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. " 1 John 5:7-8; 13 "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction

Have you ever gambled? If most of us will tell the truth, we would have to admit that we have gambled on occasion. Some have gambled in casinos. Others have frequented video poker machines. Some have played lotteries. Some have bought raffle tickets. Some have played bingo in games sponsored by churches. Some have stooped low on street corners and have rolled dice. There are some who have played Poker, Tunk, Bid Whisk, Pokeno and other games, gambling pennies, pay checks and even pensions on a win. There are others who received a hot tip and invested in a risky stock venture. Some even poured their life savings into get rich quick schemes that left them penniless and broke. Most of us, if the truth is really told, have gambled at one time or another.

Those who are opposed to legalized gambling have difficulties winning converts because of the simple truth the people see gambling all around them. In the African American community lotteries were played long before there were government sponsored lotteries. In this side of the track it was called playing the numbers, as whole communities staked their hopes on hitting the number and climbing out of poverty. Picking the right set of numbers became a daily occupation. They played their birth dates, house numbers, anniversary dates, and even the death dates of loved ones. They played numbers they saw in their dreams, posted on street signs or heard referred to in sermons on Sunday. Most of their daily routine revolved "hitting the number." The state frowned upon running the numbers when it was an African-American tradition. Now, scores of states operate lotteries that offer millions to those who pick the right numbers. Million are encouraged to "play every day and be a winner every night."

There are even some Christians who have been snared into the numbers game, whether its picking three apples at a slot machine, picking three winners in three races at the track, or picking three or more lottery numbers. The more it is opposed the more

attention and support it gets, even from church members. Consider the pastor who was disturbed because so many of his members were gambling. The more the pastor preached against gambling it appeared the more they gambled. Noticing that they were doing just the opposite of what he asked, he decided to put on a devil's suit and stand in front of a river boat casino and invite all of his members to go inside. Since they always did the opposite of what was asked he knew this would work.

He dressed in a blood red suit, carried a pitched fork and had horns coming from his head. As he invited his members into the casino they greeted him with a smile and joined thousands of others inside. None of them recognized him. Finally one his members said to him, "So you are the devil. I've heard so much about you, I've wanted to see you face to face. You know I'm married to your sister, and she's giving me pure hell!"

It was only then that they preacher discovered what we today have found painfully true, those who turn to gambling are trying to get out of what they perceive to be a living hell. They are reaching for hope, even though it's just a one in 20 million chance, that they will get lucky and be lifted into a better way of life. The crowds keep going because they are hopeless and the lure of picking the right three and getting free or the right five and coming alive attracts them.

As Christians we have hope. However, our hope is not based upon picking three or numbers. Neither is it based on a power ball selection. Our hope is based upon staking our faith in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. If we pick these three every day, there is no doubt that I will be a winner every night!

Exposition

This text gives us an explanation of the trinity or unity of the God head.

John, writing in his first epistles explains the perfect union of the godhead. In heaven, the power and presence of God is represented by the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost.

On earth the presence of God is witnessed by the Holy Spirit, water baptism and the blood of Christ. Together they are one. Those who call on God call on all three. Those who call on all three call on one.

In 1 John 4:8 John wrote that God is love. He is the spirit of living compassion among men.

Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 13:13 noted that there are three virtues that every believer should have but the greatest is love. He wrote: "*And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*"

Those who pick these three to give direction and substance to life make three spiritually sound choices. The involve no risk and there is no chance of failure. Faith, Hope, and Godly love are winning combination for any person who seeks to find happiness in life.

Pick these three as guiding principles and our lives will be complete.

Impact of Gambling

There are millions today who have very little faith, no hope and no God on their side. Among these are millions of people whose names are on church roles. It is not surprising to find Church leaders, deacons, and some of the finest church members in the country lined up to pick three.

Some have erroneously characterized those who spend huge sums on lottery tickets, horses casinos and other games of chance as sinning. In actuality there are no verses in the bible that even remotely condemn gambling. There is no 11th commandment that says "thou shalt not gamble." However, there are several life virtues that the bible does teach that indicates that those who do gamble have not embraced.

GAMBLING ENCOURAGES GREED: Those who gamble, especially those who venture beyond the occasional lottery ticket or chance ticket, tread on the dangerously unstable ground of covetness. Covetness involves wanting what others have so much that you become unhappy with what you have, even though what you have is not all that bad. Those who covet become greedy and they see gambling as a way to get money to buy what they want. 1 Timothy 6:10 addresses this subject, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Those who gamble have ceased to live lives of faith and are being driven by a desire to get more money.

Hebrews 13:5 gives what should be our resolve: *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* While gambling is not a specific sin, those who embrace it seem to suggest an attitude that without it they have no chance because God has forsaken them. But never forsakes. He is always present and will never leave us.

GAMBLING DISCOURAGES HONEST LABOR: The basic tenet of the bible is based on the idea that every person should give an honest day's work for a honest day's pay. To a degree, gambling discourages work. It encourages a person to simply wait on the lucky day when he will hit the number and rest from his life of waiting on the right number. It encourages him to find a "get rich quick" scheme and a short cut to wealth without applying the abundance of talents that God has given him in the market place of business and labor. Proverbs 28:19-20 puts it this way, *" He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."*

Again the word *"faith"* keeps coming up. The gambler does not place his faith in God but in the odds. The faithful man works and invests wisely knowing that God will provide the increase. The unfaithful seeks increase without effort and misses the blessing.

GAMBLING ENCOURAGES A RECKLESS INVESTMENT OF GOD GIVEN

RESOURCES: We are stewards over resources that God has put within our control. He allows us to control a small part of his creation. What we manage on his behalf may include a home, a car, land, business interests and a money. Without a doubt we are expected to work to build up that which has been given to us through wise investment and hard work. We know this is true when we read Matthew 25:14-30. It details how God gives each of us talents and expects us to invest that talent wisely to produce an increase.

Gambling represents a reckless investment. There is a difference between a wise investment and a gamble. When the chances of winning are higher than the chances of losing then a venture is often considered a wise investment. A wise investor investigates the track record of a prospective venture and studies the variables that project its future. He also seeks assurances against loss and considers the prospect of a modest return. A gamble is hazardous because it is just the opposite of a wise investment. The chances of losing at a gamble are greater than the chances of winning. There is no way to assure oneself that a loss will be minimal or even to expect even a modest return. Those who gamble, recklessly invest God's resources.

Christ is No Gamble

While there are many who are picking numbers, placing bets, and taking chances and losing, I would like to give you another chance to pick three, with the assurance that if you pick these three that you cannot lose.

While there are many who are playing every day, picking three, or six, there are others who play the same three every day and night of their lives and they never lose, because they have the right three.

It's important to pick the right three!

The unsaved masses in Revelation will have a choice of God or Satan, but many will stake their lives on picking the right number. Revelation 13:18 says many will pick three numbers which will represent the devil. These numbers are the numbers of a man 666. They will pick the wrong number.

Job picked three friends to advise him and strengthen him in times of weakness. He picked the wrong three. Instead of building him up they told him to curse God and die! Rather than take a chance on their advice Job said "all the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change comes!

Nebuchanezzar tried to pick three men who would deny their God and bow to his likeness. He picked the three Hebrew boys. He picked the wrong three. Bowing would have made them instantly famous, rich and powerful but they chose to stand with the Lord. As they faced the fiery furnace they declared "Our God is able to deliver us!"

Joshua had three choices to make. He could backwards to the desert. He could worship idol gods of Canaan or he could stick with the Lord. I heard Joshua declare: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"*

Herein lies the great mystery of our faith. Those who serve the Lord, don't take

chances with their lives. They don't take chances because they have placed their hope in a God who has never:

—Made a promise he didn't keep; Seen a problem he can't solve!

—Found a mountain too tall for him to climb; River too wide for him to cross!

They don't take a chance because placing hope in the Lord will never prove to be a gamble. There are millions of Saints who can testify that when they placed their hopes on the Lord they always came out winners. Those who place their hope in their Lord usually find that he will take their:

—Fears and give them confidence; Doubts and give them assurance

—Failures and give them victories; Weakness and give them strength

—Misfortunes and give them opportunities; Sins and give them Salvation!

No wonder the song writer declares *"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!*

Those who want to pick three John 1 give us the three. It says: John 1:1 *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!"* The father, the Word and the Holy Ghost and the best three to choose!

But you say you like the prospect of winning with the powerball! When we read to verse 14 we find the power ball.." And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.." Verse 12 adds:"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

If you looking for power ball we recommend Jesus, who is the commander of armies of heaven!" Jesus, who offers the abundance of spirit to all who follow him! Jesus, who has promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the earth!

That why the song writer declares "Follow Jesus, take no chance on getting lost..if Jesus can't get you to the top nobody else can!"

Jesus, the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but rose Sunday morning with all power in his hands!

Follow Jesus!

Take no chance in getting lost!

No. 587-Christmas

Big Gift in Plain Wrapping

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 10, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."Luke 2:7

Introduction

How much attention do you pay to wrapping paper? As we scurry to get gifts for those we love during this season many people will spend considerable time wrapping their gifts. They spend precious moments selecting the right colored paper. They ponder a selection of ribbons and bows that will suggest the importance and value of the contents. Fine wrapping usually means a fine gift. Poorly wrapped packages usually suggest that the giver was thoughtless at the least and the gift may be shabby at best. Therefore our eyes stretch and our imaginations soar as we open gifts that are wrapped beautifully.

Beautiful wrappings don't always indicate what's inside. Consider the mother who received gifts from her two sons, neither of whom she had seen for a long time. One was successful and wealthy. The other was a beggar who sold cans just to eat every day. At Christmas the mother received a gift from each son. One was beautifully wrapped in the finest paper. The other was wrapped in what appeared to be old newspaper. As she opened the finely wrapped gift she was surprised to receive a coffee cup. The price tag of $1.98 was still stuck to the bottom. The poorly wrapped gift contained contained two dollar bills. It contained a note that read, " you gave me your all, I give you all I have!" Though shabbily wrapped, the mother cherished the two dollar bills and tucked them away with joy. One son had much, but gave little. The other had only two dollars to his name and gave it all. Even the shabby wrapping couldn't hide the love that was inside.

That's the way it was when Jesus was born. He came wrapped in swaddling clothes. The shepherds found him lying in a manger. He was shabbily dressed and was found living in the worst of conditions. But even the shabby wrappings couldn't hide the love inside. He was a bundle of joy not only to his mother but to the entire world.

There are many who are fooled by what's on the outside, but God is never deceived. He is not impressed by what's on the outside because knows what's beneath the wrapping.

As we prepare to give gifts to friends and loved ones lets be sure that we give from the heart in a spirit of love. When we give from the heart, it won't matter too much about the wrapping, ribbons or bows. What will matter is the thought that is exchanged.

As Christians we thank God for giving us the baby Jesus. He was a big gift of hope, joy, love and salvation all in one package. Though he was wrapped in swaddling clothes under the shabbiest of circumstances he proved to be a big gift despite his humble and plain wrapping.

Exposition

This text focuses attention upon the cloth in which Jesus was wrapped upon his birth.

The Word says he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. In biblical times new born children were traditionally wrapped in what is known as "swaddling cloths." The infant is laid across the diagonal of a square of cloth of which the corners are folded over the body and feet and under the head.

The type of material that the cloth was made of depended upon the financial status of the family. The rich would wrapped their newborns in cloths of silk with fine embroidered work. The poor would wrap their children in plain cotton clothes. There would be no fine embroidery. There would be no silk wrappings or bands. Only plain wrappings.

Wrapping children in swaddling clothes was customary throughout biblical regions. Unlike today, where infants are laid in special beds or cribs with high sides to keep them from falling, babes in biblical times were wrapped tightly in swaddling bands to keep their hands and legs fixed. It avoided movement and therefore falling. It also made them easy to carry.

Salt water is applied to the lips and other areas of the babe's body to reduce inflammation. The idea was to make the body hard and thus less vulnerable to chaffing. This was followed by dusting the joints with powered myrtle leaves. Tender and irritated parts of the babe's body were rubbed with olive oil. The bands were loosed daily to attend and clean the babe but were quickly tied again. For at least the first year of the babe's life.

The swaddling cloth that wrapped Jesus was plain, because his parents were poor. It was simple; without frills.

He came to the world as a big bundle of hope and joy, in plain wrappings.

The Package Disguised The Contents

Our society is market driven. The success or failure of a venture hinges greatly upon packaging. Corporations spend millions of dollars to present their products to the public in a way that is appealing and attractive. Sometimes the money spent on packaging and presenting products equals or excels the amount spent for its

production.

Studies are made of color schemes that are attractive to target audiences, sizes of boxes and shapes are considered as well as shelf location.

In America, few poorly packaged products have a chance at commercial success, despite the worth of contents. Our first inclination is to look at the box and come to a conclusion about the contents. Therefore, many companies spend more time developing the box than they do improving the product.

Taking a cue from corporate America, many people concentrate their energies on the packaging of life rather than the substance. Often they package their lifestyles to suggest that they have more than they really have, know more than they really know, and that they are what they are not. Many are completely destroying themselves to maintain a packaged image that overstates their achievements in life.

When Jesus was born, the plain material in which he was wrapped disguised the true nature of the child beneath the wrappings. Few suspected much from a child found under such circumstances. With the exception of a few magi and shepherds who knew there was more to this child than met the eye, very few expected much from the child they saw wrapped so poorly. The package disguised the contents.

Today there are many skeptics who share the same view about anyone who is born into poor circumstances. They judge the contents by the package. How often that has proven to be a mistake.

In Japan, gift-giving is done in a very special way. First, the gift is carefully wrapped in paper. Then, the Japanese person writes on the wrapper Japanese words that mean, "Not an important gift." Literally, they write "Article of no value" on the gift. They don't actually mean that the gift is unimportant, they just don't want to appear too prideful or boastful when they give a gift. Finally, they put the gift on a tray and present it to someone.

There are some in America that take that practice and literally apply it to millions. Too often the wrapping becomes more important than the gift.

They see people who live in crowded apartments in poor neighborhoods and they mark them "article of no value."

They see children born in families that are struggling to exist without the essentials to survive and they mark them "article of no value."

The woman who scavenges trash cans for food to survive is marked, "article of no value."

A girl who is a descendant of a family known for trouble and lawlessness is instantly marked "article of no value" and may spend her entire life trying to compete against her family's infamy.

In school, they see a young man whose clothes appear to be less than the best and they mark him "article of no value."

In each instance the content of character is judged by the package in which character is delivered.

We often misjudge people when we look at the package rather than the contents. It is a common practice. As a race we are often judged by our color before we are known

as persons. We resent being told that we dance, play football and eat watermelon because those attributes are common to our package. We know too many among us who can't dance, can't play football and who hate watermelon. Although we complain about being prejudged, many among us judge all white people on the basis of the actions of a few. Prejudice is not reserved for whites only, we must face the fact that we have prejudiced tendencies as well. As we evolve in the social arena we soon learn to reserve judgment to see what's inside before reaching conclusions. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech included a memorable phrase that says "I have a dream that one day my four little children will live in nation where they will be judged not by color of their skin but by the content of their character."

We may select a book because of its attractive cover and jacket, but the final review is based on the content of the pages.

The Gift Exceeded the Package

It appears that God spends more time working on the contents than he does the package. Sometimes mankind misses its blessing because it rejects God's handiwork because of misread packages.

Some of God's greatest blessings have come in poor packages. Booker T. Washington, and Frederick Douglas were two of the finest leaders of our people. Both were former slaves whose poverty and ignorance was exceeded only by their willingness to achieve. They were big gifts to our people, but the came in plain packages.

Jesse Jackson was reared in dirt poor poverty with newspaper on the walls for wall paper. Yet he rose to champion the cause of the poor and has helped millions. He was a big gift to our people, but he came in a plain package.

James Earl Jones was stutterer who could barely say a single word without stammering. Yet his voice and speech has earned him the respect of Hollywood as one of the nation's greatest actors and orators. He was a big gift to mankind, but he came in plain package.

Wilma Rudolph was a young girl who could not walk without braces. She appeared doomed to an invalid's life. But when she won gold medals in the Olympics in track the world knew that she was a big gift in a plain package.

The baby Moses came poorly packaged by modern standards. He was found floating in a basket among the bushes. The package was pretty but that young boy grew to become a great leader of his people. He was a big gift in a plain package.

David came poorly packaged. He was small in statue in comparison to his bothers and ruddy in nature. Yet God took a young shepherd boy and made him a king whose character was of such that he was described as "man after God's own heart." David's life was a big gift in a plain package!

John the Baptist came in a poor package. He roamed the deserts dressed crudely and eating wild locusts. Yet despite his package his was "the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare Ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." He was a big

gift in a plain package!

But Brothers and Sisters there was another gift that the world received but didn't know what it had. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.!"

There was no greater gift that God could give the world than the send his Son.

Instead of sending Jesus into the world like a king, with armies all around him and trumpets blowing, God sent Jesus into the world as a little, tiny baby. He was a big gift in a plain package.

He was born in a stable and laid in a manger.

His family was poor and surroundings suggest frugality rather than royalty.

On the outside the small child born in poverty appeared to be marked as an *"Article of no value."*

The world soon found out that he was a big gift in a plain package! Those who have tried him declare that what they found in the gift of salvation was:

—Courage in the face of trial. Now they boldly say, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

—Satisfaction in times of want. "The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

—Guiding Hand in times of darkness. "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through the barren land!"

He was a big gift in a plain package!

He died on a plain cross!

He was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But Sunday morning the world discovered that what came wrapped in a plain package in Bethlehem; grew up in a plain life in Nazareth; walked around in plain shoes for 33 long years; was crucified on a plain cross; was buried in a plain tomb, actually had...

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 588-Communion

It Wasn't A Mistake

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 17, 1995

SCRIPTURE: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14; Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. John 10:17;"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Matthew 28:6

Introduction

Have you ever made a mistake? Mistakes are common to most people because they evolve out of human frailty. There are different kinds of mistakes. A blunder is a mistake that is made foolishly or out of clumsiness. It is the kind of mistake that could have been avoided with a little more thought. An accident is the result of a mistake involving judgment and perception. An oversight is mistake caused by omission of a necessary act. These kinds of mistakes are prompted by misinformation, misunderstanding, ignorance or haste. There are different kinds of mistakes. Most of us have made one or more in the course of lifetimes.

Sometimes mistakes can carry us in the wrong direction and can get us in trouble. The country mouse read an advertisement that appeared in the Rat's Gazette. It announced that there was going to be a rat's convention in the city. The agenda included items crucial to survival and living in these modern times. The country mouse decided to go to the convention. However, when he arrived in the auditorium he was horrified. There were growling teeth and glaring eyes staring at him. Fear gripped him as he dashed from the auditorium. It was only when he returned that he found another edition of the same advertisement which read: "In our last edition we reported there would be a rat's convention in the city, it should have read cat's convention. If our mistake got in trouble and you're still alive, we apologize."

The poets have told us that "to err is human, to forgive is divine." They acknowledge that all of us are capable of making mistakes.

Sometimes good things happen by mistake. It is possible for a wrong turn to take you in the right direction. There are many who testify that a broken heart led them to a restored soul or a failed relationship proved to be pivotal in finding real happiness. There are even many business successes that are result of mistakes. America's favorite soap floats due to an error in its original production — too much air. In 1878,

Harley Procter and James Gamble decided to create a new white soap that would rival the castile soaps made by their competitors. Their soap was a success, but in 1879 a worker accidentally allowed the soap solution to be overmixed. The new version of the soap was an immediate success because it bobbed to the surface of the water.

While it is true that some good things are the by product of a mistake, it is more comforting to know that most good things that come our way, are not accidents, mistakes or after thoughts but are by divine purpose and plan. That's the way God is toward believes. He doesn't bless us by mistake or accident. He does it on purpose, according to his divine will.

As Christians, we rejoice in the truth of knowing that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and when he died on Calvary, it wasn't by mistake, but it was by God's divine plan. He didn't stumble into Bethlehem or come to Calvary by accident, but he did it all according to God's purpose which was to show his love us.

Exposition

These passages of scripture focus on three acts of Christ that were intentional and crucial to our salvation.

John 1:14 reflects on the reality of the incarnation of the Word into flesh. It refers to the birth of Christ through the virgin Mary. In the beginning there was only the Father, The Word and the Holy Ghost. But to provide a means of salvation for lost mankind, the word took on a bodily form and became flesh. Mary was the surrogate instrument of incubation, but the Holy Spirit initiated the process.

The birth of Christ was not a mistake. It was not a blunder on the part of the God head. It was not a miscalculation. It was a planned event that had been predicted hundreds of years before it actually occurred. Isaiah 7:14 *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* The fact that idea predicted the birth of Christ and the immaculate conception so long before it happened suggests that it was not a mistake but a planned event.

While Isaiah's prediction was hundreds of years away, there were others even closer. In Luke 1:35 Mary is told in advance about the great thing she had been selected to do for God. It says, " And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Thus, the birth of Christ through Mary was not a mistake but a planned response to the sinful condition of mankind by a loving God.

It was not a mistake for Mary to journey to Bethlehem, knowing she was nine months pregnant. It was in the plan.

It was not a mistake for Christ to be born in a stable, laid in manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. It was in the plan.

All of the events surrounding Christ's birth were not mistakes, but they went according to plan.

Likewise, the events that surrounded the death of Christ were not mistakes but were all part of the plan. Pilate's decision to all Jesus to be crucified was not a mistake, it was part of the plan. Even Judas' betrayal kiss was part of the plan, even though it appeared to be a tremendous blunder in judgment at the least, and betrayal at the most. Jesus said no man took his life from him, he gave it up. John 10:18 says, " No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

Thus, no matter how distasteful the acts of the crucifixion were to the observing eye, they were not mistakes. They were planned by God from the beginning.

In the same way, the resurrection was also a planned event. The tomb was not empty on Sunday morning because someone had made a mistake. It was empty because God planned it that way. Jesus himself had predicted his own resurrection. That's why the angel said, *" He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*

All three of these acts indicate the well planned nature of God's plan of salvation. All of these were planned in advance, to help us lay claim to eternal life. It didn't happen by mistake!

Mistakes Can Be Opportunities

Satan is the author of mistakes, errors, oversights, misunderstandings, misconceptions, and misperceptions. When we make mistakes, they are not the products of the mind of God., but are Satan's handiworks. It is the grace of God that takes makes and turns them into opportunities. It is only God's grace that takes something intended by Satan to destroy us and makes it the rationale to lift us higher.

When Joseph looked at his brothers many years after they had thrown him into a pit because of jealousy. He told them that he viewed the incident as another opportunity for God to work. In Genesis 50:2 *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."* God took the evil act that was the result of misperceptions and errors in judgment of his brothers and turned it into an opportunity for success. Joseph rose to high heights in the kingdom because of someone's evil activity.

Like Joseph, many people are the victims of malicious actions born in misunderstanding, and misconceptions.

There are many who are ostracized today because some made a mistake in judgment. There are many who are hurt and wounded because of Satan's handiworks.

Joseph gave us the victim's model. When we are the victims of others, he never became angry with his brothers, but recognized the source of their errors.

Whether it is a friend, neighbor or co-worker who makes the mistake of causing a saint harm, we must always remember that the person themselves only acted the way they did because Satan found an opportunity to act through them.

Satan is the enemy, not your friend, husband,wife, co-worker!

Satan causes mistakes, God can only do good! Whatever he does is good and works for good in our lives!

God Repairs Mistakes

Our first reaction is to respond in hate and bitterness. Then in a calmer moment we remember Romans 8:28" And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

To put it simply, The Holy Spirit equips us with a permanent repair kit. In it there is an glue, eraser, and paint.

The Holy Spirit also works to put things broken by mistakes, back together again. Marriages that have been marred by infidelity have been restored and the Holy Ghost sealed them so tight that there is hardly a reminder of the break and it is stronger than before. Broken spirits, relationships and trusts are the results of mistakes, but they too can be resealed by the Holy Spirit so they come out stronger.

God has never found a:

— life so shattered that he can't put it back together again!

— Hope so lost that it cannot be revived

— Home so broken that he cannot rebuild it!

— Soul so lost that it cannot be saved!

The Holy Spirit works to erase the effects of mistakes on the Saints. This is what takes the evil intended departmental transfer and turns it into an opportunity for corporate advancement. This is how Chuck Colson can take the mistake of Watergate and a prison term and become one of the nation's greatest prison evangelists.

When the world has written us off as one big mistake God's erasure goes to work and erases the effects of mistakes.

Although the world has written us off as failures, dejects and rejects, God's eraser gives us a second chance! I'm glad that God gave me a second chance!

The Holy Spirit also comes with a little paint brush. This is what he uses to retouch and restore us to our former state by his grace.

Satan might have left a scar, but I've been retouched by grace of God!

The old marks are gone. The hatred is gone too.

The blood of Christ has washed us and made us white as snow.

No wonder the song writer declared: "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden they made a mistake. Instantly God put a plan in action to correct that mistake. Their mistake called for death but God worked out a plan to correct that mistake and give mankind life again!

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it wasn't a mistake. It was an act of love to correct a mistake!

When he went to Jerusalem knowing he would be crucified, it wasn't a mistake!

It was an act of love to correct a mistake!

When he refused to take swords against his enemies, it wasn't a mistake! It was an act of love to correct a mistake!

When died out on Calvary it wasn't a mistake, it was the ultimate sacrifice. For no greater love can be shown that a man be willing to lay down his life for his friends!

When the disciples found the empty tomb, they didn't make a mistake!

Just like he came on purpose..

Just like he died on purpose..

He arose after three days and nights with all power in his hands!

It wasn't a mistake, but an example of the power of God!

No. 589-Cross

In Every Cradle, A Cross For Every Cross, A Crown

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 24, 1995

SCRIPTURE:"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

Introduction

Have you ever looked into the cradle of a newborn child and wondered, what will this child become? Perhaps you may have asked that question about your own children as you stared at them sleeping soundly at night. Silently you asked yourself the question "What does life have in store for him or her?"

We don't know what the future holds for us. We ponder it and try to understand. Despite our best abilities it always seems to slip away from us. So it is natural for us to wonder about our children. Will they be like us, worse or better? Most parents hope their offspring are an improvement over themselves. They seek to help them have a better life, avoiding mistakes and pitfalls that made their lives uncomfortable, but sharing in the experiences that were meaningful.

So we understand the mystery that must have surrounded the Christ Child laying in a manger. Those surrounding that cave like dwelling understood that something special had happened. They knew that in that cradle was the promise of the future. Only God knew that there was something else in that cradle as well, the agony of the cross and the opportunity were there as well.

As Christians, we rejoice at the birth of Christ and the meaning it brings to our lives. It is a reminder to us of God's continuous love for us. In that manger was not only a little child but our chance for eternal life!

Exposition

This text evolves from Isaiah's prediction of the coming of the Messiah and his

ultimate suffering and glory.

Israel constantly allied itself with various nations seeking help and protection. Often the prophets addressed the foolishness of their arrangements and in so doing gave predictions, inspired by God, that address their political dilemma in future days. Often those predictions would span hundreds of years into the future. Such is the case with this text.

God did not reveal everything to the prophets. He only revealed what they needed to know. Most prophets that saw the coming of Christ saw his cradle years and his swaddling experience. Moreover, most of them saw his cross experience and his crown experience. Few if any, saw the age in between all of these events, which is the age of the church. There are very few prophecies that deal specifically the church age.

The prophets searched diligently to understand that which was in between but it was not for them to know. This is what is referred to in 1 Peter 1:10, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:" The prophet saw the cradle, the cross and the crown, but were not allowed to see the effects of grace on the believers between the periods.

Isaiah 9:6 looks at how God revealed the cradle experience of Christ. The circumstances of the birth of Christ were predicted well before his birth. In Isaiah 7:14 we are told, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* In Chapter 9 we are given more details of his cradle experience we are told what he shall be called: *"wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* In Isaiah 53:2 we are told that in his cradle experience he would be born into humble circumstances but rejected of men.

Isaiah 53:3-5 refers to the cross experience. It is the point in time in which Christ would suffer physical humiliation, pain, agony and death to provide for the salvation of mankind. Through his agony and pain or his "stripes" we are healed. The cross is central to salvation, without the cross there can be no claim to the final experience.

Finally there is the crown experience. This is the point in which believers share in the glories of Christ's eventual triumph. This is the period of Isaiah 9:7 *"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."*

While Isaiah 9:6-7 addressed the cradle experience of Christ, his cross experience and his crown experience, in between all of that would be the church age, a time period rarely addressed by any prophet in which both the cradle and cross experiences would be duplicated such that all believers could jointly share in his crown experience!

Thus today we know that there is a cross experience in every cradle and crown experience waiting for each believer who steps forward from his cross experience triumphantly.

The Cradle Experience

The cradle experience refers to the infancy and youth of our lives. Today there are millions of young people who struggling to grow in spirit and truth. Like Christ, many have been born into social conditions that are impoverished and rejected by the rest of society. Poverty has taken a toll on millions who struggle every day to survive. Many are hungry, others need shelter. Many youth, during their cradle experience, have become the victims of broken homes, child abuse and neglect. Some see each day overshadowed with a cloud with very little sunshine.

What we draw from the cradle experience of Christ is his mission. His birth had a meaning and significance. There was a purpose for this life. Even where Christ was born gave a clue as to his mission in life.

Each person must discover their life's purpose. In what direction is my life intended? Am I being guided by destiny or am I guiding myself into my destiny?

Christ came to earth with a purpose and he carried that purpose to the end. Likewise when we realize a sense of purpose and direction, we know exactly what God intended for us and we carry it out to the end.

That is perhaps one of the great difficulties of youth, discovering purpose. The Holy Spirit will reveal it to each person if we seek to know and ask in faith.

The Cross Experience

But if there is a cradle experience there is a cross experience.

Dr. Heather Elkins tells an interesting parable germane to this point. Once there was a Christmas play held in the most unlikely of places, a maximum security prison. This prison held the worst possible offenders including, murderers, armed robbers and rapists. Prisoners themselves would act out the story for the other prisoners. Since they were in a maximum security prison nothing was allowed to be brought in for the play. All the costumes and props had to come from within the walls of the prison.

A mop was found for Mary to use for hair. A ski mask with cotton balls glued on socks was used for the sheep. A discarded cardboard box was used for the cradle. Everything was falling into place, and the prisoners were excited about the play.

Then someone asked a question about the baby. What would they use for the baby Jesus? Of course a real baby could not be brought in. Someone suggested that Mary hold a blanket with nothing inside to represent the baby Jesus. That wouldn't do, the others said, but they were running out of ideas.

On the day of the performance the chaplain came running into the group of actors. He had found something from his office to use for the baby. The show went on. The Christmas story was beautifully portrayed at the maximum security prison. The inmates enjoyed the play, and those taking part found the experience meaningful. Then came the dramatic scene where Mary revealed her baby—the Christ child. She

very carefully unwrapped the blanket. The object she was carrying wasn't a baby or a doll but a cross from the chaplain's office.

It happened by accident in the story, but in reality there is cross in every cradle. While the prophets saw the suffering of Christ for the church, they could not see the church sharing in every stage of Christ's life. One that we share with Christ is the cross.

Every believer has a cross in the cradle. At the moment of our spiritual birth in Christ there is a cross in our future. There will be moments of humiliation, suffering, and disappointment. There will be times when we are victims of the conflicts of others. There will be times when will cry.

What is the cross that is in your cradle? Have you been frustrated by the fact that it is looming in your life? Most of us would love to have a life free of crosses. In fact Jesus himself prayed in the garden of Gethsemene and asked that he could avoid going to the cross. His conclusion however, was "not my will, but thy will be done."

The nature of crosses may differ but they no less burdensome. Whether it is dealing with a problem child or caring for infirmed parents, it is still a cross. For some the cross is striving to please everyone, their parents, preachers and professors. For others the cross is inside themselves. It is a growing fear, insecurity or sorrow. These are real crosses that come with every cradle experience.

This is the reality that was hidden from every prophet, that there would be a period called the church age, when every believer would experience the same cycles of the experience of Christ.

We celebrate the birth experience and opportunity to new life. However, we fully expect a cross experience, moments of sorrow and hardship because it is the nature of the experience.

Crown Experience

However, we must always note that while there is a cross in every cradle, there is a crown for every cross!

If we acknowledge that we share the cradle experience with Christ; where we celebrate the virgin birth and the miracle in Bethlehem; and

If we acknowledge that we share the cross experience with Christ; wherein we endure pain and suffering for the furtherance of his kingdom;

Then it is only logical that we should expect to share the crown experience with him as well.

In the cradle our experience is heightened. In the cross it is deepened. In the crown it is rewarded.

If it were not for the cradle there could be no cross. If it were not for the cross there could be no crown!

The prophets saw Christ with the government on his shoulder, but what they could not see was a huge army of believers that were also receiving their crowns and

reigning with him.

If there is no cross in the cradle, there is no crown.

James 1: 12 *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

1 Peter 5:4, *"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Revelation 2:10 *"..be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

I don't know about you but I'm that Jesus came to Bethlehem and showed us the cradle experience.

I'm glad that he went to Calvary to show us the cross experience!

But I'm glad to know that one of these old days, he's coming back again to be crowned King of Kings, Lords of Lords!

I can't get my crown until he gets his crown! That's why the saints cry out: Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him, crown, crown Lord of all!

No. 590-New Year

My Presence Shall Go With Thee!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 7, 1996

SCRIPTURE: And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. Exodus 33:14-17

Introduction

Have you ever traveled a dark unfamiliar road alone? It is a scary feeling. Whether driving or walking, the thought of going through unknown paths is unnerving. There are curves in the road as well as dips and sharp turns. The person traveling such a road for the first time is anxious and apprehensive about the journey and approaches it with caution, especially if the journey must be made alone. That's the way it is in life as well. We approach every new year with a bit of anxiety because we don't know what lies ahead. It would be easier if we were familiar with the path and did not have to make the journey alone. That's why it's good to have a traveling buddy. Traveling buddies give us a sense of security because if we meet danger along the way, there is someone to help. A traveling buddy keeps us awake on long drives. They help us to watch out for road signs so we don't make wrong turns. Sometimes our traveling buddy has to take the wheel when we find it hard to keep our eyes open. Dark, unfamiliar roads are easier to travel if we don't have to make the journey alone.

Consider the country boy who was afraid of the dark. The most frightening time of his life came whenever his father would ask him to go outside and bring in wood for the stove or fetch a pail of water from the well. Even more frightening were the times he had to take a package to a relative up the dark dusty country road. The first time he had to walk up the country road he pleaded with his father to go with him. The father's only response was, "there will be somebody else on the road."

As the boy traveled the road, the darkness frightened him and there appeared to be someone following him. He turned his flashlight behind him but saw no one.

He yelled out but got no answer. When he finally got home he told his mother about his experience. She told him confidentially, that his father walked behind him at a distance. Each time thereafter the boy became braver, knowing that although he couldn't see him, his father was walking behind him. In manhood, many years after his father's death, the boy approached that same road with a smile and with confidence. He could feel the presence of his father and was sure that there was "somebody else on the road."

The great assurance that every believer has is that he or she never walks the road of life alone. No matter what the circumstance or where the journey takes us our Lord is there. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said: "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." That means that he is always present.

As we begin a new year, let us do so with the confidence we have a traveling buddy who is making the journey with us. He'll help us to see the signs so won't miss a turn. He'll talk to us and stir us and keep us awake. In times of danger, he takes the wheel to keep us safe. Let's remember that no matter where life's road takes us in the months ahead, there is *"somebody is else on the road."* That somebody is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he asks God for guidance and mercy as he leads the people toward the promised land. Israel had received an abundance of blessings from God. They had been freed from slavery in Egypt and were marching through the desert enroute to the Canaan land, which had been promised to Abraham several hundred years earlier. Yet despite the great blessings that God had given them, they proved to be a *"stiff-necked"* people.

God refers to Israel as "stiff-necked" four times in the Book of Exodus. In 32:9 he told Moses that he would not be with the people because they refused to obey him. They built golden calves and worshipped them. They praise idol gods instead of the God that brought them out of Egypt. God said he would bless Moses but not the people. In 33:3,5 God said he would go to the promised land with the people because they were stiff-necked. He said it would be best for him not to travel with them because their stiff-necked ways might anger him and he would destroy them before they reached their destination. The people heard God's displeasure and became mournful. In 34:9 Moses pleads with God to have mercy on the people, despite their stiff necked ways. It was the stiff necked, stubborn ways of Israel that almost caused God to leave them to fend for themselves in the wilderness.

Such would have been the case had it not been for the intercession of Moses. Before going any further Moses made a line of decision. He removed the tent of the Tabernacle outside of the camp.(33:7) Then he challenged all of those who really wanted God to be with them in the journey to the promised land to come outside of the camp and commit themselves to obedience to God. Outside the murmurings, complaints and disobedience to God, Moses talked with God as a man would talk to

a friend (33:11). Moses pleads for mercy for the people for his sake. In 33:13 he says "if I have found grace in thy sight" give consideration to the people. The people, in sorrow turned again to God. God considered the obedience of Moses and for his sake decided to go forth with the people to the promised land.

In his capacity as a mediator, Moses did for Israel what Christ does for every Christian. He mediates and pleads our cause before God. In John 17 Jesus is seen in prayer pleading for Christians in the same way that Moses was pleading for Israel. Here Jesus pleads for mercy for his followers, knowing that justice would demand more. God is present in the journey of every Christian, not because of his or her goodness, but despite our stiff-necked tendencies. Without the mediation of Moses, Israel would have attempted the dangerous journey to Canaan without the presence of God. Without the mediation of Christ, Christians would be forced to make the journey without the presence of God.

Because of Moses, God decided in 33:14, *"my presence shall go with thee."* Because of Christ, modern believers also have the assurance that God will be with them. Without Christ, each person makes the dangerously unwise decision to make life's journey without God's guiding, directing and inspiring presence.

The Road Ahead

As we travel further into the new year, we do so acknowledging that we have no idea what lies ahead. We have made several resolutions about what we would like to do, but somehow even our best resolutions even get stuck bogged down in the mire of good intentions.

At the beginning of a new year, a high school principal decided to post his teachers' new year's resolutions on the bulletin board. As the teachers gathered around the bulletin board, a great commotion started. One of the teachers was complaining. "Why weren't my resolutions posted?" She was throwing such a temper tantrum that the principal hurried to his office to see if he had overlooked her resolutions. Sure enough, he had mislaid them on his desk. As he read her resolutions he was astounded. This teacher's first resolution was not to let little things upset her in the new year. Without a little help, we can get bogged down before we begin.

It is important for every Christian to have a traveling buddy this year, that being the presence of God. There is a great year in front of us but we can't make this journey alone. A battery of resolutions and self promises will not be sufficient. We simply cannot do it alone.

Despite our weaknesses and shortcomings in the last year, because of Christ, God has decided to ride another year with us, if we will let him. When God was traveling with Israel, what made him want to open the door and get out, right in the middle of desert? The people refused to obey him. They put other gods before him! They did not want to be in his presence! Because of Moses, they received a chance to start toward their goals. Later, however we read that their behavior became so despicable that God abandoned them on several occasions. Their sinful nature reached the point

that God utterly destroyed their nation. He just opened the door and got out! He left the nation to its own devices and it fell apart!

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* If we want God to be our traveling buddy in this new year, why not learn from Israel's mistake.

If we obey God and keep his commandments he'll want to travel with us. If we put building the kingdom of God high on our priority lists, he'll want to travel with us!

If we arrange our schedules so that we have time to worship, study and fellowship with him, he'll want to travel with us! Otherwise, we might find ourselves trying to make it through a new year without a traveling buddy!

It has been proven that we cannot make this journey alone! Without God we are hopeless failures, wandering aimlessly in life.

That's why the song writer wrote: Without him I could do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting. Like a ship, without a sail! There is a wonderful year ahead of us, but the road that travels through it is unknown. We should not attempt the journey without the Lord on our side!

Somebody Else on the Road

Believers who travel life's highways never travel alone. There is always somebody else on the Road. Many people who travel find it advantageous to join a travel club. It gives them a feeling of security on the road, knowing they won't be alone and that help is just a phone call away!

The believer has paid up membership in God's AAA travel club.
It's call the triple A travel club because no matter where you go, God is there, Anyplace, Anywhere, Anytime!

If you have a flat tire, he'll bring you a spare!

If you get picked up, he'll bail you out!

If you break down, he'll tow you in!

In a travel club, when you get ready to make a journey, you dial a number and they'll send a set of maps with your trip already mapped out. They'll tell which roads to take and which roads to avoid.

But God's AAA Club goes further than that. Not only will the Lord show you the road and tell you which way to go, he'll go along for the ride!

That's why the believer dials up God's travel agency and says "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land! I am weak but thou art mighty, hold with thy powerful hand!" It's good to know that we don't have make this journey alone, that there is somebody else on road!

Sometimes we take the wrong turns in life. It's good to know there's somebody else on the road!

Balaam was riding a mule on the wrong road, but there was somebody else on the road! An stood in the middle of the road telling him he was going the wrong way. When he couldn't see the angel, the Lord made his mule talk and show him the right. Isn't it good to have somebody else on the road?

Saul was on the Damascus Road traveling in the wrong direction, he found out that there is somebody else on the Road! In the middle of his journey he heard a voice saying Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He found out there was somebody else on the road!

A wounded traveler on the Jericho Road was passed up by a priest and Levite. But when the Good Samaritan came along, he found out that there is "somebody else on road."

When there's somebody else on the road:

-Misfortunes become opportunities for success!

-Hard times are turned in good times!

-Sadness is turned into gladness

-Setbacks become spring boards of progress

-Failures are turned into victories!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to know that there is somebody else on the road!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: "*I want Jesus, to walk with me! While I'm on this tedious journey, I want Jesus to walk with me!"*

Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who rose after three days and nights!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 591-Inspiration

When Famines Come

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 11, 1996

SCRIPTURE: And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. Genesis 12:10

Introduction

Have you ever had a dry spell? Dry spells are those times when everything you need seems to be so far away. Sometimes dry spells involve finances. Sometimes they involve health, time or a plethora of other variables that make life miserable if they are missing. Writers have dry spells. They call them writer's block. Marriage relationships have dry spells. Churches have dry spells. Football teams have dry spells. They call them losing streaks! Dry spells are common to a number of areas of life.

The question it seems, is not whether we have dry spells, that seems to be a certainty. The question is what do we do when dry spells come. What is our response to these discomforting and troubling periods in our lives?

Consider the old toad frog that was teaching the facts of life to the young toad. The old toad had seen many things in his long life. It was now his obligation to teach what he had learned to the young toads that were coming after him. "Son, let me tell you something. No matter what happens in the course of time stay close to the pond" the old frog said constantly. It was an important message because their area of the country was known for droughts when water would dry up everywhere. That was especially troublesome for frogs who needed to be close to water. The young frog heard the old frog but thought it made little sense.

After a while a drought came. There was no water anywhere. The animals of the back woods started drifting from place to place trying to find water, all except the old toad and the little frog. The little frog insisted that they should do like all of the other animals but old toad insisted on staying close to the pond. They went through a miserable experience, but one day water broke many miles away. Although there was not a cloud in the sky, suddenly water appeared in the pond much to the pleasure of the old toad and the frog. With amazement the little toad looked at the old frog and said "How did you know there would be water in the pond even though there is a drought every place else?" The old toad pointed the young frog to a series of streams

that ran down the mountain side and emptied into the pond and said "When a dry spell comes, if there is water on that mountain that's miles from here, it won't be long before there's water in the pond. That's why I've learned to stick with pond!" With that the old frog took a dash in the cooling waters and relaxed. Likewise, there are many in life today who panic when they run into a dry spell. Those who know the Lord however, have found that its best to remain faithful and stick with the pond!

Life has many difficulties. We never know what will happen to us from one day to the next. We take each day with an attitude of gratitude. When tough times do come we should remember that our God has promised never to leave us and to provide for our needs. God will provide a way.

As Christians, we should approach life with the attitude that whatever we need God will provide it for us. Even in times of famine our psalm of prayer should still be *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!"* Whether good times or hard times come we have resolved to *"stick with the pond!"*

Exposition

This text considers Abram as he faces a famine that came in life, in spite of being in the promised land of milk and honey.

After Abram began his new life in the promised land he encountered difficulty.

Genesis 12:10 says *"and there was a famine in the land."* This is the first major difficulty that Abram faced. It threatened the welfare of his family and very large entourage. Without sufficient food and water death would be the result.

Famines

Generally, a famine is an extreme shortage of food. Sometimes famines are the result of natural causes. The three famines mentioned in the Book of Genesis were all apparently due to natural causes. There are no scriptures that indicate the causes, indicating that their origin is natural. Genesis 26:1 tells of a famine in the time of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abram's great grandson, Joseph, also experienced a natural famine (Genesis 41:27) All three of these occurred in the lives of God's Chosen people while they lived in the land of promise.

Famines were also the result of man made problems. War and destructive acts of people have often resulted in famine. Occasionally oppressors destroyed or confiscated food (Deut. 28:33,51; Isa. 1:7). The siege of cities also resulted in famine, such as the siege of Samaria by Ben-hadad (2 Kings 6:24-25) and the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:2-3).

Famines were also caused by judgments of God. Famine and Drought as the Judgment of God God created the world as a good environment which would normally provide ample water and food for mankind (Gen. 1). However, the productiveness of the earth is related to people's obedience to God. For example, the sins of Adam, Eve, and Cain resulted in unfruitfulness of the earth (Gen. 3:17-18; 4:12). Israel's relation-

ship with God also directly affected the fertility of the Promised Land. When the people obeyed God, the land was productive (Deut. 11:11-14). However, when they disobeyed, judgment came on the land by drought and famine (Lev. 26:23-26; Deut. 11:16-17; 1 Kings 8:35). Furthermore, the New Testament reports that famine will be a part of God's coming judgment of the earth in the last days (Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:8).

When faced with the prospect of dealing with famine, Abram decided to leave the land and go to Egypt. Egyptians were accustomed to dealing with seasons of drought. They routinely built large storage bins to store grain and other supplies for short spans of famine. This may have been what attracted Abram to Egypt. However, there is no record as to why Abram turned to Egypt as a place of refuge.

When Famines Come

Today there are many people just like Abram who are facing famines in their lives. The question is not whether or not there will be a famine, but how we respond. These "famines" are periods when there is an extreme lack of the necessities of survival. The kinds of famines we may experience can span from simple luxuries to food, clothing and shelter. Whenever what we need to survive is not available because of short supply then we are experiencing a famine.

Sometimes our personal famines result from natural causes. These are the cases where we did everything right but everything else went wrong. By no fault of our own we can be laid off our job. Through no fault of our own we can develop an illness. Through no fault of our own we can experience many other difficulties. Like the droughts or locusts that caused some famines in biblical times, we can often experience hard times by natural causes. No one is to blame. They just happen.

Those who live in flood plains or regions where hurricanes are frequent, sometimes suffer hardships by no fault of their own. The devastation that follows such tragedies cause considerable hardship on their families and places them in great strain. There was no amount of planning that could have stopped a hurricane, tidal wave or drought. They just happen.

Sometimes our personal famines are man made. Neglect, failure or human error is often the cause of many personal famines. Millions of families experience financial hardships that are man made. Over extended credit and excessive debt are examples of how a financial famine can be man made. A person who decides to tell the boss a piece of his mind and gets fired may experience a famine afterwards. Such a famine is man made! A chain smoker who develops lung problems created that problem. It is a man made famine! There are many personal famines that exist, many of which are traceable to man made origins.

Sometimes our famines are judgments from God. Sometimes we have gone too far in our variances from the faith and God creates famines in our lives to bring us back to Bethel. On occasion God allows our ponds to dry up to humble us and prompt us to reconsider the error of our ways. It is not unusual to for God to seal up the windows of heaven for those who have strayed away. Whenever the windows of heaven are

sealed, there will be a famine!

Whatever the source of our famine, the question still remains, "what do we do when famines come!" Abram had received great promises from God but as soon as he moved into the promised land a famine came. Despite having the promises of God to assure him, Abram left his altar and land of promise and went to Egypt. While in Egypt he neither prayed or called upon the name of the Lord!

Like Abram, there are many today who retreat from the faith when famines come! They find their own Egypt where they abandon their altars and fail to call upon the name of the Lord. Their church attendance begins to decrease. Their prayer life falters. Their worship life disappears. Their faith shrivels. Abram ran to Egypt because he was in a famine. He had to be run out of Egypt before he returned to Bethel to face the famine with the help of his God.

When famines come we should not run to Egypt. Running to Egypt is trying man made remedies!

Running to Egypt is trying to resolve spiritual problems by carnal means!

Running to Egypt is turning away from God and leaning on man for answers to questions that only God knows!

When famines come, we should not run to Egypt, but we should run to God. The song writer was correct when the words were penned "We are our heavenly father's children...he knows just how much we can bear!"

Run to the Lord, he knows!

Run to the Lord, Yes he knows, just how much you can bear!

Back To Bethel

When Abram left Egypt he returned to Bethel. Bethel is the place where Abram stopped and built an altar. It is the first place where he called upon the name of the Lord!

When famines come it behooves each of us to learn from Abram's mistake! His mistake was to leave Bethel, his altar and his practice of calling upon the Lord and to run to Egypt. When we learn from his mistake we do not make the same error.

When famines come the best place to be is at the altar!

When famines come the best thing to do is to call on the name of the Lord!

I don't know about you but I have found out that powerful things happen when you call upon the name of the Lord!

When you call upon the name of the Lord:

—The wicked will cease their troubling!

—The weary will be at rest!

—Mountains can become molehills and valleys can be exalted!

—Enemies can become friends!

—Hatred can be turned into love!

—Setbacks can become starting points!

When we call upon the Lord in a spirit of repentance he will hear us because in

the word he says in 2 Chronicles 7:14 *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

When famines come we should stick by altar because at the Altar we can change things in prayer. Prayer can bring relief from famines!

Elijah prayed and the windows of heaven opened up, although it hadn't rained for over three years! Prayer changes things!

When famines come, remember to pray! Prayer can:

—Turn deviant children into obedient siblings

—Turn Wayward husbands into loving fathers

—Turn the hard hearted into the tender hearted

—The faithless into the faithful!

When famines come stick by the altar because at the Altar you'll find Jesus!

Jesus is the answer for the famine!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose after three days and nights!

When famines come, try Jesus!

He'll make everything alright!

No. 592-Martin Luther King

Are You Sitting On Your Dreams?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 14, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:10

Introduction

Are you making progress toward your lifetime goals? Many people have some very ambitious plans for their lives that were made many years ago. At the start of each new year many sit down to evaluate whether or not any progress has been made toward achieving those goals. Sometimes our self reality check reveals startling results. Sometimes we discover that while we've had a year of activity, in reality we are no closer to our goals than we were a year ago. Misdirected activity may keep us going at a steady pace, but almost always takes us where we don't want to go. A year of misdirected activity usually concludes with little progress toward realizing goals.

On the other hand some discover that they have actually moved closer to achieving their goals. In retrospect they see several important decisions, actions and accomplishments that have put them closer to achieving their life goals.

In August of 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. told the whole world about his dream for the nation. He dreamed of a nation that truly lived out the meaning of the American creed that *"all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness."* He dedicated his life toward accomplishing that end. Every speech. Every march. Every public appearance was calculated to help accomplish that life goal.
Dr. King's dream has not been fully realized, but it is gradually moving toward that day!

What about our personal dreams? Are we any closer to making them become realities than we were a year ago? Are we pursuing our dreams or have we given up on them and dismissed them as unreachable? Robert Fulghum in his book "It was on fire when I laid down on it" tells of a young lady who was sitting on a suitcase and crying in the airport for several hours. He learned that she had run out of money. She had spent two days waiting in the airport standby with little to eat and too much pride

to beg. Her plane was about to go and she had lost her ticket. She had been sitting in that one spot for hours just crying. She lost all hope of ever getting home. A nice couple wiped the girl's eyes and agreed to talk with the airport officials to help solve her problem. She stood up to go with them, turned around to pick up her belongings and SCREAMED. They thought something terrible had happened to her but no...it was her ticket. She found her ticket. She had been sitting on her ticket the whole time.

In a similar sense many of us have been sitting on our tickets to fulfillment and success afraid to move or feeling sorry because of our circumstance. Some have spent whole years sitting on their tickets watching others catch flights towards their destinies. They too could do the same except they have given up on themselves.

As Christians, we know all things are possible! If our life goals are in accord with the will of God, nothing can stop us from achieving our destinies, except our own unwillingness to pursue our dreams with vigor and persistence. God holds the reins of life. He also showers blessings upon those who choose to use their life tickets rather than sit on them!

Exposition

The immediate context of this text finds the prophet Jeremiah speaking to the people of Judah about the coming devastation of the kingdom.

The country had two sections. The North, called Israel, had 10 tribes but was carried away into captivity by the Assyrians after they ignored the please of the prophet Isaiah. The Southern section was called Judah. Its major prophet was Jeremiah who warned that God would use a great nation called Babylon to destroy them if they did not repent of the wicked ways. The nation ignored Jeremiah's pleadings and refused to take the opportunity to restore themselves in the sight of God. Their dreams of attaining a restored status as a leading nation of the world and enjoying the prosperity they once knew dissipated as they stubbornly chose to sit on their opportunity.

Jeremiah explained to them in many ways how God felt. In this passage he also sheds light on three attributes of the nature of God. In verses 5-10 he urged the people to trust God rather than man. He noted that those who trust God will find favor in his sight and be watered. However, those who do not will find themselves constantly frustrated and facing failure. Their aspirations will be cursed because of the failure to trust God. (Jeremiah 17:5)

In verse 10 he notes three important truths about God that should be noted:

God searches the heart. God knew their inner thoughts and secrets. The word translated heart in this context is the Hebrew word "Leb."This word is often used to refer to the will or intellectual capacity. He knew their capacities and abilities. He knew their hopes. Judah was overwhelmed by its helpless state. They were a people of broken hopes. They were void of will power. They had given up on themselves and God. They turned to neighboring nations and idol gods for satisfaction. Deep within its national character Judah did not have a real trust in God. God knew the state

of their hearts. He knew what they had to work with and he knew what they thought about it!

God tries the reins. Reins in modern times often refers to straps or guidelines on horses and mules. However in this context "reins" had a different meaning. The Hebrew word "Kilyah" is used here. Kilyah, in this context refers to the interior self. For Judah it meant that he challenged them to rise up and seize the chance to regain lost glory as witnesses for God rather than weaklings, dependent upon the protective charities of others. When God tries the reins it means that he challenges the inner man or woman to rise up. The fact that God challenges the inner spirit of individuals to rise up is of importance to believers.

God blesses those who rise up. Important to note in the remainder of this verse are two words "Ways" and "fruit." Jeremiah noted that God rewards people according to their ways. Ways in this context means their action. The Hebrew word "Derek" is used. It means "mode of action." The word translated "fruit" it means "results" or "reward" Thus Jeremiah shows believers another attribute or nature of God. When he decides how blessings will be distributed he looks at how we act on inner beliefs and the results of our actions are crucial. He gives "to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." In essence, God watches whether not the believer will act on that which is on the inside and then watch the result of his actions or the "fruit of his doings."

When Jeremiah spoke to Judah about rising up and returning to God, he challenged them to act upon their dreams. They wanted to be a great nation again. They wanted to be restored to their position of prominence in the community nations. They wanted to enjoy the blessings of God again. However, Jeremiah noted that those who trust God will act on that trust and he will reward them based on the "fruit of their doings" not the fruit of the dreams.

God Knows Our Ability

Today, each of us should remember that God knows us, inside and out. He knows what we are capable of achieving, what we can and cannot do. God's knowledge of us is deeper than even we ourselves understand. Those who know what an instrument is designed to do expect more from it because they know its ability. Most new television sets come with a remote capability to turn themselves off at a certain time. However, only those who familiarize themselves with this aspect of the set use this feature. Others will be satisfied if it just shows a picture. Microwave ovens are often used as fancy warmers. Those who know its ability know that it defrosts and can cook whole meals unattended if it is within its design and is set properly. Some use their video tape players to watch movies. Others know how to pre-set the controls and record television broadcasts on one station while they watch another or are away from home. In each instance how much you know about the capabilities and operation of the instrument determines expectations.

Often we don't know our own abilities, but God does. He is the manufacturer.

He knows what we can achieve. He knows what is within our limitations. Just as Jeremiah told Judah that God knows the heart, that truth applies to modern believers as well: "God knows our capacities."

We dream of achieving many goals in life. We dream about them but often we don't believe that we can really achieve them. Who would have convinced young James Earl Jones that he could make a living off his voice, when he stuttered so badly that he couldn't even speak? Who would have believed that young Albert Einstein, who failed in elementary school would become one of world's greatest scientists and smartest men. Who could have convinced Frederick Douglas a runaway slave, born in adversity, that he could rise to be a champion of freedom and a United States Ambassador. Each had the capacity to achieve, but each had to believe in their own capacity.

There are many who are sitting on their dreams today because they won't step out! They are afraid to take a chance! They have what it takes they are simply sitting on it! Jeremiah reminded Judah however that God challenges the inner man to rise up. Today, God challenges the inner man or woman to rise up and act on your dreams! What is it? To become a doctor or nurse? To get a college education? To have the feeling on the inside is one thing, but the blessing comes when we take positive actions. We are blessed according to the "fruit of our doings." Sitting on dreams gets us no where. Acting on them draws praises from heaven.

Step Out On Faith

There is a promise for those who step out on faith. The promise is in verse eight (17:8). Those who trust God and step out to pursue their dreams must do so with the full knowledge that as long as their dreams are in accord with the will of God for their lives they will succeed! It may take time! Their may be obstacles, but they will succeed!

Why are you sitting on your dream? Look at verse 8! Those who trust God are like a tree planted by the river. Its roots go deep and draw strength from down deep. Look at the power of verse 8. Those who trust God will not "see" that is they will not know when the heat comes. They will be able to stand the heat of opposition, frustration and the prospect of failure.

The heat will come, but "her leaf shall be green."

Why are you sitting on your dream? Look at verse 8! Though there will be tough times characterized as droughts, those who trust God won't have to be "careful" that means they won't be without the necessities! The trail toward your dream make take you through some tough times, but God will provide, if you trust him!

There will be some tough times, but the Lord will make a way!

Why are you sitting on your dream? Look at verse 8! Despite the difficulties of your journey and the heat of the day, those who trust God will never cease from yielding fruit! If we trust in God, nothing will stop us from achieving our dreams!

The good news brothers and sisters is that Jesus died and rose from the dead

that we may have life and have it more abundantly! His sacrifice on Calvary was to give us the opportunity for eternal life and fullness of life according to his purpose.

If that's the good news then, to achieve our dreams we must stop sitting on them and trust in the Lord!

When we trust in the Lord we don't worry about the frustrating turns that the road of life offers! We walk by faith knowing that the Lord will make a way!

Standing in the way of our dream might be a:

—Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!

—Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!

—Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Those who trust in God:

—Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

—Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the impossible!

—Live for the incredible; Achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: *"I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"*

I don't know about you but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Storms may rise! Winds may blow!

I will trust in the Lord till I die!

No. 593-Funeral

Jesus Loved Martha

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 20, 1996

SCRIPTURE: Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." John 11:5

Introduction

How great must you become to draw the admiration of God? In the general community only those whose lives impact or change the course of history draw the love and admiration of presidents, kings and other royalty. National champions, war heroes, or those who have been lifted into the arena of public scrutiny in a variety of ways are generally those who are loved and admired by the great and powerful. Generally those who live meaningful but private lives rarely draw attention to themselves. Their deeds are often overlooked. The significance of their life's work is often understated, if mentioned at all.

Presidents love us if we have done something to merit their love. Kings love us in response to our value to the national cause? What about God? What must we do for God to know us personally and to love us? Must we have a big name, position or title? Will we need power of money to get his attention? We won't need any of these to be loved by God. He loves every one of us regardless of our station. Whether we are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, God loves us all.

Consider the poor farm family that dressed up in their Sunday best to attend a funeral. The people of the town were amazed at the trouble the family went through for this occasion because it wasn't the funeral of a relative or neighbor but an old red hen. The entire family gathered at the grave site of the old red hen and paid their last respects. It wasn't unusual for farm folks to feel remorse over the loss of prize winning animals, those who had won ribbons, trophies and honors at the fair. However this old red hen had won no ribbons, earned no trophies and didn't even lay eggs anymore. Why the special attention? The old farmer explained that several years earlier his wife had been sick and times were tough. The doctor had prescribed an egg a day for a remedy, but they didn't have that. The family prayed to God and a short while after a young red hen appeared in the bushes. Each day the hen laid a fresh egg and disappeared. This continued until the day his wife's health was restored. They kept the hen, although she never laid another egg, won a ribbon at the fair or gained any special praise. If it hadn't been for the old red hen the wife would have died. "We've had a lot prize animals over the years. We owned them, but we loved

this old hen. She gave to us what we couldn't get ourselves." That's the way it is with God, every body is important to him. Even if the world doesn't know our name, God knows and that what counts.

As Christians, we know God loves each us and cherishes as important all of our life's accomplishments although they may not seem like much to others. As a family gathers to say farewell to the memory of a loved one, it is a comfort to know that standing with them are the hosts of heaven as well. God loves all of his children. Psalm 116:15 puts it this way: *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."*

Exposition

This text finds Jesus addressing a woman of Bethany upon the occasion of the sickness and death of Lazarus.

Mary and Martha are two biblical characters who were close to Jesus in that they showed him friendship, provided him shelter, and fed him from their table on many occasions. Martha was a resident of the town of Bethany, which was on the outskirts of Jerusalem. She was the sister of Mary and Lazarus and could have possibly been the daughter of Simon the Leper.

Though generally a "behind the scenes" personality in the biblical account of the life of Christ, she received the unique distinction of being one of the few people ever singled out as special in the eyesight of Christ. John in his gospel account often refers to himself as the disciple that Christ loved. Lazarus was called by name as well. In this text Martha is added to this short list of individuals identified as being ones that Jesus "loved."

Martha was symbolic of the average Christian woman. The name Martha itself meant "a lady" which is an adequate term to describe a person that embodies the full range of qualities that distinguishes her from all others. She served faithfully, was seldom seen, had her human moments, but possessed a great faith in Christ as the savior. The description of Martha could very well fit any Christian woman. She was not the blazing sun, but a twinkling star in the service of the master. She was not the drum major but a member of the band, marching to the beat of the heavenly drummer. She was not the glaring trumpet that sounded from the mountain side, but quietness of flute that seemed to whisper in the wind.

Just who was Martha?

Martha was Friendly and Hospitable

Martha is perhaps best known because of her friendly and hospitable manner. Her home was always open to Jesus and his friends as they sat for hours discussing the coming kingdom and his Lordship. She prepared food and made them comfortable. Luke 10:38 says *"a certain woman named Martha received him in her house."* John 12:2 says *"they made him a supper and Martha served."* The warmth of Martha's personality made Jesus and the disciples feel welcome in her home.

Even today there are Marthas in every community. Those whose warm and pleasant personalities make even strangers feel at home within their doors. They willingly share what they have with others. They open their opens with compassion to their children, grandchildren and to neighbors. There never seems to be to many people at Martha's house. Your welcome never wears out Martha's house. In deed, Jesus found the welcome mat was out was out at Martha's house!

Who was Martha?

Martha Served

If Martha is known for her hospitality, she was also distinguished by her quiet but energetic service. John 12:2 simply says "And Martha Served." She didn't make noise although she sometimes expressed dismay that others were not as attentive to their service as she. She went out of her way to do her part to insure that her responsibility, ever so small as it might have been was, none-the-less done.

Like Martha of Bethany, there are many Marthas today. Those whose role seems invisible to some but is never-the-less present and meaningful. Marthas serve, often without notice. Its the silent army of Marthas that prepare plates for the sick and shut in, save fish for the preacher, and listen to the children's tales of grandchildren with excitement and energy. It's Martha's who sick with the sick, cheer up the dispirited, and provide a strong shoulder to lean on for daughter or a friend. Often Martha's service is overlooked. In a world that is captivated by the exciting and titillated by the unusual those who make ripples on the sea of life instead of tidal waves are rarely consider. Unlike the masses of humankind, Jesus noticed Martha. He loved her partly because of the sincerity and energy she brought to her humble service. Jesus loves the Marthas of our time because ...they serve!

Who was Martha?

Martha Knew How to Call the Lord

One of Martha's best known qualities between her pleasing and hospitable personality and spirit of service was her faith in God. She knew the Lord. She had met him, talked with him and seen demonstrations of his power in her life. Without a doubt, to the fullness of her understanding she believed Jesus to be the Christ.

In John 11:1 Lazarus became sick. Despite the fact that he was probably being treated by the doctors and physicians of the town, she sent word for Jesus to come. Her message was simple: "Him whom thou lovest is sick." She had seen what Jesus could do and knew that the only real hope Lazarus had was in Jesus. Her intense faith was admirable. She never doubted that if she could reach Jesus that he had the power to respond to Lazarus' sickness.

Martha lived in Bethany, but there are some Marthas every city in America too!

Martha believes that Jesus is the son of God!

Martha believes that he died and rose after three days and nights!

Martha knows that despite hard times and tough days that the Lord will make a way!

Martha knows that there is power in prayer!

When everybody else seem to lose their heads and forget that God is control Martha knows how to call out from the secret recess of soul "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me whether shall I go!

Martha knows how to get in touch with the Lord. She knows that Jesus is on the mainline and all she has to do is call him up and tell him what she wants!

Look at Martha! Quietly calling on the Lord for the safety of her family!

Look at Martha! Breathing a prayer of thanksgiving for her husband!

Look at Martha! Asking God to bless her daughter!

Look at Martha! Saying "Father I'm in pain. Let this cup pass! Never-the-less, not my will, but thy will be done!

No wonder Jesus loved Martha...she never lost her faith in Lordship! She never doubted his ability to save and heal! She was strong in her faith. It was because of her faith, that Jesus loved Martha!

Who was Martha?

Martha was Human

While Martha had many strong characteristics, she had a human and weak side. On occasion she was frustrated because others didn't take their duties seriously. Despite her great faith, on at least one occasion she showed that she didn't quite understand all the principles of the faith.

After she sent for Jesus and he was delayed in coming she demonstrated both faith and doubt at the same time. She met Jesus as he finally came to town and said: *"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."* John 11:21 Yet in the same breath she expressed that she believed that even in death Christ could raise him if he wanted to! She believed in the resurrection but she didn't quite fully understand that Christ was the embodiment of the resurrection she hoped for! There were some aspects of life she just didn't understand! Even though she didn't understand Jesus loved Martha anyway! Even as she wept at the death of her brother Jesus loved her...to the point that the scripture records it with two words that embody the passion of the moment "Jesus wept!" Why did Jesus weep? Because he loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus!"

Today we stand we stand like Martha, not fully understanding how God operates, but trusting in him completely!

Our humanity cries out! Our soul swells! Our heart mourns! Yet deep within we know that just as Jesus wept with Martha when she lost a loved one, that he stands with us in our moment of trial. He stood with Martha because he loved her!

Jesus' love did not extend to Martha alone! Each person named in this text is connected to other inextricably by the conjunction AND. It means that he did not love one without the other! He loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus! He loved Martha

and he loves us...just like he loved Martha!

Who was Martha? She was a woman who gentle nature earned her the distinction of being called a “lady!”

Who was Martha? She was an invisible servant who made a difference in the lives of her family and those whom she touched

Who was Martha? She was a child of the king!

Who was Martha? She was one who loved to hear the story! The story of a God who loved the world so much that he sent his only begotten Son! A son who died on Calvary rose after three days and night!

Where is Martha now? Martha has answered the call of him who loved her!

He calls for every believer even today..”Come and go with me to my father’s house!”

In my father’s house there is peace!

In my father’s house there is joy!

Come and go with me to my father’s house!

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On Monday January 15, 1996 Martha Perry Murray answered the call of the heavenly father. Her quiet manner, deep faith, humble service and warm spirit bears to the fact that Jesus loved Martha...and took her home!

No. 594-Inspiration

Traveling Light

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 21, 1996

SCRIPTURE: ***"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house." Luke 10:2-5***

Introduction

Do you ever feel weighted down? The cares and concerns of life can easily mount up. Instead of moving through life at a brisk pace we drudge through each day with a snail like crawl. Problems, worries, commitments, difficulties, challenges: they all seem to mount until they begin to pose a burden upon us. Now even the simplest aspects of life have become complicated. We find ourselves making it through each day with the assistance of headache medicines, nerve pills, relaxers, and pep pills. We are so worked up, stressed up, tied up and tangled up that we can't lay down without sleeping pills. When our appointment book gets so full that we have no place for church, family, and self, except a few non-quality minutes here or there, then we know that we are getting too busy. When the concerns of life accumulate they become burdens. After we've carried them for a while the burdens seem to get heavier. In actuality, the burdens don't get heavier, we get weaker. Accumulated concern makes it hard to enjoy life to its fullest.

Consider the young woman who had found herself a new apartment and was preparing to move. Her girl friend had come to help her but found her sitting in the middle of packing boxes crying. When asked to explain her tears she said, she never realized how much "stuff" she had accumulated. "I'm not going to be able to take all of this to my new apartment" she moaned. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" There were what nots and souvenirs, gifts, mementos, gadgets and plethora of others. She was a complete mess. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" Her friend, who had faced the same dilemma once said: "Take only what you need to get where you're going!" With that, the young lady painfully decided to leave behind many things which tied her to the past and took only those things she needed to claim her future.

Are we sitting at the threshold of the future trying to take with us all of the old baggage from the past? Are we finding that we have too much "stuff?" To make the

journey. Maybe its time for us to part with some of our "stuff" if it doesn't help us to get where we are going. Do we really need an appointment book that is so full that we have to schedule in a moment with our family and call it quality time? What about the worries and concerns of the past? Can we box a few of them up and leave them behind? Take only what you need to get where you are going!

As Christians, we have been charged to work to build the kingdom of God. The complexities of living in modern times have bogged many of us down to the point that we have little time for kingdom building as manage our accumulation of "stuff." Christ calls us to take no thought of "stuff" but to take only what we need to get where we're going and he'll take care of the rest!"

Exposition

This text finds Jesus as he commissions 35 sets of disciples to witness for him in various cities.

Jesus had commissioned the 12 apostles to go and preach the gospel and witness for him. Matthew 10 amplifies their mission and charge: To witness to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were given special powers for the task. They were to be used in accomplishing the mission. In Mat 10:7-8 *"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."* These powers were limited in nature. They were not given to all believers, but were special dispensations for accomplishing a specific purpose.

In addition, they were told to neither to worry about the usual concerns of living, God would provide.

This text in Luke begins as Jesus sends out 70 others. They too were charged to go into the surrounding villages and carry the gospel message. Like the original 12 they were forbidden to go outside of their race, but to witness only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. They too were given the command to take no concern for the usual demands of life, God would provide.

At the time of Jesus the typically dressed Jew in Palestine had five articles of clothing: Two tunics; one was an inner garment, the other, an outer one used as a cloak by day and a blanket by night. Then there was a girdle, a kind of waistband worn over the two tunics, a head covering, and sandals. A wallet or travelers bag was carried for food and money. It was carried over the shoulder. But Jesus told them to leave most of that behind. Simply Go! God would provide!

That was more of a challenge than it appeared, but they had a mission to accomplish. They carried only what they needed to get where they were going. All else, God would provide as needed.

The idea was for them to focus on the mission rather than the externals associated with the mission. The 70 were sent out on pure faith alone. In Luke 10:4 they were command not to carry a purse, that meant they were not to be overly concerned with money matters. God would provide. They were also told not to carry scrip. Scrip is

a pouch in which food is carried on a journey. If they carried no scrip that means they carried no food with them. Neither were they to worry themselves with packing extra shoes or clothing items. They were even told not to salute anyone they met along the way. Saluting was not simply a matter of "good morning" as is Western tradition. In the East, saluting could be quite a time consuming experience involving embracing and other long, drawn out, rituals. Saluting each person they met could slow down the journey. After the mission was accomplished, there would be plenty time for salutations! He wanted them focused on the mission.

These messengers were sent on a Holy Mission by Christ himself. To accomplish such a task they would need to trust him fully and keep themselves focused on the mission. Thus, they were charged to travel light, think deep and pray hard.

Modern missionaries have a similar mission but not specifically the same as these 70. Missionaries are still charged to spread the word. Unlike the first missionaries, we are charged to go to the entire world, not just the lost sheep of the house of Israel. While the first were told to make no provision for themselves and their families, modern missionaries are charged to provide the essentials for their *families. 1 Timothy 5:8 "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* That concern however is not to supercede the mission.

The key for modern Christians is do that which is necessary, avoid the unnecessary, pursue the mission and travel light!

Heavy Baggage Is A Burden

As we face new directions and the remaining months of a new year, we must consider whether we are carrying so much baggage that we can barely move along.

If you have traveled you have perhaps seen two types of travelers. One is in the airport with large suitcases and is struggling to make it to a terminal. Another has an equal amount of baggage but has a small dolly upon which he or she rolls the suitcase. At first sight it appears that the one whose suit case is on wheels was the smart traveler until you see a third traveler who only carries a clothes bag and brief case or purse. One had a heavy suitcase on wheels, but it was still a heavy suit case it was just handled easy by innovation. At some point the wheels came off and the suit case became a heavy load again.

There are many of us who are carrying heavy suitcases into the new year. Granted some handle their loads with grace and style, as if it were rolling along on wheels, but it is nevertheless a heavy load. At some point we reach a stair way or find that the wheels don't help and feel the weight of the load.

What's in your suitcase? What kind of excess baggage are you carrying?

GUILT: Some carry guilt with them every day. They made a mistake a while back and they have never forgiven themselves. They blame themselves constantly. Even though they have prayed to God and he has forgiven them and washed away the guilt with his blood, they carry guilt around with them. It's a heavy load. Sometimes they

are smiling and shaking hands and seem warm and carefree. That's because they have put their guilt on wheels, but they are still carrying it around.

We should travel lighter, leaving guilt behind, especially in light of Hebrews 9:14 " How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Since Jesus has forgiven us for our mistakes, we should not make our load heavier!

FEARS: Some carry fear with them every day. They are afraid of failure. Afraid to take opportunities and to step out on faith. Fear consumes them every day. They cannot get away from it. From year to year they live in fear of losing their job, getting demoted, not being accepted. They constantly live in fear! However, when God is on our side we have nothing to fear from life. Psalm 118:6 "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Psalm 27:1 puts it this way: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

WORRIES: Perhaps the heaviest piece of luggage to carry around is worry. Worry is more than concern, it is over concern. Those who worry invent scenarios that may never happen. The muse over projected tragedy and they make a bad case even worse because of their intense worry.

Many get bags under the eyes, lose sleep, suffer deteriorating health and suffer stress attacks because they worry so much. They carry it around with them daily. Jesus addressing this subject made this response in Matthew 6:28-30 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

A song writer worded it differently: "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come. Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. When Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Take It To The Lord

What do we do with burdens? What do we do with guilt, fear and worry? What do we do with a seemingly endless list of problems and troubles that are beyond our control?

For the answer, the Word of God points us to Matthew 11:28 *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Verse 30 puts on the finishing touches: Mat 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

What do we do with burdens and excess baggage? Give it to Jesus!

When Job found himself surrounded by burdens and troubles he decided that it was best to give it to God! In Job 5:7-9 Job says *"Yet man is born unto trouble,*

as the sparks fly upward. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:" Job decided to take his burden to God!

When David found himself surrounded troubles and trials he decided it was best to look up. Psalm 121 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!"

Traveling light means traveling without unnecessary burdens!

Traveling light means trusting God to carry the heavy end of the load!

Traveling light means working on the middle and trusting God to make the ends meet!

What do you do with asuitcase full of burdens? Take it to the Lord!

That's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word, how he feeds the little bird and take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!"

If you'll leave it there, he take your:

-Loneliness and give you an everlasting comfort; Empty House and bless it to become a home

-Trial and give you strength to endure; Heartache and give you a love that will heal

-Sorrow and turn it into gladness; Weakness and turn it into strength

-Bowed down head and raise it up in joy!

If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!

When we take our burdens to the Lord we are taking them to somebody who knows about carrying heavy burdens! He knows about carry the weight of the world on his shoulders! He knows about suffering for the sake of others!

Isaiah 53:5 says "..he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

He knows about carrying burdens for one day, nearly 2000 years ago, he carried a heavy burden on his shoulder up Golgatha's hill!

He knows about carrying burdens for died out on Calvary!

But he also knows how to get rid burdens for Early Sunday morning he rose up from the grave with all power in his burden free hands!

If you want to travel light! Trust in the Lord!

If you want to travel burden free! Trust in the Lord!

He will make everything all right!

No. 595-Funeral

Who Will Tell The Story?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 27, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlet between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth" Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Introduction

Were you ever lectured by your parents? There is nothing more monotonous than hearing the same story told repeatedly. Most children wonder why their parents, especially their grand parents, keep telling the same stories over and over again. Often we have heard the stories so often that we know them from memory and recount every word, line by line, word for word. It's not so bad until things go bad. When we make mistakes and foul ups one thing we dreaded most is hearing the lectures that our parents would give. Sometimes we'd rather have received a good whipping if meant that we avoid the lecture. In most cases however, we got the whipping and the lecture too!

Although we were often annoyed by the lectures, lessons and sermons of our parents and grand parents, one of the first things we miss when they are no longer there is sound of their strong voices ringing in our ears. In their absence, the silence is worse than the lectures. Consider the little girl who was very close to her grandmother. Grandmother always took time to come to her room, pull up the old rocking chair and read her stories from an old story book given to her by her mother. The stories were funny. Mother Goose, Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Wonderland, Goldilocks and the three bears...they were all amusing stories. Grandmother would sit in that old rocker and read one each night without fail. After a while Grandmother took sick. Shortly after the little girl learned that grandma was gone to be with God. Only one thought came to her mind. The question plagued her day and night. She knew that grandma was with God. She knew that Grandma was safe. However, the question that bothered her was "who will tell the story?" As she came home that night her mother came into her room and tucked her daughter in bed. Tired she sat in the old rocking chair. Instantly the little girl sat up in her bed and displayed the biggest

smile. “Why are you smiling so?” The mother asked. The girl pointed to her mother “You’re sitting in grandma’s chair! “ The little girl pulled out the old story book that had passed through three generations and put it in her mother’s lap. “You are sitting in grandma’s chair. You must tell the story!” Instantly the mother begin to feel grandma’s presence. She opened the book and night after night she repeated the story until her daughter fell fast asleep!

One of the roles of grand parents is to facilitate the transmission of the elements of culture, heritage and values from one generation to next. Good parents and grandparents are burdened with the responsibility of teaching the young to know the path the family has trod and equip them to make the remainder of the journey on their own. With evangelistic zeal they lecture, teach, preach, drill and reteach the same truths untiringly. Without good parents and grandparents we would lose our connection with our past. Without them, we would wander through an endless maze of meaningless frustration. Without them, we would plunge aimlessly into the future without direction!

As Christians, we thank God for good parents and grand parents. Through them we learn of his goodness in our past, his mercies in our present and his promises for our future! We are better off today because God loaned us the presence of parents who were not afraid to “tell the story!”

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he tells the nation of Israel the story of God’s goodness and mercy toward them as a people.

The journey of the children of Israel from a small band of hungry pilgrims who came from Canaan to Egypt in a time of famine to a huge nation of wilderness nomads, nearly a half million in number is memorable.

Moses, the patriarch of the nation, had been the single strong spirit that seemed to bond the nation together. It was his faith and strength that helped them to leave Egypt and begin their journey to the promised land. When they lost faith, Moses prayed to God. When they were afraid, Moses told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. When they had no food, Moses turned to God and meat, bread and water was served daily on their table. When they sinned, Moses chastised them. When they exercised faith, Moses led them in celebration.

Without a doubt, Moses was the pillar of the Israelite nation. His youth was a litany of deeds and accomplishments that included surviving the wilderness, seeing the burning bush, facing Pharaoh, maintaining the wilderness existence for 40 years. However, in his senior years, Moses assumed the role of teacher for the people.

The entire book of Deuteronomy is a written record of Moses’ many efforts to tell the story of the Israelite journey. The name *“Deuteronomy”* means *“A second Look.”* In this final of his five books, Moses retells the story. It is not simply a recounting of the journey but an account of God’s dealings with the people. That aspect is what distinguishes biblical history from secular history. While secular

history tells the story of man's journey, biblical history tells the story of the journey with respect to God's relationship to the pilgrims. Thus Moses notes that it is not so much the telling of the story that is important as is the emphasis on God's dealings with mankind in the process.

The thrust of these text verses seem to fall in three categories.

Each believer is charged to know the story themselves. They are charged to have the word of God in their hearts and to constantly remind themselves of God's goodness by keeping them visible in glaring ways. Knowing what God has done from first hand experience has the effect of serving as frontlets or guides that keep us from straying too far to the left or to the right.

Each believer is also charged to teach their experience to their children. Thus it is not sufficient for good parents or grand parents to know what God has done for themselves, but they must also take advantage of every opportunity to teach the principles of godliness to their children. At any given opportunity the good parent or grand parent tells the story. In the morning, noon or at midnight, they will tell the story. Moses goes even further in Deuteronomy 11:19-20 *"..speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:"*

Each believer will be rewarded for their faithfulness to their duty. The reward will come in the form of long life. In addition, their children and grand children will enjoy a richer happier life because they took the time to tell the story at every opportunity!

Thus, Moses emphasized the importance of telling the story. Each parent or grandparent must live the story and believe God in their own hearts. Tell that testimony to their children, and expect to reap the reward of long life and blessed posterity for their faithfulness to God

A Story to Tell

Before anyone can tell the story, they must first have a story to tell. Moses told Israel to first get the word of God in its heart. For Israel that meant internalizing the 10 commandments and ceremonial laws that God had given through Moses. At that point, that was the only written law. It also meant allowing it to become fronlets or guides for their lives.

No one can tell the story of God's dealing in their lives until they have a story to tell. That's why the senior members of every Christian family are so vital to its existence. They are the keepers of the family story. The seniors and the seniors alone can tell the whole story. They have run the full length of the life experience. They have made the foolish mistakes of youth, meandered the maze of marriage, faced sickness, shouldered the burden of the death of loved ones, and endured hardships, all while surfing the sea of life in their golden years. The seniors of every family have a full story to tell.

The microwave mom won't appreciate her microwave unless she knows how far God has brought the family. When the story is told she'll soon learn that there weren't always microwaves, but there was a time when the family cooked on cast iron stoves heated by freshly chopped wood. If she listens as the story is told, she'll learn that there was no "shake and bake" but there was a time when mama would "cook and wake" her family to a table of 15 minute grits, home made biscuits soaked in freshly churned butter, fresh hen house eggs and cured bacon straight from the smoke house. When the family prayed over breakfast, there was no doubt that God made it all happen. The women of the family learn that they are part of a long line of Christian women who remained faithful to their husbands and families and even pursued careers with success in proportion to their trust in God. That's what they learn when the story is told.

When dad drives away in his shiny new car, he won't appreciate it fully until he knows how God has really blessed the family. When he knows that God has moved the family from hitching up the mules to the wagon to loading everybody into Cadillacs, Lincolns, Toyotas, Fords and Chevrolets then he will better appreciate the work of God in his family. If he endures hard times and trouble in the world, he'll gain faith in knowing that the men of the family have survived slavery, depressions, race discrimination and deprivation, with the help of God. That's what he'll learn when the story is told.

The story is also about allowing God's word to guide personal decisions to the point that the word of God becomes a "frontlet." Frontlets keep the eyes of team mules from straying. They see only what's in front of them. The seniors of every Christian family must drill the Christian message into the young, showing them how God has guided their own lives. The example of faith and dependence upon God is invaluable in every family. It's the story of how God has moved in your life. It's a story of a family that has been blessed because God has been in its midst.

There must be persons in every family who serve as the keepers of the family story. Moses said they must tell the story in the morning. Tell it in the evening. Even if walking down the streets and the opportunity presents itself, tell the story. Anywhere the younger members of the family turn they must hear the story. Write it down, put it on video tape, save it on computer discs, inscribe it in the family bible, record it, place it on the internet and world wide web, broadcast it on the radio and television..that's what Moses meant by write it on your door posts. Tell the story where he can be seen and heard. Every senior member of a Christian family has the great responsibility to keep telling the story.

Seniors who tell the story will enjoy a good old age. They will get a few bonus years beyond the usual three score and ten, but could earn bonus years for themselves, extending themselves beyond the normal expectancy! The joy of seniors is not in the length of their own lives, but its in their children and grandchildren Every grandparent is happy when they know there children and grandchildren are safe in the arms of God and are able to stand alone. Moses said the seniors who do their jobs well will enjoy their golden years because their children and grandchildren will walk

the Godly path, thanks to their example.

Who will tell the story?

The challenge of every family facing the death of a patriarch or matriarch who was the strong voice that has told the story for so many years, is to answer the question: "Who will tell the story?" Who will rise to be sure that young and struggling members of the family are reminded that if they trust in the Lord he will bless them? Who will champion justice and speak against sinfulness in the family with a strength of conviction that will both inspire faith and discourage wrong doing? Who will tell the story?

When Moses died the people mourned his loss. They asked among themselves: "Who will tell the story?" Just about that time Joshua stood and said "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

When Elijah went back to glory on a chariot, the question was asked: "Who will tell the story?" Young Elisha who had been walking with the sainted senior for many years picked up his mantle and the Holy Ghost gave a double portion of what Elijah had to tell the story!

Across the battlements of heaven the question rings out: "Who will tell the story?"

The modern response should be the same as that of Isaiah "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I Lord, send me!"

Who will tell the story of the goodness of the Lord?

Who will tell the world that those who trust in the Lord can:

—Face the unfaceable; conquer the unconquerable

—Bear the unbearable; suffer the insufferable

—Love the unlovable; reach the unreachable

The Lord needs somebody who will pick up the fallen mantle and be a witness that God is a good God! That even in times of sadness and death, that he will make a way!

Who will tell the story of how God took a poor farm family and sent some of them to college, placed them in jobs, pulpits and positions of responsibilities all across this nation?

Who will tell the story told by our forefathers?

Whoever tells the story must decide to live the life and walk the walk, before they try to talk the talk!

If you are going to tell the story, you must know Jesus for yourself!

You can't tell your story until you can tell his story!

Tell them about Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Tell them about Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Tell them how he died on Calvary!

Tell them how he rose after three days and nights!

Tell them how he promised never to leave the family

Tell them he'll never leave us alone!

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On January 22, 1996 Rosa Minor Coffey went home to be with God. She was a teacher, principal, usher and mother. She lived the life, walked the walk and then talked the talk. With everything in her being...she told the story!

No. 596-Black Heritage

Minority Report

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 4, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. Numbers 13:30-31;Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? Isaiah 53:1

Introduction

What lies in the future of the African-American community? The answer depends totally upon the perspective of the respondent. Some have become accustomed to the social stigmas associated with minority status in America. Their response is one of pure survival. They suggest we should be still and let well enough alone. This view is shared by a majority of the minority and historically would have represented our plight had it not been for a small minority. This small minority promoted the social changes that moved us from slavery to quasi-freedom, from the back of the bus to front and from political pawns to players in the social arena. It has historically been the plight of the minority of our people to fuel the waning hopes aspirations of a comfortable and fearful majority. The spokesmen for that minority have had different roles and different names over the years such as Denmark Vessey, Douglas, Dubois, Booker Washington, Randolph, Newton, Malcolm, and King. They represent the vocal minority whose message to a people comfortable in defeat is "we can possess a better life if we go up and seize it." Their report was one of hope in the face of insurmountable odds.

The majority rejected them but history has embraced these and others who gave the same report: "We will get to the promised land some day!" It is not unusual for the majority to accept conditions as inevitable and assume a "do nothing" attitude. The hope of every race has been in the well of inspiration they were able to summon from those who had not accepted defeat. Sometimes the a persistent minority can bring out the truth.

Consider Joshua Jones who ran a still back in the rolling hills of Mississippi. The majority of the people in the county knew Joshua ran that still but figured that a poor man had to do what he had to do to survive. Everybody except two neighbors who consistently told everyone that running a still was illegal and it promoted alcoholism. Each time they reported old Joshua the law was never able to find his still because

the majority of the folks covered for him and helped him hide. This went on for years until Joshua bought his wife a new house and a new car and fine clothes. That made the men of the town a little jealous. They worked hard, but all Joshua did was sell white lightning. So when the two neighbors demanded the police take action the majority of the folk said nothing. In court the judge who was known to take a nip of Joshua's brew tried the case as one of mistaken identity. "You are the Joshua that made the Sun stand still aren't you?" The two neighbors gave Joshua a defiant look and he gave in, "No Sir," he responded "I'm the Joshua that makes the moon shine!" It took them many years but the two neighbors finally brought the truth to the light. Often it is the persistence of a hopeful minority that saves the majority. A minority that keeps it eye focused on the promises of God can see beyond the frustrations of the moment and peer in the bright prospects of the future. A minority that never doubts the power of God can possess the promises he has given. Regardless to the majority opinion, the minority must continue to hold up the banner of hope. God is still on the throne. As Christians, African-American Christians we are the hopeful minority. Despite a changing social climate that threatens life as we know it, we are confident that the future belongs to the remnant of God. Just as a small remnant of just two people saw the prospects and promise of the future despite its challenges, we who trust in God, must also resolve that we can possess the future because we are able to overcome it!

Exposition

This text focuses on the report of 12 spies that had been sent to investigate the prospects of the promised land. Israel's journey to the promised land was fueled by a hope that had sustained them for centuries. God had promised Abraham that his family would inherit all of the lands of Canaan. However, several centuries had passed since that promise was made. They spent 430 years in slavery in Egypt. Though they were nearly 600,000 in number, they were untrained militarily and unskilled at self management. Yet they moved in a wave of hope and expectation, toward the promised land. Once there, Moses selected 12 spies, one from each tribe, to go into the land and confirm God's promise.

At verse 18 Moses suggests to them that the spies should investigate whether the people were strong or weak. They were told to report about their living arrangements, considering whether they lived in tents or in strong cities. Then they were to consider the land itself. They were to consider whether there was enough wood to supply the people and whether it was fertile or lean (v20). Once there the spies discovered that the land was truly fertile and rich with resources to support the people In fact, the land was so fertile that they described it as a land "flowing with milk and honey." (v27). It was rich in natural resources, just as God had said. However, 10 of the 12 spies also gave the down side of their report. While it was fertile and rich, it was also occupied by not one but several nations of Black people, descendants of Ham, who had lived in the region for centuries. Among these Black descendants of

Ham were the Amorites, Jebusites, Hittites and other Canaanites. Also among them were the sons of Anak, who were huge giants of men who built great cities with giant sized walls. Before these men, the spies saw themselves as mere grasshoppers (v33). The majority report was that the land was fertile but there were too many obstacles preventing a successful invasion. There was a minority report. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb tried to convince them that there was hope. In Genesis 15:13 God promised their 400 year enslavement and deliverance and it came to be. God had promised that the land would be fertile and was as he said. What reason did they have to doubt that he would give them victory despite obstacles, if everything else concerning God's promise has proven true.

Because of God's promise, Joshua and Caleb felt confident enough to say "we are able to possess it." Not by their own strength, but because they would be supported by the power of the almighty God. This is a truth that would be repeated centuries later in Zechariah 4:6 which says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." The victory they expected was not based upon what they alone were able to do, but upon the power of God to make it happen. It was God's will for them to possess the land! It had been promised! Since God had made the promise their victory was a foregone conclusion. That was the minority report. "Let us go up at once, and possess it" was their recommendation. Despite the promising report the people listened to the majority. In Chapter 14 verse 1, they began to complain and weep about the difficulty of their situation. Their final conclusion was to give up the struggle. They wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years, until the entire generation of adults that participated in the faithless decision died. In their old age, Joshua and Caleb still gave the same report "Let us go up at once, and possess it!"

The Challenges Ahead

As African-Americans consider the future, what is the report of our future? What is the status of the promised land? Is it flowing with milk and honey? What about the people who stand in the way? Will they be easy to defeat? Will they be strong? The report we receive is that the future is indeed bright. There are great opportunities that exist in the promised land. It will be a land where opportunities exist for every person without regard to his color or creed. It will be a land where the people will have worked vigorously to eliminate discrimination and will have taken affirmative steps to make up for past mistakes and place everyone on an even plain. It will be land where the bottom rail has risen to the ranks of the top rail and those who have been among the last will be among the first. Economically, Socially and politically, it will be a land flowing with milk and honey.

However, there is a down side to the report. While the future is bubbling with prospects, they will not come easy for us. The land is filled with conservative Jubusites, Amorites and Republicans. They are entrenched and pose a formidable barrier. There are a few giants among them who have built great walls to fortify

themselves and keep us at a distance. In fact they are so well entrenched, so well financed, and so well trained that we shrivel before them like grasshoppers. They are taking over the Congress, governors mansions, state and local governments. Beside this external threat we face internal threats. Our families are falling apart, our economic base is dwindling. Our cultural awareness is disintegrating. Our able bodied men are dying in their youth or jailed in the prime.

We own less, manufacture nothing and are becoming increasingly dependent upon the good will and charity of others for both jobs and public assistance. The conclusion of the majority report is that politically and socially we are doomed! We will never possess the promised land. The majority report gives us the prospects and lays out the challenge. The question is whether we are willing to meet the challenge or whether we will simply give up. The promised land won't come without a struggle. What Joshua and Caleb tried to tell Israel is germane to our present circumstance. We are able to possess the promise! However, we must be willing to adjust our methods, use the tools we have at hand, and trust God for the rest.

The African-American church is the strongest vehicle we have at our disposal with which we can claim the promise. We must use it like David's sling to defeat circumstances that stand in the way of the promise. The church must a) Promote faith in God with an evangelistic zeal. It must teach God's word to build the faith of the people beyond the generic specially showing how God has dealt with oppressed people in the past giving hope for the future. b) Organize and train an army of young men and women to go forth to possess the promise, unintimidated by the processes of government or the size of their opposition. Churches must invest in their youth. We must educate them, train them and protect them from destructive influences. They will be the center of a generation that will bring down the walls of Jericho. c) Promote Afro-centric citizen involvement in government free of entanglements, co-optation or assimilationist attitudes. We must work to promote good government that is Afro-Centric. We must support leaders who will ask questions, provide answers and take actions on our behalf, while at the same time recognizing the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all men. d) Organize and expand its influences beyond its walls into the highways and byways. To accomplish this the church must change its way of thinking. Its activities cannot be defined by what is done with the confines of its walls. It must reach into the schools, housing projects, malls and street corners to carry the message of hope. It must respond to the homeless, hungry and impoverished masses with education, health care, housing, job training, and economic opportunity renewing hope that we are able to possess the promise of God! It is the challenge that is intimidating. It is the size of the giant that stares us that scares some. Israel lost hope when they began to think of themselves as grasshoppers, rather than men who were just as mighty but just a little shorter. The majority lost hope. They made it to the promised land because the minority never lost hope.

The Minority Report

The African-American church has played a formidable place in the history of our people. It has sounded the alarm, given the battle charge and led the fight to possess the promise. It has produced a small handful of visionary leaders who have, for the most part, served as our Joshuas and Caleb's reminding us that just beyond the river lies the promised land. The majority report urges us to accept our plight because it is afraid of the challenge.

The minority report on the other hand is not intimidated by the challenge it is ready to act with the available knowledge that God will take care of the rest!

The minority report has been drenched in the word of God and is dripping with faith. It is a faith that despite the obstacles before us that the Lord will make a way!

The minority report says God wouldn't take Moses to mountain top and have him tell us "I may not get there with, but I have seen the promise land!"

The minority report says "the road is rough and going is tough and hills are hard to climb, but I started out a long time ago and there is no doubt in my mind, I've decided to make Jesus my choice!"

The minority report says we have come through hills and valleys, we've come through slavery and discrimination and second class citizenship, but I don't feel no ways tired. I don't believe he brought this far to leave me!

Somebody here doesn't believe our report. They doubt whether the action of one man or a small handful can change things. These skeptics are not the first to have such doubts. The skeptics gave the final report, the world is doomed and cannot be saved! But Isaiah declared that there is a minority report. A reason for hope, whether you believe it or not, God is getting ready to move!

I hear Isaiah 53:1 ask, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"

The minority report is that a child shall grow up among them like a root out of David! The minority report is: He shall be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace is upon him!

He will be crucified on an old rugged cross, but he'll rise up after three days and nights!

He's coming back again!

When he comes back, justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Every valley shall be exalted and mountain shall be made low! I don't about you but I believe the minority report because I trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord... Until I die!

No. 597-Inspiration

Heart Transplant

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 11, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel 36:26-28

Introduction

Have you ever had a change of heart? That's when you changed both your opinion and your actions toward someone or something. Usually a change of heart reflects a complete change, whereas a change of mind represents only a change of opinion. Those who have a change of heart are often strikingly different in their words and actions. Sometimes a change of heart can signify a positive shift. Sometimes people change for the worse. The record is filled with examples of people who had changes of heart for the better. Saul had a change of heart on the Damascus Road. Jonah had a change of heart after three days in a fish's belly. Their change of heart was for the better. Some like Judas also had changes of heart, but they were for the worse.

The one common element that all Christians share is that they have all had a change of heart ..for the better. That's when they accepted Jesus as their Savior. In the Western world the heart is usually considered the center of affections and convictions. It is symbolic of course, since in reality the heart is a mass of flesh. In other societies the kidney, brain and even the liver is considered the center of affection and conviction. It doesn't matter which organ is the symbol, it is important that each represents the place where affection and conviction are controlled. The heart is the symbol of love. While it is recognized as such year round it is recognized even more during the month of February because of Valentine's Day.

According to one of the many legends, the valentine takes its name from a young Christian who once lived in ancient Rome. Like so many of the early Christians, Valentine had been imprisoned because of his faith. Often and longingly he thought of his loved ones, and wanted to assure them of his well-being and his love. Beyond his cell window, and beyond reach, grew a cluster of violets. He picked some heart-shaped leaves and pierced them to spell the words, "Remember your Valentine," then sent them off by a friendly dove. On the next day and the next, he sent more messages

that simply said, “I love you.” Thus did the valentine have its beginning. On Valentine’s Day, people of all ages remember those they love by sending valentines. As Christians, we love God with heartfelt affection. At one point God became angry with the world and wanted to destroy it because of its sin. But God had a change of heart. He changed his mind and sent his Son to save the world instead. In effect, he sent us a valentine, saying “I love you!” Daily, we can send him one in return, when we show our love to him by obeying his word and giving him praise!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Ezekiel as he tells how God would restore the nation of Israel and give it a new heart. The Babylonians were the dreaded enemies of Judah. In the year 606 B.C. they began the first of several deportations of the best and brightest of the Jewish people, carrying them back to Babylon. These included the artists, craftsmen, and trained workers. Among those deported were Daniel, the Three Hebrew Boys, and Ezekiel. While in another land Ezekiel was called to be a prophet, at age 30. His message was one of hope and restoration for a divided and conquered people. He spoke to them in both written and verbal prophecies in which he told them that they would be reunited like “dry bones in the valley.” He constantly reminded them that their spirituality must be increased and the worldliness must decrease.

The people prayed for Babylon to be destroyed so they could enjoy full freedom again. False prophets arose among them saying God would destroy Babylon disputing prophecies hat had come from Jeremiah (Jeremiah 28-29). Jeremiah,who remained in Jerusalem told the remnant to expect 70 years of Babylonian domination. Ezekiel had the job of telling the people that it would not be Babylon that God would destroy but Jerusalem would be destroyed. After the complete destruction of Jerusalem, then God planned to rebuild the nation into a glorious state that would include the restoration of the temple, the state of Israel and the Messianic reign of the Savior.

This text extracts four verses from Ezekiel’s prophecy. It epitomizes the theme of his message to Judah. God would forgive them for their disobedience, worship of idols and ungodliness and sprinkle them with compassion and forgiveness on certain conditions.(v25).

Verse 26 notes that God proposed to give Judah and new spirit and new heart, displacing their old “stony” heart with one that could live and breath the truths of God. The new spirit would be different from their old spirit. Their old spirit was defiant. God said “no” they said “yes!” God said “go right” they said “go left!” Their spirit was selfish and materialistic. God proposed to give them a new spirit. Their stony hearts caused them to ignore God and to reject him. God proposed to give them new hearts. The results of having a new spirit and new heart would be refreshing.

Verse 27 says once the people get new hearts and new spirits they would obey God’s commands, learn them and live by them. With new spirits and new hearts a new

relationship with God would exist. He would be their God again and they would be his people.

Heart Trouble

Like Judah many today are suffering from heart trouble both physiologically and spiritually. As African Americans this is a staggering truth. The greatest single threat to the life of the African American community is not AIDS, Murders, or Sickle Cell Anemia even though these play significant roles in our collective death. Heart trouble is our biggest killer. Among Black males as of 1991, out of every 1000 deaths, 347 were from heart disease, that's (47 percent higher than white men) and 221.6 for black females (69% higher than white females).

The staggering truth is that more Blacks are dying from strokes, high blood pressure and heart attacks, than any other reason. Nearly seven out of 10 Blacks over age 60 have high blood pressure. Physiologically speaking the main causes of heart disease among Blacks are smoking, high cholesterol diets, lack of physical activity and excessive weigh. Three out of every 10 Black men smoke cigarettes two out of every 10 Black women smoke. Most Blacks have very little physical activity and three out of every 10 Black men are overweight and nearly five out of ten Black women are overweight. Psychological Connection Smoking, high cholesterol, inactivity and overweight are the main factors that cause heart trouble. However a Duke University study showed that between one third and one half of all heart trouble related deaths could not be explained by one of these four factors. Psychologically there is a connection between heart trouble and the way we handle stress and our outlook on life.

A Harvard Medical School Study of 1,122 heart attack survivors found that those who tried to remain calm during emotional conflicts had half the risk of heart attacks compared to those who tended to get angry. The same study showed Men who complain of high anxiety are up to six times more likely than calmer men to suffer sudden cardiac death. A Duke University study of 1,719 people diagnosed with heart disease revealed that "a healthy outlook (optimism) helps heal the heart" while pessimism "can be a killer." In a study with recovering heart patients at the Montreal Heart Institute, Dr. Nancy Frasure-Smith found those who were hopeful and happy were eight times more likely to live than those who were sad and depressed.

According to a Mayo Clinic study of individuals with heart disease, researchers found that psychological distress was the strongest predictor of future cardiac events, such as cardiac death, cardiac arrest and heart attack. In short, ones attitudes and outlooks on life also add to or subtract from the probability of heart disease. Spiritual Connection If there is a psychological connection then there is also a spiritual connection. Our attitudes and outlook on life is great affected by our spiritual state. Hope is a matter of spirit. Those who are hopeless suffer tremendous pessimism. They brood, complain and get cranky. They are constantly worked up and moved from minute to minute like a time bomb ready to go off. Faith is a matter is also

a matter of spirit. Those who are faithless are distrustful, fearful and are often paranoid. They live daily in fear of everything. It leads to stress, tension and reflects and deteriorating spirituality. It is no wonder that God told Israel that he would give them a new spirit before he would give them a new heart. A new heart would be useless if the spirit was still the same.

Today, there is a need for a new spirit among God's people.

There are too many **HARD HEARTED** people who feel no compassion for anyone and are stubborn and stuck in their ways. It was a hard heart that made Pharaoh resist the command of God to free the slaves in Egypt.

The **COLD HEARTED** are unmerciful and unforgiving. It was a cold heart that prompted the King of Babylon to put the three Hebrew Boys in fiery furnace because they refused to follow an order to bow.

The **BROKEN HEARTED** are depressed, anxious and defeated. It was a broken heart that God tried to symbolize when he command the prophet Hosea to marry a wife of whoredom.

The STONE HEARTED are unresponsive and sullen. It was a stone heart that prompted King Ahab to ignore the prophet Elijah and bringing on three years of drought.

The MEAN HEARTED are cruel and dangerous. It was a mean heart that prompted Herod to destroy all children under two years old when he learned of the birth of the Messiah. All of these represent bad spirits. Worry, Anxiety, Hatred and Anger are bad spirits that impact our spiritual state, promote stress and have a negative impact on our attitudes. Before we are deemed worthy transplant recipients, we must rid ourselves of bid spirits. It will do us no good to have a new heart if it too will be destroyed by the same bad spirits. King David had heart trouble. It wasn't heart disease but it was heart trouble none he less because he was in love with another man's wife. He couldn't straightened things out with God until he first acquired the right spirit. That's why in Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The right spirit was essential to the clean heart. It was true for David then and it remains true for believers today as well. When we get angry with our family members, club members, church friends and co-workers that bad spirit sends our blood pressure soaring. The answer today is the same as it was in biblical times. We need a new spirit among us. The new spirit is a determination to improve our physical health by working to control bad health habits. The new spirit must also push us to work to improve our spiritual health by adopting new attitudes and spiritual growth.

Heart Transplant

If the nation is to be saved, there must be a new spirit among us. It must be a spirit that is dedicated to obeying the word of God. Without a doubt what the world needs today is a spiritual heart transplant. We need to present to God a clean heart. It must be a believing heart. It must be a confessing heart. Psalm 14:1 says *"The fool hath*

said in his heart there is no God." The fool needs a heart transplant. I hear Romans 10:9-10 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Those with impure motives and secret agendas cannot come before God. The impure need a heart transplant. I hear Matthew 5:8 saying "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

The evil and unrighteous of the world need a heart transplant. Mat 12:34-35 *"...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

Those who are troubled by the concerns and cares of this world need a heart transplant. I hear John 14:1-2 saying *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."*

When we get a heart transplant and new spirituality we trade our old heart filled with:

—Rebellion and get new heart of obedience. I hear the song writer declaring "Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey!"

—Insecurity and get a new heart of assurance. Along with that comes a new song: "Blessed Assurance. Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine"

—Sinfulness and get a new heart of repentance. Then we'll sing. "I was sinking deep in sin. Far from the peaceful shore. Deeply stained within. Then the master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me now safe am I.

—Defiant heart with a submissive spirit. "Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. Thou are the potter I am the clay"

—Apologetic spirit with a willing heart.

"If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!"

Today the world needs a transplant. However no transplant can occur unless there is a suitable donor. The donor has to give up his life for you to receive a new heart. When we are waiting for a transplant we have to wait until there is a person with similar physical characteristics who dies and donates his heart.

It may take weeks or years. Sometimes our match never comes!

But I know somebody who is willing to be a donor, for I heard him say "no greater love than this, that a man will lay down his life for a friend"

His name is Jesus! He died out on Calvary!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead offer a brand new life to any who would accept!

Do you need a heart transplant! Call on Jesus!

He'll make everything all right!

No. 598-Inspiration

HIStory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 18, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Having therefore obtaied help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saing none other things than those wich the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. Acts 26:22-23

Introduction

How well do you like history? There are some of us that enjoy studying history. Others hate the very thought of history. At first glance history brings to mind a few less than exciting classes we had in school in which we were forced to memorize dates, names and deeds of people that have long since left this earth. For some, history is an unpleasant memory. It has a way of dragging up the forgotten past in such a peculiar manner that it stirs the emotions to hatred or nostaglia. To any student not inclined to appreciate history, the thought of an entire month focused on such an obscure aspect of history such as Black History is even more troublesome. Even in Black History month, most people aren't very fond of history

One of the great truths of our times is this: "Those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them."

Consider the frogs in the pond who were captivated by a sight they saw on the other side of the pond. It seemed that there was a funny shaped, screened box that was sitting by the bank. It drew attention because the oddly shaped box was filled with biggest juiciest flies any of them had ever seen. After a lengthy discussion they decided that it would be a great thing if they would simply go over to the box and catch themselves some juicy flies that were sitting there waiting to be taken.

Before they moved however, the old Toad Frog said "I wouldn't do that if I were you. The sign don't mean what it say!" They argued with old toad and pointed to the sign above the box that read "Fresh Free Flies for Frogs!" Even though they were told how hundreds of frogs hopped into that box and never jump out the young toads wanted to try it anyway. The lure was too appealing. About 12 of the young frogs hopped into the box only to discover that the sign above the box slapped down and revealed another sign on its back that read "Fresh Fly fed froglegs 50c a dozen. The old frog said "He wouldn't learn from the past and jumped too fast and ended in the frying

pan. But the smart old frog sits on a log and catches all the flies he can."

What is history? The latest Micheal Jackson album gives us a hint. It is entitled "HIStory. That's about as simple a definition that can be given for history—HIStory. For Jackson, the CD represents a collection of his greatest songs, especially those that refect his views about life and love. We too, have a story. HIStory is your life's experience. Herstory is her life's expriences. When we study history we study the stories of indivuals, nations and ideas that have proven themselve pivotal in the shaping of the world as we know it today. To study history is to study somebody's story. That's it plain and simple.

For African-American Christians Black history begins first in their own homes. It begins with the story of parents whose personal history is clear and understood by all children. It continue even with children who fill in the pages of their own history book as they record the history of their own lives.

As Christians, we are aware that Christ has commanded each of us to go into the entire world and tell HIStory. We are reminded as retell the grand old story that we are never alone because he promised to be with us always, even unto end of the earth.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he testifies before King Agrippa about the nature of his faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul was perhaps the most famous of the converts to Christianity. He was often jailed and persecuted for his belief in Christ. Ironically, while he was one of the most prominent proponents of the face, there was a point in his life in which he was also one of its strongest enemies.

Chapters 25 and 26 of Acts give a picture of Paul standing before two important government leaders telling the story of his faith. In chapter 25 he stands before Festus. In Chapter 26 he is standing before Agrippa.

In the first 22 verses of the 26th chapter he gives his own personal testimony.

In verses 4-11 he spells how he was a Pharisee, a leader of the Jewish faith and dedicated to the destruction of the Christian movement, believing it to be a cult. He believed Christ wasdead. He believed those he continued to speak and teach that he was alive were a danger to the Jewish faith. As a young rabbi he worked hard to persecute every Christian he came in contact with, jailing them and persecuting them.

However in verse12-13 he points to a deciding moment in his life when he came face to face with the truth. This is where he "saw a light." In verses 14-18 he noted that he heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him challenging him to change is direction in life. In verses 19-21 he told how he decided to obey the voice of God.

In our text verses Paul tells how he comitted hislife to telling the good news of Jesus Christ to the small and the great everywhere he went.

While Paul told his own story, it was only in relationship to HIStoy that his own story had meaning. His life was comitted to telling the Christian story wherever he went.

My Story

Like Paul, each of us has a personal story, a personal history. In reality the quest to know history is to first know oneself. Philospher's and poets over the centuries have urged us to be truthful with ourselves. The quote "To thine ownself be true" lets us know the importance of knowing our own capacity, motives and objectives and remaining loyal to them.

What's your story? Generally, most of us can testify like Paul. We can tell of a time we lived without a strong faith in Christ. This is a time when we had the "Budweiser" philosophy of life. "You only go through life once so you'd better grab all the gusto you can." During this period of our lives we prayed little, read our bibles less, and attended church seasonally or on rare occasions. During this phase of our lives we simply removed ourselves from the things of God.We were not interested.

Many Christians have had a Damascus Road experience. While it may not have been as dramatic as Paul's deciding moment, most believers can pinpoint a year or month, some even a day that they decided to make Jesus the choice of their lives. This is what Howard Thurman describes as a deciding moment. Every Christian should share the story of their personal deciding moment with others. Our history as Christians begins at the moment of our birth in Christ. Certainly the scriptures teach that if any man be in Christ "he is a new creature, old things are passed away."

As we testify and witness our testimony is heightened by our willingness to face the truth about our past. Paul told Agrippa "I was a pharisee." He acknowledged his aggressive fight against the church and the error of his ways. We cannot fully tell the story of our own experience in Christ without full recognition of the experience. We cannot fully appreciate ones testimony about seeing the light, until we know the depths of darkness that the individual has experienced.

Many of us are protective of our personal story. We have rearranged the events of our past to fit what we are today. Unfortunately, each time we try to do that somone comes a long who knows our story. Each time we tell our story and leave our certain chapters, there are those who watch carefully to see if we tell it all or whether we hide those embarrasing expeiences. That's why Paul was careful to tell the whole story, because there is always someone who knows the parts left out.

As each Christian tells "my story" and sings "my song" the meaning is special, when we know the story that goes with the song. It's not unusual for a person who suffered in the cold of winter for many years of his life to come back later and start a blanket ministry for the homeless. It is not unusual for a woman who becamea prostitute at a young age to later open a halfway to counsel young fallen girls. We understand it when we know the story.

When we sing "my song" only those who know "my story" know why its "my song." That's why the song writer declares both the story and the song with the words "This is my story. This is my song. Praising my savior all the day long. "

Inclusive of "my story" is our story. It is the composite of our joint experiences in

the faith. Our story, is the account of our captivity in the "Egypt" of slavery and our journey towards the promised land. Our story is one that shows a people who followed the lead of the great Moses figures of heritage. We have crossed the Jordan and the walls of Jericho are tumbling down, but there is still one more river to cross.

Our story is filled with pain and suffering, but its also filled with the joy. Our story reflects both the agony and the ecstasy! It is story of tragedy and triumph! It is the story of a people who felt the sting of the master's whip and have risen from depths of slavery to the pinnacles of American society. We are a people who have survived on chitlin's and greens, ham hocks and neck bones. We are a people who have slept on cotton sack mattresses, drew our water from wells and wallowed in the spit of racial discrimination only to arise singing "The Lord will make a way somehow." James Weldon Johnson described our story precisely in the second verse of Lift Every Voice and Sing when he wrote: "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered. We ave come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered. Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last where the white gleam of our bright star is cast."

HIStory

While all of us are familiar with "my story" which is personal and detailed, there is another story that all of us should know.

As we celebrate "our story" as a people and reflect upon the journey of our people from the dark past to the present, there is another story that all of us should know.

That story is the story of a man who came and gave of himself that all of our stories might be intertwined into one story that tells of the goodness of the Lord!

What is HIStory? HIStory is not Black. HIStory is not white. HIStory is for everyone!

Paul told Agrippa HIStory, pointing out how he had been the object of prophecy throughout the years.

Isaiah told us HIStory, telling us the details of his virgin birth and the tragic details of his crucifixion on the cross.

HIStory is the story of man who who was a physical therapist, but never opened a clinic. A man who who had been sitting by the well for 38 long years heard him say "Take Thy Bed and Walk!"

HIStory is the story of man who was an Optimologist, but never never had an office. A blind man came to him one day and testified: "I was blind, but now I see!"

HIStory is the story of a man who counseled the trouble hearted without a psychiatric degree. The woman at the well was counseled by him and she ran throughout the city shouting "come see a man!"

HIStory is the story of man who fed thousands but never owned a restuarant. One day 5,000 people came to hear him but found themselves feasting on delicacies derived from two fishes and five loaves of bread.

I don’t know about you, but I love to tell the story!
He died out on Calvary on rose on Sunday morning!
HIStory is my story!
Because he lives, I can see tomorrow!
Because of HIStory, my life has a new meaning!
Because of HIStory, my story will have a happy ending!
I ‘m looking forward to the end the story! When all of the saints of God will gather!
The story will end when we hear him say “well done!”
Well done!
Well done!

No. 599-Youth

Climbing Out of the Box!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 25, 1996

SCRIPTURE: ***"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1***

Introduction

Have you ever felt trapped? That's a time when it looks like all of your options have run out and you have little choice but to follow a route contrary to the way you want to go. There are many kinds of traps. Sometimes our enemies set traps for us and we are snared. Sometimes we stumble into traps that were set for others. Then there are times when we are the victims of our own traps. When we feel trapped we instantly look for ways to free ourselves. Sometimes we can't see a way out. That's when we feel "boxed in" or surrounded on all sides with no place to go.

For children, playing with large empty boxes is fun. A large empty box and a vivid imagination can go a long ways. With the right amount of imagination an empty box can be a house, with holes in the appropriate places for windows. A box can be a fort or a castle. A box can be a cave. Turned on its side without a bottom or a top, a box easily becomes an army tank. Boxes are fun for children. What makes them fun is that whenever a child gets tired of his house, cave or card board army tank he can simply climb out of the box and throw it away.

But what if you couldn't throw them away? What if you had to stay in the box all the time? It would be hard to play in the box. You couldn't go outside very easily if you had to stay in the box. You couldn't visit your friends. That box would become not a fort or a castle but a dungeon, a prison. You're like a slave in that box. You are not free to enjoy life.

We are trapped when we can't get out of the box!

African-American youth are faced with many challenges in life. Like youth of every generation before them they experiment with life's boxes. They are fun for a while. Often youth play games with funny hairstyles. Sometimes a weird looking fashion trend is fun. Even the language of the hood gets to be fun for a while. All of the different experiences that youth encounter are like empty boxes. They are often innocent diversions, like empty boxes! The wise youth is aware that empty boxes are just that, empty! The wise youth makes sure that they are never trapped inside

their box. Whenever they can't get out, then their box becomes a prison. Then it's not fun anymore.

Christian youth are extremely sensitive to boxes. They know how easily the box that was a play thing suddenly becomes a snare. The young boy that saw an empty refrigerator and decided it was a good place to hide and play soon found that his "cool" hiding place became a death trap once the door had closed shut. So it is in life, there are many who find themselves totally consumed by their boxes, to the point that when its time to climb out, they are locked in forever!

As Christians, we have come to learn that Jesus came to give us freedom from those things that box us in and keep us from enjoying life fully! Christian youth study the word of God and let their lives be led by the Holy Spirit. Doing so helps them avoid being trapped or boxed in. The spirit of our Lord has set them free. Those whom the Lord has set free are free indeed!

Exposition

This text focuses on a one verse passage in which Paul encourages the Christians at Galatia to be firm in their new freedom in Christ.

The Galatian Christians were much like other new Christians of the time. They had formerly been followers of the Jewish faith. They were students of the Mosaic law and worked hard to observe its hundreds of rules. Many had difficulty understanding that as Christians they were no longer bound by the lengthy requirements of the Mosaic law.

In discussing the issue Paul used the words "liberty", "Freedom" and "bondage" which were strong ways to indicate the nature of their relationship to the Mosaic law. How could a religious association be described as bondage? Paul called it bondage because of the hundreds of meaningless rules it required the people to follow.

Under the law they were required to bring animals for sacrifice, if they wanted to be forgiven of sin. Then they had to be careful to bring the right one: lambs, goats, pigeons, rams, all had different purposes. None of them could have a spot a blemish. Religious feasts had to be observed on certain days and food prepared in a certain way. Relationships were governed by the Mosaic law. Clothing, food and even what kind of work could be performed on certain days was all dictated by the law. It was an all consuming law that left little room for individuality.

The Mosaic law became a part of the life of the people. It became so dominant that many people began to worship the law rather than God himself. Their goal in life was to reach in point when they could say they kept every rule in the law. Then they could boast that they were righteous and could point fingers at others who were not so well disciplined.

However, when some of the people became Christians they soon found that they were freed from the ceremonies and rituals of the law. When they met on Sundays to worship they noticed they did not need to bring an animal sacrifice. Their were no

rules dictating every small detail of their lives, but instead they were being urged to live by direction of the Holy Spirit in all matters. That was like coming out of a dark cave and stepping into the light. It was a big difference.

One of the parts of the law that Christians had the most problems dealing with was circumcision. The Mosaic law required it! When Gentiles were brought into the faith they did not demand it. In Galatians 2:4 Paul refers to spys or nonbelievers who mixed in with Christians and raised criticisms about their practices. Trying to break their faith and make them return to the circumcision rules of the Mosaic law. Their purpose, said Paul was to set a trap for them and return them to religious bondage. Paul reminded them that when they were "children" in matters of religion they thought the law could save save them (Galatians 4:3). But in the "fulness of time" God sent his son to save them from their boxed in situation and adopt them into the family of God. In 4:9 however, he questions how some them seemed to have crawled back in the box of religious tradition. He asked "How turn ye again to weak and beggearly elements" trying to find salvation. They had once again trying to be saved by observing feasts and ceremonial days. They were once again resorting to the rituals of the Mosaic law to save them. They were crawling back into the lifestyle that had boxed them in the first place.

Despite the new freedoms, there were some who were stuck in their old ways. They were easily enticed to go back to some of the rituals and traditions they had observed from childhood. What made it even more enticing is that most of their neighbors and friends observed the old rules too. Paul constantly urged new Christians to "standfast" in their new faith.

That's why, in this text, he reminds them what they have been freed from and uses words like bondage and freedom to give them a sharp, comparative difference between what they once were and what they had become. They were once slaves to the ritual and ceremonies of the law. Now, following Christ, they are free to explore the faith fully.

The law boxed them in and restrained them, but Christ set them free! Paul urged them repeatedly not to be overtaken again and returned to bondage but to live freely in their new spirit of freedom!

Life In the Box

There are many youth today that are living in a box. The box represents the limits that have been placed upon us by society. The heights to which we aspire are governed by whether we can perceive of ourselves as free to soar or as slaves to medocrity.

What are box that negatively affect most young people? There are many but there are three that deserve note.

HATBOX: Head coverings are stored in hat boxes. Too many youth today have their heads in boxes. What kind of boxes? The little box called television has caused the downfall of many youth. Valuable study time and the time needed to think, dream

and imagine is consumed watching an endless procession of sitcoms that range from Fresh Prince and Martin to the Red Shoe Diaries to MTV. Many grades are falling because youth have their heads in the box. Not to mention the little talking box called a radio, or the little ringing box called a telephone. Or that little box that sounds off in the middle of class, called a beeper!

It's important for youth to have their heads screwed on straight! If youth attend school every day but their heads are in the box, the teacher is teaching in vain. If youth are totally consumed with the affairs of one box or another then they will never be able to achieve. At some point they must crawl out of the box! That's why Hebrews 12:1 says ".... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We must get their heads out of the box and decide to take charge of their lives!

The message Paul gave the Galatians applies here too. Youth, who have been set free and had their heads adjusted with a positive mindset should not entangle themselves with anything that will chain them to the box again!

SHOEBOX: Shoes that we wear on our feet are stored in shoe boxes. Unfortunately too many youth can't get their feet walking in the right direction because they have adopted, not so much a shoebox mentality as they have a Reebox mentality.

The Reebox mentality is that to be successful you must have a brand name! Reebox, Adidas, Air Jordans and a plethora of other brand names are essential to many young people. For many it is important to have Reebox in the Shoebox! Many feel less of a person because the labels on their clothing cannot match the labels on the clothing of others.

Throughout their school years there are many youth who struggle to get the right kind of shoes on their feet. What's more important that the band of the shoe is which way the feet are walking. If the feet are always walking into trouble, slothfulness and low achieving activities, then the brand of the shoe is unimportant. Nothing makes that clearer than when a graduate steps across the stage wearing a pair of $20 Penny Loafers to recieve a $20,000 scholarship. It's clear then that it's not the shoe that's important but the direction of the feet that's important.

That's why Psalm 37:23 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." The Lord orders his steps and keeps his feet pointed in the right direction.

MATCHBOX: In comparison to other boxes, a matchbox is very small. Unfortunately too many youth have adopted a matchbox life expectations. Their vision for themselves is so small that they can stuff it into a matchbox with room to spare.

The first step to greatness is to envision greatness! Youth who can see themselves involved in successful lifestyles work hard to make the dream become a reality. Some athlethes can see themselves in the NFL or the NBA. Resultingly they work hard to make their vision become a reality. They don't do anything that might ruin their chances.

Suppose a player is good, but he can't see himself making the pros. All he ever sees is being a laborer. Does he push himself to the max or does he become satisfied.

A girl who can see herself as a college professor, businesswoman or highly placed professional, doesn't want to ruin her chances of making by doing something dumb "like knocking the boots with soldier who doesn't wear a helmet."

Matchbox expectations reflect what we think of ourselves they are not true pictures of who we really are. We may live in a cardbox but our expectations out of life don't have to fit into a matchbox. We may be poor, but we must not expect to be poor! We must expect more! We may live in the ghetto but our expectation should be to show the world that even the cardboard world of the homeless can produce great minds if given the chance!

When you share your dream of being a doctor, lawyer, teacher or some other pursuit don't be intimidated by those who want to keep your expectations in the matchbox. The matchbox is too small for your dreams! Think Big! Dream Big! Your relationship with Christ has given you the freedom to dream and to expect big things out of life. Jesus said in John 10:10 "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Not just there, but look at John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

You have been given the freedom to crawl out of the matchbox and expect to be great! Let no one ever dare to put you down again!

Free to Believe In Yourself

The great joy of the Christian life is that faith in God has made us free to believe in ourselves!

Faith in God releases us from the shackles of pessimism.
When in God the impossible becomes possible.

Those who have faith in God crawl out of the box of low achievements and low expectations and climb the mountain of opportunity!

Faith in God stirs an excitement in our souls. We motivated to aspire, climb and achieve!

When we climb out of the box we begin to:

—Stand up instead of sitting down; Go forward instead of backward!

—Take command of our lives instead of complaining about hardships!

—Act rather than react; Start in the right direction rather stopping in the wrong place!

—Dream the impossible Dream! Tackle the unbeatable foe!

Those who have climbed out of the box of sin and mediocrity have decided in their hearts "I won't turn back, no I won't turn back!"

They sing with the song writer: "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back!

No. 600-Inspiration

Monkey on your back, Thorn in your side

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 3, 1996

SCRIPTURE:" For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians" 12:8-9

Introduction

Have you ever wished that you could enjoy a single week without problems? That's a single week without breaking something, losing something, getting sick, being attacked, failure, disappointment or hardship! Does trouble seem to follow you wherever you go? If so then you know what it means to have a "monkey on your back." That's a popular phrase that means that there is something troubling you and disturbing you to the point that the normal flow of your activities is disrupted. Having a monkey on your back can be particularly troublesome, no matter what kind of monkey has attached itself to you. Another popular phrase is drawn from the bible, it refers to a "thorn in my side." It too refers to a troublesome presence. Whether it is a monkey on your back or thorn in your side, neither is a welcomed presence.

Dealing with thorns, to a great extent, is dependent upon attitudes. How we deal with the reality of the monkey on our backs determines our coping power. Consider two men who walked by a flower garden daily. They admired the beautiful roses as they blossomed. They were a joy to see. However, one of the men complained daily at what he thought was an injustice by God. "I don't see how God, in all of his wisdom, would put thorns among all of these roses!" He complained. He felt God had made a mistake. For years the second man only smiled, but never said anything.

Each spring the comments were the same. Why thorns among the roses. Finally the complaining friend watching the curious smile on his friend's face asked, "why is that each time I ask that question all you do is smile?" In a joyous response the friend said, "You complain that God put thorns among the roses, I see it the other way around. I'm glad that God saw fit to put a few roses among the thorns!" It could very well be that those who love God are sweet roses that have been placed in thorny

situations to serve as examples for others stuck in the brier bush of life. With that in mind ever saved soul says to the monkey on his or her back: "Hold on for the ride brother, because with or without you I'm on my way!"

As Christians we rejoice that God has given us his presence every day. It helps us to cope with the misfortunes of life. It helps us to understand the setbacks, and thorns. The joy of knowing Christ helps us to deal with the monkey on our backs!

Exposition

This text finds Paul explaining his apostleship and the nature of his experience with Christ.

In both chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Corinthians, Paul explains the nature of his Apostolic calling, including the unique and sometimes conflicting ways in which he shared the experience. In the first six verses of chapter 12 he reveals his experience 14 years earlier in which he was taken to the "third heaven" in which he was in the very presence of God himself. While Paul says in verse two "I knew man" he is actually speaking of himself. He said he had been taken into paradise, which he called the "third heaven" and saw and heard things that too wonderful for mortal man to experience. The awe inspiring experience was so wonderful that he could have easily become lifted in pride because it was certainly an experience that no many people shared.

Paul knew he was apparently special in the eyesight of God. He was special because of the great work God had for him to do. Despite being special and important, God gave him an infirmity that had been with him for 14 years. There has been considerable debate as to the nature of the thorn in the flesh. Some believe that Paul had an eye disease that was an aftermath of his Damascus Road experience. The disease gave him an unsightly appearance. Others summize that he fell victim to seizures and was plagued by them. Others who focus on the thorn being characterized as a "Messenger of Satan" in verse seven. They contend that the thorn was not a physical ailment at all but was the fact that everywhere Paul went Satan's messengers caused disruption and trouble for him. These "messengers" were constantly on his trail.

The exact nature of the "thorn" is not detailed. What is known is that whether it was physical of spiritual, Paul was pleading for its removal. Whether it was physical or spiritual, it caused him considerable problem and he prayed not once but three times and yet it was not removed. The fact that Paul did not get the exact answer to his prayer as wished gives insight to the nature of prayer and answers from God. Hezekiah prayed to God had 15 years added to his life. David, a man after God's own heart, prayed to God that his son would not die, but he did not receive what he ask. Paul prayed to God three times that the thorn which troubled him would be removed but instead, it remained. Paul probably learned from this experience that there are three ways in which prayers are answered: "Yes","No" and "Wait a while!" The answers to all prayers is not always what we want, but are certainly what we need.

In retrospect Paul understood why his prayer request was not answered directly: "lest I should be exalted above measure." God left him with his "thorn in the flesh" to humble him. Paul had been in the presence of God. He had seen the beauties and wonders of paradise that no man should have seen. Such an experience could easily lift a person up in pride. After praying three times to have the "thorn" lifted, Paul decided that God had a greater reason for leaving it. That reason was to keep him humble."

In place of removing the thorn God gave him "grace" or a special favor from God. Grace helped Paul despite his infirmities. If they were physical, Grace helped him perform his tasks despite physical handicaps. If they were the presence of troubling experiences prompted by Satan's messengers, "Grace" helped him endure them. God's answer to Paul's prayer was "My grace is sufficient for thee!" With that explanation Paul concluded that he was stronger with the thorn that he would have been without it, because of extra "grace" that God gives him to compensate.

Reason for Monkeys and Thorns

If Paul's experience means anything to modern believers it should suggest to us that there is a reason for every thorn in your side and a purpose for every monkey on your back. The human response to difficulty is to work to remove it presence. Sometimes the human response is not God's response. Sometime the thorn has a purpose.

For Paul, the thorns served the purpose of keeping him humble, because he had much to boast about. For us they served the same purpose. A person with a decent education, financial security and a bright future could easily get the big head. The monkey on his back, brings him down to the real world. The thorn in his side returns him to the reality of his own mortality. Those who have a monkey on their back, never forget how human they are. Those who have a thorn in their side, always remember their own humanity.

Lest we get boastful about our new car, sometimes it breaks down and we find ourselves hitchhiking or calling cabs. Lest we get boastful about our excellent credit ad wallet filled with cards, sometimes we lose them or they are stolen and we find out how vulnerable we are.

Even sickness has a way of sensitizing us to human need. Other misfortunes work the same way. They serve the purpose of allowing us to know that "though one walks with his head in the clouds he is not one of the gods; his feet are still on the ground."

Those who have a monkey on their back are those who are troubled. Family problems don't seem to go away. Personal frustrations seem to mount. They disturb your sleep. The trouble your mind and soul.

Even the monkey that rides your back has a purpose!

What is our hope? If I live a Christian life and still have thorns in my side and monkeys on my back, what incentive is there for me to turn to God? This difference

is in he end result. Those who have monkeys on their backs but turn away from God will still have the monkey but won't have the same result as the believer.

The believer has two assurances that give him hope in such instances. The first is the assurance believers are given from the word of God in Romans 8:28 that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Therefore, a believer knows that even though there is thorn in his flesh or a monkey on his back, the entire experience will work to his advantage as long as he continues to love God and keep his purposes in line with God's purposes. The person who does not love God may have a monkey on his back without the assurance that it's going to work out to his advantage.

The second reason that believers have hope in such circumstances is that God gives them an extra blessing to compensate for the difficulty. If God has allowed a thorn to be placed in your flesh or a monkey to ride your back for the purpose of achieving a greater spiritual goal, he will also give you extra considerations to make up for the difference. These extra "favors" are generally called "grace." We often see those who are enduring unbearable circumstances showing unusual poise. That's grace. We see strength displayed at times when conditions dictate weakness. That's grace.

We are able to go beyond simply surviving, but to accomplish and achieve excellence despite disappointments, set backs, thorns and monkeys on our back because of those extra favors from God...called grace!

No wonder the song writer declares: "Grace, God's grace! His grace is sufficient for me!" Another song writer put it this way: "Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it, where shall its praises begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free, for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me!"

There is Grace for every Need

Finally we must consider what Paul said about his humbled circumstance. His original desire was for God to remove the thorn from his flesh and to take the monkey off his back. After making that request three times he concluded that God knew best what he was doing. In the place of removing the thorns, God gave Paul special gifts of strength, spiritual power, dynamic witness and peace in his soul. These gifts were so great they overpowered any weakness he might have incurred.

Two blind performers, Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder, were both given the opportunity to be given eye operations that would restore their sight. After living most or all of their lives in darkness both men turned down the chance to have sight. There were so many other benefits, sensitivities and graces that they enjoyed because of lack sight, that they feared they would lose them if they were able to see.

They wanted to keep the thorns!

That's why Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 1:27 said "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." God has decided to give special graces to those who are troubled by the thorns!

For every thorn, God has a grace!

Whenever there is a monkey riding your back, remember if stick with the Lord, he'll give you something to deal with monkeys in your life!

"I asked the Lord to get rid the monkeys on my back, but it seems as though you are going to be there for a while. But he's given me something to deal with you, so hold on monkey, it's going to be rough ride!"

God told Paul "My Grace is sufficient for thee"

If there is weakness, God's grace is sufficient to strengthen thee! I heard the song writer say: "Strong deliverer, Strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield!"

If there is emptiness, God's grace is sufficient to fill thee! A woman came to the well with an empty picture but she left filled with the waters of life, saying "come see a man" who told me all I've ever done!

If there is sadness, God' s grace is sufficient to bring you joy! I heard David declare "Restore unto me, the joy of my salvation!"

If there is an unattained goal, God's grace is sufficient to make it happen! "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you!"

If there is depression, God's grace is sufficient to motivate you! In a state of depression David decided "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

If thee is hunger, God's grace is sufficient is feed you! That's why the song writer wrote: "Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

If there is doubt, God's grace is sufficient to assure you! "Blesses assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine...this is my story. This is my song. Praising my savior all the day long!

If you are lost on the sea of life, God's grace is sufficient to save thee! "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me, now safe am I"

One evening, nearly 2000 years ago, God's grace made itself known!

He died out on Calvary!

He rose after three days and nights.

His truth is still ringing out "My grace!"

My grace!

My grace is sufficient for thee!

No. 601-Inspiration

Where Is Thy God?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 10, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psalm 42:10-11

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt you were struggling all alone? Believers are generally courageous! Believers have been known to stand against all odds, fight unbeatable foes and stand tall when others are shrink in fear? One reason for the great courage of believers is the assurance we all share that regardless of circumstances, the God we serve is standing with us. We stand boldly because we know we are not alone. We know the Lord "has our back." However, there are times when it appears that God has forsaken us and we are standing alone. The otherwise courageous believer begins to weaken before even the smallest challenge whenever he believes that he is standing alone. His strength and power is drawn from the knowledge that God is always present and on his side as long as he is right.

One of the greatest tragedies that could occur in life is to lose track of God! As the nation becomes less reverent in many respects, it becomes very clear that many have very little respect for or fear of God. We have lost him and can't seem to find him.

Consider two little boys who had caused plenty of trouble at the church. They broke things. They scribbled on the walls. They even drank out of the communion bottle. To say the least they were everyone's nightmare. Someone got the idea that if the boys could be brought to the church pastor in a counseling session maybe they would could be helped. The preacher dressed in his robe for the meeting. The older boy and his little brother sat in the study as the minister peered at them over the rim of his glasses and asked: "Son, where is God?" Neither of the boys answered. Then the minister asked again. "Son, where is God?" This time his voice raised and seemed to thunder. The boy shook in his seat. Then came a final "Where is God? The older boy, stricken with fear grabbed his little brother's hand and ran out of the study saying "Come on man, they have gone and lost God and they are trying to pin that

on us too!" There are many today that have lost God. If that is true, who can we pin it on?

While God is never far away, there are many otherwise faithful followers that have lost track of him for just a moment.

As Christians, we should make every effort to stay close to God. Through prayer, worship, praise and service, we keep contact with him. He never loses sight of us, although we might lose sight of him.. Let us strive to keep him in our hearts and minds. Whenever we start to feel alone we should remember that our God is always near. He's only a prayer away!

Exposition

This text is extracted from a Psalm of David given to the sons of Korah to sing in worship.

David often reflected upon the goodness of God and wrote his divinely inspired reflections in songs or Psalms. Two sets of his psalms were given to the Sons of Korah, a special family of Levites that concentrated on the singing ministry. Although there is debate as to the particulars, generally Psalm 42-49; and 84-89 are viewed as being those given to the sons of Korah.

Korah, as you recall, led a faction that rebelled against Moses in the book of Numbers. All of his descendants except a small few were killed. These sons of Korah, despite the rebellious nature of their ancestors dedicated themselves to singing.

David gave them this 42nd psalm to set to music. It was written during a period of distress when he did not have access to the house of worship. Many believe that it was written during the persecution period when King Saul hunted him.

In this psalm he referred to how his soul longed to be in the house of God one more time. In verse 2 he spoke of thirsting for God and yearning after his presence. He continues that thought through verse 4 where he speaks fondly of times when he was able to be with the multitudes that worshipped.

While being separated from God and possibly hunted, his enemies constantly surrounded him with biting comments asking him "where is thy God." In verse 10 he noted that daily he was criticized by skeptics whose words were like a sword in his bones. They constantly asked, "Where is they god?"

You sang *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!"* Where is thy God?

You sang *"I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help"* Where is thy God?

You sang *"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"* Where is thy God?

David said the words of his critics surrounded him. His soul reached a low point. However in verse 11 he came to himself and became spiritually alive as he remembered the power of God.

He asked himself "why am I disquieted" or anxious or uneasy? Others may have questions about God's whereabouts and give up hope when circumstances are

troublesome, but not the faithful. The faithful live in continuous hope, knowing that God is not far away.

He resolved that he should continue to hope and trust in the Lord who is the health of his countenance, or the reason for his upward climb in life. Despite the critics he would cling to God as the author and finisher of his faith.

Losing Sight of God!

In our fast paced times, it is easy to lose sight of God. Although he is never far away, we still lose sight of him if we break the associations that tie us close to him. Like the little boy who said the preacher had lost God, there are many who have actually misplaced their spirituality. The importance of God has diminished in many lives.

There was a time when the only stores that would be open on Sunday were those that dealt with necessities. Service providers such as utilities, law enforcement and hospitals were those expected to be opened, others closed. Today, malls and even hardware stores are opened on Sunday. Even bars want the right to be open on Sunday too. Have we lost God?

Decorum in the presence of God has diminished. Two generations ago, it would have been unthinkable to argue or use bad language on holy ground, but today language, actions and even fights occur in the very presence of God. Have we lost God?

Our schools at one time taught obedience to God. Now God is rarely mentioned. In many instances teaching about God is illegal. Have we lost God?

On a personal basis, many appear to have lost God? Those who grew up attending worship services regularly are seen only occasionally. Those were taught to pray at night seldom seem to have enough energy to do as they should. Though we know we should study the bible more than we do, we can't seem to find the time, or find our bible for that matter. Just as we struggle to find the simplest bible verse by scanning the table of contents of our bibles, many of us are finding it just as hard to find God! We search frantically through the yellow pages of life trying to find the secret of life. While we are searching, the world is asking, "Where is thy god?" Even the strongest believer can lose sight of God in the press of everyday experiences. Time runs short. Schedules get tight. Even those special moments that we reserved for study and reflection are often infringed upon by the concerns of the world. Even though God is near, we can't see him because there are so many things in the way.

When God gets out of sight, the enemy gets busy. Doubts are stirred. Questions are raised. Fears are intensified. Like David, we drop into a slump of low spirits and depression.

In his slump David said what he needed was to reposition himself where he could see the Lord. He wanted to hear the choir sing again! Their songs stirred his faith. He wanted to be in the midst of the multitude of worshippers again. Their faith revived

his own! He wanted to hear the word of God again, hearing the word intensified his desire to live for God!

When we find the Lord Blessings are the result!

Deuteronomy 4:29 *"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."*

Psa 34:10 *".. but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."*

When he started to feel like God had left him alone, David caught himself and said he would keep the faith for God is the source of his success.

When the darkness of his life situation prompted him to ask,"Where is God?" David remember that God is the joy of life. He arose from the pits of life to continue his journey with a steadfast hope!

As believers we are challenge to position ourselves where we can see God. As long as we can see him we know the victory will be ours!

Where Is Thy God?

Finally brothers and sisters, every believer should be reminded that God is always near and never leaves us alone, no matter how difficult situations may appear or how loud the skeptics taunt us, asking "Where is thy God?"

In difficult moments, those who want to detract from the faith seem to crawl out of the woodwork.

Look, she gives a tithe every month, but her car is broke down again! Where is thy god?

Look, he attends bible study and prayer meeting regularly, but they just rushed him to the hospital, "Where is thy god?"

Look, she worships and praises God with a mighty zeal, but they turned off their gas last week, "where is thy god?"

The believer is not immune to the attacks of Satan. However, the believer will not be defeated by Satan no matter how much he attacks. Paul wrote in Romans 8:35 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"*

Satan will attack us but we must resolve that our faith will remain in tact. Paul's resolution was this: Romans 8:38-39 *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

When Satan attacks we know that God has not gone away, but instead is close by. He is close enough to respond to my every call! He's only a prayer away!

Three men of different faiths traveled on a journey. At points along the road they stopped to rest and to commune with their gods. One of the men pulled out a wooden cup of powder from his back pack and began to sing chants to it. He explained that the powder represented his god who would protect him along the way. He asked the second "Where is thy god?" The second man built a tiny altar and lit a flame on top.

He explained that his god lived in the fire and would shield him in his journey. The third man did nothing but simply bowed his head. They thought it strange that this man would not call upon his God, in the whole journey they never saw him.

Then one day a storm approached. The first man took out his wooden cup of powder to pray for protection but the wind blew the powder away. He ran to the second man who lit the flame on his tiny altar but the rains came and doused the flame. Finally they called on the third man, "friend, we are in trouble, where is thy god?" The third man answered " He's too big to fit in my back pack, but he's small enough to live in my heart!" As the third man prayed the lightning flashed and revealed a small dry cave on the mountainside. As the three men took cover the first man threw away his wooden cup saying "I will serve thy God, he blows with every wind!" The second put aside his tiny altar saying "I will serve thy God , he's in every rain drop that falls" They both bowed their heads and declared "thy God is a mighty God. A shelter in the time of storm!"

There are many today whose god has blown away with the winds of hard times. Many have seen their gods drenched in the waters of lost hope. The true believer knows God is everywhere!

One song writer declared: *"I hear God in every robin that sings. I hear God in every church bell that rings. Billows may roll, storm clouds assail, my anchor holds, God doesn't fail. He's in control the captain of my soul. I hear God!"*

We should draw strength from the example of others who have chosen to stand fast for the Lord despite difficult times.

When Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, the king asked, "is thy God able" to deliver thee. That was an important question because the events leading up to Daniel's arrest suggested that his God had forsaken him. As Daniel was lowered into the Den of hungry lions his critics probably asked "where is thy God." Daniel didn't have to respond because he knew the Lord was close by.

The Hebrew boys were faced with the fiery furnace! They resolved however that "my God is able"

However, every believer should be encouraged to know that regardless of the situation God is able!

He's able to:

-Take defeat and turn it into victory; Take hardtimes and turn them into the best of times; Take an empty barrel and keep it filled;

-Rebuild hope for the hopeless; Reduce mountains of frustration into molehills; Reshape tragedy into triumph; Remove our doubts and give us assurance

-Deliver us in times of difficulties and disaster!

-Strengthen us in times of trial and temptation!

-Sustain us in times of sickness and suffering !

-Inspire us in times of sorrow and separation!

-Lead us in times of frustration and fear!

He's able! Yes he's able!

Where is thy god? I saw him wounded and defeated hanging out on cross?

Where is thy god? I saw him with a crown of thorns on his head and nails in his hands!

Where is they god? I saw him buried in a borrowed tomb!

If you want to know where Jesus is, don't stop at Calvary! Don't stop at the borrowed grave!

If you want to know where Jesus is, look at the empty tomb, for he lives!

No. 602-Inspiration

Can You See Jesus In The Dark?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 17, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? "Psalm 88:12-14 "And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." John 6:17-21

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you found it difficult to remain faithful to God? When trouble arises in your personal life or family, have you found if difficult to sing the same song, walk the same walk or talk the same talk? Difficult times are dark days. They are moments when we are surrounded by the blackest night at worse and dense fog at best. Dark days are difficult days. They are days when we are trying to handle fierce family troubles and remain consistent to the faith at the same time. In such times, even the strongest of the faithful, find themselves grasping for breath as they prayerfully struggle to keep their heads above water.

When we travel through the occasion dark spots on the road of life it is important for every believer to keep focused on our God. He is a God of both the good spots and the bad spots. Consider the country church that had a revival scheduled in the middle of the storm season. They had invited a big city preacher to do the revival that year and he was coming South to the backwoods for the first time. On the first night that the evangelist was to preach storm clouds began to build in the sky. The preacher said to himself "if this storm continues to develop, the service may have to be delayed until the next night." When he arrived at the small country church there were cars everywhere and it was pitch dark outside. Not a street light of any kind could be seen for miles. The service was spirited. People were singing and praising the Lord with a mighty fervor. Even as they sang the lightning began to flash, the thunder rolled but the folks inside the church kept singing anyway. The preacher was amazed. Back

home people would have been worried about the weather conditions. Just as the preacher rose to take his text, a lightning bolt flashed followed by a loud thunder clap. Suddenly the preacher found himself standing in the pulpit and a sea of blackness in front of him. A deacon pulled out a flashlight, stood behind the preacher and shined it on the bible! Patting the evangelist on the back he said, "Preach on preacher, we can see Jesus in the dark!" Even though the lights were out the people could hear the word of God, in the dark!

In a similar sense every believer needs to be able to see Jesus in the dark! We know such times are inevitable. Tough times will come, but when they come, we should remain focused to the point that despite the trouble, difficulty or frustration that we face, we can still see Jesus!

As Christians, we know God is everywhere all the time. Therefore when the storms of life rage we should not get too worried, he still walks amidst the storm gales and says "Be not afraid, it is I!" If we can see Jesus, despite the dark, we'll make it through the night!

Exposition

These passages of scripture characterize two responses of believers in the dark.

The 88th Psalm of David, is rarely read or referenced. While most of the Psalms are inspirational in nature, the 88th Psalm is solemn. It was written at time when David was at a spiritual low. He had suffered emotionally and possibly physically. He felt himself sinking in the sea of life. At best, he was struggling to keep his head above water.

This psalm presents the believer who is struggling to make it through the night but has lost hope, in the midst of the darkness, that God would deliver him. No where in this psalm does David indicate that he believes God will help him make through this dark period. It is only filled with expressions of difficulty for the troubles he faced. In verse 12 he asks the question, *"shall thy wonders be known in the dark?"*

He gives a continuous litany of dismay and hopelessness that recites his afflictions and difficulty. The 88th psalm is a striking contrast to the other Psalms. They express hope, joy and faith that God responds in a time of trouble. The other 149 psalms always strike a chord of hope that despite the darkness, God is able.

This psalm represents those occasional moments, when even strong believers find themselves distracted from the faith. In verse 15 David says he had been dealing with one affliction, trouble or another since his youth. Now he is distracted or unfocused. He wants to believe differently but can't. He wants to get back on track but finds it difficult.

It is described as the saddest of the psalms because it presents a picture of a strong believer who is down in the dumps and can't see his way out! It represents those times when normally strong believers are weak; when the highly visible become invisible; when the intensely active become inactive. It is a time when a believer is overcome by the dark!

John 6:17-21 also gives us a picture of believers toiling through the storm in the dark, but with a different outcome. In John 6 Jesus stayed on shore to pray and think. His disciples decided to row to the other side. As they were rowing, one of the sudden storms that was common to the area, broke out and tossed their ship.

The disciples were afraid. It was dark. The storm was raging and Jesus was not with them! Mark 6 tells this same episode but at verse 48 gives another insight when it notes that Jesus, while on the shore, saw them rowing against the storm. They did not see him. While the storm was yet raging, in the blackest of night, Jesus came to them walking on the water.

When the disciples saw Jesus they allowed him to enter the boat and suddenly they were on the other side. They were safely through the storm. They had made it safely through the night.

Unlike David in the 88th psalm, who could not see God in his darkness, in the midst of their darkness and storms they were able to see Jesus and made it to the other side!

Every believer will face sudden storms that may come upon them at the most inopportune times. Although momentarily we might become distracted, each should remember that while we are yet toiling help is on the way!

The Dark

One of the realities of life is that we rarely make it through any given period without experiencing some episodes of darkness. These are times when life's challenges intensify and normal responses seem inadequate. The Darkness represents those moments of disappointment in life and love in which we are overwhelmed by the expediency of the hour. It is these times that pose a challenge for us, for many are completely distracted when they occur and lose sight of everything that was once important to them.

How do we handle the darkness? It is a time when it is hard for us to see Jesus! Times are tough. Situations are burdensome. It's hard to see Jesus and know that he is there! Perhaps we should consider the manner of the visually challenged. Those who are blind are unable to see, yet the other senses seem to intensify to compensate for the loss of sight. Thus, those who live in darkness, by virtue of blindness, have keen senses of taste, smell, hearing and touch. By these, they are able to know where they are and what is going on around them.

While in the storm we may not be able to see Jesus! But every other sense we have should remind us that while we can't see him, he sees us! Every other sense we have should suggest to us and remind us that "help is on the way!"

SMELL: When we can't see Jesus we should be reminded that he is there by the smells in the air. Psalm 45:8 "All thy garments smell of myrrh..whereby they have made thee glad!" Everytime take breath we should be reminded that he is present. The fragrance of the rose and sweet smells of the seasons, remind us that he is on the throne. When we can't see him, we can smell his presence in the dark!

TASTE: Psalm 34:8 *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."* Everytime we get a taste of the goodness of God we know that we have been blessed. Every bowl of greens! Every slab of ribs! Every skillet or corn bread just reminds us of the goodness of the Lord. Though it may be dark outside and the winds may be blowing we know that he is there!

HEAR: Every child of God hears and recognizes the voice of God. John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. The song writer said "he speaks and the sound of his voice is so sweet that the birds hush their singing.! When we listen for the voice of Jesus we'll share thoughts of the old hymn that says "I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lie down, lie down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!"

FEEL: When it gets dark and we can't see Jesus, we should be able to feel his presence. Pastor John Montgomery of Baton Rouge, La. told the parable of the young college educated boy who came home to visit his father after graduation. He asked father how he could believe in a God that he could not see. The father gave a very simple answer, "I can feel him in my soul!" That wasn't sufficient for the youth because feelings were relative and changed from person to person. Nevertheless the father simply said "All I can tell you is, I feel him in my soul." Not long afterwards the son was involved in an automobile accident. He was injured internally. When the father came to visit, he asked the son how he was doing and the son said "Father, I'm hurting" The father looked at him and saw no visible signs of an accident and said "How do you know you're hurting, I don't see any hurt?" The son answered "I can feel it in my bones!" The father said "That's what I've been trying to tell you about the Lord, I can't see him, but I can feel him in my soul!"

We ought to be able to feel him in our hands!

Feel him in our feet!

Feel him him all over us!

Help Is On the Way!

Finally brothers and sisters we need to always consider that while we may not be able to see it coming, help is on the way!

David loss sight of the fact that God knows all of his children and watches every condition. He wrote a gloomy psalm because he gave up hope

However, the disciples found out that even though they were toiling against unbeatable odds, in the midst of the storms, help was on the way! They couldn't see Jesus but he was watching them!

When the way gets dark and dreary, we need to remember that he knows where we are and the extent of our need!

He knows exactly what we need and when!

No wonder the song writes: "We are our heavenly father's children and knows just how much we can bear. Just ask for strength and keep on toiling tho the tear drops

fall. You have the joy of this assurance: the heavenly father will always answer prayer and he knows just how much you can bear!"

Another song writer said "While riding through the storm, I won't worry!"

While riding in the storm you may find difficulties, but even in the dark and in the storm we should not be afraid because God is able!

When it gets dark, our God is the light of the world!

When it seems like there is no way, our God is a way maker!

Have you reached a dark spot on the road? Are you toiling in the night!

Be of good cheer, help is on the way!

There has never been a:

-Burden that the Lord could not lighten; Problem that the Lord could not solve

-Difficulty that the Lord could not resolve; Loneliness that the Lord could not comfort

-Battle that the Lord could not fight; Weakness that the Lord could not strengthen

-Question that the Lord could not answer; Situation that the Lord could not handle!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose early Sunday morning!

When the storms of life are raging!

Jesus will be by your side!

No. 603-Inspiration

It Ain't Over Till It's Over!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 7, 1996

SCRIPTURE: ***"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." Luke 23:48-49; "He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Luke 24:6-7***

Introduction

Have you ever left an activity or an event early, only to find out that you left before it was really over? An even worse feeling is when we find out that the part we missed was the good part! Nobody likes to miss the good part! Consider the the little girl who sat in front of her television watching a movie about the crucifixion. She watched as they tried Jesus before various courts, whipped him, and made him carry an old rugged cross. The little girl was glued to her seat intensely watching, before her eyes, a story that had been told to her so many times by her Sunday School teachers and pastor. As they nailed Jesus to the cross, tears rolled from her eyes. She felt sad as they took him down and buried him in the tomb. As the commercial break began her parents called from upstairs, "Evelyn, its time togo to bed!" The Little girl didn't move. The call came again but the little girl stubbornly sat with her eyes glued to the television set! Finally, she yelled back to her mother, "Just a minute mom, I don't want to miss the good part!"

Often, we leave an event or an activity early to avoid traffic or to make another appointment on time. When such an occasion comes we try to stay until it appears that we have entertained the climaxic moment and the conclusion is predictable. Often our favorite team is losing the game. The final minutes of the contest are approaching but it appears the outcome won't change. In our car radio we hear, the good part! Miraculoulsy our team comes from behind and wins! We left before the good part! Often we leave a movie early, after it appears that the outcome is obvious, only to learn that we left too early! It had a totally different and surprising conclusion. We missed the good part! Our hero was losing the boxing match in every round. His face was mawled and he appeared spent. We couldn't bear to watch any more and left before the match ended. We learned later that in the last round our hero rose up with a mighty gust of power and defeated his opponent. Again we missed the good part!

Those who stay to the end have learned one of life's most important lessons. "It ain't over, until its over!"

In our our quest for self improvement the saints of God remind the world that we may be knocked down on occasion, but don't count us out! "It ain't over until its over!"

As we reflect on the life and death of Christ we must always consider that the crucifixion is not the whole story. Those who stop there will "miss the good part!" The good part is that Christ arose from the dead. He is alive today! That's the good part!

Exposition

This passage of scripture considers the attitude of the crowd at the death of Christ.

The crowd that observed the crucifixion was mixed. In its midst were supporters of Christ, many of whom were silent in their love for him. It also included the high priests who demanded his death, soldiers and the curious. All had assembled to watch the events of the crucifixion as they unfolded.

Crucifixions themselves were not uncommon in Jerusalem. It was the manner of the Romans to punish criminals by crucifixion. The convicted were stripped naked; their bones were broken, and they were nailed and tied to crosses for but humiliation and punishment. The roads leading into a conquered Roman province were often lined with nameless corpses of those convicted of violating Roman laws. The sight of another crucifixion was not as unusual as one might think because executions were frequent and public events. Since no one had ever been known to survive a crucifixion, once the process had begun, the outcome was predictable. The man nailed to the cross was doomed to die. End of story.

This text notes that a large crowd assembled at the death of Jesus. They had seen it all before and anticipated the final results. The watched as Christ was stripped and carried his cross along the path to Golgotha. They observed as he fell under the weight of the cross. They watched as the nails were driven in his hands. They listened as he spoke his last recorded sayings from the cross.

There were many unusual things that were associated with this crucifixion. Verse 45 speaks of the sun being darkened to the point that there was darkness over the whole land from 12 noon until he died at 3 p.m. It was too long to be an eclispse or the result of an approaching bad storm. The veil of the temple was split into two pieces, despite its rugged nature and the fact that it was 60 feet high. The earth quaked. The wind blew.

When the spectacular events stopped, there was only silence. The limp body of a fallen leader was hanging on the cross!

It was at this point that this text notes that the crowd, having apparently seen all that there was to see began to disperse. Verse 48 simply says that they came to see the sight, they saw the things that were done, smote their breasts and "returned."

Even his disciples had moved far away, including the women that stood so close were now far away. They waited for a great miracle that would have prevented his death. As they started considering their own safety, they moved away from the cross, and watched from a distance.

All parties thought it was over! There had been thunder and lightning, but it was over! The veil of the temple was split, but it was over! The ground shook, but it was over! They "smote their breasts, and returned."

Those that left thought it was over! They left depressed, sad and disheartened! They were disappointed.

However, when we read Luke 24:6-7 we soon see that they left before the good part! They left before it was over! They counted Jesus out before the match had ended!

An angel asks the women who came to the tomb the important question: *"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"* The events that occured three days and three nights earlier were only a part of the story! But the rest of the story is the good part! "He is not here, but is risen."

The angel reminded them how Jesus had said that the events of the crucifixion had to be because they were a part of the game plan. He was destined to die. Just as he was destined to die he was also destined to rise again! That's the good part!

Counted Out

The lives of believers are filled with highs and lows, risings and fallings, successes and failures. The pendulum of fate swings back and forth at a steady pace. The course of our lives is as a story that is told. Every story has two principal forces: a protagonist, the force of good; and the antagonist,the force of evil. In every story, the protagonist has a plan and the antogonist has a plan. The quest of each to achieve his or her goal is called the plot or the action. The point in the story in which the antagonist and the protagonist clash is called the climax. It is followed by the conclusion. Many who watch a story unfold think its outcome is predictable after they see the climax and they reach a judgment before the story ends. They don't wait to see the final outcome!

A believer's quest to achieve a godly goal is never left unchallenged. Every dream that we have is met by an obstacle or challenge. Each time we try to take a step forward there is an unseen force working equally hard to push us backward. Whether the goal is secular or purely spiritual in nature there will be a challenge.

ENEMIES HAVE COUNTED US OUT! The first group of people at the crucifixion sight were the enemies and curiosity seekers. Many of us have experienced many troubling moments in life. We have been knocked down, set back, trampled upon, walked on, stomped, persecuted, violated, ridiculed and dogged. We have felt the bitter sting of the cutting remarks of our enemies. We have felt the foot of our oppressors on our necks. There are many who have been knocked down in every round of life. Lost jobs, broken marriages, failures, disappointments, death and lost

opportunities have dealt very powerful punches that have floored even the strongest believers. Many, watching from a distance, believe because we have been floored so many times that the outcome is inevitable. Don't leave! It ain't over until its over!

The critics see struggling souls on thousands of crosses! They see men who have dropped out of school, failed in a pursuit or otherwise in a hopeless situation and they drop their heads saying it is all over! They see people living in poverty and trapped in the claws of ignorance and they respond "its all over!" They see drug dealers, prostitutes and hustlers and they say, "It's all over!" The message to the critics is simple, "don't count any saint out. It ain't over until its over!"

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Go ahead, drive the nails in my hand, laugh and me, but you will see, I'll rise again!"

BELIEVERS COUNTED THEMSELVES OUT: The second group is represented by those in verse 49, "all his acquaintances and the women that followed him him.." These were his disciples and other believers. Not only had the critics counted the Christian cause out, but they disassociated themselves from the cross! They counted themselves out! They had to be reminded of the words of Christ when he told them that he would be crucified but would rise again after three days and nights. They had to be reminded because they forgot.

It would be tragic if a believer who knows the word of God and believes in the power of God would do to himself what the world has already done by counting himself out! The reality is that believers expect to be hit by the experiences of life. We expect, on occasion to be knocked down. But each time we are knocked down we get back up! That's why Paul wrote in Romans 8:37 *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* Therefore we are not intimidated when hit by principalities, powers, present conditions, a bad past or anything else.,nothing, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." John put it this way in 1 John 5:4 *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* Romans 8:28 put it this way "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Don't count yourself out, it ain't over until its over!

Rest of the Story!

It would be a mistake for anyone to assume that a person who is following the word of God can be defeated by the antagonisms of this world. Whenever a saint is down, be reminded he or she is down but not out!

The knockdown is not the end! Stick around and get the rest of the story! The set back is not the end of the story! Stick around and get the rest of the story! Don't miss the good part!

Joseph's life was destined to greatness! He saw himself doing something great for God. But his dream met head on with that of his brothers who were equally determined to stop him. They threw him in a pit. It appeared that it was over, until we

look at the rest of the story! He rose to geatness unmatched in the whole kingdom.

Samson was a strong man who was brought down, chained and blinded. As he stood in chains without strenght or sight it appeared that it was over, until we look at the rest of the story! He repented for his sins and slew thousands of Philistines in his last and final act!

Job was a pitiful sight. Once strong, wealthy and healthy he was broken to a poor man with ill health. Job's story looked to be one of defeat, until we see the rest of the story! He was blessed more after his trial than he had been before! All of these went to prove that we should never count a saint of God out just because they are down! Stick around! Wait for the rest of the story! Remember it ain't over until its over!

Over 5,000 people found out that there is a blessing in waiting to get the rest of the story! When looked like there was nothing to eat, some may have left to go home. They were asked to stick around and get the rest of the story!

When the winds were blowing mightily the disciples thought their ship would sink, some believed it was all over! But the good good part was not in the storm, it was in the rest of the story! Jesus rose to rebuke the wind saying peace be still!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a God that guarantees us the victory according to his purpose!

We serve a God who can take:

-Defeat and turn it into victory; failure and turn it into success

-Misfortune and turn it into good fortune; Tragedy and turn it into opportunity

-Blunders and turn them into wonders; Doubts and wipe them out!

At Calvary the world thought the Savior was out, but they learned what we now know: "It ain't over until it's over!"

They crucified him, thinking it was over!

They buried him, thinking it was over!

But Early Sunday morning they learned the truth: "It ain't over until it's over!"

No. 605-Youth

Is That On The Test?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 28, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Matthew 19:20-21

Introduction

Have you ever studied hard for an exam only to find out that what you studied wasn't on the test? This season of the year is the most stressful for students. There are batteries of required tests that are administered in schools. Some tests attempt to measure the effectiveness of the school system. If students score well the system and its professional staff are praised for excellence. If students don't score well effectiveness of the system is in question. Everyone has become so test conscious in modern times that many teachers have begun to alter their whole plan of instruction to fit the test. The assumption seems to be: "I will judged by how my students perform on the test. To insure that I do well, I will what I teach to only those skills that will be measured on the test." If it's not on the test, it probably won't be taught. It isn't long before students get the message and respond accordingly. They are gradually losing interest in learning information for life, but have resigned themselves to learning what is necessary to pass the test.

Possessing advanced information about test contents has its advantages. Those who know in advance what will be on a test can limit their study to include only those skills that will actually be measured on the test. If a student knows exactly what is going to be on a test his chances of scoring high are greater because the chances of focusing his study in the wrong area are limited. So, many teachers have "reviews" in which test information is underscored. Sometimes actual test information is given. Armed with that knowledge, many students find little reason to study continuously because the information they need to quickly to pass an exam will always be given in the review. Others take an even shorter route, they steal the test information. Those who don't steal the information directly often attempt to find someone who has seen the test and give them information about its contents. Self study of the whole body of information presented is the long way around. It will require learning information that will not be tested, which is considered a waste of time. "If it's not going to be

on the test, why bother?" seems to be the attitude.

Unfortunately, the "Is it on the test" attitude is often reflected in other areas of life. We are often frustrated when we encounter co-workers and associates who only do what is required, nothing more and nothing less. Their school work or extra-curricular activities reflect minimum achievement rather than the maximum. Like the cartoon family the "Simpsons" they enjoy being underachievers and reject the notion of doing anything that is not required.

The idea of learning the short route to success has become so prevalent today that there are even people who want to know what they can do to make it to heaven, but only enough to pass the test. Sometimes we hear their comments: "I'm not worried about a mansion or a well postured place, I just want to get me a seat somewhere in the kingdom." That attitude suggests someone wants to do just enough to pass the test.

As Christians, we know that there are no grades of salvation. We are either saved or we are lost. It's pass or fail. There is nothing in between. The test contents are simple: We must repent, believe and then act on our beliefs. The measure of our salvation is in our repentance and belief. The measure of our reward is the quality of our service as we act on our beliefs.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he responds to a young man seeking entry into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus had been teaching about the kingdom of heaven to all who would hear him. A certain rich young ruler was fascinated with what he was teaching and wanted to know the requirements to be a part of the new kingdom Jesus spoke about.

The Jewish people were reared on the principles of the Mosaic law. With the 10 commandments as a basis, they spent their entire lives learning its requirements and performing them to the letter. It was the supreme test of righteousness. Those who carried out the teachings of the Torah passed. They were considered righteous. They understood every item that was required of them and carried them out to the letter.

The teachings of the Torah represented the minimum requirements for righteous living. As such the people strived to meet the minimum requirement. They paid close attention to the details of the law. They did what it said, but no more! They gave a tenth, but no more. They honored the Sabbath, but sanctified themselves on no other day. They refrained from adulterous acts, but they thought about them constantly. In short, the maintained a strict interpretation of the law, which was just enough for them to make a passing grade and be considered righteous.

When the young ruler heard about the kingdom of heaven he inquired of Jesus about the requirements. What will be on the final test to determine entry into the kingdom, seemed to be the question. He requested that Jesus would provide him with the answers. His question asked "What lack I yet?" He seemed to ask: "Tell me, what will be on the final test? What will you be looking for to determine whether a person

is admitted to or rejected from the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus began with the central components of the Mosaic law, the commandments of God. As he listed each the young man was encouraged because he had carried out each of these items from his childhood. He felt worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven because it appeared from his advance peek at the test that he would pass with flying colors.

However, Jesus posed a final requirement which wasn't in the law. It would require the young ruler to do more than simply comply with the minimum requirements of the law. The final test would involve his total commitment to the cause. Not what he had memorized or some vague minimum passing requirement, but total commitment. Jesus said those who want to enter into the kingdom of heaven must deny themselves, take up crosses and follow him.

The mention of selling his possessions was difficult for the rich young ruler because he owned much. Even more difficult was the idea of taking up a cross. In modern times, taking up a cross means making a decision to follow Christ. In biblical times those who carried a cross were on their way to a crucifixion. Taking up a cross meant dying. Getting into the kingdom of heaven meant assuming an attitude that one is willing to endure death to acquire access into the kingdom of heaven. When the young ruler heard that, he left. His possessions were great and he was unwilling to part with neither his possessions or his life in pursuit of the kingdom.

He saw what would be on the test and realized that it was comprehensive in nature. There were no quick answers to memorize. His life's commitment would be judged. Seeing that the rich young man left. His soul was unsaved.

What Will Be On The Test?

As youth prepare for life and beyond, many may find themselves in the position of the young man in this text. The questions are universal. What will be on the final exam? What kind of test will it be?

What kind of test will life give you? It won't be a simple as a true and false question where you have a 50 percent chance of success by simply guessing the right answers. Neither does life give us a predetermined path that's already worked out for us if we can just fill in the blanks with the right answers. If we could match our skills with opportunities life would be great and success would be the final out come. The kind of test that life gives each person is comprehensive. It involves the full range of experiences from birth to the present moment, involving information, orientation, and inclination.

INFORMATION: Life will test your store of information. Youth should attempt to learn anything you can about everything you can. Information and the lack of it, is often the determining factor in success or familiar in the course of life. Information involves scholarship, advance training, and preparation in the theory and practical applications of your professions. Youth are encouraged to become information sponges. Soak up, learn and digest all that is available in school. Read books,

magazines and newspapers. Watch television programs that challenge your brain. Soak up information. Study the lives of successful people. Learn from them. Emulate their best habits while avoiding their mistakes. The more you know the more valuable you become. Life skips over those who simply learned enough to get by. Life tolerates mediocrity, but it rewards excellence!

ORIENTATION: Life will test your orientation and direction. As youth prepare to stand on their own it is important to have their direction in life set otherwise they will become disoriented and will move around in circles, making very little progress despite intense activity. Life's challenges will pull them in many directions. Youth are tempted to embrace a variety of beliefs and follow and plethora of ideas. They should acquire a life compass that will always point them in the right direction, allowing them to measure whether they are on or off course. The compass they use should be able to point to truth. Those who go through life without the proper orientation usually fail in the quest for success.

INCLINATION: Life will test your inclinations or your purpose. Our inclination affects our attitude. Our attitude reflects what we consider to be our purpose. Which direction we take in life is usually predicated on what we perceive to be our purpose in life. If we believe our lives to have a clear purpose we are less likely to be sidetracked. Our lives are ordered according to that purpose and we are focused in life walk. Life will challenge our self definition. It will present alternatives but those who keep their eyes focused will realize the fullness of the power of God in their lives.

There is no way to cram for life's test. Some try to make it through on cheat sheets, faking knowledge, padding resume's and claiming educational training they never had. There is no way to get an advance peek into life's test because each test is individualized. Each person has a different test than the other. But every test will involve information, orientation and inclination.

The Spiritual Test

While life will pose many tests for those who travel its highways and byways, there is another test that each person must consider. That test considers a persons relationship to God.

What's on this test? Is it true and False? Is it matching? Can we just fill in the blanks and make it in? Can we fake it? Can will do just enough to get by?

Malachi framed a true and false test. He asked in Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God?"

Elijah framed a matching test. He challenged the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel. He told the people if Baal be God follow him but if God be God then follow him.

The Psalmist gave us an open book test. He challenged us to study the word of God. Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

David gave us an oral exam. It was not written on paper but in our spoken words and secret thoughts. Psa 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my

heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Job received a physical endurance test. His body broke out in boils and sores yet he declared "yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him!"

Naaman received a practical Exam. He wasn't asked to write anything, say anything, or study anything. He was asked to demonstrate his faith in God by going down to the muddy waters and dunking himself seven times! Life will challenge us with many practical exams to test whether we are willing to do what we talk about!

Sometimes there are pop tests. Jesus was faced with a three question pop test in the wilderness. The person giving the test was Satan who challenged him to worship evil rather than God.

John 3:16 gives us a fill in the blank test. "For God so loved the world that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Whosoever is a blank space that is filled by whomever chooses to believe in God.

Passing the test means we can meet all of the conditions.

2000 years ago when the universe was looking for savior the question must have been asked: "Who can pass the test to be a savior?"

A savior must pass the incarnation test. That test was passed in Bethlehem when a virgin gave birth to a little boy and called his name Jesus!

A savior must pass the life test? That test was passed in the three year ministry where the glory of God was revealed.

A savior must pass the death test? He must be willing to die as a sacrificial lamb to save his people. That test was pass when Jesus took up an old rugged cross and went to Calvary!

A savior must pass resurrection test? That test was passed Early Sunday morning when he rose from the grave!

I'm glad that Jesus passed the test!

I'm glad that he is my friend and my guide!

If you want the rewards of the kingdom, Follow Jesus! He'll never let you down!

No. 606-Inspiration

Sinking In The Sea Of Life

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 5, 1977

SCRIPTURE: "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." Matthew 14:26-32

Introduction

Have you ever felt that you were involved in something that was over your head? It's over your head whenever you begin to feel yourself drowning in the circumstances that have evolved as a result of your involvement. Sometimes its a family concern. The welfare of a child or a spouse can often overwhelm us. Sometimes it is a business concern that overwhelms us. Especially those times that our expenses exceed our income and the profitability of the experience is diminished. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by acts of nature: floods, storms, and other natural disasters. They leave us with a sense of helplessness as we find ourselves unable to cope with the awesome power of nature's rage. Then there are times when our feeling of helplessness does not come from external sources but comes from deep within us. Those are the times when we feel like we are out on the sea of life sinking ..going down for the last time!

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by our fears. Often our fears are unfounded but at the time they occur they are real. A newspaper column years ago by Lydel Sims tells the fearful experience of Mrs. Wilma Sullivan, a widow who lives alone in Portageville, Missouri.

"You just won't believe what happened to her the other night when she was sleeping in her quiet house on a quiet street among quiet and friendly neighbors. She had gone to bed about 11:30...Not that she had worried unduly about her personal safety, but the doors were locked tight and nobody could have opened a window even if they had tried. She was sure of that.

"She picked up a novel...and settled down to read for a while. She grew sleepy. She put down the novel, turned off the light and settled down to sleep.

"As best she could reconstruct the night's events later, she must have fallen into a deep, relaxed sleep. Then about 2 or 3 a.m. she came up ever so gradually to the border between sleep and waking. She moved, put her arms above her head and dozed off again. All was still quiet, peaceful and relaxed. She had no fearful apprehensions, no premonitions, no worries.

"People who sometimes sleep with their arms above their heads will understand what happened next. It was a minor matter. Her left arm simply grew tired of the position. She was dimly aware of the discomfort. It continued. Still dozing, she tried to lower her arm. It wouldn't come down.

"Then, she says, she became aware of a warm, firm hand holding her arm tightly. She woke up in a hurry—and in a panic. She struggled in the dark to free her hand, but the strange hand wouldn't turn loose. The harder she struggled, the tighter the grasp grew. She was struck by how warm that hand was, and how firmly it held her. Frantically, she tried harder to get loose. Then something dawned on her. It was her own right hand doing the holding.

"Actually, it almost turned out badly after all. She nearly fell out of bed laughing. But she didn't. She finally managed to pry her right hand loose from her left, and laughed a while, and then fell back to sleep for the rest of the night, and no harm was done. And she has figured the whole thing. It was simply a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing."

Sometimes our fears get the best of us. Sometimes those fears cause us to sink in the sea of life!

There comes a time in each of our lives when our bold walk across the waters of adversity seems to sink in doubt. It's for those moments that we should remember Peter and his walk on water and remember what caused him to sink: "He took his eyes off Jesus."

As Christians we know the importance of keeping our eyes on Jesus. As we meander the seas of life we will survive storms and waves, if we keep our eyes on him.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Christ when he illustrated the power of faith in God even involving the forces of nature.

The occasion of this text was immediate following a great sermon Jesus had preached during which he fed 5,000 people with a miraculous act that provided enough food for the masses and left 12 baskets full extra. After sending the crowd away, Jesus charged his disciples to meet him on the opposite side of the lake. He stayed behind to pray.

While on the lake a storm broke out. It was an unusually powerful storm. The disciples were fishermen by trade. They had experienced many such storms. They were strong men, but when the storm showed no signs of letting up, it got the better of them. They feared for their very lives. Then across the water they saw Jesus. The disciples failed to recognize Christ. One of them cried out, "It is a ghost!" Jesus spoke

words of comfort to his fearful disciples, “Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.” Peter, the bold one among the disciples called out to Christ to give him permission to meet him walking on the water and Jesus responded “Come!” Without thinking. Without considering the impossibility of the act, Peter jumped into the water and began to walk to meet Christ.

It wasn’t long however, that he became amazed at what he was doing. He looked down and considered how impossible it was and immediately he began to sink. He was only saved when he cried out to Jesus “Lord save me.”

He stepped out, began to sank and was lifted by the power of Christ.

It’s Safe In The Boat

There are many today who will never sink in the sea! They won’t sink because they won’t venture out of the boat. The other disciples that were with Peter were all in the boat and they were all afraid. None of them were ever able to tell the same story as Peter. They would never be able to tell how they stepped out on faith in Christ and for a very short time “walked on water!”

There are many today who are afraid of the storm and they are clinging to the boat instead of stepping out on faith!

Many opportunities that life presents often require the faithful to step out on faith. Faith must be demonstrated. The best time for it to be demonstrated is during the storm. Our first inclination is to hold on to the boat. However, in the storm, when things are tough, Jesus bids us to step out on faith.

When the climate for business opportunity seems to be at its best, Jesus says “Come!”

When the storm of family trouble seems at its peak, Jesus says “Come!”

When the vicious stings of animosity bite at us, Jesus says “Come!”

When the waves of sickness and personal troubles seem to overwhelm us, still the voice of Jesus says, “Come!”

Even Strong Faith Has Some Fear

Even the strongest faith exhibits a small element of fear. Peter is often recognized for his great faith. It was immense. But it’s also important to note that his faith was demonstrated in the midst of fear. All around him there was fear. There was fear of the storm. There was the fear of imminent danger and death. There was fear of growing troubles. Peter’s act of faith in stepping out of the boat was demonstrated within the context of fear.

It is a normal response for anyone to be afraid of unknown circumstances or situations that may be beyond his control. It is normal for a person facing a crucial medical procedure to be afraid. It is normal for a person facing financial troubles to be afraid. It is normal for person about to confront an enemy to be anxious.

Peter’s actions show us that even in fear, we can act on faith and can do the

impossible as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus, rather than focus on the situation.

Sometimes the length of a difficulty gives birth to conquered fears. These are the times when despite our fears we have stepped out on faith. After a while, however, we find ourselves sinking. Lengthy sicknesses or other troubling circumstances have their impact on us. We worry when our troubling circumstance continues, just as Peter's first steps were courageous, we are often courageous when we begin. Likewise, the longer Peter walked on the water the more doubtful he became and then he began to sink. It is the same with us. Often long trials bring out our fears and we, like Peter, begin to sink.

Keep our Eyes On Jesus

If there is one lesson that Peter's walk on the water teaches us is that we must keep our eyes focused on Jesus.

Even when the storm of life is raging we must keep our eyes focused on Jesus!

A certain church in Shanghai, China was closed by the communist during the late 1960's. It was a time of great suffering and oppression for Christians. Pastors and laity were exiled and sentenced to hard labor. Christians were severely punished for practicing their faith. The old church was closed and used as a school. A large cross that once hung on the wall was taken down and placed in the floor and covered over with cement. The communists felt that if the cross was covered with cement it eventually be forgotten by the people. Many years later the old school was returned to a church and the people who rejoiced. When asked why they came into the building each day and stared at a spot on the ground and smiled, they said "the communist buried the cross under cement. We couldn't see it, but we knew it was there and kept our hearts focused on the cross until our lives were resurrected again!"

When times get tough and its hard to see your way because of the storm, keep your eyes on Jesus!

When the waves of life seem to sweep you away, call on Jesus!

Despite the storms of life Jesus is able to take our:

--Disappointments and turn them into renewed joy!

--Failures and turn them into successes!

--Setbacks and turn them into strides forward!

--Heartaches and turn them into waves of happiness!

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I"

Love lifted me!

Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help...Love Lifted me!

No. 607-Inspiration

Birth Marks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 5, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. Revelation 13:16-18; And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev. 7:14

Introduction

Has anyone ever left their mark on you? Generally a person leaves their mark on you when their life has made such a great impression on you that it influences your direction in life. Often great decisions in life have been made as the result of a person who "made a mark" on you. Sometime entire lives are changed by the influence of one person. Nearly everyone has a favorite teacher whose philosophy of life left a mark on them, for better or worse. Sometimes it is a famous person that leaves a mark. Sometimes it is an event that marks us indelibly. Most often we are marked by parents and grandparents and people who are around us and attract our curiosity. Once marked, a person seldom changes direction. He or she exhibits the traits of their mentors for many years.

Sometimes the reason for our entire existence is to leave a mark. Jesus was approached by his critics once and asked to explain why a man was born blind. Had he sinned? Was his blindness the result of his parent's sin. Jesus responded that the man was born blind so that he could be present on that very day and be healed by God. When he was healed, the man left a lasting impression on the people of that city. The purpose of his entire life was to leave a mark. Martin Luther King left a mark on an entire nation. Frederick Douglass left a mark on an entire race. Grandma left a mark on a whole family. That special person in each of our lives left a mark on at least one person who inspired us to walk our present road in life.

Sometimes those who leave a mark don't make a positive influence. Sometimes we can be influenced to go in the wrong direction. Consider Sister Callie Mae who was considered one of the most righteous members of the Holy Gethesemene Church. She made a mark on every member. She appeared to be the epitome of faith. When she prayed she'd always say "Lord if you send me thousands, I'd give it all back to

you, just give me Jesus!" That was her prayer for over 20 years. One year though, the state built a highway across her land. She received $100,000 in payment for her property. When the members of the small rickety, unpainted, backwood church heard the news they rejoiced because they remembered Sister Callie Mae's prayers. A delegation went to see her, thinking they would hear some good news. The preacher said "Sister Callie Mae, the Lord has given you thousands, is there anything you'd like to give back?" Callie Mae looked at the Cashier's check on the table and said "Well, when I prayed that prayer, I had the will, but I didn't have no money. Things have changed a little. Now that I have some money, I find that I don't have the will!" The day Callie Mae confessed left an even bigger mark on those who trusted her witness. They learned a bitter truth, "actions speak louder than words!"

As Christians we are always mindful that we are children of the king. We bear his mark. He is our mentor and the greatest influence on our lives. The day we accepted him we were born into a new life. The events that influenced that change comprised the birth mark that notes the point in life when we decided to follow Christ.

Exposition

These text show two sets of people who are influence by two different powers. One of the powers is Satan and the other Godly. Both have a mark that indicates the choices made.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, shown to John on the Isle of Patmos, gives us a glimpse, although symbolically, of things that are to come. The entire book reveals the events of the last seven years of time. It is divided into two parts, each 3 1/2 years long showing the rise and fall of the anti-Christ, influenced by Satan and assisted by the False Prophets. It ends with the glorious union of the bride and bridegroom as time is erased and eternity begins.

Revelation 7 focuses on a point in which God will prepare to pour out his wrath upon all of the earth. However, before he does so there will be a great revival and millions will come forth to accept Christ and be saved. Each person that comes forth receives the mark of salvation in the form of a seal.

Revelation 7:4 notes that even the Jewish community will have some who will come forth in those last days. There will be 144,000 Jews, representing 12,000 each from 12 of the 13 tribes (The tribe of Dan will not come forth). These 144,000 Jews will not be the only Jews that will be saved but will be those who come forth in last days to be joined by others who have believed in the centuries prior to the last seven years.

Each will be given a special mark that identified them as Children of the King. Verse notes that after the 144,000 that there will be another number that will come forward in the last seven years that will be to great to number. They to will be sealed and protected from the wrath that is to come. They all were clearly marked as children of the king.

Revelation 13 tells how the Anti-Christ and Satan devise a scheme to make a mark on people that will cause them to get off track and miss the actual call of God. The

false prophet will convince many, through signs and wonders, that will look authentic, sound authentic and appear to be from God.

Christ warned believers to be on guard against false prophets and false teachings. When they appear they will be so convincing that even the "very elect" of the saints will be deceived. Matthew 24:24 says "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

At a given point, those who follow the anti-Christ, (thinking they are right) will be given a mark either in their forehead or in their right hand. The number of his name "666" refers to his initials. (Hebrew and Greek do not have a separate numbering system like English. Numbers correspond to the letters of the Alphabet). These individuals will have the mark of the beast.

Revelation 13:17 explains that only those who have the mark will be able to buy or sell anything.

Despite the appeals of God otherwise there will be many who know better who will think they are missing something and reach out for the mark of the beast, after being misled by the false prophet.

Thus, two groups will bear marks. Those who trust and believe in God and those who trust in the Anti-Christ. The mark that comes as result of Satanic influences is shows a Satanic influence. The mark that comes from God is the sign of a godly influence.

Leaving Marks

There are many today who bear the marks of one influence or another. Dr. King was permanently influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Ghandi as he wrote and practiced "Soul Force" or the art of non-violent civil disobedience. Malcom X was influenced by the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. Wilma Rudolph was crippled with polio but the influence of a God fearing mother inspired her to become a Gold medal winner in the 1960 Olympics. These represent the millions of people in the world who have been "marked" in a positive way by outside influence.

However, there are forces at work in the community that leave negative marks. Youth are the most susceptible, but they are not alone. There are millions of adults who have been marked by a negative influence. A son watches his father beat his wife and he is marked forever. He'll either be just like his father or spend his life trying to be different. A girl watches her mother smoke, drink and curse. She'll either be just like her mother or spend her life trying to be different.

Parents must excercise extreme care in selecting the activities in which their children participate. The lifestyle and habits of the people surrounding children influence them more than the activity. A popular coach that curses and smokes in the presence of children will have a tremendous influence on the impressionable young. Just as important are the type of friends with whom our children associate. A rowdy set of friends tend to bring out the worse in every youth. Even television

and radio have a great influence on youth who shape their opinions about life from what they gleen from videos and Compact Discs.

Adults are influenced by special people in their lives. Millions of adults have been influence to use drugs, comitt crimes, cheat in the marriages, or otherwise defraud themselves because they were influenced by someone special in their lives.

Negative influences come from Satan. It is his special attempt to leave his mark on you. On occasion Satan directly leaves his mark. He visited Job personally and tried to make a mark but couldn't. He taunted Jesus in the wilderness and tried to make a mark but couldn't. Generally Satan uses people to put his mark on us. Sometimes he is successful, epecially when he catches us off guard.

Just as the Revelation tells of a time when people will be told they cannot buy or sell without the mark of the Anti-Christ, many are being told today that they cannot succeed unless they resort to ungodly tactics. Some are told to use their sexuality to open doors for themselves "every body is doing it!" Some are encouraged to cheat and deceive to win victories because it's a "dog eat dog world." Some have agreed to taking life's short cuts to success, not considering the ultimate end. Each time they do so they evidence the fact that they have have been marked by the devil himself.

That's why Ephesians 6:11 says "*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."* When Satan tries to leave his mark on you the word of God says in James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Birth Marks

When Satan influences people to live ungodly lives, in effect, he brands them, or leaves his mark on them. A brand is different from a birth mark. A brand does not indicate a new entity. It does not show a change of position but indicates ownership. A cow that is branded does not change. It's the same cow displaying a brand that indicates to whom he belongs.

On the other hand a person who is born into the family of God is a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* The mark of the Christian denotes a new life. It is not a brand but a true birth mark, signifying a new life in Christ.

The man who is marked by the hand of God is walking in a new direction. That's why Paul wrote in Philippians 3:13-14 "..forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Jacob returning to his homeland was a branded man. He was a trickster and a deceiver, but he had a wrestling match with God. His name was changed from Jacob to Israel because he wrestled with God. He exchanged his brand for a birth mark!

Saul was a branded man. He persecuted the church wherever he went. But one day on the Damascus Road he turned in his brand and picked up a birth mark!

The woman at the well was a branded woman. She had a five husbands and was shacking with number six. But Jesus gave her living water and she exchanged her brand for birth mark as she ran through city declaring "Come see a man" who told all I've ever done!

The thief on the cross was a branded man. He had lived his life as thief, breaking all of the laws of the land. But hanging on the cross, he exchanged his brand for a birth when he said "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"

The brand of sin was represented by the cross!

The world Disturbs but the cross represents our chance for rest!

The World defiles but the cross represent our chances for purity!

The world hates but the cross represents our chance to be loved!

The world destoys but the cross represent our chance to be lifted up!

The world darkens but the cross represents our chance to walk in the light!

No wonder the song writer declared: "At the cross at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart roll away. It was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

Jesus invited all believers to exchange their Satanic brands for a cross!

On Calvary Jesus took that old rugged cross and changed it from a sign of shame to sign of victory.

That's why the song writer wrote "I will cherish the old rugged till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown!"

I'm so glad that the Lord has laid his hands on me!

He gave me a new walk! He gave me a new talk!

I'm so glad!

So glad!

The Lord left his mark on me!

No. 608-Inspiration

Seizing Opportunities

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 19, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. John 5:5-9

Introduction

Have you ever missed an opportunity because someone beat you to the punch? On occasion the best of us miss chances to achieve life goals because something or someone gets there just before we do and we are unable to capitalize on the moment. Did you have your eye on a certain item in the store but waited too long to buy it? That was the time the manager had to tell you that someone had beaten you to the punch. It is even more frustrating to see the person using the item that you wanted. It happens the same way when we respond to want ads about work opportunities and just as we walk in the door someone else walks out with the job. Even in love there are some folks that move too slow. Many singles have made their move only to find out that the attractive person they had been watching for so long was no longer available because someone else had beaten them to the punch. The ability to seize an opportunity when it presents itself often makes the difference between those who succeed and those who fail. When opportunity knocks, we must be prepared to answer or someone else will beat us to the punch!

Missing opportunity is not unique to age or station. It has happened in every social strata. The youth miss opportunities because they often move to fast. The old miss opportunities because they are cautious and move too slow. The educated, the unlearned, the rich and the poor, all have missed an opportunity or two in life. When opportunities are miss we spend many years wondering what would have been. "I coulda" and "I shoulda" are two phrases used most by those who miss opportunities. It marks a tragic turn in every life.

Some miss opportunities because they are unable to act on them. Others get themselves tangled up seizing what they thought was a good opportunity that turned out to be an invitation to disaster. Jumping at the wrong opportunity they found poverty, failure and frustration. Consider two slaves that were talking in field. One

complained about how never got along well with his master. He said he was always punished. The other began to give him some advice. “Every time the master give me a hard time, I cuss him out!” Surprised, the first slave responded: “You mean you actually cuss the master out?” “I call him everything but a child of God!” Came the answer. “You just wait for the right opportunity and then you will feel a lot better after you done told him off!” The next day the young slave returned. His back was scarred from a great whipping he had received from his master. “I did just what you said. I waited for the right moment and then I called him everything but a child of God.” The old slave asked “You didn’t tell him that to his face did you?” “I sho’ did!” the boy answered. The old slave responded: “No wonder you got yourself in trouble. I waits until the master go up to the big house and I’m way out in the field by myself. Then I cusses him out! You got to pick the right time tell him off. To his face is the wrong time!”

As Christians, we know life will present us with many opportunities for success. We lean on the power of God to help us identify sound opportunities and motivate us to act upon them. We need the power of God because alone we are too slow to achieve our goals. With him however, we won’t have to worry about life beating us to the punch!

Exposition

This text focuses on the people at Bethesda and how they waited to seize an opportunity.

The pool at Bethesda attracted many visitors to the small town because it had the reputation of being a source of healing. The waters of the pool acquired healing powers when an angel stirred them. It appeared that only one person at a time could be healed during this stirring of the waters. The first to get to the waters would always be the one healed.

Those who were mobile had an advantage over the immobile. Those who could see the waters bubble and stir and could move themselves quickly had the advantage. Those who were blind or crippled and had no one to help them did not have a chance. It seemed unfair that those who needed the most help would be the least likely to get help, but that was the rule.

Verse 3 describes the people who came to the pool as “Impotent” meaning that these were individuals who were powerless to resolve their own conditions. They came to the pool looking for help. Some of the types were listed: the blind, halt, and withered. All were waiting for the moving of the waters. Each of them was seeking an opportunity but often missed it because of their impotence and condition.

Jesus visited the pool and saw all of the people waiting for their opportunity for healing. Jesus must have gone unnoticed because there is no mention of anyone paying attention to his presence as every person kept his eyes glued to the water waiting for their chance. A certain man who had become a homesteader at the pool was approached by Jesus. He learned that the man had been by the pool for 38 years.

Jesus asked the question, *"Wilt thou be made whole?"* The man explained that he's been trying to help himself for 38 years but each time an opportunity came someone else beat him to the punch. Literally he said "I have not man, when the water is troubled, to put me in the pool." He had no one who was willing to assist him. Every man was for himself. Without help he was doomed to spend the rest of his life sitting by the pool watching everyone else beat him to the punch.

Without any further questions or deliberations, Jesus instructed the man to take up his bed and walk and immediately he was healed and walked away.

The man missed the troubling of the water but he was healed by the master himself.

Waiting For the Chance

Today there are many who waiting for their big chance in life, but always seem to miss out because someone else gets there first. Like the people at the Bethesda, there are many people today who miss opportunities because they are either blind, halt or withered.

Those who are blind can't see their way clearly. Their vision has been blurred. Whenever we get to the point when we can't see beyond the present moment we are postured for disaster. It's only when we can consider the future that we understand the importance of preparation in the present. A man who plans on a future in professional athletics appreciates doing what it takes now to achieve that dream when the opportunity comes. A woman who aspires to a career in medicine, does what is necessary now to prepare for the day when opportunity comes. The blind are rarely the first ones to enter the pool, because they can't see it when it moves.

There are also those who are have halted in life. The halt are those who are physically challenged or handicapped. There are many who have been placed in challenging circumstances in life that have made the prospect of success gloom. If the halt are viewed as handicapped, a certain degree of permanence is suggested. If the halt are viewed as "challenged" then the possibility of overcoming the circumstance seems more feasible. Many miss opportunities because they view themselves as handicapped rather than challenged. Those who are challenged achieve despite handicapping conditions. Michael Jackson was born in poverty in Gary Indiana but rather than be overwhelmed by challenge he succeed despite handicapping circumstances. Colin Powell, Jesse Jackson and many other national personalities all arose from abject poverty despite their handicapping social conditions. Those who are handicapped fail to achieved because they are overwhelmed by the challenge. When opportunities present themselves many cannot take advantage of them because they have come to believe that people in their social circumstance can never achieve!

The withered are those whose energy force is all but gone away! There are many today who miss opportunities because they have withered wills. They have lost hope. The will to achieve, to forge forward has gone away. To achieve in school requires a will! To achieve in business requires will power! To achieve in marriage

requires will power! The landscape of America is dotted with the emotional carcasses of withered wills and shattered dreams and hopeless pilgrims who wandered into future, willing to go anywhere, going everywhere and ending up nowhere! Those who have withered and given up miss opportunities and someone else always beats them to the punch!

Those who are powerless need someone to help them. Look at the impotent man's response in verse 7. *"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool..."* There was no one willing to help him get into the pool. He tried, because he said "while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." He tried, but alone, someone always beat him to the punch. One of the sad commentaries on our times is that very few people are willing to help another person achieve an opportunity. Yet, each of us was helped by someone who stopped along the way and gave us a chance. A teacher, a relative, a friend. Each was helped by someone who helped us to overcome a barrier or two and make our mark in life.

Those who cannot see clearly, need someone to show them! Those who have lost hope and are overwhelmed by their social condition, need someone to believe in them.

Those who have lost their will power need someone to inspire them and give them the will to go forward! This man was unable to seize his opportunity because there was no one willing to help him.

Those who help others along the way understand the meaning of the song: "If I can help somebody as I pass along. If I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain."

Help and Healing

Finally it is important that we note that everyone at Bethseda kept their attention focused on the water. No one noticed Jesus when he came. When Jesus came near other cities the crowds met him. When he stopped at a house to rest the sick and the lame came from miles around. In one city they tore the roof from a house to get a sick man in his presence. But in Bethesda there is no record of response from the people around the pool.

They were so busy watching the water they did not see Jesus!

They were so busy waiting for a miracle, that they did not see the miracle worker!

They were so busy waiting for an angel, they see the one greater than the angels.

They were so busy waiting for a blessing, they did not see the source of blessings was in their midst.

They were so busy waiting for their big chance, they missed the biggest opportunity of all.

They were so totally consumed by their worldly concerns that they missed Jesus.

When the lame man took his eyes off the water for a second he saw Jesus. When he saw Jesus he received both help and healing at the same time!

For 38 years the people at the pool had beat this old man to the punch!

For 38 years he watched the water and made his best effort, but they always beat him to the punch

But by the time those at the pool recognized that Jesus was in their midst, the old man had beaten them to punch. He had receive his healing and was probably wandering the streets praising God!

Have you missed some of life's great opportunities? Has someone or something always beat you to the punch! Prepare yourself and watch the water, but keep trusting in the Lord!

Satan works daily to deprive you of your dreams. Despite your best efforts he always beats you to the punch.

Keep your eyes on the water, but look up every now and then, the Lord is always standing by!

I don't know about you but I've found out that when the Lord is standing by:

—Things that were impossible suddenly become possible! Because all things are possible with the Lord!

—Things at which we had failed suddenly become achievable; because I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me!

—Things which made us afraid suddenly become unintimidating; when Jesus is standing by who shall I fear?

—Things which made us weak suddenly lose their control; in Jesus I am strong!

—Things that made me lose hope don't bother me any more because my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name!

—Things that once made me sad can't steal my happiness; I now have joy, unspeakable joy!

Keep your eye on the water, but every now and then look for Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here knows him!

Jesus, the sweet Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Jesus, The Passover lamb slain for the redemption of sin!

Jesus, Our waymaker!

Jesus, the Prince of Peace and King of Kings!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose from the day!

Keep your eyes on Jesus and he'll make everything all right!

No. 609-Inspiration, Mother's Day

Leaning On The Everlasting Arms

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms!" Proverbs 31:17

Introduction

Has there ever been an occasion when you had to lean and depend on someone else? Regardless of our strength and experience, there comes a time in every life when each depends upon someone else, if only for a shoulder to cry upon. Sometimes a friend listens as we pour out our soul's concerns. Sometimes circumstances render us helpless and we need the assistance of others. Even the president of the nation is surrounded by counselors and advisors that he leans upon for sound advice and direction. Very few, if any, stand alone. Everyone leans on someone.

Mothers appear to have historically been the leaning posts of the family. They have been the source of strength and support for the family for many generations. When a child cuts a finger, he runs to his mother to kiss it and make the pain go away. When there is frustration, even grown children have a tendency to call or visit mother and pour out their soul's concern. When major steps are about to be made in life, it is natural for a child to solicit mother's advice. Over the years, families have come to love and depend upon mother. They lean upon her for strength. They lean upon her for encouragement. They lean upon her inspiration.

If the entire family is leaning upon mother, drawing strength and inspiration, who does mother lean upon to sustain herself? An amusing episode of a recent Superman movie makes the point. Lois Lane had fallen from a helicopter as she was covering a story. Lois was falling fast and the ground was racing up to meet her. Suddenly out of no where Superman appears and grabs her. As the man of steel wrapped his arms around Lois he said "Don't worry Lois, I've got you!" Lois looked around. She was floating in mid air, being held only by Superman's arm. She looked up and down and then exclaimed "You've got me. But Who's got you?" So it is with mothers. They are super figures in our lives who always seem to swoop down in the nick of time, save us from our frailties, make the impossible happen, and catch us when we fall.

Like Lois Lane every family member could easily ask. Mother's got us, but who's got mother? We lean on her, but what keeps her from falling. What sustains her. What keeps her going? Who does she lean upon?

As Christians we have learned that even the wisest and strongest among us are not self perpetuating. They get their strength from an unseen source. Mothers, fathers, and God fearing children all get their strength from trusting and leaning upon the power of almighty God. We lean upon mother, but she leans upon the Lord.

Exposition

This familiar text focuses on the description of virtuous woman.

The bible has many sections which describe various personalities. Even in the book of proverbs alone there are many types described. The first nine chapters of proverbs describes wicked women. Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24 focuses on nagging wives. However Proverbs closes with a tribute to the godly woman. It is the great testimony to the woman who fears the Lord.

The woman of Proverbs is seen doing two things. She is both giving and receiving. Giving service to her family and friends and giving to God. In reward she is shown receiving the praise of men, her husband and her family.

Buried in the list of virtues *attributed to the Godly woman is the fact that she strengthens her arms!* That means she gets new strength to give to others. What is not said is how she does it? Where does the strength come from. The implication is that such strength comes from God, the only source of spiritual strength.

Such a woman is more valuable than rubies

Learning How To Lean

One Mother's Day three mothers were featured as the special guest at a certain church. Each had varying degrees of experience at parenting. Each was asked to give their best advice to the young in four words. The young woman said "Reach for the Stars!" and there was a thunderous round of applause. Her statement represented the quest of every mother to see her children rise high plateaus in life. The second mother said "Give Life your Best!" Again there was great applause. These four words represented ever mother's expectation of her children, only that they give life their best shot! The last woman was an aged great grandmother. She stood firmly at the podium and gave her four words "Learn out to lean!" The words took the audience by surprise. They asked her to explain. The old woman explained that those who learn how to lean know both how to give and receive from God and man, which is the secret to fruitful living. The audience recognized the power of her words and gave her a standing ovation.

A generation ago the Consolers wrote a song whose words said in effect "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. He's my friend and he's my guide. I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus; and I found out that if I trust him, He will provide!"

The truth of that song is every mother's testimony. Great mothers have learned how to lean.

Leaning, in this context, has two components: Leaning to receive strength and leaning to give strength.

Lean to Give

Mothering is a giving experience. It is a constant flow of lending and leaning to offer help and assistance to young siblings. This instinct to give and reach for the unreachable in characteristic of mothers of all ages.

Jochebed gave up her little Son Moses and placed him in a basket. Once the boy was found she gave of herself to nurse him and train him in the tradition of her people.

The widow woman had come to her last cup of meal and cruise of oil. Just enough for her and her son to eat and to die. But she gave her last to a visiting prophet, trusting in the Lord to provide.

Even today good mothers are remembered most for their capacity to give, in many cases denying themselves opportunities and pleasures. Proverbs 31:31 says a virtuous woman's service to her family and others in need is a source of praise. The entire chapter describes a mother that is leaning to give: providing for her family, supporting her husband, caring for her children, helping the poor and standing tall in the community of the saints. The proverb says "her own works praise her!"

While the particulars have changed the role of mother is still the same. In biblical times the methods may have been different but the outcome was the same. Today mothers juggle a job, a husband, children, and school activities often at the expense of their own ambitions. Often attending the school PTA meeting gets to be mother's job. So does getting a child to piano or dance lessons, attending the recital, dealing with the school, the doctor and chaperoning scouting activities. Good mothers are respected because they give so much of themselves to others.

Not only do good mothers give to others, but many also give to God. With an endless list of activity needed to support and sustain their individual families, there are some mothers who still make time to give time, talent and resources to their church. For the most part churches are sustained mostly by mothers. Mothers sustain the choir. Mothers sustain the Sunday Schools of America. Mothers sustain the youth programs of nearly every church. Mothers seem to have an inexhaustible source of energy and inspiration from which every member of her family draws daily.

Thus, the good mother leans to give in two areas. She gives of herself, to her family and to her general community. But she also leans to give to God from the wealth of her resources, time and talent.

As she leans to reach out a helping hand to her sons and daughters and all of those around her *"her own works praise her in the gates!"*

Lean to Receive

We are still left with Lois Lane's question. If mother leans to give of herself to catch us when we fall! Encourage us! Dry our weeping eyes! Build us up! If mother's got us...Who's got mother? Who holds her hand? Who drys her eye? Who sustains her when she's weak? Who kisses mommy's finger and makes her hurt go away? If mother's got us when we fall...who's got mother?

There comes a time every mother's life when she has given all and throws up her hands in frustration. Everyone is depending upon her, drawing from her, yet she feels so drained. She's constantly giving and sharing and pouring from cup of her resources. Who fills mother's cup when it's empty?

Jesus gave mothers and all the faithful an invitation. He said in Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

In effect Jesus invited everyone to lean on me. Lean on me when you're not strong and I'll give you strength to carry on!

In times of trouble good mothers lean on the Lord and get strength. That's why the Psalmist wrote: "But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him. Psalm 37:39-40 Many mothers have reached trouble spots on the road of life. Many have heard their families asking them what to do. In such times the Christian mother leans on the Lord. It was for times such as these that the song write wrote: "Think of the times you've asked the question, down in your heart now just what shall I do? Then you confide in your friends and loved ones, but they have troubles too. There is a God who rules earth and heaven. In him there's relief from every pain and care, for he knows,Yes, he knows, just how much you can bear!"

In times of doubt good mother's lean on the Lord and get assurance. These are the moments when she worries whether or not there will be sufficient resources for her family. These are the times when she worries whether there will be food on the table, lights, water and gas! These are the times when she worries about the legacy of inheritance she will be able to leave behind. In such times she leans upon the Lord and gets strength. Psalm 37:25 *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."*

In times of anxiety she leans upon the Lord and gets patience. These are the times when life has gotten on her last nerve. These are the times when she is tempted to throw in the towel. The good mother in such times leans on the Lord and hears the word of God respond as in Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

In times of fear she leans upon the Lord and gets courage. These are the times when the health and safety of her family are threatened. These are the times when she faces an unknown and dangerous path. In such times she recalls the words of Psalm 27:1 *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD*

is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Today brothers and sisters we celebrate good mothers who give us a hand. But we also celebrate a loving God who holds every good mother in his hands!

Every mother knows that in order to make the journey, she's got to keep her hand in God's hand!

When we keep our hand in God's hand we find:

—Strength to make the journey!

—Endurance to make it to the end!

—Courage to face impossible odds!

—Wisdom to deal with great challenges!

When we lean upon the Lord will find that the:

—Burden will seem much lighter

—The climb will seem much easier!

—Night will seem much brighter!

—Storm will seem less frightening!

When we lean on the everlasting arms of God we see the world with a new insight. That's why the song writer declared "Oh bright the path grows from day to day. Leaning on the everlasting arms! Leaning! Leaning! Safe and secure from all alarms!

Leaning!

Leaning!

Leaning on the everlasting arms!

No. 610-Graduation

The Ring, The Robe & The Shoes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 26, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke 15:22-24

Introduction

Do you remember your high school graduation? It was a time of celebration, rejoicing and excitement. There were speeches, programs, and words of encouragement of hundreds of people, many of whom we rarely knew. High School graduation is a time when a teen bubbles with enthusiasm at completing a phase of life and looks forward with great anticipation to beginning another. Other than graduation itself, receiving graduation gifts rates high among the exciting elements of graduation. The gifts of graduation range from cards filled with well wishes to automobiles. Add it all up and graduation becomes an exciting time for everyone!

Graduation is filled with tradition and symbolism. Two symbols of graduation are well known, the class ring and the cap and gown. Many institutions don't require a class ring anymore. However, despite the objections of some, the robe or the cap and gown is still a requirement. Rings and robes. That's the graduation package, right? Well that's what everyone in Little Town thought until they saw what Old Charlie gave his son for graduation. There were three boxes all neatly wrapped given to him just before graduation. One small box contained his class ring. It sparkled and shined and was a symbol of his son's high school achievement. The second box contained his cap and gown. It was neatly pressed and looked majestic as he wore it. But the third box contained a new pair of running shoes. "These are nice dad!" Said the son, "But what are they for?" Charlie said, "The ring lets you walk around among your friends and show them what you have done. The robe lets you walk up on stage and receive your diploma with pride. But the shoes suggest that it's time for you to walk your own walk, in your own shoes instead of mine!" Thus old Charlie added a third symbol of graduation: A new pair of shoes, not for the feet but for life!

The challenge of graduation is not in the graduation, but in what lies beyond graduation. What lies beyond graduation is the specter of adult life, independent of the rules that have constrained life during childhood, puberty, adolescence and the teen-age. For some this challenge marks an anxious moment filled with excitement and anticipation. For others, it marks a moment of fear. Regardless to what it means the fact we have a ring and robe, suggests that its time to blaze a trail walking in our own shoes, rather than following in the shadow of those who come before us.

As Christians, we are glad to know that our heavenly father watches our thoughts and deeds in this life. When this life is over, we know we will come to a graduation where we will put on a new robe and walk all over heaven in heavenly shoes! That will be the greatest graduation of them all!

Exposition

This text focuses on a young man who returned home to his father after learning some hard lessons about life.

In Biblical times was viewed differently than it is today. Then an education had two functions: learning and applying the law of God was considered the primary purpose of education.

The secondary purpose in education was to teach about the practical aspects of everyday life: a trade for the boy and the care of the house, application of dietary laws and how to be a good wife for the girl.

The home was considered the first and most effective agency in the education process, and parents were considered the first and most effective teachers of their children. This responsibility is expressed in Genesis 18:19 where God states his expectation that Abraham will train his children and his household to walk in the ways of the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 is another familiar exhortation for parents to teach their children according to the way of the Lord.

Training in the Torah began very early. The father had an obligation to teach his children the Law by words and example. He spent his adolescence learning a trade and how to survive and prosper in life ,from his father

Girls received their education at home. A girl's mother taught her what she needed to know to be a good wife and mother.

She learned about such things as dietary laws which had to do with the family's devotion to God. In addition he girls learned a variety of skills such as weaving, spinning, and treating illnesses. She might also learn to sing and dance and play a musical instrument such as a flute or harp.

The formal ritual noting that a boy had completed his religious education was a Bar-Mitzphah which was held at age 12. There was no equivalent for girls.

This text shows a father with two sons. The age of the sons was not listed but it is apparent that each of them was old enough to exercise independence and far beyond age 12. Their religious education was complete but they were still learning how to survive and prosper in life from their father.

One son was anxious to experience life for himself. Ignoring the instructions of his father he requested his portion of any inheiritance he might receive in advance that he might experience life for himself. In a highly unusual move, the father agreed to the request.

He sent his Son to a school that had no formal classrooms but taught lesssons the hard way. It was the school of life. For years the father waited for the report card and trusted God. The son went to a far country and wasted the inheritance that his father gave him on riotous living.

During his short time in the school of life he learned what happens if he doesn't handled his money. After he had spent all of his money his friends and acquaintances became few. He learned the difficulty of survival, putting food on the table, when he had to scramble for a living. At one point he even slopped hogs just to earn his daily fare.

The school of life was a hard teacher. It is unforgiving, never grades on a curve or gives extra points. Those who pass are those who come to a sense of responsibility and maturity in the development and management of their lives. Those who never come to this point fail.

Luke15:17 notes the point at which this son reached maturity. "And He came to himself." This was the point when he weighed what he had experienced in the far country against his training at home and matured immensely.

The text focuses on the young man as he bravely came home to give his father the report. The father saw him afar and order the symbols of achievement given to him. He was given a ring. A robe and shoes. In addition the father ordered a fattened calf to be killed and a feast was held to celebrate the return of the son.

It was cause for celebration because a son who had appeared to fail in his training had finally come to himself. He was lost but now he was found.

The School of Hard Knocks

Today youth are graduated from high school and are given a diploma. A Ring and a graduation gown symbolize this achievement. Their training however isn't nearly complete. High School graduation only marks the completion of another phase of their education. Whether they continue in formal educational tracts or not, each will begin another form of education as they enter the school of "hard knocks." The "school of hard knocks" is a colloquialism that means the "school of life." It is a tough school that will last about five years. In this school you will learn to take care of yourself, manage your money, choose your friends, and exercise self discipline. The school of hard knocks is a tough school. It presents a formidable challenge as each student faces meandering maze of life problems and ponders the reward that lies on the otherside.

Many have found that their ultimate success and failure in life has been due, in part, to lessons they learned while attending the school of hard knocks. It is the most challenging school any student will ever attend.

To make it through this period each student needs a good pair of shoes for the journey. There will be some that will attempt the walk through school of hard knocks wearing the wrong shoes.

DANCE SHOES. Some think they can wear DANCE SHOES and party their way through life. Among the first lessons the school of hard knocks teaches is that those who succeed know how to avoid the "party trap."The constant string of parties and after parties, distracts attention from goals and attracts unsavory elements. Avoiding the party trap is one important lesson of the school of hard knocks.

SLIPPERS: Some intend to wear SLIPPERS because they will try to get through the slick way. The school of hard knocks will provide many opportunities for success the slick way, without really trying. Some may be legal but impractical. Some will border on the illegal and immoral. The school of hard knocks will teach this lesson the hard way.

LOAFERS: There will also be LOAFERS that will simply waste their time. An abudance of time and how to use it will will be another lesson taught by the school of hard knocks. Free to make your schedule of activity some will spend their time loafing and hanging out while others will apply themselves to industry. The results of either choice will be a lesson learned in the school of hard knocks.

RUNNING SHOES: Some will attemp to dash effortlessly through the school of hard knocks spending as little time as they can on life's important lessons. They will learn the lesson that the school of hard knocks teaches: those who approach life in haste, usually waste.

Work Shoes

The Christian youth entering the school of hard knocks should learn the importance of entering the next phase of life with an attitude of hard work, discipline and spiritual development That means putting on a pair shoes that will be different from what others wear. It will be a pair of work shoes.

What are the parts of the work shoe?

Strings.As youth move through life, the school of hardknocks will teach them to watchout for the strings. Very little in life comes without strings, ramifications and consequences. The school of hard knocks teaches every youth the importance considering consequences and the outcome of actions and associations. It also teaches the importance of tying up loose ends otherwise they run the risk of tripping over dangling strings. (Sometimes they dangle for a long time before we finally trip on them.)

In sole support. Every good shoe has an insole cushion that helps us to stand and walk comfortably. Learning how to stand and take a stand is another lesson taught in the school of hard knocks. Those who learn their lessons well will be able to walk away from situations that are career threatening, comfortable that they have made the right decisions.

Sole. Those who begin their journey in the school of hard knocks need to

consider their soles. There are too many who are trying to make the journey with holes in their soles. That's what Jesus had in mind when he said in Matthew16:26 "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Every now and then we find a shoe that has what appears to be grooves or designs on the soles. The gooves help the the sole to grip and hold on slippery surfaces!

Every person who has graduated from the school of hard knocks has learned this one truth, that life is slippery when it is wet! In such moments it is hard to hold on unless our soul is able to latch on and hold to something solid.

These are dangerous times. In times like these you need a savior. In times like these you need an anchor. Be very sure!

Be very sure!

Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

Hold on to the rock!

Storms may rise, but hold on to the rock!

Winds may blow, but hold on to the rock!

This rock is Jesus, yes he's the one!

Be very sure! Be very sure! Your anchor holds and grips the solid Rock!

No. 611-Inspiration

The Man In The Middle

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. Exodus 20:18-19 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" 1 Timothy 2:5

Introduction

Have you ever been caught in the middle? That was a time when you found yourself an unwilling participant in a matter that you would rather avoided. When we get involved in disputes between a husband and wife, we usually get caught in the middle. When we try to break up fights, arguments and violent encounters, often we get caught in the middle. Being caught in the middle is a dangerous situation. Many have been hurt, killed and rejected after they injected themselves in the middle of someone else's dispute. Being caught in the middle is an uneasy position. Most attempt to avoid the circumstance with cute phrases such as "my name is Bennett and I ain't in it." Like it or not, it is tough to be caught in the middle.

It is not always bad to be in the middle. In fact, some are very comfortable being in the middle. They are never too tall or too short, if they stay in the middle. They are never really right and never really wrong, if they stay in the middle. They never quite stand or completely sit, they just squat in the middle.

Some people feel safe and comfortable in the middle, others feel that those on the outside always seem to get credit for their ideas.

Consider a frog and two geese that were trying to escape hunters. They had a dilemma. The geese were unfamiliar with the pond and the frog couldn't fly to get away from those who wanted frog legs for supper. The frog came up with a wonderful idea. He suggested to the geese that they get a reed and each of them hold the reed in their beaks. The frog would get in the middle between them and direct them to safe areas by pointing. That way the three of them could get to safety. As they soared into the air the frog held tight to the reed and swooped right above the hunters. They were in and out of sight so fast that the hunters never got a chance to shoot.

One hunter got an idea. He yelled out to the trio: "That's a smart idea. I wonder who came up with that, a goose I bet!" Insulted the frog looked down opened his

mouth and yelled "It was my idea. I thought up the whole thing." Instantly, after he opened his mouth, he fell from the sky just into to bubbling hot pot to provide the main course for dinner..fresh frog legs. He was safe in the middle until he opened his mouth!

The role of the middle man is tough, important and it often requires him to keep his mouth shut.

Every believer knows such a middle man. He moves freely between God and mankind, interceding and negotiating on our behalf. That man is Jesus. He's the middle man between God and humanity.

As Christians, we are glad to know that God has given us a mediator. One who pleads our case before the judgment seat of glory. We lift his name in praise for he is one middle man who gave his life to bring God and mankind back together again. We give God praise for the man in the middle!

Exposition

This text focuses on the role of Christ as intercessor between God and man.

Exodus 20 presents a striking picture of Israel coming before God at Mt. Sinai. After wandering in the desert and praying to God from a distance they had finally come before God themselves. Moses had talked with God on their behalf and returned with two tables of stone carved with the very finger of God himself containing the 10 commandments. Each time Moses returned from talking with the creator his very person reflected his glory.

However, faced with the majesty and power of God they were afraid and were trembling.

At Mt. Sinai, they saw the lighting and heard the thunder of God's voice. They considered their own weakness before him and begged Moses to go up and talk with God on their behalf and report to them. In this context, we see Moses acting as a mediator between the people of Israel and God. When God wanted to give a message to the people, he gave it to Moses and they listened. Even when God became angry with the people and considered destroying or punishing the it was Moses who pleaded their case before God. If they sinned, it appeared that Moses was always the middle man trying to please God and the people too.

It was Moses' role as middle man that prompted his punishment at the hands of God. In the wilderness the people demanded water. God provided the source, but in the rush back and forth between God and the people, Moses in an angry response, took credit for God's provision of water to the people (Numbers 20:11-12) and was punished.

In a similar sense the high priest emulated Moses' role. The high priest would go into the temple and offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. Through prayer and offering, he interceded for them with God and they were forgiven and blessed. Israel was accustomed to mediation. However, they were accustomed to mediation only with respect to the Mosaic law. They did not perceive or accept the possibility

that any people other than themselves could be a party to mediation. Moses spoke to God for the Jews. He did not speak to them for the Egyptians or Canaanite nations he encountered. Even in Canaan, the high priests talked to God only for Jews. All other nations and races were excluded from their pleadings. Moses and the high priests were mediators of the old covenant, but that covenant was made with some of the people and left out most of the people.

In the New Testament we are reminded that just as Moses was the mediator between the Jews and God, that Christ is the mediator between man and God. There are some unique qualities that both Christ and Moses share with respect to their roles as mediator. Like Moses, Christ talks to God for us and pleads the case of the creatures before the creator. Like the high priests he offers a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin and constantly works to bring people and God together.

However, there are differences. Chief among the differences the truth that unlike Moses and the priests, Christ is not the mediator of the Jews alone. The Old agreement was made at Sinai with descendants of Abraham. Those who were not Jews were excluded. When Moses referred to the sins of the people he spoke only of Jewish people. The New Covenant was sealed at Calvary, but wasn't exclusive to the point that all others were forbidden. In John 7:37 Jesus said "if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." When Christ serves as a mediator on our behalf he does so for anyone who comes. His appeal is general and open to all. It is not race specific. It is not gender specific. It is not nationality specific, "if anyone thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

The priests, attempting to mediate on behalf of the people, offered sacrifices, first for themselves, and then for the people. Often certain animals were sacrificed to God to atone for the sins of the people. Christ mediates on our behalf by substituting himself as the one time sacrifice for everyone. His death on Calvary became the one time sacrifice for everyone.

Anyone who desires to approach God must come through Christ. He is the one mediator between God and man.

Afraid to Talk to God

There are many today who are literally afraid to talk to God. Like Israel at Sinai, there are many who want others to pray for them, but are literally petrified at the very thought of talking to God for their own cause.

Many consider themselves unworthy to talk to God by virtue of their life-style or past indiscretions. They feel themselves inadequate to stand before the throne of mercy and ask others to stand for them. Like Israel they look for a Moses to take their prayers up the mountain as they stand back at a distance and wait for the report. Many feel ill equipped to communicate their thoughts to God. They think there are certain words they must say or use to get their prayer through. They fear by comparison that their prayer lacks power or force because their personality is not the same as others who appear to pray with power.

There is no reason for any believer to be afraid to talk to God. We should remember the steps to getting a prayer through.

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Hooking Up With God

Today there are millions in the world who are trying to get hooked up with God unsuccessfully. Many have statutes before which they burn incense, prayer rituals that require them to prayer three times a day, and special chant. Some have special incantations, positions of prayer and ornaments. Each of these represents methods they are using to get a prayer to God. How do we get a prayer through to God? How do we connect with a power source without blowing a fuse?

The people of Israel learned quickly they were not able to come before the power of God directly. They needed Moses to intercede for them. Today, because of the very nature of humanity we are unable to approach God directly. Jesus acts as our mediator. The text notes that there is only one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus.

MAKING THE CONNECTION: (Illustration: three prong and two prong plugs).Have you ever paid close attention to power cords? Most power cords have a three prong plug on the end. It is designed to be plugged into a three pronged receptacle. On occasion however, we can't use the three prong cord because the receptacle only has two prongs. The problem was created because new electrical standards require appliances to be grounded older models did not. Somehow a way had to be devised to bridge the difference between the old and the new.

Someone came up with the ingenious idea of the electrical adaptor. It is three pronged on one side and two pronged on the other. With the adapter the power connection can be made.

In the same sense God is our power source. The three prongs could easily represent the Father, The Word and the Holy Ghost or the Godhead The old two prong plug represents human nature: Flesh and blood. To connect, a mediator that is God on one side (three prongs) and flesh and blood on the other is needed. Jesus is the only person who was both God and man because John 1:1 tells us that the Word was God. In verse 14 it says the Word became flesh and dwelled among men. Jesus was both God and man and therefore the only one able to mediate between God and man.

IN JESUS NAME: Since Jesus is the mediator the only way we can get to God is through Jesus. In John 14:13 Jesus explained that our prayers, addressed to God should be tagged in "Jesus Name." In John 16:23 he said "...whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He shall give it to you." Thus each of our prayers is tagged: "In Jesus name!"

The Man In the Middle

It becomes abundantly clear to every believer that we are totally dependent on the

man in the middle.

It is the man in the middle who intercedes on our behalf. Without him we are helpless to reach God for ourselves.

When pressed between success and failure, we need the man in the middle!

When faced with the prospect of tragedy or triumph, we need the man in the middle!

When challenged to rise higher or fall lower, we need the man in the middle!

When faced with the prospect of victory or defeat, we need the man in the middle!

The saints testify to power of the middle man!

Joseph declares, "I was in a pit one day in and a prison on other but thank God there was a man in the middle!"

Daniel declares, "I was in a den, trapped between danger and death, but thank God in the lion's den there was a man in the middle."

The three Hebrew boys declare, "we were trapped between fear and the fire, but thank God there was a man in the middle!"

The disciples declare "we trapped out on the sea, between destiny and a watery grave, but thank God in the midst of the storm, there was a man in the middle!"

It is the man in the middle who:

-Lifts us above the shadows; Plants our Feet on Solid Ground;

-Brightens our day and blesses our soul!

-Blesses our thoughts and guides our feet!

-Makes life worth living; Makes the Bible worth reading!

-Makes church worth attending; Makes Prayers worth praying!

` I don't know about you, but I'm glad that there's only one man in the middle! His name is Jesus!

Jesus! The Rose of Sharon!

Jesus! The Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, who picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Calvary!

There were three crosses on the hill that day. One on the left and one on the right!

I don't get any salvation from the man on the left because he said "if you be the Christ, save yourself and me also"

I don't get any salvation from the man on the left because he was asking to be saved himself!

I keep my eyes on the man in the middle!

The man in the middle died on Calvary!

But Early!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the Grave!

He's on the job today!

Call him! Call Him!

Tell him what you want!

No. 612-Youth

What is Courage?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 9, 1996

SCRIPTURE: *"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." Psalm 27:14*

Introduction

Have you ever wished for more courage? Courage is a quality that many of us desire, probably already have, but often think we don't possess . It is a quality that we usually recognize best in others. Few of us think of ourselves as courageous. Why? Probably because we seldom have the symbols that attest to our valor. Without the symbols, many think they don't have what it takes.

Many children are familiar with the movie "The Wizard of Oz." The movie presented four principle characters, each looking for something they already had but didn't know it. There was scarecrow that wanted a brain. There was a tin man who was very compassionate and loving but wanted a heart. There was a little girl named "Dorothy" who wanted to get back home to Kansas. There was also a lion who was big and ferocious but wanted courage. They all traveled to see the Wizard of Oz whom they felt could grant their wishes. Each soon learned that they already had what they needed to succeed. The scarecrow already had a brain but did not have a certificate. The Tin man was already showing he had a heart but just couldn't hear it tick. Dorothy wore the Ruby slippers and could have gone home at any time by simply saying "There's no place like home." The lion learned that he always had courage but needed a medal to attest to his valor. They all had what they were looking for, they just needed something to confirm what they were unsure of themselves.

Bravery is courage in the face of fear. Courage only exists in the context of overwhelming odds and difficult circumstances. It is not a big deal to act courageously in a circumstance where fear or overwhelming odds does not exist. The man who has the odds in his favor and is a 10 to 1 favorite to win over a lesser opponent can brag but he can't brag courageously! It takes courage for his opponent to even enter the contest with him. The odds are against him. But despite the odds he acts as though victory is sure..

In the old cowboy movies occasionally a wimpy looking man would come to town and go into the bar. Once there he would pick a fight with what appeared to be the toughest, roughest and meanest man in the saloon. Often the wimpy man was beaten

to a pulp. Sometimes he got a lick in. Even though he was defeated he acquired a reputation for being a gutsy fellow and few bothered him after that. Instead of getting whipped many times, he learned he could show everyone that he was no wimp. He was either courageous or the biggest fool in town. Either way, no one would mess with him after his first saloon fight.

Courage is rooted in confidence. Confidence is rooted in faith in God. Those who know what God has done in the past are confident that he can and will do another mighty work for them. They proceed through life boldly. They are secure in the knowledge that the God they serve is able to deliver them.

As Christians we approach life's situations with courage. We know that God has given us the spirit of confidence and the power to defeat Satanic influences wherever they appear in our lives. We stand for that which we believe is right, regardless of the cost. As long as we are on the side of "right", God is on our side. Let's face life with optimism that the same God we knew on the mountain is also the God of the valley.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he addresses the subject of courage.

David is uniquely qualified to address this subject. His own life was filled with memorable feats of courage in both his youth and his adult life. As a youth he showed courage protecting his father's flock against lions and bears. Though young , he often found himself in circumstances that were life threatening. Yet he stood courageously.

David's courage against lions and bears was not foolish valor. Foolish valor would have been to attempt to guard his father's sheep without preparing for known possibilities. The known possibilities were wild animals and thieves. David prepared himself by learning to use a single weapon well. No doubt, during the lonely days on the mountain sides he practiced his skill, casting stones at small targets. He practiced so much that he became confident in his skills as a marksman. When dangerous animals approached he relied on his physical skills and the power of God to guide his aim. Had not David honed his skills as a marksman his stand before bears and lions would have been foolish valor. However, since he had perfected a skill, he stood confident in his ability, with God's help, to overcome his enemies or the enemies of his father's sheep.

Thus, when David stood before Goliath, the mighty Philistine giant, it was not a demonstration of foolish valor, but of courage based on his confidence in his personal skills and God's ability to help him use his skills victoriously. As he responded to Goliath's plea to *"send me a man"* he was confident because of his past history of defeating enemies, with the assistance of God. He was not acting foolishly.

The 27th Psalm is David's reflection upon the courageous deeds he had done in his own life in part because of his own ability, but mostly because of the presence

of God. He noted that the
Lord was the strength of his life, thus he had no reason to be afraid. Past dealings with God gave him confidence that God would always guide and protect him. He knew his own ability and he knew he could do even more with God's help. Thus he wrote: Psalm 27:5 *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*

His conclusion at verse 14 is predictable. He uses *"qavah"* which is translated "wait." Qavah means *"look to the Lord."* It also means to look patiently and expect great things from him. It does not mean step back and let God fight for you, but expect God to fight with you in battles against the enemy.

That is why every believer is encouraged to be strong in the face of perilous situations. The strength to be strong is not derived from foolish valor but from the full knowledge that God will work with us to help us use our skills and gifts to defeat the heavenly father's enemies. The knowledge that God will be with any believer strengthens faith.

David's conclusion was "Wait, I say, on the Lord."

Courage is based on preparation

Today youth will discover it easier to be courageous if their courage is something more than just foolish valor. Courage is trusting that God will use our preparation in a mighty way.

A young football player may run onto the football field prepared to take on the toughest team. The youth who has not practiced and is not in shape will do so with foolish valor instead of courage. The prepared athlete knows the game plan and trusts in God to bring the victory. He or she may be afraid but still demonstrates courage based on the past experience. Courage to take action

Today there is a need for more of us to display inner courage that results in action. The vast majority of the world consist of people who see what needs to be done but are afraid to roll up their sleeves and take action. They are afraid of failure.

However those who make a difference in life are those who show the courage to make things happen.

It was President Theodore Roosevelt who once said: "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither defeat nor victory."

To take courage requires faith in God. The greater the faith the greater the courage.

Courage to try again

It also requires courage to try again after experiencing failure. Many youth try an extra-curricular activity or venture into a project and experience a failure. After failing once, many never try again. However, the essence of courage is to try again.

Harold Sherman quite awhile ago, wrote a book entitled How To Turn Failure Into Success. In it he gives a "Code of Persistence." If you give up too easily, write this down and read it daily.

1. I will never give up so long as I know I am right.
2. I will believe that all things will work out for me if I hang on until the end.
3. I will be courageous and undismayed in the face of odds.
4. I will not permit anyone to intimidate me or deter me from my goals.
5. I will fight to overcome all physical handicaps and setbacks.
6. I will try again and again and yet again to accomplish what I desire.
7. I will take new faith and resolution from the knowledge that all successful men and women had to fight defeat and adversity.
8. I will never surrender to discouragement or despair no matter what seeming obstacles may confront me.

That's why Paul, writing to the Romans decided that he would pursue the faith persistently, letting nothing separate him. He said: "Rom 8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors."* Romans 8:35-37

Courage is Knowing God Walks With You

Finally the courageous youth is one who knows that God walks with him, through every trial, problem or situation. Such a youth is encouraged because of the knowledge that the world's great creator is by their side.

A story is told of a child who had to walk each evening past a dark, spooky house. Some adults sought to give him courage. One handed him a good luck charm to ward off the ghosts. Another had a light put on the dreaded corner. Still another said earnestly, "It is sinful to be afraid. Trust God and be brave!" The advice was good, but he offered nothing more. Then someone said with compassion, "I know what it is to be afraid. I will walk with you past the house." He did nothing to remove the fear — except to lift it from the child's shoulders and place it on his own.

We should be glad to know that we have someone with us who can help carry the load. Our God is able to give us the victory.

He's able to turn our darkest moments into light!
He's able to turn our saddest moments into happiness!
He's able to lift the heaviest burdens from our shoulders!

He's able to take our most troublesome problem and solve it!
He's able to turn our defeats into victories!
He's able to take our fears and turn them into courage!
I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that Jesus is always by my side!
He is the best example of courage!
One evening, a long time ago, he faced the prospect of death and a cold chilly grave with courage and faith!
He died out on Calvary..
But early Sunday morning arose with the victory!
It wasn't foolish valor, but faith in the power of God!
Take courage, it may seem dark ahead, but the darkest hour always comes before the light!
Take courage, it may seem like defeat is imminent, but the race is not given to the swift, nor to the strong, but to those that endure to the end!
Take courage...
God is still on the throne!

No. 613-Pastor's Anniversary

Put This Preacher In His Place

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Monroe, La.

August 4, 1996

SCRIPTURE: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: Ephesians 4:11-13

Introduction

Have you ever found something to be out of place? Life is peculiar in that the simplest things work well and look well, as long as they are in the right place. The right thing in the wrong place suddenly becomes the wrong thing. A set of silverware is marred by the presence of a single setting that is of the wrong design. A row of evenly sized pictures on a wall seems marred by the presence of one oversized, out of line, monstrosity. Things out of place call attention to themselves.

Sometimes resources can be misplaced, especially human resources. Often church workers are misplaced out of ignorance or expediency. Too often members who possess great skills in certain areas of service are reduced to serving in areas in which they are less skilled. A woman who is a great bible scholar and has a wonderful gift for teaching youth may often be displaced by a professional school teacher who knows little about the bible but has a degree. In that case, both were out of place. Many have the skills to perform great services for the church but are blocked because of internal politics of the corporate institution. Then there are others who have a place but spend all of their time doing someone else's task. All are out of place.

Every piece of a fine puzzle has a place. Every spoke in a wheel has a place. Every organization has a specific order of organization with specific tasks for each level of membership. Everyone has a place.

How can someone get out of place? Someone gets out of place when, for whatever reason, a person is either prohibited from doing that which his duty requires or has taken on the responsibility of doing that which has been assigned to others.

In the church there are various stations and positions. Each has a place or function. Headaches and problems follow whenever any part of the time gets out of place. Bishop Hall writing about the relationship of every person in a congregation to the other said: "As many vapors, rising from the sea, meet together in one cloud, and that cloud falls down divided into many drops, and those drops run together, making rills

of water, which meet in channels, and those channels run into brooks, and those brooks into rivers, and those rivers into the sea: so it either is or should be with the gifts and graces of the Church. They all come down from God, divided severally as he will to various Christians. They should flow through the channels of their special vocations into the common streams of public use for church or commonwealth, and ultimately return into the great ocean of his glory, from whence they originally came.

As Christians, we understand that we all have a place of service. Our goal and objective is to give our best service to God using our gifts. When everyone is in place the family of God is better postured to witness and serve God with power and grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to the Ephesians in which he explained that each person in the body of Christ has a station in which he exercises the gifts God has given him.

The grace gifts are given to each believer in different measures. Each serves the purpose of building the body of Christ and preparing it for its mission of witnessing and service. Paul notes that there is one body (v4) which is controlled by one spirit. Each person exercises their grace gift in the proper station for the glorification of God and the edification or building up of the body of Christ.

The gifts that each receive are enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 Generally they fall in three categories. The first category refers to gifts that require some measure of revelation. Included among these are wisdom, knowledge, and discerning spirits. These gifts allow persons to exercise unusual abilities as it relates to understanding the mind of God and human nature.

The second category of gifts refers to communication skills. These include prophecy, diverse languages and interpretative skills. These gifts allow people to exercise unusual abilities to communicate the word of God to others through, speech, art, music or the written word. It even includes the ability to speak to others fluently in foreign languages and to interpret foreign language.

The third category refers to the power gifts. They include the unusual gift of intense faith, healing and miracles. With these gifts believers exercise an unusual combination of faith in God without doubt and are thereby able to accomplish many miraculous deeds in the name of God including healings and other great deeds.

Paul's point to the Ephesians was that each person has a place to exercise the gift that he has received. Not everyone has the same gift. The church works best when each exercises his gift in his place. Thus, some are apostles; some prophets, evangelists, some pastors and some teachers.

The goal of each person's exercise of a gift is the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

The church does not function in its finest capacity if gifts are exercised out of place. Each has an operation and an administration. When they get out of place, the church slows its pace.

Pastors, for example have seven duties as explained in Ephesians 4:12-13. These duties are to: perfect the saints, perfect all the works of the ministry, build up the body of Christ, unify members in the faith and in the doctrine, lead the church toward perfection and help members to mature in Christ. When a pastor does not or is not allowed to function in his capacities the result could mean bad doctrines that creep into the fold, a weak congregation or an immature congregation. However, a pastor who exercises his gifts of prophecy and spiritual revelation can lead a congregation to great heights.

The preacher must be in his place.

Out of Place Preachers

Today there are many churches that are experiencing problems because the preacher is out of his place. When the average person says the preacher is out of place they usually have another thought in mind.

Consider The new preacher who came to Hollow Creek Baptist Church and immediately started to change things. The members of the congregation became upset with him, especially when he replaced their straw offering basket with one of those big city style silver trays. Weekly there were changes one after another. While there were many critics, one sister always seemed to support him, Miss Cassie Bell. When he told drinking Joe he had to keep his liquor outside, Cassie Bell said "You right Reverend!" She told the members "It's his place to do that!" When he told Carrie Mae that her dresses were too short, Cassie Bell said "You right Reverend!" Again she said "It's his place to do that!" But when he told Miss Cassie Bell to stop dipping snuff in the church service things changed. Cassie Bell jumped to the floor and yelled "Wait a minute church, this preacher done got off track. We need to put this preacher in his place!"

There are many in churches everywhere that would love to "put this preacher in his place", but what they have in mind is not positive. Their problem is complicated because not only do they not know this preacher's place but they don't their own place in the body of Christ!

The saint's of many churches are doing some of everything. Much of the reason is because members have not allowed their pastors to function in their capacity as perfecter of the Saints. Today, pastors who work to improve the spiritual life of the membership become targets themselves. Things would obviously be better if we would put this preacher in his place!

Many churches are stagnant and have no ministries in place. Why? It's because in many cases the preacher is out of his place! As pastor, the minister works to lead the church in its various ministries. This is often made difficult by boards and contrary members who often put road blocks in his way. If we want the church to get moving in the right direction then we should "put this preacher in his place!"

There are many churches that are still babes in Christ. Instead of hungering for the meat of God's word they are satisfied with milk. Much of the reason is because the

preacher is out of his place! Those who stand in the way of the development of Christian Education ministries and bible teaching keep the preacher out of his place. If we want our congregations to mature then let's "put this preacher in his place."

Some preachers are out of place because they are blocked by forces that are working against them. Others or out of place because they simply have not chosen to carry out the mission that God has given them.

God told Jonah to go to Ninevah and to preach. He chose to go in another direction and he suffered because of it. He stayed out of place until the Lord had him swallowed by a giant fish!

Balaam found himself out of place once when he tried to prophecy against the children of Israel. He stayed out of place until the Lord made a mule talk!

Out of place preachers draw the condemnation of God. Ezekiel 13:3 "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"

God expects the preacher to exercise leadership over the flock that's why he gave him the keys. Matthew 16:19 "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

If the church wants to get right with God then it should both pray for and help "put this preacher in his place."

When The Preacher is in his place!

Finally every Saint must consider the great rewards that come to believers when we put the preacher in his place!

When there is a watchman on the wall, the church is warned against impending danger. In a time of peril the question is asked "Watchman, what of the night?" Keep the watchman on the wall so he can herald the condition of the night!

When we put this preacher in his place the Lord will show him visions that will give us hope! That's why Ezekiel said "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel 37:1-3

When we put this preacher is in his place we will hear the gospel declared and strengthen our faith. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:14-15

When we put this preacher in his place he can remind us of the great blessings we get when we serve the Lord. If we lift the preacher to his station he will help us lift

Jesus up!

If we lift Jesus up mighty things begin to happen!

If we lift Jesus up, the wicked will cease from troubling!

If we lift Jesus up, the weary will be at rest!

If we lift Jesus up, no matter how dark the hour, we will remember that joy comes in the morning!

If we lift Jesus up, no cloud will overshadow our sky!

If we lift Jesus up, the sinner can find salvation!

If we lift Jesus up, the despairing man can find hope!

If we lift Jesus up, the world will come to know him for he said "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Brothers and sisters, if we put this preacher in his place there will always be a way to hear a word from the Lord!

When there is a word from the Lord:

—We can see victory in the midst of defeat; Triumph in the midst of tragedy

—We can enjoy peace in the midst of confusion; Joy in the midst of sadness

If we put this preacher in his place, we've have somebody who can tell us the old story!

If we put this preacher in his place he can tell us about Jesus!

Jesus, the lighthouse in the stormy sea!

Jesus, the leaning post in a trying time!

Jesus, the river of water in a dry thirsty land!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

If we put this preacher in his place, he can keep reminding us that one of these old days, Jesus is coming back again!

He's coming!

He's coming back again!

No. 614—Inspiration

Trust Me!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 11, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:6-9

Introduction

Trust me. Are these words familiar? They are often associated with used car salesmen in a negative way. That is not to say that used car salesmen can't be trusted, but the popular culture has taken a phrase used extensively in the trade to be synonymous to "lemons."

Many people are instantly on guard whenever they hear the phrase "trust me." It suggests something sinister, especially in modern times when trust is a diminishing quality. "Trust me" conjures images of a man standing on a street corner selling $10,000 Rolex watches for $50.00. When his prospective customers question the authenticity of such an offer the slick salesman's last wall of defense is "trust me." A politician, whose record of activity has been everything but noteworthy encourages a doubting public to "trust me." It is no small wonder then that there would be so much apprehension connected with the phrase "trust me." People have been injured so many times by those who have used the phrase liberally that they are immediately suspicious of anyone that attempts to undergird their credibility with the phrase "trust me."

Many people carry their suspicions further than their secular dealings. Some have trouble trusting the power of God. Cynically, they put God in the same category as the less than honest salesman. They view God's request to simply "trust me" with an eye of doubt that is deep and penetrating.

Trusting God is essential to the believer. We do not put his promises in the same category as that of the dishonest and the powerless because they neither have the intent or the power to make their words "trust me" come to reality. God has both the intent and the power to insure that whatever he promises comes to be and it always does, and always will.

As Christians, we know that when God says trust me, he means trust him to do that which is right for us. We don't know the future but we know that God will take

care of us. When we are uncertain we can hear his words clearly: “Trust me. Trust me.”

Exposition

This text focuses on David explaining the reason believers trust in God.

The keys that unlock the wisdom of David’s words lie in several of its key phrases.

How Excellent: Excellent is the translation of Hebrew word “yaqar” which also means valuable and costly. In this context the word “excellent” describes the nature of God with respect to caring for the believer. The quality of his care, if translated into monetary terms would be invaluable and inestimatable.

Lovingkindness: Lovingkindness is the English translation of the Hebrew word “Checed” which also means mercy, good deeds, kindness and favor. On some occasions “Checed” is even used to mean “reproof.” The good deeds that God performs are often heralded as examples of his lovingkindness. The many acts of mercy, answered prayers and other considerations shown believers are generally listed as indicators of the lovingkindness of God. However, there are times when believers go astray and endanger themselves both spiritually or physically. In these times God often reproofs us. However, if these rebukes are necessary, they too are described as a part of God’s lovingkindness.

Trust: From the word “chacah” which also means, “confide in” and “seek refuge in”, and “hope in”, the meaning of trust is reflected in all three of the common uses. To trust God is to feel comfortable sharing intimacies with him. These intimacies are of such that they can be shared without fear that they will ever be divulged. To trust God is also to seek refuge, escape and protection in him. He will protect believers that seek his help and provide for them a place of consideration. To trust God is also to continuously hope for better days and better conditions. This hope is based on faith that God will always do what is good, just and right for the believer.

David notes that the believer who trusts God will always be satisfied. The term used for satisfied is “ravah” which also means abundantly, or saturated or drunk. Trusting God does not always result in riches, fame or glory. However, trusting God does result in a deep satisfaction with oneself and with life. That sense of satisfaction can only come from God. We are promised to be “drunk” with satisfaction, fully saturated or drowned in satisfaction.

When God says trust me he asks believers to place their confidence, hope and faith in him. In return he promises that their satisfaction will be higher than they ever expected.

Why Trust God

Why should a believer trust God? Why should he place all of his confidence and hope in God? What if he refuses to “be there” when difficult times comes? That is a question that many skeptics ask about God. They want to know why God should

be trusted with our most intimate concerns, considering the tough times that are ahead. They think like the farmer who was out driving his tractor one day when he rolled onto a stretch of gopher mounds. The earth crumbled beneath one tire and the tractor rolled over on its side. Luckily, the farmer escaped the situation with only a few bruises. He went home and told his wife. She breathed a sigh of relief and said, "Honey, the Lord sure was with you." The farmer surveyed his bruises and answered, "Well, if He was, He sure got a rough ride."

We should trust God because God keeps his promises to us. Abraham and Sarah learned that God could be depended upon to keep his promises, even though at the time it appears they will never be answered. Their promised son came 25 years after the promise was made and after both were well into their old age, but it came, just as God said it would come. In the same way, God keeps his promises to us today. The old saying is true "He may not come when you want Him, but He's always on time!"

Trusting God is a springboard to action. Trusting God is not just an empty phrase that is used by believers to explain inactivity. Trusting God is the tool of faith. Those who trust God take action. Those who are fearful and have no trust remain inactive. Some have the mistaken notion that trusting God means to simply wait on God to perform a miracle for us. This notion implies that we do not have full understanding of what God is about.

Many years ago some missionaries were going into a remote corner of Africa to work with a primitive tribe. The missionaries were uncertain about how they would be received, so they decided to give the tribe a gift as a sign of goodwill. As they flew over the area a bright, shiny new plow was parachuted down to the tribe. The plow would help the natives as they farmed. At least that was the missionaries' intent. They were unprepared for what they found a few days later when they arrived at the encampment. The natives had never seen a plow before. They hadn't a clue as to what this strange-looking instrument which had dropped out of the sky was used for. Not knowing what to do with it, they had put the plow on a pedestal and were worshiping it!

The plow was designed to help them farm. It was designed for use in the fields, not to be revered. It was designed to strike deep into the African soil. It was designed to help the people, to nourish the people, to make them healthier, to make their quality of life better. But the members of that primitive tribe didn't know that, so the plow became an ornament, rather than a tool!

Sometimes we do that with our faith and trust in God.. We make our faith and trust an ornament instead of a tool to help us live our everyday lives.

Trusting God inspires confidence. When believers trust God, it not only helps them but it inspires confidence in others. Those who live their faith in God encourage others to do the same. Those who live the sermon make a better witness than those who simply recite it every day. In 1958, America's first commercial jet air service began with the flight of the Boeing 707. A month after that first flight, a traveler on a piston-engine, propeller-driven DC-6 airliner struck up a conversation with a fellow passenger. The passenger happened to be a Boeing engineer.

The traveler asked the engineer about the new jet aircraft. The engineer was wildly enthusiastic about this new, improved way to travel. He began speaking at length about the extensive testing Boeing had done on the jet engine before bringing it into commercial service. He recounted Boeing's experience with engines, from the B-17 to the B-52. When his traveling companion asked him if he himself had yet flown on the new 707 jet airliner, the engineer replied, "I think I'll wait until it's been in service awhile.'" The person who acts on their faith in God inspires others, the person who is unwilling to practice what they preach raise doubts.

Trusting God keeps hope alive. The Reverend Jesse Jackson in his bid for the American presidency had a basic theme throughout his campaign "keep hope alive!" While that was the theme of a political campaign that's exactly what faith and trust in God does for the believer, it keeps hope alive. This is the hope that extends beyond the physical circumstance and takes roots in the hearts and souls of every believer.

This is the hope that prompts each to sing "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name! On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand!"

Trust Me

Finally every believer should remember that when all is said and done Christ is saying just two words: "trust me!"

"Trust me!"

"Trust me!"

Randy Morris was 43 years old when he died after a courageous battle with cancer in 1991. Before his death he wrote a letter telling about his faith. In it he described how he always prepared for prayer by going through what he called a "relaxation phase."

"After a few moments," Randy wrote, "I travel in my mind to a place in the north Georgia mountains where I used to go on camping trips. There I have built an open structure, a gazebo, where I go to talk with Jesus. Normally, I go in and call for Jesus and he comes. We visit, and usually I give him my prayers of thanksgiving and intercessions."

Late one summer Randy got the news that his cancer was back. He was in his own words, "an emotional wreck." At that time Randy prayed. In his mind he was again in the mountains waiting for Jesus to come to the door of the gazebo. "At that moment a completely unthought-of event happened that shook me to tears," Randy wrote. He saw himself as a five-year-old boy. "I became like a camera recording the event," was the way he described the experience. In the person of this boy he ran up to Jesus and hugged him. He pictured Jesus picking him up and carrying him to a seat and holding him in his arms. "He hugged me," Randy wrote. "I didn't say anything... He knew I was frightened. There were no answers and the future seemed so dim. As he hugged me he said, `Trust me, Trust me.'"

"[Jesus] held me for a long time that night," Randy wrote, "until he knew I understood what he meant." Randy found strength from this experience. "We must trust Jesus as a child trusts—totally!" he wrote.

Then Randy concluded his letter with these words, "Because of this, whatever turns out to be the ultimate result of this disease, it's not the burden it was before. [Jesus] made no promise, nor did he reveal the future, but he had provided the format for living out the rest of my life with just two words... Trust me."

Today Jesus is still saying the same thing...trust me!

Trust me because I love you!

Trust me because I died for you on Calvary!

Trust me because every day I'm right by your side!

Trust me when you are going through the mountains of frustration!

Trust me when you are struggling through the valley of the shadow of death!

Trust me when the storms of life are raging!

No wonder the song writer declares: "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!

If you trust him, he will make everything alright!

No. 615-Inspiration

Walking On Water

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 7, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Matthew 14:30-33

Introduction

Have you ever been in deep water? Deep water situations are those in which you find yourself "in" over your head. The variables are beyond those which you can control! The circumstances are unmanageable. No matter how you try it appears that you are about to get wet, or even worse, that you are going to drown.

What kind of situations pose deep water scenarios? Sometimes financial burdens place us in deep water. These are the times when our stack of bills owed is higher than our stack of income received. The financial world calls this "bankruptcy." Thousands go down in bankruptcy every year. Family troubles pose deep water situations. When relationships between family members break down and internal strife becomes the order of the day it can plunge a family into deep water. For some it leads to broken marriages, sibling jealousies, and family dysfunction. Even our personal ability to cope with the myriad of troubles, frustrations and problems that life brings each day can become a deep water situation.

Deep water situations can be dangerous but they are not always terminal. Everyone in deep water doesn't drown. Not every who gets in above their heads succumbs to failure. In fact there are some who do quite well in deep water and seem to keep their composure no matter how deep the water. Those who are able to swim are not threatened by the depth of the water. In fact, they probably preferred deep water over "baby pool" experiences. They find it easier to swim without their feet touching the bottom. If they tire they know how to tread water. Those who can't swim, on the other hand, get anxious at the thought of deep water. They are accustomed to shallow water experiences. Just the thought that they are in above their heads is enough to drown them.

Deep water situations require faith. People who exercise faith in such circumstances usually fare extremely well. Those who admire them say they appear to "walk

on water." No situation seems to difficult to handle. Sometimes we think our heroes walk on water. Ask any child and they will nearly swear to the invincibility of Michael Jordan on a basketball court. When it comes to basketball they believe he can "walk on water." The old soldiers tell war stories about General George Patton who was so respected by his men that they believed him to be charmed. They believed he could "walk on water." In football there are many great legends: Bear Bryant, Vince Lombardi and others who always seemed to come out on top of difficult situations. In politics every president sought after men like Henry Kissinger to help them negotiate with other nations. No matter how difficult the situations, Kissinger seemed able to "walk on water."

As Christians, we know people don't walk on water. Despite the great stories of our heroes we know that when people try to walk on water they will sink. While people can't walk on water, we know someone who can. Jesus walks on water. If we hold his hands in deep water situations, we can survive deep water situations and make it safely to shore.

Expositions

This familiar passage of scripture focuses on Peter as he learns when and how to walk on water.

By night Jesus came to his disciples while they were on board a ship and were battling a great storm. Jesus appeared, walking on the water and called for Peter to Come. At Jesus' bidding Peter stepped upon the water and actually walked on the water twice. On one occasion he sank.

COME: Jesus made a general invitation for Peter to come to him. He was aware of the dangers that existed. He was aware of the high winds and the dangerous deep. He was aware of the difficulty of the request. Yet despite the obvious danger of heeding his request, Jesus still said "Come." The high winds already posed a danger. The threat of death was already imminent. Leaping from the boat made it even more probable. Yet Jesus said "Come." The word "Come" (Greek: Erchomai) is a verb. It implies action and Jesus was inviting Peter to take action and step forward on faith. When he stepped into the water the word "katabaino" is used. It means to step down. It shows the aftermath of the invitation to "come." Peter stepped down. The entire phrase therefore prepares to show the believer what happened to Peter when he stepped down into the deep and troubling waters on Christ's command.

WALKED: When Peter stepped from the boat he actually "walked on the water." The word for walked is "Peripateo." The word has two applications. First it means to physically walk. Each time "Peripateo" is used in the Synoptic Gospels it refers to actually walking. It also means physically walking whenever it is used in the Book of Acts, except in Acts 21:22. Since Paul used the word "walk" in a different connotation "Peripateo" is never used in the Pauline Epistles. It is never used in the epistles of John as well. Thus, Peter actually walked on the water. It was not a spiritual vision. It was not an illusion. It was not a transfigurative mirage. He actually walked

on the water.

"Peripateo" also had a figurative meaning. It also indicated the entire range of activities of the individual life. It is used to indicate a life-style either saved or unsaved. For example Ephesians 4:17 refers to the unregenerate life style when it refers to the "walk" of the Gentiles. The walk of the believer is emphasized in Colossians 2:6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"

Jesus, speaking directly to Peter called him to physically walk. Speaking beyond Peter to believers of every generation that would follow Jesus seems to call upon them to step out of the world and begin the walk of faith, that is the Christian life.

For a time Peter actually walked on the water physically as he was oblivious to all the reasons why he could not walk on the water. He walked boldly, until he considered the storm. When he considered the storm, he sank.Yet in the not too near future he would also experience a period when he would walk just as boldly in the faith and begin to sink as he denied the Lord. In faithlessness Peter sank. In his faithlessness he also denied Christ three times.

However he began to walk on water again when he turned to Christ again. In the same sense he returned to his bold walk in the faith when he renewed his commitment and allegiance to Christ.

He walked on water physically. He walked in the faith figuratively. He only failed in his dual walks when he lost sight of the savior. It was possible for him to overcome great odds and succeed at the impossible because his faith remained in tact. With faith in tact he was able to walk in deep water.

Deep Water Situations

When Peter stepped into deep water that was not highly unusual primarily because he was already in deep water. The boat in which he was sailing was in deep water and being tossed by the storm. It was a matter of sticking with the ship and going down in the storm or stepping out on faith, into the same deep water but with the possibility of success because he heeded the master's call.

In a similar sense many people today are in deep water situations already. It is not a matter of whether or not they should be in their peculiar circumstance. It is not optional.

When the rent is due and you are facing eviction, that's a deep water situation.

When your stock investment has failed and you have lost your entire portfolio, that's a deep water situation.

When you break a window at school, get suspended and have a bad report card to bring home, that's a deep water situation.

Some deep water situations are far more complex. They may involve interpersonal relationships that are going no where or dead end marriages. They may involved failed business opportunities, career changes and physical impairments. Whether they are simple or complex, deep water situations have one common element; they

have the capacity for disaster and can drown us if we are not careful

The question that faces every individual is whether we will stay in the boat of difficulty and try to dip out the water with our own ingenuity or will we step out on faith in God.

We don't know how to handle deep water situations. In reality, there is little we can do to prevent ourselves from drowning because our survival depends totally on God's benevolence.

However, when we depend upon God we can do the impossible. We can literally walk upon the sea of problems and difficulties that we face. We are in deep water either way we go. Whether in the boat of our own making, faced with capsizing or walking on the water, we are still in the water.

When Peter trusted in God he stepped out of the boat and began to walk on faith alone. There are times when we must do the same...walk by faith alone.

2 Corinthians 5:7 reminds us that we walk by faith and not by sight. As long as Peter walked by faith he was able to do the impossible even though he was told it was impossible. In a similar way, we can do the impossible, despite being in deep water. Though the world says that it is impossible we can walk on water.

Peter stopped walking on the water when took his eyes off Jesus and began to consider the impossibilities of his situation. When he considered how improbable it was for anyone to actually walk on water he began to sink.

If we take our eyes off Jesus we will sink. We must stay focused on the possibilities of every life situation and know that with him all things are possible. We can walk on water we will only sink when we take our eyes off God.

Thus many of us are types of Peter's experience we began doing the impossible only to lose faith midstream. We walked and then we sank. Thus the words of the song writer are true, "Without him I can do nothing. Without him I'd truly fail. Without him my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

Peter's Second Walk!

Most people are familiar with Peter's brief walk on water; and many are familiar with his sinking plunge. However, what most people forget is that while Peter walked on water once and sank that he was able to walk one more time!

The text records that Peter cried out to Jesus "Lord Save Me!" In response for his plea for help, Jesus took him by the hand and pulled him from water which was rising and together they walked back to the boat.

When Peter put his hand back in Jesus' hand he was able to walk on water again!

Those who are sinking in the sea of life should call on Jesus!

Great things begin to happen when we call upon the name of Jesus!

At the name of Jesus:

—The wicked will cease from troubling

—The weary will be at rest

—Every knee shall bow

—Every tongue shall confess

When we call on Jesus, it doesn't matter how deep the water!

When we call on Jesus, it doesn't matter how ferocious the storm!

Jesus is able to quiet the storm and save the perishing soul!

Are you trying to keep your head above water? Call on Jesus

Are you trying tread through the ocean of problems that beset you? Call on Jesus!

Are you trying to swim to shore but are surrounded by sharks? Call on Jesus!

He can and will rescue those who trust in him!

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me!

Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

No. 616-Anniv.-Church

From Eden To Paradise

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Beth Eden Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 7, 1996

SCRIPTURE:For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:10; And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:1-4

Introduction

Have you ever considered what it would be like to live in paradise? A paradise is a place where life is easy. It would be a paradise if we lived each day without the troubles we experience daily. It would be a paradise if there was a place where there would be no difficulties, trials or tribulations. It would be a paradise if we lived in a place where there were no enemies and everyone present loved each other dearly. If such a place existed it would no doubt be a paradise and would be sougth after by people from all over the world.

Yet there was such a place. It was called Eden. It only had two inhabitants, Adam and Eve and both shared equally in the world's first paradise. Eden, located in an area bounded by Africa on the West and Saudi Arabia on the East, was described as a Garden planted by God himself. It was the place God intended his first creatures to live, without difficulty or aging, from time to eternity. Life was so simple, they did not even need shoes or clothes. It was the world's smallest city. There were no governments as we know them today. There were no mayors or governors or presidents, yet this small two person city was a real paradise. How long it existed is not known. Since time and agging was not a factor, Adam and Eve could have been in the garden for thousands of years.

Eventually, however, the garden paradise that was known as Eden fell. It fell because of the disobededienc of its citzens. When Eden fell it was what thelogians have described ever since as "Paradise Lost." There have been a succession efforts since Eden to restore the state of paradise enjoyed by Adam and Eve. All have been unsucessful despite their best efforts.

Each generation, it appears, spends the majority of its time "Looking For A City."

While there have been great cities built over the generations, none of them have ever been able to reestablish the paradise of Eden. However, each shared the same fate as Eden in the long run, they fell from prominence or grace because of the sins of its inhabitants.

As Christians, we are on a journey looking for a city as well. We travel each day toward a city not made by hands, promised by God and being prepared for every Saint in glory. By faith we seek this city. By faith we shall find it. By the glory of God we shall enjoy its rewards!

Exposition

This text, inspired by God but written by an unknown writer, describes the life search of every saint on the journey toward the promised land.

Generally described as the faith chapter, Hebrews 11 traces the activities of several of the patriarchs of biblical faith as they traveled from one place to another in faith that God would lead them safely. Each sought to find a place to worship God, give him praise and live in peace. They were looking for a city that would resemble the paradise of Eden. The city they sought did not exist and cannot exist as long as the frailties of man exist.

In Revelation 21 John saw a vision of the city of God coming down out of heaven. It was a city of immense beauty. Moreover it would be the capital city of the new world paradise that would last through eternity.

Hebrews describes the quest of man to achieve paradise lost. The Revelation text describes paradise found.

Humankind in this life will never achieve paradise, only a small semblance. However, in the kingdom of heaven, paradise will be fully restored in a way that far exceeds the happiness, peace and pleasure of Eden.

The Quest for Paradise

The quest for paradise lost began with the fall of Adam and Eve. Since then there have been many great cities. While many of them were beautiful, none of them ever came close to duplicating the paradise lost in Eden.

Babylon

Perhaps the first major effort to recreate paradise was the building of Babylon. Its quest to restore the beauty of Eden and to discover the wonders of God became the source of it name. It was was named "Babel" after its citizens tried to build a massive tower to reach the heavens. Then God confused the languages and brought about the name "Babel" or confusion.

It was then the largest and most beautiful city in the Middle East, considered by classical tradition with its renowned Hanging Gardens and massive walls to have

been one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Jeremiah the prophet, while anticipating its downfall, named Babylon "a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken" (51:7). The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 BC), commonly thought to have visited the site near 460 B.C., reported that its splendor surpassed any city of the known world. It was sacked in 689 B.C. by the Assyrian King Sennacherib, who destroyed much of it.

Despite its great accomplishments, Babylon was not the paradise that was lost. The search to find a city continued.

Memphis

If the beauties of Babylon were great they were exceeded only by the splendor of Egyptian city states including Memphis.

The Egyptians built beautiful cities. Many were constructed with the use of forced labor and included large pyramids for their leaders called the pharoahs. These cities sported every major advance in technology available during the time. Beauty and strength were their claim to fame.

Despite the beauty of these great Egyptian cities, they were not paradise. They angered God because of their ungodliness. The pharoah's were elevated to god status and their religion was pagan. Many of the great cities were destroyed by wars or otherwise buried under the swift flowing Egyptian sand.

The quest for a city continued.

Jerusalem

In Canann the quest for paradise continued. The city of Jerusalem was another of the great cities of the world at the time. Soon after being crowned king over all the tribes of Israel, David led his private forces in the capture of Jerusalem and made it his capital. Zion, the name of the original fortress, now became synonymous with the city of David. Here Solomon built the Temple that David had wanted to build. It was understood to be a dwelling place for God (1 Kings 8:13). The sacred ark, symbolizing His presence, was placed in the holy of holies. Other extensive building projects made Jerusalem a magnificent city.

The sins of the people caused the Nation of Israel to fall and with it the splendor of Jerusalem. The people were still looking for a city.

Athens

The conquest of the Greek leader Alexander the Great produced many great cities, among them was the city of Athens. It was the Capital of Attica, an ancient district of East Central Greece, where Paul preached to the Greek philosophers . Paul saw the Athenians were very religious and even had an altar to an unknown God. He based his sermon on this. Though some converts were won to faith in Christ, no biblical

record exists of a viable church being established. The city, which probably was named for the wisdom goddess Athene, was already an ancient place by the time Paul visited it. Indeed, human occupation of the area seems to date before 3000 B.C. In the sixth century B.C. Athens became the scene of the world's first great experiment with democratic government. It was destroyed by the Persians early in the fifth century B.C., but during the administration of Pericles the city was rebuilt into an architectural wonder.

Despite its beauty Athens was not a paradise. Not even a single church existed in its borders. The quest for a city continued.

Rome

The *Glory that was Greece is the Grandeur that was Rome*. Built upon the fabled seven hills of Italy this city state became known for building a city that grew into a national republic and blossomed into an international government. Rome was known for its architecture, government, and system of laws. It was beautiful, yet was not a paradise. It was well run, but not at peace. It had everything that a city state could want, yet it was not a paradise. Its rise and fall has been documented by theologians and historians for centuries.

The quest for paradise continues.

The Church's Quest

Today the church continues the quest for paradise. Our quest however, is not the search for paradise on earth, but for the Kingdom of heaven. Ours is a quest for a paradise found, which can only come with the return of the Savior.

As the church prepares to enter the 21st Century there will undoubtedly be changes as we face the challenge of presenting the word of God in the context of the rapidly changing technology of the coming age and the speed of the information era.

As man attempts to make the world a paradise the church, no doubt, will face the challenge of adpating methods. There will be changes of course. Ushers of the 21st century won't pass offering plates. Debit cards and computerized input stations on the backs of pews will make them unnecessary. Music will be synthesized and many instruments we now used will be relics of the past. Even bible study will be a matter of punching keys and modems and hard drives as people shift from paper bibles to computerized bibles and bible study systems. The advent of the internet will make interchurch communications quicker and more cost effective. While all these changes are coming, the word of God will remain the same, we must simply adjust to the coming age.

The church's quest is to keep teaching and preaching the Gospel message until paradise is ultimately restored.

The church must teach the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, that's what will exist in paradise!

The church must teach its young about the goodness of God. We must write on the door posts and tell them in the morning, evening and at night.

We must tell the story!
We must tell the story of Jesus!
Tell them how Jesus came and died on Calvary!
We must tell them them how he rose after three days!
We must tell them about the promised paradise when he returns!
Tell them that we have found a paradise!
It's a city with 12 gates!
It's a city that sits on 12 foundations!
It's a city where the sun will not shine and there will never be a cloud in the sky!
It's a city where it's always howdy and never goodbye!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
There'll be joy!
Joy!
Joy!

No. 617-Inspiration

SON Glasses

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 7, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

Introduction

Have you ever worn sun glasses? Sun glasses come in all shapes and sizes. They are generally designed to protect the eyes from over exposure to light. In summer months sun glasses are common place as the bright sun and heat prompt extensive measures to protect the eyes. They are among a large array of items generally described as sun shades that include: umbrellas, wide brimmed hats, awnings and leafy trees. All have the same purpose which is to protect one or more parts of the body from the sun.

Generally sun glasses are dark. Others are lighter. They have been made into fashion statements and they range from the conservative to those which are radically absurd. The ultimate goal of all sunglasses is to protect from the rays of the sun. There are a few that wear sun glasses to conceal identity. Others have found that they are useful to hide sleepy eyes. The world has a fascination with sun glasses.

Sun glasses work by reducing the amount of light that the eye is able to see, producing a picture of reality that is less intense. Thus, despite a brilliant sun-shiny day, some sun glasses are reduce the light so much that it appears to be dark outside. Reality is altered, at least while the glasses are worn. When sun glasses are worn inside, it can even appear that all of the surroundings are dark.

Sun glasses effect the way we see the world but the world itself does not change. There is no better witness to this truth than Silly Willy the backwoods mountain man. It appears Silly Willy lived in the backwoods and mountains his entire life. For years he and his wife Sally lived in the mountains and were not privy to modern conveniences. After many years Silly Willy's eyes began to fail him. He could hardly see in front of him. His wife shared the same condition. Finally they were talked into trading some furs for two pairs of eye glasses and a pocket mirror. Sporting his new glasses Silly Willy was amazed at all the things he could see. He pulled out the pocket mirror and stared at the face he saw and said: "The fellow in this picture they gave me looks just like my daddy." He then slid it under his pillow. Sally saw him stuff something under his pillow. She mumbled to herself "now that

I got my glasses he can't pull nothing over on me." She pulled back the pillow and looked into the mirror. Surprised she said "If he's gonna cheat on me then at least he could get a better looking woman than the one in that picture." Even a good pair of glasses can't help some people face life.

There are many who face the world every day with a distorted view of life. They are wearing SUN glasses that alter what they see. What they need is SON glasses that help them see the whole scope of life from a new perspective.

As Christians we know that we see a very small part of God's universal plan for mankind. We see with the carnal eye. However, when we look with our incarnate eye, aided by SON glasses, instead of being blinded by what we see, we view life with a spiritual eye. SUN glasses keep us in the dark. SON glasses help us to receive and appreciate God's greatness and bring us to the marvelous light!

Exposition

This text finds Paul writing to the Corinthians concerning maturity in the faith.

The 13th Chapter of Corinthians is the second of three in which Paul examines the gifts of the spirit and compares them to spiritual graces. The Corinthian church had been divided into four parts over the issue acquiring and usin the gifts of the spirit.

In chapter 12 Paul listed nine categories of gifts that believers receive, each having the purpose of expanding the kingdom. Those who had one gift or another suggested to other members of the body of Christ that they had achieved or received something that made them spiritually superior to others.

That prompted Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to write chapters 12-14 noting that all gifts come from the same spirit but have different functions. Since gifts will eventually diminish in use, acquiring the graces should be the goal of every believer, not gifts. Even the idea that some believers have something that others don't have divides the body of Christ but the graces of God form the basis of real Christian living.

Paul discussed the full range of graces in Galatians 5:22-23. Here he notes that the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Without these qualities, commonly described as graces, the Christian life is empty.

Thus Paul, in the 13th Chapter focuses on one of the graces "love" showing how it is superior to any of the gifts such as tongues, prophecy or knowledge. He noted that some gifts, like tongues, or prophecie never be diminished by time or condition. He showed how the grace of love, for example, is far more important to acquire than gifts. As he detailed how love operates he noted that if he had all of the gifts but didn't have the grace of love, instead of operating on a higher level, he would be empty. His words in verse two, " And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Many in Paul's time were unable to understand the differences. They were caught

up and divided over the issue (1:10-13). They were blinded by false teachings and could not see otherwise, especially those who had received the gift of speaking in foreign languages.

Paul noted, that a time would eventually come when every believer would be able to see clearly the truths of God's word. Diminished perspective is common, but those who come to know God fully get a new perspective. The new perspective gives them a new appreciation of what is truly important, lasting and most effective in the service of God. He compared the new perspective to that of a mature person over a child. Perspective makes the difference.

The carnal man sees life as though looking through a dark glass. The perspective is not godly. However, Paul reminds us that the time is coming when all will share the same perspective and see the same things. That day will come when all see Jesus face to face!

How We See Things

The March of Dimes has a video that is being shown to boys across the nation. It depicts a young man who gets a girl pregnant but tries to dodge his responsibility. While the teen mother goes through the troubles of child bearing he enjoys the good life until he purchases a pair of magic glasses that changes his perspective. While wearing the glasses he becomes a pregnant mother, experiences morning sickness, gives birth to a baby and his girl friend treats him coldly during and after the process. While wearing the magic glasses he was able to see things from the perspective of his girl friend and his life was never the same.

How do we see things in life? Do we see life through rose colored glasses? Is everything lovely or is everything dark? Does every situation present an opportunity or do we see defeat on every hand. The difference between the believer and the non-believer, for the most part, is in perspective. One sees life carnally. The other sees life with a spiritual eye.

Let us consider sunglasses again.

SOME BUY SUN GLASSES FOR LOOKS. Protecting the eyes from the sun is not a consideration in this instance. Sun glasses are purchased because of the way they will make the wearer look. Thus, emphasis is placed upon the frames. Will the frame make the wearer look good? Will the frame accentuate the wearer's positives?

In a similar manner many approach life from the viewpoint of getting that which makes them look good and feel good regardless of any other consequences. The "sun glass" perspective of life suggests that we should do that which makes us look and feel good as priority items. This is the attitude of the free wheeling, happy-go-lucky person, who constantly seeks the next thrill and refuses to take life seriously.

Those who select sun-glasses based on the frame forget that the most essential part of any kind

of eye apparel is not the frame but the lens. A great lens in any kind of frame will still be great. However, no matter how expensive the frame, a poor lens will do exactly what

poor lenses do..perform poorly!

SUN GLASSES ALTER REALITY: To protect our eyes, sun glasses reduce the light we see. They make things appear better than they really are. Sun glasses alter reality.

There are many who live in an altered state of reality. They live in a city and somehow blot outof the minds the homeless people they see every day. They imagine the prostitutes they see on street corners are not really there and hope they will disappear if they look the other way. The bulging jails, teen sexual activity and rising crime all exist but somehow those who see life from the world's perspective never come to grips with the reality that such problems exist in our city and they involve real, not imaginary people.

Sun glass people have become insensitive to the problems around them. They have little time or resources to dedicate to resolving the problem. As long as they keep their sun glass perspective they don't have to sing "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain." Sun glass people sing it this way "If I can pass somebody on my way home, then my living shall not be a pain."

SUN GLASSES MAKE DARK TIMES EVEN DARKER: On dark days, sun glass people have an even more difficult time because sun glasses make things darker by blocking out the light.

In difficult times we need the light. Sun glass people find dark days are even darker because their perspective makes things worse. Sun glass people can't see the bright side of bad situations. Things are dark and because they see with the carnal "sun glass" eye they see the bad side of everything. A lost job, love or fortune is terminal when seen from the perspective of sun-glass people. They give up on themselves and life in general. There is no other way. Some resort to drugs and alcohol. Some take up residence on skid row. Others take their own lives. Sun glasses make dark situations even darker.

SON Glasses

When Paul told the Corinthians "now we see through a glass darkly" he described the carnal man's perspective. The carnal person faces life with apprehension and misunderstanding. But Paul said a time is coming when we will be able see with the spiritual eye. That will be the day when we approach life wearing SON glasses.

SON glasses give us a new perspective on life that puzzles those around us who wonder what is wrong with us.

Stephen was being stoned to death by his enemies, but he lifted his eyes to glory and asked God to forgive them. The people saw the tragedy of the moment Stephen saw the triumph of the church!

It is only when we put on our sun-glasses that we find a reason for joy in the middle of troubles. That's why James 1:2 reminds us that whatever the situation we should "count it all joy."

A Christian always wears his or her SON glasses but there are special times when must be sure they are close by. They are SON glass moments.

When hard times approach and it seems like we can't make our way, that is a SON glass moment. Reach for your SON glasses and you'll remember Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and
now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

When death has invaded the ranks of your family and you reach an all time low, that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember 2 Corinthians 5:1 "..if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

When it looks like you've placed yourself in an impossible fix that you cannot escape, that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember 2 Corinthians 9:8 "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"

When it appears that every thing is going wrong and you are headed from catastrophe, that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember: Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

When life seems to have reached its darkest point, that is another SON glass moment. That's when you remember: Psalm 30:5 "..weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

When you are wearing your SON-Glasses dark days look a little brighter.

— hard times feel a little easier;heavy burdens get a little lighter

— Failures become opportunities for success; Setbacks become changes in direction!

Who is the maker of these SON glasses? Who is the author and finisher of this faith?

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who arose from the dead!

Jesus!

Jesus!

No. 618-Anniv.-Homecoming

He'll Welcome Me Home

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 21, 1996

SCRIPTURE: And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. Genesis 31:3

Introduction

Have you ever felt unwelcomed? To feel welcome is to feel appreciated and wanted. That is a feeling that most people like to experience. A stranger in a country wants to feel welcome. Already uneasy because he's in a new place, the stranger feels a little better when he is greeted by smiling faces and indications that he is indeed welcome. A visitor likes to know that he is welcome. Cities take great pains to assure tourists and visitors that they are wanted and appreciated. When conventions come, banners roll out and signs are posted in windows welcoming the guests. When company comes to our homes we make extra efforts to let them know that their presence is not an interruption but truly an asset and a high mark of the day. Feeling welcome is important because it sets the tone for the experience. Those who feel unwelcome begin the experience on a negative note which could sour the entire experience.

Most communities and homes make great effort to make guests feel at home. But, there are times when we feel unwelcomed, even in our own families. Being unwelcomed in the family circle is the ultimate ostracism. The family knows, appreciates and wants us to be close. Any person who is rejected by his family, regardless to how oblivious he appears to the snub, is injured internally.

Those who feel welcomed see a perpetual open door. They sense that an invitation to visit and share always exists. Consider the young man who had gone away from home to start his own family. He bought himself a new home, car and lived rather lavishly. One day in his parents received a letter in the mail. The letter contained a ring of keys and a note. Curious, the parents read the note which said: "Dear Mom and Dad. Please find enclosed the key to my new car, key to my to home burglar alarm code, the combination to my safe. Anything I have, please feel free to use or borrow. You gave me full access to your treasures, I give you full access to mine." At the bottom of the note was a P.S.: "By the way I still have the key to your front door...just in case!" The parents felt welcomed to their son's home. He also felt welcome to return home anytime he wished.

As Christians, we have given God the keys to our lives. We have given him access to the treasures and secrets of our souls. We have given him our all. In return God has given us the key to the kingdom of God and he welcomes us to use it freely.

Expectations Differ

There are many who never expect a welcome greeting or an invitation from anyone. At the very least they feel unwelcomed. They consider themselves the "black sheep" of society and have resigned themselves to lives of mediocrity. Such individuals fall into a number of categories:

THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT: There are many who have been estranged from their families for many years. When they consider going home, they don't know what to expect. Their last encounter wasn't the best and they are troubled by the prospect of going home.

Such was the case with Jacob. He and his brother Esau had been on bad terms for over 20 years. Neither had seen or spoken to the other. Esau had sworn that he would kill his brother because he had stolen his birth right and cheated him out of his father's blessing. The family was in disarray. Mother tended to favor Jacob over Esau and bad blood was everywhere. When God told Jacob to return to his family in Genesis 31:3, Jacob did not know what to expect. He was at crossroads. He agonized over whether or not he should go home. He tossed and turned in his sleep. Just before making his decision, he wrestled with an Angel and evolved with a firm resolution to return to his kindred.

There are many siblings today that are torn in a similar way. Some have left for one reason or another and have cut off all connections with the family. On occasion the thought of going home or calling the family occurs but rarely happens because they don't know what to expect. What they remember is what they last experienced. Jacob rose above his fear of the unknown and found that his brother Esau had forgiven him and welcomed him home with arms wide open. Many today might find Jacob's experience similar to their own, especially if the spirit of God has spoken to their soul and said "go home to thy kindred."

THOSE WHO DON'T EXPECT MUCH. There are others who return home not expecting much. Perhaps they left in pride and arrogance and return in humility. They don't expect to resume their former place of family respect, only to be in the number.

Such was the case of the prodigal son. His family gave him the best of everything yet he decided to leave and try life for himself. In the far country he wasted his substance in riotous living. When faced with the prospect of eating husks with the hogs he came to himself. He considered that his father had many hired servants who were living, eating and doing better than himself. When he came to himself he decided to go home. He expected only to be treated no better than a hired servant. His father had done no wrong. He made the mistake. He messed up his own life. All he expected was a roof over his head and support for a while until he could get on his feet.

There are many estranged from the family who see themselves as prodigals. They

did not listen to the advice of their parents and grandparents and wandered into an unforgiving "far country" where they wasted their substance. If they return home they don't expect anything but the least the family has to offer. However, like the prodigal, many have found that the arms of the family wide open in reception to a loved one that has returned to start again. The key in this instance is not the fact that the son left but that he "he came to himself." The prodigal son was restored to his place of honor and position in the family because of its joy that he was once lost but now found, blind but now able to see.

THOSE WHO NEVER EXPECT A WELCOME. There are some who are orphaned by society who never expect a welcome or a home. They have resigned themselves into thinking the worse and expecting the least.

Jesus, in Luke 14:12-14, urged believers to be concerned about those outside of the immediate family circle. Those who expect nothing and consider themselves outcast. Using the illustration of a banquet he urged believers to reach beyond relatives and the important people of the community, to the lost, forgotten, orphans and the poor. Individuals and families that reach beyond their own circle and help others will be blessed in great ways. The ways of reaching and touching vary from family to family, but every family should not only reach out for its own but help another struggling soul as well. Those who feel themselves outside of the reach of love or concern instantly find themselves welcome as one soul opens his home to them in love. Such actions are welcomed in heaven. Jesus promised a blessing saying in verse 14 "And thou shalt be blessed."

THOSE WHO DON'T EXPECT OR OFFER A WELCOME. There are many in life who neither expect or give welcomes. They have shut themselves out to the world and will not allow anyone close to their sphere of life.

With respect to spiritual affairs the question of life is reversed. The great question is not whether or not Jesus will welcome us, but in the case of those with closed doors, whether we will welcome him in our lives.

Jesus said in Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

There are too many whose attitude about Jesus in their lives reflects the tone of a poem by Lois K. Blanchard which asks these pointed questions:

"If Jesus came to your own home to spend a day or two
— If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do?
I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,
and all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best.
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there
— That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare;
but when you saw Him standing there, could you go to the door,
with arms outstretched to welcome Him your Heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change some things before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?

Would family conversation be continued at its pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you be glad to have him meet your very closest friends?
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever, on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might cause some embarrassment the things that you would do,
If Jesus came to your own house to spend some time with you.
Jesus is calling the weary to rest, Calling today, calling today! He is tenderly calling today!

What The Saint's Expect

Finally, we should consider our spiritual state. Similar to previous examples many consider themselves outcasts from the family of God. For one reason or another they do not consider themselves worthy

Like Jacob, there are many who have been away from spiritual circles for so long they don't know what to expect when they return. But the love of God is so gracious that despite their estrangement God will welcome them with open arms.

If we have been cut off from the family of God because of a life of sin, there is a healing spirit that awaits the saints when they come home. I hear 2 Chronicles 7:14 say " If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Isaiah 1:18 "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"

What that says to me is that regardless to what I have done, if I come home to Jesus, he'll welcome me!

Like the prodigal, there are many who feel they have erred in life and don't deserve to be in the family God. But they soon find that the love of God is forgiving for "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Rom 3:23. Regardless to past mistakes, he forgives and restores the lost to positions and places of love and trust.

That means it doesn't matter whether I have made a mistake in life, if I come home, he'll welcome me!

Like the poor, maimed and the orphaned, many soon learn that the love of God is concerned about everyone regardless to their state of being or prominence. Regardless of our station in life, everyone is welcomed in the family of God.

I hear him say in Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

That's why the song writer declared: "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad."

I know he'll welcome me because he loves. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

He'll welcome me because Revelation 21:7 says "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

I am reminded of a lost son who had been away from home for many years. He had heard the old stories about tying a yellow ribbon around the oak tree so he wrote his parents a letter which said "I'm coming home. Mama if you welcome me put a white sheet on the clothes lie and a yellow ribbon on the old oak tree. Tell papa if he forgives me, to ring the old bell." As the train made its way to the old country house it made one last stop and picked up a few passengers. The young man nervously kept his eyes on the window. As the train passed his family house his heart dropped when he didn't see any sign of forgiveness.

He asked the conductor to stop the train. He looked at the empty tree and clothes and listened for the old bell to ring, but heard nothing. As he sat down in his seat he heard a familiar sound. Coming down the isle was his father with cowbell in both hands ringing them like crazy. Behind him was his mother, who made herself a dress out of an old white sheet. In her hair was one yellow ribbon for every year her son had been gone. They both opened their arms and said "My son! My son! Welcome home!

That's the way the Lord welcomes us home!

Jesus, the lily of the valley; the bright and morning star.

Jesus, who died on Calvary and rose after three days..

Welcomes me Home!

"Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home!"

"Coming home! Coming Home, never more to roam"

Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home

No. 619-Youth

I CAN

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 28, 1996

SCRIPTURE: I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. John 5:30; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13

Introduction

Did you get a chance to observe any of the Olympic activities this year? Each day was filled with great accounts of young people and adults who overcame tremendous odds in search of the gold. There were literally scores of youth who had placed their eyes on an Olympic goal from near infancy and spent years sacrificing, training and overcoming obstacles to become the best in their country in quest of becoming the best in the world. There was great drama as the world focused on teen-agers who were able to overcome pain and injury to become the best in their field. There were even some, not-so-young, who had reached their late 30's seeking Olympic gold. One 37 year old track star had been seeking Olympic Gold since she was 13. Despite failures she kept coming back. Despite setbacks, she just kept coming back!

Even more important than the Olympic Gold medalist is the tremendous amount of optimism and spirit needed by every participant just to make it to the Olympics in the first place. Before these athletes trained their bodies, there was another training they had to endure. They had to train their mind and attitude to believe in themselves. They had to come to a point in which they could actually see themselves standing among the winners wearing the gold medal that suggested to the world that they are the best of their generation. Their journey to the Olympics began when they began to believe in themselves and say I CAN. No matter how they thought about it, pondered or considered it, the journey did not actually begin until they said the magic words: "I CAN." The rest is history. Whether the journey is a thousand miles or across the street it begins with one step.

The idea of believing in one's potential doesn't just apply to Olympic athletes. Great success stories are not confined to the rigors of athletic discipline and training. Those who succeed in any life quest, whether it's the Olympics, business, education, science, sports, or myriad of other careers, all begin at the same point. That point is the time and place that they decide I CAN.

Young Christians are preparing to run the race of life. They are preparing to make life's high dives, relay races, as a part of God's dream team. There's a great distance between beginning and finally making the goal, but it all begins when each youth decides "I CAN."

As Christians, we know that WE CAN do anything that is the will of God for our lives. We know it because we serve a God that can do anything. With our hand in his hand we will be able to reach our highest potential. We know we can because our God can do anything!

Exposition

These two texts focus on Jesus and Paul as each reflects upon the source of their tremendous confidence and optimism.

In John 5 Jesus gives a sermon on the nature of the kingdom of God. As people marveled at all of the wonderful things he was able to do in his ministry, they were puzzled. They wanted to know how he was able to perform his mighty works. They saw the lame walking after an encounter with Jesus. They saw the blind able to see again after they met Jesus. They saw those with leprosy made whole. They saw the broken hearted and dispirited encouraged. They saw people making full transitions in life after coming in contact with Jesus. They marveled at his power and many sought after his "secret" so that they themselves could use it. In response to those who were inquisitive about his power, Jesus took time to explain to them that while he received the credit for the miracles it was actually God working through him that made it so.

As those around him kept elevating him higher in prominence he kept humbling himself and reminding them that alone, he was not able to do anything. He did not have to make the mistake of Samson to know the source of his power. Samson flirted with the flattering words of Delilah only to be awakened one morning to learn that the source of his power was gone. He had muscles and great physical statue but yet was unable to do any powerful acts because the real source of his power was the presence of God.

Thus, Christ told his followers the source of his great deeds was not in himself but was in God. His hand touched the lame but it was God that made them walk. He spoke the words to the blind but it was God that made them see. Lepers were made whole after leaving his presence only because God willed it so. The simple acts and words he spoke would be powerless and empty were it not for God taking them and making them into powerful instruments to perform his will.

When Christ said "I can do nothing" he pointed to a great truth. To do his mighty works he had to reach a point in his life in which he decided to lose himself in the will of God. That was the point in which he decided to pursue a life lost in the will of God. That point was reached in his wilderness experience where he was tempted three times by the Devil who challenged him to use his popularity and gift of miracles for personal profit and fame. But in the wilderness, Christ decided to empty himself and let God use him as an instrument of his will. Thus, he could said "I can do nothing" of myself.

Without God I am nothing. Without the eternal power of the father I am weak and without ability to do anything. But everytime I act, he uses me to make a point for the kingdom.

While Christ said "I can do nothing" Paul writes to the Philippians saying: "I can do all things!" At first it appears that Paul is boasting of an ability that Christ didn't have. But in actuality he is saying the same thing. Christ said in John 5:30 "I can do nothing" but it is God. Paul said "I can do all things through Christ." Christ, letting God work through him, was able to perform miracles. Paul, depending on Christ the mediator between God and man, realized that he too had great potential. Each says, alone we are powerless. With God we are unbeatable.

Together the two statements of truth seem to say "I can do all things through Christ" but "without God I can't do anything!" It is a statement of confidence, and at the same time a statement of humility. "With God I Can do anything. Without him, I can do nothing.

Two Important words

The words I CAN are powerful. They declare a determination, a conclusion and resolution that comes at the end of a decision. Yet singularly they go even further.

When Paul said "I CAN" he narrowed the focus of his concern to himself. "I" is personal. It suggests a private application.

As we consider people all around us who have made great advancements in life we are marveled at their accomplishments. In school, youth are encouraged to read the biographies of great achievers. George Washington Carver, Booker Washington, Micheal Jordan, Muhammad Ali, Mary McCleod Bethume and others all have great success stories. They rose from obscurity to prominence. Teachers often encourage students to read books about the lives of these great people to allow them to see that these role models of success were ordinary people who often succeeded despite great adversity.

When we read about the successes of others that is a "him, her, they and them" situation. We learn about someone else's success. We learn about someone else's achievement. We learn about someone else's accomplishment. But what about me?

There are three prominent magazines in the African-American community: Ebony, Black Enterprise and Essence. Ebony present photos and articles that generally show Blacks enjoying the good life. It is filled with pictures of the rich and successful in our race. Essence and Black Enterprise do the same thing, but with a twist..they also provide numerous articles that show readers how to do what others have done themselves. That marks the big difference. When Paul said "I CAN" he narrowed the field down. It is obvious that others have done great things, but what about me?

When we see God working through the lives of other people and watch them make great strides the Christian doesn't watch them with oogly eyes and say "Wow, isn't that great!" The Christian says "Isn't God good?" and is encouraged!

The words of the Song writer are true: "It is no secret what God can do. What he's

done for others, he'll do for you. With arms wide open he'll pardon you, it is no secret what God can do!"

CAN

The second word in the phrase is "CAN!" It suggests potential. It suggests possibility.

According to Webster the word "can" literally means "to be able to" or to "possess the qualities, qualifications, and resources necessary for the attainment of an end or the accomplishment of a purpose."

What "can" says is that we "have what it takes!"

One of the first steps to success in life is to learn that we have the potential and ability to accomplish goals.

To know we that we "can" requires that we first evaluate what we have. What has God given me to work with. Athletic ability? Inquisitive mind? Organizational skills? Charisma? Talent? Insight? Patience? Once we realize that we actually have something to work with (and everyone does) then the hard part is over.

Can "means "I have what it takes to make it big!"

Yet while "Can" suggests potential it also suggests permission. That means it is possible to have the potential to accomplish an end but not the permission. A teenager may have the ability to drive a car but not the permission. A child may have the ability to play safely in the back yard, but not the permission. Paul traveled three missionary journeys but was not allowed to go to Asia Minor. He had the potential but not permission.

"Can" suggests that with God's blessing and permission a child of God has limitless potential to achieve and seek high goals.

"I CAN" means I have what it takes, and with God's permission there is nothing that is impossible for me to accomplish.

All Things

The child of God should face life with confidence that with God's permission, he can use his natural and spiritual gifts in a way that will both edify and glorify the creator.

There are millions in the world today who have given up on themselves. They have lost hope and think that failure is their fate and see defeat as their epitaph. They cannot picture themselves in the winner's circle, only among the losers of life! If they only knew what we knew, they would see life different.

Consider the preacher who decided to conduct a revival on skid row. He didn't put up a tent or a pulpit but took a shopping basket and went up and down the street, dressed in his ministerial robe, picking up crushed can. It was a strange site, watching a prominent pastor pushing a shopping basket down the street each day, never saying anything but just picking up crushed cans. Everyday the men on skid row

watched the old preacher and were puzzled. They recognized him but wondered why he busied himself with picking up cans? At end of the week with his shopping basket and two garbage bags filled with crushed cans the pastor stood on a street corner in the middle of skid row and announced that he had word from the Lord. Curious, one man asked "Why have you been picking up all those cans, you are a preacher?" The pastor answered "These cans represent the hopes and dreams of thousands who have been drained of their substance, crushed and thrown aside. They are no longer "cans" but can'ts. Can't succeed. Can't dream. Can't hope.. But I've come here today because I know a man who recycles crushed lives! Cleans them up and refills them and makes them whole again!"

I may not be able to do it by myself, but I have a father who can!

I may not be able to give you every answer, but I have a father who can!

God can do anything!

There has never been a

—Problem that God could not solve!

—Question that God could not answer!

—Enemy that God could not conquer!

—Mountain too hard for God to climb!

—Storm too hard for God for God to still!

—Emptiness too deep for God to feel!

No wonder the song writer wrote "I may not be able to take the lighting a flash it across the land. I can't take a piece of clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

I have a father!

I have a father!

I have a father who can!

No. 620-Communion

A Taste of Honey

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 18, 1996

SCRIPTURE:Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. 1 Samuel 14:29;" O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Psalm 34:8

Introduction

Have you ever had a free sample? The purpose of a sample is to acquaint prospective customers with a product. Sometimes samples come in the mail. They range from toothpaste to perfumes. Sometimes they are large and sometimes they are small. On occasion, persons shopping in malls may be stopped by vendors offering samples of food stuffs or other merchandise. The food samples are very small. Sometimes they are so small they can fit on a toothpick but they are still large enough to give the consumer a taste of what the whole product is like. The product manufacturer uses sampling as a marketing technique. It is hoped that the product will be so well received that the consumers will want and buy more of the product. Many of us have started using a certain product after we were introduced to it by means of a free sample.

Some people enjoy samples, but never buy the product. They thrive on the samples. Soap, dish washing liquids, dry cereals, shaving cream and 30 day free trial offers are regulars on their list. They seldom buy anything, especially if they can get a sample. They have made sampling a way of life. They seek to get all they can without any cost of commitments to themselves.

In a spiritual sense, God gives us samples too. Often we are unfamiliar with the nature of God and the extent of his power and ability. We hear His promises to provide for us and keep us under his protective care but we still don't understand it all. To help us understand, God gives us a few samples of his love and concern.

Unexpected blessings are samples of God's philanthropic nature. These are the times that God causes things to happen to our benefit that we never asked for or even expected. These are samples of God's benevolence. In a similar sense we get other samples from God. When we are forgiven for offenses that deserve condemnation, that's a sample of God's mercy. When we are guided away from dangerous pitfalls, that's a sample of God's protective hand.

Like a manufacturer who gives samples to introduce consumers to a product, we

have all around us samples of the power, might, gentleness and love of God.

There are many today who are living on the samples. They are tasting the goodness and benevolence of God but not accepting him for themselves. They receive God's blessings but won't praise him, acknowledge him or give him control of their lives. They are content to wait on the samples.

As Christians, we have seen and sampled the goodness of God. We have been so blessed by the samples that we have decided to switch brands. Rather than trust in the world or ourselves we have decided to trust in the Lord. We no longer wait on the samples that may come every now and then. After tasting the honey of God's goodness, we trust him daily and get blessed every day of our lives! No wonder the Psalmist said "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Exposition

This text focuses on Prince Jonathan as he discovers the effects of a taste of Honey. King Saul fought many invading armies during his reign as king. One of those armies was that of the Philistines. Once Saul pursued the Philistines relentlessly. He gave an order, which later proved to be unwise, that none of his men could eat anything. The soldiers were forbidden to even taste any food items. Those that broke his commandment would be put to death.

As Saul's armies pursued the Philistines they apparently ran them through groves of trees filled with honeycombs. It is believed that the Philistines tore open the honeycombs and nourished themselves leaving honey dripping from the trees. As Saul's men walked through the trees, exhausted and hungry, they were surrounded by honey and the quick energy it could provide. However they were unable to eat any because of the king's decree. It was a frustrating moment. Honey was dripping from the trees but they were unable to touch any of it.

Jonathan, the king's son, did not hear his father's decree. When he was surrounded by so much sweetness, Jonathan took the end of his staff, poked it in a honeycomb and tasted the honey. Though exhausted like the rest of his men, he was instantly nourished by just a taste of the honey. The small sampling on honey that he tasted gave an indication of the greater good that could be accomplished if all were allowed to participate in the virtual feast that was hanging from the trees.

Just a taste of honey enlightened his eyes!

Just a taste of honey refreshed him in that moment!

Just a taste of honey lifted his spirits!

Just a taste of honey gave him physical strength and hope!

When he was told about the king's order, Jonathan said it was not a wise order because the men were obviously hungry and fatigued. They would have fought even harder if given the chance to nourish themselves from the abundance of honey.

Jonathan revealed his deed to his father who was prepared to execute his son. He was only saved when the entire army protested taking the Prince's life after he had

valiantly led them in battle.

They insisted that Jonathan should not be executed over a taste of honey.

The irony of the text is that Jonathan symbolically stood amidst the fulfillment of the promise but was prohibited from enjoying it. In Deuteronomy 27:3 and other instances, Israel was promised that they would enter a land that would be flowing with presence of God. Opportunity for life and growth would flow freely. It would be a land of milk and honey. This text finds Jonathan literally surrounded by signs of God's promise fulfilled. Not only was he surrounded by honey that was actually flowing from the honeycombs, he wasenjoying one of the greatest military successes of the nation's career. They were surrounded by opportunity but forbidden to take advantage of it, or to even taste it.

The presence and Word of God is frequently compared to honey in scripture. Psalm 119:103 presents the Word of God as sweeter than honey. It reads: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Proverbs 24:13 compares honey to the knowledge and wisdom of God.

David in Psalm 34:8 invites all who do not know the power of God to sample the goodness of the Lord. He invites doubters and skeptics to "taste and see." He does so with a confidence that once having tasted of the blessings that flow from God all will decide to trust whole heartedly in the Lord.

Surrounded by Honey-Starving

Today there are literally millions of people who, like Saul's army, are surrounded by the promises of God but unable to claim them! All they hear is the command "Don't taste the honey!"

The promise of opportunity supported by the power of God surrounds us today. It is flowing like honey all around us. Yet while it flows there are so many that are feeling faint and weary while standing in the midst of the best times of their lives.

What prohibits us from enjoying the happiness that God has promised? Generally the only thing that stops us from enjoying God's blessings fully is the prohibitive commands of society. The world has given us a command to distance ourselves from God. It has warned us of the foolishness of religion, faith and spirit filled living. It mocks worship as a waste of time and public praise of God as a display of mysticism bordering on the fanatical. It, in effect, says "Don't taste the honey." So we wander in a grove of opportunity never fully realizing all that we can be, afraid to trust God.

Israel was promised that it would come to a land flowing with milk and honey. The army of God stood in the midst of the promise and nearly starved to death. So are many today. They are standing amidst great opportunities yet failing to achieve.What they hear is the voice of defeat "don't taste the honey."

The truth of the matter is whatever we need God's got it! Whatever we want, God can provide it! If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, according to God's Word all things are possible! We are surrounded by honey but we will never enjoy it fully until we are able to trust God completely and step out on faith.

A Taste of Honey

Just as there are millions who are like Saul's army, there are others who are like Jonathan. For whatever reason, Jonathan did not hear the king's command. He did not know that he wasn't suppose to enjoy the honey. Therefore when he came to grove he took sampled the honey.

Instantly the soldiers told him "You can't do that." Jonathan's reply has modern day applications. He told them that the soliders would be able to fight harder and would be stronger if they could eat of the honey. He only had a taste himself was instantly revitalized.

Today there many who have had a taste of God's blessings.

Was it a financial woe that bothered you? Did you silently pray to God to help you? When the answer came, that was a taste of honey! You only trusted him a little and got big results. It was just a sample of what could be if you trust him more!

Was it a sickeness that troubled you? You were not sure it would do any good but you asked God to help you anyway! When you received your blessing, that was a taste of honey!. There in that sick room you trusted him a little and got big results. It was just a sample of what could be if you trust him all the time!

Was it a personal distress that troubled you? When God answered your prayer and brought you through, it was just a sample of what could happen all the time. It was just a taste of honey!

If a simple taste of honey brings us joy and happiness and answered prayer, there is no measure of what's in store for those who trust in God continually!

No wonder David declared "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him"

Trusting in the Lord

The simple truth of the matter is that those who have placed their trust in the power of God have never been disappointed or let down. God will never fail!

If you have been trusting God a little, the answers you have been receiving are just samples of what's in store if you trust him a little more!

If you trust him, when your back's against the wall of life, he will help you stand tall! I heard David declare that he couldn't go to the left or the right but "I'll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!"

When men are talking about you and calling you all sorts of names, remember Psalm 31:1 "..In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed.."

If you have been worrying about putting food on the table, just remember Psalm 37:3-4 "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Have you try to figure out why things happen the way the do remember Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge and he will direct thy paths.”

Have you had a taste of God’s honey? Has he given you a sample of his mighty works?

If you trust in the Lord, he will take your:

—Sadness and turn it into gladness; FAILURE and give you the victory!

—WEAKNESS and give you strength; BITTERNESS and give you sweetness!

He’s sweeter. Sweeter than honey!

Honey is sweet because of the flight of the honey bee. But he’s sweet because of a flight he took to come down and save me!

Honey is sweet because it contains fructose and glucose. But He’s sweet because he is the essence of Agape love of God that’s always close

Honey is sweetened while it’s in the honey comb. But He get’s His sweetness from heaven and shares it with every home!

No wonder the song writer declared: “He’s sweet I know! He’s sweet I know. I found a saviour and He’s sweet I know!”

“There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place and I know it must be the spirit of the Lord!”

Who is it who is so sweet that he is love is sweeter than honey?

Who is it who is so sweet that when he speaks the birds hush their singing?

Who is it who is so sweet that every day with him is sweeter than the day before?

His name is Jesus!

He is the sweet Rose of Sharon! The lily of the Valley!

He died out on Calvary and Early Sunday morning he arose from the Grave!

I found a savior and..

He’s sweet I know!

No. 621-Youth

Say It Loud

I'm Saved and I'm Proud
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 25, 1996

SCRIPTURE: ***Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. Psalm 107:2-6 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:1 Pet 2:9***

Introduction

Have you ever kept quiet at a time when you knew that you should have spoken up? What was the reason for your silence? Sometimes embarrassment kept us quiet. Perhaps We felt we would be the only ones speaking on the subject and would appear peculiar. Sometimes fear made us hold our peace. We were afraid of what others would say or think so we kept our true feelings to ourselves. Whatever the reason, there are times that many of us know that we should have spoke, instead we kept quiet.

There is no time when it is harder to keep your peace than when you want to bear witness to a truth that has affected your life. At times such as those it appears that we would explode if not allowed to speak up. Consider Shouting Sally's testimony. Shouting Sally had a reputation in the country for being loud when it came to praising the Lord. If the preacher said anything about the goodness of the Lord it was almost assured that Shouting Sally would say Amen loud and clear!

When things really warmed up Shouting Sally was known to throw her purse at the preacher and shout so hard they'd have to carry her out of the church. She also had a reputation for favoring a good dip of Bitter Garret Snuff under her lip. One Summer Shouting Sally went to stay with her Cousin who was a member of one of the quieter congregations. When she arrived her reputation preceded her. As she sat in the quiet church and the preacher philosophically called the name of Jesus she would shout "Amen!" After a while the members became disturbed because she shouted so much. Finally the preacher met her one Sunday and promised her a case of Bitter Garret Snuff if she could go through one service without Shouting out! As

the service proceeded Shouting Sally tried to hold her peace. When they sang "You don't know what the Lord has done for me" she squirmed in her seat but kept thinking of all that snuff. Another sister moaned "I've tried the man and the man is alright!" and she began to rock in her seat! But when the preacher started talking about Jesus and his goodness, she squirmed in her seat and started waving her hand. Unaccustomed to so much activity in the pews the preacher asked: "What's wrong Sally?" Sally
answered: "I love the Lord and I sho' would hate to lose a who case of snuff. So If I can't say a word, I'll just wave my hand!"

That's the way it is with Christians. We have seen the great things that God has done in our lives. On occasions we try to hold our peace to conform with the standards of the social order. However there are times when we can't hold our peace.

As Christians, we know what God has done for us. We know the sacrifice that was offered on our behalf on Calvary. When it's time to praise God, we can't help it, we have to praise the Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he advises those who have been redeemed by God to express it in their lives.

This psalm is part of a trilogy of psalms which extoll the greatness of God and demonstrate his mercies. This Psalms simply speaks of how good God has been to Israel and how praising him for his goodness is a natural response.

This Psalm is best appreciated in good times. It is anachronistic in its approach. That it is, it telescopes its focus over both recent and distant history and catalogs all that God has done as evidence of his goodness. The catalog of merciful deeds is the foundation and reason given why God should be praised. Unlike other Psalms, such as 121, which are read best in times of trouble, or 37 which is read best when troubled by the presence of evil and doubt, this Psalm is celebratory
in that it celebrates the goodness of God.

Verse two of this text summarizes the theme of the trilogy: "Let the redeemed of the Lord, Say So!" It characterizes the good deeds that God has done in our lives as worthy of acknowledgement.

As if Israel needed a reminder, David took the time to retell Israel's story. He described their lives as a wandering nation of nomads, fresh from slavery and ignorant to the demands of life and survival. They wandered from place to place for 40 years and found no city in which to rest, no new clothing for the backs and no supply of food and water that was not provided by the hand of God directly.

When they hungered and thirst, they cried unto God and he provided their needs. He sustained them and protected them against enemies and against themselves. In their distress, they called upon him and he answered them by becoming their refuge and their strength.

David further recounts that after they wandered for 40 years following their own

way and failed to reach the promised land how he took them by the hand and led them the "right way."

In verse eight he sums up the reason that men should "Say So!" They should "say so" because of his "wonderful works to the children of men."

Thus the Israel of Old Testament times had a reason to show forth the goodness of God intertwined into their national fabric. He brought them from slavery to the promised land and presided over their conquering efforts to claim the land of promise.

1 Peter 1:9 is one of several New Testament texts which gives reasons why the New Testament Christ should give praise to God, in addition to the general reasons given in the old covenant.

Peter details that New Testament believers have even more reason to praise God. Today, the modern believer is a blessed generation, special and important to God.

The reason for the celebration in the life of the Old Testament saints rested in the national blessings. The reason the Saint celebrates is because of what God has done both for the collective and each individual personally. He gave each the individual opportunity to take part in the kingdom of God as a community of priests, able to step out of the darkness of the past with all of its ritualistic prohibitions into the marvelous light of the present.

The redeemed of the New Testament should "Say So" because they have been brought out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

Peter challenged believers to be living stones, or living testimonies to the goodness of God. That means that the very lives of the Saints would testify to the goodness of God in both their words and deeds.

Together, the two texts jointly encourage believers to loudly proclaim the goodness of God in both verbal testimonies and in their actions and deeds. Both give witness to a doubting world that the Saints of God serve a wonderful and great God who is worthy to be praised.

How Do the Redeemed Say So?

How does the modern believer give God praise? Is there a special way that is acceptable to God. David, in Psalm 116:12 suggested that the only way we can truly "say so" is not so much by what we say but what we do. In Psalm 116 David asked the question "What shall I render unto God for all his mercies?" His answer suggested action. He noted that to truly praise God we must at the least: take the cup of salvation, call upon his name, and pay our vows to God. The indication is clear, to really "say so" we must do something. Simply talking alone is not sufficient.

Often youth get the impression that praising God refers to specific details or methods of worship. Some believe that praising God means to sing loud, clap their hands, dance the holy
dance or to fall out. While these are all various ways in which praise may be demonstrated, these are not all inclusive.

More important than the demonstrations of praise referred to here is the praise that

is demonstrated in spirit filled living.

Our daily lives are a demonstration of praise to God. That's why Paul, writing to the Romans in 12:1 said "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The lifestyle of every young person gives evidence that they praise God. There is something different about them that sets them apart from the rest of the youth in their community. There are tell tale signs that indicate they are different.

They speak politely and have respect for their elders.

They are clean and neat in their dress.

They are orderly and obey their parents, teachers and others in authority.

They study the word of God and try to live by its direction!

Peter said our living sets us apart from all others. It makes us distinct and indicates that we are a special generation that live to praise the Lord.

Service To Others

Another way to praise is through service to others.

There is no better way to demonstrate to a hungry man that God loves him than to give him bread to meet his immediate need and then show him how to make bread to meet his long term needs.

There is no better way to show forth the praises of our God than by sacrificial service to those we encounter along life's way.

Even youth can praise God in this way. Youth who volunteer to help in their community show forth the praises oto pick up paper from city streets, serve as hospital candy stripers, man Salvation Army kettles,
and a plethora of other activities that suggest that they give back to others as a way of giving
thanks and praise to God for what he has done in their lives.

Matthew 25:45 finds Jesus telling those who want to praise him but show little compassion for the
poor, needy and downtrodden that they are mistaken. That which is done to the "least of these" is also done to God, including acts of kindness and benevolence.

Worship and Praise.

We also praise God through song, liturgical dance, drama, preaching and teaching and various forms of worship.

We praise God through lifting of Holy Hands, singing Psalms and giving testimonies of his goodness in our everyday lives.

When a Saint stands and sings "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me" that's a testimony of praise!

When even a young voice lifts itself in praise to sing "this little light of mine I'm

going to let it shine!" That's a testimony! That's a moment of praise.

We praise God because he's worthy to be praised!

We Must Say it Loud!

Finally, we must note that there can be no real praise of God unless we do it publicly. Praise by its very nature is done in public.

A private awards program to present Oscars, Emmies and Grammies would have little effect. What good would the awards be if no one knew what was being said about the recipient?

The nature of gratitude is to express thanks to the person who has made you the recipient of a kindness. Gratitude can be expressed publicly or privately and often has the same effect.

However, praise has to be done publicly or it has no effect.

Have you been wandering in the deserts of life? Have you been sustained in your wilderness journey by blessings that only God can give? Then you ought to tell somebody!

Have you felt the sting of hatred or tasted the bitter dregs of anger? Were you able to survive the ordeal thanks to the help of almighty God? Then you ought to tell somebody!

In the late 1960's the African-American community was sweltering in self hatred. They hated their hair and their color. We conked our hair. We bleached our skin. We sang little rhymes that said "Get back jack, your hands too black, you look like came from cross the rail road track."

Despite a rich African Heritage that resulted in the construction of the pyramids! We were ashamed of ourselves!

Despite surviving over 200 years of slavery! We were ashamed of ourselves!

Despite making great contributions to the greatness of America, we were ashamed of ourselves.

Then in the late 1960's James Brown coined a phrase that got us to thinking a little different. He said "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" Instantly Blacks who had been ashamed of their heritage started cutting their cuts and sporting afros. Bleaching cream products went off the shelves. Instead of "Get back jack your hands too black we started saying ' The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice!" A race of people was ashamed had been revitalized.

Today brothers and Sister there are still some saints who are ashamed to praise the Lord!

Despite serving a God who has been better to us than we have been to ourselves, they are afraid to praise the Lord!

Despite being healed of illnesses and sicknesses, they are ashamed to tell anybody about the goodness of the Lord!

I hear David declaring "let the redeemed of the Lord Say so" that's his way of saying if the Lord has done something for you ought stand tall and say "Say it Loud, I'm

Saved and I'm Proud"!

Some people are shame to claim the name, but ain't no shame in my game!

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. I may as well tell the story and tell it right now!

Say it Loud! I'm saved and I'm proud!

Amazing Grace, how sweet the Sound that saved a wretch like. I once was lost but now I'm found. Blind but now I see.. Say it Loud!

I came to Jesus just as I was, weary wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad..Say it Loud!

God so loved the world that he sent his only Son Jesus to give me a second chance!

He died on Calvary and is alive today!

Say it Loud!

No. 622-Funeral

It Seemed But A Few Days

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
At The Enterprise Baptist Church
Bay City, Texas

August 31, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." Genesis 29:20

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself asking the question: "Where did the time go?" That question often comes to mind when we observe youth who have become adults and we recall their earlier years with an eye of nostalgia, asking: "Where did the years go?" It also surfaces at the end of an enjoyable experience, at the completion of a life goal and in other moments of reflection. "Where did the time go?" It wasn't squandered or wasted. It simply seemed to sweep by us, like a breath of wind.

Time seems most accelerated in two instances: When we are living a good life and when we are in love. Those who have been blessed to enjoy either of these great blessings are most fortunate. Those who have had the opportunity to experience both are extremely blessed. A good life is productive, secure, challenging, successful, spiritual and generally happy. The good life has eluded many who get some of its components and miss others. Those who are able to capture the full essence of what it means to live "the good life" know that it is more than simply having a successful career or comfortable lifestyle, but also means being comfortable with one's self and being at peace with God. A companion to the good life is "real love." Real love is unselfish, generous, painstakingly sensitive and passionate. It is romantic and private, sensual and personal. Many spend their entire lives in pursuit of "real love" and only rarely come close to experiencing what it means to truly share an "endless love."

Those who have been blessed to live both the good life and share real love at the same time enter a whirlwind relationship filled with so much happiness that they achieve a lifetime of fulfillment at such a fast past, that upon reflection, seems but just a few days. It seems like just a few days ago that the man who stood at the altar and took a bride was a little boy, crawling on his knees and struggling to stand on his feet. It seems like just a few days ago that the woman who wears a wedding ring on her finger today, was a little girl, with ribboned hair, stretching her little fingers to play the piano. Yet even as the years go by the little boy within every man never seems

to go away. As a child he may have played football on a high school team, but as a man he still revisits those high school days in front of his television set with remote control in hand. There seems just a thin line that separates the boy that watches cartoons on Saturday and the grown man that is still fascinated by Sega Genius; yet the boy who had to be told to pick up his play things and put them away, seemingly overnight grew into the man who learned how to handle his own affairs well. It all happened so fast that it seemed but a few days.

Today we celebrate a good life and a real love that flashed across the horizon of time, danced through the corridors of joy and lodged itself among trophies of eternity. It all happened so fast, that it seemed but a few days.

As Christians, we recognize that our entire life journey is pilgrimage from time to eternity. We cherish every moment, embracing the good with the bad. We who have placed Christ first in our lives know how to live the good life, fight the good fight and finish our course, whether it is a lengthy marathon or simply a short dash. We give God thanks always for the good times, even though they past so fast that they...seemed but a few days!

Exposition

This text focuses on the romance and marriage of Jacob and Rachel.

Jacob was a colorful and important figure in Old Testament history. Nearly half the Book of Genesis tells his story. He was respected and revered so much by Old Testament believers that no one else gave their child that name. Only in the New Testament is there another named Jacob and he was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary.

By all standards Jacob was a very successful man. He was well organized, a leader of his generation and by every measure a successful man. Early in his life he caught a glimpse of future promises as he came face to face with the realization that his life goals were dependent upon his ability climb by the power of God. He envisioned a ladder that reached into glory with angels ascending and descending. In that hour he met God at a place he called Bethel. From the day he met the Lord his life became a gradual climb, round by round, toward higher heights, guided by the hand of God.

Jacob enjoyed the good life. Through hard work and sacrifice he accumulated considerable resources and was able to live a comfortable life. He worked well with people and developed a large staff of assistants and subordinates whose daily actions he directed and supervised. He invested wisely and managed his resources well. Even though he was away from home, he continued to worship God and ordered his life in a way that pleased Him. He blessed God by living a God fearing life and God blessed him with health and prosperity.

In addition to living the good life, Jacob was also able to experience real love. He fell in love with a beautiful young lady named Rachel. He was so captivated by her that he was willing to go to any extent to claim her as his own. He worked 14 years for the right to marry her. During these 14 years he was sustained by hope and

anticipation. He worked hard every day to claim her. As he labored 14 Summers, 14 winters, 14 springs 14 falls and 5,110 days he was not injured in spirit. It all seemed "but just a few days!"

Jacob's story is a story of a God fearing life. It is also a story of a man who was deliriously in love. It was a life and a love that was so intense and fast moving that when it was over.. it seemed but a few days!

Short Days

Psalm 89:47 gives us a reminder of the brevity of life when it says "Remember how short my time is." It is the same reminder given in Psalm 90:9 "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told." These scriptural footnotes remind us of the brevity of time and provide a compelling reason why we should strive to use our time wisely.

In the context of life and death, time is the measure of one's life experiences. In this context time is not defined by counting the sheer number of days of an existence but rather by assessing the experiences of a lifetime. Thus, it is possible for a highly productive person to do more in a short lifetime than a less productive person could do even if given double the available time to complete the same task. In relative terms, even those of us who live beyond our three score and ten years have actually accomplished little if the nature of our tenure has not been productive. We are reminded that Methuselah lived 969 years but all that was written about him was simply that he died. Though Methuselah lived 353,685 days he accomplish nothing worthy of note.

There are many whose lives, though short, were significant because of the nature of their experiences. They wasted little time and managed themselves in such a way that they were able to accomplish much in a small span of time. The names of Martin King, John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and countless others ring out as examples of people whose lives were shorter than most but whose accomplishments in life exceeded their years.

If we measure a life by time alone the results would not tell the whole story. We have seen too many examples of young boys who became mature men in the span of just a few weeks. Have we not all seen a young boy enter the military and 13 weeks later emerge as a full grown man. It was the intensity of the experiences not the time that made the difference. At the same time we have seen relatively young men shoulder heavy responsibilities and in the span of a few years emerge with gray hair and deep furrows in their brow. Again it is the intensity of the experience not the time that makes the difference.

A man who can claim a successful prep athletic career, a liberal education, a successful career in the business world, a record of community volunteerism, a happy marriage and a son has accomplished much. He has accomplished even more if he did so in a short number of years.

If length of life was measured by experience and accomplishment, then such a man

would have lived to a ripe old age.

Yet there is another consideration beyond the mere number of our years, that being how we live your years.

How Fast Time Passes

We have all heard the children's joke that asks: "Why did little moron throw the clock out of the window? Because he wanted to see how time flies! Those who have whisked through life experiences are very much aware of how time flies.

While it is true that time is a measure of life's experiences, it is also true that our perception of time is influenced by the quality of our life's experience.

If our life's experience was miserable, sad, filled with failure and defeat, time seems to pass slowly. Like the nights we stay awake in fear of the dark awaiting daylight, it seems that during such time the break of dawn never comes. If we hate our jobs the work day is too long and the end of the day doesn't come soon enough. If we hate our spouses we can't be rid of them soon enough. Some even hate themselves and feel every day they live is too long and then end it all.

If all we see in life is its dull side rather than its sunny side then time passes extremely slow and life is a bore.

If, however, our life experiences are filled with happiness and accomplishment, the time seems to fly!

If, we succeed in life and achieve our career goals!

If, we marry a beautiful person and spend every day like it was a honeymoon!

If, our days have been filled with romance, love, fun, laughter, travel and excitement!

If, our joy has been highlighted by new birth and renewed life!

If, we have saturated our months with worship, praise, prayer and spiritual humility!

If our experience has been a succession of adventures, captured snapshots that are stored in the albums of the soul..

The time flies so fast...that it seems but a few days!

Hold To His Hand!

The rapid transitions that life bring sometimes come faster than we expect. They often catch us off guard. Those who have experienced the dizzying whirlwind of the good life may be tempted to ask why must the ferris wheel stop? Why couldn't it continue?

The strong look back at the good times and conclude like Job, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away blessed be the name of the Lord!"

In such times it is best to hold to the changeless hand of God. He gives. He sustains. He strengthens.

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when these words were penned: "Time is filled with swift transition. Naught of earth unmoved can stand. Build your

hopes on things eternal. Hold to God's unchanging hand!

Even when our eyes well with tears, hold to God's unchanging hand!

When tempted to doubt and question his love, hold to God's unchanging hand!

In good times and bad times, hold to his hand!

Through risings and fallings, hold to his hand!

If you hold to God's unchanging hand He will take your:

—DOUBTS and replace them with confidence; FEARS and replace them with courage!

—FAILURES and turn them into victories; SORROWS and replace them with joy!

Hold to his hand to God's unchanging hand!

Face every day with confidence that God still loves you!

He loves you so much that he sent his only begotten son on our behalf!

Hold to his hand!

Hold to his hand!

Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand!

—

On Friday August 23, 1996 Kevin Matthews finished his course. In the short span of 33 years he lived a good life, experienced real love and spent his last moments playing with his son....it seemed but a few days!

No. 623-Inspiration

Living With Your Sunny Side Up

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 1, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD." Psalm 31:24

Introduction

What do you do when everything that can go wrong does? There are times when, despite your best efforts, nothing seems to work out right! Trouble seems to come in herds. Seldom do problems and difficulties appear in isolated instances. Problems always seem to bring its friends: disappointment, headache and frustration. What course do you take when life turns its dark side your way? When dark clouds of difficulty overshadow your sky, what is your response? The immediate response of the carnal man is to respond by sulking, complaining or feeling dejected. The carnal instinct is to feel sorry for ourselves and wallow in self pity. But the spirit being in each of us speaks a different language that the carnal man cannot understand. The spirit being tells us to look beyond the frustration of the moment, it is not over, God will work it out.

True believers have learned that God does not allow anything to happen to the faithful that is not for their own good. That's why Romans 8:28 says " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Much of our life's experience is a testimony to this truth. Consider the Western pioneer couple that invested their entire savings on farmland in California. They heard about the fertile ground of California and they made the long journey from New York to California to stake a claim on the future. They came through the torturous heat of the desert and endured the chill of winter like nights, in hopes that God would lead them to a piece of farmland that would grow rich crops. They built a little cabin and plowed the ground. They were disappointed however because it appeared that one calamity after another always fell upon their efforts. Locusts ate up their entire crop once and they lost everything but the seed. They replanted and the following year a great flood came and destroyed all of the crops in the valley. Frustrated, the planted another crop but it was destroyed by a drought. They were disgusted. They were angry. They had asked God to give them a better life and he

brought them through four years of frustration and disappointment. The man and wife prayed and asked God for a blessing! As they slept that night a storm broke out and a mighty wind blew down their tiny cabin. Only their family altar was left standing. The man was so angry at God for taking his crops and destroying his house that he reached into the mud to throw a rock at the altar. Just he curled back his hand to throw the rock he noticed that what he thought was a rock was a gold nugget as big as a baseball. The rain had washed away enough top soil for him to see that the site of his house was now a literal gold mine! God had answered his prayer four years earlier, but he was digging in the wrong place!

Often, many of us spent our lives complaining about misfortunes, troubles and difficulties only to find out that often the very troubles that we complained about turned out to be a great blessing.

As Christians, we know that God is always watching over us. No matter what comes our way we keep our sunny side up because God will work it out for us. We are confident that he will make a way for us! No matter how dark the moment or how terrible the storm, we know there is a bright side somewhere!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he praises God for reminding him of the rewards that are in store for those who do not lose the faith.

David spent a great part of his youth and young adult years as a fugitive from King Saul. By no fault of his own he was hunted, persecuted and treated as a criminal because he was popular. Saul's armies chased him continuously and he was always hiding and eluding the king. The king frowned upon anyone who would help him. Thus David was often shunned by those he came in contact with because they feared for their lives.

David was a believer in the power of God. He had seen God's handiworks on many occasion. Even when he was a youth God protected him when he kept his father's flock. As a young man God gave him courage and direction when he faced the Philistine Giant, Goliath. When the king became angry with him, God even helped him to elude King Saul on numerous occasions. Without a doubt David was aware of the power and presence of God.

The 31st Psalm is the musing of a believer who knows what God can do and believes God will do it, but momentarily lost focus on how God operates. In this Psalm David speaks of his trust, distress and hope.

He begins by telling God of his trust that God would provide and protect him because of his unrighteous persecution. Surrounded by enemies David asks God to deliver him from their traps and tricks. In verse one he simply said "deliver me in thy righteousness." In verse two he asks God to be his "strong rock." In verse three he urged God to "lead me and guide me." In verse four he urges God to "pull me out of the net" prepared by his enemies.

In verse five David places his whole life and destiny in God's hand, completely

trusting him to do that which must be done according to his will. His words:"Into thy hands, I commit my spirit" were repeated by Christ as one of his seven last sayings on the cross.

In frustration David tells God about his distress. Verses 9-13 detail David's feelings. He said he was "consumed with grief." Surrounded by the prospect of defeat, failure and execution he had reached a very low point. (v9-10). Rejected by friends and neighbors who sometimes slandered and defamed him, he was ostracized and shunned to the point that he felt like "a dead man" (v11-13). At any given time David expected to be reported to the king by someone who would be willing to betray him to gain favor with the king. He slept little, trusted few and suspected many of those who banned with him of secretly plotting with him, although that never proved to be the case. Paranoia was one of the first aftermaths of his distress.

As if suddenly reminded of God's power, at verse 19 David gets a sudden burst of renewed hope and faith. He remembers the goodness that God shows to all who trust and depend upon him. While he anguished over the negative things he supposed others were saying about him and the plots and plans that were being registered against him, he remembered that God hides believers in his shadow and keeps them safe from stings of wagging tongues (v20). While he was complaining about his circumstance he was instantly overwhelmed when he remembered the goodness of God whom he remembered "hath showed me his marvelous kindness" in the past. (v21).

By way of confession, David said he hastily concluded that he had been abandoned or cut off by God because of his circumstance. He felt that the only way such difficulties could confront him was through abandonment by God. He concluded "nevertheless" despite his own attitude of doubt and anxiety, "thou hearest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."

David's attitude took a positive shift from the "darkside" of distress and frustration to the sunnyside of hope. When he thought of how God preserves the saints and rewards those who try to do good, he concluded that all believers should be of good courage in times of trouble for God will not fail the believer.

Thus faced with a dark moment, David found the strength to turn his attitude sunnyside up. The key words that he leaves for other believers to remember are: courage, strength and hope.

When the Dark Side Comes

Sooner or later even the best saints experience the dark side of life. These are times when things get rough. The question is how we will respond to life's dark sides? The various responses are familiar to us. In a way trouble treats us like eggs in the skillet and our response is strikingly similar.

SCRAMBLED: There are many whose response to trouble and difficulty is a scrambled and mixed up response. The scrambled response is the one which lacks direction. The scrambled response reflects itself in the person that runs from one

failed solution to another, which almost always includes a variety of quacks and weirdos. How many, in their frustration, turn to voodoo doctors, witchcraft, palm readers and spend tons of money consulting their psychic connections. Even those who are believers spend inordinate amounts of time running from church to church, religion to religion and faith to faith in an exhaustive effort to make sense of their dilemma.

David referred to this confused state in Psalm 44:15 when he said "my confusion is continually before me, and the same of my face hath covered me." The desire to avoid confusion probably prompted his prayer in Psalm 71:1"In thee O Lord do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion." Believers whose approach to trouble is scrambled should remember that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

HARD BOILED: Some, when faced with difficulties adopt a cynical attitude. They are more or less hardened in their spirit. They believe life is the pits and they assume that God has abandoned them therefore they conclude that they should abandon God. Job's three friends adopted this attitude and tried to get him to adopt the same. However, Job refused to become cynical, despite his troubles and continued to display hope that God would bless him despite his condition. Job's conclusion was memorable: "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." The hard boiled are those who just give up on God completely. They suffered a sickness or experienced a death or a major failure and as a result they gave up on God. Being Hard boiled is an attitude of defeat.

POACHED: Some meet difficulties with an attitude of doubt and insecurity. Like a poached egg that is neither raw or completely done, there are many who are somewhere between being sure and wondering why. These are the believers who know what the word says about their situation but still they are unsure of their situation. Assurance seems to evade them as doubt envelopes them. The poached forget the words of Jesus, "Lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the world." That's why the words of the songwriter inspire us "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mind oh what a foretaste of glory divine...this is my story, this is my song, praising my savior all the day long."

Sunny Side Up

While there are some who approach difficulties with a scrambled mix of emotion and attitudes, there are others who wear a happy face in the midst of hard times.

While there are some who become bitter and hard boiled when they are greeted by the rough side of life, there are others who weather the storms of life with a lifted head and strong determination.

How can a person who his drenched by the waters of hard times and frustration, live with their sunnyside up?

How can those who have shouldered the burden of sickness and financial ruin, still live with their sunnyside up?

How can those who have suffered the pain of death and defeat as they watch their dreams withered like the petals of a flower, still live with their sunnyside up?

These have built their lives and hopes on something more sure than the physical possessions or presence of body. They have placed their hopes in the power of almighty God.

No wonder the song writer declared "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

Daniel, how can you walk so calmly, don't you know you're in the Lion's den?

Hebrew boys, how can you be so cool, don't you know you're in the midst of a fiery furnace?

Everybody wants to know how a child of God walk with a smile on their face in their midst of trials and tribulations!

We know something that the rest of the world has not learned...it doesn't matter how hard the storm rages. It doesn't matter how dark the night...our God is able!

He's able to take our:

—Rough places and make the plain; Dark nights of sadness and brightened them with joy!

—Fears and turn them into courage; Bowed down head and lift it up high!

We can walk with our sunny side up because "greater is he that is within me than he that is in the world!"

We can walk with our sunny side up because we've already been promised the victory!

Keep your head up high! Don't be afraid of the night!

Jesus is always standing by!

Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who arose one Sunday morning!

Jesus is alive today. As long as he lives, there may be a rainy day, but because he lives I know there's a bright side somewhere!

No. 624-Faith

Passing Life's Test

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 6, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." Genesis 22:1

Introduction

Have you ever taken a long test and exhaustive test? We've all taken tests on one occasion or another. Depending on the level of our preparation, the tests were either difficult or so easy we described them as pieces "of cake." Some tests are relatively short. They have only a few questions and require only a few answers. Such tests are short quick and snappy. There are others however that are long and exhaustive. The ACT, SAT,GED and the California achievement tests are long and comprehensive. They are mentally and physically demanding because they attempt to measure, to some degree of accuracy, what a person knows on a wide variety of subjects.

Long tests require both mental and physical preparation. Sharp students learn how to study for exhaustive tests. They focus on principles and ideas rather than specific names, dates and places. They learn sequences of events, paying special attention to cause and effects. Mental preparation for tests requires them to know the information and understand the principles. However, regardless to the mental preparation, those who take tests will confirm that one must also be physically prepared for the test. A good night's sleep is usually the best way to avoid pure exhaustion on an exam. Many have failed tests, despite excellent mental preparation, because they burned out on the exam. They were so tired they could not focus or recall the vast storehouses of information they had stored away. Those who want to do well on long test must be prepared mentally and physically.

We know how to prepare for tests in school or in the work place, but how do we prepare for the great tests of life? What do we do to prepare ourselves? Life's tests often come spontaneously. Like an unannounced "pop" quiz that measures our level of preparation, life often tests each person's preparation. Life also has its long and exhaustive tests. These are periods of trial, deprivation, difficulty, sickness and pain. Success on the tests of life require preparation and spiritual strength. The believer must prepare for the "pop" test and the exhaustive test. Both will take every ounce of strength and substance.

Often life's difficulties prove to be a great test that molds and shapes us. Consider the young man who complained frequently about the failure of his peach orchard. It seems that for several seasons he had watched thousands of acres of peaches destroyed by frost. It made him angry. He stopped going to church. He stopped praying. He became angry with God for sending frost to destroy his peaches. One day he explained his dilemma to another an old Christian sweet potato farmer. The old man listened as the young man railed against God. As he listened, he peeled a sweet potato and began to eat it raw as they talked on the porch. When he saw the impatience of the young man he said, "son the answer to your situation is in the taters!" Surprised, the young man said his concern was peaches not potatoes. "Taters" said the old man "get a little sweeter after the frost hits them!" The young man responded,"What's that got to do with growing peaches?" The old man looked at the young, impatient boy and said "You don't pray any more. You don't go to church anymore. You are angry with God. It could be that God is not interested in growing peaches on your place. It could be that he's interested in growing a seasoned young man that will grow sweeter after the frost falls a few times!"

As Christians we learn quickly that life's troubles season us and prepare us for better living. Like the frost and the potato, they seemed to make us humble and more aware of our dependence on God. Thank God for the frost!

Exposition

This text focuses on Abraham whose life is given as a great example of faith. Yet Abraham's successful life of faith came as a result of his passing four great tests of his faith.

Abraham was tested by God on several occasions. The purpose of each of his tests was to evaluate his faithfulness and willingness to be true to God despite the frustrations caused by his test. The word "Temp" is used in Genesis 22:1. In this context it did not mean "prompted to do wrong" but rather it meant a "test" of Abraham's loyalty, sincerity and faith. God does not tempt man with evil deeds (James 1:2,13,14). People are only tempted when they are drawn away by their own lusts and desires. Such temptation does not come from God. Genesis 22:1 shows us the beginning of another of Abraham's four great tests.

Test 1: His first test came when he was called to leave his native country and kindred to go to an unknown place. (Genesis 12:1) This was an extremely difficult test because it required Abraham to venture into the unknown and break ties with the known. To satisfy the demands of God's order, distant travel would be necessary with little or no chance of returning home. With little or no knowledge of the place he sought, Abraham began the life of a nomad traveling from place to place "looking for a city."

Test 2: The second test involved parting with Lot. Abraham told Lot to part company with him because of the quarreling of their employees. This was a painful decision, but nevertheless it was one that was necessary. Lot was a relative and possible heir and a fellow believer. Parting from him left Abraham alone in a strange,

without an heir with old age approaching. This took a considerable faith. (Genesis 13:1-18)

Test 3: The Third test involved Abraham being obedient to God's wish that Isaac and not Ishmael would be the recipient of the promised inheritance. Abraham and Sarah had agreed upon a plan of action as it regarded their family but God had other plans. Abraham's willingness to abandon his plans showed how much faith he placed in God's promises. Thus, he passed his third test. (Genesis 17:17-18)

Test 4: The final test for Abraham struck even closer to home. He was asked to give up his only son by his wife. This was a personal sacrifice. The seriousness of the final test was underscored when God said "thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" and sacrifice him in a burnt offering. It seemed cruel of God to make Abraham wait until he was 75 years old before he received the promise of a son by his wife and then wait another 25 before he allowed the son to be born, then order that the son be sacrificed. (Genesis 22:2). Yet as cruel as it seemed Abraham was willing to do all that God had commanded. He passed his final test.

At the conclusion of Abraham's period of testing he was heralded as a man of great faith and strength. That was not determined however, until after he passed his life's test.

When We Are Tested

Even the best saint can expect to be "tempted" or tested by God. For Abraham there were four tests. Each test called upon him to make extreme sacrifices. At the time Abraham made his decisions they seemed unfair and difficult. Looking back, however, they proved not to be so difficult. His last test did not even require him to complete the assignment but just be willing to go all the way. In a similar sense each believer faces tests of character, strength and faith. Whether we meet the challenge posed by our respective tests determines whether or not we "come through as pure gold."

CHANGING DIRECTIONS: Sometimes we are called upon to change directions in life. For Abraham the change of directions meant to move out of his hometown and go to a place he had never been. Just as it took great faith for Abraham to make such a move, it requires great faith for believers today to make major life changes. Sometimes major changes involve changing cities. Sometimes they involve changing careers. Sometimes it even means changing entire lifestyles.

What makes such changes difficult is that we often become comfortable in our present circumstance. We want to do something different but we lack the courage or strength to follow the inner voice that speaks to us. Doing what has to be done requires intense faith and confidence that if the move we are about to make is blessed and ordained by God we will be successful. This is the same dilemma faced by Jacob as he toiled over the thought of leaving Laban and returning home to face his brother Esau. It is the same problem faced by Naomi and Ruth as they decided to return to Israel. The prodigal son made that decision too!

Believers, toiling with major life decisions, should talk them over with God. Once assured that God has blessed the action, be strong and do what has to be done!

BREAKING TIES: One of the hardest decisions for anyone to make is to break a family tie. That is the situation that Abraham faced. He enjoyed Lot's company and they were not enemies and harbored no ill feelings. Yet they were growing too big to live in the same space. Independence was calling out for a response.

Often the family circle gets a little crowded as each person grows and matures to individuality. Parents sometimes smother their children with love. They often become over protective and remain so even after their children are married and are managing their own lives. Sometimes it is necessary to allow our children to grow up and live independently. One of the greatest tests of faith, especially for parents is to allow siblings the space to mature without parental interference.

FOLLOWING GOD'S PLAN: Sometime our test involves our willingness to follow God's plan for our lives, rather than our own. Sarah had devised a plan to insure that Abraham had a son, since she was not able to give him one herself. The young man, Ishmael was loved by Abraham and he and Sarah made plans for his future. However, God had different plans. Not only would Abraham and Sarah have a son, but the son, Isaac would be the heir, not Ishmael his first born. That meant Abraham had to change his family and accept God's plan. It was painful but yet necessary.

Often we make decisions about our personal lives and family direction. The decisions we make are based upon our own desires and goals. Yet, there are times when God makes different plans for our family and lives than we have made and he points us in different directions. Following God's plan requires faith. Following God's plan will effect the way our marriage operates. It will impact the entertainment choices of our family as well as vacation plans, career choices and many other lifestyle choices that are dictated by the love of God rather than the whims of the flesh.

Following a path that has been ordered by God can only lead to righteous living. The psalmist records "he leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name sake" (Psalm 23). Those who are willing to follow God find that he blesses them immensely and never leaves them.

PERSONAL SACRIFICE: Then there are times when we face personal trial and sacrifice. For Abraham the sacrifice required the possible loss of a loved one. Though grieved, he was willing to submit to the will of God.

In the course of each life we face the same dilemma. We often face life situations that require personal sacrifice and test the very fibre of our moral strength. Sometimes it sickness. Sometimes it is poverty. Sometimes it is death. Sometimes it is all of these wrapped into one.

When Job faced his moment of sacrifice he maintained his faith in God and responded "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." He rose to occasion and maintained his faith and trust in God.

When our day of sacrifice comes, we too should prove faithful and maintain our trust in God. It is extremely easy to become bitter in such circumstances, but the faithful know that God will never faith or desert them. In moments of personal sacrifice,

endure to the end and be sure that God will reward those who prevail.

Passing the Test

Every believer should be reminded that there are rewards for those who pass life's tests. Abraham's four tests resulted in a life that was long, fruitful and happy. He is remembered as a man of great faith.

When we put our trust in God and endure the test, we can expect not just a passing grade but a "Well done!"

Joseph found himself thrown into pits and locked away in jail cells, yet he endured and God raised him higher than his family members who persecuted him.

Moses was exiled in Midian for 40 years as he matured in the faith, but when his testing period was over he returned to Egypt as a man who was strong enough to stand before Pharaoh and declare "thus saith the Lord God almighty, let my people go!"

Job's test was exhaustive! It touched his body! It touched his relatives! It touched his resources and finances! Despite the all encompassing nature of his test, Job came through as pure gold!

Daniel met the test of the Lion's den!

The Hebrew Boys met the test of the fiery furnace!

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he asked, "Have you been tried in the fire? Did you come forth as pure gold?"

When you've been tried in the fire you know that days of tears and sadness may come but "weeping endures but a night and joy comes in the morning!"

When you've been tried in the fire you know that despite the hopelessness of any situation "Our God is able to deliver us!"

When you've been tried in the fire you sing a different song that is filled with hope!

When you've been tried in the fire you walk a different walk that is filled with anticipation!

When you've been tried in the fire you never give up hope!

Though we endure many risings and fallings we know that the God we serve is a good God! He will not abandon us or forsake!

That's why the Saint of declares "I am on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I, would serve him till I die. I'm the battlefield for my Lord."

No. 625-Youth

Training Wheels

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 22, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. "Proverbs 22:6

Introduction

How did you first learn to ride a bicycle? Did your bike have training wheels? Did someone run along beside you to get you going? One of the great challenges of youth, after learning to walk, is learning to ride a bicycle. It requires balance and a sense of self confidence. To assist in this process, manufacturers came up with a special set of wheels that are attached to the back wheel of a bicycle. The purpose of the two little wheels attached to the back wheel is to help provide balance and confidence to the rider. It provides balance whenever the rider leans too far to the left or to the right. It provides confidence because the little wheels don't always touch the ground. The riders build courage because they actually ride under their own power until they begin to lean. The knowledge that the wheels are there in case of a fall builds confidence.

Some who have never had bikes equipped with training wheels had to learn the old fashioned way. A parent or friend ran along beside the rider holding on until the rider got under way. Though wobbly at first, the rider got the hang of riding, after a few crashes. Unlike weary parents, training wheels never tired. Training wheels were always attached. Riders who used training wheels never had to wait for others to catch their breath. Training wheels were convenient.

Training wheels serve a purpose, but there comes a time when training wheels are no longer necessary. Consider the little boy who was being trained to ride his bike by his father. On the first day out his father said to him. "Son, there are three things you should always remember if you are going to learn to ride a bike." The excited son committed all three to memory: "Keep your eye on the road, don't lean to the left or the right and remember daddy's right there." As the boy mounted the bike his father had him to repeat the three rules and then ran along beside him shouting encouragement and reminding the boy to keep repeating the three rules.. After each ride the boy was excited and thrilled. After the third ride his father ran along side him but didn't say anything as the boy kept reciting the three rules. One day he mounted the bike as usual and took off chanting to himself "Keep your eye on the road, don't lean to

the left or the right and remember daddy's right there!" Two blocks up the road he looked back and was surprised to find out that his daddy had not made the run with him but was waving from the front yard. When the boy returned the father said "Son let this be a lesson to you in life. You will succeed if you can keep your eye on the road, never stray to left or right and remember, even when you can't see him, not me, but your heavenly father's right there!"

As Christians, we know that as we travel through life that our heavenly father is always there to help us. If we fall, he'll pick us up. If we stumble, he'll catch us. Our goal is to move through life with the full knowledge that God loves us and is always by our side.

Exposition

This familiar text shares the wisdom of Solomon on the training and rearing of a child.

Solomon, generally considered the wisest man the world has ever known, wrote hundreds of proverbs or wise sayings that were based upon his experience in life and truths revealed to him by God. Among those was this single admonition about child rearing. Greater insight into the passage shows the full thrust of its meaning.

Solomon urges parents to train children. The Hebrew word for "train" is "chanak" which has a variety of meanings that reveal the full extent of Solomon's admonition.

DISCIPLINE: Discipline is the first implication of the word "Chanak." Discipline is the general training that makes training in specific skills possible. It generally involves three elements: Self control, character and orderliness. It is achieved by the establishment of a system of rules, which when followed will assist its subjects in learning and growing. Discipline is seen as a necessary part of the growth process, thus children are ordered by God to "obey" or attentively follow the righteous instructions of their parents. Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

DEDICATE: Chanak also means to dedicate. To instill a sense of special purpose within a trainee that sets him or her apart for a sacred and special work. It also means to instill a sense divine calling within each young person. This encouragement to teach each child about their special purpose began when Israel received the law of God from Moses. In Dueteronomy 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. In Deuteronomy 6:8 Moses told the people to teach the laws of God to the children, reminding them that they were his chosen people, "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." The idea of being special orders steps and dictates direction. The New Testament reemphasizes this point by reminding believers that "..Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:" 1Peter2:9

THROTTLE: Chanak also means to throttle. Those who train supply the fuel of encouragement and support to young eager minds while at the same time withholding support for any ventures or areas that may be dangerous to growth.

The New Testament expands upon the three dimensions of "Chanak" by using the word "nurture." Ephesians 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Nurture involves all aspects of life that influence its final outcome. Thus, believing parents are expected to apply, discipline, dedication and throttling controls on all aspects of a child's life. The final outcome of such training would be a child that grows up in the admonition of the Lord.

There is a time frame, according to Solomon, when discipline, dedication and throttling can best be achieved. Childhood is the best time to teach discipline, inspire purpose and to exercise the throttling influence. Although the values can be learned at other stages of life, few stray away from truths they learn during childhood. Thus, parents are encouraged to train at the optimum time in life, childhood.

The results of proper training is a child that grows up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It is not an easy assignment, yet it is necessary.

Training Wheels

Learning how to live is like learning to ride a bicycle. In the beginning we need a little help. We need training wheels. We really need someone to run along beside us to keep us from falling. The role of good parents is to implement the three dimensions of "Chanak" in the lives of our children.

A SENSE OF DISCIPLINE: The three aspects of discipline are self control, character and orderliness. Every child should be taught self control. It begins at home when he or she learns to obey the rules of the home. That's when the child learns that there is a time and appropriate place for certain actions. Speaking out of turn, interrupting the conversation of others, disrespectful behavior are all signs of an undisciplined child. Controlling the impulses, selecting friends and deciding upon acceptable activity are other areas that indicate discipline. Character involves values. There are 13 important values that every child should be taught at home, at school and in every organization or group in which he or she participates: Honesty, loyalty, helpfulness, , friendliness, courtesy, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, thrift, courage, cleanliness, respect for God and a good education. These values develop the essentials of character. They are learned in childhood. They are difficult to learn or unlearn in adulthood. In addition to self control and character, orderliness is another essential. Learning orderliness is important because it allows us to easily follow rules and to gain control of life's situations. A lack of order suggests chaos.

A SENSE OF PURPOSE: Every child should be instilled with a sense of purpose. The sense of purpose is the "reason" why we exist, go to school, or worship. Every child should know that he or she is God's special representative and is learning everything needed to represent him. Every child's sense of self should be developed

to the point that they know who they are without the need for a Nike "swoosh" mark to tell them that they are somebody. They should know that they are special because they are children of God.

ENCOURAGING SUPPORT: Parents should exercise a throttling influence. They should open up the throttle and encourage children who are involved in healthy, wholesome activity through their presence and moral support. The intense encouragement and visible presence for those activities that are acceptable has a throttling effect when it is withheld. It suggests that a planned activity is not acceptable and does not meet family standards. Every parent should keep their eyes focused on the throttle for it can often be as effective as the rod.

Train up a child, says Solomon, in the way he should go. Nurture them says Paul to the Ephesians. Do it all at the time that it is most effective and the result will most likely be a child that grows up in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

The Three Rules of Life

Good Parents teach their children to ride the bike of life. As much as they can, they run beside them. They support them with training wheels to keep them from falling.

Yet the general words of every parent seem to be strikingly familiar, "keep your eyes on the road, don't lean to the left or right and remember, daddy's right there!"

Training wheels can take us just so far, but there comes a point in life when we need to know that daddy's there! We know that our heavenly father is right by our side.

Even the best riders sometime run into life problems.

Sometimes the finest bike can't go anywhere because it has a flat tire. That's when its good to know that you are not riding alone!

Sometimes the chain jumps off track, the brakes don't work, or the handle bars come loose, you can't steer your bike in the right direction, that's when its good to know that you're not alone!

Sometimes good bikes are stolen when carelessly left unprotected. Stolen from schools. Stolen from churches. Stolen from our homes!

How many innocent young people have had their lives stolen from the them. Stolen by drugs. Stolen by criminally oriented friends. Stolen impulsive actions that ended in tragedy!

When your bike has been stolen and you find yourself walking alone, that's when the words of the song writer seem to have new meaning: "When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark ...for you'll never walk alone!"

Every young person should remember to keep his eye on the road, never stray to the left or right and remember, come what may, God is always by your side!

It's good to know that the Lord never leaves you alone!

In the middle of the storm, he's a comforting presence!

In the middle of doubt, he's the voice of assurance!

In the middle of defeat, he's the hope of victory!

In the middle of failure, he's the prospect of success!
In the middle of rejection, he's the epitome of acceptance!
In the middle of sadness, he's the picture of gladness!
The Lord will never leave you to walk alone!
No wonder the song writer declares: "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on the tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!"
Jesus, who died on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!
I heard Jesus say "Behold I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth!"
"I've seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll.
"I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which tried to conquer my soul!
"I've heard the voice of my savior, He bid me still fight on!
"He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!
No never alone!
No never alone!
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

No. 626-Revival

Ready Or Not Here I Come

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 6, 1996

Scripture: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matthew 25:13"

Introduction

Have you ever thought you were ready only to find out that you had forgotten something? That's the time you prepared to leave home only to remember that you forgot to turn out the lights or turn on the alarm or put the dog out. That's the time that you discovered that you thought you were ready to go but had actually left all a personal grooming item undone. Being ready means that everything is in order. It means that everything has been done. Many say they are ready but they still have one or two things left undone.

There are many who miss great opportunities in life because they are not ready when opportunity presents itself. Consider the silly farmer who decided he would have chicken for dinner. Both his stomach and his taste buds told him that he was ready for a bowl of chicken and dumplings. He walked around on the yard and found a fine chicken and grabbed him by the neck. The chicken yelled "Wait a minute. You're not ready to eat me!" Surprised the farmer asked "Why not?" The chicken answered "Because you don't have the pot.. The farmer released the chicken and hurriedly found a pot. He grabbed the chicken again only to halt one more time. "You can't eat me" said the chicken. "You didn't put any water in the pot." The farmer went and filled the huge black pot with water and resumed his stranglehold on the chicken. Then the chicken cried out again "You can't eat me yet, you forgot to build the fire!" As the farmer built the fire, he grabbed the chicken one last time. Only to hear the chicken say again "You can't eat me!" -The farmer didn't have a hatchet. When the farmer returned he found only a note in the place where the chicken stood. The note read "Dear Mr. Farmer my name is Nettie and I live in the corner of the yard. Losing your dinner is so very hard, so next time, call when you're ready!" Like the farmer, there are many that miss great opportunities because they are not ready.

In life there are many who are not ready to face the challenges of each day. They have not put everything in place. In the children's game of hide and go seek the counter counts and chants something similar to "last night, night before, 24 robbers at my door, I got up and let them in. Hit them in the head with a rolling pin. All hid?"

Soon after the counter will say "Ready or not here I come!" If the other players have not found a safe place to hide, the counter comes anyway. There is no waiting. There is no delaying. Unfortunately, life doesn't ask whether we are ready before it bursts upon our state of being. It seems to say "ready or not here I come."

As Christians, we know that when the master comes, we need to be ready. We don't know the day or the hour of his return. We won't have time to go back and do anything over or finish that which is incomplete. We must be ready when he comes.

Exposition

This text finds Jesus giving a parable explaining the need for preparation for the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

Ten women who carried lamps are the focus of the parable. All of them were attending the wedding celebration and carried lamps filled with oil. However, five of them had reserve stores of oil and were prepared even though the bridegroom was late making his arrival.

In the tradition of Eastern marriage ceremonies the bridegroom marched in a procession down the city streets to the home of prospective bride. He was followed by people playing music and holding torches shouting his arrival. As the bridegroom approached the home of his bride those in the party raised their lamps, joined the procession and went inside the home and the door was shut behind him. It was important for all of those in the procession to carry a light, not simply to walk along in the dark.

Jesus gave this parable as an illustration of the need of believers to constantly be prepared for his return to usher in the kingdom of heaven. Many will be fully prepared for his return, however long that will be. Others, represented by the foolish virgins, will find themselves only partially prepared.

It is a vivid picture of Christ himself returning to claim his bride, consisting of the host of believers in Old Testament times, The Church and those that will come forth out of the great tribulations of the Revelation. The challenge of the parable to every believer is to be prepared for we know neither the day nor the hour of his return.

Those Who Were Not Ready

Today, there are many who have the outward appearance of religious piety yet inwardly they are painfully lacking. They are represented the five foolish virgins.

Like the women of the parable they appear like all others who wait the arrival of the bridegroom. They are dressed for the occasion. They are in the right place. They are doing the right things. Their light appears to be shining. Yet there is an emptiness within them. These are the believers who may find themselves unprepared to meet spiritual challenges although they have a light that is shining daily.

USED LAMPS MUST BE REPLENISHED. There are many believers who have lights that shine brightly. Their testimonies of faithfulness are great. They speak

about God and tell others about him with a zeal. This would appear to be the perfect arrangement, especially since Jesus in Matthew 5:16 said "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Those who use their lights must be careful to recharge or replace their batteries. What keeps the light shining is its source of power. For the women of the parable the source was the oil. For the believer, the source is the spirit of God. We must keep a full charge or run the risk of no light when we need light the most.

Those who are busy about the business of building the kingdom while waiting for the bridegroom to return should not neglect those practices that recharge their batteries.

Prayer, Public Worship, and Praise have the effect of recharging our batteries or replenishing our lamps. Prayer is a moment of spiritual communication between the created and the creator. In such moments the believer sends and receives an important message that gives strength. Believers who neglect prayer at home soon find themselves without the spiritual strength they need to continue. Public worship is an outward demonstration of humbleness before God. It demonstrates our dependence upon him. Believers who neglect public worship soon find that the develop a sense self importance that suggests that they can continue without acknowledging the source of the external success. Praise is a demonstration of adoration for God. We speak, sing and testify of goodness before others. Believers who neglect the praise and adoration of God soon find themselves ashamed to own him in the company of others.

CONSTANT STUDY BUILDS RESERVES: The tragedy of the five foolish women was that they had the right intention. They intended to pay homage to the bridegroom. They simply did not have enough reserves to last them through the night.

Today, believers who neglect the study of the word can find themselves without a storehouse of reserves when they need it most. That's why 2 Timothy 2:15 encourages us to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

How is it that some are able to endure the most trying periods of life and keep their lights shining? In such darkness, why don't their lamps go out? Those that make it through dark periods are constantly refreshed by the word of God hidden in their hearts. Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." When we can't see our way, the word of God, stored away in our hearts, lights the path.

How is it that the family, enduring the most difficult periods of its existence is still able to put on a bright smile? Why is it that their light never seems to dim and they always see their way? The Word of God sustains believers and keeps them strong. Isaiah 32:3 "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken." These are the believers who draw on a storehouse of reserves that sustain them through the darkest of times. The deeper the reservoir the longer

a believer is able to endure hardship and difficult circumstances.

Those who neglect the study of the word will find themselves with a lamp, but without oil when they need it most. Therefore those who get so busy that they cannot find time for any of the teaching moments of the church: Sunday School, Leadership Training, Bible Study or other instruments will find themselves without oil at a time when they need it most. They will reach for a reserved resource that is not present.

GRACE CANNOT BE BORROWED: At time of the bridegroom's arrival the foolish tried to borrow enough oil from the others to get them in the ceremony but found it couldn't be borrowed. In a similar sense there are many who are members of the church but who have not accepted Christ.

They are associated with the church by virtue of their family ties. They joined because it was the tradition of their family that all children unite with a church and be baptized. They attend because Grandma or Grandpa taught the family that it should be done. They attend, pay and participate but have not come to the full knowledge of God for themselves. They have the mistaken notion that just as they are prospering today on Grandma's prayers, that somehow they will make it into the kingdom of God on Grandma's Grace. Today there are millions that are living good lives because of the good lives of their parents and grand parents. They have land, homes and resources because of the hard work and belief of those who came before them. Grandma was a praying woman. Grandpa was a Godly man, but believers should never operate under the mistaken notion that they can gain entry into the kingdom of heaven on Grandma's prayers. God may bless us because of because of Grandma's prayers. We may enjoy health and strength because of Grandma's prayers, but we cannot be saved on the strength of Grandma's prayers. Romans 14:12 made it clear: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Grace cannot be borrowed. It cannot be loaned or acquired. It comes freely to those who come to know Christ as their own personal savior.

Having a relationship with the savior is personal.

Having a relationship with God is not incidental.

The song writer was correct "You got to know Jesus, you got to know God for yourself!"

Those Who Were Ready

While there were five foolish virgins who did not have enough oil, it must not be forgotten that there were five others, who kept their lamps trimmed, oil reserves in tact and were ready when the bridegroom arrived.

While there are those today who are simply going through the motions of spirituality, there are others who are seriously about the business of preparing themselves to meet the savior. They pray, praise, worship publically, study, serve and truly know God for themselves.

To be ready to them means being prepared to fight against evil. Therefore the truths of Ephesians 6:14-17 reflect in their character. They:

— Stand therefore, with loins girt about with truth, wearing the breastplate of righteousness;

— Stand, with feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

— Stand, holding shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

— Stand, wearing the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Eph 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints

To be ready means being prepared to shoulder difficulties and hard times with knowing that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"

To be ready means being prepared to go through the fire.

Everybody who says "I'm ready" is not ready. Peter told Jesus in Luke 22:33 "I am ready to go with thee into prison and to death." But he was not ready because when the cock crowed three times he had denied the faith. In Luke 9:59 a disciple said he was ready to follow, but first he wanted to bury his father. He said he was ready but he wasn't ready.

To be ready means being prepared to go all the way. Isaiah 6:8 "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I'll go. I'll go! If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!"

Will you be ready when the bridegroom comes? If today is your last day, will you be ready?

I'm reminded of the mother who kept a suitcase beside the front door. It didn't matter what time of year, the suitcase always sat by the door. One day her grandchildren, puzzled by the suitcase at the door which sat there year after year, asked why it always sat by the door. The grandmother pulled the children together and said "I got one daughter in California. I got a son in Chicago. I got another daughter in New York. On any given day, I expect to get a phone call that says mama I need. When that call comes, whether its morning, noon or midnight, I'm gonna be ready. Everything I need is in that bag, I'm gonna be ready whenever the call comes!"

I don't know about you but I want to be ready when he comes!

I got my bags packed! I don't know the day or the hour, but I want to be ready!

Ready!

Ready!

Ready when he comes!

No. 627-Revival

When Bones Rattle in The Closet

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 13, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Psalm 32:1-5

Introduction

Have you ever done things that made you ashamed? Have you ever tried to hide those embarrassing mistakes with hopes that they would never be discovered by others? Do you keep them tucked away in the secret closets of your life, hidden away, secure from the prying eyes of those who might use your past against you? Most people have a few episodes of personal history that they wish did not exist. Some have had a rather worldly life filled the unmentionables. Some have walked a path that was less than virtuous and often strayed from the "straight and narrow." Their past looms like a haunting memory. The skeleton of what once was is hidden away in each closet, known only to those who care to remember. While there are many who parade themselves in righteous indignation, pointing accusing figures at the world around them, there are others who are slow to condemn and quick to forgive because they constantly hear a rattling sound in their own closet.

In Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar" Mark Anthony, on the occasion of Caesar's funeral, said in his funeral oration, "the evil that men do lives after them, the good is often interred with their bones." That truth remains even today. People rarely remember the good that we do once they learn about hidden skeletons in closets. No one seems invulnerable. Thomas Jefferson's love for slave women, John F. Kennedy's secret romances, Martin Luther King's affairs and Jimmy Swaggart's appetite for women of the night, are all examples that vividly illustrate that even some of our strongest personalities have had skeletons in their closets. Invariably, if the story of our lives is ever told, it would not be complete until the skeleton in the closet speaks.

On June 11, 1963 Alabama Governor George Wallace stood in the doorway of the

University of Alabama and refused to allow a Black woman to register. He pledged "segregation now and segregation forever." That proved to be a moment in infamy for the governor. He tried to run for president and was shot. He was reelected governor of Alabama after he opened up his closet and let the bones talk. What the world heard was a humbled Wallace who could not be at peace with himself until he apologized for the arrogance of a man drunk with power. He made many acts of contrition. He erected statues of Martin Luther King. He appointed more Blacks than any governor in Alabama history. He won the approval of most Blacks in the state. However, on Thursday, October 10, 1996 he met with a 54-year-old Vivian Malone Jones face to face and asked for her forgiveness. She gave it and the bones in Wallace's closet were silenced.

Today there are millions who are troubled by the bones rattling in their closets. The voice of past sins and indiscretion screams with a haunting chill demanding to be heard despite our best efforts to silence our past. Unless we face up to our past instead of hiding it as if it never happened, the bones will always rattle.

As Christians, we thank God every day for his forgiveness and mercy. The man or woman of worldly ideals and dreams represented by the skeletons in our closet, no longer lives. We rejoice in Christ who has delivered us from a failing life of sin to a new and glorious life in grace. We are not proud of some of our activities in the past. We do not deny them. However, our life is not spent hiding from or being haunted by our past, but in pressing forward toward the prize of the high calling, which is in Jesus Christ.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expresses his desire for repentance.

Generally, David is characterized as a righteous man. His motives and goals in life were consistent with the will of God. In fact, he was such a righteous man that he is described as a man after God's own heart. Many of the Psalms discuss his righteousness and extol the greatness of righteous living. Most of these are included in the first 26 Psalms. In Psalm 1 he speaks of the importance of being godly saying the godly man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. In Others such as Psalm 8, 17, 18 he asserts his righteousness. The entire 26th Psalm discusses his righteousness and integrity. Here, David comes very close to bragging about his righteousness and perfection.

Despite his righteousness however, David had a skeleton in his closet. He had a dark secret that troubled him and occasionally haunted him. It was the subject of whispers in the courtroom, gossip between his aides and advisors and scorn from the man of God.

David's skeleton in the closet involved his sin with Bathsheba. It was a sin that involved adultery, deceit and murder. He had conceived a child by the wife of one of his military generals then tried to hide his deed by recalling the husband from battle and giving him a night at home with his wife. When the husband refused to go home,

David had him placed in a dangerous position in the battle and abandoned, assuring his death. Quickly David married the slain general's wife. Thus, to hide his adultery and continue to appear righteous to his subjects, David became a liar, cheat, and a murderer.

The dark secret rattled like bones in his closet. In his silent moments he could hear them rattling. The bones rattled so loud that David was troubled spiritually. While he tried to hide his sin his very essence or bones became miserable. (V3) Day and night he was troubled by the rattling of the bones. There were no more Psalms that bragged about his righteousness. Interspersed between Psalms that reflected on God's goodness and his trust in God were Psalms of penitence such as the 38th Psalm which he wrote in the aftermath of his sin while struggling secretly with a venereal disease or Psalm 51 in which he asked for a clean heart or 102, 130 and 143 in which he continually asked forgiveness for his sin.

The prophet Nathan brought David's sin to light. He spoke publically what those in the court had whispered about silently. When the prophet challenged the king saying "thou art the man" (2nd Samuel 12:7) the rattling bones came out of the closet. It revealed a righteous man who was vulnerable and capable of sin.

When his sin was finally publically recognized David discovered another aspect of God's character, his inclination to forgive. When David acknowledged his sin and repented, God forgave him. Thus he writes in Psalm 32:5 "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah".

From this point in his life David became acutely aware of everyone's vulnerability to sin. From the prince to the pauper, the prospect of sin looms. Rather than boast of his righteousness, he boasted of knowing a merciful God who blesses him despite his past. Rather than hide his past, David began to write about it to demonstrate to others the forgiving mercy of God. When he discussed his past in light of God's mercy, his dark secret was no longer the rattling of bones in his closet but a testimony about the goodness of God.

Approaches To Sin

There is no one in this world that has not sinned. It is possible for good people to sin. Pastors, Sunday School teachers, politicians and even little children have sinned. The word of God makes it plain that everyone is guilty of something. Romans 3:23 says it clearly "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In fact, anyone who claims to be without sin is characterized in scripture as a liar. 1 John 1:8 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The question is not whether we have sinned. That's a known fact, but what we did in the aftermath. There are two approaches to sin that define our actions.

FIG LEAF APPROACH: Those who sin but attempt to hide their sin and still maintain the appearance of righteousness use the fig leaf approach. This is approach used by Adam and Eve in the Garden when they had sinned. They attempted to hide

from God's presence physically and to hide the result of their sin from their own eyes with fig leaves. It's the same approach Cain tried when he killed his brother Able only to learn that his brother's blood cried out from the ground in testimony against him.

The fig leaf approach is to attempt to hide our sins while appearing flawless. Thus, the man who cheats on his wife comes in the front door with the smell of passion on his presence and lipstick on his collar and says "honey I'm home!" tries to hide his deviant behavior. He tries to hide it from his wife with a fig leaf that may as well be transparent because she sees right through it but keeps quiet. The alcoholic that goes to work doused in antiseptic, the gambling bookkeeper than juggles the books to hide his habit, the drug user who fakes urine tests, teenagers who lie about why it took so long to come home from an event, all attempt a fig leaf approach to sin.

There are no fig leaves big enough to hide sin from the eyes of God. For a time we can fool our friends and co-workers. Soon however the bones begin to rattle in the closet. Even if we have blotted our sins out of memory our enemies will be quick to remind everyone of the secret bones in the closet. There is something inside that begins to click in a righteous man or woman. Even if they have successfully hidden their secret for years, the righteous person feels uneasy and is troubled by the bones in the closet. Neither can we find a place we can hide from God. Simply avoiding Sunday School, worship, or religious broadcasts on television cannot hide our sins. Thus, a thief or murderer makes peace with God by acknowledging his or her shortcomings. But until a man or woman gets straight with God, he or she will constantly be haunted by their the dark secrets of the past rattling like bones in their closet!

DAMASCUS ROAD APPROACH: The alternative to the fig leaf approach to sin is the Damascus Road approach. Paul spent a large part of his adult life persecuting Christians. It was a grievous sin. However, on the Damascus Road he saw the light. Instead of trying to hide his sin Paul pulled it out of the closet and spoke about it openly showing others the error of his ways.

Those who follow the Damascus Road approach take the following steps. 1) They acknowledge that along the road of life they have made mistakes and are not without flaws. 2) They repent for their sins and turn from them. 3) They testify to others about their life in darkness and show how God brought them out of darkness into the marvelous light!

Damascus Road approach leaves no secret bones in the closet. It admits to human frailty and weakness. It does not presuppose self righteousness.

A person who has adopted this approach to sin does not look down on the prostitute on the corner or frown on the crack addicted man, but says in his own mind "but for the grace of God, there goes I." Those who experience the Damascus Road have laid out the entire ugly story of their life to a God that is compassionate and loves them. There are no rattling bones because 2 Corinthians 5:17 makes it clear: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The man or woman who knows the Lord does not hide his past, but acknowledges

it in the context of time. “That was then, but the man or woman that committed that sin is as dead as the bones in the closet.” People who know Christ are brand new creatures, not the dead memories lurking in the closets of time.

Forgiving God

Fortunately, God does not enjoy rattling the skeletons that represent our failures. He gets no joy out of parading our mistakes or harping on our sins. God is a forgiving God whose mercy and loves overwhelms us.

Men enjoy rattling our bones. In 1912 Fred Snodgrass dropped a pop fly in the World Series that cost the New York Giants the game. When he died in 1974 the headline announcing his death read: “Fred Snodgrass,86 Dead; Ballplayer muffed fly in 1912.” Even though 62 years had passed, New York overlooked the fact that he was a successful banker, mayor of a California city and raised a fine family and chose to rattle the skeleton in his closet. Richard Nixon died as one of the greatest American presidents, but even in death the skeletons of Watergate and his resignation were rattling in his closet.

I’m glad that God is not like men. Men rarely forget and seem to enjoy rattling the skeleton’s in our closet. God redeems sin instead of rattling bones!

Unlike men who:

—Parade our shame, God turns our shame into a testimony

—Rejoice in our failure, God forgives our failures and helps us succeed!

—Triumph in our defeat, God picks us up and shows us the victory!

When the skeletons in your closet begin to rattle, it is the secret cry from within to make it right with God!

When the skeletons in your closet begin to rattle, they want you to make a move from:

— SORROW into joy; HATRED into forgiveness

—FILTHY into the fabulous; DEVILISH into the divine

—PRIDE into humility; PIG PEN into paradise

When the skeletons begin to rattle in your closet only the peace of God can quiet them down!

When the skeletons rattle in the dark, only the love of God can bring you to the light!

When the skeletons rattling place a burden on your shoulder, only the love of God can lift it!

That’s why Jesus said come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest!

The prodigal son did well in the far country but there was a skeleton in his closet. When he came to himself, he said “I will arise” and go home to my father and say father I have sinned before God and before thee!

A forgiving God takes no joy in rattling bones but wants to meet us as we come down the aisle, with arms wide open singing “I’ve wandered far away from home, now

I'm coming home. Too long the paths of sin I've trod, now I'm coming home!"

When a man or woman comes to God there is a silence in the closet but there is a noise in heaven!

When the skeletons stopped rattling the song writer declared "I came to Jesus just as I was, weary wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

On Calvary the bones were rattling! I heard somebody say "he saved others but he can't save himself!"

On the cross the bones were rattling! A critic cried out "he said he could build the temple in three days, but he can't come down from the cross!"

He died a pitiful death. He was buried in a lonely grave. But he arose in triumph!

When Jesus died on Calvary, he put an eternal silence to rattling bones. Instead he gave every man a story to tell. Every saint can now declare I lived in shame, I died in sin, but thanks to Jesus I've been born again!

No. 628-Anniv.-Church,Cornerstone

Hitherto Hath The Lord Helped Us

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 20, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Samuel then took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Jeshanah and named it Ebenezer (meaning, "the Stone of Help"), for he said, "The Lord has certainly helped us!" 1 Samuel 7:12

Introduction

Have you ever received an award? Was the award a special plaque or a trophy? Perhaps it was a certificate or some other token of recognition. The purpose of an award is to recognize and to praise persons or groups that have made noteworthy accomplishments and contributions. They generally contain the name of the honoree, a description of the deed accomplished, a date, and the name of the presenters. Recognition of some accomplishments may get bigger than a mere plaque or certificate. Statues, busts and memorials are erected around the world to note the lifetime contributions of those who distinguished themselves in the course of time or to note the site of an historic event. Whether a small certificate or a towering obelisk, awards have a way of recognizing and marking important moments in time.

Tributes usually follow a significant accomplishment. Often those receiving the tribute feel undeserving and are puzzled at the praise they receive from others. Consider the old man who won a prize at the state fair for eating the largest watermelon. That year all of the country folk came to the fair to see who would win the $1000 prize for eating a 50 pound watermelon clean to the rind. Laughing Charlie was running the contest and every contestant had to pay $100 to try. If they failed, laughing Charlie got the last laugh and pocketed their money. Several huge men entered the contest but changed their minds when they saw the size of that melon. Each day there were no takers. It seemed that the prize money would go unclaimed until an old man who had come to the fair on the last day, raised his hand. "I'd like to try to eat that melon" said the old man. Instantly the crowd laughed at the thought of this frail old man eating a 50 pound melon. "I'll try on the condition that you give me 10 minutes to think about it." The man was given 10 minutes . Ten minutes later the old man returned, sliced open the melon and ate it completely to the rind in four minutes. The crowd was amazed at the feat. The old man was brought on stage and presented with a blue ribbon

and check for $1000. Laughing Charlie, who had stopped laughing said, “Before I present you this prize, can you tell me why you needed ten minutes?” The old man said, “Well I knew I had a melon at home about this size. So I went home and ate it. I knew if I could eat that one, I could eat this one too.” That day at the fair the old man got the ribbon, the check and the last laugh! Even Laughing Charlie said he deserved it.

We know how to recognize people for their accomplishments, but how do we recognize God when he has helped us? That was the question that puzzled David in Psalm 116:12 when he asked “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?” David concluded that he would drink from the cup of salvation, pay his vows and continue to call upon his name. He decided that was the best way to give tribute to God.

As Christians, we recognize that God has helped us in many ways. We cannot begin to pay him or reward him for his benevolence toward us. The trail of life that marks our journey is speckled with markers, large and small, that testify of the help we have received from God. Without him we can do nothing. If we have accomplished anything, the glory is his, not ours.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Samuel as he raises a stone that recognizes God for his past, present and future work in the life of Israel.

The Ark of the Covenant had been out of Israel’s hands for 20 years. Over the course of the 20 years they labored in hope and in prayer that God would bless them with its return. Assembled in the wilderness the people prayed to God for forgiveness of sin. In an elaborate ceremony they poured out water on the ground to symbolically demonstrate their humility before God. They made a public confession of their sins, condemning themselves and praising God for his goodness.

As they met in the wilderness, committed to living for God, the Philistines saw them and prepared to attack them with a vengeance. However, God confused the Philistines in their attack amidst a great thunderstorm. Despite the Philistine’s overwhelming numbers, Israel, for the first time in a long time defeated its enemy and arose victorious.

In an act of Praise, the prophet Samuel erected a great stone to commemorate God’s great work in their lives. He called the stone “Ebenezer” which means “the stone of the help.”

Erecting stones, altars and monuments was not unusual to Israel.

When Noah descended from the Ark, he erected a stone altar on Mt. Ararat to give thanks for being saved from the flood. The flood was over, the deed was done and the stone altar marked the spot.

Abraham etched Mt. Moriah into the hearts of believers when he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar, but learned that God had a lamb in the bush. He called the stone altar that marked the spot “Jehovah-Jireh” meaning the Lord will

provide. The test was over and Abraham passed. The stone altar marked the spot.

Jacob took a stone which had been his pillow and turned it into a pillar that marked the place where he saw a ladder reaching into heaven. He named the place Bethel, saying the place was none other than the house of God. Jacob saw the vision and it was over. His stone simply marked the spot.

When the children of Israel crossed the river Jordan, they took 12 smooth stones marked the spot where the priests feet touched the Jordan. Those stones would be reminders to children who would later ask "What mean ye by these stones," and be told of the great deed God performed for their forefathers. At Jordan the stone simply referred to a past accomplishment.

Israel was accustomed to stones, yet there was something different about the Ebenezer Stone. It was different from all of the others. In naming this site Samuel says "hitherto" the Lord hath helped us.

The word Hitherto in Hebrew is "Ad" which suggests a continuum in time. It is different from the "has" helped us which suggests that the time of God's help has passed. It is different from "did" help us because it suggests that the help is over. Hitherto, being a continuum reaches back to what God has done, brings it to what God is presently doing and carries it further to what God will do in the future.

The Ebenezer stone therefore was different from all other stones. It marked what God did on a certain day in time, what he continues to do and what is expected in the future.

Samuel had it right. The Ebenezer stone was not the end of God's work with the people. His defeat of the Philistines a few days earlier was not the culmination of blessings they were to expect but rather it was the beginning. In a mighty way God moved with the nation as they won successive victories over the Philistines, final victory under David and enjoyed peace under King Solomon.

The Ebenezer stone was a stone of recognition for God's work in the past. It was a stone of praise for God's continuous work and it was a stone of hope for the great work that God would do in the future.

God Has Helped Us

Today every saint can set up a stone or marker that shows a point in life in which God has intervened in their lives.

Like Noah we have survived floods of trouble. We have remained afloat even though at times it appeared that we would sink.

Like Abraham, we have seen difficult times when our faith has been tested and the very lives of those we loved the most have been threatened. It was moments such as those that strengthened us when we learned that God truly does have a ram in the bush.

Like the Israelites crossing River Jordan into a new land, we have moved into new directions that we never thought we would take. We are bound for the Canaan land!

Who is it among us that can deny God's handiwork? Who can claim to be the

architect of his own destiny, responsible for his own success and achievement?

Somebody has an Ebenezer stone erected in an unseen corner of a hospital room. It marks the place where they asked for and received an answer to a prayer!

Somebody has an Ebenezer stone in the center of their home. It marks the place where God helped a failing marriage, strengthened a weakened husband and sustained a drained wife.

Somebody has an Ebenezer stone erected in their spirit. It marks the place and time when they met the Lord.

Perhaps that's why Moses would declare in Psalm 90:1" LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."

David declared in Psalm 27:5, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

God Is A Present Help

The beauty of erecting an Ebenezer stone is that it does not simply recognize what God has done in the past, but it looks at what God is still doing!

The Ebenezer stone doesn't simply say God was good for Daniel and the Three Hebrew Boys, but it also says that God is still able to deliver.

The Ebenezer stone doesn't simply say that God was good for grandma! It doesn't simply say God was good for grandpa! It doesn't simply say that God was good back then, but it also says that is still good right now!

"Hitherto" reaches over into the past and brings God into the present.

"Hitherto" transcends time and removes God from the trophies of past victories and elevates him as the symbol of present victories.

That's why, long after Samuel had erected the Ebenezer stone, David could write in Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble."

That's why he could boldly declare in Psalm 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

God is still in the blessing business!

That's why the song writer declared: "The Lord is blessing me right now. He woke me up this morning and started me on my way. The Lord is blessing me right now!"

God is Our Future Help

Finally the saint of God rejoices in God because not only has he helped in the past and present, but he will bless us in the future as well.

God is building a heavenly kingdom, in which each saint is a living stone and a living sacrifice. The kingdom of God, though built with living stones, must have a cornerstone.

The cornerstone is the foundation upon which the kingdom is built.

The corner piece of the kingdom of God is the same stone that the builders rejected!

The corner stone of our hope is not made of bricks or mortar.

The corner stone of our trust cannot be affixed to the edge of a building!

The corner stone of our faith is the substance of our hope!

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is the justification for my faith!

The Lord is the chief corner stone of my hope!

I heard the song writer declare "The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion is great in the world today. Persecution my come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

No wonder the song writer declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 630-Revival

Been There! Done That! Got The Tee-Shirt!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 3, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"and such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever bought a souvenir? Perhaps you went on a trip to a far away place and encountered many new and exciting experiences. Perhaps you were involved in an exciting event, an historic occasion, or a memorable moment; each would have been the type of circumstance that would prompt the purchase of souvenirs. There are no set types of souvenirs. They range from match books to figurines, from sugar bags to "what nots." A souvenir is simply a reminder of a moment in time. Soldiers have souvenirs of great battles. Politicians save souvenirs of great campaigns. Mothers save souvenirs of memorable moments in the lives of their children. Souvenirs give us an opportunity to tell the story that the trinket represents.

Among the many types of souvenirs available is a wide variety of tee-shirts. They come in all shapes and sizes and bear inscriptions of all sorts. After a major event, like magic, tee-shirt vendors appear on the street hawking a tee-shirt with the emblem or logo of the winner of a competition or promoting a popular team. Whether the occasion was the "Million Man March" or the World Series, a purchased tee-shirt says to the folks back home that I've "been there and done that."

Sometimes life gives each of us some souvenirs that we purchase through our life style. There are many who bear marks on their bodies that are souvenirs of another time in their lives. Some have scars in their capacity to love. They are cracked souvenirs left over from a broken heart. Some have entrenched fears, souvenirs of insecure childhoods. Some have children who are souvenirs of a moment in time. Others have an abortion receipt to mark the same moment. Without a doubt, whether we want them or not, life gives us a few souvenirs. They each say "Been there, done that-Got the tee shirt!"

Each of us has a souvenir or two that marks a span of time when we did not know the Lord as we know him today. That was a time when the world claimed more of our

attention that we are willing to admit. That was the time when we were fascinated by the prospects that life offered and willing to dabble in a little of everything to sample our chances. In the process we picked up a few tee-shirts that hang in the closet of our experience. They read to any future person attempting to travel the road of life with the same blind ambivalence, that we have "been there, done that and got the tee-shirt!"

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that God has saved us from ourselves. We praise him for reaching inside of us and challenging us to step out of the world of darkness into the marvelous light. To every person who walks the same trail that we have walked we share our story because we have "been there, done that and got the tee-shirt!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he reminds Christians of the power of God to transform lives.

In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul addressed the subject of immorality, focusing particularly upon incest. Chapter 6 begins by changing the subject to: "Christians and lawsuits." Then at the latter part of the chapter he resumes his explanations of Christians and immorality.

Verses 9-11 mark the transition from the explanation of Christians and lawsuits back to the discussion of immorality. Paul urged Christians to avoid airing their civil disputes in public courts, demanding satisfaction, payment and control. He made this warning because the world, which perceives Christians to be above disputes that reach the litigation level observes their feuding nature and questions whether their lives are truly as transformed as they claim. Moreover, Christians who resort to the courts for revenge or personal gain exhibit worldly attributes that place them in the ranks with those in the world. He suggested that Christians should resolve differences among themselves, privately with other Christians as arbitrators using the Word of God as their guiding principle. All of this would be a way to draw a line of distinction between the Christian that is today and the person he "used" to be.

Paul begins to address morality again when he offers a truncated list of practicing sins that indicate that a person is not a part of the kingdom of God. The list given here is not all inclusive because there are places that he includes more items. These are samples of deviant lifestyles not practiced by people who are part of the kingdom of God.

Remember, the "kingdom of God" is a reference to God's spiritual kingdom that exists at the present. The "kingdom of heaven" is a physical place that will be occupied by the kingdom of God once it comes into being. A person who claims to be a part of the kingdom of God cannot be a practicing sinner. "Practicing" means a person who repeatedly sins, without remorse and has adopted a particular sin or sins as an acceptable part of his or her lifestyle. That does not mean that a person in the kingdom of God does not sin, for all have sinned, but it does mean that the sin

committed is not a part of the lifestyle of the believer because the holy spirit will convict and the righteous will repent once convicted.

Under the general category of "unrighteous" Paul points to those who abuse the privilege of sex as a matter of lifestyle as not being a part of the kingdom of God. This includes those who involve themselves in sex without benefit of marriage or adopt a preference for same sex relationships or even adopt physical habits and mannerisms of the opposite sex as a matter of lifestyle. Also included in this category are thieves, drunkards, greedy, and those who cheat and rob others. In 1 Timothy 1:9-10 the list also includes: people with rebellious hearts, those who curse and swear, those who attack their parents and murderers. The list of "unrighteous" activity, if enumerated would be endless. Certainly it is not limited to just the activities listed in these two verses.

The believer has reached a point in life where he or she has evolved from the "unrighteous" state into the full knowledge of God as they live and walk in the spirit. Having once been a practicing sinner, the believer has moved to a higher level, that of knowing Christ fully. He or she has stepped forward and up to a better life. Thus Paul says "and such were some of you!" He seemed to say you have been there! You have done that! You have the tee-shirt! But you have stepped out of darkness into the marvelous light!

Paul indicates the three fold state of every believer who is a part of the kingdom of God. He gives a list of the three states, which actually incur in the reverse order. 1)A person is justified, meaning that God's affirmative action program has made up for his short comings and
mistakes. 2) A person is sanctified, that means he or she has changed their life path and modified their list of concerns to include only those things which would be pleasing to God. They become special and set apart. 3)A person who is washed by the spirit of God is no longer of the world but is a new creature.

The believer's best testimony to a non-believer is that we have not always lived in an isolated world of bible classes, hymns and church services, but that the believer has experienced the world enough to know that God offers a better way. The believer's testimony to a non- believer is simply, "Where you are, I have already come from, I've "been there, done that and I've got the tee shirt!"

Been There, Done That!

There are millions of believers today that are not what they want to be but most certainly are not what they used to be. Our lives should be living testimonies to those who know us that we are truly different as we have matured in the Lord.

While each of us has had different experiences in life, in a general sense, all true believers can testify to those outside the faith that we have "been there, done that-got the tee-shirt."

Life's Fatal Attractions:

Many are overwhelmed with life's fatal attractions. A fatal attraction is a person, activity or thing that attracts us to the point that we are totally consumed, placing our lives, liberties and happiness in harm's way. A fatal attraction is an addiction.

For some it is alcohol, which has mercilessly addicted millions around the world. For others it is crack cocaine that is so overpowering that a mother would neglect her children, sell her body and worse just to possess it.

For some it is power. The endless pursuit of it has destroyed homes, friendships and relationships as it takes total control of those fatally attracted to it.

Some are have emotional attractions that are fatal. They plunge themselves into "go no-where" relationships with a person who is married, chase after a disinterested suitors and otherwise plunge themselves into a sea of misery as they pursue an attraction destined to drown them in tears.

Greed is a fatal attraction. The desire to have more and get more in a short period of time is as addicting as a drug. It consumes some to the point that they lie, steal, kill and even murder to acquire more of life's "things."

Status is a fatal attraction. The desire to be considered a part of the "in crowd" regardless of the cost can be destruction. To climb the social ladder, many have neglected their home, church, and personal security in the relentless pursuit of being somebody in "society." Many found themselves financially crippled and emotionally devastated in their effort, only to learn that the boundaries that define the "in crowd" change constantly making their position unstable at the least.

Some are fatally attracted to the underground lifestyle which offers an assortment of expletive experiences that at best, appeal to our prurient interests, and at worse will destroy us. It is a world of bars, clubs, drinking, strip tease and sleaze, one night stands and hangovers that rob a person of their most productive years and leaves them ashamed and empty when its over.

The believer is a person who knows the danger of fatal attractions. In one category or another, nearly every believer has a story to tell about a time in their lives when they were nearly overwhelmed by one or more of life's fatal attractions.

There are some saints who can tell of a time in their lives when alcohol ruled them. Others can tell of time they spent in prison for crimes they committed while fatally attracted to greed. Others can tell of the agony they caused themselves and others when they plunged into adulterous relationships, tried to climb the social ladder or chased after the night life.

They can testify to those who are trying it now that, "we have been there, done that-we've got the tee-shirt!" What we got for ourselves was misery and unhappiness.

Washed in the Blood

When Paul said "and such were some of you" he indicated the source of the believer's condition. He has stepped from the darkness into marvelous light.

For the Corinthians bound in a world of greed, sex sin and drunkedness Paul says "and such were some of you!"

Those words are applicable to every believer who has stepped out of the darkness into the light.

Paul himself had been caught up in the quest of persecution of the church until one day he met the Lord on the road to Damascus!

That is every believer's testimony. At some point along the road of our lives we met the Lord.

It may have been in a jail cell, like the jailer in Philippi, but there we met the Lord!

It may have been while working in a unsavory job, like Matthew the tax collector, but there we met the Lord!

It may have been while we were just looking on like Zacchaeus, who met the Lord in a Sycamore tree!

Every saint can testify that when you meet the Lord you have a story to tell!

The world offers many things but is unable to deliver anything except empty promises.

The world offered us:

—SWEETNESS but all we received is bitterness. How do we know? We've been there, done that and got the tee-shirt!

—PLEASURE but all we received was pain. How do we know? We've been there, done that, and we've got the tee-shirt!

—HONOR but only gave us disgrace; HOPE but only gave us hopelessnes

—VICTORY but only gave us defeat; RICHES but only gave us impoverished spirits!

How do we know? "We've been there, done that, we've got the tee-shirt!"

Every saint has a bright side to his story. He can tell you about the darkness, but let him tell about his journey to the marvelous light!

In the midst of our:

—SORROW he has brought us joy; WEAKNESS he has brought us strength;

—CHALLENGES he has brought us confidence; FAILURES he has brought us success!

—STORMS he has brought us a peace in the night; DOUBTS he has brought us assurance!

Whenever I needed him, He's been there! What I needed done, He's done that!

I don't mind telling the world, I know he's real!

He has talked the talk and walked the walk!

I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried him for myself!

Endured pain of Calvary! Died and unsavory death!

But early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!

Whenever you need him Call him!

He'll be there!

No. 631-Revival

Papa's Got A Brand New Bag

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 10, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity." Job 14:17; Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Luke 12:33-34

Introduction

If every man and woman in the building were asked to empty his or her wallet or purse and make a list of its contents, what would the list contain? We would be surprised at what we would find. A man's wallet is small but can often contain a variety of objects that could include: credit cards, business cards, cash, bits and pieces of paper, bills, photographs, personal identification and perhaps a license or two. A woman's purse usually contains more items than a man's wallet. Some women say their purses, on occasion, have weighed five pounds or more. It seems the bigger the "bag" the more items become necessary to be carted from one place to another. A woman's purse can contain everything from a needle and thread to an address book. Men are often surprised at the number of items some women carry in their purses: makeup kits, mini first aid kits, keys, shopping lists, address books, check books, medicine bottles, pictures, food items and a plethora of items, including the personals. Surely, it would be an item of interest to see what each person carries in their purse.

Purses in the African-American community are commonly referred to as "bags." It's a cultural definition that refers to a woman's purse as a "bag" and man's wallet as his "billfold." Both terms mean the same. The difference is in the application. Based on that cultural interpretation of a "bag" three decades ago singer James Brown produced a chart busting single entitled "Papa's got a brand new bag!" It gave another dimension to the cultural understanding of "bag."

It was one of a series of Brown selections that displayed a syncopated music style that he called "funk" and his revised social consciousness. Brown was an icon of the typical Negro who was unaware of himself but who came to a new understanding of himself. Once that happened he changed his haircut and the message of his songs, for the most part, became social statements. They included: "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud","Don't Be A Dropout","I Don't Want nobody to give me nothing,

open up the door I'll get it myself" and "Papa's Got a brand new bag" which seemed to summarize his new social consciousness.

A person's "bag" represents his attitudes and values, direction, and spirituality. It represents what's going on inside of his head and heart. Thus to have a "new bag" would suggest that something different is happening on the inside.

Certainly every believer can identify with the idea of having a new perspective on life. That's probably what Paul had in mind when he wrote in: 1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Once he had developed a new understanding of himself and his relationship to God, he put away childish things and walked in the mature knowledge of God.

As Christians, we know what it means to have come into the full knowledge of God. Once that happens in a persons life, he turns away from the works of darkness and walks after the light. He becomes a persons who has a "brand new bag."

Exposition

This text focuses on Job as he speaks of his expectation that God will forgive his sins.

Job, after experiencing many of life's problems had adopted, at least for a short while, a pessimistic view of life. His life was filled with a plethora of problems that placed him in a position of emptiness before God.

He spoke about his problems, mused about death and then longed for the prospect of the day when he would be able to stand before God with all of his sins forgiven, his wrath past and experiencing brighter happier times. That would be the day in which his shortcomings, weaknesses and flaws would be sealed in a bag, never to be mentioned again as he begins a new life free of present entanglements.

Jesus, speaking to believers, urged them to "provide yourselves bags" that represent the treasures of heaven. He encouraged every believer not to fill the substance of their lives with worldly treasures, but to focus on trying their best to fill their bags with heavenly treasures.

Job's hope was that his sins would be placed in a bag and sealed. Jesus urged us to take sinful things out of our bags and replace them with godliness.

What's In the Bag?

If our "bag" represents our attitudes and values, life direction and spiritual state, what's in our bag? If we were to pour out the bags of our souls what would we discover about ourselves?

ATTITUDES AND VALUES: If we were to pour out the contents of our bag we might find:

Lottery Tickets or Dice: Suggesting that we strive to get rich quick without much effort. Those who spend their lives in pursuit of the fast dollar forget that Jesus taught

us to: Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Condom: Which might suggest that we regard sexual experiences as permissible as long as they are safe. Yet, 1 Corinthians 6:19 keeps reminding us "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

A crumpled Appeal Letter: Suggesting that we dismiss requests to help the poor and needy as time consuming and senseless. Yet, when we fail to respond to the needs of the poor Jesus says we have done that to him. Mat 25:40 ".. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Mirror: Suggests that we concern ourselves with our outward appearance. Yet while we concern ourselves with the exterior God looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16:7a; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

DIRECTION: With respect to direction what would we find?

Compass: It might suggest that we need guidance, for our lives are running in circles and we seem to be going no where fast! Mark 10:21 "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

Map. Suggests that we have a plan that we have marked for ourselves, without giving God's plan a chance. Proverbs 3:6 "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

SPIRITUALITY: With respect to our spirituality what would we find?

Dry sponge: Suggesting that our spiritual life is dry and without substance, reduced to mere ritual and lip service. Yet our lips should be dripping with praise for the goodness of God. That's why David in Psalm 71:23-24 said " My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long..."

Daily horoscope and Psychic connection phone number: This could suggest that we are mystical about our approach to spirituality, depending on the stars and mystics to orient us in life. Hebrews 12:1-2 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

When we pour out our bag and take a good hard look at ourselves it becomes obvious that we need a new "bag."

When faced with the challenge to change their "bag" some seek to change the bag, rather than the contents. Thus many make cosmetic change to their outer appearance but the contents of the bag remain the same. They buy a new bag and then rake all of the old contents into the new one. Regardless to how pretty it appears on the outside, the new bag is really the same old "bag."

A Brand New Bag!

A person who becomes a Christian is different from a person who simply modifies his lifestyle but keeps the same values. What's in the bag changes. His attitudes and values change. His direction in life changes and his spiritual relationship with God changes.

A person who accepts Christ dumps the contents of his old "bag" into God's garbage bag called "grace" where it is sealed, never to be opened again! Job said "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity" Once sealed in the God's garbage bag our pasts sins are never brought up again and are dumped forever in time and eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The new bag may contain a bible, a pair of binoculars and a cross.

The bible reminds the believer that his life is rooted in the word of God. Psalm 119:105". Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The binoculars remind him to keep looking forward. Phil 3:13 " .... forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The cross reminds him that he is saved by the power of God. 1 Cor 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

There is power in the blood and the cross represents that power.

No wonder the song writer declares "There's power! Power!" Wonder working power in the blood of the lamb!

At the cross at the cross where I first saw the light and burdens of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

Every saved soul can declare: "since I met the Lord, I've got a brand new bag!"

My hands, once busy holding on to things of this world, are reaching for heavenly goals. I've got brand new hands!

My feet, once busy running to mischief, are now walking in the path of righteousness. I've got a brand new walk!

My talk, once filled with worldliness, now speaks of the love of God and the Lord.

Come here daughter! Come here son! Go and tell the whole world that "Papa's got a brand new bag!"

Tell them that he met and man called Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the Valley! Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose on Sunday morning!

Since he met Jesus, he doesn't go where he used to go!

Since he met Jesus, he doesn't do what he used to do!

Papa's Got a brand new bag!

No 632-Missionary Service

What Goes Around Comes Around

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 17, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. Eccesiastes 11:1-2 "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke 6:31

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether you were wasting your time or involved in a fruitless effort? On occasion we feel that our efforts are useless and fruitless. Teachers feel that way sometimes. They give their best energy and time to prepare a lesson that seems to go in one ear and come out the other. Parents feel that way too. Those who work in the criminal justice system often see so many cases of misplaced values parading before them that they wonder whether there is an end to the revolving door that seems to have trapped many in an endless spiral and will not turn them loose. Those who help the poor, the elderly or the homeless reach the same point. In frustration, many good people often wonder whether they should continue their good works. They wonder, "should I keep ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, collecting food for the needy, or working to help the homeless." No matter how much we help, the need never seems to diminish. They see no prospect of good that can from their crop. Some give up and call it quits.

The story is told of a son who had been caring for his aging father in his home. He wondered whether he was wasting his time talking, reading, and sharing with him since his father's condition had deteriorated to the point he could not respond. His father was almost deaf and blind and had difficulty eating without spilling his food. Occasionally his shaking hand would drop his bread on the floor. Sometimes he would break a bowl by accident. In frustration, the son made the old man eat in a corner behind the stove. He gave him a wooden bowl which could not be broken. Instead of a fresh piece of bread they picked up the slice from the floor and put it in his wooden bowl.

One day the old man's little grandson was working with some pieces of wood. When his father asked what he was doing, he replied, "It's a trough and a dust pan."

His parents asked "What are they for?" The grandson looked at his grandfather behind the stove and said "It's a trough for you and dad to eat out of when I'm grown. This is a dust pan so I sweep up the bread you drop on the floor and put it in the trough." The parents were horror stricken at what they heard. From that day forward the old man sat at the table. When his bread dropped to the floor they put a fresh slice in his hand. Not only were they giving bread to a helpless grandfather that day, but they were feeding fresh bread to what could be a helpless mother and father in years to come. Their son helped them remember, "What goes around comes around!"

There are millions of believers today who become frustrated with the apparent thankless nature of their good works. Jesus experienced the same feeling after he healed ten lepers and watched them walked away. Soon after however, one returned and said thanks, which made it all worthwhile.

That's the way it is when a teacher hears a student come back years later and thank her for a scolding or a punishment. That's the day a lunchroom worker gets unexpected praise from a student who recognizes the importance of her service. After many days, our deeds come back to us, whether good or bad.

As Christians, we have learned the value of doing good deeds and serving others. At the moment they seem useless and fruitless, but after many days, we know they will come back to greet us as God favors us with blessings from on high. What goes around will come around to meet us again!

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he gives words of wisdom to those have been blessed.

The text seems to suggest that those who have been blessed should not hoard their blessings. They are encouraged to cast them upon the waters.

Casting bread upon the waters is a striking phrase. It is supposed that it is drawn from the Egyptian practice of sowing seeds upon the river Nile while it overflowed it banks. When the waters subsided the seeds would take root somewhere along the Nile bank system and would grow into fine stalks of corn. The sower would cast the seed but had no idea whether it would take root in the immediate vicinity or take root in another place. However, the sower knew, if properly sown they would take root somewhere. Just as he sowed in one place and expected his seed to probably grow up in another, there were other sowers in other places along the river's edge that were also sowing. Their seed would probably be that which finally took root in his area. In any event, the sowers cast seed upon the waters in this way, not knowing what the final outcome would be while trusting the gods to provide for them.

The converse of this practice would have been to wait until the waters subsided, then plant the seed in a specified area where only the planter could benefit from it. It required little dependence on others and the gods. Yet, they made the practice of sowing on the waters to secure for themselves a confident link in the chain of goodwill among the people.

Solomon's reference to this practice as a wise choice for modern man suggests that those who have had bountiful blessings from God should share the benefit of their blessings with everyone, even when there is little prospect that the benefit given will in someway return. Often it may appear that the kind deed done has little effect or is meaningless, but down river somewhere the seed will take root and grow. Those who are recipients of the seed did not plant it themselves but are the recipients of the providence of God through the sowing of others.

After many days the seed cast would be reaped, not necessarily in the place where it was sown or by the sower, but it would be reaped by someone somewhere. What of the sower? He or she would reap seed too, that which was probably cast by someone else and blessed by the providence of God. Those who perform good deeds should not expect the results to be immediate.

The time span has been predicted to be "Many days." How long is "many days?" For the widow woman of 1 Kings 17:15 who prepared her last cruise of oil and meal in a feast for the prophet "many days" meant she was blessed as long as necessary for her obedience. In Ezekiel 12:27 the prophecies that were given by this great man of God were said to be "many days" into the future. Many days in this instance meant generations. In Daniel 10:14 "many days" meant the vision he shared was many years away. "Many days" therefore means a time that could be immediate or many years, but as long as it takes.

Solomon encourages us to give a portion to seven, if that appears to be the right or perfect number for your resources, but then go beyond that. Share resources even when you can't afford to do so.

Today we are doing the sowing, but the time may come when we may be reaping or needing help. When it comes, it flows from that which we have sown in better times.

Jesus went beyond what Solomon suggested. He encouraged us to "give to every man that asketh of thee" without thought of whether or not we are being ripped off or cheated. Jesus' rule was simple "treat others as you would have them treat you."

Both texts repeat the exact same truth: share your blessings with others without regard to prospect of immediate results, with the full knowledge that what you share will come back to you in other ways in future days.

These text combined say with a clear voice: Do good while you can: What goes around, comes around!"

The evil we do, comes around

If there is one certainty in life it is that we shall reap what we sow. Moreover, we shall reap in accordance to that which we have sown. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Those who sow evil things will reap them. In the book of Esther, Haman devised an evil plot to have Mordecai, a godly man, hanged. The plot was exposed and Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai. He learned a lesson, albeit to late,

that “what goes around comes around!”

Those who are intolerant of the views of the others, seem the most irritated when their views are not tolerated. “What goes around comes around.”

Those who are impatient with others, seem the most disgruntled when others complain that they themselves act too slow. “What goes around comes around.”

Those who are insensitive to the needs of the poor or elderly, are among the first to complain when they themselves appear neglected. “What goes around comes around.”

Those who steal from others, seem to cry the loudest when someone steals from them. “What goes around comes around!”

Those who stab others in the back, die a slow death when they become the victims of their own ways. “What goes around comes around!”

Those who pass up a person in distress along the way, complain the loudest when they themselves are passed up. “What goes around comes around.”

The tragedy of evil deeds is that we do them also unto Christ. In Matthew 25:40 he reminds us that what we have done to the “least of these” we have done also to him. “What goes around, comes around.”

The good we do, comes around

Yet while there is a warning to those who practice evil deeds, there is promise to those who do good. We are encouraged to do as much good as we can for as many as we can as long as we can.

Casting our bread upon the waters, means reaching out to hungry people with a loaf for the spirit and a word of hope for the soul!

Casting our bread upon the waters, means reaching out for the homeless with a comfortable place to rest and a chance for a heavenly home!

Casting our bread upon the waters means looking beyond the rough exteriors of wayward children and seeing the sensitive interiors that cry out for love and affection!

Casting our bread upon the waters is giving a helping hand when we see no chance that the favor would ever be returned.

When we cast our bread upon the waters it is not an exercise in futility. It is not a vain effort that has no reward because Proverbs 19:17 say “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”

Those who we help may not be able to pay us, but when the Lord pays, He pays in rich dividends and blessings.

When the Lord pays, that which we have cast upon the water comes back in mighty ways!

That widow woman who gave her last oil and bread testified, “I gave all that I had, but every time I went to my barrel there was enough for another meal!”

When the Lord pays, He pays in many days and many ways!

While casting your bread upon the waters means to share of your physical

resources, it also means to share of your spiritual resources. This is important because it is written “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

We must tell the world about the bread of life! We must tell them about the Love of God through his Son Jesus Christ!

We must tell everyone we meet about the Lord. Phillip met an Ethiopian riding in Chariot and took time tell him about Jesus. Many years later that historians record that someone came to Ethiopia with a message of Salvation and thousands became Christian. No name was given but happened in chariot along the road!

A woman came to the well and received the good news. Nobody would have suspected it but she became a great missionary running through the streets of the city saying “Come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done!”

We need to tell somebody about the Love of God!

We need to tell somebody about Jesus! Who died! And arose from the grave!

Tell them “what goes around comes around!” He’s coming back again! I hear him saying:

“You helped the poor and the needy...Come and go with me!”

“You gave a plate of food to a hungry man...come and go with me!”

“You stood up for those who could not defend themselves...come and go with me!”

“You showed compassion on the helpless....come and go with me!”

“Come and go with me to my father’s house!”

In my father’s house there is peace!

In my father’s house there is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 633-Inspiration

A Changeless God In Changing Times

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 25, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. Hebrews 13:8-9

Introduction

How much have you changed in the past 10 years? Do you look the same? Has your hair grayed a bit? Is it longer or shorter? What about your facial features? Are there lines in places that were once smooth? Are their crow's feet at the corners of your eyes? Do you weigh more or less than you did ten years ago? Are your ideas the same? What about your spirituality? Has it improved or is it in worse repair? If mirrors serve any purpose at all, they let us know that we change! But mirrors can tell us whether or not we have changed spiritually, for that we must hold our lives up to the word of God and see how it reflects from his word.

There are many things in the world that change. Sometimes things change so fast that we difficulty adjusting.. The rapid advance of computers is a change that is taking many by storm. It seems that everyone is talking about computers as the wave of the future. The prospects of change coming so fast that we can't receive it properly is the basis of Alvin Tofler's book "Future Shock." In it he details all of the changes that are coming forth in our times. He projected that they will come so fast as we near the end of the century that many people will be "shocked" by the rapidity and extent of the changes. Among those changes will be a need for shorter more intense experiences. He suggested that people will want to have the same intensity of experience in a shorter period of time. No longer will people sit and watch a nearly four-hour movie such as the Ten Commandments. Tofler also suggests that there will be a demand for disposability. Temporary items will find a great place in the marketplace. Paper plates, plastic spoons, disposable napkins, table cloths and diapers. In addition, he adds the frightening prospect that there will also be a yearning for disposable relationships as divorce and separations become the acceptable norm. The scores of changes he details in his book point to the great truth that in a rapidly

changing society, many people will find themselves shocked and uncomfortable as they move from the industrial age into the information age.

Change, especially change that occurs swiftly will also create a yearning for stability. The world will yearn for a place where its icons remain constant and its symbols remain untarnished by time. It will want something that does not change.

As Christians, we are satisfied that our God is able to provide us with a peace of mind that rises above the changing times in which we live. Our assurance is based on our knowledge that our God is not impacted by changing times. He is the same yesterday, today and forevermore.

Times may change, but our God remains the same.

Exposition

This text emphasizes the constancy of Christ while at the same time reflecting on the mortality of man.

The unknown writer of the Hebrews addressed the Jews on a variety of subjects. Among them was the need to keep Christ as the center of the focus and not religious leaders. In verse seven (7) the past accomplishments of great apostles, leaders and teachers who had died are recalled. Many of these include men who had seen Christ and had walked with him. They spoke with power and conviction because many of them were eye witnesses to his words and deeds. When they preached, thousands believed and turned to the faith. Their lives were models by which other believers could pattern themselves. They became icons of the Christian life as thousands emulated both their words and faith. Yet their number was rapidly declining. Both time and persecution had taken its toll. Most of the apostles were killed because of their beliefs. Other great teachers and preachers were either dead or incapacitated by time.

The deaths of the giants of the faith discouraged some believers. Many lost heart and were losing hope. This text finds the Hebrews being encouraged to look beyond the works of mere men but to keep their faith focused on Christ. In just a few brief words the writer pays tribute to their memories while at the same time pointing out that Christ, not the accomplishments or personality of men, is the center of the faith. Unlike, men, Christ is immortal. Unlike mere men, Christ does not and will not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever more.

They were encouraged to keep the faith and not yield to the temptation to follow after false teachings or doctrines, but to keep Christ foremost in their mind.

That Christ as God is immortal is borne out in scripture. Psalm 102:27 says "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." It speaks of the endless nature of God and his changeless character. Even his mercy is changeless as evidenced in Psalm 103:17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

The New Testament points out that there is no variability in God's nature. He is the same at all times. He is constant. James 1:17 puts it this way "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom

is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

When things change

Today there is very little importance placed upon anything. That which is traditional or customary is frowned upon. Values and ideals are all considered variable, totally dependent upon the situation. Everything changes, including the very substance that determines the quality of our lives.

The world believes in relative standards. Morality is considered relative as well. There are no absolutes according to this way of thinking. Each culture and every person is free to make its own rules. Those who have adopted this attitude toward life argue that everything in life changes.

The wagon was once our transportation, but now internal combustion engines harness horsepower!

The long walk to school with old syrup buckets for lunch pails was once a way of life, but now there are school buses and schools that serve breakfast, lunch and even afternoon snacks!

There was once an ice man that brought 25 pound blocks of ice and placed them in an ice boxes, but now electric refrigerators have taken their place.

Once, long trips across the country required a family to fry up boxes of chicken, lugging ice filled pickle jars, but today there is Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's.

We have witnessed many changes in today's time. In fact we have watched things change so much that we have come to accept them as part of life and expected.

God Does Not Change

While there are many things that change in life, there is one certain truth...God does not change!

Conditions change, but God does not change!

Circumstances change, but God does not change!

The fact that God does not change makes Him the only truly known entity in the universe that is constant. He can be depended upon never to waver or be moved. He is constant.

While man is impacted by time and age, God exceeds time and cannot be encompassed by it. Therefore, God does not age. He is timeless. For that reason it is true that he is the same yesterday, today and forever, because he is beyond measure by time. He is truly timeless.

God's love for mankind is not affected by his moods. His love for us remains the same regardless to the mood of the moment. This was best exemplified by Jesus.

Judas was a striking example of betrayal and treason. Yet Jesus' love for him never ceased, despite his disappointment in his action.

Peter was a striking example of faithlessness and cowardice. Yet Jesus' love for him

never diminished. Even while Peter was denying Christ, the Master's love remained constant.

The treachery of the cross was painful and humiliating, yet Jesus even as he hung from the cross remained constant in his love, say "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

God's love is not affected by sin. A man whose wife cheats on him often finds that his affections toward her diminishes. He does not love her like he once did. Yet, God demonstrated to the world through the prophet Hosea and his marriage to the harlot Gomer, that his love for us does not change and is not effected by our sin.

Although we sin, God develops a hate for the sin, but he never hates the sinner himself!

Consider the mother whose son was a mass murderer. The boy had turned out to be incorrigible. He stole and murdered. He caused misery to everyone that was close to him. As the day of his execution drew knew, the mother went to chapel every day and prayed for him. A friend who knew her well asked, "how can you ask God to have mercy on your son who has killed and robbed so many. Haven't his acts angered you?" The mother replied. "My heart aches for the families that were wounded by my son's actions. I am affected by his action. But his action has had no effect on my love for him. He's still my son!"

God so loved that world that he gave his only begotten Son to that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. That's a love that will not change!

God is still the same!

When we learn that God is changeless, the changing times in which we live cannot affect us!

Because God is the same...

—There is no battle we can face that will stop us!

—There is no mountain that will be to hard for us to climb!

—There is no valley too deep for us traverse!

—There is no night too dark for us to make it through!

—There is no crisis that we cannot control!

—There is no storm so strong that we cannot weather it!

—There is no enemy so frightening that we cannot defeat it!

Our God is the same!

He is the same God that..

—Walked the face of the earth, holding Enoch's hand

—Strolled along with Abraham on way to the promised land!

—Who Jacob wrestled and held to the close of the night!

—That down in the den with Daniel and sealed the jaws up tight!

—That rolled back the waters of the deep sea!

—Is alive today and He can save you and me!

That same God can get in your life and make it meaningful and real!

He's real! He's real! I know He's real!

No. 634-Youth

Just Do It

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 24, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." 1 Chronicles 28:20

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed of doing something great but have never found the time? Is there a goal that you want to pursue but have not done so because you are hesitant to take on the responsibility? Do you find yourself constantly putting off things that need to be done until tomorrow? If so, then you probably know what it means to be a procrastinator. The ranks of the procrastinators are not unique fraternities. There are many kinds of people that comprise its membership. Preachers, deacons, choir members, the young and even the old make up the ranks of the procrastinators. Many have trouble making up their minds to do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, the way it needs to be done.

The Nike Corporation has a logo that is worn by young people around the world. It is called a "swoosh" and is accompanied by the phrase "Just Do it!" It suggests that life does not wait for us to make up our minds about seizing its opportunities. If we are to do great things, we must begin at some point and stop talking.

The sales manager of a large real estate firm was interviewing an applicant for a sales job. "Why have you chosen this career?" he asked.

"I dream of making a million dollars in real estate, like my father," the young man replied.

"Your father made a million dollars in real estate?" asked the impressed sales manager.

"No," replied the young man. "but he always dreamed of it."

There are many young people today who are dreaming of making it big in life. Turning a dream into a reality doesn't just happen, it begins when someone takes the initiative to begin the process. Doing big things for God begins with positive actions in small areas. Talk is fine but action is greater. Have you ever noticed that the Bible never mentions the dreams of the apostles? It doesn't even mention the ideas of the apostles. However, it devotes an entire book to the "Acts of the Apostles."

As Christians, we know that our actions evidence our faith. If we are to witness to the great power of our God we should show it through out actions because "faith without works is dead." Have you been thinking about doing a great thing? Ask God for the power. Stop thinking about it and do it!

Exposition

This text focuses on David at the end of his life encouraging his young son Solomon to complete the dream.

Most of David's life was spent fighting wars to secure the land of Canaan for God. His one great hope was to build a great temple for God that would replace the tent Tabernacle which had served the people from the wilderness journey until his time. What David wanted to do was monolithic in size and scope. It was expensive and required an entire lifetime to adequately build.

He was frustrated because God would not allow him to build the temple in his lifetime. He spent the closing years of his life laying the groundwork for the temple. The plans were elaborate and awe inspiring. No one in the kingdom had seen a building like he proposed. It would take a lifetime to construct and cost a literal fortune.

Therefore David spent his last years collecting large sums of Gold and silver. He collected large amounts of building materials. It is estimated that the value of the treasure he accumulated to build the temple was somewhere between $2 to $4 billion. The temple was to be "exceedingly magnificent of fame and glory in all the earth." (1 Chronicles 22:5).

This text comes at the point in which David has completed the work of actual planning. Solomon, his son, was a young man who now faced the monumental task of tackling the great work begun by his father. It was huge. It was powerful. It was over powering in many instances.

Thus, in the text David encourages Solomon not to be intimidated by the size of the task, but to begin the great work. God had blessed the concept, the preparation and advance work. Now all that remained was for Solomon to do it. What David told Solomon in plan and simple terms was "don't be afraid of the size of the project, just do it!" He assured him that God would be with him every step of the way, but he had to begin the great work.

Round Tuitts

There are many people today that have great dreams for themselves and their families. The only problem they have is getting started. They have laid plans that are absolutely fabulous. They are four square and well laid, except they are missing one component. While they have laid their plans squarely they are missing one small component called a "round tuitt." It's so small that many people miss it. It sometimes seems insignificant but without this little component no matter how squarely laid the

plan, it will never come to be.

If you have a "tuitt" try to hang on to it. Put it in a safe place. Try not to lose it. Or better yet, keep a few spares on hand.

These TUITS have been hard to come by, especially the round ones. If you have them, your chances of accomplishing your sanctified dreams increase tremendously.

For you see, so many have said, "I'll get started in church just as soon as I can get a round tuit." Others have said, "I should come to the evening service, but I never seem to get a round tuit."

Or, "I know that my Bible knowledge would increase if I came to class, but I never get a round tuit." Or, "I've been wanting to start singing in the choir and I've been planning to begin tithing my income, but we've been so busy that we just haven't gotten a round tuit."

Why haven't you cleaned your room? "I haven't gotten a round tuitt!"

Why haven't you washed the dishes? "I haven't gotten a round tuitt!"

Why haven't you studied your lessons? "I haven't gotten a round tuitt!"

There are many youth who could do much better in school than they do. They just haven't got a round tuitt. They could learn to play their instrument well enough to sit in the first chair in band or to sing in the first section of the choir, but they haven't got a round to the practice needed.

Others could be honor students, but studying takes times and of course you must get "a round tuitt."

Excellence requires an ample supply of round tuitts. Like American Express, we should never leave home without them.

If you meet someone who never gets a round tuit, give him one. Keep a good supply on hand. The lack of a "round tuitt" is what is generally called procrastination. It's putting off what you know should be done today until tomorrow.

Yet the word of God encourages us not to proscrastinate or delay but to take courage, get a round tuitt and just do it!

Stick Tuitts

In addition to round tuitts, that get us started there must be some stick tuitts.

There are many people who begin projects but never finish them. They write the first chapter of the book but never go further. They begin work on the Master's or PhD but never complete it. They start to add a room on to their home and never complete it. Do you know such people?

Jesus encouraged all believers who begin in kingdom work to stick to it. In fact in Luke 9:62 Jesus frown on those who start and stop. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Stick tuitts are perphaps what Paul had in mind when he encouraged the Corinthians to remain faithful to the cause saying in "1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The Christian life is one that is focused on a single goal in a single direction. Those who begin and allow themselves to go into other directions get side tracked. Thus the Christian life is like the point of a sword. It has one point and one end. Those who are easily side tracked our like the straws of a broom. Instead of a single point and a single end they have many straws and many ends pointing in many directions.

The need to stick to our faith is what Paul had in mind when he wrote in Philippians 3:14 "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

That's perhaps what the song writer had in mind when he said "I'm pressing on the upward way. New heights I'm gaining every day. Still praying as I onward bound, Lord plant my feet on higher ground!" Lord lift me up and let me stand by faith on heaven's table land. A higher plane than I have found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground!"

If we are going to "do it" we need a few more "tuitts"

The sinner will need an "admit tuitt!" He must say in his heart, I can't make it without the Lord on my side!

His soul must come running asking "what must I do to be saved!" He's soul must testify:

"I know you have a work for me to do and you are telling me to do it..but

"I can't do this thing by myself!"

My hands are not strong enough, they may let go!

My feet won't stay on the right path, they may wander away!

My tongue may begin to mumble the wrong words

Lord, I have an "admit Tuitt" will you accept it?

I can hear the savior's response, there's a cross out on the hill I'll accept your admit tuitt, if you will look to it!

The Cross, look to it, it's a sign that "God so loved the world that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

The Cross, look to it, it's sign that enemies may try to crush you, but truth crushed to the ground will rise again!

The Cross, look to it, it's a sign that, come what may, from day, the Lord will always be by your side!

No wonder the song writer wrote: "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

The Cross, look to it, it's a sign that Jesus, who died on Calvary and arose on third day, is coming back again!

If you got the faith, you must hold on to it!

Hold on, God is still on the throne!

Hold to his hand; God's unchanging hand!

Build your hopes on things eternal!

Hold to God's unchanging hand!

No. 635-Inspiration

When is God Good?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1, 1996

SCRIPTURE:"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Psalm 31:19

Introduction

Have you ever felt you had good parents or friends? When were the times when you felt they were good? Generally, we interpret "good" in proportion to "pleasure". Thus, a person who helps us get what we want is good. One that does not is bad. One who allows us to do what we want is good. The other is bad. When requests made are granted, we describe the provider as a good one. Many of us have had favorite aunts or uncles whom we sometimes considered better than our parents on the pleasure scale because they rarely said no to our requests and bowed to our every wish. Some have friends they prefer to others because they are told what they want to hear. In this context "good" is determined by an ever-changing pleasure index that is relative to the desires of the moment.

When is a mother a good mother? When is a father a good father? Consider the boys in the neighborhood who were discussing their parents. As they talked, they often discussed what they liked and disliked about their parents. One boy in the group, never had a negative comment about his mom. It really nerved the other young men who tired of his constant bragging on his mom. One day he came to the group and bragged, "my mom carried us to Burger King and we ate Whoppers and fries!" His chest stuck out with pride. On another day he bragged, "My mom carried me to McDonald's and we had Big Mac combos!" That really nerved the other fellows. It seemed there was no end to this boy's bragging. One day the boy came to the group and he wasn't bursting to talk. He didn't rush to brag on his mom. "What's the story? Why are you so quiet today?" They asked. "What did you have for dinner this time?" The boy said, "my mom made me eat spinach and broccoli and stuff." Shrugging his shoulders he said, "I hate spinach! I hate broccoli!" The others finally got a chance to rub it in. "Still think your mom is so good?" The boy sprung to his feet with a big smile on his face and said, "She's still good, she just had a bad day, that's all!" When goodness is measured by pleasure alone, then the only conclusion that can possibly be reached is somebody is having a bad day!

In that same context, the question can be asked, "When is God good?" If we

measure his goodness by the pleasure index our response would be that God is good when we are receiving known blessings as we requested. Thus, when we are sick and we ask God for a healing and receive it, then we respond, "God is good!" When we are hungry and pray for food and it comes we respond, "God is good!" When we are in trouble and God brings us help, we respond "God is good!" However, when the hot water heater bursts and water is everywhere, is God still good? When you were laid off your job without notice or prospect for finding another one soon, is God still good? When storms damage your property or thieves take away that which you value, is God still good? Your answer is like spinach and broccoli to the proud son. "It may not be good to me, but if it's served at mama's table, it's bound to be good for me.!" That's the Christian response. No matter what the circumstance, God is still good.

As Christians, we don't measure God's goodness by the pleasure index. We know that God is good all the time and all the time God is good. That's another way of saying, 'whatever is served at God's table, may not be good "to us" at the moment, but it's bound to be good "for us" in the long run!"

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he praises God for his goodness.

There are several attributes of God that are a part of our faith. Among these are His immutability (changelessness), infinity, spirituality, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, holiness and just way. These attributes describe what believers can expect of God. In the list of attributes of God is another, called the "goodness of God." What believers know about the nature of God's goodness helps them better understand the God they serve. The goodness of God consists of four components, His benevolence, love, mercy and grace. Together, they comprise the total goodness of God.

Perhaps as much as any man, David had experienced the entire sphere of God's goodness. He had been a recipient of God's benevolence in that God had worked in many ways to promote his life goals and secure his liberty. He was the recipient of God's love in that God showed his delight in him by blessings his undertakings and rewarding him for being "a man after God's own heart." He had experienced God's mercy in that God had shown pity and compassion on him as he suffered in the aftermath of sin. He had experienced grace in that God showed him love although he was unworthy and created in him a new heart and renewed in him a right spirit. David's life was a testimony to the goodness of God because he had experienced the four dimensions of his goodness and knew God to be "good."

In Chapter 29 David witnessed the voice and power of God as it moved in the wind, rumbled in the thunder, broke the mighty Cedars of Lebanon, covered the forests, shook the wilderness in such a mighty way that in 29:9 he wrote, "in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." Even in the midst of his powerful and destructive voice, David resolved that God would strengthen his people and bless them. God was seen

as a good God.

In Chapter 30 David praised the Lord upon the dedication of his palace. It was a time of celebration in which God's goodness was evident.

Thus, he is able to conclude chapter 31 by showing the greatness of God's goodness. In verse 19 he suggests that God's goodness to believers is in two parts: one which is in reserve and another which is demonstrated before the eyes of men. He makes this clear by noting that "thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Thus, David confirms the truth that there are some blessings which are obvious on the surface and easy to recognize by people everywhere. There are other blessings that are being held in reserve for those who believe, as a result of God's goodness that cannot be seen at the present moment, but are nevertheless present. Whether the goodness of God is readily visible to those or whether it is being held in reserve to be presented at a different time, God's people are encouraged in verse 24 to "be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

Thus David answers the question, "When is God good?" by noting that even when it is not obvious to the eyes of men, God is still good! His answer seems to be, God is good all the time and all the time, God is good!

When is God Good ?

The Word of God confirms one important truth that is always relevant. Believers can expect God to always be benevolent, loving, merciful and full of grace to the undeserving. With that in mind believers should know that Romans 8:28 is true, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Regardless of the circumstance the scriptural witness is that, God is good!

IN SACRIFICE GOD IS GOOD!: Abraham was called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice of his son upon an altar. Even though his heart was heavy, he stepped forward to make the sacrifice that God required. He placed his son on an altar but soon found out that God had a ram in the bush.

In a broader sense, we are often called upon to render sacrificial service. Those who feel the burden to care for ailing family members labor under a heavy load. Those who have shouldered the burdens of others and carry them on their shoulders usually do so at considerable sacrifice of time and resources. Yet even in the midst of sacrifice, like Abraham, they have discovered that God provides strength as well as a ram in the bush. Even in the midst of our trying and often frustrating sacrificial service, God is good!

IN THE FACE OF DEATH GOD IS GOOD! David labored before God night and day praying for the healing of his son. Upon the death of his son, David arose, put on fresh clothing and said "In thee oh Lord do I put my trust." Those who struggle with the loss of a loved one may be tempted to be angry with God until they remember David's epic words "yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will

fear no evil for thou art with me!" Even in the face of death, God is good!

IN HARD TIMES GOD IS GOOD! A widow woman experienced some extreme hard times. She was trying to raise a family without a husband. Her resources had come to an end. Her barrel of meal had reduced itself to one final cup and her oil jug had only enough to make one final cake. Yet, she found that in the midst of her hard times, God was still good!

Are you going through a particularly difficult period at the moment? Are situations in your life unsettling? Is it hard to make ends meet? This widow woman reminds us that even in hard times God is still good!

IN SICKNESS AND MISFORTUNE: Job experienced the full gamut of human experiences. His fortunes were lost by no fault of his own. His family members died and he experienced a long period of pain, sickness and suffering. Despite his circumstance Job declared: "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I trust him!" "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"

When we are sick, God is still good! When we suffer at the hands of Satan, God is still Good! When we endure pain, God is still good! When we experience a loss of physical property or damages, God is still good! There is no reason for us to abandon God, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever more! God is still good!

God is Good All The Time!

Finally, every believer must remember that God's goodness is not seasonal. It is not here today and gone tomorrow. God's goodness is a perpetual shower of benevolence, love, mercy and grace.

Every morning when we rise we are the recipients of his benevolent blessings. He blesses us with health and strength. That's why David declared in Psalm 5:3 "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

When is God good? He is good all the time and all the time God is good!"

The love of God is not occasional, but it is always present. Even when we are not at our best God still loves us. When we are faring less than our potential God has showered us with love. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." When is God good? He is good all the time and all the time God is good!

The mercy of God is not incidental. He does not show mercy today and refuse to show mercy tomorrow. That's why the believer who has made a mistake knows that regardless of the day or the hour he can respond like Psalm 85:7 and say, "Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation." When is God good? God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

The grace of God is not a timed occurrence. He does not offer grace on a pre-planned schedule that withholds it if we do not come at the right time. God's grace is always available in sufficient quantity to satisfy our needs. That's why Paul declared in, 2

Corinthians 12:9 “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” When is God good? God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

I don’t know about you but I’ve found that God is good all the time!

In the midst of sorrow, God is good, because he brings us joy!

In the midst of conflicts, God is good, because he brings us courage!

In the midst of danger, God is good, because he brings us safety!

In the midst of weakness, God is good, because he bring us strength!

In the midst of defeat, God is good, because he brings us the victory!

In the midst of the storm, God is good, because he speaks to the wind and waves!

God is so good that he sent his Son to die for us on Calvary and wash away our sins!

He’s so good that he looks down on us every day and showers us with blessings from heaven!

No wonder the song writer declared “I get a blessing every day!”

I don’t know about you but the Lord is blessing me right now!

He woke me up this morning and started me on my way!

The Lord is blessing me right now!

No. 636-Inspiration

The Place To Meet God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 15, 1996

SCRIPTURE: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."Micah 5:2

Introduction

If you heard that the son of God would be born in a certain place, how important would it be to you to get there? Would you stop what you are doing jump in your car and drive there? Would you dip into your savings, buy a plane ticket and fly there? Would it be important to be there at all? We read in scripture where wise men traveled great distances to reach the place of Jesus' birth. People were interested enough to go to great lengths to be in the presence of God.

What is amazing is that while many people are willing to travel many miles to see a spectacle, there are millions more that wouldn't travel around the block. One man's miracle is another man's evidence of fanaticism. Many return home full of joy to have seen a miracle. Others respond like the historic scrooge "Bah, Humbug!"

Believers around the world have found that while it may be a curiosity to gaze upon a miracle, we don't have to travel long distances to meet God. In fact, we don't have to travel anywhere, go anyplace or incur any expense to meet God. There is no special city where God resides. There is no waiting line for us to sit on his lap, tell him what we want and take a photo with him for an extra charge. He doesn't wear special red clothes, ride in special vehicles and live in a cold and distant place. He doesn't disappear for months at a time, pop up and bring momentary joy and disappear into the night. God is always near.

As Christians, we know that God is always present. He is as close to us as our prayers are from him. While the people in Bethlehem show a place where the world saw the Word become flesh, we have found a place where we can visit him every day, in our hearts.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Micah as he announces the coming of God's son in a little known city called Bethlehem.

Micah painted believers a road map to the place to find God among men when in 5:2 he prophesied that the savior of the world would be born in the little town of Bethlehem. “Though thou be little” was a description of the city’s geography and topography but certainly not its importance. It was a little town. At the time it was more of a rest stop off the road to Jerusalem. A few important events took place “around” it, but rarely “in” Bethlehem. Genesis 35:19 says Rachel was buried in area that is “on the way” to Bethlehem. The Book of Ruth takes place in area around Bethlehem. It was burial place of some and a fort for others.

It had little significance in itself. It is more known for the great persons who were born in its boundaries than anything else. Bethlehem was the city of David. That gave it a place on the map and separated it from another town with the same name. This little town would be known as the city of David, not because David built it, but because he was born in it. Bethlehem’s fame was greater however because of the birth of Christ. He lived there only a short while, moving to Egypt and then to Nazareth later. Yet, Bethlehem is known as the city that birthed the great leaders of the believing world. Micah pointed the world to Bethlehem. The place was clear and distinct.

In Matthew 2:5 several wise men were trying to find Jesus and they came to King Herod asking how to find him. After counseling with the priests, Herod soon discovered that the Priests knew where the Christ child could be found! They quoted him Micah 5:2 which was written 700 years before. They said he would be born in Bethlehem. They knew the place. They knew the time. Despite knowing both the place and time he chose not to seek him.

Following information from Micah’s 700-year-old prophecy the wise men continued until they found the place where they could finally lay their eyes upon the son of God.

Micah’s prophecies generally began with a rebuke but generally offered promise and hope.

For 700 years the words of 5:2 leaped from the pages and guided believers. They searched for the place to find the Son of God. Those who wanted to find him were not deterred and did so.

Where to find God

Today there are millions who looking for God! Unfortunately many are looking for him in the wrong places. Some are looking in the right places but are looking for the wrong faces. Today many have seen the face of God without recognizing it!

Bethlehem was a point of prophetic revelation. Those who meet the Lord on that site do so as a result of divine guidance. Today, we meet God at many points. Each becomes our own Bethlehem, the place where we find God.

At the Point of Compassion

Consider the chairman of a great corporation who was seeking a place to build a new

plant. It would bring more than 1,000 jobs and a multimillion dollar budget to the local community. In addition to the usual prerequisites, the chairman wanted the town selected to be a friendly town. Knowing this, the town's people decided to put on a great show of its hospitality for the board chairman's arrival. Signs were posted. Banners were lifted and enthusiasm was high. As the bands played and the crowds awaited him to step from the big company jet that stopped on the runway, they paid little attention to a raggedly dressed old man at the fence. They pushed him to the side in their frenzy. After a few minutes it became clear that the chairman was not on the plane. They were disappointed. As they were leaving, they saw a poorly dressed old man board the plane shaking his head. They had failed their test. Their test was not how they treated a man they recognized as important, but how they treated the poor men who stand by the fence.

Today many have seen the face of God but did not recognize it! The face of God is hunger on the face of a hungry child. The face of God is the look of hopelessness on the face of a man or woman falsely accused of crime and locked behind bars. The face of God is the look of fear and desperation in the eyes of the man or woman that has reached the end of his or her rope.

Many have trouble recognizing the face of God, just as they did in Jesus time. Remember, Matthew 25:44? "Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Jesus' answered their question in the next verse: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

When we are able to see and feel the needs of people and respond to them we have come face to face with God. He is the essence of the divine response to human need. When we turn away from the needs of the masses and ball up in our own special cocoon, we allow him to pass us by.

At the Point of Sharing

Two families were neighbors many years ago, during a simpler time. One man, a widower, had only one son. The other had a wife and 15 children. The widower said to himself. "I only have one child, yet my barn is filled and my storehouse is full. My neighbor has many children to feed. I will share what I have with him." In the middle of the night he loaded his wagon filled with staple foods and secretly stored it in his neighbor's barn. His neighbor said to himself "I have a large family and he has only one child, I will share what I have with him" as the widower loaded staples into the neighbor's barn, the neighbor was unloading the same amount in the widower's barn. As the months passed both noticed that although they were constantly loading staples and taking it to others' barn neither seemed to empty. Then one night they stumbled upon each other. There in the road in the middle of the night they embraced. They met God at the point of sharing.

The point of sharing is a point in which we meet God. It is an act of compassion and love. 1 John 4:16 says "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,

and God in him. Those who share meet others at a point when they are most likely to recognize God. They recognize God in the kind acts of sharing performed by those who believe in him.

At the Point of Joy

Finally we meet God at the point of our greatest joy. Four men were sitting in the waiting room of the maternity ward. The doctors came out announced the births of their children one by one. The first man was told you have a son! "One son, that's great!" The man was filled with joy. "I work for the One A-Day Vitamin Company. One son. They'll love that!" The second man was told he had two daughters, twins! "Two Daughters, that's great. I work for the Double Mint gum factory. They'll love that!"The next was told he had three sons. "That's Great!" He said "I work for the 3M company, they'll love that!" Before the last doctor came in, the last man ran out the door. Asked why, he said "I going to quit my job before my wife delivers, I work for Seven Up!" Sometimes God gives us more joy than we think we can handle.

Just as we meet God at the point of need, compassion and sharing, we meet God at the point of joy!

There is no greater evidence that God is alive than at the point of joy!

At the point of Joy, God shows himself in victory!

At the point of Joy, God reveals himself as the provider!

At the point of Joy, God introduces himself as the sustainer! Psalm 30:5 "..weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

At the point of Joy, God is realized as a forgiving presence. Psalm 51:12 " Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

At the point of Joy, God uncovers his blessings. Luke 2:10-11 "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

At the point of Joy, every believer declares, " Joy to the world, the Lord is come; let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him and heaven and nature sing!

There was joy in Bethlehem when the Christ child was born, but there was even great joy one Sunday morning in Jerusalem, when he arose from the dead!

At the cross, the believers point of Joy, Every saved soul got a new song to sing,

"What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought, since Jesus came into my heart;

I have light in my soul for which long I have sought, since Jesus came into my heart.

Since Jesus came into my heart, floods of joy o'er my soul, like sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart!"

No. 637-Inspiration

Good News for Tough Times

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 22, 1996

SCRIPTURE: "My times are in thy hand.." Psalm 31:15; "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.; For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. "Luke 2:10-11

Introduction

Has this been a tough year for you? If your life is like that of millions of others, you probably shared a variety of experiences this year. Some experienced the ecstasy of victory this year. It was a great experience to achieve one of your personal life goals. It was an ecstasy that did not come easy. Some felt the agony of defeat this year. It seemed like a low, dark valley from which there was no return. For others it was the loss of a job which made things tough in your family as money became scarce and lifestyles were cramped. Others failed in love. Divorce. Romantic flare ups. Separations. All painfully stressing situations that drained your substance and tried your will. Each situation cast a dark shadow over a portion of your year that chronologically book marked the occasion as an example of a tough time.

How tough are your times? Difficulties are relative. They depend upon your experience and capacity to handle tough situations. Every person thinks his or her situation is tougher than that of the next. Three men all cried on each other's shoulder. Each claimed to have a tougher situation than the next. One man said "My life is so tough that I feel like a long tail cat in a room full of rocking chairs." The next man agreed but added "My life is so tough that I feel like a 30- pound turkey on the day before Thanksgiving." The last man said "You think your life is tough, I got union problems. Things are so tough that the roaches at my house are on strike. They are walking a picket line demanding more food!" —Everyone thinks their problems are greater than those of others.

If this has been a tough year for you...there is good news!

If this has been a particularly stressing year for you...there is good news!

Yes, in tough times there is good news and that news is that the same God who brought you through the other 51 weeks of this year..is still on the throne.

As Christians we appreciate the good news that the Christ child brought to the world. The good news is that God is with us. The empowering spirit of Christ now

resides with us, to save us from us. Regardless of the difficulty of the times, our God is still able. That is good news!

Exposition

This text focuses on the truth that regardless of the times, God is still in control.

David, whose life experiences God used as an example in this text, was a man of many triumphs but also a man of many troubles. In that sense, he was a picture of Christ in that he endured difficulty and trouble. There is a distinction however. Much of David's trouble after he became King resulted from his own sins. Christ endured difficulty not for his sins but for those of mankind.

While enduring considerable difficulty himself, David reached out to God saying "my times" are in thy hand. His circumstance, environment, situation and burden were not in his hand but were in the hands of God. In such hands he was safe and secure.

In Luke the Jewish people were enduring a tough and difficult time. Historically they were a subjugated people. They were little more than vassals in the Roman state. Once they were a great nation. Under David the nation was a military power. Under Solomon the nation was an example of peace time prosperity.

Now there was trouble in the land. They were the subjects of the Romans. They were treated as second class citizens. They endured racial discrimination and personal humiliation. Their poverty of substance and spirit increased almost to the point of being unbearable. They were in a tough and difficult time.

Despite their tough time they received some good news.

An angel appeared to Shepherds in the fields and announced "good tidings" or good news that came even in the midst of their tough times. One who was promised by God many years ago has been born. The child would grow to fruition and would literally save the people from themselves. They were being destroyed by their own actions or failure to act. The man-child who was born in Bethlehem would be the literal source of their salvation.

The message in Luke seems to be good news part 1. The birth of Christ marked the beginning of the good news. It was the sign of hope that God had not forsaken his promise. However, while the birth of Christ was good news in that it initialed the final revealing of the great promise, it was the life, death and resurrection of Christ which was the rest of the story.

This is the same message that Paul delivered repeatedly to the Gentiles as he traveled. In Acts 13:33 Paul, who was on his first missionary journey, told everyone he met that he came to bring them good news. The good news is that Christ the savior has made his arrival, preached the gospel, died and has risen from the grave. It is news that eternally sets in motion those spiritual motivators that keep every believer alive in hope despite difficult times.

As Paul moved from city to city in his missionary journey, he began with the Christmas story but he ended with the risen Lord, announcing to the world that Jesus

is alive. Despite the difficulties of the times ...there is good news!

He sent them a child

Today there are some that cannot translate the birth of Christ in Bethlehem to good news for their present circumstance. They ask, "how can the birth of one child 2000 years ago impact my situation today?" It was just one child! What difference can one child make?

Many adults do not take youth seriously. They write them off as a group to be tolerated. They see them as loud, unruly, untrained nuisances that get in the way and interrupt the flow of their lives. Very few are able to appreciate the fact that the answer to their prayers may already be among them in the form of the helpless, thoughtless, insecure and insignificant youth that have been born in their midst.

Some are perhaps just learning to walk the walk alone and are stumbling, making mistakes but reaching out for someone to help them rise again. Some are searching for a label for their cradle. They have no idea what God has in store for them and wander.

Certainly in the midst of tough times one source of hope is in the children. For each time God responds to human pleas, his response is usually to send them a child.

It should not seem strange to us that God would make life tolerable to the world by the birth of a single child, especially since we have seen it before.

When the world cried for religious freedom, the birth of one child, Martin Luther began a process that reformed religion as we know it!

When Americans complained of tyranny and looked for someone to lead them against the king, the birth of one child, George Washington, probably went unnoticed but was tremendously significant.

When American slaves needed a strong example of our possibilities and an ambassador for our improbabilities, a child was born in the heart of slavery and named Frederick Douglass.

When we groped in darkness, lighting candles and burning torches to find our way in the dark, Thomas Edison, who as a six year was told by his teacher that he was too stupid to learn, was the one God used to bring us the light bulb.

In the midst of a tough and difficult time period when racial bias was at its highest, Martin Luther King, Jr. was born.

God's answer to tough times seems to be, "send them a child!"

Israel suffered for 400 years in slavery and prayed to God. His answer was to send them a child. And Moses was found floating on the Nile River.

This proved to be God's way in many instances. In tough times...send them a child!

The Child Changed Men

When God sends a child, he or she tends to impact the way we act. The presence of children prompts many adults to watch their language, the music they hear, the

television programs they watch and their general conduct.

Bret Harte, in his classic short story "The Luck of Roaring Camp," tells of the birth of a baby on the American frontier a baby that made a radical change in a rough-and-tumble mining camp. The only woman in the camp, Cherokee Sal, a disreputable woman at best, died in childbirth, leaving a healthy young baby boy to be raised by the now all-male camp.

These rough, hard men made a decision that would reflect changes that would come later. They considered hiring a woman nurse to care for the baby but eventually decided not to. Their logic was this: a nice nurse wouldn't come to their camp, and they didn't want any more women who weren't nice hanging around their baby. And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp.

The cabin assigned to little "Tommy Luck," as they called him, was kept scrupulously clean and whitewashed. The beautiful rosewood cradle that they purchased for the baby made the rest of the cabin look wretched, so they had to fix up the rest of the furniture in the room. Then a quarantine was imposed on those who wanted to hold little Tommy Luck, so they had to clean up for that privilege.

Each act of cleanliness exposed that much more dirt and filth in the vicinity, so that new measures were taken to keep an ever-wider expanse of the camp clean. Since the baby needed rest, the camp became quieter and more dignified, less noisy and boisterous, no longer the "Roaring Camp" of the story's title. The story of the baby of Roaring Camp is the story of the regeneration of a people. A baby changed the whole atmosphere of the Roaring Camp. So it was two thousand years ago in Bethlehem. A babe changed the atmosphere for all who have come to know him.

In Bethlehem, in the middle of tough times, a baby was the sign of good news!

Therefore Brothers and sisters in the faith, be of good cheer, though times are difficult at the moment there is good news!

Though there is a point in which we stumble under the burdens and difficulties of these tough times, there is good news!

Yes, these are tough times, but there is good news!

These are difficult times, but there is good news!

These are troubling times, but there is good news!

The good news is Jesus! Do you know him?

He was born in a manger!

He died on an old rugged cross!

He arose after three days and nights!

In tough times like these, we need Jesus!

No wonder the song writer declared: "In times like these, we need a savior. In times like these we need an anchor. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

This rock is Jesus, yes he's the one!

This rock is Jesus, the only one!

Be very sure! Be very sure!

Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No. 638-Youth

I Believe I Can Fly

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Evergreen Baptist Church
Lake Charles, La.

December 29, 1996

SCRIPTURE:Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:30-31; Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?Isaiah 60:8; Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed of achieving a goal but doubted your ability to achieve it? Those were the times when you pictured yourself in a variety of roles for a moment but then dismissed the thought as you snapped back into reality. Children dream about many things. Young boys lay on their beds at night and dream of being successful and famous. They see themselves as professional athletes being sought after all over the world earning salaries that dazzle the mind as fans call their names. Young girls may see themselves as successful actresses, models and other pictures of beauty and glamour. They see themselves surrounded by luxury and the trappings of success. As both dream of the great successful lives they wish for themselves, they are awakened by a sudden knock on their doors and shouts, "You better get up out of that bed before you miss your bus!" Just as suddenly as it appeared the dream goes away!

Youth are vision driven. They pursue what they perceive to be the available future. These are the possibilities that are within their reach. Their lives are spent constantly pursuing their dreams, pushing forward, trying to reach that which they see in their dreams. In contrast, many adults are dream driven. They slow their pace toward the visions of their youth and spend considerable time dreaming about past times and the good old days. The two often meet at certain junctures in life and collide as one seeks to go forward and the other seeks simply to hold on and remember. The prescription is in inevitible. Maybe that's why the scriptures record in Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:"

Like all youth, Christian youth have visions for the future. They see small snapshots of themselves doing great things. The role of Christian adults is to guide youth to see all of the potential that God has for them and to expand their expectations of themselves beyond the snapshots they see on MTV, hear on the latest compact disc, or see on Monday night football. The church plays the crucial role of helping youth to understand who they are, define their role in God's big picture, promote their gifts and finally to help them understand that Godly visions can be achieved, if they never quit.

As Christians we have learned that many things we once thought were impossibilities have been made possible through Christ. Our lives are much different today because we gave Christ first place in our lives. Now we struggle to teach what we have learned to our youth, that is Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Exposition

The text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he prompts Israel to look beyond its circumstance to the possibilities that God had in store for the nation.

Israel was in a state of captivity, having lost the glory it enjoyed once under Solomon. In subjugation and despair, Israel lost sight of the vision and spent its time dreaming dreams of what once was, instead of looking forward to what could be. It even reached a point where they could no longer sing songs of praise to God, saying "how can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land?" Yet, as they were tempted to accept defeat and to wallow in self pity, God, through the prophet Isaiah, and others sent them countless messages of hope.

Isaiah, who was called to come forward in the year King Uzziah died, began to preach the word of God to Israel. His message was simple, look beyond captivity. Look beyond apparent impossibilities. Look beyond present frustrations. God will raise his people who have been crippled like a broken winged dove to a point in which they will fly like mighty eagles.

The written accounts of Isaiah's prophecies parrell the biblical structure. In 66 chapters he tells the full extent of God's vision. In 39, similiar to the old testament he addresses their present condition. But beginning in Chapter 40 he looks forward to the future, like the 27 books of the New Testament.

The 40th chapter encourages them to remember that God is the source of all power and strength. Things happen because of him. Thus he reminds them that God giveth power to those who lose hope or faint. He empowers those who are powerless. He changes conditions and circumstances. (v29)

Even youth, who are normally literal dynamos of energy and enthusiasm, will become disenchated, sidetracked, weakened and discouraged to the point that they will fall. (v30)

However, Isaiah gives a word of encouragement to both the young and the old; that those who wait on God will be able to reach their possibilities in a mighty way.

Those who depend on God will be inspired, motivated and otherwise strengthened in such a powerful way that their actions will seem to take off and soar as if they were lifted on wings as eagles. They will pursue their vision with such energy and committment that they will appear never to tire or become weary or faint because they are driven by the power of God himself.

The key, according to Isaiah is that they, "wait" on the Lord. Wait in this context does not mean to simply sit idle but to engage in paced activity, confident that God will bring the power to make dreams become realities.

In Isaiah 60:8 Isaiah continues to look forward to the day of Israel's restoration. After telling Israel that those who wait on God will mount on wings as Eagles, he then points to the time when they shall achieve their dreams. He painted a picture of the day when they would return home from captivity, rebuild their cities and restore the temple.

In that day the people will see them in great success and will ask the question, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" As they march boldly toward their future the doubters will ask, "Who are these they fly?" As they stand as living evidence of the power of God to make the impossible come true the skeptics will ask, "Who are these that fly?" As they stand as recipients of God's patience their very presence will testify to the power given to those who choose to wait on the Lord.

In Mark Jesus in responding to a plea for help from a man who's son suffered from an illness reminds everybeliever that all things are possible for those who believe. If our mind can conceive it and God endorses it, we can achieve it, if we believe it!

What it Takes to Fly!

The theme song from the recent Movie "Spacejams" has caught the imagination of a generation of young people in America because it addresses an inner yearning to achieve and succeed. Like other songs of the same genre such as "Believe in Yourself" from the Broadway Show "The Wiz" or recent musical hit "Hero" it addresses the futuristic ideals of youth.

When Christian youth hear the words, "I have learned how to love and now I'm leaning on the everlasting arms...I believe I can fly!" images and thoughts of leaning on God's power are released in their spirit and they like millions of other youth emerge with a renewed hope that despite the impossibility of my situation "I believe I can fly! I believe I can touch the sky! I believe I can soar!"

The truth is, youth can fly! Youth can succeed! Youth can soar! However we can fly only under certain conditions. Youth must remember:

We can fly only if we have the power of God. A 747 was halfway across the Atlantic when the captain got on the loudspeaker: "Attention, passengers. We have lost one of our engines, but we can certainly reach London with the three we have left. Unfortunately, we will arrive an hour late as a result." An hour later the captain made another announcement: "Sorry, but we lost another engine. Still, we can travel

on two. I'm afraid we will now arrive two hours late."

Shortly thereafter, the passengers heard the captain's voice again: "Guess what, folks. We just lost our third engine, but please be assured we can fly with only one. We will now arrive in London three hours late." At this point, one passenger became furious. "For Pete's sake," he shouted. "If we lose another engine, we'll be up here all night!" Some youth mistakenly believe that they can fly without an engine. The spiritual engine that helps every believer to fly is the power of God. The more of God's power we have, the faster we get to where we're going. The less we have the longer it takes.

Without his power we don't fly at all! No wonder the song writer would declare: "Without God I can do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

We can fly only if we we don't get bogged down. The story is told of an eagle perched on a block of ice just above Niagra Falls. The swift current carried the ice and its majestic passenger closer to the edge of the great falls. The cries of other birds and animals warning the eagle of danger that lay ahead were to no avail. "I have great and powerful wings," he boasted. "I can fly from my perch at any time. I can handle it." Suddenly the edge of the falls was only a few feet away. The torrent of water rushed the block of ice over the great falls. The eagle spread his powerful wings to mount up over the impending doom only to discover too late that his claws had become frozen to the cake of ice.

Too many youth, because of their strength, feel that they can indulge in sinful activities for a while and quit before they go overboard. They are confident they will be able to stretch their wings and soar and rise above the effects of drugs, alcohol, living the night life, failure to study, and sexual activity. When it comes time to fly many find themselves so weighted down by the burdens their sins have placed upon them they they cannot fly!

David, a young man who had found himself stuck in sinful activity, probably expressed the anxiety of most youth caught in the quicksand of sin when he said, Psa 55:6 "... Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

David learned that he could not fly and be in sin and the same time so he turned to God and said in Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Thus, those youth have been involved in sinful activities, should ask God's forgiveness. Then take it to God. The burden will disappear. That's why the song writer wrote: "Leave it there, leave it there, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. If you trust and never doubt he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

If I Believe, I can fly!

Finally, every believer needs to remember that if God endorses my dream and I believe it, I can achieve it!

Not every dream is endorsed by God. Not every hope and aspiration has God's stamp of approval. However, those dreams and visions which meet God's approval can be achieved. Our problem is to believe that if God has endosed it, it can happen!

The record is clear, when God has endorsed it, it can happen!

Joseph dreamed of rising high in the kingdom of Egypt. His brothers and family members doubted it, God endorsed it and made it happen!

Moses dreamed of leading Israel to the promised land! God endorsed it, he believed it and God made it happen!

I don't know about you, but I glad to know that God is able to make it happen!

Because I believe that God is able, I believe that God can take my:

— Failures and turn them into successes; Defeats and turn them into victories!

— Weaknesses and turn them into strengths; Despair and turn it into confidence!

— Sadness and turn into gladness; Sorrow and turn it into joy!

— Stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!; Candle and turn it into a floodlight!

I believe that God can help me to mount up on wings as Eagle!

Because God is able, I believe I can fly!

Because God is able, I believe I can touch the sky!

All things are possible, only believe!

Believe that God so loved the world that the sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

If I can believe that come what may, Jesus is always by my side!

Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Jesus, can make it happen!

Brothers and Sisters, after I'm through flying down here, because God is able..One Glad morning when the this life is over...

I'll..

I'll..

I'll fly away!

No. 639-Inspiration

Crossing This Jordan

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

January 5, 1996

SCRIPTURE: Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. Joshua 1:2-3; Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Joshua 1:9

Introduction

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the challenges of each new year? Sometimes it appears that before we can get a handle on the problems and challenges presented in one year, another year has begun and we are facing a different set of challenges. As they come, one after another, they seem to pile up. While many make new resolutions each year, that include changing, improving, expanding and getting better, there are others that make no resolutions because they have so many left over from the years before. They resolve simply to keep working on the resolutions they made last year.

A new year does present an empty canvass to each believer. Some see the new year as an opportunity to paint a picture of self improvement, success and spiritual growth. Others who are not so optimistic see the new year as a time in which they will be swallowed up by enormous new challenges. Consider the Country Preacher who regularly told his congregation to keep the faith. The preacher said the world was a hungry lion that wanted to eat up sweet, humble Christians, but that each should keep the faith because God would always deliver them. He spoke repeatedly of the lion in the wilderness and how God would make a way, even in the face of difficulties. One night after the services ended the country preacher rode his horse down the dark country road and was jumped by a real lion. Instantly the preacher jumped to his knees and began to pray. “Lord, you saved Daniel in the Lion’s Den. Lord you delivered Samson from a lion with nothing but his bare hands. Now, Lord, deliver me!” His prayer had plenty of fire. It was sincere. It was from his heart. At the end of the prayer the preacher opened his eyes and saw that the lion was down on his knees with his paws together over his eyes! A smile came over the preacher’s face. He asked, “Are you with me brother Lion?” The lion answered, “No, I’m just saying grace before I eat!” There are many who feel the new year is just waiting to swallow them up and

nothing will be able to change their situation.

Believers have another view. We are convinced that each new year brings a new opportunity for God to show us again that he is a wonderful God. We don't worry about the lion's of life saying grace over us, because we know what the lions won't be having for dinner. Our God is able to deliver us over "this" new year as he has delivered over all other new years in the past.

As Christians let us rejoice in the knowledge that as we stand at this Jordan, God is both willing and able to perform mighty works for us in the year to come as he has in the past. We are not intimidated by the challenges the new year will bring, but we are excited about the opportunity to show the world once again that "greater is he that is in me, than he that is in the world."

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he is instructed to cross over Jordan and claim the promised land.

The people of Israel had spent 430 years in slavery in Egypt. They wandered in the wilderness for another 40 years but were finally at a point of claiming the promise that God had made to Abraham. Claiming that promise would not come without its challenges. There would be some difficulties and frustrations in their path. As they approached each challenge God promised to be with them and to bless their efforts as long as the people remained faithful to him.

Verse two contains the adjective "this" as it refers to "Jordan." Since every word of scripture has powerful implications and meaning, a key to unleashing the hidden truths of this text is to explore the meaning of "this Jordan," as opposed to just simply "Jordan."

"This" is a designation. It points directly to the nearest thing mentioned. The particular challenge that lay ahead of Israel was the river Jordan. The land of promise lay on the other side of the Jordan, but the river had swollen beyond its banks because of massive melting of snows in the mountains of Lebanon. It was too wide to cross and no bridges existed. "This" Jordan was the challenge to cross a river that was uncrossable. "This" Jordan meant to deal the improbability of moving more than a half million people across a swollen river. At this point, Joshua wasn't told how to cross over. He was not given a blue print or a map as to how God would make it happen, but the people believed God and resolved to do it, even thou they didn't know exactly how God would cause it to happen. In verse 16 we read, "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go." "This" Jordan designated the swollen Jordan before them.

"This" is also a distinctive designation, which separates one thing from another. "This Jordan" implies that there were other Jordans in the past and there will be other Jordan challenges in the future. The swollen river was the challenge that the Jordan posed for Joshua, but there had been in the past, and would be in the future, other challenges connected with the Jordan and the Jordan Valley.

Therefore the inclusion of the adjective "this" suggests that there are many Jordan challenges ahead, swelling waters would just be one of many.

Joshua is told not to be intimidated by "this Jordan" but to proceed with the knowledge that every act he took, that was in accord with the will of God, would be blessed. (v.3-4) In verse five (5) he is promised that no man will be able to stand against him and that God would be present and would not forsake him. In verse six he is promised to get what is due to him from his future actions.

However, Joshua is warned to "be strong" and be true to God's word, walking the straight path in life, praying and meditating constantly. When this is done verse 8 says "then thou shalt have good success!"

Facing "this Jordan" God says clearly be of good courage, I'll be with you at this Jordan like I have been at others and will be in the future.

"Crossing Today's Jordan"

What is your Jordan? What challenges lie ahead for your family in the year to come? What is your personal Jordan? Every believer has the command of God to arise and cross "this Jordan" with the promise that as long as what you seek to achieve is within the will of God that every place the sole of your feet touches and everything you set out to do will be successful.

For Israel "this Jordan" was swelling waters, but "this Jordan" for today's believer may be the challenge of becoming spiritually stronger. It may also include other challenges, educational or career success. For some "this" Jordan is success in business. For others, "this" Jordan may mean overcoming an illness or the challenge of dealing with long term sickness of a loved one. Still others may see this Jordan as the challenge to improve the quality of their family lives, add more romance to their marriages, and to dedicate more quality time to friends and family. "This" Jordan has different meanings to different people.

We are warned they there will be difficulties that make claiming the promise frustrating. That's why God told Joshua in verse 5 "there shall not any man be able to stand before thee.." It indicates that opposition and frustrations will come, but they will not be successful. In a similar sense, claiming God's promise in the year to come will not come without its problems but problems will not prove to be more than you and God together can handle.

Herein lies the key to crossing "this Jordan." Israel was commanded to be strong and obey God's word and to meditate upon it. Their obedience to God's word was essential to the promise. It's basically the same premise that Jesus posed to believers in John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." If our will is lost in God's will, then we want what he wants, and what he wants us to have, we get! If we are going cross this Jordan we must resolve to be strong enough to do the will of God in the year to come. Our obedience reflects itself in our moral behavior, regularity of our church attendance, bible study and prayer, our tithes and offerings, and our empathy for the poor and

needy.

If we have not committed to do better about our church attendance in the year to come, don't even think about crossing "This Jordan."

If we have not resolved to clean up our moral lives this year, don't even think about crossing "this" Jordan.

If we have not resolved to study our bible more, and prayer more frequently than we have in the past, we shouldn't even think about crossing "this Jordan"

If we have not resolved to improve our giving to support of the work of the kingdom, then we shouldn't even think about crossing "this Jordan."

God's promise requires every believer to obey his commandments which is a prerequisite to crossing "This Jordan."

God is With Thee

Believers who trust God have the same assurance that was given to Joshua. Just as he was a God of deliverance for Moses, he would be a God of deliverance for him.

We have that same assurance. Just as God has helped us cross many rivers in times past, he will be there to help us cross those we face in the year to come.

When Lot and Abraham came to the Jordan valley their "Jordan" challenge was to choose a place in which to dwell. Somebody here has to make a life choice, will it be the mountains of godliness or the plains of the Jordan Valley?

When Jacob crossed the Jordan his challenge was not swelling waters but whether or not his brother Esau would accept him. As he stood at the banks, "this" Jordan represented a point of decision for him. Somebody has to make a decision. What will it be?

For Moses, "this Jordan" was a point of departure. It marked a finish line for a long life and a starting line for a new beginning for the people. Somebody will make retirement decisions at "this Jordan." They'll decide whether to quit or whether to stay.

For Elisha, "this Jordan" was a point of confirmation. He had assumed the mantle of leadership from Elijah and when he smote the waters with Elijah's mantle they rolled back allowing him to cross (2 Kings 2:14). Somebody will look for answered prayers this year as the waters of "this Jordan" roll back.

For Naaman "this Jordan" was a point of obedience. He had been told to bathe seven times in the muddy waters of Jordan, but he refused. When he obeyed he was healed. "This Jordan" marked the place where he decided to obey God. Somebody will decide to obey God this year.

For John the Baptist "this Jordan" was the place where converts symbolized their new faith in God by being baptized. It was the place where he met the Lord, face to face! Somebody needs to meet the Lord, face to face!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that there is nothing better than knowing the Lord for yourself. You don't have to depend on what others have told you because you have personal experience. No wonder the song writer declares "I

know the Lord will answer prayer, for I've tried him for myself"

This Jordan is a wide river of challenge posed by an unknown future!

This Jordan is wide, but it is not too wide for our God!

This Jordan is deep, but it is not too deep for our God!

I heard the song writer ask the question, "Have you any rivers that seem uncross able? Have you any mountains that you cannot climb? God specializes in doing the impossible and he can do what no other ...power can do!"

As we face the challenge of a new year every believer should remember that there is no:

—Demon that God cannot bind; Hunger that God cannot satisfy

—Problem that God cannot solve; Mountain that God cannot move!

—Situation that God cannot control; Closed door that God cannot open!

Some people will be joining the "Pity-me-Club" and the "Feel Sorry Society" but I just stopped by to tell you that God is able!

He's able to take your:

—Miseries and turn them into miracles!; Frustrations and turn them into faith!

—Sorrows and turn them into joy!; Weakness and turn it into strength!

—Deficiencies and turn them into sufficiencies! Tears and turn them into cheers!

All I have to do is hold on to his hand call his name!

His name is Jesus, Mary's Baby!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who is alive today!

At Jordan's chilly bank I stand...but If I call on Jesus!

Everything will be alright!

No. 640-Inspiration

Recovering From A Losing Season

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 12, 1997

SCRIPTURE: Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 2 Chronicles 15:3-4

Introduction

Have you ever experienced a losing season? A losing season occurs whenever you fail more than you succeed; lose more than you win or travel further backwards than you do forward. Losing seasons occur for a variety of reasons, none of which are acceptable. Many who made great strides over the past year have found, in the final analysis, that they lost more than they gained or the price they paid for their success was not worth the gain. Losing seasons are certainly disastrous.

Most people have a losing season or two. We are not as fortunate as Joe McCarthy who died in 1978. He won seven world Series games with the New York Yankees. Even while serving with the Chicago Cubs and Boston Red Sox he never had a losing season in 24 years. While Reggie Jackson is known as a home run slugger, few remember that he often had some seasons when it appeared he could not hit. In 1995 he held the world record for the most strikeouts at 2,597. While Paul "Bear" Bryant and Knute Rockne are known for their winning records in football, Eddie Robinson dwarfed their accomplishments by passing the 400 win mark. His accomplishment, though in the record book, is being overshadowed by losing seasons. Babe Ruth was known as the strike out king, but he was also the walk king, having been walked 2056 times, with 170 walks in one season alone. He was plagued with walkouts. Ruth also had long periods where he was plagued with strike outs.

There are many factors that contribute to losing seasons. Sometimes variables beyond individual control cause the problem. Sometimes its personal personality flaws that create the problem. Sometimes its just poor judgment.

In the eyes of the world a champion is only as good as his last season. It is amazing how quickly the world turns on its heroes as soon as they have a dry spell. Those who survive dry spells are those who are the true winners of life. Consider the

California Grape Farmer who had invested his life savings in his vineyards. His investment was flawed by a long hot summer that dried up water sources from everywhere. With few work hands available and even less water, he watched in dismay as his grapes withered on the ground. He did everything right, yet all he had was withered grapes. After a long night of prayer, a revelation came to him in the night. He cut down the withered, dry grapes, put them in boxes and sold them as California raisins. He made more in his raisin business than he did selling fresh grapes. In so doing, he turned around his losing season.

As Christians, losing seasons do come, but we have learned the secret of overcoming losing seasons. The secret is to trust in the Lord. When we trust in God, even a losing season becomes a winning season!

Exposition

This text focuses on how a godly King, Asa of Judah, was able to reverse the misfortunes of his kingdom by returning to worship and praise of God.

Asa, whose name means physician, was the third king of Judah. Historically he is noted for rooting out idolatry out of his land and returning it to God.

Asa reigned, following the infamous reigns of his grandfather, Rehoboam and his father Abijah. Rehoboam inherited a beautiful kingdom from his father, Solomon. It was united and in peace. It was known throughout the world for its splendor. Solomon's palace, which took 13 years to build, was a great spectacle. It included a magnificent judgment hall, porch of pillars and throne room. He constructed great water works to secure the city's water supply, along with many fortifications. The great temple in Jerusalem was filled with so much gold, fine wood and precious stones that it was considered an architectural wonder. Commercial trade flourished and trade agreements were made with Egypt, Africa and with Spain. Intellectual pursuits flourished under Solomon, who himself wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs. He promoted artistic development and culture. These were small examples of the great works under Solomon. The nation succeeded so well that the queen of Sheba traveled many miles just to witness its splendor. Under King David and King Solomon, the nation appeared to enjoy back to back winning seasons.

2 Chronicles begins to tell the story of a long season wherein the nation lost the prosperity it enjoyed under Solomon. Chapters 10,11 and 12 detail what can best be described as the beginning of what would be a "long season" of decline. After the death of Solomon the kingdom split under King Rehoboam. Now, instead of one nation, they were divided. Instead of a reign of peace, they were at war. Instead of commercial prosperity, they were scrapping to get by, cultural and commercial pursuits diminished.

Chapter 13 details the three year reign of King Abijah, who was wicked like his father. Worship of God declined. Study of the scripture almost vanished and idol worship flourished.

Chapter 14 finds the new King Asa desperately trying to turn things around. He

took down the foreign altars (14:3) and commanded the people to obey the laws of God.

Chapter 15 finds God speaking to the prophet Azaraiah and sending a message to King Asa, with a way to recover from Judah's long season of frustration, setback, war and division The solution seemed simple "Seek God and you will find him. Forsake him and he will forsake you." The prophet's message was clear. If Judah was willing to return to God, he would resume his blessings, if they chose to continue living apart from him then their long season would continue.

Verse 15:4 notes that the people, in their distress, did turn to God and they sought after him. When they sought him he was found. Asa, led them to a renewed faith and worship of God. Even his mother, the queen, was removed from office because of her support of idol worship. (15:16).

The swift and grand changes that King Asa made helped Judah recover from a long losing season. While his record never equaled that of Solomon, he was king of Judah for 41 years and enjoyed peace and prosperity. The method he used to reverse the fortunes of the people was to return to Godly ways and practices, seeking God first and trusting him for the rest. That was the plan to recover from a losing season...and it worked.

Losing Seasons

In the eyes of the world it is easy to determine whether you have had a winning season. Generally, the world says you had a winning season if your net income last year was higher than the year before. If you accumulated more profit than loss in business then you had a good year. If you came closer to reaching your career goals, despite your setbacks, you had a good year. If you climbed higher than ever before, even though you missed a few steps, you had a good year. That's how the world perceives a winning season. It counts the number of victories and subtracts the number of losses and determines whether you won or lost.

However, it is possible to have achieved great heights in the eyes of man and still have a losing season in eyes of God. God does not measure us by material things because "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." He is not impressed by the our new car, jewelry, home, or income. He judges us on the basis of our spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth requires more than a superficial count of possessions. It requires a long look in the mirror. Perhaps the most difficult challenge for any individual is self analysis. It is easy for us to arm chair analyze the situations of others, pointing out their shortcomings, earmarking their faults and second guessing their actions. It is more difficult to analyze ourselves. That's why Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 13:5 said "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.." After self examination many learn previously undiscovered truths about themselves.

Signs of a losing season: There are various tell tale signs of a losing season. Those who study the bible, worship and actively serve God less, despite their external

signals generally have had a losing season with God. These are believers who have not become practicing sinners, running to bars and nightclubs. They are not whoremongers and drunkards, thieves or lawbreakers. These are otherwise morally upstanding individuals who, for whatever reasons, have squeezed God out of their schedules. They are so busy trying to make the rest of their lives a winning season that their spiritual lives are a loss.

Like Judah there are still others who have turned away from God completely. They have placed themselves on a fast track of drinking, gambling, partying and riotous living. The spiritual strength they once knew has diminished to nothing. They are constantly uneasy, disturbed and troubled in spirit. Their soul is not satisfied. They are constantly searching and looking for that evasive "something" that evades them constantly. Though they gained much, they are in a losing season.

No one is exempt from a losing season: preachers, deacons, Sunday School teachers, faithful believers; all can have a losing season if we are not vigilant. Elijah was a great prophet of God and after the success of his Mt. Carmel contest with the prophets of Baal, had a losing season. In fear, he hid by a brook until he heard the voice of God in a still small voice and recovered. Peter had a brief losing season from which he quickly recovered after sinking in the water. Losing seasons have been experienced by the strongest believers.

Recovering From A Losing Season

Yet God sent a word to Judah. The word was the same word that he sends to believers today. There is a way to recover from a losing season.

Judah recovered by placing God once again on the front burner. When they put God first, not only did they recover from a losing season but they turned a losing season into a winning season!

It is possible to take a life that is on the rocks and transform it into a renewed source of energy! It is possible to take a faith that is hovering on the brink of despair and give it renewed hope! It is possible to take a courage that is teetering on the brink of fear and recharge its spirit of bravery!

When we put our trust in the Lord, we turn losing seasons into winning seasons!

When we put our trust in the Lord he makes our:

-RACE worth running and our BATTLE worth fighting!

-COURSE worth finishing and our FAITH worth keeping!

-DIFFICULTIES worth facing and our BURDENS worth bearing!

-ANXIETIES worth enduring and our TEARS worth shedding!

When we trust in the Lord, we turn dark days into sun shiny days; Midnights into noontimes and hard times into good times!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I will trust in the Lord, until!"

As I go further into the new year, I'm working on a winning season!

I'm going to keep my hands in the winding chain!

I will trust in the Lord until I die!

No. 641-Communion

Mixed Drink On The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 19, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." Matthew 27:34

Introduction

What is the first thought that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "mixed drink?" For some, the term conjures a variety of thoughts that involve bartenders, shot glasses, smoke-filled rooms, thin straws and the sound of music. For others a mixed drink is something as simple as Coca Cola and Dr. Pepper mixed or any variety of mixtures of punches and juices. The definition of mixed drink depends upon the circumstance.

Many drink socially to mingle with others. Others drink to dull the impact of a troubled life and deaden themselves to its impact on their lives. Some live for the happy hour where they can get their favorite mixed drink.

Many, who are in the world, think of mixed drinks and instantly see images of their favorite drinks. Some think of "Gin and Tonic" which is a little gin and tonic served in a highball glass with a lemon wedge. Others think of a "Bloody Mary" which is made up of vodka, tomato juice, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, horse radish, lemon juice, and black pepper. Still others think of a "Daiquiri," which is made up of light rum, sour mix and served with a lime wedge. What about a "Frozen Margarita" that is made up of two parts tequila, sour mix and one part triple sec. The list could go on indefinitely and could include Gin and Juice, Lulus or even Martinis. Bartenders have refined drink mixing to an art form that is highly lucrative. There is even a Home Page on the World Wide web that gives thousands of mixed drink recipes.

There are many good people who have met their downfall when they had too many mixed drinks. Consider the city preacher who conducted a revival in the back hills. The little town was known to have many people who were among God's best but they all indulged in making, drinking and selling moonshine whiskey. It was so common, that no one in the city thought anything about it. Every night at the revival the preacher preached against sin, warning that if they continued to sin they would end up in hell. It was terribly hot, so each night the usher brought the preacher a glass that appeared to be water. The preacher noticed that it had a funny taste to it but being

a city preacher had no way of knowing that the country folk regularly mixed a dab of white lightning in the drinking water. By Thursday night the preacher was demanding two glasses of water and was staggering as he warned that drinking would send all the people to hell. By Friday he drank all four glasses of water before he began his sermon and passed out in the pulpit. They laid him out on a cooling board, reserved for the dead, and tried to wake him up. When he awoke, he said, "If I'm dead, Lord help my soul; but If I'm alive give me another drink of water please!" Mixed drinks can pull down the best of us.

As Christians, we drink the cup that is set before us. We live life by the word of God, willing to take the bitter with sweet. Life offers us a mixture of suffering and rejoicing, agony and ecstasy, sorrow and joy. What bitter dregs we encounter in life cannot equal the agony that Christ endured as he drained the bitter cup of Calvary for us. His pain and agony insured our reward.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he refuses a mixed drink while on the cross.

Crucifixion was the Roman method of punishing criminals. It involved public humiliation and also a torturous death.. While hanging on the cross the Romans gave him a traditional drink offered to the condemned but Christ refused at verse 34. However, at verse 48 it appears that they gave him another drink, which he accepted. The contents of the two drinks appeared to have made the difference.

In the garden of Gethsemene Jesus begged his father to allow the "cup" of Calvary to pass. It would be a bitter, painful experience. However, he told his father his will in the matter would guide him. Thus, it appeared that the crucifixion was God's will. It involved public humiliation and a painful death. That was the price necessary for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind. There was to be nothing more or nothing less.

At verse 34, they offered Christ a mixed drink that would have side stepped one of the elements that redemption required: "the painful death." Matthew records that they gave him a mixture of vinegar and gall, which Christ refused. They gave this traditional mixture to condemned men to null their senses and sedate them. This tradition began under Solomon who in Proverbs 31:6 said, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." The mixture that they gave to Christ was composed of both "vinegar" and "Gall." Vinegar, represented the bitterness of sin. It also represented the wrath of God symbolized by the cup his father had placed in his hand. Drinking from a bitter cup was one of the curses that came upon Israel after it sin in the wilderness. Moses ground up the golden calf and sprinkled the dust in the water supply which became bitter. In Numbers chapter 5:18 "bitter water was an indicator of sin. Thus, the bitter vinegar was symbolic of Christ consuming the sin of the world fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 69:21 that he would be offered both vinegar and gall.

However, Christ refused the drink. The scripture does not say why, but its contents may shed light on the reason. The drink also included "gall." The "Gall" referred to

in this text is ground poppy heads. It had the effect of completely deadening the senses as would an anesthetic. However, if Christ chose to consume this drink, he would have bypassed God's plan. It was God's will that he endure both the pain and humiliation as well as the death of cross. He was not willing to short circuit the process, which drinking the mixed drink would have accomplished.

However, at verse 48, as he was preparing to give up the ghost, having finished his mission they gave him a drink without the painkiller and it was accepted by Christ. Having done so, soon after he gave up the ghost and died.

The mixed drink they offered him on the cross was refused because it did not represent the fulness of God's will. The vinegar, as bitter as it was, was a part of God's plan for mankind, and Christ accepted.

Bitter cups

Life offers each of us a mixture of experiences that include both the bitter and the sweet. Our life's experiences include both the sunshine and the rain.

Bitter Experiences. Bitter experiences are those that affect our lives negatively, although at the time we were engaged in them they seemed sweet. Some bitter experiences are the result of influences outside our control. Others are the result of actions we brought upon ourselves.

Sometimes we drink from life's bitter cup because it's the only one we see and we are thirsty for something. Solomon explained this tendency in Proverbs 27:7 " The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." In essence, what Solomon said still remains true, "a hungry man will eat anything to satisfy his craving, even that which is bitter."

Millions of people in the world today are hungry for something. They reach out to alternatives close to them to satisfy their hunger, although they know in advance that the experience will affect their lives.

Adulterous relationships usually turn out to be a bitter experience. The woman who dates a married man or vice-versa, is involved in a bitter experience. He probably won't leave his wife and family despite his words. Then if he does, then that is a bad sign because if he left his wife easily, he will walk away from the new woman as well. Adultery is a bitter experience but the person who drinks from the bitter cup is hungry for something. Marital happiness is what they are seeking. However, that comes only from a godly marriage.

Substance abuse is a bitter experience. Those who become alcoholics or become drug abusers usually find substance abuse to be a bitter experience. It robs them of their sense of dignity and self worth and places them mercilessly in the control of others. Substance abusers are troubled. They seek assurances in life and look for help to cope with the difficulties they face daily. Yet, assurances they seek evade them daily as the wake up with hangovers or find themselves in need of another fix after they come down from their high. Assurance in hard times doesn't come from a happy hour or from a drug fix. It comes from knowing that God is control of every situation

and he will deliver his own.

Thievery is a bitter experience. Those who steal enjoy the fruits of their actions for a short while but usually get caught. Criminal records and lives behind bars are the result. Some who steal do so to eat, but most who steal do so to profit. They hunger for prosperity and security. They reach out and grasp the first chance they get to steal or benefit from that which has been stolen. They risk their entire future on what they know will be a bitter experience if they are caught. Yet Christ promises all who believe that if they "seek ye first" the kingdom of God, all of the other things will be added.

Failure is a bitter experience. Those who have attempted a venture but failed in their trying sometimes view their failure as a bitter experience

Bitter Sweet Cups

While some bitter experiences are the result of our own personal failure and shortcoming. There are other bitter experiences over which we have no control.

Failure, when we have tried our best, can be a bitter moment. It marks the time when we have prepared fully only to find a door closed in our face.

Persecution is a bitter experience. This marks those times when we are falsely accused, attacked and tormented for our attempts to do right.

God has a way of taking a believer's bitter experience and adding the sweet nectar of God's love, mercy and compassion to it making it, bitter sweet.

Bitter sweet is just another way of saying that a good thing resulted from a bad situation.

When Joseph was thrown into a pit by his brothers, that was a bitter experience. But when God took him from the pit and moved him to the palace that was bitter sweet, because a good thing came out of a bad situation.

When Job lost his fortunes and family to the tricks of Satan that was a bitter experience. But when God blessed him in the end and gave him more than he had at the beginning, that was bitter sweet because a good thing came out of a bad situation.

When Daniel faced the loss of his life in the lion's den, that was a bitter experience. But when God closed the mouths of the lions and elevated him higher in the kingdom, that was bittersweet because a good thing came out of a bad situation.

When Christ refused the mixed drink on the cross and took only the bitter cup he absorbed all the bitterness that sin would cause in the world into himself. He now offers to every believer a cup of salvation that is so sweet that it can overcome the bitterness of any situation.

The Sweetness of our God can take every bad situation and turn it into a bittersweet experience. The sweetness of God can take our:

—HARDTIMES and turn them into GOODTIMES; FAILURES and turn them into success

—DESPAIRS and turn them into our JOYS; SHORT COMINGS and turn them into our LONG TERM GOOD!

No wonder the song writer declares, “He’s sweet I know. He’s sweet I know! I’ve found a savior and he’s sweet I know”

I heard another song writer declare, “Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. I love him more and more. Jesus saves and keeps me, he’s the one I adore. Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the one before!”

When Jesus carried his cross toward Calvary, that was a bitter experience!

When Jesus died, with nails driven in his hands, that was a bitter experience!

When they buried him in a borrowed tomb, that was a bitter experience!

But Early Sunday morning, when he arose from the grave that was bitter sweet!

Are you drinking from life’s bitter cup?

Let Jesus sweeten your experience!

He will make everything all right!

No. 642-Black Heritage

Does God Understand Ebonics?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 26, 1997

SCRIPTURE: ".. thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Psalm 139:1-4;"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46

Introduction

Have you ever talked with someone and couldn't understand their words? It may have been a language barrier or jumbled speech that caused the problem. Sometimes heavy accents, regional speech patterns or heavy use of colloquialisms and slangs make it difficult to understand others. Sometimes we hear the right words but don't know what they mean. Their words say one thing, but mean another. In such instances, we leave a conversation more confused than enlightened. One of the most frustrating experiences is not being able to communicate fully.

Sometimes it's just hard for us to get our messages across. That was the case when the country chicken thief started getting messages nailed to his door. Nearly every morning there was a note nailed to his front door saying, "If you don't stop stealing my chickens, I'm going to cut off your ears and stick them down your throat." After about a week the chicken thief became nervous. He kept getting these notes. So, he took the notes and went into town to report the incidents to the Town Sheriff. The Sheriff leaned back in his chair and said, "Well, maybe you could try doing what the note says. Why don't you stop stealing the man's chickens?" At that the chicken thief responded, "Well he needs a lesson in communication. How am I supposed to know which man's chickens to stop stealing, if he don't sign his name?"

Speaking of being hard to understand, the farmer bragged about how well trained his mule had become. No matter what set of directions he gave the mule, the farmer bragged that it would always be carried precisely. One day he demonstrated his point. He gave a command for the mule to "Haw" but there was no response. Then he gave

a command for the mule to "Gee" but there was still no response. Without losing a moment to think the farmer pick up a two-by-four and hit the mule between the eyes. Immediately the mule followed every instruction. The farmer then said, "he understands everything I tell him, but I have to get his attention first!"

In the same sense, sometimes God has to get our attention before he can get us to do his will. He understands us. He knows what we think. Nevertheless, on occasion he can't get through to communicate with us because we are going in a different direction.

As Christians, we know that God understands us. In fact, he knows us better than we know ourselves. Regardless of the method we use to talk to him, he hears our thoughts. The question is not whether God understands what we say to him, but rather whether he can get our attention long enough to communicate with us.

When man and God talk to each other, we usually find that the song writer is correct, Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains how God's understanding is universal.

Psalm 139 is the last of five Psalms that offer thanks to God for being a wonderful presence in the life of the believer. David expressed that in every walk of life that God is present and knowledgeable of what we do and say.

The main theme of Psalm 139 is the fact that God always understands everything there is to understand about us. He knows the thoughts of our minds before we think them. He also knows every word spoken from our lips or conceived in our hearts.

Geography and language are natural barriers that prohibit man from progressing but they do not hinder God.

There is never an instance when God cannot understand us.

Matthew 27:46 gives a good example of God's ability to understand. Christ, hanging on the cross, cries out to God in his agony. However, Christ does not cry out in Hebrew, his native tongue. He cries out in Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of commerce.

It contained a mixture of Hebrew, Aramaic, Samaritan and other languages that was useful to those who moved from place to place. Its use helped those of different nationalities communicate with others. While it helped most to understand a great deal of what was said, it could mislead.

When Christ called out, "Eli, Eli" he was calling upon God. Some who heard his Aramaic words interpreted it to mean that he was calling upon the prophet Elijah. Others took it for its actual meaning.

However, the appeal that Christ made was not to those who were listening he was appealing to God, who understood not only the words he spoke, but the meditations of his heart.

When he cried out in agony, it did not matter which language Christ used, God heard him, because he knows the hearts and thoughts of every person.

Ebonics has historical roots

There is considerable debate among African-Americans about the subject of Ebonics. A term used to describe "Black English" or "Ebony-Phonics." Many who work with young people are becoming increasingly frustrated in their efforts to teach standard English to African-Americans. Often their students seem to have developed a unique dialect and pattern of speech that is so entrenched that standard English has almost become a secondary language. The debate was heightened when the Oakland California School Board voted to use "Ebonics" as formal tool in its fight to teach standard English.

Black English has it roots in the American Slave trade. Blacks, brought to America, spoke their native African languages fluently. Since there were various languages present on any shipment of slaves, communication, even between the slaves, was difficult, if not impossible. A useful "survival" language was developed called "Pidgin" which consisted of the very basics of a generic language that all could use to communicate but was not unique to any of them. "Pidgin" did not concern itself with many of the detailed rules of grammatics such as "passive voice", "double negatives." Neither did it quiver over the use of irregular verbs. It was stripped down. It was just enough to get the point across. It was just enough to survive.

In most of the colonies "Pidgin" English was the standard language. However, in Louisiana, controlled by France, "Pidgin" French or Creole became the stripped down language. All Louisiana slaves and other immigrants learned just enough "French" to get by.

The Cajun dialect is such a mixture of French and English that it is extremely difficult for those outside of the culture to understand. When "Keeseesaw" means "who is that?" It gets even tougher with phrases such as "bon yea keese bye-do", which means get away from or let that alone. What about? "how you coming savah?" which means, How are you doing? "So come sah", doing pretty good

Native African languages survived in America for a time. However, as use of the "Pidgin" tongue became more useful, the native tongues began to disappear..

In every part of the world where a "Pidgin" language developed it was considered a useful tool to communicate with the outside world, while each group maintained their own language fluently. The children of each culture were taught the native tongue and the adults learned "Pidgin" to communicate with those outside of the culture. As children became old enough to venture into the greater community, they learned "Pidgin" to communicate to the outside world. What happened to Black Americans is the slave trade prohibited the teaching or speaking of our own language, thus "Pidgin" English became our standard language to the point that today, Standard English is now the "Pidgin." While among our own, we speak freely in "Pidgin" English. Most of us consider learning standard English as an essential tool to "Make it" in the general community, but revert to "Black English" when we step back into our own culture. In the same way that Asians and other immigrants learn

Standard English for its utilitarian purposes, then return to their own language patterns when among themselves.

Many educators across the country are realizing the historical roots of "Pidgin English" and are changing the way they refer to language patterns of the African-American Community.

The trick is to reach children who speak the "Pidgin" of their culture and teach them the "Standard English" that is needed to communicate in the greater society.

These are trained recognize the phrase "He be standing" and quickly translate it to "He is standing." They hear the phrase, "He gone to the store" and translate it "He went to the store." They hear, "he was hit by the man. He wasn't bothering nobody" and instantly translate it into "The man hit him. He wasn't bothering anyone." Those who are not trained in both "Pidgin" and Standard speech patterns may find that a difficult chore. The purpose of the training is not to help teachers adopt incorrect standard English. It is to help them understand 1) that students who bring such language into the classroom are not genetically inferior but are the products of their culture; and 2)ways to use what is known to help develop improved mastery of Standard English.

In the past, most of our teachers were a part of the culture themselves and needed no additional orientation. However, an increasing number of our teachers are distant to the African- American cultural experience, even some in the same race, requiring special training to reach students effectively. In Oakland, the school board realized this truth and shocked the world when it proposed training teachers to understand "Ebonics" as a stepping stone to the goal of mastering standard English.

Does God Understand Ebonics?

Since most African-Americans speak Ebonics within our culture, it's important for each of us to remember that while the Ebonics debate rages, God understands us, no matter which language we speak.

When it comes to talking to God, He is not concerned about your subject and verb agreement!

When it comes to talking to God, He is not concerned about Ebonics or Cajonics! Neither is he impressed with the rules of formal communication.

When it comes to talking to God, what is important is that are heart is straight, because understands both the meditations of the heart and the words of our mouths.

When Christ hung on the cross, in his distress he called out Eli! Someone else may have mistaken his words, but God knew and that's what mattered!

It doesn't matter whether I say "Dear God, I have found myself in a rather distressing predicament that requires your immediate assistance," or "Lord, I'm down here waiting, please don't pass me by"..God understands!

It doesn't matter whether I say "Dear Infinite one, the intensity and quantity of my persecutors have increased. Nevertheless, I shall persevere" or "I've been buked, I've been scorned, I've been talked about sure as you're born, but I'm going on to

heaven any how!"

It doesn't matter whether I say, "Dear God, I respectfully request that infinite presence to surround my being eternally" or "Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me. You walked with my mother, now walk with me. While, I'm on this tedious journey, I want Jesus to walk with me!"

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God understands me so well that even if I don't say anything he reads my thoughts. That's why the old warriors declared, "If I can't say a word, I'll just wave my hand!"

I'm so glad that he understands. He understands if my English is not correct.

If I happen to say, Lord, I done done all that I know how to do! He will understand!

If I happen to say, Lord, I thank you for my soft bed warm qiver! He will understand!

If I happen to say, Lord, You Sho' been good to me!

There is one thing that is true whether you speak Portugese or Chinese, Ebonics or Spanish, regardless to your race or nationality every saint can declare "I know the Lord will answer, prayer, for I tried him for myself!"

He understands!

He understands so much that he died for us out on Calvary and arose after three days!

No wonder the song writer declared that when nobody else understands...

He'll understand and say well done!

No. 643-Men's Day

Men at Work

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2, 1997

SCRIPTURE: Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words. Exodus 5:9

Introduction

Have you seen those signs in construction areas marked, "Men at Work?" They usually suggest that close by, crews of laborers are busy. The signs tell those who may be otherwise unaware to expect the presence of workers in an unlikely place. The men we see in such places are usually making something work better or building something we have never seen. They do not tell us how many men are working. Sometimes we only see a few. There always seems to be enough men to get the job done. A while later when we make our routine pass, the men are gone, but the work is done.

The African-American community is one under construction. Both repairing and building is needed. Still recovering from our slave experience, we are busy repairing damages made to our culture and history. Wherever damages appeared, historically, God has sent enough men to help us make the repairs. When slavery threatened our very existence, men such as Frederick Douglass were at work. When we struggled to reconstruct our lives after slavery, men such as Booker Washington were at work. When we worked to discard the shackles of legal oppression men such as W.E.B. Dubois were at work. When we organized ourselves to champion the cause of the working people, men such as A. Phillip Randolph were at work. When we sought to repair the injustice of segregation, men such as Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were at work.

At the same time we are building our future. While we are repairing damages to our social structure, there is work being done to build the future. Benjamin Mays, Jesse Jackson, and Thurgood Marshall represent a generation of workmen who have charted new courses of action for our community, while still maintaining a vigorous spirit of Afrocentricity.

Today, as in the past, God has a way of supplying enough men to meet the task. Whether it is damage control or bridge building, African-American men are at work. However, that fact defies the common perception that there are "no" African-American men. We have read the reports about crime, family destruction, lack of role

models and internalized them. To a great extent we have begun to believe the rhetoric and have reacted to the myth of the nonexistent Black male by pronouncing his death, attending his funeral, and removing his plate from the table of social affairs.

Today, we remind ourselves, that while social circumstances threaten his future, the African- American man is alive, well, at work responding to the damaging influences that affect their homes and communities and building bridges for the next generation.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that God still sends spirit filled men to meet the challenges of every generation. Our prayer is that God will strengthen our men to meet the challenge of making bricks of our society, even if there is no straw, all to the glory and praise of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on a command given by an Egyptian king to increase the work of the Hebrews because they entertained the idea of freedom.

The Hebrews came to Egypt, as a small band of refugees, from famine plagued Canaan. Over the centuries however, their numbers grew until they were several hundred thousand in number. The prospect of a revolt frightened each succeeding generation of Pharaohs. Their fear of the slaves lay in two areas described in Exodus 1:9 “And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are MORE and MIGHTIER than we”: Their numbers were increasing in such a way that they had become the predominate race. The numbers did not upset them as much as the realization that they are “mightier than we.” How is it that powerless slaves could be mightier than the Egyptians who were a dominating military presence? They were mightier in terms of their spirit and strength. They had a stronger will to survive and were more aggressive. They were inventive and creative. Because they were both huge in number and mightier, they posed a threat. They finally took action to prevent future uprisings.

The Egyptian strategy was targeted at the slave male population. Genocide was the first approach. They ordered the Hebrew midwives to destroy male babies, but they refused. Then they ordered soldiers to drown all infant males. The idea was to head off any future growth. Genocide attacked their “more” problem. Then the strategy switched to control and domination. They gave the male work force increasingly difficult tasks that required more resources than was available to them. The energy of their might would be thus be circumvented by increasing their burdens. It was a well-calculated plan that would have succeeded except for the fact that God allowed at least one man to grow up who would build the bridge to their future. That man was Moses.

The task of the Hebrews was formidable. They gave them tasks to complete without the resources to complete them. This worked on their strength and their morale. Yet despite the difficulty of the task, the slave men went to work. When they went to work, God helped them to measure up to the task. The odds against succeeding in the

challenge to make the same tally of bricks without straw were astronomical but yet they were able to triumph. They simply went to work.

While they worked to meet the challenge of responding to the daily tally of bricks, God was preparing others to work on the challenge of attaining freedom, leaving Egypt and making it to the promised land!

Thus, the command from Pharaoh, which was designed to place a stumbling block before the slave men was used as a stepping stone to higher accomplishments. They gave the men a heavy burden, but they met the challenge when they rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

We Have Work To Do

Like the slaves of Exodus, African-American men have been given a formidable task, without the essentials. We must maintain and repair our families and communities, while at the same time build for our future.

Our homes and communities are damaged. The strength of our people has been in the solidarity of our families. Though poor, ostracized and endangered, the African-American family has survived in strength. Yet, while there are millions of families that are still thriving, a great many our families are showing signs of disintegration. As our families become more tolerant of deviant behavior and less homogeneous, the community feels the impact.

The extent of the damage becomes clear when we consider that 23 percent of 20-29 year old Black men are either in jail or on probation at any given time. While there are more than 600,000 young Black men enrolled in college there are more than 800,000 under the control of the criminal justice system. The nation spends more than $3 billion a year to keep them locked up, making privately owned prisons the fastest growing new business in America.

Teen pregnancy is hitting an all time high with African-American teens topping the lists. We are plagued with a dilemma of problems created by a generation of babies making babies.

While crime, lack of males in leadership, and increased teen sexual activity reflect our internal problems, we are also battling external forces. Racial discrimination, educational set backs, and economic stalemates have also damaged our potential.

The prognosis for our community is this: If one fourth of our young men are involved in the criminal justice system at a time when they should be beginning families, starting careers and learning skills; and if one fourth of our youth are struggling to raise babies while they are still babies; and if, one fifth of our high school graduates are functionally illiterate; and if one fifth of our male population remains unemployed; then the men who are in the majority must take immediate steps to correct the trend before it becomes indicative of our entire community.

Our challenge is the same as the slaves of Exodus. We have been given a burden without the tools to make it happen. They gave them no straw or assistance. The slaves made their tally because they had two things the master could neither give

them nor take away: A willingness to work and the power of God!

How are African-American men working? Across America, Black men sensitive to the problems of our community are organizing themselves. The million man march in 1995 raised the consciousness of millions. National fraternal organizations such as the Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi, Prince Hall Masons, The National Baptist Convention and others are energizing men to take organize and take action.

Millions of Black men are forming organizations such as the 100 Black Men of America with units all over the nation. The aim of the push is to get Black men who are successful to do more than simply be successful, but to roll up their sleeves and plunge into the problem. To attack the problem men are being encouraged to: 1) Serve as a one to one role model for a Black boy; that is to go beyond serving on boards and committees but to actively work in a structured way where one man directly interacts with at least one boy that is not his own as a mentor. 2) Promote Educational excellence 3) Give volunteer service to the community 4) Promote male responsibility training for Black males 5) Promote the importance moral behavior by precept and example 6) Promote a respect for God and family.

Those who serve on boards or who lead governments have an even more awesome responsibility, because beside their responsibility as community leaders they also must function in their own families as husbands, fathers, uncles and grandfathers. They must avoid the danger of substituting one for the other.

Men at Work

While we are distressed over the extent of our social dilemma, we should not lose sight of the fact that most of our men are hard at work.

While it is true that 23 out of every 100 young men are involved in the justice system, that also mens that 77 out of every 100 are men at work!

While it is true that 800,000 young men are in prison it is also true that more than six million working age men are not in prison, they are men at work!

While it is true that 16 out of every 100 Black men are unemployed, it is also true that 84 out of every 100 men has a job, goes to work every day and pays his bills. They are men at work!

While it is true that a female heads 40 of every 100 Black households, it is also true that a man heads 60 out of every 100 homes, who is providing leadership for his family and love to his wife and children. These are men at work!

While it is true that there is great disparity in the number of men who are filling the ranks of leadership in our community, we must not forget that 95% of our pastors, 98 percent of deacons, 100 percent of our Fraternal leaders and 80 percent of our political leaders and most of our national community leaders are African-American men...who are hard at work!

Some in America have prematurely announced the death of the Black man. You went to Uncle Tom's funeral. He was a good fellow in his torn overalls, nappy hair and red head rag! He chopped a many row of cotton, but he's dead!

But before America pronounces his epitaph it should look at that young man riding up the elevator. He's wearing a $1,000 Brooks Brothers suit with a $10,000 Rolex on his wrist, his stock portfolio under his arm and engraved on his gold-plated brief case is the name "Uncle Thomas E. Zumbawi, III" -the New Black man, on his way to work!

The best present a man can give his woman is a BMW..A Black Man working! He's either working, working on it, working at it, or working through it, but he's working!

Whenever there is has been a great need, God has always moved in the ranks of God fearing men to help them do the impossible!

Whenever there was a demand there have been men at work!

When Israel faced the impossibility of the River Jordan, God moved when men went to work!

When Joshua led Israel around the walls of Jericho, God moved when men went to work!

When Gideon led a small army of 300 against a force of thousands because God went to work with his small group!

Whenever there has been a mountain God had a man!

For Mt Sinai God had Moses! For Mt. Ararat God had Noah! For Mt. Carmel God had Elijah!

And when the world needed salvation on Mt. Calvary God had a man!

His name is Jesus!

Who died on Calvary but rose after three days!

One of these days, he's coming back again!

When he comes back, let him find every man busy working!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I'm going to work until my day is done! I'm going to work until the setting of my sun! I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done!"

No. 644-Funeral

Where Hast Thou gleaned today?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen." Ruth 2:19-20

Introduction

Have you ever considered just how good God has been to you? Often we are so busy with our daily tasks that we seldom stop to consider just what the Lord has done for us? Even a cursory inventory would reveal that God has smiled on us. Most of us live a notch above our life-style of a few years ago. We dress better. We eat better. We sleep in more comfortable surroundings than we did many years ago. We drive a better car. It did not come to us by mistake. Neither did we acquire it by our own hard work. We have achieved because the God we serve has been merciful and has shown us grace. Our lives are living tributes to God's grace and mercy.

If there is a group of believers that has a special way of helping us to understand God's love and grace it would be Christian school teachers. More specifically, day care providers and kindergarten teachers, who are especially unique. Kindergarten teachers are special. They touch our lives at special moments when we are receptive and impressionable. God must have a special way of blessing them because those who have been touched by God seem to show the youngest minds how God loves them.

Consider the kindergarten teacher who planned an Easter Egg Hunt for her children. All of the children were excited about the upcoming hunt. They dyed eggs of different colors and decorated them beautifully. However, there was one little girl in the class that sat in the corner. Little Essie Mae dropped her head and shrunk in her corner. She did not participate in the class activities. The teacher came to her and hugged her. After a while she learned that Essie felt the others would laugh at her

because she was different. The next day as the class prepared for the hunt the children lined up with their baskets in hand. They saw the brightly colored eggs poking their heads from beneath the grass. They filled the field. The teacher whispered to Essie "Don't go in the field, search around the trees!" As the hunt began, screaming children dashed for the eggs. Hundreds were trampled underfoot. Little Essie quietly slipped away from the crowd and searched by the trees. At each tree she found several beautifully decorated eggs and special prize eggs. When the hunt was over Essie was proud! The class cheered for her! She had more than all of the others. The night before her teacher had placed "Eggs for Essie" around all the trees. If she followed the path, she'd find the prize. She did!

God grace works that way with us. It's as if there is a basket in heaven marked "Blessings for Annie" or "Blessings for Leo" or any number of God's children. He puts them in special places. If we follow his directions, we will find them.

As Christians, we know God has blessed us immensely. Following his directions, we have enjoyed happy marriages, lived fruitful lives and rejoiced in his goodness. He has blessed us in so many ways, that even in moments of sadness we can't help but to say "Thank you Lord! You've been so good to me."

Exposition

The Book of Ruth gives us an example of God's grace in the Old Testament.

Ruth was a Moabitess who had come to Israel with her Mother in Law Naomi after the death of both of their husbands. To support herself she worked in the fields of the region as a gleaner.

The Mosaic law made special provisions for the poor. In Leviticus 19:9 the law commands: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest." The same principle was repeated in Deuteronomy 24:19 "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands."

The law of gleaning was God's way of providing for the poor. If corn fell to the ground it was to be left for the poor or widows. None of the corners of any field were to be harvested. The poor and the widows would glean the corners. Fruits that fell to the ground were to be left for the gleaners.

It was God's way of taking care of those who would be in need.

Ruth, as a gleaner, probably expected to gather just enough to make a meal at the end of the day. There were hundreds of gleaners that waited until the day's end for their chance at a meal. She would have been happy to get just enough to get by. However, in her gleaning she came across Boaz, a relative, who recognized her as a widowed relative.

In 2:11 Boaz tells Ruth that they had informed him that she was a widow and they had noted her family connection. In verse 12 Boaz says: "The LORD recompense thy

work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

In essence he said, the Lord has recognized your work in the fields and will reward you because you have labored while trusting in him.

After she left his presence Boaz ordered his supervisors to "let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose." The supervisors were told to order their men to drop large amounts of corn near her and leave them on purpose so that she could glean them. If she happened to glean near the sheaves that were still on the stalk, they were ordered not to stop her.

Ruth returned to her gleanings. Much to her surprise the workers seemed unusually sloppy. There were more corn ears than ever in her path. She quietly gathered them without causing attention and returned home.

When she returned, Naomi asked the question: "Where hast thou gleaned today?" "Where wroughtest thou?" Where did you glean today? Where have you been? Ruth showed her gleanings and overwhelmed Naomi. Each day she returned her gleanings were bountiful.

Boaz typifies Christ. Ruth typifies every believer. When we trust, obey and serve we are rewarded bountifully by many acts of kindness, mercy and grace from our Lord.

Just as Boaz told Ruth: The Lord will reward your work because you trust in him, so does the Lord say to every believer: "Trust in me and you shall receive a reward."

While there are gleanings or blessings available for everyone, God has special blessings for those who trust in him. He has ordered them placed conveniently in our path. Those who serve him and trust him will find them..

Where Hast Thou Gleaned Today?

At the close of every believer's earthly life Naomi's question to Ruth could be asked? Where has thou gleaned today? Where have you been?

When Ruth returned to Naomi she gave account of her day's work and showed how God blessed her along the way.

In a similar manner, each of us must answer certain inevitable questions: "What have you done?" "Where have you been?" "Did God Help you Along the Way?"

What have you done? The evaluation of any life considers our works. Whether they are great or small we are judged by the effectiveness of our work.

There are many today that are spending their years idle. They spend their years aimlessly wandering and accomplishing nothing. Their epitaph is short and simple: They lived and they died. Some even lead long lives, but had nothing to show for the time between the cradle and the grave.

There are others who have decided to use their time wisely. While some have great names and were able to reach thousands, there are others who worked quietly in the fields near them.

These are the mothers who cared for the children, stood by their husbands and managed their homes.

These are the fathers who worked hard every day, loved their wives and enjoyed their children.

These are laborers who went into their neighborhoods helping the poor and the needy.

These are the ones who spent their best years teaching little ones and shaping little minds.

These are the preachers and Sunday School teachers.

These are the community volunteers, public servants, coaches and supporting hands that help to forge the future for thousands of nameless souls every day.

Our work in the family and community identifies us. That's why Christ in Matthew 7:20 says, " Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

What have you done? The believing wife responds, "I loved my family. I supported my husband. I taught the little ones. I helped everyone I could, to see the bright side of life."

Where have you been? Every true believer has a story to tell. It is a story that reveals where they have been in life. That story gives us a stronger appreciation for the life lived. Booker Washington often reminded those he taught that the measure of a person is not the heights they have achieved but the journey over which they had to travel to achieve the height.

Every believer has a journey that scales mountains, meanders rivers and, at times, sinks into valleys.

But the believers journey gives him a story to tell. It's the story of how God brought him out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

It's a story of good times and bad times, rising and falling; praying and praising!

The believer's journey is one that goes forward despite difficulties and hardships. That's why the songwriter declared "I've been buked. I've been scorned. I've been talked about sure as you're born. But at the cross I'm going to bow and I'm going on to heaven anyhow!"

It's a journey so rich that every believer declares "I wouldn't give nothing for my journey now!"

Where have you been? The believer responds: "I have seen good times and suffered through some bad times. I have been to the mountain top as I watched my children succeed. I have endured sickness and disappointment in the valley. But In the valley, I found love, peace and joy! "

Did God Help You Along the Way?

The final question that every believer's life answers is whether or not God helped you along the way or whether you did it all by yourself.

When Ruth made her report to Naomi, old Naomi answered by saying that Boaz was a kind man who showed his kindness to the living and after death also showed kindness to families of the dead.

Every believer understands this truth. In life, God helps us along the way. But even

in death, God continues to be a friend to the family. Perhaps that is why the song writer would write: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!"

Every believer should remember that God is always by his or her side! There is no circumstance that befalls me and God is not there! There is no place I can go and God is not there!

Psalm 139:8-10 "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

"Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

That's why David declared "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!"

I heard the song writer declare "I want Jesus to walk with me...:

"You walked with my mother, now walk with me!"

"You walked with my father, now walk with me!"

While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!

When the Lord walks with me, my mountains turn into molehills!

When the Lord walks with me, my midnights turn in sun shiny days!

When the Lord walks with me, my weakness turns into strength!

When the Lord walks with me, my sadness turns into joy!

One of these days, every believer will leave this life. When he or she stands before the judgment bar the questions might be asked: What have you done? Did you meet the Lord along the way?

I want to be able to say "I gleaned the field that you gave me. I tried to help somebody as I passed along. I tried to cheer somebody with a word or song!"

Along the way I met the Lord. Since I met the Lord I have been able to testify: "I have seen the lightning flash. I have heard the thunder roll. I have felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I heard the voice of my savior. He bid me to still fight on!

He promised never to leave me. Never to leave me alone!

No never alone! He promised never to leave me alone!

Where have you been? I've been telling the story!

I've been telling men about Jesus, who died on Calvary!

I've been telling them about Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

If you miss me from gleaning down here!

Come up to bright glory!

I'll be gleaning up there!

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On February 25, 1997 Annie Lyons Reed came in from gleaning the fields of life. The Lord Blessed her life as she blessed others. Great will be her reward.

No. 645-Inspiration

An On Time God

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 16, 1997

SCRIPTURE: But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:8-9; "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," Galatians 4:4

Introduction

Have you ever been late for an appointment or meeting? Most people have been late for at least one engagement in their lives. For some, tardiness is unusual. For others it is routine. Sometimes we get up on time and get out the door on time, but there is a flat tire on the car. Sometimes the car won't start or the alarm clock fails. Sometimes we oversleep, get caught in traffic jams or get stalled by one thousand and one maladies that all signal we are going to have a bad day.

While some are late by accident, there are others that late intentionally. These are the ones who want to avoid something that is uncomfortable or uninteresting and time their arrival perfectly. Some want to steal the focus of the moment by making a late, but grand, appearance.

Even the best believers work hard to maintain a busy schedule and stay on time. Consider the case of Tardy Terry. Tardy Terry was never on time for anything at the "Never-too-late-Baptist Church." Each Sunday he arrived late for the church service, just after the offering. When he sang in the choir, he never knew the songs because he came to rehearsals as they were giving the closing prayer. He almost missed his wedding but arrived just in time to say "I do." He missed his daughter's school play, but caught her bow in act two. Tardy Terry was late his entire life. While the people were sad there was a sigh of relief from everyone when they heard news of his death. Finally, they thought, he'll it make to church on time. But on the day of his funeral, the hearse took a wrong turn. After the family had taken its place, in came Tardy Terry's casket...at the end of the line! He was late for his own funeral.

Because we are familiar with tardiness and fight so hard for timeliness, we are gratified to know that there is a God who is always on time. He is always in control and is never late. He never forgets. He never has a flat tire and cannot be held up by a train. God is always on time! That's the lesson the old Missionary learned. She had been preaching the gospel in the backwoods for many years and preached heavily

about faith. One year her food supplies did not arrive on time because of a flood. It would be a month before there would be another supply. She survived on oat meal and goats milk for a month and contracted a serious illness simultaneously. When they finally treated her for her sickness the doctor told her that if her food supply had come on time it would not have done her any good. The prescription for her sickness was plenty of rest for one month and to maintain a strict diet of oat meal and milk. Anything else would have killed her. Again, God was on time!

As Christians, our faith is reaffirmed each time we consider that the God we serve blesses us immensely. We are encouraged further when we consider that he always seems to respond to our needs in the nick of time. Better than CNN...he's "on time, all the time!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter as he reassures believers that God will deliver on his promises on time.

There were many that scoffed at the faith of believers since nearly all of the Patriarchs of the Christian faith were dead and the present leaders were aging, yet Christ had not returned as promised. They were unmercifully ridiculed by unbelievers. Peter, one of the last of the Christian Patriarchs, addresses what appeared to be a delay in the coming of Christ in his second letter.

Initially Peter reminds them that scoffers are to be expected. Those outside the faith do not carry the same belief as those who know God. Thus, it is expected that those who are unfamiliar with his ways should scoff. The presence of scoffers and detractors is to be expected in the last days. Their ways will not be self fulfilling. Only the word of God remains true.

Scoffers enjoy ridiculing the faithful, when it appears that the object of their faith is fruitless. In so doing their denial of the faith is somehow reinforced. Evildoers and unbelievers enjoy making fun of believers, quickly pointing out anything that there might be an inconsistency between their belief and reality. Believers, if not reminded, might be discouraged.

In the Old Testament, David wrote to believers who were disturbed about the apparent prosperity of the ungodly in Psalm 37:1 he wrote "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." David addressed the temptation to stray when it appeared that the ungodly life was the most prosperous. Peter addresses the temptation to lose hope when it appears that the promises of God would be unfulfilled.

In such times Peter said it is good to remember. Since the immediate subject was the promise of Christ to return and usher in a new kingdom, Peter urged them to remember God's past promises in relation to the great flood. He promised it and it happened. Since he promised a flood and it happened, Peter concludes that assuming that he will do the same in years to come is logical.

Scoffers argue that despite the faith of believers, nothing has changed. The world

continues as it always has despite their great sacrifices. They suggest that hundreds of years have passed yet the object of their belief has not occurred.

Peter reminds believers not to be influenced by such reasoning because God is not subject to the limitations of time. Thousands of years in the sight of humankind are but passing days or even seconds with God. It was two thousand years before God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through his family. This occurred with the birth of Christ. It was several hundred years before the children of Israel took possession of the promised land as promised (And they still don't have it all). Obviously, God does not reckon time in the same manner as man.

Christ referred to the infinite nature of God in John 8:58 "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Indicating that he existed before Abraham was even conceived. In Hebrews 13:8 the inspired writer says "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Thus indicating the truth that God is not effected by time. What he did in times past can be done today or tomorrow.

It is sufficient, said Peter, for believers to remember that God is not slack or negligent. He simply waits until the right time. With respect to unbelievers, Peter said God is not slack but is longsuffering, delaying to give them time. Thus God clearly moves in his own time table which is altered on occasion for the advantage of the believer and out of mercy to the unbeliever.

In Galatians, Paul makes it clear that when all conditions were perfect, God sent his Son to earth to begin the redemption process. The phrase the "fulness" of time intimates a social pregnancy that was ready to be delivered. God moved and acted when the time was appropriate, not before or after. He will make his return in the same manner...in the fulness of time!

God is Always on Time

Often believers are frustrated when it appears that God has forsaken them. When problems mount up and available solutions are few, some lose hope.

When we are experiencing life difficulties the believer's first response is to pray. After prayer, we take actions to alleviate our situation. Sometimes however, our best efforts are unsuccessful. We did everything right. We prayed. We believed. We acted. Yet it often appears that our situation does not change. Our cabinets empty. Our refrigerator's shelves are bare. Our freezers are filled with ice. Our personal affairs are still in disarray. Times are tough. In such instances, has God forsaken us? Are we foolish for continuing to believe in him?

A certain widow woman of scripture found herself in the same situation. She was a believer but was broke, hungry and at the point of starvation. When the man of God came to her home, she found that God could take her last little cup of meal and cruise of oil and stretch it to meet her needs every day. She didn't know when or how God would respond to her need, she just knew he would. Even as the barrel emptied she kept trusting God. When he arrived. He arrived on time.

God is on time because He is ahead of time. We trust God to take care of things for us because we know that God has already begun the process to resolve our problem although the solution is not apparent to us.

When we watch a star twinkle at night, we must remember that the light from the closest star (other than the Sun) Centauri, takes 4.3 years to get to us. When the wise men saw the star in heaven pointing the way to the Christ child, the light from that star actually twinkled thousands of years before, but because of the distance, arrived on earth later, but on time.

Often blessings that we request from God operate in the same way. The answer to many of our prayers is probably already in the working, at this very moment. When the answer arrives God arranges for it to be "on time."

They brought a blind man to Jesus. The skeptics, attempting to trap Christ, asked whether the blind man's sin was the reason for his blindness. Jesus answered by saying that the Blind man was born blind so that he could live among the skeptics and be present at the day and hour that Christ passed by to be healed by his power. The blind man could not see but the restoration of his sight was already on the way.

Believers who are frustrated with problems or heavy burdens should remember that God may seem slack or slow but the answer to our prayer is already on the way. We cannot hurry him but we should be patient. That's why Isaiah 40:31 says "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Neither should believers get frustrated when they consider the apparent prosperity of those who are less godly. It is tempting to consider the wealth, health and prosperity of the ungodly and question whether or not we are wasting our time. The ungodly seem to prosper but God never seems to punish them!

Even here, the scriptures remind us that God is not slack. He will act according to his promise. He delays in acting toward them to give them time to respond. In the meanwhile Psalm 37:2-3 reminds believers that "they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

The key word for every believer is "Trust!" Trusting God is to know that he may not come when you want him, but whenever he comes, he's always on time!

An On Time God

Finally, we must consider that we serve an on time God.

United Parcel Service promotes the fact that it can place a package in the hands of the receiver in 24 hours. Yet there are times when UPS can't find the right address or can't make a delivery because no one is home.

Federal Express prides itself for being able to deliver a package by 10 a.m. the next morning. However, there are times when they just can't make it. They refund the charge but they still didn't make it on time.

E-mail deliverers promote the fact that they can deliver a message in seconds! But

regardless to how fast E-Mail can be delivered, the message can't get through if the line is busy.

That's why every believer rejoices in the truth that we serve a God who is on time all the time!

Abraham stood on a mountain with his son on an altar. When the knife of sacrifice was drawn that's when he found that God was an on time God!-There was a lamb in the bush!

The three Hebrew boys in a fiery furnace learned that even in the midst of the fire that he is an on time God!

Daniel in the lion's den learned that although angry teeth and enemies growl all around you that he is an old time God.

He is on time because he is fast.

How fast is God?

Light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles a second, but God is so fast before you can lift up your eyes unto the hills from whence cometh your help, the answer is already on the way!

Sound travels at a speed of 1085 feet per second, but God is so fast that before you can say "Father I stretch my hands to thee!" The answer is already on the way!

Thought waves travel at thousands of miles per second, but God is so fast that while you are thinking, the answer is already on the way!

When the world cried out for a savior, the answer was already on the way!

In the fulness of time, God rearranged the biological processes of a woman named Mary!

In the fulness of time, God made a hole in the ordered processes of nature!

In the fulness of time, God sent the Word to dwell among men!

At the right time, an on time, he revealed himself to the world!

At the right time, an on time, he began a three-year ministry!

At the right time, an on time, he took up an old rugged cross!

At the right time, an on time, he died out on Calvary!

After the three days and nights, at the right time, an on time

He arose from the grave!

With all power in his hands!

No. 646-Inspiration

Simba's Lesson

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." Isaiah 41:20

Introduction

Have you ever experienced deja vu? Deja vu is the feeling that you have experienced a sensation before. It is a psychological phenomenon that helps explain why we sometimes think we have seen or done something before. The professionals say deja vu does not really exist. They say things we have seen and heard are stored in our memory and on occasion something else that we see or hear sets off the "deja vu" circuitry in our brain and we get a feeling of intense familiarity. The brain, according to the experts, tries to explain the feelings with a series of rationalizations and the result is the feeling is accepted as genuine memory.

The professionals have long definitions to explain it. There are many who will argue that they have been places and when they stood in a certain spot they got the strange feeling that they had seen themselves there or had actually been there before. There are some who even point out that they pictured themselves in a dream doing a certain thing but could not remember it until it actually happened. When it happened they experienced Deja vu.

As we consider the spiritual state of our world, the corruption, declining morality, rising violence, it seems that we have been here before. Somehow we seem to forget where we have seen this picture. We forget how we saw the scene. Still, in the back of our collective mind we know that we have seen all of this before.

That's when we need Simba's lesson. Did you see the movie "Lion King?" In the movie, Simba the young lion claimed that he had no interest in history and it made little sense to know it. After that his teacher struck him on the head with a stick. Later in the discussion the teacher took the stick and swung at him a second time. This time Simba ducked and avoided being hit. In that way the teacher showed him the value of learning from the past. The strike on the head was a wake up call! The attempt at the second strike was Deja vu. Simba's response was to recognize the action and take action to avoid prior results.

If the declining state of our world seems familiar to believers it is because each event triggers in our memory what we have studied in the word of God. When we see

murders, violence and trouble we instantly recall Mat 24:6-8 "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

God has given us advance warning of the troubling times that are to come. They seem familiar because we have studied them so much that we feel we were there. If we are wise we will learn the lessons found in his word and avoid the mistakes of the past.

As Christians, we have learned a few lessons in life. Some, like Simba's lesson, we have learned from making mistakes and taking a blow. We have also learned a few other lessons that Simba did not learn, mainly that when times are tough we can make it through if we trust in God.

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy given by Isaiah about conditions that would exist 150 years in advance of their actual occurrence, creating a feeling of Deja vu when they actually happened.

The six chapters of Isaiah from Chapters 40-46 paint a picture of the moral decay of the people and the resulting destruction of the nation. Isaiah's message predicted the rise of the Persian empire and Cyrus the great. However, it was given 150 years before the events actually happened. At the time, they were likely dismissed as the babblings of a confused old man.

Yet Isaiah accurately painted a picture of both the declining morality of the people and the eventual salvation of the righteous who depend upon the Lord. Chapter 40 closes with the classic admonition "but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.."

In Chapter 41 the rapid rise of Cyrus is predicted. The trouble that was to come was predicted, yet help and shelter was projected for the people who would place their trust in God. There would be many in the approaching time that would resort to idol gods, giving them precedence in the spiritual lives of the people.

It all actually happened. It took 150 years but it all occurred. Overpowering armies of Babylon destroyed Israel. They were taken captive back to Babylon. There, many remain faithful to God, such as the Three Hebrew Boys, Daniel and others. However, there were others that took on Babylonian ways and beliefs. They even began to worship Babylonian idol gods.

Isaiah paints the prophetic picture that certain things will happen. When they happen don't get excited because believers have been given advanced warning.

The people will worship idol gods in Babylon! The thought of such a thing was considered ridiculous at the time they said it. When it happened it was like Deja vu.

God will perform mighty miracles for his people despite their exiled condition. The first 19 verses of the 41st chapter explain how God will provide for the needy, the

thirsty and impoverished in miraculous ways. In verse 18-19 he shows how he will open up fountains of water in dry places and plant trees that need plenty of water to survive like the Pine and Myrtle, in the midst of the wilderness. When they prosper it will be a sign that God is still providing for his own.

All of this will be done that the people might see and know that all that is being done is a sign from God.

Then Isaiah in subsequent verses challenged the idol gods that the people would serve in the coming to time to equal the power of the almighty God. Can they claim responsibility for the events of the past? Can they control the future? (v22) The gods that people will serve in the future will be just as impotent to control their events as those of the past. He challenged in advance, the false gods of the future to do something either bad or good that everyone could see as a witness to their power.

When it happens, it will be a memorable lesson.

The people will see it and remember that God is a powerful God.

The Believer's Lesson

It took a whack on the head for Simba to understand. From that he understood that whenever the stick swings one should duck.

What is the believer's lesson?

Every believer should learn the outcome of living against God's word as well as the reward of righteous living. We have read it in the word. We have heard it from the pulpit. We have seen it with our own eyes. It's like Deja vu. Whenever we stray away from the word of God we get a whack on the head. Whenever we hold firm to what God desires we are blessed.

Simba's lesson: We have seen Simba's lesson in scripture. It marks those occasions when God took control of events to give his people a wake up call.

Samson learned Simba's lesson. He was fascinated with Philistine women. Despite advice from his parents and compatriots he romanced and married a Philistine woman. Another ultimately brought him down, which was Delilah. It took the loss of his sight and strength for Samson to learn Simba's lesson. He prayed and asked God to return his strength after his lesson was learned. God answered his prayer.

David learned Simba's lesson. He was adulterous with another man's wife. He committed murder and tried to hide it from God and his subjects. It was discovered and God plagued him with a serious venereal disease as a result. In his agony, David cried out in Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Saul learned Simba's lesson. He was en route to persecute the church. Yet, on the road to Damascus he was stricken with blindness and thrown from his animal. He saw a light and heard a voice that asked him "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It took three days of blindness to teach Saul Simba's lesson. Afterwards he arose, changed his name to Paul and the rest is history.

Believer's Assurance: A believer, on the other hand does not need Simba's lesson

to prompt him to obey God.

Every believer is acutely aware that God can deliver "Simba's lesson".Hebrews 12:6-8 says "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

The Believer's Motivation

The believer is therefore motivated by the reality of Simba's lesson, but he is also motivated by the assurance that comes with faith.

It is faith that prompts a believer to experience Deja vu when hard times come.

Believers see every situation and say in their hearts, I have been here before.

In hard times he remembers that such times have been predicted and he remembers what the word of God says about believers in tough times.

If there is a shortage of Money. Faith says "I have been here before." I was with David when he was at a very low point. I was there when he wrote in Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

If there is death. Faith says "I have been here before." I was here with Mary and Martha when they told Jesus, "Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died!" I was there when he answered "I am the resurrection and the life."

If there is persecution. Faith says "I have been here before." I was here with the Three Hebrew Boys when they were thrown in the fiery furnace. I was there when they declared "Our God is able to deliver us."

If there is doubt. Faith says "I have been here before." I was here when Elijah stood on the top of Mt. Carmel and asked the question, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God then follow him. If Baal be God then follow him."

If there is a shortage of food. Faith says "I have been here before." I was here when a poor widow woman looked in her barrel for what she thought was here last time only to learn that God had made a way.

I've been there before and the lesson that I have learned is that if I trust in the Lord, he will make a way!

I've been there before and the lesson I've learned is that if you call him he will answer!

I've been there before and the lesson I've learned is that he may not come when you want up, but he's always on time!

Call him, in the morning! Call him in the noon day!

Call him at the midnight hour! He will answer bye and bye!

Call on Jesus, who died on Calvary! He will make everything all right!

No. 647-Women's Day

A Woman's Place

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 9, 1997

SCRIPTURE:Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. Numbers 27:4-7;"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:16-17

Introduction

Where is a woman's place? What is a woman's job? The answer to that question depends upon the person asking. Men have their own defini tions of a woman's place and job. Their place, according to some men is somewhere to the rear of a man, but close enough to make him look good. Throughout history women have fought for their place in the world.They point out that Eve was created from a rib from his side to be equal in service, not from his back to be forever behind him; or his foot to be walked on by him, or from his fist to be his punching bag. Yes, even today, women are struggling to gain an equal footing before the law and in the consciousness of society in general.

Privately, many men think the woman's place is in the home. In fact, they expect to find her at home in her place, a*s soon as she gets home from work*. The confused signals that society sends leaves many women frustrated in their attempt to define themselves. They always seem to be written off, written up, or underwritten. No one seems to know just what they really want from women.

It is even more difficult for African-American women since they have served in and out of the home throughout our history.

Women have so many jobs it is often difficult to keep up with them all.

If they would pay the average woman $5.00 an hour for all her jobs, she'll take home a nice sum every week. Consider that she sends 44 hours a week as a nursemaid; 2 as a dietician; 3.3 as a purchasing agent; 13.1 as either a cook or a waitress; 6.2 as a dishwasher; 17.5 as a housekeeper; 5.9 as a laundress; 1.3 as a seamstress; .6 as a practical nurse; 1.7 as a maintenance worker; 2 as Chauffer; Social Secretary; 2; 5.3 hours pinching hitting for absentee fathers. At $5.00 the 125-hour work week of the

average woman would earn her a salary of $525 easily.

Where is a woman's place when she stands before God?

The woman's place is not measured by its proximity to a man but by the closeness of her walk with God?

Her role is the same as that of a man, to be used as an instrument of the most high guide, wherever she happens to serve.

As Christians we are proud to know that God has a special place for everyone. All of us are equal in his eyes. Our place is to join the millions that humbly confess him as Lord as usher in the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

Exposition

This text shows how five women boldly claimed their rightful inheritance from Moses.

Zelophehad, a descendant in the tribe of Joseph, was a god-fearing man who died leaving no sons to inherit his portion of the land of promise. Though he had obeyed all of the laws and was pious and dutiful, his family was to be deprived of its rightful place because he had only five daughters and no sons.

In ancient Israel they passed on possessions to the living sons of a father. The oldest son received a double share of his possessions. If a man had no sons then they transferred all of his possessions to his brothers or to his father's brothers or to the next of kin in his family who was a man. A man who had only daughters ran the risk of losing his entire life's work to another member of his family, not of his own choosing.

Women had no rights of inheritance. According to the law, they could not be heirs. They had no legal standing before the eyes of the law of Moses.

However, Zelophehad's daughters were different. They believed themselves to be equal in the sight of God, deserving their inheritance. Their family had been loyal to Moses. Their father had not been a part of Korah's revolt. They were not complainers. Their father died, naturally, not as a punishment of rebellion, thus they could not understand why they should be prohibited them from assuming their rightful place as his heirs.

For women to even think such thoughts in those times was remarkable. These were times when they commanded women not to speak, act or make decisions without the consent of a man. These were times when women were traded in marriages and paraded before the masses to satisfy the whims of men. For five women to stand firm and demand an inheritance was remarkable. The women of their tribe must have called them many names, suggesting that they were not real women and had moved out of their place. The fact that one of the five women had a man's name, Noah, probably made their position even more suspect. Yet they stood demanding their rightful place.

These women had an earnest desire for a place in the land promise, which was a type of the kingdom of heaven. They sought it and received it after Moses talked to

God about the matter heard God tell him to do right by the women who were females but no less heirs to the promise.

The triumph of these women which is recorded in chapter 27 is tempered by an additional commandment in chapter 36 which allowed them to be heirs but ordered them to marry within their family clan to keep the inheritance from falling in the hands of others if they married outside the family. Thus while their rights were upheld, they abridged them to the extent that they would negatively impact their entire family.

Paul, writing to the Romans reminds every believer that we have a great inheritance as children of God. As children of God we are heirs to the promise of salvation and the kingdom of heaven. In this respect there are no sexes, races, or national barriers, all are equal before God.

A woman's place in this context is the same as a man's place. Both are equal heirs in the kingdom. Both bear equal responsibility to serve God fully and to share in the rewards of the faith.

What is a woman's place? What is a woman's job? To walk humbly before God and to do his will!

The Black Woman's Place

What is the African-American woman's place? Throughout our history she has worn many hats and played many roles in the drama that has become our heritage.

Unlike her peers in other races, the African-American woman has not had the privilege of living the sheltered life. The social circumstances of our history have cast her in the role of field hand, nanny, cook, concubine, maid, mother and wife.

According to the department of Labor 51.6 of the Blacks employed in America are Black women (1995). Throughout our history there have always been more men working than women. That trend continued until 1988 when Black women exceeded men in the work force.

As Black women enter the work force and begin to earn comparable salaries to men, defining their place in the family and home becomes more difficult. No longer low paying maids and domestics, Black women are rising in the work place. Forty years ago most Black women were either domestic workers or teachers. That was the way to go. Segregation closed most doors and those that remained were closed by sexism. But the picture has changed. The top occupations for Black women today, according to the Department of Labor is: nursing aides, orderlies and attendants (481,000). They are followed by cashiers (349,000), secretaries (287,000), Retail sales workers (187,000), Cooks (166,000), registered nurses (150,000), janitors and cleaners (149,000), teachers (148,000), sales supervisors and proprietors (112,000).

While these figures represent the number of women in the work force it must be remembered that there are more than 158,000 Black-women owned businesses in America with gross revenues of $6.5 billion dollars. Black women in business account for more than 40 percent of the Black owned Businesses in America.

An increase in the education of Black women has resulted in much of their success.

More than 62 percent of women who graduated from high school went to work in 1995. Those who had at least a B.A. found that 83 percent went to work.

The picture is clear. The Black woman of the 90's is more educated, earns more money and is more likely to land a decent job than ever before.

However, there are some tradeoffs that every woman must consider.

Women struggling to compete in the job market find themselves in the awkward position of trying to be a competitor in the work place, mother and wife. Too often their children and husbands are forced to compete with their careers for quality time. Too often the family loses.

The problems are staggering. Single parents head 48 percent of the eight million Black families in America. Increasing divorce and teen-sexual activity is a major contributor to this problem. It looks worse when we consider that Hispanics which generally have larger families have only 25% female headed households, 14% for whites and 13% among Asians and Pacific Islanders. As the number of female headed householders increases so does the poverty rate as 53 % of female headed households end up in poverty.

The most endangered entity in our community is the family. Like the daughters os Zelophehad in the text, today's women must exercise their rights to extent that they do not negatively impact their family.

Both men and women must reassess the importance of family stability over possessions. Our women must not accept female headed homes as an acceptable alternative but actively seek to improve upon their situation. Working wives must make tough decisions if they discover their careers competing with their husbands and children and their families lose more often than they win. The African-American woman must also do everything possible to promote, educate and mature the next generation of Black men or run the risk of not having a peer within the race without stepping outside of their sphere of acceptable mates.

That is a challenge that an increasing number of Christian women are accepting every day as they reevaluate their "place" in the order of things.

The Woman's Place Before God

The Black Woman's place in the family is that of an equal helper to her husband and mother to her children.

The Black woman's place in the social order is that of a citizen of equal worth that receives equal protection under the law and equal pay and opportunity in the work place.

But what is the woman's place before God?

When God looks down upon human kind he does not see a woman or man. He only sees a child of God. An heir to the kingdom of God.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God is an equal opportunity provider!

Receiving Blessings from God is not just a man's thing, because God is an equal opportunity provider!

I hear Hannah talking to the Lord. "If you give me a child, I'll bring him back to you!"

I hear Esther talking to the Lord. "If you save my people from destruction and persecution!"

I hear Ruth talking to Naomi. "Your people shall be my people. And your God shall be my God!"

What God does for one, he'll do for the other.

We like to talk about Job, but what about Mrs. Job. Job lost his family, but so did Mrs. Job. Job lost all of his wealth, but so did Mrs. Job. But when it was all over God blessed Mr. and Mrs. Job with more than they had before.

We like to remember that God saved Noah on the Ark, but what about Mrs. Noah? She was on the ark too! What God does for one he'll do for another.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "It is no secret what God will do. What he's done for others he'll do for you. With arms wide open, he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God will do!"

Our place before God is to worship him with lifted holy hands!

Our place before God is to bow down before him and acknowledge him as Lord!

Our place before God is to serve him with our mind, body and soul!

Our place is to live among humankind so the spirit flows freely.

I don't know about you, but "Every time I feel the spirit...I will pray!"

Our place is to humble ourselves at the cross of Christ.

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

Baby Talk

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 10, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."1 Corinthians 13:11

Introduction

Have you ever talked baby talk? Most parents, especially mothers, have talked baby talk to new borns. Theoretically, baby talk is an adult's way of bridging the gap between what is perceived as an adult way of comprehending reality and that of a toddler. Baby talk recognizes that most infants around 13 months old can use five to 10 words. At about 18 months their vocabulary has grown to about 100 words. Thus, those who try to communicate with babies use baby talk to compress the adult experience into the 100 words or less that a baby understands.

Sometimes baby talk can get down right silly. One wonders if babies lay in their cribs and wonder at the strange way in which adults talk to them. Perhaps they marvel at the funny sounds they make or cute little faces they make trying to make them laugh. Most of the adult's communication with a baby is designed to get a response, usually a smile or a giggle. Sometimes it appears that baby gives in and pastes on a smile or forces out a giggle to patronize the adult who won't go away otherwise.

Babies talk to us in a number of ways, the first of which is crying. For newborns, it's the only way they can tell you they're hungry, wet, tired, uncomfortable or sick. As the months go on, babies' communication skills broaden as they begin to babble, coo, laugh and squeal. By the end of the first year they may even have a vocabulary of two or three words.

Parents who attempt to communicate with babies learn special ways to "talk" to them. They sing or hum songs, make silly faces, or play games. Often they use a different voice to talk higher pitched, slower, or in other unique ways so that the baby knows they are directing their attention toward him. Parents speak to babies in simple sentences, often repeating words or phrases. Simple rhymes and stories are also told to babies in a way that they will understand.

Young Christians, despite their age, need baby talk. They do not understand everything about the Christian life therefore those who share the experience with them must be able to help them grasp the important principles of Christianity in ways

that they will understand.

There comes a time in every Christian's life, just like an infant, when he or she outgrows the need for "baby talk" or the mechanisms needed then to communicate the faith. That is the point in which the baby talk ends, the experience grows and the adult Christian emerges.

As Christians, we have experienced the full gamut of God's power and expression. When we were children we perceived it one way. Today, we see it another way. Then we thought as children. Now we see the fullness of God's glory and rejoice in it completely.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians in Corinth about the new to mature in the faith.

The Corinthians were babies in the faith. As babies they understood the Christian life as babies. The sought after that which they understood.

The main issue that Paul addressed was their pursuit of spiritual gifts instead of lasting spiritual character. The Corinthians had heard the testimonies of those who had experienced the power of Pentecost. They had seen and heard of the miraculous things that were done by the faithful as a result of the Pentecost experience and they sought those gifts. They understood the Christian life to be the intertwined with the acquisition of spiritual gifts.

They sought the spiritual gifts of tongues, knowledge and prophecy. They raised them to a level so high that they became identified with salvation itself. To exercise the gift of tongues meant a believer had been saved. To exercise the gift of knowledge or prophecy or discerning spirits meant believers were living the Christian life. The pursuit of these gifts consumed the sum total of the Corinthian experience. It became a subject of excitement and controversy in their ranks.

Paul took three chapters to respond to the issue. In chapter 12 he identifies the gifts. He spelled out their source, which is God and their operation. He also noted that everyone would not receive the same spiritual gift. Some may receive only one while others may have multiple gifts. In chapter 13 he points out that spiritual gifts are a means to achieve an end but not an end in themselves. Learning to live the life of love is the primary goal of Christians. The exercise of gifts is considered secondary. Gifts, designed for a special purpose would cease but living the life of love would continue.

The Corinthians, like little children, understood the Christian faith only in the context of the spiritual gifts. This is not knowledge in general or prophecy in general; this is the "gift of knowledge," the "gift of prophecy," the "gift of tongues" that he is talking about. These were the three favorite gifts at Corinth. They were making much of them. Paul was telling them that as important and God-given as these gifts are they were never intended to last in contrast to love, which never quits.

Prophesying is the gift of unveiling the mysteries of God, making known to man these radical secrets about humanity and society that are revealed in the Scripture

which the secular world can never discover.

The gift of tongues is the gift of supernatural utterance of a language never learned in praise and thanksgiving to God. It is called glossolalia, the ability to speak a language, a true language, that was never learned.

The gift of knowledge is the ability to grasp a great range of Biblical truth, to systematize it and to know it, and it too is a great gift. But of the three, Paul says, tongues will absolutely cease. This is because tongues is a "sign" gift, given as a sign to unbelievers, designed to arrest their attention. When that is accomplished there is no further need for the gift, so it ceases in the individual.

Many of the spiritual gifts, such as tongues, were given to the church in its "baby" period. A time when people needed to see miraculous occurences to believe. As the word of God became more readily available the gifts gradually faded. Thus Paul writes: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child," There is nothing wrong with that. Children are supposed to act like children; everybody expects them to, and it would be folly and a shame if they did not. Paul says he did what is expected of children when he was a child, but, " when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

He put away childish things because men and women move toward maturity in the faith and therefore these things were no longer needed. Now what Paul is saying, of course, to these Corinthians is that the mark of maturity is the ability to love, to love the unlovely, the selfish, the distasteful, the ungrateful, and to not let that change your attitude or your actions toward them but to keep on working fully for their best interests.

Those who place a great deal of importance upon the acquisition of and exercise of gifts are being childish in their approach to the faith. Those who have matured in the faith should put away childish things.

Childish Chistians

Today, there are many in the church who approach their faith with a childish attitude. Childishness is different from childlike. Childlike refers to humble and innocent. Childish refers to immaturity. In this respect there are many whose spiritual development is not as it should be.

Many believers resemble children at Christmas. As they open packages of toys they tear open each gift feverously, play with it for a while then discard it as they run to other gifts. If a sibling has a gift then they want to play with their gift for a while. The entire morning is a frantic jump from one gift to the other.

Likewise there are many believers that are seeking the most exciting gift they can receive as a result of their new found faith. The Pentecostals tell them that speaking in tongues and the working of miracles and wonders is a great gift. Many new believers run to play with that gift for a while. Another denomination promotes the gift of healing and a group of believers runs to play with that gift. Many jump from denomination to denomination to play with the gifts of others in the faith. In the

process, many miss the whole purpose for the gifts in the first place, which was to help win souls to Christ.

Lacking maturity, too many today still approach their faith in a childish way:

RATTLERS: Lacking a full comprehension of the world around them, babies are fascinated with anything that moves and makes noise at the same time. They enjoy listening to the sound. There are many Christians whose maturity in the faith has only reached the level of rattlers. They are fascinated by nearly anything that sounds good or makes noise. Thus, many are running from one place to the other looking for the sound. Preachers with the right sound! Choirs with the right sound! Hymns and devotionals that have the right sound. Such believers are impressed only with the sounds.

PACIFIERS: Pacifiers keep babies satisfied. A pacifier takes a baby through the motion of nursing but actually gives them nothing. So it is with many believers who get themselves caught up in religious activities that appear to nourish them but actually take them through the motions without giving them anything. Many have focused on worshipping with their hands pointed a certain way. Others suggest a certain position when they pray. Still others emphasize reading the bible from a certain position as a source of strength. These only serve to pacify and occupy believers with a form and style but give them no substance.

BABY FOOD: Baby food is strained and restricted. Because babies were not able to chew their food many in past generations would chew the food for their children then put it in their mouths. Thus some babies were able to eat meat or greens or cornbread, but only after someone had someone chewed it first. There are many today who have not grown to the point that they can read and study the bible for themselves. Despite the availability of bibles and technology they still depend on others to digest the word of God for them and tell them what it says. Thus they are always vulnerable to the vast interpretations of others because they do not study the word for themselves. What they receive is tasty. What they receive is just as assorted as the food that others appear to get, except that it has been chewed over so much that the real meaning of the message is often lost.

Paul told the Corinthians that their thirst for the exciting and disdain for the weightier matters of the faith identified them as babies in the faith.

However, those who have matured in the faith are no longer impressed with rattlers. They do not chase after preachers and choirs that have the right sound. They are more impressed with the message than the sound. Neither are they impressed with pacifying rituals that are meaningless and powerless in times of peril. They are impressed with those matters of the faith that bring them closer to God in a real and meaniful way. Moreover, they have learned to appreciate the value of studying the word for themselves rather than receiving their information second hand.

Those who have matured in the faith have put away childish things.

When we see God fully!

There is a sense of joy that a beliver receives when he or she has finally been able to see and understand God for themselves.

Those who have had an experience with God are not moved by the external, because they have learned that the true believer has the spirit of God in his heart and soul.

There are many things we did when we were children that are still good, but are no longer valuable to us as mature believers in Christ.

There was a time we played house and made mud pies out of the wet dirt and made icing out of the dry dust! But when we became men and women, we put away childish things!

There was a time when we made dolls from Coke bottles and combed hair made of seaweed string! But when we became men and women, we put away childish things!

There was a time when we made play houses out of card board boxes and punched holes in the sides to make windows. But when we became men and women we put away childish things!

There was a time when we rolled tires down the street and filled them with dirt to immitate the exhaust. But when we became men and women, we put away childish things!

There was a time when we rode broom handles and told ourselves they were horses. But when we became men and women we put away childish things!

Even in the faith there was a time when the choir had to rock and the preacher had to roll for us "feel" something in a worship service! But When we became spiritually mature we found God in every rock and every time the thunder rolled!

When you know God for yourself you come to understand that it is not in the waving of our hand or in the wagging of our tongues, but in the purity of our faith that God comes.

When God comes, things change!

When God moves, things happen!

When God speaks, the world listens!

When God walks, the earth keeps silent!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that I know God for myself!

I know him because I tried him!

I tried him for myself!

When you try him, you find out that faith in him is not a children's game but serious business!

It is so serious that He was willing to come to this earth. Die on an old rugged cross and arise again after three days!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know he's alive!

I know he lives because I can feel him in my heart!

No. 649-Inspiration

Getting Back With God, After the Beep!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 16, 1997

SCRIPTURE:" I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not." Isaiah 66:4 "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isa 65:24

Introduction

Have you ever tried to call someone but the closest you came was their answering machine? One of the most frustrating experiences is to play telephone tag with an answering machine. Some of our friends have been very creative with their messages. There are messages that play gospel music in the background. There are some that recite, what seems like, scores of bible scriptures before you can leave your message. There are singing messages, dramatic messages and even humorous messages. There are messages that are so long, that you don't have time to leave a message. Then there are those that are short and to the point: "I'm not here. Leave a message after the beep."

Since their creation in the 1980's answering machines have become an integral part of the information age. Nearly every office has an answering device of some kind. Someone decided to put a name on our ritual of leaving answering machine messages and decided to call the messages "voice mail." We are obviously creatures of modern technology.

Gone are the days when a telephone was simply a number pad from zero to nine. Now we must be familiar with features like call waiting, call transferring, speed dialing to a bank of coded numbers, last number redial, three way calling, the star button for faxes, connections to computer modems, voice mail menus, and much more. Things probably will not get better either.

If you call any major company, brace yourself for the inevitable menu. Many school systems, even many local businesses all have answering machines. Sometimes we feel like throwing a party when we actually hear a live person on the other end. Glasbergen, a cartoonist in THE WALL STREET JOURNAL posted a cartoon a while

back that posed the question of whether it is possible for a man call home from work and hear his wife's recorded voice say, "Hi, this is your wife. To find out what's for dinner, Press 1. To apologize for what you said last night, Press 2. To say I love you, Press 3. If you would like to speak with me personally, Press 0 and wait. I will be with you shortly!"

These are busy times in which we live. Playing telephone tag is getting to be a way of life. Beepers, once the tools of doctors and highly placed individuals are now common place. It is getting harder and harder for us to catch up with each other.

How difficult is it for God to get in touch with you? Is it possible that we have so crowded our hurried schedules that even God has problems getting in touch with us? Do we play telephone tag with God? At the appointed time when God generally speaks to us, does he get a message instead that says: "Sorry, I missed you at prayer time, but leave a message after the beep!" Does it say, "Sorry, I couldn't be at church to hear your message, I was tired, but leave a message after beep Lord, and I will get back to you later."

As Christians, we always make time available for God We never get too busy to hear from him or make room for him in our lives. We study our bibles. We listen to the preached word and we create space in our day to talk to God. Most importantly we always make time for him to talk to us. What he has to say is too important to hear....after the beep.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he reminds Israel of the ways God has tried to respond to the needs of mankind and man's thoughtless response.

This last section of the book of Isaiah covers the final events of world history, and closely parallels the book of Revelation. The book of Isaiah is in many ways a miniature Bible. It divides like the Bible. The Bible has 66 books, and Isaiah has 66 chapters. The Old Testament has 39 books, and the first division of Isaiah has 39 chapters. The New Testament has 27 books, and the second half of Isaiah has 27 chapters. The theme of the last of Isaiah is the theme of the last of the Bible: the end!

Yet before the end, God looks at the people of Israel and tracks the way he has attempted to respond to their need and their empty response. Though God has attempted to contact them through prophets and messengers for hundreds of years they have virtually ignored him. He has repeatedly attempted to minister to the people yet they have turned a deaf ear. This prompts God, as he considers the future state of believers, to say, "I called them but they would not answer." In Isaiah 65:24 he remembers notes that in the future state believers will be of such that they will know that before they can call, the answer will be en route.

Their desire to build altars, make animal sacrifices and concentrate on the ritual is the final element of frustration for God. In Isaiah 50:2, God asked Israel to give a reason it did not answer his calls. Here he said, "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot

redeem? or have I no power to deliver?"

Israel frustrated God by not answering his call, although he always answered their prayers.

Too Busy for God

Most believers live at a fast pace. Our days are spent in a series of short intervals in which we gather and exchange information, tie loose ends and make "show your face" appearances. For the most part the days are gone when we sat quietly on the porch for an entire afternoon or other meditative activities. We are busier than we have ever been. Even our off days and rest days are busy.

That requires every believer consciously to work to create time for God. Often God has something to say to us but we are too busy to hear him. He even leaves us messages but we fail to get them. We are getting so busy that we have pushed God right out of our daily calendars.

What is our relationship to God? How do we respond when he calls? Some respond in a variety of ways:

BUSY SIGNALS: There are some whose lines stay busy. Sometimes it's because they are constantly on the phone. At other times it is because their phone is off the hook. No one can get a call through. The receiver is off the hook.

When God calls many of us simply cannot hear him. Either our line is busy or our phone is off the hook. Saul was a busy man. He busied himself persecuting the Jews. God needed to talk to him but he could never get through. It took an experience on the Damascus Road to get him to put the phone back on line. If we intend to hear from God, we must put the phone on the hook or have some appointed time in which he knows the line will be clear.

CALLER ID: The caller I.D. is a device that allows a phone subscriber to see the phone number and sometimes the name of the person making a call. The subscriber decides whether to answer the call based on the identity of the person calling.

There are some who anticipate that they are receiving a call from God and try to avoid him by not answering. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve tried to avoid God after they ate the forbidden fruit. They did not want to hear from God when they realized he was coming. There are many today who consciously avoid hearing from God. They won't read a bible, attend a bible study, or listen to the preached word. They try to hide from God.

LISTENERS WHO DON'T ANSWER: There are many who listen to messages as we record them on their answering machines. They turn the volume up high and stand next to the phone and listen to every word as callers fumble to leave concise messages that get their point across. They view such calls as unwanted interruptions. They come at a time when we don't want to listen to what the caller has to say or talk with them about anything. As Jonah listened to God's message to go to Ninevah, he did not want to pick up the phone. He did not want to go and avoided God as long as he could. It took three nights in the belly of a fish before he realized that it is not good

to try to avoid God.

Yet there are times when many of us hear the messages that God leaves for us, but we won't pick up the phone. We are too occupied to respond. His call will usually indict us, or enlist in yet another time-consuming service. We know God is trying to get in touch with us but we just don't have time to deal with him. We listen to his message and decide we will get back with him later.

THOSE WHO NEVER GET BACK: There are many who seldom answer their calls even if they are on an answering machine. Some machines hold thirty or more messages. Some messages can be as long as two minutes. When some consider that it will take them nearly an hour just to listen to all their messages they dread playing them back. That results in full voice mail boxes and answering machines. The receiver has the message but is slow to answer. By the time he or she actually decides to call back, the occasion for the call has passed.

Israel, once in the promised land, received many messages from God. For 150 years they received warnings from God that destruction loomed. As a succession of prophets gave the same message repeatedly, the nation never "got back!" When they finally decided to answer it was too late.

There are many who dread how much time it will take to get back with God. Worship is time consuming. Prayer is time consuming. Service is time consuming. They place God's calls in their box of "good intentions" but never get back to him.

We must strive to leave the line open so God can get through and if by some chance we miss his call we must never hesitate to get back with him.

The Lord may call us to give us a blessing, we need to pick up phone!

The Lord may call us to give us a healing, we need to keep the line clear!

The Lord may call us to commission us for service. Our response should not be to stand by the phone and ignore him, but to say "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me!"

When We Call God...

Fortunately God does not respond to our calls they way we respond to him.

God does not use heavenly Caller I.D. Box to see if the call is coming from you and decide whether or not he wants to hear from you.

He does not listen to our prayers and thoughts and play like he is not at home.

Neither does God hesitate to answer us. There is no box of unreturned calls in heaven.

There won't be a recorded voice in heaven that answers: "for blessings press 1. For healings press 2. For Forgiveness press 3. To speak to God himself press G.

When we call God it won't matter what type of phone you use. Down here the recorded voice says press 1 if you have a touch tone phone. If you have rotary phone stay on the line. But when we call heaven, it won't matter what type of phone we use. It won't matter whether we are old fashioned or modern, the Lord will answer prayer!

Consider the little preschooler whom they had told in school about using the

telephone. The teacher said if there is an emergency, dial "911" on the phone. The little boy always had trouble in class because he could not tell a six from a nine. One day his mother became ill and dropped to the floor the little boy began screaming and picked up the phone and dialed the emergency. Each time he dialed he kept pushing 6-1-1. Nothing happened. He couldn't remember everything his teacher said but he remembered that his Sunday school teacher said when you are in trouble call God. He picked up the phone and started pushing the only number he could remember correctly. Instantly a neighbor who heard the boy screaming came in the front door. Others swept in to help. Someone asked "What number did you call?" The boy said "I couldn't remember the number I just kept pushing the one." He didn't get the emergency line but he dialed right into heaven. Because he dialed God's hot line: One for the father, One for the Son and One for the Holy Ghost!

Sometimes God answers even before we call. That's why Isaiah said, "before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear!"

Sometime God sends the answer even when we don't call. We rarely pick up the phone!

When the world was in trouble, God sent an answer before they called.

When the world was in trouble, he sent prophet after prophet but every message went unanswered!

Then God decided to stop calling. He would send the Word in person. He sent Jesus to deliver the message. God still loves you!

Jesus came and lived among men, but they didn't get the message!

He healed the sick and raised the dead, but they didn't get the message!

But when he died out on Calvary, the Sun refused to shine! Dead saints walked from their tombs. Somebody shouted out, 'Surely, surely, he must be the Son of God!"

After three days and nights he arose from the grave!

Today, you can call him in the morning!

Call him in the noonday. Call him at the midnight hour!

No wonder the songwriter said "Jesus is on the mainline tell him what you want! Call him up and tell him what you want!

Call Him!

Call Him!

...and tell him what you want!

No. 650—Youth

The Man Behind The Curtain

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 23, 1997

SCRIPTURE:It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isaiah 40:22,27-28

Introduction

Have you ever felt you were being ignored? We feel ignored when our input, advice, opinion or directives are not considered. Sometimes we feel ignored on the job. Those are the times that work they post schedules that make life difficult for you despite your complaints to the contrary. Some employers feel ignored when work rules are posted but broken by employees regularly. Parents often feel ignored when children break household rules or if a spouse takes actions without considering the opinion of the other. Even children feel ignored when their problems, complaints or feelings seem to make little difference in family decisions. No one likes being ignored. Everyone likes to feel wanted and appreciated. Each wants to know that they are an important player in every circumstance in which they involve themselves.

Many people suffer from the "Oz" syndrome. In the popular movie "The Wizard of Oz" Dorothy, The Scarecrow, The Tin Man, The Lion and Toto all went to see the Wizard of Oz. They came into the throne room of the great and powerful Oz. The splendor and beauty of the room awed them. They trembled and shook when they saw the great gusts of smoke and fire burst forward and heard the powerful voice of the "Wizard" himself. However, Toto became curious and went behind the giant curtain. He found a small man speaking into a microphone, feeding bellows and feverishly creating the illusion that the others saw. Once discovered, the Wizard said "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain." Then Dorothy and the others stopped placing their hopes in the Wizard of Oz. They discovered that the man behind the curtain was not the "Great and Powerful Oz" but simply a man who was lost in Oz like themselves.

There are many today who have difficulty believing, trusting and serving God because they suffer from the Oz syndrome. They either believe or expect to find out

anytime that the man behind the curtain is not real or not all that he is cracked up to be. They live their lives as if the words of the Wizard applied today: "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

As Christian youth it is important for each to remember that God is real. There is no point in our lives when we will grow up and discover that the man behind the curtains of heavens is actually nonexistent or powerless to respond to our particular needs. We know God is real for we can feel him in our soul!

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he reminds Israel of the omnipotent nature of God.

Israel received great words of hope and encouragement from God through the prophet Isaiah that Great blessings awaited them once their dark period of exile was over. He warned the people not to turn to idol Gods that are powerless, but to remain faithful to the one and true living God.

Thus, at verse 22 Isaiah reminds Israel of God's powerful presence in the universe. We clearly understand that God sits high over the universe hidden by the curtain of the heavens managing the universe. He is in complete control of the forces of nature, the laws of science and the movement of the stars, planets, galaxies and solar systems. Our mere existence, in comparison to the universe is like grasshoppers, even then God is mindful of our presence and thoughts.

At verse twenty-seven Isaiah challenges believers not to feel that God is so big, busy and occupied that their actions escape him. Though he is mighty and powerful and sits behind the curtains of heaven, nothing done by anyone escapes his notice, whether it is good or bad. Thus, Isaiah reminds them that God does not tire, sleep or fumble his job as master of the universe. Nothing we do or say escapes his observation. "There is no searching his understanding" (v28). There is no way for us to understand how he does what he does.

While we can't understand how God does what he does, it is important that we understand that he does exist. Though far away in terms of miles, he is close enough to know us, hear us and respond to our need.

Two Important Questions

Today, youth should be aware that the world will tempt them to ignore God. They will attempt to persuade them that God either is powerless or does not care about their actions Youth will be urged, by mischievous friends, to break rules and flirt with lawlessness for thrills and pleasure as if God did not exist. To resist the temptations of ungodly friends youth need to know the answer to two of the most troubling questions .Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Paul writing to the Romans urged all believers not to be influenced by world, as if there was no God, but to live above the world in a life-style that is clean and decent.

Romans 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

God is real and his truth is everlasting!

God is real and his mercy is unending!

God is real and his vengeance is sure!

Where is the line?

Since God is real, then youth must know the answer to the second question to avoid being trapped into ungodly acts, “At what point does God act to punish me for wrong doing?” “Can I get away with venial sins (small ones) as long as I do not commit mortal (big) sins? How far can I go?

We might find the answer to that question when we consider Sammy’s Guard dog as an example. Sammy was a local businessman who had a warehouse full of electronic devices in the neighborhood. He built no fences around the warehouse. Neither did he install a burglar alarm system. He bought a Doberman and put him on the grounds. Then he took lime and drew a white line to mark his property. At first the youth of the neighborhood were wary of the big dog. However, he never barked when the passed. He appeared happy. His tail wagged. Sometimes they even threw rocks at him and he ran to hide. They thought Sammy was silly wasting good money on a dog that never barked, growled or bite anyone. One night they decided to slip into Sammy’s warehouse to steal a few of his electronic games. It would be easy. There was no burglar alarm, only the dog that never barked. As the boys came to the street, they tossed pebbles at the dog. He only tucked his tail and ran. Amused, the boys crossed the lime line on the property. Instantly the dog began to growl and bark. He became ferocious and chased after them. When they left the property the dogged started wagging his tail and sat back down. His actions were mysterious. The boys were baffled. What they did not know is that the dog had been trained to be docile and friendly, until someone crossed the line. When they tried to break in the warehouse...they crossed the line.

Many youth today react to God in the same way. They are amused at the fact that there is a God in the heavens. He is cute but powerless to interact in their daily situations. They know he is there but his presence does not intimidate them. Sometimes they joke about him. Sometimes they do crazy things right in front of him just to see how he reacts. They will glance at pornographic material and see if he reacts. They will cheat on a test and see if anything happens. They will curse or use a vulgar word or two, then wait for the reaction. Soon, many get the impression that God will not bite. They get bold. They skip church or come to church and write notes, sleep or hide outside. Some get bolder. They engage in sex. Some steal. Some talk back to their parents, defy authority and break the rules.

Where is the line? At what point do we anger God with our actions? We anger God any time we break his moral law. The line is drawn in the word of God. 1 John 3:4

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." For example, if we drink, smoke, use illegal drugs or engage in sex outside of marriage we commit sins against the body. Any unclean act involving the body is described as "fornication." 1 Corinthians 6:18- 19 "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

Whenever we break any of God's laws we cross the line. There are no little sins that are OK and big ones that are bad, every sin carries the same punishment, Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death.."

Those who break God's rule cross the line. Once the line is crossed there is a punishment for sin.

The Man Behind the Curtain

Finally, we must consider that while God is behind the curtain of the heavens observing us, he doesn't focus only on our sins. He also knows our troubles and trials.

He is not simply looking for our mistakes, but he is concerned about our hopes and dreams.

He is not a God who searches for our negatives, but he is a God who helps us discover our positives.

When the woman at the well confronted the master, she discovered that not only was he concerned about her sin, but he gave her another chance. When she met the man behind the curtain she ran everywhere telling people, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

In Psalm 139 David said the man behind the curtain knows all about me because "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

Whenever you attend a play you will notice that an opening and closing of the curtain separate the acts. We never see him, but there is a man backstage who raises and lowers the curtain. Though we do not see him, we know he is there, because we see the curtain rise and fall.

However, there are some scenes in a play when the curtain does not close, the lights simply go out. The scene is being changed. When the new scene has been rearranged, the man behind the curtain gives the signal and the lights come up on a brand new scene!

In the drama of life, it is good to know that there is a man behind the curtain.

Every now and then the lights go out. The stage gets dark. Some think it's all over and give up.

But there is a man behind the curtain who knows my life's script. He knows it's not all over.

He knows I am having a scene change!

When the stage is set the lights come on a brand new scene!

That's what Paul meant when he said in 2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

There was a time when I disobeyed God and enjoyed it, but my scene changed!

There was a time when I ran wild in the world, but I had a scene change!

There was a time when I do not respect God, but I had a scene change!

One day in my life, the man behind the curtain brought the lights up on a brand new scene that world had never seen!

One day in Jerusalem, the lights went out. The people thought the drama had ended. The sky was dark! The sun refused to shine. They thought it was all over.

But Early Sunday morning, the man behind the curtain ordered the lights up!

And Jesus, arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm glad there is a man behind the curtain!

When trouble comes my way, he doesn't let the curtain fall, but brings the lights up on a brand new scene!

When sickness comes my way, the man behind the curtain did not let the curtain fall, but brought up the lights on a band new scene!

I'm glad to know that there is a man behind the curtain!

God is still on the throne!

No. 651-Inspiration

The Rest Of The Story

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 30, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. Mark 15:37 Mat 28:6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Matthew 28:6

Introduction

Have you ever sat reading your favorite book or watched a broadcast only to be interrupted before it ended? Nothing is more frustrating than getting part of the story, yet we are often interrupted just as the final minutes of the story unfolded. We never really feel comfortable until someone fills the blanks and tells us the rest of the story! While it is frustrating to know we do not have the whole story, it is even more frustrating to think we have the story only to find out that while what we had was true, it was not the whole story!

Paul Harvey is a famous radio commentator whose daily news broadcasts often contain short biographies of great individuals. Generally, Harvey tells the stories of hundreds of Davids as they wage their wars against life's Goliaths. They contain the stories of students who were failures in school who picked themselves up and later became millionaires. Once he told the heartbreaking story of Wilma Rudolph. He painstakingly described how she was crippled as a youth but could not walk. Then in his unique style, Harvey told how Rudolph mustered the energy and will to push herself to the limit and win the 1960 Olympics in track and field. He even spoke of the boy whom they doomed to failure because he stuttered then miraculously became James Earl Jones, the voice Darth Vader and CNN. The point of Harvey's litany of success stories is that many of life's millions of personal stories may start with a dark and hopeless future. Poverty, crime and social circumstance may make life difficult. The world however, cannot draw conclusions about any person however, until they write the final epitaph. We must wait to get the rest of the story.

Our lives are open books. We are like novels unfolding every day. Each day's events are recorded in a journal in glory. Every year concludes a chapter. Without a doubt our life's story would make a great read. A little drama. A little action. A little romance. Some could be rich if we would sell our story for use on the CBS Sunday night movie. Sometimes folks tell their story while they are still writing it. Mike Tyson's life story was made into a movie. But the story was not over. The part about his imprisonment and return to the ring was not in the book. They did not get the rest

of the Story. When Michael Jackson was in his early 20's books were written about his story. That was before "Thriller", Ms. Presley and his new baby. They didn't get the rest of the story.

In our own lives we have a story to tell. Many who knew us in high school or just a decade ago remember that story about our lives. What they know is probably true. But it will not be an accurate account until they know the rest of the story.

As Christians we recognize that our story is unfolding every day. Many of us have some dark chapters of failure and frustration. However, most of us can proudly talk about the point in our lives when we crawled out of the darkness into the light. This new light that we have discovered came through our faith in Jesus Christ. "I was lost but now and I am found. Blind but now I see!" That is the rest of the story!

Exposition

This text focuses on what some thought was a terminal point in the life of Christ.

They crucified Christ on a wooden stake, pole or cross. The cruel picture we see is one of despair and tragedy. Those who watched lamented that it was an unfortunate end to a life with great prospects. It was a terminal point in Christ's life but it did not mark a termination.

His miraculous birth was a terminal point of emphasis. Along with other terminal points such as his performance of miracles and challenging of religious leaders, the terminal points in Christ's life all show points in which he seemed to have fulfilled either his mission or failed in its accomplishment.

His death was a terminal point but it did not terminate his mission.

Matthew shows the resurrection and underscores its importance to believers today. His resurrection proved that he was truly the Son of God as he said and proves the scriptures to be correct. His resurrection assures believers of their own resurrection because he arose himself.

Each of the occurrences marked terminal points in Christ's life.

All terminal points are not final. Some indicate a change for a new direction. Each of the terminal points in Christ's life charted a course for something that was to come.

Even his resurrection was not terminal, because he's coming back again!

Terminal Points

If the truth is told about us, it would reveal that whatever we are today, we are not all that we could be or should be. It would also reveal that we are a long ways from where we were. Along life's way we have both seen and heard a variety of experiences that have brought us to our present state. To truthfully describe our state however we must consider every terminal point.

SUCCESSES. Many believe that once they have achieved a great success in life that they have reached a terminal point. How much higher could they ever expect to go?

Social scientists have devised a mechanism called a "career ladder." It measures the steps one takes up the ladder in the corporate world, with being president of a major fortune 500 company being the highest goal. Some measure themselves by such ladders and strive frantically to reach each step on the ladder. Since some management levels require college degrees or other specialized training some know instantly how far they can move up the ladder. Thus some reach a point in which they are as high as they can go.

As far as they are concerned it is time to write the book!

Moses shared this experience. In Egypt he climbed the career ladder. He reached the second highest position in the land. He was prince of Egypt. In many eyes, he was in his prime! He was 40 years old, highly educated and a prince of Egypt. For many it was time to write the book! Yet any account of the life of Moses would have been incomplete if it stopped at his great successes in Egypt. The full truth of Moses' greatness was not in Egypt but in the wilderness. To know the real Moses we must see him in the wilderness and on Mt. Sinai. We must get the rest of the story! The rest of history showed God had even greater works in store for Moses! Likewise, if we think we have reached a terminal level of success...think again!

That is why Paul reminded the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

FAILURES: There are many who perceive their failures as terminal points. These moments mark the times in which they have endured a major setback. Sometimes business failure is seen as a terminal point. Bankruptcy, which marks the collapse of our personal fortunes is seen as another. Divorce, which marks the dissolution of a marriage is also viewed as a terminal point. Loss of a job or career opportunity is often viewed as a terminal experience. Moral indiscretions have sunk many to low points. There are many who have had their opportunities aborted by the tricks and plots of others, closing many doors for them. In such instances is it time to write the book? Is that the end of the story?

Joseph was a young man who enjoyed great successes in his family circle. A dreamer, he often dreamed of being great and powerful earning the allegiance and obedience of his brothers. He enjoyed the favor of his father until his brothers plotted to destroy him and threw him in a pit.

The view from the pit is often gloomy! All Joseph could see was imminent death, a tragic end to what could have been a wonderful experience! Was it time to write the book? If so, it would have missed the greatest part of his story. It would have shown us how Joseph was moved from a pit to a prison and finally to a palace!

When we experience failures, the view from the pit often makes us consider throwing in the towel. The view from the pit can be heart wrenching! It prompts considerable soul searching. That was the case with David when he sunk to a low point because of his sin with Bathsheba. But in his searching he found God. When he found God he then realized that it wasn't time to write the book!

Are there any among us that have reached such a point in life? Are there times when

we think it is all over? Have we literally hit the bottom? Is it time to write the book? Probably not. If the biblical record gives us an accurate picture, the world should wait around for the rest of the story!

SICKNESS: Sickness is often viewed as a terminal point. Many who are diagnosed with terminal diseases or crippled in accidents seem to think they have reached a terminal point. Cancer, AIDS, Sickle Cell, Heart Disease and other life threatening diseases have taken many lives. Many, once they are diagnosed with usually terminal diseases think they have reached the end. Yet is it time to write the book? There are literally thousands who have added additional chapters to their life's book as they showed courage in the face of sickness. Many lived to tell the story of their victory. Others took their tragedy as an opportunity to champion the cause.

Christopher Reeves is known to most in this generation as "Superman" in the movies. But since he was crippled in an accident he still lives an active life and is directing movies. Teddy Pendergrass is confined to a wheelchair after an automobile accident but some argue that his best singing years have come after the accident.

There are literally thousands that have won their battles with sickness. They have overcome cancer! They have walked away from deathbeds. They have defied doctors and modern medicine!

Job suffered such an affliction. He was ill, broke and sick. Though his friends and even his wife tried to get him to give up.. He decided to wait around for the rest of the story! I can hear him declare in Job 14:14 " all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

Job said I will wait for the rest of the story!

The rest of the story showed how God healed his body!

The rest of the story showed how his family finances were restored even greater than before!

The rest of the story showed him with a greater and larger family!

Hezekiah shared a similar situation. Though given his death sentence, he turned his face to the wall and asked God for 15 more years. We can't tell Hezekiah's story, without the rest of the story!

If we experience a sickness it may be a terminal point, but it's not the whole story. We must wait around for the rest of the story!

The Rest of the Story!

Anyone who attempts to tell our story, must tell the whole story. Truth is only valid in the context of completeness. We can't talk about the man or woman we once knew trying to accurately describe a person until we tell what they became after they met the Lord!

Saul's full story can't be told in the context of his life as Saul. We need the rest of the story!

The woman at the well can't be accurately described by simply saying she was an adulterer who had five husbands. We must get the rest of the story!

We can't accurately describe Mary Magdalene by saying she was a woman possessed by demons. We must get the rest of the story!

Our lives before Christ would make interesting reading, but those who study us must be sure to get the rest of the story!

Something happened in our lives when we met the Lord! What happened changed our story!

Before we met the Lord we were:

—Immoral and Immodest; Lukewarm lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God

—Worldly, Wicked and Wayward; Profane, Proud and Perverted

—Troublemakers, thieves and traitors; Unjust, unholy and unfaithful

Be sure to tell the rest of the story!

When I met the Lord I got another story to tell! It's a story of God's love. Because "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sin her my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me, now safe am I. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help! Love lifted me!

I love to tell the whole story of God's love for me!

That story doesn't stop at Bethlehem or Nazareth, we must get the rest of the story!

That story doesn't stop with the healing of 5,000 or turning water to wine. We must get the rest of the story!

That story doesn't stop with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. We must get the rest of the story!

That story doesn't stop at Calvary. Important as it is, we must get the rest of the story!

That story doesn't even stop Sunday morning, when he arose from the dead!

The rest of the story is that he's coming back again!

I want to be ready when they crown him king of kings and Lord of Lords!

I want to be ready when he comes!

No. 652—Inspiration

Searching for Heaven's Gate

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 6, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

Introduction

Have you ever had a door slammed in your face? On occasion most of us have had an experience in which doors of opportunity were closed in our faces. It may have been a job opportunity. It might have been an important career achievement opportunity. It may have even been a romantic venture that simply fizzled. Sometimes doors are closed because we are rejected. At other times doors are closed because we failed to act or acted too slowly. Sometimes doors are slammed because we simply knocked on the wrong door. We spend much of our time searching for the right doors to enter and find it completely frustrating that once we find the right one, it is closed in our face.

The world was shocked at the news that 39 people in California committed suicide last month as they postured themselves to be beamed aboard a space ship from heaven that accompanied the comet Hale-bob. The Heaven's Gate cult believed that this planet was cultured by God and humans, like plants were designed to grow and mature until they reach a point of full bloom. Jesus was a representative of the higher being who came to show humans how to align themselves to go back to the higher level once they reached a point of spiritual maturity. At that point God, called the higher level, would come to pluck specimens from his garden to take back with him to heaven. They believed there was only one window of opportunity to make it through "Heaven's Gate" in this life. The comet was their sign. They prepared themselves for their journey and waited to be beamed up to the next level. The space ship never came, but death did.

There are many people who are searching for the window of opportunity to make it to heaven. While the members of the cult were an extreme example, there are nevertheless millions who are searching for their window of opportunity unsuccessfully. While some are searching, others want to find it but are looking in the wrong places.

As Christians, we know there is only one door to heaven which is through Christ. We know the way and we know it is true. It won't be a space ship that beams us up

to glory, but we will be caught up to meet him in the sky, in the twinkling of an eye.

Looking for Heaven's Gate? Find Jesus. He is the way!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains his approaching departure, soothe the troubled hearts of his disciples.

The disciples were troubled about the prospect of Christ leaving, which he had announced in John 13:33. There he told them that where he went they would not be able to follow. That, coupled with the news that he would be betrayed, disturbed them. Those events prompted the words of John 14:1 "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." He assures them that he must leave and explains to them the reason for his departure.

The manner of his leaving would create a gateway through which all believers would be able to follow him to the realm of God. It would be the only true way that would lead them to heaven.

In John 14 Christ gives believers five reasons He must leave them:

TO PREPARE THEIR HEAVENLY HOME (1-6) He would leave them to prepare for them a place in the home of the father. The father's house is large and grandeur, even large enough for all of believers to have mansions. Since the father would be present himself it would be more than simply a house, the presence of the father would make it a heavenly home. The heavenly home would provide "Mansions" or residences for every believer.

TO HELP THEM KNOW THE FATHER (7-11): Phillip, who always wanted to "see" to believe, is reminded that seeing Christ is the same as seeing the father. Christ provides believers with the ability to truly know the father by knowing him. The way to know that he is God is to consider the nature of his works: John 14:11 "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

TO GIVE THEM ACCESS THROUGH PRAYER (12-14): In leaving, Christ grants every believer the capacity to pray to God, in his name and expect an answer to their prayer. The great works they witnessed in acts and even more miraculous deeds would be possible through prayer in his name. John 14:13 "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

TO SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT (15-26): In leaving, Christ would send them the Holy Spirit to serve as a "comforting" presence. The Holy Spirit would be the great comforter. John 14:18 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

TO BRING THEM PEACE (27-31): The troubled disciples would find that Christ offers those who followed him peace of mind and spirit. John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

As the way, the truth and the life, Christ therefore becomes the only way into the

marvelous presence of God, the only way to receive granted prayers, the only way to assure the presence of the Holy Spirit and to bring peace into troubled hearts.

Walking In the Way

Today there are many believers who are troubled spiritually. They are seeking assurances that they are going in the right direction, following the right religion and thus aligning themselves to receive the great blessings of divine grace.

Thomas followed Christ for three years but was unsure who Christ was or whether he was walking in the way. On at least three occasions Thomas exhibited doubt: at Lazarus' resurrection, Christ's resurrection and here. He had been in the presence of Christ and walking in the way himself for three years but did not know it. When Christ explained to him that he knew the way he argued that he did not.

There are many today who share his dilemma. They are walking in the way but do not know it. Many are unsure of their salvation. They are looking for something more. They think the present course is too easy thus they search for what appears to be truth.

Many have run the complete circuit of religious beliefs with a dibble of this and a dab of that. Some have mixed so many beliefs together that they have developed hybrid beliefs that are distant from their present state.

We have begun our journey on the right way. We should stay on that path. What is that way?

WE BELIEVE IN CHRIST: We believe that Jesus is Christ and God raised him from the dead and that he is presently sitting on the right hand of God. We believe he is coming back again. If you believe that, then you going in the right direction.

WE HAVE REPENTED FOR OUR SINS: We have turned from lives as practicing sinners. That was a time when sinned and enjoyed it. Today, we may sin but the Holy Spirit instantly convicts us and we get no real joy from sinful activities. We count on God's grace to forgive us for our shortcomings. If you believe that, then you are going in the right direction.

WE LIVE ORDERED GOD CENTERED LIVES: We live ours lives in accord with the truths of God as we strive to that which is both legal, moral and ethically advisable as we conduct our daily activities. If we are practicing this, then we are going in the right direction!

WE WORSHIP GOD REGULARLY AND STUDY HIS WORD: We regularly assemble with other saints to worship God publicly. We praise him for his goodness. We also make time to study his word with the Saints and in our private devotions so we may know him better. If you are practicing this, then you are going in the right direction!

WE WITNESS FOR HIM BY OUR SERVICE TO OTHERS: We show the love of God to the poor, needy and distressed by our actions and deeds. We feed the hungry, console the wounded, assist those in despair and work to show the love of God in the daily lives of mankind. If we are practicing this, then we are going in the right

direction!

Keep Your Life Open to God

The key to finding heaven's gate is to walk in the right way. The key to finding the right way is to follow Jesus.

A woman who was known for her active schedule, often told friends that she rarely had time for bible study or church work because there was too much to do. Her days were filled with so much activity that at the end of each day it was all she could do to make it home and drop off to sleep let alone spend a few minutes reading her bible.

In a period of one week a strange thing happened to her. Each night as she dozed off she dreamed that she saw the beautiful gates of heaven. They were huge, all 12 of them, made out of single pearls. She saw people standing in line, filing into the heavenly city. She saw herself rushing to get in the line, stopping to grab a bite to eat, then attending a quick meeting, but each time she made it to the gate it was closed.

Night after night she dreamed the same dream. Each night the door closed. Troubled, she opened her bible and began to read the words of Jesus "...but ye come by me." With her bible across her chest she dozed off to sleep. This time she sees the line again. She stood patiently in line. She wasn't in a hurry. Her thoughts were on the words "but ye come by me." When she reached the front of the line she waltzed through. Puzzled she asked her minister to explain the meaning of her two dreams.

The minister smiled and answered her very quickly "It appears obvious my dear. The gates of heaven will not close if you keep your life open to God."

Those who want to make it through heaven's gate must walk the path of the straight and narrow!

Those who want to make it through heaven's gate must be willing to:
—FOLLOW the will of God for their lives; INVOLVE themselves in the work of God
—REJOICE in the greatness of God;STUDY workings of God among men!

There is a highway that leads to heaven. It is paved with grace and mercy!

There is a road that leads to eternity. It meanders through peaceful ways!

There is a gateway that leads to God's domain, but those who step through must have a peaceful heart.

There is a path that leads to the beauties and fragrances of the King's garden.

There is a window through which we can see beams from the holy city. No wonder the song writer declared: "Beams of heaven as I go, through this wilderness below. Guide my steps in peaceful ways, turn my midnights into days."

There is a threshold over which we can cross and enter into the blessed presence of the Lord.

If you want to know how to get there, listen to the words of Jesus "I am the way!"

I am the way! This world offers you gloom. But I'm preparing a place where gloom becomes glory!

I am the way! This world offers you problems; but I'm going to a place where problems become peace!

I am the way! This world offers you tribulation; but I'm going to a place where tribulations become jubilations!

I am the way! This world offers you earthly fears; but I'm going to a place where earthly fears become heavenly fellowship!

I am the way! This world offers you darkness; but I'm going to a place where earthly darkness is transformed into the marvelous light!

This way began in the battlements of heaven!

This way walked a meandering path through the hills of Galilee!

This way cut a blood soaked path up Golgotha's hill!

This way leads to an empty tomb one Sunday morning!

If you are looking for the way: Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house there is peace and happiness!

In my father's house there is joy, joy, joy!

No. 653-Inspiration

It Will Not Return Empty

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

April 13, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isaiah 55:11

Introduction

Have you ever gone shopping for a special item only to return empty handed? What was the reason? Sometimes we had difficulty finding the item. Sometimes we found it but we did not have enough money to make the purchase. There were even times when we simply forgot what we went to buy! Returning empty handed is a sign that something went wrong somewhere! Returning empty handed is even more frustrating to those with high expectations. The more we expect to receive the deeper our disappointment when we see empty hands.

Sometimes we are warned not to come home without an item. Consider the country boy and the box of snuff. The country boy was told by his grandmother to walk up the road a piece and get her a box of Bitter Garrett Snuff, with two dots. It was a long walk to the country store and Grandma's box of snuff was running low. She gave the boy a stern warning, "You get that snuff boy, you hear? Don't you come home empty handed!" The boy made the long walk to the country store but was filled with fear when the store keeper told him that he had sold the last box a few minutes earlier. "What am I going to do?" He thought. Grandma would be furious. Remembering her words "Don't come home empty handed!" He walked five miles to a country store down by the creek. However, they were out too. With nowhere else to go, the youth walked home trembling and shaking. Just before he reached his grandmother's porch at sundown he walked over to the hedges and pulled a handful of hedge limbs and trimmed them. When he told his grandma there was no snuff she was furious. Before she could say another word he pulled out a handful of hedge limbs and gave it to her? "What is this?" She asked. "Well you told me not to come back empty handed and I could not find your snuff. So before you tell me to go and get you a switch I bought you a hand full! The grandma was so tickled she said "I ain't gon whip you this time, at least you didn't come back empty handed!"

What about God? Is He like us? Are there ever times when his promises come back empty and unfulfilled. Does God ever make us promises that he cannot keep? Does

his word ever return to him empty handed?

As Christians we have the assurance that God's word is true. If God has promised us either a blessing or a punishment, it will happen. His word will not return to him empty handed. No matter where we are or what we are doing, the grace of God will find us. If God has promised it to us, we receive it! If he has forbidden us for having it, there is nothing we can do to obtain it. One old timer summed it up this way, "God's word won't "git" until we "got" what we are suppose to get!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he explains that promises made by God will be fulfilled.

In Isaiah 54 the Word of God made striking promises to Israel. Among these great promises was the prospect that God would bless them bountifully. They were encouraged to enlarge their boundaries in expectation of the great wonders God would perform. After describing Israel as barren (54:1). Israel is told to enlarge "the place of thy tent" or its boundaries in (v2) because blessings were on the way. It was promised that they would break forth on the right and left and build great cities for the Lord, rising out of the ashes of desolation.

After the 54th chapter presented a litany of promises by God, the 55th chapter begins with an invitation to everyone that has a "thirst" for righteousness to come before God's presence (55:1) Many are making futile efforts to build godless lives that will reward them little. Thus the prophet asks in verse 2 "wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" Why do you labor for that which does not satisfy? The appeal is made to Israel: "Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (V3) God appealed to all to end their merry-go-round experience and come to him with the promise that he would provide for their needs and shower them with the blessing of happiness as well as peace of mind and soul.

Yet he warns that those who seek him should take advantage of the opportunity while it exists. Verse six says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." In essence they were challenged to take God's offer seriously and respond to it quickly."

The mystery of God's ways often confuses men who cannot understand the correlation between God's promises and the events of the earth. It appears to some that the promises are made but the results are not immediately seen. In verse 8 God explains it by saying "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" God's way of moving and acting is too lofty for us to comprehend. It is deep. It may even seem at times that what God has promised is impractical and improbable to occur, yet believers are encouraged to remember just how God operates.

The example that God gave Isaiah for Israel was that of the rain and snow. The rains and snow fall from heaven. Sometimes when they come they may be perceived differently by those upon whom they fall, depending upon their expectations.

Regardless to how they are perceived or received by humankind, they do not return to God in the same state. After having accomplished their work rain drops may vaporize and float back toward heaven but the rain drop itself does not return to God without accomplishing its purpose.

This is the example that God gave to Israel to illustrate how his Word works. If God has made a promise it goes out like rain drops from heaven. How it is received does not matter, but it will be fully realized. When God promised Noah that it would flood, the people mocked at the idea. Yet Noah, confident that God's word was true, acted upon the word of God and was saved. Even though the masses did not receive the Word, it did not return to God void. There was a flood.

Thus Israel was encouraged to know that God has promised a day of triumph for the people. His word would not return to him empty. They are encouraged to believe it and receive it.

Isaiah's message to Israel said in brief, "God has sent you a blessing, it may appear unlikely at the moment, but the blessing will not return to God undelivered.!"

Will My Blessing Ever Get Here?

There are many people today who are frustrated because they feel they are not receiving the blessings they should receive from God. When blessings seem to evade you, is there a reason? Consider the little girl who attended a church sponsored balloon release. The church decided to get the word of God to the dispirited by putting scripture verses in helium filled balloons and releasing them. As persons found the balloons and read the word of God they would be given hope. As they released the balloons, the little girl saw a single pink one and tried to get it but it dangled just above her head. She chased after it through the park but it always dangled just above her head. Finally it entangled on an electric wire and she scrambled up a nearby tree to reach for it. In hysterics her mother screamed and called her down. As the little girl began to cry in disappointment, another balloon drifted right into her hand. She opened it and read the note: "Thy soul shall be blessed..." She was happy. She wondered what the note in the pink one said. Little did she know that a devilish youth had written the verse "this day thy soul she be required of thee.." on the note and put it in the pink balloon. Had she actually climbed the tree and retrieved the balloon from power line she would have died. It was above her reach for a purpose.

There are many today who are frustrated that the blessing they seek seems to evade them. Often we even get angry with God because we can't seem to get what we want. We criticize him and doubt him because the "string" seems to dangle just above our heads. Why can't we reach it?

Those who live under the influence of the Holy Spirit know why they can't achieve certain blessings. God leads them away from certain pitfalls. The believer's prayer is "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The pink balloon, being the most beautiful and attractive is tempting, but often it may carry with it certain unseen dangers of which we are not aware. The Holy Spirit moves us in such a way that we

always get to the pink balloon too late.

What's your pink balloon? Are you single trying to find Mr. Wonderful? Miss Perfect? Are you seeking a great career opportunity that could mean riches? Is it a great promotion on the job? A position on the school team? If it has constantly evaded you, there is a possibility that it might require your soul to possess it! Getting it may cause you to lose the one trait that made you worthy to receive it, your relationship with God. That may be why your balloon never falls within your grasp.

Moreover, Christians know that whenever an opportunity evades us there is another opportunity that is heading our way. How do we know this is true? Because the word of God says: Rom 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." God has said and his word will not return unto him empty handed. If a door is closed for us, another will be opened. If we encounter a bad experience, it will work out to our advantage. We know it because the Word of God has declared it and God's word will not return to him empty!

It shall achieve its purpose

Finally we must consider that Isaiah told Israel that God's word would accomplish its purpose. It would achieve its intended end. The word, once spoken by God is inalterable. If God has said it, it will be done! It will not return to him empty!

God spoke this world into existence with both a purpose and a plan!

In answer to many of our own prayers God has given his word that it would be done! His word will not return to him void.

When God, through Moses told Pharaoh that certain plagues would come upon Egypt, though it seems impossible, God's word did not return empty. It was done.

When God told Joshua to cross the river Jordan and the waters would roll back, God's word did not return empty it was done!

When the children of Israel marched around Jericho seven times, it seemed a foolish thing, but God said it, and the walls came tumbling down!

When Abraham was told that he would have a child at the age of 100, he and his wife both laughed, but God's word did not return empty it was done!

When Elijah told Jezebel and Ahab that the skies would not see rain, they laughed, but God said it, His word did not return empty and it was done!

When God says it, it may seem impossible to us. It may seem illogical. It may seem improbable, but it will be done!

Those who are obedient to God's word should get ready for a down pour. Don't expect a shower! Get ready for a storm of blessings!

Two little boys were on their way to the Black Heritage parade. One little boy had a little small paper bag and the other had a huge shopping bag. Asked why they brought along bags of different sizes, the first boy said he knew he was little and expected only to get a few pieces of candy. The boy said he heard that every float would be throwing out candy. He felt because he was little he would get a lot so he

brought along a shopping bag.

Brothers and sister when God sends a blessing, because you are child of God bring your shopping bag!

God has sent his word of:

—ENDURANCE in the midst of adversity and his word will not return empty!

—PATIENCE in the midst of problems and his word will not return empty!

—SUPPORT in the midst of suffering and his word will not return empty!

—HOPE in the midst of hardships and his word will not return empty!

—COMFORT in the midst of confusion and his word will not return empty!

—RELIEF in the midst of our misery and his word will not return empty!

No wonder the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:105 " Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Brothers and Sisters the world pleaded for a redeemer to save it from its sins!

Then God, in John 1:14, sent the word to dwell with men.

God did not send the word for him to come back empty handed!

Don't come back until you have shown men the way!

Don't come back until you have prepared the way of salvation!

Don't come back until you have atoned for their sins!

Don't come back until you laid the true foundation!

When Jesus died on Calvary he was on his way back to God!

But he didn't go back empty handed!

He went back with his mission accomplished!

For arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 654-Inspiration

All In The Family

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 20, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

Introduction

How do the members of your family relate to you? Do you feel loved? Do you feel appreciated? Is your presence welcomed or would everyone be happier if you left? If you could not do what you do, what would be their response to you? Many are struggling to find their respective places in the family circle. Some are the family's pride and joy. Others are the black sheep. There are even times when the best persons feel that no one in the family cares about them. Occasionally everyone reaches a low point in which they yearn for understanding and support. Many expect those distant from them to be unconcerned, but they have difficulty accepting the fact that sometimes members of their own family are among those that give them the cold shoulder. Some feel so distant from members of their own family that if they were starving and had to ask certain family members for help or perish, they would rather die!

A hit television program of the 1970's and 80's was entitled "All In The Family." It featured a family headed by Archie and Edith Bunker along with a hippie son-in-law and a daughter whose elevator did not always appear to go to the top. The strange mix of ultra conservatism and liberalism under the same roof gave plenty of room for comedy as the program remained a hit for years. When the show went off the air, the Smithsonian Institute took Archie Bunker's chair and enshrined it in the National Museum.

Being a part of the family despite one's views or persuasions is important. There are some that are even unsure of their position in the family. That was the situation when the worrisome son caused many problems for the family. At school they always called him to the office. He always stayed in fights. He was sassy and showered insults on all of those around him. One day as family members discussed him, a younger sister asked their grandmother, "Grandma, do you think Jesus loves Billy Joe?" Grandma smiled and leaned back in her rocker. She said "Of course child. Jesus

loves every body?" The little girl asked, "even if when he gets suspended from school?" She continued, "Even when he says ugly things?" Grandmother defended Little Billy Joe. She said God loves all his children. Just then Billy Joe threw a rock at one of his brothers and missed. The rock flew past grandma's head and broke out the big picture window. Grandma looked at the broken glass and said, "But then, Jesus don't know Billy Joe like we do!"

Some of us have trouble being loved in our families because our families know too much about us to love us!

Fortunately for us God knows more about us than we know about ourselves and chooses to love us despite what he knows. We are part of the family of God and he loves us one and all. He is not happy about our shortcomings, but loves us anyway. Everyone in the family of God does not have the same level of maturity, talent, or spiritual strength. God knows that! That's why he loves us anyway and takes us all in the family.

As Christians, we continually praise God for taking us all into the family. He has helped us in the past and we have chosen to give him first place today. In the family of God we are not outsiders because he loves us one and all. He loves us and we love him.

Exposition

This text considers Joshua as he speaks to Israel about the importance of each family remaining loyal to God.

In previous chapters Joshua, now growing old, summoned the heads of the great families of Israel together to talk with them concerning their allegiance to God in the new land. In the new land new forms of worship surrounded them, challenging their faith. It was important that their faith in God would not depend upon the presence of a national hero figure to inspire them to allegiance. Each family should teach the principles of godliness to their children and to each succeeding generation.

In the 15th chapter therefore, Joshua summoned the leaders and "rehearsed" to them the great deeds that God has done for the people. He recounted the mighty works of God. He recounted the powerful deliverance of the people from slavery, their journey through the wilderness, their receipt of bread from heaven, the crossing of Jordan and many other miraculous acts that God has done in their lives. He warned however, that even with these great deeds as a witness to God's magnificence there were some who chose to worship idols both in Egypt and in the wilderness.

Now, in a land surrounded by Ammorites and others whose ungodly practices could influence a new generation of Israelites away from God, Joshua calls the leaders of the great clans of Israel together and urges each family clan or tribe to remain faithful to God. If, after a review of God's service to them they discover that God has not provided for their needs or has neglected their care, then they should not follow him. However, if they find that God has truly been the one true God of Israel then they should abandon all others and follow him.

Joshua concluded that his "house" which is "bayith" in Hebrew, would serve the Lord. His House referred not only to his household but "bayith" referred to his extended family or his clan or tribe as well. His clan included his immediate household, his parents grandparents, in-laws, and others who have become a part of his family by law or tradition. All of these were referred to when Joshua spoke of "my house."

He said "my house" will serve the Lord. That could be almost be assured if the heads of the family units within the clan have decided that the households within their influence would be directed toward God. The decision to follow God had to be made by the leaders of Israel's 13 clans. Joshua had already spoken for one family. The others had to follow in their decision to trust God.

Joshua called upon family leaders to encourage the fear of God in their clans. He challenged them to insist that their clan members give their allegiance to God and him alone, despite the fact that some of their fathers may have worshiped idols even while receiving blessings from God.

Keeping The Family

Today, the dissolution of the family frustrates the African-American community as we have historically known it. Greatly influenced by secular idealism many African-Americans have distanced themselves from their family network and in many cases from their loyalty and devotion to God as well.

The family, in its purest sense, is nuclear in that it has one or more persons related by blood or law under the leadership of a governor which may be a mother, father or other authority figure, all living in the same household. The governor of the household is the primary support of the household, enforces the rules and influences the tone of the life-style and spirituality that will be practiced by household members.

As members of a household mature and begin their own households the sense of family exists only to the point that they are connected to their base household for: emotional support, fellowship, financial support and moral guidance. To the extent that either of these four diminishes, the sense of family also declines. To the extent that the base household provides these three, the sense of family intensifies.

The extended family or clan consists of many households, generally influenced by one dominant personality who generally works to keep the family together by orchestrating ways to provide emotional support, fellowship and financial support for other family members. The family revolves around the base household. From it evolves family reunion, outings, weddings, celebrations and memorials. The base household is what other family members refer to as "home" no matter where they may live in the nation.

There is a direct relationship between strong families and the level of interdependence among them. Households that are independent from others in their extended family tend to be less influenced by family tradition, standards or religious beliefs. Since they are not being supported in any of the three major ways, such households tend to set their own course, generally in a different direction than that of their

traditional family.

If the African-American family is in trouble it is not because of the problems that exist outside of the family but because families have allowed the four principles that build strong families to decline, weakening their ability to inoculate family members against the secular influences.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: Is what families offer members who are frustrated, depressed, fearful, confused or otherwise emotionally barren. When there is death, sickness or crippling disease in the family ranks, family members rally to support its members for whatever length of time it takes to overcome. The need for emotional support is a link that keeps many tied to their families.

FELLOWSHIP: Is what families provide for its members. It promotes the achievements of family members. It joins in the great celebrations of family members such as weddings, house warmings, baby showers, etc. It promotes reunions, outings and other festive activities among family members. The support received from the family for such occasions is an important link that builds strong families.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Is what families give to other family members who are in a financial crises. In addition the family provides assistance in financial planning, investment and management of resources. Families help other family members with education, maintenance of the elderly and infirmed and with the burying of the dead. The support received from the family for such occasions is an important link that builds strong families.

MORAL GUIDANCE: Sense of purpose, morality and direction that families offer individuals. The family, in private, will reprimand a member that has erred while putting forth its best effort to make the best of the situation in public. The Godly family encourages respect for God, worship, prayer and a life based on the moral principles of the bible. Thus the family promotes worship attendance, bible learning activities and others that will help member develop a sense of morality. Families that receive support from their families in making morally correct choices are forever indebted to their families and indivisibly linked to them in this respect.

There is a reciprocal element as well. Families tend to respond to a family member to the degree that a specific member has responded. Those who have given help, generally get help in times of trouble. Those who share in celebrations of others generally enjoy family reciprocity. Families, as a general rule, tend to respond to members in proportion to the individual's history of response to others.

Serving The Lord

Joshua's influence in his family was based upon his role as the primary provider of support and guidance for his clan. He could say "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" because he knew that all in his family would be influenced by his direction.

Today, every head of a household should rise to repeat Joshua's decision. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Every God fearing family leader should insist that its younger members be trained in the way of the Lord by precept and example. Household leaders have the obligation to provide moral direction and religious training to their children.

We will serve the Lord because, if we don't serve the Lord our;

—LIFE has no purpose; QUESTIONS have no answers;

—PROBLEMS have no solution; LONLINESS has no comfort!

—PRAYER has no authority; PREACHERS have no message!

—LOVE has no meaning; LABOR has no reward!

Regardless of the situation the family must resolve that, "we will serve the Lord!"

We will serve the Lord because, in our time of trouble he has been our shelter in the storm

We will serve the Lord because, in our time of:

—Sorrow, he turned our gloom into glory;

—Weakness, he turned our weakness into strength

—Burdens, he took our burdens and made them light;

— Pain he took our sorrow and turned it into joy!

—Heartaches, he took our heartaches and turned them into hallelujahs!;

— Misery, he took our misery and turn them in the miracles!

—Sickness, he took our sickness and turn it into healing!

We will serve the Lord because he

—Supports me, when I'm emotionally in trouble!

—Brings me the joy of his fellowship!

—Pours out blessings upon me financially and otherwise

—He gives me moral direction!

I will trust in the Lord because he first loved me!

He loved me enough to die out on Calvary!

Yet after three days and nights he loved me enough to rise from the grave with all power in his hands!

"I will trust in the Lord!"

"I will trust in the Lord until I die!

No. 655-Mother's Day

A Mother's Mark

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 11, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." 2 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

Has there been anyone who made a lasting impression upon you? Those whose influence upon us lingers are those who have made in impact upon the direction of our lives. Sometimes these include teachers, coaches, close friends, political leaders and co-workers. Among those who have impressed us the most are our mothers. More than any single person, a mother leaves a lasting impression, for better or worse, upon a child. It is one that he or she never forgets throughout the course of life.

There is no doubt that mothers make an indelible impression upon their children. In fact, full grown men and women still find themselves repeating the basic rudiments of life they learned at their mother's knee. Consider the country mother who had 13 children. All of her children seemed to be a happy lot except child number 13. She was careful of her youngest and last son. She sheltered him and protected him. Yet no matter how she showered affection upon him he still seemed distant from the other twelve. One day, he was playing outside and came in dirty from head to toe and took his place at the dinner table. Instantly the mother went into a rage. She picked up a shoe and threw it at him, saying "If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times, never come to dinner without washing!" The boy ran into the bathroom but when he returned he was filled with smiles. There was a hickey on his head but he was smiling. He had been hit with a shoe but he was smiling. In fact he smiled all the week. Finally the mother asked him why he was suddenly all smiles. He said "When Joey got in a fight, you moled him on the head. When Alice took cookies from the jar your slapped her fingers with a ruler. When Jacob broke the window, you threw a pie pan at him. They all talked and laughed about the things you threw at them. All you ever did to me was hug me. When you hit me with that shoe, I knew I was loved just like all the others. I'll never forget that day all my life!" Mother had left her mark.

Good mothers leave their mark upon their children in a variety of ways that are often least expected. Mother's have ways of leaving marks through their wise proverbs:

"A penny saved is a penny earned."; "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."; "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!" They leave their marks through their willingness to give of themselves to support their children. The fondest memories that most have of good mothers involve instances in which mothers have sacrificed their personal pleasures for their children. They leave their marks by their the level of devotion they show to God. God fearing mothers leave pious impressions on their children. Whether or not the children adopt the same level of piety as their mother, the importance of conformity to some creed is given as their children observe them and their actions make impressions upon them that last throughout all their lives.

As Christians, we thank God for good mothers because mothers write on the hearts of their children that which the world can't erase. Good mothers write messages of love, godliness and humility that once ingrained in the spirit can never be erased. Good mothers pass their love for God to their children and grandchildren who proudly display their "mother's mark."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to Timothy attesting to the faith that he has seen in him that he once saw in both his mother and grandmother.

Paul yearned to see Timothy and he was proud of him for the display of what he described as "unfeigned faith." Faith such as that displayed by Timothy did not develop immediately. According to Paul, this great quality appeared to be a family quality. It was reflected in his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

It is generally believed that Paul met both Lois and Eunice in his first missionary journey. Obviously he knew them because he referred to them by name. He knew enough about both of them to recognize their characteristics and values as they were reflected in Timothy. What made them unique was their unwavering faith. Their faith was described as firm. An unfeigned faith will stand the trial, and it dwells in them as a living principle. Thus pious women may take encouragement from the success of Lois and Eunice with Timothy, who proved so excellent and useful a minister because of the mark left on him by both his mother and grandmother.

. Some of the most worthy and valuable servants in the faith have had to bless God for early religious impressions made upon their minds by the teaching of their mothers or other Christian relatives. Such was the case with Timothy. He was raised in the midst of God fearing parents and grandparents. When the opportunity came to become Christians they responded to the claim.

It was customary in Jewish homes for children to be taught the scriptures. It was a matter of obedience to the law. In Deuteronomy 6:7 the law states, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Thus, teaching the law was not unique, it was expected to be drilled into every youth.

However, obedience to the law did not always translate into faith. Faith was derived

through a combination of instruction and practical application. The law required the instruction, however the law could not prescribe faith. A child that learned faith learned it from observing the adults that surrounded him as they responded to real life situations and from his or her own life experiences.

The great mark that both Lois and Eunice left on Timothy was his intense faith and trust in God. It was described as "unfeigned" and unwavering. Persons who had dealings with Timothy immediately recognized the mark of his mother and grandmother on his personality. In the same manner, the faithful and prayerful Hannah left her mark of trust in God and respect for her word on her son Samuel whose life was so spiritually impressed that God called him for service as a prophet. The mark of his faithful mother was reflected through his entire life. It was a mark of faith and service to God.

Timothy's mark was that of his mother's. However, their mark was one that was placed upon them by God through exposure to the Gospel message.

Mother's Marks

Mother's leave their marks on their children in a variety of ways, often unintended.

AN INDICATOR OF CHARACTER: A person who marks someone leaves a permanent impression on that person's character. In a child's impressionable years, it is generally the mother whose character is etched into the soul and spirit of her children. Mother's principles, values and standards are assimilated by her children and while they may not be identical, will be reflected generally in their orientation in life. A mother who drinks, gambles or smokes will find it extremely difficult for her example not to be emulated by her children. She has set the standard by her action. Some of her habits will be adopted or at the very least tolerated by her children. At the same, a mother who strives to live the godly life, do the right thing and achieve high standards also leaves an impression on the character of their children. Her example is a guide for them to follow.

A SENSE OF IDENTITY: A person's mark is the unique lettering of figure that identifies him. Mothers give their children a sense of identity and belonging. Good mothers teach their children the importance of individual expression. No two children are alike. Every child must grow to know that individual achievement is not dependent upon his or her being a clone of other members of the family. Knowing one's ability and direction is one of the first steps to success. Good mothers work hard to help each of their children to develop a sense of individualism while nurturing a respect for the cooperative spirit at the same time.

Developing a knowledge of oneself as a heir to the kingdom of God, for example, helps us to know exactly who we are. If we are outside of God's family our expectations are minimal but since we perceive of ourselves as heirs, according to the Word of God, then our behavior and expectations differ. That's what Paul told the Galatians in, Galatians 4:7 "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." That's why mother's diligently seek children to know

who they are and what is expected of them accordingly.

SETTING OF GOALS: A mark is an indicator of a goal to achieve. Good mothers strive to inspire their children to reach admirable goals. They promote, inspire and help to motivate their children to achieve goals. Solomon's mother constantly worked to help her son become king of Israel even though he wasn't the likely successor. She used her influence to help him and persuaded Solomon that the throne was his destiny. Mothers accomplish this end by helping their children discover their talents and skills and by helping them to perfect their gifts.

EVIDENCE OF PRESENCE: A mark is an evidence of presence. Good mother's teach their children to make their lives useful and meaningful such that their existence makes a difference. By their example they lend themselves to charitable causes, assisting neighbors in need and working hard to be a positive influence in efforts to improve social conditions. The good mother's willingness to feed the hungry or show kindness to others not of her own family, leaves a mark upon her own children. It instills an appreciation for the same value in them. Thus many youth leave home determined to "make their mark" in life or to do something significant enough to have made a change in the quality of life of the world they touch. Like mother, their motto becomes, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain."

LIMIT OF ACTION: A mark is also a limit or a standard of action. Even in adulthood many find themselves still operating within the limits set by their mothers. Good mothers teach their children to limit their actions within the bounds of respectability. Moderation and temperance in all matters is essential to every good mother's tutorship of their children. They teach their children "when to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on and when to let go." Those lessons taught in childhood and adolescence follow their children all their lives. Thus, each time they are tempted to go astray or to engage in activities beyond their self imposed limits they hear the voice of their mother reminding them to moderate themselves and be temperate.

A Mother's Faith

Mothers leave important marks on their children from physical birth marks to personality traits. However no mark that a mother leaves upon her children is as great as her example of trust in God.

Timothy was influenced by both his mother and grandmother's great faith in God. It reflected in his own life and was evidenced in his own ministry. In a similar manner every child who has had the opportunity to be nurtured in a god fearing home learns to trust in God from his mother. That is a mark she leaves upon her family that will carry them further than the proverbs, education, skills or secular attainment.

The mark of the Christian mother is her willingness to love her children like God loves all of his children.

Max Lucado relates a touching, true story about a mother named Maria and her daughter, Christina. Christina wanted to go to the city. She dreamed of trading her dusty neighborhood for exciting avenues and city life. Just the thought of this

horrified Maria. “People don’t know you there,” she said with desperation in her voice. “Jobs are scarce and the life is cruel. And besides, if you went there, what would you do for a living?”

This is what horrified Maria most. Maria knew exactly what Christina would have to do for a living. That’s why her heart broke when she awoke one morning to find her daughter’s bed empty. Christina had gone and Maria knew where. Maria set out immediately to bring her back.

Maria threw some clothes in a bag, gathered up all her money, and ran out of the house. But not before she entered a photograph booth there and spent all the money she could afford on pictures of herself. Maria began her search. Knowing what a girl would have to do to support herself in this cruel city Maria began with the bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with a reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place she left her picture-taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note. It wasn’t too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. She wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village.

A few weeks later young Christina descended a flight of hotel stairs. “Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. She walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation, “Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn’t matter. Please come home.” She did.

Mother had left her mark and daughter responded.

Today brothers and sisters we are reminded that God left his mark to a wayward people. He sent his only begotten Son to say to the world “no matter what you have done. Whatever you have become. It doesn’t matter. Come home.”

Jesus left a mark of love upon the world. When he carried the cross to Calvary, he left his mark!

When he died on the cross, he left his mark! When he arose from the dead, he left his mark!

Every day of his life a believer testifies, I’m glad that Jesus left his mark! He left his mark in my heart!

No. 656-Mother's Day

That's Just My Baby's Mama

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 1997

SCRIPTURE:Hosea 2:2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. Hosea 2:2-3; Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Proverbs 31:28-30

Introduction

How do you know whether or not you are a real mother? Are mothers defined by titles, positions or styles of dress? Is every one that births a baby a mother? As our times become faster paced, less personal and sometimes insensitive, it is getting more difficult to define "mother." In the traditional sense mother is not only the one who gives birth but also the one who nurtures and breathes personality, character and direction into the very spirit of an infant. The real mother by that definition is a diminishing presence. Real mothers are giving way to women and children who are giving birth but are leaving the nurturing process to someone else. Those are the ones that can easily be described by the condescending phrase "that's just my baby's mama." She gave birth, but that's all.

The dilemma of our times is graphically depicted in the statistical picture that gives us a snapshot of our cultural orientation. The average age of girls giving birth is getting lower. Each year over 1.1 million girls become pregnant. Nearly 50,000 of the girls that get pregnant are under the age of 14 years old. Statisticians report that trends show that 80 percent of the girls that become pregnant drop out of school and 70 percent end up on welfare. There are even thousands more that resolve their crises by having an abortion. Present trends indicate that mothers are becoming younger with fewer parenting skills themselves. Despite grand attempts, the young mothers, at best are able to provide only marginal assistance to their newborns. Someone else, usually a parent, grandparent or a guardian usually becomes the real "mother" of the offspring. Often the grandparent or guardian find themselves being "mother" to both the baby and its mother at the same time.

As Christians, we know that the real mother reflects values inspired by God. The

real mother not only gives birth but nurture. We give him praise and thanks for the experience of having had great women in our lives who were more than "just my baby's mama."

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Hosea as he asks his children to encourage their mother to assume her place as mother and wife in their family.

The people of Israel were estranged from God. Despite the great outpouring of blessings they had received from God, they continually adulterated themselves. Concerned that their frequent involvements with idol gods were an abomination and affront him, God told Hosea to marry a woman of ill repute to symbolize the relationship between the people and God. The people were characterized as an irresponsible mother and wife and Hosea symbolized God's feeling toward the people.

Although married to a famous prophet, Hosea's wife, Gomer, continued to live a wayward life and generally displayed a highly irresponsible and adulterous life-style. Hosea's life was miserable. He played the role of father as well as that of mother. He remained loyal while at the same time begging his wife to come home.

In 2:2 he tells his children to plead with their mother to turn from her wayward ways. She was his wife by law, but not by practice. She was their mother biologically, but she was not acting as their mother. After trying everything else he pleaded for her to assume her rightful place and responsibilities.

Gomer had several children for Hosea. However, she continued to live a life of adultery and spent her time in whoredom. She was married but not a wife. She gave birth but she was not a mother. To her husband she had become "Just my baby's mama."

Proverbs 31 gives striking contrast to the picture painted in Hosea. The picture in Proverbs is just the opposite of that in Hosea. Proverbs shows a woman who is both a wife and mother. She is described as a virtuous woman whose words and deeds are worthy of emulation .

The picture of the virtuous woman is the snapshot of a woman who is more than just "my baby's mama" it is the picture of what a real mother should be.

The real mother is the ideal. She is a loyal and faithful wife to her husband. She is depicted as a person whose devotion to her husband and children is unequalled. She is extolled as an excellent family manager who searches for bargains and tends to the domestic tranquility and prosperity of her home.

She sends both her husband and children out of the home in a way that they will both be honored in the courts of public opinion. Her attention to the fine details of family members earns her both the praise and respect her husband and children. Neither bad weather or bad times catch her off guard, she stands prepared in such a way that her words and deeds bring her respect and continued praise all of her life.

The virtuous woman is far more than simply a "mama" although is what she may

be called. Proverbs paints a picture of her as one who is worthy to be praised.

What Mother Is Not

Perhaps the best way to find define a good mother is to take a close look at what a mother is NOT. The contrast of what a mother should be as compared to what she should not be should make the point.

A GOOD MOTHER NURTURES HER YOUNG. The real mother nurtures her children. That means she provides every thing they need to grow strong and wise. This may include food, clothing, shelter, love and time. Food, clothing and shelter are three elements most closely associated with parenting, yet they are not the not the only components to nurture.

Rearing a family without nurture reduces the role of a mother to simply raising children rather nurturing them. One can raise chickens and hogs on a farm. Chickens and hogs need no special nurture only a coop or a pen, a handful of chicken feed or bucket full of slop. Given enough feed or slop either will grow big and fat.

Unfortunately, many of today's mothers have mistakenly feeding and clothing a child for nurture. Simply putting some "feed" on the table or some "slop" in the bowl will not provide nurture for children but it will help them to grow big and fat. Nurture involves two crucial components: time and affection. The real mother gives her children quality time and plenty of affection and attention. When given at the opportune moments, both time and affection produce children who are well rounded.

A GOOD MOTHER DOES NOT GIVE A BAD EXAMPLE: Everyone has a bad habit or two, however the good mother avoids excusing her bad habits as acceptable to her children. There are some mothers who display an array of bad habits before their children. When questioned about them they often dismiss them as trivial or offer empty explanations which seem to suggest that the behavior is acceptable. Good mothers attempt to set an example of moral correctness. Bad language, improper sexual activities, drunkenness and other sinful activities set bad examples for children, who may be likely to emulate their mother's behavior if not guided in a different direction. When mistakes are made, they are admitted and the family's help is solicited to help take corrective action.

A GOOD MOTHER DOES NOT TURN HER BACK ON HER CHILDREN: Good mothers are loving by nature. Their children can always depend upon them for guidance and support. On occasion children make serious mistakes in judgment or fall victims to the scurrilous elements of society. Good mothers demonstrate the ability to love their children while hating their mistakes. Good Mothers love their children, even when they are wrong. That does not mean that they support their wrong doing, but the nevertheless love their children.

A GOOD MOTHER DOES NOT PUT HERSELF BEFORE HER CHILDREN: How often have good mother's neglected themselves in their attempts to help their children. Many have little money to buy themselves new clothes or to improve themselves as they work extra hard to be sure that their children have adequate

protection. It is not unusual to look in the closet of a dedicated mother and discover that her shoes have worn heels and her dresses have torn straps. It is not unusual for her purse to be empty and for weeks to pass before she gets her hair done. This is because many mothers who are strapped for cash choose to help their children rather than lavish pleasures upon themselves. Mothers generally think of the welfare of their children before they consider their own. That's why Jesus compared himself to a mother hen and the people of Jerusalem to chicklets. As he sat on the outskirts of Jerusalem he said he would like to gather them under his wing as a mother hen would her chicklets and protect them. Mothers seek the safety of their offspring as they put their own self interest behind those of their children.

What Mother Is

A good mother is more than "just my baby's mama!" A good mother gives her best and then counts on God to take care of the rest.

Every good mother knows that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be a good mother outside of the Lord. There are too many factors in life that mere mortals cannot control that determine every child's outcome. That's why every good mother knows that he or she needs God's help every day and hour.

Thus the question is asked again. "Who is the woman we honor?" She is more than "just my baby's mama!" She is a woman who trusts in the Lord.

Good mothers have found that when you trust in the Lord, he will turn your:

-Hardtimes into good times; Setbacks into leap forwards

-Defeats into success; Failures into victories

-Darkness into light; Weaknesses into strengths!"

Who is this woman? She is the one who has learned that "weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning!" She is the one that declares "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I've tried him for myself."

Mother is a woman that has decided to keep her hands in the winding chain and hold on just a little while longer.

Hold on mothers because, Mary's Baby!

Jesus, the fairest of 10,000

Jesus, my rock in a weary land!

Jesus died out on Calvary but he arose after three days!

Hold on mothers, because one of this day's he's coming back again!

When the question is asked "Who are these?" The answer won't be, "that's just my baby's mama" but "These are they that have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb!"

Well Done!

My good and faithful servant..Well Done!

No. 657-Inspiration

The Lion's Lunch

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 4, 1997

***SCRIPTURE** "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:6-10; And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Daniel 6:20-22*

Introduction

Have you ever had a craving for a special food item? What was it? Fried Chicken? Maybe a sixteen ounce T-Bone Steak? What about a big bowl of collard greens, a couple of slices of piping hot corn bread with butter oozing out the middle? When you have a craving, nothing else seems to matter. Cravings prompt us to get up in the middle of the night and rustle refrigerators or hunt hard to find items in grocery isles at 3 a.m. in the morning. When you want it, you got to have it.

There is nothing better than having just what you want they way you like it prepared. Consider the little cafe that was operated in the forest. It was unique and cozy. When the rabbit hopped in the front door the waiters were nice and congenial in fact the whole cafe seemed overjoyed to see him come in. The waiter ushered him to a seat obviously reserved for special guests. It was close to the kitchen and he could smell the various spices in the air. He never bothered to look at the menu but began to order, "I'll have a vegetable soup." The lion that was sitting at the next table smiled and said "I'll have that too!" The rabbit said, "Add a lettuce salad with a carrot on the side" The lion smiled and said, "I'll have that too!" The rabbit said, "I'd like to follow that with a large glass of goat's milk." The Lion said, "I'll have that too and winked." Impressed that the King of jungle was ordering the same entre's as he, the rabbit decided to do the same. The Lion looked at the menu and said "I'll have number two!" The rabbit yelled to the waiter "I'll have that too!" Waiter nervously told the

rabbit. “I’m sorry sir you can’t order that two.” The rabbit wanted to know why? So the waiter gave his answer, “The Lion ordered for his lunch, fresh rabbit stew, you are number two!”

If Satan is a hungry lion looking for something he can devour, what do you think he craves? He grows bigger and bigger every day. That means he is eating well. What does he eat for lunch?

He enjoys devouring would be lambs! Sometimes, like the little rabbit, we walk right into the Devil’s cafe and place ourselves right on his plate. We didn’t plan it that way, but before we knew it, we were on the brink of becoming the Lion’s Lunch.

As Christians we are constantly aware of the dangers that exist in this world for those who want to do right. The forces of evil are constantly at work to destroy us. They smile and grin and always work against our interest. Therefore we keep our hands in God’s hand and always stay alert. The day we fail to do so may the very day that we become the Lion’s Lunch!

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter who advised the Christians to be careful not to fall prey to the attacks of Satan.

Christians were especially susceptible to criticism, humiliation and persecution in the early days of the church, especially in Rome. In the month of July in the year 64 A.D., a great fire broke out in the city of Rome and the entire city was engulfed in flames. Hundreds of public buildings were burned to the ground and thousands of homes were destroyed, so that there were thousands of the inhabitants of the city left homeless.

History has concluded that Nero set that fire in order that he might destroy the ramshackle buildings of Rome and give him room to erect some marble palaces and other monuments that he thought would establish his name in history. It was during this time, of course, that the story was born that Nero “fiddled” while Rome burned. The Emperor was seen looking over the city and enjoying the view while it was burning.

The people were ready to revolt and overthrow him. Nero quickly looked around for a scapegoat that he could blame for the fire. There was in Rome a group of people who were just in the right situation to lend themselves to take the blame for the fire. They were called Christians. They followed a man named Christ, about whom strange things were said, and they themselves did very strange things. Rumors were flying all around Rome that they were cannibals, because they talked about getting together in their houses, drinking someone’s blood and eating his body. They spoke about “love feasts,” — at which they greeted one another with a holy kiss, and shared their innermost problems with each other. This soon became enlarged into stories of sexual orgies. So they were a people already under deep suspicion. When the Emperor needed a scapegoat, therefore, he started the rumor around Rome that the Christians had burned down the city.

The Emperor began a series of persecutions against the Christians. It was during this time that Christians were dipped in tar and burned as torches to light the gardens of Nero when he threw an outdoor party. They were tied to his chariot and dragged through the streets of Rome until they were dead. They were thrown to the lions; they were tied up in leather bags and thrown into water so that when the leather bags shrank, the Christians were squeezed to death. In a hundred other delicate ways, Nero sought to impress upon them the folly of being Christians.

Now it was during this time of the outbreak of the persecution of Christians in Rome that the Apostle Peter wrote this letter. And he wrote it, most scholars believe, in Rome to "the exiles," he says, or "the strangers in dispersion:"

It was a warning to Christians to be cautious and always on guard against the attempts of Satan to destroy the body of Christ. The acts of evil in scripture have been compared to "snakes","dragons" and that of a "lion" all of which are destructive and require a maximum of care and caution. They were encouraged to keep the faith, while at the same time resisting attempts of the devil. God, they were assured, is able to deliver them.

Don't Be The Lion's Lunch

Today believers must be vigilant and careful that they do not become the Lion's Lunch. Since Satan is always looking for ways to destroy us we should be careful. To resist Satan and avoid be devoured we are encouraged to:

Be In Control: The command is, "be sober." A drunk person has no self-control and is not clear-minded. Thus the command is to be in control of one's thought processes and thus not be in danger of irrational thinking - 'to be sober-minded, to be well composed in mind.' We generally lose control in pressure situations, in the face of fear, anger and frustration. These are the times when someone gets on your "last" nerve. They are moments when your thinking gets muddled and you are subject to say anything, do anything or throw anything in response. When that happens we become lunch for the lion.

Satan will try to confuse your thinking. He will try to frustrate you. If that fails, Satan will try to frighten you and scare you any way he can. That's why a lion roars so it can frighten its prey to come to a complete haul, then devour them. That's why Peter says, "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion."

Just what happens when the lion roars? We shake in our boots and begin to doubt God and to lose confidence and trust in God. Satan says, "You are all on your own. It is up to you. God isn't going to help you. He doesn't care what happens to you. Save yourself." While shaking in fear we momentarily forget that God "does" care and provides for his own.

BE ALERT: Christians must not only strive to be in control but they must also be alert. Much like a shepherd is always aware that at anytime or any moment a lion or a bear may attack the flock, Christians are warned to keep the eyes open and ears positioned for indicators that danger is near. This was David's situation. He guarded

his father's flock. He watched it carefully keeping his mind open to the dangers that lurked. In 1 Samuel 17:34-37 David details his vigil to stay alert fighting Lions. He gave God the credit for delivering him saying in verse 37 "the Lord delivered me from the paw of the lion."

Our job is to be alert. God does the delivering. Sheep can't take on Lions. Sheep cannot match strength with such a powerful prey, but God can. Our responsibility is to stay alert and trust God for the deliverance.

RESIST THE DEVIL: Christians are encouraged to take an defensive position relative to the devil. They are encouraged to stand firm in their belief and actions. James 4:7 makes the same command: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Christian must resist the devil by maintaining a strong and firm belief. Belief in what? Faith in what? God's mighty hand. His care. Resistance to the devil means reliance on God. Just as David professed. It means understanding that no matter what the present circumstances God has a plan and is in control.

When in the Den you have a Friend!

Peter's words to believers was simple: The devil is out there roaring. He wants to scare you, and tempt you, and anger you. To defeat him. Be self-controlled, be alert, and resist the devil through a strong faith, always giving credit to God.

Paul summarizes these concepts nicely in Ephesians 6:10-17."Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the high places."

Yet every Christian should be aware that a time will come when Satan will attempt to place you in harm's way.

David met his lion while minding his own business, caring for his father's flock. Yet God helped him to defeat them on every hand.

Samson met his lion while traveling along the road. He destroyed his attacker with strength given to him by God.

Our best example of overcoming lions is Daniel who was placed in a den of lions because he refused to stop praying to God. The king was mystified by Daniel's patience. He was awed at his courage in the face of fear. He was humbled by Daniel's unwavering faith that his God was able to deliver him!

In the den, the lions pranced two and fro!

In the den, were the bones of others who had been devoured!

In the den, was the ultimate penalty for defying the powers of the world!

In the den, the lions waited for their lunch!

As Daniel was lowered into the Lion's den, he never stopped trusting in God. He could hear the king asking: "Is your God able?"

What the king found out was that in the den, a child of God has a friend!

When the lions of this world seek to destroy us we have a friend!

In the den, we have a friend, who brings us:

—Hope in the midst of discouragement; FAITH, in the midst of despair

—WAY OUT when there is no way; PEACE in the midst of confusion

—JOY in the midst of sorrow; STRENGTH in the midst of weakness

No wonder the song writer wrote: What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to be. What a privilege it is carry everything to God in prayer!

We have a friend who loves us so much that he was willing to carry a cross for us up Golgotha's hill!

We have a friend who died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I'm so glad to know that when I'm in the den...my friend has all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 658-Inspiration

Cheeri -O's

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 18, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplicati ons. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me. Psalm 86:1-7

Introduction

Have you ever been in an "O'Lord" situation? That is a time when you came upon a circumstance where your only response was "O' Lord!" The phone rang at your home at 3 a.m. and you received bad news about a family member. As you heard the news you sat up in your bed and responded, "O' Lord!" You found yourself in a jam. You could not turn to the left or to the right. Your only response was, "O' Lord!" We all have had some "O' Lord" situations, not all of which were bad. Sometimes you get news that is just too good to believe, even as the news is being broken to you, your response is, "O' Lord!" When your child surprised you or your boss gave you an unexpected raise, there was only one thing to do; sit down and respond, "O' Lord!"

Sometimes O' Lord situations just creep up on us! You may know the story about three women who were talking.

The first said, "Sometimes I go to the refrigerator. When I get there I just stand there for a while. Then I say O' Lord, I forget what I what I came down here to get."

The second woman said, "The Other day I stood at the top of the stairs for an hour. I said "O' Lord, I can't remember whether I'm going up for something or I'm on my way back down."

The third woman said, "I'm lucky, I guess (knocking on wood), I don't have the problems you girls have.. O' Lord, there's someone at the door." Yes, sometimes O'Lord situations just slip up on you before you know it!

There are some that respond to "O Lord" situations with the voice of weariness. They approach difficult times with a "Weary, O-Lord!" The very sound of their voice suggests despair and frustration. While some respond to their situations with Weari-Os other respond with "Cheeri-O Lords!" That means each time they make an

expression it is bursting with hope.

Everybody likes Cherri-0s! These are the positive responses that turn every bad situation into a possibility for a grand opportunity.

Are things looking tough? It's time for Cheerios!

Are you frustrated to the max? It's time for Cheerios!

As Christian we call upon the name of the Lord in a spirit hope and anticipation. We may say "O' Lord" but it is certainly not a defeatist expression. it filled with excitement. No matter what the situation when we say "O Lord!" its a cheerio!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he speaks to God concerning the desires of his heart.

The Psalms are unique expressions of prayer and praise that reflect the thoughts of the mind and the meditations of the heart. Most of the psalms are David's work. God gave him the gift of capturing the emotions of his full life's varied experiences and putting them in beautiful lyrical terms.

These became the psalm book or hymn book of Israel. Many of these psalms were written to be sung in public. They are often prefaced by the title, "To the chief choirmaster" or "To the choirmaster, " and in some of our Bibles is the word "Maskil" which is simply the Hebrew word for "psalm." You may be interested to know that one psalm, Psalm 90, was written by Moses, and two were composed by King Solomon. Still others were written by a nameless group called the sons of Korah who were especially charged with leading the singing of Israel. Also, a man named Asaph wrote many of the psalms, and even good King Hezekiah wrote ten of them. As you look into the book of Psalms, you can see that in many cases the titles refer to the author

This section of the Psalm, Psalm 73 through Psalm 89, focuses on the discovery of what God is like when man comes before him and what he himself is like in the presence of God. It is the book that reveals the inner workings of man's heart: we see his need, his deep consciousness of his own sin, and the discovery of what God offers to do about it. They represent pattern of thought from psalms, 73 through 89, that shows man's awareness of God's judgment in the inner heart. Psalm 78 is a record of God's unbending love: although God loves man, he will never let him get away with anything. He never compromises, he never bends; he gives in to man's plea for mercy, but is absolutely relentless in cutting away sin. Then, when man is ready to acknowledge his sin, and to agree with God's judgment concerning sin, God deals with him in love. Psalm 81 describes the new strength that God offers man, and Psalm 84 wonderfully portrays the continuous provision that God offers us.

David uses many musical devices to accomplish the goal of setting his meditations to God to music. One of the devices is the use of the phrase "O Lord!" Throughout the Psalms the phrase is used to express a variety of feelings that range from happiness to sadness, from courage to fear. Much of the Old Testament uses this phrase similarly. With the exception of references in the Book of Revelation, the New

Testament almost solely uses the phrase associated with "pleas for mercy."

Regardless of the context, the phrase "O Lord" was an announcement of expectation. Even if it was included in a plea for mercy or a recitation of an uncomfortable circumstance, it was bursting with hope. In some contexts it may appear an expression of pessimism, however it later proved that it was an expression of current conditions but also an expression of anticipation.

There are five "O's" in the first seven verse of the 86 Psalm alone. Each accompany an independent plea for help, mercy and gratitude. They are cheerful, expectant and full of gladness. They reflect the make up of the "O's" throughout the bible. Those who use them never cease to have faith that God will help them triumph over any circumstance.

O Lord

We often use the phrase O Lord loosely. Sometimes it is a cry the reflects our pain. Sometimes it reflects our fear, disgust or frustration. Believers are careful about the use of any phrase that includes a reference to God. We are mindful of God's commandment in Exodus 20:7 "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Therefore, believers may use the phrase but never in jest or in ways that do not suggest the sacredness or seriousness of God.

WHEN WE ARE OVERWHELMED BY IMPOSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES our "O" is cheery because God can do the impossible. That was the situation in Ezekiel 37:3 "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Ezekiel had been placed in a valley of dry bones and asked whether or not the bones could ever be revived. It appeared and Ezekiel would not say no, but answered "O Lord..thou knowest." Often we are surrounded by similarly impossible situations. Sometimes what has to be done seems to exceed our ability. The human response, is "O, Lord, I can't do it." That's a weary-O. When we respond "O Lord" we should make it a cheery "O" because we know that while some things are impossible for man, all things are possible for God.

IN TIMES OF DOUBT our "O" is cheery because God can be trusted. There are times when believers get caught with their guards down. In such moments they question God, doubt their own faith and experience a general weakness. Sometimes we respond "O Lord" what have I done to deserve this. That's a weary-0 But in times of doubt we need a cheery -O. When David found himself in doubt he cried "O, Lord" but it was a cheery-O. Psalm 71:1 "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion."

In times of trouble our "O" is cheery because God, is a help in time of trouble! When trouble comes upon us we often respond "O, Lord!" Often however, our cry to God seems terminal. It lacks faith and seems to accept the finality of the circumstance. That's a weary-O. A cheery-O is better in times of trouble. David gave us the example in Psalm 31:9 "Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed

with grief, yea, my soul and my belly" The cry for mercy is an indicator that he knows that regardless of the trouble that exists at the moment. God can do something about it. That is a reason for cheer!

WHEN WE MAKE A MISTAKE our O should be cheery because God holds us up! Regardless of our position in life we will eventfully make a mistake. Despite our best plans and precautions, mistakes are inevitable. However, mistakes are not terminal. There are some whose question for perfection is so intense that they have difficult accepting personal error. Their cry of "O, Lord" is one that echoes defeat. That's a weary-O. When a believer makes a mistake, his "O, Lord" is an expectation for God to help him make a correction. That's why Psalm 94:18 says, "When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up."

IN TIMES OF POVERTY AND DESPAIR our "O" is cheery because God is a provider. The poor and the destitute are constantly surrounded by reminders of their poverty. When money becomes scarce the poor cry out "O Lord" When resources are not available for food, clothing and shelter, the poor cry out "O, Lord" The believer is not simply shouting out an empty praise to vent frustration, that would be a weary-O. However, the believer calls out "O Lord" in a display of faith. Thus Psalm 86:1 says, "O LORD", hear me: for I am poor and needy." The 37th Psalms carries it even further in verse 25, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

WHEN WE ARE THE VICTIMS OF LIES AND DECEIT.our O's are cheery because he blesses those who are persecuted for righteousness sake..Nothing hurts more than to be the victim of lies and deceit. Yet that is the fare of most believers constantly. Some experience this sting and respond "O Lord here why are they doing this to me?" That's a weary-O. But there is a cheery O! Psalm 120:2 "Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue." Jesus takes our weary-O and turns it into a cheerio-in Matthew 5:44 when he said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" What began as a weary-O became a Cheery-O!

Cheery-O's

Finally we must consider that believers consider cheery-O's because we see the bright side of life.

Every time we read the Word we find a reason for cheer!

When we look around at the beauty of the world we are stricken with the majesty of God. We are tempted to respond like David in Psalm 8:1 "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." That's a Cheery-O

The song writer saw the same thing and responded "Oh Lord, my God as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hand hath made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder and marvel at the universe displayed, then sings my soul my savior God to thee, how great thou art! How Great thou art! That's a cheery-O!

When we consider how good God has been to us, we know that is a cheery-O situation! It is a reason for cheer for God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

No wonder David said in Psalm 86:12 " I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore."

Every saint has a reason to be happy and full of cheer!

We serve a God who guides us when we are lost. That's why we sing "Guide me O thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through the barren land!" That's a cheery-O!

We serve a God who loves us more than we love our ourselves. That's why the song writer wrote "O how I love Jesus, Oh How I love Jesus, because he first loved me!"- That's a cheery O!

We love the Lord because in our:

—WEAKNESS he gave us strength; SADNESS he brought us gladness

—DECEPTION he brought us truth; DEFEAT he brought us victory!

—SIN he brought us salvation; DESPAIR he brought us happiness!

No wonder the song writer declared "O Happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!"

As long as God is still on the throne we should keep reciting our cheery-O's

Matthew 20:30 tells how Jesus came to a certain village and two blind men sat by the wayside. When the men heard that Jesus was passing by they started yelling O Lord, have mercy on us! People tried to silence them, but they continued to yell "O Lord" have mercy on us! Jesus heard their despairing cry and stopped and what they wanted him to do!

If trouble comes your way don't forget your cheery-o's! That's when you call on God expecting to receive an answer!

O Lord, I'm out here on your word!

O Lord, I can't see my way, but I know you are a way maker!

O Lord, The storm is raging by I know you can speak a word and make the storm be still!

Call on Jesus!

The same Jesus who died out on Calvary!

The same Jesus who arose after three days and nights!

Call on Jesus!

He will make everything alright!

No. 659-Anniv.-Mens Day, Father's Day

An Apple Tree in The Woods

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pine Grove Baptist Church
Jonesboro, La.

May 18, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." Song of Solomon 2:1-3

Introduction

Have you ever seen the perfect man? What about the perfect woman? At some point in every man's life he glances what he perceives to be the perfect woman. Everything is in the right place. The package is complete. There is beauty, charm, intellect and wit. Everything is rolled into one package. Most men have seen "Miss Perfect" at least once. Some have been fortunate enough to marry her.

There are also some women who have spent their entire lives looking for "Mr. Perfect." He is the man that has everything in the right place. He looks good, is charming, intellectual, a good provider and sensuous. Women have looked for such a man for hundreds of years and found little success in finding Mr. Perfect. Some have been fortunate enough to find him and marry him.

One of the greatest fears of modern African-American women is that they may not be able to find their social peer in a mate. Women are more educated and work place experienced than ever before. Women earn more money, hold higher positions in major corporations and generally are more successful than ever before. With more women in the work place, earning more money, their biggest fear is that they may not be able to find a man, within the same race, that will be able to be their intellectual and economic peer. Many women spend an inordinate amount of time looking for a "good" man.

The definition of a "good" man changes from person to person. Most women consider a good man as one who has a relatively good job, lavishes them with love and gifts, spends quality time with them and makes an effort to love her like Christ loves the church. Christian women desire a Christian man because the bible encourages individuals to be equally yoked. Their frustration is increased as they find themselves settling in many instances for what they perceive to be less than the ideal, living daily with the hope that they may be able to change what they have into the man of their dreams.

As African-American men present themselves to the world they must remember that they are becoming an "endangered species" in the minds of the general public and in the eye of the African- American woman, thus it becomes increasingly important for men to stand tall in all of the virtues that make them "men" in the largest sense of the word.

As Christians, we are extremely aware that God expects both men and women to lead lives of virtue, value and vision. We strive daily to achieve that ideal. It is the quest of every man to be the best that he can be to please both God and the woman that God has given him.

Exposition

This text focuses on a wife of Solomon as she shares her musings and thoughts about him as an ideal man.

Generally, the 31st Proverbs is given as the book of the bible that describes the "virtuous woman." It is often referred to on occasions that praise women. It is a description of a good woman. The virtuous woman is seen as a woman who takes care of the business of the family, feeds and clothes the children, looks out for the welfare of her husband and makes a pleasant and pleasing public appearance. The virtuous woman, is a beauty to behold and an honor to her family.

While Proverbs describes the ideal woman, this text, given from the viewpoint of a woman, focuses on the ideal man, at least from the context of a wife.

Song of Solomon is considered the book of love in the bible. It details intimacies between King Solomon and one of his wives, described as the Shulamite. Since "Shulamite" is the feminine version of the male name "Solomon" it is safe to say that the comments in this text are being made by "Mrs. Solomon" about her husband. According to historians, Solomon spent a large amount of time trying to find the real meaning of life. For a period he took on the role of a commoner and worked in the fields. There he met the woman later known as "Shulamite." Once back in the palace the king courted and married the woman who was said, by her own description, to be "black" but beautiful (1:6)

The Songs of Solomon, to a large degree, details intimacies shared between Solomon and the Shulamite. It is often referred to as the biblical basis of marital sex and relations. In some places it is graphic. In others it is sensual.

While Songs of Solomon is a picture of the love of King Solomon for his Black bride, in a greater sense it is a picture of the relationship of Christ to the Church. While Solomon describes himself as the "Rose of Sharon" and a "lily of the valleys" these are also pictures of Christ and the Church. Christ is the "Rose of Sharon" and the "Lily of the valley." Solomon pictures the Shulamite as a "lily among thorns" in verse two. In the same sense, the church, that elect, chosen generation that has been called out of darkness into the marvelous light is also a "lily" among the thorns of unbelievers in the world. Thus, while this text has an immediate application that focuses on an exchange between a man and his wife, it is also a type of the relationship between

the savior and the church or the bridegroom and his bride.

Verse three focuses on Mrs. Solomon as she describes her husband in response to the way he described her in verse two. There, he said she was a lily among thorns, a valuable presence at the least. She responds by telling him that he is an apple tree in the wood. By this she meant that he was a rarity among men and she pledged herself to sit in the shadow of his tree and enjoy his fruit.

The man in this context is seen as "An apple tree in the woods" and in this single illustration she distinguishes him from all other men. He is different. He is beneficial. He is unique. He is a commanding presence that deserves respect.

The Trees of the Wood

Today there are millions of African-American men whose lives are characteristic of the trees of the woods. They make up the fabric of what's available for African-American women, most of whom are looking for that single unique presence in their life long pursuit of the ideal man. What kinds of trees are there in the woods today?

PINE TREES: There are many men who are pine trees at best. The pine tree grows tall, is distinguished by its pointed top, drops cones and burns fast. There are many men who share the same characteristic. They drop "cones" in a relationship, point the blame and disappear fast. Women who have experienced this kind of relationship dream of finding a real "apple tree" in the woods.

SWEET GUMS: These trees are known for a sap that is called sweet but is not really sweet at all. There are "Sweet Daddies" all over the nation. They are the sugar daddies that give the appearance of sweetness but leave a bitter taste in every relationship they enter and leave. They are the heartbreakers and home wreckers. They are sweet to single women. They are sweet to married women. They are sweet to your girl friend. They are sweet to your wife. They are so "sweet" that they leave a bitter taste when they leave. The woman who experiences this relationship leaves looking for the apple tree in the woods.

EVERGREENS: The Evergreen is unique in that its most noteworthy characteristic is that it looks good all the time. It is green in the summer. It is green in the winter. It always looks good, but is known for little else. Yet, there are many men who have Evergreen personalities when it comes to their usefulness as men. These men look good. They dress good from head to toe. Their hair is neatly groomed and they spend hours touching up all of the right places to give the proper appearance. No matter when you see them, they look good. Even in their casual attire they look good. Sitting in their yard they look good. Beyond their looks however, there is little else that they do. While there is nothing wrong with looking good, it is also important to have qualities of personality to match the looks. Women usually leave relationships with Evergreens looking for an apple tree in the woods.

WEEPING WILLOWS: The Weeping Willows stands drooped. Its broad limbs slump downward. It looks defeated. There are many men today have lost their drive and ambition. They have adopted defeatist attitudes about life and have succumbed

to the pressures of society. A defeated man is not an inspiration to his wife and family. Even a poor man who scrambles to climb up, inspires his family, but a defeated man is a disappointment. No wonder his woman dreams of finding an "apple tree" in the woods.

OAK TREES: Oaks grow tall but their wood is hard and their fruit is inedible. These are men who are stubborn and set in their ways. They are thick skinned, slow to change and adapt. They are not bad trees but they have a tendency, because of the stubbornness, to produce fruit that is inedible. A few nuts here and a few nuts there. Unfortunately, their children grow up just like them because the "acorn" doesn't fall far from the tree. Women still dream of finding their "apple tree" in the woods.

An Apple Tree

What the African-American family needs today is men who will become "Apple Trees" in the woods. Such men are a unique presence in the family. They are beneficial, commanding and essential to the growth and security of the Christian family.

APPLE TREES NEED COLD WINTERS: The Shulamite referred to Solomon as an "apple tree" which was important because it indicated the rarity of his presence. In Palestines apple trees cannot grow. It is too hot for them in the summer and it is not cold enough for them in the winter. Apple trees require, by their very nature, a very cold winter climate. They only grow in parts of the world that have very cold winters and warm summers. Since Palestine had neither of these, finding an apple tree in the wood would be rare, if possible at all.

The African-American family needs men who can weather the cold periods that often impact the African-American family, including unemployment, discrimination, poverty and attacks on the family itself. Only those men who can germinate in such conditions can expect to become "apple trees in the woods." They are rare but nevertheless are needed.

ROOTSTOCK TRANSPLANTS GET NEW APPLE TREES: While legend has it that Johnny Appleseed went across America planting apple seeds and growing orchards, farmers have found it beneficial to get new apple trees by taking a portion of the rootstock of an apple tree and mixing it with another young tree, thus growing a new apple tree. Even so, if African-American men are to provide for a secure future for the race the men who are the role models for our youth must take time to groom the next generation of young men. In a sense they must take from their rootstock and help another young apple tree sibling to grow. They must become mentors, big brothers, advisors lay leaders who help young boys to grow. Men must force themselves to groom the next generation. They must make the time. They must provide the time. It is essential to their growth.

APPLE TREES GIVE EDIBLE FRUIT: While there are many trees in the wood which look good, most give no edible fruit. The apple tree is one of those that give edible fruit. The African- American man must become so productive that he gives

edible fruit. He must be productive. He must be a provider. He must be a companion and friend to his wife. He must be a presence in the life of his child. He must be a source of inspiration for his family. Although our past has been filled with tragic moments, African-American men have been a stable presence in their families. Fathers who did not have college educations worked the fields and sent their children to school. Men who could not read and write themselves made it possible for their sons and daughters to read to them. These were men of good fruit. Our race needs a new generation of men who have the same commitment.

A Good Man is Needed

Not only is the African-American woman looking for a good man, so is the Lord. The search is on , both high and low for a good man who is willing to stand tall in his generation and declare the goodness of God.

For every cause God needs a man. For every mountain God has a man!

On Mt. Carmel, God had Elijah

On Mt. Aarrat, God had Noah

On Mt. Sinai, God had Moses

But for Mt. Calvary there could only be one man!

I here Jesus saying like Isaiah, if the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!

There will be three trees on the hill called Golgotha, but I'll be the apple tree in the middle!

He died on Calvary, but I'm glad that he arose after three days and nights!

He is the Rose of Sharon!

He is the Lily of the Valley!

He is the best example of "An apple tree in the woods!"

No. 660-Graduation

M & M's

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 25, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." 2 Corinthians 10:13

Introduction

What did you plan to do when you graduated from high school? Did you do it? Some had great visions of finally getting free of their parents' authority, and making their own decisions. Some had visions of achieving great success and making a name for themselves. Others could not wait to jump into the fast lane to see and do all of the things that their parents restricted them from doing. Most wanted to move up in life as fast as possible without all of the slow and tedious precautions that over seemingly over protective parents insist upon. Some planned to move fast while others plotted a slow meticulous pace that would lead them to success. Every graduate, at one time or another has dreamed of graduation day and beyond. Now that the day has come and gone, the journey envisioned has begun.

For a special reminder of what it will take for every graduate should take a good look at the candy product known as M and M's.

This simple little product has been one of the best selling candy products for many years. Its one of the rare treats that is enjoyed by both grandparents and their children. They are noted for three qualities: They have tasty chocolate on the inside, a hard shell on the outside and they bear the mark of their maker where it can be seen. The milk chocolate in M and M's is poured into molds as they move along a conveyor belt. Even though the chocolate is tasty, what make's M and M's different from other chocolate candies is that it is spread with a hard shell and moved in large batches of 2.6 million each, daily. They are then sifted. Those that are too soft, malformed or misaligned will be dropped from the line of progress.

While they are batched together for spraying and hardening, there is a point when each M and M has to get that distinctive "M" pressed upon it. When that happens, each individual candy, on a conveyor belt finds its own slot, separate from the others, and gets its own "M." They are packaged and shipped all over the world as the candy that melts in our mouth, not in your hand.

Christian graduates, like an M and M candy, have the right stuff inside them. The

maturity process now calls for them, along with the rest of their generation of graduates to enter a period in which their beliefs, values, and lifestyle will be shaped and solidified. Along the way, the sifting process begins. Some will drop out of life.

Some will be misaligned or too timid to stand against the temptations of the world.

Others will stand strong and bold and pursue their godly dreams and visions giving God the glory and praise. Those that make it through in the final analysis will get the "M" which denotes the "Master's approval"

As Christians, we strive to pace our journey through life that our lives will have a variety of M and M's: both magnitude and magnificence as well as meaning and message.

The Christian graduate begins a journey that he or she hopes will be pleasing to God and earn his mark of approval. For it is his well done that signifies a life well spent.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the importance of each person living his life according to the measure God gives him.

Paul had been given a specific mission by God. It was to open the doors of opportunity in the fath to those who had not heard it before. He was to take the Gospel message where no man had gone before, charting new frontiers and horizons. That is how Paul got to Corinth. His journey started in the Book of Acts. It started back with that Macedonian call, where Paul had a vision one night from a man in Macedonia saying, "Come across into Europe and help us." In response to that Paul landed in Philippi. There he got into trouble and ended up in jail. When he got out he went to the next city Thessalonica. Again, his preaching of the Word aroused opposition and he was driven out of town. He went to the next city, which was Berea, and once again there was trouble and a riot. He had to leave there by night and was taken down to Athens, which is only 50 miles to the east of Corinth. He preached on Mars Hill in Athens, but they did not receive his message. So he shows up in Corinth, all alone in the dust of the road, armed with nothing but the power of the Spirit of God, and begins to preach the gospel throughout this city. Out of this came the Corinthian church.

In this passage Paul responds to critics who criticized his physical appearance and doubted his abilities (7-11). He concluded that God had given him a "measure" or an assignment to complete and he was not in competition with anyone else, only to complete the assignment and life work he was given to do. While others would have the task of building upon the groundwork he laid, Paul remained loyal to his task of spreading the gospel in distant regions.

In verses 16-17 he rejects the notion of boasting in another persons accomplishment but chooses to boast only in with respect to his own accomplishment of the task set before him. It was a task for which he been given special gifts and for which God had opened many doors of opportunity for him to succeed in completing the task.

He had a good gift on the inside. Paul suggested that in the final analysis each

person would be measured by his or her use of the gifts that have been given to them, not by what anyone else has done. In Romans 12:3-6 not to get the big head and " not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Each person has unique gifts that differ from those of another. The final glory all goes to God.

He was tested and hardened in his mission. During the course of his ministry Paul was criticized, beaten, nearly stone to death, persecuted, jailed and ostracized. He developed a hard shell to personal attacks, danger and fear. He was almost immune to insult, oblivious to sarcasm and insulated from cold hearted words and thoughts. His hard shell lead him to reach the conclusion in Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

He had the approval of God. Paul's message and mission in life had God's blessing. He used his gifts wisely, within the measure that God had given him.

His quest was to reach the mark and attain the prize. It was not secular or material in nature it was the approval of God. In Phillipians 3:14 he said "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In the final analysis, Paul made his mark for in the closing days of his life he wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:7-8

M and M's

Today youth should strive to simulate the processes of Paul's life that made him confident that God would reward him. That process involves:

PUT THE GOOD STUFF INSIDE.. Every believer has a special gift from God. It's that unique talent, ability or personality trait that is unique and identifiable. The ability to sing, dance or involve oneself in athletic pursuits are just a few of the hundreds of gifts that include, a mastery of numbers, an artistic eye, a healing personality, verbal communication skills and a plethora of other skills and talents. The purpose for each of these gifts is so the recipient may use them to build the kingdom of God. When used in that way, God blesses the gift immensely and makes life satisfying.

Every youth has the responsibility to perfect the gift, to make sure that there is something good inside. The most difficult challenge of the immediate years after graduation is to force oneself to study, train and attain a degree of competency. Yet that is what is required to make sure that there is "good stuff" inside.

DEVELOPING A HARD SHELL: The six years that immediately follow graduation in some ways, will be the most challenging for young Christians. This will be the time when temptations will be greater than they have ever been. As immense freedoms begin become available each youth will be bombarded with a large number of

alternatives demanding choices. This is the time for youth to begin developing the ability to say "no" to any activity that will distract them from their goal, or distance them from. their peculiar calling in the faith.

Developing a hard shell means becoming immune to negative remarks that others make because one chooses not to participate in ungodly activities. It also means developing a firm and solid belief system, values and lifestyle. Principles and beliefs adopted during this period are generally those that last a lifetime.

Christian youth will emerge from the second phase of their development with a firmer belief in God or they will mangle the process and emerge with good stuff inside with a soft outer shell. Those with soft outer shells will easily be influenced by others. They will stray from one religious belief to another. Their values will change with every trend. Somewhere in the process they will get lost in the sifting.

Developing that hard shell is what Paul had in mind when he wrote in Ephesians 6:1-2 that we should "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The hard shell that is developed is not so hard however, that no one can get to or be touched by the "good stuff" that's on the inside.

It is hard enough to resist damaging influences yet soft enough to allow the flavor inside to do what it is made to do.

A hard shell does not mean a bitter, negative attitude. A hard shell does not mean being negative.

Just as an M and M melts in your mouth, not in your hand, the Christian youth with a hard shell knows when to say yes and when to say no.

Getting the big "M"

The goal of young Christians is the same as that of every believer, that is to insure that we live our lives in such a way that God would be pleased. In essence our goal is to get the Master's Mark.

For a chocolate candy, M and M could mean "Melt's in your mouth", but for a Christian, M and M has different meanings.

MEASURED MOVEMENTS: The believers lives every day of his life with measured movements. He doesn't go to far to the left nor to the right but walks the center line. That's why David wrote in Psalm 37:23-24 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

MEASURED MOUNTAINS: There will be mountains and obstacles that come in a believers life. However, no believer will get a mountain he or she cannot climb. No believer will receive a burden that he or she cannot bear. No wonder the song writer would write, "We are our heavenly father's children, and we all know that he loves us one and all. Yet there are times when we find we answer another's voice and call;

If we are willing he will teach us, his voice only to obey no matter where and he knows, yes, he knows just how much we can bear!"

As we travel through this life we may have a mountain but we have an M and M God who makes mountains into molehills!

MEASURED MIRACLES : Every believer knows that his success is dependent upon the miraculous intervention of God. God is an M and M God in that he supplies us with measured miracles. He makes it happen when we need it to happen.

A measured miracle is one that meets your particular need. Israel didn't need the Red Sea moved, they just needed to get to the other side. Elijah, laying by the brook, didn't need an eight course dinner, he just needed enough to make it day by day.

A measured miracle is God making things happen one day at a time!

-When God works a miracle, doors that were once closed are opened.

-When God works a miracle, opportunities that were unavailable suddenly appear.

-When God works a miracle those who were expected to fail suddenly succeed.

-When God works a miracle those who were defeated become victorious

MEASURED MERCY: Along the way we will make some mistakes, but it is always good to remember that we serve and M and M God. Just he gives us Measured Miracles he also gives us measured mercy. He will look beyond our faults and see our needs.

It's good to know that we make a mistake, Grace a sign of God's measured mercy, will give us another chance!

It's good to know that if we fall, that Grace will put us back on our feet!

Every child of God should strive to become an M and M Christian. That's a Christian who wears the Master's Mark. No matter where we go the world should be able to look at us and see the Master's Mark!

Praise him for being so good!

Praise him for giving us a second chance!

Praise him for dying out on Calvary!

Praise him for rising after three days and nights!

What a Mighty God we serve!

What a Magnificent God we serve!

Praise him all the day long!

No. 661-Anniv-Men's Day

Not Just My Baby's Daddy

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 1, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Genesis 18:19

Introduction

What is your concept of a real Black man? Some would measure him differently from others. To some, a real man is one that is physically strong, able to endure pain and perform great feats of strength. A man is often measured by the height of his ambitions, dreams and goals. Others measure him by the depth of his pockets or the breadth of his compassion. Regardless, the measure of a man differs, depending on one's perspective. No matter what one's estimate of a man is, the current national sentiment is that there is a shortage of real African-American men.

While there are no statistics that indicate that there is a decline in the number of African- American male births, there is a general feeling in our community that real Black men are a diminishing presence. That conclusion is supported by what we see and hear in the media. A 1995 study by the National Rainbow Coalition Commission on Fairness in the media showed that: 1) African-Americans appear on the news as criminals twice as often as other groups; 2) Of 620 television shows on prime time television between 1955-1987 only five percent showed African Americans as professionals while 94 percent showed whites as executives. 3) Black men are virtually invisible on commercials between Saturday morning cartoons 4)Blacks are projected generally in two stereotypes "Sambo or Savage." Thus, both Black women and Black children evolve with a negative image of Black men.

The images that remain are stereotypes that suggest that a Black man is less than admirable. There is a hit recording being sold around the world whose title is being repeated by millions. The song, "That's just my baby's daddy" is the redundant chant that is given in a low budget recording in which a woman describes the father of her child to her new lover as "Just my baby's daddy!" The question is asked, "Who dat is?" and the answer comes, "That's just my baby's daddy!" It's a nineties take on the phrase of the 70's and 80's, "A black man ain't nothing." The song seems to reinforce the common belief that Black men, all Black men, are less than desirable.

The phrase "Just my baby's daddy" is a general indictment of a growing subclass of men who are either unable or refuse to assume the role of father to their children. "Just my baby's daddy" is a statement of lost respect for some men who have left the job of fatherhood to either a mother or the state. Men should be concerned because while America chuckles at the simple little song, the fact that it is selling millions suggests that there are even more millions that agree with its theme.

The man who fathers a child and disappears, is "just my baby's daddy!" The man who has little time for his children, especially in the formative years is running the risk of becoming, "just my baby's daddy!" The man who provides little or no support for the nurture and welfare of his children is generally described as "just my baby's daddy!"

As Christians, we are aware of the importance of having a being a good father. It is important because our fathers not only are the mates for women and leaders of families but they are symbols of our relationship with our heavenly father. Since fathers are types of the love of God, good fathers represent to their family the way God responds to the family. Good fathers, millions of them around the world, work daily to prove that a Christian father is more than "just my baby's daddy!"

Exposition

This text focuses on God as he describes his relationship with Abraham.

Angels had visited Abraham's home and in the course of their sojourn God debated whether or not Abraham should be told about his plan to destroy the cities of the plain. It would be a deadly destruction because of their great sin. At this point no human had been told the details of God's plan. As they came to the edge of a deep ravine overlooking the doomed cities of the plain, God talkedwith himself to decide reasons why Abraham should be told.

As God reasonsed with himself he revealed why Abraham was considered a good man in his sight. Beginning at verse 17 he contemplated Abraham in the phrases, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him?" His answer is "no."

He then began to list the fine qualities of a spiritual man that drews him close to Abraham. These qualities made him more than just a man; more than just any husband, but special in his sight.

For I know him. Abraham's walk with God was so close that God considered him above all others. He knew him because he created him. He also knew him because Abraham listened to the voice of God all of his life. He led a godly life himself and encouraged the same in all of those who were either in his company or employ.

He will command his children. To command his children suggests something more than demand by sheer force of strength. It suggests that his life and actions elicit the respect of his children by the way he lives before them. Thus, he is in a position to give direction by virtue of his own experience.

He will command his household. Not only was Abraham able to command the respect of his children, but that of his wife, employees and other relatives. Commanding such respect requires that he live before them as an example of the precepts and standards that he expected of them.

Keep the way of the Lord. Abraham wanted to do what was right in God's sight. His push to do that which was just, correct and pleasing to God showed itself in the direction of his entire household. Without a written law, it was only the will of an individual to follow the voice of God as he speaks to his soul, that led him in the right direction.

When God analyzed Abraham he concluded that Abraham deserved special consideration because he was not just another man, but he was a man close to his ideal. In a similar sense, so should every man or woman who has been born into the family of God be considered in the same way.

The believer's relationship with God, through grace, should be one that is so close to God that knows him because of the closeness of the walk. The way a believer lives before his or her family, associates and co-workers also commands the respect of those around him. By virtue of his own experience he or she makes a mark on the general society as he or she strives to do that which is pleasing to God.

Thus, a believing man is not "just" any man. A believing woman is not "just" any woman. Both are part of a special "chosen generation" of peculiar, holy and special people who have been called out of darkness into the marvelous light.

Abraham was more than just a daddy, he was a father. He was more than just a mate for his wife, he was a godly husband.

Believers who share the same attributes share the same description.

Fathers Not Just Daddies

Today, Christian men should strive to throw off the stereotypes that describe African-American men as something less than the ideal. How can African-American men become more than "just" my baby's daddy? If it is to be done he must assume a posture in the context of his relationship with the mother of his children, his children and family that commands respect. If Abraham's life is an example then the personal attribute that rises higher than all others is that his lifestyle in the presence of his family and associates commanded their respect. Thus, African-American men must work to change their image by:

BEING A PROVIDER: A man who provides for his household to the best of his ability commands the respect of both his wife and children. The provider is not expected to do that which beyond reason, but that which is within his ability. Children who see their fathers doing their very best to provide a roof over their heads and put food on their table, develop a respect for them. Even when a woman has lost her romantic attraction for her former mate, she still respects the man who does not abandon his children and provides adequately for their care, education and safety. Men who provide for their children are not compelled to do so by the courts. They

do so out of love. In the context of marriage most of his resources would be applied to the care of his children. Even outside of marriage, the man who provides knows that the costs are the same. He assumes his responsibility without an order from a court. Such a man is never described as "just" my baby's daddy. He is my father, my provider.

BEING A ROLE MODEL: A man who lives a life that is exemplary before his wife and children commands their respect. Abraham became a role model for his family because he sought to do the things that were right and just in the eyesight of God. Because this was his standard, his children and associates came to respect him for the moral tone of his life. Likewise, the man who obeys the law, works hard and lives a clean cut, ordered life, is a commanding presence. Those who refuse to involve themselves in illegal activities, public drunkenness and wild uncontrolled actions cannot command the respect of their children, who know the real deal. Children take note. His mate takes note. The community takes note. When he is in the presence of his family, he is welcomed not frowned upon. When he is in the presence of his wife or even his former mate, she treats him with respect because he is always the gentleman and refuses to stoop lower than the standards he purports. Such a man is never described as "just" my baby's daddy. He has a name. He is referred to as "father."

BEING A GOD FEARING MAN: A man who orders his life by the word of God commands the respect of his wife and his children. Such a man may not walk the streets daily with a bible in his hands or have a huge cross dangling around his neck, but the principles of godliness are hung around his heart and nailed to the doorposts of his soul. The man who is led by God and shows it in his lifestyle and manner. In a society that casts a God fearing man as a wimp, there is a tendency of some to shun the image of being a spiritual man. Yet, that is the very characteristic that drew Abraham close to God, the fact that he was willing to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. The God fearing man seeks the will of God and strives to follow it, thus shepherds his family in the direction of the almighty.

Even in estranged situations, the God fearing man still seeks to follow God. His children can see it. His wife or former mate can see it and it commands their respect. Such a man is never referred to as "just my baby's daddy" because he is a man who strives to do that which is right in the sight of God.

The Reward of the God Fearing Man

What is the reward of the God fearing man who is more than "Just my baby's daddy?" Verse 19 ends with Abraham's reward "..that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

God promised Abraham a great and strong family. He promised him land and security. He promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through him. That is the essence of his reward for being more than his baby's daddy. More than his wife's old man! More than just a man, but a man who walks with God.

It is difficult to find a man who truly walks with God, described as "just my baby's daddy!" because such a man assumes his responsibility and commands the respect of his children and mate.

It is possible for a man to have a fine job and still be "just my baby's daddy!"

It is possible for a man to have a fine education and still be "just my baby's daddy!"

It is possible for a man to live in the same house with his wife and children and still be "just my baby's daddy!"

It is possible for him to be well dressed and groomed impeccably, and still be described as "just my baby's daddy!"

If a man wants to be more than "just my baby's daddy!" then he must stand for something in the eyesight of his children and his mate.

He may not be rich, but he'll be more than just my baby's daddy!

He may not be famous, but he'll be more than just my baby's daddy!

He may not be well educated, but he'll be more than just my baby's daddy!

There was once a slave family on a Southern plantation that faced the prospect of being sold. The young father of the family of 10 children overheard his master discussing the possible sale of family members. The master said he could sell the father and get a handsome some and still have a woman and ten children. But he could sell all ten of the children at a profit and the young couple could bear him more. Realizing that his family was about to be sold the father called in his wife and children and told them that he may be leaving them soon. "But wherever you go, no matter how long it takes, I'll come back to get you. "

That night the young father picked an argument with the overseer and he was whipped like an animal. The master shipped him off to be sold. The boys watched as their father left with scars on his back and chains on his hands and feet. He forced himself to stand tall before his sons and ambled down the road.

Nearly 30 years later, after freedom was won, that father found his family and a giant reunion was planned when he stepped out of the wagon he saw each of his ten sons and their children standing in a straight line. The oldest said to the others, "children, let me tell you about my father. The last time I saw him, he had chains on his feet and 10 stripes across his back. But because of those chains and stripes on his back, we are able to stand here today. That's not just your granddaddy, that's my father!"

Children let me tell you about the Lord!

The last time the world saw him he had stripes on his back and nail prints in his hands! He saved the world from sin and destruction!

He died out on Calvary! He died, but he rose again!

He died that we might live! He died that we might have a chance!

Because he lives...

I live!

No. 662-Youth

Finding God
In a Mickey Mouse World

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 8, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20:26-29

Introduction

Have you ever watch a cartoon? Most of us are fascinated with cartoons. Even from our childhood we have been fascinated with the tiny characters that seem to come to life and defy all natural laws to both amuse us and entertain us. Whether one is young or whether one is old, we are taken with cartoons. We read cartoons in comic books, newspapers and on individual sheets. They make us laugh. They entertain us. On occasion they are used by satirists to send a message. Regardless of our age, America is fascinated with cartoons.

Each generation has had its exposure to cartoons. A generation of adults read Dick Tracy cartoons in their weekly papers. They were fascinated by the wonderful gadgets that Dick Tracy seemed to use. The other gadgets he used were the forerunner of the magic and gadgetry of James Bond, agent OO7. Flash Gordan introduced us to space and raised the possibilities of manned space vehicles and star wars type combat. We dismissed it as impossible at the time, yet we were fascinated with the cartoon anyway.

The late Walt Disney became rich and famous when he perfected the art of animating cartoons. When he developed a technique of making the little pictures come to life with such accuracy that they appeared life like, the world watched. His great characters Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse were the spin-offs to many others inspired by his work. Entire animated movies were developed that were caricatures of real life. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella and others were all so beautifully designed that decades later people still flock to see them.

Then there were others. Not only did Disney create Mickey Mouse and Minnie

but there was also Pluto, scores of others who invited children to join the Mickey Mouse Club. Others catch our imagination as well. Tweedy Bird, Tom and Jerry, Heckle and Jeckle and a plethora of others. All of them invited young people and adults as well to join a world of make believe where they could step out of reality for a moment and be somewhere else as long as they want to be.

Make believe. That's the world of cartoons. That's the world of Mickey Mouse. Millions of youth around the nation are plunged into this make believe world and some experience difficulty separating reality from their make believe world. The line is thin and blurry. Children are often frustrated in their attempt to understand the various shades of real and make believe. Between the Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and the cartoons, many children are completely confused.

What about belief in God? Children have some difficulty with that too. Many do not know whether or not to believe in God or wait to see if he turns out to be another imaginative product of a region that parallels cartoon land.

As Christians we should work to help our children understand the difference between reality and make believe. As we make the distinctions, we should be sure to help them know through both our precept and example that God is not a make believe character like Mickey Mouse, but God is real!

Exposition

This text focuses on Thomas as he expressed his doubt that the risen saviour was actually real.

Thomas had the dubious distinction of being one who doubted the resurrection of Christ. When the disciples assembled themselves after the crucifixion, there was obviously much anxiety among them. The doors were shut and locks were in place. Then suddenly Christ appeared in the midst of them.

Thomas did not trust what his eyes were seeing. It appeared that saviour was standing before him in the flesh. It appeared that the image he saw was that of Christ. However, Thomas was not sure. Too many things had happened and they had happened so fast. He had earlier said he would not believe that Christ was risen unless he could touch the wound prints with his own hands. Thus, when Christ appears in this text He invites Thomas to do just that. It was then that Thomas knelt in submission and belief not needing to touch the Lord. He believed what he saw. He concluded that Christ was not a fake but a real presence before him.

When he bowed, he acknowledged Christ as the Lord and worshipped him.

Is Mickey Mouse Real?

Youth today are exposed to many influences that make it difficult for them to differentiate between what is real and what is imagined. Whether it is the magic of movie special effects to the magic of David Copperfield, youth are bombarded with images of life that may be real or could be well crafted illusions.

Such is the case with Mickey Mouse. For as many times as we have seen that face, it will come as no surprise to you to discover that Mickey isn't real. In fact the technology to make Mickey appear real didn't exist until the beginning of the 20th Century.

"Of course, that's obvious!" you might be thinking. Yes and no. Disney's skill in animation is part of a dissolving of the border between the real and the unreal which one finds perfected in Disney theme parks.

The choice of a mouse as the character for Mickey that children might identify with is significant. Walt laughed about the choice because he said he was afraid of mice. Mice are cute, furry and cuddly, but also small, amoral and pesky much as children might have been viewed during the late 1920's.

Mickey and his Disney pals live in a virtual world where things that are lifeless can become animate and things that are alive can be treated as objects. The format of a cartoon removes the limits of time and space so the world can be turned upside down.

Mickey and all animation characters live in the same world as children who are striving to understand the relationships of time and space. Children especially enjoy the suspension of natural law because they can understand the deception and laugh at the confusion of the characters. In one comical scene, Mickey's dog Pluto swallows a magnet and then gets chased by pots and pans and everything metallic.

In the magical world of a child, everything is alive. In many of the Disney classics, the world is full of inanimate objects which come to life - with an attitude. Knives forks and spoons dance on the table while the teapot spouts off at the tea cup. Trees malevolently grab little children while Moose stand on two feet and smoke cigars. It is a world of make believe far out of touch with reality.

And why do we watch that which is obviously fake when understanding the real is of supreme value for survival? It's entertaining. We laugh at the bawdy exaggeration. Something about slapstick tickles the funny bone. And the story usually teaches some moral or value. Cartoons do pass on the rules, the knowledge and social conventions of a culture. Animation is a refined visual form of story telling that has existed since before the first cave paintings.

Life In A Toon World

In the world of cartoons life is drastically different from reality.

NO ONE DIES IN TOONLAND: Youth who watch cartoons without adult interpretation can easily believe that death is not a reality. In cartoons, no matter how many times Elmer Fudd shoots the pesky rabbit he will never die. The coyote can drop a bolder upon himself or have a stick of dynamite blow up in his face and still live in toon land. When a person falls it is humorous because no one in toon land can be permanently injured.

The idea of pain, sickness and death does not exist for cartoon characters. Many youth still have that view of life as they become teens

GOD DOES NOT EXIST IN TOON LAND. No matter how lofty the goals of toons, they never seem to have a religious belief. No toons go to church, pray or worship God. There are some that call up higher powers for energy. Some talk to ancestors. Some draw power from unseen sources, but as a general rule toons don't go to church or express a belief in God. It is easy for a youth who is absorbed with the world of make believe to conclude that God does not exist. Big Bird doesn't go to church, neither does Bat Man or Porky Pig. Yet, the reality of life is that God does exist. He is real regardless to whether or not he appears in toonland.

In A Mickey Mouse World, God is real

While the world focuses on the theme park images of life that distort the realities and point us away from faith and devotion, true believers are convinced more than ever that God is real, even in this Mickey Mouse world in which we live.

In a world of Daffy Ducks and crazy rabbits, mass murderers, free sex and gross individualism, there is still one influence that provides sanity to insane and understanding to the confused. That influence is the presence of almighty God.

No matter how difficult the times, God is still in control.

These are time when it is difficult to tell men from women and women from men, but God is the same.

These are times when it is hard to know real leather from pleather, fake fur from real fur and designer clothes from cheap imitations, God is still the one and only.

I Don't know about you but I'm glad to know that the God we serve is still a God that can take:

-Misfortunes and turn them into opportunities

-Failures and turn them into successes

-Sadness and turn it into gladness

-Defeat and turn it into victory

We serve a God who still sits high and looks low! He still holds the fate of the world in his hands.

No wonder the song writer declares, "Yes God is real for I can feel him in my soul!"

Walt Disney may tell the world to spell happiness "M.I.C.K.E.Y" but every believer knows the way to spell happines is "J.E.S.U.S"

When the world is dark, Jesus!

When times are tough, Jesus!

When you can't see your way, Jesus!

When things are looking down, Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Jesus is real!

For I can feel him in my soul!

No. 663-Inspiration

Precious Promises

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 22, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4

Introduction

Have you ever made a promise, only to discover that you couldn't keep it? Did it concern something major? Did it concern something you consider relatively unimportant? Did you simply change your mind or did something prevent you from keeping your promise? We often make promises with the best intention of keeping them, but fail to follow through. Sometimes, we have promised without really thinking about what we have done. Then there are those who promise that which they know is not within their power to perform. Whether it is a husband who promises to have a talk with his wife at the end of day and never does; or child that promises to complete a task but never gets around to it, promises are empty unless they are kept.

The value of one's promise is a measure of integrity. Those who value their promises greatly endeavor to keep them at all cost. There are some who make promises and break them for convenience sake. Consider the girl who was feeling like an old maid at age 15 because she was the only girl at school who had not received a promise ring from a boy. Then one day a scrawny little freshman boy, obviously shy and reserved, noticed that when boys gave girls promise rings the girls liked them. He saved his money until he could buy a golden ring big enough to win the heart of any girl he gave it to. He spotted the lonely girl with no ring on her finger, walked up to her and asked her to be his girl friend. He presented her with a pretty, gold "Promise ring" and she promised to be his girlfriend that day. . Shortly after, a senior Letterman, who stood well over six feet tall, being one of the most popular guys on campus also approached her to be his girl friend. She thought about the skinny little freshman boy and the handsome, tall, and popular football player and became confused. She returned the ring to the freshman and said "I changed my mind." The boy pawned the ring, which coincidentally was purchased by the football player, who gave it to the girl. Confused the freshman asked her, "You promised me and I gave you a ring. You promised him and he gave you the same ring, what's the difference?" The girl

looked at him, laughed and said, “Later you’ll understand this thing. The difference is in the man and not in the ring!” A change of mind broke a promise very easily.

Have we changed our minds on God? Have there been times when we were desperate and promised to do things for God but, changed our mind later. Did we accept God’s tokens of mercy and love then change our minds? What if God broke his promises to us as easily as we break our promises to him? Unfortunately there are many who have “returned the ring” to God. The world has offered them tempting opportunities for prosperity, popularity and success and they have simply changed their minds.

As Christians, we strive to keep our promises to God. We realize that he has never broken a promise to us and we strive daily, to keep our promises to him. Our Goal is to keep him forever in our heart as he does for us. He told us he loved us and gave us the cross and an empty grave as a token of his love. We strive everyday to be worthy of his gift. We never plan to give it back!

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter as he reminds believers that God has given them precious promises that sustain them in the faith.

Peter was one of the great undershepherds of the Church. He had the job of trying to keep believers unified after many dispersed following the burning of Rome by Nero. He wrote letters or “epistles” to them to nurture them, even while being dispersed. This letter addresses three subjects. . In the first chapter, the apostle is giving his readers a word of exhortation on what the Christian life is all about. In the second chapter, he gives a word of warning on how to recognize and handle false teachers; and in the third chapter, he gives us a word of certainty about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the facts that underlie our faith. And then he draws a conclusion. It is a very simple outline, isn’t it - a very practical letter, as you might expect coming from such a practical, hard-headed Christian as Peter.

When this letter was written, Peter was a prisoner, perhaps of Nero of Rome. He sensed great danger and felt his time was drawing near when he was to put off his body - his tent, his habitation - to go and be with the Lord. And he says the Lord himself showed him this, as recorded for us at the close of the Gospel of John. The Lord Jesus had said to Peter that there would come a time when men would bind his hands and lead him where he did not desire to go.

Peter understood this to mean that he was to suffer and die as our Lord died, on a cross. And tradition tells us that Peter was indeed crucified, that he was so humbled by the fact that he was counted worthy to die the same kind of a death that the Lord Jesus did, that he begged his captors to crucify him upside down.

Peter told believers that the Christian faith provides everything we need to know to live fruitful, fulfilling as develop a greater knowledge of the nature of God. What is essential, according to Peter, is that each believer acquaint himself with the divine nature of God and the will of God. When believers know what God is like, what He

wants and what He has promised it becomes easier to understand how we are "more than conquerors" in this world.

He encourages Christians to build their faith through the Knowledge of how God operates in the world and in personal lives.

God has made every believer certain unique and "precious promises" that sustain him in troublesome times. It is these promises, of life, hope, protection and salvation that have sustained believers for nearly 2,000 years.

Precious Promises

It said that a certain man had a habit of writing notes in his bible as he heard speakers speak or preacher's preach. His wife noticed that beside some verses he had marked "P" around others he had written "PP" and still around others he had written "PPP" When later asked the meaning of these markings he explained that a single "P" marked a promise God made. It was usually a promised made to someone else or something distant. "PP" Was a precious promise. It was a promise God made that applied to his life. It was not distant but was peculiar to him. "PPP" was a precious promise that God made to him that was proven in reality!"

Seven Promises of God

Generally Christians have come to know that God has made thousands of "P" promises, but seven "PP" promises that are repeated in different forms and at different times. What are God promises to believers?

1. God has promised that those who believe in Jesus and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins will be saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" Mark 16:16.

2. God has promised His people eternal life. Those who believe in Christ and accept him as Savior shall be saved. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. John 10:27-28.

3. He has promised to supply every need we have. The Bible says: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". That's Philippians 4:19. God has obligated Himself only to the extent of our needs. That would include food, clothing, shelter, companionship, love, and salvation thru Jesus Christ. It would not include the multiplicity of luxuries that we have come to think of as needs.

4. God has promised that His grace is sufficient for us. The bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. " He has made provision for our salvation by His grace through faith.

5. God has promised that His children will not be overtaken with temptation.

Instead, He assures us that a way of escape will be provided. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Jude wrote: “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present your faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude v 24).

6. God has promised us victory over death. Physical decay may come, but God has promised that we shall be victorious over actual death. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

7. God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 No matter how frustrating a situation gets, it will work to the advantage of true believers.

Standing on the Promises

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that while there have been some promises and at least seven categories of precious promises, it is good to know that all of God’s promises are proven promises.

If God has said it, that settles it, it will be done!

God told Moses, Brother Moses, it looks like you are standing at the edge of defeat, but get your marching shoes on. I promise you I’ll make a way for you through the Red Sea! Through the Red Sea!

God told Noah, Brother Noah it might look a little dry out here, but you better get started building you an ark. I promise you, it’s going to rain! That was a proven promise

God told Lot, Brother Lot don’t be deceived by the peacefulness of Sodom. Things are about to get hot. I promise you, God’s “a gonna rain down fire!” That was a proven promise.

Has your experience proven God’s promises to be true?

Has God’s promises proven to be true?

Has his promise to supply your every need, proven to be true?

Has his promise to be with you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, proven to be true?

Has his promise to be with you alway, even to the end of the world, proven to be true!

Has his promise to take every bad thing that happened to you and work it out to you advantage, proven to be true?

I don’t know about you, but I found out that God is a dependable God, if he promised it, I can count on it!

I can count on because His word is true!

I can count on it because, unlike man, God is able to do exactly what He says!

He's able to:

-Take my mountains and turn them into molehills!

-Take my sadness and turn it into gladness!

-Take my agony and turn it into ecstasy!

-Take my darkness and turn it into light!

-Take my failure and turn it into success!

As I close, I am reminded of an old man who heard the voice of God one night in his sleep. God told him to invest in a house that stood on the corner of 3rd and Main. God told him to take the contents of the house and throw it away and he would be blessed. Sight unseen the man took all of his savings and bought the house. When his children found that their father had bought an old run down house that had been abandoned for years they became concerned. Every day he moved out a piece of furniture and stood on the porch. The trash pile became increasingly larger as he emptied the house and stood on the porch. The last thing he took from the house was an old picture that was hanging on the wall.

As he threw the picture on the trash pile an art dealer had stopped at the red light. He recognized the picture, jumped from his car and took the old man to the gallery. Within a week the picture was determined to be a collector's item and the man was paid several million dollars. The art dealer asked, "Why were you just standing on the porch every day! When you had a fortune on the wall!" The old man answered, "I didn't know what was in this old house. You thought I was standing on the porch, but I was standing on the promises of God!"

I don't know about you, but I've decided to stand on the promises of God!

I heard the voice of Jesus say, Lie down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast and I will give you rest! That's a promise I can stand on!

I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also! That's a promise I can stand on!

I heard Jesus tell his disciples, After while, bye and bye, this old body will be destroyed; but after three days and nights I'll take it up again. The disciples didn't know what to think.

One evening they crucified him and buried Him in a borrowed tomb! But Early Sunday morning, just like he promised! He arose from the dead!

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I'm gonna stand on the promises of God! I don't know what the future holds, but I'm gonna stand on the promises!

No wonder the song writer wrote: Standing, Standing, Standing on the promises of Christ my Savior!

Standing, Standing!

I'm standing on the promises of God!

No 664-Inspiration

Feeling His Presence Without Seeing His Hand

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 6, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"For if thou altogether holiest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: who knoweth whetherthou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why things happen the way they do? Very few things in our world happen by chance but rather in response to an unseen plan. We may not be aware of the plan or the planner, but the plan exists. Very few things simply *happen*. When a building is constructed, does it just happen or are there plans and planners working in the background that we do not see? When a project is completed did it just happen or were there participants in the process that forever remain nameless. We may not know how an event occurs, but are sure that it did not occur by chance. The continuous flow of life began with an unseen hand and is guided by the same hand every day.

Sometimes we are puzzled by events that occur. We often wonder why this is happening to me? Consider the little rabbit that was fascinated with its new found speed. The bunny loved to out run the creatures of the wood. He out ran the toad frog and brer snake could never catch him. In fact, he took on ever creature of the woods to test his skill. The little rabbit was disturbed however, because each time his folks let him go to the woods alone, mama rabbit would prick the bottom of his foot with a thorn. When they left, without explanation, the little rabbit limped around for hours in pain. When they returned they said nothing. After a while the little rabbit was concerned and asked mama rabbit the question, "why do you stick my foot every time you leave me alone, it doesn't make sense and it seems cruel for you to do me this way." Mama rabbit hopped over to her son and said "There is a hound dog and hunter that love to chase little fast rabbits. Knowing you, you'd give them a run. It may not make sense to you know, but it's better to be a living bunny with a sore foot than a dead rabbit with a fast reputation." It didn't make sense to him at the time, but that sore foot was keeping him alive.

What's your sore foot? Do things seem to happen to you that don't make sense? Did you miss your airplane flight, only to learn that the plane you were scheduled to catch had a lengthy delay or crash? Everything has a reason and a purpose, even though we don't see it clearly, there is a purpose. That's what happened when Jesus' critics asked him why the blind man was blind. Had he or his parents sinned? Jesus responded that the man was born blind so that he could be present at that very moment to demonstrate the healing power of God. Even his blindness had a reason.

There is an unseen hand that operates in every life work. That unseen hand guides and controls, tears down and builds up. That unseen hand is called providence, the will of God working itself out among men. The believer knows the power of God is working everyday, even though he can't see his hand directly, his presence is felt.

As Christians we are encouraged when we remember that God is in control of the universe and our lives. He cares for us and is working out his will for us every day. Our prayer is "thy will be done." We rest confident that his perfect righteousness will take care of the rest.

Exposition

This text focuses on Esther as she is told that her rise to throne of Persian was destined so that she could save her people from destruction.

The story of Esther concerns a king called Ahasuerus, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, who has married a young Jewish girl named Esther, a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem. It also involved her cousin, Mordecai, who became a judge in the city gates in Susa, the capital of Media-Persia and an officer of the King's court named Haman.

The book of Esther is unique in that the name of God is not mentioned with its pages. Neither is there any reference to God. While the name of God is not called the hand of God is felt in the unraveling of the story of Esther.

The events of the Book of Esther take place when Israel was in captivity under King Ahasurus. Many of the Jewish people had been allowed to return home to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and restore their worship, others for various reasons stayed. The God of Israel was not popular among the Persians and many simply found it safer not to refer to God in the courts of the King. Thus many writings, including the Book of Esther had no reference to God, yet God's work was evidenced all through the writings. Jewish rabbis have since found the name of God in Hebrew formed by taking first letters of 1:20, 5:4, 5:13, 7:5 and 7:7. Even this is a hidden reference. The fact that God's name could not be called did not stop his hand from moving in the life of the people.

The story is that of a king and his kingdom. The king divorces the queen who is at his side when the story opens, and thereby becomes a lonely man by his own decree. He is powerless to change the decree after it is issued, and in his loneliness he begins a search for a new queen. Esther, under the control of her cousin, Mordecai,

is brought before the king and he falls in love with her. Because of her beauty he immediately chooses her to be his queen and exalts her to the second place in the kingdom.

Haman managed to pull the wool over the king's eyes and deceive him into signing a decree to destroy all the Jews in his kingdom. Immediately antagonistic toward Mordecai Haman and Mordecai are instantly in direct conflict, because Haman was "the enemy of the Jews." Learning that Mordecai is a Jew, he vows to eliminate him from the kingdom. Mordecai overhears the plot and gets word to Queen Esther that she would need to act to save the people. He is confident that the people would be saved, either by her hand or by someone's hand because God would not allow his people to be destroyed. Thus he utters the words of this text, "and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Eventually Esther is able to expose Haman's plans, and save the people but not before watching Mordecai raised to a position of prominence and Haman hanged from the gallows he built for Mordecai.

How is God's providence revealed in the book of Esther?

1. Although highly improbable, Esther was able to win a beauty contest and become Queen (2:15-18)

2. Mordecai's overhearing of the plot to destroy the people.

3. The casting of the lots that produced a date a year away gave Esther time to persuade the king to change his mind. (3:7-51)

4. The King's tolerance for Esther although he had others in his harem.

It shows that while God's name was never called in Esther his hand was felt in the way he caused things to happen for his people.

No One Is Insignificant

Both Esther and Mordecai are examples of how God can place people at different ends of the spectrum to accomplish his purpose. One was placed as a Queen the other as a man who sat by the gate. Both were instruments used to accomplish the same purpose.

In life, we often think our elevation or selection to a particular position or post came by chance. The term we generally use to describe our good fortune is "luck." We felt lucky to get a special promotion or lucky to get a job in a certain area.

But could it be that God arranged for us to be where we are for a specific purpose? Is it possible the man who bags the grocery and smiles every day to weary shoppers was placed there for a purpose, beyond keeping bread on his own table? Is it possible that the plumber, bus driver, or the yard man have another purpose other than providing a service when we call? Is it possible that you are more than a nurse or doctor, secretary or civic leader?

This text seems to indicate that although the name of God may not have been mentioned in your selection to your present station in life, His hand was in the process nevertheless. When you were hired, seldom did your employer say he hired you

because he was inspired by God or moved by the Holy Spirit to do so. It appeared that you were hired on the merits of your resume' or record of experience. God's name was not mentioned at all, but the believer knows that while his name was never called, God was nevertheless in the plan.

Our history is filled with examples of how God placed seemingly insignificant personalities in the right place to accomplish his purpose. During the days of segregation, many troubles for our people were averted because a well placed maid was able to speak a word on our behalf. Some were tired laborers like Rosa Parks, placed on a city bus at just the right time. Others were great organizers and motivators like Frederick Douglass and A. Phillip Randolph. God has a way of placing the right people in the right place at the right time, to benefit his people.

Christians must be careful not to become complacent with their role in life. It is possible for us to come to believe that what we do is insignificant. The school cook, after a while, starts to believe her role is unimportant. Yet it is highly possible that she is the one person that motivates others to keep a focus on quality for we are "feeding God's children." The auto repairman, the lawyer, the cashier and others, all play significant roles in God's master plan for his people. We are where we are as a part of God's master plan. It did not happen by chance.

No one is insignificant. God uses each of us to carry out his divine providence.

An Unseen Hand

Finally we must consider that often we may not be able to see God move, but we know he is there. We may not seem him walking but we can look back and see his foot prints in the sand.

Consider the father who had a spend thrift daughter who couldn't resist a good bargain. When she moved away from home the father promised to take care of her. A friend asked the father, after several months, whether or not he had heard from his daughter. The father said he hadn't seen her but he knew about her actions. She celebrated her birthday this month a bought a birthday cake and a dress. She went to a restaurant and must have entertained friends too. The father proceeded to other activities. The friend asked, "How is it you know so much about what your daughter is doing, but you have seen or heard from her?" The father answered that when she left he gave her his credit card. He keeps up with her through the charges that show up on his bill. "When I get to the total every month. I feel her presence although I can't see her face."

God moves in mysterious ways. Often we can't tell how he's doing what he's doing, we just know that he's doing it!

Joseph can testify that when he was thrown into a pit by his brothers, there was an unseen hand that cushioned his fall and guided him from a pit to a prison cell to a palace. He didn't see his hand but he knew he was there!

Daniel can testify that when he was taken into exile as a captive, God moved to lift him from his lowly position and placed him in a place of honor!

The Three Hebrew Boys can testify that God protected them in the fiery furnace. They didn't know whether he would be there, but they were confident. Can't you hear their declared "Our God is able to deliver us!

God moves in mysterious ways!

I'm reminded of a man who had fallen from cliff and dangled by the end of a rope being held by his friend. The friend yell to him to hold on "I've got the rope!" As the man was eased down he suddenly made a huge drop followed by a sudden stop. Then he was eased to the ground. On the ground his friend came and hugged his neck. The man said you scared me there for a minute, you let me go for a second. The friend responded, "I did let go. I tried to hold on but I couldn't. The rope slipped out of my hand. Then suddenly, I got a surge of strength from somewhere and picked up the rope. You made it to the bottom, but I don't know who was holding the rope!" The man lifted his hand to the sky and gave praise to God. "I couldn't see his hand, but I know who was holding the rope!"

Whose holding the rope for you?

When troubles get you down, whose holding the rope?

When doctors give up on you, whose holding the rope?

When friends slip and let go, whose holding the rope?

When your best efforts fail and you seem to be lost, whose holding the rope?

The man who is holding the rope is the same man that carried a cross for us back on Calvary's hill.

The man who is holding the rope is the same man who died and was buried for three days and nights!

It's the same man who arose, Early Sunday morning!

He's name is Jesus!

No. 665-Homecoming

Keep The Home Fires Burning

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 20, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "The altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out, but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat portions of the peace offerings on it. Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out." Leviticus 6:12-13

Introduction

Have you ever started on a project, but somewhere along the road lost the enthusiasm needed for its completion? You began with such vigor and enthusiasm that it could not be paralled anywhere. Was it a personal goal? Was it a business or social commitment? At the onset, it appeared that you would be unstoppable, yet somewhere along the road you just ran out of gas. Your enthusiasm began to smolder. What was once a burning fire had reduced itself to a mere smoldering pile of ashes. That's the way it is with lost enthusiasm.

Why do fires go out? Generally, fires are extinguished when one or more of the elements needed to keep them going begin to disappear. Fires need air to continue burning. They also need combustible material. That's why fire fighters combat forest fires by dozing them with chemicals to cut off the air supply or by cutting or burning down all of the trees in front of a raging fire to starve it to death. Consider the little scout who spent his first night in the woods. Being new, he drew the assignment to keep the fire burning all night. At first the fire burned high and the camp was warm. Then the boy looked at the darkness of the trees surrounding the camp site area and became afraid of the dark. He laid by the fire placing small twigs instead of limbs on the fire until there was nothing remaining. Finally, all that was left were small handfuls of straw. When his fellow campers awakened they found that they fire had gone completely out. They questioned him, "What happened to the fire?" The boy, surrounded by a wood everywhere said, "I couldn't find anything to burn!" At that the others in his patrol looked around their tents and showed the new boy that they had camped in a freshly cut part of the forest with an ample supply of firewood laying everywhere. There was plenty of firewood available, but he did not have the will to gather it in the dark.

In a similar sense many begin efforts with enthusiasm but allow the fires to go out when it gets dark. They burn up everything they have collected to keep it going,

but because maintaining the fire often requires them to venture into the unknown or to face the possibility of criticism or disappointment, they let the fires go out.

The same is true of believers who begin their walk with Christ with great faith and enthusiasm and somehow let the fires die.

As Christians, we strive to keep the fire of our faith burning daily. We study the word, pray, sing and fellowship. In doing so we build our faith in the God we serve.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's command to the priests to maintain the fire of the altar of sacrifice.

Leviticus focuses mainly on the particulars associated with the operation of the Tabernacle. It details the duties of the priests and the rituals and ceremonies associated with the sacrifices.

This passage focuses on the command to the priests to maintain the fire of the altar continuously. God himself lit the fire. They were ordered to make sure that it never burned out. The priests took that responsibility seriously. The organized themselves to maintain the fire 24 hours a day seven days a week. When the temple was build by Solomon, God once again lit the fire (2 Chronicles 7:1) Their vigil was maintained continuously for 800 years until the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

Building The Fire

There is an urgent need for believers to rekindle the flame of worship, study and service in the kingdom of God. Many have allowed their spirit of service to dwindle from the burning fire of yesterday to the smoldering ashes of today. They have become relics and empty shells of what they once were. The fire that was ignited in our spirits was sparked by the Holy Ghost. We must feed that fire however, it we want to maintain its presence.

What does it take to build the fire of faith and to keep it going?

KINDLING: A Good fire starts with kindling. Kindling are small combustible items that burn fast and easy.. String, dry grass, leaves and match stick size twigs are examples of kindling. The very nature of kindling is that it is a quick starter. It is also the nature of kindling to burn up fast.

It is very difficult to start a fire without kindling. However, it is also difficult to keep one going on kindling alone.

This the case with many Christians who drawn in the Christian family by the power of emotional experiences. There is a certain element of emotion that is necessary to keep a fire going. This is true in nearly any area of endeavor from interpersonal relationships to politics. There has to be some emotion to energize a move to action. The preacher needs a little emotion. The choir needs a little emotion. The deacon needs a little emotion. It is God's fire starter.

Emotional experiences can start a fire but few can keep one going. They burn out

quickly, are easily past and need a constant infusion of more kindling to maintain the flame. It's spirit based emotion that makes the preacher whoop after he has preached. It's emotion that makes choir members clap their hands although clapping is not on the printed sheet. Its emotion that makes a deacon pray and impassioned prayer rather than simply going through the motion. It's emotion that makes a church say "Amen" to truth and stand on its feet in a moment of praise.

Believers who are building their spiritual lives looking for emotional experiences must remember that while emotion is good and even necessary, emotion alone won't keep the fire going. A Christian life based on emotion will leave the believer starving for more emotional experiences, searching from church to church to have their cravings fed.

TENDER: Fires that last longer also have tender. This is a wood supply that is a little thicker than kindling. It burns easily, but needs a little encouragement. Tender burns a little longer than kindling because there is more of it.

Believers who have witnessed God in action and have experienced his wonder working ability add the tender of faith to their fire. Faith comes through experience with God. Those who have trusted him and tried him have a tendency to burn longer. Those who obey his commands, pray, tithe and live righteously before him seem to have fire that burns longer than those that simply operate on emotion alone.

Obedience to God is essential to keeping the fire going. We cannot expect to maintain a spiritual relationship with him unless we walk in the spirit. Singing, shouting and other emotional experiences don't last long. The fire is maintained through the Christian walk. That's why Galatians 5:25 says " If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Faith in God is also tender. Sometimes it takes a little encouragement to get it going, but once we have seen God in action, faith produces a stronger believer than one who is simply all praise. Faith comes in two ways. First, faith comes by hearing the preaching of the Gospel. The more we hear the Gospel preached the stronger our faith. That's why Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Secondly, Faith comes from trusting in the Lord on a daily basis. Faith comes from allowing him to guide our steps along the way.

FUEL: What keeps fire going longest is fuel. These are the large logs that burn just as hot as tender but they last longer. Some types of wood such as oak and other hardwoods break up into embers called coals that continue to provide heat even though they appear to be dead. Even in wet weather hard wood can be cut to the center. There a woodsmen will find enough dry wood to produce both kindling and tender from the same log. After a long night, the fire pit may look dead but all you have to do is stir the coals and blow them and the fire starts all over again!

As believers we must approach God with a commitment for service. Commitment is not predicated on emotion. Commitment does not depend upon there being an atmosphere of prosperity. Those who are committed have decided to weather the storm and to serve the Lord. The committed have decided that Jesus is their choice and there will be no turning back.

Home Fires Burning

Nehemiah led the children of Israel from captivity under Persia. His quest was to return home. However, when Nehemiah made it to Jerusalem his heart sank. The temple had been desecrated. The walls of the city had been broken and the perpetual fire that had been maintained for 800 years by the priests had gone out. Nehemiah went to work on the walls and Ezra went to work on the spiritual life of the people. The quest was to rekindled the flames and keep the home fire burning.

To keep the home fire burning today we need to be emotional sometimes. There should be something that makes us want to clap our hands or say "Amen!" There should be something about God that makes us want to "Stomp!"

To keep the fire burning we must become students of the Word. We should attend bible study, pray and regularly hear the word of God preached.

To keep the fire burning we must trust God and be bold enough to step out on faith.

To keep the fire going we must approach him fully committed to do anything he wants us to do, go any place he wants us to go and perform any service he wants us to.

At home, there is a need for your involvement!

At home, the choir needs your voice!

At home, the ushers need your smiling face!

At home, the ministries of the church need your service!

At home, the worship needs your sincerity!

At home, the youth need some of your time!

At home, the poor and distressed need or compassionate spirit!

If your individual fire has gone out, the Word reminds you today to keep the home fire burning!

After a long night, it is possible for a flame to disappear, but the good thing about being saved is that all it takes to rekindled the fire is for the Holy Spirit to breathe on us and stir up the gift!

That's why the song writer said, "Spirit of the living God fall fresh on me. Melt me, mold me, break me, shape me, spirit of the living God fall fresh on me!"

Powerful things happen when we are moved by the spirit.

God's spirit, can lift up a bowed down head!

God's spirit, can take a defeated soul and give it the victory!

God's spirit, can take a weakened faith and give it strength!

Keep the home fires burning!

Keep telling the story!Keep telling the world about Jesus!

Tell them that he died! Tell them that he arose!

Tell them that he is alive today!

No. 666-Inspiration

All Dressed Up With Some Place To Go

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 13, 1997

SCRIPTURE: My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? James 2:1-5; "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Revelation 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever had an occasion to be dressed, ready and waiting for an activity, only to learn that it had been canceled? What do you do on such occasions. Your clothes are neat. Your hair is well groomed. Everything about you is just right. What do you do? It's a frustrating feeling to simply sit and wait, all dressed up with no place to go. Many people are creatures of habit when it comes to dressing up. Often their emphasis is placed on the way they look rather than their character.

There is the story of the man who came down from the North Carolina mountains. He was all dressed up and carrying his Bible. A friend saw him and asked, "Elias, what's happening? Where are you going all dressed up like that?" Elias said, "I've been hearing about New Orleans. I hear that there is a lot of free-runnin' liquor and a lot of gamblin' and a lot of real good naughty shows." The friend looked him over and said, "But Elias, why are you carrying your Bible under your arm?" And Elias replied, "Well, if it's as good as they say it is, I might stay over until Sunday." There are many who think the outside appearance supersedes the inside and they work extra hard to look good.

The African-American tendency to dress formally for worship services is rooted in our history. Sentenced to daily lives of drudgery in the cotton and tobacco fields of the South, African-Americans had few opportunities to wear anything except work

clothes. Even those were scanty. On occasion masters who considered themselves benevolent would give their loyal slaves an item or two of old clothing as a reward for some special deed or attitude. Slaves who had received such gifts had no place to wear them except at the monthly gathering at the plantation church. That and perhaps the annual Christmas celebration or the layby after crops were planted was one of only a few times a year we could wear "dress up" clothes.

Dressing up for Sunday became the thing to do. The African-American wardrobe, for many years, included special "Sunday clothes" or "Church Clothes." Generally, we have a "Sunday" dress or a "Sunday" pair of shoes. Clothes reserved for Sunday have often been described as "Sunday-Go-To-Meeting" Clothes. Men are generally expected to wear a tie. Women are expected to be at their best grooming, complete with full makeup, stockings and a hat. Those who appeared at worship service without their "Sunday-Go-To-Meeting" clothes were often frowned upon by others as examples of disrespect.

With that history, many who have been invited to attend a worship service refused because they don't have the required attire. Often they know they will be prejudged by what they wear, before anyone ever takes time to find out who they really are inside.

As Christians, we know that God does not judge us from the outward appearance. In fact, God is not impressed by anything we wear because he saw us in the shower before we put on anything! God is concerned with our heart. Let us show that same concern for others.

Exposition

This text focuses on James as he gives instruction to the church about the equality of every person in Christian service.

The Jewish synagogue was a place of common ground for both the rich and the poor. There were many synagogues in nearly every town in Israel. In the country areas they were established close to rivers. All manners of men and women attended a synagogue. There were enough to go around because any 10 Jews could start one. There were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone.

Every Jew was expected to attend either the worship at the temple or a synagogue assembly at least once each week. At the synagogue he or she would received their education, religious instruction, direction in righteous living. Moreover, the synagogue was also a place of judgment.

Jews brought their disputes to the council which could have as few as three men or as many as 13. These men would hear and make judgments on their interpersonal disputes.

Because the synagogue was a place of common ground, it was essential that those who came in the midst of the "assembly" possess a sense of commonality with all believers. Thus, James, building on the understanding that Jews had of the synagogue, expressed the importance of every believer understanding fully that in

the assembly of the saints on Sunday as well as in the presence of God himself, all Saints are one.

He warned them against prejudging individuals by their dress. Clothing and adornments should not be a standard by which believers are judged, but the content of the heart and their character. His direction was simple, there should be no special treatment given to any person among the saints on the basis of their wealth or position or their appearance in this respect. No special seats were to be given to the wealthy. No special privileges were to be given to those who were accustomed to royal treatment outside of the congregation. In Christ, even the poorest saint is an equal with the most affluent.

Common Ground

Today, it is supposed that the one place where every man is equal is at 11 O'clock on Sunday. However, that often proves to be a great myth. Believers, often without knowing it, often find themselves erecting barriers that separate themselves from others perceived to be different. Sometimes the barriers separate us by race. Sometimes the barriers are the result of class and social standing. Whatever the case, Sunday mornings are known for their separateness in the unique manner we commonly call "Christian."

CLASS: There is an element of class distinction in every group of believers. Class distinctions are differences between those who are perceived to be affluent and those who are less affluent. While reading scriptures that rail against class-ism, many believers practice it anyway. A person who visits a congregation who appears to relate to our class is welcomed. Another is shunned. Among the less fortunate, the more fortunate is treated differently. Either he or she is welcomed or shunned on the basis of class alone. Among the fortunate, the less fortunate are often patronized and tolerated but rarely thought of as equal

RACE: Race is often a distinguishing factor among believers. Generally Blacks perceive of themselves as the identified "type" of Israel in the bible. Some still think of whites and anyone else as too different to occupy their section of heaven. There are many whites that consider Blacks as a necessary burden of the faith, but not equal before God.

SOCIAL STANDING: There are also those who make differences based upon social affiliations. Those who join the circle of believers who are members of the same fraternity or sorority usually find themselves socially accepted. Small cliques can develop that include the socially acceptable to the exclusion of all others.

With man made barriers constructed even among believers, the word of God still remains clear. Each person who enters the house of God must be received equally and respected equally without regard to race, class or social standing. The church should be the one place where every person finds common ground.

There are many who claim that they cannot attend worship services because they don't have the proper attire. Their words reflect their feeling that they will be

judged by their outward appearance.

While there are many that do not attend because they can't "dress up" there are many who actually attend, dressed up, but they have no place to go. There is no place in the kingdom of God for those who are respecters of persons.

Some Place to Go

Finally brothers and Sisters we must consider that every believer is getting dressed up, because he has some place to go!

Believers don't put much stock in outward appearances, although they strive to look their best when representing the Kingdom or in formal occasions. The true believer knows that he will be judged in the final analysis not by what he or she wears on the outside but by what they wear on the inside.

The believer wants to get dressed up on the inside because he has somewhere to go!

The believer wants to get dressed up on the inside because he wants to impress the Lord. God won't be impressed with the outside, but he will be impressed by the inside.

As believers we have someplace to go! That's why we want to be dressed right!

We are polishing shoes that will help us to walk up the King's highway. We are dressed up with some place to go!

We are grooming our hair for a God who knows all about us and has even counted the hairs of our head.

We are washing out hands so we can approach life with innocence. We are dressed up with some place to go!

We are not worried about designer outsides, because that's what man sees! We are worried about being designed on the inside by the hand of God himself.

We are dressed up because we are on our way!

We've got someplace to go!

We're on our way to place, where the wicked will cease from troubling!

We're on our way to a place, where the weary will be at rest!

We're on our way to a place, it will always be howdy and never good-bye!

We're dressing up because we are on our way to see the King!

It's not about clothes! It's not about class! It's not about social standing!

It's about Jesus, who died on Calvary!

It's about Jesus, who arose from the dead!

I don't know about you, but I'm dressed up on the inside...and I'm on my way!

No. 667-Youth

The Fountain "For" Youth

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 27, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9 "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Proverbs 14:27 "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Revelation 21:6

Introduction

What would you do if you learned that there was a way that you could stay young forever? Would the thought rouse your curiosity? Would you be tempted to explore the possibility, especially if it was clinically plausible? There are millions today that are doing just that, searching for ways to look and feel young? Since there are so many people interested in the subject it is no small wonder that a whole industry has developed around a plethora of products that all promise to do one thing...keep us young.

Some want to be young so bad they'll fall for just about anything. Consider the con men who made millions selling pill bottles of tap water. One con man, nice looking, youthful and well dressed, stood on the corner holding a pill bottle of water. He said nothing. He just stood on the corner and held the pill bottle in his hand. The other con man went a block down the street and stopped pedestrians pointing to the man on the corner. "Isn't it a shame" he said "They should stop that man from doing that!" He shook his head. The pedestrian looked and saw scores of people walking up to the man offering him rolls of money for bottles of tap water. "It should be a crime" said the 2nd con man. "All those people think he's selling water from the fountain of youth. He's just playing them all for suckers! It's wrong. It's just a shame!" Amazed at the crowd of people that were surrounding the man offering him money one pedestrian asked, "Why hasn't he been arrested?" The con man gave his marks a bewildered look and said, "He's been arrested so many times the police just leave him alone. He was arrested in 1895, 1912, 1941, 1963, 1972, 1985, 1991 and just this year. I can't figure out why people keep coming back! Hearing that, everyone in the crowd dropped everything they had, ran over to the man and begged him to take their hard earned money ..for a swallow of tap water! Some want to be young so bad they'll believe anything and do just about anything to achieve it!

The Explorer Ponce De Leon spent a lifetime searching for the fountain of youth

and never found it.. In April of 1513 he found Florida while chasing down rumors he heard in the West Indies about a fountain they thought made people young and virile again. He gave up his quest for the fountain of youth, realizing it didn't exist.

Ponce De Leon gave up but there are millions today that are still looking for the fountain of youth. To service their hunger an entire industry has developed selling anything and everything to guarantee youth and virility. In Palm Harbor Florida the Fountain of Youth institute offers a series of massages and treatments to retard aging and suspend participants in a period of youth and vitality. A new wonder drug called DHEA is being promoted a hormone that retards sickness, cell deterioration and aging for many years. Plastic Surgeons are offering face lifts, and other lifts to give a more youthful appearance. The Movie Cocoon even touched on the subject of staying young indefinitely as it focused on a group of senior citizens that stumbled upon alien cocoons that gave them renewed energy and vigor.

Looking for the fountain of youth took up most of Ponce De Leon's life. Today there are many who have youth are wasting it while there are many others whose time has passed, still living as if they were teens.

Yet our God makes us a promise that makes more sense than Ponce De Leon's obsession. The promise is that those who trust in God will be guided to a fountain whose waters will not only guarantee youthful energy, zeal and ideals, but eternal life. The words ring out clear "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9

As Christians, we come to the fountain of God's grace and mercy every day. We drink of it freely. We know it guarantees us eternal life!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains how God is the source of real life and real living.

David's 36th Psalm is one which encourages believers to continue trusting God who continuously blesses mankind with everything that is good and meaningful.

In verses one through four he lays out the life-style of the ungodly: wild, deceitful and wicked. The ungodly spend their lives wastefully, as if there were no God and no judgment. His mouth is filled with evil words and his thoughts filled with evil deceptions. When the wicked are sleep at night they dream of the wicked things they will act upon when they awake. The wicked set themselves on a path that is not good.

The idea of God as the fountain of life and the source of all lasting happiness and peace is used several times in scripture. In Jeremiah 2:13 the people are chastised for seeking their own fountains of life: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns that can hold no water." The people sought vainly to find ways to acquire happiness, joy and life without God. They spent their substance and time seeking after it. But their efforts were vain and futile because each time they came close to finding this fountain of life outside of God, it disappeared. Their efforts were

like water barrels filled with holes. It left them thirsty and empty.

In contrast, David shows the attitude of believers in verses five through 12. David praises the magnificence of God. He praises God's providence. He praises God's benevolence. The believer is blessed to constantly drink from God's fountain which provides the essence of things that make life beautiful, pleasant, comfortable and joyful. In the middle of his troubles, Job saw this fountain and chastised his critics by saying, "He does not look at the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and curds." Job 20:17. In Psalm 46:4 David projects that this fountain of God's blessing flows through the hearts of believers. He said "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High."

This river of life will be supplied to each believer eternally. It will provide the energy of youth, joy for the soul and rejuvenated aspiration. That is the meaning of Revelation 21:6 which says in part, "...I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

The presence of the river of God that constantly feeds the happiness of the Saints is projected again in Revelation 22:1 "THEN he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Thus, the unrighteous spend their lives seeking their own fountains and living by their own deceitful ways. While the unrighteous seek to find or build their own fountains of life, the righteous turn to God, who is the source of all life and happiness. He promises to all who follow him, life eternal.

Those who find God find the fountain of life!

The Fountains of Youth

A fountain by definition is a natural outflow or spring of water. It is not artificial. Neither is it the result of human creation. Its flow is unending. Man has many inventions that appear to be fountains and work like fountains but are not really fountains at all.

Youth probably first come in contact with man made fountains in the context of a school or day care center. There is a machine that is called a fountain that produces water each time a knob is turned. It appears to be a fountain because the flow of water seems never to end. As long as one holds the knob the water seems to keep coming.

HOLDING THE KNOB, GETTING THE FLOW. Here lies one of the mysteries of youth. Life often creates the illusion that the blessings of youth will continue forever. Thus, many youth take their youthful years lightly. They squander their health and abuse themselves in unbelievable ways. Regardless to how much abuse they give their bodies nothing seems to injure them.. While the world warns them constantly, they hold the knob of the fountain and see that the flow continues.

While it is true that as long as one holds the knob, the water will flow, it is also true that the flow is not natural. It is totally dependent upon its connection to the source. If the connection is disrupted for any reason holding the knob won't do any good.

While it may appear that the flow is unending, there are times when the water source in many cities is threatened and unnecessary uses of water are limited. It may appear that the source is unlimited but each time we make a draw, our earthly sources diminish.

WHEN THE BUBBLES GO UP, THE SUPPLY GOES DOWN. Some are familiar with fountains with visible sources. Bottles of pure water sit atop fountains. When a cup of water is drawn from this type of fountain, one instantly sees the bubbles go up. Even though the cup is filled each time the button is pushed, it becomes very obvious that it won't be long before the reservoir is depleted.

Each time youth drink from the fountain of worldliness they diminish themselves in visible ways.

When a cigarette is smoked...blup! The bubbles go up! Each youth should say, there goes about two minutes of my life.

When alcoholic beverages are consumed, listen for the sound!....blup! The bubbles go up!

When drugs are used, listen for the sound!...blup! The bubbles go up!

When youth engage in sex outside of marriage, listen for the sound!...blup! The bubbles go up!

Those who work or study all day and party all night...listen for the sound! When the bubbles go up, I take down a large part of my life in measurable cup fulls.

OLD FOLKS AT THE KIDDY FOUNTAIN: Some fountains are made for children. They are low and easy to access. It is expected that children will drink from these specially made fountains. It is also expected that they will outgrow them.

Yet in life, there are many old folks at the kiddy fountain. These are men and women who should have learned better but are still looking for the fountains of youth.

They have not learned how to live as a mature man or woman, responsible, happy and free. Neither have they accepted the joy of having overcome many of the pitfalls of youth. The beauty of maturity is having outgrown the need for the kiddy fountain, training wheels, pacifiers, diapers and fads.

The mature man or woman agrees with Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The fountains of youth are deceptive because they appear to be unending. Like in David and Jeremiah's day, many forsake God as they drink from man made fountains that are not endless, eternal or comprehensive.

Those who drink from the fountains of this world diminish themselves each time they take a drink.

Fountain for Youth

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while the world supplies many fountains OF youth, there is a fountain FOR youth.

While there are a multiplicity of fountains that are frequented BY youth, there

is a fountain FOR youth.

While there are many artificial fountains that present themselves TO youth, there is a fountain FOR youth.

While there many fountains that are ABOUT youth and invite them to step up and take a drink, there is a fountain FOR youth!

This fountain is not a physical fountain. If it were then the world could have gone to the Pools of Solomon near Bethlehem, there was and still is a continuous flow of cool fresh water. While it's not the pools of Solomon, there is a fountain in the mountain!

This fountain is not visible to the eye. If it were then the world could have gone to the Fountains at Jerusalem that were supplied by several underground sources. They were beautiful to the eye but they didn't last long. But there is a fountain in the mountain!

Though the waters of the Jordan run deep and wide, it is not the same as the fountain in the mountain.

What is this fountain in the mountain? Does it actually exist? Can it bring eternal life?

If you don't believe there is a fountain, ask the disciples who asked Jesus to give them the bread of life. In John 6:35 Jesus answered them saying, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

If you don't believe there is a fountain, ask the woman at the well. She came to the well but ended up drinking from the fountain. Jesus told her in John 4:14 "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

No wonder then that the song writer would write, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilty stains!"

The fountain is the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a lowly grave!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Jesus, who calls out to the thirsty and searching hearts!

Come unto me!

Come unto me! And I'll give you living water!

No. 668-Inspiration

Delivered From Afflictions

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 3, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." Psalm 34:19

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself in a situation from which you prayed to be delivered? Deliverance situations are those when we instantly recognize that we won't be able to survive the circumstance without some outside assistance. Deliverance situations effect us personally. These are the times when we look around and know that we can't make it without a little help. They also occur in our families, when problems reach crises level and our solutions have failed. Whether its personal, family or in our social circles, deliverance situations have a way of making themselves known.

When is the right time to ask for deliverance? Consider the hungry cat that sat down with an empty plate before him. His stomach growled and he was desperate for something to eat. The cat looked at his empty plate and said "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Just then he saw a mouse sit down. His plate was empty as well. When the mouse looked up and saw the hungry cat he began to pray, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Just then a bulldog came in. He was hungry too. He looked at both the cat and the mouse with an appetizing glint in his eye. They both rose from the table and eased away as they said, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil!" At that they delivered themselves from evil!

The late Norman Vincent Peale was known for his noteworthy suggestion that every problem comes with a seed of solution attached. In essence, what we need for deliverance is always within our grasp, but is generally untapped or unused. A seed sometimes lays around for years before it's ability to take root and provide new growth is used. The farmer who has eaten all his food and is faced with prospect of hunger, can have plenty if he puts the seed to good use.

Often our prayer for deliverance is for the threatening situation to vanish. In reality, the situation seldom vanishes, we are removed from the situation or the impact of its effects. The Three Hebrew Boys were not removed from the furnace, they were protected from its effects. The Lions of Daniel were not removed from the pit, he was simply protected in the pit. We should remember that often our deliverance is not

dependent upon the fire being extinguished but on helping us to survive despite the flames.

It is possible for us to be surrounded by a threatening situation but not be consumed by it ourselves. Martin Luther King was surrounded by hatred but was delivered from its effects. If there is strife in your family or on your job, it is possible to be delivered from its effects. It's possible to keep a cool head and stable spirit, knowing God is still in control. To be delivered in this respect means to live beyond the emotion of the moment.

As Christians, we should always remember that God is in the delivering business. However, we do not expect him to prevent evil from coming upon us but to deliver us out of the mouth of evil. This is our hope as believers and this is the faith which our Lord Jesus gives each person that trusts him.

Exposition

This text reflects David's feelings of desperation and his hope that God would deliver him from adversity.

Most of the Psalms have been ascribed to David. "Most" is important because some are unidentified. At least one is ascribed to Solomon another to Moses, but most reflect the moods and emotions of David, a true picture of the believer's experience in the world. The moods and emotions reflected in the Psalms parallel those of the average believer. Therefore, believers who share common experiences can be helped by reading them. For instance, if you are fearful, read Psalm 56 or Psalm 91 or Psalm 23. And if you are discouraged, read Psalm 42. If you happen to be feeling lonely, Psalm 71 or Psalm 62. If you are oppressed, with a sense of sinfulness, then try Psalm 51, written after David's double sin of adultery and murder; and Psalm 32, a great expression of confession and forgiveness. If you are worried or anxious, try Psalm 37 and Psalm 73. If you are angry, try Psalm 58 or Psalm 13. If you are resentful, read Psalm 94 or Psalm 77. If you are happy and want some words to express your happiness, try Psalm 92 or Psalm 66. If you feel forsaken, try Psalm 88. If you are grateful read Psalm 40. If you are doubtful, if your faith is beginning to fail, read Psalm 119.

Psalm 34 is an expression of another of the spiritual needs of the believer, the need for deliverance from adversity. It was written in David's youth as he fled from King Saul. The actual events it reflects are detailed in 1 Samuel 21. David was being persecuted by the King and despite the fact that the entire army of Israel sought after him, David was delivered. On some occasions he deceived his captors. On other occasions he went so far as to fake insanity (1 Samuel 21:13). The end result was that he survived what should have been his defeat and later became the King of Israel.

The emotion David felt when he was trapped is what every believer understands. He was being pursued because of a jealous hearted king. He had done his best to defend the country and kill Goliath. Instead he was hunted. Everywhere he turned he met adversity and persecution and trouble. However, Saul was frustrated in his

various attempts because David's life seemed to be charmed. No matter how many times he was trapped, he always seemed to escape. No matter how many soldiers he brought against him, David seemed to slip away. No matter how physically exhausted or depleted he became, David seemed to be protected by the hand of God himself as he was delivered from every circumstance.

Thus David could comfortably write in 34:19 "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

As David wrote this Psalm of praise to God for deliverance, his meditations provide reassurance for all believers that God will do the same for them.

Righteous

David makes it clear that afflictions do not exempt the righteous. In fact, he makes the point of stressing that the righteous can expect many afflictions. Who are the righteous? In Old Testament times righteousness was an earned status. Those who kept the law of Moses to the letter or participated in the prescribed ceremonies to acquire atonement could consider themselves righteous. In New Testament times the righteous are believers who have been saved by the Grace of God through the blood of Christ. They have not earned their redemption by their perfection but rather they have earned it through the free will of God.

Many Afflictions

Afflictions generally have three connotations in the common vernacular:

1) ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT COME UPON US. These are adverse situations that seem to befall us that are not the result of any action or inaction on our part. The blind man that Jesus healed was an example of this kind of affliction. He was not blind as a result of any action on his part. His affliction came upon him from birth. There was a reason and a purpose for his situation, but he was not the cause. In a similar manner there are many who deal with a wide variety of maladies that are not the result of their own doing. Some wrestle with ill health, family situations and even financial maladies that are not of their own design. Even in this context, the words of David still linger in the believers heart "the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

2) ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE BROUGHT UPON US BY OTHERS: There are some types of difficulties that the result of the natural design, but the products of influence of Satan. It is possible for a perfectly innocent person to be severely afflicted. This is the example of the Book of Job. Job was afflicted in every kind of way possible. He was stricken physically with sores and boils. He lost his financial base and struggled with the death of his sons and daughters. All this happened to him even though he had not done anything wrong. By definition Job was a honest man and a righteous man. Job 1:1" says he was "man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." His circumstance came about

because Satan was interfering with his affairs. In a similar sense, there are many believers today who are suffering the same afflictions, not because of their doing but because Satan, working through a variety of influences is interfering in their affairs. Yet in this context David's words still linger, "the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

3) SELF INFLICTED AFFLICTIONS: While there are some afflictions that come upon us and others are brought upon us by others, there are some afflicting circumstances that we bring upon ourselves. These circumstances for which we can blame no one but ourselves. When King David was stricken with a venereal disease he could not blame a single person for his circumstance. To his credit he did not pass the buck and blame to someone else, Psalm 38:3 "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." He was the cause of his own problem. Similarly, there are many today who have self inflicted afflictions. Sin, neglect and simple recklessness have caused hardships for many of us. We have made our beds hard by our own actions. But even in this context, David's words remind us that he will "delivereth him out of them all."

All

Finally, we must consider the conclusiveness of David's affirmation. While detailing God's ability and willingness to deliver the righteous from adversities he defines the limits of the deliverance. David said God will deliver the righteous from all afflictions.

"All" is inclusive. It does not leave room for exceptions. It means everything.

What does the word of God mean when it promises that God will deliver the righteous from "all" afflictions?

In terms of numbers, "all" refers to the whole number of our adversities, taken as a group or one by one, God will deliver us from them all. When Israel suffered the stings of slavery, God delivered them as a people from slavery, but at the same time he delivered every person. When God delivers a nation he also delivers the people within it. When the doors of segregation and racism are brought down in the nation they are also brought down for the individual.

In terms of quantity, "all" refers to the extent of adversities. While we are frightened by what seems to be an endless number of problems that come our way, first one thing then another, God is not intimidated by the number of adversities. He simply scoops them up and disposes of them "all." If you think the quantity of adversities is a consideration with God, asked Job who will testify that his problems came one behind the other, but God handled them all!

In terms of duration, "all" refers to the length of time the adversity existed. We may be awed by the fact that a situation has existed for many years, but God is not moved. He is greater than time and dwarfs its impact on any situation. If you think time is a consideration with God, ask the man who had been sitting by the pool for 38 long years did time stop the Lord from saying "rise, take thy bed and walk!"

In terms of degree, "all" refers to seriousness of the situation. We may feel that

a circumstance is so serious that it is beyond resolution, but there is no problem God cannot solve. If you think seriousness and finality are a consideration with God, ask Hezekiah who lay on his sick bed whether the seriousness of his situations stopped God from giving him 15 more years!

I don't know about you, but I've found that God is all situation God.
It doesn't matter what the circumstance, God is able!
It doesn't matter how bad it seems, God is able!
Those who trust in the Lord can testify that God is able to take our:
BURDENS and lighten our load!
PROBLEMS and help us find the answers!
DARKNESS and turn it into light!
WEAKNESSES and turn them into strengths!
SET BACKS and turn them into come backs!
STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!
He was able to deliver the children of Israel from bondage!
He was able to feed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread!
He was able to make a blind man see!
He was able to make a lame man walk!
He is able to deliver me!
Who is this deliverer?
His name is Jesus!
The mighty God!
Jesus, The Rose of Sharon!
Who died out on Calvary!
Who is alive today!

No. 669-Communion

What To Do With The Leftovers

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 17, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. John 6:11-13

Introduction

After a hefty, home cooked meal, what do you do with the leftovers? Leftovers are a common part of a home cooked meal. Many home makers quickly clear tables, cover dishes and refrigerate left over food items because they plan to serve them again. The idea of left overs finds a mixed response in many households. A home maker with several family members who refuse to eat left overs faces a dilemma, "What do you do with the left overs?"

Some homemakers serve left overs again and endure the grumbling. That was the case when the husband who hated leftovers with a passion sat down to a beautifully set table with his family. The family joined hands and bowed their heads as he offered grace for the food. "Lord, thank you for the food we are about to eat." He said "It has come from your bounty and we are grateful. Amen."

As he opened the various serving dishes the husband noticed that each was filled with left overs. "This rice looks like the same rice we had yesterday!" He said, pushing the server away. "Peas? Aren't these some of the same peas we had day before yesterday?" He went from item to item critiquing each one, snubbing all and complaining. Finally he looked at his wife and said, "Honey, we've been married for all these years, don't know I can't stand leftovers?"

Then his five year old daughter said, "Daddy, didn't you just say grace?" The father said, "Yes." With innocence pouring from her face she asked, "Did God hear what you said?" The husband said, "Why sure dear?" Then with great wisdom the girl said, "Did God hear what you said about the leftovers?" Embarrassed, the father said, "Yes, God heard that too!" Finally the girl asked, "Which one do you think God

believed most?" Often we tell God we thank him for the food, then show him right after that we are not thankful by refusing to eat it or throwing it in the trash.

Leftovers! Some view their lives that way. They see themselves as useless, unimportant, failures. Some who have failed in life, love and careers view themselves as valueless shadows of what once was a great life. The world discards leftovers but what does God do with them? He gathers them up and uses them again! He restores, refurbishes and refinishes them! God loves leftovers!

As Christians, we are glad to know that we serve a God who sees our value and our worth and loves us, even after we have made mistakes and stumbled in our faults. We're glad to know he loves us even if we don't get it right the first time around. There may be some in the world that hate them, but when it comes to compassion, God loves leftovers!

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Christ in which he challenged those who followed him to exercise faith and frugality in their service to the kingdom.

This is one of two instances in which Jesus performed a miracle that resulted in the creation of food for the masses. Jesus had been teaching his disciples and the multitudes about his mission as Messiah. He told them that God allowed him to perform miracles to witness to the fact that he was truly sent from God. In verse five he starts to remind them that his was a greater ministry than that of John and it was evidenced by his many miracles.

As he spoke to them he noticed that a large number of people had gathered to hear him. The number of the crowd was about five thousand. He seized that opportunity to give them another proof that he was sent from God. Turning to Phillip he asked where could they buy enough bread to feed 5,000. It was an academic question because Jesus already knew what he planned to do, but the question was asked anyway. Phillip said it would cost a small fortune to feed such a large number of people, not to mention the precedent he would set by feeding every large crowd that gathered to hear him.

Jesus had no obligation to feed the crowd. It was not required that he provide free lunches at all of his revival meetings. He provided the food to make several important points to his followers: 1) That he was truly sent by God. The miracles he performed were a testament to his anointed role 2) That God is able to provide resources for those who believe in him 3) That blessings once given should not be taken lightly.

They were ordered to sit in 100 groups of fifty and prepare to receive a blessing. As the five barely loaves and two fishes that were available to them were blessed by Christ the disciples began to distribute them. Each time they reached into the basket there was enough to supply every group and more.

When all had been fed Christ ordered the disciples to pick up all of the remaining fragments. There were enough leftovers to fill twelve baskets. The fragments were

collected so that they would not be lost, implying that they could be used on other occasions. There was no guarantee that Jesus would always decide to feed a crowd, the leftover bread could be useful.

Only on one other occasion is Jesus noted for feeding large crowds. A crowd of four thousand was similarly fed in Mark15:36-38. In this instance the people had followed Jesus for three long days and had nothing to eat. At the close of the meal there were seven basketfuls of left overs, that were all quickly collected.

By example, Jesus gave believers a model to follow. Trust God for everything. Give thanks for God's blessings, take no part of a blessing for granted, even the leftovers.

Trust God for everything

Very often in modern times we approach life with considerable doubt. We worry from day to day about how we will make ends meet. While it is prudent and wise for us to weigh each life situation, consider our options and make decisions, we should do so with an attitude of trust.

An attitude of trust creates a situation where we remember whom it is that we serve and how he is able to provide for us, despite the apparent disparity of the moment.

In Matthew 16:8 the disciples worried about not having enough bread. They did so with Jesus in their midst. He had to remind them that their worry was unnecessary. So he asked them, were you not there when 5,000 were fed or on another occasion when 4,000 were fed and with food to spare.

If so, then worrying about the availability of food should not be a concern, God provided then and he can provide now.

Trusting God for everything means proceeding through life with the confidence that whatever I need God's got it and can provide it.

No wonder the song writer declared, "I trust in God no matter where I may be. On mountain peak or on the stormy sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me."

Give Thanks

We should be truly thankful for whatever God has given us. Our thanks should not be grudging, but from the heart. When Jesus was given the five loaves of bread and two fish, he could have complained that he did not have more. Instead, he lifted them up to God and gave him thanks for just two fishes.

Often we spend much time complaining about what we don't have instead of being appreciative about what we do have. We complain about what we don't like to eat, without ever thinking that the alternative could easily be an empty plate. We constantly mourn about our lack of riches and fame without considering the real wealth of health, happiness and family that surround us.

We should give God true praise and thanks for what we have.
Thank you Lord for the two fishes!
Thank you for my old car!
Thank you Lord, for my oscillating fan!
Thank you for grits!
Thank you for everything!

Take Nothing For Granted

We must not squander our blessings or take them lightly. If God has arranged for a blessing to come your way use it wisely, don't discard it foolishly.

When Jesus fed the 5,000 there were 12 baskets of bread left over. The fact that the bread was left over did not mean anything was wrong with it, it meant that it was an unused blessing. Better yet, it was a blessing waiting to be used. Thus, Jesus commanded the disciples to gather up the fragments so that nothing would be lost.

It is very easy too see how we discard our food thoughtlessly, taking it for granted, but often we do the same with other blessings God has given us.

We have shoes but we won't wear them because they are not designer shoes.

We have clothes but we don't wear them because they are not this year's latest fashion.

We have health and we destroy it with, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.

We have time and we waste it with foolish living.

We have money and we squander it with gambling and less than thrifty pursuits.

Using the leftovers

Finally, we must note that while Jesus told his disciples to pick up the fragments so that they would not be lost, there was no instruction about what exactly should be done. What was done with the fragments is implied but not specifically stated.

We are a people who know what it means to be considered a left over.

We survived on the master's left over clothes, as we took them and turned them into our Sunday best!

We were nourished on the master's left over food. We took his hog intestines and turned them into chitterlings. We took his turnip bottoms and turned them into a gourmet.

DON'T LEAVE LEFTOVERS OUT. You can't leave leftovers out. While they can be used again, you can't deal with leftovers if they are left out because they are susceptible to bacteria that cause disease.

Society today has described some of its members as leftovers and has left them out. While a leftover is a blessing unused, a leftover that is left out is a spoiled blessing that can't be used!

The alcoholic is seen as a leftover and is often left out.

The drug addict is seen as a leftover and is often left out!

The prostitute is seen as a leftover and is often left out!

But nothing can be done to help them if they are left out.

SOMETIMES LEFTOVERS ARE BEST WHEN RECYCLED: Often we encounter leftovers but we don't recognize them because they are called by a different name.

Today, they call him preacher but there was a time they called him pimp.

Today, they call him deacon but there was a time they called him devil.

Today, they call her mother and deaconess but there was a time they called her hot mama

Today, they call you a saint, but there was a time they called you a sinner!

If you don't understand that go back with me in history,

Great-grandma took the old grease from the pots and stored it with old ashes from the fire place. One day she got to stirring and took the grease and the ashes, mixed them together with other ingredients and came out with something called lie soap. It was the same leftover grease. Same leftover ashes, but recycled and called by another name.

The other day the meat and potatoes you ate were recycled and served again, but this time it was called hash!

The leftover turkey from your Thanksgiving meal is recycled and served again, but this time it's called turkey salad.

The left over corn bread was recycled and served with baked hen or turkey and called dressing!

The leftover light bread that was hard and unservable was mixed with sugar raisins and eggs and served again, but this time it was called Bread Pudding

The leftover peas, corn, and chicken pieces that cluttered the refrigerator were recycled and served again, but this time they called it Chicken Gumbo.

Every now and then when we look at our lives we should see a leftover life, recycled by the grace of God.

I heard Jesus declare, they are left over but they have some use. Gather up the leftovers and I'll come down to give them a chance to be recycled and to get a brand new name!

No wonder Paul declared, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Behold old things are passed away and all things become new!"

Jesus, died that I might have a second chance!

Jesus, arose that I might have a new name!

I'm so glad that he lives in my heart!

No. 670-Youth

Jesus Had An Attitude Too!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 24, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. Matthew 26:39-42

Introduction

If I were to ask whether or not you had an attitude what would be your response? The general response of most youth is "no I don't have an attitude!" In the common use of the term an attitude is a colloquial phrase that is used to describe any person who responds or reacts in a negative way. Generally when someone is argumentative we say the person has an "attitude." A person who walks around with a chip on his shoulder is generally said to have an "attitude." Persons who are disrespectful are said to have an attitude. In fact, anyone that acts in any way that is contrary to our expectation is described as having an attitude. That's the colloquial use. Yet, while the common use of the word attitude suggests something negative, it does not always carry a negative image. An attitude is a way of responding to a circumstance. That way of responding can be negative as well as positive. In reality, every person has an attitude or a way of approaching a situation. The question is how do I respond. When we respond we have a choice. We can either have a positive or negative response.

Consider the little boy who was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the back yard, baseball cap in place, toting ball and bat. He was heard to say, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world." Then he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it and missed. "Strike one!" Undaunted he picked up the ball, threw it into the air and said to himself, "I'm the greatest baseball hitter ever," and he swung at the ball again. And again he missed. "Strike two!" He paused a moment to examine his bat and ball carefully. Then a third time he threw the ball into the air. "I'm the greatest hitter who ever lived," he said. He swung the bat hard again, missed a third time. He cried out, "Wow! Strike three! What a pitcher! I'm the greatest pitcher in the world!" The difference between being the world's greatest hitter and the world's greatest pitcher was a matter of attitude.

Everyone has an attitude. Not every has a positive attitude. Positive attitudes often are a matter of perspective. The proverbial half glass of water is a perfect example. A half glass of water is half full if you have been trying to fill it. If you have been working to empty the glass it is half empty. It is all a matter of how one chooses to look at the situation. The same is true with attitudes.

As Christians, we assume the attitude that whatever God wants us to do we do it. Whatever day God puts before us we will live it and whatever challenge that is before us we will conquer it.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he talks with God about his approaching martyrdom.

The entire life of Christ had one purpose, which was to provide a means of reconciling lost mankind with God. In place of animal sacrifice he would become the eternal sacrifice by dying on Calvary to redeem lost mankind. Even though he knew the plan when he came, it still was a difficult and thankless task. It required him to die and to endure suffering. It required the highest sacrifice that any man can offer, which is his own life.

In the final week of his life, Christ went to the Garden to pray to his father. After reporting how he completed his assigned task up to that moment, Jesus peered into the future and saw the gloom and agony of Calvary, which he characterized as a cup. He then requested that God would still provide a way to redeem man but without the necessity of his suffering and death. As he thought of all of the things that could happen to him he asked God to excuse him. However, he concluded that he would continue with the unpleasant task if it was his father's will. He assumed an attitude of obedience to the perfect will of his father.

Learning God's will for him, Jesus carried through his mission in obedience to his father's wishes.

Biblical Attitudes

Today we think of attitudes in the context that we know them. However, the bible has many situations in which attitudes like ours were displayed.

JOSEPH'S ATTITUDE: Joseph had an attitude. His brothers were jealous of him and threw him into a pit. There was a series of unfortunate incidents that occurred that landed him in prison. In the end Joseph became a powerful man in Egypt. When his brothers were forced to come to him for food many years later, he displayed an attitude of love and forgiveness. He helped them, embraced them and encouraged them. It was a case of sibling rivalry, yet Joseph approached it with an attitude that was inspired by God himself.

JOB'S ATTITUDE: Job had an attitude. Faced with the loss of all of his personal wealth, health and peace of mind, Job assumed an attitude of acceptance Though he was constantly urged by his wife and friends to speak ill of God, he did just the

opposite. Instead of cursing God, Job told his friends that God gives and God takes away. He concluded that he would serve God even though he appeared to slay him. His attitude was one of acceptance of God's will. He knew and accepted God's will with humility and patience.

Often we feel like Job. Life often sends us a curve ball and we seem to swing and miss on so many occasions. The youth that fails in efforts to make school teams or suffers false accusations or humiliations from friends, share many of Job's circumstances. How does a young Christian face such difficulties. If Job's experience is an example we should approach it with an attitude of acceptance.

PAUL HAD AN ATTITUDE: Even Paul had an attitude. Though he spent the great part of his life championing the cause of Christ, Paul suffered considerable hardship. He had a "thorn in his side" that would not go away. Even though he asked for it to be removed, he was told "My grace is sufficient for thee." He was often stoned, accused and finally was jailed for his belief in God. Despite all these mishaps and tragedies Paul adopted an attitude of hope and faith.

Hope and faith are important attitudes. They help us face impossible and tragic moments. If there is a sickness of a mother or father, sister or brother a youth would do well to keep an attitude of hope and faith. In such moments it is good to remember that we are more than conquerors. Paul had an attitude but it was an attitude of hope that God would bring the ultimate victory.

Jesus had an attitude, but not a problem

Finally, it is important for us to remember that Jesus had an attitude. While Jesus had an attitude he did not have an attitude problem.

Everyone has an attitude, but everyone does not have an attitude problem.

As a youth showed that he had an attitude, but not an attitude problem. When reprimanded by Mary and Joseph, he responded that it was time that he should be about his father's business but showed respect to his parents. He displayed an attitude of obedience. The command of God in the Mosaic law is that man should not live by bread alone but by everyone word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

When Peter cut off the ear of guards coming to take Jesus for an impromptu trial, Jesus displayed an attitude. He replaced the ear and told Peter that he that "lives by the sword shall die by the sword." Jesus displayed an attitude of nonviolent resolution.

There are many youth that believe violence is the way. That is the attitude that they display when they respond to conflicts by fighting and murder. Yet, Jesus showed he had an attitude but had no problem with nonviolence.

Jesus had an attitude, but he did not have a problem.

He had no problem showing an attitude of compassion to a blind man when he healed him!

He had no problem showing an attitude of mercy when he raised Lazarus from the grave

He had no problem showing an attitude of mercy for the man who had sat by a pool for 38 years.

He had no problem showing an attitude of acceptance when he sopped his last supper with Judas.

He had no problem showing an attitude of love as he wrapped his arms around an old rugged cross.

He had not problem showing an attitude of forgiveness while he hung on the cross for he asked his father to forgive them for they "know not what they do."

He died on Calvary and rose from the grave!

He died with an attitude of love, but he did not have a problem!

All he had was a heart for of love for the entire world!

Yes, Jesus had an attitude but he did not have a problem!

No. 671-Christian Education

Life is a "B.Y.O.B." Affair

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 14, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "DALETH. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. Psalm 119:25-28

Introduction

What type of bible do you have in your home? Is it a beautiful sight to see? Is it expensive and decorative? Does it have scores of pictures and supplemental materials? Does it blend well with the interior design of your home? There are many who have beautiful bibles in their homes that do little more than provide decoration. The bibles serve no purpose for them because they are rarely read. Some are used to store important family papers. Others are used just to record genealogical information such as birth dates and death of family members. The bible, however, should be more than a mere ornament. It should be the spiritual information source that feeds the souls of every believer.

While many people have bibles, few actually read or study them on a regular basis. Consider the young man who sat at the reading of his grandmother's will with his two sisters. Grandmother was a wealthy Christian woman who had tried all of her life to get her three grandchildren to read the bible and live clean lives. Her granddaughters followed her instruction. Her grandson would not. When she died she left her two granddaughters large portions of her estate, making them wealthy women. However, she only left the grandson her old tattered bible. Angry at what he thought was an obvious slight, the young man stormed out of the room. He fell onto hard times and slept on street corners in card board boxes for nearly 20 years. In all that time the only thing he possessed in the world was his grandmother's old tattered bible. With no money or food, he reached a point where he tried to sell it at a pawn shop, but no one would buy it because it was too old and valueless. He seemed haunted by it. He left it on a park bench but someone returned it to him. Frustrated, he sat down and opened it and it fell on words that said, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Tucked in an envelope behind the page was a cashier's check for $1 million. He had it all the time, but he would never open his bible.

How many people today lose valuable blessings because they refuse to open their bibles. There are many that are struggling with frustration and could find the answer, but they won't open their bibles. There are many that are looking for answers to many of life's greatest secrets, but they refuse to open their bible. Yet, every searching question for which they seek an answer is in the bible, if we would simply open the cover and read.

As Christians, we know that God has left us an instruction manual for life. We keep this guide close by and refer to it often. The word of God has so much truth in it that we tell everyone that the spirit filled life is a "B.Y.O.B. Affair." We must bring our own treasury of Bible knowledge into everyday's experience.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he addresses the importance of studying and living by God's statues and commandments.

The 119th Psalm is unique in that the entire Psalm highlights the importance of studying the word of God. It is also unique in that it is written in complete thoughts that consist of eight verses each. Each part shows how important it is to be guided by the word of God in our daily affairs. Each section is headed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which explains the odd looking names at the beginning of each of the 22 sections.

David understood the importance of studying the word of God. While there were times that he strayed from the Word, much to his own detriment, for the most part, he tried to live by the commands of God. His advice to others trying to live the Godly life was to learn the word of God, commit it to memory, and strive to live by its teachings on a daily basis.

The various eight verse sections emphasize different aspects of studying God's word. For example, verses 1-8 focus on how studying God's word produces character. Verses 9-16 shows how God's word cleanses. Verses 17-24 show how God's word enlightens a believer and opens new worlds of understanding.

Verses 25-32 shows how studying the word of God sustains a believer and strengthens in a time of weakness.

THE WORD QUICKENS: The word quickens is from the Hebrew word "chayah" (Khaw-yaw) which means to live, have life, remain alive, and live prosperously and happily. David said those who study the word of God find that it helps them to live, but not only to live, but to live a spiritually prosperous life. Though life's circumstances might reduce us to a "dust like" existence, the word of God revives the believer when he or she is reminded of the delivering power of almighty God.

THE WORD TEACHES: David noted that he had "declared my ways" (v26) meaning that he had expressed the direction in life he desired to take. One great deed David wanted to do in his life was to build the temple, but what he wanted conflicted with what God wanted. God did not want David to build the temple because his life was polluted with war and violence. In his frustration, David asked God to teach him

the right way. Thus, David acknowledges that the word of God teaches those who will study it, the good and perfect will of God for any life situation.

THE WORD PROVIDES UNDERSTANDING: Understanding the ways of God was quite troublesome for David, as it is for most believers. However, he said his hope was rooted in his desire to understand God's ways, which he calls precepts. Once understood, David felt that God's ways would prove to be wondrous and overwhelming. Thus, he studies God's word regularly to understand God's ways.

THE WORD GIVES STRENGTH. When besieged by enemies or overwhelmed by personal woes, David said his soul "melted." It lost its statue. It became less firm. Like a dwindling snowball, it dissolved in the face of persecution. However, David said studying the word of God brought him renewed strength and inspiration to continue living the godly life.

Thus, David concluded that he sticks to the word of God (v31) and runs the way of righteousness. The word broadens or enlarges the scope of his understanding, and as such, sustains him in times of peril or distress.

A "B.Y.O.B." Affair

Many people have seen the advertisements in clubs in every city. The signs invite prospects to come to an activity and someone on the advertisement the will be a line that says this is a "B.Y.O.B" Affair. That usually means that the each patron is supposed to "Bring your own bottle." Many expecting to party on such arrangements find that setups, ie. cups and ice, are needed and sometimes come with a charge.

In the context of living the Christian life, B.Y.O.B. has a different meaning, but each believer will still need a little help with the set ups.

Brighten Your Own Borders. The world encourages everyone to live life free and happily, but it doesn't quite show us how. It shows us clips of the way life should be and then tells us to do it yourself. We are familiar with the world's approach which suggests that all we need to do is give ourselves 1) Positive self talk, 2) Enriching thoughts; and 3) Aggressive upward climbs. On a different level the world makes other suggestions for those whose world has become dark, 1) Party 2) Get Drunk 3) Get high! That's the world's solution to livening up life! It defines happiness and fulfillment in the context of its own standard.

That's where the word of God provides the setups. It shows us how to live life fully, freely and happily.

Jesus told his followers in John 10:10 "..I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The abundant life is the happy life. It is one that has adopted the attitude of putting God first, knowing that if that is done, everything else will fall into place.

Days are brightened when the word of God calls to our memory, the fact that God is still in control.

Borders and Brighten when the word God reminds us that regardless what the day brings, God is still in control because he is "the same yesterday, today and

forever" {Hebrews 13:8})

The borders of each day are brightened when we wake up in the morning and recall that the word of Gods says in Psalm 118:24 "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

BROADEN YOUR OWN BODY OF KNOWLEDGE: The world suggests that self improvement is directly related to our ability to broaden the body of knowledge available to us. It suggests that we can do better if we know more. Following this lead, many have attempted to read a wide variety of literature to broaden their own body of knowledge. While broadening our knowledge is essential to personal growth, it must not be exclusive of the word of God.

We may master the writings of Plato and understand the essential rudiments of his Utopian society, be we need to know the Lord.

We may understand the philosophy of Aristole, the psychology of Sigmund Frued, and the beauty of Beethoven's 9th symphony, but we need to know the Lord.

We may memorize the Gettysburg Address, recite Maya Angelo, and quote William Shakespeare, but we need to know the Lord!

Broadening our body of knowledge in our profession or in school without deepening our understanding of the Word of God, is an exercise in spiritual futility.

David, in this text was the leader of his people and a powerful man but he pleaded with God to teach him his will. So in Psalm 27:11 he says "Teach me thy way oh Lord and lead me in a plain path." In Psalm 86:11 he says "Teach me thy way oh Lord and I will walk in thy truth."

Studying the word of God helps us to transform ourselves by renewing our mind. Studying God's word shows us what Romans 12:2 calls the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Broadening our knowledge of God is essential to our spiritual growth.

BALANCE YOUR OWN BATTLES: The world suggest that we take life by the horns and wrestle it into submission. Many who have tried to tackle life situations on their own have found that they couldn't do it by themselves, they needed some help.

That's where studying God's word plays an important role. When we study God's word we see how God brought a sense of balance to others facing similar situations and we get to understand God's way.

When we see Gideon struggling to balance his fear of a battle with thousands of enemies with his desire to obey God's command, we see how God gave him victory despite the odds.

When we see Paul trying to balance his personal infirmity with his desire to do the work of the kingdom, we see how God answered him in 2 Corinthians 12:9 "...And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..."

When we are living the righteous life but seem plagued by unfortunate circumstances, we see Job trying to balance his love of God with his battle for health and sanity. We see how Job declares in Job 13:15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust

in him!" We see how God ultimately rewarded him.

We study the Word so that we can find balance in the face of life's battles.

You Can't Do It By Yourself!

Finally brothers and sisters, the world suggests that we bear our own burdens.

It suggests that we can shoulder the problems of life when we participate in seminars, group therapy, recovery programs and physcho analysis.

However, history has proven that no matter how many seminars you may attend, you can't bear the burdens of this life by yourself!

It doesn't matter how many therapy sessions that you attend, you cannot bear the burdens of this life by yourself!

The entire life of Christ, in his humanity, is symbolic of the Christian struggle. When he carried his cross and stumbled under the heavy load, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to help him carry his cross. If that stumbling moment has any meaning to us, it means that we too will need a little help carrying our daily cross!

Everybody Needs a little help sometime!

You may live in a fine house that is in perfect repair, but in a natural disaster strikes, you soon find out that everybody needs a little help sometime!

You may drive a brand new automobile and pass people along the road. But even new cars can put you down and you soon find out that everybody needs a little help sometime!

You might have a wealth of strength and can do everything for yourself, but the day will come when you may be laying flat on your back unable to give yourself a drink of water, that's when you learn that, everybody needs a little help sometime!

The world says "bear your own burdens" but in my limited life experience I've found out that the burdens and cares of this world are so great, that you need a little help sometime!

But when you study the word of God you hear Jesus saying in Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Maybe that's why the song writer says "If the world from you witholds of its silver and its gold and you have to get alone with meager fare, just remember in his word how he feeds the little bird and take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

The world says bear your own burdens, but I'm glad to know that we serve a burden bearing God!

We serve a God who can take all of our:

—Difficulties and turn them into delights; Failures and turn them into successes

—Backward steps and turn them into forward progress; Stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones

—Midnights and turn them into noon days; Sadness and turn it into gladness

When I'm troubled with the problems of the night, the word of God

in Psalms 30:5 reminds me that "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

When I find myself caught between a rock and hard place and I can't turn to the right or the left, then I remember \reference Psalms 121 "I will lift up mine eyes to hills from whence cometh
my help, my help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth."

When I find myself worried about how to make my ends meet, I
remember Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

When I study the word I get to know this man they call Jesus!

Jesus, The lamb of God!

Jesus, The Lily of the Valley

Jesus, The Bright and Morning star

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose
from the grave with all power in his hand!

No. 672-Communion

Manna

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 21, 1997

SCRIPTURE: And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. Exodus 16:15.

Introduction

Is it possible for a person to be showered with blessings but be unaware of what they are or where they came from? It would seem unlikely, but there are many people who enjoy immense blessings every day but are not fully aware of the source of their blessings. They have fine jobs, a roof over their heads, food on the table and a reasonable portion of strength, but despite these obvious signs of blessed lives, they attribute them to causes not directly related to the true source. Some say their education is the reason for their blessings. Others say it has been their hard work and dedication. Still others attribute their good fortune to "luck" or the fact that they happened to be in the right place at the right time. Whatever the reason, there are countless millions today who are receiving great opportunities, without ever considering that what they have is a great blessing from God.

Sometimes we are so busy complaining about what we don't have that we miss the blessings right at our feet. Consider the man who complained each morning about his breakfast. "Lord, all I have for breakfast is a bisquit," was his complaint. The next day there was a bisquit and sausage on his plate. Then he said, "Lord, I serve you every day, but all I have is a bisquit and sausage." The next day there was a bisquit, sausage and syrup. "Lord, as much as I trust you, all I get is this?" The next day there was a bisquit, sausage, syrup and scrambled eggs." The man looked down at his plate and said "Lord, this is ridiculous. Every day now you have been giving me these same old bisquits. Why don't you give me what I deserve?" The next day the Lord answered his prayer and gave him what he deserved ... an empty plate! He was being blessed every day, but could not appreciate what he had.

Like Israel, sometimes we are ungrateful. They were constantly blessed but they constantly complained. If it wasn't slavery it was the wilderness. If it wasn't the lack of water it was the lack of meat. If it wasn't meat it was bread. Then they even tired of meat and bread. Through it all, God continued to bless them, despite their complaints.

As Christians, we respond to God's blessings like the song writer who said, "I've had some good days. I've had some hills to climb. But when I look around and think things over. All of my good days out weigh by bad days and I won't complain!" That is the Christian testimony.

Exposition

This text focuses on the children of Israel as they received the blessing of meat and bread from God without being aware what it was or considering that it came from God.

Israel's journey in the wilderness of Sin was one that tired and frustrated them. They complained to God of insufficient food and water. God heard their murmurings and told Moses to tell them that they would receive blessings of sustenance from him that would undeniably be an evidence that he was leading, providing and caring for them.

At verse 12 they were told that there would be meat for them to eat and there would be fresh bread the next morning. Even though they had been told that the meat and bread was on the way, many of them still did not recognize either as a blessing from God when they actually came.

At verse 15, as promised, there was a small round thing that blanketed the ground around them. It was so abundant it appeared to be a frost. The people were surprised at what they saw and described it as "Manna."

It is commonly thought that the name "Manna" means "Bread From Heaven." Since God promised in verse 4 that he would rain bread of heaven, many have assumed that the name "manna" meant "bread from heaven." Actually, "Manna" means "What is it?" From the Hebrew word "Man hu." It came from the statement of surprise and wonder that they people gave when they saw it laying on the ground like a frost, they exclaimed "Manna?" or "What is it?"

Both the quail and the manna were blessings from God. It appeared that despite being told how God would bless them, the people had no idea what the blessings were or where they came from even though they received them within 24 hours of being told that they would come.

Once God promised the meat and bread to the people it came just as he promised. There was always sufficient quail to feed the nearly half million people. The "Manna" appeared daily for six days of every week. The people were told to gather enough for every person in their respective households, but not to gather more than they could eat. They were to gather food "at a certain rate every day." On the sixth day, they were told to gather twice as much because there would be no manna on the 7th day. Any person that tried to gather more than their portion, found that the food was infested with worms on the next day.

There have been many attempts to identify the natural source of the "manna" that would have been foreign to the Israelites who had spent over 400 years in slavery in Egypt. What is known from scripture is that it was a "small round thing", "like the

hoar-frost on the ground," and like coriander seed","of the color of bdellium," and like wafers made with honey." It was also capable of being baked, ground in mills or ground in mills.

Some have ventured to identify the Calabria plant that is native to Sicily. It drops from twigs of a species of ash trees in the months of June and July. At night it is fluid and resembles dew, but in the morning when the dew leaves it begins to harden. Others think it could have been "Manna-Tamarisk" that is peculiar to the Sinatic peninsula. Like the Calabria tree its characteristics are similar to those described in the bible.

The wafer like bread that appeared on the ground each day may have had a natural source, but its regularity and abundance required divine intervention. The Calabria Tree and the "Manna- Tamarisk" only gave droppings during two or three months of the year. Yet, the scripture says the manna that the people received came daily, six days a week, year round for forty years. Regardless of how natural the source, it was obvious that a miraculous intervention by God almighty made it happen.

God provided for the needs of the people until they reached the promised land. Then the manna ceased.

In John 6:31-35, Jesus referred to the bread that came from heaven as a blessing from God that sustained the people. However, in the new covenant God has sent his only son as the new bread from heaven.

There are still people who are asking, "Manna?" What is this as they try to understand the nature of the savior's calling.

What Is This?

Today there are millions of people who murmur to God about meat and bread issues and when he answers they do not recognize his response to their murmurings. Often what they ask God for is already available to them but they either don't recognize what it is or don't know how to use what they have. John McArthur reminds us that too often our prayers are murmurings of frustration that suggest that we don't know exactly how God operates.

We spend a great deal of time and effort vainly looking for blessings already available to us.

We pray for God's light, although He has already supplied light in abundance through His Word. Their need is to follow the light they already have.

We pray for strength, although His Word tells us we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

We pray for more love, although Paul says that God's own love is already poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

We pray for more grace, although the Lord says the grace He has already given is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

We pray for peace, although the Lord has given us His own peace, "which

surpasses all comprehension" (Phil. 4:7).

Since the blessings we are already assured to us, the tone of our prayer should not be that of a person who is asking for something that has not been given, but rather it should be the tone of a person who is asking God for the grace to appropriate, collect and use that which has already been provided.

We should not say Lord give me Manna, but Lord help me to collect the manna that is already at my fingertips.

God responds to meat and bread issues. Meat and Bread issues are the essence of our daily needs. We have a basic need for food, clothing and shelter. In most instances this is the sum total of our basic needs. These are our meat and bread issues. Often we murmur to God about what we do not have, without considering blessings that we have actually received. They are appearing all around us each and every day, often without the label "Miracle" attached to them.

On a daily basis, God provides our basic meat and bread needs, in proportion to our needs. Israel was told that every day there would be enough manna to meet the day's need. No more and no less. One of Rabbi Ben Jochai's scholars once asked him, "Why did not the Lord furnish enough manna to Israel for a year all at one time?" The teacher said, "I will answer you with a parable. Once there was a king who had a son to whom he gave a yearly allowance, paying him the entire sum on the fixed date. It soon happened that the day on which the allowance was due was the only day of the year when the father ever saw his son. So the king changed his plan and gave his son day by day that which was sufficient for the day; and then the son visited his father every morning. How he needed his father's unbroken love, companionship, wisdom and giving! Thus God dealt with Israel and deals with us." David, in Psalm 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Jesus speaking to his disciples, reminded us that we are to ask God for our daily blessings as it relates to meat and bread issues. In Matthew 6:11 he said we should pray to God, "Give us this day our daily bread." When it comes to the provision of our daily need God always provides.

God often uses a natural means to respond to a natural situation, in a very unnatural way. Sometimes we are so familiar with how things are naturally done that we lose sight of how God manipulates the course of events to benefit us. A believer who prays that God would help him meet a financial need and then finds that a long overdue check, unexpected, comes in the mail is the benefit of a special blessing from God. Skeptics will say that the check was already in the mail before the prayer was made. However, every believer knows what the word of God says in Isaiah 65:24 "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

Bread of Heaven

Finally brothers and sisters, just as Israel had bread from heaven rained down upon them and they asked "Manna?" What is this? There are many who have the

presence of Jesus, our spiritual bread of heaven, and have no idea who he is or how they should respond to him.

Jesus told his disciples that Israel was sustained by the bread of heaven and asked "What is this?" by calling it manna. Even as he comes to bring salvation and eternal life there are many who are still asking, "What is this?"

As Jesus performed miracles in their presence, stilling the stormy sea, his disciples asked the question, "What manner of man is this?" That even the winds obey his will!

As Jesus spoke to his disciples about his mission to bring salvation, they did not understand him. In John 16:17-18 they heard him say that in a little while he would go away from them they gathered among themselves and said "What is this?" What does he mean by the phrase "a little while!"

And when Jesus described himself as the bread of heaven there must have been many who responded "Manna?" What is this?

What is the bread is the bread of heaven? What is the answer to this perplexing question?

The bread of heaven is merciful grace of an all powerful God!

The bread of heaven is the unseen presence of an all powerful hand!

The bread of heaven is the voice of God speaking in a listening ear!

The bread of heaven is the never ending shower of blessings from on high!

The bread of heaven cannot be baked, doesn't need to be rolled, and can rise without yeast!

No wonder writer declares "bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

The bread of heaven is the presence the almighty God in the person of his Son Jesus!

Jesus, do you know him today?

Jesus, the rock of ages!

Jesus, the shelter in a time of storm!

Jesus, who is water for the thirsty!

Jesus, who is bread for the hungry!

Jesus, who died on Calvary but arose Early on Sunday morning!

He is the Bread of Heaven!

No.673-Membership Improvement

How To Be A Player In The Kingdom of God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 28, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." 1 Thessalonians 4:1-6

Introduction

Has anyone ever played games with your affections? Has your heart ever been broken? Only a few people have blessed to go through their entire life without being the victim of someone's effort to play games with their affections.

There are many that view life as a fun game of "line them up, love them, and leave them." Playboys, playgirls, Macs, and Dap Daddies are names that we usually use to describe these men and women who step into a life, tinker with someone's affections and then disappear. A recent movie entitled, "How to be a player" focuses on a young man, played by Bill Bellamy, who promotes himself as the ultimate heart breaker. He specialized in breaking the hearts of unsuspecting young ladies as he pursued his only goal in life, which was to have sex with as many girls as possible without getting caught. He had no hard feelings about the weeping lassies he left behind as he unleashed a barrage of smooth lines, lies and deceptions to win the affections and confidences of women who fell for his overtures. He doesn't come to his senses in the movie until his sister teaches him a lesson and invites all of his women to the same party. Adults who have watched the film call it amusing. However, some youth who have watched have been impressed enough that many young men have idolized the idea of becoming a "player." Players make no comittments. Players don't settle down with one person. Players can only do one thing wrong and that's to get caught.

Many approach life with the players attitude, they use other people to achieve

their ends, even if it means not being totally honest with them. Some even approach their relationship with God in the same way: not being completely honest with him. However, the Christian approaches life with a different perspective. Eventually such an attitude creates problems and strains relationships.

As Christians, we have learned the value of being honest with God, honest with ourselves and honest with our neighbors. That's what it takes to be a player in the kingdom of God. That is the goal of every believer.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he shows the Thessalonians how to please God with respect to their interpersonal relationships. The church at Thessalonica was located in the midst of non-believers, whose lifestyle was distant, even foreign to that of Christians. Paul urged believers not to emulate the lifestyles and patterns of unbelievers but to remain faithful and loyal to God. In Chapter 4 of his letter to the Thessalonians he detailed "how" every believer should walk to obtain the blessing of God. In effect, he showed them how to gain the favor of God so that "ye would abound more and more." What he described to the Thessalonians is a step by step "how to" be a blessed player in the kingdom of God.

SANCTIFIED LIVING: Paul noted in verse 3 that God expects every player in the kingdom of God, that is every believer, to be sanctified. Sanctified simply means being set apart for a holy or special work. A person who is sanctified is consecrated and special in the eyesight of God. Since each believer is consecrated for the work of God, Paul urges each to set themselves apart from the world remembering that their lives are a sacred mission to God. The call to sanctification is especially important as it relates to interpersonal relationships. Paul urged believers to be truthful to each other (v6), love each other with Godly compassion (v9), mind their own business(v11), work with their own hands(v11), keep a renewed hope(v13-17) and to constantly encourage each other (v18). Those who live the sanctified life are true players, important people in the kingdom of God.

ABSTAIN FROM FORNICATION: Every believer is urged to remember that a saint is one who abstains from all forms of fornication. Fornication, refers to all manner of unclean or unholy activity. It is a broad ranged term that includes unholy language and activity. It is specifically applied to any practice that would be counter to the will of God.

With respect to interpersonal relationships, Paul warned against sexual fornication. Sexual Fornication involves sexual relationships that are outside the will of God. Thus, he encourages every believer to "know how to possess his vessel" in sanctification. The term vessel refers to the believers own body and also to the body of those with whom they share interpersonal relationships. The saint approaches sexual relationships with an attitude of holiness rather than lust. In verse 5 Paul reminds believers that they should not approach sexual relationships in the same way as the ungodly or the heathen. The ungodly do not know God and approach their

relationships out of lust. They seek to satisfy themselves without any consideration for the other person. There is no love. There is no comittment. There is simply the gratification of the moment.

Thus, those who involve themselves in sexual fornication actually steal from or cheat their partners. Believers are encouraged not to defraud each other (v6) by moving from person to person, satisfying themselves at the expense of others, drawing the wrath of God. He reminds believers that "God hath not called us unto uncleaness but unto holiness." (v7).

To abound more and more believers must strive to please God in every way, including the way their private and personal relationships with others.

Living to Please God.

When the term "Player" is used, it evokes a variety of responses. In the world of interpersonal relationships it refers to the unfaithful. In the world of business it refers to somone who has successfully conquered the business world. In the world of sports, a "player" are the giants of a sport, those who influence the game in a major way. In politics, a player is a person who is key to the decision making process. A player has influence. How that influence is used what makes the difference between the way a believer and a non-believer plays the game of life.

Today there is a growing tendency for many to live to please themselves, even at the expense of others. Yet believers are encouraged to live to please God. That is the essential element of the Christian life: we live to please God. Those who please him are those who are true "players" in the kingdom of God.

How can we please God? How can we do that which pleases him?

LIVING HOLY: To please God we must live holy lives. The first thought that comes to mind when some think of holy living is that God wants them to live a life that makes them look like they have been dipped in embalming fluid, first cousins to sour pickles and dried prunes. Holy living means living wholly or completely. It means the spiritual person on the inside and the physical person on the outside are doing the same thing. Spiritual believers know the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Very few believers deny this truth spiritually. Holiness challenges us to make the physical man or woman match the spiritual man or woman on the inside.

HOLY LIVING REQUIRES MORAL PURITY: It is impossible to live holy without moral purity. People who indulge in moral impurtity are not spiritually whole. It doesn't matter whether they sing a religious song! It doesn't matter how much they shout! It doesn't matter whether they attend church, pay a tithe and shout with the spirit or do the holy dance, those who indulge in moral impurity are not spiritually whole. The spiritual person inside of them does not match the physical person outside of them.

Those who are unmarried make delude themselves into believing that sex without marriage is acceptable to God if you intend to get married one day. Others might consider it acceptable to play house, since they love each other and plan to eventually marry. Still others have no intention of marrying they feel they are being responsible if they indulge in "safe sex." Some venture into homosexuality and Lesbianism, saying God made us this way. Others have sexual relationships with someone else's husband or wife.

SELF CONTROL: Belivers count on the spirit of God to give them self control. Every believer should constantly pray that God would shower them with spiritual strength to remain in control of temselves. Sexual urges are natural drives. Yet they must be in control. Eating Food is a natural drive, but even eatng can be a problem if it gets out of control. Paul put it in biblical terms, that each of us should learn to "control his vessel."

Sometimes we can let things get out of control. Those who are married can entertain flirtations from someone other than a partner or a regular basis and the next thing you know, you are out of control. The unmarried can allow themselves to turn that which should be pure and simple into dangerous liasons. A kiss to long. A misplaced hand. The next thing you know, you are out of control.

RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE: No one should do anything that would cheat his brother or sister out of anyting valuable to them. That's what Paul mean when he said " That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" These are fancy words, what they mean is that every believer is expected to treat his friend of the opposite sex with the utmost respect. He should not say "I love you" just to break her defences and have sex with her. She should not lure him into her with pretense of false affection.

Belivers should not be heart breakers who love them and leave them crying. They shouldn't tinker with the hearts of others, collecting their conquests on a chain of fools.

Although society rewards its players, the lady killers, who move from woman to woman or the man handlers that move from man to man, God has a way of bringing hard times on the world's players. Look at verse 6, "The Lord is the avenger of all such." It serves a warning to those who tinker with the affections of others...."God will get you!"

In Kingdom of God

While being a player in the negative sense is condemned in the Word of God, there is a reward promised for those who actually become players in the kingdom of God.

They are rewarded because they play the game of life with one objective, that is to please God.

Players in the kingdom of God are rewarded because they have learn to go beyond abusing the affections of others and have learned how to truly love each

other with Godly compassion.

Those who have learned to please God have learned how to mind their own business and do their own work (v11)

Those who have learned to please God have learned to walk by faith and not by sight.

If you want to be a player in the world, all you need to do is trust yourself. But if you want to be a player in the kingdom of God you must learn to trust in the Lord!

A player in the world, only needs to depend on good looks. But a player in the kingdom of God learns that he must look to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of his faith.

A player in the world, only needs a flow of smooth words. But a player in the kingdom of God needs to know the Word of God.

A player in the world, has to be a heart breaker. But a player in the kingdom of God needs to know the one who can mend a broken heart!

A player in the world, has to be a home wrecker. But a player in the kingdom of God is a home builder!

A player in the world, has to be able to lie quick and move fast. But a player in the kingdom of God has learned that "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount on wings as Eagles!"

I don't know about you, but I'd rather be a player in the kingdom of God than a player in the world.

If I am a player in the kingdom of God, he will be pleased by my actions!

Good things happen when God is pleased!

When God is pleased:

—Miseries turn into magic moments!

—Closed doors are opened in miraculous ways!

—Dried Rivers of opportunity begin to flow!

—Bowed heads are reised up high!

—Brokens spirits are renewed with vigor!

—Enslaved souls are set free as bonds are broken!

I can please God by the way I live!

I can please God by the way I relate to others!

I can please God by the way I tell the story!

Everytime you tell somebody about Jesus, God is pleased!

If you tell them that Jesus lived on earth, God is pleased!

If you tell them that he died on Calvary, God is pleased!

If you tell them that he arose after three days and nights, God is pleased!

If you tell them that he is alive today! God is pleased!

No. 674-Revival

Hitting Rock Bottom

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 5, 1997

SCRIPTURE: It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statues" (Ps. 119:65-71).

Introduction

Have you ever failed? Have you ever given a project your best effort but it simply fizzled in front of your eyes? Failure is an integral part of success. Very few have become successes in life without experiencing some element of failure. The unique thing about those who succeed is that while all experienced failure at one time or another, none considered themselves failures.

Each person reaches a point in life that Josephine Dupree Dean calls a *"teachable moment."* A teachable moment, says Dupree, is a point in which a person is most susceptible to learn a skill, a new idea, or come to a new understanding. Often teachable moments are created by teachers. More often than not, a "teachable moment" occurs as the result of life situations beyond one's control. It is at that point that God speaks and we listen.

Consider the man who saved a small fortune from hard work and wise investments but suffered a great loss. One day, while scanning the pages of an investment journal he saw an opportunity that appeared too good to be true. It was a chance to buy 1000 acres of prime timber at an unbelievably low price. When he considered how much timber sold per board foot he immediately cashed in all of his savings, mortgaged his home, secured several loans and bought the land. However, before he could even claim his new acreage, a tornado swept through the area and completely destroyed his 1000 acres of prime timber. When he surveyed the area, he saw thousands of trees, most too small to be sold, scattered over the landscape. He had been financially ruined. He had lost everything. His big dream had failed.

Two years later a friend stumbled upon the man at a conference and expressed sympathy over his loss, but to the friend's surprise the man, who had obviously suffered a great defeat was beaming with enthusiasm. The man told him of his dismay at the sight of his destroyed investment. "I sat down at breakfast the next morning and I talked to God for the first time in a long time. I confessed that I had failed myself and failed my family. As I sat over my breakfast plate, God answered me in the most peculiar way. When I asked God for an answer the waitress handed me a toothpick.

Toothpicks! That was the answer! With a burst of enthusiasm I arranged to have all of my fallen trees made into toothpicks! Today, I have toothpick factories in ten cities and my investment has tripled. God showed me how to turn my fallen trees into "toothpicks!"

There are many today who mourn over a failure and consider themselves failure. Failure is a part of the refining process of every life. An occasional failure has a tendency to humble us and remind us that we are dependent on a higher power than ourselves for every blessing we receive in life.

There are many who never truly know God until they hit the bottom. It is then and only then that God can show them how to take the destruction that has wrecked their spiritual lives and turn it into an opportunity for... "toothpicks!"

As Christians, we know that every experience in our lives has our best interest as its intent. Even when we stumble, the stumble is allowed, so that it can make us more careful and prevent a fall. When we seem to hit the bottom in life, we don't give up, we look up and find God who shows how to turn adversity and failure into triumph and success.

Exposition

This text focused on David as he communes with God at a time when he appeared to have hit rock bottom.

The life of David is typical of the average believer. There were times when his faith was strong and championed the cause of God. In such moments he was the epitome of faith and courage. These moments weere marked by his faith as he shepherded his father's flock and protected it against lions, bears and other animals of prey. There were also highlighted by his courage in the face of Goliath. In these moments David is remembered as a man of great strength and character.

There were also times when his faith was extremely weak. These were moments when, despite his knowledge of God and his willingness to stand for God, he strayed away from the right path or met misfortune. As David enjoyed the favor of the king and the popularity of the people his life made a turn. By no fault of his own, he became the enemy of the king and instantly fell from being the favored musician and poet of the king to being a hunted vagabond. He moved from place to place, hiding and evading. He was often hungry and fatigued. He was treated as a criminal.

Despite all of his potential and best efforts, it appeared he had failed. He had hit rock bottom.

Even after he became King, David hit rock bottom. He had a throne. He had a crown. He had a name! He had popularity, but spiritually he hit rock bottom. This time it was the result of his own sin. In Psalm 119:67 he muses about his life before he hit rock bottom. He said "before I was afflicted, I went astray." He knew the right thing to do but did not do it. He knew the will of God for his life but ignored it. He was familiar with the law of God but decided to break it anyway. He appeared to prosper and as he appeared to prosper despite ignoring the will of God, he hit rock bottom. After

reaching his spiritually lowest point, he came to himself.

He concluded that hitting rock bottom was good for him. At verse 71 he said that the experience helped him to get a better appreciation of the law of God.

At the bottom, David found God again. At rock bottom, he asked God for forgiveness. It was there that Psalm 51 was written. It was there the immortal words of Psalm 51:10 were written, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

From rock bottom, David arose to champion the cause of God. He is remembered as aman after God's own heart. While he is remembered for his mountain top experiences, he is also remembered for the point in his life when he met God at the bottom.

Hitting Rock Bottom

Today there are millions of people who are having rock bottom experiences. Some are obvious because we see the pitiful state of their lives and affairs. Yet, there are others who have bottomed out spiritually and the outer appearance betrays their inner condition...Generally, there are three types of people that hit rock bottom:

THOSE WHO HAVE BOTTOMED OUT BUT DON'T KNOW IT. There are many who have hit rock bottom but their other appearance does not betray their condition. They live in nice homes. They drive nice cars. They have jobs and appear to be the epitome of success. Yet despite their appearances, they have lost something that has left them spiritually devastated.

The joy they once knew has disappeared. The enthusiasm with which they once approached life is gone. Their lives are empty. They have hit rock bottom.

This usually happens whenever a person abandons a sacred trust or loses sight of their purpose. The fire that motivates them seems to smoulder. This was the case with King David. He strayed into adultery and abandoned the sacred trust between himself and God. His outward appearance looked fine. He was King of Israel. He sat high on a throne and judged Israel, yet he had hit rock bottom. This was also the case with Samson who violated a sacred trust and lost all his strength. When he awoke from sleeping with the enemy, he appeared the same, but he had hit rock bottom.

Blues singer B.B. King calls it "losing the thrill." David called it losing the joy of salvation. Either way, a person has hit rock bottom when it happens.

THOSE WHO FEEL THAT THEY HAVE HIT ROCK BOTTOM BUT HAVE NOT. While there are millions who have hit rock bottom and don't know it, there are countless others who feel like they have hit rock bottom and have not. Those who feel this way are those who have misinterpreted a stumble for a fatal fall.

Many who make mistakes in life feel as if the world has come to an end. If an investment fails, they think they have hit rock bottom. If they lose a competition, they think they have hit rock bottom.

Everyone who fails is not a failure. The person who says "I have failed three times!" faces life with a totally different perspective than the person who says "I am

a failure." Stumbles often serve the purpose of preventing us from falling. When we stumble we are reminded how easy it is to fall and the prudent will take precautions. When we stumble we have not hit rock bottom.

Peter walked proudly with Christ. Yet when he was identified as a believer, Peter denied Christ three times. He thought he had bottomed out. When the disciples gathered after the resurrection, he considered himself unworthy. Then Peter found out that in the eyesight of the master he had not hit rock bottom, but had only stumbled.

THERE ARE SOME WHO FIND THEMSELVES WHILE ON THE BOTTOM. There are many who are on the bottom of life's experiences but don't know it. Unlike David who knew he had bottomed out but others didn't know it, those in this situation are on the bottom but don't know it. They consider themselves having a "good time." Their life is an endless stream of false friends, synthetic happiness and manufactured joy that is maintained as long as they have what it takes to keep it going. Often people in this situation are on the bottom but don't know it.

The prodigal son went into afar country and wasted his life in riotous living. He was surrounded by people who appeared to be his friends and acquaintances, but then as quickly as they befriended him, they abandoned him when he lost all of his money. Reduced to slopping hogs for a living, "he came to himself" and realized that he had hit the bottom. It was only after he realized his condition that his eyes turned toward home.

The Rock at the Bottom

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, we must consider that there are two ways to hit rock bottom.

The usual way of hitting rock bottom is to make a complete crash, splashing everything you have against the unknown to be lost forever. When the world thinks of hitting rock bottom that is what it sees, complete failure.

The other way is to start looking for the rock at the bottom!

The rock bottom is the point at which we reach our lowest. We can't fall any further. We can't be a worse failure. We can't destroy ourselves any more! When we reach that point we shouldn't concentrate on hitting rock bottom but we should remember that there is a rock at the bottom!

The rock at the bottom cushions the fall. Instead of splashing to destruction, the rock at the bottom becomes a trampoline and helps us to bounce back.

The harder a believer falls, the higher he bounces back, because there is a rock at the bottom.

Job's life bottomed out! He fell from a man of great riches and health to a man of little means and poor health. Job's friends were astonished, that although he was obviously on the bottom, he continued to praise God saying, "All the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change come!" When his life reached the lowest point, he was sustained by the rock at the bottom!

Joseph's life bottomed out! What was once a career that was full of dreams and successful accomplishments had turned to failure. In a pit designed for his doom, Joseph saw how God could lift him from the pit and place him in an Egyptian palace. There, in the dark bottom of an abandoned pit, Joseph met the rock at the bottom!

Saul persecuted the church and sought its destruction! On the Damascus Road he was blinded by a powerful light. After three days and nights of darkness, his spirits reached the bottom! There, at the bottom, he met the rock at the bottom!

The rock at the bottom knows what it means to be rejected for Isaiah 53:3 says he was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

The rock at the bottom knows what it means to be on the bottom!

He was surrounded by friends, some of whom smiled in his face and ate from the same plate, but they turned him in to his enemies! He knows what it means to be on the bottom!

When he went to pray, his friends went to sleep on him, leaving him all by himself! He knows what it means to be on the bottom!

He had no money or possessions! He told his friends, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the son of man hath no where to lay his head!"

He had no political power. He was rejected by every level of government which worked to stop his great work and finally to kill him! He knows what it means to be on the bottom!

He knows what it means to be alone and to feel forsaken. His voice can be heard echoing across the centuries, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Who is this rock that lifts dispirited souls on the bottom? David answered this question by exclaiming in Psalm 18:2 "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust..."

When life has thrown us into a rock bottom experience, every child of God should not despair about hitting rock bottom, but simply look for the rock at the bottom!

No matter how bad the times, there is a rock that is higher than I!

Theses are times when people want to:

—Succeed without really trying; Go forward but they keep going backward!

—Stand up but they keep falling down; Receive but they never want to give;

—Love but they can't stop hating; Saved but they don't want to repent

—Be supported but they don't want to support; To be helped but they never want to help!

In times like these we need a Savior!

In times like these we need an anchor!

Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

Who is this rock?

This rock is Jesus!

The lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, The sweet Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, The fairest of ten thousand!
He died on Calvary and hit rock bottom!
But early Sunday morning—arouse from the grave!
If you hit rock bottom...look for rock at the bottom!
He'll make everything all right!

No. 675-Christian Education

Studying the words without Knowing *The* Word!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
At The Zion Traveler Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 8, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Hebrews 8:10-11

Introduction

Is it possible to think you know a subject only to find out that you don't really know it at all? Often we approach life with the assumption that what we know about it is all consuming. We trust what we have read or seen on television to give us accurate images of what is or at least what should be. In our search for knowledge, often the very process itself substitutes as the objective rather then means to achieve an end. As such, some become perpetual students, never completing their education. There is a terminal end to their pursuit. They only hope to study and study more.

Sometimes we can delude ourselves into believing that we know more than we actually know. Consider the smart little mouse that knew more information than any mouse around. He read constantly and often led debates about the virtues of living the life of a mouse. One day, since he had such great knowledge, he decided to conduct a class for the other mice. The class would teach them all he knew about cats. He posted signs everywhere announcing his class. The young mice were excited, because this was one of the smartest mice around. If anyone could help them learn about cats, he could. On the day of the first class, the room was filled with little mice. However, there were no old mice present, just the little ones. There was a big guy who came too. He sat in the back of the room. The mouse proceeded to lecture the little mice about cats. The cat has nine lives. The cat has fur and great claws. The cat purrs and meows. The cat has peculiar looking eyes. He went on for many minutes. Suddenly the guy in the back of the room stood and showed his teeth and started chasing all of the little mice. The young mouse ran outside the room and barely escaped being clawed. Several days later the little mouse met a group of old mice and he asked them a question. "Why didn't you attend my class on cats the other day?"

He asked. One old mouse responded, "You know what the book says about cats, but you had never seen a cat yourself. We didn't come to your class, because we have seen cats and we know what cats eat for lunch!"

In a similar sense there are many today that have accumulated immense biblical knowledge about God, but their daily lives suggest that they really don't know him. They know that he is powerful. They know that is all knowing. They know he is everywhere at the same time. They know that he is beyond comprehension. They know all that is written about him, but they don't know him for themselves.

As Christians we understand that we must study about God. We must read his word and we must commit to memory as much as we can about His nature. However, just as it is important to know about Him, then it is even more important for each individual to have a personal relationship with God.

Exposition

The Hebrews were encouraged to learn both the words of God and to know God themselves.

Since Moses gave the Hebrews the 10 commandments written on tablets of stone there has been an intense thirst among believers to know the words of God. As Moses taught the words of God in the original 10 commandments, he then detailed them in countless other commandments. The people were commanded to commit the words to memory.

Moses commanded every home to teach the words of God to their children and to write them on the door posts of every home. They were commanded to teach them in the morning and to teach them in the evening. They were commanded to stand firm to insist that they were embedded in every mind.

In this way God hoped to put his law in their mind.

Yet, beyond simply putting the commandments in the mind. His ultimate aim was that they would have the love of God in their hearts. While Israel learned the laws of God in their collective mind it took them many years to begin to know the Lord for themselves.

They had to endure the wilderness of Zin!

They had to wear the same shoes and clothing for 40 years!

They had to be fed bread and water in the wilderness!

They had to march around the walls of Jericho!

They had to suffer the defeat of the nation at the hands of Assyrians and Babylonians!

They had to watch their mighty nation carried off into the oblivion of slavery and watch God restore them to some semblance of their past glory, before the began to under the miraculous way in which God works.

The words were in their heads, but the Word was not in the heart.

Thus, the epistle to the Hebrews addressed the covenant of Moses and how it was indelibly imprinted on the minds of believers. However the day is foreseen when

it will no longer need to be taught in classes or constantly given to people in rote memory exercises. The day is coming in which the people themselves will have God's law and love embedded in their hearts.

The day when the law is in the heart rather than written in tablets or recorded in memory is the day in which the true freedom that Christ brings to all will be fully realized.

Emphasizing the words

Today there are millions of believers who study the words of God. They engage themselves in healthy debates, philosophical discussions and religious queries. They ponder the meaning of words and become enthralled in the process.

In these instances, the words themselves become the central point of attention. Study groups, seminars, lectures, sermons, bible classes and other learning experiences are growing by leaps and bounds. As the believers become more fascinated with the words, the church should never lose sight of the importance of the Word himself.

Too many know the words, without knowing the Word.

Too many know the genealogy of God, but they don't know God!

Too many are familiar with smallest details of the attributes of God, without knowing God for themselves.

Institutes, Congresses and Christian Educational projects should continue to teach the words of God's law and the mechanics of worship, but it should make sure that those who study never lose sight of the Word Himself.

Know God for Yourself

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that all the learning in the world is insignificant if we do not have a personal relationship with God.

You might be able to explain that there are 66 books in the bible, 39 in the old and 27 in the new, but you must know the Lord for yourself!

You may able to explain that bible contains books of prophecy, literature, history and doctrine, but you must also know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to the bible has 3,586,489 letters, 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, and 1,189 chapters but you must also know the Lord.

You may know that The longest verse in the bible is Esther 8:9, and the shortest in the English language is John 11:35 "Jesus Wept," but you must also know Lord for yourself!

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, he will be a doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, he will be a lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, he will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, he will feed you with bread on high. That's why the old

warriors cried out “Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know he will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself he will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the song writer says, “You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself!” You got to know Jesus, you don’t need nobody else!”

Every saint should keep telling the world about the words of God, but we should also let the world know that we know Lord ourselves!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how he lived on this earth for 33 long years!

Tell them how he bore an old rugged cross!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary!

But don’t forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 676-Revival

How to get "There" from "Here"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 12, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. Isaiah 42:16; Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." -John 14:6.

Introduction

Have you ever asked directions? Were you able to under stand them clearly? When you followed them, did they get you where you wanted to go? Often those who are new to an area are dependent upon others for direction. Many have stopped people on street corners and asked directions only to hear the response, "I'm new here myself!" Sometimes we are surprised when we learn that some people who have lived in a city many years, don't know the directions to some of the city's best known land marks or civic attractions. With surprise, sometimes we ask, "How could they live in a city and not know this place?" As frustrating as it is to find people who give us dumb looks and raised shoulders when we ask directions, it is equally frustrating when we receive directions but they are so complicated that they are hard to follow. What we ask is a simple question, but too often we get complications rather than a simple answer.

Consider the weary traveler who sought directions to a certain address by stopping a pedestrian on the street. Considering the address, the pedestrian said, "That's on the other side of town." When asked how to get there the pedestrian rattled off an array of alternatives. "When I leave home I take the interstate and then the 5th Street exit." Then he scratched his head. However, when I leave work I can get there by taking the by pass road and come to it straight down the lane." Before the traveler could say anything else he gave yet another alternative. "When I leave my mother's house, I take the freeway. It's a straight shot, just one turn." The traveler interrupted and said "But how do I get there from here?" The pedestrian scratched his head, "From here? I'm sorry, but I don't have the slightest idea!" There are many today who give life directions from their own perspective. The best directions usually come from persons who are familiar with where you are and know where you are trying

to go.

There are many who are trying to find the way to a Godly life. They are reading life's street signs, but have no idea which way to go. Many have decided to simply drive through life, hoping they will stumble upon the Godly life. Some have asked directions from those who have steered them in circles and left them confused. Some have stopped looking altogether.

As Christians, we rejoice that we have found the directions to heaven. Jesus, who has been there and lived here, has shown us the way. With Christ as our guide we know exactly how to get there from here. That's why we follow him and take no chance of getting lost.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's predictions that God would show those who are lost a new way of life as their God.

Isaiah spent the bulk of his life trying to give direction to Judah. Judah on the other hand spent most of its national life taking directions from sources foreign to the true God. As the armies of Babylon approached Judah, there were many that directed its leadership to forge alliances with neighboring nations such as Egypt. It was thought that such alliances with mighty nations would prevent Judah's defeat and subjugation by an invading power. However Judah, like Israel, took directions from other sources. The nation was defeated and the people became the wards of Babylon. God's judgment upon the nation for taking wrong directions is the subject of chapters 1-39.

Chapters 40-66 focus on how God will deliver the people and ultimately show them the way out of their estranged and exiled condition.

In captivity, Isaiah prophesied about the day when God would restore the believers. In the 42nd chapter Isaiah words addressed both Judah's state of affairs and that of believers in the future. So though his words are immediately addressed to the lost house of Judah, struggling to find its way back into the graces of God, they are also addressed to people in future times who are similarly looking for direction.

Verse 16 is a one verse passage that makes a prediction of hope.

Speaking directly to Judah and also to those in future years, God makes three promises to those that truly want directions for restoration:

I WILL BRING THE BLIND BY A WAY THEY KNEW NOT. Judah is described as a blind nation, stumbling along trying to find its way. God promises to show those who will follow him, how to get where they are trying to go, by a way that has been untried or unfamiliar to them. Judah had tried political alliances, military strength, diplomacy and many other ways. Yet God to show them a way "they knew not."

I WILL LEAD THEM IN PATHS THAT THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN. Not only does God promise to show the blind the way to go but he promises to lead them in unfamiliar territory. For Judah, the path they sought was to return to Jerusalem. They sought a restoration of the city. For others the path is to return to close relationship

with God that leads to eternal life.

I WILL MAKE THE DARKNESS LIGHT BEFORE THEM: Captivity in Babylon was darkness. They could not enjoy their homeland. They had hung their harps on the willows and could not even sing Zion's songs in a strange land. Their worship life had disappeared. Their faith became weak. They were burdened. Yet God promises to turn their darkness into light. He promises to bring them into a more illuminating circumstance.

CROOKED PLACES STRAIGHT: The evil act of military exile which stripped the people of their native culture and the economic rape of their homeland was seen as crookedness. The people were given hope that God would straighten out the crooked state of affairs that afflicted them by making the "crooked places straight."

In these four ways God resolved to show his people the way to a better life from their present condition of exile through their return to Jerusalem. Faith in God was the signpost that show the way in Isaiah's time.

However, Jesus is the final signpost for the believers looking for the way. He announced to all that followed him that he is the way. God will do for every person that believes what he promised in Isaiah. He will make a way, lead us in the path, turn darkness to light and straighten out crookedness if we will simply believe on him. No man can find the way to heaven except first he accepts Christ and let him show him how to get there from here!

How To Get There

Today, there are millions who are looking for simple but realistic directions to get to heaven. The way is not complicated. We can get there from whereever we happen to be, if we follow the following for steps:

GO TO THE NEAREST STOP SIGN: The first step in getting to heaven is to simply stop doing wrong. There is no gradual withdrawal or extended withdrawal plan. One must stop immediately. There is no doubt the way to salvation requires repentance. Luke 13:5 puts it this way, " I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Repentance means to stop doing anything that you know to be displeasing to God. It may involve sex or stealing, or lying or self destruction or any act that displeases God. The first step to get there from here is to go to the nearest stop sign and repent.

TURN RIGHT: After we stop participating in sinful activity, we must turn from our evil ways. Listen to Zechariah 1:4 "...Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings..." To turn from evil activity means to have a change of heart and desire. It is not merely refraining from certain activities but retuning the heart in such a way that we have no desire to do the evil deeds in the future. Joel 2:12-13 says, "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.."

GO STRAIGHT: The man or woman that walks the path to heaven walks straight. Crooked practices are abandoned. If it's not right, count me out. If it's not straight it can wait! Jesus encourages every believer to be willing to walk the narrow path through the straight gate, even though the number of travelers are few. Matthew 7:14 "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

The straight path is free from addictions.
The straight path is free from alcoholism.
The straight path is free from drug abuse.
The straight path is free from nicotine controlled lives.
Those who walk the straight path are certain to make it to the kingdom of heaven.

Look For the Cross

Finally, brothers and sisters, to avoid getting lost, those who give good directions usually include landmarks in their directions. Even though we may be given a list of directions that tell us to turn here and exit there, the inclusion of a landmark lets us know that we are traveling in the right direction.

Those who are trying to find their way to heaven should look for the land mark.

This land mark is not a store at the turn of the bend or a large Oak tree at the end of the road.

This land mark is not a certain billboard or flashing light at an intersection.Those who want to make it to heaven should, go to the nearest stop sign, turn right, and walk straight until they see the cross on the hill!

When the weary traveler sees the little cross on the hill, he knows that he is traveling in the right direction!

When a depressed soul, sinks into a sea of depression, he is revived when he sees the little cross on the hill, he tries to hold on little while longer, because God can lift a bowed down head!

I'm reminded of the two little children who rode a school bus to school everyday in the big city. They lived next door to a big church in a crowded neighborhood. The mother worried that one day something might go wrong and they might get lost. She wrote down their address and directions and gave it to each child with the instructions, "If you get lost, show this to some adult." After several weeks, the unthinkable happened. Somehow the children were put off the bus in the wrong neighborhood. Things were worse when they realized that they did not have the slip of paper with their address and directions. As the little boy began to cry the little girl got a sudden burst of inspiration. She grabbed her little brother by the hand and bravely walked several miles through city streets, turning corners with deliberateness. When she finally made it home, her mother was nearly out of her mind. "How did you find your way back?" She asked. The little girl said, "We live next to this big church with that great big cross on the top. I just walked toward the cross and made it home!"

When you are lost in this world, keep your eyes on the cross!

When trouble comes your way, keep your eyes on the cross!

When you don't know which way to go, keep your eyes on the cross!

When you can't tell your left from you right, keep your eyes on the cross!

That's why David declared, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!"

There is power in the cross!

There is salvation in the cross!

There is redemption in the cross!

No wonder the song writer declared: "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away! It was there by faith I received my sight and now I'm happy all the way!"

It was on the cross that, Jesus died for my sins!

It was on the cross that He paid the price of my salvation!

I'm so glad that carried the cross for me!

If you want to know how to get to heaven, you must be willing to follow the trail of the cross!

Follow that trail to a night of prayer in Gethsemene!

Follow that trail to a hill called Calvary!

Follow that trail to a cold and lonely tomb!

But don't stop there, follow that trail for three more days and you find the way to heaven, because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Follow Jesus! Take no chance in getting lost!

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!

No. 677-Anniv.-Church

St. Peter's Rock

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 19, 1997

SCRIPTURE:"And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." John 1:42 "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18;

Introduction

What best describes the measure of your faith? If those who know you were asked to describe you would they describe you as a pebble, a boulder or a rock? Each believer has a measure of faith upon which he or she builds and directs life. Like pebbles that are small and movable, some have faith experiences that have great potential but are easily cast aside or trampled upon. Some are like boulders that are large and nearly unmovable. Most aspire to be like mighty rocks that appear unmoved by the storms of life, standing tall and remaining firm. Very few describe themselves as rocks, yet each believer has that potential. There are many pebbles among us. There are many boulders. However, there are very few, if any, rocks.

What most of us call rocks are actually pebbles. These are the little stones we see along the road, along side railroad tracks, or scattered here and there. Rocks are larger, much larger. England is known for the Rock of Gibralter which sits towering on a mountainside. There is also Remembrance Rock in Illinois, which marks the burial site of poet Carl Sandburg. Most of us have heard of, even if we have not seen, Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts, a mammoth seven-ton rock that stands unmovable in the bay. Depending on one's area of residence, rocks and pebbles have different meanings.

The Christian experience is a pebble to rock relationship. Those who are boulders were once a piece of the rock but somehow found themselves dislodged, separated and removed from the rock. Those who are pebbles were not created pebbles, they too were once a part of the rock, but became separated somewhere along the line. Christianity is a pebble to rock relationship because it reminds each believer of his relationship to the Rock of Ages. While the natural order will not allow a pebble to rejoin itself with the rock from which it came, the spiritual beauty of the pebble to rock relationship is that every believer is given the chance to become one again with the

rock that is higher, bigger and more powerful than ourselves.

In nature, pebbles can't become boulders.

In nature, boulders can't become rocks again!

Yet, those who know the Lord are given the promise that we can be one with Christ, who is the rock of our salvation.

As Christians, we rejoice that God has considered our humble estate and has given us a chance to become one again with the rock of ages. There is power in the rock! There is security in the rock! There is salvation in the rock! If we abide in the rock and he abides in us, there is no limit to our capabilities! Thank God for the Rock!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives Simon a different name that indicates the inner qualities he saw.

At the beginning of his ministry, Christ began to assemble his apostles. He saw in each person, characteristics that would be useful to the expansion of the kingdom. After he met Andrew, the excited new disciple ran to his brother Simon and said, "I have found the Messiah!" When Jesus met Simon, he immediately discerned his spirit, character and persuasion. He saw what those around him could not see. Without debate or discussion, Jesus first words to Simon had the impact of announcing the state of Simon's inner self. At his first meeting with Simon Jesus called him Cephas. After ministering with him for a while Jesus gave him yet another name. Each reflected the progressive growth of the man known as Simon.

CEPHAS: When Jesus told Simon he would be called Cephas, He demonstrated how he looks at a man or a woman. The name Cephas means literally a hollow or empty stone. Naming Simon Cephas suggested that he had a hard exterior but was hollow and empty on the inside. Simon, was known for his often volatile temperament. He was strong willed, but cowardly. He was bold but yet fragile in his confidence. Outwardly he was the picture of strength, but inwardly he was weak.

When Jesus decided to rename Simon, it demonstrated how Jesus looks at men. He does not only see what a man is, he sees what a man can become. He sees not only the actualities in a man; he also sees the possibilities. Jesus looked at Peter and saw in him not only a Galilean fisherman but one who had it in him to become a much stronger man than stood before him.

When Simon met Jesus, he had no confession of faith. He had not witnessed any miracles. He had not listened to the great teachings of Christ. He was a strong man who was spiritually empty.

PETER: Matthew relates an instance between Christ and Cephas (Simon) that took place after Cephas had witnessed Christ on almost a daily basis. He had seen him heal countless numbers of sick and lame people. He witnessed a number of miracles and was impressed with what he saw.

At one point, Christ paused in his discourse to ask his disciples how he was being perceived by the general public. Several stood and told of the various ways that Christ

was being received. Some saw him as John the Baptist. Others saw him as the prophet Elijah. However, Christ narrowed the scope of the questioned and asked "Who do you think I am?" It was then that Cephas stood and said "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16).

The statement of affirmation from Cephas was one that came as a result of his relationship with Christ. It was a testimony that was based on what his eyes had seen and what his ears had heard. It was a statement of truth that he believed Christ to be the son of God. Cephas, the man Christ first described as a "hollow rock" had graduated. His witness was stronger. His belief was stronger. His faith was more secure.

Jesus no longer referred to Simon as Cephas. He no longer called him a hollow and shallow rock, but said "Thou art Peter!"

The name Peter is important. In the Greek it is "Petros" or a piece of a rock. This man had graduated from a situation where he did not know Christ and was called Simon, to where he was introduced to him and called "Cephas," and finally to where he knew him for himself and was called "Peter!"

Jesus said it was the kind of belief that Peter displayed that would be substance of the church. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Jesus said upon this "rock" I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! The word He used for "rock" was not accidental. It was "Petra," which implies a great massive rock. While Peter had grown in his relationship with Him, Christ reaffirmed that the church would not be built upon "Petros" or the Little Rock, but it would be built upon "Petra" the massive rock, which is Christ himself.

Peter's progress therefore tracks the relationship that every believer has with Christ, progressing from a point of ignorance to his presence, being introduced to his power and finally knowing him personally. Peter's progress brought him closer to being one with the rock, rather than being a loose pebble! Peter's rock was Christ.

What Jesus sees!

Today, there are many people who share the progressive experience of Simon. Like Simon, we are growing in the faith as we strive to know God better.

SIMONS: The Simons are those who do not know the Lord at all. They have been busy living their own lives and have had little time to know God for themselves. Generally, the Simons are not evil or deviant. For the most part the Simons of the world are those who are of good character, hard working and law abiding. They simply do not know God.

Just as Andrew took it upon himself to bring his brother Simon to Christ, those in the faith must work diligently to seek the salvation of family members. Millions of families have brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews and even mothers and fathers that are lost. Though they are successful and safe those who know Christ must feel compelled to introduce them like Andrew and say "I have found the Messiah!"

HOLLOW ROCKS: There are others that are living the Cephas experience.

They are firm and strong in secular pursuits but they are hollow on the inside.

The beauty of the Christian experience is that God knows the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 puts it this way, "...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

As Jesus saw Peter and named him Cephas, he could do the same for many today. There is some Cephas in most of us. This is especially true when we are not living to our fullest potential.

It is obvious when we are not using the gifts we have been given. It is noticeable when the light of spirituality begins to burn dimly.

Cephas came to Jesus spiritually empty, but willing to follow him. He was not a giant in the faith. He was not a great thinker, intellect or philosopher. He was a simple man who wanted to do what was right. He had the potential to become a stone, but was a hollow rock.

Today, there are many who stand at the threshold of accepting Christ as their savior. They are hollow and empty. To these Jesus cries out, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) Those who come to him in a hollow state, arise with the testimony of the song writer who wrote, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and He has made me glad!"

LITTLE ROCKS: There are still others who came to know the Lord in a personal way. They came to him empty but their lives has have blessed with a wealth of experience. They have studied the Word and have tried God for themselves. Like Peter, they ignore the criticisms and sneers of others. Their conclusion is that Jesus is the Son of God. He is their savior. They are not the rock, but they are little rocks, hewn out of the Rock of ages!

Every child of God is willing to tell someone who does not know him, "you better get a piece of the rock!"

The saved Saint does not worry about the difficulties that life brings because he has "a piece of the rock!"

Peter's Rock!

Finally brothers and sisters we must focus our attention, not on Peter but on Peter's Rock!

While some have maintained that the church was built around and upon Peter, Christ himself has made it plain that the church is not built upon Peter but upon Peter's Rock.

Who is Peter's Rock? David, in Psalm 89:26 said, "...Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

Who is Peter's Rock? He is different things to different people.

To the artist He is the One Altogether Lovely.

To the architect He is the Chief Cornerstone.

To the astronomer He is the Sun of Righteousness.

To the baker He is the Living Bread.
To the banker He is the Hidden Treasure.
To the biologist He is the essence of Life.
To the carpenter He is the Sure Foundation.
To the doctor He is the Great Physician.
To the educator He is the Great Teacher.
To the farmer He is the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.
To the florist He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.
To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.
To the horticulturist He is the True Vine.
To the judge He is the Righteous Judge.
To the juror He is the True Witness.
To the jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.
To the editor He is the Good Tidings of Great Joy.
To the oculist He is the Light of the Eyes.
To the philosopher He is the Wisdom of God.
To the Printer He is the True Type.
To the servant He is the Good Master.
To the student He is the Incarnate Truth.
To the toiler He is the Giver of Rest.
To the Sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.
To the Christian, He is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer and Lord!

No wonder the Song writer wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus, blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean of Jesus' name.

On Christ, who carried a cross for me up Calvary's hill!
On Christ, who let them drive nails in His hand!
On Christ, who died on Golgatha's hill!
On Christ, who arose after three days and nights!
On Christ, the solid rock I stand!
All other ground!
All other ground!
All other ground is sinking sand!

No. 678-Revival

What's That Behind Your Back?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2, 1997

SCRIPTURE: O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. Isaiah 38:16-17

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when people talked about you behind your back? What do you suppose they said? Was it good? Was it bad? Without respect of person, everyone that is living and some that are dead, is discussed behind by others, often outside of hearing range. There are times when others applaud you in discussion with others. They boldly defend you, praise you and edify you without your knowledge. The words the say to others in your defense have probably never been said to your face. There are others who ridicule you and trample your name and reputation behind your back. Instead of defending you, praising you and edifying you, they do just the opposite. Usually what they say has never been said to your face and you are surprised to learn what they really think.

While there are many that plan evil behind your back, there are times when those who love you, plan things for you without your knowledge and hold it out of sight. That's the nature of the surprise birthday party, secret gifts kept hidden until special moments and other surprises, planned behind your back, meant for your good. Consider the former slave who tried all of his life to buy his homestead but could never clear enough at the end of planting to save the $200 he needed to buy his land. The owner, impressed with the old man's honest spirit decided to give the land to him as a gift, but the old former slave would not accept charity. Knowing the old man to be very religious, the owner said "Why don't you go down to the praying tree and tell the Lord you need $200." The old man agreed to pray about it. In the meantime the owner scrapped up all of the cash he had on hand which was $199.90 and put it in a bag. He scurried down to the praying tree, climbed up high and waited for the old man to come. When the old man prayed and asked God for $200.00 he saw the owner in the tree. He said nothing he just kept praying. Immediately a sack fell right out of

the tree. Without blinking he took it home and counted it but realized it was a dime short. He went to the owner to buy the land and said "I prayed to the Lord and he surprised me with $199.90. If he can surprise me with that I'm certain that being the kind man that you are, you can surprise me with a dime!"

God has great blessings in store for those who believe in him. Sometimes we are so blessed that we have to stop and asked, what have we done to deserve such blessings.

Just as God holds rich blessings for us behind his back and surprises us with showers of blessings, he also takes and mistakes, sins and shortcomings once forgiven and hides them behind his back never again to be seen.

As Christians, we give thanks to God for the little surprises we get every day. We also thank him for the gift of salvation, removing our sins forever and hiding them behind his back.

Exposition

This text focuses on King Hezekiah as he gives praises to God for both saving his life and saving his soul.

There are three chapters in the book of Isaiah which generally focuses on King Hezekiah. Hezekiah, whose name means, "whom Jehovah has strengthened" was the son of Ahaz whom he succeeded on the throne of the kingdom of Judah. He reigned twenty-nine years. He is generally referred to as a good king who followed the example of his great-grandfather Uzziah. He was known for abolishing idolatry and beginning a great reformation in the kingdom of Judah.

The full narrative of his activities as king is noted in 2 Kings Chapter 18. Isaiah makes references to it between chapters 30-39. As he fought the enemies of Judah as King he also fought against personal sickness. In both instances God miraculous snatched him away from the jaws of defeat and death.

His secular struggle was against the King of Assyria, Sennacherib. Sennacherib dealt treacherously with Hezekiah. He invaded his kingdom two times within two years. This invasion issued in the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Hezekiah prayed to God, and in a surprise move, "that night the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men." Sennacherib fled with the shattered remnant of his forces to Nineveh. Hezekiah had not expected such an overwhelming victory. He had prayed but never expected so great a result.

His physical struggle was against a sickness. Scholars have studied verse 21 and others and have concluded that he was either afflicted with a serious ulcer or boils, to the point of death. Hezekiah prayed to God, after receiving word from the prophet Isaiah that God had numbered his days. (38:1). Isaiah's words were a sure indication of approaching death, yet Hezekiah "turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord." (38:2). He appealed to the Lord to consider his witness before God. In a miraculous turn around God decided to add 15 more years to his life.

Hezekiah praised God for his surprise blessing in dealing with Assyria. He

praised him for his surprise blessing by healing him from his sickness. In verse 17, he praised God for taking his sins and shortcomings and hiding them behind his back. He praised God for salvation.

Hezekiah was such a good man however, that he trusted men like he trusted God. The 39th chapter, in what is called Hezekiah's folly, details how he invited his enemies into his treasury and showed them all of his wealth, exposed all of his defenses to them and trusted them with secret information. Behind his back, his enemies plotted to take away his kingdom and his riches.

The idea that God forgets past sin and hides them behind his back is familiar in scripture. Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." Psalm 85:2 says, "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." Jeremiah 31:34 say, " .... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Hezekiah offered praise to God for surprising him with great blessings that were hidden from him behind God's back. The truth that God often works in mysterious ways to reward and defend the faithful is supported in the word of God. It is the substance of David's conclusion in Psalm 37:25 "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Psalm 31:19 says "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men" Paul writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:9 said, "..eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Thus Hezekiah praised God for what was behind his back, both blessings and forgiven sins and shortcomings.

How The World Works Behind Your Back!

Today there are millions of people who are troubled by what is said about them or planned for them behind their backs. Many are so troubled that they cannot sleep at night and have become nervous wrecks in this respect. Even Jesus wanted to know what people were saying about him behind his back. He asked his disciples to tell him what people were saying. He found that there was an assortment of things being said by others, very little of which was what he intended. Only Peter stood to say that he believed Christ to be the actual Son of God.

The fear that one day precious secrets or intimacies may become the subject of attacks lead our forefathers to conclude that it is best to "keep friends at an arms length, to give yourself falling out room!" Among the attacks that the righteous endure are those that come from those who:

THROW A ROCK AND HIDE THEIR HAND: There are many that smile in your face, knowing full well that they have worked to speak against you or to destroy your efforts. Such was the case with Judas. He walked with Jesus daily and on the very

night of his arrest had eaten from the same plate. Yet he had betrayed him to the authorities.

SPEAK AND PLAN EVIL BEHIND YOUR BACK: If a tape recording could be played to persons that you have discussed this week, would they reveal things being said that you would never say to that persons face? Would you be ashamed to have them hear what you actually said?

In every conversation or encounter there is a third party on the line. There is an unseen party listening and recording our actions. Psalm 69:5 "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." Psalm 139:2 says "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." Psalm 139:4 says "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

How God Works Behind Your Back

While enemies of believers work to hurt or destroy them behind their backs, God does just the opposite.

GOD IS BURY LEADING US AROUND PITFALLS: Even as pits are being dug, some by own hands, in which to bury a believer, God is busy, often without our knowledge, working to lead us around them. When the prophet Balaam had been convinced to prophesy against Israel for personal profit the Lord put an angel in his path to stop him but he could not see it. Numbers 22:28 records how God caused a mule to talk to him to show him the error of his ways. The angel in the road was put there without his knowledge to save him from self destructing.

GOD IS BUSY ANSWERING PRAYERS: Behind our backs God is busy answering prayers, without our knowledge. We often spend time worrying about one problem or another even after we have turned it over to God. Behind the scenes however, God is busy making it happen. Isaiah 65:24 says, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." The prayer that we pray is being answered before we finish speaking the words.

He Hides Our Sins Behind His Back

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that while God works behind our back to guide us around pitfalls and to answer our prayers, he also holds our forgiven sins behind his back!

When men hold our sins behind their back, we live with the constant fear that one day they will bring them up again. But when God holds our sins behind his back, they will never been or heard of again.

What's that behind your back Lord?

--The burdens you bore, I'm replacing it with blessing!

--The Shame you endured, I'm replacing it with sunshine!

--The Guilt that trouble you, I'm replacing it with the glory of the Lord!

--The sorrow that was in your heart, I'm replacing it with the Joy of the Lord!

When God takes your sins and puts them behind his back, he takes your

--TORMENTS and turns them into triumphs; FOOLISHNESS and turns it into wisdom

--HEARTACHES and turns them into Hallelujahs; LOSSES and turns them into victories!

Come here David! What happened when God took your sins and hid them behind your back? David answers, He gave me a clean heart and a renewed spirit!

Come here Woman at the Well! What happened when God took your sins and hid them behind his back?" He told me to go and sin no more. I told everybody "Come see a man!" That told me all I've ever done!

He's able to hold my sins behind his back because "he was wounded for my transgression, and bruised for my iniquities and the chastisement of my peace is upon him!"

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that behind God's back there are blessings that are being kept for me!

I'm glad that behind God's back ways are being prepared for me!

I'm glad that behind God's back forgiven sins are being hidden from judgment!

That's why I have to keep telling the world that there is none other name under the heaven whereby we must be saved, except the name of Jesus!

Jesus, without whom life has not purpose!

Jesus, without whom questions have no answers!

Jesus, without whole problems have no solutions!

Jesus, without whom labor has no reward!

Jesus, without whom darkness has no light

Jesus, without whom sinners have no salvation!

Jesus, who carried the cross to Golgatha's Hill!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But early, Sunday morning he arose from the grave telling the hold world I've got all power in my hands!

I've got all of your sins behind my back..and there is a blessing on the way!

No 679-Revival

Here Comes The Bride

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 9, 1997

SCRIPTURE: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Rev. 21:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever attended a wedding? Weddings are filled with symbols, all of which have importance to believers and little significance to nonbelievers. Those who are believers will immediately identify the entire ceremony as a rehearsal for a greater marriage that is coming between all believers and Christ himself. Those who are non-believers will probably focus on the beauty of the moment rather than its meaning to the Christian life. Gowns, dresses, tuxedos, candles, beautiful music, flowers and romance usually are the focus of non-believers. In addition to the pomp and beauty of the moment, the believer also sees a picture of the union between man and woman as a type of the eventual union between the believer and Christ.

There are three perspectives from which weddings are seen today. Some have visions of the ceremony that is to come. They are planning every detail and dreaming about that day with great excitement. There are others with fond memories of their own wedding day. They remember the excitement, joy and emotion of the moment. Husbands remember seeing their wives walked down that isle as the picture of beauty and happiness. Wives remember seeing their husband, standing tall and strong as the picture of manliness at the end of the long isle. We remember the music. We remember the smiling faces. We see the candles, flowers and camera flashes, just as if it were yesterday. There are others however, who would prefer to forget that day, all together.

A marriage is the union between two people who have come to love each other, even though neither has found complete perfection in the other. That was the case with the young groom who thought it would be best to be completely honest with his new bride, keeping no secrets and allowing her to know just what he thought of their relationship. On their honeymoon, the groom took his bride by the hand and told her that he had to be completely honest with her and share what he really thought.

He begged her to take what he was about to say with an open and objective mind. He sat beside her on the bed, reached into his pocket and retrieved a sheet of paper upon which he had written a long list of items. "Now that we're married, dear, I hope you won't mind if I mention a few defects that I've noticed about you." He began to read the rather lengthy list of things that he found wrong with his new wife. As he read, he occasionally looked up to gage her response, but she only smiled. When he finally completed the list, he paused and waited for a response from her. She only smiled. "You are not angry with me are you? I just thought you should know the defects that I see in you." He said. "Not at all," said the bride while still smiling. "It was those little defects that kept me from getting a better husband, you're the best I could get." Sometimes we see the defect in others, but we forget that we have a few ourselves.

While we find marriage ceremonies to be beautiful and romantic occasions, they are simply preliminaries to the great marriage ceremony between Christ and his Bride. Christ is the groom and the assembly of believers is the bride. That ceremony will be grand. It will unite every believer with the bridegroom for eternity.

As Christians, we look forward to the return of the bridegroom. We await, with great anticipation, the marriage of the bridegroom and his bride. Thus, we strive to keep ourselves spotless and holy waiting for his return. On that great day the hosts of heaven will proclaim "Here comes the bride, All dressed in white!"-Spotless before the Lamb of God!

Exposition

This text focuses on John's vision of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ.

After John is shown the events of the last seven years of time, known as the great tribulation, he is given a final picture of the reward of the saints. As a general rule, the church is not a part of any of the atrocities that are mentioned between chapter 4 and 20 of the Book of Revelation. It will be raptured up with the Lord. After the plagues, battles and judgments listed, John is shown a picture of what will be the glorious reward of the righteous, the heaven and the new earth.

The expectation of a new heaven and a new earth is integral in scripture. Isaiah 65:17-19 says, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create a Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 2 Peter 3:12-13 projected the same hope for New Testament believers, "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat . . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

John was shown the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. The city and its inhabitants are referred to as the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ refers to both a place and a populace. The City is the New Jerusalem. The populace is the large congregation of believers from all times that will

live with Christ under the new "covenant" marriage throughout eternity.

The people that comprise the bride will include:

The Old Testament believers. Those who believed in God and obeyed his will and laws in Old Testament times will be part of the Bride of Christ. Hebrews 11:10 speaking of Abraham's eternal search said, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Verse 16 makes it clear that God plans to include the Old Testament believers in the "Bride of Christ" because it says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Thus, the bride will include all believers from the Old Covenant.

The New Testament believers. Believers under the new covenant have also been promised to be a part of the bride of Christ. John 14:1-3 says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The modern believer expects to be a part of the bride of Christ. It is the reward of a life of faithfulness and sacrifice.

The Tribulation Saints will be there. During the last seven years of time there will be a great shaking of this earth as God prepares for final judgment. When the final warnings go forth, during the period of the great tribulation, 144,000 Jews will respond to the call to revival. Revelation 7:4 "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." In addition to the 144,000 Jews, there will be a large number of converts in the last seven years that will also become a part of the bride of Christ. Revelation 7:9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

Not only does John show the picture of the people but he shows us the place. The New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven and sit squarely on a newly reconstructed earth as its capital city. It will be a huge city that will be 12,000 furlongs or 1,500 miles in every direction, surrounded by walls that extend 1,500 miles high. (Rev. 21:16). The walls will be decorated with beautiful gems (v18-20) and it will have 12 gates, each one a massive pearl. (v21).

The bride of Christ is both a populace and a place. The entire Christian world waits for the coming of the bride.

Getting Ready for the Wedding

Today, in many respects, the church is preparing for the wedding of the lamb. We are looking forward with great anticipation to the day when we will enter into the celebration of eternal life with our Lord. There are certain similarities between the modern marriage ceremony and our preparation for the coming of the bride. The church is preparing every day for its role as a part of the bride of Christ. Our wedding

ceremonies and marriages are small types of what we expect on that great day. While many take the ceremonies lightly, they are nevertheless extremely important because of what they represent. Each new marriage is a symbol of the marriage of Christ to his bride. The various components have striking parallels to our relationship in the coming marriage of the lamb.

Every wedding has participants that often include:

A groom, who is a type of Christ in every marriage. The groom is the unmarried man who pledges love and fidelity to the bride. In the marriage between Christ and his bride, Christ is the groom. His pledge is to love his wife with all of his mind, body and soul and to remain faithful to her.

Groomsmen are types of young Christian men who are learning to live the Christian life and preparing one day to become a part of the wedding ceremony themselves as grooms. As young Christian men they are representatives of young men who are chaste, in self control, well groomed and disciplined and in love with the Lord. The groomsmen are the promise keepers. They are the trusted partners that advance the cause of Christ in their generation.

The Bride. The bride is a type of every Christian. Brides that wear white dresses symbolize the fact that they have been forgiven of sins and made pure by the blood of Christ. In her past, she may have made mistakes or fallen short; but when she goes to meet the bridegroom, her past ways will be abandoned and a totally committed being walks down the isle. A practicing sinner cannot expect to be a part of the bride of Christ, but a repentant and forgiven sinner can! Her head is usually covered representing her acceptance of the leadership of her husband in her family as a symbol of how each believer accepts the leadership of Christ in our spiritual lives. The bride represents the church collective in her most beautiful moment.

Matron of Honor. Is a type of the seasoned saints who have experienced a relationship with Christ. In a marriage ceremony it is usually a married female whose young marriage is happy and spirit filled pointing to the joys that the new bride can expect in her relationship with Christ. Among us are many seasoned saints who have walked the walk and talked the talk. They know the Lord and have enjoyed a lifetime of meaning experiences in his presence.

Bridesmaids. Are types of young Christian females who are learning to live as Christian women before the Lord. Their hope is one day to become a party of wedding ceremony as brides themselves. As young Christian women, they are representatives of young women, chaste, in self control and subject to the leadership of Christ.

Music. The music in a Christian marriage is symbolic as well. The songs give praise to God. They lift him up! They edify his name! They give him glory. At the wedding of the lamb and his wife every song will point to the glory and majesty of God.

Rehearsal. To get ready for the marriage, most have a rehearsal. At the rehearsal each person gets a chance to practice the role they will play in the marriage ceremony. Every party involved comes to the rehearsal. The rehearsal builds anticipation. The rehearsal calms fears because we assured that each knows his part and assignment.

The rehearsal provides a chance for fellowship between wedding party members who may not know each other but have one common link and that is their relationship to the bride or groom. For a believer our daily lives are rehearsals for wedding of the lamb. Each Sunday when we attend worship, we are rehearsing our parts, learning the songs, calming our fears and building our excitement for the wedding ceremony. There are many who say they want to be in the wedding but they are missing all of the rehearsals!

Here Comes The Bride

Finally brothers and sisters, every Child of God looks forward to the day when the rehearsals will be over and the wedding day comes.

Revelation 21:2 says, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

John saw the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, its palatial structure and its people of praise!

Today the church is a part of the bride of Christ. Every believer should be getting ready to go to the marriage ceremony.

Jesus, talking to his disciples, said there were 10 virgins getting ready to go the wedding. Five had their lamps trimmed and filled with oil, but five were not ready. When the bridegroom arrived the shout went out that "the bride groom cometh" but they had no oil. While they were running, trying to find oil for their lamps that door was shut and they missed out on the celebration!

Brothers and sisters, one of these days the music of heaven will play and the shout will go out "Here comes the bride!" We need to make sure we are ready when the procession begins!

The coming of the bride will begin the day when those who are a part of the kingdom of God will enter into the kingdom of heaven!

When the bride comes, there won't be tears in her eye, but there will be joy in her heart, for God shall wipe away all tears!

When the bride comes, there won't be any fear of sickness or death, for the former things shall be passed away!

When the bride comes, the bridegroom will be waiting at the end of the isle, with arms wide open in love and compassion!

When the shout goes up, "Here comes the bride,"the Holy City will come down!

It will sit on 12 foundations, with streets paved with gold!

When the bride comes, every saint will have a new song to sing!

When the bride comes it will be too:

TREMENDOUS to talk about; THRILLING to think about

DELIGHTFUL to dream about; SATISFYING to sing about

PRACTICAL to preach about; GLORIFYING to gloat about

Here comes the bride will be a triumphant shout, but the best is yet to come!

The final symbol in the wedding ceremony is that the bride doesn't get a chance

to actually see the groom until she comes before the altar. When she stands at the door and actually sees her perspective husband, in all of his glory, her heart jumps!

I don't know about you but the best part of the ceremony will be when we, the bride of Christ get to see Jesus, face to face!

I want to see him.. See him face to face!

Telling about my journey, trying to run this race!

Jesus, the bridegroom of the church!

Jesus, the lover of my soul!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose from the dead!

I want to be there!

The bridegroom cometh and here comes the bride!

No. 680-Communion

A Man That Hath Friends

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 16, 1997

SCRIPTURE: Prov 18:24 A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Introduction

How many real friends do you have? Many people have a number of contacts with others that we sometimes characterize as friendships. When is a mere contact a friendship? A contact is a person we know by name and position. We may know very little else, in fact it is possible that we have not even seen a contact. An acquaintance is just one step better. An acquaintance is a person we may have met or been introduced to informally. An acquaintance is generally someone we have seen. We may know a few details about the person but little else. When we are acquainted with the background of a person and are privy to some private data about them, we are said to be well acquainted with them. Those with whom we work in close proximity are said to be our associates as it relates to our employment or profession. Yet it is possible to be an associate and still not be a friend. In deed, friends are far less abundant than associates, co-workers, even husbands or wives. Those who have friends should consider themselves blessed in deed.

At what point does a person become your friend? If they show you a kindness do you call them your friend? If they lend you some money or give you something to eat, is that qualification enough? Friendship is not easy to develop.

What is a friend? For the answer consider the woman who had spent some seventy years as maid and servant to Miss Lucy a wealth Southern belle. Now the mistress had died, and in an effort to comfort this old black maid, a neighbor said, "I'm so sorry to hear of Miss Lucy's death. You must miss her greatly. I know you were dear, dear friends." "Yes'm," said the servant, "I am sorry she died. But we wasn't friends." "Not friends," said the lady, "I know you were. I've seen you laughing and talking together lots of times." "Yes'm, that's so." Came the reply. "We've laughed together, and we've talked together, but we was just "quaintances. You see, you don't become friends until we have shared each other's pain. We never shed no tears. Folks got to cry together before they become friends." Only those who are willing to share our pain, can truly call themselves our friends.

The beauty of the Christian faith is that we serve a God who has shown us in so

many ways that he knows our situation in life and shares our pain. It is this knowledge about us and His willingness to act upon what he knows that makes God a worthy candidate for friendship. He shows himself friendly to us and in return is worthy of our praise and loyalty.

As Christians, we should rejoice to know that Jesus is our friend. We rejoice because he has chosen to befriend us, despite what he knows about us. He has chosen to love us, despite our shortcomings. He has chosen to empathize with us despite our flaws and obvious weaknesses in life. Every day of our lives we rejoice because He proves, over and over again, that he is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Exposition

This text focuses on the wisdom of Solomon as he addresses the importance of being friendly.

There are about nine Hebrew words and phrases which have been translated "friendly or friend." Most of the words have been translated to mean neighbor or friend, associate or lover.

In the biblical context the term friend was used by Jesus to describe the nature of the believer. He is perceived by God more as a friend than as a mere humanoid servant, though he is but a frail creature. Thus, in John 15:15 Jesus says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Before we were called Christians, Jesus called every believer first a friend, then a Christian or a servant.

There is a great truth buried in Proverbs 18:24. It addresses both the secular and the spiritual. It gives an accurate description of what is in the material world and what can be expected beyond what this world can offer.

Three words appear in this verse and all three have been translated friends, friendly and friend respectively. As short and as simple as this verse is there are three great truths associated with its meaning as indicated by the three meanings of the word friend.

REA: The first of the three is "Ray-ah" which refers to associates, companions and compatriots who are referred to in the sense that they are dependent or weaker. Rea has reference to those who are associated with another by virtue of his willingness to share a resource or meet a need whether the need is spiritual or material or to be neighborly in the purest sense. These are drawn to him because he possesses the capacity to fill an emptiness. To the extent that he shares the resource, the greater his attraction. Thus while we see the word "friends" it is most often used as in Psalm 101:5 as a "neighbor" or person who may at one time or another be compelled to call upon him for spiritual or material assistance.

RA'A: The second is "Raw-ah" which refers to the necessity of one to respond to the point that one could possibly injure themselves. "Raw-ah" means literally to

be broken, not cracked, but to be broken into pieces that are beyond repair. It defines being friendly as responding to the needs of others to the point that one is willing to risk being broken, defeated or destroyed themselves to achieve the end. "Raw-ah" goes beyond mere courtesy. It is interpreted as "friendly" in this text, but it is the same word that is translated as being "utterly broken down" in Isaiah 24:19. It borders on the dangerous because those who are truly friendly are those who are willing to even risk their lives for another.

AHAB: The third is "aw-hab" which refers to a person who whose response is not material or secular but Godly in nature. The "aw-hab" is the friend that responds with a Godly type of love that is righteous, personal and inspired by God. While it is interpreted "friend" in this passage, it is the same word that is translated "love" in passages such as Psalm 145:20 "The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy." The person who responds with "ahab" is motivated by a love of God.

With that understanding, the verse takes on a clearer meaning: "A man who has resources, whether spiritual or material must be willing to respond to the needs of others to the point of risking all, if he would be called a friend. Yet there is a higher response, that is the man who responds to others out of a love for God and righteousness, that man will stick closer than a brother."

Thus, this proverb gives a warning against having large numbers of friends, for the requirements of friendship go beyond, just mere acquaintance, but extend to the very life and substance of he who shows himself friendly.

The Requirements of Friendships

Today there are millions of people who characterize at least one person as their friend and at the same time they characterize themselves as a friend to others. What is the nature of a true friend? What should we expect?

Friends share happy times. Acquaintances often grow into friendships when people share the happy moments of each other's lives. A friend of your family wants to be present to share obviously important moments with your family. Weddings, anniversaries, house warmings, and family gatherings that celebrate achievement are best when shared by friends those whom we love. True friends recognize the importance of such moments and make special preparations to share the moments with each other. This sharing of happy times is mutually shared by both. It becomes suspect, when it becomes one sided. Jesus told a parable of a man who invited many to attend a feast, but those who were on his special list wouldn't come, so he opened his doors and invited everyone to share his happy moment, so it is with true friends.

Friends never have hidden agendas. Unlike a contact, who may often feign friendship to achieve a purpose, true friends have no hidden agenda. A contact or acquaintance uses the words and phrases associated with friendship to gain access, often they have another agenda or reason for their association. The voice on the phone asks, "How are you?" That's a phrase obviously associated with a friend. It

is personal and it lowers barriers. A person with another agenda uses the phrase to gain access, but could really care less how you actually feel. What would happen if you responded "I feel miserable?" They would probably respond, "I hope you feel better, but what I call you for was . . . " A friend who asks the question wanted to know because of concern. There is nothing else that follows. Nothing to sell. No request for help. Nothing. There may come a time when a friend may address these needs but a true friend doesn't feel the need to approach another with a hidden agenda. Samson thought Delilah really loved him when she laid him to rest every night on her lap, but she had a hidden agenda. Uriah thought the king was proud of his work as a soldier when he put medals on his chest and put him at the front of the battle, but David had a secret agenda behind all of his words of praise. True friends have no hidden agendas.

Friends share each other's pains. Just as friends share each other's joys, they also share each other's pains. There is correlation between the level of pain shared and depth of friendship. Some of the best friendships we have were forged in moments of adversity, pain or suffering. Entire communities once divided by barriers of racism and class have found new levels of friendship after they have shared the pain of an earthquake, flood, tornado or other disasters. Personal friendships have blossomed when friends shared the pain of death, sickness and divorce. As the life of a friend is turned upside down, a closeness develops as one knows that another who has obviously put his or her life on hold to share the pain of an awful experience with them.

Friends don't support deviant behavior. People expect their friends to endorse their behavior. A man who cheats on his wife, confides in his friend and expects his support. A true friend would remains a friend, but does not endorse the behavior. In fact, the true friend is probably the only person who has enough access to us to really help us get back on the right path. Sometimes the withdrawal of support is the best help that a true friend can give to a person who is traveling a wrong path. In matters of right and wrong and grave ethical concerns, it is the true friend that will be bold enough to differ with us at the point of decision, where it counts.

Friends share resources. Because there is an unusual closeness between them, friends have a tendency to share things. Whether it is a cup of sugar or a blouse, friends share. Friends have been known to loan automobiles to each other. There are even friends who loan credit cards, money and valued possessions. The beauty of friends who share resources is that those who receive them return them with gratitude. We should be extremely careful about resources borrowed from friends, they didn't check a credit report or require an interview. They shared their resources with you out of love, expecting no interest or personal gain. Return that which has been borrowed, especially from a friend.

Friends Share Jesus

Finally brothers and sisters we should consider that Friends are protective of each other. There is a bumper sticker that carries the slogan, "Friends don't let friends,

drive drunk!" That slogan is indicative of the nature of a true friend. He or she is protective of another person, especially when it appears that their friend needs help and may not know it!

Friends don't let friends drive drunk. However, we could go further. Friends don't let friends wallow in fear and failure. Friends don't let friends destroy their dreams. Friends don't let friends doubt their destiny.

Friends don't let friends live without knowing the joy of the Lord.

The latter part of Solomon's proverb gives us the reason why. While we may have friends down here on earth, "there is a friend, that sticketh closer than a brother!"

This friend told his disciples one day, "no greater love hath a man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

I'm reminded of the true story of Joseph Scriven, who had been engaged to a woman whom he truly loved. On the night before his wedding the boat she was in capsized and she drowned. He had lost his best friend and lover and went into a depression. He left his homeland and became a friend to the homeless and helpless. He gave food and clothing to those in need. In some cases he even gave the clothing off his back. He lost a friend, became a friend and found a friend at the same time. One night he sat down and wrote words that have been repeated for centuries, "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!"

To those who have lost a friend, every believer becomes a friend to show you a friend!

I don't know what you think about it, but I've found a friend that can bring you:

--JOY in the midst of sorrows; COURAGE in the midst of conflicts

--PEACE in the midst of persecution; STRENGTH in the midst of weakness

--COMFORT in the midst of calamity; DELIGHT in the midst of discouragement

--HELP in the midst of hardships; HOPE in the midst of heartaches.

--SALVATION in the midst of sin; FORGIVENESS in the midst of repentance

No wonder the song writer declares, "I have found a friend, who is all the world to me! His love is ever true. I love to tell how his love lifted me and what his love can do for you!

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, without whom life has no purpose!

Jesus, who is the answer to every question!

Jesus, Without whom love has no meaning!

Jesus, Without whom problems have no solutions!

Jesus, the lily of the Valley, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but...

Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

Jesus, he is my friend!

No. 681-Youth

What To Do With Stones In Your Shoes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 22, 1997

SCRIPTURE: And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another. Mark 9:43-50

Introduction

What's keeping you from making your goals? Many of us began this year with an ambitious list of resolutions and goals that we set for ourselves. As the year progressed, we found ourselves coming short of those goals. What got in the way? Was it a bad habit? Why not cut your losses and get rid of anything that is holding you back and march on toward the goal you set for yourself.

Most youth, like adults, want to achieve their best in life. For youth the immediate goals are to succeed in school and to be accepted among their peers. However, like adults, youth often find that it is easier to set a goal than it is to achieve a goal. It seems that so many things get in the way. Youth often try hard to do the right things but something or someone that they hold dear often is the very obstacle that stands in the way.

A farmer in need of a farmhand posted a notice in the village. Three promising youths responded, and the farmer met with each in turn. He asked the first young man about his background, and concluded with a peculiar question. "Tell me, how long can you work with a stone in your shoe?"

"Half a day," answered the youth. The farmer thanked him and sent him on his way.

The farmer spoke with the second young man, again concluding with, "How long can you work with a stone in your shoe?"

"All day long!" boasted the boy. The farmer sent the second young man on his way.

The farmer met with the third youth. "How long can you work with a stone in your shoe?"

"Not a minute!" exclaimed the youth. "When I get a stone in my shoe, I take it out right away." The farmer hired the third young man on the spot.

If there is some stone in your shoe as you walk life's path-some stone that is impeding your progress-get rid of it and do it now. You may be in a relationship that is tearing you down. You may be in a school situation that you know is destroying you. You may have a situation in your family that you know cannot continue without a tremendous amount of pain. Isn't it time you moved into action? Isn't it time you cut it off or plucked it out?

As Christians we know that the Kingdom of God offers us the promise of eternal life. That is our goal. If our hands are busy doing wrong things or our feet busy walking in ungodly paths or our eyes searching for the forbidden, we should refocus them on better things. Anything that separates us from the love of God should be abandoned, like that stone in shoe! We'll feel better and walk further without that stone to trouble us.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives his disciples a lesson on the importance of self judgment in achieving greatness in the kingdom of God.

The disciples often implicated to Jesus that they desired to be great in the kingdom of God. At times they asked for seats on his right hand or his left. Repeatedly, Jesus told them that service to others is the criterion for judgment in the kingdom of God, all other criterion, while valued in the world, is useless in the kingdom.

In this passage, Jesus uses a child as the object of illustration to make his point clear in response to their inquiry. Three important truths are presented in the passage.

THOSE WHO SERVE OTHERS WILL BE REWARDED: (v40) The mark of true greatness in his kingdom is that someone takes humanity seriously, and longs to see it develop rightly. The slightest ministry to a young believer is rewarded by God. Even a cup of cold water given in the name of Christ will never lose its reward. Every opportunity taken to help someone develop into the fullness of spiritual health, as well as the body, will be rewarded by God. This is especially so, with respect to the young. This is the promise of reward to those who work to promote the kingdom of God with kind deeds and words.

THOSE WHO ADVERSELY INFLUENCE THE YOUNG WARNED: While there is a promise of reward for those who promote the kingdom and build up the young, there is a punishment in store for those who cause any damage or spiritual injury to a young Christian. That damage is more serious than murder or physical injury: "Better for him that a great millstone be hung round his neck and he be cast into the depths of the sea, than to cause one of these little ones who believe in me

to stumble." This is a word of warning to those who mistreat or abuse a child of God.

CHILDREN OF GOD MUST EXERCISE SELF JUDGMENT: The final truth of the passage is directed at children of God themselves. He emphasizes the importance of each believer acting as his own judge and jury regarding the moral issues of life. The mark of one who takes seriously the importance of spiritual growth is that he begins to judge himself critically. In Matthew 7:3-4, Jesus said similar words about the importance of self judgment. There he said, "First remove the beam that is in your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to help another

Jesus said those who involve themselves in activities that are destructive, counter the goals of the kingdom of God. They are wasteful, of no use and will plunge believers into living hell.

The word used here for "hell" is Gehenna. Gehenna ["Ge-hinnom"] was the name of a valley outside Jerusalem. It was a defiled place, and it became the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Fires smoldered there continuously; repulsive and ugly worms ate at the garbage. That becomes the symbol of the eternal waste of life. A person who rejects the good news of Jesus it means his whole life is like that - wasted, a total loss. There is nothing salvageable about it. He may have won the approval of men,. He may have lived very comfortably, but at the end his life is a wipe-out, a total loss, good only to be thrown on the garbage heap for eternity.

Using symbols of the hand, foot and the eye, Jesus urges believers to remove any impurity or irritation that would endanger their Christian life. It would be better to live without the impurity than to live with it and waste a chance for heaven.

Jesus used two other symbols to explain this truth: Salt and fire. Salt is a symbol of purification. It was used to both preserve and purify meats and sacrifices. Fire is often used as a sign of judgment. In the case of hell, it represents the judgment of God. In this passage it represents "self judgment." Self judgment is seen as the vehicle every believer should use to purify himself of any habits, practices or ideas that make his life in danger of the judgment of God. In this way, Jesus said, we can have peace with each other.

Thus greatness is achieved by serving others in the name of God while at the same time constantly judging ourselves and removing anything that prevents us from fully serving God.

Removing Stones

Today there are millions of believers, some of them youth, who are striving to live in the kingdom of God, but there are stones in their shoes. That is, they are walking among the Saints but they are burdened by the irritating, annoying and sometimes painful presence of sin. A person with a stone in his or her shoe may walk, but the walk is uncomfortable. It could even be a limp. It is walk of a person who is trying to live the right life but is being hampered in some way. Retracing Jesus's words gives us direction about dealing with stones in our shoes.

OFFENDING HANDS: The hands refer to our activities or what we actually do.

The fact that Jesus referred to the offending hand, suggests that one hand was trying to do the right thing, but the other was doing something else. This is the case with many who are young and insecure in the faith. Often one hand gives to the poor, feeds the homeless, volunteers to help others, and does a mighty good work, the other hand does just the opposite. The other hand cheats when given the opportunity, steals, lies and destroys every good work that the other has done.

Jesus' response to "cut off the hand," of course refers to eliminating the actual act that is wrong. If you have a dirty mind, a filthy mouth, stop thinking evil thoughts, stop using obscene terms. Deal with the hand, cut it off.

OFFENDING FEET: The feet refers to the paths we walk or our direction in life. Just as with the hands, Jesus suggest that one part of us is trying to go the right direction, but another part urges us to go in another way. This is the case with many who find themselves going to bible study, singing in the choir, attending Sunday School and living the moral life one day. However, the same person also is a regular at the local juke joint, hot spot and one hour motel. How often have we seen the man who is the perfect picture of marital fidelity walking before us, only to see the same man stop at another woman's house before he gets home. Double walks, double paths and double directions are the source of misery and trouble for many who are striving to do right, but can't seem to let go. Cutting off the foot, as Jesus commands, may mean we will have to change where we go and what we spend your time doing, because we may be confronted with temptations too strong for us to handle. Cutting off the foot means changing:The people we deal with, the places we go and the things we do. Jesus said cut them off; otherwise you will waste your life.

OFFENDING EYES: The eyes are the symbols of the inner vision. The eyes show us what we want to be. They show us images of who we are and fuel our fantasies and dreams. There are some who are spiritual schizophrenics. They see themselves as angels of God with halos around their heads with one eye but see themselves as the poster girls for what's wrong with the world in the other. With one eye they see themselves walking the streets of gold. With the other eye they see themselves on the dance floor of a fancy disco in a distant city. With one eye they see themselves in love with God with the other eye they see themselves as the love Goddess of an MTV video. One eye offends the other. One fuels visions and dreams that conflict with the other.

Exercising self judgment, removes the rocks from our shoes. Failing to do so puts us in a circumstance where we limp through the Christian experience, while maintaining a hand that does just the opposite of what God says, feet that walk just opposite of the kingdom, and dreams that imagine everything except things which are Godly.

Removing The Rocks Improves The Walk

Finally brothers and Sisters it must be considered that removing stones from our shoes improves our walk!

Our walk is a heavenly walk that compels us to help somebody as we pass along.

Our walk is a divinely motivated walk that encourages us to keep our eyes focused on the prize!

Our walk is a rewarding walk as we move closer to our eternal reward.

Jacob began a walk with God, but he had a stone in his shoe. One night he wrestled with God, saying "I won't let you go until you bless me!"

David began a walk with God, but he had trouble on the way because a rock named "Bathsheba" was in his shoe. He had to get by himself and talk to God saying, Lord create in me a clean heart!

Jonah began a walk with God, but he found himself in trouble, there was a rock in his shoe called stubbornness. After three days and nights in the belly of a fish, he got rid of the rock and told the Lord where ever you need me, I'll go!

Isaiah began a walk with the Lord, but found himself stumbling on a rock called insecurity. When he got rid of the rock, he cried out "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me!"

Saul began a walk with God, but while walking down the Damascus Road he discovered a rock in his shoe! When he got straight with God he said "I am persuaded, that nothing shall separate me from the Love of God!"

I'm reminded of the Native woman that was brought to the city to live. In her village back home the women strapped their babies to their backs and walked with bare feet from place to place. When danger came these women were known to run and leap like antelopes. In the city however, she had to learn a new way. Her baby wasn't strapped to her back. On her feet there were a pair of tight fitting shoes. One day her child wandered away from her and was walking into the path of an oncoming car. She cried out but the child did not hear. This mother, who had dashed through the bush with the speed of a deer found herself helpless to reach her child. Without thinking, she reached down and took off her city shoes and in her bare feet saved her child in time. Afterwards a reporter asked her to explain her shoeless run. She said, "When I wear shoes, I look good, but the shoe was standing between life and death. Given that choice I'd rather run with bare feet and be out of style, than be in style with a dead child!"

No wonder the old warriors declared: "I believe I'll run on and see what the end's going to be!"

When you walk with Jesus:

-Darkness turns into light; Agony turns into ecstasy

-Defeat becomes a victory; Failure becomes success!

-Closed doors begin to open; Weakness becomes strength!

No wonder the song writer said, "I want Jesus to walk with me. I want Jesus to walk with me!

While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus, who

---carried my cross up Calvary's hill!

---died for all my sins!

---who arose after three days!

I want Jesus, to walk with me!

No. 682-Inspiration

Prepare Ye The Way

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 7, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Luke 3:3-6

Introduction

Has anyone ever prepared you for a shocking or a surprising announcement? How did they do it? There are a few phrases that are traditional that usually indicate that we are about to learn something that may be unsettling. When someone asks, "Are you sitting down?" It usually means that the information will give you such a jolt that it will sit you down. "Hold on to your hat!" usually means the news will come like a strong wind. Still others warn us to "Brace Yourself!" implying that the information will stagger us. It's good to have advance notice to soften the impact of shocking or surprising news, even if the news is good, but especially if it's bad.

How we respond to news depends upon what we hear first. Consider the college co-ed who had not done very well in school. She was a freshman and hadn't really learned the art of self discipline necessary for college which was reflected in her grades. She wondered how she was going to break the news to her father that she had blown her first semester of school. When she called home, she had two pieces of news to tell her dad. "Dad, are you sitting down?" She began. "I just want to tell you that I have decided to drop out of school and marry my unemployed boyfriend. That way he can stay at home a raise our twin babies!" There was a long pause on the other end of the phone. Dad said nothing. He was too shocked to say anything. Then the clever daughter continued. "That was the bad news. The good news is that what I just told you is not true, but I did fail all my courses this semester!" The Dad was relieved to hear the good news. It didn't seem to matter that it was good only in comparison to what could have been.

All year long we have heard the bad news. We've heard shocking stories of death, violence, crime, unemployment and threats of war. As the yuletide season approaches, the world hears the voice of hope crying in the wilderness, "Hold on to

your hat!","Brace yourself!" There is good news! The day of the Lord is approaching and help is on the way! That's the message that the yuletide season brings.

As Christians, we proclaim to the world that there is a reason for hope, despite the difficulty of our times. When others have given up and dropped their heads in dismay we proclaim with great faith that even in the wilderness of our times, "The Lord will make a way" through his Son Jesus Christ!

Exposition

This text focuses on the role of John The Baptist as the advance herald of Jesus Christ.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus were relatively the same age, one being about six months older than the other. They were cousins. John described himself as a forerunner, not the light, but one who bares witness to the light. He preached in the wilderness of Judea and raised the consciousness of the people that righteousness, not allegiance to ceremony and tradition, is what is expected from God. He challenged them to rise above appearances of morality while harboring sinful spirits. As a sign that of their renewed morality, John "Baptized" those who heeded his call in the Jordan river. Thus, he became known as "John the Baptist!"

Despite his popularity John made it clear that he did not perceive himself to be the savior or the liberator that people expected. He constantly pointed to another that was soon to announce his public ministry whose shoes he did not feel worthy to untie. That person was Jesus, who was maturing and waiting for the right moment to begin his ministry.

The ministry of John had also been predicted. The prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) hundreds of years before, had pointed out that the promised deliverer would be announced by the "voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." Isaiah's words came at a time when Israel had endured a terrible captivity. Its moral fibre and national spirit had been broken. Its state, at best, could only be described as barren, unproductive and dry. It was a wilderness. Yet in this wilderness estate, Isaiah in 40:1 urged the people to "Comfort ye!" Despite their wilderness condition there was a reason for the people to be at ease. Therefore the words of hope to Jerusalem, the people of God, were that they had endured the worst of their "warfare." Some of their problems had been caused by their own sins, others by enemies. At any rate their wilderness condition represented the full punishment of God for their transgression, which came "double" at the hand of God.

Not only were there the physical iniquities, the people also faced a spiritual void. Isaiah raised hope that the people would be returned from captivity and in this context also announced that they would be revived by a spiritual renewal as well. The coming of this renewal would be introduced by one who would come forth out of the wilderness, challenging the people to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

John announced to the world that the day of the Lord had arrived. He prepared the world for the great news!

In effect he told the world, “Hold on to your hat!” There is good news about to come that will “Knock your socks off!”

When Christ finally began his ministry, many were ready for his arrival. It had been announced! They had been prepared! Their hearts were ready for the coming of the Lord!

In The Wilderness

. A wilderness is a wasteland. It is a wild and desolate place that is untamed wherein survival is a struggle. In many ways our present dilemma is one similar to a wilderness experience. Maintaining life is becoming a difficult struggle and hope seems to diminish daily. It is the very opposite of the way God intended. In Eden, God created an atmosphere for mankind to exist in peace and love. There was an abundance of those things which were needed as well as those things which appealed to our senses and pleasures. Eden was a paradise .The very essence of that which contributed to the “Eden effect” is what is absent from today’s experience. Instead of the safe, peaceful life that existed in Eden we are presently experiencing the “Wilderness Effect.”

The prospect of violence surrounds us. On a national level our troops stand poised to attack and destroy thousands in the middle East. Battleships patrol the Eastern waters like sharks waiting to attack as a war of words escalates and then de-escalates. On the national scene violence intrudes into our living rooms as we watch with horror the accounts of children armed with weapons killing their friends in school room shoot outs or disgruntled workers taking the lives of co-workers. Too many local communities now have their own headlines that bark similar tragedies. Metal detectors in the court rooms, air ports and even in some schools are signs of the times. The increase in violence is a contributor to the “Wilderness Effect.”

Cynicism, race hatred, crime and disrespect for the things of God are growing at incredible rates. The fastest growing business in America seems to be jails and detention centers. The number of homeless among us seems to increase faster than we can move them from the streets. The family is becoming weaker, jobs are getting scarce and those things which once gave us optimism about the future are in short supply. The decline in the social order is a contributor to the “Wilderness Effect.”

In frustration even some of the faithful have resorted to offbeat religious practices that border on fanaticism and the mystical as they attempt to reassure themselves that there is hope. In frustration, the faithful begin to doubt and begin to search for what has to be a missing element or a higher power. Some have resorted to bottles of oil, special cloths and special utterances as they look for signs and wonders to confirm that they are on the right path. The confusion and frustration of the faithful is a contributor to the “Wilderness Effect.”

Yet in the wilderness, there is a voice that brings a renewed hope!

In this wilderness that we call our life experience, the voice of the living God still rings out! It speaks to our fears! It speaks to our frustration! It speaks to our waning

faith!

The song writer must have had our wilderness experience in mind when he wrote, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down, Lay down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!

Alone in this wilderness another song writer concluded, "I was alone and idle. I was a sinner too. I heard a voice of from heaven saying there is work to do. I took the master's hand and I joined the Christian band. And I'm on the battle field for my Lord!"

Prepare Ye The Way

Just as John preach in the Wilderness of Judea, saying "Prepare Ye The Way" the body of Christ today must assume the same role and declare to the world that we live in a wilderness but "Prepare Ye the Way!"

Times are difficult, but prepare ye the way!

Trouble is all around us, but prepare ye the way!

To "pare" is to do something and take an action. To pre-pare refers to the actions taken that cause, speed up, contribute to or anticipate a greater action.

I hear John declaring, "prepare ye the way!"

Prepare for what, John? We are in a wilderness down here!

Prepare for what, John? We are swallowed up by deep valleys! Our burdens and frustrations are heavy. They have sunk us into a valley that is deeper than we have imagined! Every time we try to climb up it seems like we are falling back down! In the midst of these times there is a voice from heaven that says, "Prepare" for there is good news on the way, "every valley shall be exalted!"

Prepare for what, John? We are surrounded by high mountains! Every time we try to progress mountains get in the way. They make our lives difficult because we are always struggling to climb. But there is a voice from heaven, saying "Prepare! For there is good news on the way, "every mountain shall be made low!"

Prepare for what, John? We are consumed by corruption and crookedness! Someone is always trying to cheat us! Someone is always trying to deceive us! We don't know who to trust! But there is a voice from heaven, say "Prepare!" for there is good news on the way, "the crooked places will be made straight!"

Prepare for what, John? Times are difficult and conditions are rough! It's hard to make a living these days! We don't know from one day to the next whether we'll have a job or not. Money is scarce and opportunities are few! But I heard a voice from heaven say, "Prepare" for there is good news on the way, "Rough places shall be made plain!"

As I close, I'm reminded of the widow woman who struggled to raise eight children all by herself. She worked hard to make ends meet and keep food on the table, but one day she lost her job and times became tough. When the last of her food supply was gone and she was down to nothing but salt and pepper she heard a voice that said, "Get the kitchen ready." The mother awakened all of her children and they busied

themselves setting the table in the middle of the night. Plates were set. Silverware was properly placed. Water glasses and empty platters were placed on the table. A large pot was put on the stove, salted and put on to boil. The bread pan was greased and the oven was warmed. One of the children asked their mother, "Mother, why are we doing all this and we don't have anything to cook!" The mother only answered, "God said get the kitchen ready!" As the hours passed the children began to cry in hunger. About 12 noon there was a knock on the door as neighbors from up and down the street came with arms filled with food and supplies. The mother took her eight children and held them close and said "Let this be a lesson to you. If God says get the kitchen ready, you better grease the pan, put water in pot and put your plate on the table...because he's able!" He's able to set the table!

In the wilderness of these times there is a voice from heaven, saying "Prepare!" for help is on the way!

Are you overwhelmed by the valleys? Prepare for your valleys to be exalted!

Are you struggling with a mountain? Prepare for your mountain to be made low!

Are you struggling with crookedness being plotted against you. Prepare for crooked things to be made straight!

Are you vainly trying to handle the rough side of life? Prepare for the rough places to be made plain!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come let earth receive her king! Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing!"

A long time ago God considered the wilderness estate of the world. Jesus volunteered to come down and show struggling mankind the way.

Can't you hear God saying, "If you go, I have three things prepared for you. I've got a body prepared for you and crib down in Bethlehem!"

But after you've been around for a while I want you to know that I also have a cross prepared for you, for there can be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood!

Don't worry about the cross, because the third thing I have prepared for you is an empty tomb!

They will talk about you! They will spit upon you! They will nail you to an old rugged cross. They will bury you in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning I'll wake you up with all power in your hands!

Church don't lose hope in this wilderness, for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

I don't know about you but I'm going to put water in the pot, grease the pan and set the table, for God is able!

God is Able!

God is Able!

No. 683-Christmas

He's Making A List And Checking It Twice

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 14, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Rev. 3:5-6; And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Rev. 21:27

Introduction

Have you made your Christmas list yet? What's on it? At this time of the year many are busy making a Christmas list. Some have only one list that they are making. It is their "want list." Depending on the person, the "want" list could be as simple as a pair of socks or as elaborate as a new car or house. Often we humorously say that a child's Christmas list is generally filled with "I wants" but the same can be said of adults as well. The old saying is still true, "The only difference between men and boys is the size of their toys." A child's wish may be "Play Station" but a man's wish may be for a 233-megahertz 2.1-gigabyte CPU computer with a 21-inch screen and 56K modem. A toy is a toy. A girl may want new clothes for her Barbie Doll, and a woman may want a complete new wardrobe for her closet. Both may often be unnecessary toys.

While there is a want list, there is also a give list. This is the list in which we try to reach out to others with an expression of love. Your give list includes people who have become special in your life for a variety of reasons. It also includes those who stand in the need of assistance. The give list is not a discard list. It is not a chance to dump our "want-nots" on someone else, but a time for us to show real empathy with those who are less fortunate.

In addition to our give list there should also be a "Praise and thank you list." This is our list of experiences for which we are eternally grateful. Our praise and thank-you list is one that is addressed to God. It is not seasonal. It is one that we focus on every day.

There is a list that usually circulates at Christmas time. The lists shows 10 commandments for every Christian at Christmas time. Here is the list: 1)Thou shalt

does not leave “Christ” out of Christmas, making it “Xmas.” To some, “X” is unknown. 2) Thou shalt prepare thy soul for Christmas. Spend not so much on gifts that thy soul is forgotten. 3)Thou shalt not let Santa Claus replace Christ, thus robbing the day of its spiritual reality. 4) Thou shalt not burden the shop girl, the mailman, and the merchant with complaints and demands. 5) Thou shalt give unselfishly with thy gift. This will increase its value a hundred fold, and he who receiveth it shall treasure it forever.
6) Thou shalt not value gifts received by their cost. Even the least expensive may signify love, and that is more priceless than silver and gold. 7)Thou shalt not neglect the needy. Share thy blessings with many who will go hungry and cold unless thou are generous. 8)Thou shalt not neglect thy church. Its services highlight the true meaning of the season. 9)Thou shalt be as a little child. Not until thou has become in spirit as a little one art thou ready to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. 10) Thou shalt give thy heart to Christ. Let Him be at the top of thy Christmas list.

As Christians, we are aware that while we are making a list, God himself is making a list and he is checking it twice. God’s list is checked daily. He checks on the faithful, hears and answers our prayers, and responds to our needs. One day, when this system of life has ended, he will check his list again. That list will be the one that includes the name of every saint that will share eternity with him.

Exposition

This text focuses on God revealing through John that he maintains two lists. One of our daily experiences and another of those who have been forgiven for their failures.

John is significant in biblical contexts because he is used by God to transmit many important truths to believers. He is the instrument God uses to write one Gospel account, three epistles and the revelation of things to come.

In the Revelation, John addresses three whole chapters to seven of the churches in Asia Minor, 17 chapters to the events of the last seven years, and the last two show the reward of the righteous.

In addressing the churches of Asia Minor it became abundantly clear that God was keeping track of their works. Repeatedly he addressed each of the churches with the phrase, “I know thy works.” He made it clear that he was watching their actions and would reward their acts of faith and punish their indiscretions and sinful acts.

Constant reference is made to the “Book of Life.” This Book of Life is the book that contains the names of every believer that has been saved by the Grace of God. Those whose names appear in this book are those who have confessed Christ as their personal savior, thus blotting out their past sins. In Philippians 4:3, Paul referred to those who are fellow laborers in the kingdom as those whose names are in the book of life. In Revelation 17:8, those who are not among the believers who have not confessed by the time of the last days are excluded from the “Book of Life.”

The idea that God maintains a list of the faithful is thus supported in scripture.

These are the ones who will enjoy eternity with him and reign in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Just as God maintains a "Book of Life" that focuses on the faithful, there is reason to believe that there are other books that contain separate lists of those that have been "naughty." The word only points to one book and therefore one list, that is the Book of Life, but John 20:12 says "...and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." The unfaithful will find that their names will be removed from the Book of Life. Their unrepentant, ungodly existence will be recorded in other books.

This truth is best illustrated as John depicts the details of the resurrection of the unrighteous. The dead, both great and small will stand before the judgment bar of God. The books that record the temporal deeds of mankind will be opened. In addition, the Book of Life, recording the deeds of the saved, will also be opened. Since all have sinned and fallen short of the standards of God, every person's name will be recorded in the book that shows our deeds. This book will record all of our flaws and shortcomings. The second book, is a record of both the Salvation and good works of each believer.

The believer's reward is to enter into eternal life as a part of the Bride of Christ. His name being recorded among the believers, saved by Grace and glorified by God. Thus, as John describes the beauties of heaven and the grand and glorious state of that moment in notes in Revelation 21:7 that those who would defile or corrupt will not be a part of the eternal experience only those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

There are two lists being kept. One is the list of our deeds. They are being written every second of our lives. The other is the Book of Grace. This is the list of those whose names are on the "naughty" list but will be allowed to enjoy eternity anyway, thanks to the Grace of God.

Three Lists

In addition to our "want" list, every believer should have at least three other lists that should be considered very important.

GIVE LIST. Every believer has an obligation to consider ways in which he or she may become a blessing to others. The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of giving. It is the spirit of sharing resources no matter how meager they may appear at the moment. Neighbors, friends, relatives and even those who are unknown to us should be included on this list. Your gift may be a donation of your time to sit with an infirmed person or to ring the bell for the Salvation Army. You may be among those called upon to prepare food for the homeless or to comfort a lonely heart.

The underlying idea behind Christmas is to point out in a graphic way how god gave the world his son to bring life. We give to others to bring hope and joy as well.

Our "give list" should not be a short list. When we run out of money, our "give

list" should include time. When we run out of time, we should share our talents. At Christmas time and every time we should be willing to give until we can feel the joy overflowing in our own spirits.

FORGIVE LISTS: If Christmas is a time of giving, it is also a time of forgiving. It is the time when we consider that god "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." that means that from the coming of Christ to the present, heaven has been preparing a list of people that have been forgiving.

As believers we should start our "forgive list" this Christmas. Put the person's name on the top of the list that has caused you the most difficulty. It will be literally impossible for us to see Jesus and enjoy his forgiveness if our "forgive list" is empty. The person who caused you the most pain this year, can you put his or her name on the list? Will that person stand in the way of your own salvation? Remember, our daily prayer is "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In essence, we say, "Lord, don't forgive us, if we can't forgive them."

Make a List And Check it twice

Finally, we must consider that during this season of the year there is a popular song that speaks of St. Nicholas. One of the verses of this popular song says, "He's making a list and he's checking it twice, he's gonna find out whose naughty or nice!" But when we run that same song through the theological filter what we as believers hear is:

"You better watch out. You better not put. You better not cry, I'm telling you why, Jesus Christ is coming to town. He know when you are sleeping. He know when you're awake. He knows when you you've been bad or good so for goodness sake be good!" he's making a list and he's checking it twice, he already knows whose been naughty or nice, Jesus Christ is coming to town!"

He's been making a list for a long time!

He told Moses in the wilderness, you better make a list of all able bodied men for there are rough days ahead! Make the list and check it twice!

He told Joshua after crossing the Jordan, you better make a list of all those who are on the Lord's side. Joshua responded, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

He told Nehemiah, when you return to Jerusalem, make a list of those who have a mind to work. Include all of the builders, craftsmen and every person who has a mind to work, for there is work to be done!

He's making alist of every word and deed! He's making that list and checking it twice!

God has a list, but every believer should have another list that we have not talked about!

I'm not talking about our want list, that addressed the desires of our heart!

I'm not talking about our give list, that details how we intend to share with others!

I'm not talking about our forgive list, that shows how we intend to forgive the offenses of others!

Every believer should have a "Thank you List!" that tells the things for which they should give God praise!

Consider the little girl who sat on the back row of her class. The teacher gave an assignment for each to write a list on a sheet of paper that contained the reasons why they are thankful. After a few minutes the little girl raised her hand with a puzzling look on her face, but the teacher told her not ask questions but just to write. One by one, the students completed their sheets, but the little girl remained on the back seat. When the teacher inquired why she sat alone the girl responded, "I tried to ask a questions, but you told me to wait. I have filled out this one sheet of paper, I just want to know if it would be all right if I used two or three more sheets!

Everybody should have a thank you list!

If you can't find a reason for joy this Christmas, then check your list and check it twice!

If you woke up this morning with a sound mind and body, you should say, "Thank you Lord!"

If there was food on your table and clothes on your back, you should say, "Thank you Lord!"

Thank you Lord, for you've sure been good to me!

He came down to save us, so we should send the praises up to glorify him!

Thank you God, for sending down your Son!

Thank you Lord, for shedding your blood!

Thank you Lord, for your saving Grace!

Every time I check my list, I have to say one more time!

Thank you!

Thank you!

You've been so good to me!

No. 684-Communion

Mary Had A Little Lamb

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 21, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.;John 1:14 "on the morrow John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, 'Lo, the Lamb of God, who is taking away the sin of the world; John1:29

Introduction

Have you heard the children's story, "Mary Had a Little Lamb?" Most people have heard the popular nursery rhyme included in the Mother Goose collection of children's nursery rhymes, riddles and stories. It ranks along side the others that we have heard including, Baa Baa Black Sheep Have You any Wool? Hey Diddle Diddle, Hickory Dickory Dock, Humpty Dumpty and Jack and Jill. Obviously, we are fascinated with nursery rhymes, because they plunge us into the world of the imaginary and make believe.

Mary had a little lamb is one of the most popular four-lines of verse in the English language. It was written in 1830 by Sarah Hale in Boston Massachusetts. While Sarah Hale gets credit for writing the famous children's poem it was not without dispute. A woman named Mary Sawyer appeared about the same time, with the unusual practice of bringing her pet lamb to the Old Red stone school house in Massachusetts. The line of the poem that said "he followed her to school one day" seemed to fit her reputation. She convinced the late Henry Ford to erect a memorial plaque in her honor. Even as she lay claim to be the original "Mary" of the poem, several other Marys soon materialized and made similar claims. It seems that in those days there were many who were competing to be the Mary of the poem, "who had a little lamb."

The cute little poem takes on different meanings when viewed from a theological perspective. The emphasis shifts from a school house to a manger. It switches from a young girl and her pet to a young woman and her child. It shifts from nursery rhyme to statement of truth. This is even more apparent when Mary is the wife of Joseph and the lamb, is the Lamb of God. It takes on special meaning when we hear certain lines that say "every where that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go . . . " When seen through theological filters the nursery rhyme takes on an unusual significance.

Since the bible supports the claim, we know it is true. Mary did have a little lamb. There is no debate about it. John in a vision said his hair was white like lamb's wool and his feet were like burnt brass.

Down in Bethlehem, Mary had a little lamb! As angels proclaimed the majesty of the moment, Mary had a little lamb!

As Christians, we are reminded of the immaculate concept. We praise God for the Word. We praise God even more for the Word that became flesh. That is the moment that the world celebrates! The moment wherein God displayed his love for the world so grandly that he gave his only begotten Son, the Lamb of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he spans the entire scope of creation to point the world to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

In the course of just 29 verses John starts at the beginning of creation and moves to the birth of Christ and to his baptism day. John acknowledges that in beginning the Word resided with the Father and the two were one in purpose and being. Yet in 1:14 the Word became flesh and dwelled among men. At the point of becoming "flesh" and dwelling among men, God, for the first time had a "begotten" son with the woman Mary serving as the instrument of his transfer from the divine to the human.

The Word becoming flesh served the same purpose as a lamb in the Jewish worship experience. For the Jews a lamb had tremendous significance. For John to describe Jesus as the Lamb of God could not be dismissed as a casual reference. In their experience, lambs between one and three years old, were offered daily at the morning and evening sacrifices in the temple. Lambs were sacrificed on the Sabbath, The Feast of the New Moon, The feast of the Trumpets, the Feast of the Tabernacle, The Feast of Pentecost, and of the Passover and many other occasions.

Depending on the circumstance, the lamb's sacrifice had various expressions. It was offered for the forgiveness of sins daily. It was offered in celebration of prosperity and rejoicing as was the case at Pentecost and in remembrance of deliverance in the case of the Passover. Whatever the occasion, the lamb was seen as a sacrifice for God.

While the Jews were accustomed to lambs being offered in sacrifice, it would be highly unusual to refer to anyone as a "precious lamb," or "my little lamb" as is common today because it would have signified that the person referred to would ultimately be sacrificed. When John referred to Christ as the "Lamb of God" he identified him as the one person whose presence among humankind was to serve the same role as a lamb in their worship experience. He would be a source of celebration. He would be a source of joy. He would be a source of deliverance. He would be a source of forgiveness, but like the lamb of the worship, he would have to die to accomplish his end.

Describing Jesus as the "Lamb of God" is unique in the whole bible. Only in John

is the phrase "Lamb of God" used. The only person ever called the "Lamb of God" was Jesus. The only person worthy of such a designation was and is Jesus!

Secondly, by describing Jesus as the "Lamb of God" in this manner clarifies that Jesus came to be baptized to identify himself as the fulfillment of the prophecy, not to be forgiven for his sins, because he had none. Jesus himself so pure as to be able to wash away the sins of others, did not come to confess sins, but to give opportunity for John to point Him out saying He is the one so long sought, this is "the Lamb."

He calls Him "Lamb," to remind the Jews of the prophecy of Isaiah, and of the shadow under the law of Moses, so he could lead them from "type" to "reality." The lamb of Moses did not take away the sin of any one; but this lamb took away the sin of all the world; for when it was in danger of perishing, He quickly delivered it from the wrath of God.

Mary, as the earthly instrument used by God to bring Jesus into this life, delivered a baby boy. That boy, because of the divine nature of His mission would save the world from its sins by sacrificing his life on Calvary.

In that she gave birth to the one that would serve as the sacrifice for the sins of many, on that winter's night in Bethlehem, Mary had a little lamb!

Abraham's Lamb

Today, we rejoice in knowing that Christ came to serve as the Lamb for every purpose and to satisfy every spiritual need.

ABRAHAM'S LAMB: Abraham climbed to the top of a mount preparing to sacrifice his son in obedience to the command of God. As he tied his only son on the altar, preparing to sacrifice him, the lad called out, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham's response was that God would provide the lamb for his sacrifice. Moments later, an angel called out to him to stop and showed him a "Ram in the Bush." (Genesis 22:7)

In that same sense, many today have seen how God has provided them with a "Ram in the Bush" experience. When our circumstances appeared to be overwhelming and problems appeared to evade solution, God somehow has provided the "Ram in the Bush." When you called upon all that you knew for help, God fixed it so that a ram in bush appeared. When you did all you knew how to do to fix a problem, God made a way for a ram in the bush to provide. God will make a way out of no way. He will hear and answer prayer. Abraham trusted God, even when he didn't know how God would operate, he trusted and God showed him the "ram."

Abraham had a little lamb. It was called faith in God.

JACOB'S LAMBS: Jacob worked for his uncle Laban 14 years for the right to marry the woman he loved. In the course of that time he was cheated and mistreated. However, God turned his misfortune into good fortune. Through a special arrangement with his uncle Jacob agreed to work for only the speckled and spotted lambs that were born in Laban's herd. In the course of time, to make up for wrongs done to him, God fixed it so that Jacob's spotted and speckled lambs multiplied so much

that he became rich. (Genesis 31:9)

There are many today who have shared this experience. Some can witness to how God took what was meant for their destruction and turned it into their good. Ditches, meant to swallow them up in defeat, served to protect them from harm. Stumbling blocks placed in their way were turned into stepping stones. It is no small thing for God to step into the affairs of his people and turn things around and give them a new meaning. Jacob's lambs were tangible proof that God can take that which is meant for bad and make it good.

Jacob had little lambs. They were called the helping hand of God.

MOSES' LAMB: Moses ordered the children of Israel to prepare to leave Egypt. On the night before their departure they were told to kill a spotless lamb and take its blood and put it over the door posts of their homes. In this way God's death angel would passover and spare their lives. As Israel waited to be set free they sat in their homes behind the safety of the blood stained door posts. It was blood that had been provided by a lamb.

Even in this respect there are those who share the same experience. There are many who have been delivered from a circumstance not by their own power but by the power of God working in their lives. The man addicted to cigarette smoking, was delivered by the power of God. The woman released from a life of prostitution, was not released on her own, but by the power of God. The family crippled by a heavy load of trouble, distrust and bad feeling, were saved not by their own power but by the power of the blood of Christ.

They are keenly aware that alone they are powerless to effectuate any changes or make their conditions improve. However, with God they can make it happen.

Moses had a lamb, it was the lamb called the power of the blood. Maybe that's why the song writer would record, "there's power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb!"

Mary Had A Little Lamb

Finally brothers and sisters, it is clear that Abraham had a lamb, called faith displayed on a mountainside. Jacob had lambs that showed how God had richly blessed him. Moses had a lamb that marked deliverance.

However, the focus of our attention at this point is on the truth that one evening in a lonely corner of a small town called Bethlehem, Mary had a little lamb.

Just exactly who was this lamb? What was his nature? Isaiah tried to show us when he said in, Isa 53:5 " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." He carried it further by saying, in Isa 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

Don't be intimidated when you hear someone say, "Mary had a little lamb" because the truth of the matter is every child of God has lamb, that follows you every

where you go!

If you go to work, the lamb is the there!

If you drive your car! The lamb is there!

If you go to school! The lamb is there!

The Word of God says, in Psalm 139:8-10 “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

John looked over into the revelation of the things to come and saw the host of heaven asking, who is worthy to open the little book and the answer came, “Worthy is the Lamb!”

He is worthy because he came down upon this earth to dwell among men!

He is worthy because he suffered for the sins of men!

He is worthy because he died out on Calvary!

He is worthy because, Early Sunday morning, he arose from his grave!

Worthy is the Lamb!

Worthy is the Lamb!

Worthy!

No. 685-Christmas, Inspiration

Dealing With The After Christmas Blues

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 28, 1997

SCRIPTURE: "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:17-19

Introduction

Now that Christmas is over, do you feel a little let down. After all of the build up and the hype what do you do after Christmas? Now that all the presents have been exchanged and opened and you have given and received. What's next?

The wait for Christmas day seems endless. It seems like the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas are the longest days of the year. They seem to drag endlessly. Most children found it hard to sleep at night pondering the excitement they will feel when they finally get their new Play station, bicycle or Barbie Doll. They had dreams of themselves sitting in front of the television with play stations plugged in neatly. The closer Christmas day came, the more intense was the excitement. Christmas eve seemed to be the longest day in the world. The day dragged on endlessly. It was hard to go to sleep. What happened to the clock? It seemed as though it stopped working. The hands never moved.

Finally on Christmas morning the family awoke but then there were all of those delays. Who wanted to wash their face on a morning like Christmas? Why couldn't we simply put things away later in the day? The packages under the tree were screaming, "open us!" Someone read the Christmas story from the bible. Why couldn't they read the short version. Somebody prayed. It was the longest prayer in the world!

At last it was time to open the presents. Look at the gifts! Why did they use so much ribbon? It's so tough it can't even be torn open. As wrapping paper flew left and right and bright eyes widened even wider, the excitement swelled until every child realized that it was actually Christmas Day.

On Christmas night, nestled in bed beside a new baby doll on one side and a

play station on the other, many a child mused "It's over!" It took so long to get here, now its over so quick.

In another room, safely away from the rest of the family, a mother sat in her favorite chair. She sipped a cup of coffee and reflected on the events of the day. She remembered smiling children, family reunions, the fellowship of friends. As she reflected, she concluded, "It was a mighty good day!"

After such a build up, there may be some at a loss about what they should do after Christmas. Friends are returning to their routines. Family members home for the holidays are gone. The food is all gone. Your house is a wreck. Trash is piled up. Discarded trees line the streets. Decorations are coming down. It is enough to give you the blues, if it wasn't for Jesus.

As Christians, we know exactly what to do after Christmas. We follow the example of the Shepherds and Mary after Christmas day had ended. Mary reflected on the joy of the day. The shepherds told the world about the glory of the Lord! Thinking about God's goodness and telling others how good he truly is, is the best way to deal with the "After Christmas Blues!"

Exposition

This text focuses on two immediate responses to the birth of Christ, one from Mary another from the Shepherds.

There was plenty of amazement at the birth of Christ. There were miraculous events happening in the sky. A large star appeared and pointed the way the place of the Christ Child's birth. Angels announced his birth to shepherds. Truly it was a night of wonder, added to the usual joy and pain of childbirth. When it was all over Mary pondered them in her heart.

Mary had plenty to ponder. She had much to reflect upon. When she considered the series of events that brought her to Bethlehem, the very place where Angels were preparing to announce the birth of the Christ. Her meditations had even more meaning once it is considered that she brought forth this son, despite the suspecting eyes and wagging tongues of the people in her hometown who were taken aback by the fact that she was pregnant before she was married to Joseph. None of them knew the circumstances of her pregnancy. It wasn't for them to know. Their criticism, therefore, was expected, considering the appearance. Secondly, her meditations had to focus on her good fortune to have a successful childbirth, despite the circumstances. Without assistance she gave birth in the cold of the night to a healthy child. Despite her long journey, most of which was on foot, there were no complications. She pondered these things.

Mary's first response after the birth of Christ was to personally meditate and reflect upon the meaning of her circumstance and the majesty and power of God.

While Mary's response was personal and private, the shepherds did just the opposite. They had witnessed two marvelous events, Angels in the heavens and the birth of the Christ Child. It was simply too much for them to contain themselves. When

they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued , This being a day of good tidings, we dare not hold our peace), so they made known abroad the whole story of what was told them, both by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary, concerning this child, that he was the Savior, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin.

They told everybody that would hear and they agreed in their testimony. And now if, when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own fault, for they have sufficient notice given them. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds, v. 18. The shepherds were plain, downright, honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them; what they had said therefore was likely to be true, and, if true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable and not in a palace, that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never asked any further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a nine days' wonder.

The shepherds made them the matter of their more public praises. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were (v. 20): They returned, glorifying and praising God, in concurrence with the holy angels. If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what they had heard from the angel, and for what they had seen, the babe in the manger, and just then in the swaddling, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God that they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation. As afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his manger, was to some foolishness and a stumbling-block, but others saw in it, and admired, and praised, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Mary's personal meditation and the Shepherds outward combined, give the world a glaring example of what to do "after Christmas", meditate on and glorify God.

Things to Ponder

As family members are returning and families prepare to take down decorations, Christmas should leave every believer with something to ponder and meditate upon.

HIS GOODNESS: Mary and Joseph were not wealthy people. In fact, because they gave the "Poor Man's" sacrifice of pigeons when they came to dedicate Jesus at the temple eight days later some believe they were relatively poor working people. Despite their poverty they had a reason for joy. As Mary thought of her family sleeping in a stable in the cold, she did not focus on the negative but focused on the good thing that happened. A child was born. It could have been worse, the child could have been lost in delivery. There may not have even been a stable available. Mary chose not to curse the darkness, but thanked God for one candle!

Despite the poverty that is common to most of us, God has been good. When we think on his goodness we see so many ways that he has blessed us that we arise from the Christmas season with a feeling of assurance that God is Good.

Perhaps that's why the song writer said, "When waves of affliction sweep over your soul and sunlight is hidden from view, if ever you tempted to fret or complain, just think of his goodness to you"

HOW HE MADE IT HAPPEN: After Christmas, we should also consider how God arranged things for your family to make it happen just right. Like Mary and Joseph made it to the right place by no plan or design of their own, God fixed a few things for every family this Christmas. He fixed things to make it happen the way it did. Flights that were not available became available. Vacation schedules were rearranged. Somehow, despite meager resources, sufficient gifts were available for those special family members. There was enough food for your family and enough to share with visitors. Some received unexpected bonuses from their employers. So many good things lined up, one after another, that the hand of God was obviously interfering in our affairs, arranging things to make it happen.

Even when we are tempted to worry about the bills that will come in January, there are many that have already concluded that God will make a way in that respect too! Has not God provided in times past? Hasn't he opened doors of opportunity on other occasions? Is he still the same God? The answer is "Yes!" to all of the questions. The After Christmas blues comes only when we believe that we are hopelessly in over our heads and there is no help. Saints always find a reason for hope! They are literal fountains of optimism because we know our God is able!

EVEN IN MISFORTUNE: By modern standards, Mary and Joseph would have been considered misfortunates. They were accustomed to a warm fire and a roof over their heads. Yet, on Christmas night they were homeless. Even in their misfortune, they found God to be good.

Some spent this Christmas beside a sick loved one in a hospital bed. Some were helping loved ones feed themselves. Others were helping friends and associates with injuries. Even in this unfortunate circumstance, the saint finds a reason not to be sad. They were able to show the true meaning of Christmas to a loved one or friend, that is giving of themselves to help others. Even the victim of an illness sometimes feels guilty for disrupting the lives of others at what is supposed to be a happy time. The sainted family member reassures the sick and the victims of misfortune that their illness or misfortune simply gave them a different way to celebrate the gift of love that the Christ child brought, through showing love to them. Even the sick, have no need for the 'After Christmas Blues" they have the joy of knowing that God is working through the hands of others to bring them healing and deliverance!

Give A Testimony

While there is sufficient reason for each of us to have a private meditation and reflection on God's goodness, we should also consider the example of the shepherds,

who told the world, not only what they had heard from the angels, but what they had seen with their own eyes.

After Christmas, every saint should take every opportunity to spread the word about the goodness of God.

We should tell from what we have heard in the word, but we should tell from our own experience. There was no experience for the shepherds like seeing the Christ child themselves. When they told others, they gave a testimony about something they had experienced themselves.

Those who are preparing to leave the city, returning to far destinations, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of family get togethers, reunions, fine foods and fellowship. It is a story of God's love.

Those who are taking down decorations and packing them away, have a story to tell. Is is more than a story of beautifully decorated homes, bright colors and festive spirits. It is a story of how the love of God brought joy and hope into the hearts of every family member.

Those who are still carrying out the bags of wrappings, ribbons and boxes that contained so many presents, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of opened presents, gifts given and gifts received. It is a story of how God loved the world so much that he gave the greatest gift.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Every Saint has a story to tell!

It is the story of that began in Bethlehem and ended in Jerusalem!

It is a story that began with a borrowed manger and ended with a borrowed cross and an empty tomb!

It is a story that began in the darkness of night, but ended Early Sunday morning!

It is the story that Jesus, the lamb of God, came to this earth, died and rose again that we might have a chance to everlasting life!

What do we do after Christmas?

The same thing we did before Christmas!

Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!

No. 686-New Year

Wherever You Go, God is with You!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La..

January 4, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9

Introduction

Does the new year present any challenges to you? How are you responding to them? We respond to life's challenges in one of three ways. We can decide to tackle them head on and give them our best shot, run in cowardice or avoid dealing with them as long as we can. Those who decide to grab hold to a challenge and give it their best effort are courageous. They don't know the outcome. They are apprehensive, yet bold. Those who run from the challenges are usually afraid. Somehow they have developed a feeling of inadequacy that seems to dwarf them in comparison to the possibility of failure. Those who avoid challenges may not be afraid but lack the level of commitment necessary to tackle a gigantic problem and wrestle it to the ground. The new year presents each believer with new challenges. How we respond will depend mostly on what we believe about God's ability to help us shoulder any challenge.

There are many who run the risk of missing great opportunities in store for them because of their own fears. Consider the little boy who was often teased by his older sisters and brothers. To tease him they took all of his toys and hid them in an empty room. They removed the light bulbs and told the gullible youth that there was a monster in the room. The monster allegedly fed himself by eating little boys. They described his big teeth, claws and fearsome manner. The little boy was frightened at just the thought of the monster in the room.

Every day his brothers and sisters rolled in laughter as he shivered at the tales of the monster, then cried because he could not get his toys that were inside, even though the door was not locked. One day, much to the surprise of his siblings, he was sitting in the middle of the floor playing with all of his toys! He was happy and smiling boldly. They asked, "How did you get your toys? Didn't we tell you that there is a monster in the room?" The little boy never stopped playing with his toys. He said,

"At first I was afraid of the monster in the room. So I got me a monster that was bigger than your monster and my monster beat your monster up!" His brother ran out of the room shouting, "Hey, I had some candy in the room, did you eat it?" The little brother answered, "I guess my monster got hungry. He ate your monster and the candy too!" When we overcome our fears, we can seize the opportunities that life offers us.

The devil has played a mind game on many believers. We fail to claim many of our opportunities because someone has told us that there is a "monster in the room." If we live in the shadow of the devil's intimidation and monster stories, we'll never become the man or woman that God wants us to be.

As Christians, we know that God controls the unknown. We do not fear each new day, but enter boldly as we remember that "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world."

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he receives encouragement to cross over Jordan into the unknown trails of the promised land.

Joshua was very apprehensive about assuming the role of leadership of Israel. For 40 years, all the people had known was Moses. For 40 years they were sheltered in the wilderness and literally fed by the hand of God. Now they faced the prospect of crossing into unknown territory. The Promised land was full of promise, but it had so many challenges. It had cities that were fortified by great walls. Each city seemed to have giant warriors that were well armed and well trained. The people were so intimidated that they felt like grasshoppers in their own sight. As a young man, Joshua was bold. When he was forty years younger, he was stronger and more able to withstand the pressures of war. Now, in his senior years, he was being called upon to lead the people. It was an awesome challenge.

The land of Canaan represented many things to the people of Israel. It represented the fulfilment of God's promise to them through Abraham. God promised them the land they saw. They had suffered greatly to reach the threshold of the new land which was a fulfillment of that promise. Now it lay before them.

The land is given to the people of Israel, but it still had to be possessed. Title to it is the gift of God; possession of it is the result of an obedient walk. God promised, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses." {Josh 1:3 RSV}

The idea was simple, God gave them the land but they had to go and claim it themselves. Any amount they claimed they could have. If they ended up with nothing it was only because they would not possess that which God had already given. Israel's choice was to stand on the side of Jordan and observe or rise up to the challenge.

Although the land was promised it would not come without a formidable challenge. There would be people poised to stand between what God has promised and life in the wilderness. Yet God promised Joshua that no man would be able stand

against him. Just as he had been with the patriarch Moses, he would also stand with Joshua.

But if the land is filled with challenge it is also filled with the prospect of victory. It is the prospect of victory upon which God focuses Joshua's attention, not the size of the challenge. He is promised that, "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." {Josh 1:5 RSV}

Joshua was encouraged to be strong and courageous as he pondered the prospects of the new land. The strength referred to is both physical and spiritual. Taking on such a challenge would no doubt be physically challenging and draining. Yet God encouraged Joshua to be strong. It would also take spiritual strength for the times when both faith and confidence would fail.

It is going to take courage.

At verse nine God summarizes his words of encouragement to Joshua. If he did exactly as he was commanded and proceeded to tackle the new land without being afraid, God promised he would be with him wherever he went. That was perhaps the most encouraging part of the God's words to Joshua, the knowledge that the maker of the universe was with him.

Thus, Joshua, standing before a great new challenge is told be courageous and seize the moment. He is reassured that if he obeyed God's command, because God promised it, he would be victorious.

The Challenges of the New Year

Like the children of Israel faced their Jordan river, staring at the challenge of the new land, every believer also stands at the threshold of each new year, faced with the challenges that each new year brings.

Great opportunities are available for every believer in the year, God has already promised them, but, like Israel we must do several things:

POSSESS THE LAND: God has already opened several unseen doors of opportunity for each believer. The only thing that stops us from claiming what God has ordained is our own obstinance, fear or procrastination. We have been promised a measure of joy and happiness. It is what Christ talked about when he said in John 10:10, " I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The abundant life is the satisfied life. Once a person is satisfied, there is nothing else needed.

What stands between us and the satisfaction we want out of life? What stops us from achieving our dreams, often it is only our fear of reaching out and grabbing hold of that which is close to our heart. Like Joshua, there are many believers today standing at the Jordan pondering the promised land. If they listen close, they will hear God say, "Every place the sole of your feet treads upon, I will give you!" Seize your dream! I give it but you must take the first steps of faith. Every step you take, following God's command, will lead you to victory.

CHALLENGES WILL BE IMMENSE: The promise of the new year is not without its challenges. God has not said that this new year will be one without formidable obstacles. In fact, they are not hidden, you can see them in the not so distant future, just as Israel was close enough to know that there were giant sized enemies in Canaan.

What is it that you seek to accomplish this year? A new job? A career move? A promotion? Stable family life? More spirituality? Improved marital relations? No matter what your particular goal, there will be obstacles. Some of them will be formidable. Nothing good comes without a struggle.

Believers struggling to live pure and holy lives are finding it more of a challenge as decadence surrounds them on every hand. Students in school, laborers, professionals, all are being bombarded with a shower of challenges to spiritual purity. Even in the spiritual realm nothing good will come without a struggle.

Some of the obstacles that stand in the way of every believer achieving what God has promised have Satan as their source, especially those who are trying to get their feet on stable ground with God. That's why Paul writes in Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We struggle, but we also have the promise of the victory. Have you not read, 1 Corinthians 15:57-58 "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. "

DON'T TURN TO THE LEFT OR RIGHT: If God has promised the victory, what remains is for us to do is to be steadfast. That means we set our course on that which is right and don't stray off the course. Israel was told to study God's word and then not turn to the left or the right. Essential to claiming the great blessings that God has in store for us is obedience to God's word. We can't ignore this portion of the scripture. There are blessings being promised, but there are also warnings that we must steadfastly walk in the way of God. That's what 1 Corinthians 15:58 means when it says, " Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

God is With You

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that God gave Joshua a promise that is rare in biblical history. He told him, "...for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." That promise deserves serious consideration because of its uniqueness. It is rare, if ever, that God made that promise to another human being.

God walked with Enoch and loved him so much that he took him, but he never promised him, whereever you go, I'll go!

God was so taken with the loyalty of Noah that he spared his life for one whole year as he floated in the ark, but there is no record that he ever told Noah, wherever you go, I'll go!

God was pleased with Abraham as a great man of faith. He traveled from Canaan to Egypt and back, but he never told him, wherever you go, I'll go!

David was known as a man after God's own heart, but even the man heralded for his devotion to God never heard God say, wherever you go, I'll go!

Elijah was revered for his closeness to God and was swept home in a fiery chariot, but there is no record that God told him, wherever you go, I'll go!

What is so unique about this man Joshua that God would select him for this extraordinary promise?

The name Joshua means "he shall save his people." Joshua himself is a type of someone that was to come.

The only other instance wherein a person of the Godhead promised mortal men "where you go, I'll go" is when another Joshua came, whose name also meant, "he shall save his people!"

This new Joshua stood his disciples on the side of a mountain and gave them the greatest of their lives. It would be a challenge that would require all of their faith and courage, yet he challenged them anyway by saying..

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20)

When somebody says they are with you, that means they plan to support you, defend you, and protect you!

I hear Jesus say "lo, I am with you!"

If you are about the tackle the challenge of a brand new year, be sure to have the Lord with you!

When the Lord is with you:

—It doesn't matter how dark the night, because he can take darkness and turn it into light!

It doesn't matter how much rain falls, because after every rain he makes the sun shine!

It doesn't matter how many ditches your enemies dig for you, he can take your enemies and make them your footstools

It doesn't matter if you don't have a dime in your pocket, if you take the Lord with you, David said, "I have been young, but now I'm old, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging for bread!"

When you get up in the morning, take the Lord with you!

At the noon day, take the Lord with you!

At the midnight hour, take the Lord with you!

Take the Lord with you! Take Jesus with you !

The same Jesus, who died out on Calvary, and rose on Sunday morning!

Before you begin the tedious journey this year, you ought to make up in your mind, to "Take the Lord With you!

No. 687-Inspiration

Moving at God's Command

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 4, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses." Number 9:23

Introduction

When is it time to move on with your life? When is it time to rest? There are many times in life where each believer reaches a cross road. This is the point in which decisions have to be made about direction and life choices. Sometimes the choices are simple, whether or not to diet or to redecorate a room are examples of simple choicess. Sometimes they are not so simple. Often we must decide whether to have a major surgery, change jobs, marry or divorce, or some other major decisions. There are many who bog down when faced with such decisions. Others act but do so recklessly.

Knowing when to move and when to be still is one of the most crucial lessons we learn as believers. This is important to us because we know there are times when God wants to take action, but there are also times when God wants us to "be still and Know That I Am God "(Ps. 46:10). Every believer seeks the quiet moments when they can hear God clearly, confirming what they sense to be the voice of God speaking to them.

It is important to hear God clearly because there are so many contrasting voices today, many which sound like the voice of God. Consider the woman who prided herself in always trying to do what God wanted done. Obedience to God was so important that whenever God spoke to her she carried his commands to the letter. Some devilish teens in her neighborhood tried to take advantage of her obedient spirit. At night they gathered outside her window and whispered in a voice that tried to imitate an angelic tone, "If you bake it, they will come!-Pound!" The next morning the woman arose and baked a pound cake and called in the neighborhood boys and offered them generous slices. Buoyed by their success, the boys whispered to her again, "If you bake it, they will come, Lemon!" Just as she did before she baked a lemon cake and offered them giant slices.

On the third night the boys whispered, "If you bake it, they will come, Chocolate." She heard the voice, but immediately afterwards she heard the giggling boys outside

her window. She arose and baked a cake but mixed several boxes of Ex-Lax with the chocolate icing. She called the boys in and gave them generous slices. As they were eating, she said, "I heard a voice that said, if you bake it they will come. But then I heard other voices, outside my window." As the boys finished their cake they had this sudden urge to find a bathroom. She said, "The voices I heard told me to tell you, if you eat it, you will run!" We need to be careful whether the voice that speaks to us is actually the voice of God or the simple suggestions of mortal men.

Our Christian experience thus far has taught us to listen for the voice of God. When God speaks to our hearts, we sense it immediately. Then we look and listen for confirmations as God repeats the message to us by sending us other signs and indicators. His Holy Spirit directs us through inspiration. We can test what we sense against the Word of God itself. If what we are moving to do is against what the Word of God teaches or is doubtful, we know it is not God telling us to move. If the Word supports what we sense, then we should look for the confirmations, God will send them, when it is truly time to move!

As Christians, we ask God to lead us and guide us. When he says 'stay put' we do just that. However, when God says "move" we are ready to move at his command!

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it moved from place to place in its wilderness journey, always at the command of God.

The children of Israel were a nomadic people. After leaving Egypt they constructed a tent like Tabernacle in which they worshiped God and offered sacrifices. The presence of God was always known among the people through the outwardly visible sign of a pillar of cloud that hoovered over a portion of the Tabernacle. The cloud was always present. Even at night the cloud could be seen because God gave it the appearance of fire when it was seen at night.

The people were instructed that whenever the cloud lifted it was time for them to pack up their tents and move to another location, as God dictated to Moses. Whenever the cloud stayed low, they knew it was God's will for them to stay still.

The cloud was a visible token of God's special presence and guardian care of the Israelites (Ex 14:20 Ps 105:39). It was easily distinguishable from all other clouds by its peculiar form and its fixed position; for from the day of the completion of the tabernacle it rested by day as a dark cloud, by night as a fiery pillar of fire, over that part of the sanctuary which contained the ark of the testimony (Le 16:2).When the cloud was taken up—that is, rose to a higher elevation, so as to be conspicuous at the remotest extremities of the camp. That was a signal for removal; and, accordingly, it is properly called (Nu 9:18) "the commandment of the Lord." It was a visible token of the presence of God; and from it, as a glorious throne, He gave the order. So that its motion regulated the commencement and termination of all the journeys of the Israelites.

John Wesley notes the importance of the cloud as a symbol for modern believers.

Wesley points to the phrase, "When the cloud abode." This is repeated again and again, because it was a constant miracle, and because it is a matter we should take particular notice of, as highly significant and instructive. It is mentioned long after by David, Psalm 105:39, and by the people of God after their captivity, Nehemiah 9:19. And the guidance of this cloud is spoken of, as signifying the guidance of the Blessed Spirit, Isaiah 63:14. The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest, and so didst thou lead the people.

The cloud became a symbol of the presence of God. Its movement became a sign of direction to believers. It guided believers then and through the Holy Spirit even today continues to guide all those who commit their ways unto the Lord.

It is difficult to understand this passage without considering the enormous significance of the cloud. The presence of the cloud signals to all believers that God is always near us, both night and day. As long as the cloud rested on the tabernacle, so long they continued in the same place. There is no time lost, while we are waiting God's time. When the cloud was taken up, they removed, however comfortably they were encamped.

It is very safe and pleasant going when we see God before us, and resting where he appoints us to rest. The leading of this cloud is spoken of as signifying the guidance of the blessed Spirit. We are not now to expect such tokens of the Divine presence and guidance; but the promise is sure to all God's spiritual Israel, that he will guide them by his counsel.(Psalm 73:24). Romans 8:14 reminds every believer that true "sons" of God are led by the spirit.

At the commandment of the Lord, our hearts should always move and rest, saying, Father, thy will be done; dispose of me and mine as thou pleasest. What thou wilt, and where thou wilt; only let me be thine, and always in the way of my duty.

Lifting of the Cloud

Today, there are many who are contemplating great moves in the name of the Lord. Some are in doubt as to whether they should move or stand still. In the biblical context of our text the cloud symbolized the presence of God. However, its very shape indicated it was not the usual clouds that always appear.

In the normal context of life clouds represent varying degrees of indecision, difficulty and doubt. Even in this context, it is the lifting of the cloud that indicates when God wants us to move.

There are four types of clouds that readily come to mind.

FOG: Fog is a cloud on the ground. It rarely rains when it's foggy, but movement is often limited, if possible at all, during foggy weather. Those who are driving, flying or otherwise trying to move usually discover it is safer to wait until the fog lifts.

There are many life situations that are foggy. There is no thunderstorm threatening, but yet the danger that foggy situations bring is not in the possibility of storms, but in the danger of going off course, making a wrong turn or even worse getting on a collision course.

In the fog, we don't know which way to turn.

In the fog, we can't see our way.

Before moving in such situations, wait until God lifts the cloud, then move at his command.

STRATUS: Stratus Clouds form a blanket of gray across the entire sky. They block the sun, dull the appearance of the day and while they don't produce thunderstorms have been known to irritate us with light mists and drizzles that force us to turn on our windshield wipers.

There are often times in life when the demands of life and sometimes our extra activities block out the sun. The clouds give a miserable tint to each day. Life's little irritations get to us during such times. Like drizzling rain, they don't cause big problems but they dampen our spirits. What makes it worse is that we can't see the sun.

The spiritual life dies if it goes to long without seeing the Son!

Good jobs bring in the money, but if they keep us away from the Son too long, every day still seems to be filled with grey skies!

CUMULUS: Cumulus clouds are lumpy in appearance and marked by large spaces of blue in between them. They are generally associated with fair weather. However, if conditions become unstable cumulus clouds quickly become associated with thunderstorms.

There are many who see the storm clouds gathering in their own lives. Although there are patches of sunlight, they sense the tensions building themselves into a great thunderstorm.

It is not wise to do much moving in a storm. The wise have learned to wait out storms and move only when they have lifted. The unwise make decisions in the midst of storms of anger or frustration that bring on the thunder and the lightning. It is better to wait for the clouds to lift before moving!

CIRRUS: Cirrus clouds form at higher levels than cumulus. They generally contain very little water vapor and nearly always move from West to East in the natural Jet stream. With an appearance like a feather duster, they generally point to fair weather.

The time to move is when there is no possibility of fog, clouds of indecision do not overspread the sky, and thunderstorms are not threatening. The time to move is when the clouds have lifted and the spirit of God points to fair weather on the horizon.

At God's Command

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that Israel had many faults and short comings, but it appears that they had no problem moving at God's command. Every time the cloud lifted they were ready to move!

At God's command they packed their tents and moved at a moment's notice!

At God's command they arose, even in the middle of the night and were ready to move!

Not everybody learned this lesson.

When Elijah heard God's command to face the wickedness of King Ahab, there were times when he hid in a cave, under a Juniper tree and lay by the side of a brook being fed by a raven. But when God got ready, he had to move!

When Jonah heard God's command to preach to the wicked people of Nineveh, he tried to avoid the task by hiding out on a boat, but when God got ready he had to move!

When God gives the command every believer should know that he has to move!

Naaman moved at God's command even though his instruction seemed illogical and stupid. But when he washed seven times in muddy water he came up out of the water a brand new man!

A poor widow moved at God's command, it seemed impractical to take her last bread and oil and give it to a stranger. She did as God instructed, and she found that her barrel never ran dry!

A lame man who sat by the pool moved at God's command. It seemed impossible for a man who had been lame for 38 years to just walk away, but when Jesus said "take thy bed and walk" and moved at God's command!

I don't know about you, but I've decided to move at God's command!

I won't worry about the clouds!

I won't worry about the storms!

I just keep my bags packed, because when God gets ready, I've got to move!

I do not know how long it will be nor what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus

The lily of the valley,

If Jesus, the bright and morning star!

If Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

If Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

If Jesus leads me, I shall get home some day!

No. 688-Communion

If Jesus Had Come Down From The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 18, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Matthew 27:40

Introduction

Have you ever played what if? "What if" is a mental game that some play in which they consider possible outcomes. Those who plan long range activities usually consider "what if" scenarios. These are the times in which plans are made in anticipation of certain actions by others. Emergency planners practice "what if" scenarios. Military organizations and police units often practice "what if" situations. In this way they are constantly ready to take action because nearly every possible situation that can occur has been anticipated and an appropriate response has been planned. "What if" is also a consideration of those who look back after the fact. Sometimes those who attend reunions see their old girl friends or boy friends from high school and they play the "what if" game. That's especially true if the person has become successful at what they do or has turned out to be everything you thought they couldn't be.

Sometimes children ponder the "what if" questions. What if I had been born to another family? What if I had been born white? What if I had just been rich? The possibilities for "what ifs" are limitless, considering all the various alternatives that are available in modern times.

Often "what if's" have a tendency to lead us full circle. When that happens, we are led to consider how a change in events could have affected our personal lives.

What if there had been no American slave trade? A section of the U.S. Constitution referred to slaves as three fifths of a man would not have been written. The civil war would not have been fought. In all probability the Ku Klux Klan, Dixie, the NAACP, Negro Spirituals, the Blues, Affirmative Action, and Civil Rights Laws would probably never have existed.

What if Mahatma Ghandi had not lead the freedom movement in India? The civil rights movement in America would have been a revolution instead of a series of civil disobedience actions. There would have been no Freedom Rides, sit-ins or marches

on Washington or King Holiday. In fact, if Ghandi had not led the freedom movement in India, Martin Luther King, Jr. would have become an aging senior Black leader tucked away quietly as the ambassador of some small island.

In a spiritual context, every Christian has to ask, what if Christ had not come to the world? Churches would be synagogues. Our Saturday assemblies would still require us to bring animal sacrifices. We'd celebrate Hanukkah instead of Christmas and the Passover instead of Easter.

If Christ had not come, we would constantly be looking back on our ancient past instead of forward to our future.

Even more staggering is the prospect of what might have happened if Christ had actually done as he was asked by his critics and stepped down from the cross.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that our Lord gave us a second chance by staying on the cross. Had he come down our souls would have been lost. However, because he remained there, we have a chance to the tree of life!

Exposition

This text focuses on the Christ at his crucifixion, as his critics urged him to come down from the cross.

During the entire ministry of Jesus he was constantly bombarded by those who urged him to do things to prove himself to them. Regardless to what he did, most of them still did not believe him. Even some of those who were with him constantly found it difficult to believe what they were seeing and hearing.

At his crucifixion, as he hung on a cross with nails in his hands and feet, his critics continued their assassination of his person and ministry. His words and claims were misrepresented and his ministry was questioned repeatedly.

His critics challenged him to come down from the cross and prove that he was the Son of God. It was just another instance where people wanted to see a spectacle, but still would not have believed even if he had come down. They probably would have accused the soldiers of sloppy work by failing to secure him to the cross completely. There was nothing for Jesus to prove by coming down from the cross. Those who would see him would not be convinced anyway. There was much to be lost if he came down, too much to risk for the mere self satisfaction of showing off for those who criticized him.

The people at the cross wanted him to come down for their amusement.

When he began his ministry, Satan wanted him to stoop down. In the wilderness for 40 days and nights, Satan came to Jesus with the offers of food, fame and fortune if he would simply stoop down and acknowledge him. The chance to have food after a 40 day fast was tempting, but it would have required him to stoop down to the level of using his mission to satisfy his own needs and drives. The opportunity to have earthly fame and fortune was also given to him, but even that would have required him to stoop down to the level of pandering to the public to achieve his end. The possession of power, resources and influence was certainly admirable, but as Satan

presented them, it would have required that Jesus stoop down and use his influence in a cheap and mercenary way that would have made him a subject of Satan rather than the Son of God.

He was often criticized because he refused to look down. Throughout his ministry Jesus was criticized for his close association with the poor, needy and socially rejected of his time. He was constantly seen with women of ill repute, associating with Samaritans, and eating at the homes of publicans and sinners. Although he was called upon to shun such types, he refused to look down on them. He reminded any who dared to frown on his actions that it was only those who were sick that needed a doctor, not those who were well.

He was also criticized because he would not back down. Often he confronted the scribes and pharisees, challenging them to equal the displays of piety with inner purity. On one occasion he even had to get a rope and run money changers out of the temple. When he was surrounded by his critics on every hand, even then he would not back down from his beliefs.

Since in the course of his ministry, Jesus would not stoop down, look down or back down, those who ridiculed him while he was on the cross should have known that he would not come down from the cross.

Those who were critical of him were not the least bit interested in his mission. They were interest only in his defeat. They saw the nails, the blood and his agony on the cross as the perfect time for them to promote themselves in the wake of his demise.

The plan of salvation had been laid out from the beginning. He had agreed to it and had resisted every attempt by Satan to get him to stoop, bend or back off his pledge. If he had come down, then his coming to the Earth would have been futile and our chance for salvation would have been lost.

If he had come down from the cross every person living today would not have a chance to eternal life because John 3:16 reminds us that, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” His death on the cross made our salvation possible because his death atoned for our sins.

Each Believer Is Crucified With Christ

Today each believer is crucified with Christ daily. While we are not literally on a wooden cross, our lives are stretched out bare before a non-believing public that wants us to turn from our belief and faith. That’s why, Romans 6:6 says “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” What if each of us as believers actually stepped down from our faith?

STOOP DOWN: The world often attempts to get believers to stoop down. We are tempted to turn stones into bread every time the possibility of personal profit turns a ministry into a financial opportunity. We are often asked to stoop down and become

that which is beneath both our dignity and our calling in life. There are many that will stoop to any level to achieve fame, riches and success. There are no inhibitions, barriers or obstacles that obstruct their path.

But what if every believer stooped? What would happen if every person God gave a voice to praise him decided to put it in the secular market for profit? What if each person who is a believer decides that the temptation to make money or achieve power is too great and decides to come down from the cross?

LOOK DOWN. We are often tempted to chase lofty and high ideals while ignoring the embodiment of our ideals that surround us. How often we speak of helping the poor but yet frown upon the poor when we see them. The world has already considered the estate of the poor, the needy and the destitute. It wants believers to do the same.

But what if every believer looked down on the poor masses of this earth? What would happen if every believer turned a cold shoulder to the homeless, helpless, lonely and miserable? Suppose every person who is motivated by the love of God to respond to human need, simply stopped and began to assume a condescending attitude toward those in need? What would be the situation in the world?

BACK DOWN: Not only are believers, whose old lives are crucified with Christ, urged to abort their daily crucifixion by stooping down and looking down, believers are also challenged to back down from their beliefs. What we believe about God, morality and life in general is the defining principle of the Christian life. Yet there are times when every believer is called upon to back down from their beliefs, or at the very least to look the other way.

Out of fear of being called antisocial or different, many back down from their beliefs. There are many who are patronizing in their beliefs in that their benefactor dependent.

What if every believer backed down each time their religious belief or moral standard was challenged by their employers, co-workers or even friends.

Each time we either stoop down, look down or back down, we in effect come down from the cross.

What if each Christian lays down his cross for convenience?

What if each Christian lays down his cross to have a little fun, with the intention of picking it up later?

What if each Christian lays down his cross to make a little money?

What if each Christian lays down his cross to save his job?

He Didn't Come Down, He Came Up!

Finally we must consider that Jesus' critics wanted him to give them one last sign that he was the Son of God. They felt that if he could defy death by escaping the torture of the cross that it would be a sufficient sign that he was truly of divine origins.

Coming down from the cross would not be sufficient. Because Jesus would not come down from the cross there were those who felt he "could not" come down.

He would not come down from the cross because the real sign would not be his getting down but in his rising up!

In that same context, this is the true beauty of the Christian relationship with God. It is not that we will not have a cross to bear but that we will have a final triumph over that cross.

Our testimony is not that we are able to escape life's problems and difficulties, but that though we are knocked down and trampled upon by life's circumstance, we will rise again!

That's the meaning of Romans 6:4 "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life."

We are crucified with him, but we are raised daily by the glory of the father to walk in the newness of life!

That's why every saint declares, "Stretch me out wide if you will, but my hand is in the winding chain!"

Talk about me if you will, but my feet walk steadily on the king's highway!

Abuse me if you will, but my mind will stay fixed on the Lord. That's why the song writer said, "I woke up this morning with my mind, staid on Jesus! I am walking and talking with my mind, staid on the Lord!"

The world may crucify us and call us everything but a child of God, but we will triumph!

We serve a God who is able to take the pain and agony of the heavy cross we bear and turn it into glorification

We serve a God who is able to take our:

HARD TIMES and turn them into good times; MISERIES and turn them into triumphs!

FAILURES and turn them into successes; WEAKNESSES and turn them into strengths!

STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones; FEARS and turn them into confidence!

Every saint will be challenged by the world to put your cross down!

Can't you hear the world saying, don't let people talk about you, put your cross down, take off your religion and tell them a piece of your mind!

Somebody's been told, why don't you put your cross down, go out and have yourself some fun. Go to a few bars, discos and clubs, you only go through life once!

Somebody's been asked, why don't you put your cross down, make yourself some money. You can sell a little crack, sell hot pork chops, steal merchandise from your job, sell your food stamps!

But every saint asks the world another question, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me!"

As Jesus hung out on the cross they talked about him and challenged him to come down!

He couldn't come down from that cross because he had already decided to die just to save me!

Even though they were laughing when they drove the nails in his hands the words of the song writer must have been in his mind, "Go ahead, drive the nails in my hand. Laugh at me if you please..but I'll rise again. Ain't no power on earth can keep me down!"

He did not come down from the cross, but he died out on Calvary!

He did not come down, but Early Sunday morning he got up from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 689-Youth

I Wonder
If Heaven Got a Ghetto!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 25, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? Believers have heard the descriptions of heaven. We can visualize its beauty. In quiet moments we can see the New Jerusalem, with its streets of gold, pearly gates, huge towering walls and millions of inhabitants. We envision a place so beautiful that we cannot adequately describe or fathom its awesome nature. Song writers have captured our amazement in songs such as "How beautiful heaven must be" and "I'll just walk around heaven all day." Believers are confident that heaven is the homeland of saints.

What do you expect to find when you get to heaven? Will heaven be occupied only by Blacks? Or will there be people of all races? Will there be any Republicans in heaven? Believers are expected to be there, but will there be others who were not Christians but were popular entertainers, sports stars and rappers?

Most people have only faint ideas of what heaven is like. Those who live in the poverty and decay of modern society, commonly called "the ghetto" do not expect to find a ghetto when they get to heaven. The ghetto is associated with hunger, homelessness, drugs, inferiority, violence, crime and struggle. Most of those trapped in the ghetto are trying desperately to get out. They are trapped in a neighborhood, but the forces that turn them into something less than a child of God do not become a part of them. The ghetto engenders its own life style, mentality, rules, humor and religion. Only in the ghetto does a woman wear the title of a farm tool or a female dog with pride. Only in the ghetto does a man pride himself on being a "G" or a gangsta and receive praise for how low he can wear his pants on his behind. Many feel that they are hopelessly trapped and have given up on escaping. They have accepted the ghetto mentality as their own.

The late rapper 2Pac is the author of a popular song which falls in this category.

The song is entitled "I wonder if Heaven Got a ghetto." He points to police brutality, poverty and social apathy as reasons for selling drugs, murder and general lawlessness and saying, "If I die, I wonder do heaven, got a ghetto!" Since God knows about the hungry bellies, racism and troubles of the world, what's criminal behavior can't be judged by those outside of the situation. 2pac concludes, "Let the Lord judge the criminals If I die, I wonder if heaven got a ghetto. He expects God to consider their circumstance and allow the ungodly into heaven, even if they are condemned to spend eternity in a ghetto like environment.

Many have varied opinions of what to expect when they get to heaven. Some expect more than they will get. Consider the rich woman who was ushered into the heavenly city. There were mansions of varying sizes all over the New Jerusalem. Her guide brought her to a small, but comfortable mansion that sat at the bottom of a hill. Shocked, the rich woman said, "Do you suppose there has been a mistake? This mansion is so small!" She saw a giant mansion at the top of the hill which met her fancy. She asked, "Whose mansion is that?" The guide said, "That belongs to Beulah, your maid." The rich woman was taken aback. How is it that her maid received a larger mansion than hers? "After all she worked for me all of her life!" The guide said, "Well, you talked down to your weak servant all of her life. But when she got home, she talked "up" to an almighty God. What's sitting on that hill is the result of a life time of prayer, praise and righteous living, something money can't buy!"

As Christians, we don't know everything there is to know about heaven. What we do know is that it will be a place of the saints. Our Lord will be there and we plan to be there too!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as Christ reassures the troubled hearts of his disciples by reminding them of the rewards of heaven.

The disciples were no doubt disturbed and troubled when they heard the news that Christ would soon be leaving them. They were not quite sure what that meant. Panic was beginning to spread among them.

Jesus knew that these men were afraid — afraid of what was coming. They were afraid of death, afraid that they, with him, were going to be executed by the Jews. They knew of the opposition which had developed against them in Jerusalem, the bitter hatred of the Pharisees, their determination to eliminate Jesus and all his disciples. They knew they were in danger, and so their hearts were deeply troubled as they gathered with him.

His words about leaving them added to their distress brought terror into their hearts. They were afraid that even though they might survive, might escape death, they would have to go on living without him, and that was unbearable to them. They could bear to die with him; they could not bear to live or die without him. So as he gathers with them he says these words to them, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

MANY PLACES TO LIVE: He reassures them by telling them that in my Father's

house are many rooms." What do you think he means by "my Father's house?" This is the only time that phrase is employed in the New Testament. Therefore it is very difficult to say exactly what this means by trying to compare it with other passages —until you go to the Old Testament. There you see that some of the prophets clearly indicate that God dwells in the universe. The whole universe is the Father's house. God, speaking through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, says, " Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool {Isa 66:1b}

The word for mansions in Greek literally means "abiding places" or "places to live." What Jesus says here then is, "In my Father's house are many abiding places." Version. It is, literally, "places to live." "In my Father's house are many places to live." So Jesus assures them that there is an abundance of places to live in God's house, plenty of them. Therefore, there is room in the Father's house.

PREPARING A PLACE: Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Why would he need to prepare a place for us if the world is already made? The fact is this world is doing what scientist call "winding down." Scientists call it the second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, the law of decay. This creation is running down, its energy is being transposed into a form in which it is no longer available. It is like a great clock, once wound up, which is gradually running down. And Paul suggests in Romansö8 that this process will be reversed one of these days, that the Lord Jesus, as Lord of the universe, will reverse this law of thermodynamics and change it, so that the universe will no longer be running down but will become a new heaven and a new earth, built on entirely different principles. Perhaps that is what Jesus has in mind when he says to the disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you."

Since Jesus is preparing a place for us to live there is no need for any of us to be overly concerned about where we will live. The places God prepares for his children to live will far exceed those of any ghettos or even the imagination of men.

We are reminded of the scriptural promise in 1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

No Ghettos in Heaven

Today many African-American youth are being bombarded with a ghetto mentality, that if they are not careful could become so much a part of them that it will be inseparable.

GHETTO IS A PHYSICAL CONDITION: The first thought that comes to mind about Ghettos is a physical condition. Generally a ghetto is a condition in which there is poor housing, unkept environment, inadequate lighting and a very dense population. Sometimes these conditions are made worse by absentee slum lords who collect rent from their tenants but negligently maintain them. The landlord is more interested in the rent than insuring that his tenants have a safe, comfortable place to live.

GHETTO IS A STATE OF MIND: The ghetto is a state of mind as well. There

are some language patterns and life style modes that can become a part of one's state of mind if he is not careful.

Economics dictate whether a person lives in a physical ghetto. Character dictates whether the ghetto lives in them. Poverty may determine the kind of house in which we live, but character decides how we live inside that house.

Unfortunately, many youth are letting the ghetto get into their heads. When the ghetto gets into your head you:

Lose self respect.. No self respecting woman will allow herself, even remotely to be referred to as a "ho" or a female dog. No self respecting man would refer to his mate or any other woman in a degrading way. That only happens when the ghetto gets inside your head. Once it is accepted in our heads our acceptance level has been lowered.

Yet despite your neighborhood, it is possible to live in a poor neighborhood without losing your self respect. Though others around you may lose their respect, Christian youth are challenged to keep their self respect in place.

Pursuit of Academics Declines. When the ghetto gets into your head, you begin to accept mediocrity. The quest for academic excellence declines and interest in school work diminishes. Simply "passing" is sufficient. In some cases, even failure is accepted as a badge of honor.

Even if we live in a poor neighborhood, we can still achieve, if we guard against letting the ghetto mentality of our neighborhood get into our heads. Poverty has been the "story of our lives" in the African-American community, but out of the squaller of abject poverty have come some of this country's greatest minds, because they did not let the ghetto get in their heads.

Youth must be extremely cautious not to let the fashions, modes of speech and mannerisms of their neighborhood become a part of their mentality. While it may be fashionable for a man to wear his pants below his behind, it is fashionable only in the ghetto. It may be "tight" to spit out four letter words to explain yourself, but it is only "tight" in the ghetto. It may be a point of pride to have a police record an inch thick before you are 17, but it is cool only in the ghetto.

IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF IT: The Word of God addresses this idea of conformity by encouraging every believer, whether young or old, not to take part in any activities, ideas, fashions, methods of dress, speech or behavior that would detract from the Christian lifestyle. Paul writing to the Romans in Romans 12:2 said "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

What's In Heaven

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that Jesus has said that he is going to prepare a place for us. While he is preparing the place for us, it is our responsibility to *prepare ourselves for the place.*

The place he is preparing for us will have no physical ghettos. There will be no

houses with leaking rooms, rats, roaches and crumbling walls.

The place he is preparing for us will have no dimly lighted and poorly maintained streets. I'm told that in that place the streets will be paved with gold. There will be no need for street lights for the entire city will be lit by the glory of the Lord.

The place he is preparing for us will no public hospitals with long lines and short treatments, because in the midst of the city will be a tree that will bear 12 manners of fruits, whose leaves will be good for the healing of the nations!

Jesus is gone to prepare a place for us but youth today need to be about the business of preparing themselves for the place.

I heard a popular rap song say "I'm Bout it!" But when it went through my theological filter it came out that every Christian youth needs to be "bout it!"

When it comes to giving up the bad and doing that which is good, I'm bout it!

When it comes to striving for success rather than accepting failure, I'm bout it!

When it comes to standing up for that which is right, and opposing wrong, I'm bout it!

When it comes to praising God for being so good, I'm bout it!

When it comes to lifting up holy hands in praise, I'm bout it!

When it comes to saying thank you Lord, for being so good to me, I'm bout it!

When it comes to telling the whole world about Jesus, I'm bout it!

When it comes to telling them that he died out on Calvary, but arose on the third day! I'm bout it!

No. 690-Funeral

A Saint's Signature

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 31, 1998

SCRIPTURE:"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."Rev. 14:13

Introduction

Did you know that our handwriting reveals a lot about us? Our handwriting is a window into the secret corridors of our personality, mind and soul. The way we form letters and put them on paper often tells more about us than our resume. Our resume' tells what we want people to know. Our handwriting reveals traits, patterns and feelings, characteristics that we may not want others to know but are nevertheless apparent.

Just as no two people have the same fingerprint, the same is true about handwriting. No two people have identical handwriting. Our fingerprints point to our identity. Our handwriting reveals our personality. A person's handwriting is his own private trade mark or seal which cannot be reproduced by any other individual. While a skilled artist can simulate your handwriting, it is impossible to capture the power and speed of your stroke, the firmness of your grip and the slope and curve of your letters in a way that survives the close inspection of a trained eye.

Our handwriting is a printout of our feelings and sensibilities. In the hands of trained professionals, the psychological code imbedded in our handwriting reveals general character traits that have proven meaningful and exact over the years. The patterns are unmistakable. Those who write words with large spaces between the words are usually described as persons who are confident but unable to form or maintain close relationships with people. Those who print with fancy letters rather than write them in cursive are said to be people who are very secure in themselves. However, the lack of curves and connectors suggests that they have difficulty taking orders or working as a part of a team. Sweeping capital letters suggests a bold personality, a touch of flair and a tendency to be different or stand out from the crowd. Those who capitalize letters in unusual places suggest persons who may defy tradition. Those whose letters slant to the left with a low T-bar may be insecure, with a touch of low self esteem.

Our signatures are the composites of all that is essential to our being, reflected

in the letters that are fixed to a page or a document. In a greater sense, our signatures record our style and manner. Great artists leave their signatures on their paintings. Others draw graffiti on walls and sign their names. Even singers have "signature" songs. When we think of "His eye is on the Sparrow" we think of Ethel Waters. "How Great Thou" is the signature song of George Beverly Shea just as "I feel Good" is the signature song of James Brown. Your signature is your mark, in your handwriting, that is the pure essence of everything you leave the world!

Many have left their signatures on the canopies of life. It is their legacy to posterity. George Washington's mark was a free country. Abraham Lincoln's signature was a united country. Dwight Eisenhower's signature was a strong and powerful nature in battle. What is your signature in life? What reputation does your mark represent? What do the lines and strokes that compose your life's experience say about you?

As Christians, we strive to leave a mark in life that will be both memorable and meaningful. Yet, it is our Lord's signature, dipped in the blood of the cross, that guarantees us forgiveness and our salvation.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he shows a picture of God giving a blessing to those who die in the Lord and ordering that it be written.

John was given direction to write an advance account of the activities of the last seven years of time. John wrote what he saw as it was revealed to him in the Book of Revelation.

Those that spend their lives in praise and service to God leave a work record that elicits the praise and reward of the savior. Thus, the Revelation's first three chapters focus on the seven churches of Asia Minor. God lets each of them know that he has observed their works. Some had developed a pattern or signature for being rich, hot, lukewarm or receptive to foreign ideas. In each case, God sent a message that those who overcame would receive a crown of righteousness.

During the last seven years, many will come to know the Lord for themselves and suffer persecution and death. A message was sent to them: God blesses those who die in the Lord, their works or their life's signature follows them.

Jesus Christ dictated the Book of Revelation to John. While it is not written in his handwriting, it is clearly the work of the Son of God. The promise bears his characteristic signature.

When Moses received the 10 commandments atop Mt. Sinai God wrote the commandments with his own finger. Exodus 31:18 says, "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."

The Book of Esther is unique in that it is a book about God, but never calls his name. Although his name is not called, the way that Esther rose to be queen and how she saved the people from destruction reflects the signature of God. His name is not

called, but the faithful recognized that his signature was on their redemption.

Belshazzar hosted a banquet in which he used the dedicated ornaments of the temple. God wrote him a message on the wall in his own hand. It was a message of impending doom: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

John 8:6 records an instance in which an adulterous woman, caught in the very act was brought to Christ for his condemnation. Here the only account of Christ writing anything with his own hand was given, for the text says: "and with his finger he wrote on the Ground." What he wrote was unknown but his response left his signature. He responded, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone."

Jeremiah 31:33 points to the place where God writes a message to every believer. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." God leaves his signature in the hearts of every believer.

Thus when Jesus says those that die in the Lord will be blessed, believers are encouraged and have hope, because the promise bears the signature of Jesus Christ himself.

A Saint's Signature

What is a Saint's signature? What epitaph does the saint leave for the world to ponder? The progression of a Saint's spiritual development is similar to a child that learns to write. In the tender years of life a loving teacher takes a child's hand and guides it through the formation of every letter. Sometimes the child's hand is lost completely in the large, enveloping, hands of the teacher. Each time the child forgets to cross a "t" or dot an "I" the teacher carefully shows him how to do it properly. It is a slow painstaking process, but the child, with a good teacher, learns to write.

The same is true with the spiritual life of a saint. In our carnal life we wrote terribly. We missed a few strokes. Often the message we wrote was illegible to say the least and "shaky" at best. Our signature was sinful.

However, when a Saint began the Christian walk the process of learning how and what to write began all over again. The teacher was the Holy Spirit. It guided us, one stroke at a time, as we wrote our epitaph on the canopy of time.

If a person's handwriting gives insight into his personality, I would like to believe that a saint's life, like his handwriting gives an insight into his or her spirituality. Those who study the life signature of a saint might find that it:

LEANS TO THE RIGHT: The great mark of every saint is that in their Christian walk they have learned how to lean on the Lord. The abundance of life's trials have taught that there is strength in leaning on God. That's why the song writer would say he felt "safe and secure from all alarms, leaning on the everlasting arms." Study the life of a saint and you'll find that every letter of their life signature leans toward that which is right. It leans toward God. It is leaning on God that brings us through repeated sicknesses with abounding hope that God is able to overcome every obstacle. It is leaning on God that helps a saint endure the death of a son or a daughter and go on

with life. That leaning is the sign of a life of dependence. The song writer said, "I've learned how to lean and depend on Jesus! I found out that if I trust him, he will provide!"

FILLED WITH CONNECTING CURVES: The saint's spiritual signature is filled with curves and connectors. A saint is marked by a life of connecting and bonding with others. Helping the poor and the need is a way of acknowledging the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We connect with others when we are able to empathize and sympathize. We connect with others when we recognized that when someone is hungry, we should respond with food. When someone is sad, we should connect with comfort. When someone has fallen, we should connect with a readiness to lend a hand up. The life signature filled that connects suggest a life that has been filled with teaching, leading, serving and working to help others. There are some saint's whose life signature is filled with curves and curls because they live the words of the song, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain. ...if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain."

CROSSES "T'S" AND DOTS "I's": The life of a saint is marked by integrity. He or she wants to do that which is right in the sight of God. Righteous living is the mark of every Christian. On some occasions the cares of the world may cause a saint to ignore doing that which is right, but the Holy Spirit has a way of reminding us to go back and cross our "T's" and dot our "I's" as we remember to do "everything decently and in order." Look at the life signature of any saint and it will contain a life dedicated to striving for righteousness. It is righteousness.

BOLD CAPITALS: The life of Saint is also marked by periods of Boldness. Nearly every act we begin starts with a capital letter. We begin in confidence! We are sure that if God blesses our endeavor it can be accomplished. We are bold because the word of God teaches us to be bold. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." When we have made mistakes, we boldly ask forgiveness. When we are sick, we boldly ask for healing! When we are confused, we boldly ask for direction! When we are weak, we boldly ask for strength!

God's Signature

Finally brothers and sisters, while it is good to know that every Saint has a spiritual signature, we should also remember that God also has a signature. The omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of God leave an indelible imprint in the lives of everything and everyone God touches. He leaves his signature.

He has a way of letting us know when he has acted in our lives, even though it may not be apparent to those who do not know him. Consider the mother who left her son with a baby sitter while she took care of her business. She left instructions for him to do his lessons and go to bed. When she returned she marched into his room and awakened him from his sleep. "I thought I told you, not to go in the kitchen

or to watch television, but to go directly to bed." Yelled the mother, "You disobeyed me!" The boy was puzzled. He had made the baby sitter promise she wouldn't tell, how did their mother know? The mother answered "Nobody had to tell me. Look at this kitchen! The cabinet doors are open. There is sugar on the table. The refrigerator is not closed and the television is on the cartoon channel. I may not have seen you do it but this has your signature is written all over it!"

Brothers and sisters all we have to do is look around and we'll see God's signature in the life of every saint.

When a saint lives through hard times and difficulty and still manages to live a comfortable life despite it all, that's nothing but the signature of God!

When a saint overcomes bouts of sickness and rebounds time and time again, that's nothing but the signature of God!

When a saint looks boldly into the face of death and refuses to die before her time or take an early retirement, that's nothing but the signature of God!

When a saint can watch her life work unfold in front of her eyes in the person of God centered grand children and great grandchildren, that's nothing but the signature!

It's God's signature in a saint's life that affirms his promises every day!

When in our CONFUSION, we find peace, that is the signature of God!

When in our WEAKNESS, we find strength, that is the signature of God!

When in our DOUBTS, we find answers; that is the signature of God!

When in our LONELINESS, we find comfort, that is the signature of God!

When in our DESPAIR, we find hope, that is the signature of God!

When in our FRUSTRATION, we find encouragement, that is the signature of God!

Even when we are tossing on our bed of affliction crying out for mercy and relief and we are able to close our eyes in peace take our journey...that too is the signature of God!

God's signature whispers with every gust of wind!

God's signature tolls with every church bell that rings and robin that sings!

God's signature is not written in ink, but it is written with blood of the Cross!

On the cross Jesus, bled and died ... so hard that even the unbelievers could recognize his signature, because a soldier cried out "Surely, he must be the Son of God!"

God left his signature on an empty cross!

But God also left his signature on an empty tomb, because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with...

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

On Tuesday January 27, 1998 Amy J. Reed was called home to rest from her labors. "Blessed are they that die in the Lord" ....Signature, Jesus Christ!

No. 691-Black Heritage

The Heritage of Those That Fear Thy Name

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 1, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name." Psalm 61:5

Introduction

What if you were given the chance to trade your heritage, would you make the deal? Our heritage is the sum total of the possessions, qualities and traditions we have inherited from others. Each of us came into the world with nothing of our own. We have borrowed DNA from our parents. We sleep in homes prepared for us by someone other than ourselves. For many years we follow a ritual and tradition dictated by others. Our appearance bears the resemblance of a composite of persons older than ourselves and even our talents and intellect has trickled down from those ahead of us in our family line. While it is impossible to trade your heritage, because it involves altering the past, would you trade your heritage for a chance to satisfy the desires of the moment.

Esau was the oldest son of Isaac. He was the lawful heir to all of Isaac's properties and immense wealth. More than that, he was, by right of birth, the heir to God's promise to bless the family with prosperity and maturity. Esau thought little of the future of his family or the fact that he was the grandson of Abraham, whom God blessed immensely. One day he was hungry and offered to trade all that should have been important to him for a bowl of porridge. His stomach was filled at the moment, but he had traded away his heritage.

Today the African-American family is in danger of losing its traditional definition. By tradition, the African-American family is headed by a strong man who provides for and defends his home. He is supported by an equally strong woman who mothers her children and works at the same time. Together, they rear children in the fear of God and the respect of their fellowman. The family that fits that definition is becoming an "endangered species" among American families. Many have traded the family of their heritage for a bowl of porridge.

The adhesive that has kept the families of the world's people of African descent united has been a belief in God and adherence to strict codes of honor and conduct.

Whether Blacks in Africa called on God as Allah or whether their descendants in America call on him through his Son, Jesus Christ, the fact remains that from Africa to the American shores, belief in God and godly ways has been the glue that has kept our families strong and viable despite slavery, Jim Crow laws and racism.

Families become endangered because we have shifted from "super glue" which is faith in God, to "Scotch tape." Our families are steeped in the tradition of trusting in God, serving him, worshiping him and placing our hope in him. Our present dilemma today is the result of our willingness to substitute this important of our heritage for that which is more immediate. Family prayer, worship, study and participation in God centered activities has decreased tremendously. In retrospect, the strength of our families as has diminished proportionately.

As Christians, we know the source of our blessings over the years. We should strive to strengthen our families by reinforcing our belief in God by worshiping, studying, and serving God in ways similar to that of our forefathers.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he muses over the goodness of God.

David was in exile at the time of this text. His son Absalom had assembled an army to attack Jerusalem and dethrone him. Unwilling to go to battle against his son, David exiled himself to nearby Hebron. There he praised God for his goodness, while at the same time reflecting on the great inheritance that God had given him through his family.

The 61st Psalms is a Psalm of deliverance. It is one of praise and thanksgiving.

He gives God thanks for giving him the heritage of people who feared God. It is that heritage that taught him to pray, even when he was a boy. His family trusted God so much that even the young members of the family were bold. When he killed Goliath he was just a mere boy.

David had a heritage of praise. He sang God's praises and used the harp to set his praise to music.

He had a heritage of leadership and manliness. Like his older brothers and father before he could stand to defend his family and his beliefs.

When he gave God praise for his heritage, it was for that aspect of his heritage that kept him focused on God. He pledged to continue serving God and living for him daily, carrying out his vows and keeping his commitments.

If the 61st Psalm says anything, it underscores the importance of family heritage. David extolled its importance, even while his son trampled upon it with a vengeance. He maintained his head even though some members of his family were losing theirs.

There is a people that fear God's name and those people leave a peculiar heritage. It is faith that brings comfort to the soul and encourages renewed hope. Following the heritage of people of faith every believer can be secure under the protection of God's mercy and truth.

The duty of every believer, therefore, should be to praise God continually for

his good works and the great inheritance he has given to us.

Appreciating Our Heritage

Many aspects of the African-American heritage are being lost by each succeeding generation of our people. It is essential therefore, that we as a people work to promote that which is unique to our families.

WE MUST VALUE OUR INHERITANCE: Since slavery the African-American family has worked hard to catch up with the rest of America. Immigrants and those of other nationalities had difficult times in America but did not have the tremendous disadvantage of slavery. As a result of generations of other nationality and immigrant family presence in America their families today enjoy wealth and security that has been passed to them by their forefathers. The African-American family, working hard to catch up after slavery ended, sought to acquire land as a way of leaving an inheritance to their children. They operated under the general rule that "as long as one has land one has the means to borrow and build a future." Some families spent entire life times accumulating properties to give to their children. For many generations, our families have appreciated that sacrifice and have added to their inheritance.

However, today there is a new mentality among African-Americans which has very little appreciation for their inheritance. As older members of each family pass on, many younger members quickly sell the land that is the family inheritance. At the turn of the century Blacks owned thousands of acres of prime real estate. However, beginning in the 1940's we began to sell our properties and distance ourselves from the land. It was not unusual for even small families to own 50 acres or more of land that was free and clear of debt. Today, very few African-American families can claim land ownership beyond their homestead.

We are encouraged to value the inheritance that is left to us by our forefathers and resist the temptation to sell our inheritance so easily, for bowls of porridge that so quickly disappear.

WE MUST APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF OUR FAMILY NAME: If there has been anything important in the history of the African-American family, it is the importance of our family name. Our fore parents have endured great suffering and pain to pass on to their children a family name that is a source of pride and honor. Even today, many young members of a family are enjoying the fruits of the fore parents labor as they find certain opportunities being made available to them because of their family name. In every community there are still merchants who disregard credit applications and other traditional means of business documentation and extend credit to certain people based on the reputation of their family name alone.

Families have reputations. The family reputation follows every generation. It is incumbent upon every generation to build upon good family names and to improve family reputations that have been scarred. Proverbs 22:1 reminds us that " A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." That is why many older members of African-American families refuse to

acquire any debt or extended obligations. They want to leave their families an unobligated family name.

WE MUST ASSUME OUR ROLE IN FAMILY SUPPORT: The tradition of the African-American family is one of self help. The education of family members was a family objective. Each member worked to help others complete their education. That help came from the household or extended family. Dealing with extended sicknesses became a matter of family concern as all members of the family, far and near took their turns helping to care for members with long term illnesses. If a family became dysfunctional for some reason, the children of that family would be picked up by one or more family members and became the wards of their uncles and aunts, cousins and grandmothers until they became of age.

Today there is an increasing number of children in foster care, wards of the state, because family members do not share the responsibility of raising the children of a dysfunctional relative. Even fewer family members today feel an obligation to share in the expense of caring for elderly members of the family and helping family members who are distress.

Supporting each other is part of the family heritage of the African-American community.

WE MUST EMBELLISH THE FAMILY GIFTS: In Old Testament times each family was assigned tasks and roles. There were families of singers. Families of doorkeepers. Families of priests, etc. Today, families that know and respect God have been endowed with certain gifts of the spirit that are unique to entire families. 1 Corinthians 12 list several categories of gifts. The histories of many families reflect a heritage that surrounds one or two of the gifts. There are families of teachers. There are families of healers that include everything from doctors, nurses and midwives to mothers who have master the art of herbal cures. There are families of artists, musicians and creators. There are families of advisors, counselors, lawyers and others who exercise the gift of discerning spirits.

Family members should seek to learn the history of their family, beyond just the mere names of your great grandparents but to find out as much as you can about their gift. The gift that runs in your family is a part of your inheritance. You should cherish it. You should perfect it! You should use it for the furtherance of God's kingdom!

A Heritage of Faith in God

Finally, we must consider that the African-American family has a heritage of rich, emotional and heart felt expression of our faith in God. Our fathers brought their families to church and served as the spiritual leaders of their homes. Fathers today, must not neglect their obligation, not only to provide for their households materially, but to lead their families in spiritual growth. It is a part of the African-American heritage for strong fathers to lead their families in faith.

Through nearly two centuries of slavery, our families maintained a faith in God.

In our weary years, we have wallowed in the spit of American racism, sustained

only by the faith that God would lift us from the bottom rail and bring us to the top.

When we were not allowed to talk to God about the problems our lives, entire families would steal away to brush arbors and bow as grandpa or grandma put their heads under tubs to muffle their voices and cried, "Lord, I'm out here on your word!"

The Newage mentality that faith in oneself rather than faith in God is a long way from our heritage. Let's get modern, but don't get that modern!

When somebody says we should stop singing the Dr. Watts Hymns, the preacher should stop whooping, the deacons should stop moaning and choir should stop rocking and we should show some intelligence; we should be intelligent, but not so intelligent that we forget the bridge that brought us over!

We are a people whose heritage reflects that we have been sustained by an unfaultering trust in God.

It doesn't matter what generation you are from, good things happen when you trust in the Lord. When you trust in the Lord, a family that is:

WEAKENED by internal problems, can find renewed strength!

TROUBLED by disturbing questions, can find its answers!

FRUSTRATED by its failure to achieve goals, can find renewed hope!

BURDENED by the increasing problems of life, can find help in the time of need!

When Israel moved across the Jordan into the promised land there were some who wanted to abandon the God that brought them out of the wilderness. I can see Joshua, standing on the side of a mountain challenging all of those that would be faithful to God to come forward. I hear him declare "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Brothers and Sisters, stay on the Lord's side!

In good times and bad times, stay on the Lord's side!

Through all of your risings and fallings, stay on the Lord's side!

Get you a good education, but never get so educated that when the storms of life begin to rage that you feel embarrassed to cry out, "Father I stretch my hand to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go!"

Tell your children about the Love of God!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them about Jesus, who arose from the grave!

Tell them about Jesus, who is alive today!

I don't know about you, but as for me and my house...

We will serve the Lord!

No. 692-Women's Day

The Scarlet Cord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

February 8, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee." Joshua 2:18

Introduction

What has been the role of African-American women in the life of our community? The history of our struggle for freedom and independence has been built, for the most part, on the courage and strength of the Black woman. No page in our history can adequately be related without acknowledging that the faith, fortitude and conviction of the women of our community has been a primary factor in the survival of our race.

Through our three hundred year sojourn in North America, we have been sustained by our women as our men became the targets of oppression. When our men were socially castrated and reduced to mere shells of their former greatness, it was our women that rose to hold us together, doing whatever had to be done to survive.

Black women, like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman are the icons. But there were literally millions of others that displayed the same strength of character and determination to be free, by any means necessary.

When Black men were being lynched from trees all across the South, our women took the lead in fighting our cause. Ida B. Wells began a crusade the pushed others to take action. Her vigorous activism and careful documentation of lynchings in America stirred the souls of a nation to finally make lynchings illegal. Singer Billye Holliday sang "Strange Fruit" as she touched the hearts of a race decrying lynching.

As unemployment for Black men soared and racial discrimination intensified, our women took to the kitchens and factories of America and literally on their hands and knees kept their families alive. Even when the struggle for our rights was being waged in courtrooms, legislative halls and on the streets, our women provided the backbone to the struggle.

Today, the Black man is rising. His presence is being seen and felt in corporate board rooms, in high levels of government. While there are many that are still suffering and struggling, millions of Black men have risen to a level of living that has far exceeded expectations. Now that the Black man is arriving, he is compelled not to

forget the undeniable fact that his survival and looming success over the past 300 years has been sustained by the strength of the Black woman.

As Christians, we know God works through people to improve conditions. He uses circumstances, events and the hands of others to achieve his will. Whatever level of success we have as a people today, we owe to God's grace and to those he inspired and strengthened to help us make it through the night.

Exposition

This text focuses on a woman named Rahab as she offered help to Israeli spies with hopes of being helped in return.

God gave the Hebrews the land of Canaan, but the gift would not come without a fight. When the Hebrews were encamped at Shittim, Joshua, as a final preparation, sent two men to "spy the land." Five days later they returned and reported what they saw and what had happened to them.. They had been exposed to danger in Jericho, and had been saved by the assistance of Rahab the harlot, to whose house they had gone for protection. When the city of Jericho fell (6:17-25), Rahab and her whole family were preserved according to the promise of the spies, and were incorporated among the Jewish people. She afterwards became the wife of Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:21; 1 Chr. 2:11; Matt. 1:5). "Rahab's being asked to bring out the spies to the soldiers (Josh. 2:3) sent for them, is in strict keeping with Eastern manners, which would not permit any man to enter a woman's house without her permission. The fact of her covering the spies with bundles of flax which lay on her house-roof (2:6) is an 'undesigned coincidence' which strictly corroborates the narrative.

Rahab had heard of the miracles the Lord wrought for Israel. She believed that his promises would certainly be fulfilled, and his threatenings would take effect; and that there was no way of escape but by submitting to him, and joining with his people. The conduct of Rahab proved that she had the real principle of divine faith. Observe the promises the spies made to her. Those who will be conscientious in keeping promises, are cautious in making them. The spies make needful conditions. The scarlet cord, like the blood upon the door post at the Passover, recalls the sinner's security under the atoning blood of Christ; and that we are to flee thereto for refuge from the wrath of a justly offended God.

The same cord Rahab used for the saving of these Israelites, was to be used for her own safety.

The cord in the window represented a life line of hope.

The cord in the window represented a way to escape almost sudden death. It represented the golden opportunity to live life anew.

For the spies, it meant escaping out of the city.

For Rahab, it meant starting a new life.

The cord was a reminder to the spies that they had received help, but once in a position of strength they had an obligation to help others in the same way.

The cord in the window

The Black woman has served the same purpose for our community as Rahab did the spies. She has let down the scarlet cord to help the rest of us escape. Thanks to her sacrifices our community is growing, despite its obvious crippling circumstances.

The Black woman is presently under attack. Those who recognize the scarlet cord should come to her defense.

SHE IS THE VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. Increasingly, the Black woman is becoming the victim of domestic violence. Hundreds of thousands of Black women are treated each year for beatings, burnings and sexual assaults. The community must come to her defense because too often the Black woman is convicted by her poverty and is treated as a perpetrator rather than a victim. Black women still face the stereotype that if a Black woman who lives in a poor neighborhood is raped, her poverty alone suggests low morals. Statistics and media tell us that rape is read in a way that devalues Black women and wholly erases other women of color.

A recent study in Dallas revealed that low conviction rate of men accused of raping Black women is based on-going sexual stereotypes about Black women. As recently as 1989, jurors acquitted a defendant of the rape of a 12-year-old African American stating that "a girl that age from that neighborhood probably wasn't a virgin anyway."

We must defend her against domestic violence. We must defend her against the stereotypes, poverty does not mean low morals.

WE MUST BUILD HER STRENGTH BY SURROUNDING HER WITH A STRONG FAMILY. The family must not be allowed to disintegrate at the point in time in which she is now able to realize her dreams. When she was a slave to the family and worked hard to keep it going, with no dreams of her own, she gave up everything to keep the family strong. Now that she has a chance to finally realize some of her dreams, the family should not abandon her.

There are some that believe the Black family should be restructured. Eleanor Holmes Norton in her lengthy treatise called "Sadie and Maude" calls on women to restructure the family on the assumption that men will never regain their place of strength in the family again. She calls on women to shape a new family structure not make a paper mache' version of what existed in the past. Writing off men places Black women in the window without a scarlet cord. Those who know her predicament should respond as quick as they can to help her.

STRENGTHEN THE ABILITY TO BE A WOMAN. To strengthen the Black woman's ability to become self sufficient the rest of the community should take note of her needs. These were boldly expressed during the 1997 "Million Woman March:" Some of these included:

- The further development of Black Women, who are or who wish to become professionals, entrepreneurs, and/or politicians.

-The further development of mechanisms that will assist Black Women who are "in transitional" experiences, including divorce, single parenting, widowhood

-The formation of Rites of Passage centers and academic programs to help young Black women know the meaning of finer Black womanhood.

-Develop programs that will promote a better family environment with models of respect for youth

-Promotion of programs that will help women dealing with the problem elder care.

-Promote a program of home economy and professional excellence that prepares women for both their roles as parents and workforce players.

These areas represent the scarlet cord that is a plea for help and assistance.These areas represent the scarlet cord that cries out as a reminder to everyone that has benefitted from her sacrifice thus far..."help me as I have helped you!"

The Scarlet Cord Saves

While the scarlet cord helped some to escape and reminds others of what has been done, it also points to a faith that believes that in times of trouble there is hope.

Rahab knew troubling days were approaching. She could sense that the enemy was all around her, she sat quietly in her room and, gathered her family in one place and dangled the scarlet cord!

Today, every woman dangles a scarlet cord. It is not dangling out of a window, but it dangles boldly from her heart.

Not only are women dangling the cord, but every believer is dangling the same cord, looking for help and salvation in turbulent times.

These are difficult and troublesome times.

By faith we have let down the cord of God's compassion and helped the poor and the needy!

By faith we have let down the cord of God's love and opened our doors to the hungry and homeless!

By faith, we have stood in defense of the weak and insecure and dangle the cord.

Now we sing the words of the old spiritual, "Not my sister, not my brother, but it's me o' Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

When the forces of destruction are all around you, call on Jesus and dangle the cord!

When your money runs low, call on Jesus and dangle the cord!

When your health begins to fail, call on Jesus and dangle the cord!

When misfortune surrounds you on every side, call on Jesus and dangle the cord!

That's why the song writer said "Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want. If you're sick and you want to get well, call him up and tell him what you want!"

Call him up! He'll answer your prayer!

Dangle the cord, it has been dipped in the blood of the cross!

On the cross, he died for our sins! On the cross, he paved the way to eternity!

But early Sunday morning, he arose with all power in his hands!

Whatever you need....dangle the cord!

No. 693-Funeral

Pleasing Him Who Called Thee To Be A Soldier

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 13, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 2 Timothy 2:3-6

Introduction

How can we please God with our life's work? How can we be sure that the way we live our lives is pleasing to the one who commissioned us into his service? As every saint reflects upon life, one of the most satisfying feelings experienced is to know that the time, talent and resources that have been poured into what we believe is an honorable service, is truly acceptable and pleasing to him that called us into his service. Nothing could be worse than to live our entire lives, only to learn that we were driving the right way, but on the wrong street.

The telltale mark of every believer is his motivation for his service to God. Consider the ancient king who wanted more men enlisted into his army. He sent out word that a contest would be held to determine those best fit to serve in the king's elite guard. Fifty men answered the appeal. Most considered serving in the king's guard as a chance to advance themselves. The king's guard had fine living quarters, daily food supplies, money in their pockets and glory. Each worked to train themselves for what they thought would be the test of their worthiness. They threw spears, practiced hand to hand combat and discipline themselves. When they entered the courtyard, the king brought all fifty of them into his kitchens and complained about the dullness of his silver goblets, plates, knives and forks. Suddenly, the king turned and asked his 50 competitors if they would help shine his silverware. All 50 agreed. As the day wore on the men began to grumble. "We came to train for the royal guard, not to be silver polishers." At the end of the day the men were ushered out of the palace gate, but only 49 men left. The next morning they returned and the guard noticed that one was missing. The guard soon found the 50th competitor all soiled and fatigued. He had spent the entire night shining all of the king's silverware. The King announced that only one of the 50 competitor's was

worthy to be in the royal guard. He kept the 50th competitor. Answering the questions of the 49 he said, "Your test was not in your physical strength or power on the battlefield, but in your commitment to the king. The 50th competitor had one thing none of you possessed. He was willing to please the king!

The difference between the life work of a nonbelieiver and that of a saint is that the none believer serves for personal glory, profit and fame while the saint does his service without thought of personal gain. He does it to please the King!

Saints who spend their lives helping others and serving in the kingdom of God are soldiers in the army of God. They volunteered for the service, with the full knowledge that being in God's army requires sacrificial service that may not draw the accolades of society. They knew it could mean being unpopular. It could even be dangerous! Like good soldiers, every saint stands ready to defend the faith regardless of the cost.

As Christians, we rejoice in our commitment to the king. It is not about money, fame or fortune. Our life's quest is to live in such a way that when we are finally discharged, we can hear the king say, "Well done!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he gives advice to Timothy to be strong in the graces that God has given him.

Paul, in the last days of his life, wrote this letter to young Timothy as a way of warning him about the difficulty of the life that was in store for him. Constantly he warned Timothy to study, discipline himself in the word and to be on guard against the wiles of the devil.

In this passage Paul uses three similitudes to demonstrate to Timothy how his life work can please God. He referred to the commitment of a soldier in verses three and four, the discipline of an athlete in verse five and the persistence of a farmer in verse six.

SOLDIER: Every believer pleases God if he enters service with the commitment of a soldier. This was a striking comparison for Paul because the Roman Soldier was selected for the legion's partially on his commitment to Rome and the Emperor. Soldiers who were committed fought harder, complained less and endured more than all others. They stood head and shoulders above the rest because their commitment was based upon a love for God and country and not personal glory.

To be a good soldier, Paul said young Timothy should be prepared to "endure hardness."(v3) with a sense of commitment and loyalty. Away from the families for months at a time, walking hundreds of miles to battle grounds and carrying over 60 pounds of gear as they marched, required a great amount of strength.

It also required a sense of commitment. In Paul's mind, commitment meant having a singleness of purpose. One goal, one mark, one prize is all that was before him, all others were secondary. He often rebuked those with multiple objectives as "double-minded." He described those who reached for their heavenly goal while pursuing

earthly goals as well, entangled themselves in a web of contradictions. Secular pursuits were deemed proper and necessary, but they were not perceived as the goal of a saint, which is to live to please God.

ATHLETE: Paul's reference to "masteries" and being "crowned" in verse five refers to the athletes in the Olympic games. They were given wreaths or crowns when they won the victory for their province or nation. Athletes were noted for their tremendous discipline. "If anyone strives for masteries," he says, "he is not crowned, except he strives lawfully." What is meant by "lawfully?" It is not enough that he enters into the service, that he is anointed, and even engages, unless he complies with all the laws of the exercise, with respect to diet, to temperance and sobriety, and all the rules of the wrestling school, unless, in short, he goes through all that is befitting for a wrestler, he is not crowned. And observe the wisdom of Paul. He mentions wrestlers and soldiers, the one to prepare him for slaughter and blood, the other with reference to endurance, that he might bear everything with fortitude, and be ever in exercise.

HUSBANDMAN: The husbandman of verse six refers to the very act of planting seeds and teaching others. The husbandman was one who planted. Paul notes that those who please God are those who plant and enjoy that which is planted themselves. Paul himself was a master teacher. He not only taught, but he enjoyed what he was teaching about and believed in it himself. Those who teach what they know about life please God. Yet the greater blessing is in the teacher who believes in and lives by the very tenants being proposed for others.

Pleasing God in Paul's sight involved commitment, discipline and a willingness to teach others the wealth of your personal experience and knowledge. When these three, combined with a knowledge of holiness and righteous living, work together they please God.

Pleasing God is a matter of refusing to entangle one's self with the world.

Pleasing God is a matter of training ourselves in sobriety, obedience and faithfulness.

To Please God

Using Paul's instruction to Timothy as a guide, every Saint that strives to please God must enter into his service in the same three ways.

COMMITMENT OF A SOLDIER: The Soldier serves to please the king. A Christian soldier serves to please God. A soldier who assumes a post in the Christian army does so with commitment. Those who accept assignments in various stations of duty in the church must do so with the same level of commitment. A Sunday School teacher assumes that role with utmost dedication and commitment. A committed teacher is loyal to God. The identity of the Sunday School Superintendent or the pastor does not matter. That commitment extends beyond mere personalities. An usher, choir member, or auxiliary worker that enters the service without commitment will not make a good soldier in God's army. That's why Paul warned Timothy to

"harden" himself for service. Those who are hardened are willing to do whatever is necessary to please the Lord. Rainy days, cold days and frustrating times are those that try our commitment. Times of turmoil and confusion, strain our patience and tax our endurance. These are the times that a good soldier's training pays off. Some go AWOL (Absent Without Leave). Some operate so poorly in the army that they are dishonorably discharged, which is the worse stigma that can be attached to man's record. It follows him wherever he goes. The good soldier is well trained, committed to the cause, follows leadership and carries out the orders of his commander and chief! Thus Paul uses this similitude to every believer; to be a good soldier for Jesus Christ.

DISCIPLINE OF AN ATHLETE: An athlete is the epitome of discipline. With respect to temperance, sobriety and attitude, athletes stand tall as Paul's second similitude of what it takes to please God. Any man or woman that enters the service of our Lord pleases him when they display self control, sober thinking and a positive attitude. Self control does not come without practice. Sober thinking is not hereditary. Positive attitudes are not accidents of birth. All of these are learned attributes, developed by grueling hours of practice, fueled by determination. A disciplined spirit is in control. When others are losing their heads in a wave of emotion, the disciplined man is able to sit quietly and respond appropriately. The disciplined mind is clear thinking and sober. It weighs ideas and considers alternatives and outcomes. The disciplined spirit is always positive because it knows that no matter what happens in life, Romans 8:28 says "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Thus, a saint who wants to please God must lead a disciplined, temperate life. He or she must be sober thinking and serious minded, pursuing the work of faith with gravity.

TEACHER OF TRUTHS, PLANTER OF SEEDS: Those who please God must be apt to teach. It is expected that every saint pass on to others the truths they have learned in the Christian life. Paul made it clear that the planter must first be a "partaker of the fruits" himself. That is the teacher lives by the precepts that he teaches to others and follows his own advice. Life's lessons are sometimes learned at the knee of a parent. Most often they are learned in the school of "hard knocks." Spiritual lessons are learned from long walks through the Valley of Baca, quiet evenings beside the still water, and lonely trips through the valley of the shadow of death. We learn the importance of life when we have been on the battlefield and seen the charred bodies of comrades and the tears of weeping widows. We learn the importance of caring for others when we have seen so much pain. "Love" becomes more than just a lesson to teach out of a book. Love becomes an "action" word that prompts the teacher to teach by precept and example. The good teacher motivates, inspires and sometimes angers his students. He plants seeds, like a good husbandman, to promote the growth of the kingdom.

God is pleased with a teacher that teaches his students to love in practice rather than in words.

God is pleased with a teacher that teaches that each person is important regardless of their station in life

God is pleased with a teacher that is bold enough to declare the truth, even if it is unpopular.

God is even more pleased when the precepts the teacher teaches are pages drawn from his own life experiences.

When He is Crowned

Finally we must consider verse five. Here Paul notes that no one who is calling himself a saint should expect to receive a crown unless he has lived by the book.

Through three different similitudes, Timothy was given the formula for pleasing God. Paul answered the question, before Timothy asked.

How do you please God? Enter into his service with a sense of divine commitment. It is a commitment that is not affected by adverse circumstance, but is tempered in determination.

Maybe it was the Christian soldier's commitment that the song writer had in mind when he said, "I'm on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I would serve him till I die, I'm on the battle field for my Lord."

How do you please God? Enter into his service with a made up mind!

It is a made up mind that prompts a saint, fresh from his sick bed to come inside of Zion's walls one more time!

It is a made up mind that inspires a love flame that can warm a marriage for nearly 50 years.

It is a made up mind that can drive a weary soul to work his fingers to the bone to buy trumpets, pay for piano lessons and put three children through school!

That's the kind of determination that the song writer had in mind when he said "I'm determined to follow Jesus, yes I am. Through hard trials, tribulations, persecutions, I am determined.."

How do you please God? You must know the commander and chief! In every federal building and military post, there is a picture of the President of the United States, he is the commander and chief of every soldier! Posted on the doorpost of every Christian soldier's heart is an indelible imprint of our commander in chief. Every Christian soldier knows the Lord! If you want to please the Lord, you must know God for yourself!

How do you please God? You must teach and testify every time you get a chance!

Tell them about Jesus! Tell them how he died!

Tell them how he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Tell them how he arose...Early Sunday morning with all power in his hands!

Power to enlist soldiers!Power to discharge soldiers!

Power to promote good soldiers to higher rank!

All power...in his hands!

On Sunday February 8, 1998, Willie McClinton was honorably discharged from the Christian service. He was a great teacher, well disciplined and sober thinking. His service pleased him who called him to be a soldier!

No. 694-Anniv.-Men

Men In Black

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 15, 1998

SCRIPTURE:We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine. Lam 5:9-10;Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. Lamentations 5:21

Introduction

Are Black men a defeated gender? Is it time to write the epitaph of the African American male? There are some that believe that the Black man has finally been defeated. The nay sayers of society stand at the grave side of African-American men and sprinkle statistics on their caskets as they bow to what they believe is the inevitable power of the oppressor over the oppressed.

Despite the ongoing myth that the Black man is defeated, there are tell tale signs that he is indeed live and well. Just when we were thinking that there were no men left we were jolted into reality a while back when one million Black men converged on Washington. Suddenly we have started seeing reports that more Black men are working than any time in our past. Black men are making more money than we have in our history. Generally, despite all of our problems, we are really doing much better than public opinion says we are. The sudden reminders serve as a wake up call. We are reminded that the "reports of our demise have been greatly exaggerated."

This society has played a mind game with African-American men. Mind games are tools for control. A baby elephant that travels with the circus is often tied with a chain to a cement pole in the ground. No matter how hard the elephant tries, it cannot succeed in uprooting the pole. Finally the baby elephant stops trying. As the years pass, the elephant becomes larger and stronger. In fact it is so strong that it can push down trees and ram its way through walls at will. Yet in nearly every circus the mammoth sized elephant can be tied to the back of a tent with a rope not much larger than a string. Why? Because the elephant has grown to an enormous size and power, his mind is still tied to that cement pole.

In a similar sense, that is the plight of African-American men today. We do not realize the full force of our presence because our minds are still tied to times when we were less powerful than we are today.

As Christians, we know that all things are possible. We are not dissuaded by any myths that limit our potential. With God as our guide we know that we can achieve

greatness in the eye sight of God and man. We don't waste our time lamenting our condition, but planning our victory, for we know that in the end, Ethiopia shall stretch her wings again!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Jeremiah as he mourns the fall of Israel and expresses hope that it will once again be restored to its former greatness.

Lamentations consists of five separate chapters or poems. In chapter 1 the prophet dwells on the manifold miseries oppressed by which the city sits as a solitary widow weeping sorely. In chapter 2 these miseries are described in connection with the national sins that had caused them. Chapter 3 speaks of hope for the people of God. The chastisement would only be for their good; a better day would dawn for them. Chapter 4 laments the ruin and desolation that had come upon the city and temple, but traces it only to the people's sins. Chapter 5 is a prayer and an expectation that Zion's reproach will be taken away in the repentance and recovery of the people.

According to tradition, Jeremiah retired after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to a cavern outside the Damascus gate, where he wrote this book. It is filled with mournings over the loss of power, prestige and national sovereignty by the people. They had been carried off to a foreign land. They were treated as second class citizens. They were forced to work for low wages. Their supply of food and water was scarce. They felt even worse because their men were unable to defend or provide for their families. They became totally dependent upon the government for their sustenance.

Their experience was like famine. It made them black on the outside, but even worse, they were black inside, defeated, destroyed and without hope.

Verse by verse Lamentations 5 listed off the details of Israel's Black experience.

Inheritance lost (v2) In exile in Babylon, the people were estranged from their native land and distant from their mother country.

Strength of the men destroyed. (v3) Their leaders and men had been successfully destroyed with respect to their roles as champions of their families and the nation. The men in their families were not dead, but for all practical purposes they could have been. Their lack of initiative left them "as" orphans and widows.

Lost the ability to provide for themselves. (v4) The people were no longer independent and self sufficient. They had become totally dependent upon the government of Babylon for even the wood for their fire places and water to drink.

Constant persecution. (v5). They felt that the foot of their oppressor was on their neck. They complained of persistent hard work without profit and little time to rest.

Sustained by handouts. (v6) They were reduced to asking for handouts from every source possible even former adversaries such as the Egyptians and the Assyrians.

Multiple Generations suffer (v7) Israel fell into hard times because of the sins and misdeeds of their grandfathers. They complained of the unfairness that a new

generation should still suffer for the misdeeds of others.

Servants rule (v8) Even persons that would have normally been their servants by reason of age or experience have authority over them. The situation exists with no leadership appearing anywhere to change the situation.

Hard times made them black. (v9) The bleakness of the experience made it difficult for them to survive. Everything they did, including earning a living became a daily challenge and struggle. Each day they faced danger of being persecuted, humiliated or destroyed. They lived in peril daily. They felt bad. They felt destroyed and helpless as if they lived under a black cloud of helplessness.

Lost Glory. (v16).They lamented that they had lost the glory of their forefathers. They no longer could boast the strength of character and accomplishment that was unique to them as a people. They too had sinned.

Return to God. (v20). Collectively they concluded that if they returned to God their condition could be turned and they would once again enjoy their great heritage of strength and valor.

Unwarranted Lament

Israel lamented, but it possessed the same keys for deliverance as their forefathers but never used them. The same is true today.

Despite overwhelming odds the men of our history made great accomplishments by resisting every attempt to reduce their willingness to achieve. Many attempts were made, but for the most part, our men have shown an amazing ability to overcome adversity and stand strong. The most successful tool that has been used against us however, has been the "mind game."

The mind game is psychological. It is a tool that alters your self concept and perception. The mind game is so destructive that it can keep an entire race in subjugation with little or no effort.

Historically, attempts have been made to reduce our sense of self worth by teaching us that the only thing good that could have possibly come out of Africa is grass skirts and witch doctors. But in our own circles we defeated the myths through oral histories that told of the great African kings that built pyramids both in central Africa and in Egypt. We kept reminding ourselves of our art, ability to organize, govern and manage ourselves. We would not allow our enemies to reduce our sense of self worth.

We were taught that is was destined for us to be slaves, but we defied the false teaching. Generally we were taught that it was God's will that we should be slaves. They pointed to Noah's three sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth, noting that God cursed the descendants of Ham to be slaves forever. They referred to Genesis 9:25 "And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." They attributed the words to God instead of Noah and told us we were destined to be second class forever. We resisted the mind game, even in our enslavement. We couldn't read but we heard encouraging words from those who engineered of the

underground railroad, that Christianity did not support the enslavement of any person that all men are equal in the sight of God, in fact all men are brothers. In secret meetings, we resisted the mind game.

The African-American man has always been Black but he has resisted draping himself in the self defying myths designed to defeat him. Thus, we are Black men but not men in black.

Today the myth that is being perpetuated is that there are no Black men. It's another mind game that is being played on a new generation. It is even more dangerous however, because of the availability of the mass media to spread the message fast. Through music, literature, movies and videos the myth is being perpetuated in the Black community that a Black man is worthless. The phrase, "A black man ain't nothing" is repeated more times in our circles than it should be. Even some of our women have bought into the myth by teaching their children to say derogatory things about their fathers, instead of holding up his finer qualities for them to see, even in his absence. Despite the fact that in every community there are thousands of working Black men who are loyal to their wives, pay their bills and taxes and obey the law, many still perpetuate the myth that there are no Black men. Obviously our men are endangered. There are growing influences that are attempting to strip them of their place in the family, role in the community and boot them from the leadership circles of every community. There is no doubt that our men are under attack, but we do exist in large numbers. It is a myth to believe that our families don't need a man. The family may survive without one, but survival and a quality experience are not one in the same.

In every community the Black men of our history worked hard to insure that each new generation of Black men was strong. Masonic groups, fraternal organizations, civic and church groups organized a net work of activities to mentor the boys, show them the way and to give them hope. Churches organized Jr. Laymen, shepherd boys, Ambassadors and scouting. Community groups organized a plethora male oriented programs, all designed to help fight the myth and keep hope alive. Today, we must not lose the key that was successful for the men of our history. We must not become so busy that we neglect the importance of preparing the next generation of men to stand guard. If we do, we will wake up one day lamenting the devastation of our situation rather than rejoicing at our accomplishments.

We are Black men, but we are not men wallowing in the blackness of defeating self talk and crippling myths.

We Hold The Keys

The men of Lamentations lost sight of the one element that helped their grandfathers and great grandfathers succeed despite overwhelming odds. They had a sustained faith in God. It was that faith that helped them, despite the odds.

When they spent 400 years in slavery and walked out of Egypt as free men, it was not by their own power, but the power of an almighty God.

When they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years without crops to harvest or wells to fill their cisterns, when they were fed bread from heaven and quail meat every day, it was not by their own power but the power of an almighty God.

When they marched around the walls of Jericho without military training or armaments, the walls came tumbling down, not by their own efforts but by the power of an almighty God.

When Gideon assembled a small army of 300 men and defeated a force of thousands without the loss of a single man, it was not by his own works that he was victorious, but by the power of God.

Without the power of God, we are reduced to being men in black. The signals of our troubling times seem to tell us that too many of our men are wearing the wrong colors because many have strayed away from the Lord.

Without the Lord, all we have are:

MEN IN BLACK-Who are lamenting their problems but taking no action

MEN IN PINK-Who have given up on being men all together and are now Black men wearing panty hose!

MEN IN YELLOW -Who have lost the courage to stand up for themselves and are defeated on every hand!

MEN IN BLUE Who get up every day complaining about hard times and singing a somebody done me wrong song!

MEN IN GREEN-Who have plunged themselves into greedy pursuits willing to do anything to make a little money.

MEN IN GRAY -Who are going to funerals every day. Dying by their own hands, in drive bys and fits of violence.

MEN IN RED-Who have decided that the only thing important in life is to party, get drunk and get high

MEN IN PURPLE-Who have become power hungry. Their quest is to rule, control, dominate and pull the strings. The only ones who usually benefit is themselves.

MEN IN WHITE-Who have forgotten who they are and where they come from. They are willing to trade their heritage for a bowl of porridge.

I don't know about you, but I have concluded that if we are to higher we don't need men in Black, brown or blue. What we need is men in the colorless cross of Christ.

No wonder the song writer declares, "Jesus keep me near the cross, there's a precious fountain. Free to all a healing stream that flows from Calvary's mountain!"

In the cross, it's not black and it's not white!

In the cross, which is neither yellow, or brown!

In the cross be my glory ever!

On an old rugged cross Jesus died for our sins!

But early Sunday morning he arose with victory!

Hold your head up high, men!

Don't wallow in the blackness of despair!

The God you serve is still on the throne!

No. 695-Youth

You Gotta Represent

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 22, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. Acts 22:14-15

Introduction

Have you ever been asked to represent someone else? A person who represents is a person who is presented as a stand in or substitute for someone else. The representative is usually delegated certain privileges and authorities to act, participate or stand in for another.

A popular song today says, "You gotta represent!" In the vernacular of Hip Hop to "represent" means to be worthy of your selection. "You gotta represent!" means you must live up to the expectations of the person or persons who deemed you worthy.

We are familiar with representatives. An ambassador is a person that represents his country in another. Our elected officials are representatives in national, state and local government. Senators, representatives, councilmen and aldermen all represent large numbers of people as government leaders. They are generally chosen by others to speak or act in their place. Lawyers are representatives. They stand before the courts of our nation and take actions on the behalf of clients who authorize them to act on their behalf. Athletes represent the sponsors of teams and competitors of all sorts often carry the banners of their nations and communities as they symbolize the hopes and dreams and best achievement of others.

Youth are often called upon to represent. School athletes carry the banners of the local school. They are more than just athletes, they symbolize all that a particular school teaches about good sportsmanship, fair play and competition. Student leaders are called upon more than any others to speak, not only for their schools, but often they are asked to represent the interest of youth on committees and other planning vehicles. Student leaders represent the best that their schools have to offer. That's why teachers and school administrators exercise a pivotal role in the selection of student leaders, regardless of their popularity. Student council members are often called upon as ambassadors of goodwill for their respective schools. Persons who are school fools or criminal in nature will rarely get selected as a student leader. They

simply don't represent the highest ideals for which the institution stands.

What if you are a young Christian? Do you have to represent? Young Christians have been chosen to represent Jesus Christ in their generation. That is an honor greater than serving on the school Student Council. It's even greater than representing the school on the all state football team. As a representative for Christ on the school campus, what young Christians do and say symbolizes the highest ideals of Christianity. Thus, if you are a representative, "you gotta represent!"

As Christians, we are proud to witness for the cross of Christ. We are proud because he has given us the opportunity to show and tell others about his goodness and greatness. Because we love him so much we are compelled to conduct ourselves as his ambassadors, both young and old. We are his witnesses so, we "gotta represent!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he details the events that caused him to become one of the greatest representatives of Jesus Christ.

Paul was a frequent subject of controversy among the Jews. For most of his life his name represented "persecution." He made it a life pursuit at one point to jail and imprison as many Christians as he could. When Stephen was killed he held the coats of those that did the actual stoning. Whenever persecutions occurred, it seemed Paul, under his former name "Saul," was close by. Pretty soon his name began to represent persecution, trouble and evil.

While on a journey to Damascus, he encountered Christ himself. It was a spell binding experience that that left him blind for three days. He was alone and an introvert. He studied, prayed and asked God to restore him. God restored both his sight and life with a new direction and meaning. He changed his name from Saul to Paul and began to represent the cause of Christ.

Immediately his actions were suspect. Wherever he went he was pointed out for that which he was known and persecuted. Often he was falsely accused by those who hated what he represented and false charges were brought against him.

That is the case of the 22nd chapter of Acts. Paul is being falsely accused of disrespecting the faith. The charge is purely is false It is purely circumstantial, cooked up out of false evidence. He is charged with being anti-Judaistic, i.e., against the religion of Judaism. And further, they invented the accusation that he had defiled the temple by bringing gentiles into it. They were upset at the very idea. Their outcry results in Paul's arrest.

Given a chance to speak, Paul tells the crowd his story of first representing the enemies of the cross,then seeing Christ for himself and then becoming a witness to the goodness of God.

Though it occurred thirty years before, he had never forgotten a single detail. He recalls it all as vividly as if it had happened yesterday.

His experience pushed him to understand that he was chosen to know the will

of God. Knowing the will of God, he chose to represent that perfect will rather than the evil presence he had formerly represented. There on the Damascus Road, Paul said, he learned he had to make a choice of whom to represent. Though his history would never be changed, his present and future had unalterably been changed. He would never be the same again. Regardless to what was done to him, he felt compelled to represent and witness for the cause of Christ.

This explains his motivation. It identifies the drive with which he pursued his calling. It pushed him ceaselessly, out into the far regions of the earth, performing his apostolic ministry.

Though crowds were filled with bitterness against him, he stood for Jesus.

Though he was sometimes jailed and often persecuted, he stood for Jesus.

It was if he was compelled and driven by an unseen hand. No matter what came against him, Paul never missed an opportunity to witness for Jesus. He stood firm. He stood determined to do the will of God and to witness for him. It was as if he said in his heart, "I've gotta represent!"

Representing

It's important to every young person in these times to "represent." If one represents he's *"dope."* If she represents in a great way she's *"tight!"* If the representative really did it in a big way, it was "the bomb!" Representing is important.

BE CAREFUL WHO WE REPRESENT: The very definition of representing, suggests that we are acting on behalf of someone else. Therefore, youth should remember whom they represent. The first line of representing is the family. Every action or deed a youth takes represents his family. When a student walks through the door of a school he represents the honor, integrity, achievement and standards of his family. African-American students go even further, each time they venture outside of our community, whether they want to or not, they represent the entire African-American community. The same is true of every minority group. The accomplishments or misdeeds of every person who achieves even limited notoriety are generally attributed to the entire race. There are some who reject the notion that they represent others. They claim that "I represent myself. If they don't like what I do, then tough!" In reality however, a person can present himself, but in the act of presenting himself, he ends up representing others.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO MISREPRESENT: Just as it is important to represent, young Christians must be aware that it is possible to misrepresent. A misrepresentation is something that is not a true reflection. A student from a God fearing home, with a history of respect for authority, misrepresents when he or she cusses a teacher or defies school officials. She represents someone, but she obviously misrepresents her family. A student who represents his school at a conference or meeting but shows little intelligence and self control, misrepresents the entire school. His representation shifts to another group while officially representing another. Some forget whom it was they represented and sometimes misrepresent themselves.

THOSE WHO FAIL TO REPRESENT CAN BE RECALLED: A person may be given an opportunity to represent, but that opportunity can easily be taken away. In the Olympics and professional sports, we have seen athletes who fail to meet certain standards, barred from competition or ejected from games. Elected officials who fail to represent their constituents satisfactorily are often the subject of recall elections. Students that fail to represent the ideals and principles of the school by committing crimes or acts of violence are generally stripped of the right to represent the school in any way, by expulsion.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH MUST REPRESENT CHRIST: Youth who claim Jesus Christ on Sunday, must represent him Monday through Saturday. It is not enough for youth to sing in the church choir, serve as Junior Deacons, usher or participate in religious worship services, youth should remember they are now official representatives of Christ in their generation.

When the youth of your group decide to party hard and get drunk, you gotta represent!

When others are using profane language and using obscene gestures, you gotta represent!

When your friends are making plans to have sex and invite you to participate, you gotta represent!

When others in your class disrespect teachers and school authorities, you gotta represent!

If you go along with wrong doing, to avoid being disliked, you misrepresent!

You must remember who you are and to whom you belong. As a young Christian, you belong to Christ. He purchased your salvation with his own blood on Calvary. 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 says, "ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Christian youth are God's pride and joy and he expects them to represent him and witness for him constantly. 1 Peter 2:9 puts it this way, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:"

Tell What you know

Once Paul had stopped his old way and began to represent Christ in a new and bold way, he was criticized by those who did not believe he was "for real" and disliked by those whom he had abandoned. Despite the criticism he received, he went forward because he was confident that God was pleased. He had a story to tell and despite what others thought or how unpopular he might become he concluded that he had to witness for Christ. In essence Paul said, "I've gotta represent!"

Today, Christian youth have the same challenge, to witness for God in these troublesome times.

None of us should delude ourselves into thinking that these are anything less than troublesome times.

These are NILLI VANILLI times, when we don't know whether what we have is real!

These are PLAY STATION times, where some youth spend more time getting joysticks in their hands than they do getting their homework in their heads.

These are FREAKY times,when youth are encouraged to freak all day and to freak all night as long as they are careful to put a Trojan on the soldier!

These are BEAVIS AND BUTHEAD times, when youth are challenged to think ugly and talk dirty!

These are BART SIMPSON times, when youth are encouraged to do less than their best, talk back to their parents and praise under achievement!

These are 2PAC times, when youth are encouraged to live dangerously, risk death and wonder if heaven has a ghetto.

From head shoulder knee to toe there is only one way to go...you gotta represent!

Every Christian youth should say in his or her mind, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!"

All of my friends may decide to act a fool and get themselves in trouble, but I've got to represent!

When all around me are cheating and stealing to make it through life, I've got to represent!

When my friends are disrespecting their teachers, talking back to those who have authority over them and showing insolent attitudes, I can't be a part because, I've got to represent!

I've got to represent because "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save and fit it for the sky!"

I may only be 13 years years old, but I've got a story to tell!

I may only be a high school student, but I've got a story to tell!

A little while ago I joined the church and gave God my hand. On that day I said to the world, "For God I'll live and for God I'll die"

So you can say what you want to say about me, but I've got to represent!

Cut me out of your social circles and clubs, but I've got to represent!

Persecute me and isolate me if you want to but the word of God says "Matthew 5:10 says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:.....". Matthew 5:10-12

Call me everything but a child of God, but I've got to represent!

I have decided that the Lord has been so good to me, that I've got to represent!

The one I represent, came down to this earth about 2000 years ago!

The one I represent, lived among men for 33 long years!

The one I represent, was crucified on an old rugged cross!

The one I represent, was buried in a borrowed tomb!

The one I represent, arose early on Sunday morning!

I have decided to represent for Jesus!

No. 696-Inspiration

A Saint's Secret Connection

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and visions of thy head upon thy bed are these;" Daniel 2:28; "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:29

Introduction

Are you ever tempted to dial those psychic connection phone numbers you see on television? Do you want to know the secrets of your destiny? The commercials are compelling. Those who watch them are lured into calling a special number for several minutes of free consultation that easily turns into paid time. The persons in the commercials purport to tell you everything about yourself without knowing you, even secrets that no one knew but yourself. There are many, out of curiosity, who have made those calls and showered the voices on the phone with questions, "Will he leave me?" "Is there another woman?" "Will I be happy?", "Will I find a good wife?" Of course the psychic claims to have the gift and will use it to show you the future ...for a price. The obvious conclusion we are expected to reach is that any person who could know personal and private information about us that is singular in scope, must be endowed with special gifts.

A glance at the daily newspaper tells us that modern life is still infected by the ancient practice of astrology. Guests on talk shows discuss their astrological signs with the same ease that they discuss their divorces. Late-night television offers the services of stargazers by telephone at four dollars a minute. The wife of a recent president of the United States consulted an astrologer for advice on the travel schedule for her husband.

This fascination we have with astrologers did not just begin. It has been around for quite some time. As a young man, Augustine (354-430) consulted astrologers. In later years, however, he opposed the practice. Because astrology assumes that the position of the stars at the time of our birth determines personality and the course of our life, Augustine asked, "Why, in the life of twins—in their actions, the events that befall them, their professions, arts, honors, and other things pertaining to human

life, as well as in their very deaths—is there often so great a difference that, as far as these things are concerned, many entire strangers are more like them than they are like each other?"

As we have grown to understand life better we have learned that our lives aren't shaped by lifeless stars, but by the God who created the stars and us as well. So believers don't waste time seriously consulting psychic connections, because we put our trust and confidence in God. He has revealed to us in the Bible our destiny in Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we have a connection. It is not mystical or psychic. Our connection is Jesus. He knows all about us, even more than we know about ourselves. Whenever we are in doubt, we simply call on Jesus and he reveals to us the secrets of life according to his divine will!

Exposition

This text focuses on Daniel as he calls upon God to reveal the secret of the king's dream.

Daniel had been taken into captivity into Babylon. He, along with three friends, were mere teenagers but were respected for having great wisdom despite their years. Daniel was one of the few prophets that recorded the prophetic visions given to them about things to come and as such has become respected for giving us pictures of the future state of the world.

In chapter 2 we are presented with the story of the great dream vision of King Nebuchadnezzar. He dreams one night of a great image of a man with a strange body. He had a head of gold, shoulders of silver, mid-section of brass, legs of iron, and feet of a clay and iron mixture. It was a troubling dream. What made it even more troubling is the fact that the king forgot his dream. The king called in the wise men and asked them to tell him not only the interpretation, but the dream as well. The astrologers, soothsayers and the sorcerers of Babylon were totally unable to come up with anything. The nature of their craft was to draw an interpretation from a known fact or occurrence. They were not equipped to both tell the king the dream and interpret it at the same time!

Obviously, if the king couldn't tell them the dream, then they couldn't dream up an interpretation. Thus, their lives were in danger.

Daniel was placed in the middle of this situation. Again God's man was pressured and threatened with death if he could not provide the answer to the dream. Not only did Daniel face the prospect of death but so did all of the wise men of Babylon.

Confident that God would give him the answer Daniel volunteered to give the king both the dream and its interpretation. True enough, God revealed to him both of the secrets, in time to save the lives of all involved.

Daniel gave the credit for his action to God. He told the king and all others that would hear him that he was not the source of the revelation, that it came from God. As he told the meaning of the dream, he also attributed theinterpretation to God as

well.

God is, said Daniel, a revealer of secrets.

The Prophet Amos bears out the truth that God reveals secrets. In Amos 3:7 he records, "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets." In Amos 4:13, he added "He who forms the mountains, creates the wind and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth the Lord God Almighty is his name."

In the New Testament the fact that God knows all about us, is repeated constantly. It is dramatically demonstrated in the incident in which Christ met the woman at the well. Here a woman came to the well, with an innocent look, but soon found that a stranger knew her life story and her present condition. This woman had a dark secret. She had been married many times and was living with a man with whom she was not married. It was probably known by some, but a stranger would not have known. It could only have been revealed by God himself. The woman received the water of life and ran through the city shouting, "Come see a man! Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

Whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, God is a revealer of secrets. He provides answers to life's disturbing questions. We can't hide from him, he knows what we don't others to know. He Knows all about us!

God Knows

When Daniel told the king that God was a revealer of secrets, he also told him something, by way of suggestion, that is very important: "In order to reveal secrets, God must first know them!" The fact that God knows everything about everybody and everything is called is omniscience. There is nothing that escapes his knowledge. There is no act that is unseen or unnoted. There is no thought that goes unnoticed. What we think is a secret to most people, but God knows. Every believer should remember that:

God knows Our Works: A saint does the work of a believer without calling attention to himself. The saint's greatest quest is to "do the work of him that sent me." It does not matter whether anyone else knows about the work, only that God knows. When John was told to write letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor one of the first statements God made to the churches was this: "I know thy works!" He spoke to the church at Thyatira and said, in Revelation 2:19 "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." To the Church as Laodecia he said "I know thy works" and chastise them for being Lukewarm. David in Psalm 139:2 said, "Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." None of our good deeds and Godly actions escape. He even knows our intentions and the desires of our heart. No matter how secret we may desire for them to be or how unintelligible our thoughts and deeds may be to others, God knows!

God knows Our Sins: While we work desperately to keep our sins from being

known by others, there is one from whom we cannot hide! It is true that God knows about our good works, deeds and thoughts, but he also knows about our secret sins. Moses, in Psalm 90:8 said, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Our past is an open book to God. We may have torn out a few pages or smudged a few beyond recognition, but God knows! He knows about every unconfessed lie, act of thievery, adultery, abortion and every other sin that we have attempted to hide from everyone. God knows! That's why Jesus could approach the woman at the well and tell her about her secret sins, God knows!

God Knows about our Burdens: While it may appear at times that God ignores us, we must also remember that God knows about our burdens and concerns. God knows about our illnesses. He knows about our financial problems. He knows about the problems in our marriage that we have not shared with anyone. He knows about the spiritual war that is going on inside of us. He knows about the frustration that some feel about their jobs. He knows about the secret fears that some have about aging and facing the prospect of death. Though these fears have not been shared with a soul, God knows! Not only does God know, but cares. Maybe that's what Roberta Martin had in mind when she wrote the words, "Though the load gets heavy you're never left alone to bear it all. Ask for strength and keep on toiling, though the tear drops fall. You have the joy of this assurance. The heavenly father will always answer prayer and he know, yes he knows, just how much you can bear!

It is no secret

Finally brothers and sisters, while we know that God knows the secrets of life and the universe, we must also consider that God is a keeper of secrets.

As mere human beings it is hard for us to keep a secret, but God can. Many have confided in their friends only to learn that their friends have shared their secrets with others.

It's safe to see the Lord about our secret fears, because we are not telling him anything that he does not already know.

He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our griefs and sins to bear. What a privelege to carry everything to God in prayer!

If you tell secrets to a friend, all he can give you is sympathy, but when you tell the Lord, he can change things.

That's why we sing "I must tell Jesus. I must tell Jesus, I cannot bear these burdens alone. I must tell Jesus. Jesus can help me, Jesus alone!"

One of the hardest secrets to keep is when the Lord has done something for you!

Mark 7:36 gives an account of a man who was deaf and dumb who was brought to Jesus. Jesus stuck his finger in the man's year and touched his tongue and the man began to speak for the first time. Jesus told him to keep it a secret, but more he tried to keep the secret the more he ran through the streets praising God.

When the Lord has been good to you, you got to tell somebody!

When he has picked you up and turned you around, you got to tell somebody!
When he has planted your feet on solid ground, you got to tell somebody!
When you testify what God has done, every saint starts rejoicing!
When you bless God for cleaning up your life, every saint says Amen, because the secret is out!
When you tell the world how the Lord has blessed your family, the saint's shout hallelujah, because the secret it out!
When you tell the world how good God has been, the saints clap their hands because the secret is out!
It is no secret what God can do, what he's done for others, he'll do for you!
Every saint has a secret connection, that can make a way out of no way!
A secret connection who becomes a shelter in a time of storm!
A secret connection that lightens burdens and carries heavy loads!
His name is no secret!
His name is Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus! My Rock in a weary land!
Jesus!, My bridge over troubling water!
Jesus! Who died on Calvary but arose early Sunday morning!
The secret it out!
If you call on the name of Jesus...
He will reveal the secret path to the abundant life!

No. 697-Funeral

A Good Deacon's Reward

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "For they that have used the office of deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 3:13

Introduction

How would like a job that worked you very hard but paid you nothing? Suppose this job required you to be on call 24 hours a day? Suppose it required you to use your own car without payment for gas, repairs or mileage? What if it required you to be absent frequently from your family and often exposed you to undo criticisms and unfair comments. Suppose this job often made you sick with worry about the concerns of others. If you saw a want ad for such a job would you respond to it? Could any person actually "desire" such a job..for life?

Many today take the office of deacon in a church lightly. Some think it is only a post for a person to pray or read scriptures during a worship service or count the collections afterward. It's such a easy job that we feel that anyone that has reasonable good sense can do it well. Consider three men who saw a set of tracks and argued with each other as to the kind of tracks they were. "They are duck tracks!" Shouted one man with great confidence, "I'd know them anywhere!" The second man shook his head in disagreement. "They are too big to be duck tracks, they are chicken tracks! They have to be!" The two men argued back and forth between themselves until they both turned and asked the third man who was always the wisest of them, "What kind of tracks are these?" The third man took a moment to think, then said, "These are not chicken tracks, but all three of us will be dead ducks if we don't move soon, because these are railroad tracks and here comes the train!" Obviously, deacons must be persons who have enough sense to know what track the church is on!

The Old Testament picture of Moses standing on the side of the mountain holding his arms up high is clear to most bible scholars. In that image we see Moses upraised arms as the call to victory for the people. As Moses tired and his hands dropped, the people lost their battles. To insure victory, two men, Aaron and Hur, sat Moses on a stone as they held up his heavy hands until the sun went down. As Moses tired, they held up his hands, but there is no record as to who held up the hands of Aaron and Hur. These men are given as examples of the role of deacons, holding

up the pastor's heavy hands, while counting on God alone to give them the strength to get the job done.

Deacons are not compensated for their service. As extensions of the pastor, they represent him as they visit the sick, feed the hungry, comfort the lonely and provide support for those who feel abandoned. It is often a thankless job. Yet, while there is no pay check for those men and women who serve as deacons and deaconesses in the church, there is a reward. That reward is not given by men and is not subject to any withholding or deductions. Every good deacon, like every good Christian, expects his reward to come after this life has ended as he steps up a degree to a higher reward.

As Christians, we know that when we have fought a good fight and finished our course that we have a degree of reward. Those who have distinguished themselves with an effective ministry to others have reason to expect to hear the welcomed words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Thou hath been faithful over a few things, I will make thee a ruler over many. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains how a good deacon is rewarded in the sight of God and man.

Paul explained the qualities that should be sought in a person desiring to serve as a pastor. He then described the attributes necessary for persons to serve as lay ministers or deacons and deaconesses of a congregation. It was expected that the lay ministers would exhibit many of the same attributes of pastors in terms of morality, spirituality, dedication to the word, ability to manage their personal lives and those of their children, while maintaining a clear focus on their service to the house of God as well. Moreover, Paul emphasized the importance of a good reputation and character as qualifications of a good deacon. He also emphasized that deacons should not be greedy, foul mouthed or silly but serious minded, grave and full of the Holy Ghost, maintaining loyalty to one spouse.

The first 12 verses of 1Timothy chapter three addresses the qualifications of a person to serve as a pastor or deacon, prior to their service. However, verse 13 focuses on the completion of service. The chapter begins with the words "If a man desire.." which indicates preparation. Verse 13 begins with "for they that have used the office of a deacon well." It shifts to the past tense, indicating that Paul was looking to a point after the active service has ended.

Verses 8-12 tells what is needed to become a deacon. Acts chapter 6, tells what a deacon should do. His duties require him to attend to the details of the church and minister to the needs of its membership, freeing his pastor to attend to the preparation of the Word. Having done that, verse 13 tells what to expect after a good deacon's life service has ended.

Paul said those who have served well as a deacon, "purchase to themselves, a good degree." That literally means that they acquire a step up, to a higher degree.

This higher degree that a deacon would achieve was not literal. There was no church hierarchy at the time that Paul wrote. There was no military style chain of command for a deacon to move to a higher position or job in the church. The higher degree that would be acquired would be outside of the physical church. It would be outside of the realm of the tangible. A good degree refers to a measure of accomplishment in the eye of God.

Great Boldness: The deacon who serves well not only acquires a higher degree but a "great boldness." A great boldness is literally a good standing place, a well grounded hope, a secure faith. A deacon who serves well prepares himself to stand before God with boldness, faith and confidence that he has performed the work well and finished the course. As an example of that boldness and confidence, Paul wrote Timothy a second time and demonstrated his own boldness when he said in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 "I'm ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Thus, the scope of a good deacon's mission and expectation is explained. Those who serve and serve well, can expect to stand boldly before God and receive a higher reward!

Measuring A Good Deacon

How does one sum up the life work of a deacon? He can only be judged by the standards specified in the Word of God. It will be the measuring stick by which he will be measured when he stands before God. It's what determines whether he has earned the designation of a "good" degree.

HE WILL BE MEASURED BY HIS SALVATION: A man who serves as a deacon must meet the biblical qualifications. More than anything else he must be born again. He must know the Lord for himself. It doesn't matter about his past, but his present must be one that indicates that he is totally committed to building the kingdom of God. The good deacon has a testimony that speaks of commitment to the cross and his determination to live for God.

HE WILL BE MEASURED BY HIS CHARACTER: He must be a serious minded person. He must understand the seriousness of his task and approach it with a dedicated spirit. His personality must be of such that he speaks the truth, even if it is not politically correct to do so. This requires a unique strength of character.

He must be sober in his thinking and in his conduct. He cannot be one who is intoxicated with liquors or inebriated by the concerns of the world. He should not be excited by money and worldly possessions to the point that they consume his thoughts and actions.

Since becoming a Christian, he should have a blameless reputation. He should not be viewed as a backslider or a person who is a "Sunday" Christian. He should reflect the fact that he holds the mystery of the faith close to his heart.

He should demonstrate the love and fidelity that Christ has for the church through his love for his wife. His faithfulness to his wife should be unquestionable and should extend until God calls one or the other to glory. His devotion and attention to the development of Christian attitudes among those of his household should be an example for others to follow. His children should be under his leadership. His household should reflect Christian attitudes and spirit.

In short, the deacon who stands before God will be measured to see if he actually met the qualifications for his post or whether he was chosen for other reasons.

HE WILL BE MEASURED BY HIS SERVICE: The deacon will also be measured by his service. His primary role as a deacon is to assist his pastor in handling the multitude of details related to managing the church as well as ministering to the needs of the sick, spiritually wounded, aggrieved and others in need of spiritual assistance. Contrary to popular opinion, the good deacon serves in the field, he does not sit on a board where all is required is for him to make an appearance from time to time.

The good deacon is supportive of his pastor. As an extension of his pastor in spirit and service he gives his pastor the benefit of public support and private, personal criticism if necessary. He is strong enough to differ as to methods, but humble enough to accept his pastor's leadership.

The good deacon regularly visits the sick and the wounded in his area. The good deacon is rarely absent from any gatherings of the congregation because he is aware that he is an example to those who look to him for leadership. The good deacon helps the poor, is a friend to the young and is a champion of the cause of those whom Christ described as the "least of these my brethren."

The good deacon ministers to the spiritual needs of the congregation through prayer and supplications. He is comfortable in prayer and does not neglect opportunities to pray for the congregation.

The good deacon's concern is first to his family and congregation, but it extends even to his neighbors and the general community. His concern prompts him to become involved in the betterment of his community, without neglecting his service to his family or church. Anything that makes life better for the saints attracts his attention.

The deacon who stands before God must give an account of his record of service.

Our Life Work Will Be Rewarded

Finally, brothers and sisters, when the books are open and each servant is asked to give an account of his service, the statement may be made, "Servant give an account of your stewardship!"

The servant who has done well, won't need to filibuster, stammer or study, but the words of the song writer might come to mind, "May the service I've done, speak for me."

"When I've done the best I can and my friends don't understand, may the work I've done speak for me."

"The work I've done seems so small, seems like nothing at all. But when I stand before my God, I want to hear him say well done, may the work I've done speak for me!"

I'm so glad that the rewards that God plans for the righteous are not reserved for a certain class of believer. I'm glad to know that when the call goes out to bring out the long white robes it won't be for deacons alone.

I'm glad to know that when the golden crowns are brought forward, they won't be reserved for preachers and Sunday School teachers alone. For Paul said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Every saint of God expects to receive a crown of righteousness when he or she has given the Lord their best.

If you have been a good choir member, one of these days, the call is going to come, "come on up a little higher!

If you've been a good usher, serving Sunday after Sunday, one of these days the call is going to come, "come on up a little higher!"

If you've been a faithful member of the prayer band, praying from your soul, one of these days, the call is going to come... "come on up a little higher!"

Servant, I watched you down there! I saw you serving others when you needed to be served yourself!

Servant, I watched you down there! I saw you walking to the homes of the weary, when you couldn't even wear shoes on your feet!

Servant, I watched you down there. I saw you lifting others up in prayer when you could hardly catch your breath!

I'm so glad that God's got a place for every good servant. It doesn't matter whether you were a deacon. It doesn't matter whether you are a choir member. It doesn't matter whether you were just a faithful follower in the pew!

God's got .....

A place, Where the wicked will cease from troubling!

A place, where the weary will be at rest!

A place, where every mountain will be made low!

A place, where every valley shall be exalted!

A place, guaranteed by Jesus!

Jesus, Who carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early! Early!

Early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hand!

On Wednesday February 25, 1998, John Joseph James, Sr. was called to stand before his God. He served his family, his church and his community well. He was a good deacon.

No. 698-Communion

What's That Nailed To The Cross?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 15, 1998

SCRIPTURE: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Collossians 2:14-15

Introduction

Do you find it difficult to forgive an offense that a person makes against you? Is it possible to forgive and forget? One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life is to learn to forgive offenses that have been made against us. It's easier to talk about such actions than it is to actually carry them out. Some find it easy to say the words "I forgive you!" but find it more difficult to actually do what the words imply. For some the ability to forgive is based on the depth of the offense. They find it easy to forgive small offenses where nothing more than pride was lost. However the more quantitative the loss, the more difficult is the process of forgiveness.

A spouse that has been the victim of adultery wrestles with the question of forgiveness. Someone who threatens or injures a loved one finds forgiveness comes slow. Those who have lost loved ones to violent acts of drunk drivers or criminals are slow to forgive. Sometimes, if we have had a bad experience, its really hard to forgive the person responsible. Consider the country judge who came to court angry one Monday morning. It seems that he had trouble with two new hound dogs that were left on his steps by a stranger. Since the judge loved to hunt, he readily put the dogs with the rest of his fine set of hounds. Over the weekend these new dogs went crazy. They escaped the pen and got into the chicken yard and killed his prized blue ribbon rooster. They dug a hole under the fence and got into his rabbit yard, killing and maiming dozens of his pet rabbits. The dogs almost wrecked his farm.

The judge looked over the crowd of suspects that were standing before him with a stern eye and called for the first case. A short man came before him grinning. The judge said, "You have been charged with criminal mischief, what do you have to say for yourself?" The man, feeling pretty secure, said "Judge, you don't know me, but I wouldn't hurt a flea, why I'm the one that gave you those two hound dogs the other

day!" Angered, the judge said, "Guilty as charged! That'll be six months in jail! You were doing pretty good until you reminded me why today is a bad day!" Sometimes we are pretty good with forgiving and forgetting, until someone brings it up, then we start all over again!

Suppose God held his animosity and anger toward us as long as we hold it against other people. What if, years after we have committed a sin, that God continued to be angry with us and treated us coldly and distantly because of that offense? If God said he would forgive us for our sins but never forgets them and continues to hold them against us? Wouldn't that be terrible!

As Christians, we know that we must learn to forgive and forget. In the flesh, that is a difficult task. However, if we let the Holy Spirit guide us, it becomes very easy. God has forgiven us and nailed our past to the cross. We should do the same for others.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he instructs the Colossians on the nature of their new relationship with Christ, free of the restrictions and condemnations of the past.

Jewish Christians were caught between two worlds. They were obedient, God fearing Jews who kept the commandments of Moses to the letter. They adhered to both the moral law, embodied in the Ten Commandments, and the ceremonial laws as well. As they were introduced to Christianity however, many felt obligated to carry out the dictates of the Mosaic law, while at the same time living under the new dispensation offered by Christianity. In this way, they would get the best of both worlds.

However, Paul charged them to turn loose their allegiance to the Mosiac ceremonial law because they were freed from that obligation in Christ. He took the same positions when he was writing the Romans, Galatians and the Ephesians. His message was simple: "The old way has been nailed to the cross!" The old "you" that was defined as sinful by the law has being "nailed to the cross!" The new you is stronger, bolder and free because of Christ.

Paul declared the forgiveness of sins for which the law, the "written code with its regulations," condemned us. That condemnation has been removed by the death of Christ on our behalf. He paid for all our sins, the sins we committed in the past, the sins we are going to commit to day, and the sins we shall commit in the future. Sin is no longer an issue in our relationship with God. It affects our fellowship but not our relationship. He has fully dealt with it.

Blotted out. What did the death of Christ on the Cross actually accomplish? It blotted out our sins. Blotted out literally means "having wiped out" which is coincident in time with "having forgiven you" in verse 13 (Col 2:13); hereby having canceled the law's indictment against us. The law was a compulsory, accusing code, and as far as "righteousness" (justification) and "life" were sought for by it. It could only produce outward works, not inward obedience of the will, which in the believer

flows from the Holy Spirit. The law could make a person act right out of fear, but it could not make him do right out of a desire to do the right thing. The law defined a person's ugliness before God and gave no way for the believer to see himself in the beauty of holiness before God.

The "handwriting of ordinances", which the law represents, typifies a bad memory. It constantly points to the frailties, shortcoming and inequities of every believer. The hundreds of Mosaic laws that dealth with everything from the washing of hands to dealing with the diseased and infirmed, had a crippling affect. Many became married to the writings that defined the old way. They held so much of an allegiance to the past that Paul had to constantly remind believers that Christ has taken it away so that it is no longer a hindrance to the believer's new life by "nailing it to the cross."

The phrase "nailing it to the cross" is a metaphor that denotes that the written law has been canceled. Christ, by bearing the curse of the broken law, has redeemed us from its curse (Galatians 3:13). In His person, representing us, Christ was nailed to the cross. In effect the law itself was nailed to the cross as well. One ancient mode of canceling bonds was by striking a nail through the writing: this seems at that time to have existed in Asia. The bond canceled in the present case was the obligation lying against the Jews as representatives of the world, and attested by their amen, to keep the whole law under penalty of the curse.

The effect of canceling the law is that every day God gives us a new slate, a new unspoiled day, to live through by his grace. Our sins have been forgiven. Paul sees them as "nailed to the cross," so they no longer can condemn us. The law is not done away with, but the condemnation of it is. Believers are made free and told to, "go and sin no more." The last step is, believers are freed from the power of these evil beings: Having disarmed the powers and authorities, Christ made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Nailed to the Cross

There are many today who are troubled by their past. It seems that despite our best efforts friends, associates, classmates and co-workers never forget what we once were before we knew Christ. Most people have portions of their past of which they are not proud. They did and said things which were out of character with the new life they have found in Christ. Friends and associates however, have a tendency to continue to judge them by what they use to be rather than their present state in Christ. The fact is, many aspects of our old lives have been nailed to the cross.

OUR SINS ARE NAILED TO THE CROSS: That part of our past which represented our worst has been forgiven and nailed to the cross, once we accepted Christ. The old script that we once followed has been destroyed. The old map that once took us to places foreign to our faith, is gone. There is no resurrecting the past once he has nailed our sins to the cross. They will never be brought up again. It will never be brought up again to condemn us. That's what Romans 8:1-2 means, "There

is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." When Christ forgives he forgets. In fullness we actually become another person. Our walk and talk changes. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, " Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Only by shedding his blood and dying on the cross could Jesus effectively nail our sins down for good. No wonder the song writer would ask, "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

OUR FEARS ARE NAILED TO THE CROSS: Before we came to Christ our lives were filled with fears and apprehensions. We worried constantly. We were afraid of death. We were afraid of failure. We were also afraid of the words and actions of others. In the interim however, we have learned to say with David in Psalm 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." When enemies surround us we have learned the power of Psalm 27:1, " The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" If you are looking for fear in a saint, it's gone. It has been nailed to the cross!

OUR LOSSES ARE NAILED TO THE CROSS: Before coming to Christ we brooded heavily over any loss, no matter how small. Defeats were equated with failure and we made ourselves miserable as we chided ourselves for our shortcomings. We were showered with negative self talk. We were so negative that we even depressed ourselves. But once we came to Christ, defeatist thinking was nailed to the cross as we saw ourselves in a different light. Now we see every challenge differently. We see the victory that has been promised by Christ. We hear Paul's words to the Romans ringing in our ears, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:35-37.

There was a time when we pouted over difficulties, but now we count it all joy!

There was a time when we felt overwhelmed by sickness or hard times, but now we count it all joy!

OUR WORRIES ARE NAILED TO THE CROSS: Before coming to Christ we struggled under burdens that were unusually heavy. They were heavy because they contained their own built in weight and problems. They were heavier because we tried to carry them alone and we added worry to the load. Now that we know the Lord we still have burdens from time to time, but what we have less is worry. We have heard the voice of Jesus when he said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Today, we trust more and worry less because we turn our worries over to the Lord and he nails it to the cross. No wonder the song writer says, "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there. If you trust

and never doubt he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

Our Load Is Lighter

Finally, every child of God must consider that because our sins, fears, burdens and worries have been nailed to the cross, every child of God walks a lot lighter than he or she has in the past!

Not only did Jesus nail our sins to the cross, but he also took the sting, venom and poison of life...drained it and nailed them to the cross as well!.

Everything that made life miserable for us or condemned us, has been nailed to the cross!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the frown we use to wear, until the Lord gave us a brand new smile! Now we sing, God has smiled on me. He has made me glad!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the failure that we once knew, until the Lord gave us the victory! Now our daily reminder is, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the lonliness I once felt, until I remembered that he promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the sadness I once felt, until he took my sadness and gave me gladness!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the dirty heart I use to have, until he gave me a clean heart!

What's that nailed to the cross? It's the words to the old song that I use to sing, until he gave me a new song to sing!

Preacher you told us what is hanging on the Christ, but who is that man nailed to the cross?

His name is Jesus! The wonderful counselor!
Jesus, almighty God!
Jesus, the great physician!
Jesus, the lily of the valley!
Jesus, the bright and morning star!
They hung him high and stretched him wide!
When they nailed one hand, that must have been for my sins!
When they nailed the other hand, that must have been for my fears!
When they nailed his feet that must have been for all my troubles!
He died on an old rugged cross!
But Early!
Early, Sunday morning...he got up from the grave with..
All Power!
All Power in his hands!

No. 699-Love

Looking For Love In All The Wrong Places

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Jerusalem Baptist Church
Calhoun, La.

March 16, 1998

SCRIPTURE: I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Proverbs 8:17

Introduction

Where can you find true love? That is a question that has been asked by millions over the years. Many have searched for love without success and are mystified at how some are able to extol the wonders of the love they have known and experienced in life, while they always seem to emerge empty handed. Love, being an intangible, is difficult to quantify. It is best demonstrated rather than defined. How is it acquired? Is there a special potion that can be applied that will cause it to happen? Just how does one acquire true love?

Millions today are searching for true love. Those who are searching should consider the lesson learned by the young squirrel. It appears that the young squirrel was confident that he could find acorns just as easy as the older squirrels. One day as they walked through the woods he begged for permission to gather nuts himself. The old squirrel that led the group said, this is not a good place. The young squirrel complained and begged to be given his chance. The old squirrel finally gave his reluctant permission. Determined to show that he knew how to gather acorns the little squirrel ran across the ground but found nothing. Then he ran up and down every tree in the woods, but still found nothing. He looked in hollow logs under trunks and in the hollows of trees. At the end of the day the young squirrel returned tired and empty handed. The old Squirrel asked, "How many acorns did you find?" The young squirrel dropped his head and said, "None." The old squirrel, sensing the dejection of the young upstart said, "Hold your head up little fellow, you did all the right things. You scurried up every tree. You checked the ground below. However, there is one thing you did not consider, you are standing in the middle of a pine tree forest, you were looking for the right thing, but you were climbing up the wrong tree!" Those who are looking for love need to look for it the right places.

Have you been looking for love? Where have you been looking? Many are looking for Christian friends but they are looking unChristian places. Some are

looking for Christian mates but are they looking for them in bars and night clubs. Many are looking for God-fearing relationships but they continue to expect these qualities from those who do not know God.

Those who are looking for love have to look in the right places. True love comes from God, for God is love. Therefore, people who are looking for real love must find God for themselves, then find another who also knows God. If our relationship is not dipped in the love of God, then it cannot work.

In the same sense there are many who are looking for strength, peace, joy, reassurance and hope. They have sought these important aspects of life in a variety of places. Some have turned to a plethora of secular pursuits that they hope will bring them joy only to find that they return empty. They are looking for acorns in a forest of pine trees.

As Christians, we know that the source of all of life's real joys is God. We have sought him diligently and we have found him and he has made us glad!

Exposition

This text focuses on the wisdom of loving God and doing so early in life.

Solomon, in the course of his life, sought happiness, peace and contentment. Much of his life was spent looking for happiness and joy in all the wrong places. In the Ecclesiastes he recorded his various pursuits. The list of his endeavors seemed endless as he dabbled in first one pursuit then another, trying to find happiness and true meaning of life.

Among his various pursuits were: architecture, science and astronomy, building construction, music, partying, romantic ventures and a plethora of other activities. After each, he wrote that they were all vanities. He did not find that which he was looking for in any of them. Even in the accumulation of wealth he found no happiness. He concluded the Ecclesiastes by saying, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

He finally concluded that the real meaning of life was tied to those things that were Godly in nature.

Thus, in the Proverbs he shares the wisdom of his life's experience. One of the great wise truths he learned in the course of life is the wisdom that outside of God there can be no love, happiness or peace.

What Solomon learned was that while God loves all of his creation, God responds best to those that love him and earnestly strive to show their love to him. The voice of wisdom speaks, "I love them that love me!"

Those that seek God's love shall find it. Those who want to know him can find true knowledge of him. Those who desire to find the true meaning of life and love can find it. Christ, talking to his disciples, reminded them that if they would just knock, that doors would be open to them. If they asked it would be given to them. If they would simply seek, they would surely find.

To know God and love him was the epitome of wisdom as far as Solomon was concerned. Find God and demonstrate his love in every act or deed and every man and woman will discover the true key to happiness and joy.

Solomon spoke of the wisdom of seeking God's love and its reward. The New Testament identified exactly how to know if we love God. Two passages of scripture are symbolic of Jesus' teaching on loving God:

God loves those that keep his commandments. John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. "

To look for God is to strive to know his will and seek after it.

Those who are looking for Love have only to look around them. The evidence of God's love surrounds them each and every day!

In All The Wrong Places

Many today are looking for blessings and the abundant life in every place except the right place. Like the prophet Elijah who tucked himself away in a cave keep misinterpreting every act that occurred as being from God. A strong wind came, but that was not God. An earthquake came, but that was not God. There was fire, but God was not in the fire. He found God in a still small voice.

In a similar sense there are many people who are looking for God to display himself in some giant way. They are looking for him in all the wrong places.

BUSINESS PURSUITS: There are many that have plunged themselves into a variety of business pursuits looking for the fulfillment that comes only with God's love and blessing. These have committed themselves totally to increase their bottom line by expanding their investments and increasing their profits. In the process of pursuing their businesses many have found that they have little time for the church, study of the bible, prayer and fellowship. They literally forget that the word of God in Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." They are looking for love, but in all the wrong places.

WORLDLY RELATIONSHIPS: There are others who spend the entirety of their time trying to find a mate. They want someone who will treat them with love and respect and shower them with kindness. The problem is that many of them are looking in the wrong places. Some are trying to take good men from their wives. Some are trying to take good women from loving husbands. Even more are involved in a series of one night stands as they move from club to club looking for Mr. Goodbar, singing "Shorty swing my way. You sure look good to me!"

When we look for love in someone else's mate, we are looking in the wrong place.

When we look for love in places known for pickups, one night stands and easy rides, we are looking in the wrong place.

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS: Some are seeking fulfillment through involvement in a variety of clubs and fraternal organizations. While club work and fraternal associations are commendable, there are some who get so involved in their club work or their sorority, fraternity or masonic order that they lose sight of their obligation to God. For many people, the club becomes their God. The sorority or fraternity becomes their God. No matter how noble our civic work is, it cannot substitute for working in the king's vineyard. No matter how fulfilling our social engagements may seem, there is always something missing, if God was not in the midst of the work. No wonder the song writer would say, "You may build great cathedrals large or small, you may build sky scrapers grand and tall, you may conquer all the failures of the past, but only what you do for Christ will last."

BARS, DISCOS AND HONKEY TONKS: There are many who seek friendship, fellowship and binding relationships in bars and honkey tonks. They spend the majority of their time moving from one hole in the wall to another. Their lives consist of an endless string of late night jams, parties and get downs, each one designed to pick up where the other left off. When the day has passed participants usually find that they wake up feeling just as lonely and empty as they began.

There are many today who are learning, that simply looking is not enough, you must look in the right place, otherwise they'll end up like the lost little squirrel, simply running up the wrong tree!

Looking in the right places

Finally brothers and sisters, those who want to find God and God like people must look for
him in the right places.

The first step in finding real love is to know God for yourself. No one can really fully know true love until they know the Lord for themselves. Not the kind of love that depends upon others for its interpretation, but the kind that is indicative of a personal experience. Since God is love, if we want to find real love we must know God for our selves.

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will take you to the source of love.

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will show you a believer that believes in the power of prayer. Those who know the love of God, also know the power of prayer!

Prayer can change things!

Prayer can take a defeated spirit and show it the victory!

Prayer can take a sadness and turn it into a gladness!

Prayer can take a sorrow and turn it into a joy!

Prayer can take a bowed down head and lift it up high!

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will show you a believer who knows what faith can do.

Faith can dream the impossible!

Faith can move the unmovable!

Faith can reach the unreachable!

Faith can stop the unstoppable!

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will show you a believer that demonstrates the compassion of God. Those who know the Love God show it by helping others. They fervently sing the song, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain."

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will show you a believer that is lifted up in hope. Those who know the Love of God show it through their continuous belief that God will make a way somehow!

Hope looks beyond darkness because God can take darkness and turn it into light!

Hope looks beyond failure because God can take failure and turn it into success!

Hope looks beyond tears because God can take tears and turn them into cheers!

Hope looks beyond weakness because God can take weakness and turn it into strength!

Hope looks beyond stumbling blocks because God can take stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones.

If you are looking for love, follow the trail of any saint and it will take you to the cross. There you'll find a saint singing, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith, I received my sight and now I'm happy all the day!"

The cross represents the climatic summation of God's demonstrated love.

That's what John meant when he said "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

If you are looking for love, follow that old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

If you are looking for love, follow that trail of blood to his wounded side!

If you are looking for love, look out on Calvary...for they hung him up high!

Stretched him out wide!

..And he died!

But Early!

Early Sunday morning, Love got up from the grave!

If you are looking for love, follow Jesus!

Follow Jesus!

And everything will be all right!

No. 700-Inspiration

What are you running from? Where are you running to?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Taberancle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 29, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God." Psalm 73:28

Introduction

Have you ever felt like running away? Those are the times when you feel like everything "out there" seems better than what's "back here." We think about running away in moments of frustration. Those are the times when the lure of being someplace else, where no one knows you seems fascinating. There are endless scenarios that we have developed for ourselves that range from tucking ourselves away in the anonymity of a large city to finding a quiet small town and starting all over again. It doesn't happen much, but every now and then, many people entertain that thought.

Sometimes life just seems easier some place else. Consider the little boy who was completely fed up with all of the rules of his house. He felt like a slave. He had to pick up his toys. Empty the trash. Clean out the bath tub behind himself. He even had to sweep the floors. Finally one day he was just fed up. He packed all of his bags and decided he would run away. He wrote his mother a note that said, "I cannot take it any more. I'm running away. I'm never coming back again!" He put the note on the table, went into the kitchen and fixed himself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, threw his back pack across his shoulder and dashed off into the night, never to return again. About 30 minutes later he returned home and met his mother at the door. "I thought you were running away?" She said. "I was, but it's too dark tonight, I'll wait until another night!" There are many who think about running away until they remember how dark it is "out there!"

While there are many who think about running away, there are some whose lives today are a reaction to something that happened to them many years ago. Author and cartoonist James Thurber made this provocative observation about life: "All persons must learn before they die what they are running from and what they are running to, and why." Often our thoughts and actions in the present are shaped by

something in our past. A stern parent that set goals to high for us to reach when we were children, has prompted some to run away from achievement as they intentionally set low goals for themselves. A student who was teased in high school, is now the adult that shys away from social contacts. A victim of sexual abuse, now runs away from intimacy. A child that was second best to an older sister or brother, runs himself into the ground determined never to be second best again. There are many people who are running away from something. Their every action is a reaction to something that has happened to them in some way.

One of the keys to ultimate happiness is to discover the answer to what we are running from. When we face what we are running from, then we understand why we do what we do. But more importantly, we should seek to know where we are running to. We know what we are running from but unless we know where we are headed our life is aimless. We must also find out what we're running to. Some people, competing for temporary fame and fortune, are like passengers who are fighting for the best seats on a bus headed for oblivion.

As Christians, we have the assurance of knowing where we are going. We know the road over which we have traveled. Our task now is to press on toward the mark and make heaven our home. We are happy because we know what we are running from and where we are running to!

Exposition

This Psalm focuses on David's song writer Asaph as he shares how he almost ran from God in frustration and temptation, until he found him in the sanctuary.

Psalm 73 is a clear picture of a man running from his frustration. What was bothering this man was the apparent contradiction between what he had been taught in the Scripture — that God was good to the upright and to those who were pure in heart — and his experience in life. He was envious, he said, of the arrogant, and disturbed by the prosperity of the wicked. That prosperity seemed to him to be a direct contradiction to what he had been taught about God. He had been told that if you are "upright and pure in heart," that is, you had learned to lay hold of the righteousness which God provides and were cleansed by his grace, then God would be good to you, take care of you, and watch over you. But instead this man was finding his own situation to be difficult and very discouraging, but the wicked around him, the ungodly, were seeming to prosper and everything was going well with them. This bothered him greatly. He could not reconcile this. It troubled him so terribly that it created a deep resentment and envy in his heart. This, in turn, became such a threat to his faith that ultimately he found himself threatened with a complete loss of faith.

He was also running from temptation. As he surveyed the life of the ungodly around him, he was tempted to try that life for himself. It appeared that the ungodly life was the better. It was the ungodly who never seemed to have any troubles. In verses 10-14 he details his view of the ungodly, he is well fed, well clothed, even expensively dressed; pride is like an ornament to his life. His carriage, his bearing,

is one of self-assurance and authority. He appears never to have any difficulty. If he is crossed he is very quick to retaliate. He is given to self-indulgence in food and pleasure. Asaph says, "Their eyes swell out with fatness, their hearts overflow with follies." They boast in their abilities and throw their weight around by threats and great displays of influence and connections in the "right" places. Truly, Asaph was tempted to live this life as opposed to the godly life.

He found himself being drawn away from God. In his frustration he was applauding the life of the ungodly and running to it with enthusiasm.

He kept running away from God, towards the world until he came once again into the presence of God. In the presence of God, he began to understand what he was running from and he saw clearly his final state if he ran either with God or with the world. This happened when he went into the sanctuary where God meets his people. When he came in God's presence he began to see where the ungodly were running to. He said in verse 17 "then I understood their end." His conclusion is similar to that of KingDavid who shared the same frustration in Psalm 37. David concluded that we should not fret over evil doers because they would be cut down and become like the chaff which the wind drives away.

In the presence of God, Asaph saw clearly that to which he was being drawn. This is where he began to change. He began to shift from natural thinking to spiritual thinking. The problem was that he had been thinking like a natural man, i.e., within the limits of this life only, considering only the visible things of this earth. Thus, he had gotten himself worked up into a terrible state of frenzy. Now, in the sanctuary, he began to think from God's point of view. He began to understand. He came into the sanctuary and there he began to use spiritual thinking rather than natural thinking.

The unrighteous were running to destruction.

The proud were running towards a great fall

The wicked were ultimately running to damnation.

Once his eyes were opened he stopped running from God and started running to God. In verse 28 he concluded, "it is good for me to draw near to God." He put his trust in God and has declared all his mighty works. Instead of being pulled away from God, he found himself being pulled toward him in a mighty and special way.

He ran from God until he considered what he was running to!

What We Are Running From?

There are many today who find themselves running from one thing or another. They do not carry a sign that announces that they are "running" but they are never-the-less running away.

RUNNING AWAY FROM RESPONSIBILITY: There are many fathers who are literally running away from the responsibility of fatherhood. They have abandoned their children and the courts must track them down and force them to maintain their children. There are others who live in the same house with their families but run away

from their wives and families by filling their schedules with "make busy" work to avoid seeing them as much as possible.

RUNNING AWAY FROM PROBLEMS: There are many who are trying to run away from problems by drowning themselves in alcohol or using drugs. In their running these only make new problems for themselves, while the old ones never seem to go away. There will always be problems in life. The question is, what do we do with our problems? Do we run from them? Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No matter how we run we can't out run problems. After a while, just the running itself becomes a problem. It's best to take it to God and leave it there.

RUNNING AWAY FROM THE PAST: Some are struggling to run from their past. At some point they failed miserably and they are attempting to treat that experience as if it did not happen. They do not talk about it, think about it and avoid any situations or persons that will bring it to memory. Yet the bible urges us not to run from our past, but to use it as a testimony to others. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul wrote, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Thus, the saint does not run from the past, but understands it in the context of a life outside of the fullness of the knowledge of God.

RUNNING FROM THEMSELVES: There are some who are running from themselves. They have painted a picture to the world of a man or woman that is perceived in one light but they face the man in the mirror each morning who tells them a different story. They are in a foot race with the shadow of themselves. No matter how fast they run, the shadow seems to keep up with them. No matter where they turn, the shadow of themselves is close by. Shadows of the ego and id aren't diminished until they are surrounded by the brilliant forgiving light of God's love. Shadows only exist if some part of us isn't exposed to the light of God. That's why 1 John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There are no shadows when we walk in the light. There is no need to run from ourselves.

RUNNING FROM GOD: Like Asaph of the 73rd Psalm, there are many who have decided that godliness has its virtue but it is not profitable. Gradually they experiment with the things of the world. They flirt with the ungodly life. They dabble a little here and walk on the border of temptation there. They observe the prosperity, gaiety and fortune of the ungodly and find themselves drawn toward that life. It appears successful. It appears productive. It appears lucrative. In this context, they become like the prophet Jonah who was commanded by God to go in one direction but he chose to do another. Jonah's eventual lesson was the same that boxing champion Joe Louis announced to his opponents, "You can run, but you can't hide!"

What Are you Running To

While there is great virtue in discovering what we are running from, it is more

important that we learn where we are running to!

The psalmist Asaph was stricken when he finally understood what the ungodly were running to! While running from God, if he followed their example, he would have been running to the same destination.

If he followed their example their epitaph would be that of Psalm 1:5-6 "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Asaph said he became drawn to God and God reminded him what the end of the righteous would be!

The righteous are running to receive their eternal reward in glory!

The righteous are running to achieve the victory over sin!

The righteous are running to acquire a crown of life!

Consider the grandmother and grandson that came to the train station to catch a southbound train. It had been some time since the grandmother had been home but she wanted to see the old stomping ground, one more time. Inside the station the trains were all pointed in the same direction, but were sitting on different tracks. The boy, excited with the beauty of one of the trains begged his grandmother to get on the shiny train, with an upstairs view. He cried when she refused. As that train pulled off there was a second train which was not as shiny and it had no upstairs. The boy begged to board that train. It was going in the same direction. The grandmother refused. When it pulled off, all that was left was a very short train with one engine and a passenger car. It was not pretty to look it but was obviously steady. The grandmother took her seat as the boy looked in amazement. "What's different about this train?" He asked. "It's going in the same direction as the others?" The grandmother answered, "All of the trains leave here going in the right direction, but up the ways a bit the tracks will split off in different ways. I'm trying to get home. The train doesn't have to be pretty! The train doesn't have to be shiny! The train doesn't have to be fancy, but the train has to be on the right track!"

If we put our hands in God's hands, we're on the right track!

If we trust in God and lean not to our own understanding, we're on the right track!

If we give God praise and thanks for all his mighty works, we're on the right track!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to know that this train called our pilgrim's journey is on the right track.

The good thing about this journey is that the ticket has already been paid.

Jesus, paid my ticket, out on Calvary's hill!

When Jesus died on an old rugged cross he put the ticket in our hand!

When he arose early Sunday morning, he punched it paid in full!

I got my ticket!

And I'm on my way!

I'm on the right track!

No. 701-Cross

Cross Words

(The Seven Sayings of Christ on The Cross)

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 5, 1998

SCRIPTURE:"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34; "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" Luke 23:43; "Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit." Luke 23:46;"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46; "I thirst" John 19:28 "He said to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!John 19:26-27; "It is finished" John 19:30

Introduction

Have you ever felt like you were being nailed to the cross? If so, what was your response? What did you say to people? What words did you utter? Whatever we say during such times are our "cross words." They comprise our initial response to circumstance of the moment. In moments of frustration sometimes the things we say are completely out of character. Sometimes our cross words come straight from the bottom of hell. There are times when we think and say ungodly things about our condition and those who work against us. On the other hand they are those of us who are not intimidated by the frustrations of the moment. We look beyond the despair of the night into the joys of the morning. Our "cross words" are filled with hope, anticipation and victory.

The best example of a person using "cross words" is Jesus Christ himself. When nailed to the cross, with the world frowning on him, friends doubting him and followers deserting him, he uttered seven last sayings while on the cross. No single book of the bible contains all seven of the sayings. There are three in John, three in Luke and there is one in Matthew. The book of Mark does not mention any of the last sayings. Combined, they are generally called the Seven Last Sayings or "words" of Christ from the Cross. They are his cross words.

In them, Christ demonstrated his empathy, sympathy, humanity and divinity. Through them he gave us one final example to follow. He showed us the way to happiness and abundant living. He showed us the proper attitudes to life, God and each other. He showed us how to deal with persecutors, sickness and critics. Through the last seven words, his "cross words," he gives us an example of how to respond when we are on the cross.

As Christians, we are encouraged by these cross words because they remind us that the God we serve knows us and understands our feelings. His cross words now become our cross words as we look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Why hast thou forsake me?

Jesus showed empathy for our feelings when we are on the cross. The words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" ring in our ears. Yet they speak to our emotional state when we are on the cross. They address the full range of our emotions at that moment. By shifting the emphasis, we see how that is clear.

"My God" suggests that even in our suffering we know God is still real and is personal and concerned about us. Even in our suffering we still proclaim, "In thee on Lord do I put my trust!"

"Why" raises the question of humanity. On the cross the humanity of Christ raised the question of "why," while the divinity of Christ kept silent. Much as the humanity of believers often prompts them to ask why is there so much pain? Yet the spiritual person inside already knows the answer. It is according to the will of God.

"Thou" points to a believer's raised expectation of God. We expect to be forsaken by enemies, critics and those who see our bad side alone. We expect nay sayers and back stabbers. We even expect some of our family members to abandon us from time to time, but sometimes the misery of the moment makes us feel that even God has abandoned us. We soon learn that he has not forsaken us, he has promised to be with us always, even until the end of the earth.

"Me" demonstrates what we know to be the plight of the ungodly. We fully expect that the ungodly will endure hard times and difficulties. We expect *them* to meet death. We expect *them* to be criticized, ostracized and nailed to crosses, but why "Me?"

We who are the faithful often question whether it is practical for us to serve God and still be exposed to hardships as well. However, the question should not be "why me?" but "why not me?" If sacrifice and suffering as well as victory and triumph are the marks of a true Christian, then why not me? If there can be no gain without pain, then why not me? If there is no crown without a cross, then why not me?

Woman Behold Your Son

Jesus showed concern for his mother. Perhaps the most humiliating experience of any son is to be stripped naked before his mother. When boys are little, their mothers bathe them playfully in tubs. Yet when they start to mature they cover themselves, hide behind shower curtains and closed doors. Sometimes mothers respond, "You don't have anything that I haven't seen before!" In a more adult way, every man wants his mother to see him in his best light. It is humiliating to have our worst side shown to our mothers. Yet Christ, stripped completely naked and dying

was exposed to the world and his mother. He expressed concern for her. She and Joseph knew exactly who he was. Though he had three brothers and sisters, none of them had really known, all through their childhood and young adult lives, who he really was. They simply remember him as their play partner, but not as the Son of God. However, Mary knew. What would she think about the death of her son? Jesus turned to John and urged him to be a comfort and support for her because, unlike his brothers, John understood who Jesus was. Even though John's mother was standing close by, Jesus told John "Behold your mother!" Mothers feel the agony and pain of sons and daughters. Mothers feel. Mothers empathize. Mothers love their daughters! Mothers love their sons! But yet on the cross, Jesus demonstrated another great truth, Jesus loves mothers!

I thirst

Jesus demonstrated "arranged suffering." On the cross Jesus spoke the words, "I thirst." He seemed to complain about a small matter of thirst when he had not complained about any other discomfort. They falsely accused him but he did not complain. He had to drag a cross through the streets of Jerusalem but he did not complain. They nailed his hands without a complaint from him. They nailed his feet ...still no complaint. Yet after enduring all of that, he seems to complain about being thirsty. Why?

Throughout his ministry Jesus sought to fulfill scripture. From the very day that he announced his ministry, his acts fulfilled scripture. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, according to scripture. He was falsely accused according to scripture. He kept quiet through his turmoil, according to scripture. He was crucified according to scripture. Yet there was another scripture which had not been fulfilled. It had been prophesied that he would be given vinegar on the cross. It had not been done..so he asked for something to drink, knowing that a few seconds after he would die anyway. It indicated that he arranged his suffering to fulfill all of the demands of God.

Believers today are familiar with arranged suffering. There are many parents today are suffering financially to help their children finish their education. Some are suffering in their health because they neglected themselves to care for others. The father that works three jobs to pay college tuition for a son suffers by arrangement. He asked for it!

Jesus only spoke because it was necessary to the arrangement. Today, those who feel the stings of life agree with the song writer, "I've had some good days. I've had some hills to climb...but when I think things over, all of my good days outweigh my bad days, so I won't complain!"

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Forgive them

Christ forgave our ignorance while on the cross. In our ignorance we have failed to respond as we should. Often we have wasted many years chasing dreams without

means just beyond measure. Our pursuit of life has been so vigorous that often we have ignored the things of God. Prayer, worship, Holy Living, many of these things have been placed on the back burner of life as we ignorantly pursue what appears to be important at the moment. As Charles Spurgeon notes, on the cross Christ prayed an "indistinctive" prayer. In asking God to forgive them he expanded his plea for mercy beyond those who placed him on the cross, the liars at his trial, the temple guards and even the soldiers who nailed him to the cross. "Them" is all of those who have lived ignorant of God's law and of his power to give new and abundant life. When he said father forgive "them" he included "us" in all of our ignorance today, for we know not what we do.

In Paradise

Christ rewards our faith. This saying of Christ is in response to the faith, even though in a dying hour, of the thief on the cross. There were two thieves on the cross. John Piper notes that of the sinners on the cross represented one of two attitudes we can assume about God: 1) We can rail against God and say, "If you are such a great and powerful and loving God, who allowed my condition?" 2) Or we can acknowledge that we are sinners and don't deserve any good thing, and cry out for mercy and help in our time of desperation.

Most of us have all these things in common with these two thieves: there has been, is, or will be suffering in our lives. And none of us will be able to say, "I do not deserve this."All of us want to be saved from death one way or the other. While both are the same in sin, they are not the same in their response to Christ. One is worldly, with no spirit of remorse and still thinks only of himself. The other is remorseful and asks for mercy. Those who come to Christ in remorse and faith, receive the same immortal words, "this day...paradise!"

Into thy hands

On the cross Jesus placed his life in God's hands. On the cross Jesus gave up the ghost. Father, 'into Thy hands I commend My spirit' shows that He gave up His life when He wanted to and how He wanted to. No one took His life from Him; He gave it up when His work was finished. Morever, it shows that he placed his life in God's hand. Even today, believers must put their hands in God's hand. There is no safer walk than the walk we make when we put our hands in God's hand. When we are on the cross we should put our hands in God's hands. No wonder the song writer cries out, "Precious Lord take my hand, lead me on let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn!"

When the weight of life's miseries nails us firmly to the cross we should respond in the words of the hymn, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, oh whether shall I go!"

It is finished

Christ completes our salvation. The suffering of Christ on the cross completed the necessary suffering and death prescribed by the law for sin. When Christ said, “it is finished” he did not refer to himself. Notice, he did not say, “I am finished!” He said, “It” is finished. The great work of atonement that he began was finished on the cross. When Jesus cried out with a loud voice, John 19:30 tells us what He said: “it is finished”, which is one word in the Greek (tetelestai - “paid in full”) this is the cry of a winner, because Jesus had paid in full the debt of sin we owed, and had finished the eternal purpose of the cross .

It is finished means it is done.

It is finished means the way has been paved.

It is finished means those who are sick can be healed,

It is finished means those who have sinned can be forgiven!

It is finished means those who are dispirited can be revived!

It is finished means those who have lost hope can have hope restored!

On Calvary there was a cross, but God had a Word for that cross. Not just any word, for John said “In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God!

Every now and then even the best saints feel like they are on the cross, but don’t worry. Just like there was a Word for that cross on Calvary, if you stick with the Lord, there is a word for every cross we bear!

If your cross has brought you defeat, God’s got a word, because he can take defeat and turn it into victory!

If your cross has brought you abowed down head, God’s got aword, for I heard the Word of God declare, “Lift up your heads oh ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in!

If your cross is sadness, God’s got a word, he can take you sadness and give you gladness!

If your cross is doubt, God’s got a word, he can take your doubt and give you assurance!

If your cross is bondage, God’s got a word, he can take your bondage and give you freedom!

For every cross, God’s got a word!

For every tomb, God’s also got a word!

The world may declare, “put him down!” But for every “put down” God’s got a word!

It’s the same word he declared early that Sunday morning

“Wake up! Sit up! Get up! Step up!”

I’m so glad, that for every cross, God’s got a word!

No. 702-Easter

Get The Story Straight

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Matthew 28:10-15

Introduction

Have you ever known people who always manage to get their facts twisted? Somehow, despite their best efforts they never seem to come out right! Those are the kind of people that have serious problems sticking to what they know. If they describe an event, they feel compelled to add a little flavor and color to it to make it interesting. Sometimes they add a few details. Often they leave out many. When they finish with even a very simple account of an event, it has become very complex. These kinds of people have problems, getting the story straight.

While some make mistakes and get the story wrong, there are others who deliberately twist the story. These persons intentionally begin "misinformation" campaigns to deceive others The culprit behind misinformation campaigns is Satan. He inspires people to intentionally lie to achieve what he describes as a higher, loftier goal.

In our personal lives, Satan does the same. He mounts a massive misinformation campaign against every believer. His job is to lower our self esteem, kill our spirit, dampen our enthusiasm and thwart our every effort at personal achievement. He begins with us personally and then goes to our friends and associates. The end result is we begin to believe what we hear. When that happens, he has succeeded in side tracking another Saint from the godly path.

At Easter time it is important for every believer to get the story straight. It's important for us to make sure that everyone knows what the Easter celebration is all about. Ben Haden tells the amusing story of a group of four year olds who were gathered in a Sunday school class in Chattanooga. The teacher looked at the class

and asked this question: “Does anyone know what today is?” A little four-year-old girl held up her hand and said,” Yes, today is Palm Sunday.” The teacher exclaimed, “That’s fantastic, that’s wonderful. Now does anyone know what next Sunday is?” The same little girl held up her hand and said, “Yes, next Sunday is Easter Sunday.” Once again the teacher said, “That’s fantastic. Now, does anyone know what makes next Sunday Easter?” The same little girl responded and said, “Yes, next Sunday is Easter because Jesus rose from the grave” and before the teacher could congratulate her, she kept on talking and said, “but if he sees his shadow — he has to go back in for seven weeks.”

As Christians, we know that the story of the Easter celebration has nothing to do with bunny rabbits and eggs, even though those are great symbols of fertility and new life. The Easter story isn’t about new clothes and Easter parades either, although they represent the newness and freshness of the season. The real story of Easter is about Jesus. It’s about his death, burial and resurrection. That’s all it’s about. It’s up to us to help get the story straight!

Exposition

This text focuses on the effort of the Jewish religious leaders to spread a false story about the resurrection of Christ.

After his death, Christ was buried in Joseph’s new tomb, where he stayed for three days as he prophesied. However, on the first day of the week he arose from the dead and walked from the tomb despite the fact that a huge stone blocked the doorway. The absence of his body from the tomb sent shock waves throughout the religious leadership. It was their greatest fear, that another person would be seen living after having been reported dead.

The death of Lazarus and his resurrection caused them many problems. Jesus raised him from the dead and they knew they would only increase his followers. They were so disturbed that they attempted to kill Lazarus again, to stop the ground swell of support Jesus was receiving. A little girl had been raised too. That sparked great interest. They took great pains that Jesus’ followers would not be encouraged by the disappearance of his body and lay claim to his own resurrection of the dead.

They insisted that the large stone that would block the doorway of the tomb would bear the official Roman seal to keep anyone from removing his body and claiming that he had risen. In addition, for the course of the three days that he predicted they insisted upon guards for the tomb. It must have seemed ridiculous to the soldiers. With all of their other duties to perform they were being called upon to guard a tomb from people who were so frightened that they hid in crowds and stayed back a distance to avoid association. It must have been humorous to them to stand watch over a tomb, cut from a rock, protected by a rock and sealed with the Roman official seal. Yet, this was their task.

When an angel appeared and rolled the stone away, the soldiers were amazed. When they reported what they saw to the religious leaders they were given huge

amounts of money to tell the story another way. It had to appear that the disciples had stolen the body. They could conjure any reasonable fabrication if necessary, but they were not to tell the truth.

There was a large amount of money given to the soldiers for advancing that which they knew to be a lie. The priests promised to protect them from the sword of Pilate because their lives would be in danger. They did not consider that while they had influence with Pilate, their bad deed would get no where before the sword of God's justice.

They gave them a story to tell but it was one that was riddled with inconsistencies. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, the rulers would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole account shows that the story was entirely false. And we must not charge such things to the weakness of the understanding, but to the wickedness of the heart. God left them to expose their own course. The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is his resurrection; and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers; yet they took bribes to hinder others from believing.

The scribes and pharisees wanted a story told but they didn't want it told straight! What they tried to hide a host of witnesses would not conceal. Jesus was alive! He had been seen by many! Despite the lies that are being told about that resurrection morning, the story has been told straight and the world now knows who is truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Twisted Stories

Today there are millions of people who are frustrated because they are the victims of twisted stories told on them in their neighborhoods, by jealous lovers, family members and even friends. Whatever the reason these stories are told, they have the net effect of destroying individual morale and optimism. Most of us readily see how twisted stories can destroy our lives, but on a spiritual level, Satan has some twisted stories that he disseminates on every believer. They have the net effect of destroying a believer's hope and faith in God.

SATAN TELLS TROUBLED BELIEVERS THAT GOD HAS FORSAKEN THEM. Believers who are experiencing difficulties are often frustrated. As each attempt to side step a problem leads to another problem, Satan starts to tell the story. The truth of the matter is that at the moment we are enduring a difficult time. We are having a set back. We are not moving at the pace that we desire. However, Satan takes those known facts and twists them to mean that God has forsaken us. In our moment of weakness he whispers in our ear that our struggle is over! We are told repeatedly that we have failed. There is no hope! However, we should get the story straight!

While it is true that we may be in a slump, it is not true that we are defeated! We have not been forsaken or left alone for Jesus promised us in Matthew 28, "And Lo I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth."

EVERY WEAK BELIEVER IS TOLD HE IS WITHOUT STRENGTH: There are times when even the most devout believer is weak. In times of stress, frustration and doubt, believers, because they are human, can get weak. Jesus had such a period when he was in the wilderness forty days and nights. He was physically and mentally exhausted. It was at this time that Satan came to him with a twisted story of self satisfaction and vain glory. It is easy to believe that we are failures if we listen to the story that is told. It is repeated to us so often that some have begun to believe that story themselves. They have simply given up trying. However, every believer is reminded to get the story straight. It is true that we often experience moments of weakness but we are not without a source of strength. The Word of God reminds us that "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint!" Paul reminds us that even in my weakness, I am strong!

EVERY SINNER IS TOLD HE IS BEYOND SALVATION: All men have sinned and fallen short of God's standards! That is an eternal truth. Satan adds a special twist to that story. He convinces every sinner that he is beyond salvation. A person who has been outside of the ark of safety for a long time is told that all is lost. Drunkards, gamblers, thieves, adulterers have been convinced that they have destroyed themselves with God and will forever be marked as "cons." Yet, we only have to look at the woman at the well to learn that what we are hearing is only part of the story. Jesus met this woman who had five husbands and lived in adultery. It is true that she had a messed up life. However to get the story straight, we must look at what happened after she met Jesus, she ran through the city shouting "come see a man who told me all I've ever done." There is no sinner who is willing to repent and turn to God who cannot be forgiven. If any person believes on Jesus in his or her heart and confesses him openly, Romans 10:9 says, "Thou shalt be saved!"

Get the story straight!

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that no matter how Satan tries to turn things around, we must help the world get the story straight!

When the story is straight those who are dispirited will be encouraged. The disciples were all completely discouraged after the crucifixion. They hid themselves like criminals and stayed away from the public view. But when they heard the word, they were revived and rejuvenated.

When we get the story straight, we make sure that the world knows the true meaning of that resurrection morning.

It's not about Easter bunnies, because Easter bunnies can't raise a bowed down head! We got to get the story straight!

It's not about brightly colored eggs, because dyed eggs can't wipe tears from

my eyes! We got to get the story straight!

It's not about brand new clothes, because new clothes can make me look good on the outside, but they can't save my soul! We got to get the story straight!

It's important to get the story straight because Satan can make you feel that you are on the losing side! But when we get the story straight, we understand that we serve a God that has guaranteed us that we'll be on the winning side

Can't you hear Paul saying, in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Somebody saw you going through a hard time the other day as a tear fell from your eye. Tell them to wait before they tell the story, because David said, "weeping endureth but a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"

Somebody saw you wrestling with troubles and problems, tell them to wait before they run to the telephone, for I heard the Psalmist say , "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me" No wonder the Song Writer wrote, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

Somebody saw your enemies surrounding you and thought you were down for good, but I heard God tell David, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

When we get the story straight we begin to remember that we serve a God who can take our:

MISFORTUNES and turn them into grand opportunities; MINUTES OF PAIN and turn them into hours of joy;

DAY OF AGONY and turn it into years of ecstasy; WEEPING EYES and turn them into warm smiles

SADNESS and turn it into gladness; SET BACKS and turn them into step ups!

When we tell the story, we've got to be sure we tell the story straight!

We've got to tell the world that nearly 2,000 years ago that Jesus, the Lamb of God, gave his life that we might have a chance to everlasting life!

When we tell the story, we must tell the world that he carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

But even before the story was over somebody got it wrong! They started running through the city saying, he saved others but he can't save himself! They couldn't wait to get it straight!

If they had waited, they would have seen him die!

If they had waited, they would have seen him buried!

If they had waited, they would have seen them roll the stone in front of the tomb!

If they had waited, they would have been able to get the story straight!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Those who want to pronounce your death burial tell them wait, God is not through with me yet!

When God gets through with me!

When God gets through we me ...

I shall come forth as pure gold!

No. 703-Usher Anniversary

Hinges of Gold

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 22, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the show bread was, And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple." 1 Kings 7:48-50

Introduction

What determines the quality of our worship experience? Much of what we gain from any worship experience is dependent upon a number of factors, including what we expect from the experience, what we bring into the experience and how we feel about the experience. Any person who worships comes to meet God. Whether that happens or not is determined at the door.

Sometimes what's said or done at the door makes the difference. Consider the day all of the barnyard animals received an invitation to attend a great dinner at the barn. Everyone was especially honored to be invited to a dinner, so each made special preparations to look their best, come early and find a good seat. It seemed that all of the animals of the farm were present. When the two young fryers got their invitation they were excited like the other animals. They envisioned a fine supper of chicken feed, bread crumbs and corn. The hogs were excited too, they knew there would be plenty of slop. The cows were sure there would be plenty of hay. Each was elegantly dressed and ready for the great dinner. As they entered the barn door each was greeted by ushers who wore elegant tuxedos and gowns. They were shown to their respective troughs, perches and stalls. As the young chickens approached the barn door two foxes greeted them warmly, "Welcome!" they said, "We've been waiting for you, we can't get started without you!" The two chickens answered with surprise, "Really?" With a devilish glint in their eye while licking their chops the foxes responded, "What's a chicken dinner without the main course, you are the guest of honor!" In terror the young chickens promptly flew the coop, content that it was better to dine alone on chicken feed than to be in the company of those who wanted to eat them for dinner!

Whether we enjoy the worship experience or not hinges upon whether we are

made to feel like a guest of honor at the banquet of God, rather than the main course.When we are greeted with a smile we feel the warmth of God. The stage is set. The atmosphere is perfect. We are ready to meet God.

As Christians, we understand the importance of meeting God. Whether we actually meet God hinges on our faith. It also hinges on our belief and it hinges on the atmosphere that exists both in our hearts and in the place. Those who help create that atmosphere are precious. They are hinges of gold!

Exposition

This text focuses on how the temple of Solomon symbolized the presence of God and every aspect of its construction, even its doors and hinges revealed truths about the majesty of God.

The Temple of Solomon was grand, expensive and awe inspiring. The purpose of Solomon's temple was different from our understanding of a temple in modern times. Today, a temple is perceived as a place of worship. It is a place where men and women gather to sing praises to God, pray and seek a personal experience with God. No matter how grand a temple is built in modern times, believers expect to use the temple, in part for their own private worship and meditation.

However, in Solomon's time the temple was perceived differently. The temple was not perceived as a place to worship God, but it was a place where God actually lived. The temple was to be God's house. It was not a place where the people were expected to assemble to worship. It did not have seats, balconies and special seating areas. In fact, it had no seating accommodations at all. It was God's house, plain and simple. If that was Solomon's intent, then the house would have had to be much bigger. It was just over 100 feet long. Although it was grand, beautiful and expensive it could not have attempted to seat the thousands that would come each year to share in annual religious celebrations and rites. It was obviously a house for God.

The meaning of the Temple was the same as that of the ark it was constructed to enshrine: a symbol of God's presence in the midst of His people (Ex. 25:21-22). Because it was God's house, the worshipers could not enter the holy place, reserved only for priests and other worship leaders, much less the holiest place (holy of holies) to be entered by the high priest only once a year (Lev. 16). The worshipers could gather for prayer and sacrifice in the Temple courtyard(s) where they could sing psalms as they saw their offerings presented to Yahweh on His great altar.

Solomon paid attention to every detail of the construction. He hired the best artists and craftsmen who worked for years to create the beautiful temple that was constructed from huge stones carved out of the side of a mountain, transported to Jerusalem and fitted in place without the sound of a hammer. No detail was overlooked even to the construction of its doors and hinges upon which they hung.

The double doors of the inner sanctuary and the nave were carved and inlaid of finest wood and gold (1 Kings 6:31-35).

The doors served the purpose of letting the priests into God's holy place and

keeping the people out. Whether the giant doors served their purpose depended heavily upon the hinges, which Solomon commanded to be made of gold. Even though they would ultimately be almost invisible in he scheme of the entire temple, the hinges were important to Solomon. Once the beauty of the sanctuary in all of its glory was seen, the hinges would disappear, and at the very least appear insignificant. Yet, Solomon demands that even the hinges for both the inner door, which leads to God's presence and the outer door where the people had assembled to worship, both sets of doors must have hinges of gold.

It would have been cheaper to use other materials for the hinges. No one would see them. There were alloys of iron that could have been used that would have been stronger. But Solomon wanted the doors to have "hinges of gold!" Gold was valued and used because of its rarity, beauty, and workability. It could be melted without harm and shaped to meet many needs. Thus it can be used for casting objects, inlays, or overlays. The hinges for the doors of God's house had to be made of gold. The great doors that led to God hung upon them. They were important, because they opened the way to the presence of God.

Ushers Are Like Hinges

Ushers are known as doorkeepers in today's worship service. Like the hinges of Solomon's temple they serve an important purpose because worshipers and visitors perceive the open doors of the church in the context of their reception by the church ushers. The success and spirituality of any worship service hinges on good ushers known their responsibilities and carrying them out to the fullest.

A HINGE WORKS BECAUSE IT HOLDS FAST TO BOTH THE DOOR AND THE FACING. A hinge works because both of its arms are secured tightly to both the door and the door facing. A hinge that becomes disconnected from either the door or the door face will lose its pivoting ability. The door will hang or drop if either of its hands loses its grip.

Good ushers are those who have one hand in God's hand and the other on their post. It is extremely important for ushers to be Christians. Ushers must read their bibles, attend Sunday School, prayer meeting and otherwise live a godly life. Ushers should know and trust God for themselves. Their hand should always be in God's hand. No matter what the situation, their hand stays in God's hand. No matter what comes upon them, their hand stays in God's hand.

At the same time they must pay attention to their post. They must not neglect the importance of their station as they attend the needs of worshipers assigned to them. If an usher holds on to one and lets go of the other, the effectiveness of his service is minimized. An usher that holds on to God but lets go of his service is a self serving usher. An usher that pays attention to their station but lets go of God, is lost. Every usher should hold to God's unchanging hand as he remembers 1 Corinthians 15:58, "...be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

A PERFECTLY GOOD HINGE CAN BE LOOSENED. A perfectly good hinge can loose its grip. In this circumstance the hinge doesn't change but the screws that hold its arms in place become loose. When that which holds the hinge in place gets loose, the hinge loses its pivoting power and the doors begin to sag.

There are times when the best ushers get slack in their service. Somehow they lose the fire of their original commitment as they wrestle with a plethora of family problems, spiritual voids, and financial crises. Some are being besieged by temptations. Others have simply neglected their spiritual lives so long that their service has lost its attraction. The signs are impossible to ignore. They are frequently absent from their station, offering first one excuse then another. Then they reach a point when they are simply absent with no explanation at all, that's when we know that a good hinge needs to be tightened. That's when the board and the church goes into prayer and asks God to reignite the fire of enthusiasm in this weak member. Ushers who find themselves slacking should say what David said to God in the Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

SOME HINGES WORK IN ONLY ONE DIRECTION: There are hinges that open only to the outside and others that open only to the inside. Such hinges are restricted in that the doors they serve can only be opened one way.

In the same sense, there are ushers whose cordiality and warmth is restricted to the inside. They smile and greet visitors warmly inside the church edifice. They are the perfect picture of Christianity when they are in uniform standing in their place of service. However, many have difficulty carrying that same spirit of warmth, love and cordiality on the outside. On the outside of the church they may curse, grumble, complain, argue, fight, drink, smoke cigarettes and otherwise give a bad example.

On the inside, they shout and praise the Lord. But on the outside they are an embarrassment to the cross.

On the inside they sing "Swing Lo Sweet Chariot, Stop and let me ride!" But on the outside they sing "Shorty swing my way, you sho' look good to me!"

On the inside they study the Book of Daniel but on the outside the look for Jack Daniel.

On the inside they are promising to go and tell but on the outside they are looking for motel!

What God needs is a hinge that swings both ways. It's the same on Monday as it is on Sunday!

A spiritual hinge that serves a God that is the same today as he was yesterday and will be forever more!

Hinges of Gold

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that what God needs is not only ushers who will be good hinges, but he needs hinges of gold!

A gold hinge is valuable and hard to get.

A gold hinge is important because it has been tried in the fire!

A gold hinge is a beautiful hinge that never stops looking good! If Solomon had asked for hinges of Silver things would have been different. Silver looks good for a while but with time it begins to tarnish and requires someone to stroke and polish it, to keep looking good.

But a gold hinge doesn't need stroking are polishing it looks good all by itself!

A gold hinge is malleable, which means it can be change and is easy to adapt! An usher who is a gold hinge might work the front door one Sunday and the back door on another Sunday. A gold hinge usher may be asked to work the center isle one Sunday and be asked to sit out a Sunday to give a newcomer a chance! A gold hinge won't mind cause they shine even when they are sitting down!

As I close, I'm reminded of Oil Can Harry, the mentally challenged man who went around town carrying an oil can. Wherever he found a door that seemed to squeak he would squirt it with oil. In the grocery, public buildings or even in homes along the street, Oil Can Harry would tip his hand and squirt a little oil. One Sunday morning he was climbing the steps when he overheard the usher at the door complaining in about the president and grumbling about being taken lightly. When old Harry reached the door the usher forced a smile and gave him a program. When the service was over someone asked, "Harry where is your oil can? You never leave home without it!" Harry said, "Whenever I see a door that seems to be squeaky I put a little oil on the hinge. When I came to church this morning, there was a squeaky hinge on the door and I gave her the whole can!"

Every good hinge needs a little oil! The spirit of God keeps us from squeaking!

Whenever you have God's spirit, things are not the same!

God's spirit can take:

Heavy burdens and make them light; Fears and turn them into courage!

Despair and turn it into hope; Sadness and turn it into gladness!

Failure and turn it into success; Defeat and turn it into victory

Sin and turn it into salvation!

Every good usher should be a hinge of gold because gold gives evidence to the truth that "My father is rich in houses and land and holds the wealth of the world in his hand!"

A good usher should be a gold hinge because a gold hinge knows how to tell the story! He may not preach from a golden pulpit or play a golden piano, but he knows how tell to somebody how God woke "woke me up this morning and started me on my way!"

He knows how to tell the world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days!

I don't know about you but I've decided that come what may, from day to day, I'm going to keep my hands wrapped in the winding chain and tell the story!

Tell the Story!

Tell the Story!

No. 704-Youth

Get Yo' Shine On!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 26, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Introduction

Have you ever had someone to completely embarrass you? Most people have had an occasion or two in which a friend, family member or associate either said something or did something that was completely the opposite of your positions in life. You stand for honesty, they stand for dishonesty. You stand for truth while every word they speak is a lie. You stand for progress, while they stand for retrogression. This is the person that goes into the movie with you and yells at the screen when everyone else is quiet. This is the person that acts a complete fool in a restaurant or public place. This is the drunkard husband that loses control at an outing. Maybe it's the flirtatious wife at the company party. The situations are endless, but most people have had at least one occasion when someone has embarrassed them so badly that they wanted to hide themselves forever. On the other hand, there are other persons whose actions represent everything we stand for. We proudly own them as our own. They reflect our ideals and represent the virtues in which we believe. Whether we are embarrassed or not, therefore, depends on whether those around us have the same vibes as ourselves.

Supposed a person called himself a Christian, but did very few of the things not associated with Christianity? How would that be received? Consider Willie and Charlie, two friends who had shared most of their lives together from teenagers to grown men. They played basketball on the neighborhood court in high school. They enjoyed nights of entertainment and joyous occasions together. They talked late into the night, shared vacations, double dated and were involved in many projects. One day Willie was talking to Charlie about some music he described as "kickin!" As he scrabbled through his bag to show Charlie a new CD, a copy of a book entitled "Living the spirit filled life" fell to the floor. Charlie picked up the book and read the cover, then he saw other books in Willie's bag. "How to live for Jesus and love it" and others. With a puzzled look on his face Charlie said, "Willie, I been knowing you all these years, I didn't know you were a Christian?"

Is it possible that the people we are close to cannot recognize us as Christians

outside of a church environment. At school, do your activities quickly identify you as a Christian. Would the music you listen to or "don't" listen to, suggest that there is something different about you? Would the places you go, books you read or movies that you rent all testify to your faith in God and your Christian life?

There are many today whose professed life does not equal their practiced life. There is a husband somewhere whose wife is saying, "Gee darling, I didn't know were a Christian?" There is a wife somewhere whose husband is saying, " Gee darling, I didn't know you were a Christian." These are the cases in which that which is professed does not equal that which is lived.

As Christians, we strive to live for God. We show our life quest in actions and conversations. Those who know us don't say, "I didn't know you were a Christian!" but rather "You never said it, but I could tell you were a Christian!" That happens when we let the love of God shine through us as a living testimony of God's grace. That's when what we are shines through free and clear!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he commands his disciples to let their life style and works glorify God in every way.

Throughout the journey of the Jews God told them repeatedly that they were his chosen people. He intended for their survival, deliverance and success to be a light for all of those in the world who did not know God. Isaiah 49:6 says, "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Thus, God made it clear that he intended for the entire life experience of a believer to be a witness to people everywhere. He did not expect them to do anything except serve him and obey and love their fellow man. The world would take notice of their humble acts of obedience.

In the New Testament, Jesus repeats the same principal. In Chapters five and six of Matthew, Jesus seems to give a conflicting directive to believers. In Chapter 5 he urges every believer to do good works that they may glorify God. Yet, in Chapter six he seem to urge believers to do what they do in private, not to be seen of men. This left some believers puzzled. Should they let their light shine or should they simply keep a low profile and hide their works?

While Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light shine" chapter 6:1-3 says, if you do a good work and give to help the poor, do so in secret. Matthew 6:3 says, "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

While Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light shine" chapter 6:5-8 says, if you pray and talk to God, do that in secret or at the least in humility. Matthew 6:6 says, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

In Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus says that when we fast, do that in secret. We are encouraged to fast but to avoid demonstrations in the sight of men that let them know

that we have been fasting. Matthew 6:18 “That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

In matters of service, benevolence, prayer and personal sacrifice we see Jesus instructing us to avoid calling attention to ourselves.

The irony of this avoidance is that the very fact that we don’t call attention to what we do attracts notice, but the notice we receive is not personal. People are able to see God working in us and through us.

Thus, we are encouraged to do good works before others for the purpose of glorifying God. Those who help the needy, do so not for personal glory. Those who live righteously, do so not for personal glory, but to glorify God. Those who achieve a great success while doing a good work were not seeking the fan fare that accompanies success, but were doing the work itself, thus God gets the glory.

To let our light shine means each believer must assume a humble walk. We do that which must be done because of our calling, but we do it with humility.

Our eternal song whenever praise comes our way, is “to God be the glory for the things he has done!”

How to get your shine on!

Young Christians are learning the difficult task of the humble walk. It is difficult because the world teaches each person to walk in pride. A popular song among youth uses the phrase, “Get yo’ shine on!” encouraging them to stand out, look good, be “bout it,” etc. The idea of letting our light shine certainly appeals to Christian youth because they are taught to let their lives be a witness to others for Christ.

As Christian youth, how can you get your shine on? How can you let God’s light shine everywhere you go?

Every substance responds to light in one of three ways:

REFLECTION: Some people, like some materials, only reflect the light. When a substance reflects light, it in essence rejects it. It does not let it through! God stands poised to help every boy and girl become the best that they can be, but there are so many that send God’s love right back to him, without a response. God offers friendship, but when certain youth receive his offer they bounce it right back. God offers his presence, but many simply bounce it right back to him, preferring to operate alone. God offers his love, still others send that back too, preferring the love of those around them to the love of God. There are many youth today who simply reject God and send his offers of warmth, help, friendship and companionship back to him without a response.

Many youth know of adults who are not associated with their families who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help them. There are teachers who are trying to help youth improve their grades. Coaches that are trying to bring out their best athletic skills, civic workers who are trying to improve their social skills and others attributes. These persons are trying to help you to get your shine on! However,

many young people reject the help of those who are trying to help them only to continue to walk in darkness.

ABSORPTION: There are other youth that absorb the light, but still won't let it through. There are substances such as dark colored clothing that do not reflect light, they simply absorb it and hold the light. It goes no where! These are the young people who have not rejected the light. They listen to their teachers and advisors. They have received what has been said. They have absorbed it but they have not used it. They know the truths but they are not acting on it! They know their capacity but they are achieving their fullest potential.

Spiritually it is the same. There are many who know the word of God. Many have committed it to memory but simply won't let God work with them! They know that Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." They know what it says but they won't let God's light through! They know Philippians 4:13 that says, " I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." They know it, but they won't let it through!

Youth should remember that "you can't get your shine on, until you act on that which you know to be true!"

TRANSPARENT: There are youth who allow God's light to shine through them and as it shines, others see it! A young boy about nine years old went with his parents to Europe one summer. Part of their tour was visiting the great old cathedrals of the past. As he would visit cathedral after cathedral he saw the massive stained glass portraits of the disciples and of other saints. He was so impressed as he stood in these great empty halls looking through the beautiful stained glass windows.

Upon return, when asked by his Sunday School teacher to define a saint, he thought for a moment about those massive beautiful stained glass windows and said, "A saint is a man the light shines through."

That literally defines the believer and explains Matthew 5:16 at the same time. When we bask in the light of God's word we do not reject or simply absorb it and hold it, but we act on it. As we do that which we believe for the work's sake alone, we let God's light shine through us, others will see it and God will get the glory!

Beyond simply letting God's light shine through us the Christian becomes a magnifying glass which intensifies the light as it passes through and brings, power, energy and heat into every situation in which he or she focuses the power of God. There is so much power and energy that it becomes obvious that it is not the magnifying glass but the light source that deserves the praise.

Get your shine on!

Finally, consider what Jesus said to his disciples and to every believer today. Matthew 5:14-15 says, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

If every believer is expected to be a city on a hill that cannot be hid, then you need to get your shine on!

Whenever there is an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God, it's shining time! It's time to get your shine on!

Whenever you are needed to help someone in distress, it's shining time! It's time to get your shine on!

Even when it gets tough at school and students and teachers are getting on your last nerve, it's shining time! It's time to get your shine on!

Young believers let your light shine!

When Puff Daddy talks about the "Victory", It's time to get your shine on, tell the world that God has told us that we are "more than conquerors" in him who loves us!

When Master P starts talking about "I got the hook up!" That's when you know it's shining time. That's when you let the world know that we serve a God who can hook us up with everything we need. Whatever I need God's Got it!

When LL Cool J starts talking about "Father," that's when its time to put your shine on! Only a child of God can say it right... Father! I stretch my hand to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!

No wonder the song writer said, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine! Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine!

We have to tell the world about Jesus!Who died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he opened his eyes...

I can hear him saying in my mind..

It's time to get my shine on!

No. 705-Inspiration

All These Things Are Against Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 3, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Genesis 42:36

Introduction

Do you ever reach a point when it appears that everything is working against you? There are periods in life when the chain of events and circumstances seem directed against us, especially when they occur in succession. Those are the times when everything that can go wrong does just that. Those are the especially trying times when all news is bad news and it seems to come in floods! When these kinds of times appear they prompt us to feel like the slogan on the Morton Salt box which says, "When it rains, it pours."

We become especially frustrated when we experience a string of bad experiences because somehow, deep down, we expect God to walk us around the valley of the shadow of death and to shield us completely from evil and temptation rather than delivering us from evil. Our carnal understanding of life is that every circumstance should be for us and nothing should work against us. We were told that once we became a Christian that everything would work for us...something is wrong! Isn't it? These troubles are not part of the deal!

Consider Caldonia, who was a fine, plump hen in the chicken yard, but she was a bit naive. Her feelings were often hurt because the rooster wouldn't let her get close to the farmer when he came inside the gate. "You push me back every time he comes in the gate. All of the other hens always get the best feed and I always get what's left. Some even get put in the special coop. They are fed well and don't have to scratch for worms and chicken feed. I think its unfair of you to work against me so much." The old rooster liked Caldonia, even though she was a bit slow. "Caldonia, you are a fine, good looking chick but sometimes you don't think. Have you ever seen a single chicken that was put in the coop return to this yard? It may seem that I'm against you from Monday to Saturday, but I'm trying to save you from being somebody's Sunday dinner!"

So it is with the Christian experience in life. We often complain about that which appears at the moment to be against us. We are so close to our life's experience that

we cannot conceive of any way that such negative and painful experiences can ever be anything but something that works against our best interest. Just as a child that is not allowed to keep company with unrowdy friends or attend questionable social events can't understand why parents work against them so much, we often interpret that which is meant for our good as actually something that is against us.

As Christians, we must always remember that any experience we encounter is one in a series of encounters designed for our betterment. We trust God in the experience, knowing that when it has passed we will have gained from that which we once thought was against us.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he interprets an unfortunate string of events as something that was working against him.

Jacob, at the time of this text, was an elderly man. For over a decade he had mourned what he thought was the untimely death of his son Joseph. He brooded over that loss as he also wrestled with the domestic problem of scarcity of food. He decided to send his sons to Egypt to purchase grain for the family. There they encountered Joseph, the younger brother they had sold into slavery 12 years earlier, but did not recognize him. Joseph was moved when he saw them but did not reveal himself to them. Instead, he told the brothers to prove themselves honest men and not spies. He took one of the brothers, Simeon, and held him hostage until the brothers returned home and brought their younger brother Benjamin with them. In this, they would prove that they were not spies, but honest men as they claimed.

When the brothers gave this report to Jacob he was disheartened. He responded that "Joseph is not." "Simeon is not and ye will take Benjamin away." When he considered what was before him, Jacob responded by saying, "All these things are against me!"

Jacob's response was based on misconceptions. When Jacob concluded that events were working against him, his was a response to what he perceived to be adversarial situations. Jacob believed that Joseph was dead. He was presented his son's beautiful coat of many colors, stained with animal blood. He believed Joseph to be dead and he suspected his older sons, who were jealous of Joseph, to have played a part in his death. He counted Joseph's loss as something that worked against him. The famine caused a tremendous problem for Jacob. He had a large family as well as many workers. In his old age, dealing with scarcity of food was a great strain. He counted that as something else that worked against him. The incarceration of Simeon was also considered to be just another example of life working against him, only to add the possible loss of Benjamin as well. When he looked at the events, he dropped his head in bereavement and concluded that, "all these things are against me."

In actuality, none of the events that Jacob lamented were working against him, although they appeared that way at the moment. Joseph's disappearance was not against him. By being sold into slavery, God eventually placed Joseph in a position

of trust in Egypt that would mean help for his family 12 years later and a comfortable existence for his father for the remainder of his days. It looked to be against him, but it was actually working out to Jacob's benefit. The famine turned out to be the catalyst that pushed Jacob to send his sons to Egypt where they eventually met Joseph and reunited the family. At that moment, the famine appeared to be against him, but it too served a useful purpose in God's plan. Even the incarceration of Simeon and the request to bring Benjamin were not working against him. They would lead to moments of greater joy, although that purpose could not be seen. Certainly, Jacob had a misconception about God's movement in his life.

Jacob ignored the past. When Jacob said "all things are against me" he spoke with a very short memory. If anyone should know how God operates in the course of human events, it should have been Jacob. It was Jacob who was placed in the uncomfortable position of working 14 years to get the woman he loved. It was Jacob who turned that experience into a profit as he left his uncle's employment after two decades and returned home a rich man. It was Jacob who wrestled with an angel and walked away with a new name, and a great blessing from God. It was Jacob who was successful at every venture to which he put his hands. Obviously it was inaccurate for Jacob to suggest that "all these things are against me." In a great way, God had shown Jacob how he can take any circumstance, even one that appears adverse, and make it work to the advantage of those that trust in him. Had Jacob remembered this truth he would have probably concluded that, "all these things will work to my benefit" instead of "all these things are against me".

Isaiah, responding to a similar circumstance, gave the proper response in Isaiah 38:16, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." His was expression of hope and faith in God rather than an expression of despair.

Thus the believer is encouraged to remember that despite the appearance of negative circumstances, "so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live!"

Everything is Against Me

Today there are millions of people who believe the world is against them. They suspect everyone and everything. There are even some who suffer from spiritual paranoia. They suspect that God has forsaken them and that they are being overwhelmed by a stream of circumstances that are working against them.

These are the individuals who sing the song (to the tune of Jesus love me):

God doesn't love me, this I know
my misfortunes tell me so
if things are good it won't be long
fo' everything starts going wrong
everything is against me
everything is against me
everything is against me

my misfortunes tell me so

While some sing the song of misery and defeat Christians should remember:

WHAT MAY APPEAR TO BE AGAINST US MAY NOT BE SO: When misfortunes happen we struggle to understand why they happen. On one day thousands of people pray to God for a financial blessing. Instead of raining dollar bills from heaven, God sends hail stones as big as baseballs. There are broken windows, dented cars, smashed roofs and tremendous damage everywhere. Some are tempted to say, "everything is working against us," until they realize that after the repairs are made there will be enough left over to solve that financial problem for which they prayed. What often appears to be against us, usually turns out to be for us.

A family devastated by criminal behavior can be torn apart when a son or daughter is arrested and jailed. But when that child arises a better man or woman as a result of the experience, we remember that what appears to be against us, often turns out to be for us!

The prophet Jeremiah was shown a great truth at the potter's house. There he saw a potter making clay pots. However, each time there was a flaw in the clay the potter tore down the entire mold and started over again. In a similar sense, sometimes God allows some things to happen to us, like flawed clay pots, that require us to be completely reshaped. It appears destructive at the moment, but God has a greater intent in mind.

NO MATTER HOW NEGATIVE SOMETHING APPEARS, GOD IS BEHIND THE SCENES. Every believer should remember that no matter how bad a circumstance may appear, God is always present with them and is secretly working behind the scenes in many ways to help us. Often we do not even know that it is happening!

Believers are not promised immunity from unfortunate circumstances. We are never promised that there will be no auto accidents, sicknesses, financial troubles, marital ripples, and personal frustrations. We are never promised that we will always have a job. Neither are we promised financial security. We are promised that regardless to what comes our way, God will be there for us!

If we are struggling with troubles that have put our livelihoods at stake, it may seem that the world is against us, but the believer takes hope in God's promise in Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

If we are besiged by troubles on the left and problems on the right, we don't worry too much about it, because as long as God is on the case I can, "Lift up my eyes unto hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!

If we believe in God, trust in him, and walk in his way, he will work every negative situation out to our advantage. We e know this to be true because of what God has promised in his word. Romans 8:28 reads, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

God will make a way

Finally, every believer must keep one assurance in mind. He should remember that no matter how difficult the path or dangerous the road, God is still in control. He will make a way!

We have the assurance that although we do not know exactly what each circumstance means, God still holds the reins of life and will steer every situation so that we come out stronger and better because of it!

When Jacob's son finally realized who Joseph was, it was then that he realized that God had turned a bad thing into a good thing!

When Jacob saw all of his family reunited and plenty of food on the table it was then that he realized that God had taken what he thought was a bad thing and turned it into a good thing!

When Jacob was able to put his arms around the son that he thought was dead, then realized that instead of working against him, God had been working for him all along!

When Israel left Egypt they stood at the mouth of the Red Sea. The Red sea was in front of them and Pharaoh's army was behind them. The were caught in the middle with no place, that's when they discovered that Lord can make a way out of no way!

Somebody can testify how God can take a bad thing and turn it into a good thing.

We serve a God who can take a bad thing like:

FAILURE and turn it into success; DEFEAT and turn it into victory!

SADNESS and turn it into gladness; SORROW and turn it into joy!

HATRED and turn it into love; LOSSES and turn them into gains!

TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs; BROKEN HEARTS turn them into happy souls!

Because we serve a God who specializes in taking bad situations and turning them into good, we don't worry because we know the Lord will make a way somehow!

We serve a God who understands what it means to have troubles on every hand!

They sat him down and taunted him all night long, but he kept looking forward to the day that every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus was Lord of Lords!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, but he kept looking to the day when the angels would cry out, "bring forth the royal diadem and crown him, crown, Lord of Lords!

They stretched him out wide and drove nails into hands but he never said a word. He just looked forward to the day when he would stand with all power in his hands!

On Golgotha's hill God took a bad thing and turn it into a good thing!

He took an old rugged cross, an emblem of shame, and turned it into a symbol of hope!

He took the death of one man and turn it into life for millions!

He died out on Calvary! But Early...Early Sunday morning..

God took a bad thing.....

No. 706-Mother's Day

She That Bare Thee Shall Rejoice

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 10, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice." Proverbs 23:22-25

Introduction

What is the best way to please your mother? As Mother's Day approaches each year children scramble to find unique ways to make their mothers happy. Many kitchens are ruined on the second Sunday in May as little hands try their skill at frying water and boiling bacon to make mother a breakfast served in bed. Many mothers are humbled by the thought as they dread the prospect of cleaning up the kitchen after their breakfast in bed. Others buy beautiful cards, flowers, gifts and a plethora of other symbols of love and respect. As the nation honors its mothers families will pay tribute in a variety of ways that include: Wearing red roses to signify our mothers are living still and white roses to signify those mothers who have passed on; making long distance phone calls; attending church with them or dining out with them. The ways to symbolize a family's love and respect for mother vary. They all seem insignificant when compared to what mothers have given of themselves in sacrifice for their families.

How successful are our efforts to please mother? Consider the mother who had a daughter who was faithful, studious, and hardworking with a deep sense of morality. At home, she was often criticized for her unwillingness to lower her standards and for her sense of personal pride and ethics. To succeed in the corporate world however, she lowered her standards considerably and was the subject of rumors at the company. It was said that she would do anything to succeed. Unfortunately the rumors made it home more often than she did. One Mother's Day the daughter came home and showered her mother with expensive diamond earrings and a pearl necklace. The mother hugged her and expressed thanks. As the mother talked, she continued to stare at a picture of her daughter in her youth and an empty frame that sat next to it. She had taken selected pages from an old family bible and made matts

for the frame. She often stared at the empty frame. Occasionally she broke a smile. The daughter sensed something was wrong and inquired. Staring at the picture said, "I appreciate the gifts, I really do." Then she asked her daughter to read the verse that would fall just underneath any picture that was put in that frame. The daughter read the words, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thy own understanding." At that the mother said, "What would really make me happy would be to see the little girl in this picture, grow big enough to fit this empty frame."

Each mother works to provide a framework for her children. That framework consists of certain values that will square their lives. Those values certainly include: morality, hard work, positive spirit and faithfulness to God. Most mothers spend their entire lives trying to help their children fit the frame. They lecture, beg, plead, pray, argue and use every resource available to them to help their children reach a point when they are able to fit the frame. There are many today, long after their mothers have left them, who are still struggling to fit the frame, even as they pay respect to memories of mothers gone to be with the Lord.

Would she have been happier if there had been more flowers? Could you have brought a bigger smile if the gift you purchased had cost just a little more? Does our checkbook capacity bring her joy? Probably not. Many mothers would gladly exchange all of the flowers, candy, gifts and cards just for the knowledge that their sons and daughters are safe, secure, happy, fulfilled and that their lives fit the frame.

As Christians, we give thanks to God for mothers. They have been the source of our inspiration and joy. Our quest is to live our lives in such a way their life's work is justified, knowing that we have finally grown big enough to fit the frame!

Exposition

This text focuses on great words of wisdom that share how to please our parents and to bring joy to our mothers.

Proverbs, a great book of wisdom and knowledge, often addresses the subject of children and parents. This is done often to draw parallels between our relationship between our parents and that which also exists with God. This is the case with verses 24 and 25 of Proverbs 23.

The scope of the instruction in Proverbs is that believers should seek to be honest, truthful, obedient and wise. Having done these, every believer pleases God and brings joy. In the same way that a son or a daughter gains the praise and admiration of his father and mother, believers also gain the praise and admiration of God when we seek after truth, live righteously and act wisely.

While describing what pleases God, Proverbs also describes what brings joy to our earthly parents. What pleases God is that every believer lives a righteous life.

What pleases parents most is to know that their children are doing the right thing with their lives. Children who live and act wisely are the source of perpetual joy to their parents. Their actions constantly bring gladness and cheer into both parents.

Verse 25 adds an interesting footnote. "And she that bare thee shall rejoice!"

It is a striking contrast to Proverbs 17:25 that notes that instead of bringing joy to the woman who bore them, a foolish child brings "bitterness to the one who bore him."

The word translated "rejoice" in this text is the Hebrew word "Giyl" (Gheel) which means to delight while trembling in fear, awe and respect.

In the 44 times in which this word is used in the Old Testament, it is mostly used in the context that a person is receiving joy in response to the power, mercy, benevolence and intervention of God. For example, Psalm 2:11 says, "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." Those who rejoice in this context do so because they are aware that it is only the powerful hand of God that moves around them that protects and blesses them. Psalm 13:5 says, "I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." Those who rejoice in this context do so because God has rewarded their trust with salvation. Each time they think about it, their joy is renewed. Psalm 31:7 says, "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities." In this context a believer rejoices because God has been merciful in times of trouble.

Thus, when the text notes that a child that lives wisely, truthfully and honestly, a mother is prompted to rejoice, it suggests that the mother is glad, but with a sense of trembling, awe and respect for God because it is through him that there is hope for life!

What Pleases Mother

The emphasis of Mother's Day is to show our mothers our concern and love on one special day. However, what can we do to please our mothers, beyond Mother's Day. Obviously, it is not practical to buy gifts every day or to even go out to dinner every day. What can be done on a daily basis to turn every day into a mother's day?

CONSIDER HER COUNSEL: The wisdom of a mother's experience can often be the difference between success of failure for a son or daughter. She would be thoroughly pleased if she knew her children followed her counsel. Mothers provide invaluable counsel and advice to their children in matters of love, understanding of people and pitfalls to avoid. It doesn't matter what profession a child may choose, if it involves people sooner or later mother's counsel will play a part. That's the time when you will remember how mothers taught you to be careful how you treat people because the same people you trample on your way up, you may meet on the way down. It doesn't matter how sophisticated your chosen occupation, if it involves concentration, dedication and perseverance, sooner or later, mother's counsel will play a part.

That's when you remember how she told you once you have begun a project don't quit until it is done. It doesn't matter how complicated and involved your life pursuit is, if it requires perfection, you'll hear mother's voice saying, give nothing but your best, accept nothing less than the best.

Mother's may not know much about what it is that you do. However, their experience has taught them about people, which is where most of us mess up. Her

counsel can save us much embarrassment and disgrace.

REMEMBER HER EXAMPLE OF INDUSTRY: The good mother rejoices when her children are gainfully industrious. A mother rejoices when it appears that her example of doing honest and praiseworthy work is followed by her children. Every mother wants her children to know how to take care of themselves and to provide for their own food, clothing and shelter. From childhood she has encouraged each to employ themselves at some form of praiseworthy industry. Mothers are not picky. They are just as proud of the daughter that waits tables as they are of the son who is a school teacher. What pleases her is that her children are able to stand for themselves. Those who are not able to do so draw her smiles, each time they try, even thought they may fail in their trying.

REMEMBER HER WHEN SHE IS WEAK: Often mothers give the impression that they are pillars of strength. In actuality many have destroyed their health and strength trying to insure the strength of their families. A mother is happy to know that in her hour of weakness that her children do not forsake her, but will provide for her care. Physical sickness, emotional crises and aging are three maladies that eventually catch up and overtake even strongest mothers. These are times when a mother rejoices to know that those that she loves have not abandoned her or forsaken her. These may be times when she may seem difficult to deal with as she struggles with the frustration of advancing aging or failing health. Inside, however, her soul rejoices that her children stand by her, even in the face of her weakness.

The Source of a mother's Joy

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider the source of a mother's joy.

A Christian mother's happiness comes from seeing her baby's smile, but that's not the source of her joy, because babies don't always smile

A mother is glad when she sees a son or daughter reach a high point in life, but that's not the real source of her joy, because children don't always reach high points, sometime they fall flat on the faces.

A mother is excited when she hears good news about one of her children, but that's not the source of her joy, because sometimes she hears bad news.

A mother is elated when she hears words of praise from her child, but that's not the source of her joy, because sometimes what she hears breaks her heart.

A mother is ecstatic when her child becomes a success, but that's not the source of her joy, because sometimes her child sees nothing but failure.

A mother is elated when her children perform good deeds, but that's not the source of her joy, because sometimes children do bad things!

A mother is impressed when her children are pictures of perfection, but that's not the source of her joy, because children make many mistakes.

Moments of happiness are man made, but a mother's joy doesn't come from man-made moments, but it comes from knowing the Lord.

A mother who knows the Lord, can withstand the greatest of life's storms!

A mother who knows the Lord, can find strength in the midst of her own weakness!

A mother who knows the Lord, can fight back the tears of disappointment and greet a failing child with a smile!

A mother who knows the Lord, can show courage in the face of family problems that bring fear to the heart.

A mother who knows the Lord has a joy that bubbles from the inside that cannot be extinguished by the circumstances of life. Maybe that's why the song writer declared, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!"

The believing mother affirms, that this joy I have:

Lifts me up when I feel down!

Comforts me when I feel lonely!

Cheers me when I feel sad!

Every child who has a Christian mother should watch your mother's walk then tell the Lord, "I want Jesus to walk with me..You walked with my mother, now walk with me!"

You know Jesus don't you?

Jesus, who carried and old cross for you and me!

Jesus, who was stretched out between two thieves!

Jesus, who looked down from the cross at Mary and all mothers to come and said, "Woman, behold thy son!"

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

He has all power in his hands!

All power!

No. 707-Communion

Crumbs

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 17, 1998

SCRIPTURE: And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Matthew 15: 27-28

Introduction

Have you ever felt yourself praying for a blessing? Any kind of blessing will do, even a small itsy bitsy one! Those are the times when you're simply not choicy about the size and type of blessing. Any blessing will do! Not a million dollars, just $20 will do! Not a new car, but you'd be happy if the one you have would just start! Not a new house, but just getting the squeaky door on this one repaired would be fine! Not a big high paying job with an office and a window overlooking the city, just a few less hassles on this one would be fine! If you've ever had those kind of moments then you know what it's like to experience the spiritual trauma that creates the illusion of a "blessing drought!" That's when things get so bad that you stop troubling God about the big things and would be happy just to get a little something from heaven.

Sometimes, even the best of us get pretty selective in what we ask God for. Not shoes, but designer shoes! Not food, but expensive cuisine! Not an automobile, but a stretch limousine! Not our daily bread, but the entire bakery! As God provides our daily needs for us, believers must be careful not to be too specific and demanding in what we request of God. Sometimes our blessing is not in a new car, but on the city bus. Our blessing may not be in the appointment or promotion that we seek, but in another job, even with another company! Our blessing may not be in the fact that we received a "Gold Card" in the mail, but the real blessing may be in the letter that turned us down!

Consider the homeless woman who came into millions by what appeared to be the grandest stroke of luck. Her house was filled with fine furniture and her closets were filled with the best that money could buy. However, people were puzzled that an obviously wealthy woman would continue to wear a pair of run down old shoes one her feet daily. No matter what the occasion or the style of dress, she wore the

same pair old shoes. Finally a friend asked why she continued to wear the old tattered shoes. She was inspired by her answer. “I was poor and homeless.” She began. “I. was tired of searching the alleys and trash barrels for food every day. I was cold and had no shoes on my feet. One day, I sat quivering and talked to God saying, “Lord, I ain’t never asked you for much, but right now I need a big one!” Later that evening she found an old pair of tattered shoes in a trash barrel. She shouted “Thank you Lord” as she put the shoes on her feet. She tipped into a church prayer service that night and sat on the back row. After the service she was met by a kind wealthy woman who gave her a job in her home. She attended the woman for many years and they became friends. Upon the woman’s death she left all her fortune to her former homeless maid. “Now even though I have dozens of dresses and can buy anything I want to put on my feet. I wear these old shoes, because one day I asked God for a big blessing, but all I got was these old shoes! They walked me to the house of God and put me in his care. Ever since that day, I hardly ever take them off my feet because I’ve been walking on my blessing every day!

How many of us are walking on our blessings every day? We didn’t get the big one we asked for but God sent us just what we needed! How many can testify that when we asked God for our daily bread we were disturbed when we all we received were crumbs! How many of us have lived to see how God worked with the crumbs and made them into bread?

As Christians, we have witnessed the power of God. We know he is able to bless us with just a touch of his garment, a word from his lips, or with a crumb from his table to provide for our need! Our prayer daily is, “Give us this day our daily bread!” But if not the whole loaf..a crumb will do!

Exposition

This text focuses upon a gentile woman whose faith in Christ demonstrated that even a small blessing from him would be sufficient.

The woman upon which this text focuses was not of the people of Israel, of whom came the patriarchs, and prophets, and the parents of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh; of whom the Virgin Mary herself was, who was the Mother of Christ. The text makes special note of the fact by noting that as the Lord, “departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,”(v22) and with the greatest earnestness begged of Him the mercy to heal her daughter, “who was grievously vexed with a devil.” Tyre and Sidon were not cities of the people of Israel, but of the Gentiles; though they bordered on that people. Though she was not a Jew, she cried out, and boldly knocked.

God’s original plan of Salvation was for Christ to come and offer the great blessing of redemption only to Jewish people, referred to as the “lost sheep of Israel.” Though he contained himself mostly in the Jewish community giving blessings of healing and hope to all that would hear, word of his mighty works spread outside of the Jewish community. The outsiders, those who were not Jews, were called a variety

of names by the Jews. They were sometimes called "swine" and often called "dogs" because they were idol worshipers or ate foodstuffs from swine.

Most of Jesus' personal ministry was focused on the House of Israel. After they rejected him and crucified him, he commissioned his disciples to reach out to the entire world. When the woman of Canaan came to him asking for a blessing Jesus' reply was, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

In verse 26 Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." A full understanding of the text requires us to focus on three words, "children", "bread" and "dogs."

Children. People who were Jews considered themselves the children of God. Jews and Jews alone considered God as their father and the people as his humble offspring. They also considered themselves the descendants of Israel and thus his "children." The reference to children was not a reference to a single child, but a reference to their race as being special before God.

Bread. In his discussions with the Jews he often compared himself to the bread that was rained down from heaven by God upon Israel when it wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. That bread was called "manna." He characterized himself as the new bread from heaven. His was a blessing of salvation and hope to the people.

Dogs. Anyone who was not a Jew was considered a dog or an outsider. At the least, he is a non-believer. At the most he is prohibited from enjoying the full blessings of a benevolent God.

Thus Jesus response to the woman meant, "It is not good to take the blessings of healing and hope that are intended for the people of Israel and give them to outsiders."

The woman was not intimidated by the reference to 'dogs" she quickly used the same statement in an illustration, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

Her faith was so intense that she believed that just a small portion of God's grace would be sufficient to resolve her need. It was the same attitude that a woman who had been afflicted by an issue of blood for 12 years assumed. She felt that if she could just touch the hem of his garment, it would be sufficient. The woman of Canaan didn't want a lot, just a crumb! Not a whole dispensation, a crumb would be sufficient!

Her faith in the power of God resulted in the healing of her daughter. It was achieved but by asking for something big, but just from a crumb from the master's table.

The Power of Crumbs

Today there are millions of people who are overwhelmed by the fact that all life seems to have given them are crumbs. They have assumed the attitude of the poet who said that life is a "crust of bread and a corner to sleep in, a minute of joy and an hour to weep in..." Many have made themselves miserable lamenting the fact that all they ever seem to get in life is crumbs!

Initially, when we think of crumbs, we usually think of small particles of food left on a plate, scattered on a table or dropped on the floor. We think of crumbs as a useless by product, more of a nuisance than a resource.

Mr. Webster reminds us that the "crumb" of a slice of bread is the soft inner part, while the crust is the hard outer part. The "crumbs" are the small pieces of the crumb that become separated from the whole. With that in mind we should consider that:

THERE IS POWER IN THE CRUMBS: The power of God is unimaginable. What we enjoy today are only the crumbs of what he is able to do. We have learned how splitting a single Plutonium or Uranium atom can cause a chain reaction that can kill millions of people and with fallout that lasts for years. That's from splitting one atom. But each human body contains millions of atoms. There are many atoms in the world that they cannot be counted. This indicates the immense power of God. God's power is so great and intense that if he actually gave us all he was capable of giving, we couldn't stand it! For our sake, we have been given crumbs! If we received much more we would injure ourselves.

OUR BLESSINGS ARE BUT CRUMBS: Whatever we have accumulated in this life are just crumbs! Take an inventory, whatever is found is just crumbs, when compared to the storehouse of God. In Psalm 50:10-12 God reminds believers that the whole world is his including, " every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." Everything we have is but a small crumb from the great storehouse of God's goodness.

DON'T TAKE YOUR CRUMBS LIGHTLY: Perhaps you have noticed that some homemakers are studious about collecting your bread scraps. The reason is those crumbs and scraps have value. They take the old bread crumbs and crush and season them and turn them into dressings and puddings and scores of other uses. An entire industry has evolved among those who don't take crumbs lightly. They sell bagged crumbs for dressings and salads and other epicurean uses and make millions. All they sell are crumbs!

What crumb has fallen into your life from God's immense storehouse? What are you doing with it? Are you leaving it upon the plate of life, waiting on a whole slice instead? Perhaps your crumb is a special talent or ability. Perhaps your crumb is an attractive personality that inspires people. Maybe your crumb is a quiet comforting manner. Whether your crumb is genius or ingenuity, don't take your crumb lightly! Gather up the idle crumbs of skill, personality, talent, faith and hope and prepare to use them. There is a whole world waiting for someone like you who can take their crumbs and turn them into dressing!

Just a few crumbs!

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider who can expect to receive crumbs from the master's table.

If this text does anything, it makes it abundantly clear that anyone who has faith in the Lord can get a blessing. The woman of this text was a Canaanite. She was a direct descendant of Ham, the son of Noah, most notably identified with the African people.

The woman in effect said, "Lord I'm not a Jew, but all I want is just a small blessing; a crumb from the table!"

When the Lord looked upon her he didn't see a woman of African descent. He didn't see a woman buried under a sea of stereotypes and racial nicknames! What he saw was a human being with a believing heart!

The Lord doesn't care whether you are a Caucasian-American or an African-American. He doesn't care whether you are a Hispanic-American or an Asian-American. It doesn't matter to God whether you are an American at all! What counts most is whether you have a believing heart!

That's why Jesus told the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is thy faith!"

Faith can show us how to take the crumbs that life gives us and turn them into delicious dressings!

Faith can take the hog guts that life throws us and turn them into "chitterlings!"

Faith can take the bread scraps of life and turn them into bread pudding!

Faith can take the lemons that make life so sour and turn them into lemonade!

There is more power in the crumbs that fall from the master's table than the whole loaf in the devil's bread box!

Consider the man who was taken as a prisoner during the great war! As the soldiers broke into his house he grabbed a piece of bread and stuffed into his pocket. Blindfolded, they marched him all night long to a secret camp. As he walked along the road, he crumbled the bread and punched a whole in his pocket. Ever so often he dropped a few bread crumbs along the way. That night he and several comrades managed to escape but didn't know how to get home. He ran boldly in the right direction and never missed a turn. Once they were safe, they asked him how he was able to find his way back and he answered, "I just followed the trail of the crumbs!"

When someone wants to know the source of your blessing, tell them to "follow the trail of the crumbs!"

I may be wearing a decent looking, suit but it's just a crumb from the master's table!

I may be driving a brand new car, but it's just a crumb from the master's table!

If you want to know where the blessings come from, follow the trail of the crumbs!

Follow that trail to a little town in Bethlehem!

Follow that trail to a carpenter's shop in Nazareth!

Follow that trail through the winding streets of Jerusalem!

Follow that trail to a cross sitting on a hill!

When you get to the end of the trail say, Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 708-Graduation

Tall Trees Need Deep Roots

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 24, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:3

Introduction

Do you ever dream of reaching high heights? How high have you set your sights? Youth have a multiplicity of dreams that range from becoming movie stars, fashion designers, professional athletes to politicians, business persons and millionaires. Dreams are the substance of ambition. Those who reach high goals in life begin with great dreams. What does it take to grow tall enough to reach one's dreams? Simply height alone? Reaching high goals will take more than simply dreaming. Success does not come from idle fantasies. Those who dream of reaching high heights learn what it takes to make it to the top, then once there, to stay at the top.

Certain qualities are needed for anyone to reach the high heights they seek. Those who would go high need only to the lesson of nature, which gives one simple but profound lesson, "tall trees need deep roots." In the Bible, godly people are often likened to trees. Joni Eareckson Tada wrote about this in her book Diamonds in the Dust: "The branches of growing trees not only reach higher, but their roots grow deeper. It's impossible for a strong tree to have high branches without having deep roots. It would become top-heavy and topple over in the wind."

A high school graduate is a seedling in the forest of life. The graduate has been standing with the help of his family that has propped him up to help him grow straight and tall. She has been held in place, watered and protected from strong winds. The little seedling has been nurtured, fed and shielded from hurt harm and danger. At graduation, many families literally present the little seedling its life in a flower pot. What happens to the future of each graduate is similar to what happens to any seedling.

Young Christians have in the bible have been compared to young seedlings. They are often encouraged to plant themselves by the rivers of water where their roots can grow down as their branches reach up. Many of the great sages of biblical history send one message to the youth of each succeeding generation, "if you would grow

tall and reach the sky, send down your roots in fertile soil!"

For any believer this is also true. Those who would grow in the faith and knowledge of God should prepare deep roots that will dig deep in an active faith, service and belief in almighty God. The world will solicit every seedling to plant in its dry, sandy soil. As it becons, the seedling must resist the temptation to plant itself anywhere except fertile ground.

As Christians, we have learned what it means to enjoy fertile ground. In the fertile ground of God's love we have found assurance. In the fertile ground of God's grace we have found shelter from the storms of life. As our arms continually reach up to God in praise every day, our roots must grow deeper because...tall trees need deep roots.

Exposition

This text considers how the word of God compares a believer's life to trees.

David, writing in the first Psalm suggested that trees planted in the right place would grow and prosper. Thus he compared the believer's life to such a tree, planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit at the right time, with leaves that are fully watered. Leaves that should be beautiful and green in the spring and summer, wither if they are not nourished and sustained. Yet David, said trees planted by the rivers of water don't wither but flourished because they are always fed. Spiritual prosperity and happiness follows such a person, who is happy regardless to their estate in life.

Building on this same idea Jeremiah in 17:8 compares the righteous man to a tree planted by the water that sends out its root by the stream. When heat and drought comes, it is always green. It is planted in the right place.

Each emphasizes the importance of being planted near the rivers of water, symbolic of the word of God.

Believers who trust in God continually and stay close to his word, keep the faith, are like such trees. Their leaves will not wither out of season and spiritual prosperity will follow them.

What Trees Need

Today there are millions of youth about to begin another phase of their lives. They are little seedlings that want to be big one day. If that is the case, then each should closely observe just what a tree needs and what it does to grow tall.

TREES CANNOT GROW TALL IN THE POT: Often small seedlings are given as gifts in small flower pots. The pot contains just enough soil to maintain it for a short term. However, as the tree grows, it will require its own space. To grow tall, it must take root in fertile ground. It cannot grow tall in the pot.

No matter how comfortable they become, there comes a time when every young seedling must take root in its own space. It cannot grow tall in the pot. Parents will do as much as they can to help their children resettle. They often help them find

apartments or acquire a few of the essentials to get them started on their own. They are not putting them out or casting them aside, but they realize that true growth comes only outside of the pot.

TREES THAT GROW TALL NEED FERTILE GROUND: Where do you plant a tree so it can grow tall? Trees that grow tall need to be planted in fertile ground. Fertile ground is conducive to growth. It supplies all that the tree needs to live and mature.

One of the most frequent mistakes of most youth is that they try to grow tall in dry ground. They plant themselves around friends, associates and social surroundings that cannot sustain them. Rather than fertile ground, many plant themselves in dry ground and their growth, if not their lives are stunted.

EVERY TREE DOESN'T GROW TO THE SAME HEIGHT: A fact of life that nature documents is that all trees don't grow to the same height. The Giant Sequoias in California's Sequoia National Park grow to a height of 257 feet, yet there are other species in the world that are fully grown at 13 feet. What is tall for a pigmy sized pine may not be tall for an Oak.

Each youth, making his or her own mark on the world must accept that their goal in life is to reach their fullest potential. To be the best that they can be. When your best has been achieved, you have reached your highest point, even though it may not be as high as a friend or an associate. The quest is to grow to the fullest of your potential, when that is done, each youth will have accomplished a great task.

Parts of a tree

Looking closer at the growth of a tree gives even more parallels.

Leaves. Every tree has leaves of some sort. Leaves are not decorative. They serve a specific purpose. Leaves take the carbon dioxide out of the air and mixes it with the water within its own cells to make enough energy for the tree to grow. Leaves feed the tree growth energy. What's left from the process is called Oxygen, which is breathed in by humans. Leaves perform this task of energizing the growth of a tree, but it cannot be done without light. The process is called photosynthesis.

Every believer today must keep this in mind. The energy we need to grow tall enough to reach our goals cannot be obtained if we walk on the dark side of life. We must walk in the light. In John 9:5, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." We must strive constantly to walk in the light even though the world will give us many temptations to do otherwise, the energy, blessings and grace we need to reach our goals only comes when we are walking in the light. Our photosynthesis occurs when we mix what we learn in school, with the truths that we learn in life and place it all in the light of God's word. That spells energy! Growth and blessings!

Bark: Bark is the outer protection of tree trunks. It often peels off easily because it is composed mostly of dead cells. On the inside another, living layer exists. It is the one that constantly feeds the tree with food. As the tree matures it makes new layers and sheds its old outside bark.

The same is true of every youth. Each is constantly growing, learning, maturing,

shedding old ways and replacing them with new ones.

As children, youth acted very foolishly at times. Sometimes their antics and attitudes were incorrigible. Some they were selfish. Some were rebellious. However, just like a tree sheds bark, there comes a time when every youth must put the child like things aside. Paul writing to the Corinthians said in 1 Corinthians 13:11, " When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Roots: Trees are held in place by anchoring organs called roots. In addition to anchoring the tree, roots also absorb water and minerals through tiny structures called root hairs. From the roots the water and mineral nutrients are carried upward through the wood cells to the leaves.

The taller a tree grows the deeper its roots must be. In the constant search for minerals and water to feed the leaves, the roots constantly grow, down and out wrapping themselves tightly to anchor the tree against strong winds.

No one should expect to go very far in life without a life that is anchored. An anchor keeps a ship from drifting away. An anchor holds an object in place.

Youth who dream of reaching high heights must not cut themselves loose from their roots. Our roots represent our faith in God. Our roots represent the sum total of all that we have been taught about what is good and right about life. Our roots represent the best of grandma's wisdom, mothers's advice and father's vision.

Our roots represent our trust in God and obedience to his word. For 18 years graduates have been taught to trust in God and learn the word of God. As the young seedlings begin to grow in life the roots must go deeper. Simply sitting in a church service or singing in a choir won't be enough! You must actively study the word! Step out on the word! Live by the Word and let God guide you every day.

Anchored lives are what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "In times like these, you need a savior. In times like these you need an anchor! Be very sure. Be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!"

When Trees get a second chance

Finally, we must consider that even though a tree grows to its maximum height, there are times when it bears no fruit and appears to be useless.

One of the realities of life is that there are some young people who will plant themselves in ground that will keep them alive but will not allow them to produce fruit. Fruit bearing needs a delicate combination of conditions to exist. It not only needs a mature enough tree, but it needs the proper environment and soil conditions.

It is possible to have a fully grown pear tree in your yard, but have no pears!

It is possible to have a fully grown pecan tree in your yard, but still have no pecans!

Jesus addressed this idea in Luke 13:6 when he began a parable of a fig tree that did not bear any fruit for three years. When it was decided to cut the tree down the dresser of the vineyard pleaded to give him a year to dig around it and fertilize it...that

tree, like us, was given a second chance.

Thank God for a second chance! For there are many adults today who can testify that they heard words similar to these in their youth but ignored them and they experienced a barren period, but God gave them a second chance! When they removed the weeds and nourished themselves on the word of God they began to bear fruit!

Thank God for a second chance!

Gladys Talbot tells the story of three little trees who wanted to be something in life. The first tree wanted to be a pretty cradle when it grew up. One day some people came to the forest and cut the tree down. The tree was hewn into rough pieces and carelessly put together to form a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. The little tree was disappointed because it was shoved into a dark cave with no one to see it but some cattle. One day however, God laid there His own Babe - the Son of God. the manger quivered with delight. "Oh, this is wonderful! In all my dreams I never thought to hold a Baby like this. This is better than all my planning. Why, I am part of a miracle!"

Years passed by, and men came to the forest to cut down the second tree. This tree aspired to be a great ship when it grew up. But the little tree did not do great things. It was not made into a great vessel, but instead it became a tiny fishing boat, owned by a simple Galilean fisherman named Peter. The little boat was most unhappy. One day it stood by the shores of the Sea of Galilee dejected and disappointed. A crowd had gathered by the shore and because of the multitude, a Man, called Jesus, stepped into the little boat and taught the people from it. "This is wonderful!" it whispered. "In all my dreams and planning I never thought I would be used as part of a miracle."

After some months, men came to the forest to cut down the third tree. This tree just wanted to remain on the hillside and point to God. But men did not leave the little tree alone. They tore away its branches; they cut into its bark, and deeper, into its very heart. They hewed it apart and put it together again, in the form of a crude cross. The little tree quivered through all its being.

"This is terrible!" it whispered. "They are going to hang someone. Oh, I never wanted this to happen to me - I only wanted to point to God! This is awful!"

One day, outside of Jerusalem, a great crowd gathered. In the midst of the crowd was Jesus and beside Him was the cross. After nailing Him to the cross, the little tree heard words of forgiveness and peace that were offered to the whole world. Then Christ completed His work of redemption and "gave up the ghost."

He died and arose again on the third day.

Today little crosses like the one on that hill that day still point millions to God.

Would you be a tall tree?

Get deep roots!

..and let your life work...point people to God!

No. 709-Youth

I Got Da Hookup

(Holler if you hear me)
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Empire Church of Deliverance
Monroe, La.

May 25, 1998

SCRIPTURE: And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. 2 Samuel 6:12-14; "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:28-29

Introduction

Have you ever felt disconnected? We feel disconnected whenever we start to sense that we are not hearing what we think we should hear, getting what we think we should get, or doing what we think we should be doing. When we don't have a job, we know we are disconnected from the work force.

When we have a job and there is whispering behind our backs, we begin to feel disconnected. When we feel disconnected, we know something is wrong!

The popular Rap Singer Master P has a hit song that is playing around the country. It has a simple title, "I got da hook up, holler if you hear me." The song talks about a man who has finally got it together. It has no redeeming religious qualities, but its constant repetition of the title and beat have caught the imagination of youth.

With the bass turned up loud, quiet neighborhoods are suddenly awakened and windows begin to shake as the unsuspecting hear the vibrating sounds of Master P saying, "I got da hookup..holler if you hear me!"

If the title were passed through a theological filter however, its title would mean something different to the Christian mind.

Christians can remember times when they were disconnected, separated and apart from God. They were unhooked, to say the least. Now that each has truly found the Lord in all of his fullness, each can truthfully say, "I got da hook up!" Each now has something to holler or shout about!

As Christians, we know the significance of being truly connected with God. When we are connected, he blesses us. When we are connected, we are in position to receive blessings. That's what Jesus meant when he said in John 15:7 "If ye abide

in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

With this experience as part of our testimony, every Christian, whether young or old can testify, "I got da hook up!" "If you are hooked up too..holler if you hear me!"

Exposition

This text focuses on instances in which a nation and a person had been disconnected from God, but rejoiced when hooked up again.

Israel placed great importance upon the Ark of the Covenant. To them, it symbolized the presence of God in their lives. They carried it into battle and worshiped before it.

Enemies, thinking it to be a good luck charm of sorts, stole it and carried it into foreign lands, only to return it when they found more bad luck than good luck as they carried it from city to city.

After being crowned King in Hebron, David decided to return the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. It would symbolize the restored presence of God among the people. As David made it to the city, he was so excited about bringing the Ark back to the city that he stripped his clothing down to a cloth ephod or girdle and danced in the street. He was excited and filled with joy.

The desire to be hooked up is what prompted the rich young ruler to come to Jesus and ask what he must do to be saved. When he learned that he had to sell all he had, he left unhooked!

Another ruler asked the same question and was told to love his neighbor as he loved himself. He too left unhooked.

But when Paul and Silas prayed in jail one night and the doors opened, the jailer wanted to know what he had to do to be hooked up. He was saved that very night. He went and hooked up his entire household. There was joy everywhere!

That's the same joy that the woman at the well must have felt when she met Jesus. There she learned that he offered her living water and told her all about herself. She was so excited about meeting the promised Christ face to face, that she ran throughout the city yelling and hollering, "Come see a man!"

Whether it is a nation disconnected like Israel, or an individual that is disconnected, there is a certain sense of joy once disconnected parties are hooked up again.

Getting Hooked Up!

There are many people whose lives are miserable because they are unhooked from God. Many have great wealth and material possessions but they are nevertheless miserable because they don't know God.

Many youth are members of churches, sing in church choirs and carry on the

semblance of the Christian life, but secretly they know they are not hooked up!

While many are worshiping God through the ritual of the church, they are partners with Satan Monday through Saturday. They are simply unhooked.

Many youth have unhooked themselves from Sunday School.

Unhooked themselves from prayer meeting.

Unhooked themselves from Bible Study.

Unhooked themselves from youth activities and some even come to church but they come late and leave early.

They are unhooked from the things of God!

There is a danger in being unhooked. We don't know the day or the hour in which the Lord will return, therefore, we cannot run the risk of being unhooked when he returns.

He will come as a thief in the night. We do not know the day or the hour. If we are unhooked, the doors will shut and we will be on the outside!

There is a blessing in being Hooked Up

While there is a danger in being unhooked, there is a blessing to being hooked up!

There is a blessing whenever we are fully connected with God.

Those who are hooked up are free of blame for past wrongs. The truly connected, are those who have been forgiven by God. That's why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Not only are those who are hooked up free from blame, but they are recipients of God's grace. The forgiving grace of God is one of the greatest parts of the Christian life.

We are not worthy of being saved, but Grace gives us another chance!

We should be condemned but grace opens up the arms of forgiveness!

Those who are hooked up receive the gift of eternal life. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Those who are hooked up receive power from God to carry out his great work. Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

These are powers to discern spirits, use healing hands, communicate with others in languages unfamiliar, intense optimism, and to pray fervently.

Being hooked up has its advantages, but brothers and sisters you must be hooked up to get them! Jesus said: "John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

You Must Be Hooked Up!

You must be hooked up!

If you buy a phone to get messages from friends, it's no good if it's off the hook. Even if it's on the hook it's no good if it's disconnected! You gotta get hooked up!

You may buy a beautiful home with a great interior, but the home is no use to you until the utilities are hooked up!

Beautiful chandeliers and crystal lighting fixtures are nice, but they are no good unless the electricity is hooked up!

Although there is a cable line going to your house, you can't get a picture unless you get hooked up!

You can have a computer with all the right equipment. It can have a powerful modem, large disc capacity, huge memory reservoirs and fast connections to surf the World Wide Web, but you can't get any information unless you first get hooked up!

The best toys in the world can't bring a child any joy if someone forgets to bring fresh batteries. Even a toy is no good if it is not "hooked up!"

A boxcar may be able to carry a heavy load but it can't go anywhere unless its hooked up to a good engine!

Many people are having problems in life because they have unhooked themselves!

Too many things are getting unhooked!

Our homes are being vandalized because some doors are left unhooked!

Teen pregnancy is on the rise because too many zippers are being lowered and dresses are being unhooked!

Fathers are trying to get out of child support payments, vainly trying to get off the hook!

Our resolve should be that nothing will unhook us!

"Nothing shall separate me from the love of God"

Holler if you hear me!

When you have been hooked up, it's hard to hold your peace.

When Israel was hooked up again with the presence of God, David danced in the streets!

When the woman at the well realized that she was hooked up with the King of Kings, she went running through the streets, saying "come see a man!"

If you've been hooked up, you can't hold your peace!

The Lord woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind, I've been hooked up!

The Lord blessed me with the articulation of my speech and the movement of my body. I've been hooked up!

The Lord put food on my table and a few coins in my pocket. I've been hooked up!

I don't mind telling the world that I've been hooked up, wrapped up and tangled up in the love of God!

I am so hooked up that I don't mind telling the world about Jesus! Do you know him?

He's the Lily of the Valley! He's the bright and morning star!
He's the Fairest of Ten Thousand!
He died out on Calvary and rose Early Sunday morning!
If you know the Lord, holler if you hear me!
If the Lord has been good to you, holler if you hear me!
If he's been a doctor in your sick room, holler if you hear me!
If he's been a lawyer in your courtroom, holler if you hear me!
If he's been a bridge over your troubling waters, holler if you hear me!
Holler!
Holler!
If God has been good...
Holler if you hear me!

No. 710-Deacon Ordination

Three Drops of Blood

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 7, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Then shalt thou kill the ram; and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." Exodus 29:20

Introduction

Have you ever felt inadequate for a task which you assumed? When you were asked to do it, was the first thought that ran through your mind about your inability to measure up to its demands? Did you compare your education, training, experience or qualities, against those of others who might have been asked and wonder "Why me?" Many who have begun great endeavors felt inadequate at the onset. They considered themselves unworthy as they looked upon others who appeared more suitable. Each looked at the enormity of the job before them and felt small, certainly not large enough, to tackle the task.

What qualities do we need to measure up to the demands of each day God sends? Consider the man who had the strange custom of eating peas with a knife. It was so strange a custom that all of the people on his job would stare when they saw him eat his lunches, which included peas and kernel corn, using only a knife. That fascinated his co-workers. The idea that he actually ate peas with a knife, and balanced them perfectly without ever dropping one amazed them. Eating peas with a knife was actually how he was hired at the plant. There were hundreds of workers applying for jobs but during his interview the man told the supervisor that he had one quality others didn't have, "I can eat peas with a knife." The supervisor hired him for some reason he did not understand. He noticed that over the years the man was his hardest worker. He never complained about working overtime, extra days or doing odd jobs. However, every day at lunch, included in his meal was a portion of peas, which he ate with a pocket knife. Curious, after many years, the supervisor asked the meaning of his motto, "learn to eat peas with a knife!" The man told the supervisor how he was homeless for many years. He often never knew the origins of his next meal. One day he prayed to God for help and God showed him a pocket knife left in a trash bin. On occasion, he was given a can of peas or corn by some compassionate person and he would open the can with his knife. With no fork or spoon, he learned to eat cold

peas with his knife, never dropping a single precious pea. "I had to balance what was given to me me with what I had to work with." Said the old man. "Every new day is like a new can of peas, I've still got to balance what each day brings with what God has given me. It would be easier if I had a fork or a spoon, but I've got to use what God has given me which is the knife that is my life."

Everyday life presents each of us with a fresh new can of p's. You know them: Problems, Persecutions, Predicaments, Pain, Pressure; even Pleasure, and Play. Tom Hanks portrayed the movie character Forrest Gump who said, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get!" If that logic applies then certainly it would be equally true that every day presents us with a new can of peas. Some feel that each day's peas should be already opened, warmed and served in a dish. Others complain that they have no can openers and cannot tackle the day's peas. Others, with peas in hand, complain that they have no fork or spoon. But then there are those who say, "Thank God for the peas, I'll tackle them even if I have to eat them with a knife!"

Those who are servants in the kingdom must approach their service with an attitude of humility and gratitude tempered with faith in God. It is the attitude that whatever problems that life presents, I will use every power at my command to resolve them. We may not have a Harvard University diploma that suggests we have heard from the best in the world, but I have ears that can hear the commands of God. We may not be highly skilled craftsmen, sought after by the world, but we have hands that can be used to help those in need. We may not be world travelers, who have circled the globe many times, but we have feet that carry us daily to do the master's will. The humble servant is not intimidated by what he does not have, but uses what he has to tackle the can of peas that life presents each day.

As Christians, our desire is to serve God. We want to use our eyes, ears, hands and feet to build his kingdom every day. We pledge ourselves to that service and pray for power to tackle each new day's problems and opportunities with the spirit of confidence we gain from our faith in him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he consecrates Aaron, the high priest, and his assistants, who were his sons, for roles as servants in the temple.

The Priesthood in the Old Testament primarily involved sacrificing at the altar and worship at the shrine. The entire tribe of Levi, consisted of families who dedicated themselves to the service of God. The descendants of Aaron served as priests. Others served as assistants in a variety of respects that ranged from families of doorkeepers to singers. While the Priests alone handled the sacrifices, there were literally thousands of assistants in the tribe of Levi that carried out other non-priestly functions such as teaching, blessing and assisting in various ways.

The consecration of those who served as Priests and assistants in the biblical context was elaborate. It required each person to acknowledge his own sin, make

atonement and then make a total commitment to live fully for God.

The consecration of priests involved three sacrifices: (1) The sacrifice of a bullock, as a sin offering; expressing his own consciousness of personal guilt. (2) The sacrifice of a ram as a burnt offering. The ram was to be wholly burnt, in token of the priest's dedication of himself to God and his service. The sin offering was first to be presented, and then the burnt offering; for until guilt is removed, no acceptable service can be performed. (3) There was to be a peace offering, called "the ram of consecration" (Ex 29:19-22). The first ram was sacrificed to the glory of God the second ram symbolized the priest's personal covenant with God, sealed with blood sprinkled around the altar and three separate drops placed on his ears, for him to ear God, on his right hand to do God's work and on his right great toe to symbolize his walk with God

God promised Israel, in Exodus 19:6 that if it remained a faithful nation it would one day become a Kingdom of priests wherein every man and woman was a priest because it would be a Holy nation.

1 Peter 2:9 makes it clear that in modern times every believer is his own priest. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who has brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Today every man is his own priest, but certain men and women among us are called out to assist in the ceremonies and to serve God on a higher order than the rest.

The call to consecration, while not with blood of bullocks and rams like in Old Testament times, is still clear.

Each person must consecrate himself to service with the blood of the lamb. The blood should be applied to the ears that they may hear, to the hands that they may serve and to the feet that they walk at his place.

From both the Old Testament and the New the word is the same, those who would serve God must be washed in the blood.

Hearing the Word of God

Every believer should love to hear the Word of God. It is through God's spoken word that believers get direction, instruction and inspiration. Through his written Word they get understanding, strength and guidance. The written word is the test of the spoken Word, confirming its truths.

Those who lead in the congregation of the Saints should have a special love for the Word. They should study the Word themselves and love to hear the Word preached.

Hearing the Word of God preached builds faith. Romans 10:17 reminds us that "..faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

God directed Moses to place the first drop of blood on the ear of the first servants of the temple. It was to remind them to always be directed by the commands of God. Henry David Thoreau was famous for saying that he "marched to the beat of a

different drummer." So it is with every person who steps forth to lead the people of God. They must march to the beat of a different drummer.

From heaven on high, God sets the cadence and tempo. The consecrated leader listens closely for the sound of his voice. The voice of God is not in every passing fad, nor in the obvious. Elijah found that God was not in the earthquake, nor was he in the fire, but listening close he found the voice of God to be a still small voice.

The song writer declares, "I hear God, in every robin that sings. I hear God in every church bell that rings. He's in control, the captain of my soul. I hear God!" That's the way it must be with every believing leader. Listen to the preached word, confirm it in the written word and listen to the majesty of God's creation as God speaks his will.

Servants who Help Sort Things Out

The question was asked of Jesus in Matthew 18:1, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" In Matthew 23:11 came the answer, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant!"

Moses placed the second drop of blood on the thumb of the right hand of the servants to remind them of their obligation to serve the people.

In the New Testament the word that describes both the preaching elders and those who assist in the ministries of the church is "servant." In Greek, servant is Diakonos (dee-ak'-on-os) which refers to one who runs errands, waits tables, or performs as a servant. Diakonos is generally translated as: deacon or deaconess, minister, or servant. Each is expected to function in the humble role of a servant.

The servant helps the congregation of believers "sort out" emotional and intellectual problems. As believers we get upset, we need someone to help us sort it out. Sometimes we are turned off, we need someone to help motivate us. Sometimes we are off track, we need someone to help us get back on track. Sometimes we get excited or depressed — we have all kinds of emotional problems. Sainted servants help, members sort it out.

While there may be times when the servant performs custodial tasks or functions as a carpenter or even a taxi driver for a member in trouble, the greatest service that he or she offers to the congregation is to "be there" for individual members in times of trouble, to help them sort it out!

The greatest servant is the one who serves the most. Those who help others sort it out are usually "sought out" the most and become great in the minds of the faithful!

Walk with God

Finally, Moses placed a drop of blood on the great toe of the servant's right foot! It was to be a reminder that they must continually walk with God.

The journey of those who lead in the congregation of the Saints is not an easy one, but it is one that requires each traveler to walk with God.

The Word of God says in Romans 6:4, we "..should walk in the newness of life"; Romans 8:4 says, we should, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." ; 2 Corinthians 5:7 reminds us that we "walk by faith, not by sight!"

Ephesians 4:1 says, "I ... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"

Walk with all lowliness! Walk with all longsuffering! Walk forbearing one another in love!

Walking with God means to lean and trust on him constantly.

Enoch walked with God and did not die!

Elijah walked with God and was carried home in a chariot!

The Hebrew Boys walked with God and survived the fiery furnace!

Daniel walked with God and watched God turn hungry lions into purring kittens!

Consider the little boy who walked to school every morning but was afraid to walk home from school in the broad day light! Every day he'd walk down the long dusty road but was never afraid. Yet every day when school was out he'd cry standing at the school door, afraid to walk home. One day the teacher asked, why is it that you walk to school each morning and you are not afraid, but you are afraid to walk home from school at the end of the day. The little boy explained that when he leaves school he's afraid that the big boys might attack him and he'd be all alone. However, when he walks to school in the morning "My father walks with me and he holds my hand! I'm not afraid as long as I'm holding his hand!"

I don't know about you but I've found out that it doesn't matter how dark the road might be, if I walk with God, I'll always see the light!

It doesn't matter how long the journey, if I walk with God, everything will be all right!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me!"

Jesus, the sweet Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, the precious Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary but arose Early Sunday morning!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 342-Youth

Little But Wise

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 9, 1991

SCRIPTURE:"There are four things which are little upon the earth but they are exceeding wise: The ants area people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by band; The spider taketh hold with her hands and is king's palaces." Proverbs 30:24-28

Introduction

The grasshopper and the ant were friends but they were truly of different characters. During the summer the grasshopper enjoyed the warm days, danced, played and sang. It was great fun! Day after day the grasshopper kept singing and dancing and relaxing in the sun.

One day the grasshopper met his friend the ant. He invited him to enjoy the sun and the good times with him. He was disappointed when the ant said he did not have time because he was going to work to gather crumbs for the winter. "For the winter?" replied the grasshopper, "That's a long time a way!" He laughed at the little ant.

Daily, the ant worked dragging crumbs into the ant hill, while the grasshopper laughed. While the grasshopper made fun of him, the ant kept working until his storehouses were filled.

Soon the winter came and the green grass was gone. The snow fell and food supplies for the insects disappeared. The grasshopper found himself out in the cold, with no food to eat. But he thought about his friend the ant and went to visit him. The ant appeared warm and snug and was nibbling on a morsel of corn.

"Please help me Mr. Ant, I don't have anything to eat." He said.

But the ant replied: "In the summer you laughed at me because I worked to prepare myself for winter. Now I laugh at you because without my help you won't live to see another summer!"

Then the grasshopper saw the foolishness of his ways.

This ancient tale by Aesop is still true today. There are many young people who dance away the summer of their lives, while others prepare for winter.

There is much to be learned from the ways of the little creatures of nature. The bible urges us to study them closely and we'll be wise.

As Christians, we learn from the ant that it is best to work while it is day, for when the night cometh, no man can work.

Exposition

This text is lifted from the proverbs. It gives a description of four creatures which are small but wise. This description comes on the heel of the verses that precede it in which four great and powerful things are listed as well as the wisdom that is gained from them. The four creatures of this text are small in bodily size but yet exhibit wisdom in their actions.

Between them the four creatures: The ant, conies (country mice), Locust, and spider are listed as creatures whose social or work habits should be studied and emulated. The text suggests that there is wisdom and strength even in the smallest of creatures, even though, on the surface they appear weak.

The Ant

The Ant is a small but extremely industrious creature. It works tirelessly to build and provide. Despite their small size ants carry more than their own weight, build and defend their domains and provide for themselves in unseasonal months.

The great lesson that ants teach us is industry. They show us that by working continuously and conscientiously we can achieve despite our size.

There are many young people who are already learning this lesson. They are not full grown adults, but many of them work continuously in school, at home and in part time jobs. They are working to build a future for themselves. Despite their youth many of them have astonishing accomplishments already, as they work daily to build their futures.

The ant is hard to discourage. Sometimes people or animals knock down ant hills that have been carefully constructed, but ants are not dissuaded or discouraged. They immediately rebuild and continue to work. Likewise, young people should not be discouraged by set backs. There will be times when the best efforts and labor will be destroyed or put down by others. Don't be discouraged, keep working.

It is easy for young people to get discouraged, because they are not sure of themselves. They need the support and praise of adults, who strive to see them for what they can be rather than focus on the error or failure of the moment. They should be reminded that when there are set backs that God is still on the throne. The song writer wrote: "Be not dismayed whatever betide, God will take care of you."

Conies

The Conie, described in verse 26, is a country mouse. It is a small and weak creature and is often considered a choice menu item for the evening supper of many creatures in the field. However, the conies, knowing their vulnerability seek protection in the rocks and hills where their enemies have difficulty getting to them. That is wise.

The lesson of the conie is that we learn to know our own short comings and then seek a higher protection from them. The conie knows what it can do and what it cannot and acts wisely in light of this knowledge.

Youth are learning, as they mature, the extent of their own shortcomings and gifts. Some can sing like a nightingale, others croak like frogs. Some dance with the grace of MC, and others dance as if they had three legs. Some can paint beautiful pictures while others even have trouble drawing stick people. Some can run the football and score a touchdown, others have trouble picking up the football. Learning your limitations is a part of growing up.

One of the greatest truths you will learn is that you have not failed if you are not as good as the other fellow. You have failed, if you have not done your best. If you have failed to give your best effort in life, then you have truly failed.

When the conie seeks protection it looks to the rocks and hills. That's a wise example. Every Christian should know that his help and protection does not come from man but from God. That's why David wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth." We are weak and feeble creatures and look continuously to the Rock of Ages for our salvation. I hear the song writer declare: "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me, let my hide myself in thee."

Locust

The Locust is a small creature. It can be squashed under foot and is a helpless creature when it is alone. But when it is in the company of an army of locust, with which it usually travels, Locusts are awesome. They can destroy entire crops, fields and countrysides. Without a queen, like ants or a king, like men, they march in amazing order and organization to accomplish their goal.

The lesson of the locust is teamwork and organization. Alone, one boy can do a great work, but a team of boys working together can do wonders. Whether in sports, civic work or church work, teamwork is the essential. Teams have one leader and followers. Young people who can learn to work on a team will go far in life. Sports stars may get individual glory, but it's the team that helps win the game. Professional teams of athletes may pay millions for a Micheal Jordan or Joe Dumars, but only because they have talent and can function in a team situation. Corporations pay high salaries to talented people who can be a part of their team.

To work on God's team you must remember two things: "You can't be the star and work in God's show", because he is the bright and morning star. Secondly, "You don't have to be a star to be in God's show" he looking for workers who are willing to surrender their all to the cause.

Spider

The spider is creature of art and anonymity. It works painstaking to construct

geometrically perfect webs, often out of the eyesight of men. It gets no glory, usually is feared and attacked, but yet works artfully and craftfully day after day.

The lesson of the spider is excellence without notoriety. There will be many times when youth will not receive the credit or praise for their work that they deserve, but like the spider, they should do their best anyway. Often when men see their work, they may laugh at it or try to destroy it, but they should continue to pursue excellence.

The value of your contribution cannot be judged by ribbons or trophies or medals. There may be no medals to mark your efforts but pursue excellence anyway. The spider could probably half build a web and still catch a fly or two, but no matter how often his web is swept away he continues to rebuild with the same quality as before.

In service to God, give him your best. Give him of your strength. Give him the best of your creative ability. Give him the best of your talents! Give him the best of your time!

That's why the song writer declared: "Give of your best to the master, give of the strength of your youth. Clad in salvation's full armor, join in the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example. Dauntless was he young and brave. Give him your loyal devotion, give him the best that you have!"

No. 711-Youth

If You See A Turtle On a Stump

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 14, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever." Deuteronomy 4:40

Introduction

Many young people have been honored for outstanding accomplishments across the nation, how did they achieve their goals? Was it through their own initiative, hard work or study? Were they born self motivators who naturally pushed themselves to achieve greatness among their peers? The Valedictorians that sat on stages at thousands of graduations, how did they get there? The honor society members, how did they manage to maintain their grades? The scholarship winners, athletic champions, Eagle Scouts, student leaders and others in hundreds of categories of youth excellence, how did it all happen? The young survive and succeed because adults believe in them and devote time and energy to helping them become the best they can be. Very few youth are able to achieve without a mentor in the wings helping them. That mentor is the one that God uses to help them mount up on wings and fly!

Every youth must remember that each level of success is achieved by a combination of individual effort, family support and the help of people in the village who make dreams happen. Consider the young man who bragged about what he had in life. He amused himself by putting down young friends who could not wear designer clothes or jewelry and those who did not have his level of popularity, smarts and opportunity. One day as he played the dozens with some associates, an old man was sitting on the porch listening. The youth constantly bragged about his position at school, club memberships and belittled those around him. After the boy was alone, the old man questioned him about his tendency to brag. The boy responded, "the truth is the light!" The old man talked the boy into walking with him to a nearby wood. All the way the boy continued to justify why he had a reason to brag. The old man said nothing but quietly walked forward until he came upon a turtle sitting on a tree

stump. The old man pointed at the turtle and said, "That's you boy! But if you see a turtle sitting high up on a stump, then you know he didn't get there by himself!" Every person who achieves anything does so with the help of someone else! No one has a right to brag because no turtle can get on a stump unless an unseen hand lifts him and puts him there!

There are millions of unseen hands that God is using to lift our children and place them on the stump. You may call them "teacher", "piano instructor", "coach", "scoutmaster", "Drill Sargent" or "Aunt Sally" but each serves the same purpose which is to prepare, protect and promote them to the best of their ability!

As Christians, we thank God for those unseen hands that have touched our own lives and for those that are touching the lives of our children! It is our challenge to lift our children to the stump. Once there, each child must remember that it was nothing but the spirit of God that worked through people that placed them where they are today!

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he gives instruction to Israel about teaching God's laws to children.

Moses had received the ten commandments and hundreds of other ceremonial laws from God to give to the people of Israel. During the course of his 40-year leadership of the people, Moses tried to show them what God wanted and expected of them. In Deuteronomy, he repeats many of the laws and instructions that had been given to the people for their instruction and guidance. They were instructed to teach these laws to their children, to prepare them for lives of obedience to God. Preparing the next generation was a command with a promise. Those who did as instructed were reminded that they would extend their own life expectancies as they showed the next generation the commands of God.

Thus, God gives each generation a blessing for teaching his truths to the next. The recipients are blessed by receiving the instruction.

Prepare Them

Today the biblical mandate that was given to Moses is just as clear. Every generation of adults has the responsibility to teach the children by precept and example. Moses was ordered to teach the children God's law and their responsibilities under the law. They were to be taught morning and night. That obligation still exists. We must teach the children.

Children cannot excel unless they are taught the basic rudiments of life, which include self respect, respect for others, obedience, vigilance and morality. Respect must be taught. It doesn't simply drop from the air. Children acquire respect because they are taught how to respect themselves in their dress and grooming habits, speech and decorum. They are taught to respect the rights and properties of others as well.

Children must learn obedience. Those who are taught well at home understand that disobedience carries a punishment and obedience has a reward. Vigilance and persistence are essential to achieving goals; quitters don't win and winners don't quit. Every child must learn that simply beginning a project has no reward unless it is carried out to the end. Every child should have a sense of morality. It's the basic instinct or little voice that whispers to them and tells them when something is inherently good or bad.

These are the basics that every child needs to get on the stump, but they can't get what they need unless adults make it possible. Every child needs somebody. Children need someone that will prepare them for life by teaching them respect, obedience, vigilance and morality.

If you see a child who is well disciplined, exhibiting good character, working hard in school, obedient and mindful of the rules, sitting high on a stump...there is an unseen hand somewhere that has made it happen.

Protect Them

In Matthew 18:6, Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." His words imply to all of us that we have an obligation to protect our children.

In August 1925, some 54 representatives from different countries gathered together in Geneva, Switzerland to convene the first "World Conference for the Well being of Children", during which the "Geneva Declaration Protecting Children" was passed. The proclamation made a strong appeal for the spiritual needs of children, relief for children in poverty, prevention of child labor, reassessing the way that children are educated and other issues related to the welfare of children around the world. After the conference, various governments around the world established a day to promote the cause of children. It is different in each nation, but in America it is the 2nd Sunday in June. It is the time when the nation focuses on the needs of children.

Delivering the keynote speech at "Stand for Children Day," June 1st, 1996, Children's Defense Fund leader Marian Wright Edelman called on the nation to ensure that "all our children" enjoy a "healthy and safe passage to adulthood.

Hilliary Rodham Clinton, repeated the words of an old African proverb in a book she wrote entitled, "It takes a village." Many have taken issue with her acceptance of the African proverb that it takes an entire village to raise a child. They claim it only takes one good set of parents. A good set of parents is the beginning but it takes the preacher, teacher, coach, grocer, doctor and they lady down street to protect and nurture a child once he walks the lonely streets of the village.

Our children need protection. They need protection from themselves! Being very young they do things that might hurt themselves out of pure curiosity. The child who sticks his finger in the fan does so out of curiosity. The teenager who steals an

item out of a store, often is not criminally inclined, but does it just to see if he can get away with it?

Children need time to be "children" before it's time to put away childish things

Children need protection from abuse and abandonment. Children need advocates to speak for their protection, because they cannot speak for themselves.

If you see a child that appears to be doing well, with a sense of family, purpose and personal security, look close behind them, there is an unseen hand that causes that to be. Remember, if you see a turtle on a stump, it didn't get there by itself!

Promote them

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Suffer little children and forbid them not!" Thus, we are given an obligation to promote our children. We are encouraged to do things that will inspire and motivate our children rather than kill their spirits and discourage them! There are two essential elements to promote children: time and resources.

It takes time to promote children. Many adults are supportive of children's causes and programs but are unwilling to give the time needed to help them. Even in families, time is important. Children need an active support group that sits in the stands and cheers them along as they try to find their way. They need parents, uncles, aunts and others who watch what they do and help them put their best foot forward. In a world where available time is a premium, it is a precious gift to give to any child.

If you see a young lady being presented as a debutante, it means someone has given her ..time! If you see a young man being praised for leadership abilities, it means someone has given him time!

Not only is time essential, but so are resources. Promoting children does have a price tag. Promoting, encouraging and supporting children is very expensive, but it is less expensive than the alternative. Recent reports from the Children's Defense fund show that the government on average, spends about $20,000 per child per year to keep children in juvenile jails. It does that without an argument. But its only willing to spend $3,500 a year per child to give them an educational "Head Start." One of the fastest growing industries in America is juvenile detention centers. Every time one is built, it is being built by private companies to make money.

Children need adults who are willing to invest in their promotion! Children need churches that will provide them with a quality program of youth activity. Children need government officials that are willing to spend more to keep them out of trouble than they are to lock them up.

If you see a child who is doing well and has avoided the criminal system for the most part, look closely behind him, for there is an unseen hand that has played a part in promoting his interests. If you see a turtle on a stump, you know he didn't get there by himself!

The Unseen Hand

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember that there is an unseen hand operating in the lives of every believer.

That unseen hand moves quietly but effectively in the lives of people who put their trust in God. The movement of that unseen hand bears witness to God's mysterious activity in the lives of believers. When we consider the journey that we have had to travel in life to reach our present point and the obstacles that we have had to overcome; we know that it was literally impossible, unless there was a God somewhere!We who were born into poverty, reared in segregated neighborhoods, nourished on breast milk and chewed up mustard greens, know that there must be a God somewhere!

When we see where we are now and where you used to be, we say, Lord you've sure been good to me!

There was a time when we didn't have money to buy lotion, but grandma would grease the girls legs with chicken fat before they went out of the house!

There was a time when we couldn't afford to buy new clothes, but grandma would put patches over the holes in the boy's overalls and newspaper in the soles of their shoes!

There was a time when girls didn't have hair rollers, but grandma would take strips of paper bags and roll and curl the girls hair!

There was a time when we couldn't buy deodorant, but grandma would get a box of soda and dap it under our arms and then mix a little salt with it and use it for toothpaste to brush our teeth!

There was a time when we didn't have soap, but grandma would take the left over grease from her cooking and mix it with the ashes from the fire place and make lye soap. It was tough on the skin it got the job done!

There was a time when there were no washers and dryers, there was only a big black pot in the back yard in which clothes were boiled and a rub board to get them clean.

There was a time when there were no showers and inside bath tubs. Family members bathed in number 10 tubs that were hand filled with foot tubs of water, heated on the stove. In the winter sometimes all of the children bathed in the same water.

If you see a child of God that is living half way well, remember he didn't get there by himself, but there has been an unseen hand moving in his life!

The unseen hand of God, prepares him! The unseen hand of God, protects him!

The unseen hand of God, promotes him!

If you hear a saint stand and testify that he is saved, holy and sanctified he's able to do so not because of his own good, but because he's been washed in the blood of the lamb! If you see a saved soul, that soul is saved because 2000 years ago Jesus, paid the price!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he got up with all power in his hands!

If you see a saint enjoying the blessings of God every day, you know there must be a God somewhere!

No. 712-Youth

Thou Art But A Youth

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 28, 1998

SCRIPTURE: ***"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." 1 Samuel 17:33 "David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee." 1 Samuel 17:37***

Introduction

Have you ever been prohibited from doing a great work because you were too young? One of the most frustrating pronouncements to hear is "come back when you have some experience!" Most youth usually ask, "How am I suppose to get any experience unless someone gives me a chance!" Youth and inexperience are two conditions that seem to go hand in hand. Often young people are misjudged in their ability, maturity and skill levels because they are not judged by their abilities but by their age. It seems in the world of employment that everyone wants someone that is 22 years old with 23 years of experience. How does anyone get experience unless someone makes an opportunity available?

Some adults have a condescending if not cynical view of young people. They have a tendency to lump all of them in a pile and dismiss them as insalvageable. Many share this opinion of youth, "Our youths love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority-they show disrespect for their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up food, and tyrannize teachers." That statement was made by Socrates, in 400 B.C.

Granted there are many young people who are more than wet behind the ears, in fact there is a fountain of immaturity flowing behind some of their ears. However, there are thousands of youth who are waiting for the chance to prove themselves. Some get a small job and prove themselves invaluable. Some are given a responsibility that requires a great deal of skill and maturity and measure up to the task with amazing ability.

Many of the great changes we have seen in life came by young men and women who dared to focus their intense energy on a goal and defied the critics who said it could not happen. Loren Cunningham once said, "Young people do the impossible

before they find out it's impossible, that's why God uses them so often." The bible is sprinkled with instances in which God used young men in their 20's to fight battles or some as young as seven years old to become king. Young men and women are willing to tackle the impossible! -That's why God uses them! They move quickly and never blink at the thought of failure or defeat.

As Christians, we thank God for the chance to serve him. We have made some mistakes gaining our experience, but the grace of God harnessed us in a way that kept us from running away with the plow!

Exposition

This text focuses on David who was given a chance to prove himself despite his lack of battle experience.

David was the youngest of the 12 sons of Jesse. His older brothers were seasoned shepherds and experienced in war. David was both young and small and was often given the assignments associated with his age. One of the assignments he was given was to tend his father's sheep because it was considered relatively simple and safe. It required no special skills and very little experience. Most of the time the sheep dogs would do most of the work, thus David's lack of experience would not be much of a factor.

David was considerably responsible and mature, even for his young age. He tended the sheep daily and never left them unattended while he played youthful games or other pursuits. While it wasn't expected to happen, on more than one occasion David found himself defending his father's flock when it was attacked by a bear and a lion. In each case, he proved himself to be both strong and bold.

Had there been a serious problem with bears and lions in the area, David probably would not have been sent to guard the flock, but an older brother instead. David was considered too young and too inexperienced to tackle such a task. Yet, when they occurred he proved himself able to handle the job.

When the prophet Samuel came to Jesse's house, seeking to anoint the next King of Israel, the father lined up eleven of his sons for Samuel to inspect. After considering them all, Samuel asked if there was another, and Jesse reluctantly called in his youngest, most inexperienced son, David. It would appear that if God sought a man to anoint as King that he would look for one that was strong and tall and could inspire others from his presence alone. Even Samuel himself was impressed with Jesse's older son Eliab and thought to himself that he would make a great King, but God saw what Samuel could not see and judged character rather than appearance. 1 Samuel 16:6-7, "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

God's refusal of Eliab does not cast a bad reflection on him. Neither does it

suggest that experience should not be a factor in qualification. It does suggest that "potential" and "character" which are unseen qualities also weigh into the process. Unlike Samuel, God knew what lay ahead for the man he selected. Character, courage and faith would be needed more than anything else. Whatever physical shortcomings he might have, God would handle.

David was given a chance by God, when Samuel selected him. It was a chance given despite the absence of numerous physical qualities.

David was given a chance by Saul, when he was allowed to tackle Goliath. At first Saul told David that he could not fight Goliath because he was but a youth. The irony in his reasoning was that he praised Goliath because he had been fighting since his youth. Someone in Philistia gave Goliath a chance. When would David get his shot? Saul gave David his shot. He gave him a chance. It was a chance given, despite his lack of experience on the battle field.

David was given a chance by the people, when they crowned him King on two separate occasions. It was chance given, despite his lack of experience in government.

He was a young man who was given a chance and proved himself worthy of the opportunity that was given to him.

Earning The First Chance

There are millions of young people today who are looking for a chance to prove themselves. Whether it's in the National Basketball Association, National Football League or their first job at McDonald's, each is looking for a chance to show what they can do.

Those who take a chance on young people have very little to go on. Their professional resume's are very short. A young man trying to get his first real job with a couple of zeros in the salary probably has a resume' that lists: mowing yards, washing cars, delivering pizzas or waiting tables. Often there is nothing in the job titles themselves that would make a difference until a potential employer decides to check out the references. The background check goes beyond the fact that one waited tables, but it reveals "how" it was done. The background check helps reveal character: "If hired will the person give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay!" Is he a hard worker or a malingerer? Does he show up on time or is constantly late? Is he trustworthy? Is he prone to complain and file suits? Many decisions to give young people a chance are based on qualities not found on application forms, but lie in the unseen.

SHOW THYSELF A MAN: As David himself prepared to die he told his son Solomon in 1 Kings 2:2, "Be strong and show thyself a man." The same words could equally apply to a woman. Be strong and show the qualities of womanhood and manhood that will open doors and give opportunities. That was important to David because he was naming a younger son, to be his successor, not the older brother. Young Solomon would have to prove himself.

How one handles the small things often determines whether or not an opportunity is given to do big things. That's what Jesus had in mind when he told the parable of the talents. It demonstrated how God looks at the way we handle the little we have as he decides whether we should handle more. Matthew 25:21 records the overriding thought, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

CHARACTER COUNTS: Experience on the job is something that youth do not have. They may have skills and aptitude which give them a chance, but a major consideration for many who take a chance on youth is "character!"

Character is not revealed on the application form. Character is shown by the way one handles himself among others. Does she steal? Can she be depended upon to be loyal to the team? Will he be helpful? Is he friendly? Can he follow leadership? Does he waste? Is he respectful of the property of others? All of these are questions that, once answered, tend to reveal character traits.

These are the questions that will be posed to persons who know you best. Many youth have lost their chance, not because they were not eligible or talented, but because a check into their character revealed traits that were unattractive to those with opportunities to offer.

Character begins at home and exhibits itself in small but visible ways. Is he or she clean and neat in their dress and appearance? If given a household chore to complete, is it performed in a timely manner? Are assignments carried out without grumbling and complaining? Can you be counted on to perform the task without taking shortcuts that would undermine the quality of your work? Can you operate under pressure? These and many other questions, suggest character.

CONFIDENCE: David had another quality that helped him get a chance. He had confidence. Yet consider that his confidence was not "self" confidence. Self confidence is faith in yourself and your own abilities. Self confidence is a belief in yourself. Self confidence is trust in yourself.

David had confidence, but he did not have "self confidence." As he told the king of his accomplishments in killing a bear and a lion, he indicated the source of his confidence in 1 Samuel 17:37 "...The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine..." His confidence was based upon his relationship with God, not in his own ability.

Youth who know the Lord, know that if they prepare themselves with the skills necessary for life, God will have help them in a mighty and powerful way. They are confident that no matter what challenge life brings them, God will help them meet the challenge.

Confidence in God is not cockiness. Cockiness suggests a person who is absorbed in himself. Confidence in God suggests a person recognizes that "without God, I can do nothing, without him, I'd surely fail, Without God I would be drifting, like a ship without a sail!" But with God all things are possible!" Confidence in God

means to prepare and train well and know that God will do the rest!

And the Lord Be with Thee

Finally, brothers and sisters, after King Saul finished his interview with David and heard his enthusiasm and confidence, dipped in faith, he gave him his chance and said at verse 37"... Go, and the LORD be with thee."

His words suggest to every believer that is about to face obstacles that he should be like David in this instance. You should prepare, train well and then take the Lord with you!

Are you nearing the time for your first full time job? Prepare, train well and take the Lord with you!

Are you seeking appointment to a position or post? Prepare, train well and take the Lord with you!

Are you seeking a promotion to a place of leadership? Prepare, train well and take the Lord with you!

Wherever you plan to go in life, plan to take the Lord with you!

There will be some dark days ahead, but if you take the Lord with you, he'll brighten your path!

There will be some rough places ahead, but if you take the Lord with you, he'll make the rough places plain!

There will be some crooked places ahead, but if you take the Lord with you, he'll make the crooked places straight!

There will be some mountains ahead, but if you take the Lord with you, he'll bring every mountain down low!

There will be some valleys ahead, but if you take the Lord with you, he'll take your feet out of the valleys of despair and plant them on solid ground!

As you go forward looking for your chance, go forward with the confidence that the same God who heard you when you prayed for help on your final exam; the same God who answered you when you prayed in your moment of trouble, that same God will is able to make a way for you!

Not only does God give us an opportunity for success in life, but he also gives us a chance to inherit eternal life! For John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

When he carried his cross up Calvary's hill, he did it to give us a chance!

When he died on an old rugged cross, he did it to give us a chance!

And Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with ....

All opportunity!

All Chances!

All Prospects!

All Power in his hands!

No. 713-Prayer

After This Manner Therefore Pray Ye

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 12, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Matthew 6:9-13

Introduction

Have you ever heard someone pray a powerful prayer and wished you could pray like that? There are many who have the ill-conceived notion that one needs special skills to pray. They believe that an effective prayer is one that has all of the right words in all of the right places. What does it take to get a good prayer through? A loud voice? A powerful delivery? To pray is to speak to God about the concerns of one's heart. To get it through, all one needs is a believing heart.

Often we forget that when we speak to God, he is not concerned with how we phrase our words. He is concerned about what we are actually saying. God is more concerned with what we have to say than how we say it! Consider the country church that tried every kind of program conceivable to raise funds and searched for a new one. Finally it came upon the idea of a praying contest. The contestant that prayed the best prayer would be awarded a fine, plump chicken.

An old deacon took offense to the program but participated to teach the others an important lesson. The final contestants were "Praying Sam", "Blow Your Horn Billy" and the old deacon.

Billy blew his horn! "Lawd, I thank you that my bed last night was my bed of rest and not my cooling board! Lawd, I thank you that my kivver was not my winding sheet!" Lawd, Prop us up on every leaning side! Now Lawd, when we comes to press a dying pillar, help us to cross the chilly Jordan at a calm time!" Amen.

Praying Sam was at his best!

`"O Lord, give Thy servant this mornin' the eyes of the eagle and the wisdom of the owl; dip him down in the sweet waters of your word; connect his soul with the

gospel telephone in the central skies; Look down through the telescope of time and shine a light on his soul; 'luminate his brow with the Sun of Heaven; possess his mind with love for the people; turpentine his imagination; grease his lips with 'possum oil; loosen his tongue with the sledge hammer of Thy power; 'lectrify his brain with the lightnin' of the word; put 'petual motion on his arms, fill him plum full of the dynamite of Thy glory; 'noint him all over with the kerosene oil of Thy salvation and set him on fire. Amen!"

When both had finished the old deacon bowed and prayed his prayer in one sentence! "Lord, forgive us, for we know not what we do!" Amen. The old deacon won the prize!

As Christians, we have learned that prayer is the sincere desire of the heart. Just as one person may not speak as fluently as another, one prayer may not have the same ring as another. Each prayer, no matter how fancy or plain, gets the same consideration from God. Every believer's prayer, regardless of its simplicity, will get an answer from our father in heaven who hears and answers all prayers.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he gives his disciples an example of what should be included in a prayer request to God.

The Lord's Prayer is often called the model prayer because it provides an outline of what any person who prays should say to God. Because it is a model, it is not expected that the exact words of the prayer should be repeated, but it should be used as guide to prayer.

The Lord's prayer is usually divided into six parts or petitions: the first three relate more expressly to God and his honor, the last three to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual.

This prayer model includes the general teaching of Christ that we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that all other things shall be added. After the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the needful supports and comforts of this present life. Each of the six petitions contains a lesson.

Our Father

Any prayer should be directed to the source of blessings. Blessings come from God, therefore our prayers are directed to him as the Father of all creation and humanity.

The phrase "Our father" also suggests the brotherhood of all mankind. It acknowledges that each of us has one common source of life, liberty and happiness and that is God who is our father.

We respectfully call upon the name of God because we recognize that his name is "Hallowed" or holy. We do not approach God irreverently or in jest but in a serious manner. "Hallowed be thy name" is our statement of the sovereignty and power of

God.

Thy Kingdom Come

The kingdom of God lives in the hearts of men and women. Those who pray the words, “thy kingdom come” express a desire to see the love of God lived out in the lives of every believer. Believers yearn for the kingdom and they seek to help it become realized in life. They work, seek and pray for it to become a reality.

Establishing the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women is a prerequisite to the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Each believer prays that both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God will come.

Thy will be done

Essential to any prayer request is the acknowledgment that God’s will supercedes our own. It is God’s will that is supreme. It is God’s will that is divine. The believer makes requests of God with the full knowledge and acceptance that God’s will is supreme on earth in the affairs of men as it is supreme in heaven.

We may desire opportunities, but only those that are in God’s will.

We may desire certain changes, but only those that are in God’s will.

The believer wants the will of God to come first and prefaces or amends any requests of God to acknowledge the fact that God’s will must be done!

Our Daily Bread

We ask God to meet us at our point of need. “Our daily bread” suggests our daily needs. Our daily needs may include a variety of ingredients including, food, clothing and shelter. They may also include our daily spiritual needs as well. We ask only for bread; not for what we do not need. We ask for our bread; that teaches us honesty and industry and it teaches us to constantly depend upon Divine Providence.

Each day we renew our request to God to give us what we need to complete the day fulfilled, safe and secure. That might require an extra portion of wisdom. It might require extra strength. It might require an extra financial blessing or two. “Give us this day”compels each of us to ask God for the essentials need for the abundant life this day.

Forgive us Our debts

We ask God for mercy and forgiveness for our shortcomings. Despite our best efforts we often come up short. There are times when our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak and we simply miss the mark. These are the instances when we call upon the merciful nature of God to forgive us for our shortcomings.

However, our request for forgiveness should hinge upon our willingness to forgive others. There are many people who ask God to forgive their shortcomings, but they are unwilling to forgive the shortcomings of others. In Jesus' model prayer, he included the words "as we forgive our debtors" making it clear that we should forgive those who have wronged us before asking God to do the same.

Lead us not into temptation

Each believer is exposed to temptation on a daily basis. Temptations are those things that we desire to do, but should not do.

Temptations are those situations that prompt us to act in a way that is against our best interest while appealing to our baser instincts and more prurient or carnal interests.

The believer's prayer to God is to be kept away from temptation.

In addition the believer asks God for deliverance. It is expected that Satan will attempt to trap every believer in some way each day, thus the believer prays that God would deliver him from evil. Every day the believer asks God for deliverance.

Power of Prayer

Finally brothers and sisters, it should be noted that Lord's prayer is short a prayer with a lot of power. The Lord's prayer contains only 66 words. It is short but powerful. It not powerful because of its longevity obviously, but because of what it says.

One of the most powerful and effective prayers in the world was also one of the shortest on record. It is the "Peter Prayer" When Peter walked on the water he did the impossible for a few steps. However as his faith waned, he began to sink and he cried out "Lord, save me!" Those three words are known as the Peter Prayer. They illustrate that even a short prayer, without any formality or great wisdom can get an answer from God, for in the very instant their Peter prayed he received an answer and was saved!

Peter prayers are powerful. We are familiar with them because we pray them ourselves!

Lord, help me!, That's a Peter Prayer! We don't have to say much because we know that Lord is my help in a time of trouble!

Lord, direct me! That's a Peter Prayer! We know he'll direct us because the word says "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Lord, hide me! That's a Peter Prayer! That's all we need to say, because we know that "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.." Psalm 27:5

Lord, teach me! That's a Peter Prayer! We know if we are taught the word that "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

I don't know about you but I am convinced that prayer changes things!

Prayer can take that which is:

IMPOSSIBLE and make it possible; IMPROBABLE and make it probable!
DEFEATED and turn it into victory; FAILURE and turn it into success!
CROOKED and make it straight again; BROKEN and make it like brand new!
Prayer can take your old lady and turn her into your loving wife!
Prayer can take your old man and turn him into your darling husband!
Prayer can take your house and turn it into a home!
Prayer can take a wayward child and bring him home again!
Prayer can take your sickness and turn it into healing!
Prayer can take your empty billfold and stuff it full of blessings!
In John 14:13 Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do."
In the name of Jesus!
Jesus, the problem solver!
Jesus, the mediator!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!
No wonder the song writer said, "Jesus is on the mainline tell him what you want, call him up and tell him what you want!

No. 714-Homecoming

Looking For Elbethel

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

July 19, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."Genesis 35:6-7

Introduction

Do you remember where you were when you met the Lord for the first time? Not the time you united with the church, but the time you first acknowledged God in your own heart? How did you feel? Was that a precious moment in your life? Was there a special place or event that marked that moment? The day of our salvation is truly an important day. It is the day that we made comittments to God about our life and our future. On that day we put our hand in God's hand and pledged our loyalty to him.

Unfortunately, many met God in a special moment in a special place, but haven't seen him since. There are some who have many unfulfilled promises to God. In fact, there are many who have forgotten what they promised. It has been so long ago. One of the significant truths about homecomings and reunions is that they tend to stir memories of special moments. If those memories are pleasant then homecomings are joyous occasions. If those memories are sad, then we try to avoid them.

It is human nature to desire to find things just the way they were. In fact, we can get a little unsettled if things have changed too much. Consider the Jack leg who passed himself off as a preacher in the back woods. No one in the back hills knew that he wasn't a preacher, cause he preached so good. They called him Rev. "Fresh Air." It seems that the would be preacher could not perform his act unless he had a sip or two of white lightning which he kept under the back door step. In the middle of his sermon, while people were really warming up, he would often stop and say "Hold it sister right there, while I get me some fresh air!" He'd then run out the back door, take a nip and come back preaching harder. He did this repeatedly throughout his sermon interrupting it several times. Some of the church boys saw him one night and they hid his bottle. When the preacher tipped to the back door and found his bottle wasn't where he put it, he ran back into the church and shouted, "Hold it sister right there, somebody done stole my fresh air!" Folks get really upset when things are not the way they left them!

Nostalgia! It is wonderful. It reminds us of the good times! It reminds us of our blessings! It reminds of how far we have come! It reminds us of the journey and how blessed we have been by God along the way.

As Christians, we walk in the path that leads toward heaven. We are constantly looking for God and remembering our vows to him. It is his goodness to us and our need of him that stirs our souls every time we return to Bethel- the house of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he returns to Bethel, the "house of God" and leaves finding "ElBethel" the "God of the House."

When Jacob fled from his brother, Esau, en route to Leban's house, he fell asleep along the way by a city called Luz. There he saw a vision of a great ladder ascending into heaven. Upon the ladder he saw angels both ascending and descending. He was inspired by what he saw and immediately arose, took the stone that had been his pillow, anointed it with oil and erected it as a pillar of commitment. He promised God that if he protected him and insured him a safe journey that this stone would be "The House of God" when he returned. He named the spot "Beth-el" meaning House of God.

Jacob made a safe journey and lived with Laban many safe and prosperous years. He returned with two wives, children and a great fortune. While he was away, he remained Godly himself, although he tolerated many ungodly things in his presence and among his family members.

This passage finds God "calling in his marker." Jacob is commanded by God to return to Bethel. Bethel, was at the time, a name only Jacob knew about. The city was called Luz by everyone else. But Bethel was a particular spot where Jacob met God and in so doing it was a special, private, place to Jacob. God's call was for Jacob to come home to the place where he met God and where he promised him his service.

Before returning, Jacob took all of the strange gods and idols of those in his family and hid them under a tree. He had been tolerant of many strange things in his family. As he planned to return home he demanded that all in his company give up their strange gods.

Jacob returned to the place called, the "House of God." It was just as he had left it. But it wasn't long before he built an altar, consecrated himself and renewed himself fully with God. Instead of the "House of God" -Bethel, he renamed the same place "El-Bethel"- The God of the House or the God of Bethel. More important than the spot itself, he had found the God that the spot symoblized.

Where he went-Bethel

Today there are many who share the Jacob experience. Many have erected Bethel Stones that represent milestones in their lives.

THE PLACE WHERE WE PROMISED GOD: There are many who met God at a

special moment in their lives. That special moment may have been during a church service. It may have been in a quiet moment at home. It may have been as they sat by the bedside of a loved one in a hospital room. It may have been the moments immediately after an accident when death appeared certain and the future dark. It may have been a moment of great joy and excitement. During such special moments, many have made promises relating to their own behavior.

Like Jacob, God has blessed us immensely. Like Jacob, some of us have forgotten about the promises we made God, while the blessings constantly continue to flow. Most of us have more material possessions than we have ever had in our lives. While we are not nearly all that we can be, we are much more than we were. The reason for our prosperity is that God is blessing us in powerful ways.

The call to return to Bethel is a call to come home.

It is a call to remember our promises to God.

THE PLACE WHERE HE EXPERIENCED GOD: At reunions and homecoming, it is traditional to return to the "House of God." Even as we walk in the doors memories begin to stir. Our eyes scan for familiar faces, rituals and atmosphere. Our return to the House of God stirs emotions and pleasant memories.

When Jacob returned to Luz he found a simple stone marked the place that he said would be the House of God. He had done little to help it become anything more. It marked a place where he had an experience and made a promise but it was little more.

Many have the mistaken notion that there is salvation in the "house of God" itself. They think that simply participating in the services, sharing in holy communion, observing the liturgy and other particulars brings salvation. However, there is no salvation in simply sitting in the House of God. There is no salvation in the rituals: standing, sitting, passing little cups of grape juice and chewing on small portions of bread or crackers.

The rituals and ordinances of Bethel offer no salvation in themselves. They are significant only if they represent the completion of pledges and promises of union between believers and God himself.

The call to return to Bethel is a call to once again experience God in our lives. It is call to commitment and service.

The call to return to Bethel is a call to do more than simply participate in rituals but to experience the love of God as it reflects itself in service to others.

THE PLACE WHERE WE MET GOD: There is a special time in every believer's life when the undeniable truths about God become real. That's the time when we come to know him more than we have ever known. It's the time when all of the bible stories we've learned in Sunday School and the songs we've learned during thousands of religious services take on a new meaning!

Bethel marks that magical moment when God became real to us. Somebody shouted on that day! Somebody cried! Somebody else simply spent the entire day with a warm feeling of renewal and happiness.

Like Jacob, however, many of us in our prosperity, have not forgotten God completely but the matters relating to God have become less important.

We still believe in God, but it does not bother us any more to skip a Sunday or two of worship.

In many ways we are like Jacob, we have allowed many strange influences into our family circle and into our hearts.

But the call to return to Bethel is more than just a call to return to a place, but it is a call to return to point in our lives when God was everything!

No wonder Andre' Crouch would write, "Take me back! Take me back dear Lord, the place where I first believed!"

The call to Bethel is a call to return to a point of spiritual renewal.

What he found-ElBethel

Finally, brothers and sisters, Jacob returned to Luz looking for the "The house of God" but what he found was "El-Bethel" -The God of the house.

He returned looking for a place and found God. When he found God, he built an altar and completed his pledge made in Genesis 28:22. He gave a tenth of possessions and committed himself fully to service of God.

It was at this point in Jacob's life that he found God again. False gods were buried. Promises made were renewed and joy was restored. It was at Bethel that God told Jacob in Genesis 35:10, "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel."

In moments of reunion and homecoming, we may find our way back to the House of God, but we need to make sure that we find the Lord of the House.

Make sure that we find the Lord!

When we find the Lord great things happen in our lives. When we find the Lord what we thought was:

DARKNESS turns into light; INSECURITY is turned into confirmations!

SADNESS is turned into gladness; HARD TIMES is turned into good times!

A QUESTION is turned into an answer; BAD FEELINGS is turned into good feelings!

FAILURE is turned into success; DEFEAT is turned into victory!

When we find the Lord, coming home means more than just a reunion! It means more than just reflection on the past! It means getting together again with God!

No wonder the song writer wrote "Coming home, coming home, never more to roam. Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home!"

When you get home you'll find many happy faces!

But when you get home you'll also meet Jesus!

Jesus, the joy of every homecoming!

Jesus, the inspiration of every spiritual reunion!

Jesus, the pinacle of all our hopes! Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

Come back to the House of God, but don't leave until you find Jesus and know God for yourself!

No. 715-Youth

Naughty By Nature

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 26, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Romans 7:20

Introduction

Have you ever did something that was wrong? Did you know it was wrong when you did it? Most people have done a few things wrong in the course of their lives. Not simple mistakes, but actual wrongs. If the truth is told, most people would confess that they have either told a lie, stole something, cheated, misrepresented the truth, injured someone, or failed to keep their word somewhere in their lives. If the truth is told, there have been times when we have thought about doing wrong things in advance, considered the consequences, and did them anyway. Why did we do it? We knew it was wrong but we did it anyway! Why did we do it? A while back, comedian Flip Wilson had an answer. In his comic routine each time his famous character "Geraldine" would do something wrong it was explained by saying, "The devil made me do it!" As audiences rolled with laughter there were some who understood that the humorous statement was closer to the truth than it was a simple comic line. When we do wrong, the devil does influence our actions, although he doesn't "make" us do anything!

A while ago rapper Snoop Doggie Dog produced a CD entitled, "Naughty by Nature" The top selling CD contained a selection of raw songs about sex, violence and drugs. This love of sex, drugs and the wild life was explained in the collection of rap tunes as being caused by a natural instinct to be "naughty." It was almost an excuse for bad behavior and wild living. Of course, like most of his songs, they became instant hits with many in the younger generation. Snoop's CD like other song writers before him gave those who may have been troubled by their actions an explanation, "It's natural!" Such was the answer to the lyrical question, "Why must I chase the cat? Nothing but the dog in me!"

There are certain actions that are natural to certain creations. It is natural for a dog to bark, a chicken to lay eggs and a cow to give milk. It is natural for babies to cry, birds to fly and for living things to die. It is the nature of a hungry bear to roar! It is the nature of a rooster to crow! It is the nature of a dog to howl! No matter how tame a domesticated animal becomes, there is an element of the wild within him that could,

at any time, develop into a full beast. Those who work with them know the possibility and they remain on guard.

The story is told of the man that found a snake frozen in the ice. The man brought the snake into his cabin and nourished it and warmed it in front of the fire. As time passed, the snake began to move and revive itself. The man cuddled the snake in his chest and rubbed it ever so gently. He fed it and nourished it back to full health. One day as the man held the snake close to his chest and rocked in his chair, the snake bit him in the chest and released a poisonous venom that critically injured the old man. As he was dying the man said to the snake, "I took you in out of the cold. I held you in my arms. I fed you and warmed you! Why did you bite me of all people?" The snake looked at the dying man and said, "You knew I was a snake when you took me in. I did what snakes do!"

It is the nature of people to sin. We were born with a sinful nature that despite our best efforts, causes us to do wrong things. Snoop Doggy Dog and his followers have used this nature as an excuse for reckless living. Others have turned to God for help in controlling the powerful urges within.

As Christians, we have learned that we are powerless alone to defeat this mighty enemy. We cannot do it alone. We give thanks to God for giving us the power to resist this evil presence within us every day. It is this resistance that gives us the victory in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he tries to explain the forces that operate within the spirit of every believer, one for God and one for Satan.

New converts to the Christian faith were confused about the nature of their conversion. Some thought they should instantly be free from any desires for worldly pursuits. They felt sin should run from them and they would be absolutely free from temptations and spiritual flirtations with evil. Paul tried to explain to them that they were born with the spirit of sin or evil in their lives. They have been given the spirit of Grace through Salvation. Now, the two spirits live within each person, battling for control.

At times, like a sleeping lion, the evil spirit disappears and the good spirit from God prevails. However, on occasions the evil spirit within us awakens and prompts us to sin.

Paul says that as a Christian, redeemed by the grace of God, there is now something within him that wants to do good, that agrees with the Law, that says that the Law is right. The law spoken of here, is not the law of your community or laws made by the United States Government. It refers to the laws of God, specifically to those laws that were given to Moses by God when Israel was in the desert. They began with the 10 commandments and included many others. Those who believe in God want to obey God's law. There is something within every believer that says what the Law tells them to do is right, and they want to do it. But also, he says, there is something else inside

every believer that rises up and says "No!" It says, "Do not obey the law!"

When this occurs, Pauls says, despite the fact that we have determined not to do what is bad, we suddenly find ourselves in situations where our determination vanishes. Our resolve is gone, and we end up doing what we had sworn we would not do.

These text verses attempt to discover the source of the problem. Paul tries to help us figure out what is wrong. Paul's explanation is, there are two forces living inside of us, one which wants to do what God says and another which only wants to please Satan. What Paul is suggesting here is that the redeemed spirit never wants to do what God has prohibited. It agrees with the Law that it is good. And yet there is an alien power, a force that he calls sin, a great beast that is lying still within us until it is touched by the commandment of the Law. Then it springs to life, and we do what we do not want to do.

Put in modern terms Paul asks the question, "What's the matter with me? Why can't I do what is right? Why do I give way when I get into this situation? Why am I so weak?"

This inability to control ourselves frustrates us. It confuses us. Paul described this frustration in verse 24, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

The answer to the question from Paul's perspective is Jesus Christ. It is he and he alone that gives us the power to overcome the power of evil in light of his glory and excellence!

Doing What I Don't Want to Do

Verses 15-17 explain a modern paradox: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

These three verses explain how a good Christian youth can get caught up in an evil act. It explains how a person can want to do what is right but end up doing wrong every time. He or she knows the law of God and believes that the law of God is right, but does wrong anyway! How is it that this happens? The answer is sin that lives inside.

Having sin living inside you is like having a miniature demon, perhaps a Gremlin or a little "Chuckie" sitting on your shoulder every day. Each day the little demon keeps suggesting evil things for you to do. It speaks in your ears and says how it would not be very bad if you broke God's law. It keeps suggesting and pushing until at some point, if you are not careful, you do exactly what the little voice says.

Why I Do Wrong!

The next three verses explain why we do wrong when we know we shouldn't! "For

I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
"Romans 7:18-20

Inside us there is an evil presence somewhere. We can't see it. That's the evil presence that makes us lose our temper so easily. It's the evil presence that makes us talk back or say things that get us in trouble. It's the same evil presence that makes us disrespect our elders, or disobey those who have authority over us. Paul said, it's obvious that there is something within us that makes us do wrong things. That presence is sin.

Good is at War with Evil In Me

The next three verses show how good and evil are at war inside of us. Not just youth, but all of us! "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Romans 7:21-23.

There is a war being waged for the mind and souls of today's youth. The word of God speaks loudly trying to get youths attention, but often youth cannot hear the word of God because Satan has a way of pumping up the volume, drowning out the Word of God!

If there is a war going on inside of us, we must fight evil with the Word of God. 2 Cor 10:3-4, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"). Our weapons are spiritual. That's why we come to Sunday School! That's why we come to bible study! That's why we work so hard to let God use us, so we can defeat him using the most powerful weapon we have, which is the "Word of God!"

Who can Deliver us?

Finally, every young believer must consider Paul's last question. Not only did he ask an important question but he provided an important answer. After describing the bad situation, Paul asked, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Romans 7:24-25.

Today, youth may be asking the same question. There are negative influences all around us, who can deliver us?

Drugs are all around us. There are dealers on our school campuses and many of our friends are users, who can deliver us?

Violence is all around us. Our friends carry knives and some carry guns. We stand in danger of being a victim of violence if we do not become violent ourselves, who can deliver us?

Sexual temptation is all around us. If we watch television or listen to the radio our heroes tell us to have sex but simply be safe. Who can deliver us?

Youth today are being asked the same question that was asked of the three young Hebrew Boys about to be thrown into a fiery furnace, is your God able to deliver you?

I don't know about you, but I've discovered that God is able!

God is able to take that which is bad and make it good!

God is able to take that which has been destroyed and rebuild it again!

God is able to take our setbacks and make them opportunities!

Young believers gird yourselves in faith in God and have a ready response when the world starts talking to you!

When "Usher" starts talking about "My Way" you telling them that it's not my way, but God's way, for Jesus said "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done!"

When Master P says "Make em say Uhhh", you tell them that "I'm not worried about making them say Uhhh, but one day, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord of Lord and say Hallelujah!

When Will Smith says "Get Jiggy With it!", you tell tell Will, I don't have to get Jiggy with because what I really need is to make sure I've got Jesus with it ! If Jesus is with it, everything thing will be all right!

When 2 Live Crew talks about coming to the 2 Live Party, where you and "Luke" can "Raise the Roof" tell them them I don't need the 2 live party to raise the roof, because I got the hookup with Master J and I'm on my way to see the King of Kings!

Holler if you hear me!

He died out on Calvary!

He arose after three days!

God is able!

He's able!

No. 716-Faith

Put Your Pot Out!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 9, 1998

SCRIPTURE: And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, there is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.' 2 Kings 4:6

Introduction

Have you ever prayed for a blessing? When you prayed did you actually expect to receive the blessing you requested? There are many who pray for blessings but they don't expect anything to come of their prayer. These are the ones that pray for a job, apply, but miss the call because they didn't expect to be hired. They are the ones who enter a competition with no expectation of winning. They invest in an opportunity, without an expectation that it will exceed.

The essence of faith is expectation. Those who expect, look forward to a promised event or experience as if it were about to happen. They faithful anticipate the fulfillment of the their request with the enthusiasm of a child who has asked for a toy and spends a sleepless night on Christmas Eve, knowing full well that the toy will be under the tree on Christmas morning. Have you not heard of the God fearing community that was being inundated by a long and tortuous drought. The drought had ruined all of the crops, streams had dried, water was being rationed and death from heat and drought loomed every where. The community decided they had only one other recourse. They decided to pray. The entire community gathered at the town hall. They came in wagons on horseback and in cars. They all shared the look of defeat and despair. It was too hot to even talk, yet they decided to try praying, since they had tried everything else to no avail. Much to their surprise, the pastor of the community church arrived dressed strangely. He wore thick rubber boots, a bright yellow rain coat and on the back of his wagon was a boat and a life jacket. His first words to the crowd were, "If you came to ask God for rain, why didn't you bring your umbrellas?" Those who ask God for a blessing in faith, should be prepared for a down pour!

Expectation is the mental attitude of the faithful. The saint who prays for better times in his life, assumes the attitude that happy days are just around the corner. The believer besieged by problems, assumes that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning." The believer who trusts God for an answer, expects it to arrive at any moment from any direction. The attitude of the faithful is one grounded in the

knowledge of God. A believer with a little faith believes God "can" bless his people. A believer with a great faith, believes God "will" bless his people.

As Christians, we have come to expect great blessings from our God. Despite our circumstances we expect God to do what is best for us. Left alone, our requests are often self centered and short sighted, thus when we pray for a blessing, we ask God to do what is best for us. We always get a blessing from Him, even when we don't recognize them as such. He has blessed us immensely in the past, that's why we expect blessings in the days ahead!

Exposition

This text focuses on God working through the prophet Elisha to respond to the need of a widow woman.

Two great prophets of the Old Testament are Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was known for demonstrating God's power over nations. He challenged King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. He challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. He prayed and a drought came upon the land. He prayed again and the rains came. Elijah was the prophet of fire and thunder.

After Elijah went to heaven in a fiery chariot, his student, Elisha received his mantle of authority. Elisha was used by God in just the opposite way. While Elijah was the prophet who demonstrated God's power over nations, Elisha demonstrated God's power in response to individual need. Elisha is often seen as the instrument God used to bless individuals, raising the dead, or otherwise responding to personal woes of people in distress.

This text focuses on Elisha as he responds to the financial distress of a widow who was about to lose her son because she could not pay a bill left by her deceased husband. Her husband, not enjoying the lucrative profits of business, had nothing but a professional income, which, in that irreligious age, would be precarious and very scanty, so that he was not in a condition to provide for his family. Creditors came to collect the debt by seizing one of her sons to work as a bondsman.. By, a creditor was entitled to claim the person and children of the insolvent debtor, and compel them to serve him as bondmen till the year of jubilee should set them free.

The woman explained her situation to Elisha who in return asked her what she had in the house. She had only a pot of oil.

Oil in biblical times was considered a blessing given by God. It was valuable because it was used to prepare food, and make medicines. It was also used as fuel and in religious ritual. Most of the oil was pressed from olives. Most was stored in small pots called cruses. Anyone who had large amounts of oil would find ready buyers because it was used in so many ways. The more oil she had, the greater her blessing.

The widow woman had one cruse of oil. She had something. She was then ordered to find as many vessels as she could. She was encouraged to borrow vessels from her neighbors and friends. She was expressly told not to have just a few vessels

but to get as many as she could find. The woman had no idea what was happening. It was not explained why she was being asked to gather so many vessels, she simply did everything she was asked. She and her sons gathered vessels until there were no more.

Elisha closed the door and ordered the vessels filled with oil from the one jar the woman had. As they went from the vessel to vessel the oil never stopped flowing. As long as there was an empty pot the oil kept flowing. When there was nothing else to receive oil, then the miraculous flow of oil ceased.

Thus, God demonstrated in this instance how believers should respond when in need. They should go to God in humility, do what they can do, and expect God to respond to their need according to his will.

How to get the oil to flow

Today millions are distressed about personal circumstances. Some have completely thrown up their hands and decided that life is not worth living. Bill collectors, health problems and a plethora of other discomforts have made life miserable for many. Many are stressed out and suffer anxiety attacks, high blood pressure and depression as a result. Each of us can easily become the widow woman of this text. God's response to her need is the same way he responds to our need.

CRY OUT: Every believer, faced with difficult situations should turn first to God. There are many that turn to God last. They consult horoscopes, witch doctors, voodoo experts, palm readers, psychics, shrinks, psychologists and even their beauticians and barbers, before they seriously go to God in prayer. How many people in financial need have consulted a long list of alternative sources before they consulted the main source.

The widow in this text cried out to Elisha, who represented God. Her plea was not so much to Elisha as it was to God himself.

It's the cry to God that sparked the Hymn writer to say, "Father, I stretch my hands to thee no other help I know." In Psalm 4:1 David called upon God and said, "thou has enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me and hear my prayer!"

USE WHAT YOU HAVE: Most of us have at least one resource upon which to draw in times of trouble. We may not think much of it, but we have it nevertheless. Moses, as he was about to begin the task of leading Israel, complained that he was ill equipped to challenge Pharaoh. God asked him "What's that in your hand?" Moses answered, "A rod!" He was told to use what he had. Gideon only had 300 soldiers, but God used the 300 to defeat thousands! He used what he had!

The widow of the text had only one cruse of oil. God used it. The family in response to the command of Elisha went out and did what was necessary to get their blessing. Today, every believer should be prepared to do whatever is necessary to get your blessing. There should be no honorable work or moral task considered beneath your standards.

If you have health and strength, use what you have! Mop floors, wash dishes, shine shoes, sell pop corn, wait tables, mow yards! If you are confined to a wheel chair and can only look out the window and talk on the phone then become the one woman neighborhood watch consultant! Use what you have!

There is a great truth that we should remember, God has shown a tendency to help fill the pots of those who are willing to go out and seek as many opportunities as they could. He has been known to bless the applications of those who sought jobs, but first they had to prepare themselves and apply!

LIVE IN EXPECTATION: Those who live by faith don't know what will happen but they live in expectation that God will handle their situation. The widow woman of the text followed God's commands to the letter. She had no idea what was about to happen or how God would respond to her problem. The easiest way would have been for the prophet to simply make money appear out of nowhere. She didn't know what would happen but she expected something to happen!

Every believer who is trusting God for an answer should expect God to answer! Gathering pots was a strange way for God to answer, but she gathered them without question. God may not respond to our need in the way we anticipate, but we should expect him to answer in one way or the other!

We should expect God to move in our time of need because the Word says he will! We expect him to act because the Word, in Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

We expect God to move because the Word reminds us in Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

As Long as there is need, the oil flows

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the oil flowed as long as there was an empty vessel. That simply suggests that as long as there is a need there is a blessing.

Each new day always presents new challenges and new needs. There is never a day when we don't receive a blessing or two.

I'm glad to know that I serve a God who is in the blessing business. I heard a song writer declare, "I get a blessing every day!" On Monday, I get a blessing! On Tuesday and Wednesday I get a blessing...I get a blessing every day!

If we have learned anything from the widow in this text, it should be that should we tell God about our problems then put out the pots.

If the week is about to begin with financial troubles looming everywhere, tell God about it and put your pot out!

If there is a problem in your family that you can't solve, tell God about it and put your pot out!

If there is job that you are trying to secure, tell God about it and put your pot out!

If there is an opportunity looming on your horizon, tell God about it and put your

pot out!

After you put your pot out, step back and watch God work!

God can take bad situations and turn them around! Put your pot out!

God can take unemployed hands and help them find work! Put your pot out!

God can take empty purses and filled them with blessings! Put your pot out!

God can take failures and turn them into successes! Put your pot out!

God can take sicknesses and turn them into examples of good health! Put your pot out!

There has never been a problem that God couldn't solve!

There has never been a valley too low for God to pull you out!

There has never been a mountain to high for God to climb!

There has never been a river so wide that God couldn't cross it! Put your pot out!

Call on Jesus!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Call on Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

No. 717-Inspiration

Looking For God On Life's Left Hand Side

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 16, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:8-10; "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." Luke 23:33; "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43

Introduction

Do you know any left handed people? Left handed people share a unique frustration. The entire society is geared toward their right handed friends and for the most part they are completely ignored. The handicapped have special parking privileges and access to buildings. Minorities, seniors and other special groups all seem to get consideration from the general community. However, the left handed are left to wallow in their frustration without a fair hearing.

It must be frustrating to be left handed in a right handed world. Because 90 percent of the people of the world are right handed, everything appears centered around the majority as if the minority does not exist, or at the least, is not important. At school, the left handed person finds most desks are made for right handed people. A left handed seamstress has trouble using scissors because they are made for the right handed. Right handed baseball gloves can be a problem if you are left handed. At dinner, traditional etiquette calls for each person to put his left hand under the table, which is a real problem, if you are left handed. In America, even the cars drive on the right hand side of the street instead of the left as they do in the rest of the world.

Added to the frustration of being left handed is all the stigma that society has added. The word sinister or evil also means "left handed." Those with extremely unorthodox views are said to be out in "left field" and every left hander dreads hearing the judgment that because they are left handed they "owe the devil a days work." Sometimes a left handed person is frustrated even when he reads his bible. In scripture the left hand is frequently associated with the less preferable of alternatives. Joseph

protested against his eldest son being blest with Jacob's left hand (Gen. 48:13-19). A fool's heart inclines to the left (Eccl. 10:2). In the day of judgment when the sheep and goats are separated, the goats' place of judgment is at the left hand side.

While most of us may not be left handed, we do know what it means to be stigmatized, criticized, ignored, frustrated and stereotyped. We know the frustrations of being isolated. We know what it means to be treated as if we do not count. Life is uncomfortable on the left on hand side.

Yet, despite their problems those who live on the left hand side of life have managed to overcome. While the world laughed at them, the likes of Leonardo Da Vinci, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Babe Ruth, Benjamin Franklin, Charlie Chaplin, Wynton Marsalis and millions of others have over come the stigma that the world has placed on them and risen to high heights of achievement. Still others who have shared their left sided stigma have been able to rise as well. Life on the left hand side for them was not a condemnation but an opportunity which they seized and used to their advantage.

As Christians, we are aware of what it means to live on the left hand side of life. We are often frustrated and criticized because of our insistent faith. The great truth we have learned as we consider our plight in life is that we serve a God who operates on both the left and right sides of life. When frustrated by the left sided slant that life seems to give us, we have learned to look to the Lord. Even on the left side of life, he is still God!

Exposition

This text focuses on Job one whose life answers the question of why the righteous suffer. This question was prominent in Job's day, for ancient society believed that human suffering was the result of one's sin or at least a god's displeasure. Even the meaning of the name Job (the persecuted one) seems to support this suggestion, but that may not be all that is involved in the book. Job's life illustrates for us the nature of true faith, both from the point of view of people and of God. For humans, it is trusting in God as the creator and sustainer of life, even when all is not going well and when He is not visibly present to help us. From God's point of view, the story proves His faithfulness to His creatures despite their weaknesses and inability to understand what is happening.

In this text Job is frustrated over his losses, which included his children, wealth and health. He was completely overwhelmed with trouble that seemed to surround him, though he had attempted all of his life to live a righteous life. Surrounded by the signs of failure and depression, Job sought help from his friends who came to him and advised him that he should repent of his sin. Even that advice frustrated Job because he had not committed any sins and was recognized as a perfect man.

In his frustration he sought God but was so caught up in his grief and frustration that he could not really find him. When he looked forward or backward, God was not there. When he turned to the left, where God had been known to work, he could not

find God. Neither could he find him on the right. Among those who were having either bad times or good times, Job couldn't find God.

He was completely consumed with personal self pity. He had lived a relatively righteous life only to be destroyed by the very forces that he fought against all of his life. He was being unduly criticized by his friends and associates. He endured considerable hardship and impoverishment. He was becoming acutely aware that the left hand side of life was less than desirable.

However, when he came to himself he realized that God would consider his plight. Even though he was trapped on the left hand side, God would deliver him eventually and he would come through his ordeal as pure Gold.

He was rescued from his dilemma when he remembered that the God who worked for him on the right hand side was still in control. On the right hand side, God had brought him prosperity, a large family, fame and notoriety. On the right hand side, God had blessed him immensely. When he considered that God is no less God on the left than He is on the right, he reminded himself that God is still God. So he sought desperately to put himself in communion with him, to find him and get his blessings again.

Despite being on the left hand side, he decided that finding God and staying close to him would be the solution to his situation. He arose determined to come through as pure gold.

In Luke, a similar circumstance is presented. As Christ was being crucified a special mention is made of one being on the left and another on the right. The malefactor on the right hand side is referred to first and then the left. Most scholars agree that the thief on the left, being the second one reference, showed an understanding of the nature of the kingdom of God. He asked for salvation and received, in his dying hour, the acknowledgment of the savior, "this day ye shall be with me in paradise." Even on Calvary, the Master displayed that He is a God who operates on the left hand side!

Turning Right and Going Left

Today there are millions of believers who are frustrated over the reality that despite their best efforts to live right, things seem to go left.

Some are frustrated over the fact that although they attempt to give God their best, they are besieged with problems. A plethora of frustrations have come their way ranging from personal finances to family problems. Enemies seem to revel in their fall and those who live less virtuously seem to succeed while they are bogged down trying to do right. It is such moments that make us feel that we are turning right but heading to the left side of life. We feel like Job in many ways. Yet, in our frustration, we should recall Psalm 37:1-2, " Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

When On the left, keep living Right

When Job found himself on the left hand side of life, he set a wonderful example for believers. Even though he suffered on the left hand side of life, he kept living right!

There are many who have enjoyed the right hand side of life with its blessings of health and prosperity. From time to time, even the strongest of believers, have found themselves on the left hand side of prosperity, health or social advantage. These are the moments when personal or family illnesses slow our pace. These are the times when our finances are in total disarray. These are those irritating times when our families are strained with discord. These are those times when we are drowning in personal weakness, overcome by our flaws, temptations and doubts.

When such times come we know that the pendulum of life has made a dramatic swing to the left. What do we do? Look for God! On the left, Job looked for God but could not find him for a while because he was so consumed with his personal problem that he could not find him on the left or the right, forward or backward.

When he stopped to think however, then he realized that God knew his situation. He knew his heart and intentions. Even in his frustration, Job shook himself out of his self pity long enough to remember the greatness of God. He determined to keep doing right. Keep believing. Keep the faith. Therein is our example. When on the left, we should resolve to keep doing the right things. If money is tight, to resist the temptation to steal. If our marriages are strained, to resist the temptation to find comfort in the arms of others. If our troubles are overwhelming us, to keep our faith in tact!

Even in bad times keep sending the praises up for when the praises go up the blessings come down, even if you are on the left hand side of life!

Develop and Ambidextrous Faith

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that while some people are right handed and others are left handed, there are others who are ambidextrous. An ambidextrous person can use his left hand just as well as his right hand. He can pitch or hit a ball with either his right or his left hand. He fights conventional style or as a Southpaw. He can write with either his left hand or his right.

The goal of every believer is to have an ambidextrous faith. This is a faith that is just as strong on the left hand side of life as it is on the right.

This is a faith that can see beyond the darkness of the left hand side and remember that “weeping endureth but a night but joy comes in the morning!” Psalm 30:5

This is the faith that is not frustrated by the temporary setbacks of the left hand side but remembers that “The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want” Psalm 23:1

This is the faith that holds firm in hard times because “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” Psalm 37:25

This ambidextrous faith that operates on both the left and right hand side of life,

must have been what Paul had in mind when he said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:12-13.

While it is good for us to maintain an ambidextrous faith, it is also good for us to remember that we serve an ambidextrous God, who is the same on the left hand of life as he is on the right!

When Daniel was lowered into the lion's den, he was on the left hand side of life, but his skeptics soon found out that the same God that Daniel worshiped in the palace could operate in the lion's den!

When the Hebrew Boys were thrown into the fiery furnace, they faced the heat of the left side of life! But they soon found out that the same God who stood with them in good times, stood with them also in the fiery furnace!

No matter what side of life you may experience, God is there. That's why David said in the 139th Psalm, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

When things are going good in your life, call on the Lord and praise his name!

When things are going bad in your life, call on the Lord and praise his name!

When your deep freezer is full, call on the Lord!

But when you have nothing in refrigerator but ice cubes and cold water, remember God operates on the left hand side!

Somebody can testify, "I was on the left hand side of life, sinking deep in sin, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I"

"It doesn't matter whether you are on the left side or the right, there is power in the name of Jesus! Call on Jesus who can:

Turn darkness into light; Turn Sorrow into Joy;

Loneliness into love; Fear into faith

-Wickedness into righteousness; Sickness into health

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross up Calvary's hill with somebody on his right hand and somebody on his left. I know it must have been the voice of the millions of believers on the left hand side of life that cried out "Remember me, Lord!

I don't know about you but when I'm struggling on the left side of life I want the Lord to remember me!

He died out on Calvary! They buried him in borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with

Power in his right hand!

Power in his left hand!

With all power in his hands!

No. 718-Youth

Keep Your Eyes On the Rock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 23, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." Psalm 62:7

Introduction

Have you ever been distracted? Those were the times in which you lost your focus, even if it was just for a short period of time. Distractions can be dangerous. Distractions can result in a loss of opportunity, property and health. Sometimes they are fatal. A distracted athlete cannot give his best on the playing field. A leader besieged with personal problems cannot fully focus on the problems of those who follow him. A student's academic performance drops once he or she is distracted. A person driving an automobile can cause a serious life threatening accident if he is distracted. Distractions have a way of slowing progress at the least, and totally derailing activity at the most. Thus, it becomes extremely important for those who are trying to succeed in life to remain focused on their immediate and long range goals. Even the smallest distraction can steer them off the course.

Keeping focused is essential to success. Losing focus can be costly. The story is told of two men crossing the rugged Sierras on horseback. As they came to a large and swift-flowing river, the older and more experienced man said to the younger, "As we get to the deepest and swiftest part, be sure not to look down and from side to side at the swirling water around you, it will only make you dizzy." "Listen to me," the older man continued sternly, "See that huge stone on the other side? Keep your eyes focused on that stone!" "OK" said the younger man. As the men then crossed, they quickly approached the swift and turbulent midstream waters. The horses began to struggle, the spray of the icy waters splashed against their faces. The young man began to center his attention solely on the waters swirling angrily around horse and rider. Becoming dizzy-headed, he began to struggle to remain on the saddle. The older man looked back, and noticing the young man laboring hollered out, "Keep your eyes focused on the rock! Keep your eyes focused on the rock!" The young man, barely able to hear, desperately and with great difficulty focused his eyes on the rock. Soon his head began to clear, and soon they were on the other side safe and sound. Once safe, the old man said to the young boy, "Crossing this river, like making it in life is

easier if you keep your eyes on the rock!"

It is easy for the concerns of the world to distract us and for our life walk to shift from a faith walk to a secular walk. Like Peter who lost focus for just an instant while he walked on water, many of God's best people take their eyes off him while they respond to the demands of the world. Sometimes their distraction is short. Sometimes it is extended. Too often, regardless of the length of time, the period of distraction is too long. The end result is sometimes tragic.

As Christians, we have learned to constantly trust in the Lord. Our experience has taught us to trust in him at all times and in all situations. When we trust him, he will provide for all of our needs.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he encourages believers to keep trusting in God, the rock of our salvation.

David's life is filled with examples of the great way in which God works in the lives of individuals that completely trust him. The importance of trusting in God completely is a truth that David learned over a lifetime relationship with God that proved to him that as long as he remains focused and trusts in God he is assured of great blessings from God. However, his experiences also taught him that those times when he allowed himself to be distracted from the perfect will of God he experienced failure.

The visible example of distraction in David's life occurred when his head was turned away from God by the beauty of Bathsheba, who happened to be another man's wife. David turned his eyes away from God and toward this beautiful woman. During this period his kingdom experienced an all moral low. It wasn't until he acknowledged his wrong and begged God for a clean heart that he refocused himself and once again enjoyed the fame and glory that was due him as king.

Those who stay focused on God walk in the way both of duty and comfort because they wait upon God. They cheerfully give of themselves, becoming instruments of his will and wisdom. It is in such times that we see the wisdom of remaining focused on him. We see that there is power in trusting him. When we stay focused on him, he helps even the weakest among us to do much more than we could do alone.

For the believer there is ground and reason of this dependence. By his grace he has supported us, and by his providence delivered us. He only can be our Rock and our salvation. As creatures we are nothing without him, therefore we will look above them to him.

Four Reasons To Stay Focused On The Rock

Youth today should heed David's advice and stay focused on God, trusting in him immensely. As the school year begins, each Christian youth must remember why

they are going to school and keep focused on the real reason they attend school: to learn to use the gifts God has given them that they may be used for the furtherance of his kingdom. That may require study of what may appear to be strange and unnecessary subject matter at the moment, but God has a purpose for everything, including the subjects youth hate the most.

Christian youth are often surrounded by non-Christians on the school campus. It is important that each young believer not be distracted by what the crowd is doing but keep focused on the power within you which is replenished daily by the Holy Spirit. Thus every believer should leave home everyday saying, "I will keep my mind focused on my goal and I will release the power of God within me!"

Verse seven of this text gives four clear reasons why believers should remain focused on God:

HE IS MY SALVATION: Each school day, youth will be bombarded by a number of forces claiming to offer freedom and fun. Many of the offers will come from sources that are not advisable. We have read of the accounts of youth who have been overwhelmed by the temptation to involve themselves in Satanism and many other strange beliefs. For some, these distractions proved fatal. For others they served as diversions that kept them away from their stated goals. All of the distractions offered fulfillment and salvation in one of its varied forms.

However, there is no other worldly source of salvation. There is no involvement or occupation that offers our souls the joy of salvation. Only through God can we ever hope to receive a chance to everlasting life. This is what Acts 4:12 meant, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Keep your eyes on the rock because he is the only source of Salvation.

HE IS MY GLORY: It is important to stay focused on Christ because he is the source of all Godly accomplishment. Those who achieve academic excellence do so in part because of their hard work, but the glory they earn comes mostly from the power of God working within. No honorable goal can be achieved without the blessings of the almighty

. Whatever high accomplishments we hope to achieve can only be done so in light of his grace. 1 Corinthians15:10 " But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." When we are honored for academic excellence, it is not us, but the grace of God which is in us! When we are praised for excellence in art, music, literature and dance, it is not us, but the grace of God which is in us! Any glory we receive is through the working of God within us. All grace and praise is given to God for his excellence working through us!

While the world may offer great opportunities, none of those can compare with what God offers. Keep your eyes on the rock because the rock is the source of your glory!

HE IS MY STRENGTH: The faithful remain focused on God because he is the

source of all of their strength and abilities. When a Christian football player has played four quarters of a tough game and every bone in his body is screaming for rest, where does he get the energy? Certainly not from Gatorade! When a Christian student is trying hard to complete a class project and energy just runs out as the eyes begin to droop and power just seeps away, where does the energy to complete the program come from? When your brain takes a rain check and your body clocks out, where do you get the energy to keep going? That's when believers lean hard on the power of God to keep them going.

Even when weakness approaches, young believers still remain faithful because God restores waning strength with new vigor. The Word identifies the source of a young believer's power. Isaiah 40:30-31 says, " Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Keep your eyes on the rock because there is strength in the rock!

HE IS MY REFUGE: A refuge is a place of hiding, healing and help. Every young person needs a shelter when storms blow at school. Sometimes there are storms of confusion. Storms of violence. Storms of temptation and misunderstanding. Whenever the storms blow, young believers need a place of refuge. Those who stay focused on him can expect him to serve as their hiding place, their source of spiritual healing and their help in times of trouble. It does not matter to God that the person needing help is only a teenager or a college student. Age ain't nothing but a number to God. That is what David had in mind in Psalm 27:5 "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

Keep your eyes focused on the rock because the rock provides safety and help in the time of trouble!

Keep your eyes focused on the rock because the rock:

SATISFIES thirsty hearts and feeds hungry souls. That's what Dr. Watts had in mind when he said "Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!

SHELTERS weary souls from the storms of life. Did you not hear the song writer proclaim, "When the storms of life are raging stand by me. When the world is tossing me like a ship out on the sea, Thou who rulest wind and waters, stand by me!"

GUIDES lost and confused souls through the mountains and valleys. If we stay focused on the rock we can say like David, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me!"

Have you ever noticed a rock badger? It is a bit larger than a prairie and is gray, the color of the rocks. As long as the rock badger, is on the rock sunning itself, it's almost impossible to see. When a predator comes to attack, the rock badger will run into a hole, the crag in the rock. If a vulture or an eagle wants to sweep down on the coney, it has to knock down a mountain to get at it.

One thing about rock badgers, they know where their security lies. If a rock badger decides to go off on the prairie, venturing away from the rock, then it's

vulnerable. It doesn't matter how courageous the coney is. It doesn't matter whether or not it's been taking body building lessons at the local gym. The most courageous coney falls victim to the smallest wolf or lion. When it wanders away from the rock, a rock badger is dead meat.

They would have said, "If you have the wisdom of a rock badger, you'll know where your security and stay close to the rock!"

Young brothers and sisters stay close to the rock!

When I say keep your eye on the rock, I'm not talking about the Rock of Gibralter that protrudes into the deep waters

When I say keep your eye on the rock, I'm not talking about a children's song that says "Rock a-bye baby on the tree top, when the wind the blows the cradle will rock!"

When I say keep your eye on the rock, I'm not talking about Elvis Presley and Jail House Rock!

When I say keep your eye on the rock, I'm not talking about Little Richard, and Bo Diddley, master minds of rock and roll!

I'm not talking about a rhythm and blues golden hit that encourages you to "Rock around the clock"

I'm not talking about Areatha Franklin who wants you to "Rock Steady baby!"

I'm not talking about Master P who wants us to "Rock The House!"

I'm talking about Jesus, my rock weary in weary land!

Jesus, my strong tower!

Jesus, my bridge over troubled water!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary...

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

Keep your eyes on the rock and everything will be all right!

No. 719-Inspiration

Don't Mess With the Blessed

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La..

August 30, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Numbers 23:20

Introduction

Have you ever received a blessing only to have someone try to take it away from you? One of the most frustrating experiences in life is to strive to achieve a goal, attain a height or otherwise receive a blessing and then have it taken by the evil deeds of others. Sometimes thieves deprive us of financial blessings. Sometimes insensitive people steal our sense of security by making us afraid. Sometimes there are those who enjoy cheating us out of our good names and reputations. Often opportunities for advancement are taken from us. Even business opportunities have been known to slip through our fingers because there are people who are virtual blessing burglars. Such moments are extremely frustrating, but they are realities that every Christian faces daily. They never stop trying to turn our happy days into sad days.

Sometimes our blessings came in the strangest ways. A bad moment turned out to be a blessing. A loss opened the door for even another blessing. Blessings when received are intended to be shared with others. At a church meeting a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith. "I'm a millionaire," he said, "and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember that turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first pay day and before I could spend it, I was robbed of everything but a dollar. A whole week's work and all I had was one dollar left. I went to a church meeting that night. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and had to either give it all to God's work or nothing at all. So at that moment I decided to give my whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, to give all I had, and that is why I am a rich man today."

He finished and there was an awed silence at his testimony as he moved toward his seat. As he sat down a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him: "You say you are a millionaire?" The man nodded yes. The old woman said, "I dare you to make that decision again." Many find it easier to share blessings in their poverty than they do in their prosperity.

What God has blessed cannot be reversed by anyone or anything. At times it may appear that God has abandoned his promises. It may even appear that instead of being blessed that we are actually being cursed with one string of adversities after another. However, the faithful always remember that God is true to his word and his promise. There is no power on earth that can stop a blessing that is intended for you.

As Christians, we have come to know that what God has for us, we will receive. Others may try to cheat us out of what he has in store for us, but he will eventually see to it that we get what he intends for us to have. Once we receive his blessings, we should share them with others, over and over again.

Exposition

This text focuses on a professional prophet by the name of Balaam who was asked by the king to curse Israel after God had blessed them.

Balaam was one of many prophets of eastern religions who worshiped all the gods of the land. In many instances they proved to be prophets for hire who knew the intricacies, rituals and beliefs of all of the surrounding religious community. Many of these false teachers had great power and influence. When they pronounced a blessing or a curse, it was considered a true prophecy.

When Moses led his people across the wilderness, he journeyed north on the east side of Jordan where King Balak of Moab faced the invasion of Israel. Balak sought a strategy other than battle to stop Moses. He decided to use a prophet to curse Israel. Balaam was chosen. Balak sent his messengers with fees to secure Balaam's services. Balaam asked God's permission to curse Israel. Permission was refused, but Balaam journeyed to confer further with Balak. On this journey, Balaam's donkey talked with him as he traveled a narrow trail (Num. 22:21-30). Here Balaam clearly understood that an angel's drawn sword enforced his obedience to speak only God's message to Balak.

In four clear and precise messages Balaam insisted that God would bless Israel (Num. 23-24).

The people of Israel were being blessed because they were living godly lives. In 23:21 Balaam said God had considered the ways of Israel and was pleased with their righteousness. Moses had insisted that they live according to the law of God. Their righteous living drew praise from God and resulted in a blessing that could not be reversed.

In 23:21 Balaam noted that Israel was blessed because they were strong in their faith. The phrase "strength of a unicorn" was another way of saying that the people were as strong as oxen. Strong faith and dependence upon God had led them out of Egypt. It also led them across the Red Sea and the River Jordan. Over 40 years of wandering and dependence upon God had made them strong and bold in their faith.

Baalam concluded that the people were protected by the blessings of God. No magic spells, enchantments or special potions could be used against them because they were protected by the hand of God. God was performing signs and wonders as

he guided their paths. The walls of cities were falling. The sun seemed to hang in the sky prolonging the days of their battles. Their enemies were falling by the thousands. They were a protected people that could not be stopped by any tricks the king hoped to have played upon them.

Balaam could not curse Israel. However, they brought curses upon themselves by their willingness to commingle their faith in God with that of others around them. While Balaam could not curse Israel, he taught the Moabites to bring the men of Israel into Baal worship with its immorality. For this God would punish Israel. What Balaam could not accomplish with a curse he did so through seductive means.

When Blessed Expect A Test

There are millions today who are frustrated victims of dirty tricks, plots, schemes and plans of some person or group trying to undo blessings that God has destined them to receive. Some have blamed themselves, wrongfully, for the ungodly acts of others. The righteous must consider what kind of behavior elicits God's blessing and then remember when God blesses, nothing stops that blessing from reaching its intended destination.

LIVE RIGHT AND GOD WILL FIGHT: Believers must remember that God blesses the righteous. Those who try to live for God can expect him to bless them immensely. David realized this when he wrote in Psalm 5:12 "For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield."

God blesses the righteous. Those who live according to God's laws and incorporate them into their daily living can expect to draw the favor of God. He is always mindful of the acts of the righteous and keeps them in his protective arms. In Psalm 1:6 the word says, "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Those who strive to live righteously will find that God will stand with them in the face of life's battles. Live right and God will fight the battles.

STRONG FAITH OPENS GATES: Believers who exercise strong faith are blessed by God. Many opportunities that God makes available to believers can only be achieved through strong faith. In the same sense that Israel would not have been freed from slavery or crossed the Red Sea without faith and confidence in God, modern believers cannot expect to have all of the blessings God has in store for them unless they exercise strong faith.

It is an abundance of faith that opens doors of opportunity that God has unlocked. The person who never steps forth and tries for fear of failure, never claims that which God has in store. If not for faith, Abraham would not have been a great and successful patriarch. Neither would Noah have been saved from the flood. Only those who believe what God says and then step out in confidence can expect to reap his blessings. The key is to remember: Strong faith opens the gate!

ONCE BLESSED GOD DOES THE REST: Believers should not be intimidated by turns of events that seem to indicate that they are being cursed instead of being

blessed. God is in control of the events of our lives.

Joseph was blessed by God to eventually become a great man in Egypt. Even as a boy God showed Joseph in dreams the great blessing that was to come. Along the way, Joseph had many frustrating moments that appeared as if God had forsaken his promise and that instead of being blessed he was cursed. He was thrown in a pit by his own brothers. He was sold into slavery. He was jailed for a crime he did not commit. It appeared that instead of blessings, all he was receiving was curses. Everything that could go wrong was going wrong. Soon after, he was eventually promoted to oversee the agricultural reserves of the entire nation. He became an important man in Egypt, just as God had promised. However, Joseph discovered the simple truth that "once blessed God does the rest."

David was anointed King of Israel by the prophet Samuel while he was still a shepherd boy keeping his father's flocks. Since the moment he was promised that blessing he experienced one difficulty after another. The king threw his spear at him frequently. He was chased around the countryside like a criminal. He was hated by the King and those in authority. It appeared that instead of being blessed he was being cursed with the life of a fugitive. A few years later, he was named the undisputed King of both Judah and Israel, just as God had promised. David discovered that once blessed, God does the rest.

Both Joseph and David followed the formula for continued blessing from God. They continued to live right and to exercise strong faith, even in the face of difficult times.

This truth applies to all believers. If God has promised believers a blessing, it is a sure promise. No circumstance can stop it from becoming a reality. Once blessed, God will do the rest!

If Given A cross There will be a crown

Finally, brothers and sisters, every believer should keep in mind that blessings that come from God are not separate from hard work, difficulty and struggle. There will be obstacles along the way but the presence of obstacles does not mean that the promise will not be realized.

Every believer will have a cross to bear before he can expect to achieve the final victory. We can't stand in the winner's circle without having first run the race. We can't share the ecstasy of winning without also sharing the agony of the contest.

There will be times when the blessed must endure mess. These are times when the believers are falsely accused and called everything but a child of God. But I hear the word of God say in Matthew 5:11 " Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Don't mess with the blessed!

There will be times when the blessed seem to have less. These are the times when even the blessed seem to ride in smaller cars, live in smaller houses, and survive on smaller amounts. Those who are at war with the blessed should be careful, because

we serve a God who has promised us more and his promise will not remain unfulfilled. John 10:10 says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Don't mess with the blessed!

There will be times when the blessed must face a test. These are times when difficulties seem to mount and believers find their faith pushed to the very limit. No enemy of the faithful should celebrate during their hour of trial. They are knocked down but knocked out. Job 23:10 says, " But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" Don't messed with the blessed!

There will be times when the blessed seem to regress. These are the times when believers feel like they make one step forward and the world pushes them two step backwards. Be careful when you try to push believers backward because we have a different walk. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says "For we walk by faith, not by sight"- Don't mess with the blessed!

Every believer should remember, if we are given a cross there will be a crown!

If we are given a sip of sadness, there will be a gallon of gladness!

If we are given a taste of failure, there will be a touch of success!

If we experience a few days of sickness, there will be years of good health!

If we share a day of defeat, there will be a year of victory!

Don't mess with the blessed because we have been promised that if we endure to the end, we will receive a crown!

Don't mess with the blessed because "God has smiled on me, he has made me glad!"

Don't mess with the blessed because God has given us a new song to sing that the angels cannot sing, "I've been washed in the blood!"

Don't mess with the blessed because the Lord said, in John 10:28 "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Don't mess with the blessed because Jesus came and died to claim them as his own!

Don't mess with the blessed because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to claim them for his own!

Don't mess with blessed because one of these days he is coming again to claim their righteous place in glory! When he is crowned king of kings and Lord of Lords!

No. 720-Faith

Living Above "See" Level

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 12, 1998

SCRIPTURE: 2 Cor 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Introduction

How do you see life? What is your perspective? How we perceive each day depends heavily upon our perspective. There are many who make them selves miserable because they interpret every incident that occurs in the run of a day as a sign of the end. They subscribe to the "Chicken Little" school of thought in which every drop of rain that touches their heads is a sign that the sky is falling. Others whom the same raindrop touches see it as a sign that God is blessing and refreshing the earth. One man sees a fallen tree and sees only its death. Another looks at the same tree and sees an opportunity to build a fire. How we see life depends heavily upon the attitudes we bring to bear upon any situation. Life is what we make of it!

Often we are unable to see how God moves and operates in our lives. No matter how we try we simply can't understand his ways. Consider the two men who had walked many miles in the forest but could not kill anything to eat because their fine, shiny rifles were out of ammunition. There were natives in the forest who followed them for days, attracted to their shiny rifles. Beautiful hunting rifles like theirs were priceless in the backwoods. Anyone who possessed one would be extremely fortunate. The natives waited for an opportunity to get them. After several days, the men were out of food and hunger weakened them. As they lay asleep, the natives slipped from behind the trees, took their rifles and left a closed bag in their place. When they awakened, one of the men realized their rifles had been stolen and complained and cursed. The other man opened the bag and found two young fryers, that looked ready for the skillet. Though he missed his rifle he said, "THROUGH grace, God gave us those rifles but we ran out of bullets. Now he has given us these chickens and a chance to SAY grace, a few more times!" It is how we see things that makes the difference!

As Christians, we have learned to trust God continuously. We do not understand how he arranges things but we trust him to take care of our needs every day of our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains what it means to live by faith rather than trusting in any other means.

Those who are not born of God walk by sight. In other words, they depend heavily upon the senses. They trust only that which they can see, feel, taste, smell and hear. Those outside of the faith are highly empirical about life. They demand to see it, smell it, taste it, touch and hear it. Each of these is a reaction to stimuli. None are pro active. The person who walks by sight is one who has to see the miracle performed before he acts. Thus he has to see the waters of the Red Sea roll up, taste Manna in the wilderness, touch the hem of the Lord's garment and hear the voice of God as a still small voice himself, before taking any action.

Paul, explaining the nature of walking by sight, noted that those who walk in this fashion usually find themselves worrying about success or failure in this life. They are overly occupied with concerns of this life without observing that if anything happens to this body, in this life that God has another building, not made with hands, prepared for those who believe.

Trusting only in what appeals to the senses, logic and reasoning is not an indicator of trust in God.

They that live by faith, walk by faith. But what is inferred in this? John Wesley says it means, " They regulate all their judgments concerning good and evil, not with reference to visible and temporal things, but to things invisible and eternal."

Those who walk by faith, are aware of physical influences and often use them. However, those who walk by faith, are not limited only to those experiences that appeal to sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. They consider visible things to be of small value, because they pass away like a dream; but, on the contrary, they account invisible things to be of high value, because they will never pass away. Whatever is invisible is eternal; the things that are not seen, do not perish. So the Apostle says: "The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal."

What's Your See Level?

Today there are many people who live at one level of faith or another. Our level of faith controls the depth of our involvements, commitments and hopes. There are at least three comparisons germane to this subject:

DEAD SEA LEVEL: The surface of the Dead Sea, at 400 m (1312 ft) below sea level, is the lowest water surface on earth. It is fed by many small rivers but its main source of replenishment comes from the River Jordan which empties six million tons of water every day into the Dead Sea's waters. Despite the fact that it receives so much water, its level never rises more than 10 feet and it has no outlets to empty water anywhere else. All of the water that it receives from other sources is quickly evaporated or is made useless by its high salt content. Nothing lives in the dead sea.

There are no fishes. No algae. Nothing.

There are many today who live a dead sea existence. They are constantly striving to acquire but no matter how much they acquire they are not happy. Happiness seems to evade them. No matter how much they party, they have to have another party and another. No matter how much they drink they always need another. No matter how much others try to love them, the love is never returned...it simply evaporates. They receive but they never give back.

The dead sea experience is a faithless experience. It represents a life that is lived outside of God. It considers its own passions. It considers its own desires. It considers only what appeals to its own sense of sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing.

Too many can only see life on this level. They can only see that which can satisfy their own passions. The walk of faith however, requires us to die to our selfish demands and walk in the newness of our faith in Christ. Matthew 16:24-25 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

There are millions who have chosen to rise above their dead "see" experience by accepting Christ. They sing with new meaning, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back. No turning back"

MEDITERRANEAN SEA LEVEL. The Mediterranean sea represented Israel's feelings of inadequacy and fear. The Jews were not a seafaring people. They could even describe them as a sea-fearing people. Their nation had most of its origins in desert wanderings. Their efforts at sea faring usually ended in failure. Their fear of the sea was frequently used to show God's power over the unknown. Solomon used the sea to bring in timbers for the temple, but he made deals with other countries to have it done. King Jehoshaphat's attempt to build a Jewish navy ended in disaster after all his ships wrecked in the harbor. The Mediterranean Sea was a constant reminder of Israel's fear of the unknown.

Today, there are millions that operate on the Mediterranean "see" level. This is what can easily be described as the level of "fragile faith." They have a semblance of faith but it is fragile. They are afraid of the unknown or to pursue anything that has not been tried before. They have witnessed many failures in the experiences of others and have chosen the "safe" route for their future. The safe route does not require any real faith on their part. It requires only that they stick with what they know. Walk the path that has been well beaten and stick with recipes that have been proven true over the generations.

However, the word of God says in Psalm 27:1 "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

The believer is inspired to trust God to bring all unknown things into a clearer understanding. We do not know what the outcome of an endeavor may be, but we trust that God controls our destiny to a point that every end shall eventually be for our advantage.

We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future and we know who holds our hand. Maybe that is what the song writer meant when he wrote: "Farther along we'll know all about it. Farther along we'll understand why. Cheer up my brother walk on the sunshine, we'll understand it all by and bye!"

RED SEA: The Red Sea represents what we have seen God do with respect to the barriers that stand between ourselves and our goals. We believe God can roll back the waters, but we're not doing anything until God makes the first move. God moves first then we move. God destroys Pharaoh's will then we leave Egypt. God opens the Red sea, then we cross over. Not until we see it first! Those whose faith operates on the Red Sea level have a "Cautious Faith." They believe in God to a degree, but they think it is prudent to use good sense and logic rather than completely and totally depending upon God. They only depend upon God totally as the last resort. They adhere to the motto, "After you've tried the rest, try the best." Even then they wait for God to move first before they act.

Yet, the word teaches us that waiting for God to move first does not exemplify faith. Faith, by its very nature, represents the "Peter" in us that will that prompt us to step out on the water without giving it a thought. Hebrews 11:1 " Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Those who live on this level of faith should strive to move up higher. They have a form of faith, but not one that moves the unmovable, dreams the impossible, stops the unstoppable or achieves the impossible!

Above "See" Level

Finally, we must consider that while some live below "see level" and others operate at "see" level, trusting only their five senses, there are millions of believers that have learned to live above "see" level.

Living above "see" level is not the same as living at or below see level. The man who lives below "see" level doesn't trust anybody or anything. The man who lives at sea level trusts only what he can see, hear, taste, smell and feel. But the man who lives above "see' level" trusts completely in the Lord.

Living above see level represents the idea of walking by faith and not by sight. It is the level in which the believer moves first, in faith that God will act!

Ascending from sea level to above "see" level heights requires an adjustment in the attitude that makes one able live above see level. Those who are not accustomed to life above "see" level can find themselves suffering from altitude sickness.

If you have traveled in the mountainous areas of Colorado, the Alleghenies or the Great Smoky Mountains, you have probably noticed that as you climbed your ears stopped. At night you probably found it hard to sleep. Some had an increase in blood pressure and others found it hard to breathe. However, the people who lived in those areas seemed to have no problems at all. That's because they have learned how to live high above sea level.

When you see a saint smiling happy although living under intense pressure it's

because he has learned to say, “Whatever I need, God will supply!”

When you see saints giving freely to the church and to others even though they don’t seem to have much themselves, it’s because they have learned that “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

When you see a saint trying to do the impossible, without a doubt that it can be done, it’s because that saint remembers Matthew 19:26 “..with God all things are possible.”

Living above “see” level, means walking by faith and not by sight.

Living above “see” level means trusting in the Lord!

When the Three Hebrew Boys stood before the fiery furnace, all their critics could see were the red-hot flames, but they lived above see level and proclaimed, “Our God is able to deliver us!”

When Daniel faced the Lion’s Den, all that others saw was a Den full of Hungry lions, but Daniel lived above “see” level and knew the words of Psalm 27:5 “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.”

Walking by faith means living the words to the old song, “I will trust in the Lord, until I die!”

Through good times and bad times, trust in the Lord!

In daytime and night time, trust in the Lord!

When you are weak and when you are strong, trust in the Lord!

When you don’t understand what is going on, trust in the Lord!

When you can’t see your way and the road gets dark, trust in the Lord!

In the midst of sorrow and tears run down your eyes, trust in the Lord!

Call on Jesus!

Jesus, who looked at me and saw more than a wretched sinner, standing in need!

Jesus, who looked at Calvary and saw more than just an old rugged cross!

Call on Jesus, who looked at the grave and saw more than the sadness of a dark and gloomy tomb!

They buried him below see level!

The guards watched his grave, at see level!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave! They couldn’t understand it because what he did was

“...above see level!”

No. 721-Cross

Cross Bearers

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 20, 1998

SCRIPTURE:"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross"; Matthew 27:32 "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross." Mark 15:21

Introduction

What is your attitude about your life's responsibility? How we view the circumstances we face each day determines the quality of the experience. There are some who face each Monday with an, "I sure hate to go to work" attitude. There are others who say to themselves, "Thank goodness it's Monday, Get back Satan and watch God work!" Are you the person who gives more than the minimum or do you go beyond the call of duty? Do you malinger or do you look for ways to help your employer succeed? When you face a difficulty, do you constantly complain about it or do you view it as another opportunity for God to demonstrate his power? It is important for every believer to bear his or her own cross. However, it is equally important that each believer bear his or her cross with the right attitude. Our savior not only considers our deeds, but the spirit we bring to bear as we carry out our daily responsibilities.

Who cares how we bear the cross, as long as we bear it? Our Lord cares! The reward that comes with carrying the cross is not in the shouldering of the burden alone. The spirit in which even a good deed is performed plays a part in the way it is received by our Lord. Consider the lesson the waitress learned one day on the job. It so happened that Winnie the Waitress was called to work on her off day. She was really disturbed about having to give up the one day a week she had to work in the restaurant, even though she understood the reason she was called to work. As she waited on each table that night she'd look at her watch and let her frustrations be known to each customer by singing the words, "I feel like going home. I feel like going home!" After she waited on each customer, Bennie the bus boy would clean up the dishes. The bus boy worked with energy and enthusiasm and was a joy to watch. As he worked, he kept singing,"I've got joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart! Then he would sing a lively version of, "I don't feel no ways tired." The two worked each table singing their theme songs. One by one Winnie noticed that as her customers left they

walked to the bus boy and gave him the tip instead of leaving it on the table for her. Finally, Winnie stopped one of the customers and asked. Why did you give him my tip? Didn't I do the job? Didn't I take your order? Didn't I bring your food? The customer looked at Winnie and said. We watched you work and we watched him work, "He sang a better song!" There are many today who grudgingly carrying out their Christian responsibilities. They say the right words, do the right things and give the right amounts, but sing the wrong song!

As Christians, we should strive to bring positive attitude to our Christian service. Are you an Usher? Do more than hold your post. Are you a deacon? Do more than simply hold a title! Are you a Preacher? Go beyond simply throwing something together to go through the motions. Are you are pew member? Do more than just list your name on the roll. Are you a Choir member? Do more than grudgingly show up! If we approach our areas of service without a feeling of commitment, then we are all...doing the right things, but singing the wrong song!

Exposition

The text focuses on Simon who was forced intothe service of the Master, to help bear his cross.

The Roman soldiers were commissioned to take Jesus out to crucify him. On the way from Pilate's judgment seat, as they went down the Via Dolorosa, the "way of sorrows," through the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus stumbled and fell. The second time he stumbled, the Roman soldiers grabbed an African man who was in the crowd and compelled him to bear the cross of Jesus.

Simon was from Cyrene, a country in North Africa. He had come to Jerusalem with his two sons Rufus and Alexander to celebrate the Passover, having studied the Jewish religion and become impressed with their God. That was significant at the time, for the predominant religion of most in Africa was not Judaism. However, many had come to learn about these people with one God, called Jehovah, as the Roman Empire stretched across the known world. Simon came to learn more about the God of the Jews, before that day ended, he would know him better than he ever imagined. He didn't plan it, but circumstances would demand it. He would help Jesus carry his cross.

Circumstances changed what should have been a learning vacation into a life changing experience for Simon. He was compelled, yet the result of the experience changed his life forever. There is evidence in the Scripture that this event had a tremendous effect on Simon's life. In the book of Acts he was there on the Day of Pentecost and very likely did become a Christian as a result of this sudden interruption of his plans. Mark makes clear to us that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who are well-known to the Gentile believers to whom Mark is writing. In Romans, Chapter 16, he mentioned Rufus with whom he was very closely associated and whose mother had been very kind to Paul. It is evidently the same Rufus.

Mark simply brings out Simon's attitude of unwilling involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus. However, his involvement changed his life forever.

What Does Bearing The Cross Mean?

Today there are many who are bearing a cross in life, but they are not doing so by choice. If any of us had a choice, most would gladly stand on the sidelines and leave the business of cross bearing to someone else. Like Simon, most of us have our own personal agendas each day. However, life often gives us circumstances that compel us to carry the cross. Those are the interruptions that seem to grab us and place a load on our shoulders that we would rather avoid. The burden of a huge responsibility crashes down upon us with such weight that we question our own ability to stand. We could run, but where would we hide? We don't have much choice.

When a member of the family is stricken with an illness, we are compelled to carry our cross.

When financial troubles encroach, we are compelled to carry our cross.

When we are unfairly attacked, persecuted and assaulted, we are compelled to carry our cross.

When compelled to carry one or more of life's crosses, believers should approach our crosses with all three of the following attitudes:

TORCH BEARER: In Biblical times the torch bearer went before the King to light the path before him. Those who carried the torches, went forth into the dark; their lights brightened the path for others who followed. We should strive to approach our burden with a torch bearer's attitude. That which you do often makes life better for someone else. Your sacrifice, pain and trouble often lights the dark path for those who are walking close behind. Jesus reminded every believer to remember that each of us is a light that is set upon a hill that cannot be hid. Others see our light, walk toward it and gain warmth and strength from our example. That's why every believer loves to sing the words of the song, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!"

STANDARD BEARER: The standard bearer was important in every battle. The standard bearer marched close to the front and bore the coat of arms, insignia or flag of the king. Those who saw it immediately knew the identity of the army and of the king.

As we carry our crosses, each should remember that we are standard bearers for our Lord. We represent the Christian Army of soldiers whose training, discipline and faith has prepared uf for life's battles. Our Lord is our general and we are his foot soldiers. Each day we go into the battle for truth carrying his banner. Our attitude, disposition, commitment and drive instantly identify our army.

No wonder the song writer declared, "We are soldiers, in the army. We've got to fight, although we've got to cry! We've got to hold up the blood-stained banner, we've got to hold it up until we die!"

ARMOR BEARER: The armor bearer often wore or carried the king's armor for

him until he prepared to enter the battle. He had to be strong and brave because the king seldom fought without putting on his armored battle uniform. Every believer is reminded that we should put on the whole armor of God. That's why Ephesians 6:13-17 says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

We must approach our cross fully armored and ready for whatever may come. We know the nature of the enemy and therefore we do not take him half hearted.

We cannot be caught with our guard down when we are fighting a serious illness.

We cannot be caught without our armor when we are struggling to help our children overcome.

We cannot be caught without our armor when we are trying to overcome a temptation.

We must approach the struggle with a spirit of victory, knowing that no power on earth can defeat us if God's will and our will are one and the same!

Cross Bearers Reward

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the reward of bearing the cross.

The scriptures suggest to us that while Simon was compelled to carry the cross. The experience changed his life for the better. Not only was his life changed, but that of his two sons was also changed. He was a better man. A stronger man and no doubt a more spiritually secure man after he bore the cross.

Those who successfully shoulder the burdens that life has placed upon them in faith, will receive a great reward from our Lord. Repeatedly the Word indicates that cross bearers will receive a reward.

Paul told the Corinthians that the burden of preaching and witnessing was his cross. In 1 Corinthians 9:17 he said, "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward:"

Revelation 3:21 says, " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Revelation 21:7 says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Those who bear the cross in faith undergo a life changing experience. They will never be the same.

Those who bear the cross, talk a different talk and walk a different walk!

Those who bear the cross, live a different life and think different thoughts!

Those who bear the cross have different ways of handling responsibility. They have a different feelings for the trials and troubles of others!

Those who bear the cross in faith say, Lord I'm willing and ready to:

GO wherever you send me; GIVE whatever you require of me!

DO whatever you want me to do; BE whatever you want me to be!

HELP whomever you want me to help; STAY wherever you put me!

Simon came to Jerusalem looking for the Lord, but he didn't find the Lord until an unforseen circumstance compelled him to pick up his cross!

Somebody here today didn't find the Lord until they were compelled to carry a cross! Ever since that day they've been singing a brand-new song, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

When Jesus carried the cross to Calvary, he changed things in the lives of every cross bearer that would follow him.

Because Jesus carried the cross, every:

TROUBLED cross bearer can now have peace!

LONELY cross bearer can now have comfort!

SAD cross bearer can now have everlasting joy!

HOPELESS cross bearer can now have hope!

DEMON POSSESSED cross bearer can now be delivered!

AFFLICTED cross bearer can now be delivered!

FINANCIALLY EMBARRASSED cross bearer can now enjoy the riches of heaven!

As Jesus stumbled under the weight of the cross I hear the song writer ask, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? -No there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me!"

He bore the cross of my iniquity!

He was crucified on the cross for my sin!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave in the shadow of the cross, with all power in his hands!

No. 722-Revival

Under New Management

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 4, 1998

SCRIPTURE: " 2 Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the sign posted on a familiar business.."Under New Management?" Perhaps it was your favorite restaurant or service station or some other merchant. When we see that sign, it means something is different. Sometimes we can notice the difference immediately. Our favorite caf, has a new look. Our favorite grocer has rearranged the placement of merchandise. Places that were once drab, now boast flowers. A fresh coat of paint has changed the decor. New uniforms for the waitresses. New equipment. It all means that something is different!

New managers have a new way of seeing things. They offer a fresh approach and go out of their way to impress their customers. That's why many people are attracted to visit an establishment that has a sign, "Under New Management." They want to see what's different! They expect to see a fresh approach!

While "Under New Management" does mean something is different, it does not always mean that what's different is guaranteed to be better. Simply putting out the sign may attract new customers but it won't take long for the customers to figure out if the service matches the sign. Consider the Northern couple that decided to come South and open up a steak house. They were impressed with the Southern way of doing things and they bought a fine restaurant called, "The Big Hat." Outside, they put up a sign, "Under New Management." They advertised in the newspapers and on television until a giant crowd appeared on their opening night. Texans were there from everywhere. They came in and ordered huge steaks and plenty of drinks. However, it wasn't long before they noticed that the service was slow and the steaks were tough to chew. One by one the customers left, vowing never to return. On the way out the door, one looked at the other and summed up the new restaurant, Texas style by saying,"Big Hat-No Cattle!" The Northerners couldn't live up to promise of their sign.

There are many today who profess Christianity. They promote that fact everywhere they go. But under close scrutiny, too many are turning out to be a case

of "Big Hat-No Cattle!" The old timers among us phrased it this way, "All smoke, no fire!" The bible put it another way "All faith, no works!"

Those who intend to live for Christ must become better managers of their lives. Our time, energy, talent and resources are best used when we apply them toward kingdom building work. Getting the most out of our time, talent and resources is what management is all about with respect to building the kingdom of God.

As Christians, we have learned that we get more out of the Christian experience when we allow God to manage our lives. He is an expert at taking over lives and helping us put out new signs that show while we may have the same old name, we are under new management. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the regenerating effect of being "in Christ."

A person who is "in Christ" goes beyond simply acknowledging Christ in a public confession of faith. Being "in Christ" goes even further than simply being associated with the visible church. "If any man be in Christ," as George Whitefield puts it, means to "partake of the benefits of his sufferings. To be in him refers not only to an outward profession, but by an inward change and purity of heart, and cohabitation of his Holy Spirit."

A person who is truly "in Christ" places his or her entire life in the hands of God, to manage, control, direct and order. It is an internal management shift that reflects itself in outward changes that often are visible to the casual observer. The idea of being a "new creature" does not mean that the person is physically altered in any way. It does suggest that some other power is in control of the thinking and actions of the converted soul. It becomes evident in their actions.

Persons who turn over the management of their lives to God immediately change course. The qualities and temperament of the mind change so much that we must entirely forget what manner of persons we once were. For all practical purposes, a person who is "born again" literally places his or her soul in the hands of God.

Liability or Asset

Today there are literally millions of people who are spiritually bankrupt. They are the victims of mismanaged spiritual lives. Generally, we are considered bankrupt when our liabilities continue to exceed our assets.

Our liabilities are numerous. They include our fears, failures, frustrations. The biggest liabilities we have are our sins. They weigh heavy in the scale. Every person has a liability column with respect to their personal lives. Those who thrive spiritually don't do so because they have no liabilities, but because they insure that their assets are greater than their liabilities.

The Saint's assets include: A strong prayer life, Bible reading and bible study,

public worship and praise, faith building activity, and fellowship with other saints. Saints who pray often, read their bibles and regularly participate in public worship and praise activities usually are stronger, bolder in the faith. They actually put their faith to work on a daily basis and strive to demonstrate a spirit of brotherly love and compassion that is beyond measure.

Spiritual Manager

Just as the growth and prosperity of a business is determined by the quality of its management, the quality of our spiritual lives is impacted in the same way.

MANAGERS PROMOTE GROWTH: In a business, the manager promotes company growth. Some managers are aggressive they advertise and promote the company to a point that it increases sales. Others are not aggressive, but take a slow steady path that is reliable and dependable. The approach may be different but the goal is the same, increase assets. A good spiritual manager promotes growth. Those activities that will increase spiritual maturity become the focus of their attention. Some are more aggressive than others: they sing louder, pray longer or shout harder. Others, while not as aggressive, consistently study, worship and fellowship in a way that promotes spiritual growth.

Those who mismanage are those who plunge themselves into activities that do not build treasures in heaven. Jesus said in Matthew 6:20, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

MANAGERS INSURE QUALITY OF SERVICE: The manager of a business determines the quality of its service. A company's management decides that it will stand behind its workmanship, guarantee that food is tasty or that a teller calls you by name at the local bank. Management teams that support poor service delivery, usually lose customers. In a similar sense, the quality of our spiritual management generally reflects itself in our service to our church and fellow man. If we sing in the choir, do we give our best? If we preach, do we take time to prepare? If we are deacons, do we actually serve people or sit on a board? If we are committee members, do we do our part? If we are members of the congregation, are our names simply "on the roll" or do we serve? Jesus set the attitude for each believer when he described his own service in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Those who mismanage are those who allow the quality of their service to depreciate. They have become content with simply doing just enough to get by!

GOOD MANAGERS CAN MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS: The best managers are those who are able to make tough decisions that produce results. A company with a large amount of expense will find a way to reduce the expenses or increase its income. Good managers will not simply allow the expenses to continue to outweigh income. That often requires tough decisions that have one goal in mind, increasing the "bottom line." In a spiritual sense many people have a growing list of liabilities. The

good manager is one that can take an inventory and realize that something must be done before it's too late. Sometimes it's a bad personal relationship that is the liability. It may be an addiction. It could be a negative attitude. Whatever is causing the loss, a good manager is able to do what is necessary to eliminate loss. A good manager acts decisively to counter bad habits and trends before they do irreparable damage.

Those who mismanage allow liabilities to continue to grow until it is too late to make repairs. However, the good manager can make the Joshua choice: Joshua 24:15 "...choose you this day whom ye will serve;...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

GOOD MANAGERS GIVE AN ACCOUNT: Managers in large companies generally answer to persons who are their superiors. It means that while they carry the keys, handle the money, hire and fire, and run the company from day to day, they don't own the company! They must give an account for whether theymanged the company according to the rules and policies of its owners. Spiritually, every believer remembers that we have been given a life to manage. We run the day to day operations, we make the decisions, we handle the company money and we are allowed to accept or reject many of life's offers. At the same time, however, we remember that we must give an account for our stewardship. In Matthew 12:36, Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Nothing that we do or say is final! It is coming up again!

Those who mismanage forget that they must account to their superiors. They assume the attitude that management means ownership and they are often fired!

Under New Management

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the undeniable fact that we are actually unable to manage ourselves! We have tried to take our lives under control but somehow we have always ended up in a spiritual deficit, on the edge of a spiritual crises or bordering a spiritual bankruptcy! We have tried, but our best efforts have failed.

Maybe this is what Paul had in mind in Romans 7:14-17 when he talked about his efforts to do right, but he always ended up doing just the opposite.

We want to manage our spiritual lives better but are frustrated because we can't seem to make it work.

How is that we seem to do so well at managing our corporate or carnal affairs, but fail so miserably in our spiritual lives? How is it that we seem to know how to get the light bill paid, get the rent in on time, keep the phone connected, provide for life and health insurance, and keep records of important transactions, but yet have so many problems managing our spiritual lives?

When a corporation realizes that it has a problem beyond the ability of its manager to handle, it starts looking for a new manager!

I submit to you that there is a resume in your mailbox, of someone who wants

to apply to be your new manager!

Who is this applicant?

Name: El-Shaddai, "The Almighty God.";Jehovah-Jireh "The Lord will Provide"; Alpha and Omega, "The beginning and then end."

Address: I live everywhere, the earth is my footstool and the heavens surround my shoulders. If you take the wings of the morning and fly in the sky or move to the bottomless deep, I am there! If you ascend into heaven or even make your bed in hell, I am there!

Phone: Simply dial area code 111-PRAY. One for the father! One for the Son! One for the Holy Ghost. "Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want!"

Prior Employment: I created the universe! I put the galaxies in place! I formed man from the dust of the earth! I made the Pine tree point its finger to the sky! I hollowed the valleys out and bulged the mountains up! Right now I've got the whole world in my hands! The song writer said, "He's got the whole world, in his hands! He's got the whole wide world in his hands!"

Character References: 1 John 4:16 says, "God is love."; 1 John 1:5 says "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; John 14:6 says, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh to the father, but by me!" If that's not enough, James 1:5 says I am the source of great wisdom. John 8:32 describes me as the truth that shall make you free!. Philippians 4:19 describes me as a provider for it says, "My God shall supply all your need..!"

Availability: I am willing to step in your life and begin to put things in order. I want to build up your assets and cut down your liabilities. I want to bring spiritual balance that you might have life and have it more abundantly!

Salary Requirement: You don't have to worry about what my services will cost because I'm holding in my hand a check to pay for all my services. It is a check drawn on the bank of heaven, written in the blood of Calvary, and signed with the hand of Jesus!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left his crimson stain but he washed it white as snow!"

He paid it all out on Calvary!

He paid it all on an old rugged cross!

He paid it all in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, got up with all power in his hands!

No. 723-Revival

Dealing With The Issue

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 11, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. Matthew 9:20-21; "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

Introduction

How do you approach the problems that you face every day? Are you a procrastinator? Do you simply put them off until a more convenient time? Do you delude yourself into thinking that your problems do not exist or that they will go away? Or do you tackle them head on and solve them to the best of your ability? For some people problem solving is basic and elementary. There are others whose lives are considerably frustrated by an inability to solve the problems that confront them daily. The matters that concern each of us differ. While some are concerned about family matters, others are faced with problems on the job. Some have legal problems. Others have financial problems. Many youth have problems at school concerning teachers and other students. The question is not whether the faithful will have problems, but how the faithful will respond to problems. There is a best-selling book on the market that deals with the subject of "How to deal with the issues of life." The book is the Holy Bible. It gives us the blue print to dealing with life's issues and how to approach them as they occur.

As a general rule professionals suggest that problem solving requires at least five steps: 1) Make a clear statement of the present problem and the desired result 2) Gain as much information as feasible 3) Consider potential solutions 4) Weigh the consequences 5) Make a decision. These steps, tend to lead to a logical resolution of any problem that may confront an individual or a group. Believers add one step that professionals often overlook. Just before making any decision, believers pray and then make decisions.

When dealing with the issues of life the world often overlooks the God factor. However, experience has shown that no problem solving plan can be complete unless one considers the "God" factor. When doctors in a sickroom have tried every technique known to man, they are derelict in their duty if they don't also remind their patients of the "God" factor. Marriages facing considerable strain and difficulty

could be dismissed as unsalvageable if it were not for the "God factor." Lives discarded as too broken to be repaired would be completely lost if it were not for the "God factor." Believers never exclude God from their problem solving method. He is the answer to every question and the solution to every problem.

As Christians, we strive to deal with whatever issue life gives us. We tackle that which is impossible and improbable because we are aware that we serve a God that can make the improbable probable. We serve a God who specializes in doing the impossible. How do we deal with the issue? We take it to God!

Exposition

This text focuses on an incident in the life of Christ in which a sick woman was healed by exercising her faith.

The incident tells of a time in which Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people as he passed, only to be touched by a single woman who received a healing blessing as a result.

According to added insights into this incident provided in Luke 8:43-47, the woman had an "issue of blood." That's another way of saying she had a hemorrhage of some kind. Her condition had existed for 12 years despite the fact that she had consulted all of the best physicians of time. No one was able to cure her disease.

Receiving a healing became quite an issue with her. The hemorrhaging complicated her life considerably and she sought a resolution. Adding to the complication was the fact that people who shared her illness were considered unclean under the Mosaic law. Not only was she considered unclean because of her "issue" anyone she touched was considered unclean as well. The unclean were forbidden from public socialization and forbidden from participation in any part of Israel's public worship life.

The woman had heard that a healer from God was in their midst. She made up her mind to deal with the issue of sickness by taking it to the Son of God. Defying all of the laws, she made her way through the crowd, no doubt touching many people as she forged through. She felt she probably wouldn't be able to get a personal interview with him, but concluded in her mind that if she could simply touch the hem of his garment that she would receive the same blessing. After all , God's healing power certainly would not be limited by such a small thing as a personal interview.

The woman's faith was not a perfect faith, based upon a great knowledge of Jesus, for she knew no more about him than what she heard. What had she heard? Perhaps it was accounts for his miraculous healings and cures! Perhaps it was testimonies of others who had seen him perform mighty acts. It became obvious from what she heard that Jesus was some type of man of God who was being used to do mighty acts. She heard about Jesus, she knew about God. Her faith was in the power of God, whom she knew much about. She knew that God had the power regardless of the man. Her faith in God was strong.

When the woman touched Jesus' garment, he immediately felt something. With

hundreds of people around him, obviously pushing and shoving out of curiosity, he was able to "feel" the prayerful touch of a woman who had been sick for many years. He felt power going out of him. He sensed that someone had just been healed.

When it became known that someone had been healed by the master the woman told her story to the amazement of the crowd. Jesus responded to her by saying that her faith had made her whole.

Her attempts to deal with the issue were futile. She tried every way she knew to solve her problem but had no success. When she heard that Jesus was close by, she took her issue to him. She found healing when she stopped dealing with the issue herself and gave it to Jesus!

Dealing With Issues

Most of us deal with the issues of life from one of two mind sets: faith thinking or logical thinking. Regardless of problems or situations our response usually falls in one of these two categories. Our mind set determines the way in which we will deal with any issue that we face whether it is health, finances, family, business or personal relationships.

LOGICAL THINKING: Those who think logically use tried and tested processes to achieve an end or solve a problem. They isolate the problem to determine its exact causes then move quickly to eliminate its cause. Repairmen use logical thinking. After learning that there is a problem, they isolate it by narrowing down all of the possible sources of the problem until they get to the right one. Then they fix the problem and send us the bill! There is nothing wrong with logical thinking., scientists, doctors, and a plethora of professionals in thousands of discipline use logical thinking successfully every day.

Logical thinking, by its nature, excludes the possibility of anything that is not empirical. The auto mechanic does not consider any possible cause for a mechanical failure other than something physically connected to the failure. He won't accept that your car won't start because the "devil got into it!" He excludes that explanation as a possible source of the problem. Moreover, he also excludes the possibility that anything other than a mechanical solution will solve the problem. He will not accept that a believer can lay hands on the car, pray the prayer of faith and it will work perfectly again.

While everyone is encouraged to be logical, purely logical thinking has a tendency to exclude all other possibilities. As we mature, we learn to think logically. A child has not fully learned to think logically. He accepts the possibility of a man in a red suit who flies around the world in one night and slides down chimneys that do not exist. He accepts the possibility of a "Daffy Duck", " Tweedy Bird", and a "Mickey Mouse." In a child's mind, everything is possible! ...Until he learns to become logical!

In dealing with the issues of life everyone is encouraged to be as logical as they can. However, believers are reminded that logic solutions have limitations. It is limited

because it proposes solutions and projects outcomes based upon available data. For example, the gloomed faced doctor may meet with a family and say, "All the tests are in. We have the E.K.G., the X-rays and blood tests. Every thing has been tried. Your loved one has about three days!" His prognosis is based on the available data. He is limited to what he can expect because logical thinking leaves him no other alternative.

FAITH THINKING: Faith thinkers begin with logical thinking and use all of its processes. However, the faith thinker does not close the door to possibility! Faith thinkers are those who accept the logical thinking process but consider possibilities that may not be supported by the data. The faith thinker hears the doctors report and accepts the data. However, the faith thinker is not limited to the doctor's prognosis! The faith thinker keeps open the possibility that there is a power greater than the situation that can alter the outcome!

That is the essence of faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What that means is that faith is the sum total of all the things you believe are possible even though they are not supported by available facts and data!

In dealing with the issues that life presents to us, we must become faith thinkers. Faith thinkers are logical, but they are not limited in their expectations!

The faith thinker is not a fanatic. Neither are faith thinkers mystics or conjurers!

Faith thinkers are those who are not intimidated by the improbable or who act cowardly in the face of the impossible!

Faith thinkers are logical thinkers who have the added dimension of trusting God!

Touching the Hem

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that those who are dealing with tough issues in their lives, should take them to Jesus.

The woman with the issue of blood dealt with a silent issue in her life for many years. However she could not successfully resolve the issue until she took it took it to Jesus.

There are many people today who are dealing with issues in their lives, but they are frustrated when they do not succeed.

The disciples came to Jesus and said we have a finance problem. We can't pay our taxes. Jesus told them what to do. He told them how they should go fishing and would find enough money in the mouth of the fish to meet their finance obligations. Somebody here today is dealing with the issue of personal finances. If you take it to Jesus, he will show you the way!

A lame man was brought to Jesus who had not walked in many years. His friends brought him to Jesus and lowered him through a roof and found healing that very day. Somebody here is dealing with the issue of personal sickness. If you take it to Jesus, he will give you an answer!

A crazy man ran naked through the tombs and his life was possessed by demonic spirits. No one could deal with the issue so they let him run wild. One day he ran upon Jesus and the evil spirits left him. Somebody here today is dealing with issue of being possessed by bad habits and evil tendencies. You've been trying to deal with it by yourself but you were unsuccessful. Give it to Jesus! He will turn things around!

Are you dealing with an issue in your life? Push your way through crowd and give it to Jesus!

Don't say in your mind, "I am insignificant!" or "He doesn't know who I am!"

Don't say in your mind, "I haven't been as faithful as I should have been!"

Don't say in your mind, "I can't get to him because there are others closer to him!"

Push you way through the crowd and say, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole"

If you are dealing with the issue of:

FAILURE, he can turn failure into success;

SADNESS, he can turn sadness into gladness;

SICKNESS, he can turn it into good health!

BURDENS, he can take your burdens and make them light!

DEFEAT, he can take your defeat and turn it into victory!

LOSSES, he can take your losses and turn them into gains!

HEARTACHES, I know a God who specializes in mending broken hearts!

TROUBLE MARRIAGE, I know a God who can turn your old lady into the first lady, who can turn your old man into the King of the Castle!

LOST GENERATION, I know a God who can take Gangsta Rap and turn it into a Saint's testimony!

Push your way through the crowd; reach out and touch the hem of his garment and his blood shall make you whole!

If you want to deal with the issue, push back your fear of embarrassment or insignificance and give it to Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed a tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

If you want to deal with the issue, give it to Jesus and everything will be all right!

No. 724-Church Anniversary

We're Doing A Great Work And We Can't Come Down

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 18, 1998

SCRIPTURE: And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Nehemiah 6:3; So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. Nehemiah 6:15

Introduction

Have you ever started a great work but stopped before you finished? There are many who begin even the smallest of projects or tasks but never finish. Their lives are littered with the tombstones of unfinished endeavors. A house remodeling sits idly. A spring cleaning once started, waits in the chill of autumn for completion. A business endeavor's plan lies idly on a desk top. A campaign to champion a worthy cause, once vigorously discussed, is tucked away amongst our personal drawers filled with good intentions.

The reasons a great work is often unfinished are numerous. Sometimes there are so many interruptions that completion is delayed. Sometimes we lose focus of our original motivation and inspiration. Sometimes passions such as anger, fear, hatred and love play a part as we put our work on hold to pursue a course dictated by one or the other. Many people are familiar with the experience of starting but never completing a great work. It is a frustrating experience.

Each person has a life work, the greatness of which is only inherent in its completion. Some parents have made the nurture and education of their children their life's work. There are many that have made helping the elderly their life's work. There are some who are committed to projects and causes that help children. The environment consumes the energy of some, while others have plunged themselves into causes that would save animals. What is your life work? Helping the homeless? Defending the poor? Beautification? Saving the race?

Life has much more meaning when it is defined through the perspective of one's life work. When we are involved in that which we perceive to be our life work a certain level of energy is generated that is not demonstrated with other projects or tasks. Our associations, friendships and memberships are all determined by our understanding

of our life's work.

Even our church membership, to a large extent, reflects what we perceive our life's work is all about. For example, those who see their life's work defined in terms of service to others, lifting fallen humanity and championing the causes of the oppressed are most comfortable in a church congregation that generally responds to that area of service. On the other hand, a person who perceives that his life work is to achieve personal wealth, fame and glory, might be uncomfortable in a setting where service without publicity and notoriety is the most salient of its attributes.

Like people, churches undertake great works. Like people, churches must be careful not to lose sight of their original motivation and to keep their goals in sight.

As Christians, we strive every day to work the work of him who sent us while it is day. When we are prompted to slow our work and to abandon it all together, every believer must look at the importance of their personal mission and their promise to God and say, "I'm doing a great work, and I can't come down!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the people of Israel whose commitment to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem resulted in it being done far ahead of schedule.

Almost 100 years after the Jews had returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, the walls around the city and the gates had remained in ruins. The people were disillusioned, in debt and intimidated by the awesome commitment that rebuilding the walls would require. They had excused their failure to rebuild the walls on fierce opposition from surrounding nations and their poverty.

Nehemiah refused to accept their excuses and despite the danger inspected the walls at night (2:15). He then called an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. He was an excellent leader who demonstrated engineering knowledge and brilliant organizing ability (ch. 3). He encouraged them while reminding them that they would have to watch, fight and pray. The work began.

Trouble arose from without and from within. Sanballat, in league with other leaders of the area, opposed Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem. If the Holy City regained prominence, it would erode the powers of the surrounding cities. It was a political contest designed to keep Jerusalem from becoming the economic power and influence of its golden years.

Sanballat and his friends tried to stop the work, but without success (ch. 4). The trouble from within was economic. Building the walls caused a labor shortage; farms were mortgaged. Many could not work on the walls or support the building program because they were plunged into their personal financial woes. Even this did not dissuade Nehemiah. He sat out to improve the financial condition of the people so they could turn their interest toward rebuilding the wall. Some received direct financial aide that helped them become strong enough to help.(ch. 5).

The people had a mind to work and the massive task of rebuilding the walls was continued. It was massive work requiring thousands of workers, spread out over

miles of landscape. Even as the people worked, enemies both within and without kept a steady stream of delaying tactics flowing.

As in the past, Sanballat had done all he could to stop their work through ridicule and threats. He then sent word to Nehemiah, saying: Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono (Nehemiah 6:2), about 28 miles from Jerusalem. But Nehemiah sent messengers to them, saying, I am doing a great work, and cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you? (6:3).

After Sanballat had made five attempts to meet with Nehemiah, he finally resorted to accusing him of rebelling against the king of Persia (6:5-7). When this failed to stop Nehemiah, Sanballat hired a prophet to prophesy Nehemiah's death. Nehemiah did not yield to their threats for he had faith that the God of Heaven . . . will prosper us. . . . So the wall was finished . . . in fifty-two days, far sooner than even they themselves had imagined.

Theirs was a great work and continued despite opposition, in the name of the Lord.

Attitudes About Works

Today, many people have varying attitudes about their life work. The attitudes range from "It's no big deal" to "It's extremely important."

SOME THINK THEIR WORK IS INSIGNIFICANT: There are some who feel their contributions are small and insignificant. They consider their work unspectacular. They want to do big things and they judge "big things" by the volume of notoriety attracted. There is no small work in a united effort. Rebuilding the walls required hundreds of tasks to be executed with precision. Some actually stood on the wall and laid the brick. Others gathered the straw and tromped in the mud to make the brick. Hundreds of others brought water to the workers. Some never came close to the wall itself, but baked the cakes of bread that fed the workers. Each person carried out tasks with precision. It succeeded because each person considered their contribution important.

Jesus reminded his disciples about the reward of the faithful servant in Matthew 25:21, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

As Church workers pause at anniversaries and look at the wall that has been completed, each person should know that the part they played in helping the church reach its milestone is important. The janitor that cleans the floors, the widow that gives a folded dollar, the lay member that prepares food in the kitchen or the person that is seen out front on a program; each does a great work. The work is not measured by the volume of its notoriety, but by the appreciation of the one person that matters...God!

SMALL WORK IS GREAT IN THE RIGHT HANDS: There are some people who fail to do anything because they consider themselves too small. They feel that

anything they do would be a waste because they don't have the size or resources of others. They see others who participate have cars, education, jobs and other resources. From their perspective what they have to offer is too small to measure. Their potential is minimized because they have a "grasshopper complex" they see the task as being so huge that they are grasshoppers in comparison.

Yet, the question that God asked Moses in Exodus 4:2 when he spoke of his lack of resources, is still important, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses only had a rod but God said use what you have! What you have may seem small, but in the right hands it is big enough. Can you imagine how ridiculous that little boy with the two fishes and five loaves of bread must have appeared to the apostles? They were trying to feed 5,000 and he offered his family's lunch. How could such a small contribution matter against such a huge problem? Does the widow's two mites matter? Even the smallest of contributions of time, talent and resources goes further when we contribute it to an idea, movement, organization or ministry that has been blessed by God. He has a way of blessing it to expand creatively, far beyond what we could imagine.

Your small work, in God's hands, can make a world of difference!

Maybe that's why the song writer said, "The work I've done. It seems so small. Sometimes it seems like nothing, nothing at all. But when I stand before my God, I want to hear him say well done. May the work I've done, speak for me!"

I Can't Come Down

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that Nehemiah was so convinced that he was doing a great work that he turned down every request to slow his pace by saying, "I'm doing a great work and I can't come down!"

His mind stayed focused on the objective. That objective was to get the wall completed before the enemies of the people attacked them. He marshaled the people together, and together they plunged themselves into a great work and none of them would come down!

The church should not be dissuaded from its mission. It is doing a great work and must not come down!

The church that shows sympathy to the homeless and the helpless, should say, "I'm doing a great work and I can't come down!"

The church that teaches and reaches the masses with the word of God should say, "I'm doing a great work and I can't come down!"

The church that feels the pain of the poor and wounded and responds with love should say, "I'm doing a great work and I can't come down!"

The church that embraces children and the elderly through programs that promote and protect them should say, "I doing a great work and I can't come down!"

All of the Patriarchs before us have done great works, like them we should not come down!

Noah's Great work was to build the ark. Though critics assailed him, he was doing

a great work and would not come down!

Moses' Great work was to lead the children of Israel to freedom. Though many doubted him and wanted to return to Egypt, he was doing a great work and would not come down!

David's Great work was to secure the kingdom of Israel. He was tempted on every hand to hang up his sword and shield, but he was doing a great work and would not come down!

Solomon's Great work was to build the temple. Though discouraged at complexity of the task and the complaints of the people, he was doing a great work and would not come down!

But there was another great work that we need to tell you about.

It was a great work that did not seem like a great work at all, but more of a disgrace.

Come and go with me out to Calvary and see a great work in progress!

Hanging out on the cross, a great work was being criticized and despised!

I hear the critics at the cross saying your great work seems to be:

A battle lost; A horrible defeat; A pathetic end to a glorious beginning

It didn't seem like much, sitting out ona hill, but the great work of redemption was underway!

The cross was a great work because it was the greatest of all victories

The cross was a great work because it was the highest of all accomplishments!

The cross was a great work because it was the finest of all hours!

The cross was a great work because it was the noblest of all events!

I heard somebody say to Jesus, "If you are who you say you are, why don't you come down?"

Jesus didn't say a word, but he must have remembered Nehemiah's words, "I'm doing a great work and I can't come down!"

He didn't come down, but Early Sunday morning, he got up!

With all power in his hands!

Jesus Great work was to save my soul by going to Calvary!

No. 725-Youth

It's Time to take care of business

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 25, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2:49

Introduction

When did you finally wake up and decide it was time for you to get serious about life? Most of us have memories of a period in our lives when we were literally "Lost in Space." We moved from one experience to the next with little knowledge of where we were going or what we were doing. It's a strange experience that overwhelms some as they become plunged in the flow of the crowd, moving with the flow, while not knowing from one day to the next where the flow is leading. Our wanderings have varied our perceptions of life and for the most part, our reception of God and humanity. One day, however we woke up to the reality that we must assume our rightful role in the grand scheme of things, even though the current of life continues to flow in a different direction. That is the point that where we say in our own mind, "It is time for me to be about my father's business."

"Taking Care of Business" is a colloquialism that generally means assuming responsibility and doing that which is necessary and right. The young king Joash was only seven years old when he came to the throne, but he learned quickly that it was time for him to take care of business. David was just a lad when he faced Goliath in a face to face contest. Even though he was just a youth, he learned that it was time to take care of business. The bible is literally sprinkled with episodes of individuals who have, at young ages, assumed a serious and mature attitude about life and began to take care of business in a sober and responsible way that both shocked and surprised the adults around them.

In modern times we have read accounts of youth who have assumed adult roles in their families, out of necessity. We have heard of girls who have learned to manage homes and rear their brothers and sisters after a family crisis thrust them into the leadership role in their family. We are familiar with accounts of young boys who have assumed adult roles in their homes upon the sudden sickness or incapacitation of a parent. Each instance prompted a young person to assume an adult role in their

family, much sooner than expected.

While there are extreme circumstances that prompt some youth to begin to take care of business earlier, the vast majority are not catapulted into the forefront so abruptly. Most youth in America get a chance to enjoy a period of childhood and adolescence in which they are not expected to assume the "business" of their fathers and mothers, only to learn the skills and information that will prepare them to do so, when the time comes.

The day that a child fully comprehends the importance of life and their own role in its cycle, is the day of his or her awakening. The day that a child understands the value of studying, doing their best in every endeavor and striving for spiritual perfection, that day marks their personal introduction into the adult world. Paul addressing this point of awakening in his own spiritual development said, in 1 Corinthians 13:11, " When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

As Christians, we have come to know that his business is the business of helping, serving, witnessing and saving. The day we awoke to the joy of salvation was memorable in deed. That was the day we turned our backs on the world and said, "It is time for me to be about my father's business."

Exposition

This text focuses on the life of Christ as a boy approaching adolescence, plunging himself into his life work, which was the salvation of mankind.

Luke paints three pictures of Christ. We see him as Christ the baby, small and fragile, destined to spiritual greatness. We see him as a boy, accepting the challenges of manhood. Finally we see him as an adult, shouldering the responsibility of the world as he carries the cross.

While Jesus was God incarnate among men, he was also flesh and blood. He grew, matured, learned and responded just as most youth his age. Verse 40 notes "and the child grew" indicating that His life expanded like other human lives. He learned as other boys;. He obeyed as other children., as he waited patiently for growth. We don't know the details of Christ's childhood, but certain assumptions can be drawn from the outcome. His boyhood in Nazareth must have been a quiet life, but its sinless purity was so great that it made John the Baptist feel his own unworthiness compared to it (Matt. 3: 14). His demonstrations of maturity and restraint must have been so grand and sweet that even his mother moved with confidence when he spoke at a wedding demanding pots of water that would be turned to wine.

Unlike most women, Mary had the unique privilege of knowing in advance that her son would be great. She knew he would save his people one day. She knew he was the Son of God and enjoyed a special anointing from God while he was still in her womb. She knew he would be great, but she did not know when or how his greatness would be accomplished.

As a boy, Jesus learned many things expected of boys. Joseph was a carpenter, thus he immediately learned to be a carpenter in the Jewish tradition. He learned the scriptures early, committing them to memory as he prepared for his manhood. Yet there were other things that he was learning too, which was not common for poor boys. We know he learned to write for John 8:6 gives us an instance in which he wrote on the ground. There is little doubt that he was able to read both Hebrew and Greek. He was obviously maturing rapidly, concentrating on that which he would need to fulfill his life mission.

The Law required all Jewish men to appear before the Lord God at three major feasts in Jerusalem every year: The Passover, which included the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Feast of Pentecost; and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Luke 2:41).

The Passover Feast, which brought devout Jews, such as Mary and Joseph, to Jerusalem, was in memory of the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian bondage through the blood of the Passover lamb hundreds of years before. But, for Jesus, who at the age of 12 was about to enter manhood, it spoke of His greater sacrifice yet to come - His death on the cross for the sins of the world. This accounts for His special interest in being about the business of His Father in the Temple - sitting in the midst of the doctors (teachers of the Law), both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (2:46-47). In the midst of the doctors indicates that Jesus was sitting in the place of authority, for teachers would sit surrounded by their students and would both ask and answer questions.

In all of the preparation for returning to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph were under the impression that Jesus must be in the company of others traveling in the caravan. Up to this time in His life, being perfect as He was, they had never had any reason to question the absolute obedience, submission, and cooperation of Jesus. They assumed that He was in the company until that evening, when they discovered He was not with them.

When they found Him, Mary's words were: Son, why have You thus dealt with us? Behold, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing (2:48). They implied thoughtlessness on the part of Jesus. However, this was not the reason for His being in the Temple. He was there because He was now ready to be about the business of His true Father. And He said to them, Why is it that you searched for Me? Didn't you know that I must be about My Father's business? (2:49).

Even as a youth Jesus had concluded, that it was time for him to "take care of business."

Taking Care of Business

What is the 'business' of today's youth? In a more simple time, that question could be answered by saying, the business of youth is to learn a trade plus the three "R's" of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. That's all that was needed then. What does

the modern youth need to take care of the business? A youth who takes care of business:

LEARNS SELF DISCIPLINE: Self discipline is the ability to control our time, temper, talents, and temptations. That is difficult for adults. These four "T's" are extremely difficult for youth, but they are necessary to take care of business. Learning to use time wisely is important because there are only so many hours in a day. Each hour must be used to gain as much information and inspiration as possible. Unproductive hours can never be recouped. Tempers that run out of control can be destructive. The youth who learns to control his temper learns to take care business. Talent development requires self discipline. God given talents require constant training to develop. The youth that invests time and energy into developing God given talents, learns to take care of business. Resisting Temptation is essential to growth. Youth face many tempting opportunities but each must be met with an equal amount of resistance that comes from self discipline. To take care of business in modern times, youth need to develop self discipline.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE: A positive attitude means that we see the bright side of things. To take care of business youth should view their growing experience from the bright side. Those who see the dark side take a "the world is against me" attitude. They believe everyone is against them including their family, teachers, and even most of their "homies." The positive attitude is different. This attitude responds to every life situation with the phrase "this is going to work out for my good!" When teachers seem hard, the positive youth says, "this is going to work out for my good!" When parents seem to be unusually rigid with unbending rules, the positive youth says "this is going to work out for my good!" Even when a romance doesn't work out and the world seems to cave in, the response is the same..."this is going to work out for my good!"

Christian youth can have this positive attitude because the word of God promises that, no matter how tough a teacher seems; no matter how bad people talk about you; n o matter how tough your teen-aged life seems to be, if you love God, "it's going to work out for my good!" That's what Paul had in mind in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Those who develop positive attitudes are not discouraged easily. If they are knocked down, they get up and try again, for even the knock down, will work out to their good!

QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE: The youth who learns to take care of business, strives for excellence and is uncomfortable with anything less than his or her best! Whether it is an athletic competition or a small speech in an assembly program the quest for excellence drives the youth that has learned how to take care of business. The youth that has learned how to take care of business never goes on the football field without learning the plays, never goes to class unprepared, never takes on a task that will not be completed, never assumes a responsibility that will not be carried out...and will give each undertaking their best effort! Those who learn how to take care of business are those who develop a distaste for mediocrity and an appreciation

for excellence in every area of endeavor.

My Father's business

Finally, brothers and sisters every youth must understand that for a Christian youth, our business and our father's business are one and the same.

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, he announced to them that it was time for him to be about his father's business.

Today, every youth, lost in the crowd of today's fast paced times must find himself a place in the kingdom of God and announce it is time for me to be about my father's business.

The kingdom of God needs youth who are not afraid to witness about the goodness of God to their generation.

The kingdom needs youth who are willing to give as much time and attention to studying and learning the word of God as they are to learning reading, writing and arithmetic!

The kingdom needs youth who are willing to be about the business of helping the poor, setting the captives free and declaring the acceptable year of our Lord!

The kingdom needs youth who are willing to be about the business of fighting evil, lifting up good and glorifying God!

Every child of God whether they are 13 or 113 needs to be about our father's business.

My father's business is the business of helping those who cannot help themselves!

My father's business is the business of reaching out to those who are in need of a helping hand!

My father's business is the business of reminding those who are:

AFRAID, that the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

WEEPING, that weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!

DEFEATED, that he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

IN NEED, that the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!

FACING DEATH, that yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil!

My father's business is the business of telling a world that is in darkness that Jesus is the light!

My father's business is to let my light shine so that men might see my good works and glorify the father which is in heaven. No wonder the song writer declares, "This little light of mine. I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!"

My father's business is to tell the world about Jesus, the son of God and the Bright and Morning star!

Tell the world how he came here for 33 long years and died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, completing his father's business with all power in his hands!

No. 726-Anniv.-Choir

They Are Singing My Song!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 1, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Isaiah 12:2

Introduction

Do you have a favorite song? There are literally millions of songs that have been written over the years. We have heard thousands over time. However, there are one or two that are special to each of us. In fact, they become so special that we label them as "my song." If we hear it on the radio, in a concert or in a church service, a smile comes to our face as we think to ourselves or mumble aloud, "that is my song!"

A song is a thought or feeling, set to music, that expresses a belief, mood, or feeling. There are different types of songs. Those who like to drink in rowdy groups have a drinking song. School athletic teams have fight songs. People who are making their final appearance are said to sing their "swan song." Movies have theme songs. Some who work in large groups have "work songs." Romantics have love songs. Different cultures express their uniqueness with folk songs. Those who want to express their love for their country sing "patriotic songs." Those who focus on spirituality sing "Godly songs!"

It is possible to have a favorite song but not have the voice to sing it! That's the beauty of having a favorite song. We don't have to be able to sing it ourselves, but simply hearing it stirs us to action, changes our mood or strengthens our belief. As Americans, for example, the words of the National Anthem stir most of us, but few of us can sing it as it is actually written. "My song" is the song that expresses, my mood, my belief and my feeling. I do not have to sing "my song" myself.

Those who do have a voice to sing are at their best, when the song they sing, is "their song." That is when the words have meaning to them because they express a personal experience or feeling. Consider Singing Sally who often stirred the church with her moving voice. She moved the whole congregation when she began to sing her signature song, "Yield not to temptation.." For a spell Sally disappeared from the choir. In fact, no one in town saw her for over a year. Then one Sunday Sally came to church holding a little baby, a little over a year old. She sat in the pews and dropped her eyes whenever anyone looked at her. For five years Sally sat in the pew. She

refused every attempt to get her to sing in the choir again. One day a deacon approached her and asked her the reason she did not sing anymore. She explained that five years earlier the 'devil stole my song." On his way out the door the deacon left Sally a note to read after he left. The note said "but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." The next Sunday Sally sat in the choir stand. As she rose, she looked at the old deacon, smiled and began to sing "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me. One day when I was lost he died upon the cross. I know it was the blood that saved me." Sally shook the church that day. That was the Sunday she realized that God had given her a new song!

Those who know the Lord have a new song to sing. It's a song that the angels cannot sing: "I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb. I've been redeemed."

As Christians we sing a new song today. It is a different song than the one we sang before we came to know the Lord. Our new song expresses our new mood. Our new song expresses our new belief. Our new song expresses our new feeling. Our new song expresses our new direction in life. It comes from Jesus, the devil didn't give it, and the devil can't take it away!

Exposition

This text focuses upon the prophet Isaiah's prophecy that Israel would sing a song of victory once it received the promises of God.

The nation of Israel was split into two parts. Its Northern Kingdom consisted of ten tribes and was called Israel. Its Southern Kingdom was called Judah which consisted of two tribes. A succession of kings sat on the thrones of Israel and Judah but none could unite the nation, few tried, even fewer wanted it to happen. Isaiah often prophesied about the day when the nation would finally be reunited to enjoy its glory. After telling of the eventual fall of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in Chapter 10, he begins to look to the day that the nation would be reunited under someone who would come like a rod out of the root of Jesse. He spoke of their day of reunion and victory.

When that day comes, he said the nation would once again sing a special song that had become 'their song" of victory.

The song that is referred to in Isaiah 12 is called "my song." It is the same song that was sung by all of Israel when they enjoyed the victory fellowship on their march out of Egypt. In Exodus 15:2 there is reference to this song. After 400 years of slavery and racial discrimination they marched out of Egypt singing the Lord's song, which became 'my song.' That song was sung around campfires and hummed by women as they kneaded the bread for evening suppers. That was the song that was sung by singers and historians as they told the story of their deliverance. As each person sang the words of the song, it expressed their faith and confidence in God. It became "their song."

Israel was divided and easily conquered by world powers. During their period of exile, their mood was gloomy. They felt defeated and deserted. They felt they had no hope. They hung their harps on the willow trees and refused to sing. Their captors, who were familiar with the great songs associated with this once joyous people, would ask them to "sing us one of the songs of Zion." They responded in Psalm 137:4 "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

However, the people were reunited again and they were about to sing the Lord's song again. Psalm 118:14 is the song they sang as "my song." It is the song that speaks of the strength of the Lord and his power to overcome evil. When they returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls, they sang a new song. It was a song of victory. The words were extracted from David's own personal testimony of victory and restoration in the Lord after being surrounded by both enemies and detractors. Even for David, the fact that the Lord was his strength was his song.

As Isaiah expressed it in Isaiah 12, "my song" is a song of trust (v2). It is a song that expresses how believers trust in God and will never doubt his purpose and power.

'My song" is a song of courage in the face of fearful situations. It attests to the believers ability to enter into fearful situations with the full confidence that God is in control. This confidence is the basis of the believer's song.

"My song' is a song of strength in the face of weakness. It expresses the believers knowledge of the source of his power and ability, not coming from himself but from God.

"My song" is a song of salvation in the face of sinfulness. It expresses the believers joy over being saved from sin. His song is one that shows how he has been given one more chance.

Thus, at verse 5 Isaiah tells Israel and all believers, "Sing unto the Lord for he hath done excellent things..."

My song is a song that express my belief, faith and confidence in God. My song expresses my mood of joy. My song expresses my hope of restoration through the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life!

My song should say something!

Today there are many people who enjoy songs. However there is a growing number of people who appreciate songs for how they sound rather than what they say. In fact, many popular songs don't say anything, they simply sound good. We are attracted to the heavy beat and the sound of the music rather than the power of the words.

Most of the songs of the psalms of David's time were written to a five note scale. They were simple. The attraction was not in the beauty of the music but in the power of the words. Therefore those who sing should remember that:

SONGS OF THE LORD ALWAYS HAVE WORDS: In the secular community music is appreciated for its sound and technique. In the community of believers sound and technique are important but fall second place to the words. Even

instrumental solos in the religious community are songs that have words for the people to visualize in their mind as the musician plays alone. The most important part of any song is the words. While some claim that they don't pay attention to words, most songs would be meaningless without the words. They are essential because the words tell the story. The words express the feeling. The words state the case.

Choirs that sing should make sure that the words of their songs are clear and understandable. Even before they are sung to an audience, choir members themselves should know the meaning of the words they sing. Metaphors, similes, allegories and other symbolic language often used in religious songs should be explained to every choir member. Words that are extracted from scripture should be especially understood by going to the scripture and reading the actual words. Some of the best choir members are great bible students because they understand the meaning of the words and language of their songs. Choir directors have the challenge of both directing their choirs and teaching the Word of God at the same time.

There are some choir rehearsals in which there is very little singing at all, as choir members listen to spirit filled directors, sometimes called ministers of music, pull out the meaning of the songs to make it real to them. Anyone can stand in front of a well-trained choir and wave their arms. However, it's the ministry of witness, words and wisdom that precede that moment that makes the song live in the lives of those and sing and hear "my song."

YOUR SONG SHOULD REFLECT YOUR FEELING: Your song should reflect your feeling, attitude and mood. An audience, whether it's one person or one thousand has the advantage of both watching and hearing a singer or a group. The feeling or mood of a song should be reflected in the expressions of a singer. In fact, those who hear good songs are moved most by people who can both sing "my song" and sing it like they mean it! The choir that sings the words, 'This joy I have, the world didn't give in and the world can't take away!" misses the point if their collective facial expression looks as if they just left a funeral. The song expressed a feeling of joy, but the singers didn't. If God has blessed us, then we should let the world know it through our expression.

YOUR SONG SHOULD REFLECT YOUR LIFE: A person who sings "my song" has the greatest impact on others if their song reflects their life. A person who loses hope, quits attending worship, and strays away from the Christian walk during periods of trial, can't sing 'Have you been tried in the fire?" It is not their song, even though they have the voice to sing it. The choir member that rarely gives to support the church and stingily supports choir based finance efforts has a hard time singing "The more you give, the more he gives to you, just keep on giving because it's really true, you can't be God giving, no matter how you try!" Every choir member should strive to live the life they sing about in their songs.

Your song is your witness

Finally, bothers and sisters, every believer should remember that our song is our witness. It is our testimony about the goodness of God.

Those who have a story to tell should have a song to tell their story. If the Lord has done something for us, we should be willing to testify. No wonder David said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord, say so!"

Singers should remember that when they stand to sing, they stand to testify about the goodness of God. Whenever the choir sings a song about goodness, they are singing somebody's song.

The person who is struggling to make sense of a life situation, in the face of misunderstanding friends, is encouraged when he hears the words, "He'll understand and say well done!" That believer says in his heart, they are singing, "My song!"

You're singing "my song" if I'm trying to find my way through the night and you sing "Precious Lord take my hand, lend me on, let me stand!"

You are singing "my song" when I look at the calendar and see more years behind me than I do in front of me and you sing, "I have heard of a land on a far away strand, tis the beautiful home of the soul. Built by Jesus on high, there we never shall die, tis a land where we'll never grow old!"

You're singing 'my song" when the hurricane force gales of life toss me from one side to another and you begin to sing, 'When the storms of life are raging, stand by me!"

You're singing "my song" when you say, "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!'

You're singing "my song" when you remind me that I may be at the end of my rope but I should "Hold on a little while longer, everything will be alright!"

You're singing "my song" when you testify that, "My soul is anchored in the Lord!"

You're singing "my song" when you testify that, "He's an on time God yes he is!"

You're singing "my song" when you try to do the best you can and your friends don't understand and you sing, "May the work I've done speak for me."

You're really singing my song, when start singing "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know. Fills my every longing and keeps me singing as I go!"

You're really singing my song, when you remind me about, "Calvary, Calvary, surely he died on Calvary!

On Calvary he died, but Early Sunday morning he arose and gave me a new song "He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and talks with along life's narrow way. He lives. He lives! Salvation to impart..

Ask me how I know He lives!

He lives within my heart!

No. 729-Inspiration

One Window

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above." —Genesis 6:16

Introduction

Have you ever been surrounded by troubles and searched for that one window of opportunity? Life provides us with numerous opportunities to advance, achieve, overcome, profit and excell. The opportunities usually come when we least expect them and in ways that we would never suspect. The trick is to stay alert and on guard to seize the moment when it comes. Such moments are call windows of opportunity. They are the precise moments in time when an opportunity presents itself perhaps rarely to appear again.. The chance to get a job promotion comes rarely! The chance to get a business opportunity comes rarely! The opportunity to climb the ladder of life presents itself ever so often. These small windows present the most opportune time for persons to move up and improve themselves. Sometimes the window is a way out of a problem. Sometimes it is a way into a better life. The idea behind life is to prepare for the day that our window of opportunity opens and then boldly seize the day!

Windows of opportunity often present themselves in ways we least expect. Consider the eccentric old man who had placed a sign in his window that read, "Opportunity Available, apply in side!" A young man applied and was given the job description. He was to collect all of the trash cans in the building, take them to the cellar and sort the contents piece by piece into similar types. Then he was to bag all of the trash in plastic bags and take them to the dumpster. The young man agreed. At the end of the day the young man reported that he could not complete the task because it was cold in the cellar. He was paid for the day but told not to return. The sign was again placed in the window and a young lady applied. She was given the same assignment. In the cellar with no one observing her, she quickly emptied all of the trash cans into the plastic bags without sorting them and placed them in the dumpster. At the end of the day she reported that despite the cold and darkness of the cellar she had completed the task. She was paid but told notto return. Again the sign was placed in the window. Another young man applied and was given the same task. The young man carefully went through each trash can and sorted each paper

item, bagged them properly and returned at the end of the day. The old man asked, "Did you finish your assignment?" As he had asked the others he added, "Did you find anything unusual during your day?" The young man answered, "Yes sir, when I sorted the bottom of the last can I found this $100 bill which I figured someone must have lost!" The old man smiled and said, "I have no child to which to leave my company. I placed a sign in my window looking for an honest hardworking person young person that I could mentor and leave my fortune. The person who found the $100 bill would show me energy. The person who reported it, would get the chance to own this business one day!" That young man found his opportunity in a trash basket, that others passed by.

Opportunities for blessings come in disguises. Sometimes an opportunity for success comes disguised as a doomed project. Sometimes failures present opportunities to try again and claim victory. Sometimes losses present opportunities to gain.

As Christian, we have learned that every life event is an opportunity for God to act if we will simply allow him to act in his own way. No matter how dark the situation, there is a window of hope. That window allows us to see our way, and for the Light of God's love to shine in!

Exposition

This text focuses on the Ark of Noah and the way God provided for its ventilation and light.

The history of Noah's Ark is steeped in the ungodliness of men. While the first five chapters of Genesis tell of the wonder of God's creation, they also tell about the sinfulness of man. That sinfulness disturbed God so much that he regretted his decision to create man. God warned Noah of His intentions to destroy the earth because of the wickedness of humanity. Noah was commanded to build an ark to God's specifications to save his family and representatives of all animals from the flood (Gen. 6:18-19).

Because the Ark would save Noah and his family from destruction, it has become a symbol of faith on the part of Noah and a symbol of grace on the part of God (Gen. 6:8,22).

According to Holman, the shape of the ark was unusual. Although the Bible does not give enough detail to enable a full model to be made, the ark was apparently not shaped like a boat, either ancient or modern. The shape more closely approximates a giant block. The length was 300 cubits (about 450 feet), the width was 50 cubits (about 75 feet), and the height was 30 cubits (about 45 feet), overall dimensions that resemble the dimensions of a giant house (Gen. 6:15). The ark had three floors filled with rooms (Gen. 6:14,16).

Some have estimated that the Ark was bigger than most steamships with a storage capacity so large that it could have easily stored 600 freight cars on board filled with a combined tonnage of 90 million pounds.

The ark was built of Gopher wood (Gen. 6:14) which may have been a variety of Cypress.

Despite its great size the Ark only had and one window and one door (Gen. 6:16).

That fact has marveled those who have studied the Ark for centuries. A three story luxury liner sized boat with only one door that had to be sealed and opened from the outside and one 25 inch window seemed impossible. They questioned how so many animals could survive for so long without light or air. Although the text only refers to "one window" some scholars seem to think that this would be an impossibility, sense air and light would be needed to sustain life on board a giant boat for one year and 17 days. They suggest that there was probably one window on each floor. Even if they were correct, three 25 inch windows for a boat that size would still be a miracle.

They survived the darkness, with only one window!

They survived the stench of life, with only one window!

They overcame every imaginable reason why they should fail, inspired by the light of only one window!

The window was so small that the only thing that Noah could see when he looked out was the waters God saved him from and heaven from which would ultimately come his help and salvation.

Since there was no large body of water nearby on which Noah could have floated such a large boat, its very construction attested to Noah's unwavering faith in God. When he constructed the Ark there was no obvious or visible need for such a vessel. To have built such a vessel at that place, and at that time was clearly an act of tremendous faith in the message of God that the vessel would be needed (Gen. 6:17-19). Noah dared to believe that he had properly understood God and that God could be depended upon (Gen. 6:22).

The fact thatthe ark only had one small window underscores Noah's faith, enough to lock himself within and trust God for light, air and deliverance.

Lives In God's Hands

Today, believers around the world should take heart when the read the account of Noah's Ark in the bible. It refers to how God saved a family in biblical times and in a greater sense it shows how God works with believers today, faced with the difficulties of troubling times.

The ark showed God saving believers from a world that would self destruct. It showed God providing miraculous ways for those believers to survive, multiply and prosper because of their faith.

Since the Ark is a type of believer, believing families, and believing congregations, believer should look closely at what the ark did NOT have as a source of inspiration for the present moment.

THE ARK HAD NO RUDDER: The rudder of a boat determines its direction. A skillful captain can use a boat's rudder and change its direction. Noah's Ark had no

rudder. Like Noah had no control of the direction of the Ark, each believer puts the direction of his life completely in God's hands. While preparing himself for whatever direction God carries him, the believer chooses to direct himself or to pursue his own will. His testimony is, "Thy will oh Lord, Not Mine." When the troubling waters covered the face of the earth, God's hand guided the ark and took it eventually to safe ground. Every believer has the same assurance, God will guide. This adds greater meaning to the old hymn, "Guide me oh thy Great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land." Our quest is to let God lead us and guide us every day in the words of the song writer, "Lead me. Guide me. Along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee. Lead me oh Lord, lead me!"

THE ARK HAD NO SAILS: The sails of a boat helped to move it from one place to another. Boats that do not have sails have a source of propulsion whether it's a motor, special oars or just a single paddle. The ark did not have sails or oars. There was no out deck to operate them and no portals for oars. The ark moved whenever God wanted it to move.

Every believer's life is the same when it is in God's hand. There are millions of believers who have more than adequate education, training and experience in many walks of life who refuse to move in any task or undertaking without receiving the life giving instruction and direction from God. They know that no matter how hard they row, the boat will not move until God literally pushes it along with his finger.

Our life efforts are futile unless God blesses our actions. Nothing we attempt will be able to succeed unless God gives his blessings. In God's hands, we wait for his command.

THE ARK HAD NO LIFE BOATS: Any boat the size of the Ark would certainly carry life boats. Life boats assume that there may be an accident, causing the ship to sink. Maritime laws require such boats to have enough life boats to provide a safe escape for everyone on board. The Ark had no life boats. There was no expectancy that it would sink. It was God's boat. The Great Titanic had the reputation of being a ship that even God himself could not sink. Noah's Ark was just the opposite. It was a boat that could sink, but God himself would not allow it to sink!

Believers don't need faith life boats. A faith life boat is a "just in case" faith. A "just in case" faith takes some faith actions but holds back on others "just in case." When Noah built the ark he left no room for doubts. He placed his faith in God. Hebrews 11:7 says, "by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house..." He put his whole life in God's hand. That's what the song writer had in mind with the words, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back. No turning back!"

T**HE ARK HAD ONLY ONE WAY OUT:** The ark only had one door. It was the only way out. The door to the ark was on its side. It could not be opened from the inside because it was sealed from the outside by God himself. Genesis 7:16 says, "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in." Considering the weight it carried the door was probably covered by water at all times. There was no way out. The door could not be opened

unless God opened it. There was no way out unless God made a way!

Every believer should consider his own circumstance and remember that the way out of any situation is in God's hand. Even when Noah looked out and saw the ground he didn't leave until God unlocked the door and commanded him to leave. God makes a way for all of his people. He stands at the door announcing, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh to the father except by me!"

Only One Window

Finally, while we've looked at what the Ark did not have, we must also look at what it DID have..one window! It was only 25 inches high, but that was more than enough for God!

If the window of the ark had been larger, Noah would have spent all of his time looking out instead of letting God's light shine in!

If the window had been larger, one of his family members might have been tempted to crawl out instead of waiting for God to open the door!

That little window at the top of the ark, kept the believers on board looking up!

No wonder David declared, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven's and the earth!" Psalm 121.

Somebody here feels a bit overcome by the rising tides of trouble in your life!

Somebody here is overwhelmed at the flood of troubles that seems to be destroying life!

Somebody here is inundated by the unending torrents of trouble that rains all around them!

No matter how difficult the times there is safety in the Lord and there is a window of opportunity!

In the darkness and gloom of the ark, there was one window of hope!

In the loneliness and depravation of the ark, there was just one window of comfort!

In the frustration and anxiousness of the ark, there was just one window of assurance!

When you look up to the window of hope you are reminded that God knows your limits!

There will never be a:

HILL that is steeper than you can climb!

BURDEN that is heavier than you can bear!

ENEMY to difficult for you to withstand!

PROBLEM that is greater than a strong faith can solve!

RACE that is longer than you can run!

NIGHT that is darker than you can endure!

No matter how dark the days might become there is always a light in heaven. No wonder the song writer said, "Beams of heaven as I go. Through this wilderness

below. Guide my feet in peaceful ways. Turn my midnights into days. When in the darkness I would grope. Faith always see a star of hope. And soon from all life's grief's and danger. I shall get home someday!"

There is window through which I can look up to heaven!

There is a window through which God looks down on me!

This is the same window through which God pours out showers of blessing!

This is the same window through which God hears and answers prayers!

This window of hope was created on a little hill called Golgotha!

This window was designed in the pain and agony of Calvary!

This window was opened through the death of Jesus, who died for me and you!

The world tried to close this window, by pulling the curtain of the crucifixion to hide it!

But early Sunday morning, Jesus arose from the grave, pulled back the curtains of eternity and opened a window of hope!

Open up the windows of heaven Lord and shower down a blessing on me!

Send the praises up! Open up the window and...

Watch the blessings come down!

No. 730-Youth

Half on a Baby

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 22, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof." 1 Kings 3:25-27

Introduction

Have you ever felt as if you were been pulled in more directions that one? These are the times when it appears that every opportunity or influence in the world is presenting itself to you at the same time. Imagine being a youth, facing a multitude of life choices and situations at the same time. It could be extremely frustrating. The family, Sunday School teacher and school offer one direction and the peer group offers another, often conflicting choice. The rapid increase in the number of choices available to the young also increases their frustration to the point that they often feel like they are being torn apart.

For teens, one of the most difficult choices involves sexual responsibility. Everything that is good inside them suggests that the right thing to do is to listen to God's word and abstain from sexual involvements until they are married. At the very least, they are urged to plan for safe sex. While everything inside of them says "abstain," all of the influences around them say "indulge."

Such is the case with the popular tune by R.Kelly that appeals to many youth entitled, "Half on a baby!" Kelly appears in the recording's video outfitted in semi-sheer drawls and flowing robe as he dances through his large and spacious home with the fire place burning calling out to a woman saying he has "half on a baby." The adult mind sees the video and dismisses it as "cute." The young mind is instantly plunged into a world of fantasy. Body temperatures begin to rise and the tug of war between right and wrong begins.

There is a war being waged over our youth. Their families, churches and teachers are trying to shelter them, teach them and prepare them while other influences are trying to entice, seduce and market them for a profit. Caught in the middle are millions of innocent youth who are mere pawns in a deadly game of profiteering. The signals are confusing. The conflicting images of superstars such as R.Kelly make it even more confusing. What many don't understand is that in the battle for profits and big

money, there is no right and wrong only what sells and what does not sell. Thus the same singer that inspires them to reach high in, "I believe I can fly" and offers a shoulder of hope with Kirk Franklin and Mary J. Blige in, "Lean on me" also encourages them to put "half on a baby." It's not that the singer even believes the ideas, but that the ideas sell and make money. Youth struggling to do the right thing are divided down the middle as the line that separates right and wrong loses its distinction in the mad war for profits where youth are the primary marketing target.

As Christians, we know the world is pulling at the heart strings of all that is good. We count on the Lord to lead us and strengthen us as we strive to do the right thing. We put our trust in the Lord, who demonstrated in no uncertain terms that he was willing to go more than just half on our salvation, but to pay it in full!

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he discerns a real mother from an imposter.

The immediate importance of this text is reflected in its history. Solomon had become king of Israel ahead of his brother. There were many who accused him of being young and inexperienced, having risen to the throne only because he was the favorite son of King David who named and installed him as king before his death. The text focuses on one of many decisions Solomon made as king that was dramatic enough to demonstrate that he was truly wise enough to serve as king.

Two women both had infant children the same age and lived in the same quarters. During the night, one of the women rolled over atop of her child and killed it. In the night the mother of the dead child switched babies with the other. The switch discovered, the two women disputed each other's claim to the live baby. Their case came before Solomon, acting in his capacity as judge. He heard the claims of both women. Obviously one of the women was lying. The guilty mother faced certain death if she admitted to her part in the lie, so she continued her claim. Solomon decided to resolve the dispute by cutting the baby in half, giving one half to each. The guilty woman said that was a fair action. It was a matter of survival. At least she would not be slain or convicted in the process. The real mother did not consider herself at all, but instantly threw herself before the king pleading for the life of the child.

Her action immediately identified her as the real mother. Solomon gave her the whole baby uncut.

The action established Solomon's wisdom in the mind and hearts of the people as it was repeated to their hearing.

The guilty woman had made a mistake. However, to cover her mistake and the error of her ways she was willing to destroy the life of an innocent child to insure her own survival. She took no thought of the life she would terminate, only her own safety and well being. To guarantee that safety, she was willing to go half on a baby, especially since the baby involved was not her own and meant nothing to her. The baby was simply a means to achieve an end. The baby was a ticket to freedom. If cutting the baby in half could accomplish what she needed then she was satisfied.

The real mother on the other hand had the concern of her child at heart. She would prefer to have a whole baby alive than half of a baby dead. She would prefer to see her baby alive and well in someone else's care than to have only half a baby. That was the level of emotional commitment that Solomon hoped his act would elicit: an out pouring of sympathy and love that would be unparalleled. When the appropriate time came, real love would be displayed, even at the expense of the mother's life.

The guilty mother's disinterest in the welfare of the child represents the way the world receives every person: a means to achieve an end. Generally, Satan enters a life, uses it and tears it apart. It does not matter to him whether a life is lost or ruined, only that his purpose is achieved. Much like the possessed man who ran naked through the grave yard was not considered beyond how he could be used, so Satan destroys every life in which he can get a grip.

The real mother demonstrates God's love for his people. Not selfish in its intent, God's love moves men to raise themselves to higher levels of respect for life and being of others. In no way would God's love seek only half of a being. He seeks to preserve every part of his creation as a complete and whole being.

Sin cut mankind in half. When Jesus went to Calvary, he reconciled man unto to God and made him whole again!

Torn Apart

What contributes to the development of a whole person?

Each person is a complex mixture of physical and the metaphysical; the seen and the unseen. A fully developed and well rounded person is one who has developed physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Usually physical development comes first. It is natural and requires little help and assistance from anyone.

MENTALLY TORN APART: Mental development is shaped by experiences and training. Each experience whether actual or through artificial stimuli, contributes to the development of mentality. Youth who observe, a large number of murders whether in person or on television, develop an insensitivity to murder. At the least, they see a murder as sensational, at the most, it becomes a raw deal. The same is true of sexual experiences. By means of television and other stimuli youth witness scores of sex acts each week. At the least, they become fascinated with the act. At the most, they are tempted to try it themselves. The massive dose of mental stimulation is not mentally healthy for youth and contributes to an increase in violence and pre-marital sex among teens. The negative stimuli that youth receive is not confined to these two examples alone. There are hundreds of others.

Youth continue to see negative images of themselves. Schools continue to relate to them in ways that are non-productive and their educational performance declines. The sense of racial identity and self worth has been shattered as less emphasis is placed upon the importance of culture.

EMOTIONALLY TORN APART: Emotionally youth are being torn apart. They are often exposed to extremely stressful life situations that are contributing to a

growing depression in their generation. Increasingly dysfunctional families are making it hard for youth to cope as they learn to live without a father or mother after a divorce. In the "my week-your week" rotations of custodies, the emotional stability of youth is often shattered. The range of emotions caused by dysfunctional family life ranges from feelings of abandonment, frustration, worthlessness to fear and anxiety.

At alarming rates Black teens are committing suicide. There was a time when Blacks associated suicide with whites, but no longer.

A recent Center for Disease Control and Prevention study on teen suicide says African-American teens are increasingly not able to cope with the "stressful" family environments. The study shows the suicide rate of African-Americans between the ages of 10 and 19 has increased by 114% since 1980. In southern states, the rate has grown by 214%.

Given the collapse of urban family and educational institutions, should we be surprised at the spiritual emptiness which causes our young people to make often fatal choices? Whether they passively drift into the gang-war lifestyle or defiantly turn deadly weapons on themselves, the result is the same: A lack of self-esteem turning into self-hatred turning into self-destruction.

Unless a commitment is made to strengthening the basic family unit, reforming our urban schools and re-energizing the spirituality of our communities, these awful numbers will only increase."

SPIRITUALLY TORN APART: Many youth are growing up in homes that are spiritually empty. Mothers and fathers have no religious life. Children know a church when they see one, but are distant from its teachings, ideals and standards because they rarely attend. Sunday School, worship and church activity for many children is becoming a passing fad rather than a standard practice. To an increasing number of youth, God is not real. Like the man behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz, they accept God as a fantasy creation of adults on the same line as the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. There is a growing absence of Bible instruction for youth in Black families. Memorization of scripture, even the Lord's prayer and the 23rd Psalm, once required learning in every Black family are becoming extinct. The absence of God and the godly lifestyle in the lives of youth contributes to a feeling of despair, especially when they have questions that seem to have no answers, problems that have no solutions, and feel lost without direction.

A Whole Person

Finally, we must consider that while the world is concerned about youth in part, God is concerned about the whole person.

God is concerned about the whole person and seeks to share his love, healing and saving power to make every person completely whole.

When Jesus saw the man sitting by the pool for 38 years he asked him in John 5:6, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The woman with an issue of blood came before Jesus physically torn, but he said "Thy faith has made thee whole" Luke 8:48

Paul writing to the Thessalonians, said his prayer for believers is that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved until the return of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

No one should be satisfied with half of anything.

Young people listening to the provocative overtures of the world should keep in mind the whole picture before they settle for half.

Young men who proudly quote the gospel according to R. Kelly and claim they have "half on a baby" should consider whether they also have half on 18 to 21 years of child support.

One night's thrill is only half the picture. Even if he has half on a baby does he have half on the medical treatments and eventual funeral bill that results from sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS?

He may have half on a baby, but does he also have half on the cost of pampers, baby sitters, school clothes, school fees, food, clothing and shelter of the baby?

He may have half on a baby, but does he also half on the health insurance costs, college tuition, music lessons, cheer leader uniforms, braces, after school tutoring, car insurance of the baby who grows up? Does he have half the cost of that teen-aged baby's Air Jordan Tennis or Tommy Hilfiger Shirts?

Does he have both halfs of an education? Both halves of a job?

Every believing youth must keep the whole picture in mind. And as the whole picture comes into focus, every youth must remember that God is concerned about them completely and wholly.

When we sing "Yes Jesus loves me" he doesn't love me because he's trying to get something from me, he already owns me because we have been bought with a price!

Jesus loves you for who you are and what you are!

Jesus loves you despite what others say or think about you!

Jesus loved us so much that he came to this weary world to make a payment for our salvation

It wasn't half on a soul, but he paid it all!

It wasn't half on salvation, but he paid it all!

It wasn't half on a chance to everlasting life, but he paid it all!

When he died out on Calvary, it wasn't half, but it was all!

When it he arose on Sunday morning, he had paid it all!

No wonder the song writer declared: "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

No. 731-Inspiration

Ending The Silent Treatment

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." Psalm 28:1 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" Hebrews 1:1-3

Introduction

Have you ever received the silent treatment? One of the most frustrating feelings in the world is to be the recipient of the "silent treatment." It is an often used as a tactic in cold war. Whether it is between two people, two organizations or two nations, the silent treatment can inflict excruciating pain and discomfort without a word being said. In fact, it is the absence of words that prompts the frustration. When nations disagree, they often decide to break off relations. They won't talk anymore; ambassadors are pulled from one nation and all relations are cut off. When disputing parties in a negotiation get angry they stop talking and something disastrous usually happens. In families, a husband and a wife get angry with each other and do the same thing. Add in a child that gives his parents the cold shoulder and the formula for frustration is very clear. The silent treatment can hurt.

Sometimes the silent treatment can be worse than an argument. In an argument, at least the emotion is vented, the steam is let out and the anger is given a chance to dissipate. But in the silent treatment there is no release of steam, it just builds. Consider the cheating husband who made a habit of stopping by his girl friend's house every day before he came home. One day he stayed longer than his usual pit stop and was very late coming home. His wife had cooked an especially delicious meal. There were candles. Romantic music. After several hours had passed and her husband had not come home the wife was tremendously angry. When he walked in the door he had his story together, but she never said a word. If she said anything to him he would lay out his well prepared alibi, but she only looked at him. There was venom in her eyes. Steam seemed to come from her head as he looked at the withered candles. He rehearsed his speech so well, anticipating her rants and rages, that he was completely off guard by her silence. So he yelled "Honey, don't you look at me

in that tone of voice!" -He would have been happy if she had said anything!

Sometimes the lines of communication are even humourous. The husband says to his son "Ask your mother what is wrong." The son turns to his mother and asks, "Dad says what is wrong?" The mother answers, "Tell your father nothing is wrong, I'm not speaking to him!"

Usually the silent treatment results from someone breaching a trust or not meeting an expectation, whether real or imagined. It is the first phase of an emotional cold war. The silence does not indicate peace, but absence of peace. It does not indicate that a problem has been solved, only that a confrontation has temporarily been avoided.

What if God gives the world the silent treatment? Suppose the world became so bad that God became so angry that he simply did nothing for a while. What would be our fate if God became angry at our excuses, complaints and stubborness and decided to give us the silent treatment?

As Christians we want to talk to God and we want to always let God speak to us. We can't give God the silent treatment, and we certainly can ill afford to have him ignore us. We need him every day and hour.

Exposition

This text finds David expressing his hope that God would not give him the silent treatment.

His cry to God was simple, do not be silent! Speak to me! Send me a word! If not he feared that he would become as a dead man, unable to respond, move or take control of his life.

When David killed Uriah, committed adultery with Bathsheba, and tried to lie to the people and to God, he received the silent treatment from God. His kingdom was threatened. He contracted a venereal disease and he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit!"

In Jeremiah 8:14 the sins of Israel brought down the wrath of God. Jeremiah told the people "let us enter into the defenced cities and let us be silent there: for the Lord our God hath put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord." The nation received the silent treatment and they were eventually taken away into captivity.

Over the centuries God has spoken to his people in many ways. In the beginning he spoke directly to leaders such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He gave them instructions and they were relayed to the people. In other times he spoke to Prophets and Kings with divine direction. Neither would rarely move until they had heard a word from the Lord.

That's why the writer of Hebrews writes, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.." (1:1) God always spoke to the people in one way or another. That's why many were confused at 400 years of silence that ensued from the writing of the Book of Malachi in about 450 B.C. to

the events of the Book of Matthew in about 3 B.C.

There were 400 years of silence in which the people essentially heard nothing from God. There were no prophets. There was no spoken word. There was no written word. They were silent years.

During this time they had three phases of existence. The Greeks led by Alexander the Great dominated them for over 100 years. The sacred scriptures were re-written in the Greek language and their temples were turned into places of worship of the Greek Gods. Their priests were forced at the threat of their lives to offer sacrifices to Zeus, the Greek God. There was a silence in heaven.

The second phase occurred Judas Maccabeus led a revolt and freed the land from the Greeks. The Jews ruled their own land for a while; ut there was still no word from the Lord.

The third phase occurred 63 years before Christ was born when the Romans took control levied and taxes but allowed them to continue observing their religious practices.

During all of this time they desperately sought a word from the Lord. They searched the scriptures for signs to explain God's silence.

Then suddenly the silence broke and a voice from God was heard crying in the wilderness saying, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

The silence had ended. Someone was coming that would tear down the wall of silence between almighty God and sinful man. In the last days, says the writer of the Hebrews, that person came.. That person would be none other than the Son of God himself, the mediator who had the job of bringing God and mankind back together again!

Dealing With The Silence

Today there are millions of people who are struggling as they attempt to deal with the silence. Dealing with the silence requires certain understandings:

THE SILENCE INDICATES SOMEONE HAS BEEN OFFENDED: Whether unintentionally or by design, silent treatments are usually the result of an offense by one party or another. Whether by accident, misunderstanding, or intent, the reason behind the use of the "silent treatment" is rooted in hurt feelings. We offend God often. Each time that we disobey his commandments, ignore his directives or otherwise disrespect him, we push closer to getting the silent treatment.

Amos warned the people about unjust business practices and personal deception. Malachi warned them about robbing God. They continued and for 400 years, Israel received the silent treatment.

Can we afford to offend God? Can we afford for God to give us the silent treatment in response?

When we call upon him, wouldn't it be tragic if he would not answer? If we need him wouldn't it be sad if he did not respond?

If we sense that our actions have caused God to give us the silent treatment then

we must realize that someone has been offended. Obviously, God cannot do any wrong. Then, we must have offended him. If we have offended him, we must take the next step.

SILENCE CAN LEAD TO LOST BLESSINGS: A home in which there is a silent war being conducted is not in the mode to receive blessings. Partners involved in cold war both take their sights off God and in the meantime lose out on the opportunity for great blessings while they feud. Richard Armstrong in his book "Make Your Life Worthwhile" told the story of a man in Wales England who tried to win the affections of a certain lady for 42 years before she finally said "Yes" and the became husband and wife at age 74. It appeared that 42 years earlier he had said something to offend her and she gave him the silent treatment. He never spoke to her and she never spoke to him. The man was rather shy so every week for 42 years he went to her home and slipped a love letter under her door. She continuously refused even though the man wrote beautiful letters. After writing 2,184 love letters without ever saying a single word, the man finally got enough courage to knock on her door and say "I'm sorry." There were married a short while later. It was a silent treatment that lasted 42 years.

THE OFFENDING PARTY MUST START TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT: Whomever it is that receives the silent treatment should do what is necessary to make things right. Unfortunately human beings are stubborn creatures. Once the talking has stopped it almost takes an act of Congress to bring silent partners back to the table of mutual concern. Someone has to start making things right. During Israel's 400 years of silence there were a few, Judas Maccabee and some priests that took actions to make things right with God. They took back their temples, threw out idol Gods and restored their worship. It was a small step but it was a step.

Breaking the Silence

Finally, we must consider that anytime there is a break down in the peace talks, a negotiator, arbitrator or mediator usually comes into the picture.

The mediator's job is reconciliation. His job is to get the two sides back to talking again. His job is to bring two divergent parties that are enduring the silent treatment born in the bowels of sin, back together again.

When the leader's of Iran and the United States gave each other the silent treatment over the Iranian hostages, neither the President or the Iranian leader would pick up the phone and talk to each other. The Reverend Jesse Jackson went in person and became the mediator that brought hostages home.

When another war threatened recently with Iraq, President Clinton and Saddam Hussein both gave each other the silent treatment, the head of the United Nations became the mediator between two countries and got them to talking again an avoided a war!

After 400 years of silence the relations between God and mankind were strained. The Persians, Greeks and Romans were turning the masses away from him. The Greeks worshipped everything known and even worshiped an unknown God. The Romans

worshiped power. The Jews seemed to do whatever was necessary to survive.

God and mankind were at odds. No praises went up, no blessings came down!

In the past, God would speak to the people through a prophet or leader, but now there was silence.

When sin covered the earth like a blanket, there was a word from heaven to Noah, to warn them of a flood, but now there is only the silent treatment.

When the people worshiped a gold calf and turn away from God, there was a word from heaven, for God told Moses what to say to he people, but now there is only the silent treatment!

When the prophets of Baal seemed to dominate the world scene, there was a word from heaven as Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal atop of Mt. Carmel; but now there is only the silent treatment.

In the past God had sent a word from heaven through David, Solomon, Hosea, Nehemiah, Isaiah and Malachi, but now there was a silence in heaven.

Without a word from heaven, there is nothing to break the silence!

Without a word from heaven, there is no balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul!

Without a word from heaven, there is no light at the end of the tunnel!

Without a word from heaven, there is no healing of the wounded heart!

Hebrews says that in the past God had always spoken through prophets, but in these last days the people heard from heaven, from the word himself.

Galatians 4:4 puts it this way, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"

He didn't send a word, but he sent "The Word" John 1:1 reminds us that "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Then John 1:14 says "and the Word became flesh"

When relations between sinful mankind and the all powerful God became strained, there was the Word from heaven that came down to break the silence.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ."

Do you sometimes feel like God has been silent in your life? If you've been at a distance from God and have not heard a word or feel your blessings have been cut short, there is a word from heaven!Down in Bethlehem, God broke the silence! What God had to say, he said through Jesus!

What Jesus said was , "Come unto me..believe in me....Your sins are forgiven... go and sin no more... follow me... you will receive power, go and make disciples!"

Tell the world about an all powerful God! Tell the world about Jesus!

Tell the world how he was born in a manger, crucified on an old rugged cross!

Tell the world how he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Tell the world that Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!Go tell it on the mountains that the silence is broken..let earth receive her king!

No. 732-Anniv.-Homecoming

Show Me the Road to Zion

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Zion Hill Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Jeremiah 50:4-5

Introduction

Have you every left home and had to ask directions to find the right road back? Often when we travel , we carry maps to help us find our destination. When its time to go home, those who have never traveled the way before can get turned around trying to find the right road to get home. Often we can get home if we can just find our way to the main highway, but even that can be puzzling in some cities. Like every animal, we have a homing instinct. We have a natural urge to go home. Unlike animals, we can't always find our direction without help. Birds instinctively know which way is South for the winter. They also know how to get back home. A dog, taken in a car 100 miles away from home will somehow make his way back to your front door. Humans want to go home but can't find directions without help. Animals know the way home but don't need maps or road directions. Finding one's way home is not an easy task.

There is a natural desire to go home. Home is where the heart is. Much has been said about the home, most of which explains why coming home is important to each of us. What is home?

Home is a place our feet may leave but our hearts always want to return to

A man travels the world in search of what he needs and returns home to find it!

J.H. Payne said it and Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz made it famous, "There is no place like home!

Home is a place where the great are small and the small are great!

A good house is built by man, but a good home is created by the hand of God!

It's no wonder then that when we are away from home we often get homesick. There are thousands of people who have moved to other cities to find jobs and to pursue careers. But there is not a day that goes by that they do not talk about, think about and yearn to go home, if only for a few days!

Some want to go home but have lost their directions. They need to find the right

road. They need to know which land marks to look for on the way. Those who are searching are doing so as the hope and pray that God one day they'll find their way home again.

As Christians, we know that this earth is not our home. We enjoy our existence but we want to find our way back home. Some have left, but there are others that know the road to Zion begins at Zion's Hill.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah has he foretells the day in which God's people would return home through the eventual fall of Babylon.

The Jews were held captive in Babylon for many years. They had become the vassals of the Babylonian Empire. They were in a strange land in which they could not rejoice or find any hope. Every waking moment of their day seemed spent thinking about home, talking about home and praying for God to get them home.

The prophet Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, often cried over the Jew's predicament. He cried so much that his Lamentations consumed an entire book of the bible.

Judgment was foretold upon Babylon, the empire that appeared to be invincible. But its magnificent splendor and fortifications posed no doubt in the heart of the faithful prophet Jeremiah, who said: The Lord spoke against Babylon (the capital) and against the Land of the Chaldeans. . . . Declare among the nations . . . Babylon is taken, Bel (patron god) is confounded (put to shame), Merodach (Bel) is broken in pieces. . . .For out of the north there comes up a nation (Media) against her, which will make her land desolate, and none will dwell there (50:1-3).

Even today, more than 2500 years later, the ruins of Babylon remain a witness to the accuracy of Scripture. Almost as much space in the Bible is given to the judgment upon Babylon as to all the other nations combined. Babylon was destroyed so the people could go home.

Following the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon and the release of Israel from captivity, Jeremiah showed the people the road home. There must be a genuine repentance and conversion. Then and only then would God show them the road home.

"They shall ask the way to Zion" Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 50:5. They will want to know the way home. They resolved to join themselves together in what was called a perpetual convenant or a new pledge to worship, praise and obey God that will never be forgotten.

In response, God started a miraculous work that would result in the people finding their way home.

Finding the Road Home

When we speak of finding the road home, immediately our minds focus on strips

of land. When we think of roads, we think of geography, terrain, and strips of land that extend from where we are to where we want to be. In a biblical sense roads were important. The rugged geography of Palestine made one concerned with taking the right road.

If the road home went through the desert regions, the traveler had to know the location of wells to get water.

If the road home was around the hilly spines of central Palestine then the traveler had to consider whether to walk on foot with a light load or to carry a heavy load with pack animals.

If the road home required crossing streams and rivers, often travelers had to do it without their pack animals, that could not ford the streams.

If the road home was frequented by highwaymen and thieves, then travelers had to constantly be on guard.

If the road home was in the marshy wet areas, travelers had to know the location of solid ground.

If the road home would carry them through the sandy dunes of the desert, then travelers knew to carry an ample supply of food and water.

When Israel cried out "show me the road to Zion" they were asking for directions home, but were also prepared to do whatever was necessary to get there!

Finding the road home

The Jews spoke of Zion as home. Zion was actually a fortified hill in the region outside of Jerusalem. Zion is a reference not only to Jerusalem but to the entire area that they called home. Their desire was to return to Zion's Hill. They wanted to see the beauty of Zion's Hills and Valleys, lakes and streams. They wanted to recall the memories of times past and bask in the shadow of the greatness.

Today, believers are still trying to get home, but it's not a return to Jerusalem, but to the new Jerusalem, the city of God.

Our journey is not to a place on this earth, but to a city not made with hands

Our journey is not to a building construction in the imagination of men but to a place so beautiful that song writers could only write, "How beautiful heaven must be!"

Our journey is not to a structure of wood and concrete, but to a city that is built by the hands of God, and placed on 12 foundations.

To get to Zion every believer must first find the:

ROAD TO REPENTENANCE: You can't get to Zion without repentance and becoming a new creature. When Nicodemus asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus answered, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" Being born again makes you a new person on the inside. It is the epitome of what the scripture means when it says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, behold old things are past away and all things become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17. The road to repentance is the same road that Saul was traveling on the way to Damascus. There on the

Damascus Road he met Lord.

ROAD TO PRAISE AND GRATITUDE: Those who expect to get to Zion must have an attitude of gratitude. The attitude of gratitude prompts every believer to remember what the word says, "In everything give thanks." We thank the Lord for everything, because he didn't have to do what he did! We thank you for Sunshine and rain and the harvest of grain.

We praise him because he is worthy to be praise. From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same he is worthy. Those who travel this road are like the one leper that returned to tell Jesus, I want to say thank you for healing me!

ROAD TO SERVICE: Every believer who expects to get to Zion must find the road to service. It's not enough just to be saved and show gratitude but we must serve God through serving our fellow man. Whenever the poor are surrounding us, we should show the love of God ministering to the poor. Whenever there is a lonely heart we must serve that empty soul. This is the Road traveled by the Good Samaritan on the Jericho Road. He helped a stranger without thinking of himself.

No wonder the song writer declared, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain. If I show somebody that he's traveling wrong, then my living shall not be in vain."

The Road To Zion Must Lead to Zion's Hill

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that in order to get home, we must take the right road.

An old man took his small grandson on a trip to what grandpa called home. The little boy fascinated with the fine highway. He loved count to lines in the highway and see the pretty cars as the raced by. After a few hours however, his grandpa turned on an old dirt road. Gone was the hard pavement, brisk traffic and brightly colored lines. The road was bumpy. It wound through trees and went over hills. At some points it was filled it pot holes. The little boy asked his grandfather, "Why did we have to take this ugly road with all of these mud holes. Nobody is on this road? Why could we stay on the pretty road with all of the cars" The grandpa looked over at his grandson and said, "Look up on the top of that hill, that's we're going. There's only one road up that old house and it goes straight up that hill. The highway is pretty, but it won't take me where I'm trying to go!"

We can't get home without taking one final road. It is a road that leads to salvation.

The road to glory begins in repentenance, gratitude, praise and service, but it ends at Zion's Hill.

When David talked about Zion's Hill he referred to a hill in the Southern Region of Israel. But when a believer talks about finding the road to Zion's hill he's talking about a little hill outside of Jerusalem that became famous not for its geography but because it became the cross road.

No believer can get to the New Zion in glory, without traveling the road to Zion's

Hill!

On Zion's Hill there is a sign post to eternity that points the direction glory.

No wonder the song writer proclaimed, "On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering shame. And I love that old cross where the dearest of and best, for a world of lost sinners was slain. So I cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown!"

Show me the way to Zion! For at the cross there is:

Strength for those who are weak; Victory for those who have failed!

Love for those who have been hated; Comfort for those who feel lonely!

Cheer for those who are discouraged; Peace for those who feel troubled!

Forgiveness for those who have sinned; Salvation for those who were lost!

Show me the way to the cross on Zion's Hill for it, "was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

On Zion's Hill, Jesus, Mary's baby, died for my sins and your sins

On Zion's Hill, Jesus, died to reconcile lost mankind!

On Zion's Hill, Jesus, the Son of the living God, died!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He blazed a road through Bethlehem!

He walked a road through Jerusalem!

He walked the road to Zion's Hill

He showed us the road to Zion and every saint is on that road.

That's why we love to sing, "Come we that Love the Lord, that never knew our God, join in the song of sweet accord, join in the song of sweet accord and thus surround the throne of God, in the beautiful city of God.

"We're marching to Zion... where every day will be Sunday!

"We're marching to Zion...where it's always howdy and never goodbye!

"We're marching to Zion...a land where we'll never grow!

The beautiful city of God!

No. 733-Inspiration

My Soul Doth Magnify The Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 13, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And Mary said, My Soul doth magnify the Lord!" Luke 1:46

Introduction

Have you ever received an honor which you felt you didn't deserve? Often we are praised for accomplishments and achievements with the accolades of friends and associates. We are honored with plaques, certificates, gifts and praises whenever significant activities are noted by our contemporaries. There are times however, when we feel unworthy of the praises received. A movie star that receives an Oscar or a Grammy is quick to thank a team of people from directors and producers to wives and husbands, writers and agents. They know their accomplishment, while noted by millions as extraordinary, is really the handiwork of unseen persons behind them that are responsible for their success. Many were nobodies who became "somebodies" because of the investment of time and talent of others to catapult them into the limelight. Those who have risen from humble beginnings to great heights are reluctant to receive honors. They are humbled by them because they, more than anyone else, realize their dependence on others. They feel the honor they receive is a tribute to all of those who contributed to their success rather than a tribute to their individual greatness.

Humility is a virtue that is praised in scripture. It's the ability to avoid getting caught up in the praises of the moment, but know what truly counts. Marian Anderson, the Black American contralto who deserved and won worldwide acclaim as a concert soloist, didn't simply grow great; she grew great simply. In spite of her fame, she remained the same gracious, approachable lady — never one to "put on airs" — a beautiful model of humility. A reporter, while interviewing Miss Anderson, asked her to name the greatest moment in her life. The choice seemed difficult to others who were in the room that day, because she had many big moments.

Her conductor Arturo Toscanini announced, "A voice like hers comes once in a century." In 1955 she became the first Negro to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York. The following year her autobiography, "My Lord, What a

Morning," was published — a bestseller. In 1958 she became a United States delegate to the United Nations. On several occasions during her illustrious career, she received medals from various countries around the world. There was that memorable time she gave a private concert at the White House for the Roosevelts and the King and Queen of England. Her hometown, Philadelphia, had, on one occasion, awarded her the $10,000 Bok Award as the person who had done the most for that city.

In 1963 she was awarded the coveted Presidential Medal of Freedom. There was that Easter Sunday in Washington D.C. when she stood beneath the Lincoln statue and sang for a crowd of 75,000, which included Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices, and most members of Congress. Which of those big moments did she choose? None of them. Miss Anderson quietly told the reporter that the greatest moment of her life was the day she went home and told her mother she wouldn't have to take in washing anymore. That's humility personified.

Those who are humble recognize the fragility of their life situation. They do not brag or boast but live in a continuous state of gratitude. That's important because it means they always feel unworthy of honor because they are not the sole source of their accomplishment.

As Christians, we recognize that our blessings come from God. It is He who gives us our power and strength. We magnify him! We glorify him...because he's worthy to be praised. !

Exposition

This text focuses on Mary as she sings a song magnifying and glorifying God.

Mary was about 15 years old at the time she learned she was pregnant with the Christ Child. She was awed and afraid at learning that God had selected her and that she was already pregnant. "How can this be?" She asked. He answered her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her so that the child's conception would be divine. And then he gave Mary the added confirmation that nothing is impossible with God by telling her that her kinswoman Elizabeth who was old and barren was also pregnant.

When she saw her kinswoman Elizabeth, her soul leaped with joy. It was a confirmation of what the angel had said. She immediately recognized that God was about to change the course of all human history; the most important three decades in all of time were about to begin.

She was awed that God would occupy himself with two obscure, humble women- one old and barren, one young and virginal.

Mary was so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she broke out in song—a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.

Mary's song was a song of humility. It was an expression of her feeling of unworthiness for her selection and her appreciation that God would even notice her.

The passage makes three distinct expressions. First, there is Mary's expression of what she feels in her heart (verses 46 and 47), namely joy. Second, she mentions what God has done specifically for her as an individual, (verses 48 and 49): regarded her lowliness; did great things for her and thus gave her an enduring reputation for blessedness. Third, she described the goodness of God in general. This general character of God accounts for why He has treated her the way He has in her lowliness and thus leads her to rejoice and magnify the Lord.

The goodness of God is the overriding reason that she desires to magnify and intensify the focus of her praise toward God. His goodness was simply too great for ordinary praise.

He Considers the Lowly

Today there are many people who believe that God does not consider the lowly. They are stricken with a multitude of complexes that force them to assume that their lack of status and power relegates them to the corner of God's consideration.

Mary and Joseph were poor people. They lived in a city called Nazereth, it was the metropolitan equivalent of a one red light town that barely gets a spot on the map. Their region of the country was not known for anything great. Neither had any great personalities hailed from the area. Mary was a poor teenager, about 15 years old, who hadn't accomplished anything in life. She was not a great lady ofthe King's court or even the elder daughter of a great family. She was obscure.

That is why she was so overwhelmed that God selected her to serve as the surrogate mother for Jesus.

Why Me?

There are two times when believers ask the question why me? One is when tragedy comes to persons who have lived according to the word. The other is when an overwhelming good fortune comes to an obscure member of a great crowd.

When we reflect upon life, we can easily see that God has favored us in many ways.

We, who are the great grand sons and daughters of slaves and share croppers have been raised from the cotton fields to positions of power and influence.

We, who have built the roads, cooked the meals and served as nanny to millions, have been raised from the backyard basketball court to the Supreme Court from slaves and dejected men to congressmen.

Why me? Because the scripture record suggests that God has an unusual compassion for the underdog. He has demonstrated consideration for the persecuted and downtrodden, helping them overcome the odds to achieve lofty goals.

Mary's testimony could easily be the testimony of any person who has managed to keep his head above water in the troubling seas of life:

Verse 50: "He has mercy on those who fear Him" Mercy is God's grace. It is an

undeserved favor received by individuals who should have received worse. When we consider what we deserve from God, based upon our obedience, loyalty and respect for him, we immediately recognize that we should not receive anything. We have fallen short. Yet because we respect God and fear him he has shown mercy upon us and blessed us in ways we do not deserve.

As Mary pondered the coming of the Christ Child she also looked at her own situation and praised God for having mercy on her, despite her short comings. Like Mary, we too are looking toward the coming of the Christ Child and in our hearts we are praising God for showing mercy on us.

Verse 52: "Exalted them of low degree." God takes the lowly and often exalts them to high position. Joseph was a prisoner in Egypt but was taken from prison and made the Minister of Agriculture in the Egyptian government because of the power of God. David was a shepherd boy, a singer of songs, whom God raised to be King of Israel. The bible is sprinkled with examples of how God has exalted the lowly and humble and lifted them to places of honor.

As Mary considered her life situation she could only praise God for selecting her because she was of such a low degree. Like Mary, we too must consider the lonely road we have traveled in this life. Some who were living on the streets now have a safe roof over their heads. Some have been blessed enough to own a house, a car and few creature comforts. Some have reasonable health and strength after years of battling sickness. When we think about the goodness of God, we like Mary conclude, "My soul doth magnify the Lord!"

Verse 53: "He has filled the hungry with good things." The word of God indicates that those who live righteously will never be forsaken. God puts food on the table in miraculous ways. He has a way of opening doors, making opportunities available that did not exist. Whether it is a soup chicken, the homeless ministry of a church or a seven course meal in the luxury of your own home, God will make a way for the faithful. That's why Psalm 37:25 says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

When Mary considered the approaching birth of the Son of God, she was overwhelmed with the great gift that God was giving those hungry from salvation...the bread of heaven. Like Mary, we too are overwhelmed and we sing the old hymn, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

Mary's soul magnified the Lord because the birth of the Christ child demonstrated in her life that God was mindful of her and had considered her low estate.

Magnify the Lord!

Finally, we must consider Mary's statement that her "soul" magnifies God. How does a soul magnify God?

When a mouth magnifies God there are words of praise. There are sounds and words that expressed the glory of God. When a mouth starts magnifying God it may speak. It may shout. It might sing or scream. A mouth that magnifies praises God

intensely. That's what David had in mind in Psalm 109:30 "I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude." It is easy to see how a mouth could magnify the Lord, but how does a soul magnify the Lord?

When hands magnify the Lord they come together in applause, join together in prayer, and link together in service. Hands that magnify God help others. They are the hands that feed the poor, help the needy and extend God's mercy to everyone in need. These same hands join together in prayer, touching and agreeing to ask God's grace and mercy on the masses. These are the hands that are lifted up in praise to God for his power! These are the "holy hands" of 1Timothy 2:8 lifted up to an all powerful God.. These hands clap! These hands wave! These hands are excited about the goodness of God! It is easy to see how a hand can magnify the Lord, but how does a soul magnify the Lord?

If feet had to magnify the Lord, they would walk the lonely trails of life, "carrying the sunshine where darkness is rife." If feet had to magnify the Lord, they would walk into the cesspools of poverty and despair to bring a message of hope. When feet magnify the Lord, they go! They go when they feel like it and they go when they don't feel it! Feet that magnify the Lord are propelled by a sense of mission to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost!" But how does a soul, magnify the Lord?

If eyes magnified the Lord, they look for him in every hidden corner of the earth. The eye that magnifies the Lord looks beyond any tragedy and sees the glory of God. David, surrounded by despair said in Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes until the hills from wench cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." When eyes magnify the Lord, they see his glory even in the worst of situations. That's why the song writer wrote "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of Lord...his truth is marching on!

But what happens when a soul magnifies the Lord?

The soul is the essence of all that we are. The soul is our inner spirit, our virtual command center that sends out signals to the rest of us!

When a soul magnifies the Lord, it tells the left hand to meet the right and clap in praise of God!

When a soul magnifies the Lord, it tells the tongue, the lips and the voice box to join together and lift him up!

When a soul magnifies God it tells the left foot and the right foot to come together in a mighty cadence that does the work of God!

When a soul magnifies God, it shows a vision of the power of God to the eyes so they testify, "I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder and marvel at the power thou hast displayed."

When a soul magnifies God, everything it controls begins to praise God. No wonder the song writer declared "then sings my soul, my savior God to thee. How great thou art! How great thou art!"

My soul magnifies the Lord because only he can take a:

Drunkard and make him sober; LIAR and fill him with truth

THIEF and make him an honest man; PERVERT and make him pure again!

SAD HEART and make it glad again; WEAK SPIRIT and give it new strength

LOST SOUL and him find his way; BROKEN HEART and make it whole again!

My soul magnifies God because only he loved the world enough to send his only begotten son into it!

My soul magnifies God because of a Little town called Bethlehem and a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

My soul magnifies God because one day out on Calvary, Jesus...

Mary's Baby! The Rock of My Salvation

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, Fountain of my joy!

Died on an old rugged cross!

My soul magnifies the Lord because, Early Sunday morning he arose from the Grave, with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you but, My soul!

My soul!

My soul...magnifies the Lord!

No. 734-Christmas

The Gift that Keeps On Giving

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 20, 1998

SCRIPTURE: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger Luke 2:12; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

Introduction

Have you tried to buy a gift that would last? One of the great truths of holiday gift giving is that many of the gifts that are received won't last the length of the season. Many parents have been frustrated to see an expensive toy laying dormant because it became inoperable just hours after it was given. It was expensive but it didn't last. The doll looked so pretty in the box, but she now needs a paramedic to restitch her arm. It was pretty, but it didn't last. The excitement and appreciation that a gift offers is often directly related to its usefulness and longevity. That is why many people are trying to give gifts that last beyond the moment but bring joy and happiness for longer periods of time. Those who give gifts like to know that their gifts are appreciated and bring continued happiness and fulfillment long after the moment of giving has passed. Everyone appears to be searching for the one gift that keeps on giving, all through the year.

Recent news accounts of two men in Otwatanna Minnesota shines a humorous light on the subject. Roy Collette and his brother-in-law have been exchanging the same pair of pants as a Christmas present for 11 years - and each time the package gets harder to open. This year the pants came wrapped in a car mashed into a 3-foot cube. The trousers are in the glove compartment of a 1974 Gremlin. Now Collette's plotting his revenge—if he can get them out.

It all started when Collette received a pair of moleskin trousers from his brother-in-law, Larry Kunkel of Bensenville, Ill. He did not like them so he wrapped them up and gave them back to Kunkel for Christmas the next year.

The friendly exchange continued routinely until Collette twisted the pants tightly, stuffed them into a 3-foot-long, 1-inch wide tube and gave them back to Kunkel. The next Christmas, Kunkel compressed the pants into a 7-inch square, wrapped them with wire and gave the "bale" to Collette. Not to be outdone, the next year Collette put the pants into a 2-foot-square crate filled with stones, nailed it shut,

banded it with steel and gave the trusty trousers back to Kunkel.

One year Kunkel had the pants mounted inside an insulated window that had a 20-year guarantee and shipped them off to Collette. Collette broke the glass, recovered the trousers, stuffed them into a 5-inch coffee can and soldered it shut. The can was put in a 5-gallon container filled with concrete and reinforcing rods and given to Kunkel the following Christmas. Two years ago, Kunkel installed the pants in a 225-pound homemade steel ashtray made from 8-inch steel casings and etched Collette's name on the side. Collette retrieved the pants a cutting torch.

Last Christmas, Collette found a 600-pound safe and decorated it with red and green stripes, put the pants inside and welded the safe shut. The safe was then shipped to Kunkel.

Last week, the pants were trucked to Owatonna, 55 miles south of Minneapolis, in a drab green, 3-foot cube that once was a car with 95,000 miles on it. A note attached to the 2,000-pound scrunched car advised Collette that the pants were inside the glove compartment. They keep giving each other the same pair of pants. The gift just keeps coming back.

Others, more seriously, try to make a lasting impression. They want to give a gift that will be around later. Many give to churches and charitable organizations by setting up endowments and annuities that will fund scholarships or make contributions toward their favorite programs long after the fanfare of the original gift has diminished.

Even merchants have adopted the idea. In November of 1998 Wal-Mart and Sam's began issuing a merchandise gift card valued at $5 to $1,000. A person receives the card as a gift and can use it like a credit card until the amount is gone. The best part? The card is renewable. In the mind of the Wal-mart marketing experts, it's a gift that keeps on giving!

What if we received a gift from God? Would it last? Would it stop working as soon as the batteries run down? Or would it keep on giving?

As Christians, we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child because it reminds us of the gift that God gave the world that day in Bethlehem. Though the angels that announced the birth are no longer seen. The shepherds have long since gone. Though the birth site itself is just a tourist attraction. The gift of the little baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes is a gift that keeps on giving!

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke's account of the birth of the Christ child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, God's gift to the world.

Mary and Joseph had been told of the birth of Christ by an angel. They knew his birth was special. More than simply special his birth would be God's gift to a troubled world. It was his way of reconciling a distant world to a loving father.

The gift of the Christ Child was a sign from God that he still loved the world enough to allow a part of himself to assume human form and absorb the punishment

for their sins.

The gift of this child was doubly significant because he would be the first of the millions that would come after him that would reflect the hope, love and passion for humanity that the Christ Child would reflect as a man.

Through disciples and believers over the centuries that gift God gave in Bethlehem would continue to be given to people of every generation, nationality and color.

The message of peace and hope would be given repeatedly as others echoed his words of love and reconciliation.

The message they would echo would be the same message of John 3:16. That God loves the world. He loved it so much that he sent his only son for a ransom to redeem the lost to himself.

This message of hope is what the world waited to hear and still desires to this day. It is the message that despite man's shortcomings and failures that God is forgiving for all who are truly repentant and turn to him for mercy.

God's "gift" is available to everyone. It will never need to be returned because it "fits" everyone and is complementary to all colors. Scripture tells us that "...when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." That which is perfect came to us in the form of Jesus Christ and from that day to this, He has remained a "Giver."

Giving Meaningful Gifts

Today as believers we should strive to reflect the spirit of that night in Bethlehem as we give those we love a few meaningful gifts that "keep on giving."

THE GIFT OF TIME: It cannot be placed under a Christmas tree but the best gift a parent can give to a child is quality time. Watches break. Clocks ultimately run down. However, a parent that spends quality time with children gives a gift that keeps on giving. It's the decision to participate in the school life of our children, beyond just their grades. It's the commitment to join the P.T.A., attend school programs, cheer for them as they perform, exchange ideas and dreams and share planned quality time activities as a family. For some it would be easier to give money. However the gift of time, is a gift that keeps on giving!

THE GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION: Millions of families across our nation are torn apart because of misunderstandings and a lack of compassion and concern. The Christmas trees of such families will be filled with thousands of gifts except the one gift needed most: Understanding and compassion. Consider the little boy who sat sadly on Christmas morning. The tree was decorated brightly and there were toys everywhere including a computer, computer games, a play station, a bicycle and many other gifts. He was still sad. When prompted for the reason by his mother the boy responded. "I didn't get what I wanted." Angry the mother yelled, "What more can you want?" "I wanted you and daddy to stop arguing and fighting. I wanted us to be a family again." -The sad little boy would have traded

all of the gifts under his tree for the gift of understanding, compassionate and loving parents. It's a gift that keeps on giving!

GIFT OF A RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING: No one should underestimate the value of a religious, God-fearing home. It is a very special gift. Many today have been able to endure difficult times and experiences because of truths they were taught in a God-fearing home. It was at Papa's house that you learned to say your prayer's at night. It was at mama's knee that you learned to give thanks for everything. It was in that religious home that you learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. Yes, it was in that God fearing home of your youth that you found out that if you trust God, he will provide. Parents who bring their children to church, give them a gift that will be with them all of their lives. Those who teach their children the fear of God and respect of others, give them a gift that will help them as they travel life's stormy paths. Give them the knowledge of God and you give them a gift that keeps on giving.

The Gift That Keeps on giving!

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that while there are many kinds of gifts we give each other, God has given each of us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is God's spirit that moves and directs us each day. We are blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. We are helped so we can help others. We are encouraged so we can encourage others. We are fed so we can feed others.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God moving within us, it is a gift, given by a loving God.

When God looked down on the pitiful state of the world's affairs:

He saw Scribes not talking to Pharisees. He saw Jews not talking to Gentiles!

He saw Romans not talking to Greeks. He saw the upper class not talking to the lower class!

He saw the healthy not dealing with lepers. He saw the learning making fun of the unlearned!

He saw the poor scrapping for food, while the rich threw food in the trash!

He saw the innocent crucified and fed to the lions, for the sport of blood thirsty mobs.

He saw that the world seemed to be in disarray, everybody had become someone else's enemy

He decided that it was time for him to make a peace offering among men. It was time to give mankind a gift.

Sometimes a gift is a peace offering. When Jacob had wronged his bother Esau, he sent him a gift to show his desire to bring peace.

Sometimes a gift is a sign of thanksgiving. When Noah had been on the ark for over a year. When he touched the ground, he built an altar to say, "Thank you Lord for being so good to me!"

Sometimes a gift is a sign of admiration. When the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. She brought him gifts from the heart of Africa. Her gift demonstrated her

admiration for his great wisdom.

But what does God give the world when he wants to give the people a gift? He can't go to the shopping mall of creation and buy something and stick it under a tree.

Can't you hear God in your imagination, trying to make a decision!

"I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!"

"I could give them the moon, but after awhile, the moon would cease to shine!"

"I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for short and then comes the fall!"

"I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!"

"I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life!" But there will come a time when storms will rise!

"I want to give them a gift that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

"I want to give them a give that will give them:

STRENGTH when they are feeling a little weak; COMFORT when they are feeling all alone!

VICTORY after they have suffered a defeat; HOPE when all hope is gone!

LIFTED HEAD when they are bowed down low; SIGHT when they can't see their way!

What kind of Gift can God give? John gave us the decision:"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

He gave the gift that keeps on giving!

He was born in a manger, but he kept on giving!

He was wounded for our transgressions, but he kept on giving!

He was bruised for our iniquities, but he kept on giving!

They whipped him and tried him all night long, but he kept on giving!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, but he kept on giving!

Thry hung him up high and stretched him out wide, but he kept on giving!

He died but even in death, he kept on giving!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that God gave me a gift that keeps on giving!

I get a blessing every day because....

He keeps on giving!

No. 735-Inspiration

And When They Had Seen It

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 27, 1998

SCRIPTURE: 'And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." Luke 2:20

Introduction

What did you get for Christmas? That's one of the first questions that is asked by anyone who knows you at Christmas time. Depending on who is answering the question, the answer varies. Children who are asked that question instantly begin to rattle off a litany of gift varieties that range from baby dolls to Play Stations. Some were immensely blessed at Christmas. They received clothes and toys. As we relate to others what we received smiles come to our faces. Our countenance lights up. There is a certain brilliance about us that strains our sense of humility to the limit. We want to share our excitement about our model cars, video games, designer clothes, games and other gadgets. We are just bubbling over with joy telling anyone who asks. We stayed up half the night pondering what we would find and now that we know, we simply must tell somebody. Once we tore the wrapping paper away, shredded boxes to bits and waded through a sea of paper and cartons, we actually saw the gift itself. If there was more than one box we probably went from one box to the next jumping and shouting. Our faces reflected our joy! We finally saw it!

After we have seen it, the next best part of the Christmas gift is to tell others what we received. Telephones are busy on Christmas day. Whether it is across town or across the world, we feel the need to share the joy of our gift with someone else. You called him, and he asked, "What did you get?" He called her and she asked, "What did you get?" Then came the answer. You were so excited that your listener could feel the joy bubbling through the phone receiver. Half the joy of receiving a fine gift is the ability to tell somebody what you received. It would be no fun at all if you received it then could tell no one. No one answers the question, "What did you get?" with the answer "I can't tell you, it's a secret!" Sometimes we are so excited we tell others what we have received before we are asked. "Aren't you going to ask me what I received?" That's what our faces say when no one asks.

If you received a gift from God, what would you do? Would you peek at it and then keep it to yourself? Would you remain silent and tell absolutely no one what you

received? Christmas Day marks the day God gave the world a gift. Many people have heard the good news and received the gift, but say nothing about it. In fact, many people claim that they have the gift of the Holy Spirit, Salvation and special ministry gifts, but don't seem too excited about it!

As Christians, we are grateful that the world has been given the gift of the hope through Jesus Christ.. We are also glad that we have received the gift of God's spirit and eternal hope in our personal lives. It is exciting and we want the world to know the good thing that God has done!

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke as he details what the shepherds did after they experienced the birth of the Christ child.

The shepherds that were watching their flocks by night were given the opportunity to experience the birth of the Savior first hand. After going to the manger and observing the Christ Child the shepherds had concluded their Christmas experience. They were finished. It was over. Luke details the aftermath of that experience.

"And when they had seen it" says the scripture, they told everyone they saw everything they had seen and heard concerning the Christ child.

The shepherds responded by recognizing that it was truly a sign from God. They admit that it was the Lord that sent this message to them in verse 15. The angels were simply the messengers of God, and were not to be worshiped themselves.

Secondly, the shepherds hurried off. They didn't wait around until daybreak or until they made sure everything was secured. This was more important than their daily earthly concerns. They interrupted everything they were doing and starting waking up the sleeping, making unpopular announcements at strange hours of the night.

They must have ran through the streets, yelling and knocking on doors. The sight they saw had a tremendous effect on them.

Finally, the shepherds spread the word. They saw Jesus, and recognized that what the angels had said about him was true, however ironic. Jesus, the baby, was truly the Savior and the Christ and Lord. Even though they didn't see him do miracles or didn't fully understand what this all meant, the shepherds trusted that what the angels said was true, and they acted on that trust and told others.

Luke notes that those who received the shepherd's message were not overwhelmed with joy. In fact, he noted in verse 18 that the best response the shepherds were able to get from anyone they told the message to was "wonder." The verse says "And all that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."

They told of the angels, and the people wondered!

They told of seeing the Christ child, and the people wondered!

They told of their excitement, and the people wondered!

They told of God's miraculous presence, and all the people wondered!

The people wondered but they did very little else. Mary herself meditated upon

the experience and rolled it over in her mind. Luke notes that she was so impressed with the greatness of the moment that she simply soaked them in and "pondered them in her heart."

After the shepherds told everyone they saw, they gave a demonstration, as to what others should do... "They returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told to them."

When Christmas ended, they praised God!

When Christmas was over, they glorified him in gratitude!

When Christmas was ended, they returned but they returned different, more radiant than they were before!

After Christmas, What next?

Now that Christmas is over there are literally millions who are completely lost. They are let down because they have or have not received what they hoped for at Christmas?

What did you get for Christmas?

SHOES THAT WALK TOWARD GOD: Many people received new shoes for Christmas, but it would be even better if those shoes are the ones they plan to use to go to God's house or to do his work among your neighbor's shoes. What kind of shoes were they? Shoes that look good? Wear well? Do they make us stand out as people of prestige and worth. Many received shoes that are party shoes. Others received running shoes, but they won't take them toward God. You received a great gift if you received inspiration to walk toward God after Christmas.

FOOD FOR MY SOUL: There is plenty of food at Christmas time. Turkey, duck, chicken and dressing and cranberry sauce. The menu items are tasty sounding, fattening, diet busting and good! What about the cakes and the strawberry pie, potato pie, chocolate pie, pecan pie and lemon pie? They were food for our tummies. While many of us ate, there were some that were so busy eating that they didn't even have a family prayer before they ate. The best that some gave is "Good food, good meat, good Lord, let's eat!" Yet, the story of Christ's birth and the hope that his presence among us brings, is food for our soul. The thought of preparing food for the souls as well as food for the tummies, slipped by the minds of some. You received a great gift for Christmas, if you were moved to a greater appreciation for the love of God for all humanity. That love is food for your soul!

THINGS TO DO: Many gifts received at Christmas time represent things to keep us busy. Whether it's the child that plays house with baby dolls and play houses or the boy that is glued silently to his play station and joy stick. Whether its the father who is enjoying his new television set or the mother who is kept busy trying out every one of her new appliances, many have received gifts that will give them many things to do. Yet, the birth of Christ gives us some meaningful things to do and occupy our time, in addition to our new video player, dishwasher or automobile. Among the things we have to do is to share the love of God with others in ways that are unique

and meaningful. You received a great gift for Christmas, if some how you were motivated to help the poor and needy; to lift spirits that are broken; or to bring joy to someone who is struggling, you received the gift of useful spiritually directed things to do.

The week After Christmas

It's how we celebrate the week after Christmas that really tells our Christmas story. After Christmas the excitement is gone! After Christmas, the real world sets in. It's best characterized by this anonymous little poem:

'Twas the Week After Christmas

'Twas the week after Christmas and all through the house
The new computer was silent - the dog ate the mouse.
The kids like their toys, but before they can play
We need fifty more batteries (size double A).
We all stuffed our faces, our tummies still ache,
And we're still a bit tipsy from Grandma's fruitcake.
The floor's full of needles, the tree's nearly bare,
And there's tinsel embedded in everyone's hair.
Then what to my terrified eyes should appear,
But the bills for the things that I purchased this year.
I tried to control all my spending, and yet
The total could pay off the national debt!
The weather was awful, outside there's a gale -
And then I remember the post-Christmas sales.
Those clearance-sale bargains are starting to call -
So it's dash away! Dash away! Out to the mall!
On Visa! On Mastercard! Sears and Discover!
There's American Express and few limited others!
There's pushing and shoving, there's screaming and yelling -
We're lined up for miles to buy what they're selling.
There's boxes and bargains, but no Christmas cheer-
I stop and I ask myself "Why am I here?"
Then I saw a manger scene high on a shelf -
And I cried when I saw it in spite of myself.
I'd forgotten it's not about clothing or toys
The child on the hay is our reason for joy.
We're so unworthy, yet God sent His Son
To offer Himself for the things we had done.
The meaning of Christmas is God coming near -
The holiday's gone, but the Gift is still here!

After Christmas we should emulate the joy of the shepherds. They experienced their joy at the cradle, today we should do they same because we have both the cradle and the cross!

We have the cradle that tells the world that hope is not diminished!

We have the cross that tells the world that redemption is finished!

We have the cradle that reminds us that God heard us and came!

We have the cross that tells the world that God felt our misery and absorbed our pain!

The cradle and the cross, what a story to tell!

After Christmas, let's tell it, everywhere we go!

No. 736-New Year

Pass The Peas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 3, 1998

SCRIPTURE: " Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Psalm 65:1-4

Introduction

When you have finished one year and begin a new one, what can you do for good luck in the year to come? Our society has a variety of good luck rituals. These are the things we do to bring ourselves good look. The gambler thinks blowing on the dice will bring him luck. Someone else wants to rub the hand of a "lucky" person to get some of their luck rubbed onto themselves. There are others who wear rabbit's feet t on key chains for good luck. Some even wear dimes around their ankles.

Looking for luck is universal. On New Year's day it is said that a helping of black eyed peas on the plate guarantees good luck. Many people laugh at the custom, but serve the peas anyway, just in case there's some truth in the old saying. The African-American community celebrates Jubilee Day on January 1st. It is the day that freed slaves in rebelling states on January 1, 1863. To commemorate jubilee day Black folks eat the food of slavery: Hog Jowls, Chitterlings, Hog Maws and Tripe. It is said that those who forget where they came from and choose not to eat the memorial meal on Jubilee Day would have bad luck and be returned to slavery.

Depending on cultural backgrounds, different foods come with a new year: cabbage, herring, honey, sardines, and salt are seen as good luck signs in some areas of the country. The Japanese eat long noodles. The Greeks bake a special bread. In Spain, the custom is to eat 12 individual grapes in the 12 seconds leading up to the new year. Anthropologists say that eating certain foods to change one's fortune dates back to ancient Babylonia.

Looking for luck, even those who claim not to believe, say "pass the peas!"

While some spend their time looking for luck by eating peas, dashing salt and killing hogs, there are others who don't count on luck, they look to God for their blessings. He was the source of the blessings in years past and will be the source

of blessings in the years to come.

Peas or no peas, God can bless those who love him!

Peas or no peas, God delivers for the faithful who call on him!

Peas or no peas, God continues to open doors for those who trust him!

As Christians we are overjoyed as we face the new year. We enter it with optimism because the God we serve is all powerful. He blessed us immensely last year, and he can do the same in the year to come. The good thing about our God is he doesn't decide whether to bless us depending on whether or not we ate black eyed peas!

Exposition

This passage of scripture focuses on the children of Israel as they gave thanks to God for a great year and they look forward to renewed blessings in the year to come.

This passage is written at the conclusion of a great year. The people assembled themselves and looked back at the wondrous way God blessed them in the previous year and gave thanks. Success in biblical times depended heavily upon the rains. If there were no rains, then no matter how hard they worked their efforts would be in vain. There had been prosperity. The rains had come, poured down, as it were, from heaven.

At the end of the season, therefore, they assembled to consider the year ahead.

The meaning of the passage is associated with five words all of which begin with a "P" within the first four verses.

Praise (v1) waiteth for thee. As the people looked forward to the coming of a new season God is pictured as the future coming toward them, armed with good things. The people are pictured as standing waiting silently for the great things God was preparing,. They were waiting to shower him with praise for his wonderful works. They did not perceive themselves as walking into an unknown in this passage. They saw God, whom they knew very well, coming toward them and they were ready to spend the year praising him for everything that comes.

Performed (v1). As they looked to future they remembered the vows they made during the difficult times of the preceding year. They remembered the silent promises they made to God in their moments of frustration. They remembered the decision to break bad habits, tear down false altars and remain true to God. Thus, they approached the new season with a renewed commitment to keep their promises to God and to live up to their various pledges.

Prayer. (v2) They looked to the new season with a resolve to be prayerful. Their united voice said, "thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." They looked into the unknown with assurance that no matter what it brings, that talking to God could enable them to face any circumstance. They resolved to enter the new season with a prayerful spirit. They believed that God heard the prayers of his people and thus they looked at the new year with courage and hope, understanding that prayer can change anything as long as God is on the throne.

Prevailing (v3) Despite their optimism the people were aware that every new

season brings with it certain inequities and iniquities. Inequities being those things that come upon us unjustly and iniquities being those things that we bring upon ourselves. The word "prevail" seems to suggest that our iniquities and faults will overpower us and be victorious at first reading. However, the Hebrew translation of the word prevail is "gabar" which means strong, mighty and powerful. It does not mean victorious as in the English. It means troubles may give believers a hard fight as they always do, but picking a hard fight and winning a hard fight are not one and the same.

Purge (v3). "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." This answers the questions raised about what will happen to the strong inequities and iniquities that will come against believers. "Thou shalt purge them away." The people had no doubt there would be short comings and flaws in their collective character that would surface, but they were assured that the grace of God would purge them away. They were confident that in the new season there would be errors, misjudgments and critical mistakes made but the people concluded that "thou shalt purge them away."

Collectively these five "P's" demonstrated the people's attitude as they entered into a new year. It was an attitude of optimism dipped in gratitude. It was an attitude of expectation, for they looked forward to the great things that lay ahead and were waiting to give God the praise and the glory!

Three P's that Hinder Progress

As believers look to the new season we are faced with a few "P's" in our own experience. They represent some attitudes and feelings that will hinder us in the new season. They include:

PROCRASTINATION: Nothing hinders progress more than procrastination. We procrastinate when we set goals and keep putting off every step necessary to achieve them. There can be no progress unless we first decide to move toward our destiny. One writer put it this way, "the best way to start realizing your dreams is to wake up!" Millions of dreams are lost each year because of procrastination. The procrastinator is the person who has the wisdom to know what to do, the skill to know how to do it, but lacks the will power to get up and do it! Surrounded by frogs, Pharaoh was given an opportunity to obey God and remove them immediately or wait. He said he would do it tomorrow! Thus he spent another night with the frogs. (Exodus 8:10). Putting things off until tomorrow is condemned in scripture. Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." If there is a "P" we should leave behind it should be procrastination.

PAST: Too many try to march into the future dragging the past with them. As Israel moved toward their promised land, their month long march became a 40 year journey because they tried to bring the past with them. They constantly brought up life in Egypt and God let them wander until there was no one left to bring up the past. Today there are millions who want to begin a new year but they keep dragging up

Egypt. Family disputes, marital problems, financial difficulties, which caused problems in the past are dead weight if they are dragged into the future. "..forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14.

PAIN: No year finishes without families experiencing some level of pain. Whether it is sickness, death, finances or disappointments, every person experiences some pain in his life. Yet we should not carry the fear of pain or the memory of painful moments into the future. They have a tendency to absorb us and destroy us. Lot's wife tried to walk forward. She was given a chance to climb the mountain but the pain of loss possessions, lost dreams and acquaintances overwhelmed her and she stopped, turned and looked back and found herself completely absorbed in the pain of the moment and she was turned into a pillar of salt. Has there been a painful moment in your life in the past year? Carry the happy days into the new year, leave the pain behind! His there been a bitter experience? Leave it behind or it will drag you down. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Pass the Peas

Finally, as we consider the new year we must do as the children of Israel in Psalm 65. We must focus on the P's.

Like Israel we stand on the threshold of a brand new season. When we look back over the year that has passed we recognize that we've had some good days and we've had some bad days, but the Lord has showered down blessings on us that cannot be measured.

We need to approach the new year with some new P's. Not the pain, procrastination and focusing on the past that we have done in other times, but we need some new P's.

We need a positive attitude for the new year! This is the attitude that says nothing will stop me from achieving my goals, because "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"

When Israel assembled itself at the beginning of the new season, the people looked back over the road they traveled but they looked forward with expectation of even greater things from God.

They didn't focus on the negative "P's" that would be out there: Problems, Prevarications, Perplexities, Pundits, and Power Hungry Pontificators.

They were not consumed by the pale painted pictures of the prophets of doom. Neither were they overwhelmed by the precise but profane presentations of pagan prognosticators.

They were not influenced at all by any negative feelings about the future. They simply kept their eyes on the P's. They came together at the first of the new season and talked about five P's that would bring them blessings.

Not black eyed peas!

Not purple hulled peas!

Not English Peas!

But five words that defined their expectations. Those same five words should guide every believer today.

They talked about the "P" of performance. If we do what God wants us to do. If we go where he wants us to go; there is a blessing coming our way. Can't you hear him saying in John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

They talked about the "P" of prayer. We know that God is a prayer answering God. If you call on the Lord he will answer, bye and bye! There is power in prayer! There is strength in prayer! Prayer changes things!

They talked about the "P's of prevailing over temptation! Temptations come and temptation's go, but it doesn't matter what comes because the Lord won't allow those who trust him to be overtaken. Didn't the word say, in 1 Corinthians 10:13 "but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The Lord will make a way!

The fourth "P" was praise. They praised God before the year began for what he was going to do! In essence they offered praise in January for February! They offered praise on the first Sunday in January for what would happen on the last Sunday in December.

We should praise the Lord because his:

Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant

Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

We should praise the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he's going to help us to climb!

We should praise the Lord for the bills he's going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job he's going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home he's going to help us to buy!

We should praise the Lord for the old man who's going finally to start acting like a husband!

We should praise the Lord for old lady who will finally want to become a wife!

For everything that God is going to do, we ought to praise the Lord!

Come here Hebrew boys, bring me that "P"-They were in the fiery furnace and God protected them! He will protect you and he will keep you. Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

Come here widow woman, bring me that "P"-She was down to her last cup of meal and oil and God "Provided" for her every need.

Come here Paul, what did you tell the Philippians? "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus!"

The last "P" was the "P" for purged. Even though the Lord blessed us last year.

We ought to be glad that our sins didn't follow us over into the new year, for they have been purged and made pure.

What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, the prized son of Palestine

Jesus, the epitome of perfection

Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace

Jesus died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 737-Inspiration

There is Honey in the Rock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 10,1999

SCRIPTURE "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock" Deuteronomy 32:13

Introduction

Do you know someone who has become bitter over the years? Many are beginning the year by bringing the failed bitter attitudes of the past into the new year. Some failed in love and romance and the bitterness of the experience has made them intolerable, untrusting and void of compassion. Some have had friendships betrayed and have vowed never to trust again. Some have brought deep rooted feelings of dissatisfaction into the new year. Some feel used. Others feel neglected. Still, others feel unappreciated. Whatever the reason, there are many who are bringing their feelings of bitterness into the new year. Their bitterness has already robbed them of the rush of enthusiasm that usually comes with a new year as they conclude that the new year offers no new hope of changes, just business as usual.

Why does an otherwise optimistic person become pessimistic? Why does the hopeful lose hope? Why does the ambitious cease to struggle? .Those who are bitter were not always bitter. What made them so resentful? What made them so angry? What made them so exasperated? So indignant?

Those who have allowed life's frustrating experiences to make them bitter have lost their grasp on those things which make life sweet. The late Jackie Gleason, known for his role as Ralph on the 50's television comedy "The Honey Mooners" had a favorite line he used when he began every night of his famous "Jackie Gleason" show. A pretty woman walked on the stage and brought him a cup a coffee. Gleason looked at the woman and as she walked off the stage and said, "How sweet it is!" "How sweet it is" became the code words for recognizing and enjoying the goodness of life. Those who are bitter have lost the ability to say, "How sweet it is!" Their pessimism becomes so great that they can't see the good in anything. Even when they see a dog hit by a speeding 18 wheel truck get up and walk away on three legs, they complain because he's hopping around. They fail to understand that it is better to be a cripple dog hopping on three legs than a dead dog with all four legs sticking up straight in the air.

What makes life sweet, despite its difficulties? The goodness of God makes life sweet. God is the essence of sweetness. His presence makes even the most bitter circumstance, palatable at the least and unusually sweet at the most. Every new year brings with it the prospect of difficulties and troubles. That's why every Christian prepares to face the new year armed with faith in God. A strong faith in God is sweeter than honey according to Psalm 19:8. It is sweeter than honey to the mouth says Psalm 119:103. The scriptures are clear, trusting in God is what makes life sweet, despite any hardships that may come. Conversely, failing to trust in God can make life bitter and hard.

As Christians, we approach the new year as we do any year, with our hand in God's hand. When life throws bitterness our way, we respond with our faith in God. We go to the Rock that is higher than I, because there is honey in the Rock!

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he writes a song about the future of Israel in the promised land.

The journey of the people from Egypt to the shores of the Jordan River had taken them 40 years. It was filled with difficulty but was sprinkled with demonstrations of God's goodness and special fondness for them. Although there were over 600,000 fighting men and nearly two million others, they were sustained with food and water throughout their 40 year journey. They wore basically the same clothes for the entire time. They existed without planting a single crop or building a single house. They existed for 40 years on the Grace of God alone.

This entire journey was supervised by Moses, who was often shown great visions by God. In the final month of his life, Moses was directed by the Lord to write a song about the future of the people in the promised land. He was told to teach this song to the people. Those who were unable to read it from the scrolls would at least know its words as they listened. Moses was commanded to teach it to the children of Israel . . . that this song may be a witness for Me (Deuteronomy 31:19).

This song was prophetic in that it told how some would let the prosperity of the new land turn them away from God. In the new land, some would lose their original commitment to God. Thus, Deuteronomy 31:20 says, " For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant."

Moses' song addressed two venues of life. One that was sweet, sustained by the power of God himself and another that would appear to be sweet at the offset but would lure them away from God and end in their destruction. It dwells primarily on the future misery, distress, and troubles that would be Israel's downfall if it failed to trust in God's Word. This song showed how some of the people would allow the sweetness of their blessed arrangement to become bitter and sour. But, Moses also foretold of the blessings of prosperity and happiness which could be theirs through

living in obedience to the Word of God (33:6-29). He sang of the joy they would know if they believed in God and kept their promises to him. He sang of the opportunities that would be available to them, if they remained faithful to God and resisted the temptations that were sure to come in the new land. He sang of the reward of the faithful.

Thus, the song that begins at Deuteronomy 32 begins by singing of the greatness of God. He is the Rock (unchangeable), His work is perfect (32:3-4; II Samuel 23:3; Psalms 31:3; Isaiah 17:10). The Almighty Rock, who will never forsake the faithful, is perfect . . . a God of truth and without iniquity (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Israelites were to daily consider His purpose for their lives and set their priorities in light of His will: They were to set their hearts to all the words which were commanded them by the words of this Law (32:46-47).

Moses' song told Israel, in no uncertain terms, that once in the promised land there would be some of them that would try to find their happiness from other sources. Those efforts will end in bitter experiences and failed efforts. Others, he said will remember that the real honey of life is in the Rock of their salvation.

Vinegar Experiences

Today there are many who have begun the new year with fresh enthusiasm and commitment. They are excited about living the Christian life and look forward to the sweetness of life. Too often however, that which should have been sweet becomes bitter. Great positive attitudes sour and values once held strongly begin to weaken. Satan has a way of working on us to turn what should be sweet into something bitter.

HOW GOOD FRUIT BECOMES BITTER: Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. The fruit of the spirit, like any fruit, is susceptible to all of the influences of life that cause it to decay. A handful of plums placed in a jar will decay and will ferment to a point that what was once fresh plums becomes plum brandy. But when the plum brandy is allowed to ferment, a bacterium is introduced and what was a sweet tasting wine brandy becomes a bitter tasting vinegar. There are many who watch love change to bitterness of hate. They have observed as their peace became confusion. Instead of longsuffering, many now have short patience. Instead of gentleness some are now brash. Instead of goodness some have become basically bad. Some have lost their faith, they have become abrasive rather than meek and they have lost all semblance of temperate behavior.

Just about any fruit, because of its sugar content, can become a vinegar. The more sugar a fruit has the better. Vinegar is the final result of spoiled fruit. In the same sense, the most likely people to become bitter are those who once were sweet. The worst enemies are often those who were at one time best friends or lovers. The most pessimistic person is one who was once very optimistic. Bitterness breeds on those who have a quality of sweetness about themselves. Even the sweetest honey, if allowed to ferment can become vinegar.

Satan looks for an opportunity to take a usually sweet person and make him bitter. That's why 1 Pet 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

PRESERVING FRUIT KEEPS IT SWEET: There is a way to keep the fruit of the spirit sweet, free of contamination and guaranteed not to become vinegar. The method is similar to the way our great grand parents canned peaches, pears, figs and plums. Do you remember how they would take peaches, peel them, cover them with sugar and cook them until those peaches had a sweet syrup surrounding them? Do you remember how she would sterilize those Mason Jars and pour those peaches to the jars and seal them tight? Then she would take those jars and put them into a big pan filled with super hot water and let them sit for a while. When she finished, we had something called preserves. They would last for years!

If our sweetness is to be preserved we must do something similar. We must peel away anything that could influence us to do evil. Cover ourselves in the sweet love of God, then seal ourselves in the protective care of the Grace of God. Ephesians 4:30 says we are "sealed" until the day of redemption. That means those who want to keep the sweetness of God in their lives must act to preserve it in the new year.

Fruit that has been sealed does not turn to vinegar!

Fruit that has been sealed does not go sour!

Fruit that has been sealed does not spoil!

Honey In the Rock!

Finally, brothers and sisters we must also consider that while there will be many tempting situations that will arise in this new year, every believer should remember that whatever we need, God's got it...there is honey in the Rock!

The new year offers many challenges. It is a weary land. Yet there is a rock in the weary land!

In the days ahead there will be some scorching summers, but the Rock is a shade on your right hand, for the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night!

Believers can expect to be attacked in the days ahead, but the Rock gives them a special vantage place, a higher ground!

There are some dry days ahead, but there is also refreshment in the Rock! That's what Israel found out when God brought water for a thirsty nation from a rock!

When times are difficult and bitter experiences tend to change our attitude, it's good to remember that there is also honey in the Rock!

Those who understand that there is honey in the Rock, have reached a point when they have accepted that life's circumstances are not terminal because "Our God is able!"

The world doesn't understand how believers live so sweetly even though they don't always have the best of everything!

They don't understand how we can be so happy but:

Our bank accounts are so low!

We are not driving a Rolls Royce!
We don't have expensive furniture in our homes!
Our closets are not filled with brand-new clothes!
Hard times seem to come your way so often
Death just left your door
What they don't understand is, the one thing all of us do know that we serve a God who specializes in taking the bitter things of life and making them sweet!
I don't know about you but I've found out that God can take my:
WEAKNESS and turn it into strength; DEFEATS and turn them into victories
DARKNESS and turn it into light, HUNGER and turn it into satisfaction
SADNESS and turn it into gladness; EMPTINESS and turn it into fullness!
SORROW and turn it into joy; SIN and turn it into salvation!
It doesn't matter what the new year brings, I found out there is honey in the Rock!
Rock of Ages, Cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee!
This Rock is Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
This Rock is Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!
Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock because...
There is honey in the Rock!
No wonder the song writer declare "He's sweet I know! He's sweet I know. I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!

No. 738-Communion

Table Talk

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 17, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

Introduction

What do you talk about at the dinner table? The family dinner is becoming an endangered entity in America. Only a few families actually observe a daily family meal in which all members of the family are present for at least one meal a day. While most families strive to achieve this goal, it seems increasingly harder to accomplish. At the table, the family communicates its hopes and dreams. At the table there is fellowship and interaction. The meal is the reason for the gathering but the most lasting impact is the interaction between family members. Much is learned around the family table.

Sometimes table talk can be revealing. When Little Eddie told the family about his day at school at the family dinner, it revealed a lot about him. "Miss Jones said she would pick one person to sit on the front seat and be the class leader. She said me and Johnny were her final choices." The family listened as they passed food around the table. "She decided to give us a test to decide which one," Eddie said "because she said we were about the same in everything." Eddie revealed that when the test ended that Miss Jones picked Johnny to be the class leader even though both of them missed one question, it was number 10, on the test. "I went to her and I asked why she picked Johnny over me. We both missed the same question and received the same score. What's the difference?" The father then asked, "What did Johnny have as his number 10 answer?" Eddie then answered, "He wrote, 'I don't know! and I wrote "neither do I?" Table Talk can be revealing.

A few church women were sitting around the table talking, and the subject turned to their husbands. One lady said "My husband just won't go to church with me, I think he's going to hell." This led to talk around the table about the spirituality of their husbands. One complained of a husband that wouldn't go to bible study. Another complained of a husband who never participated with the other church men. Another said her husband never participated in family prayer and devotions. It was

generally agreed that, for one reason or another, all the husbands were going to end up in hell. So, then the church women started speculating about themselves. One woman said "I try to be good - I'm sure I'll make it to Heaven." Each talked of reasons why they were good wives and were all going to heaven. They noticed that one of the ladies wasn't saying anything. They looked at her and said "You're such a nice lady, surely you're going to Heaven...?" She said, "No, first thing in the morning, I'm going to buy me a ticket straight to hell!" They were shocked and asked why. "Well if what you say is right, then only women will be in heaven. If I get my ticket now, I'll be the only woman in hell and...it will be heaven!"

When we gather at the Lord's table, what should be on the mind of every believer? What should concern us and occupy our thoughts? At the Lord's table we focus on the reality of his death, and the assurance of his return. It brings us hope and renewal.

As Christians, we grow stronger when we fellowship together at the Lord's table. It renews our faith and hope that one day our savior will return and will bring with him our reward!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he gives instructions to the Christians at Corinth about the proper observance of the Lord's Supper.

In this passage Paul gives the Corinthians a good talk about the table or the Lord's supper and exactly what it means to every believer.

He began by explaining what the Lord's supper was not. He noted that it was not a feast and eating was not the primary reason for the observance. The Corinthians expanded the Lord's supper to a point that observances had become giant feasts and pot luck dinners. Those who came, brought baskets of food and stuffed themselves at the weekly meetings. Those who were fortunate had plenty of food. Those who were not so fortunate watched as the others ate. They actually stuffed themselves. They drank so much wine that they became drunk.

Paul noted that an observance in which eating food and getting drunk is the primary reason, is not observing the Lord's supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 he wrote, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before the other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." In verse 22 he said those who want to eat full meals should go home and eat, but the Lord's supper was a symbolic reminder rather than a feast.

The purpose of the Lord's supper is to recall the sacrifice made by Jesus for the remission of sin. The bread represents his body. The wine represents his blood. Taken together, they remind believers of his life and substance, both of which were given for the remission of our sins.

Paul noted that the Lord's supper is a time of spiritual reflection, self examination, and thanksgiving.

Spiritual reflection. Verse 26 notes "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." The elements of the Lord's supper

prompt every believer to remember that salvation is conditioned on a sacrifice given by Christ himself. They remind each believer that the sacrifice made required real blood and the loss of a real life. In making the sacrifice for us at Calvary, Jesus paid for our sins. The Lord's supper causes every participant to reflect on that sacrifice.

Self Examination. Verses 27-29 remind every believer of his personal covenant and promise to God. Each believer is to approach the Lord's supper with an attitude of seriousness and self judgment. Paul notes that no believer should participate in the Lord's supper unworthily. Unworthiness in this context implies irreverence. It refers to a person who participates in the observance and takes it lightly or "not discerning the Lord's body" which means the participant forgets or ignores the fact that the observance is extremely sacred because it represents the Lord's body. The self examination is one of motives and intentions. It is personal. It is private.

Thanksgiving. Verse 24 shows what Jesus himself did at the Lord's supper. He gave thanks. He gave thanks for Calvary. He gave thanks for the difficulties ahead. He gave thanks for the troubles to come. He even gave thanks for his death. Showing gratitude is expected from every believer. Give thanks to God for everything.

Table Talk

As believers, what do we talk about when we assemble at the Lord's table? Current events? Other people? The latest fashions? Are some a bit hungry and wish for larger portions? Are some a bit thirsty, with a taste for larger wine glasses? Table talk, to a large extent depends on the setting.

Luke 14:1-24 gives an instance in which Jesus himself talked a whole lot at the table. As he dined with friends, he talked about, being sensitive to the needs of others, being humble, sharing with others and taking advantage of opportunities. Jesus talked a lot at the table. His conversation was interesting, informative and positive.

However, when Jesus approached the last supper his conversation shortened. When he talked, he talked about Giving thanks to God and Calvary! Thus, from Jesus we get two subjects to talk about at the Lord's supper: thanks and Calvary. From Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we get the third, self examination.

GIVING THANKS: When Jesus talked at his last supper, he gave thanks. Yet, the thanks he offered was not for anything he had received in the past. He offered thanks for a crucifixion and death that was coming the next day. As he took the bread and broke it, he said it symbolized his body, he gave thanks for the bread and the sacrifice.

At the Lord's table we too should give thanks for everything. We should thank God for protecting us from dangers, but we should also give him thanks for difficulties that lie ahead. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." In every situation, we should give God thanks. Not only do we thank him for the new job, but we also thank him for getting fired. Why? Because Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

When saints gather for the Lord's supper there is plenty of thanksgiving, testifying

and praising of God for his goodness and mercy are everlasting.

SELF EXAMINATION: The Lord's supper is a serene time when we hear not the voices of others but we hear "self talk." It's the time when we examine and talk to ourselves about the life we live and our true intentions and motivations. Self talk comes in our quiet times, when we have removed all other considerations. Self talk looks deep and asks many questions. Among the questions that a saint examining himself will ask are, "Am I involved in a sinful practice for which I have not repented?" "Am I doing my very best to be true to the Christian faith?" "Is my life-style at the present, at odds with what Christ expects?"

Paul said, after self examination a person should not partake in the Lord's supper if his own self examination shows he is unworthy at the moment. Instead of the blessing normally derived from participation, the unworthy participant brings damnation on his own soul. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 he said "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

When saints gather for the Lord's supper there should be a time for self talk and examination.

Talk About Calvary

Finally, when saints get together for the Lord's supper, not only should there be plenty of talk around the table about blessings the Lord has given; what the Lord is doing now, and blessings that are coming in the future. The saints must talk about Calvary!

Calvary is the essence of the Lord's supper. What happened there is the reason for our salvation. There, on Calvary, Jesus became the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, dying in our stead to give us a chance at the tree of life.

When saints get together at the Lord's supper there will be plenty of table talk.

In the secular world there are plenty of rules that govern table talk, but we find that it is hard to follow those rules when we get around the Lord's supper table.

The world tells us not to talk about problems and troubles at the table, because that will stop your food from digesting properly.

But saints have a problem with that rule because anytime we are in the presence of the Lord we can tell him about our problems and he will hear and answer prayer. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

That's why the song writer said, "Let us have a little talk with Jesus. Tell him all about your troubles ...just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!"

The world says when we come to the table we should not whisper to the person next to us and point because it is ill mannered.

Yet when we come in the presence of the Lord we have to keep breaking that rule

because everything about us points to the goodness of the Lord!

If we talk about our family, that points to the goodness of the Lord!

If we talk about our job or career, that points to the goodness of the Lord!

If we talk about our health and strength, that points to the goodness of the Lord!

An old lady was destitute and starving and she prayed to God for help. One day the king saw her lowly condition and decided to help her as an example of his benevolence and good will. Later, she received an invitation to a banquet where she would sit at the king's table as one of his guests. In preparation, a matron warned the old lady that it was considered an insult to refer to the king or any of his good works at the dinner table. If called upon to speak she should be cordial but never refer to the king.

Sure enough, the old lady was called upon. Surrounded by Nobles and Lords she couldn't help herself. "I want you to know there is a man at the table that has turned my life around. He has put clothes on my back and brought me out of the darkness into the light!" As she sat down the matron frowned and said "You will probably lose everything you have, you were not suppose to talk about the king." The old lady answered "When I said there was a man at the table, I was not talking about the king, I was talking about the king of kings. I don't think he'd mind too much if I told the world that he will make a way!"

Today, brothers and sisters there is a man at the table...and it's all right to talk about him!

It's all right to tell the world how the Lord picked you up and turned you around!

It's all right to tell the world how he planted your feet on solid ground!

The world says it's not polite to talk with your mouth full, but that's the best time to tell the world about the goodness of the Lord, when he has anointed your head with oil and your cup runneth over..tell the world!

Tell the world about Jesus!

Tell the world how he died!

Tell the world how he was buried!

Tell the world how Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 377-King Day

A Spirit Led Drum Major

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 19, 1991

Scripture: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19; "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor. 3:17

Introduction

Have you ever watched drum majors? It is a fascinating experience to watch as they strike up the band, blow their whistles and lead the parade. The drum major sets the pace of the march, signals the cadence for the drummers, and directs the band as it plays and marches.

Martin Luther King characterized his role in history as that of a "drum major." There were many instruments of freedom in the movement that included the Urban League, C.O.R.E., N.A.A.C.P, and Black Panthers, that were playing tunes and warming up. The various players stood ready but there was no single person that could "strike up the band" and get them to march for a single purpose, until Dr. King arrived. Refusing to take much credit for his actions in his last words to America he said "If any of you are around when I meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. I'd like somebody say that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others...yes if you want say that I was a drum major, say I was a drum major for justice..peace..righteousness." As a drum major Dr. King pricked the conscious of America and challenged the dormant players of our ethnic leadership to take an active and even dangerous step toward breaking down the barriers of hatred in America.

As America salutes the memory of this great man we, who knew him, must resist the attempts to tame his image by glorifying him as a mystic dreamer, a godlike hero image to be worshipped and idolized while the sacred principles for which he lived and died are continuously desecrated. By focusing the emphasis on Dr. King as a futuristic dreamer rather than as an activist that stirred the world to take action against racism, poverty, and war, the established powers have sterilized his legacy and made it safe for public consumption. If the focus remains on the abstract nature of the dream, then less emphasis will be placed upon the activism that was necessary in King's time and is needed now to fulfill the dream's demands.

As Christians we understand the role of prophets of God. We know that each

was raised up by God to respond to the crises of the hour. Each was empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to lead the march for freedom and justice in their generation. While Dr. King was a great man, we do not elevate him to a godly statue, we give thanks to God for using him to help facilitate the blessing of increased liberty for all.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he selected a passage of text to read during a service at the synagogue. It has been described by theologians as Christ's inaugural address, or first sermon, in which he set the tone for his ministry. He read a passage from Isaiah and pronounced to the leading religious scholars of his day that the scripture was prophetic of himself and would be fulfilled in his ministry.

The overriding idea of this short announcement message was "liberty" or freedom. Jesus said it was his mission to show those who are captives the way to freedom; to encourage those who had given up to continue the struggle, to give a renewed vision to those who were blinded by circumstance, and to announce the year of the jubilee. Liberty is what Jesus talked about and some in the audience immediately recognized the tenor of the message and immediately applied their own interpretation to his challenging announcement.

A captive people, the Jews were treated as second class citizens. They could meet among themselves but major decisions about their destiny were made by the Romans. They were not in chains, as they were in Egypt, yet they were not a free people. They were taxed but they had no representation in the democratic government of Rome. The laws that respected the rights of every Roman did not apply to them. They lived in segregated sections of the city, and assumed a second class status. They had fought many times to be respected as first class citizens during the period between the Testaments with varying degrees of success. The revolt of the Macabees and other conflicts raised spirits but ended in domination by the Romans. At the time of this text they were dispirited, broken, and resolved that if there was to be a change in their status it would be so gradual that their generation would never see it to fruition. Others had become blinded by the shear power of the Roman presence with legions of soldiers and its infinite military might. They saw no way possible for their efforts to succeed. Barabbas and other militant personalities had been jailed, and only a handful of zealots dared even talk about liberating the people, and certainly not in public.

On this backdrop of social circumstances Jesus makes a public proclamation that he would bring "good news" to the poor, raise their spirits, liberate the captives and announce the acceptable year of the Lord, or the Jubilee when all captives are set free. He did not intend to jump into such a task because he wanted to make a name for himself, but because the Spirit of God was upon him. Paul wrote the Corinthians and explained that wherever the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom and liberty. So, Jesus stepped forward as a drum major for freedom, led by the spirit of God to challenge the established order and change it forever, even at the expense of his own life.

King's Spirit

The social conditions that prompted Martin Luther King to step forward from the ranks of his generation and sound the clarion call are similar to those of this text. African Americans were socially ostracized. We did not have full voting rights, or legal protections under the law. We still rode buses on the back seat, sat in colored waiting rooms, drank water from colored fountains, and were served through the back entrance at restaurants and hotels. Many of our people had given up hope that conditions could change in their time. Some lost the vision and while the Black Panthers took arms to defend themselves and Malcom X promoted "freedom by any means necessary" in some parts of the country, for the most part African Americans were resigned that freedom was a distant dream.

In I954 a young 26 year old preacher began his first pastorate in Montgomery, Alabama. He was empowered by the spirit of God with a tremendous flow of words, and an overwhelming sense of purpose. A year later, in December of 1955 he was called upon to lead the Montgomery community in a struggle that changed the world. He was reluctant, because he waited on divine guidance and once it was received he jumped in with both feet. He borrowed the social techniques of Ghandi and the Spirit of Christ as he challenged the poor masses of America to stand up and resist unjust laws. He lifted the hopes of the broken hearted to the point that they marched in the heat, endured beatings by police, bombings of their homes and churches, riots, and the long hot summers of the 60's.

He raised the consciousness of America so much that the FBI trailed him looking for and on occasion, finding personal flaws to use against him. But in his public position he was led by the spirit and there was no stopping him. To those who had lost sight of the possibilities he gave new vision by pronouncing "I have a dream." Many people believe that the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, and 1965 Voting Rights Act was, with respect to the legal system, a year of Jubilee for African Americans. We were legally free.

Real Freedom

The impact of Dr. King's life was that he served as a drum major who was led by the spirit of God to set the wheels in motion to help us gain freedom under the law. True freedom would only come when we are free on the inside. The legal shackles that held us were snapped but freedom for every man woman and child would only come when we are guided by what Thoreau called the "beat of a different drummer."

When Jesus spoke he challenged Israel to become free of the restraints of the law and turn to God. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Jesus challenged Israel to seek the truth because the "truth shall make you free." Truth crushed to the ground will rise again!

The truth is, that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with

certain inalienable rights among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Crush it to the ground and it will rise again!

The truth is, that God is not a respecter of persons and whether red, yellow, Black or white we are all precious is in his sight. Crush it to the ground and it will rise again!

The truth is, the God we serve is still on the throne. He sits high and looks low and can move mountains out of our way. Crush it to the ground and it will rise again.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed his fateful lighting and his terrible swift sword, his truth is marching on. Glory, Glory hallelujah, his truth is marching on!

This is the truth that was taken to Calvary; nailed to a Cross and buried in a borrowed tomb.

This is the truth that was crushed to ground and trampled!

But early Sunday morning, truth crushed to ground said:

"I'll rise again!"

No. 739-Inspiration

Winning Life's Super Bowl

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 31, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto the mount. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:19-21 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12

Introduction

Do you ever feel like you are in a struggle with someone or something all of the time? Most people sense that each day of their lives they are in a contest of some kind against some opponent, seen or unseen. Planing to overcome the enemy, defend against his darts and launch our own offensive gets to be the core of our routine. Every believer leaves home on a daily basis, prayed up and confident that they will return the victor in the fight against the unseen forces of evil that would destroy the quests, dreams and hopes of the people of God.

Perhaps that explains our fondness for contests. Any kind of contest: Boxing, basketball, baseball, or water melon seed spitting. We thrill at watching two equally matched opponents demonstrate their skills in the competitive arena. Some even spice up the contest by placing bets on which one will win. We get excited in face offs whether its between David and Goliath, Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett or Luke Sky Walker and Darth Vader. We love the thrill of the contest because in a small way we can project ourselves into the arena. For one reason or another we associate with one competitor or another. We can see ourselves in the arena! When our team wins, we win! When our team loses, we feel as though we have personally lost.

On Super Bowl Sunday churches scramble to find ways to relate. Last year reports in the media told of churches where the ushers were dressed in referee stripe shirts, the pews were marked off as yard lines and the church service began with the deacons in a huddle and a toss of the coin between the ministers to determine who would preach. Wouldn't it be something if our love for Christ dwindles to the point that to maintain a worship service on Super Bowl the church would have to equip its Mother's Board with pom poms and mini-skirts to be cheerleaders? Will the choir

need to dance down the aisle singing "Drop kick me Jesus, through the goal posts of life?" Will we penalize deacons for long prayers for "delay of game?" Will we have to give every usher yellow flags to throw at people who refuse to sing? Instead of hymns will it be necessary for the choir to sing the fight songs of both Super Bowl competitors? If the service lasts beyond the time that the televised pre-game show begins, will the head deacon need a whistle to blow to give the preacher a two minute warning? For some people, deciding to attend worship on Super Bowl Sunday is tough, but not for others. For them, every Sunday is a Super Bowl Sunday! The cause of Christ is matched up against Satan week after week! Guess what? Our team always wins!

When your team is up against a powerful foe, who do you want on your side? If it's the 7th game of the World Series - bottom of the ninth inning - bases loaded - 2 outs - you are down by 1 and you can choose anyone in baseball history to be your next batter - who would it be?

If it's the last minute of the Super Bowl, you have the ball, you are down by six and you can choose anyone in football history to be your quarterback - who would it be?

If it's the last 10 seconds of the final game of the NBA playoff - you have the ball - you are down by one and you can choose anyone in basketball history to take your last shot - who would it be?

In such a moment none of us would pick a rookie. We want somebody who has proven themselves in tough situations.

As Christians, we enter a super contest for our souls every day. We're glad to know that we have Jesus, the MVP of the universe on our team!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Elijah as he challenges the people to watch a contest between God and the prophets of Baal.

The wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel established Baal worship throughout the land. The people had relegated God to a second place status in their lives. Some had discounted him altogether. Baal worship was growing in the land, promoted by the king and 450 Baal prophets.

According to Holman, Baal worship revolved around two themes that represented the conception of Baal his worshipers held. Baal was both the sun-god and storm-god. He was worshiped as sun-god when the people wished to express thanks and gratitude for light and warmth and fertility. Worship of Baal as storm-god took place to appease the destructive nature of Baal, demonstrated by drought and storms that devastated the vegetation of the worshipers. The efforts to appease Baal whenever adverse conditions prevailed culminated in the sacrifice of human beings, usually the firstborn of the one offering the sacrifice. Baal worship was as diverse as the communities in which he was worshiped. Each locality had its own Baal, who was named after the city or place to which he belonged. Baal was considered the owner or possessor of the land on which his followers lived.

Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to put up or shut up. A super contest was planned between all 450 of Baal's prophets and Elijah the prophet of God. The actual contestants would be the false god Baal and the real God Jehovah. As each called on their God, the true God would answer by raining down fire from heaven. An added, unspoken, expectation was that the real God would end a drought that devastated the land

The first half of the contest was dominated by the prophets of Baal, all 450 of them. They danced their ritual dances, sang their chants and called on Baal to consume their sacrifice with fire from heaven. As they danced, Elijah taunted them on the sidelines, amused that Baal must have been hard of hearing or out to lunch.

After the false prophets failed, Elijah wet the wood on his altar by pouring four jars of water over it three times. In response to Elijah's prayer, Yahweh rained fire from heaven to consume the wet wood. It became obvious that Elijah's God was the real God. Elijah ordered the false prophets killed.

Elijah next prophesied that the drought was soon to end (1 Kings 18:41) after three rainless years. From Carmel, Elijah prayed and shortly after the rains came.

The real God had won a super contest on Mt. Carmel and in the hearts of the people. The test contrasted his power and the impotence of Baal. It showed the moral superiority of God and the inferiority of all others.

For the people, the contest meant they underwent three years of drought, calling on the wrong God. Their personal battle was one of survival. The help they needed was always close by, but they were calling on a helpless, useless, source that could not assist them when they really needed help.

Facing life's challenges

On a daily basis, most of us face huge life challenges. The nature of the challenge varies but the adversary is still the same. Decisions concerning finances, marriage, school life, employment opportunity and morality face us each and every day. The pressure of dealing with these challenges is immense. Sometimes they even seem insurmountable and the odds seem stacked against any form of success.

There are some who try avoid the challenges, while others recognize that problems must be tackled head on!

Christians study, pray, and verbalize a general love and dependence on God. We sing regularly, "I will trust in the Lord.." When problems come, it is put up or shut up time. All of the pre-game hype and promotion that comes with our Sunday school class professions of faith comes to a head on the day when faith must come face to face with adversity. When problems come, each of us enters the super bowl.

When Elijah went into his put up or shut up situation he followed three steps that helped him to emerge the victor. He was a 450 to one underdog. It had'nt rained for three and one half years. He was meeting his opponents in front of their home crowd. When put up or shut up time arrived, he entered the contest using three steps that might be useful to us today:

FACE OUR CHALLENGES WITH CONFIDENCE: Just as Elijah refused to be intimidated and actually reveled in the moment, every believer should face each of life's challenges with confidence. Confidence is a faith-based virtue. Those who exhibit confidence know God's power. They are not intimidated by the odds because God + one equals a majority. With confidence Elijah quietly prepared his altar. (V 30-35)With confidence he ordered four barrels of water and ordered his sacrifice to be soaked four times. We should also face our challenges with confidence that comes from the word: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" Philippians 4:13. God's people have always been outnumbered, but they have always arisen the victors. They have always been the underdogs, but they have always won!

REMEMBER GOD'S CAPABILITY: It is easy to be overwhelmed by a problem if we forget our capabilities. We can be restrained and detained for great periods of time if we can be tricked into forgetting our capabilities. A baby elephant is tied to a cement pole in its early life in the circus. The baby elephant pulls against the pole but is not able to escape. As the years go by the elephant grows in size with enormous power. In the circus, that same elephant is often tied to the back of a tent by a little rope. Why doesn't the elephant pull the tent down? Because his mind is still tied to the cement pole. He cannot focus on his present capability. Believers facing challenges don't' focus on the size of challenge, they focus on the size of God. When David stood before Goliath he didn't worry about Goliath's height, but kept remembering what God had done for him in the past. The 12 spies who reported on the prosperity of the promised land said they could take the land despite the problems. There is no mountain too high for God to climb! No river too wide for God to cross! God specializes in doing things that are impossible!

TALK TO GOD BEFORE YOU ENTER THE ARENA: When Elijah faced his challenged he did what every believer on record has been known to do, he talked to God. He said "..let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word." (v36). Before Israel crossed over the Red Sea, Moses prayed. When they face starvation and drought in the desert, they prayed. Name the challenge and watch believers go into prayer before they enter the arena. The believer's prayer is not for victory, but that God's will might be accomplished. The Hebrew Boys stood before the fiery furnace confident that God was able to deliver and committed to the point that they declared even if he did not deliver them they would not be defeated or intimidated. They wanted to accomplish God's will. Before the battle pray, because prayer changes things. Pray because prayer can cause the impossible to become possible.

Get ready to rumble

Finally, brothers and sisters every believer must be ready when he or she steps into the arena. We must be ready, mentally, physically and emotionally.

No contest can be won unless the competitor enters with the right frame of mind. It is important to know the nature of your adversary and to remain focused. That's

why Paul writing to the Ephesians said, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12). When we are focused we remember "greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world!"

Don't attempt to enter life's super bowl without the right equipment. Paul said in Ephesians 6:13 " Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"

Every Super Bowl competitor who expects to avoid serious injury wears the right equipment.

—Underneath every competitor's uniform, unseen by the observing eye is a **GIRDLE**. It helps to keep everything in place. Every believer that steps in the arena of life must wear the girdle of truth. It is important to have "right" on your side. This is what Paul referred to as having your loins girt about with truth.

—A good HELMET protects the head from collisions that are sure to come when we butt heads with the enemy head on. Paul called it the helmet of salvation. Every helmet comes equipped with a chin guard . The saved life is like a good helmet. It helps believers withstand the attacks of Satan. The holy spirit is like a built in chin guard. When things are down, it reminds us to keep our chin up, everything will be all right.

—A MOUTH PIECE is essential in the contest. For believers a mouth piece keeps us from saying the wrong things or even saying the right thing but at the wrong time! This is what David meant in Psalm 39:1 when he said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Don't go into battle without a mouthpiece!

—SHOULDER PADS protect the shoulders of those who are receiving hits and delivering blocks in the contests. This is what Paul referred to when he said, "having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness"

—CLEATS are special shoes that help competitors to grip the ground. Paul told the Ephesians to keep their "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Gospel shoes don't slip and slide as other shoes do, but they grab the turf and hold on! When life gets tough, they hold on!
If thunderstorms break out and the turf is wet, they hold on!

Every good competitor enters the contest prepared to play until the game is over! There is no praise or reward for those who quit before the end. I hear Revelation 21:7 say, " He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Every saint should be able to say, "Today is Super Bowl Sunday, but tomorrow will be super bowl Monday!" Every day we come up against Satan is super contest. However, we can say with assurance, "Our team will win!"

We know our team will win because of the line up!

At left end there is GENESIS at right end there is REVELATION.

At tackle and guard is Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at center is Malachi!

At half back is faith and hope! At full back there is prayer!

But my team always wins because, my team has the best quarterback!

The quarter back of my team wears jersey number 1-1-1. One for the father, one for the Son and One for the Holy Ghost.

My quaterback knows how to play the game because he's a super bowl veteran!

One day, 2,000 years ago he met the forces of Satan out on Calvary, died on an old rugged cross!

But just before the game was over, Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

You don't have to wait until the battle is over...shout now!

Your super bowl team has already won!

No. 740-Anniv.-Men

Adam, Where Art Thou?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 7, 1999

SCRIPTURE: ***And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?Genensis 3:9***

Introduction

Where are the Black men? It seems that many people are concerned with what popular conversation calls the sudden disappearance of Black men. In the last three decades there has been a growing trend toward beating up on Black men to the point that there is a generation among us now that has completely accepted as fact that there are no Black men of substance in America. Today, whenever Black men assemble in sizeable numbers America stops and watches because the very assembly defies the myth of the diminished Black man. Can you imagine the awe that the 1995 gathering of one million Black men in Washington must have had on those who believed that Black men were either all dead, drunk or in jail? Can you imagine the powerful inspiration of such a sight as it put all of the pundits to silence? The sight of so many men brought the myth into question: If there are no Black men, where did all of these come from? Why weren't they conforming to the images seen in the media? Why weren't they drunks? Why weren't they drug dealers? Why weren't they wearing prison clothes?

Earl Ofari Hutchinson, author of "The Assassination of the Black Male Image" writes that the image of Black men in America has been carefully shaped by the national media which has pounded, twisted, and slanted Black male stereotypes into sensational headlines and T.V. sound bites who combined message is that Black men are non-achievers, brutes, shiftless, lazy and criminal.

The only images that America projects forcefully of the Black man is that he is either the ignorant Sambo or the hate filled Savage. When Hollywood wants to make a movie about Black life that shows Black men, the men in the movies will reflect one extreme or the other, the ridiculous antics of Step-in-fetch it or the sheer rage of "Boyz in the Hood."

Sambo or Savage, that's the choice that African American women and children are given, when they consider the image of the Black man in America. Black men do face challenges.

There are troubling trends that are developing that are threatening their very

existence. The trend toward violent crime is making young Black men an endangered part of our society. Three out of every five Black boys is expected to have a run with the law, be in jail or dead before they reach the age of 30. That's staggering. According the United Negro College Fund, the number of Black men attaining college degrees since the 70's has been outpaced by the number of Black women who have increased 55 percent while Black men have increased only 20 percent. Black men are having women problems as they are viewed less eligible by a more educated professional Black woman who refuses to marry down to a man who is not her equal.

Black men have problems like men of all other races, but the problems are not thematic of the entire gender. The image of the Black man is under attack. Gone are images of the strong Black father of yesteryear who took nothing but grabbed a shotgun to protect his wife, children and land. Gone are the images of men so proud that they would rather die free than live as slaves. Gone are the images of the hard working, God fearing Black man who believed in teaching his children about God, keeping his word and giving an honest days work for an honest day's pay. Gone are the images of the Black father who understood the value of a dollar and saved to provide a future for his children. Because that image is not shown to us in the media, does not mean that the picture of the Black man has changed.

There are still millions of strong Black men in America. There are men who will stand in the front door of adversity and defend their wives, children and land. There millions of God fearing men who still teach their children the importance of God and family and giving an honest days work for an honest day's pay. Even though it's not shown there are millions of Black men who live and breathe in professional circles and have mastered the art of investment and providing secure futures for the families.

Where are the Black men? Somewhere between the myth of non-existence and the image of Sambo and Savage is Today's Black man. Present, but unseen. Active, but unfelt. Growing, but ignored. Fortunately, God is not impressed with the media images of Black men. God knows there is something other than Sambo and Savage. God knows there is something else to our men other than the intoxicated images flashed to mindless masses.

Today, as in biblical times, God asks the same question he asked the first Black man, "Adam, where art thou?" As he beckons him to come forth and shoulder responsibility for his mistakes and rise above unfortunate circumstances and carve out a glorious future.

As Christians we are compelled to remember that God knows who we are and where we are at all times. He speaks and we respond to the sound of his voice. He asks and we answer. Today he asks, "Adam, where art thou?" and we are compelled to answer, "Here Lord, ready to serve!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Adam as he attempts to hide from God after disobeying the command not to eat from the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve were given full permission

to eat of all of the fruits of the Garden of Eden with the exception that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they both disobeyed they became fully aware that they had broken a sacred trust with God.

One day God's presence moved through the garden and Adam could hear God asking "Where art thou?" God asked a question even though he already knew the answer. Because God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, he knows all. God asked Adam the question not to gain information but to indicate to Adam that he was out of unity with his divine purpose.

He was some place he was not supposed to be. He was hiding, shriveling and disconnected. God asked Adam three questions: Where art thou? (v9) Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (v11) The three questions form basis of God's dispute with Adam: That he was not where he was supposed to be, that he listened to what others had to say rather than what God said, and that he disobeyed God's command. In asking these three questions, God both condemned Adam's poor stewardship and reminded him of his potential at the same time.

Where art thou?

The first question God asked Adam prompted him to consider his present circumstance, just as it prompts Black men today to consider our present circumstance. Where art thou? Sociologically, where art thou? The Black man is changing. He is more educated than his father and grandfather. He has more opportunities available to him than has ever been imagined. Despite the obvious frustrations of the social order, the American Black man is living in a virtual Garden of Eden when compared to other nations of the world. Yet, societal expectations of Black men are changing.

There are challenges to his manhood on every order. There are challenges to his safety, even his survival on every hand. Race discrimination still exists. He remains the target of institutionalized attempts to destroy his credibility. In light of social affluence and the growing problems of our community the Black man must not be found hiding in the garden.

When the question is asked, "Adam, where art thou?" The answer should be "I am busy doing your work Lord!" The Black community, which goes beyond mere geography, needs men who will use their increased social skills to help improve the plight of others that follow them.

Men are needed to join and form organizations of men who work to improve the plight of the community of African-Americans specifically and the entire community as a whole. We need men who will volunteer to help the homeless, feed the hungry, mentor children, teach investment techniques, promote literacy, fight crime and generate stronger leaders to build up the broken walls of our community.

Who told you, you were naked?

The second question God asked Adam, questioned who he had been listening to. A large part of his problem derived from the fact that he had been listening to the wrong person, Satan. For the most part the myths about Black men are being promoted by enemies of our community. The idea is to promote the weaknesses among us as examples that represent us all.

If we constantly show ourselves images of fallen Black men, it won't be long before we begin to think that the fallen represent us all. In moments of frustration we even find ourselves internalizing those fallen images.

Who told you there were no Black men? Why did you believe it when you look around and see men driving cabs, buses, working in offices, holding positions in government, working in high finance and making life and death decisions across this nation. Who told you there were no Black men? Who told you that a Black man ain't nothing! Why did you believe that when the legacy of nearly every Black family includes stories fathers and grandfathers who gave their lives on farms, serving as Pullman Porters, butlers, janitors, teachers, preachers and professionals to keep their families together?

Who told you that a Black man is shiftless and lazy when you see millions of Black men get up and go to work every day on jobs that no one else wants and millions of others stand in line looking for work that they can't find?

Who told Black youth that all they need to succeed in life is athletic skill? Why do you continue to believe when you know that nearly every NBA or NFL superstar has a college education an even the rapper Master P, was one of the smartest students in his high school class?

Who told you that you are basically dumb and stupid, so just concentrate on building your arm and leg muscles but not your brain power?

The world keeps focusing on the negatives of Black men, constantly showing them how naked they are and many men go into hiding, forcing their women to come up front.

Disobeyed the command

The third question God asked Adam was why he did not do what he was told. He was told NOT to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but he did it anyway.

He was told to take dominion over every thing God put in his hands and he failed to do that too! Genesis 1:26 the Adam family was given the charge to have "Dominion" over all creation. Dominion means leadership and responsibility.

If Black men are failing today it is in the area of leadership. There is no shortage of men biologically. There is no shortage socially. There is however, a growing shortage of men in leadership of the home, church, school and the general community.

It is no mistake that a growing number of communities are seeing their women rise up to fill vacancies created by the absent of men in leadership.

Where there is a son or a daughter there is a father somewhere, but mother is

providing the family leadership in many cases. Where there is a church, women are rising to chair the committees and shoulder the responsibilities of men.

In the community, an increasing number of women are becoming elected officials on school boards and other civic bodies because of a leadership vacuum..

Adam, Where art thou?

Adam was chastised because he wasn't where he was supposed to be and was not doing what he was told to do!

Adam, rise up and be a father to your children, without a court order!

Adam, volunteer to lead community efforts!

Adam, stand tall in the community of saints to champion the cause of Christ! Adam, where art thou?

Adam needs to know the voice of God

Finally, we must consider that as God called on Adam in the garden there are two truths that cannot be overlooked. God knew Adam and Adam knew the voice of God.

If ever there was a time when Black men need to know God that time is now! No man should become so comfortable in the pursuit of his career that he has little time or interest in the things of God. A black man in business for himself, soon finds that he can't succeed in the business world unless God sends the customers!

A black man climbing the corporate ladder, soon finds that he can't maintain his upward climb without the Blessings of the Lord! A black man striving to lead a family soon finds that his job is made much easier when he and the Lord are on good terms! It doesn't matter whether you are male or female, everyone needs a blessing every now and then!

When we need a blessing it good to know the voice of God! When we know the voice of God we hear him ask, Where art thou? But if we listen closely we can also hear him ask: Do you need anything? That's when we answer "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!

Sometimes the question may be: Adam, are you afraid? And we answer "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid? Adam, why are you looking down? And we answer: "I'll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!"

Adam, why are you sad because you don't have all the resources you want? That's when Adam remembers, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Adam, why are you worried? That's when the Adams of our generation rise to sing, "Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he! His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

The first Adam was in the garden hiding behind a tree, but the last Adam stretched out wide on a tree!

The first Adam was hiding from God, but the last Adam was raise up high for all men to see!

The first Adam disobeyed God, but the last Adam said, “not my will but thy will be done!”

He died out on Calvary! But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Adam, where art thou?

Adam, are you working on his program? Adam, have you given your life to him?

Adam, where... Where... Where art thou?

No. 544-Funeral

To Be Continued...

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 8, 1995

SCRIPTURE: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." Psalm 72:17-18

Introduction

Have you ever watched your favorite movie or television series only to find out that you had to wait until next week to find out its conclusion? Those were the times when you really became interested in the story line. You followed it from the beginning. You were enthralled with the plot. Then, just as you were sitting on the edge of your seat, the words "To be continued" came across the screen. For most people, those words are a giant "let down." Something good was interrupted. To find out the conclusion the viewer has to wait until the next episode.

While "To be Continued" is an interruption it is better than some of its alternatives. Sometimes we lose the picture because we lose the signal altogether. In this case we will never know what happened for ourselves. There is no continuation. We can lose the signal if there is trouble with the cable, a power failure, or transmission difficulties. Whatever the reason, once this happens, we lose the moment forever.

In this context, "to be continued" is better than never getting to see the end at all! Consider the farmer who decided it would be a good idea to have baked hen for his Sunday dinner.

The farmer looked at all of the chickens in the coop and there was not a single one that was as fine as Hattie the Hen! Hattie would bake good, even though she did have a reputation for being rather smart for a chicken. The Farmer heated up the pot of water real hot. He got his hatchet and caught Hattie under his arm! As he held her down and aimed his hatchet at her neck the farmer was amazed to hear Hattie talk! "Please pardon the interruption sir, but I think I would be much tastier, if you allowed me to freshen up a bit!" The farmer was amazed. He had a talking hen. He was so amazed that he put down his hatchet and allowed Hattie to go freshen up. The farmer waited for her return so he could finish his chopping.

When Hattie did not return for a while he sent his son looking for his prized talking chicken. Finally the son returned and said "It's amazing what Hattie has done!"

"What else has she done son?" Asked the farmer. The boy answered "Well chickens dont't talk. Hattie did. Chicken's don't fly either, but your prized talking chicken just flew the coop!" This farmer would have preferred a "to be continued" situation, but all he got was an empty baking pan!

There are many who suffer setbacks in life and never continue. Some fail. Some encounter sickness. Some experience death. There are many who lose their signal and never get a clear picture again.

As Christians we know life offers us many challenges. However, because we know the Lord we are not defeated by their enormity. Generally we pause, respond to the demands of the moment, and then return to our service as we continue doing what we do best... serving and praising the Lord!

Exposition

This text considers David as he speaks of the wonderful works of God that deserve continuous uninterrupted praise.

David, in an inaugural style psalm, points out to his son Solomon the importance of continuous praise and service to God for he is worthy of praise. In a Messianic phrase that begins at verse two and ends at the close of the psalm, David testifies to the greatness of God and to the beauty of Christ's reign as the Messianic Lord.

In verse 17, which is the focus of this text, David said our Lord's name will endure forever and his name "shall be continued!" The Hebrew word used for continued is NUWN (Noon) which means to resprout or shoot out repeatedly! The indication is that there will be times when circumstances will attempt to eliminate his name from the face of the earth, but regardless to what is done it will continuously resprout and shoot out again. Men will continuously be blessed by him.

Locked into the meaning of this simple phrase "shall be continued" was the secret of David's success as King, which he was passing on to his son. In his own life there had been moments when he was brought low, both in the eyes of men and in his own eyes. Despite his circumstance, David continued to resprout in his praise to God. When he was hunted by Saul. He found safety only in the hills. Prompting him to write "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." Despite being hunted as a vagabond, David resprouted and praised God more. When he was caught up in sin with Bathsheba and reached a low moral point in his life, he reached another low point. Here again, resprouted and saying "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and renew in me a right spirit!" When his son was ill, he reached such a low point that he covered himself in ashes and sat in mourning every day, tears flowing from his eyes. However, once his son died, he arose, washed himself and resprouted, continuing his duties. Those who did not understand him wondered how this could be so. He responded by saying when there was hope that the child might live he mourned, but once God acted there was no reason to mourn. "I can go to him, but he cannot come to me."

In these contexts David's life was the epitome of resprouting and continuously giving God praise. This quality is what he hoped to give his son Solomon who would follow him on the throne. This is the quality that faced each hardship, setback and letdown with a notation "to be continued" or "I shall return." It is an attitude molded and shaped by a lifetime of trusting and believing in God.

David said God would be praised continuously by the faithful, we would be retarded in the movement but would resprout to praise the Lord as long as there is a sun in the sky. Why will this happen? Because God only does wondrous things and those who believe in him know this truth and trust him continuously, despite their circumstance.

Life's Pauses

How do people respond to personal tragedy? Those who are non-believers have a different response than those who believe. Non-believers, those who are unfamiliar with the Lord, tend to be overwhelmed by their tragedies and are crushed by them. At the very least their optimism is dimmed. Sickness and the difficulties that attend it are frustrating. Financial misfortune is an immobilizing factor for many. Failed efforts at achievement sidelines some of the best. But the most devastating of tragedies is the death of a husband or wife or other immediate family member. In such moments a person has not only lost a friend and life partner, but a piece of themselves as well. After such a loss, those who are not strong in the Lord roll up into a cocoon and disappear from life forever. Their whole existence comes to an abrupt hault. Everything stops. They are defeated by a lack of faith.

It is as if they were watching the story of their life played out before their eyes and someone pulled the plug. They lost a wife, a husband, a friend and they are alone. So they sit daily and stare at life's blank screen. This is view of the defeated and the faithless.

However, the believer views difficulties and tragedies differently. Rather than view sickness, misfortune and death as terminal events that leave his screen blank, the believer assumes an automatic pause posture, placing himself on hold for a moment or two while he submits to the will of God. The believer doesn't view his life as unplugged and his future as a blank screen. On the contrary the believer says "wait a minute life, let me put you on hold, God is calling." After submitting to the will of God, enduring tragedy, and overcoming misfortune, he releases his pause button and continues his life of praising God.

For David, resprouting, or continuing meant continuing with his duties as King of Israel. It meant writing more psalms, and living the kind of life that made him a man after God's own heart. For Job, resprouting, or continuing meant living his life in faith that God would do what was best.

This ability of the believer to respond to personal loss with renewed praise for God is rooted in his or her belief that Christ has already given the ultimate victory over life and its problems. Like the Hebrew Boys they are confident that "My God is able

to deliver me." Like Paul they rest on the persuasion that nothing will separate them from the Love of Christ for " in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:38-39 says " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Even in the face of death, the believer is not completely without hope. Why? Because he or she lives daily on the promises of God. Jesus promised every follower that belief in him meant eternal life. On the occasion of the death of Lazarus he made a point to remind Martha of this truth: " Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"John 11:25-26 Those who believe Jesus' words know that while death of the body is unavoidable, death of the spirit and soul, which is the whole essence of life, continues for those who believe in God.

Standing on the Promises

Believers stand on the promises of our Lord! We believe them and therefore when we experience the death of a loved one who is a believer, we don't view it as a life unplugged, ended and abruptly stopped, but one that came to a point where we saw the words "to be continued" on the life's screen!

We live with the full knowledge that in God's own time, we'll live out the final episode of life's experience, in a different place, in a different way, with one long continuous flow of love, peace, and joy.

Since we know that God has great things in store for us, believers must continue doing what they do best!

We must continue in service. The poor, the needy, lonely and broken hearted still need our help. We must continue to demonstrate the love of God in the community of the saints and within our own family circle.

We must continue praising God, resprouting from setbacks, misfortunes lifting him up even higher!

We praise God because he is worthy to be praised! We praise God because of the many wondrous things he has done in our lives!

Like Job, we must respond, " though he slay me, yet will I trust him!" (Job 13:15)

We will continue because we know that despite our personal loss, God still loves us. He has not and will not abandon us or forsake us!

Let us continue to praise God to the highest! Let us praise him in his sanctuary!

When we praise God:

--Burdens are lifted; souls are enriched!

--Questions are answered and confusions are cleared

--Sorrows are removed; joys are received!

--Hopes are restored, angels are excited

-Devils are confused!
Praise God for giving us hope that transcends tragedy.
A hope that supersedes sadness.
A beautiful hope that sets us free!

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On Thursday, February 2, 1995 Sister Clarissa Clark's life on this earth was put on hold. It was not the end. Jesus has marked it .."to be continued."

No. 741-Anniv.-Women, Black Heritage

The Burdens & Blessings of Eve

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 14, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Genesis 1:27-28 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. Genesis 3;15-16.

Introduction

Have you ever been served a full plate of food that contained several foods you liked, but at least one item that you found distasteful? Was that broccoli? Spinach? Brussel sprouts? Did you find yourself picking around the distasteful items and eventually leaving them on your plate? Every believer is given a full plate every day. On that plate are many blessings, but there is also a burden or two. As parents tell children, eat your vegetables they are good for you, so does each person face the challenge of accepting life's full plate of burdens and blessings in full stride.

The African-American woman is more sensitive to this truth than most others. She has been served a plate with several distasteful items, but it is working out for her good. History has placed the African-American woman in the strange paradox of being a woman and Black. Women have a difficult time and it seems African-American women have a tougher time. You know you are an African-American woman when: You are up every night until 10 p.m. vacuuming, dusting, wiping, washing, drying, loading, unloading, cooking, driving, flushing, ironing, sweeping, picking up, changing sheets, changing diapers, bathing, helping with Black history reports, paying bills, budgeting, clipping coupons, folding clothes, dragging out of bed every day, brushing, chasing, buckling, feeding them, stopping school buses, rushing to work, waiting in traffic, rushing from work, picking up children, playing catch, cuddling dolls, music lessons, lighting the stove, picking up, putting back, yelling and screaming, cleaning up, never still a single minute in the day... but

somehow you manage to gain 10 pounds! Women seem to have a full plate that always contains a whole lot of the bad stuff!

African-American women face what Patricia Hill in her book "Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment" calls a trifold matrix of problems that stem from the fact that she has to deal with Race, class and gender problems. White men only face Class problems. White women deal with class and gender. But Black women must deal with all three and it becomes an unusually difficult burden that makes their plight in America more frustrating. While women have succeeded in dealing with these three frustrations, there is still much to be done. While progress has been made, much still remains.

Black America received a wake up call to this truth with a recent incident at Louisiana State University. Dianne Piper, a 43 year old Black attorney on staff at LSU dropped in to talk with
associate dean Richard Nelson about the possibility of lecturing at another university. While attempting to explain her position, Nelson grabbed Piper, pulled her across his knee and began spanking her while chanting, "You're a bad girl." It didn't matter that Ms. Piper was highly professional, had never become "friendly" with Nelson, and had a prestigious legal back ground, she was viewed as a woman and Black, and thus fair game. Of course Ms. Piper, being a lawyer, promptly sued Nelson and the University. The incident underscores the depth of the struggle African-American women still face in America.

Despite the distasteful items on the plate of the African-American woman she has still managed to grow and succeed beyond the expectations of many. Even the bitter experiences of her history have made her stronger, bolder and more able to stand in these perilous times.

Whether male or female, every life experience has a little rain sometimes. The beauty is that after the rain the sun will shine. Christian women endure the rain because even in the storm they know the SON will shine.

As Christians, we have learned to take the bitter with the sweet that this life offers. Every believer has the joy of knowing that for every burden there is also a blessing that comes from God.

Exposition

This text focuses on both a burden and blessing that God gave Eve after the fall in the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve were given a great blessing from God in the beginning. Both Adam and Eve were blessed with authority and dominion over the earth. Both were invested with the sanction of heaven as they ruled God's creation. The blessing that God gave them in Genesis 1:27-28 was never revoked or rescinded. It remains in force to this day.

Satan interceded in the beginning and tempted Eve to sin. As a result of her sin, God placed an "enmity," hatred, or strife between Satan and woman and her seed that

would last many years, as Satan would always attempt to bruise the heel of women and their seed.

However, there would come one of woman's seed that would finally bruise the head of Satan. This is a picture of Christ who would be the only power able to deter Satan in his attacks on woman and her Seed.

Christ will ultimately defeat Satan and his forces, destroying his presence forever.

It will also be Christ that will negate the influence of Satan in the lives of every believer until that day arrives.

Eve's Burden

Today there are many African-American women who are struggling with an Eve Complex. They feel as though they are operating under a curse that cannot be removed. They live in a white male dominated society that seems to work against them because they are Black. They are even more frustrated when they come home to a world where Black men, who should know their frustration, dominate and discriminate against them because they are women.

SHOULDERED THE BURDEN OF THE MOTHERHOOD: Until recent years it was almost unheard of in the Black community that mothers would abandon their children. African-American women have been icons of strength in motherhood throughout our history. They have been examples of what the bible calls a "virtuous woman" even in their worst states. Motherhood is a burden that African-American women have bourn with dignity and respect.

STOOD IN SUPPORT OF HER HUSBAND: Even before Tammy Wynette made the phrase popular, Black women have known the value of standing by their man. They have refused to allow anything or anyone to lower their estimation of and respect for the Black man. They felt his pain. They felt his sorrow. They felt his hunger for freedom and a better life. Thus, they stood by him through difficulties and good times.

KILLED HER DREAMS TO LET OTHERS LIVE: Perhaps the hardest burden of all for the African-American woman has been that of watching her personal dreams wither on the vine as she worked to promote the dreams of her family. Millions of African-American women, even today, have placed their personal dreams of being doctors, lawyers, businesswomen and educators on the back burner of life so that they might help others in their families achieve their own. Silently, many moan within themselves. Silently, many cry out for a chance to live their own dream with decency and respect.

NEW BLACK WOMAN'S CHALLENGE: The new Black woman is operating on a revised playing field, which presents her with a new challenge. She is no longer expected to watch her personal dreams die and as prerequisite to motherhood. She is no longer expected to walk behind a man, in fact many are assuming the burden of raising a family without a man at all. While she is playing on a different playing field

than the African-American woman of the past there is one thing she still needs that all women before her had to have ...she needs the power of God!

She may work in corporate America, but she still needs God!

She may be a professional, clerical worker or drive a city bus, but she still needs God!

Every African American woman should rip that page out of our history, if nothing else and resolve "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Eve's Blessing

While life gives us a certain number of burdens, believers have the consolation of knowing that we never have to deal with them alone.

The African-American woman and every other believer has been able to endure the difficulties and frustrations of the past because they always remembered that they were not in the struggle alone.

We have been isolated, but we were not alone!

We have been frustrated, but we were not alone in our frustration!

We have been persecuted, but even in our persecutions, we were not alone!

The same power that sustains the African-American woman, sustains every believer today. That power is the power of God.

The knowledge that God is with us has helped our people overcome the historical negatives that have destroyed others. We have withstood because we have found our blessings in the Lord!

The women of our past bowed low so that their children today could stand tall!

The women of our heritage, did what they had to do, so that we could do what we want to do!

The women of our experience, took the bitter scars of discrimination, hatred and sexism and bathed them with healing waters of God's grace and emerged, stronger, bolder and dedicated to marching on!

One thing the African-American woman learned to do very early was to pray!

She prayed when her back was bent and sweat poured from her face!

She prayed when she had to take the scraps from the master's kitchen to feed her family!

She prayed when she had to watch her children sold on auction blocks like cattle!

They took many things from us but the one thing they couldn't take was our faith in God.

They took our names, but God gave us new names!

They took our history, but God gave us a new story to tell!

They took our villages, and houses, but God has given us new homes!

They took our freedom, but God gave us truth and we found out that "the truth shall make you free!

Despite the burdens of today, every believer should march on singing the words of our anthem: "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who has brought

us thus far along the way, thou who has by thy might, led us into the light, keep forever in the path we pray!"

If we stay on the right path God will be for us. Romans 8:31 reminds us that "If God be for us, who can be against us!"

If we stay on the right path, it won't matter about the burdens because Romans 8:37 says, "In all these these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

If we stay on the right path, it won't matter how many barriers are placed in front of us because we remember that Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"

If we keep our hands in God's hands, our blessings will overpower our troubles and we will continue to rise, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, we are perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed."

It doesn't matter whether you are a man or woman, it makes a difference when you know the Lord is with you!

When you know the Lord is with you, you can:

Resist the devil

--Overcome temptation

--Bear a heavy burden

--Conquer a bad habit

--Fight a good fight

--Stand the heat

--Survive the storm

When the Lord is with you, you can call on him, like great grandma did! "Lord, I'm down here waiting, please don't pass me by!"

Walk with me Lord, Walk with me! While I'm on this tedious journey, I want Jesus

Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed grave!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 742-Black Heritage

Out of the dust we rise!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 21, 1999

SCRIPTURE: He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them." 1 Samuel 2:8

Introduction

Have you ever felt insignificant? There are times when even the greatest among us feels insignificant. These are the times when the accomplishments of others seem so much greater than our own. Those are the moments when we wallow and bathe in self pity as we consider our own worthlessness. Historically, we have lived in relative poverty. We have possessed relatively little. We have influenced relatively little. There are times when it dawns upon us that in actuality we are very little, but for the grace of God. Considering the totality of God's creation, the stars, moon, sun, flowers, trees, mountain, and rich soil, we appear to be the least . . . the dust of this creation.

What comes to your mind when you think of dust? Some think of that thankless chore that seems to thrust itself upon us no matter without invitation. No matter how well a home is kept sooner or later dust appears and it has to be dusted. Dusting is repetitive and frustrating because no matter how much one dusts, it will appear again, as if out of no where.

In comparison to the rest of God's creation, dust appears to be one of the most useless aspects of God's creation. Scientists say that there are more than 100,000 particles of dust per square foot of the average home. Dust floats in the air and left alone settles on table tops, Venitian Blinds, chairs and buries itself in the fabric of chairs, sofas and clothing. Nothing grows in dust. Nothing holds on to dust. It appears unable to sustain life. Dust simply gets in the way and makes life difficult. It has no value.

The story is told of the Little Johnny who heard a lot of talk about "dust" on the same Sunday. After church, Johnny tells his parents he has to go and talk to the minister right away. They agree and the pastor greets the family. "Pastor," Johnny says, "I heard you say today that our bodies came from the dust." "That's right, Johnny, I did. "And I heard you say that when we die, our bodies go back to dust."Yes, I'm glad you were listening. Why do you ask?" "Well you better come over to our

house right away and look under my bed 'cause there's someone either commin' or goin'!" If God made dust, there has to be reason. Something is either going or coming!

In his great novel 'The Grapes of Wrath" John Steinbeck shows an American family that had been reduced to nothing in "dust bowl" of the great American West. Their land could not produce because of a drought that reduced them to equals with the dust of the earth. The novel showed how one family rose above its dust experience and persevered.

Our historical experience as African-Americans has been a "dust" experience. Our community of families has endured the dust of this life as we have struggled to overcome obstacles place before us. Like the families of the Steinbeck novel, we have risen above our dust experience by the grace of God.

Only the grace of God could take millions of families, crushed to the earth by racism and prejudice and raise them to new life.

Only the grace of God could take the dry dusty bones of broken and shatttered families and sustain them through 300 years of mistreatment until the bottom rail family begins to emerge on top.

Our families have wallowed in the dust of the American experience. Yet, still they rise!

As Christians, we are strengthened by knowing that God knows the condition of the poor and downtrodden all over the world. The poor, the rejected, the beggar, the homeless and even those of means crushed into the dust of life's draining experiences, revel in the knowledge that God knows their plight and will raise them to a greater glory, if they will trust him!

Exposition

This text focuses upon has low view of herself until God raised it up.

Hannah was a barren woman, a fact which caused her considerable frustration and difficulty. She was the wife of a man named Elkanah. This man had two wives. The other wife was a prolific woman, who taunted and mocked Hannah in her barrenness. The barrenness of Hannah is
very symbolic because it illustrates the spiritual state of Israel at this time. This people to whom God had manifested himself had fallen into a state of utter infertility and barrenness. Hannah described her own state as being that equal to the dust. She felt worthless because she could have no children.

After being ridiculed beyond her ability to bear it by her husband's other wife, she went forth alone, and knelt before the Lord at the sanctuary and prayed inaudibly. Eli the high priest,
who sat at the entrance to the holy place, observed her, and said to her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition." A while later Hannah gave birth to a son, whom, in grateful memory of the Lord's goodness, she called Samuel, i.e., "heard of God." After the child was weaned (probably in his third year) she brought him to Shiloh into the house of the Lord, and said to Eli the aged priest, "Oh my lord, I am

the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked
of him: therefore I also have granted him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:27, 28, R.V.).

In a greater sense the entire nation was symbolic of her state. The priesthood which God
had set up with the tabernacle and the rituals was on a decline. Generally the people had turned from God and were involved increasingly in activities that would please God.

Hannah prayed to God for relief. God heard her prayer and opened her womb and she was able to bear a son, Samuel. Looking back on her barren days, Hannah wrote a song that described her low estate and how God raised her up.

Although she characterized herself as "dust" because of her infertility, God blessed her to five more children besides Samuel, three sons and two daughters.

She had risen from the dust to a position of glory of women. Her childless family had been lifted from shame to that of honor..

Dust Experience

The African-American family's struggle for survival is a dust to glory experience. Our families have been under attack, torn asunder by social forces oblivious to our concerns or problems. For the most part the Black family has survived by sheer will power and faith. Despite our experience in the dust, the Black family will rise.

DUST IS NOT TOTALLY USELESS: While dust consists of fine particles of materials floating in the atmosphere, it should be noted that it contains organic and inorganic materials that include: animal and vegetable fibers, pollen, silica, bateria and molds. We are able to see colors because dust particles scatter light. Without dust there would be no rain, mist, fog or clouds because dust serves as the nuclei for the condensation of water vapor.

There is a tremendous value in the Black family. Even though it may appear to some as a powerless and useless vehicle, it still has tremendous value to our people. The family is the primary unit of society. It teaches values, respect for rules, promotes tradition, life skills and transmits history. Without families society as we know it would be inalterably different.

IF LEFT ALONE, DUST WILL SETTLE: Dust is always present but it is usually unseen until it is stirred or until it settles. In many ways American society is generally afraid of what it calls the "Browning of America." It is the settling and growth of large numbers of Black and Hispanic families. Already one American in four defines himself or herself as Hispanic or nonwhite. If current trends in immigration and birth rates persist, the Hispanic population will have further increased an estimated 21%, the Asian presence about 22%, Blacks almost 12% and whites a little more than 2% when the 20th century ends. By 2020 the number of U.S. residents who are Hispanic or - nonwhite will have more-than doubled, to nearly 115 million, while the white

population will not be increasing at all. By 2056 the "average" U.S. resident, as defined by Census statistics, will trace his or her-descent to-Africa, Asia, the-Hispanic world, the Pacific Islands, Arabia — almost anywhere but white Europe.

The reality is there is a move afoot to keep scattering the dust. Stable "Colored" families contribute to growth and there are many sectors of this nation that are not happy with the prospects so they work hard to keep Black families scattered internally and every move to settle in traditionally non brown areas is resisted.

DEALING WITH THE DUST: Since there is no way to prevent dust from settling or making it disappear, the most obvious thing to do is to learn how to deal with the dust. African-American must deal with the crises that faces our families. Our churches, civic organizations and think tanks must sponsor more efforts to help families grow and mature.

More workshops are needed to teach family skills that include: conflict management, parenting, health concerns, relationship building, financial management, education of the young, care for the aging, spirituality and parental roles.

The dust experience is real, but continued focus on the nature of the problem helps everyone involved adequately deal with the dust.

From Dust to Destiny

Finally we must consider that even though our families have endured a dust experience, there is a way to move from dust to destiny. That way is provided by our faith in God.

The book of Genesis tells us how God gathered the dust the earth, formed it into a human body. That body did absolutely nothing until God breathed on it.

"Spirit" and "breath" are the same word in a number of languages, including Greek and Hebrew. God's breath is his Spirit. He exhaled his breath, and the figure that he had formed inhaled it and became a living being.

Mankind rose from the dust when the spirit of God breathed upon the dust of the earth.

The picture we have of God laboring over a large lump of dust and breathing life into it is the same picture that we see when Ezekiel was placed in the Valley of Dry Bones. In the Valley he saw dry and dusty bones everywhere and was asked the question "Son of man can these bones live?"

The African-American family has been scattered and kept apart by slavery, racism and faulty social programs, but it has been kept alive by the spirit of the Almighty God.

If there is a power that can turn dust into destiny it is the power of the almighty God.

Maya Angelou says we have forgotten our ancestors and our children no longer honor our old people.

We have lost the path and our children cannot find their way.

We have banished the God of our ancestors, our children can not pray.

The African-American family must pledge to:

To embrace our lowliest,

To keep company with our loneliest,

To educate our illiterate, To feed our starving,

To clothe our ragged; to be brothers to our sisters.

In all of our actions we should never lose hope, for out of the dust we shall rise!

Thus, every family has the responsibility keep the love of God!

Every grandmother and grandfather must teach their grandchildren the old path and the love of God.

Every father and mother must demonstrate the love of God in good times and bad times.

Every child must learn that it has only been through the grace of God that they have been able to survive these troubling times.

We are living in a time when people want to: Succeed but they don't want to prepare; Conquer the world but can't control their own homes!

Protect the innocent but they can't defend themselves; Teach without going to school; Preach without study and preparation; Lead without learning to follow

Chair without demonstrating they can be a good member; Sing without coming to rehearsals

Strength without invoking the power of God!

Though these times have crushed us down, like the dust of the earth, out of the dust we shall rise, if we keep our hands in God's hands!

Great granddaddy didn't have much education, but he learned the value of the Word of God

Great Grandma didn't have a college degree, but she graduated from the school of two knees! She learned how to trust in the Lord!

Every God fearing family hears the voice of our ancestors telling us, the Lord will make a way!

We have been able to rise out of the dust, because we have learned how to call on Jesus!

With chains around hands and feet, we learned how to call on Jesus!

With crosses burning in our front yards, we learned how to call on Jesus!

As we stared and white and colored drinking fountains, we learned how to call on Jesus!

From seats on the back of the bus we learned how to call on Jesus!

The same Jesus, that grandma called!

The same Jesus, who died out on Calvary! The same Jesus, who arose early Sunday!

That same Jesus calls upon us to rise up out of the dust, stand on your feet, and

March on till victory is won!

No. 743-Funeral

A Path Finder's Reward

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

February 25, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself in a strange location that required you to ask someone else for directions? Many who travel, plan meticulously, only to get lost before they reach their destination. It doesn't take much for that to happen: a wrong turn here or a wrong turn there can confuse the best navigator. Many have had the experience of asking directions of someone on the street only to find out that they didn't know either. They turned, looked in the sky and scratched their heads, but often had no answers. One sure fire way to find directions is to ask those who know the neighborhoods well: policemen, cab drivers and bus drivers know the street because they have driven them daily for years. In fact, there aren't many places in the average city they are not acquainted with to one degree or another.

It's important to make sure that you are going in the right direction. Consider the pedestrian that was walking down the street minding his own business when he was suddenly hit by a car. As he flew through the air he felt instantly that he was breathing his last breath and wouldn't make it. As he lay on the sidewalk a minister ran to him and after calling for help, talked to him. The minister starting asking him to make his peace with God and renounce the devil and all his deeds. The man said, "Lord, forgive me for all my sins!" The minister said, "that's good but you need to renounce the devil and all of his deeds!" The man lay on the sidewalk quietly, then whispered, "Lord, forgive me for all my sins, I believe!" Again the minister said, "You must also tell the devil that you renounce him and all his deeds!" The man looked up at the preacher and said, "Until I know where I'm going, I don't think it would be a good idea to aggravate anybody!" Even at the point of death there are some that don't know which direction they are going!

Often we require the help of others to find our direction. The young need the assistance of their seniors to chart the right course for themselves. The untrained benefit from an apprenticeship with a skilled artisan. Every student learns best when directed by a wise and insightful teacher. Very few have found their mark in life without the benefit of a mentor, guide or counselor that helped them chart a proper

course on the rough sea of life.

Even in our lives as believers, many have found it difficult to learn the Christian way without the guidance of the more experience saints who have traveled the meandering roads that challenge faith and assurance. Many find it difficult to keep their eyes on the path and lose their direction until they are helped to find the right path again by someone who cares.

As Christians, we know our salvation lies in walking the right path. In the right path we find security and grace. We ask God to show us that path that we may turn in the right direction. In answer to our prayer, God sends us sainted souls, path finders, whose whole purpose in life is to point the lost in the right direction and to give hope to those aimlessly wandering the corridors of life. Every path finder has a life task that is noble and blessed. The task was assigned at the throne of God from the beginning. In like manner, the path finder will receive his reward...at that same throne by the Grace of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he gives "golden" advice about finding the path to everlasting life.

This psalm has the title "A Mitcham of David." Five other Psalms have a similar title. There is no conclusive evidence as to what exactly is meant by 'mitcham'. Many think it refers to its literal meaning "Write in gold letters," indicating that it is truly a 'Golden Psalm.'

One of the golden nuggets in this psalm is in verse 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life!" This is the path that man has blindly groped for ever since he has been on earth. It is a right of way into the presence of God. The singer of this psalm tells of ONE who has found the way through, presumably a messianic reference to Christ.

The path of life begins with our inheritance in Him (v5). David notes that those who would enjoy life to its fullest participate in the divine inheritance. They consider themselves heirs of the King and thus see life from the perspective of those who are sons and daughters of the King of Glory. We are children of God and thus heirs to his promise made to Abraham. This is the meaning of Galatians 3:29 "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The way of life is within the boundaries. He has set for us. (Vs.6.). God blessed David, as he does every believer. The way of life is to know where our blessings end and those of another person's begin. An awareness of the boundaries of our blessing and its inherent limitations is a formula for life. Each person has been given gifts and resources by God. The use of those resources with restraint demonstrates our faith in him and helps us better walk the path of life.

The way of life depends on guidance deep within. (Vs.7.). Those who seek the path that leads to life learn to let God guide them from within. Being led by the spirit is not an empty phrase because God is a spirit and those that worship him worship him in spirit and in truth. The way to life is to constantly be guided by the Holy Spirit

in all of our daily affairs.

The way of life is in having a single objective. (Vs.8) Those who want to find the path to everlasting life must make finding it the single objective of their lives. They should never stray from it but pursue it with vigor and a sense of purpose.

The way of life is in joy (Vs.9); even in the face of death, sickness and hardship. Those who find the path of life face life's difficulties with a sense of assurance that no matter where the path leads they will come out in God's hands on the other side. That path leads straight through death, and hell, and the grave..

Thus, David asks God to show him the path to everlasting life. He said finding that path would guarantee him a life of joy in the presence of God and after this life, pleasure, as he sits at the right hand of God!

The Path finder's Method

Today, there are many believers who serve as path finders. These are men and women whose presence among us provides a sense of security and direction. The 16th Psalm gives us clear indicators of what is necessary to accomplish this end.

A PATH FINDER IS A COMPASS: A compass helps those who are lost to get a sense of direction by showing them one direction constantly. A compass points North. The traveler may walk South but the compass continues to point North. The traveler may point East but the compass only points one direction and that is North. In a similar sense those who are path finders are those who point to the direction of truth, honesty, integrity and godliness. Psalm 16:8 says, " I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." The path finder keeps the principles of godliness before him constantly and is attracted to them regardless where he is in life. He simply changes his direction until his life lines up with the will of God. That compels path finders to sometimes stubbornly resist innovations that may tend to encourage deviation from the true path, whether that deviation is real or imagined. They insist on doing things right, even when it is more popular to bend the rules. They insist on being truthful even when it is more popular to twist the facts. They insist on obeying God rather than following after every fad or fantasy followed by man. Whenever the masses stray from the well worn path of truth and godliness, path finders continue to point the right direction.

A PATH FINDER IS NOT INTIMIDATED BY THE NIGHT: Some find it easy to find direction in the day, but stumble in the night. Like sea navigators who chart their direction by finding the North Star and other points of reference in the sky, a path finder can find the path even in the night. This unique ability is given by God himself. David said in Psalm 16:7 "I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons." We are familiar with the nights. These are the times when we are frustrated, troubled, confused and feel lost. In times of sickness, financial disaster, trouble and death we see only the darkness. In times like these path finders are invaluable. They help us to see that "weeping endureth but a night, but joy comes in the morning." In night of our sickness, the path finder

whisperS a word that reminds us that God is a healer. In the night of our confusion, the path finder reminds us that God has an answer. In the night of our troubles, the path finder reminds us that the Lord will make a way somehow. Because path finderS have a reference point in the heavens, they are not intimidated by the night. They move with assurance because they are focused on the Bright and Morning Star.

PATH FINDERS WATCH THE SUN BY DAY: Path finders know the movements of the sun and can chart their direction by its position. They know the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. Thus, they instantly know that if the sun shines their faces in the morning they are traveling East. If it is at their backs, they are traveling West. They keep themselves oriented by watching the sun. In a greater sense believers also orient themselves not so much by the SUN as they do by keeping a fix on the SON. It is the son of God that keeps every believer oriented properly as we walk through this life. Path finders keep their direction by watching the sun and tell the time of the day by watching how the sun makes shadows on fixed places on the ground. Path finders are sensitive to the times. They watch them closely like David who noted in Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Even in their own lives, the path finder watches the sun and senses when it is going down and prepares every detail, for he knows the words of the old chant, "it's getting late in the evening and the sun is going down."

PATH FINDERS KNOW THE TRAIL: Path finders have the benefit of knowing the trail. They know the trail because they have walked it for years. They know the signs that are invisible to others. They see the broken twigs, the leaning grass, the ruffled leaves and the bruise bark that indicate the unseen path. Life experience is invaluable. Situations change, but human nature never changes. The path finder is ever cautious in matters of faith, politics and interpersonal relations, drawing on years of experience as he ponders the overgrown forest looking for trail signs that point the way. They have passed through many life circumstances in the course of their lives and are familiar with the trail. They know the trail of tears that follows loss, pain and disappointment. They know both the danger of thoughtless pursuit in youthful eagerness and faithless reluctance in old age. They know the trail that leads to a happy and successful marriage. They know the trail that leads to a fulfilled life and they aware of the road to destruction. Path finders are invaluable because they know the trail and help point others that way.

Path finders follow Trail Blazers

Finally, we must consider that there is a difference between a path finder and a trailblazer. A trailblazer is the one who makes a path when there is no path. A path finder finds the sure path that has been blazed. A trailblazer ventures into territory that has never been charted and leaves a path. A path finder follows in the path of those who have blazed the trail into uncharted areas.

Path finders have a sense of history. They know the trail. They also know the trailblazers.

Christian path finders know the path to glory, but they also know they did not blaze the trail.

A Christian man who serves as a deacon, Sunday School teacher, choir member, trustee or spiritual advisor, helps others find the path, but he is keenly aware that he did not blaze the trail.

He may know the way to the path, but he did not blaze the trail.

He may help others find the path, but he did not blaze the trail!

Whenever we seek a good spiritual path finder, we must be sure to find one who knows the trailblazer!

Despite our origins and backgrounds, we can find the path to eternal life, if we know the trailblazer.

Even if we come from an obscure background of poverty and despair, we can find the path if we know the trailblazer!

We can overcome the barriers of race and class and educate our ourselves and put others on the right path, if we know the trailblazer!

We can endure the agony of defeat and ecstasy of victory in politics, government and other paths of life, if we know the trailblazer!

We can dash through the path of youth with vigor, and carefully meander the lonely trails of aging with grace and assurance, if we know the trailblazer!

Though our voices once strong diminish to a whisper. Though our steps once bold become short and restrained, we can still walk the path, if we know the trailblazer!

While there are many who are path finders and know the right path, there is only one trailblazer. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, " For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus, every path finder knows him by name!

Jesus, follow his path and it will carry us to forgiveness, clean hearts and humble spirits!

Jesus, follow his path and it carry us to repentance and praise of God!

Jesus, follow his path and it will show us the way to salvation!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose after three days, blazed a trail from Calvary to Glory!

He has blazed a trail from the finite to the infinite.

He has blazed a trail from this life to eternal life!

He has blazed a trail through this life, and beyond death, to a place where the path finder sings at last, "How beautiful heaven must be!"

There, at the end of that trail, is the path finder's reward!

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On Saturday, February 20, 1999, Clem T. Toston, Jr. took another turn on the road to glory! He found the path and showed it to others. He is now gone to receive the path finder's reward!

No. 744-Funeral

Living a Lovely Song

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the King David #1 Baptist Church
Vicksburg, Mississippi

February 26, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hat a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for tey hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezekiel 33:32

Introduction

Suppose your life matched the way you sing, would the world be happier or saddier? Some people are gifted with beautiful voices that resonante and leave positive impressions. Others have voices that even frogs would find unattractive. The voices of some people resemble song birds while the voices of others sound like those of crying crickets. For some, their lives would be a marked improvement if they were lived the way the sing. For others, there would be a marked decline in the quality of their life experience if their lives were made to match the quality of their singing voice.

While there is no real correlation between our life style and voice quality, there are times when what we sing, expresses just what we are thinking and feeling. Consider Sipping Sam at the revival. Sipping Sam had been brought to the revival because the evangelist was known for being so overpowering that he often talked wineos into giving up their bottles. This revival was being held by the river. Sipping Sam saw the preacher talking about the dangers of whiskey and one by one he saw wineos getting up and giving him their wine bottles. Each time a wine bottle was turned in the preacher would empty its contents into the river. Behind one wineo he sang, "I've been washed in the blood." Behind another he sang, "Jesus paid it all." Each time one came forward Sam took a sip from his bottle until it was dry. Sam became thirsty. After several hours of hard preaching the only wineo left that had not come forward to repent was Sipping Sam. Since Sam would not come up the preacher called him up front and asked him why he was waiting so long. Sam stared at the water then said, "I don't know, but if I joined up with you, could I pick the song everybody gon' sing?" The preacher agreed that was a small price to pay for saved soul. "Sure, what is the song?" Sam gave the preacher his empty bottle and started singing, "Take me to water! Take me to the water!" Sometimes our songs reflect just what we are thinking about.

The best songs are those that seem to fit the person that sings them. In essence, the words of the familiar tune apply: "Let me live the life I sing about in my song."

In this case it is not the quality of the voice that becomes our song, but genuine beauty of our lives that sing a song that is heard and appreciated by others every day.

If each of our lives is a song, what does God hear? Does he hear the blues? Are we always complaining about this or that? Each time our friends see and hear us are we singing that same old "Somebody done me wrong song?" Does he hear your rap? Are our life experiences fast paced, disconnected, rapid fire spurts of something here and there that can barely be understood? Do people understand what our lives say, or do they just listen to the beat? If our lives were songs would God be pleased with what he hears? Would our song be sweet, laid back and soft? Would be hard pounding rock filled with screams and yells? Would God find us singing our song at all or would he finding singing shower songs, rough imitations of someone else's life song?

Whether we want to accept it or not our lives do sing a song. What it sings depends on how we choose to live our lives before God. It can be a sweet melody or it can a ball of confusion. It can be a sound of hope in troubled times or it can be the fanfare that announces doom and gloom. It can be the voice of peace or it can be a battle hymn that means trouble for everyone around.

As Christians, we strive to make our lives a love song that expresses the joy and love of God in everything we do. Deep in our hearts, we believe that's what God wants to hear?

Exposition

This text focuses on Ezekiel as he expresses the thought that he is perceived by the people as a beautiful song, but they are unmoved.

Ezekiel was a great prophet who constantly warned the people about the pending doom yet they did not listen. After they were taken away into slavery in Babylon Ezekiel continued to live justly before them and tell of the need to repentance but they would not listen.

He was a fine and eloquent speaker. They enjoyed listening to him speak. He actually lived what he talked about. While they enjoyed listening to him, very few heeded what he had to say.

This prompted him to say in verse 32 that he is viewed as a person who sings a lovely song or plays an instrument. They are enjoyed, but not heeded.

That was a description that could well apply to many of the prophets. Paul preached to many who loved to hear him preach. They enjoyed him, but heeded him not. Even Christ himself was enjoyed by thousands, but when the song ended, even today many heed him not.

The comparison of a person's life to a song is striking and meaningful. Ezekiel said the people enjoyed his life song and ignored what he tried to say, but they heard and recognized the song.

The song our lives sing

Since each of our lives are songs that means that our lives have all of the elements of a song?

Every good song has a message. The central part of any song are its words. The words reflect the message and overall theme of the song. They are the meat of the song. Without words the song's meaning is diminished.

Likewise each person's life should have meaning and substance. There should be principles and ideals to which each person subscribes in life. A vindicate person spends his life singing an "I'll get you back" song. A hateful person's life literally sings "I hate the ground you walk on." Life ideals are important. They become our song. In Christian homes the children see that song lived in the lives of their parents. They see them work hard to be honest. They see them strive to educate themselves and reach for goals. They even see how those ideals apply when they differ. The children listen and they learn the message of their parent's song. Every child knows mother's life song. Hers is the life that sings of concern and compassion for each of her children. Hers is the bitter voice of scorn when they have gone astray. Mother's song is always full of hope. Her life message seems to say, "Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow until you find your dream!"

Songs have a cadence or beat. Usually songs are set to a cadence or beat that allows so many notes to be sung in a certain frame of reference called a "measure." To insure that the song is played at the right beat, music writers indicate the time and the cadence on a sheet of music. Little markings that look like fractions tell how many beats should be in each measure of the song and how long certain beats should be held. Every life song has to be sung to the right beat. The cadence must match the message. Singing "Amazing Grace" to the beat of "Good Golly Miss Molly" simply would not work.

Likewise we must live our lives with a steady beat that matches message of our life's song. Measuring our actions and words is necessary if our lives are to be acceptable. Those are the songs we sing when we act according to our age. One great song writer said, "When I was 17 it was a very good year.." he described the passions of 17 and he continued the numbers through his adult life. The song that is properly timed fits neatly into each of life's measures. The words and the message seem to fall in place.

Our life song should reflect our passion. A good song stirs the emotions. A person who has traveled abroad is stirred by words "God bless America" when he returns home. A veteran of the Civil Rights movement is moved when the crowd sings "We shall overcome!" A good song moves people to cheer, applaud, cry, smile, shout, or scream. A good song is filled with passion. No one who hears it will remain unmoved.

Likewise every life should have some sense of purpose. Martin Luther King once said, "If a man hasn't found something he's willing to die for, he's not fit to live." A sense of purpose in life brings passion into it. The person whose life song is passionate plunges into what he does with enthusiasm and vigor. They bring an

excitement to any project in which they are involved. They are a joy because they are so passionate about what they do! They are energetic! They smile with a happiness that beams! They bring joy to the hearts of everyone they touch! Our life song should be one that is filled with passion and purpose.

Every song needs a melody. We appreciate songs because of their message and the passions they stir. We remember songs because of their melody. The melody is a set of notes played in a way that expresses the theme of the song in a memorable way. Every child knows the melody of "Happy Birthday to you!" Even if the words are not spoken, the melody is there. Even if we can't see the face of the person singing the words, the melody is still there! There is nothing more frustrating than hearing someone sing a song in which they change the melody. It loses something. The melody is the lingering theme of the song that stays in our hearts long after the music has left our ears.

In the 1960's there was a popular television show called "Name that tune." Contestants won prizes if they could identify a song, when only the first two or three notes of the tune were played. Many went home rich because they were able to "name that tune." Each person's life plays a few notes on the scale of life. Some lives hit the right notes in a way that we can never forget. There are some who are always positive, smiling, playing light notes. The same person, when rubbed could go sharp or flat in an instant. Combined, the chords of our daily lives comprise our melody or tune. Long after we are gone, our tune will be heard. Children can hear mother's words in their hearts, long after she can no longer speak. They know her tune. Long after she is gone they will see the first few notes of life circumstance and immediately hear mother's tune and the advice she gave. Each person should be careful about the tune our lives play, because they will be replayed again in the lives of everyone who comes in contact with us.

Singing A song of Faith

Finally, there is one aspect of a song that is unique to those who trust in the Lord. Those who trust in the Lord, sing a song of faith.

Ezekiel spoke of a "lovely" song, but what makes a life lovely to God?

A lovely life is one in which we exhibit a general love for God, respect for his Word and order our lives according to his will.

A lovely mother can take her sons and teach them to love God, respect themselves and others.

A lovely sister can inspire honesty and integrity and vision among her siblings.

A lovely believer is one that can battle an illness willing to accept the will of God with a smile on her face!

A lovely believer keeps singing the same song despite the circumstance.

When difficulties come and times are tough, the lovely saint knows how to sing, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

When friends don't understand, the lovely saint knows how to sing, 'He'll

understand and say well done!"

When the trouble is on every hand, the lovely saint knows how sing, "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me!"

When the way gets clouded and the road is hard to see, the lovely saint knows how to sing, "Guide me oh thou Great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land!"

When provisions get low and there's no place to go, the lovely saint knows that "his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

Why does the lovely saint sing? I hear the song writer answer..

"I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free! His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

I sing because when I'm weak he gives me strength!

I sing because when I'm lonely he comforts me!

I sing because when I'm failing he gives me victory!

I sing because when I'm falling he picks me up!

I sing because when I'm filled with sadness, he gives me gladness!

Even when I face the chilly arms of death I will put a smile on my face and sing "To God be glory, to God be the glory for the things he has done! With his power he hath raised me! With his blood he has saved me! To God be the glory!

Glory, for his life on this earth!

Glory, for his death out on Calvary!

Glory, for his rising Early Sunday morning!

To God be the glory for the things he has done!

On Monday, February 22, 1999 Rita Queen Trice walked into the chilly arms of death with a smile on her face. Her life was lovely melody, which will linger long after she is gone!

No. 745-Inspiration

Do Not Disturb

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 7, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" Mark 1:24-27

Introduction

Have you ever seen the sign hanging on a door knob: "Do not disturb." Generally it means that someone is occupied and does not care to be interrupted. Life is filled with interruptions. They seem to be unavoidable. You are busy in your kitchen preparing a meal, but before everyone takes their seat there is a sudden knock at the door? So much for a quiet family dinner. You settle down to read your bible or to get a few moments to yourself when the phone rings. So much for quiet time! Interruptions happen. They are the flat tires that mar your otherwise perfectly planned day. They are they trains on the track that throw you off schedule. They are the cars that won't start or the person who drives 15 miles per hour in front of you when you are almost late for work. Interruptions can be so frustrating that you want to turn around go back to bed and start over! If you can't do that then you are tempted to wear a sign marked in bold letters "Do not disturb!"

There is barely a day in anyone's life in which there are no interruptions. Generally, we are interrupted by unforeseen circumstances or well meaning friends and acquaintances. Sometimes the worse time to generate any productivity in the work place is during working hours because there are too many interruptions. Co-workers who tell you about their exploits the night before when you are preparing do whatever it is you are paid to do, can sometimes become interruptions. Pop-ins, drop outs, and unsolicited call-ins are also interruptions. Most folks can take a hint and know when they are interrupting: 1)When your telephone conversation is one way and there is little or no response to your questions or statements, it could mean you are interrupting; 2) When the person you are talking to suddenly has a change of tone and says, "Well O.K. then..." it could mean, you are interrupting. 3) When you drop into an office without an appointment and your party meets you standing up and doesn't ask you to sit down, you could be interrupting. 4) If you are slow to

take a hint and your party continues with their scheduled chore looking up to say a word to you here and there, you could be interrupting. 5) If your party is holding a sign marked "Do not disturb" and waves it in your face...well, you get the picture!

While interruptions are frustrating, annoying and even depressing, there are times when we are blessed by interruptions! A "Blessed interruption" breaks into your normal programming to give you late breaking news that is extremely important! An interruption is blessed when you are benefitted by the interruption and blessed because of it! When you sat down to dinner only to be interrupted by the knock at the door, you were pleasantly pleased to find it was your insurance agent personally delivering your settlement check. He says, "I hope I'm not interrupting" and you say, "Interrupt me any time you get ready!"

There are times when God interrupts us. Whenever God interrupts us, it is a "blessed interruption." He often has great news for us! He sometimes has new instructions for our lives! Sometimes he simply wants to point us in the direction of the hidden treasures of this life when we are straying far away from the right places. Too often God gets ready to tell us late breaking news from heaven and we have a sign posted "Do not disturb!" Sometimes we entertain him but we give him the signal that we'd rather he allow us to continue doing what we were doing. Sometimes we are in his presence, but we are not fully present in mind and soul. For all practical purposes many people miss blessings because they post signs that say "Do not disturb! "Let us alone!"

As Christians, we strive to live our lives in such a way that we always have an "Open Door" policy when it comes to God. He's always welcome and his presence is a blessing at anytime!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he exorcizes an evil spirit from a man.

Mark gives us a picture of Christ demonstrating his authority over physical conditions and pain. Jesus is shown moving throughout the community making miraculous demonstrations of his authority. His demonstrations prompted his critics to ask the source of his authority as they were astonished and amazed at his great works.

In the instance of this text Jesus came upon a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit. The evil spirit had been left alone to destroy the man from the inside for quite some time and no one had bothered to interrupt..until Jesus came.

When Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, the truth of his statements disturbed those who were at peace with the status quo. The reaction to the man possessed with the evil spirit was typical of the response of all who were disturbed by Jesus' actions. They were disturbed. They could not stand the interruption and yelled, "Let us alone!" Jesus hadn't spoken to them directly. He spoke of God's truth in general but the truth disturbed and interrupted them. The demons were tortured with truth, and they broke out in this angry interruption: "What have you to do with

us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him and commanded him to be silent.

Through all the centuries since, the only name demons have ever feared is the name of Jesus. It is Jesus who sets men free and delivers the oppressed. Each believer saw a demonstration in this text of what happens when Jesus interrupts a demon's activity. Demons leave. It is Jesus whom demons fear because he has the authority to command the unclean spirits to obey.

The demonic spirit had succeeded in controlling the possessed man until it was confronted with truth and hope and the renewal of spirit brought by Christ. In a similar sense this is the same spirit that gave a similar response in a whole nation of people in Exodus 1:12. Here, Moses kept speaking to the people about the possibilities that await them if they maintained a faith and hope in God. That idea was disturbing to some and they responded: "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." They wanted to be let alone in their fear. They wanted to be let alone in their faithless state, but God, through Moses, kept interrupting.

Dealing with Interruptions

While there are times when we give instructions, "Do not disturb!" There are also several qualifiers. We list off certain circumstances that must exist before an interruption is allowed: Certain calls are received regardless to the time of day or what's going on. Certain information is welcomed whenever it is received. Certain visitors are the "stop what you are doing" kind. There are ways to deal with interruptions that require the right attitude and perspective.

Sometimes an interruption is directly from God. God sometimes interrupts our life to gain our attention, and other times allows interruptions in our lives to teach us, redirect us, challenge us. Sometimes these interruptions give us opportunities that he has especially for us and no one else.The believer wants to be interrupted by God. When God knocks his presence is not seen as disruption of that which is good. His actions in our lives are not corruptions of experience but eruptions of hope and opportunity. We should welcome God's interruptions When God spoke to Abraham and told him to leave his homeland and go to a place he would show him, that was an interruption. Things were going good, but God interrupted him with something that would be even better. Abraham heard the voice of God and acted upon it. That's the way a Christian responds when God steps into a life. "Thanks for the interruption, I'll get right to it!" is our general response.

Bob Gass wrote the following prayer which illustrates this point. "Disturb me Lord when my dreams come true, only because I dreamed too small. Disturb me when I arrive safely, only because I sailed too close to the shore. Disturb me when the things I have gained cause me to lose my thirst for more of YOU. Disturb me when I have acquired success, only to lose my desire for

excellence. Disturb me when I give up too soon and settle too far short of the goals you have set for my life." Have you been interrupted by God lately? When is the last time you were interrupted and thought, "Could this be God? How might God be using this interruption in my life?"

When the interruptions of life introduce fearful circumstances, remind yourself that the Lord is with you. Sometimes our interruptions are really irritating. Hot water heaters burst. A sick child cries. A financial disaster looms. All seem to frustrate us. It's times such as these that believers remember that they are not alone. Like the disciples in the boat who panicked when the storm came, we need to be reminded that the Lord is right there in the boat with us. Like Gideon who feared for his life and felt all alone and deserted by God, we need to open our eyes and ears and perceive that the Lord is with us. The next time an interruption comes, hear the Word of God, "The Lord is with you."

Some interruptions in life result in our safety. That slow driver may have been placed there by God delaying your trip so that an accident is averted. Balaam was riding a donkey enroute to do an ungodly act. God put an angel in the road to change his direction but he didn't see it. God eventually had to make the mule talk for Balaam to get the point. The interruption had a purpose! That annoying telephone call that interrupted your favorite television show, may have been used to deliver some bit of news which may seem insignificant now, but may prevent you from taking action which will result in terrible consequences. What it it that has interrupted you? Might it be something that is serving to protect? When the traffic cop gives you a ticket for driving 85 in a 65 zone might that interruption be the very thing that saves your life?

When we see impossible situations arising out of the interruptions of life, we need to be reminded that nothing is impossible with God. We may see no way. We may not understand how this interruption could possibly be a good thing. We may not begin to see how, but we need to trust that with God nothing is impossible. When Sera heard that she would have a baby though she was about 90 years old, she laughed and thought it was an impossible situation. But the response to Abraham was "Is there anything too hard for God? No matter how impossible an interrupting situation may seem, all things are possible with God.

When God Drops In

Finally, brothers and sisters, every believer must realize that sooner or later the Lord is going to move in every person's life. No man or woman can expect to live his entire life without a visit from the Lord. Even the ungodly get a visit from the Lord, every now and then.

Belshazzar was a great king who had a great party with all of his important friends using the golden vessels from the temple. The party went well until he had a visit from the Lord and read the handwriting on the wall.

The Pharaohs had mighty armies and kept the Children of Israel in bondage for 400 years, until the Lord interrupted the building of the mighty pyramids with the

voice of Moses saying "Let my people go."

The people of Babel were building a great tower to reach to heaven. Their vain and selfish activity succeeded until it was interrupted by a visit from the Lord who confused their languages.

Every saint needs to remember that God often interrupts the devils activities in our lives.

When the king planned to throw the three Hebrew boys into the fiery furnace, his plan was interrupted by the Lord who put a fourth man in the fire, who looked like the Son of God.

When Daniel was thrown into the Lion's den, the plan to kill him was interrupted when God made the hungry lions as gentle as lambs.

No wonder Psalm 110:1 says, "sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool!"

Somebody dug a ditch for you last week, but the Lord interrupted the plan!

Somebody was plotting on you, but the Lord let the secret get back to you!

Somebody was working against your program last week, but the Lord had another plan!

Many people have been putting up a sign that tells God they don't want to be bothered. They don't say the words, but their actions speak louder than their words!

Some people skip their Sunday worship, because they think Sunday worship is an interruption of their Sunday rest!

Some people don't have a daily devotion because daily devotion is an interruption of the planning process for their day. They forget that the word of God says "this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice in it!"

If serving Lord is an interruption in the grand scheme of things for us then we have placed a great sign on lives that says, "Do not disturb!"

I don't know about you, but I've found out that when it comes to the Lord, it's best to take the sign down!

I don't what the Lord will say to me everyday, but I don't want him to come to bless me and find me to busy to receive him.

I don't want the Lord to see a sign posted on my life that says "Do not disturb!"

I don't want to:

Stay in the dark because when the Lord came to show me to the light, I said "Do not disturb"

Stay in my poverty because when the Lord came to show me the way out, I said, "I don't feel like going today!"

Stay in my loneliness, because when the Lord came to be a comfort to me,I said, "I'm Tied up at the moment!"

Stay in in frustrations, because when the Lord came to show me my alternatives, I said, "Come back at another time!"

I don't know about you, but I don't want the Lord to pass me by! "Pass me not oh gentle savior! Hear my humble cry! While on others thou are calling, do not pass me by!"

When the Lord calls:

Bowed down heads are raised; Slow feet mount up on wings!

Deafeated hearts are filled with victory!; Depressed spirits are inspired again!

I so glad that 2000 years ago that the Lord stop by this old world and interrupted our corruption!

I so glad that he interrupted our condemnation to give us salvation!

I'm so glad that he interrupted our failure to give an opportunity to success!

I'm so glad that he interrupted our weakness to give us renewed strength!

I'm so glad that he interrupted our blindess to give us new sight!

I'm so glad that he picked up an old rugged cross...

Died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he interrupted the silence of the night and arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 745-Inspiration

Got Me Going In Circles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 14, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."—Joshua 6:3-5

Introduction

Do you sometimes feel you are just going around in circles? Do you feel like your life is taking you to New York when you're trying to go to California? Are you sailing West trying to get to the East? Often we doubt our life's direction and question whether we have made the right choices. These are the times when we feel as if our best efforts are fruitless because we are no closer to our goals today than we were two years ago. Even the repetitions themselves start to irritate us after a while as we search for ways to break the monotony of doing the same things all the time with very little prospect of change. Going in circles often suggests confusion, frustration and loss of direction.

Many people spend their entire lives doing a lot of everything but accomplishing little or nothing. They have no goals or direction. A man or a woman without a goal is like a ship without a rudder. Each will drift and not drive. Each will end up on the beaches of despair, defeat and despondency. John Henry Fabre, the great French naturalist, conducted a most unusual experiment with some Processionary Caterpillars. These caterpillars blindly follow the one in front of them. Hence, the name. Fabre carefully arranged them in a circle around the rim of a flower pot, so that the lead caterpillar actually touched the last one, making a complete circle. In the center of the flower pot he put pine needles, which is food for the Processionary Caterpillar. The caterpillars started around this circular flower pot. Around and around they went, hour after hour, day after day, night after night. For seven full days and seven full nights they went around the flower pot. Finally, they dropped dead of starvation and exhaustion. With an abundance of food less than six inches away, they literally

starved to death, because they confused activity with accomplishment.

There are many ways to go around in circles. People who have fail in love despite their best efforts often feel like they are going in circles. Parents who fail at motivating their children to do their best often feel they are going in circles. Business efforts that see more dead ends than runways often go in circles. Anytime our efforts seem to be fruitless, we have a tendency to feel we are going in circles.

Yet, there are times when the circles we travel are divinely inspired. These are times when something inside of us keeps leading us in a direction that is totally opposite from that which we desire. It is frustrating because we can't see the purpose. It is troublesome because it is seems an endless, thankless, unrewarding spiral that has no known purpose or direction.

As Christians, we have resolved to let God lead us. We have pledge to follow his direction regardless. "Wherever he leads me, I will follow...I go with him, with him, all the way!"

Expositions

This text focuses on the people of Israel as they marched in circles around the walls of Jericho.

God promised Joshua and the people that he would give them the victory if they proceeded into Canaan and followed his instructions. That took a great deal of courage because the city's of new country were well fortified and filled with skilled soldiers. Israel's soldiers were untrained and untested in battle.

God told the people he would provide the victory, but he did not tell them how. They simply were to march forward on faith alone.

God's instructions were that the entire army would march around Jericho once a day for six days. Half the army would lead the way as a front guard. They would be followed by seven priests, each blowing on a shofar, a trumpet made out of a ram's horn. Priests carrying the ark of the Lord would come next, and then the rest of the army would serve as a rear guard to complete the procession. On the seventh day that processional would continue seven times around the city. At the end of those times the priests were to give an extra long blast on the shofars, and then the entire nation, all two million people, were to shout at the top of their lungs. God promised that the walls would then collapse, which would make it easy for the soldiers to enter the city.

The people must have felt a little foolish marching around the city blowing horns. The people of Jericho must have been amused watching this untrained army march around their city walls blowing on trumpets. They would make easy targets for sure. They had few weapons and it seemed all they knew how to do was blow on trumpets.

Even the Israelites themselves must have felt a little silly. It would have been easier if they had known the plan, then they would have understood why they were marching around the walls, but they didn't. If Joshua had at least given their generals some direction other than simply marching around the wars they would have been

more comfortable. They had no idea what they were to do other than march around in circles. God had the plan and he knew exactly how he was going to accomplish the outcome.

God had a plan in New Testament times too? In John 6:5-6 when Jesus was faced with five thousand hungry people in the Galilean highlands, He asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" Jesus knew how the problem was going to be solved: He would feed the people miraculously. But the he tested the faith of his disciples to follow his instructions. They were confused for a moment, but decided it was best to follow Christ's instructions and the rest is history, 5000 were fed with much left over!

From a human perspective, God's plan for the conquest of Jericho was foolish, however. God delights in using plans and people that seem foolish to the world. That truth is at the heart of 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: "For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." Whether it's Joshua with these trumpets, Gideon with torches and pitchers, or David with a sling, God delights in using weakness and seeming foolishness to defeat his enemies and glorify his name.

Strange Ways of God

Today there are many believers who are frustrated because it seems that life is carrying them in circles. Nothing they try to do seems to succeed and they seem to be wasting valuable time accomplishing nothing. When we are troubled that our goals seem to elude us and obstacles seem to block our path continuously, consider three ideas while you walk the circular path God has given you.

If you have placed your life in God's hands, trust Him completely. The strange, roundabout march of Joshua illustrates that God sometimes accomplishes his purposes in mysterious ways. He may not lead us in obvious paths when He intends to show His power.

Scottish pastor and author George Matheson (1842-1906) wrote, "There are times when I get work to do, the good of which I cannot see. Sometimes . . . there is put into my hands a trumpet when I think it should be a sword. Sometimes I am sent on a long circuitous march when I am expecting to be retained for the assault. These moments are very hard for me. . . . Help me at
such moments, O Lord, to say, 'One step enough for me'!" We are not to ask, "Why the long march when we could be fighting the battle?" "Why the noisy trumpet?" It is enough to know
that God is leading. Although we cannot always see the promised land, yet we may trust the guidance of the promised Hand.

Placing our lives in God's hand completely means closing our eyes and depending on him to make the walls fall down, even if it means doing something that others call silly like walking in circles and blowing my horn.

Faith without works leads us in circles. We must consider the possibility that we may be going in circles because we are not fully following God's plan. God has devised a perfect plan for our lives. We may not be achieving what he expects because we may be partially implementing what he told us to do.

A Christian man worked each day transporting tourists across a lake. On occasion he would present the Gospel and its implications for life in a most unusual way. He had painted the word "Faith" on one of the oars of his rowboat and "Works" on the other. When they got quite far from shore, he would stop, then, beginning to row with only the one oar marked "faith," he would cause the boat to go in circles to the left. Reversing the process, he would pull on the other oar marked "works," and they would circle in the opposite direction. By this time the bewildered passengers were waiting for an explanation. This afforded him a wonderful opportunity to give them the truth concerning discipleship and the Christian life. He always concluded by saying, "You see, neither faith nor works can stand alone. They are twins that cannot be separated!" (James 2:20) Faith without works leads us in a circle. Works without faith takes us in a different direction but still in a circle.

Sometimes God leads us in circles to accomplish his will: If the account of Israel at Jericho does anything, it reminds us that God sometimes has us to walk in circles to accomplish his will. There may be a reason that only God knows why we keeping ending up at square one every time we try some big venture. We are familiar with the hymn God, "Moves in a Mysterious Way." It has been a source of great comfort and blessing to many of God's people since William Cowper wrote it in the 18th century. Yet few people know of the unusual circumstances that led to its composition.

William Cowper was a Christian, but he had sunk to the depths of despair. One foggy night he called for a horsedrawn carriage and asked to be taken to the London Bridge on the Thames River. He was so overcome by depression that he intended to commit suicide. But after 2 hours of driving through the mist, Cowper's coachman reluctantly confessed that he was lost. Disgusted by the delay, Cowper left the carriage and decided to find the London Bridge on foot. After walking only a short distance, though, he discovered that he was at his own doorstep! The carriage had been going in circles. Immediately he recognized the restraining hand of God in it all. Convicted by the Spirit, he realized that the way out of his troubles was to look to God, not to jump into the river. As he cast his burden on the Savior, his heart was comforted. With gratitude he sat down and penned these reassuring words: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm. O fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head."

Another old hymn urges us to continue despite disappointments saying, "farther along we'll know all about it. Farther along we'll understand why, cheer up my brother walk in the sunshine, we'll understand it all bye and bye!"

Where God Leads

Finally, brothers and sisters, following God's will may seem to take you in circles but it will always carry you to the right destination.

There are times when obedience to God appears fruitless and illogical but it always proves to be the right thing to do!

Moses must have felt like he was going in circles. He spent 40 years as a Prince of Egypt thinking he was somebody. He spent another 40 years as a shepherd in Midian believing he was a nobody. Then he spent his last 40 years leading Israel, realizing that God can take a nobody and make them somebody.

Jonah must have felt he was going in circles. God told him to go into Ninevah and he tried to go a different direction. He bought a ticket to sail on a ship but got a first class seat in the belly of a giant fish before he turned himself around and decided, "I'll do what you want me to do!"

David must have felt like he was going in circles. He started out his life as a shepherd boy saying, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want" and was praised by the king but before it was all over he was hunted as a criminal, exiled in a strange land, only to be returned as king and a man after God's own heart.

Naaman must have felt like he was going in circles. He'd been to one doctor after another trying to find a cure for his leprosy, but then the man of God told him to go wash in the river seven times. He must have felt ridiculous bathing seven times in muddy water, but when he came up the seventh time he realized that his life had gone full circle. He had gone down in leprosy but he had come and brand new man.

Somebody here today can testify that your life has gone full circle. There was a time when you were filled with:

DOUBT, but you have learned how to lean and depend on Jesus!

FEAR, but you have learned that the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

HATRED, but the Lord has taken your hatred and turned it into love!

Have you gone full circle?

Have you learned that the Lord can take your:

QUESTIONS and give you answers; WORRIES and give you consolation!

BITTERNESS and give you sweetness; WEAKNESS and give you strength!

FAILURE and give you success; DEFEAT and give you victory!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that the Lord can take your life around in circles, then take you where you are supposed to go!

I've found out that he'll pick you up and turn you around. He'll plant your feet on solid ground!

The God we serve is a full circle God!

He can pick us up from nowhere and carry us anywhere!

He can push us from back here and put us over yonder!

He can lift us from down here and put us up there!

He’s a full circle God who left the heaven, came down here for 33 long years!
Died out on Calvary!
Arose from the Grave..
But one day he took flight on cloud and went back home again.
I hear the voice of the angels asking, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven!”
The circle is still not complete because he’s coming back again!
I don’t know about you, but I want to be ready when he comes!

No. 747-Funeral

The Measure of My Days

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

March 13, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" Psalm 39:4

Introduction

How do you measure the impact of our lives? Sometimes we feel that our lives are insignificant when compared to the great names we study or heroes whose life stories a part of our folklore. Sometimes the really great accomplishments of life are not made by our hands but by the hands of those we touch along the way; those whose existence and success we make possible through our unselfish efforts. How do you measure the impact of such a life?

Sometimes the decision not to withhold love is the difference between whether or not the world receives a gift God has sent. We never know how God intends to use the lives he puts within our trust. How would you advise a mother who was pregnant with her fifth child based on the following facts: "Her husband had syphilis. She had tuberculosis. Their first child was born blind. Their second child died. Their third child was born deaf. Their fourth child had tuberculosis. "The mother is considering an abortion. Would you advise her to have one?" In view of these facts, some would agree that she should have an abortion, but if this mother had she would have killed the great composer Ludwig von Beethoven!"

Measuring the importance of a life has little to do with longevity, but the long life of a caring person has plenty of time to do great works.

We cannot measure the life of a saint using yard sticks or measuring tapes. These only measure the outward growth of the body. Neither can we measure it using weights and scales they only measure accumulated substance. The life of a saint must be gauged by a different measure. It is a measure that is not empirical. It does not quantify by natural means and does not register on the scale of the natural order.

The life of a saint must be measured by God's standards, for he is the righteous and just judge.

As Christians, we strive to remember that Psalm 37:23 reminds us that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." The measure of our lives is the degree to which we have ordered our steps in the way of the Lord.

Exposition

The 39th Psalm paints a picture of a quiet elderly saint, who had lived a measured life.

The psalm, written by David, is a testimony of a good life lived before God. It is a picture of the mature saint who has learned to measure days and remain at peace despite the raging storms of life.

Though enemies surround the saint and troubles appear on every hand, David said in verse two, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace." The quiet saint David described was sometimes difficult to measure for the quiet saint was silent even in good times, praising God within, and occasionally a show of expression gave a hint of the fire that burned inside.

The quiet saint referred to was David himself, who had earned the right to speak in retrospect. God had been good to him and opened many doors for him. There were times when he could have spoken out against enemies but held his peace. On other occasions he could have lifted a hand against his adversaries, but he remained silent. Then in his senior years, David recognized that his life was measured. In verse five he notes, "Behold thou has made my days as a handbreath." That is, they are short and easily measured. A hand breadth is the amount of space that one hand covers, minus the thumb. Like the four seasons, of spring, summer, autumn and winter, his life is but a hand breath.

The measured life is one that recognizes the omnipotence of God in every respect. It is measured in hand breaths of spiritual qualities that indicate the nature of one's spiritual walk, including faith, humility, service and salvation. These four mark the measure of the saved life.

Measuring A Saint

Since David suggested that our days are measured in hand breaths or by four fingers, how do we measure our lives? What are four standards that could be used to measure a saint's life? What is our hand breath measure? If we measure the life of a saint, we would find:

SMALL HEAD: The world is preoccupied with those who measure their importance by their status. Many seek to be the richest, smartest, fastest, and greatest, thinking that is the only way they can leave a lasting impact on the world. In the process, many get the big head as the accolades of the world fill their ears and they are unable to resist the steady flow of praise from men. However, the measure of a saint is not in the big head but just the opposite. Saints are measured by the degree of their humility. Matthew 20:26 says, "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." One measure of a saint is in her ability to do works of charity and love without requiring or expecting praise or recognition. The humble saint never thinks more of themselves than they really are in the sight

of God. The humble saint wears a small hat because he or she has a small head.

STRONG HANDS: We also measure a life by its industry, ie.,whether or not a saint, when able, spent his or her time wisely engaged in gainful employment that would glorify God. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 says, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." Whether the hands are those of a laborer or those of a humble custodial worker. Whether they were the hands of one who could lift great loads or those of one who carefully cooked and baked fine foods for family, church and friends...the hands of the saints are busy hands, that were dedicated to the service of others in the name of the Lord. Busy hands are those that help the poor and the needy. Busy hands are those that work to lift the burdens of others. Busy hands are those that feed the homeless, and care for the lonely. Busy hands are those which work constantly, while they can. These are the hands that John referred to when he said, " I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

GRACIOUS HEART: What measure of a saint would be complete if it did not measure a saint's heart. A measure of one's heart is a measure of one's compassion. Compassion is the sum total of a person's affinity with charity, forgiveness, mercy, sympathy, and kindness. A saint who is not merciful, forgiving, and sympathetic doesn't measure well at all. A saint who is inhospitable and irritable, showing no lasting feel for the least of God's kingdom, measures small in the grand scheme of God's plan. If you want to measure a saint, see whether or not she was willing to help others, despite not having much herself. Measure whether or not she was willing to share her resources to help somebody along the way. Was her heart always reaching out to some lonely child? Were her arms always stretched forth to give an understanding embrace? Was she usually gracious, even in strained circumstances? Gracious hearts are those enlarged by the love of God. They will run over with the joy of the Lord.

SAVED SOUL: The greatest measure of a Saint's life has nothing to do with anything temporal, but is purely spiritual. The greatest measure has nothing to do with the extent of one's education, the amount of property accumulated or the extent of one's travels and knowledge about the world. The greatest measure of a Saint's life is whether or not the saint had a "saved soul."

It is the saved soul that measures well in the sight of God.

It is the saved soul that endures difficulties and tough times content that God will make a way somehow!

It is the saved soul that lives through wars and depressions and civil disorder with confidence and assurance, knowing God is in control.

It is the saved soul that weathers storms and turbulences by anchoring their souls to the word of God.

It is the saved soul that feeds on the word of God...

It is the saved soul that cries out "Guide me oh thou Great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land!"

If we are to measure the soul of a Saint, measure their faith in God's Amazing Grace!

It was that grace that provided for our salvation out on Calvary!
It was that grace that withstood the pain of death on an old rugged cross!
It was that grace that awakened the eyes of a sleeping savior early one Sunday morning!
It was grace...that brought us thus far and grace will see us through!

On Sunday March, 7, 1999 Sister Annie Broadnax was called to be measured by God. She had a humble spirit, working hands, a gracious heart and a saved soul!

No. 748-Communion

Shared Bread

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 21, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."Matthew 26:26-28 " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

What do you do with a great blessing? Do you keep it to yourself or do you share it with someone else? If God has blessed us to receive blessings we have two ways to respond, keep them to ourselves or share them with others. If the blessing was a new house, do you invite others to share or do you keep it to yourself. Can a person who has no transportation ride in your new car? Did you get a financial blessing? Did you keep it for yourself or did you share it with others? When you gain strength from an experience do your share your experience and testimony to strengthen others or do you keep it to yourself? Sharing is an act of passing on or distributing a portion of that which one has obtained. It is the essence of the Christian experience to share what God has given us with others.

While there are many people who share today, there was a time in our community, especially in more rural areas, when sharing was personal. When a farm family killed a hog, folks all around were rejoicing as family members made personal visits and left smartly wrapped packages of smoked ham for a neighbor. A good watermelon didn't taste well unless a neighbor close by was given a taste of that melon you said was so sweet that sugar dripped from the rhine. Sharing is personal and sometimes it is confidential. A friend in need often avoids a great loss when something of value is privately shared to help avoid a catastrophe by someone else who cares. Sharing is contagious. One shared chocolate cake has a tendency to draw a potato pie or some other treat in return. People who share life's experiences together grow closer together.

There are some people who pride themselves in being stingy. In fact they have refined stinginess into an art form and they live by a creed that forbids them from sharing with anyone. Consider the old miser that had the reputation of being the

stingiest geezer in the hills. A young boy decided to study the old miser and learn the art of being stingy from a pro. One day he visited the miser's house and took a gift of watermelon seeds, no sense wasting good melon on an old miser. The miser wasn't in but his wife was and she was stingy too, but not as stingy as her husband. She received the young boy's watermelon seeds and offered him a cup of coffee while he waited. She returned with only a cup, no sense wasting good coffee on a guest. The young boy thanked her and complimented her on her house saying, "You sure have a.." then cut it short, no sense wasting a perfectly good compliment when she knew the rest. Enjoying the boy's skill, the wife said, "You must be hungry, Sir, Here is a big cake; please eat it." At the same time she drew a circle with her hands and set a plate of imaginary cake in front of the boy. The boy was outdone. This woman was the stingiest person she had ever seen. Then the old miser himself came in. He became angry with his wife when he realized what she had done. He snatched back the imaginary chocolate cake and drew a half circle with his hand and said, "This is a boy, not a man, a half a chocolate would do just fine!" There are some people who won't even share with others, even that which is being shared will cost them nothing.

We should be thankful that God is willing to share the bounties of heaven with us. We are so undeserving but he doesn't give us slices of blessings based on our worthiness, if so our slice would be too small to imagine. God shares blessings with us to show his love for us.

As Christians, we recognize that the greatest way God shared a blessing with us came when he shared his only begotten Son with us. It was personal. It was sacrificial. Now, we must share him with others.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives instructions to his disciples concerning the elements of the Lord's supper.

The bread and the wine of the last meal were originally prepared to observe the Passover. Jesus, observing the Passover with them, took the occasion as an opportunity to emphasize how his life would be given as a sacrifice.

He took the cup and shared it with his disciples, saying it represented his blood, shed for the remission of sin. He took the bread and shared it also with his disciples. It would represent his body which would be given for the remission of sin.

The emphasis of the action is upon the fact that Christ "gave" to his disciples. He gave both in the Lord's supper and in life. He gave of himself to others.

In receiving what was given the disciples also received the mandate to give of themselves in an unselfish way, through sacrificial living and service to others.

Sharing Our Substance

Today there many people who have learned that some of their greatest experiences are those which were shared with others. There is no happiness that can exceed that

which is derived from sharing a blessing with someone else.

The bread and the wine of biblical times was the embodiment of community effort. In the time of our Lord the work of many families, even of whole communities, was that of growing grain and cultivating grapes. As these families worked in the production of grain and grapes their whole lives became involved in the process. Their hopes, their associations with each other, their intentions, their good deeds, and their attitudes toward each were all intertwined in the bread and wine they produced.

Thus, when Jesus took bread and wine and blessed it and shared it with his disciples, he in essence urged them to give of themselves to others as he would soon give of himself. The Lord's supper became a call to sacrifice. It also became a call for believers to share the essence of themselves with others.

EVEN A LITTLE IS A LOT TO GOD: Sometimes we feel that what we have is of little significance. This is the attitude of those who forget that even a little is a lot to God. In John 6:8 there is an account of a boy with five loaves of bread and two fishes. Jesus took this small bread, offered from a believing soul, and made it feed five thousand people, with plenty left over. God has done the same for believers today. The mother who struggles to maintain her home with meager resources, but offers a hand to help others, seems to always have enough for her family. The man with little spare time who takes what little he has and shares it with some child as a mentor, tutor or listening ear, seems to always find more time somehow. The housewife who prepared enough food for six plates, seemed to have enough to prepare a seventh plate for the widow woman that lives next door. God has a way of blessing the resources of those who share of themselves with others. We don't exactly know how he does it, but it is amazingly true, that the more we give, the more he gives to us!

GOD WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE TO MEET NEEDS: Our actions are the embodiment of answered prayers. Someone has prayed that God would help them with housing, financial or medical problems. The answer to that problem often comes through the actions of God's people. God has no hands but our hands. He has no feet but our feet. When God responds, in most cases, he uses the skill and resources of his people to answer the prayers of those in distress. When Israel cried out to God for deliverance from Egypt, he could have simply clapped his hands and set them free. Instead, he used Moses to begin the process. God could have batted his eyes and created the temple at Jerusalem, but he chose to use Solomon and the people of Israel to accomplish his will. That's why the song writer's words are so important, "Make me a blessing. Make me a blessing to someone today!" It is a plea of every believer to be an instrument that God uses to bring sunshine in the lives of those struggling in darkness.

GOD BLESSES WHAT IS SHARED AND THOSE WHO SHARE: God blesses our meager resources so that they become abundant blessings. He blesses what is shared and the person who shares. When we share our home with another person, give lodging to a stranger, or provide a meal to a hungry person, God blesses both what we do and we personally receive a blessing for our action. The action is being

recorded. Matthew 25:37- finds Jesus speaking of the reward of the righteous. They were being rewarded for feeding Christ when he was hungry, giving him water when he was thirsty and clothing him when he was naked. The question was asked, "When did we do this?" The answer came, "..as ye have done it so to the least of these my brethren ye have done it also unto me." Each act of sharing is observed and recorded by God. Each act of kindness is recorded in God's book of records. When we stand before God our willingness to share and help others will be noted. Revelation 14:13 "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Shared Bread

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God gave us the best example of sharing when he shared his only begotten son with the world.

Sharing is most meaningful when the recipient realizes that he has received something of value at considerable risk of life and substance.

When David was being pursued by King Sau, he was hungry and afraid. He knocked on the door of the priests, who took their lives into their own hands by sharing the sacred bread that had been set aside for the worship of the Lord. The bread they shared with David, saved his life that day, but it does not compare with the bread God shared with the world.

Elijah met a widow who was down to her last cup of meal and cruse of oil. Her barrel was empty and she was about to eat her last cake of bread and die. Yet, in her poverty she was ready and willing to share her last piece of bread with a stranger. God blessed her empty barrel so that every time she went to it, it kept producing enough to make one more pan of bread. The bread she received sustained her life, but even that bread does not compare with the bread God shared with the world.

When Israel wandered in the wilderness, it complained of a lack of bread and water. God moved in a miraculous way to put meat on their tables every day and he rained down bread from heaven to sustain them. Yet, even the manna of the wilderness cannot compare to the bread God shared with the world.

Jesus said in John 6:32 " Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

The bread that God shared with the world is a wonder working bread!

God's bread gives:

STRENGTH to those who are weak; INSPIRATION to those who are frustrated and confused!

HOPE to the hopeless; RENEWAL to those who are in despair!

PICKS UP those who are let down; LIFTS UP those who have been let down!

SAVES those who are lost and gives NEW ENERGY to those who wait on him. For

I hear the word declare that “they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!”

God’s bread is

QUICKER that hoe cakes. While we are still praying, our help is on the way!

LIGHTER than light bread. Those who wander in the dark will find that he is the light of the world!

SWEETER than raisin bread. His goodness takes the bitterness of hard times and sweetens its taste. No wonder the song writer said, “I found a savior and he’s sweet I know!”

MORE ASSORTED than corn bread. Corn bread is good with greens, rice and gravy, stew meat or chicken. If there is nothing else, corn bread goes good with just corn bread and gravy. But God’s bread goes with every situation. In my days of happiness, God is there! In my moments of sadness, God is there too! When my soul is hungry, God is there! No matter what my situation, God is there!

God’s bread is better than wonder bread because he helps us to grow in many ways. No wonder the song writer declared: “Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

When God saw a world hungry for the bread of life, he decided to share his only begotten son to feed them the power of salvation!

One evening, 2000 years ago, Jesus, the bread of heaven, took an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

He died on that cross so that we might live!

But early Sunday morning, Quicker than instant biscuits in a hot stove!

Early Sunday morning, faster than light bread browns in a hot toaster!

Early Sunday morning, God’s shared bread arose from the grave with....all power in his hands!

No. 749-Easter

Put Your Eggs In The Right Basket

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 4, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain..but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." 1 Corinthians 15:12-14,20. "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matthew 28:6

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether or not you have this religion thing just right? Most believers have experienced a time in their lives in which they questioned whether or not they were actually in the right religion? Some believe that Budda is the way. Others believe in the order and power of Islam. Even among Christians there seems to be some who say that even though we believe in Christ we are doomed to hell if we don't worship on a certain day, speak in a certain way, or offer praise with the same intensity and fervor of the next person. That gets to be confusing for some people who have trouble sorting it all out. Many have privately asked the question, "Am I doing this thing right? Am I in the right religion?" Believers have come to know that true religion is a matter of faith. It's what you believe about God and your relationship to him as it is revealed to you through the written word and through your own life experiences with him. We believe that if we trust God fully and follow his word completely that his spirit will lead us to the truths. We need to do those things which are right in this life as we prepare for the next.

One of the great truths that makes us certain that we are on the right path is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believers acknowledge and celebrate that truth every Lord's Day. The world wide family of believers recognizes it on the first Sunday following the first full moon of spring. The world calls that day "Easter." The celebration takes on many means of expressions, many of which come to represent new life or the newness of life. Brightly colored eggs, a completely secular tradition, has come to represent renewed hope. There are other symbols too, such as bunny rabbits, known for their fertility, new clothing and a plethora of other seasonal

innovations.

Eggs often represent the essence of life for many people. They are fragile and can be easily broken. If properly fertilized and nurtured, eggs can be the source of new life. In simpler times, one of the main chores of children was to gather eggs on the farm. A clumsy child learned an important lesson very early...never put all of your eggs in one basket. If you happen to fall and break them, there are still some remaining.

There are many who have adopted this philosophy in life. In finance, they diversify their investments, seeking to shield themselves from the complete failure of one investment over another. There are some who even use that idea in their personal relationships, choosing to have two or three relationships going on at the same time, just in case one or the other falls apart.

Unfortunately, there are also many who approach their spiritual lives in the same manner. They are afraid to put all of their eggs in one basket. They will not put their entire trust and faith in God. They put a few eggs in God's basket and a few are placed in the basket of their own understanding and effort. That makes them feel comfortable because they feel they have successfully hedged themselves against failure. "Because I show up at church a few times a year, I have a small investment in heaven. Because I have invested my time, talents and resources wisely, I have a secure investment in the world." They feel they are safe because they don't put all of their eggs in one basket.

As Christians, we see the empty tomb as a miraculous inspiration. It is a reminder that we are on the right track. It is a reminder that faith in God is the right basket and that all of our eggs, should be put in the basket of his care and compassion. It is a vivid expression of how hope, though crushed to the ground will rise again. True believers have all of their eggs in the basket of God's love and care!

The Right Basket

Today there are millions who are not sure whether trusting in God is the right basket. Even if it is they are not sure it is wise to put all of their eggs in that basket. One of the great messages of the resurrection is the reassurance to the faithful that God is still in control and can do everything that he has promised. People who put their trust in him are in no danger of losing anything.

THE EMPTY TOMB IS EVIDENCE: We know we are on the right track because of the empty tomb. If our faith is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, then we would be putting our eggs in the wrong basket if it turns out that Jesus did not rise from the grave. Paul, speaking to the Corinthians said the same words in a different way. 1 Corinthians 15:14 says, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." However, the biblical record shows that we are right to trust God's resurrecting power because Christ is risen from the grave. When the women came to the tomb on Sunday morning to dress the body of Jesus they received great news. "He is not here. He is risen. Come see the place where the Lord lay." The women saw an empty tomb. The disciples saw an empty tomb.

The soldiers saw an empty tomb. Everyone involved realized that he did exactly as he said. He had risen from the dead after three days and three nights.

The empty tomb is evidence that those who believe can trust the power of God to overcome any obstacle to keep his promises to us, even the obstacle of death. It should also encourage those who believe in God that in our worst moments God can lift us from the jaws of peril, death and persecution and breathe new life into our dreams hopes and ambitions.

The empty tomb shows us a living Christ, who defeated Satan and arose triumphantly. It means that since Christ arose, I can sing with renewed hope, "I'll rise again!"

THE TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES IS EVIDENCE: We know we have our eggs in the right basket because of the testimony of the witnesses. The list of witnesses who could verify the truth of the resurrection experience was long. Luke 24:10 tells of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James and others. All 11 of his disciples, two men who walked down the Emmaus Road, and countless others all became witnesses of this great truth. Their testimony is a witness to a great work God performed on that Sunday morning.

There is no greater assurance that any believer has about the power of God than the testimony of persons who have been touched by the hand of God themselves. The testimony of the faithful reassures others that they have their eggs in the right basket.

When God has touched a life and a testimony is given, it is an encouragement to others who are also trusting in God to know that what he has done for you, he will do for them too!

One man who is sick is encouraged to hear the testimony of someone God has healed!

Someone who has been experiencing a difficult time is encouraged when they hear how God helped someone else climb up the rough side of the mountain!

THE PRESENCE OF RESURRECTED LIVES IS EVIDENCE: We know we have our eggs in the right basket because of the evidence seen in the resurrected lives around us. When Christ arose from the dead there were many people who actually, physically arose from the dead with him. Matthew 27:52-53 says, "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many." When the believers saw the dead saints walking and talking again, they knew they were not believing in Christ in vain.

Today we have seen hundreds of examples of lives resurrected through the power of God. Each one of them reaffirms that we are putting our eggs in the right basket.

When we see marriages that have crumbled into the dust of divorce, restored, renewed and rejuvenated through the power of God, we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

When we have seen youth who have come to a greater knowledge of God and

watched their entire lives turn around. That's when we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

When we see people who were once slaves to alcohol and drugs, completely turn their lives around by the power of God, we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

When we see people who had buried themselves in self pity and wallowed in bitterness step out of their self imposed tombs to a new life and a new spirit in Christ, we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

When we see people turn their backs on sinful life styles, amoral living, adulterous relationships, and immorality, we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

What God did that Sunday morning, he's still doing today!

He's still rolling stones away from lives entombed in faithless living!

He's still raising dead spirits with a new joy and enthusiasm!

He's still raising new hope and new spirit among all who believe! That's why we know we have our eggs in the right basket!

Giving God Everything

Finally, brothers and sisters, there comes a point when we know we have the right basket and we decide to put all of our eggs in the right basket.

To put all of our eggs in the right basket means to completely trust and depend on the Lord.

It means to look at the evidence of the resurrection and realize that Christ died and is alive today!

It means to consider the testimony of those who have had dealings with the Lord in their own lives.

It means to look at all the people we know, who have changed their walk and talk after knowing God for themselves.

When Israel came into the Promised Land some folks tried to put some of their eggs in God's basket and others in the basket of the Canaanite gods. But I hear Joshua telling them to put their eggs in the right basket, "As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord!"

Elijah had a great contest with the Prophets of Baal. He asked the question, "How long, halt ye between two opinions?" He said if Baal be god, then follow him. If God be God then follow him! You got to put your eggs in the right basket!

Isaiah said, if the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me. He put all his eggs in the right basket!

Giving God everything means, giving him your:

FAILURES and trusting him for your success; QUESTIONS and trusting him for the answers!

DOUBTS and looking to him for confirmations; TIMID SPIRIT and trusting him for a new boldness

BURDENS and trusting him to make them light; DEFEATS and trusting him for

victories;

WEAKNESS and trusting him for renewed strength;

Consider Sanctified Sally's Easter Basket. Every Easter Sunday Sanctified Sally came to church carrying an empty Easter basket, much to the amusement of the members. Somebody finally asked her the meaning of the empty basket. She said "There was a time when I carried around a full basket of burdens. I had Black eggs that represented my troubles. I had red eggs that represented my sins. I had brown eggs that represented my lost hope. I had gray eggs that represented my sad spirit. But one day I heard Jesus say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest! I gave him all my burdens; all of my sins, all of my lost hope! All of my troubles and sadness! It may look funny to you today, but I may have an empty basket, but my burdens sure are light!"

Somebody here today is carrying a heavy load! You need to take that load and put it in the right basket!

Somebody here today is struggling with the guilt of sin! You need to take that load and put it in the right basket!

Somebody here today is crying in the midnight hour! You need to take that worry and put it in the right basket!

We know it's the right basket because we have the evidence of the resurrection!

We know it's the right basket because we have the testimony of the saints!

We know it's the right basket because we see the wonder working power of God in the lives of the saints!

We know it's the right basket because we know the story!

It's the story of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three days and nights!

Jesus, who arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

You can put your trust in him because he is alive!

No wonder the song writer said, "He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me, he talks with along life's narrow! He lives, He lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives.

He lives within my heart!

No. 750-Family

What could you possibly see in me?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 11, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another 1 John 4:9-10; "Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."Philippians 2:2-5

Introduction

What could your mate possibly see in you? The humble must struggle to discover the salient features about themselves that would attract others. The vain person has no problem. Their vanity responds: It is my good looks, charm, giving spirit, generosity, remarkable body, wit, intelligence and of course, my modesty. Those who are single spend a great deal of time looking for a mate. Some do so without asking, what about me is attractive? Some are married but have no idea what it is that their mate sees in them. Is he attracted to your looks? Hopefully not, because looks are so fragile, shapes are so unpredictable and muscles turn to flab so easily. Is it your income? Hopefully not because what is rich today can easily be poor tomorrow. What is it that our friends or spouses see in us that makes us attractive to them. What could they possibly see in us?

Sometimes we can't see for looking. Consider Beautiful Beneatha's choice. Beneatha was the most beautiful woman in her one red light town. She could have had any man she wanted because she was a feast for the eyes and a sight to see. When she married Bennie the blind man everyone in town was shocked. When asked why, of all the men could have had, she chose to marry blind Bennie, she said, "Even though he has no eyes, he looked deep into my soul and loved me despite what he saw!"

The success of any relationship depends upon what one sees when he or she looks deep into the soul of the other. That look goes deeper than outward beauty and other superficial considerations. It considers the essence of what makes us who we

are. Often “who we are” is entangled in webs of confusion, uncertainty and doubt. Sometimes “who we are” is hidden behind an obnoxious personality that makes it hard to see. Sometimes attituds can muddy the clear waters of our spirit so much that “who we are” is hidden almost completely from view. Those who love us, see the mud, the tangled web of personality, and the attitude shifts that represent all of our faults. They love us because they also see the “who we are” that really defines us and makes us special to them.

As Christians, what we look for in each person, especially in a soul mate is the love of God. We have learned that there is no happiness that can come from a relationship if the person with whom we share the secret of “who we are” is not one and the same with us in our love for God. We cannot experience love unless our search through the soul of our mate finds God. Where God is, there is love, for God is love!

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he gives instruction about the fullness of a believer’s responsibility to love.

John, in this epistle, points out that God demonstrated an attribute of his Godliness when he sent Christ to this earth. He demonstrated his love. His love was so complete that he sent his son to pay for our sins. It is a demonstrationof Godly perfection.

It is the same spirt that Paul suggested for every believer’s relationship when he wrote in Philippians 2:2-5 “make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”

When man sinned it left an emptiness in the divine order. Christ came to complete the arrangement and to restore man to sonship with God.

We should see a friend

What could you possibly see in me? Is it possible that your spouse or the person with whom you are sharing a relationship sees you as a friend? There are millions of people today who are married to someone that is not their friend. Friendship is vital to the health of any relationship. Your spouse should be your friend before becoming your sexual partner, provider, husband or wife. Your friend is your confidant, buddy, colleague, associate, partner and your ally. Your friend is a person who peers deep into your soul and knows you for who you really are and despite what is discovered still sticks with you anyway. Your friend knows your flaws, shortcomings and irritations and still sticks with you. Your friend dares to differ with you, tells you when you are wrong, tries to keep you from falling, but is ready to pick up the pieces if your stubbornly fall flat on your face.

Our friends sometimes anger us because of their truthfulness.

Our friends sometimes disappoint us because they do not flatter us as do others.

Our friends call it straight and we know it. They are our mirrors because they reflect who we really are not what we say we are.

Marriages work when each partner is a friend to the other. They fail when friendship ceases. Those that begin outside of friendship are doomed to fail even before they begin.

More than a lover, your soul mate must be your friend. That's what one of Solomon's wives told the Daughter's of Jerusalem in Song of Solomon 5:16 "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

We should see the perfection of ourselves

What could you possibly see in me? Is it possible that your spouse or friend sees qualities in you needed to complete themselves? No person is created as a turn key package, complete with everything we need or feel we need to be balanced. Most of us lack something. Our soul mates, despite their frailties and shortcomings in other areas fill in the empty blanks in our lives. They complete us by helping us to become the men and women God intends for us to be.

This perfecting presence is what brings out the best in each. Just as a wife will pick the lent off a husband's suit before he walks out of the door, he covers an uncovered slip strap before she leaves. Each works in greater ways to perfect the other by supplying that which the other needs. The wife of the blind man becomes his eyes. The husband of the lame woman becomes her legs. She becomes the ears for the husband who is deaf and he reaches for life for the wife who has given up hope. One finds perfection in the other.

In Ephesians 5: 25-28 Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. "

The idea here is that Christ was willing to do whatever was necessary to perfect the church to the point that it could stand before God without spot or wrinkle. What Paul suggests is that every couple watch the relationship between Christ and the church and do the same.

Husbands perfect their wives by speaking to them in forms other than grunts. Husbands who represent Christ in a Christian marriage should communicate with their wives as Christ does with the church through his word. Husbands should share their hopes, dreams and fears with their wives, even though the conversation may seem trivial at the time. She is perfected when she knows how her husband thinks and feels.

Wives perfect their husbands by making them know they respect them. The church accepts the leadership of Christ and Christ alone, so should every wife follow her Christian husband's lead. Her HUSBAND, not her pastor, Sunday School teacher, or favorite person is her leader. He is perfected when he knows he has the complete followship of his wife. Their marriage is perfected because they mutually respect each other.

Husbands and wives perfect each other by doing things together. There is no greater perfection for a marriage than a husband and wife who operate as a team, in every respect and endeavor. They come as a package becomes one perfects the other, like ice cream and cake!

Husbands and wives perfect each other by discerning each other's desires and needs and helping to satisfy them. The husband who didn't get a complete education often finds perfection when his wife walks across the stage. They are both perfected when she works to help him do the same if it is his desire. A marriage is perfected when one partner seeks to fill in the void that makes the other's life incomplete.

We should see the power of God at work

What could you possibly see in me? Perhaps your soul mate sees the power of God at work in your life. Your soul mate knows your frustrations, difficulties and problems, but more than any other person can see the power of God at work in your life.
There is no force that can build a relationship better than the power of God.
A Christian woman is drawn to a Christian man because she can see how God is using him to bring her to spiritual fullness. A Christian man is attracted to a Christian woman for the same reason: He can see how God uses the energy, enthusiasm, practices, habits and beliefs of this woman to make him a better man. He sees the power of God at work in her and how that power, when it comes through her, builds, strengthens and empowers him to be a better man.
When your soul mate is a person of character that's an evidence of God at work.
When your soul mate becomes an instrument of God for the building of the kingdom, that's the power of God at work.

When your soul mate becomes a walking advertisement for what the Holy Spirit can do in the life of a believer, that's the power of God at work! What could you possibly see in me? Maybe it's the power of God at work!

What does Does God See In Us?

While we ask questions of our soul mates about our own worthiness, we could very well ask that same questions with respect to our relationship with God. What could God possibly see in me?
We are creatures who are recklessly going out of control. What could God possibly see in us?
David in Psalm 8:4 asked the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" What could God possibly see in us?
"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." What could God possibly see in us?
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." What could God possibly see in us?
When we should be doing right, we end up doing wrong. What could God possibly see in us?
When we should be:

GOING FORWARD, we often going backward; STANDING UP we often somewhere sitting down;

SPEAKING AND TESTIFYING we never say a word; QUIET AND SILENT we are somewhere running our mouths.

CLIMBING HIGHER we often falling down; GETTER BETTER most of the times we are getting worse

SOBER AND CLEAR HEADED we are somewhere getting drunk; DOING RIGHT we are somewhere doing wrong

What could God possibly see in us?
We lie when we should be telling the truth!
We complain when should be giving thanks!
We show more greed than we do gratitude!
With all of these faults, what could God possibly seen in us?
I heard a song writer declare: "He looked beyond my faults and saw my need."
He looked beyond all my faults..
All my shortcomings..disappointments!
What God saw was a world that needed more love!
He saw lonely hearts that needed comforting!
He saw lost souls that needed saving!
So, 2000 years ago he sent his only begotten son to die out on Calvary!
He died!
But, Early Sunday morning..
He arose up from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 751-Communion

Doggie Bag Blessings!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 18, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." Exodus 16:4; "And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. 20Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them." Exodus 16:19-20

Introduction

Have you ever dined out and asked for a doggie bag? Depending upon the restaurant, the response from the waiter may have ranged from blase to insult. In fine restaurants, where chefs regard themselves with the greatest amount of dignity and pride, a patron's request for a doggie bag is an insult. It is an insult that the customer did not eat the food and a double insult if the customer actually plans to take the chef's painstaking creation home to a dog! In general, those who dine at a cafeteria or a very casual cafe, may not draw any attention if they ask to take the TSO chicken home in a "doggie bag." Even doggie bags for the fine breads and cookies offered at some cafes are considered good taste. Don't try that at an exclusive restaurant. The chef himself may come to the front to give you a piece of his mind as he wonders to which side of the Jed Clampit family you are related.

Some people live by the doggie bag. If they are guests at your wedding reception or your dinner, they ask for doggie bags! If they go through a reception line, they want a doggie bag! Some will even ask for the food from your plate and then ask for a doggie bag to carry home your left overs.

Health inspectors these days are very careful to encourage patrons to follow what is known as the two hour rule. Food taken out of a restaurant must be eaten or refrigerated within two hours or deadly germs begin to form that could result in sickness or death. That's when some recognize immediately that there may be "death in the doggie bag!"

Why do they call them doggie bags anyway? A generation or two ago people actually requested table scraps to feed their dogs. They raked the scraps into the dog's bowl and the hungry pets would gulp them down without hardly a swallow. Today, however, doggie bags are rarely for the dogs. There are no scrap bags for the poor doggies! In fact, the dogs probably wouldn't eat them anyway, especially after they were raised on "Nibbles and bits!" and Purina products. "Doggie Bag" is just

a phrase that means I, not my dog, plan to nibble on the bits when I get home.

Is it possible for us to desire more than our share of blessings from God? Even though we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" is it possible for that some of us may want a little more for our doggie bag? Our daily bread is what it takes for us to live with reasonable comfort and security every day. Yet, even with such an assurance, there are many that have convinced themselves that they need more than just their daily bread...they must have a "doggie bag!"

As Christians, we have learned that God provides all of our needs through Christ Jesus. Whatever we need, he supplies to insure that we will never be in want or desperation. In very secret and compelling ways, God moves to provide for us on a daily basis. He presents us with a daily buffet of blessings that satisfies our every need. Because he is our God we end each day completely satisfied. We rejoice exceedingly because when God gets through blessing us, there's no need for ....doggie bags!

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he explains the command of God with respect to the manner in which they would be fed.

Israel was about to witness a daily miracle of God that would happen so frequently in the lives of some that they would not even recognize it as a miracle, but as a chance of nature. They were trapped in the wilderness without the ability to care for themselves. God announced his place for their care.

RAIN DOWN BREAD FROM HEAVEN: God decided to provide for the daily needs of the people. He would arrange for wafer like bread morsels to appear each day in sufficient enough quantities to feed them. The bread was unlike any other bread. White like coriander seed, it tasted like wafers made with honey. "What is it," the people asked when they first saw it. In Hebrew they said, "Man hu?" What is it? "It's the bread the Lord has given you to eat." What is it? Man-na. That's what it is. Bread from heaven, from the hand of God. God is gracious. He provided daily bread for his people, His hand fed them in the wilderness, even when his people grumbled against him. The manna was a perfect food for the wilderness. It was renewed every morning. They had to carry nothing. Wherever they went in the wilderness it was there.

GATHER AT A CERTAIN RATE: Even though the people found manna laying around everywhere, every morning they were instructed to gather their bread by a rate prescribed by God. Each family was to gather no more than they needed each day. They were to gather no more and no less. At verse 16 Moses said, "gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents." An omer is just over a half gallon in size. The rate set by God was more than sufficient to supply the daily bread need of any person. An omer was to be collected for every person in the tent, meaning there would be sufficient enough supply for the day. In case some

person miscalculated and gathered less than was prescribed God multiplied what little they had to make it sufficient for the day. If someone gathered too much he found that there was nothing left over. What he gathered would be what it took. Moses was ordered to measure what he collected to insure that no one broke God's law by getting more than their daily bread, but obviously some tried.

TAKE NOTHING AWAY: Their instructions were to take no more than necessary to make each day. Once their tables were set they were to eat everything without attempting save a little for the next day. There were to be no "doggie bags!" Verses 19-21 "And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted."

A TEST OF OBEDIENCE: While God could have allowed the people to gather as much as they liked and preserved what they gathered to prevent it from spoiling, that wasn't his purpose. Preservation of resources was not beyond his power. Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years with the same shoes on their feet. They were preserved by the power of God. Obviously, God could have preserved the manna until the next morning, but it was not according to his purpose. His purpose was spelled out in Verse 4.." that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." The entire idea of God providing and the people trusting in him and obeying him was a test of their willingness to follow him. If God said he would provide then he wanted the people to trust his word and obey his command rather than to attempt matters on their own. Their forty year journey proved that God would supply their needs. As they entered the promised land God increased the rate each man was blessed as the manna ceased. By this time they had witnessed that God's word was dependable and sure.

How God Blesses

Today there are millions of believers who have discovered that their lives are wilderness experiences much like that of Israel. Some approach that experience like Israel, grumbling and complaining. Others approach it with a sense of trust and faith, knowing God will help them every step of the way. For Israel, Manna was the substance of their everyday need. Today, our daily need for food, clothing, shelter & transportation becomes the essence of our "bread." Just like Israel, we look to God to supply that need.

FROM ABOVE YOUR HEAD, THERE'S BREAD: Just as God promised Israel that it would rain bread daily, God promises showers of blessings to believers. In Ezekiel 34:26 God said, "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Just as loaves of bread did not literally fall out of heaven, there were, never-the-less, ample supplies of bread stuff floating like wafers in the air, so it is when God promises us showers of blessings. Don't look up and expect to see

money drop out of the sky. Don't look for a job to be delivered to your door by a winged Angel. However, we should expect God to keep his word and provide us with showers of opportunities, openings, ideas and breaks, that will provide everything we need, according to God's appointed time and purpose. When rain drops fall, they fall in large quantities, only a portion of which any one individual needs to supply their need for nourishment and refreshment. The same promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 he makes to believers today, "I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee." Our challenge is to trust that God will do that, even while we are waiting for him to provide.

BLESSED TO TEST: Israel found out that God constantly tested the nation. Often they measured up to his test, but they often failed as well. When he showered down blessings upon them, even that was a test to see how well we would respond to his instruction. It is the same for us today. The showers of blessings that we receive are tests of our ability to follow God's instruction, even while we are being blessed. When we get a new car, do we stay home to wash it or use it to come to worship? When we get a new house are we overly absorbed in decorating it and ignore our kingdom building responsibilities. If we acquire a new job or business opportunity, does it distract us from the work of the kingdom? It is possible that our blessings are tests of our obedience. In Matthew 25:23 the good servant was told that he was being doubly rewarded because he was "faithful over a few things" so God was making him ruler over many. The test of stewardship often comes with each blessing. If a believer can tithe on a dime and a dollar, then maybe he's ready for a thousand. The test of obedience often comes with each blessing. Does one remain faithful to all of the commandments of God after being blessed? Is he chaste? Is his morality in tact? Does he still worship, praise and maintain private devotion? The test of gratitude comes with each blessing. We should be ready to praise God for whom all blessings have come.

TO INCREASE THE RATE INCREASE THE FAITH: God has apportioned each person's gifts, material blessings and opportunities initially. Israel was supplied manna by the rate of one Omer per person. If in obedience someone did as they were commanded but fell short, they always came home with enough. Those that tried to get more, still came home with just enough.

There are many today that are still wrestling with the question of, "how much is enough?" Some are frustrated because no matter how much they gather, they never seem to accumulate anything. They work two and three jobs but still can barely make ends meet. They work more and it takes everything they get just to make ends meet. The believer who trusts God says, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." He counts on God for his daily bread and let God take his little bowl of manna and makes it sufficient for health, safety and happiness.

Some have looked around at the opportunities for prosperity that surround them and have taken the doggie bag approach to life. They try to increase their rate without increasing their faith. They try to get it all but have difficulty doing so because it never seems to be enough. When they try to get more than God has apportioned, it tends

to slip away from them, eaten up by taxes, bills, and a plethora of other liabilities.

True believers have learned that as they increase their faith, God himself increases their rate. He simply supplies all of their needs and then some, according to the display of a believer's faith.

Daily Bread

Finally, brothers and sisters, every believer must remember that God supplies our daily need, and there is no need for doggie bags.

Whatever we need God supplies it in quantities sufficient to supply our need.

The problem with doggie bag blessings are that they assume that having an over abundance of material things can bring happiness. Thus, we try to get as many things as we can. More cars. More houses. More land, More money. Bigger barns!

But I hear Jesus telling Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!"

We need bread, but we can't survive on bread alone!

We need a house, but it takes more than bricks and wood to make it a home!

We need clothing, but it takes more than cloth and fine stitching to clothe us in righteousness, because we need the whole armor of God!

We need bread, but we can't live on bread alone.

The one who orders the doggie bag, is the one that is paying the bill. We can't order a doggie bag on our blessings because we are not paying the bill.

True believers wait for God to tell what to do with the left overs.

When Jesus fed 5,000, there was much food left over when they finished. Jesus told his disciples to gather up the fragments and put them in baskets. He could order the doggie bag because he provided the blessing.

I have found out that I can't live on yesterday's blessing, everyday I need a blessing from the Lord!

I can't take yesterday's life and save some for today. I've got to get a new blessing of life every day!

I can't take yesterday's health and put what was left in a doggie bag and use it today. I've got to get a new blessing every day!

I can't take yesterday's success and put it in a doggie bag, but I must succeed again every day!

That's why the song write wrote: "I get a blessing every day!...On Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday...I get a blessing every day!"

Man cannot live by bread of alone, but he must be sustained daily by another kind of bread.

This bread, gives strength to those that are weak.

This bread, gives power to the powerless!

This bread, gives hope to the hopeless!

This bread, gives inspiration to those that are frustrated!

This bread, gives food for hungry souls

This bread is Jesus, who said “I am the bread of life” He is the bread of heaven!

No wonder the song writer said, “Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

This bread was prepared in heaven. Kneaded on Calvary! Placed in the grave for three days!

But Early Sunday morning the world found out that it was “Self rising bread!” because he arose with all power in his hands!

No. 752-Anniv.-Ushers

If You Want to Know An Usher

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 21, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. John 20:27

Introduction

How can you be sure that the person sitting next to you is a Christian? That person may belong to the same church, serve on the church Usher's Board or sing in the choir..but how do you know the person is a Christian? He might be a fellow deacon. She could work with you on a committee or give her time to benefit a worthy cause, but how do you know that the person is a Christian? Does a choir robe make a choir member a Christian? Does an usher's uniform and station make a person a Christian? By definition, a Christian is a person who is Christlike in every way. The best way to determine whether or not a person is a Christian is to look for signs that the person thinks, acts and talks in a Christlike manner. Christian character is difficult to hide. It shows and those who see it are instantly convinced that we are what we say we are.

Today, the need for authenticity is always present. We want to be sure that the person with whom we are dealing is for real. So a plethora of methods have been devised to protect ourselves. When someone knocks on our door we begin by asking, "Who is it?" We peep through security holes, key holes and curtains to get a visual confirmation as well. Stores require identification before they will cash checks. ATM cards require PIN numbers before withdrawals are allowed and many computer programs require pass words before access is allowed. An entire science has developed around our need to authenticate. Finger prints are used by criminologists. DNA and fiber samples are used by forensic scientists. Voice prints, eye tracts ane even breath analysis is being used to help establish a proven identity. Even after accepting all of these methods, some are still leery because the experts tell us that no system is fool proof.

Most of today's identification methods don't identify a person. Generally, they do well at excluding a person from consideration. If a murder victim had type B blood and a suspect was found with Type A blood on his clothing, this suspect could be eliminated. If the suspect had type B blood it only indicates "he could be" the suspect but it does not identify him. The same is true of DNA, it works well to exclude a person

from consideration by showing that he is not in a category of possible suspects, but even DNA could not specifically identify the person beyond the shadow of a doubt.

If it is hard to identify a person by sight, finger print, DNA sample, blood, or voice, think how hard it is to discover more secret truths about a person that are not visible to the naked eye.

How do my fellow usher board members know that I am more than just a person who wears a uniform, comes to meetings and stands on the floor during church worships? How can they know that I am a Christian?

Jesus dealt with this idea of authenticity in Matthew 7. In this chapter he said there would be many that would come and point to their areas of service as indicators of their Christianity. In Matthew 7:22 he said many will point to their great and wonderful works as evidence. In verse 20 Jesus gave the undeniable way to test whether or not a person is a true Christian when he said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

As Christians, we strive to grow good fruit. We strive to demonstrate love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. They testify to our salvation more than the uniforms and labels we wear.

Exposition

This text consider Jesus as he presents evidence to his disciples that he is the risen Lord.

After the resurrection the disciples were wounded in spirit and afraid. The Lord Jesus, they supposed was dead. Suddenly the risen Christ slips through the closed doors and appears before his despondent disciples. But they don't know him. He spoke to them, as he had spoken so often before, saying "Peace." But they still don't know him. Then, John says, "He showed them his hands and his side" (John 20:20). He showed them his scars and then, only then, they saw, they rejoiced. Those who saw his scars immediately knew his identity for the sight of them was still fresh in their collective mind.

Thomas shows up a little later. He wasn't with the other disciples for the resurrection morning appearance. When they told him about it his first reaction was a normal one - he did not believe it. Thomas had a healthy scepticism, and like most people who have a healthy scepticism, he would not believe until he first had some proof, and he did not hesitate to tell the others that.

The other disciples tell him of the Risen Christ, but Thomas says, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). His absence from the original meeting gave reason for his doubt. Had he been there the outcome would probably have been different.

A week later, the Risen Christ again surprises the disciples. Thomas is there and Jesus obliges, "Put your finger here," says the Risen Christ, "Do not doubt but believe."

Tradition has it that later in life Thomas became the apostle to the nations east of Israel, and that he died a martyrs death in India. Because he saw the risen Lord with his own eyes - he believed, and he went forth to do what all the other disciples did, he went forth and spread the good news about Jesus, that Jesus died so that we would know the love of God, and that he rose from the dead so that we might know that God's love is forever and that all who follow him receive eternal life.

The testimony of the scars convinced Thomas. The scars will convince those who do not know our Lord in every generation.

The testimony of Our Experience

Today, there are many who lay claim to the Christian life. They join churches and some of them join usher boards. Not long after they join however, the actions of a few raise doubt about their Christian experience. Even though they are ushers, their informal talk, private lives and public decorum indicates everything other than a born again Christian. Beyond the uniform, what is the evidence of an usher's Christian Life experience.

LOOK AT HIS HANDS: Jesus, told his disciples to look at his hands. They were a great testimony of not only who he was but the extent of his love for them. They were the testimony of his work on earth: healing, lifting and holding up the cross.

We can identify an usher by observing his or her works. Beyond membership on a board, an usher is a servant of the Lord and ministers to people on behalf of a loving God. Ushers have working hands. They help the poor and needy. They feed the hungry, hopeless and helpless. They extend themselves to those who stand in the need of help.

With or without a uniform, the Usher is a Christian lady and gentleman. They are willing to extend the love of God to any person, not only on Sunday, when they are wearing the usher's uniform.

Watch real ushers. They'll find themselves doing the work of saints seven days a week. Even at work they are helping people, showing love to those who feel neglected. At home, their discussions are filled with concern for others and perfecting ways to help others.

The service of an usher identifies them quickly as one who is in the service of the Lord. They work vigorously and passionately. Why? "Because I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. When night comes, no man can work!"

LOOK AT HIS FEET: Jesus' feet, like his hands were nailed to the cross. He traveled to the homes of the rich and poor and walked a straight path all of his life. He did not tell them to look at his feet, but they, never-the-less, would have been a great testimony if only the disciples had looked.

We can identify an usher because of his or her stand. Most ushers spend most of their time standing on their feet. When everyone else is sitting down, ushers stand.

With or without a uniform, usher's stand for truth. In every walk of life believers take stands against wrong doing. They stand against evil any place they see it. That's

why Paul in Ephesians 6:11, said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." In verse 13 he says that we should put on the whole armor of God, but after having done all to...stand!"

Stand for righteousness! Stand for Holiness! Stand for truth!

The willingness of saints to stand up for the kingdom of God whatever the cost, identifies them as believers in the cross, even if they are not wearing a uniform.

The scars tell the story

If there is a final evidence, it is in the scars.

The most convincing aspect of Jesus' appearance to his disciples was his scars. They saw the pierce marks in his side. They saw the nail prints in his hands and that was sufficient enough to convince them of his true identity.

We can identify any person who is a believer by the testimony of their scars. Our scars tell our story in a way that nothing else can. Every scar has a story.

Some of us have survived troubled childhoods and dysfunctional families. That experience left a scar.

Some of us have endured troubled, abusive relationships. That left a scar.

Some of us have been down to a point when we couldn't see our way and we tasted the bitterness of despair. That left a scar.

Many athletes, and soldiers date their battles and victories by their scars. One scar was made in a running winning touch down. This scar was received in the midst of a great battle.

In our battle with Satan many of us have come forth as new men and women, and we have the scars to prove it.

There are some who have wrestled with God and like Jacob who wrestled with an angel all night long and walked away with a limp, we have the scars to prove it!

If you want to see a Christian look for the scars!

Consider the mother whose son had gone off to war. She had not seen or heard from her son for over 20 years. The government sent her a letter saying he was missing in action. But every day she kept going to the door, waiting for him to come home. The children were worried that their mother might be losing her mind. She was convinced their her boy was somewhere on his way home.

One day there was a knock at the door. There stood on the steps a tattered man who seemed to have no face. His head was bald and he was very crude in his appearance. He could not talk, so all he did was stand at the door and he stretched out his hand. The mother took the stranger by the hand and set him down at the table. She rushed to get him something to eat as her daughters complained that she was taking a chance letting a stranger in the house.

The mother said, "That's no stranger. That's my son! When he was just six years old he fell and skinned the palm of his hand. When it healed it left an "S" looking mark in the palm of his hand. I couldn't see his face but when he raised his hand, I knew that was my son!"

Somebody here today has been wounded on the battlefield of life, nobody knows but you and the Lord...and your scars tell your story!

If you want to know a Christian let their scars testify!

They'll tell you of a time when they wallowed in sin only to be saved by the grace of God!

If you want to know an Usher don't look at the uniform!

If you wan to know an Usher don't look at what you see on Sunday!

Look at the journey they have traveled and listen to their testimony. That's when you'll hear them say, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

I f you want to really know an Usher, follow them down tothe house of prayer, and they'll tell you a story of how God picked them up and turned them around and planted their feet on solid ground!

If you want to know an Usher ask them about Jesus!

They'll tell you how he came to this old world. Died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning. ..he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No. 753-Youth

Little Posse, Big God!

By Roosevelt Wright, Jr
Pastor of the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 25, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Judges 6:15-16

Introduction

Have you ever felt out numbered? Are there times when it looks like everyone else is having all of the fun and you're all by yourself? Many times there are only a few youth who are willing to stand up for God at school or in the community. Sometimes it gets hard being the minority. Often we wonder why God does not make his people the majority more often.

It seems like every neighborhood has a posse of some kind. Whether it's a Northside Posse, Southside Posse, Eastside or Westside, it seems that every "hood" has a posse. Some of them are pretty large too! It seems that every "G" has to belong to some posse or another. In some areas, the bigger your posse, the safer the members, because others will be afraid to bother the member of a large neighborhood posse.

Christians are different. Christians are often criticized because they don't participate in some of the activities of other youth in the neighborhood, especially if those activities are questionable. Christian youth don't look to neighborhood posses for protection.

There are only two members of our posse, ourselves and God. We have a little posse, but we are bold enough to be different because we have a Big God!

God doesn't need many people to do his work. In fact, sometimes God works better in small groups. If He works with us in small groups or as individuals, we will know that what we have accomplished was not because of our own size or power, but because of Him.

A Little Posse in the Bible

A Big God can do mighty things with a small "believing" posse!

One good example is Gideon. He was a leader of Israel who is referred to in the 6th Chapter of Judges. He was given the task of delivering the Israelites from their

enemies, which had armies with many thousands of soldiers. Gideon was given the task of delivering the Israelites from the Midianites and Amalekites, desert nomads who repeatedly raided the country. Their use of the camel allowed them to ride in, destroy crops, take plunder, and then escape back into the desert with such speed the Israelites could not catch them. Gideon was not a willing volunteer. Although he knew the will of God, twice he laid out the fleece in what seems was an effort to avoid the will of God by imposing impossible conditions. God met his conditions both times and then set out the strategy that would guarantee victory for Israel.

Gideon had an army of about 32,000 men, but God told him that number was too big. To reduce their number, two tests were given to the 32,000 men in Gideon's army. This was done that Israel could not claim victory by any other means than continued dependence upon God. Those who were afraid and those who knelt down to get a drink of water were sent home. The number was cut to 10,000. Still God said that was too large!

Finally, the number of men in Gideon's army was reduced to 300 men. It was 300 men against thousands and thousands. The remaining 300 were given pitchers, torches, and trumpets, and placed around the Midianite encampment. The strategy was one of terror: at Gideon's signal the pitchers were broken, the torches then became visible, and the trumpets sounded, giving the enemy the impression they were surrounded. They took flight, their leaders were killed, and the Midianite oppression was brought to an end.

Gideon's army had been reduced to a very small posse but it had one big advantage...it was led by a Big God! Before morning, Gideon's little 300 man posse had won the victory without even losing a single man! He had a little Posse, but he also had a Big God.

We have God On Our Side

Today, youth of the Chosen Generation, may feel out numbered because there are so many non-Christians at school and in the community. There are many forces trying to influence God's chosen. But in every community and at every school, there is a small group of believing teens who will stand up for God. They have one big advantage. They have God on their side.

Those who stand up for God are bold, despite the fact that they are few in number!

They tell the truth when others find it easier to lie.

They are obedient when others find it easier to break the rules.

They show respect for others, when others cop attitudes!

They dress neatly and with good taste, even when others tend to stretch the boundaries of good taste in their choice of clothing.

They are careful to act like Christians each and every day, even when those around them seem not to bother.

We Belong to God

Vol 8-1922

The fact that Christian youth try to be "Christ like" makes them seem peculiar or odd to others on campus. Those who obey the school rules, respect their teachers and study hard are often ostracized by the vast majority of students. Sometimes they are even called names and insulted for only trying to do their best. "Nerd", "Geek" and "Bookworm" rank high among the names that are used to describe those youth who dare to be different and excel.

But when the world calls a Christian "peculiar" it usually means something strange. However, when God calls a person peculiar it means that person belongs to Him.

Do you know what peculiar means? Often when "peculiar" is referred to in New Testament scripture it refers to being completely owned by God. In 1 Peter 2:9 believers are referred to as "a peculiar people." It means we are God's purchased possession.

As believers, we should not be worried about the large number of ungodly people. Psalm 37:1 reminds us to "fret not" when it to comes to them. Don't lose any sleep over what they are doing.

Don't worry over how many of them it seems to be!

As a believer, remember, you may belong to a little posse of Christian youth in your community.

But ...it's a little posse with a Mighty Big God!

How Big is God?

Finally, every Christian youth should remember that the God they serve is a big God. How big is God?

God is so big that he can be everywhere at the same time. It doesn't matter where we are, God is there. If we are at school, at home or playing with our friends, God is there!

David said in Psalm 139:8-10 "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." That means God is everywhere!

How big is God? God is so big that he can lift any burdens we may be carrying and make them light!

How big is God? God is so big that he can solve any problems that trouble us!

How big is God? God is so big that he can defend us against any enemies that attack us!

How big is God? God is so big that he can help us to achieve any divinely inspired goal we seek to attain!

Consider the little boy who was given a Sunday School assignment to find out where God lives. The little boy searched all week and seriously tried to find the

answer. As he walked home, he looked at little tadpoles swimming in a ditch. He looked inside an empty car. He looked inside some empty card board boxes. All along his journey home he discovered all the places where God could be. That night the little boy prayed asked, "God where are you?" He received no immediate answer but in his sleep he saw a card board box, a little tadpole in a ditch and a playground and heard the words, "Whereever you go, I am!" The next Sunday the boy was ready to answer the teacher's question. She raised a crisp new one dollar bill and offered it to any student that could tell where God lives. The boy waved his hands wildly and said, "I've looked in the weeds and in all my favorite places, and discovered every where I went, God was there. Miss teacher, I'll give you my last lollipop if you can tell me where God ain't." The teacher smiled and gave the boy a hug. She knew the little boy had found the answer. He found out God lives in his heart.

Don't worry about the odds, God is with you!

Don't worry about what people will say about you, God is with you!

God love us so much that he gave his only Son for us on Calvary. That son died and rose again to live in the heart of any person who will let him live with them, help them, advise them and help them achieve in life.

If you let Jesus live in your life you may not have a big posse but you'll have a big God on your side!

No. 754-Inspiration

The Place Where Edges Meet

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Exodus 13:20-22

Introduction

If you live on the edge of night, battle to survive the secret storm, and deal constantly with "All my Children," where do you find God? Many people sleep on the edge of the bed, walk on the edge of their shoes, sit on the edge of their seats, and walk boldly on the edge of life and never know the joy of finding God in their own lives. Living on the edge of life is pushing it to its limits. It's like taking a big bungy jump into the unknown, hoping that the cords are as strong as they were for the last jumper. Living on the edge is like standing on the ledge of a skyscraper holding one foot in the air singing "I believe I can fly." Many people live their entire lives on the edge, snugged somewhere between "I should not" and "I will," or sandwiched between "safety" and "insanity." Living on the edge fascinates the young and titillates the old. To some, living on the edge is what makes life interesting. To others, living on the edge is the epitome of foolishness.

Some live on life's edges to gain notoriety. It gives them bragging rights. Did you hear of the three mice that loved to live on the edge. Each time they did some foolish thing they met at a bar took a drink and bragged about how tough they were. One evening the three of them met and started drinking. It wasn't long before they were all bragging about which one lived farthest toward the edge. The first mouse slammed a shot and said, "I play with mouse traps for fun. I'll run into one on purpose and as it is closing on me, I grab the bar and bench press it twenty or thirty times." Now that's living on the edge! The second mouse slammed a shot and said, "That's nothing. I take those Decon tablets, cut them up and snort them just for the fun of it." That's living on the edge! The third mouse slammed a shot, got up and walked away.. The first two mice looked at each other, and then turn to the third mouse and asked, "Where do you think you are going?" The third mouse stopped and replied, "I'm going home to eat. I invited the cat for dinner!" That's living on the edge! Some enjoy living on the edge, especially if they live to tell about it!

However, there is a point at which all of the edges meet. There is a point where the excitement of the night meets the reality of the day. There is a point where health meets sickness, joy meets sorrow, success meets failure and life meets death. There is a point where all of the edges that define our lives come together in one place, at one time, in one moment. The place where the edges meet; where we finally see the day break rather than the darkness of night, that's the place where we meet God, decide to follow him and our lives are changed forever.

As Christians, we have experienced, to a degree, what it means to live on the edge. Sometimes circumstances of life pressed us to the edge. Sometimes we were foolish and actually lived there for a while. But we also know what it means to find God at life's edge. Just when we stood on the edge of despair we saw hope, because we found a loving God!

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as the entire nation packed up to leave Egypt and return to the promised land.

There were 600,000 men plus women and children in the nation of Israel at the time of this text. God, through Moses, had issued an ultimatum to Egypt. That ultimatum, "Let my people Go" was finally heeded as Moses led the children out of Egyptian Bondage toward the land of promise. There were four points in Israel's journey when it found itself on the edge. Each is followed by an encounter with God. Each experience demonstrates to believers, what happens when the edges which envelope us meet in the presence of God.

At Succoth, They were led to the edge

When Pharaoh allowed the children of Israel to leave Egypt after 400 years of bondage, they took all of their possessions and left the land of "Goshen" where they had lived a slave's existence. God led them away from a bad situation and they journeyed to the edge of the Wilderness of Zin. The camped at Succoth on the edge of a new experience. At the edge of this wilderness they met God's presence. He appeared before them as a pillar of cloud in the day time and as a pillar of fire at night. Whenever the cloud moved, they moved. Thus, at the edge of a new experience they met God and followed him.

When we follow God he will lead us to new and higher experiences. He will lead us out of bondage situations that make life miserable for us and will make his presence known. There are many of us that have been in bondage to people, places and things that have enslaved us. Though we wore no chains on our hands and feet, we were slaves never-the-less.

An alcoholic is in slavery. A drug addict is in slavery. Both are addicted to a substance that robs them of their freedom, health and happiness.

Many have found themselves involved in relationships that have become

bondage relationships rather than sources of joy.

Today, many are standing on the edge of a new experience, having made the crucial decision to break the bondage and follow God. Some have made a decision to stop smoking. Some haven't had a drink in quite some time. Some have broken off adulterous relationships. Some have made great faith decisions that have brought them to the edge of a new experience.

Like Israel, they are about to enter areas unknown to them. At the edge, God appeared to Israel to show the way. Believers moving in a new direction should do the same. Let God lead them both by day and by night.

At the Red Sea, They were pushed to the edge

After camping at the edge of the Wilderness for a time, Israel came to another Edge, the Red Sea. The sea was a formidable challenge. It stood between where they wanted to go and where they had been. Without building materials to build bridges or ferries to take them across they were literally standing on the edge of the river with no bridge on which to cross.

Complicating things, Pharaoh was on the move. Although Pharaoh allowed Israel to leave, he had second thoughts about it. His slaves and builders were gone. He began to feel he had made a bad decision. He sought to find the Israelites and return them to slavery and send his elite force of 600 chariots to retrieve them.

At the Red Sea, Israel found itself pushed to the edge. The people had their backs against a watery wall. But there, at the Red Sea, the place where their past bondage and their future hopes met, God acted. He rolled back the Red Sea and allowed them to cross on dry land destroying their enemies as well.

Just because believers have walked away from bondage situations doesn't mean that the situation will turn them loose without a struggle. Often Satan attempts to reclaim those who try to free themselves from bondage. The person who decides to quit smoking finds himself drawn to it again. Cans of beer seem to sing the names of people who are trying to quit. Temptations seem to increase at the very moment we are trying to walk away.

The evil presence that dominates this world will not give up a single convert without a fight. His efforts will push every believer to the edge.

However, at the edge we have the joy of knowing that we are not alone. At the edge God will open a way out of no way. He will roll back the Red Sea and allow us to cross on dry ground, if we would but "stand still" and see the salvation of the Lord.

At Mt Sinai, They ran to the edge

At Succoth God led Israel to the edge. At the Red Sea Pharaoh pushed Israel to the edge. At Mt. Sinai, Israel went over the edge, on its own!

Moses climbed Mt. Sinai to receive instructions from God about directing the people. He was gone for 40 days and nights. At the foot of Mt. Sinai the people went

over the edge. They believed Moses was dead so they built themselves a golden calf, worshiped it and plunged themselves into immoral acts that angered God. In the aftermath, the anger of God rumbled as God spoke to them through Moses. Those who went over the edge were slain. Others who did not participate themselves but only observed the lewd actions of others, were forced to drink water laced with gold. The punishment for going over the edge was tremendous and lasting.

There are many today who allow themselves to go over the edge. Like Israel, many are paying a heavy price for their sin. Some are behind prison walls at this very moment. Some have lost their health and strength as a result of their activities.

Each individual must remember that a day comes when we must account for going over the edge. That day is not always in the distant future. Sometimes we pay instantly.

What is the price we pay for an experiment with drugs? What is the price we pay for criminal ventures? What is the price we pay for hot tempers, cold shoulders, and luke-warm persuasions? Many have paid dearly for going over the edge. Like Israel, some have paid with their lives. Some are still paying.

There are many who have learned that when they stand on the edge of godliness and sin and choose to go over the edge, they will incur the wrath of God. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

At Jordan, They Wandered around the edge

When Israel came to the River Jordan they stood at the edge of their dreams. They were so close but so far away. Across the river was a land flowing with milk and honey. The opportunities of a life time were there, waiting for them to claim them. However, a negative report from the majority of 12 spies that scouted the land told them of the problems they would have making their dream become a reality. Foremost among the problems was the fact that they felt like small grasshoppers in front of their enemy. As a result they wandered on the edge of Jordan for 40 years. When they came back to Jordan the second time, 40 years later, they were at the edge again. This time they asked for and received divine direction from God.

At the edge of Jordan, God moved in a powerful way and rolled back the waters of the Jordan so that they, like their forefathers, crossed on dry land. At the place where their edges met, they met God.

Today, there are many people who are standing on the threshold of their future, afraid to go forward because of negative reports. Like Israel, many are wandering on the edge of their future afraid to make a decisive move. Many wander so long that it is nearly impossible for them to make their dreams come true. Often those dreams involve business pursuits, educational opportunities, and other endeavors. Many are lost in the process. They stand on the edge and wonder. At the point where we stand on the edge of indecision between our dreams and inaction we meet God.

I don't know about you but I've found out that God has a tendency to show up

at the right place at the right time.

The same God that rolled back the waters of the Jordan for Israel, is still rolling back waters today.

It doesn't matter what kind of edges we experience God can meet us at the edge and show us the way.

There are some who have:

ROUGH EDGES, things just won't go right in their lives and everyday seems to be rougher than the one before. But we serve a God who specializes in making the rough places plain

JAGGERED EDGES, things are disordered, out of shape and nothing seems to go right. But we serve a God who can take our crooked places and make them straight.

DULL EDGES, we can't seem to get anything done. Nothing seems to work. If our lives were knives we'd be butter knives trying to cut steak!

Whenever we are standing on the edge, prepare to meet the power of God!

At the edge of night, we meet the break of day!

At the edge of despair, we meet the prospect of hope!

At the edge of loneliness, we find companionship!

At the edge of frustration, we find patience!

At the edge of hunger, we find food for the soul!

At the edge of defeat, we find the victory!

At the edge of sickness, we find a restored health!

At the edge of eternal death, we find a chance for eternal life!

When mankind stood on the edge of destruction for its sin, an opportunity for salvation appeared.

At the edge of separation from God, God made a way!

On a little hill outside of Jerusalem, God made a way!

Jesus, the lamb of God, came and died that we might have a chance to eternal life!

When he arose on Sunday morning he stood on the edge of time and eternity with all power in his hands!

Are you on the edge of a decision? Let God move in your life and he'll show you the way!

The place where edges meet is in the mercy, strength and hope that comes from God

No. 7480-Mother's Day

Hand Me Down Love

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 9, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." 2 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

Have you ever worn hand me downs? One of the unique facts of life in a family in which you are not an only child is the inevitable presence of hand me downs. If you were a second, third, or last child of the same sex you probably became affected by the "hand me down syndrome." That means, you probably rarely received anything new, generally it was handed down to you after your big sister or brother outgrew it or refused to wear it. Since the oldest was usually the largest it seems that the oldest always received the new clothing and then they were stored away in some secret place and appeared again, just when you thought you were about to get something new! There are many adults today who shower their children with new things because they remember what it felt like to only receive the hand me downs.

Generally, hand me downs are perfectly good items of clothing. As a rule, they still look well, are just as durable and fashionable. What they don't have is a new price tag. Usually someone has outgrown an item, develops a distaste for an item or simply doesn't want it anymore. Often there is nothing wrong with the item itself. The fact that it is a hand me down is more of a mental response than a response to quality. No matter how we rationalize it, very few people like receiving hand me downs.

There are a few however, who receive hand me downs with honor. They are proud to wear their mother's wedding dress on their wedding day. In some instances it was the same dress, with a few alterations that was worn by a great grandmother. Many are proud to wear a necklace given to them by a beloved grand parent. There are some items, when handed down, assume a value of their own, beyond any numerical figure that can be affixed. There is no value that can be placed upon great grandma's bible. It was handed down from generation to generation. You can sit in granny's old rocking chair and almost feel her presence. It's a hand me down and doesn't fit exactly into your decor, but who cares...it is priceless. There are some hand me downs that we cherish and never want to lose.

Every mother gives her children hand me down proverbs. It is almost like mothers

went to class and learned the same phrases as their mothers and then passed them down to their children.

Your mother said them, her mother said them because her mother said them. Have you heard these? “How many times do I have to tell you...don’t throw things in the house!”,”Close the door behind you — were you born in a barn?”,”Don’t talk with your mouth full!”,”Always put on clean underwear in the morning, in case you’re in an accident”,”I’m not just talking to hear myself talking”, “A hard head makes a soft b-”. Everyone remembers the classic hand me down phrase of nearly every mom who’s had to deal with hard headed children, “I brought you in this world and I will take you out.” A new one that hasn’t been handed down too many generations goes like this, “You can call the child protection number on me if you want, but it’ll be the last number you dial!” Hand me downs have a little history.

As Christians, we are aware of the importance passing on things that are important. Christian mothers, pass on many things to their children that have helped them in life. The one thing that has helped them the most is their faith in God. That’s a hand me down that no one minds receiving!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to a young minister encouraging him to be strong in the faith. It is a faith that was handed down to him by his mother and his grandmother.

When Timothy received this letter, Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the second time and he expected to be executed. Nero - the psychotic tyrant who murdered his mother, wife, stepbrothers, and many others - was emperor at the time. Accused of having set the fire that burned Rome in 64 AD, he blamed the Christians. That initiated the first general persecution of the Church, a period which has been described as a “carnival of blood”. It was a time when being a Christian was not just unpopular or difficult, but genuinely dangerous, especially to the leaders of the church, such as Timothy.

The theme of Paul’s letter is don’t compromise, don’t quit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to compromise the Word of God, but to “hold fast the form of sound words” which he had learned from Paul. His faith and commitment came from examples that were lived before him by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

In the opening verses of this letter, Paul reminds Timothy of his spiritual roots. Timothy was walking in the footsteps of the faithful. One important line in Paul’s lesson suggests that Timothy had a great faith that had been handed down through the generations. “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.” We do not know a great deal about those women, but in that sentence we get a picture of two very special people.

No one knows where Lois and Eunice came from but it is known that they eventually settled in Asia Minor, in the rural Roman town of Lystra. They had been

born Jewish, but whether or not that meant too much in their home we can only guess. I would tend to think not, frankly, because Eunice married a Greek, a gentile, something just not done even to this day in Jewish families where religion is taken seriously.

Something happened to Lois and Eunice. Somehow, some way, they heard about Jesus Christ. They came to realize their need of a Savior and accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives. Scripture does not record exactly what Timothy heard, but it is relatively safe to assume that he heard and saw everything both his mother and his grandmother heard. Between them there was probably 40 years distance between himself. But there were years of faith, pass one to another that he was just trying for the first time.

The faith of his mother was a living faith, but it was handed down to her. The faith of his grandmother was a great faith. She acquired it first and passed it down.

Over the generations

Today we have memories of three types of mothers among us. Depending upon a person's age, the memory of at least one of these types is as clear as yesterday. Their methods of mothering have changed over the years but, each has handed down important truths about life to the next generation.

THE WOOD STOVE MOTHER: She operated during a time when her daily tasks required more physical strength than is required today. She often chopped wood and prepared meals on a wood burning stove. She was the mother who washed clothes on a rub board, made lye soap and insisted on cleaning unpainted and polished wood floors until they glistened because "cleanliness is next to godliness." The wood stove mother couldn't read, but she seemed to know every word in the bible. She didn't operate a business but she seemed to manage every single affair of her household.

She saved pennies for the society dues and some for a rainy day. She was always saving.

The wood stove mother would often have 15 to 20 children and love them all. She and her husband spent the evenings talking and listening to the children. She fed them from chickens in the back yard and made their pillows from cotton sacks. In the winter they cuddled together in their cabin and listened to the wind and as it breathed through the newspaper covered walls. She prayed long prayers, out loud. The children could see her on her knees and they heard her pleas.

The wood stove children saw her smile when all of them sat at the table. She looked proud when her husband quoted from the bible and lead the family in prayer. She road the wagon to church. She had a hat on her head. She wore a plain dress with no makeup. She always seemed to shout.

At the close of the day, even though she couldn't read a word of it, she sat with her bible on her lap and glow of the fire in her face and would often be heard saying, "Thank you Lord, it's been a mighty good day!"

Her daughters watched her every move and recorded her strength in the

corridors of their minds. Every day, mama was handing it down.

GAS STOVE MOTHER: Gas stove mothers were truly modern. They had gas stoves and didn't have to chop wood. Fancy washing machines replaced the rub boards and dryers replaced clothes lines. They had vacuum cleaners and electric can openers. There were new contraptions that were stuck in the windows called air conditioners, and electric Frigidaires took the place of the ice box.

She was a modern mother, but she had a few things that were hand me downs. She could read and she read the bible a lot. She also read the Chicago Defender and Jet Magazine like they were the bible. In the evening she and her husband gathered their family of six to 10 children and they talked, but not as long..things kept getting in the way, first a radio then a new thing called television.

Like her mother she saved and managed well. She saved 50c a month for the church and she put a dollar in the burial envelope for the insurance man behind the door. There was also a few dollars tucked away under the mattress. She was saving for a rainy day.

Her family loved her cooking. All the stove's eyes would burn at full blast as the smell of fried chicken and collard greens filled the air. They had something new called "T.V." dinners but she didn't care for warmed over food. A new place called McDonalds selling something called fast food..who would want that?

She wore a pretty hat to church and lipstick with a flowered dress. She wore every color but red, for some reason. With her husband on her arm she carried the family to church in a big Buick. The preacher preached until he sweated. Like grandma..she often shouted.

At the close of the day she drank a cup of fresh perculated coffee and read from the bible. She prayed on her knees. It was hard to hear what she said. It must have been powerful though because she always seem to cry.

Just before she went to sleep at night the children could hear her say, "Thank you Lord, it's been a mighty good day!" She was a gas stove mother but she was handing it down!

MICROWAVE MOTHERS: The microwave mothers move fast. An instant cup of coffee, Pop Tarts in the Microwave and rush the kids out of the door. Telephone answering machines, cell phones, beepers make communication easy, but there is so much to do.

She is a 21st century mother but she has a few things about her that were hand me downs.

She still manages. She has a career and an income. She has her own Visa, Master card and ATM access. But she still saves a little in her own private place..saving for a rainy day. Grandma's old cookie jar has been replaced with 401 K plans, annuities and stocks and bonds. But it amounts to the same thing.

The family of one to three children gets together in the evening. They don't talk much but they sit in the same room and watch T.V. The stove gets a good work out once a week in between there is chicken from Popeye's and burgers from the place Grandma said would never make because it was too fast...McDonald's.

She attends church regular, although she often skips Sunday School. She says she steals a few minutes from God to be by herself. At church, she doesn't wear a hat. Sometimes she wears red dresses. She doesn't shout but she raises her hand a lot and says "praise the Lord!"

At the close of the day,she drinks a cup of instant coffee, checks her email, answers her voice mail, then reads a page or two from her bible.

In her bed at night she stares at the ceiling and says, "Thank you Lord, it's been a mighty good day"

Hand me down Faith

Though times and methods have changed there are some things that every mother hands down to her children that are still good.

Every good mother knows the value of hand me downs!

Every child should consider himself fortunate if he has a mother. A hand me down mother reaches back and picks up a little of the old way and mixes it with the modern way. She believes in the idea of "something old and something new, it was good enough for me and it was good enough for you!"

Hand me down mothers, still believe that:

Cleanliness is next to godliness!

We should give an honest days work for an honest days pay!

We should save for a rainy day!

We should put our trust in God and he will make a way.

As I close, I'm reminded of the little boy who came to his mother and said, "Mama, why is it that you don't love me like you love the others. I never get anything new. All I get is hand me down love." When the mother heard that she burst into tears.

The grandmother took the little boy and sat him in a chair and said, "You're right, she never bought you new clothes. But you should be glad she gave you hand me down love."

She said, "You may call it hand me down love, but it was that hand me down love that made her carry you in her womb for nine months instead of going to an abortion clinic!"

It was hand me down love, that made her run along side your bike to teach you how to ride when she could barely catch her breath!

It was hand me down love that made her get up from her sick bed and come to Mother's night at your school, because she didn't want you to be the only one whose mother didn't show!"

It was hand me down love that made her pawn her wedding ring to buy you a clarinet to play in the school band.

Grandmother said, "Son remember, new things come with a price tag, but that what you call hand me down love has already been paid for!"

God invented hand me down love!

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever

believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

This hand me down love was handed down from the firmaments of heaven!
Handed down over 42 generations!
Handed down in a manger in Bethlehem!
Handed down on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!
But Early Sunday morning the love of God arose from the grave!
Today, he's ready to hand it down to anyone that will accept him!

No. 756-Funeral

Survivor's Benefits

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 15, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:2-5; Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. Psalm 116:15

Introduction

Have you ever felt empty? The feeling of emptiness usually comes after we experience a great loss. Sometimes it comes as a companion to loneliness. When we feel empty, it is as if everything we have has suddenly disappeared. We feel empty when we reach for that which has always been there and it is no longer there. Nothing can create the feeling of emptiness and spiritual poverty like the death of a loved one. We're at a complete loss when that happens. We don't know what to do. We become weary and our souls wander.

Even when we feel empty, we are never really without the benefit of God's mercy and love. Consider the old prospector who had spent his entire life in the mountains looking for gold. After nearly 40 years of searching, he finally struck gold. He located sacks he had brought with him 40 years earlier and filled each until it could hold nothing else. Then he loaded them on his mules. He hadn't left the hills in 40 years. Things had changed. The familiar land marks he once knew were gone. As he traveled day after day, trying to get back, he found himself hopelessly lost. He traveled in circles. Tired and exhausted, he took the cover off his mules to inspect his treasure. To his dismay, he was completely devastated to learn that his entire fortune was gone. The old sacks had given way and all that remained were dozens of empty, worn sacks. The old prospector was distraught. He was hungry, lost and broke. All he had to show for his 40 years of work were dozens of empty sacks and the prospect of death by starvation and thirst. That night he sat and considered his losses. It was the first night of the full moon. When the moon was high he saw what seemed to be a trail in the night. The gold that leaked from his sacks left a trail in the wilderness, which he followed until he returned safely to his cabin. Those empty sacks, showed him the road home.

Many today are able to enjoy a better life because someone emptied themselves to show them the road. Perhaps it was a father, who worked quietly to provide a home,

education and an opportunity for his children. Perhaps it was a mother, who gave of herself until there was nothing else to give. There are millions of people who can testify of how they found a better life because someone gave them the best they had, even to the point that they strained their health and loss their strength to accomplish it. They gave the richness of their lives in making it possible for others to find the way.

When death comes what do survivors have left? Non-believer see only empty sacks! However, believers know they have much more. Survivors have the benefit of being the recipients of a lifetime of love and devotion. Even though the sadness of the hour makes it dark, survivors look at the golden trail and find a reason to praise God.

As Christians, we praise God for the rich experiences that he allows us to share with a husband or wife or with a parent. When this life ends and all we have left is empty sacks, then we thank him for the benefit of the golden trail home.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he considers the benefits he has received from God.

The background of this Psalm is unclear, but what is clear, is a desire on the part of David to praise God for all that He has done. David praised God for all of his benefits. By benefits David referred to the blessings he received as a result of God's dealings with him. His relationship with God was extensive, especially as it relates to the blessings that he received. David's entire life was one of dealing with God close up when he was a shepherd boy, from a distance when he sinned with Bathsheba and intimately as he neared death.

In all of his dealings, David concluded that God should be praised, because he all of his dealings he had been merciful and loving.

Between verse three and nineteen David lists 30 benefits that every believer receives from God, included among them are forgiveness of sins, healing, blessings of good things, assurance of justice, mercy and even chastisement is seen as an evidence of his God's benevolence and his love.

David's summary is that every believer receives benefits from God in every situation. It may appear everything but a benefit at the moment but God in his infinite wisdom, makes every circumstance a benefit to the those who love and trust him.

With all of the benefits that God provides for us, David maintains that even in his saddest hour the believer finds reason to thank and praise God.

If all that is left is the empty sack, then the believer simply praises God for the golden trail.

Survivor's Benefits

Believer's who study God's word have come to learn that Christian survivor's have many benefits. These benefits go beyond any benefits that man can provide. We are accustomed to survival benefits related to insurance, various employment

plans and Social Security. However, God has a survivors plan that goes beyond Social Security and insurance.

A SURVIVORS BENEFIT WITH GOD IS NOT PAID IN A LUMP AND THEN FORGOTTEN. In certain circumstances the Social Security will pay a survivor a huge lump sum and then close the case. That ends the assistance forever. God never closes the case. Jesus, speaking to his disciples, said "And lo, I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth." God never forgets those who trust in him. He remembers them and provides for them long after their loved one has been called home.

A SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS ISN'T DEPENDENT UPON ANYONE'S WORK BUT OUR OWN. Survivor's benefits in social security are based on the amount of work of the deceased. The amount of assistance that a person receives is related to amount that the deceased actually earned in his lifetime. Thus, your benefit is dependent on his work. However, when God considers the saints, he does not base what he does for us on anyone else's service and faith. Each believer can expect to receive the love and support of God that is the result of their own faith, not the experience of faith of the father, mother or spouse.

A SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS ARE NOT PRORATED BY FAMILY SIZE: With Social Security there is a maximum amount of benefit a family of survivors can receive because the total amount of the benefit is divided by the number of family members. Survivors in a large family expect to receive less individually because the total benefit is divided by the number of eligible survivors. But in the kingdom of God there is no limit to God's benefits to survivors. There is not limit to God's benevolence. He will open up the windows of heaven and pour out enough blessings to handle every believer that trusts in him.

A SURVIVOR'S BENEFIT IS NOT TIME SENSITIVE: With Social Security, the deceased must have paid premiums on wages for a set number of quarters before his survivors are eligible for benefits. No minimum, in most cases six quarters, is not negotiable. But in the kingdom of God the survivor's benefit is not time sensitive. It doesn't matter whether you have known the Lord six quarters or six minutes, the benefits are the same. Jesus gave a parable of a workman that hired some of his workers at the beginning of the day and others at the close of the day. However, he paid all of the workers the same wage. He emphasized the point that in his eyesight every believer is the same and can expect the same reward.

There Must be a life certificate

Finally, to receive Social Security benefits the survivors must file a death certificate. It marks the day, time and place in which the deceased left this earth. The only way Social Security will give any benefits is that there must be a death certificate on file. It bears an official seal, and is properly signed and notarized.

However, brothers and sisters, to get God's benefits we don't need a death certificate, but we will need a life certificate.

Our life certificate, marks the day and the hour that we came to know the Lord!

That's the day we testified, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

When you know the Lord, you can raise your family and in the respect of God with a humble spirit!

When you know the Lord, you can overcome obstacles to educate your children and rear them to adulthood!

When you know the Lord, you can remain faithful to your wife for four decades and continue to hold her in high esteem!

When you know the Lord, you can undergo sickness and frustration with quiet strength and minimum of complaints.

Our life certificate is guaranteed by Christ himself because he said, "I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly!"

Our life certificate is no good unless it has been signed.

I'm glad that one evening, Jesus went out on Calvary, and died for our sins! With his blood he signed our life certificate as he died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with our life certificate, signed sealed and delivered!

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On Monday, May 10, 1999 William Gill went to be the Lord. He left behind a golden trail that points the way home.

No. 757-Communion

I'm Drinking from my saucer cuz my cup done overflowed!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 16, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"Thou annoinest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Psalm 23:5

Introduction

Can you remember a time when you or someone you knew drank their coffee from a saucer? Believe it or not there was a time in the African-American community when it was common practice to pour one's coffee out of the cup right into the saucer and then slurp it from the saucer. Some say it was done to let the coffee cool. Others say we couldn't find any use for the saucer. Since we had to wash it, we may as well use it!

There are only few in our culture who still drink their coffee from a saucer. It has generally gone the path of eating collard greens with our fingers and sucking on neck bones. It was good until someone outside our culture told us it wasn't dignified. Somehow the greens don't taste quite as well if you can't eat them with your fingers. You can't get to the grissle of neck bones without sucking them and coffee doesn't taste as good if you can't drink it out of the saucer! In fact, there was a time when we felt truly blessed if we could eat grits and gravy for breakfast, mixed in with a little fried hog brains and eggs. We were living the life if we could dip a slice of corn bread into a glass of buttermilk for lunch and wash it all down with a big Nehi or RC...In fact, you were the richest man in the world. We didn't know we country because we sopped our syrup with the biscuits, broke wish bones, licked our fingers. All we knew about life was that we were doing pretty good! We enjoyed drinking our coffee from our saucers. We were thankful because our cups always seem to overflow!

Think about your life for a second. Have you been blessed? When you stop to think about it, the only times you are really unhappy with yourself is when someone or something makes you unhappy with what you have and where you are. Most people have full cups right now. Given our age, training, education, skill level and health, most of us have more than we can handle right now! Many of us are swimming an ocean of opportunity, if a single cup more were to be poured upon us would drown in prosperity. The truth of the matter is we are drinking from a saucer because our cups

have overflowed!

An anonymous writer wrote the following poem which seems to epitomize this thought so clearly:

I've never made a fortune and it's
probably too late now;
But I don't worry about that much, I'm
happy anyhow.
And as I go along life's way I'm reaping
better than I sow;
I'm drinking from my saucer 'Cause my
cup has overflowed.

Haven't got a lot of riches and
sometimes the going's tough,
But I've got loving ones around me and
that makes me rich enough.
I thank God for his blessings and the
mercies he's bestowed;
I'm drinking from my saucer 'cause my
cup has overflowed.

O, remember times when things went
wrong My faith wore somewhat thin;
But all at once the dark clouds broke
and sun peeped through again.
So Lord, help me not to gripe about the
tough rows that I've hoed;
I'm drinking from my saucer 'Cause my
cup has overflowed.

If God gives me strength and courage
When the way grows steep and rough,
I'll not ask for other blessings,
I'm already blessed enough.
And may I never be too busy to help
others bear their loads;
Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer
'Cause my cup has overflowed

As believers, we praise God the overflow! We thank him for his anointing that has made our lives spiritually rich and rewarding. It is the gift of grace, that fills our cups till they overflow!

Exposition

This passage focuses on David's appreciation for the abundant blessings God gave him.

Psalm 23 shows how God responds to our needs by using two different images. In the first half of the psalm, the image of a shepherd and sheep is used. God is pictured as a good shepherd and his people as the sheep. David shows how God takes care of the sheep leading to green pastures and settling them besides still waters.

The second image is that of a banquet host and a guest. God is pictured as the host and his people are depicted as the guest.

God prepares a table for his guest and does so in the presence of all of the guest's enemies. While those who try to oppress his people watch, God blesses them royally in a demonstration of heavenly hospitality. Then he anoints the guests head with oil, which was the custom of all hosts in Eastern culture.

In Eastern cultures a host would often demonstrate that his guest was very welcome by tokens that suggested that nothing was being spared to provide for the comfort and happiness of the guest. One of those symbolic gestures involved the host asking the guest to hold up his drinking cup. The host would then pour wine and keep on pouring wine until it would overflow the cup and fall on the banquet floor to the laughter and applause of other guests.

By this expression the guest knew he was doubly welcome! There was more available than he would ever consume and his host was willing to shower it all upon him to the point of overflow if necessary!

Thus, David paints a picture of a loving God who pours out blessings upon us until they overflow. He not only quenches our thirst but does more than enough to meet every need of those who trust and follow him!

More than enough

Today, there are millions of people who are frustrated because others seem to have more of everything and they have less. Believers on the other hand, are secure in the knowledge that whatever they need, God will supply. Believers have found that in every way, God is more than enough!

GOD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO MAKE OUR EFFORTS FRUITFUL: We have seen numerous demonstrations in the lives of believers to know that God is more than enough to provide for our needs. Often we are frustrated because of our inability to meet goals, make provisions or otherwise succeed. When the believers are tempted to give up, we remember that God will help us if we will invite him, to make our apparently vain efforts fruitful. In Luke 5:4-7 Jesus was in the boat with Simon who had been fishing all night long. Jesus told him to let down his net one more time and prepare for a "draught." When Simon obeyed God's command, he blessed his work so much that he caught so many fish the nets almost broke. He had more than enough! Believers who are involved in Godly pursuits, should constantly remind themselves

that God is more than enough to make that effort successful. Call on the Lord, then step back and watch God work!

GOD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH T0 PROVIDE FOR OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS: We often worry about our physical need for food, clothing and shelter. It is good to remember that God provides that too. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. There was no way for them to make new clothes or shoes, but God provided for them by allowing their clothes to last, in perfect condition, for 40 years. In Matthew 15:36-38 Jesus took seven loaves and a few fishes and multiplied them enough to feed the crowd and leave seven baskets of leftovers. When Israel moved into the promised land they lived in houses they did not build and ate from crops they did not till. In every instance, in the nick of time God provided more than enough for their physical needs. Whatever we need, God has helped believers obtain, not barely enough, but more than enough to sustain us!

GOD IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO PROVIDE FOR OUR SPIRITUAL NEEDS: Often our physical condition is tied to our spiritual condition. Sin often stands in the way of many of our stated physical goals. God responds by addressing our spiritual needs. In Mark 2:9-12 Jesus meets a man with the palsy. Instead of addressing his physical need he told him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee..arise take up thy bed and walk!" Not only did he receive forgiveness, but he received more! He received physical healing as well. Paul was a great ambassador for Christ but he was troubled by what he described as a "thorn in the flesh." He asked God three times to remove the thorn but his answer was, "My Grace is Sufficient for thee!"

When we have God's grace, we have more than enough!

When we have God's grace, the barrel is never empty!

When we have God's grace, we never walk in a courtroom with an able attorney!

When we have God's grace, we never enter a sickroom with a first class physician!

When we have God's grace, we have more than enough!

Drinking from a saucer

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that today most of us can truly testify that, "I'm drinking from a saucer, 'cause my cup done overflowed!"

Despite our numerous complaints about one thing or the other, we're doing better today than we have ever done before. The Lord has been good to us in so many ways. He has filled our cups until they have overflowed.

Whatever we have needed God has provided more than enough!

If we needed to:

CRAWL, God gave us more than enough, because he helped us STAND on own our two feet!

SING, God gave us more than enough, because he helped us to sing, but then gave us something to sing about!

SHOUT, God gave us more than enough, because he not only helped us to shout,

but gave us something to shout about!

SEE, God gave us more than enough, because after he opened our eyes he gave us a vision of the beautiful city that sits on 12 foundations, with streets of gold. He helped us to see the homeland of the soul!

EAT, God gave us more than enough, because he eat helped us to eat the bread of heaven! He heard us sing that old song, "Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

DRINK, God gave us more than enough, because not only were we filled, but he showed us a fountain that was filled with blood, that flowed from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all the guilt and stain!

I don't know about you, but I'm drinking out of my saucer because my cup done overflowed!

Every time you sit at your table and eat a full course of your favorite dish, tell yourself, "I'm drinking out of my saucer because my cup done overflowed!"

Every time you see your family doing well and everyone is in reasonably good health, tell yourself, "I'm drinking out of my saucer because my cup done overflowed!"

Every time you are tempted to complain, count up your bad days, then count up your good days then tell yourself, I'm drinking out of my saucer because my cup done overflowed!

What you are drinking out of the saucer is life, but not just life, but life more abundantly!

What you are drinking out of the saucer is peace, but not just peace, but peace that transcends all understanding!

What you are drinking out of the saucer is happiness, but not just happiness, but the joy of God's salvation!

What you are drinking out of the saucer is love, but not just love, but God's love!

It is a love so complete that God sent his only begotten Son to fill the cup of salvation!

He died out on Calvary and arose Early Sunday morning!

Today, he's pouring out salvation to a world that stands before the throne grace singing "Fill my cup, till it overflows!

Fill my cup till it overflows with love!

No. 758-Graduation

May The Force Be With You

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 23, 1999

SCRIPTURE "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." Philippians 4:9

Introduction

Have you ever felt guided by a higher power? Most of us can remember a time when we made a decision because we felt almost compelled by something within us. We have numerous names for that inner spirit. There is the notorious "something" that tells a variety of things. "Something told me I should have done this or that." Then there is our "first mind" which usually tells us to do the right thing but some times we don't listen. Some call it a conscience, or the voice of their upbringing that speaks and reminds them to do those things which are right. Whatever name is used, it seems to describe the same circumstance, the presence of a higher power within us which speaks and offers us directions concerning our life's course.

George Lucas, a famous film maker is expected to earn over a billion dollars on the latest in his Star Wars Movies. Those a bit older probably remember the first three, "Star Wars"," The Empire Strikes Back" and "The Return of the Jedi." His latest installment is a prequel that takes place before the first three in time. It is called the "Phantom Menace." Whatever the attraction is to Star Wars movies there have been lines around the country at movie theaters. People are sleeping in tents, sleeping bags and in card board boxes, just to get tickets. Movie theaters are jammed with Star Wars fans who want to see the next episode regardless of the cost.

While critics agree that the movie is short on script and heavy on special effects, the one thing it does have that is unique to all Star Wars movies is the presence of something Lucas calls "The Force." The Force, which is never defined clearly is an energy presence which exists with every person. This energy force guides, protects, empowers and emboldens those who follow its dictates. The force has a dark sight and a light side. The dark side is evil and sinister. The light side is the epitome of moral correction. The dark and the light side compete for heart and soul of characters in Lucas films, most of the times the light side wins, but not without giving up a few life essentials.

As characters depart from one level, station of point of entry to another, the

statement is generally heard, “May the force be with you.” By that they mean whatever force that guides you.
Of course Lucas himself is not a believer in God. His use of the generic term “Force” is pregnant with market potential. It was so generic that young people in nearly every denomination in the world could relate to the “force” as being the presence of good in their lives and the dark side being the presence of evil.

Every child that leaves home packs suitcases of clothing and other essentials. Some will carry their bibles with them and will read and become stronger as they grow and mature. There will be some that with them the voice of their parents, Sunday School teachers, pastor and teachers. Some will remember the warnings, heed the advice and as they let the inner power within them guide them to the light side.

As Christians, we know there is an inner force that guides us. When we were children we did not fully understand why we felt uncomfortable doing wrong, or why we enjoyed doing certain other things. We did not know then, but we do know now. We have been guided by the hand of God himself, who proved himself able to keep us from falling.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he encourages the Christians at Philippi to follow the examples they have seen as they attempt the Christian life.

Paul made three missionary journeys. In that time he established churches in many towns and cities, one of which was at Philippi. While in their presence he constantly taught them and demonstrated what it meant to be a Christian. In a great sense, he was their father in the faith. They were bold while in his presence. They were restrained while in his presence. They were reserved while in his presence. However, Paul was a great distance from them and his time was running out.

This letter was designed to be an encouragement to remember the things he had taught them. It is a benediction; or a final thought before parting company. The fourth chapter’s benedictory rehearses everything Paul had taught them one last time. He did not write them again. Scanning the fourth chapter Paul encouraged them to: 1) Rejoice in the Lord always (v4) and always find a reason to give God praise in any situation, 2) Don’t worry about anything but trust in God (v6) because doing so would give them a peace that “surpasseth all understanding.” 3)Think positively, focusing on whatsover things that are honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. 4)Be content (v11) regardless of the circumstance, God is God in every situation. 5)Don’t Doubt your ability, (v13) because any worthy Godly inspired challenge that you meet can be conquered because “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”; and 6)Count on God for the supply (v19) he is the source of all your blessings and he has promised to bless those who abide in him. “My God shall supply all your need..” was his constant reminder.

Verse nine is an encouragement to the Philippians to take to heart all that they have learned in the course of the short Christian experience. He told them to take four

things with them in life: What they learned. They had learned Christian practices that included, gathering on the Lord's Day, sharing in The Lord's supper, singing Psalms of praise, supporting each other in the faith, and participating in Christian fellowship. These practices were easy to follow as long as they were in Paul's presence, what he suggested is that they take with them into life, even outside his presence, what they have learned.

What they have received. They had received material and spiritual blessings while under Paul's instruction. They received an abundance of God's spirit and often received material blessings as well. The memory of how God has blessed them in the past would be a source of strength for them in the future.

What they have heard. They had received in countless study sessions, sermons and lectures the fine points of the spiritual life. They had been taught God's viewpoint of love, hate, damnation and the good life. Repeatedly they had received the lectures until they rang in their ears. Now, on this benedictory note, Paul tells them to take what they have learned with them into life and remember it all.

What they have seen. In the course of their experience they witnessed God's power in action. They saw many miraculous things happen that confirmed the power and majesty of God. The sick had been healed, the downtrodden had been lifted up and prayers had been answered in front of their very eyes. Paul encouraged them to remember what they had seen and take that with them.

His final benediction is that the "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.." Or that the merciful presence of God should follow you where ever you go!

What to take with you

Today, millions of youth are beginning their own journey into life. Many have dreamed about the day they would leave home, free from the rules, regulations and watchful eyes of their parents and loved ones. Some approach this with excitement and anxiety, not sure of what lies ahead. Paul's reminder to the Philippians in this text should be a guide to young believers as they prepare to enter the next phase of their lives and answer the question: "What shall I take with me?"

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED: Young believers have learned many practices at home that they should take with them. They have learned to pray before they go to bed at night. They have learned that every Sunday morning that they should find a Christian assembly and pray and fellowship with the Saints. There will be many temptations pointing believers in a different direction, however they must do as they have learned. They have learned to stay away from the night clubs, juke joints and honky tonks because the environment does not encourage Christian living. They learned to frequent those kinds of activities that will help them grow in the faith. As each youth begins life much distant from the firm rule of their parents, each is encouraged to take the practices they have been taught with them.

WHAT I HAVE RECEIVED: As you begin your own life, remember how God has blessed you already. He put you in the caring hands of parents or wards who guided

you and protected you. He blessed them with enough strength and resources to provide for you, nurture you and sustain you. God has blessed you with knowledge, special abilities, skills, personality, charm, wit, charisma, outward beauty and intelligence. Many have received great opportunities to learn, grow and achieve. These opportunities only came because God is in the blessing business and he rewards those who strive to put him first in their lives.

WHAT I HAVE HEARD: Youth heard many lessons from parents about life. Many of those lessons were learned in the "School of hard knocks" an unforgiving and unmerciful classroom that takes no prisoners. They know the proverbs of their parents and grand parents from memory. They know their pastor's teaching line by line, word by word. They have studied their lessons well. What they did not learn in a Sunday School class youth group or Bible School, theylearned from watching how God worked in the lives of the people that surrounded them. They have learned that ...serving the Lord will pay off after while.

WHAT I HAVE SEEN: Youth have had many opportunities to see God in action. They have seen heal people who were sick and watched those people recuperate and resume their lives in front of their very eyes. They have seen him take people who were thought to be failures and turn them into successes. They have seen God literally jerk them from the mouth of danger. They have seen the miracles that God has performed in their lives. They have seen the glory of the Lord working in the lives of millions and they now know that they serve a mighty, and powerful God.

Take The Lord With You

Finally, brothers and sisters, while George Lucas encourages youth to "take the force with you" I have something more reliable than the invisible force of "Star Wars."

The Force of Star Wars has a dark side, but I want to recommend someone that only has a bright side!

The Force of Star Wars did not have a name, that just called it the force. But I want to recommend someone that is called by many names. Somebody called him:

El-Shaddai, the almighty God!

Jehovah-Jirah, The Lord will provide!

Jehovah-Ropeka, The Lord is our healer!

Jehovah-Rohi, The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want!

As you go out in life don't worry about taking the "force" with you, but you should be sure that you take the Lord with you!

When David went out to fight Goliath, they tried to give him the King's armour and sword. They were all amazed when David faced the mighty giant with only a slingshot and five smooth stones. He didn't take anything with him but what he had learned, what he had received, what he heard and what he had seen about the Lord. When he took the Lord with him, Goliath had to fall!

When you take the Lord with you, powerful things can happen!

When you take the Lord with you:

Doors that were closed, will find themselves open!

Evil that tries to overtake you will fail because your prayer to your body guard is “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Trouble that comes won’t bother you because you know that in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret of his tabernacle, he shall hide me!

Storms may rise and winds may blow, but the Lord your God is still in control!

Take the Lord with you because he promised never to leave you, never to leave you alone!

What shall I take with me?

Take the blood of the lamb with you!

This is the blood that was sacrificed out on Golgotha’s Hill.

This is the blood that was shed for the remission of sin!

Wherever your journeys take your testimony with you!

Tell the world that you serve a savior who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!

Don’t worry about the force...take the Lord with you!

No. 472-Prayer

Praying With Power

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 17, 1993

SCRIPTURE: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16

Introduction

Do you know how to pray? Some, when asked that question will immediately respond, yes! Others will hesitate for a moment and consider the full nature of the question. Since prayer, by definition, is the expression to God of the sincere desires of the heart, every Christian should know how to let God know exactly what he or she wants. Praying is talking to God.

Praying with power is talking to God in a way that gets action. How do you get action from God? Is it through correctly worded prayers that are linguistically correct? Is it through loud, long and lavish prayers that appeal to the ear? What kind of prayers really get through to God?

Consider the three men who had become lost in the woods and could not find their way out. As they stumbled around aimlessly they came upon an abandoned church building which had a bell in its tower. It came to the men to ring the church bell to let any search party that might be looking for them know where they were. In the bell tower, each took his turn at ringing the bell. The first, a quite dainty fellow, seized the rope politely taking care to keep his pinkies in the air and to follow all of the rules of etiquette. He gave a slight tug, but the bell made no sound. He waddled away saying, "It's hopeless, the bell won't ring, we are lost!"

The second man tried. He wasn't concerned about his pinkies or whether he followed the right form. He grabbed the rope and pulled it with a single, powerful tug. The bell sounded loudly! The man said, "That's the way to ring a bell!" A search party that had been seeding the three heard the bell toll, but could not locate their exact position. It waited for another chime but it did not come.

After a while the second man concluded that ringing the bell wouldn't bring any help. Finally, the third man, who was older and very short, came to the rope. He jumped into the air, grabbed the rope and dropped to his knees, still holding on to the rope. The bell chimed and pulled him into the air. He dropped to his knees again. Repeatedly, he pulled the rope and dropped to his knees.

When the search party finally located the three men they found that the old man

was still holding on to the rope and toning the bell. His knees were bruised and calloused and his hands were scarred with rope burns, but he kept ringing the bell. The leader of the search party told him, "we were able to find you because you didn't stop ringing the bell!"

As Christians, we know that the way to get a prayer answered is not by fancy, flowery language; nor by occasional tugs, but through fervently repeated, sincere prayers, that keep going up until an answer comes down!

Exposition

This text focuses on James as he explains to the church how to put its faith in action through prayer. This reflects the entire message that James gives to the church which is that it must put its faith in action. This is evidenced by active service, patience and prayer.

Throughout the book of James, Christians are encouraged to use God's special formulas to achieve success. He suggests to us (James 5:20) that an active faith uses the formula (F+W)*U2=A. Interpreted it means that your faith plus your works times the number of people "U" influence equals action. In James 1:3 he suggests that our faith plus our trial equals patience (F+T=P). Here James gives us another formula, this one results in Powerful prayers that get through. James's teachings seem to say: Our faith plus a saved life-style, combined with action on our part, multiplied by the intensity and frequency of our prayers equals "much" or (F+R+E)*P=M.

The key to understanding this truth is to look closely at James 5:16B "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The words "Righteous", "Effectual", "Prayer", and "much" are the key elements of James' formula for powerful prayer. The unlock the great secrets of getting prayers through to God.

The Righteous

James, addressing the church lays down a prerequisite for powerful prayers: they must come from a righteous man or woman.

This does not imply that prayers are only answered from people who have never committed any sins or have no spiritual imperfections. The term righteous used in this context refers to those who have been saved and justified by the blood of Christ. These are men and women who certainly have flaws and shortcomings but who have been saved and forgiven by our savior himself. The righteous are those who live their lives in communion with God. They obey his commandments and strive to live according to his word on a daily basis.

It will be difficult for a person who is living out of communion with God to get a prayer through, until that person has first been justified. The preponderance of Old testament scriptures follows Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" The New Testament follows John 9:31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him

he heareth." The prayer the sinner should pray first, and it will be heard, is "Lord save me."

The very first step to getting a prayer through is to get in communion with God! That can be done only by accepting Jesus Christ as your savior, and repenting for sins.

Effectual Means Doing Your Part

James uses the word "effectual" as he tries to explain to the church how to get a prayer through. Effectual means actions or deeds that bring about change. In the Old testament the word "effect" connotes "deeds." In the New Testament the word effectual is used to refer to "effective work" as in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 or Galatians 2:8.

Since the book of James emphasizes active faith, it becomes clear that by using the word "effectual" his formula for powerful prayers, James indicates that the person praying should have an "effective work" himself. Having an effective work means that we have done all that we can do to change our circumstance. We have done all that our hands know how to do! The person who prays to God should have done, or be in the process of doing everything humanly possible to resolve his or her crises, performing an "effectual work.

We should not ask God to do for us what we have not attempted to do for ourselves. We should not pray to God to give us a job, for example, and we have not applied. We should not ask God to give us good health, while we do little to protect that which we have. We should not ask God to bless the sick or shut-in when we have not visited, called or responded to their circumstance in any way ourselves.

James reminds us that our prayers complement our "effective work" or our efforts to resolve a situation. Conversely, he seems to suggest that we should not pray for that which we have shown no concern for ourselves.

Fervent Prayer

James says our prayers should be fervent. Fervent means sincere, passionate and from the heart. Our prayers should reflect our real concern about the circumstance as reflected in our active efforts to resolve the situation.

Fervency refers to intensity and frequency. Those who pray fervently do so with unparalleled intensity. They pray regularly for the same blessing. In suggesting fervency in prayer, James simply reiterates the teachings of Jesus, who taught that we should be "importuning" in our prayers. To emphasize this principle, in Luke 11:8 Jesus gave the illustration of the knocks at midnight to drive home the point that even though a man had settled in his bed and locked his doors he arose because a neighbor kept knocking on his door. The same is true, he said for those who ask fervently from God.

However, we must remember that no matter how fervent our appeals to God, what

we ask, must be in accordance with the will of God. Sometimes we know that we are asking for something that is against the will of God because he has said so in his word.

The ladies man who prays that he will be successful at conquering some innocent lass is an example of someone who may pray fervently but won't get an answer because that request is against the will of God. James 4:3 says "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

The righteous always want God's will to be done and graciously bow to it. When times come when we don't know the will of God for our situation, we ask, accept, and claim. Ask for what we want, accept his answer, and claim the victory because we know his decision in our circumstance will work to our advantage in the long run.

"Availeth Much"

Finally, James reminds us that prayer, coming from a person who knows the Lord in the pardoning of his sins, and has demonstrated an effective work, availeth much. To say that such a prayer "availeth much" is another way of saying what our grandparents put another way...prayer changes things.

Prayer can turn situations around and make the darkness light.

When there is something that seems beyond reach, prayer can reach the unreachable!

When someone has gotten out of touch, prayer can touch the untouchable!

When there is a circumstance that resists efforts to change it, prayer can change the unchangeable!

When there is a stumbling block that will not move, payer can move the unmovable!

When there is a problem that cannot be solved, prayer can solve the unsolvable!

I don't know about you but I've found out that prayer can change things!

If there is hatred, prayer can turn hatred into love!

If there is confusion, prayer can turn confusion into harmony!

If there is disappointment, prayer can inspire hope!

If there is fear, prayer can turn fear into courage!

Within your bosom you have the phone, call up the Lord, he's still on the throne!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

No wonder the song writer declares "Jesus is on the mainline, tell Him what you want!"

Call Him!

If you're sick and you want to get well...

Call Him....and tell Him what you want!

No. 759-Funeral

She Shall Be Praised

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 27, 1999

SCRIPTURE: Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Proverbs 31:30

Introduction

What are you afraid of? Most people are afraid of one thing or another. Some are afraid of snakes. Others are afraid wild animals. There are still others that are afraid mice or spiders. Strange as it may seem there are some who are afraid of falling in love, some who are afraid of the dark, some who are afraid to walk under ladders and still others who fear Black cats that cross their paths. What we fear is said to be our own private phobia. It is the one part of our nature that we keep essentially close because it reveals our vulnerability.

While everyone fears something, everyone does not fear the same thing. The same man that is afraid to sleep in the dark may jump out of an airplane in a parachute jump. The same person that is afraid of the sight of blood, loves mountain climbing as a hobby. There is no pattern to our fears. That's why a person can scream at the sight of a mouse but show no fear in another circumstance.

That's why some people do not find it hard to disobey God, they do not fear him. While they fear many other things, they don't fear God. They fear being fired from work if they don't perform. They fear losing a lover. They fear being disavowed in a will. They fear any and everything except God.

It would appear that living in the fear of the Lord would be an attribute associated with every church member. Yet there are many who associate with churches and denominations who have no fear of the Lord. That lack of fear is demonstrated in the behavior of those who snub their noses at God and walk proudly in their sins.

Not long ago there was a generation among our people that lived in fear of the Lord. Whenever it rained, the sheets were pulled over windows. Radios and television sets were turned off. Children who were playing had to sit still and wait because, "God was doing his work." This same generation feared their dress and speech in the house of the Lord. They were afraid to work on Sunday and often refused to indulge in any recreational activity on Sunday, afraid that they may unintentionally do something that would displease God. There was a general reverence for the Lord and those things and people that worked to represent his

cause. That fear has greatly dissipated.

However, those who manage to maintain a healthy fear of the Lord, stand to gain favor with God. Those who fear him, respect him and usually obey him. Those who fear him fear him usually hold his name and being in reverence and work to defend his cause with their own lives.

As Christians, we strive to come before the Lord with fear and with trembling. We know that those who come before him with respect and fear will gain his praise and adulation. Any man or woman that orders their lives according to the will of God has the joy of knowing...he or see, shall be praised.

Exposition

This text focuses on the attributes of what is described as a "virtuous" woman. Virtue in this context refers to moral and mental qualities, combined with a spirit of love, industry and fear of the Lord.

Verses 10-31 are an acrostic. Every verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Aleph is for woman full of virtue,Beth refers to the trust her husband shares, Gimmel is for work she does to help you, Daleth stands for how she seeks her wares.

This continues through all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In this manner 22 separate virtuous of a good woman are combined to show a woman who is complete and worthy of praise because she fears the Lord.

Proverbs describes the virtuous woman in a very detailed analysis that leaves little to the imagination.

The virtuous woman has four character traits that are unique. All four are listed in verse 26 which notes: strength, honor, wisdom and kindness as the marks of the ideal woman.

Her loyalty and Devotion to her husband is another identifying trait of the virtuous woman. Verses 11 and 12 say: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Despite her other qualities a good woman is measured by her loyalty to her husband, according to the scripture. Her actions toward him are of such a nature that he can "safely trust her," meaning that his trust will not be breached..

She is also measured by her loyalty to her family. Verses 13-21 describes a very industrious woman who seeks ways to provide the best for her family yet be economical. She considers the meats and foodstuffs needed for her household and secures them. She saves, pinches and economizes in every way possible to make the family's resources go further. When she cannot buy what her family needs she makes it herself, to the best of her ability. Neither weather or seasons will stop her from providing for her household. Verse 21 says "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet."

Not only does she care for her husband and family, but she also works very diligently to help the poor and the needy. Verse 20 says: "She stretcheth out her hand

to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." The virtuous woman is concerned about the sick. She visits the hospitals, prepares food for shut-ins, gives to help the less fortunate and gives of herself to help lift the burden of those who are in a position of need. "She reacheth forth her hand" suggests that she does not wait until the needy make an appeal to her, but takes the initiative to reach out and touch someone with compassion.

The character trait that distinguishes her from all other women is the fact that she fears the Lord. This fear and reverence of the Lord permeates her being, family relationships and interactions with others.

Because she fears, the Lord, verse 30 says..she shall be praised.

Women Who Fear The Lord

Today there are many great women in the world, but the woman who fears the Lord deserves extra attention and praise. Perhaps that's why Proverbs 31:29 notes that there are many great women, but the woman who fears the Lord excellest them all. What are her characteristics of such a woman? Why should she be praised?

SHE IS NOT ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE: The woman who trusts in the Lord does not worry about the future but is content to let God do those things she cannot do herself. She thinks about the future. She plans for the future but she does not worry about the future, because much of the future is in God's hands. Thus, in the present, she prepares for the winter or the coming of bad times. Verse 21 notes that she is not afraid of the snow because she is prepared.

SHE LIVES BY PRACTICAL WISDOM: There are many great women who have many degrees but they lack the ability to know and live by practical wisdom. The Woman who fears the Lord practices wise living and then shares her wisdom with family members in family gatherings, over the telephone and every other opportunity that presents itself. Verse 26 says she openeth her mouth with wisdom. The wisdom she accumulates is lived by example in front of her family. She lives by a set of old wise rules that have been the hallmark of great mothers over the years, "spare the rod and spoil the child," "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," "Be careful of the dog that brings you a bone of information, because the dog that brings a bone will also carry a bone," "A penny saved is a penny earned," "Waste not, want not!" There a very close connection between a practical, gracious wisdom and freedom from anxiety about the future.

SHE IS STRONG: Women who fear the Lord are strong. Strength as noted here, is not necessarily in a physical sense, but they are strong in the moral and spiritual sense. Verse 17 notes that "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms." These women are those who have the moral strength to resist those things which would operate to her detriment. They turn away from certain crowds, distance themselves from certain activities and avoid association with evil practices. Moreover, her fear of the Lord prompts her to build her intellectual strength. She studies the word in every way that is available to her. That study builds her ability to resist

temptation and to stand for God. Many women who fear the Lord live well past the pivotal three score and ten years that the bible seems to promise and by reason of the strength see four score and beyond. The strength developed by such women is developed over a life time of faithful dependence on God.

Each small storm that God sees us through, builds strength for those that come with hurricane force.

Each small stream that God helps us to cross, builds strength, for the Red Sea that will block our path to the promised land.

Each small problem that God helps us to lift, builds strength for the heavy burdens that are sure to come.

SHE LIVES FOR OTHERS RATHER THAN HERSELF: One of the great distinctions of women who fear the Lord is that they seem to live for others. They give of themselves constantly. These are the women who know that the Lord has no hands but their hands and no feet but their feet. They seem to live for others because they believe they should do the work of the Lord. She seems to lose herself in the providing for her husband and children. She often denies herself to assist them, not because it is required but because it is her nature to do so. The Woman who fears the Lord reaches out because she remembers that Christ has taught that what we do to the least of these, we also do unto him. Thus she reaches out in grand and small ways to help those outside of herself family while doing the same for those inside of her family. She seems to live by an imbedded motto: "If I can help somebody as I pass along...then my living shall not be in vain."

No Fear Of Death

The virtuous woman fears the Lord, but she has no fear of meeting him.

There are many who approach their final years with an anxiety and lingering fear of the unknown that makes them afraid for the day when they will be called to meet God.

The woman who fears the Lord and has lived her life in respect for his word, is not afraid to meet the Lord. She is not afraid of the judgment books or what may be written in her record for she knows that her name is written down in glory.

When your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, there is no fear of death. I hear David declaring "Yea though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me!"

Consider the old slave woman who was the ward of an unusually tough slave master. The master was known to punish slaves whenever they failed to meet their quotas or disobeyed the overseers. This year he promised the slaves that any one that picked 400 pounds of cotton per day and met their daily chores would be set free and given a wage to work on the plantation. Nobody believed the master would actually free a slave but one old slave woman sweated in the sun every day to pick 400 pounds of cotton. She picked until her hands were blistered. She hoed her assigned rows long after the others had gone into their cabins. At the end of the

season, most of the slaves were afraid when the heard the master was coming, except the old slave woman. She began singing and smiling. “Don’t you know the master is coming, why are you singing?” She was asked. The slave woman replied “I have picked my bales, I have hoed my rows, I have toiled in the heat of the day, when the master comes...I’m going to be free!”

The woman who fears the Lord doesn’t fear death because she has picked her bales! She worked the works of him who sent her while it was day!

The woman who fears the Lord doesn’t fear death because she has hoed her row! She has finished her course.

She came meet the master with a smile to receive her crown!

It is a crown she earned for being a faithful wife!

It is a crown she earned for being a caring and devoted mother!

It is a crown she earned for being a loyal church member!

It is a crown paid for by Jesus himself, way out on Calvary!

For 2000 years ago he died and rose again, promising life eternal to those who will believe and trust in him!

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On Saturday May 22, 1999 Luella McNeal went to meet the master. She lived the life of the virtuous woman and she shall be praised.

No. 760-Inspiration

Don't Throw In The Towel

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 6, 1999

SCRIPTURE: And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. 17You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you." 2 Chronicles 20:15-17

Introduction

Have you ever felt like giving up? Those are the times when you asked yourself the question, "What's the use?" There are times in the best of lives when the temptation to quit is overwhelming. Everyone likes to succeed at goals that they establish. They are encouraged when there are indicators that their efforts are not in vain. Nothing is more discouraging than a series of defeats, failures and setbacks. Those are time when we are overwhelmed by the odds and feel like giving up. Just as in the sport of boxing a fighter that cannot continue signals defeat by throwing a towel into the ring, many otherwise confident Christians find themselves throwing in the towel when they face odds that seem unbeatable.

What generates this feeling more than anything else are tough situations that seem unsolvable despite our best efforts. Dealing with tough situations takes a whole lot of adjusting. Some folks never get ready for tough times and they simply throw in the towel.

Consider the day the Devil decided to visit the church. Before he arrived, the members gave brave testimonials about their willingness to be tried in the fire. That Sunday the devil decided to come to church carrying a big bucket of fire and hell. As the members saw all the problems and troubles and headaches the devil had in his bucket they all started running. First it was the members in the pews. They tried to hold on but the fire in the bucket was too hot. They threw in the towel and left. The choir members tried to sing, but as the devil walked toward them, they all left, followed by the choir director. The musicians left, finally even the deacons threw in the towel. The fire got so hot that the preacher left. When the devil looked around the whole church was empty except one old man. The devil walked over to him and asked, brother why aren't you throwing in the towel like the rest of the church members?

Don't you know who I am and what's in this bucket? The old man looked in the bucket and then looked up at the devil and said, "That's all you got in that bucket? I get more hell than that at home? I do believe that woman I married, must have been your sister! Some have been through so much they can stand just about anything!

As Christians we are comforted to know that if we stand for that which is right, our battles are God's battles. If we do the right things and stand for God, we are not lonely soldiers standing isolated on the battlefield but we have the knowledge of knowing that our God joins us in our struggle and promises us the victory through his power.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jehoshapath as he learns that his battle will be fought by God.

Jehoshapath was the King of Judah who found himself surrounded by a coalition of armies that included the Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites among others. These vast armies had assembled themselves and were in the process of attacking the people of Judah.

The presence of such a large force of enemies in view of the fact of is inability to repel this host of invaders, Jehoshaphat felt his only refuge was at the horns of the altar. He resolved to employ the aid of God. He called his subjects to observe a solemn fast at the sanctuary. It was customary with the Hebrew kings to proclaim fasts in perilous circumstances, either in a city, a district, or throughout the entire kingdom, according to the greatness of the emergency. On this occasion, it was a universal fast, which extended to infants (2Ch 20:13; see also Joe 2:15,16 Jon 3:7).

He led the people in prayer. At this time recalled how the enemy they faced was present only because God commanded Israel when it left Egypt not to destroy these nations. The people were obedient and allowed the Moabites, Ammonites and others to live. Now, years later, they were united together to destroy Judah. Jehoshapath's appeal to God was to remember that their present trouble was the result of their previous obedience to God.Then it concludes with an earnest appeal to the justice of God to protect those who, without provocation, were attacked and who were unable to defend themselves against overwhelming numbers.

As they prayed God answered them through the prophet Jahaziel who told them that the battle that was about to be fought was not their battle but God's. In fact while it appeared that Israel would be the primary participant in the battle, they would not even fight, but would arise the victors.

Hearing this, Jehoshaphat bowed his head and expressed thanks and gratitude to God

Without a doubt the people began preparations for the celebration. They ordered the singers to prepare a special song and a procession was arranged similar to the ones used when the people celebrated a victory. The songs and celebration that were being prepared were victory songs. The praises were announcements of

victory. The Levites led the procession with their musical instruments; and singing the 136th Psalm, the people went on, not as an army marching against an enemy, but returning in joyful triumph after a victory.

The moment they began to sing praises to God the Lord went to work. Just what happened has been debated for years. The scripture says ambushments occurred. Some have argued that God sent angels to ambush the Ammonites and Moabites and made it appear as if one had attacked the other. Others claim that there may have been arguments among the confederates.

Whatever the case animosities sprung up, which led to widespread dissensions and fierce feuds, in which they drew the sword against each other. The consequence was, that as the mutual strife commenced when the Hebrew procession set out from Jerusalem, the work of destruction was completed before Jehoshaphat and his people arrived at the battlefield.

When Judah finally made it to the battle scene, they saw the field strewed with dead bodies, so that they did not have to fight at all, but rather to take possession of an immense booty, the collection of which occupied three days. On the fourth they set out on their return to Jerusalem in the same order and joyful mood as they came.

What are God's Battles?

Today, there are many who are fighting daily battles for one reason or another. Battles are small confrontations that are only a part of great wars. Sometimes battles can be pivotal in determining the outcome of the war. The great American battles at Vicksburg and Gettysburg during the Civil War were pivotal because a victory or a loss would affect the final outcome of the war. In a similar sense, each of our small battles pivotal. They may not be the whole war but they can set up a series of events that determine the end.

When Jehoshaphat faced his coalition of enemies, he recognized them as people that Israel could have dealt with in their own way and avoided the trouble. However, the people obeyed God. Because the people obeyed God and did not destroy the Moabites and Ammonites when they left Israel, the resulting battle in the aftermath was not their battle, but God's battle and he proved himself quite able to win his own battles.

Many of a believer's battles are God's battles. These are battles that occur in your life because you tried to do what was right and ill feeling, misunderstanding, confusion and even serious trouble resulted. You tried to help someone and they turned on you. You gave your honest opinion and it wasn't received well. You refused to participate in an ungodly activity. You fell into financial trouble by no fault of your own. These are small battles that besiege believers every day.

The word of God reminds that these daily battles will occur because Satan brings them against us. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that

ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:12-13

Believers who are being attacked because of their attempts to do the right thing should remember the words of Jesus In Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

When you are trying to do right and meet frustration, you are in a godly battle! Don't throw in the towel! That battle is not yours, it's the Lord's!

Pre-Battle Prayer

Those who see a battle coming should follow Jehoshapath's second example, don't throw in the towel, Go down in prayer before the battle.

When Jehoshapath brought the country together in prayer, they talked to God about their approaching trouble. It was not a "can" prayer filled with metaphors and flowery words, it was one of those "driving in your car, stalled at the red light in deep thought prayers!" The people really talked to God. !

Throughout the Old Testament great Kings would often call in the prophets to talk to God about battles that were about to fought. If God indicated that he did not favor their involvement the wise kings avoided conflicts the unwise went into battle anyway. That's what happened to Jehoshaphat's friend, King Ahab.

He prayed and then was told to avoid the battle, but Ahab went into battle anyway....and it cost him his life. Having observed what happened to Ahab, Jehoshaphat knew the wisdom of talking to God before going into any battle.

As he talked to God...God told him how the battle would be fought!

When we pray, God will give us the answer. God will tell us how the battle is to be fought, if we have to fight at all!

In prayer we may learn that we must be like Joshua and march around the walls of Jericho!

In prayer we may learn that we must be like David and slay giants without a sword and shield!

In prayer we may learn that we must be like Gideon and face large numbers with just a handful!

Then there are times, when God may answer us and say...don't do anything! Like Moses standing at the Red Sea, he may say "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord! Don't say a word! Don't raise a sword! Don't put up a defense! All of your battles are my battles, but this battle is all mine!

That's the time when God says be still till "I make your enemies your footstool!"

That's the time when God prepares a table for you in the presence of your enemies!

Prepare For the Victory!

Finally, every believer facing difficulties, frustrations and problems for God's sake, should not throw in the towel, but prepare for the victory!

When Jehoshaphat received an answer from God, he never doubted his word, but he prepared for the victory.

The people prepared for the victory celebration and ordered the choir to write a victory song!

It doesn't matter whether God fights the battle for us, or whether God fights the battle with us, those who fight in the name of the Lord are guaranteed the victory!

That's what Romans 8:37 means when it says, "..we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Are you facing a time of trouble? Don't throw in the towel because "in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me."

Are you feeling helpless? Don't throw in the towel! Say like David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!"

Are you feeling alone? Don't throw in the towel! Jesus said in John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you!" .."And lo I'll be with you alway even unto the earth!"

Are you feeling trapped with no way to turn? Don't throw in the towel, because the Lord will make a way out of no way!

Are you feeling weighted down by a heavy load? Don't throw in the towel! Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there for Jesus said in Matthew 11:30, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light!"

Are you feeling overwhelmed by the odds? Don't throw in the towel! I hear the word declaring, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things!"

Do you feel like giving up and just want to throw up your hands! Don't throw in the towel! Instead of throwing up your hands, say "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!"

Don't throw in the towel, but get ready to praise the Lord!

Israel praised the Lord for the victory that was on the way!

Praise God for the blessing that is on the way! When the praises go up, the blessings come down!

In good times and bad times, praise the Lord!

When tears roll from your eyes, praise the Lord!

You don't have to wait until the battle is over..you can't shout now!

Shout because God is still on the throne!

Shout because God still hears and answers prayer!

Shout because God sent his Son to command the outcome of our battles!

Shout because Jesus demonstrated that we may have our Garden of Gethesemenes

We may have times when we are nailed to the cross!

We may have times when it looks like we are defeated and buried in our graves!

Shout because when the battle the battle is over...we will rise again by the power of God!

Don't throw in the towel, call on Jesus!

Don't throw in the towel, trust in the Lord!

Sing the words of that old song, "I'm on the battle field for my Lord. And I promised him that I would serve him till I die. I'm on the battle field for my Lord!"

No. 761-Father's Day

If Then I Be A Father, Where Is Mine Honor?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

SCRIPTURE: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: IF THEN I BE A FATHER, WHERE IS MINE HONOR? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Mal 1:6

Introduction

Have you heard the phrase, "Giving honor to God who is the head of my life?" It is a familiar phrase in church circles which seems to suggest that theperson speaking is bestowing honor upon God by the use of the phrase. At church programs, these speakers usually preface their remarks with this phrase which usually elicits an 'Amen" or two from the audience. However, a closer look at the phrase reveals another truth. Honor is DEMONSTRATED by obedience, respect, reverence and praise. Thus, a person can honor God through actions that demonstrate that he or she is obedient, respectful and grateful for his benevolence.

However, GIVING HONOR to God suggests that honor is being BESTOWED. Honor is bestowed from a larger entity onto a smaller entity. The King honors a subject with an invitation to the palace. A citizen is honored by the nation. A member can be honored by the church. A member who gives honor to the church is a member who is so renowned that his presence gives honor to the church. A citizen can honor give honor to the nation if he is greater in renown than the whole of the country. A human being can only GIVE honor to God if he is bigger more powerful and has more renown than God himself. Thus, God is honored to see him in a worship service. In simple terms, when honor is given, it is given from the big thing down to the little thing. Thus when we say, "Giving honor to God" we are suggesting that we are the "big thing" bestowing honor upon God the little thing. The problem is not in honoring God, it is trying to GIVE God honor.

Consider the little boy who came into his father's room crying on father's day. The lad was drenched in tears as he came to his father's bed. "What are you crying about, son?" As the father as he wiped the tears away from his eyes. Raising his big round eyes the boy said, "I can't find anything to give you for father's day. I was

going to get you a razor but you have one. I was going to get you a tie but you have many. I was going to get you some cologne but have that too. Everything I want to give you, you already have." The father smiled then embraced his son and said. "Every day you give something I had the day before but don't have each day until you show me and that's your love, obedience and respect. Keep being a great son and you'll give me a new gift every day." We can't give God anything that he does not already have, except daily love, respect and obedience.

Then how is God honored?

God is honored through the way we live our lives every day. He is not impressed with our words and lip service if they are not indicative of our daily actions.

In the same manner, we cannot honor our parents with mere words. A father whose children disobey his every command, disrespect his house, and fail to keep holy his sacred things, does not hear words from his children that express their love and appreciation for him. They honor him with their lives. Everything else is just icing on the cake.

As Christians, we see God as a type of the perfect father. We see him strong, loving, compassionate, kind, warm and benevolent in spirit. We honor our fathers the same way we honor God, not with empty words of praise or tokens but through the way we live our lives before him. Long after our fathers are gone, many still honor them, by following their instructions, respecting their values and praising their memory. How do we honor our fathers? Not with our lips and gifts, but with our lives!

Exposition

This text emphasizes the truth that God deserves the reverence due him because he is both a father and Lord.

The priests of Israel became very slack in their implementation of the laws of Moses with respect to the sacrifices. They allowed polluted, lame and sick animals to be offered as sacrifices in violation of the law's requirement that all sacrificial animals be "without blemish." This angered God who made it known that he would prefer having no sacrifices at all than to have impure offerings. Although God had a great reputation among the nations as a powerful and just God, the priests in Jerusalem debased the worship by their lax procedures. Their actions disgraced God although their lips gave him praise.

While the people gave lip service to God without the accompanying actions, God himself had been good to them. He deserved their reverence as both a father figure and Lord.

With their lips the people hailed God as their father, but God, through the prophet Malachi questioned whether their words were meaningless or really truthful.

His question seems to suggest that God is truly honored by those who study to act the part of both an obedient child and a faithful servant.

OBEDIENCE: The obedience paid to God as a father in the context of this passage is described as "honor." "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If then

I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" The honor that a father receives from a son is obedience. God expected it from Israel. He demands it from all who follow him. God told the people that they honored him with their lips but they were being disobedient to him especially when it came to the way they lived.

FAITHFUL SERVANT: Those who honor God assume the role of a faithful servant, willing carry out the will of his Lord. This willingness to do what God wants do is called "fear" in this passage. To honor God is reverence mingled with honor and fear. Those who honor God do what pleases him, even without the threat of hell looming over them. They are true and faithful servants.

As a father, God is honored by obedience to his word and reverence to his name.

As a Lord, God is honored by carrying out his will among the nations.

When God asked the question, "Where is mine honor?" Israel could not answer. They neither obeyed his commands or reverence him by carrying out his will. Their words were empty and the praises were hollow and empty.

To honor God, words are not necessary but actions are the true sign of a life devoted to God.

How to Honor Our Fathers

Today, there will be many that will attempt to honor their fathers in traditional ways. Among them will be a plethora of gifts including, shavers, neckties, cologne, shirts, etc. Some dads will be treated to lunch or fellowships.

In addition to the traditional tokens of love that are demonstrated on father's day, believers can best honor their fathers on a daily basis by displaying three characteristics: Obedience, respect and faithfulness.

OBEY YOUR FATHER: In nearly every home the fathers usually becomes the parent that has to "lay down the law." In addition, the father usually has to enforce the rules of the home. Good fathers spend considerable time explaining the family rules and the rules of life to their children. The rules involve respect for life, property and the rights of others. They may also involve interpersonal relationships, solving problems and other disciplinary measures.

Children honor their fathers when they obey their father's rules. Since a good father is a type of our heavenly father in the home, we model our obedience to our father after our obedience to God. A good father does not make rules that will harm him family, in the same way that God does not make laws that would hurt his people. We honor our fathers most by obeying their rules and directives without question. That's why Ephesians 6:1 puts it bluntly, "Children obey your parents..."

The picture of young Isaac obeying Abraham even as he was laying himself on the altar is striking. With no sacrificial lamb in sight and death apparent, Isaac still laid himself on the altar and obeyed his father. Even as the blade swung into the air, perhaps aimed at his heart, he laid still in obedience. While that is an extreme, today, children can do far less and honor godly fathers by obedience to their rules and directives.

RESPECT YOUR FATHER: Obedience and respect are different in nature but both are drawn from acceptance of the same truth. That truth is that we should submit our ourselves to higher authority. In biblical times there was an extreme amount of respect for parents. That respect was so intense that children acted in certain ways in the presence of their parents, especially their fathers that was a marked difference from their usual behavior. Ham drew the wrath of his father Noah when he mistakenly saw him naked. There were certain ways that a child could even look upon his father that were deemed disrespectful. Even in the context of African-American history, the respect for father and grandfather was immense. Today that respect is declining. There is much lip tucking, eye rolling, fist balling and talking back among children today. The role of father has been talked down so much that there is very little respect for fathers in many homes. What, at one time was respect, has been reduced to tolerance.

Children can honor their fathers by respecting them daily. They can speak well of their fathers and be at their best when in their presence. Respect does not mean a child will agree with everything his father will do or say, but he continues to hold his father in high regard, despite differences of opinion over matters of style, taste and procedure. Children who respect their fathers, even into adulthood honor them in the greatest of ways.

CARRY OUT YOUR FATHER'S WILL: Often father's give their children special duties and responsibilities. Sometimes however, children are negligent when it comes to carrying out their father's will. We honor our fathers' when we honor their wishes and do what we have been asked to do. Whether it is a simple errand or an instruction to make peace with an enemy, those who carry out their father's will praised by him.

One of the quickest ways to anger a father is to fail to carry out an instruction. Conversely, one of the best ways to please a father is to carry out an instruction expeditiously and meticulously. Father are honored by children that he can count on to do what he says, exactly like he says.

What happens when father is honored

Finally, brothers and sisters every believer should consider what happens when father is honored.

When a father is honored by his children he is pleased and will stop at nothing to insure that they are happy and fulfilled. A good father will use everything in his power to provide for children who honor him with obedience, respect and faithfulness.

If our earthly fathers will stop at nothing to provide for children that honor them, how much more will our heavenly father bless children that obey and praise him.

Malachi told the people that if they obey God, pay their tithes and respect the Lord that he would open up the windows of heaven and shower down so many blessings upon them that they would not be able to contain them.

What happens when we honor God by obeying him?

What happens when we honor God by doing his will and praising him?

Jesus seemed to answer that question when told his disciples that if they abide in him and his spirit abides in them that they could ask what they will and the father would provide!

When we praise the father he is honor!

When we obey and praise the Lord he responds by making good things happen in our lives!

When God is pleased, he:

Takes our burdens and makes them light!

Takes our questions and gives us answers!

Takes our mountains and turns them into molehills

Takes our broken spirits and makes them whole again!

Takes our failed efforts and turns them into success!

Takes our low expectations and raises them beyond imagination!

When God is pleased he opens doors of opportunity that have been closed in our faces!

I don't know about you but I'm not ashamed to let the world know about "Our father!"

Our father, turns keeps food our table!

Our father, makes our enemies our footstool!

Our father, makes a way out of no way!

Our father, is a bridge over troubling water!

Our father, is rock in weary land!

Our father is a loving father! He loved us so much that he sent his only begotten son that we could have a chance to ever lasting life!

Thank God for the father!

Thank God for the Holy Ghost!

Thank God for the Son, who carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill and died for our sins!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

He's alive!

He's still providing!

Every day of my life I'll call on him!

Father I stretch my hand to thee, whether shall I go! If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go!

No. 762-Youth

No More Remixes!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 27, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. " Ecclesiastes 1:9; "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Introduction

Have you ever heard a new song by your favorite artist, only to be told that it's not really new but a remake of someone else's song? Many youth have had discussions with their parents about an exciting new song on the market only to hear their parents say, "That's not new, that came out in 1965..." Although the song is new to the children, to their parents it's simply warmed over soup. The trend toward remakes is not confined to just the record industry, it is widespread. In nearly every area of endeavor there is very little that is entirely new. In many cases that which is promoted as new is just a remake of something that was popular in another time.

There are remakes of popular movies, television shows, and hair styles. Even clothing styles are targets for remakes. The new Ford Mustang is a remake of the popular car of the 60's. There is even a remake of the Volkswagen. The idea behind a remake is to keep the essence of the original then add a touch of creativity to give it a new look and feel. So, today's Yo-Yo is nothing new except that today's Yo-Yo lights up or plays music instead of just going up and down. The Hoola Hoop is not new, it's the same old Hoola Hoop except that the new ones make sounds and glow in the dark. Barbie Dolls are not new, except that she wears new clothes and accessories. When Denzell Washington and Whitney Houston starred in the movie, "The Preacher's Wife" many thought it was a new story, but actually it was a remake of a 1950's era movie with an almost identical story line. Even the legendary biblical epic, "The 10 Commandments" starring Charleston Heston wasn't new. It was a remake of a 1923 movie by the same name. Many are old enough to remember the originals and can spot a remake instantly. There is a constant comparison between that which claims to be new and the model upon which it is based.

The same is the case with today's popular music, whether it is secular or Gospel. Many of popular songs on the market today are actually remakes. The popular term

in the music world is "remix." A remix is a song that is built upon the melody, rhythm or lyrics of another song that was popular in another time. Rapper M.C. Hammer publicly acknowledged that he based most of his popular songs on the base lines of music created by James Brown. Even Gospel entertainer John P. Kee uses the hard funk of James Brown in his gospel recordings. Those who hear the current recordings are constantly reminded of the song upon which it is based and respond, "That's not new. I've heard that before."

What about those who are church members? Are we "new releases" or remixes? Have we simply added a new layer to our same old attitudes, behavior and morality and called it church membership? If so then what we have is a remix. We go to a different place on Sunday and do a few things differently, but at the core of our lives, the daily rhythm of things remains the same. On the other hand, if we are we new releases, there is a completely new rhythm, totally different from any we have heard in our lives. There are no traces of the old and everything becomes new.

As Christians, we praise God for giving us a new lease on life. We thank him for a new talk, a new walk and new sense of self. We are not remixes but the love God has made our lives a new release that's a hit in heaven!

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he reflects on the inability of man to do anything that is completely new.

In the course of his life Solomon tried to find happiness, only to meet with one conclusion after every effort..all is vanity. As king, he spent the majority of his life looking for happiness through building construction, accumulation of riches, music, extensive study, music, and cultural pursuits.

In all of his searching Solomon concluded that his efforts were not new. He built a beautiful, expensive historic temple to worship the Lord, but his effort was not new. The Egyptians, hundreds of years before his time built pyramids and elaborate temples to their gods. The idea of great temple wasn't new.

He studied astronomy and the movement of the stars, but even that too was done long before he set out to study them. Star gazers and astrologers were charting the course of the celestial bodies for centuries before Solomon. The fact that he could do it, was nothing new.

He sought after beautiful women. married hundreds of them and kept hundreds more as concubines. But the pursuit of women was not new either.

No matter what the area, Solomon learned that anything he attempted, any direction he attempted to go and any goal he tried to achieve had, to one degree or another, been performed before.

Not only did Solomon notice that there was nothing new under the sun but he also noticed that there was a repetitive nature to all occurrences. In essence, he noticed that whatever we experience today has been experienced at another time by someone else. Whatever is done in one time has been done in another time by

someone else. That's what he meant in verse 9 when he said, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

That's the way it is with man's efforts, imaginatively repetitive, resourceful but not creative, ingenious but not original.

Any truly new thing comes from God. He is the only power that can create something new without building upon anything else. In Isaiah 43:19 the Lord declared, "I will do a new thing..I will make a way in the wilderness." In Jeremiah 31:22 there is another prophecy along the same line as God promises to do a new thing in the earth, as he projected the birth of Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the nature of the Christian experience he spoke to them about something that was foreign to them. The idea of being a new person with respect to attitude, direction, motivation, and morality was completely foreign to those of his time. They were familiar with persons who had adopted the gods of their neighbors by simply adding new gods to a long list of others. They were also familiar with persons who had adopted new ways and mannerisms. However, Paul said people who accept Christ, in every way except physical, become new people. All of their former dispositions are passed away.

Something totally new comes only from God. Man's best efforts can only produce a remix of the same person acting, for a while, in a different way.

Remixes

There are many people in the world today who Christianity, have been baptized and are members of churches, but the are new creatures. They can best be described as remixes because they have added a few things to their lives, change a few others around, but basically they are the same. A remix keeps all of the recognizable features of a song and imbeds them into a different arrangement.

TUNE: There are many who are claiming to be Christians, but they are still singing the same tune they sang before they came to Christ. Though the Christian faith teaches us to, "Don't worry, be happy" there are many whose mouths say, "My God shall supply all your need" but their actions sing, "Every day I got the blues." Even though we sing in the choir, hold a church membership and attend worship service every Sunday, our lives simply remixes if we still carry the same doubts, fears and apprehensions we had before we came to God. In truth, a true believer sings a brand new tune! He boldly approaches each day, confident that "greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world!"

RHYTHM: There are others who claim Christianity but the rhythm of their lives still remains the same. Our life's rhythm represents the places we go, the activities in which we participate, and the people with whom we associate. There are many who hold church membership while the rhythm of their lives is still same. They work in church ministries, attend revivals and volunteer in church missionary work. However, the rhythm of their lives remains the same. They still go places that are

questionable. They still participate in activities are suspect. Many of the people they associate with are less than admirable. Even though they have added a layer of church membership to their lives, the recognizable rhythm that identifies them is the same.

LYRICS: The lyrics of our lives represent the things we say and the ideals that we espouse. There are many who claim the new life of Christianity but their manner of speech does not reflect their new life. Many still curse, use vulgarities and sprinkle the conversations with expletives and four letter words. Moreover, there are others who life ideals are extremely worldly. Their beliefs do not reflect the positives of life but its negatives. Paul, writing in Philippians 1:27 said, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." If the things we talk about do not become the Gospel of Christ then our church membership is simply a remix. We've added a few new things to our daily routine but the lyrics are the same.

A New Release

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that a man or woman that simply joins a church makes a decision to remix himself. However, a person who decides to accept Christ into his life asks God to do a new thing in his life and make him a completely new release.

A new release is not a remix of the same old song, but we become entirely new creatures in Christ.

A remix leaves traces of the old intertwined with the new!

A remix keeps the essence of what was and continues in a new way!

A remix maintains the sum total of what we were and presents it in a picture of what we are!

Everything that looks new may not be new at all!

When Lauryn Hill sang "Killing me softly" it was only a remix of the original song by Roberta Flack

Natalie Cole is famous for her song "Unforgettable" but it was a remix of her father, Nat King's Song by the same name.

When Mariah Carey sang "I'll be there" it wasn't new, but only a remix of a hit song by Micheal Jackson and the Jackson Five.

When Whitney Houston hit number one on charts with her son "I will always love you!" It wasn't her song, but a remix of country and Western Song written by Dolly Parton

When M.C. Hammer released "Super Freak" to sensational crowds, it was only a remix of an Old Rick James song.

When B.B. and CeCe Winan sang "I'll Take You there" it was only a remix of Mavis Staples and the Staple Singers.

When Jayzee rocked the nation with a little tune that chanted "It's hard knock life" it was actually a remix of the theme song from the musical "Annie."

Everything that looks new is not always new!

But I have found out that when God touches a man's life he becomes a brand new creature!

When the Lord touches your life, he takes your:

Failure and turns it into success

Doubts and turns them into assurances

Defeats and turns them into victories

Sins and washes them away!

When God looked at the sins of the world flooded it and then allowed Noah's family to repopulate it. But what he received was the same old world, with new faces.

But 2000 years ago God looked at the world and decided "no more remixes!" He decided to do a new thing!

This new thing would happen in a little town called Bethlehem!

This new thing would grow up in a little town called Nazereth!

This new thing would carry an old rugged cross!

This new thing would be named Jesus, the Son of the living God!

He would die out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he would rise from the dead!

God's got a blessing in store for the believers that won't be a remix!

I heard John declare "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea"

No more remixes, I've got a brand new walk!

No more remixes, I've got a brand new talk!

No more remixes, I've got a brand new song to sing!

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb. I've been redeemed!"

No. 763-Inspiration

God Uses Four Letter Words

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 11, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

Have you ever heard people use four letter words? (Of course you have never used them yourself). Often those who used the four letter words were trying to make a point, under score a truth or simply insult someone else. Four letter words are what generally call "expletives." An expletive is then an outburst that is obscene, vulgar or in extremely poor taste. Four letter words generally express an emotion of anger or frustration.

The term "four letter word" has become a generic way to describe every possible way that a person could refer to an entity in a negative or obscene way. Many recordings that are played on popular radio broadcasts are sprinkled with "bleeps" which take the place of actual words. A popular television broadcast, "The Jerry Springer Show"is so riddled with expletive deletions that many cannot understand a word that is being said on the show. A typical Springer script might say, "Look ***, you better watch your ****mouth before I come over there and whip your ****. I don't have to take this ****.. Four letter words are everywhere.

Sometimes four letter words are used to to show how frustrated we are. Consider the student who studied every possible answer to a test about birds. Confident that he had covered every possible scenario about birds, the student approached his classes proudly. He was ready and he knew it without a doubt .He entered the auditorium and took a seat in the front row. On the table in the front was a row of ten stuffed birds. Each bird had a sack covering its body, and only the legs were showing. When class started, the professor announced that the students were to identify each bird by looking at its legs and give its common name, species, habitat, mating habits, etc.

He looked at each of the birds' legs. They all looked the same to him. He started to get angry. He had stayed up all night studying for this test and now he had to identify birds by their LEGS? The more he thought about the situation, the angrier he got. Finally he reached his boiling point. He stood up, marched up to the professor's desk, crumpled up his exam paper and threw it on the desk. "What a

ridiculous test!" he told the prof. "How could anyone tell the difference between these birds by looking at their legs? This exam is the biggest rip-off I've ever seen!" He began to spout out four letters words as he spake. Then he turned and stormed toward the exit. The professor was a bit shocked, and it took him a moment to regain his composure. Then, just as Joe was about to walk out the door, the prof shouted out, "Wait a minute, young man, what's your name?" He turned around, pulled up his pant legs and hollered, "You ought to be able to look at my legs and figure that out. Otherwise get the (bleep) out of my face and leave me alone!"

Did you know God has some choice four letter words that he uses? The four letter words that God uses have nothing to do with expletives. In fact, God's four letter words are often spoken in frustration over our failure to be obedient However, instead of stooping to obscene guttural responses, God uses a different set of four letter words that show us how he really feels about us at any given time in our life's experiences. God takes words that negatively describe us and turn them to our good.

When there is despair, God gives us the four letter word called HOPE. When there is Fear God uses a four letter word and tells us to be BOLD.

When the world tells us to us to look at our loss, God uses a four letter word and show us our GAIN. Sometimes it takes a four letter word to describe our God because, "God is GOOD" all the time. Good- that's a four letter word every believer should use to describe God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains that God's response to the world's sin was send love.

There is debate among the scholars as to whether those words were uttered by Jesus or by John the Apostle. It appears however that in, John 3:16, the "for," ties the verse into the verses before it, and these were undoubtedly uttered by Jesus. So our Lord's discourse in response to the questions posed to him by Nicodemus the Pharisee runs clear through Verse 21 of this third chapter of John. Then, beginning with Verse 22, the chapter concludes with a confirming word by John the Baptist, whom John the Apostle again quotes. Verse 36 says: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." (John 3:36)

Jesus is the Word of God personified. He is God's response to his frustration and disappointment over the way mankind has responded to his directives and laws. If some sometime respond to frustration with four letter words, then Jesus is the way God responded to the world in his disappointment.

God's response is a guideline as to how believers ought to respond to people who do not know God, who frustrate us, to those who are living careless, indifferent, often sinfully wretched lives. We ought not to come shaking our finger at them, pointing out how terrible they are and what evil things they are doing to themselves. We ought to come sensing the agony, the hurt, the inward shame, the loneliness,

misery and anguish they are going through. That is the way God feels and that is the way we should feel too.

The verse has four words that indicated God's response, "Loved, gave, have, life." These four words summarize the way God has responded and continues to respond to his wayward children. He loves us. He provides for us and he wants us to have life!

Paul puts this very beautifully in his second letter to the Corinthians: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them," {2 Cor 5:19 RSV}. That is why, in every vignette we have of Jesus in the gospels where he is dealing with acknowledged, open, blatant sinners, we never hear a word of condemnation. Witness the woman taken in adultery, or the woman at the well of Samaria. She had five husbands and was now living with a man outside of marriage. Jesus was courteous to her. He did not attack her, blame her, or judge her. There is no condemnation.

Four Letter Words

Today there are many who respond to the failures of others or themselves with a plethora of four letter words. However, this text seems to highlight a few words that should be important to every believer.

LOVE: The central part of the text is God's love. God's love is AGAPE. It is unconditional love that goes beyond mere mutual respect and courtesy. When the world snubbed its nose at God and disobeyed his commandments and precepts, God's response was to us a four letter word....Love! The world cursed God and he made the sun to rise everyday anyway! The world ignored him, but he put foot on their tables every day! The world rejected God but he continued to shower blessings upon them daily! There is no doubt God was angry with the world. Once he became so angry that he flooded the earth with water. But his overall response to the world has been a four letter word called... "love." Every believer must learn to do the same. We must assume the AGAPE love attitude of our Lord. It is easy to use this four letter word with those that love us, but it also applies to those who do not love us. Jesus showed us the way which has been immortalized in the words of the song, "Oh How I love Jesus, because he first loved me!"

GAVE: A central truth of life is that God provides for those who trust in him even though there are times when he is not pleased with our behavior. Just as there are times when children disappoint their parents but the parents continue to give to them, God's response to his children is the same. He continues to provide. The parable of the Prodigal Son makes this very clear. A father had a son who insulted him, but he gave him his inheritance anyway! He gave him the opportunity to lead his own life! When the Son failed, the father also gave him a chance to return home. Today, God continues to do the exact same thing. He gives! He provides! Every time we turn around God is making away! Despite our wayward actions, God continues to give! Despite our mean spirit, God keeps making a way!

HAVE: One of the main truths of our faith is that God responds to us with the four letter word "Have." It is a truth that God wants us to have. What is often confusing to some is determining exactly what God wants us to have. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The context of "Have" from God's perspective is that God wants all of his people to possess the essentials to joyful and fruitful living. Unfortunately, some have interpreted have to mean God wants you to have "things." Therefore anything they see they feel that God wants them to have it. Just as a wise parent cares for a child by seeing that they have what is necessary for their growth and well being, God insures believers that they will have the essentials to joy and fruitful living. We cannot have everything we see just because it is there. What God does is to make our lives rich and fulfilled, regardless to our physical state. We count on God to provide us with all of our needs knowing that he will also supply many of our wants. Psalm 23 puts it simply, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!"

LIFE: Among the greatest gifts that mankind has received from God is a four letter word called, "life." His response to death that this world offers is "life." Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.." Life is a four letter word that comes directly out of the mouth of God. It involves more than just living and breathing literally, but it also involves the entire process of energizing humanity. Our God can give new life to withered dreams, failed quests, crumbling marriages and broken relationships. His response to death of aspiration is to remind that we should not write our epitaph when there is a failure. Instead of saying, "I could just die" we should say, "I believe I can fly!" God gives life to those who dispirited, its one of his favorite four letter words.

God's Four Letter Words

There are many today who are overwhelmed by four letter words, but for every four letter word that the word has, God has an answer.

The world curses us and tell us we are DEAD, but God has his own four letter word called, "Live." I hear him asking Ezekiel, "Son of Man, can these bones live?" They can live but only by the word of God.

The world hits us with the four letter word PAIN, but God has his own four letter word called, "Gain." That's why James 1:2 says, "My brethern, count it all joy!"

The world hits us with the four letter word "LOST" but God has his own, called "Save." That's why Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

The world hits us with FEAR, but God answers with "BOLD." We are bold because the word teaches us that, "Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid!"

The world hits us with SICK, but God answers with "HEAL." That's why 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble

themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The world hits us with DEAF, but God answers with "HEAR" God hears and answers prayer. That's why the song writer wrote, Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want!"

The world says ball up your FIST, but God answers with KNEE. Prayer Changes things! Not by might, but by my word saith the Lord!

About 2000 years God decided to send the world a four letter word that had been around for a long time. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This four letter word which was spoken out of the mouth of God became flesh and dwelled among men!

This is the Word that was born in Bethlehem, and raised in Nazareth!

This is the Word that picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

When he dropped his head, Satan claimed victory and used a four letter word and exclaimed he DIED!

The command was given to BURY him in a borrowed TOMB. Another four letter word was placed on the tomb ...SEAL!

But early Sunday Morning I see an "R" meeting up with a "I" and a "S" and an "E."

At the tomb there was a meeting of the four letter words Rise, Life, Live

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Today he has one final four letter word! Come! Come! While you have time!

Come to Jesus and everything will be alright!

No. 764-Inspiration

Laughing When You Feel Like Crying

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 25, 1999

SCRIPTURE:A cheerful heart is a good medicine; But a broken spirit drieth up the bones." Proverbs 17:22; "

Introduction

Have you ever laughed to keep from crying? There are often times when we find ourselves laughing aloud to keep from crying. Those are the times when every thing that can possibly happen, happens- in succession! When those times come we have two choices, we can either laugh or cry. Have you had them? The radiator on your car runs hot, the fan belt breaks, a head gasket is blown and to top if off, there is flat tire! That's a situation where you laugh to keep from crying. There was also the time when the power was shut off, the freezer defrosted, and the food was spoiled. To top it all off the hot water tank busted, your house flooded and your homeowner's insurance expired the day before. You may as well laugh! Nothing else can happen. There are some situations in which it is easier to laugh than it is to cry!

We enjoy comedians. They show us the bright side of crying situations. The great comedians of our times including: Will Rogers, Bob Hope, George Burns, Bill Cosby, Flip Wilson, Johnny Carson, Moms Mabley, Sinbad and others all share one common trait, the ability to make us laugh at our ourselves and see the light side troubling situations. When comedian Richard Pryor became wheelchair stricken, he kept thousands laughing about the difficulties and advantages of life in a wheelchair. Moms Mabley and George Burns were famous for their jokes about the problems of old age. Bill Cosby and Sinbad helps us to see the light side of family life. When the President or some government official gets in trouble comedians like Johnny Carson, Jay Leno and Chris Rock are quick to point out the humor of their mistakes and give us a reason to laugh rather than cry. There are others who need a little help seeing the bright side, so their favorite comedians are the likes of Ruddy Ray Moore, Chris Rock and the Def Comedy Jam crowd. Even though their routines are studded with vulgarities and four letter words, the objective is the same, to get us see the light side of a dark situation.

A recent Robin Williams movie entitled, "Patch Adams" is a true story about a medical student who wanted to be a clown and a doctor. He believed that laughter was therapeutic and contagious and defied the medical profession by mixing medicine and humor. He was both a clown and a physician. When he graduated from the Medical College of Virginia he founded the Gesundheit Institute. He used wacky surprises to make his patients laugh and promoted their healing. He believed that doctors should treat people not just diseases. It was nothing to see Adams enter a hospital room filled with gloomy family members dressed like a gorilla, or fill a room with balloons just to get one smile from his patient. He kept his patients smiling and began a flow of positive feelings that sped up their healing.

Patch Adams taught the world of medicine that the Word of God recorded thousands of years before he wore his first gorilla suit: "A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones."

Who is it that doesn't enjoy a good laugh? There are so many different things that make us laugh. What sends some people into hysterics leaves others scratching their heads. There are as many different types of humor as there are different types of people. Many people find humor in seeing people get buckets of paint spilled over their heads and pies squashed in their face, and then getting whacked by boards and falling over. The Three Stooges and other slapstick teams have always found a big audience. Others find it hilarious to see public figures and institutions satirized—the more irreverent, the better. Others find humor in puns and word play. And then there are situations where something strikes us as absurd.

Sometimes we have to laugh at ourselves. Everybody told the preacher that his sermons were great. Nobody had the heart to tell him that he really put everyone to sleep. One day he was searching his closet and found a small box containing three eggs and one hundred $1 bills. He called his wife into the closet to ask her about the box and its contents. Embarrassed, she admitted having hidden the box there for their entire 25 years of marriage. The pastor asked her, "WHY?" The wife replied that she hadn't wanted to hurt his feelings. He asked her how the box could have hurt his feelings. She said that every time during their marriage that he had delivered a poor sermon, she had placed an egg in the box. The pastor felt that three poor sermons in 25 years was certainly nothing to feel bad about, so he asked her to explain the $100. She replied, "Each time I got a dozen eggs, I sold them to the neighbors for $1." He couldn't do anything but laugh at himself!

Sometimes we say some dumb things that are just unbelievable. That was the case with the little boy in the Sunday School class who claimed to know God's name. The teacher offered a sweet prize of frosted donuts to anyone in the class that could tell God's name. The little boy, anxious to win the prize waved his hands in the and jumped up and down yelling, "I know, I know!" "What is God's name?" was the question. The little boy shouted, "Andy." When the teacher said the answer was wrong the boy insisted that "Andy" IS God's name. The boy said the church was his witness because everyone sang his name in the morning hymn, "Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me, Andy tells me I am his own.'" What children say sometimes makes us

laugh!

Deeply rooted in a believer's laughter is faith and assurance. When a believer laughs at a situation or at himself, it is a sign that he or she has just remembered who they are, children of the most high God. No matter how difficult their situation gets, a believer knows that because God is still in control, one day they'll look back and get a good laugh about the thing that's worrying them so much today!

Exposition

This text focuses upon the advantages of a cheerful heart on the human spirit.

Solomon wrote most of the Book of Proverbs with the intent of passing on to the next generation what he had learned about life. The Proverbs are a collection of truths, most as short as one sentence,some as long as an entire chapter, from his life's experience.

This proverb highlights two truths: those who possess a cheerful heart lighten the impact of their burdens, troubles, difficulties, sicknesses or other maladies. Cheerfulness is a result of being able to see the bright side and the light side of a situation. The bright side sees that there is hope. The light side sees the humor of the circumstance

Solomon noted that the person who is unable to demonstrate a cheerful spirit is usually pessimistic, bitter, sad and defeated. Such a spirit of pessimism "drieth" up the bones. The Hebrew word "gerem" (gheh-rem) translated "bones" in this context means: "strong ..self." The person who cannot see the bright side dries up the essence of his strength and sense of self worth.

An ability to see the bright side and light side of any situation is "good medicine."

Job obviously saw the bright side of his deprived situation when, despite his condition, he said, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve him." He espoused a great hope when he considered his losses and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Paul showed us how to look at the bright side of difficulty by saying in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." In essence, God's going to work out difficult situations to a believer's advantage.

Jesus saw the humor of his situation often. One day he considered how he left the mansions of glory and came to earth to walk around among mankind without any resources. While he was helping many put their lives together, he had to try to scurry daily to find lodging. One day in obvious frustration, Jesus laughed at the situation and said, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of man hath no place to lay his head."

Solomon learned this truth early and reminded believers that a positive outlook and a sense of humor is ..."good medicine."

Occasions for laughter

When is it good to have a good laugh? Whenever we are able to see the light side of a situation. Believers are often cheerful in difficult situations because they are assured that God is in control of things, thus everything will work out for the best. So, why not laugh about it?

Sometimes we laugh when we doubt. There are times when we consider the prospects of many avenues of life but we are overwhelmed with pessimism. At that point we begin to lose confidence that we can do anything; achieve anything or rise to any reasonable height. Some thoughts we push out of our minds with a chuckle by saying, "yea right!" When we doubt we laugh. Often we doubt God's abilities to make our dreams come true and laugh at the thought of being a successful professional. When we tell our dreams to others, they laugh in doubt that you could ever achieve such a lofty goal.

Friends laugh with us, enemies laugh at us! Our friends are those who share our faith, common interest and hope. They are generally those who are able to laugh with us in our troubling moments. They shared our fear, danger or peril. They know what we feel and they empathize and sympathize with us. When friends laugh together, they laugh in joy and assurance because their laughter reminds each other that it is not as bad as it seems. They remind each other that there is a bright side and light side to life. Our enemies on the other hand laugh at us. Their laughter is focused on our miserable condition rather than on our eventual restoration. Thus, not everyone who laughs in our troubles is laughing with us, some are actually laughing at us!

Our sinfulness gives God a good laugh! Did you know that God gets a good laugh whenever we try to deceive him. He laughs hard, then prepares to administer punishment. Psalm 37 describes how the wicked operate in the dark and appear to flourish. However, their actions only give the Lord a good life." The LORD shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming." Psalm 37:13.

God gets a good laugh every time we try to pull one over on him!

When pull the curtains at our favorite hide-a-way motel...God rolls over laughing at our stupidity because he knows whatever is done in the dark is coming to the light!

When we steal from our boss on the job and think we have gotten away, God gets a good laugh because he knows its coming up again!

When we dig ditches for others and stab them in the back, God gets a good laugh because he knows that God is not mocked, "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap!"

It's a humourous thought, bordering on pathetic for the creature to believe that any of his actions can escape the all seeing eye of the creator.

When we do wrong we laugh that we got away for the moment, but God gets the last laugh!

"He who laughs last, laughs the loudest!"

God laughs at impossibilities

Finally, we must consider that God not only laughs when the wicked think they are getting away, but God also laughs at the very thought that there is a problem that is impossible for him to solve.

Sarah listened outside of the tent of Abraham and heard the angels pronounce that at the age of 89 she was going to conceive and bear a child. That was too funny a thought for her to consider, so Sarah laughed, only to be rebuked when the angel asked, "Is there anything too hard for God?"

God has demonstrated repeatedly that there is nothing impossible for him to do.

God laughs at things we think are impossible!

God laughs at the fact that Pharaoh thought his 600 chariots and the Red Sea could keep Israel in bondage. God must have been laughing all the while he opened up the Red Sea and forged a path for the people on dry land.

God laughed at the fact the River Jordan stood between his people and the promised land. He must have been laughing when he rolled up the waters of the Jordan and ushered the people across to camp ground.

God laughed at the fact that something as feeble as the walls of Jericho were thought strong enough to protect the enemies of God from his wrath. He must have laughed at the looks on the faces of the people of Jericho when the walls came tumbling down!

God laughed at the fact that the people doubted that the dry bones of Israel could ever come together again! But I hear the Word of God declare, Son of Man, can these bones live?

God laughs at the fact that people think you are in an impossible situation!

Is there a Red Sea in front of you and a marching army behind you? Are you in an impossible situation, God still opens up ways out of no way. He's still making paths through the Red Sea!

Are there walls that stand between you and your dream. Nothing is impossible for God, put it in God's hands and watch the walls come tumbling down!

Have you given up open of ever rising again! Put it in God's hand and the dry bones of your life can come back together again!

Even if people are laughing, remember God can do the impossible!

Don't worry about what others say, God and his people will get the last laugh!

They laughed at Jesus when the whipped him all night long!

They laughed at Him as he hung out on the cross saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself!"

They laughed at Him, when he died out on Calvary!

They laughed at Him, when they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

They laughed at Him, when they rolled the stone in front of His grave!

But Early Sunday morning, God got the last laugh! He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 765-Harvest

Reaping What You Sow

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 8, 1999

SCRIPTURE: ***"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" Galatians 6:7***

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether your hard work is in vain? There are times when each person considers whether or not all of their efforts to do the right thing are worthwhile. Many have lived right all of their lives, but have seen very little of the reward they expected to receive for their work. Some have spent decades teaching their children Christian values and wonder whether or not their efforts have been in vain. Many have had opportunities to bend the rules and excel in their profession but chose to do right. Now they see others excelling and the wonder if they made the right choice.

These thoughts pass through the mind of believers when we see the unrighteous prosper and the godly have what appears to be long and difficult "rows to hoe."

We are reminded in the word of God not to fret or be overly concerned about the apparent success of non-believers, but to focus on our faith and believe in God.

As Christians, we are content to know that God knows our hearts and our needs. It is God that we aim to please. He will, in the final analysis, reward those who are faithful to him.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of every Christian understanding that whatever they do in the present will come back to them in a more intensive way, in the future.

Paul, in Corinth, wrote this letter to the churches of Galatia. In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the book of Acts it is noted that these were churches begun by Paul when he was on his very first missionary journey, traveling with Barnabas into the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra.

Paul wrote to these churches about the importance of spiritual growth as opposed to growth in carnal things. He encouraged believers to invest in those things which

are spiritual, expecting an eventual reward.

Paul tries to explain this truth of by comparing the Christian experience to sowing and reaping. The eventual truth is that regardless to what one says he is sowing, there will come a time when what he has actually sown will come up. If he has sown good seed, he can expect to reap well. If he sows bad seed, then he should expect to reap a bad harvest.

Paul notes that there are two kinds of harvest, one of the flesh and the other of the spirit. Those who live a carnal, sensual life, must expect no other fruit from such a course than misery and ruin. But those who, under the guidance and influences of the Holy Spirit, live a life of faith in Christ, and abound in Christian graces, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Believers are encouraged not to tire in doing good because God observes and will reward the good that is being done. Those who persevere are promised a joyous response. Believers are encouraged to take care to do good in our life-time, and make this the business of our lives.

Seven laws of sowing and reaping

This short little verse is pregnant with biblical truth. Just as it spoke to the Galatians, it speaks to this generation. There are at least seven truths that this text reveals for today's believers.

WE ARE ABLE TO REAP BECAUSE SEEDS HAVE BEEN SOWN: Whatever reward a man receives is a direct result of what has planted. Believers can only expect to receive exactly what they have sown. We reap blessings in many instances because of seeds that have been sown by others before us. It is their good seed that make our lives more comfortable today. This is the meaning of John 4:38, " I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." We enjoy the opportunity for salvation because of a seed that was sown by the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

WE REAP THE SAME TYPE OF SEED SOWN:. We cannot expect to plant one seed and produce a crop of a different kind. We get back the same kind of seed we plant. Those of us who plant seeds of love expect to receive love. Seeds of forgiveness usually produce a compassionate response. Seeds of Godliness usually produce a great spiritual reward. Conversely, those who plant who plant wordly seeds usually get carnal results.

We don't plant watermelon seeds and expect to get collard greens, we can expect to reap only what has been sown. We don't expect godly well mannered children, if all we give them is an ungodly home life. We don't expect to become honor roll students, if we never study. We reap only what has been sown.

WE REAP MORE THAN WE SOW: Not only will believers reap ONLY what is sown, they will reap more than what was actually sown. Those who plant a row of purple hull peas, know they will reap more than the row they planted. They expected bushels of peas. If we only receive back the same seed we planted, no one

would be a farmer. This is the law of the harvest. The harvest is always greater than the seed planted.

Those who do good works, can expect to receive more in return. Conversely those who sow bad seed can expect to receive more than what they have sown. Good works produce an abundant harvest of good works. Bad seeds sown will produce an abundant harvest of bad fruit.

WHAT WE SOW IS REAPED IN A DIFFERENT SEASON: No seed that is planted comes to harvest instantly. It is planted one day, then reaped in another. This truth sheds light on two truths for believers: Serving the Lord will pay off after a while and, "What's done in the dark will eventually come to the light." No seed is reaped at the same time that is planted. There is a period of germination. Sometimes it appears that the seed will not come up, but sure enough, given adequate time, it does come up. The teacher who takes the time to instill study skills in a talented youth won't see fruit of her work until many years later when that hard headed student becomes a college professor. She planted in one season but the reward was reaped many years later when received a card of thanks from that same student.

Likewise, our bad seed comes up in a different season. No man can turn up his nose to God and get away with it. Life's bad choices, sooner or later, will catch up with us. Thus, there are many today who are afraid to be still because their past may catch up with them. What is planted today may not come up until tomorrow, but it is coming up again.

WE REAP IN PROPORTION TO WHAT WE SOW: While every believer expects to reap more than what is sown, another truth is that we reap in proportion to what we actually sow. We reap more than we sow because God multiplies whatever seed we sow. This truth underscores the truth that the more we sow, the more God has to multiply for us. Believers who serve God in faith sow seeds. The more faith actions they take, the more God multiplies. Whether the faith action is in time, talent or finances, the seed that is planted will be multiplied by God. What is reaped will be in direct proportion to that which was planted. We must sow all the good we can then leave the multiplying process to God.

TO REAP, YOU MUST WORK YOUR CROP: Those who want to reap a good harvest must constantly work to achieve it. While Christians do not work to be saved, because Salvation is free, we do work to increase our reward. To reap any harvest we must work the crop. Weeds will grow without any work at all. Gardeners testify that a good gardener works constantly to keep the weeds out. Weeds will grow naturally, and in a short period of time will take over a garden without anyone doing anything. Believers who neglect bible study, worship, fellowship, allow a situation to exist in which weeds can grow in the garden. For a while the beauty of the flowers is still seen but soon, the weeds will grow taller than the blooming flowers and take over. To reap, we must work the crop.

WE CAN'T CHANGE LAST YEAR'S HARVEST, BUT WE CAN WORK ON THE NEXT: There is nothing we can do today that will change our past. Whether our lives have been failures or successes, productive or barren, cannot be changed.

While we can't change last year's harvest, we can do something about the next.

There are two truths to note here:

Those who have not planted as they should cannot afford to brood over the fact that they have had a few bad seasons. They must forget those things which are behind and press on toward the future. Too many worry about the fact that somewhere in the past they have had a bad season or two. Turn it over to God, mindful that while God forgives us for our shortcomings, we the truth of the word remains. We will still reap what we have sown, but once we turn it over to God, we'll have a little help at harvest time. The prisoner who finds God, still pays for his crime, but the punishment is easier to bear because he found the Lord. The unmarried couple that produced a child out of wedlock, must still reap what they have sown, but it is made easier knowing that God has forgiven. Bad harvests can't be changed, but the next harvest can be changed.

Changing the Harvest

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that if we have had a several bad season we must consider ways to get a good crop.

Farmers who repeatedly produce bad crops make immediate adjustments to improve their harvest.

INSPECT THE SEED: One of the first steps a good farmer takes is to inspect the seed to insure that he is planting good seed. There are many today who are getting bad crops because they are planting bad seeds.

You know you are planting bad seeds if the only:

Books movies you watch have ungodly themes!

Activities you attend are those that do not promote spiritual growth!

Places you go are those where the righteous never frequent!

Music that moves you is lusty and worldly!

People that inspire you are those who have riches, power and fame!

Books you read are those other than the word of God.!

If you want a good harvest you must change your seed!

CHANGE THE FIELD: Sometimes farmers have good seed but it cannot grow because the soil in which is planted is void of nutrition. There is not enough there to help the seed to grow. So farmers who planted soybeans in a field one year may plant sweet potatoes in the same field the next year.

How many people find that they can't get a harvest because they have planted good seed in a field that is drained of nutrients. How many churches still do things the same way they did them 50 years ago? If we do things in the same way, we get the exact same results! If you want a bountiful harvest, keep rotating crop!

Sing your songs in a different way!

Study the word in a different way!

Plan ways to fellowship, in a different way! Rotate the crop!

But after we have planted the seed and done everything we know how to God

we must put it all in God's hands! We must pray to God for the increase!

Lord, I've done all I know how to do...it's in your hands!
Lord, I've done the best I could...it's in your hands!
Shower down the blessing Lord...my life is in your hand!
If we sow the seed of belief and faith, God will provide the increase!
If we sow a pure heart, we will see God!
If we sow meekness, we will inherit the earth!
If we sow a believing life, we will receive the gift of God which is eternal life!
It is gift, guaranteed by Jesus, the Son of God!
He died out on Calvary, and arose Early one Sunday morning!
If we sow in faith, he will come again to bring us the harvest!
We'll know it's harvest time when we hear him say, Servant! Servant! Well Done! Well Done!

No. 766-Funeral

When God Hyphenates Your Life

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 14,1999

SCRIPTURE: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

Introduction

Does it ever appear to you that the best times of your life are those that don't last long? Was it a birthday party? A reunion? An evening with a close friend? Didn't the time pass quickly? It seems that the times when we have the greatest enjoyment in life come and go very quickly. On the other hand, those dull and uninteresting times, seem to linger forever, dragging, tugging and hoovering over us in a never ending vigil. Good friends, like good times, never seem to stay around long enough. We enjoy their company. They excite us. They make us laugh. They brighten our day. We can talk with them until the wee hours of the morning and still not tire. We hate to see them leave!

When a friend or family member that has been close to us is no longer around we are surrounded by questions and we desperately search for answers. Consider the little boy who had trouble with English Grammar. His problem seemed simple to the other students, but it wasn't simple to little Johnny. He could not seem to understand how punctuation marks were read in the course of a sentence. He would never raise his voice when he came to a question mark, he would say "question mark." Instead of getting excited when he saw an exclamation point he would say, "exclamation point." If a hyphen appeared in a word at the end of a line he would say the word then "hyphen." It was funny to everyone in class except his teacher, Miss Faye. He liked her because she seemed to understand him. She gave him little things to say to remember what each punctuation mark meant. When she came to the hyphen she said, "The hyphen in a word at the end of a line means that you have seen the good part but the best part is still coming so watch for it!" One day, Johnny came to class and everyone was crying. Miss Faye had been killed in an automobile

accident. The class was in tears. No one could bear the thought of a life being cut off so short, until little Johnny stood before the class with tears running from his eyes and said, "Miss Faye was in an accident and her life was cut short. But God put in a hyphen and that means the good part is still coming...so watch for it!" With that the class understood.

Often God punctuates our lives for various reasons. There are question marks that show the many answers that we seek. There are explanation marks that show our moments of excitement. There are commas that show the times when we had to pause; colons that show the times that we went from one activity or another. There were even periods, marking those times when we came to complete halts.

As Christians, we thank God for his punctuation marks in our lives. They help us to understand ourselves and our relationship to him as we read our own lives in the book of time. Even when we look around for a friend or family member that is absent from the family circle, we know the meaning of a spiritually hyphenated life.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains what happens to a believer at the point of death.

On various occasions Paul made it known that he was prepared to leave this life at a moment's notice, with the full knowledge that because of Christ's promise of eternal life, he would be instantly in the presence of the Lord. He lived each day in danger of persecution and death and expected fully to be interrupted by death. He prepared himself for that day, both physically and spiritually by recognizing that in any instant he could be absent from this life. When that time came, he taught believers to know that he, like all believers, would resume life, instantly, in another place in the presence of the Lord.

In the preceding verses to this text, he noted that the body in which each person lives is subject to moaning and groaning, pains and deterioration. That moaning and groaning is not defined by age, but by physical circumstances beyond mortal control. Paul noted that believers should be consoled in knowing that their insurance against mortality is that they have another building not made with hands, waiting for them in the heavens.

While believers who are absent from the body have not gone to face a judgment, they are nevertheless before the Lord. The time of judgment will be the day that believers will participate in heaven's official awards day ceremony. It's the time that they will receive the honors for their works on earth. The believer who is absent from the body, waits for this day, in the presence of the Lord, having escaped eternal death.

Believers whose lives on this earth are interrupted are not truncated or cut short but are simply continued in a different place. There is nothing final, like period. There is no mystery that would require a question mark. It is as if the Lord himself applied a hyphen at just the right place indicating that the life that appears ended is being continued someplace else.

Where is this place? What does "absent from the body, present with the Lord" actually mean?

Believers who are absent in the body are instantly in the presence of God in heaven. This heaven is the place referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:2 as the "third heaven;" the first heaven being the atmosphere, the second being the stratosphere or the stars, and the third being the home of the heavens (Matthew 24:36). Thus, the believer who is suddenly absent from our midst is instantly present with God, Christ and the angels in the "third heaven."

Believers will be in the full sight of our Lord. In this life we see Christ "through a glass darkly." Believers see him through the reading of his word. Believers see him move in the hands and feet of the saints. In this life we see Christ only vaguely, like watching foot prints on the beach without ever seeing the person that makes the steps. But believes who are transported to be in the presence of our Lord at death, see him face to face. Not in terror and trembling. Not in fear but in rejoicing and celebrating. The believer who is absent sees Christ in his fulness, while we see him only in the glimpses of glory that flash past us on our journey.

Believers will experience perfect conformity with Christ. In this life believers, especially the young and fragile, have difficulty conforming to the will of God. Their spirit is willing, but their flesh is weak. The frustrations that believers face as they win one battle with Satan only to lose another is often evident. These are the battles that have them praising God one day and on their knees asking forgiveness for sin in another.

When the believer comes before Christ however, he will be in perfect conformity with the will of God. There will be no battles or frustrations. There will be nothing that will place wrinkle in the relationship between the believer as servant and Christ our Lord.

Believers who are absent from the body enjoy the fellowship of heaven immediately.

To be in the presence of the Lord means happiness and joy. It means singing and celebrating. It means enjoyment and happiness, which can only come from being in the presence of God. Believers will enjoy a fellowship like none they have ever known as Christ draws from the infinite deep vaults of heaven and shares the riches of love with them, that have been there from eternity.

We sing, "Oh how I love Jesus" but the believers who are absent are able to express their love to him, in an infinitely better manner than ever they could while in the body.

Thus, in the words of Jonathan Edwards, "they shall eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love."

Thus, believers who are absent from our midst, no matter how suddenly, are not dead or lost. The eternal life that was promised them continues in the presence of the Lord.

Make Sure We Can Be Hyphenated

Today every person should strive to order the syllables or components of their lives so they can be hyphenated! There are several thoughts to consider concerning the hyphenated life:

A HYPHENATED LIFE IS CONNECTED TO SOMETHING: Hyphens are connectors. Generally a hyphen connects the parts of a compound word. Whenever you see a hyphen between two words, it means that the two go together. A life that can be hyphenated is a life that can be connected. Every believer is connected to God and the things of God. It is a rare occasion when a believer is not associated with the things of God. If you see a choir singing, look for a believer to be in the crowd. If the crowd is praising God, look for a believer to be in the midst. If the church is celebrating the goodness of God, look for a believer to be in the midst.

Believers and worship are closely connected.

Believers and churches are closely connected.

Believers and prayer are closely connected.

Believers and faith are closely connected.

In fact believers are so connected that they feel strange on Sunday morning if they are not in a church. They are so connected that they hitch rides, catch buses and some even walk to be in the presence of the Lord.

SOMETIMES A HYPHEN IDENTIFIES A PERSON'S CULTURE AND PEOPLE: It is common today to see people with hyphenated racial descriptions such as "African-American" or "Irish-American." The hyphen connects the person with his cultural roots on one side and his country on the other. The hyphenated name of a married woman points to her family, history, heritage and upbringing on one side and that of her husband on the other. Christians have a hyphenated named called "Child-Of-God." The hyphens tell who we belong to, where we are going and how we plan to get there!

HYPHENS ALLOW PREFIXES: Even when a believer strays and is caught in a sinful moment the Holy Spirit puts a hyphen in front of the name "Christian" adds a prefix and calls that action "un" Christian without changing the meaning of the root word which means to be "Christ like." That's when we remember that not just any word can get a prefix and hyphens are only applied to prefixes that precede proper nouns. Even when a believer has erred, there is a hyphen that God places in front of his life that lets him know he is on the wrong track. The Holy Spirit busily worries that believer until they get back on right track. That's what happened to David, whose holy life was hyphenated with a prefix of "un" when he committed adultery. When David repented he told God, "Create in me a clean heart O' God and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51). Because a believer is connected, the hyphens in his life keep him connected to God and the hyphens before him warn him when he about to do wrong.

SINGLE SYLLABLE LIVES CANNOT BE HYPHENATED: A single syllable life is one that is selfish and sinful. It is the life that says, "Not God's will, but my will

be done." The single syllable that defines such a life is "sin." Sin means living contrary to the will of God. Such a life can't be hyphenated. There is no insertion point. No room has been made for the Holy Spirit to act or move. While "SIN" can't be hyphenated, "SALVATION" can be easily be hyphenated. The saved life has at least three places in which in can be hyphenated, in youth, adulthood or the golden years. At any of these points, should a saved life reach the end of line. The Holy Spirit inserts a hyphen.

When you see a hyphen

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that whenever we see what looks like a break in the flow of the Christian life, look for hyphen. It is the sign that they have been saved. When you see the hyphen, then look on the next line!

That's what Paul meant when he said in 2 Corinthians 5:1 "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

Millions of saints had hyphenated lives. Enoch walked with God and ..was not! Moses talked with God and was buried by the angels! Elijah prayed with God and taken up in fiery chariot! Each walked among men until one day the reach the end of the line and God inserted a hyphen and carried them home.

So the saint declares, If you miss me from...

Working with the little children and teaching them God's songs...look for the hyphen!

Singing in choir and singing my favorite songs...look for the hyphen!

Amusing you with my jokes and funny faces, ...look for the hyphen!

Behind the hyphen there is joy instead of sadness
Behind the hyphen there is peace instead of confusion!
Behind the hyphen there is victory instead of defeat!
Behind the hyphen there is love instead of hate!
Behind the hyphen there is a land and a man!
The man is Jesus, who died on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

If you miss me from singing down here, come on up to bright glory, I'll be singing up there!

On Friday, August 6, 1999, Uganda Rhodesia Kyles lay in a hospital bed in Shreveport, La. From her hospital bed she lifted her voice and sang, "To God be the glory" and "I'm on my way!" Then God inserted a hyphen- her life continues on glory's next line!

No. 767-Communion

Dealing With Look Bad/Feel Bad Situations

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 15, 1999

SCRIPTURE: And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.." Mark 14:36

Introduction

Have you ever faced a situation that was really bad? What is a really bad situation? Life threatening situations are really bad because they bring our very existence into question. Financial disaster, the dissolution of a relationship, imprisonment or failing health, are all examples of facing a really bad situation. Each of them create an uneasy, disturbing feeling on the inside. What can make matters worse is the fact that sometimes the situation looks just as bad as it feels. When it feels bad and looks bad, we are in a situation that needs all the help we can get.

Sometimes a bad situation would be easier to deal with, if we could keep it from looking bad as well! Even simple things feel worse when they look bad too. If we run a stop light, we feel bad that we broke the rule. But when the police officer pulls us over to the side of the street and keeps her flashing light on the whole while she's giving you the ticket, the feel bad situation starts to look bad too! A person who has been injured feels pretty bad. There is pain all over his body. However, he feels even worse when the doctor walks in and says, "I'm going to tell you straight, it looks pretty bad!" That's what can be called a feel bad/look bad situation.

Politicians and major corporations hire public relations specialist whose job it is to keep feel bad situations from looking bad. They are called "spin doctors." These are people who are good at putting a good face on a bad situation. If the oil barge has leaked 1 million gallons of oil, the spin doctor will let you know that it has been contained. Even though nothing will live in those waters for years, at least for the moment it doesn't look so bad. Even if the President of the United States is caught having a relationship with a young girl, the spin doctors get busy to keep it from looking too bad. They point out that the woman was an adult and the relationship

was immoral but consensual. After all, the spin doctors will say, he was caught with a woman, it could have been worse, he could have been caught with a man! The idea is that it's not all bad if it can be made to look better than it actually is!

Feeling bad and looking bad is a double whammy! That's why some women go to the mall when they feel bad. If they come home with a new hair dryer, it means they were feeling bad. If they come home with a dozen pair of shoes, six new dresses and new hair do, they will be looking good but their husbands will be feeling bad...really bad!

As Christians, we have learned that life often gives us feel bad/look bad situations that must be endured. We can't avoid them because our Savior couldn't avoid them. We drink from our cup, endure our circumstance and know that in the end God's will, not our will be done. If we do what God wants, in the end, the believer will always be blessed no matter how bad it looks or feels at the moment.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he dealt with a situation that felt bad and also looked bad.

The occasion was just prior to his crucifixion. In prayer, Christ came to grips with the painful realities of what he had to do. The law required the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. Animals were being used to achieve this purpose. Jesus himself, according to God's plan, would become the ultimate sacrifice that would make it possible for him to offer salvation to all who would recognize him. However, the full meaning of that sacrifice had not become real until this time. Now, the terrors of the crucifixion and its attendant humiliations were becoming clear.

Crucifixions were the method of punishment for enemies of the state, in Jesus' time. They were anything but feel good situations. According to Holman, the accused was "scourged (beaten with a whip consisting of thongs with pieces of metal
A tablet detailing the crime(s) was often placed around the criminal's neck and then fastened to the cross, this made it look worse. Then to add insult to injury the accused person's body was left to rot for days, with carrion birds allowed to degrade the corpse further.

In light of the terror and horror of crucifixion, Christ did two things: He talked to his father and he accepted his will. His conversation with the father was more an emptying of the soul than anything else. He was fully aware of the plan. He was fully aware that his death would provide redemption for mankind, but he sought another way to achieve this end, short of Calvary. He told the father how he felt. Yet, while he described his hesitancy to go to Calvary, he also told of his willingness to do his father's will. He concluded his prayer with the decision to carry out his father's will rather than his will.

Calvary was a feel bad/look bad situation, but Jesus faced it, endured it because it was his father's will. In the end he arose victorious over all of his critics and enemies. He arose to a better situation because he was willing to endure a feel bad/look bad

situation for God.

Feel Bad Situations

Since believers are human, they face every problem that anyone else in the world faces. Believers have family problems, health, financial problems and other difficulties that come like bumps in the road of life. The difference between a believer and a non-believer is how they handle situations.

LOOKING GOOD BUT FEELING BAD: It is possible to look good, but feel bad. Looks are deceiving. Often we see neighbors and co-workers who live in fine houses, drive beautiful automobiles and wear the finest clothes. Yet, we are surprised at times to learn of so many who come to work dressed "to kill" but are feeling bad. Many are troubled, distressed, frustrated, and afraid. The fine appearance of some, acts as a thin veil that hides the terror or pain they feel on the inside.

Looking good but feeling bad, is a difficult situation. David had such a situation. After he committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged the death of her husband, he tried to resume his Kingly duties as usual. He put on his finest clothes and sat on his throne. To any observer, he looked good, but he was disturbed on the inside. He did not feel good about himself until he straightened things out with God and confessed his sins.

In a similar manner, there are many today who will never feel as good as they look until they get things straight with God.

LOOKING GOOD, FEELING GOOD AND DOING BAD: There are some who look good all the time and they feel good but they are really doing bad and either don't know it or don't care! The thief who steals your valuables makes himself look good and feel good. The man who steals your wife, is looking good and feeling (at least until you catch him!) good. Neither cares about the fact that they are doing a bad thing. Sometimes the apparent success of a situation can hide the fact that it is not a positive involvement. A person that gambles and wins frequently is both looking good and feeling good. In fact, they don't even notice how they gradually increase their gambling activities in both frequency and amounts risked. They are in a bad situation but can't see it because they are feeling good and looking good too!

When Samson laid his head on Delilah's lap, he was feeling good. She was a beautiful woman. He was strong and powerful with rippling muscles. He was the perfect picture of a man that was looking good and feeling good. But he was actually doing bad. He didn't know how bad until he woke up one morning to learn that the beautiful woman he trusted had betrayed him. Only when he came to himself and had a talk with God did he regain his strength.

LOOKING BAD, YET FEELING GOOD!: There are times when situations look extremely bad, especially with respect to appearances. Sometimes a son or a daughter is falsely accused of a crime. Sometimes your family is viciously attacked and falsely accused. The bad publicity, rumors, ugly statements and comments of critics and enemies begin to paint a bad picture. Believers have a strange way of feeling good

even though things look bad. A believer's co-workers are amazed that they keep their composure and hold their head up even though things look so bad.

What makes a believer feel good even when things look bad is the knowledge that persecutions, false accusations and a degree of unsolicited trouble is an expected part of the Christian life. The believer remembers Jesus' words in Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

A woman with an issue of blood for 12 years was in a feel bad/look bad situation. She was sick and she didn't look good, but dealt with the problem by bringing it to Jesus. She said, "If I could but touch the hem of his garment" she believed she would be made whole.

Give It to Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, if God has given you an agonizing situation, which both feels bad and looks bad, do not despair, the same God who gave you the burden, will help you bear the burden and reward you in the end!

Your burden may look bad to the public eye. It may feel bad as you live through it!

Our God knows our burden bearing capacity, and he won't put more on us than we can bear.

Maybe that's what Roberta Matin had in mind when she wrote: "Think of times you've asked the question, down in your heart, now just what should I do. Then you confide in your friends and loved ones, but they have troubles too. There is is God who rule earth and heaven, in Him there's relief from every pain and care, for he knows! Yes, he knows just how much you can bear!

When we get in look bad/feel bad situations, it's not always easy to:

Start over again after the rug has been pulled from under you!

Face yourself in the mirror after you've messed up and made yourself look bad!

Clean up your act and live right after you have lived in gutters of sin!

Stay cool when things are heating up around you!

Trust God when everything things to be going wrong!

That's the time when we should say, "I trust in God, wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Thou billows roll, he keeps my soul, my heavenly father watches over me!"

Standing at the Red Sea, Moses was in a look bad/feel bad situation. But he said "Stand Still and see the Salvation of the Lord!"

Faced with advancing age in a new an uncharted territory, Joshua was in a look bad/feel bad situation, but he said, "As for me and My house, we will serve the Lord!"

When both his health and wealth left him, Job was in a feel bad/look bad situation, but he said "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Down in the Garden of Gethsemene, Jesus found himself in a look bad/feel

situation. He prayed to his father. Father, I don't want to go to Calvary, but never-the-less not my will but thy will be done!

They whipped him and spit upon him!

They placed a crown of thorns upon his head!

They placed a purple robe on his shoulder marched him from judgment hall to judgment hall!

Calvary was a feel bad/look bad situation!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning!

What once looked bad started to look good!

What once felt bad started to feel good!

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Power over every situation!

Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 768-Family

A Godly Grandparent's Blessing

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 12, 1999

SCRIPTURE: Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways; Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel. Psalm 128:1,6; " Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers. Proverbs 17:6

Introduction

What is your fondest memory of your grand parents? Grandparents are special people. They seem so wise and so patient. Unlike parents, grandparents seem to have a soft spot for grand children, except when they are pinch hitting for parents. Then, again grand parents can be really tough when they have to be. Grandparents whole special places in our hearts because grandparents do secret things for us that our parents never know about. They let us watch television beyond curfew a few times. They always seem to have time to bake cakes and pies. They listened to us tell about our exciting moments and seem to hang on our every word. Every good grand parent holds a fond place in the hearts of their grandchildren.

There is a mystique about grandparents. They teach life lessons in some of the strangest ways. Consider the little boy who was absolutely amazed at his grandfather's ability to make a lot of sense by saying nothing. Grandpa would always say, "Never assume anything or you'll make a fool out of yourself." One day the grandson understood just what his grandpa meant when he and his grandpa were sitting on the porch counting all of the green colored cars that passed. There was a hound dog laying in the yard. Their serene day was interrupted by a door to door salesman who was working the neighborhood. "Excuse me, sir, but does your dog bite?" said a salesman who stood at the fence. The grandpa stopped counting cars for a minute and replied, "Nope." As soon as the salesman stepped out of his car, the dog began snarling and growling, and then attacked both his arms and legs. As the salesman ran out of the gate he yelled, "I thought you said your dog didn't bite!" Then the grandpa answered, "That ain't my dog."

Increasingly, grandparents are becoming primary care givers out of necessity. In fact, grandparents raising grandchildren or grand nieces and nephews are becoming commonplace in our society. The 1995 U.S. Census Bureau Report estimates that four million children live in a household headed by a grandparent, which is a 40 percent increase during the past decade. For 1.3 million children, a grandparent, often the grandmother, is their primary care giver; 46 percent of these children are African American, almost 42 percent are Caucasian, and 12 percent are Hispanic. Kinship care givers, usually grandmothers and fathers or grand uncles and grand aunts are generally over the age of 50 and make up more than 50 percent of the kinship care providers in the nation, according to a study commission by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources.

When grandparents double as parents they take on a difficult task. Their tempers are shorter. Their patience grows thin. Their nerves are fragile. They are disturbed easier and stress builds faster. Sometimes they face a myriad of challenges, such as their own declining health or the need to provide support to the absent parent of the grandchild. Other challenges include lack of support and respite services, affordable housing and access to medical care, as well as other physical, emotional and family strains. But, if it were not for grandparents, millions of children would be denied the opportunity to grow up in stable homes and communities.

Across the nation, grandparents who are doubling as care givers are forming support groups to share information and concerns and to advocate activities and programs that would enhance their own quality of life.

As Christians, we know that the godly person who lives by God's laws is often blessed with the presence of loving grandparents and kinship care givers. Morever, those who stay close to God may even get the ultimate of blessings which is to live long enough to see their own grandchildren grow and mature in front of their eyes. One is a great blessing. But to have had wonderful grandparents then to become a grandparent oneself, is a double reason to give praises to God.

Exposition

This text focuses upon one of the rewards of righteous living: grandparents, grandchildren or both.

David, writing in the 128th Psalm, said those who live truly holy lives derive one of the great blessings of holiness, which is happiness. Happiness, in this context, is not measured by material possessions but by an abiding appreciation for the great gift that God has given to every believer who aspires to the holy life.

David said one of the great benefits of living the Godly life is the ability to reap some of the benefits of his life's work. So, verse two finds him noting that the righteous man will "eat the labor of thine hands." The labor of one's hands is the essence of all that one has tried to achieve for himself and for his family. This involves both the material and the spiritual. Those who are righteous and godly are blessed when they are able to see the work of their hands, like seedlings that take root, grow

up before their very eyes. This feeling of accomplishment, brings a happiness that exceeds anything that can be offered by material means. That's why David says, "it shall be well with thee."

The believer who strives to live according to God's law can expect children whose nurture and growth parallels that of olive trees. That is significant because the growth of a productive olive tree only occurs when a part of the root stock of the mother plant is grafted on that of a young inferior seedling. In less than 10 years the young olive begins to flower or show potential. However, one is not able to see the full results of an olive tree until it reaches 40 or 50 years old. Thus, it is not an accident that David says a believer's children are like "olive plants" about the table. He meant that a believer's children, although growing in the wild, have grafted in them the essence of their parent's training, background and morality. At a young age they show the potential, but what they really become doesn't really show itself until they become 40 or 50 years old.

Proverbs 17:6 echoes the thoughts of Psalm 128. Solomon records that one of the greatest honors of a believer is to have grandchildren who are walking in the steps of their strongest virtues while avoiding their weak points. Even more important and pleasing to a grandparent is to watch a young "olive" flower and know that not only does a grandchild follow the family virtue but has the potential to exceed their own level of accomplishment, advancing the reputation and strength of the family as they follow the will of God.

Solomon adds a note that David does not add. He notes that while it is a joy to have grandchildren, a grandchild who can enjoy the presence of a godly grandparent is also blessed. Those who have them are able to see the rootstock from whence they have been grafted, and can see it from a distance.

Combined, Psalm 128 and Proverbs 17:6 tells us that a person that lives a godly life is often blessed to see grandchildren or at the very least to enjoy the presence of godly grandparents who revel and rejoice each time they demonstrate another example of budding potential.

Grandparents are a blessing to grandchildren

Grandparents are a blessing to every family for a number of reasons. Some of the reasons make us happy some of the reasons trouble us, but they are blessings never-the-less.

GRANDPARENTS REMIND US BE PREPARED: If there is one thing that troubles many grandchildren, it is hearing their grandparents constantly referring to their deaths. References to "When I'm gone," and "It won't be long" are unsettling but serve as reminders of our own mortality. Our grandparents show us how to live the golden years, one day at a time, in faith, prepared to meet the king. Preparation is the key otherwise even a grandparent might end up like the two 85 year grandfathers whose grandchildren carried them to a baseball game. As the two, Joe and Doug, watched the game, Joe said, "You know how we have both loved baseball all our lives.

Doug, you gotta do me one favor. If you go before me, somehow you've got to find a way to get a message to me to tell me if there's baseball in heaven. I want to keep going to games with my grandchildren." Doug agreed that would be a good idea and asked Joe to do the same. As fate would have it, Joe passed on first. At midnight a couple of nights later, Joe heard a voice in his sleep whispering "Joe..Joe!" Joe sat up straight in his bed and said, "Doug, is that you?" Doug answered, "Yes, I want to know I'm trying to keep our deal. I've got some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that there IS baseball in heaven." Then Joe asked, "O.K. What's the bad news?" Doug said, "The bad news is that you're up to pitch next Tuesday!" A godly grandparent teaches us to be prepared for life's eventualities.

GRANDPARENTS CONNECT US WITH OUR PAST: Grandparents, through their oral histories connect us with our past. Through them we understand our family and its history and how God has moved and worked through our family to change lives, save souls and help others. It's through grannies recollections of deeds and misdeeds of the family over the years that we learn of the strengths and weaknesses of the family. We learn the kinds of traps that have injured our family in the past and how to avoid them in the future. When we listen to our grandparents we gain an appreciation for our parents, why they believe what they believe and better understand how God has used them to nurture us in the knowledge of him.

GRANDPARENTS SHARE THE WISDOM OF THEIR EXPERIENCE: One of the greatest contributions any grandparent makes to the family is the wisdom of their life's experience. Since this experience deals with values not affected by time or changes in technology, their advice is priceless because it is applicable at any time. Many grandparents try to advise their children and grandchildren about the value of saving their money, avoiding waste, protecting their name and reputation, choosing the honorable route rather than the road to least resistance. Many grandchildren have heard the same instructive words from godly grandparents, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understandings."

How Grandparents are blessed

Finally brothers and sisters, while it is true that grandchildren are blessed to have godly grandparents, it is also true that every godly grandparent gets multiple blessings from the Lord.

Those who have walked the rugged road know the danger of the journey. They know the importance staying close to God.

It takes a godly grandfather to tell how God helped him provide for his family through hard times and difficulties. It wasn't easy heading a family when a man had to scratch out a living in a system that kept its foot on his head. But with God's help, grandpa kept food on the table.

Grandpa didn't have much education but he knew enough to know that you should treat people the way you want to be treated. He didn't have much money,

sometimes hardly enough to buy coal oil for the lamps, but he'd rather starve than steal.

It takes a godly grandmother to tell how God helped her rear her children despite frustrating times. Godly grandmothers spent much of the time praying for their children and grandchildren and the other part trying to make them happy.

Only God knows the number of nights that grandma spent on her knees praying for her children.

Those who have weathered the storm know the power of God.

Those who have seen the rough side of the mountain don't become upset when the storms begin to rage because they know a man who can speak to the wind and waves and say "Peace be still."

Those who have who have soaked their pillows with tears, wrestling with the tragedies of life, have learned that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"

Those who have who watched bare cabinets and survived on light bread and air pudding, know that if they keep the faith, that Lord will make a way somehow!

Those who have stood face to face with sickness and risen from their sick beds time and time again know that God is able!

Ask any grandparent and they'll tell you...God is able!

God is able to take our:

BURDENS and make them light; DISAPPOINTMENTS and give us renewed hope!

FRUSTRATIONS and give us encouragement; DOUBTS and give us confidence!

Weaknesses and give us strength; FEARS and give us courage!

Those who have walked the Christian journey can testify that God is a prayer answering God. They sing with confidence the words of the old hymn, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I tried him for myself!"

Every godly grandparent needs to keep telling the story!

Tell your grandchildren about the goodness of the Lord! Warn them about the dangers of loose living!

Tell your grandchildren that they must know the Lord for themselves!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them how early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Tell them in the morning!

Tell them in the evening!

Tell them in the midnight hour!

Tell them ,,,,not matter what comes their way...

God is able!

No. 769-Communion, Baptism

The Water and The Blood

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 19, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." John 19:34; "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." 1 John 5:6

Introduction

What is one of the first acts of new business? They put up a sign to let people know they are in business! In the same sense, people who begin new lives in Christ, post signs to the entire world that a new, born again, life is about to begin. They don't buy bill boards to announce it. They don't carry a huge cross down a city street. They simply acknowledge it to the world through what the religious world calls "baptism." It is a sign that the new life is in business. The old life is out of business and its assets have been completely liquidated. Baptism is the outward symbol of this new life. It is a sign that is only meaningful if it truly represents a change of direction or is an affirmation of commitment.

Water baptism lets the devil know that he has lost another battle over a soul. A hellish, disobedient, contrary, troublesome, sinful person spiritually dies, and a new person rises from the watery grave. The devil is frustrated and defeated in his battle to win that person's soul.

The story is told of two boys who went on a nature hike in the hills picking up nuts. Along the way, they filled their small pails and then started to fill their pockets and shirts. When they could hold no more nuts, they started down the country road until they came across a cemetery. The boys decided that would be a good place to stop and rest and divide out the nuts. The two boys sat in the shade of a large oak tree and unloaded their pockets and buckets by dumping all of the nuts in a large pile. In the process, two of them rolled away and rested near the road. The boys then proceeded to divide out the nuts. "One for you. One for me. One for you. One for me." As they were doing this, another boy was passing by and happened to hear them. He looked into the cemetery, but could not see the boys, because they were obscured

by the tree. He hesitated a moment and then ran back to town. "Father! Father!" he yelled as he entered his house. "The cemetery. Come quick!" "What's the matter?" his father asked. The boy and his father ran up the country road and stopped when they reached the cemetery. Then the father asked his son what was wrong. "Do you hear that?" he whispered. Both people listened intently and heard the Scouts. "One for me. One for you. One for me. One for you..." The boy then blurted out, "The devil and the Lord are dividing the souls!" The father was skeptical but silent — until a few moments later as the boys completed dividing out the nuts and one boy said to the other, "Now, as soon as we get those two nuts down by the road, we'll have them all." Yes, the devil is busy trying to gain our souls and he even has his eye on us, the nuts by the road.

Baptism is an act of faith that symbolizes our decision not to let Satan win in our lives. For some it means that Satan has been cut loose and cast out. For others it means that the doors have been shut and Satan won't get a chance. In either case, it represents a life that is being fully and totally committed to the kingdom of God.

As Christians, we approach our baptism with optimism. It is an important moment in our lives. The water marks the day our humanity yielded to God allowed the blood of Christ to save our souls.

Exposition

This text focuses on the strange event that occurred after Christ died, the pouring of water and blood from his side.

John records that after Christ died, a Roman soldier pierced him in his side with a spear. To his surprise water and blood gushed from the puncture. Medical experts have been trying to explain this occurrence for centuries. Most agree that the fact that water and lumps of blood flowed from the wound indicated that there had been a rupture of the pericardium, or the membrane around the heart that contains water, before Christ died.

Since every aspect of Christ's life was significant, the strange case of the water and the blood has been the object of study for centuries. Most agree that the flowing water and blood seemed to represent the humanity of Christ, with respect to water, as well as his divinity with respect to the blood.

By the water, our humanity and imperfections are made ready for the kingdom, through an outward act and profession of faith. The water is the essence of everything human in us that needs the power of God to perfect its nature.

But it is the blood that justifies, reconciles and presents us righteous before God. According to Matthew Henry, "By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal cleansing of our natures."

When his side was pierced, both water and blood came forth. The human frailty and divine power was demonstrated.

In 1 John 5:6 John makes the point that water is significant, but the water alone is not sufficient to redeem mankind. It takes both the water and the blood to

accomplish this end.

In that the water, with respect to baptism, marks a point in which we have accepted Christ and have given an outward sign of acceptance, it is not the water, but blood of Christ that does the actual saving, reconciling and atoning for sin.

The divinity and power of God are witnessed on earth by the presence of the Holy Spirit, a body of baptized saints, and the reality of the blood of Christ. 1 John 5:8 says, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

These three in a true believer are in agreement and are the same. A believer who is baptized in the water and washed in the blood of Christ is guided daily by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Combined, the spirit, the water and the blood, bear witness to power and glory of God in heaven.

The water does not save. It is the blood. The water is a sign.

A life washed in both the water and the blood, is powered by the Holy Spirit. That life is a dramatic witness to the power of God that cannot be denied.

The Water

Water represented everything human in Christ. It represented basic human needs for survival as well as human passions, faults and failure.

WATER REPRESENTS FRUSTRATIONS AND OBSTACLES: When Israel stood at the Red Sea it came to a point of frustration. The sea of water in front of them posed an obstacle to their ultimate goal, which was to reach the promised land. It was frustrating because they marched out of Egypt with high hopes, only to be stalled at the Red Sea by a huge body of water. Today, we are often faced with obstacles but the God we serve helps us to overcome them.

WATER REPRESENTED HUMAN NEED: In the wilderness Israel cried out for water. They had marched for days without water. Their bodies needed nourishment. It was out of need that they complained to Moses that they had no water. Responding to that need God provided them water to meet their needs. Today, each of us has a need. The same God that met Israel's need meets ours.

WATER REPRESENTED NEED FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL: When Naaman was told to wash in muddy water seven times to receive a healing, he complained about the water. He said it was muddy and dirty. What he needed was a spiritual renewal and faith in the Word of God, the water itself only symbolized his need. The woman at the well met Jesus and learned that he offered her "Living water" that would cause her never to thirst. In this context water represents our need for spiritual renewal. We need spiritual renewal to survive in these dangerous times.

WATER REPRESENTED THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS: When the people cried out for the blood of Christ, Pilate asked for a bowl of water. He washed his hands to absolve himself for the blame of Christ's death. He washed but the guilt would not go away! Today, our past, though written indelibly in the minds of our neighbors are

forgotten once God has forgiven us.

WATER REPRESENTED OUR NEED FOR REPENTANCE: When John the Baptist baptized in the Wilderness of Judea he gave a call to repentance. Those who were baptized did so to acknowledge a turn from their wicked and evil ways. Jesus, although he had no sin, came to be baptized as well. He was baptized, in one sense, to set the example for those who would follow. In obedience to the command of God he came to the water. Today, if we repent for our sins God will be willing to forgive us.

The water represents our emptiness.

The water represents our need for the power of God.

There is nothing in the water. It has no saving grace. It serves to remind us of our frailty and need for God.

The Blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there is nothing in the water, there is power in the blood.

The water from Jesus' side represented his humanity, but the blood from his side represented his divinity.

It was through the shedding of blood that sins are forgiven, justification secured and lost sinners are restored and reconciled to God..

It is through the blood of Christ that we are saved and brought before God spotless and worthy for the kingdom.

The water gives us the witness, but it is the blood of Christ that does the saving. That's what John meant in 1 John 5:6, when he said, "not by water only, but water and blood."

There is a new life that should accompany every person who has been dipped in the water. The new life comes only by the power of the blood.

If all you have is the water, but you still don't know the Lord through accepting his blood: There is a table from which you cannot eat, but the power of the blood, brings you to the table!

There is a fountain from which you cannot drink, but the power of the blood brings you to that fountain!

There is a promise that you cannot claim, but the power of the blood allows you to claim that promise!

There is a hope that you cannot enjoy, but the power of the blood allows you to enjoy that hope!

There have been many who have been baptized in the water, but still don't know the Lord!

They want to be a member of a church like everyone else, but they still know nothing about the Lord!

They've been dipped in the water, but they still lie and steal!

They've been dipped in the water, but they still disobey God in matters of

lifestyle and morality!

They've been dipped in the water, but they are so frequent at the Motel 6 that the desk clerks know their names!

They'd been dipped in the water, but they still shacking, getting drunk and running from club to club looking for Mr. Goodbar!

There are many who have sung the words, "Take me to the water!" but they never learned, "There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vain. Sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilted stain!"

After you have been washed in the blood you have a new song to sing, "God gave me a song. That the angels cannot sing. I've been washed in the blood, of the crucified lamb, I've been redeemed!

When there is a dirt in our clothing, we can wash it out!

When there stain in our carpet, we can buy a stain remover!

When we have ring around the collar, we can shout it!

But what can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you've been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and turned it into love!

I know it was the blood that took my despair and turned it into hope!

I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and turned it into honor!

I know it was the blood that took my enemies and turned them into friends!

I know it was the blood that took my worries and turned them into confidence!

One day when I was lost, he died!

He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that save me!

He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!

He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!

But early Sunday morning arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 770-Anniv.-Pastor

Let's Talk About The Preacher

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 26, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Luke 12:3; Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:" 1 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

Do you know people who talk behind your back? One of the great American pass times is "back talking." Co-workers, talk about each other, behind the other's back. Acquaintances, business associates, and even family members talk about each other outside of the ear shot of the other. One of the most popular pass times among church folk is talking about the preacher. He's probably the most talked about person in the entire congregation. It seems everybody has something to say about the preacher from the little child that just loves him to those who criticize his every word and action.

Not everything that is said behind your back is bad. Neither is everything said to your face all good. There are people who speak well of you, promote you, and defend you. There are others who berate everything about you, no matter how honorable your effort.

The question is not whether or not people talk about you, but what they say. Whatever is said, sooner a later you will know. Consider the little farm boy who had heard his parents complaining about the preacher. They said he preached too long and used bad English. In addition, the said he was grouchy. One Sunday the parents invited the preacher to their home for Sunday dinner. Just before leaving to come to their home the preacher smiled a big grin and asked, "I've been invited to your house, what's for lunch?" The little boy, with innocent eyes said, "Goat!" The preacher said, "Are you sure?" The boy said, "Yes sir, I know it's true because I heard my daddy say, 'Let's have the old goat for dinner!"

We should be careful what we say too, because we don't know who's listening. Consider the two women that went to a program and sat two rows behind the pastor of the church. The two women whispered to each other about the preacher. "They

say, he used to be great a long time ago!"" One woman said. The women shook their head in pity. The other added, "They said he's a bit senile too, can't even remember the day of the week." They shook their heads in pity again. "They say, he and his wife are having trouble." They continued for a while as the whispered, pointed and shook their heads in pity of the preacher's problem.

Finally the preacher rose from his seat and greeted the women with a big smile. Then he leaned over and whispered to them, "They also say that he's hard of hearing, do you think that could be true?" The women were out done. He had heard every word they said.

Appreciations are times when the church gets together to talk about the preacher. Generally it's a time when the church says something good about him to his face. What they want to talk about is everything about him that glorifies God! They want to talk about his strengths and vision! They want to talk about his ministry and message. It is a time of edifying, glorifying God and giving thanks for his rich blessing.

As Christians, we talk about our pastor and other saints too. We talk more behind their backs than we do to their faces. The difference is what we say.

Philippians 4:8 tells us exactly what to say, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

As saints we speak well of our church, other saints and our pastor. That's what the Lord would have us to do!

Let's Talk about the Preacher's Service

This text focuses on Paul writing to a young man in the ministry with advice for his service.

There are two sets of letters that Paul wrote to pastors in the bible. They are called Epistles. One of the Epistles is Paul's letter to Titus who was the pastor of Crete and Timothy who was the pastor in Ephesus.

Ephesus was a city that was devoted to the worship of the Goddess Diana , the patroness of sexuality. The Gospel message of sexual abstinence and purity of spirit was controversial and different for the people of Ephesus. There were many people talking about young Timothy. Some were saying good things some were not. Timothy was encouraged to preach the word to the people with love and a pure heart. (V5). What they said was not important as long as he knew that both his words and actions were ordained by God.

Paul encouraged Timothy to do three things, each of which would give the people something positive to talk about.

STAY UNTIL THE JOB IS FINISHED: In verse 3 Paul urges Timothy to stay in Ephesus. And carry out the mission. The mission was certainly a difficult one. Timothy was carrying them in a different direction than they had been accustomed. They were being challenged to give up habits and practices with which they had

become comfortable and while they loved him, they talked about him behind his back. Sensing that young Timothy may be tempted to leave and go to areas more acceptable to the message, Paul encouraged him to stay until the job is finished.

One of the criticisms that people have of ministers is that they often have no sense of commitment. Many appear mercenary in that they must have the dollar before they holler. The congregation that pays the most gets their attention. Thus, many don't stay long enough to get anything done. This doubt about commitment causes some churches to take a wait and see attitude about the preacher before they jump into major changes of direction. The pastor that would lead his congregation through unknown paths as he charts a new course, is best served to make the people know that he plans to stay until either the job is finished , God gives clear direction otherwise or until God calls him home!

STAND WITH CONFIDENCE ON THE TRUTH: Paul encouraged Timothy to stand on the truth and correct any false teachings or misconceptions that may come. Truth is what determines whether not a church becomes a theater or a place of worship. "Without truth" an unknown author wrote, "what we call worship blurs into entertainment or emotional catharsis or feel good experience. Without truth, teaching and preaching becomes either ear tickling or guilt provoking. If we ignore the truths of God our teachings become legalistic."

Yet standing on the truth will get people to talking. Some will say good things. Others will say bad things whenever the pastor stands on the truth.

KEEP A GOOD CONSCIENCE: Lastly Paul encouraged Timothy to keep a good conscience. What matters most is that he had exercised what God has commanded. He had spoken that which God has inspired and charted the course that God has given.

This is the spirit that Paul himself demonstrated at the close of his own life when he wrote, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course."

The preacher who has a clear conscience sleeps well at night and even though people may be talking about him one way or another.

Let's Talk About What the Preacher Does

Let's talk about what the preacher does on behalf of the Lord.

The primary job of the preacher is to preach the Gospel of Jesus and to declare the acceptable year of our Lord.

In the name of Jesus, the preacher says and does things that inspire and motivate the people of God to rise to their fullest potential.

In the name of Jesus, the preacher comforts those who are lost, disappointed or dejected and brings them hope.

In the name of Jesus, the preacher performs simple acts that God often empowers beyond their simplicity.

A widow woman met the preacher one day. She was down to her last cup of meal and her last jar of oil. But after the preacher talked to God, the barrel never ran dry.

A poor lady who didn't have a dime to pay her bills was about to lose all she had, when the preacher came with a word from God. The preacher said, put your pots out.

What the preacher does is remind us that the Lord is a wonderworking Lord!

Let's About What The Preacher Talks About

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we talk about the preacher, let's talk about what the preacher talks about!

The subject that is first and foremost on the mind of every good preacher is the goodness of the Lord.

If we start talking about the goodness of the Lord, that's a subject that will occupy our time both morning and night. That's what the preacher likes to talk about.

It doesn't matter how many times we hear him say it, because each time he tells us that God is good, it reaffirms our faith. That's why Romans 10:17 says, "Now faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

If we want to talk about God's goodness, that is something to talk about.

It's the goodness of God that takes the bitterness of life and makes it sweet.

It's the goodness of God that takes the:

HARDNESS of life's troubles and makes them tender;

WRONGS that life has handed us and makes them right

LOSSES that we have sustained and makes them gains;

NOBODIES of life and makes them somebodies

UNDERDOGS and turns them into champions;

WEAKNESS we've developed and gives us new strength

Every good preacher likes to talk about the power of God. When the preacher talks about the power of God he reminds us that God has all power in his hands. No matter what our circumstance, his grace is sufficient.

His grace is sufficient to keep us!

His grace is sufficient to forgive us!

His grace is sufficient to cleanse us!

His grace is sufficient to satisfy us!

But more than anything else, every preacher likes to talk about Jesus!

We like to talk about Jesus because he is the author and finisher of our faith!

We like to talk about Jesus because he gives us a reason to rejoice and be glad!

We like to talk about Jesus because he gives us the:

Power to overcome sin and Satan; Grace to live holy and righteous

Strength to make it from day to day; Courage to walk in the face of fear!

We like to talk about Jesus because there is "none other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved, except the name of Jesus!"

In the name of Jesus, broken spirits have been restored!

In the name of Jesus, shattered lives have been put together again!

In the name of Jesus, the down trodden have overcome!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three days and nights!

If you want to talk about something talk about how got up, early Sunday morning!

Preacher! Keep talking about Jesus!

If they say good things about you, keep talking about Jesus!

If they say bad things about you, keep talking about Jesus!

Preach the word! In season and out of season, keep talking about Jesus!

No. 771-Communion

The Will To Pay The Bill

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 26, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 22:42

Introduction

How would you like to have someone who paid all of your bills for you with no strings attached? How would like to open your mail one day and get a letter that announced that all of your bills, current and future have been paid in full? Think about it! Your house note, rent, college tuition, school fees, furniture bills, telephone bills, grocery bills car notes, Visa Card, Master Charge, American Express, Diner's Club, club dues, television, cablevision ..everything paid in full! That may sound too good to be true but there are millions of people in America who are looking for just that! They are looking for someone to pay the bills!

There is a growing sentiment among youth and young adults that rejects permanent arrangements, as temporary couples partner for the expressed purpose of expense sharing. Most are familiar with college students who get apartments of their own and share the expense with a roommate. Many friendships have ended when a roommate became a burden rather than a help. Whenever a roommate reached a point where their part of the rent was always due and never paid, we knew it was time for someone to move out!

Today the search has gone beyond roommates. Interpersonal relationships have entered the picture. We have before us today what can easily be called couples who "play for pay." In essence there are millions of relationships that are being built upon the, "I let you play, as long as you pay" mentality.

We have evolved from the chivalry of the 50's and 60's. That was a time when no self respecting girl accepted gifts from a man; and no real man would allow a woman to take care of him and be proud of that fact. Today, there is a growing "what's in it for me" feeling that is damaging relationship potentials of young adults across the nation.

Today, both men and women are saying, "You can play if you pay!"

There are many women who are looking for someone to pay their bills. They agree

with the spirit of the hit song by Destiny's Child entitled "Bills, Bills, Bills" about a woman who became disenchanted with her lover who started out spending heavily on her, but suddenly started asking her for support. When it became obvious that he couldn't or wouldn't spend money on her, she wrote: "

You triflin', good for nothing type of brother
Silly me, why haven't I found another
A baller, when times get hard
Need someone to help me out
Instead of a scrub like you
Who don't know what a man's about
Can you pay my bills?
Can you pay my telephone bills?
Can you pay my automo-bills?
If you did then maybe we could chill
I don't think you do
So, you and me are through

Some men are looking for a woman who will work for them and help them pay their bills. They believe that a woman should have a good job and take care of the man's bills. This spirit is best represented in the lyrics to the song "No bills" by "Sporty Thieves" In this song the man wants to be on the receiving end of the relationship. Any woman that can't deliver is described as a pigeon.

"You triflin',good-for-nothin' kinda pigeon
Silly me,thinkin' I could help a chicken
I need a lady,who'll work to nine-to-five to help her man out
Not a pigeon,who just lay around,just lookin' for a handout
I can't pay your bills,I can't get your hair done
I can't pay your rent,and I can't take care of your son
I-don't-trick-my cash,so...pigeons do not ask
(for my dogs,for my dogs)
I can't pay your bills,I can't pay your cell phone
I can't pay your car, no I can't help out with your home
I-don't-trick-my cash, so...pigeons do not ask "

One final song by Missy asks this question, "Why you all in my grill? You be all in my grill! Can you pay my bills. Let me know if you will 'Cause a chick gotta live." The Beastie Boys tapped into this thinking when they wrote, "I got the skills to pay the bills" as an advertisement to girls who want what is described as real man.

Each song suggests that many people are looking for someone who has the will and skill to pay the bills!

As Christians, we hear these songs, but they take on a different meaning to us.

We hear the question asked, “Can you pay my bills?” And we think of Jesus, who has proven that he has both the skill and the will to pay the bill!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he prays and talks with God about the prospect of dying on the cross.

Mankind had sinned greatly in the eyesight of God. Nearly every sin that could be imagined had been committed against heaven. Everything from sex sins, theft, and lying to murder had been charged against the human race. Mankind had accumulated a huge bill, for which God was ready to exact a payment.

The payment for man kind’s sin had to be made in blood. Jesus came to earth to substitute himself for our sins. When he died on Calvary his death would substitute for our death and our bill would be paid.

This text focuses on Christ as he withdrew about a stone’s throw into the garden, which some reckon to be about fifty or sixty paces. He prayed that, if it were the will of God, this cup of suffering, this bitter cup, might be removed from him.

However, he knew the plan. He also knew what God’s will was for the salvation of mankind. Thus, he said, “not my will” but “thy will” be done. This is spirit of every believer which David records in Psalm 40:8 “ I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

By demonstrating a willingness to do what was untasteful and unbearable to carry out the desire of his father, Jesus showed that he had the strength of character needed to carry out the plan of Salvation.

Truly, he had the will to pay the bill!

Who Pays The Bill?

While there are many today who are looking for another person to pay their bills, many right thinking believers understand that Christian’s don’t put their trust in any man or woman to provide for their daily needs. Believers have learned to trust in God.

PLAY FOR PAY IS PROSTITUTION: Christians should be warned that trading “play” for “pay” is just another form of prostitution. It begins with little girls who want boyfriends that can buy them presents. It begins with little boys who expect girls to do their homework or pay their way to the movies. Then it graduates something bigger. A man who trades companionship and sexual favors for a place to sleep, food to eat and access to a charge card is just as much a Gigolo as the man who charges by hour! A woman who trades her virtue and chastity for a $75 hairstyle, $60 pair of false fingernails, free rent and a cell phone may as well place an ad in the local paper that reads, “Wanted, young man, single, divorced or free, you can sleep in my bed but you can’t sleep for free!” Whether on a street corner or under fine sheets by Dan River and Cannon, the end result is the same...prostitution!

Every believer’s salvation has been paid for by the blood of Christ, we cannot

sell to someone else for the price of a light bill, what belongs to God. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price:therefore glorify God in your body, in your spirit, which are God's."

BE CAREFUL WHO PAYS YOUR BILLS: There many who have developed a new morality that supports that the idea that everything is moral which achieves a desired end. In other words, there are those who believe, "It doesn't matter who pays the bill, as long as it gets paid." This has been a moral issue for centuries. In the famous play "The Devil and Daniel Webster" the devil is more than willing to pay the bill for a man who wanted everything and was willing to trade his soul to get it. However, there came a day when the promissory note made to the devil was due and he came to collect. We must be careful to guard our integrity and keep our soul.

Jesus asked the all important question, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

The devil pays bills. If we just want bills paid, the devil will pay your bills, but not without a price! Sometimes the price is a life behind bars. Sometimes it's an addiction we can't stop. Sometimes it's a reputation that is soiled! Sometimes it is an education that is lost!

The devil even offered to pay Jesus' bills. For 40 days and 40 nights he tried to get Jesus to let him take care of things such as turning stones into bread only to hear Jesus say, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

WE PAY FOR OUR PLAY: Every believer should remember that while we play for pay, we will also pay for our play! Every sin we commit exacts a toll upon us. We will give an account one day for the way we play. Just as a credit card bill details every charge with a date, place, amount and sometimes a detailed description of what was purchased, we too will be presented with a bill for our play. It will list every sin that has been charged against our account.

The word of God says we will pay. Romans 6:23 made it clear that, "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus Can Pay The Bill

Finally, brothers and sisters we are encouraged to know that while we may have many charges on our account, Jesus has the skill and the will to pay the bill!

I suggest to you that while the world is looking for someone to pay its bills, we who know the Lord can testify that we have found a man who can pay the bill!

The world has placed many charges on our account, but we have found a man with the will to pay the bill!

The world knocked us down, but we found a man who had the will to pick us up and turn us around!

The world gave us despair, but we found a man who had the will to take our despair and turn it into hope!

The world gave us sadness, but we found a man who had the will to take our sadness and turn it into gladness!

The world gave us failure, but we found a man who took our failure and turned it into success!

The world gave us weakness, but we found a man who took our weakness and turned it into strength!

But somebody is a doubter! That somebody is asking, "I know he's got the will, but can he pay the bill?"

Can he pay my light bill? David said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"

Can he pay my water bill? I see a woman sitting by the well, worried about getting water. I heard Jesus tell not to worry about water from the well because he could give her living water and she would never thirst again!

Can he pay my grocery bill? I heard Jesus say, "I am the bread of life" No wonder the old hymn says, "Bread of heaven. Bread of Heaven. Feed me till I want no more.!"

Can he pay my doctor bill? Ask the man who sat at the pool for 38 years. He told me to take my bed and walk!

Can he pay for my telephone bill? Can he establish a line of communication that won't be cut off? Can I send up a prayer in the morning, noon or night? I heard a song writer declare: Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want!

Can he pay for my sin bill? Isaiah answered that question, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. "

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

One evening 2000 years ago, he went up a hill and paid my bill!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose with the canceled note on my soul marked paid in full!

If you are looking for someone who can pay the bill, don't look for a man. Don't look for a woman!

Call on Jesus!

He's got the will to pay the bill!

No. 772-Revival

And Now
A Word From Our Sponsor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 3, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God." Psalm 50:7

Introduction

Have you ever watched your favorite television program only to have it interrupted by a commercial break? It seems like commercial breaks always come at the wrong time. Just when you were about to learn the answer to a secret or the villain was about to be captured, then comes a commercial! How frustrating! In the 1960's the late Alfred Hitchcock was known for interrupting his weekly suspense programs with these words..."And now a word from our sponsor." Like it or not, there had to be a break because the sponsor had to have a word.

While some listen to the sponsor's message, others take it as a convenient time to go to the refrigerator or bath room. To get us to listen to words from our sponsors, advertising agencies go to extremes, using everything from talking frogs to beautiful models advertising everything from hotels to swimsuits. It is extremely difficult to get us to hear a word from the sponsor despite the fact that the average television viewer is exposed to over 500 selling messages (commercials) per day! That amounts to over 182,500 selling messages per year or 2.1 million commercial words from the time you begin the first grade until your high school graduation day.

What's amazing about the messages of sponsors is brevity. Most commercial messages are between 30 and 60 seconds in length. They rely heavily upon repetition to get the message across. Thus, the same commercial may appear more than once in the same time block. Even within the commercial itself the name of the product is repeated visually or audibly several times. The sponsor will use a variety of techniques to get our attention: slogans such as "You're in good hands with Allstate", or jingles such as, "Like a good neighbor State Farm is There", animals such

as the Budweiser frogs or humorous characters such as Energizer Bunny are often used; whatever it takes to get the message across. If the viewer enjoys the commercial but can't remember the sponsor then the sponsor failed to get the message across, no matter how cute the commercial.

If commercial sponsors bombard us with hundreds of words a day, how does a believer hear a word from his or her spiritual sponsor? When and how does a believer hear a word of inspiration, instruction, comfort or hope from our heavenly sponsor? Unfortunately, God has to compete for advertising time to get in a word to some of us. When he wants to speak to us he often finds that others have bought up all the messages in the program called our life. So he puts his message on a religious channel, but even that has to compete with the world and it is often unheard.

Sometimes God has to do exactly like Alfred Hitchcock. He thrusts himself in the middle of our program and has an unexpected circumstance to say to us..."And now a word from our sponsor!"

As believers, we have come to know that we need to hear from the Lord. We need to hear him for daily inspiration. We need to hear him for correction and instruction. We need to hear him for comfort and hope! We allow God to speak in our lives because we recognize that without the sponsor...there is no program. In him we live, move and have our being, he is our sponsor and saving souls and enriching lives is his product!

Exposition

This text focuses on God telling Israel to listen to his words as he gives encouragement, reassurance and reprimand.

The collective national life of Israel was very similar to that of individual believers. There were times in Israel's national life when they were prosperous and did well. Often, in their prosperity the people would not listen to God and found little time for worship. In difficult times they turned to the methods and techniques of the people around them, often ignoring the one and true God altogether as they worshiped idol gods.

There were long periods when they would not hear the prophets and ignored the place of God in their lives. Strangely, they did this while continuing to carry out most of the rituals that they had begun to perform mechanically, with little feeling or spirit. They made sacrifices, participated in the rituals and came to the right places on the Sabbath Days, yet they were not keeping the vows that they had privately made to God. They would not pay attention to God's messengers, so God interrupted their prosperity and brought them a word.....first hand.

One way to understand Psalm 50 is to read it from the context of God interrupting the national chain of events with an attention grabbing moment such as that described in verse 2 and 3. The second way is to see God interrupting the flow of our individual lives with an attention grabbing moment that speaks to us individually instead of Israel as a whole nation.

What is the message that God wanted Israel to hear?

He told Israel then and now believers by comparison, that he was aware of how they adhered to the requirements of the Mosaic law. He said he understood and appreciated the sacrifices they made toward him. However, he wanted them to know that the glory is not in simply participating in the ritual of sacrifice, but in sacrificial living and living with an attitude of gratitude. Thus from verse 7 to verse 13 he says that he doesn't really need their sacrifices. He is not hungry and does not need the nation to give him of that which is already his.

The point that he wanted to make is imbedded in verse 14-15, if we want to please God we must offer him continuous thanks and praise, and then keep our vows to him. Moreover, when we are in trouble, we glorify God when we allow him to deliver us. He is glorified through our deliverance.

Matthew Henry puts it this way, "God demands the heart. How can human inventions please him, when repentance, faith, and holiness are neglected? In the day of distress we must apply to the Lord by fervent prayer. Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, not drive us from him. We must acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon
his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves wholly to him, and so give him glory. Thus must we keep up communion with God; meeting him with prayers under trials, and with praises in deliverances."

There was also a word for the unbelievers too.. God is not pleased. But verse 23 makes it plain that those who praise God best glorify him by ordering his life "aright" to receive the full benefit of God's salvation.

We have a Sponsor

Today, every true believer acknowledges that they live sponsored lives. Most will acknowledge that they are unable to accomplish anything on their own without the power of God, who is the wind beneath their wings. Paul speaking to the philosophers of Athens as they pondered the unknown God, tried to help them understand that our God is not distant but personal and responsive. In Acts 17:28 he said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being..." God acts as our sponsor in three ways:

HE MENTORS US: A mentor is a person who teaches us what we know, then uses his influence to create opportunities for us to advance. A mentor takes us under his tutorship and shows us the ropes of our life's walk, points out the pitfalls and helps us to avoid the dangers. Those without a mentor find it more difficult to succeed. Elijah and Elisha are the perfect example of the mentor/tutor relationship. Elisha walked with Elijah constantly. He observed and learned from the old prophet. When Elijah prepared to go home to glory riding on a fiery chariot, Elisha asked for a double portion of gifts and Elisha's mantle fell upon him.

God mentors every believer in the same way. The student of the Word walks with him and talks with him on a daily basis. When the right time comes, God opens doors for his proteges who have prepared themselves to walk in the light.

CO-SIGNS FOR US: Those who are young or unable to stand for themselves often need a co-signer. Co-signers are persons who pledge their resources and good names to give others the opportunity to establish their own resources and good names. The co-signer actually makes a loan in which another person gets the money but they assume the legal responsibility. Many young people have been able to get their first car or furniture for their homes, thanks to co-signers who put up their good name to help them establish a name.

Spiritually, Jesus says tells every believer that if we lose ourselves in his will that he will co-sign our life's needs. John 14:13-14 puts it this way, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

UNDER WRITES US: An underwriter is a person who takes care all of our expenses. The underwriter is the provider or producer.When we see God as our provider we understand why Abraham described him as Jehovah-Jireh or "God will provide." Believers across the centuries have learned that God does sponsor and underwrite the needs of his people. David wrote is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." The word sponsor could easily replace shepherd and God's role as our provider becomes clear. Paul writing to the Philippians put it this way in Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Combined, the preponderance of scripture teaches that God is truly the underwriter of our life's experiences. This makes the words of the song writer even more meaning "Without him I could do nothing. Without him I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail!"

A Word From Our Sponsor

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that since we all live sponsored live, every now and then we must hear a word from our sponsor.

Only the foolish believe they can ignore their sponsors and still enjoy the same level of sponsorship.

It's a foolish child that believes he or she can ignore their parents by walking way, shutting up in a room or turning the music up loud. It's foolish because the shoes they walk on, the door they shut and the music they turn up loud are all provided by their sponsor. At home, every now and then, there has to be a word from the sponsor.

It's a foolish employee that fees he can enjoy a decent salary but skip staff meetings and ignore the instructions of the employer. Some would rather go fishing or lay back in their home. It's foolish because it's the sponsor that provides the income to pay the note on both the boat and the house. At work, every now and then, there has to be a word from the sponsor.

There are many who treat God the same way. He is our sponsor, but many feel they can ignore him, refuse to be in his presence and neglect listening to him speak and still enjoy his sponsorship at the same time.

We should be careful in this because, "it's not nice" to ignore your sponsor. When we put our fingers in our hear and tell God we don't want to hear, he has a way

of interrupting our program whether we want him to or not and announce:

"And now a word from our sponsor.!"

Sometimes, God interrupts our program to give us a word that provides us with direction! Jonah didn't want to hear that word and only heard it after he spent three days in the belly of a great fish!

Sometimes, God interrupts us to give us a word of encouragement. That's what the disciples found one night as they were wrestling with empty nets. Jesus came walking on the water saying

"Be not afraid, it is I." In the midst of our troubles the word from God is, "Be not afraid!"

Sometimes, God interrupts our mourning of loved ones to bring us a word. It's the same word that David heard when he wrote in Psalm 121, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and earth!"

Sometimes, God interrupts us as we feel sorry about our empty barrels and gives us a word. It's the same word he gave a widow woman one day, trust in the Lord and keep going to the barrel, he will provide!

When the world became self consumed and felt it did not need God, our sponsor decided to interrupt the flow of events on earth and send a word!

John says "In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God and the Word was God"

Today, brothers and Sisters there is a word from our sponsor!

The word from our sponsor brings hope for the hopeless!

The word from our sponsor brings peace in the midst of confusion!

The word from our sponsor brings, confidence in the midst of doubt!

The word from our sponsor brings, joy in the midst of sadness!

One day the word took up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

He died for our sins but Early Sunday morning he arose to complete our victory!

Thank God for a Word from Our Sponsor! Jesus...the word of God!

No. 773-Revival

Bloopers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 10, 1999

Scripture: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Jonah 2:4-10

Introduction

Have you ever said or done something, then wished you hadn't? Most of us can remember a time when we said a few words that we later wished we hadn't said. There were even times when we did some things that we should not have done. They proved to be mistakes. Sometimes they were serious mistakes that altered relationships or whole life directions. Any person who strives to accomplish anything in life is bound to make mistakes. The only ones who can completely avoid mistakes are those who attempt nothing in life. Mistakes are inevitable and unavoidable. It has been said that if mistakes were drops of water, each person living would need a swimming pool to contain all of our blunders and errors. Mistakes are an undeniable fact of life.

Mistakes are not limited to the ignorant and uninformed. Even our brightest and smartest make mistakes. Consider the case of the mistaken scientists. A group of the world's smartest scientist concluded that enough scientific data and machinery existed to resolve any human problem scientifically, eliminating the need for God. Since science could match anything that was expected from God, the need for churches, prayer and praise and even God himself had outlived its usefulness, in their view. They drew straws and decided which of them would tell God that he should butt out of the daily affairs of mankind. The one that was picked walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can do everything you do. We can make it rain. We can predict the weather. We can fly in outer space. We can even clone people, so why don't you just go on and get lost." God listened very patiently and kindly until the scientist finished talking. Then God said, "Very well, how about this, let's say we have a man making contest." The scientist conferred with his associates and they agreed to the contest with God. The contest was to make a man. The rule was they had to make a man just like God did

it in the old days with Adam. The scientists set up a lab, brought out their machinery and prepared for the contest. When the buzzer sounded one scientist quickly reached down and grabbed a handful of dirt to put into his machine when suddenly God looked at him and said,. "I said we were doing this the way I did it with Adam, You got to get your own dirt!" That's when the scientist realized they had made a mistake.

In the 1980's there was a television show that focused on the bloopers made in movies. These were the out takes or mess ups actors made while making the films. They were humourous. They made us laugh because we knew the actors got a chance to shoot the scene again and do it correctly. The director simply called for, "Take Two!"

Wouldn't it be nice if we could receive a "Take Two!" every time we commit a serious blunder in real life? On one level, such second chances are not possible. Because time is irreversible, we cannot neatly undo our mistakes. We cannot cast our real-life bloopers on the cutting room floor. Wouldn't it be nice to hear life's director say, "Take Two!" which would give us another chance to relive certain parts of our lives that we sort of messed up? On the second take we'd probably shoot the scene without our initial blunders.

As Christians, we are happy with the truth that God gives us second chances spiritually. It really doesn't matter how bad we messed up the scene, he has graciously provided us with another opportunity through offering us mercy and forgiveness. Have you made any mistakes? If you're willing to spiritually try again, God will gladly say, "Take Two!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Jonah as God gives him a second chance to accomplish his will.

Jonah was a great prophet who was given a command by God to preach to the enemies of his people for the purpose of avoiding God's anger and restoring them to the righteous path. Jonah did not like his instructions. He thought there was better use for his life than to simply waste it on the enemies of his country. Moreover, Jonah did not actually want his enemies to repent. If they did, they would be spared the promised destruction of God. Whatever his reasons were, Jonah decided to rebel against God. He refused to go to Nineveh and tried to sail in a different direction. That proved to be a big mistake

On board a ship sailing away from the course God had given him, Jonah came face to face with the power of God. God caused a huge wind to shake and rock the ship in such a way that everyone present feared for his life. In desperation, the men on board cast lots to determine which of them had caused the great storm by offending their god. That person would be sacrificed to their god. Jonah decided to participate in the lottery...that too was a mistake. The die fell upon him by some miraculous stroke of destiny. The men reluctantly threw Jonah overboard to satisfy the demands of his God. Jonah thought death by drowning would help him escape the will of God.

That was a mistake too, because he fell into a fate worse than death. He was swallowed whole by a giant fish. In the midst of darkness and digestive juices, he came to himself and realized that it was a mistake to run from the power of God.

He said, "When my soul fainteth within me" that he would seek the Lord. It took three days and three nights of darkness and utter desperation before he repented for his mistake. Jonah told God to give him another chance and he would "Pay that that I have vowed," promising a reversal of direction if he was given another chance.

Despite the fact that Jonah had disobeyed him and openly defied him, God forgave him and caused the fish to spit him onto the bank. Armed with a second chance from God, Jonah went forward to do as God commanded. Eventually the people of Nineveh were saved. It happened because Jonah listened to the words of God and was given a second chance.

The idea of a second chance is best illustrated by Jonah who lived a godly life most of the times, but on at least one occasion defied him. Jonah, representing the modern believer, shows how God can take us in the middle of our wrong doing and give us a second chance.

Two Types of Mistakes

Today, many of us share Jonah's dilemma. Propelled by a desire to accomplish our own will rather than God's will, often we ignore the warnings of relatives, spiritual leaders and others who mean us well and set a life course in the opposite direction than the one God has chosen for us. For some, these choices have resulted in serious mistakes. Two types of mistakes made are:

IGNORING GOD'S WILL IS A MISTAKE: There are many believers who have attempted to ignore God's will for their lives while they chart their own personal course. These are the instances where we sense what God wants us to do but refuse to do it because it conflicts with our personal agenda.

We sense God wants us to teach, but we reject that because it won't bring fame and riches.

We sense that God wants us to marry and settle down, but we reject that because it limits our options.

We sense that God wants us to lead a more sacred life, but we reject that because we fear it will minimize our fun.

Ignoring God is a serious mistake. From Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God in the Garden of Eden to Israel's numerous rebellions against God in the wilderness, the biblical record shows that it is a mistake for believers to ignore the will of God because it can have tragic and disastrous outcomes. David is one of the bible's best examples of a good man almost destroyed by mistakes. Adultery and murder ranked highest among his mistakes, but David came to himself and asked God to "create in me a clean heart oh God." In Psalm 143:10 David wrote, "teach me to do thy will for thou art my God, thy spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness."

Jesus set the example. In the garden, faced with his own desire to take an easier

more comfortable path through life rather than go to Calvary, he told God, "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done."

TRYING TO RUN FROM GOD IS A MISTAKE: If the lesson of Jonah teaches us anything, it is the truth that running from God is a mistake. It is a race we can't win. Being a prophet, Jonah knew the nature of God. The voice that spoke to him in the night could not be out distanced by simply moving to a different city. God is everywhere. Running from God is fruitless, because when God gets ready for us, he will find us. Elijah discovered that truth when he hid from God in a cave, only to hear God speak to him in the silence of his cave, in a still soft voice. Though he hid behind trees in the Garden, Adam discovered that he couldn't hide from God. We should pay close attention to Jonah because his flight from God endangered the lives of others. The wind and waves that tossed the boat upon which he rode was not intended for the other men on the boat, but others were being threatened by his vain attempts to run from God.

Moreover, we should note that running from God is futile because there is no place to go. The immortal words of Joe Louis are applicable in this instance, "You can run, but you can't hide." There are many who attempt to avoid God by staying away from worship services and keeping their distance from religious activities. By doing so they hope to run from God. Some don't run at all, they casually assume a nonchalant manner and stroll about their own business. To get their attention, God often has to rock the boat! That often has tragic consequences.

When David tried to run from God he came to the conclusion that he wrote in Psalm 139:8-10 "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."

A Second Chance

Finally, brothers and sisters, while most of us have made our share of mistakes, we are encouraged to know that despite our mess ups, God does offer us a second chance.

The second chance is the opportunity to shoot the same scene again, using the original script but to get it right this time.

Does your present relationship represent a second chance? The mistakes of your first relationship have been edited from the final run. You now have a chance to play the part by God's script, without the bloopers that destroyed previous efforts?

Are your family affairs enjoying a renewal? That's God's second chance at work.

Are you embarked on a business venture that slumped or failed in your first try. God's second chance is at work!

Have you started a new course in life after trying a life of club hopping, one night stands, and going no where relationships? Then you know what it means to have a second chance!

The beauty of the Christian life is that we give our lives to a God who is willing to give us a second chance!

A second chance, gives us an opportunity to do right instead of wrong!

A second chance, helps us to stand for something this time, instead of falling for everything!

A second chance, helps us find strength to overcome our weaknesses!

A second chance, helps us elevate principle over practicality!

A second chance, give us the faith to achieve the impossible and to dream the improbable!

Consider the slothful young woman who suddenly became active in her church. Members were surprised to see her in prayer meeting, bible study and volunteering in church ministries. When asked the reason for her sudden change she said a few months earlier she had been club hopping one Saturday night, when we was accidently shot by a bullet intended for someone else. The bullet lodged near her spine, but doctor's didn't remove it. "They told me they couldn't move it because it was too close to my spine. They said be careful, because any move in the wrong direction could end my life. When I saw I was able to walk out of that hospital. I decided God was giving me another chance. I decided it was time to move in the right direction!"

I'm glad God gave me another chance!

Another chance to praise him for his wonderful works!

Another chance to glorify him for being so good!

Another chance to lift him up for saving my soul!

Another chance to tell somebody about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Another chance to tell somebody how he arose from the grave!

Another chance to tell somebody how he lives in my life today!

I'm so glad, God gave me a second chance!

No. 774-Funeral

When Doves Stretch Their Wings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 16, 1999

SCRIPTURE: And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest. Psalm 55:6

Introduction

Have you ever wished you could just get away from it all? There are times when even the best of us envy the birds of the sky and wish we had lives that were as care free as theirs appear. We struggle with goals and objectives, successes and failures, pros and cons, do's and don'ts and they seem to just fly with ease, without a care in the world. We wrestle with bills, troubles, misunderstanding, problems and confusion and they seem to rise above the clouds and float out of sight. In moments when we are feeling low, we often envy the birds and want to fly.

For some, even flying in an airplane would be different. Consider the back wood couple that always watched airplanes from their shack in the woods. Pa wanted to fly. Each year they went to the county fair with their hound dog "Duke" and saw the fellow who offered plane rides. Pa wanted to ride but Mama said it cost too much. Pa said, "Ya know Ma, I'd like ta get a ride in that theah aihplane. And every year Ma would say, "I know Pa, but that aihplane ride costs ten dollahs.... and ten dollahs is ten dollahs. When he tried to insist she grabbed him by the ear and pulled him away. For several years she told him the same thing, "Ten dollars is ten dollars!" twisted his ear and pulled him away. Finally Pa said, "By Jeebers, Ma, I'm 71 yeahs old. If I don't go this time I may nevah go." Ma replied, "Pa, that there aihplane ride is ten dollahs...and ten dollahs is ten dollahs. " The pilot over heard them and said, "Folks, I'll make you a deal, I'll take you both up for a ride. If you can stay quiet for the entire ride and not say ONE word, I won't charge you. But one word, just one word, and it's ten dollars." They agreed and up they went. The pilot did all kinds of twists and turns, rolls and dives, but not a word was heard. He did it one more time; still nothing. So he landed. He turned to Pa as they came to a stop and said, "By golly, I did everything I could think of to get you to holler out, but you didn't." Pa grabbed hold

of old Duke and said, “Well, I was gonna say something when you turned upside down and Ma fell out...but ten dollahs is ten dollahs! ...Some want to fly real bad.

Believe it or not, like the birds of the sky, every believer has flying power. Flying power in this context is not the kind that allows you to take to the air like a bird but the kind that gives each believer the ability to soar above the concerns of this life where they can see from a different perspective. Flying Power helps us to reach beyond this life’s troubles and woes and peek into the sublime. Flying Power even gives us the ability to take spiritual wings, when the time comes, and leave this world behind.

Generally, young believers are compared to doves. Like young believers their lives are fragile and short lived. They flutter with beauty, coo with innocence and the poets tell us that while we often see doves as they fly, that dove’s cry. The average dove lives between three and five years about the same as (25 to 30 human lives). In this time doves develop a homing instinct that is unique and peculiar. No matter how far away a dove strays or is taken away from home, doves can always find their way home. The female usually lays two eggs and nourishes them until they hatch. She keeps them close to the nest until they develop a homing instinct themselves. After a few years a dove may leave the nest perched high and never return. High in the sky she may be seen soaring on the wind, never to return again.

As believers, we know we possess flying power. It is the power to soar above our circumstance. We always stay prepared for we don’t know the day or the hour that the Lord will send a message that it’s time to come home. We know the way. It’s in our very soul. When the time comes, like a dove, we stop whatever we are doing and stretch our wings and fly!

Exposition

This text focuses on David who expressed his desire to simply soar above the problems of the world and fly away.

David was a young man when he killed Goliath and became a national hero. Some scholars think he was just a teen. As a young adult he battled life and always tried to do the right thing. Yet he was often misunderstood and ostracized. He was hunted by the king and targeted for execution. At times, his tug of war lifestyle frustrated him to the point that he often lamented. In the 55th Psalm he vented his frustration and said he wished that he could just be as free as a dove and simply fly away.

Doves are regular figures in biblical history. Writers have referred to them in a variety of ways to express a variety of emotions through the use of metaphors. When Noah floated on the ark for over a year he sent out a dove to see if there was hope of dry land soon. He knew the bird would return, because doves are actually small homing pigeons. When he opened the window and the dove did not return, he knew the dove had found dry land and stayed there long enough to call the new place home. When the dove did not return, Noah knew the dove had another home. It was a strange case where the bird’s failure to return was actually a sign of hope.

Doves symbolize promise, peace and humility. When Jesus was baptized the dove's presence above him symbolized God's promise. When Jesus sent out his disciples through the world, he told them to be as wise as serpents but as harmless as doves.

Doves are peaceful! Doves are harmless!

However, at the right time, doves can stretch their wings and fly away!

Homing Instinct.

One of the main responsibilities of parents is to help their children develop an appreciation for family and home. That does not come naturally, it is taught by precept and example.

Parents teach their children the importance of family unity, brotherly love and respect. These values are essential to the development and growth of a family.

People who buy doves and try to raise them in their own homes learn a unique thing about their nature. The first thing they learn is that their homing instinct is portable. In essence, if you buy doves in California and bring them to New York, the doves learn that their new home is New York in time. Those in the dove raising profession call the process "homing." By this they mean teaching the doves to know their new homes.

In a similar sense, Christian youth are taught to know the ways of home and the way home on two different spheres.

THE WAYS OF HOME: Young people don't learn the way a home operates out of a book. They don't study a book. They watch their parents. Christian parents know that the best gift they can give their children is the example of a Christian home in operation. Fathers show their children how to love a wife, provide for a household and live honestly and decently. Mothers show their daughters how a wife should be and their sons see in her, the fine qualities they should seek in a wife. Youth who are reared in Christian households soon learn the ways of home. They see how a home celebrates. They see how a home handles trouble and crises. They see how a home mourns. They learn the ways of home.

THE WAY HOME: One of the first things a parent teaches a child that reaches the proper age, is to know their address and phone number. They want that child to know where they live and be able to tell someone else how to get them home if they get lost along the way. Knowing the way home is important, so some families play games with their children to see if they can give directions to someone to tell them how to get them home.

SPIRITUAL INSTINCTS: While every good parent wants to be sure that their children know the way to their physical address, they also want them to know the Lord. That's a part of their home training. Good parents take the time to see that their children attend church, Sunday School and participate in learning activities that will help them to know the ways of their other home, the one not made by hands.

Good parents want them to know how to pray, to respect God and the people of God. Good parents work hard to spiritually "home" their children because they

know the day is coming that they may be called to it and they want them to be prepared.

Understanding the ways of the kingdom of God is learned at home, but good parents also want the children to know the way home.

Despite the best efforts of parents, children may not do things that they have been taught. Like the Prodigal Son of the bible, there are some that simply feel they must travel into the far country. Some don't attend church as they should. Some, once away from their nest, attempt to fly without parental support and go in every direction except the way they were taught. Knowing this truth, many good parents, spend considerable time with their children while they are young trying to make sure that they know the way home! That's important because, even if the child drifts away from home and gets distant from home, he knows the way back!

Like the dove, once the homing instinct has locked in, it doesn't matter how far away life has taken them, believers know how to stretch their wings..

...in a second, before a breath can be drawn,

..before a heart can take a beat,

...before an eye can blink... they know how to stretch their wings and fly!

When Doves Fly

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when doves don't return to your house, they are on their way home!

That's the message that Noah learned on the Ark. Even though the dove found dry land upon which to rest its feet, it would have still returned to the ark if it considered the Ark home. If the dove did not return, it had made another home.

At some point in every believer's life he or she accepts the reality that he or she needs a house down here and a home over yonder.

Jesus said no man knows the day or hour that we shall be called to our home over yonder, so each believer is encouraged to watch day and night.

Any day or second we may be called home. We must constantly be ready to stretch our wings!

Believing parents can rest easy when they have taught their children how to stretch their wings!

That's why good mothers tell their children so much about Jesus! How he died out on Calvary and arose to give them a new home in glory!

Daughter, In the face of failure, stretch your wings!

Son, In the face of difficulties, stretch your wings!

Children, In the face of persecution, stretch your wings!

When people talk about you and put your name on the highway... stretch your wings!

When your way gets dark and you can't see your way, say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go?"

When disappointments come look at the little bird in the sky and say, "Why

should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!

Children be ready, for one of these days, it may be morning night or noon! It may be on a quiet afternoon while you're talking on the phone...You don't know when! You don't know where....there will come a call from glory....be ready to stretch your wings!

One glad morning when this life is over, I'll get a call from glory!

In that moment, in the twinkling of an eye, I'll put the world on hold, drop the receiver and stretch my wings and..

Fly!

Fly!

Fly Away!

—

On Monday, October 11, 1999 Tamara Riley Gordon, talked to a friend on the telephone for the last time. She didn't get to say goodbye because... she had to stretch her wings and fly!

No. 775-Anniversary

Ain't No Danger in God's Water

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 17, 1999

SCRIPTURE: Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Act 27:31

Introduction

How close are you to achieving your goals? Have you ever stopped to measure your own progress. Most organizations pause occasionally to review their progress toward stated goals. Whether it is the corporate sector or private enterprise, it always helps to know that you are sailing on the right ship and that the ship is going in the right direction.

Sometimes those who pursue a certain course in life give their best, but feel that their best is not enough. Sometimes, overwhelmed by the plethora of problems and frustrations that surround them, they simply give up and abandon ship.

On July 4, 1952 Florence Chadwich, aged 34, waded into the water off Catalina Island and began her 21 mile swim toward California. If she had completed her journey, she would have been the first woman ever to accomplish this feat. The water was ice cold, and the fog was so heavy, that Florence could hardly see the boats in her own party. Sharks often began to attack Florence as she swam and men armed with rifles in the boats surrounding her had to drive them off with carefully aimed shots. But the constant numbing cold of the water was her toughest problem. Fifteen hours after she began, she asked to be taken out, her muscles sluggish and unresponsive due to the frigid water. Her mother and trainer, along side in the boat, told her they were near land. They encouraged her not to quit. But as she looked ahead, all she could see was the dense fog.....so she gave up and asked to be taken out of the water. When they pulled her out, she was only a half mile from the California coast! Only a small fraction of her journey was incomplete....she almost did it. Later, when Florence's body began to thaw, the shock of failure finally hit her. To a reporter she blurted out, "Look, I'm not excusing myself. But if I could have SEEN the land, I might have made it."

There are many today who give up personal pursuits because their efforts seem fruitless. Coaches burdened with losing teams throw in towel when the team continues a losing streak. Corporate executives resign for top paying jobs because it appears their efforts are in vain. Even individuals abandon worthy causes, noble projects and great undertakings because it seems that no one cares or pays any attention.

There are many church members who began their journey on the Old Ship of Zion but have lost their zeal and inspiration. Many who were once on fire to change the world, champion the poor, lift up Christ and live cleaner, holier lives have dulled enthusiasm. Instead of the fireballs of energy they once were, they have shriveled to fleeting shadows of what they once were. There were some who came to Christ under the false notion that it would mean riches, prosperity, health and wealth. They were not prepared for the storms that were to come and many have abandoned the ship.

As the church celebrates its anniversary, it looks back at the distance traveled to measure its progress. Anniversary celebrations look back, but they also look forward to remind every traveler on the sea of life, that the goal is near, the time is short and there is less time in front of us than there is behind us.

As Christians, we celebrate anniversaries to see where we have been and where we are going! We know that our salvation is not in abandoning the Christian life and the church, but our salvation comes only if we "abide in the ship." If we abide in the ship, the waters may become treacherous but we will not fear because, "there ain't no danger in God's waters."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul onboard a ship whose crew had become disenchanted and were about to flee.

Paul was on board the ship, as a prisoner, along with 275 other people. He was being sent to Rome to appeal his case to Ceasar. On the way, the ship was accosted by two weeks of violent storm that battered the 276 people on board. Not only did they face the terrible dangers of the storm, but, as they drifted they heard the frightening roar of breakers in the distance. They did not know where they were nor what kind of strange land they might be coming upon nor what kind of shore it would have. When it was pitch dark, in the middle of the night, their fear increased as they heard the breakers pounding against the rocks. They feared their lives were in danger of being lost so they cast down four anger to slow the drift of the ship until they could learn where they were.

If they could have seen their location in the dark it would have been easier. If they could have plotted their position by the stars they would have known where they were, but they couldn't see their location, adding to the stress of the moment.

The sailors on board felt their efforts were useless. They had given their best and the ship still appeared to be aimlessly drifting to destruction. Even though God

had revealed to Paul that they would make it to dry land without the loss of one, they were nevertheless disheartened. Paul kept saying, God has promised them that each would make their destination without the loss of a life, but they were not listening.

The sailors decided that continued effort was futile, so they decided to abandon ship and save their own lives, leaving the rest to survive the best way they could. Paul learned of their plan to abandon ship and told the centurion that was in charge of the ship, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

Ultimately, the people on board all made it to shore, without the loss of one, just as God had promised.

The winds subsided. The turbulence of the sea quieted. God's word and prediction of safety for those who remained on the ship was proven true.

Where are we going?

Every member of a church is happier and more at ease when they know the direction the ship is taking. They are even more encouraged when they can see some signs of progress toward stated goals and objectives.

At anniversaries the local church lifts itself above the fog of everyday circumstance to take a bird's eye view of its journey past, present and future. It's a way of peering above the clouds, to see the land. With respect to the functions of the church, are we getting closer to the land or should we abandon ship.

EVANGELISM: The main function of any church is to save souls. It is the great measuring rod of ministry. As the church looks at its journey, it remembers Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.." Have the evangelism and outreach efforts of the congregation shown any progress toward reaching stated goals? Buildings, budgets and activities are generally meaningless if they do not ultimately result in the saving of souls. Is the church going in the right direction? Any congregation that reaches out for the lost with a missionary zeal will see souls saved, the larger the number of its membership that shoulders the task the greater result. The church IS saving souls! It IS going in the right direction. Stick with the ship!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: Jesus said, "teaching them to observe." The teaching ministry of every congregation must be meaningful, and far reaching. Its aim should be discipleship or making Christians prepared to serve. Moreover, its secondary objective should provide instruction to the congregation in Christian living, family improvement, single living, personal management, Christian careers and other areas that help individual members grow and learn. Is the church going in the right direction with respect to Christian Education? Is there a strong program of Christian Education involving leadership training, Sunday bible schools and regular bible study? The church IS teaching! It IS going in the right direction. Stick with the ship!

MISSIONS: The great commission also called upon the church to become

missionaries. Its aim should be to support the preaching of the Gospel on the missionary fields in Africa, Asia and other areas of the world while at the same time supporting missionary fields in the local community. Many churches have mistakenly labeled mission work as that of the "Women's Department" but the church has a mission, not just the women. The mission is not to sit around and read books about mission and sip coffee!

The mission is to DO mission work. Mission work is seeking ways to help the poor, needy and downtrodden to help themselves. Mission work is helping the helpless and providing assistance to the homeless. Is the church marching toward its missionary objective? Is the support for the foreign mission and home mission strong and vibrant in the congregation? If it is then, then the church IS going in the right direction. Stick with the ship!

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT: The program of every church congregation should be family friendly. It should involve activities that encourage family unity, cooperation and growth. Families want to know if the church is reaching our children. Is the church helping to provide opportunities and activities that will challenge and motivate them to reach their highest potential in Christian living, bible knowledge and personal development?

Churches should provide growth opportunities for singles and married couples seeking ways to grow stronger in the Lord through workshops, retreats and other activities designed to improve their quality of life. Churches should respond to the needs of the elderly, infirmed, and families dealing with the special problems of aging while providing adequate opportunity for seasoned members of the congregation to use their skills and talents in its ministries. Is the church moving in this direction? If it is, then the families on board would do best to stick with the ship!

WORSHIP AND PRAISE: The center piece of every congregation is bible centered worship and praise. Through worship the congregation lifts up the name of Jesus in ways that are meaningful to each generation and to each person. An atmosphere must exist where the believer that wants to lift holy hands can feel free to do so. The person that wants to beat a tambourine, stand and clap holy hands, shout or do the holy dance should feel free to do so. At the same time the church must promote a respect for the truth that God is also worshiped in the reverence of silence and meditation.

While the church encourages praise and adoration it must not forget that there are those who believe what the word says in Zechariah 2:13, "Be silent, O all flesh before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation!" The church must appreciate the worship style of choice of every person without stigmatizing them with labels one way or the other. Worship and praise is important to the life of every congregation.

Members who neglect public worship and hearing the Gospel preached, usually dry up on the vine and receive little support in their quest to live the Christian life. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Romans 10:17. If the church is moving in the right direction, then it is best to stick with the ship!

Ain't no danger

Finally brothers and sisters, the greatest reason to stick with the ship of Zion is that King Jesus is the captain!

When Paul told the Centurion Soldier, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.," the words ring true to every believer today. Those who try to achieve personal goals and ambition by abandoning the church and their active involvement in its ministries are headed for disaster!

Abandoning ship has never been an option for the Saints, because they knew their only hope of surviving and triumphing over difficulties was to stay close to God.

Job, though surrounded by death, sickness and difficulty, refused to abandon ship. He said, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve him!"

Joshua faced an impetuous crowd of people who wanted to go back to Egypt rather than tackle the promise land. Yet Joshua would not abandon ship, he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Saints don't abandon ship because as long as Jesus is the captain of the ship, there ain't no danger in God's water.

In the face of fear, faith in God gives us courage. There ain't no danger in God's water!

In the face of defeat, faith in God gives us victory! There ain't no danger in God's water!

In the face of failure, faith in God shows the way to success! There ain't no danger in God's water!

When Jesus is the captain, it doesn't matter how the storms of life rage!

When Jesus is the captain, it doesn't matter how the winds blow!

When Jesus is the captain, trials may come on every hand, but we stand firm because their ain't no danger in God's water!

Jesus! Somebody knows him!

Jesus! Mary's baby!

Jesus! The sweet Rose of Sharon!

Jesus! Our rock in a weary land!

Died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Don't worry about the winds and the waves!

There ain't no danger in God's water!

No. 776-Revival

O Ye Dry Bones, Hear The Word of the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 24, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." Ezekiel 37:11

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you just didn't care anymore? What happened? Did you lose your enthusiasm? Energy? There are times when even the strongest believer throws up his hands in defeat in the face of overwhelming odds. These are times when the chance of victory seems remote; as the forces against us dwarf more the power we have to mount a reasonable defense. At such times we are likely to throw up our hands and lose hope.

Like a helium filled balloon that gradually loses air, a person who once floated on a high of inspiration and motivation can gradually descend to an untimely landing. In the work place, in school, homes and even in the church, there are millions of people who seem to have lost their will to go forward or pursue a course they once felt driven to follow. For all practical purposes, such people are dead to the causes they once held dear.

Even our society in general is beginning to reflect deathly symptoms. There appears to be a decline in godly inspired family values and morality in general. Those truths we once held dear have degenerated, for the most part into a mere shell of what was once important.

How dead is our society? Even a casual review shows a culture that has distanced itself from what we once believed to be true. We know our society is declining when we see:

-Teenagers deliver live babies and then leave them to die in a dumpster!

Black women described by black men and themselves as "hoes" and noone gets angry!

-We protect doctors who murder babies in mother's wombs and then prosecute men who kill animals.

-Some of the most beautiful girls are becoming lovers of other girls; while some

of the most handsome men are holding hands with other men.

- Many youth praise the holy master on Sunday then pay tribute to another Master the remainder of the week!

Sometimes parents, frustrated over the failure of their children to excel in school give up hope. Marriage partners struggling in unresponsive relationships often dismiss their union as beyond repair and divorce. Schools completely dismiss some students as beyond hope and expell them. Society writes off the same children, and locks them away in detention centers for the rest of their lives. Educators feel frustrated when even their best efforts to revive test scores and student performance, result in dismal results.

Whenever a person or a society as a whole loses hope, it loses the breath that keeps them living and afloat, they diminish to a state similar to that of dry bones. They are lifeless. Their daily activity is minimized to simply getting through another day, without zeal, enthusiasm of motivation.

Is there hope for the generation? Is it beyond saving? If a person reaches such an all time low, can he be revived? Can she be motivated to rise up to live again? Is there any hope for the next generation?

As Christians, we are convinced that the word of God provides the answer to all of life's dilemmas, including our feelings of hopelessness. We know that if we hear the word of the Lord and act on it, his word shall provide the breath of inspiration we need to continue with vigor, despite the enormity of the tasks we face.

Exposition

This text focuses on Ezekiel as he gives a message of hope to the people of Israel.

This text is best understood in the context of its historic background. This text was written during a period when the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Judah the second time (597 BC) to put down a rebellion by King Jehoiakim. But Jehoiakim had died (or was killed) and his son Jehoiachin who had ruled only eight months was taken captive to Babylon.

The Babylonian King took Israel's youngest, brightest, and most talented men and women back to Babylon. Among the 10,000 prominent leaders, soldiers, craftsmen and scholars was was Ezekiel, then 25 years old and in training to be a priest Ezekiel settled in his own house in a village near Nipper along the river Chebar in Babylonia. He prophesied for at least 22 years.

Not only were the Israelites reduced to second class existences in a foreign land, but they felt utterly isolated, utterly cut off from the God of their ancestors. YAHWEH, God of their people, had given their ancestors a land, a good land flowing with milk and honey, and had always been available to them through the temple built strong and solid in the heart of their land.

Now their land had been devastated and they had been torn from it. Their temple had been utterly destroyed, its vast wealth removed and callously hauled off to distant lands.

The people of Israel felt lost, forsaken, desperate. In their own words, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely."

Even the young men like, like those in Ezekiel's age bracket, lost hope. They gave up trying.

Then God gave Ezekiel another of several visions two of which have become famous of the years: "The Wheel in the Middle of the Wheel" and the vision of the "Dry Bones in the Valley!"

This vision depicted the people of Israel who had been scattered into different lands. There spirit of national unity had reached an all time low. Their people were in Assyria, Judea, Babylon and many other places. They gave up hope of ever seeing their homeland again!

For many that feeling of hopelessness translated into a feeling of personal defeat as well. Known for being a people of great enthusiasm and inspiration, they hung their harps on the willow trees and asked, "How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land?"

Ezekiel's vision portrayed a people completely restored, fully alive and living for God, once they decided to hear and abide by the word of God.

Dry Bones Situations

Today there are many who face dry bones situations daily. They face seemingly hopeless scenarios that frustrate them immensely. How do we face the dry bones?

DRY BONE STUDENTS: Often teachers express their anxiety at the lack of motivation, intellect or concern of some of their students. Often there are troublesome students in the classroom who seem to constantly disrupt the normal instructional flow. There are others who seem beyond reaching. Sometimes teachers dismiss problem students as hopeless and focus their attention on those who respond to their best efforts. Once any student accepts the designation of hopeless, they don't improve they get worse. If mother says, "You're just like your no good daddy!" If teacher says, "You're rotten to the core!" If adults say, "He's a bad apple!" It won't be long before that student starts to act accordingly. There is nothing more dangerous or troublesome in a school environment than a hopeless student. Hopeless students are not intimidated by any of the threats of the school system. Expulsion? So what, if the student is failing anyway! Suspension? It's a needed vacation for the hopeless student. Jail? It's no big deal for the student who has given up hope on being anything else except a criminal. The only solution is to inspire hope. This cannot be accomplished electronically or by any artificial means. It must come from the heart and soul of educators. Students must sense that someone believes in them. This is why coaches have more influence over students than even some parents. Some parents are often unsupportive or negative toward those activities that help inspire hope and self esteem in students...coaches fill the gap! For many students the coach is the one source of hope they know! God asked Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" God's answer was "Yes!"

DRY BONE RELATIONSHIPS: Today there are millions of couples that are enduring what they feel are "dry bone" relationships. These may be marriages or courtships that are only shells of what they once were. Some marriages have reached a point where there is little if any communication between spouses. Many only share the same address, but don't even sleep in the same part of the house. Some are just hanging on out of respect for tradition or for the benefit of children. There are even dry bone courtships. These are relationships that are going no where. Partners are going in different directions and each is inconsiderate of the feelings and needs of the other. Hurt feelings, jealousy, tears and frustration are the a hallmarks of such relationships. The principals still see each other, but for all practical purposes the relationship is dead. Can such relationships be salvaged? Can they live again? Can they enjoy the happiness, fun and companionship they once knew? Any fire can be rekindled if there a few coals left. Where there is love there is hope! Why, because in "Love" there is "God" because "God is Love!" Though invisible to the naked eye, love is a powerful reality. Where there is love there is hope. Love endures. Love expects! Love appreciates! 1 Corinthians 13:7 puts it this way, "Beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Can these bones live again? Yes, if they hear the word of God.

DRY SPIRITUALITY: There are many today whose spirituality has declined to meaningless ritualism. Rituals are part of liturgical process. They involve singing hymns, reading scripture, standing or sitting in certain ways and at prescribed times. The complement spirituality and provide a means for its expression, however, ritualism is not a substitute for spirituality. Believers who have a deep sense of spirituality go beyond the ritual to find God. They know him through their daily relationship with him. God is more than a meaningless tradition but a living presence. They serve him best by letting him live through them. Believers who lose sight of the great commission to go, teach, preach and minister to masses of the world, lose their sense of divine mission and calling. When that happens their entire religious experience is reduced to ritual. The man or woman who feeds the hungry senses God's presence in every bowl of food. There is a sense of mission in every kind act done in the name of the Lord. There is closeness to the divine that is developed from carrying out the divine will. Those who distance themselves from living out the mission of the Lord, usually experience a reduced spirituality. As they make noise and pretense in worship, they make plenty of smoke, but there is seldom a blaze of service.

Absent service to others there can no be real spirituality or knowledge of God. For when we merge with him we become his hands and feet for the mission. Can these bones live? Yes, if they hear the word of the Lord!

Hear The Word

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that bones, though dry, can live again!

Ezekiel was asked whether the bones in valley could live again. His response was "thou knowest!"

Despite his dismay at the miserable estate of the bones, Ezekiel knew that even dry bones can live again if empowered by the word of God.

What was told to Ezekiel is that the people could be restored first if they repented and then hear the word of God and then acted on it!

When they heard the word of the Lord, they were able to live again.

No matter how hopeless a situation appears, things change when God gets in the picture.

A family that seems on the virtual of destruction changes, when God gets in the picture!

A relationship that is on the rocks, can get a reprieve, when God gets in the picture!

A situation that seems beyond salvaging can be improved, when God gets in the picture!

The key for the dry bones was to "hear the word of the Lord!"

Today the solution is no less true, O' ye dry bones, hear the words of the Lord!

Are you looking for a fresh start and forgiveness from God? Hear the word of the Lord!

"If my people, which are called by name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sins and heal their land!"

Are you feeling alone? Hear the word of the Lord!"

"And Lo I'll be with you always, even until the end of the world!

Are you plagued by difficulties in your past? Hear the Word of the Lord!

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before"

Are you feeling dejected because of a lack of possessions? Hear the word of the Lord!

"I am come that they might have life and have it more abudandtly!"

When we hear the word of the Lord, the bones can live again!

The bones can come together because he lives!

Because Jesus came!

Because he died and arose!

These bones can live again!

No. 778-Anniv.-Choir

Singing Noonday Songs At Midnight

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 7, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." Acts 16:25

Introduction

Have there ever been times when you could tell that you were going to have a bad day? What were the signs? Sometimes you can sense it before you get out of bed, especially if the time has changed and you forgot to set your clock or you discover that your hot water tank has burst! You know a bad day is coming when you're out of toothpaste, you burn your toast, or have no toast at all, your car won't start, the train sits on the track, but you finally get your child to school on time, only to learn that it's Saturday and there is no school! That's the beginning of a bad day!

On bad days you feel like the prisoner who escaped from a Florida jail and ran through the swamps all night long. He fought off snakes, mosquitoes and hound dogs. He made it through rows and rows of barbed wire and successfully eluded search lights before he dozed off to sleep. When he awoke the next morning, he found himself surrounded by men pointing guns at him. He had broken out of jail and in the darkness broken into a prison. That morning, he knew he was having a bad day! Bad days frustrate everyone, even those who thought they had a good night!

When we feel a bad day beginning, we often want to go back to bed, get up and start over! Bad days drain us and challenge us at the same time. That's when the darkness comes and it feels like midnight at high noon.

On good days we sing a merry song! We glide through the day singing, "We're Blessed, We're Blessed, We're Blessed!" On good days our response to everything is, "God is good all the time!" On good days we sing about the goodness of the Lord! On good days, we assume our places at work or school with unparalleled enthusiasm. On good days our faces smile and our personalities radiate! There is a brilliance about us that illuminates us. Everyone around us can sense that we are having a great day!

However, when we sense that there is a bad day coming and things are not going to be great, what song do we sing? When the midnight is approaching and we can see things getting dark, what is our response. What happens to the big beaming smile? The great feeling of victory we took to work on that great day, does it disappear on a bad day? Are we grouchy? Are we sad? If we had to sing a song when we face a day that is obviously going to be dark and dreary, what do we sing? There are some whose repertoire of midnight songs are best represented by B.B. King's best seller, "Every Day I Sing The Blues!" They cannot find a way to be cheerful in the midst of trouble. Believers on the other hand, hear the good news, see the clues and choose, rather than sing the blues, to praise a God who rules both the night and the day in the same way! Armed with the knowledge that God is in control of both the night and the day, believers approach midnight experiences different than non-believers. A believer's faith teaches him how to sing noon-day songs at midnight. In essence, we learn how to sing God's praises on bad days, just as we sing them on good days!

As Christians, we have learned that the God we serve is just as good at midnight as he is at noon. Whether it's the lion's den, fiery furnace or a shipped tossed on the waves of life, we can still sing his praises because, he is a good God all of the time!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul and Silas as they demonstrated what it means to sing noonday songs at midnight.

One day the two men came upon a slave girl who had an evil spirit that enabled her to predict the future. The slave girl was extremely valuable to her owners, who were not concerned that she was possessed by an evil spirit. They were only concerned that her predictions, evil or otherwise, turned a profit for them.

Paul cast out the evil spirit "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 16.18). At once she was healed. The healing had economic consequences - she could no longer foretell the future. Her owners complained about their loss of fortune.

The Philippian businessmen told the Roman authorities that these Jewish visitors were teaching a religio illicita—an illegal religion. "These men are. . . advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice," they said. And as a result, they added, "These men are. . .throwing our city into an uproar" (vv. 20-21). The apostles were disturbing the pax Romana, in other words. Additionally, the owners were appealing to the racial snobbery of the Philippian authorities. Philippi was a Roman colony whose residents, mostly Romans, were proud of their heritage and their government. They thought they were superior to everyone else. "These inferior Jews have come here to trouble us and teach us a religion that is illegal," the slave owners were saying.

Paul and Silas were seized and dragged before the Roman officials on the charge that they were Jews who were breaking the law which forbade proselytizing Roman citizens. They were stripped, whipped and thrown into the inner cell. That day had all of the markings of a real bad day.

Despite their circumstance, the two men still had positive spirits. Despite being jailed, beaten and falsely accused they remained joyful.

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them" (v. 25).

The end result of their midnight worship is that God answered their prayers and praises by causing an earthquake that opened jail doors and led to their ultimate release.

Their ability to pray at midnight impressed the prisoners and the guards and won converts for Jesus!

Their ability to praise at midnight shined a light of hope that everyone around them could see.

They gave evidence, in this final moment, of how important it is to be able to sing noonday songs at midnight!

Preparing to Sing

The best way to deal with bad days is to prepare for them on good days. Just as those who prepare for musical presentations take certain steps, believers also prepare themselves for the storms of life, while the skies are clear. Good singers follow several steps, among them are:

KNOW THE WORDS: Good singers are those who know the words to a song. Very few entertainers sing our favorite songs to us using musical sheets. Good singers know the words of their songs. They sing best when the words also have a meaning for them. The words testify to truths and principles upon which the singer believes and thus they become alive for him or her. Thus a singer who sings, "He's an on time God," knows the truths represented by the words. That singer knows God and what he can and will do.

To be prepared for the storms of life every person must know the Word and "words" of God. Since John tells us that, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." It is important for everyone to know "The Word" of God. Knowing God means to understand how he operates. When we know how God operates we are not intimidated by the storms of life because we know that although he appears to be asleep in the midst of our trouble, he will present himself in the nick of time and say, "Peace be still." Not only do we know "The Word" of God, we make sure that we know the "words" of God. When we know God's words, then we know what he has promised us and we are encouraged. We are encouraged because we remember that he promised, "never to leave me, never to leave me alone."

Our past experience with God helps us to know him. Our study of his written word helps us to know his words. When know God and his words, we are better prepared for the midnight.

WE MUST REHEARSE: All singers know the value of rehearsal. At rehearsal singers learn the expression of the song. They feel its mood and get a feel for its flavor. During rehearsals singers learn how their part fits in with those of others. At

rehearsals they learn to read the signals of the director and know the silent but universal language of choir directors that indicates when they are to keep going, when to return and when to come to a halt. After a good rehearsal, singers are more confident of their ability to handle the demands of the presentation and are able to lift their voices in praise with boldness!

To sing noonday songs at midnight, believers must not miss the rehearsals. The word "rehearse" means to rehear. We are able to withstand the trials and troubles that life presents in the midnight with an upbeat spirit because we have built up our faith in the noon day! Romans 10:17 puts it this way, "Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." That means the more we hear the word of God, the more our faith is strengthened. The more we hear that God will make a way, the more we strengthen our faith to carry it out!

Those who are able to stand strong in the time of trouble, do so because their faith has been built upon years of "hearing the Gospel" and building their faith.

WE MUST BE ABLE TO SING THE TUNE, EVEN IF THERE IS NO MUSIC: The best singers are those who can sing with or without music. Under the best conditions, singers are accompanied by great musicians who embellish their songs with beautiful orchestrations and vocal accompaniment. These are usually described as backup. It is great to have backup, but the best singers are those who carry the melody in their hearts. With or without backup, they are still able to sing the tune, because the melody is in their heart.

When the melody is in his heart, a believer knows what to say and when. In the morning noon or midnight, a believer knows that it doesn't matter what the day brings, as long as God is still on the throne, all things will work to his good. She recites that at noonday and she remembers it at midnight.

What to do at Midnight

Finally brothers and sisters, this text gives us an example of what to do when midnight comes.

It illustrates the attitude that we should take into every midnight situation, which is the attitude that God is in control here as well.

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 Paul said, "We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." In 2 Corinthians 6:9 he said Christians were "known, yet regarded as unknown; dying,
and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

Thus, the word reminds every believer: "In the midnight, remember who you are!"

Even if circumstances plunge us into dark moments when we are tempted to get our heads bad, we should remember Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with

psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus, the word reminds us: "In the midnight, remember to sing your noonday song!"

Believers who face the midnight, face circumstances where they must stand alone. There is no backup. Friends have disappeared! Co-Workers who boldly encouraged us in the day are no where to be found at midnight! When your family and friends misunderstand you and those who are close to you doubt you, that's the time when it is hard to hear the music!

At midnight, we often to come to the reality that some whom we thought were our friends were not our friends at all. At midnight, it's hard to hear the music!

At midnight, the evidence of our failures flashes before us like neon lights for all the world to see! At midnight, it's hard to hear the music!

At midnight the Godly walk seems frustrating and unrewarding, because we see the ungodly doing so well! At midnight, it's hard to hear the music!

At midnight the saints act a little different than the rest of the world. People wonder how you are able to continue, although you are operating under such a heavy load.

They know you are shouldering a burden all by yourself, but you seem to demonstrate a confidence that could only come from God himself.

They know the music and the fanfare that once surrounded you and the crowds of friends that once backed you up have disappeared! The wonder what keeps you going!

At midnight, even if there is no music, believers still have the words inscribed upon their hearts. Though times get tough, they still know how to sing:

"If the world from you withhold of it silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word, how he feeds the little bird, and take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

Midnight is the time, when those who once helped you are no where to be found! Folks who know you are mystified that you keep praising God despite being alone.

What they don't know is that at midnight, even when we can't hear the music, believers can still sing the tune, "What a friend we have a Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege it is to carry, everything to God in prayer!

Midnight is the time when everyone says, "I don't understand how you can be so high spirited! You have trouble all around you and nobody seems to be looking out for you! How can you be so happy?"

What they don't know is that midnight, even when we can't hear the music, a believer can still sing the tune, "Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? When Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he! His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.."

I sing because I'm happy!

I sing because I'm free!

For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!

At midnight every believer needs a song sing!

When trouble turns your bright day into darkness, you should be able to sing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!

When the way gets dreary and you can't see a way to escape, we should be able to sing, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

At midnight when the storms of life are raging, stand tall and sing, "My soul is anchored in the Lord!"

Out on Calvary the sky turned black!

Jesus hung with nails in his hands!

At midnight, somebody wrote a song for him sing!

"Go ahead, laugh at me!

"Go ahead, drive the nails in my hand!

But I'll rise again! Ain't no power on earth can keep me down!

It may look like midnight right now, but because he lives every believer can sing, "I'll rise again!

No. 779-Membership Improvement

Living Single In A Married Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 13, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Introduction

Have you ever considered marriage? There are thousands of single believers who spend much of their time looking for a marriage partner. Men are looking for the ideal mate who has beauty, body and brains. The ideal woman for such a man is the woman who has the beauty and body of Miss America and the brains of an MIT honor scholar. With such high standards, many men are still looking for that ideal woman. Women are also looking for that ideal person. The want a man who has the muscles of Mr. America, a wall street check book, and the looks of Billy D. Williams. They want a man like Stella's, who can help them get their groove back. Many, both males and females find it difficult to live single in these difficult times. The temptation to step outside of the bounds of morality threatens at each term. Considering marriage is a serious step for a single person.

Some people are single by choice. Others don't have much choice. Consider old man Charlie. He was the oldest member of the Happy Hearts Baptist Church. Not only was he the oldest member, he was the only member who had reached his golden years without being married once. That fact amazed the members who finally asked him on his 90th birthday, why he was still single. He gave the members a toothless grin and said, "When I was young, there wasn't a woman anywhere that looked good enough for me!" When I was middle aged, I couldn't see where I was going for looking at every woman I saw. Now that I'm old, even if I see what I'm looking for, I can't do nothing with what I git, so I might as well stay single!"

The image of the single man or woman is that of a happy go lucky, wild, rolling stone that moves from place to place, and relationship to relationship with little thought of what it might mean for their personal future. While that is the image, it is not necessarily the case for every person who is single. There are millions of singles that contradict the stereotype.
They are moral, chaste, and conservative with their time, talents and resources. They are careful in their relationships and serious about endeavors in which they are involved. Being single is not a curse of youth or a state of being a victim in old age, it is an opportune time to be of greater service in the kingdom of God.

As Christians, we strive to give God the best we have everyday. We pray, worship and praise him constantly. We lift him up perpetually. The fewer our personal involvements, the more time we have to focus on the building of the kingdom, with the knowledge that in the fulness of time God will send the proper mate for the single man or woman who wants to be married to the work of building of the kingdom of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he gives a personal opinion on the advantages of the single life.

In writing to the Corinthians on this subject, Paul made it clear that he had not received a direction from God to speak on this subject, but offered them the advantage of apostolic counsel on the subject of single living.

Paul made it clear in his counsel that living single is not a moral issue at all. Persons who live single commit no sin or do wrong, simply because they choose to live the single life. In earlier passages he discussed the handling of sex drives and sexual immorality for either married or single. However, in this context, there is no discussion of morality as it relates to being single because simply "being single" is not a moral issue at all.

Since there is no moral issue involved, the Lord was silent on this subject. The Lord had not spoken to this either publicly during his ministry or in private in the revelations he gave to the apostle. Therefore, Paul says he does not speak with a command of the Lord. But he suggests that he is given this as a subject to be settled by apostolic guidance. Thus, Paul makes it clear that he is offering prayerful advice on the handling of singles with respect to the work of the church.

Paul's counsel is that the single life has its advantages.

Those who ae single are flexible and can adapt more quickly to changes or sudden crises or catastrophes. Paul referred to the perilous times of the biblical setting but it also applies to any perilous times, noting that those who work for the kingdom are better able to respond if they are single to any need for missionary outreach.

While Paul extolls the advantages of single living, he is not trying to put down marriage. He is trying to lift up singleness as a perfectly proper way of life. Those

who choose it are not secondary citizens, he is saying. They are exercising an option that is available to every person. Each adult has the option of marrying or remaining single.

Those who marry, said Paul, have "worldly troubles" or increased responsibilities. These responsibilities, decrease one's ability and availability to respond to the outreach and evangelistic needs of the church.

Single living makes it easier to put the church and its work at the top of one's personal priority list. While the mandate to put God first applies to everyone, it is less difficult for those who are single, who do not have to make choices regarding the needs of a husband or a wife, weighed against the needs of their church.

Thus, Paul gives strong advice to the churches: promote single living because it is the opportune time for service to the outreach needs of the church.

Living Single

There are many today who are single, in a church that is married to Jesus Christ. There are some who are comfortable doing just that. Consider what happened when two men, both divorcees, were sitting around talking. One said he had joined an organization called "Marriage Anonymous." The other said he had heard of "Alcoholics Anonymous" but he had never heard of "Marriage Anonymous." "Well", said the first, "Marriage Anonymous" is for those of us who have married so many times and flunked out each time. What they do is give us this phone number. Each time we start feeling like we want to get married they send a woman to our homes, dressed like our former wives and saying the last thing we heard them say. The woman stays and does whatever it was that irritated us over and over again, until that marriage feeling disappears!"

We have the choice of being single or married but those who choose the single life are part of the church, the body of Christ, which is married to Jesus Christ himself. Thus we have the responsibility to make the following considerations:

LIVING SINGLE IS NOT FREEDOM TO LIVE IMMORALLY: While the bible encourages a person to live single, the purpose is not to encourage immoral living, but the freedom to work for Christ without the entanglements of marriage and family. Those who are single have the same obligation to live morally pure lives as those who are married. Fornication, adultery and other forms of immorality are just as unacceptable for singles as they are for everyone else. 1 Corinthians 6:15 puts it this way, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid! Single living offers freedom from complications, but it does not offer the believer the freedom to be immoral.

LIVING SINGLE GIVES TIME FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT: Many singles have discovered that they are not ready for a mate, because they have not yet developed wholly into the Christian they desire to be. God is preparing a Christian mate for every Christian man and woman, but single believers may not be ready to

receive what God has prepared, unless they themselves
have progressed in their own spiritual development. Spiritual maturity implies the ability to prioritize our lives in a way that would please God. A spiritually mature life puts God first (Matthew 6:33). It is the life that places self in the background and pursues the wishes and demands of God first. Believers need time to assume this attitude. Once the kingdom of God has become a top priority, then a single believer is ready to receive the mate that God has prepared. Remember, while God is preparing a mate for you...he is also preparing YOU for somebody. Neither of you are ready for each other until both have assumed the attitude of following Christ fully. Singles who have not yet matured in their spirituality, may not even recognize the man or woman that God has prepared for them because they are looking for qualities that are not spiritual. However, once a believer sanctifies his or her life, they see life and their potential mates with a different eye, that does not always consider looks, money or any physical characteristic at all.

SINGLE BELIEVERS ARE MARRIED TO THE CHURCH: While a single believer is not married to an individual, he or she IS married to the church. It may sound strange, but every believer should follow Christ's example in this respect. Christ was single! He had not wife or mate, yet he was married to the church, referred to in Revelation as the "Bride of Christ." That
means that single males work to provide for the church, protect the church and to see that the church grows in spirituality. Male singles love the church and its ministries to the point of sacrifice with respect to time, talent and resources. Female believers are also married to the church. They care for the church and nurture its children in the faith. They become the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 with respect to the church. They are loyal to the church and seek to promote its ministries until death separates them. As the bride of Christ, they keep themselves spotless, always living in hope and faith.

Living in Faith

Finally, brothers and sisters, whether believers are single or married, they share one common bond, they are both trusting and believing in Jesus Christ!

It is just as easy to live a single secular life as it is to live a single spiritual life. But the reasons people give for not joining the church are similar to those given by those who refuse to get married.

There are some who say they don't want to get married because they are turned off by the marriage of others they have seen. They have seen cheating husbands and wives that slip around, so they don't want to get married.

There some who don't want to come to unite with Christ because they have seen so much cheating.

They have seen preachers, deacons and so many members who are married to the church but run around with the devil!

There are some who do not want commitments. They like the convenience of

packing up and moving on whenever they feel like it. They won't marry anyone because they want to be like a rolling stone.

In the same sense there are those who shy away from hooking up with the church. They don't want to make any commitments. They want to be ready to move from one church to another, whenever the feeling hits them.

There are some who are afraid to fall in love. They are afraid if they let themselves go that they may give their hearts and souls away. Anytime they get close to making a commitment, they back away!

There are many who stay away from the church for the same reason. They are afraid they may fall in love!

There is a man that is in love with but us, but many of us are afraid to let him love us!

There is a man who wants to provide for our every need, but we are afraid to hold his hand!

There is a man who wants to give us life and give it more abundantly, but we are afraid to give him our lives!

Is there such a person?

Is there one who would love us so much that he would lay down his life for us?

The word of God says, "For God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him,
should not perish but have everlasting life!"

You can be single, but be married to church!

You can be single, and give your life wholly to God!

Whether you are single or married, God is still God!

He's the same God that wakes you up in the morning and puts you to sleep at night!

He's the same God who wipes the tears from your eyes and raises up your bowed down head!

Keep your hand in his hand!

Walk with him and talk with him!

For he loves you!

He loves you so much that he picked up and old rugged cross!

Died out on Calvary!

Arose after three days!

...And he's coming back again!

Whether you single or married...

He's coming back!

He's coming back!

For all who love him!

No. 780-Funeral

Jesus Loved "Sister"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 19, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." John 11:5

Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether God cares about you and your family? At times it appears that God is not aware of our families. There are times when it appears that other families are spared hardships, trouble and frustration because God seems to care for them in ways that he has not cared for us. They appear happier, healthier and less burdened by the troubles of the world. It appears that God smiles on others frequently and often ignores our struggling family, its problems and frustrations. Even within our families, there are times when individual members feel that God has favored a sister or a brother more than another and they compete to win what little attention is available. When sickness, death, misfortune or failure comes to a family that tries hard to live the honorable life, the soul is tempted to ask, "Does God care about us?" Why is this misfortune falling on us? There have been many who have quietly asked that question.

In ancient times the common view of God was that he was distant and impersonal. The Greeks believed that there were many Gods who lived on Mount Olympus, under the leadership of Zeus. Even in their mythological concept of God, they rarely viewed him as personal in any way.

The idea of a personal God that blesses, curses, hears and answers prayers of individual humans was a new concept, introduced by the Children of Israel who perceived themselves as special in the world, as God's chosen people. Through Israel, God demonstrated that he is not distant, but personal. He showered them with blessings, protection and unusual national success for generations. Moreover, he demonstrated that he responds to the needs of individuals for food, clothing, shelter, spiritual growth and maturity.

There is no one that can escape the love of God. The kings in a palace or the bag woman on the street are both loved by God in the same way. He causes the sun to rise on all of his creation and does not selectively eliminate those who consider themselves disfavored. He showers us with love, even when it appears that we have been neglected, ignored or even rejected. God loves everyone with equal intensity.

He loves the seen and unseen, the great and the small, the known and the unknown, with equal passion.

It is easy for believers to accept God's love when his actions bring us joy. It is more difficult for us to understand that he still loves us, when his action or lack of action seem to bring pain and difficulty in our lives. That's why Paul found it necessary to remind believers in Romans 8:28, "... that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

As Christians, we have come to know that God loves us. He blesses us in ways that we cannot see. He sustains us in the course of this life with physical and spiritual nurture. However, when this life becomes too much of a burden for us, he also loves us enough to carry us to a better life.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he demonstrates his love for a special family that experienced pain and death.

Jesus was away when Lazarus, a personal friend, became ill. This family was greatly favored by Jesus who showed it great personal attention. Martha, Mary and Lazarus were well known in the community and were often blessed with the opportunity to fellowship with Jesus personally. They were aware of Jesus' special ministry and his divine nature. Their fellowship had grown beyond casual acquaintance. They were Jesus' friends.

When Lazarus became ill, the sisters sent word to Jesus to come and heal him. When Jesus received their message, he continued his ministry and did not come to Bethany immediately. He waited.

When he finally arrived, Lazarus had been buried for four days. The sisters were distraught. They were frustrated because it appeared that Jesus had ignored them. They assumed that his delayed response to their time of need caused the death of Lazarus. In their pain, they lashed out at Jesus saying, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" (v.21)

Despite their frustration, John notes that, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus!" The individual nature of John's statement is of peculiar importance. John's statement meant Jesus loved the family. By accentuating each member of the family by name, it underscored the fact that Jesus not only loved its members as a family, but also loved them individually.

Jesus explained that his apparent delay in responding to their call was not a delay at all, but an opportunity for him to demonstrate the resurrection power to the world. Afterwards, despite the doubts of all those around, Jesus went to Lazarus' grave and spoke words that caused him to walk from the tomb alive!

His delay was not a delay at all. What appeared to be neglect was not neglect at all. The family learned that Jesus in fact, did love them individually and as a whole, despite the appearances of the moment.

Jesus Loves The family

Today, every believing family should consider the underlying message of this simple text. God loves our family and he loves every member of the family. Despite circumstances, difficulties, frustrations, sickness and even physical death, Jesus still loves the family. Taken separately, the meaning of the text becomes even clearer.

Jesus Loves Marthas!

Jesus loves the Marthas of the family. Martha was the doer in the family. She took charge, expressed hospitality and showed a unique ability to get things done and achieve. She was not the older sister and found her name often listed second in the order of age and priority. Yet the family depended upon Martha because of her history of achievement, to make sure that obligations were met and details were satisfied.

In every family there are Marthas. They are the achievers. They are the ones who seem to rise to meet every challenge, overcome every obstacle and survive! The Marthas of the family often receive the accolades and praise. The Marthas are usually the best known, even though they may not be the oldest members of the family. Somehow they shine.

Sometimes the Martha's of the family get frustrated and become emotional with others who are not as precise or as concerned with obligation and responsibility. That's what happened once when Jesus was a guest at their home and Martha became upset with her sister because it appeared that she was not as hospitable to Jesus as she should be. In Luke 10:38-40 she even asked Jesus to speak to her sister about her apparent lack of interest in the details of the service, choosing to listen and absorb the truths being taught by Christ rather than actively being involved in the service. Martha wanted her sister to be more aggressive in the service, but she chose a quieter, almost invisible course for herself. Yet Jesus responded in Luke 10:42, that her sister had "chosen a good part which shall not be taken away from her."
Jesus loves the Marthas of the family!

Jesus Loves Lazaruses

Jesus loves the Lazaruses of the family. The name Lazarus means "One whom God helps." Lazarus came to represent those members of the family that always seem to need support. Two people in the Bible were named Lazarus. Both of them seemed to need help. One was the subject of a parable told by Jesus of a poor man who begged for bread for crumbs that fell from the table of the rich. He begged for help. Lazarus in this text was sick and had been dead for four days. He received help from Jesus in a most unusual way.

In every family there are Lazarus members. These are the family members who try their best but cannot stand without assistance. Sometimes they even find their

best efforts buried, dreams crushed and ambitions destroyed. Often these family members find themselves buried in depression, and self pity.

It is these members of the family that God often uses to show the world and other family members how he revives defeated lives, changes pessimistic attitudes and restores lost ambitions. These are the family members who have experienced the bitterness of failure, divorce, disillusionment and career dissolutions. It is these family members that appear to be beyond help that God can use to demonstrate his power by standing before the tomb of their failed experience and declaring, "Lazarus come forth!"

Yes, Jesus loves the Lazaruses of the family!

Jesus Loves "Sister"

Jesus loved "Sister" or Mary. Mary knew the Lord and gained notoriety for her humility. This was the Mary that was so humble that she stooped to washed Jesus feet with precious oils and dried them with her hair. Designating her in this passage as "sister" generalized her status to represent those who know God in a humble, almost invisible way, but are always willing to do that which is necessary to further the ministry, but their names are seldom called or identified with the ministry.

In every family there are "Sisters." The Marys are the quiet members of the family. They do their part, but are not as visible as others. The Marys seldom get their names in the paper and are almost never seen on television. "Sister" represents that army of family members who contribute to the family through their warm smiles, loving spirits, caring hearts and humble natures. Often their work is done outside of the public eye. Those close to them know of their heartfelt love and devotion and humble spirit.

"Sister" knew the Lord. She was raised in a God fearing family that understood how God operates.

"Sister" paid attention to living the Godly life. In every aspect, she is recorded as one who carried herself in a godly fashion and espoused Godly characteristics.

"Sister" believed in finding Jesus. When she learned that Jesus was in town, Mary found Jesus and went to him to share her hurt with him. He felt her pain! He felt her anguish and John 11:35 records that "Jesus Wept!

Jesus loved Sister!

Jesus loved Martha and Lazarus!

Jesus loved the whole world! John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

To demonstrate his love for the world, Jesus died on Calvary and arose alive and strong to keep loving every member of the family!

Today, we rejoice because we know that Jesus loved Sister!

Jesus loved Sister enough to bless her with a warm and caring spirit!

Jesus loved Sister enough to encourage her in her hours of loneliness!

Jesus loved Sister enough to lift her when she stumbled in life!
Jesus loved Sister enough to carry her when she could not stand!
Jesus loved Sister enough to strengthen her when she was weak!
Jesus loved Sister enough to surround her with sisters in her final hours!
Jesus loved Sister enough to save her from her pain and continued agony!
Jesus loved Sister so much that he saw her declining health, failing spirit, and troubled soul and called her home!

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On Sunday, November 14, 1999, Evelyn Gunn Burrell, lay in a bed surrounded by her sisters in a nursing home, uncomfortable, and troubled. In that moment, Jesus loved "Sister" ...enough to carry her home!

No. 781-Funeral

Milestones

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

November 20, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it." Genesis 28:18

Introduction

How do you commemorate events that mark turning points in your life? Sometimes there are photographs of childhood accomplishments that seem small by adult standards: our first steps, first birthday party, or high school graduation; they all marked important moments. Sometimes there are certificates and plaques that line our walls that mark the achievement of a life time goal, completion of a professional quest or our retirement from an area of endeavor. Sometimes there are what-nots on a shelf that are small mementoes of travels and good times. To others these mementoes are simply match books, salt shakers and empty glasses, but each has a special meaning to the person who owns them. Each memento has its own story that describes a range of emotions from excitement and depression to courage and fear. When these mementoes mark significant moments, they are usually referred to as "Milestones." Each life has its milestones.

Our milestones tell the story of our journey. They even reveal aspects of our lives that are otherwise obscure. Sometimes milestone moments reveal secrets. Consider the couple that celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. It was a great milestone of accomplishment and the entire family joined them as they renewed their vows after 50 years. As the couple stood at the altar to mark this historic occasion the minister had to speak loudly because the wife was hard of hearing. As they exchanged vows, the husband told his wife, "After 50 years, I've found you to be tried and true!" The wife couldn't hear and she said, "What did you say?" This time the husband shouted, "I said, After 50 years I've found you to be tried and true!" The wife said, "Don't feel bad, after 50 years, I'm tired of you too!"- Sometimes mile stones reveal long kept secrets.

If someone could retrace our life's journey, what would we learn from reading the inscription of each of our milestone moments? They would see the times we succeeded. They would see the times that we celebrated! They would see others that marked our failures and disappointments. They would see the moments that we stood

alone and those that marked our greatest frustration. If they read all of the stones that marked our journey they would see the point which we reached a decision to rise above our apprehensions and seize the moment. They would see stones that marked turning points in our lives.

As Christians, we acknowledge that our lives have not always been what they are since we entered into covenant with Christ. The day we met him, was an important milestone that changed our lives and our destinies. The day we gave our lives to Christ is perhaps the most important mile stone in our lives, because it marks the beginning of a new direction in faith and mastery of personal frailty.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he erects a milestone to acknowledge a turning point in his life.

Jacob, a patriarch of Israel, began his life endowed with many gifts. He had a deep an introspective mind, a keen sense of timing and a sense of destiny. When he left his father's house, he traveled to live with his uncle Laban. However, along the way he stopped to rest, using a stone for a pillow. During the night, God showed him a ladder reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending. The vision, though prophetic in nature, had personal implications to Jacob. Even though the vision projected Christ as the ultimate mediator between God and man, giving mankind access to God, Jacob saw the ladder vision as a sign indicating that he could reach as high as heaven, with respect to his personal growth.

That dream marked a turning point in his life. It marked his decision to pursue his life dream with an evangelical zeal. He took the stone that he had used as his pillow and set it upright until it formed a pillar, poured oil over it and sanctified that place. At that point in his journey, he recognized no limits to his potential.

Others who passed the simple stone pillar on the road would not recognize it as important. The stone pillar only had a meaning to Jacob. He saw the vision alone. He met the turning point alone. To all others, Jacob's milestone was simply a stone sitting on its side.

Jacob's use of the stone to mark an important occasion was not unique. When Israel crossed over the River Jordan, Joshua commanded the people to take 12 stones out of the river bed and set them as an altar on the bank. Joshua said the stones would serve as a remembrance to future generations who would ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" The stones would provide the opportunity to tell the story of what God did for the people in this place.

A thousand years later, the Romans would build roads, well paved with stone, between the chief cities of their eastern provinces. Common travelers on the Roman built road often marked their journey by the erection of markers called, "mille passus" (Latin for "A thousand paces") The purpose of the "mille passus" or milestones was to indicate to the traveler how far he had traveled, giving him an idea how far he had to go to complete his journey.

Jacob's stone was unique because it was not a mile marker, or a "mille passus." A mile marker is not placed along the road by the traveler, but by the one who builds the road. It only counts miles traveled. A stone of remembrance, however, is placed by the traveler himself to note an important occurrence along the way. It was a stone of remembrance. It was Jacob's stone. It identified his experience. Had it been his brother that had placed the stone it would have been Esau's stone. His father's stone would have been Isaac's stone. It was personal and meaningful.

When Jacob began his life journey he set up a stone of remembrance. Years later, when he was on his way home, he came back to the very same stone and remembered what he had promised God and what God promised him.

He wrestled with God that night. He came to grips with his destiny and left, much older and not as healthy as he began, but stronger with respect to his relationship with God and with those around him.

When Jacob went home, he left his stone, a visible epitaph for others to see and perhaps ask, "What is the meaning of this stone?"

What Do Your Stones Say?

Every person is a traveler along the road of life. While the years that pass mark our "mille passus," there are points when each individual erects his own stone of remembrance. It marks a personal turning point in our lives for better or worse.

STONE: LISTENING TO GOD: When Jacob slept, he slept on a hard rock. While sleeping on a hard rock God showed him his possibilities. Believers have learned that despite the obscurity of our humble beginnings that all things are possible when we put God first. Like Jacob, a young man who had nothing but a hard way to go and an uncertain future, God can lift us from the realms of obscurity and place in positions of prominence, importance and power. The ladder Jacob saw, inspired him! In the same way, every believer reaches a point in life in which he or she believes that the sky is the limit! It may have been the inspiring words of a favorite teacher, preacher, coach or family member that helped us achieve that confidence, but once acquired, like Jacob, we scaled the ladder of life with steadfast commitment! The day we decided to get an education and pursue one course in life or another, is an important stone of remembrance because it marks the point when we accepted the possibility that, despite our circumstances, we could achieve, with the help of the Lord!

STONE: DEDICATION TO GOD: When Jacob awoke he took his pillow and turned it into a pillar. That pillar became a point of dedication. It designated a time and place where he decided that his life work would be dedicated to God and that which is uplifting rather than that which is destructive and ungodly. Like Jacob, there are many who have also decided to make their life work one that reaches and teaches others to rise above circumstances and be the best they can be. The pursuit of any life goal requires dedication and a sense of destiny. Too many begin their life work with one controlling thought in mind, "how much will I get paid." It is dedication that drives and motivates us to go beyond just the superficial and strive to climb life's

letter with enthusiasm and zeal. Those whose life work directly touches the lives of people such as educators, ministers and others should be prepared to do what is necessary to help raise the quality of life of God's people without hesitation.

STONE: WRESTLING WITH GOD: Along the course of his life journey, Jacob had to come to grips with himself. His life had gone full circle. While he had many admirable traits there were other things about his past experience that troubled him. Before he could go home, Jacob wrestled with an angel of God. In essence, he wrestled with himself all night long, deciding his life direction. He emerged a blessed man! Similarly, every person reaches a point in their own lives when they must search their own souls. In the course of that soul searching we see every mistake we have made, every error we have made and we grab hold to the God of our salvation and we hold on until we are forgiven, renewed and restored! "I won't let you go until you bless me!" Jacob told the angel. Once blessed, Jacob met his future with boldness and spent his remaining days as a great witness for the Lord!

The man who wrestles with God and walks away lifted, inspired and renewed, knows he has been blessed! His stone of remembrance marks the time and the place when he lost his match with God, gave himself over completely to his mission and said, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me!"

Milestones

Finally brothers and sisters, there is one last stone of remembrance that every believer wants to leave behind, it's the memory of a life lived for the Lord.
Every believer leaves behind a stone of remembrance that tells the story of his journey! Every Saint from ancient times unto the present erects a stone of remembrance!

There was a stone of remembrance erected by Moses. His stone tells how he spent 40 years thinking he was somebody in Pharaoh's court, then spent another 40 years learning he was nobody watching the herds of Midian, and then spent his last 40 years learning that God can take a nobody and turn him into a somebody!

Joshua had stones of remembrance. These stones mark the day that the Lord rolled back the waters of Jordan! These stones show how God brought us over on dry land!

David had a stone of remembrance. They tell the story of a little boy who faced a giant with only five smooth stones and a slingshot! It tells of a man so comfortable with God that he could write, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

Elijah had a stone of remembrance! It tells of the day that I climbed Mt. Carmel and challenged the prophets of Baal!

A Widow woman had a stone of remembrance! It tells of the day that she was down to her last barrel of meal and her last cruz of oil. It tells how she trusted in God and her barrel never ran dry!

Paul had a stone of remembrance! His stone stands in the middle of the Damascus Road. It tells of a man who tried to fight against God until he met him face to face!

Paul had a stone, his was "Paul's stone"

David had a stone, his was "David's Stone!"

Joshua had a stone, his was a “Joshua Stone!”

But if there was a Milestone, what would it say today?

It would say a man passed by here who had his own faults and failures, but despite his own weaknesses, he tried to help somebody as he passed along! He tried to cheer somebody with a word or song and his living was not in vain!

If there was a Milestone it would mark the place where a man of the world became a man of God!

If there was a Milestone it would mark the place where a school teacher became a Christian Educator!

If there was a Milestone it would mark the place where an accomplished musician became a powerful pulpiteer!

If there was a Milestone it would mark the place where a tired traveler decided that I’m tired of walking this tedious journey, I’m gonna get me a ticket on a heaven by train!

I’m going to place where the wicked will cease from troubling! Where the weary will be at rest!

I’ve got a ticket that was bought and paid for a long time ago, on a hill called Calvary!

Jesus paid for that ticket, when he picked up an old rugged cross!

Jesus paid for the ticket, when he died out on Calvary!

Jesus paid for that ticket, when arose after three days and nights!

Jesus paid it all!

All to him I owe!

Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

On Tuesday, November 16, 1999 Richard O. Miles, Jr., stood at the depot of time to board the heaven bound train. Those who don’t know his story, can read it on the Milestones he left behind!

No. 782-Inspiration

I've Got To Tell Somebody

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 21, 1999

SCRIPTURE:""And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;" Mark 7:33-36

Introduction

Have you ever had something to happen to you that was so good that you just had to tell someone? Suppose one of the conditions of acceptance required that you keep it a secret? It is extremely difficult to hold on to good news. The person who gets a new car wants to drive it around town for a few days to let others see. What good is a new dress, if no one ever sees it! If you receive a huge diamond ring for your anniversary, it's of little value if you can't let anyone know that you have it! It is human nature to want to share good news and suppress bad news. We want everyone to know about our blessings. We are not excited about the prospect of our failures, like dirty laundry, being hung out for the world to see. It's just the opposite with our blessings and successes. Part of the joy of such moments is being able to share them with others.

Even if secrecy is a condition of receiving a gift, we are still tempted to let it slip. Consider the little boy who always wanted a television set in his room. Every one of his friends had a television set in their rooms and they constantly teased him by telling him how they could lay back in their beds and watch their favorite television program. The boy was in complete anguish. After several months of begging, his parents told him they would get him a television, but they were disturbed about the reason he wanted one. "If we get you a television, you must promise not to tell your friends that you have one," his father said. That was disturbing to the youth, what good would it be if he couldn't tell them? Reluctantly, the youth agreed. The television set came in a big box.

After unpacking the box the youth sat and watched his set. He laid back on his bed and used his remote control. When the telephone rang, he watched but couldn't tell his friends anything. The promise he made was killing him, but he never said a word. A few days later some of his friends came over to his house and blurted out, "We came over to see JJ's new T.V.!" Angry, the father carried JJ into a side room.

"I thought you promised never to say a word to your friends!" The boy looked at his father with a devilish smile, dipped in sincerity, and said, "I knew you would want me to have a clean room, so I cleaned up my room real good..and I put the television box on the side of the street! I didn't say anything, they saw my box!" He had to tell somebody, even if we just show the box!

During the life and ministry of Christ there was a time or two when he blessed people and told them not to tell anyone! It was hard for them to do. Some did, but some could not keep it! In modern times however, no one is told to keep their blessings from God a secret. In fact, those who are blessed are told just the opposite. They are told to make a joyful noise and shout from the rooftops if necessary. Each believer is encouraged to make sure that the world knows about the goodness of the Lord!

As Christians, we know that all of our blessings come from God. We give thanks and testify to his goodness every day. In fact, we're glad that God doesn't tell us to keep his blessings a secret! It would be extremely difficult to do! The tears would flow! Our hands would clap wildly and we'd act strangely. In our own way, we'd have to put out the box for the world to know about the goodness of the Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on a man who was healed by Jesus, but couldn't keep it to himself!

An anonymous man met Jesus and needed a healing. He was both deaf and dumb. He could neither hear or speak. We are not told anything about the man whose ears and tongue didn't work. We don't even know his name. He was one of the many hearing impaired, living in silence, struggling daily to communicate with people whose ears did work. He'd never heard the sound of laughter or music or God's Word.

What we do know is that he came from the region of the Decapolis, the "ten cities" in Gentile territory. The Decapolis was the place where Jesus had cast a legion of demons out from a man and into a herd of pigs who subsequently jumped off a cliff into the sea. The people asked Jesus and his disciples to leave. But word had spread about Jesus' power over demons and diseases, and so the next time he showed up, the people actually sought him out.

That's how Jesus and this man whose ears and tongue didn't work got together. In the process, Jesus pulled the man aside and took his fingers and stuck them in the man's ears. Then he spat on his fingers and touched the man's tongue.

Jesus looked upward to heaven and spoke a word. St. Mark gives us the Aramaic original: Ephphatha! Be opened. Be released. Jesus wasn't simply speaking to his ears, he was speaking to the whole man. "Be released from your bondage. Be free." Jesus was releasing him from everything that held him bound and captive. At the sound of Jesus' word, Ephphatha! the man's ears could hear and his tongue was freed and he spoke plainly and clearly.

Then a strange thing happened. Jesus ordered everyone not to speak or tell anyone of his healing. He did not want to be known as an ear and tongue specialist,

or some miracle healer. Those who saw him in that light missed the point.

God came in Jesus Christ. He came to save us by absorbing into himself all the sin and evil and brokenness, all that had gone wrong with us, all that had come into creation because of sin. He came to take up our sicknesses and diseases into his own body, to battle the demons that darken our lives, to take up the devastation the crushes us. He came to free us from everything that binds us. He came to unchain us from sin, from death, from the devil. He came to bring in a new creation with His own dying and rising, a new creation in which blind eyes see, and mute tongues speak, and the lame leap, and water flows in dry, desert places.

That's why Jesus didn't want anyone to say anything about what happened. It was too small, too soon. There was much more of Jesus to come. His death on the cross. His open, empty tomb. His ascension to glory. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Then His disciples would speak, openly and plainly.

But yet the people of the Decapolis told everyone about what happened. The more Jesus tried to quiet them, the more they spoke. People were overwhelmed at the power of Jesus' words. With a simple word Jesus did what no man could do, and yet he did it in such a human way. Through His humanity came the power of God to save, to set free, to release from bondage. And people just had to talk about it. "He has done all things well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

What they experienced was simply too good not to talk about!

We Should Testify

Today, believers are called upon to testify about the goodness of the Lord! We have even more to say abut Jesus than the man in this text. Since we have experienced salvation after Calvary, we have more to give thanks for than healings.. Jesus has died for us, risen from the dead for us, reigns over all things for us. He lords His death and resurrection over our sin and death. We have something to testify about. We should testify about:

HOW GOD HAS PROTECTED AND PROVIDED FOR US: When Saints talk about the goodness of God we should readily tell everyone we see that He has provided for us and protected us. More than anyone else, the saint knows three things about God that are extremely useful in tough times. Those three things are embodied in Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

We can testify that our experience has been that in times of trouble we have been able to turn to God for protection against the storms and he has been our refuge. In our times of weakness he has been our source of renewal and revival. We can also testify that in times of trouble, God has been "present" and available to satisfy our needs.

We can also testify with David, that God has provided all of our needs and most of our wants.

It is difficult for the man who has been through the storm not to give thanks when

the sun rises!

It is difficult for the family that has sustained a prolonged attack from its enemies not to give thanks when the enemy retreats!

It is difficult for the family that has seen its finances dwindle to an all time low, then bounce back again, not to praise God. We've got to tell somebody! We've got to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

HOW GOD HAS BLESSED US: The saint recognizes every accomplishment and good work as a blessing from God. It doesn't matter what it is, the saint is always praising God for his goodness and blessings! It's hard for a saint to keep quiet about a blessing from God! When David was blessed by God he said in Psalm 105:1, "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people."

We can testify that in our experience God has been a blessing God. In the course of our short lives God has given us better homes, better jobs, bigger happier families and has sustained us in ways that we could not do ourselves! There is a tee shirt slogan that seems to epitomize what every believer feels about what God has provided. The slogan says, "Too blessed to be stressed!"

The ungrateful man complains that his house is too small, the saint says, "Lord thank you for blessing me with a house!"

The ungrateful man complains that his job doesn't pay him enough. The saint says, "Lord thank you for blessing me with a job when so many are unemployed!"

The ungrateful woman complains about not having new shoes. The saint says, "Lord thank you for blessing me to be able to walk in the same old shoes!

The ungrateful man complains about having a bad day! The saint says, "Lord, thank you that all of my good days, outweigh my bad days, I won't complain!

When a saint has been blessed he finds it hard not to tell somebody how good God has been!

HOW GOD HAS SAVED US: The saint recognizes that it is only the Grace of God that has given him the opportunity for eternal life not his own power and strength! We tried to reform ourselves but couldn't, it was only the power of God. That's what Titus 3:3-6 means when it says, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;"

We can testify that we are not what we want to be. We are not what we ought to be, but thank God because of Jesus, we are not what we used to be!

There was a time when our idea of a drink was measured in six packs, 40 ounces, fifths and pints!

There was a time when our idea of a good night was to get a quick roll on cheap sheets with a one night stand!

There was a time when our idea of fun was to bump and grind on a dance floor, take

a few drinks, then go back for more!

There was a time when our idea of reading was confined to magazines with pictures of naked men and women!

There was a time when our idea of manhood was to have as many women as we could without marrying them, caring for them or paying child support!

There was a time when our idea of womanhood was to use what we had to get in his head, lay in his bed, pick his pocket, play him hard and charge up his credit card!

But God has saved us from these life draining attitudes and experiences. 1 Corinthians 6:11 puts it this way, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Tell Somebody!

When God has been good to us, it is extremely hard for believers to keep their peace! We've got to tell somebody!

Jesus healed ten lepers one day and they all went away, but one turned around and went back to him to say, "thank you!" Jesus asked, "Were there not ten? Where are the nine?"

The leper had to tell Jesus himself, thank you!

Thank you for making me whole again!

Thank you for giving me another chance at renewed life!

He couldn't keep it to himself! He had to tell somebody!

Jesus met a woman at the well, he told her all about her herself! He offered her living water! On that day she was in the presence of the Lord!

She had to tell somebody! She ran through the streets shouting, "Come see a man who told me all that I've ever done!"

She had to tell somebody that she had met a man, who looked into the abyss of her soul and saw something worth saving! She had to tell somebody!

I'm reminded of the old woman they called, "Bitter Garret Gracie!" She loved to dip Bitter Garret snuff and to say Amen in church. When Gracie moved to another town, there was only one church in the little community. The folks in that church didn't say Amen or dip snuff. She was always out of place on Sunday when the preacher started talking about the goodness of the Lord and she'd shout "Amen preacher!" The members were disturbed that this newcomer didn't know how to be quiet. Quietly the deacon chairman went to her and offered her a year's supply of snuff if she'd just be quiet on Sunday. Gracie loved snuff! She took the deal. The very next Sunday the preacher began to talk about the goodness of God and Gracie began to skirm in her seat! The preacher said "God had was good God in a time of storm!" She skirmed more! Finally, she started waving her hand wildly in the air! The preacher interrupted his sermon and asked, "Sister Gracie is there something you want to say?" Gracie looked over at the deacon and said, "Reverend I sho loves Bitter Garrett suff and I'm trying to keep quiet. So if I can't say a word...I'll just wave my hand!"

I don’t know about you but I’ve got to tell somebody! If I can’t say a word, I’ll just wave my hand!

I’ve got to tell somebody that God will pick you up and turn you around!

I’ve got to tell somebody that God will answer your prayer!

I’ve got to tell somebody about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

I’ve got to tell somebody that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

I’ve got to tell somebody that he’s alive today!

I’ve got to tell somebody that’s he’s coming back again!

I don’t know about you, I’ve got to tell somebody!

No 783-Inspiration

The First and The Last Word

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 5, 1999

SCRIPTURE: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1;" I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Rev. 22:13

Introduction

Have you ever known anyone who felt they had to have the last word in every discussion? The person who has the last word is generally thought to be an authority on the subject or the dominant personality whose experience or wisdom transcends that of others. In a company, the chief executive is the last word! In a school system the school board is the last word! In matters of law the Supreme Court is the last word! There are many who feel like their opinion, conclusion and resolution about a problem or an issue should be considered the "last word" thus their word becomes the word for the day!

Psychiatrists have discovered that there is an association between what we secretly think and the first word that comes to our mind. Thus, word associations have become a meaningful tool in psychoanalysis, as doctors ask patients to say the first word that comes to their mind when a randomly selected word is spoken. A youth that responds "jail" to the words, "school, police, home, and future" may suggest a lot about what he actually believes about himself and his future.

What is the word that best describes how you feel about your church? Consider Cassie Bell's Answer to that very question. Cassie Bell believed every thing is better if there is less of it. When she drank beer she wanted a lite beer! She bought lite potato chips! She used lite salad dressings on her salad! So when Cassie Bell started looking for a church home, the word that described which church she joined would naturally be "lite." She went from church to church but all of them seemed to be too heavy until she came to the Lite House Baptist Church. The Word light seemed to jump out at her, especially when she heard the welcome from the pastor who said, " Welcome to the Lite House Baptist Church. Has the heaviness of your old fashioned church got you weighted down? Try us! We are the New and Improved Lite Church of the new millennium. We have 20 percent

fewer people making commitments and 30 % fewer programs. If you worship with us you can get out in half the time because we promise you a 35 minute worship service, with no song longer than two minutes, no prayer over one minute and no sermon longer than seven minutes, including the whoop! We believe in lite! We are the only church in our community that specializes in the 7.5 % tithe, the ten minute Sunday School and doggie bag altar prayers. We have only six commandments, your choice! In our new King James Version lite edition of the bible there are only Genesis, the 23rd Psalms, three gospels, Acts and the last two chapters of Revelation!" The pastor was really enthusiastic when he said, " Yes, we are the New and Improved Lite House Baptist Church. We are everything you want in a church... and less!!

Cassie Bell heard that and became so excited she waved her hand and said, "I want more of that!" The preacher said we can't give you more of anything because we believe that he came to give us life and give it more litely!"

Cassie Bells said, Well just save my soul then! Then the preacher said. We can't do that either because that would require your being washed in the blood, and here at the lite house we believe in the quick dip, fast dry and permanent press! Cassie asked one more question, "Can you get me to heaven then?" The preacher answered, "Well there is heaven regular and heaven lite. Heaven regular has streets of gold, pearly gates, fancy mansions and eternal life!. Heaven lite has no streets, no gold, no mansions and no life!" Cassie, getting a little disturbed said, "What ya'll got that can save and is lite too!" The preacher said, "That's easy, the word is Jesus! Because he said my yoke is easy and my burden is light!" Cassie said, "I'll take two of them!"

What if you were asked to say the first word that comes to your mind when it comes to God? What would it be? Most would instantly think of security, salvation, heaven, mercy, etc.

As Christians, we have come to know that God is our everything. He is our all and all. He is the first word we think about each morning and the last word we think of at night. He is truly the first and the last word!

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he shows the Word of God as both the source of all beginnings and the only end of salvation.

The Hebrew mind set considered "Word" as both a verbalized utterance and an event. A word was seen as a concentrated, compressed unit of energy. As the word was spoken, this concentrated, compressed unit of energy was released and surged throughout the world, changing altering and destroying.

Modern thinking is that words effect emotion, but don't alter reality. In the Hebrew mind however, the conviction was different. Words changed things, especially if it was the Word of God. The psalmist writes, "By the Word of God the heavens were made." God speaks and the galaxies occur.

Because words were seen to have power the Hebrew language only contained about 10,000 words. In comparison the Greek language contained about 200,000 words. So they used words sparingly, carefully, and thoughtfully.

When John began his Gospel with "In the Beginning was the Word" he introduced what he knew the Hebrew mind would accept as the power of God. However, when he wrote this gospel he was living in the city of Ephesus. John was Jewish; his readers, however, were chiefly Gentile. In speaking about Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of the Word of God, John looked for a word which Gentiles would understand, yet a word to which he could also marry the full force of the Hebrew understanding of "word." The word John chose was LOGOS. LOGOS is the Greek word which had been in use for a little over 600 years, introduced by Heraclitus, that refers to the divine plan of things that co-ordinates a changing universe. In essence the LOGOS is the secret of how something works.

Thus two ideas existed. The Hebrews saw "Word" as the power of God released. The Greeks saw "Word" as the secret plan of the divine for the ordering of the universe.

What John did was to bring the Hebrew and Greek concepts together when he stated that Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, is the Word or logos of God.

What John said very simply was that the power to get things done, and a plan by which it would be done had come together in the person of a little baby born in a manger in Bethlehem. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among men." (V14).

Jesus, in Revelation 22, underscores the meaning of his incarnation when he noted that not only was he the spoken word of God, but he is the last word, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last letters of the Greek Alphabet.

This is the great good news of Christmas, the power and plan of God is now available to anyone who will be bold enough to claim them both! The full power of our faith is that the power of God has been made available to us for every circumstance. He is the first and the last word!

The First Word

The world has a way of suggesting negatives. Our times are becoming so difficult that it is easier to associate negatives rather than positives. Usually, that happens because Satan has a way of trying to get the first word in the affairs of men. His first word is usually unsettling. It disturbs and depresses us. Some of Satan's First Words include:

FEAR: As the year's end approaches there are many who have heard the word..fear! They are afraid of what the new year will bring. They are afraid of the unknown. They are uncertain of the unknown future. The spirit of fear comes from Satan. He keeps putting that word into our heads. This happens each time a believer is faced with a challenge or sizeable task. The spirit of fear has a way of making a creeping entry into every situation. Name the challenge and the spirit of fear will appear. But this spirit is not of God. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not

given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." When David approached Goliath, he did not know what to expect. He had never faced a giant before. But he did not approach him with a spirit of fear, but one of confidence. Years later David would write in Psalm 27:1, "The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

DOUBT: Name the challenge and the first word to many is fear's first cousin..doubt. Skepticism surrounds every new idea ;every uncharted course; every circumstance that poses the possibility of failure. Doubt is the first word that Satan tries to put into the head of a believer when they receive an inspiration from God. Has not God, inspired some believer to take an unknown direction and the first word Satan brings to mind is doubt. Doubt is sometimes aimed at the probability of achieving the result. There are also times when doubt is aimed at the capacity of the believer to achieve themselves. Often the sheer size of the mountain in front of us awes us. We can hear the words of the Master addressing this same subject. In Matthew 21:21 the Master says, "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done"

SADNESS: No matter how joyous the occasion, Satan has a way of bringing up the spirit of Sadness. When we should be rejoicing, Satan tries to get in the first word. Sadness has a way of turning what should be a joyous occasion into a sad moment. When that happens, Satan has managed to get in the first word! Satan has found that days like Christmas, Easter, Birthdays and other holidays are the best times to make some people sad. When there has been a death, a divorce or other abrupt changes in our family circle, it's easy for Satan to speak the word of Sadness. Once he speaks, Christmas becomes sad! Birthdays become sad! Every holiday or family gathering also become sad! Those who do not want to have a sad Christmas should resolve not to allow Satan to bring in the spirit of sadness. Despite a past loss, believers refuse to allow Satan to prevent them from rejoicing in the Lord. Despite the loss of a loved one, believers remember Psalms 30:5, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning." When memories of better times bring tears to your eyes, don't let Satan get a foot hold, "Count it all Joy!"

The Last Word

While it is true that Satan often tries to get in the first word to dampen our spirits, weaken our strength and destroy our resolve, it is also true that Satan does not have the last word!

Every believer faces life with the full confidence that no matter what troubles approach our lives, Satan does not have the last word!

Enemies may dig ditches to try to destroy you, but their ditches and attacks are not the last word! What is the Last word? Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" That's the last word!

Temptations and frustrations may try to separate us from God, but this world's temptations and frustrations are not the last word. For Romans 8:37-39 says, "... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. " That's the last word!

Sometimes competitors seem to outdistance us and beat us to every opportunity. We always seem to come in second or near the end. Those who come in first don't have the last word! Mark 10:31, "But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first." That's the last word!

Hezekiah lay down on his bed after receiving word that he had to die. But he turned his face to the wall and told the Lord in essence, "I heard your first word, but Lord, oh Lord, I want your last word to be merciful to me!" Hezekiah received 15 more years on his life. That was the last word!

The king sent out a word that anyone who prays to his God will be put in the den of lions, but the king's word wasn't the last word! The next day they found Daniel sitting among the lions. That was the last word!

The Three Hebrew boys received word that their faith would cause them to be thrown in the fiery furnace. A short while later they emerged from the fire without even the smell of soot. That was the last word!

A little old lady went to court with her grandson who had been falsely accused of a crime. As he was found guilty in every level of the court system, she kept a big smile on her face. When the District Court, Appeals courts, State Supreme Court, Federal Appeals Court and even the U.S. Supreme Court turned her down, she kept that same smile on her face. As her grandson remained in prison that old lady never stopped smiling. One day a young man walked into a police station to turn himself in. He said many years earlier he had committed a crime that resulted in another man facing life in prison. He said he had become a Christian and could not let another man pay for his crimes. That week the lawyer carried the release decree to the little old lady, but he had to ask her a question, "Why is it that you never stopped smiling?" The old lady said, "Each time we lost a case I kept smiling because they did not have the last word! On the first day, a long time ago I got down on my knees and talked to the man who told me "I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the beginning and the end. He told me everything was going to be alright! He has the last word!"

When doctors say there is no hope...they are not the last word!

When teachers say there is no help for your child, they are not the last word!

When your situation has been condemned by both friends and family, they are not the last word!

Let me tell you a strange thing, he who is the last word is also the first word. In the beginning was the word ...and 2000 years ago, the word became flesh and dwelled among men!

They put a cross on his shoulder...but that wasn't the last word!

They hung him up high and stretched him out wide, but that wasn't the last word!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but that wasn't the last word!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, but that wasn't the last word!

I heard the angels declare, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens, this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

It doesn't matter what anyone else in this world says, as long as God is still on the throne, he will have the last word!

No. 784-Christmas

Something to Believe In

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 12, 1999

SCRIPTURE:"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his names Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: the Lord God shall give uno him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the Angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? Luke 1:31-34; "But as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12

Introduction

Have you ever believed in something only to find out that your beliefs were misplaced? There is a natural desire in human nature to believe in something. Every person instinctively lavishes hope in or on something. Some believe in people and place all of their hope and trust in other human beings that range from a close friend to a parent or spouse. Others believe in ideas. Lives have been sacrificed by those who believed in an idea so strongly that they were willing to die to achieve its fruition. Freedom, has been such as idea. It has claimed the lives of millions who have rallied to its defense. Some believe in power, and the vehicles that are attendant to power such as money and political influence. Some believe only in themselves and then not completely. It appears that around the world, people are searching for something to believe in. In the course of that search people believed in Hitler, Mussolini, Jim Jones, David Kuresh and even the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny only to find out that their beliefs were misplaced.

There are two ways to believe in something. We can see it in action and base our belief on our experience; or we can hear accounts of its action and base our belief on what we have heard from others. For many people seeing is believing. Consider the faith healer who sat alone at a cafe. As he sat alone customers pointed at him as they identified him as a faith healer. One customer, who had a bad leg, bought the faith healer a cup of coffee and he limped back to his seat. Another man, who was nearly blind, hearing that there was a faith healer in the cafe, sat at his table and they talked a while about beliefs. Just before leaving, the man bought the faith healer's dinner. A third man entered who walked on a cane and wore a brace on his back. He talked with the faith healer and was convinced that the man was exactly what he says. When he left he paid for the faith healer's dessert. Each of them was convinced that the faith healer was genuine. Upon leaving the faith healer stopped at the table of the

first man and said, “Because you believe..” then healed his leg, and the man ran from the cafe, shouting. He stopped at the table of the second man and said, “Because you believe” then touched his eye and the man shouted, “I can see again!” But as the faith healer came close to the last man’s table, the man jumped up and shouted, “Because I believe, please don’t touch me!” Astonished, the faith healer asked why, the man answered, “Because I’m drawing disability!” He saw the faith healer in action, and he believed!

Children are very vulnerable in areas of faith. They need something to believe in..desperately. Some, wrestle with troubling home lives, dysfunctional families and personal insecurities. They need to believe that there is someone, somewhere that has the answer to their troubles, perhaps in the back of a sleigh! Often the feeble attempt of adults to wet their imaginations and bring a smile to their faces, clumsily result in imaginative characterizations of great truths. A good old man who gives toys to children, is something to believe in, but it requires a series of lies to create the fantasy picture. Reindeer that fly, Elves that live in the sub freezing, unliveable conditions of the North Pole feed the imaginations of children and give them something to believe in, but it’s accomplished at the price of lowered confidence in the believability of anything a parent says.

Some adults never turn it loose! According to a poll taken by KRC Research in 1996 and cited in U.S.News & World Report, nine percent of American adults say they really do believe in the jolly old man in the red suit. Perhaps that’s not surprising when we realize that at no other time of the year do we focus so much attention on a single theme as during the Christmas season. The fictional character of Santa Claus has become an integral part of the celebration in our culture because he symbolizes the spirit of giving. We want to believe in giving and sharing, thus there are millions in America that still believe in Jolly Old St. Nick.

As admirable as that spirit may be, there is something more grand and life-changing to believe in. At Christmas we need to focus on one single great truth: God doesn’t wear a red suit, live in the North pole or ride reindeer, but he does give gifts. In fact, on Christmas day we celebrate the greatest gift he could give anyone, the gift of his own son!

As Christians, we have found someone to believe in! He has given us something to believe in and that is the hope of eternal life! If you are looking for something to believe in...we recommend Jesus!

Exposition

This text focuses on Mary as she wrestles to understand and believe a promise of God concerning her life that she found difficult to believe.

Mary had been selected to serve as the surrogate mother for Jesus. This idea of surrogate motherhood was unheard of in biblical times, even though it was quite common for wives to have their maids or servants to have children for their husbands. The idea of giving birth to a child without benefit of sex was hard to believe.

It was the conception that Mary does not understand. God permitted her to ask the angel how this should be. Mary asks, with holy confidence, since God thus favoured her, how the thing should be accomplished, outside the natural order.

By posing her questions to God, she found the answers that explained her circumstance and gave her something to believe in!

Seeing Is Believing

Today there are many who hold to the old adage that "Seeing is believing." There is more to that adage when we consider it seriously, especially for believers. Consider these three truths:

WE SEE WHAT WE EXPECT TO SEE: As a general rule of human nature, we see what we expect to see. Thus, our expectations play a major role in our ability to see. We respond to what we expect to see. Paul speaking to believers in 1 Corinthians 13 says love thinks no evil, expects the best, believes all things and hopes for all things. In essence, those who love expect the best. When expectations are low, we are not surprised with low performance levels. When expectations are high, we are challenged to reach them. If we expect to see improvement, then our eyes have a tendency to focus on every component of an idea or activity that demonstrates improvement. If we expect mediocrity, we get just that! What do you expect out of life? Maybe your expectation is the same as that of the Black poet who wrote: "A crust of bread and corner to sleep in a minute of joy and an hour to weep in and that is life." Regardless to your persuasion, we see what we expect to see.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT YOU DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE: There are many today who have very low expectations of themselves and others. We can't see anything better because we do not expect to see anything better. After the resurrection, Jesus walked along the Emmaus Road. He talked with two men who had witnessed the crucifixion and listened to their conversation. The one thing he noticed as they walked along the road is that neither of the men recognized him. They looked him in the face and did not see his true identity because they did not expect to see it! In a similar sense we often cannot see things because we do not expect to see them. If we can't see the good in a cause, a person, or some great movement, it may simply be because we do not expect to see anything good and therefore cannot see anything good!

Believers should expect the best! If we teach students, we should expect them to perform! If you coach a team and you do not expect to win, defeat will be your ultimate end. In the same way, a life is lost to God's purpose if believers do not expect God to do great things in their lives.

Just as we must constantly upgrade computers and other equipment, we must upgrade our expectations out of life. There are some who refuse to upgrade because it is expensive and time consuming. They prefer to continue using their old model. Sooner or later something will break in the program forcing a new direction, but the new programs won't work with old expectations, something must be upgraded!

We must see ourselves differently! We must expect more of ourselves!

Believe Without Seeing

Finally brothers and sisters, if we see what we expect to see and believe; and if we fail to see because we do not expect to see; then greater is the person who believes and has not seen at all!

Jesus, speaking to his disciples, told them of the great blessing in store for the man or woman that believes but has not seen.

Believing in God without seeing is the essence of faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen!"

The things not seen are the focus of our faith!

We have seen the tears of frustration, but we have not seen the happiness of accomplishment that God is preparing for us!

We have seen the mountains that crowd our way, but we have not seen how God is preparing to take our mountains and turn them into molehills.

We have not seen most of what God is planning for us... but we expect to see it! Because his word has promised us that eye hath not seen nor has it entered into our imagination all of the things God has in store for us!

I did not see it, but I believe that an angel spoke to Mary and told her that she would have a son!

I did not see it, but I believe that Mary gave birth to a son and a laid him in a manger!

I did not see it, but I believe that wise men traveled from afar to see the birth of this child!

I did not see it, but I believe this boy lived for 33 long years!

I did not see it, but I believe that one day he died on an old rugged cross!

I did not see it, but I believe that he arose from the dead, with all power in his hand!

I don't know how he'll do it, but I believe that he will keep his arms around me!

I don't know how he'll make it happen, but I believe that he will make a way for me!

I don't know all of the details, but I know somehow, someway, because of something that happened one Christmas morning a long time ago, that God gave his only son for my life!

That is something to believe in!

No. 785-Christmas

The Stranger In The Manger

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 19, 1999

SCRIPTURE: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7 ;"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." John 1:10

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you were treated like a stranger? One of the most peculiar and uncomfortable feelings is to be received by others as a stranger or a foreigner. A stranger receives an ambivalent reception in our country. He is neither a friend or an acquaintance; enemy or rival. A stranger is unknown, untried, and unusual. A stranger usually makes us uncomfortable. Even if we are not strangers, we can be received as such and that too can make us uncomfortable. When we move into a new neighborhood, we feel like strangers until someone welcomes us, then we know we are accepted as new, but not strange. If we are in a new city, it is good to know that we are newcomers but not strange. If we visit a church we feel better when folks tell us we are not strangers in God's house, we feel at ease when our presence doesn't make them uncomfortable. Being a stranger can be an uncomfortable experience.

Our response to strangers is to stay away from them. Every child is warned to beware of strangers, not to go with them, follow their instructions or take things from their hands. Children, who have the tendency to place everything in neat categories simply describe strangers as "bad guys" and those with whom we are familiar as "good guys." Persons who want to persuade a child to go with them need only convince them that they are not a stranger, but really one of the good guys. A child will ask, "Are you a stranger?" The stranger will answer, "No" and the rest is history. As adults we have learned that life does not always lend itself to such simple characterizations. We now know that every stranger is not a bad guy and every familiar face is not always a "good guy."

We have discarded many of our childish ways. We have put aside our Barbie and Cabbage Patch Dolls, bicycles and yo' yo's, but there is still one instruction that lingers from our childhood that we hang on to, that is our parent's instruction to: "Beware of strangers!" That which is unknown to us is kept at a distance. People who are unknown to us still make us uncomfortable.

For some, even the concept of a loving God is strange. Even stranger to them is the idea of the Son of God being born in a manger.

To the man or woman who does not know Christ as Lord and Savior, the Christ Child is a "stranger in the manger" an unfamiliar, unknown, foreigner who operates outside of his sphere of existence. To that person, Jesus is not real but an anomaly.

As Christians, we have come to know Christ in the three ways that puts him in the "good guy" column. Thus we are ready to follow him, obey him and take that which he gives us. He is not a stranger, he is our friend.

Exposition

In this text John focuses on the fact that Jesus came into the world but received a stranger's welcome; the world received him not.

In 14 verses between John 1:1 and verse 14 John makes it abundantly clear that Jesus existed in the beginning but came to dwell among men as a light that would show them the path to eternal life. When he came among his own, the Jews, and in a greater sense the world, he received a stranger's welcome and was treated coldly, rebuffed and finally crucified.

The mystery of his birth underscores his stranger's role during his life time. He was born in the house of strangers, the Inn. As C.H. Spurgeon puts it, "In the early and simple ages of the world every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger; later, as traveling became more common, many desired to share the honor and pleasure with their neighbors; wherefore they could continue the dignity of hospitality."

The Inn where Mary and Joseph came to finally rest was not the same as is expected in modern times. The Inn was not a commercial establishment operated for profit, bolstered by the explosion of tourism and travel. The Inn was just the opposite. In Old Testament times the Inn was not a building at all,,but a rest stop used by travelers to warm their food, water their animals and bed down for the night. It was a gathering place for strangers who usually became acquaintances before the night ended. There was no charge for the rest stop, it was provided as courtesy of the host people of the land.

As time progressed each town and village appointed special keepers who were expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest of the town. That evolved into the provision of a huge square block, in the town (caravansary), arranged into rooms for the travelers, the guests
were on the second floor and the bottom floor was reserved for the animals, with a certain provision of water and in some cases chopped straw for the animals, the traveler would make himself as comfortable as he could. He did not have to purchase admittance to the caravansary, for it was free to all, and the stable especially so.

When believers traveled to observe the Passover, it was expected that those along the way would provide for them free housing for their journey. In return the traveler would leave a tip as a way of saying thanks for the courtesy. The tip often

consisted of the vessels used in the Passover or the skins of animals slain. Even when Christ and his disciples came to observe the Passover they found such a room, made available to them free of charge, to observe the feast.

While there were special keepers who had guest chambers in their homes, there was also the general caravansary, also called the inn, in which large numbers of strangers could expect to find rest, especially among the animals.

When the Christ Child was born in the Inn, he was born among strangers in a place that was free to all.

He dwelt among men and was received by his own as a stranger. He died as a stranger, but he arose offering hope to all.

Stranger's Rules

Today, there are many who relate to Christ as if he is a stranger. They keep their distance from him and won't allow him to get close to them and become their friend. They distance themselves from worship, churches, and those things associated with the church. They are extremely cautious, because, after all, Christians are a strange set of people. However, this restrained attitude about God prevents many from receiving the benefits of God's gift to the world. Jesus came to dwell among men. From the very beginning he came offering blessings, but was often received as a stranger. Revisit the rules that children are given with respect to strangers. Many are typical of the world's response to Christ.

DO NOT GO ANYWHERE WITH A STRANGER: Those who view Christ as a stranger, are cautious. They won't go anywhere with him. While believers sing, "Where ever he leads me, I'll go" and "I have decided to follow Jesus" non-believers are cautious. They distrust him. They distrust where he may carry them. To receive the blessings that the Christ child came to offer the world, it is essential that we trust him and follow him. As long as Christ is received as a stranger, the element of trust will be absent. Even in marriages and friendships, partners trust each other only because they know each other. Those who trust God do so because they know him. He is not a stranger. They trust their health, careers, and safety to him.

David made certain that God knew that he trusted him. In numerous Psalms David wrote, "In thee O Lord do I put my trust." In Psalm 7:1 he trusted God to protect him from persecution. In Psalm 16:1 he trusted God to preserve him in the face of sorrow. Psalm 56:11 sums up his attitude, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

We follow Christ because he is the good shepherd and we are his sheep. Jesus said in John 10:5, "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him for they know not the voice of strangers." We know his voice and the work of his hand. Where ever he leads, we'll go.

DO NOT OBEY STRANGERS: Those who view Christ as a stranger have difficulty obeying him. Rarely are children taught to disobey adults. One of the few times that disobedience is allowed, even encouraged, is in the case of strangers.

Children are told never to obey strangers. Those who perceive God as a stranger, have difficulty obeying him. They do not know him. They have no experience with him. They do not trust him. They have found it better to be safe than sorry. Those who really know the Lord, have no trouble obeying him. The elements of the universe know him and obey him. After Christ calmed the storm, the men on board asked, "What manner of man is this that the winds and the sea obey him?" Mark 1:27 notes that even unclean spirits obey him. The wind, the waves and even unclean spirits have no trouble obeying because they know him.

Obeying God at times may appear sacrificial. When Abraham placed his son on an altar, ready to sacrifice him, it was sacrificial to the edge of fanaticism. But Abraham knew God would provide. Obeying God can often isolate you from your family. Job 19:15-17 finds Job saying, " They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body." Sometimes obeying God can appear financially impractical. Thus many saints are ridiculed by those with less faith because they obey God and bring a tithe to the store house. They obey him because they know him. They believe him when he says in Malachi 3:10 that he will, "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Those who know God have no trouble obeying him.

Let Him Bless You!

TAKE NOTHING FROM STRANGERS: Those who view Christ as a stranger are suspicious of his gifts. However, those who know him and have no problem at all receiving gifts from him because he is gift giving God who is in the blessing business. Good parents teach their children to be suspicious of gifts they receive from strangers and to accept no expensive gift from persons of the opposite sex. The receipt of gifts under these circumstances implies insecurity and distrust. A daughter who receives an expensive watch or ring from a male suitor, usually finds mother encouraging the return of the gift. Gifts like that come with strings.

However, those who know the Lord do not have a problem letting him bless us. We know that blessing believers is a part of his nature.

We don't have a problem letting him bless us because we read in Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

We don't have a problem letting him bless us because blessing his children is part of what he does every day. Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Those who know the Lord, know the little babe in Bethlehem is not a stranger in the manger!

They know him as the Lord who goes with them into hospital operating rooms and wraps his hands around those of surgeons and guides every move and stroke. Every Christian doctor knows that it doesn't take but one slip of the hand to lose a patient, that's why they whisper a prayer, "Precious Lord take my hand!"

Those who know the Lord, know the little babe in Bethlehem is not a stranger in the manger!

They know him as the Lord who goes with them into the courtrooms of this land. He guides his defense attorneys, inspires ideas for their briefs, and directs their defense strategies. That's what 1 John 2:1 means when it tells us that we have an, "advocate with the father" it means that he will speak for us when we are wrongfully prosecuted.

Those who know the Lord, don't call the babe in Bethlehem a stranger in the manger!

They don't call him a stranger because they know that when they are:

WEAK he provides them strength; DOWN he picks them up!

DEFEATED he gives them the victory; DISCOURAGED he gives them hope!

LONELY, he gives them comfort; TROUBLED he gives them peace of mind?

The blind man, didn't view him as a stranger!

The woman at the well, didn't see him as a stranger!

After 33 years, a life begun as a stranger in the manger, ended as a friend who held out to the end!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

He is no stranger!

He is our friend!

No. 786-New Year

"We Will Remember The Name of the Lord"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Psalm 20: 7

Introduction

Have you ever forgotten anything? Most people have forgotten a few things in the course of their lives. There are those who have forgotten the whereabouts of items such as their keys, glasses, purse items or other specialties. There are some who forget instructions, while others forget directions. Some who are successful have forgotten from whence they have come. Others who have crossed over, have forgotten the bridge that brought them over. Some have trouble remembering the day of the week, not to mention the date. Some two timers, call the wrong name in the middle of the night! In effort to remember, some time a string around their finger to remind themselves not to forget, then forget why they tied the string around their finger in the first place. Most of us, at one time or another, have forgotten something!

Some even problems remembering when to talk and when to keep our mouths shut. Consider what happened to the family that couldn't remember to keep its mouth shut. This man and his family had been followed by a patrol car for about 30 minutes now. Getting nervous the man pulled his car to the side of the road and a police officer stepped out and walked up to the driver's window. "Good afternoon sir." Said the officer. "Good afternoon officer, any problems?" The driver answered. "No sir, none at all. I have been following and observing you for a half an hour now. You have not committed one single traffic violation, you have not gone over the speed Limit. You were courteous toward the fellow drivers on the road. Therefore, as a part of our new "Better Driving Program," I would like to present you with this check for $100.00" The driver let out a big sigh of relief.... "Wonderful good! Now I finally have enough money to pay for my driver's license." The driver said. The man's wife saw the officer writing something and she said, "Don't listen to him, officer, he always talks nonsense like that when he has been drinking...." Grandma, who's a little hard of hearing adds from the backseat, "You see, you see! I told you not to go in a stolen

car again?" About this time the trunk pops open and a head peeks out, "So, are we over the border yet?" As the officer led the man away to jail, it dawned on him that it would have been much better if had remembered to keep his mouth shut.

As a new year begins, believers need to forget a few things, while remembering others. Paul writing to Philippians in 3:13-14 said, "..forgetting those thing which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We need to forget our doubts, failures and frustrations and troubles. We need to remember that even in those frustrating moments God has been our refuge and strength. Remembering what God has done for us, gives us confidence to press forward into another year. The God who brought us through last years will see us through the year ahead.

As Christians, we remember the bridge that brought us over. While some may trust in the resources of this world, believers remember to trust in God! We will never forget how he has blessed us in the past. Neither will we forget his promise, never to leave us alone!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he stands prepared to face the challenge of the unknown.

Psalm 20 is a victory Psalm. It offers an expectation for success against the Ammonites and Syrians, who came with a vast number of horses and chariots to fight Israel. (2 Sam.10.6-8) It is an expression of how David advanced into the unknown, surrounded by odds that were against him and succeeded by remembering the name of the Lord, his promises to him, and calling upon him to strengthen him. At the conclusion, David looked back in 2 Samuel 10:18 and noted,"And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there."

Psalm 20 therefore, shows David magnifying God for blessing him, while at the same time demonstrating how the faithful should approach the unknown ...with confidence.

In The Day of Trouble

As we begin a new year, we are entering a time of trouble. Despite our advanced technology, there are increased chances of wars, pestilence, and global disaster. The believer approaches the new era, just as David did in 20:1, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." This is a statement of two realities: There is trouble on the horizon and there the person who faces it is imperfect being."

Who was Jacob? He was third of the patriarch's: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The memory of each usually refers to characteristics they possessed that applied to the

situation. What did God do for Jacob that is applicable here?

God defended Jacob and blessed his life, despite his personal flaws, cheating heart, and mercenary spirit. When Jacob lived with Laban his uncle, he was blessed and protected. When he returned home to meet his brother Esau who had promised to kill him, he was defended. It was Jacob who wrestled with God and left slightly crippled but blessed.

Jacob, the maneuverer, the manipulator, the wheeler-dealer, the Big Time Operator. He thought he always had to maneuver everybody, to manipulate them, in order to bring a situation around to the way he wanted it. He depended upon his wits, his wisdom, his cunning, in order to accomplish what he wanted. The result, for people like that, is always that they are constantly short-changing themselves. The very thing they think they are protecting — they end up destroying.

But God found a way to set Jacob free from that kind of thinking. Jacob had a God, and his God finally taught him, lesson after painful lesson through the years, to abandon that way of life, that way of thinking, and to come at last to trust and to worship. Hebrews 11 tells us that Jacob was one of the great heroes of faith because he finally learned to lean on the top of his staff and wait on God and worship, while God acted. That is why God is called here "the God of Jacob."

In the time of trouble the God of Jacob will defend those of us who certainly share some of Jacob's characteristics.

Help From The Sanctuary

Before approaching a new direction, every believer should resolve to regularly meet God in a place of worship.

The "Sanctuary" in the biblical context is the place where believers meet God. It is the appointed place and time where God and man have a little talk with each other.

David said in Psalm 20: 2 "Send thee help from the sanctuary" That means those who face the unknown are helped by their personal chapel talks with God.

Each person should have at least two sanctuaries, one personal and the other corporate.

In our personal sanctuary we praise God in meditation and prayer. It's the time that you talk to God and give him time to talk to you. Usually God speaks to you during your personal bible study. The time when you read scripture and let God speak to you. Often in prayer, we do all the talking, we spend little time listening.

President Woodrow Wilson, the 26th president of the U.S. once wrote: "I am sorry for men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and of the pleasure? It is one of the most singular books in the world, for every time you open it some old text that you have read a score of times suddenly beams with new meaning. There is no other book that I know of, of which this is true. There is no other book that yields its meaning so personally, that seems to fit itself so intimately to the very spirit that is seeking its guidance."

The second sanctuary is corporate. It is pubic worship with other believers.

Again, however God speaks through the word. As the word is preached and taught, believers receive help. Sometimes that help is by way of encouragement. Sometimes it is by way of chastisement. Sometimes it is by way of comfort.

David approached the unknown with confidence because he had received helped in his sanctuary meetings with God.

Others, thousands of years later didn't use the same words they simply sang a little song that said, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

Remember Your Sacrifices

The believer that steps forth into the unknown does so with the confidence that God will remember both his offerings and personal sacrifices made in the past.

In Old Testament times believers brought offerings of meal and corn other staples. They made sacrifices with rams, lambs and oxen. The intent of both was to be obedient to God and to demonstrate their love for him.

In modern times our offerings involve: "Time, talents, & finance." Many believers give liberal offerings of their time, talent and finance for the promotion of the kingdom of God. Many give them sacrificially, to the point of endangering themselves.

It is these offerings and sacrifices that believers know God will consider as they approach the unknown. Thus David records in, 20:3 a confidence that God will "Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

Bless Your Plans

The believer approaches the unknown with the knowledge that if he designs a plan or strategy that is according God's will, God will bless that plan and success is inevitable.

Psalm 20:4 says, "Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel." The word "Counsel" here means plans or strategy. When one has sought the Lord day by day, his desire is to please and serve the Lord. When that happens, he is assured that God will give him the "strategy" or desire.

When our hearts have been cleansed by the word of God and by prayer, then what is left is what God wants for us. Every true believer wants what God wants. We are one spirit with him. And what do we want?

What we really want is to be happy, whole people. We want to be confident, courageous, able to cope with situations, able to handle what comes, and to be trusting and loving. That is our heart's desire. Psalm 37:4 "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Remember The Name of the Lord

Finally brothers and Sisters, those who approach the unknown, do so calling on

the name of the Lord.

David said in 20:5 that he would set up God's banner and lift it up high. In 20:6 he said he would march boldly forward knowing that God will "save his anointed." David said, God would hear the cry of the faithful from his holy place on high and answer.

No wonder the song writer would write, "Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus, going on before!"

As we prepare to enter a new era, we must take David's words in 20:7 to heart. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."

I don't know about you, but I have decided to trust in the Lord!

Some may trust in the stock market and Dow Jones Industrial Average, but I will trust in the Lord!

Some may trust in technology and information systems, which are all good in their place, but I will trust in the Lord!

Some may trust in medical science, X rays and brain scans, which are all blessed in their place, but I will trust in the Lord!

Some may trust in their education, in their Master's degrees and Phd's, which are blessings from God, but I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord because he has brought me from a mighty long way!

I will trust in the Lord because he has taken my:

Burdens and made them light; Bowed down head and lifted it up high!

Defeats and given me victories; Despair and given me comfort!

Losses and given me gains; Weaknesses and given me strength!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. He's my friend and he's my guide. And I found out that if I trust him, he will provide!"

I will trust in the Lord because he has made a way for me out of no way!

I will trust in the Lord because in the time of trouble he will hide me, in the secret of his Tabernacle he will hide me!

No matter what the future holds, trust in the Lord, he will remember your sacrifices!

No matter how dark it gets, trust in the Lord, he will remember your offerings!

No matter how difficult the way gets, trust in the Lord, bless your plans!

No matter how lonely it becomes, meet him in your sanctuary! Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

Trust in the Lord because he loved us enough to give his life for us!

He died and rose again that we might have life everlasting!

I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord until I die!

No. 787-Family

The Church That Meets In My House

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 16, 2000

SCRIPTURE: ***"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. " Ephesians 5:31-32***

Introduction

How do you rate your marriage? What about your family? If a test were given for every married couple and every family to see how well they were doing how would your marriage rate? If you think your marriage is doing just fine, does your spouse think so? If you think your family is great, do the other members of your family have the same opinion? What do your children think of the relationship between you and your spouse? Children, how do your parents rate you? Such a rating would be difficult to fix by external sources, unless there is a model by which we can measure ourselves. What one person calls the ideal marriage, another calls a catastrophe. What one family calls a well adjusted happy family, another calls a ball of confusion. To really rate our marriage and family relationship, a standard is needed.

Often, when children are small, there is a measure or mark made to show their growth. The child stands next to the mark and can see how much he or she has grown since the last measurement. Sometimes it's an inch or two. Sometimes, there has been very little growth at all. In a similar sense, marriages and families need a measuring device that is accurate and true. Simply comparing themselves to others is insufficient because every family seems to have a different standard of good and bad, right and wrong.

Consider Uncle Eddie's secret. Uncle Eddie was 90 years old and the men of the church were amazed at how well he looked. He looked robust, strong and virile. He had the look of one who spent much time in the outdoors keeping physically fit. The men of the church sat and they talked about doing the right things in their marriage when Uncle Eddie abruptly stood and gave the men the secret to his fine physical shape. "Brothers!" He said. "I have been married for nearly 70 years. My wife and I made an agreement when we were first married. We agreed that whenever one of us was wrong that we'd cool off by going outside and chop a chord of wood. Brothers,

I want you to know that the secret to my good looks is that for seventy years I've chopped a chord of wood everyday!" They had a way of measuring their conduct.

Believers have a reliable measuring tool! It is fixed. It does not change. It is fair. It is inspired by and supported by the Word of God. Those who are married or those who are leading families in the Christian context, know that every marriage and every family can only be judged by one single standard and that's the word of God. It is reliable. It is true.

A Christian marriage and family is a prototype of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The church is the bride of Christ or the wife of Christ. Each family member helps make up the body of Christ. The husband or family head is a symbol of Christ, the husbandman of the family. Those who want a standard to measure the quality of their marriage or relationship need only compare your family relationship to that of the body of Christ, the results are sometimes amazing. At the very least they are revealing.

As Christians, we enjoy our relationship in the body of Christ. We have committed to serving God with our mind body and soul. We relish the words of Joshua when he said, "As for me and my house...we will serve the Lord!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the peculiar relationship between a Christian marriage or family and the body of Christ which is the church.

Paul taught that the marriage between a man and a woman was typical of the relationship between Christ and the church. Each party in a Christian marriage represents a particular facet of the relationship between the church and Christ.

Wives and any resulting offspring represent the church. The church, in scripture is described as a major part of the "Bride of Christ," which also includes the raptured Saints, and Old Testament believers. It was John, for example, who saw Christ returning as a bridegroom coming to receive his bride.

It is assumed that a Christian marriage contains both a Christian wife and a Christian husband who both desire to order their lives and their marriages by the word of God. The Christian wife sees herself as representative of all believers in the world. The husband sees himself as a representative in his home for Christ himself.

Both husband and wife, with respect to mutual interests, are urged to respect each other's views and opinions, prayerfully yielding to the choices that best represents the will of God. (v 21) The opinion of both the husband and wife are equally important. When they differ, the couple submits themselves to God in a prayer for direction. In the eyesight of God, both husband and wife are equal. When there is a difference, couples who bring their case before him in prayer will receive direction through divine revelation to one or both parties and confirmation to all through signs and wonders.

God is not a respecter of persons. In a marriage, both partners are equal before God. However, since a Christian marriage represents the relationship of Christ to his

church, certain roles are defined so the relationship distinctions can remain clear.

It is for this reason, and this reason alone that wives are told in verse 22 to submit themselves to their husbands, as unto the Lord. In essence, wives are told to follow their husbands as their husbands follow Christ. In verses 23-24 Paul explains the relationship: The husband represents Christ and Christ is the head of the church. Since the church is subject to Christ and wives and any subsequent offspring represent the body of Christ, wives are told to submit themselves to their husbands.

Paul's command does not take anything away from either the husband or the wife, but it does place an awesome responsibility on both of them.

For women, the responsibility is to follow their husbands as they follow Christ. For men it is even more demanding. Every man is compelled to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Christ provided for the church, protected the church and then proved himself willing to die for the church. Very few women have problems following the leadership of a man who lives a godly, spirit filled life, works to protect her, provide for her and is willing to lay down his life to secure her future.

Thus, Paul makes it clear that a Christian marriage or family relationship is styled after Christ and the church. Those who want to measure their growth need only compare their relationship to that of the church for the answer.

My House and The Church

How do we measure up when Christ and the church is the standard? How far are our marriages away from the mark? How much work is there to be done? Comparing "My House" or my marriage and my family relationship to that of the church, there are several measuring points that indicate whether we are on the mark or need improvement.

LOVE: The most important ingredient in any marriage is love. Just as love is the main ingredient in a church, it is essential in marriage. Love consists of four components that can easily be described as "Tata" -Talking, Attitudes, Touching and Actions. If a marriage is going to succeed there must be a little "ta-ta!" People who love, talk freely. They dream together, brain storm and they share. Their attitudes represent the best of 1Corinthians 13, in that they hope for all things, believe all things, endure all things, think the best and look for the good. People who love, touch each other. In marriage there is physical touching in a community they touch each other's existence and they feel each other's joy and pain. People who love, do things to demonstrate their love. Any marriage that has no "ta-ta" is doomed before it starts.

WORSHIP: Every marriage and family must have worship, since it is a type of the church. Worship is the means by which the church comes together to praise God for his mercies and goodness. It is also the means through which the church talks to God. In families worship occurs when the family sings, reads scripture and prays at home. Further, worship occurs when the family goes public and joins others and worships God together. Husbands and wives should read scripture and discuss scripture together. They should pray together because their relationship and family

life is like that of the church.

MINISTRY TO OTHERS: Every marriage and family should have a mission. It should be involved in the fight against evil, pain and suffering on some level. Husbands and wives who lose themselves in service to others, find themselves in the joy of fulfillment. A husband and wife or family that returns home fresh from the battle front of fighting poverty, feeding the hungry or relieving the diseased and afflicted know the meaning of the song, "I may not have done all, that I wanted to do, but Lord it's been a mighty good day!"

STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES: Just as a church exercises stewardship, so do families. Many marriages have crumbled over management disagreements. Christian families recognize that all they have belongs to God and manage finances, time and talents with painful precision. Is it possible that there are some marriage partners who have let time slip away? Some have filled their roledexes with so many appointments and meetings that all possible opportunities for quality time with their families is completely eliminated. Many have talents that are never used. Some have awfully mismanaged their resources to the point of bankruptcy and beyond. Marriage and family is greatly improved when there is sufficient time, resources and opportunities to use talents.

FELLOWSHIP: Every marriage needs fellowship. Fellowship is another way of saying "socializing." For children, fellowship simply means fun. Every marriage deserves the excitement of being a fun experience. Every family member should share an excitement about their family because their family knows how to have fun! How many marriages have gone stale because there is no fun? Take a trip, even if it's just to the neighborhood park to sit on a blanket and eat sardines and crackers! Laugh a little! Eat some cotton candy! Stand in the front yard and let your children or grandchildren soak you with a water hose! Have some fun! The spirit filled life is a life filled with joy and happiness. People who are happy and joyful know how to have fun! Marriages are invigorated and renewed when both husband and wife, have a little fun!

Keep Your Hand In God's Hand

Finally, if marriages are to succeed and grow we must be determined to keep our hands in God's hand! In good times and troubling times, marriages require both husband and wife to hold to God's hand.

The Christian marriage is at its best when it is founded on the principles of love!

The Christian marriage is at its best when it is powered by faith based worship!

The Christian marriage is at its best when it is invigorated by meaningful service!

The Christian marriage is at its best when it is sustained by an attitude of stewardship!

The Christian marriage is at its best when it is revived by a generous spirit of fellowship and fun!

Families that weather the storms of life do so because they are inextricably bound

to the will of God.

Marriages are a matter of will power. They only dissolve when at least one partner loses the will to continue. They are sustained when both partners make up in their mind that, come what may, they are determined to work things out in a beneficial way!

There are times when relationships are triumphant. These are the time when a couple rides through life on the shoulders of prosperity and world shouts Hosanna!

There are times when relationships are strong. These are the times when a couple stands strong against its enemies, ignores its critics and says, "Get thee behind me Satan!"

There are times when relationships are strained. These are the times when one partner feels like he or she is being crucified.

There are times when relationships are painful. These are times when one partner looks in the cup of life and earnestly prays that God would "let this cup pass from me!"

There are times when relationships are lonely. These are the times when friends go to sleep on you and your associates, on whom you have depended upon and confided betray you with a kiss!

There are times when relationships are embarrassing. These are the times when you are stripped naked and hung out on a cross for the world to see. These are the times when even the best partner sometimes cries "Father, why hast thou forsaken me!"

There are some who have endured so many troubles; so many frustrations; so many disappointments, so many nails driven in their hand, that one partner cries out, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

The devil is busy! He'll try to bury your marriage in the first empty tomb he can find!

He'll stand guard around it to try to keep you from reviving!

But a marriage that is rooted in Christ, can stand, even though shrouded in thorns!

A marriage rooted in Christ can stand, even though it appears to have been destroyed!

How do I know?

Because I know a man who went into the garden one day and told his father, "Father let this cup pass from me! But nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done!"

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary to secure the salvation of his bride!

But early Sunday morning when, when the world thought the wedding would be called off, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but I've decided that come what may, I'll keep my hands in God's hand a dn stick with the Lord!

In sickness and in health....I'll hold to his hand!

For better or for worse.....I'll hold to his hand!

Richer or poorer.....I'll hold to his hand!

Hold to his hand!
God’s unchanging hand!
Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God’s unchanging hand!

No. 788-Youth

Back This Thing Up!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 23, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! Luke 15:17

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you were not yourself? That was the time when you acted in a way that was not typical of your usual behavior. Did you scream or yell at someone when you didn't mean to? Did you hit or push someone when that was not your intention? Did you do something completely stupid, that was outside of your normal way of doing things? If you've ever done anything that does not fit your self definition, then you know what it means to be something other than yourself.

One of the most difficult lessons for youth is to define themselves. Childhood and adolescence are difficult years because they are years of uncertainty. Children have no definite idea about who they are, why they are here and where they are going. As soon as they think they have defined themselves, the definition changes. Since most youth have not clearly defined themselves they tend to look for role models. These are the people whose lives impress them. They watch and observe their role models closely. They study them, learn their habits, strengths, weaknesses and history. Often they begin to dress like them, and repeat slogans phrases and catchwords used by their role models.

Because youth have not clearly defined themselves, many allow themselves to be defined by their peer group. Their friends determine what brand of clothes they will wear, what television shows to watch and even their radio station choices. They depend heavily upon the opinion of others to reassure themselves that they are doing the right thing and going in the right direction.

Young adults are awakening to the reality of who they are. Many have pursued their storybook images of their idols, only to discover that what works well for their television, music and sports industry role models doesn't alwasys fit well with what they are feeling about themselves on the inside. Maturing young adults are better able to define themselves. As a result have a clearer understanding of who they are,

why they are here and where they are going.

Christian youth who suddenly find themselves able to define themselves by the standards of God, know that there have been times when they have been everything except what God intended for them to be. Those were the times when they "were not themselves." Christian youth, know what God expects, they desire to do what is right and judge themselves by his standards rather than those of their friends.

As Christians, we strive to know ourselves better. Once we discover that we are off track, we quickly halt our movements in the wrong direction, back up and start over again! We know who we are. We know where we're going. We're children of the king, on our way home!

Exposition

This parable illustrates the impatience of youth and the love of God.

Jesus related the parable of the prodigal son to demonstrate God's love. The father, in the context of the parable, represented God's love, had two sons. The younger son demanded his share of what would be his inheritance while his father yet lived. By law, the younger son could expect to receive one third of his father's properties. However, he was only entitled to his share after his father's death. The son asked for his part early.

The son, totally focused on himself, demanded and received his share. Upon receiving his share he left and lived in what is described in verse 13 as a "far country." There, he wasted his substance on riotous living. After spending his inheritance he fell upon hard times only to learn that those whom he thought were his friends had abandoned him. He deigned to feeding hogs which, for a Jewish boy, was the lowest of insults. In hunger, he reached a point in which he considered eating the slop of the hogs until "he came to himself" in verse 17.

When he came to himself, the prodigal realized how far he had drifted from his family's instruction. Then he determined that he would stop, go back home and mend fences with his family.

Once home, he found his father waiting to receive him and celebrating his return.

The Desire To Be Free

This parable reflects the feeling of many teenagers today, who privately say, "I can't wait until I leave this house! I want to be free!"

Generally, teens want to be free of the demands that parents make on them.

They want to be free of restrictions on the use of the telephone. They want their own phone.

They want to be free of rules about cleaning the house. They want their own house that they can clean when they feel like it, if ever!

They want to be free of the constant scrutiny of their clothing. They want to wear what they want, wherever they want to, whenever they get ready!

They want to be free of rules that require permission to move. They want their own houses where they can set their own time to come and go.

They want to be free from being puppets dangling on a string, jumping and scratching for the right to drive a car, go to a movie or just to be let alone.

The prodigal of the parable wanted to be free from all rules and restrictions. He wanted to be free to choose his own friends and chart his own destiny.

He wanted to have fun!

Freedom is not free. This is a fact that many young people forget. Someone pays for freedom.

The freedom to use the telephone comes when one pays the monthly bill for the phone, the house note or rent where the phone is connected, the utilities that make the phone feasible, etc.

Freedom is not free! Someone pays! Many youth desire freedom without the responsibilities that go with freedom!

The prodigal left home because he wanted to be free!

Wasted his substance

The parable notes that the young man wasted his substance in riotous living.

What is his substance? It is more than the money that he received from his father. His substance was the very essence of his character, home training, energy, talents, abilities, skills, knowledge, and potential. All of these comprised his substance. They were much more valuable than the mere money he received.

At home, his parents were helping him to build up a substance reserve of character, training, and discipline that would be useful once he left home at the appropriate time. These intangibles, added to the inheritance he was due, would give him a fighting chance to survive in a cruel world.

Yet, in the "far country" the prodigal, wasted everything that he needed in what is described as "riotous" living.

Away from home, this youth found himself involved in excessive and addictive "substance abuse." The essence of his identity was being destroyed. His personality! His character! His reputation! He was both the victim and the perpetrator. While he wasted his substance in the far country...he was everything but the young man of character and discipline that walked out of his father's door! He was everything but the scholar and youth bubbling with potential that felt the warm embrace of his mother as he walked away from the place he called home.

He was free but he was not himself!

What is riotous living? A riot is an activity that is out of control. Riotous living is a lifestyle that is destructive, in opposition to laws and rules. It is dangerous! When it is over, all resources are depleted. There is often death and destruction associated with riotous living. Today, riotous living usually is associated with drinking, drugs, sexual promiscuity, and thrill seeking. Those who involve themselves in riotous living live on the edge of death and move from one life threatening situation to another

in search of fun and thrills.

Those who embrace the riotous life style live dangerously and walk on the wild side. These are the those who now live outside of the homes of their parents, and defy every rule they have been taught. They stay out till the wee hours of the morning, drink, party with the wild set, and come dangerously close to life threatening situations by frequenting places where death, drugs and destruction are common.

The prodigal learned that riotous living brings temporary satisfaction. It only lasts as long as one has the money to look good, dress good, eat good and drive good. Popularity is generally associated with one's ability to continue looking good and helping others to look good and party hard as well. Once resources are depleted, the world drops even its most popular! "Out of money" and "out of luck" go hand in hand!

When the prodigal found himself broke, hungry and alone, feeding hogs for a living, he learned the price that he had paid for the "freedom" to be "free."

He was a broken man. He was a destroyed man. He certainly was not himself.

Back this thing up

Finally brothers and sisters, the parable notes that the son reached a pivotal point in his life's direction. The text says, "when he came to himself." That is the point where he must have said to himself, "I'm going in the wrong direction. It's time to back this thing up!"

He made a 360 degree turn and began the long walk back to that which he knew was right!

Those who want to back up and get on the right road need only to watch this young man and learn a lesson in how to "back this thing up!"

First, the young man had to regain his "right" mind!

Those who regain their right mind are able to see things with a clearer eye. They are able to understand the way the world works and the value of their own life's experience.

That's not always easy to do, because the world is full of people who are:

Perpetrating instead of relating.

Ganking and yanking instead of banking and thanking the Lord for being so good!

It's hard to get your mind right, when everyone around you, who claim to be the real deal, lives outside of God's will!

It's hard to get your mind right, when your spirit is willing but your friends are chillin and grilling!

They are in your face and on your case, trying to get you to do their thing and go "bling! bling!"

It's hard to live the good life when everyone around you is singing, "It's a hard knock life!"

It's hard to get your mind right in a shake and bake "give or we take" world, where only the strong survive!

But I heard David declare in Psalm 37:1-3, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

Secondly, that son decided that before he back this thing up that there were some things he had to straighten and others he needed to turn loose. He said "I have sinned against heaven and before thee!"

If we want to back this thing up, there are some things that we need to turn loose.

If you want to back this thing up, but you are involved in

Drugs, you need to turn them loose and drop it like it's hot!

Illicit sexual relation, turn them loose and drop it like it's hot!

Drinking and running the club scene, turn them loose and drop it like it's hot!

Homosexuality, turn it loose and drop it like it's hot!

Stealing and buying stolen merchandise, turn it loose and drop it like it's hot!

Finally, that son decided that he would back up and go home!

At home, somebody loves him!

At home, somebody would forgive him!

At home, somebody would give him a second chance, even though he hadmessed up real bad!

Can't you see that son, walking down the road singing that old song, "I wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home! Too long the paths of sin I've trod, Lord I'm coming home!"

That father met his son, with his arms wide open!

This is my son, who was once lost but now he is found!

I suspect that every parent has walked the shoes of the prodigal son in their own lives. But we're so glad to have a heavenly father who loved us so much that sent his only begotten son to die out on Calvary!

Early Sunday morning he arose to welcome us with arms wide open!

Come on home!

Never more to roam!

Come on home!

No. 789-Inspiration

Half Time Is The Right Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 30, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." Zechariah 14:2-3

Introduction

Have you ever supported a team that didn't do well in the first half of the game, but came back to win in the second half? It happens very frequently. A team seems overwhelmed at the beginning, often giving the appearance of a mismatch. There are fumbled balls, missed passes, poorly executed plays, and a series of mistakes that makes the entire team effort appear to be a comedy of errors. Sometimes, what appears to be a poor first half performance is part of a team's strategy. It allows its opponents to become confident reveal their best plays and attacks first, then the team responds with its own offensive action in the second half. This happens in nearly every sport. Former Heavy weight champion Muhammad Ali, became famous for his "rope a dope" tactic of laying against the ropes, appearing to be tired, while his opponents pounded away at his gloves and shoulders. In the second half of the fight, Ali would rebound, dancing and jabbing to punch himself to another championship. In football and basketball, everyone waits until the second half before they pass judgment on a team's performance. Some come out of the locker room, fired up and ready to win.

Why would half time make a difference? What happens in the locker room that could motivate a team that is losing to come back and win? What could help a team that is leading to maintain its lead? More than any other person, the coach is extremely valuable at half time. He is the one person able to say the right things to fire up his team. The coach reviews the plays of the first half, praises the right moves and points out the bad moves. He analyzes the performance and gives suggestions. On some occasions he may even switch key players. He sometimes goes to the blackboard and reviews the game plan, and how each new play is to be executed. When he is finished, the coach reminds the team of its ultimate goal which is victory! He fires them up! They come out of the locker room with new enthusiasm, a revised game plan and confidence that they are the superior team!

Before a game in most competitive, organized team sports like football or basketball, the coaches get together and pick the plays they feel will work well against their opponents. The plays are collected into a play book and these are the plays the team works on in preparation for the game. These plays, including when they will be executed, are a part the team's game plan. The job of the coach is to train the team to learn the plans, then during the actual game to execute the plan itself.

Did you know that God has a game plan for every person who believes in him? God worked out a game plan, from the beginning, that guarantees salvation and victory to everyone on his team! He wrote out the plan in a play book called the bible. In the course of life's events he has sent in many plays from the play book. Some of them we have executed well. Other plays we have fumbled.

Half time, is the time we stop long enough to hear a word from the coach as he reviews the plays, reminds us of our strategy and sends us back into the game, with victory on our mind!

As Christians, we are happy to know that God has a game plan for our lives. We have learned that to insure victory, it is always wise to listen to the coach rather than play our own game. If we listen to God in the locker rooms of life, we'll come out more than conquerors in him who loved us!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Zechariah as he speaks to Israel about the coming victory of the Lord, despite what appears to be a long period of setbacks and disappointments.

Zechariah and Haggai were among the last prophets of the Old Testament. Israel had risen and fallen. It had enjoyed freedom and national prominence. It had also experienced a long period of exile and destruction. Haggai's job was to motivate the people to work. Zechariah's job lead them to rebuild the temple.

As the Old Testament was just about to close, and the New Testament was set to begin, Zechariah's message was similar to that of a coach's locker room pep talk. He had to inspire confidence in the team.

The returned captives were becoming disheartened and depressed because God had not made it possible to restore Zion and rebuild the temple. The foundations of the latter had been already laid, but as yet there was no superstructure (Ezr 3:8-10). Zechariah was coaching a team with a broken spirit. He reviewed the play book to reaffirm the game plan. His message: We are behind, but the big push comes in the second half.

He encouraged them to listen to the prophets, to follow God's ways, and encouraged them in their work of rebuilding the temple. He covered the entire future of Israel, beginning with his own day and on to the time when the Messiah would come to Jerusalem and be rejected by His own people. He gave a picture of the condition of the nation after the rejection of Christ; then showed them the time of Christ's return .

He told about the Gentile nations ruling over Jerusalem and how God will finally deal with these powers. The last siege of Jerusalem and what is associated with that siege, the tribulation, the deliverance by the visible coming of the Lord, and the resultant kingdom. It is a complete prophetic history of Israel and the times of the Gentiles, from the captivity to the end of time.

Zechariah reviewed the divine game plan and showed the people the ultimate victory which would come through Jesus Christ.

The Plays

Suppose our lives were like athletic contests. What would we need to win? We would need to be in good shape, possess some level of skill, and have a game plan and a good coach. The objective of the game is to win. The objective of the game of life is victory! That rarely comes without these team components.

GAME PLAN: Every person should have a life goal. A life goal is the major objectives one seeks to accomplish before the end of their lives. Some have devised a life plan or game plan which outlines the steps they plan to take to accomplish their life's goal. The game plan includes several special plays as well as offensive and defensive strategies in case of sudden death situations. For example a man's life goal may be to find the cure for the common cold. To accomplish that goal he designs several major plays or objectives needed to accomplish the goal. Included on his list are education, self discipline, selected internships and quality experiences. Everything he does moves him in that direction, including what parties he attends the kind of woman he marries, and where he chooses to live. Getting a house and a job are just plays in his play book. Finding the cure for the common cold is his goal. Unfortunately, while a game plan is a good idea, there are many who have some plays in mind, but they do not fit into a game plan. A person who says "I plan to grow up and make lots of money and own a big house" is usually describing a play. A game plan defines the goal and the strategies. The play book, outlines the plays that will be used when certain situations occur. Life without a game plan usually ends activity without purpose.

SANDLOT APPROACH: Many approach life with the attitude of a sandlot athlete. The sandlot athlete plays for the joy of the moment. Whether it's basketball or football, wrestling or running, sandlot athletes simply get together and have fun. The sandlot player wants to win and jumps into a game to do just that. There is rarely any thought of injury protection, game strategies or play books, the players simply make up the plays as they go along. Sometimes, they luck up and win. Often they lose. Sandlot players often have a good time but the sandlot games have nothing more to offer than, the joy of the moment. Aesop's fable of the ant and the grasshopper made the point. The ant had a plan and stuck to it. He collected food all summer and prepared for winter. The grasshopper had no plan, he lived for the moment. In the end, the ant survived, but the grasshopper faced the chill of hardtimes without provisions.

There are many today who have a sandlot approach to life. They have no special

plan,except to live for the moment, There is no game plan, play book or coach. They simply get up every day and decide what they'll do, one day at a time.

GET IN SHAPE: Every athlete must be in shape to compete. In life being in shape means more than simple physical fitness. It also means being educationally prepared and job ready. The best athletes have disciplined themselves to train rigorously. We've read the stories of athletes who rise at 4 a.m. in the morning, run five miles a day, lift weights or otherwise train themselves. That requires special discipline.

In life, we also need discipline. Those who can discipline themselves train both the body and mind. They study hard, read regularly and prepare themselves for the contest. They also train themselves spiritually. They study their bibles, feed themselves spiritually and stay prayed up. Their spirituality affects their attitudes about life, thus they discipline themselves to begin each day with the "breakfast of champions" which is the word of God.

A GOOD COACH: Whether a person competes in a team sport or individual competition, a good coach is essential. The coach is the person responsible for teaching the plays, executing the game plan, disciplining the team and motivating them when they lose sight of their goals or stray from the game plan.

Very few teams can win contests without a good coach, he or she is essential to the process. The coach provides the standard for the team and is often the source of inspiration that keeps the team going!

The best coaches are men and women who have "been there" themselves and succeeded. The best coaches have been in the arena themselves and ended their playing careers with high levels of achievement. They have something to share with others.

It's Half Time

Finally, brothers and sisters, I suggest to you that there is someone who has reached a point in his life in which he or she is considering different options. It's half time for someone today, and there is someone today looking to make some changes while they still have time to win the game.

Somebody has made it to half time! Unlike a football game where half time marks the half way point of the game, in life, half time is that point when you go into your personal locker room and evaluate your direction and come out with a new game plan!

Somebody has made it to half time!

There is someone here today who is tired of the sandlot approach to life, simply doing things without a purpose.

There is someone today who is tired of being a player without plan!

There is someone today who wants to discipline himself or herself to begin each day with the breakfast of champions!

Someone here today is tired of posting losing seasons.

Whenever a team has a losing season one of the first things it does is find another coach!

In December of 1998 the football world was rocked when five coaches were fired in the same day.

When Ted Marchibroda posted a third losing season with the Baltimore Ravens, the team said "I'm sorry but we've got to change the coach!"

When Dave Wannstedt posted a losing season with Chicago, the team said, "We're sorry but we've got to change the coach!"

When Don Capers found it impossible to turn around Carolina's losing record, the team said "We're sorry but we've got to change the coach!"

They loved Ray Rhodes in Philadelphia but when the team began to post a losing season, somebody said, "We're sorry but we've got to change the coach!"

They really loved Dennis Erickson in Seattle, but when he posted a losing season, they said, "We're sorry, we've got to change the coach!"

There is someone today who is a looking for a coach! They are looking for someone who has been there! Someone who knows the agony of defeat but who has also heard the crowds shout "Hosanna!"

I know a coach who is looking for a team! I heard him say in Revelation 3:20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me!"

His first official act as your new coach is to change the quarterback. Instead of calling your own shots, he's going to send in the Holy Spirit as your new quarterback!

The new coach is Jesus!

He is the one!

He's signed up on a multi-year contract, for I heard him say, "and lo I'll be with always, even unto the end of the earth!"

Jesus, who died out on Calvary !

Jesus, who arose after three days and night!

If it's half time in your life, let him lead you in the second half, and he'll carry to victory!

No. 790-Inspiration

When Trouble Returns

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 6, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint. ..." 2 Samuel 21:15-17

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when a problem you thought had been solved, reoccurred? We'd like to believe that once we emerge victoriously from our troubles that we will never see them again. However, experience has taught, that trouble has a way of finding its way into even the strongest fortress. There are some who once whipped their smoking habits, but they came back! There are some who have been wounded in failed relationships. Just about the time emotional recovery appeared eminent, there was a knock on the door and it returned! The same is true for some sicknesses that seem to grant a period of remission, then return. How many struggled with financial storms for years before they were finally defeated, only to see them return again? Despite our best efforts trouble and difficulties, once defeated have a way of coming back again, in a different shape and form, but just as dangerous as before.

As African-Americans, we celebrate our heritage by remembering our history. We celebrated the end of slavery with great fanfare, thinking that it had ended forever. As slaves, we were often forced to sing, "Happy Songs" such as "Dixie." To the amusement of our masters and his guests we'd sing "I wish I was in the land of cotton, old times there are not forgotten, look away, look away Dixie land." Even as we sang, our backs bore the stripes of the master's whip; our women bore his children and our lives were scarred for generations. When slavery ended, we thought we had heard the last of Dixie. We thought we had seen the last of the Confederate battle flag, which was etched in our collective mind as a symbol of our oppression. It became a reminder of a period in our history when we were humiliated and trampled upon, our ideas stolen from us, our fathers hung from trees, our friends sold off and our women raped. When General Lee gave General Grant his sword at the close of the Civil War, we thought we had seen the end of the bitterness the flag represented. We were mistaken.

The men who flew that flag nearly 140 years ago were defeated, but today their great great grandsons and daughters have returned to wave that same flag in our

faces, in the name of history and regional pride. Just as it stirred pride in Dixiecrats 140 years ago and motivated them to fight to preserve a way of life that depended upon the enslavement of others, it stirs an equal amount of resentment from those who are great-great-great grandsons and daughters of slavery. We thought trouble had gone away, only to see it return with a vengeance.

Whether socially or personally, no person should expect evil, once defeated, not to return. On the contrary we should expect, prepare for and guard against the return of evil influences, that return with the same and often greater vengeance than they did at the beginning.

As Christians, we know we must constantly be on guard against evil. We should watch constantly for the devil to attempt to destroy our personal lives and our community. When he returns he will often come in differently, but just as dangerously, with our destruction as his goal. Thus, we should be cautious against the return of evil, lest we are caught off guard and become its victims.

Exposition

This text focuses on David when he came face to face with a problem he thought he had defeated 40 years earlier, that almost killed him.

Toward the end of his long and prosperous reign, some 45 years after Goliath had fallen, David was forced to lead his army out against the Philistines. David had become famous as the giant killer of Israel. Even though it happened 45 years earlier the people still sang, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David has killed ten thousand." He was a folk hero and a king. He was a man known for his ability to kill giants.

1 Samuel 17:40 records the events of that historic day. David gathered five smooth stones to use in his sling shot. Why would a young man so confident that God would lead him to victory, need five smooth stones, rather than one? Did he think he would miss four times? Some scholars think he may have prepared himself for the inevitable. It would only take one stone to kill Goliath, but he had heard that Goliath had four sons. One of the five stones, therefore, was for Goliath, the other four were for his sons should they come to avenge him.

On the day David killed Goliath there was a shout of victory. The people celebrated and David put away the unused stones because the sons of the Giant never made a move against him.

For 45 years David never heard a word from Goliath's sons. They made no attempts to destroy him. They existed but left him alone.

However, this text records that the Philistine army decided to try to dominate the people of God once again. They were led by four great champions, the sons of Goliath, the fallen hero who was slain by David.

And in the dust and fury of the battle he was confronted, face to face, and challenged by one of Goliath's sons. His name was Ishbi-benob.

David went into battle with him and was confident of victory. If he had slain

Goliath with a puny pebble, how much more the son of Goliath with a mighty sword. (2 Sam 21:15-17)

But David found himself hard pressed against this enemy. Isbi-benob fought David with a new weapon. He dominated with great strength and with the power of his new weapon. David's arms ached. His legs threatened to give way. Fear began to fill his heart. He gave ground as he fought in desperation. The Philistine realized that he was slowly wearing David down. Just as he was about to deliver the fatal blow to David, Abishai, one of David's faithful soldiers, moved in, distracted the Philistine and killed him. Later on in the war the remaining 3 sons of Goliath were also killed. (2 Sam 21:18-22) Had it not been that he had a little unexpected help, David might have been slain.

Goliath Has Sons

Have you conquered some "Goliath" in your life? Some fearful sin, some dark oppression or affliction that challenged your Christian experience and threatened your fellowship with God? One of the greatest joys of the Christian experience is winning a victory over Satan. One of the greatest thrills, is to know that Satan did not win! However, each believer should be reminded that Goliath has sons!

The temptation that we thought we had defeated...has sons! They do not go away completely but others come to take their place. Therefore believers are urged to stay on guard. That's what 1 Corinthians 10:12 means when it says, "Let he who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall."

When David fought Goliath he carried enough stones to kill each one of Goliath's sons. However, in this text David stumbled upon Goliath's sons unprepared.

We should always be prepared for the attacks of the evil one. He never sleeps. He is a like a lion prowling to and for, seeking to destroy us.

Goliath may have been conquered but his sons are waiting their turn.

Ishbi-benob used a new sword!

Ishbi-benob came after David with a new sword (v.16). It was different than David's sword. The Philistines controlled the production if iron and allowed no one in Israel to learn the secret of its production. (1 Samuel 13:19)Their long, iron swords, made them formidable enemies. Thus, David tried to tackle the son of Goliath on his own terms, not realizing that the son of Goliath was using a new weapon.

When David faced Goliath he carried only a slingshot and refused a sword. He was confident that God would protect him. However, before Ishbi-benob, he placed his confidence in his bronze sword, without knowing that the giant had a new weapon.

Often we are tempted to rely on our own swords. We rely on our education, financial investments, influence and personal resources to attack problems. We take these into every battle without realizing that when the sons of Goliath come, they come with new swords that have better education, more influence and more resources

at their disposal.

When the sons of Goliath come every believer should remember how he slew the first giant, not with his own sword but by the power of God. Zechariah 4:6 put it this way, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts.”

Goliath’s Sons are Patient

The sons of Goliath are very patient. In David’s case they waited 40 years before they made their return. Even then, Ishbi-benob waited until David was fatigued to make his attack.

Weariness decreases our defenses. When we are weary we are most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks.

When are we most likely to give people a sharp response or an insulting answer? When we are tired!

When are we most likely to dread going to choir rehearsal? When we are tired?

When are we most likely to avoid participating in church related ministries? When we are tired!

When do we say and do things in our marriages that we are sorry for later? When we are tired!

Fatigue is the best time for Satan to attack. That’s why it is a good idea for every believer to have a time of refreshment?

Thousands of believers are defeated by the Sons of Goliath who wait for them to get weary before they attack them.

Church leaders should refresh themselves regularly. If not, the joy of ministry can easily become a chore.

A tired preacher, no longer takes the time to research, study and prepare, he simply throws something together and tries to hide it behind a whoop!

A tired choir, no longer takes joy in the execution of difficult but inspirational songs, but is content to throw something together to get by.

Tired deacons, no longer participate in prayer, visit the sick or minister to the congregation, they just choose themselves a front seat and sit down.

Tired ushers, no longer greet visitors with joy, if they stand at all, they are grumbling about how long they stand.

Tired members, drag themselves to worship! They drag themselves to auxiliary meetings and church ministries. David asked God to “renew in me a right spirit.” That would help him stand strong in the face of the sons of Goliath!

We Need A Little Help!

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that no one successfully tackles a giant without a little help!

Whether you stand before your Goliath with a stone or with a sword, you will need some help!

Everybody needs a little help sometimes!

It doesn't matter whether we graduated from a day care center or whether we have a Phd, everybody needs a little help sometimes!

It doesn't matter whether you have a jar full of pennies or a bulging stock portfolio, everybody needs a little help sometimes!

When David fell faint in front if Ishbi-benob, Abishai came to his rescue the same way that the Lord comes when a believer is in trouble!

When you are in trouble, and the sons of Goliath are attacking, you don't call on your college diploma!

When your health is failing, and the sons of Goliath are attacking, you don't call on your financial resources!

When you are being attacked and falsely accused, and the sons of Goliath are attacking, you don't call on your circle of influences!

When a believer is in trouble he calls out, Lord! Oh Lord! Have mercy on me!

David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!"

Don't worry about the sons of Goliath, just stay prayed up and know that God is still on the throne and help is on the way!

With a little help from the Lord..the weary can be at rest!

With a little help from the Lord..the lonely can get comfort for their souls!

With a little help from the Lord,.the weak can find new strength!

All my help comes from the Lord!

He lived down here for 33 long years!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave

With all my help in his hands!

No. 791-Anniv.-Women

The Lamp Lighter's Mission

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 13, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it " Exodus 25:37

Introduction

Have you ever been afraid to walk in the dark? We are often afraid to travel certain streets in the dark because of a fear of unknown dangers. We feel safer on streets that are lighted well because they help us to prepare for dangers lurking behind a corner or around a bend. The more light the better. Even in our homes, it can be a scary feeling to awaken in the middle of the night and try to move toward a bathroom when all of the lights are out. Walking in the dark is a scary feeling.

We feel a little better when someone goes before us and turns on the lights. When the lights are on we feel more secure. We are bolder..more courageous, when the lights are on!

The person who turns on the light is a very important person. When we are walking in the dark the person who carries the flashlight is extremely important. The person who enters a dark room first and turns on a light for us to see, makes us all feel better.

Before electricity, the streets of most cities were lighted by gas lamps that stood on high poles. Cities hired people who began work at sundown walking through the streets lighting the street lamps. Sometimes the lights were out of reach. The lamp lighters would use long poles or walk on stilts to help others to see. The people were dependent upon the lamplighters to walk about at night in safety. Without light, the streets were dark and ominous - almost impassable. Many who walked the well lighted streets never actually saw the lamp lighters. If they did, they rarely knew their names. However, they were eternally grateful to them, because their work made it possible for others in the city to walk a brightly lighted path.

In our life's journey, there have been many times that we have stumbled upon dark areas of experience that would have otherwise been frightening had it not been for the fact that someone turn on a light to help us see.

Lamp Lighters. We have them in every area of endeavor. These are the men and women who move into an area of experience first and make it easier for others to follow

them. These are those who move into the darkness of the unknown, strengthened only by an unfaltering faith in God, and seize opportunities that open doors for others.

In matters of faith there are also lamp lighters. These are those who inspire hope in a faithless generation. These are those whose life experiences show those who come after them that despite the difficulties of their own life experiences, that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Spiritual lamp lighters help those who follow them to approach the unknown with the full knowledge that God has led others through this path, and will lead them too!

As Christians, we praise God for his light and his salvation. As we try to let our lights shine, we know that part of the shining process, is to help light the lamps of others. Giving light and lighting lamps...that is the lamp lighter's mission!

Exposition

This text focuses on the instructions given to the priests about lamps used to light the Tabernacle.

In the wilderness, Moses received instruction from God about the construction of the Tabernacle, which was a magnificent tent, in which God himself resided. Every minute detail of the Tabernacle was spelled out by God himself, and carried out by Moses.

The 25th Chapter of Exodus, in part, focuses on the instructions for lighting the Tabernacle. Moses was instructed to make a great candlestick (v. 31) with six branches that came out of its sides (v. 32) and a seventh on the top of the shaft which ran through the middle of it.

The candlestick, with its seven lamps has been said to represent many things in our dispensation. To some, these seven lamps represent the several gifts and graces of the spirit, often called the seven spirits of God. To others, these lamps represent the perfection of the church in its ministries as represented by the seven churches of Asia Minor. Still others contend that the seven lamps, spread in every direction, suggests the spreading of the church's mission into every place of darkness.

While this passage is quite detailed as to the nature of the materials of which the lamps are to be made, how they are to be designed and other construction particulars, it leaves one area to conjecture: Just who was suppose to light the lamps!

Verse 37 says, "and they shall light the lamps." However, in none of the preceding verses has "they" been clearly defined. Verse 10 implies that, "they" refers to the people. In practice, it was Aaron and those that came after him who drew the responsibility of lighting the lamps.

Each was ordered by God at verse 40, to pay strict attention to every procedure and step laid out by God himself, "after the pattern" that was given on the mount.

The lighting of the lamps was important to the Tabernacle because it had no windows. There was no way, because of the manner of its construction, for any light to enter unless it came from the inside. Those who drew the responsibility of lighting

the lamp made it possible to see how to order themselves before God.

What began with Aaron and his descendants in the Tabernacle as a simple ritual of lamp lighting has now continued into the present dispensation. The command, "and they shall light the lamps" still lingers, but it refers to the spiritually strong of every generation. They are commanded...light the lamps, but follow God's direction in doing so!

Let Light Shine

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Thus, every believer is challenged to have a light and let it shine before men themselves. Before a person can serve as a lamp lighter,he or she must first have a light themselves.

What kind of light do you have?

CANDLELIGHT: Candles provide a small amount of light, but the light source is fragile. A gust of wind can easily snuff a candle. Similarly, there are people who have lights that shine like candles. They serve until the first gust of wind blows them away. The slightest difficulty or frustration discourages them and they give up in despair. The church needs candlelight people, just as it needs every person with a light. We must be aware of those who are extremely sensitive, and fragile lest we snuff out their candles before they get to shine.

FLASHLIGHTS: Flashlights are most handy in times of emergency or darkness. In a time of trouble or need we often reach for a flashlight to light the way. However, a flashlight is only as good as its batteries. The batteries of flashlights must stay charged up. In every generation, there have been flash lights among us. They have risen in times of emergency, crises, and peril to show us the way. Flash light personalities among us have one unique quality, they seem to always be "powered up" and operating on a full charge. For believers, this means we must constantly be prayed up and ready to face whatever situation that comes in the name of the Lord.

SEARCH LIGHTS: Search lights are used to scan large spans of dark areas. They are used to help find someone or something that is lost. They are powerful. They are bright. Today, there are millions of people who have lost their way. In education, business, civic affairs, and personal development. The search lights among us are those who have been endowed with special gifts to seek and find the lost and bring them to shore. The search lights are those who deal with wayward children, minister to those imprisoned or trapped in the vicious cycle of drug and alcohol abuse. God needs search lights to win the masses.

FOG LIGHTS and NIGHT LIGHTS: Fog lights are the small lights on automobiles. They don't provide the same intensity of light as the headlights but when visibility is low, fog lights help drivers avoid accidents. The same is true for night lights in the home. They are small lamps that would hardly be seen in the day, but at night provide just enough light to help a family member moving in darkness to avoid an accident. There are many among us who are not gifted to be search lights or flood lights. Their

gift is small but at the right time, their advice and counsel, like a fog light, can help us avoid accidents. The fog light people are not the leaders but the faithful followers to do their part in the ministry. They are not big idea people but they are gifted in wisely carrying out details once formulated. It's the thousands of fog lights and night lights that help us make it through times when visibility is low without a collision. Thank God for fog light people.

BRIGHT LIGHTS: Those who travel dark roads need bright lights. Automobiles usually come equipped with a light fixture that has what is known as a low beam and a high beam capacity. The high beam can cast a beam of light 500 feet or more ahead. Bright lights are needed to help the driver see up the road. However, every good driver knows that there is also a time when the low beams must be used. When two automobiles meet each other and both are beaming bright lights, both are in danger of an accident unless both of them dim their lights. While bright lights are needed among the lost, those who are saved gain nothing for engaging in "bright lights" contests in which we promote our church, denomination or non-denomination over another and spend our time trying to out shine the other. In a world of darkness, those who have bright lights should keep their high beams on the dark road, and dim them when approaching another who has lights but is coming from a different direction.

Light a Lamp

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the truth that each person who has a light bears a responsibility to not only shine a light, but to also light a lamp!

Those who have achieved and realized a degree of satisfaction and success in an endeavor shine a light, whether they want to or not. They have a responsibility to mentor someone as they themselves were mentored. We have to reach back and help somebody, like somebody helped us!

If we have learned anything from history as a people, it is that we stand on the shoulders of those who have lighted a path before us.

Phyliss Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Mary McCleod Bethune, were all lamplighters. They pointed the way in poetry, the quest for freedom and in education!

But so was Lucy Campbell. She's gone on to glory but the lamps she lit in song still shines brightly. In thousands of churches people still sing..."Something within me that holdeth reins, something within me I can't explain, all that I know there is something within!"

Mahalia Jackson was a lamp lighter. She made the words of Matthew 6:33 true to millions; that if you, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you." She showed that a woman could give her talent to God alone and still be rich and famous and in so doing lit the lamps of a generation of young women who would follow in her path, singing only for God and his glory.

Lamplighters have lights to shine, but where do they get their light? For the answer take a good look at the moon. It shines brightly at night, but it has no light

of its own. It reflects the light that comes from the sun. Without the sun there would be no light.

That's why the Psalmist wrote, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, who shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid."

That's the way it is with a believer. He or she would not have any light, if were not for the SON!

Every believing lamp lighter is powered by the Son!

That's the only way they can keep on shining!

They are able to keep working in education, because they are powered by the Son!

They are able to keep serving in the community, because they are powered by the Son!

They are able to keep on witnessing because they are powered by the Son!

Somebody answered that question, "Where do lamp lighters get the light?" in the words of a song that said, "Jesus gave it to me, and I'm going to let it shine!"

All in my home, I'm going to let it shine!

Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine!

Shine, Shine, shine! I'm going to let it shine!

Jesus, Mary's baby!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose after three days!

Jesus gave it to me..and I'm going to let it shine!

No. 792-Anniv.-Men

Who Will Stand In The Gap?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 20, 2000

Scripture: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. " Ezekiel 22:30 "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Introduction

Have you ever needed someone to intercede for you? There are occasions in each life in which we find it necessary for someone to say a word on our behalf. A person who intercedes has a special influence that could help create opportunities we desire. If your employer is hiring, it is not unusual that you should get a call from a friend asking you to put in a word for them. Those who must stand before a judge, it is not unusual for a defendant to encourage everyone who may know the judge privately to speak a word in his or her defense. Sometimes children beg their mothers to stand between them and a punishment that has been promised by a father. Most of us have had an opportunity or two to seek an intercessor.

One of the most dramatic plots of the theater is found in the play, "Cyrano de Bergerac" a French drama in which one man, who has good looks but no intellect gets his friend who has a flow or words but a giant nose, to write love letters to a beautiful woman named Roxane. Roxane fell in love with the thoughts of the letter, without knowing that they were not the thoughts of the man who read them. In the same way, many friendships have been broken by best friends who were trying to intercede in troubled relationships.

Good or bad,we've had some experience with intercession. Consider the guy who arrived at the pearly gates, and waited to be admitted. A clerk read through the Big Book to see if the guy's name is written in it. After a few minutes, the clerk closed the book, and said "I'm sorry, I don't see your name written in the Book."

"How current is your copy?" he asks.

"It's updated every ten minutes," The clerk replied. "Why do you ask?"

"I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I was always the stubborn type. It was not until my death was imminent that I cried out to God, so my name probably hasn't arrived for your copy yet."

"I'm glad to hear that," the Clerk said, "but while we're waiting for the update to come through, can you tell me about a really good deed that you did in your life?"

The guys thinks for a moment and says, "Hmm... Well there was this one time when I was drivin' down a road and I saw a giant group of biker gang members harassing this poor girl. I slowed down, and sure enough, there they were, about 20 of 'em torturing this poor woman.

Infuriated, I decided to intercede. I got out my car, grabbed a tire iron out of my trunk, and walked up to the leader of the gang. He was a huge guy; 6-foot-4, 260 pounds, with a studded leather jacket and a chain running from his nose to his ears. As I walked up to the leader, the bikers formed a circle around me and told me to get lost or I'd be next. "So I ripped the leader's chain out of his face and smashed him over the head with the tire iron. Then I turned around and yelled to the rest of them, "Leave this poor innocent girl alone! You're all a bunch of SICK, deranged animals! Go home before I really teach you a lesson in PAIN!"

The clerk, duly impressed, said "Wow! When did this happen?"

"About three minutes ago." The man answered. Certainly, he knew the meaning of intercession.

Often we call upon friends to intercede for us with other people, but who can we call upon to intercede for us when we need special consideration from God?

As Christians we have come to know that when we need someone to help us get a prayer answered, we must call on Jesus he will stand with us and for us in our time of need.

Exposition

The text focuses on the Prophet Ezekiel as he appeals for men to intercede for Israel as the gap between God and the nation widened.

The prophet Ezekiel ministered to Israel in two spheres. In the first 23 chapters of his prophecy he gave warnings of a gap that was being created between the people and God by the sinful actions of the nation. In the remaining chapters, which were written after God destroyed Jerusalem and allowed them to become captives, Ezekiel detailed ways the nation could re-establish itself with God.

The idea of a growing gap between God and man was promoted heavily by Ezekiel. The nation began to feel that the temple in Jerusalem was a "good luck" charm for them. As long as they had this billion dollar structure, the home of God, no enemy could trouble them. After all, they believed that God lived in Jerusalem and would not allow anything to happen to the place where he resided.

The essence of Ezekiel's prophecies were to detail how God is bigger than humanity and does not need mankind to maintain his existence. God's anger at the sinful people and the constant disobedience by the people of God, created a widening gap that would end tragically for the people.

In desperation, Ezekiel preached, advised and counseled those who listened. He said the nation needed men who would lead the nation in repair the breach or gap in

the hedge of protection that once surrounded Israel. Repeatedly, the call was given for men to come forth and intercede between the people and God. No one came forth. No man answered the call.

Spiritually, no man was able to do so.

1 Timothy 2:5 makes it clear that those who seek access to God cannot succeed without an intercessor. It says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The sinful nature of mankind that existed from Ezekiel's time still exists. There is no man who can bridge the gap on his own merits. Those who are successful at doing so must go beyond their own humanity and be empowered by Christ himself, who is able to keep us from falling and willing to intercede for us with the father in heaven.

The Gap

Today, it is becoming increasingly evident that there is a gap between what God expects of us and what we actually do. Like the people in Ezekiel's we are trusting heavily on our rituals, church buildings and ceremonies to protect us from the enemy. A broad gap exists between what we say and what we actually do as believers.

GAP BETWEEN NEEDS AND DEEDS: There is a service deficiency among believers. Today, there is a growing need for men and women of God to respond to the cries of the helpless, hopeless and homeless. There is a need for someone to help our children survive the onslaught of negative influences designed to destroy them. Despite the fact that poverty is all around us and ignorance is clutching its cold and unforgiving fingers on the minds of our youth, there is a surprising gap between what needs to be done and what the people of God are doing! Is it possible that we are spending a disproportionate amount of our time praising and worshiping instead of ministering and meeting the needs of others? As we focus our attention upon what we can personally get from God through praise and worship, is it possible that we are neglecting the service? Is it possible that, like Israel, we are operating on the false notion that our ritual is sufficient to meet the need?

Just as in Ezekiel's time, the cry still goes out.."Is there a man who can stand in the gap?" Is there church community willing to close the gap between needs and deeds? Is there a congregation willing to roll up its sleeves and vigorously work to improve the community in which in lives?

GAP BETWEEN OUR TALK AND OUR WALK: There are many believers who talk a good game, but rarely act on what they talk about. Very few men will take issue with the fact that every home needs the active presence of a father. In our discussions, meetings and fellowships every believing man says that the family needs a strong male presence to give guidance, support and protection to the family. That is our talk. Often our walk is different from our talk. Many families see a very diminished male presence, especially in middle class homes where career goals often clash with family needs. Often the same man whose talk is "family first" finds himself in a dilemma when

it's time to walk the walk instead of just talking the talk. Children hear their fathers talk about the importance of God in their lives, but each time worship and service opportunities occasion themselves, father is not there. It's easier to talk the talk than to walk the walk.

Walking the walk closes the gap and demonstrates faith. That's why James 2:20 says, "Wilt thou know oh vain man that faith without works is dead!" Simple profession of faith without the works that demonstrate faith is useless. It's a classic case of talking the talk without walking the walk.

GAP BETWEEN OUR SOULS AND OUR SAVIOR: Many men today have a keen sense of business, order and goal achievement, especially in the middle class. However, some of these same men are unable to close the gap between themselves and God. These are the men who climb the career ladder quickly. These are the men who receive promotions on the job and burn the midnight oil to prepare themselves for their careers. Sometimes though, when they are alone, the secretly know that they are not as close to God as they should be. There are some who are not worried about their stock portfolios, annuities, 401K plans because they will take care of themselves. They are worried about closing the gap between themselves and God.

Across the nation men are realizing the importance of getting closer to God. That's why a few years ago, one million black men gathered in Washington D.C. to atone for their distance away from God. That's why Promise Keepers is attracting so many men. That's why the National Baptist Men's Movement is growing by leaps and bounds. Men everywhere want to close the gap between themselves and God. We can't get closer to our wives and children until we get closer to God.

Who Will Stand in the Gap?

Finally brothers and Sisters, we must consider that there is a need for someone to help us close the gap between ourselves and our God.

It has been established that there is a growing gap between our carnality and our spirituality, but who will stand in the gap?

There is a gap between husbands and wives, but who will stand in the gap?

There is a gap between parents and children, but who will stand in the gap?

There is a gap between what is and what ought to be, but who will stand in the gap?

When it comes to gaps that exist between humanity and inhumanity we can work to close those gaps!

We can give of ourselves and close the gap between the haves and have nots!

We can reach down and help someone and close the gap between the more fortunate and the less fortunate!

We can reach and close the gap between the touched and untouched!

However, when it comes to closing the gap between God and Man, we are helpless to do it all by ourselves!

The people of Sodom lived apart from God. Abraham tried to stand in the gap

for them. He begged God to save the city if he could find 50 or even as little as 10 good men. The people were so adverse to God that the city was destroyed.

There are many today who have created big gaps between themselves and God!

In the past, Grandma and Grandpa have stood in the gap for them!

When they couldn't pay their bills on time, grandma and grandpa stood in the gap!

When they couldn't manage their own affairs, grandma and grandpa tried to stand in the gap!

When they had to stand in front of mean judges, grandma and grandpa, raised money for their defense, and tried to stand in the gap!

When it comes to closing the gap between a man and his God, who will stand in the gap?

Grandma can't stand in the gap!

Grandpa can't stand in the gap!

Paul told Timothy, there is one mediator between God and man...his name is Jesus!

If you need somebody to stand in the gap, call on Jesus!

If you need somebody to forgive your sins, call on Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Call on Jesus..he will stand in the gap!

No. 793-Stewardship

Audit Trails

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 5, 2000

SCRIPTURE: ***"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:35-36***

Introduction

If an angel from heaven came to conduct a spiritual audit, how would you fare? If you receive a call today to say that your stewardship of the time, talent and resources that God has given you will be audited today, what would be your response? Would you be ready? Would you be afraid or would you be able to stand confident that everything is the way it should be? Audits reveal truths about our activities. That truth is discerned as auditor's reconstruct our actions through a trail of activity buried in our personal records. An audit of our spirituality would reconstruct the trail of our stewardship activities. If a stewardship audit could be conducted today, it would reveal in painstaking detail, the quality of our service to God.

Audits are conducted on many levels. As a general rule, whenever someone allows someone else to manage a business concern on their behalf, audits are conducted periodically to insure other parties that their interests are being protected and that their affairs are being managed properly. In large corporations, the stockholders are the company owners. They want to know if the company is operating according to recognized standards. In a very small company the owner may be a person. In a home, audits can be as simple as a husband or wife reading the check book ledger behind the other.

Scrapbooks and diaries tell a history of our lives. There is another history however, that paints a more detailed picture of who we are and what we really believe, that's our old checkbook registers. (A shoe box full of old receipts tells the same story for those who do not have checking accounts). The entries will read like a family history book. They chronicle every major event—births, deaths, and illnesses—and quite accurately reflect our tastes, habits, and interests.
They record our vacations, travels, and other moves. They also tell much about how expensively we dress or how extravagantly we eat. The total spent in each category

will pinpoint the things that make the greatest demands on our income— either because of need or by choice.

If a checkup was made of our stewardship, what would it show? If the extent of our heavenly reward depended on an audit of the last full month of our life, how would we stand? Would it show time, talent and resources managed according to the divine order? If our time log shows many hours watching rented videos or television, involvement in career building activities and attending social events, but very few or no hours in the service of the kingdom, what would that say about our stewardship? If our audit talent log, shows that talents and skills we possess are rarely used in kingdom building but are generally restricted to our personal development, what does that say? If our financial contributions for the support of God's work are irregular and small in relationship to how we've been blessed, will a spiritual audit suggest we need to examine our values?

As Christians, we recognize that each of us must account for our stewardship of the resources that God has given us. Our goal is to be audit ready, for we know not the day or hour when the savior will return and call us to account for our stewardship.

The Bible and Stewardship

The bible teaches that mankind two great truths about the world's resources.

EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD: Everything in the world belongs to God. We know this because he declares in Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." This means that everything that we possess or come in contact with belongs to God. Nothing is our own. Everything is his. This truth is important because, men often feel they can give God something. There is nothing we can give him, because everything we have already belongs to him.

WE ARE MANAGERS OF HIS RESOURCES: While God owns the world he delegated the management of the world to humanity. In Genesis 1:26 the word says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." The reference to "Man" is to humanity not gender. In verse 27-28 he clarifies that by "man" in this context he meant male and female and both were to have "dominion" over the earth and were charge to subdue it. We are held responsible as managers of the resources that God has provided for this earth.

Our entire understanding of our stewardship responsibility is based on these two truths: Everything belongs to God and we are called upon to manage it according to his rules.

God's Basic Management Rule

The basic rule that God gives us it to manage ecological, corporate and personal

resources in a way that conforms to the moral order.

As it relates to us personally, there are two sets of instructions. The first is found in the Old Testament. In Numbers 18:20-32, God provided that all believers set aside a tithe or a 10th of the resources that he has given them to manage to provide for the efficient operation and support of the sanctuary and its support staff, the Levites. The Levites had no land or inheritance, their entire existence depended totally on what was provided through the other tribes. The tithe was God's system to take care of them. Every third year there was a second Tithe collected for the purpose of taking care of orphans, widows and foreigners in addition to the Levites. The remainder of the resources managed by each family was left to their discretion.

The second set of instructions is found in the New Testament. Jesus reprimanded the religious leaders for promoting the tithe as an end in itself rather than a starting toward living a fully committed life predicated on faith, justice, mercy, compassion and giving. In Matthew 23:23 he noted that they emphasized minimum compliance with the law without understanding that more weightier matter which was total commitment to God with the tithe as a starting point. In the Old Testament it was understand that a person could use the 90 percent for their own purposes. Jesus suggested that a believers purpose and God's purpose should be one and the same, thus a person is not limited to just the tithe but even more if necessary to accomplish God's purposes.

Thus, the New Testament believer uses the tithe as a starting point and then blesses God even beyond, if it is necessary to accomplish God's purpose. His basic management rule is: "sacrificial living for the purpose of promoting God's purposes." He is not locked in by a 10 percent limitation. She is not married to a percentage etched in stone. But believers are committed to giving of their time, talents and resources, even to the point of sacrifice to help advance the kingdom of God. That is what he meant in Matthew 8:34-36 when he challenged every believer to deny himself, take up his cross and "follow me."

The Audit Trail

An audit trail is the record of how we manage what God has given us. With respect to spirituality it has to do with three areas: time, talents and resources.

TIME: Each believer is a time manager. God gives us 24 hours a day to manage. One day we will be called upon to give an account for our time management. According to the old Testament at least 2.4 hours a day is owed to the purpose of kingdom building. This may be bible study time, volunteer service to the needy or worship. In the New Testament context, we would not be bound by the 2.4 hour limit but would give whatever amount of time necessary to help accomplish a Godly purpose. While many are careful in other areas of stewardship, they are stingy when it comes to their time. When Jesus gives the call for believers to serve there are many who give excuses because they have other uses for their time. In one parable, Jesus told of a Lord who had a banquet and asked persons to attend but each offered

excuses because they had other concerns that demanded their time and attention. They lost their blessing because they were not available. The same is true today.

TALENTS: Each believer is a talent manager. Every believer has a special gift which falls in one of nine categories of gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. These categories are: Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits and language and its interpretation. In the world they are called talents. In the Body of Christ they are called Gifts of the Spirit. Every believer has at least one, some have several to one degree or another. Jesus told the parable of the talents to illustrate that he expects everyone to use their gifts. There will be a day of reckoning in which we will be called upon to show how we used our gifts. To those whom much is given, much is required, but everyone is expected to do more than simply report the gift back to God unused for the kingdom.

RESOURCES: The resources we manage include our money and investments, properties, and possessions. All of these belong to God. The New Testament steward views everything that he owns as an instrument that can and will be used for the advancement of the kingdom, if necessary.

In the Old Testament mentality, he would only give only a tithe. But because his purpose is now God's purpose, the New Testament Steward perceives everything he or she has as being available for God's use. Giving less than a tithe is unthinkable, giving more than a tithe is usually the order of the day!

A Good Audit Report

When an auditor finishes his investigation of our affairs it all ends with an auditor's report. Everyone wants to hear the auditor say everything is in order.

An auditor's report may show that everything is accounted for, but the its extreme value comes with the management letter. The management letter shows areas of weakness that need to be improved.

A spiritual audit report may show that a believer has good intentions and wants to obey God, but his management letter may show areas where he needs to make improvements.

Before the report is given to the owners, the manager is given a chance to adjustments to his management procedures to show good faith efforts to make things right!

Everything we do leaves a trail! All of our time leaves a trail!
All of our talents leave a trail!
All of our money and resources leave a trail!
If you want to know where we are going in life...just follow our trail!
Follow any believer's trail and it will point you to the kingdom of God!
Follow that trail and it will take you to Calvary!
Follow that trail and it will take you to an empty tomb!
Follow that trail and it will take you to a living God!
If you want to know where I'm going...follow my trail!

No. 794-Inspiration

It's Your Move

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

March 12, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. Psalm 121:1

Introduction

Have you ever played a game of checkers or chess and found that you had run out of moves? It's frustrating when your opponent has all of your board pieces and has you cornered on all sides with no way out. Those or the times when you are outnumbered, your kings are gone and every place on the board will result in a tremendous loss. In Chess, it's the time when he has placed you in a position of check. Your opponent has all of the Knights, bishops,Kings and Queens and you find yourself a defenseless pawn, surrounded on every side. That's the time you hear the chilling words..."It's your move!" When there are no moves left, and defeat is imminent, some throw in the towel to save time. Others continue to play despite the fact the outcome was determined earlier in the game.

There are often times in life when we hear those words, "It's your move" and know instantly that we must make a dramatic decision. We must act or face a consequence. Consider the professor at the university who had a reputation for being very strict. With over 200 students in his class he had little time for those who procrastinated. On exam day he told the class that he would not accept any exam that was not on his desk exactly two hours after the exam began. "I have told you my rule, It's your move, " said the professor. A half hour into the exam, a student came rushing in and asked the professor for an exam booklet. "You're not going to have time to finish this. No exam papers will be accepted after the test time ends. What are you going to do? It's your move?" the professor said.

"I'll take my chances," replied the student. He then took a seat and began writing.

After two hours, the professor called for the exams, and the students filed up and handed them in. All except the late student, who continued writing. A half hour later, the last student came up to the professor who was sitting at his desk preparing for his next class. He attempted to put his exam on the stack of exam booklets already there.

"No you don't, I'm not going to accept that. It's late."

The student looked incredulous and angry.

"Do you know WHO I am?"

"No, as a matter of fact I don't," replied the professor.

"DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?" the student asked again.

"No, and I don't care." replied the professor with an air of superiority.

"Good," replied the student, who quickly lifted the stack of completed exams, stuffed his in the middle, and said, "It's your move" as he walked out of the room!

Whether it is ping pong, checkers, football, tennis or the game of life, sooner or later the ball of life is going to be on our side of the court and someone will say, "It's your move!"

Often life gives us some challenging plays. We make our best moves but it seems like things just line up against us. We give some efforts our best shot and there are times when they don't succeed. Then there are times when we play our best game and rejoice not in hearing the words, but in saying the chill inspiring phrase "it's your move!"

That principle even applies to our spirituality and our relationship to God. God gives to us and we slap him in the face with disobedience. God makes a few big moves and takes away a few of our comforts and pleasures, so we try to punish him by withdrawing our praise and service. Move after move we play a dangerous game with God. It's a game we can't win, because he knows how we are going to move! At some point in our lives he sets up the board where we have no other place to turn ...then we hear the chilling statement..."It's your move!"

As Christians, we know that the essence of who we are resides in Christ. Our next move is to do what he wants, because "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)

Exposition

This text focuses on the Pilgrim song of Israel, which was usually sung by those on the move.

Pilgrims came to Zion to worship, pray and ask God for help. Many journeyed for days just to sit in the presence of God in the Holy City to ask divine blessings upon their actions and souls. They trusted God immensely. Thus, as they moved closer to Zion, they sung of their anticipation to receive help from God once they reached Zion.

Psalm 120 through 134 are called Psalms of degrees, accents and Pilgrim songs. They were usually sung by those on the move, about to be moved or desiring to move to Zion. These were the songs of the exiles in Babylon as well as the Pilgrims enroute to Jerusalem to worship. These were the songs of hope and inspiration that inspired them to reach higher and trust God more as they made one move after another.

Certainly David, the author of this Psalm, knew about making moves and looking to God for help.

David, as a young man, was constantly on the move. His life was filled with strategic actions that placed him in one position or the other.

He moved from the safety of his father's house to the obscurity of a pasture. It turned out to be a good move. Here, he learned to trust God to help him fight lions and bears as he protected the sheep.

He moved from the pastures to the battlefield, facing Goliath. That turned out to be a good move. After slaying Goliath, he became extremely popular as the people sang, "Saul has killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands." His victory elevated him in the eyes of the people but also drew the scorn of King Saul.

He moved from being a national hero to being a fugitive. When the king became jealous of the praise that he received, he sought to kill him personally. David made a move. He sought protection in the hills of the region. This too, turned out to be a good move, even though he was a wanted criminal. The people embraced him, followed him and loved him even more as he became a living legend among his countrymen.

He moved from being a Vagabond to being king. That was also a good move. As King of a united Israel and Judah, David was positioned to do many great things for the Lord. He defeated the region's enemies and united the people in battle. Under David the land was secured and an atmosphere of peace was created.

As King, David made a move on the wife of one of his soldiers. That was a bad move. It distressed him and convicted him with the burden of being both an adulterer and a murder conspirator.

He then moved to bring himself back to God and earnestly prayed that God would renew in him a clean heart and a right spirit. That was a good move.

Whenever the people made a move, they usually looked to God for help. They found that he was always awake, quick to answer and strong.

Making Moves

Today, there are many people who are making moves. Some of the moves they plan to make will benefit them. Others will increase their chances of failure.

SOME WILL MOVE AWAY FROM GOD: There are many who are contemplating some strategic life moves that will benefit them in some ways, but will ultimately take them away from God. There are some that are contemplating career moves that will put more money in their pockets than they have ever known. At the same time, some of the options available to them will place their spirituality in danger because of decreased time and emphasis on those things that will sustain their spirituality. Moving closer to career while moving away from God and family is counter productive. Yet, there are thousands today that are sacrificing God and family to move closer to their career objectives. When assessing such moves, each believer should consider that in addition to their skills and abilities, there are certain character traits and attitudes that they possess that make them attractive to others. Many of those traits are nurtured in a happy home and wholesome spiritual environment. Take away either of those and what was attractive, after a brief time becomes ugly, as personalities, attitudes and motivations change to adjust to the atmosphere around them. Jonah

discovered that moving away from God has its down side. Not only did he discover that personal goals could be thrown overboard but that even simple efforts can dry up on the vine without God. That's why the song writer wrote, "Without God I could do nothing. Without him, I surely fail. Without him, I would be drifting. Like a ship without a sail!"

MAKING MOVES TOWARD GOD: While some are moving away from God, there are others who are deciding that it is time for them to move closer to God. They have lived a life away from God and see where it has carried them. They know the worldly scene. They've done the club scene. They've played the dating game and the waiting game. They have tried the independent life, free of church membership, prayer, worship and bible study. All of these have left them with an empty feeling. It is a feeling that, "Something is missing." That's the point where Jacob decided that he would return to his homeland. That's the point where the prodigal son said, "I will arise and go to my father." The point when we begin to move toward God is the point that we make up in our mind that we will make a radical move in our lives. It's the point in which we decide to move toward God rather than continue moving away from him. There are many who already belong to a church, but they have been drifting away in small increments. There are some who were reared in religious environments and carried the teachings of home in their hearts, even though they rarely acknowledged them..now they want to move closer to them. There are others who have known God for themselves and they desire to move closer to him.

SOME DON'T MOVE WITHOUT HIM: There are some who never make a move without God. They consult him in prayer and seek his advice on a daily basis. Every major move in their lives is the result of consultation with God. If they desire to buy a car or a house, they talk to God first. If they want to change jobs or careers, they talk to God first. Even if they want to take out a loan or contemplate other changes of direction, they talk to God first. Some have experienced difficulties in their marriages and personal lives but found workable solutions when they decided to talk to God first. This is the biblical example. People of God, talk to and consult him before they make major moves. Kings that went into battle, talked to God first. Prophets, about to make major pronouncements, talked to God first. Even widows who were destitute with no where to turn, talked to God first. Very few, in the biblical record, moved without talking to God. Those that did, met with undesirable ends. Those who talk to God have learned that he has always provided the direction they needed. Sometimes he even nudged them in the right direction by slamming some doors in their faces while opening others. Individuals should talk to God first. Families should talk to God first. Churches and communities should talk to God first. Believers should never make a move without God!

God Moves You!

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that while some take long periods of time to make their moves, there is one truth that cannot be ignored, when God gets

ready for you, “you’ve got to move!”

There are many who simply procrastinate. They put off doing what they know they should do, until a more convenient season. They put off what needs to be done today until tomorrow. But when God get’s ready, you got to move!

Abraham was satisfied living in his homeland, but God showed him a land of promise and pointed him in the direction of his future, despite his old age, Abraham found out that when God get’s ready, you got to move!

Elijah hid from his enemies in caves, and was fed daily by ravens by a brook. He resisted efforts to come forth and show himself. But when God got ready, the brook ran dry and the raven powered room service he enjoyed stopped, then he returned to his mission. He learned that when God gets ready, you got to move!

Saul persecuted the church and put many of its believers in jail. He resisted following Christ himself and traveled in a different direction; but when God got ready, he caught him out on the Damascus Road and give him a new direction. When God gets ready, you got to move!

That’s why Isaiah resolved, “If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me!”

Somebody here, has been trying to move away from God!

Somebody here, has been trying to move without God!

Somebody here, has been trying to move with God!

No matter who we are, there comes a time when we have to make a move!

If you put your trust in God he change your:

Defeats into victories.. It’s your move!

Failures into successes..it’s your move!

Enemies into your friends..it’s your move!

Stumbling blocks into your stepping stones..it’s your move!

Somebody here today has made a bad move or two and thinks that the game is over!

But the word of God tells me that there was another move made in heaven 2000 years ago!

Jesus, the son of God, came down and died for our sins!

He moved up to Calvary!

He moved into a borrowed tomb!

And early Sunday morning he arose up from the grave!

Now...salvation is complete!

Now...opportunity for eternal life is available!

Now...you have a chance to live a spirit filled life!

Now...you can play a winning game!

It’s your move!

No. 795-Love

If You Can't Be With The One You Love

(Love The Ones You're With)
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 13, 1971

SCRIPTURE: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:33-35; "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4:20

Introduction

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder?" It seems to suggest that when a person is away from the person they love they yearn for them and desire them to return quickly. In the absence of a loved one, we cling to the memory of every pleasant moment as we await their return. This constant focus on the object of our love intensifies our feeling of commitment and concern..at least in theory.

In modern times it seems that there are some who have developed their own response to this idea. Instead of "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" they say "Out of sight, out of mind." Indicating that their loves last only as long as they can see the object of their love. If he or she stays gone too long, then love is gone.

What do you do when the one you love out of sight? Often when a spouse or a person with whom we are romantically inclined is out of sight, the lines of communication are kept open. Letters are written on occasion, although many are not writing letters as they have in the past. In addition, phone calls are frequent, despite the increased costs. The intent of the letters and phone calls is to keep in touch with the one that is out of sight?

What happens if the object of our love is out of sight and communication is little or none? That is a formula for failure.

A popular song made a suggestion that seems to be accepted by many, "If you

can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with." Those who adopt that mentality have concluded that the proper response to an absent lover is to share a meaningless physical experience with someone else until the real object of love returns. Such is the case with those who love on the rebound. Those who feel rejected or are otherwise wounded often share a brief relationship with someone else for the express purpose of tiding them over a wounded feeling until either their relationship is fully restored or the wounds have healed.

Real love does not provide a "Love the one you're with" escape. However, the love of God has a response that is similar: "If you can't be with the one you love, love the ones you're with." The implication is simple, in the absence of Christ in the flesh, until his return, loved the persons whom you come in contact with everyday!

As Christians, we understand the importance of loving God. We also know the importance of loving our fellowman. We must do both if we truly love God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains to his disciples what they are to do after he returns to heaven.

Jesus made it clear that he was about to leave. He was going to prepare a place for them and all believers. At this point, the disciples would not be able to go with him, but at a later time he would return and catch them up to be with him.

In his absence, the disciples were told to "love ye one another." By loving each other, each of them would demonstrate that they are truly children of the king.

Attitudes about love

One of the most peculiar power of mankind is his ability to love. This capacity is one of the ways that he stamped in the image of God. One of the most difficult challenges we have in life is to learn to love as God loves, with an "Agape" or universal Godly love for everyone. It is challenging because we have been called upon to have dominion over the world in which we live, while at the same loving everyone and everything in it.

The spiritual love that God has given us has a dynamic meaning. By this love we are also called to redeem and transform the world through the same power that raised Christ from the dead..

Love has become everything other than what God has intended for it to be. There are many who are puzzled by the spiritual dilemma that prompts them to ask the question: "If everybody loves or tries to love, why is it that we are not made happy and redeemed by all of the constant effort? " The answer probably lies in the truth that all that seems to be love is not so in reality.

Have you heard the child's definition of love: "Love is a feeling that you have when you feel like you've got a feeling that you've never felt before and will never feel any more!

Have you heard the romantic's definition? "Love is when two people lay siege to capture each other's hearts. When the siege is over and the hearts are captured the marriage is complete.

Have you heard the poet's definition? " Love is a sensation that leads to temptation that increases the population for future generations."

With notions such as these, it is not difficult to understand why so many people can claim to love without an evidence of the same. None of them describe real love

False notions

There are many who harbor false notions about love such as:

ROMANTICISM: The romanticist enters a subject to object relationship. A person who has the attitude about love views others in the relationship as things, commodities which can be used exploited, enjoyed then cast away. This attitude looks for the perfect object that is worthy. The with this attitude often feels like the only person that feels, think, enjoys, wills ,desires or commands. The feelings of others are beside the point. Romanticism is really an escape from the commitments that real love requires. The romantic usually refused to enter into real relationships which would make true love possible.

EGOTISM: The egotism reserves the love that should be expressed and related to others only for oneself. Related closely to romanticism, the egotist feels you should be honored to be in his presence and should count yourself fortunate to be among the number of persons in his company. He will have difficulty relating to the snapshot of others who desire love because of the wall size photo of himself that is always in the way.

AUTHORITIANISM: Others are viewed as imperfect "things" unworthy of a full relationship. Once perfection has been achieved, then and only then are they worthy of the effort required to love. Such a person has difficulty focuses on people but on the greater picture. He can love the family as a whole but not the family members individually. He can love the nation but not the people in it. He can love the church building but the people. The choir or ushers but not its members. Once the individuals come up to his standard of perfection, then they can be loved, but until then love is reserved for the greater picture.

True Love Requires and Death and a Resurrection

True love requires both a death and resurrection to be properly demonstrated. What Christ wants from believers is true love. He wants both a death and resurrection. Thus, true love requires that a person "deny himself" or die to his own impulses and give himself completely and totally to another.

True love requires more than simply waiting until the person another person becomes perfect.

It requires more than simply giving a person the chance to love you.

It requires more than making someone an object to be worshiped.

True love requires a person to die to himself. To completely lose himself in another person.

There are many of have died in themselves and found themselves in something bigger, more powerful and greater than themselves. Martin Luther King once said "If a man has found something for which he is willing to die, he is not fit to live."

For believers this truth is extremely important because it suggest that in order to truly love God we must be willing to die to ourselves. Our will disappears and becomes his will. Our desires vanish and lose themselves in his desires. Our goal becomes to abide in him as he abides in us.

But just as we die to our own interest we rise to his commands directions and purpose.

We die in ourselves and become resurrected in him. He becomes our all and all. He becomes our everything!

Love the ones you're with

Finally, brothers and sisters, when Jesus left the earth he told his disciples "I go to prepare a place for you" but in leaving he charged them to love everyone until he returns.

In essence, what he said to us is "You can't go where I'm going. You can't be with me, but what I want you to do is to love the ones you're with."

Every time you see a hungry man, love that man by showing him how to feed himself as well as giving him bread!

Every time you see a lonely person, show them I'm concerned by being a friend for them!

Every time you see a dejected person, show them compassion and by opening your heart to them.

If you can't be with the one you love, then love the one you with!

Love them in the choir, even they rub you wrong way!

Love them on the usher board, even when they make uneasy!

Love them on your job when they get on last nerve!

The greatest example of love was given by Jesus himself!

He loved the world, although it spit in his face!

He loved the world, although it mocked him and ostracized him!

He loved the world, although it nailed him to an old rugged cross!

I'm glad to know that he also loved the world enough to get up that Sunday morning, with all power in his hands!

He's gone to prepare a place for us! We can't be where he is right now....but if you can't be with the one you love... Love the ones you're with!

No. 796-Cross

Cross Roads

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2, 2000

Scripture: "And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: " John 19:17

Introduction

Have you always been where you are now? Most people will readily admit that their lives are much different than they were several years ago. While we still have quite a ways to go to reach the levels that we seek, most of us have improved upon our past condition. We are not what we want to be. We are not what we should be. But thank God, we are not where we were. Most of us have come a long way from where we once were.

For everyone, the way has not always been easy. Consider the wealthy old man who was catching an airplane to New York from California. As he prepared to board, he heard the janitor grumble under his voice about how such a rich man probably never worked a day in his life. A ticket taker said something similar, so did the shoe shine man. The old man took note of the three and once in New York sent each of them a registered letter. He told each that were the recipients of $1 million provided they could be in his office in New York, one week from the date of the letter at 12 noon. One minute late would mean forfeiture of the $1 million. A week later the janitor was in the office. He looked weary and red eyed. The ticket taker was there too. His clothes were tattered and torn. The shoe shine man made it, but he was badly bruised.

The old man, holding the checks in his hand greeted the three who immediately recognized him. The man asked each to tell about their journey. The janitor said he drove the entire distance by himself, almost none stop, with little sleep. The ticket taker man said he caught a ride with a man who beat him, robbed him and left him for dead. On crutches and with one leg in a cast he thumbed a ride to New York. The shoe shine man left California, his car broke down, but he hid himself on a trailer full of chickens that was bound for New York. He was smelly and hungry, he said, but he arrived on time. The old man said as he handed each their checks, "A week ago you criticized me in the airport, on the basis of the way I looked. Today, you are millionaires but you look like you're not worth a dime. Let this be a lesson to you. Never judge a man by where is now, but by the road he had to travel to get there and to make it own time!"

What roads did you travel before you finally came to the cross? If the truth is told, some of us can testify that we were once thieves, adulterers, fornicators, liars, gamblers and murderers. Some have come over a way that has been watered by tears of frustration. Some have come over a way that has been haunted by an incestuous childhood. Some have traveled a lonely secret road where they still hear the hidden screams of aborted babies strewn along the road to their success. Some of us have traveled the fast lane of gamblers, prostitutes, dope dealers and users. Some of us have even joined church but find ourselves making u-turns, going back to what we are trying to get away from.

Believers have roads they have traveled and stories to tell. Some of those stories represent the Holy Spirit's best work and kingdom's grandest testimonies. That's what 1 Corinthians 6:11 means when it says, "And such were some of you..." But since finding the road to the cross you have been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord.

As Christians, we know that we are traveling the right road. It is road that began at the cross, but will lead us to eternity.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he continues in a series of stops on his way to Calvary.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, heard the appeal of the crowds as they called for Christ's death by crucifixion. Pilate, in an apparent attempt to avoid an insurrection, patronized the crowd, yielding to its call for the crucifixion of Christ. His decision to authorize the crucifixion marked the beginning of the journey to the cross.

The points along the final road to Calvary have been invariably described by some as stations of the cross. The stations of the cross mark significant places on the journey to Calvary that highlight certain events in scripture. The stations generally include: the place where Jesus was sentenced, given his cross, the place where he fell the first time, where he was helped by Simon, talked to women, nailed to a cross, buried and rose. There are others, but these mark the significant points along the trail to the place called Golgotha and afterwards.

The road followed by Jesus on the day of his death was a real road. It still exists today. Millions of people each year travel to Jerusalem to retrace the road to the cross and to touch and feel the station's of the cross.

It is by following the way of the cross that believers have come to a deeper appreciation of

what the carrying of the cross was really like. "Via Dolorosa" or "Via Crucis" designates a stretch of road between the Antonia fortress and Golgotha, along which Jesus Christ walked bowed under the weight of the Cross. The fortress, which stood near the north-west corner of the Jewish Temple, was the starting point for Jesus' painful walk toward Calvary, which at that time was outside the city walls.

John notes in the text “and he bearing his cross went forth..” (V17) noting the actual start of Jesus’s physical journey to Golgotha. Each stop or noteworthy moment along the way seemed to mirror the same struggles of believers everywhere who carry their crosses on a daily basis. It indicated the heaviness of the load, the need for help, expectation of punishment and the final victory that every believer knows all too well.

The road to the cross was not an end to itself because Christ’s journey did not stop there but continued to other stations: which were the grave and eventually to the empty tomb and heaven.

For believers the journey is significant. In retracing the steps of Jesus, we walk a mile in his shoes and feel his pain. Because we have felt his pain, he walks with us daily and shares our pain.

Falsely accused

The first stop on the Road to Calvary was the point where Jesus was falsely accused. False witnesses were brought forward to accuse the master of speaking seditious words against Roman authority. It was not true.

Every believer can expect the same. There will be many times when believers will be falsely accused of deeds and misdeeds. Some will even be falsely accused of crimes and may receive punishments they do not deserve. The fact that Christ himself endured false accusations on the road to Calvary, indicates that he understands the disappointment and frustration we feel when we are falsely accused for doing that which we believe to be right. In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus gave us the key to handling false accusations for doing right things, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Needed A Little Help

Carrying the cross, Jesus bore a heavy physical load that was too much for one man alone. He fell on several occasions. Luke 23:26 notes that Simon of Cyrene was drawn from the crowd to help Christ carry the cross to Calvary.

On the road to glory, every believer will need some help. Jesus, bearing the cross, understood what it meant to shoulder heavy loads and need help. He was God’s son, but by his own design, was a man with all of the weaknesses of a man. Shouldering the burdens of life is a difficult task. Sometimes burdens overwhelm even the strongest saint. Everybody needs a little help some times. When burdened David wrote in Psalm 121, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.” Knowing that believers carry heavy burdens, Jesus promises to help shoulder our burdens and lighten the load. That’s what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, “Bring it

to me, I'll bear it. Bring it to me I'll share it. If there is need in your life...bring it to me!" Jesus put it this way, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest!"

Nailed to a cross

At Golgotha Jesus endured a tortuous physical punishment. He was nailed to a cross with spikes in his feet and hands. He was ridiculed and helpless at that point, but remained confident that he would make it to his final glory. He felt forsaken, but never stopped calling on God.

Often, along the road to glory, believers experience failure and frustration. These are the times when everything seems to crash around you, despite your best efforts to sustain them. Your hands seem helpless to solve problems as if they are nailed in place. Your mobility is limited and your very ability or willingness to make things happen is severely limited.

Jesus, nailed to a cross, crying out to his father, indicates his empathy with our feelings of helplessness and frustration. In pain and frustration he cried out, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Having done this himself, he understands our feelings of frustration.

Believers who feel forsaken have a great assurance, Jesus promised never to leave us alone. In Matthew 28 he said, "And lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth."

Road to Glory

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while the road to salvation takes us to the cross, the road to glory begins at the cross.

The road to salvation, forgiveness and justification take us to the cross, but the road to resurrected lives, new hope and new beginnings, begins at the cross!

Many who should be enjoying renewed life and happiness, cannot achieve it because the road to renewal begins at the cross.

There is a song that says, "There's a highway to heaven. None can walk up there but the pure in heart. There's a highway to heaven, I'm walking up the king's highway!"

While there is a highway to heaven, there is only one on ramp! We must come by cross.

Jesus said in John 14:6 "..I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Somebody is standing on the cross road of life, trying to decide which way to go!

I don't want to mislead you! You won't see everybody walking the road to glory. You won't see the crowd's walking this road because broad is the road to destruction, but strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that

find it!

I'm not going to tell you that if you get on the road to glory that you'll be rich and prosperous, but I will tell you that "whatever you need, God will supply!" For the word of God says in Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

I'm not going to tell you that you that you won't have any problems, but I will tell that the God we serve is a problem solving God!

I'm not going to tell you that you will never failure, but I will tell you that the God we serve specializes in taking failures and turning them into successes!

I'm not going to tell you that you won't cry a few tears, but I will tell you that every heaven bound traveler has found that "weeping endures but a night and joy comes in the morning!"

Jesus knows the difficulty of walking the road to Calvary, but he also knows what its like to walk the road to glory!

Jesus knows what it means to be nailed to a cross and buried in failure, but he also knows what it means to have new resurrected experience!

He knows what it means to watch a life experience die, but he also know what it means to live again!

He knows because he died out on Calvary..

Was buried in a borrowed tomb...

And Early Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 797-Cross

Cross Crowds

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 9, 2000

Scripture: "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way." Matthew 21:8

Introduction

Have you ever been a part of a crowd? Crowds are large groups of people that gather at a particular place for a purpose. The identity of a crowd is fluid. While it is composed of a variety of people, it takes on the personality of the dominate personalities that influence its direction. Crowds gather for gather for various reasons. Crowds gather to watch or participate in an event. Sometimes crowds get out of control and become mobs. Crowds are often attracted to anything out of the ordinary: a parade, the arrival of a celebrity, a protest or something free. When crowds are large and disorderly they can become dangerous. People have been crushed in crowds, especially those that panic. Most who were part of a crown were glad when they were able to get out.

Crowds can often be rude and disrespectful. Consider the small town store that advertised a great sale it called "Christmas in July." Everything in the store had been marked down by 75 percent, no questions asked. On the day of the big sale a huge crowd had formed in front of the store. Customers had come from miles around and had stood outside for several hours, waiting for the store to open. As it approached opening time, the crowd became unruly. A large commotion began when a small man pushed his way to the front of the line, only to be pushed back. The crowd cursed him in a loud and colorful terms. The man tried again. On his second attempt, he was punched in the jaw, clubbed with an umbrella, knocked around a bit, lifted up and passed hand to hand until he was thrown to the back of the crowd. As he got up he yelled one last time, "That does it! If this crowd doesn't let me through, I'm not going to open the store!" Often crowds are thoughtless.

It is possible for a person to be lose IN the crowd. That's when we lose our personality and identity and simple do what everyone else does. The quest for individualism is lost. Henry David Thoreau was known for promoting the idea of individualism. He suggested that there is virtue in being different or "marching to the beat of a different drummer." Those who are lost in the crowd, move with the crowd,

follow the crowd and act, not as a matter of conscience, but simply because the crowd acts.

It is also possible to be lost TO the crowd. Those in a crowd are often inconsequential to the main body. The crowd is not concerned about the individuals that make up its numbers. They are simply nameless faces that do what every one else does. If there is hurt, anguish, pain or trouble, the crowd notices, only to the point that one man's difficulty interrupts the movement of the masses.

How does God relate to us? Are we simply faces in the crowd? Of the millions of believers, does he know us or care about us? We are more than faces in the crowd to our Lord. He knows each of us by name and is concerned with every detail of our lives. He listens when each of us prays and grants prayer requests on a individual basis. We may worship him in a congregation, but he sees us as individuals. We may gather in great assemblies, but he responds to us personally.

As Christians, should be reassured to know that God knows us and cares for us. We are a part of a great crowd of people that met him at the crowd, but even in our anonymity, he died that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

Exposition

This text focuses on the final crowd that gathered with Jesus. He had seen many in the course of his three year ministry, but this crown was an important crowd.

Jesus had seen crowds before. The presence of a crowd was not unusual.

When Jesus went to Peter's house, where he healed Peter's mother-in-law, great crowds (Matthew 8:18) or the whole city (Mark 1:33) were present.

When Jesus ate with the tax collectors, a large company of tax collectors were present (Luke 5:29).

When Jesus went out and sat beside the sea, all the crowd followed him (Mark 2:13).

After Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, many followed him when he withdrew from there (Matthew 12:15).

When Jesus began his ministry in Galilee, "great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 4:25).

When he preached the Sermon on the Mount, it was to a great crowd (Matthew 5:1-7:28; Luke 6:17).

When he raised the widow's son from the dead, a great crowd was present (Luke 7:11).

When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus, Jesus was amidst a large crowd (Mark 5:21,24; Luke 8:40,45).

When Jesus saw the crowds on one occasion, he said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37).

A great throng of over 5,000 listened to Jesus teach by the shore of the Sea of Tiberias and were fed with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14: 14-21; Mark 6:34;

Luke 9:11-17; John 6: 2-14).

When Jesus healed the deaf mute, a multitude was present (Mark 4:33).

A great crowd of over 4,000 came to Jesus on the mountain where they were taught by Jesus and fed with even loaves and a few small fish (Matthew 15:29-39; Mark 8:1).

When Jesus foretold of his impending suffering and death, a multitude and his disciples were present (Mark 8:34).

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, a great multitude was present (Luke 14:25).

When Jesus ate with Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus had to climb into a tree in order to see Jesus over the crowds (Luke 19:3).

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, crowds spread their garments on the road and went before him and followed him (Matthew 21:8).

The Contentious Crowd

Just as there were crowds drawn to Jesus' early ministry, in that final week of his life there were other crowds that followed him. The types are the same kind of crowds that follow believers all over the world.

The contentious crowd was the first hostile crowd Jesus encountered. Despite all of the good he had there were people who were willing to kill him and destroy him. This crowd was called a great crowd (Matthew 26:47) and its members came with swords (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43), clubs (Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43), lanterns, and torches (John 18:3).

The crowd came up to Jesus after Judas betrayed him, laid hands on him, and seized him (Matthew 26:50; Mark 14:46) and bound him (John 18:12).

In the same context, believers can also expect that doing right can generate enemies and hostile elements in your family and community. The crowds we meet are contentious, bent on our destruction.

The Courtyard Crowd

The next hostile crowd they met was the courtyard crowd. This is the crowd that watched as Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate, the governor (Matthew 27:15-26).

This crowd was composed of Jews that had gathered in Jerusalem for the annual Passover feast. They were accustomed to having a prisoner of their choice released to them by the governor during the feast. When Pilate asked the crowd which prisoner he should release, Barrabas or Jesus, this crowd said, "Crucify him," "Give us Barrabas!"

This is the crowd that could have helped Jesus if its participants had simply spoken up for him or called his name.

This happens many times today. There are many still standing in the courtyard. Neighbors who witness a wrong doing, an evil deed or dangerous act, but say nothing are standing in the courtyard. Often crimes in neighborhoods could be reduced if the

neighbors would simple watch out for each other and be willing to speak up. Criminals could depend on those in the crowd to keep silent. They could depend upon their fear. The righteous in the crowd did nothing and in so doing allowed its rowdy elements to dominate the decision.

The Cruel Crowd

The next hostile crowd that Jesus encountered was the crowd of cruel soldiers inside the palace.

Jesus had already been sentenced to scourging and death, but they decided to add insult to injury...they became extremely cruel and tried to humiliate him as well.

When the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the palace they stripped him, put a scarlet robe on him, placed a plaited crown of thorns on his head, and put a reed in his hand (Matthew 27:28-29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2). They then kneeled before him and mocked him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3). Then they spat upon him and hit him on his head with the reed from his hand (Matthew 27:30; Mark 15:19) and stuck him with their hands (John 19:3). He was then stripped of the robe, his own clothes put back on him and led away to be crucified (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:20).

In a similar way, there are many today who are treated cruelly by others. It's bad enough to stumble upon hard times, but it is worse when the crowds around you get cruel. It's bad enough not to be able to pay a utility bill, a mortgage or a car note on time, but it's even worse when those around us make fun of our situation and discuss it in their phone conversations. It's bad enough to face an unjust judge and jury or suffer a tragedy, but it's even worse when others grind salt in the wound.

The Crucifixion Crowd

Another crowd Jesus encountered was the crucifixion crowd. These were the men and women who wanted to se him dead.

This crowd was composed of Roman soldiers, the chief priests, scribes and elders, Jews attending the Passover; curious bystanders and those who doubted him.

As Jesus hung on the cross, some in this crowd derided Jesus, wagging this heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

The crucifixion crowd is the crowd that works to destroy you!

The crucifixion crowd wants to see you down on your back!

The Crucifixion crowd wants to see you literally nailed to the cross, without a chance of ever getting up again.

Cross Crowd

Finally, brothers and sisters there was another crowd that followed Jesus, it was the cross crowd.

These were the men and women who were in the crowd but not of it. The cross crowd consisted of those who had been touched by the master's hand!

Anytime a man or woman has been touched by the master personally, that touch has a tendency to separate you from the crowd!

Anytime the Lord has lifted you up out of the miry clay and planted your feet on the solid ground, that saving moment has a tendency to separate you from the crowd!

The crowd at the cross is not saying crucify him!

The crowd at the cross is not saying nail him to the cross!

In that crowd are millions of souls that testifying, "he touched me and now I'm no longer the same!

In that crowd was a man who said, "I was once lost but now I'm found, blind, but now I see!

In that crowd was a man who sat by a pool for 38 long years and ended his stay by the pool of Bethesda when Jesus said, "Take thy bed and walk!"

In that crowd was woman who ran through all the city saying, "come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

In that crowd was a little boy who came to Jesus one day with two little fishes and five loaves of bread!

Some came in the crowd but even while he was on the cross, Jesus called them out of the crowd!

The thief on his right hand said, "Remember me" and Jesus "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!" He was called out of the crowd and to the cross!

When it was all over a centurion soldier cried out "surely, he must be the son of God" he was called from the crowd to the cross!

A crowd watched as they hung him up and stretched him out wide!

A crowd watched him as he dropped his head and died!

A crowd watched him as they buried him in borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, when no one was watching he got up from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't known about you, but I want to be in the crowd when he comes back again!

No. 798-Anniv. Women

Seven Women Who Followed One Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Riverside Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 9, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:" Matthew 27:55

Introduction

What would you think if you heard that seven women, some of them married, were all following one single man? Would you raise an eyebrow if you heard that they followed him wherever he went. If he talked to a group of men, they were close by. If he walked down a city street, they were close behind him. If he stopped to help someone, they were nearby. If such a group of women existed, there would be many suspicions raised as to their motives.

In the last days there will be a shortage of good men. Women will be looking hard to find a good man. Those who have found one, will hold on to him tightly. In fact, Isaiah 4:1 says, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." In the last days it won't be odd to see more than one woman with an eye on the same man. Some of that has already begun. Many marriages have been wrecked, friendships dissolved and lives have been lost because more than one woman had her eye on the same man, who proved to be the wrong man.

Recently Bishop T.D Jakes sponsored a "Woman Thou Art Loosed" rally in Atlanta. Over 75,000 educated, middle incomed women flew, drove and chartered buses to come to the Atlanta for the rally. The highlight of the conference was the appearance of Bishop Jakes himself. One man who watched the event on television said, "Look at that 75,000 women all looking for one man!"

While the comment drew a laugh, the truth is, the women were not looking so much at Jakes as they were the man he represented. In a sense the comment was true, there were 75,000 women looking for one man, but the man was Jesus, the son of God.

Today, Christian women are still following one man. He is a man they have found

to be faithful, a good provider, always there for them and supportive. They have found him to be strong, personal and caring. They have learned that he loved them enough to die for them. When women find a man like that they follow him wherever he goes.

As Christians, we have a friend in the person of Jesus. Like the women at the cross, we have pledged to follow him, wherever he goes.

Exposition

This text focuses on a short verse which notes the presence of many women at the cross who observed the crucifixion of Christ from a distance.

Throughout his ministry, there was a faithful group of women that followed Christ wherever he went. From beginning to end, these were the women who had totally committed themselves to Jesus and his ministry. Through thick and thin, good times and bad, these women were always there, ready to assist and help Jesus in any way that they could. Seven women are mentioned in scripture, by name, as being followers and/or active supporters of Jesus and his ministry:

MARY MAGDALENE: Mary followed Jesus because she was one of the women that Jesus healed of evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8:2). She was said to have had seven demons cast out from her by Jesus (Mark 16:9, Luke 8:2). When Jesus was crucified on the cross, she was one of the women who stood afar off. She was present at the tomb when the stone was rolled away. She was there when Jesus appeared outside the tomb.

JOANNA: This Joanna was the wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward (Luke 8:3). She was one of the women that Jesus healed of evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8:2). She supported the ministry of Jesus from out of her means (Luke 8:2). She went to the tomb of Jesus after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, and witnessed the great earthquake and the angel rolling the stone away from the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-2; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).

SALOME: Salome was the wife of Zebedee, the mother of the two apostles James and John, and the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (John 19:25). She ministered to Jesus when he was in Galilee (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 15:40-41). She was so close to Jesus that she sought seats of honor for her sons from Jesus (Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 10:35-40).

MARY OF BETHANY: She anointed the head of Jesus with an alabaster jar of expensive ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. She had a brother named Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were among those whom Jesus loved (John 11:5).

SUSANNA: She was one of the women that Jesus healed of evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8:2). She supported the ministry of Jesus from out of her means (Luke 8:2).

MARY, "THE OTHER MARY": This Mary was the wife of Clopas and the mother of the apostle James the younger and Joses (Joseph). She was present at Jesus'

afar off with several other women. She was also present at the tomb of Jesus when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus rolled the stone to the door of Jesus' tomb (Matthew 27:61; Mark 16:47; John 19:38-42). She went to the tomb of Jesus after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, and witnessed the great earthquake and the angel rolling the stone away from the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-2; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS: Mary was the earthly mother of Jesus (Matthew 1:18,25). Mary's husband was Joseph (Matthew 1:18), a carpenter by trade. She and her four sons, James, Joses, Judas and Simon - and at least two daughters (Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3) followed Christ's ministry from the beginning to the end.

Why They Followed Jesus

The seven women who were named and others followed Jesus for the same reason. He had touched their lives in some way. Some of the seven women had been healed of evil spirits. He gave others new hope. Some followed him because he accepted women on a different level than had ever been before.

Until Jesus came on the scene, women were treated as inferior beings.

* In the Mediterranean region and the near East, women were viewed as inferior beings because of the Patriotarcial society.

* In the Greek society women were held as inferior to men and destined only for procreation (childbearing).

* In the Roman society a wife was the property of her husband.

* In the Jewish societies, women were only sexual beings, servants of their husbands, with limited religious roles. They were not required to make the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the feasts. They didn't go to school where the Torah was taught. They were not allowed to read or recite scriptures.

After Jesus began his ministry, his treatment and acceptance of women caused problems with the Jewish leaders, his apostles, and others who had allowed women to become stereotyped as lower class beings. The women Jesus met were astonished at his attitude and acceptance of them

He defied the establish traditions when he talked to the woman at the well in public. When a woman was caught in adultery he related to her with compassion and told her to go and sin no more.

Women Must Follow Jesus

Women today follow Jesus for the same reason they followed him in biblical times. They follow him because he has touched their lives in a powerful way.

The women who followed Jesus supported his ministry with their time, talents and resources. Whether it was bathing his feet with oils, supplying food for he and his apostles, or giving of their time to follow and support him, the women gave him

every fibre of their spiritual being.

Today, the ministry of Jesus still needs women. He needs women who are willing to give of their time to help expand the kingdom of God.

He needs women who will help promote the kingdom through the use of their special spiritual gifts.

He needs women who will give of their finances to help underwrite the expense of kingdom building.

The women who followed Christ were not looking for a HUSBAND, but they were trying to be a part of the BRIDE OF CHRIST, the spiritual body of believers that will live with him eternally!

The women who followed Christ were not looking for a BOYFRIEND, but they were looking for a FRIEND. The song writer knew how they felt when he wrote, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grieves to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!"

The women who followed Christ were not looking for a LOVER, but they were looking for the LOVE OF GOD. It's the love that John 3:16 talks about when he said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life."

The women who followed Christ were not looking for a ONE NIGHT STAND, but they were looking for a PLACE IN ETERNITY! They were looking for a place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest! A place not made by hands!

The women who followed Christ were not looking for a man to pay their LIVING EXPENSES, but they had accumulated a huge spiritual debt and they needed the son of God who had the will the pay the bill!

The followed who followed Jesus, followed him through sunshine and rain!

They followed him through hostile crowds and jeering mobs!

They followed him as he picked up an old rugged cross!

They followed him as they hung him up high and stretched him out wide!

They followed him as they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

And early Sunday morning, the women who followed him heard an angel say, "He is not here, why seek ye the living among the dead. Come see the place where the Lord lay!"

Whether you are male or female...follow Jesus!

Take no chance of getting lost!

Follow Jesus!

Follow Jesus!

No. 799-Cross

Cross Talk

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 16, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 40But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." Mark 10:38-40; "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that every walk of life has its own conversation? Those who walk in certain circles usually find themselves exchanging ideas about the same kinds of things. They are so in tune with each other that they often abbreviate references because most people in their circle of acquaintances know the meanings. Those outside of our walk of life often hear what we say but have only a faint idea what we are talking about because they don't understand our talk. They know the words, but they don't understand what the words mean.

For example, those who move in medical circles have their own talk. They live in a world of EKG's, IV's, ICU's, OR's, Code Blues, charts, and STAT. The terms and initials represent procedures, levels of medical care or emergency situations. Those who become associated with the medical profession by training or while attending to someone receiving medical care learn "doctor talk" pretty quickly.

Women are often frustrated when their husbands talk sports talk. Some watch their husbands glued to television sets listening as sports announcers use words like, T-formation, Blizt, TD, End Sweep, goal to goal, first and ten, backfield in motion,"hut hut" and a variety of other words and utterances that have little meaning to anyone who does not understand the game.

Ever talked to a computer junkie? If so you probably needed a dictionary to understand them. They live in a world of gigabytes, megahertzs, Ram, floppy disks, hard drives, CPUs and internets and service provider. It's a world where "Windows" has nothing to do with glass, a "mouse" is not a rat and if you're told to "back that thing up" you're not being told to dance.

Some parents are frustrated trying to talk to their kids. When their children say something is "tight," the parents think it doesn't fit, but the kids mean its good. It's a world of Hot Boys, fly girls, glocks, hatin',ganking, rocks, and jamz that is "da bomb" to kids but is totally confusing to parents.

Our talk often suggests our walk. A person who regularly talks about joints, crack, detox, hits, getting high, and OD, suggests that he or she is familiar with the drug scene as either a participant, care giver or association. A person who refers to lockdowns, isolation, ID's, 10 to 20, 25 to life, death row and variety of similar terms is associated with the penal system in some way either from the perspective of an inmate, law enforcement officer or incidental acquaintance.

If every walk has its talk, then what do those who walk the road to the cross talk about? Just like any other walk, believers have their own talk which we take for granted but those outside our walk find it quite baffling. Terms such as: regeneration, sanctified, and justification are utterly confusing to those outside of our walk of life. Phrases such as "working out my soul's salvation," "born again", "my spirt man and my flesh man", "The word", "Going up yonder" and "walk by faith not by sight" have great meaning to those who walk in a believer's circles, but are confusing to those who don't share the same walk.

While every walk has its talk, everyone who knows the talk may not be walking the walk. Just as there are people who learned the meaning of medical terms without being doctors, football language without being athletes or understand computers and other walks without actually being in that world themselves, there are some who are in the church, who know the talk, but do not walk the walk.

. Jesus came to show us the way to heaven. It is the way of the cross.

As Christians, we walk with Christ on a daily basis. In our walk with him, we talk with him. That daily talk is inspiring and encouraging. We understand it. We look forward to it. It is the talk of the cross.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains his approaching judgment, death and resurrection. He said the words, but his disciples did not understand what he was talking about.

As Jesus was approaching the final week of his life, he took his disciples to the side and began to explain to them what would happen to him in Jerusalem. He said once in Jerusalem he would be arrested, taken before the chief priests and Jewish leaders and sentenced to die (v33). Moreover, he added that he fully expected to be mocked, spit upon, whipped and ultimately killed. After three days, he said, he would come back to life again. Two of his disciples, James and John, known as the sons of Zebedee heard Jesus talk, then asked a favor. They wanted seats on his right and left hand once he came into power in his kingdom. Their statements indicated that they did not understand what Jesus was talking about.

In all of his talks with his disciples, Jesus referred to two spheres of spiritually.

One is described as the Kingdom of God. The other is described as the Kingdom of Heaven. When he referred to the Kingdom of God he meant the spiritual union between believers on earth in the present moment. When he referred to the Kingdom of Heaven he spoke of a literal place where believers would spend eternity with him. The favor asked by James and John indicated that they did not understand anything Christ talked about. They interpreted his entire reference to a kingdom to mean that he would use his miraculous power to build a worldly kingdom among men. When he spoke of his death and resurrection, they assumed he meant a political death and a political resurrection. Even if a physical death was meant, they felt that it too would ultimately result in the establishment of a kingdom in this world, of which they wanted positions of power. So the lobbied him, based on their understanding of what he talked about.

Jesus sensed that they did not understand him. He asked, "Can you drink the same cup that I must drink?"

In essence he said, you are able to talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?

The term "cup" in this context had more than a literal meaning. It meant more than a simple chalice or drinking cup. It was a reference to his suffering. It was a reference to the pain and humiliation that he would endure. The cup was his destiny. Could they drink from this cup? Could they share this destiny?

They answered that they could, not knowing what he meant.

What Jesus Meant

Those who follow Christ today are fully aware what he meant when he asked, "Can you drink of this cup." We understand the meaning of the cup and we also know the meaning of the cross. As we walk the believer's walk there are things that believers talk about. Those who walk the way of the cross seem to talk the same language anywhere in the world.

WE TALK ABOUT REPENTANCE: Every true believer talks about a time his or her own life experience when they were not in the faith. True believers talk about repentance. Repentance refers to the point which you turned away from the world and focused on Christ. It is the time that you released yourself and caught hold to God. This is the time that 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 refers to when it dictates a long list of worldly involvements including thievery, adultery, and drunkenness and concluded by noting, "And such were some of you."

WE TALK ABOUT BEING BORN AGAIN: True believers are not the same people they once were. They have become different personalities with different goals, ambitions and manners. In every esthetic and spiritual way, they have been reborn. In circles of believers the phrase "born again" is talked about in conversation and is the emphasis of many of our songs. It is the theme of the message that Jesus gave Nicodemus when he told him that anyone that enters the kingdom of God must be born again.

WE TALK ABOUT BEING BAPTIZED. Believers talk about baptism a lot They

talk about a water baptism that signifies their change from direction and spirit. They also talk about their spirit baptism, that empowers their gifts, inspires them and motivates them and energizes them when they are working to build the kingdom of God. John told his disciples that he would baptize them with water but one coming after him would baptize them with more than water, but with the Holy Ghost's fire.

WE TALK ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT: Those outside our faith don't understand us when we talk about the Holy Spirit. They don't understand that we actually refer to the presence of God within us. The Holy Spirit is not an "it" but a "He." Those who don't understand our talk sometimes see a person excited, shouting or praising God in a bold way and say, "she caught the Holy Ghost" as if the Holy Spirit was some mysterious spark floating in a room that lands on a person and causes them to respond. When we talk about the Holy Spirit, we talk about God's power within us. One song writer said the Holy Spirit "makes you move, makes shout and makes you cry within!" It is definitely true that every believer asks for the Holy Spirit's guidance every day.

WE TALK ABOUT BLESSINGS: If there is one thing that believers talk about, its blessings. A blessing is a gift from God. It is not the same as good fortune. Good fortune is pure luck that one stumbles across in life that is always pleasing. A blessing is an experience that works to our advantage whether it is pleasing or not, because it comes from God. Believers see our days of health as a blessing. We also see our days of sickness as a blessing. We even see the homegoing of a loved one as a blessing. It sounds strange to those who do not know the Lord. They can't understand why a person laying in a hospital room, hardly able to breathe can mumble the words, "God is Good All the time, All the time God is good!" They can say it because, they have learned that "All things" work to the good of those who love the lord and are the called according to his purpose. If you want to get a believer started just talk about blessings and they'll be on roll.

Cross Talk

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that believers have a great testimony because Jesus gave us something to talk about!

Jesus did a lot of talking in his ministry. He talked to crowds on the side of mountains, on beach heads and from boats. He talked to tax collectors and prostitutes. He talked to scribes and pharisees. He talked to blind men, lame men and to political leaders.

Many people heard him as he talked while he walked.

There is great value in talking and walking with the Lord.

When you talk with the Lord, He:

—BREAKS CHAINS that bind you; HEALS HURTS that pain you;

—CLARIFIES THING that frustrate you; LIFTS BURDENS that hold you down

—CHANGES EARTH'S SHAME into heaven's glory; TURNS OUR SORROW into unspeakable joy!

No wonder the song writer said, Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

Jesus talked with his disciples along the way. Today I still hear the song writer's words, "I come to the garden alone, while dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own, and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known."

Even in our times of trouble Jesus gave us something to talk about!

In his dying hours, there was some cross talk!

When there are nails in your hands, a crown of thorns on your head, and nails in your feet, what do you talk about?

Jesus showed us what to talk about, not only when the crowds our shouting Hosanna but when we are being nailed to the cross..."Father forgive them for they know not what they do!-That's cross talk!

When we feel all alone and deserted by the world the human side of us cries out sometimes. That's the kind of talk we sometimes hear from those on the cross. "I thirst" I yearn for more. I desire more.

Sometimes on the cross we can hear a believer say, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" That's cross talk, but even while we're asking we hear Jesus words say, "And lo I'll be with you always, even to the end of the earth!"

When there is no place to turn and no where to go, what is the cross talk? "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit!" That's why a believer who is being nailed to the cross can drop to his knees and declare, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thy hand from me, whether shall I go?" -That's cross talk!

Even on the cross the dying thief inspiring cross talk, he heard the master say, "This day, you shall be with me in paradise!"

He dropped his head in the locks of his shoulders...

And he died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

That's something to talk about!

Every day he walks with me!

That's something to talk about!

Every day he blesses me!

That's something to talk about!

No. 800-Anniv.-Ushers

The Stone Roller

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 19, 2000

Scripture: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." Matthew 28:2

Introduction

Have you ever been on the outside wondering how you would get in? There are many times when we have faced barriers, real or imagined, that make it difficult for us to go forward. We often find ourselves wondering what we will do to overcome the barriers. The most common situation involves locking ourselves out of our cars and houses. The more complex situations involve being locked out of opportunities and chances to progress and to succeed by barriers. Barriers are coming down. New laws now require buildings to be handicapped accessible, providing wide doorways, toilet stalls, ramps and rails, all designed to make it easier for the handicapped to get in. It is definitely a relief to those who worry about such things, to discover that the barriers they fear have already been removed.

On any given Sunday a variety of people attend worship services. Many bring with them the cares of the world. Ushers should always be careful when greeting visitors because they never know where the visitors come from. Consider the ushers of one the finest churches in Walawala. The huge church attracted visitors from many miles and its ushers were constantly encouraged to be friendly. A new usher on the board had recently finished her ushering class and wanted desperately to convince the other ushers that she could handle her assigned area. On her first Sunday of service there was an unusually high spirit in the worship service. The spirit really moved. As the service ended the new usher noticed a man spread out over three pews in the back of the church. The man was breathing heavily laying flat on his back. The usher came over and said, "That's very rude of you, sir, don't you know that you are in the Lord's house.Don't you have any respect? Where did you come from?" The man looked up helplessly and said, "The balcony!" We never no where the people who attend a worship are coming from!

One of the chief concerns of church ushers is to remove any barriers that will make it difficult for a person at worship to experience God's presence. That is an

important ministry because often believers approach the church building itself weighed with fears and worries that dramatize their anxieties. As many walk from their cars to the very doorway of the church, they pray that they will find answers to problems, reassurance and strength. Ushers, remove artificial barriers that could prevent a person at worship from getting close to God. Like the angels, at the tomb, they roll away stones.

As Christians we have learned that most of our fears and worries about life have been unnecessary. Much of what we worried about in life was really as bad as we thought. God made it there before we did and roll the stones away. The great truth that the resurrection of Christ brings to mind is that every obstacle or stone that is put in front of God's will for us, without a doubt will be rolled away! Those who assist worshipers in learning this truth about God are like God sent angels...stone rollers.

Exposition

This text focuses on events that took place after the crucifixion as the women came to anoint the body of Christ. According to the text, Christ had been in the grave for three days and nights as he predicted in Matthew 12:40. Early on the first day, which was Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome set out to anoint his body with spices. While enroute the thought came to them that there was a stone covering the entrance of the tomb. This was no small pebble or lightweight rock. It was a huge stone, taller than a man, and requiring the services of several men to move. It had been placed in front of the tomb to keep Christ's disciples from coming in the middle of the night, stealing the body, and claiming to the world that he had risen from dead. The intent of the stone was to keep believers away from Christ. As they walked toward the tomb they became concerned about "who shall roll for us the stone away?" Although they were concerned, the women were not dissuaded, they went forward anyway! Once there, they learned that the stone had already been rolled away. An angel, which appeared as a young man, told them not to fear because Jesus had risen. They were told to go and tell the disciples about his resurrection.

The women left excited because not only had the stone been rolled away from the tomb, but the stone of doubt and fear had been rolled away from their hearts.

It was no doubt in their mind that although they met an angelic face at the door of the tomb, it was God him that rolled the stone away.

Rolling Stones

Today, many believers approach the presence of God on a regular basis. They are often met by the radiant angelic presence of the church usher.

The angel at the tomb could very well be a type of the first church usher.

THE USHER IS OFTEN THE FIRST PERSON SEEN: The first person the women saw was the angel. The first voice they heard was the angel. The first hint they

received that everything would be alright, came from the angel. Likewise, many people attend a worship service from various walks of life. Usually, the first person they see is the church usher. Sometimes, the first voice they hear is that of the usher. What the usher says and does can either inspire confidence and hope or stir fears and anxieties. A warm smile and a friendly handshake are often the very courtesies that are needed to set the tone for a great worship experience. Ushers who frown, appear angry or grouchy do more damage than they do good.

THE USHER SHOULD BEAM AND RADIATE: The angel was radiant and beamed, so should the usher that meets and greets guests. The usher should radiant a sense of inner peace and unity with the body of Christ. It is not difficult to pick up bad vibes. Visitors can sense when there is something wrong. Ushers should be at peace with themselves, with other members of their board, the pastor and the general congregation. Good ushers should be willing to reach out and touch a visitor. Often a handshake, a hug or other casual greeting breaks down barriers that allows visitors to know that they are welcome to the presence of God.

THE USHER SHOULD NOT APPEAR TROUBLED: The angel at the tomb did not appear troubled by the stone or the empty tomb. In fact, the angel sat on the stone which, by its very presence, had frustrated the thoughts of the women as they journeyed to the tomb. Ushers must be confident themselves that God is still on the throne. If the women who came to the tomb were upset about the stone, their fears disappeared when they saw the angel sitting on top of the stone. In a similar manner ushers must demonstrate an inner strength to those who are coming to worship that they are on top of things. Whatever stones that are in their own lives, they are on top of them, with the help of God. Therefore, ushers who are overwhelmed with personal problems should be the object of the prayer of others on the board. Those who are weak should be strengthened through active support and fervent prayer. When ushers stand at the door their very presence should say, "no matter what stone is front of my way, with God's help, I'll be on top of it."

The Stone Roller

It is true that usher at the door is typical of the angel who the women met at the tomb. The usher at the local church may be seen smiling, greeting and rejoicing. He or she may be seen radiating confidence and faith. The usher may also be seen sitting on top of their own mass of daily problems. However, the usher is not the stone roller, only the person who introduces each worshipper to one who has the power to roll away stones.

Who has the power to roll away stones? Angels? Guards? Machines? Only God himself can roll away stones. The angel rolling away the stone represented the power of God himself to roll away stone.

The message of every usher to those who worship should be the same as those of the angel.

FEAR NOT: No matter where we have come from or what road we have walked,

we should enter the house of God without fear. David put the matter of fear in perspective when he said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid." Fear is cradled and nurtured in doubt. Those who come to the presence of God should have no doubts that God is able to respond to their personal need.

I KNOW THAT YE SEEK JESUS: If we enter the house of the Lord we should be prepared to worship. Every person who comes to a worship does not come to see the decorations, enjoy the atmosphere or share a seat with a friend, believers come to worship to find the Lord. One song writer concluded: "I don't know what you came to do, but I came to praise the Lord." Those who seek Jesus will find him for he is only a prayer a way!

HE IS RISEN: Every believer needs to know that the God they serve is a living God. He sits high but he looks low. Not only is he alive but he is aware of the various needs of every believer. Believers should come to worship confident that God is able to do the impossible! God is able to turn conditions around! God is able to solve problems! Because God is alive and able, every believer should expect to leave their worship service motivated to set the world on fire!

Go Tell Somebody

The final words of a good usher to any worshiper come as they leave the building. The final words are the last words that a believer hears as he or she leaves the sanctuary. Those final words are similar to the angel's words... go and tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

Every believer should have a testimony and a story to tell.

We should be ready to testify about the power of the Lord!

We should be able to tell the world that we have met the Stone Roller!

Who is the stone roller? Where can he be found?

The Blind man testifies...I had the stone of blindness covering my eyes. But one day I met the the stone roller.. He rolled the stone away. Now all I can say is, "I was once blind, but now I see!"

The woman at the well testifies...I met the stone roller at the well and he rolled the stone of guilt away in my life. "Come see a man who told all I've ever done."

The little boy testifies...I met the stone roller on a crowded hillside and he rolled the stone of hunger away for a crowd of 5000 people with two little fishes and five loaves of bread!

Who is this stone roller?

Who is this man who is taking our fears and giving us courage?

Who is this man who is taking our weakness and giving us strength?

Who is this man who is taking our failures and giving us succcess?

Who is this man who is taking our losses and giving us victories?

Who is this man who is taking our sins and giving us salvation?

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley and the Bright and Morning Star!
Jesus who died out on Calvary!
He was held down by a stone of hatred!
He was locked down by a stone of prejudice!
He was blocked down by a stone of death
But early Sunday morning, the power of God ...
Rolled the stone away!
Go quickly and tell

No. 801-Easter

An Empty Cross, A Vacant Tomb and A Living God!

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 23, 2000

SCRIPTURE: ***"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5; He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matthew 28:6***

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you paid a bill in full? How did you feel? One of the most frustrating feelings is to be in debt. When we are in debt there is a load on our shoulders, our patience grows thin, our sense of humor dulls and we are extremely sensitive. Debt robs us of the freedom to do what we want to do because even when we get our paycheck it is already spent. If there is a feeling worse than being in debt it is being in debt and not having the money to pay our bills. That's really frustrating. That's when the bill collectors start calling, knocking on the door and sending us notices in the mail. Because debt places a heavy load on our shoulders, we feel a sense of relief when a debt is paid in full. The car seems to drive a little better once it's paid in full. A bed sleeps better when we have paid for it. Without the weight of so many bills on our shoulders, we walk lighter each day.

Sometimes the bills just add up. Consider the man who wanted to do something special for his father's funeral he since was unable to attend. He called his brother who did not always play with a full deck. "Do something really nice for papa. I mean make it really nice. Don't worry about the cost, just send me the bill." He said. The nit-wit brother followed his brother's directions to the letter and the funeral was a beautiful and memorable occasion. Later however, his brother got a bill for $300, which he paid without a thought. The next month, he got another bill for $300.00, which he also paid. He figured this was a late bill from the funeral service. But bills for $300.00 kept arriving every month. Finally. the man called his brother again to find out what was going on.

"Well," said the other brother, "you said to do something nice for Dad. So I rented

him a tuxedo. It was a good deal too. It was only $10 a day until it is returned!" Sometimes the bills just keep coming!

Our sin bill is like that! Acting very foolishly, we keep adding one sin after another to our sin bill. It just keeps adding up! No matter how we try, the bill just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger!

What makes the resurrection of Christ such a joyous occasion for believers is that it reminds us of the fact that our sin bill has been paid in full. We see the reminders and know that it is paid in full. The empty cross and the empty tomb serve as clear reminders to us that we have been given a clean slate and a chance for a brand new start.

As Christians, we celebrate Easter with excitement and enthusiasm. More than any other time of the year we are reminded that hope lives and faith remains strong. Each time we see an empty cross, we are reminded that our debt has been settled and our sin bill has been paid.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would one day be wounded for the sins of the world.

Isaiah's words were prophetic indeed. They were spoken hundreds of years before the birth of Christ and described almost to the letter the details of Christ's death.

The essence of the passage lays out in clear detail how Christ would be wounded, chastised and abused while paying the price for our transgressions or sins. The payment Christ would make on Calvary would be sufficient enough to substitute for our sins. His blood and death would pay the price for our atonement.

On the cross, Christ would suffer humiliation on our behalf.

On the cross, Christ would be further wounded on our behalf.

On the cross, Christ would be the symbol of defeat, death and doom!

On the cross, Christ would pay the awesome price for our liberation. It was a shameful yet rehabilitating deed. There was no other way that the payment for the sin of man could be made except for the shedding of blood...on the cross.

The image of the debt being paid is often depicted by a cross with a likeness of Christ on the cross, called a crucifix. A crucifix is a cross bearing a painted or sculptured image of Christ. They first appeared in the 5th century, and from the 9th century on medieval artists
increasingly aimed at a realistic portrayal of Christ's suffering. The artists of the Renaissance seemed focused on the suffering and the pain that result from sin, thus they often depicted Christ on the cross in their masterworks. During the Reformation, Protestants generally repudiated the negative focus on the suffering and disassociated themselves from the crucifix. Thus, most Protestants, even today, refuse to wear crucifix ornaments or display artwork that suggest the crucifix as the symbol of the church.

Contrasting the image of the defeated mission with Christ hanging on the cross is the image of the empty tomb and the empty cross. On the first day of the week, the women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. To their surprise, the stone that had blocked the tomb's entrance had been rolled away and an angel sat upon it. The angel's announcement "Come see the place where the Lord lay" was a declaration of victory and closure to a divine mission. When the women saw the empty tomb, they knew Jesus had risen. It also meant that all other promises he had made them were still possible! They were overjoyed to say the least as they ran to tell others this great news.

The fact that the tomb was empty became a clear reminder that the debt for the sins of mankind had been paid in full.

Rather than focus on the enormity of the debt, the empty cross reminds us that the debt has been paid, that every believer has a clear line of credit in heaven, and the endorsement of the heavenly father to do any and everything within his will.

The Empty Cross

Today, the image of the empty cross towers above us. Believers around the world wear empty crosses around their necks as jewelry, dangling from the ends of key chains or swaying from side to side on the rear view mirrors of automobiles. The empty cross has a powerful meaning to those who believe in the promises of God.

HOPE FOR OUR HARD HEADEDNESS: The empty cross reminds every believer to keep the faith and never give up hope. The empty cross is a symbol of triumph over difficulty. In that respect, the empty cross serves as a reminder to each believer that there is always reason to hope as long as God is on the throne. Today, there are many who are experiencing their "point of pain." The point of pain is what the crucifix depicts. It shows the results of our foul ups, goof ups and dumb decisions. It shows the penalty for our sins. This is why Isaiah 53 points out that he was "wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities." He took the penalty for our goof ups, mistakes and down right sinfulness upon himself. He took our whipping and gives us a chance to start again! The empty cross reminds us that no matter how bad we have been in the past or what we have done wrong, there is still hope! The empty cross says, you are not condemned forever! There is hope. That's what Romans 8:1 means when it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

POTENTIAL FOR PEACE: The empty cross reminds us that we can still be at peace with God. The crucifix reminds us of our "Point of Provocation." It focuses our attention on the payment for provocation which is misery and estrangement. The empty cross goes beyond what happens when we are provoked to lose our peace, but reminds us that peace can be restored. Isaiah said, the "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." That means that whatever needed to be done to allow us to make peace with God when we have fouled up has been done. Jesus did it! Consider the two children who played with a doll. The little boy was unusually rough with his

sister's doll and while playing, inadvertently turned the head completely around. The sister cried and was angry with him. The little boy took the doll to his mother and said, "I was bad. I broke the doll." The mother gave him a hug and turned the doll's head around and kissed it as she gave it back to the boy. When the boy gave it back to his sister she was all smiles. They played together all day that day. That's what Jesus does for us. When we come to him and say, "I was bad. I messed up. I broke this life you gave me." He turns our head around and points us in the right direction and gives us a new chance! When we are not going in the right direction, we are not at peace. We often attribute it to many things, often to other people, but too often the reason we can't sleep at night and seem so troubled is that we are moving in the wrong direction. The empty cross reminds us that we have the potential to make peace with God available to us. It's a matter of saying, "I broke this life you gave me, can you turn my head around?"

HEALING FOR OUR HURTS: The empty cross reminds us that whatever hurts us, can be healed. The crucifix reminds us of hurt, and the pain and anguish that come from our hurts. The empty cross does not focus on the hurt, but on the fact that we can overcome hurt and be healed.

Many things contribute to our hurts. Family troubles hurt us. Whenever a husband or wife is living less that their potential, one or both marriage partners hurt. Children sometimes hurt their parents by their disobedience. Parents often hurt their children in the name of love. We hurt each other, often without even knowing it, we bruise the feelings of friends and co-workers. Most often we hurt and critically injure ourselves. Jeremiah 8:22 asks the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Is there any healing for our hurts? On the cross, Jesus endured the punishment for our hurts. Isaiah said, "with his stripes we are healed." The empty cross reminds us that the great physician who took a blind man and helped him see again, restored a lame man's movement and gave new life to the dying is still alive. That same power that healed and revived these souls, lost in despair is still present and available today. When you see an empty cross let it remind you that there is healing for our hurts.

A Living God

Finally brothers and Sisters, the empty cross and the vacant tomb, remind us that we serve a mighty living God!

When the angel said, "He is not here, for he has risen as he said, come see the place where the Lord lay." That was a proclamation of victory!

The empty cross testifies that the world may try hold back the people of God, but if they keep the faith, nothing can hold them down!

Thorns of disappointment may be crushed upon our heads!

Nails of failure may puncture our hands!

Spikes of mistakes and bad judgment may rivet our feet!

But if we can just "hold out until tomorrow!" everything will be alright!

The empty tomb told the world, that anyone who follows Christ is serving a living God!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that there are some benefits to serving a living God!

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow!

Because he lives, I know that if falter, he pick me up and turn me around again!

Because he lives, I know that if I shed a tear, he'll dry my weeping eye..for weeping endures but a night but joy comes in the morning!

Because he lives, I know that if trouble comes my way, that he will hide me! In the secret of his tabernacle, he will hide me!

Because he lives, I know that if run a short of this or that, "my God shall supply all my need according to his purpose in Christ Jesus!"

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Because he lives I can face tomorrow!"

Because he lives all fear is gone!

Because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living because he lives!

Because he hung out on the cross, I have a chance to everlasting life!

Because he died out on Calvary, my sins have been forgiven!

But Early!

Early Sunday morning!

He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 802-Youth

Say My Name, Say My Name!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 30, 2000

SCRIPTURE: ***" For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26***

Introduction

Have you ever been the "other woman" or the "other man"? If so then, you know how it feels for someone to express their love for you, but want to keep it a secret. As amusing as the idea sounds, there are millions of people who daily wrestle with the problem of being the "other" man or the "other" woman. This generally happens when a person is attracted to something about us, but is ashamed to let others know. Sometimes the reason for secrecy is because one aspect of our personality is attractive, but the rest of the package is repulsive. Then there are those who like what they see, but they don't want to let go of what they have, so they play both ends against the middle. It is extremely frustrating to be the other person whose name is never called in public.

If you've ever been the "other woman" or the "other man" then you know that there is a certain feeling of insecurity that develops around this type of relationship. What makes the "other" person relationship so insecure? It is insecure because it is based on mistrust and deceit. When a person becomes the "other" in a relationship it is because at some point the person has been convinced that the other partner is not linked with another or the link is broken or is so loose that it can be broken. For teens, the fact that a person to whom they are attracted is already socially linked is insignificant. Girls who already have the names of several boys on their caller I.D. box, will add another quickly. He'll ask, "Do you have a boyfriend?" She answer, "No" and the hookup with #15 begins. its generally a challenge just to see It is based on the belief that even if the other person is linked that it can be broken. It gets more complicated with adults, especially if the other man or woman is married.

One tale tell sign that you may be in an "other" woman or "other" man situation is when your friend wants to keep the relationship a secret. A popular song by Destiny's Child is entitled "Say my name." In it, a woman suspects that there may be an "other" woman when she calls her man on the phone and he talks in a manner that suggests that there is someone else in the room and he doesn't want his other

woman to know he has another woman. The woman presses him to say he loves her and to say her name out loud, the chorus of the song says, "

Say my name, say my name
If no one is around you
Say baby I love you
If you aint runnin game
Say my name, say my name
You actin kinda shady
Ain't callin me baby
Better say my name!

While there are many who have "other" women or "other" men. There are still others who have other gods. The principle operates the same. There are some who are attracted to certain aspects of their relationship with Jesus Christ, but he remains the "other" God. On Sunday, the worship him and praise his name highly. The lift him up and glorify him, but at school or outside of Church circles his rarely mentioned. It's a one day a week relationship.

Yet God is speaking to every believer when he says in Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

In essence he is challenging believers and putting them on the spot. "Say my name!" If you are not in love with the world like you say...then when you are surrounded by them, say "Jesus I love you!"

When you are on the school campus.."say my name!"

So you are about to go "Clubbing" with your other god..."Say my name!"

So you are getting ready to party hardy at the prom..."Say my name!"

So you've booked a room for graduation night..."Say my name!"

As Christians, we acknowledge God in every way possible. We lift him up and praise him everywhere we go. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ or to say his name!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he reminds believers that he expects them to boldly witness for him among their peers.

As Jesus spoke with his disciples about his approaching death and the establishment of the kingdom, he warned them that being a true believer would be unpopular. It would mean that at the very least they experience loss of popularity and possessions. At the most, they could lose their lives for following him.

The challenge that Christ gave his disciples was to make a full commitment to the cross. He challenged them to deny themselves. That means, he challenged them to put aside what they wanted and to seek those things that would benefit the kingdom. Persons who did what he asked were characterized as "taking up their cross" because doing what Jesus asked meant he would most definitely be criticized

and ostracized for his actions. The woman that lives for Jesus, doesn't expect to be popular to others, but pleasing to God. The man that follows Christ may be snubbed by associates but is "secure" in Christ.

Jesus challenged believers not to be ashamed of what they believe or to be identified with others in the kingdom. Being ashamed of him in this life to gain the favor and approval of others won't mean much if we lose the opportunity for eternal life by doing so. Thus, Jesus asks what advantage can there be if a person gains the praise and thanks of the world, but loses his soul in the process.

Those who are embarrassed to be identified with Christ, the kingdom's work and the words of Christ, will find that he will be ashamed to speak for them in the day of judgment. It is only the fact that he speaks for us that save us. If he is ashamed to own us before his father, then we will lose our place in glory.

Every believer therefore is challenged to witness boldly for Christ in this life with the assurance that he will witness boldly for us in the day of judgment and rewards.

Recognize God

One of the first lessons that youth learn is to recognize God. We recognize God in everything we do and say, with the full understanding that if we recognize him, he will reward us and guide us. Proverbs 3:6 says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

Recognizing God begins with simple things...saying our prayers at night and saying grace over our food. Those are simple ways to recognize God.

As youth get older they learn that they also recognize God when the live by his teachings every day, even when they are at school. When we recognize God, he recognizes and rewards us.

We should never be ashamed or afraid to tell the teacher, principal, coach or school mate that we are workers in the kingdom of God. That means there may be times when my work for the kingdom conflicts with my school or the social demands of my friends. When those times come, they know we will be absent because we are kingdom workers who have made working for the Lord our top priority.

We recognize God not by simply saying his name frequently, but living according to his rules every day.

Saying the name of Jesus

Destiny's child was not the originator of the idea of "Say my name." Jesus told believers 2000 years ago that those who love him should "say my name"

WANT FORGIVENESS? SAY MY NAME: Every person who has done something wrong can be forgiven. How? "Say my name!" Acts 10:43 says"...that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." and I John 2:12..."...because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

WANT TO BE SAVED? SAY MY NAME: A person who desires to be saved

from sin and wants to begin a new and wonderful experience with Christ can make this happen. How? "Say my name!" Acts 2:21 says,"...that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That salvation we received cleans us and makes us whole. That's why I Cor. 6:11 says"...ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." We are even guaranteed eternal life through the name of Jesus. I John 5:13 says, "These things have I written unto you,that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe
on the name of the Son of God."

Say My Name

Finally Brothers and Sisters we must consider that saying the name of Jesus is an access code.

Jesus told his disciples to pray to God but to pray in his name. That means that there is something special about the name of Jesus.

The name of Jesus opens opportunities for us. John 15:16..."...that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Then, John 16:23-26 says, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive that your joy my be full."

When we face our enemies, God says, "Say my name!" Moses asked God "Who shall I say sent me!" And the answer came tell them "I am that I am." When Pharaoh asks, just "say my name!"

The name of Jesus opens the doors of heaven.
At the name of Jesus, demons run and devils hide their faces
At the name of Jesus, evil takes a vacation and trouble takes a holiday!
Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!
Jesus, the Bright and Morning!
There's something about the name of Jesus that turns:
FAILURE into success; WEAKNESS into strength
SET backs into opportunities; STUMBLING BLOCKS into stepping stones!
There's something about the name of Jesus that lifts up a bowed down head!
Jesus, who died on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose from the dead!
Jesus, Jesus!
The sweetest name I know.

No. 803-Inspiration

Life Gets Slippery When Its Wet

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 7, 2000

SCRIPTURE: But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had wll nigh slipped. Psalm 73:2; "Until I went into the sanctuary of God: then I understood I their end." Psalm 73: 17

Introduction

Have you ever been tempted to do something wrong? Often we are met by people who tell us how they have made money using one great scheme or another. The scheme sounds good and looks like its working for everyone who tries it. It gets tempting. Sometimes we hear of businesses that play cruel games on the public to make a dollar, they advertise one thing then switch the product once a steady stream of customers arise. Some in business see this under handed tactic and and seriously consider it as a prosperous move. Children in school see students turn in home work as their own but it has been completed by their parents and get rewarded with high grades. They are tempted to follow suit and get someone to complete complicated projects for them as well. One man tells another how he cheats on his wife and successfully hides it from her. Soon the idea seems workable for his friend too. Most of us have been tempted at one time or another. Getting involved in evil plans, plots and tricks is like walking on a slippery ground.

There are the times when the life of the ungodly is attractive. It appears that the ungodly win the awards, trophies, salutes and praises of men. It apears that those who ignore the laws of God and flirt with evil daily reap the best rewards. They seem to drive the biggest cars, live in the biggest houses, wear the finest clothes and attract all of the noteriety of the public. They do everything wrong and yet seem to prosper.

Conversely, while we see a few of the righteous in the circles of the materially prosperous, for the most part, material prosperity eludes the masses of the righteous. Most are comfortable, safe and happy, but rarely approach a lifestyle of luxury. The righteous base their lives on the moral law of God and as such seek sure foundations rather than existences filled with risk.

Sometimes, in a moment of weakness, the righteous get just a little envious of the free wheeling lifestyle of the ungodly. Some are even tempted to experiment with ungodly practices that promise quick returns. They are tempted to walk on slippery

ground.

Everything that works for one person may not work for another. Two women talked about training their husbands to do clean up work. The experienced wife said I train my husband by waiting until he comes home to start mowing the yard myself, he'll feel sorry for me and get the point. Then I start sweeping the sidewalk and he takes the broom and does it for me. Try it! It works she told her friend. Her friend decided to follow her advice. When her husband arrived home that day, he found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away with a tiny pair of sewing scissors. He watched silently for a while, then went into the house.

He was gone only a few moments and when he came out again he handed her a toothbrush. "When you finish cutting the grass," he said, "you might as well sweep the sidewalks."What works for other people may not work for you!

The ungodly appear to walk on sure ground, but it is slippery. If believers follow in their footsteps, they will share their fate.

As Christians we have learned that there is wisdom in trusting God and following him. Following God is solid ground. Following anyone but him will lead to our own demise because such a life is slippery when its wet.

Exposition

This text focuses on Asaph, the musician, who was tempted to follow the wicked until he had a talk with God.

Asaph was song writer, singer and musician who often spoke boldly in song about the power of the Lord. He was the father of the clan of Temple musicians who served under many kings of Israel, both before and after the exile. Asaph, as his songs reflect, trusted and served God intensely. He believed in the all consuming power of God to deliver and protect his people. His musical presentations were so intense that at times they were presented as "prophesying" (1 Chron. 25:1-7). Even after his death, later generations sang the songs of Asaph.

He had only one job...praising and worshipping God. David arranged for all of the singing and worship to take place in Jerusalem were the Ark of the Covenant was kept. In Gibeon, however, the people gathered to make their sacrifices. Asaph's job was to praise the Lord continuously (1 Chronicles 16:37-43).

It was was Asaph who wrote 12 of the 150 Psalms.(50, 73-83) His words of of power gave a strong witness to the power and majesty of God.

It was Asaph who said in Psalm 50:1 "The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

It was Asaph who looked back over the rocky road that he had traveled and wrote in Psalm 74:1 "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth."

It was Asaph who often lifted up his voice to God in prayer and wrote in Psalm 77:1, "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me."

It was Asaph who encouraged Israel to sing joyously before God and wrote in

Psalm 88:1, “Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.”

Though David constantly called upon him to lift God’s names in praise, there were times when Asaph was overwhelmed with frustration. That frustration was reflected in the 73rd Psalm.

This psalm shows one of God’s strongest and most spirited saints at a time when he was frustrated over the apparent successes of the ungodly, while his own piety seem unrewarded. He was so overwhelmed at the prosperity of the wicked that he began to be envious of them and yearn to walk in their paths. His feet “were almost gone” and he “slipped” as he considered the ungodly walk.(v2)

What made him consider the walk of the ungodly? He details what he envied about the ungodly between verses 3-12. He said the ungodly appear to be prosperous and only lightly effected by death (V3-4). They appear to escape trouble and the law, they are often loud, cocky and violent (v5-6). They are often crooked, corrupt and possess everything their eyes can see and hearts can desire. They talk wicked talk and are confident in their own abilities. They give little credit to God, yet seem to flourish.(v 7-11)

In verse 12, he summed up his frustration: “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.”

In verse 14, he noted how the prosperity of the wicked frustrated him so mucht that he was plagued and chastened constantly.

In verse 17, Asaph snapped out of his admiration for the wicked. In the sanctuary of God he awakened to a new understanding of the ultimate end of the righteous. “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.”

In the sanctuary, or in the presence of God, Asaph regained the power to sing with assurance.

In the sanctuary, he understood God’s plan and wrote in verse 18, “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.” He saw the true picture of the life of the wicked. Those who reject God find that he actually allows them to drift into slippery places.They walk daily on slippery, unstable ground. It is the walk of destruction.

He confessed his foolishness and ignorance (v22) and realized that God had been with him continuously, holding him in every way with the power of his hand (v23).

In the sanctuary he asked himself the overpowering question, “Whom do I have but God?” There is noone in heaven or earth that provides and takes care of me like God. (v.25) “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (v.26).

He made a final determination in verse 28 “But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”

In the sanctuary, Asaph saw the light and was able to sing again!

There is a slippery side of life

We are able to relate to Asaph because there are times we have thought the very same thoughts, considered the same alternatives, but reached the same conclusions.

Life does have its slippery unstable side.

The drug dealer seems to live the good life. He rides a fine car, is surrounded by beautiful women and has plenty of money. Yet despite his apparent success, he walks on the slippery side of life.

The student in school that cheats on exams, plagarizes homework assignments and receives the applause and accolades of the school, appears to be the role model. Yet by failing to adequately prepare himself, that student walks on the slippery side of life.

We have seen women acquire posessions way beyond their financial means by befriending several men to provide for both their wants and their needs. They dress well, look good and seem to live the good life. We have seen do the same. Yet, despite what appears to be a successful life of fun and gaiety, they are walking on the slippery side of life because those that provide for them, do so with a price.

Youth are fascinated with Gangsta Rappers who were $80,000 necklaces, diamond studded rings on the pinkey fingers and gold plated teeth. They seem to defy all of the rules and ride big cars, make millions of dollars without the frustration of acquiring an education, obeying rules and other limitations of society. Despite the glitter and the bling bling, there is a down side. They are walking the slippery side of life.

The ungodly seem to live charmed lives. They don't seem to have long term sicknesses. When they die, it's by accident or they are the victim of some assault. They rarely suffer extended sicknesses and troubles, it seems.

That is exactly what Satan promises anyone who follows him. Fame, popularity and riches. But there is a price! You must give him your soul and walk on the slippery side of life until the dreadful day that you fall.

Jesus asked the question: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

As we observe those who walk the slippery side of life, we should be careful not to allow our frustration over their apparent success, to steal our song

Insight in the Sanctuary

Asaph found a resolution to his dilemma in his sanctuary.

A sanctuary is the place where man and God meet, commune and abide in peace. Nearly every church building has a sanctuary. It is different from the other parts of the church building because it is the special place where believers expect to meet God, hear from him and abide in peace. Yet, the church sanctuary is not the only sanctuary. Every believer has a private place, a special place where it seems talking to God is easier.

What is your sanctuary? Is it a special room in your house? A special chair in your back yard? A special corner of the library? Your sanctuary is the special place where you and God connect and you can feel it happening.

In the sanctuary is where God reveals to you the ultimate end of the slippery walk. In the sanctuary, we talk to God and pour out our souls to him.

In the sanctuary we open up and he he fills us up with his grace, mercy and love!

In the sanctuary we hear God speak to us clearly, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and whiter as the green herb!" (Psalm 37:1-2)

In the sanctuary, we are reminded of the goodness of God. For it is in our sanctuary that we hear God say, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:23-25)

God Holds our hand

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that though life is slippery when it's wet, we can make it through, if we hold to God's unchanging hand!

Asaph looked around at the ungodly and then at his own situation. At this point he relized that everyday of his life, God was holding him by the hand!

At verse 23 he noted that he and God were constantly together. When he started to put things in perspective he had to discern whether it was better for him to immulate the ungodly and focus on houses and land or take the low road and walk constantly with his life in God's hand!

Don't ever let anyone play down the significance of walking with God.

Abraham walked with God and he pledged him the promised land!

Moses walked with God and he showed him he promised land!

Joshua walked with God and he carried him to the promised land!

Enoch walked with God and "was not!"

No wonder the song writer declared, "And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there. None other, has ever known"

Life gets slippery when its wet!

Jonah tried to disobey God and was thrown into an angry sea and swallowed by a fish. There, inside the belly of a great fish, he found out that life get's slippery when we try disobey God. Life gets slippery, when we try to move against his will. Life gets slippery when its wet!

Peter walked on the water but before he reached the Lord he found out that life get's slippery when we take our eyes off Christ. Life gets slippery when the first time we begin to doubt! Life gets slippery when its wet!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that if you keep your hand in God's unchanging hand, he'll guide you to the solid ground!

Life may be slippery sometimes, but if we keep our hand in God's hand, he'll guide us through to on dry ground.

No wonder song writer declared, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thou powerful hand!"

Life might have its slippery twists and turns, but that's when a child of God stands on the solid rock.

On Christ, who died out on Calvary!

On Christ, who was buried for three days and nights!

On Christ, who arose with all power and magesty in his hands!

When life gets slippery...

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

No. 804-Mother's Day

If It Be So, Why Am I Thus?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 14, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD." Genesis 25:22

Introduction

Have you ever felt that your mother was watching you, even though you knew she was no where in sight? It is said that mothers have a sixth sense that is almost surreal. It has yet to be proven scientifically, but there are millions who would argue that mothers have a connection with their children that enables them to sense danger, pain, trouble and even moments of joy in their children, even though they are miles away. No one has been able to accurately describe how it works, but millions of children testify regularly that they have received cards, letters or calls from mothers who seemed to sense the exact moment that some great pain or joy was happening in their lives. Still others feel their mother's eyes peering over them, though she has been in glory for many years. Mothers seemed to have a special gift that allows them to connect with their children, despite time and distance.

This gift does not appear reserved for just biological parents, but to those who are mothering. It is a unique gift that only mothers seem to have, non-mothers don't need, and fathers can't understand.

This unique gift for feeling the pain and joy of there children is one of things that make mothers special. Since May 10, 1908 Mothers around the nation have been honored and praised in what we call "Mother's Day." It was founded by Anna Jarvis in tribute to her mother, Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis. The first fully organized Mother's Day program was held at the Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia, on May 10, 1908. The honored mother had already laid the foundation for such a day in the last fifty years of her life.

The purpose of Mother's Day was announced in the first ceremony: "...To revive the dormant filial love and gratitude we owe to those who gave us birth. To be a home tie for the absent. To obliterate family estrangement. To create a bond of brotherhood through the wearing of a floral badge. To make us better children by getting us closer to the hearts of our good mothers. To brighten the lives of good mothers. To have

them know we appreciate them, though we do not show it as often as we ought...

Mother's Day is intended that we should salute the one who feels our struggles, admits her own fallibility and turns to God for answers and strength.

We wear a red rose to salute living mothers. We wear a white rose to embrace the memory of a deceased mother. Dr. Jacquelyn Simmons suggests that those who wear both a red and a white rose suggest that the spirit of mother lives on in the presence of the descendants.

As Christians, we understand the importance of strong Christian mothers. It is the Christian mother, more than any other that can feel the struggle of her children, wrestle with her own doubts, flaws and failures and turn to God for answers and strength.

Exposition

This text focuses on one mother's experience with feeling the struggle of her children and how she turned to God.

Rebekah is a snapshot of many mothers in many ways. She was young and beautiful, devout, faithful to her husband, industrious and protective of her children. She was the sister of Laban, married to Isaac. She is first presented in Genesis 24:1 where the beautiful story of her marriage is related. (B.C. 1857.) For nineteen years she was childless: then Esau and Jacob were born, the younger being the mother's companion and favorite. (Genesis 25:19-28)

She demonstrated great faith when she never gave up hope that she would bear children even after 19 years of failed efforts. But if she was a woman of great faith, when it came to one of her children should proved herself capable of devious means to assist him in gaining a foothold in life. It was Rebekah who suggested the deceit that was practiced by Jacob on his blind father. She directed and aided him in carrying it out, foresaw the probable consequence of Esau's anger, and prevented it by moving Isaac to send Jacob away to Padan-aram, (Genesis 27:1) ... to her own kindred.

While carrying Jacob and Esau, Rebekah was troubled by an unusual movement in her womb. She had no idea what the movements meant and they could not be explained by the midwives and women who assisted her. Her husband, Isaac asked God to bless his wife with a child (v21) and the Lord answered by allowing her to conceive, not one child but two.

The unusual movement prompted Rebekah to question whether or not her pregnancy was a blessing or a curse. "If it be so, why am I thus?" If this pregnancy is a blessing from God, what explains the complicated struggle going on inside her. She could feel the intensity of the movement. She sensed an atmosphere of battle. If her condition was of God, blessed and sanctioned by him, she wondered, "why am I thus?"

For an answer she asked God and he answered and gave her peace. She was told that she was carrying twins, both of whom would be the fathers of great nations that

would struggle and compete with each other over generations. “Two nations are in thy womb and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other and the elder shall serve the younger.” (v23).

From the onset, Rebekah felt the life struggle of her children. It was abnormal and unusual. She wondered how she could be the recipient of a blessing from God if such abnormal activity was a part of her being. No one else could feel what she felt. She sensed their destiny and was not assured of it until she talked to God.

When Rebekah talked to God, she received an answer that helped her understand the children she would bear and her role in the process.

Because she was told that the younger child would be the leader of the family, Rebekah became the instrument that God used to insure that this unusual occurrence came to fruition. It was truly unusual because, the oldest son was always the recipient of the inheritance of his father. She protected and specially groomed the younger son throughout his life. When the time came for Isaac to bestow the blessing of family leadership upon his oldest son, Rebekah helped Jacob, the younger son receive the blessing by disguising himself as his older brother.

History records Rebekah’s role in the deception as an example of devious motherhood. However, in light of God’s prophecy to her, even before the children were born, some agree that “she was thus, for it to be so.”

A mother senses her children’s struggle

Rebekah felt the struggle of her children, even before they were born. In a similar manner, mothers seem to sense the struggles of their children even today. Whether that struggle is physical or emotional, mothers seem to possess an unusual ability to perceive that something is good or bad in their lives of their children.

It is not that mothers love their children more than fathers, it is that mothers are divinely connected for the purpose of nurture, more than fathers. Since the rearing of children is one of the chief responsibilities of womanhood, it seems that God equipped each mother with a “mothering” instinct that functions automatically unless it is aborted by external sources, foreign to the nature order of things.

To sense her children’s struggle a mother must have the capacity to love. Love is an expression of godliness for God is love. Mothers who know God can best demonstrate love. Mother’s who love their children can sense their feelings. That ability comes from God. A mother took her six-year-old boy into a doctor’s crowded waiting room. The little boy was naturally inquisitive. He had a need to know. As they waited their turn, he began to ask her all kinds of questions. In half an hour he managed to cover almost every subject known to humanity. To the wonder of all the others sitting in the room, his mother answered each question carefully and patiently. Inevitably, he got around to God. As the other people listened to his relentless “how’s” and “why’s,” it was plain to see by the expressions on their faces that they wondered: “How does she stand it?” But when she answered her son’s next question, she answered theirs too. “Why,” he asked, “doesn’t God ever get tired and just

stop?" "Because," she replied after a moment's thought, "God is love; and love never gets tired."

Mother's sense their children's struggles because they empathize with them. Mother's feel the hurt, embarassment and pain of their children. They can do this because they are able to put themselves in their children's shoes. They can visualize each step a child makes and put themselves in their children's places. Sometimes, when they should be angry they show love in the strangest ways. Consider the mom who spent a year cultivating a special rose to enter into a contest. Her daughter enjoyed working with her and often imitated her mother's actions as she pulled up weeds and replanted seedlings. As time passed the beautiful rose blossomed. Visitors to the home were astonished at its beauty and took pictures as they assured her that it would win a blue ribbon. The three days before the contest, the mother was horrified. Her daughter stood in the back door with her prize rose crumpled in her hand and said, "Look mommy I pulled up the weeds, just like you!" On the day of the contest the mother entered her a rose in the contest. When the judges came to her entry they found a picture of her daughter attached to a stick. When the audience her story, she didn't win the prize, but the rose that was not a rose won a standing ovation. Here was a mother who could feel her child's need for understanding, love and forgiveness more than her own sense of loss.

Whether her children struggle for life or the pursuit of their dreams, mothers sense that struggle and more than any others, connect with that struggle in ways that only mothers can.

Why Am I thus?

Yet, there are times when motherhood becomes burdensome and troubling. Rebekah, "If it be so, why am I thus?"

This is the same question that mothers ask when the are frustrated. These are the times when the children which were supposed to be a blessing from God actually caused her more trouble and pain than she desired. That's when she says, "If these children are my blessing, why am I so frustrated?"

Nothing frustrates a mother more than to watch her children squander opportunities, live recklessly or waste talents.

Some variables are controllable. Poverty may be a circumstance, but some mothers have managed to overcome its disadvantages and give their children great opportunities. Racial discrimination make certain opportunities difficult to attain, but some mothers have worked around them. Some, without much education themselves have struggled hard to help their children attain high educational standards.

But when children fail to use their talents, become discipline problems and demonstrate a lack of appreciation, mothers are frustrated. That's when they look at the children who were supposed to be their source of their joy and ask, "If it be so, why am I thus?"

Good Mothers Talk to God

Finally, brothers and sisters, it should be noted that good mothers are sustained and rewarded in motherhood, because they know how to talk to God.

A believing mother knows how to talk to God in a way that gets an answer. When Rebekah asked the question, "If it be so, why am I thus?" She then turned and talked to the Lord.

Every good mother should know how to talk to the Lord.

Consider the daughter that asked her mother to teach her to pray. "I can't seem to get a prayer through" said the daughter. "It looks like I have to keep asking for the same things over and over." The mother looked at her daughter and said, "You jiggling baby!" Surprised the daughter asked for an explanation! The mother said, "The other day your car wouldn't start and you asked me to turn the ignition while you jiggled the wire on the battery. When you started the car you brushed off my suggestion that we take it to a mechanic and get him to tighten up the post. You said it would take too long. After a while however, you did what I said and you don't have to jiggle any more." The daughter was still bewildered and could not make the connection. Then the mother said, "If you want to get blessings from God you can't jiggle the wire, you must tighten up the post!"

If read your bible quickly then ask God for a blessing, that's jiggling the wire!

If you come to church once or twice then expect a blessing, that's jiggling the wire!

If you rush through a quick prayer before a test or in a moment of need, and neglect your regular prayers that's jiggling the wire!

But every good mother knows that if you want to get a prayer through and keep your blessings flowing, you must tighten up the post!

When a mother is worried about the whereabouts of her children, she has learned how to talk to God and say, "In thee oh Lord, do I put my trust!"

When a mother is worried about putting food on the table, she has learned to talk to God. She'll testify that, "I have been young, but now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread!"

When a mother has done all that her hands know how to do, she has learned how to talk to God and say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!"

When a mother seems to run out of resources to provide for her children, she has learned how to talk to God. We can hear her say, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

When mothers get old and feeble they still know how to talk with the Lord, for I can hear many great grandmothers declare, "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me!"

If we could hear every mother's prayer over a loud speaker, we'd hear her say, "Lord! Lord!

Bless my children! Keep them safe every day!”

Good mothers know how to call on the name of Jesus!
They know how to say Jesus!
Good mothers know him!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!
If you want to know, “If it be so!” Call on Jesus!
If you want to know, “Why am I thus!” Call on Jesus!
Call him up and tell him what you want!

No. 805-Communion

Four Cups of Wine

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 21, 2000

SCRIPTURE: Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6-7 "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:17-20

Introduction

Have you had a little nip? Just a little bit? There was a time when some believers were in the world and indulged at the fountains of insobriety! While there are a few exceptions, most have had a taste of whiskey, wine, scotch, gin, Vodka or beer. Whether it was at a teenage party, a fraternity or sorority rush, or while fishing in the bayou, there are many who have had a nip, even if only a "little nip." Once we became believers, Baptist pledged to stop nipping and sipping because our little nips might cause someone to become a drunkard.

Folks outside of our faith think Baptists are a little too conservative. What's wrong with a little nip? "A little wine is good for the belly," they claim. In fact, there are many denominations of believers that do not go as far as the world's Baptists. They don't promise not to nip or sip or drink a fine wine with their dinner. They have no prohibitions against a nightcap or sherry every now and then. They say the Baptists are a little backward and behind the times.

On the other hand we understand the problems that alcoholism causes. We know that alcoholism impairs a person's judgments, and emotional stability. It causes loss of appetite, skin problems, stomach ailments, sexual impotence, liver disease, heart damage and memory loss, just to name a few. Armed with this knowledge, we have voluntarily given up our privilege to drink alcohol because our "nip" or "sip" might serve as an encouragement to a brother or sister not strong enough to stop at a "nip."

Paul set the standard in 1 Corinthians 8:13 when he said if eating certain kinds of meat would cause another person to stumble, then we should refrain. With that in mind Baptists pledge not to nip or sip buy or sell alcoholic drinks as a beverage.

Most of us know at least one person who can't stop at a little nip. There are some places where it has been reported that some even need a nip to make it through the work day. Most find it very hard to restrain themselves. They must have another nip. Consider the town drunk who left a church revival and decided to stop drinking. However, he felt he wasn't strong enough to stop cold turkey, so he decided to reduce his drinking and stay sober longer. On the way home from the revival he stopped by the local bar and sat at the counter. "I am a new man" said the town drunk. "Yes sir, bring me four bottles of Johnny Walker Red!" The bartender brought four full bottles of the cheap wine and everyone at the bar watched as the town drunk emptied each bottle one after another. He gave a slight hiccup. The ordered again. "Bring me three bottles of Johnny Walker Red." To the amazement of everyone around he summarily drank all three of the bottles in what seemed like single gulps. As he wobbled on the seat and struggled to keep from falling, he struggle to straighten himself and said, "Bartender, bring me two bottles of Johnny Walker Red!"

Everyone in the bar stopped and watched as the town drunk emptied two more bottles of red wine." Finally, the drunk held up one finger. Hardly able to sit on the stool he said, "Bring me one bottle of Walker Red Johnny." He sat on the stool a long time and stared at the bottle. Then he told the bartender "I made up in my mind to drink less so I could stay sober longer, but something ain't working. I ordered four bottles, then three, then two, now one. Something ain't working because it seems likes the less wine I order, the drunker I get!" Some people don't know when enough is enough!

Have you wondered why the glasses are so small in the communion tray? There was a time when people observed the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-34) with big parties. There was plenty of food and lots of wine. People actually became drunk at the Lord's supper. He told them that the purpose of the wine at the Lord's supper is not for people to get drunk! The purpose of the bread is not for participants to get full! Paul encouraged them to eat and drink at home, but not at the Lord's supper. The purpose of the Lord's supper is to help believers remember!

The bread helps believers remember Christ's physical sacrifice!

The little cup of unfermented wine, just enough to taste, is to help us remember the blood of Christ!

As believers, we observe the Lord's supper to remember what Christ did for us. Through his body and blood we are redeemed and given a chance to enjoy eternal life.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus as he adds a new twist to the Passover celebration, giving it a new meaning.

For 1500 years the Jews celebrated the Passover following one traditional procedure that had been passed down through the generations since Moses. When they were slaves in Egypt, they were given explicit orders to prepare to leave out of bondage as God's hand moved in their affairs. They were told to kill a lamb and to take the blood of that lamb and spread it over the door posts of their houses.

In addition, the Jews were told to prepare a memorial meal that was to commemorate this important day. The ritual was continued for centuries without change or interruption. It was followed to the letter.

In general, here is the procedure when there was a temple. The Passover sacrifice was managed by groups of men usually 10 to 20 in number who took lambs that were at least eight days old but not more than a year old and prepared to participate in the Passover. Representatives of each group of men would be admitted inside the temple court where they held their lambs until the priests blew the trumpet three times. After the third blast of the trumpet the lambs were slain and the priests caught the blood in gold and silver bowls, which were passed from hand to hand, until their contents were dashed on the base of the altar.

The lambs were dressed, the fat was removed and offered by the priests on the altar. While all of this was taking place the Levites who were appointed the singers sang from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118) repeatedly.

The lambs were then taken to the homes of the men in each group and roasted on a wooden pit, with pomegranate wood so there would be no sap. No bone was allowed to be broken and the meat was not tocome in contact with any foreign substance, if so that portion must be cut away. The meal was not eaten until midnight.

Four Cups of Wine

A part of the meal was wine. Each passover participant was served four cups of red wine. If a person was poor and could not afford the wine the person was expected to sell his clothing, or pledge himself as a laborer to acquire his four cups of wine. If unable to work, then the wine was to be provided from the public treasury. In addition to the wine, the meal consisted of bitter herbs, unleavened cakes of bread, and the Passover lamb.

Participants at the Passover followed a specific order or ritual. Exodus 6:6-7 formed the basis of the use of the four cups.

I WILL BRING YOU OUT: As the ceremony opened the first line was recited or chanted "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians." It was a reminder of God's promise to Israel that he would free them from their 400 years of bondage. After the opening chant everyone drank the first cup of wine.

I WILL FREE YOU: After the second cup was poured, the son of the house or someone who represented him would ask "Father, what does this mean?" Then the father would explain the story of Jewish slavery and how God lifted them from slavery and allowed them to leave Egypt and come to the promised land, crossing the Red Sea on dry land and surviving desert journeys. After the story is told, then the second

line of Exodus 6:6-7 would be recited "I will free you from being slaves to them." Then the family would drink from the second cup of wine.

I WILL REDEEM YOU: The meal was eaten at this time. After the meal an, after meal grace, was given and the third cup was filled. The third cup was preceded by reciting the third line from the Exodus text: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."

I WILL BE YOUR GOD: Then a fourth and final cup was poured, with the 4th line of the text, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God." When they drank the last cup they sang Psalm 115 to Psalm 118, which closed the observance.

Four Cups in One

Finally, brothers and sisters, When Jesus met with his disciples in the Upper Room he met to observe the traditional Passover. The bitter herbs, unleavened bread, wine and Passover lamb were all present, but they were to take on a new meaning from that time forth. There would only be bread and wine. No bitter herbs. No lamb. Jesus himself would be the lamb. The bread would represent his body and the wine would represent his blood shed for the redemption of sin.

This marked the day that the Passover became the "Lord's Supper" in the Christian community.

He gave us a four in one cup that compresses the original four cups into one cup. However, this four-in-one cup was still to serve as a reminder to believers about the God we serve. It should remind us that:

God will bring you out! It does not matter what part of Egypt has kept us enslaved, this cup should remind every child of God that God can and will bring you out! The Three Hebrew Boys were asked as they were about to be thrown into the fiery furnace, "Is your God able to deliver you?" Their answer is our answer today. Our God is able!

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to open up a way out of no way!

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to be a shelter in a time of storm!

Let this cup remind you that no matter what you may have gotten yourself into, God can bring you out!

God will set you free! It doesn't matter what type of chains hold you in bondage God is able to set you free! Jesus met a lame man who had been struggling under a crippling bondage. He told the man, "thy sins are forgiven..rise up take thy bed and walk!"

Let this cup remind you, that you don't have to suffer under bondage for something you did a long time ago! God will set you free!

Let this cup remind you, that whatever guilt that you are suffering based on something that you have done wrong, God is able to set you free!

I heard Jesus say, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!"

God will redeem you! No one should ever forget that our God is the God of the second chance. He will redeem us from our sins. Jesus told the parable of a man who came upon a fig tree that was not bringing forth figs and the owner gave word to have

it cut down. But the garden worker asked for permission to fertilize and work with the tree and it was spared destruction. In the same way Jesus gave me and you a second chance!

Let this cup remind you that God is still giving second chances to those who have walked in the wrong direction!

Let this cup remind you that God is still offering a second chance to those who have fallen and can't seem to get up!

I'm glad that God gave me a second chance!

Finally this cup should remind us that God is still God!

Despite the trials and tribulations that may suggest otherwise, God is still God!

He still sits high and looks low! He wants to be our God, and he's only a prayer a way!

Let this cup remind you that whatever comes your way that "God is still on the throne!"

Let this cup remind you that Jesus died on an old rugged cross!

Let it remind you that he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Let this cup remind you that after three days and nights that he arose from the grave!

God is able !

God is able!

No. 806-Graduation

When Does Life Begin?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 4, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "..I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

Introduction

Have you ever reached a turning point in your life? A turning point is usually defined as a critical point in which a major decision is made that impacts direction. In the course of every life there are many turning points. At each, we make crucial life altering decisions. The first major turning point in every life comes at the time a youth completes adolescence and becomes a young adult. A flood of choices rises with tidal wave intensity, involving college, careers, relationships, independent living and spiritual decisions. Reaching young adult life is a major turning point for every youth. It is the beginning of a seven year period of self discovery and soul searching which will change their lives for ever.

Graduation marks a major turning point. Many will argue that it impacts not only the students, but their entire families. Students are happy because they have graduated, their parents are happy for a different reason. Three people: a Sunday School teacher, a sociologist and a mother of 10 children, were discussing when life begins. "Life begins," said one, "at the moment of fertilization. That is when God instills the spark of life into the fetus." Said the Sunday School teacher. "We believe," said the sociologist, "that life begins at birth, because that is when the baby becomes an individual and is capable of making its own decisions and must learn social skills."

"You're both wrong," said the mother, whose last child had just graduated from college, "Life begins when the children have graduated from college and all have moved out of the house and you finally have a minute to yourself!"

Somewhere in between all of the ideas, life in its fullest meaning requires a "conception" and breath. Life is fully realized when there is both. Even the idea that is conceived in the mind of a creative person lies dormant until it has breath. It is the breath that animates, invigorates and makes that which is conceived become a reality. To a large extent, we incubate, grow and have movement in a social womb that feeds, protects and nurtures us. However, life really begins when we get a hard slap of reality and we take our first breath without the umbilical cord of dependence that has sustained us for so long. It is a brand new experience! We often cry at the very moment

that life really begins!

Every believer understands this idea very well. We have been given physical life, but it is the breath of God that moves and pushes us to realize life in its fullest. It is his spirit and power that makes life meaningful and abundantly happy.

As Christians, we know what it means to live the happy fulfilled life. When does it begin? At graduation? It begins the day we turn that which we have conceived for our lives over to God. He breaths the breath of life into our dreams and the abundant life begins!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains that belief in the new covenant would lead followers to an abundant life.

Jesus was often criticized by the chief scholars of his time because his ideals challenged the status quo. One of the most controversial ideas that Christ introduced was the idea that everyone who followed him would be new freedoms from the strict requirements of the law of Moses.

Under the Mosaic law, there were very few freedoms and very little room for individual decision making. Moses attempted to address every possible situation that could concern the every day life of believers. The laws multiplied from the original 10 given on Mt. Sinai to hundreds of laws that dealt with every aspect of life.

Life, under the strict interpretation of the priests and judges, was at the least a burden because there appeared to be a law that addressed every possible situation, good or bad. Life was restrictive at the least.

Jesus was controversial because he proposed to give those who believed in him only one law, and to introduce them to greater liberties than they had ever known before. As far as Jesus was there was only one commandment important for believers to follow, it was the command to love God, love your yourself, then love your neighbor like you love yourself. In that context, Jesus summed up all of the hundreds of laws that comprised the Mosaic law into one general law, “love ye one another.”

Those who followed Christ began a new experience. They were being introduced to a way of life that would less intrusive, less obstructive, and more libertarian. Believers were being freed to make their own decisions about their course of life with only one rule in mind, “love God, love yourself, and love others like you love yourself.”

Those who followed this course in life were promised a more fulfilling and complete life that Christ described as the “abundant life.” By abundant life, Christ did not promise believers that they would have large accumulations of material things, but that they were being given the opportunity to exercise options, seize opportunities and achieve.....with only the spirit of love to guide them

Those who followed him began a new life experience, with a new perspective. They were given one hope. This hope is the hope of life eternal through Jesus Christ.

Even though some of the disciples were men in their 30’s and 40’s life began for

them, the day they decided to follow Christ. The sought his simple promise: “I come that they may have life and have it more abundantly!”

The Formation

As a general rule, young lives experience two periods of incubation. One occurs at conception and lasts until birth. The other begins at birth and lasts through childhood and adolescence. During each of these periods they are protected and nurture with an expectation of future growth and maturity.

The first 18 years of a young life are occupied with the shaping of ideas, learning information, developing skills, assimilating values and developing social discipline. During this time the society in which a young person lives gives them special treatment. There are free schools provided for their education. There are special apprenticeships designed to help them learn skills. There are special rules designed to shelter them from certain types of language, ideas and visual stimuli. Movies, music and television broadcasts are labeled to warn parents of hazardous content. Medicine has protective caps to shield them. Toys designed for them have safety features, cars must seat them in special seats, and people who teach, coach them and lead them must follow rules designed to protect from abuse. Even when they make mistakes and involve themselves in petty criminal activities they are protected by withholding their names and confined in centers that often have all of the embellishments of home.

Many youth find the first 18 years of their lives restrictive. As they get older they complain about the rules of their home, church and school. They challenge the system that strains to contain them and virtually dare it to attempt to contain them.

Many have silently sat in their homes and dreamed of the day that they would be free of the rules and constraints of adolescence. Like the quarry slave, peering out of a dungeon window, they often yearn for the day they would be “free” to live their own lives independent of their parents.

The Slap

Just as there is an incubation period, there is also a point in which every youth gets a wake up call. The wake up call is the slap that suddenly announces the end of incubation.

For many young adults, high school graduation is a wake up call! It is society’s way of announcing the end of the sheltered existence.

Certainly the shift from youth to young adult life is a wake up call. Society takes off the wraps and begins to respond to the same young person in all new way.

Youth who make mistakes suddenly find that their names are listed in the paper and they go to jail instead of customized “centers.” They are suddenly old enough to go to war, vote and are expected to pay taxes.

With the new freedoms come responsibilities. Responsibilities are wake up calls

that many youth have been sheltered from all of their lives.

Many have not had to worry about food, clothing and shelter. If they worked, their money was generally their own. Responsibility is a sobering slap that introduces youth into the real world of forms, documents, record keeping, loan payments, contracts, leases, insurance and liability. Many who have not been properly introduced to various nuances of independent living, find themselves in a world that responds to them with coldness rather than warmth and affection.

This rude introduction into the adult world is a slap that is bone chilling and often frightening. It is sobering to say the least.

The Breath of Life

Finally, we must consider that even though there is an incubation period and a slap of reality, life does not begin until the first breath is taken.

There are many young people who are socially "still born." They live 18 years but never take the first breath on their own. They drop out and disappear from productive life.

The Christian young adult strives to live the abundant life, not simply to be free from restraint but free live abundantly.

Dreams need power to animate! Every bird needs wind beneath its wings to fly! Every engine needs fuel to operate.

Every believer knows that it takes the power of God for a life to take flight!

Jesus said he came that those who trust in him and give him first place in their lives might know might be free but also enjoy Godly support!

The dream of being a teacher is formed in childhood, but that life doesn't begin until God breathes upon the dream!

The dream of being a doctor or nurse is formed in youth, but it begins to live when God breathes upon it.

The dream of being a businessperson or achieving in the arts remains just a dream until it comes to life when God breathes upon it!

Every Christian graduate needs to remember that no matter how talented, witty, smart and intelligent they are at the moment..none of their dreams can become reality until God breathes upon them!

When does life begin?

The abundant life begins the first day a child of God places their lives, hopes and dreams in God's hands. At that point life begins!

Life begins when we realize that anything that will help us to glorify God, build his kingdom and strengthen the cause of Christ can be accomplished.

Life begins when we step out on faith into the utter darkness of our own horizon with the full confidence that as long as we trust in God and do his will...no weapon formed against us shall prosper!

Life begins we resolve that no matter what comes our way, we will trust in the Lord!

On university campuses, in trade schools or on new found jobs...trust in the Lord

On the highways and byways of life...trust in the Lord!

Trust in Jesus, who died and arose from the dead to give us eternal life!

No wonder the song writer wrote, “I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord!” I will trust in the Lord until I die!”

No. 807-Membership Improvement

Leaving Before The Benediction

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 11, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "The lord bles thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine up thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." Numbers 6:24-26

Introduction

Have you ever left an activity before it ended? Was it a movie? A football game? An exciting basketball game? How did you feel? If you are like most people, you felt an emptiness when you were required to leave an exciting activity before it concluded. Can you imagine sitting on the 50 yard line at the Super Bowl, the score is tied, with two minutes left to play in the game, then your partner says, "let's go so we can beat the traffic!" Can you imagine watching your favorite movie, but just before you discover the secret plot, your group says, "it's time to go?" That would be a bummer!

Those who read a suspense novel are glued to its pages. They can be terribly upset if someone stops them from reading those last five pages. They wouldn't even think about moving until it has been completed. By nature, we want to see how it will end. That's when we get a feeling of satisfaction.

No one likes an enjoyable experience interrupted. In fact, people have been known to stand in the rain and snow to see an experience through until the end.

When it comes to the things of God, shouldn't our resolve be the same? Those who are excited about their service to God, are very disturbed if asked to interrupt a blessed experience before it ends.

In the body of Christ there are many worship and service opportunities. There are generally two blessings offered: One at the beginning of the activity and the other at the end. There are many who push themselves to be present at both and would not think of having it any other way.

As Christians, we seek the blessings of God on all of our actions. We live our lives in expectation of his blessing and vow constantly that we will "run on to see what the end will be."

Exposition

This text focuses on the benediction offered by priests after sacrifices were made.

The Mosaic law provided for many sacrifices. The procedures for offering each sacrifice were often spelled out in the law.

Numbers 6 refers specifically to the Nazarite's blessing, but its general procedure was common to all. Those who sought a blessing from God came to the place of worship, and presented both a sacrifice and an offering. Then they waited for a blessing that came from priests. Even though sacrifices and offerings had been offered they waited patiently for the confirmation blessing that came from the priest who announced the words of the text, "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: "

They waited for the benediction for it represented an acceptance of the sacrifice and offering and a confirmation that blessings would follow. Despite the length of their journey home, there is no record of people who left before the benediction.

Time for God

There are many good Christians who are trying to grow as it relates to giving God time to act in their lives. Three thoughts may be important to consider:

MANY PENCIL GOD IN A SMALL WINDOW OF TIME. There are many who believe and trust God but they expect God to operate within the context of their calendar of events. These are the people who will praise God intensely and sincerely within the window of time they have reserved for him. During that time they will give him everything they have and will serve him religiously. However, if God's praise or work every requires time beyond that which has been provided for him, they often decide to abandon him to pursue personal interests. A look at the weekly schedule of some believers will reveal their expectations.

There are at least two groups of believers. One group always pencils God in its calendar of activities, however, the amount of time he is allowed is often truncated as they schedule other activities immediate following the time block they have provided for God's service and praise. The average time block those in this group provide for God is about 60 to 90 minutes an activity. During this time, they will give their attention and energy to his worship and praise. However, if the worship or service to God is not completed within their allotted time, they become impatient and will generally leave the worship or service activity before it concludes. The second group pencils God in their schedule but they take pains not to schedule anything immediately following the activity. God moves in his own time and way. Those who serve him are aware that he cannot be hurried, neither can he be contained in any time sphere. Thus many believers may schedule an activity immediately following a worship or church based service activity but they warn others that they may be late for secondary activity. Only an extreme emergency could prompt such believers to leave a divine service or worship before the benediction. They know that the blessing is given at the end of the service and thus they plan to stay until it is received. In a

similar request, they resist penciling in a proscribed amount of time for God to respond to prayer requests. God moves at his own time schedule. When Mary and Martha complained that Jesus did not come when they called him to the death bed of Lazarus, they soon learned with the resurrection of Lazarus, that he did not come when they wanted him to, but when it came, it was on time.

MANY WANT THE BLESSING WITHOUT THE SACRIFICE. There are many who come to a worship or service activity just in time for the blessing. We have seen these individuals, they slip in the back of the worship service and ease into a seat, just in time to hear the sermon or perhaps just the benediction itself. These have assumed a "show my face" attitude with God. In this respect they have concluded that it is sufficient to simply "show their faces" at a worship or service activity and that will merit the blessing. That's the way some politicians approach the Black community in some areas of the country. They invade a worship service long enough to show their faces, then leave. Their intent for participating was not worship, but politics. A "show my face" attitude is not sufficient with God.

Such individuals are types of individuals who want the reward of the Christian life without making the sacrifices associated with the life. It is true that the Christian lifestyle promises a crown of life. But the blessing of a crown is closely associated with an individual cross. Each believer, at one time or another, must bear his own cross. Bearing the cross requires sacrifices of time, talent,and money. It requires an enduring spirit and a determination to give God our best despite circumstances.

A close look at numbers 6 however, reveals that the benediction given by the priest was based upon the sacrifices and offerings that were given. A person could quickly run and stand in the crowd as the priest offered the benediction, but he did not receive the blessing because the blessing was tied inextricably to the sacrifice. If there was no sacrifice or offering there was no blessing. Simply put: If there is no cross, there is no crown.

MANY GIVE UP HOPE BEFORE GOD MOVES. Those who leave before the benediction are symbolic of the millions of people in the world who are impatient. They want God to bless them, heal them, inspire them or otherwise do whatever he plans to do..quickly. Allowing time for God to work his plan for our lives is essential for every believer. We can't push God's clock faster than he wants it to go. When some don't receive the answer to their prayer request in a certain time frame they become impatient and take matters into their own hands. When God seems slow about answering our prayer for steak and eggs, we get impatient and start buying stolen pork chops that were a real deal. Some begin to steal a little here, and slip a little there, all in an attempt to make something happen, because God moves to slow. Sarah had this problem. God promised her a child, but as she progressed in age without a child she became impatient with God and tried to help him out by ordering her slave to mate with her husband to bare him a son. When it comes to the things of God are we impatient. Patience is a virtue that is based on faith. Those who are patient know that God will move in his own way, thus they faithfully wait for him to act. This is the message that Isaiah projected to Israel, in Isaiah 40:31 "But they that wait upon the

LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Those who leave before the benediction are often impatient. Those who are impatient usually miss the blessing associated with the real patient spirit.

Don't Miss The Blessing

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there is no blessing without a sacrifice, it also well that we remember that those who make a sacrifice, don't mind waiting for the blessing.

While Numbers 6 focuses heavily upon one type of sacrifice, those of the Nazarites, the ritual pattern was followed in most sacrifices. Thousands of people stood in line to present their sacrifices, then waited patiently for the Priest to offer the blessing. Depending on the number of people, this process could be quite time consuming, but the people came for a blessing and they were not leaving without one.

Jacob wrestled with an angel all night long. As the sun began to rise Jacob held on to the angel who demanded to be released. Jacob said he would not let go, until he was blessed.

There are many today who have been wresting with a problem, decision, or a family issue. It's been an uphill struggle, but strong believers have decided not to let go until their blessing comes.

When Job faced difficulty and troubles on every hand, his friends encouraged him to let go. Even his wife gave up hope, but Job steadfastly refused to let go until his blessings came.

With sores on his body, he would not let go!

Through financial ruin, he would not let go!

Job said, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

When Jesus prepared to return to heaven, he assembled his disciples and told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait until the blessing came. With the blessing would come the power of the Holy Ghost.

When the Holy Ghost came they were filled with power to speak in languages they had not studied. They were given power to perform signs and wonders that certified them as true apostles of Christ.

When the blessings come, every believer is lifted, empowered and motivated in a way that only God can do!

When God blesses your life, his power is evident.

At the benediction, God is asked to bless you! God is in the blessing business! When God blesses, that which has:

--FAILED becomes a success; FALLEN is picked up again!

--DIED is revived and lives again; CEASED begins to move again!

At the benediction, God is asked to keep you! We can't make it from week to week without protection from God, because we live in troublesome times. But I heard David declare in Psalm 27:5 "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the

secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me..”

At the benediction, God is asked to be gracious to us and let his light shine! No matter who we are or how important we think we are, we can’t make it without God’s grace!

Grace wakes us up in the morning!

Grace puts food on the table!

Grace puts us to sleep at night!

At the benediction, those who have made the sacrifice, say I can’t go forward, without the Grace of God!

It’s the grace of God that keeps us!

It’s the grace of God that secures us!

It’s the grace of God that gives us one more chance!

This grace was paid for out on Calvary!

This grace was delivered through an empty tomb!

This grace keeps blessing us everyday!

No. 808-Youth

Can Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 25, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon. Genesis 49:13; And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." John 1:46

Introduction

Have you ever wished you lived in another place? On occasion, most of us have entertained that thought. Not only have we wished we could live in another city, but some have even wished they could have been born in another class or race. In many instances, tn appears that those who are successful in life seem to have prestigious histories that have begun in some far away place removed from their rural existence or poor inner city neighborhoods. Our day dreams sometimes paint a picture of life the way we think it would have been had we been fortunate enough to have had a different history.

Those who live in small towns, poor neighborhoods or disadvantaged situations are generally perceived as culturally deprived and somewhat unequal to the rest of the world. In general, the world questions whether anyone born outside of the cultural centers of America has a competitive chance. Minority youth have even less of a chance, say the skeptics. Very few good things can come from such situations, they contend.

It's no small wonder then, that millions of youth feel it is useless to attempt to achieve anything. They are not expected to achieve by their circumstance! When expectations are low, poor performance follows!

The world promotes its doubts boldly. To each question, we supply an answer. "Can anything good come from a Black child, born in poverty and deprived of cultural opportunity?" Certainly. Ask The Reverend Jesse Jackson for that answer. He grew up in the midst of poverty with only newspaper to cover the walls of his home. Despite poverty he rose to become a world leader, spokesman and advisor to presidents.

Can children born with physical handicaps ever expect to do anything with their lives? Ask Wilma Rudolph who struggle with a crippling disease as a child and could barely walk. Yet rose above her handicap to become an Olympic Gold Medal winner.

Can a boy with a severe speech impetiment ever hope to become a great actor? Ask James Earl Jones, who could barely speak when he was a child because of a severe stuttering problem. Now his voice and command presence has made him a star of stage and screen.

Can an Black athelete for a small town ever dream of being a quarterback in the NFLl? Ask James Shack Harris who marched his way from the bayous of Louisiana to become the first Black Quarterback in the NFL.

Can a Black man expect to excell in sport dominated by whites? Ask Arthur Ashe the tennis champion or Tiger Woods the greatest Golfer of all times. Both of them made history by doing the impossible.

Can a kid from the ghetto ever dream of being a Four Star general in the Army? Ask Colin Powell.The more we ask, the more examples we receive of those who have dispelled the myth that a person must be from "somewhere else" to make a significant contribution to the world community. The place where anyone is from, is somewhere else, to someone else!

One of the frustrations of youth is the feeling that life would have been better if circumstances would have been different. Why wasn't I born to a rich family? Why couldn't I have the physical appearance of others? Why can't I do as well in my studies as others? Some even ponder the thought that life would be better for them if they had different parents and a different home. Some youth create a virtual fantasy world in which they attempt to apppear more than they actually are. They want to dress as if they are rich, brag about things they do not have, invent experiences they have not known, and generally live a fabricated existence.

Poverty, handicaps, race and lack of cultural experiences does have a tendency to place us on the outside lane of the field of life without the advantage of head start. We start our race with a more difficult course ahead of us. It does not mean that we can't win, but it does mean that we must have a tremendous amount of discipline and will power to achieve our goals. Even more than the person who runs the inside lane.

That's where God comes in the picture. Whether we are running the inside track or the outside lane. Whether we are born into poverty or to a life of relative comfort, the greatest achievement comes to those who put God first. Many have achieved some level of success without God, but those who let him control their lives have gone even higher than they could have imagined.

As Christians, we have come to know that God is able to lift us from obscurity to the pinnacles of success, if we will allow him to work through us to benefit his kingdom. Whether we were born in a mansion or a shack, there is no limit to what a child of God can do or where he or she can go. It's all in God's hand.

Exposition

This text focuses on Nathaniels question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The greatest understanding of the text comes from realizing that it is rooted in

a history that began with Jacob in the Old Testament. Jacob had twelve sons: Levi, Simeon, Judah, Joseph, Issachar, Dan, Benjamin, Asher, Gad, Naphtali, Rueben, and Zebulun. These twelve sons all received an inheritance from Jacob who also added blessings to some of them.

Among the least of the inheritances is that given to Zebulun. Zebulun, remember him? He was the sixth and last child of Leah, whom Jacob was forced to marry after working seven years for her younger sister Rachel. He was told that his descendants would be those who would dwell by the sea, at the very edge of land of promise. Hundreds of years later as the Children of Israel overcame slavery and marched into the promised land, the 12 tribes divided up the new land. In keeping with the blessings of Jacob, the tribe of Zebulun was given an area of land that was near the sea of Galilee. It appeared to be a very mediocre inheritance.

While his brothers received inheritances that included mountains, fertile fields and pasture land that could support sheep and cattle, all Zebulun received was an address. A small area of land next to the sea that would not be able to grow anything or produce much profit. His brothers appeared the more prosperous. His family appeared the losers.

The land that Zebulun came to inherit was one of the most despised places among the people of God. His land was way in the north, way at the very top; his land was bordering the sea on one side, and Sidon of the Gentiles on the other side, it was a long way from Jerusalem where the king would come to live lives, where the leaders would come to reside. His land is far removed; perhaps once a year he would go there. The historian Josephus notes that Zebulun's lands reached on the one side to the Lake of Gennesareth and on the other to Carmel and the Mediterranean. On the south it was bounded by Issachar, whose inheritance lay in the great plain or valley of the Kishon; on the north it had Naphtali and Asher. Thus, it was remote from the center of government.

By any standard Zebulun was so far North that it rarely participated in tribal decisions, central government or other activities. For the most part, it was what we would consider "backwoods" or a "one red light" town. Morever, it was assumed that those who came from Galilee or any of the cities of that area, they were generally considered what we would call "hicks", "unlearned","uncultured" with little or no chance of achieving success.

At the least, those who were descendants of Zebulun were disappointed. What they had was very small. It was nothing to speak of, but it was theres. It had been given to them by God himself.

The descendants of Zebulun took their small inheritance by the sea and turned it into a prosperous way of life, that profited from the sea. They became industrious in many ways that used the resources that were available to them. Although despised by the rest of the nation, they silently worked to being a successful existence for themselves, even while everyone else laughed.

One of its hard working families bore a child that would put their little area on the map! The mother was Mary. The Stepfather was Joseph. The son who would make the town famous was Jesus.

Thus, when Philip spoke to Nathaniel under the fig tree about the Messiah, coming from Nazareth, a city in the land of the Zebulunites, it was funny. Nothing good comes out of Nazareth—except that which has blessed by the power of God!

Philip's answer was simple...."Come and see!"

Overcoming Circumstances

Zebulun worked against the odds. The chances of succeeding in such a remote area were very low. Very few doubted that the tribe would even continue to exist let alone thrive. Yet, Zebulunites used what was around them and succeeded anyway.

Today, youth face similar situations. By virtue of birth, many are operating in very difficult situations. Some youth are operating without both parents. Some go to school everyday with little or no sleep because their home lives have been interrupted by fighting, drugs and violence.

Still other youth have been sexually abused and misused. Some have been discarded and trampled upon so much that they feel like door mats.

It's difficult to think of yourself in any way but a failure when everyone seems to think you are a Zebulunite or a good for nothing!

Zebulunites, however, are overcomers! They achieve despite the odds! They excel despite their detractors! They make it to the top despite their critics!

DISCIPLINE: Every Zebulunite needs discipline. This is the ability to force oneself to do what is necessary to overcome. It may mean forcing yourself to read to improve reading skills. It may mean studying math when everyone else if playing basketball. It may mean watching less television and doing more to achieve.

WISDOM: Every Zebulunite needs wisdom. Wisdom goes beyond mere knowledge. It is the wise application of knowledge. Many youth have opportunities to excel in life but blow their chances by making unwise choices that send them on a meandering trail far away from what God intended. Dr. Ava Pierce, says wisdom is knowing, "When to say yes, When to say no, when to hold on and when to let go!"

DETERMINATION: What Zebulunite can ever hope to achieve anything without determination? Determination is the unquenchable fire that fuels the quest for success. It is that inner push that resolves to go forward despite obstacles. If you put a Zebulunite in a boat that is sinking, he will keep searching until he finds a way to plug the hole and bail out the water or swim for the shore. He won't sit still and drown!

When God Blesses

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who go forth out of Nazereth must remember one truth, when God blesses, it doesn't matter where we live, or the extent of our circumstance, he's able to see it through.

The Zubulunites didn't have much, but what little they had was blessed by God.

When what you have has been blessed by God, it doesn't matter who you are

or where you are from, the power of God makes the difference!

All Moses had was a rod, but when it was blessed by God it turned water to blood and opened up the Red Sea!

All Elijah had was a mantle on his shoulders, but when it was blessed by God it performed hundreds of miracles!

All a widow woman had was an empty barrel, but when it was blessed by God, that barrel never ran dry.

All the lame man had were two legs that would not walk, but when blessed by God those legs were able to walk!

When Philip came to Nathaniel he said "come see the savior." Immediate Nathaniel wanted to know, where is he from?

Did he come from Jericho, known for its high and lofty walled cities?

Did he come from Bethlehem, riddled with many taverns and inns?

Did he come from Emmaus, along whose road many great men have walked and talked?

Did he come from Bethany, in whose gardens many pious and devout men have prayed?

Did he come from Jerusalem, whose temple echoes the voice of God?

When Philip responded that he was from Nazareth, the question responded, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Philip could only answer...come and see!

Come and see and I'll show you a man out of Nazareth, who is making the lame walk again!

Come and see and I'll show you a man out of Nazareth, who is making the blind see again!

Come and see and I'll show you a man out of Nazareth, who is raising the dead!

Somebody here has been told that they will never amount to anything. Tell them "wait and see"

I know a man who came from Nazareth who specializes in doing the impossible!

He's name is Jesus and he is in the blessing business!

He was born in Bethlehem!

He was raised in Nazareth!

He died in Jerusalem!

But early Sunday morning..he got up from the grave with all power in his hands!

If you want to know what good can come out of Nazareth, come and go with me to my father's house!

Come and go with me...

To my father's house!

No. 809-Inspiration

No Strings Attached

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2, 2000

SCRIPTURE:"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Introduction

Have you ever heard an offer that sounded real good..in fact it sounded too good to be true? When we hear such offers we usually look for qualifiying conditions. Qualifying conditions usually reduce the offer from its initial "too good to be true" category to something less. A letter comes in the mail and announces that you have won a $1,600 Florida cruise for six days and seven nights, including transportation and food. Sounds good? Yes, until you find out that the cruise costs $4,000 and the $1,600 is a discount coupon. Many people were excited to see ads in newspapers that they could get full computer systems for only $400.00. Many ran to the store with $400 in hand only to find out that you had to pay the full price for the computer, sign up for several years of intenet connection with Microsoft, then get a rebate check later. Professionals usually remind the public to beware of offers that are uncharacteristically generous. The rule is, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

A popular singing group, N Sync released a new album a few months ago. It's lead song bears the name of the album "No Strings Attached." It seems to say "world here we are, just as you see us with no strings attached." Whatever the message, the album has sold 10 million copies in just over two months. There seems to be a demand for simplicity and honesty in every generation without qualifiers.

Strings are qualifying conditions or limitations that are connected to promising situations or opportunities. The purpose of the string is generally to persuade us to involve ourselves in circumstances, situations, projects or opportunities that are often more advantageous to the solicitor than to us. If there is a costly commitment involved, it's a string. Whether it's a telemarketer trying to sell us something on the phone or a man who offers a free case of cokes just to let him vacum one room of our house free of charge, there is a string attached.

Strings are even attached to things at home. Most parents have learned that whenever their children start using phrases like "you are the best mom in the world" -there is a string attached. Somebody wants something. When a sister or brother

volunteers to do the chores of another- watch out, there may be a string attached.

Consider the son who learned about strings real early in life. When he received his driver's license he wanted a chance to drive the family's new car around town, take out his girl and generally chill with some wheels. He asked his father, if they could discuss his use of the car. His father said "Yes!" The son was excited at the answer but before he could enjoy it, there was a string attached. "If" said the father "You bring your grades up, study the bible a little, and get your hair cut; then you can drive the car" For an entire month the son studied hard in school and brought his grades up to honor roll status. Every night he read his bible and learned many bible stories. Feeling he had done enough, a few months later the boy came back and again asked his father if he could use the car. His father said, "Son, I'm really proud of you." As he looked at the report card. "Your Sunday School teacher tells me that you have become a biblical whiz kid." By this time the son could see himself driving off into the night in the family car. "However" said the father, You didn't get your hair cut- two foot tall afros went out with KidNPlay!" The son waited a moment and then replied, "You know dad, I've been thinking about that. Samson had long hair, Moses had long hair, Noah had long hair, and even Jesus had long hair." His father replied, "Yes son, and they walked everywhere they went!" There are strings attached to everything-even the family car!

Sometimes relationships come with strings attached. There are many who have entered relationships looking for love, only to find themselves entangled with so many strings that they can't get loose. A young man who gives an expensive gift to a girl usually gets a frown from her parents, because they know that such gifts usually come with expectations of ownership and control that form strings of attachment that will be hard to break later. It's hard to love if someone is always pulling strings.

What about God's love? Are thee any strings attached? When he promises to love us, is it conditional? Does it depend upon whether or not we love him the same way he loves us? God's love for us is truly unconditional. There are no strings attached. He may not be happy with our present condition and will certainly work for our improvement, but he loves us anyway.

As Christians, we are happy to know that God loves us unconditionally. Our faith is based on the knowledge that God's Grace is given to us freely without demand or deception. It is what it says it is...a free gift to all who will receive it!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the Romans, explaining that God's love is an unconditional gift given to mankind.

Unconditional love is difficult for the carnal mind to comprehend. Our culture and tradition teaches us to that anything received received is earned, whether it is good or bad.

Those who lead sinful lives earn a payment or a wage. They will receive a just punishment for their sinful life and actions. That payment is death. Even though death

is not desirable, it is accepted as a payment for a lifestyle. It is earned through lives live in defiance to the Word of God.

Eternal life, on the other hand, is not earned. Mortal men, despite our best abilities cannot do enough good to earn ourselves a place in heaven. No amount of good will, charity or good works can earn heaven. Eternal life is a gift. It is free and comes with no striings attached. It is an act of mercy on behalf of the Father to accept us into the kingdom, although we don't deserve to be there!

Salvation Has No Strings

There is a difference between "strings" in its purest connotation and "conditions." Generally, strings are considered to be conditions and limitations that are revealed after the fact or not revealed at all. Strings point to ulterior motives associated with an act or persuasion. Not all conditions are strings. Conditions that are explained to us prior to entering an agreement or relationship are generally viewed in good faith. They allow us to enter into our relationship with the full knowledge of the possibilities.

SALVATION HAS NO STRINGS: The promise of eternal life does not come with strings attached. There is nothing a person has to do once it has been received in order to confirm salvation. However, there are some preconditions that each believer is aware before receiving the gift of salvation. There are four pre-conditions to salvation.

Believe. Each person must believe in Jesus Christ. They must believe that he is the Son of God and that God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9)

Confess. Each person who wants the gift of life must confess with his mouth his belief in Christ. It is not sufficient for a person to be a good man, a good woman, a good boy or a good girl. They must confess (Romans 10:9)

Repent. Believers who want the gift of God must turn from their wicked ways. Repentance is not a string that we learn about after we are saved it is a precondition of our salvation. That's what Peter meant in Acts 2:38 when he said, "... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Repentance is essential.

Baptism: Baptism is also essential to salvation. Those who want to be saved no of the condition before hand. It is not a string that comes later, but every believer is asked to acknowledge his acceptance of Christ through baptism.

After the gift of life has been bestowed, it is complete. There is nothing else to do. Many works, signs, wonders may occur after a person is saved but they do nothing to increase his salvation at all.

The World Has Many Strings

While salvation has no strings attached, the world has many strings attached to its relationships.

PUPPET STRINGS: Puppets move and seem to talk only when someone else who is out of sight pulls their strings. They move their moves but speak only when the puppet master speaks. There are many people who have reduced themselves to being mere puppets. On the job, in the community or in government, pulling strings has become a way of life. While there are a few exceptions, most politicians generally fall into two categories: puppets or puppeteers. Candidates who seek office are judged as much by what they say and do as are the puppeteers who work out of sight dictating their programs, plans and ideas. Many receive promotions on their jobs, then later learn that promotion comes with strings. Some are frustrated when they discover they are expected to dangle on the company string void of individualism. Many spouses, though married still dangle like puppets on strings controlled by their parents.

Believers don't like being puppets. We believe the words of Acts 5:29, "..we ought to obey God rather than men." We dangle only on his string, he is our master and we have committed ourselves to serving him.-There are no strings attached.

PURSE STRINGS: There are many who are held hostage by purse strings. There are marriages that are held together because of purse strings. We have heard the threatening words of purse strings: "If I leave him, I will have no place to live. If I leave her, I'll have to find me a job. If we break up, I'll lose my part of this fine house and automobile. If I divorce him, grandpa will cut me out of his will." There are many who control others through their financial resources. Individuals who have large full purses have the capacity to wield tremendous influence because of purse strings. The federal government forces states to comply with federal laws through its purse strings. Employers force workers to do strange things in the name of, "its my job" because they control the purse strings.

Believers are aware of purse strings but choose to follow the Godly path even if it means cutting purse strings. We have tied ourselves to the purse strings of God. We walk daily with the faith of Philippians 4:19, " But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"-There are no strings attached.

APRON STRINGS: Many couples experience tremendous difficulty because one or both parties are tied to the apron strings of a parent. Parents sit on the side lines and dictate the lives of their children, spelling out every detail. Even when they marry, apron strings are often not cut and wife finds herself competing with her husband's mother or a husband finds himself in the losing position of being at odds with his wife's parents. While it is difficult to do, one of the greatest gifts that parents can do to a child who has married and begun a new family is to cut the apron strings of dependence upon parents rather than spouse for emotional support. While there are exceptions, generally apron string marriages are strained and difficult. Parents can make it easier by quietly pointing their son or daughter toward their spouse as they cut the apron string that dominates their children's spousal decisions.

We believe that there are no paternal or maternal apron strings. Each family stands on its own because the word teaches in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one

flesh"-There are no strings attached.

God's Love-No Strings Attached

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the love that God has for the world and each of its inhabitants, has no strings attached.

While man usually attaches post conditions and hidden strings to relationships and opportunities, when God says "I love you" there are no strings attached.

When we deal with mankind we must be sure to read the fine print and the details for the strings are often hidden in the small letters. But when God says, "thou shalt be saved" there are no strings attached!

When the worlds invites us into a relationship we proceed with caution, because every invitation usually has another motive under the surface. But when the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There are no strings attached.

When the world makes great expressions of love, we often take a wait and see attitude. But when we read that, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"-There are no strings attached!

I'm so glad that God's blessings don't come with strings attached. If that were the case, most of us wouldn't be blessed at all!

When God hangs out the sun each day, I'm glad there are no strings attached. If he required all of us to be perfect, then we'd all be walking in the dark!

When God sends down the showers every month, I'm glad that it doesn't just rain on the worthy, because no one would receive any rain!

When God sends down blessings for mankind, I'm glad that he doesn't just bless those who deserve it, because none of us would receive anything!

When God says, "I love you!" there are no strings attached!

When Jesus healed the blind man, there were no strings attached!

When told the woman at the well all she had ever done, there were no strings attached!

When he raised Lazarus from the grave, there were no strings attached!

When he carried my cross to Golgotha's hill, there were not strings attached!

When he died between two thieves on an old rugged cross, there were no strings attached!

I'm so glad that early Sunday morning he arose from the dead, with all power in his hands!

He's offering salvation today, to anyone who will accept him with...

No strings attached!

No. 810-Youth

Whoa!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 23, 2000

SCRIPTURE:"Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isaiah 3:1; "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Isaiah 5:20-22

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word "Whoa?" Depending upon your perspective, it can mean different things to different people. To some, "W.H.O.A." is acronym for the "Walking Horse Owner's Association of America!" These think instantly of walking horses. Those familiar with rural life, probably associate "Whoa" as a term yelled at mules who pull wagons and ploughs in the American farmland. If a horse is pulling a wagon and the driver wants the horse to stop, he doesn't say, "OK Bessie you can stop now!" He shouts, "Whoa!" To a horse, "Whoa means stop!" However, if you are familiar with the Hip Hop subculture, "Whoa" means none of the above. "Whoa" is a term that means just the opposite of what anyone could possible suspect. It doesn't mean stop, slow down or quit, it means you're doing great, "keep going!" It means spectacular, sensational, acceptable, and pleasing!" Such is the topsy turvy world of Hip Hop, in which this generation of young believers is trying to mature into Christian adulthood.

A popular rapper in the Hip Hop scene is "Black Rob." His hit video and CD has effectively coined a new word for the Hip Hop Generation. Rob says, anything that is "ill" is "whoa!" That can be really confusing to those not familiar with Hip Hop terminology that changes flavas quicker than the eye can see. A young man born in 1976 was ten years old in 1986 when "Run-DMC" coined the phrase "You be illn!" In 1986 "illn" was a word that meant obnoxious or unacceptable. But a decade or so later the Beastie Boys described themselves at the "Most Illn'est" boys around. Now "ill" means to be great or desirable.

Can you imagine the confusion of a teenager who reads the words of Isaiah 3:11 and finds the word woe and ill in the same sentence. "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." It's a simple statement that seems to be straightforward, unless the person who reads it understands the reading by its Hip Hop definitions rather than its standard English reading. The

words, “Wo”,”Woe”,”Whoa” when used as interjections, in standard English imply: caution, stop, slow down, warning, or trouble. Whenever we hear them spoken then are associated with negatives: “stop, quit, slow down, and trouble!” The verse should mean, “Trouble is in store for the wicked, it shall not be good for him, he lives by trouble and he shall receive the same trouble, by which he lives.” But by Hip Hop standards the verse means just the opposite, “Great is the person who is wicked. Life shall be great for him and he shall be rewarded for his wickedness.”

Definitions of words and values are often reversed in every generation of adolescence. Teens are often encouraged to do just the opposite of that which is right. It’s a guaranteed fact, that the most popular teens are those who seem to do the opposite of the mainstream culture and get away with it! If the culture says don’t smoke, it becomes popular to smoke! If it says don’t have sex before marriage then its popular to have as much as possible! If they are taught that the bible says everything must be done decently and in order, then the slouchiest dress style will be the most popular, complete with untied shoelaces, sagging pants and general untidiness. It is not unique to this generation. Adolescence is a time when every teen become like Alice lost in Wonderland, a place where good is bad and bad is good! Like Alice, however, they must wake up to the reality of the real world!

As Christians, we know that what God says he means. What is good is good. What is bad, is bad. There is no middle ground! We praise him for being the same yesterday, today and forever more.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he chided the people of Israel for blurring the line between right and wrong as they attempted to ignore God and live according to their own standards.

The nation had seen its clansmen in the North besieged by the Assyrians. They watched as their cities were destroyed and some of their strongest men were carried away into captivity. The Southern Kingdom was the next target of Assyrian threats. Isaiah warned that these attacks were the result of sinful living and gave warnings that destruction would follow if they did not correct their behavior.

The 5th chapter of Isaiah depicts Israel as a vineyard that is about to be abandoned by God because of the sins of the people. Many accumulated vast estates and great wealth as a result of their riotous living. Their sins included: greed, injustice and drunkenness. Many had grown rich by exploiting the poor. There was little attention paid to morality issues as every person became absorbed in the pursuit of the good life, often achieved at the expense of others.

Isaiah predicted woe and destruction to those who lived against God’s rule in 3:11. He said they would receive exactly what they gave to others...trouble!

Isaiah warned the people using the term “Woe” six times in chapter 5. “Woe” was a warning. It was also a prediction of difficulties to come.

In verse 8, he used “woe” to predict troubles for those who were covetous, who

joined their lands together in such a way that they owned all of the lands, robbing the poor of opportunities.

In verse 11, he used "woe" to warn the people about the evils of drunkenness and drinking.

In verses 18-19, he pronounced "woe" on those that multiplied sins, adding bad ones on top of already bad ones.

In verse 20, he denounced those who blurred the line between right and wrong by calling wrong right and right wrong. He said "woe" would follow those who called evil good and good evil, for confusing bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

In verse 21, he used 'woe" to describe those who are conceited in their own eyes. It is a blindness that makes them think their sins are insignificant.

In verse 22-23, he pronounced "woe" on them that do evil things then justify themselves, especially when those evils are against the poor and distressed.

Isaiah gave a warning for the people to be cautious and repent. They ignored him. A hundred years later, the national morality declined to a point the Babylonians raided them, took their best citizens prisoners and destroyed everything that was special to them!

"Woe" was given as a warning, but the people would not listen.

Blurring the line

Youth today face a social order that is strikingly similar to that of Isaiah's time. There is an atmosphere of drunkenness, greed and immorality that is weaving itself into the fabric of our national order. Millions of youth have adopted an "in your face" attitude to God's laws, while they follow the lead of adults before them and plunge head long into a subculture of violence and immoral living. Yet, even as millions of their peers, fall astray, there is a core of young believers who hear the word of God and strive to heed its warning. Like Isaiah's time, a new morality is developing that teaches:

DARKNESS IS REALLY LIGHT: Youth are constantly bombarded with signals that conflict with God's standard of morality. These signals suggest that "darkness" or defiance of God's moral order is really the "right" thing to do. Violent behavior is promoted with a passion among our youth. The video games that feature the most violence are the most popular. Movies that feature "action" a code word for "violence" are the most successful among youth. They usually involve people dying in grotesque ways that range from stabbings to explosions. Much of the music targeted toward youth suggests violence, defiance of authority and immorality. The result is an attitude among youth that "violence is right." Youth respond with a litany of violent responses to nearly every situation. If a person cuts them in the lunch line in school, a violent response is likely to follow. Teachers and administrators are often showered with a sea of vulgarities for even suggesting an unpopular action. In the extreme, there are even some youth who respond by getting them a "rock" and a "glock" (gun) and "busting a cap" on anyone who differs. The subculture supports

these response as the right thing to do!

Young believers should remember is never right to do wrong. In Acts 5:29 Peter and the Apostles faced a similar question. Their response was, "We ought to obey God rather than man." 1 John 1:6 says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" There is no revised definition of "right" and "wrong" that creates a situation where wrong is right. There is never a situation where disobedience, insolence, immorality is right! The words of Isaiah are applicable even to this generation: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" It is never right to do wrong!

LIGHT IS REALLY DARKNESS: Young believers are constantly berated by some of their peers because they choose to walk in the light. They are given names and labels that ostracize and ridicule them because they choose the Christian lifestyle. They are criticized for living by God's standards of morality and decency. Those who do not drink or use drugs are often frowned upon. Those who wear their clothing to acceptable standards are not considered sexy or fashionable. Those who study hard, live clean, avoid sexual encounters and speak without vulgarities are usually ridiculed by a large part of their peer community. Unless reminded, it won't take long for young believers to get the notion that there is something wrong with doing right. The world tries to convince young believers that walking in the light of God's word is really darkness! The world sends the signal that those who live for God are missing the fun in life. In actuality they say, light is really darkness! To those who blur the line, Isaiah's words apply, "woe to them ..that put darkness for light, and light for darkness"

Yet, young believers are reminded that many in this generation do know God and walk in darkness. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light!"

It's Alright to Walk In The Light!

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remind ourselves that despite what the world says, its "alright to walk in the light!"

The world may tell young believers that it wrong to do right, but the word of God is tells us that it is alright to walk in the light.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

1 John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"

But Jesus said it best when he said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.In today's context Black Rob says, "Whoa" means something is good! It means something is great and wonderful! It means something is desirable! He says Whoa means Go!

Today Christian youth need a little horse and mule sense. A mule isn't known for being very smart, but he knows when he is told to "Haw and Gee" he should turn to the left or to the right. He knows when he's told to "Whoa!" it means he should pull back and stop.

We need to use a little horse sense. When God says WOE then we need to WHOA, pull back and come to a stop!

If the world says steal, children of the light should say "WHOA" because Exodus 20:15 says, "Thou shalt not steal!"

If the world says talk back to your parents, we should say "WHOA" because Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right!"

If the world says lie, children of the light should say "WHOA" because Exodus 20:16 says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor"

If the world says engage in premarital sex, children of the light should say "WHOA" because 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. .."

That price was paid by Jesus, the Lamb of God!

That price was paid on a old rugged cross on a hill called Calvary!

That price was paid when he died between two thieves!

But Early Sunday morning Jesus arose from the grave to give us the victory!

If you've been walking in darkness, Whoa! Try walking in the light!

Jesus gave me a light and I'm going to let it shine! Let it shine! Let it Shine! Let it Shine!

No. 811-Inspiration

Angels Watching Over Me!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 6, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Psalm 91:11

Introduction

Do you believe in angels? Do you believe that there are special beings that God has created who touch our lives in different ways? There are millions of people today who have more than a passing curiosity when it comes to angels. The television show "Touched by and Angel" has contributed greatly to the renewed interest in angels. In this series, angels are dispensed from heaven to help those who are weak, frustrated, living in fear and are threatened. The show depicts angels as spiritual beings that resemble people, with a special, personal mission that plunges them into the world with the express purpose of making life better for the recipients of their favor. Even those who do not consider themselves devout or Christians, find the show inspiring at the least. Belief in angels gives us hope that there is someone outside of ourselves able to control circumstances that seem to be out of control.

Where do people get their ideas about angels? Some get their ideas from the bible. In nearly every part of the bible angels are mentioned, sometimes by name. They make announcements, carry messages, defend, fight and even destroy. While some get their ideas about angels from the bible a large number of people get their information from movies and television. "Movies such as "Angels in the Outfield", "Angels in the Backfield" and the "Sixth Man" all project angels as baseball, football and basketball players. Others such as "City of Angels" and "The Preacher's wife" show angels falling in love with the mortals they are assigned to protect. Too many people depend on Hollywood to tell them about angels.

What is certain is that angels are real and on occasions they are assigned to get into our business. Consider the preacher who was hard on his members when they skipped Sunday worship. He told them they would burn in hell for putting the world before God. The same preacher had a love for the game of basketball. Whenever the urge hit him he had to play. It was a compulsion. On the day of the church's big anniversary program the urge to play basketball struck the minister. He tried to shake it off but it would not go away. Despite the fact that it was a very important Sunday

at his church, he made up an excuse and skipped. He drove a hundred miles away from the city, to a place where no one knew him and jumped into a game and began to play. Two angels that watched him from heaven shook their heads. He's going to make the chief angry by skipping church to play ball. The other angel said, "Don't worry he'll be punished real good. Suddenly both angels received instructions from headquarters to go down and assist the preacher with his basketball game. As the preacher took his first shot from half court his angel grabbed the ball and guided it smoothly into the goal. The preacher was amazed. When he made three pointers they all went in. He sank his free throws and lay ups. He never missed a shot. He found that he could use a sky hook that would shame Kareem. When he stuck out his tongue and jumped, he soared into the air, higher than Micheal Jordan, making slam dunks with 360 degree turns. When the game was over he had scored 68 points. It was the best game of his entire life. The first angel said to the other, "I thought you said he would be punished for skipping church. We helped him play the best game of his entire life." The second angel said, "He is being punished. He just skipped church to play the best game of his life ...who's he going to tell?" Yes angels do get in our business, sometimes they even teach us lessons.

Angels are God's messengers. He uses them to protect, push us and position us to accomplish his will. Sometimes we see them but fail to recognize them. Often we don't see them at all, but we know they have touched our lives in ways that only God can do.

As Christians, we believe that God still has angels. We believe he uses them to accomplish his will for us. He works through them to make his will apparent in the world. We feel safe and secure in the knowledge that all night and all day, angels are watching over us!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he tells of blessings the righteous can expect.

David, writing from his own experience, related that those who believe in God and abide in him enjoy a special relationship with God. A life of communion with God shelters every believer from the worries, anxieties and fears associated with life's problem.

The 91st Psalm is particularly directed towards believers. It is their assurance that regardless of the circumstances that life presents, God has their personal destiny in control.

In the preceding 10 verses he noted that the righteous are privileged to be under God's protection. He noted that the righteous would be delivered out of the hands of those of the powers of darkness. They would not escape the experience, but are assured of deliverance.

The text presents the mechanism God plans to use to accomplish the protection succor of the righteous. The righteous shall be the wards of heavenly angels that will assist them in not only surviving difficulties, but in the eventual victory over

difficulty.

David makes a statement of fact, “he will give his angels charge over thee.”

The word angel in both the Hebrew (Malak) and the Greek (Aggelos) languages has the same meaning, “a messenger.”

Angels were created by God before the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4-8). There are Godly angels, those who do God’s work, and there are fallen angels, those who do Satan’s work. Satan himself is a fallen angel. God has prepared a place of punishment for these fallen angels (Matthew 25:11) who often disguise themselves to appear as God’s anointed.

There are millions, perhaps billions of angels. Rev. 5:11 gives a snapshot of the angels surrounding the throne. In just that one moment there would be 100 million angels on hand. It has been said that there are so many angels that at any given time every person on earth could have a special private angel and still others would be left with waiting for something to do.

Biblically, angels have two appearances. Angels are spirit beings and have no form of their own. They have been recorded in scripture as appearing either as winged creatures or as men. In some instances they are seen as winged creatures, known as Cherubim (four wings, Ezekiel 1:4-15) and Seraphim (six wings, Isaiah 6:2-4). In other instances they have been recorded to appear as men. There is no record where angels appeared as women, but since believers have each been dispatched an angel, it is logical to assume that angels appeared as women as well. In Genesis 18:1-4 angels appeared to Abraham as normal men. Luke 24:3-5 shows angels appearing to the apostles in the normal form of men.

Angels have been recorded as they appeared at special times in the lives of believers:

Special births: The births of Christ, Samson and John the Baptists were announced by the appearance of angels.

Special deaths: The home going of Elijah was of such a great significance that angels driving chariots of fire swept him into glory.

Special points of decision: When great decisions about life direction and life paths must be made, angels have been recorded to be present. Such was the case with Jacob who wrestled with an angel and would not turn loose until he was blessed.

Special difficulties: Angels are present at moments of great difficulty and trial. When Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son, a angel called from heaven to give him the good news that he would not be required to slay his son. (Genesis 22:11).

Special dilemmas: When the women came to the tomb after the crucifixion, they were met by an angel that told them to “fear not.”

Thus, David reminds the faithful of a biblically documented truth, God will dispense his angels to protect and provide for his own.

My Guardian Angel

Without a doubt there were angels in biblical times, but should believers today

expect God to do the same? The word of God gives believers an assurance that God still sends angels in modern times:

PROTECTING ANGELS: God sends angels to protect those who inherit salvation. Hebrews 1:14 refers to them as "ministering spirits" that are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Generally God's protecting angels protect those who are carrying out the work of God, according to his purpose. Thus the Apostles, on some occasions were stoned and jailed, but were protected from serious injury and permanent incarceration until they had fulfilled God's purpose. Thus we read of jails being opened and men escaping mobs miraculously because of God's protection. Even in our work for God, he still will send ministering spirits to assist those in the work to continue without hurt or harm, according to his will.

MESSENGER ANGELS: God sends angels, who often take on the appearance of humans, to bring messages to us from heaven. An Angel told Philip to go into the desert. Once there he found an Ethiopian Eunuch who was struggling to understand a passage of scripture. Philip received a message from heaven, once acted upon resulted in the Eunuch being baptized and a continent being evangelized. (Acts 8:26-29). Today, God's sends us messages through angels. Sometimes we receive the message from the lips of a person we have never seen before. Sometimes God's messages bring us words of comfort and joy. Sometimes they bring warning. God sends his angels who do their work, then disappear.

ANGELS ARE SENT AS A RESULT OF PRAYER: Angels are sent as the result of the prayers of the righteous. The biblical record is sprinkled with instances in which either a believer prayed to God personally or on behalf of someone else resulting in an angel being dispatched. Elizabeth prayed for herself and an Angel came in answer to her prayer to announce the birth of John the Baptist. Sara prayed for a child, then laughed when an angel came to bring the news that she would mother a son despite being in her 90's. Abraham prayed to God for the cities of Sodom and Gomorra and his prayer resulted in angels escorting Lot and his family from the city before it was destroyed. In Acts 12:5-8 Peter was imprisoned, but constant prayer by the church resulted in an angel being dispatched to awaken Peter, swing open his cell doors and loose him from his chains. Believers continue to intercede for others through prayer. We don't know the countless times that others have been protected on highways and even in their homes by unseen angels of God that insure our safety, according to the will of God.

Seen or Unseen, God is still blessing

Finally, brothers and sisters we should be reminded that it does not matter whether we have physically encountered an angel in our lifetime, but it is important to know that, whether we see them or not, God has his angels watching over us.

We have no way of knowing how many times angels have been driving our vehicles for us after we fell asleep at the wheel.

We have no way of knowing how many times an angel of God forced us to turn

in a different direction to avoid a catastrophe.

The song writer wrote, “If you could have seen the unseen dangers” that God has protected us from, then we would be praising God!

Praising God for his goodness!

Praising God for his mercy!

Praising God for being better to us than we have been to ourselves!

I’m reminded of the old lady who was seriously sick but lived all alone. One night in the winter, she was stricken with pneumonia, and could hardly breath. There was no one to help her. The old lady turned to her side and reached for her bible and starting talking to the Lord. As she prayed for help, there was a knock on the door of a doctor about 20 miles away. It was persistent and could barely be heard because of the wind storm. When he answered the door a woman told him there is a woman that needs your help. The doctor made excuses but the woman insisted, “there is somebody that needs your help.” When the doctor arrived he treated the old lady in the nick of time. He told her she was wise to send someone for help. The old lady said she didn’t send anyone because she had no phone and could not move. When a puzzled look came over the doctor’s face the old lady smiled and said “I was sick, but I didn’t worry, because all night and all day, God’s got an angel watching over me!”

Every saint should be glad to know that “all night and all day” God’s got an angel watching over me!

In the midst of hard times and trouble...God’s got an angel to help me remember that trouble don’t last always!

In the midst of my failure...God’s got an angel to help me turn my failure into success! In the midst of my weakness..God’s got an angel to help me turn my weakness into strength!

In the midst of my fears...God’s got an angel to help me turn my fear into confidence!

In the midst of my questions.. God’s got an angel to help me find the right answers! In the midst of my defeats...God’s got an angel to help turn my defeats into victories!

Everybody can’t get an angel! David said, “he that abideth in the temple of the almighty God”

On television, a man who doesn’t believe in God can get an angel!

On television, folks who have never stepped foot in a church can get an angel!

On television, the worse sinner can get an angel!

The word of God teaches that ministering spirits are sent to those who are heirs to salvation!

If you want to get an angel, you got to know Jesus. You got to know God for yourself.

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley! Jesus, the Bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave!

If you want to get an angel all night and all day...you got to know Jesus! All night. All Day! He’ll be a hedge all around you!

No. 812-Inspiration

Peanut Butter & Jelly

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 31, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. Job 14; "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." Psalm 27:5; But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22

Introduction

What's your favorite kind of sandwich? There are many kinds that tickle our fancy. Many of us like a simple balogna sandwich. It tastes good and is simple to make. Others require a little more extravagance. Salami, roast beef and a few other meats make good sandwiches. A familiar cartoon strip, Dagwood, featured a man who loved to make giant sandwiches. Sometimes the sandwiches in the cartoon stood over three feet high and contained every kind of meat and topping imaginable. The sandwiches were called Dagwoods. Today, any oversized sandwich is often referred to as a Dagwood. Perhaps, the most famous sandwich of our time is the peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It seems everyone gets a thrill out of making and consuming peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Recent reports have shown that the peanut butter and jelly sandwich is the most consumed sandwich type in the world. We love peanut butter and jelly!

The recent movie Forrest Gump, was a blockbuster hit for its simple logic. One statement Gump made in the movie was, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get." The phrase was catchy and it helped many people understand the uncertainties of life. If we could coin another phrase for Mr. Gump we could also say:

"Life is like a peanut butter sandwich, it's hard to swallow without a little jelly." That sums up a way to approach the Christian experience. There are difficult moments and periods in every person's life, yet these difficult times are easier to handle through the grace of God.

Life is like a peanut butter sandwich! Our existence is sandwiched between our birth and death. Somewhere between the two, we experience the substance of our lives. Our substance consists of the every day concerns that we handle: acquiring food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, romance, etc. Often these everyday concerns can be frustrating, infuriating and exasperating. They make each day a

challenge. It's these challenges that can get sticky and hard to swallow.

As much as we like peanut butter sandwiches, they taste much better and are easier to swallow when there is a little jelly! So it is with the frustrations of life, they are easier to handle and swallow when accompanied by a healthy, vibrant and energized faith in God. An active faith makes life's sticky issues easier to swallow!

As believers we know that the saying is true, "into every life a little rain must fall." We prepare for life's difficulties and trials. We know that when we place God first in our lives, he will make anything that comes our way...easier to swallow!

Exposition

These three texts point to the reality that any person's life can expect trouble, which can be overcome with the spirit of God.

Job is the perfect biblical example of the righteous man or woman. He was a perfect man who observed the laws of God in spirit and in truth. Yet, despite his perfection, he experienced considerable trouble. Financial loss beset him after he lost all of his cattle. Family woes troubled him at the sudden death of his children. His own health began to fail him. In the midst of these woes, his wife and friends chided him constantly, suggesting that his troubles were the result of some sin. Without a doubt, Job was dealt a difficult hand. His own faith however, remained in tact. He was not swayed by the skepticism of his wife and friends. He concluded that no man that is born of a woman can expect to live without trouble. His time on earth is short, and most of that time is filled with trouble. Job gave us a fine example of how to deal with trouble, he endured it with a steadfast hope. In the end, his reward was great. His health was restored. His finances were greater. There were even more children born.

David was not the perfect man that Job was. He was a more worldly. He made many mistakes but remained loyal and faithful to God. He was more like the average believer, strong in some areas, weak in others. His loyalty to God earned him the nickname, "a man after God's own heart." Despite being a man after God's own heart, David had troubles. He was king of Israel, but he had troubles. They did not evade him. From his youth through his tenure as king, David's years were filled with the "sticky" issues of life. He found however, that God often hid him from his enemies and protected him. It prompted him to write many psalms about God's protective grace. He managed to keep a positive perspective on his difficult experiences by remaining focused on God. On one occasion the spirit of God prompted him to write in Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth." David was able to digest difficult times by keeping his eyes focused on God, the source of his help.

Paul, writing to the church at Galatia, reminded them as he reminded all Christians: remain focused on the strengthening nature of the spirit of God. In each life experience the traits of love, joy, peace and other virtues of the Christian way of life, make life more palatable. It is the presence of God in our lives that helps each believer overcome difficult times and look forward to brighter days.

Combined, these texts show believers that "sticky" difficult, and troublesome times should be expected by even the strongest believers. However, the spirit of God mingled with each trouble, makes it easier to swallow.

Peanut Butter Situations

There are circumstances and situations that make life sticky. They are tense, dramatic and traumatic at times. They are often difficult to swallow.

PERSONAL WOES: Personal dilemmas are numerous. These are the situations that present us with difficult choices, that often spell the difference between success and failure. Lack of courage, shattered self confidence, and diminished capacity are among the personal woes that many face. Any one of these three has the propensity to elicit feelings of personal woe. Any one of them can make each day hard to face and life hard to swallow.

FINANCIAL FAILURE: Financial failure is emotionally devastating. It often ushers in changes of lifestyle that are unwelcomed. In addition, it creates a diminished emotional capacity that reduces personal productivity and enthusiasm. The loss of a job, failure of a business, or other means of financial loss can be so devastating that some have even considered committing suicide. The loss of financial security is certainly a sticky situation. It too is hard to swallow.

DEATH: The death of a loved one is inevitable. It one reality that is sandwiched between the divergent ends of life. Yet, death disrupts the normal flow of our lives. It abruptly destroys links of dependence that have sustained us for years, and as a result we are lost when its chilly fingers touch the core of our lives. When death comes, no matter well prepared we may seem, it is always hard to swallow. It's a sticky situation.

ROMANTIC FAILURE: When a man or woman experiences a failure in marriage or close personal relationship with another, it can render a personal totally dysfunctional. It becomes hard to sleep, eat, concentrate or focus on even the simplest tasks. Divorce, estrangement or difficulties in relationships can place a severe strain upon an individual, to the point of emotional burnout. Like the others, this too is a peanut butter situation. It's hard to swallow

A little Jelly Makes it easier

Just as a little jelly makes a peanut butter sandwich a little sweeter and easier to swallow, there are several spiritual qualities, once acquired, that can make even the toughest situation easier to swallow. Just what is jelly anyway? It is usually made up of fruit and fruit pectin. It sometimes contans additional sugars for sweetness. It makes our taste buds happy and makes peanut butter digest better too. In a peanut butter sandwich, jelly clarifies and sweetens.

That's the impact of the grace of God on each believer's life. Paul referred to the fruit of the spirit. These qualities are like jelly, they sweeten and make even difficult

situations easier to swallow.

A joyful spirit, a spirit of longsuffering, an attitude of hope, a humble approach, good motivations, and a tempered response to all of life' situations, make them easier to digest. Some have found that they present sweet opportunities for God to work in their lives. Instead of complaining they "count it all joy" because they are confident that all things, even peanut butter situations, will work to their good.

The fruit that makes life's jelly comes from the spirit of God. It's the kind of stuff that preserves saints.

He's Sweet I know!

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that we serve a God who specializes in taking bitter situations and making them sweet!

Life offers every believer some very difficult challenges. But each challenge is made easier by the outpouring of God's spirit.

God takes bitter experiences and makes them sweet!

Joseph was thrown into a prison and left for dead, but God took the bitterness of a lonely pit, and prison and turn it into the sweetness of the palace!

Moses was exiled from Egypt as an outcast of Egyptian royalty, but God took the bitterness of a dry barren desert and turn it into the sweetness of victory that let Israelites go free.

Naaman found that the bitterness of his leprosy could be sweeten by seven dips in waters touched by the hand of God.

The Lord is a sweetener! He can take any bitter situation and make it easy to swallow!

Are your funds running low? Has it made life hard to swallow? God can fill empty wallets! Are your hopes waning? Has it made life hard to swallow? God can renew lost hopes! Are your fears increasing? God take our fears and give us renewed courage!

Are your doubts multiplying? God can take our doubts and give us assurances!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine! This is my story! This is my song! Praising my savior all the day Lord!

I don't know about you, but I serve a God who has taken situations in my life that were hard to swallow and given me renewed hope!

Maybe that's why the song writer declared, "He's sweet I know! He's sweet I know! I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter the blue berry jam!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than strawberry jelly!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than home made peach preserves!

His name is Jesus! The Lily of the Valley! The Bright and Morning Star!

He died out on Calvary! But Early Sunday morning...he arose from the dead!

Dark clouds may rise! Strong winds may blow! But I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!

No. 813-Communion

Get What You Need And Leave

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 20, 2000

SCRIPTURE:" "This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it, every man according to his eating. An omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. " Exodus 16:16-17

Introduction

Have opportunities ever passed you by? Have you ever wondered why? Often we find ourselves surrounded by opportunities, but we are unable to seize the moment. There are a variety of reasons that we fail to capitalize on opportunities, most of them can be attributed to our own short comings. Sometimes we are passed over because of influences beyond our control. Whatever the reason, it's a bad feeling to miss out on a big chance to achieve a goal, or improve our condition.

Sometimes opportunities seem to pass us by, especially if we are minorities or women. Consider the homeless dog that wandered the streets until he saw a sign posted in a window that read: "Help Wanted: Must be able to type, work a computer and speak more than one language." At the bottom of the sign were the words, "An Equal Opportunity Employer." The dog became excited and went in the office. When he began pointing at the sign and barking, the owner understood that he wanted to apply for the job. The dog hopped in a chair, wagged his tail and waited for his interview. The owner said, "You must be able to type." The dog quickly jumped from the chair, grabbed a sheet of paper, and quickly typed a perfectly typed letter at 75 words per minute. Not convinced the owner said, "You must also know how to use a computer!" The jumped down, turned on the computer and demonstrated perfect use of Microsoft Word, Excell, Lotus 1-2-3 and Word Perfect. "Amazing" said the owner. "But you are a dog!" The dog pointed at the words on the sign, "Equal Opportunity Employer!" Trapped by his own sign, the owner said, "Yes, but the sign also says you must be able to speak two languages!" -Then the dog sat up in the chair and said, "Es-Panol","Paw-la-boo Franc-ee","Spre-can-shee Dusch?" and capped it off by saying "Yo, dog! I be a Black dog, I can speak Ebonics too!" At that owner said, "Sorry, you're over qualified for the job!" Sometimes, no matter what we do, opportunities pass us by!

How does God provide blessings and opportunities for believers? He provides

them, one day at a time! Every day believers approach the world with an attitude that God will provide our needs this day. This is what Jesus taught us in the model prayer. "Give us this day our daily bread." That means give us whatever we need for sustenance, this day. Sustenance includes food, clothing, shelter, emotional support or opportunity. Our request to God is to provide blessings and opportunities for us one day at a time. As we act on each blessing we maintain the faith that the same God who provided bread and opportunity for us yesterday, will do the same today.

As Christians, we have learned to walk by faith. We trust that God will provide us with what we need, no more and no less. Since he has never let us down, we have no doubt that he will provide for us if we continue to live...one day at a time.

Exposition

This text focuses on the children of Israel as they received blessings every day.

At the beginning of the wilderness journey they began to complain and worry about what they would eat and drink. There had only been about two and one half months since they left Egypt (Ex: 16:1) According to Exodus 12:38 they had plenty of cattle and supplies with them when they left Egypt. They carried flocks and herds and "very much cattle." At the time of this text, with sufficient supplies on hand, they began to worry and complain about what could happen up the road. They doubted their ability to sustain themselves in the wilderness much longer. Some wanted to return to Egypt while they still had enough supplies to sustain themselves on the return journey.

The Israelites complained and murmured to God because they had very little to eat in the wilderness. They asked for bread and God responded by sending them bread prepared in heaven. The bread would serve two purposes. It would be a test of whether or not Israel would walk in God's laws. It would also be a reminder to them that they were brought out of Egypt and sustained in their journey by God himself.

Manna was a miraculous bread from heaven. Some point to a plant that grew natural in the Sinai region as being the source of Manna. But it could not be true, because of the nature of the occurrence. It came consistently for six days of every week, did not appear on the Sabbath, and continued in the same manner for 40 years. It spoiled if left over night during the week, but maintained its substance if kept overnight on the Sabbath eve. It was obviously not the product of a simple plant that was growing in the area because the shear amount would have made it improbable. There were an estimated 600,000 or more Israelites. Each person gathered an omer, which is about 3/4 of a gallon. On a daily basis it has been estimated that some nine million pounds of Manna had to fall on each of five days of the week and on the Sabbath eve, 18 million pounds of had to be collected. Such a requirement could only be met by God himself. Manna was quite mysterious too. It could be baked, boiled or eaten raw. While it could be boiled or baked in a cooking process, it melted away in the heat of the sun if not cooked or used. It was obviously a miraculous provision from God, not a natural occurrence.

Each day God provided for Israel. In addition to Manna he also provided them

with sufficient meat and water. He even fixed their clothing so that it would not wear out or need replacing. They wore the same clothes for 40 years. Without a doubt, every new day they saw was a blessing. Most of the people counted on God daily for renewed blessings.

Responding to Blessed Opportunities

Today we share a similitude with Israel. Like Israel we are pilgrims in the wilderness of life. Many of us have moved out of personal Egypts which once held us in bondage. We are free from drugs, alcohol and a variety of other amoral habits, but yet we yearn occasionally for a return, if only a brief one, to Egypt. We complain to God constantly about what is not available to us and he has answered us in a variety of ways with "bread from heaven." Every day he provides us with sufficient opportunities for food, clothing, and shelter. Studying how God responded to Israel reveals the following truths:

WHETHER A DOLLAR OR DIME, BLESSING COME ONE DAY AT A TIME: God provided for Israel according to his time schedule. He could have provided them with large reserves of food and water, but in the meantime they would have forgotten about him. So, he chose to provide their blessings, one day at a time. In the morning he provided them Manna. In the evening he provided fresh quail meat every day without fail. On the Sabbath he gave them enough to sustain them for two days. Every day God provided their needs. Every day Israel constantly remembered that God was the source of their blessing. Today, believers should look at Israel and remember how God works. He provides exactly what every believer needs, one day at a time. There is a storehouse, but it is not on earth. He maintains the warehouse that stores our blessings and delivers them on a daily schedule. Each day when we rise, it shouldn't take us long to recognize that God is blessing us. In addition, each day God makes limited opportunities available to us. These opportunities, issued one day at a time, lead us to open doors where even greater opportunities lie. Each day, believers live and walk by faith. Whether the blessing we receive each day is a dollar or a dime....they still come, one day at a time.

WITHOUT TOIL BLESSINGS SPOIL: Each day God blessed Israel with a sufficient supply of nourishment for that day. However, there was a measure of commitment necessary from each believer. God delivered the blessing, but it was their responsibility to go out and bring it in. Exodus 16:21 says, "and they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted." If by midday they had not acted on the blessing, the Manna melted away. In the same sense, God blesses us with special opportunities and blessings. However, we must toil or they will spoil. A job opportunity remains available for only a short time. If unanswered it melts like Manna in the sun. A business opportunity, chance for advancement or personal improvement is never permanently available, but only for a short time. We either act on the blessing opportunity or lose it. Without a little toil, blessings spoil. The opportunity to learn is showered on every student daily, but

without toil the blessing spoils. The opportunity to work is often showered upon us, but we must diligently apply ourselves to find and maintain employment. Without toil, blessings spoil. Truly God blessed Israel every day with sufficient supplies for their needs, but they had to act upon the blessings or they would melt away!

SATISFY YOUR NEED NOT YOUR GREED: Israel had the opportunity to gather what was needed for every household. Each household member could gather up to 3/4 gallon of Manna, according to each person's eating habits. Moses warned each family, not to gather more than it could eat because it would spoil. Some gathered more than they needed anyway. In verse 20 we read, " Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them." Even today there are many who are overworking themselves to gather more than they need, only to watch their efforts deteriorate. Many families are paying a high price for luxuries they are seeking to acquire above their basic needs. How many marriages, relationships with children and personal health conditions have bred worms and begun to stink as a result of family partners that choose to give up quality family time in pursuit of gathering more manna? We must remember that cell phones, cable vision, Big Screen T-V's, fishing boats, internet access, new vehicles, manicured finger nails and a plethora of other excesses are, in many cases, more luxuries than needs. Yet in pursuit of these luxuries many husbands have become strangers to their wives. Children have been cut off from their parents and too many family relationships have begun to bred worms. Some believers have even truncated their spiritual lives in the quest to gather more manna than needed. Some are frequently absent for worship, bible study and other spirit based activities, leaving themselves vulnerable to spiritual decay. While God makes opportunities and blessings available to us we should gather enough to satisfy our needs not our greed. Anything else we gather will be void.

When you get what you need, be pleased!

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember this truth, "After you get what you need, be pleased!"

Many in Israel complained even after they had received what they needed. They said, all God has given us is this "bread from heaven" and this quail meat. They received but were not pleased and continued to grumble.

Our attitude should not be like Israel's. We should remember that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

God still sends a little bread from heaven and our attitude should be *receive and be pleased!*

If God gives you a car, but it was not a Lexus, then drive your little Volkswagen all over town and say "Thank you Lord!"

If God gives you a house, but it is not a mansion, then walk through your little house and say thank you Lord for Living room! Thank you Lord for the bed room! Thank you Lord for the Closets!

If God gives you food but its not Filet Mignon, then praise the Lord for the mustard greens, rice and gravy, corn bread and friend chicken!

Whatever bread you get from heaven...receive and be pleased!

While God provided manna for Israel, to meet their PHYSICAL NEEDS, there is another bread from heaven that satisfies our SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

God fed manna to Israel to feed the OUTWARD MAN but there is another "bread from heaven" feeds the INWARD MAN.

In the wilderness, Manna was eaten by all the Israelites and some were WICKED, but NONE BUT THE RIGHTEOUS can partake of the "bread from heaven."

In wilderness, manna could SPOIL, but there is another bread from heaven that is always as FRESH today as it was yesterday.

In the desert Manna could only be found on CERTAIN DAYS of the week at certain times a week. But there is another bread from heaven that can always be found, ANYTIME you need him.

In the wilderness, many who ate manna for years EVENTUALLY DIED, but those who eat of the new bread from heaven shall LIVE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

Who is this bread of heaven?

John 6:35 answers this question because Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

No wonder the song writer declared, "Bread of heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

This bread is Jesus, the son of God!

This bread died for the remission of our sins!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave all power in his hands!

Bread of Heaven!

Feed me!

...Till I want no more!

No. 814-Inspiration

Keeping Cool When It Gets Really Hot!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 3, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated."; "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. Daniel 3:19,24-24

Introduction

Have you ever been in a hot situation? Hot situations are those times when you face danger of a traumatic loss of life, liberty or the pursuit of those experiences that make life happy. Generally, hot situations occur whenever you are forced to make choices that will drastically impact the quality of your life or that of someone close to you. Sometimes we create hot situations. However, many hot situations are not of our own choosing. Hot situations are the testing ground upon which we discover the extent of our professed faith. There are many who have professed a faith in God which simply withers like an ice cube in the sun, at the first sign of difficulty.

If nothing else, hot situations can bring out the best or worse in us. Consider the new pastor who wanted to improve the spiritual life of his congregation. The young pastor was tall and especially attractive since he was an obviously good looking man. One week the pastor posted notices in the church bulletin and in the church lobby, "Anyone who is dealing with a hot situation can talk to the pastor about it after services any Sunday." For several weeks there was a steady stream of members who came to the pastor's office to talk about hot situations. The pastor listened attentively and appeared to give sound advice despite his young age. Families facing legal troubles. Youth unsure of themselves. Men who faced business and career failures. The pastor dealt with them all. Then one Sunday a young woman walked into his office. The church secretary, who happened to be the pastor's wife, listened in on the intercom. She was extremely attractive, dressed to accentuate her sexuality and spoke in a soft Marilyn Monroe whisper. "I have a problem." She told the young pastor. "It seems that I can't keep my eyes off young, tall, attractive pastors." At that,

the pastor broke out in a sweat." The woman placed her hand on the pastor's hand and said. "I just can't keep my hands to myself when I see good-looking men of God." At that a voice announced over the intercom and announced, "Pastor, there is a fireman in the next room!" The pastor dashed to the next room and asked his wife, "Where's the fire?" She said, "It's sitting across the desk from you. Either you put HER out or I'll come in there and put IT out!" --He was in a situation that was getting hotter by the minute!

Is it possible that some of our hot situations are meant to test us? Job faced a number of hot situations only to learn that God was testing the strength of his faithful. Abraham, atop of a mountain faced a hot situation, only to learn that God provides for his children, all of the time.

As believers, we have come to know that regardless of our circumstance that God will provide for us. Our situations may seem difficult and hot. We are able to remain cool because we know that no matter how hot it gets, God remains able to deal with hot situations!

Expositions

This text focuses on three believers who were delivered from a hot situation because they chose to obey God rather than man.

The King of Babylon conquered all of the region of Judah and carried most of its craftsmen, scholars and thinkers back to Babylon. He began a three year program to repatriate these Jews so that they would accept the Chaldean customs. Among the three, were four men, commonly known as Daniel, Meshack, Shadrack and Abednego. The four were adamant believers in God's kingdom. They prayed regularly and even refused the king's efforts to reeducate them to the Chaldean political viewpoint and life-style. Daniel interpreted a dream for the King. In so doing Daniel was given the opportunity to serve as a prime minister or leader of governors in the land. It was a position that he refused. However, he recommended similar positions for the three young men who were with him.

As foreigners and powerful political leaders in the land, the three young men and even Daniel himself were often the subject of efforts to oust them from power. One such move came when the King erected a statue of himself and sent out a decree that said when certain music was played that everyone should bow and worship his image. Those who refused to do so would be punished by being cast into a fiery furnace the same day. The king's Chaldean advisors made certain that the resistance of the three was noted. The Chaldeans, who denounced Daniel and his associates to the king, were astrologers who wanted to predict a happier future for the king and his realm.

When the music played, as expected, three of the nation's highest governmental officers refused to bow. The king addressed them by asking whether they understood the order and the punishment for those who defied the order. They acknowledged that they understood, but they still refused to obey the order.

The King ordered that the furnace be prepared, but this time that it should be prepared seven times hotter than it had been on other days. The three young men were thrown into the furnace but were not burned by the fire. There was no smell of smoke or fire on their clothes as well. As the people waited for them to scream, there was silence. Instead, the king look in and called out to them. He then noticed an astonishing revelation. Instead of three men in the fire, he saw four. The four one, he said, looked like the Song of God.

The King was so impressed that he passed another decree, placing sanctions against anyone who even spoke against the God of Meshack, Shadrack and Abednego.

Faith is not intimidated by fire

Those who choose to live the Christian life-style and adhere to its moral code can expect to face the fire. In the days of this text, religious persecution was a common occurrence. Today it is not politically correct to persecute individuals because of their respective religious beliefs, but it happens daily. Millions of believers have lost opportunities for promotion because they chose to stand for truth rather than fall in the trap of ungodliness. While some have missed promotions and other advancement opportunities, some have actually been threatened with the fire! The company "whistle blower" is the person who risks everything to do the right thing.

Those who have a strong and abiding faith in God are not intimidated by the fire. Nebuchadnezzar, pointed to the kilns as a ,reminder to anyone who chose to breach his order or defy his commands in any way. Our society has a way of pointing to its fires too intimidate the faithful

Faith stands firm even though your fraternity or sorority may blackball you!

Faith stands firm though your political career may be jeopardized!

Faith stands firm though you're your financial future may be threatened!

No matter how hot the fire, believers are not intimidated by the heat. The word of God rings in their ears, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Faith is not diminished by fire

Hearing the threat of fire is one thing, but seeing the flames is another. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the intensity of the fire for the Hebrew Boys be seven times hotter than normal. Normal was enough to destroy them completely! Ordering the fire to be seven times hotter while they were waiting was probably designed to diminish their faith and make them squirm in the face of a sure and certain death.

How often it is that believers, faced with the fire, are taunted because of its heat and intensity. Job's friends saw him going through his "fiery furnace" experience and questioned why he would remain faithful to God in light of his loss of finance, health and the life of so many loved ones. Job's response should be typical of that of every believer, "yea thou he slay me, yet will I trust him!"

We should expect trials by fire. 1 Corinthians 3:13 says, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every
man’s work of what sort it is.”

Believers who experience death in their families, sicknesses, tragedies, financial failures and other woes should see themselves as standing before the fiery furnace. Though its flames lick out toward them, even the intensity of its heat should not diminish our faith in God. Neither should it cause us to forget that “all things” work to our good, even fiery furnaces. In the midst of our fires, God is able to deliver us!

Faith Proven in the fire is rewarded

Believers who survive the fire are stronger, more intense in their beliefs and are rewarded in ways that only God can know!

The Hebrew Boys held high positions in the kingdom. As a result of their fiery furnace experience they were elevated to even higher positions. The king promoted them. The same king who condemned them, praised them and lavished adulation upon them. They were rewarded after the fire.

These men were typical of today’s faithful believer who faces difficult experiences. Those who come through as pure gold are rewarded. There are many believers at this very moment who are plunged in the midst of the fire. By all standards, you should have been destroyed financially, but you are still standing! Considering the sicknesses that you or members of your family have endured, you should have given up the ghost, but you are still here! Considering how you have been plunged through an endless stream of setbacks and disappointments, you should have thrown up your hands in defeat, yet you are still praising God!

This promise of reward applies to all believers, not just the Hebrew Boys. Revelation 2:26 says, “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations,” But Revelation 21:7 goes even further, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Fourth Man In Every Fire

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that there is a fourth man in every fire!

The witness of the Hebrew Boys was powerful. It gave God a chance to work in full view of those who doubted him. Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed that there was no god that could take the Hebrew Boys out of his hand. He pronounced himself almost invincible! Yet, when he threw the Hebrew Boys in the fire, he said, “ Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

They were bound and thrown into the fire, unable to move, yet he saw them loosed!

To be loosed is to be set free of anything that binds us or holds us down! The king looked in the fire and saw them loose!

Today, the critics of believers are scratching their heads in amazement!

How is it, that with all of the burdens they shoulder, they are still walking around..loosed!

How is it, that with all of the troubles in their family, they still walk with their head up high...loosed?

How is it that despite of their sicknesses and family tragedies they still keep a smile on their faces and walk around ...loosed!

I know their hands were tied but they are loosed!

I know their feet were tied, but they are loosed!

The Saint's have a secret to surviving spiritual fires; We keep our lives located close to the fire station! When a fire breaks out, we need a fire fighter!

The fire fighter knows the nature of the fire. He sees the blaze but keeps an eye out for the back draft!

Consider the little boy who was trapped in a burning building. Fire fighters searched for him but could not find him. Just before the building began to collapse, the little boy appeared on a fire escape and began to make his way down. Asked afterwards how he made it to the fire escape the little boy gave thanks to the fire fighter. They asked the boy to point out the fire fighter who saved his life but the boy could not find him in the group. The boy said, "He's not here. The man who saved me had hair like lamb's wool. He had feet like brazen brass! He was dressed in a long white robe! He picked me up and said everything is going to be all right!"

I don't know about you, but when I get into the thick of the fire, I want somebody that knows how to put out the fire!

He's name is Jesus! The lily of the valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

He died out on Calvary; but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

His name is Jesus! He'll be with you in the middle the fire!

No. 815-Faith

Faith for The Lion's Den

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 10, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Daniel 6:22-23

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that Godly seniors always seem to remain calm although the world around them panics? It is an inspiration to study the life of Godly men and women who have weathered the storms of life and continue to do so with a grace and style that is enviable. Godly grandparents are great examples of grace despite the pressures of life. They seem to sail through life without worrying much or suffering bouts of depression or fear. They have survived a multiplicity of difficult times, overcome storms, droughts and disasters. They have seen God act in so many positive ways that seem unmoved by any new storm that life brings.

Godly Grandparents and those who have acted as grandparents, are unique. They are living examples of faith in action. Character studies of these men and women, if written, would reveal lives that are rooted in faith that God will make a way. Since 1978, the nation has paused to salute grandparent figures for their example and contribution to the development of family life in America.

Erma Bombeck, an American humorist and columnist died in 1996. Before her death she wrote the following about grandparents, "What is a grandparent? They can always be counted upon to buy anything you're selling ... from all-purpose greeting cards to peanut brittle ... from flower seeds to cookies ... from transparent tape to ten chances on a pony.

A grandparent buys you gifts your mother says you don't need.

A grandparent pretends he doesn't know who you are on Halloween.

A grandparent will put a sweater on you when she is cold, feed you when she is hungry and put you to bed when she is tired.

A grandparent will check to see if you are crying when you are sound asleep.

A grandparent is the only baby-sitter who doesn't charge money to keep you.

A grandparent will believe you can read when you have the book upside down.

Perhaps the saddest words in all the world are, "I never knew my grandparents."

Even better than simply knowing grandparents, is knowing God fearing grandparents! God fearing grandparents seem to believe that no matter how bad things get "God will work it out!" Sometimes grandparents seem a little out of touch as they dismiss any crises with the words, "I just put that in the hands of the Lord!" They seem distant, but yet are so close because the trust God to resolve every difficulty of life. No matter how the winds blow! No matter how the lions roar, the godly grandparent has learned, and teaches us by example, that ..God is still in control.

As Christians, we have come to learn that faith in God is a character trait that is intrinsic to our nature as believers. In difficult times, our faith is evidenced. Over the years our faith is disciplined. Our mature mentors give us evidence of faith in action. It is a faith that has been tempered by time and remains untouched by the volatility of our times.

Exposition

This text focuses on Daniel, a senior mentor of his time, as God delivers him from the Den of Lions in response to his faith.

Many years passed between the close of chapter three and the beginning of chapter six. In Chapter three Daniel and the three Hebrew Boys were young men. The King was a Babylonian who came to know the power of God by the witness of the three Hebrew Boys. Nebuchadnezzer is now off the scene. Even his descendant, Belshazzar is history. He was the one who saw the had writing on the wall, announcing his kingdom's destruction. When this text begins, most of the major Babylonian characters familiar to the Fiery furnace or Handwriting on the wall experience have come and gone. Who remains is Daniel, who survived it all and even in his senior years remains unmoved in his commitment to follow God and be obedient to him.

The king at the time of this writing is Darius, who heads up the leading world power of the day. Darius was a great political strategist, organizer and leader. Since Medio-Persia ruled the known world at the time, he divided the empire into 120 provinces called "Statraps". The 120 Statraps each had a governor and were organized into three commissions which were administered by one of three commissioners. Daniel was one of the three commissioners.

Daniel's skills and talents were recognized by every King that came on the throne: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, all found him to be a great asset in the administration and organization of the kingdom. Despite the fact that he was a foreigner, no one even considered moving him because he helped them accomplish their administrative goals.

Daniel began his service as a teenager. Now he is around eighty years old. For nearly 70 years Daniel helped governments succeed. In the course of that time he did everything he could to cooperate, except when cooperation meant going against God. He was unmoved by threats of political reprisal, loss of his job or position or death. He simply did his job well and counted on God.

The attitude of peace that Daniel achieved was accomplished, in part, by his habit of talking to God three times a day. Every day, seven days a week,

he paused in his day for prayer, reflection and meditation. Every day, three times a day, he would open a window and face Jerusalem and tell God, himself that he would never forget from whence he came and where he planned to go. Three times a day, he reminded himself and God that he was a stranger in a foreign land, surrounded by changing times,and changing gods. Everyday, he reminded himself that his strength came from his obedience to God that helped over the years.

Certain ones among the king's advisors wanted Daniel removed from his position. The exact reason is not specified. Daniel had survived past attempts that were aimed at his ethnic background. Now, for certain, age was also a factor. In addition, Daniel was being considered for a promotion to prime minister which would place him as the most powerful political leader in the kingdom, short of the king himself. However, there was no flaw in his work and he seemed destined to live much longer than anyone suspected. A plan was developed was designed to entrap Daniel. The advisors, pushed the king to make a decree making it illegal for anyone to pray to any god or man, besides the king, for 30 days, under penalty of death. Daniel's detractors, having recognized his habit of praying three times a day, knew he would not alter his lifestyle to fit the new law and would be removed from his position.

Daniel was aware of the decree. When he heard of it he went to his chamber (v10) and began to pray as usual, ignoring the decree. His detractors quickly pointed out to the king that Daniel defied his order and must be killed because the king's decrees are irreversible.

The king was upset when he discovered that his actions meant the death of a trusted aide whose only fault was that he was of another race and was a senior citizen as well. Public opinion would not allow him change the decree. Despite his reluctance, Daniel was thrown into a Den of Lion's, where he was expected to be instantly killed. In the morning the king inquired about Daniel and was gladly surprised to hear Daniel answer him that, "My God sent his angels to shut the Lion's mouths." Daniel was removed from the den and his detractors and their families were thrown into the den in his place. They were consumed by the hungry lions.

The salient qualities that accentuate Daniel's character is that for 70 years he loyally did his work well. He was able to do that work because, for 70 years he maintained a strong faith building relationship with God that helped him remain fearless, even though the Lion's of life roared.

Faith for the Lion's Den Was Developed Way Back When...

Today, there are many senior mentors that demonstrate faith, despite the pressures of life. However, the faith for their experience was not developed instantly, but over a course of years. Daniel had faith for the lion's den, but it was a faith that began when he was a teenager and practiced at every stage of his life.

Every believer has had a senior mentor of sorts. Small children focus on certain teenagers as their senior mentors. Teens focus on young adults as the senior

mentors. Young adults see maturing adults as their senior mentors. Maturing adults see the mature as their senior mentors and mature adults remember the words and deeds of the mature adults before them as their guide.

At age 80, Daniel's faith had reached a level of maturity in which he was unmoved by anything that happened around him. Today, there are senior mentors among us that share a similar resolve. They have seen wars, depressions, several presidents, good times and bad times. They have seen droughts, floods, hot summers and cold winters. In all that they have seen, they have learned that God is still under control. That's why David, reflecting would write, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed, begging for bread."

Fearless Faith is an outgrowth of Flawless Service

Daniel was demonstrated faith in the face of the lion's den because of his flawless service to both God and man.

Over 70 years, Daniel was able to grow in his secular life because his secular service to the king and his spiritual devotion to God. He never worried about threats to move him from his job, because of his service. He never worried about threats on his life, because of his devotion to God.

Today, this quality of faith under pressure is one of the admirable treats of our senior mentors. They seem unmoved by the circumstances. They have tremendous faith and have mystified others at their ability to out last supervisors, owners and company mergers. Many have worked at their companies longer than their supervisors. Most are unmoved when they hear of possible layoff or cuts. It's not stupidity on their part...it's confidence and faith. That faith is based on two things, just as Daniel's case. It is based on a record of flawless service and loyalty to the employer, and a flawless devotion to God.

Flawless service is what made Daniel inexpendable. No king even considered trying to operate without him. He was loyal and flawless in his occupation and profession. In respect to God, he was also flawless. He prayed daily and remained faithful to the values important to his spiritual development.

You Can't Fight Lion's With A Switch

Finally, we learn from Daniel another great truth, we can't fight lions with a switch.

President Theodore Roosevelt was famous for his adage that America should "Speak soft and carry a big stick!" With that in mind, he suggested that the nation should build a strong enough military that would keep anyone from trying to attack us.

In life, we have found that when the Lion's come to roar, whatever weapons we attempt to use to defend ourselves are but mere switches. Our education, training, intellect, skills are insignificant against the lions of life. They are little switches that cannot ward off the devil.

But we do serve a God who speaks soft and carries a big stick!

When we face the lions den of life, we need more than a switch, we need God on our side!

Can't you see Daniel's enemies smiling as he is carried to the Lion's den?

Can't you see Daniel's critics rejoicing as the lions begin to roar?

I'm so glad that we serve a God who knows how to fight lions!

He's a God that's so powerful that he can lift our heaviest burden!

He's a God that's so sensitive that he can hear our slightest prayer!

He's a God that's so forgiving that he can take our worse mistake and replace it with forgiveness!

He's a God who can take our lost opportunities and give us another chance!

He' a God that can silence the roars of our enemies and protect us through dangers of night!

When King Darius came to the den he asked the Daniel a question, "Was your God able to deliver you?"

That question is being asked of believers everyday!

Was God able to deliver you when you down to your last dime?

Was God able to raise up your head when you were overwhelmed with grief?

Was God able to heal you when you were struggling with sickness and pain?

Was God able to promote you when others tried to keep you down?

Our answer today is the same as it was yesterday, Our God is able!

He's able to take my weaknesses and turn them into strength!

He's able to take my doubts and turn them into confidence!

He's able to take my defeats and turn them into victories!

He's able to take my short comings and turn them into long opportunities!

He's able to take my ship wrecked life and plant my feet on solid ground!

He' able because 2000 years ago, he died out on Calvary!

He's able because, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

He's able...

He's able...

He's able!

No. 816-Faith

Faith for the Fight

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 17, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson and of Jephthae, of David also, and Sameul, and of the prophets. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens." Hebrews 11:32-34

Introduction

Have you ever faced a formidable challenge only to find yourself a bit nervous? We often face challenges that require us to rely upon every ounce of faith at our command. Somehow, we never seem to have the same level of faith as others. They seem so confident, while we seem unsure of ourselves. The challenges we face everyday are real. They are awesome, but they are not invincible. They can be overcome. If we are nervous, it is because we focus on all the things that can go wrong. We ponder our possible failure instead of bathing in the prospect of success. Those who are prepared for the challenge stand boldly, without fear of failure. They are confident that God is able to deliver them in any challenge.

It is easy to believe that others have more faith than ourselves. Somehow, we believe that the preacher, because he stands in a certain spot on Sunday; or the deacon because he sits on a front seat; or the usher because she wears a uniform, possesses more faith than others. We believe others have greater dispensations of faith than ourselves because they look confident. They look sure. The basis of that confidence is faith.

Sometimes we think of ourselves as faithless when compared to others, only to learn they are as weak as we are. Consider the man who had cheated on his wife but had reconciled with her. It bothered him so much that she was so faithful and he was a cheat. One night, he dreamed he and two of his friends had arrived in heaven. Before he was admitted, a big book was opened and he heard the question, "Have you ever cheated on your wife?" The man answered, "Yes I have, but it was only once and we have reconciled." Because he only cheated once and it was forgiven he was allowed into heaven and given the keys to a gold Rolls Royce to drive around. His friend was asked the same question, but he answered, "I have cheated two or three times, but my wife and I have straightened things out. All is forgiven." Because it was only two or three times and he was forgiven, the friend was given the keys to a

Chevrolet to drive through heaven. The other friend was asked the same question, "Have you ever cheated on your wife?" He answered that he had many affairs and chased every skirt he saw, until he repented. Because he cheated so much he was given the keys to a small Volkswagen Bug. Several days later the friends saw their buddy sitting by his Rolls Royce crying. They wanted to know what could be so bad? "You're in heaven, you're driving a Rolls Royce, what could be so bad?" The man answered, "I cheated one time and they gave me Rolls Royce. You cheated two times and they gave you a Chevrolet. You cheated many times and they gave you a Volkswagen Bug. Well, I saw my loving faithful wife the other day...she was riding a skateboard!" -Those we think are faithful may not be as faithful as we think.

Among the great characters of the bible is Samson, an extraordinary man, who was able to do great things when he exercised his faith. Often he did not use it as he should. He was not always faithful to his vows to God, but in the end he relied on his faith to defeat his enemies. Samson was similar to most of us. We don't have great faith and often are not as faithful as we should. When we act in faith and keep the faith, we have found that God always gives what we need.

As Christians, we revel in the fact that God empowers us to do mighty works in his name. We rejoice in the knowledge that he uses our lives to build his kingdom. Thus, we face each day's challenge with confidence that God will deliver his own. Every day God gives us...faith for the fight.

Exposition

This text focuses on men of great faith that the Lord used to do great works.

The writer of Hebrews focused on the nature of faith in the 11th chapter. Beginning at the very first verse he defines faith as the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Many biblical heroes of the Old Testament are referenced as he explains the nature of faith and how it works. Verse 32 however, lists Samson as an example of faith. This is unique because Samson is not usually referred to as a man of great faith and godliness, but rather one of great strength. While Samson exercised faith in his last days, most of his life was spent at odds with his people and his faith.

At best, Samson's faith was an example of the ordinary man because he was an ordinary man who was able to do extraordinary things with God' help.

Samson was a Nazirite. Nazirites were individuals whose lives were consecrated to God. They neither drank strong drink, touched unclean things, or cut their hair. Their abstentions symbolized their vows to God. Individuals became Nazirites in one of two ways. First, their parents made vows to God about how a certain son would be raised. His nurture would reflect the vow made by his parents to God. While the parents made the vow, it was not a certainty that the life planned for the son would be actually lived. Hannah pledged that her son Samuel would be a Nazirite. He lived out his mother's vow. Samson's parents vowed that he would also be a Nazirite, despite their best efforts, he did not live up to the ideal. Secondly, a person can take

the Nazirite's vow himself. In the New Testament, Paul took the Nazirite's vow for a short time (Acts 18; Acts 21:21-26) It was voluntary on his part and not a life long commitment as is the case when a parent makes the vow.

Samson, while being pledged to the life of faith by virtue of his vow, violated most of its components. He had a fascination for foreign women, considered unclean by Jewish standards, often drank wine, and was seen as a man of the world by his peers. Yet, in all of his worldliness, Samson still had a small element of faith and faithfulness to God. This single strain of faith is symbolized by his refusal to cut his hair, a condition of the Nazirite's vow.

Despite his worldliness, God stirred within Samson on numerous occasions and he was able to perform great physical feats. Removing the gates of Gaza, slaying a lion with his bare hands, and slaying a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass are but small examples of the power Samson displayed when he allowed God's spirit to move within him. He was an ordinary man, with ordinary faith, who often proved unfaithful. Whenever he used his faith, God helped this ordinary man to do extraordinary things.

Samson's demise was tied to his worldliness. A beautiful Philistine woman tricked him into violating the final covenant he had with God. He had literally divorced himself from his people and become a virtual resident of Phlistia. When Delilah cut his hair it was the concluding act of a process that had begun in Samson many years earlier. He arose with his hair and his power cut off. He became as any other man. He lost the faith for a while and lost his power as well.

The Common Man's Faith

Today, there are millions who are like Samson. There are millions of common people. There are also millions of common believers, many of whom, like Samson, have abandoned much of what they have been taught about God, faith and religion as children. Like Samson, we still have a small portion of what we were taught and on occasion can still perform extra-ordinary feats of skill, wisdom or intellect.

There are many today whose parents and grandparents made pledges to God concerning the nurture of the children and grandchildren. They promised God that they would raise their children in the fear and respect of all things godly. As a result, we raised to read the bible, say our prayers at night, attend Sunday School and worship, obey laws, respect elders and live clean, morally pure lives. During our life's course, like Samson, we abandoned some of the things we were taught. There are however, still a few that we cling to faithfully. Yet, even though we cling to them we constantly face the Delilah like temptations to part with that which we know to holy and special.

Many have not completely disconnected themselves from God. They maintain a semblance of holiness that allows them to keep the aurora of spirituality, despite our increasing worldliness. On occasion God's spirit moves in us and we are inspired, empowered and otherwise motivated to do extraordinary things despite being plain mortals with no powers of our own. Even while God works through us, our spirituality

declines as our flirtations with world increase.

When we suffer the Samson syndrome, we walk the fine line that separates our godliness from our worldliness. Because we are able to continue doing extraordinary works, even though we have spiritually digressed, we are deceived into even more digressions; which, in the end, will prove to be our destruction.

In such instances, faith is exhibited in minuscule amounts. We do great works, but not in the proportion to what we could do if we were spiritually closer to God.

Extra Ordinary Capacity

In that Samson was an ordinary man, it should have been obvious to all around him that his strength was not in his physical statue. Samson himself knew the source of his power and prayed to God for the power to do extra-ordinary things.

Each of us has the capacity to do extra-ordinary things, with God's help. There is nothing that we cannot achieve with God. There is no obstacle that is too difficult for us to overcome, with God's help. We have the capacity to do the extra-ordinary, despite being ordinary people.

What gives us this capacity is our faith in God. Through faith in God we march in the terrains that have not been traveled before. We try the impossible. We challenge the invincible. We tackle the unbeatable foe. Our boldness is grounded in our belief that if we abide in Christ and he abides in us that we can accomplish anything that is in his will for us.

This faith must be nurtured through worship, prayer, bible study, Christian fellowship and moral living. It is also nurtured through hearing the word of God preached. That's why the word says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17.

Samson did mighty works, but could have done even greater had he remained close to the faith that gave him his strength.

When God Leaves

Finally, brothers and sisters, Samson gives us a clear picture of what happens to a person when faith fails and God leaves us.

When Delilah cut the seven locks of Samson's hair she awakened him out of his sleep. He quickly jumped up thinking that he had the same capacity as before. "He wist not that God had left him." When God left him, he was alone.

It is a terrible thing when God leaves us.

When God leaves us our:

-Homelife turns into a catastrophe

-Peace and tranquility turns into turmoil

-Order and routine turns into confusion

-Safety and security turns into disaster

-Quiet days and slumbering nights turn into violent storms

-Home turns into a house
-Husband turns into an old lady
-Wife turns into an old lady!
When God leaves us, we're too weak to fight
No wonder the word says, "Seek the Lord while he can be found!"
No wonder the song writer says, "Without God, I can do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him, my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."
Down in the valley of despair, with his eyes out and strength gone, Samson found, once again, the faith for the fight. He asked God for strength one more time. That's when his enemies found out that his strength was not in his hair but in God.
Our help does not come from our college degrees!
Our help does not come from technical training!
Our help does not come from our intellect or mental capacity!
Our help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!
If you want to know the source of our strength, it's in Jesus!
Jesus, Mary's baby!
Jesus, Ezekiel's wheel!
Jesus, My rock in a weary land
Jesus, My bridge over troubling water
Jesus, My doctor in a courtroom!
Jesus, Who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, arose from the dead!
Follow Jesus and get strength for the fight!

No. 817-Revival

Recalling Defects

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 1, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." Jeremiah 18:4

Introduction

Have you ever met people who considered themselves perfect? The perfect person is the one who is absolutely correct on every subject, never makes a mistake, does everything right, is never late and generally lives by the book 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Most people spend their lives looking for Mr. and Miss Perfect. Single men and women have devised a checklist of everything they want in a partner, only to find that they can't seem find anyone that can meet everything on the checklist. The longer they date, the more they discover that their partner is less than perfect. It's disappointing, because we'd like to believe that someone is perfect. What about the preacher? Deacons surely must be perfect. Choir directors, ushers and church leaders are all very spiritual, shouldn't they be perfect? What about mom and dad? Aren't they perfect? Don't they know everything about everything and do everything right? One of the greatest disappointments in life is to discover that those we thought were perfect were actually human after all.

Perfection is a goal that every person pursues but often achieves. The truth of the matter is that we are seriously flawed. Unfortunately, we can't see the flaws in ourselves as well as others. It is easier for us to spot the flaws in another person than we can in ourselves. Generally, we know our own weaknesses, but we are slow to admit without justification. When we see the same tendencies in others we recognize them quickly. Often, we erroneously attribute our bad habits to others, assuming how they will think and act in a situation, because that's the way we think and act.

Who is really perfect? Ask a man and he'll tell you, men are perfect and women mess up everything. Ask a woman and she'll tell you that men are not even remotely close to perfection. A certain church had a marriage retreat designed to help couples explore sensitivities. In one session the presenter said, "There was a perfect man who met a perfect woman. After a perfect courtship, they had a perfect wedding. Their life together was, of course, perfect. One snowy, stormy Christmas Eve this perfect couple was driving along a winding road when they noticed someone at the roadside in distress. Being the perfect couple, they stopped to help. There stood Santa Claus

with a huge bundle of toys. Not wanting to disappoint any children on the eve of Christmas, the perfect couple loaded Santa and his toys into their vehicle. Soon they were driving along delivering the toys. Unfortunately, the driving conditions deteriorated and the perfect couple and Santa Claus had an accident. Only one of them survived the accident without injury. Who was it?" A woman raised her hand and said. "The perfect woman?" When asked why she thought so she said, "Well everyone knows there is no Santa Claus, and there is no such thing as a perfect man." Before she should finish her answer a man raised his hand and said, "If there is no perfect man, and there is no Santa Claus, the perfect woman must have been driving the car. That explains why there was an accident in the first place!"-No one is really perfect!

The reality of the matter is that no one is perfect. Biblically, we learn in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." That passage means that we all have defects, short comings and flaws. Nothing about us is perfect. We are a work in progress. That's what the popular song meant with its lyrics pronounce, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet! When God gets through with me, I shall come forth as pure gold."

As Christians, we know that we are far from perfect. In fact, we acknowledge our imperfections to God on a daily basis. Our prayer is that God will have his way with us. We want him to shape us and mold us after his will as we overcome our imperfections and work out our soul' salvation.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah as he tells the people that God is aware of their imperfections and will tear them down and rebuild them again.

In the days of Jeremiah, Judah was a nation which had forgotten God. It reveled it its own success and depended heavily upon its military strength and political alliances for national security and prosperity. Corruption was widespread in government, morality was constantly declining, evil infected the people, and the life of the nation gradually becoming more and more hellish. Frustrated with the response of his chosen people, God told Jeremiah to deliver a message to the nation, through its leaders.

Jeremiah was told to visit the work station of a potter and to observe his operation. After watching the potter, Jeremiah would understand the nature of his message to the people. Potters were common in that time, because most of their utensils were examples of fine pottery. As potters shape and mold the clay with which they work, they exert their will and their skill over the clay . If the potter chooses, the vessel can be squashed back into a lump so that a different vessel can be made.

At the potter's house, Jeremiah saw the clay being shaped and molded into a vessel. As he watched he also saw an amazing thing, an imperfection in the clay spoiled it in the potter's hand, and the potter crumbled it up, and began anew the process of shaping it into a vessel that pleased him.

Observing the Potter, Jeremiah understood that God was the Great Potter, with

absolute right over the clay to make it what he wanted it to be. Paul argues this with keen and clear logic in Romans 9: "Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me thus?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?" Of course he has.

So Jeremiah, watching, learned that an individual or a nation is clay in the Great Potter's hands. He has a sovereign right to make it what he wants it to be. And if there is some imperfection in the clay, something which mars the design, spoils the work, the potter simply crushes the clay down to a lump and begins again to make it a vessel according to his own mind.

Jeremiah saw the wheel turning constantly, bringing the clay against the potter's hand. That wheel stands for the turning circumstances of our lives, under the control of the Potter, for it is the potter's foot that guides the wheel. The lesson is clear. As our life is being shaped and molded by the Great Potter, it is the circumstances of our life, the wheels of circumstance, what Browning called "this dance of plastic circumstance," which bring us again and again under the potter's hand, and molding finger that shapes the vessel according to his will.

Defects In the Product

We are familiar with product defects and product recalls. We have witnessed defects that have been caused by a variety of sources.

We vividly remember the defects in the Product Tyelenol which resulted from someone tampering with the original packaging and injecting poison that killed many people.

We have seen recalls of baby cribs, children's toys, food items and even recently automobile tires when a defect in the original design resulted in the loss of life.

We have been tremendously disturbed to learn that the cigarette industry has designed its product with a defect intended to addict its users for the purpose of profits.

Generally, when products have a defect they are recalled voluntarily by the manufacturer or by government mandate. The purpose of the recall is to remake the product so that it can be used without the loss of life or the threat of injury by consumers.

Man Made Perfectly/Satan Corrupted Him

Mankind was made without a defect. When God created the world and mankind, he looked at all that he had made and said, "That's good." God's original creation was perfect, which is reflected in Psalm 139:13-14, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." In the garden, Satan tampered with the product and each succeeding generation has been born with a defect, called sin.

In each life, God wants to begin the process of rebuilding the perfect man or woman. Just as a potter spins the wheel upon which the clay sits, God spins the wheel of our fortunes and molds us in his hands. He controls every aspect of our lives and can determine the outcome. On occasion, he sees flaws in us that are so ugly, troublesome and burdensome, that he has not choice but to crumble us and reshape us again.

The potter not only spins the wheel of our lives, he has a passion for shaping clay. He loves the putty so that with his loving touch the clay responds to the touch so that the putty/clay comes out in the most beautiful design that could be.. He remakes the putty in the image that he desires.

He made us without anger, but Satan tampered with our package. The potter may find it necessary to tear us down to remove that spirit of anger!

He made us without hatred, but Satan tampered with our package. It may be necessary to completely reshape us to remove our hatred.

He made us without fear, jealousy, bad spirits and evil tendencies. These flaws are often the reason that the potter finds it necessary to break us down..so he can build us up!

We are the Clay

Our destines are in God's hands. It often explains why things happen the way they do. It could very well be that God is turning us on the wheel of circumstance, shaping and molding as he turns us to get us to be exactly what he wants us to be!

Clay that is watered is easier to shape. Very few potters attempt to shape, hard, dry clay, even if it hasn't been fired. The clay has to be wet. The water of our spirituality is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes us soft and moldable in the hands of the master Potter the living God. The Spirit of the Lord make us soft and responsive to his touch. It is then that we yield ourselves to him and say, "Have thine on way Lord!"

The dry individual is the one who does not listen to the Word of God, ignores worship, is skeptical of the value of bible study and completely rejects the things of God. Dry clay leaves God but one choice, to break it down and destroy. Because there is no spirit, once broken is rarely remolded again.

We are but clay in the master's hand. Let beg him to mold us and shape into his will.

God Has Issued A Recall

Finally, brothers and sisters, we want to remind you that while Satan has tampered with our packaging, God has issued a recall for imperfect lives.

When a company announces a recall, anyone who has a defected product can find the nearest dealer and get a repair, replacement or an upgrade.

Today, brothers and sisters, God has issued at recall announcement to any

person that will allow him to come into his life, saying, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock!”

Do you have a life that isn’t perfect?

Do you seem to turn on the wheel of circumstance?

There is a recall announcement for those who are spiritually lost.

When Tylenol was damaged, it issued a recall and then produced a tamper resistant package. It is not tamper proof, but it will let you know when something is wrong.

God wants to take our shattered lives, and give us tamper resistant packages. It won’t stop the devil from messing with us, but the Holy Spirit will let you know when something is wrong!

Somebody wants to know why? Why am I having such difficulty? It’s because Satan is tampering with your package!

Why is my husband acting the way he’s acting? It’s because Satan is tampering with your package?

Why is my wife acting the way she does? It’s because, Satan is tapering with the package!

God is issuing a recall for imperfect lives!

He wants us to have tamper resistent packages, secured by grace and sustained by the Holy Ghost!

The recall notice is from a God who specializes in restoring broken lives.

The recall notice is not from Firestone, or Tyelenol or from the federal government; its from a man named Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hand? Are you suffering with a heavy burden of imperfection?

Take you burdens to the Lord and leave it there!

No. 818-Revival

Oops, I Did It Again!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 8, 2000

SCRIPTURE: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Romans 7:18-20

Introduction

Have you been disappointed with yourself? Most believers, while generally striving to live a positive productive life, reach a point at which they are disappointed with themselves in one respect or another. Although we are living an obviously blessed life, there is disappointment, not in a friend or co-worker that let you down, or in a situation that failed, but disappointment in ourselves. We experience self disappointment whenever we fail to do that which we think we should do in the way we should do it. Dealing with self disappointment is a private war, an internal struggle that is not seen by others but is felt by every believer, from time to time, as we measure where God what wants us to be and where we really are.

Unless we tell someone else, other than God himself, the only other person who knows about our self disappointment is the man or woman in the mirror. The man or woman in the mirror reminds us of what we promised ourselves that we will be and what are actually doing about that promise. The face that keeps changing in mirror, keeps pointing out the size of the gap between our ideals and reality, and that disappoints us.

John Ortberg, in his book "The Life You Always Wanted," describes how we often feel when he writes: "I look in on my children as they sleep at night, [and] I think of the kind of father I want to be. I want to create moments of magic, I want them to remember laughing until the tears flow ... I want to have slow, sweet talks with them as they're getting ready to close their eyes. I want to chase fireflies with them, teach them to play tennis, have food fights, and hold them and pray for them in a way that makes them feel cherished. "I look in on them," he writes, "and I remember how the day really went. I remember how they were trapped in a fight over [a game] and I walked out of the room because I didn't want to spend the energy needed to teach them how to resolve conflict. I remember how my daughter spilled cherry punch at dinner and I yelled at her as if she'd revealed some deep character flaw; I yelled at her even though I spill things all the time and no one yells at me; I yelled at her - to tell the truth - because

I'm big and she's little and I can get away with it. I remember how at nights I didn't have slow, sweet talks, but merely rushed the children off to bed so I could have more time to myself."

Often we see life as a game. As such, we get caught up in its thrill and excitement, to the point that we do that which we know that we shouldn't...to win, to conquer, to emerge victorious. In the aftermath, we disappoint ourselves because we have stooped to a level of life that embarrasses us and often hurts others. Britney Spears, a popular musical artist in the youth scene, has a very popular song that has made her rich. It portrays a girl who enjoys toying with boys in a way that leads them on. She enjoys the game, without really wanting to do any harm, but realizes she does. When she breaks another heart she brushes it off by saying, "Ooops, I did it again!"

I think I did it again I made you believe,
we're more than just friends
Oh baby
It might seem like a crush
But it doesn't mean that I'm serious
'Cause to lose all my defenses
That is just so..so typically me
Oops!...I did it again I played with your heart
Got lost in the game
Oops!...You think I'm in love
That I'm sent from above
I'm not that innocent.

Just like Britney Spears, most of us find ourselves trying to play off our disappointments by saying, "Oops, I did it again!"

We lied when we promised ourselves, we wouldn't lie...oops, we did it again!

We lost our temper when we promised we would be in control...oops, we did it again!

We cheated when we said we would be faithful..oops, we did it again!

We lit up another cigarette after telling ourselves that the last one was the last one...oops, we did it again!

As Christians, we struggle daily with our self disappointment. Our only redeeming grace is the knowledge that, while the God we serve is not happy with our personal failures, he is forgiving and merciful. Despite our flaws and short comings, he blesses us continually. That's why we praise him continually. Even when we said we would keep our joy to ourselves, it comes out in the wave of our hand and the praise that falls from our lips. We said we wouldn't tell anybody but...oops, we did it again!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the nature of the believer's life in Christ

as opposed to the law.

Generally, Romans focuses upon the believer's sanctification. It is his personal struggle to perfect himself and come closer to the Godly ideal. Romans presents individual struggle from the perspective of one who is a believer. In other writings, the perspective is that of a sinner struggling against God, fighting him in every way. It is personified best in the life of Paul himself as he fought against the advancement of the church. However, wants a non-believer gives himself over to God, his battle shifts from a lift that is opposition to God's laws, to one that is struggling measure up to God's expectations as reflected in God's laws.

Non-believers reject God's laws and thus, God himself. Their fight is to do it their way, regardless of what God says. They reject him and the need to know him.

Believers accept God's laws but fight a different fight. Our fight is not against God, but against the remnants of sin within us that prompt us to act in ways that are deviant to God's laws.

Paul recognizes his fundamental agreement with the Law. He concludes that the law is good (verse 16). The law shows that the source of the problem which is the strength of sin. Nothing good indwells Paul''s flesh, but sin is present in him. Paul''s flesh is naturally opposed to God, to His Law, and to anything righteous. Paul''s flesh is responsive to sin. Paul''s flesh (his fallen nature all that he was before he came to faith in Christ) has become sin's sanctuary.

Deep within himself, Paul wishes to do that which God''s Law defines as good. The spirit man within him desires not to do that which the Law calls sin, but the carnal man rebels. His desires conform to God's Law. He is almost schizophrenic in his spiritual life. A spiritual Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde. What Paul is doing, he is doing against his own will! Paul has been taken prisoner by sin. Sin has taken advantage of the weakness of his flesh and has perverted the Law to entice men to sin, rather than to keep them from sin.

This inability to control that "sin-person" within himself constantly caused him to do that which he did not want to do, again and again, making him a wretched man indeed.

In the midst of his disappointment however, Paul found a reason for hope. In v.25 we read, "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Though disappointed he saw an opportunity for victory in Christ. While the law condemns those who measure up to death. Christ forgives those who give life their best, but yet still fail to measure up to every letter of the law.

It is best recognized in Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It means, we may fall short of the high standard that God's law holds us to, but those who give life their best and trust God for the rest, will not be condemned in the end. It is not a license to excuse sins, but it is a reprieve that is offered to every believer by the grace of God.

For that reason, Paul said he praises God constantly and gives thanks! He has been merciful to the undeserving, which is a reason for praise.

Again and Again

Today, there are many believers who are frustrated over their inability to stay on the right path. The fact that it bothers us means that we are no longer at war with God. We accept his moral standard, we're simply angry and frustrated with ourselves.

THE LAW SHOWS WHAT WE SHOULD BE: The laws of God tell us what we should be. They set the high standard which we are to live and govern ourselves. The moral code, reflected in the 10 commandments teach us clearly that we should acknowledge God and him only, reverence our parents and live morally pure lives, void of cheating stealing, and murderous tendencies. The 10th commandment, thou shalt not covet, even deals with how we should maintain our thoughts and desires. When each of us stands before the law, we fall short. We see our errors and know immediately how miserably we have live d up to the ideal believer's life.

The law sets the standard for each of us. It is rigid and unchanging. It says live up to this standard or die. There is no room for compromise or compassion. The letter of the law must be carried out in every circumstance.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PUSHES US TO BE ALL WE CAN BE: While the Law sets a standard for each of us and says live up to it or else. The Gospel of Christ shows us the standard, and motivates us to measure up in every way that we can, with the full knowledge the in the areas that we fail, that the Grace of Jesus Christ will make up the difference. Every waking minute of the day a believer is pushed by the Holy Spirit to reach higher, remove imperfections and strive to become better.

Over and over again, we find ourselves messing up, saying, "Oops, I did it again!" That's when we feel the Holy Spirit working on us. Hebrews 12:6-8 gives this insight. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The work of the gospel picks up every time we say, "ooops I did it again." It whips us and torments us until we correct ourselves. It's goal is to help us "be all that we can be." When we have done all, the grace makes up for the rest.

CHRIST SHOWS US WHAT WE WILL BE: What Christ does for every believer is to look beyond what we once were. He even looks beyond how we measure up at the present moment. He looks to what we will be. A plastic surgeon knows how to alter a disfigured image. However, he needs to have before him a picture of what the image will be. He may have to cut, graft skin from one place to another, but the end result is always in mind. So it is with believers. Christ looks beyond our faults and short comings and sees what we will be. He has the final picture in his hand and is shaping us through the Holy Spirit to go beyond being, "all that we can be" to what we will ultimately be in Christ... a completely new, regenerated and saved man or woman who is worthy to stand before God, not because of his goodness but because of the grace of God.

Oops I did it again!

Finally, brothers and sisters, Paul says God's saving grace excites him so much that he must give thanks. We know how he feels, because believers get so excited about God's grace and mercy that we have to keep praising him again and again!

When it refers to our weakness, "Ooops, I've done it again" refers to an instance in which we breached the faith.

When it refers to the carnal man of sin within us, "Ooops I've done it again" refers to an instance in which we did what we did not want to do!

But when it refers to our gratitude to God, the same words take on a different meaning. It's hard to hold your peace when we think about the grace of God.

Consider the old lady who moved in with her great grandchildren up North. They were wealthy professionals who attended a big city "quiet" church. Her grandchildren went to church regularly but they asked grandmother to remember that she wasn't down South. "Folks up here don't say Amen and stuff" like they do down South. Don't embarrass us." Every Sunday the old went to worship and tried her best to keep quiet as the name of Jesus was glorified. Her grandchildren would give her the eye and she would hold her peace. They didn't mind the funny looking red coat she wore. They didn't mind the flower that dangled from hat. If she'd just sit quiet, they'd be happy. A guest preacher from down South was in the pulpit. He started talking about the goodness of the Lord. As he talked the flower started dangling on the old lady's hat as she moved from side to side. Her heels started clicking on the floor. Before she knew it she was standing on her feet shouting, "praise the Lord." As her embarrassed grandchildren stared at her along with whole church, she put her hands on her mouth and said, "ooops, I' did it again!"

I don't know about you but there are times when we just can't keep it to ourselves, we've got to tell somebody!

All we can say is, "Ooops, I've done it again!

Tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

I've got to tell somebody about a savior who picked me up and turned me around!

I've got to tell somebody about a risen savior who tells me I am his own for he walks with me and talks with me!

He's name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

He saved my soul! "I said I wasn't going tell nobody, but I couldn't keep it to myself!"

"Ooops, I did it again!

No. 819-Anniversary

From Whence Comest Thou? Whither Dost Thou Go?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 15, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deuteronomy 11:10-12.

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to consider just how far you have come to reach your present point in life? Each of us has traveled a long and meandering road to reach this milestone on life's journey. Our paths have brought us through a myriad of experiences that have included successes and failures. Along the way, we have witnessed many changes and have learned to take them in stride. Our joy is to know that despite the road that we have traveled that there has been one constant in life that has never changed...that is the love of God. It never changes.

We've come a long ways. The most senior among us have seen the most miles, tallest of mountains and the deepest of life's valleys. The younger among us have traveled a journey too. It is just as real to them as the distances traveled by those who walked before them.

How far have you come?

If you were born in the 1930's, you were born at time when a round steak cost 42 cents a pound; and a half gallon of milk was 25 cents. It was the time when Social Security began and Mary McCleod Bethume was a prominent Negro leader. It was a time when Jesse Owens was a national Olympic Hero and Will Rogers made America laugh with his homespun humor. It was the time when Dick and Jane Books were used in nearly every public school, Joe DiMaggio was the baseball hero and the Monopoly board game was invented.

The times changed, but God remained the same.

If you were born in the 1940's you enjoyed Buster Bob on The Howdy Doody Show, marveled at Tupperware, and saw men wear funny looking Zoot Suits, wrapped things in Aluminum Foil, and tried your hand at dancing the Boogie Woogie and

listening to Ella FitzGerald and Billy Holiday. You were probably upset over Pearl Harbor and heard your folks talking a lot about Franklin Roosevelt. You probably remember your folks saying the minimum wage was 43 cents an hour.

The times changed but God has remained the same.

If you were born in the 1950's, your mom probably sent you to the store to buy a loaf of bread with 14 cents. You heard of a woman named Rosa Parks who refused to give up her seat on a bus while you played with Barbie Dolls. It was the decade in which Drive-in Movies; Blue Jeans, Poodle skirts, hoola hoops; Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard fascinated the kids, and The Edge of Night, All My Children, The Guiding Light captivated our parents on television.

The times changed but God remained the same.

In the 1960's the minimum wage was $1 an hour; Well paid teachers earned $5,174; Gloria Steinem lead the Feminist movement; GI Joe, Skate Boards; Go Go Boots, Nehru Jackets; the Black Panthers, Malcom X and Martin Luther King were dominate political figures; Prayer in school was ruled unconstitutional; Hippies paraded at Woodstock, Men walked on the moon; and the teen idols included the Beatles, Temptations, Jimi Hendrix and James Brown. As a child you laughed with The Flintstones and watched big ears of Dr. Spock on Star Trek.

The times changed but God remained the same.

If you were born in the 1970's, you were born at time when Bread was 24 cents a loaf; a Quart of Milk was33 cents; smart kids played with Rubik's Cube, cute girls wore Hip Hugger pants; and almost everyone had a Video Cassette Recorders and a boom box.

The times changed but God remained the same.

Those born in the 1980's learned that the Minimum wage was $3.10; watched Jesse Jackson run for president; played with Cabbage Patch Dolls, watched the movie E.T., played Pack Man; witnessed the dawn of Cablevision as Rap Music became popular; LL Cool J, Millie Vanilli; Oprah Winfrey;

If you were born in the 1990's: You probably have heard that the minimum wage is $5.15 an hour; and that a gallon of gas is $1.55. You live in the world Email, The World Wide Web, Microwaves, Cloning, Rodney King, O.J. Simpson, School Uniforms; Tommy Hilfiger, Liz Claiborne and FuBu, Beanie Babies. Forrest Gump and Microsoft.

As Christians, we have seen the times change. We've seen things come and go. Gone are Drive in Movies, Full Service gas stations; 8 track tapes; 45 and 77 rpm records; Manual typewriters, push lawn mowers, Wide seat bicycles, Doctor's house calls; disco dancing, taps on shoes, returnable pop bottles; Home milk delivery; The Afro Pick, Afro Sheen, and the Jeri Curl. But remains the same.

Expositions

This text focuses on Moses as he reflects on Israel's journey and considers the road ahead.

Moses, at 120 years old, had a wealth of experience. He served 40 years as a prince of Egypt. He served another 40 years as a humble shepherd. He spent the last 40 years

leading Israel out of Egypt toward the promised land. In the course of that time he saw many changes.

He saw the people change their life-style from slaves in Egypt to nomads. He saw them change their diets to accommodate the manna, or bread from heaven, that fell everyday. He saw them move from a people who called on God faithfully and continually in Egypt, to one that complained incessantly. In his experience, Moses saw children grow into adults, opponents of God's work swallowed, and miracles performed in front of his very eyes. He saw the Red Sea roll up and manna provided from heaven. He watched God provide, food, water and clothing for the people in miraculous ways. He had witnessed many changes.

As they paused, just before going into the promised land, Moses wrote, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Book of Deuteronomy. The name means "A Second look." In it, he reminds them where they had been and then points them to where they are going.

In this text he notes that where they are going is different from where they have been. Things will change. In Egypt, they spent much of their time building manual irrigation systems because there were infrequent, if any, rains. They tapped the resources of the Nile River and worked hard to keep themselves fully watered by the wisdom of the Egyptian engineering system. However, the land to which they headed would be a different place. Whether they succeeded in the new land would not be dependent so much on their own skills and labor, which would still be needed, but upon the grace of God. The Land of Canaan was an uneven country. It was a land of hills and valleys. The only river in it was the Jordan and it was not a shadow of the size and magnitude of the Nile. The land would be appear to drink water straight from heaven. In due season, God promised to provide his people with the rains needed for their survival and prosperity. Things were about to change.

Moses warned the people that as things change and opportunities of the future avail themselves, to remain faithful to God. He warned them not to forget where they had come from, and how they made it to their present destination. The only way they could lose the benefit of God's blessings would be to turn to ungodly living. Change is going to come, Moses said, but the people should not change their belief and faith in God.

From Whence Cometh Thou?

Every believer should be keenly aware of the road they have traveled. Individuals, families, organizations, and institutions all share one common trait, they build upon the work of others.

Those who are upwardly mobile, climbing to the top of the ladder should remember life and the bottom of the ladder empathetically. Since we have been there, we should understand what is needed as we explore way to further our climb?

INDIVIDUALS: Should also look back over the journey they have traveled. Today, many are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent church

personalities. That has not always been the case. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "and such were some of you:, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

FAMILIES: Families should always remember the old warriors. Those whose eyes are dim, but whose wisdom has grown sharper over the years. Likewise the memory of ancestors who charted a course for your family should always stay foremost in every family. Every family, upon reflection should see that God has brought your family a mighty long ways. The resolve of the family should be the same as Joshua's as he spoke to Israel about their journey. Those who came into the promised land wanted to change gods to keep up with the times. Old Man Joshua told the people these words in Joshua 24:15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Families that look back, know that it was only the Lord that brought safely through.

CHURCHES: Churches should strive to remember "from whence cometh thou?" The humble beginnings of every congregation in comparison to its present always reminds a congregation of the great work that God has done through its members. In addition, congregations that reflect, also see how God has lifted them and related to them in a personal way that has magnified his name and their greatness in his eyes. Churches are encourage to remember to continue striving to advance the kingdom of God with the reward in view. The reward is promised to the churches in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son"

Wither thou Goest

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that regardless to where we have come from in our past, we'll need God to make it through.

When Moses spoke to Israel he constantly pointed them to the land before them, with the ever present reminder that as long as they stay close to God the blessings from heaven will continue to flow. The implication of Moses' comments were simple: Turn away from God and expect trouble, stick with God and expect an enriching experience.

The times change, but God never changes. In Malachi 3:6 God said, "I am the Lord and I change not..." Hebrews 13:8 makes it clear that the nature of God never changes. It says clearly, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

God does not change.

HE IS STILL OMNISCIENT: God has not changed. He still knows all about us. That's why the 139 Psalm declares, "Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off..." God knows what we think. God knows what we feel. God knows our doubts. God knows our fears. He also knows just how much we can bear.

HE IS STILL OMNIPRESENT: God has not changed. He's still available to us wherever we go. That's why the Psalmist declared, " If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If, I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea" thou art there. If I'm riding in an airplane, God is there. If I travel to a far away place God is there. We know he's there because Jesus promised in Matthew 28, "And Lo I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth!"

HE IS STILL OMNIPOTENT: God has not changed. He's still all powerful. There is nothing God cannot do. When Sara doubted God's ability the angel asked, "Is there anything too hard for God to do?"

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that God does not change!

He's brought me from a mighty long way!

I'm glad to know that, when I've failed, he still turns failure into success!

I'm glad to know that, when I'm weak, he still turns weakness into strength!

I'm glad to know that, when I have questions, he still provides the answers!

I'm glad to know that, when I am frustrated, he still gives me hope!

In the past, he's been with us, but I'm glad to know that wherever I go, He'll still be by my side!

All I have to do is call on his name! His name is Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

He's coming back again to take us to a land! A land where we'll never grow old!

No. 820-Youth

The #1 Stunter

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 22, 2000

SCRIPTURE:" Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD." Jeremiah 9:23-24

Introduction

Have you ever met a person that loves to show off? That's the person who has to let everyone know what he has and tell the world in an "in your face" kind of way. The show-off is the person who calls attention to the fact that he or she has achieved. Whether it's the graduate that tries to dance across the stage at a high school graduation or the football star that does a special dance for the crowd after a touch down, show offs are all around us. There are adult show-offs who love to brag about how much money they make, what kind of car they drive and how much education they have attained. There are youth show-offs who enjoy the fact that they wear the latest, most expensive fashions and wear them first. In school there are show-offs. Many classes are often interrupted by students who try to grab attention by getting a laugh on a cheap corny joke or wise crack. Showing off is nothing new. It's been around for a long time, like an infection that invades every generation.

While adults use the term show-off, youth call it "stuntin." A stunter is a show stopper, an attention grabber who does something that calls attention to himself. Sometimes what is done is truly difficult and amazing. Sometimes what is done is simply stupid. Either way, a stunter successfully grabs the attention and credit for a deed that thrusts him into the limelight, if only for a moment. The person who is the most successful at performing such stunts is called the "#1 stunter."

In the Hip Hop world there are a group of artists from New Orleans who have taken the art of "stuntin" to its highest level. In 1992 Brian "Baby" Williams and has brother "Slim" started Cash Money Records and began a Southern Phenomenon that has made millionaires out of kids who were once poor. Groups like Juvenile, BG, Lil Wayne, Hot Boyz, and Young Turk have taken the nation by a storm, all wearing the famous "Cash Money" diamond studded dollar sign necklace around their necks. "Baby" himself sports $100,000 worth of diamonds in his teeth and throws cash money from the stage at his concerts. Flossing and "Bling, Bling!" are the name of the game as

the cash money crowd promote themselves as the "#1 stunters." Their message is simple, "if you have it-show it off, brag about it, let everyone see it!" That's the message behind all the stunting. The young men of Cash Money should be applauded for their business sense and ability to lift themselves from poverty by using natural talents. Yet, one must wonder whether, the reckless abandon with which they "show-off" and encourage others to do the same is a flawed formula that has caused the demise of many millionaires who shined for a moment and disappeared into obscurity.

Across America, young people hear the message and dream of being #1 stunters. The goal is to become rich and famous, then brag and show it off to others. Even Christian youth hear the message. It surrounds them at school and on the college campus. It is in their music and videos. It is reflected in their fashions and literature. As Christian youth try to sort out right from wrong, good from bad, appropriate from inappropriate, they seek answers that will help them understand the world in which they live. Christian youth know that if they *seek ye first the kingdom of God*, the other things will come. Figuring out what to do with "all these things" is a dilemma of Christian youth, some of whom are trying to decide whether its O.K. to be a "#1 stunter."

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that God blesses us immensely. Yet, in our rejoicing, we remain humble, because we know that all things come from God and not from our own abilities. We can't comfortably brag about our successes because, without God, we would have failed!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah as he warns Judah not to become to confident in own accomplishments.

The people of Judah were caught in the middle of world history. It was a prosperous nation that survived under the world domination of the Assyrians and the Eyptians before them. A new world power was on the scene, Babylon. The people were confident that they could not be conquered because they had three things about which they boasted and bragged. The bragged about their intellect and knowledge, reputation that was earned under Solomon. They bragged about their armies and fortified cities. Jerusalem itself was surrounded by mighty walls. Even if their own armies failed, they had political alliances with other nations such as Egypt to insure they could stand. Moreover, they had money. Lots of money!. Its king kept great storehouses of gold and silver and bragged about its wealth. If trouble came, the nation's leaders felt they had enough money to buy themselves out of danger.

Jeremiah spoke to the leaders and people of Judah about a coming judgment from God because of their sinfulness. Jeremiah's words were often ignored because the people were self confident. They could not imagine the downfall of the kingdom. They pointed to their superior knowledge and wisdom their strength and political alliances and to their vast riches as evidence that they were able to ward off any impending

attacks by would be enemies.

Yet Jeremiah chided them for boasting. He said the wise man should not boast in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength or the wealthy in their riches. All of these come from God. The man who wants to boast, should boast about God, because it is God that exercises judgment and dispenses blessings as a part of his lovingkindness and mercy.

They were encouraged not to revel in their own achievements because those achievements were attainable only by the grace of God. Jeremiah reminded that when the same God that allowed them to achieve gets angry at their actions he could, just as easily, take away the very strengths they boasted about.

Three ways to be a stunter

Today, youth should glean from Jeremiah that there are at least three ways to be a stunter, some of which may be unacceptable to God.

GLORYING IN WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE: Some Christian youth have been given the gift of wisdom and knowledge, both of which are listed in the categories of gives in 1 Corinthians 12. Wisdom and knowledge are wonderful gifts that come from God. Youth who exercise wisdom are able to make difficult and complex life decisions, act wisely and prudently and seem to always come out on top. Those with the gift of knowledge seem to excel in their studies without much effort. Their names are constantly on the school honor roll, they are members of the honor society and they are constantly praised for the knowledge. Should a smart student brag about their smartness? Should they belittle other students who must work hard and study long hours to make the same grade? The Christian student who has the gift of knowledge and wisdom, resists the temptation to become a "stunter" because the Christian student recognizes that the glory for their academic success comes goes to God. He's the one that helped them pull off the stunt. He's the one that called to their memory that which they had learned. God gets the glory. The Christian student hears the praise of others, but is never carried away but the accolades of teachers and fellow students. They simply will not take credit for God' work in their lives. The Christian student doesn't stunt, but responds in the spirit of Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

GLORYING IN STRENGTH. There are students who have special physical endowments that give them physical strength, or personality traits that give them persuasive strength, or organizational gifts that give them political strength. We see the powerful presence of athletes who seem to dominate and control their sport. We see the popular students who always rise to the top of student leadership. These students have great gifts of strength and personality that make them extremely popular on campus. No matter how others try, they never seem to have the same level of strength of these gifted students. However, the Christian athlete knows that his strength is not achieved in the weight room. The Christian student leader on campus knows that his ability to lead students as a student council member or class officer is not a result of his own hard work. The popular Christian student knows that her

popularity is not a result of anything she has done. All recognize that their help and strength comes from God. It's what David had in mind when he said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

GLORYING IN RICHES. There are many students who enjoy material blessings. Some are fortunate to live in a fine home in a comfortable and safe neighborhood. Some are blessed with a comfortable life that is affording them many pleasures. Christian students recognize that every blessing they have received has been provided by God as he blesses the efforts of their parents to provide for them. A Christian student who has no job or legitimate source of income, never brags about his ability to wear designer clothing or keep up with the styles because, he knows that none of what he has, comes from his own efforts. The Christian student may wear fine clothes, but never brags about them or belittles others who cannot or chose not to do the same. The Christian students doesn't brag about how much money his family has or how poor someone else's family is. Neither does he brag about the quality of his neighborhood and berate and belittle those who have not been blessed in the same way. The Christian student doesn't enjoying stunting because he knows he is not the source of his own blessings. He has no right to brag.

The #1 Stunter

Finally brothers and sisters, while belivers don't brag on themselves, they do have someone to brag about!

Jeremiah warned Judah not to brag about their own wisdom.

He warned them not to brag about their strength or riches.

However, Jeremiah said, if we must brag then brag on the Lord. If we must brag, then give God the glory. That's what he meant when in verse 24 when he said, "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD.."

The problem with be a stunter, is that the person who stunts, takes credit for that which he has not control. He writes himself in the robe of conceit and declares, "I Am this" and "I am that!"

I am a great football player!

I am a great scholar!

I am a member of a sorority or fraternity!

Everything that we have comes from the Lord. We can't take credit for anything, because without him we could do nothing. Without him we would surely fail. Without him our lives would be drifting, like ships without sails!

The believer chooses not to be a stunter because he knows he's not the source of his own accomplishments. He can't say "I am this" and "I am that" because there is a main man who is #1 in his book who says:

"I am the way, the truth and the life!"

"I am the bread of life!"

"I am the lily of the valley and bright and morning star!"

If we just have to brag on someone who has done good things. Let's brag on the Lord and make him the #1 stunter!

Jesus said when a man stands in church a prays a show place prayer, he's just stunting because he prayers go no where. The #1 stunter is not the man who can pray a fine prayer but the one who can answer prayer!

I know a man who can answer prayer! Call him in the morning! Call him in the midnight! He's always there!

James said some folks come to worship and they wear fine clothes that will get them a front seat. Often times they are simply stunting. They may be stunting but they are not the "number one stunter" The #1 stunter is not the one who wears the fine clothes but the man who provides the clothes you wear!

I know a man who can provide all we need. Someone asked the question, "Is thy God able?" The answer came..Yes, he's able!

Scribes and Pharisees spoke to a blind and accused Jesus of performing a publicity stunt when he healed the blind man. The blind must have responded, "If it was a stunt or not, I don't know, but if it was a stunt, he'd have to be the number 1 stunter, for I was blind but now I see!"

The woman at the well proclaimed it may have been a stunt, but "come see a man who told me all I've ever done"

The number one stunter isn't on the Cash Money label!

The number one stunter doesn't have diamonds in his teeth but holds the wealth of the world in his hands!

His names is Jesus!

He's the number one provider!

He's the number one healer!

He's the number one savior!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 821-Inspiration

Where Scary spirits live

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 29, 2000

SCRIPTURE: And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit;" Mark 5:2; Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee;Mark 5:19

Introduction

Have you been afraid of the things that go bump in the night? As children, many of us were literally taught to be afraid of certain places and certain times. We were often told that certain abandoned houses in the neighborhood were haunted. We were told that the ghosts of its previous owners lived in these houses waiting for intruders. We walked fast each time we walked past those houses to escape the scary spirits that live there. Every child remembers being told that the "Boogie Man" would get them if they did wrong things or went into certain rooms of the house. The Boogie Man lived under beds, hid closets and other dark and scary places. We learned the children's stories of witches who baked little children in ovens, goblins and trolls that waited to gobble up innocent kids. Even though we grew up, many of us have the mental scars of a frightened childhood. Millions of adults, still sleep with a light on and are horrified when they come close to a place where they believe scary spirits live.

Certain times of the year promote scary things. Scary movies attract millions of people who pay to have themselves frightened. Movies. The scary movie began in 1922 with the black and white version of Count Dracula and his vampires who sleep in caskets by day and prowl the streets at night. The litany of scary movies began.The Mummy shows us living mummies from Ancient Egyptian tombs. The Nightmare on Elm Street series, featured Freddie Kruegar, who lived in your dreams at night and tormented you in real life. "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers" had people afraid of their neighbors who might have been replaced by Aliens, and the 1973 movie "The Exorcist" had little children afraid of demons that live inside little girls. In the 1990's Scream and Scream2 scared the living day lights out of millions. The horror that was "Scream" was replaced by the ultimate horror of the Blair Witch project about boys who went into the forest to verify a witch legend and never returned.

Monsters. Scary things. Where do they live? According to our legends they live in closets, under beds, in dark rooms, and in grave yards. They are the essence of

what is to be feared from the things that go bump in the night. The monsters of children's tales and movies, they exist only in our imagination..or so we are told.

There are some evil spirits in this world, but the only ugly face they have is our own. There are some monsters, but they are not in the movies, but rather represent our worse inclinations and most serious weaknesses. There are some scary things of which we should be afraid, but they are not the kind that we see in movies. Where do they live? Where do the evil tendencies, bad thoughts, hatreds, bad feelings live? They live within us.

As Christians, we have come to know that Satan works constantly to get control of us. On our best days we have him in control. On our weakest days, he runs loose and we act unpredictably. We find peace and tranquility only at the feet of Jesus, as long as he fully dominates our lives, Satan has no place to live.

Exposition

This text focuses on Mark's account of evil spirits that lived in a man until he found Jesus.

The text gives an account of a man in terrible shape. He was a violent mental case. He refused to wear clothing or to live in a house; he lived naked in a cemetery, screaming and yelling at all hours of the day and night. Whether he was a danger to others or just frightened people to death, we don't know, but he constantly injured himself with rocks. All attempts to restrain him failed: he was very strong and no one was able to overpower him. People were so afraid of this man
that they had attempted to chain him down, maybe while he was asleep, but he was so strong that he broke the chains! He was not controlled until he met Jesus.

This account is told in Matthew 8:28 and Luke 8:27 as well. In Matthew, an account is given of two men who ran wild in the tombs, both possessed with demons. Luke and Mark seemed to focus on one of the men who was possessed with an unclean spirit. This unclean or unholy spirit is alternatively called "unclean" in one place and "demons" in another.

The Mark text focuses upon the "demons" or unclean spirits that were in one of the two men.

The fact that the word "demon" is used, has been given a variety of meanings that range from monsters within to aliens.

"Demon" in the context of New Testament scripture refers to:

EVIL SPIRIT: Demon is used to indicate the presence of an evil spirit. An evil spirit indicates the presence of a tendency to act against the will of God. Such tendencies can be many or legions, that show themselves in a variety of avenues of human behavior. A demon is a spiritual agent associated with amoral act. Every amoral has a corresponding "demon" associated with it. Adultery, lying, thievery, envy, etc., all have evil spirits attached to them.

SEDUCING SPIRITS: Demon is also used to refer to "seducing spirits" 1 Timothy 4:1. These are spirits which disseminate false information and errors among believers under the guise of truth. They are constantly referred to in the New

Testament because their presence divided the faith and allegiance of believers. One of these spirits promotes the idea that they can speak to the dead, a practice that is outlawed in scripture (Isaiah 8:19, Leviticus 19:31).

UNCLEAN SPIRITS: Demons are also characterized as spirits which tempt men with unclean thoughts and to some extent control the actions of individuals as suggested in Matthew 10:1 and Luke 8:27-29.

Combined, demons refers to the presence within a person of a spirit that is contrary to godliness that influences actions and thoughts of individuals in an ungodly way.

Christ met such a man in his journeys. The legions of unclean spirits within him confused his mind and caused him to act uncontrollably. However, in the presence of Christ, even the legions of unclean spirits within the man had to yield to the wonder working power of God.

Once out of the man, found peace in the presence of Jesus. However, Jesus commanded the man, free of evil spirits to return to his homeland, armed with a new spirit, and tell everyone what the Lord did for him.

Where scary spirits live?

Where do bad spirits that scare us live? Not in dark corners or the shadows of the night; they live within us. Demon possession is not like the movies. Don't look for monsters with ugly faces, long sharp nails, pointed tongues, cat eyes, and slim dripping from their bodies. Demon possession, in reality is the present of a bad spirit within a person that impacts the way they think and act in uncharacteristic ways. A man or woman possessed with a demon looks just like everyone else, but acts contrary to the will of God. The demon possessed are marked by:

PERSONALITY CHANGES: One of the first tell-tale indicators of the presence of a bad spirit, is a severe personality change. The demoniac in this text is one who is totally consumed by another power. In the same sense that an intoxicated person seems to become someone else when they are under the influence, a person under the influence of a bad spirit. It reflects itself in a severe personality change. A person who was once loving, acts just the opposite. A person who was once very talkative and open is now a recluse and shuts everyone out. A person who was once friendly is now angry with the world. All of these suggest that a bad spirit is taking hold. When another power takes over our identity and we become something that we are not, our individuality is swallowed up by legions of bad spirits, for one invites others. Personality changes are observed by those outside the person, but affected person exhibiting the negative behavior seldom is able to recognize it themselves. They usually attribute their actions to an understandable and justifiable reaction to something the bad spirit within them as identified as questionable action of others. Thus, the man running through the tombs was unaware of his situation, but the legions within him did.

TENDENCY TOWARD SELF DESTRUCTION. The man of the text constantly

did things to harm himself. Verse five notes, "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." It indicates that the bad spirits within him pushed him to act in ways that were self destructive. Those who are possessed by bad spirits do things that are self destructive. A man with a happy marriage, begins an affair that he knows will destroy his home in the end, acts to destroy himself. A woman who involves herself with a married man, knows the relationship will end in hurt feelings and disappointment, but she plunges headlong anyway. The man who gambles away his paycheck, the student who mouths off at a teacher, or the person who uses drugs is fully aware that the actions are destructive, but the bad spirit within them is overpowering and controlling. Like the man in the text, they act wildly and are out of control.

AFRAID OF JESUS. The bad spirit of the man in the text kept him wandering, wildly, loosely and out of control. The one thing bad the spirit feared was exposure to God. In the presence of Christ, the bad spirit was identified and removed. One of the most difficult things to do is to get a person who is under the influence of a bad spirit to come in the presence of any situation where the bad spirit might be challenge or expunged. A marriage affected by a bad spirit in one partner is strained at the least. One of the most difficult things to do is get the partner with the bad spirit to agree to counseling or even to come to a worship service. Bad spirits know that in the presence of God that will be revealed and eliminated, thus they avoid encounters with God as long as possible.

CASTING OUT BAD SPIRITS: The bad spirits in the man of this text were unable to stand in the presence of God. The word of God was such a powerful presence, the bad spirit could not continue in the same circumstance. When we know that a brother or sister is being overtaken by a bad spirit our response should take two directions: 1) Bring their situation before God in private intercessory prayer. Paul, in Romans 8:27, "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." An intercessory prayer is one that is prayed on behalf of someone who doesn't know to pray for themselves or even feel the need of prayer. Private prayer brings the situation and the bad spirit before God. Bad spirits can't stand to be before God. Secondly, we must confront the bad spirit in person. Matthew 18:15, says we should confront person overtaken by a bad spirit, personally and in private. If the bad spirit persists we should gather the spiritually strong. A true believer, the face of that much "spirit man" presence will find that bad spirits will leave.

BAD SPIRITS LOOK FOR SOMEWHERE ELSE TO GO. When bad spirits leave one person they look for somewhere else to go. In this text, it was a herd of swine. The point is underscored one person may overcome their bad spirit, but then another person starts acting strange. It is a constant struggle to defeat Satan. We are reminded to put on the whole armor of God and to constantly be on guard because, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Peace with Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that while bad spirits can make us do some scary things in scary place, there is no fear in Jesus.

The wild man of the text ran wild in the tombs, but in the presence of Jesus

He stopped his ranting and raving

He came to grips with himself

He stopped his self destructive acts

He had his peace of mind restored!

At the foot of Jesus, a man who was once lost was not found!

At the foot of Jesus, a man who was once crazed had regained his sanity!

No matter what storm prevails in our lives there is peace in the presence of the Lord!

In the presence of the Lord:

Confusion is turned into understanding; destruction is turned into construction

Heavy hearts are comforted and heavy burdens are made light!

Questions and met with answers and Problems are met with solutions!

In the presence of the Lord those who have been living a horror movie, that unfolds every day like a nightmare from which they cannot awake, find a new relief

In the presence of the Lord those lives have been the victims of spirit stealing vampires that have robbed them of their ability to live life freely, find a second chance!

In the presence of the Lord, those whose bodies have been snatched by alien bad spirits, can get a new life!

It's a new life that has been promised by Christ himself, "for any man that is in Christ is a new creature, old things are passed away and all things become new!"

A child sometimes is afraid to sleep in the dark because he is afraid of the scary things. It looks like the walls are breathing. There seem to be footsteps in the attic. Every noise outside seems to be inside, but then somebody would turn on the light.

Are you afraid of scary things, Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world"

Scary things that can't live in the light!

Walk in the light!

Live in the light!

This light is Jesus! He is the one!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead, with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 822-Anniversary, Choir

It's hard to sing the melody, if your life is out of tune

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 5, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Ephesians 5:19

Introduction

Have you ever picked up your favorite album only to discover that the wrong recording was inside? Back when 33 1/3 rpm albums were popular, the album covers were beautifully decorated and contained photographs of recording artists and other information. For many of the popular recording, the album covers became collector's items. Even as Compact Discs permeate the scene today, there are still millions of homes that have the old albums in music bins, or decorating walls. On occasion, we may pull out an old album to stroll down memory lane, only to learn that what's on the inside does not match what's on the outside. Many frantically go through every album they have and find that somewhere in the stack there is another one with the wrong record inside. It happens with compact discs, video recordings and other articles in which it is possible for what's inside to get separated from what's outside. It's frustrating to some, in fact, it's so frustrating that it they won't stop until they can straighten it out.

A generation ago there was a song that said, "Let me live the life I sing about in my song." To a large extent, the songs we like are extension of ourselves. They reflect our emotional state at the moment and generally our temperament. Recording artists who sing love songs, have a general reputation of being lovable if they are having trouble achieving the idea. Even rappers have to represent. Will Smith, the fresh Prince, raps with rhyme and intelligence. His life-style also reflects his rap. Gangsta Rappers like Mystikal and Snoop Dog, talk mean, tough and ugly. Their fans wouldn't follow them if they always appeared wearing three pieces suits and weren't really what they rapped about. Whether its good or bad, we expect singers to live the life of their song.

Every song we sing should be meaningful. Consider the church choir that traveled to New York for an appearance on a national television show. The church, proud of its choir, bought an entire floor of a hotel for them, and sent the keys and

registration information in advance to the director. All they had to do is get to their and rooms rest before the broadcast. When they arrived in the city, they were brought to an extremely fancy hotel and told that their rooms occupied the entire top floor of the 50 story building. Just as they prepared to go up, the elevator broke down. That meant they would have to take the stairs. The director told the choir, "all things work to the good" and with good spirit they decided to sing as they went up the fifty flights of stairs, each of the 49 choir members would lead a song and the director would sing the last song. As they began they sang, "We're marching to Zion." At the 10th floor they sang, "We are climbing Jacob's Ladder", at the 30th floor they sang, "We're climbing up, the rough side of the mountain," at the 40th floor they sang, "I won't complain." When they made it to the 50th floor the choir director began to sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I see!" The choir members asked why, at the top of the stairs he chose to sing such a sad song instead of a song of victory. The director dropped his head and said, "I left all of our keys at the front desk!"-The choir members looked him and said in unison, you sang the right song!

Every believer is part of God's choir. We sing his praises on a daily basis. Our album jacket is full of beautiful pictures of the goodness of God. Our title attracts those who see the cover. They are interested. They are curious. They watch and the listen to the melody that is played for them to hear.

What if the melody of holiness and godliness that we sing about in our song is out of tune with our lives?

The goal of every believer is to keep it real. To make the songs of praise, thanksgiving and faith that they sing about on a daily basis, a reflection of what they really believe and apply in their lives on a daily basis.

As Christians we strive to sing praises to God. We want the praises we sing however to reflect the melody of life and love that is in our heart.

Lives in tune can sing the melody

It is difficult to sing songs about the Christian faith with enthusiasm, unless our lives our in tune with the Lord. The words come out but without meaning. A sound comes out of our mouths but without power and witness. This text suggests several measures Christian believer should take to stay in tune with God and give meaning to the melodies their lives sing.

SINGING IS TO BE FROM THE HEART: If a church choir held an audition, it wouldn't what would be the criterion? The criterion should be whether or not a person is a great singer, for most church choir singers are not, but they are individuals who have a heart for the songs they sing. Verse 19b: "... singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Many think of the church choir as a show place to make a name for themselves. The do just the opposite of verse 19, instead of "singing and making melody with your heart" they "sing and make melody with their mouths. The phrase "with your heart" signifies that you mean what you sing and you feel it!

SINGING IS TO BE TO EACH OTHER: In the shower, a believer sings to himself

and for himself. Those who sing in public should sing to each other. They should look at the people they are singing to and reach out to them. Look at Verse 19 again, ". . . speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." We can't obey this teaching in solitude. God calls us to speak in song to one another.

To sing to each other we should get together and sing as a congregation and as small groups. We should sing in each other's hearing and want to be heard by each other. The second

implication is that it is justifiable to sing songs that are not directed toward God but toward each other for the purpose of testimony, edification, and exhortation

SINGING IS TO BE "TO THE LORD." Singing to the Lord implies that songs should be God centered or Christ centered. This means that what we sing should reflect our nature, that our lives are God centered. Everything we do and say is centered around our central beliefs about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Our songs are a reflection of that belief. What we choose to sing should be worthy of presentation to the master. Because what we sing will be presented to the Lord, those who sing should feel compelled to rehearse such that they always present God their best. Without proper rehearsal and preparation, then what is presented "to the Lord" is less than the best and is a negatively rather than a positive reflection on the singers. No singer should be happy with themselves if they sing with the choir but fail to block out time to adequately prepare. Singing to the Lord is serious business. It comes from roots that are deep in faith and impact the spiritual growth of the church.

SINGING SHOULD VARY IN FORMS: Those who sing should be trained to sing in various forms and styles, delivering the same witness in a variety of ways. Verse 19 says, ". . . speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." Those who sing to the Lord and to others select the style of song appropriate for the moment. The psalms, what we call "Anthems" speak dramatically about the power of God. Every singer should know how to witness with the power of the word transcribed into anthems. Hymns attest to the greatness of God as he relates to us. They are standards that have survived the test of time and linger long in the hearts of believers around the world. Spiritual songs are those that speak from the soul and experience of believers. They testify about what God has done in the life of a believer. They are about blessings received, hope renewed and prayers answered. Trained music leaders usually insure that varied forms are represented in every worship, hymns, psalms and spiritual songs. This too represents the course of every spiritual life: a devotion to God, dealing with God, and Testimony about God.

When life is out of tune

Many people in the choir are not strong singers. In any given church choir, most will testify that while they can blend in with others, it is hard for them to carry the melody unless there is a strong person in their section to set the tune. When that person is missing, they sing but sing softly, afraid they may sing out of tune.

So it is in life. Many believers, whether they admit it or not, depend upon each other to stay in tune. Outside of the body of Christ it is easy to start singing another tune. It is easy to get distracted and get our lives off track. We depend upon each other, to stay on track.

We depend upon that phone call from another believer who questions our sustained absence. We depend upon words of encouragement and even the words of chastisement we receive from our teachers and ministers to help keep us in tune. We depend upon the support of friends of the faith who have the melody to keep us in tune we lose our note.

For this reason we must constantly pray for those who set the tune for us. We must constantly pray for our pastor, teachers, musicians and choir leaders. Church musicians are those who believe in God and testify with their instruments! Choir directors don't just wave their hands, they testify with their lives! We should pray that they stay in tune with God!

Those who have been on the journey, know that it is extremely difficult to sing a melody to the Lord if our lives are out of tune with his word.

It is hard to sing about faith, if we know we have no faith.

It is hard to sing about strength, if all we show is weakness.

It is hard to sing about our hope in the Lord, if we have given up on God ourselves!

It is hard to sing about walking the narrow road, when we are running down road to destruction.

Filled with the Holy Ghost

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that in order to stay in tune, every believer needs to stay in touch with the Holy Ghost!

Verses 18 and 19: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,. This means that Christian singing is not natural, but supernatural. The Holy Spirit is God. He is supernatural. He comes and he fills his people and moves them to act in certain ways.

Simply singing without letting the spirit sing through you, is not always pleasing to the Lord Amos 5:23-24, "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." There is religious singing that is offensive to the Lord, namely, singing that is not a work of the Holy Spirit along with his other fruit.

You get a glimpse of what being filled with the Holy Spirit is by the comparison in verse 18 with being drunk. "Don't get drunk with wine, be filled with the Holy Spirit." Getting drunk with wine means being controlled by wine. It masters you and makes you feel and act in certain ways.

When you get drunk with alcohol, the liquor controls your song.

When your head is bad you may sing, "Every night I sing he blues" but when you are filled with the spirit you may sing, "All day, all night, angels are watching over

me!"

When your head is bad you may sing, "Shake it fast" but when you are filled with the spirit you may sing, "Only what you do for Christ will last!"

When you head is bad you may sing, "The thrill is gone!" But when you filled withe spirit you may say, "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before"

I don't know about you, but I've found out that you may not have the best voice in the world but when you sing from the heart and God gets in your song, it always comes out right!

When we you know the Lord, you can sing his song!

When you know the Lord, you can lift him up in praise!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "I've tried the man and the man's alright!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "I don't feel no ways tired, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!

No. 823-Funeral

From Whence Cometh Our Help?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 8, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." Psalm 121:1

Introduction

Have you ever needed someone to help you? At some point in life, most people have needed someone to assist them in personal and career development. Very few people can truthfully say that they have achieved anything alone. We all need someone, sometime. Whether it was a parent who worked hard to provide an opportunity for us or a coach who gave extra assistance that helped us achieved, most of us have received assistance along the way.

No one can exist without some level of assistance from other human beings. Neither can anyone distance themselves from the obligation to give assistance to others. What happens to one, inevitably happens to another. We are so intertwine that the misfortunes of one, diminishes us in the same way that the good fortune of a friend enriches us. John Donne, in his epic poem put it this way,

"No Man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent a part of the main;
if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less,
as well as if a promontory were,
as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were;
any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee."

Everybody needs somebody. Everybody gets help from somewhere. Consider the country preacher who was known for his spirited preaching. He had a habit of stopping in the middle of his sermon from time to time and singing, "All my help comes from the Lord!"-then running out the back door. The members inside didn't know that he had a bottle of whiskey under the back step. After a good drink, the preacher returned and preached boldly saying, "My help is come!" A few minutes later he would sing again, "All my help, comes from the Lord!" and run to get another drink.

The boys at the church followed him outside and saw him take a big drink. When the preacher returned the next time his bottle was gone. The boys had taken it. Dry, the preacher was lost for words and could not continue. All he could say was, "Help me Lord." Then, he looked out of the window and saw the boys standing on a hill waving his whiskey bottle. The preacher smiled and raise a finger as he ran out of the church saying, "Ya'll excuse me, I got to lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help!" Help is on the way.

God helps us in a variety of ways. Most often, he uses people to accomplish his will for us. He places a child in the care of loving parents and blesses their hands to care for, discipline and nurture us. God moves through people to make opportunities available to us. Immediately we see their hand and feel the touch of their lives impressed upon our own, but our help doesn't really come from them, but from the Lord.

As believers, we are strengthened when we remind ourselves that God is our refuge and our strength. We see the people he has used to bless our lives and bless him for touching through the lives of the ones who loved us.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the believer's help and assurance in the faith.

The believers are urged to remember the source of all blessings. That source is God himself.

For Israel, the mountains and hills of Palestine afforded them protection against enemies and a certain sense of security. The Psalmist, pointing to the hills, was not implying that the assurance of every believer is in the literal mountains and hills around them, but in the power of the God who provides the protective environment in which they are able to sleep secure each night.

The God we serve protects us and keeps us continually. Our first line of reference is the hills themselves, but beyond that, it is God's hand, moving through the hills that brings our greatest assurances.

In most translations "from whence cometh my help" is a question, which places the psalmist in the position of asking where his help comes from. Without the question, KJV points to the hills themselves. The hills are symbolic.They represent the way God provides help. They are not the help themselves.

Often hills and mountains meant the same to those who made references to them. Those who knew the environments often referred to them as hills. Those who were foreign to a locale often referred to the same region as mountains.

Whether they were mountains or hills, David declared in this psalm, that a believer's help and security comes from God, not the hills and the mountains.

What the hills meant to believers

The hills and mountains of Palestine had special significance for the people of Israel. They were the places that offered them protection from enemies, places of worship, the points of sacrifice, and sanctuary from the storms of life.

In a similar sense God uses people to reach out and touch believers. Like the biblical hills, many believers have been touched by touched by individuals who have been used by God to strengthen their life experience.

The immediate way that God helps us is through the family. Those who are fortunate enough to have strong families, learn that God touches a mother and father in such a way that they are able to provide unique sustenance for their children, beyond mere food and drink.

For young believers, mothers and fathers are strong, like mountains and hills. They stand for strength and control. They protect us from enemies, teach us how to worship, help us to learn the meaning of sacrifice and provide a home life that gives us a sanctuary from the storms of life.

Yet, even mothers and fathers, as strong as their presence has been in our lives, are not the source of our blessings. Our help comes from the Lord.

Things get their names from the hills

In the bible, many places received their names from the hills around them. Great ideas were born among the hills. Great challenges were accepted in the hills and historic moments were birthed in the hills. So places like the Gibeah or hill of Saul, marked the place where Saul returned king of Israel or the Gibeah of Phineas or the Gibeah of God, and numerous others received their names from what happened on a certain hill.

There are many children today who are making a name for themselves, but that name results from the instruction, love and nurture received at the hands of a loving mother and father.

No matter how great the personality, the names that represents who they really are, came from those who touched their lives in special ways.

A child who becomes a great teacher, coach or basketball player, may earn great recognition for themselves. However, it is not their success that gave them their name, it is their name that made their success possible. The elements of personality, self esteem and confidence needed to achieve are acquired in the setting of a home environment that promotes success, inspires and motivates. At home, good parents spend a great deal of time instilling values into their children. They know that values are more important to success than even skill and education, Thus, they make sure that character goes in before the name goes on!

Good parents teach their children to live up to or improve upon the family name. Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.” A good name is not determined by riches and wealth. There are thousands of rich people who have bad names and reputations. A good name is not determined by success in a profession, for thousands have

achieved great works but brought shame to their family names. Honesty, integrity, humility and godliness, despite all of the other things a person may accomplish contribute to a good name.

The children of good parents should praise God for the lives of their parents. Through them, God blesses their lives immensely. The young of every God fearing family is taught and remembers that they already have a name, the world just doesn't know it yet.

The hills represented high country

In Palestine there are different types of terrains. There were plain, valleys, mountains and hill country. Hill country represented high ground. It wasn't too high, but it was elevated.

The life of those in the hills and mountains was different from those in the plains. The life-style of the hill people was different from those of the plains. The air was thinner and it was challenging.

Good parents teach self esteem to their children. The Christian parent teaches their children to be different from the crowd but never to look down on the crowd. The idea is to rank yourself among the best but never lose the common touch. Be a hill that no one has to climb, while you think and aim high in life. The idea is not to be high and mighty, but to high and humble. The goal is not to be a mountain that is formidable and obstructive, but a hill that is lofty but yet accessible to all. Rudyard Kipling captured this spirit when he wrote:

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings-nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And-which is more-you'll be a Man, my son!"

The spirit of humility is what every parent teaches their children. It is the spirit of Micah 6:8 "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Help comes from the Lord

Finally, we should remember that God gives us good parents to guide and protect us, but all of our help comes from the Lord.

David, writing this Psalm, understood the source of every believers help. He looked up to the hills, but he knew his help came from the Lord.

His help came from a God who neither slumbered or slept.

His help came from a God who watched over him by day or by night.

In the same sense every believer should remember that through our parents, teachers and associates God has helped us along the way and we love them dearly, we have not been left helpless, when they are called home, because our real help has always come from the Lord!

In the frustration, as we deal with the reality of death, every believer should adopt an attitude of praise.

We thank God for a mother and father who provided a happy home for us!

We thank God for parents who placed their lives on whole and invested their entire substance toward helping us to achieve!

We thank God for a mother whose towering influence gave us a bold sense of family pride and self esteem!

We thank God for a mother whose optimistic spirit showed us how to live a long and happy life, endure challenging set backs and to count it all joy!

We thank God for parents who showed the way to the hill!

Not to a mountain peak or elevated blocks of land in a distant place but to a hill called Calvary!

We thank God that we had a mother who knew not to look at the hill, but to cross on the hill.

That's why the song write wrote: "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame....So I'll cherish that old rugged cross and exchange it someday for a crown!"

That man on the hill was Jesus who died and rose again that we might always know that come..that despite death, sickness or tragedy.. He is our help!

Our help comes from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth!

—

Viola Earnestine Holts Hill has ended a 90 year journey on this earth. She was used by God to love her husband, help her children, and give the world an example of Christian womanhood. On Friday, November 3, 2000 the woman who lived a grand life, died in peace and dignity. Even at death she was still, "Viola Hill."

No. 824-Stewardship

God's Debt Payment Plan

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 12, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" Matthew 6

Introduction

Have you ever stretched out all of your bills on a table or desk and wished they would just disappear? Those who run household are often overwhelmed with how much debt we have accumulated in such a short period of time. In many cases it seems like the only mail we receive is a bill from another creditor. There are many who are reluctant to answer the phone for fear that it may be a bill collector. The excitement of going to the mail box is dulled by the reality that it's going to be filled with what the old timers call "due bills." It seems that our debt is an endless vacuum that sucks up all of our resources and makes it impossible to sleep comfortable at night.

When we consider the enormity of our debts we are often frustrated. Tennessee Earnie Ford had a hit song in the 1950's. It was called "Sixteen Tons" that was popular in the fifties. It told the story of a coal miner who worked hard and could mine as much as sixteen tons of coal a day. The community he lived in was dominated economically by the coal mining company, which charged exorbitant prices. So this hard-working miner could never earn more than it cost him to live. Though it was many years ago the chorus of that song lingers:

"Sixteen tons and what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
St. Peter, don't you call me 'cause I can't go—
I owe my soul to the company store."

There are two types of debt. An over simplified explanation is this: We have current debts and long term debts. Current debts are those we deal with on a current, regular basis. They may include your utilities, phone, cablevision, your internet connection bill, etc. Long term debts may include your mortgage or car note, bank loans and others that are extended over long periods of time. We are said to said to be solvent when the sum total of our debts is less than our assets. Most folks are solvent but they have cash flow problems. Cash flow is accounting term that means a person can't get enough cash every month to pay their due bills even though they have enough assets to cover the debt. (Sometimes we reluctant to sell a piece of

property or our second T.V. to satisfy a debt, so a creditor sues us and orders it seized).

When cash flow is the problem, there are professionals called debt counselors who help families work out plans to manage their debts. When there are high debts without assets to cover them, sometimes bankruptcy is the only option left. Dealing with debt can be frustrating.

Like financial indebtedness, spiritual indebtedness is equally frustrating. We are spiritually in debt when what we owe for our sins is more than we can pay. We run up a sin bill on a daily basis, but don't have the capacity to meet the daily due bill for our transgressions. Over the long term, we have a huge sin debt. We are spiritually bankrupt! Our sins outweigh our ability to pay.

A debt consolidation plan won't help us. Our problem is not "cash flow", our problem is insolvency. We desperately need a way to pay off our debts and become debt free.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that our sin debts have been covered. We no longer have long term sin debts from our past, and a spiritual mechanism is in place which covers our current sin debt. We know it because the word of God says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed.."

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus as he tells believers to ask for forgiveness of debts by the same measure that they are willing to give forgiveness for death.

The text is extracted from the Lord's prayer, which is model prayer for believers. In it Jesus sets for the principles of a model prayer, teaching his disciples what they should and should not do in the course of their prayers. With respect to forgiveness, Jesus said, believers should not ask for God's forgiveness of their personal transgressions, unless they are also will to forgive those who have transgressed against them.

The only person who can forgive our sin debt is God. He alone has the capacity to cancel that debt and mark it paid. Often our debts to God are more than we are capable of paying, thus, what we seek from him is mercy and grace. The debts that we accumulate against God are staggering.

God has a plan for man's debt to be paid.

It would be purchased by another, who would pay its full price, then give each person who applies an opportunity to begin again with a fresh start.

That plan involved the death of his Son on an old rugged cross, to pay the price for man's debt to God. Those who apply with him, will be accepted and all debts to God will be canceled.

Stewardship Requires Debt Management

Those who act as stewards over their resources, must be able to manage those resources. This includes the ability to manage debt. Debt management is a necessary

skill for every believer operating in the secular world. Consider:

DEBT OFTEN ALLOWS US TO GIVE A FALSE APPEARANCE OF OPULENCE: Those who are wealthy buy expensive things freely without worrying cost. The opportunity for debt tempts the "not-so-wealthy" to acquire the same lifestyle and symbols of the wealthy. The difference is that the truly wealthy person doesn't worry about the cost of opulence because he can afford it, the pseudo wealthy worry as soon as the bill comes. In other words, you can use your credit card to get things that make you look and feel rich without thought of what's going to happen when the bill comes. Millions of otherwise strong believers have fallen prey to the temptation to use their American Express, Gold and Platinum Visas to acquire things they would not normally buy otherwise.

DEBT MAKES US LOSE SELF CONTROL: The fruit of the Spirit is self-control or temperance (Galatians 5:23). The availability of easy credit tempts us to loosen the reins a little. You can get out beyond the parameters of control. That makes it easy. A lady once commented, "I love credit cards; they go so much further than money." We should constantly be on guard. It makes impulsive buyers. You walk by a window. You see something. The money's not there, but you've got the card. You can get it. "Ah, let's buy it honey. The Lord will provide at the end of the month."

DEBT FREQUENTLY CAUSES MARITAL PROBLEMS: Every year thousands of marriages feel the strain of an increased debt load. Husbands and wives, dealing with the frustration of escalating debt, often become enemies as one blames the other for creating the debt or inability to manage it properly. Debts are incurred to impress the neighbors or associates, make the kids happy for a day, or to satisfaction a variety of itches and impulses. When the bills in the home begin to escalate, marriages are strained to the limit.

DEBT TEMPTS US TO RESORT TO UNLAWFULNESS: When we want more than we can buy, and owe more than we can pay, many are tempted to consider ways to make the ends meet that border on unlawfulness. There are many that actually do unlawful things. There are some that embezzle from their employers. There are others that steal merchandise from their employers and sell them to get extra cash. There are others who may not go that far, but they rob "Peter" to pay "Paul." Unfortunately there are still others, who find it convenient to rob God! They use funds that should be given for the promotion of the kingdom of God to satisfy personal debts. They are funds that are rarely paid back. Malachi asked the question, "Will a man rob God?" And the answer came that there are many who robbed God by using their tithes and offerings for personal purposes.

How to get our of debt

Finally, while most of agree that we are certainly in debt, thanks to our Lord and Savior, there is a way to get out of debt.

The only real way to get out of debt is for the debt that is owed to be satisfied.

Every debt we make must ultimately be satisfied.

The man who steals, has a theft bill, that must be paid.

The man who cheats on his wife, has a adultery bill that must be paid.

The man who lies, has a false witness bill

The woman who wants more than she can pay for has a greed bill, that must be paid

The woman who talks about a friend behind her back, has a back stabbing bill that must be paid.

We can't pay our sin bill with silver or gold.

We can't transfer title to our cars or deed over our homes.

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death."

To pay our debt something has to die.

But every believer needs to remember that , no matter how numerous our sins, God has payment plan.

God announced that he would allow a ransom to be paid our behalf. In essence, God announced that he would allow somebody to pick up the note!

Can't your hear the call go out from heaven, "Is there anybody out there, who can pick up the note for man's debt of sin?"

Moses said, "Lord I can't do it, I got my hands full dealing with the Children of Israel!"

Elijah said, "Lord, I can't do it, it's taking all I have to wrestle with the Ahab, Jezebel and the prophets of Baal"

Ezekiel said, Lord, I can't do it, I'm over my head in the valley of dry bones!"

Daniel, said, Lordi, I can't do it, it's taking everything I have to deal with these lions in the Lion's den

Three Hebrew Boys can you do it? They were too busy walking around the fiery furnace

But I heard a voice from saying, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!"

Jesus came down to this earth in the form of a man!

He died out on Calvary!

He paid the price for sin debt!

And Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands and set me free!

No. 825-Thanksgiving

Recount Your Blessings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 19, 2000

SCRIPTURE: Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Psalm 106:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever felt that those who are less faithful than yourself seem to get more blessings? There are times when even the strongest believer thinks God is unfair to the faithful. These are the times when you look at the ungodly people all around you and consider their prosperity despite their ungodliness. In comparison, we sometimes feel that if they are doing well in the midst of their ungodliness, then we should be doing even better because of our godliness. We secretly think there should be a correlation between godliness and prosperity. It is not until we stop and review our actual circumstance, the good and the bad, that we reach an understanding about the nature of our blessings. When we start accusing God of short changing us, that's when we should consider a recount to learn whether our claim is really true.

We're learning a lot about recounts these days. The presidential election of 2000 will be enshrined in history because of its close outcome, necessitating, at least in the minds of some, a recount of the votes of certain counties in Florida and other areas of the country. The initial counting process in most places in the country uses an automated process that can give a quick result, but is subject to error, especially if the instruments used to record the vote are not used according to their design, or those who report the findings are in error. Because there is a likelihood of error, either human or mechanical, close elections usually include a demand for a recount. The idea is to revisit that which has been done and to authenticate the results. Sometimes the results of an election are confirmed. Sometimes those results are overturned as flaws, errors and miscounts are discovered and discarded.

When believers think that the ungodly have outvoted them with the favor of God, maybe it's time for a recount. When we begin to feel that our blessings are diminished despite our godliness, maybe we should revisit what God has actually done. If we have these feelings, we would not be the first. There have been others. Psalm 37:25 found David frustrated over the apparent success of the wicked until he concluded, "I have been young and am now old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor

his seed begging bread." After recounting his blessing David concluded that although the wicked seemed to prosper, the righteous are always the eventual winners with God.. Therefore, we are constantly urged to count and recount our blessings to remind ourselves of the goodness of God.

As Christians, we have learned that God blesses us continually. Even the experiences that seem to work against us, eventually bless us. Truly God is good and his mercy endureth forever. The initial count may seem to favor the wicked. But when we recount our blessings, God gets the victory and praise!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he recounts the ways that God blessed Israel, despite themselves, prompting him to conclude that God is deserving of thanks and praise.

Generally, the 106th Psalm is a historical narrative of the many ways that God blessed Israel despite their own stubbornness and tendency toward unfaithfulness and sin. It recounts God's blessings from the point of their liberation from Egypt to their arrival in the promised land. As their national history is recounted, their own flawed experience is revealed and God's charity and mercy is seen clearly.

Beginning at verse 7 David began the recount. He noted how God blessed Israel in Egypt, even though the people did not clearly understand the various ways that God was dealing with them in their experience. The phrases, "understood not" and "remembered not" are given as the reason for their constant frustration.

David's recounting of God's action, looking at each one slowly and meticulously, revealed what the people could not understand and did not remember. It showed that in moments when they felt God had forsakened or abandoned them, God was actually blessing them. At the Red Sea, for example, it appeared that God had brought them out of Egypt to allow them to die at the hands of the Egyptians. They did not understand how God works. Even when God opened the Red Sea and they crossed on dry land, they still did not understand completely how God was blessing them.

They complained that God was helping their enemies to triumph over them, until the recount. However, at verse 10, after the recount they saw how God defended their cause and defeated their enemies.

As they wandered in the wilderness, they couldn't see how that was a blessing, until they recounted it! After the recount they realized that God was preparing them as a nation for a greater blessing that was to come.

When they had no food, they complained that God had forsaken them. After the recount, they remembered how God provided both bread and meat for them in midst of their wilderness experience.

In the process of recounting, they saw some things they didn't like about themselves, which increased the importance of God's blessings in their own sight. Verses 13 and 14 show how the people soon forgot about God and lusted after their own pursuits in the wilderness. When they considered their own stubbornness, then

they realized what a blessing God had bestowed upon them, despite themselves.

Verses 21-22 make it abundantly clear that the people rushed to judge God without counting the great things he did for them in Egypt, such as providing protection for them in the Land of Goshen where their crops grew and the terrain was protected for plagues, drought or pestilences. Many among them only saw the fact that they were slaves. They did not count how God blessed and sustained them despite their servitude. Many saw the Red Sea as a stumbling block against the success, but not how God acted at the Red Sea. Many saw the high, walled cities of the Promised land, but did not count how God made those walls come tumbling down.

Verse 43 sums up a litany of instances in which God blessed the people, but they provoked him by ignoring him and plunging into iniquity.

When the final count was complete in verse 48, David declared, "Bless be the Lord God of Israel from Everlasting to Everlasting. Let all the people said Amen. Praise the Lord!"

Why Should We Recount?

Whenever we find ourselves complaining and questioning whether God has blessed us, it may be necessary for each of us to demand a personal recount. In so doing, we may learn some things.

Sometimes we learn in the recount that we simply did not count it right. In other instances we may find that we gave Satan credit for work actually done by God. We should recount because we may find that some of our life's experiences may not have been counted as blessings. Counting them correctly gives us a brand new outlook!

HOW DO WE COUNT TROUBLE? There are many that do not count trouble in their lives as a blessing. We consider trouble as a curse rather than a blessing. However James 1:2 "Count it all Joy when you enter into divers temptations." It simply means that many of life's troubles are actually blessings. Many who have spent time in prison, or have been fired from jobs, or have undergone marital strain can testify that at the time of their occurrence these seem more like curses then the blessings they turned out to be. However, looking back, they now see how God used the experience to edify them to his glory and praise. Thus, those who do not count their troubles as a blessing should recount those experiences and see what the Lord has done!

HOW DO YOU COUNT LOSS FOR CHRIST? There are many who have lost job opportunities, and chances for personal advancement toward life goals because they held firm to biblical principles. Many Christian women could have received promotions on their jobs if they had catered to the sexual advances of some of their superiors. There are others who easily have become rich, if it were not for the fact that they would not sacrifice their integrity to attain riches. For the sake of the cross there are many who have lost friends and have been ostracized from clubs, civic groups and certain social circles, because they refused to go along with an immoral practice. How do you count such losses? Philippians 3:8 finds Paul saying, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ," Those losses were actually blessings received for standing up for the excellency of Christ. Those who do not count their losses for Christ sake as blessings, should recount them and give God the glory!

HOW DO WE COUNT PROLONGED HARDSHIP? Those who have endured a personal sickness of that of a loved one for a long period of time, sometimes see the experience as a burden. When they count their blessings, they don't place this hardship in the blessing category. Yet James 5:11, addressing a similar situation says," Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." The very ability to handle the hardship in itself is a blessing. It indicates that God is providing strength beyond the ordinary for each person to handle the prolonged hardship, sickness, or personal struggle. It doesn't look like a blessing but it is. That's why James points to Job as reminder that Job's hardship didn't appear a blessing either. In the end however, God blessed him beyond expectations. Those who refuse to count their hardships as a blessing, should recount their blessing and see what the Lord has done.

HOW DO WE COUNT THE APPARENT SLOWNESS OF GOD TO ACT? When God answers our prayers immediately we immediately recognize the inherent blessing. We lift our hands in praise and glorify him intensely. However, when God seems to be slow to respond to our prayer request, we don't put that in the blessing category. Did you ask God for something? Are you frustrated because it appears that he has not answered? 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If you have failed to count what appears to be a slow response by God in the blessing category, you need to count again. That's what happened to Mary and Martha. When Jesus did not come to Lazarus' bedside during his sickness, they chided him for being late. When he raised Lazarus from the dead, they learned a lesson that we now know, God may not come when you want him, but he's always on time. Count every prayer request that seems to be unanswered, but the answer is already on the way!

Demand A Recount

Finally brothers and sisters, those who have counted their blessing, but still think God has cheated them, should demand a recount.

There are some who have surveyed the world around them and have miscounted the goodness of the Lord.

I suggest to you that there somebody here today is the victim of a miscount.

They have looked back over the tragedies and mishaps of this year and concluded that it has been filled with everything but blessings.

This is what happened to Job. His life appeared riddled more curses than blessings. He lost his wealth. He lost his health. He lost most of his family. Yet in all

of his losses, Job did a quick recount and concluded, “Yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve him!”

You know you are the victim of a miscount when your tally of the year’s experience leads you to believe that God has abandoned you and left all alone!

You are the victim of a miscount if all you can see is the number of days you spent in the hospital, the money you lost in a business venture, a failed relationship, missed opportunities and broken promises. If that’s all you can see, then you are the victim of a miscount.

If there has been a miscount and it favors the adversary, the adversary will usually oppose a recount, because it may change the result..

When we start complaining about how much we have lost..

When we start complaining about how much sickness we have endured..

When we start complaining about the burdens of death we’ve borne...

The adversary says stop the count right there! Shut the process down!

When a believer starts recounting blessings, there is no doubt that God will always come out the winner!

When we count our blessings we find out that God that God has taken our:

Stumbling blocks and turned them into stepping stones!

Failures and turned them into successes

Tears of sadness and turned them into smiles of joy!

Defeats and given us victories!

Disappointments and given us hope!

When we count up our good days and our bad days, our good days will always out weigh our bad days.. We have no reason to complain!

God has been good to us! He’s opened doors we could not see!

I won’t complain about my blessings because I know that the Lord is still in the blessing business.

He blesses me in the morning. He blesses me in the noon day. He blesses me in the midnight!

One day, 2000 years ago, he blessed the World by giving his Son to die on a old rugged cross!

On that dreadful it didn’t look like a blessing!

When the buried him in a borrowed tomb, it didn’t look like a blessing!

When they rolled a stone in front of the tomb, it didn’t look like a blessing!

But Early Sunday morning Mary ran and told everybody, if you’ve counted him, you’d better recount!

Early Sunday morning he arose up from the grave, with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 826-Inspiration

What Manner Of Child Shall This Be?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 10, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. "Luke 1:66

Introduction

Have you ever watched a child and made predictions about what he or she would become? The little industrious girl who studied hard in school was told by her graduating class that she was the most likely to succeed. The little bad boy that was constantly in trouble, suspended from school and displayed criminal tendencies was told that he would count for nothing in life, prison was his destiny. The child born with a physical handicap, what kind of life did we predict for that boy or girl? The Black child or the poorest white trash, what chances do we give them to succeed in life when the odds seem stacked against them. Poverty, ignorance, and social proscription seem to define the existence and their future. Yet, despite the obvious, many have watched their predictions shattered. They have seen girls who were not very industrious in school, become great leaders. They have seen the bad boys of the elementary schools become the great businessmen and leaders of their generation. They have seen the physically challenged win Olympic competitions, write books and challenge the world. They have seen many loose themselves from dire expectations of poverty and rise to heights never imagined by those who doubted the possibilities. We have learned, through experience, never to second guess what God can do with a life that is placed in his hands.

There are certain unalterable truths about young people that seem immutable. How far children go as adults is directly related to their experiences as youth. What children see, hear and experience in their youth weighs heavy upon the productivity of their lives as adults. What adults do to children, say about children, and do for children, will affect them the rest of their lives.

Dorothy Knolte made this important observation. "Children learn what they observe.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn and be judgmental.

If children live with hostility, they learn to be angry and fight.

If children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy and withdrawn.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with tolerance, they learn to be patient.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with praise, they learn to appreciate.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with acceptance and friendship, they learn to find love in the world.

It is obvious, therefore, that we can shape the future of every child by surrounding them with love, home, attention, and expectations.

Dan Pursuit mused that to a great extent, most youth were a sign that reads, "I want to be important NOW." Many of our juvenile delinquency problems arise because nobody reads the sign.

What does God have in store for the child whose life has been placed in his hands? We don't know exactly, but we know what it means to be in God's hands. It means that God gently guides us to realize our fullest potential, if we will allow him to do so.

As believers, we don't know what the future holds for children, but we know, that children who allow God to use their lives can do great things. That's why we place our lives and the lives of our children in his trust and care.

Exposition

This text focuses on the awe inspired by the birth of John the Baptist.

John is one of several biblical children whose birth was promised and whose contribution to the world was destined to be great. At birth he appeared to be an ordinary child. However, even as he grew those around him could sense that he was different from other children, thus destined by God to greatness.

The mystery that surrounded John did not begin in his adult life, but in the very circumstances of his birth. He was from a God fearing family that ministered regularly before the Lord. His parents had prayed for many years for a child but were frustrated that years passed without conception, yet they prayed.

The parents sensed that once John was conceived that he would be endowed with some special gift or would accomplish some special purpose. They had been told by Angelic vision that the child should be named "John" (v13) because he would be an instrument of God's grace. Not only would the child of Zacharias and Elizabeth bring them joy, but he would do great works.

The prospects for the child were immense. The angels told Zacharias that the child would be special because it would be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from its mother's womb (v15). Moreover, many people would come to know the Lord in a different way because of his life, that will be endowed with the power of God to challenge people to repent and turn to God (v16).

Zacharias doubted that his son would be able do so many powerful things. He was a man of poverty himself. Though he attended the affairs of God religiously as

a Levite, he still could not conceive of a child, born of old age, doing such a mighty work through the power of God. He demanded a sign that would confirm what he had heard. The only sign he received was a restriction on his own abilities. He could not believe, so God froze his own movement; his ability to minister, work and carry out his duties, until what was promised came to fruition. From that day forward, Zacharias became dumb, unable to speak, not permanently, but until he could recognize the work of the Lord in his life.

When the child was born relatives, friends and neighbors came to assist Elizabeth. They had their ideas about what the child should be and offered to do what had not been done in the biblical record, name the child after his father. Biblical names were significant in that they represented great truths or expectations that the child symbolized. The record is replete of any accounts of a David, Jr. or a Solomon, II or a Samuel, Jr. Yet here, the neighbors proposed to name this child after his father, giving tribute to him for this great work of bearing a son in his old age.

Elizabeth refused the good intentions of the neighbors and relations. She said the child would be named "John" (v60). Not understanding why Elizabeth should not be honored to name the child the child "Junior" or "Zacharius the second", they went to Zacharias himself. Unable to speak, Zacharias no longer doubted what he had been told by God and wrote on a slate, that the child should be named John. He immediately recovered his ability to speak (v64). The sign he had asked for had been given.

When the people saw Zacharias speak. When they saw Elizabeth and her dumb husband both decide upon the same name in independent situations, they knew something special was about to happen in this family. They were not sure exactly what would happen, but they knew something would happen that would be great.

The friends and relatives left this aging husband and wife and their little boy and wondered "what manner of child shall this be?"

The would soon receive their answer because the hand of the Lord was with him.

What manner of child?

Today there are millions of people who have prejudged children and condemned them to failure because of the circumstances surrounding their birth. For many years, society frowned upon children born of unmarried parents by calling the child illegitimate. It was a misnomer. The child may be have been the product of an unsanctioned, unblessed relationship, but it was certainly not illegitimate. The relationship was illegitimate but, not the child. Such children lived through life, marked by an insensitive society. The circumstances surrounding John's birth should draw our attention to several considerations:

NEVER DOUBT THE POTENTIAL OF A CHILD: Zacaharias, even though he was told by angel what his child would become, doubted what he heard. As a result his own growth and activity were limited until he became a believer. Today, millions of parents don't really expect their children to achieve greatness. Many hope that they will stay out of jail, get a job, have children and make some money. The idea of

greatness is foreign to many parents. When Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner was a little girl her mother assumed she would be great. On that assumption she took it upon herself to teach her things she would need when greatness came. Among the many great things she did was to carry her daughter to every state capitol in America and to help her learn, American History and government. She doubled her efforts to send her to law school and gave everything she had to help her become a judge. When she was sworn in as the first woman judge, O'Conner said she didn't see the crowd, she searched for her mother who believed in her. The crowd cheered as she looked at her mother. Her eyes said "thank you." Parents should expect their children to be great and do what is necessary to help them develop the character and skills to acquire greatness. Zacharias should be a warning as well. His momentary doubt caused him to be dumb for nearly a year. Parents who doubt that God has selected your child for greatness and chuckle at the prospect, display a doubt similar to that of Zacharias. Such doubt can lead, it has been shown, to interruptions in parental grow and flow, until the potential is realized.

IGNORE THE LOW EXPECTATIONS OF NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS: Very often the people around us, who attempt to be our friends, do us more damage than good. Parents who believe their children destined to greatness, will often ignore the opinions of their friends and relatives. Elizabeth's friends told her what she should name her son. Elizabeth knew greater things were being planned for him, she named him John. There are many today who condemn children to be just like their mothers, fathers, uncles. Many of them were not bad people, but were not great people either. When born in poverty, no one expects the poor child to be anything except poor and ignorant. When born into a non-achieving environment, very few expect the children of such circumstances to exceed their history. Believing parents should ignore sociologists, doubters, skeptics and even friends who doubt the prospects of greatness for their children. When God has blessed, nothing but greatness can result. Parents such as these invest in the potential of their sons and daughters. They struggle against the jokes of their friends to help their children achieve. They seek out organizations that help instill character. They seek out activities that will instill discipline and scholarship. They look for churches that help mold and shape their spirituality. No matter what the world says, they believe in their children's potential and tell them so repeatedly.

When the hand of the Lord is upon us.

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should never under estimate our potential when the hand of the Lord is upon us.

The hand of God is the essential element in realizing potential. That's why Hannah brought her son Samuel to the temple and placed him in the hand of the Lord.

That's why millions of families each year bring their infant children to the altar and place them in the hands of the Lord.

In the hands of the Lord, lives that have been shattered by the circumstances of poverty can be restored agin

In the hands of the Lord, gifts that are ever so humble can become mighty tools. In 2 Kings 3:15, the hand of the Lord was upon a musician and he played with power

In the hands of the Lord, the impossible becomes possible. In 1 Kings 18:46, the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah he performed mighty miracles.

In the hand of the Lord, doors are opened for us. In Ezra 7:6, Ezra was granted his every request in life because the Hand of the Lord was upon him

A life place in the hands of the Lord, changes other lives. In Acts 11:21, the hand of the Lord was upon the Apostles, and many believed.

In the hands of the Lord, even the most humble can become great!

In the hands of the Lord the:

Weakest can rise to become the strongest

Losers can overcome odds to become winners

Faithless can be encouraged to become bold

Lost can find themselves

The disappointed can find new reason for optimism

Disheartened can find new reason for hope!

In the right hands, the good can become better!

In the right hands, the average can become superior!

In God's hands, the lost can find salvation!

These are the hands that were stretched out on Calvary!

These were the hands that were pierced and nailed!

These are the hands of one who died for our sins!

These are the hands that raised, Early Sunday morning, in victory over death and grave!

These are the hands of Jesus of Nazereth, who has all power! All power in his hands!

No. 827-Christmas

Star Search

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 17, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "..Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him" Matthew 2: 2

Introduction

Have you ever waited for something promised to you but it took a long time coming? Most of us have been recipients of promises. Many of us have waited, what seemed to be enormous amounts of time to receive something promised. There are some that are waiting on promised employment raises that seem elusive. Some are waiting on marriage proposals. This season of the year, many children are waiting on a special day when they have been promised an exciting day, in return for a year of good behavior. It's a day that seems to come so slow. The clock seems to tick slower. The nights seem to get longer. The closer it gets, the slower that magic day seems to come. Whether we are children waiting for toys or bigger boys waiting for larger toys, when we are waiting for something, it seems to come slow.

When something has been promised, we look for it. Consider the young man who was a little nervous about making a promise to be faithful to his wife forever. Just before the wedding ceremony he met the pastor in the hall and asked him to skip the part of the wedding vow about being faithful until death. To insure the deal the young man slipped three crisp new $100 bills in the pastor's hand. Secure that he wouldn't promise anything that he was not willing to deliver, the groom marched down the isle with a big smile on his. His wife also had a warm smile on her face. Both of the them were extremely happy. However, when the minister reached the part of the vows that asked the groom to respond he said, "Do you promise to wake up your wife each morning with a sweet morning kiss, serve her breakfast in bed, grant her every wish and never look at another woman so long as you shall live?" With the entire church staring at him and seeing the big grin on his wife's face, the groom whispered, "I do." Immediately the groom leaned over to the pastor and said, "Say, you promised. I thought we had a deal!" The pastor gave the groom the three $100 bill back and said, "You know why your wife is smiling so much? She made me a better deal!"
We look for whatever has been promised and are disappointed when it doesn't come.

God made the world some promises. For hundreds of years the world waited for those promises to come true. God made many promises, since most of them had been fulfilled, the Jewish people had no reason to believe that this promise would not be

fulfilled. God promised Noah it would flood, and it did. He promised a rainbow, it came. He promised Joshua that sun would stand still, it did. He promised Moses that the Red Sea would roll back and it did. He also promised the world that he would send a savior, whose birth would be announced by a shining star. The people took him at that promise too and started searching for the star that would be the sign that God's promised had been fulfilled.

In biblical times wise men searched for the savior. They searched by looking for his star. When they found the star, they knew that God's promised would have been fulfilled. Today, wise men are still searching. They are searching, not necessarily for a specific star in the heavens, but for a sign that God is keeping promises made to the faithful.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that is not slack in his promises. We know that what he promises, he delivers. It may seem like a long time coming, but a promise from God is good as a blessing received.

Exposition

This passage focuses on the search of the astrologers and wise men for the baby Jesus.

Matthew divides the account of the birth of Christ into five stories that begin at Matthew 1:8 through the end of chapter two. The first story, begins with an angel making an announcement to Joseph about the forthcoming birth of Christ. Chapter 2:1-12 begins the search of the wise men and Herod's attempt to kill the baby boys. The third story begins at 2:13 detailing how God moved Joseph and his family to Egypt for safety to avoid the genocidal plans of Herod. The Fourth story recalls how Herod's decision was similar to that of Pharaoh that caused great weeping in Rama. The last story begins at 2:19-23 and details Mary and Joseph's return from Egypt and move to Nazereth after the death of Herod.

This text focuses on the second of the five Christmas stories, the search of the wise men.

In Babylon and Persia there were men who studied the formation and the movement of the stars. They were called then, as they are today, astrologers. While astrologers today focus on the science of star movement, in biblical times the astrologers ascribed significance to those movements, specifically as they relate to revealing secrets about the future, personal growth or destruction. They were familiar with Judaism and its prophets by virtue of many Jewish leaders, such as Daniel, the Three Hebrew Boys, Ester, Nehemiah, and others having served in high places in their kingdoms. Most rose to prominence because of the mighty acts of an unseen God who had no statues or images. This raised their curiosity and they searched for information about this God.

Among the writings were several predictions by prophets that a King would be born in Israel and that his birth would be predicted by a star. In Numbers 24:15-19 they saw prophecies that a star would rise up out of Jacob with a kingly scepter that would

begin kingdom building efforts. They read in Micah 5:2 they that the new king would be born in Bethlehem. The astrologers watched the stars constantly looking for something different that would indicate the fulfillment of these predictions. When they finally saw a different star appear in the horizon, they immediately associated it with the scriptures they had read and predictions made. They began a journey, that would take them almost two years to complete, to find the new king and present him with symbolic gifts. The knew where to go, because the scriptures pointed the way. When they found him they expected to worship him.

The text places significance upon the star. It is called "his Star." It indicates that they believed the star they saw was not simply an astrological phenomenon but a special appearance with a personal application. The astrologers made their observances without benefit of telescopes which were not invented until 1672. When they saw "his star" they saw it with the naked eye and drew their conclusions from their observations.

To single out "his star" is significant because there are billions of galaxies in the universe. Each galaxy has billions of stars. The galaxy which includes earth has over 100 billion stars in it. Yet with 100 billion stars, many of which can be seen with the naked eye, they astrologers saw "his star."

They made the designation that what they saw was "his Star" without the knowledge that light travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second.

The light that formed the star they saw began its journey long before they saw it appear. The closest star is said to be about 4 light years away. How far away is a light year? A light year is the distance that light can travel in one year. In one minute a beam of light can travel 11 million miles. In one hour it can travel 669 million miles. In one day it travels 16 billion miles. In one year a beam of light travels 5.8 trillion miles.

Since the closest stars to earth are about 4 light years away, if the star the wise men saw was among the closest, there would be at least a four year gap between the time that star twinkled and the time the astrologers saw it with their naked eye, traveling some 24 trillion miles. In essence, there was a large span of time between the wink that began in heaven and the twinkle of the star the astrologers saw on earth.

The promise was real. The astrologers knew it. They searched for it. Knew where to go. And prepared worship the Lord when they found him.

They Searched

Today there are millions who are still searching for something in life. They are not quite sure what it is they want, but they are searching. They believe that God has something for them but they can't quite put their hands on it. Look closer at the wise men and their search for "his Star" can reflect upon our own life search.

THEY KNEW WHAT TO SEARCH FOR: The wise men knew what to search for. They looked for a star in the heavens. Today, there are millions who are looking for something but I have no idea what they want. Some men want a beautiful woman, they get her and start looking for another. Some look for happiness in a house or certain automobile; once achieved they are still looking. Many spend aimless years

searching the aisle of life opportunities but can't seem to find just what they are looking for. Solomon had the same dilemma. He spent his entire life searching for happiness. He tried education, music, partying, women, wealth, science, building construction and a plethora of hobbies, only to conclude in Ecclesiastes 12 that the only thing that really brings true happiness is to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Even though they were non-believers, the astrologers knew what to look for because they studied the Word of God. What are you seeking? Matthew 6:33 says we should seek the kingdom of God first and make other things secondary. When we know what we are looking for, we have made the first step toward finding it.

THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHERE TO GO: The wise men saw the star and knew where to go! The headed for Bethlehem. The star did not shine a light straight to Bethlehem, the word of God pointed them to Bethlehem. What course should we take in life? Which way should we go? As one year ends and another looms on the horizon, where should we go? The spirit of God should be our compass. Paul wanted to minister in Asia Minor. It was an obvious choice for him because it was close and cost effective. Yet, the spirit of God led him into Macedonia where his ministry sky rocketed and spread. Phillip was led into the desert to minister. It was unpopulated. Yet one man came along riding in a chariot. That man was baptized and scholars believe started a movement that brought Christianity to Africa. We may not know where we should go in life or what we should do, but God knows. The spirit of God will tell us exactly where to go in life if we will follow him.

THEY KNEW WHAT TO DO ONCE THEY GOT THERE: The wise men knew where they were going, who they were looking for, and what to do once they arrived. They brought offerings and prepared to worship. There can be no real joy unless believers have learned to worship and praise the Lord with sincerity and truth. What to do once "we get there" is a problem that has plagued believers over the years. When Israel finally made it to the promised land, they spent years in frustration because they didn't know what to do when they arrived. Many African-Americans, newly freed from slavery had prayed so long to be free, when it finally arrived, many didn't know what to do and stayed with their former masters. What do we do once we have achieved some of the goals we have set for ourselves? If the wise men are example we should bring offerings and prepare to praise the Lord! Praise him for his goodness. Praise him for his mercy!

The Blessing Is On the Way!

Finally, brothers and sisters, this text reminds us that just because you haven't seen your star, doesn't mean the twinkle hasn't begun!

The star the wise men found shined bright in the night sky, but its twinkle began at least four years and possibly hundreds of years earlier.

Today, there are millions of believers who also searching for their own stars. Many are looking for answers to prayers and blessings. In their frustration there are

many who have given up on God thinking their star will never shine; and their blessing will never come! Yet, no one should be completely frustrated if it appears that everyone's star is shining but yours, because the fact that your blessing has not arrived, does not mean it is not on the way.

If the birth of Christ has any real significance to believers it is that it reminds us in so many ways not to give up hope, help is on the way!

In the darkness of our silent nights, the stars give new life to our withering hopes!

It's tough to be in the dark, but it's even tougher when you can't see the stars! It's hard to see the stars, if there are clouds in the way. Clouds of doubt make it hard for us to believe that we have any opportunity to overcome.

When difficulty comes in the night, clouds overspread the sky and its hard to see the stars!

When death comes, it's hard to see the stars, that remind us that God shall wipe all their tears away!

When trouble comes, it's hard to see the stars, that remind us that "trouble don't last always!"

When tears well up in our eyes, it's hard to see the stars, that remind us that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

That' why when God was ready to send the world a message of hope, he moved the clouds out of the way! I heard the song writer declare, "It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old" Another song writer said, "O holy night, the stars are brightly shining!"

The wise men didn't spend time searching for their own star in the heavens, they searched for his star. They put their lives on hold and traveled half way around the known world, looking for fulfillment of his star.

That should say to everyone today, that you can't find your star until you find his star! His star is what Moses talked about when he referred to a star that would rise up out of Jacob!

His star is what the wise men referred to when they said, we have seen his star in the East. His star is what John talked about in Revelation as the "root and offspring of David, the bright and morning."

A star is a self contained unit that generates its own light and energy. Unlike the moon that reflects light from the sun, which is a star, a star generates its own light.

His star represents the power of the Lord, independent of all other powers. Our God is able! A star is active 24 hours a day. You may not be able to see it, but it never stops shining!

His star is just like that. He never shining. He shines in the morning. He shines in the evening. He shines in the midnight. That's why David declared, "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

That God for the bright and morning star!

His name is Jesus! Wonderful Counselor! Almighty God!

He was born in Bethlehem, but died on an Old rugged cross!

But Early Sunday morning, the clouds were rolled away and the world saw his star shining!

If you are struggling on the edge of night!
Put your trust in the man behind the star! His name is Jesus!

No. 828-Inspiration

How Big is the Baby?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 24, 2000

SCRIPTURE: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

Introduction

How much do you weigh when you were born? Were you a scrawny little thing, barely tipping the scales? Were you an average sized baby? Or, were you a larger than usual? One of the first questions that we usually asked about a new born child, is, "How big is the baby?" If we hear the baby that the baby was four pounds, we start to worry, six to seven pounds, we smile. At eight to nine pounds we put our hands over our mouths in disbelief. When we hear 10 pounds, we sit down. Everyone seems curious about the size of the baby.

While we know that the size of a baby at birth is not a sure sign of anything in the future, people are never-the-less curious. We have seen the scrawny baby grow up to be a strong man. We have seen the biggest babies grow up to be only averaged sized men and women. Birth weight is not a true indicator, but we want to know any way. Consider the folks in the mountain country who knew very little about the facts of life. The old farmer watched his pregnant wife get bigger and bigger, until she looked as if she would burst. When it came time to deliver they sent for the doctor who came in the black of night. The doctor told the farmer, to hold the light while he delivered the child. Soon the doctor delivered a bouncing baby boy. Then the doctor yelled, "You better hold that light down here again, then he produced a second baby boy. Then the doctor yelled, "You better hold that light down here again, then he produced a third baby boy. When the doctor called for the light a fourth time the farmer look at his lantern then said, "Doc, do you think you could do this in the dark, this light seems to be making them come out, one after the othern.'

Why do we celebrate the birth of a baby? They don't really do much. The kid just sort of lays there. Why do we make such a big deal out of babies? They can't walk, can't talk, can't even take care of themselves. Why do we make such a big deal out of their arrival? Why do we ask the question, "How big was the baby?" Perhaps because we want to believe in the baby's potential. Even though it doesn't always

work out as we think, knowing how big the baby is, gives a mental snapshot of the future, at least at the present.

More than anything else, babies are bundles of potentiality. The potential is not always revealed in physical size. Samson must have been a big baby, he grew to be strongest man that every lived. Yet, David might have been a small baby, being the smallest of his brethren, not strong in appearance, yet it was David that killed Goliath, not his bigger, stronger brothers. We celebrate the birth of babies because of what they can be.

In the sense that babies have so much potential, that they change the people around them. Good parents recognize that they may be holding in their arms a future president, congresswoman, teacher, minister, or the one person that God has sent to the world to find a cure for cancer. Because babies represent so much potential, they change people. Good parents become active in church, because they realize the importance of a spiritual life and want to make sure that their babies get a solid spiritual foundation. Because of babies, life-styles change. Working habits are adjusted, romance, and sacrifices are made because we want to be sure that the potential we saw in our babies, the first day we held them in our arms, is realized.

In a manger in Bethlehem, a little baby was born, with great potential. He was just a little baby, kicking in the air, crying, wetting, burping, and warming his parents with toothless grins. He wasn't powerful. He didn't perform any tricks or do anything out of the ordinary. Yet shepherds stopped what they were doing and gathered at a cave like stable and celebrated the birth of a baby. A great, big, bundle of potentiality! It was the baby's potential that raised hopes. It was the idea that laying there, in that manger, was hope for the future, that brought everyone to their knees.

As Christians, we celebrate the birth of the Christ child, because that birth brought the world the potential for peace, joy, love and good will toward all men. He was just a little baby, laying in the manger, but his potential overshadowed the circumstances of his birth.

Exposition.

This text focuses on the birth of Christ, in a manger in Bethlehem.

Mary and Joseph came from Nazereth to Bethlehem to register to pay their taxes. It was a long and tedious journey on foot, but the couple arrived in Bethlehem, only to find that there were no rooms available for them in what served as hotels of their time. However, they were provided a chance to house themselves in a stable. Mary was obviously pregnant and considerably tired. Even a stable was considered a blessing at that moment.

That night the labor pains began. It was uncomfortable. The child moved inside her. As she groaned, it was if the angels in heaven heard her cries. They announced to shepherds, who were watching their flocks, that the hope of Israel was being born in a stable in Bethlehem. The shepherds came and bowed in the presence of the baby and its parents. They bowed at the potential of what God was going to do through this child for Israel.

The hope they saw in the Christ child was not aimless musing. It was grounded in promises made by God. In Isaiah 9:6-7, the prophet raised the nation's expectations when he said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

Why we celebrate?

Today, there are some who might ask, why do we celebrate the birth of a child who was born over 2000 years ago. Why is the world in such a frenzy over something that happened so long ago? The answer today is the same as it was then, the birth of the Christ Child represents the hope that we will triumph over the difficulties of our times to achieve a better and brighter future. He was just a baby, but he was a little baby with big potential. Today, we are drawn to him for the same reasons... for the potential and hope that he represents for our lives. To many he represents the:

POTENTIAL TO REALIZE DREAMS: The presence of Christ in a believer's life, represents the potential to realize dreams. Possibilities are limitless. One of the major differences between adults and children is that adults place limits on what they can do in life and call it reality. Children have no limits. They dream of becoming astronauts, firemen, Presidents and mail carriers. They can dream because they accept the truth that all things are possible. The late Robert F. Kennedy represented this idealism when he said, "Some men see things as they are and ask why, I dream dreams of things that never were and ask, why not?" The birth of Christ inspires this kind of thinking because he said in Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." It is through Christ that we realize our greatest potential. We have learned, that, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

POTENTIAL TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES: The Christ child fuels our hope that despite obstacles in our way, we shall over come. Believers stubbornly pursue goals and are not easily dissuaded. This is true because believers have an unwavering faith that with God, we can climb over, walk around or tunnel through any mountain in our way. We believe that if really gets down to it that God can and will literally will move mountains out of our way. The Christ child represents the embodiment of what the scriptures teach, that "no weapon formed against us shall prosper." This hope makes us bold! Some call us cocky because we walk up to the Red Sea of difficulty and expect it to roll back. We wander in our wilderness of trial and expect the Bread of Heaven to feed us until we want no more. When our enemies hide themselves within the safe and secure walls of Jericho and shoot arrows at us, we raise our voices to God in a shout and expect the walls to come tumbling down. The birth of the Christ

Child inspires this kind of hope because he said we are blessed when we meet obstacles of persecution, trouble and difficulty and great is our reward in heaven.

POTENTIAL TO RE-CREATE OURSELVES: The Christ child fuels our desire to correct our mistakes and start again. Even the best person makes mistakes. It is expected. That's why pencils come with erasers, type writers come equipped with erasure ribbons and computers have spelling and grammar checkers. Mistakes are inevitable. Believers are encouraged by the birth of the Christ child because it means that we have the hope of forgiveness. Despite our best efforts, we often fall short of God's expectations. We often fail to do what we should do and then do poorly what little we do. What draws us to Christ is the opportunity to begin again. Not only is it an opportunity, but starting over is almost a requirement. He said, "Except a man be born again" he cannot begin life in the kingdom of God. We are inspired by the truth that believers who are in Christ are "new creatures." Old things are passed away and all things become new. The potential to begin again is exciting. It lifts the spirits and it provides us hope of a brighter future. The birth of the Christ child inspires this hope because we know that as a man and as the son of God, he looks beyond our faults and sees our needs.

How Big is the baby?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the answer to the question that was initially asked, "How big is the baby?" Every believer responds with the answer, he's big enough.

The fact that the little baby in the manger in Bethlehem was the son of God should have been enough, but there are still those that ask, "How big is the baby?" It is not a new question, but one that has been asked of God for many years, "Is thy God able?"

When the king prepared to throw the three Hebrew Boys into the fiery furnace, he asked, "Is thy God able to deliver thee?"

When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, what was really being asked is, "How big is your God?"

How big was the baby in Bethlehem? We have no records of pounds and ounces, but all we know is that he was big enough!

He was big enough to feed starving masses and heal the sick and disheartened.

He was big enough to turn water into wine and walk upon the sea!

He was big enough to lift the scales from a blind man's eyes and call Lazarus from his tomb!

How big was the baby?

He is big enough to take all of my failures and turn them into successes!

He is big enough to take all of my shortcomings and turn them into opportunities!

He is big enough to take all of my weaknesses and turn them into strengths!

He is big enough to take all of my defeats and turn them into victories!

How big is the baby?

He is big enough to hold the whole world in his hands. I heard David say, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The song writer must have heard him

because he said, “He’s got the whole world in his hands! He’s got the little bitty babies in his hands!”

How big is the baby?

He’s big enough to love the whole world! John said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosever believeth on him, should not perish but have everlasting life.”

He’s big enough to pick up an old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha’s hill!

He’s big enough to die out on Calvary!

How big is the baby?

He’s so big, that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

How big is the baby?

He’s big enough to give us a blessed presence and a bright future!

No. 829-New Year

Traveling Directions

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 7, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD." Joshua 6:7 "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city." Joshua 6:16

Introduction

Have you ever traveled in the wrong direction but thought you were right? Those who have planned trips, often take the time to map their course, plot their journey, select the best routes, check the roads for detours and delays and take every precaution. Sometimes, passengers sense that they are traveling in the wrong direction but are rebuffed when they attempt to correct the driver. It's hard for anyone who thinks they have their route perfectly planned to admit that, despite their best efforts, they are still traveling in the wrong direction. We sense it when we notice that the road signs and land marks familiar to this course are missing. The foolish will continue to drive in the wrong direction, hoping the road will connect to something, somewhere. The wise will reroute themselves, turn around and put themselves back on course.

There is a reason for everything and a predictable result for every decision. That's the point a Sunday School teacher was trying to make to her class of seven year olds when she told them the story of Moses leading the people in the wilderness. Moses, the teacher said, led the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness. The teacher asked the question, "What was the reason Moses led the people around in circles for 40 years?" One boy stood and answered, "Because God wanted them to appreciate the promised land once they made it there." Another girl, said, God wanted to let the people know that had to depend on him." The teacher was real pleased with the answers until one little boy waved his hand and stood with this answer, "Moses carried the people around in circles for 40 years, because he wouldn't stop and ask directions!" —That was the reason he saw.

Have you been moving around in circles and getting nowhere? Has it frustrated you? Moving in circles is not a real problem, as long as God has given you direction to move in circles. Often airplane passengers hear the pilot announce just before landing that the plane is in a holding pattern until a run way clears or conditions permit the plan to land. In these circumstances, the plane flies in circles but its circling pattern

is sanctioned by the tower, for the purpose of insuring a safe landing.

In any given year, God gives his people moving directions. For Israel, those instructions came through the forming of a stationary and moving pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. For Elijah the directions came as a still voice. For Jonah the directions were heard clearly even though he lingered in the belly of a great fish. The believer's quest is to make sure that any direction taken is godly inspired, no matter how others think. When God inspires our march, we are assure to reach our destination without harm.

As Christians, we strive to follow God's directions every day. As a new year approaches we ask him for guidance to plan our route, then check along the way to make sure we haven't made a wrong turn, then drive forward at a steady pace keeping our heavenly destination in sight!

Exposition

This passage focuses on God's direction to Israel as they moved into the promised land and faced the armed fortresses of Jericho.

The Israelites were a people who, for the most part, were led by the spirit of God. For 40 years they had conditioned themselves to move at God's command. In the wilderness, they moved at an instant whenever the pillar of cloud that led them by day lifted itself and moved. Even if the pillar, which was fire by night, began to move in the middle of the night, they were quick to move. It did not matter when God would tell them to move, the people stood ready to move instantly at God's command.

They never knew where God would take them, when he would tell them to move, or how long they would be traveling. They simply moved at his command.

This text is one of a series of commands that God gave to a new generation of believers. They had heard the old stories about how God moved for their parents and grandparents. Now God prepared to demonstrate his directing power to a totally new generation.

After the death of Moses, the people no longer wandered in the wilderness. God gave them a brand new direction. The first route that God gave Joshua was short and simple. The command was to move into Jordan and occupy it. It was a simple directive until the people recognized that there was a wide, swollen river, that separated them from the land of promise. However impossible it seemed, the people prepared to march right through the river at God's command. However, as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the river waters rolled back and they crossed on dry land.

Once in Jordan, this text finds God giving the people another impossible, even foolish sounding set of directions. They faced the impossible task of driving out the people of Jericho who were fortified behind high walls of security. Instead of telling them to prepare for war the Lord gave a very ridiculous sounding directive. He told them to march around the city without making a sound, with the sole exception that seven priests would blow upon trumpets. The sound of these trumpets marked God's declaration of war against the people of God. They had nothing to do except follow

God's command and circle the city.

They were to march around for six days. However, on the seventh day, they were told to march around the city seven times, after which they were to let out a great victory shout.

It sounded strange, but the people followed God's direction. Circling the city every day and then seven times on the last day. Every day they were probably taunted by their enemies who thought them a pitiful, defenseless mob of untrained, unskilled, and more importantly, unarmed peasants, seeking to steal their land.

On the last day they were probably taunted even more by the by the residents of Jericho for their ridiculous appearing act. Whomever lead them could have given them better directions! An army of over 600,000 men attacking at full force from every side would have a fighting chance against Jericho. Had they been directed to strategically attack the city from various vantage points with foot soldiers and cavalrymen, showers of arrows and flaming oil drenched stones, they might have an even better chance. Any number of directions would seem more plausible than simply marching around the city. It seemed like an open and shut case of weak leadership and bad directions. Yet, while their enemies laughed, the Lord moved in the shouts of the people and the walls of the city came tumbling down.

Their destination was sure. Their method was unorthodox, but they followed God's directions in the new land and found victory and something to shout about

Directions for the journey

Today, believers face similar dilemmas. Entering a new year there are many obstacles that lie ahead. They are formidable, overwhelming, and burdensome. As believers prepare to travel into this new year, each should adopt the attitude of the Israelites who also wandered into the unknown. Each person should resolve to receive his or her traveling directions from God, regardless to how those directions may be received by their neighbors and friends. Those who travel into the new year will probably adopt one of four attitudes:

TRAVELING WRONG AND THINKING YOU' ARE RIGHT: There are many that will enter the new year traveling wrong, but thinking they are right. At the very least, they will convince themselves there is no problem with the route they have chosen. Last year, these are the ones who convinced themselves that their absence from worship, bible study, and active participation in the Lord's ministries was excusable. They reasoned in their mind that they were serving a greater good through their political service, community involvement, fraternal commitments, attention to family needs and personal financial growth. With this mindset, they travel at a full speed last year, without checking a road sign or a map to consider whether they route they had chosen carried them closer to God or further away. They slept well, convinced that God would not hold them accountable for the lack of commitment because, after all, they served a greater good. They believed themselves to be traveling right. Proverbs 16:25 says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The litmus test is to question each route

decision to ask, whether or not this decision takes us closer to God or further away. If we are children of God any direction that takes us further from the ideal that God desires, is a wrong direction. It is a way that "seemeth" right to us, but it will take us to damnation.

TRAVELING RIGHT AND THINKING YOU ARE WRONG: There are many are considering new directions in the new year, operating under the misguided notion that they were traveling wrong in the year's past. These are those who have considered the prosperity of unbelievers around them who seem to flourish traveling without making the spiritual material sacrifices of the believer's life. They have evens seen members of the church who seem to do well without attending worship regularly, paying a tithe, attending Sunday School or even maintaining a regular prayer life. There are some who have been paying close attention to their spiritual development over the years who have become frustrated at the relative success of so many people who are not following God's direction. Their success is so glaring that many begin to think that they are traveling wrong, even though they know they are traveling right. Someone today, is considering joining the band of the unrighteous because it appears that their direction is more rewarding. It appears that they are being blessed without singing in the choir, coming to Sunday School, participating in youth activities, or serving in church ministries. If they can be blessed without being fully committed someone has decided that this is an easier, less demanding route to take. Yet the word of God addresses this feeling in Psalm 37:1, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." In 37:8 we are warned to, "fret not thyself in any wise" or not to even consider following the example of the ungodly or even that of believers who are not fully committed to kingdom building. They are traveling in the wrong the direction and shall "soon be cut down." Those who are one the right path, stay the course and received God's ultimate reward.

TRAVELING WRONG AND KNOWING YOU ARE WRONG: There are many who traveled in the wrong direction last year and knew it was wrong. These are the individuals who have seen the road map, know the route needed to get to their destination, but have traveled the opposite direction knowingly. Why would a person travel opposite the direction they want to go? There are some like Jonah, who know which direction they should travel but have their own reason for avoiding the route. Instead of going to Ninevah, Jonah tried to travel on the right ship with full knowledge that he was traveling in the wrong direction. Like Jonah, there are many today who have their own reasons for traveling in the wrong direction. Each reason they give seems justifiable and satisfactory to them. In Romans 7:20, Paul explained how a person can do wrong, knowing full well that it is wrong. He said, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." He said the presence of sin in any person's life pushes them to do wrong, with the full knowledge that it is wrong. Paul said the only way such a person can redirect themselves is to allow Christ to come into their lives. He will make each person a new creature.

Traveling Right and Knowing You Are Right!

Finally, brothers and Sisters, there is a word for the last group. This is the group of believers that is traveling right and knows that it is traveling right!

It must be frustraing to be traveling wrong but thinking you're right.

It must be equally frustrating to be traveling right and thinking you're wrong

It must be debilitating to travel the wrong direction and know you are traveling wrong.

If these scenarios are frustrating, then think of the joy of the man or woman who is traveling right and knows that he is traveling right.

The man or woman that is traveling right is confident, and assured regardless to the uneasiness of those around him. That's why the believer sings, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine oh what a fortaste of Glory devine. Heir of Salvation, Purchase of God, born of spirit and washed in his blood!" The believer on the right road declares, "This is my story this is my song, praising my savior all the day long."

The man who is traveling right and knows that he is right can say with Job in Job 19:25, "I know that my redeemer liveth."

Those who travel on the roadways of life must pay attention to the roadsigns because they let you know when you are traveling in the right direction!

Every believer needs know how to read the signs of life.

HIGHWAY SIGN lets you know the number of the highway upon which you are traveling then lets you know whether traveling North or South. It's possible to be on the right highway but be traveling in the wrong direction!

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS because the numbers have a meaning. If you are traveling highway 20 and see signs reading "220" or "620" those first digits indicate there is a bypass coming. This bypass will carry you around an area.

An even numbered bypass number like 220 or 620 means that that the bypass will hook you up on the the same highway, in the same direction on the other side!

An odd numbered bypass number like 320 or 520 means that the bypass will carry you around but it will probably carry you in a different direction on a different highway.

Somebody is worried that last year life seem to have thrown them into a loop. They are worried because it seemed that they have been trying to live right but they are going around in circles.

If God has put you on a bypass, if you're living right, that by pass will hook up on the other side, on the same highway, going in the same direction!

WATCH THE SPEED LIMIT because if you travel the wrong speed, you can hurt yourself! Those who know travel know you can get a ticket for going to fast, but you can also get a ticket for going to slow! The Holy Spirit is a speed cop. If you're going to fast, he'll slow you down. If you're going to slow, he'll speed you up!

LOOK FOR A PLACE TO REST if you are tired. If you watch the signs you see one that says there is food, fuel and place to lay your head.

On the highway the children look for the Golden Arches. If there is a McDonald's, there's going to be a Burger King. If there's a McDonald's and a Burger King there's going to be a gas station!

Every Sunday morning, believers traveling the highway of life, look high in the

air and look for the sign of the Cross and they make a pit stop!

"Somebody told me that you serve food for the soul..bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

"Somebody told me that I can rest my soul here, ...I came to Jesus as I was, weary wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

The children of Israel marched around in a circle seven times on that last day, but when they sent up a shout, the walls came tumbling down!

When God blesses us, we have something to shout about!

When we get close to our destination, we have something to shout about!

If you've been on the road a long time and you get close to home, every time you see a new road sign showing you are 100, then 55, then 20 miles from home, you feel like shouting!

I don't know about you, but when I think about the year ahead, I feel a shout coming on!

When I think about everything God's going to do this year, I feel a shout coming on!

Every time I think about Jesus, how bore an old rugged cross for me; I feel a shout coming on!

Every time I think how he died out on Calvary, I feel a shout coming on!

Every time I think about him staying in the grave for three long days and nights! I feel a shout coming on!

But every time I think about Early Sunday morning, how arose from the dead, I feel a shout coming!

Stay on the battlefield!

Keep your hands in God's hand!

No matter how high the walls!

Send up a shout and the walls will come tumbling down!

No. 830-Martin Luther King

I Have A Dream

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 14, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh" Genesis 37:19

Introduction

Do you have a dream? Our dreams are the manifestation of our hopes and wishes. They represent the positive pictures that we have painted about our futures. We dream of business success, professional achievement, family unity, peace, and spiritual power. We dream of victory! We dream of history making accomplishments. We dream of lazy sunny days on the fishing pond, when the fish are biting and the weather is fine. We dream of walking on the beach with love of our lives and sharing eternal moments. If our dreams represent our positive thoughts, nightmares would represent our worse fears. Our nightmares paint dark, muddied pictures of failure, defeat, death, poverty, gloom and doom. Every person has both dreams and nightmares, depending on our statue, those dreams may go beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary.

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous, "I Have A Dream" speech in front of over 200,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. He spoke of his personal dream, it was so broad and sweeping in its appeal that any of the millions of Negro Americans that watched him on television could have easily substituted themselves each time he said, "I have a dream!"

"I have a dream that the State of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering in the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and love."

"I have a dream that one day my four little children will live in a nation where they will be judged, not by the color their skin but by the content of their character!"

"I have a dream, that one day the sons of former slaves and the former slave owners will sit down together at the table of brotherhood..."

Martin Luther King's expression of his dream for America, was instantly embraced by millions because it represented the hopes and wishes of millions in America, both Black and White.

What was different about Dr. King's dream and our dream? What was different about the dreams of Ghandi, Thoreau, or Emerson? What made their dreams different from our dreams? Ghandi dreamed of a united India, free of oppression. Thoreau,

dreamed of a liberated individual who marched to the beat of a different drummer. Emerson, dreamed of the ideal balance between man and nature at peace with each other. Each dreamed great dreams that are the subject of study and review by countless generations.

But what makes their dreams differ from our dreams?

Were they any different from the dreams of your great-great grandfather, who may have sat in the middle of a cotton field, with sweat dripping from his brow, callouses on his hand and scars on back, dreaming!

If you would have asked great-great grandpa, what he was thinking, he too would probably say, "I have a dream!"

Ask, Great-grandma, who scrubbed floors through a depression, and washed the dirty laundry of millionaires for pennies as her beautiful face became rubbery and dark, and her cold black hair turned silver and grey. Ask grandma, and she'll probably say, "I have a dream!"

Martin Luther King said his dream was deeply rooted in the American dream, "we hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

But great grandpa, didn't know anything about Thoreau or Emerson. He didn't know anything about the philosophy of Locke or the noble writings of Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson. But grandpa could say, "I have a dream!" that is deeply rooted in the Word of God!

I have a dream that one day that the first shall be last and last shall be first!

I have a dream that the bottom rail will one day come to the top!

I can hear great grandpa, breathlessly mutter, I have a dream that one day "Ethiopia shall stretch forth her wings and fly" again!

Dr. King, Thoreau, Emerson and great-great grandpa dream dreams, but they were not personal dreams. Their dreams had grown beyond themselves and embraced entire nations, and even the entire world. When they dreamed, they dreamed an all inclusive dream that dwarfed themselves and embraced the hopes and futures of all man kind.

While we dream of a house, a car, a job and a successful career for ourselves. They dreamed of a nation that provides opportunities for everyone to have a house, a car, a job, and a successful career without artificial barriers. Our dreams are generally for us. They dreamed the big picture and brought us all into the circle.

As Christians, we also dream. Like great grandpa, our dreams are rooted in our faith in God, that day will come when a person's color will be an important distinction but not a discriminating factor. Like Martin Luther King, we too can say, "I have a dream!"

Exposition

This text focuses on a description of Joseph by his brothers, as the dreamer.

Joseph was the favorite son of his father Jacob. That favorite son status often drew the envy of his brothers who were jealous of his position. Joseph's position became dangerously imperiled when he shared his dreams with them. The dreams exacerbated the problem because they depicted the brothers in a surbordinate role to Joseph, bowing down to him and treating him as their lord Dreams in the Old Testament are rarely mentioned, except in the Books of Daniel and Genesis. In these instances, dreams are characterized as instruments used by God to depict future states. God used a dream to give Solomon an opportunity to ask for anything he wished in 1 Kings 3:5. He also used dreams to speak to the Babylonian King about his ultimate fall from grace. Prophets were often given directions in dreams.

In the New Testament, references to dreams were very few. It appears that The New Testament placed very little importance on dreams. They were certainly mentioned much less than in the Old Testament. There are only six references and one citation to dreams or dreamers. It is significant that all these references are in the book of Matthew and still more significant that Jesus nowhere refers to dreams, evidently attaching little if any importance to them as instruments by which God would speak to individuals. The references in Matthew are confined entirely to warnings and announcements. The one citation is in Acts 2:17 which referred to an Old Testament prophecy about old men dreaming dreams and young men seeing visions.

While dreams were diminished as a communication tool of choice, there were grand visions in both the Old and New Testaments. Prophets painting sweeping pictures of the destruction of Israel, as well as its restoration. Jesus didn't use dreams, but spoke of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven in a way that painted a futuristic picture of the advanced state of all believers.

Many of the dreams of the Old Testament were personal. The Butler's dream, interpreted by Joseph was personal. The baker's dream was personal. They both dealt with the personal fate of individuals and focused on them. The biblical trend seems to suggest that God gradually shifted from speaking "in" dreams to "giving" dreams or visions. That is, grand visions for the good of the people were given to the people, but not necessarily in a dream. Thus, Ezekiel was carried to a valley of dry bones, in a vision. The vision was not about Ezekiel but a broader, grander picture than simply one man in a valley of bones. It was about the restoration of an entire nation.

The Kingdom of God characterized by Christ is bigger than one man. It involves the whole world. It also involves a dream powered by the spirit of God. As such, the dream of transforming the world by one carpenter and a rag tag collection of unlearned men from the most non-productive region of the nation, could be realized. It could be realized, not because they wanted to make a name for themselves, but because what they wanted was the same as what God wanted and he helped make it happen.

The great biblical leaders had visions, rather than dreams. Those visions moved an entire nation to believe in trust in God more fully and freely.

Personal dreams

Today, most Americans have a dream. Yet, most of our dreams rarely extend beyond petty wish lists that are purely "self" oriented.

MANY HAVE A CHILD'S DREAM. Today there are many who have dreams, but they are the child's estimate of dreams. They are personal and self centered.

Ask any child, to stand and give their own I have a dream speech and it may sound something similar to this:

"I have dream. I have a dream that one day I'll be living in a mansion with servants waiting on me hand and foot!"

"I have a dream that one day I will be flossing gold chains on my neck, diamonds on my fingers, and gold on my grill"

"I have a dream that my four little children will be banking so big that the whole world will go bling bling!"

"I have a dream that one day we'll be able to live out the true meaning of freedom, which means freedom to party and rock the house!"

"I have dream that all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will join and sing the words of that Old Negro classic, "Shake it fast! Shake it Fast! Thank hip hop and Mystikal I can shake it Fast!"

Such dreams are not the exclusive property of the young. There are many adults whose dreams are equally personal and rarely extend beyond themselves.

GODLESS DREAMS STAY PERSONAL: Our dreams remain petty until God gets in the picture. Without God we dream of a turkey on the table. When God gets involved we dream of the day when everyone gets something to eat. Without God we dream of having a comfortable home. When God gets into our lives, we dream of the day when every person who does not have a roof over their heads, will have some place to call home! Without God, we strive to advance ourselves. When God gets in the mix we dream of the day when everyone shares the same opportunity to advance and achieve. Without God, we feel that we have failed if we do not achieve ourselves, but with God, we consider ourselves successful if we played a part, even in small part, in helping the dream become a reality.

RISK IS ESSENTIAL TO THE DREAM: Those who believe in a dream are willing to assume a certain amount of risk to make it happen. Even though a family may not know what the next 30 years will bring, many risk their financial futures when they sign a 30 year mortgage to buy a house. Risk is essential to the dream. A young man who dreams of becoming the MVP in the super bowl is willing to risk the prospect of breaking a leg, dislocating a shoulder or being paralyzed in quest of that dream. Those whose dreams are personal are only willing to risk that which is essential to accomplishing their personal dreams. Those whose dreams reach beyond that which is purely personal, risk more. A parent or grandparent that dips into their own retirement savings to sustain a child, places their own security at risk. They do so because their dream reaches beyond themselves and embraces their family. Those

who promote dreams beyond the relative safety of personal pursuits assume greater risks. Thus, every person that strives to change the community, or the world, also assumes the risk of defamation, incarceration, or assassination in one of its many forms.

Those whose dreams are personal, usually find it difficult to risk anything for dreams that are ideological such as freedom and justice. Yet, these are the ideals that have changed the world. Those who promoted them believed in them so much that they would place their own safety in jeopardy to achieve them.

Martin Luther King once said each person must search for that one something that he is willing to die for. If there is nothing that we are willing to die for, then we are not "fit to live." What we are willing to die for indicates the extent of our dreams. Many will risk death to protect our television set from a burglar, but we would not risk jail to protest a civil injustice. Some would risk death to protect our child, but not the nameless children of others. Whether the dream is global or personal, risk is essential to its fulfillment.

Dreaming bigger than ourselves

Finally, brothers and sisters, I suggest that every believer must dream dreams that go beyond themselves and embrace the kingdom of God.

One secret to happiness is to lose yourself in a cause that is greater than yourself. While helping others find themselves, we find ourselves.When we find ourselves, we find God!

That's why the song writer wrote, "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living will not be in vain! If I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain."

Powerful things begin to happen when a man with a dream, hooks up with the Lord!

The miraculous begins to happen when a woman with a vision, allows the Lord to get in the picture!

When God gets in your dreams, they become so overpowering that you rise above your inadequacies.

Paul had a vision of carrying the gospel message to Macedonia! He pursued that dream on three dangerous missionary journeys despite having personal problems of his own. He asked the Lord, three times to solve his personal illness, but each time the Lord answer, "My Grace is sufficient!"

Some parent today, is trying to make a dream happen for their children, but is frustrated at all of the difficulties along the way! I hear God's answer, "My grace is sufficient!"

Some grandparent today is saying, "I have a dream!" It's not for me, but I want my family to be secure and safe!" But encroaching age seems to slow down my pace! I hear God's answer, "My grace is sufficient!"

The grace of God makes dreams happen!

It’s the grace of God that has brought our families across the Red Sea of legal segregation!

It’s the grace of God that has brought our people through the wilderness of second class citizenship!

It’s the grace of God that has caused many of the barriers against opportunity to come down!

It’s the grace of God that has brought us from slavery to our present state!

It was God’s grace, that picked me up and turned me around!

It was God’s grace, that planted my feet on solid ground!

One evening, 2000 years ago, God’s grace picked up an old rugged cross and marched up the tear stained trail to Calvary!

God’s grace was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning ..God’s grace arose from the grave!

No. 831-Communion

Food For The Journey

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 21, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. F132 And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." 1 Kings 19:5-7

Introduction

Have you ever packed food for a long journey? What did you pack? Often when we take long journeys by automobile or train, we may carry food stuffs along with us. The items we carry are designed to tide us over until we reach our destination or a restaurant. Sometimes, drivers are armed with a variety of snacks, juices and water for the journey as well. Sometimes sandwiches are prepared for picnics at rest areas. It's even good time to put left overs to use as well. We generally consider the length of the journey and stock pile enough food to make to our primary rest stop.

Not long ago African-American families planning long trips across country packed considerable amounts of food for the journey. Racial segregation made the prospect of stopping at restaurants and cafeterias none existent. McDonald's and Burger King did not exist. To compensate, many families fried large boxes of chicken, wrapped in aluminum foil. Large pickle jars were filled with ice water and few fruits were sacked for the journey. Along the long bumpy roads, fried chicken became a gourmet. The pickle jar of water was usually passed from one person to another. Somehow, just as the last piece of chicken was consumed, the family was pulling in the drive way of its destination. Such was the nature of preparing for the long journey over land.

How do we prepare for our life's journey into a new direction? What do we pack? How do we insure enough of the essentials to carry us where we need to go? Every believer is on a journey that is long and meandering. Without the power of God to carry us and motivate us, many have found it impossible to make even the shortest journey. He is the energy source. He is the power! Without him our journey comes to a screeching halt.

As Believers, we've come to recognized that our life journey needs God's grace to sustain it. We need the power of God to refresh us and nourish us. Our prayer is

that God will always stay close to us every step of the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on Elijah as he prepared for the journey with food and drink.

Elijah was one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. Perhaps the greatest moment in his life is epitomized by his challenge of the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel. Elijah was the prophet of record during the reign of King Ahab and his wicked queen Jezebel. Jezebel worshipped an idol God named Baal and influenced her husband, the king, to do the same. This displeased God, who moved Elijah to challenge Jezebel and Ahab. On numerous occasions, Elijah went before the queen and pronounced judgment on the royal couple's wicked ways. Obviously, she was not pleased. A unit of the king's soldiers was sent to arrest Elijah, but the great miracle worker, called down fire from heaven and consumed them at God's command.. Jezebel threatened Elijah with death. It is an understatement to say that she hated him.

In a great contest on Mt. Carmel, Elijah completely humiliated the prophets of Baal. He challenged the false prophets to get their God to answer them by answering from heaven with a fire that would consume an animal sacrifice. Despite the dancing, wailing and pleading of the Baal prophets, there was no answer. When his turn came, Elijah quietly called on God and he immediately answered with fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice as requested.

Afterwards, Elijah became a hunted man. He won a great victory on Mt. Carmel, but he was also a defeated man. He was tired of running and was fatigued. He laid himself by a Juniper tree and simply hid from Jezebel. He cried as he hid under the Juniper bush, "Lord, I have had enough. It was bad enough facing four hundred priests of Baal but when this one woman gets after me, that is too much." She was threatening his life. "Lord, I have had enough - take my life," . For a while a raven brought him food and he quenched his thirst from water in a brook.

Yet, while he retreated God sent an angel to bring him food to eat and water to drink. He was awakened by the angelic voice to the words "Airse and Eat." On a second occasion, the angel provided him with food to eat again. This time the angel noted that Elijah should eat because the journey ahead of him was great. For Elijah,the journey ahead was to rediscover the power of God within himself. The man who had called down fire from heaven was hiding under a bush. His journey was the journey of self discovery. Elijah ate as commanded. The strength from that food and drink carried him 40 days. At the end of the 40 day journey, hiding in a cave he rediscovered that God does not always move through earthquake, fire, and thunder - but many times through the still, small voice of a committed spirit and dedicated heart.

God knew what was ahead for Elijah. He could not have made it without the power of God supplying him. The food and drink he received represented the power of God. It was under that power that he was able to complete the journey.

The Journey Ahead

Like Elijah many believers today had an eventful year last year. We had a few mountain top experiences in which we tasted victory. There were also times when we saw ourselves in retreat under our own personal Juniper tree. While we were talked about and abused, threatened and challenged, God sustained us and fed us, out of his own hand. While we reflect upon the past with nostalgia, there is still a journey ahead. There are mountains to be climbed and rivers that must be crossed. That journey will require strength. It will require more strength than we have to offer. Believers who are preparing to make the journey into the future must be prepared spiritually. The road ahead may be a road filled with challenges. Like Elijah, it could be the road to self discovery. At any point it will require spiritual nourishment to make the distance.

Food for the Journey

Nutrition experts have divided the food groups into five categories and arranged them into a pyramid that represents the best way to eat and remain healthy. While the nutritionist categorized food into five areas (The old wheel used four groups which promoted variety) there are actually six sections of the pyramid. The smallest, nonessential items are located at the top and the most essential items occupy the broad base at the bottom. These groups are remarkably similar to the nourishment the spirit person within us needs to sustain the journey.

JUNK FOODS: At the top of the food pyramid are junk foods. They are not considered a food group at all. They contain fats, oils and sweets. They have a tendency to produce temporary energy surges but contribute little to the overall health of the individual. Candy, chips and most snack foods fit into this category. There are many believers whose spiritual lives are maintained by junk food experiences. In these experiences they get just enough to get a small surge, but nothing sufficient to maintain them. These are those who attend Sunday School but arrive in the last 10 minutes before dismissal. They attend worship but arrive only in time for the surge, skipping the devotion and offering. . They get a rush for the moment, but not enough to sustain them on a long journey. Junk foods are placed at the top of the pyramid with the indication that they should be avoided, or at the least used sparingly.

MILK AND MEAT: The first level of the food pyramid are milk and meat food items.These include, milk, cheese, yogurt, meat, fish, eggs, etc. In the spiritual sense they are also the beginning level of spiritual nutrition. Milk experiences are those that are easy to digest, don't require must digestive work and are easy to swallow. That's the level in which we learn bible stories and learn to sing songs and participate in the ritual of worship. In 1 Corinthians 3:2 Paul said, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Thus, he indicated that those who are new to the faith are nourished first with milk then with meat. First we learn to read the bible, then we learn to study the bible. First we learn to say the Lord's prayer then we learn to pray for ourselves. First we learn to hear

the gospel then we learn to live the Gospel. Both are needed to sustain the believer on life's journey.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: On the food pyramid, it is suggested that it is better for us to have more fruits and vegetables than milk and meats. They are packed with the necessary vitamins and nutrition to ward off disease and promote immune system resistance to illness. In the spiritual life, fruits and vegetables take on special significance. The three Hebrew Boys, locked in a Babylonian jail, chose only to eat vegetables and refused food from the kings table. They chose obedience to God and faith in his promises, rather than submission to the will of the King. Obedience and faith are certainly two elements that every believer needs to make the journey ahead. Like the Hebrew Boys, many have discovered that it is better to obey God rather than man. Likewise it important for every believer to exhibit the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." These are essential elements for the journey; without them, what should be a simple pilgrimage becomes of slow march to destruction.

BREADS & CEREALS: The largest part of any day's food consumption is represented by the base of the food pyramid which includes breads, cereals, rice, pastas, etc. While junk food is only sparingly recommended even discouraged and, milk and meat requires 2-3 servings a day; and fruit and vegetables require 3-5 servings; breads require 8-11 servings per day. In the mind of the nation's nutritionists, breads are needed most to nourish the human body and maintain health. Ironically, it is also bread that is needed to sustain the spiritual life of believers. Jesus said in John 6:35, ".. I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The presence of Christ in a believer's life is essential to satisfying life's hungers. He meets all needs and satisfies all desires. In John 6:51 Jesus expands on this characterization by saying, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Body and the Blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who wish to nourish themselves spiritually, must arise and eat of the body and the blood!

Those who intend to make the spiritual journey must be prepared spiritually. That means they must acquire the power that is generated by the presence of God in our lives.

When Christ met with his disciples he told them to host a memorial meal in which they reaffirmed their commitment to kingdom building and remembered his sacrifice. He said the bread would represent his body and the wine would represent his blood.

The two elements represent the sum total of the believer's commitment to serve and glorify God. When believers eat the memorial meal, they indicate that they are in full communion with God.

While the nutrionists say there are five food groups, the word of God only gives us two for spiritual person and that is the body and blood!

Without the body and blood there would be no:

-Regeneration available for the ruined; COMPASSION available for the condemned

-Deliverance for the depressed; Cleansing available for the corrupt

-Strength available for the weak; REST available for the weak and tired!

Every now and then you get a little tired, but when you start to think about the body and the blood and the goodness of the Lord, you start to sing the words of that old spiritual, "I don't feel no ways tired, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!"

The body and the blood represent the presence of the Lord. If we are going to make this journey we must do so in the presence of the Lord!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

Nutritionist say that even though we eat from the five food groups we can stay in shape for life's journey if we get a little exercise. They say you don't have to jog! You don't have to run! But if we just walk a little while it will help!

The body and the blood makes you want a little exercise. For I heard Isaiah declare, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not get weary they shall walk and not faint!"

If you want to make this journey, you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you got to walk!....

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Who died out on Calvary!

Who arose Early Sunday morning!

I've got to walk with the king!

No. 832-Inspiration

Big Victories Need Little Plays

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 28, 2001

SCRIPTURE:" His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:23

Introduction

To win a game, which is more important, making one or two big plays that win or a succession of well-executed little plays? Depending upon who is asked, there are many that will argue that only the big plays count. No matter how well contested a match up may appear, the big play supporters argue that it is the team that is able to make the big plays that walks away the victor. Conversely, there are those who say the little plays count most. Without the little plays that keep the contest so close that one or two big plays can make the difference there would be no big play victory. Which is the most important will continue to be debated in athletic circles for generations as strategies are outlined for contests.

Any athletic contest, especially between champions, will match up great players who are able to make the plays that count. Many of the plays that count will bring cheers from the audience. There will be scores of others that won't be seen by every spectator, shown on the big screen or flashed back in an instant replay, but the play counted. This year, both the New York Giants and Baltimore Ravens have earned the right to play for the most cherished trophy in American sports. Both teams may be deserving of the prize, yet only one will walk away as the victor. Only one team's members are the champions. To become the champion of the Super Bowl one team must win a game that will consist of about 150 offensive and defensive plays combined between the two teams. Add in plays made by special teams on both sides and there will be between 175 and 200 total plays that will determine the winner. Most of those plays will be little plays. They won't be talked about in the years to come. They won't even be remembered. About five percent of the plays of the big game will be the big plays . . . these will be talked about the most!

We remember the big plays. In Super Bowl 34, Isaac Bruce caught a 73 yard bomb that beat the Titans near the end of the game. That was a big play! In Super Bowl 23, late in the game Joe Montana threw the ball to a leaning John Taylor in the end zone to win that game! That was a really big play! Those are the plays we remember! Those are the ones that will be replayed on ESPN and NFL films for years to come!

There will be many little plays that seem insignificant throughout the game. These are the plays that set up the field goals, or hold the opposing team to a margin where a single touchdown, interception or successfully thrown pass can make the difference. These are the plays that mark the slow march to the end zone through grunts, growls, sweat and pain! They may not make the replays, but without them there would be no replays because there would be no big plays to watch!

Every believer is striving to win a victory for Christ. What is important? Making the big plays or focusing on individual effort? When believers focus on giving God their absolute best, they create a succession of small plays that make it possible for a big play to happen! It's a little play to work with a difficult child. When that difficult child grows up to be the one who finds the cure for cancer, he will make the big play, but the little plays of his childhood made it possible.

As Christians, we recognize that if we are faithful over a few things, that God will make us the master over many things.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable Jesus gave that emphasized the importance of the faithful execution of the smallest gifts.

The truth was emphasized in a story Jesus told about a traveler who left a portion of his fortune entrusted to three of his servants. He gave the first, five talents. To a second, he gave two talents. The third received only one talent. When the traveler left, two of the men became industrious with their talents, (a talent was a large amount of money.) However, the third man protected his talent but did nothing with it.

When the traveler returned, he asked for an account of how the talents had been employed. The first reported that he had taken his five talents and used them so well in the marketplace that he now had ten talents. The second reported an equally rosy answer. He had taken his two talents and doubled them to four. However, the third said he was afraid he would lose his talent so he dug a whole in the ground and buried it. He had not lost what was given to him, but he had not used it either.

The traveler was pleased with the actions of the first two. He praised them for being faithful servants, using what they had been given in an industrious way. Even the servant who only had two talents was praised, because he doubled what was given to him. He told them that because they had been faithful over a few things, that he planned to entrust them with even more. The third servant drew the traveler's anger. He had not used that which was given to him. As a result, the little he had would be taken from him and given to those who made great use of their talents.

In the parable, the traveler is Jesus. The servants are believers in the kingdom of God. Each is given a measure of talent or ability. The talents that each believer possesses may differ. One may be gifted to sing and another gifted with an artistic eye. One may be a musician while another has been entrusted with a discerning spirit. Each believer, having been given at least one talent, is expected to use the talent in a productive manner.

Even the servants who received five and two talents, were praised for being

faithful over a few things. What they received was immense only in comparison to each other. When compared to the wealth of the traveler, what they had was very small. So, although they appeared to have been given a considerable amount, that amount was not very much when weighed against what the master had available to give them. Even though five talents were given, the master had much more to give to those who could prove themselves faithful over a "few" things.

The parable emphasizes how our Lord observes how we handle and execute the gifts and talents that we have been given to determine whether we should be placed over a larger store of gifts and talents. Every believer, as the parable notes, who works with what has been given can expect not only to be praised by the master but also rewarded handsomely for diligence.

The servants thus, were given praise and a promise. They were given praise for their good works and a promise greater reward. They were told to "enter into the joy of the Lord."

The joy of the Lord, is a reward that goes beyond possessions. It is an attitude that makes even the smallest possession a treasure. To receive the joy of the Lord, is to receive a blessing so great that it makes each day happier, brighter and filled with intense joy.

However, it begins with the faithful execution of the smallest of gifts. When done with the help of the Holy Spirit, it multiplies itself immensely. Christ emphasizes that the measure of our reward will depend greatly upon our ability use the gifts he has given us in a way that will glorify him and build the kingdom of God.

Work With What You've Been Given

Today, there are millions of believers who are frustrated because they don't have the same gifts and talents as others. Even within households there are brothers and sisters that envy the talents of their siblings, while frustrated at their own endowments. We equate our gifts with our ability to do great things, especially since society seems to heap the greatest praise upon those who do the most spectacular things! Our frustration is deepened when we conclude that our gifts are insignificant because they do not accomplish the spectacular.

We should resolve to work with the talents and gifts that God gives us, with the full knowledge that what we do will either create a spectacular moment, or make a spectacular moment happen.

There are two biblical references that make this point clear:

THE RAVENS: 1 King 17:4-6, shows us a team of ravens at work. The great prophet Elijah was told by God to sit by a brook and drink from its waters while he waited for God to move. In the interim God commanded a team of ravens to bring him bread and meat for breakfast and supper on a daily basis. Since ravens are small birds each raven could only bring a small portion of meat and bread to fulfill God's command, yet each did its part methodically. The ravens executed a very small part of a big plan. God had great things in store for Elijah, but the ravens role was to simply

bring the meat and bread every day.

When Elijah left the side of the brook he went on to challenge the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel. It was a successful contest that resulted in the people restoring their faith in God and the destruction of the prophets of Baal. The event itself was spectacular. Four hundred prophets of Baal danced and pranced and pled to an unanswering god. Then Elijah calls down fire from heaven. It was obviously a sensational scene that has been talked about ever since. What is rarely mentioned is the role of the ravens. These were the little birds who nourished the prophet for days bringing him tiny morsels of meat and bread that sustained him in the wilderness. The ravens by the brook made the mountain top challenge possible. If there were no ravens there would have been no challenge and victory.

Today, there are millions who are like the ravens. They exercise their talents in the way that God has given them. They are the people that make the big plays possible. The cooks, bus drivers, Sunday School teachers, janitors, secretaries, and maintenance workers who perform thousands of small tasks with precision and dedication, are the ones that make big plays possible.

Yet, even the ravens who worked in obscurity are not forgotten. Luke 12:24 says "Consider the ravens" how God feeds them and takes care of them. He does the same for every believer who carries out his mission with care. These are the ones the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches over me!"

THE GIANTS: While 1 King 17:4 points us to the raven, 1 Kings 17:4 points to the giant Goliath. David, was a young man of very small statue who attended his father's sheep. As a youth he had been assigned to carry out a very mundane and obscure task, which was to protect his father's sheep. Isolated, out of the public eye, David took his task seriously and fought bears and other wild animals that came to feed on his father's sheep. Because he acted bravely in the face of fear and executed many small plays well, he was given the opportunity to execute a very big play. He answered the challenge of the giant Goliath by facing him armed with a sling shot and five smooth stones. As the armies of Israel and Philistia watched, the young boy made the big play. The score was Israel 0 and Philistia 0. The people watched and were on edge until David swung his sling shot and killed the giant with one fatal swing.

It's interesting to note that David's motive in life was not to make the big play. He did not come to the army camp destined to make a name for himself. He came, executing another small play. He came to bring food for his brothers who were in the army. While there he was asked to do another small and thankless task, to play and sing for the king; which he also did well. The opportunity to make the big play came because God put in the right place at the right time. Because he had successfully carried out many small plays, he was given a chance to make the "play of the day."

Today, there are many believers who are thrown in the spotlight because they made big plays. A house burns and someone dashes in to save a life. They didn't come to make the headlines, they did what they normally do, and but did it in a spectacular moment. Someone has a heart attack and a citizen responds with emergency CPR. Their face made the evening news. They carried out an obscure task

in a spectacular moment. Some volunteer rings the bell for the Salvation Army, then makes the front page of the paper the next day. It was an obscure act of charity performed in a newsworthy moment.

Every believer should strive to use his talents in such way that it will benefit the kingdom. It should be done with the attitude that the master needs the service, not whether or not it will be on the evening news. We execute the plays life's circumstances require. God decides whether what we do will be the play of the day!

Serving the Lord has its rewards

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that serving the Lord does have its rewards.

In the parable Jesus gave, each believer was praised for good service and then told to enter into the joy of the Lord.

What is the joy of the Lord?

Beyond the material rewards that believers receive for service, is the satisfaction of knowing that their little part helps to build the kingdom of the Lord. This satisfaction leads to a spiritual peace of mind that has been described as the joy of the Lord!

It's the satisfaction that a little boy felt when he saw his five loaves and two little fishes used to feed five thousand!

It's the satisfaction that the good Samaritan felt when he watched the injured man walk away from a battered situation after weeks of love and care!

What is the joy of the Lord?

Those who live in the joy of the Lord, are recipients of his goodness and are instruments of his compassion! When you know the joy of the Lord you know the goodness of the Lord.

It is the goodness of the Lord that transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights;; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness

It's the goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!"

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The Joy of the Lord, turns SADNESS into GLADNESS; WEAKNESS into strength; DEFEAT into victory!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

That's why the song writer declared, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind..victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years ago there was a Super Bowl type contest between good and evil as Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill! When he was buried in Joseph's tomb it looked like the contest was over!

Early Sunday morning Sunday the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as he arose from the grave with all power in his hand

Can't you hear angels celebrating the victory chanting, "Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him! Crown him! Crown him Lord of all!"

No. 833-Black Heritage

Wondrous Works in the Land of Ham!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

February 4, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "They forgat God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea." Psalm 106:21-22

Introduction

Do you ever think about the wonderful blessings that God has given you? Sometimes, in the midst of our complaining we actually forget how good God has been to us. Despite the difficulties of our past, and obstacles that have been placed in our way, God has blessed our people in a wondrous way. We have made the treacherous climb of the mountain of slavery. We have forded the streams of racism. We have survived the bitterness of genocide and economic depravation. Despite these and other difficulties, we can truthfully say, God has blessed us with wondrous blessings.

The world has seen wondrous works that have resulted from the mind and soul of people of African ancestry. The bible often points to the great accomplishments of the African peoples, but we often miss the references in the blur of geography that passes us very quickly. Yet, in the bible itself, the record of the wondrous work that God gave the world through African peoples is evident. Some of the greatest achievements in early world history were the wondrous works of the people of Africa, as the bible so precisely notes.

Since the bible is color blind, the color of its characters is of little importance. In the Old Testament, nearly all characters were people of color. The beginnings of civilization itself, according to the great anthropologist Louis B. Leaky, began in the heart of Africa. Some of the oldest remains of human life have been discovered in Kenya which is on the African Continent, leading to the logical conclusion that the first people themselves were nestled on the African-Continent, which according to Genesis 2:13-14 was the location of at least a portion of the Garden of Eden.

While color was of little importance, the bible does make repeated mention of nations and geography, which identifies the heritage of the principal characters. Egyptians, despite the attempts of Hollywood to say otherwise, were Africans. Men and women of dark skin, kinky hair and broad noses. These were the great minds that

built the pyramids, gave the world paper, embalming, and a variety of other mathematical and scientific based discoveries that still inspire awe thousands of years later.

The travels of the Children of Israel were in what is known as the "Land of Ham" whether it was in Egypt (Psalm 78:51) or the Land of Canaan which was a son of Ham. The three most illustrious Hamite nations-the Cushites, the Phoenicians and the Egyptians-were greatly mixed with foreign peoples. The military, commercial, architectural and institutional genius of the Hamite nations is epic and historic. It is an obvious indication that God himself, has moved in the mind and soul of the his nation to achieve a great end.

As African-Americans, we point with pride to the traces of African heritage in the biblical record. We have seen how God has blessed our heritage experience. We have seen him move in mighty ways to lift us up, protect us from our enemies and to bring us down when we got beside ourselves. For all practical purposes we see ourselves in the splendor and strength of the Egyptians and African nations. Yet, we also see ourselves as a shadow of the people Israel, broken, strayed and enslaved by enemies, and freed by the hand of God.

We cannot help but reflect upon the wonderful blessings that God has given us, despite ourselves. We should never forget his wondrous works, timely intervention, and the uninterrupted flow of blessings that fallen upon from the throne of God.

As Christians, we remember God's compassion and benevolence. We see his hand and mercy and give him praise for he has done wondrous works for those who journey began in the land of Ham!

Exposition

This text focuses on David giving a variety of reasons while Israel should praise the Lord.

In this Psalm David takes a nostalgic look over the long, meandering path taken by the Israelites to reach nationhood. David recounts their struggles in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea and the numerous miraculous acts God performed for the people while in Egypt, wandering in the wilderness and while in the Promised Land itself.

The Psalm suggests that many have forgotten where their loyalties should lie. They have failed to see God in the light of provider for national security and prosperity. They have forgotten his mighty works on their behalf.

Thus, this text finds David suggesting that the people have forgotten how God helped them in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the Land of Ham in general.

He summizes that once the people remember what God has done, they will find a renewed reason for rejoicing.

Great Things in Egypt

David notes that Israel forgot the great things God did for them in Egypt. What great things could have been done for them? The skeptical mind would say, "They spent 400 years in slavery building great pyramids, palaces, sphinxes and architectural wonders for which they would never receive credit, what great things could God have possibly done for them?

In the midst of their slavery God did a wonderful thing for Israel, which they almost always forgot. He blessed the land of Goshen. The Northeast sector of the Nile Delta was an inundated area that was hardly able to support any kind of habitation, let alone nearly a million people. This was the area which was assigned to the Israelites from the time of Joseph until the exodus. Although it was supposed to be inhabitable, God blessed Goshen as a refuge against the atrocities that others outside Israel. In Goshen the people survived miraculously. They were sustained and protected by the hand of God himself.

Our experience is similar. African-Americans have shared our own Goshen experience. Our side of the social track has always been the uninhabitable and most undesirable. Our lot in life, historically, has been that of disadvantage, but yet, more than any other, it appears that God has given us a Goshen experience.

Only in Goshen do railroad tracks run next to residential housing. But when others are awakened by the rumbling of the big trains, we the people of Goshen, learned how to sleep soundly even though the whistle of the train blows loudly and its rumble shakes the house. Instead of waking us, it rocks us gently and we sleep soundly.

Only in Goshen could we take shotgun shanties and whitewash the floors, decorate the walls with newspaper, stuff rags underneath the doors and windows in the winter, and jump into one bed with all of our children and say "there's no place like home!"

Only in Goshen could we take what was supposed to be the scraps and turn them into a gourmet. When the master at the ham he threw away everything else. In Goshen, what he threw away became our gourmet. The master ate the ham, but in Goshen we boiled the pig's ears and tail. We pickled his feet. We fried his skin and called it cracklings. We cooked his stomach and even washed and cleaned his intestines, drowned them in spices and called them "chitterlings!" Only in Goshen!

Plagues that killed the Egyptians did not exist in Goshen!

Hard times that almost destroyed the rest of Egypt, never touched Goshen! God blessed Goshen in ways that made its inhabitants able to sustain themselves and grow stronger instead of weaker.

Despite the fact that we have experienced over 200 years of slavery in America and another 140 years of second class citizenship, we have a reason to praise God! He has been good to us!

Some may complain, but those who know the Lord, can say with the song writer, "All of my good days, outweigh my bad days and I won't complain!"

Terrible Things by the Red Sea

When Israel was freed from slavery, they marched toward the promised land with a quick pace, but God led them to the Red Sea instead of through an inland route that would have been the logical choice. Trapped between the Red Sea and Egypt, the armies of Egypt pursued them with the goal of returning them to slavery in mind. At the Red Sea, God performed a wonderful act that was awe inspiring to the Israelites and terrifying to the Egyptians. He opened the Red Sea and allowed the Israelites to cross over on dry ground and drowned their Egyptian pursuers in a watery grave.

Had Israel returned to the promised land without the Red Sea experience, their history would have been totally different and less dependent upon God.

So it is with African-American families today. Had it not been for our Red Sea experiences, we would not be a close to God as we are today. It's the fact that we are accustomed to Red Sea experiences that we stay close to God.

Historically, our faith in God has conditioned us to adopt two attitudes: 1) We expect Red Sea experiences and 2) We expect God to roll back the waters for us to cross over on dry land!

Millions of African-American families know that we are technically free from slavery. However, we also recognize that while the chains are gone, our freedom is constantly threatened. Pharaoh's army is pursuing us with haste.

As we marched toward freedom, we saw legalized lynchings in America as a Red Sea, but God rolled back those waters and took away its authority. Racial segregation was a great divide. It forced us to sit on the back of the bus, drink from colored water fountains and sit in the colored sections of movie theaters, doctors' offices and in public place. They were Red Sea experiences, but God rolled back the waters.

Today, we have come to expect Red Sea experiences. Those who know the Lord have also come to know that whenever a true believer faces a Red Sea, God will make a way!

There is no Red Sea that we can face that God cannot conquer. There is no approaching army that can hope to successfully vanquish a believer that God has blessed!

Wondrous works in the land of Ham

Enroute to and in the Canaan Land God performed a multitude of wondrous works that Israel should not have forgotten.

In the wilderness, God fed them manna every day that appeared miraculously six days out of every week, with a double portion on Friday.

In addition, God provided quail meat for the entire nation six days a week.

They wore the same clothes for 40 years without the material wearing out. The same robes. The same hats. The same shoes...for 40 years!

When they were thirsty God provided them water from dry rocks!

Once in the Promised Land, he rolled back the waters of the River Jordan for them to cross on dry land, just as he had for their fathers.

He caused the walls of Jericho to fall down and when the daylight for their battles was about to fade away, God held the Sun in the sky long enough for them to be victorious.

David's conclusion for Israel was that there is sufficient reason for Israel to praise God because of his wondrous works, not just in Egypt; not just beside the Red Sea but in the land of Ham!

Today, believer have sufficient reason to praise God.

We ought to praise the Lord because in our Egypt experience he fed and sustained us!

We ought to praise the Lord because in our Red Sea experiences he made a way for us out of no way!

We ought to praise the Lord because even today, he is blessing us!

Somebody here today can testify that we don't have to look back to our slave experience to know that God is in the blessing business. We can look at our own experience and say with truth and meaning God has performed some wondrous works in the land of Ham.

Every day, God is blessing us!

Every day, God is still opening doors!

Every day, God is still wiping weeping eyes!

Every day, God is still raising bowed down heads!

Every day, God is still putting food on our tables!

Every day, God is still making a way out of no way!

We should praise the Lord because he has brought us a mighty long way!

He has brought us out of darkness, into his marvelous light!

We ought to tell somebody that our Good is a good God!

We ought to tell somebody how he raised us; and how he saved us!

He raised us by bringing us out of slavery to this present day!

But don't tell how he raised us without telling how he saved us! He saved us on an old rugged crossed out on Calvary's hill!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from grave giving us new hope and determination!

Now "facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won!"

No. 834-Women

What Women Want

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 11, 2001

SCRIPTURE: Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to attend the Passover paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." John 12:20-21

Introduction

Have you ever wished that your mate knew exactly what you wanted and would act on it? Women often complain that men know nothing about their needs. They say it's as if the two of them lived on different planets like Mars or Venus, one knowing very little about the other. But wouldn't it be something, if women could run upon a man who knew exactly what they wanted and then would act upon it?

Mel Gibson raised the issue of male sensitivity to the needs of women in a recent movie entitled, "What women want." In the movie, Gibson played a marketing executive who had a rather negative and stereotypical view of women. However, a freak accident changed his whole perspective when he found himself able to read the thoughts of women. Being able to get inside the heads of every woman he met helped him advance his career and gain certain advantages. The movie was humorous, but the idea of men trying to understand what women want is serious. It lies at the root of millions of dysfunctional relationships, as frustrated women conclude, "He just doesn't understand me!" or "He does not know what I want!"

What do women want? Thousands of articles have been written on the subject but the women's want list seems to depend upon the nature of the subject and whose doing the asking. For example an article in a women's magazine recently listed the following as some of the most wanted qualities women seek in a relationship: Women want a man who is interesting to talk to; clean, well-groomed, with a sense of humor. Women want a man who listens when they talk, projects self confidence, has a flair for conversation with decent social skills and fair intelligence. They want a man who is passionate about something, half way decent to look upon, is in reasonably good shape and drug free. He doesn't need a lot of money, but it would help. A religious preference would be a plus, as long as he is not too religious. However, If he drives a fancy car, has a valid gold card with unlimited funds and is good looking, single and sexy all of the other qualifications are unnecessary!

No one really knows what women want. Even women seem confused about what

women want. The feminist say women want the right to choose. Pro-lifers say women want the right of an unborn baby to be protected. One group says women want professional careers in which they can advance themselves in the economic arena. Another group says women want to raise families, nurture children and love their husbands. Everyone seems to be an expert on what women want.

What about Black women? What do they want? What has been the history of Black women? Have they been successful at getting a few of their wants, while securing their needs? While Black women may differ about what they want, the history of the African-American woman's struggle has been one that has revealed that historically the Black woman has always wanted to love and be loved.; to care and to be cared for; to protect and to be protected; to live respectfully and to be respected. At the center of her struggle for self determination, the Black woman still wants parity in the eyes of those who see her, work with her and embrace her.

What is certain is that no human will ever know what a woman wants, even women themselves, but God knows. God knows about each of his creatures large and small. He knows us better than we know ourselves. When we are tempted to forget whom we are and whose we are he reminds us that we are his children and we have been bought with a price.

Believing women have found that faith in God has minimized their want list in life. It is an attitude that helps them to truly say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!" What do believing women want from life? Many have come to say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "You can have all of this world, give me Jesus."

As Christians, we may not understand each other's wants and needs, but God does. Our desire is to be blessed by him, for in him everything we want and need becomes a reality.

Exposition

This text focuses upon an appeal to see Jesus by the Greeks in Jerusalem.

In the passion week, just prior to the crucifixion, an account is given of the Greek men and their wives who were among the proselytes to the Jewish faith. By name, the Greeks of this text are not called. There has been considerable speculation about their identity. What is known is that they were probably Gentiles who wanted to know more about the Jewish faith. They worshipped with the Jews, but because they were uncircumcised, they were not allowed to participate in the Passover.

After the crucifixion and the establishment of the church we don't hear much about them except when their women started complaining. In Acts 6 it is recorded that the Greek women began complaining. They complained that they were not being treated fairly. They said the Jewish women and the Africans were receiving an unequal portion of the shared community resources. They wanted fair treatment.

When they appealed to the Apostles, the Apostles decided to appoint seven men to serve as deacons over the Greek affairs,handle the complaints of the women and, as much as possible to give the women what they wanted.

In Jerusalem however, what the Greeks wanted was not position, fame or honor. They wanted to see Jesus. They met Philip and made it known..”we want to see Jesus!” They wanted more than just to see him. No doubt, they had seen Jesus as he walked along the streets, surrounded by crowds of men and women. Their request to see him was not just to look upon him but to meet and have a conversation with him. They wanted to see him. After seeing him they would never be the same.

Black women

The African-American woman has struggled for generations on two fronts. She has struggled as a Black American and also a Black American woman. The quest of the Black woman has reached several levels, among them being:

THE QUEST FOR PARITY: Women want to be treated equally. Our history is wrought with examples of Black women shouldering two burdens, blackness and womanhood. While the world sought equality for the white woman, it forgot about Black women. This point was brought out by SoJourner Truth in 1851 at a women’s convention in Akron Ohio. She said, “That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?” The African-American woman, fighting two battles for equality, wants parity. She wants to be equal before the law, both as an African-American and as a woman.

When believers, male and female come to Jesus, they come because he offers them parity. There are no pre-defined differences that establish superior and inferior classes in Christ. Christianity offers no race or sex distinctions. Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” The Christian Black woman who seeks equality, begins with the full knowledge that with respect to her relationship with God, neither race nor her sex matters. Grace is not apportioned by sex or race. Salvation is not reserved for a special class. Everyone enjoys parity before God.

THE QUEST FOR OPPORTUNITY: Women want equal opportunity. It is not an unfair request. It is not unreasonable for anyone to want the opportunity to work and serve in the capacity that best represents their talents and skills. African-American women, moreso than Black men, have been given limited opportunity in a historical perspective. Black women worked as domestics when Black men couldn’t get a job. Black women worked as house slaves when their men were relegated to the fields. The quest for opportunity extended to a variety of areas but has seldom come without a struggle. This quest is best represented by the indefatigable service of Mary McCleod Bethune. She began a school in 1904 to teach Black girls educational

skills. She led marches and campaigns for the African-American woman's right to vote in the 1920's even when African-American men were being denied the vote themselves. She defied the Ku Klux Klan and rode a bicycle from house to house and raised enough money to pay the poll tax for Black voters, then taught them the answers to tough questions designed to stop them from voting. She wanted opportunity!

When believers come to Jesus they too want "opportunity." It's what happened when a woman came to Jesus with an Alabaster Box filled with fine oils. When she proceeded to serve him by anointing his feet with oil, Judas complained that she was wasteful. He said the woman was using her resources unwisely because, if sold it could be used to feed the hungry. What the woman wanted was an opportunity to serve Christ by giving the best she had to him. Jesus rebuked Judas, and allowed the woman to serve. The opportunity to serve as a member of the family of God is not restricted, but is open to all. If women want opportunity, then Christ offers them exactly what they want!

THE QUEST FOR RESPECT: Women want respect! That was the theme of a popular song by Aretha Franklin that sold millions of copies a generation ago, and is still sung today, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Despite her strength, beauty and intrinsic power, Black women have found it difficult to get respect. Zora Hurston in her book "Their eyes were watching God" painted a picture of grandmother who wanted her granddaughter to achieve what she called "high ground" reaching a level of living that would bring her respect. She kept her granddaughter away from men who would not respect her or would lead her away from the high ground. The "high ground" has been elusive for Black women. Slave masters used them at will. Black men neglected them and society ignored them. Even today, Black women endure the stinging insult of a generation of men who think it's humorous to refer to them as garden tools (hoes) or female dogs (bitches). Despite her best efforts, the Black woman still craves just a little of what Areatha Franklin sang about, "Respect!"

Women who came to Jesus, found that despite their race or social status, he treated them with respect and dignity. A woman who had a bad reputation in the community, who had been caught in the very act of adultery was brought to Jesus. She was the lowest of the lowest in social status, yet he treated her respect. He told her to go and sin no more!

Women want to see Jesus for the same reason men want to see him, he treats every soul with the same level of importance. Everyone gets respect!

He knows what women want

Finally, brothers and sisters, while most men don't have the slightest idea what women want, I know a man who knows exactly what women want!

God knows what women want, but he also knows what men want. He knows what we say we want, but he also knows what we really want!

Psalm 139 says, " O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest

my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." He knows what we are going to think, before we think it. He knows what we are going to say, before we say it! He knows what we want.

That's what the woman at the well found out! "He told me who I was" but he told me what I wanted...the living water. "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!

A widow woman said, "All I wanted was enough meal in my barrel to make it another day" but Lord touch her little barrel and it never ran dry!

I'm glad to know that God knows when the barrel runs dry!

I'm glad to know that God knows when we need a little help!

A woman with an issue of blood, said "All I want is to touch the hem of his garment!" When she touched his garment she became whole!

God is still in the garment business! Just one touch makes it all right! No wonder the song writer wrote: "Shackled by a heavy burden. Neath a load of guilt and shame. Then the hand of Jesus touched me and now I'm no longer the same! He touched me! He touched me! Now I know, he touched me and made me whole!"

Mary and Martha told Jesus what they wanted, and received more than they asked for. When Jesus didn't come during the sickness of Lazarus, they chided him for not coming "right now!" But when Lazarus was raised from the grave, they got more than they asked for!

When you ask God for something, be prepared for an answer! If he decides to answer your prayer.. you may get more than you asked for!

Elijah asked God to receive his sacrifice with fire, but the fire consumed the sacrifice and licked up the water. He got more than he asked for.

Solomon asked God for wisdom, he received wisdom, riches fame and 1000 women, he got more than he asked for!

A lame man asked the apostles for silver and gold, but they responded, "Silver and Gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee!" When the lame man walked away, he got more than he asked for!

When you ask God for rain, get your umbrella and your boots.. you may get more than you ask for!

When ask for shower of blessings, get ready, you may get more than you ask for!

What women want is a man who can overcome adversity!

What women want is a man who can keep his word!

When Jesus died out on Calvary, they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

Early Sunday morning the women came to the grave site. What they wanted was the embalm his body, but they got more than they asked for! What they found was an empty tomb and folded clothes..an angel said, "He is not here he has risen from the dead!"

They got more than they asked for!

If you want something from the Lord! Tell him!

Jesus is on the main line tell him what you want!

Call him up and tell him what you want!

No. 835-Men

What Hinders Men

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 18, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Acts 8:36

Introduction

Has there ever been anyone or anything that has stopped you from doing something important? Most people have learned to deal with obstacles and hindrances in the path of their goals. Sometimes there are people who work against your best efforts, especially if you are trying to chart a new course that breaks from tradition. Sometimes there are legal barriers and limitations that are placed upon us that limit the exercise of our abilities and skills. Then there are social reasons why we are often hindered such as poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunity. Hindrances retard progress and often bring movements for change to a grinding halt.

African-American men have made great achievements over the years despite hinderances. Depending upon whom is asked, what hinders men differs. Men may cite the lack of opportunity, job skills and access to power. Women may have a different view. If a woman is asked what is the greatest hindrance that men have, some answer. Men pay them no attention or listen to what they say. Consider the woman who driving down the highway going in one direction and she met a man who was driving on the same highway going in a different direction. The man was traveling very fast when he saw the woman stick her hand out of the window and start to wave. As she got closer the woman stuck her head out of the window and shouted "Pig!" The man was instantly insulted. Before she could pass completely by he stuck his head out of the window and shouted, "Witch!" as he sped off. Traveling at a very high rate of speed he suddenly slammed into a object on the road. His car was ruined although he was unhurt. He had hit a pig in the road. The woman drove up, looked at the wreck and said, "That's why men can't get anywhere, they just won't listen!"

Black men have made remarkable accomplishments over the years, despite a history of deprivation, slavery, racism and denial of equal opportunity. These accomplishments have been made despite the circumstances that exist.

The future for Black men is only limited by their ability to see beyond any obstacle and discern that God has plan for the renewal, restoration, preservation and elevation of their race and gender. Black men who want to achieve should seek God and he will

send them answers. They should not be deterred and God will show them a way!

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that God helps us overcome hindrances. Whether we are male or female, no obstacle placed in our way is more powerful than an effort that carries an endorsement from heaven. He that overcometh shall inherit all things!

Exposition

This text focuses on a question asked by an Ethiopian eunuch, who desired to be baptized.

After churches were establish in Samaria, and all of the ministers in place, Philipp waited for a new assignment from the apostles. He probably expected to move into new territory to begin churches. Instead, in a dream he was given a directive, by an angel, to go South to Gaza, into a desert region. It was the most unlikely place for an evangelist. A desert, with very little water, no roads, and most importantly, no people. Phillip followed the angel's direction and when he approached the desert region he came upon an Ethiopian man, riding in a chariot, reading a Jewish religious scroll from the Old Testament. The man was reading the 53 chapter of Isaiah and was puzzled at what he read. He wanted to know and God sent an answer in the person of Phillip.

After hearing Phillip testify about the goodness of God, his mercy and his love, the eunuch wanted to know more. He was told about Jesus and his sacrifice. He was told about baptism and salvation. Then the eunuch looked around, saw water and asked, "What doth hinder me" from being baptized. Following his baptism he rejoiced and returned to his native land.

Who was this Ethiopian man? The word for Ethiopia in Greek means "burnt face." Also known as Nubia or Cush, Ethiopia was south of Egypt, stretching southward from Aswan to Khartoum in Sudan. Black people lived there, as we read in Jeremiah 13:23. While the fact that the eunuch was Ethiopian indicates he was Black, it is no guarantee. However, the odds against him being Black in biblical times was great. What is certain is that he was African.

The king of Ethiopia was considered to be descended from the sun. Because he was considered to be most holy, he did not engage in the secular affairs of ruling his country. That task in Ethiopia belonged to the queen mother, known by the title Candace, which is a title similar to Pharaoh, Caesar, Ptolemy, and Abimelech.

This eunuch was the minister of finance for Candace. He probably was an emasculated official in the royal court, similar to Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the royal harem, referred to in Esther 2. This Ethiopian eunuch was a VIP, a high official of the royal court of Candace. As the minister of finance, we can deduce that he was highly educated and a person of great moral integrity, because one must be trustworthy to be the head of a treasury. I am sure he was also well-born, powerful, and very rich.

Yet we can also deduce that this Ethiopian eunuch was thoroughly disappointed

and dissatisfied with his life. His education, nobility, power, position, and temporal riches had all failed to satisfy him and he was unhappy and restless, longing for joy and internal peace. But the eunuch could find no peace in Ethiopia, so in this passage we see him traveling from his own country in search of a cure for his problem.

When he found what he was looking for he asked, "What doth hinder me?"

Not hindered by race

The Eunuch was not hindered by his race. Although he was African, obviously different in color and nationality than the Jews, his race did not hinder him. What hinders African-American men from achieving? Should it be a matter of race or ethninticity? Historically, we have legions of examples of men who have achieved success despite the animosities, indifference and resistance their color generated.

The racial barriers have made it difficult for African-American men to achieve. Stereotypes of Black men precede. It was believed that Blacks were unable to think creatively, lead meritoriously and plan to strategically. We given credit for being able to eat watermelon, dance and father babies. The very thought that an African-American man could achieve anything of excellence was foreign to the powers that existed. Doors of opportunity was closed shut, even before many Black men knocked.

Literally thousands of African-American men have overcome the barriers imposed upon them by racial concerns.. George Washington Carver, was a great agricultural scientist. The world came to recognize his greatness when he discovered over 450 ways to use the peanut that has produced thousands of industries in America. He worked daily for the praise of God, reading his bible and making new discoveries. He refused to place a patent on any of his discoveries. Despite his race he remains one of the world's greatest scientists. He was not hindered by the idea that Black men could not think creatively

Thurgood Marshall was not hindered by race either. He was an outstanding orator, legal strategist and jurist who argued land mark cases before the Supreme Court. As a lawyer he led the legal team that reversed discrimination laws in the United States. Despite the fact that no man of color had ever been a member of the Supreme Court he became the first, opening the doors for other minorities in the generation to come. He was not hindered by the notion that Black men could not think strategically.

Jackie Robinson stepped up from the Negro Leagues to become the first African-American major league baseball player. His achievement of excellence came despite his color. So did others. Tank Young and James "Shack" Harris, both of Grambling State University challenged the sports world when younger became the first Black NFL player and Harris became the NFL's first Black quarterback. When Doug Williams stepped into the super bowl as a champion, he joined a legion of men who dispelled the men that Black men can't perform under pressure or lead white men. They were not hindered by the preconceived notions of others that Black men could not achieve.

Not Hindered by Circumstance

The Eunuch was not hindered by his circumstance. He was thousands of miles from home. He was riding alone in a chariot, reading a book that he could not understand, without a teacher. Yet, he was not hindered. African-American men have been similarly challenged and have not been hindered.

Slavery, ignorance, and poverty and lack of opportunity have been the main hindrances to the achievement of African-American men. Despite these hindrances, however, African-American men have excelled.

Frederick Douglass was not hindered by the circumstance of slavery. He arose from slavery to become a great abolitionist, news paper publisher, statesman and politician. The peculiar institution of slavery threatened him but did not hinder him. It haunted him but it did not stop him from achieving excellence.

Booker T. Washington spent his life fighting ignorance. A former slave, he challenged the notion that blacks could not achieve and established Tuskeegee Institute to promote higher learning for Blacks. Industrial education was his forte. W.E.B. DuBois went even further as he promoted the education of the whole man, both his hands and his intellect. Both men achieved despite the ignorance of that surrounded them and rose to high planes in the fields of education, philosophy and civil rights.

Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder are extremely talented African-American men who were not hindered by circumstance. Both born blind, they achieved greatness in the area of music creativity in their respective generations. Blindness could have easily been received as a hinderance, but both used it to their advantage and achieved greatness.

Opportunities to achieve in business, sports and politics have been limited for African-American men but yet they have not been hindered. John Johnson didn't have many great opportunities in the world of business, he created them when he developed the Johnson Publishing Company empire. Tiger Woods didn't find a great door of opportunity opened for him in the world of golf, but he created one. When Julian Bond and Jesse Jackson ran for president of the United States they created opportunities for hope for others in the area of politics. None of these men were hindered by the lack of opportunity..they simply created an opportunity and achieved.

Not hindered by limitations

The Eunuch was not hindered by limitations. He asked "why not?" This is the same question that Robert F. Kennedy asked America as he ran for president in the 1960's, "Some men see things as they are and ask why, I see things that never were and ask, why not?"

Why not?

Why not create a way to help young African-Americans to regroup and help themselves out of poverty? That's the question Dr. Leon Sullivan asked when he

started OIC in America? He dared to ask, "why not?"

Why not become a great actor? So what that as a youth I stuttered and was very shy, why not? That's the question that James Earl Jones asked as he rose to become one of the nation's greatest actors. Why not?

Why not take boys and girls who sing on street corners and in school talent shows and make them millionaires? That's the question that Berry Gordy asked as he founded Motown Records and sailed into the history books and financial success.

There have always been limitations imposed upon Black men, yet those limitations have not been able to hinder them from progressing and achieving.

For the Eunuch the fact that he was in a desert, alone with alone a small pool of water available was not perceived as a hinderance but an opportunity.

Black men today, should see opportunity in every situation and ask like those before them, "why not?" Why not invent a stop light? Why not pioneer open heart surgery? Why not blaze new trails in science and technology? Why not? What hinders me?

The only constraints that have stopped Black men from achieving in the past have been self imposed. Those who defied the limitations have been able to achieve greatness.

What Hinders Me?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that once the eunuch found the knowledge of the Lord, he would let nothing stand in his way!

In Jeremiah 29:13 God says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." The eunuch was seeking God with all his heart. Without reference to cost or troubles, he began his pilgrimage to faraway Jerusalem because he wanted to find the Lord

Here was a Black man who wanted to find the Lord. Finding out more about God was not an easy task. He could not go to a bookstore and purchase a copy. He couldn't get one over the internet. But he found a way to find out about the Lord!

Somehow the Ethiopian eunuch also secured a copy of the book of Isaiah. He may have brought it with him from Ethiopia, because there were many Jewish people in Egypt and other places near Ethiopia. In fact, the Hebrew Bible was translated in Egypt into the Greek Septuagint version. In his relentless quest for God, he must have spent quite a bit of money to buy this papyrus scroll containing the great prophecy of Isaiah. He wanted to know God for himself. When men have a thirst to know God and to do his will, money is not hindrance.

When men resolve to accomplish a Godly goal, nothing should hinder them! Such was the resolve of Naaman who was told bathe seven times in muddy water! He wanted to be healed so badly, that even his dislike of the muddy water was overcome as he resolved that nothing would hinder him from being cleansed!

What hinders men from becoming better husbands?

What hinders men from becoming better fathers?

What hinders men from developing stronger relationships with God?

Romans 8:38-39 seems to announce the believing Black man's resolve, " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When I was a boy we watched a television broadcast of "Superman." When he worked at the Daily Planet newspaper, he was just Clark Kent, a mild mannered reporter. But when he went into the phone both and put on his blue and red suit with a big "S" on his chest he became "Superman"

They called him superman because he was able was faster than a speeding bullet!

They called him superman because he was more powerful than a locomotive!

They called him superman because he could leap tall buildings in a single bound!

They called him superman because with his x-ray vision he could see through closed doors; with his strength he could bend steel bars like pretzels; and bullets bounced off his chest!

Brothers and sisters, a man who knows the Lord is a superman!

A man who knows the Lord finds that Problems bounce off his chest like rubber bullets!

A man who knows the Lord finds that he leaps tall difficulties with a single bound!

A man who knows the Lord can grab hold to a tough situation and bend it like a pretzel!

The only thing that hindered superman was Kryptonite. It made him weak! It took away his power!

The only thing that hinders a believing man is losing his faith in God and losing faith in himself!

As long as a man or woman trusts in God, nothing is impossible, because God will take our:

—Questions and give us Answers; Frustrations and give us confidence

—Weaknesses and give us strength; Failures and give us success!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I will trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord till I die!"

A man who knows Jesus, cannot be hindered because he knows that the Lord has promised that "no weapon formed against thee shall prosper!"

A man who knows Jesus, cannot be hinder because he knows that he is never alone, for Jesus has said "And lo, I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth!"

Nothing should hinder men because Jesus, the man of God has paved the way!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with the victory in his hand!

No. 836-Youth

A Different World

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 25, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20; "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3; ".... for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Luke 16:8

Introduction

Have you ever listened to stories of great men and women of the past and wondered if they could be just as heroic in a different setting? If there is a certainty about the coming generation it is that they will live and operate in a different world than the one experienced by their parents and grandparents. The tools necessary to function in that world must be grasped, while they are available.

There is no doubt that youth live in a world that is already different from that of their grandparents.

In grandpa's time the Black community was well defined. Everyone lived on one side of the track. Everyone who lived on the other side of the track was either white or a traitor to the community. Children today, live in a different world. Communities rapidly being defined by economics rather than by color. The people on the other side of the track are no longer defined by color but by economics.

In Grandpa's time folks knew their neighbors by name. Neighbors shared food, cared and supported each other. Children today live in a different world. Very few neighbors know the names of every family on the block, very few exchange food and hospitalities, and even fewer support each other in times of frustration and difficulty.

In Grandpa's time Sundays were set aside for worship. All businesses except those providing essential services shut down on Sundays. Attending movies, baseball games and playing cards on Sunday was considered a sin, even by those who didn't go to church. Children today live in a different world. Mom and dad often leave for work on Sunday just as they do on Monday. Malls are open and Sunday afternoon football has become the religion of choice for millions of men who bow reverently before the altars of ESPN, CBS and NBC.

In grandpa's time children were expected to be children until they were grown.

Children didn't listen to adult conversation and could not legally watch sexually explicit movies, read dirty books or even be in the presence of unhealthy activity. Today's world is different. Youth see sex and murder and crime in every movie they watch. If they are banned from watching x rated movies then they see it when they watch the daily soap operas with grandma every day on television. In today's time children are doing what was once considered adult things: going to prison at age 12, blowing up schools, selling drugs, threatening teachers and violently defying the slight symbol of authority.

It's a different world. It's so different that preteens now get pregnant, condoms are distributed in schools, and teen-agers are attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. It's a world where every home has burglar bars or an alarm system. Even though grandpa slept with only the screen latched on his door, today's world is different. If grandpa sleeps at all, he has five dead bolt locks on his door and a magnum under his pillow.

It's a different world. It's a world so different that the singers who win Grammy awards are those who curse, insult women and give the world the finger! The talk shows which are most popular are those with lewd and personal revelations that result in fights, cursing and vulgarities. Comedians are not funny unless they curse, swear or use vulgarities. Even the most popular cartoons and video games are the ones drenched in violence and blood.

Bill Cosby tries to make us laugh about how different the world of youth has become. A created a television show about a funny mix of students on a college campus who bring a variety of attitudes and situations together in special weekly show Cosby calls, "A Different World." It is humorous, but Cosby who has a PhD, uses it to show us a very important reality...youth are living in a world totally different from that of their grand parents. Once they leave the protection of home, they see it more vividly than ever before.

On the backdrop of this different world, God is looking for a generation that is willing to prepare youth for a world that is more different than the one in which they live. Our Lord has a different world in mind for believers. He challenges us to prepare for it, because it will be one that will be completely out of this world!

As Christians, we know God is preparing a better world for us. It will be a different from the world this world. It will be a better world than this world. As we live in this world we should do so in preparation for the world to come. It will be different and because Christ will be there, it will be a glorious world for us all!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus giving instructions to his disciples to go into the world with the good news.

For three years Jesus taught his disciples about this world and another, far different, world that would come, called the kingdom of heaven. In preparation for the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus told his disciples to teach, preach, baptize and witness in every part of the world to create a prototype of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

He called his prototype...the kingdom of God.

As whole communities accepted Christianity, the world around them changed. It effected their business dealings, interpersonal relationships and general life-styles. The new world that Jesus sought was one in which the great priority of life would be placed upon the value of the heart rather than on the material things. Jesus' world would certainly be different.

It would be highlighted by those who denied themselves pleasures to seek the common good of all.

It would be a world in which each citizen loved his or her enemies and prayed for those who spitefully abused them.

It would be a world of active nonviolence in both thought and deed.

It would be a world of total dependence upon God and faith in his ability to supply needs.

Each disciple was challenged to go and deliver the message about this new world to the present world and to make preparations themselves for life in the world to come.

While teaching his disciples, in Luke 16, Jesus compares how the unjust operate in their context of their world to some half hearted believers. In his parable he pointed to an employee who was harsh to the customers of the business. However, the employee feared that the owner, when he returned, would not be pleased with his work so he called in all of his boss's customers and cut the bills in half, which pleased the customers. The employee provided for himself a haven among the boss' customers who would receive him warmly, if he were terminated. He created for himself a place in another world, just in case his present world changed.

Jesus said his disciples were aware that the present world order was about to change, but were not pursuing it with the same amount of vigilance that those outside the faith use in their world. In essence, Jesus said, if the ungodly man has enough sense to make preparations when he suspects a change in his world, shouldn't the children of light do the same?

Jesus left this life reminding his disciples that in his absence the new world is being prepared. When he returns, it will be time for the faith to enter a new a completely different world!

Preparing to live in a different world

Youth today must prepare to live in a different world. It will be economically, socially and politically different from the world they have historically known. The challenge is to be ready for it when it comes.

A DIFFERENT ECONOMIC WORLD: Today's youth will live a different economic world than their parents. They will earn more money than their parents and have the opportunity for an even higher standard of living. However, in preparation for that world youth must begin to practice for a different using values from the past. In the past, parents and grandparents understood the value of saving. Nearly all of our grandparents had some type of savings account, even if it was in the sugar bowl

or stuffed in a mattress. They had a rainy day fund.

Youth will earn more but will have less unless they prepare now for a different world. Teens should begin by saving pennies, perhaps a nickel or dime out of every dollar. Learning to save and manage money will be essential.

Grandpa stuffed it in money in a mattress and hid it in coffee cans, but youth must learn to let their money work for them. Today's youth must understand the investment instruments available such as mutual funds, stocks, annuities, bonds, 401K's and other tools that go beyond what grandpa did.

Grandma learned early, that the Lord blesses every penny managed well, so she paid her church dues. Youth must build upon grandma's understanding and set aside, and pay a tithe to God in obedience to his command.

A DIFFERENT SOCIAL WORLD: Grandpa's world was all Black. His friends were all Black. Nearly everyone he knew believed in Jesus. Most of his neighbors were Baptist or something close to it like church of God in Christ (sanctified) or Methodist. They were all Black too. However, youth are being prepared for a different world. It's a world that won't be all Black, like grandpa's world.

In the new world order Muslims and Christians will work side by side. Blacks, whites, Pakistani, Jews, Chinese and Japanese will study at the same schools, marry each other and have children with mixed heritages.

In preparation for this different world youth, both Black and White must have a greater appreciation for the culture of those with whom the work. Those who teach them have a responsibility to prepare them in the context of their needs rather than the context of the teacher's social perspective.

Martin Luther King observances should not be all Black experiences..

Black heritage programs should be a part of every teaching curriculum, regardless to the number of Black students in a school. In the same sense, we should celebrate with the Irish, Hispanic, Italians, the Jews, the Arabs, and Asian Community and others. A school system that promoted months of study to the major ethnic groups in the local community would not be out of place.

It will be a different world that will not be Black or white, but will be so different that one will not be able to recognize one part of their heritage for the other. Those in the Black community who were upset with golfer Tiger Woods when he refused to be identified as Black because his father and mother are of different heritages, did not understand that he lives on the cutting edge of a new world order that cannot call every person with dark skin Black, and neither can it call every person with slanted eyes Asian. Racial definitions will blur in the new world order.

A DIFFERENT POLITICAL WORLD: Grandpa's world was a world of Black folks voting together to elect Blacks to office. Grandpa felt if a Black man became mayor, governor or senator the Black man would remember from whence he came and help other Blacks. Youth today will not live in grandpa's world. In their world a Black man who is a city council member, school board member, mayor or governor is not guaranteed to think "Black" just because he is Black. In the new world, youth will study voting records and past performances of candidates as the prepare to select leaders of their generations. That means, in the world ahead, the best representatives of the interest of the identifiable Black community may not be Black, but someone

who champions the causes common to the populous.

The political world of youth will see more women holding office and leaders of African-American causes who are not from the traditional African-American community. It will be a different world that will be challenging for all who encounter its components.

A World of Difference

Finally, we must consider that no matter what condition the world is in, one youth can make a world of difference. When Jesus spoke to his disciples he spoke mostly to young men and women who were being charged to go into the world and make a difference, under the power of the Holy Ghost. The challenge to go to the world and teach, preach, baptize and observe was immense then, and it is still immense today.

One believing youth can make a difference and change the world!

Jacob was a just a youth, but he pursued his life with dedication and excellence. He became the Patriarch of a family known as the children of Israel and changed the world! Joseph was just one youth who made a world of difference. Despite hardships and difficulties he arose to become prime minister of Egypt and saved a nation from starvation and changed the world! Samuel was just one youth who made a world of difference. As a child he came before God and learned his ways and his advice effected the direction of Kings and Queens. David was just one youth who depended upon God to help him slay and giant. He was just one youth, but he helped establish a kingdom that changed the entire face of the earth.

Solomon was just one youth who trusted in God developed a whole nation into a show piece of excellence for the world to see. He was one youth who made a world of difference

But there is another youth who made a world of difference.

He was born in a manager in Bethlehem and reared in a little town called Nazereth..he made a world of difference!

He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

They called him Jesus..he made a world of difference!

Before he left he told his disciples to stay ready because “I’m going to create another world!” That “where I am ye may be also!”

In that world...every day will be Sunday and the Sabbath will have no end!

In that world...It’ll always be howdy and never good-bye!

In that world...hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the song writer declares, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory!

In that world we’ll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose Early Sunday morning!

No. 837-Family

God's Home Improvement Plan

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabeernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 4, 2001

SCRIPTURE:"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." 1 Cor. 13

Introduction

Have you ever looked around your home and wished for a few improvements? No matter how happy we are with our house or apartment, there is always room for improvement. Should the carpet on the floor be replaced? Is there paint peeling from the ceiling? Can the outside stand just a little touch up? There are some who know it's time for a few improvements. Every time it rains, the pots and pans that catch the water play a tune. When we start hearing crickets in the house and feeling the wind blowing through cracks in the door facings, we know its time for a few household improvements.

As winter begins to pass, many focus their attention on household improvements and get ready for spring cleaning. The list is already being prepared and each day it grows longer. Since the house is a major investment, it is of extreme importance to family members who want to do all they can to get a more than adequate return on their investment. Household improvements are necessary and recurring because, even with the best of care, the regular wear and tear of a busy house breaks, wears and strains even the most well built structure. Every house, even one that is brand new, can stand a little improvement.

Household improvement decisions involve deciding whether to add more space, upgrading cabinets, counters, appliances, and fixtures; creating a floor plan that's customized for your life-style, improving energy efficiency with new windows, doors, insulation, and climate control systems; and increasing the resale value of your home. A family that decides on household improvements, does so with the full knowledge of its costs and with full picture in mind of what the family wants to achieve.

Those who own houses know that household improvement is a must. Maintenance keeps things as they are, but improvement makes them even better.

If a house can stand improvement, what about our homes? Can your home stand

a little improvement. Are there a few things that need to be spruced up, changed around, redecorated, repaired, expanded or remodeled? If your home is like most homes, the regular wear and tear of daily life takes its toll. Often relationships break down or hang on the hinge waiting to fall any day. Even newly established homes need maintenance.

While our houses, condominiums, apartments and rental units represent major investments, these investments in no way equal the investment made in building a happy home. A tremendous amount of blood sweat and tears has been invested in the creation of a strong family.

Christians are home builders. When they all get together they form churches, which are really home builders associations. Home builders are people who associate together to learn ways to live the Christian life better and to build better homes.

When building or remodeling a house, one key consideration is financing. Without financing, building a house or making improvements to a house is impossible. When building or remodeling a home, the key ingredient is not finance.The key ingredient is love. Without love there can be no home building or home improvement.

As Christians, we have learned that if we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us, we can make home improvements that will increase the value of our family relationships. With God, who is love, we can improve. Without him, our homes will lose.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he makes it known that love is the most essential ingredient in relationships.

The 13th chapter of 1Corinthians is the second of three chapters in which Paul addressed the importance and use of spiritual gifts. In Chapter 12 he noted that each believer has special gifts, according to God's purpose. He warned believers not to become overly occupied with the quantity and type of gifts because all gifts come from God.

In chapter 13 Paul notes that the most essential element to any believer is love. Without love, which is translated "charity," that the unique nature of a believer cannot reveal itself. He emphasized this point in the first three verses by citing several of the gift categories, while noting that each gift is nothing without love.

Even if he could speak every language as fluently as an angel, without love that gift would be useless. If he had prophetic gifts of discerning spirits or the gift of giving and did not know how to love."it profiteth me nothing."

Beginning at verse four Paul begins to describe the attributes of love that are essential for any relationship to exist. These form the basis for an explanation of love that supersedes the carnal.

When all else is said, Paul concluded, love will arise as the greatest component of a believer's life.

Love is essential to home improvement

No one can build a home or make improvements to a home without love. It is the crucial ingredient.

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them.

She said, "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat."

"We are home builders. But we can't come in until your whole family is together." The old men sat in the front yard.

In the evening when her family had assembled, she told her husband what had happened. "Go tell them we're here and invite them in," he said. The woman went out and invited the men in.

"We do not go into a house together," they replied.

"Why is that?" she wanted to know.

One of the old men explained: "His name is Peace and Understanding," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Happiness and Prosperity, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The woman went in and told her husband what was said. Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice!!," he said. "Since that is the case, tell happiness and prosperity to come in. Prosperity is what this family needs, we've been down so long."

His wife disagreed. "It could also use a little understanding

Their daughter said, "Why not invite love? Then be filled with love!"

They took the daughters advice and the father said, "Go out and invite Love to be our guest."

The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest."

Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other two also got up and followed him. Inside, each of the three wave their hands in the air and turned to leave.

Surprised, the lady asked," You told me you were home builders and I invited Love to come in. Why did you all come in? What about my home?"

The old men replied together: "If you had only invited happiness and prosperity or peace and understanding, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever He goes, we go with him. We entered a house but left the ingredients to make it a home. Where there is love, peace, understanding, and happiness follow. Whenever these exist the potential for prosperity is never far behind... if you have love, my daughter, your house becomes a home!"

Home Improvement Punchlist

Contractors who build or remodel homes use what is called a "punch list" to

insure that everything that needs to be done is done. Before the job is considered complete, the punchlist is reviewed to see whether or not everything has been done properly. In verses four through seven, Paul gives believers a spiritual punchlist to check the quality of a home essential ingredient which is love.

LOVE IS FOR THE LONG RUN: In verse four Paul uses the term "suffereth" in the context of commitments. Commitment is the difference between those who shack and those who marry. Without a commitment for the long term then partners have a house but not a home, but partners in a home commit for the long term.

LOVE IS KIND: Kindness reflects an attitude and disposition. A family that responds to each other with kindness and understanding builds a sense of security. Families where members yell at each other, curse and insult each other, create a hostile atmosphere that is abrasive. If kindness is lacking, it may be time for a little home improvement.

LOVE IS NOT ENVIOUS: Family members are not competitors they are partners. Unfortunately there are many families that suffer because one family member succeeds and others are envious. If one family member makes a goal, the entire family celebrates, even if others have not completed their own goals. If there is envy in your family, it may be time for a little home improvement.

LOVE DOES NOT BRAG: Being "puffed up" means to brag. Family members don't get the big head, especially at the expense of the feelings of other family members. A brother or sister who does well in school does not brag about personal brilliance while putting down the ignorance of a brother or sister. Love is humble and thankful. Those who love don't make fun of the misfortune of those they claim to love. If this is the case in your family you may need some home improvement.

LOVE BEHAVES PROPERLY: Simply put, those who love each other don't clown each other and act like complete fools. A man who loves is wife doesn't call her names and clown her public. A woman who loves her husband make a scene for all the neighbors to see and hear. People who love each other don't clown each other, make embarrassing scenes and ridicule each other. If this has been the case in your family, then there may be a need for some home improvement.

LOVE IS NOT SELFISH: Family members consider the wants and needs of other family members, not simply one individual's desires. What is good for the family becomes the essential ingredient, rather than what's good for me. It's selfish for one family member to insist on having it his way or her wall all of the time. Those who love, consider the needs of the entire family, if this is not the case in your family, maybe there is a need for some home improvement.

LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED: It is possible to disturb a family that loves, but it's not easy. Gossip, rumors, lies and untruths often destroy families that allow provocations from the outside to provoke. Sometimes the provocations come from in-laws whose well intended advice works to turn husband against wife and interferes in the development of a home. It is difficult to provoke a family that loves. If your family is easily provoked by outside influences, then it may be time for some family improvement.

LOVE IS NOT SUSPICIOUS: A key element of love is trust. Family members who

love each other trust each other. However, trust extends to the limit of past experience. Those who have no negative experience trust without question. Others trust with one eye open. Love promotes and respects trust which smothers suspicion. If you have little trust in your family, you may need some home improvement.

LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN FAILURE: A family that loves gets no joy out of the downfall of a family member. Every member of the family, even those that are the proverbial "black sheep" are objects of a family's love. If a family member is caught in a negative situation and experiences a set back, families don't rejoice. They are wounded by what they experience. If there are members of your family who celebrate the downfall of other family members, you may need a little home improvement.

LOVE BEARS AND ENDURES: Family members who love each other both bears and endures all things. They accept the good and the bad. They love, despite flaws and short comings and seek the good of every family member. A family that loves can bear the burden of sickness, poverty, misfortune, death and a plethora of other ills. A family that is not willing to bear the flaws of its weakest members, is a family that may need a little home improvement.

Home Improvement Contractor

Finally, brothers and sisters, when home improvements are necessary, it's a good idea to call in an expert.

When a house needs improvement, many people save money by doing it themselves. You may be able to repair a torn screen or fix a leaky faucet yourself. You may be able to replace broken tiles or even patch a leaky roof yourself.

But when it comes to home improvements, it's not a good idea to try do it yourself methods.

Regardless to your education and training there are some things you can't do yourself.

A lawyer is trained in the legal craft, but when a lawyer needs a lawyer, he goes beyond himself. In fact a lawyer who represents himself is generally said to have a fool for a client.

A doctor is trained in the medical profession. He may be the best in his profession but when the doctor needs surgery, it's not a good idea for him to try to do it himself.

A psychiatrist is trained at analyzing the mental condition of his patients, but it's not a good idea for the psychiatrist to try to analyze themselves.

When we build a house or make improvements, many people will hire a contractor or a home improvement expert, to make sure the improvements are done according to plan.

When we need home improvement, if we go to the home builders association, they'll tell you name of a good contractor.

If you go to a child of God and say, "We need a home improvement expert, can you make me a recommendation?" Every child of God will recommend world's best home improvement team...1-1-1- Home builders, run by the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

When they make a home improvement they begin with love.

I know it's based on love because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the World that he gave his only begotton Son"

When the Lord makes an improvement, he turns:

—DISTRUST into trust; CONFUSION into peace!

—DISUNITY into unity; ENEMIES into friends;

When the Lord makes a home improvement he does it without a fee because it has already been paid for...all we have to do is call him up!

If you family is sick and wants to get well, call up and tell him what you want! He's name is Jesus! He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

Call him and tell him what you want!

No. 838-Family

Is Your Home Heaven or Hell?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 11, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "The smallest family will multiply into a large clan. The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will bring it all to pass at the right time." Isaiah 60:22

Introduction

How would you describe the atmosphere in your home? Is it happy, warm, caring, friendly, safe, and secure? Is your home the place you can't wait to get to and feel terrible about being away from? Is your home like a warm fire in the winter, and a cool breeze in the summer? Does that describe your home? If so, your home is a virtual heaven. Many people have another definition of home. When many people think of home they think of some place that is cold, uncaring, unfriendly, and insecure; more like icebergs in the winter and blazing fires in the summer. For some, home is heaven. For others, the very thought of home is hell.

There are many people today who live in unhappy homes. They are what Isaac Hayes described in the early 1970's as "One Big Unhappy Family." An unhappy family is a miserable family. It is people who live in the same house but feel insecure, afraid, unloved and sad. The unhappy families of America contributed to a 700 percent increase in the number of divorces between 1960 and 2000. In 1960 there were 393,000 divorces. Last year, there were an estimated 1.2 million divorces. This year alone over 1 million children are expected to be involved in a family that breaks up. A new course is taught to children of divorcees. It is taught by other children of divorces, it involves how to play one parent against the other and get everything you want.

There are three divinely ordained units of society: the home, government and the church. The devil is out to destroy our entire society and he begins by working on the most powerful unit of the three which is the home. The old saying is true, "so goes the home, so goes the church; so goes the church, so goes the government, so goes the government, so goes the nation, so goes the nation, so goes the world."

How does the devil destroy a family? There are many ways to destroy a family, but one way is to make it unhappy! An unhappy homes shifts from a heavenly experience to a living hell.

A certain husband was frustrated with his wife. He felt she was insensitive and made his home life miserable. So he paid a visit to his doctor and gave his doctor a

$1,000 tip to talk to his wife. . Afterwards, the doctor took his wife aside and said, "Unless you do the following things, your husband will surely die." The doctor then went on to say, "Here's what you need to do. Every morning make sure you serve him a good healthy breakfast. Meet him at home each day for lunch so that you can serve him a well balanced meal. Make sure that you feed him a good hot meal each evening and don't over burden him with any stressful conversation, nor ask him to perform any household chores. Also, keep the house spotless and clean so that he doesn't get exposed to any threatening germs." On the way home, the husband asked his wife what the doctor said. She replied, "He said that you're going to die!"

How happy is your home? On a scale of one to ten would you consider your home a "one" which is very sad or a "10" which is very happy? Nick Stinnet, Chairman of the Department of Human Development and Family at the University of Nebraska researched thousands of families in the 1990's and concluded that strong and happy families had several common traits:

Families that rate tens are happy families because they:

-Love one another and are committed to one another.

-Spend time together and care for one another.

-Regularly expresses appreciation to each other and makes every family member feel important.

-Communicate well and truthfully.

-Work through ever crisis as a team, regardless to the hurt felt by individual members.

-Have strong beliefs in God and count on him for strength and guidance.

The goal of every Christian family is to grow stronger in the Lord. One way to do that is to learn that the key component of a strong family is to have a "happy" family. Happy families endure! Happy Families survive! Happy Families thrive!

As believers we have found the blueprint for a happy family. It is rooted in faith and belief in God. A family that lives in the joy of the Lord, is a happy family.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Isaiah as he looks to the future state of Israel and the world.

Isaiah made a majestic prophecy about the coming state of the kingdom of God beginning with its smallest units, its families to the entire nation.

The entire 60th chapter carries this optimistic tone..that God is going to build a happy, prosperous, safe and secure nation of believers that will inhabit the earth.

Isaiah tells how the nation itself will be enlightened (v1-2), that will grow and join in the service of God (v. 3-8), that it will be great in honor and reputation (v 14-16), that it shall enjoy peace and happiness (v. 17-18), and that its joy shall be everlasting (v 19-21).

The rebuilding and strengthening of the nation would not begin on a national scope, but would begin in its smallest units and spread forward. The Living Bible records verse 22 in this manner, "The smallest family will multiply into a large clan.

The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will bring it all to pass at the right time."

The world of peace and happiness begins in the home and will multiply until it sweeps the entire nation.

Five L's of a Happy Family

The key elements of a happy family rest on five principles that are unalterably true.

HAPPY FAMILIES EXERCISE LOVE: No family is stronger than the affection of its weakest member. Love is the binding glue that holds a husband and wife together with children. Real family love is impossible outside of God. Families can have a multitude of relationships, but real happiness is only attainable through love..the bible says, God is love. A family without God is a family with love.

HAPPY FAMILIES LIVE LIFE TOGETHER: Families grow and bond when they share common experiences. It is difficult for families to function if each family member operates separate from the other. If your husband is involved in an effort, so is the wife and children. When your children are involved in activity at school or church, both mom and dad should not be far behind. When mom is at the forefront, the entire family pitches in to do its part. Families spend time together. It is so important to a happy family that every family should insure that its calendar of career, social and employment obligations does not crowd family time out of the picture. The happy family goes out to dinner, the movies, attends sports activities, the theater, travels, explores and discovers life..together!

HAPPY FAMILIES LIFT EACH OTHER UP. Families that are happy are havens of appreciation. Why do children love grandma and grandpa so much? Because as a general rule, grandma and grandpa, pour out praise and affection with a passion. In happy families, appreciation is expressed often, even for the little things. Yes, taking out the garbage is a chore, but it feels better when it looks like everyone appreciates the way it's done. Yes, washing dishes is a chore, but it makes it much easier when family members show appreciation for the dishwasher. Cooking is a necessity, but it makes the cook feel better about it when it looks like everyone appreciated what was prepared. Families that are happy are not stingy with the praise! They lift each other up!

HAPPY FAMILIES LAUGH TOGETHER: It's a sad family that has no laughter. Happy families laugh when they remember their good times. The laugh at their past. Happy families even laugh at their mistakes, bloopers and mess ups. Strong families laugh with each member, not at each member. No family should be so serious that it cannot enjoy a good laugh. One mark of happy families is the willingness of its family members to do crazy things together. It's not unusual in a happy family, to see a dad who is an important community leader, crawling on the floor with his children. It's not unusual to see a mom who is quiet and reserve in public, scream to the top of her voice in a family sing along... Families have fun! They laugh together!

HAPPY FAMILIES LISTEN: Communication is important to every family.

Families that are happy spend time listening to each other. Listening involves a focused effort to hear, appreciate and understand what another family member is saying, free of distractions. Listening while watching the game on television is not really listening, it's hearing, but it is not focused. Those who listen get inside the personality of the person speaking to the point that they share the frustration, joy, sadness or pain of what is being said. Good listeners are those who can both hear and empathize at the same time.

Families rooted in Christ last

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should note that families rooted in Christ, last.

The foundation of every strong family is that family's faith in God. Belonging to a church doesn't make families happy, faith in God makes families happy and reflects itself as happy families share their joy with other families in the body of Christ.

Happy Families last. The average family experiences a variety of crises and conflicts. Crises vary from a child failing in school, to an unwanted pregnancy, major illnesses, or financial disasters. Happy families last. Happy Families out last difficulties. The purpose of loving, lifting, laughing living it up and listening together is to help the family last through storms.

Christ told a parable of two families that built homes. One built their house on the sand another built their house on a rock. When the storms came the house on the sand collapsed, but the one on the rock stood.

Families that last can withstand the blast because their families are founded on a rock.

When a house is built is done with the expectation that it will be able to endure the weather conditions of the area. A house built in an area that rains regularly, is expected to be water resistant. If it is windy it is expected to be strong. Eskimos build igloos because they live in the ice and igloos can withstand the cold and keep them warm at the same time.

A strong family expects a storm and is prepared to offer shelter for its members in a time of storm.

Families don't fall apart because they are poor..that's a storm, but a family rooted in the Lord..out lasts the storm!

Families don't fall apart because someone loses a job..that's a storm, but families rooted in the Lord out last the storm!

Families don't fall apart because someone in the family slips and breaks the law...that's a storm, strong families out last storms!

Families don't fall apart because there are problems..problems are storms, but strong families out last the blast!

Strong families need church families that help them grow even stronger.

Strong families need a church family that loves each other and shows it in good times and bad.

Strong families need a church family that spends time with its children, cares for

elderly and sick and promotes the growth and strength of its adult members!

Strong families need a church family that recognizes the importance of every member's contribution and makes every person, even those performing the most trivial task, feel important.

Strong families need a church family that laughs together, travels together, celebrates together and creates memorable moments.

Strong families need a church family that will be there for them in times of family crises and struggle to lend a helping hand and say and encouraging word!

Strong families need a church family that will help them learn more about the love of God and his mercy!

The more a family knows about the Lord, the more your family becomes a heaven on earth.

If family members don't love each other, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot of hell!

If family don't appreciate each other, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot of hell!

If family members don't have time for each other, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot of hell!

If family members don't laugh and have fun together, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot of hell!

If family members don't share each others burdens in times of crises, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot hell!

If family members don't know the Lord, there's not much heaven there, but a whole lot of hell!

No matter how strong a family is, it cannot stand unless it knows the love the Lord!

A family that knows the Lord may not have much, but they can sing the words of the song writer, "I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free, his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

A family that knows the Lord, knows that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is a shelter in time of storm!

A family that knows the Lord, holds on to the solid rock!

This rock is Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

This rock is Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

This rock is Jesus, the only one! Be very sure! Be very sure!

Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No. 839-Family

Happy Meals

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 18, 2001

SCRIPTURE:"Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." Rev. 19:9

Introduction

Do you think there will ever be a day when families will eat their meals standing up, at separate times, in the car, on the run, or in different rooms of the house? If that question had been asked forty years ago, there would have been laughter everywhere. The thought of families eating at separate times was unthinkable. The prospect of family members taking a plate and eating in separate rooms or in the same room but in different places only existed for in the imagination of science fiction writers. Warming of meals instantly with the push of a button was not imaginable. It was just as unimaginable as microwave hamburgers and French Fries, Pop Tarts, and Chinese food. It was unimaginable because 40 years ago, meal time was not so much about food as it was about family fellowship, communication and memorable moments. While it was unimaginable 40 years ago, that scenario does exist today. The family meal, which was once the focal point of the day, is now reserved for special occasions. In fact, Thanksgiving has become one of the most sacred holidays in the nation, not for its spiritual implications, but because its one of the rare opportunities for the entire family to sit down at the same table and share a meal.

The family meal is becoming a dinosaur. It has virtually disappeared from the regular ritual of most families. This anomaly is reflected in the architecture of many homes, which choose not to waste an entire room for dining that happens only once a year. Dining rooms have become off limit rooms, dining tables have become home work tables and family dining has become so rare that if a family has a "sit down" dinner the children may ask, "Is it Thanksgiving already?" A family that buys fine China today, usually expects to use it once or twice a year, at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Even special guests in the home, will find it a really rare treat, if the hosts, instead of taking them out to dinner, treat them to an old fashioned sit down dinner with the whole family present.

According to the Food Marketing Institute, only 40 percent of American families eat meals together, and then no more than two or three times a week. What is happening to the family meal is a reflection of what is happening to our society in

general, whether it is good or bad depends upon whether you have ever known anything better. Speed, distractions, and individualism are the hall marks of today's society. The general society wants everything fast, it is preoccupied by a growing number of distractions and the tendency toward individualism. Thus, the family meal takes too long, does not allow an opportunity to eat and indulge in a distraction, and works against an individual's desire to do his own thing and eat at the same time. Because of these limitations some believe, this generation may be among the last to remember the traditional family meal. Even the last traditional sit down meal, Thanksgiving is often rushed because it happens between the Christmas parade and the kickoff of someone's favorite televised football game..

Family meals are important, not just nutritionally, but they are important because they give the family a chance to fellowship, bond and participate in a memorable moment. Meal time is also what educators call a "teachable moment." It's a time when at least one truth can be taught, when guards are down.

The family meal is a happy time, but in today's society it takes plenty of planning and a strong family leader to make it happen. The forces outside of the home are tremendous. Getting everyone to the table at the same time requires a level of energy and will power that some family leaders have dismissed as unattainable. Is it worth the effort? Sociologist think so, because it builds strong families. Margaret Mackenzie, a nutritional anthropologist, says, "The family meal is much more than food on the table. You are creating warm, happy memories and meanings your children will carry with them the rest of their lives."

The seniors among us probably agree with Ms. Mackenzie. They remember meal times as happy times. There are some who remember the family breakfast, the family lunch and the family supper. They remember drawing the anger of their mothers if they were late for any of the three. As they became older they watched the family lunch disappear. As mom entered the work force, they saw the family breakfast reduced to a few sips of coffee, a bowl of cereal or a roll and a glass of juice, as family members rushed out of the door. The last to survive was the family dinner which fell prey to work schedules, television, school activities, church activities, and a plethora of other distractions that closed the window of time for the evening meal. The happy times disappeared altogether, that is ....until Thanksgiving.

It is a happy time because the family laughs and talks. It is a happy time because the family bonds. It is a happy time because it creates memories like time grandpa was trying to eat corn and his false teeth fell in the coffee cup. Or the time the new baby spit his baby food into grandma's oatmeal and she didn't know it. After tasting a spoonful, grandma said, "This is the best oatmeal I've ever had!" It's a happy time because mom smiles. It's a happy time because the children giggle and the troubles of the world seem to disappear. Unfortunately the only happy meal that some young people know is provided by McDonald's. To them a happy meal means a hamburger in a beautifully decorated box with a toy.

The old folks had rules about family meals. Family meals were safe. A child who made a bad grade wouldn't get criticized at the dinner table. There was no business discussed at dinner. No lectures, arguments or sulking was allowed at the family meal.

The family meal was light. It involved the funny things that happened at school and work. It involved talk about family plans for vacations, trips and weekends. It involved fellowship that made everyone feel good. Anyone who broke the rules would surely hear one of the older family members say, "not at the dinner table...this is not the place."

It's also a time that the head of the family, acting as the family minister, offers prayers for his family's safety and strength. It's a time when the family sees dad or the mom whose wearing his hat, in a spiritual light. They see the family leader as God's representative in the home.

We lose a lot, when we lose the family meal. We lose an opportunity to see ourselves, in one setting, as special units in the kingdom of God.

As believers, we enjoy the fellowship of family and friends who dine at the banquet table of our Lord. It is a happy time, and time of rejoicing for it is a time of promise.

Exposition

This text focuses on the last meal time listed in scripture, which is depicted as a time of rejoicing.

John, sharing the Revelation given to him by Christ, points to a time during the last seven years of time when the marriage table of Christ and his church will be set. He depicts this time as a "blessed" or "happy" occasion in which there will be great celebration.

Meal time, in the biblical context, was a very important time. Families were brought together, victories were celebrated, memorials were undertaken and great fellowship existed.

Five of the great celebrations of the Old Testament were celebrated with great family and communal meals. They included: The Passover, Pentecost, Purim, Feast of the Tabernacles and Purim. All of these were sacred times, but also happy times and fun times.

When someone was married, there was a happy meal..a feast planned. Such a feast was planned by Samson when he married a new wife in Judges 14:10.

When birthdays were celebrated there were happy meals..feasts. Such a birthday party was given by Herod in Matthew 14:6 and Pharaoh in Genesis 40:20

On special religious observances the meals lasted for as long as a week, with an endless stream of food, family and fellowship. Such a fellowship was ordered in the law in Leviticus 23:40.

In Deuteronomy 16:11-14 the people were commanded to observe the festival of Shelters for seven days as well as other memorable events that celebrated their deliverance from slavery. In verse 14 the command read, "This festival will be a happy time of rejoicing with your family, your servants, and with the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows from your towns."

Without a doubt, meal time, was viewed as a happy time for family and friends.

A Happy Meal

Finally, when Jesus observed the Last supper with his disciples, it was not a solemn occasion but a happy meal.

Jesus sat with his disciples around him and told them, what was once the Passover would become a memorial to his life and death.

It was the last happy meal.It was a happy meal because it celebrated the fulfillment of God's promise to mankind. It was the last happy meal but it wasn't his first happy meal.

When Jesus began his public ministry he attended a wedding feast. When the wine for the feast ran out, Jesus turned the water into wine. The wedding celebration was a happy meal.

Jesus was often accused of sharing happy moments and meals with people of ill repute, prostitutes, tax collectors and publicans. He taught them great truths as they shared bread from the same table. Those meals were happy meals.

Anytime a saint of God can celebrate the goodness of the Lord, it is a happy time.

When a widow woman found herself down to her last cup of meal and last cruz of oil, even though she though she was eating her last meal, it was a happy meal because she knew the Lord would provide.

Anytime a saint of God gets a blessing from the Lord it is a happy time!

I don't know about you, but I believe every child of God should have something to talk about, when you think about the goodness of the Lord!

When you think about how the Lord brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light, it ought to be *get happy time!*

When you think about how he picked you up and turned you around, it ought to be *get happy time*!

When you think about how he came to your hospital room and rolled you out to your bedroom, it ought to be *get happy time!*

When you think about how he took you from your doctor's hand and put you in his own hand, it ought to be *get happy time!*

That's when you get the family together!

Come here children! I've got some collard greens and corn bread, Black eyed peas, rice and gravy, fried chicken, candied yams and a passel fresh cabbage greens.

Come here children! I've got a whole pot of pork steak, smothered beef tips, and hot buttered biscuits!

But what's on the menu is not what I'm happy about. Sit down children and let me tell what I'm happy about!

I'm happy because he wakes me up each morning and clothes me in my right mind!

I'm happy because in a time of trouble, he's a shelter in a time of storm!

I'm happy because when I was down and out he picked me up and turned me around!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free! His eye is own the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

Sit down children let me tell about the goodness of the Lord!

He saved me and he loved!

He loved me so much that he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm happy!

I'm happy!

I'm happy in Jesus!

What about you?

No. 840-Inspiration

The Lord Hath Need of Him

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 8, 2001

SCRIPTURE: And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither." Mark 11:2-3

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what church folk were like before they became Christians? On any given Sunday there are millions of believers who sing in choirs, lead worship and deacons, serve as ushers or otherwise diligently work in the church? There are some in the crowds that we know because we grew up with them. But there are others that we don't know? What were they like before they became Christians? The believer who says amen and seems so holy today, has that believer always been so pious? The church mother who is the stern task master, the preacher who condemns sin, the Sunday School teacher that constantly lectures us about doing what is right..were they always the way we see them now?

On any given Sunday there are millions of believers around the world that shout hallelujah, praise the Lord and lift up holy hands. Yet, in every crowd that shouts Hosanna are individuals with a story to tell of how knowing God actually changed their lives.

When Christ rode into Jerusalem, scriptures tell us of the crowds of people that followed him along the way praising God. They also teach us about those that met him in the city. They all cut down palm branches and covered the streets from him to enter. Among those that met him were many whose lives had just recently been changed for ever because his presence.

As Christians, we too can testify that on any given Sunday, as we praise God, we are living witnesses of lives that have changed. We are not totally pleased with our present level of spirituality. But there is one thing we know for certain...since the day he touched us..we have never been the same.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he selects a donkey to ride into the city of Jerusalem. When Jesus prepared to come into Jerusalem he instructed his disciples to secure

him a young "colt" donkey upon which he would ride. The instruction he gave identified the donkey that he wanted. It was to be untamed, tied and never been ridden before. He told the disciples that if the owner asked why the colt was being taken, they were to respond, "The master has need of him."

While much attention has been focused on the events leading up to and following Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, little attention has been paid to that simple instruction he gave to his disciples.

The donkey in the bible is the bible is the symbol of the hard working but unrefined. Often God has used images of donkeys to make certain truths known to men. When Balaam was enroute to attempt to curse Israel, God opened the mouth of his donkey and caused the donkey to speak. When Israel strayed away from God, the entire nation was characterized as a wild donkey pulling against God (Jeremiah 2:24). As a general rule the donkey was an animal that carried heavy loads and has often been called a beast of burden.

The kings of Old Testament times, before the wide spread use of horses, rode donkeys in parade procession. When Zechariah in Zechariah 9:9 foretold the triumphant arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem he said, "Rejoice greatly oh daughter of Zion behold thy king cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Thus, the donkey came to represent the burdened, but wild nature of the people of God. It was strong but untamed and difficult, moody, edgy and easily frightened. When Jesus told his disciples to find a donkey and insisted on an unbroken unridden colt, he did so to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah and at the same time symbolize his own relationship with a stubborn mankind.

Asking for a colt that had not been ridden by a man, meant the young donkey was wild and unpredictable. The loud noise of the crowd could easily provoke him and instead of a triumphant entry, the crowds could easily have seen something similar to a modern bronco rider in a rodeo.

The fact that Jesus not only asked for the donkey but was able to ride into the city on his back without any incident, bucking and resistance has an important meaning for those who are sometimes guilty of making a donkey out of themselves. There was a crowd and donkeys are sensitive to crowds and loud noises and wild donkeys will resist being ridden. Yet Jesus rode triumphantly through the city.

Donkey Training

The bible doesn't say how Jesus was able to mount a wild donkey and ride him, but those know what's needed to break a donkey enough to ride him, are quick to point out that the steps involved in the training the donkey are the same steps God uses to get men and women to carry the burden of the King of Kings.

Professional donkey trainers say before you can break a wild donkey it enough to ride him several things must be done. Together these help establish a relationship between the trainer and the donkey. Good trainers build relationship.

If there is a little donkey in all of us and Christ wants to use us in his service, then whatever he did to get that donkey to let him ride, he is probably trying to do for each of us.

THE TRAINER MUST GET THE DONKEY TO LOOK AT HIM: Donkey trainers report that before you can break a wild donkey the trainer must be able to get the donkey to his head and watch him. The same is true with our relationship with God. Before he can really do anything with us or for us, we have to look at him. There are so many today who refuse to look God's way.

They'll watch a football or basketball game but they won't look God's way

They'll watch the stock market, the opposite sex, or their television sets but they won't look God's way!

They'll watch the world over and see its every nook and cranny, but they won't look God's way!

In our wildness and stubbornness, if we would but look upon his face, we'd take the first step in changing our lives

THE TRAINER MUST GET THE DONKEY TO STEP TOWARD HIM: Often trainers will stand in front of donkeys that recognize them and attempt to get the donkey to make one step toward him. Just one step, that's what begins the Christian's journey to glory...one step! It's a small step but a mighty step. Those who stubbornly resist Christ are reluctant to take even the smallest steps toward him. The rich young ruler asked, "What must I do to be saved?" then failed to make the first step, when he heard the answer. Many today resist taking even the smallest steps, such as attending a worship service, reading a bible or religious material, or even talking about their spirituality. But building a relationship with Christ requires those of us who are as stubborn as donkeys to make that first step toward him and he will do the rest.

THE TRAINER MUST BE ABLE TO TOUCH THE DONKEY: If the trainer can get the donkey to allow him to touch him and rub him he is on his way. There are many people who have never been touched by the hand of God. They have never opened themselves in a way that the Holy Spirit could touch and move in their lives. Once Christ has touched a person's life, they are different. A woman met him at the well one day. After just a brief conversation, she ran everywhere telling everybody..come see a man who told me all I've ever done. The song writer wrote: "He touched me. He touched me and oh the joy that floods my soul. Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole."

PICK UP THE DONKEY'S FEET: The trainer really develops a closer relationship with the donkey, when the donkey allows the trainer to pick up his feet. One at time the trainer talks to the donkey and lifts one foot at a time. Even the stubbornest person opens up to God when God does something to pick him up when he has fallen down. When the jailers who were keeping Paul in prison found out that the jail doors had been opened and prisoners could have escaped, he prepared to kill himself. When he saw the awesome power of God displayed by the opening of the jail cells, he instantly wanted to be saved...and convinced his whole family to be saved as well. God can and will pick up and restore shattered lives, lost opportunities and broken spirits if given the chance.

GET THE DONKEY TO FOLLOW: The next and hardest step for the trainer is to get the donkey to follow him and allow himself to be pushed to the left and to the right and stop when he wants him to. That's essential. Any person who wants to be a servant in the kingdom of God must be a follower of God. When we allow God to guide our lives we allow him to tell us when to go to the left and when to go to the right. Such a person also learns how to stop and go at God's command. That's the idea of proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding." An old Gospel song says, "Lead me, guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee. Lead me oh Lord lead me!"

The Lord Have Need of Him

Finally, brothers and Sisters we should consider that when Jesus came into Jerusalem he performed a minor miracle that was noticed only by those who knew the difference

When Jesus rode into the city there were many that marveled at the crowd shouting "Hosanna." There were others who marveled at the thousands of country folk who laid palm branches in the way. However, there were others who noticed a small miracle that went almost unnoticed, as he rode into the city on the back of an untamed donkey that carried him as if he wasn't even there.

Many of Christ's miracles were easy to recognize but there were thousands of unseen miracles.

Everybody at the wedding saw him turn water into wine, but when he came into Jerusalem there was an unseen miracle.

Everybody saw the lame man at the pool get up and walk, but when he came into Jerusalem, there was an unseen miracle!

Everybody saw the blind man who was able to see again, but when he came into Jerusalem, there was an unseen miracle!

Everybody saw Lazarus come forth from the grave, but when he came into Jerusalem, there was an unseen miracle!

While every body saw the crowds that cheered as he entered the city, the miracle that folks didn't see was a donkey that was once wild, in the service of the Lord!

Among the millions of believers today are many who were just like that donkey. If the truth is told, there are millions who are sitting in worship services today praising God who were once wild and untamed.

There is somebody singing in the choir today, who just a few years ago would have been to worn out from Saturday night parties to even wake up. That's a little miracle!

There is somebody on the usher board today, who just a few years ago would have been too hung over to stand up, let alone stand at an usher's post. That's a little miracle!

There is somebody in the pulpit, deacon board , mother' s board and congregation

today, who is saying amen and praising the Lord, but just a few years ago, was running wild and loose in the city. That's a little miracle.

It took a little unseen miracle to take wild and untamed lives like our ours ,and harness them in the service of the Lord.

When we consider what we once were, then we understand what Paul meant when he said, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. 6:11

Today the Lord is still sending out the command, go into the city find me a man or woman.

He may be a little wild and untamed, but that's alright!

He may be a little rough around the edges, but that's alright!

If anybody questions why you are recruiting this man or woman, tell them, "The Lord hath need of him"

Isaiah said, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8

I don't know about you, but I've decided that "if the Lord needs somebody..here am I Lord..send me!"

Send me and I tell everybody that you are a mighty good God in a time of trouble!

Send me and I tell them that you can:

–TAKE WRONGS and make them right again!; TAKE WHAT'S DOWN and bring it up!

–WHAT'S DEFEATED and give it the victory!; TAKE WHAT BROKEN and put it back together again!

Send me and I tell them how you carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill!

I'll tell them how you died out on Calvary!

I'll tell them how early Sunday morning you arose from the grave!

If the Lord needs somebody, here am I...send me!

No. 841-Youth

If You Take It Fast, You Better Watch Yourself

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For God's Family Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 2001

Scripture: "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Luke 15:13-18

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that there are some people who live fast? Living fast is a way of saying that we are racing through life at a pace that is so dangerous that we threaten to collide with something somewhere. Many young people, and many adults for that matter, live life extremely fast. It is not unusual in modern times to see pre-teens wearing stockings and lipstick. It's not unusual for 13 year olds to go out on dates and for teenagers to drink alcohol, have sex and to have babies. The world invites them to live fast and die hard and young.

Living fast is dangerous and it is wasteful. Those who are attempting to live fast should watch themselves and take heed from those who have unsuccessfully tried the same life-style.

When Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes he summarized his youthful experiences. There were many to summarize. He lived the fast life for a great while. He spent money wildly. He stage great parties and invited some of the nation's greatest musicians to play at his parties. He married beautiful women and put hundreds more into his official care. He built buildings, studied a little, wrote and explored life to its fullest. In his senior years, he scribbled the words of the Ecclesiastes Chapter 12, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth.." He later added, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Those who speed through life run the risk of missing the real important things that it offers. The most important thing life offers, is a relationship with Christ. Thus,

youth should be warned, “If you take it fast, you better watch yourself!”

The Prodigal Wanted To Live Fast

There are many youth today who are like the prodigal in this text. They want to take life fast. The prodigal asking his father for his inheritance before his father’s death was a staggering request. It is equivalent today of a child asking his parent to cash in insurance policies, sell properties that might be included in an inheritance and divide up all resources that would be forthcoming in the future.

That was an awesome request, but yet the son in the text wanted just that. Surprisingly, the father concurred with his request and gave him the cash equivalent to his inheritance in advance.

For the prodigal, the “far country” represented a distant unnamed place. For youth today, the “far country” is anywhere there is action.

The far country is where there are plenty of lights, parties, thrills and chills. That seems to be the place to live. It is different than the boring routines of home. Many youth find their own lives boring and the routines imposed by their parents symbolic of the slow life. They want to live life free and fast.

Today, many young people are like the this young man they want to take life fast. The regimentation of their father’s house is too great and they want it fast. It is not unusual for this generation. It likes everything fast. It wants fast food, the faster the better. It wants fast information, fast fun, fast love and fast living. It is a generation obsessed with speed that borders on recklessness. Included in this fast living syndrome is also the desire to live recklessly.

Living fast requires youth to neglect education, which disciplines the mind.

Living fast requires youth to forego any means of restraining themselves for the future, because it emphasizes living in the now.

By necessity, living fast also leads to wasted substance.

There are many today that are living “large” off the fruit of someone else’s labor. Living “large” diminishes with resources. There are many who have discovered, like the prodigal, that when their money runs out, so do their friends and associates. People party hardy when the money is flowing. But when it is gone “so called” friends usually are no where to be found.

As long as a person has money to buy a nice ride, floss a while and shine, he’s an all right “G.” But when he’s broke he is all alone.

Living fast usually entails reckless consumption. Consumption without saving and restraint only leads to despair. Consumables only last a short period of time before they are “consumed.”

Flashy jewelry, cars, wild parties and spending binges all cost money. It doesn’t take long to deplete a stash of cash if everything is going out and nothing is coming in. A person may start out “banking” but end up “ganking.” There is no worse feeling that the thud one feels when he hits the bottom after falling from the top.

When the money runs out

What happens when the money runs out? Youth who live large but suddenly run out of money get an instant "reality" check. Without money their whole life changes.

In the text, the prodigal sold himself to slop hogs. What is that like?

Many seniors who lived on farms are familiar with slopping hogs, while youth are not. Country living was frugal and nothing was thrown away. When the family sits at a table to eat, nothing that was edible was thrown into the garbage. Somewhere in the house, usually in the kitchen, a large bucket was kept to contain all the scraps of food and left overs off every plate. It was called a slop bucket. Once the slop bucket was filled someone was assigned the task of taking the slop out to the hog pen. Hogs in real life are not like the ones in movies. In the movies hogs are shown pretty and white, cute and cuddly. In reality, hogs are muddy, smelling, and nasty. Hog pens are usually muddy, and smelling. The slop is pour into a trough in the hog pen and the hogs would almost trample each other as they gobbled up the slop.

In the text, the prodigal was reduced to slopping hogs, which for a Jew was the lowest of jobs, because they were scripturally unclean.

Even today some youth who live fast have been reduced to low levels of existence just to survive. Some activities they involve themselves in, may even border on being illegal. There are teens who are couriers for drug dealers. Others involve themselves in petty crimes to keep the money flowing. They reduce themselves to "feeding the swine" just to "maintain."

He came to himself

Youth should pay close attention to the prodigal's experience. "He came to himself" marks the turning point in his life. The turning point is when he reviewed his own life situation and realized that he had reached its lowest point. When he came to himself, the prodigal thought about his father and concluded that if he returned home he could have a better life, even without an inheritance. When he returned he found a forgiving father waiting with open arms.

Youth today should consider their own far country experience. Does it live up to the hype? Is there a better way? Is it too late to start again?

The answers are simple. The far country life never lives up to the hype. It is hyped up to be a life of fast fun, filled with chillin and grillin. It turns out to be a life that is dangerous, treacherous and dog eat dog.

There is a better way. Youth never escape the world but they learn to be "in" the world but not "of" the world. The better way is to live a life dedicated to the living for Christ.

It is not too late! As long as a person is living and breathing it is not to late. Anyone who desires to do so, can do just as the prodigal did, and say in his own heart, "Father I have sinned" and salvation will be offered when connected with a repentant spirit.

Youth who have wandered through the fast life of this world....come home!

Youth who have strayed away from the teachings of their youth....come home!
Youth who have given some of their best years to the hood.....come home!
Youth, who have lowered their sights from the divine to the worldly....come home!
I hear the song writer clearly, "I've wandered far away from home. Now I'm coming home. Too long the paths of sin I've trod, Lord I'm coming home!"
Come home and Jesus will meet you down the road...
"Open wide thine arms of love...Lord I'm coming home!"
Come home and Jesus will give you new life!
It is a life he went to Calvary to secure!
It is a life he arose from the grave to guarantee!
All you need to do is say!..."Lord I'm coming home!"

No. 842-Easter

What A Difference A Day Makes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 15, 2001

SCRIPTURE:Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. John 20:19

Introduction

Have you ever had a bad day? A bad day is extremely frustrating because everything that can go wrong does! On bad days cars malfunction, keys get lost, children get sick, deadlines are missed, opportunities are lost, reputations are tarnished, mistakes are made, lies are told, wounds are inflicted and pain is endured. Bad days are unavoidable. They often come unannounced and give us little opportunity to respond to them. Bad days, at the very least, are aggravating.

Bad days don't discriminate. Children have bad days. Adults have bad days. People of all races cultures and creeds, all have experienced those irritating times when everything that could go wrong did go wrong.

Consider the man who went to work after an especially bad day. The people in the office could always tell when Tom was having trouble at home. One friend said, Tom, how was your day? Tom said, "I had very bad day. Me and my wife got into it. We argue like cats and dogs." The friends shook his head and said, "You did have a bad day.!" Then Tom added, "But before the day was over with she came crawling to me on her hands and knees!" Impressed the friend asked, "What did she say to you?" Tom answered, "She said, Tom, come out from under this bed. Don't you make me come after you are I'll whip you all over this house with this rolling pin!" -Tom had a bad day!

You can't tell what kind of day it'll be by the way it begins. A day that starts off great can very well end up a bad day. Some days start bad and end the same way. Then there are other days that start out bad but before the day is over, end better than they began. We know it's been a bad day if left home with plenty of money but came home broke. If we leave broke and come back broke, it's still a bad day. But if we leave broke and come back with our pockets full..then we've had a good day.

No condition in life is permanent. Neither success or failure is fixed. Both are

conditional.

On July 3, 1776 America was a colony of England, but on July 4th, one day later, the whole world changed. What difference a day makes!

On Wednesday, October 23, 1929 millionaires in America were dancing in the street. The next day, Thursday, October 24th, the stock market crashed and millionaires instantly became beggars. Hundreds jumped from windows in anguish over their sudden poverty. What a difference a day makes!

One day a man is a lowly janitor. They next day he wins the lottery and is a multimillionaire! What a difference a day makes!

Have you seen the television show that sings this song? "Come and here the story of man named Jed. A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed. Then one day he was shooting at some food and up from the ground came a bubbling crude.. Oil that is, black gold" One day they were hillbillies, the next day they were living in Beverly Hills! What a difference a day makes!

There are some days that are different from others because they are turning points. They are days that mark transitions, shifts, and life-style changes. These days are important because of the way they initiated change our lives. The day we decided to get married instead of shacking. The day we decided to stop smoking. They day we decided to tone down our wild and reckless pattern of living..all of these were important days because they made a difference in our life-style.

Today, we celebrate an important day. Today, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a day that changed the entire world and the lives of millions of people.

What a difference a day makes!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ at the end of the resurrection day.

The crucifixion of Christ a tremendous blow to his disciples. They had high hopes of establishing the kingdom of God on earth with Jesus as King and themselves as his royal court, some sitting on his left and others on his right. As the stone was sealed in front of tomb, their hopes were also sealed away.

Early Sunday morning the women came to the tomb to anoint his body with spices. They had hurriedly wrapped him without completing the process. When they left home they fully expected to find Jesus' body just as they had left it. Instead, they found the stone rolled away. John's account tells how the women saw Christ himself risen and spoke to him. Other Gospel accounts tell more details.

In Matthew the women are told by the angels that Jesus had risen. They said, "come see the place where the Lord lay."

In Luke 24 the women are told not to be afraid, but are asked, "why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Mark 16 identifies Mary as the first person to see Christ alive.

All of the Gospels describe the same great event, one with more detail than the other.

While many focus on the beginning of the day, John focuses on the end of the day in a peculiar way. The disciples enclosed themselves in a room and shut the doors. They were afraid for their lives. Since Jesus had been crucified, some concluded they would be next. It was a striking contrast to the boldness they had shown just a few days earlier. Peter was so bold that he cut off a man's ear at the garden and swore he would never reject he Lord. Now he was huddled with the others, shivering and afraid. What a difference a few days made.

Their fear was equaled by their surprise when Christ appeared himself. He challenged them to look at his hands and his feet, to bring him something to eat and even invited them to inspect the nail prints in his hands and feet.

The appearance of Jesus made their day. What began as a bad day of low spirits and defeat, ended in victory

Together, the gospels give us an account of one amazing day that began with women making a sad pilgrimage to the tomb, only to find it empty. It ends with the 10 of the disciples seeing Christ in his glory standing in triumph. It began with defeat, fear and hiding. It ended in celebration, praise and renewed faith.

What a difference a day makes.

They Began with Low Expectations

The women who came to the tomb, came with low expectations. They expected to find Christ dead, even though he told them repeatedly that he would rise in three days. They woke up expecting a bad day. There are many people today who begin each day with low expectations. Attitudes set the tone of every day of our lives. The attitudes that we carry to work, school or community service have a great effect on the way we appreciate every day. It is dangerous to prejudge the day before it begins. In the same manner it is also troublesome to prejudge every situation before it actually unfolds.

When Israel stood at the banks of the Red Sea there were many who had already prejudged the situation and concluded that they were lost. Pharaoh's army was behind them and the Red Sea was in front of them, making the possibility of survival very slim. The wind was blowing, but they didn't understand why. The waves on the water were rippling but they didn't understand why. They saw all of these signs, expected defeat and began to complain. Moses told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

When Jesus carried Mary and Martha to the tomb of Lazarus they expected the worse. Lazarus had been dead for four days. They accepted what they considered to be reality. They began to complain to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." They did not expect to see their brother again, despite the fact that Jesus was by their side. They approached the situation with a low expectation.

On the other hand, a woman who had an issue of blood heard that Jesus would be passing by. She felt that if she could push her way through the crowd and touch the hem of his garment she would be healed and made whole.

It didn't matter that there was a big crowd. She expected to see Jesus!

It didn't matter that she was old and sick; she expected to be satisfied!

It didn't matter that she had an issue of blood for 12 years; she expected to see Jesus!

Today, there are many who are living through personal droughts. Some are spiritually dry! Some are praying for a shower of blessings but they leave home every day with low expectations. If you pray for rain, and rain is in God's will...carry your umbrella, boots and a rain coat. If you pray for blessings, and blessings is in God's will, it doesn't matter how your day begins, expect a shower of blessings.

Their Day began to change when they saw Jesus

The women came to the tomb expecting to see the body of a dead rabbi, but the ended up seeing the living Lord. The text elaborates that Mary looked into the tomb, saw two angels sitting and the head and foot of the slab where Jesus lay. She saw Jesus but didn't not recognize him, thinking he was a gardener. Finally she recognized him as the risen Lord and she became excited.

No matter how bad an experience may be, it always looks a little better when we can recognize the hand of God working in that situation. Like Mary, who saw Jesus but did not recognize him at first, there are many today who cannot recognize the hand of God working in every situation of their lives.

Believers approach each day with the full knowledge that God is working in every situation. If we succeed, God is working. Yet, if we fail, God is working that situation too. If we get a promotion on the job, God is working, but if we are not selected for promotion...God is working that situation too! Romans 8:28 reminds us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Believers understand that sometimes God has to trouble the waters, to roll back the sea for us. Sometimes he has to heat up the kitchen of our experiences to put food on the table. God's hand is in every experience of believers. The prophet Elijah sat by a brook and was fed daily by ravens and drank from a brook. When Elijah wouldn't move, God dry up the brook and called the ravens home. Elijah recognized the hand of God in his situation and moved on with his life.

Believers must see God's hand in every situation. When we are able to see Jesus and recognize him, what we think is a bad day, may not be so bad after all.

The man who missed his flight, thought he was having a bad day until he read how those who caught the flight were stuck for days in the snow! He praised God for missing the flight

The man who thought he was having a bad day because he had a flat tire but as he changed the tire he notice his gas tank had a slow leak that could have caused an explosion and killed him. He praised God for the flat tire!

Whenever we can see God working in a situation, our attitude about it begins to change.

Bad days become Good Days

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that bad days become good days when Jesus shows up!

The disciples, unaware that Jesus had risen from the dead, were locked in a room. They were trembling and afraid, but suddenly Jesus showed up. When Jesus showed up, everything began to change.

It doesn't matter how bad things are, things change the day Jesus shows up.

A lame man sat by the pool for 38 years, that's 13, 870 days, but one day Jesus showed up and told him to take up his bed a walk. What a difference a day makes!

A blind man had never seen the light of day, but one day Jesus showed up and the blind man was able to see. What a difference a day makes!

The disciples were fishing in their boats and couldn't catch any fish. It had been a bad day, but when Jesus showed up, he told them to cast their nets on the other side and they caught so many fish they broke their nets. What a difference a day makes.

Believers should not count on the praise of men to determine whether they are having a good day, but put their trust in the Lord. People will praise you one day, and turn against you the next.

One day Jesus rode into Jerusalem and the crowd cheered saying "Hosanna" in the highest. The next few days, that same crowd was saying "crucify him." What a difference a day makes!

One day Judas was among the faithful disciples, the next day he was betraying Christ with a kiss. What a difference a day makes!

One day the people were ready to put a royal crown on Jesus' head, the next day the giving him a crown of thorns! What a difference a day makes!

One day your boss gives you plaque and calls you the employee of the month, the next day you are fired for being incompetent. What a difference a day makes

One day your husband says, "I love you forever" the next day he's running after a hoochy mama! What a difference a day makes

Saint should never be intimidated by the events of any experience. Every day is a good day.

That's why David wrote, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

No matter how bad the day looks at the beginning, it's a good day to be glad!

It might be cloudy outside, but I'm glad!

It might be a time of storm, but I'm glad!

When Jesus was arrested and carried before three courts, it looked like a bad day; but God was working his plan!

When they put a crown of thorns on his head, it looked like a bad day, but God was working his plan!

When they nailed him to an old rugged cross, it looked like a bad day, but God was still working his plan;

When he died out on Calvary, it looked like a bad day; but God was still working his plan!

When Mary and the women came to the tomb they were expecting to have another bad day.

They didn't know that God had taken what was supposed to be a bad and turned it into a good day!

Early Sunday morning, God took the sting out of death!

Early Sunday morning, God removed victory from the grave!

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the Grave with all power in his hands!

One day he was in the grave, but the next day he was alive! What a difference a day makes

One day he was down, but the next day he was walking around!
What a difference a day makes!

No. 843-Youth

Expect the Best-Nothing Less

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 22, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And David said to Achish, "Surely you know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever." 1 Samuel 28:2

Introduction

Have you ever completed an assignment and knew it was not your best? Often we are guilty of giving "less-than-our-best" in a variety of areas. In school, teachers often given homework assignments with the idea that the assignment will encourage additional study. Often students rush through the work to complete something. Science and Social Studies Fair presentation boards are often generally thrown together at a quick pace barely reflecting the student's abilities. Often athletes attempt to play games without using their best skills. Tests are sometimes taken without giving adequate time for preparation. Even household chores are sloppily performed as beds are half made, dishes are half washed and floors get a "hit and miss" rather than a thorough sweeping. When we have not done our best, we know it. Conversely, when we have done less than our best, we know that too.

Mediocrity once accepted becomes a standard. That is the example of the television cartoon "The Simpsons." Homer Simpson is a 36 year old safety inspector at the Springfield Nuclear Plant. He is obviously an educated man but tries to get by doing the least amount of work that he can. His ten year old son, Bart has two role models, "Radioactive Man" and his father, Homer. But is an under achiever. He's smart, but his family only expects him to "pass" so when he brings home "D's" on his report card, Bart his praised. In a family of educated people, the Simpsons represent a family that has accepted mediocrity as a standard. Just as it became a standard in the cartoon family of the Simpson, mediocrity has become a standard in many real life households, as millions of youth, subliminally adopt the Simpson's standard response, "I didn't do it, you didn't see it, you can't prove it," attitude.

Mediocrity, once accepted doesn't just reflect itself in the classroom, it shows in a variety of areas, even in service to God. There are many believers, both adults and youth, who believe that it is acceptable to give mediocre service to God. Mediocre service is "just enough to get by." It's "show your face" mentality that prompts believers to give less than their best in their areas of service to God, then make excuses to explain their lackluster service. The mediocre preacher, never prepares what he will

preach. The mediocre choir member rarely rehearses it songs to perfection. The mediocre usher rarely attends practice. The mediocre deacon shows up but gives little service otherwise. The mediocre church member "shows his face" occasionally bur rarely gives any quality service. Once mediocrity is accepted it becomes the standard and very little is expected otherwise.

God expects our best and nothing less. He knows exactly what we can do and is not pleased with anything less. Cain and Abel made sacrifices to the Lord. They both made sacrifices but Cain's sacrifice was rejected, while Abel's was accepted. In anger, Cain killed Abel. Theologians tell us that not every act of service or sacrifice that we make is acceptable to God. Cain killed Abel because his God rejected his sacrifice for some reason, rather making another, better sacrifice. Isaiah 1:10-15 makes it clear that God is not please with mediocre sacrifices. He calls such service "vain oblatians" in Isaiah 1:13 making it clear that God is not pleased with mediocrity. He wants our best.

As believers, we remain committed to giving God our best. Even our youth should resolve to give of their best to the master in the strength of their youth. Then God will be pleased and their sacrifice of time and talent accepted because God expects the best and nothing less.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he asks for an opportunity to show what he can do.

David was a shepherd boy who was not expected to achieve much in life because he was the smallest and most gentle of his father's sons. Yet, he demonstrated great potential each time he was given an assignment by his father. Often he was assigned to guard a portion of the family's sheep herd. He protected the sheep by killing lions and other predators that pounced upon them. When he was assigned to take bread to his brothers in the army, he braved the long journey, without excuses, to bring them food, even though he himself was denied the opportunity to serve because no one thought he had the ability. Then he killed Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, enemies of the people of God. When that happened David became an instant national hero.

It became obvious to many that David would be great one day. Soon, 600 men and their families followed him wherever he went and his popularity grew. Anything David did was great and successful. The people came to expect excellence from him, even though he was hunted as a criminal because the king feared him.

Attempting to hide from King Saul, David went to another country and hid for a while under the protection of King Achish. David feared that the King would be intimidated by his reputation so he faked insanity causing the King to pity him rather than fear him. About a year later, Saul came to fight against King Achish and the King told him that his 600 men may be needed. David then said the classic words, "Surely you know what your servant can do." In saying these words, David acknowledged

his abilities without committing himself to fight against his own king.

Achish knew what David could do. He had heard of his exploits and knew his potential. He knew of his reputation for strength, courage and valor. If needed, he expected the best from David and felt he would receive it.

In the New Testament Jesus emphasized a similar principle. He noted that God knows the heart and soul of every believer and knows their capacity as well. Thus, God judges not only a man's actions but also his motives. God sees what is done, but also knows whether what is done is being done out of sincerity or out of a sense of routine.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus set the standard, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." This is not simply a statement that suggests believers should acknowledge God as they pass the kingdom enroute to their personal pursuits, but that believers should give God first priority in the use of their time, talent and resources. If the motive is the build the kingdom, then the actions will follow and the standard is set. If our motive is to promote our own agenda, then matters of the kingdom will always be second place.

God knows our abilities. He also knows when we are giving him our best.

God Knows What We Can Do

Today, there are many young people who perform less than their level of ability. Millions of youth perform poorly in school, church and the general community without any sense of dissatisfaction. Yet, in the sports arena, the same youth would not dare think of giving mediocre performances. They are so driven that they practice their skills at every opportunity. What is the difference? Why will youth push themselves beyond physical limits to be an athlete or a member of a championship cheerleader squad, but will come to their classroom or church and give only a "show your face" presentation. The answer lies in the standards and motivations.

LOW STANDARDS: Youth rise to meet whatever standard is set. Every student has at least one tough teacher. This is the teacher that reads their homework, demands that they perform and will accept nothing short of their best. Even though students usually hate the teacher, they work harder for this teacher than the others, because the teacher has set a high standard of expectation. There are other teachers who have lower standards. Homework is rarely checked, poor performance is accepted, and many opportunities are given to cover poor performance by bonus activity. As a result students accept the teacher's standard and rise. Churches get lackluster performance from youth, if the church program has low standards. If churches reach a point where they are so glad to see youth that they will not challenge them, then the youth will rise only as high as the demand.

The standard for anyone should never be measured by what others do. In the educational community, youth are measured by the performance of others. Thus, tests such as the IOWA, California Achievement, ACT and SAT, compare one youth's performance to that of others. A true test of an educational system would

be whether the program of the local school challenges each student to reach his or her maximum potential.

Every home should promote excellence and frown on mediocrity. Youth should strive to set a high standard for themselves in everything they do. Gifted students should strive for perfection, even if it is not achieved. Average students should strive to become a notch higher. No one should be satisfied with mediocrity.

God knows what we can do. While others may be happy with our mediocre performance, every youth knows, and God knows when the best has been done. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, ": for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." God knows if the "C" we received is our best, just as we know. He also knows if our once a month appearance at Sunday School or worship is our best. He expects the best and nothing less.

MOTIVATION: Motivation is a key to performance. Youth must be motivated and inspired to seek excellence. Motivation is a big word that means "why you do the things you do." If an attitude of excellence exists among youth, then these youth develop a sense of pride that pushes them to do their best in every endeavor. They are not satisfied with lackluster performances in school, home or church. They want to give their best.

Good teachers are those who are able to motivate. Just about anyone who has graduated from a college can stand In a class and recite information and grade a report. However, it takes a unique person to motivate students. Good teachers are those who constantly seek ways to motivate students..not just make it through the day. These are the ones that turn on the light for millions of children everyday, encouraging them to reach higher and achieve more.

What is the value of a coach? Mostly in his ability to motivate players to give their best. There are millions of coaches that can design plays and demonstrate executions. The best of them are the ones who can motivate players to "want to be the best."

While coaches motivate players to be the best, the church should worked to motivate youth to do their best..there is a difference.

God doesn't expect us to win.. he expects us to do our best!

God doesn't expect us to be the champion, he expects us to give our own championship performance, which is the best we can do!

God doesn't expect us to be first, he expects us to give everything we have in the pursuit of being first...when we have done our best, he is pleased.

This is a crucial difference between what the church teaches and what the world recognizes. The world recognizes the victor, the winner and the champion. God recognizes the competitor who gives his best in the process.

The world gives trophies, praise and sometimes dollars.

God gives everlasting life in the kingdom of God.

That's why Jesus encouraged believers to seek first the kingdom of God. Getting the praise of God is important to a believer, winning is secondary. We are praised by God if we play by the rules and give our best...even if we lose the contest.

The motivation of every youth should be to hear God say, "Well done my good

and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things now I will make you master over many."

Seeking Excellence Pleases God!

Finally, brothers and sisters, every young believer should remember that when they strive to do their best, they please God.

When Moses told the people that God wanted a sacrifice, they were surprised to hear that God didn't want just "any" sacrifice, he wanted their best. He wanted the first fruits of their labor.

The people were told that sacrifices made at the temple could not include animals that had been injured or diseased, God didn't want just any sacrifice..he wanted their best.

In building the temple, God told Solomon that even though the people had given gold and silver to support the building of the temple, he still wanted more. He wanted committed lives from them. Thus God told Solomon, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. " 2 Chronicles 7:14

Thus, God doesn't just want a person to sing in the choir, that's just enough to get by. He wants a person who lives the life they sing about In their songs. God wants the best, and won't accept songs sung to him if they come from uncommitted singers.

God doesn't just want a person who attends a worship service for an hour or two a week. He wants a person who lives the believer's life 24/7. He expects the best and will not accept anything less.

Young people who have committed themselves to living for God may not receive the praises of their school or community, but their sacrifice service will be recognized in the one place where it counts and that's in hallowed halls of heaven.

Serving the Lord pays off.

God is a good God who knows when we are doing our best and he knows how much we can bear!

That's why every believer is challenged to live out the words of the hymn, "Give of your best to the master, give of the strength of youth. Clad in salvation's full armour, join in the battle for truth. Jesus has set the example, dauntless was he young and brave. Give him your loyal devotion, give him the best that you have!"

When we give God our best, he'll take of the rest!

It doesn't matter how many obstacles get in your way, give God your best, he'll take of the rest!

It doesn't matter people talk about, give God your best, he'll take of the rest!

It doesn't matter how unrewarding it may seem at the time, give God your best, he'll take care of the rest!

He will open doors that have been closed in your face!

He will pick you up when you fall down!

He will make a way for you out of no way!

Give the Lord your best, because he gave us his best.

The word says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Give you your best because one day of Calvary, he gave us his best!

He died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning arose from the dead with all power in his hands.

Give God your best and nothing less!

No. 844-Love

Love Letters

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 29, 2001

SCRIPTURE:" For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

Have you ever written or received a love letter? Perhaps it was a little children's exchange that began with the words, "Roses are red and violets are blue, sugar is sweet and I love you." Elementary children write love letters with simplicity. Sometimes they come complete with little boxes to check if you like me, or if you don't. As simple as they are, love letters are complicated, especially as the writers and the recipients mature. Love letters grow beyond simple novelties and cute expressions. They are windows into the soul of the writers. They float across the hard exterior of face to face encounters and rest in the heart of each person who reads them. Love letters are personal. They are private. They special.

Can you remember the last time you wrote a love letter to anyone? What was it about? Some love letters are written in courtship and combine discovery with revelation as trust is being built. Some write letters to apologize for mistakes made and to reaffirm sincerity. There are even love letters ask for second chances, forgiveness and renewed opportunity. Husbands and wives often send each other love letters.

Cyrano de Bergerac is the classic 1640 tale of two men who loved one woman by the name of Roxanne. One of the men, Cyrano had a gift for words and wrote beautiful letters. However, he had a very long nose that detracted from his looks. The other man had a beautiful face but could never say how he really felt. In a bizarre twist Cyrano expresses his love to Roxanne through love letters he writes for the other man. Roxanne fell in love with feelings expressed in the letters thinking they were coming from the other man.

Elizabeth B. Browning enchanted us with her question, "How do I love thee, let me count the ways." Shakespearean sonnets like "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" and others were great expressions of love expressed with words that stir emotion and cement bonds. Last year, a book entitled, "I love you Ronnie: the Love Letters of Ronald Reagan to Nancy Reagan" was published. It contains love letters that the former president wrote his wife over a 50 year period which she kept in a

shopping bag. During important presidential meetings dignitaries thought the president was taking notes, but he was often writing a love letter to Nancy whom he called "Mommie Poo Pants." She never threw away a single letter, some of which were written on napkins from state dinners and others on bits and pieces of paper.

There are some letters that begin as love letters and end up something else. That's what happened to the little bad boy who wanted a bike. His mother tried everything she knew to get him to improve his behavior, but the boy was incorrigible. When he wanted a bike for his birthday, the mother knew she had discovered a way to get him to look at his behavior differently. She said, "Write a letter to God and tell him why you should get a bike for your birthday." The boy sat down and wrote "Dear God, I've been a good boy and I deserve a bike for my birthday." After thinking about it the boy knew God would know that wasn't true so he rewrote the letter to say he was a "half way decent boy" then revised it further to say he was trying to do better. None of those would get by the big man, so the boy asked permission to go down the street to the Catholic church on the corner. Once inside, when no one was looking he went up to the altar and stole the statue of the Virgin Mary and put it in his book bag. At home, he wrote God a final letter, "Dear God, I got yo' mama. If you want you want her back you better send me a bike."

Suppose God wanted to send the world a love letter, how would he do it? Across the nation, there many bill boards which are cropping up with messages from "god." They say things such as, "Don't make me come down there," "I forgive you, now come home," or "I'm waiting up for you." The idea is that persons who would never go to a church will read the billboards as they pass by and get a quick thought that reflects what God has said to the world.

However, if God wanted to send the world a love letter, even a bill board would be insufficient. It would not be sufficient enough for him to write a letter in the sky for all the world to see, some might dismiss it as an atmospheric anomaly. He would need a means that would be lasting. It would need to be so moving that it could never go unnoticed or be easily forgotten. It would have to be personal, special, and revealing of how God really feels.

When God prepared to send the world a letter, he inspired holy men to write down his words to the generation. The bible gave the world a record how God feels about the world and how he has interacted with others in the past. The bible is a letter from God that he wants everyone to read.

However, when God wanted to give the world a love letter, he did not write it down, he sent it in person. Jesus was God's love letter to the world.

As believers, we are happy we have received God's love letter. We listen to him speak and we receive his words with joy and with praise.

Exposition

This text focuses on John explaining the reason for Christ's incarnation.

Jesus was asked to explain the nature of being born again. In the process, he explained that a person who wants to be a part of the kingdom of God must be born

of both the water and the spirit.

The 16th verse of John is perhaps one of the most memorable in scripture because it indicates the depth of God's love for the world. In more than one instant God had attempted to communicate his love for his creation but they were all rejected.

Sending the living Word to dwell among men was the way God chose to finally say, in a way that could not be denied, that he loved his creation.

Unlike the seven letters written to the churches of Asia Minor by Christ in the Revelation, the Word he sent to the world would not be on paper or scrolls, it would be in the person of Jesus himself...a living love letter from God.

God's Love Letters

God has been sending love letters to the world from the beginning of time, but they have often been returned unopened, ignored and marked returned to sender.

Have you received a love letter from God letter? He leaves them everywhere so we won't miss them.

The sun the rises in the morning, is a love letter from the Lord!

The stars that twinkle in the night, are love letters from the Lord!

Sometimes, God's love letters are just like our love letters they state just how he feels about us at the moment.

Some letters say, "You made me mad but I changed my mind" That's how God felt after he created the world and mankind began to sin. Their actions angered God and he wanted to destroy his entire creation. He sent a flood that destroyed most of his creation. Then in an act of love, he changed his mind and placed a love letter in the sky in the form of rainbow. It was God's way of saying, "You made me mad but I still love you!"

Some letters say, "You've been doing me wrong but I still love you anyway." That's how God felt about Israel after he had given them his best, they continued to cheat on him with other gods. God to Hosea to go and marry a prostitute. Hosea's love for Gomer was the same as that which God had for his people, "You're been doing me wrong, but I still love you!"

Some letters say, "You may have made some mistakes, but I won't hold it against you." When Jesus preached about the kingdom of God a woman was brought to him that was caught in the very act of adultery. Her accusers stood around with stones in their hands asking Jesus what to do. Jesus looked at the woman and then wrote an unknown love letter in the sand. He looked up and said he that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. It was his way of saying "You may have done something wrong, but If you stop, it won't be held against you!"

Some letters express love and frustration at the same time. That's what God said when he wrote a love letter to the church in Laodicea. He said I can't tell whether you love me or you hate me. You are lukewarm. I wish you were hot or I wish you were cold. Yet despite his frustration God still love the church.

But the time came when God tired of sending love letters that were not being read.

—When he opened the Red Sea for Israel to cross on dry land, that was a love letter.

—When rained down bread from heaven for them in wilderness, that was a love letter.

—When he made the sun stand still for Joshua in the Canaan land, that was a love letter.

How does God love me love? Let me count the ways!

He loved me enough to wake me up this morning, and clothe me in my right mind!

He loved me enough to put food on my table!

How do I love thee? “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son...”

One night in Bethlehem God’s letter was delivered in manger!

One evening on a hill called Calvary the last line of God’s love letter was read, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit...It is finished!”

But sometimes letters don’t end at the end. There is a Post Script.

At the bottom of God’s love letter was a P.S.

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, announcing to the world..”I still love you!”

It doesn’t matter what you have done, I still love you!

No. 845-Mothers

With These Few Sticks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 2001

Scripture: "And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. 1 Kings 17:11-16

Introduction

Have you ever wondered how mothers manage? Good mothers are great managers who seem to know how to take the smallest amount of resources and use them for their family's nurture. Those who were blessed to have good mothers in their families have watched these sainted women take meager resources and stir them in a way that would provide sustenance for their families for as long as possible. Most mothers are able to provide because their thoughts are always on ways to help members of their families. Thus, good mothers manage well, because they are always thinking ahead.

If personal management could receive a college degree, all good mothers would have Phd's. In the grocery store, she only has a few dollars, so she labors over product labels to get the most for each dollar. In the process, she learns the difference between two ply tissue and four ply tissue. She knows instantly if the sale on sugar is really a sale. At home, she saves pennies with efficiency. Those pennies are stored away for rainy days, emergencies and hard times. Some mend and sew, others find ways to repair what is broken rather incur the cost of buying something new. They may take worn shoes for shoe repair rather buy new ones. The money saved is applied to other family needs.

With just a few dollars, some mothers do it all: house notes, utilities, food, clothing, shelter, insurance, and even a few luxuries. The management skills of good mothers can probably put a Harvard MBA to shame. He wouldn't know anything about taking old bread and turning it into bread pudding or dressing. He'd read his

paper, but he probably would think of saving the rubber band. When his soap bar became small, he'd reach for a new bar, and probably never consider taking all of the small pieces meshing them together until they make another big bar. Some mothers can stretch a dollar so far that if they have a run in one leg of a stocking, they save it until there is run in another pair; they then wear the good leg of each pair and no one knows the difference. The Harvard MBA may pay $500 for a suit, but smart mothers wait for him to gain a few pounds and buy it at his family rummage sale for $5.00. If there is a degree in management, good mothers deserve the honors.

What has been the key to mother's seemingly magical ability to make ends meet for her family? Believing mothers will quickly tell us that the answer is their faith and reliance upon God. The Christian mother is one who does what she can to manage what God puts in her hands, then counts on God to do the rest. She is aware that she cannot do it alone, but is humbled daily as she watches how God blesses her efforts. All she has to work with is a few resources, and God does the rest.

As believers, we have seen God take little things and carry them far beyond their capacity. That's how we can appreciate how God worked through our mothers to bless us. He took her meager resources and stretched them enough to provide for our needs. Praise the Lord.

With only a handful of resources, mothers have trusted God and saved their families. Even in short times, they have shared their last resources with others, trusting God to provide, with these few sticks available to them, mothers have sustained strong families.

Exposition

This text focuses on a widow woman who trusted God and was the recipient of his care as a result.

Elijah was a great prophet who had been commanded by God to speak out against the evils of his time. He challenged King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel for their evil ways. Idolatry was prevalent in the land. There was a general disrespect for God. Elijah told the king that there would be no water in the land until he adjusted his ways. The prediction angered the king and a death warrant was issued for Elijah.

God took care of Elijah while he was in hiding. In one instance God arranged for a raven, considered an unclean animal, to feed him everyday while he was by a brook until it was time for him to move on.

Then God sent Elijah into the land of the Gentiles. He was told to go to Zerepath, a city in Sidon. It was a foreign country for sure, but yet Elijah followed the command. The drought that he predicted for Ahab, extended even to this land. By going to Zerepath, he became the first prophet to minister to gentiles.

God commanded a gentile woman to provide for Elijah. It must have been a difficult command for the woman because she was a widow, with a sickly son, barely enough fuel and food to live upon herself, yet God wanted her to share what little she had with a stranger. God could have certainly picked a better person to provide for Elijah, but God did not consider present circumstance because he could alter

circumstances at will. The widow would suffice to demonstrate obedience and faith for the world to see. The widow wandered the streets trying to find enough wood for a fire that could bake her last cake of bread. She was an unlikely source of resources for a hungry, thirsty and tired traveler.

The widow had little, but used what she had to provide for her family. She didn't even have a fuel supply but God seemed to keep the fire going. She had only a little fuel. The text mentions "two sticks" which was a figure of speech for "just a few." She had "just a few" resources but she was willing to throw herself, trustingly, into the hands of God. It took a considerable amount of trust because the prophet was promising a miracle. It wasn't that God was going to supply her needs, but that he would do it in a miraculous way, the barrel of meal would not run out and neither would the oil. Believing Elijah's statement and trusting God took immense faith on her part.

Even in her impoverished state, she was willing to trust God with the last cake she could make, on the last fire she could build. She took a small portion of the meal and made Elijah a "little cake." That little cake demonstrated a willingness to trust God for the unknown. In response she was blessed.

This mother, placed the future of her life and that of her son, in God's hands.

For months, she and her son survived and prospered living on pure faith alone.

What began for her as a few sticks, a cup of meal and a cruse of oil, turned out to be a blessing from God that protected her household for years to come.

Put Your Life In God's Hands

Like the widow of this text, there are many mothers today who have placed their whole lives in God's hands.

What does it mean to put one's whole life in God's hands? It means to literally commit ourselves to doing his will no matter what. The widow of this text was not a Jew. Yet she believed in the God of the Jews. This belief surely prompted a level of rejection from members of her community, who were Gentiles are probably resented her persistent, open, belief in the God of the Jews.

In many ways there are other Godly mothers who have endured ridicule, harassment and difficulty as they chose to obey the will of God rather than follow the easier path of less resistance. These are the moms who endured difficult times but refused to steal, accept illegal items or survive on ill gotten gains. These are the moms who made it known that they would rather endure difficult times than be known as less than a godly woman. They are the ones that made the apostles words in Acts 5:29, ring true.." We ought to obey God rather than men."

Not only have mothers placed their own lives in God's hands, there are many who have also placed the lives of their children, in God's hands. When Jocebed realized that her son could be drowned, she made him a straw basket and placed the baby Moses in it. When she let that basket float on the water, she was placing little Moses in God's hands. When Hannah, carried young Samuel to the priests to be trained as a priest, she placed him in God's hands. Even while many mothers carried us in their

wombs they were whispering silent prayers to God, placing us in his hands. Sometimes mothers have been overheard praying, "Lord, place take care of my child."

When the widow of the text decided to obey the God of Israel, she placed her own life, and the life her child in God's hands. Her life or death was solely up to God. Many mothers today have placed the fate of their families in God's hands. They have resolved to live according to his plan, regardless to the outcome, and thrown themselves whole heartedly into his hands.

Do what you can, trust God for the rest

The widow woman of this text was blessed because of one admirable characteristic that she displayed. She made the best of what she had, without complaining and trusted God for the rest.

Two sticks, a cruse of oil, a small portion of meal, all of these suggested that she didn't have much but found a way to make it last. In much the same way good mothers found a way to manage and stretch a few resources further than could normally be expected.

Many mothers prayed to God for an automobile, but while waiting on God to deliver walked or rode the bus to work everyday; only to come home and cut the callouses from the feet.

Many mothers prayed for washing machines but while they waited, scrubbed clothes on rub boards, walked to washaterias and even rang out sheets on their hands and hung them across clothes lines to dry.

Many mothers prayed for new clothes for their children, but while they waited, sewed buttons on shirts, patched holes in papers and lined the bottoms of worn shoes with newspaper.

Many mothers prayed to God for a variety of food but while they waited, cooked grits and butter for breakfast, and grits and gravy for supper.

Many a mother learned a thousand ways to cook a potato by boiling it, mashing it, French frying it,meshing it into hash browns or one of hundreds of other ways to stretch an inexpensive food item a long ways. That's why so many households ate plenty of beans, spaghetti and soup. Mama knew she could stretch these food items seemingly forever and make ends meet.

These were the mothers would not dare assume the attitude of Sara who tried to help God out, but rather that of women who were willing to do whatever was necessary to provide for their households while they waited for God to extend their efforts to their maximum.

Her whole house was blessed

Like the widow of this text, there are many mothers whose faith and diligence has resulted in their whole households being blessed.

The widow put her life in God's hands, did what she could and trusted God for

the rest, and her whole house was blessed.

Those who have had the benefit of having a good mother in their home, know the truth of this passage. The efforts of a diligent God fearing woman in nearly every instance we can name has resulted in most of the family reaping the rewards of her labor.

What successful son or daughter doesn't walk across the stage at a high school or college graduation and look for his mother's face in the crowd! What man receives a high honor in life without thinking of the words of mother as he grew up.

Mama had a strange way of doing it but she taught us some things that helped us to be blessed. They were complicated subjects but she had a way of saying it that everyone remembered.

Mama taught us to look into the future, she said, "Be sure to wear clean underwear, in case you have an accident."

Mama taught us about time travel, she said, "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"

Mama taught us to respect authority, she said, "I brought you into this world and I will take you out!"

Mama taught how to know a real problem, she said, "You just keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about!"

Mama taught us to be individuals, she said, "I don't care what the other children are wearing, you ain't walking out of this house looking like who'da thought it!"

Mama taught us to suck it up and take criticism, she said, "You can poke out your mouth if you want to, I'll knock it off!"

Mama said many things that blessed us, but one thing that she taught blessed us more than anything else, she said, "Whatever you do, no matter how high you get, don't forget about the Lord!"

What blessed the widow woman's house was the presence of the Lord!

Somebody understands what it means to blessed because of mama's prayers. Verses 11-12 tells how this woman was blessed with barrel that never ran drive and oil that never ran out. But when you consider verse 17 and those that follow you see another way that God blessed her house.

The son she loved and worked so hard to protect, became ill unto death. The widow woman found the prophet Elijah and asked God through him to restore her son. Elijah came back and stretched himself over that son, and God raised him from the dead.

Somebody here today has been risen from a mortifying deadly life, because of mama's prayers!

Somebody here has been literally pulled from the gaping jaws of riotous living, because of mama's prayers!

Somebody here has been snatched back from the chilly grips of alcoholism, drug abuse, and criminal activity, because of mama's prayers!

Some mama somewhere fell down on her knees and cried, "Lord you didn't give me much, just these few sticks; but I've tried to do the best I could. I didn't have a lot of money, but I gave you my all, If it be your will,

Lord, save my son!
Lord, keep your arms around my daughter!
With these few sticks, I tried to put clothes on their back!
With these few sticks, I tried to put food on their table!
With these few sticks, I tried to make their lives happy!
With these feeble hands I tried to hold on!
With these feeble lips I tried to tell them never to forget the name of Jesus!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose Early Sunday Morning
Hold my hand Lord, Hold my hand!
I'm doing the best I can, hold my hand!

No. 846-Inspiration

Stand Still

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 20, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." —Exodus 14:13

Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation that caused you to panic? We panic when we can't figure a way out of a situation and we envision the worst. In a crowded theatre, the word "fire," shouted loudly can incite panic. As people look for exits and crowd isles, each person envisions himself suffocating and dying a horrible death. At that point many lose control, climb over others, scream, cry, run, punch and struggle for survival. Many have lost their lives in panicky situations, not all of them were life threatening, but they appeared to be. Crises can prompt a panic. Loss of a job or source of income can also be a panic situation. A health emergency can also promote panic. Whenever panic occurs rational thinking and faith based actions are difficult. Often a response made in panic is more dangerous than the threat itself.

Generally, we panic out of fear. We see the worst that can happen actually occurring and we attempt to avoid that situation. When we panic there is disorder, disunity, distrust and chaos. Even faith gets challenged when we panic.

A man was walking in the mountains just enjoying the scenery when he stepped too close to the edge of the mountain and started to fall. In desperation he reached out and grabbed a limb of a gnarly old tree hanging onto the side of the cliff. Full of fear he assessed his situation. He was about 100 feet down a shear cliff and about 900 feet from the floor of the canyon below. If he should slip again he'd plummet to his death.

Full of fear, he cries out, "Help me!" But there was no answer. Again and again he cried out but to no avail. Finally he yelled, "Is anybody up there?"

A deep voice replied, "Yes, I'm up here."

"Who is it?"

"It's the Lord"

"Can you help me?"

"Yes, I can help."

"Then help me!"

"Let go." Looking around the man became full of panic. "What?"

"Let go. I will catch you."

"Uh... Is there anybody else up there?"

Is there a personal or family situation that is reaching the panic stage in your life? Are you about to lose it? Have you begun to show the first signs of panic as you see no way out of a steady spiral of trouble and difficulty? Before you push your panic button, why not try one last thing... stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.

As believers, we have learned that God has an amazing way of making a way out of no way. He has carved pathways through seas and brought us over many mountains. Before you lose control and panic, do what you can, then stand still and watch God work.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel in a state of panic at the Red Sea.

The journey to the Promised Land was eventful for the Israelites. It had stressful moments and a number scary turn events. Among the first of their stress test events was the challenge at the Red Sea.

Pharaoh released the Israelites after enduring ten plagues placed upon by God to force their release. However, after Israel was released, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them.

At the Red Sea, the people saw Pharaoh's armies and were frustrated. They were trapped in a situation that seemed inescapable. Behind them the armies of Egypt were approaching. In front of them was the Red Sea. On both sides of them there were mountainous ranges, too steep for a large number of people to pass. Trapped, some of the people panicked. They complained about their situation. They spoke of the "good life" they enjoyed in Egypt and constantly compared it to their present circumstance.

When they saw the armies of Egypt they imagined an angry and vengeful Pharaoh, who would destroy them for leaving. In front of them was the Red Sea, wide, deep and uncrossable. If they went forward they would drown. If they returned to Egypt they envisioned death. Large mountainous terrain bordered them on both sides. They felt trapped and panicked.

In desperation, the people complained to Moses. They vented their frustrations on him. They lost control and all sense of reasoning. They saw trouble and Moses, they felt, was the instigator.

Their panic was unnecessary. They had acted on faith by leaving Egypt at God's command. The followed his directive until they reached a point beyond their control. At the Red Sea, God did the rest. He opened up a path for them to cross on dry land and destroyed their enemies in the process. When they looked back, they realized they had no real need to panic, God was in control.

Panic: When Faith is overwhelmed by Fear

When are we most likely to panic? Usually, we panic whenever our measure of

faith is overwhelmed by our fear. The ideal spiritual situation is to have more faith than any fear generated by a particular circumstance. On occasion the strongest Christian stares a giant sized fear in the face and does not have an equal amount of faith to match.

SOCIAL PANIC: Many people panic easily. Even preparations for a social event can panic them. Someone didn't bring the flower arrangement on time or the decorators brought blue trimmed tablecloths instead of the pink ones ordered. Wedding gowns that won't zip, rings that have been lost, and food that didn't arrive for the guests, are all among the variety of social panics that have given some people high blood pressure attacks, stress attacks and even more. The event planner is suddenly stricken with the fear of failure. He or she visualizes the negative talk after the event and begins to push the panic button.

Believe or not there was a panic situation of this type in the bible. Jesus and his mother attended a wedding party. A large crowd of thirsty guests arrived and it was not long before the wine was gone. The hosts hit the panic button-there are guests and no refreshments. However, Mary remained cool, calm and collected, why? Jesus was in the midst. She went to her son, who had never performed a miracle in public and called on him to provide wine for the wedding. Huge barrels were filled at his command and water became wine. Even in social settings, there is no need for believers to panic as long as Jesus is one board.

Our fear sees a failed experience that will be the subject of gossip. Our faith sees an opportunity for the God in us to turn the situation into an opportunity.

Our fear sees a catastrophe. Our faith draws upon the presence of godliness within us to respond with a positive action rather than with defeatist reaction.

PANIC IN CRISES: Whenever there is a crisis, many people panic. There are many kinds of crises that include everything from financial failure to tragedy? How do we respond to the disability of a loved one? What do we do when there has been a fire, automobile accident or death in the family? If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith...we are likely to panic.

That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard a ship and a storm developed. The shipped rocked and turned and many on board envisioned themselves as dead men. There was no escape. The winds were too strong and they were too far away from the bank to swim. Death appeared imminent. Then someone remembered that Jesus was on board.

Awakening him they asked, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus came to the deck, unmoved by the storm and said, "Peace be still."

Our fear sees the worse that can happen. Our faith knows the best that can happen.

Our fear sees the downside of the situation. Our faith sees every situation as an opportunity to stir the dormant power of God within us that speaks to the storm and says, "Peace be still."

POCKETBOOK PANIC: Many panic when they face a financial crises. When they are laid off work, or lose their benefits or otherwise face a financial crunch, many people panic. They see the worse about to happen. They can't imagine anything

better happening, so they fall to pieces.

It gets tough when the money runs out and it strains every inch ones being just to keep his senses. When the power company truck and the water company and the gas company, rent collector and everyone else is threatening to cut-offs, for some it gets very close to panic time.

Luke and John both record an instance when Simon and several of the disciples were distraught. They were fishermen by trade and had caught no fish. No fish meant no money. They had done their best, toiled all night but caught nothing. They were about to hit the panic button. Then Jesus appeared and told them to cast their nets again on the "right side" of the boat. When they followed his instructions their nets came up full.

Pocketbook panic results when our fear is greater than our faith. We have sought employment unsuccessfully, fear creeps in. Yet the master says try one more time!

We've tried every resource we know to get assistance with a major financial dilemma but met failure every time. Fear sets in. Yet the master says, try one more time!

Faith says, before you panic, remember God is still God and he will make a way!

God Will Make A Way

Finally, brothers and Sisters we must remember that when we reach a panic button situation, the Lord can and will make a way!

The important lesson that Israel learn sitting at the Red Sea is that no matter how impossible the situation appears the Lord will make a way somehow!

When troubles come, feed on your faith rather than fan your fears!

Moses told Israel to stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord!

Stand still was a command not to panic!

Stand still was command to pause and reevaluate!

Stand still was an admonition to stay in the present rather than concern yourself with how much worse the situation can get!

When Israel stood at the Red Sea wasn't the only time we hear these words "Stand still." In Numbers 9:8 the people were about to panic because some of them had touch dead bodies and were unclean. As they began to panic Moses said, "Stand still" let me talk to God about it!

If trouble erupts in your home, Stand still, and talk to God about it!

If there is a question whose answer seems to evade you...Stand still and talk to God about it!

When Joshua reached the River Jordan, it was too wide for the people to cross, but God told Joshua, "Stand Still" on the banks of the Jordan while God made a way?

Have you reached a Red Sea? Are you faced with a River Jordan? Have you done all you know how to do? Don't panic, Stand Still and watch God work!

Stand still means to wait with patience and give your fears time to pass. That's why Isaiah said in 40:31, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. "

The voice of despair said, “Lie down and die,” but the voice of God says, Stand don’t lay down and die. If you want to lie down, “Lie down, lie down, thy weary one thy head upon breast and I will give you rest!

The voice of defeat says, “Give it up!” but the voice of God says, Stand still, and don’t give up! Don’t give up, just look up! “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!”

The voice of frustration says fold your hands in frustration. But the voice of God says, Stand still! Unfold your hands and say, “Father I stretch my hands to thee no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!”

When the storm rages, stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord!

When trouble is all around you, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Lord...stand still!

When your worries overwhelm you, stand still; God will take care of you! Through every day over all the way, he will take care of you!

God will take care of you!

Stand still and think about the goodness of the Lord!

Think about how he died out on Calvary!

Think about how he arose Early Sunday morning!

Think about how he has brought you a mighty long way!

When you feel like giving up, stand still and say, “I don’t believe he brought me this far to leave me!”

Stand still!

Stand still!

Stand still!

No. 847-Inspiration

Maters and Taters

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 27, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" Ephesians 5:8

Introduction

Between potatoes and tomatoes, which do you prefer? America has a love affair with the potato. In the toughest times, our families have survived, thanks to the potato. Think about it, there are mashed potatoes, French fried potatoes, scalloped potatoes, hash brown browned potatoes, baked potatoes, potatoes and beans, potatoes and rice, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, etc. If a family could get its hands on a few potatoes, a smart cook could stretch a meal for days. Tomatoes are common too. While not as utilitarian as potatoes, some folks have found plenty uses for tomatoes, including eating them raw, right out of the garden. Fried green tomatoes is a Southern delicacy, tomato soup, tomato catsup, and no spaghetti dinner is complete without tomato sauce. We see both tomatoes and potatoes often and for the most part have developed a taste for them.

In the South, especially in rural areas, country folks were just a little lazy when they talked. When they referred to tomatoes, they cut it short and simply said, "Maters." Potatoes had the same fate. They became "Maters." There are still many Southerners that proudly refer to these items as Maters and Taters!

What if I told you that there is a connection between Maters, Taters and Christians, could you see it right off? It can't be in the looks or color, that wouldn't have anything to do with living the Christian life. Taste wouldn't be a factor either, since taste is usually subjective.

Maters and Taters are connected to the Christian life in the way they grow and respond to the light. One grows in the dark, under the ground. The other grows in the light.

As believers we are encouraged in scripture to walk in the light and not in darkness. The success of our efforts to grow in the faith has plenty to do with where we walk, where we talk, where we spend our time and what we do to grow in the faith.

It's like maters and taters! Those who grow in the dark respond one way. Those who walk in the light respond another way?

As believers, we are encouraged to walk in the light and not in the dark. Our blessings come when the light of Jesus shines in us each and every day?

Which are we: tater people who grow in the dark, or mater people who thrive and grow because they live in the light?

Exposition

This text focuses the manner in which Christians live, in the light.

There were seven churches in Asia Minor at the time of this text. The book of Ephesians was immediately addressed to the Christians at Ephesus but was ultimately carried to all seven, as was the custom. It began the second of the great themes reflected in the New Testament.

In Paul's first four letters, Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians, the idea of "Christ in you" is promoted. These letters, in great detail, show how the indwelling presence of Christ in our lives is really supposed to operate. The removal of condemnation, forgiveness of sin and the shunning of evil practices is characterized by the Christian who operates with "Christ in you" mode. In essence, the first four letters describe what happens when "Christ is in you." They describe how we turn from the world and gradually develop a distaste for the things of the world as we grow in the faith. That's Christ "in you."

However, beginning with the book of Ephesians, the theme changes from "Christ in you" to "You in Christ." Whereas the first four shows us what happens when Christ is in us, the remaining books, with the exception of Revelation, show us what should happen when we are "In Christ." It teaches us to understand with greater clarity, what it means for us to be a part of the body of Christ and the church.

One thing that is special about being "in Christ" is that we learn a different way of living. The "Christ in us" changes our tastes, ways, direction and goals. But being "In Christ" refers to what we do after we have let Christ in.

This text points to one thing we do...we strive to walk in the light and do those things which are reflective of "Children of the light."

For all practical purposes, one part of our Christian experience is Jesus give believers a light.-Christ in us. The other part of our experience is our decision to let it shine- "In Christ." The song, Jesus gave me a light, is the perfect example. It says, "Jesus gave me a light" (Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians)..and "I'm going to let it shine." (Remainder of the New Testament, except Revelation).

Walking in the light and being children of the light is Paul's way of saying that we should reflect that we are "in Christ." In essence, we are encouraged to move from simply having "Christ in us" to a point of being "In Christ." Not to simply have a light in me, but to let it shine in my daily living.

"Walk as children of the light" means that we don't simply sing the song, and talk the talk, but we also walk the walk of those who are truly "in Christ."

Tater People

There is a parallel between what Paul teaches in this text and Maters and Taters.

TATERS LIVE IN THE DARK: Taters are products of the dark. They grow off the work of other plant components, the leaves, which are above ground doing all of the work. Yet in the church, there are millions of "tater people" who sit in the dark and let others do all of the work. They let others study the bible as they try to pick up a little bit here and there as they talk to them. They let others, do the praying, fellowship and work of building the body of Christ, while they sit in the dark. They are not sinful people, they have Christ in them, but they have not reached a point of being "In Christ."

TATERS WILL ROT IF LEFT ALONE: Although taters live in the dark, the very darkness they enjoy will destroy them if they are not uprooted in time. A tater, left in the ground too long will rot. Once that happens, that tater is not worth anything to anybody. Tater people are the same way, that's why God's Holy Spirit constantly tugs at them to get them to move out of the darkness, into the marvelous light. In the dark, their fate is sealed. In the light, there is life!

TATERS HAVE EYES BUT THEY CANNOT SEE: Taters have lots of eyes but they can't see a thing. There are many tater people who are the same way, they have eyes but they can't see a thing. They can't see how God operates in their lives. They can't see God's plan for them. They can't understand God's ways. Neither can they "see" God's vision. That's what Dr. Watts had in mind when he coined the phrase, "Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. I was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

TATERS MUST BE PREPARED TO BE USED: As a food, taters generally are not ready, just as they are. To get a tater ready to eat it must be fried, or baked, or boiled or mashed other otherwise prepared. While there are a few folks who like them raw, most folks stay away from an unprepared tater. Tater people are the same way, they are not useful just being taters, they must be prepared first. Sometimes God prepares tater people by exposing them to just enough heat in life to make them usable. He doesn't fry the French fry until its black, but just enough! He doesn't boil a potato until it falls apart, but until its soft enough to mash. There are some tater people who have hard personalities, terrible ways and corrupt attitudes. They are not ready yet, God is still turning up the heat and he's not through yet. Even then, taters need a little seasoning. That's where believers come in...we are the salt of the earth!

TATERS MUST BE CUT UP TO GROW: Taters are strange. Rarely will they grow unless they are cut up into small pieces and replanted. Tater people are the same way. Many have not grown spiritually. They are the same today as they were a few years ago. Some grow however, after something happens to "cut them up" into small pieces. The ways are numerous, sometimes they are accidents, sicknesses, family dilemmas, and plethora of other maladies that bring Tater people to a new reality. Many find a new relationship with God after an ordeal. It is then that evolve from being a Tater Person.

TATER PEOPLE HAVE A VARIETY OF NAMES: The Tater personality usually results in a variety of descriptions. There is Dick-tater, he wants to tell everyone what to do. There is Agi-Tater, who always stirs up dissent. Hesi-tater, who always puts off doing that which is necessary; Ro-tater, who moves from one thing to another.

Tater people, by whatever name we call them, seem to reflect darkness rather than light. They have a light, but it never shines.

Mater People

If there are tater people who live in the dark, then there are also mater people who live in the light.

Maters are different from taters, not just in looks.

While taters live in the dark, maters live in the sunshine. Maters bloom in the garden, grow on the vine and abide in the word of the Lord! That's what Jesus meant when he said in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

MATERS ARE READY TO SERVE. While taters must be prepared to serve, maters live ready to serve. A gardener get walk through the garden, see a fine mater and pick it right there. It doesn't have to be cooked. He can cut it up in a salad, place it on a hamburger, or use it to garnish a dish. Maters are ready. If he wants to do more he can. He can refine a mater into a sauce or a paste or he can drink it as a juice.

Mater people are ready to serve the Lord. Maybe that's what Isaiah 6:8 means when it says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

The continuous testimony of a true believer is, "Use me Lord in Your Service"

If you need me to pray, use me!

If you need me to sing, use me!

If you need me to wave my hand, use me Lord in your service!

MATER PEOPLE HAVE MANY SEEDS: While taters have to be cut up before they can grow, Maters have seeds. They have plenty of seeds. Seeds for growth and seeds of faith. Mater people are always planting seeds for their growth and prosperity.

Maters are known by a variety of names, we may know a few of them of them. There is:

ANI-MATER, who takes things that don't usually move and makes them come to life. If you have a program that is dead, you need an ani-mater to get it going again!

AMALGA-MATER, who takes things that are loose and unconnected and brings them together

ESTI-MATER AND APPROXI-MATER, two folks who always have an idea of what it will take to get a job done!

ACCLI-MATERS, those who help others to get adjusted in a new situations. They have a special touch that settles rather than disturbs, inspires rather than confuses.

We need to be careful in life, because there are some taters that try to look like maters; they are generally called "imi-tators!"

One thing about mater people is that they can be sealed by the Holy Ghost.

Someone remembers grandma, picking maters in the garden!

Someone remembers grandma going to the store to buy the Mason Jars!

Someone remembers grandma boiling those jars in hot water while she'd get her peaches, pears together. Somewhere in the bunch, grandma would also include a few maters. When the jars were sterilized, the maters are put in the Mason jars while the water is hot. Grandma would say, "Don't screw the top too tight, wait for it to pop!" When it pops she'd say it's time to lock it down.

When the maters were sealed in the Old Mason Jars, grandma would store them away. It didn't matter how, long because they were sealed.

That's what Ephesians 1:18 meant when it says, "...after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

When we are sealed with the Holy Ghost we have a testimony to give and a story to tell!

It's a story how he brought me out of darkness, into his marvelous light!

It's a story of how he picked me up and turned me around!

It's a story of how he died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

Jesus gave me a light and I'm going to let it shine!

Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!

No. 848-Graduation

Every step up is from the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 3, 2001

SCRIPTURE:" For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Psalm 75:6-7

Introduction

If you had to make an acceptance speech and thank those responsible for your accomplishments, who would make your list? Every year we watch the Academy awards, Emmy and Tony awards on television and watch as the stars rattle off a list of names of persons they want to thank for helping them reach the pinnacle of their careers. Some name their producers, directors and agents. There are others who come with prepared lists, to make sure they are politically correct, not missing anyone. There are a few who do not feel it necessary to thank many people at all, but think they achieved their success on their own. Whenever we accomplish anything in life, our accomplishment is not independent of others. Everyone has had a little help along the way. If we were to thank everyone that helped us, our list would be too long to read.

Graduations give us an occasion to reflect upon our journey. Along the way, there have been many people who have assisted us in the learning process, from teachers to coaches, religious leaders and the lady down the street. The graduate that believes his accomplishments are the result of his own singular effort graduates in ignorance and is doomed to a similar ignorance throughout his life, if he is not careful. Consider the moron who dropped out of school without learning to read or write. He married a woman who encouraged him to work hard and save his money and nobody would pay attention to the fact that he dropped out of school. He opened a bank account and signed his name by writing x two times. As the years went by he saved his money, bought a fine home and kept going to the bank with all of his savings. He opened many businesses and made lots of money. Finally he was beginning to believe he was somebody. One day his banker came by to see him. He had a hand full of checks. The banker said he was concerned because for years the moron had signed his checks with two xes. This week, however, the bank received checks signed with three xes. The moron told the banker, "That's alright, My wife said since we have made it, I deserve to have a middle name!" He started out ignorant and stayed ignorant all of his life.

The foolish man believes that his achievements are the result of his own work. A graduate may have studied for tests, turned in home assignments, and completed official requirements, but the success of our efforts were not the result of our own handiwork. If we had to stand with an acceptance speech for accomplishment of a godly ordained goal, it would begin and end with thanks and praise to God.

Believers acknowledge one truth: Whatever promotions or blessings we receive in life come from God. Every kind act shown to us by a teacher, coach, relative or friend is the result of God touching that person's heart and motivating them to help us. Believers don't live in ignorance; we know the source of all our blessings.

As Christians, we thank God for every step up, whether it is a high school graduation or completion of other life goals. Every step up, every promotion we receive in life comes from the Lord because we are in his hand.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains how success is in God's hands.

David, the author of this Psalm, offered praise to God for his advancement in life. His advances were epic in proportion. He moved from a lowly shepherd boy to the king's musician. While being heralded as the King's musician he suddenly became a national hero after he killed Goliath. Years later, he was first named the King of Judah, then King of Israel.

Reflecting on that amazing string of promotions and advancements, David wrote the 75th Psalm, giving praise and thanks to God, whom he credits as the real source of his promotion and elevation.

In praising God alone for his promotion, David notes how those outside of the believer's circle often give praise to external sources for their success. In verse 4 he refers to those who credit sources other than God as the reason for their success as "fools" who proceed through life with "stiff necks" believing their success has come by some efforts other than God alone. Referring to them as persons who "lift up their horns," David urges believers not to follow their example, but to humble themselves as they pursue life.

His summary of success, promotion, graduation and all other accomplishments is that they come from God.

In verse 6 he paints the picture clearly, success does not come from the South, East or West. Specifically, he referred to those who relied on alliances with neighboring nations for Israel's national success. Some looked to Egypt and Ethiopia to the South for political support. Others looked to the wisdom and wealth of the people of the East. Still others depended upon the large military forces of the nation's of the West. In these areas, David's advisers told him, Israel would be secure.

In the same verse it should be noted that the 'North" is omitted. David notes the South, East and West, but he omits the North. North of Jerusalem were desert states that had nothing to offer and no help was expected. North represented the unexpected, chance or luck. There is no promotion that comes from sheer luck alone. It was not even considered.

In verse 7 David makes it plain that providence, the eventual ebb and flow of our lives, is in God's hands. The cup of daily occurrences, chance, success and failure is in God's hands. In the course of any life he pours out some sunshine and some rain. He pours out some victory and some defeats. Ultimately, every believer will receive the richest of God's blessings, while non-believers can expect, in the end, the dregs.

Thus, David makes it clear to believers, whatever our advancement in life, it will come from God, for our future is in his hands.

The Next Step

Our promotions in life are steps toward success., We may do the climbing, but God provides the steps.

Have you ever tried to reach for something that was just out of reach? Maybe you stood in a chair, but it was still out of reach. Did you have a ladder but found it too short? That's what David means when he says, promotions are from the Lord. Some goals we seek may be out of our reach, but they are attainable if he provides us the steps needed to get there. Without a ladder high enough, we will never reach the goal, no matter how hard we strive to reach the top.

Being Ready for the Next Step

God opens doors for believers every day. He provides highways in the wilderness. Each opportunity or step that God provides for us is our chance to step up, but we must be prepared to take the next step when opportunity knocks. Education, discipline and faith are three essentials to seizing these opportunities when they come. Moses received a superior education in the classrooms of Egypt and in the mountains of Midian. He learned discipline and self control as he battled against himself in long mountain stays. He learned to depend upon God in every situation.

Education for life boils down to this: "Education is knowing what you gotta know, to do what you gotta do." It is learned in three schools: school room, Sunday School and the School of Hard Knocks. Each teaches important essentials for living. Secular schools teach the theory, history and bodies of knowledge necessary for understanding the world around us. Sunday School helps us to understand how what we learned in the classroom effects us as children of God. But it is the school of hard knocks that teaches the hardest lessons. In the school of hard knocks we learn what It means to work, sweat, pay bills, meet obligations, fail, succeed, and suffer disappointment. It is a tough school, but its graduates, usually arise ready to take the next step.

Discipline for life is generally imposed, but works best when it is self imposed. If education is knowing "what you gotta know, to do what you gotta do" then discipline means, "doing what you gotta do, to get what you gotta do, done." Initially, parents imposed discipline, they tell you what you "gotta do!" They picked your clothes, decided whether you would go to church, and be in a school activity. Your

parents forced you to study and achieve. That is imposed discipline. The hallmark of discipline is when it is self imposed. It's when you force yourself to do "what you gotta do, to do what you gotta do."

Faith for life is learned through experience. As a child, youth placed much of their faith in their parents. Children don't worry about paying the rent, utilities, or putting food on the table. They have faith that mama or papa will take care of it. At this juncture however, each child learns mama's secret, which is to have individual faith in God. Faith is the "evidence of things unseen." It's not knowing how you are going to do what you gotta do, but believing that "God's gonna do what he's gonna do, to help you do what you gotta do."

In God's Hands

Finally, we should consider David's conclusion, that our future success is in God's hands!

The 75th Psalm has taught us clearly that God is in control of the events our lives and that our successes and promotions come from him. We are in his hands.

We have seen believers of all walks of life promoted from obscurity to the highest levels of success, when they place their lives and destinies in God's hands.

Joseph was raised from being a slave boy to the prime minister of Egypt, because his life was in God's hands.

Aaron was raised from being a mere slave in Egypt to being a high priest of Israel because his life was in God's hands!

The three Hebrew Boys were raised out exile to become great leaders in the Chaldean kingdom.

Daniel was lifted from a lion's den to high esteem because his life was in God's hands!

When our lives are in God's hands, he creates the steps for us!

He opens the doors!

He makes the opportunities!

He baffles the critics who doubt our abilities.

He mystifies the skeptics who said, we were doomed to failure!

He intensifies our commitment and builds our strength

When our lives are in God's hands, he breathes his Holy Spirit on us and promotes us higher and higher.

That's why the old warriors used to sing, "We are climbing Jacob's ladder, We are climbing Jacob's ladder, Soldiers of the cross...every round goes higher higher!..Soliders of the cross!"

Somebody else sang, "Step by step, we'll make this journey, but the way seems hard, hard, hard. Step by step we'll make this journey, but we must put our trust In God!"

Trusting in the Lord means asking God to hold my hand!

As I move from level to level, hold my hand!

As I take the next step in my life's journey, hold my hand!

I may be young but I know the meaning of the old song, "Lord hold my hand, while I run the race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Trust in the Lord, he will never let you down!

Trust in the Lord, who died for you out on Calvary!

Trust in the Lord, who arose after three days with all power in his hands!

Trust in the Lord because he holds your future in his hands.

No. 849-Inspiration

Raise Your Roof

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 10, 2001

Scripture: "And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. " Mark 2:4-5

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when someone told you that you could not achieve a goal? How did you respond? As children, many of us had dreams of doing great things in life, only to have our dreams shattered by someone who told us about the impossibility, impracticality and improbability of our dream. Can you imagine a student who failed in school ever dreaming that he would become a world renowned scientist? That's what happened to Albert Einstein. who mastered the theory of relativity! James Earl Jones was told he'd never be an actor because he stuttered as a child! When we dream, there are many who attempt to lower our expectations, to what they call something more realistic. There are thousand of people whose growth has been stunted because of lowered expectation.

Sometimes, we get no more out of life than we expect. If we expect failure then failure is what we get. If we expect a bad day, then a bad day is exactly what we get. Much of what happens in life depends on what we expect. While traveling home from a business trip a man traveling at 60 miles an hour in a 45 mile an hour zone topped a hill just in time to see a state trooper turn on his flashing red and blue lights. As the police car pulled out behind the man's car the man thought to himself. "I can outrun this guy." and increased his speed to 70 miles an hour. With the police still in pursuit he accelerated to 80, then 90, then 100 miles an hour. Before long he decided it was of no hope and pulled over to the side of the road. He was a smooth talker however, and he expected to talk his way out of the situation. The officer walked up to the side of the man's vehicle and shouted "I have had a very bad day and am in no mood to stand out here in this heat giving you a ticket. Just give me a good reason why you were driving so fast and I'll let you go." The man thought for a minute, then said. "Well, officer. my wife left me about three weeks ago for a state trooper. When I saw your lights come on. I thought you were him and you were trying to bring her back." "On your way," said the officer. -It turned out just like he expected.

Too many people have condemned themselves to lives of quiet desperation because they gave up on their dreams. The youth who dreamed of being a doctor gave up because someone said they didn't have what it takes. The woman who dreamed of owning her own business gave up because someone said she was a minority andthat odds are stacked against both women and minorities. Someone told the workman that he could never own a business like his employer and he believed it.

Each time a person tells us that we cannot succeed, in effect, they lower our expectations. However, our God does just the opposite. The word of God teaches us to raise our expectations! It gives us the confidence to expect miracles when we are sick; expect a job when we are unemployed and to expect answers when we have questions. On a daily basis, believers raise the roof of their expectations higher, with boldness and confidence that anything is possible a-nd nothing is impossible which is within the will of God.

As Christians, we thrive on the knowledge that God will make a way. Despite difficulties and frustrations that make success appear improbable, we stand assured that God will make it happen for us. Instead of lowering our expectations, we raise them higher every day!

Exposition

This text focuses on five men who expected a healing from God and received it.

Jesus was teaching in a private home. When a crowd suddenly appeared outside the home he continued to teach them about the kingdom of God.

A man who was afflicted with Palsy believed Jesus was a healer, He and four friends concocted the idea of getting close to Jesus to be healed. His friends carried him on a cot to the house where Jesus taught, but when they arrived the crowd was so thick that he could not get close.

The four men climbed to the roof top, and raised the sick man to the roof. They tore a hole in the roof that caught Jesus' attention as he saw the lame man being lowered in front of him. Impressed, Jesus forgave the man's sins and he was healed.

Raising The Roof

Today, there are many people who have shelved their personal dreams because they have been told that it cannot be done. Some have not even asked God, because they don't expect him to grant their request. A close look at the five men of this text shows what happens when believers raise their expectations and dare to succeed, relying on faith in God alone!

THEY DARED DIFFICULTY -. Success is accomplished by those who are not intimidated by difficulty. That is the lesson these five men teach. It was not an easy task for these five to get close to the Lord. They had to carry him through the streets only to find that the doorway was block. Carrying a full grown man, even for four men. is not an easy task. Raising him to the top of the house without dropping or injuring

him was even more difficult, yet they were not intimidated. Believers who are pursuing life goals should not be intimidated by. difficulty. The road to success is paved with difficulty, frustrations and bumps. Our farmly histories are filled with accounts of how our ancestors overcame difficulties of slavery, poverty and ignorance to achieve. Any person who expects to succeed should expect difficulty and live constantly armed with a plan "B." "There is a way! If there is no way, God can create a way, if we trust him.

THEY DARED TO BE DIFFERENT: Sometimes, the road to success compelsus to be different and to take approaches that are different than others. The five men of the text took a very unorthodox approach to their healing. They were not limited by the fact that it was not at all customary to breakup a roof. When they found that the door was blocked they immediately sought ways to get close to the Lord, even though every traditional way was blocked. They risked the disapproval not only of the owner of the house but also every person thereby interrupting the meeting in order to get their friend to Jesus. They took a very unorthodox route, but it led them to their goal.

The believer often searches for a way to accomplish a goal and is not afraid to try a different approach. Dare to be different! That is easier said than done, because being different usually carries with it the stigma of nonconformity. Yet, one of the most salient features of the lives of great men and women is the fact that they had the courage to be different from the rest of the crowd marching toward mediocrity. Climbing to the top of a house with a sick man was certainly different.

They defied the status quo. Those who saw the five men must have thought them crazy, yet they continued. In the same sense, any person today who is faced with a challenge should search for an approach that leads to a resolution. That approach should not exclude the untried and unorthodox. Whatever works for your situation...works!

THEY DARED TO DO THE COSTLY: Success never comes without a price. Those who pursue it must be willing to pay the cost. The men of this text were well aware of the costs they would incur tearing up a roof. Removing brick and dirt and creating a large hole in the roof of a stranger, was costly. Financially, it would cost. They had no idea how the homeowner would respond either, but they were willing to shoulder the cost. Jesus, speaking to his disciples encouraged them to count the cost before pursuing the Christian life. He showed them the rewards, but he also told them that the rewards would not come without a price. That price would not be in dollars., but in many intangibles that could include life, liberty and pursuit of secular dreams.

Those who succeed, dare to incur the cost, A business enterprise won't succeed without some risk of financial loss. A change of careers in mid-life won't happen without the risk of security. To grab and hold one pursuit often means letting go of another. It is risky, but those who succeed, calculate the cost and then make their move. That's the essence of faith; the willingness to step out on the water trusting God to help do the impossible.

Expect God to Act

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should learn from this text that we should live expecting God to act in our lives.

There was never a moment in the experience of these five men when they did not expect the savior to act. They encountered each obstacle with the full knowledge that if they made it to a certain point they would see the savior face to face!

If we are acting in accordance with the will of God, there is no reason for any believer to doubt that God will act to open doors of opportunity or shut doors of defeat. The question is not whether God will act, but whether we will trust him to act and do what's necessary to bring ourselves before him.

Believers should approach God with determination, knowing that he has the power to make it happen.

The woman afflicted with an issue of blood, expected to receive a blessing if she could touch the hem of his garment!

The Centurion soldier, whose child was ill, came to Jesus expecting a blessing, if Jesus would say the word!

Believers don't know how it will be done, but they expect God to make a way!

Those who have lowered the roof of their expectations should not give up on God, raise your roof!

Those who have given up on achieving the impossible should not give up on God, raise your roof!

Those who have accepted defeat and have thrown in the towel should not give up so quickly, raise your roof!

Trust in the Lord!

Those who trust in the Lord, find that God usually acts in the appropriate way at the appropriate moment. The old folks said it correctly, "He may not come when you want him, but always on time!"

I don't know about you, but I have learned never to second guess the Lord!

Believers we should resolve, "I will trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord until I die! "

We can trust him because he loved us!

We can trust him because he died for us!

We can trust him because early Sunday morning he arose from the grave for us!

We can trust him to do what he said he will do!

No. 850-Inspiration

Crossed Fingers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 24, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

Introduction

Have you ever faced a decisive moment and crossed your fingers? What did you mean when you did it? We've seen it happen on thousands of occasions: A team, in the final minutes of a game is down to one final shot that will determine the victor, many supporters in the crowd, cross their fingers. A person who is hoping to receive good news in an upcoming announcement, secretly crosses his fingers. A crossed finger in these instances is a form of body language that expresses hope and faith. When a person is expressing a false hope or is attempting disguise a true feeling, he or she often crosses his fingers, but does so behind his back. It indicates that the words being spoken are not really a true expression of how one feels; they are a lie. Crossed fingers give insight into depth of our desires and emotions.

Nearly everyone has experienced an occasion in which they have crossed their fingers. Most however, did not know that the crossed finger first originated with Christians. When it was first used, it had nothing at all to do with luck. It was a secret code. In the early days of the Church it was dangerous to be a Christian. Our faith was unpopular and illegal. Many who believed were tortured and fed to lions for sport. There were times when Christians were hated so badly that even a casual association with followers of the cross could mean death. When those who were Christians, met another Christian they would use "body language" or crossed fingers to indicate that they too were believers. If someone approached that they were unsure about, they would quickly hide their crossed fingers behind their back to disguise their identity.

Crossed fingers represented the Cross of Christ. It indicated that a situation had been placed in the hands of God. It suggested that the believer was hoping and praying for victory in Christ. The blessing associated with crossed fingers for many was, "May Christ be victorious in my hour of need!"

That's significant, especially in light of the words of the text from Psalm 23. We read the words, "though" I walk through, the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. There are two words that leap from this passage, "though" and "through." The only difference between the two words is the letter "r". In American Sign

Language, the letter "r" is made by crossing the middle finger over the index finger. It's the sign of the cross.

The difference between our "though" situations and our "through" situations is the "r" the presence of Christ victorious in our hour of need. When the cross, there is no "through" only a though.

Though we may walk in the darkness of the moment, our hope is that Christ is victorious in our hour of need so, we walk through the dark moment fearing nothing, our hope and trust has been placed in God's hand.

As Christians, we may not cross our fingers as much as the early believers, but we do maintain hope and faith, that in any given situation, Christ will be the victor. We don't hide that hope or faith behind our backs, but only declare to the world, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

Exposition

This text focuses on two words of the 23rd Psalm, "though" and "through."

David wrote freely about his faith in God despite difficult times. It is a psalm of confidence and determination. It positive, forward looking and without a doubt, filled with faith.

The essence of the psalms is derived from two words "though" and "through", which if it were not for the "r" would be the same word. It is the "r" that makes the difference.

Life's "Though" Experiences

David's psalm was realistic. It showed that he was keenly aware that there are dangers, misfortunes and misunderstandings lurking around every corner. "Though" seems to represent unknown difficulties, without an "if" but with a certainty that unknowns will come.

What are "though" experiences? In this Psalm David praises God for prepared tables, quiet waters, overflowing cups, green pastures, and anointed heads.

Yet our "though" experience, underscores the fact that there are periods in life with when the waters are not quiet. In fact, there are times when the waters are turbulent and dangerous. When quiet waters become rapids, that's a "though" experience.

There are times when our cups do not overflow. Overflowing cups implies prosperity. It indicates those times when you have more food than you need, more clothes than you can wear, a soft bed to sleep in, and a few nickels in your pocket. Yet life does not always present us with overflow situations. Sometimes there are times when our cup is not overflowing. In fact, there are times when we may find our cup has only a few drops in them. When those times come, they are "though"

situations!

There are times when we do not have green pastures. For sheep and cattle a green pasture means an abundance of grazing opportunities. There are times when we seem to always be in the right place at the right time, to take advantage of opportunities. That's when pastures are green. When everything seems to work the way it should..that's when pastures are green! As great as they are, there are also times in life when the pastures are not green. There are times when opportunities seem to pass you by. These are the times when you always seem to be in the right place but always at the wrong time. Instead of green pastures, there are no pastures at all. These are "though" situations.

There are times when we can feel the strength of talents and gifts as we perform a great work. The anointed head is the one that has been touched by the power of God. When we operate under the anointing, we feel God working through us. When we sing under the anointing, God sings! When we play an instrument under the anointing, God plays! When we work in a ministry under the anointing, God works beside us! Yet there are times when have allowed ourselves to slip from under the anointing power of God. That's when we sing, but it is not God singing through us. That's when we minister but do it without God. It is a barren time when the artist has no inspiration, the writer stares at a blank page, and musician loses his creative touch. These are the times that can be characterized as "though" situations.

There are times when we are victorious despite the efforts of our enemies to defeat us. For a time, we appear to be charmed, unbeatable, and unmovable. Each person has a host of detractors and a few enemies, none of whom relish the idea of his success or prosperity. Yet, God often provides a "table" of blessings for believers in the presence of their enemies, frustrating and confusing them. There are many believers who have received promotions despite the efforts of co-workers to stop it from happening. Others have received appointments or special opportunities, despite barriers erected to retard their efforts. These are situations when it becomes obvious that God has prepared a table for us, in the presence of our enemies. Life, however, is not always "win-win" situations. There are times when we suffer defeats, lose battles and watch our enemies walk away with life's trophies in a moment of triumph. There are even times when we walk in the valley of the shadow of fear, death, depression and trouble. These are the kinds of situations covered by "though."

Though is a word of caution in the context of this psalm. It reminds us of the realities of life. It reminds us that the devil is busy and is constantly looking for opportunities to seek and destroy believers.

For every "though" there is a "through"

Believers bring an "r" into every "though" experience. The "r" is our faith and hope that "Christ will be victorious in our hour of need!" –It's our crossed finger! It's our faith, based upon experience, that God can change a though situation into a "through" situation.

What is the difference between “though” and “through?” It is only one letter!

If a difficulty in life gets you down, it may be because you can only see the “though” and not the “through.”

When you get fired off your job, it’s a time when you can only see the though, and don’t know how you’ll get through!

When your car breaks down, a household item gets out of control, it’s a time when you can only see the though, and don’t know how you’ll get through!

When the love of your life is acting up and doing the “fool thing”, it’s a time when you can only see the though, and don’t know how you’ll get through!

When all of your bills are due, but you’ve run out of money, it’s a time when you can only see the though, and you don’t know how you’ll get through!

Though indicates a time of trouble. Through points to a time when trouble will end.

Though indicates a time of weakness. Through points us to renewed strength.

Though indicates a time of defeat. Through points us to a time of victory.

This is the faith that helps a believer say, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me..”

Though I was born poor with all of the odds against me, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!

Though I am discriminated against, persecuted and belittled, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!

Though I am besieged by troubles on every side, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!

The difference between a though situation and a “through” situation depends heavily upon what believers take into a situation. Believers have learned to take the “cross of salvation” with them and “thoughs” become “throughs!”

The believer’s hope is not in the storm, but in coming through the storm!

His hope is not in the darkness, but in coming through the darkness into the marvelous light!

His hope is not in his oppression, but in coming through oppression into liberation!

It’s the idea of the song writer who asked the question, “Have you been tried in the fire? Did you come through like pure gold?”

That’s what Job had in mind when he said, “Yea though he slay me..yet will I serve him!”

The song writer had it right when he said, “I’m going through. I’ll pay the price, no matter what others say or do! I’m going through!”

Whenever you get into a tough situation, take the Lord with you, because there is power in the cross!

There’s power in the cross, because one day, over 2000 years ago, Jesus was lifted up on an old rugged cross!

He died nailed to a cross!His blood was shed on a cross!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Take the Lord with you and everything will be alright!

No. 851-Inspiration

Bought With A Price

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 1, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:20

Introduction

As Americans, we celebrate freedom, but are we really free? In the land of the free and the home of the brave, do we really enjoy unrestricted freedom, liberty and independence? While we celebrate our national independence and exercise certain individual liberties, it doesn't take much for us to realize that we are not really "free."

"I wants to be free!" That was the chant of slaves who worked in the fields of America producing its crops and maintaining its Southern agricultural economy. We spoke of our desire to be free, but many had no notion what freedom actually meant. For most, freedom, meant that ability to avoid the most responsibility possible.

For a time "I wants to be free" meant the end of slavery. That's when men like Frederick Douglass traveled the nation questioning whether or not our celebration of independence was real. In 1852 Douglass asked this pointed question, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelly to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."

American Independence from Britain certainly cut the political umbilical cord connecting this continent from Europe, but it did not bring true freedom and it certainly did not come free.

Even today, we are not completely free but what we have has been bought with a price.

Our national record is sprinkled with limitations, restrictions and prohibitions, that limit us, but even the freedoms that remain, are bought with a price.

The very first person to pay the price for American freedom, was a Black man,

Crispus Attucks, who was killed protesting the British.

What of the others? Historians tells us that five signers of the Declaration of Independence were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.

They signed and pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Whatever liberties we share as Americans, they were bought with a price. Thousands gave their lives, both Black and White that we have a chance to exercise certain options, considered inalienable from the human spirit: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We are free, but there are limitations, restrictions and prohibitions related to our freedom. This is the spirit of what Paul talked about when he wrote to the Galatians. In Galatians 5:1 he wrote "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Spiritually, Jesus came to set us free from bondage, but just like American Independence, it is not complete freedom It has restrictions. Also like American Independence, it did not come without a price.

The price of our spiritual independence was paid by Christ on Calvary.

Salvation is available without a charge, but spiritual freedom was not free, it was bought with a price, which was paid by Jesus Christ himself.

As Christians, we celebrate whatever level of freedom we enjoy, with the full knowledge that no freedoms come without responsibility. We our spiritual freedom from bondage was purchased by Christ and as such we owe him our allegiance.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul explaining the nature of the spiritual relationship of each believer to Christ.

This letter was written to believers who lived in the city of Corinth. It was a city that was infamously known for its loose morals, fast living and low moral standards. The idea of "if it feels good do it" was the dominant philosophy. It controlled the actions of most of the citizens. Until Paul arrived in Corinth there had been very little resistance or challenge to the immorality of Corinth. It was accepted as a way of life. Incest, homosexuality, drunkenness, lesbianism, cheating, extortion; all of these were the hall marks of the Corinthian way of life.

Paul took the unpopular position of challenging the status quo of Corinth, damning those who participated in immoral activity under the guise of individual freedom. It was an extremely unpopular opinion, especially in a city that prided itself upon a "Live and let live" attitude. "You do your thing and I'll do mine" was the idea that prevailed and very little was said by anyone until Paul became to teach and preach in Corinth.

In his first letter to the Corinthians and later to the Galatians and Romans that believers in Christ are spiritually free, but that free should not and does not insinuate that they are free to conduct themselves anyway they want; do anything they want; or involve themselves any activity they want. They are free, but there are limitations.

Beginning at verse nine Paul produces a checklist, which is not all inclusive, but is certainly representative of our limitations: ÿ"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

His explanation of freedom is characterized in verse 12. He notes that the spirit of freedom gives believers the option to participate in a variety of activities without restrictions written in a spiritual legal code that itemizes each and every activity with intricate detail. Paul said, while he knows he, as a believer has a right to indulge in any number of activities, just because he has the right does not mean that it is "expedient" to exercise the right. It is not necessary simply because the opportunity is available.

Specifically, Paul notes that our freedom comes with restrictions that are self imposed. Without a list, we evaluate circumstance in terms of its spiritual value and choose or reject participation based upon our goal of being active citizens in the kingdom of God.

The freedom that Christ gives falls in three categories:

1) The freedom from the compulsion to do what the world dictates (Gal 1:4)

2) Freedom of living a life that only self oriented but elevated to a level that wants to please God (Gal. 2:20)

3) Freedom from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13)

The overriding principal is for every believer to remember that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. We have freedoms and liberties, but we children of the King, purchased by his own blood. As we exercise our liberties, we must do so in the light of our relationship with Christ, who paid for our salvation with his own blood.

Freedom

Freedom does not come without restrictions. As believers we have conditional freedom, just as we have as American citizens.

We have freedom of speech, but we cannot say anything we want without injuring the rights of others.

We have the freedom to assemble, protest address government leaders but we don't have the freedom to disrupt the orderly flow of commerce or activity.

We have freedom of the press but we can't knowingly write false statements of fact that injure the ability of others to pursue their profession.

We have freedoms but they do not come without restrictions.

In a spiritual sense, this still remains true. We have a plethora of freedoms but those freedoms do not give us the right to indulge in worldly activities, because we

have been saved.

For many years in the African-American religious community there was an unspoken belief that two persons who were both saved enjoyed special freedoms that allowed them to participate in sexual activity without penalty as long as both parties were saved. The idea said, “Two clean sheets can’t dirty each other.” Following that notion, many preachers, deacons, and believers involved themselves in a variety sexual escapades, always careful to make sure that both parties were “saved.”

We have freedoms, but there should be self imposed restrictions upon our freedoms.

As believers, we have the freedom to go any local club, get on the dance floor and hunch and grid. The question that Paul asks is does that activity strengthen or weaken our relationship with Christ, to whom we spiritually belong.? We have the right, but is it expedient?

As believers Adam can leave Eve and find Steve and they can hug, kiss, hold hands and engage in other unmentionables. In light of God’s word, will their relationship strengthen or weaken their standing with Christ, to whom they are spiritually indebted?

Believers who choose to live together without being married, have that freedom. Believers who choose to drink excessively, brawl, steal or engage in malicious gossip, all have the freedom to do so. but freedom has both limitations and consequences.

A man may have the right to wave his hand in the air, but the first time that his hand hands another person’s nose his rights end and there is a consequence.

While Christianity does not give us a list, etched in stone, in matters of conscience we are encouraged to exercise our freedoms with prudence. Thus, a believer can go to a night club, but he only chooses to exercise that freedom if his participation will please God. A believer has the freedom to engage in a variety of activities, but only chooses to exercise the freedom, if doing so will please God.

Our freedom is limited only by our desire to please God. If pleasing God is not a high priority in our lives, then the types of activities church members involve themselves in could be unfathomable.

Independence

While we celebrate our independence from England, as individuals we are highly dependent.

Not a single one of us can survive long in modern times without the assistance of another person. Even those who pride themselves in their lack of dependence on others must face the reality that we are irrevocably tied to others.

We depend upon others for the food that we eat. We need farmers, truckers, grocers, chemists, administrators and check out cashiers just to get food for our table.

We depend upon loggers, mill workers, truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers and electricians just to get the homes and apartments in which we live.

We depend on doctors, nurses, orderlies, LPNs, ambulance drivers, EMS professionals, pharmacists hospital intake clerks for treatment when we need medical attention.

We claim that we are independent, but even independence has its limitations. We are independent only to the extent that we can make something happen without the assistance of someone in the chain events.

If that is the case, all of us are tremendously independent.

Dependence carries a responsibility, limitations and even intrusions. A family that lives in public housing can find that the dependence upon government subsidized housing places limits on their liberties and rights. When a member of that household violates a law many face eviction.. Welfare recipients often have to reveal every detail of the personal lives, including the identities of their sexual partners. Even free lunch in school requires a family to reveal all of its financial vulnerabilities and weakness which are plugged into a computer transferred from database to database. A child may have a driver's license, but that child is totally dependent upon their parents for the authority to drive a vehicle, because they have not reached a majority age.

Dependence carries responsibilities and restrictions.

More than we depend heavily upon God for the air we breathe and the very life in our bodies. We count on God for everything. But that dependence does not come without responsibilities and restrictions.

God gives us finances, but we must exercise responsibility in how we spend those finances. He gives us talents, but there is a responsible expectation of prudence in the use of the talents he has given us.

God blesses us, but he cannot expect for him to bless us without expecting certain type of behavior from us. Because we are dependent upon him for everything and cannot bless ourselves, there are some restrictions that he places on us, if we want to continue getting his blessings.

Many have discovered what the song writer found out when he wrote, "Without God I could do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him, my life would be drifting. Like a ship without a sail."

Solomon made it clear when he said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding."

A final song writer said, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. I found out, if I trust him, he will provide."

Bought With A Price

Finally, brothers and sisters, even salvation is not really free, it has been bought with a price.

The society we live offers many things which appear to be free, but actually have either a hidden cost or is being paid by in an indirect way.

We see sales in stores that say, "buy one get one free." But is that second pair really free, or only half price?

Free lunch is provided in school but is it really free?

Every time you look at your paycheck, there is a section in which your federal income tax is deducted. That's the place where the free lunch is paid for. That's also where the free federal interstate highway system is paid for.

Anything that is free has a price, hidden or otherwise.

Somebody has to pay the price.

Consider the young man who lived a wild life and always disobeyed his mother. One night he took a gun and left home. His mother was concerned about him and started walking the streets looking for him. When she walked into a local convenience store she was horrified as saw her son standing over the body of man her son killed in a robbery. The mother took the gun from her son's hand and pushed him out of the door. She pressed her finger on the trigger and fired one shot into the floor and stood over the body with tears running down her face. When police arrived, they found the mother standing over a dead man, holding a fired pistol in her hand. When asked to make a statements she said, "A crime was committed, a price has to be paid." When the son found out that his mother was going to jail. He tried to tell everyone that he was the guilty party, but no one would listen. She was sentenced to life in prison because all she would say, is "a crime has been committed, a price has to be paid."

The son came to visit her in prison and asked why she did it. She said, "Son, you took a man's life and a price had to be paid. I'm paying the price for you to give you one more chance at freedom. Every time you think about doing something wrong, remember your freedom has been bought with a price! Every day that would waste in idle living, remember that day of freedom was bought with price!"

Brothers and Sisters, That's what Jesus did for us! He paid the price for our salvation.

Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as now!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in hands!

He paid it all!

He paid it all!

All to him I owe!

No. 852-Homecoming

Looking for Home in a City Full of Mansions

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 15, 2001

SCRIPTURE:"And Jesus said unto them, Foxes have holes and birds have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Luke 9:58; "In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

Introduction

Is it possible to sleep on silk sheets at night, in a house worthy of the tastes of kings, and still be homeless? Is it possible to live in a fine apartment with all of the amenities that make life comfortable, but still homeless? Is it possible to eat your food from silver trays, drink your coffee from fine China and still be homeless? Those who answered "yes" understand the true meaning of homelessness, which is typified by absence of a dwelling, but in a greater sense has nothing at all to do with dwellings but abandonment.

There are thousands of men, women and children in America who are living on street corners by day, and sleeping in alley ways and card board boxes at night. Politically, they are described as homeless. Often that description is inadequate. There are some who live on the street who are not homeless, but are houseless. There are others who are truly "homeless."

What is the difference between a homeless person and a houseless person? A truly homeless person is totally disconnected from all sources of support and affection. By chance or design, a homeless person has noone who cares. A houseless person, on the other hand, may have a home, but not have a house. In some cities, it is not unusual for entire families to live in card board boxes on city streets or in abandoned building. They have no house, but they have a home.

But an equal paradox exists. While there ere are thousands described as homeless because they have no place to lay their heads, there is an equal number of people who have a place to lay their heads, but are still homeless. They have a house, but they do not have a home.

If the identifying factor of being "homeless" in the larger sense of the word is "disconnection," then there are many who are spiritually homeless. They are disconnected. They wander from faith to faith. One day they are Baptists, the next

they are Charismatics. One day they are Methodists and the next they are Seventh Day Adventists. There are some who have wandered through all of the available faiths and still have no place to call home.

Some have even disconnected themselves from faith based connections completely.

As Christians should strived to remain connected to home that God has provided for us, through worship,service and prayer.

Exposition

Our text first considers Christ as he responds to the request of a certain man to follow him in the Christian way. Jesus reminded him of the sacrifices that would physically be required of those who joined his missionary travels.

Jesus said though the animals of the forest, foxes, birds, etc., have places to call home, while on this earth, he had no permanent place to call home.

David in the 104th Psalm said Storks live in the fir trees, (v17) goats live in the high hills (v18), Conies live in the rocks, and holes, caves and forests provide homes for other wild beasts, but yet the son of man hath no place to lay his head.

This characteristic of Christ is consistent throughout the Gospel accounts of his life, he lived a life of poverty. He did not own a house or a piece of land. In Bethlehem, he was born in a borrowed Stable. In Nazareth he lived in his mother's house. In his ministry he existed on borrowed things. He lived in borrowed houses. He Rode borrowed mules. He ate his meals in borrowed upper rooms. He was even crucified on a borrowed cross, and buried in borrowed tomb.

Therefore when Jesus referred to his not having a place to lay his head he made specific reference to the sacrificial nature of his ministry. It was not about accumulation of wealth, but about declaring the good news about the Kingdom of God.

Although Jesus had no place to lay his head, it would be a mistake to describe him as homeless. He did not have a house, but he certainly had a home. This the home he describes in John. Because he has a father who cares for him, Jesus could say, "In my father's house." He was never disconnected in any way from the love or affection of his father. They kept in touch. He may not have had a house but he certainly had a home.

Homelessness is being disconnected

Homelessness is not defined qualitatively by the kind of house we live in or quantitatively by whether we have a house at all.

The truly homeless are those who have no one to care about them. There are only two ways that a person who once suceeded in the business world can be on the streets, no one cares or the person doesn't care to be connected.

Believers will never be spiritually homeless because God stops caring. God always cares about his own. He keeps up with us as too. The psalmist says he neither

slumbers nor sleeps. He knows our downsitting and our uprising. He knows every thought we think and is aware of our whereabouts at all time. We never leave the presence of God. He cares and keeps us with us.

Whenever a child leaves home, a concerned parent keeps up with them. Letters, telephone calls and visits, demonstrate that concern is there. A child that is away from home, is always on a parent's mind. That's the way it is with God. We are always on his mind. The porchlight is always on and their key still works.

Isreal was exiled in Babylong but they were never without a home. Messages came on a regular basis from back home and they continued to pray for the restoration of the homeland.

God does not disconnect a beliver, he maintains a constant vigil to keep in touch.

While there are persons who have no one to care for them, there is a large number of people who have family that is concerned about them, but they chosen to disconnect from them. They don't call home. They don't write home. They don't go home. They distance themselves from home.

They have a home, but they have disconnected themselves.

Having a home but not touching base is frustrating. Connections are necessary.

A beautifully decorated telephone that is not connected is useless.

An all electric home with the power disconnected is no good.

Having a home but being disconnected is like having no home at all.

Too many today, have allowed themsleves to become disconnected from their spiritual "home." God has not cut us off, we have cut ourselves off from him. There are members of churches across America that are literal strangers to the church family. They offer no service, do not participate in church ministries and do not pay their fair share of the operating expenses of their church. They are literal strangers, who have cut themselves off from the daily life of the congregation. They have time for every imaginable endeavor, except the church.

Today there are many who are homeless in a city of mansions. They have much, but have so little

In that respect there are many today who have a place to lay their head but are never-the-less, homeless.

These are those who drive fine cars and wear the best clothes, but have no place to call home.

These are those who live in houses of brick with carpet floors, and a wealth conveniences and appliances, but still have no place to call home.

These are those who have a summer house in the South and Winter house in the North, but still have no place to call home.

These are those who have a place to lay their heads but there is something missing in the house: Mother doesn't seem to like father, and father doesn't seem to care; sisters don't like brothers and brothers are happy to be left alone. They have a place to lay their heads, but no place to call home.

There are many who still have a place to lay their heads, but have no one who cares You got to have somebody who cares.

I'm so glad that I serve a God who cares.
He cares enough about me to wipe tears from my eyes.
He care enough about me to lift up a bowed down head.
He cares enough about me to pick me up when I'm falling
He cares! Yes he cares!

We have a home

When Jesus said that he had no place to lay his head he was not implying that he was homeless and rejected by his father.

We know his father still loved him because on the day of his Baptism the spirit of God came as a dove and "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

When Jesus said he had no place to lay his head, he was not a man without a home, but he was a man away from home:

-Not a man journeying to find a home, but a man on his way home.

-Looking a for a home to buy, but a man looking for friends with whom to share his home.

Jesus was on a pilgrimage of love, preaching the coming kingdom. But this earth was not his home, but only his dwelling place. His home is with the father in the heavenly city.

Every child of God is a pilgrim on his way to Canaan land. The place where you lay your head is only your dwelling but its not your home!

Down here, Jesus didn't have a place to lay his head, but he wasn't worried about it, because I heard him say "in my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told"

Come and go with me to my father's house!
Come home with me and I'll show you a place:
-Where hearse wheels never roll
-Where tears never fall
-Where tempers never rise
-Where doubts never appear
Come and go with me and I'll show you Savior who cares about you!
He cares about you whether:
-You drive a Lincoln or a Lemon
-Its GED,PH.D or no degree
-Your clothes of French sale or rummage sale!
-You pay with VISA or ask with Please Suh
He cared so much that John 3:16 says that God gave his only begotten Son.
He cared so much that died on Calvary!
He cared so much that rose on Sunday morning!
Come and go with me to my father's house!

No. 853-Inspiration

The Hiding Place

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 22, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32:7

Introduction

Have you ever had a secret hiding place? Most children have some kind of hiding place. It's that place with children go to escape if only for a short while. The hiding place is a secret place known only to those who are privy to its whereabouts. There are no designated places. Just about anyway can be a hiding place. For an adventurous youth, a tall tree is a good hiding place. Perched high in such a tree, a boy can escape the pressures of the world, if only for a few minutes. Closets make perfect hiding places. There have been many children who we have found their closets to be safer refuges from grown ups and siblings that do not understand when they just want to be alone.

It is not only children that have hiding places, adults have hiding places too. Maybe adults do not hide in cardboard boxes or climb to the top of trees but nevertheless they still have hiding places. These are the places where we find solitude and a few quiet moments to compose our thoughts and to commune with God.

Sometimes it's fun to hide. The children of many generations have played the game called "hide and go seek." One person serves as a caller. The rest of the children hide themselves in obscure places and try, to the best of their ability, to race home before being found by the caller. The caller closes his eyes, turns his back and begins a familiar chant: "Last night, night before, 24 robbers at my door, I got up and let them in. Hit em in the head with a rolling pin." Then the caller with yell a question: "all hid?" the project on the game was for that caller to find your hiding place before you were able to make it to home base. Some even played the game at night and called it kicked the can." It was a fun game but no one really enjoyed being discovered in their hiding place.

Yet, in our despair, no matter how distant or troubling our circumstance, God hears and answers our prayers.

Hiding is fun until our hiding places us dangerously out of distance from God. Like the child who seeks to avoid the demanding eyes of parents, often we are drawn to believe that we can hide from God without considering the words of the 139th Psalm, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.ÿIf I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ÿEven there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he glorifies God for securing for him a hiding place where safety and blessings are guaranteed.

David wrote this Psalm From the perspective of a man who were had a variety of experiences with God. In the course of his life David knew what it meant to be both a vagabond and a favorite of the King.

In this text, David summarizes the course of his own life experiences as a man who tried to hide things from God, was hidden by God, and ultimately found security in God.

As a young man David had the unique experience of sharing the power of god's protective hand. King Saul became jealous of David because the people praised him as a national hero. They sang songs that praised David greatly while giving only marginal praise to Saul who was king. The king set out to destroy David. His armies chased David through the valleys and hill sides of Palestine without success because God hid David from his enemies. As Saul would approach him David would escape. Though his numbers grew so large that at trail was obvious, still God hid him. In Psalm 27:2 David refers to this when he said, "when the wicked even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat my flesh they stumbled and fell." David survived because he was hidden by the hand of God.

There was a point in David's life where he attempted to hide his actions from God. When he committed murder during his adultery with Bathsheba, David thought his actions were hidden From both God and man. God sent the prophet Nathan to remind him that he had committed a great sin for which the nation would pay dearly. Convicted, David changed course, and instead of trying to hide from God, He turned to repentance. In Psalm 51 he cried out to God, "Saying create in me a clean heart Oh God, and renew a right spirit within me." In verse five David points out that he had to acknowledge his sinful acts. He said he had to confess his wrongdoing before the almighty. After a confession, David said his sins were forgiven.

For the remainder of his life, David found joy in hiding himself in God, rather than trying to hide from God. David found the tremendous joy In giving his life to God, And reveling in the joy of salvation. He discovered that those who hide themselves in God rather than in mankind, learn to fear and trust God. Those who fear and trust God are blessed by the protection of God. In Psalm 31:20 David says, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." David's joy was that God would cover him and secretly sustain him from the malicious actions of others if he continued to fear him, respect him and live according to his commands.

David's conclusion of the matter is in the last verse of the 32 Psalm which says,

"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart."

Hiding From The Lord

There are millions of people who are playing the frustrating game of hide and go seek with God. On A daily basis there are many who spend a considerable amount of time trying to either hide illicit actions from him or trying to evade service on his behalf. Playing hide and go seek with God is a game With a predictable outcome. The winner in such a game will always be God Because there is no place that we can go that is outside of the vision of God.

Hiding from God is impossible. The very nature of God is that he is everywhere at the same time as well as being all knowing. Thus, there is no place a person can go that is outside of the eyesight of God. Despite our best efforts to conceal are worldly activity, God still sees everything. Ezekiel 8:7 gives the account of an attempt by the ungodly to hide actions from God behind closed doors. In public they appeared religious but they had a private life that they tried to hide. God took Ezekiel and created a hole in the wall to show him what the people were doing in the dark, outside of the view of their neighbors and supposedly, the scrutiny of God. Just as Israel attempted ungodly acts behind closed doors, there are many church members (as opposed to Christians) who are religious zealots on Sunday but who gamble, fornicate, steal, and indulge in many other vices when they are outside of the view of the religious community. Numbers 32:23 gives us a stern warning, ".ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."

While some try to hide sins from God, there are others who are not trying to hide sins but they are evading active service in the kingdom, hiding behind a plethora of excuses and secular involvements. There is no hiding from God, he knows our hearts. When Jesus asked several men to follow him, some tried to hid behind family obligations, citing a recent death of a family member. Others cited business obligations. Each was looking for something to hide behind. God told Jonah to preach to people of Ninevah, and the prophet tried to evade his call to service by going in the opposite direction. It was only after he was swallowed by a giant fish that Jonah decide that it was better to follow God's direction. There are many today who evade active service in the kingdom pointing to their obligations to their families, their place of employment, the club, fraternity or sorority or some other worthy and noble cause. Yet, while the excuses flow, the master still issues the call for servants to help minister to the sick and bereaved; comfort the wounded, religiously educate the children, feed the hungry, visit the jails, build Christian families, administer to affairs of the kingdom, promote praise and worship, and generally nurture the faithful. The harvest is great, but the laborers are few.

It is impossible to hide from the Lord. Jonah discovered that. Nathaniel, sitting under a fig tree also found that without looking Jesus saw and heard him. The call to serve is so great that it cannot be shut out. The song writer said, "Jesus is tenderly calling today. Calling today! Calling today. Jesus is tenderly calling today!" When

Isaiah heard the call he said, “Here am I send me!”
Hidden by the Lord

While there are some who spend their lives hiding from the lord, there are others who acknowledge that the only way they have been able to achieve any semblance of success and security is because they have been **hidden by the Lord**. To be hidden by Lord simply means that a person has been sheltered, protected, secured, and maintained by the mercies of God. It means that while a person should have experienced a devastating outcome because of circumstances and conditions that existed, God intervened and hid that person from the negatives that should have resulted. But in another way, God has built a hedge of protection around believers that has resulted In a spiritually sheltered existence.

When Pharaoh issued a decree that all boys would be destroyed, It meant certain death for the baby Moses. The young child was in a circumstance he could not control. His life was in danger. His future was gloomy. His prospects were dim. Yet, in this context, God responded by hiding him from trouble. As Moses floated In little basket down the Nile river it was the hand of god that hid him From soldiers seeking to kill him. It was also the hand of God that hid him from mercenaries that would have betrayed him for a reward. He was hidden by God, sustained by God and then used by God to do a great work.

In a similar sense, many today have been hidden by God. We have been sustained in our poverty. We have obtained celebrity despite obscurity; achieved greatness despite our apparent anonymity; and have grown strong despite the weaknesses reflected in our history.

This is the truth that accounts for the protective hedge that seems to surround believers. It explains how we survive and thrive despite the efforts of our enemies to defeat us. God hides us from the plots, tricks, plans, schemes, and traps of those who would destroy us. There are times when we feel like we have been abandoned. That’s when we should re-read David’s words in Psalm 31:22, “For I said in my haste I am cut off from before thine eyes, never-the-less thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee.” David said in essence, “I started feeling sorry for myself until I looked around and realized that everytime I got in trouble I called upon the Lord and he hid me.”

Hidden in the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider the rewards of being hidden IN the Lord.

Being hidden in the Lord is significantly different from being hidden from the Lord or being hidden by the Lord. When we are hidden from the Lord the implication is that we are trying to be out of his sight. When we are hidden by the lord the implication is that an outside force is acting upon us to achieve an end. However, when we are hidden IN the Lord it suggests that we have put ourselves under the trust and care of the almighty.

Those who are hidden in the Lord develop a sense of confidence that is unequaled by non-believers.

Those who are hidden in the lord are able to weather storms, regardless of their ferocity!

Those who are hidden in the Lord are able to endure difficulties because the know the Lord will make a way!

Job was hidden in the Lord. Though he faced difficulties, sickness and loss of his possessions he said, "Thou he slay me, yet will I serve him!"

Daniel was hidden in the Lord. Though he faced sudden death in the lion's den, he remained confident in God and prayed every day!

The Hebrew Boys were hidden in the Lord. Though they faced the crippling heat of the fiery furnace, that still maintained God is able!

If you are hidden in the Lord, whatever it is, let God take care of it! If you are hidden in the Lord it also means that you have hidden BY the Lord!

If God has hidden you under his protective grace, it means that he is working things out!

In the game of Hide and Go Seek, there are some who can hide themselves so well that the caller never finds them. The only time a person who is well hid is discovered, is when they decide to stick their head around the corner! Then they were tagged out!

If God has hidden you under his protective grace, don't mess things up, by sticking your head out and trying to handle it yourself!

If folks have stabbed you in the back, but they haven't killed your spirit, it means that God has hidden you in his grace, don't stick your head out!

If your enemies have laid traps for you, but you have never fallen into a single one, it means that God has hidden you in his grace, don't stick your head out!

If people have called you all kinds of names, but your reputation is still in tact, it means that God has hidden you! Don't stick your head out!

What does it mean to be hidden in the Lord?

To be hidden in the Lord means to keep your hand in God's hand!

To be hidden in the Lord means to keep trusting God every day of your life!

To be hidden in the Lord means to stay close to God! Stay close in prayer! Stay close in study! Stay close in Worship!

In the game of Hide and Go seek there is always one player that refuses to hidebut tips up behind the caller and stands right behind him. As soon as the chant is finished, the player touches home base!

That's the way it is with God. Those who stay close to the Lord, always make it home!

No wonder David declared, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me."

Because he has saved me and forgiven me...

Because he has hidden me from my enemies...

Because he has hidden me from dangers seen and unseen, I can't help but tell his story!

I got to tell somebody how he died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 854-Inspiration

The Millionaire Next Door

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 5, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Introduction

Have you ever taken time to add up your net worth? If you added it all up, what are you worth? Throw in everything, your car, house, furnishings, savings,business property, investments, gadgets? What are you worth? Some of us could add those numbers quickly. Others would take a while. What is your net worth? $10,000? $50,000? What about $250,000? Over a million? What would surprise many people is the number of persons in America who have accumulated more than $1 million in assets. Think of it, the person sitting next to you could secretly be a millionaire and you've never known it?

In 1997 Drs. Thomas J. Stanley and William Danko startled America with their book, "The Millionaire Next Door." In it they released the results of a study that showed that there are over 3.5 million first generation millionaires in the United States. They generally live on seven percent of their worth, drive American made cars, look for bargains, save 15 percent of their incomes, and work hard to keep from looking, dressing, eating, or otherwise acting like millionaires. They operate on the philosophy of spend less and invest. The study showed that the millionaire next door doesn't live an extravagant life style. If necessary he could live for 10 years out of his savings account and investments without going to work a single day.

Among that number are hundreds of thousand of Christians. Like the others they save, invest, spend wise, live frugally and have amassed considerable resources. The difference between the Christian with resources and the others is that the Christian acknowledges its source and operates with the full knowledge that it all belongs to God and, "you can't take it with you."

Many people focus totally on accumulating "things." There are many people who store up treasures as if they could take them with them. Consider the old miser who saved a considerable amount of money in the course of his life. The thought never crossed his mind that it wasn't permanent until he lay on his dying bed. That's

when he called in three of this best friends: His doctor, his minister and his broke brother in law. He gave each of them two personal checks, one for $100,000 that they were to keep for themselves and another for $100,000 that they were to have placed in his casket so that he could take it with him. At the funeral each man, came and placed an envelope in the old miser's pocket as they paid their last respects.

After the funeral the three of them talked. The preacher said, "I have to confess something to you fellows. Our church roof sprang a leak, just over the place where the old man used to sit. I took most of the money and fixed the roof and made some other repairs. I didn't put anything in the envelope. The doctor was relieved. "I too have a confession. I probably could have saved the old miser's life if I had one machine that I didn't have then. Knowing that he wouldn't anyone else to die from the same problem, I spent money to buy the machine. My envelope was empty too."

The broke brother-in-law became angry. "I can't believe you guys would go back on your word and spend this man's money. He gave us $100,000 of our own, just to make sure that he could take some of his wealth with him. How could you cheat a dying man?"

The two asked the brother in law did he really put the whole $100,000 in the casket. To that the brother in law answered, "I sure did. My envelope was not empty. I wrote him my personal check for $100,000, which he can cash as soon as gets where he's going!" The old miser never took a dime with him!

What's valuable in one country may not be valuable in another. When a person leaves one country and enters another his currency must be exchanged for the currency used in his destination country. The value of currency varies from nation to nation. A man may leave France with 7 francs but they are only worth 1 U.S. Dollar. He may leave Italy with 2,191 Lire but when he gets to America he'll only have $1. He may leave Korea with 1,280 "Won" but he'll only have $1 when he gets to the U.S. He could leave Tanzania with 886 Shillings but would only have $1 when he made it to the shores of the U.S. He could leave Vietnam with 14,953 "Dong" and still have just $1 when he made it to. America. That same man could leave America with $100 and be a millionaire in Vietnam because his $100 American dollars would exchange to $1.5 million "Dong"

What is the value of all the "things" we accumulate on earth in heaven? Do our worldly possessions have any value in heaven? I suspect that what we call value on earth will have very little value in heaven. There is an obvious difference, since the streets are paved with gold in heaven, meaning gold has very little exchange value in gloryland. Yet, on earth, gold is the standard upon which currency is based.

As Christians, we plan to make heaven our home. Our goal is to find out what is considered valuable in the kingdom of God, then store up treasures that will have value in the sight of God. These are treasures that will not decay or devaluate. Unlike gold or silver and paper dollars, we can take them with us!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus explaining what is considered valuable in the kingdom

of God.

Matthew 6 is a continuation of Jesus' sermon on the mount. The sermon on the mount details attitudes and actions that believers should undertake to gain favor in the kingdom of God. It is literally a guide to how to amass treasures in heaven.

In verse 1 Jesus warns believers not to do good works simply to be seen. Those who work in the kingdom may be seen by others but they should not do good works for the purpose of being seen. The work itself is the reward. The reward is minimized whenever it is done for the publicity and not for cause. In Matthew 5:16 believers are told to let their light shine before men. The meaning is that whenever believers are seen they should be seen doing good works. However, believers don't do good works to be seen.

Verses 2-4 addresses how to amass treasures in heaven by giving. The person who makes a big show out of their giving does not receive a reward from God, no matter how much is given. We are warned not to "sound a trumpet" when we give. If it gets out that we have given, that does not diminish the believer's reward because it was not given for that purpose. Those who give generously and secretly, build up treasures for themselves in heaven.

Verses 5-13 show prayers that build up treasures. Long public prayers are frowned upon in heaven. Jesus attacks the motivation of such prayers, noting that they often draw attention to the person praying rather than focusing on the request. Verse 5 says people who pray such prayers "have their reward." He then provides a model prayer in 9-13 as an outline of the model prayer.

Verses 16-18 addresses the fact that fasting for public praise is also frowned upon in the kingdom of God. Those who fast do so to reach a spiritual consensus. The impact of the fast is diminished if attention is focused on the fasters themselves. The person who fasts builds up treasures, if his fast is done in secret. Men may learn of his fast, but publicity is not the motive.

Verses 19-21 summarize what Jesus teaches about treasures. The idea is selfless service to God through investing time, energy and talent into the very act of helping others. We build treasures on earth through our work to help others, our private giving to support kingdom giving, our secret devotions, our private prayers and meditations, our short but meaningful public prayers, serious personal fasting and moral living. In these ways, Jesus says we build up treasures in heaven. They are they are the currency which makes a believer a millionaire in the sight of God.

How to be a Millionaire in the Kingdom of God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that we may not be listed among the 3.5 million first generation millionaires in America, but if the person who lives next door to you is true believer, there's a millionaire next door.

How can a person become a millionaire in the kingdom of God:

HELPING OTHERS**:** Those who help others build up treasures in heaven. Believers are becoming millionaires in the kingdom because of their willingness to

help others without the necessity of pay or recognition. Every good deed adds to the treasure. Matthew 9:41 reminds us that even the man that gives a cup of water to stranger in the name of Jesus, gets a reward. Those who help the homeless, help the infirmed, visit the sick, feed the hungry, heal the hurts of families, and respond to personal needs and crises, build up treasures in heaven.

LIBERAL GIVERS: Those who support kingdom building by liberally giving their time, talents and money build up treasures in heaven. Every minute that a believer gives is rewarded. Those who give time, talents and money at a sacrifice get "over time" pay in kingdom dollars. That's why the church at Thyatira was told in Rev. 2:19, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." That's overtime pay! How do believers become millionaires in the kingdom? They give their time even at a personal sacrifice. They give their talents, even at a sacrifice. They give their money, even when it hurts!

GIVES THANKS: A salient feature of every spiritual millionaire is that he or she is eternally grateful to God and seeks ways to show his thanks. True believers praise God by living morally pure lives, keeping their promises to him and joining with others in public worship of him. That's what David meant in Psalm 116:12-14 when he said, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." The millionaire next door is rich because he is a child of the king.

Currency Exchange

Every heavenly traveler needs to remember that we are on our way to the Canaan land. The heavenly traveler already has a passport that identifies him as a child of the king on his way. But like any traveler to a foreign country the heaven bound travelers need to exchange our earthly riches for heavenly riches.

What's valuable down here won't be valuable up there unless it can translate into heavenly dollars.

Our Porsche and other imported vehicles are extremely valuable, but when we get to glory they won't be worth a heavenly dime.

Our Rolex watches are worth thousands down here, but when we get to heaven no watch will have any value because time will be no more.

Our tailor made suits and designer clothing, may fill our closets down here, but when we get to heaven the angels won't be wearing Tommy Hilfiger and Liz Claiborne and FUBU. I'm going to put on my robe and tell the story!

Our designer shoes won't have any value up there, because we're going to put on golden slippers and walk all over God's heaven!

Our diamond rings and pearl necklaces will have no value when get to heaven, for the very foundations of the city will be made precious stones and the 12 gates of the city will be made of giant pearls!

Our 401K and our IRA, Stock Portfolios and investment plans are good down

here, but it won't mean anything in glory, because there my father is rich and houses and land and he wholes wealth of the world in his hand!

If you need heavenly dollars you have to cash in your service!

Cash in your giving! Cash in you worship and praise!

I don't know about you but I'm working on my million in the kingdom! Everyday I'm sending up timbers, one by one!

I'm telling every body about Jesus, who died out on Calvary! Jesus! Who arose after three days!

I'm telling the world that I'm a millionaire in the kingdom of God!

No. 855-Inspiration

The Rhythm and The Blues

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 12, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." Ecclesiastes 1:1-8

Introduction

Do you follow a routine in your life? Is there a set pattern by which you govern your affairs and order your life on a daily basis? Some of us are more regimented than others. We awaken at about the same time, groom ourselves in the same way, and follow a regular routine that may consist of leaving home, going to work and doing basically performing the same duties every day. We have a day routine. We have a night routine. We have a weekend routine. We have a Sunday routine. Whether we are students or retirees, most of us fall into a regimen that repeats itself with regularity. The ebb and flow of our daily lives establishes a cadence by which we govern and pace ourselves. We march to our own set of cadences that set the tone for our lives.

On occasion, life's events can interrupt our fragile rhythm and set a new tempo. A phone call in the middle of the night signals trouble. A police car or fire truck parked in front of our home with lights flashing and sirens blaring does the same. Sickness, death, and trouble all serve to change the tempo with which we live our lives each day. Just as trouble changes the tempo, so can good fortune. A marriage, a promotion, a birthday, a party, a reunion all have the effect of adding cymbal crashes of excitement into the normal cadence of our day, changing the tempo and the rhythm of our daily experiences.

When a negative life event or a series of life events occur at the right time the pace of our lives can be altered dramatically. When this happens our tempo doesn't just change. It doesn't just speed up. It almost comes to a complete halt! When our

rhythm comes to a complete stop.that's when we have the blues. Something happens in our lives that upsets us so bad that our entire life rhythm simply stops. Loss of love and affection can create a feeling of depression and blues Those who have been hurt in love lose all sense of timing and they are unaware of the cymbal crashes they encounter. They cannot seem to respond to the cadence. They sulk. They sink into complete depression. The same is true for those who have experienced death, sudden unemployment, financial crises, family disruptions such as divorce and separations. It is extremely difficult to re-establish a cadence, a rhythm and routine that is unique and peculiar. When we have the blues we have no rhythm at all.

A believer's life has a special rhythm. There is special cadence to which a believer marches that sets the tempo of each day. It is punctuated with cymbal crashes, drum rolls and taps on the high hat. Yet, believers approach each day with the full understanding that during the course of that day, they may have to slow their tempo, change their cadence or alter their rhythm to find events that come their way. God is the drum major who calls the cadence, we march to his beat. When life appears to have brought a believer to a halt, he views it as "parade rest" not a complete disruption. He waits patiently for the signal from heaven to resume the ebb and flow of life.

As believers we know that there are certainties in life. Because we know the flow of life we expect a little rain after days of sunshine. We expect to stumble and fall and we expect to get up again. We expect death, sickness and disappointment, as well as life, health and happiness. Knowing how God operates, helps us to enjoy the rhythm without experiencing the blues.

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he explains the ebb and flow of life.

Ecclesiastes is an account of Solomon's search for happiness and peace. In these 12 chapters he records the feeble attempts of his youth to live by his own rhythm and cadence. He entertained a variety of experiences that he thought would move him from one pace or another. Music, parties, accumulation of wealth, knowledge and fame, were a part of his great plan for himself.

In his senior years, upon reflection, he acknowledged that life has its own rhythm; its own special the tempo and syncopation of which is ordered by God.

The rhythm of the physical man is depicted in the first four pairs of rhythms in verses 1-3. There is a

-a time to be born, and a time to die;
-a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
-a time to kill, and a time to heal;
-a time to break down, and a time to build up; {Eccl 3:1-3 RSV}

The steady rhythm cannot be better seen than by ebb and flow of birth and death, planting and harvesting, war and peace, building up and tearing down. The exact time for each is dictated by God himself. Solomon learned later in his life that the rhythms

of planting and harvesting, death and birth, were all part of life controlled by God himself.

If is a time to laugh, there will also be a time to weep. It is in the rhythm of life. Likewise there is a time to mourn and a time to dance in celebration. Each of these are according to rhythm.

Even in the areas of spirit and soul which control our thinking, feeling and choosing as we carry out the social encounters and interrelationships of life there is a rhythm:

-a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
-a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

The rhythm of life is not all steady beats. There is weeping as well as laughter. There is mourning as well as dance. We know its true for mortals because Christ himself was described in Isaiah 53:3 as a "man of sorrows" yet we see him full of gaiety and fun as he participates in a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Life's rhythm shows us that life not confined to receiving. There is a time of giving. In essence a time to gather stones and a time to cast stones away. There is a time to seek and a time to lose. There is a time to hold on and a time to let go. There is "a time to keep and a time to cast away," (Eccl 3:6b) There is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," {Eccl 3:7b RSV).

There is even a time for us to hate evil with a passion and time to love good with an equal passion.. There is "a time for war, and a time for peace," {Eccl 3:8b RSV}.

Solomon's lesson was clear: There is a certain rhythm in life that includes good times and bad times, sunshine and rain; day and night, strength and weakness, sickness and health. The exact cadence of the rhythms we play in life is called by the heavenly father.

Solomon learned in his senior years that it was vanity to expect the rhythm not to be uninterrupted or to expect it to continue with pauses and rests.

The believer who trusts God knows the ebb and flow of life. He is not overwhelmed by its risings and fallings because God is calling the cadence.

Our spiritual life requires rhythm

The maintenance of a productive spiritual life requires a rhythm. Every believer should have a regular routine or rhythm that promotes spiritual growth.

Regular bible reading at a set time each day establishes a rhythm, a pattern and a routine that regularly feeds the soul. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." As such a believer who has no pattern of bible reading runs the risk of walking in the dark.

Prayer at a set time each day and more if need be establishes rhythm. There are many believers who have a prayer time. For some it is early in the morning. For others it is late in the evening. Yet, there is a set time and schedule. The word teaches us to prayer regularly and with fervor. James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. "

Bible study should be a part of a believers set pattern and rhythm. The easiest

bible study is Sunday School. In the company of other believers the scriptures are discussed, questions are answers, and God's word is made applicable to real life situations. Bible study should be a part of the regular rhythm of every believer. 2 Timothy 2:15, reminds us to "study to shew thyself approved." Those who fail to study, break their spiritual rhythm.

Worship is a necessary part of the believers rhythm or weekly pattern. Very few real Christians are uncomfortable when they are repeatedly absent from worship services. Hebrews 10:25 warns Christians not to "forsake" or "skip" public worship. Worship inspires Christian living. It motivates service. Those who frequently skip public worship break their spiritual rhythm.

Whenever a believer's spiritual rhythm is interrupted it is difficult to maintain the Christian because it requires a steady pattern of prayer, bible study, worship, service and praise.

We Do not control the rhythm, but how we respond to it

The Christian life has a special beat that is different from others. Believers march to a different cadence than others. Yet there is a rhythm to our lives. We should not expect a steady, uninterrupted beat of progress without a few setbacks, and success without a few failures.

Believers respond to life's rhythm with an attitude of expectancy and are not overwhelmed by the pauses, changes in tempo or cadence. The word of God teaches us that no matter what life's rhythms may be, those who are faithful will be rewarded. James 1:12 says, "God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." (New Living Translation). We may not be able to understand it all but we know that despite any difficulties or frustrations, our steady march will lead us to unimaginable blessings. That's what 1 Corinthians 2:9 meant by "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

If our day begins with a quick pace but slows to marking time, there is a reason.

If there is a delay or break that seems immeasurably long. There is a reason.

If there are problems and difficulties that beset us, there is a reason.

We can't control the events that occur every day. However, we can control how we respond to them. If they overwhelm us we get the blues. If we keep the word of God in mind, we are reminded that no matter how difficult the day may seem, it will work to our advantage. That's why Romans 8:28 says, " .. all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Just as we do not control the rain or the rising of the sun, we can't control the ebb and flow of any day's events. We can respond to the rhythm without the blues.

Why we don't have the blues

Finally brothers and sisters, we should consider that the rhythm of the believers life doesn't give him time to have the blues.

B.B. King had a hit song once with the title, "Why I sing the blues." Every believer should be able to do just the opposite, that is, write a song saying "Why I never sing the blues."

Since the blues is an expression of despair, believers never sing the blues. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;ÿPersecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"

Since the blues is an expression of hopelessness, believers never sing the blues. When believers encounter hopeless situations they always have hope. Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;" We have the rhythm but we don't have the blues because the song writer has declared, "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name."

Since those who have the blues can't see their way, believers never have the blues because we know that the Lord will always make a way. When we can't find a way after looking to our right and to our left than we remember the words of David, "I will lift up mine eyes until the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

Since those who have the blues have no one to love them, believers never have the blues because there is never a time when God doesn't love us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosever believeth upon him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Since those who have the blues have no where to hide, believers never have the blues because Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me."

Since those who have the blues have feel like they have been hit by a rock, believers never have blues because we have been saved by the rock. That's why the song writer wrote, "be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!"

We have don't have time to sing the blues about what we don't have because we are so busy praising God for what we do have!

We don't sing the blues because we don't have a new car, we just praise the Lord for having bus fare!

We don't sing the blues for not having t-bone steaks, we just praise the Lord for pork chops and pig tails!

We don't sing the blues because we don't own a home, we just praise the Lord for being able to make the rent!

We don't sing the blues because of what we lost, we just praise the Lord for what

we are able to hang on to!

David said there is a time for everything and for everything there is a season.

That means there is a time to praise the Lord.

There is a time to lift up holy hands! There is a time to say amen!

There is a time to give thanks!

Thank you, for the rising and setting of the sun!

Thank you, for the food on my table!

Thank you, for Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Thank you, for Sunday morning!

We don't need to see blues, for God gave me a song, that the angels cannot sing, I've been washed the blood of the crucified one.I've been redeemed!

No. 856-Communion

A Prepared Table

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 20, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Psalm 23:5

Introduction

Have you ever waited at a restaurant, while your table was prepared? On certain days in restaurants there is busy crowd and available tables are few. As soon as one party finishes a meal the bus boy or waiter quickly prepares a table for the next guest. They rake off crumbs, wipe tables free of debris and stains, clean seats and rearrange the notions on the table. When all is ready, then you are ushered to your seat. While you wait, portions of the meal are served, such as bread and butter, water and other niceties. Very few patrons would dine at a restaurant that would attempt to serve them at an unprepared table. On some rare occasions, some patrons who were impatient about waiting have been known to help waiters prepare tables to speed up the process, but even then the table is prepared for diners before the meal is served.

Professional waiters, now called servers, earn a living by insuring that patrons at restaurants are pampered. They work hard at the trade because most parts of the restaurant industry only pays a basic wage of $2.25 an hour to waiters. They earn their money through the generosity of their patrons. Tips make up the bulk of their pay, which for some gets as high as $200 a day. To earn that tip, waiters learn to pamper guests. Among the ways that guests are pampered is the waiters ability to secure them a well prepared table, clean, convenient and quiet. Food seems to taste better when served on a well prepared table.

Some folks will argue that a well prepared table can do miracles. Consider Tater Pie Eli who would do anything for a slice of Sweet Potato pie. One day all the family had gathered around Eli's bed for it appeared he was about the draw his last breath. Funeral arrangements had been made and the family members had already begun cooking as they waited his last moment.

Then suddenly there was a miracle. Eli opened his eyes and sniffed the air. He said, "I dreamed that I died and went to heaven and there was a table prepared up there. It had collard greens, corn bread, fried chicken, corn on the cob and sweet potato pie." Uncle Sweet Pea answered, "You were dreaming Eli, but you were right. Miss Mable done set the table and it's got all that you mention on it..including her

famous sweet potato pie."

Eli, decided to take advantage of all of their concern and said, "Tell Miss Mable that Eli has come back from the dead and would love to have some that sweet potato pie." When Uncle Sweet Pea returned he was empty handed. "Where's the pie?" asked Eli.

Apologizing, Uncle Sweet Pea said, "Miss Mable says there is food on the table, but its to be served AFTER the funeral. If Eli don't die, won't be no sweet potato pie!"

If we all enjoy the prospect of dining at a well prepared table, we should enjoy the table that God has prepared for those who believe and trust in him. It's more than a table of pork chops collared greens, black eyed peas and okra. It's a table with more than food stuffs. The table that God has prepared for those who believe in him is a table of blessings, prepared in heaven's kitchen daily and served by angelic waiters who only expect a 10 percent tip.

As Christians, we thank God for his blessings every day. We graciously sit down to sup with him and share the blessings we have received. He prepares a table for us and invites to share our blessings with anyone who is willing listen and hear. We expect great things when we dine at a table prepared by the Lord because 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains how God prepares blessings for believers despite adverse circumstances.

The situation that prompted Psalm 23 is believed to be based on an incident recorded in 2 Samuel 17:28-29. David had been drawn into the wilderness after the rebellion of his son Absolom. Absalom's advisors had devised two plans to destroy David. One involved slipping to David's camp and killing David alone. The other involved amassing a giant army that would overwhelm the king and his men and destroy them on the battle field. The latter plan was approved and Absalom's armies tracked and found David famished forces.

They found David at last. His soldiers were with him. They were tired, hungry and exhausted to the point of despair. Those that sought to destroy him surrounded him on all sides, and no doubt were aware of his weakened position. As they watched and waited for his destruction, God caused a miraculous thing to happen. Three men, who were not even Israelites, Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai, appeared and brought beds, basins [so they could wash and refresh themselves], and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat; for they said, "The people are hungry and thirsty in the wilderness."

As his enemies watched the entire army enjoyed fine food, slept on soft beds, washed themselves from freshly filled water basins, ate foodstuffs of grain, meal, barley, beans and other fine foods. To the amazement of his enemies God literally

prepared a table before him in the presence of his enemies.

Thus when David writes this portion of Psalm 23, he draws on his own life experiences to know that God will truly provide for the faithful, despite the difficulties they experience.

Comparing believers to sheep, David's entire psalm, known as the shepherd's song, painted a picture of God caring for his sheep as a good shepherd. Among the items in the shepherd's care would be the provision for the nourishment and safety of sheep, which God does for believers everyday.

God Prepares a Table For Me

God is in the blessing business. Each day of our lives he prepares great opportunities for those who believe and trust in him. He is already working on tomorrow, while we live today.

It is said that a shepherd, before allowing his sheep to graze in a field, will first go into the field and prepare it for the sheep by pulling up poison weeds, and chasing off any harmful animal. When the field is rid of the dangers the sheep are allowed to graze.

God works that way with us. Often we are prevented from going in some directions because there is something ahead that will harm us. The condition is not conducive to our growth. We have witnessed this truth as we have seen jobs in certain areas denied to us in one company, but given in another. There may have been other obstacles unseen to us that our shepherd had to clear before allowing us to graze.

Thus, we should be careful about insisting that we graze in green pastures before talking to God about it. Proverbs 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths."

As we grow in grace we learn to wait until God prepares our table.

Wait until God prepares the table for the new houses we seek.

Wait until Our shepherd will never lead us into harm's way.

The shepherd may need to go before us and prepare the pasture before we graze.

My Enemies See What's Prepared For Me

Not only does god prepare a table for me, but often he allows my enemies to see what he's doing for me.

The Hebrew word for enemies is tsarar {tsaw-rar'} which literally means to make narrow or to cause distress, vex and harass. Thus, a believer's enemies are those forces that cause them distress, harass them and make life difficult for them.

There are three natural enemies of every believer:

1**: The World:** The world around us works against the spirit person trying to live within us. The world is the plethora of temptations that constantly surround us: night clubs, opportunities to live fast, wild and loose; as well as dangerous living. It is an

enemy to any person trying to live a spirit filled, holy life. 1 John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Thus, the world is seen as the enemy of God's people.

2. The Flesh: The Flesh is constantly at war with the spiritual person. It desires and craves. It reaches for the forbidden with a yearning. It is sexual passion, greed, jealousy, hatred. The flesh represents our carnal nature. It represents our prurient instincts. Galatians 5:24 says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." The flesh is an enemy to those who are Christ's.

3. The Devil: Satan is constantly looking for ways to destroy children of God. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

In the presence of these three enemies, God prepares a table for believers. He blesses them with comfort, peace and joy despite the fact that they have not participated in the world, yielded to the flesh, or been discouraged by people influenced by Satan's bad spirit.

My enemies see how good God is to me.

They see his hand working out victories for me!

They see him lifting me up when I have fallen down!

They see him encouraging me when I have shrunk to an all time low!

Yes, In the presence of my enemies, he prepares a table for me!

He Prepares Me for the Table

When God prepares a table for us, the job is still incomplete. It is not complete until he prepares US for the table.

No matter how well prepared a table may be, there is usually something we must do first, to prepare ourselves for the table. We must wash up!

You've worked on cars all day, your hands are filled with grease and grime. You come home to a well prepared table, but you must wash up first.

You've worked in the office, counting money, typing, filing papers and handling various items. At lunch you are escorted to a well prepared table, but you are not ready for the table. You must wash up first.

Some of us sit down and eat without washing our hands. We look at our hands and we don't see or feel any dirt, so we sit down to eat without cleaning up. Those who can see the dirt usually wash. Others may not be able to see it, but they know it's there. They wash up anyway!

Spiritually, God anoints believers with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament anointing with oil is symbol of the Holy Spirit. When David says, "thou anoinest my head with oil" he draws us to observe how the Holy Spirit prepares us for the table that is set.

The Blood of Christ is the flow that washes us, and the Holy Spirit that directs us toward repentance and restoration.

There are many blessings that God has in store for each of us, but we are not

prepared to receive them. The Holy Spirit prepares us! The anointing of God's power opens us! It illuminates us! It creates a proper spirit within us, so that we become worthy vessels for him.

Yes, God has prepared a table for us, a table even our enemies can see, but he also has to prepare us for the table.

God is able to make a bountiful table

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that God is able to prepare a bountiful table!

Whenever God prepares a table, it is an overflowing table.

One day Peter and others were out fishing but had not caught any fish. Jesus told them to let down their nets on the on the other side of the boat. God had already prepared the fish, but Peter's faith had to be prepared. When he let down the boat, he caught more than the nets could hold.

On another day Jesus spoke to 5,000 people. There was not food to feed such a large crowd, they only had two little fishes and five loaves of bread. But God had already set the table. There was enough food to feed the multitude with plenty of leftovers!

Maybe that's where those old fashioned mama's get the idea. When they cook, they cook for the neighborhood.

It's not one two or three or slices of bacon, but whole slabs of bacon!

It's not one or two pieces of chicken, but enough to feed the family for days!

It's not an ear or corn or two, but there's corn on the cob for days!

That's the way God prepares our table.. he's got more than we need!

God prepared a table of replenishment for Elijah sitting by the brook. It was just meat and bread, brought by ravens but it was more than enough!

God prepared a table of nourishment for a widow woman who was down to her last cup of meal and cruise of oil. It was more than enough!

God prepared a table of restoration for Peter while he was asleep on a roof top. He showed him a basket filled with every kind of food and said, "Rise Peter Slay and Eat." It was more than enough!

One evening Jesus assembled his disciples around a supper table in an upper room. He prepared a table of remembrance. He Hold them to eat this bread in remembrance of me! Drink this wine, in remembrance of the blood that would be shed for them!

In the Upper Room there was a prepared table, and Savior who was ready for the Table!

As Saints eat from the Lord's table, they are eating from a prepared table.

To prepare the table, Jesus had to live among men for 33 long years!

To prepare the table, he had to suffer the humiliation of his critics!

To prepare the table, he had to pick up and old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha's hill.

To prepare the table he had to die out on Calvary!

No. 857-Inspiration

Knowing God on a First Name Basis

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 25, 2001

SCRIPTURE: And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 14And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 15And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Exodus 3:13-15;And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. Exodus 6:3

Introduction

When do you know a person well enough to refer to them on a first name basis? One of the first lessons that youth learn, especially in the south, is to address only those persons who are you peers on a first name basis. In the Southern section of the country it is often considered an insult for a person to refer to someone that is not a close peer without the appropriate title. A person from the South can be culturally shocked when he travels outside his region and sees persons addressing each other without the appropriate title. “Yes Sir” and “No Ma’am” are considered the only appropriate way to show respect in the south and in the military.

In our society, we generally refer to those we do not know by using a title and their last names. Mr. Jones, Captain Jones, or Doctor Jones are signs of respect. They may be seem small but there were times when newspapers and official documents in the South would not refer to African-Americans by any title that showed respect, including something as simple as “Mister.”

While we refer to those who are not our peers by their last names, we tend to refer to those who are closer to us by their first names, often without the titles. This is common among friends. Friends not only refer to each other by first names, but often by “Nicknames” they have been known by for years. Sometimes nicknames are humorous such as “Pooch”, ”Spike”, ”Snake”,”Snooky”, ”Chee=Chee” and a variety of others. When a person earns a nickname in a group, it usually means that person has formed a personal identity, good or bad, within the group or family unit.

People who want to establish a closer relationship with others are aware that titles create barriers, so many invite those they meet to "Just call me Albert" or "Just call me Mary." Often at conferences, name tags are distributed that include only the person's first name in large bold letters. This allows other participants to refer to him as if they knew him. It's an artificial way to break down barriers. Often telemarketers call prospective customers and ask for them by their first names to avoid the appearance of a salesperson. Even sales letters can be programmed by smart computer programmers to repeatedly refer to a person by their first name, as if the letter was personal instead of being a mass duplicated letter.

There are families in which the relationship between parent and child is informal. It is so informal that some children refer to their parents by their names without the usual titles of "mama","daddy", "big mamma", or the famous "Muh-dear." Whenever someone in the south hears a child referring to their parents by a name other than the traditional title, they frown and usually say, "You call your mother by her first name?" Inside those family circles where this is a practice the children mean no disrespect, it is just a family tradition.

We are all the children of God. He is our father. What do we call him? Mister? Your honor? Your Excellency? What is God's full name? When do we know him well enough to speak to or refer to him on a first name basis? What relationship must exist between God and man for us to comfortably refer to him on a first name basis?

As we read the bible we see believers have referred to God by many names. Those names seem to suggest how they viewed God at the moment. Yet, historically, believers have held the name of God in such high respect that many trembled when they called his name and feared death if they invoked his name in any way that would profane his deity. Yet, God encourages believers to call on him regularly and freely. The bible record gives us clues of what to call him.

As believers, we have great respect for the deity of God and the name of God. We do not use his name irreverently and neither do we abuse our relationship with him by calling his name foolishly. His name is a holy name and as such we approach him with the greatest respect, even though he has given those who believe in him permission to speak to him on a first name basis.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he hears God tell his name for the first time.

Moses was assigned the burdensome task of leading the people out of Israel. Moses, who had been away from Egypt for 40 years, was reluctant. He questioned what he should say to the people when they asked the source of his authority. At this point, God did a new thing; he gave Moses a specific name to call him instead of just "God" which was the tradition of all of the generations of Jews before him. God had no name, he was just God. He had no title, he was just God.

Moses was told to tell Pharaoh that his name is "I Am That I am" The name that God chose was more an affirmation of God's deity than a name. The Hebrew equivalent of the letters of the name God chose is YHWH, or Yahweh in Hebrew and

in English, Jehovah. The full meaning of God's name is "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be" or "I cause to be what is."

Moses was told to tell Pharaoh in no uncertain terms that Yahweh is the one that will cause the liberation of the people. He is the same God who was called upon by Israel for 400 years. Now he had a name rather than just a general reference.

In chapter Exodus 6:3 God reassures Moses that he would deliver the people from bondage and again encourages him to invoke his name, Jehovah, which was not known unto them at the time.

By giving Moses a name to invoke, God announced his personal involvement in the affairs of his select and chosen people. It was a name which indicated the people were not distant from him, but able to access him on a personal basis, as son would his father.

Those who know God, Know his name

The children of God know him, but they also know him on a first name basis. Sometimes what God is called depends upon the situation. Each biblical reference refers to the same God, however each of the various names suggest how God responded in a certain need circumstance. The bible has many Hebrew names the aspect of God's nature in a situation. English translators in many instances chose to simply use the word "God" for the variety of descriptive names used to describe God.

The Hebrews were unique, they enjoyed a first name styled relationship with God that individualized what they called him, depending on what they needed and what God supplied.

JEHOVAH-RAPHA,Exodus 15:26 The name Jehovah-Rapha means 'I am the Lord that healeth thee'. When God spoke to Israel in Exodus 15 he is addressed as "Lord" the Hebrew name translated was Jehovah-Rapha. God that heals. It is God's nature to heal. Jesus came to reveal God to us. When Jesus was in this world He was constantly healing the sick. From this we understand the nature and the desire of God. God wants to heal and make us whole.

When we are sick, it good to know God on a first name basis. It is good to know that Jehovah-Rapha is a great healer for whatever ails our body or soul.

JEHOVAH-JIREH Genesis 22:14. The name Jehovah means 'the Lord is our provider." We must look to God to meet our needs. This is the lesson that Abraham learned in Genesis 22. It is the lesson that God always provides a ram in the bush for those who trust him. The Lord sent the people of Israel through the wilderness to teach them to depend upon Him. In the wilderness there was no source of help for them. They had to look to God for every need. But God proved that He can meet their need even in the wilderness.

When our supply of food is running low, it is good to know that the Lord will provide.

When our money is gone and provisions have nearly disappeared, it is good to

know God on a first name basis. Jehovah-jireh, my provider that is what God becomes in such situations.

JEHOVAH-SHALOM, Judges 6;24. The name Jehovah -Shalom means that God is our peace. In this troubled world we must experience God as our peace. Jesus did leave behind great material wealth or resources for his disciples when he left this world. But He left behind his peace for them. In Judges 6, Gideon was told not to fear, but to be in peace.

In times of confusion, many have found God to be a God of peace.

When there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to know God on a first name basis, Jehovah-shalom. He is the one who brings peace in the midst of confusion.

JEHOVAH-NISSI- Exodus 17;15 The name Jehovah-Nissi means the Lord is our banner of victory. He is the lord of hosts and commands the vast heavenly army. He will fight the battle for us and give us the victory. He will lift our head and honor us. We need not fear shame and failure when we have God as our Jehovah-Nissi.

When we appear to be facing imminent defeat, it's good to know God on a first name basis!

When the chips are down and it appears we have no chance of victory, it is good to know God on a first name basis.

He is Jehovah-nissi, the God of our victory!

There is a name..Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a name that commands the respect of the universe, it is the name of Jesus.

The children of Israel knew there was a God, but they did not know his name. They simply described him as Elohim. Elohim is a plural word, suggesting many dimensions. The same dimensions referred to in Genesis 1:26 when he said "Let us make man"- us being the father, the Word and the Holy Ghosts three distinct entities that act as one.

Although Elohim is a plural noun is always followed by a singular verb. It laymen's terms it means if you call on the father you get action. If you call on the Son you get action. If you call on the Holy Ghost, you get action. It doesn't matter which name we call, we get action.

Believers who walk with God may not go through the long list of the names of God. They may be too long to remember.

When our strength is failing, we may not remember to call on El-Shaddai, the almighty God..but there is a name!

When we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we may not remember, Jehova-Rohi, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"..but there is a name!

When we are feeling like we're making this journey alone, we may not remember "Emmanuel" the everlasting God, but there is a name!

Because we walk with the Lord he has given us a name to call, on a first name basis.

There is no hyphen.

There is no special effort needed to remember certain names.

One name says it all. If you know God for yourself, you call on the name of Jesus.

No wonder the song writer declared, “I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known”

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It’s the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved! It’s the name of Jesus!

No wonder the song writer declared, “There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me.”

He loved me so much that he hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 858-Inspiration

Tragedy, Tears and the Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 16, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in a time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Psalm 46:1-2;The Lord of hosts is with us the God of Jacob is our refuge." Psalm 46:11.

Introduction

How did you feel when you heard the news of terrorist attack on the World Trade Center? When you heard of the second plane crash, what did you feel? When you heard that another plane had crashed into a section of the Pentagon and yet another had crashed outside of Philadelphia, what was your reaction? If you are like most Americans, your reaction was that of horror, anger and a terrible sense of insecurity. No one expected that in our nation, that it would be possible to literally bring the world's most powerful nation to a screeching halt. This week we learned that our sense of safety and security has been misplaced because despite what we have been told, we are extremely vulnerable as a nation and as individuals.

As we watched with terrified eyes the total destruction of the World Trade Center and witnessed the debris and carnage of lost lives and property, many people came to another astonishing realization.. "we no longer feel safe!"

The attacks seemed to target the obvious symbols of power in America.

The World Trade Center, towering at 110 stories high, represented the essence of American economic power. It was the home of giant American financial corporations, which operate, control and direct financial operations around the world. It was the one symbol the world recognized as an icon of American economic strength. The picture of the World Trade Center crumbling into the dust shook our sense of economic security.

The pentagon is the symbol of American military strength. In its walls the security of the entire nation is planned and executed. The movements of millions of soldiers, battleships, missiles and aircraft are orchestrated from the Pentagon. It is well guarded by armed soldiers, anti-aircraft guns, radar, and electronic security of the highest order. In our collective mind, the thought of an enemy, foreign or domestic penetrating such a defensive area was unimaginable. But when a hijacked jet liner crashed into the pentagon, killing hundreds, and wounding even more, we were

intimidated. Our sense of military security was shaken.

The White House and Camp David are the residences of our national leader. They are protected by armed guards, air and land security, and the latest in technological advances. On any given day the President of the United States, the Vice President, Chief of Staff and many other leaders of the nation may all be assembled in the same building at the same time. When we learned that a fourth plane is believed to have targeted the president himself and was probably steered off course only by the brave intervention of passengers on board, we were shaken again. When we saw the President being shuttled from one place to another, ducking and hiding to avoid death while trying to lead the country at the same time, our sense of political security was shaken.

When we rode airplanes we felt safe. When we opened packages received in the mail, we felt safe. When we walked the streets of our nation, we generally felt safe from attack from foreign enemies, even if we were a bit intimidated by the enemies within. No matter how the nation responds to the tragedy and the tears of this week, the feeling of security we have known throughout the history of this nation will be lost forever.

Yet, beyond the tragedy and the tears, the terror and the fears, one symbol still stands strong, it is the old rugged cross!

The cross represents the one power in the world that has not and cannot be toppled by terrorism, crashing planes or evil empires. It represents the power of God himself. Christians, more than all others, are reminded that the power of the cross should reaffirm our feeling of safety and security. Our feeling of security is rooted in our faith that God is still on the throne and still controls the universe.

That's why the song writer declares, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation. Purchase of God. Born of his spirit washed in his blood!"

It is an assurance for times like these.

It is an assurance that there is still safety in the arms of God.

As Christians, along with the rest of the world, see the fallen symbols of shattered security in New York, Washington and Philadelphia; let us not forget to see the one symbol that still stands tall as a symbol of hope….the cross of Christ!

Exposition

This psalm focuses on David as he encourages believes in times of trouble.

David understood what it meant to be utterly devastated by trouble on every hand. David was acquainted with both the praise of the people and at the same time he was acquainted with trouble. He enjoyed being a hero and saw how quickly popularity crumbled. He soon became hunted. From the wealth of his experience with God, David suggests three things for believers:

Believers should trust and hope in God when times are difficult. In such times we are to remember what God has done for us in the past and look forward with

expectation for the great things he is going to do in the future. Scholars think David was reflecting on his own life experiences in 2 Samuel 8, in which he experience difficulties but eventual victory.

David encourages us to sing his praise despite the difficulties of any given moment because he is our eternal strength. He is control and in him we can still find security, continuity and hope.

Tragedy Shakes Security

A tragedy, simply put, is an unfortunate experience endured by an otherwise good person. When bad things happen to good people, we call them tragedies. Whenever tragedies occur our sense of security is shaken, especially if we are not grounded in the Lord.

The most striking example of a tragedy is Job. He was a good man who endured a series of tragedies that resulted in the loss of his family, property and health. Yet in all of his tragic experience, Job was not shaken.

Generally, we feel secure when outside forces cannot intrude upon us. The simplest feeling of security is how comfortable and safe we feel inside our homes when it rains. We hear the roar of the wind and see the waters drench the ground but we feel secure. But if there is a leak in the roof, we worry every time it rains. We don't feel safe.

When David said, "God is our refuge" what he meant is that our sense of security is not derived from our own defenses, but it rests in our faith in God. Psalm 20:7-8 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm." As believers, we must remember that our feeling of security goes beyond metal detectors, airport security checks, military power, political alliances or the strength of our financial institutions. Our faith rests in a living God.

Security is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of confidence and courage in the midst of trouble. Security is not a promise that it will not rain.

Security is confidence that even if it rains my roof will hold.

Beyond that, security means that even if circumstances beyond my control occur, "it is well with my soul." To carry the illustration further, those who trust in the Lord do not put their trust in the strength of the roof, but live daily with confidence that no matter what tragedy may befall them, they are secure in the Lord. They are unshaken. Psalm 125 puts it this way, " They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken (removed), but abideth forever."

Jesus, talking to his disciples in Matthew 24:6 said, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Since the word of God is true, we know that tragedies of monolithic proportions are forthcoming. As nations form leagues with each other against others, each action precipitates a reaction. As Cities are bombed, leaders are assassinated, and terrorists invade tragedy increases and the death of the innocent escalates.

In verse 7 of Matthew 24 Jesus said, "For nations shall rise against nations and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diver's places." These shall be! The believer's sense of security is maintained not in a hope that tragedies will not happen but in the knowledge that when they do happen, God is still in control. Thus David in Psalm 46:2 says, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea"

Though the great symbols of our security crumble around us, we will not fear!

Though buildings topple and our defenses seem weak we will not fear!

Look at verse 6—We can relate to it especially in these times. We have seen the heathen rage. We have seen powerful constructions melt and crumble before our eyes. Though the work of the ungodly shakes the world around us…David declares in verse 7.."The Lord is with us."

Tears follow tragedy

Whenever there is a tragedy, there are tears. There are tears from those directly affected and those who empathize. We have seen our share of tears in the aftermath of our own personal tragedies. Often our tears reflect our weakness and vulnerabilities at a precise moment. We can't stop them because they flow. They reflect our weakness.

When a young widow, frustrated with the responsibility of raising three children alone shuts herself in a room and cries…her tears reflect her frustration.

When we are helpless to change our circumstance and have tired of wishing that things would be different, but they never are…sometimes the tears flow.

When we eat alone with an empty chair after years of sharing our meal with another who was always there…sometimes, right there, while no one is looking..the tears flow.

David reminded believers that God is our refuge or source of security. He also noted that God is our "strength."

News of a tragedy is enough to buckle the knees of any human being. In an instant our humanity takes control as we sympathize and tears flow. Then the Holy Spirit moves and true believers find strength in the Lord.

Strength is the ability to rise above weakness, even with teary eyes and go forward.

When we are weak our strength is restored by allowing God to move in our lives. In the face of tragedy, when we are overwhelmed with grief and tears, we still need to allow God to act.

Look at verse 10. God says, "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen." When the heathen rage and cause tears, grief and pain, God will move on the altar of the hearts of the world in such a magnificent way that good will be raised up, love will be exemplified and righteousness will be victorious.

This is what Isaiah meant in Isaiah 40:29, "He giveth power to the faint; and to

them that have no might he increaseth strength..but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as Eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

When we shed a tear for a friend, our tears are not lost. In our moment of compassion, God sees our tears. In 2 Kings 20:5 God told Hezekiah, "I have seen thy tears and will heal thee." In Esther 8:3, Esther prayed for the life of Mordecai with her tears, and God heard her prayer. But when it's all over Revelation tells me that "God shall wipe all of their tears away."

Tears follow tragedy, but our tears should not be tears of despair.

Our tears may reflect our frustration, but they should not mean we have given up hope!

Our tears may reflect our grief, but they should not mean that we have abandoned our faith.

Embedded in our grief should be our eternal praise of God, who is bigger than any evil and better than the worst atrocity.

The Cross still stands

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider, that when every symbol of power and achievement in the world falls, the cross still stands.

The ultimate goal of an evil power is to convince good people that there is no hope.

When we see the symbol of financial strength destroyed or the symbols of our political power and military strength laid vulnerable, it indicates that it is all hopeless.

Yet when every symbol that man makes crumbles to the dust, rising like a Phoenix like from the rumble with the hopes of every believer clinging to it. is the cross of Jesus!

When the sun is hidden from view and soot and clouds form a blanket around us, the cross of Jesus beams through the darkness and brings hope!

When it appears that all that we stand for is under attack and lays buried beneath twisted steel, charred dreams, and broken spirits, one symbol of hope still stands. It is the cross of Jesus.

The cross is the helping hand of men and women who give of themselves, beyond human capacity to save lives. Their untiring energy says to the world…the cross still stands!

The cross is the combined prayers of the faithful of every denomination and faith around the world lifted up with one voice. It's a resounding chorus gives one grand testimony…the cross still stand stands!

The cross is our reminder that no matter how difficult times may become..God is still in control.

To paraphrase David, every believer declares:

'Though the earth be removed…the cross still stands!"

"Though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, the cross still stands!"

"Though waters roar and be troubled…the cross still stands!"

I"m glad to know that in times like these, the cross still stands!

These are times:

—Of Wars and rumors of wars..but the cross still stands!

—When nations are rising up against nations, but the cross still stands!

—When the heathen are raging and the multiple headed monster of evil raises its ugly head…but even in these times, the cross still stands!

The cross stands as a symbol of:

—Strength in the midst of weakness; victory in the midst of defeat

—Comfort in the midst of despair; hope in the midst of hopelessness!

No wonder the song writer declared, at the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I'm am happy all the day!

Over 2000 years ago, the world saw a tragedy on a hill!

It was a tragedy because a good man was nailed to an old rugged cross!

It was a tragedy because a man who only tried to help people was persecuted by the forces of evil!

But Early Sunday morning the tragedy was turned into a victory!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "On a hill far away stood an old rugged, the emblem of suffering and I'll love that old cross where the dearest and best, for a world of lost sinners were slain.

"So I'll cherish that old rugged cross, till one day my trophies I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged, and exchange it one day for a crown"

Though storms rise…the cross still stands!

Though the heathen rage,the cross still stands!

God is in control!

No. 859-Youth

A Stranger In The House

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 23, 2001

SCRIPTURE: Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: Psalm 144:11-12

Introduction

Is it possible to know the names of every person in your home but still feel that there is a stranger in your house? Is it possible to recognize the shoes under the bed, the shirt or blouse in the closet, and the face in the photograph, but still not recognize the person sleeping in the bed? There are thousands of familes that are frustrated today, because one or more family members have become unfamiliar to the others. They are doing strange things. They are going to strange places. They are acting in strange ways. Even though they look the same on the outside, they have become strangers to members of their families.

Thousands of relationships between men and women are shaken each year as one becomes a stranger to the other. Marriages are shattered and romances are breached for ever when partners become strangers. It is a difficult experience.

Even more frustrating is what happens when some parents look at their children and realize that they don't know them anymore.

Grandparents shake their heads and say, "Lord, Lord, Lord!"

Great grand parents say, "Uh, uh, uh!"

The greatest joy of parents and grandparents is to know that their off spring are clinging to the strengths of the family and avoiding its historocial weaknesses. That's why grandparents are important to families. They provide the perspective of generations. Sometimes grandma sees a trait in granddaughter that was peculiar to her daughter. Great grandma sees it even clearer because her eyes see farther back in time.

If it is a joy to know that children are clinging to the family's strengths, it is equally frustrating to discover one day that our children have become strangers to the family. They become strangers when they extend beyond the familiar, differ from the family's path, and plunge into the unknown, uncomfortable and peculiar.

Strangers rarely call themselves strangers. In fact they don't see themselves as strangers at all. That's what the mother learned when she told her child never to get

into a car with a stranger. The little girl was very careful to obey her parents. One day an unfamiliar man stopped at the school and offered to give her a ride home. The little girl said, "Mommie says not to ride with strangers. Are you a stranger?" The man said "no" the girl got into the car and was never seen again. Strangers can't be relied upon to define themselves.

Strangers can get on your nerve too. A man is in bed with his wife when there is a rat-a-tat-tat on the door. He rolls over and looks at his clock, and it's half past three in the morning. "I'm not getting out of bed at this time," he thinks, and rolls over. Then, a louder knock follows.

"Aren't you going to answer that?" says his wife.

So he drags himself out of bed and goes downstairs. He opens the door and there is strange man standing at the door. It didn't take the homeowner long to realize the man was drunk.

"Hi there," slurs the stranger. "Can you give me a push??"

"No, get lost. It's half past three. I was in bed," says the man and slams the door. He goes back up to bed and tells his wife what happened and she says:

"Dave, that wasn't very nice of you. Remember that night we broke down in the pouring rain on the way to pick the kids up from the baby and you had to knock on that man's house to get us started again? What would have happened if he'd told us to get lost??"

"But the guy was drunk," says the husband.

"It doesn't matter," says the wife. "He needs our help and it would be the Christian thing to help him."

So the husband gets out of bed again, gets dressed, and goes downstairs.

He opens the door, and not being able to see the stranger anywhere he shouts, "Hey, do you still want a push??"

And he hears a voice cry out, "Yeah please."

So, still being unable to see the stranger he shouts, "Where are you?"

And the stranger replies, "I'm over here, on your swing and I can't get it to move. I need a push!"

Strangers outside of the house are difficult. They are even more difficult if they are in the house. If those strangers are our own children, it is even more frustrating.

As Christians, we strive to rear our children in ways that will help them reflect the fear of the Lord and the Christian values of our family. Even though they may grow up to look, dress or speak differently, they are no strangers to us, as long as they reflect a love for God and family in their lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he speaks of his desire for peace for the eventual prosperity of his children.

The 144th psalm is believed to have been writtten after David was King. His kingdom was threatened with impending war with the Philistines and he was

particiularly concerned about the welfare of the kingdom. In this psalm he acknowledges the goodness of God toward him and extols him as his, “goodness, fortress, high tower, deliverer, shield and one whom he trusted.” (v2) In every respect, he saw God as a tower of strength and hope in his life.

In verses 5-8 He asks God to help him in his efforts against his enemies. His prayer is that God would “send thine hand from above” to protect him from invading enemies, who were like strange children, attacking and destroying.

In verses 9-10 he rejoices because he expects complete and total victory over the enemies of the people.

His prayer of hope for the children of his kingdom is that they would not be estranged from God but would be examples of sons and daughters who are well rooted in their commitment to God.

In verse 8 he identified his enemies as strange children. In verse 11 he repeats that same description but asks God to deliver his children and the children of his nation from influences that would estrange them against all that is good and right.

David desired to see the prosperity and fulfillment of the children of his kingdom. He wanted them safe, rooted and given an opportunity to grow and mature in the Lord.

He began verse 12 by saying, “That our sons may be..”. He provides an illustration of his hope when he characterizes his hope for sons by saying he hoped that they be as well rooted plants that have grown in the right way since their youth. He also notes “That our daughters may be..” Here the illustration is that of cornerstones, pillars and well maintained.

David wanted no strangers in his house. To understand this mode of thinking, consider that in ancient times houses were constructed, especially those of the wealthy such as David, with the garden inside instead of outside which is the common practice. Those who entered a house found themselves in a court yard that were adorned with trees and shrubs, fountains and fish ponds, inclusive of elegant stautues that often rested on great columns. These statutes often were of elegantly scuptured figures of women wearing robes. In every court the plants and the statutes were the centerpieces of attention. Other than the house itself, it was the owner’s pride and joy. The young trees which grow up so vigorously within an enclosure and the polished pillars and statues that stand strong and tall represent the sons and daughters of the faithful.

Those whose sons and daughters remain true to God and family are said to be happy in the Lord. (v 15)

That our sons may be like plants

David expressed a desire that the sons of believers should be as plants.

Plants are different from weeds. Weeds are not wanted while plants are prized and cared for. Plants are watered. Plants are regularly exposed to the sun and pruned.

No one cares about weeds. No one waters them,they find their own sun. They are never pruned . They grow wild.

Like prized plants, every family rears its sons the same way. They are regularly

watered with love and affection and exposed to the SON. This son refers to religious instruction and religious experiences. Parents who love their sons are careful about the environment in which they are reared and pay close attention to them.

It takes little effort to grow up a houseful of weeds. There are many in our neighborhoods. They grow up without rules, set their own standards of right and wrong and usually have no purpose or value. No business wants weeds, but nearly every business and office has some type of plant. Churches don't want weeds. Schools don't want weeds. Weeds have a way of choking plants at the root and killing them too. No matter how many weeds you collect, their ultimate end is to be pulled up, cast aside and burned.

If you want your sons to become weeds here is the perfect receipe:

1. Let your child see a conflict between your homelife and your church life.
2. Permit your child to choose his own companions without restraint or direction.
3. Give your child a latchkey and allow him to return home at any hour of the night.
4. Make no inquiry as to where and with whom he spends his leisure hours.
5. Insure that he goes to church but one or both parents stay at home
6. Let him expect pay for every act of helpfulness
7. Let him spend his church-time hours outside the building instead of in the church
8. Be careful never to let your child hear you pray
9. Show no interests in your child's school or personal life especially after 6th grade
10. Let your child select the television programs he watches and music she hears.

Follow these rules and one day, it is guaranteed, parents will look upon their sons and see "strange children" in the house who have become weeds instead of plants.

That our daughters may be

David compares believing daughters to strong cornerstones, statues of beauty, grace and strength.

Every believing daughter, in addition to the attributes desire in sons, should examples of strength, grace and beauty-polished and perfected.

There is nothing more beautiful than a young woman who has learned the art of finer womanhood.

She is strong when she has developed a sense of self worth that is independent of the approval of others. She is strong when she is immune to flattery and aware of her inner beauty.

She is strong when she has learned when to say "yes" and when to say "no"; when to hold on and when to let go.

Strength and grace are taught in the home. Parents work hard to teach their daughters to be strong and carry themselves with dignity and grace.

A graceful woman does cuss like a sailor, walk like a man, and fight like wrestler. A woman of distinction is refined, restrained and does not show it all.

Just as there are ways to create "strangers" there are also ways to create sons and daughters who grow up close to the ideal godly family model.

1. Make "home the brightest and most attractive place on earth .by creating an atmosphere of love and warmth

2. Promote responsible behavior dress, conduct and general decorum.

3. Promote healthy relationships by screening companions, organizations and people who influence your child

4. Help your child develop a spirit of helpfulness by doing things for others without pay

5. Stay involved in your child's school life, including PTA and extra-curricular activities, even
in high school.

6. Be careful to impress upon her mind that making character is more important than making
money.

7. Live uprightly before him at all times; then you will be able to talk to him with power.

8. Admit the mistakes you have made in your life and help your child to avoid the same.

9. Go to church with your child and participate with her in chuch related youth activities.

10. Insist on excellence as a goal rather than mediocrity.

Parents who follow these guides will follow the biblical mandate to "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from them."

Never be a stranger to God

Finally, brothers and sisters, the greatest benefit of rearing children in the fear of the Lord is that they will never be strangers to the Lord.

When a child is brought up in a God fearing household, he never feels like a stranger in the presence of the Lord.

You are stranger if you are unfamiliar with the ways of the Lord. Every child needs to know how the Lord operates.

Every child needs to know that the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, but no matter what he chooses to do, his response should be, "blessed be the name of the Lord."

Every child needs to know that when times are difficult, God is a shelter in a time of storm.

Every child needs to be told that when he can't find his way, God will make a way out of no way!

You are stranger if you are unfamiliar with the power of prayer!

Every child needs to know that there is power in prayer!

You are stranger if you are unfamiliar with the grace of God!

You are stranger if you are unfamiliar with salvation of God provided by Calvary!

No child should be a stranger to the story of cross.
Every child should know that Jesus died out on Calvary!
Every child should know that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!
Every child should be able to say with old warriors…I know I am a child of God!
Look at the way I walk!
Look at the way I talk!
I know I am a child of God!

No. 860-Revival

Odd Couples

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 7, 2001

SCRIPTURE:"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14

Introduction

Have you ever seen a strange couple? Most of us have seen a few strange couples in our lives. Whether it was the short man with the tall wife, or the brain child who married the dumbest, goofiest guy in town. We have seen strange hookups before. Sometimes, we even wonder what makes their relationships work. Secretly we wonder, "What does she see in him?" It's an amazing sight, but odd couples are around us every day.

What is odd? An oddity is an unusual occurrence or relationship. Oddities change as the unusual become usual. A half century ago, interracial marriages and couples were oddities. Today, interracial couples barely get a second look, even in the South. When an old man marries a young woman 40 years his junior many people call that odd. Some unfairly call her a gold digger and him a dirty old man.

The oddest couples we've seen in these times are same sex marriages. People still shrug when they see two men kiss and find it extremely difficult to embrace the thought of two gorgeously beautiful women live as husband and wife. To many that's an odd couple.

There are literally millions of "odd" couples around us every day. We see them and scratch our heads. They are couples that are like water and oil, stripes and plaids; they simply could not mix together.

Life has its odd couples.

There was a very odd couple in the town of Do-wa-ditty. Folks all over town knew the man and his wife to be extremely faithful to each other, but for the entire 40 years they were married they argued every single day. It was an odd picture to see them hug and kiss each other one minute and argue the next.

One day the couple was traveling on a car trip. The argued about road signs, stop lights and just about every thing else. Whichever one lost the argument would tell the other, "I love you dear." The husband never like being wrong. Every mistake had to be his wife's fault. They stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. The old woman unfortunately left her glasses on the table, but didn't miss them until they were back

on the highway. The husband complained that his wife should be more careful. It cost them both time and money to drive back 50 miles just to get her glasses. When they finally arrived, as the wife got out of the car to retrieve her glasses, the old man said, "While you're in there, you may as well get my hat, too." The wife then said, "And I love you too!"

If you think that's strange, what about the odd couple that insisted on having every thing around them reflect the love of God. They went overboard. The parrot sang hymns. Their telephone answering machine quoted long scriptures before the beep. They bought a dog and cat and named the Jacob and Esau so they could fight. One day they saw an advertisement of a religious pet shop that had a religious dog for sale. The couple bought the dog home and were amazed at its tricks. It became obvious that was self trained by watching TV preachers. When they asked the dog to fetch the Bible and looked up the 23rd Psalms. They told him to turn on the TV and he turned it to the 700 Club. They said "Praise" and the dog held up both paws, howled and jumped around. One night there friends who visited and the odd to show off the dog's skills. The friends were impressed, and asked whether the dog was able to do any of the usual dog tricks, as well. This stopped the couple cold, as they hadn't thought about "normal" tricks. Well, they said, "let's try this out." They called the dog, and they clearly pronounced the command, "Heel!" Quick as a wink, the dog jumped up, put his paw on the man's forehead, knocked him down and said, "In the name of Jesus-heal!" — It was an odd dog for an odd couple.

As Christians, we are aware of the importance of maintaining a relationship with God. It may appear odd to others, but we are maintained in our faith by our love for him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the importance of forming healthy relationships in personal and social areas.

Although many take this passage to refer to marriage and courtship relations, Paul, writing to the Corinthians stressed the importance of all Christian relationships.

Being unequally yoked is an agricultural term which refers to the kinds of animals used to plow the field. Two hard working oxen get a better job done than one that does not pull its share of the load. In a similar sense, people who do not share the same spiritual direction do not pull well together but tend to contradict each other.

No one would deny that we are living in a day of deception, compromise, and worldliness,
among many Christians who do not recognize the meaning of being unequally yoked with unbelievers. To clarify this problem, Paul asked five questions that deserve our prayerful consideration because they have eternal consequences:

1)What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?

2)What communion has light with darkness?

3)What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial (the devil)?

4)What has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

5)What agreement has (can there be between) the Temple of God and idols?

Paul indicates the obvious. There is a difference between the relationship and interaction. His words here do not suggest that believers have not interaction with unbelievers because to do so would require believers to live in another world. The emphasis is not to develop any relationships beyond the necessary with unbelievers.

True faith not only joins the believer to the Lord, but should also separate the believer in heart and practice, from the world which crucified his Lord and still hates Him. The presence of God demands holiness, for the presence of God cannot dwell in the presence of evil. Wherefore, come out from among unbelievers, and sever your relationships from them, says the Lord, and touch not unclean things; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you (6:17-18).

Odd Couples

The world has seen its share of odd couples. We have learned many great truths from studying the couples of the bible.

Samson and Delilah were an odd couple. Samson was a Danite who was a judge of the the people of Israel. He was the epitome of strength. He was also extremely vulnerable. He fell from grace with God when he coupled himself with Delilah, who took advantage of vulnerabilities and brought him down. They were the oddest of couples because instead of complementing each other, they were direct opposites. Their odd relationship ultimately resulted in his loss of strength and power.

David and Bathsheba both were odd couples. David was the ki ng of Israel and was biblically characterized as a 'man after God's own heart.' Yet, despite his close relationship with God, his eye was attracted to Bathsheba, who was already married. When he killed her husband with a royal order, the resulting relationship was and oddity for many years; people saw its oddity but rarely spoke of it openly.

Esther and the King: Esther was a beautiful Jewish woman who became queen of Persia. A Jewish woman married to the King of Persia was certainly an odd couple. However it was an odd arrangement that was ordained by God himself. There are times when God brings relationships together. They are odd in their appearance but nevertheless they are divinely inspired. Esther and the King shared a blessed relationship that saved the entire nation of Israel.

Hosea and Gomer were the epitome of Odd couples. Hosea was the foremost prophet of his time. He was well known in religious circles. His integrity was respected by all. Yet, God told Hosea to marry Gomer, who was a prostitute. The relationship was symbolic, yet it was real. God showed through this relationship how God's people related to him. Even today, there are relationships that are odd in nature but they make a point or statement about life as a whole.

Odd couples are odd because they make us stop and stare. They are not odd because they are grotesque, but because they are unique. Those couples that begin in the Lord, may be odd, but they are pleasing in the sight of God.

The oddest couple: Jesus and me

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there have been many odd couples, the oddest relationship of all is that between Jesus and a born again sinner.

Paul himself is the best of the odd couples. He spent most of his life fighting against Christ, but somewhere on the Damascus Road he saw the light. The people who saw him later question this odd arrangement, but he defended it with a passion.

If you want to see an odd couple, don't worry about trying to see odd couples like Robin Givens and Mike Tyson

If you want to see an odd couple, don't worry about Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown!

If you want to see an odd couple, don't worry about Micheal Jackson and Lisa Presley!

If you want to see an odd couple, don't worry about Ike and Tina Turner!

If you want to see an odd couple, all you have to look at is Jesus and me!

The Lord is so strong and we are so weak!

The Lord is so powerful and we are so powerless!

The Lord is so rich and we are so poor!

The Lord is so wonderful and we are so despicable!

The Lord is so compassionate and we are so merciless!

The Lord is so complete and we are so incomplete!

Who would have ever thought that someone like me who did what I did back then could be doing what we are doing now!

Who would have ever thought that someone like me who went where we weren't suppose to go then could go where we're going today!

Who would have ever thought that someone like me who danced the dance in clubs, could be dancing the dance that David dance today!

What could God possibly see in me? Maybe he saw what that fine woman saw in the fat man! Everybody else said, "I just can't see it!"

What could God possibly see in me? Maybe it's the same thing the handsome man saw in the ugly. Everybody else said, "I just can't see it"

What could God possibly see in me? Maybe it's same thing that the rich man saw in the poor woman, Everybody else said, "I just can't see it!"

What could God possibly see in me? Maybe it's the same thing that the educated woman found in the hard working but uneducated man. Everybody else said, "I just can't see it!"

The word of God answers the question when it says in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

He loved us so much that he died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands.

No. 861-Inspiration

Do It Your Self Projects

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 30, 2001

SCRIPTURE: Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Psalm 127:1

Introduction

Have you ever tried to do it yourself? It may have been repairing a car, building table, or repairing an electrical wire. If you were dealing in an area in which you have little expertise, did it come out right? Most of us have had our turn playing Mr. or Miss "Do it yourself." Sometimes we did well, but there were also times when the final results were not as pleasing as we desired.

One of the factors that contribute to a decision to "do it yourself" is cost. A lawyer could cost a hundred dollars an hour or more, but do we actually save by representing ourselves? Can a novice save money by repairing his own transmission? Even doctors, who are highly skilled in their profession would not attempt major surgery on themselves. In such cases, cost takes second place to quality of service. In most cases, we save, but we sacrifice quality.

Time may be a factor in a "do it yourself" decision. Some choose the "do it yourself" route because they have more time than money. Some have decided that as practical matter, it is better for them to mow their own lawns, clean their own houses, and wash their own cars; especially since they have more time than money.

There are still others who choose the "do it yourself" route because they enjoy the challenge of completing a task themselves. They enjoy being able to say, "I did it all by myself." It increases their sense of self-worth and value. To them, being able to do it themselves is a statement of independence.

There is a final group which chooses the "do-it-yourself" approach because it believes that no one else can do it better. They live by the philosophy "if you want something done right, do it yourself." It's not necessarily right because they do it, but it will be to their satisfaction, good or bad.

Whether it's a "do it yourself" project or a turnkey professional job, each person should approach life with the eye toward perfection. We should seek the one way we can achieve excellence.

An elderly carpenter had worked many years for the company, under the sneaky suspicion that he was not as great a carpenter as his reputation said. When he reached his last year on the job, his employer gave him one final assignment. Without the

assistance of a crew or others, the old carpenter was asked to build one last house, as a favor to the owner.

The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that while he was a very good carpenter he was not able to build the house alone. In the company of his plumbers, electricians and decorators he had amassed a great reputation. Alone, the plumbing leaked, the lights were dimmed and the project was wreck.

When the carpenter finished his work the employer came to inspect the house. He handed the front-door key to the carpenter.

"This is your house," he said, "my gift to you." The carpenter was shocked! This was his worse project and his first do it yourself project

Many have a do it yourself attitude about life, but the project never seems to come out right. There is no creation so flawed as that of the self made man or woman. We may work to build a life for ourselves, but without the help of God, our do it yourself life project may be our worse project.

As Christians, we understand that there is little we can do in the world without God. We can work and labor, but our best project fails without his help.

Exposition

This text focuses on King David as he gives instruction to his son Solomon on family building. Since it is well known that David wanted to build a house for God, on first appearance it would appear that this text concerned building the temple. Closer inspection reveals that the text had very little to do with building the temple, and much to do with Solomon's attention to his family.

The "house" of this text is not a building, but a family, immediate, extended and cross generational. David's instruction was very simple. He said unless the principles of God are applied in family building, Solomon's efforts will be fruitless.

In his instruction, David encouraged Solomon not to work so hard that he neglects his family. In addition, he was encouraged to view his children as precious gems, or arrows in a quiver, the more the better.

The parent who pays attention to his family and rears it according to the will of God is happy and sleeps well at night.

Except the Lord Build the House

There are many who have a "do-it-yourself" approach to family. The approach is very simple. Get some kind of education and training, get a job, makes some money, pay the bills, send the children off to school, fix things that break, find someone to keep the children, sneak a way for a break, find someone to keep the children, get a better job, make more money, send the kids to school,etc. The cycle continues without end. That's the "do-it-yourself" method of family building. It seems practical and logical.

This approach leaves godliness out of the formula. It emphasizes our own

methods and leaves little room for faith or the development of faith based activities.

Often we work ourselves to the bone to acquire skills necessary to succeed in our profession, trade, business or work arena. We tend to forget about our need to rely on God for success.

How does God help us build our families? Does he come to our homes, take a seat and teach us a course or two? God is good for Sunday morning, but in the real world of Monday through Saturday, how does God build the house when we are struggling to pay the light bill, water bill, house note and payments on loans? How does he fit into the real picture? He provides the directions.

Many furniture or toy items look well in the show room because they are completely assembled. Those who assemble them usually rely on the instructions to put them together properly. Without the instructions, the hundreds of pieces would be meaningless. So it is with families. God has the instruction manual for every family, called the bible. Through the bible and through his "family life assembly program" called the church, he shows families how to put the pieces together.

Do-it-yourself projects that fail usually do so because we don't read the instructions, or don't follow the directions to the letter.

A story is told of Henry Ford. One day he and his wife were driving in the country and they came across a man whose Model T had broken down. He was under the hood trying to figure out what was wrong, when Mr. Ford asked if he could take a look. And in just a few minutes, Mr. Ford had the Model T running. The owner was amazed and said, "I'm impressed with your knowledge of Model T's, and I'm amazed that you fixed it so easily." Mr. Ford replied, "I ought to be able to fix it because I'm the one who DESIGNED it." And dear people, that's how it is with God and the family. God says, "I can fix it because I designed it!"

God isn't going to wave His hand over you and your spouse and supernaturally transform the two of you into the Huxtables, the perfect family. Nor will He wave His hand over your children and change them into the Brady kids. God doesn't work that way. Instead, He gives you the necessary instructions and tools and says, "Here's what you need. Get to work. I'll help you every step of the way."

It's a marriage manual, a courtship manual, a child rearing manual, a problem solving manual and a goal setting manual all tied into one.

When it comes to our families, it's better to let God fix it, rather risk a bad experience trying to do it ourselves.

Laboring in vain

Hard work is the American way. However, all of our work and labor is in vain if we lose our families in the process.

All of our hard work does not yield the success we seek unless it also includes the people we love. What good is success, if you look down from the mountain top and no one who loves you is in the crowd?

David told Solomon if there is not a sense of godly purpose in what we do; all our labor is in vain. Godly purpose in life means that each family member should spend

time seeking the will of God concerning their life pursuits. Seeking God's blessing means that we know we cannot be successful without his help, thus we want our actions to meet his approval.

We give our time and energy toward pursuits that are godly. Our approach to these pursuits minimizes intrusions into our family life and optimizes every opportunity for quality time with our spouses and children.

If we make millions but lose our husbands or wives in the process, what have we gained?

If we improve our standard of living by our intensive work but lose our children, do we really succeed?

A young boy said to his father, Daddy, how much do you make an hour?" With a timid voice and idolizing eyes, the little boy greeted his father as he returned from work. Greatly surprised, but giving his boy a glaring look, the father said, "Look, Sonny, not even your mother knows that. Don't bother me now. I'm tired."

"But Daddy, just tell me please! How much do you make an hour," the boy insisted?

The father, finally giving up, replied: "15 dollars per hour."

"Okay, Daddy. Could you lend me two dollars?" the boy asked.

Angry with his son's constant pestering, he said, "Go to sleep and don't bother me anymore."

It was already dark, and the father was feeling guilty for what he said. Maybe, he thought, his son needed to buy something for school. Finally, trying to ease his mind, the father went to his son's room. "Are you asleep, son?" asked the father.

"No, Daddy. Why?" replied the boy, partially a sleep. "Here's the money you asked for earlier," the father said.

"Thanks, Daddy!" rejoiced the son, while putting his hand under his pillow and removing some money. "Now I have enough! Now I have 15 dollars!" The father gazed at his son, confused by the meaning of what he had just said, when the boy continued, "Daddy, could you sell me one hour of your time, please?"

Many families are busy constructing "do-it-yourself" home building projects. They are so busy that they have little time for the family left behind.

We need a little help

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that while there are some things you can do yourself, everybody needs a little help sometimes.

David discovered that even as King of Israel, he could not do it all by himself. He said in Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

There are many good Christians who have placed their faith in God on hold and have plunged into their own "do it yourself" life building mode.

Are you single but finding it increasingly difficult to find the right person that complements your life? In your pursuit of happiness have you placed your spiritual

life on the back burner? Has the pursuit of Mr. Wonderful and Miss Fantastic superceded your bible study, worship and dependence on God? Remember David's words, "Except the Lord build the house, they that labor, labor in vain."

Are you married but feeling frustration in your marriage? Do you have more than you have ever had, but enjoy each other less? In your pursuit of marital happiness how important has it been to you to worship, pray and participate in bible study together? If your marriage relationship is boiling down to simply tolerating each other over the years, you should remember David's words, "Except the Lord builds the house!"

Are you a youth that is working hard to advance yourself in school? Are you an athlete, cheerleader, scholar, band member or school leader that is trying hard to make it but get frustrated all along the way? Are you trying to do these things at the expense of your spiritual life? Do you find that they take up all of your time and from week to week you are praying less and reading your even less? If so, even in your young life you have shifted into a "do it yourself" mode. Remember David's words, "Except the Lord build the house."

There are some things you cannot do all by yourself. You need the Lord, he's like American Express, don't leave home without him.

We can't bless ourselves. No matter how hard we work, we cannot bless ourselves. While it is true that we can be a blessing to someone else we can't bless ourselves. Blessing is not a do it yourself project. If you need a blessing, you have to call on the Lord.

We can't answer our own prayers. No matter how clean and moral we live our lives, we do not have the capacity to answer our own prayers. We may be the answer to someone else's prayer but we can't answer our own payers. Getting an answer to a prayer, is not a do it yourself project. If you need an answer to prayer, you have to call on the Lord.

We can't forgive our own sins. When an offense is committed, only the person who is offended can forgive the offense. We can forgive those who offend us, but we can't forgive our own sins. Sins are offenses against God. Forgiveness is not a do it yourself project. If you want forgiveness, you must you have to call on the Lord!

We can't save our own souls. Salvation is the act of reconciling the differences between God and man. Salvation is the act of cleaning the slate and restoring a good relationship with God.

We can't save oourselves, because there is only one name under the heavens whereby we must be saved. It's not our name, but the name of Jesus!

Salvation is not a do it yourself project but it has already been done!

We can't do it ourselves because the project is already complete!

We can't carry the cross, because it has already been carried!

We can't have nails driven in our hands, because it's already been done!

Jesus died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave! We can't do it by ourselves, but if we take the Lord with us, everything will be all right!

No. 862-Anniv.-Church

The Lord Is There

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 14, 2001

SCRIPTURE: It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there. Ezekiel 48:35

Introduction

Have you ever faced the unknown alone? Being alone is an awkward feeling. Most of us feel better when we face a situation in the company of those who make them feel safe and secure. When we are alone, fear sets in and anxiety is heightened. When we are alone, we feel uncomfortable. We feel safer when we are not alone,

When Jesus spoke some of his final words to his disciples he was careful to make sure they knew that he would not leave them alone.

In Matthew 28 he told them, "And Lo I am with always" even unto the end of the world.

Church ministries are difficult and frustrating, but they are much more rewarding when the "The Lord is there."

That's why Christ promised not to eave us comfortless, but promised the presence of God would always be with the people.

In Old Testament times Israel knew God was there when they saw the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day.

They knew God was there whenever the saw the Ark of the covenant.

They were reluctant to take on any new pursuit unless they could assure that God would be with them. They believed this so much that King Saul went to a which to consult Samuel to find out whether God would be with him in battle.

As Christians, we have learned that any church is a church of power if the Lord is there. Without the Lord a church is heater without fire, sugar without sweet, and water without wet. In all of our doing we should make sure that the Lord is there!

Exposition

This text focuses on Ezekiel's vision of the reconstructed city of God.

Ezekiel gazed into the future and saw what did not exist through the power of God's imagery. Many saw city that Ezekiel envisioned and named it Jerusalem, but he never

called it Jerusalem. They believed it would be in Canaan, but he never said where it would be located. The vision was Messianic in that it project a vision for another day and time when Christ would come.

It was a vision of what would be, based upon what was.

Ezekiel's vision of the city of God envisioned a city that lay four square and had three gates on each of its four sides. There would be twelve gates to the city, each of them named after one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Significant here is the name that Ezekiel uses to describe the city, "Jehovah-Shammah" or God is there.

John saw a similar vision of a city. John called it the new Jerusalem. It too will have walls and gates; 12 in all with the names of the tribes of Israel written upon them. The name John gave "the New Jerusalem" was an equivalent to that Ezekiel gave which was, "The Lord is there." "God is there" implied that there would always be tokens of God's presence among them. They would see his handiworks, good deeds and mighty works. There would never be a time when they would wonder "is God with us." The signs of his presence would be all around them.

The church, likewise would also serve as the temple of God. Each individual will serve as a living temple of God in their bodies and collectively the church would become the temple of God. The idea that the Lord is there for faithful is he that has said, and he will be as good as his word, Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. The Lord is there in his church, to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there. In making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be that God himself shall be with them (Rev. 21:3), that he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them, Rev. 7:15. And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city that the Lord is there. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be for ever with the Lord.

The Lord was there...

The church is the one special place where God dwells among men. Because "The Lord is there" no power formed against the church can prevail. This a great truth that our forefathers knew and promoted with zeal. If "the Lord is there" the church can overcome any frustration.

This church has seen difficult times. There are many who sleep today, whose names are etched into the hollowed history of this church, who spent many sleepless nights trying to help this church weather the difficult storms of its early beginnings. The church survived in part because of their labor but mostly because the Lord was there.

When the old warriors sat on wooden benches without pads and sweated in the heat of the summer and shivered in the cold of winter, they were not intimidated because "the Lord was there."

When Klansmen were blowing up churches and killing little children, the founders of this church kept praying anyway. They kept praying because they knew everything would be alright as long as the "Lord was there."

When its young men went off to war in Vietnam and Mission sisters joined the "War on Poverty" to feed the poor and the hungry, this church did not shut its doors and horde its resources. It joined others that gave and shared, knowing that even if their barrel of meal became dry it would be alright as long as God was there.

When our leaders came into these walls and cried for John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Malcom X. Even as we cried we knew that God would rest the souls of our leaders just as he gave rest to the souls of hundreds of mamas and papas, sisters, brothers and aunts who were stretched out before the altar in this little church. Even as we mourned, we knew everything would be alright as long as God was there.

God was there when the old sisters sang, "I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow!"

God was there when the old deacon prayed so hard that he sounded like he was preaching and the preachers sounded like they were praying!

God was there when the heels of the church women clicked against the hardwood floors and the ushers carried smelling salts to revive those overcome with the spirit!

God was there when the saints shouted for joy when they paid off the mortgage on the building and;

God was also there when the church crowned new deacons, baptized sinners and lifted up the name of Jesus!

It has been a long journey, but God was there every step of the way.

The Lord is here

Just as the Lord was there for our forefathers, the church today should get consolation in knowing that God is still here. God "is" here suggests a change of time. It suggests a change from what was to the present time. God "is" here is right now. God is here also suggests a change of place. God "was there" points to God's goodness in times past. It demonstrates that God "was" good to others "back in the day." God "is here" makes special note of what God is doing today.

Jehovah-Shammah should remind every Christian that, regardless of the situation, God is present and is moving in the lives of believers.

When we are able to say, "The Lord is here" we bubble with confidence that whatever the circumstance God is and in control. When the disciples were besieged by a sudden thunderstorm many began to worry about their safety. They saw the winds and waves. They heard the roar of the wind! Then they concluded that death was imminent. Then someone remembered that Jesus was on board. If the Lord is on board the ship of our lives, there is nothing to fear. He may appear to be sleep, but in the nick of time he awakes and calms the angry sea.

When our finances run low, we remain confident if we can say Jehovah-Shammah,

the “Lord is here.” That’s the lesson a widow woman learned one day when her resources dwindled to just enough meal and oil to satisfy a single last meal. Her cabinets were bare. Her fuel supply had dwindled to just a few sticks. Yet her faith remained high. She knew that when the “Lord is here” the barrel never runs dry. Because of her faith she had sufficient food stores to maintain her in the drought.

Even in the face of sickness, the beliver still says, Jehovah-Shammah. Often sickness depletes our morale. We give up hope and throw up our hands. Yet in all these troubles there is still a blessing as long as the Lord is here. A sick man sat by the pool for 38 years waiting for an angel to trouble the water and heal his body. For 38 years he watched the water, but was never fast enough. For 38 years he asked for help into the water but found there was none. Then Jesus stopped by. When Jesus showed up the healings began. When Jesus showed up the walking and talking began. If we want healings today we should let Jesus come in!

In the time of trouble God is here. There isn’t a single moment that a believer is abandoned by the Lord. In the midst of our frustrations and difficulties, God is present, providing shelter, succor and protection. That’s why the Word of God not only refers to God in the “was” but also in the “is.”

David said the “Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!”

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!

God is my refuge and my strength!

Each of these say that God is a God of the “right now!”

It is good to know that whenever we need God he “is” present and right by our side.

There Lord is there

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must focus on Ezekiel’s prophecy about the future. The one thing that stands out more saliently than everything else about this prophecy is not the beauty of the City, but the fact that the Lord will be there!

Ezekiel described a millennial city whose beauty is the basis for John’s vision in the Revelation.

Ezekiel saw the new Jerusalem, the future home of the church.

Between Ezekiel and John we see a beautiful picture of what will be.

We see a picture of New Jerusalem that sits on 12 foundations, one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

We see a picture of a city with twelve gates. Three gates to the East. Three Gates to the West. Three gates to the North and three gates to the South.

We see a city whose gates are made of solid pearls!

We see a city whose streets are paved with gold!

In the midst of that city is a tree that will bear all manner of fruit. The leaves of that tree will be good for the healing of the nations!

We see a city whose beauty will not be scarred by smog, terrorist threats, and fear!

That’s not the best thing about the city. The best thing is that “God is there.” - God will be in the city!

It doesn't matter how beautiful the church, it's not a church if God is not there!

It doesn't matter how grand the choir sings, the choir can't really sing until the Holy Ghost comes!

It doesn't matter how hard the preacher preaches, you can't have church until the Lord shows up!

When the Lord shows up we are able to face the unfaceable!

When the Lord shows up we are able to conquer the unconquerable!

When the Lord shows up we are able to defeat the undefeatable!

When the Lord shows up we are able to bear the unbearable!

As the church looks up the road to its future, make sure you see the Lord in the picture!

If the Lord is there, everything will be alright!

Until that time, keep on telling the story!

Teach it in Sunday School!

Preach it on Sunday morning!

Testify in your missionary society!

Tell somebody that Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No 863-Revival

How Can Anyone So Smart Be So Dumb?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 14, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philipplians 3:13-14

Introduction

Have you ever met anyone who was very smart but always acted very stupid or did very dumb things? If you have, you probably asked, how can anyone who is so smart be so dumb? We have seen people like that all of our lives, and we have continuously asked the same question.

When we see educated people committing crimes and being carted off to jail, it pops up again.

When a teacher falls in love with student, we shake our heads and say, "How can anyone so smart be so dumb?"

When the rich old man is courted by the pretty but broke coed, everyone can see the motive except him. They shake their heads and say, "How can anyone so smart, be so dumb?"

When the accountant, who knows his every action will be reviewed in an audit, decides to embezzle from his employer he acts against what he knows to be right. We see him led off to prison in chains and say, "How could anyone so smart, be so dumb?"

When the police officer decides to take bribes from the local dealer, he knows that he is breaking the very law he has sworn to uphold. The old lady who watches him out of her window drops her head and says, "How can anyone so smart, be so dumb?"

When people watch the president of the United States have an affair with secret service agents outside the white house door, the whole nation asked in bewilderment, "How can anyone so smart, be so dumb?"

There are some people so smart they could not recognize dumb if they saw it face to face. Consider the not so smart farmer who had a prize dog that knew how to play poker. People came from all around to watch the smart dog play and win. The farmer was a little jealous of all the publicity his dog was receiving. There were newspaper reporters every where. There were T.V. news crews everywhere. Every turn of the

corner saw more people coming to marvel at the wonderful dog that could play poker. The people raved over the smartness of the dog. Finally, the cameras came to the farmer, who was really jealous by now. "Tell me, how does it feel to have such a smart dog?" Asked a reporter. The farmer spat out a big juicy blob of tobacco spit and said, "He's not so smart; he wags his tail every time he gets a good hand!"

Humans are the smartest of God's creation. We are able to think, create, imagine and deal with aesthetic issues. Yet, in all of our genius, we still kill, murder steal and rape. In all of our knowledge, we still lack the wisdom necessary to do right. The question could very well be asked of every believer, "How could anyone so smart, be so dumb?"

As Christian, we don't revel in our personal genius. The more we know, the more we realize that we don't know. There is one thing that we do know, however. We know that God is real and only what you do for him lasts. Anyone who hasn't figured that out yet is too smart for their own good.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's response to those whose spiritual intellect was so great that it made them dumb.

Wherever Paul went in the course of his ministry a group of detractors seemed to either follow him or congregate. The group that followed him were what we call today "Judaizers" or scholars who attempted to take the Christian message and apply the rituals of Judaism in a way that made Christianity a branch of the Jewish faith. Their immediate goal was to apply their vast learning to Christianity in way that would make it acceptable or compliant with the Jewish faith.

One of the ways these very smart men attempted to do this was to spread a teaching that even though a person became a Christian, he was still a Jew and thus bound to carry out the command of Moses that required male circumcision. The first verses of this chapter address the argument of these smart men who contended in their smartness, that being circumcised carried out the will of God.

So in verses 4 through 16 Paul explains, the "smart" people think obeying God means to insist on circumcision or observing certain types of diet. He maintains that those who are spiritually circumcised or obedient to God are those who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in living the Christian life, and have no confidence in the saving grace of the rituals of man.

Paul himself knew the reasoning of the Judaizers because he himself had once been among them, thinking himself smart and right in his decision. In his smartness, he persecuted the church, only to find out later that in all his learning, he really knew nothing. When he stood before Festus and argued for Christianity it became obvious to Festus that he was not a dumb man. Festus said, "with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad (Act 26:24).

In verse 13 Paul puts his vast knowledge and experience in perspective. He says he doesn't consider himself as a man who has "apprehended" or achieved significantly

philosophically or theologically.

It was an important statement for Paul because in the eyes of the world he was a "smart" man. In verses 4 through 8 he details how "smart" he thought he was at the time.

In his smartness he claimed righteousness because he was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth as the Law of Moses required. (v5)

In his smartness he boasted about the fact that while the Arabs could brag that they were descendants of Abraham and the Edomites could boast of being descendants of Isaac, he was a descendant of Jacob. (v5)

In his smartness he persecuted the church as enemies of God (v6).

In his smartness he promoted those things that concerned the Law of Moses. He was a very religious man who was a Pharisee and was known for his loyalty, patriotism and conservatism (v6).

In his smartness, Paul considered himself "blameless" (v6).

In his smartness he considered his learning, birthright, religious learning and prestige in the religious community as an asset. However, when he came into the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, all of these things were counted as a loss, no more than dung (v8).

In his smartness he tried to think himself worthy because of his knowledge. But when he came to the true knowledge he found that he was worthy not because he was so smart, but because Christ through his suffering and dying gave him a chance to everlasting life. (v11).

In his smartness Paul acted as if he was "Mr. Big Stuff" having already achieved righteousness before God. That's what he means by the phrase, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." In Christ he learned that anything he had become was through Christ (v12).

In the full knowledge of Christ he realized that what he knew and achieved in life was really nothing compared to the greatness of God. Thus, in the text, he says, "I count not myself to have apprehended."

Paul said in his smartness he thought he knew many things. In the faith, however, he only claims to know "one thing" and that is that Heaven is such a great prize it's worth forgetting everything else and committing himself to living for God everyday.

In our Smartness…

Today, there are millions of smart people around us, yet in their smartness they make some foolish spiritual mistakes.

IN OUR SMARTNESS WE AVOID GOD: There are many very intelligent people in our society who avoid God with a passion. They avoid him and those things associated with him as if they were contaminated. It is extremely frustrating to see learned men and women, who are steeped in the arts, and sciences, but are completely ignorant about God. When Paul preached to Felix and Drusilla about the realities of God they avoided making a decision by telling him to come back at a more convenient season.

Even today there are many who make up a variety of excuses for not following God. They point to those who are marginal in the faith and weak at best as their reason for not believing. They argue that Christianity doesn't seem to have benefited its followers. So with their Harvard degrees, leather suspenders and fine cars, they speed through life confident in their smartness that their degrees and professional experience will carry them to a good life. How could anyone so smart, be so dumb? The real joy in life is found through faith in God. We can achieve material success and still not enjoy it. Avoiding God does not make us happier it only deprives us of the chance to really know true happiness. The song writer says, "Without him I could do nothing. Without him, I'd truly fail. Without him, my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

IN OUR SMARTNESS, WE FLIRT WITH TEMPTATION: There are many extremely intelligent people who are literally foolish with regards to matters of the heart. We have seen them all around us. They are fine upstanding citizens who attend church regularly and give liberally. They are models of the faith until it comes to their love lives. It is nothing more frustrating than to watch an intelligent man attempt to cheat on his wife. Here's a man who pays his bills, loves his children, and acts responsibly in every respect; that is until he decides to cheat. Despite all of his knowledge and intelligence he thinks he can cheat and get away with it. There's nothing more puzzling than trying to figure out what would make an otherwise intelligent woman think that a man who lives with her everyday but does not want to marry her is really in "love" with her. Sometimes the smartest people can act really dumb when love gets in the picture. Highly civilized couples have been known to throw pots and pans, cut up each other's clothes and act like complete fools when love gets involved.

Solomon was the wisest man the world has ever known. His wisdom and knowledge had no equal in the known world. Yet, when it came to matters of the heart Solomon was a complete fool. He literally had 1,000 wives and state supported concubines. Many of them were from different countries and had strange beliefs and gods which he tolerated and in some cases promoted. It caused great spiritual harm to his nation, but he continued anyway. When we look at Solomon and at the smart people of our times, we can't help but ask, "How can anyone so smart be so dumb?"

Even the fool knows that if you play with fire, you'll get burned! Yet there are many today, who flirt with temptation. Some experiment with drugs, just one time! Some decide to take a drink just to be sociable. Some make it to the clubs, "just one time." For many that "one time" becomes a lifetime. That one trip to the casino ended up being a life time pursuit. That secret love affair ended up wrecking a marriage. That one night in a hotel with a one night stand ended up with a life time of AIDS. When we look back, we say, "How can anyone so smart be so dumb?"

IN OUR SMARTNESS, WE COUNT ON OUR OWN EFFORTS. There are many today who rely totally upon their own intelligence, imagination and intuition to achieve what they call "success." These are the individuals who believe that with a good education and a little luck, success is just a matter of being in the right place

at the right time. They believe it is their skill and knowledge alone that accounts for their climb. They attribute everything else to sheer "luck."

Obviously, education is an important factor in any person's development. Imagination, intuition and skill are all essential to personal development. Yet these do not supercede the need to have God in our lives. In our smartness, we should never revel in the fact that we have graduated from Grambling, Southern, Morehouse, Dillard or some other fine institution of learning. The sheepskin diploma that hangs on our wall attests to what's in our head, but we count on the power of God to take what's in our head and put it in our hands and feet in a productive and spiritual fulfilling way.

When Solomon finished his foolish living he concluded that what's really smart is that we "trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding." At best, our understanding of life is miniscule and Lilliputian. Anything one who thinks he succeed by his own efforts is mistaken. He represents the type that makes us shake our head and ask, "How can someone so smart, be so dumb?" We need the Love of God to make life real and meaningful. Instead of simply being a slogan on our money, "In God we trust" should be a testament to what we really want to do with our lives.

One Thing We Know

Finally, brothers and sisters, those of us who are in the faith may not be the smartest people in the world, but there is one thing we know, if we trust in the Lord, he'll make a way!

There is a smart way and a dumb way to do just about anything. The word of God says in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

It's smart to be a good driver and have an highway worthy automobile, but it's dumb to think you can make it where you going without the protecting hand of the Lord!

It's smart for parents to provide for the safety, nurture and education of their children, but its dumb to believe that they don't need to know about the Lord!

It's smart to save our money and invest wisely, but it's dumb to trust in our 401K plan and bank accounts instead of trusting in the Lord!

Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but one thing I know…" That's a fancy way of saying in modern times..

I may not know how to mathematically calculate a hypotenuse or calculate the number of degrees in the base angles of an Isosceles triangle, but one thing I know…

I may not know how to conjugate my verbs correctly. Sometimes I may use the wrong words and say "Dis here" and "Dat there" ; but there's one thing I know!

I may not know much about biology, dividing life into species, and learning the difference between the ectoderm and the ectoderm; but there's one thing I know!

I may not know much about history, about the dark ages, crusades, the industrial age and the great revolution; but there is one thing I know!

I may not know much about economics. I may not know the difference between a recession and a depression; inflation, deflation, the stock market and Dow Jones Industrial average; but there is one thing I know!

I may not know much about politics, about Democrats and Republicans, third parties, voting trends, exit polls and campaign finance; but there is one thing I know!

I may not know much about all these things, but one thing I know is that God is real and if you trust in him he will make a way!

If we trust in the Lord, though we're bogged down in Egypt, he carry us to the promised land!

If we trust in the Lord, when our going gets tough, he'll help make it to the other side!

If we trust in the Lord, he'll bring us out of the darkness into his marvelous light!

You may have done some dumb things, but the smartest move of your life is to trust in the Lord!

He will make a way!

Trusting in the Lord is a smart thing because it's a sure thing!

It's a sure thing because he proved his love for us!

It's a smart thing because one evening He hung out on an old rugged cross!

It's a smart thing because He bled and died for the remission of our sins!

It's a smart thing because Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

You may be a smart may or woman but if you turn him down today, the angels in heaven may be shaking their heads saying, "How could someone so smart, be so dumb?"

No. 864-Anniv.-Church

I Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 21, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39

Introduction

Is there anything that you would trade for the life you now live as a Christian? Is there anything that could prompt you to change your life journey and turn in another direction? The Christian life is one that is challenging and rewarding. Those who live for Christ have reached the conclusion that there is nothing they would trade for the Christian life experience. That is a bold statement because it means believers would reject everything the world offers if it means giving up their lives in Christ.

Anniversaries are milestones. They are points along the way where we pause to evaluate the journey.

Anniversaries tell us how far we have come and they help us measure how far we have to go. Congregations of believers celebrate anniversaries because they help us appreciate the unique nature of one church's journey. As individuals, anniversaries help us to focus on our personal journey to the promised land. Church congregations that have existed many years have long rich histories that speak of dedicated men and women who believed and trusted in God and worked to make the kingdom of God a reality on earth. Church histories are filled with references to the faith of the founders and the strength of their commitment to the church and the kingdom of God.

Church anniversaries give individual members a chance to reflect upon their personal journeys toward perfection. Every church anniversary is an individual anniversary as well. It marks our personal milestones in spiritual development.

As the church celebrates this anniversary, every member is challenged to answer the question, "Is there anything I would trade for the Christian life?" The classic play,

"The Devil and Daniel Webster" raised that very issue. A man traded his soul for a chance to prosper only to learn that they years passed quickly and the devil came to collect.

Is there anything worth giving up the Christian journey? What if you were offered the opportunity to be filthy rich; would you place your Christian concerns on the back burner? What if you were given the chance to become internationally famous? Better still, suppose you were given the chance to have absolute power over the nations of the world in exchange for your Christian life; would it appeal to you?

The words to an old song of our heritage sums it up this way:

"Well, I wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now,
Gotta make it to heaven somehow,
Though the Devil tempt me & try to turn me around,
He's offered everything that's got a name,
All the wealth I want & all the worldly fame,
If I could, still I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now

I started out travelin' down the road many years ago,
I've had a lot of heartache, met a lot of grief and woe.
But when I stumble, then I humble down,
If I could, still I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

After traveling 30 years in his earthly journey, Jesus reached a point of decision and reflection. The devil offered him a chance to satisfy himself by turning stones into bread. He offered him world power and international fame if he would exchange his mission. Jesus refused. He told Satan to get behind him. In effect, he told the devil, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

As the church celebrates, believers celebrate their personal journeys too. The church has charged forward with an invincibility that remains undiminished. As individuals we too have overcome unbelievable odds and obstacles to reach this point of our spiritual development. As we celebrate the anniversary of the church, we renew our resolve to keep our hand in the master's hand and say with conviction, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

As Christians, let us remain firm in our belief that the Christian life is the godly way. Let us also resolve to stay with the church, because it is God's vehicle to help us complete our heavenly journey. We are too close to our final destination to turn around, so we should all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he tells believers that there is nothing that he would exchange for the love of Christ. It is a statement of Paul's commitment to the Christian life after reflecting on a life service to the kingdom of God.

Paul was uniquely qualified to make such a statement because of the nature of

his personal journey and also because of his role as progenitor of the church into the Gentile world.

Paul wrote these words to the Romans to reaffirm his personal dedication to the cause of the church, despite the meandering path of his journey with the church and his personal journey with the Lord. His commitment was simple. He would not allow anything to interupt his mission and his walk with the Lord.

Paul made three missionary journeys in the course of establishing the church and one personal journey as he established himself as a child of God.

The understanding of this text is rooted in our appreciation for Paul's journeys and the events and struggles associated with each.

His first Missionary journey took him to Cyprus. Traveling by land he established churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. There among the Gentiles he ordained elders in every city to watch over the newly estabished churches.

On his second Missionary journey he returned by land to the churches he had established in his first journey but went further into Galatia. In this second journey he had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing before him saying, "Come over and help us." Responding to that call, he traveled into Macedonia and set up churches in Philippi, and Thessalonica. In Athens he was received coldly but preached anyway. He wrote the epistle of Thessalonians, met Aquila and Priscilla and after some time returned home. Even then he was not willing to exchange anything for his journey.

On his third journey he moved by land to Asia Minor, through Ephesus, Pergamos, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. He was attacked by angry mobs who sought to kill him because he preached against idols. He was ridiculed, stoned and belittled, yet he sat down in Corinth and wrote the words of this text which was a statement of affirmation for the church and himself. Just as Paul had been a victim, so were those who followed him. His words were to the church:

".For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Paul's three missionary journeys pertained to the establishment of the church, however he had a personal journey as well. His personal journey was that of the man who was born in Tarsus and he spent the first part of his adult life in opposition to the church, until he had an experience on the Damascus Road and spent three days in darkness. After that experience his personal journey took a new direction. Instead of walking away from the Lord, he started walking with the Lord!

When Paul allowed the blood of Christ to come into his own life, his own Christian journey began. The power of this new relationship with God was so intense that he decided that he would let nothing separate him from the love of God.

Our Journey Now

While there were journeys in his life that were associated with the church, Paul's personal journey with the Lord was a continuous celebration. At every step of the way, he said without despair, "nothing shall separate me from the Love of God" –I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

Promises of gold and silver and financial wealth were insufficient. They could not buy what he hoped to gain from the Lord- "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Promises of popularity and fame had no appeal. The praises of men are meaningless when our goal is to hear the angels call our name. –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Promises of power and control were empty. The power of mere men could not match the power of God. That's why the angels will sing "All the power of Jesus name, let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all." I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

Our Personal Journey

Paul's personal journey is similar to that of every born again believer.

Like Paul there are many believers who have worked to help build the church. Like Paul, I can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but still they proclaim –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but still they proclaim, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans, others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

We all say, "I've come too far to turn around."

Some have been on the journey longer than others, but they wouldn't take nothing for the their journey.

Some can remember walking to church on country roads, trying to keep cool while fanning hot air! I've come so far. "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Somebody remembers a time before there was central heating and air, when the entire church was heated by huge space heaters that drove away the cold until the spirit warmed up the church!-I've come so far, but I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

Somebody remembers a time before Kurt Franklin, John Pee Kee and Donnie McKurklin. There was a time folks used to sing without music and instruments. Some old sister would sing, "I love the Lord he heard my cry. Long as I live while trouble rise I'll hasten to his throne." I've come a long ways, but I wouldn't taken nothing

for my journey now!

Somebody remembers a time before we learned to tithe that members paid church dues where the men paid $1.00 a month and the women .50c. –We've come a long ways, but I' would'nt take nothing for my journey now.

Paul's last journey wasn't to the shores of Asia Minor!

His last journey wasn't to the Hellenistic conclaves of Macedonia

His last journey wasn't to the intellectual citadels of Athens!

His last journey was his most important journey because he was on his way to a city not made with hands!

Every saint shares the same destiny. We're on our way to the New Jerusalem. It's been a long journey, but I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

I'm on a way to a city that sits on 12 foundations and I'm too close to turn around!

It's a city where the streets are paved with gold!

It's a city where every day is Sunday, it's always howdy and never goobye!

It's a city where we'll never grow old!

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

I'm going to stick with the church…the old ship of Zion!

She has landed many a thousands!

I'm going to keep on telling the story about God and his goodness!

I'm going to keep on telling the world about Jesus, the Son of the Living God!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you but I will continue to testify, "You can have this whole world, just give me Jesus!"

I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

No. 865-Youth

Who Let The Dogs Out?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 28, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." Rev. 22:14 Also Roman 7:16.

Introduction

Have you ever cared for a dog as a pet? Many families have had dogs for pets **at one time or another. The type of dog that families have varies from big dogs to little dogs, skinny dogs to fat dogs, mean dogs to sweet and cuddly dogs. Sometimes a person's dog even seems to take on the special "look" of its owner. Some owners have developed such an affinity with their dogs that they treat them as family members, feed them from their plates, sleep with them in their beds and buy them special clothes and toys.**

Dogs have been called "man's best friend" in some areas and have become the envy of many who admire the "dog's life."

Among youth today, it is an honor to be referred to as "my dog" and one of the most popular of today's rap stars, the dogfather himself is non-other than Snoop Dog.

About a year ago a group of Bahamian natives, using a West African-inspired rhythm as the basis of their music produced a record that stormed the world. It was an apparent response to a news item that was covered heavily in the Southern region of the U.S. about a pair of poodles that were stolen. The headlines daily were filled with the story of the stolen dogs and the headlines asked, ''Who lets the dogs out." In Indianapolis, a high school marching band made up the little song to promote its school mascot which was the bull dog. The song asked, "who let the dogs out?" – The Baha Men, with two of its members from Indiana, seized the idea, made it into a song and the rest is history.

Who let the dogs out? That question is asked in commercials, political circles, and even in churches.

Our national language is sprinkled with references to dogs. When we think it's better to leave a subject alone rather than stir controversy, we say, "let sleeping dogs lie." When we see someone taking life easy and relaxed we say they are living a "dog's life." The ruthless competition of modern society is described as , "Dog eat dog." A person who keeps others from using something he does not use himself is a "dog in the manger." A person who goes from something worthwhile to a low

estate is described as "going to the dogs."

In reality we could probably learn a few things from dogs.

Whenever a loved one comes home a dog always runs out to greet him, while we often watch from the window.

A dog will let you know when you have invaded his territory; we often mumble and complain after the person leaves.

A dog eats with enthusiasm, but when he has had enough he stops eating; we often keep eating, even if we are full.

A dog notices when its owner is having a bad day. It sits close by, keeps silent and sometimes nuzzles its owner for comfort. Sometimes we can make our partner's bad day even worse.

A dog will avoid biting, if a simple growl will get the point across. People often bite at each other before they growl.

A dog who is looking for a bone will dig until he finds it. People looking for what they want often give up before they achieve their dreams.

A dog knows how to come home, no matter how far he finds his way. Too often some of us forget where we live.

A dog finds joy in the simplest things and wags his tail. We complain so much that our tails are always tucked in fear or out of ingratitude.

There's a lot we can learn from dogs, but as Christians we've learned one thing about dogs is not true. Man's best friend is not his dog, but the Lord. That's why the song writer wrote, "What a friend we have in Jesus." He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he gives a vision of who will and who will not be allowed into the kingdom of heaven.

Dogs have been portrayed in a variety of ways in the bible. Dogs were used to watch and protect the homes of the Hebrew people. They were also used to protect their flocks of sheep and goats. While there were domestic dogs that were useful and playful, there were also groups of wild dogs that devoured dead bodies and roamed through the streets of cities as scavengers. The dog was considered an "unclean animal" and terms referring to a "dead dog" or "dog's head" were terms of reproach.

Dogs were presented as hungry scavengers in 1 Kings 14:11. Here they were projected to eat the remains of those that rebel against the Lord. When Jezebel murdered Naboth and took his land, the prophet Elijah told the wicked queen that the dogs of the city would lick her blood. In Job 30:1, Job describes the young men who sat with him in his misery as detractors who were no less than the dogs that guarded his flocks. In Psalm 22:16, David referred to his enemies as dogs who surrounded him. Preachers and prophets are presented as watchman over the people. However, in Isaiah 56:10 preachers who sugar coat the gospel are referred to as "dumb dogs" whose greed and self serving sermons and prophesies put them

in a position where they "cannot bark." In Matthew 7:6 Jesus warned believers not to give holy things to "dogs" that will trample them under their feet. A woman cried out for mercy to Jesus, asking for a just a small blessing saying in Matthew 15:27 that "Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Philippians 3:2 refers to persons who do evil as dogs and warns believers to stay away from them.

When John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ while on the Isle of Patmos, he was keenly aware of how dogs are perceived in the Judeo-Christian context. Thus, when he revealed the beauty of the coming kingdom he noted that those who enter the heavenly city by the gates will be those who have washed their robes and have a right to the tree of life. Those who will be denied entrance are the despicable types represented by dogs, sorcerers and "everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

This is essentially the same message that Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:9 when he said, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. "

At the very least, John revealed that the ungodly as represented by dogs and those that promote falsehood will not enter in the coming kingdom of God.

Who let the dogs in?

Today there is a growing tendency to abrogate the things of the world embrace them and bring them into the kingdom of God. That which is unholy is brought into the world of the holy. Little by little the question changes from "who let the dogs out?" to "who let the dogs in?"

As individuals we have increasingly allowed the "dog" of sin into our lives while still expecting that our new "dog" will be accepted by God.

Who said it is acceptable to be a drunkard and hold a position of prominence in the kingdom of God? Who let the dogs in?

Who said practicing adulterers and fornicators could be overlooked in the kingdom of God as long as they attend church regularly and maintained their tithes and offerings? Who let the dogs in?

Who said unrepentant gays and lesbians will enjoy the praise and blessings of God even though they continue to practice a life-style different from his word? Who let the dogs in?

Who said gamblers, cheats, gossipers, and backstabbers could expect a place of prominence in the kingdom of God? Who let the dogs in?

Through our daily actions, we have let the dogs in!

When the bible refers to "dogs" in the negative it obviously is not talking about the lovable little creature in your home. It is used to symbolize a wretched estate.

Dog is the opposite of God. Where God is spelled G.O.D. dog is spelled D.O.G. The implication is that wretchedness of the dog estate is just the opposite of the Godly estate.

Where God is love...the dog hates everybody
Where God is peace....the dog is confusion
Where God is humility...the dog is pride
Where God is glad tidings...the dog is Bad news
Where God is friendship...the dog brings enemies
Where God is happiness...the dog is sadness
Where God is hope...the dog is despair
Where God is beauty...the dog is ugliness
Where God is strength...the dog is weakness
Where God is harmony...the dog is confusion

If God stands for everything that is good, then dog, being the opposite of God semantically, could stand for every thing that is bad. If G.O.D. spells God then D.O.G. must spell "S.I.N."

Who can let the dogs out?

Finally, brothers and sisters, our sinful nature may have let the dogs in, but only the grace of God can let the dogs out!

Each believer has a history. But there should be a point in each believer's life where personal history comes in contact with the grace of God.

Sin lets the dogs in. It's grace that puts the dogs out!

It's forgiveness that puts the dogs out!

It's the overwhelming mercy of God that puts the dogs out!

It's the unchanging power of God's love that puts the dogs out!

In Romans 7 Paul said there was something in him that made him do what he did not want to do.

He wanted to do right, but he ended up doing wrong!

He wanted to be obedient, but he ended up being disobedient!

He wanted to be strong, but he ended up being weak!

He wanted to be wise, but he ended up doing foolish things!

In Romans 7:24 he said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

In essence he said, my sinful nature has let the dogs in, who will let the dogs out?

The doggish nature of sin has caused some people to even take on the resemblance of dogs. Who will let the dogs out?

Some folks are SLY DOGS. They try to be slick, throw a rock and hide their hand. Who will let the dogs out?

Some folks are COWARDLY dogs. They are afraid to take a stand. They tuck their tails and run. Who will let the dogs out?

Some folks are HOUND DOGS. They sniff out and latch onto a trail of hot gossip and they never let go. Who will let the dogs out?

Some folks are POINTERS, They are quick to point a finger of blame at the preacher, deacon or choir member, everybody but themselves. Who will let the dogs out?

Some folks are WATCH DOGS. They watch everybody's business and forget that just as they watch others, somebody's watching them.

Some folks are FRENCH POODLES. They try to be cute. They can't come to worship without a new dress, hat, suit or designer patterns.

Some folks are BULLDOGS. Not only is a bulldog mean, but his mean disposition makes him ugly too. These folk will bite your head off and keep a frown on their face. Who will let the dogs out?

I'm so glad that I serve a savior, who is able to let the dogs out?

He's able to put a muzzle on your doggish nature.

He's able to tame the wild and roving spirit within us.

Who can let the dogs out?

That's the same question that David asked in Psalm 24:8, "Who is the king glory? The Lord Strong and mighty? Who is the king of glory? The Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads oh ye gates. Lift up ye everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall come in!

Who is it that can forgive our sins?

Who is it that can pick us up and turn us around?

His name is Jesus!

He is Mary's baby!

He died out on Calvary; but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Satan will ask one day? I had this believer full of sin. Who let the dogs out?

I had him weak and puny, now he's bold and strong? Who let the dogs out?

I had him thinking he was defeated, down and out, now he believes he can do all things. Who let the dogs out?

He's name is Jesus!

Jesus let the dogs out!

No-866-Inspiration

Just Can't Tell It All

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 4, 2001

SCRIPTURE: ***"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." John 21:25***

Introduction

Have you ever been so excited about something that you tried to tell it all? Whenever we try to tell it all, what we do tell gets lost in the telling. We've all met the person who tried to tell us every detail of their summer vacation including every photograph, slide, video and restaurant receipt. What began as something interesting ended up being a nightmare because our friend tried to tell it all. During the Monica Lewinsky/Bill Clinton scandal the media tried to tell the world all that was done. Entire sections of newspapers carried transcripts of tapes. Websites were flooded with morsels of gossip and radio and television stations played hours upon hours of tapes on the air. They told the public so much that the people tired of hearing it. They tried to tell it all and told too much.

When does a crowd scream "encore?" Does it cry "encore" when it has had too much, or when it thirsts for more? When a great pianist plays a sampling of his skill, he titillates the spirit just enough that there is a desire for more. When a great singer lifts our spirits and leaves us longing for more, there is a desire for just one more song! A lovely evening that is romantically inspiring leaves us dangling and yearning for more!

However, too much of anything is a bore. No matter how great the movie, if it's too long the public won't see it. No matter how great the performer, after a while even his best fans will walk out the door one at time. One sage put it this way, "too much water will drown a frog!"

Even when it comes to testifying about the goodness of the Lord, how much is enough? There are many, in their zeal to testify about God's goodness, testify so much that they drown their co-workers in testimony. There are testimonies about financial blessings. There are testimonies about healings. There are testimonies about answered prayers. There are some workers who tell so much that instead of convincing their co-workers about the goodness of the Lord, they convince them that they should always avoid testimony time.

The Lord has done so much for us that we just can't tell it all. Whether it's

healings, answered prayer or blessings, those that know the Lord realize that they could not make it without the Lord. When we are excited we have to tell someone. That's what happened when Jesus touched the life of the woman at the well. She had to tell somebody, so she ran through the streets of the city and cried, "come see a man, who told me all I've ever done."

As Christians, we know we can't tell it all. However, that which we do tell is sufficient to let the world know, "What a mighty God we serve."

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he describes the multitude of deeds, healings and miraculous actions of Jesus.

In his Gospel account of the life of Christ John revealed many of Christ's deeds that extended from his incarnation when the "Word became flesh" to the resurrection. He told of healings and mysteries that have yet to be explained other than being the mighty works of God himself. The Gospel account of John revealed many great facts about Jesus but even his detailed listing of Jesus' deeds did not begin to describe his greatness. John said, "Many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

John's statement is an obvious figure of speech. The Greeks called it a hyperbole or an exaggeration to emphasize a point. The point being that the works of Christ were so numerous that it would literally take volumes to detail and chronicle all of his words and deeds.

He wrote what needed to be said

John saw no need to say more than what needed to be said. The words that John recorded described examples of the teachings and sayings of Christ. What was written was sufficient to document the doctrine that Christ taught and to supply ample cross references. To say more would have been redundant. There are many who do not believe who argue that more should have been written about Christ to make it easier to believe. The truth of the matter however is that if John had written hundreds of different episodes those who did not believe would still not believe.

There are times when the occasion demands that something be said, but not everything, just what needs to be said. Abraham Lincoln came to Gettysburg in the aftermath of the Civil War and stood on the ground where Union and Confederate soldiers died in the quest for what each side called a fight for freedom. It was a time when the nation was hurting, angry and frustrated. When Lincoln rose to speak he began by saying, "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation: conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." He ended it by saying, "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. . . and that government of the people. . .by the

people. . .for the people. . . shall not perish from the earth." The entire speech was only 272 words but it is remembered as Lincoln's greatest speech. He said just what needed to be said.

Saying more than needs to be said can cause trouble. Consider the man who returned his parrot to the pet shop. "I want my money back" said the angry customer. The store owner asked why he was angry. "It's this talking parrot" said the customer. The owner asked whether or not the parrot talked as advertised. "Yeah he talks all right" said the customer "but he talks too much." Surprised, the owner wanted to know more. "I thought he would say cute parrot things like 'Polly want a cracker' but this parrot talks too much." The owner said this a very smart parrot. The customer said, "My wife has left home because the parrot said, 'your husband came home last night at 2 a.m. He had lipstick on his collar. He cleaned it off while he talked to a woman named Julie on the phone" The customer said, "I'm bringing this smart parrot back until you can teach him how to keep his mouth shut!"

When a woman was brought to Jesus who was caught in the very act of adultery, her critics wanted Jesus to say what should be done to her according to the law of Moses. Jesus gave the them a very short answer, "He without sin, cast the first stone." He said what needed to be said.

When a lame man sat by the pool for 38 years without any hope of getting to the healing waters first, Jesus saw his dilemma and said what needed to be said, "Take thy bed and walk." It was all that needed to be said. The subject was closed.

When God speaks to our situation he says what is needed to address the situation. No more or nothing less. If the storms of life are raging, he doesn't have to say much, a simple "Peace be still will do!" If we are entangled in the deathly grasps of sin, a simple, "Loose that man" is sufficient.

John didn't try to tell it all, he simply said what needed to be said.

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He said was advisable

What John wrote were those episodes from the life of Christ that would serve to edify, exhort and comfort. He did not have to say it all. He only needed to write enough about each of these subjects to get us to understand the nature of our Lord. Generally, Jesus' words and deeds served three purposes: to edify, inspire or to comfort. The gospel writers gave us just enough episodes out of Christ's life to show Christ addressing these three crucial areas.

When Christ spoke against hypocrisy and challenged believers to be pure in spirit and motivation, his purpose was to edify. John didn't have to write everything, but he wrote enough to make the point.

When Christ preached about the believer's attitudes and said, "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" he intended to motivate the people.

When he spoke boldly to believers saying that even those who were persecuted for his name sake were blessed as well, his purpose was to inspire confidence.. John didn't write everything he said..just enough.

When Christ spoke to those whose hearts were heavy from sadness he said

"blessed are those that mourn for they shall be comforted." John didn't try to tell it all. He told just enough.

Sometimes we try to tell everything we know and that gets us in trouble. Consider the man who complained that his wife told all of his friends and neighbors about everything he did. "I never have a moment of privacy" he told a friend. "She tells everybody everything I do." His friend was impressed, man she must really love you to brag on you that much, how will you celebrate your 20th anniversary?" The man said he planned to take his wife on a trip to Australia. "She'll have plenty to talk about for sure. How will you top that? How will you celebrate your 30th anniversary?" – The man answered…"that's when I'll go back and get her."

John showed the people the various circumstances of life and told what was appropriate to confirm our beliefs.

What we want to know is whether or not Jesus hears and answers prayers! John answers, "Yes, for I heard him say Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!"

What we want to know is whether or not the Lord will respond to our faith. Unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke who wrote accounts about Jesus talking about faith, the word "faith" is not written one time in the Gospel of John. In essence he did not show us Christ talking about faith, he showed us faith in action.

When the scribes and Pharisees came to the lame man and asked him why he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath, he didn't tell them about his faith, only that Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk. John didn't tell us about faith, he simply told show us how God operates.

Although he never used the word faith, he said enough to let us know that God is still in the faith business.

He could not tell it all

Finally, brothers and sisters, John admitted like we admit, when it comes to talking about Jesus, we can not tell it all!

John said Christ did not say everything he could have said to his disciples because they would not have been able to bear it. If John had attempted to write all that Jesus did and said the world would not have been able to comprehend it and the volumes of written material necessary to document what he did and said would have been unbelievably large.

When presidents completes their tenure in office they usually begin a presidential library. That library usually contains all of the correspondence that the president has received. It also includes films, photographs, gifts and many other keep sakes that document his tenure in office. The ten Presidential Libraries, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, and the Clinton Presidential
Materials Project, maintain over 400 million pages of textual materials; nearly 10 million photographs; over 15 million feet of motion picture film; nearly 100,000 hours of disc, audiotape, and videotape recordings; and approximately half a million

museum objects....but still they can't tell it all.

If 400 million pages of written text and 10 million photographs can't tell it all about the four years of a president's term, imagine how hard it would be to try to tell it all about a man who speaks and the birds hush their singing!

If thousands of biographies still fail to capture the essence of George Washington, the father of our country, imagine how hard it would be to try to capture the essence of a man who speaks to the wind and waves and they obey his will!

When it comes to talking about the goodness of the Lord, I just can't tell it all.

What I can tell you is that when I'm sick, he's doctor in my sick room!

When I'm in trouble he is my refuge and my strength!

When I'm weak he is the strength of my life!

When I'm low, he picks me up and turns me around!

When I need a blessing he's always on time!

I can't tell it all but I want you to know that:

—He's a shelter in a time of storm!

—He's a bridge over trouble water!

—He's a lawyer for every courtroom!

—He's a rock in a weary land!

I can't tell it all but I can tell you that one evening about 2001 years ago he died out on Calvary!

I can't tell it all but I can tell you that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I can't tell it all but I can tell that he's alive today!

No. 867-Funeral

Oh Be Joyful

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 10, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10-11

Introduction

When is it the easiest to demonstrate a spirit of joy? Usually, we find it easy to demonstrate joy during times when things are going as well or better than we planned. We are joyful when we have accomplished a difficult task, achieved a difficult goal or acquired a long sought after item. We are joyful when we feel loved, respected and appreciated by our peers and loved ones. We are joyful when we have a little money in our pockets and we can stand on our own two feet. Joyfulness is a unique quality that everyone does not have, but many seek in the course of their lives.

The occasions of our joy reflect our understanding. As a general rule we are joyful when we are pleased with the outcome. The believer goes one step further, expressing a joy that issues from a faith that says, "Whatever makes God happy brings me joy regardless of the circumstance for me."

No two people will interpret a joyful situation the same. Consider the man who sat at the bar drinking one whiskey after another until it became obvious to the bar tender that he was about to hurt himself. The bar tender asked, "What's the matter? Are you having troubles with your wife again?" The man nodded his head and began to cry.

The bartender said, "I don't usually get in the business of my customers but your wife should be ashamed of the way she belittles you, talks about you and hits on you in front of other men."

The man heard that and started crying again. "What happened this time?" the bartender asked.

"My wife told me she was leaving me for 30 days" the man said as he cried like a baby.

"Well you should be glad" said the bartender, "As mean as your wife is to you, you should praise God for a joyful month of peace. Don't be sad, be joyful!" At that the man started to cry even more.

"What are you crying about?" The man answered "My wife left me for a month...and today is the last day!"

One man's joy is often another man's sadness.

There is an economy of joy that works in most of our lives. There is a vigorous joy that exists every day and grows stronger continuously. There is an inflated joy that is not all that it is put up to be. When joy suffers from inflation it puts on an act but is not real. There are times when joy goes into a recession. That's when we experience a setback, difficulty or frustration. We are still in a receptive and grateful mood but joy eludes us most of the time. Then there are those times when joy goes into a depression. That's when we are overwhelmed by our own incapacity to control the influences around us such as life and death. Depression plunges us into a slump. It fastens us to despair and fixes our mind and spirit upon the darkness rather than the light.

Believers have learned how to function in the economy of God especially as it relates to the way he blesses us. Job learned this economy lesson well. He received both the good and the hard to swallow from God and after he had received the worst declared, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

As Christians, we have developed an attitude about life that is not inflated, or subject to recession or depression. It is based on one conclusion and that is our belief that whatever God does is good..all the time. Thus, in everything and in every circumstance we have joy.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as encourages Israel to be joyful because of the coming kingdom of God.

The closing chapters of the book of Isaiah speaks to the people of Israel directly but they are also Messianic; they also look to the coming of the age of the church. Isaiah details the struggles of the people but he closes his book in its final chapters by looking to Jesus.

It is Isaiah that tells us, thousands of years before it occurred, that he "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

It was Isaiah who said that Christ would be led like a sheep before his shears, but by his stripes we would be healed.

Thus, at the point of this text, there are words of reassurance for Israel as Isaiah looks beyond the present and looks to the future. That's why he encouraged the people to "be joyful." He looked beyond the present moment to the time which loomed on the horizon.

Isaiah projected us beyond the exile of Israel and the difficulties of living in exile.
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He went beyond the time of wars and second class citizenship.

He went beyond the time of pushing hard and being pushed.

He looked beyond the time of health then sickness, deprivation and loneliness.

He even looked beyond Israel's brief period of physical restoration.

He looked to the return of the Lord and the beginning of the Kingdom of heaven.

That's why he encouraged Israel to "be joyful." The joy he encouraged Israel to have was not over the present situation but the final result.

Not only should the believer rejoice in difficult times, but Isaiah noted that "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." Isaiah then told why he could rejoice, "for he hath clothed me in the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." The reason believers were told to rejoice greatly was because believers have been prepared against the day of trouble and prepared for the day of his return.

The "garments of salvation" points to the personal faith of the believer. It is that undying faith in our redeemer that sustains us despite the difficulties we experience. Like a garment that fits well, believers wear their faith into every situation.

Our faith does not prevent the circumstance but it prepares us against its arrival.

Our faith does not forestall its approach, it helps us to weather the situation.

Then looking to the future, Isaiah makes the comparison of how the believer's faith prepares him to be a part of the bride of Christ, the church. That will be a time of rejoicing for John said he saw a vision of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband.

When Christ, the bridegroom, comes for the church he will look for the believers that Isaiah talked about in Old Testament times. But he will also look for the believers from the church dispensation and those who will come to believe in the last days during the great tribulation. He will look for those who are the answer to the question in the Revelation, "Who are these?" The answer will be sure, "these are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb!"

Thus, Isaiah says "be joyful" not because of the moment, but because believers have been clothed in the proper spiritual garments that prepare them for the eventuality of the coming kingdom. Be joyful, because whatever this age offers, it is not the end. There is a better day coming.

How to be Joyful

Isaiah told Israel to be joyful while painting them a rather gloomy picture of their immediate circumstance. That raises the question for believer's today, how can I "be joyful" with so many difficulties and problems around me? How can I be joyful?

How can I be joyful when I have fought in two wars and watched the bodies of my comrades shipped home in boxes, sometimes just parts and no body at all? How can I be joyful when I have seen the pain of men suffering and heard their cries in the night?

How can I be joyful when my life is filled with ups and downs, but with more downs than ups? I am healthy one day, sick another day, healthy again then sick three days. How can I be joyful?

How can I be joyful when I have attended the funerals of my father and mother

and watched my wife give her life substance just to keep me alive?

How can I muster the strength to "be joyful" under such debilitating circumstances?

We can only be joyful in every circumstance if we have truly learned the meaning of joy. In the Old Testament, joy was closely associated with circumstances. Joy was a mental sensation that was accompanied by an outward expression that was shown by singing, shouting, leaping and dancing. That's what happened when David returned the Ark of Covenant to his people that he was so joyful that he stripped off his clothes and leaped and danced in the streets.

In the Old Testament, Joy was associated with a circumstance. If the people won a battle they were joyful. If they lost a battle there was no joy. If there was a festival they danced and sang. Without the occasion, there was no joy. Their joy was tied to a circumstance.

In the New Testament joy is not viewed the same way. Joy is not associated with any circumstance or situation. Believers derive their joy from the knowledge that there is a great plan unfolding which ultimately ends with their good. Therefore, believers "count it all joy." Believers find reason for joy in every circumstance because we know when the great plan completes itself we will be the victors.

The secret to real joy is to have the assurance that no matter what the circumstance may be, that God is working it out for our good in this life or the life to come. The secret is to quietly know that he will never abandon us, but will continue to provide for us on a daily basis, despite appearances. In such circumstances don't look for us to jump and leap like David did. There may even be a tear in our eyes as we respond to the frustration and pain of the moment, but on the inside there is joy!

That's why, as strange as it may seem, a believer can be advanced in age to a point that he can hardly remember the words of a song and still sing, "Oh be joyful."

Believers who watch a loved one decline in health and slip away in death before their very eyes can still say, "oh be joyful" because they know it is a part of the divine order and as such.."all is well."

Those who want to know how to be joyful must know the Lord.

Only an abiding faith in God can help a wounded family find a reason for joy in the midst of death.

Only a blessed assurance can help a weeping daughter find a reason to keep singing the praises of God.

Those who want to know how to be joyful, must begin their search by first finding the Lord.

Oh Be Joyful

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the full meaning of what Isaiah's prophecy means, that there is a better day on the horizon, so be joyful.

Isaiah said each believer should be joyful because we are clothed in the garments of salvation and righteousness. That's an assurance for difficult times ahead.

There are some who believe that being a Christian should protect us from trouble,

sickness and death. They feel that God is not a good God if he allows sickness and death to invade their family ranks.

True believers know that being a Christian does not keep us from trouble but protects us in times of trouble. We wear rain coats and reach for our umbrellas when rain is threatening. The raincoats don't stop the rain. Neither do umbrellas hold back the torrents. They protect us during the storm. We ride out the storm knowing that there is a brighter day on the other side.

The garment of salvation assures believers that no matter what this life may do to our bodies, we are safe in the arms of the Lord!

The garment of righteousness assures believers that no matter how many mistakes and errors we make or sins we have committed, if we have given our lives to Christ, he will make it right with God for us and guarantee us a ticket on the train to glory!

I'm reminded of a man and his daughter as they stood at a train depot waiting to catch a train. A pretty shiny train pulled up, but it seemed to be filled with people who were gambling. The little girl said, "Let's ride this train daddy!" -But papa wouldn't get on board. A while later another train appeared, it had people who seemed to be drinking and having a wild party on board. The little girl said, "Let's ride this train!" But papa still wouldn't get on board. Late in the evening when the sun was almost down, a single engine train pulled up and papa prepared to get on board. The little girl was surprised, "Papa, the other trains were pretty and filled with people and they were going that way. This train doesn't have many people on it and it's going in the opposite direction. Why this train?"

Papa looked back at his daughter as he handed the conductor his ticket and said, "This train don't carry, no loafers, hobos and cigarette smokers. This train is bound for glory, and I'll shout and tell the story!"

Believers are joyful because they have a story to tell. It's story of rising and falling. It's a story of battles fought and victories won. It's a story of family, friends and a song to sing!

That's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my savior all the day long!"

It's a story that says, "I've been tried in the fire" and I have come through as pure gold!

It's a story about Jesus who said I'm going to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be also!

It's a story of a place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

It's a story of a place where Joy will never end!

It's a story that began in a manager in Bethlehem, was interrupted on a cross outside of Jerusalem but will end when He comes back in the New Jerusalem!

Oh be joyful! Weeping endures but a night but..joy comes in the morning!

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On Monday, November 5, 2001, Earling "Paw Paw" Little slipped away from this life. The last voice he heard was his daughter singing. With his ticket in his hand and joy in his heart, he boarded

No. 868-Prayer

The Prayer of Jabez

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Avenue Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 11, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested." 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Introduction

Suppose God granted everything you request in your prayers, would you be happy? We often pray for many things that range from successful careers to riches, but how would our lives change if we actually received everything we prayed for, exactly the way we prayed to receive it? If all of your prayers for success and fame were answered, would you be in worship today? How would your life be different?

Jesus tells us that if we abide in him and he abides in us that we can ask whatever we want and it would come to pass. That's a grand statement that is highly conditional. To "abide" in him means to lose ourselves to his will for our lives. Once emerged into his will, that what we ask is only that what he wants us to have. Thus we only pray for those things that will help us to accomplish his will, nothing more or nothing less. Since what we pray for will help us to carry out his will, then it will be granted.

As Christians, we have learned how to place our lives in God's hands. Because our lives our in his hands we do not seek anything other than his will. In many instances our prayers are answered just as we pray them.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jabez, a man who prayed to God and his prayers were answered just as he prayed them.

At first glance this chapter of Chronicles only presents a long genealogy list. Its purpose, it appears, is only to record the names of individuals in a family; that is until the inspired writer reached the name of Jabez. This one name in the list was emphasized by two paragraphs of notes. Afterward the list continues. The fact that one name in a long list names has a note attached to it attracts attention. Over the

centuries there have been thousands of studies, reports, sermons and expositions about this one name in 1 Chronicles 4.

In the highlight we are not told much about him, only that his mother deemed him a son of sorrow and that he grew to be "more honorable" than his brothers. The text does not say that his brothers were not honorable, only that he was "more" honorable than they. To be honorable in scripture meant that he was a man with a reputation for integrity and virtue.

He was highlighted because he did something remarkable. He did not lead an army, build a building or write a great book. What he did was something simple. He prayed a prayer that was answered. The content of the prayer was important enough to be listed in the chronicles by his name.

To Whom Did Jabez Pray?

To whom did Jabez pray? The text records that he addressed his prayer to the "God of Israel." In most Old Testament prayers the names of ancestors were invoked to get a prayer answered. In the New Testament prayers were addressed to "The Father of Jesus Christ our Lord." Christians in their prayers, generally address God directly but ask them in "Jesus name." Thus, the Lord's pray begins with "Our Father." Jesus told us that we should make our prayer request in his name.

Jabez lived before Christ, so he addressed his prayers the old fashioned way. To say, "God of Israel" is the same as saying, the God of "Grandpa Jacob" (whose name was changed to Israel). This was the God that lead his family out of Egypt. This was the God that opened a way for them through the Red Sea. This was the God that fed them in the wilderness. This was that God.

The idea was to invoke the names of persons who stood well in the eyesight of God. In some Old Testament passages the names of "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" were all invoked at the same time. Jacob's prayer is similar to our own, "Lord, I know you heard great grandma and I know you heard grandma, now hear me."

In the Christian tradition, we pray to God in Jesus' name in keeping with the biblical teaching that there is only one mediator between God and man, and that man is Jesus.

What did Jabez request?

What did Jabez pray for? His prayer had four requests:

BLESSINGS: Jabez said, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed." Jabez asked not only for a blessing but a blessing "indeed." What Jabez wanted was a "real" blessing. A blessing "indeed" is a blessing that is received and appreciated. You may be blessed with a bowl of mustard greens in front of you, but it's a blessing "indeed" if you are able to eat them and enjoy them. It's a blessing to have a bed, but it's a blessing "indeed" to be able to sleep well on the bed. By asking God for a blessing "indeed" Jabez asked God for both a blessing and a quality of life that would allow

him to enjoy the blessing at the same time. Good Health, a happy family, and peace of mind are all essentials to being blessed "indeed." Because of it's nature, it is possible to be "blessed indeed" and have very few material things to show for it.

REALIZE MY POTENTIAL: Jabez said, "Enlarge my coast." That is another way of saying help me to expand to my limits. What person among us can say that he or she is actually operating at their fullest potential. Most of us are not operating at 100 percent. How many of us have realized all of our dreams? How many us can truly say that we are doing all that we can really do? Jabez' prayer was that he could operate at his fullest potential or to enlarge his coast. He did not pray to acquire anyone else's coast. He wanted to realize his own potential.

GOD'S GUIDANCE: Jabez asked, "That thy hand might be with me." Jabez wanted God's hand to be with him. Jabez recognized that he couldn't go far without the hand of God to guide him. God's hand will guide and point us in the right direction, while at the same time restraining us from going in the wrong direction. There are times when God's people are even chastised by God's hand because "those whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth." This is a request for God to handle me in such a way that I accomplish his will. It is a prayer of submission.

LEAD HIM AWAY FROM EVIL: Jabez asked, "that thou would keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." Jabez wanted to live the righteous life and wanted to stay away from evil. He acknowledged that the presence of evil in his life would "grieve him." It is the same request that Jesus told us to make in the model prayer, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Participation in evil activities will grieve us. They will cause many problems in life. Thus, Jabez asked for God's assistance to specifically keep him from seeking evil.

The Result of Jabez's prayer

Finally, we must consider the result of Jabez's prayer; God granted his request.

The prayer of Jabez is one of those unique instances in which a man received everything he asked for, just like he asked for it.

Jabez' prayer was a prayer of humility. He asked to be blessed enough to achieve his potential while being led, guided and reprimanded by a loving God. In all likelihood, God granted the first two requests of Jabez's prayer because of the last two requests. There are many today, who want blessings and expanded coasts without placing themselves totally in the hand of God.

Every believer today should look at Jabez and know that if God's hand is guiding us, we have a good chance of being blessed and living to your fullest potential.

The hand of God is a guiding hand! Those who let God's hand lead them cannot go wrong. That's why the song writer says, "Lead me Guide me along the way, Lord if you lead me I cannot stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord, Lead me!"

If the Lord leads us, we'll be able to climb the highest of mountains!
If the Lord leads us, we'll be strong even though surrounded by weakness!
If the Lord leads us, we'll be able to stand when the world is trying to knock us down!
If the Lord leads us, we'll be able walk when the world around us is stumbling!
The prayer of Jabez emphasizes one important truth, that there is power in prayer!
Prayer can open up doors that have been closed in your face!
Prayer can create opportunities where none exist!
Prayer can chisel victories out of mountains of defeat!
Keep on praying in Jesus' name!
Jesus, who died on Calvary and early Sunday morning arose from the grave!
Keep on praying in Jesus' name!

No. 869-Thanksgiving

"Glad"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 18, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" Psalm 126:3

Introduction

How do you demonstrate gladness? Each person has his own way of showing gladness that varies in degree. The football player who makes a touchdown or an outstanding play may do a dance in end zone to show his gladness. A person who learns that a relative is safe after being involved in a major catastrophe may show gladness by bursting into tears. A candidate who wins an election may jump up and down and hug his supporters. A child who opens a Christmas package and receives a long awaited toy may scream and run around the room. A mother that learns that a daughter has won a major all expense paid scholarship may show a big smile. A businessman that lands a major contract may respond, "yes!" All these are ways that we use to express gladness.

To be glad is to have a feeling of joy and exhilaration that bubbles and illuminates.

Gladness is hard to conceal it is obvious and visible.

Unlike joy, gladness appears to come from the outside in. Joy is an attitude about life that comes from the inside. Described in Galatians 5 as a "fruit of the spirit" Joy is not conditional and is an endearing part of the Christian life experience. A Christian is joyful regardless of his circumstance or condition. If a Christian is bathed in riches he is joyful. At the same time, the word teaches us that the Christian is also joyful even in abject poverty.

Whether he enjoys the best of health or is lying in a sick bed, the Christian is always joyful.

Gladness however, appears to come from the outside. It is a "cousin" of joy but is usually associated with a condition or circumstance whose outcome is favorable. If a Christian is beset by a misfortune he may rejoice despite his misfortune but he may not be glad about it. A plane crashes or car wrecks and loved ones are injured, a Christian will remain joyful in the Lord, but won't be glad about it. Gladness seems to depend on a circumstance that is positive, while joy is independent of any circumstance.

During a time of praise and thanksgiving, there is both joy and gladness. Those who know the Lord rejoice in his goodness and at the same time are glad for the great

blessings he has demonstrated.

Thanksgiving is a continuous response to blessings, not a season that comes once a year. When we give thanks we express our joy and our gladness at the same time. The word teaches us to always give thanks and to show gladness for every blessing received. Thus, we don't wait until a given month, we are thankful everyday the Lord sends.

As believers we rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. We are thankful for his blessing for he has made us glad.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains that God has made him glad.

David had sufficient reason to be glad. His life was filled with outward signs of God's blessing hand. From his rise to reign as king from a mere shepherd boy to his powerful command of the armies of Israel, David had plenty to be glad about.

David pointed out in this text that the source of his gladness is the goodness of the Lord. This is the source of his great expressions of gladness which ranged from dancing in the street when he brought home the Ark of the Covenant or writing songs of praise. Gladness was a way of life with David.

In this psalm David expresses gladness that God returned Israel from its captivity and brought laughter and joy to its lips instead of sorrow. Even the enemies of the nation, described as the "heathen" took note of how God blessed "them."

David lifted God in praise for his how blessings and urged the nation to praise God because his actions toward them made them glad.

David wrote most of the Psalms. In his praise of God he used three words to express the word "glad." Each of his definitions give a clue as to nature of gladness and how it is expressed and understood.

"Chadah" -Gladness after blessing

The first way that "glad" is used is indicated by the word "Chadah" which means "rejoice."

Chadah is a verb which refers to the actions that cause gladness. In Psalm 21:6 David used "Chadah" when he wrote, "For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance."

Blessing from God "made" him "exceeding" glad.

Even today, blessings still make us glad. Every person feels a sense of gladness after receiving a blessing. What person is not glad when they are blessed with a new house, car or long sought after appliance.

When we see the hand of God blessing us with a few of the things we desire, there is "gladness." That's what "Chadah" means in a practical application.

"Giyl" -Gladness means to live in awe

The second way that "glad" is used is indicated by the word "Giyl" which means to tremble.

Giyl refers to a sense of awe, wonder, respect and amazement at the power of the Lord. It is this sense that is reflected in Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

This is the type of gladness that comes after one has considered the universe and how God controls it. It is a feeling of security in the hands of an all powerful God who is so powerful that as James Weldon Johnson declared, "he batted his eyes and the lightning flash, clapped his hands and the thunder rolled." Gladness in this context is to feel protected because of the knowledge that we are the children of an all powerful God.

Glad in this context is what the Mighty Clouds of Joy had in had in mind when they wrote, "It's another day's journey and I'm glad about it. He gave me health and strength and I'm glad about it." No matter what the day brings, it is a day created by an all powerful God and "I will be glad in it!"

"Sameach" -Gladness that is shown

The final way that Glad is used is epitomized by the word "Sameach" which is an adjective which describes ways gladness is displayed.

Sameach refers to gladness that is shown. This is what Psalm 113:9 means when a once barren woman openly praises God when she finally bore a child

Thus, when Psalm 126:3 says, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" the word used was "sameach" which means to Show gladness

When we are really glad, we should show our gladness.

While it good to feel glad about God after he blesses us and be awed with gladness over God's greatness, every now and then we show some gladness.

Every child of God ought to show a little gladness sometimes.

We can show our gladness through the smiles on our faces!

We can show our gladness when we clap our hands!

We can show our gladness by paying our vows to God!

Showing gladness should not be difficult if we have something to be glad about!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that Lord woke me up this morning!

I'm glad that he clothed me in my right mind!

I'm glad that he put food on my table!

I'm glad that he saved my soul!

I'm glad that one day, over 2000 years ago, that he picked up an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary!

But if you think Calvary makes me glad!

Every time I remember that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, I'm glad!

I'm glad to be a child of God!

No. 870-Anniv.-Pastor

A Voice In The Wilderness

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isaiah 40:3

Introduction

Have you ever felt you were wasting your breath? Have you ever asked whether people were actually listening to what you had to say? Often those who have the responsibility to preach the gospel never really know whether or not they are reaching the people. They preach boldly but often find that their words fall on deaf ears. Sometimes those who hear the preacher, hear his words, but do not hear his message. He declares the word of God but his efforts often go unheeded.

The voice of the pastor should always have something significant to say, because the wilderness is crying out for a voice. A few minutes before the famous Shakespearean actor was to perform Hamlet to a packed house in NY, he dropped dead. The house manager solemnly came on stage and announced, "We are sorry to bring you this news. Mr. Famous Actor has passed away in his dressing room, and there will be no performance tonight."

From the back of the rear balcony, a voice cried out, "Give him some chicken soup!"

The stage manager, startled, clears his voice and says "I apologize if in my grief I have not made my solemn message clear. Mr. Actor is deceased, and there will be no performance."

Again, from the top balcony, that voice: "Give him some Chicken Soup!"

Having had about enough, the manager yells back, "Lady, the man is dead. Giving him some chicken soup wouldn't help."

And the voice replies, "It couldn't hurt either!"

The pastor's job is often a lonely one. In the local congregation he is the one voice in the wilderness, constantly pointing the way to the king.

His voice is often a lone voice

His voice often urges that preparations be made. Preparations require advance work.

His voice often urges that a clear path for the Lord be made.

As Christians, we know the value of the man of God who echoes the voice of God in wilderness situations. His voice brings us a word from heaven that is refreshing

to our ears.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he describes the one who heralds the coming kingdom of God as a "voice in the wilderness."

Isaiah's words about the "voice in the wilderness" had both an application for the Jewish people and a greater application as well. For Israel, which was subject of an exile, his words indicated a return from Babylonian exile. But it also points to the coming of the Church era, when John the Baptist proclaimed the approach of Christ.

When eastern princes marched through desert countries, ways were prepared for them, and hindrances removed. Isaiah's words seem to reach into a future time and point to one that would come to prepare the hearts of the people for the kingdom of God.

Isaiah noted that voice of the preparer or forerunner would come at a time when Israel and in a greater sense the people of God were experiencing "wilderness" type conditions.

The term "wilderness" usually refers to a desert. A desert is a place of soaring temperatures, desolation, thirst and danger. It's easy to get lost in the desert and not be able to find your way home. When the Israelites thought about the wilderness, they thought of wild beasts, heat, sand, rocky plateaus, desolate mountain country, temptation, and sin. For 40 years, the Israelites wandered around in the wilderness trying to find their way home. For 40 years, the Israelites traveled around in this unfriendly and inhospitable country.

In many biblical references the term "wilderness" also came to mean exile, homelessness, temptation, and danger. The wilderness is not only a geographical description of a very desolate countryside, but it also a description of the desolate, lost state of the sin in people's hearts.

When John the Baptist appears in the Gospels, Isaiah's prophecy becomes clearer in its fulfillment. John's voice echoes through the telling those who would listen to, "Turn away from your sins and be baptised and God will forgive your sins." John was a strange looking man, dressed in animal hair, his breath heavy with locusts and wild honey proclaims that someone was coming, someone so spectacular that it was not good enough to simply wait around for him to arrive. It was time to get ready, to prepare the way, to make hearts and lives right for the coming of the one "whose sandals he is not worthy to untie".

The voice of the prophet serve the purpose of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord. He would announce the glad tidings of heaven to the people. He would urge them to prepare for salvation and be fit to receive it.

A need for water

In the wilderness there is a need for water. The human body must have water to survive. While a person can live a few days without water, there comes a point when

every living creature must have water.

Acknowledging this fact, God created the earth so that the cooling waters would come down.

David says that the righteous man is "like a tree planted by rivers of water." David said a man that is well watered shall notice that "his leaf shall now wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

When Israel was in the wilderness one of their regular dilemmas was the lack of water. They complained continuously about the lack of water. It was the constant complaining about water that caused Moses to lose his temper and take credit for a miracle that produce water for the people out of a rock. The commotion over water and Moses' mistake blocked his chance to enter promised land.

Those who travel the wilderness of life search for those things which will water them.

Believers are watered and refreshed by the word of God.

David, writing in the 23rd Psalm said, "he leadeth me beside the still waters." When believers drink from God's "still" waters he "restoreth my soul."

The preacher reminds his congregation that in the wilderness there is an oasis of water. Through preaching the Word the preacher shows believers how to find restoration and refreshment for souls languishing in the heat of the wilderness.

Fertile Ground

When the Children of Israel went into the promised land, they went expecting to enjoy fertile ground. They had good reason for their hopes because forty years earlier the spies returned with a report that the land was so fertile that it seemed to flow with milk and honey. Fertile ground is essential to those who want to grow crops. Soil that is rich in resources contributes to healthy crops.

When Israel was in Egypt there was an abundance of fertile ground. The land of the Nile delta was rich in minerals which extended even to Goshen where Israel lived. Life in the wilderness was different. The land was not fertile, nothing could grow, and there were no nutrients. They needed and wanted fertile ground.

When Jesus talked to his disciples he told the parable of the sower. The sower sowed seeds in thorny ground, hard rock, among weeds and on fertile ground. In good ground seeds can grow. Very little grows in the wilderness because the ground is not fertile.

The preacher is a voice in the wilderness. His voice is powered by God as it heralds the way to fertile ground.

Shelter

While Israel wandered in the wilderness the only shelter they knew was that provided by tents. The tents protected them from the wind, sand and heat. In the Promised Land they built themselves homes of clay and wood. Whether they were

in the wilderness or in the Promised Land they needed protection against the elements.

Everyone needs shelter. That's why the Word teaches us that the Lord is our refuge and our strength; a very present help in the time of storm.

The wilderness is crying out for a voice that reminds its pilgrims that there is a shelter. The pilgrims need to know that there is a place to go and a place to hide from the storms of life.

When battered by the storms of his life David found shelter in the Lord. He wrote, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." Psalm 121.

The search for a shelter lead the songwriter to say, "Rock of Ages, Cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee."

Every believer who is traveling through the wilderness of life needs to be reminded that God is a shelter in a time of storm.

The preacher's voice cries out in the wilderness. It cries out that God is a shelter in a time of storm. He is a powerful God who is shelter to any soul in their time of need.

Food

In the wilderness, Israel often complained because the people did not have enough food. When God supplied food then they complained that they did not have a wide variety of food. God fed them with manna that rained down from heaven and quail meat, but still they complained.

God provides food for body and food for the soul. Food for the body is not all sufficient. This is evident because Jesus told Satan, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Jesus told his disciples that just as bread was rained down upon Israel in the wilderness that he was their living bread. Those who eat of the living bread will never be spiritually hungry.

Believers trapped in the wilderness of life want to know that there is food for the soul. They cry out in the words of the songwriter, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more!"

The preacher is a voice to believers traveling in the wilderness. He constantly reminds the under nourished and those starving for the bread of life that God is bread to the hungry!

Bread, that is always fresh and never stales!

Bread, that is always nutritious and contributes to growth!

For ever wilderness there is a voice

Finally, brothers and sisters, for every wilderness that cries out, there is a word from the Lord!

The voice in the wilderness is a voice that speaks with a volume that cannot be

muffled by the cacophony of our times!

The voice in the wilderness is a voice that speaks to every situation of our lives.

It doesn't matter about the nature of your wilderness; for every wilderness there is a voice.

The voice in the wilderness speaks about love in the middle of hate!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about joy in the middle of sorrow!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about strength in the middle of weakness!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about success in the midst of failure!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about going forward when the wilderness says turn back!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about life in the wilderness of death!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about rest in the wilderness of fatigue!

The voice in the wilderness speaks about continuing the journey when the wilderness says give up!

This is the voice that says the *Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!*

This is the voice that says to my wandering spirit "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou are with me!"

It's the voice that says, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"

The preacher's voice echoes through the wilderness, declaring the good news!

It's a voice that tells the world that Jesus, the son of God lived on the earth for 33 long years!

It's a voice that declares with certainty, that he died out on Calvary; but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!"

As long as the wilderness needs a voice the preacher must keep on preaching!

Preach the word!

Preach it in season. Preach it out of season!

Tell the world that God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

No. 871-Inspiration

Gifts from Heaven

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2, 2001

SCRIPTURE: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. —Romans 12:6

Introduction

The shopping frenzy is upon us. Have you located and purchased all of your gifts yet? Purchasing gifts is both a joy and a chore. It's a joy because we know the right gift can bring so much pleasure to so many people. It's a chore because it is often difficult to find the right gift for the right person. Sometimes we try to buy gifts the recipient would appreciate. At other times we try to get them a gift that will help them in their life work. A plumber gets a fancy tool. A carpenter and a mechanic gets tools too. As Christmas approaches we push ourselves to find the right gift for the right person.

If God had to go shopping at that giant Wal-mart in the sky, what kind of gift would he buy for those who are his children? Would it be toys, certainly we would like fishing rods and sewing machines, cars, and dresses and pretty things. Would it be ornaments such as jewelry? Or would God give us something we could use.

There is no Walmart, Kmart or shopping mall in the sky and God doesn't go shopping for gifts, but God does have gifts available to every person who accepts the task of working in a ministry of the kingdom of God. When we accepted Christ we were like little children in the faith. God decided to give us gifts that we could use in our individual ministries.

Like the carpenter and the plumber are given gifts of tools they can use, God gives every believer a new set of tools to use in the building of the kingdom.

Sometimes we wish that we had the gifts of others. There are times when we watch someone sing and think to ourselves, "I wish I could sing like that." We watch a musician play an envy their gift. Many of us are completely amazed at those who have the gift of making works of art out of what appears to be nothing. There is nothing more exciting than watching a gifted person use his gift.

Some types of gifts are difficult to detect in their infancy. The school system attempts to give tests that can identify gifted persons by their performance on tests. Any written examination will always be insufficient to reveal a truly gifted person. Sometimes people who have certain gifts slip through the testing and are made to feel

by default that what they have is not a gift at all. The system's test won't spot a person who has a unique gift for organizing and administering. Neither will it detect the person who has an unusually keen sense of discernment. While some parents can detect the gifts of their children early in life, the children themselves are well into their teens before they begin to realize what God really gave them at birth.

An old man came to the home of a family and knocked on the door. When they answered he asked them for something to eat. The family took pity on the old man who was invited in and given a place at the family table. Afterwards they talked with him and heard of his many travels, hopes and dreams. After many hours he thanked the family. He reached in his pocket and produced a silver dollar and offered it to the family. The family refused saying, "You gave us an opportunity to be a blessing and that's enough." The old man saw the family's little girl who was holding her father's hand and said, "then let me give it to your daughter until she knows what its worth." The family gave in and accepted the silver dollar. They never saw the man again but the little girl kept the silver dollar as a keep sake for many years. One day she happened upon a news article about the value of old coins. She saw a picture of a 130 year old one of a kind silver dollar that collectors were offering thousands of dollars to buy. She ran to her room and looked at her gift from the old man. It was the lost coin. The man gave her a treasure that she carried around most of her life without knowing its true value.

There are many people today who have a variety of gifts from God but do not know what they are or how to use them. Like the little girl, they carry them around for years but do not use them, thinking they are not really gifts at all.

When we don't recognize our own gifts, there is a tendency to think that we have been cheated when we watch others use their gifts. A concert violinist had a brother who was a bricklayer. One day a woman began talking to the bricklayer about how wonderful it was for him to be in the same family as the noted musician. But then, not wanting to insult the bricklayer, she added, "Of course, we don't all have the same talents, and even in the same family some just seem to have more ability than others." The bricklayer replied, "You're telling me! That violinist brother of mine doesn't know a thing about laying bricks. And if he wasn't able to make some money playing that fiddle of his, he couldn't hire a guy with know-how like mine to build his house. If he had to build a house himself, he'd be ruined."

If you want to build a house, don't look up "violinist" in the yellow pages. And if you need someone to play the violin in an orchestra, don't hire a bricklayer. No two of us are exactly alike, and no one possesses every gift. In that way, houses get built and music gets played.

That's the idea Jesus had in mind when he laid out the foundation of the church. Build a ministry that touches people, then give gifts to its members that when used in combination yields a growing, productive church.

As Christians, we know God has given each of us gifts. These gifts were designed for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. We should renew our commitment to use what we have in his service.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul encouraging the Romans to use the gifts God has given them for the promotion of the kingdom of God.

The idea of gifts is sprinkled throughout the New Testament. No single book of the New Testament lists all of the gifts. There is a list in 1 Corinthians 12 that points out nine categories of gifts that could easily be subdivided into hundreds of others. There is also a list in 1 Peter 4 and Ephesians 4. To get the full picture and the variety of gifts God gives to believers you would have to put all of the gifts together into one list and then realize that even this list is not exhaustive. There are others that were not mentioned.

The point that Paul makes to the Romans is that everyone has gifts that have been given to them by God. He calls them "graces" suggesting that they have been freely bestowed on us by God for the specific purpose of making our work for God easy when it would normally be hard. Romans 12:3 makes it clear that God has not given every person the same gifts or the same "measure" of gifts. Thus, one person may not have the gift of intense knowledge at all. Others may have been given a little knowledge and still others may have been given an exorbitant amount of knowledge. That's what Paul means by describing how God distributed gifts as the "measure of faith." Everybody does not have the same gift, and even those who share the same gift do not have it in the same measure.

God created us with a purpose in mind. So he gave us certain gifts, from the point of our spiritual birth. We call these abilities, spiritual gifts. This is an ability God has given us because he wants us to use it in his kingdom. The gift that God gives us enables us to do it so naturally and smoothly and beautifully that others will take note of it, and ask you to do it, and enjoy watching you do it. All they have to do is step back and watch God work through you.

Paul gives examples of the different kinds of gives in verse 4 and 5 noting that all of these gifts are designed to help us become one body in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12 he notes that all of the gifts come from the same source.

Verses 6-8 tell us that God has given us the gifts we have and we are expected to use them according to what he has given. Verse 6 uses the phrase, "according to the proportion of faith." It means God wants us to use our gifts to the best of our abilities. It may not be better than the gift of the next person but it is the best we know how to do.

In verses 7-8 Paul reemphasizes the point. Whether it is healing, teaching, prophesy, exhortation or showing mercy, we should use the gift God gives us to the best of our ability.

Three kinds of Gifts

There are three kinds of gifts that believers receive from God:

UNIVERSAL GIFTS, these are gifts which every Christian has. Among these are

eternal life (Rom 6:23); God's mercy toward us (Rom 11:29-31); and answered prayer. (2 Cor 1:11) These are "charismata," that have obviously been given to every believer. No believer is without any gift.

FOUNDATIONAL GIFTS. These are the gifts that are called "sign" gifts in 2 Corinthians 12:12. They were gifts miraculous of a miraculous nature by which the apostles and prophets of the New Testament confirmed and validated that they were speaking God's message. They also were given to many of the early Christian leaders to help them in their worship and proclamation, to give the new church a strong foundation in a short period of time since the Bible had not yet been written.

These gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12 as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, speaking in foreign languages, interpretation of these languages, apostleship, etc. While they were given to help establish the church's foundation they were not designed to last forever. However, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 notes that certain foundational gifts will cease.

THE FUNCTIONAL (OR SERVICE) GIFTS; these are gifts that are absolutely essential for the church to function as the body of Christ in our world, gifts that each of us possess, gifts that we must recognize and develop to reach our full potential as servants where God has placed us in His body. The seven service gifts mention in this text include:

1. Prophecy
2. Service
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation (or encouragement)
5. Giving
6. Leadership (or administration)
7. Showing mercy.

Using God's gift

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that "what we are is God's gift to us, what we do with what we are is our gift to God!"

The Yuletide season is a celebration of God's gift giving. Beginning with the crude manger of Bethlehem, we see a clear and succinct message that the Christian faith is the celebration of ordinary people who come to possess a very extraordinary power.

When asked to serve, don't say you can't, let God use you!

When asked to minister don't say I can't minister, let God use your gift!

The Christ child in the manger was a gift to the world, what the world does with the gift is left up to each individual.

Your ability to sing, sew, count, dance, draw, crack jokes, listen, remember, calculate, or paint, is God's gift to you. What you do with it, is your gift to God.

Use what you have for building of the kingdom and God will take care of the rest.

Three men went to a farmer asked him for a job. The farmer was reluctant because one of the men had no legs. The second had no arms and the third had no eyes. He did not want to appear to discriminate against the handicapped so he gave them an impossible task. I will hire you if you can pick me 12 bushels of apples directly from the trees by the end of the day. The men agreed on the condition that he would hire all three. At the end of the day the farmer returned to find 12 bushels of apples freshly picked in front of him. He inquired how they were able to pick them considering one had no legs, another had no eyes, and another had no arms. What he heard amazed him. The man with no arms stood on the back of the man with no eyes and held up the man with no legs while he told the man with eyes which way to go so he picked fresh apples from the trees. The farmer paid them saying you are three smart men, you used what you had!

Today the Lord has given every believer a gift, use what you have!

You may not be able to sing like a mocking bird, but use what you have!

You may not be as great as the next person, but use what you have!

Resolve in your mind to say, "Use me Lord in your service!"

When the Lord works with you, powerful things begin to happen!

"Use me Lord!"

"Use me to tell the story!"

Use me to tell the world of the gift of Jesus, who was born in a manger; but died on Calvary!

Use me to tell everybody that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 872-Inspiration

Star Trek-The Next Generation

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 9, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2

Introduction

How far will you go to find what you are looking for? How hard will you look to find something you really want? How long will you stand in a line to see what you want to see? How much will you endure to acquire that which you consider to be important? If you are like most people there are some things in life you want. There are other things you would like to have. Then there are some things that we simply "must" have at any cost. When a situation exists for us to experience a "must see" movie or concert, people will wait in long lines just to get in. When a "must have" item is on sale, it does not matter how long the lines are; we wait, camp out if necessary, to get what we want. People have been known to travel long distances just to participate in a certain experience. There are some who have no limits to how far they will go or what they will do to get what they are looking for.

How far will you travel to achieve the unreachable? Would the stars be your limit? In1967 a series of television broadcasts began that were the creations of the imagination of science fiction screen writer Gene Rodenberry. The series was called "Star Trek," It featured a crew of people and a Vulcan who traveled through space, following the stars, boldly going where no man had gone before. The show caught the imagination of a generation because it was futuristic and because it routinely showed a group of people who fought injustice, greed and evil in the depths of space and won. They rode in a space ship called the Enterprise and they often fought the evil forces led by the Klingons.

Twenty years later a new series began, called Star Trek The Next Generation. It featured a new futuristic crew that did the same thing as the old timers like Dr. Spock and William Shatner and Scotty. They came 100 years after the original Enterprise but they too fought against evil, greed and wrong doing. As they followed the stars and traveled through the universe, the television show attracted millions of followers. The old school followers of Star Trek were called "Trekkies" while the new followers

of the next generation were called “Trekkers.” It was another generation but they followed the same stars for the same cause.

In 1994 Star Trek The Next Generation ended and yet another version of the show began for yet another generation. Beginning in 1995 the show, with another cast of stars for a new generation was called Star Trek Voyager which continues unto today.

Even though the show has gone through three generations, changed the names of its characters and its followers from ‘Trekkies to Trekkers” its cast of characters continues to boldly go where no man has gone before, to fight injustice, greed and oppression anywhere that they find it in the universe.

While the movie Star Trek shows imaginary characters chasing the stars for generations, the bible tells us about the original Star Trekkers. These were men who followed a star in hopes of finally being able to defeat evil, triumph over injustice and to bring peace to the universe. They did not have a space ship or electronic gadgets. In fact, electricity hadn’t been invented and the most reliable travel over long sandy distances was on a camel; yet the bible tells us about their quest to follow a star that would point to a child that would boldly go where no man had gone before.

The men were called Magi, or wise men. Their goal was to follow a strange star that appeared in the heavens and see where it led them. The ancient scrolls had predicted the birth of a child that would change the world and they wanted to see this child. They followed the star path over a journey that took months and extended into nearly two years until they found the Lord. They found him, worshipped him, showered him with gifts and returned home.

Today there are millions of people who are still looking for the spirit of the Christ child. They desperately yearn to find him for themselves and to boldly go where no man has gone before. They are not riding camels or flying through galaxies in space ships, but they are looking in churches, reading bibles, attending Christian fellowships, bible classes and prayer services around the world, looking for a savior. They are the next generation of Star Trekkers, who are looking for the king.

As Christians, we understand the mystery of the star that shone brightly in the heavens. We know what it meant. Yet there is another generation of star trekkers before us who go forward with one change. Whereas those who went before them followed the star and went boldly where no man had gone before; this generation has the advantage of going where many have gone before. Like the wise men of old; every generation that seeks him will find him, worship him and leave rejoicing.

Exposition

This text focuses on the wise men who came to see the infant Jesus.

The word interpreted “wise men” is more correctly “Magi,” a term which designates an order of priests and philosophers which belonged originally to Persia and Media, and who were extensively distributed over the region of the Euphrates. They were professional star gazers and men who studied the movement of the stars and attached meanings to these movements. The “wise men” of this text were probably of the same order as those described in the book of Daniel as wise men,

astrologers and magicians. No one knows exactly what country they came from, only that they came from the east.

They came to find the Christ child because they expected him to be a child prodigy. Generally when a child king is born he is given all of the respect due a king as if he was a full grown man. For men who were not Jews to make such a long journey to worship a king that was not of their own race was certainly a part of God's plan that Gentiles as well as Jews be blessed by and pay homage to the son of God.

There are two myths associated with the wise men that are generally repeated unchallenged. The first involves the number of wise men. Popular opinion has it that there were three wise men. Yet, there is no record of three wise men. A popular yuletide song is "We three kings" and drawings and etchings show three wise men bowing before the Christ child.. In reality, the scripture does not designate a number, but only says wise men. Some suppose that because the wise men brought gifts of gold, Frankincense and myrrh that it suggests three people. However, that suggestion is not confirmed in scripture.

The second myth is that the wise men found the babe lying in the manger. This is the image that is projected by artists that show the shepherds and the wise men worshiping the Lord at the manger. In reality, when the wise men saw the star they began a journey that could not be completed in a single night. Their "trek" took them almost two years by some estimates. When they finally arrived they went to Herod looking for the child. (v2). By the time the wise men arrived, Mary and Joseph were not in a stable and the babe was not in a manger. Verse 11 notes that when they arrived they found the family in a "house."

While the myths of the current era have blurred the number of wise men and where they finally found him, one truth was not blurred. After a long journey, having followed a path written in the stars, they found the Lord.

The First Generation

The first generation of star trekers sought Christ for the purpose of worshipping him. In verse 2 the wise men told Herod, "we are come to worship him."

Think of that, they traveled hundreds, maybe even thousands of miles by camel to worship him.

When the first generation of star trekkers found the Lord they did three things:

BOWED BEFORE HIM: Verse 11 notes that the wise men "fell down" or humbled themselves before the Lord. The first generation recognized that they were in the presence of divinity and they humbled themselves. Humility is a virtue that is unique and golden those who truly reverence God humble themselves before him. That's what David had in mind in Psalm 2:11 when he said "serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." Those who humble themselves before God recognize the holiness and sanctity of God in all that they do. To humble ourselves before him is to submit ourselves to his will, to be guided by his direction.

WORSHIPED HIM: To worship God is to praise and adore him. We worship him

privately and we also worship him publicly. Privately we speak to him in prayers and tell him of his greatness and importance in our lives. We read our bible and adore him in our family testimonials. In public we worship him through our singing, public prayers and testimonies. To worship God is to glorify him and lift him up and praise him for his good works. That's why Psalm 106:1 says, "Praise ye the Lord, oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever." The 146th Psalm says our very souls should praise the Lord because he is worthy to be praised. Believers worship and praise God both for what he has done and for what he is going to do. We praise him for health and strength. We praise him for victories. We praise him for the rising of the sun and the stars that twinkle at night. We agree with Psalm 150, "let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord!"

OPENED THEIR TREASURES: In addition they opened their treasures to the Lord. They bought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. No true worship of God is complete unless we open our treasures and make them available to him. Our treasures may be financial. We may have received a blessing from God that includes a regular paycheck, retirement income, business income or gifts. We may have allowances and allotments, alimonies and child supports, which are all are a part of treasures even if they are small. The wise men opened "their" treasures and gave to him as they had been blessed. In addition, our treasures may include our talents, gifts and abilities. Many make those treasures available to him for promotion of the kingdom. For the wise men there were three kinds of treasures, for believers there may be even more. But there can be no true worship without "Opening our treasures."

The Next Generation

Finally brothers and sisters, while the first generation of wise men went where no one had gone before, the next generation is going where many have gone before.

Today there are millions of men and women who are still searching for the Lord, but they don't have to blaze a new path to find him. After the wise men found Jesus everybody after that seemed to know where to go.

When the lame needed a healing they didn't have to go where no one had been before, they looked for Jesus!

When the blame wanted to see, those who helped him looked for Jesus!

When those who were dispirited wanted new hope they looked for Jesus!

When Jackie Robinson played baseball for the Dodgers, he was in the first generation of Blacks who played in the big leagues. Now the next generation knows the way.

When Alan Shephard put on a space suit and went into space for the first time, he was in the first generation, but he wasn't the only one because many followed after him.

When John Glen walked on the moon saying, "one small step for man, one giant step for mankind" he was the first generation, but he wasn't the only one because many have walked on the moon since!

When mama and papa found out that the Lord will make a way somehow, they

were not the only ones, for the next generation has found out that Lord still makes a way!

When our grand parents found that the Lord is a lawyer in the courtroom they were not the only ones, for there is a generation today that has found out that the Lord is still winning battles!

If you are looking for the Lord, you don't have go where no one has gone before.. many have found him and can tell you where to find him.

Wise men and women are still searching for Lord!

When you find him you'll find a bridge over troubling water!

When you find him you'll find a doctor in your sick room!

When you find him you'll find a mind consolator and a heart regulator!

His name is Jesus!

He was born in Bethlehem and died on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

The next generation of believers has found out the same thing as the first generation..God is mighty good God…all of the time!

No. 873-Christmas

And this shall be your sign

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 16, 20001

SCRIPTURE: "Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:11-14; "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12;

Introduction

Have you noticed that the number of signs around us seems to be increasing? There are signs virtually everywhere announcing any and everything. Along the highway there are giant billboards that advertise soft drinks, food and truck stops. There are even small signs that announce fresh fruit or vegetables that will be for sale a few miles up the road. Sometimes there are so many signs that they get in the way of each other. There are federal laws about the placement of billboards but that doesn't seem to help. Local communities have laws too about signs that protrude above buildings and proliferate the landscape. Portable signs seem to sit in every yard along commercial strips with arrows and flashing lights announcing one product or another. In Las Vegas and other night spots giant neon lit signs announce the grand casinos. Signs are all around us.

There are signs made of plastic, wood and bright lights, but there are other signs too. There are signs of the times. Metal detectors at schools, armed soldiers at airports, and mail carriers who wear rubber gloves give us signs of the times. These signs are bigger than billboards and flash more brilliantly than Neon lights, yet there are many people who cannot see them every day. Jesus, speaking to his disciples in Matthew 16:3 said there are many people who are learned at predicting the weather and the change of seasons "but can ye not discern the signs of the times." The signs of the times are the indicators all around us that calibrate the social climate in which we live. Consider the woman who filed for a divorce after 20 years of marriage on the grounds that her husband never showed her any sign that he loved her. She felt lucky because her case was heard by a female judge she knew was having problems with her husband too. The judge listened as the woman complained all her husband every did for 20 years was clutter up the house but never showed any sign that he loved her. The judge asked the woman to explain the clutter he leaves. The wife said, "Every day for twenty years he takes my lipstick and draws my name and kisses on the

bathroom mirror. When I go in the refrigerator he has notes taped to the door with my name and little hearts on it. He clutters up my mail sending me little cards with a little man shooting an arrow at my heart. Every night for 20 years he puts these notes on my pillow that I'll be dreaming of you. Your honor, I'm tired of him cluttering up the house he bought me, the huge jewelry case he bought me, the car he bought me and the three closets of clothes he bought with all this clutter. Any fool can see this man doesn't love me he just wants someone to pick up his clutter. The judge said, honey, the only kind of clutter my husband leaves me is empty beer cans, I'll take your husband any time!" -The woman couldn't read the signs all around her.

What if God wanted to send the world a message, would he put a sign! There are some clever billboards going up all over the country that purport to be from God. They say things like, "Don't make me come down there!-God!" Is that the way God would he put up a billboard? Would he buy a television commercial and interrupt your favorite broadcast with a message from heaven? If God wanted to send the world a sign what would he do?

The bible says God did want to send the world a sign of hope. He announced that his sign would be the simple birth of a little child that would be born in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. The birth of this child would be God's sign, brighter than the brightest neon light, that hope for a better world existed. Just as the rainbow was God's sign to Noah, so is the birth of Christ God's sign to the world that the hope of peace and joy everlasting continues.

As Christians, we see God's signs all around us. We especially see the significance of the important sign that we received one night in Bethlehem. God said, "And this shall be your sign!" –We receive that as a true sign of God's love for the world and give him the praise and the glory!

Exposition

This text considers how God gave the world the sign it needed even though it wasn't requested.

The subject of this 7th Chapter of Isaiah is King Ahaz, King of Judah in the Southern Kingdom. Ahaz was disturbed over the possibility of Israel, of the Northern Kingdom, and Syria, a foreign nation, getting together to over throw his kingdom.

The details of a plan Ahaz made to gain an ally in this fight are recorded in 2 Kings 16:7-8. He sent tributes of silver and gold to the Assyrian King to persuade him to help to protect Judah. Ahaz felt confident that Assyria would help him and he could be free to continue in idolatry as in times past.

Isaiah chapter 7 focuses on God showing the King that the plans of Israel and Syria to over throw Judah would not succeed and the throne of David would be secured by the promised Messiah forever.

God was going to save Ahaz, but Ahaz knew that meant the elimination of the idolatry and pagan practices going on in the kingdom.

He wanted to be saved from his enemies, with the liberty to continue in his evil ways.

He wanted to be free of the threat of attack but at the same time he wanted the freedom to worship idols and other forms of ungodliness.

Are there not many today who also want to be protected from their enemies but remain free to continue in their evil ways?

At verses 7-10 God speaks to Ahaz and says "I will take care of these problems for you, you don't have to worry about these enemies of yours anymore just let me handle it." At verse 11 God says to Ahaz, "to confirm these things which I have said to you, just ask for a sign and I will show you. Ask what you will, whether it's in heaven or on earth, I'll do it, to show you."

Ahaz rejected God's offer to give him a sign! Why? He did not need a sign to let him know God's power, he knew it and had witnessed it in many times past. He did not want God's help because he felt he already had his bases covered without God.

He coyly responds in verse 12 that he did not want to tempt God.

There are many today who do not turn to God because they think they have their bases covered. Their response is, "I don't need God for my daily living, I have General Motors, my business, and my job. My bases are covered!" Furthermore, with these, I can freely continue this worldly lifestyle that I enjoy.

Those who desire to do God's will reject Ahaz's approach. Not only do they look for a sign from God they ask for a sign to confirm their answer. Gideon's response showed us the way. Gideon felt led to take 30,000 men into battle but before doing so he asked the Lord to send him a sign. (Judges 6:37-40). He placed a woolen fleece on the ground and asked that the Lord would make the fleece wet with dew and the ground dry. When it was answered he asked the Lord for another sign, by doing it just the opposite. When the signs he looked for confirmed what he felt God wanted him to do Gideon then acted upon his faith.

God gives believers signs that indicate his will. Our desire should be to live a life of such spiritual noteworthiness that we can recognize the sign and then have the faith to act upon what we have seen.

What the signs mean

Today, we see the birth of the Christ child in the manger as a sign of things to come. If the manger experience is a sign then we can expect this experience to do what signs typically do.

SIGNS MAKE ANNOUNCEMENTS: Signs often make announcements about upcoming events: ballgames, rummage sales, festivals, concerts and other activities. They announce warnings about hazards ahead and detour that may be necessary. In Bethlehem there was a very big announcement made by the angels themselves. Theyt announced to the world the birth of the Savior. Then both Mary and Joseph received a personal announcement from the angel that was a warning about imminent danger. They acted upon the sign and fled to safety in Egypt.

God often makes very important announcements in our own lives. Sometimes everyone knows the news. Then there are those times when our situation is like that of Mary and Joseph; we receive a private announcement about impending danger or hazards. God still operates the same way. Often there is an announcement that everyone in the community knows. There are other announcements that are private and personal that only you and God know about. These are signs, announcements and proclamations that God makes to all of his children, just like Mary and Joseph. Like them, we should heed them and act upon them.

SIGNS GIVE DIRECTION: If we travel the highways we depend upon signs to give us direction. Signs tell us when to exit and what to expect when we exit. They tell us if we are on the right highway and even if we are traveling to fast or too slow. The sign of the Christ child gave directions to those who sought him. Shepherds in the fields followed the sign. Wise men thousands of miles away traveled in the direction of Bethlehem as they followed a star. Even the scriptures gave the sign, "A virgin shall conceive" Isaiah 7:14 and "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" Luke 2:12.

In life we often seek direction for our own life's travels. We should pray and ask God for direction signs. Gideon gave us the model. It is not too much to look for at least two confirmation signs to make sure we did not misinterpret. God is the same God today as he was yesterday. When he answers a prayer he will give us the direction and a sign. Look for it like highway signs. They rarely point to a change a direction with just one sign there are usually several along the way to make sure we get it right.

SIGNS PROVIDE IDENTIFICATION: There are some signs that are so obvious that they don't need an explanation. When you are riding down the highway and see a golden "M" towering above the trees, you don't need an explanation, you know it means McDonalds. A white checkmark called a swoosh doesn't need an explanation, it means NIKE.

So it is with the birth of Christ. We don't need a long explanation the sign of the babe in the manger is the sign of hope.

A young man traveled with a church group to a foreign land. Somehow he and several friends became separated from the group and almost panicked until this young man said "follow me." As they turned many corners and meandering streets they finally reached the church at the top of the hill. Someone asked how they found their way back and the others did not, the young man said, the church sat on the top of a hill and the cross on its steeple reached high in the sky. "I just kept my eyes on the cross and found my way home."

There are many today who can find their way home if they keep their eyes on the cross.

The believer's sign

Finally, brothers and sisters the birth of this child shall be a sign that is still in control.

The reason the world celebrates the birth of the Christ child is because it this child is a sign of renew hope that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning."

The birth of this child gives us new reason to sign "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

God has given the world a sign. This child shall be my sign!

—When darkness covers the land, that I am able to turn darkness into light!

—That although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and good will toward all men!

—That although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow!

This child is a special child, for Isaiah said in 9:6 for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be on his shoulder; his name shall be called:

—Wonderful. Counselor. The Mighty God. Everlasting father. Prince of Peace!

This child is a sign of God's unending love. I heard John 3:16 say "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"

One evening out on Calvary, the world saw the sign of God's abiding love.

For he died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

The empty tomb was sign that he had risen from the grave!

And every now and then I feel a sign that he is alive for I feel him!

I can feel the sign!

No. 874-Christmas

Joys R Us

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 23, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11

Introduction

Is it possible for someone or something to steal your joy? There are special times of the year when joy abounds. The Christmas season operates on the fundamental notion that it, "tis the season to be jolly!" Yet, while this is the season to be joyful, there are millions of people who are anything but joyful during the Christmas season. Someone or something has stolen their joy. Bad memories linger to snatch the joy of Christmas from some. Lonely hearts steal the joy from others who sit alone embracing memories of happier days. Poverty can easily steal the joy of your Christmas if you are not happy; so can sickness and frustration. The season to be jolly can be anything but joyful if we are not careful to focus on what brings real joy all year round.

If there is a group of people who should know the meaning of real joy, it should be Christians. That's what we are about! Think of Joy. Think of Christians. It's like the chain store that operates in most major city's Toys-R-Us! Toys-R-US is not just a toy store, it's a mega-store. It's big. They want you to think about toys and their store all year round. If you are looking for toys, think Toys-R-Us!. That's the way it should be with Christians, we are about joys, because we know what joy is all about.

Yet, there are many, even in the Christian family who are the victims of the devil's plan to steal our joy. Dr. Suess, the fable children's writer wrote a classic children's poem called "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The cute little rhyme, complete with funny caricature styled pictures tells the story of an ugly old Grinch who was upset because the people of the town of Whoville had so much joy at Christmas time. He couldn't stand the noise and the happiness and the celebration. The grinch figured that the secret to their joy was in the toys. So he decided to steal the toys to take away the joys of Christmas. After stealing their toys, The grinch waited to see their response. Dr. Suess put it this way:

"They're just waking up! I know just what they'll do!
"Their mouths will hang open a minute or two
"The all the Whos down in Who-ville will all cry BOO-HOO!"

"That's a noise," grinned the Grinch,
"That I simply must hear!"
So he paused. And the Grinch put a hand to his ear.
And he did hear a sound rising over the snow.
It started in low. Then it started to grow...

But the sound wasn't sad!
Why, this sound sounded merry!
It couldn't be so!
But it WAS merry! VERY!

He stared down at Who-ville!
The Grinch popped his eyes!
Then he shook!
What he saw was a shocking surprise!

Every Who down in Who-ville, the tall and the small,
Was singing! Without any presents at all!
He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming!
IT CAME!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,
Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?
It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"
And he puzzled three hours, 'till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.
"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"

Dr. Suess was almost right. Instead of "a little bit more" Christmas means a lot more!

While the poem depicted an imaginary "grinch" there are real life situations that threaten to steal the joy from believers.

As Christians, we are the embodiment of joy. Christ gave us a joy that the grinch like fingers of the world cannot seize. The song writer is right, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the good news brought by the angel to shepherds watching their fields. It was news that would bring them "great joy."

The announcement of Christ's birth was not an ordinary announcement. It was

highly unusual primarily because it was announced by Angels themselves.

The angels told them not to fear because they were bringing news of "great joy." The Greek word for "great" is Megas, which means big, enormous, colossal. It's the word we get the English word "Mega." When mega precedes something it is going to be super big.

The angel announce news that was going to bring "mega joy." It would be mega joy for of Israel. It would be mega joy for the shepherds. It would be mega joys for every believer; that means mega joys for us.

The good news, of course, was the birth of Christ. That is the same good news that lifts our spirits today. The reality that God is with us, should lift our spirits and give us reason to be hopeful, cheerful and excited about life and all it offers.

Guarding Against the Grinch

Yet as happy as this season is there are many who cannot celebrate this season because some "Grinch" is stealing their Christmas. Look at the letters in the word "Grinch" and we'll find six things to do that can stop the Grinch from stealing your Christmas joy.

G-IVE YOUR WORRIES TO GOD: There are many that cannot celebrate Christmas because they worry so much they make themselves miserable. Listen to the list: "How am I going to pay for all this stuff?"; "How am I going to get everything done?" or even little things like, "How am I going to find a parking space at the mall?" The worry list varies from person to person but is never-the-less real. The Greek word for worry is actually two words "merizo and nous" which means to "divide the mind." The English word is based on an old Anglo Saxon word which means to choke or to strangle. The combined meanings let us know that worrying can divide our thinking and choke and strangle our spirit. Excessive worry keeps us frustrated, divided and choked up. It would be better to trust God for a change. Don't worry about finding a parking space, get in the car and go and trust God to show you where a space will open up at the mall and in life!

R-EFUSE TO BE NEGATIVE: There are many who look at their own life situation and turn negative. They focus on what they don't have. They see what everyone else has and become envious and extremely negative. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A heart at peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones…" So your tree is not as big as the one next door! So what? So you don't have a tree at all? So what? So you are not able to get as much as you like for your children! Love them! They will understand! The Grinch thought he could steal Christmas because he thought things were the secrets. He associated toys with joys. When the "Who's" woke up Christmas morning there were no toys but there were still joys because they focused on what they had and not what they did not have. So let it be with us. Let's refuse to focus on the negatives.

I-NCLUDE TIME FOR REST. There is an interesting passage in Job 9:25 (NCV) That reads this way, ""My days go by faster than a runner. They fly away without

my seeing joy." That can easily describe many of us during this season. We can get so busy trying to do so many things that we don't have time for the joy of the season to really soak in. We can be so busy cooking, shopping, wrapping presents, attending programs and activity after activity. We can get so busy that we simply become to tired to enjoy it all. On Christmas morning when all of the food is on the table we'll be too tired to eat. This is the time of year when everyone overloads their activity plate. There is more stress, tension and anxiety because there is very little rest time. There is very little time to think and reflect. When we lose thinking time we lose sight of the real meaning of it all and our joy slips away. During this time of the year it's good to set your "yes" limit and your "no" limit. To give yourself time to rest there comes a point when you must respectfully say, "no" to anyone that wants to put another item on your activity plate. Say "no" to more activity so you can have time to say "yes" to God. We are about mega Joy. But we can't have mega Joy without time to rest.

N-EVER FORGET THE REASON FOR THE SEASON: The Angel said "A savior is born unto you.." That was the word then and it is the word now. The reason for this season is that we needed a savior and God sent him to us in the person of his only begotten Son. The Christ child did not come 2,001 years ago so that we could give each other presents, decorate our houses, drink egg nog, have parties and sit on Santa's lap. NO Christ came - that little baby was born to a virgin, and was laid in a manger for one reason, and one reason only and that was to be a savior for each of us. Today, we still need a savior. We still need God in our lives. Jesus is the reason for the season. If we ever lose sight of that fact, then the Grinch of commercialism can truly steal our Christmas! We are about mega joy, but we can't have mega joy if we forget the reason for the season.

C-ONCENTRATE ON WHAT YOU HAVE: There are many who are miserable at Christmas time because the season brings back memories of things we no longer have. For some it brings back memories of a loved one who is no longer with us, so we feel emptiness and hurt. For others it brings back memories of love lost. Perhaps it was a failed marriage, a broken heart, an abandonment of some kind. Focusing on our losses can make Christmas a miserable time of the year. Instead, why not hear Paul say, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press forward toward the mark." Focus on what you have now! Focus on what your loved one left behind. Focus on the laughter, the good times, the humorous sayings, the funny moments of the past and tell them with joy when your family meets. Concentrate on what you have now! Concentrate on how God is blessing you now! Concentrate on the goodness of this life now, despite the hardships you have endured. When we focus on what we have we experience "mega joy" because we know that God is with us and has not abandoned us. The Grinch can only steal your Christmas if you focus on your losses instead of your blessings. God is with us and he is blessing us and that should bring us mega-joy.

H-OLD ON TO HOPE. There are many who have lost hope in themselves. They see themselves in the worst way. They feel as if they have failed miserably and are beyond repair. They have given up hope on themselves because they have wasted

so many years. That can happen if our hope is misplaced. If we have placed our hope in any person, place or thing, we have misplaced it. People can let us down. Places and things change. We can lose hope in ourselves because we change. That's why the song writer says, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." The presence of hope during this season should bring us joy. The knowledge that because "God is with us" that our lives can be turned around; that conditions can change! That thought alone should bring us mega-joy!

Why Joys R Us

Finally, we must consider the overriding reason why "Grinch" like circumstances can't steal our joy! Because our joys are not in noise and the toys but in the powerful love that comes from above!

Joys R Us! That defines us. It's not a definition that applies only at Christmas time. We are about joy all year round.

We have joy because we know that "all things" work to the good of those who love the Lord, according to his purpose.

In our sickness we have joy, because we know that God is in control of hospitals and doctors and surgical procedures.

In our misfortunes we have joy because we know that what is misfortune today will be our fortune tomorrow if we trust the Lord to work it out.

Even when there is a death in our family, we still have joy, because we know God has done us no wrong when he has given safe haven to a believing member of our family.

Joys R Us describes us! We have mega joy! We have mega hope! We have mega confidence that our redeemer will help us to overcome any obstacle in our way!

Despite our circumstances our lives symbolize not just joy but great joy because we place our hope in a risen Lord.

Author Max Lucado writes: "No man had more reason to be miserable than this one; yet no man was more joyful"

The man is described as having had two homes. In his first home he was a king with servants who attended his every wish. He could snap his fingers and change the course of world history. His name was well known. He had wealth and power and the respect of millions. Then instantly he had nothing.

It still amazes scholars today how he had everything one minute and then everything changed.

His bed became a borrowed pallet. He never had his own transportation and depended upon others for handouts. He often wandered through fields to eat raw grain, picked fruit from trees and sometimes ate only fish and bread.

He knew what it meant to be homeless. He knew what it meant to spend nights in the cold or to sleep in the cold wet hold of a ship on the sea.

In his first home he was surrounded by admirers calling his name in praise. But in an instant he was surrounded by mobs of people who either wanted to kill or beg him to perform tricks for their amusement.

He was accused of a crime he did not commit and witnesses were hired to lie on him. He was condemned to death and hung out on a Roman cross. Six inch spikes were driven through his hands and he was lifted up in ridicule.

In the midst of his pain, he seemed to still have an inner joy. He begged his father, "Forgive them for they know not what they do!"

Even when he died he was buried in a tomb borrowed from someone else.

He should have been miserable. He should have been despondent, but early Sunday morning he arose with Mega Joy! "He is not here" the angel proclaimed. "He has risen as he said."

It's Mega Joy for us because we know that he still lives for us.

That's the lesson that believers teach the Grinch who wants to steal our joy: Jesus is the reason for the season.

Perhaps the Grinch finally got the message. Listen to his words once more:

It came without ribbons! It came without tags!

"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"

And he puzzled three hours, 'till his puzzler was sore.

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.

"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"

No. 875-Christmas

It's Over, Right?

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 30, 2001

SCRIPTURE: And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke 2:20

Introduction

It's over right? Isn't Christmas over? One of the best known truths about the Christmas season is that the length of the celebration lasts about as long as the object of your celebration. If your reason for celebrating Christmas was to find out what you would get for Christmas, then it was probably over the moment you opened the last package with ribbons flying from one place to another. The moment the new baby doll came out of the box or the new bicycle hit the ground with wheels whirling and chrome glittering the sun, it was over! For some it was over after the last plate of Christmas dinner was eaten and they couldn't force down another bite. For some, it's over! The singing, special activities, decorations and even more have finally ended and for many it's time to start looking at the next planned event.

Whenever we are enjoying something we don't want it to end. That was situation when the faith healer ate lunch at a local café. There were people in the café who immediately recognized him and decided to treat him. One man complimented him on his fine ministry and paid the waiter for his meal. A short while later he was recognized by another customer who decided to leave the waiter a $20 tip on the faith healer's table. The third man saw him and decided to pay for his meals for the entire week that the faith healer was in town. As the faith prepared to leave he shook the hand of the first man and instantly power went from him and the man screamed, "Glory Hallelujah, the back troubles I've been having have suddenly gone away!" The faith healer went to the table of the second man and shook his hands and another surge of power went from him and the man cried out, "Glory to God, the arthritis that has been troubling me all these years has gone away!" Then the healer went to the last man and stuck out his hand for a shake. The third man got up and quickly back away? The healer asked, "Why are you backing away?" The man said, "You touched him and his back was healed. You touched that man and his arthritis was healed. I don't want you to touch me because I'm on disability. You touch me and it's over!" –The man didn't want his good thing to be over!

When do we know when something is over? B.B. King says it's over when the,

"The thrill is gone." Actors say it's over after the final bow. Competitors say it's over when "fat lady sings." Maxwell House Coffee says its over when we have tasted the "last drop." From a spiritual context, as long as the spirit of Christmas lives it's never over; the party continues every day.

The joy of Christmas reflects in our lives everyday. Like the romance of the wedding is not over at the ceremony, but is only the beginning; so it is with the Christmas spirit with all true believers.

As Christians, we may pack away the wrapping paper and take down the lights, but the spirit of hope and faith the Christmas season brings is never over!

Exposition

This text focuses on the actions of the shepherds after they participated in the manger experience.

Shepherds, who were grazing their flocks, were interrupted to participate in the manger experience in Bethlehem. Their normal routine consisted of a rather dreary cycle of watching flocks by day and night. However, whenever the flocks were left unattended for long the possibility of losing some of their sheep always existed because either thieves or wolves were always present. While they were inspired and strengthened by observing the manger experience in Bethlehem they returned to their fields still under the glow and charisma that came as a result of being in the presence of God.

Even though they went back to the fields, the excitement of what they experienced in Bethlehem never ended. It simply continued indefinitely. They returned, glorying God. The Greek for Glorifying in this text is "dox-ad-zo" which means to cause the dignity and worth of a person or thing to be recognized or acknowledged. Thus, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to participate in the manger experience and they returned with an exciting testimony about what they had experienced themselves. Their testimony recognized and acknowledge God in such a way that his respect and reverence among the people was uplifted.

The joy of that night in front of the manger did not end in Bethlehem. Their business as usual routine had been changed forever as their conversation and relationship was changed for their own betterment. Their return was not the end of the manger experience but it was the beginning of a lifetime of praise and glorifying that would never end.

Do what they did

Today, believers should note what the shepherds did after the manger experience. They returned, but their return was not simply to their usual return, but they returned glorifying God.

Exactly how do we keep the spirit of Christmas using the example of the shepherds? We should glorify him as the shepherds did by:

GLORIFY HIM BY RELYING ON HIS PROMISES: One way to glorify God is to rely heavily upon his promises. The shepherds were told to go to Bethlehem and told what to expect. They acted upon his promises. Romans 4:20 encourages every believer not to "stagger" when it comes to trusting in God. We glorify him when we show others, through our bold faith that we trust him completely. In so doing we present ourselves as instruments to be used by him to prove his excellence to the unbelieving.

GLORIFY HIM BY ACKNOWLEDGING HIM: Believers glorify God by acknowledging him as the source of every good thing we do. 1 Corinthians 10:31 reminds us to acknowledge God in everything, including the seemingly small and mundane things such as eating and drinking. Paul in this text says in "whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God." The act of acknowledging him is not a seasonal occurrence. It never ends. We should praise the Lord 365 days out of every year and glorify him continuously.

GLORIFY HIM BY RIGHTEOUS LIVING: Believers continue to glorify God daily by righteous living. In this context God is glorified when non-believers observe our attempt to live lives that are honorable, praise worthy, law abiding and draped in integrity. In so doing, we glorify God. In Philippians 1:11 Paul told the Philippians that it was essential that they demonstrate what he called the "fruits of righteousness" in their daily living. Doing so would bring glory and praise to God. That means that we praise God every day by simply doing the right things and choosing to reject evil things. Doing right is not a Christmas day thing, but an every day thing that extends well beyond Christmas day.

GLORIFY HIM BY FAITH IN THE FIRE: The greatest glory God receives is when his children, in the midst of the fire, still praise him and cling to him. There is never a year that passes when the children of God escape the fires of life. It is almost as if each of us were one of the three Hebrew Boys being thrown into the fiery furnace. Their response to the king certainly glorified God. When asked would their God deliver them from the fire they responded that, "Our God is able" but even if he chose not to deliver them they would hold fast to their faith in him. Isaiah 24:15 encourages believers to "glorify ye the Lord in the fires." When trouble or sickness or mishaps come, glorify God in times of trouble just as you do in when everything goes well. It's not a Christmas day thing, it never ends.

GLORIFY HIM THROUGH WORSHIP AND PRAISE: The wise men came to Bethlehem to worship and praise the Christ child but their praise and worship continued long after the Bethlehem experience ended. Our praise and worship of God is not seasonal. It is not something we do on special days of the year such as Christmas and Easter. We worship and praise God continuously. Our worship consists of singing and rejoicing, bringing our tithes and offerings as we well as prayers and words of adoration. Psalm 50:23 puts it this way, "whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me" and those who order their conservation in a way that praises God will find salvation. Praising God is not a seasonal occurrence that ends with Christmas. We praise him continuously, all year long.

It's Not Over

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must say to those who think the spirit of Christmas is over that, the spirit and power of the Lord never ends; he abides with us everyday!

Someone who is unfamiliar with the way the Lord works and how believers think, may ask, why is the church still decorated for Christmas? Don't they know that Christmas is over?

A week has passed, why are they still singing Chrismas carols, don't they Christmas is over?

Those who asked these questions, mistakenly think that the spirit of Christmas ends at the close of one day on the calendar. Those who know the Lord, know that the beauty of the believer's life is never over. Once we have been in the presence of the Lord it's never over because we relive it again and again.

Today, there is someone who thinks the excitement concerning the birth of the Christ child is over.

They think it's over because they have taken the lights down. We know it's not over because our light never comes down. Every day of our lives we sing, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."

There may be some who think because the choir stops singing, "joy to the world,"h that the impetus for that song has left and it is over. But its not over because this joy I have the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!

There are some who think its over because life is now going back to normal. But we know it's not over because we'll never be the same. I heard the song writer declare, "Since I met the blessed savior. Since he washed and made me whole; since the hand of Jesus touched me; now I am no longer the same!"

Somebody thinks it's over because everyone has stopped talking about the wise men from the east who followed a star. But it's not over because there are some wise men and women today who are still seeking him every day!

Somebody thinks it's over because the choir is no longer singing, "Hark the herald Angels sing!" But it's not over because we are singing with angelic voices, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down."

Some have concluded that the season of talking about peace has passed. But we know it's not over because everyday of our lives we praise him for being the "prince of peace and Lord of Lords."

Somebody thinks it's over because all the fine Christmas food is gone. But we know it's not over because in the wilderness of our life experience all through the year the Lord still feeds us. That's why we say, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more!"

Somebody thinks it's over because all of the sweet pies, sweet cakes have been put away. But we know it's not over because "every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before." We know it's not over because "I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

There may some who feel that because angelic voices are no longer singing, “Go tell it on the mountain” that there is nothing else to tell because it’s over. But it’s not over because there’s somebody who still has a testimony and a story to tell of how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind. It’s not over because there are millions of witnesses who have tell the story!

We still have a story to tell!

We still have to tell somebody that he was born in Bethlehem!

We still have to tell somebody that he died on Calvary!

We still have to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning that he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 876-Inspiration

Great is thy faithfulness

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 31, 2001

SCRIPTURE: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23

Introduction

Suppose I told you that I know a person who keeps every promise he makes, would you believe me? What if I added that not only does this person keep every promise made but keeps them exactly as they were promised without modifying them one bit. Would that be harder to believe? Well, suppose I said I know a person who not only keeps every promise, exactly they were promised, but also delivers on the promise at the time promised? That would be even harder to believe! There are very few of us who actually know any individuals that are able to keep all of their promises. We do know of many who work very hard to keep every promise they make, but are often sidetracked by circumstances beyond their control. If I told you I knew a human being that could guarantee a delivery on every promise I wouldn't be telling the truth, but while no human being can guarantee delivery, God can.

Sometimes we promise the unorthodox or that which we know it will be difficult to deliver. Consider the woman who was having difficulty with her husband cheating on her. It really upset her that no matter how she tried he would not pay attention to her. One day she happened upon a magic frog. The frog told the woman that she could have three wishes, but there was one catch. Anything she asked for herself would be granted also to her husband 10 times more. "Fine" the woman said. Her first wish was to be strikingly beautiful and irrestible. The frog reminded her that her husband would also become 10 times more handsome and she would have a problem with other women. The woman said she did not care and the wish was granted. Secondly, she wished for wealthy. The frog said, "But your husband will be 10 wealthier!" The woman said, "I don't care, what's his is mine anyway!" Instantly it was done!. The woman asked the frog one last time, "You promise me that whatever I ask for I will get?" The frog said, "Yes, and your husband will get 10 times what you get." She looked at her cheating husband and said, "For my final wish, I'd like to have a mild heart attack!"

If we look back on the year spent, we'll quickly see that despite all of its ups and downs, good days and bad days, God has delivered on his promises to us, just as he said, when he said he would!

At first glance, especially when we consider the problems we've encountered this year, we might conclude that God has not delivered on his promises to us. If he did, there are some who think he did not do it the way he promised. Even then, there are some who think that he may have responded to his promise but he did not do in the time of their special need. In that frame of mind there are many who conclude that God failed them this year. He allowed a death in the family. He allowed a loved one to become injured or sick. He allowed the loss of our property and possessions. He allowed us to be caught up in a fast moving world that is taking us for a ride so fast that everything of value is falling out of our pockets as we move through life. At first glance, it does appear that God may have been negligent, or at the least, a little slow!

What has God promised us? He has never promised that there would be no mountains; he did promise strength for the mountains. He never promised that we would not walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but he did promise to walk with us. He never promised to immunize us from sickness or trouble but he did promise that he would deliver us and lead us away from temptation if we ask him. Moreover, he promised to be with us always, in every situation and circumstance and to be only a prayer away.

That's what God actually promised us. In that context God has been faithful in his promises to us and has not neglected us in any way. Every day that has passed this year, he has been with us. When he has answered a prayer for us, he did exactly as he promised. When we needed his strength and power and sought him he responded, on time.

He is more dependable than Federal Express, The Post Office or U.P.S. He delivers all the time, on time. This year has been no exception.

As Christians we praise God for his faithfulness to us and give him praise for his wonderful works in our lives during the past year. He has been faithful toward us in the past and we expect him to do the same in the year to come.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Jeremiah as he describes the faithfulness of God despite difficult times.

The lamentations of Jeremiah is a collection of inspired writings by the prophet Jeremiah with the intent of showing Israel the cause of its exiled position, lamenting its present state and providing hope for its future.

It is filled with bleakly colored laments about the difficulty of the times. Yet, there is also the continuous hope and trust that God could and would reverse the circumstances.

Despite their exiled conditions, Jeremiah noted that each morning he saw new evidence of God's mercy and goodness indicating that God had not abandoned them or forsaken them.

The biblical record is punctuated with accounts that indicate to us the extent of God's faithfulness. Psalm 89, is a major text that tells us about God's faithfulness. It

tells us that his faithfulness is an inseparable part of his character and nature. His ultimate nature is displayed in the heavens and natural order of things. Psalm 89:2 says, "You established your faithfulness in heaven itself." It's in the order of things, the rising and setting of the sun, the rotation of the earth on its axis, the movement of the planets in the solar system; all are indicators of God's faithfulness, dependability, reliability and timeliness. Thus, Psalm 89:8 concludes, "Your faithfulness surrounds you."

The biblical record is also careful to delineate a difference between the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of man. Numbers 23:19 - "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" When God says it, it will be done. When God promises it, it will happen and happen on time. The New Testament echoes this theme repeatedly: 1 Corinthians 1:9 - "God . is faithful."; 1 Corinthians 10:13 - "And God is faithful." 1 John 1:9 - "He is faithful."

When we review the biblical record when it comes to God's faithfulness, the preponderance of scripture indicates that being faithful is a part of God's nature. He keeps his word and executes it on time, because if he didn't, he wouldn't be God!

God Has Been Faithful

As we reflect upon the year that has passed, we recognize immediately that God has been faithful to us by providing the essensials for our survival, all of our needs and some of our wants.

FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER: Though we may have complained about some of our food, whether or clothing was fashionable, or the size or location of our home; must of us would have to agree, that God has been faithful in providing us with all three. Just as Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years depending upon the faithfulness of God, we have done the same. In the wilderness Israel found that God provided them food, on time every day; even though they complained about it. He fixed it such that the material that formed their tents held up for 40 years with need of repair. He arranged it so that they wore the same shoes and clothes for decades and they never wore out. The food came on time every day. There was water just when they needed it most. God was faithful to Israel as he provided for them in ways no one could explain. He has been faithful to us in the same way. No matter how we look at it, we have been blessed by the powerful hand of God.

MADE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE: God has been faithful in his promise to open doors for us and to make opportunities for the abundant life available to true believers. Jabez went to God and asked that he would expand his coasts and bounderies. God heard Jabez and made good on his promise, giving him exactly what he prayed for. As we reflect upon this year we see that God has given many of us exactly what we prayed for. He has kept his word. Many have recognized an increase in pay this year. Some have expanded their boundaries to the point that they have taken advantage of job opportunities and other doors that were opened his year. The expanded boundaries are not limited to only the material. There are many who have

experienced stronger family relationships this year, in addition to other quality of life measures that cannot be ignored. God has been faithful to insure that many of the things we have asked for, we have received.

PROVIDED FOR OUR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: This has been an extremely difficult year for some us. There are some families that have encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that are experience strained relationships. These are the believers who will quickly testify that if it had not been for the Lord on their side, they would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments. Just as the spirit of God lifted David as he mourned for his son or reassured Paul in his weakness, that "my grace is sufficient." We have been sustained by the eternal presence of God in our life situations this year. When difficult times were upon us this year, God was there, he was only a prayer away. Someone can recall how the Lord lifted a burden from their shoulder and gave them renewed strength in the midst of weakness. When Jesus told his disciples, "Lo I'll be with you alway" that meant exactly what it said, he planned to be with us continually.

New Mercies

Finally, brothers and sisters while it is good to look back on the mercies that God showed us this year, as the new year dawns, it is good to remember that God plans new mercies for the new year!

Jeremiah said, every morning God has new mercies for his people!

Every morning God has has new blessings in store for them!

It's good to know that you had something to eat yesterday. But you feel a little better if you know there will be something to eat tomorrow!

It's good to know that you had a job this year, but you feel a little better when you know you'll have a job next year!

It's good to know every thing was alright last year, but you sleep better at night when you know that next year will be an even better year!

This is the message of hope that Jeremiah was trying to get across to Israel. Oh Israel, you have been going through some difficult times in your capitvity, but God has blessed you from his abundant mercy!

He brought you out of some tough times! He sustained you in the midst of your exile and banishment!

He saw you when you hung your harps on the willow trees and said, "How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land!"

The Lord showered Blessings on Israel during their difficutl time. However, Jeremiah wanted them to know that what God did for them in the past is not a historical footnote.

It's the Lord's mercies that have kept us from being consumed. That's what Jeremiah meant when he said if it had not been for God's mercies we would have been consumed!

Consider the little boy that was told by his father to chop enough wood to keep

the fire burning through the night. It was late in the fall, when the weather was warm in the day, but cold at night. The father said a hard freeze was on the way. The little boy was disobedient. It was so warm that he could wear short pants and he couldn't see the need of chopping so much wood. He collected a few sticks and put them in the wood bin. As he curled up on his pallet the flicker of the flames put him to sleep. A few minutes later the flames started to burn low. A cold chill draped the room as the temperature began to drop. The little boy curled up in a ball and began to shiver and shake. When he awoke the next morning there was frost on the ground but the house was warm. There was a blazing fire in the fireplace. When he asked his father, how could this be, his father said, "You didn't do everything I told you to do, but you're still my son. I couldn't let you lay in the cold unprotected. I chopped enough wood to keep the fire going. Every time, it started to burn low, I put on another log. The little boy said to his father, "I haven't done everything I was supposed to do, but you kept the fire going to keep me from freezing. I don't know how to thank you, because every day you're always putting another log on the fire!"

In the winter of our discontent, God keeps putting another log on the fire! He keeps on blessing me!

Jeremiah said, every morning there is another log of mercy placed on the fire! Every new year, there's another log of mercy on the fire!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided, Great is thy faithfulness Lord unto to me!"

He was so faithful that 2001 years ago he sent his only begotten Son to live among men!

Somebody knows him. His name is Jesus!

He was so faithful that he died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning....

No. 877-New Year

I will never leave thee

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 6, 2002

*SCRIPTURE: **"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5***

Introduction

Have you ever been afraid to take even a short trip by yourself? Often when we travel into unknown territory we feel safer if someone goes with us. There is safety in the "buddy" system. We feel safer at home when we are not alone. In threatening circumstances the sense of terror is lessened if we are in the presence of those who we know. No matter how young or old we are, this feeling of insecurity does not escape us if we are traveling alone.

While there are some who are intimidated with the thought of being alone, there are others who believe that their success is due to their own effort alone. Consider the skeptic who didn't care too much for God or religion. One day a preacher took him to a large empty field and told him that he had vision of the future. He said "You and God can take this large empty field and turn it into something." The preacher then disappeared. A few days later the man, without good credit or references was able to float a loan to buy the field. Even though nothing had ever grown in the field but weeds he planted and harvested a great crop. At the end of the year the preacher returned and said to the man, "See I told you that you and God could do miracles with this field." Not wanting to share the credit even with God, the man said, "If you think God had something to do with this you should have seen this place when God had it all by himself."—There are some that refuse to give God credit for even the smallest miracles he creates in their lives everyday.

There is very little we can do in any given year that does not require the miraculous intervention of the divine. Whether it's putting a safety net around our homes or creating opportunities for us on the job, God is busy 24 hours a day and seven days a week, making things happen for his people. That's what he did for us last year and will continue to do this year.

He will never forsake us or leave us, even though sometimes we believe that what we have accomplished has been done without him.

As Christians, we approach the new year with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We see the great emptiness that lies before us, but we also have enough sense to know

that when this year is over and the harvest is great that our success this year won't be because our own work, but because God never forsook us or left us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on various precepts needed for Christians living including the assurance of God's presence.

The author of the Hebrews is unknown but is believed to be Paul. The entire book gave noted instructions to Christians about living the Christian life. In the last chapter, many different ideas were listed together, without much comment. The ideas were not in any particular order in this chapter as the letter came to a close, each one was powerful enough to stand on its own.

At verse one he encouraged believers to continue to show love in the brotherhood. Then in verse 2 he urged them not to turn away strangers but to be hospitable. In verse 3 he told them to remember those that are in bonds. In verse 4 he touched reminded them of the sanctity of marriage..

When he reached verse five and six the writer gave advice for living each new day. These to verses turn out to be a formula for facing new opportunities. The writer said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

This tidbit of spiritual advice from the word of God said in essence, "Don't talk such much about acquiring new things, money and keeping up with other people, but be content with the things that you; don't worry either because God will always be with you, he will be your helper, so move without fear."

Immediately after the writer, for 19 more verses gives more tidbits. However, the tidbits in verse 5 and 6 are immensely powerful for believers.

These two verses for powerful because they were timely and drew on the power of other biblical teachings. They struck home because many believers were anxious about their personal condition. They did not know what the future held in store for them. Since becoming Christians many had parted with their personal property, forced from their jobs or even been ostracized by former friends.

They were anxious because they did not know what to expect of the future. They did not have the food they wanted. They did not have the money they wanted and it appeared that others were advancing and achieving their goals at a higher rate. They feared that the years ahead would bring more loss and more discontent.

Verse 5 and 6 draws on biblical principles already established. It is what is known as a "gezerah-shavah" where two truths of scripture are linked together in the same verse because of one common word in both phrases. In Deuteronomy 31:6 as the children of Israel faced the prospect of entering a new promised land they were anxious and nervous. They did not know what to expect. Moses spoke to them to console them by saying, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. " In Psalm 118:6 David surrounded with the prospect of rejection and failure before men wrote," The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man

do unto me?" The common word in both of the texts is the word fear.

Even though the truths of verse 5 and 6 are not elaborated upon any further, the truth lingers. If we are content with what we have, allow God to help us, there will be nothing that the world can bring against us that the team of "us and God" cannot not handle.

Contentment

One of the things that many people fear about the future is the prospect of loss. They fear the loss of prestige, position, power or property. The fear of loss troubles many people from children to adults and we are anxious about any changes that may cause us to lose something or someone.

What is contentment? It is an inner peace that has nothing to do with how much money you have, the type of clothes you wear or the kind of home in which you live. Contentment is not to be confused with lack of ambition. People who are content still strive to climb higher, reach for improvement and ways to build themselves up. The difference is that they do not feel total loss if their ambitions are not achieved immediately.

Contentment is a sense of balance in life that is achieve by having enough God on your side t balance out whatever comes up on the other side.

Contentment is having enough God to balance out the loss of a job if it comes.

Contentment is having enough God to balance out a major sickness if it comes.

Contentment is having enough God to balance out an interruption or dysfunction in your family or personal relationship.

Contentment cannot be bought. It is not acquired by belonging to a church. It is acquired through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the faith that the combined strength of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost can balance any trouble that may come against us.

How do you acquire contentment? For some contentment is elusive. They are never happy, never at peace with themselves. Contentment comes when a believer allows God to direct them in a pursuit and accepts, at the beginning, whatever the outcome as God's will.

Thus the loser in a campaign or contest is content knowing that he gave his best but the outcome he desired was not God's will for him at that moment.

It's the same attitude held by those who enter any other challenging situation. We go in to do our best, but will accept the fairly achieved outcome as the will of God.

What comes with accepting the will of God is the knowledge that all things will eventually work to our good, even a failure, according to the will of God. The secret to contentment is put your life in God's hand.

What he promises at the least is to balance any negatives with his power. In some instances it could be his will that we are victorious.

Fear

The fear of what man can do makes many people anxious.

Sometimes what we fear is not something that will happen to us but what people will say about us or what they will think of us.

Franklin Roosevelt, dealing with the fears of the American people after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and just before entering World War II said, "The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself!"

Sometimes our fears can really stop us from advancing. A freshman at Eagle Rock Junior High won first prize at the greater Idaho Falls Science Fair, April 26, 1997. He was attempting to show how conditioned we have become to alarmist practicing junk science and spreading fear of everything in our environment. In his project he urged people to sign a petition demanding strict control or total elimination of the chemical "dihydrogen monoxide."

And for plenty of good reasons, since it:

· Can cause excessive sweating and vomiting.

· It is a major component in acid rain.

· It can cause severe burns in its gaseous state.

· Accidental inhalation can kill you.

· It decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes.

· It has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients.

He asked 50 people if they supported a ban of the chemical. Forty-three said yes, six were undecided, and only one knew that the chemical was H20 (water). The title of his prize winning project was, "How Gullible Are We?" He feels the conclusion is obvious.

There are many who will enter into the new year afraid of what they don't understand. Fear of the unknown prohibits growth, those who become great are those who dare to go where no man has gone before without fear but shrouded in confidence.

When the writer of Hebrews said, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me?" He made a statement of bold confidence that with God as his helper he would strive to that which is right and truthful and let people think what they want.!

Courage

Finally, we must consider the emphasis this text has on courage for the future.

The writer said, "I will not fear" what ever comes.

This should be the attitude of every believer as we look at the prospects of the new year, "I will not fear!"

Believers take courage as we face the unknown because we the Lord has promised never to leave us alone! That means, through any trouble or difficulty, he will never leave us.

If we fall upon misfortune his words remain true, I will never leave thee!

If we fall upon temporary disgrace or public scorn, his words still resonate, "I will

never leave thee!"

If we fall into sickness or despair, the echo of his words fills our ears, "I will never leave thee!"

If our friends forsake us and family turns on us, the sound of his words is loud and clear, "I will never leave thee!"

This promise of God overrides the material and plunges us into the supernatural. It cancels the logical and pushes us into the realm of faith. It padlocks fear and unlocks hope and optimism.

As Israel prepared to march across the River Jordan they were filled with anxiety about approaching the unknown. They did not know what the future would hold, but they heard the word of God say, "I will never leave thee!" and the crossed over Jordan on dry land.

Somebody today has crossed many rivers, but there is still one more river to cross! You may not know what tomorrow will bring but you know who holds tomorrow. Listen to voice of God saying, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee!"

As Israel faced the challenge of walls of Jericho, they were apprehensive. They had no military skills to match those of their enemies. But they heard the word of the Lord saying, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee."

Do you have any walls that seem to stand in your way? Remember God's words, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee!"

If you take the Lord with you during the new year the:

—IMPOSSIBLE can become possible; the IMPROBABLE becomes probable

—Mountains that stand in your way can be reduced to molehills!

—Rough places can be made plain, crooked places can be made straight!

Let us move into the new year with confidence that come what may from day to day! My heavenly father watches over me!

If I fall down, he'll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!

If I stumble, he'll whole my hand!

If I can't find my way, he'll guide me! That's why I'll say, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!"

The same hand that touched a blind man's eyes!

The same hand that healed a lame man and made him walk!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death

But the same hands that were raised in victory early Sunday morning!

I want that same hand to guide me every day!

No. 878-Revival

He would not come down from the cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 1, 1978

SCRIPTURE:"At that time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who were passing by were whirling abuse at him and waging their heads and saying you who destroyed the temple and rebuild it in three days save yourself, if you are the son of God come down from the cross. In the same way the chief priests along with the scribes and elders were mocking him saying, "he saved others and he cannot save himself. Let him come down from the cross and we'll believe him." Matthew 27:38

Introduction

This particular passage of scripture focuses on Christ being nailed to the cross. After being nailed to the cross certain groups of people who appeared to ridicule him, challenge him and to poke fun at him. Their purpose was to provoke him to prove for their benefit that he was the God he claimed to be.

There were at least three groups of people that appeared to ridicule him was the common people. They said "you said you were so powerful that you could tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days." They questioned that if Jesus was as powerful as he claimed that he should not have any difficulty removing the nails from his hands. They were disturbed because they had misinterpreted his statements about rebuilding the temple to mean that he planned to tear down and rebuild the temple built by Zerrubabel. However, it was not this temple that Jesus referenced. He referred to his body which would be in the grave for three days and nights and would be arisen after the scripture had been fulfilled.

The common people misinterpreted his humility for weakness. It was similar to the old song that was popular a few years ago that said, "Don't take my kindness for weakness." Because he refused to come down from the cross, his refusal was taken as a sign that he was unable to do so.

2 Corinthians 13:4 teaches us that Christ was "crucified through weakness yet he liveth by the power of God." That means he allowed himself to become weak that he could be raised by the power of God. That would be the greatest testimony of the power of God.

-II-

The common people also told him, “You say you are the son of God.” They reasoned that if Christ was truly the son of God that God would not allow his son to hang on a cross, thus Christ should come down to conform to the will of God. Christ met a similar challenge a few years earlier from Satan while he fasted and prayed in the desert for 40 days and nights. Here, Satan tried to get Christ to prove himself by turning stones into bread and by bowing down and worshipping him. The idea of proving one’s self is often placed upon each of us. Even as young as high school some young men are often heard challenging some young lady to prove her love to him by having sex. This was the same challenge that was given to Christ: prove your love by coming down. However, Christ knew that he would not prove his love by coming down from the cross, but only by staying on the cross until his mission was completed. When the mission was complete and salvation secured, then and only then could Christ prove himself to any doubters.

-III-

The second group of people who criticized Christ were the religious leaders. They charged that he could not save himself because he did not possess the power. They misunderstood him. It was not that Jesus could not save himself, it was that he would not save himself. He possessed the power to come down if he so desired, but he chose not to exercise that power. One of the great common beliefs about any modern democratically dominated society is that those who lead the populus must be individuals who have first done something for themselves. The thinking is that those who cannot protect or provide for themselves won’t be very effective helping others. Thus, the public judges the level of personal success of those who purport to show others the way to success. Using this line of thinking the religious leaders maintained that Christ should be able to save himself by the same power and authority with which he expected to raise himself. They seemed to say, “You can’t show me how to make money if you can’t make money yourself.” If you can’t run your own house then you can’t tell me how to run mine.” And “If you are not doing well yourself, you can’t tell me how to improve.” They took this same line of reasoning and applied it to Christ saying, “He went around saving other folk, but he cannot save himself.” Moreover, the religious leaders were aware that in many instances Christ accompanied his miraculous works with forgiving of sin. Thus, if he could not come down from the cross it would indicate that he was guilty of a sin..that sin being that he claimed to be God, such a sin justified his death.

They also charged that if he was the King of Israel as he claimed, God would not allow him to die on the cross. They contended that if Christ was actually the King of the Jews as he claimed he would have organized the people in a successful revolt against the Roman government; but instead he hung on a cross.

They said, “If you are really this promised king of Israel, why don’t you come down from the cross and we will believe it.” I’m sure that Christ on the cross, being both God and man, must have considered the challenges that were given to him. He must have been affected by the ridicule. However, after hearing what they had to say about him, he decided to die to save mankind.

-IV-

The last group of those who criticized him was represented by the thieves on the cross. One of the thieves challenged Christ to prove his deity by saving himself and the thief as well. He had a selfish motive for his request because he wanted to be freed himself. Even in our prayers, sometimes we have selfish prayers that we ask of God. Fortunately God does not give us many of our selfish request because they will not be for our benefit. Thus, the thief on the cross asked a selfish request. The other thief was different. He saw what Christ was doing and teaching and believed it to be right, despite the fact he was a thief. Likewise there are many in the church who believe what is right but simply do not act on what they believe. The thief maintained that he deserved his punishment but he recognized that Christ had done no wrong. He asked for paradise and received an immediate answer.

The thief on the cross understood that Jesus could not come down if the possibly for heaven was to remain real.

The thief on the cross understood that Jesus could not come down if salvation was to be purchased.

The thief on the cross understood that Jesus could not come down if he intended to be the savior of the world.

He had the power to come down if he wanted to, but he still would not come down.

He had the power to bat his eye and make the lightning flash, but he still would not come down!

He had the power to clap his hands and make the thunder roll but he still would not come down!

He had the power to speak to the winds and make them obey his will but he still would not come down!

He had the power to touch a blind and make him see again but he still would not come down!

He had the power to touch a lame make man and make him walk again but he still would not come down.

He would not come down because he knew that one day in some city in the world there would be somebody down on their knees in the midnight hour say, “Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thy self from me, whether shall I go.”

He knew if he came down from the cross he wouldn’t be able to answer!

He knew that some wife, father or child would ask for blessing for a family member and he wouldn’t be able answer them with the blessing of grace!

He knew that one day in the distant future there would be someone who got drunk

on Friday and Saturday nights, or who indulged in adultery and ran around on the mates, or someone who would gamble away their paychecks, or even a child that would be disobedient to a parent that would become weary of their deviant lifestyles.

He looked to the day when the drunk would say, "I'm tired of being drunk every day of the week" or when the adulterer would say, "I'm tired of running around;" or when the child would say, "I'm tired of being disobedient to my parents."-because he knew someone would desire to be saved and repent, he would not come down from the cross!

I can hear the thoughts that must have floated through his mind on the cross.

"I can't come down because I want to be there for the church, in their time of need."

"I can't come down from the cross because I want to bread when they are hungry!"

"I will not come down from the cross because I want to be water when you are thirsty."

"I will not come down from the cross because I want to be a bridge over troubling water."

"I will not come down from the cross because I want to be a lawyer in your court room and a doctor in your sick room."

It's a good thing he didn't come down from the cross because we would have been a lost generation.

When he hung out on the crowds people came from miles to see him and said, if you are the Christ come down and save yourself.

Jesus would not answer them because he knew Satan was tempting him.

I'm glad he did not come down, but he died out on Calvary!

I'm glad that he died, but I'm also glad that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 879-Prayer

Ask for what you want, want what you get

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 13, 2002

SCRIPTURE: ***If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7***

Introduction

Have you ever asked for something, then didn't want it when you received it? Did it turn out to be what you expected? You may have been in a restaurant where you saw scores of delicious looking entrees you saw an item that looked good but, once it was on your plate it didn't look so hot! There have been certain clothing items we have yearned to have, only to find it that once we had them they weren't all that. Some things we were just "dying" to have caused us more problems than a little. There are many who have actually received what they asked God for only to discover that it would have been better if they did not receive it in the first place.

An old maxim is this, "be careful what you ask for, you just might get it!" Many have found that maxim to be true because they have received a few things in answer to their prayers, but did not want them after they received them. In every home there are probably Christmas toys, for the men and the boys, that haven't been touched in a long time. Yet, when we prayed for them we just had to have them!

There was a certain church member who loved to hear the pastor preach about the power of prayer because he was interested in using it to gain advantages for himself in the business world. He knew every sermon the pastor preached on this Subject and became an expert on prayer. One weekend he decided to skip his Sunday church service to go bear hunting in the mountains. As he turned the corner along the path, he and a bear collided. The member stumbled backwards, slipped off the trail, and began tumbling down the mountain with the bear in hot pursuit. Finally the member crashed into a boulder, sending his rifle in one direction and breaking both legs. As the bear closed in, the member remembered the power of prayer and cried out in desperation, "Lord, I'm sorry for skipping church. Please forgive me and save me! Lord, please make that bear a Christian."

Instantly the man's prayer was answered and the bear became a Christian. The

bear fell to its knees, clasped its paws together and said, "God, bless this food which I am about to receive." –He received what he asked for, but he did not want it afterwards!

Country and Western Singer Travis Tritt has a song called, "Where corn don't grow." It's about a young man, 17 years old, sitting on the front porch with his dad, drinking a cup of coffee, looking out over all the fields, the fields of corn, that surround their farmhouse. The son says, "Dad, I may be kind of young and maybe there's a lot I don't know, but don't you dream of going somewhere where corn don't grow?" In other words, don't you get tired of corn, planting it, cultivating it, fertilizing it, harvesting it, living around it, looking at it. "Don't you dream of going somewhere where corn don't grow?" The question makes his dad kind of sad. He says, "You're young, and there's a lot that you don't know, but weeds are high where corn don't grow." In the song the son goes to the big city, goes where corn don't grow, and discovers that big city life isn't so grand because weeds are high where corn don't grow.

When we ask God for something, we must be prepared to receive what he gives us in response. One author put it this way:

I asked for strength, God gave me difficulties to make me strong
I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.
I asked for riches and God gave me plenty of work to do
I asked for courage and God gave dangers to overcome
I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help
I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I received nothing I wanted, but everything I needed.

As Christians, we know that our savior has promised to hear our prayer. We also know that when he answers, he will do so in a way that will be in our best interest. We have learned that instead of asking for what we want, that it is better to ask for what "he" wants and know that we'll want what he gives.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as explain the nature of the believer's ask/receive relationship with God.

Jesus told his disciples that if they continued to "abide" in him and allowed him to abide with them, then they could ask what they wanted and they would receive.

The Greek word for "Abide" in this text is "Meno". It has various meanings but generally means to "remain." Specifically it means to "remain as one, without a difference." When Christ used this word explaining the ask/receive relationship he noted that there should be no difference between his will and the believer's desire

or his desire and the believers will. The believer loses himself completely in the will of God and there is no difference.

The second key word of this text is the phrase "ye will." The Greek phrase for "ye will" is "ethelo" which means to "have in mind" or an intention.

When the receive clause of this text is combined with the "ask" clause they seem to say, if a believer's desire is based on the beliefs, teachings and purpose of the savior then whatever he asks will be granted.

The secret of the text the believer knowing the will of God, adopting it as his own, then allow God to respond to their request in his way.

Why we don't want what we get!

Why is that sometimes we get what we pray for and then not want it? What is the reason? One of the main reasons is that we often forget what we ask for ultimately involves. If we change the arrangement of the universe in such a way nothing happens without affecting something else. Nothing exists independent and separate. Everything that exists is connected to something else. A believer who prays for a car may receive it. But the presence of the car changes that believer's arrangement in many ways, one is financially. With the new car comes a monthly note, insurance, gas, car washes, extended service contracts, parking fees and increased liability.

The same is true if a spouse becomes attracted to someone outside of the marriage and falls in love with them. That affair is going to affect a series of changes. It's not going to be confined to "A motel 6" mentality. Relationships with family will change, available time will change, attitude, energy, finances and spirituality will all be affected. We get what we want and usually find out that the affair cost us more than it was worth.

Because believers don't know the full impact of what a request will have on their lives, we trust God to only provide us with those things which will be to our benefit according to his will. He sees the big picture, we don't. Thus, whatever he provides, we are extremely grateful because we know it's connected to something up the road that will benefit us.

5 steps to get what you, and want what you get

Getting what we want from God and then wanting what we get involves five steps

WE MUST ABIDE IN HIM: We must approach God as a partisan rather than as a mercenary. A mercenary approaches the army for pay. He works hard but without loyalty to a cause. He stops working the first time he misses a paycheck. A partisan joins an army because he believes in a cause, pay is secondary. So it is with Christ. Those who accept his cause, teachings, philosophy of life, and objectives are partisans. What they want is what he wants. All others are mercenaries, seeking to get what they want. Because partisans want what's best for the cause, that which they ask for will be granted. The first step to getting what we want is to make sure what we want is in line with the will of God.

WE MUST FORGIVE: We can't get what we want from God if there are people who have offended us in some way and we have not forgiven them. Many people love to read without reading the 25th verse. Mark 11:24-25 says, 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. If want a blessing, we should not expect to enjoy it, even if we get it by hook or crook, as until we have forgiven those who have injured us.

WE MUST BLESS OTHERS: We receive answered prayers because we share our blessings with others. Those who want to keep the blessing for themselves alone don't expect blessings. Proverbs 21:13 "If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered." That's a fact of life. God says if you pay no attention to other people's legitimate needs, why should He pay attention to your needs? Our prayer should be, "bless me Lord and return I will use my blessing to bless someone else."

WE MUST NOT DOUBT: The fourth condition for answered prayer is you must believe that God will answer. You can't doubt. You must expect God to answer. There's only one kind of prayer that God answers: the prayer of faith. Mark 9:29 says "According to your faith, it will be done unto you." God can bless us without faith, but we can speed up the process by the intensity of our faith. We receive blessings by the measure of our faith. A teaspoon of faith yields a teaspoon of blessing. A gallon of faith yields a gallon of blessing. No faith at all results in no prayer being asked at all, hence no answer.

WE MUST ASK IN JESUS' NAME: There is only one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus. Thus, all prayers are addressed to God, but are delivered through our mediator, Jesus. Thus believers read what the word says and tags their prayers, "In Jesus' name." John 14:13 "And I will do whatever you ask in My name so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name and I will do it." The fifth condition for answered prayer: You must pray in Jesus' name.

What in the world does it mean to pray "In Jesus' name?" What does it mean?

A father took his young son and about fourteen of his son's friends to the carnival for a birthday party. He bought a roll of tickets and he'd stand at the front of every ride and as the kids came by — his son and the fourteen friends — he gave everybody a ticket. He was just handing them out. All of a sudden he looked up and realized there was a little boy with his hand out asking for a ticket that he'd never seen in his life. He stopped and said, "Son, are you with my son's party?" No. "Why should I give you a ticket?" The young boy turned around and pointed to the man's son and said, "Your son said you'd give me one." The son waved his hand in the air and said, "Daddy he's alright!"

When we pray in Jesus' name, our Lord tells the father, "Daddy's he's alright!"

I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things!

Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!
Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!
Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!
Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!
Daniel will tell you that prayer is good for the Lion's den!
The Three Hebrew Boys will tell you that prayer, is good for the fiery furnace!
I know what prayer can do! I've tried it for myself!
In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!
In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!
In Jesus' name, wounds have been healed!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!
Abide in him, trust in word, and ask what you will in Jesus' name and it shall be done!

No. 880-Communion

Good To The Last Drop

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 20, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; "Matthew 26:27

Introduction

Have you ever enjoyed something so much that you wanted more? There are some things in life that are so good that we just want more of them. We can't get enough, no matter how we try. These are the good things in life, the pleasant moments, the wonderful experiences and the grand times that seem too short. If it is an event the time flies quickly. If it is a consumable, it is gone before we even notice it. Vacations seem to end before they begin; honeymoons are too short; and a visit with a good friend flashes by so fast that we lose track of the time. Our natural tendency is to try to get all we can while we can; to milk the moment for everything we can get from it while the opportunity exists.

Maxwell House Coffee has a slogan that says, "Good to the last drops." It says that every drop of their coffee is good, down to the last drop.

When we think about life, there are some Maxwell House moments, when things are "good to the last drop."

A huge succulent, meaty neckbone is a tasty treat (Don't pretend you've never eaten a neckbone). To those who enjoy this treat it can bet so good that you find yourself breaking the bones and sucking them, trying to get to the last drop.

In rural areas of the nation folks once took a large bowl of collard or mustard greens and mashed corn bread in them. Although it was against every rule in the book of etiquette, they took their fingers and ate the greens. It was good! In fact, it was so good that when the greens and corn bread was gone, they licked their fingers! It was good to the last drop!

Watermelons grew on the vines in country fields. On occasion folks stumbled upon a juicy red one that seemed to be dripping with sweetness. Sometimes, if we were not careful we could eat all of the red meat then start scrapping the rhein. It was good to the last drop!

A good bowl of corn flakes can start a day just right. The cereal floats in milk and the taste is delicious. There are times when we have eaten all the cereal but there is still plenty of milk left. It tastes so good that we break every rule of etiquette as we

pick up the bowl and drain it..to get to the last drop!

A good movie excites us. We sat on the edges of our seats during the show. But when it was a great show we sit as the names start to scroll across the screen and watch the outtakes and bloopers, listen to the sound track and enjoy it all because it was good to the last drop!

Those who read mystery, romance and science fiction novels have the same story to tell. A great novel is a page turner. You burn the late night oil turning page after page, absorbing the words, scenery, dialogue and drama. A great novel is read down to the last word. It was good to the last drop!

The Maxwell House moment is not unique to just coffee, it describes even our spiritual moments. There are times when the spirit is high that we simply want to freeze that moment forever. Peter, James and John were carried to the top of the Mount of Transfiguration and were shown the glories of heaven. They were so excited that they wanted to stay there. They asked to build three tabernacles so they could stay in the presence of the Lord. They delayed their stay as long as they could before returning, because it was good to the last drop.

On one occasion Jesus healed a man who had been a lunatic. After being healed, the man wanted to stay in Jesus' presence but had to be told that he should return home. Being in the presence of the Lord was so intense an experience that man wanted to stay as long as he could. It was good to the last drop.

As believers, we have come to appreciate every day and every situation as one that is blessed by the Lord. It is worthy of rejoicing and praising him and enjoying. It is good to the last drop!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he encourages his disciples to receive their spiritual destinies by drinking from the cup.

Jesus spent three years preparing his disciples for his death and resurrection as well as the difficulties that lay ahead for them. He often described their immediate future to them in terms of being persecuted, ridiculed ostracized and even hated. In all, he described their experience as their cup and the contents being their life experiences.

As he prepared for the eventual crucifixion that was coming he shared the last supper with them and told them to take the bread and wine and commemorate his life and legacy by sharing this supper as a memorial meal until he returns. We call this meal the "Lord's Supper." He elaborates on its meaning in Luke 22:20, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." "After the same manner also he took the cup," we read in I Corinthians 11:25, "when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood. What Jesus seemed to say was, "Disciples, the cup of the Supper represents all that I have done to purchase your salvation upon the cross, you must continue to drink it." I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

As he explained the elements he said the bread would represent his body and the wine would represent his blood which is shed for the remission of sins. He then gave them the cup and told them the words of this text "drink ye all of it."

The Greek word for "drink" in this context is "peno" which means to receive into the soul that which will nourish and strengthen it unto eternal life. In using the word "peno" Jesus went beyond the physical and plunged into the spiritual. He went beyond flesh and blood and delved into that which was even greater. He encouraged his disciples to receive the providence of God because it would strengthen them spiritually.

This did not imply that those who "drink" from the Lord's supper table receive special powers or dispensations. It means that those who drink from the Lord's table "receive" providence of God. That spirit of bowing to the will of God strengthens and empowers a believer spiritually.

Jesus made a special point to tell his disciples to drink "all" of the cup. That is to receive everything that is in God's providence for the them. Drink it all. If that providence included joy or sadness, receive it all. If it included success or failure, receive it all. If it included an easy road or a difficult road, receive it all.

Thus, when Jesus told his disciples to drink all of the cup, he told them to receive everything that God gives them with a humble spirit and they would be stronger for doing so.

The whole cup

To understand the full impact of Jesus' words on our lives, we must focus on our lives in the context of "all of it."

There was a time, before fancy coffee making machines that percolated coffee grounds could find their way into a good cup of coffee. We called them the dregs. They were not deadly, but they were definitely unsightly and distasteful. If a person drank the entire cup of coffee he often drank the dregs too!

That seems to be the message that Jesus'' words conveyed to his disciples when he said, "drink ye all of it!" Drink the parts of the cup you like and the parts that are dregs too! Together they will bring you to a point of salvation.

How do you approach your cup in life?

SIPPERS: There are many people who are sippers. A sipper is a person who drinks the contents of his cup in small quantities. Sippers pace themselves, they take their time. In life, the sipper takes one day at a time, experiencing life as it comes. The sipper seems to agree with David when he said, "This is the day the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!" No matter how much we have to do in every week, we can only live one day at a time. Those who have learned to "sip" are those who drink the whole cup by gracefully internalizing each day and each experience.

GULPERS: In contrast to the sippers, there are those who are gulpers. The gulpers are those who drink large quantities quickly. Whereas a sipper paces himself, a gulper attempts to drink as much as he can as fast as he can. That is the approach

that many have about life. They attempt to do as much as they can in the shortest amount of time. They gulp. A person who gulps gets his drink or food down, but often misses the taste. Psalm 34:8 encourages us to take time to taste the blessings of the lord, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" When we live too fast, it all passes us by. We build a nice home but never enjoy it. We have a beautiful family but rarely spend time with them. We work hard and earn plenty of money, but we are so busy that we can't enjoy what it buys. Gulping robs us of the opportunity to enjoy the taste of the cup.

SLURPERS: Those who slurp, drink from the cup but they do so with a loud noise. The slurper attracts attention to himself often to the point of disturbing others. There are many who enjoy life but in the course of their enjoyment disturb the peace and serenity of others. It's like those who enjoy their music but don't care in the slightest if their 20" inch woofers are blaring so loudly in their cars that they cause the walls to shake in the homes they pass. There are many who live noisily, the live loud, attract inordinate attention and often disturb others. Just as it is uncomfortable eating at the table with a slurper, it is also uncomfortable trying to live with a slurper. The word encourages us to be modest in all of our endeavors.Avoid slurping.

How Do You Take It?

Finally brothers and sisters, when Jesus urged his disciples to "drink ye all of it" he encouraged them to accept life as God gives it to them.

There are many that cannot drink their cup in life unless they can have it the way they want it.

Jesus says, "Drink ye all of it" and they say, "Lord I can't take it black, I got to have a little cream to make it lighter!"

When the Lord tells us to go through life, he knows there are times when you can't take it black.

These are the times when despair is all around and clouds over spread the sky!

These are the times when troubles seem to multiply and moans come double!

Yet these are the times when the Lord comes to remind us that weeping endures but a night but joy comes in the morning. It may seem dark, but there is a bright side somewhere!

Jesus says, "Drink ye all of it" but there are some who say, "Lord, I can't take it without a little sugar!

When the Lord tells us to go through life, he knows there are times when we can't take it without a little sugar!"

There are times when life gets, bitter but Lord knows just how much sugar to add to make it alright.

Only people who know you well can fix your coffee. They know how much cream you want or whether you want cream at all. They know how much sugar you want, or whether you want sugar at all.

Too much sugar can mess up a good cup!

When Jesus said, "drink ye all of it!" He said it from the standpoint of someone

who knows us!

David said he knows our downsitting and our uprising! He knows the thoughts of our minds before we think them!

He knows how much cream you need to make your days brighter. He knows how much sugar you need to get through each day!

Maybe that's why the song writer says, "We are our heavenly father's children.. and he knows just how much we can bear!"

When things get dark he knows how much lighter things need to be. That's why David declared, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"

When days get a little bitter he knows how much sweetness to add. The song writer said, "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before!"

I heard another song writer say, "He's sweet I know. He's sweet I know. Dark clouds my rise and storms may blow but he's sweet I know!"

I see Jesus in the garden talking to his father!

Father you have given me a strong cup that is black. I don't like it black.

If I take it black, it's going to be strong!

If I take it black, they are going to persecute me!

If I take it black, they are going to beat me and persecute me!

I don't like it black, but nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done!

He drank his bitter cup and died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hand!

If you think your troubles are too difficult to be solved, wake up and smell the coffee!

If you think your burdens are too heavy, wake up and smell the coffee!

His blood has been shed for you!

And it's good to the last drop!

No. 881-Family

A Generation Without God?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 27, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. {11} Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals..." Judges2:10-11

Introduction

Is it possible to live with someone everyday and not know them? Is it possible to live in a family and the family members not know each other? Each day we interact with people at work, school or in the general community, but we don't really know them! Of course we know their names. We may know a tidbit or two about their background. We may even know a few facts about their hobbies and the names of a few of their family members, but does that mean we know them? There are many homes today in which family members do not know each other. Often children know more about their parents than their parents know about them. There are many children today who are growing up in families without really knowing their parents. They live in the same house but it may as well be a separate world because they close themselves in their rooms and shut out the rest of the family with the glare of the television set or the muffle sounds of a set of stereo headphones. It's a rapidly growing phenomenon of the modern evolving family where each member becomes accustomed to living with "strangers in the house."

How well do you "know" the members of your family? Not just their names, mind you, but how well do you really "know" them?

The old timers gave us a measuring stick to determine whether we know a person.

1) We know a person when we know the path he has walked to get to where he is? Knowing a person's history is the first step to really knowing them. Their history explains many things about them. It explains why they do what they do and why they "do not' as well.

2) We know a person when we know what makes them happy and have seen them happy. When we know these truths about people we know the situations they will enjoy, the books they read, the movies they watch and the kinds of circumstances that bring them joy.

3) We know a person when we know what makes them sad and we have seen them cry. No matter how strong the person, each person has a "cry" level. We know a

person when we know the kinds of things that will sadden them. That's when we know the situations, events or words that will bring tears to their eyes. We really know them when we have seen them cry.

4) We know a person when we know what makes them angry and we have seen them tremendously upset. A telltale aspect of any personality is their ability to handle their anger. How do they manage their anger? Are they violent? Do they yell? Are they destructive? Do they curse and swear? Do they get drunk? We really know a person when we have seen them tremendously angry and observed their response.

5) We know a person when we know how they respond to success or failure. Often the strongest and most positive personalities we know become weak and bitter when they fail. We don't know anyone until we have seen them fail. That's when we understand their nature better. Likewise, we know them when we see what happens when they succeed. Success for some is an intoxicant. For others, success is incidental. We know a person when we see them succeed.

6) We know a person when know how the importance they place upon their word. That's when we know whether a person can be counted upon to do what they have said they will do. The valuable of a man's word, is one identifying trait of his character. It identifies his truthfulness, dependability and reliability. You don't know a person until you know the value of their word.

Having made these six points, the question is asked again: "Is it possible to live in the same house with a person and not know them?" The answer is yes!

There are some parents who do not know their children. There are some children who do not know their parents. There are some husbands who do not know their wives. And there are some shacking partners who do not know each other at all.

If that's possible, then it is also possible for a generation of believers not to really know "God." It's possible for us to be in his presence daily and not know the history of his dealings with us or to know what makes him happy or angry, or to know the value of his promises to us. It's possible to come to church every Sunday and call yourself a church member and not really "know" God.

Every generation must learn to know God for themselves. It is the knowledge of God and how he operates in the lives of believers and on the universal sphere of life that helps us to appreciate all that he does for us. Knowing God gives the world sanity and a sense of purpose. Not knowing God is frustrating, troubling and destructive.

As believers we strive to know God for ourselves. Beyond that, we strive to make sure that each generation that follows us knows God as well, because without him we can do nothing. Without him we'd surely fail. Without him our lives would be drifting, like a ship without a sail.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel's lack of knowledge of God after the death of Joshua.

Joshua carried on the traditions and teachings of Moses for a generation. At the age of 110, Joshua died having successfully brought Israel into the promised land.

However, once in the promised land their actions changed tremendously. They began to familiarize themselves with the habits and practices of the Canaanites and their knowledge of God grew even less.

In the wilderness, Israel was completely dependent upon God. In the promised land they became completely depended upon the idol gods of the area. They began to worship a series of idol gods called "Baals" and Ashtaroths. Baal was a male god. Ashtaroth was a female god. These were fertility gods. How could a people who have been nurtured in the hand of God for generations and who, in their own life times, found themselves the beneficiaries of God's blessings, end up worshipping idol Gods? They knew it was wrong! They knew the ten commandments, but they worshipped idol gods anyway! How could this be?

They had been farmers in Egypt where irrigation was a means of watering the land, so they weren't accustomed to dry land farming. They didn't know quite how to handle the crops nor what to do. When their crops came up the first spring, they were of rather poor quality and straggly. In contrast, the Canaanite tribes had wonderful fields of grain. The Israelites asked: "Well, what do you do? What is your secret?" The Canaanites said, "It is very simple. We have certain fertility gods and we bow down to them and offer them sacrifices. Then they bless our crops. If you ever expect to get abundant crops in this land you are going to have to adjust to our ways." Of course, along with this advice the Canaanites taught them how to plant their crops properly, how to fertilize the soil and so forth, so that next spring, sure enough, after they had bowed down to the gods of the Canaanites, they found the crops were wonderful. The Israelites said, "There must be something to this fertility business. We'd better worship these gods after all." They forsook the God of Israel and bowed down to the Baals and Ashtaroths. Now, what is not recorded here is that these were sex gods and worshipping them involved not only bowing down before dumb idols that could not speak, act or think, but also involved the Israelites in licentious practices. Thus, they gradually drifted off into idolatry.

The book of Judges records what happened to a generation of people who were familiar with but did not know God. Their allegiances, spare time, practical faith and goals were all related to idol based worship and orientations of the Cannanites. Because they did not "know" God they were easily drawn into a world that caused them trouble, loss of glory and power and diminished capacity. The mighty people who once crossed the Red Sea and marched around the walls of Jericho until they fell, were reduced to human chattel; a little more than slaves but far less than their best.

It all happened because a generation grew up that did not "know" God.

Families Need a Sense of godliness

If there is a lesson to learn from observing and studying the Israelites in Canaan it would be that families should become better acquainted with the tie that binds them. After Joshua's generation died off, another generation came along after them, "who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel" (2:10). Certainly,

we've already seen that Joshua's generation clearly disobeyed the Lord. But at least they were a generation that had heard the word of the Lord through Joshua. They were lazy and disobedient, but they knew the God Joshua was talking about. There was a standard. They knew the rules. And, our text says, Joshua's generation knew the works God had done in the past. They had some sort of heritage. They had some sense of identity of being God's chosen people. They knew they had been delivered from their enemies by God Himself. They knew because Joshua made sure they knew. Read his speeches to the people. He constantly told them of the blessing of God upon their lives.

There are several truths that every family must know about itself.

KNOW HOW GOD HAS MOVED IN YOUR FAMILY: Each believing family should make sure every family member knows how God works his will in your family. God does not work with individual's alone. He moves through entire families to accomplish his will. Certain gifts are bestowed upon families of believers to accomplish his will. Just as there were families of doorkeepers, singers and priests in bible times, there are families of educators, engineers, missionaries, mechanics, leaders, soldiers, etc. Every family member should know the lives of its patriarchs and matriarchs to discover the purpose God uses your family to accomplish.

KNOW THE MISTAKES OF YOUR FAMILY: Each family member has a story. Family members need to know the history of its members. We need to know about our family successes and what we did when we succeeded. Those times when we failed, what did we do? When we suffered, how did we overcome? What mistakes have we made as a family? Does our family history show us that we could have done better if we had avoided certain paths? As a family, what have we learned from our mistakes? When families explore their history and dissect their strengths and weaknesses, it brings great strength and a sense of purpose to young lives

KNOW YOUR FAMILY'S RESPONSE TO ITS MISSION: Every family that has been equipped for a mission has responded to their mission. While there are entire families that have chosen to use their gifts for the betterment of the kingdom of God, there are others that have used them for themselves and have neglected God altogether, not to mention of the kingdom of God. Many families have responded to God in a positive way, using their family gifts in a way that glorifies God and builds the kingdom of God in a grand way. Each family member should be familiar with God and the history of its family's response to God.

Know God for yourself

Finally, brothers and sisters, not only must we know how God operates in our family, but you must know God for yourself.

It will be dangerous if we ever reach the point that there is a generation that does not know the Lord!

When Israel reached the promised land they were more prosperous than they had ever been, but there grew up a generation did not know the Lord!

They had better crops than they had ever had before, but there grew up a generation that knew not the Lord!

They were living better than they had ever lived before, but there grew up a generation that knew not the Lord!

Every family must teach its children about the goodness of the Lord.

When Israel crossed over the River Jordan, Joshua ordered 12 stones to be erected as a memorial. Every succeeding generation would ask, "What mean these stones?" At that time Joshua said the people should tell the story of how God brought us over on dry land?

I'm reminded of three daughters who were raised by their grandmother. They had become successful in life, but they never went to church or took religion seriously. They decided to buy their grandmother a gift for her 75th birthday. When she opened the box the grandmother saw a beautiful and expensive reading bible. It's pages were made of the finest onion skin. It had ribbon of pure silk for a page marker. Her name was engraved on the cover in 14 carat gold. It's cover was made from the smoothest calfskin. It was an expense bible that came with an hard leather carrying case speckles with the name "Holy Bible" on the outside in scores of small diamonds. That grandmother thanked her daughters for the gift, but a few hours later they saw her sitting in her chair reading her old family bible. The girls asked, "Why are you still reading that old bible?" Grandma said, "When you were young, we didn't have much, but I opened this old bible and read, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want! When your mama died of the plague, I read in this old bible, "Yea thou I walk through valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. When the flood came in 51 and destroyed everything we had but this old bible, its pages was opened to these words, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Grandma said, "Your bible is pretty, but this bible has a story tell. Your bible can't tell my story!"

I've got to tell the story of how we were down and out, and God picked us up and turned us around!

I've got to tell the story of how God healed our sick and open the blind eyes of lost family members!

I've got to tell the story of how he planted our feet on solid ground

I've got to tell the story about Jesus!

.How he died out on Calvary!

-How early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I've got to tell somebody!

I've got to tell somebody!

No. 882-Inspiration

Recovering Fumbles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 3, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

Introduction

Have you ever messed up a good thing? Every now and then each of us gets a golden opportunity that probably won't be repeated to frequently. Sometimes the opportunity involves a career opportunity. Sometimes it's a quest for a higher education. There are times when our "good thing" is a caring husband or a loving wife. It could even be a nice car, job and bright prospects for promotion. Whatever happens to be our particular "good thing" -some of us can recall a time or two when we really messed up and lost or nearly lost our "good thing."

Many years ago the blues singer Etta James wrote a song about a man who had a loving and devoted wife but he was never there for him. While she did everything to please him, he was always somewhere else. When the wife decided to leave him, Etta James sang the words of the song's title, "Your good thing is about to come to an end."

We can all relate to Etta James' words. At some point in our lives, we seen a good thing or too, slip right through our fingers.

The child who has a comfortable room with video games, designer clothes and the best of everything has a "good thing." But when attitudes, low grades or back talk cause these things to be taken away, parents sing that song, "Your good thing is about to come to end."

The wife who has a husband who works himself to the bone to provide for her every need, keeps her looking good with money in her purse and with a nice set of wheels to ride in has a "good thing." But if that wife is unfaithful or takes her husband for granted, he may sing, "Your good thing is about to come to an end."

The same is true for husbands who have those perfect wives who somehow manage to balance a career, rear children and make them feel like a king. Such men have "good things." When husbands take their "good things" for granted there are some wives who will quickly sing the words, "Your good thing is about to come to an end."

When we mess up, we fumble! Like a football player who had the ball in his hands

with a golden opportunity to capitalize on a possession and score, we are miserable when we fumble and drop the ball

Fumbles are costly. Depending on the situation at the time of the fumble, they can be devastating, especially in an important game.

Just as winning is a part of life, fumbles also a part of life. The greatest baseball players were also known for a large number of strike outs. The record books show that some of the greatest basketball scoring aces missed more baskets than they scored.

Each time there is a super bowl we remember the big plays, but there has rarely been a game where there were no fumbles; they seemed to come at the worse moments and caused so much trouble.

While the great players messed up good things by fumbling, the record also showed that what made these players great was there ability to recover some their own fumbles and go on to win their games.

In 1996 Tony Banks of St. Louis had the distinction of having the most fumbles, 21, in a single season. He was able to recover 8 of his own fumbles.

Warren Moon made the history books in football for making the most fumbles in a career with 160 fumbles. His career lasted from 1984 to 1998 and spanned three teams including Houston, Minnesota and Seattle. It wasn't all bad though because 55 of those fumbles he recovered. Following close behind Moon is David Krieg with 153 fumbles over his 18 year career with Seattle, Kansas City, Detroit, Arizona, Chicago and Tennessee. He recovered 47 of his own fumbles.

Both of these men are icons in football history. They are known for their successes, but football history also shows that both men have set records for the most fumbles made and most fumbles recovered.- mostly their own.

Is it possible that we have fumbled the ball in one or more of our relationships? Is everything all right at home? At Work? What about our relationship with God? Are we holding on or have we fumbled the ball?

Fumble recovery is specialty of Holy Ghost. He spends a great deal of time drilling every believer on the importance of holding on to the ball. However, just like every good coach, the Holy Ghost also teaches us how to get the ball back and how to get over the mental anguish associated with fumbling.

As believers, we have learned that while it is human to fumble and mess up a good thing, only the divine can give it back to us. Since God is a forgiving and merciful God, no matter how bad we mess up, we can recover our fumble!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he asks God to restore the joy of good relations with God. This psalm is the result of an instance in David's life which he made a major error despite being given a golden opportunity. The inscription of the psalm reads, "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

David enjoyed a grand opportunity during his 40 year reign as King of united Judah and Israel. He raised the worship of God to a high standard and brought peace to the land. He was, by any standard, a successful king. However, in the midst of this prosperity David fumbled the ball. He became involved in the double sin of adultery and murder while he was king.

. The story of David's fumble has been told so many times it has become legendary. He was on his palace roof one day when the army had gone out to battle and he saw a beautiful woman bathing herself. He entered into an adulterous relationship with her for she was a married woman. Her husband, Uriah, was a soldier in the king's army. He was away from home fighting for his nation.

A love child was conceived in the relationship and David panicked and tried to cover it up. He ordered Uriah home from battle and sent him home, hoping that he would sleep with his wife and the child would then be accepted as his own. But Uriah was a soldier, committed to battle, and though he came home would not go home to his wife because he felt it unfair to that he should get to go home and not the other men in his company.

To cover his sin, David ordered Uriah to be put in the forefront of the battle where he would most certainly be killed. When news of Uriah's death reached the king he felt he had safely covered his sin. In Psalm 32 David records how he felt during that terrible time when he was trying to cover up his sin. "When I kept silence," he says, "my bones grew old through my groaning all day long. For a year he tried to live with a bad conscience. But, as the story records, God sent a prophet to David. God loved this king, loved him too well to let him go on covering up and thus damaging himself and his entire kingdom by this hidden sin. So God sent the prophet Nathan to David.

Nathan approached David in a way that he could not deny and singled him out as the man responsible for both adultery and murder. In a prophetic moment the prophet Nathan pointed a finger at the king and said, "Thou art the man!" David knew then that his sin was uncovered.

At this point David recognized for sure that he had fumbled. He fell on his face before God and out of his remorse came the fifty-first Psalm. It gives other believers a game plan for recovering a fumble in life, which is to seek forgiveness from God.

What Causes Fumbles

A fumble can only occur unless someone has possession of the ball. If believer's fumble an opportunity, it means that they at least had possession of the opportunity. It is not a case of a blessing being sought, but rather a blessing possessed then lost.

John Milton wrote a ten volume poem called "Paradise Lost" as he attempted to describe the life long fall from grace of man from the presence of God. Whether it is Adam and Eve fumbling a golden opportunity in Eden or Moses fumbling as he took credit for providing water to thirsty people, the reasons for the loss of "paradise" are varied.

WE SOMETIMES DROP THE BALL: There are times when we lose golden

opportunities because we "drop the ball." There is no other reason. We had it in our hands and dropped it. That's what the prodigal son realized after he wasted his inheritance on riotous living. There, standing over a hog trough, he realized that he had dropped the ball. There was no one else to blame but himself. Because believer's are human, bad judgment is a flaw that will always be present. Despite our knowledge and experience, we often make bad judgment calls in the heat of the moment. That's one reason the Word teaches us to always be ready for reconciliation or ready to forgive someone who has offended us. It acknowledges the undeniable truth that while executing the most well thought out play, that even the best players can drop the ball. Thus, the prodigal said, "I have sinned before God and before thee."

SOMETIMES FUMBLES ARE FORCED: Sometimes an opponent can force a fumble. They can execute a blitz and hit us in a way that causes us to fumble. It must be a horrible feeling to be a quarterback on a team and see 300 pound defenders attacking from all sides. Sometimes when everything hits at the same time a fumble occurs. 1 Peter 5:8 warns believers about the devil's blitz when it says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" That's a fancy way of saying the devil is looking for an opportunity to force a fumble in your career, family, or spiritual life. He's not just waiting, he's seeking someone to utterly destroy.

When a believer is winning the game of life, the only chance the devil has is to force a fumble. Aware of that, every believer should be extremely vigilant to make sure that he holds onto the ball. Even though he may be hit from every side, hold on to the ball. Defenders may pile up on top of you and crush you, but hold on to the ball!

SOMETIMES FUMBLES RESULT IN TURNOVERS: The worse case scenario for a fumbled opportunity is to see your opponents capitalize on your fumble. A turnover occurs when we drop the ball and our opponents recover our loss. Fumbles can be costly. Jesus told the parable of several men who were given talents and told to use them in a way that would make the master proud. In the end one of the men failed to use his talent and buried it. That was a fumble. The master took his talent and gave it to someone that would use it. In a similar sense, fumbles can result in turnovers in life. Opportunities and "good things" that should have been ours can easily fall in the hands of others, for the simple reason that we fumbled the ball. We had it but could not hold on to it. Every year there are literally millions of people who watch their opportunities blossom in the hands of someone else. They fumble a project at work and someone else received the promotion. Even worse they fumbled a marriage and someone else is enjoying the happy relationship that could have been theirs.

Recovering Fumbles

Finally brothers and Sisters, we have seen the different ways that we can fumble the ball. We have seen how the ball can be dropped or taken from us and prompt turnovers. But we need to remember one final thing today, and that's how to recover our own fumbles.

We may drop the ball, but the enemy doesn't get possession of our blessing, if we know how to recover our own fumble.

We have may mess up an opportunity, but all is not loss, if we can recover our own fumble.

If we look closely at David's actions after he fumbled we'll find the secret to how to recover our own fumble.

David showed us a two fold fumble recovery plan that worked for him and will work for every believer.

David's first step was to ask God to give him a clean heart.

He's said "Lord, create in me a clean heart!"

A clean heart means to get rid of anything that would not be pure!

"If I have fumbled because my heart's not right, then give me a brand new heart."

"If I have fumbled because I hate somebody, then take my hate and turn it into love"

"If I have fumbled because I hold a grudge against someone, then take my grudge and give me reconciliation."

"If I have fumbled because I have an impure motive for my action, then take away my impurities give me a divinely inspired motivation."

"If I have fumbled because I have not shown mercy, then take away my vicious spirit and replace it with mercy and compassion!"

I'd like to believe that when David asked the Lord for a clean heart that God reached down and took all of his sins and guilt and washed it white as snow.

That's what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 6:11 when he said, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The second step that David implemented to recover from his fumble was to change his attitude and spirit. He asked the Lord to "renew in me a right spirit."

To renew means to start all over again.

There are many believers who began their Christian journey with a right spirit. They were dedicated toward the mission, but somewhere along the way they adopted a different attitude or a wrong spirit. David decided that simply getting a clean heart was not enough, he needed to go back to the point where his spirit was with the Lord!

Take, me back to the point where I found joy in my relationship to God!

Take me back to the point when I was enthused about worship and studying my bible!

Take me back to the point when I was willing to give my life on the altar of sacrifice!

That's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Take me back! Take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received you. Take me back, take me back dear Lord, to where I first believed!"

I heard the song writer declare, "I'm not asking for the riches of the land. I'm not asking for all men to know my name, but give me Lord a clean heart, and I will follow thee!"

If you want to recover your own fumble, ask the Lord to give you one more chance!

The game is not over because you fumbled the ball, because we serve a God of the second chance!

The Lord will give you a second chance!

He'll pick you up and turn you around! He'll plant your feet on solid ground!

Call on Jesus!

He died out on Calvary for you!

Call on Jesus!

He arose from the dead for you!

If you fumble the ball in life, he'll give you a second chance!

No. 883-Anniv.-Women

Ansistahs

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 10, 2002

*SCRIPTURE:**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. Acts 17:11***

Introduction

Have you ever read the biographies of great people? One of the most interesting undertakings is to research the struggle of many of the world's greatest people to rise against expectations and succeed. We see them today as they bask in the glory of triumph, achieving acclaim in various walks of life, without really knowing the whole story. This is very true with respect to the accomplishments of women in general and African-American women specifically. Each generation of women achievers stands on the shoulders of others who have blazed trails and opened the doors of opportunity. We don't know the stories of many of these great women, but we know that for every woman that succeeds today there was another woman before her that brought the entire gender closer to achieving the ideal.

African-American women share a sense of sisterhood that has been created in the womb of oppression and difficulty. This sisterhood extends beyond the present and blurs the lines that divide time and space as it plunges every generation into a perfect union.

The sisterhood of African-American women is tinged with empathy. It is real and has its roots in the soul. Not all sisters share empathy for each other. I'm reminded of the rich woman who lived in a certain city who never gave to the United Way, despite having made millions in the local community. A local volunteer called to solicit the donation, saying "our research shows that you are one of three sisters who were born in this city. Of your sisters, you became wealthy with an income of over a million dollars. However, our research shows that you do not give one penny to charity! Wouldn't you like to give back to your community? The sister thought for a moment and said: "First, did your research show that my mother is dying after a long, painful illness and has huge medical bills far beyond her ability to pay?" Embarrassed, the United Way rep mumbles, "Uh, no." "Secondly, that one of my sisters, is disabled , blind and confined to a wheelchair and is unable to support her six children?" The stricken United Way rep begins to stammer an apology but is cut off. "Thirdly, that

another of my sister's husband died in a dreadful traffic accident leaving her penniless with a mortgage and three children?" The humiliated United Way rep, completely beaten, says simply, "I had no idea."
Then the sister said, "...and if I didn't give my mother and my sisters any money, why should I give any to you?" Not everyone Sister acts like a sister.

We call a person a "sister" who has an affinity and connection with our heritage of struggle. Though ebonics has changed both the spelling and the pronunciation, sister and "sistah" both have the same cultural meaning: women who are connected by heritage and struggle.

An ancestor is a person from whom one is descended, especially if that person is more remote than a grandparent. Ancestors are the source of our inheritance whether it be in real property, intellectual or biological. Ancestors make up the sum total of stock from which we are derived.

Then what are "ansistahs?" They are sistahs (sisters) who have served as the forebears of the present generation. They are the women from whom we are descended, beyond our grand mothers. These are the women who are the source of our inheritance whether it be real property, intellect or genetics. They make up the sum total of the stock from which the present generation derives its strength.

They are the ones that Carol Bernard wrote about in 1999 in her work, "A Sistah's Pledge" in which she said,

"I am an expression of God's handiwork, therefore I must love and respect my total being"

"I will use my eyes to see all the possibilities God has for me."

"I will use my ears to hear all that affirms my beauty, my potential and my possibilities."

"I will use my hands to work for the betterment of myself, my family, my community, and my country."

"I will use my voice to speak words of wisdom, so that I might help others to realize their true greatness."

"My feet stand on the shoulders of my ansistahs who have gone before me"

Ansistahs are the ancestors of the female gender who blazed the trails before there were roads and highways. Ansistahs are those women of color who marched forward into the face of the unknown to make it known.

For every sistah that is achieving today there is an ansistah.

For every Alice Walker today, there is a Phyliss Wheatley the first published African-American poet

For every Venus and Serena Williams today, there is an Althea Gibson the Wimbledon doubles champion of 1957.

For every Lauryn Hill and Lil Kim today, there is a Queen Latifah.

For every Etta James today, there is Bessie Smith queen of the blues.

For every Halle Berry today, there is a Hattie McDaniel of Gone with the Wind and Ethel Waters, pioneers of the silver screen.

For every Condeneeza Rice today, there is a Shirley Chisolm or Harriet Tubman walking the halls of government

For every Ophrah Winfrey there is a Madam C. J. Walker who became the first Black female business millionaire.

For every Janet Jackson today, there is a Billie Holiday on the sound stage.

For every Dinah Ross today, there is a Dorothy Dandridge.

Today, women who serve honorably in their communities owe a debt of gratitude to their ansistahs who dared the forbidden and created opportunities.

Today, there are millions of Christian "sistahs" who have spiritual ansistahs as well. These are the women who served as spiritual examples of commitment to God and service to their fellowmen. Every Christian sistah has a heritage of hope and honor that is derived from faith in God. Embedded in the life stories of their ansistah's is the story of how God moved in the lives of our ansistahs to create a better day.

As Christians, we thank God for our sistahs and our ansistah's. Together they have shown the world the path to living faith-based lives that are filled with hope strength through the power of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's conversion of many honorable women on his second missionary journey.

Paul made three missionary treks throughout the known world of his time. In each of his journeys he established churches in the homes of those who believed his preaching and wrote to them regularly to keep the faith burning in them.

In the early beginnings of the church Paul always found many women among the first believers. In Thyatira, there was Lydia, a seller of purple (Acts 16:14). In Thessalonica, there were many women that came forth (17:4) and Berea even more women (17:12);and even when others mocked him there were some who remained faithful. One woman named Demarius is named in Acts 17:34.

Without a doubt, women were among the trail blazers and pioneers of the church. Paul referred to these women as honorable. The Greek word translated "honorable" is euschemon {yoo-skhay'-mone} it means, "respectable, influential, of good standing."

These women were among the proselytes who studied the word of God. Paul used the known scriptures to convince them that Jesus was the fulfillment of promises made by God in Old Testament times. The men and women searched the scriptures daily with an open mind to verify Paul's words. They concluded that he was right and believed on Jesus Christ.

The first followers in every city were the founders of the church in their respective cities. They were the ancestors of millions that would follow in succeeding centuries. The women who followed Paul in Thessalonica and Berea were the spiritual ancestors of many women that would follow in the succeeding centuries. They worshipped often under the threat of their lives and property. Many died for the cause of Christ

Today, African-American women should follow the trail of Godly women who lived with honor and dignity and struggled in hope.

The record of African-American Ansistahs is long and glorious and deserves the study of those who begin the walk themselves.

Every woman who begins a walk down a career path should be able to recognize the foot print of the persons who have blazed the trail.

Those who were successful all had something in common. Paul called it "honor" which meant to him that they lived godly lives, kept their word, and gave service to others.

If this generation gains anything from the study of its ansistahs, it should seek to learn how they prepared themselves, how they overcame obstacles, and how they played the game.

PREPARATION: Women like all others, must be prepared. Gone are the days when it was believed that learning was a man's pursuit because a woman's place is confined to a dish pan and a wash pot. Women of the past learned what was required to compete in their generation. They learned to read and write. In other times they learned to type on typewriters and to operate machinery. Likewise, women must prepare themselves for the challenges of the 21st century which means acquiring verbal and language skills and a proficient use of technology. A woman who has no email address has stamped a date on her preparation that flashes "smart but out of touch." Despite her resume, she presents herself as one who is not prepared to transact business in the mode of this generation. To be women of honor, women must prepare.

STRUGGLE: Women must be prepared to struggle. To paraphrase Frederick Douglass, success cannot come without a struggle. The person who wants success without struggle is like the farmer who wants rain, but does not want the thunder and the lightning associated with rain. The women of our history have shown a unique willingness to struggle. Whether it was the slave mother who labored to protect her children and women who defied laws of segregation as they worked to change social circumstances. Today's women should study the struggles of their career path ansistahs. What obstacles did they meet? How did they overcome them? Such study allows this generation to expect a struggle and to prepare themselves to overcome.

PLAYED THE GAME: Women must play the game with dignity and grace. That is what is learned when we study the record of our ansistahs. They were able to maintain amazing dignity about themselves, despite adverse circumstances. Our ansistahs may have lived in shanty houses with wooden floors, but those floors were kept clean and spotless. They may have worn dresses woven from flower sacks, but they were always neat and clean. The way a woman carries herself is the way she plays the game. The world is wary of the woman that cusses like a sailor and walks like a cowboy. Moreover, the woman who strives to honor her word, care for her family and be true to her husband or vow of celibacy is deemed a woman of honor by the general community. She is revered because of the way she plays the game..

Spiritual Ansistahs

Finally, we must follow the path of our spiritual ansistahs.

Our spiritual ansistahs are those women of faith who answered the question, "What doth the Lord require of us" by giving themselves to his service.

The trail of our spiritual ansistahs is long and clear.

If we follow the trail of Hannah it will find her telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts.

If we follow the trail of Ruth, we'll hear her say, "You people shall be my people and my God shall be your God"

If we follow the trail of the woman at the well, we'll hear her say, "Come see a man" who told me all I've ever done.

Our ansistahs have made it clear that following the Lord is a rewarding experience. Because when you follow the Lord you have somebody who can help you:

-carry your burdens
-face your future
-fulfill your responsibilities
-fight your battles
-solve your problems
-overcome your temptations

What doth the Lord require of us? That we worship him! We should worship him with the:

-spirit of Mary of Bethany
-power and strength of Deborah
-grateful and humble heart of Mary Magdalene
-faith of Ruth and the enduring hope of Rahab

What doth the Lord require? That we live for him everyday and every hour!

Dr. Watts declares "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save to fit it for the sky."

What does the Lord require? That we love our neighbor as we love ourselves!

What does the Lord require? That we tell the world of the goodness of the Lord!

I must tell of the goodness of the Lord!

I must tell them how he touched my life one day, picked me up and turned me around.

I must tell them how he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill!

I must tell them that he died for me..

But early Sunday morning ...

He arose with all power in his hands!

No. 884-Youth

God's Hall of Fame

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 24, 2002

SCRIPTURE: " And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." Mark 10:34-37; "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." Mark 10:42-44.

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed of being a member of the Hall of Fame? Nearly every area of interest imaginable has a hall of fame. There is a hall of fame for Baseball, football, Negro League baseball, Rock and Roll, Country Music and many more. You name the area of endeavor and there is a "hall of fame." In Hollywood there is even a "Walk of Fame" which features stars on the sidewalk of the streets for actors who have left their footprints in the entertainment business trail of glory. Those who are inducted into the "Hall of Fame" are those who are recognized by their peers for their excellence and achievement. These are people whose accomplishments are a part of our history. They are being lifted up as the greatest because of their work. Those who are selected for this honor deserve the praise and their place in the hall of fame.,

You name the game and there is a hall of fame. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame includes the greats of Rock and Roll from Louis Armstrong to Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley and Micheal Jackson. Johnny Unitas, Y.A. Tittle, Joe Namath and Jim Kelly are all members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb and Hank Aaron are members of the Baseball Hall of Fame. There is a Pro Hockey Hall of Fame, Bowling Hall of Fame, Figure Skaters Hall of Fame and even a Cow Girl's Hall of Fame. If that surprises you then you'll really be surprised to know that there is a Tobacco Spitting Hall of Fame too.

Amazingingly, a person does not have to be dead to be a member of the Hall of Fame they do not have to be old either. The National Kids Hall of Fame celebrates youth who are making a difference and leaving their footprints for others to follow. Youth such as Shelarese Ruffin of Atlanta, who at age 15 decided she wanted to do

something that would help give troubled kids a second chance. As she researched the issue and discussed it with others, Shelarese began to formulate a concept for a program that would appeal to at-risk teens and effectively address their problems, through both individual attention and group interaction.

She began developing an intervention program that enables middle and high school students to confront and overcome drug and other discipline problems instead of being expelled from school. She focused on the issue, brought in professionals and received a $50,000 grant to help Jr. High and High school students avoid drugs and stay out of school. Over 3,000 students participated in the two year project. Miss Ruffin was just 15 years old when she decided to make a difference, but she entered the Kids Hall of Fame.

At this point in your life, what kind of foot prints are you leaving? Would you suggest that others who come after you follow your pattern? Should they study the way you study? Should they dress the way you dress? Should they strive for excellence the way you do? One unique trait among Hall of Famers is that they were all serious, committed and believed in themselves. Youth who desire to leave a foot print in life's walk of fame must do likewise.

Position and power can be attained by many means. However, greatness is not conferred upon a person by virtue of a position but by the quality of the service that is actually performed. For example, being a member of an NBA team does not guarantee that a player will automatically be inducted into the NBA Hall of Fame. Even being a famous singer does not mean that Hall of fame status has been achieved. Not every president was a great president. Even though thousands of people have sold chicken over the years, only a few rank in the same category as Col. Harland Sanders and his famous Kentucky Fried Chicken. Those who rank among the Hall of Famers are those whose actions and deeds deserve preservation.

As Christians, we are concerned about what God thinks of what we do and say. Therefore the accolades of man are appreciated but what we want to hear is God say well done. To be great in his sight is simply to love him and show it through using our talents and gifts to the best of our ability in a way that would glorify him. Every person that does so is virtually guaranteed to be a member of God's Hall of Fame.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives a simple formula for greatness to his followers.

Jesus often taught his disciples life stories that would help them as they tried to live the believer's life on a daily basis. Two of the principles that Jesus often referred to were humility and service to others. On the occasion of this text, two of Jesus' disciples came to him with a proposition. Their names were James and John, who were often described as the "Sons of Thunder" because they had a tendency to "go off" whenever things didn't go just as they thought they should.

The two brothers approached Jesus with a special request that angered their

friends among the 12. They wanted a guarantee that when he came into power in the new kingdom that both of them would be given positions of power and fame, one on his left and the other on his right. They believed that a new kingdom was coming and they wanted to be famous once it happened.

Jesus questioned the young men at length. He asked whether they knew what they were asking. He wanted to be sure they knew the full implication of their requests. They claimed that they knew and were ready to do whatever was necessary.

In verse 42 Jesus pulls them to the side and reminds them of the difference between how greatness is perceived among believers and how it is perceived among nonbelievers. The truly great man, according to Jesus, is not one who sits high on the left or right of leaders and exercises power, but the one who gives his best in service to others. In the Kingdom of God, those who are considered the greatest are those who give the most to others.

Thus the formula for greatness is revealed. Jesus made it clear, to be considered great in God's sight is not just to gain a position or status, but to use whatever position, status or station in life we attain as a servant to others. The greatest servants are inducted into God's Hall of Fame.

Young Hall of Famers

Youth today can be a member of the Hall of Fame. Just as there is a national "Kids" Hall of Fame God also has a Hall of Fame for young people and anyone else who make contributions to the kingdom that glorify God and help others at the same time.

The Bible is filled with examples of young people who have earned what we could call hall of fame honors. They exhibited four characteristics unique to all persons whose service is of Hall of Fame caliber. They were willing to serve others, were willing to stand for God, build the kingdom and display courage and faith in the process. Some even rose above difficulties and the restrictions imposed by their youth to achieve greatness because they expected great things from God and attempted great things for people with the help of God.

WILLINGNESS TO HELP OTHERS: John 6:1-15 shows how a little boy who wanted to help became a member of God's Hall of Fame. A crowd of people had assembled, over 5,000 and there was concern that there would not be enough food to feed them. A little boy, in his innocence, offered his lunch which was two fishes and five loaves of bread. Jesus took the boy's lunch and used it to feed the boy and 5000 others as well. The boy gave a very small gift in comparison to the need. However, small things become great things in the master's hand. The boy's intent was to use his gift to help people and in so doing he was able to do a great thing. His intent was not to become famous. His intent was to help and give all he had in the process. As a result, God blessed him and the people he touched with abundance. There were many youth present that day, but only one is remembered today; the little boy who gave his lunch and earned a place in God's Hall of Fame.

WILLINGNESS TO STAND FOR GOD: There are three youth who remembered around the world because of their willingness to stand for God at the peril of their own

lives. The three men were Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego. They were promised wealth and prosperity if they used their talents and gifts to help an evil king run his government. They refused and as a result of their refusal they were thrown into a fiery furnace that was especially made seven times hotter than usual, just for them. These three men were not in search of glory of fame. They sought to do what was right in the sight of God and stood up for him in a bold way. Youth today, have similar opportunities and challenges to stand up for God and do the right thing. It may not be popular to do the right thing. It may even get you thrown into a fiery furnace of trouble, but "God is able" to deliver believers from a world of trouble when they stand for him. These young men did not seek fame but they achieved it because they stood for God.

WORK TO BUILD THE KINGDOM: There were many beautiful women in biblical times, just as there are today. A beautiful young woman by the name of Esther won a beauty pageant sponsored by the king. This king did not believe in Esther's God but he was impressed with her beauty and married her. When a wicked man tried to get the king to hurt her people, Esther used her influence with the king to save the people. Those who have influence should use it to help advance the kingdom of God. In Ester's case, her influence was gained through her beauty. Not every beautiful woman uses her beauty for godly causes. The bible tells of a beautiful woman who danced before the king. She danced so well that the king granted her a single wish. She used her wish to ask for the head of God's best preacher, John the Baptist. Youth who use their influence for Godly purposes earn his respect and blessing. Esther was a lowly woman who let God use her grace and it earned her a place in his "Hall of Fame."

COURAGE: One of the most famous youth members of God's Hall of Fame is David. He is known the world over for killing a giant with a single stone from his sling shot. The Lord used David as youth because He believed God could use him to conquer all kinds of giants. (I Sam 17) David, as a young man was inducted into God's Hall of Fame because of his faith and courage. He had faith that God would provide for him and protect him. That faith gave him courage to stand for God when all others were afraid. That is an attribute that makes young people eligible for his "Hall of Fame" -courage to stand against the odds and do the impossible. Youth who stand with faith in God dare to think the unthinkable, do the impossible, and reach the unreachable! Those who are able to do so in a godly way earn a place in God's Hall of Fame.

Hall of Famers must be team members

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that you can't be in the hall of fame without being on a team.

No matter how much we may hope and wish to be inducted into the hall of fame, it cannot be done unless we are members of a team.

No one is inducted from sandlot football into the NFL Hall of Fame. The players must be members of a team.

No one goes from the neighborhood park or recreation center fun activities to

the NBA Hall of Fame. The players must be members of a team.

The same is true for those who want to be great in the Kingdom of God. You can't be in God's Hall of Fame unless you are a member of God's team.

It begins with a simple belief that is espoused in Romans 10:9. It begins when we make it known that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that God raised him from the dead. When we tell the world that we want to be a part of the team and will be disciplined by its rules and work hard to carry out the plays of the coach (God), we get to be team members!

There is nothing better than being on a dream team. The dream team is composed of the best players!

When a person joins God's team he's on a dream team, with all of great Hall of Famers!

When you join God's team you're on the same team as thousands of Hall of Famers!

Young Daniel was thrown into a Lion's Den, but when the Lions couldn't tear him apart, he instantly became a member of God's Hall of Fame!

Young Ruth was a woman of great faith. She told Naomi, "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God." Her great faith made her member of God's Hall of Fame!

Young Solomon was a man of great wisdom who told young people "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not."- Because he chose to follow God boldly he was inducted in God's Hall of Fame!

But the greatest joy with being on God's team is you get to work with the superstars!

On God's dream team is a man who was born in Bethlehem and wrapped in swaddling clothes!

On God's dream team is a man who at the age of 12 told his parents, "Its time for me to be about my father's business.

On God's dream team is a man who healed the sick and made the blind see!

On God's dream team is a man who picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill.

His name is Jesus and he died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

You can join him today as part of God's Dream team, if you only believe!

No. 885-Membership Improvement

Regaining Your Cutting Edge

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 3, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. 5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. 6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. 7 Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it." 2 Kings 6:4-7

Introduction

Have you ever tried to do what you once did well but found out you couldn't? There are many times during the course of life that we find ourselves at our best, only to learn that at other times we cannot repeat our perfection. There are times when we think that we can do everything we once did with the same vigor and strength. It's the "old men on the park bench syndrome." The old men talk about their young days and swear to themselves that they have not lost it, they can still do what they once did. The simple reality of life time and circumstance have a great impact on our ability to do what we once did.

There was a time when some could run 100 yards in 10 seconds flat. Now, they are lucky if they can walk to the corner and back in 10 minutes.

There was a time when we could run up a flight of stairs skipping two as we went along. Now, we are out of breath after the first two.

There was a time we could read without our glasses. Now we can barely see the letters with our glasses on.

There was a time when we could walk without a cane or walker. Now we'd prefer to ride in a wheelchair than walk at all.

There was a time when we could crack a pecan with our teeth. Now, we have to get our teeth from a glass before we can crack a smile.

There was a time when we could do many things better than we are doing them today.

There are some things that we once did that are purely physical in nature and no matter how we try to regain that ability it has passed with time. Purely physical abilities are mellowed and tempered with age. Only the foolish think that they still have the stamina and strength they had in another time or age.

Age is a common denominator that has a way of affecting our skills. However, there are abilities we have lost not due to age. When we lose the ability to that which

we once did, it is generally called "losing your edge."

When Muhammad Ali was stripped of his heavyweight boxing championship, he stayed out of the boxing ring for several years. When he returned, Howard Corsell and other boxing experts predicted that he would not be the same Ali because such a long time out of the ring would cause him to lose his edge. They counted the number of punches he missed and whether he remained on his toes as often as he had before. They concluded that while he was not what he once was, he was still the greatest.

The same is said of anyone who has not used a skill for a while. If it is not used, experience says it will be lost.

Those who are in the service of the Lord can lose their edge too if they are not careful. The choir member who once sang with power and spirit but now sits in the audience and watches others has lost an edge.

The usher, who once maintained a service with enthusiasm and warmth but now stands coldly in a corner, has lost her edge.

The deacon who prays but now prays a canned prayer that lacks power and spirit, has lost his edge.

The preacher who once preached with conviction and power, but now preaches without purpose, has lost his edge.

There are many in the service of the Kingdom of God who have lost their edge. They are still serving. They have not been affected by physical inability, but they have never-the-less loss the unique qualities and skills that made their service unique and valuable to the kingdom.

There is a way to regain our lost edge.

There is a way to rekindle the flame of enthusiasm and spirit we once enjoyed.

There is a way to restore the joy of our salvation.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that God has given us a special cutting edge that helps us to do the work of kingdom building. We rejoice while we build the kingdom. We revel in the truth of his word that if we reach out to him; that which we have lost can be restored.

Exposition

This text focuses on a miracle performed by the prophet Elisha that restored the lost edge of a brother in the faith.

Elisha was the successor to the prophet Elijah. He traveled with Elijah during his life and watched and learned at the hands of the great prophet. When Elijah was taken up to heaven in the fiery chariot, Elisha received his mantle and blessing. For 50 years he found himself able to achieve the same miraculous results as Elijah and even more with a "double portion."

One of the noted miracles of Elisha took place in the context of this text.

The young students who studied under Elisha in the seminary of the times were about the task of building a new "dormitory." Each was assigned to cut down a tree for the construction of the building. They received permission from their trusted teacher Elisha to go to the area of the Jordan River where there were many trees so

they could build a larger place to live.

The students invited Elisha to share the experience saying, “Won’t you please come with us?”

So Elisha and his young students headed to the Jordan River to build a new college campus, and when they arrived immediately began to work on cutting down trees. Each student was doing his part, and when one of the young students was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head flew off the handle of the axe he had borrowed and fell into the Jordan River, sinking to the bottom.

This young student lost his axe head, he lost his cutting edge, and he lost his effectiveness in doing his work.

He confessed his problem to Elisha who promptly asked to be taken to the place where the axe had was lost. Miraculously, Elisha caused the axe head to raise from the bottom of the river and reconnect itself with the axe handle. He told the student to hold out his hand. In so doing, the student had a working axe and had “regained his cutting edge.”

Losing Your Cutting Edge

Today, there are many who are like the young prophets in this text. The prophets were believers. In fact, they were ardent students of the word, so they are similar to our circumstance today, we too are believers, but some of us have lost our cutting edge. The young prophet who lost his edge represents the masses of us who have lost our spiritual edge. There are basically three ways we can lose our cutting edge.

NON-USE: There are many people who have talents and gifts but they are not being used in the kingdom. The gifts that we have vary. Some of us have more gifts than others, but none of the gifts do the kingdom of God any good at all if they are not used. For all practical purposes they are buried. Jesus told the parable of talents to underscore the importance of productive use of our gifts. Of the three men in that parable who received gifts, one buried the gift and did not use it. It was taken from him and given to those who could make the most out of it. In a similar sense there are many today who have gifts but non-use is causing them to rust and lose their effective potential.

USING WRONGLY: While many have lost their cutting edge from non-use there are others who have lost the edge, because they used it but they used it wrongly. Often first time campers take to the woods and get excited about having a hatchet. Sometimes such campers, especially children, will take a hatchet and just chop into the ground. Using an axe or hatchet in this manner dulls the edge of the hatchet. It was used but used wrongly. In a similar sense there are many who use their gifts but they do not use them as the Lord intended. In effect, they are beating them into the ground and dulling their edge. Sometimes we misuse our bodies, gifts, and talents so badly that they can be of no use to the kingdom. Some athletes have been gifted with strong bodies and athletic abilities, yet they misuse their bodies and ignore their gift. Many who have gifts to sing, sing for the world and not for God. Not only singers

but thousands of others have used their gifts wrongly and as a result have lost their cutting edges.

FAILED TO SHARPEN: There are many who have a cutting edge but they have failed to sharpen it. In the secular world a person sharpens his cutting edge by keeping abreast of the latest techniques and methods in their profession, attending workshops and seminars and other learning opportunities that advance the craft. In terms of our spiritual development, we sharpen our cutting edge through bible study, prayer and worship. Involvement in these three experiences helps us to sharpen our understanding and appreciation for our faith. There are many who have lost their cutting edge because they have neglected the opportunities that promote spiritual growth. For many, it has been months or years since they have attended a bible class or even a Sunday School class. For others, sharpening experiences are nonexistent and the final product is a loss of the cutting edge.

Regaining Your Cutting Edge

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that while there are various ways to lose your cutting edge, if we retrace the steps of the young prophets in this text we can learn how to regain our cutting edge once it has been lost.

The very first thing the young man in this text did was to admit that he had lost his edge. He told Elisha that somewhere in the process, he lost his edge. If we are to regain our edge, we must come clean with ourselves. We cannot blame our loss on anyone else. We must assume the responsibility for our lost edge then act to regain it. There are many today who have slipped in their service. However, rather than say they have lost something they conveniently lay the blame for their loss on someone else: The pastor, the deacons, a particular group of church members, the three legged dog outside...anyone or anything else except themselves.

When David reviewed his acts with Bathsheba he dropped his heart in remorse and acknowledged that he had sinned. In so doing, he asked God to “create in me a clean heart.”

The second thing the young man did was to carry the prophet back to the place where he lost his cutting edge. Likewise, it’s good every now and then for those of us who have lost our cutting edge to go back to the last point when we felt sharp and really good about our service. What were we doing then? What was our routine then? What event or occurrence happened that caused us to lose our cutting edge.

There is great value in going back!

Going back makes us retrace our steps! It prompts us to seek a spiritual renewal that only comes with serious reflection.

Maybe that’s what the song writer had in mind when he said, “Take me back. Take me back dear Lord to the place where I first received you. Take me back, Take me back dear Lord, to where I first believed.”

After going back, the young man was told to simply “reach out your hand.” After reaching out his hand, the cutting edge which he had lost arose from the waters and once again became available to him!

Any believer who has lost his cutting edge must remember that if we admit that we have lost our edge and go back to the place where we lost it, then stretch our hands to God, he will restore our lost spirit, drive and enthusiasm.

Powerful things happen when men and women of God stretch their hands out to God! Miracles happen! Renewal begins!

When we reach our hands out to God, those things which were:

Lost, can be found again!

Broken, can be restored!

Weakened, can be strengthened!

Defeated, can be reinvigorated

Impossible, become possible

When we reach out our hands to God, that which was down goes up! That which was dark becomes light. That which was destroyed and rebuilt!

When we reach out our hands to God we regain that which was lost and in the process regain our cutting edge!

No wonder the song writer declares, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go!"

When we call on Jesus, he gives us another chance!

Lift up your heads, call on Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Don't complain, stretch out your hands and call on Jesus, who arose early one Sunday morning!

Call on Jesus and regain your cutting edge!

No. 886-Communion

The Power of Pain

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 17, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Introduction

Have you ever had a pain? Pain is universal. Nearly everyone at one point or another has experienced pain. An infant lying in a crib has pain. A student attending school has pain. Parents involved in the fast paced activities of the work place have pain. Senior citizens have pain. Pain does not discriminate. The rich, the poor, whites, Blacks, males and females, all have had a pain or two in the course of their life's experience. It is almost impossible to journey through life without experiencing some element of pain and discomfort.

The list of physical pains is unending. Everyone has their own list. What's your pain? While one person has headaches another has backaches. Someone has aching muscles and stiffness while someone else has tender joints. Some have writer's cramp and others have carpal tunnel syndrome. Some have aching feet or sore eyes while someone else suffers from sprains, and bruises. The pain of dislocations bothers some, while fractures bothers others. Some pains are not physical at all. There are many that would rather have the pain of a broken leg than the agony of a broken heart. Sometimes pains are caused by the people around us. The doctors have a fancy word for it, "Sciatica" but it is characterized by pain in the buttocks.

As a social phenomenon, entire races of people, nationalities and subclasses can also experience global hurts that are felt by everyone in their particular class. The holocaust in which six million Jews were exterminated during World War II was a pain. The enslavement of Blacks was a pain. The subjugation of women as a gender is certainly a pain. Whether the pain is physical, social or even economic, it still hurts.

Pains are either acute or chronic. An acute pain happens suddenly and at some point ends. It's the pain we get from a broken leg, or an injury. As the injury heals the pain goes away. Chronic pains never seem to go away. They are often related to an ongoing condition or tucked away in the secret corridors of our psyche.

Sometimes we can stumble upon pain. A burglar was cruising through one of our posh suburbs looking for a target of opportunity. At one house he saw a truck unloading a big screen television, stereo, and video outfit. All the gear had to cost thousands of dollars. He made a mental note and went on his way. The next day he

was back in the same neighborhood. When he drove past the house with all the goodies, he saw an elderly couple loading suitcases into the trunk of their car. He could hardly wait. That night, without a moon in the sky and a heavy fog, he drove up to the house. He rang the doorbell and when no one answered, broke the lock on the kitchen door and went in. It was pitch black inside as he made his way through the kitchen, then the dining room and into the den where he expected to find the things he wanted to steal.

"I see you and Jesus sees you," a voice said. The burglar froze in his tracks.

"I see you and Jesus sees you," the voice said again.

When nothing more happened, the burglar took out his flashlight and shinned it in the direction of the voice. All he saw was a parrot on its perch.

"I see you and Jesus sees you."

The burglar laughed. "Just a dumb bird," he said. The burglar closed the drapes before turning on a lamp and that's when he saw a big and mean looking Doberman Pinscher sitting beneath the parrot's perch.

"Sic him, Jesus!" The parrot said. Then the burglar understood the meaning of acute pain!

Generally, pain is a signal that something is wrong and needs attention. When a finger is cut it would go unnoticed without the pain. If a limb is injured, it would also be ignored if not for the pain. Pain has a biological purpose which is to alert us that something is wrong an needs adjustment or attention.

Just as there are physical, social and economic signals or pains that alert us to an imbalance, there are also spiritual pains as well. A guilty conscience, a broken spirit, a loss of direction, and a waning spirituality are all signals that something is out of adjustment spiritually.

When we feel physical pain we turn to pain relievers. Over the counter drugs like aspirin or other stronger medicines stop the sensation of pain while the condition the prompts the pain often lingers.

When there is a spiritual pain many plunge into cults and new age "promise-me-the-world religions" that serve as a pain reliever.

There is only one spiritual pain killer that treats the cause of the pain rather than the symptom, that is the blood of Christ. The grace of God deals with the cause of spiritual pain does more than simply make us feel good for the moment but forgives our sin and heals our wounds.

As believers, we are encouraged to know that the blood of Christ is a pain killer and not just a pain reliever. We lean upon his Grace to heal our wounds and strengthen our souls through his love.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's prophecy of the coming of the Messiah.

The prophecy does not mention Christ by name but refers to events that point directly to him. It often refers to the events in the past tense as if they had already

happened. The prophecy makes it clear that someone is coming to champion God's cause. That someone is first presented in the 52nd chapter beginning at verse 13 and is referred to only as God's "servant" who would be lifted up and exalted.

When Christians read these passages we see Jesus as the "servant." However, throughout the centuries the Jewish community has insisted that the "servant" referred to in these passages is the nation of Israel itself, even to the point of being bruised and wounded. Like many before them the Jewish community expected the Messiah to rise as an earthly king and since Jesus did not accomplish that end have dismissed this text as referring to him because it does not appeal to their vision of the Messiah that would come with might and power to deliver the nation of Israel. They expected him to help them overthrow the Roman domination of their nation and to fulfill the promises of God to make it the chief of the nations of the earth.

The passages, taken as a whole, make it clear that the "servant" referred to in these scriptures is a person and not an entire nation. That person, Christ himself, would come as a substitute for the sins of the people and would bear their penalty in his own body.

The prophecy tracks what Christ did for believers. He was "wounded" for our transgressions, "bruised" for our iniquity. This indicates that the Messiah would absorb the pain, punishment and suffering for the sins of the world. As a result of his act, the pain of sin would not be simply relieved but totally eliminated because the source of the pain will have been satisfied.

When verse five refers to "stripes," reference is made to the physical pain that Jesus endured for his followers. Deuteronomy 25:1-3 notes that the Mosaic law prohibited anyone accused of an offense from receiving more than 40 lashes with the whip. Thus temple scourgings were generally 39 lashes creating 39 "stripes" on the backs of offenders. Matthew 27:26 notes that Christ was ordered scourged as a possible alternative to crucifixion. That scourging produced stripes or torn flesh, blood and pain. Though generally they mean the same, popular references note that through his "stripes" we are healed and through his death on the cross we are saved.

The spiritual pain of the people was caused by sin. The pain was eliminated through Christ's pain and suffering. His death and resurrection lifted his believers from the pain of sin to the power of salvation, through Jesus Christ.

What Pain Does

While no one likes pain, it does have its purpose. Pain alerts us that something is wrong. Like the aggravating seat belt chime in an automobile we can either buckle up or get use to the irritation.

PAIN ALERTS US: The presence of pain alerts us that something is wrong. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he attributed the pain in his groin as a result of his promiscuity. Psalm 38 records his lamentations about the cause and effect of his physical pain. David's pain, in this instance, was directly related to his sin. Not only did he hurt physically, but he was unable to sleep well or be at peace. He tried to hide his deed. That was a pain reliever. But when he was confronted by the Prophet

Nathan he had to come to grips with the cause of his pain. In the 51st Psalm he cried out "create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me." There are some pains we suffer that are directly related to our own behavior and actions. Pain calls attention to the relationship between our present condition and our past actions. Not every pain is related to a past sin. Job endured considerable pain and suffering, but not because of a sin. He was being tested by God. His painful situation served notice that he was being observed by the creator. In a similar manner it could very well be that some of our suffering may not be sin related but may serve notice on us that we are being observed. If a believer has a sin-based condition he or she should seek forgiveness. James 5:15 reminds believers that after prayer for forgiveness is offered by the elders of the church a sin based pain will be relieved shortly thereafter. If sin is not the basis of the pain then "testing" is and the believer should prayer for strength to endure. That's what Paul found out when he asked three times for the thorn in his side to be removed but it was not. He was told, "My grace is sufficient." Pain alerts us to the need to rely on the grace of God.

PAIN PROMPTS US TO TAKE ACTION: There are many conditions that we will ignore until it begins to hurt. We'll let a leaky faucet drip until we feel the pain of the water bill. We'll ignore our special diet until we feel the pain of a heart attack or high blood pressure. The pain prompts us to take action that we would otherwise put off. There are many people who lead healthier life-styles today because the pain of a previous illness prompted them to take corrective action. We do things in response to pain and often we can be very innovative. In 1897 a chemist working for the Bayer Company tried to find a way to ease the sensation of pain his relative was experiencing. In the process he discovered Aspirin, a product which now sells 80 million units a day around the world. When our old car breaks down for the last time, we'll either walk or get a better car. When the roof leaks so bad that we run out of skillets, pots and pans to catch the water, we'll either bear it or repair it. We may have a tooth cavity for many months and keep promising to do something about it. But when the pain hits, we'll take action quick. Pain prompts us to take action. It was the blindness of the Damascus Road experience that prompted Saul to become Paul. Jonah stopped running from the Lord after he spent an extended weekend in the belly of the fish. Thus, one purpose of pain may be to prompt us to take action.

PAIN PROMPTS SACRIFICES FOR OUR GREATER GOOD: When we experience painful situations we are prompted to make sacrifices we would not normally make to achieve the greater good. Pain and sacrifice are integral parts of the Christian experience. That's why Jesus encouraged every new believer to count the cost. The promise of eternal life would not come without the pain of the cross. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Before the crown there must be a cross. Before the sweet, easy life of heaven, every believer had to be prepared to go through a little hell on earth. With that in mind, believers have willingly responded to painful situations and made sacrifices of property and life to achieve the aims of the kingdom. Believers have faced lions in the Coliseums of Rome and the torturous death of the cross. They have been boiled, crucified and persecuted

through all times. While many have not faced this level of pain there are millions who have had their names trampled upon on the highway and have been called everything but a child of God for defending the purpose of the kingdom. Yet, the words of the song writer are clear, no cross, no crown.

The Power of Pain

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that there is power in pain.

While no one likes suffering or painful experiences, it is true that believers have acquired considerable power while dealing with their pain.

There are many who can testify today that it was while they were dealing with pain and suffering directly or the pain and suffering of a loved one that they developed a greater appreciation for what it means to walk by faith and not by sight.

In our pain, we gain an increased power to keep our eye focused on the power of the Lord rather than our own ability.

In our pain, we recognize our own weakness and lean heavily upon the strength of the Lord.

In our pain, we recognize our own fallibility and lean heavily upon the immutability and eternity of God. While we may not be able to handle a situation we have God who can deal with the issue.

In our pain, we recognize our own inability to control the complex maze of situations that impact our lives while at the same time gaining the power to take our burdens to Lord and leave them there.

No wonder the song writer would declare, "If your body suffers pain and your health you can't regain and you have to get along with meager fare. Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save and he can heal take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there."

In our pain, we have learned to trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine understanding.

We may not know about tomorrow but we trust in the Lord who holds tomorrow in his hands!

From our pain, we gain the power to say to the world, "I don't know everything about, but I serve a God who is in control of everything!"

From our pain, we have gained the power to stand in the midst of sickness and say, "It is well with my soul!"

From our pain, we have gain the power to see the world and its circumstances from a heavenly perspective. The humanity within us wants to respond to everything with a worldly response, but the power we gain from pain and suffering teaches us to see things from a heavenly perspective.

From our pain, we have learned that we have a higher power who takes over when we have done all that we know how to do.

From our pain we get a perspective that goes beyond the carnal, into the metaphysical and reaches into the spiritual.

This power gives us hope when everyone else has thrown up their hands, because

we know that God is able!

Strong winds may blow...but God is able!

Storms may rise....but God is able!

What power did you gain from your pain?

From the pain of falling down, God gave us the power of getting back up again!

From the pain of weakness, God gave us the power to remember that they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not get weary! They shall walk and not faint!

From His pain we have gain the power to stand firm against whatever the world brings and hold to God's unchanging hand!

His pain has given us hope!

His pain has given us a new determination to run on and see what they end will be!

His pain was endured through 39 Roman lashes!

His pain was felt as he carried his cross to Calvary!

His pain was realized as he cried out in agony, "Father, why has thou forsaken me?"

In pain and misery he died on an old rugged Cross, but Early Sunday morning!

His pain...became our gain!

No. 887-Palm Sunday

A Whole Lot of Shouting Going On!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 24, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Mark 11:9

Introduction

What's the life span of praise? There are many people who offer praise in a variety of areas but it doesn't last long. We praise a coach, until he loses the big game. We praise our stock brokers until one of his tips loses us money. We praise an elected official until he takes an action we don't like. We shower praises on our bankers until they refuse our loan request. Praise is a cousin to flattery and should be received cautiously. People who offer praise have varying expectations and purposes. When those expectations are not met praises often cease. Praises live about as long as we are able to please the crowd!

As a general rule, praise is given in appreciation for something done or in expectation of something to be done. In some cases it's a little of both.

When an employee retires and is praised by the company, it is for something done. When a valued staff member is praised by the company it is usually to recognize an accomplishment and to encourage the staff member to "keep up the good work."

In religious circles around the world there are millions who praise the lord. They praise him for what he has done, in hopes that he will continue to meet their expectations.

There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

People are praising God for blessings, healings, answered prayers and renewed spirit!

People are praising God for giving them what they asked for and restoring their faith.

While many are praising God, their praise is based on the assumption that he will meet their expectations in the future. Some lay it on thick because of a perceived correlation between the quantity of praises and the quantity of blessings received.

There are many who are shouting, waving their hands and singing praise to God for what he has done. There are others who are shouting for different reasons.

The story is told of a minister who was full of energy and enthusiasm for the Lord. One day he went to the hospital to visit one of his parishioners who was critically ill. The minister entered the room and saw the man lying in bed with a whole host of tubes and wires attached to his body. Without any delay the minister strode to his bedside and began to exhort him to be of good cheer. Soon the man became agitated and started to wave his arms. This encouraged the minister, and so he exhorted him more and more enthusiastically. Finally the minister ended with a rather lengthy prayer. At the final "Amen" the minister opened his eyes just in time to see the man reach for a pad of paper and a pencil. Quickly he wrote something and handed it to the minister. Then he looked at the pad and read these words: "You are standing on my oxygen tube!"

Sometimes it is easy to misread people's actions. Not all arm-waving is an expression of exuberance. Not all laughter is the laughter of happiness. Not all tears are tears of sorrow. Not all shouting is the shouting of triumph and victory. And not everyone who says, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the kingdom of God.

There are many who shout praises to God as long as he seems to be doing what we want. But if he steps on our toes or fails to meet our expectations we cry out, "crucify him."

As Christians, we praise God in appreciation for what he has done. We also praise God with the expectation of great things to come. However, we are not specific in our expectations. We praise him for whatever he does in our lives, for everything he does is good and will work to our benefit. We praise him because he is great and his mercy endureth forever!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he made his triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem.

The arrival of the Messiah had been predicted by the prophet Zechariah many years before. The people of Jerusalem expected a champion to come into the city and establish himself as the one person who would lift their domination by the Romans. In Zechariah 9:9 the prophet wrote, " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass"

Intoxicated with the idea of liberation the people met Jesus outside of the city singing and shouting "Hosanna (save now)." The expected Jesus to announce a rebellion against the Romans. They expected to see the Roman legions running in fear of the power of Israel. So they sang "Hosanna" -Not just "save us" but save us "now!"

The phrase "Hosanna" was extracted from the 25th and 26th verses of the 118th Psalm. It was a Psalm which was sung by Israel giving praise to God for deliverance from slavery in Egypt. When Jesus came to Jerusalem the words of the Psalm were appropriate. The prophet Zechariah said, "Shout" for your king comes. David wrote

the words “Hosanna” -save us now!

The words of the Psalm 118 make it clear what the people wanted.

Psalm 118: “25 Please, LORD, please save us. Please, LORD, please give us success. 26 Bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD.”

They shouted Hosanna because they wanted a blessing and success.

They shouted Hosanna because they wanted their special interest taken care of immediately.

They shouted Hosanna and showered praises on Jesus because he was seen as the one that would bring them what they expected.

Later, in the same week, many in the same crowd that shouted “Hosanna” were still shouting, but they were shouting “crucify him” when it turned out that Jesus would not meet their expectations.

They cried crucify him when he spoke of being persecuted and making sacrifices!

They cried crucify him when he refused to take up the sword even in his own defense, saying he that lives by the sword will die by the sword.

Their shouts of praise turned to shouts of death, once Jesus failed to meet their expectations.

Sometimes we have to shout

There are times in every life when we have to shout! No scream or complain but simply shout. There are at least types of situations that can easily be identified as shouting time.

WHEN THE WALLS ARE TOO HIGH: There are occasions in every life where situations get beyond our control. These are times when only the power of the Lord can help us. Sometimes our goals and objectives became a blur or seem unattainable because high walls of opposition, red tape or confusion block us from meeting our own expectations.

When the walls get high and the enemy looks fierce, that’s a sign that it’s shouting time. When Israel moved into the promised land they were intimidated by the sight of the cities of Jericho, which were protected by high walls guarded by trained soldiers. Yet, they soon found that when the walls were high, it was shouting time. God told them to march around the walls seven times and on that seventh time “shout!” They shouted until the power of the Lord came down.

Similarly, there are times when we have shout and praise until he power of the Lord comes down! Maybe that’s why the song writer wrote, sing till the power of the Lord comes down. Lift up your head, don’t be afraid, sing till the power of the Lord comes down.

WHEN WE’VE BEEN BLESSED: There are times when we are overwhelmed at the goodness and mercy of the Lord. This often happens when we achieve a long sought after goal or receive a blessing that we desired but felt unworthy to receive. When David succeeded in the getting the Ark of the Covenant returned to Israel, he was so excited and happy that he stripped his clothes to his loin cloth and danced

naked in the streets, leaping and jumping and shouting with joy. That's they way we feel when God has really blessed us. We have to shout.

When the Lord blesses us financially in a way that we did not expect, it's shouting time!

When a wayward child starts showing signs of hope, it's shouting time!

When lost family member finds the Lord, it's shouting time.

As Jesus came into Jerusalem his disciples wanted to quiet the crowd but Jesus said, "if these hold their peace the rocks would cry out!" -It's shouting time.

WE SHOUT IN OUR TRIBULATIONS: It's easy to shout when we are being blessed. It's harder to shout in our troubles and tribulations. Yet, even here we should also shout. Tribulations lead to patience and patience leads us to experience and our experience leads to hope and renewed joy in Christ. What the experience of the faith teaches us is that even in the midst of our problems, God is still good.

If there is nothing in your refrigerator but ice cubes, God is still good, shout over ice cubes!

If you lose your job and are forced to walk the street looking for a job, shout over the fact that you still have two feet!

On our sickbeds we should shout thanks to God for your doctor and your nurses and praise God that no one is standing on your oxygen tube!

A Lot of Shouting going on!

When Jesus came into Jerusalem there were a lot of people shouting and there was a whole lot of shouting going on!

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's a whole lot of shouting going on.

Whenever you think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving going on!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole lot foot patting going!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a who lot of hand clapping going on!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

We're shouting because of what he has done.

We're shouting because of what we expect him to do.

We're shouting because he's been to us and we just can't keep it to ourselves.

I'm reminded of the couple that called the police to report a disturbance in the neighborhood. The couple reported that for the last hour the people in the house next door had been keeping up a noise that made it hard for them to sleep. They requested that the neighbors would be arrested. The officer explained to the neighbors the nature of the complaint and listened as the wife explained.

"Well officer, we're sorry, but we just couldn't help ourselves. At 10 o'clock we

got a call said our daughter who lives in New York was in a car accident but has survived without a scratch or a scar. We tried to be quiet and my husband and I just hugged each other." She said.

"Fifteen minutes late we got a call that my grandson who lives in California is the recipient of an all expense paid scholarship to Harvard University. It was all we could do, just to keep from screaming with joy.

"At about 10:30 we got a call that said my other daughter who lives in Detroit had given birth to triplets. Despite complications, all the babies are fine and my daughter is alright." It was all we could do to keep from crying out with happiness and gratitude.

"At about 10:45 the phone rang one more time. The doctor reported that my sister, who was in intensive care, had taken a sudden turn for the good. The doctor said he couldn't explain it, but she was going to be alright. All we could do was shout and stomp and praise the Lord.

The people who complained call the police station and filed another report. "We asked you send an officer to stop the noise next door. We expected him to put the handcuffs on our neighbors but he's running in the front yard yelling praise the Lord!. You better send somebody down here, because there's a whole lot of shouting going on!"

I don't know about you, but there are ought to be a lot of shouting going on in the homes of the Saint's.

Everytime you think about the mountains you've climbed and the valleys in your way, you ought to feel a shout coming!

He's been a lawyer in my court room! I think I feel a shout coming on!

He's been a doctor in my sick room! I think I feel a shout coming on!

He's been a bridge over troubling waters! I think I feel a shout coming on!

Though the crowds shouted "Crucify him" he picked up an old rugged cross and shouldered the burden of my sin!

Out on Calvary, he died, that I might live!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb..

But early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I think a feel a shout coming!

He's still blessing me!

I don't know about you, but I think I feel a shout coming on!

No. 888-Easter

Were You There?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe La.

March 30, 2002

SCRIPTURE: ***"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." Matthew 27:54***

Introduction

Have you ever tracked an event or movement so closely that you felt you were "there?" There are many who have fixed on a certain event in history or a certain movement so intensely that they have read everything written on the subject, attended every possible function related to it and have become so intensely involved in it until they feel as though they were there themselves. Some have followed the events of September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center was destroyed. They have read every article, seen every special report, absorbed all of the photo images and have developed an "empathy" with the victims. In a sense they say, "I was there."

Those who are able to say "I was there" are those who are able to not only sympathize but empathize with another. To sympathize is to share the troubles of another. To empathize is to not only share the troubles of another but to share an affinity with another because of a mutual experience." A family that is dealing with the impact of drugs may get sympathy from a friend who listens but have never had the problem before. However, they would get empathy from a friend who has also experienced similar problems. A school counselor who counsels a child that has been moved from school to school frequently has sympathy for that child's situation, but the counselor who himself was a frequent transfer student has "empathy" because of his own experience. Those who empathize are those who can say, "I was there."

As believers track the events related to the crucifixion of Christ, we have focused so intensely on its details that we have gone beyond sympathy, we have developed an empathy with Christ. We have projected our own circumstances into that day in such a way that we are actually "there" at the scene of his death and conversely, also at the scene of his resurrection.

We can empathize with Christ because we too have been falsely accused by witnesses who pointed fingers at us and accused us of things we have not done. When we watch Jesus stand silently and become the victim of lies, in our meditation, we say, "I was there."

We can empathize with Christ because we too have been abandoned by those around us. When his disciples began to distance themselves from him and say to others, "I don't know him" it must have been disheartening to him, just as it is to us when family or friends abandon us in our weakest moments. When we hear Peter deny Christ three times, then hear the cock crow, true believers say silently, "I was there."

We can empathize with Christ because we have borne the pain, ridicule and suffering of others until it has exhausted us. Although he had committed no crime, Christ was beaten by soldiers, a crown of thorns placed upon his head and humiliated. He suffered unjustly and was "wounded" without regard for innocence or guilt. We too have suffered immensely as we bore the pain of a lost child, a troubled friend or co-worker. When we see Jesus stumble under the weight of the cross, we see ourselves stumble under the weight of the load we carry everyday and we say, "I was there!"

We empathize because our lifestyle is inextricably tied to his. We share both his agony and the ecstasy of his experience. We know what it's like to have the crowds call your name in praise on one day and in scorn another. We have experienced the rejection of everyone around us. Our lives as Christian warriors are so closely tied with Christ's experience that it is easy for us to say, "I was there!"

As Christians, we relive the events of Holy Week and say, "I was there!" But just as we relive Jesus' pain, rejection, crucifixion and death, we also relive the power of his resurrection. When he arose on Sunday morning, we are inspired, but we who were buried with him, also rose with him. When he arose the entire saved world said, "I was there!"

Exposition

This text gives an explanation of the events of the crucifixion including a summation of the persons who were present to witness its execution.

Christ, having been found not guilty of any crime against Rome by Pontius Pilate was never-the-less crucified in an action that was politically expedient. He was sacrificed to satisfy they anger of a mob, despite the lack of evidence of a crime. There were many who were present to witness his crucifixion. The text notes that there were Roman soldiers present. They carried out the sentence against what they considered to be an eccentric but harmless Jew. Some of his disciples were present. Verse 55 notes that there were also many women who were there. There names were given to accentuate the fact that even though they stood at a distance, they were there.

Many of Christ's disciples stood with him at the cross but were with him from the beginning, boldly declaring the truth of the kingdom of God at the peril of their own lives. As each nail was driven into his hands, those who were closely bound with him felt the piercing of their own souls as well.

These were more than simply witnesses, they were fellow laborers. They understood more than anyone else.

While they were present and understood, there were others who were present

but who were not "there" in the sense that they shared the struggle.

Collosians 2:20 could easily be a companion to this thought. In this text Paul notes that those who truly believe and have Christ's kingdom at heart can say they were crucified with him and raised up on the cross with him. It notes that true believers have such a close affinity with Christ that we have died with him.

Thus, some of those who were present were "there" while others were just present.

In Collosians 3:1 Paul notes that just as we are buried with him we can also say that we arose with him.

Thus, those believers who shared in his ministry, the humiliation and pain of his crucifixion, also shared the glory of his resurrection. Such believers can truthfully say, "We were there!"

The Cross: He's Been There!

During his suffering and death on the cross Christ served notice to every believer in every generation that, "I have been there." Whatever circumstance that may occur in a believer's life, our savior has experienced the full gamut of human emotions from joy to sadness; from victory to defeat; from life to death. No matter experiences we have, he can say, "I have been there."

That's important for us to know. It's important because it helps us to receive the final judgments of God. If we suffer and wonder why, we share that burden with our Lord, who also suffered and wondered why even though the royalty within him knew why. On the cross, Christ asked his father, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" These are moments when we feel at our lowest. That's when it helps to know that the Lord in whose name we pray, knows how we feel because he himself has "been there."

Have you wandered into a wilderness in your own life experience where you had to sort things out? Jesus says, "I've been there!" In the beginning of his experience he was tempted by the devil on three occasions, but he finally decided to follow the will of God. When we pray and ask for direction, the answer we receive is not given in a void, but it comes from one who has "been there" and understands.

Have you seen those around you lose hope in their ability to do the impossible? Jesus says, "I've been there!" Peter walked on water, doing the impossible but lost hope and began to sink even though he was looking the master in the face. When a storm arose on the sea the passengers and crew began to worry and fret and lose hope even though Jesus was on board. Jesus even watched as Peter denied him repeatedly. When, in frustration, we turn to the Lord and tell him about those who have lost hope in us, we are talking to a savior who has "been there."

The joy of the Christian relationship is that it provides us an opportunity to share our experience with someone who has "been there."

No wonder the song writer says, "What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

Another song writer responded with these words, "If your body suffers pain and

your health you can't regain and you have to get along with meager fare. Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save and he can heal, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

No matter what we are going through, the struggles of Christ's life tell us that he has "been there" and knows how we feel.

Empty Tomb: I Am There

If the message of the suffering and the crucifixion of Christ is, "I have been there" then the message of the empty tomb is, "I am there." The knowledge that Christ is alive today brings us the assurance that Christ is "there" for us.

This assurance, given by our Lord, helps us to know that though you may walk a lonely road in life, you'll never walk alone!

This assurance came when Jesus told all believers, "and lo, I'll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth."

That's probably what James Freeman had in mind when he wrote:

"Do you need me? I am there.
You cannot see ME, yet I am the light you see by.
You cannot hear Me, yet I speak through your voice.
You cannot feel Me, yet I am the power at work in your hands.
I am there when you pray and when you do not pray.
Though you fail to find Me. I do not fail to find you.
Though your faith in Me is unsure,
My faith in you never wavers
because I know you,
because I love you.
I am There."

Every child of God has experienced the full measure of the Christian pendulum. We've been down and out and wounded and nailed to the cross. We've been hung out and buried.

But we have also seen a glorious new life.

Anytime anyone questions our faith in God, we are quick to remind them,

"You don't know and you wasn't there. You don't know when and you don't know where!"

You wasn't there when I almost drowned in the sea of self pity.. "from the waters he lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help love lifted me!

You wasn't there when I was so tired I could not stand!
Tired of being talked about!
Tired of rising and falling!
Tired of seeing more sadness than I saw gladness!

Then I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Lay down, lay down thy weary one thy head upon my breast!

When I think about how good God has been and how much he sacrificed for me

on Calvary, it causes me to tremble, just like I was standing there!

The events of Calvary happened over 2000 years ago, and you may have been born in 1949 but yet you can say, “I was there!’

You may have been born in 1956, but you can still say, “I was there!”

You May have been born in 1968, but you can still say, “I was there!”

Sometimes, when I think about how they nailed him to the cross, it causes me to tremble!

Sometimes, when I think about how they buried him in a borrowed tomb it causes me to tremble!

But early Sunday morning, I was there when the angel declared, “he is not here. He has risen from the grave! Come see the place where the Lord lay!”

No. 889-Inspiration

God's Hors d'oeuvres

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 7, 2002

SCRIPTURE: But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Introduction

Have you seen the little finger foods offered at social gatherings and wondered why there wasn't more? In most situations, these little finger foods are called "Hors d' oeuvres" (pronounced "or-derves). At many social gatherings the food is often served on small plates about the size of a hand. They are usually noted by the peculiar presence of toothpicks perturbing from the tops of each item. Instead of a whole sandwich, one sandwich is cut into several small squares and topped with a tooth pick. Instead of a whole chicken wing, there is usually a half of a chicken wing, called a "buffalo wing.." Also there are little green olives, a few chips and dips, and few crackers, slices of meats and cheeses rolled into cute little circles. Meatballs, cheeses and a variety of other delicacies make up the host of fineries used in finger foods. The food is great but it is usually served on small plates. Sometimes these plates are too small for those who try to get some of everything. When they do they are forced to stack everything into a pyramid. Finger foods are great, but they always leave you wanting more.

That's the whole idea of an appetizer! Appetizers are not designed to fill us up but to wet our desire for more. In many restaurants the appetizers are served while the chef prepares the main course. The main meal may be fillet mignon, stuffed crab legs, T-Bone Steaks, or some specialty item that takes a considerable amount of time to prepare. The appetizer satisfies us temporarily but not completely. It tides us over until the main course is served.

Do our spiritual lives work the same way? Jesus told the parable that said the kingdom of heaven was like a great banquet in which many people are invited. While many are too busy to attend this banquet, those who came would participate in the feast. At any great dinner the appetizers are served first before the main meal. The kingdom of God, which is the fellowship of the saints on this earth is an appetizer to the Kingdom of Heaven which is yet to come. It is a "foretaste" of the main course, which will be life with Christ in heaven.

We are participants in the Lord's banquet as a fore runner of the things to come. He has served us a few appetizers, or samples of things to come, that we call blessings.

They are the small comforts and securities of life that we have been able to enjoy: a bed to sleep in, a plate to eat from, a roof over our heads, sound minds, a reasonable portion of health and strength. All of these are samples of what's ahead. They are the "Hors d' oeuvres!

As Christians, we thank God for every blessing he gives us. We also know that what he has in store for us is worth the wait, especially judging by the Hors d' oeuvres!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he looks to the future blessings in store for all of those who trust in the Lord.

This passage comes from the last section of the Book of Isaiah. It covers the events that will occur in the last days. It closely parallels the book of Revelation. As I pointed out when we began this study thirteen weeks ago, the book of Isaiah is in many ways a miniature Bible. It divides like the Bible. The Bible has 66 books, and Isaiah has 66 chapters. The Old Testament has 39 books, and the first division of Isaiah has 39 chapters. The New Testament has 27 books, and the second half of Isaiah has 27 chapters. The theme of the last of Isaiah is the theme of the last of the Bible: the end!

The chapters immediately preceding this text are a cry of desperation from Israel for God to make himself known and to rescue the faithful from the troubles of the world.

In the middle of their despair comes Isaiah's plea that God would show himself by performing mighty acts in a way that would assure the people that he has not abandoned. In all of their lives, he maintained, the world has never seen a God like the one and only God.

What he is prepared to do for his people is beyond human perception and comprehension. That's also the theme of 1 Corinthians 2:9 which also reminded believers of that which is to come: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Whatever God is doing for his people now, is only a sampling of that he has planned for us. Whatever pleasures believers enjoy, hope they share and fulfillment they realize is but a foretaste of what is to come. What God has in store for us is unimaginable, great and too wonderful to describe. What believers have now are simply samplings of blessings to come.

Appetizers

Appetizers are a foretaste: The purpose of any appetizer is to wet our appetites for something bigger. That is really the nature of the entire Christian experience. It is a foretaste of things to come. It is a spiritual rehearsal for that which we will enjoy later.

There are some believers who have experience the power of God's presence in their daily lives. They are excited when they see daily evidence of his divine power. Whatever we enjoy it's just a sip and dip? There are believers who have received a few "finger blessings" from the Lord. Our finger blessings include our house, car, television, a few pork chops in the refrigerator and new hat or two; a new pair shoes and a new set of designer finger nails. All of these are finger blessings. Small samples of what God has for us in the new kingdom?

If you think your house is something, just wait until you get to heaven?! Jesus said in my father's house are "many mansions." He noted in that same passage "I go to prepare a place for you!" -Your little house is only a sample of the bigger better things to come.

If you think the silver and gold that you have accumulated in the banks of this world is something, just wait until you get to heaven. John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It had twelve gates made of solid pearl and the streets will be paved with gold! Right now you may have a little money in the bank and after worry about someone stealing it, but when we get to glory, everyone will have gold under his feet because the streets will be paid with precious ores.

Even our health and leisure on this earth is a sample of things to come. We're excited when we go on vacations, have a little time off, just get to walk and see a few sights. If you think what you have not is good, think again, it's only a sample of what's coming. When we get t heaven we'll never need time off because time will be no more. We won't wait for holidays because everyday will be Sunday. It will always be howdy and never good-bye!

Everything we have on this earth is an Hors d'oeuvere, a sample to tide us over until the kingdom comes.

The appetizers are not the meal: In our quest for self satisfaction it is very easy for us to become obsessed with the Hors d' oeuveres and lose our desire for the main meal. Many people go to restaurants and eat so many salads, breads, crackers, and soups that by the time their main dish is served they are too pooped to pop! There are others who are so hungry they can't wait for the main meal so they stuff down as many finger sandwiches as they can. When the main course is served, some have eaten so many finger sandwiches and Hors d' oeuveres that they are no longer hungry.

Likewise there are many who get obsessed with the "Hors d' oeuveres of this life. There are many who have become obsessed with getting grabbing all of the money, houses, clothing, and everything else they can get their hands on in this life. They have become overly consumed with Hors d' oeuvres!

Jesus warned believers about this very subject. He said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you!" In another instance he warned believers about being overly concerned about possessing the things of this world urging them to build their treasures in heaven with the fear of moths or rust instead of seeking to build a world of wealth for themselves down here.

Our plate is too small to receive everything God has: We have all seen the person

at a social event who tried to put more finger sandwiches on the plate than it would hold.

This brings out an important truth, "When our plate gets too full, things fall off!"

One of the seven deadly sins is "greed"-Trying to get more than we really need. The greedy try to put more on their plates than they can hold. That's when things fall off.

There many marriages that are experiencing difficulty because one partner or both have full plates and they are steady trying to stack more on top and things are falling off!

Many professionals have overloaded their schedules to the point that they don't have enough time for themselves and those that are important to them! Things are falling off!

We are going through life's party delicately balancing everything getting more and holding on to it, but at the first little bump...things fall off!

That's the reason that some restaurants don't allow us to serve ourselves, they prepare the finger plates for us. When we serve our selves, we tend to get what looks good to our eye, and get more than we can use..and things fall off!

That's why the saint lets God portion out his blessings every day. In the Lord's prayer we say, "Give us this day our daily bread!" David said, "thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies..."

At the banquet table of life, the buffet of Hors d'oeuveres is to large to fit on our plate. God has more than we can ever possess! Let him prepare the plate and we will be satisfied!

We can't even imagine

Finally, we must consider that there is nothing in this life that can fully prepare us for what God has in store for us.

We may accumulate a few comforts while we are here, but there is nothing that can compare to what God has in store for us.

Don't get too full on the finger sandwiches, because the main course is on the way.

While we are nibbling on the Hors d' oeuveres, the Lord is making a way.

The main course will be greater than anything we can imagine!

What God is preparing for us is:

—Better than good; richer than rich!

—Softer than soft; and sweeter than sweet!

—Eye hath not seen, nor has it entered into the heart of man to understand the many things God has in store for us! For Hebrews 11:6 says: "for he hath prepared for them a city."

Don't get too satisfied with your little house, because Jesus said, "In my father's house are many mansions"

Don't get too comfortable with your newly paved street of blacktop and asphalt,

because John said in that city the streets will be paved with gold!

Don't get too comfortable with your digitized alarm clock that wakes you up every morning, because when the main course is served, you won't have to worry about alarm clocks, daylight savings time that springs forward and falls back, because time shall be no!

Don't get too comfortable with your new dress and shoes, that's just a Hors d'oeuvere. Over yonder every saint will put a new robe and slippers. No wonder the old hymn says, "I got shoes you got shoes. All God's chillun got shoes. When I get to heaven I'm going to put on my shoes and walk all over God's heaven!"

Don't get too comfortable with your jobs in the health care industry because it's just an Hors d' oeuvere. Over yonder there will be a tree sitting in the midst of the city that will bear 12 manner of fruit that will be good for the healing of the nations. God's health care plan will have no deductible. It will be the ultimate HMO. It will heal on "His Majesty's Orders!"

I don't know about you but I'm on my way to that city not made with hands!

It's a city, built on 12 foundations!

It's a city, that surrounded by 12 gates!

It's a city, where Jesus is will rule throughout eternity!

On his way to get everything ready he stopped by Bethlehem!

On his way to get everything ready he hung around Palestine for 30 years!

On his way to get everything ready he stopped by Calvary and died!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

He's coming back again!

But until he comes back he didn't leave us comfortless!

He left us the Holy Spirit to and showers of blessings to keep us going until he comes back again!

No. 890-Family

Traits of Our Mates

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

April 14, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word. Ephesians 5:21-26;Now abideth these three, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction

If you could have the perfect mate, what qualities would you like for your mate to have? Should he be taller? Should she be finer? Some, if given the option, would forego the looks if they could find someone with a little money. There are some who have a fix on intelligence. There are others who want the whole ball of wax; they want looks, money and brains all in the same package.

It seems everyone is looking for Mr. Wonderful and Ms. Perfect Delight. Some have found what they have been looking for. Others always seem to be one day too late. Life's cycle involves a complete circle of emotional events that span the entire scope of our lives. We spend one third of our lives looking for love, another third trying to hold on to love and a final third remembering love. Somewhere in between there's a group that can't find love at all. They are the group that is "looking for love in all the wrong places."

What qualities do we look for in the perfect mate? Is there a check list that's fool proof? Is there a guidebook we can purchase to insure that we now have, "Mr. Wonderful?" Can we really use this magic checklist to be sure that we have the right one or to measure the quality of what we have?

Is there any such creature as Mr. Perfect? Is there a perfect woman? To get the answer to that question consider the preacher who stood at a bible class and said, "There's no such thing as a perfect man. Anybody present who has ever known a perfect man, stand up." Nobody stood up. "Those who have ever known a perfect woman, stand up." One demure little woman stood up. "Did you ever know an absolutely perfect woman?" He asked, somewhat amazed. "I didn't know her personally," replied the little old woman, "but I have heard a great deal about her. She was my husband's first wife."

What if I told you that there is a check list for the perfect mate? Would you like to have it? Galatians 5:22-23 gives a list of traits or qualities of the perfect person.

The traits of the perfect mate are: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, and temperance" This little short verse gives each of us a check list to use. However, this check list is not for us to measure others, it is for us to measure ourselves. Before seeking perfection in others it's good to become acquainted with ourselves.

Am I a person who is capable of loving someone and allowing myself to be loved?

Am I happy with myself, eternally optimistic about life and the conditions around me?

Am I a peace with myself and the circumstances in which I live?

Do I have the capacity to be tolerate in tough times, holding on for the best?

Am I abrasive and destructive or am I considerate of others, handling them gently and with care?

Am a person of intense faith in God, who trust in him reverently?

Am I humble in my manner, returning wrath with a soft response of measured strength.

Am I able to control myself to avoid over indulgences that might destroy me?

These are traits the bible calls the "fruit of the spirit." They represent a subset of character that identifies believers everywhere. They exist in people independent of external characteristics such as: money, looks or education.

It is possible for the perfect man to have all of the biblical traits but not have a six figure income. It is possible for that person have everything that makes her perfect except a beautiful body. He may not even be the smartest person in the world, but he may be perfect for you otherwise. Only a person who has these traits would appreciate them in others. Thus, some may find difficulty finding the right person because God is getting them personally ready to receive Ms. Perfect and Mr. Wonderful once he or she comes along.

If all we can see as important are looks, brains and money, then it becomes evident that we are not ready. Many years ago the Chilites wrote a song that asked, "Have you seen her?" There are many men today who are looking for Ms. Perfect externally. Because they were not spiritually adjusted themselves they were not able to see her when she sat right next to them. Some women have already met Mr. Wonderful, but they could not see him for looking for him.

As believers, we praise God for giving us a loving spirit that helps us to understand the meaning of true love, which is only in and through Christ Jesus. Because he allows us to see ourselves through his eyes we are better able to identify and appreciate the traits of our mates.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to the Ephesians in which he gave instructions to the married. When he wrote to the Corinthians emphasized the importance of love. To the Ephesians Paul made the point in Ephesians 5:21 that love places every

believer in a mode of respect. Thus, out of love and respect a husband and wife mutually agree to submit themselves to one another. That is "when he's right, he's right." But it also means "when she right, she's right.

In the context of the same love, a wife agrees to follow the leadership of her husband. Moreover, the husband is commanded to love his wife like Christ loved the church. Paul took the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians to define love in no uncertain terms. Armed with that definition, believers can build relationships in Christ that last.

Establishing Relationships

One of the most vulnerable times for Christians is when they are over 18 and single. It is a time when the dating game is intense, when we should be the most careful. Single Christians should remember what the word of God says:

GUARD YOUR HEART: Proverbs 4:23 warns us to guard our heart because out of it springs the issues of life. Be careful who you share your affections with because our affections influence a great deal of who we are. Therefore, we should be careful whom we date. Every person that is good to you is not good for you.

AVOID DATING NON-CHRISTIANS: Avoid sharing your affections with persons who do not share your value set. 2 Corinthians 6:14 urges us to resist the temptation to be "yoked" with someone who is not of the same faith and value set.

TEST WHETHER ITS LOVE OR SEX: Singles should look for love traits, not sex traits in their mate. 1 Corinthians 13 provides the test. Is your mate patient with you and kind to you? Is your mate one who is never jealous, or envious of you? Does your mate build you up instead of putting you down? Does your mate avoid rudeness, always tell you the truth, trust you and work to protect or defend you? If you are sick or fail in life, will your mate be there for you over the years? Take away the sex and you have the answers to these questions staring you in the face. Sex messes up the picture. It's easy to say "I love in the throws of passion." Remove the sex and see if your mate passes the test.

IF YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR-STOP!: Confusing sex with love, there are many singles who also want to be Christians who have begun to travel down the wrong path. It is not too late to stop and return to the godly path. God is quick to forgive. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

DO WHAT CHRISTIANS DO AND GOD WILL SEND A MATE: Many singles frustrate themselves trying to find on their own. Why not try it the other way around. Do what Christians do and God will send the mate in his own time and way. Genesis 24 gives a perfect picture of how Isaac met and married Rebekah. She went about her

work as usual, doing what was assigned her hands to do and God pointed the servants of Abraham to her and brought her together with Isaac. The key is for young believers to be busy doing the work of the saints. Help the poor, work with children, teach, sing in the choir, carry on the ministry..God will send the mate in his own time.

Building Relationships

While singles are dealing with establishing relationships, married couples are learning how to build and strengthen relationships. Psychologists at the Minirth-Meier Clinic have identified five stages married couples pass through as they build strong, and deeply satisfying marriages.

YOUNG LOVE: The first two years of marriage are described as the period of young love. During this period a young couple begins to understand each other and begin making adjustments that make them one family. We could easily call these years the Rice Krispy and Frosted Flakes years. They are full of snap, crackle and pop that are just GREAT!

REALISTIC LOVE: Year 3 to 10 is described as the period of realistic love. It is a stressful time when the demands of child rearing, careers and our mate strain relationships. It is a dangerous period because it is often marked with frequent arguments and frustration. It is called realistic love because the couple faces the realities of the real while still loving each other. This is the period where most divorces happen or the seeds for them are planted. These years can be described as the shredded wheat years. It is good for you but it can get hard to swallow.

COMFORTABLE LOVE: Years 11 through 25 are described as the years of comfortable love. During this period many of the adjustments of the prior period have already been made and the couple is beginning to be comfortable with each other, although without all of the snap crackle and pop. One man described these years as the oatmeal years, they are not exactly exciting, but they are comfortable, warm and satisfying. Even though they are warm and comfortable the oatmeal years taste better with just a little sugar.

RENEWING LOVE: Year 26-35 are the renewal years. These are the years when the children have left home and grandchildren are nice little dolls that we can play with and send back home. They are also the years when the couple has experience losses, deaths, sickness, ailing parents and troubles. This is the period of renewal and restoration. These are the Fruit Loop years when life is once again tasty, free and colorful.

TRANSCENDENT LOVE: Year 36 and above is the kind of love that transcends. Free from many of the frustrations and struggles of those who are just beginning those who have experienced this level of love report that is a time when more than

ever they have become one. They have transcended doubt, confusion, failure, disappointment, death and sickness and have become one. These years can be described as the "Continental Breakfast"-you get a little of every thing, even a little snap, crackle and pop.

Relationships Need Love to Last

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that what is needed for any relationship to last is "love." But true love cannot exist outside of God because God is love.

The love of God is a powerful sweetener that helps bind broken hearts, heal wounds, and restore lost joy.

Real love is what sweetens the flakes during the years of discovery!

Real love what makes the tough to swallow experiences in which partners often feel like shredded wheat bearable!

Real love is what makes oatmeal sweet!

All snapple, crackle and pop is alright but we still need a little something sweet!

That's where love comes in! Real love has been demonstrated to us by our savior himself.

He loved us so much that he came and demonstrated that no greater love can a man show than his willingness to lay down his life for his friends. It's love that transcends time!

It doesn't matter whether it's been 30 years or fifty years or a thousand years, he still loves us!

We know he loved us because John said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

It's a demonstrated on Calvary!

It's a love that proven on an old rugged cross!

It's a love renewed when arose from the grave! No wonder the song writer wrote, "Oh How I love Jesus...because he first loved me!"

No. 891-Communion

Instant Food

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 21, 2002

SCRIPTURE: And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover." Exodus 12:11; "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

Introduction

Have you ever eaten on the run? We live in a fast paced nworld that has little time for anything. We like instant food, it's quick, tasty and gets the job done but doesn't take long to prepare from the consumer end. (It actually takes the same time to prepare, we just don't have to do it, it's already done by someone else.) When we are eating on the run we are looking to grab a bite as we go. It's not unusual in such circumstances for us to eat snack foods for breakfast, quick serve foods for lunch and boxed or micro waved foods for supper. The quicker the better.

Although nutrionists warn us that eating on the run is not good for us, their warnings seem to fall on deaf ears. Our cupboards are filled with everything from instant coffee, instant oatmeal, instant grits, microwave hamburgers, microwave French fries, rice in a pouch, noodles in a bag, pop tarts, ready to serve Chinese food and there are even bags of salad fixings in which the lettuce and other ingredients are already cut and package ready for instant salads.

Obviously, we live in a instant world where three minutes to pop a bag of popcorn in the microwave or to bring a pot of water to a boil seems like a lifetime.

For some, eating, like filling up the gas tank in our cars, is a necessary interruption, thus we try to get enough in our tanks as fast as we can to get us to the next stop. The thought of standing at the pump long enough to fill up the entire tank is a drudgery. There are some who approach preparing and eating food with the same attitude. They say, "If it can't be popped into the microwave or bought from Church's Chicken, then it's not worth the trouble!"

There are many who approach their spiritual nourishment with the same instant food" attitude. They want just enough spirituality to get them to the next stop. They say, "Make it quick, nutritious, and tasty." Give it to us in an instant, we've got to go!

There are still believers who a squeeze their spirituality into their schedules. They have one minute prayers, one minute devotions, one verse a day bible studies and

maybe an hour once a week for a quick spiritual fix. If it takes too long they are usually gone before the benediction. On the bright side, at least these have some kind of prayer and devotional life, but on the other hand, serves the same purpose as instant food, its just enough, consumed fast enough, to get us to the next stop on time.

Instant food gets us by, but it doesn't take the place of old fashion stove top cooking. Fast food chicken may be quick, but somehow it never matches up to that good old chicken that mama fries on the stove. Instant biscuits are quick and fast, but they never seem to match up to the huge fluffy biscuits made from scratch with the butter sparkling on top. Instant coffee can get you through the craving of the moment, but it doesn't match up to the flavor of freshly brewed pot of coffee made from hand grown beans.

Likewise the best worship and praise is not the instant brand but the kind that gives God proper praise and respect for blessing us in ways that only he can do. It's not instant. It's sometimes takes a little longer, but the results linger long afterwards.

As Christians, we want to be able to respond instantly to God's commands and instructions, but we don't want to be in so big a hurry that we miss our opportunity to hear his command to move and be blessed.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's instruction to Israel to prepare the Passover meal and to prepare to eat in haste.

Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. During that time they prayed constantly that God would free them from slavery and return them to the Promised Land. When God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh to "Let my people go he accompanied his command with 10 plagues, the last of which would be so great that even the might and power of Pharaoh could not resist. After the last plague, that of the death of the first born, the people would be released.

God told the people to prepare to leave in a hurry when the command was given in preparation for the Exodus. Four days before they were to leave the people were told to assemble the ingredients for a memorial meal. Each family was to secure a lamb for the meal. Small families were allowed to join with others for the meal. They assembled the other ingredients as well, bitter herbs and batter for bread which was to be eaten unleavened.

On the evening of the Exodus each family was ordered to kill the lamb and roast it. A portion of its blood was to be used to paint a marking on three sides of the doorway to their houses. The marking would identify them as believers to God's death angel which would visit Egypt and destroy the first born of every house. With the lamb and the unleavened bread on the table that night, they were instructed to eat in haste and be prepared to move at God's command.

They were commanded to do this every year in commemoration of God's great work in delivering them. They were instructed to count their years from this event (v 1,2) by making this event each year, the first year of the month for ceremonial

purposes.

The act itself had great significance for Christians as well. The lamb selected was a type of Christ who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The blood shed upon the doorways was a type of the safety and security of believers who are spared the condemnation that comes with sin as long as they are covered by the blood of Christ.

Thus, Israel was told to prepare to eat in a hurry, but the food they ate took four days to assemble and prepare. They ate quickly and were ready to move at God's command. Christians are told to eat bread, not necessarily unleavened bread, as a reminder of the body of Christ who was slain. We are also told to drink wine to symbolize the blood of Christ which is the blood of the new promise to all believers.

Both were told to eat and be ready to move at God's command. For Israel, the command was to move out to possess the Promised Land. For believers, the command is to "Go ye there fore and teach all nations.."

Hurry Up and Wait

Israel was told to prepare their food then wait. It took them four days to do that. We have learned the hurry up part of that lesson, we are bothered by the wait.

We live in a hurry up society that gets impatient when it has to wait.

We don't want to wait on anything!

In most modern homes the bathtub is used less because it takes too long. Showers are faster!

There are brands of shampoo on the market now that have the conditioner in the same container, to save another step!

What we like about Big Macs and Whoppers is not so much their taste, as is the fact that they are fast!

Dominoes Pizza became one of the biggest names in pizza not because its pizza tasted so good but because they promised delivery within 30 minutes or the pizza was free!

In Illinois there is a funeral home that has a drive through window to view the dead, for those who want to quickly pay their respects.

There is a fast lane at the grocery store and the left lane of most interstate highways is the fast lane.

We are constantly running. John Ortberg in his book, "The life You've always wanted" compares our hurry up life to that described by the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland. The Red Queen said to Alice, "Now HERE, you see, it takes all the RUNNING you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least TWICE AS FAST as that"

We know that's true, because the week won't pass without hearing the phrase, I'll see you later, I've got to run!

Often we run past our families!

Often we run past our church!

Often we run past our God!

Instant is not always better

Instant is not always better. Old Fashioned oats takes longer but it tastes better. Old fashioned home cooked burgers are slower, but taste better than Big Macs. There are other areas too.

INSTANT RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT AS GOOD: Instant people have a problem building relationships. We can become so instant oriented that we judge relationships with people based upon how much time that will consume. So, caller-id's on our phones help us to ignore those that will take up our time or waste our time. Relationships take time.

INSTANT LOVE IS NOT BETTER: Instant love is frustrating. Love and instant are incompatible because love deals with two things: feelings and action. Love is a succession of feelings that are nurtured through time spent together. A minute here and a moment there is instant love, but it is also frustrating love. Love is also an action word; it is better shown that spoken. Love that is shown over time is better than instant love any day.

INSTANT RELIGION IS NOT BETTER: Instant people are in such a hurry that they have little time for God. Things that are godly often take up tremendous amounts of time. Bible study is not instant, it takes time. A real prayer life is not instant, but it takes time. True worship is not instant, it takes time. An instant person considers the amount of time set aside for worship, prayer, bible study and spiritual growth as an encroachment upon his schedule. Such a person looks for the quick version that can give a quick fix.

Is there an instant way to tell God thanks for his blessings?

Is there an instant way to praise him for his goodness?

Is it a symptom of our "instant" mentality to pray and then ask God to answer it "right now!"-Instantly!

Wait On an instant God

Finally, it is good that we remember that despite the hurried pace of our world it better for us to wait and let God be instant God that he is.

There was no person whose daily life was more crowded than Jesus. He was constantly surrounded by crowds who wanted to see him or touch him. Jesus always found a way to slow his pace by retreating in a boat, praying in a garden, or crossing over to the other side.

What he came to do could not be done instantly it would take time.

When Jesus told his disciples that he was the bread of heaven, it wasn't instant bread but it was bread that had been prepared from the beginning of time.

Thus, the word of God encourages saints not to be in a hurry, but to learn to wait on the Lord!

Isaiah said, “They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!”

Psalm 27:14 says, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

Because the bible encourages us to wait on the Lord, it does not mean that God is a slow God and that we have to slow down for him to catch up to us. It means we have to be patient for God to move in his own time.

While it’s not advisable for us to hurry God, it is good to know that we serve an instant God.

While it’s not recommended that we tell God when and how to act, it is good to know that we serve an on time God!

Sound travels at a speed of 1085 feet per second, but before we speak the words of any prayer, the answer is on the way!

Light travels at speeds above 5,000 feet per second, but long before we can see it, God makes a way out of no way!

A widow woman with an issue of blood, pushed her way through a crowd. When she touched the hem of his garment, instantly she was made whole!

A centurion soldier asked Jesus to speak the word for his daughter’s healing, and instantly it was done.

No wonder the song writer declared, “He may not come when you want him, but he’s right on time!”

In the fullness of time, God sent his only begotten Son to be a living sacrifice!

He died on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

One of these days, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye we shall be caught up to meet him in the air! Instantly

No. 892-Anniv.-Ushers

Gate Keepers and Door Openers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 24, 2002

SCRIPTURE: And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. Acts 12:13-16

Introduction

How important is the person you meet at the door of an assembly? Most would agree that the first face you see is an important face at any gathering. The person who meets and greets is extremely important. We should never minimize the role of the greeter. When former Heavy Weight Champion Joe Louis fell from grace, there were many who believed that he lowered himself to become a doorman at a hotel. The hotel didn't think so. He was one the best paid doorman they had ever seen. People from everywhere came to the hotel just to see the world famous Joe Louis. While ushers may not have national renown of Joe Louis people none the less choose their places of worship largely by how they feel about the people who receive them.

Gates and doors have two purposes. They either keep something out or let something in. The person who keeps the door does both.

The gate keeper has a great responsibility. If that responsibility is not taken seriously it can cause tremendous problems. Consider the man who got a job as a night watchman at a factory. There had been a lot of thefts by the workers on the night shift, and so every morning when the night shift workers passed through his gate it was his job to check their bags and pockets to make sure that nothing was being stolen. Things were going along very well the first night on the job until a man pushing a wheelbarrow of newspapers came through his gate. Aha, he thought, that man thinks he can cover up what he is stealing with that newspaper. So he removed the paper only to find nothing. Still he felt that the man was acting strangely, so he questioned him about the paper. "I get a little extra money from newspapers I recycle, so I go into the lunchroom and pick up all the ones people have thrown away." The guard let him pass but decided to keep a close eye on him. The next night it was the

same, and the night after that. Week after week it went on. The same guy would push the wheelbarrow of newspapers past the guard's checkpoint. The guard would always check and find nothing. Then one night, about a year later, the guard reported for work only to find a message had been left for him telling him to report to his supervisor. He walked into the supervisor's office and before he could say a word, the boss said, "You're fired!" "Fired?" he asked in total surprise. "Why? What did I do?" "It was your job to make sure that no one stole anything from this plant and you have failed." "Wait a minute, what do you mean failed. Nobody ever stole anything from this place while I was on guard." "Oh, really," the boss answered. "Then how do you explain that there are 365 days in the last year and we are missing 365 wheelbarrows?" -The gatekeeper let the crook walk right by.

What if the gatekeepers of the church are not sharp enough to know the tricks of those who want to slip foreign doctrines and ideas into the church. There are 52 Sundays in a year and every Sunday somebody could get by us without being noticed, if we are not careful.

Ushers are important not only as greeters but as gatekeepers as well. We praise God for good ushers who know their jobs and do them well.

As Christians, our goal is to guard the gate of the church to keep out unwanted ideas, doctrines and practices. At the same time, it is our responsibility to be gate openers, to welcome "whosoever will" to the throne of grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on how the power of God guarded a gate and opened a door for a believer.

Twelve years after the crucifixion of Christ, the church had grown to an astronomical size. King Herod Agrippa became an enemy of the church, much like his brother Herod before whom Jesus stood. As the church began to grow he ordered the capture of James and had him decapitated. James and his brother John were well known among believers. In fact they were called the "Sons of Thunder." When news of his death spread, fear went through the church.

When James was arrested the church took it lightly. They expected him to be released. When he was killed they were shaken. Soon after, Peter was arrested and the church became extremely alarmed. He was kept under guard of four soldiers.

The church did something for Peter they did not do for James. It went into prayer. In the middle of the night an angel of the Lord woke Peter, threw open the gate, and allowed him to walk free. At first Peter thought it was a dream but when he woke, he realized that he was really free.

At Mary's house he knocked on the gate that guarded the house where the disciples prayed. The gate was kept locked to protect other disciples from soldiers or others that might sneak upon them while they prayed and worship. A woman by the name of Rhoda came to the gate and notice that it was Peter. Leaving him outside, she ran back in to tell the others that Peter was free. They did not believe her and insisted it was Peter's angel.

All the while Peter kept knocking at the gate!

Finally the door was opened to him and they heard the good news of God's deliverance!

Gate Keepers

The text points us to a gate being kept and door being opened.

Ushers are gate keepers but as such there are a few considerations they should keep in mind.

GATE KEEPERS MUST KEEP THE DEVIL OUT: Ushers must be very careful to keep the devil out. Often the devil may not come in the front door, because we will be watching for him. Sometimes the devil finds a way to come in by riding in the wheelbarrow with an usher. Ushers must always be careful not to let the devil in their midst. The devil can get into church by getting in with the gate keepers. Usually, the devil will find a way to turn the gate keepers against each other. It's not hard to do. He can make them argue over uniforms, positions and other petty things. He can make them so mad that they refuse to speak to each other or work together. While they are watching the door trying to keep him out, he's sitting in the usher's section laughing up a storm. No wonder the song writer would say, "Don't let the devil ride. If you let him ride, he'll want to drive, don't let him ride!"

GATE KEEPERS MUST KNOW WHEN TO OPEN THE GATE: Rhoda opened the door but she wanted to be sure it was the right time to open the gate. Sometimes ushers open the gate at the wrong time. There are times in a worship service when the doors are closed. The doors and closed during worship, just as they were in this text.

When the church is reading from the word in a responsive reading or a group reading, the gate is closed in respect for the word of God. There should be no one walking or trying to find a seat when the bible is being read.

When the church is praying, the gate is closed. It is most disrespectful for visitors to enter the sanctuary of a church while someone is praying, trying to find a seat for themselves while others are trying to talk to God.

An important part of the worship is the offering. No worship is complete without an opportunity for believers to witness to God through giving an offering. While many churches want as many people as they can get to be inside during the offering; in reality the offering is a part of the worship and the gate should be closed.

GATE KEEPERS PROTECT THE WORD: In the old church, ushers were also consider gatekeepers of the word. Not only was there an usher stationed at the doors to keep the gates from the outside, but there were also members of the Levitical class whose task it was to provide for preaching teaching by ministering to the priests. In the old church there was at least one usher who kept the pastor's door. If someone was upset about something, they had to talk to pastor after he preached, not before. If they had a concern about the operation of the church that might break the pastor's train of thought, they would have a tough time getting pass the usher that kept the

pastor's door. In addition, they saw to it that whatever it took to facilitate the preaching of the gospel was provided Such as a glass of water or a fresh hanky; they saw that it happened. In addition, the gatekeepers must study the word. They did not neglect Sunday School and bible study because knowing the word themselves help them to better promote and respond to the word!

Know who to let in

Not only do does a good gatekeeper know whom they should keep out, they know who to let in!

When Rhoda saw Peter standing at the gate, she was not absolutely sure of what she saw. But when the disciples came they hear Peter knocking on the door and they opened it to let him in!

That lets me know that not only are ushers gate-keepers but they are also door-openers!

In this text Peter was a type of Christ because he was knocking at the door! Revelation 3:20 shows Jesus standing on the outside, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

I don't know about you, but I've found out that powerful things happen in the life of a church "when he comes in."

When an usher becomes a door opener, he introduces someone who is lost to someone who can show him the way!

When an usher becomes a door opener, he

-SHOWS THE WEAK how to find knew strength

-SHOWS THE DISCOURAGED how to find new inspiration

-SHOWS THE DISENCHANTED how to find new hope!

When an usher becomes a door opener he gives an invitation to the world to come see a man who can

-Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties

-Strengthen us in our weakness; Encourage us in our trials

-Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties

-Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles

I heard David declare: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Who is the king of glory? The Lord Strong and Mighty!

Who is the king of glory? The Lord mighty in battle!

We never know who comes in because the world wants to know about Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose after three days!

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith!

Keep the gate but open the door of your heart and he will come in!

No. 893-Youth

You Got it Bad

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 30, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Romans 7:19-20.

Introduction

Have you ever been really hooked on someone or something? I mean really hooked! It can mess with your mind. Those who remember their teen years and thereafter, can remember the times in your life when you were really hooked on someone. All day long you thought about them. In class, you scribbled their names on sheets of paper. Maybe you toyed with the idea of fixing your name with their name just to see how it sounded for future purposes. Sometimes you wrote them letters and mingled the letters in with your paper work to appear to be studying. On breaks you looked for them. You wanted to sit next to this person; touch them and just hear their voice as long as you could. At night you slipped and called them on the phone and maybe even whispered to keep your parents from knowing you were on the phone. When you finally closed your eyes you saw a music video in your head. Of course there were only two people in the video..the two of you. In the morning you spelled the persons name in bowl of Alphabet cereal and wrote it on your books. Day in and day thoughts of this person dominate your every waking hour. When that happens friends, you've got it bad. Your fixation grows into a compulsion. There are some who completely nut up of another person appears in their day dream and messes it up. Then the fixation becomes a fatal attraction and you really nut up! When you can't break away, then you know; you got it bad!

A while back there was song hit the top of the charts by "Usher" The song was very popular and was titled, "You got it bad!"

U got, u got it bad
When you're on the phone
Hang up and you call right back
U got, u got it bad
If you miss a day without your friend
Your whole life's off track
You know you got it bad when you're stuck in the house
You don't wanna have fun

It's all you think about
U got it bad when you're out with someone
But you keep on thinkin' bout somebody else
U got it bad

Obviously when we get in that deep, you got it bad! There is old saying that your "nose is wide open!" You are "Whipped!"

Infatuations are a normal part of teen life. Teens who are infatuated with another person however, should not confuse it with "love." Infatuations come and go and the feel like love at the moment. Your hand sweats, heart pounds and life just takes your breath away at the thought of Mr. Dynamite and Miss Gorgeous.

But there are some done have mild case of infatuation, they have it bad. Real bad. We have seen them. Some people who have it bad unstable people, have mood shifts and angry outbursts with little provocation; they are impulsive in their behavior; can make suicide attempts, often to manipulate others; they seem to lack a coherent sense of self and identity; and cling to others hoping to get it from relationships; terrified of being abandoned and alone. Such people, like Glen Close in the movie "Fatal Attraction" can be dangerous as well.

It's not just people that can get us hooked, but we can get hooked on a passion or pastime. We can get hooked on football, basketball, video games to a point that they are the only things we think about! We get hints that we have it bad when we mistakenly call any adult figure "coach." When we consider leaving home for school "getting off the bench and going into the game" and prepare to "slam dunk" a test! We have it bad when we pass by a computer at school and want to touch the key board to see if our favorite game is installed!

There are some forces in this world that are so strong that once they make headway into our lives, they take control, for better or worse. They are called compulsions. What's your compulsion? Is it wine, women or wild living? Is there another dark passion that has taken over the reigns of your self control?

If so, don't feel like the Lone Ranger, you're not by yourself, there are millions of people like yourself who have "got it bad!"

As Christians, we are happy to know that our attraction to the savior is not an infatuation, fad, pass time or fatal attraction. We are drawn to Christ because he first loved us. That's why we sing, "Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me!"

Exposition

Our text first considers Paul writing to the Romans about the relationship of the Mosaic law to his life as a Christian. In short, Paul told the Romans that the law served the purpose of showing him what his sins were but it lacked the power to deliver him from the penalties of sin.

In verses 7-14 he tells how sin was more powerful than the law itself. In verses 15-25 he tells how sin is even more powerful than the man who is a slave to sin himself. In other words, there is a force in the world that is more powerful than any man or woman can handle and can make them do wrong, even when they want to do right.

In these verses Paul describes in vivid detail a man or a woman who "has it bad."

When we don't do what we should; and things that we should do, we don't; and things that we hate we do, then we are stricken with a bad case of the can't help its. (v. 15)

Moreover, when we do things we do not intend to do we are possessed for a moment, a day, or a week by the power of sin. In verse 17 Paul says "It's no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." In verse 18 he explains further that the will to do right is present in me, but the power to do right is just not present.

Listen as verse 19 tells the story: The good things that I want to do, I don't do them; the evil things that I do not want to do, I do them anyway.
It is the classic example of a man or woman who's "got it bad!"

Got it bad

There are many today who have it bad.

POSSESSION OF THINGS: The world of teens is plastered with images of conspicuous consumption. The concept is "if you've got it floss it!" or show it off. There are many who have gone beyond simply having a few nice changes of clothing, they've got it bad! There are some who must wear designer clothing and must wear the absolute latest fashions. They have got it bad! There is nothing wrong with the clothes they have but they want more, shoes, dresses, tennis or anything else that has been worn or endorsed by a star! This is what happened to the rich farmer in a parable Jesus told. He had full barns already, but he tore down his barn to build bigger barns. He had to have more. He had it so bad that it prompted Jesus to ask the question, "What profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?"

OVERACHIEVING: There are many people who are achievers. Then there are others who are overachievers, those who have developed a compulsion about achievement to the point that nothing else matters. They have it bad! There are some overachievers that want to win so bad that they will cheat on tests and steal to get what they want. This could easily be called the Tonya Harding Syndrome. In 1994 Harding was competing in the Olympics but wanted to win so bad that she reportedly participated in a scheme to injure the front runner, Nancy Kerrigan. Since then her name is always linked to examples of people who want to win at any cost. Ananias and Sapphari wanted the praise of men so bad that they lied about what they gave to the church. They gained a moment of praise but lost their lives because the had it bad.

HARMFUL HABITS: Harmful habits are hard to break. Teens slip around a little have a smoke, then there are two smokes, then a pack and before you know it, they have "got it bad!" The same could be said for drinking, sex and drugs. Someone experiments with a small amount at the beginning and the next thing they know they have "got it bad." Even marginal attitude shifts can turn out to be "bad" –real bad as our attitudes toward life and relationships turn sour.

Many bible characters had it "bad!"

David looked out of his window and saw Bathsheba bathing on her terrace and said to himself, man "you got it bad!"

The rich young ruler wanted the kingdom of heaven but loved his possessions more and he turned down glory for a fistful of dollars because he had it bad!

Samson was a powerful man of God who could tie tails of foxes together and carry the gates of cities on his shoulders, but he met his downfall in the arms of Delilah. When he met Delilah, he realized that he had it bad!

Somebody here today has it bad.
Paul says that when you have it "bad" you are a miserable and wretched man. You are a miserable and wretched woman because you are:

—doing things you don't want to do
—going places you don't want to go
—drinking things you don't want to drink
—saying things you don't want to say

I hear Paul say "oh wretched man am I!"

I don't know about you, but I want to make it to the kingdom, but I can't make it by myself.

I want to walk the streets of glory, but I found out, that you can't walk this pilgrim way, and walk it by yourself.

I want to live the Christian life, but I found out that you can't do it all by yourself. Every time you try to do it all by yourself, you'll end up doing what you don't want to do. You can't walk this road all by yourself.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "Walk with me Lord, Walk with me, while I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus, to walk with me."

-II-
Christians have it bad too!

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that Christians "have it bad too!"

Since we have come to know the Lord there are many things that have changed in our lives to the point that others around us say, "You've Got it bad!"

When others on campus see Christian students giving up what they call fun school activities so they go to church and rehearse for the youth choir, they say, "you got it bad!"

When you refuse to dress like a hoochimama and because your faith in God teaches you to be modest in your attire, your friends may say, "you got I bad!"

When you wear shirt tail tucked in, a belt on your pants and keep your hair neatly trimmed, there are some who might say, man you are really into that church stuff, "You got it bad!"

When you talk more about your church, faith and God than you do about sports, movies and videos, your friends will quickly say to you, "you got it bad!"

I hear Paul asking a question at verse 24 "Who can deliver me from this body of death?" That's a question that every child of God can answer when people ask, "How

did you get so wrapped up in the Lord?"

There was a time when I didn't like coming to Sunday School, but now I'm regular in my attendance!

There was a time when all I did was play basketball, but now I play basketball and make slam dunks for the Lord!

There was a time that if I had to choose between the church and school, the church would lose!

Satan had me in the palm of his hand, doing what he wanted me to do! I had it bad! Then I heard Paul ask the question, "Who can deliver me, from the body of death?"

I'm caught up in a vicious cycle, doing things that I do want to do and living a life that I don't want to live. Who can deliver me from
my "on-again, off-again" relationship with God, where Satan operates mylife at a distance by remote control.

"Who can deliver me from this body of death?" I heard Paul say thank God for Jesus! For he can save us from this body of
death.

No wonder the song writer wrote: I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sin heard my despairing cry, and from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me. When nothing else could help love lifted me.!"

I'm reminded of the mother who took her son to the doctor and explained that he had come down with a sickness that she could not explain. She said "doctor his knees bend frequently, and his hand keeps extending. His head keeps bowing and he seems to have developed a bleeding heart, and this thing gets worse, the closer it gets to Sunday."

The doctor asked the youth what was his problem and the man responded that he had recently gone to a revival and had accepted Christ and it looked like right after that his strange behavior began:

—A STRANGE CASE OF THE BENDED KNEE: Because every time he faced a difficult moment he found himself on his knees talking to the Lord.

—AN UNEXPLAINED CASE OF THE HELPING HAND: When ever someone needed help he was quick to respond. He found himself humming "if I can help somebody as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain."

—UNPREDICTABLE SPASMS PRAISING LIPS: Whatever happened in life in found himself saying praise the Lord and lifting him up!

—UNCONTROLLABLE CLAPPING HANDS and STOMPING FEET: Every time he thought about the goodness of the Lord he had to clap his hands and stomping fee!

The man said he's alright on Monday and Tuesday, but the closer it got to Sunday, he found himself anxious to make it to the house of God. The doctor said there is noting wrong with you but whatever you've got, you got it bad!

There is somebody here today that's got a bad for Jesus!

Tell everybody how he died and how he rose again!
I just can't keep it to myself! I got it bad!

Stay on Course

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 5, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Neither give heed to fables, and endless genealogies which minister questions, rather than edifying which is in the faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of pure heart, aynd of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside to vain jangling." 1 Timothy 1:4-6

Introduction

Have you wandered off your course? The times in our lives when we have been off course are those times when we strayed from the goal or mark that we set for ourselves. We started in the right direction then found ourselves sidetracked for one reason or another. Wandering off course is not unique to any person or race. The educated wander off course just as well as the undereducated. The rich and poor alike, can both wander off course. Those who are just beginning in life can wander off course and so can those who have been traveling for a long time. Anyone can wander off course.

At the beginning of this year, many set goals for themselves, but have already strayed off the course. Was it a commitment you made to your family? Your church? Or was it simply a commitment you made for self improvement that has been placed on the "back burner" of your life or now occupies the bottom rung of your priority list.

There are various reasons why we strayed from our course but all they do is provide an explanation but not an excuse for our present course. Staying on course requires a measure of personal discipline that requires a higher power than ourselves to dictate. We need God to help us stay on course.

When do we know that we are off course? We know we are off course when we begin to sense that we are moving away from our goal rather than moving toward it. If our goal is to complete our education and we drop out of school, we are off course. We may be forced to take fewer classes and carry a lighter load, but we are still on course as long as we stay in school. If our goal is to save our money to one day own a home or start a business, we know we are off course if we start dipping into the savings for purposes not related to the goal.

It is also possible to become spiritually off course. We are spiritually off course when we start out to make the kingdom of God our first priority, but get side tracked by other priorities such as careers, money making opportunities, romance, politics,

and social concerns. We can get so side tracked that spiritually we are only a shell of what we once were, going through the motions without substance or strength in any of our actions.

We are challenged as believers to press on toward the mark of the high calling which is in Jesus Christ. Believers must keep their eyes on the cross if they expect to avoid straying off course.

As Christians, we resolve to avoid the temptations and distractions that would pull us off track and lead us away from a stronger relationship with Christ. Our strength is in him. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. We dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the Solid Rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul instructing Timothy to guard the instruction of the saints in Ephesus against false teaching to stay the course.

Paul wrote epistles to two young men in the gospel that are generally referred to pastoral epistles. These two young men were Timothy and Titus, both of whom Paul entrusted to insure that the doctrine of Jesus Christ remained scripturally correct.

In verse three he warned Timothy to see to it that no other doctrine was taught.

In verse four he charged Timothy to make sure that believers were not taken off course by fables, genealogies philosophical questions that raise doubt rather than confirm faith.

He pointed out in the same verse that edifying God in faith is something that should be done. Edifying God means to build up or strengthen.

The purpose of the commandments of God is to inspire love and acts of love (charity) that spring from a pure heart, are performed with a good conscience with unfeigned faith (sincere faith.)

Timothy had his hands full for sure. There were many fables that were being promoted during his time, among them were the familiar legends and stories that were circulated among the Jews that were not a part of the divine word of God. . Most Catholic Bibles for example contain 14 such books call the Apocrypha that are not in bibles used by Baptists and other non-Catholics. The Apocrypha contain some very imaginative accounts of some real events but were not divinely inspired.

Just as there were those who moved the church off course with fables there were others who moved the church off track with genealogies.They stressed their ancestry, who they were, where they came from, their family ties,etc. This is what Timothy faced when he addressed the believers in Ephesus.

Straying Off Course

Straying off course is not difficult. There are many who began their journey in the Christian faith completely on course. They sought to make heaven their home,

but somewhere along the way they were drawn off course.

OUR COURSE SHOULD LINE UP WITH GOD'S COURSE: In our life's pursuit we should make sure that what we are trying to do in life lines up with God's course. Will the activity that I'm involved in keep me on course with God's course. Or will it take me in a different direction? What is the course that will take me to glory? The road to have is paved with love and acts of love that are performed with a pure heart, by persons who are striving obey God to the best of their ability and can stand before him with a good conscience and a sincere faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. (v5)

GOD'S COURSE IS DETAILED IN THE WORD OF GOD: The word of God is the compass that we use to determine whether or we are on or off course. We measure every direction we take against the word of God. Just as a compass always points North, the same is true concerning God's word. It always points the way to glory. The word of God teaches us to trust in the Lord, with all thine heart and lean not unto thy own understandings. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6. No matter which way we try to go, the Word of God points us in one direction, that's the godly way to glory!

GOD'S COURSE LEAVES US WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE: Those who choose to follow God's course always have a clear conscience because they have followed God's instruction to the letter. Joshua 1:7 says, "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all laws my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left that you may be successful wherever you go." Being obedient to God clears our conscience. It gives us the ability to stand before him knowing that we have done what was required of us and have not strayed.

The Course to Calvary

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is no course we can take to spiritual success that will not take us to Calvary!

The essence of the Christian struggle is to glorify God in all that we do and say. We strive to glorify him in a way that builds the kingdom of God.

That's why Paul told Timothy, forgetting those things which are behind, I press on toward the mark of the high calling which is in Jesus Christ.

Those who want to stay on course with the Lord must do the same thing. We keep our eye on Jesus, because we can't make it to glory without knowing the Lord!

There are some courses in life that are nonrestrictive and are all inclusive.

You buy gasoline for your car from Chevron or Texaco, but you don't have know the president of the company. But if you want to get to glory you got to know Jesus!

You can be a member of Sam's Clubs and buy merchandise at Walmart without every meeting a descendant of Sam Walton, but if you want to get to glory you got to know Jesus!

You can by a Ford or a Lincoln without every knowing Henry Ford, III, but if you want to get to get to glory you got to know Jesus!

You can buy a Wendy's hamburger, French fries and a drink without having

known Dave Thomas, but if you want to get to glory you got to know Jesus!

No wonder the song writer wrote: “You got to know Jesus. You got to know God for yourself. If you know Jesus you don’t need nobody else!”

You must follow Jesus who told his disciples that if they wanted to get to glory, “sell all you have, take up your cross and follow me!”

Follow me, though the storms rise! Follow me, though the winds may blow!

Follow me, though the mountains are high!

No wonder the song writer declared, follow Jesus, take no chance at getting lost.if Jesus can’t take you to the top, nobody else can!”

Jesus died out on Calvary!But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to point us to the way!

Follow Jesus! Stay on Course!

No. 895-Mothers

Before Her Pains Came

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Before she travailed; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." Isaiah 66:7

Introduction

What if it were announced today that there is a new childbirth technique that would completely eliminate the pain of childbirth? Would there be a market for it? If such a technique could insure that regardless of the instance, no mother would ever have to endure the pain of childbirth again, without a doubt that technique would become the most popular medical innovation of all times. While many mothers speak fondly of the joy of childbirth they also speak with disdain about the pain of labor. In fact, many conclude that childbirth would be a breeze if it were not for the labor pains. Any technique that could guarantee a painless childbirth is always welcomed by expectant mothers, especially in modern times.

Just what is labor anyway? Any mother could easily answer that question. However, for the sake of the fathers and non-mothers among us, the term labor is used to describe the final hours before a child is born. For first-time mothers, the process of labor and delivery takes an average of 15 hours, although for plenty of women it lasts more than 20 hours, and for a lucky few it's over much sooner. For women who've been through labor before, later deliveries average around eight hours.

While there have been a few labors that have been shorter than eight hours the world's longest labor was reported on January 3rd 2000. In Rockville Maryland doctors described what has been called a medical marvel when a woman delivered a healthy baby after 153 days of labor. When Mindy Rosenthal attempted to give birth to twins the first child was stillborn. Moments after the first twin was born dead Aug. 3, obstetrician Sheri Hamersley placed a stitch the thickness of a shoelace at the opening of the womb to prevent the second baby from following immediately and dying as well. 153 days later the doctors at shady Grove Adventist hospital set a world record for the longest case of arrested labor.

The mere thought of a 153 day labor sends chills down the spine of every mother.

Fathers and other women who have never delivered a child, do not have the slightest idea what it means to endure labor pains. A father's idea of labor pain may be the discomfort he feels as he sits on a hard waiting room chair. A father's idea of labor pain could be restricted to the discomfort of drinking several cups of cold or

lukewarm coffee as he waits. Fathers have heard the descriptions of labor discomforts from their wives but do not have the faintest idea what it means or feels like to endure labor pains.

Medical experts remind us that long before the actual physical labor pains begin that there is also a period of travail. In this period of doubt and discomfort many Christian mothers have drawn on their faith in God to produce the strength to endure the difficulties of parenting that lay ahead. In fact, many Christian mothers confess that it was in the time "before their pains came" that they learned how to lean on the Lord.

It was before her pains came that the Christian mother saw the great revelations of the coming future.

Before her pains came she was sustained by the thought of tiny hands, hungry eyes, and cuddly bodies all blessed by the grace of God.

In all truth, the Christian mother was blessed before she went into the delivery room, while she endured her labor, and after she gave birth to a child. The God she served blessed are before her pains came and gave her and assurance that even in her sorrow she would find joy.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that the God we serve knows about our frustrations, difficulties troubles and long before our pains come, makes a way for our deliverance with joy.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells of the wondrous way that God will bless Israel.

The nation of Israel had fallen upon hard times. The glory it once knew as the premier example of how God blesses a nation had become a mere shadow of its former excellence. It now stood in exile, mere chattel, a nation of slaves and vagabonds. The people cried out to God for deliverance and received an answer.

The prophet Isaiah delivered God's response by characterizing the people as a mother facing the ordeal and prospect of birth pains. Isaiah raised the expectations of the people to a new height when he prophesied that God would respond to their pleas even before they had a chance to travail long in their troubles. The answer to their prayers would be delivered even before their travail had been completed.

Isaiah's summary was a paradox to say the least. "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." It was a paradox because it appeared to suggest that God would deliver an answer or a blessing in response to a travailing condition even before the condition completed its cycle. If Israel was compared to a mother with child, then what Isaiah actually said was that God would deliver the nation of Israel without labor pains.

Verse eight asks the question, "Who hath heard of such a thing?" Is it possible? Then the same verse gives the answer, that God delivered Zion as soon as she began to feel her first contractions and set her free.

In a purely physiological sense, there is no biblical precedent for women giving birth without labor pains. The closest the Bible record details of such an event would be the account in Exodus chapter one in which the midwives were ordered to kill the male babies of every household. The midwives refused to slay the male children and made up false tales about the ability of Hebrew women to deliver children so quickly that before the midwives could arrive, the male children had been born, in effect bypassing labor altogether.

However, as a picture of Israel in exile, the example of the child being born before the onset of labor is the exact picture that God wanted to present to Israel. His message was simple. Even though they were in exile in a strange land and were beginning to feel the full impact of their slave status, that before they began to feel the full strain of their travail God would deliver them. Historically, this happened when the king of Persia ordered the release of the Hebrews from their exile and allowed them to return to Jerusalem just as quickly as they had come. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled, "Before her pains came, she was delivered..."

Before, during and after their hardships and troubles, God made a way for his people.

The Pains of motherhood

What are the pains of motherhood? What are the unique circumstances that challenge mothers today? Is God unaware of the problems of today's mother? Does he have a response that is relevant to the problems and concerns of the modern woman? The word suggests that regardless of the situation, before a Christian mothers pain comes, she is delivered.

SINGLE MOTHERS: A growing phenomenon in modern times in the appearance of the single mother. This is the mother who either by choice or circumstance bears the responsibility of child-rearing from the perspective of both father and mother. In addition to that responsibility single mothers have a tremendous need for support from their family and friends. Various factors contribute to arise in single mothers. Some mothers are single because of divorce or the death of a spouse. Others are single for a variety of other reasons. Regardless of the reason single mothers can feel isolated and rejected if they are unable to see the outstretched hands of love and friendship as expressed by those around them. Hagar was a single mother who was rejected by Sarah, Abraham's wife and banished from their home. Alone and without help Hagar faced the prospect of death in the wilderness. However, before her pain came, she heard a word from the Lord. Would not die, but God would save her life and bless her child to be the father of a great nation. Even today, single mothers who are frustrated over their circumstance should remember that before your pains came, God made a way for you and will not abandon you or reject you because of your present circumstance.

STRUGGLING MOTHER: In many homes today, mothers are struggling to make ends meet. They are fighting desperately to balance what little they have with the

great demands of life in modern times. Often mothers find that they run out of things. Mothers often run out of money. Mothers sometimes run out of resources and find themselves stretched from one end to another often robbing Peter to pay Paul. Some mothers have become literal scavengers, saving morsels of bread for a pudding; and recycling rummage items to provide their families. There was a widow woman in Scripture was also a struggling mother. She picked up sticks and scraped her barrel every day. She understood what it meant to struggle. But before she endured the pain of starvation she received a word from the Lord that reassured her that God was aware of her circumstance. Before her barrel ran dry, God kept filling it up again!

AGONIZING MOTHER: The agonizing mothers are a composite of all mothers. Agonizing mothers are single, married, struggling and prayerful. Agonizing mothers see their children for what they are and stand beside them even in the worst times. When Jesus was a child Mary cared for him, worried about him and no doubt scolded him a time or two. She watched as he learned the family trade, taught him the lessons of the Torah until it became obvious that she should have been the student rather than the teacher. When he began his ministry she followed him closely. When he was crucified her eyes welled with pain and her heart broke as she watched her son stripped naked and hanging from a Roman cross. There are millions of mothers today who agonize over their children. They worry about their safety and the direction they take. They lose sleep at night as they worry about their children's future. Many have calloused knees from so many nights of fervent prayer as they agonize over every detail of lives just beyond their reach. Yet even as their children were walking out of the front door to begin their own lives, God was making a way.

Long before our pains came..

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that long before we begin to agonize about our children, the Lord is making a way!

That is the lesson that every good mother knows, that long before we ask him, God is already working on the answer to our prayer.

Long before mama started to worry about how to the pay lights, water, and gas God was already planning to show her how to manage!

Without a college degree in business administration, she turned a sugar bowl, mattress and handkerchief into her own Savings and Loan Association, saving for a rainy day. It didn't pay any interest, but God supplied the grace!

Long before mama got a chance to worry about the health of her children, God had already completed the diagnosis and the prognosis and sent help on the way!

If a child had a fever, a little Salhepatica around the neck would drive the fever away. In the cold of winter, a table spoon of Castor oil every other day, kept the doctor away! If there was a splinter in a foot, it was nothing that a little fat salt meat and the Lord couldn't handle!

Long before mama started to worry about what her children would wear, God took the needle and thread of heaven and threw out Tommy Hilfiger and gave them clothes

by mommy and His finger!

Somebody remembers how mama would break out the old Singer sewing machine with the foot paddle on the floor or use a needle, thread and a thimble to make the girls dresses out of left over materials, but the left home they looked like they had step out of a Sears Roebuck catalog!

Long before mama had a chance to worry about how she would feed her children, the Lord had prepared a table for her in the presence of her enemies.

The Lord showed mama how to take the scraps and turn them into gormets. It was only the hand of the Lord that could take bread crumbs and turn them into dressing. It was only the hand of the Lord that could that show mama how to bake possoms and coons in giant pans surrounded by candied yams,.

Only the hand of the Lord could show mama how to pickle a pig's feet, fill a stack of Mason jars full of canned peaches and pears and call them home made preserves!

Only the hand of the Lord could show mama how to reach into the throw aways of the hog pen and serve a whole giant plates of fresh boiled chitterlings!

As I close I'm reminded of the mother who was upset with her son because he sold drugs. She told him that she had nightmares of his lying in a pool of blood and begged him not to sell drugs. He left the house packing a suitcase full of drugs and a .45 caliber pistol. But before he could reach his destination he had a flat tire and had to pull to the side of the road. As he tried to fix the flat the police passed by with lights flashing. Soon he could hear gunfire up the way. Soon after he walked to the sight and saw his connection laying in a pool of blood. That son called his mother on his cell phone, and said "Mother, I want you to know if it had not been for a flat tire I would have been lying in a pool of blood. The mother started laughing and praising God." When the son inquired why, she said, "I just remembered something I read in the bible this morning, Long before your pains came, I delivered you! It's wasn't a flat tire, but it was the hand of the Lord!"

Every mother knows that it has been nothing but the hand of the Lord!

Mothers, before your pains came the Lord was blessing you!

Mothers, during the struggles and frustrations of motherhood, the Lord kept on blessing you!

Even today, before you get a chance to worry about your children, remember the Lord is making a way!

Mary cried at Calvary, but long before that dreadful evening God had already started working on Sunday morning. He had already started to assemble the forces of the universe to heal her pains even before they came.

She cried when they nailed him to an old rugged cross! But God was working on Sunday morning!

She cried when they buried him in a borrowed tomb! But God was working on Sunday morning!

Early Sunday morning, before the pain and sorrow of the crucifixion had a chance to settle in,

Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

Before her pains came!

No. 896-Cross

The Old Rugged Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 19, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Colossians 2:14

Introduction

If you had to create a symbol that represents who you are and what you believe what would it be? If you could devise a symbol that represents the sum total of your being, and post it for all the world to see, what would that symbol be? Would your symbol be a lion that is strong or powerful or a mouse that is weak small. Are you an eagle that soars high in the sky or a dove that is vulnerable and passive. Are you a pork chop or a steak? A Cadillac or a Volkswagen? A penthouse or a shotgun house? Would it be Cash Money or No Limit? Would you describe yourself as a butcher knife or a butter knife? Are you a lion or a kitten? Symbols are important because they define at a glance, who we are and what we believe.

Even people, countries and companies are defined by symbols. Our national flag is symbolized by red, white and blue; stars and stripes. African American Heritage is often symbolized by the red black and green flag introduced to us by Marcus Garvey. The Nike Company is linked to the "swoosh" symbol. As soon as you see it, you know that it's Nike. They're inseparable. A few years back, the musician Prince legally changed his name from Prince to a symbol he drew up. Whenever we saw the symbol we thought of him. Companies spend millions of dollars each year to associate the company "logo" with their name. So, at baseball parks, football fields and countless other places a company name is plastered against a billboard or wall to etch it into public mind. We are often associated with the way we package and present ourselves to others. What we wear in some ways symbolizes what we believe about ourselves and sends a message to those who do not know us that indicates who we are, who we think we are, and what we want people to think we are.

In the religious community there are also symbols that immediately identify a person's religious orientation. The crescent moon of the of Islam immediately conjures images of Muhammad, The Qu'ran or mosques. The Star of David of the Jewish community is associated with Moses, the Torah and synagogues. The Lotus blossom or wheel of Buddhism is immediately associated with temples, large overpowering statues and meditation. Each of the world's great religions selected

symbols that suggest charm and attractiveness, radiance and light. However, the universally known symbol for Christianity is an instrument of death- a cross.

Why a cross? Why not a dove, it would have made better pictures! Why not a bible, it represents God's word? Why not a manger or better still, why not an empty tomb? An empty tomb would suggest a confirmed covenant and a risen savior! Why a cross?

The symbol of the Christian faith is a single, empty cross. Romans put thousands and thousands of people to death on crosses. Jesus of Nazareth was one of those victims. The cross was used in ancient times for the purpose of torture and death. Crucifixion was invented by barbarians, but taken over by the Greeks and perfected by the Romans. It has been regarded as the cruelest method of execution ever practiced because it delayed death until the maximum torture had been inflicted on its victim. It was possible for the victim to hang on the cross for days before dying very slowly of asphyxiation.

If the cross is such a negative image, why do Christians embrace the cross? Why do we have crosses on our buildings, mark our graves with crosses and wear gold and silver crosses around our necks? If the cross is an instrument of death, why do use the cross as our symbol?

Historically, the cross has not always been the symbol of our faith. During the late first and early second centuries, the simple outline of a fish was commonly used by Christians to identify themselves to one another. Theirs was an illegal religion at the time, and they used the sign of the fish to identify themselves to one another in undercover fashion. From the second century forward Christians began using the cross as the symbol of faith. The idea it represented was simple, it signified the death of "self" and the birth of a new born again person in Christ not intimidated or conquered by the threat of death. The Christian symbol is not a crucifix, with Christ still attached, because that celebrates how death conquers. The Christian Symbol is the empty cross which shows how death has been rendered powerless over believers.

Armed with this new boldness, Christians wore the cross to signify that they would stand with God even in the face of death. Many were fed to lions and burned at the stakes for their beliefs, but death had no power of their eternal spirits because Christ gave every believer then, as he does today, eternal life.

As believers we believe there is victory in the cross. We wear the cross, but most importantly we bear the cross! It is a witness of our faith to the God we serve!

Exposition

This text was written by Paul as he addressed the relationship between the cross and our sins.

Paul was imprisoned at the time of this writing and wrote many letters to the churches of his day explaining the nature of the relationship between Christianity and the Mosaic law. Many early Christians had difficulties reconciling the differences between living under the law and living under the New Testament dispensation. Such was the case of the Colossians who like many other New Testament churches were

not sure about the relationship of their new lives in Christ as compared to their lives under the Mosaic law.

Even though Paul did not establish this church himself he felt compelled to try to explain to them the nature of salvation and the role of the cross.

He explained that relationship in the context of the Mosaic law and the cross. First he noted that the Mosaic law was a list of ordinances or rules that attempted to govern every aspect of a believer's life. When believers failed to live up to any aspect of the laws numerous parts they were condemned to death. He explained to the Colossians just as he had explained to the Romans and others that under the new covenant all of the condemnations that were peculiar to the law have been blotted out.

Inclusive of the Mosaic law was a long list of rituals, ceremonies, and procedures that were followed by believers and were strictly enforced by the religious leaders of their day. Paul tried to explain that under the new testament covenant that the need for such ritualism would no longer exist. In effect, all of these rituals and procedures were declared null and void as they related to an individual's salvation.

The cross, he declared, was the instrument that ultimately paid the price for each individual's salvation. Not the cross itself, but the sacrifice of God's only son which was made upon the cross gave the cross its significance. The cross was important because it's symbolized the end of condemnation and ritualism. The cross also symbolized the beginning of the time when men would realize the presence of God's grace.

The Old Testament law is depicted in this text as being the hand writing against believers. This hand writing would symbolize the charges that the law makes against us for breaking its rules. However, when a debt is paid the hand writing or the paperwork that is held against a debt or is destroyed or blotted out. The law was the hand writing that made it impossible for every believer to expect a chance at glory. The cross symbolized payment of that debt. It also symbolized the destruction of the hand writing that would be held against us.

Whenever a Christian sees the cross it reminds him of a debt that has been paid and a promise that has been kept. The debt was paid by Jesus himself the promise was made to every believer. It was a promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why the Cross

Today, the cross remains the central symbol of faith for Christian believers. It is what identifies a person as a follow-up of Jesus Christ.

The cross symbolizes is at least four different concepts for believers.

How Bad Sin Is: The cross of Jesus is a clear reminder to anyone in every generation of "how bad sin he is." The cross is not a symbol of a tragedy. Neither is it a symbol of an unfortunate accident or an act of terrorism. If it were the symbol of a tragedy the cross would represent how a good man came to a violent death as a result of a personal flaw. If it were the symbol of an accident it would represent how

carelessness could result in the death of a good man. If it were the symbol of a terrorist act it would represent how a defenseless people can have its champions destroyed by an enemy within. However, the cross was not symbolic of any of these. The cross is a testimony and our reminder. It is a testimony to the sinfulness of humanity and a reminder of how one man, Jesus, died because of human sinfulness. Each time we see a cross it reminds us of our own fallibility and capacity to sin and the cost that must be paid to compensate for our sin. The fact that there must be a payment for sin is underscored in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is debt but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How Deep His Involvement Is: Before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah in 7:14, noted that a virgin would give birth and his name would be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." When believers see the cross it is a reminder that in any of life's situations God is with us. Whether it is physical pain, mental anguish, social dysfunction or financial disaster, God is with us. Whatever our human predicament happens to be God is with us in the person of Jesus Christ. Whether it's being lied upon by so-called friends or being attacked by enemies, God is with us and shares our predicament. Because of Calvary we know Christ knows the extent of our vulnerability. Because he too has suffered he understands our suffering. Because of Calvary no one can raise a finger of scorn at God and say, "You don't know what it's like!" God did not insulate himself from our predicament but came among us, took our sin to himself, and died for our redemption. The cross reminds us that Jesus knows and cares. Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Jesus knows the pain you feel he can save and he can heal; take your burden to of the Lord and leave it there."

How Great Love Is: While the cross reminds us of how bad sin is it also reminds us of how great God's love is. Each time a believer sees the cross it should serve as a reminder of the love of God. In his knowledge and in his wisdom God knew the extent of man's sinfulness and in the beginning prepared a way for him to be saved. However that way, would require a universal sacrifice that could only be provided by the essence of God himself. Looking down in compassion and love God decided to provide the world with a way to reconcile itself even if that method meant the loss of life on an old rugged cross. John 3:16 says, "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." The cross serves as a reminder to believers of the extent of God's love for us. Have you heard the story of the man on the track? It appears that there was a man who was a a rail switcher and a very dangerous bridge crossing. His job was important because each time a train approached he had to pull a lever that allow the train to safely cross the track. If, for a reason he failed to pull the lever, the train would crash. One night he brought his son to work with him. As his son played along the track's he made a mistake and fell through and dangled by one hand. Terrified, the man moved quickly toward his son. At the same time he heard the whistle of the train loaded with over 500 passengers blowing behind him. If he took his hand off the lever the people on the train would died in a collision. If he failed reaches son in time he would not a certain death. As his son cried out "Daddy help me" the father

looked at the approaching train and with tears in his eyes, went back and pulled lever as his son fell to his death. He sacrificed his son to save the lives of 500 people. In a similar manner God love the world so much that he gave his son that we might have a chance to eternal life. When we see the cross we remember how great God's love is.

The cross Symbolizes a Living Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters the empty cross represents a victorious and living Lord who has given every believer a clean slate.

Today there are many kinds of crosses in the marketplace. There are golden crosses, silver plated crosses, diamond studded crosses, crosses with elaborate jewels that mark the hand and feet of Christ. There are expensive crosses, large crosses and small crosses. There are crosses on chains that dangle around our necks; there are crosses on the steeples above churches, and on customized license plates and T-shirts.

No matter where a believer sees an empty cross it reminds him of a fresh new start.

It reminds us of a new start because the word of God teaches that any person who is in Christ is a new creature and that old things are passed away and all things become new. While some believers symbolized their faith by a cross which still shows Christ hanging, most Christians symbolized their faith by displaying an empty cross. Only the empty cross symbolizes a new start, a renewed hope, and a living faith.

An empty cross reminds us of a sin record that no longer exists.

An empty cross reminds us of a mistake that has been forgiven.

An empty cross reminds us of an error that has been erased.

But more than anything else an empty cross is reminds us that we serve a living Lord.

The cross marks the place where we came in contact with the power of the Lord.

The cross marks the place where we stepped out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

The cross marks the place where we traded in our lives of sin for the hope of salvation.

That's why the song writer wrote, "At the cross at the cross where our first saw the light and a burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received the light and now I'm happy all the day."

As I close, I'm reminded of the young woman whose sister was killed in a train accident and a railroad crossing. The sister placed to small white cross at the railroad crossing as a monument to her sister's life. While she erected the cross as a monument, those who came to the area saw the cross, it there breaks and looked both ways before crossing the track. One day the sister noticed that there was a red rose placed at the foot of the cross and wondered what it meant. Each week thereafter she saw another red rose at the site. Many weeks later she stumbled upon a lady in the grocery store who thanked her for placing the cross at the site.

The woman said, “Three weeks ago I was absorbed in a personal trouble and worried about my family. I didn’t hear the train blow, but I looked up and saw the cross, I hit my break when I looked to the left I saw the approaching train. That cross saved my life.”

The sister asked, “Why do you put a rose on the cross every week?” The woman answered and said “Because every time I see it it reminds me how I was standing on the ‘Edge of Night’ dealing with ‘A secret storm’ worried about ‘All my children’ but because of that cross I still have “One life to live!”

Because of the cross, we still have a life to live!

Because of the cross, We still have hope!

Jesus died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning, he arose to new life supreme!

It may have been an old rugged cross, but it brought a brand new life!

No. 897-Inspiration

What's Your Excuse

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 26, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Luke 14:17-20

Introduction

Have you ever made an excuse? We usually give excuses to explain why we failed to perform a task or why we are unavailable for a specific request. Excuses are common. It appears that everyone has an excuse or two or three. Excuses tend to provide a rationale for noncompliance or a refusal of service. Generally, we give excuses to explain why we missed a mark or failed in some way.

Have you ever made an excuse? When the note came from your child's school requesting your presence at the parent teacher meeting, did you go or did you have an excuse? The appointment you missed the other day was certainly an important one, but of course you had a valid excuse. We were a few days late paying bills last month, but of course we had valid excuses.

Sometimes our excuses start sounding a little ridiculous. John F. King tells the story of GI's on furlough that illustrates point. "The commanding officer was furious when nine GIs who had been out on passes failed to show up for morning roll call. Not until 7 p.m. did the first man straggle in. "I'm sorry, sir," the soldier explained, "but I had a date and lost track of time, and I missed the bus back. Being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell over dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here." Though skeptical, the Colonel let the young man off with a reprimand. However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the same story-had a date, missed the bus, hired a cab, bought a horse, etc. By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel had grown weary of it. "Okay," he growled, "now what happened to you?" "Sir, I had this date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab ." "Wait!" the colonel screeched at him. "Don't tell me the cab broke down." "No, sir," replied the soldier. "The cab didn't break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses in the road, we had trouble

getting through."

We even have excuses for our failure to participate in church. The same excuses that we give for our nonparticipation would not hold up if they were applied to our favorite sport. Some years ago Moody Monthly ran a piece which included excuses which a fellow might use for quitting sports. In it they included the excuses that people often give for not participating in church but tied them to reasons for quitting sports. The excuses sounded like this:

I quit sports because every time I went they asked for money.

I quit sports because the people with whom I had to sit didn't seem very friendly.

I quit sports because the seats were too hard and uncomfortable.

I quit sports because the coach never came to see me.

I quit sports because the referee made a decision with which I could not agree.

I quit sports because I was sitting with some hypocrites - they only came to see what others were wearing.

I quit sports because some games went into overtime, and I was late getting home.

I quit sports because the band played numbers that I had never heard before.

I quit sports because my parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.

When put in the context of sports our excuses for not participating in our church look pretty petty.

The excuses that we give today for our failure to make God first place in our lives are not unique. We are not the first persons to make excuses. Neither will we be the last.

But what does God think of our excuses? Is he pleased? Does he accept them? Do we get by?

God has been dealing with me and and their excuses since the beginning of time. We can offer an excuse that has not been offered in some form or another during the course of the history of man can. Solomon said clearly: "there is nothing new under the sun." Neither are our excuses.

As Christians, we should strive to do all we can to keep our commitments to God and to make ourselves readily available for any service required. The words of the prophet Isaiah should apply to us, "if the Lord needs somebody here am I send me."

Exposition

This text focuses upon the parable Jesus gave that explains the nature of a believer's commitment in the kingdom of God.

As he explained to his followers the nature of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus told a parable about a certain man who prepared a feast and invited special people to attend. No sooner than they had received the invitations did the invited guests began to give excuses. The excuses war varied but they all provide explanations and reasons for nonparticipation.

The excuses came in succession. One man said he had just bought a piece of property and had to go and inspect it. His possessions and property took priority

over the invitations that he had received and therefore he turned down, or at the least placed on a lower priority the invitation he had received from the Lord. The second man said he had bought a yoke of oxen that he had to go and try them. To try them simply meant that he wanted to go and work them himself. His work took priority over the invitation to labor in the kingdom. The third man also turned down his invitation because he was recently married. According to Mosaic law a man was excused from normal responsibilities in the first year of his marriage including any responsibility to serve in the army. Thus, this man placed his family responsibility ahead of the invitation to participate in the kingdom celebration.

Jesus used these three as an example of persons who turned down invitations to participate in the kingdom for varied reasons whether those reasons are professional, work, or family. In the parable, the servants were ordered to go into the streets and to invite anyone that would come to participate in the feast. Many enjoyed the benefits of the kingdom that were not on the original invitation list because those originally invited had so many excuses.

Many excuses

Today there are many people who have excuses. However, the fact that people have excuses is not something that is original with this generation. Biblically, they have been many people who have given a multitude of excuses in a variety of situations. Many of those excuses sounded strikingly similar to what we here today.

BLAME IT ON SOMEONE (Genesis 3): The most common excuse heard in modern times is the "blame it on someone else" excuse. This was the excuse that Adam gave God in the Garden of Eden. When both Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit, Adam blamed his failure to obey God's command on his wife. He told God that the woman God provided for him was the reason he disobeyed. Even today there are many who blame their faults, figures, and short comings on anyone other than themselves. If they are fired from a job, it's the boss's fault. If they failed a test, it's the teacher's fault. If they don't succeed in life, it is the world's fault.

WHY ME?(Exodus 4): There are many who respond to the call for participation like Moses. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush and told him to go down and tell Pharaoh to "let my people go." Immediately, Moses began to make excuses. He said people would not listen to him. He said people would not believe him. Then he tried to say that he could not be well. Moses wanted to know why God would select him when there were certainly others more qualified for the position. In the course of time however, Moses soon learned that those whom God selects he also he quips for service. The people would not have to believe him they would see the power of God demonstrated before their eyes. He would not have to speak, his brother Aaron would speak for him. Like Moses, there are many today who say, "why me?" They say there are many people who are more qualified than themselves to serve. They overlook the fact that God can equipt even those who feel unqualified with the power of his word and the enthusiasm that his spirit generates.

IT'S TOO HUMILIATING: (2 Kings 5): There are some who refuse to serve because they are asked to do things that appear to be humiliating. This is often the case if a person is asked to follow instead of been a leader. It is definitely the case for many who are asked to be the Indian instead of chief. Naaman was a great leader of the people who had gained weath a great reputation. When he was stricken with leprosy he came the prophet Elisha for healing. He was asked one thing. He was told to give himself seven times in the river Jordan. That was a simple task that was humiliating, because the river Jordan was very muddy. A man of his stature would look silly bathing in muddy water seven times. There are many today who refuse calls for service because the service is "beneath them." They don't want to look silly. They will serve only if the service is equal to their perceived statue and position.

INCONVENIENT TIME: (Acts 24: 24-27) There are many who would serve if the church could find a time or them that was convenient. They would sing in the choir, help with ministries, or perform other services if it were convenient. Paul preached before Felix and told him about the power or of the Christian movement. He preached a powerful message and invited Felix to begin service in the kingdom. Although Felix felt the conviction of the holy spirit he responded by telling Paul that he would do so at a more convenient time. Paul left and there is no record of Felix ever being converted. His convenient season never came. Today, there are many who simply can't find the time for service in the kingdom of God. There are many like Felix who are still looking for a convenient season.

CLOSE BUT NOT CLOSE ENOUGH: (Acts 26: 19-29): There are others who are like Agrippa. Agrippa listen to Paul's appeals for him to join the band of Christian believers. Although he was moved by the appeal he did not see a need for his personal involvement and said Paul "Almost" persuaded him to be a Christian. Today, there are many just like Agrippa who do not see a need for their personal involvement. As they listen to the appeals of their pastor and others to become personally involved in church ministry, they cannot see how their involvement will make a difference. Their whole lives echo Agrippa's fateful decision, "I almost decided to serve, but changed my mind."

No Excuse

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that while we offer excuses for our failure to serve in the kingdom of God, the Lord makes no excuses when it's time to respond to our needs.

From the beginning of time the Lord has listened, as we his people, offered a variety of excuses for our failure to acknowledge him. But history has shown that anytime we needed him, he was always there.

When Jacob wrestled with an angel until the wee hours of the morning, he asked the Lord for a blessing. The Lord could have made and excuse. He could have said, Jacob you have been a trickster all of your life. You haven't been as faithful that you should have been and don't deserve to be blessed. But instead of and excuse, God

bless Jacob and changed his name to Israel.

When Samson called upon the Lord in his blindness and asked the Lord for one more surge of strength, the Lord could have made an excuse. He could have said, "Samson, I gave you great strength but you chose to squander it on Philistine women."However, God made no excuses but blessed Samson anyway.

When Saul called upon the Lord after three days of darkness and asked for his sight again, the Lord could of answered him by saying "I gave you good sense and the ability to do mighty works and he persecuted my church, I don't have time." But instead, the Lord gave him not only his sight but spiritual insight as well and changed his name from Saul to Paul.

We may make excuses when it comes to serving the Lord, but I'm glad to know that the Lord doesn't make excuses when it comes to blessing us.

When it comes to opening doors that have been shut and our faces, God doesn't make excuses when he makes a way out of no way.

When it comes to rebuilding our strength when we have exhausted ourselves, God doesn't make excuses he simply takes our weakness and turns it into strength.

That's what happened when God saw that the world needed a savior that could rescue lost mankind from its own sinful nature.

If he had called the roll of all the great ones, they probably would have all head excuses.

If he had called on Moses, he would have said, "I have my hands full dealing with the Children of Israel, will you get someone else."

If he had called on Elijah, he would've said, "I have my hands full gear on top of Mount Carmel."

If he had called on Daniel, he would've said, "I'm down here in the lion's den, can you get someone else?"

If he had called for the three Hebrew Boys, they would've said, "we're here in the fiery furnace, can you get someone else?"

But I heard Jesus say in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "If the Lord needs somebody here my send me."

Without making excuses, he came down through 42 generations.

Without making excuses, he was born of the Virgin Mary and wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Without making excuses, he lived a difficult life among mortal mankind.

Without making excuses, he stood trial on an unfair charge in an unjust court.

Without making excuses, he allowed himself to be whipped and spit upon.

Without making excuses, he allowed himself to be nailed to an old rugged cross.

He died on Calvary without making a single excuse or mumbling a single word of protest.

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He did not make an excuse. What about us?

No. 898-Graduation

Who's In Your Balcony?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" Hebrews 12:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that at most graduations there is always one student or two that seems to attract thunderous applause when they walk across the stage? Graduations are supposed to be solemn occasions. The ideal graduation is one in which the graduates march in uniformly, take their seats, listen to an address, and quietly file across the stage and receive the diploma for which they have worked for so many years. There are two forces at work in any graduation. There is the force of tradition which mandates discipline and order and there is the force of enthusiasm and excitement that is the result of years of anticipation. Despite the best efforts of our institutions, it gets pretty hard to keep people quiet when they witness a momentous occasion such as the graduation of a family member or a friend. Sometimes the crowd of witnesses is so excited and the thunder of the applause is so great that school officials literally give up.

While graduates themselves approach every graduation with a plethora of orders from both their family and school officials, there is very little that can be done about the people in the balcony. The antics we have seen have ranged from the unusual to the bizarre.

There are some who march across the stage and receive a shower of applause. There are others who are greeted with a cheering section complete with bull horns and noisemakers. There are still others that seem to have their own cheerleader section that chants their name, screams and yells frantically. That was the case when all of the hill folks came to the graduation to watch little Essie graduate. It was first time anyone from the hills had ever graduated from High School and they came in trucks and wagons. The principal warned all in the audience against any outbursts and admonished all to observe the solemn occasion. But when little Essie marched across the stage to receive her diploma grandma Ginny yelled loudly "that's my girl!" Immediately the principal stopped the proceedings. He demanded to know the identity of the ignorant person who yelled. Little Essie came to the microphone and told the audience how her grandma had raised a family of 10 children as a widow. She

told how her grandma chopped cotton for four dollars a day, sold eggs, and scrubbed floors so that she would be the first in seven generations of a family to graduate from high school. "She may be unlearned, but she's my granny." Unmoved by the story, the principal demanded that the person who yelled to stand up. Grandma Ginny squared her shoulders and stood tall and began to applaud Little Essie alone. However, much to his surprise grandma Ginny didn't stand by herself. Over 1000 people stood including cousins, aunts, neighbors and friends and hundreds of simple country folk who came to see an important event in their lives. When the principal saw over 1000 people standing and applauding little Essie, he threw up his hands. There were too many people in her balcony.

Who's in your balcony? Have you made it this far in your life journey alone? At each step along your educational journey there has been someone in your balcony. When you graduated from kindergarten or received a certificate in elementary school or said your first speech, there was someone in your balcony. Was it a mother or father? Perhaps it was a grandparent. It may have been a neighbor, a teacher, or some individual who always seemed to be there for you. Very few people achieve great heights alone. Nearly everyone known has had someone in their balcony even if it was only one person.

Besides mother and father. Besides teacher and mentor. Besides coach, scoutmaster and favorite teacher. Besides favorite uncles and aunts, there has also been someone else in your balcony rooting for you, cheering for you, and encouraging you on. That someone is God. Along with a large crowd of witnesses, God has been guiding us, correcting us, supporting us, and strengthening us throughout our journey. He has constantly reminded us that we are never alone.

As Christians, it is a joy for us to know that God never leaves us alone. No matter where we go or how complex our involvements God never leaves us alone. He is always in our balcony.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the importance of faith for those who are about to began an endeavor; a faith that has been endorsed by a cloud of witnesses.

Hebrews chapter 12 is a continuation of Hebrews chapter 11. The two chapters speak about the importance of faith to every believer. Chapter 11 listed many patriarchs who were men of faith. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and many others were listed in chapter 11 as men of great faith and moved in response to their faith. They were listed as men who achieved despite obstacles and lived their lives in such a way that they were successes because they depended upon their great faith in God.

We know each of these men primarily because of their faith. Their lives were witnesses to what God can do for any believer who dares to step out in life, despite the possibility of failure, boldly trusting God to make a way.

Thus, chapter 12 begins by reflecting upon what had been said in Chapter 11. The reflection brings to focus the fact that the present believer is surrounded by a host

of witnesses to the truth that if we put our trust in God, he will provide for all of our needs and many of our wants.

The words of chapter 12 seem to be aimed at each new generation of believers that stands at the threshold of life, ready to begin but not quite sure of the future. These words are a statement of dispensational support for babe in the faith about to begin a new venture. Verses one and two make it clear that since believers are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses from the past and the present was very presence testifies to their faith that each believer should lay aside in a weight or sin and prepare to go forth.

The two words "weight" and "sin" used in this text are best understood in the context of recalling what the book of Hebrews is about. It is generally about the importance of faith in our lives. Weights and sin in the context of this verse refer to those things which would hinder us from succeeding in kingdom building such as doubt, fear, apprehension, and scepticism. These are referred to as weights or things that will hold us down. For those who profess faith in God, to be fearful of the future is tantamount to sin. To doubt God's ability to help us achieve divinely inspired goals is also sinful. It identifies us as men and women who talk about lives of faith but are actually unable to live the life we talk about.

Laying aside doubts, we are encouraged to run with perseverance the race that is before us. Perseverance implies a steady pace that is not interrupted, slowed or halted.

The secret to perseverance is in the phrase, "looking to Jesus." Although there are many witnesses past and present who testify to the power of faith, believers are pointed to one who stands beyond the cloud of witnesses. Believers are pointed to Jesus himself who is the author and finisher of our faith. Each believer should move forward in life, according to this text, looking to that one person in that great crowd of witnesses who can help them, strengthen them, correct them, and guide them. That one person is Jesus our Lord and savior.

Perseverance means to keep on trying no matter what happens. It means if you fall down get up and try again. It means if you feel like you are alone in the race keep looking to Jesus and run on until the race is one.

A Cloud of Witnesses

The people in your balcony bear witness to your success and serve as an inspiration for what can be. It is good to have a full balcony of supporters but it is sufficient to have just one. What do the people in your balcony do for you? There are at least three ways that a believer is helped by the cloud of witnesses before and at the moment.

COMMEMORATE THE MOMENT: Every step that a believer makes is the result of sacrifice. Today, we enjoy the faith of the ages but this great privilege came because of the sacrifice of others. The cloud of witnesses that gather for each graduate commemorate the moment. That means that they remember. There are many today who have achieved great ends because of the sacrifice of others who were not able

to share that moment. At any graduation there is a mother or uncle or an aunt that watches the graduate march across the stage and they speak silent to themselves "Oh if he could see you now!" or "Oh if she could see you now, she would be so proud." Each steps forward because of the sacrifice of someone else. It is the father who dreamed of seeing of his children educated. It is the mother whose only desire in life was to see her children stand on their own two feet. Those who graduate, walk across the stage in hallowed moments of commemoration as family members reflect on the words and deeds of others in the family whose sacrifices made it possible. One reason many institutions ask for quiet during such ceremonies is to allow the families to observe the procession of history and to hear the voices of a cloud of witnesses that include mothers, fathers, great grandmothers and great uncles and aunts speak from the silent balconies of eternity and say, "well done." It is good to have ancestry in the balcony. Sometimes, other than the voice of God, it is the only voice we hear!

CELEBRATE THE PRESENT MOMENT: There are many people who want to help us celebrate the moment. They share our joy and they share our enthusiasm. Often people come from far and near to share in the celebration. Celebrations are scriptural! When friends of his family hosted a wedding Jesus joined the celebration, indicating that helping others celebrate the moment was an act of friendship and fellowship sanctioned by God himself. Despite the fact that there are thousands of people who come to some celebrations there are certain people that each of us desires to see present to share that moment. Those who know our story, who have seen us grow and mature, fall down and get back up, as well as grow stronger by the year are best able to appreciate and celebrate the moment. Those who know us well know from whence we have come. When we are on in the mountaintop only those who have seen us when we were in the valley can appreciate the full gravity of our accomplishment. It is good to have those in the balcony as witnesses who have seen us at our worse and now see us at our best. When Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner became the first woman to sit on the Supreme Court, the day she was sworn in was a great day. There were thousands of people in attendance. But Justice O'Conner, scanned through the crowd to find the eyes of a mother and mouthed the words thank you. As far as she was concerned only one person could really help her celebrate that moment. Believers who accomplish something today must remember that there are only a few people who can really help then celebrate the moment and it's good to have them in the balcony.

ANTICIPATE THE NEXT MOMENT: Those in our balcony are those who help us to dream. These are the people who believe in us, prod us and push us to be the best we can be! No one succeeds in life without a mentor. This is the person or persons who will go beyond the excitement of the moment and will join us as we prepare for the next moment. We need persons who will go before us and prepare the way by speaking a good word for us, giving us a recommendation or swinging open the door of opportunity. It's good to have such people in the balcony. It's even better to know that when all else fails that the power of God is with us, like an ever present force, guiding and protecting us. When many in Israel celebrated the march out of Egypt, God had already moved in front of them, anticipating the next moment. He led them

as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. He was always one step ahead, opening seas, providing water in the desert and raining down bread, just when they needed it. Any believer who goes forth will need a mentor, but more than mentors they will need the Lord on their side.

You are Never Alone

Finally, brothers and sisters, each believer must remember that even when the world turns against you, if you keep your hands in his hands, God is always in your balcony!

Historically, the people of God have always been hesitant to begin any endeavor without first assuring themselves that God would be by their side. They wanted to make sure that God was in their balcony and would cover their back.

When God told Moses to go down and tell old Pharaoh to "let my people go" Moses wanted to know whether he'd be going on his own or with the authority of God. He felt better when he found out that God would work miracles and all he needed to say was, "I am that I am" sent me.

When Joshua set out to cross over the River Jordan he wanted to be sure that the Lord was on his side. He felt better when the Lord told him "wherever you go I'll go with you."

Jeremiah began in the ministry as a young man, but he was hesitant to go in this new direction. Then God told him to "be not afraid of their faces. I'll go with you."

David found confidence whenever he knew God was with him. That confidence prompted him to write, "the Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid.?"

Paul told believer to go forth with confidence because if the Lord before us, who can be against us?

With God on your side you can dream the unimaginable!

With God on your side, you can think the unthinkable!

With God on your side, you can reach the unreachable!

With God on your side, you can do the impossible!

When you graduated from high school, no doubt there was somebody who applauded for you or called your name!

As you move through life there are believer should remember that as long as your hand is in God's hand, there's always somebody in the balcony calling your name!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote, "When he calls me I will answer, when he calls me I will answer. I'll be somewhere listening for my name!"

When you feel like you are all by yourself there is somebody in your balcony who promised never to leave you, never to leave you alone!

When you feel like you can't go on, there's someone in your balcony who keeps whispering in your ear, "they that wait on the lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on Wayne's as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

Who's that in your balcony, who keeps telling you, "My God shall supply all of

your need, according to his riches in Christ Jesus!"

Who's that in your balcony, who keeps reminding you that, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want"

When the world asks why you look up when you are feeling down, tell them, "I'll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth" The Lord is in my balcony and I will fear no evil!

Whose that in your balcony?

The Lord strong and mighty!

Whose that in your balcony?

The Lord mighty in battle!

Whose that in my balcony? His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

Everywhere I go, I've got somebody who walks with me and talks with me and tells me I am his own!

He's in my balcony and he's all right!

No. 899-Youth

When Will You Grow Up?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 9, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Corinthians 13:11

Introduction

Have you ever measured how fast you have grown? There are some children who have a mark on the wall in their homes that shows how they have grown. Some have used little lines that have charted the progress of their growth week by week, as each inch of progress is marked by a line or note. More often than not, there is also a story that is associated with every inch of growth. We know we have grown when our children out grow their clothes and shoes. We can also tell they have grown when their taste in toys changes. Sometimes it's exciting to stand next to the marker and realize that we have grown without even knowing it. Only when we stood by the marker were we able to tell that we had actually grown.

One of the largest jumps in our growth happens between 11 and 13 years of age. As a child enters and exits puberty things start to happen internally and in a matter of months, clothes sizes change, voice pitch and other noticeable changes happen in what seems like an instant. It happens so fast that a child can leave home for a summer vacation with a relative in June and look like a totally different person by September.

There are some aspects of our growth that are obvious. Our height and weight are obvious telltale signs that we have changed. This change in our physiology is impacted by our chronology. There are natural changes that happen to each of us without any action on our part. Whether we study, eat correctly or exercise won't effect our chronology. We will get older without doing anything and it will reflect itself in our physiology. However, there are other factors present, such as our psychology, which reflects our mental capacity and our spirituality which affects the growth of the inner man or woman within us.

While chronology, physiology, psychology and spirituality are tell-tale signs of growth, they don't always develop at the same rate. Just because there is a two inch growth in physical height does not mean that there is a corresponding growth in thinking capacity or spirituality.

The believer comes to Christ as a babe. 1 Peter 2:2 refers to a new believer as a

"babe" in Christ that must be fed the milk of the word. However, the goal of every believer is to grow beyond the "babe" stage and step into a deeper relationship with Christ that is sustaining and strong.

The desire of Christian youth, should be to grow in the spirit. They should grow stronger in wisdom and in their understanding of the important things in life. They should also gain a greater appreciation for the power of God to direct and influence their lives and invite him to lead them every step of the way.

As Christians, our goal is to grow in Christ. Our goal is to be more Christ-like everyday. Unlike chronology, spirituality won't happen in our sleep, it has to be nurtured and developed. If you haven't grown in Christ over the years, the question being asked today is an important one, "When will you grow up?"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's writing to the Corinthians on the issue of Christian maturity.

The Corinthians received many instructions from Paul, some of which addressed issues of spiritual development. Peter also addressed these same issues in his writings to the church.

In Corinth believers were new in the faith and to sustain them, they were given special signs and wonders designed to secure their faith and strengthen their relationship with Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul addressed this subject by noting that many of the special gifts that were given to new apostles were limited in scope and would cease as believers began to fully understand the full weight of their spiritual lives. Love, said Paul, was the most important thing.

As he began to fully understand the meaning of the Christian experience and the importance of "charity" Paul said he grew to become a man in the faith and no longer needed the kinds of elementary supports required of children. He said when he became a man he put away childish things.

As a child we see through a glass darkly. When we mature we see God in a clearer light and understand him as a mature adult in the faith.

Signs of our Growth

If a child can mark his growth with a mark on the wall, how do we mark our spiritual growth? Are there ways to tell whether or not we have grown spiritually?

GROWING IN BIBLICAL MATURITY: Have you grown in your knowledge of the scriptures? One true sign that we are growing in spiritually is our knowledge of and respect for the Word of God. When we are children in the faith we have a raw respect for the words of Jesus. The first stage of our growth is to read our bible from time to time. Not much, but a little here and there. We grow even further when we develop a regular discipline of reading, studying and memorizing scripture. We are really growing when we grow beyond simple bible memorization and reading to the

point of meditating on scripture and feeding on its truths. We have grown further if we find ourselves developing convictions and attitudes about life based upon what the bible teaches. We are fully mature when our collective mind and attitudes are controlled by the scriptures. Have you grown any since you began your spiritual journey? If not, when will you grow up?

GROWING IN PRAYER: Have you grown in your praying ability. When we are babes in Christ we say the words of a prayer taught to us by our parents. It is mechanical and routine. It often means little, but serves the purpose. As we grow however, we begin to say words that are not part of the memorized prayer. We begin to offer thanks to God for blessings and for salvation. In the adolescence of our prayer life we learn to pray to God when we have problems and troubles that are beyond our ability. As we grow further, we pray on a regular basis, even if there is no trouble or problem and we prayer beyond the memorized prayer of our childhood. The fully mature Christian prays for the will of God to be done through him and in every situation, regardless of the outcome, giving God praise and glory regardless. Has your prayer life grown any since you became a Christian? If not, when will you grow up?

GROWING IN FELLOWSHIP: Have you grown in the Christian fellowship? When you are a babe in the body of Christ you are still a little uncomfortable in church related sessions. There are some people who you like to be around but for the most part you don't get a thrill out of being a part of the Christian fellowship. The babe in Christ has to be begged to attend Christian fellowship activities, gatherings, socials or programs because he has not grown to appreciate the fellowship. The next level of growth appears when we have grown to attend but not participate or support. When we have grown in the fellowship we are most comfortable when surrounded by Christian friends and in Christian fellowship opportunities. We are uncomfortable outside of this setting. At this level he has at least one other Christian friend in which he has bonded for the benefit of sharing spiritual growth experiences. A fully mature Christian gets joy out of invitations and opportunities to serve and fellowship with other Christians and will give time, energy and resources to improve the quality of the experience.

MATURITY IN CHARACTER: Have you grown in Christian character? A new believer is a babe in Christ. He has joined the church but his character, in many respects remains the same. The first sign of growth is when we recognize the error of our sinful ways and turn from them. We reach the next level when we fear doing anything that is wrong because it will displease God, not because of a fear of jail. We reach another level of maturity when we willingly admit to flaws in our character and turn out flaw over to God completely and totally. Have we grown in character development since we became Christians? If not, when will you grow up?

Grow in Grace

Finally, brothers and sisters, a true measure of our growth spiritually is to measure whether we have grown in grace. To grow in grace with God is to grow in favor with

God.

How does a child of God gain favor with the father? First by believing in God and in his Son Jesus Christ.

But beyond that we gain favor with God by obedience to our parents while we are under their care.

We also gain favor with God by avoiding sin, resisting temptation and living the Christian life at home and at school.

We know we have grown in the faith when we begin to recognize that everything we have is the result of God's grace and we have done nothing on our own.

It is a good thing to know that you have the grace of God.

God's grace supplies us with what we need to live life abundantly. 2 Cor. 9:8 says "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." When we grow in grace, God gives us what we need to live the abundant life.

It is marvelous to experience the grace of God because his grace supplies the:

-Soul with salvation

-Heart with joy

-Mind with peace

-Hands with tenderness

-Feet with Strength

-Eyes with compassion

The sweetest song that was ever sung was about God's grace!

The greatest sermon ever preached was preached about Grace!

The most gratitude ever expressed was expressed about Grace!

The best knowledge ever attained was knowledge about Grace!

Most children who have not traveled far in life whisper among themselves and want to know why the old people, those over 30, like to sing Amazing Grace.

We sing about Grace because Grace has brought us through

-Valleys of loneliness, valleys of tears, winds of persecution, storms of opposition, nights of despair and the trials of suffering.

Through many dangers toils and snares, I have already come. Tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home!

Young people grow in spirit! Grow in Wisdom. Live the Christian life and you'll grow in Grace:

-That touches that untouchable

-That reaches the unreachable

-That loves the unlovable

-That comforts the uncomfortable

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see!

Grace, that was paid for by the blood of the savior!

Grace, that was secured on Calvary's hill!

Grace, that was delivered Early Sunday morning!

Early, Sunday morning Christ arose from the grave with all power in his hand!

No. 9000-Revival

The Tragedy of Backing the Wrong Horse

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 23, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36

Introduction

Have you ever watched a race, felt sure about the outcome, then backed the wrong horse? There are many people who spend considerable amounts of time at the race tracks studying the horses. They learn the names of the jockeys, the pedigree of the horses, the history of their races and then make predications on the outcome. Many are so sure that they are backing the right horse that they will bet everything they have on the ability of one horse over another. As they stand in the crowd anxiously waiting, watching jockey and horse at the starting line, they have high hopes of victory, confident that they are backing the right horse. When the gate opens and the thunder of powerful hoofs pounds against the dust, their hearts beat with rapid pace as they see the horse of their choice breaking out to the lead. Your hopes are raised as you anticipate great cash rewards for the victory that seems so obvious. As your horse makes the turn, two lengths in the lead you feel relieved because everything thing you owned is backing that horse. You used your mortgage money, pawned your jewelry, and put up everything you had in one giant effort to win it all in one fell sweep.

As they come to the final stretch you almost pass out with joy except for the sight of that strange looking horse that was coming up from the rear, advancing like crazy, moving like lightning, and passing all others. That's when you stand on your feet and yell for your horse, knowing that he can't hear you but it makes you feel better. No matter how you yelled that other horse that was billed as 100 to one long shot was coming too fast. He was now shoulder to shoulder with your horse. The crowd is standing on its feet! Your heart is pounding! You are screaming loudly, waving your hands in the arm! Just a few more seconds and it would be over!" Hang in there! " you yelled. Then just as quickly as it began, it was over. Your horse came in second! Who would have thought it? How could it be? Everyone said your horse couldn't lose! If you had placed just a little of what you had on that long shot you would have

been a winner, instead you lost it all backing the wrong horse.

Life is an amazing mystery. Often we are so sure that we are making the right choices, only to learn that we have not chosen wisely. Often despite our best efforts to be cautious, we have to admit, we backed the wrong horse. Some are weary about marriage because they are afraid they may marry someone who turns out to be a bad choice. So they don't marry at all. Others choose their mates based one what everyone tells them, success potential, education, finance, looks. They literally marry by the book, only to find out later they picked the wrong horse.

It happens in other areas of life as well. There are many who back a political candidate with high hopes that they have chosen well, only to discover later that they backed the wrong horse. Some take sides on an issue desiring always to take the popular stance, then find out later that they backed the wrong horse.

There were many who laughed at Thomas Edison when he brought up the idea of the light bulb and put their money somewhere else. They backed the wrong horse!

Those who thought Bill Gates' idea of a computer that could operate on top of a desk was too risky. They put their money somewhere else. They backed the wrong horse!

If all the people who laughed at the Wright Brothers idea of a flying machine could speak today, they would say collectively, "We backed the wrong horse!"

What about our spiritual lives? Is it possible that in all of the life plans and careful selections that we have made that we made some unwise choices? The man or woman who has chosen to live a life outside of God, away from the church and distant from spirituality, makes a choice? Are they backing the right horse?

Jesus was approached by a rich young ruler once. The young man had considerable resources. He had hedged his bet well. He accumulated riches and obeyed the commandments of Moses to the letter. However, when Jesus came to town, he heard that there was another "horse in the race." He came to place a bet on heaven and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus asked him about following the commandments and obeying the law. The young man felt confident until he heard Jesus say, "One thing thou lackest; sell all you have, take up your cross and follow me." The young man was stunned. Jesus was asking him to bet his whole substance, everything he owned on him. The young man backed away, stuck with his own pursuits in life and ended backing the wrong horse.

As believers, we are convinced that we have made the right choice in Christ. We are certain that he is the way, the truth and the life. We have placed our hopes on the cross of Calvary and pledged our faith. We sing boldly, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back! No turning back!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he explains the importance of placing our hopes in the kingdom of God instead of vainly seeking what the world offers.

Jesus often spoke to his disciples about the importance of choices. He maintained

that many choose to follow the evil course because it appears to be the easiest and most profitable.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus himself had to make three critical choices about the direction of his life. In the solitude and loneliness of the wilderness he was tempted to use his ministry for self promotion, power and fame. The devil guaranteed him a successful career and a powerful reign. It would have been easy and certainly would not have resulted in the crucifixion of himself and the untimely deaths of those closest to him. Faced with those choices, Jesus chose to follow the directives of God.

There is a sure way to heaven. Jesus gave his disciples a simple formula: deny yourself, pick up your cross, follow him.

Denying ourselves means that we deny what would normally be our natural right. When we deny ourselves we give up the right to run our own lives and turn our whole being over to God. The natural order of things dictates that we run our own show, make our own decisions, do what pleases us, go where we want to go, do what we want to do, when we get good and ready. To deny ourselves means that we give that right over to God.

Jesus said, "Take up your cross!" What exactly does that mean? To some it means to shoulder whatever burden or hardship you receive as a result of kingdom building. In its purest sense, "take up your cross" has a different meaning. The cross was a symbol of humiliation and degradation. Those who were crucified upon crosses were broken, humiliated and dispirited. It suggested that those who associated themselves with the cross would be broken in spirit, humbled and fully aware they deserve no credit for anything they do because everything they accomplish is done by the grace of God.

The command to "follow me" means believers are expected to obey the Lord. This is just the opposite of our carnal nature which lives in defiance of God. Obedience is not our second nature. It is not even our third nature. Complete obedience to God is the key element to the new life of a believer in Christ.

A person follows this route in life places his bet on the kingdom of God. He is banking on the work of God to be true. They are backing the right horse in the race for eternal life. To do otherwise is what Christ called gaining the whole world and losing your soul. He asked the question, "what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?

The Importance of Following Jesus

Two Kentucky farmers who owned racing stables had developed a keen rivalry. One spring, each of them entered a horse in local steeplechase. Thinking that a professional rider might help him outdo his friend, one of the farmers engaged a crack jockey. The two horses were leading the race at the last fence, but it proved too tough for them. Both horses fell, unseating their riders. But, this calamity did not stop the professional jockey. He quickly remounted and won the race. Returning triumphant to the paddock, the jockey found the farmer who had hired him fuming with rage. "What's the matter," asked the jockey. "I won didn't I?" "Oh, yes," roared the farmer.

“You won all right, but you still don’t know, do you?””Know what?” Asked the jockey. “You won the race on the wrong horse!”

In a way this explains the dilemma in which many people find themselves. They began the race of life on the right horse but somewhere along the line switched horses inadvertently. They are winning the races that they are running but unfortunately they are riding the wrong horse.

There are many who can testify that they began the race of life riding the right horse. As children, they attended Sunday school, participated in church services, studied the Bible and spent much time in pursuit of the kingdom of God. These were glorious years that were filled with excitement and joy. They learned a lot and were enthusiastic about their service. They were riding the right horse and they knew it.

Somewhere in the excitement of it all, someone stumbled. Somewhere between the joy and the excitement, confusion appeared. Somewhere between the enthusiasm and the happiness of service a mix-up occurred that left many people still trying to win the race of life while riding the wrong horse.

In a horse race the victory is awarded to the horse not the jockey. The jockey is a servant of the owner and does everything within his ability to see to it that the owner achieves the victory. The horse can win the race without the jockey. The jockey only receives the praise of his employer if he wins the race and is riding the right horse.

Unfortunately, there are many people today who are trying to win life’s race while riding the wrong horse.

Many people need to check their horse to make sure they are riding the right steed. Some are riding a horse named success. Others are riding a horse named riches. Still others are riding the horse named fame. However, the only horse that can win the race for heaven is salvation.

Follow Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, it is important that every believer remember that the safest thing to do is to follow Jesus and take no chance of getting lost.

They were always challenges believers to question whether or not they are following the right and when they choose to follow Jesus. In a moment of weakness even the strongest believer muses about how much they could have made or where they could have grown in life and they not chosen to live the Christian life. Because they have not chosen to live ungodly lives they often make less, have less, and seem less than their friends who have chosen to ride a different horse. That’s why the word of God keeps reminding believers to “fret not thyself because of evil doers nor be thou envious of the workers of iniquity..”

Believers need to remember that they are riding the right horse, in the right race, and victory is guaranteed.

There is always victory when we choose to be on the Lord’s side.

There is always joy when we choose to be on the Lord’s side.

Elijah stood atop of Mount Carmel and challenged the prophets of Baal to,

"choose ye this day, if God be God then follow him. If Baal be God, then follow him." The prophets of Baal turned their backs on God. They backed the wrong horse!

As the people doubted whether God would help them in the promised land, Joshua stood on the side of a mountain and asked those who would stay with the Lord, to step forward. He told the people, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Moses stood at the gate of the camp of Israel and asked the question, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

I don't know about you, but I've found out that it's a good thing to be on the Lord's side!

When you are on the Lord's side, it doesn't matter what happens in life, the Lord will make a way!

I heard the psalmist say,"I have been young, and now am old, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread."

It would be a tragedy to spend your whole life, accumulating riches, only to find out that riches can't buy your way into to heaven!

It would be a tragedy to spend your whole life, trying to achieve power, only to find out that the power you achieve is powerless to get you into eternity.

It would be a tragedy to spend your whole life, trying to achieve fame, only to find out that not an angel in heaven knows your name!

Paul told the New Testament churches that he was confident that he was going in the right direction. He asked a question that aroused believers to a greater faith, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back! No turning back!"

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

Follow Jesus! Take no chance at getting lost!

No. 9001-Friends

Friends Don't Let Friends Live Without God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 30, 2002

SCRIPTURE: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Introduction

How many friends do you have? If you are like most people you don't have many friends outside, perhaps, your wife, husband, mother or father. Friends are a rarity. Most of us don't have many friends. All of us have several enemies. In today's society, we are selective about those persons whom we choose to call our friends. We are careful because the terms mean different things to different people. While calling a person a friend is a mark of cordiality, it is also an indicator that the person referred to is much closer than is normally expected. Being a friend today is both an honor and a challenge.

When do we call a person a friend? Different people have different answers to that question. A friend says, "We had so much food left from our reunion, would you care to share some of it with us?" A friend says, "I see you are moving I'll be over to help you it looks like too much for one person to do alone." A friend says, "It's our anniversary will you come and help us celebrate? A friend says, "You are making a terrible mistake, you are about to mess up good fashion." A friend is more than a neighbor. A friend sticks closer than a brother or sister.

Our friends consider our needs. Our friends include us. They open their homes and their arms to us. Our friends open their hearts to us and they give us their time. Our friends often stop whatever they are doing to join us to help us. They warn us if we are heading a wrong direction such as dating a person who is deceiving us. They are able to express their friendship much the same as David and Jonathan did. Good friends are an invaluable asset.

Just when can we call a person a friend? Everyone we talk to, work with, or know is not a friend. Longivity does not mean automatic friendship. Just when is a person my friend? There are perhaps several levels that must be achieved before we can call the person our friend.

The first level is the" never heard of you" stage. At this level we have never seen

or heard of an individual. No matter how well known the person may be to other people he or she is a foreigner to us. Because we have never seen the person, neither have we heard the person's name before, it is highly unlikely that this person could consider himself my friend.

The second level is the "name recognition" stage. At this level we have seen the person's face or heard the person's name before. We recognize the person because we have casually seen his name or his face perhaps in a newspaper or magazine or otherwise seen him or her at a distance. Because we have seen his face or have heard his name that fact alone, however, does not qualify the person to be called a friend.

The third level of friendship is the "acquaintance" stage. At this level we meet a person face-to-face. We exchange small bits of information about each other. We learn his name, he learns our name. We learn where he works, he learns where we work. There may be other small pieces of information that are exchanged, such as business information, a phone number or similar contacts. However, the exchange of such information does not qualify a person to call himself my friend.

The fourth level of friendship is the "associate" stage. This level is shared by persons who work together or for the same company. They may work in the same division of a corporation. They may serve in the same platoon in the military. They may be members of the same church. They may work together and know each other's name. They may have met each other in brief contacts. They may know little tidbits of information about each other. However, none of these are prerequisites for friendship.

The fifth level of friendship is the "co-laborer "stage. In this stage, a person shares a common cause and works to achieve a common purpose. Such persons work closely together. They share our mutual interests and a common bond. They do more than simply associate. They are more than mere acquaintances. Yet, despite the closeness of their collaborative effort this relationship still does not qualify as a friendship.

The highest degree of any relationship is to be called a friend. A friend sticks closer than a brother. Friends know all about us, including the dark secrets about our inner selves. Despite what he knows, he still chooses to be our friend anyway.

With that as a definition the number of our friends quickly dwindles to number so small we can count them on one hand. No wonder the song writer would declare, "what a friend we have been Jesus." He alone has proven to be our only friend.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that we have a friend in Jesus. He will always love us. He will always be with us. And he will never leave us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of his relationships to his disciples.

Although Jesus was with his disciples for three years as he trained them and taught them the nature of the kingdom of God, none of them really knew the nature of his mission. He tried to teach them the full extent of what it meant to be a part of the kingdom of God. The concept of self-sacrifice is what he constantly taught. The

central theme of his message was that each person should be winning to deny himself, take up his cross and follow him.

The focal point of all of Jesus's teaching was that each believer must learn to love. The love he spoke love was unconditional. It was extended even to enemies. While he explained his concept to his followers, he would soon demonstrate it by dying on Calvary. Jesus could see what lay ahead for him even though his disciples could not. Thus, his words of this text were probably confusing to his followers.

The central point that he makes in this text is that a true friend is willing to go beyond just mere acquaintances of being a laborer in the vineyard. A true friend, according to the Master, is one who is willing to go beyond the ordinary; even to the extraordinary for a friend. No greater love can a person show for another than his willingness to lay down his life in his defense. For Jesus this meant the ultimate sacrifice. It meant his death on Calvary to provide a means for the men and women of this world to have eternal life and forgiveness of sin.

A true friend is willing to lay down his life. A true friend is willing to go the last mile if it will mean saving the life of a friend.

Six Qualities of True Friends

Friends have many qualities that are admirable. The Bible is filled with examples of what should be expected of a person who is a friend. There are a few things that we might consider in this context as qualities of friends that should be emulated. There is a popular slogan that says "friends don't let friends drive drunk." The same could apply to faith and our relationships with our friends. There are some things friends don't let their friends do or do without.

FRIENDS DON'T BORROW FROM FRIENDS WITHOUT PAYING BACK: Whenever we borrow from a person it should be our intention to repay the loan. This should be especially true with respect to our friends. Generally, our friends will strain themselves to help us when we are in trouble. Because they are our friends, some often tap resources in their own homes which endanger their on stability in order to help us when we are in a temporary bind. This principle is promoted in the Bible. In Matthew 5:42 Jesus said, "Give to the one who asks, and don't turn away from the one wants to borrow from you." Thus, a friend tries to find a way to respond to us when we are in need. A person who has been befriended should understand the value of repaying a loan, especially to a true friend. An old proverb says "if you want to fallout with a friend loan him your money." The proverb underscores what happens when a person perceived to be a friend takes advantage of that relationship by paying others and leaving their friend in a strain. A true friend will not take advantage of a friendship by borrowing and not repaying it.

FRIENDS DON'T BETRAY THE CONFIDENCE OF THEIR FRIENDS: Often friends share their secrets together. It is said that our friends and know enough about us to destroy us. In moments of weakness many of us have revealed the great secrets and vulnerabilities to persons that we perceived to be our friends. True friends will

never reveal the secrets of or betray the confidence of a friend. Some of the most difficult times in relationships between friends have come when a friend betrayed a confidence. The Bible gives us two extreme examples of this principle. Jonathan could have easily betrayed David and told his father about his whereabouts but even though it put him personally at risk, he chose not to do so. On the other hand Judas knew the whereabouts of Jesus Christ. Jesus had revealed to him his plans and Judas knew his vulnerabilities and the times when he would be alone. Judas used that information for his own profit and betrayed a confidence. A true friend is one that can keep secret and take into the grave with them.

FRIENDS DON'T WALK AWAY FROM FRIENDS WITHOUT AN EXPLANATION: There are times in any relationship between two people when there are differences. Differences even occur among persons who have been friends for many years. People who are friends however, are careful to explain their actions so that there is no doubt in the minds of either party that although they are separating for a specific reason, the friendship itself is still in tact. Abraham and Lot had considerable differences over how their large families would share the same grazing fields. The two relatives realized that they had reached a point when they had to part company. However, when the decision was made both men talked about it and decided to go their separate ways with peace between them. The nature of friendship is of such that we may truly love our friend as a person but cannot walk the same path that he walks. In such a case when friends leave and go separate ways neither leaves without an explanation. Friends don't walk away from friends without an explanation.

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIFT INTO DANGEROUS WATERS WITHOUT WARNING THEM: We often find ourselves involved in activities that aren't dangerous for our spiritual, economic, family, or personal best interest. Often our friends see the danger of our involvements when we cannot. Those who are our friends feel compelled to warn us when we are going into dangerous waters. Often we are angry when they tell us what we don't want to hear. Sometimes we rebel against them, cut them off and even strike out against them. But a friend would not be a friend if they saw us preparing to destroy ourselves and let us go head first into destruction. The friends of Samson constantly told him that it was dangerous for him to work with Philistine women. They saw his habit of keeping company with ungodly women as a sign of his imminent downfall. Samson ignored them and met his destruction. On the other hand the friends of Moses saw that he was stretching himself to thinly trying to judge all of the people of Israel himself. They warned them that he needed to subdivide his duties and let others help them. Wisely, Moses listened to their advice and was the better man because of it. Sometimes the advice of friends who want us that we are nearing dangerous waters troubles us but it is the kind of advice that can be expected from true friends.

FRIENDS DON'T LEAVE FRIENDS OUT OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THEIR LIVES: tTere is a time for everything and to everything there is a season. When friends celebrate they are careful not to exclude the persons who have befriended them over the years. In great moments, every person who has befriended us should feel welcomed and be invited to share in the celebration. Friendships should not be

dependent upon status or class. A rich man may have poor friends but they are still his friends, whom he wants to share in his great moment. A learned man may have many friends who are not as learned as he but he still wants them to share in his celebration. Jesus made this point when he gave the parable of the man with a great banquet. He asked his friends to attend but they were all too busy and would not share his great moments. He went into the highways and byways and compelled others to come and share the moment. Friends go out of their way to share important moments in the lives of their friends. At the same time, friends who have succeeded do not turn their backs on their friends who are still struggling but includes them in the list of important people sharing their great moments. Friends don't leave friends out of important events in their lives.

Friends don't let friends live without God

Finally, brothers and sisters, friends don't let friends live without knowing the goodness of the Lord.

Every believer has a friend or two that does not acknowledge the goodness of the Lord. In that respect every believer has the responsibility of showing a lost friend how good God has actually been.

Just as no real friend would allow a friend to get behind the wheel of an automobile inebriated and unable to control himself, neither would a real friend watch a friend live while drunk with the wine of worldly pursuits.

A friend cannot sit by and watch a friend build a whole life based on physical things and notice that the things of God are taking second place. A friend looks for the right moment and right way to remind their friends, that it doesn't profit a man anything if he gains the whole world and loses his soul!

If you have a friend who knows the Lord, you have a friend in deed!

A friend who knows the Lord knows a man who came to be our friend.

In John 15:15 Jesus said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends…"

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we can't see our way, he makes a way out of no way! What a friend we have in Jesus, when we have fallen down, he picks up and turns us around!

What a friend we have in Jesus, when he we have dropped our heads in despair, he dries our weeping eyes!

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we feel abandoned, he promises never to leave us. Never to leave us alone!

What a friend we have in Jesus, who showed us the greatest love!

He carried an old rugged cross!

He was raised up and stretched out in humility!

He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity!

No greater love can a man show than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends!

No. 9002-Communion

Turning Bitter into Better

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 18, 2002

SCRIPTURE: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" Hebrews: 12:15; "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."Matthew 26:38-39

Introduction

Have you ever had a bitter experience? Bitter experiences are those that were troubling, disturbing upsetting, unrewarding and disastrous. Most of us have had at least one bitter experience in the course of our lives. Those bitter moments are those that frustrated us and prompted us to throw up our hands saying, "what's the use!" When we expect justice and receive foul play, that's a bitter experience. When we expect love and only receive hate, that's a bitter experience. When we expect to graduate and learn that we fell short of the requirement, that's a bitter experience. Since bitter experiences are not unique to any particular person, every believer should strive to respond to the bitter situations in a way that takes life's lemons and turns them into lemonade.

There are many people who have been wounded by so many bitter experiences that they themselves have become bitter. We see them every day. Their faces are always curled up. There are always frowning, always complaining and rarely have a kind word to say. They are so bitter they appear to bathe in lemon juice and rub themselves with Castor Oil!

Sometimes our bitterness can make us unbearable. Consider the first grade teacher who was very bitter because she was jilted by her husband who was a Baptist deacon. Anytime she thought about Baptist it left a bitter taste in her mouth, so she quit going to church and became a free spirit. One day in class she announced that she was a free spirit and asked how many in the class thought people who were free spirits were good people? All the children raised their hands because they wanted to be like their teacher!

However, there was one girl in the class who didn't raise her hand! When asked why, she said, "Because I'm not a free spirit!"

"What are you?" Asked the teacher?

"I'm a proud, dyed in the wool, holy ghost filled Baptist" the little girl said proudly.

The bitterness began to swell in the teacher. The girl's statement brought back bitter memories, but she quietly asked, why she was a proud, dyed in the wool, Holy Ghost filled Baptist"

The little girl said, "Because I was brought up to believe that God loves everybody. My mommy and my daddy were Baptist and I'm a Baptist too!"

The teacher said "That's a silly reason. Suppose your mommy was a stupid ignorant moron and you're your daddy was a stupid ignorant moron? What you be then?"

The little girl paused for a moment then said, "I guess I'd be like you!"

People who are bitter rarely seem themselves as bitter. Those around them see them clearly.

The word of God challenges us not to be so overwhelmed by the circumstances of this life that we become bitter for we are "more than conquerors" in Christ Jesus.

As Christians, our goal in life is to turn bitter experiences into better situations through the power of God. We have learned that no matter what circumstance we encounter God can make it sweet and beautiful if we focus on his power and love rather than then bitterness of the moment.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he considers the bitter cup of Crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemene.

Jesus was a perfect man. Despite his perfection and holiness the world seemed to deal him a series of bitter experiences.

As a man, Jesus showed his disciples how the godly should respond do life's circumstances. He experienced nearly every emotion known the average person: rejection, fatigue, frustration, anger, love, sadness, even destitution. His was a life that was filled with poverty and simple living. Yet, despite the lowly nature of his circumstance he remained positive, trusting and obedient to God.

In the Garden of Gethsemene he made his final report to the father. John detailed how he told the father that his mission was complete and work was done.

What John did not detail was Jesus' request to avoid the "bitter cup" of Calvary. His request was simple, "if there was a way to provide salvation for mankind, short of Calvary he wanted God to excuse him from the cross."

He concluded that God's will was preeminent however, and chose to go to Calvary saying, "not my will by thy will be done."

He endured the bitterness of Calvary but turned it into a bittersweet experience for all of those who would follow him. His resurrection was the crowning achievement of his journey on earth.

He took an experience that was bitter and made it better for the entire world!

The writer of Hebrews presented this book with one single theme, which can be summed up by the word 'better." A better way. A better hope. Better promises. A better covenant. A better testament. A better tabernacle. A better priesthood. The

book of Hebrews reminds us that Christ is better than angels, better than Moses, better than Aaron, better than Melchizedek. Because we walk in a better way, believers are warned not to fall prey to the "root of bitterness" that can grow within each of us if we are not careful.

It's Easy to become Bitter

It's easy to get bitter, especially if we feel that we have been wronged.

A man left for work one Friday afternoon. But, being payday, instead of going home, he stayed out the entire weekend partying with the boys, spending lavishly on loose women, squandering his entire paycheck. He wife was extremely angry because. The more she thought about his actions the angrier she became. She reached the point of bitterness.

When He finally appeared at home, Sunday Night, he was confronted by a very angry and bitter wife and was walked him up the wall for nearly two hours.

Finally his wife stopped the nagging and simply said to him. "How would you like it if you didn't see me for two or three days?"

To which he replied. "That would be fine with me."

Monday went by and he didn't see his wife. Tuesday and Wednesday came and went with the same results. But on Thursday, the swelling went down just enough where he could see her a little out of the corner of his left eye! Her bitterness closed both his eyes!

WE GET BITTER WHEN WE BROOD: It is good to look back at our lives and see how far God has brought us. However, it is not a good idea to look back and brood. When we brood and focus on how much we have been wronged we get bitter. Each of us has someone in our past who wounded us or hurt us in some way. Brood over a wrong that happened many years ago makes us bitter. We know we are bitter when we see that person coming and walk the other way. We know we are bitter when we refuse to sit near that person or even be in the same assembly. Brooding is dangerous because if causes us to focus all of our energies on the negative rather than the positive. If we experienced a bitter experience in the past don't brood over it! Don't get bitter, get better! You know you are better when you can treat a person who has offended you kindly! You know you are better when you don't want to take out your pistol and shoot the woman who stole your man! You know you are better when you pray for your enemies rather than wish them harm. Since we are all saved saints, don't get bitter, get better!

WE GET BITTER WHEN WE FAIL TO SEE THE GOOD: Bitterness develops when we can't see the good in the world around us. It's easy to see the bad. It's all around us. There was a time when you could walk down the street and folks would speak to one another, and you could hear people say things like "please", and "thank you", and "no ma'am", and "yes, sir", but now it seems like some people will just as soon shoot you as speak to you. Poverty is everywhere, despite a plethora of programs we still have very little to call our own. It's easy to get bitter. Crooked cops are beating us and trampling our rights! It's easy to get bitter. The school system is

failing our children and those teachers who are trying hard find that they are usually underpaid and underappreciated. It's easy to get bitter. We got to blame somebody. Some blame on the Mexicans who are coming across the border illegally. Others blame on the Arabs who have come across the border legally and taken over every store in poor communities across the nation. We blame everybody, hate everybody and have something bad to say about everybody but ourselves. That's when we know we are bitter! Despite the bitter circumstances around us however, we are urged, not to get bitter, but to get better! Out of the bitterness of educational decline let's roll up our sleeves and make it better! If our youth are rapidly sliding down the slippery staircase to degradation, don't get bitter, let's make it better! If others are succeeding in our community let's not get bitter against those who are making it work, let's roll up our sleeves and make it better!

WE GET BITTER WHEN IT GETS INSIDE OF US: To be bitter means that you are in a state of heaviness, to be bitter means that you are in a state of sorrowfulness, of despair, and what happens when we find ourselves in such a state, is that if we don't do what is needed to get rid of that thing, that thing that's bothering us, that thing that's hurting us, it begins to get down on the inside, and it eats away at our joy, it takes away our peace, and we find ourselves becoming mean,vindictive, angry and malicious. That's why our text from Hebrews talks about how a 'root of bitterness' can spring up, and it will not only mess you up, but the text says thereby, 'many' would be defiled.

You are bitter when you've got something against somebody, somebody has offended you, hurt your feelings, and now all of a sudden you decide you're gonna take the situation into your own hands and you end up carrying that "thing" around. All of a sudden you're not what you used to be, you're mean and hateful and cutting, and that begins to affect everybody around you.

When you are you start seeing enemies where there are no enemies, and all of a sudden this one don't like you, and that one is against you. That's what the word means when it says that 'the wicked flee when no man pursueth'. "Don't Get Bitter! Get better!

Some of us think that we can treat people any kind of way, and believe that we can still stand before God and hear Him say "well done"…but the devil is a liar. You who say you're on fire for the Lord, and yet you sit up in church with a bad attitude, can't get along with nobody, sitting in the pews looking like you've been baptized in lemon juice, then have the nerve to say "I can't find no husband… I can't find no wife". Don't nobody wanna marry you…with your bitter self…Somebody look at somebody and say, "Don't Get Bitter

Better not bitter

Finally, brothers and sisters, there may be bitterness in the cup but we can still be better.

This is the lesson that Jesus taught his disciples,; the world around you may be

without hope, but we can be better because we have hope.

The people around us may be bitter because they have failed, but we can be better because we serve a God who turns failure into success!

The social conditions around us may be obstructive, but we can be better because we serve a God who turns obstructions into opportunities.

We are in the world that sings a "somebody done me wrong song" but we serve a God that keeps us singing, "God gave a me a song that the angels cannot sing, I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb, I've been redeemed."

Every time a child of God even thinks about getting bitter about life, he or she should just look around and start counting his bleesings. That's when he'll say, "The Lord has been so good to me. He's opened doors I could not see!" I won't get bitter, I'll get better.

Joseph was treated unfairly by his brothers and sold into slavery. He was falsely accused and thrown into prison. He could have wallowed in self pity and festered in anger. He didn't get bitter, he became better! Because he was better instead of bitter God lifted him up higher than he'd ever been before!

Has someone done you wrong? Have you been falsely accused? Don't get bitter get better and God will lift you. Psalm 110:1 says, sit close to the Lord, "until I make thine enemies thy footstool!" Don't get bitter, get better!

Jacob was tricked into marrying a woman he didn't love. He worked seven years to marry Racheal but had to marry her sister instead. He could have been bitter and took it out on Leah, but instead he became better! He worked seven more years and ended up with two wives, 12 children and enough money to live in luxury for the rest of his life. He didn't get bitter, he got better and God blessed him!

Has someone let you down in romantic life? Is your heart hurting because you have been betrayed? Don't get bitter, get better! God is a heart fixer and a mind regulator! Put it in God's hand, don't get bitter, get better!

A widow woman put her trust in the Lord but soon found that her barrel had run dry. Even when she was down to her last cup of meal she refused to get bitter. She could have become bitter because she trusted in God but her food and supplies ran out. But instead of getting bitter, she got better! She kept trusting in the Lord. As long as she trusted in the Lord there was always enough for one more meal.

Are times getting tough for you? Is it difficult to make your way? Don't get bitter and lash out at the world, keep trusting in the Lord. Don't get bitter, get better! That's why the song writer says, "I will trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

Bitterness takes away from us, but there is a blessing in being better!

Bitterness takes away our joy, but it's better to know the joy of the Lord. When David found himself wallowing in bitterness because of his sin, he decided to get better. He asked, the Lord in Psalm 51 to "create in me a clean heart O' God and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." He didn't get bitter, he got better!

Bitterness takes away our ability to enjoy the sweetness of life, but it's better to be able to sing "there's a sweet sweet spirit in this place and I know it must be the presence of the Lord!"

Don't get bitter, get better because we serve a God who can take defeat and turn it into victory!

Don't get bitter, get better because we serve a God who can take pain and turn it into gain!

Don't get bitter, get better because God can take our setbacks and turn them into start ups!

Don't get bitter, get better because God can take our weaknesses and turn them into strengths!

Don't get bitter, get better because God can take our losses and turn them into gains!

In the garden of Gethsemene Jesus looked at the bitter cup before him! He could have become bitter and lashed out at his father for showing little appreciation for all he had done. Instead of getting bitter, he got better! He told his father, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done!

When they took before a court filled with false witnesses, he didn't get bitter, he got better!

When they put a crown of thorns on his head, he didn't get bitter, he got better!

When they whipped him all night long, he didn't get bitter, he got better!

When they put an old rugged cross on his shoulder and marched him up Golgotha's hill, he didn't get bitter, he got better!

When they nailed him to an old rugged cross, he didn't get bitter, he got better! I heard him say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" That wasn't bitter, it was better!

When they buried him in a borrowed tomb that was a bitter experience!

But early Sunday morning, he arose up from the grave! He didn't get bitter, he got better!

It doesn't matter what the world does to you!

Don't get bitter, get better!

No. 9003-Membership Improvement

When The Master Comes Home

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 21, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."Matthew 25:19

Introduction

Have you ever been audited, reviewed or evaluated?This is the time when all of our actions are reviewed by superiors or those who have authority over us. Some jobs have regular evaluation periods that occur systematically. There are often peer reviews and quality performance checks in some areas. Some will argue that one of the most painful reviews is the one posed by the Internal Revenue Service when it conducts an audit. It reaches way back and makes us all feel vulnerable and small in the face of an all powerful government. Since we are aware of the possibility of evaluations, most people prepare for them by doing what is expected and keeping the proper records.

There will also be a spiritual evaluation one day. It will be the day that the Lord reviews the quality of our service and determines the extent of our reward based on our service. There is a judgment day coming and every believer will be held accountable for the quality of his or her service on this earth.

Consider the church worker who fell asleep and dreamed he had gone to judgment. All his life he had been relaxed in his church work, personal services and attendance. Standing before the judgment bar the man saw his entire record scrawled on scores of pages and became nervous about the ultimate result. In his dream, the man decided that he would try to talk himself out of what he knew was "serious trouble." When his life came up for review, he heard the question, "In your life, where did you worship and serve?" The man answered, "Here and there!" Another question followed: "What type of service did you render?" The man answered, "This and That!" A third question came, "Has your service been good or bad?" The man answered, "Tit for tat!" The man felt pretty comfortable with his answers until he heard the words, "Depart from me, take him to hell!" As the devils came to claim the man he cried out, "Wait, Lord, how long will I be in hell? When will I get out?" A voice answered, "Sooner or later!" Then the man woke up.

How far we get in life has a lot to do with the way we respond to life's opportunities. Three words and the way we respond to them, usually define the limits of our life experiences. The words are: "potential, production, and procrastination." Each of us has some degree of potential or possibilities. The little voice that sings clearly, "Yes Jesus Loves Me" has the potential to make it to the Metropolitan Opera, that's what Leontynne Price found out. The hands that make cookies in the kitchen have the potential of making cookies that are marketed around the world; that's what Famous Amos found out. Each person is born with potential to one degree or another. What we do with our potential is called our "production." The more we work with what we have the further it takes us and the greater our success. Production is the result of maximizing potential.

Procrastination is the poorest way to respond to an opportunity. It means to put things off. Potential remains a possibility but never a probability when we procrastinate. What we "could be" never becomes real if we keep putting things off. Procrastination is the enemy of production and it owns a graveyard filled with souls with unused potential.

With respect to our spiritual lives and service in the kingdom of God there are many who have great potential for the kingdom but can't quite seem to get the production they desire because of procrastination. These are the ones who have the gift to be Sunday School teachers, youth workers, singers, clerical aides, or musicians, but they just keep putting off making the decision to serve fully. Morever, there are still others who have the potential to be a part of the kingdom of God but they procrastinate about their decision to serve him and never produce anything for the kingdom.

The almighty has given each of us a life to manage. What we do with it has been left up to us. However, there will come a day of reckoning, when we will give an account for our stewardship. When the Lord returns he will review the work of each believer and will reward us accordingly.

As believers, we strive to do the best we can with what we have. We give of our time, talent and resources to promote kingdom building. We do so with the full knowledge that when the master comes home he will review our work and reward us accordingly.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable Christ told to emphasize the importance of service in the kingdom of God.

Jesus constantly emphasized to his disciples that greatness is determined by service in kingdom building. Kingdom building involves service to others in the name of Christ.

In this parable the roles in the kingdom are symbolized by the master and his servants. The master represents God who is the Lord of the Kingdom. The servants represent the members of the kingdom of heaven. The theme of the parable is that

God gives each person a measure of possessions for which he will one day be held accountable.

One servant is given five measures of money called talents. A second is given two. The last is given one. The first two invest their money and return the master a profit. The last buried his talent and did not use it. It angered the Master and resulted in loss of favor with the master.

The message to believers becomes obvious. If we use what God has given us he will be pleased. If we do not, we make him angry and he could withdraw his favor.

Being Held Accountable

WHAT I HAVE IS ON LOAN FROM THE MASTER: What do we really have that belongs to us? Often when we look at our possessions we get the impression that everything belongs to us. Verse 14 shows the master in the parable entrusting his possessions with his servants. The idea that everything we have has been entrusted to us by God is one of the most difficult concepts for many to accept. It is against the carnal nature of man to accept that what we have is not ours, but God's. Yet, that is the attitude of the steward. Everything we have is actually on loan from the master. What we have from God is time, talent and treasures, all of which are subject to the discretion of the creator. It is as if we are the juvenile that has been given the keys to the family car. The juvenile has the responsibility, but the right of ownership remains with the parents who can withdraw the privilege of driving the car at any time. Even those who own a home do not really own it. If you stoop down and pick up a hand full of the dirt around your home you will instantly realize that your home sits on dirt that you have a title to but you really do not own. Your deed only gives you the right to possess it for a while but not forever. Only God will own it forever. Maybe that's what 1 Corinthians 10:26 means when it declares that the "earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

WORK WITH WHAT YOU ARE GIVEN: There are many who spend their whole lives grumbling about what they were not given. There are others who choose to work with whatever they have been given. Verse 15 makes it clear that each servant is given possessions according to his ability. An old proverb says, "To whom much is given, much is required." Those with great abilities have more to work with and are usually expected to make a great leap over others in sheer quantity. However, those who have been given little can also enjoy the same proportionate growth. There are literally thousands of success stories in America. These are stories of men and women who were given small advantages but took them and multiplied them. Those who have great advantages at the beginning have even higher expectations at the end. Whether you are a five talent person or a one talent person the expectancy is the same, that is that we use whatever we have been given to the best of our ability. That's why verse 16 notes that "immediately," without hesitation or procrastination, two of the servants began to find ways to multiply the possessions entrusted to them by trading and investing. It is essential that we work with what we have been given.

A DAY OF ACCOUNTABILITY WILL COME: There will come a time when each

believer will have to give an account for his service. Whatever we have been entrusted to invest our energies into will one day be the subject of review. What will we be accountable for? We will be held accountable for whether or not we do a lot with a lot or do a lot with a little. Either way, we are expected to do a lot. A great amount of will power and industry can take the smallest opportunity and turn it into prosperity. That's what God will be looking for in the final day when he asks, "What did you do with the little that I gave you?" Those who do not achieve must understand that God will judge our lack of action just as he will our action, that's the essence of accountability. The wise servant will be able to say, "I used my time, talents and resources in your service.

The faithful will be rewarded

Finally, brothers and sisters it is good to remember that while there are those who misuse what the Lord has given them, the faithful will be rewarded.

This is the message of the parable that should not be lost in the telling. Those who labor in the kingdom faithfully will be rewarded.

Every now and then it is good for believers to remember that serving the Lord does pay off after while.

We have to work while it is day because when the night comes, no man can work. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he penned the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done. I'm going to work until the setting of the sun. I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done."

Whatever the Lord has given you, you must use it until your day is done!

If he gave you a voice, sing until your day is done!

If he gave you an artist's eye, then paint pictures, arrange flowers and make things beautiful until your day is done!

If he gave you the ability to speak, then lift up your voice for him, until your day is done!

If he gave you the ability to cook, then keep rattling pots and making tasty meals until the setting of your sun!

There is no reward for those who sit on the stool of good intentions singing, "I shall not be moved" but only for those who use their God given abilities to the fullest.

If you work until the end of the day, the word says, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things!"

I'm reminded of Uncle Doug's hound dog. Every morning that hound dog would greet Uncle Doug as he walked out of the front gate. All day long he chased away strangers, protected the yard and kept a watch out for varmits that would slip up on the farm. Long about sun down every day that old hound dog would lift his lazy eyes. His tail would begin to wag. His ears would stick up straight. Anybody who was visiting would always ask, "Why is that old hound dog suddendly barking and pacing back and forth on the porch.?" Aunt Jenny would answer, "Every morning that hound dog sees Uncle Doug leave. But on the way home from the mill Uncle Doug

stops by the local cafe, and gets a fresh bag of scraps for that old dog. That dog is excited because he knows he's going to get a reward when his master comes home!"

I don't know about you but I know there is going to be a reward, when the master comes home!

Through the years I've been rising and falling, but when the Master comes home....

Through the years I've cried many briny tears, but when the Master comes home he'll wipe all our tears away!

Through the years we climbed up the rough side of the mountain, but when the Master comes home, every mountain shall be made low and every valley exalted!

When the Master comes home the bottom rail will come to the top!

When the Master comes home, those who are last shall be first!

When the Master comes home, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

I don't know about you but I can't wait for the master to come home.

When the Master comes home he's going to do a quality check that might sound like he's checking a steak!

He's going to say "Servant, how was a church attendance? Somebody's going to say, it was "rare" because I rarely came to Sunday School, rarely came to church, rarely paid any money!

He's going to say, "Servant, how was your missionary service?" Somebody's going to say, it was medium well, because they did well, but they didn't do all that they could have done.

I don't know about you but when the Master comes home I don't want to hear him say "rare" and do not want to hear him say, "medium well!"

I want to hear him say, "Servant Well done!"

Warriors, keep on telling the story!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how he died on Calvary!

Tell them how he arose from the dead!

But don't forget to tell them that he's coming back again!

When the Master comes home, everything is going to be alright!

No. 9004-Youth

And It Shall be so

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 27, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

Introduction

Has anyone ever told you that you couldn't accomplish a goal? Sometimes our friends have a tendency to doubt our capacity to do great things because they think they know us. When we tell them about our dreams to become lawyers, doctors, educators or other lofty areas of profession requiring skill or special training, they often listen to us but are privately amused because they think that we're fooling ourselves into believing that these things are possible. Often in their conversations with us they tell us that we have very little chance of succeeding or accomplishing our goals because the odds are against us. They often remind us how poor we are or they point to our humble origins and the fact that perhaps we were not born with the affluence necessary to accomplish certain goals. If we're not careful we would listen to what they say to us and limit our possibilities to what our associates consider to be attainable objectives.

Often young people get chuckles from their parents, and sometimes their teachers who are amused when they say they are dreaming about being brain surgeons, engineers, or math specialists. The adults who second-guess youth usually do so because they are peering hard at their performance in the present without considering the potential of the young person that is speaking. If we have learned anything from history it should be that we should ration the use of the word "never." We should be careful when we way something can't can be done. We shouldn't doubt the possibilities that exist for any person who sets his mind on a goal and decides to pursue it with everything he has within him.

One of the challenges youth have is to sort out their potential. Many adults forget how frustrating it is not to know what you are going to do with your life. Young people often find themselves tangled in the frustration of trying to figure out what to do with themselves. At one point in their lives some may have said they were going to college only to change a few years later, deciding that college is so tough that they would prefer a trade school. Some decided one year that they were going to be nurses; but within the next year they decided that they were going to pursue a career in law.

Unfortunately, many young people have shortchanged themselves. They have shortchanged themselves because many have turned away from what they would really like to do with their lives because someone, somewhere, convinced them that their particular dream was unreachable. So the young boy who was born to be a doctorl owered his aspirations to become an orderly because someone told him that he could never be a doctor. The young man who dreamed of being a pro football player contented himself with watching from the bleachers because someone told him that he could never make the team. The girl who dreamed of being a nuclear scientist became content with being a lab assistant because many years earlier she accepted the fact that she could never master the math and science needed to be a real scientist.

Those who tell us that things cannot be only judge what they see at the present. They have no idea what's in store for the future. The experts are often wrong. History is filled with errors of the experts.

In 1932 Albert Einstein dismissed the idea of nuclear energy because mankind would never be able to split the atom at will.

Three days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor the Secretary of the Navy announced to the nation, the U.S. Navy would never be caught napping.

In 1949 a Popular Science magazine said computers would never be useful becomes each would have weigh over 1.5 ton each.

Just before he fired him in 1954, a concert told a young man with a guitar that he should go back to driving a truck. He had just fired Elvis Presley.

When MGM looked at the first takes of the movie "Wizard of OZ" they said no one will want to sit and listen to a girl sing about "Somewhere over the rainbow."

In 1962 a famous music executive said "singing groups with guitar music are on their way out." When he was asked to give his impression of the Beatles.

Their teachers said they would never amount to anything because all they did was play in their garage. The two boys they talked aboutwere Steve Jobs and Bill Gates who founded Apple and Microsoft respectively.

The point is very clear. When it comes to your future, no one should be allowed to put limits on how far you can go. The sky is not even the limit for beyond the sky there is the moon and the galaxies beyond.

That truth is even more important for Christian youth. Many of the people who set out to achieve a personal goal do so because they bring a controlled passion to their quest. It is a passion fueled by the spirit of God, controlled by his hand, and protected by his divine power. Christian youth should turn deaf ears to those who tell them that they can never achieve their goals because they know what the word of God says. They know beyond the shadow of a doubt that if they seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness that all other things will be added unto them.

If God has spoken it; and God has empowered it; it shall be so.

As Christians, we are confident in our belief that if God has blessed our aspirations and has spoken it into being, his word will not return to him void. That which God has prepared for us can only slip through our fingers if we've failed to prepare ourselves to receive what he has given.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he reminds Israel that anything God has promised will be fulfilled.

The 55th chapter of Isaiah is a confirmation of the strikingly bold promises God made to Israel in the 54th chapter. In the 54th chapter Israel was encouraged to enlarge its boundaries in expectation of the great wonders God would perform. After describing Israel as barren(54:1)Israel was told to enlarge "the place of thy tent" or its boundaries in (v2) because blessings were on the way. It was promised that they would break forth on the right and left and build great cities for the Lord, rising out of the ashes of desolation.

After the promises of the 54th chapter this text is imbedded in the 55th chapter which seeks to assure believers that God will make his word good even though it may not be understood at the moment.

The mystery of God's ways often confuses men who cannot understand the correlation between God's promises and the events of the earth. It appears to some that the promises are made but the results are not immediately seen. In verse 8 God explains it by saying "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" God's way of moving and acting is too lofty for us to comprehend. It is deep. It may even seem at times that what God has promised is impractical and improbable to occur, yet believers are encouraged to remember just how God operates.

The example that God gave Isaiah for Israel was that of the rain and snow. The rain and snow fall from heaven. Sometimes when they come they may be perceived differently by those upon whom they fall, depending upon their expectations. Regardless to how they are perceived or received by humankind, they do not return to God in the same state. After having accomplished their work rain drops may vaporize and float back toward heaven but the rain drop itself does not return to God without accomplishing its purpose

Thus, Israel was encouraged to know that God has promised a day of triumph for the people. His word would not return to him empty. They were encouraged to believe it and receive it.

Isaiah's message to Israel was precise. If God has spoken it, it shall be so. It shall prosper in the way he intended for the persons whom he intended to receive it.

It shall not return void

In the scriptures God speaks to Israel. But the same message that God spoke to Israel is relevant to believers today. The essence of the truth of this text remains just as strong today as it was in Isaiah's time. If God speaks a command or wills for a thing to be, his command will not return to him without having accomplished the purpose for which he sent it. The phrase used in the text is that God's word would not return to him void. Returning to him void is a way of saying that God's word will touch the hearts necessary, open the doors needed, and turnover whatever stones required to

lay the groundwork for his will to be accomplished. In a very simple sense, it is as if God sends out an angel with keys to open the doors of opportunity, with sledge hammers to weaken the walls and obstacles that stand before us, and signs pointing us the right direction to go. That essence of God's being would not return to him until the opportunity that God wills has been created.

It was highly unlikely that the young boy Samuel would grow up to be a priest. Yet long before he was born God spoke the command that set the wheels in motion for his mother to speak to the priests, for the priests to agree to her request to raise her son in the temple, and for him to receive firsthand the instructions about the ways of God. Whether Samuel became a great priest or not was left up to him. But God's word set the wheels in motion to put his priestly future within his grasp. The same was true for Moses. God fixed every circumstance so that it would favor Moses. He provided him with the opportunities to obtain skills and abilities to lead the people of Israel to the promised land. He spoke the word and his ark floated upon the river. He spoke the word and Pharaoh's daughter found that little bundle of joy. He spoke the word and the wheels were set in motion for the military, organizational, and leadership training of Moses. Whether or not Moses would use what had been a made available to him was left up to him but God's word did not return to him void.

In the same sense, youth today must know that if God has endorse their life's quest, their dream will become a reality no matter how far-fetched it may appear to others. God fixes it such that all the right people will meet you at all the right times. They will say all the right things and help you achieve what needs to be done. Whether or not you accept what God has in store for you is a matter of your own choice; but his word will not return without having created the opportunities necessary to accomplish that which he has promised.

It will accomplish what pleases God

The opportunities that God will create for each young believer will be according to what pleases him. Obviously, God does not create opportunities for those things which he abhors. God would not create opportunities for believers to disrespect him, ignore him, or do anything that would not bring him joy. His word will only be given to sanctify and endorse those dreams and aspirations which are according to his will and purpose.

Samson was a young man who recognized early that he had special physical gifts. However, Samson had a fascination for women of the Philistine race who were off-limits to the men of Israel. Samson had been given strength but the strength was to be used in ways that pleased God. Because Samson chose to use his special gift outside of the will of God he awoke one morning to find himself without his special gifts. He became just as every other man no more or no less. Samson's situation lets us know that God gives us special opportunities that allows us to enjoy them as long as we used them in ways that please him.

Youth today should be aware that we please God when we live our lives that are according to his purpose. Therefore each young man or woman should ask God for

guidance to determine his will. If your life pursuit is according to the will of God, this text speaks to you today, "It shall accomplish that which I please."

It shall prosper in us

The last portion of the text verse is unique because while the first section shows God's word going out to create opportunities for us, this last section shows God's word as it germinates in us. In essence, while opportunities are created all around us, God's word has to grow in us for us to seize the opportunities that God is making available. Look at the verse again, "It shall prosper in the thing." That means the word starts growing on the inside of you and the dreams that you have of godly success begin inside before they can reach outside.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson coined a phrase that epitomizes what this text is about, "If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, I can achieve it." Prosperity begins inside of us. It grows in proportion to our faith in God and confidence in ourselves. Joseph was not the most likely of all of his brothers to be a success. Yet, even while he was a boy he dreamed of a day when he would be so successful that even his family members would bow before him. It was as clear as day to him. He never doubted that it would come to be. Even when he was jailed or falsely accused he still believed what God had shown him in the fields would become a reality. The same was true for the little boy David. He believed God would protect him in any situation. When he was threatened by the king or when he faced Goliath, he remained strong and bold. That which he was destined to be prospered first within himself before he could accomplish anything outside of himself.

Youth today must believe in themselves. You must believe that you have the capacity to do anything with God's help; even master difficult subjects like algebra, calculus, and world history. You must believe that if I apply myself I can program a computer and make video games rather than simply playing them. I can build cars rather than simply driving them. I can earn money rather than simply spending it. Prosperity begins on the inside and that's where God comes in. Faith in God is the key to a young believer's success. It is that faith that motivates you to reach for the unreachable, climb for the unclimbable while you dream the impossible dream.

When God speaks it, is shall be so

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when God speaks it, it shall be so.

If there is one truth about God that every believer knows, it is that when God speaks a word, it shall be so.

When God stepped out on the blackness of creation he spoke a word and said let there be light and there was light.

When God told Noah to prepare for a flood his word did not return void for it rained 40 days and 40 nights proving that when God speaks it shall be so.

When God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the Red Sea and that the people would walk across on dry land, it happened just as he said proving once again that when God speaks it shall be so.

When God showed Ezekiel the valley of dry bones and told him that these bones can live again it wasn't long before Israel became a nation once again proving that when God speaks it shall be so.

Whenever God speaks we don't have to worry about it, his word will not return void.

The same is true when God speaks to our life situations; whenever God speaks it shall be so.

God can speak to our doubts and turn them into confidence!

God can speak to our weaknesses and turn them into strength!

God can speak to our failures and turn them into successes!

God can speak to our insecurities and turn them into assurances!

God can speak to our difficulties and turn them into opportunities!

God can speak to our defeats and turn them into victories!

God can speak to our enemies and turn them into lifelong friends!

Despite growing up in a life of obscurity God spoke to Joseph's dreams and he became the prime minister of Egypt.

Despite growing up as a young girl with no name and no future God spoke to Esther and she became the queen of Persia!

Despite spending his life as a major persecutor of the church, God spoke to Paul on the Damascus Road and he became the greatest ambassador for Christ that the world has ever known.

Every child of God needs to be reminded every now and then that if God is the power behind your dream there is no force on earth that can stop it from happening. When God speaks it shall be so.

There were some who did not believe the power of God but one evening on Calvary they learned an important lesson which the whole world knows and that is when God speaks it shall be so.

They took Jesus and nailed him to an old rugged cross!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb!

To prevent God's word from fulfilling itself they put armed God's around is grave on to learn early Sunday morning that..

When God speaks, it shall be so!

No. 9005-Inspiration

Knowing the Will of God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 11, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." 1 Samuel 28:6

Introduction

What method do you use to discover the will of God? How do you know that what you decide to do is really what God wants you to do? Are you sure? People have used many ways to try to learn the will of God for their lives. Some are very humorous and others border on the superstitious. Those who are undecided about what they should do with their lives usually seek outside assurances. Some ask God to show them which way to go. We perhaps know of individuals who have unanswered questions about life so they open the Bible and point to a Scripture and take their directions from whatever scripture their finger finds. That was the case with the woman who stood in front of the judge and tried to explain her strange habits.

"Your honor" she began, "the Lord told me to do it. Before I left home I told the Lord to show me what to do. I opened my bible and I pointed to a verse that said, 'my God shall supply all your needs.' When I saw them pork chops laying there and nobody was looking I knew the Lord laid them out there for me." The judge listened as the woman continued. "About that ring. Just before I left home I opened my bible and pointed to a verse that said, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." When I saw that ring I wanted it. It was so shiny. I took it because the bible told me "I shall not want." The judge praised the woman for her belief in God. Then asked her to come to the bench where she kept her bible open to the Ten Commandments. The judge said point right here. The woman touched the bible and the judge said, "God's got another message for you, you pointed to thou shalt not steal. You got 2 years in jail!"

Strange as it seems people try to find the will of God in many strange and peculiar ways. Some contact mediums, palm readers or call the Psycic connection. There are those who read tea leaves and fortune cookies while others won't move until they read their daily horoscope to see what the stars say about the day ahead. It seems that some people will go to any lengths to find the will of God except talk to God himself.

As believers we have learned that the best way to know the will of God is to stay in close union with God, pray regularly, listen for him to speak to us and strive to live

a life that is pleasing to him.

As Christians, we want to know God's will. After knowing his will we want to do his will every day.

Exposition

This text focuses upon King Saul as he sought to learn God's will before going into a battle.

Saul had fallen on disfavor with God and found that because of his sinful nature that God would not speak to him or answer him in any way. The prophet was obviously disturbed. He had become accustomed to receiving advice prior to major military actions by calling upon the prophet Samuel. However, the prophet Samuel had died and Saul found himself without spiritual advice as he faced a mighty Philistine army.

Every possible way that he knew to contact God was gone. He had banned all spiritualists, mediums, and witches. Samuel was dead. When he saw the huge gathering of the Philistines in front of him the text says he was afraid because he did not know the will of God in this circumstance.

The text makes reference to Urim. It is a reference to the Urim and Thummim, by which the will of God was made known in doubtful cases. Urim and Thummim signify light and integrity. There are many conjectures what these were. The most probable opinion seems to be, that they were the twelve precious stones in the high priest's breastplate. Even when he consulted the Urim and Thummim he found no answer.

In frustration he found a witch to try to conjure up the dead spirit of Samuel for advice. God allowed the spirit of Samuel to speak to Saul and give him the message he did not want to hear and the message was that he would suffer defeat and both his sons would die the next day because of his sin.

Had King Saul sought the will of God before, he would have probably avoided this tragedy. However, he waited until he was in trouble to find the Lord and he paid the price.

How to know the will of God

There are four steps believers should take to learn the will of God.

WHAT I WANT TO DO MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE WORD OF GOD. Every believer should seek to learn whether a planned action is consistent with the written word of God. The bible sets a standard of general expectations for all of God's people. Whether it's business or school, government, economics, or career choices, the bible has a response. Regardless of the subject, the Word of God has a response. Believers are challenged to study God's word to discover the truths it contains about life. Once these truths are mastered then we are also challenged to live by them. This was the challenge of the young king Joash, who at age seven found the word of God for himself then began to order his life by what he knew to be true. If the Word of God does not endorse the principle of a planned action then it becomes obvious that the

action is more than likely not consistent with the will of God.

PRAY TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD: Sincere prayer is the next step for believers seeking to know God's will. Once we know that an action is consistent with God's written Word we still may not be sure that what we plan to do is consistent with his will. Prayer is the method by which a believer expresses the sincere desire of his heart. When believers pray it should be our desire to live wholly and completely by God's will. Thus, we should pray to God with an open mind and heart. We should not pray to God after we have made our decision. Our prayer should be modeled after Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed to God that God would spare him the pain and humiliation of Calvary. But he prayed with an open mind and heart that God's will would be done. After expressing his own thoughts to The Father he said, "Never the less, not my will but thy will be done." To pray in this manner is to completely turn ourselves over to him, willing to go wherever he sends us and do whatever he tells us to do.

WAIT FOR GOD'S RESPONSE: After you have prayed, the next step is to prayerfully wait for God's response. Believers are assured to receive an answer from God. The answer we receive may not be the exact answer that we seek but it will be the answer that God wants us to have. We should look for God in the obvious, but we should also look for God in the not so obvious. When Elijah fled from the face of the wicked king he hid himself in a cave. He listened for God to speak to him. There was an earthquake but God was not in that experience. There was also a strong wind but God was not in that experience either. It was not until God spoke in a still small voice that Elijah was able to experience the presence of God. In a similar sense we often look for God in the dramatic or in the catastrophic, when in reality God often speaks to us in the simple and mundane things of life. When God responds it is often in ways that we do not expect. His voice is often the voice of the one we would lease like to hear speak.

Sometimes his voice is that of a child, or even an enemy. Listening for God to speak requires us to be sensitive to the many ways that God speaks to us. We should be fully aware that even the birds singing may be the very object that God uses to answer our prayer.

LOOK FOR CONFIRMATIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE KNOWN WILL OF GOD. We should wait for confirmations when we think that our prayers have been answered. Sometimes we get excited when we sense an answer that appears to be the answer to a prayer especially when that answer is the answer we wanted to hear. However we should not be content with receiving one answer. We should look for confirmations. When Gideon was told by God that he would have to fight the Midianites Gideon wanted to be sure that he was hearing from God and was not simply hearing the voice of his blind ambition. He asked God to send him a sign that would confirm that the instructions he was receiving or actually from God. Gideon placed his doormat outside and asked God to give him a sign by causing the dew to soak the mat while at the same time keeping the ground around the mat dry. Although God gave him that sign Gideon asked for another sign. This time he asked for the mat to be dry and for the ground be soaked with dew. God gave Gideon the sign that he

looked for and Gideon felt assured that God would be with him during the battle. He was right because he won his battle against thousands of men without the loss of a single man. We should look for confirmations before we assume that we have the answer to our prayer. Sometimes a confirmation comes in a sermon. Sometimes it is in a song. Sometimes it comes in the voice of a relative, co-worker or friend. Sometimes while you're staring at a television screen the confirmation speak so loudly to you that it appears that the whole world hears what is being said.

Do the Will of God

Finally, brothers and sisters, while it is important to know the will of God it is even more important to DO the will of God.

There are many people who spend a considerable amount of time seeking the will of God but once they learn God's will they refuse to do it. This was the case with the prophet Jonah. He knew the will of God but he wanted to go another way. Jonah jumped on a boat and tried to go as far away from Nineveh as he could. However, he soon found out that you can run from God but sooner or later he will catch up to you.

In a similar sense there are many people today, who know God's will, and they sense it in the soul of their being but they choose to different ways for a variety of reasons.

Doing the will of God is much more rewarding than simply knowing the will of God and refusing to abide by his will.

The will of God is powerful. It is difficult to resist and impossible to impede.

When God wills, nations rise and fall. Even mighty kings such as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and Ramases of Egypt who had the power of their chariots and horsemen were no match for the power of an Almighty God.

When God wills, even those who have spent their lives persecuting his cause are brought to their knees. Saul found himself walking down the Damascus Road marching against the will of God only to meet God face-to-face after being brought down to his knees.

When God wills, even a fiery furnace and a den full of Lions are unable to do harm to any person who is in God's protective care. The King was mystified when he saw the three Hebrew boys still standing in the fiery furnace. Another instance saw a king watch in amazement as Daniel arose unscratched from the den of Lions. They learned what we already know, that it is impossible to do harm to a child of God when it is his will that they flourish and prosper.

When God wills, even bad situations work out for the good. Israel stood with the Red Sea in front of them and Pharaoh's army behind them. They were obviously in a bad situation. But God took a bad situation and turned it into a blessed situation when he rolled back the waters of the Red Sea and caused them to cross on dry land. When it's God's will, even the worst situation that we face can be turned to our advantage.

When God wills, even serious illnesses take vacations at his command. Hezekiah

had been served notice that he should get his house in order for his days were numbered. But Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to God and God answered his prayer and gave him 15 more years. Hezekiah learned that even serious illnesses are not too hard for the will of God.

When God wills, even empty cabinets can be filled again. That's what a widow woman learned when she was down to her last cup of meal and her last Cruz of oil. She found out that when it's the will of God that the barrel will never run dry.

When God wills, that which is lost can be found.

When God wills, those who are weak can find their strength again.

When God wills, those who are discouraged can find new inspiration.

When God wills, those who have fallen can get up and start all over again.

When God wills, those who are confused find clarity and meaning.

When God wills, those who are separate and apart can be brought together again.

When God wills, those who have been the victims of life's tragedies will find restoration and joy.

One of the hardest things to do is to pit yourself against the will of God. James Weldon Johnson said it right when he said "your arms are too short to box with God."

Where can you run that God cannot find you?

Where can you hide where God cannot see you?

I hear David in Psalm 139:7 saying, "Where shall I go from thy spirit? Where shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea even their shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me."

Every believer should strive to stay in the will of God.

If it is not God's will we don't want it. If it is God's will the world can't stop us from getting it.

The other denominations frowned upon Baptist because we always say "if it's God's will." They say that is a defeatist attitude which presupposes the possibility of failure. We don't know what Bible they are reading but we watched Jesus and listened as he told us how to pray. We heard him say, "Thy kingdom, thy will be done."

Not only that, we watched him in the Garden of Gethsemane and heard him tell his father, "not my will but thy will be done."

It was God's will that he would carried an old rugged cross.

It was God's will that he would die out on Calvary.

It was God's will that he would be buried in a borrowed tomb.

But it was also God's will that early Sunday morning that he who was buried in weakness would rise in strength.

It was God's will that he who was crucified in shame would be raised in everlasting glory.

And it's God's will that he will come back again for all of those who commit themselves to do his will.

No. 9006-Inspiration

Passport to Heaven

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 8, 1987

Scripture: "For God loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth upon him should not perish but have everlasting life. "John 3:16

Introduction

Do you have a passport? The average person has no need for a passport unless he or she is planning to leave the country. Generally, a passport is the credential necessary to allow a person to leave one country and enter another. While it is true that many people rarely leave the country, especially the poor, there are many who have actually had the opportunity to see life outside of the United States of America in a non-military capacity.

To prepare for the journey we need to gather documentation that states who we are, where we are going, and when we plan to return. According to Webster a passport is anything that can get you from one place to another or from one state or condition to another.

With that in mind a passport can not only move us from one country to another but also from one state to another. In the secular world we are bombarded with the idea of passports.

Education is generally flaunted as the "Passport" to a good job. Education makes good jobs possible, but does not always guarantee a job. Without an education the best things in life are not possible.

An abundance of salable talents are also perceived as "Passports" to success. Those who have the gifts to sing, dance or play musical instruments are said to have been born with the passports to success in their fingers.

Economists say that sound financial investment is the "passport" to financial security. They say the wise use of capital is the best insurance against poverty, but they don't tell us how to get the first funds to invest.

If a person wanted to make himself a place in the kingdom of God, what is his passport? What is it that can guarantee him a place in the kingdom?

There are some who believe that the passport into the kingdom of God is simply to join a church and find a place of service on the church program.

Ushering, for example, is a fine place of service. Ushers provide warm salutations for those who come to worship. They are the standard bearers of hospitality and the finest example of the true meaning of the word servant.

But simply serving as an usher is not a "passport" to heaven. Unfortunately there are some who are uniformed but are not transformed, by the renewing of their minds.

Simply looking good and marching down the isles as a choir member is not a "passport" to heaven. Unfortunately there are some who are good at marching on the right foot but their feet don't always walk up the king's highway.

Teaching a Sunday School class or driving a church van are not guarantees for heaven. There are many who believe that such services earns them special awards and privileges in the kingdom of God.

Does the janitor earn his way to heaven by sweeping the floors? What about the church secretary, youth leader or announcement reader? None of these can earn a passport to heaven by simply performing a service.

Salvation is free. It can't be earned by any act of service on our part.

Serving on the program is not a passport into the kingdom of God.

As believers, we have learned that there is only one passport to heaven. This passport is the blood of Jesus.

How Can I Acquire My Passport?

How can one acquire a passport into the kingdom of God? If simply joining a church and serving in an auxiliary like the ushers or the choir is not sufficient, how can such a passport be obtained?

Can this passport be obtained by the accumulation of riches? Can it be bought? This is what perplexed Solomon as he launched out on a pursuit of happiness. He accumulated riches untold and assembled for his use all the pleasure providing vehicles of his time, but concluded they all were vanity.

I hear Jesus speaking of the rich fool when he said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and he lose his own soul?"

The passport that we are talking about cannot be bought by large contributions to the church, that are not accompanied by even larger amounts of faith, repentance and dedication to the cause of the kingdom.

The passport that we are talking about is not for sale. Can this passport be obtained by quite living? If I adopt a lifestyle that is what the diplomats describe as a "peaceful coexistence" …that is, I don't bother anybody and they don't bother me, won't that get me a passport into the kingdom of heaven?"

This was the dilemma of the rich young ruler. He lived a good life. He didn't bother anybody and he didn't break any laws. He felt his good living was enough to earn him a passport. But Jesus said there was one thing more he'd have to do. He would have to sell all he had, take up and his cross and follow "me."

There are many people today who feel that simply living a quite life of coexistence is enough to earn a passport. But just living a low profile life of peace and tranquility will not get us a passport into the kingdom of God.

Can this passport be acquired by tagging along with another traveler. This was the dilemma faced by Elisha who followed closely by the prophet Elijah for many

years. But when the chariot came down from heaven Elisha found that it only had room for one. Elisha learned that although he could hold Elijah's mantle he had to make his own mark and reserve his own place in the kingdom of God.

You can do some things in a crowd but you have to talk to God by yourself.

You can hire people to do some things for you but you have to talk to God for yourself.

Someone else can open doors for you but you have to walk through the door of life, yourself.

You can hear the testimonies of others every day but you have to try God for yourself.

Try him…and mountains shall become mole hills.

Try him and valleys shall be exalted.

About That Passport

A passport bears the picture of the traveler and tells his identity.

If you are a heavenly traveler your passport identifies you as a child of the king.

Every child of God can say without doubt, " I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow"

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb." I've been plunged beneath a fountain that flows from Immanuel's veins.

"If anybody ask you who I am, tell them, I I'm a child of God."

Not only does your passport tell who you are but it tells where you come from.

—We've come through the rocky hills and valleys of destitution.

—We've come through the meandering peaks of hard times and survived the sweltering deserts of hopelessness.

—We've come climbing Jacob's ladder singing our new song, "I'm climbing up the rough side of the mountain, holding on to God's unchanging hand."

A passport is no good unless it also has a seal. The seal notes that it is official and is not a fake and is backed up by the powers of the government.

Every heavenly traveler should know that his passport is:

—written with the pen of life!

—official and includes his place of origin, which is listed as hard times and trouble

—inclusive of his destination which is listed as good times and happy days

—recorded with his nationality listed as a child of the most high king!

—documented to show his means of transportation listed as a chariot that swings low.

—is signed by the Holy Spirit.

—written in the blood of the lamb!...

"I'm on my way to the Caanan land!

Every child of God should say, "I've got my passport in my hand"

I'm on my way to land on a far-a-way strand

I'm on my way to a land where the wicked will cease from troubling!

I'm on my way to a land where the weary will be at rest!

I’m on my way to a land where I’ll never grow old!
I got my passport and I’m telling everybody!
Follow Jesus, whose name authorizes my transfer!
Follow Jesus, whose blood paid my fare!
Follow Jesus who died out on Calvary…
But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!
I don’t know about you but…
I’m on my way!

No. 9007-Inspiration

Get A Life!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 15, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "..I am come that they may have life and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

Introduction

Is it possible for a family to live in the same house but have no life together? Is it possible to share the same roof, eat at the same table with the same people everyday and still have no life together? Is it possible for husband and wife to be madly in love with each other and still have no life together? Is it possible for parents and children to love each of their siblings as individuals but have no life with them? These are troubling questions that are forcing many families to evaluate the true meaning of family, relationships and love within families. The first sign of a troubled relationship is the reality that "while I love my husband I do not enjoy our life together. While I love my wife dearly, I prefer the company of others rather than our life together." That's when trouble pokes up its ugly head. When we realize that while we love each other the quality of that love is strengthened as we build a life together. Lives built together grow abundantly. They prosper in happiness, joy and everything essential to fulfillment.

Susan Piver wrote a book entitled "The Hard Questions" that was featured on Oprah in 2000. In it she said she dated her future husband for some time before she realized that while she loved him, neither of them, as husband and wife, would enjoy the life that their marriage would require. So, in her book, she posed 100 hard questions that helped them discover the level of enjoyment they would enjoy in their life together. The questions were basic but probing? "What is our relationship with each other's family? Do we like it? How ambitious are we? How will achieving our personal ambitions stack up against our relationship? Which one will be put on hold for the other?

One of the most probing questions in her book was one simple but powerful question: "How will we handle our money? Will we manage it jointly or will we keep it separately, loaning to each other, borrowing from each other and keeping tabs? The answer to that question often indicates the quality of the life ahead.

Even more probing are her questions about God and religion. Will we actively belong to a church or will we visit from place to place? Will we function as partners in a church ministry or will one of us or neither of us do this alone? Will we worship

together as a family or will this be something we must do by ourselves or not at all?

While her book delves into the crevices of human relationships, trying to raise hard questions that explain dysfunctional relationships, we cannot ignore the fact that there is a striking similarity between our interpersonal relationships and our relationship with God. In a strange sort of way, there are many who find that while they love God for what he does for them, they are not excited about living their entire lives together with God. They come into the sheepfold to get what the shepherd has to offer but do not relish the idea of living their entire lives together with him.

Generally, most people spend a great portion of their lives trying to make a life for themselves. That life is generally defined by career pursuits and passions that indicate the direction our lives take. For some, the pursuit of that life is all consuming and everything else, even is secondary.

As Christians we have come to learn that the best living is done with Christ, not without him. He shows even the poorest man how to live more abundantly.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of the believer's relationship to God.

Jesus often told his disciples parables to explain complex religious concepts. One concept is God's promise of the abundant life.

The picture that Christ gives is that of sheep, a sheepfold, a shepherd and a pasture. The sheep are the millions of people who are struggling to live better, more complete lives that are completely and totally acceptable to God. The shepherd is Christ himself who stands at the door of the sheepfold greeting and acknowledging every sheep by name. The sheepfold is the church through which the sheep will find guidance, understanding safety and inspiration.

Jesus said there are many who have presented themselves to the sheep and offered them green pastures but have robbed them of everything essential to live fulfilling happy lives. Many have fallen prey to the words of deceivers who have offered one false hope after another. However, Jesus notes that believers know him personally and he knows them. They know his voice and will not be persuaded by the voice of another. Verse three says, "..the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out." The sheep develop a daily association with him by following him. Verse four says, "..and the sheep follow him because they know his voice."

In verse nine Jesus makes it very clear that those who come to him will find salvation. "If any man enter in, he shall be saved" means exactly that. What comes with being saved is "eternal life." We come to Jesus to get life! Not just life, but eternal life. Believers come into the sheepfold to get life and the life they develop in the sheepfold is the same life they take with them outside of the sheepfold and that life and relationship helps them find "pasture." Look at verse nine again, "and shall go in and out and find pasture."

Jesus makes it clear that those looking for eternal life can only find it in him.

Those who have found eternal life, have also developed a life while in the sheepfold that helps them to always find "pasture." If you are a sheep, a green pasture is synonymous to happiness. It is what you need in abundance! Thus, Jesus says "I am come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."

We come in to get life. While in we learn a life that is centered around him and with him. This experience helps us to live abundantly and happily in the Lord!

Jesus challenges believers to get a life. Then promises to give them that life and even more!

Get a Life

Those who come in to be with Christ are given eternal life, but they are also given four additional attributes that they learn as they work together with him. We could call the "abundant" life package a special bonus that we gain from being "together" with Christ in the sheepfold.

GET A FAITH FILLED LIFE: Those who live the believers life together with Christ learn to lead a faith filled life. By definition, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen(Hebrews 11:1). Faith is not automatic. No one joins a church and then instantly becomes a man or woman of faith. No one sits in a chair or signs or membership card then instantly they have the faith of Noah or Elijah or Mary. Faith is a quality that is learned by listening, studying and interacting with God and the people of God over time. There is a correlation between the time we spend listening to the Gospel, studying the bible and sharing with other believers and the intensity of our faith. The stronger our life is together with Christ, the stronger our faith. That's what Roman 10:17 means when it says, "Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We develop faith by constantly hearing the word preached; by constant study of the word and by constant interaction with the people of God as God moves an interacts in their lives. When we hear the word of God preached, study the word, understand how he acts and see how he responds to the faith of other believers, we are strengthened. Living the life of faith is the life of every believer. Those who questioned our commitment to the faith filled life should "get a life" themselves!

GET A JOY FILLED LIFE: A joy filled life is a life that goes beyond mere happiness, it is joyful. Happiness requires a multitude of props. It depends on cars, money, clothing and many other superficial and intangibles for its sustenance. Joy, on the other hand, is like a bubbling fountain that constantly sends up bursting bubbles of enthusiasm, inspiration and hope, regardless to our situation. Take away the props and happiness disappears. But even without the props joy can stand. Those who have learned to live the believers life can have joy even when they have no props. It's possible to live in a one room shack with very little food or creature comforts and still cuddle all of your children in your arms at night, look up to God and give thanks. Joy is an attitude born in gratitude. Get a Joy filled life and an attitude of thankfulness that even considers a negative circumstance as a reason to be joyful.

In fact, 1 James 1:2 says we should, “count it all joy” whenever we are confronted with diverse difficulties. Even though times are tough we should be joyful. The joy filled life is one that remembers the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In every thing give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” An attitude such as this doesn’t just come out of the air. It is developed through close association to, and living with, God and the people of God. It is learned in the sheepfold for use in and out of the sheepfold.

GET A BLESSED LIFE: Those in the sheepfold have made following Christ their entire life because that closeness with God has given them a blessed life. True believers don’t have enough calculators to count how God has blessed us. If he hasn’t blessed us with T-bones he’s blessed us with neck bones. If he hasn’t blessed us with cable vision he’s blessed us with public TV. We have been blessed in every way imaginable. We learned how to acquire the blessed life since we have been in the sheepfold. Micah 6:6-8 makes it clear that we can get a blessed life if we do right, love mercy and walk humbly before our God. This spirit of humility is the hallmark of the blessed life. It is the spirit that everything we are and our whole substance is an intentional blessing from God for our good!

Get a Grace Filled Life

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that every believer enjoys the benefit of a “grace filled life.

If you want to get a life, get a grace filled life!

Grace is the favor and blessings of God showered down on undeserving subjects.

A Grace filled life is God blessing us when we haven’t done anything to deserve a blessing.

A Grace filled life is God showing mercy toward us, when we don’t deserve any mercy at all.

A Grace filled life is a walking testimony to the goodness of the Lord.

There is someone watching each saint today. They want to know how can they get a life like the one you live.

They notice that you seem to live a faith filled life. You believe that no matter how tough things get that the Lord will make a way!

They notice that you seem to have a joy filled life. No matter what comes your way you count it all joy.

They notice that you seem to have a blessed life; that God just keeps blessing you every day.

They notice that you seem to have a grace filled life; that something is changed about you; that you are no longer what you used to be.

They ask: “How can I get that life?” “Do I just join your church?”

It’s not about joining a church and having your name on a roll, but it’s more about loving God and loving the service of God through the ministries of his church.

In churches across America there are millions of believers who love God but they

don't like serving God. They have another life to live.

It's like the husband who loves his wife dearly but he never wants to do anything with her. He lives his life and she lives her life.

It's like the wife who loves her husband to the bottom of her heart, but she doesn't enjoy doing things with him. He lives his life and she lives hers. They have no life together except on special occasions.

There are many that love the Lord but they are uncomfortable with the life he wants them to live. They tell the Lord, "I got another life to live!"

But I heard Jesus say, "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly!"

When you live the abundant life God gives you a heavenly spirit.

When you live the abundant life God takes your

-Weaknesses and turns them into strengths.

-Failures and turns them into successes!

-Defeats and turns them into victories!

-Doubts and turns them into confidence!

When you live the abundant life storms may rise and winds may blow, but God will make a way!

There was a time when most of us had another life! It was a life that was filled with gambling casinos, and midnight crap shoots.

There was a time when we had another life. It was life of secret encounters in cheap hotels, wrinkling sheets in a series of one night stands!

There was a time when we had another life! Our best friends were not Matthew, Mark and Luke but they had names like Jack Daniels, Seagrams and Johnny Walker Red.

There was a time when we had another life. We lived for the weekend, danced till will dropped and the words, "Early Sunday morning" meant that the party was over!

But the word of God says, "And such were some of you" but we have been changed, washed in the blood of the lamb!

I've got a new life!

I've got a new walk!

I've got a new talk!

I've got a new story to tell!

I've got to tell everybody about Jesus!

I've got to tell them how he died on Calvary!

I've got to tell them how he stayed in the grave for three long days!

..but Early Sunday morning!

I've got to tell somebody!

That Early Sunday morning he arose in my life!

No. 9008-Youth

The Church's Chickens

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La. 71201

September 22, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37

Introduction

Have you ever been called chicken? One of the most frustrating aspects of being a youth is developing enough self esteem to endure the variety of nicknames which are given to us by our peers. Nicknames are usually associated with the way we are perceived at a specific moment in time. Among the various names that we can be called is "chicken." It means that we lack courage or boldness. "You are not chicken are you" is generally a question that dares us to take one action or another. Many youth, desiring to meet the expectations of their peers often perform dangerous, or ridiculously stupid acts all in the name of bravado. For the most part, adults are not swayed by the "chicken" question. Youth find it a little more difficult to accept the prospect of being labeled "chicken" by their peers.

Why chicken? Why not something else? The array of nicknames seems to have been exhausted. The person who displays flamboyant dress styles that include loud colors plus mix and matches may be called a peacock. The person who is a tell-tale may be called a rat. A person who eyes a target and prounces immediately may be called a hawk. A good friend may be called a "dawg." A sneaky distrustful person may be called a weasel. A person who creates a stink whereever they go could be called a skunk or a polecat, but usually not to their face.

What are the characteristics of a chicken that would earn such a label? Most city youth know very little about the habits of farm animals, but their grandparents may be able to give them some insight. The only thing many youth know about chicken is what they learn at Church's Chicken and KFC. They know about rotisserie chicken, fried chicken, marinated chicken and baked chicken. They know about chicken tenders, drumsticks, breasts and thighs. They know the difference between crispy and original and they know a two piece combo. They know about baked hens surrounded by dressing. They know about chicken and dumplings, chicken soup, chicken salad, and breast of chicken sandwiches. They know about roasted chicken, bar-be-qued chicken, chicken ala king and chicken chop suey. They know about buffalo wings, which is really chicken too! They know singing group called the Dixie

Chicks. They know that if they don't groom their hair correctly all of their friends could call them a chic-chic-chicken head!

That's about all they know about chickens.

What is there about chickens that would earn us that label? It can't be that they taste good!

Even Jesus called believers "chickens" although his meaning wasn't the same as ours. Obviously he knew something about chickens that many non-agrian city dwellers would probably miss. During the time he lived people were surrounded by chickens in their pens and roaming freely in yards. People watched them and knew their actions. They understood clearly what Jesus had in mind when he called the people chickens and compared himself to a mother hen. They knew and they understood the nature of chickens which would make even Jesus call us chickens from time to time!

As believers, we are glad to know that Jesus cares for us like a mother hen does its chicks. It's good to know that there is safety underneath his wing. We are safe and secure as long as we stay close to him and are nestled in his protective care.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Christ as he considers the wayward ways of the people of Jerusalem and his love for them.

As the final days of his life approached Christ lamented over the people of Jerusalem. This text finds him outside of the city, looking upon it and brooding over its tendency to act counter to what God wants. Just a few days earlier he had cried over Jerusalem and now he looks at them again.

His lament is prefaced with "Oh Jerusalem"; not the buildings, but the people. This was the city whose heart was so heart that its inhabitants stoned the very prophets of God.

Jesus said he would like the people of Jerusalem to be like humble chicks that respond to the gentle clucking of the mother hen and run to her for shelter and succor. This desire to gather in the lost to himself has always been an attribute of Christ's person. To gather the poor, disenfranchised and loney to himself, much like a mother hen does her chicks.

The idea that there is shelter in God is what Christ refers to. It is the essence of Psalm 91:4 which says, "..he shall cover thee with his feathers." In addition Malachi 4:2 adds that there is even more under God's wings, because he adds that. Shelter, comfort and healing his what he wanted to give the people of Jerusalem just as he desires to do the same for believers today. Yet, like Jerusalem, the people of today exhibited many of the other characteristics of chickens rather than the obedient following of chicks.

Chicks, humble in nature would come to the hen. On the other hand full grown chickens and rooster might operate with the mind of their own and refuse to come to the hen. Recognizing the depth of their opinions and persuasions Christ referred to them as "chickens" and not chicks.

Getting chickens to act right, would be a hard, if not impossible job. So, he wept over Jerusalem.

Chicken Coop Lessons

From Christ's characterizing of the people of Jerusalem as chickens, there is even more to learn when we consider the characteristics of chickens.

CHICKENS DIFFER BUT HAVE SAME NATURE: There are many kinds of chickens. There are Rhode Island Reds, Black Minorcas, White Plymouth Rocks, Barred Plymouth Rocks, Silver-gray Dorkings, White Wyandottes, White Leghorns, Bannies, and many more. In a similar sense there are many types of people in the world who all share one characteristic: We are all sinners. Romans 3:23 reminds us that "we have all sinned." It doesn't matter what kind of chickens are in the coop, when it ends up on the plate, it's just "chicken." To God sin is sin and although each of is guilty of a different kind of sin, we are sinners in need of forgiveness.

CHICKENS FOLLOW THE CROWD: If a chicken sees another chicken running across the chicken yard he'll start to follow him. Somehow a chicken thinks another chicken that is doing something different must know something he doesn't know so he runs and follows. There are many chicken Christians that run after every religion they can find, especially if it sounds new or novel and is drawing a big crowd. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus warns us clearly that "If the blind lead the blind., they both fall in the ditch." There is a tremendous danger in following the crowd. African-American youth have found themselves in tremendous trouble because they chose to follow the crowd to crime and deviant behavior. Ironically, believers are called chickens for not following the crowd, but it is really those who can't say no to the crowd are acting more like chickens.

CHICKENS LOOK FOR THINGS IN THE DIRT: Chickens are constantly scratching around in the dirt. They are looking for a tasty morsel to stick their beeks into. When one finds a tasty morsel all of the other chickens come to share in the tidbit. There are some people who are like chickens in this respect. They love finding the dirt and others gather around when they find it to share in tasty morsel. Once they get hold of a juicy piece of Gossip they revel in it and even fight over who told it first. They cackle and make a lot of noise a bunch of old hens.

CHICKENS FIGHT OVER THINGS: If chicens in the coop spot a tasty worm, they will fight over the worm. They peck each other on the head. They peck each other in the eyes, sometimes until they draw bird as they fight over a worm or insect. Chickens fight over food. They also fight over anything that is shiny. A shiny buttton or piece of glass can spark a chicken fight. If it looks like one chicken wants it, they all want it and the peck and fight until one gains dominance. In a similar sense many people fight over food and "things." Shiny things like cars, jewlry or anything else that attracts attention, like chickens we fight over them. Youth fight over baseball cards, t-shirts, and shoes. Adults fight over things too. Just like chickens we fight. No wonder Jesus wept.

CHICKENS FRIGHTEN EASILY: It doesn't take much to frightened a chicken. That's where the common use of the term chicken comes from. You can wave your hand and frighten a chicken. They run from any perceived threat. Chickens can fly, but very few ever try to fly over the fence. They are afraid of getting their wings clipped if they caught on the other side. Fear of failure stops many people today from flying over the fence of their own poverty. Fear of rejection. Fear of fear itself has stopped so many. But the word of God reminds each of us that "The Lord is my light and my salvation, in whom should I fear!" Don't be chicken! Do what God wants you to do!

IT'S EASY TO PICK OFF A CHICKEN: In broad day light a dog can get into a chicken pen and kill 15 or 20 chickens and they are helpless to defend themselves. Even when a chicken is roosting they are easy pickings. A Coon can slip into a chicken coop and take one chicken one night and leave all of others sleep on their perches. He can pick off one at a time and they never know what happens. A weasel can get in the coop and kill off every chicken in the coop in the same night, picking them off one at a time before anyone of them wakes up. There are weasels and coons in the world today. They wait for opportunities to pick off believers one at a time. A coon will whisper a discouraging comment and pick off a believer and that member disappears. Killed by a lying coon. A weasel can spread rumors that a destroy whole blocks of members. We look around and members have disappeared. Killed by a two faced double tongue weasels. Weasels and coons and dangerous, especially if you are a chicken. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us to beware of the enemy who comes like a roaring lion waiting for opportunity to devour. If you are chicken, that verse in 1 Peter means, beware of weasels, coons and bad dogs that bite.

Chickens are supposed to be fruitful

Finally, brothers and sisters, chickens who are not productive usually end up in the frying pan.

Chickens are not kept for good looks. They are expected to produce eggs.

A good Longhorn chicken will lay a egg a day for up to 260 days a year.

Chickens that don't lay eggs have a special name, they call them fryers!

Chickens that don't lay eggs get the privilege of becoming dumplings!

They are the ones who become two piece combos and who are served in crispy and original nuggets.

esus said "Oh Jerusalem, how I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that there is safety under the wings of God. Even though a hen is a chicken, she forget she's a chicken when something starts to threathen her chicks.

The mother hen gets defensive when you threathen her chicks!

The mother hen is dangerous when the safety of her little ones is in peril!

The mother hen is protective when the little one come to her for cover!

That's the way God is.

He offers shelter in a time of storm!

He is a rock in a weary land!

He is a bridge over troubling waters!

He is a strong deliverer in times of peril.

No wonder David said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Under the wings of God, storms may rise and winds may blow, but I’m safe in the arms of Jesus

Under the wings of God, the thunder my roll and I may feel waves breaking against my soul, but all is well because he promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the weasels!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the barking of the dogs!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the coons!

That’s why the song writer said, “I’m leaning on the everlasting arms. Safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning on the everlasting arms!”

I’m safe in the arms of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who stayed in a grave three days and nights!

..but Early Sunday morning, he arose in my soul!

I’m safe in the arms of Jesus!

No. 9009-Blessings

He Can Do it- Again!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 29, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." Psalm 106:7-8

Introduction

Have you ever accomplished a task once but found it hard to do it again? There are occasions when just the right combination of skill and grace coincide to produce the perfect outcome. These are times when we baked the perfect pound cake, or cooked the perfect pot of greens. It's the day that the dressing was perfect or the flowers planted in the spring sprouted perfectly. There are years when the school football team seems unbeatable, playing each successive game without a flaw straight to the championships. How did you fare when you tried to do the same thing again? If you are like most people, you found that perfection, while possible, is hard to duplicate. Even Tiger Woods misses a putt or two. The best singer can hit a flat note on occasion and the best figure skaters slip on the ice while performing the simplest routines. Many can manage the effort necessary to accomplish a feat the first time but they have trouble doing it again.

When something miraculous happens in front of us, we are prompted to ask whether or not it was the real thing or whether it was a fluke. When Muhammad Ali knocked out Sonny Liston to become the heavyweight champion of the world, everyone said, "It was great, but can he do it again?" When Venus and Serena Williams won Wimbledon, the world said it was great, "but can they do it again?" The World's Series champs last year won accolades around the world, but then the sportscaster ask the question, "Can they do it again?"

It's one thing to get to the top, but it's even harder to stay there! Staying there requires the ability to maintain the power and strength exerted to get there over and over again.

What about God? If he blessed us once, can he do it again? If he opened a door for us that seemed impossibly secured, can he do it again. If he healed us of a sickness in the past can he do it again? If he helped us overcome an obstacle once in our lives, is he able to do it again?

Many think of God as a genie in a bottle. When we rub the bottle the genie grants us three wishes and once the wishes are used, there is nothing else that we can do.

Some lose hope in God who helped them in the past because they feel the circumstances have changed today. There was a major sickness then, there is a terminal sickness now. We were laid off from work then, but we are completely out of work today. Because the circumstances have changed a bit we believe that God has somehow used up his power to bless us.

In Malachi 3:6, God reminded the sons of Jacob that "I am the Lord and I change not!" What God did then he can do again! Not only can he do it again, but he can do it in a grander more miraculous way than he did in the beginning.

As believers we are confident that God's power does not dwindle like a drained battery. We believe his power is a never ending flow that ebbs from the battlements of heaven to the edges of every known universe. Whatever God has done before, he can do again.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he muses on the weakness of believers and the power of God.

The 106th Psalm begins and ends with "Praise ye the Lord" or the Hebrew "Hallelujah." It is a praise that sandwiches a litany of reasons why God should be praised despite the doubts and insecurities of the people. So often the people doubted the power of God in various circumstances and as a result when new circumstances were encountered they forgot how God helped them in the past.

In verse six David calls it a sin to forget the power of God. "We have sinned with our fathers: we have done amiss, and dealt wickedly" does not refer to an active break in the covenant but rather to "doubt." Doubting God's ability or willingness to intervene in the affairs of believers is what David calls "dealing wickedly" with God.

Immediately he carried believers to the instances of the people's struggle in Egypt and to their constant murmurings and complaints during that time. Not that these were the only instances, for there were obviously many others as well. However, the Egyptian deliverance is one facet of Jewish History that was known by every Israelite and was a ready reference. In that instance God delivered the people despite their doubts, complaints and forgetfulness. David describes this doubt as a "sin."

Our fathers," he saith, "regarded not Thy wonders in Egypt" (ver. 7). It was a way of saying that our fathers saw the works of God in front of their eyes and fail to receive them with the power and authority necessary. They did not observe the repetitive nature of God's actions on their behalf. They failed to connect the succession of blessings in a way that strengthened their belief that God would ultimately deliver them despite their circumstance.

"They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies" (v.7) They saw God act in a "multitude" of ways but it was not sufficient to warrant an unblemished belief that God would act again on their behalf when necessary. Look at what should have been obvious: while Egypt sweltered in drought they had watered lands in Goshen. When pestilence and disease killed Egyptians, they were protected in Goshen. When they

faced the Red Sea God caused them to cross on dry land. When they wandered in the wilderness, God fed them with manna and quail." These a "multitude" of minor miracles should have been sufficient to convince them of God's power but it was not. Faced with new threats, believers "sinned" liked their fathers and forgot that what God did once, he can do again!

St. Augustine says David reproved both their Understanding and their memory. "Understanding there was need of, that they might meditate unto what eternal blessings God was calling them through these temporal ones; and of memory, that at least they might not forget the temporal wonders which had been wrought, and might faithfully believe, that by the same power which they had already experienced, God would free them from the persecutions of their enemies; whereas they forgot the aid which He had given them in Egypt, by means of such wonders, to crush their enemies."

They provoked God in their forgetfulness and lack of understanding. They challenged him and became angry and frustrated because they did not understand his way of doing things. They could not make the connection and were often fearful.

Despite their unbelief God acted in favor of Israel. Had he responded to them by the measure of their faith he would not have acted again. Thus, verse 8 says, " "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake." He saved them not because the people remembered and remained loyal to him, but for his name's sake. That is because of his loyal, loving nature.

For such goodness the 106th Psalm both begins and ends with "Praise ye the Lord."

What God did

The 106th Psalm could easily have been written today. Like Israel, we often forget what God has done in the past, or if we remember do not connect what he has done in the past with his ability to repeat that action in our present circumstances. But there are countless references in the biblical record that show God repeating what he has done once-again!

PROVIDING FINANCIAL NEEDS: There are many who face financial needs today who have lost faith. They can't remember a time when God helped them once and have lost sight of his ability to help them again. 1 Kings 17:13-16 shows us how God helped the poor widow of Zarapheth. She was the woman that used all of her resources to the point of only having two sticks, a cruz of oil and a cup of meal. Elijah the prophet told her to act on the command of God, and everyday her barrel had enough meal for food and her oil never ran out. This is an instance where God responded to a household need of a family once. But has he ever repeated that? 2 Kings 4:1-7 shows another woman whose sons were about to be taken in lieu of a debt she could not pay. The Prophet Elisha came to her with a word from the Lord. It seemed silly at the time, but he told her get as many empty pots as she could and place them in her house. Every pot she could get was filled with oil. She was told to sell the oil, pay her debt and praise God. God did it once and he did it again! There is no financial need in our families that God cannot meet! From putting food on the table to giant

size problems like mortgages and massive debt. God has done it once he can do it again!

MAKING A WAY OUT OF NO WAY: Sometimes it appears that there is no way for us to escape a dilemma. When we look to the left and to the right there seems to be no way over, under or around a situation. Then we should think like David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth." We have seen God part impossible waters before. In Exodus 14:21 God caused Moses to stretch out his hand and he parted the water for Israel to cross on dry land. It was a remarkable feat. But did he ever repeat that miracle? Joshua 3:15-16 records how Joshua and the children of Israel were about to enter into the Promised Land but a swollen river Jordan blocked their way. Yet God ordered them to proceed forward. As the feet of the priests touched the water, they miraculously rolled back and the entire host of Israel crossed on dry land. God did it again. 2 Kings 2:8 shows God repeated this miracle not for a who nation but for just two people. Not hundreds of thousands, but a powerful miracle was repeated for just two people! When Elijah and Elisha came to face the Jordan the waters rolled back for them when they were struck with his mantle! God did it for two people. Read down to verse 14 and see where God repeated the same miracle again for just one person! After Elijah had gone to heaven in the fiery chariot, Elisha faced that same river again, and God repeated what he did —again! God will make a way out of no way. He will open doors again and again! No matter how tough things appear God can do it-again!

GOD HEALS AGAIN AND AGAIN: There are times when we consider illnesses and sicknesses, we forget about God's healing power shown in the past. What he did once he has repeated time and time again. Matthew 4:24 says "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" Over and over again. Blind men, lame men and women, leprosy, even deathly sicknesses were all healed repeatedly. People tore the roofs off houses and pushed their way through crowds just to touch the hem of his garment, because they knew he could do it again! Today as we face a multitude of health related problems we must remember that there is no sickness that is outside of the power of God. God has defied the known science of the day and continues to do it today. Are you stricken with an illness, God has healed you and members of your family before, he can do it again! Are you worried over a dark prognosis? God has reversed dark situations before and he can do it again!

He will do it again

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that God has not run out of blessings, there are still more to come.

The genie in the bottle can only grant us three wishes according to legend, but God is not a genie. He is the creator of the universe! He is not a legend. His blessings don't

stop with three but continue to four and many more!

When David chastised Israel because the people often forgot what God could do, he stood as a living testimony.

David is known for facing down Goliath. But long before there was Goliath, there were bears and lions that threatened his father's sheep. He had seen God act before and knew he would act again.

When the Hebrew Boys faced the threat of the fiery furnace they stood in boldness because they had seen God deliver his people before, and they knew he was able.

Sometimes in our weakness with forget that God is able!

He's able to deliver us from the pit and miry clay!

He's able to transform confusion and discord into unity and love!

He's able to make somebodies out of nobodies

He's able to make kings out of beggars!

He's able to make workers out of lazy men!

He's able to make winners out of losers!

He's done it before and he will do it again!

Long before we came to our presence circumstance God has been blessing us!

Like Hezekiah, some of us had come to the end of our lives but he gave us a few more years! I'm glad to know what he did once, he can do again!

Like David, some of us have been surrounded by enemies but he delivered us from destruction. I'm glad to know that what he did once, he can do again!

Like Esther, some of us have been raised from poor backgrounds, just a little higher than before. I'm glad to know that what he did once, he can do again!

I'm glad to know that if I"m sick, he can heal me again!

I'm glad to know that if I'm down, he can pick me up again!

I'm glad to know that if I've failed, he can make me succeed again!

I'm glad to know that if I've lost, he can give me the victory again!

That's why I've got to tell somebody! That I serve a God who has:

—Taken the bad and made them good and he can do it again!

—Taken the hateful and made them loving and he can do it again!

—Taken the proud and made them humble and he can do it again!

—Taken broken families and put them back together again, and he can do it again!

I've God to tell somebody about Jesus!

—The Lily of the Valley!

—The Bright and Morning Star!

Who died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

He came once before..but he's coming back again!

No. 9010-Inspiration

Hold to God's Unchanging Hand

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 6, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." Psalm 37:24

Introduction

Have you ever held someone's hand or had someone to hold your hand? There are many times and many ways that we have reached out to touch someone's hand or to be touched ourselves. When we think about hand holding, our first reaction is romantic. We think about teenage romance and the magic of holding hands with our first love. There are other times too like the times we held the strong and confident hand of our father or mother in a time of crises or joined hands in a prayer. Even the times when we held the hand of a newborn child at birth was an important moment for us. There is a special magic about holding hands and being held by a strong hand.

We hold hands for different reasons, each of which carries it's own meaning.

Consider the picture of the elderly couple sitting on the porch swing holding hands in the moonlight. That's commitment.

Consider the nurse who takes the face of a small boy who sees his mother rolled into an emergency room, and hold his face up to hers to keep him from seeing her pain. That's sensitivity.

A construction worker as he builds a mighty building holding a hammer. That's strength.

A preacher stands beside a young woman with tears in her eyes as the court grants the final divorce decree; the minister pats her hand gently. The marriage has been painful, but change, too, is painful. That's sympathy.

A mom takes her son to the first day of school. As they approach the classroom he reaches up and takes her hand. That's security.

A husband stands at his wife's bedside. She's been faithful but now she's seriously ill. They have faced much together, but never this. He holds her hand and squeezes it gently. His hands says, "we've face much together. We'll face this too."

A camp instructor takes the hand of each child as they cross a stream— strength,

help.

At a wedding A father takes the hand of his daughter and places it in the hand of a young man and thus "gives her away"— That's confidence.

A friend who has been drinking tries to drive but his friend takes the keys out of his hands, grabs him by the hand and puts him in a car for a safe ride home. That's correction and conviction.

Sometimes the reason that people hold hands is not what it seems. Consider the man and wife who won the praises of their friends because they appeared to be so romantic even after 40 years of marriage. A friend spoke to the husband to try to discover his secret. He said, "I notice you and your wife the other day in the mall. You went into a dress store and you were holding hands. You went into a shoe store and you were holding hands. You went into a jewelry store and you were still holding hands. It's amazing and so romantic. Can you tell me the secret to such romance?" The man said, "It's not so much romance. But after 40 years of marriage I've learned that whenever we go into the dress store, shoe store or jewelry store, if I don't hold her hand...she shops like crazy!"

There's a fancy world that is used by the theologians that describes a condition that is applicable to this circumstance. It is called, theo-antropomorphism. It means taking the traits of humans and giving them to God.

That's what we do when we think of holding hands but put God in the picture. Instead of mother or father, or a caring friend, the hand becomes the hand of God. It's the idea that we as believers can put our entire lives in God's care and it would be the same as holding his hand or God holding our hand. There are nearly 100 theo-anthropomorphic references in the bible that refer to God's hand or hands. We read about them. We even sing about putting ourselves in the hands of God.

A popular song puts it this way:

"Time is filled with swift transition-Naught of earth unmoved can stand-
Build your hopes on things eternal, Hold to God's unchanging hand.
Trust in Him who will not leave you, Whatsoever years may bring,
If by earthly friends forsaken, Still more closely to Him cling.
Hold to God's unchanging hand! Hold to God's unchanging hand!
Build your hopes on things eternal, Hold to God's unchanging hand."

As believers, we have come to trust ourselves in the hand of God. He will correct us, conform us, protect us and strengthen us in our time of need.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the relationship of the believer with God.

The overall intent of this psalm is to underscore the security of believers in their fate in his hands. Believers are reminded not to be envious of the unrighteous or to be doubtful of their own security with God because of the apparent success of the unrighteous.

Believers are secure with God. The surety of their position is just as sure as the

fragile nature of the unrighteous who will soon but cut down like that grass.

The righteous, claims David will never be abandoned. In the course of his entire life he claims never to have seen the righteous forsaken or their seed begging for bread.

The righteous are being held by and are holding on to the hand of God. Because of that fact the Righteous are in the hand of God they will never be utterly destroyed and kept down. Either they climb up with their faith as leverage or he picks them up by the power of his will.

The Blessing of Holding God's Hand

There are immeasurable blessings that come as we hold to God's hand.

GOD'S HAND IS UNCHANGING: In a difficult world where everything changes instantly, it is a blessing for believers to know that God's hand is unchanging. His way of dealing with us is constant and predictable. He won't be with us today, then forsake us tomorrow. The biblical record is filled with reassurances that God will be with us in a predictable manner. When Israel prepared to go into unknown territory Moses reminded them in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." In the New Testament this is repeated again for Christian believers. Hebrews 13:5, "..for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is a reassurance that whatever situation that may arise God will be there, holding our hand. Even when our parents and relatives seem to change in their relationships toward us, God is unchanging. Psalm 27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." In God's hands, we are safe. He will not walk out on us. He will not abandon us. He will be there for us regardless of the circumstance.

GOD IS COMPASSIONATE TOWARD US: God is sensitive to our needs. He understands the burden we bear and how we feel on the inside. There are times when those around us just do not know, but God always knows. The skeptics around us doubt our motives, but God knows. Because he knows, he helps us carry our load and our faith in him somehow makes our burden lighter. Matthew 11:28 finds Jesus saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's compassion. He continues that if we take his "yoke" upon us our burden will be light. It is a sign that he knows us and knows all about us. A song writer said, "When your body suffers pain and your health you can't regain, and you have to get along with meager fare. Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save and he can heal. Take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there." While we are in his hands, we are under the protection of a compassionate God who knows and understands us. Out of his compassion and love for us he opens doors for us and makes ways out of no way that we may enjoy life more abundantly. God cares! That's what compassion means. We hold to his hand because he cares about us personally!

GOD'S HAND IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD US UP: God is powerful.

Because he is powerful we hold to his hand to add stability to our own lives. This sense of security we derive from holding on to a powerful hand comes from the fact that God is a pillar of strength. How strong is God? Isaiah 40:15-30 attempts to describe the strength of God. Isaiah painted a picture of God being so big and powerful that all of the nations of the world form but a single drop in the bucket in comparison to his strength. He asks can we compare God to anything? The God who spreads out the skies like a blanket and holds worlds in his hands like so much dust! Can we compare anything to God who sits on his throne hovering over men who appear like grasshoppers before him? There is no strength greater than the strength of the Lord. James Weldon Johnson the poet said, "He batted his eyes and the lightning flashed. He clapped his hands and the thunder rolled. He waved his hands and the waters came down..his footsteps hollowed the valleys out and bulged the mountains up." What does all of this say? It says, "whatever problem I have, whether it is sickness or finance, love or social reform, God is big enough and strong enough to handle it! That's what Jeremiah meant when he said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You" (Jer. 32:17). There is nothing too hard for God. He can handle any problem set before him. In answer to that same statement Isaiah 59:1 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." So every believer should hold to God's hand. Even in difficult times and wait for him his deliverance. Don't give up. He can and will take care of it.

GOD'S HAND PROTECTS US: God uses his power to secure the faithful. Security is a concern of every person and every nation. There is a security at airports, train stations, schools and even security systems in our homes. Yet, while we rely on these systems for a measure of security the believer trusts in God for his ultimate protection. Another reason we hold to God's hand is because protects us. Isaiah 41:10-13 puts it this way, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." That's security. It's security in the hand of God. Those who attempt to harm the anointed children of God take on the power of God himself who has promised to provide security for believers. It's a simple truth. You "mess with a child of God and God will get you!" In times of difficulty, believers find refuge and strength in God. That's what Psalm 46:1 means when it says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." In a time of trouble, hold to God's unchanging hand!

How to hold to his hand!

Finally, brothers and sisters while we have considered why we should want to hold

God's hand and what we get from holding God's hand, we must finally consider, how to hold God's hand.

There are many who fail to hold to God's unchanging hand because they don't know how to hold to his hand.

To hold God's hand successfully, we must not try to hold on to his hand, as much as we ask him to hold our hand.

When God holds our hand he guides us. Each of remembers a favorite teacher who had the task of teaching how to form cursive letters. There was always some point in our learning where the teacher had to literally take our hand in her hand and guide our fingers as we shaped the letters.

When we allow God to guide us, we allow him to take control of our lives and guide us along the way. That's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Lead me. Guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray."

When we are about to move through life without dotting and "i" he guides us!

When we are about to move on without crossing a "t" he guides us!

That's why the song writer concluded, "..Lord let me walk, each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord, Lead me!"

When God holds our hand, he holds us we might be tempted to let go.

When life gets difficult and tiresome, our hands tend to sweat and to tire and may start to slip in our faith, church attendance, giving and general spirituality.

When God holds our hands, even if we slip a little, he still holds on!

No wonder the old warriors sang, "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to take care of my family, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to deal with the raging storms in my life, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to make sense of the madness that surrounds me, I don't want to run this race alone!

We should let God hold our hand because we can be sure that if he holds our hand that he won't let go. In many of the action movies action heroes such as Sylvester Stallone and others are often shown leaning over the edges of cliffs and mountains reaching out for a person in distress. Sometimes we hear them say, "Give me your hand. I won't let you go!" Then we watch as they use almost super human strength to pull up a lost victim and bring them to safety.

I don't know about you but sometimes I find myself slipping down the mountain of life and I have to cry out to Lord, "Take my hand! Hold me in your everlasting arms!"

Lord, take my hand, when I can't see my way!

Lord, take my hand, when I can't turn to the right or the left!

Lord, take my hand, when I'm confused and don't know what to do!

Lord, take my hand, when I'm weak and give me strength!

Lord, take my hand, when I have fallen and help me up again!

When you find yourself falling and you can't get up, call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, a strong hand that will not let you down!

Jesus, a mother to the motherless!

Jesus, a shelter in a time of storm!

Call on Jesus, who reaches out to us with nail scarred hands!

Call on Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

When the storms of life are raging, reach out with the saints of old and say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shalt I go!

Build your hopes on things eternal!

Hold to God's unchanging hand!

No. 9011-Inspiration

Is It All About the Benjamins?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 13, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13

Introduction

What is the most important thing in life? The answers to that question vary depending upon the individual asked. To some, the most important thing in life is to be successful. To others, the essence of really living is to be rich. There are still others who contend that the most important thing in life is to be happy and content. The responses to the question continue endlessly and vary depending upon the person who answers the question.

For many people the pursuit of happiness is equated with the possession of as many things as possible. The more "things" a person owns the happier and more successful a person is perceived to be. To acquire "things" we need money. Thus, for some, the pursuit of money as a means to acquire more, bigger and better possessions becomes a life pursuit.

The recent movie by "Ice Cube" entitled "All about the Benjamins" depicted individuals who were willing to kill or steal to acquire diamonds and a $60 million lottery ticket. Getting the Benjamin's, a street reference to one hundred dollar bills, became the goal of the movie's central character.

A few decades ago, the O'Jays produced a hit record that is still sung today entitled, "For the Love of Money." They said people will sell their bodies, murder and steal for the love of money. It's all about the Benjamins.

For an increasing number of people life is "All about the Benjamins." It is about making money and getting money. It's about "Banking." By any means necessary.

We have seen multinational corporations fall in recent months because many of their top CEO's were more concerned the "Benjamins" than they were with giving their investors an honest report.

Youth are being recruited to sell drugs as young as seven and eight years old, because it's all about the Benjamins.

Some parents are neglecting the essentials needed for a quality family life because, it's all about the Benjamins.

Is life really all about the "Benjamins?" Are there values more important than

"banking" and "Benjamins?"

Another movie entitled "Indecent Proposal" caught the eye of the nation a few years ago. In it Robert Redford played a rich man who offered a man who was in financial trouble $1 million for permission to spend one night with his wife. The couple faced a real struggle about what was important to them in life.

Yet while the movie presented a fictional situation, there are many who actually make such choices.

How much is it worth to you to participate in the growth of your children? A few thousand a year? A promotion?

How much can you be offered to see less of your spouse each day? Another $100 a week?

If you were told that you could collect $50,000 cash today, with no questions asked but you'd have to promise never to step foot in a church again for the rest of your life. Would you take the deal?

Jesus posed the question that still rings across the corridors of time "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

As Christians, we have concluded that life is more than just the endless pursuit of "Benjamins." We have resolved that real happiness comes when we put our trust in the Lord and give him first place. When we do that, with or without the Benjamins, we are filled with joy because we do the master's will.

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he draws a conclusion about what really matters in life.

Solomon is credited with being the wisest man of all times. Early in his life he asked God for the gift of wisdom and received it. Yet there were some lessons that he had to learn through difficulty, despite his unique gift of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes is a book that details Solomon's attempts to discover what was really important in life. Since he was king, he had the ability to involve himself in a large number of activities that he thought would ultimately bring him happiness and fulfillment. The results of his life pursuit was recorded in this book as a guide for generations that would follow. He hoped those who came after him would benefit from his experiences and learn from his mistakes.

In Chapter 1 he said he first sought wisdom and knowledge, thinking that after he acquired great knowledge and wisdom that he would be fulfilled. At verse 16, he noted that he had accumulated more wisdom than all of those before him, but yet he concluded that all of his wisdom and knowledge only brought him frustration. In verse 18 he said the more he learned the sadder he became. The essence of life is not simply to accumulate wisdom and knowledge.

In Chapter 2 he explored the possibility of the night life, partying and drinking. In verse one he said he would pursue "mirth" and "Pleasure" two words that indicate that he explored the party scene. Being king he was able to stage the best pleasurable events available. He concluded that it was "vanity." That means that it did not

accomplish what he sought. In other points in his life he made the construction of great works his top priority in life. Building became a top priority with him. He fortified many cities in Israel and built what he called "store" cities. In addition, he built a great temple complex in Jerusalem that not only consisted of the temple but various "porches" or pavilions. He even built a palace for one of his special wives. In verse 4 he said he built fine houses, vineyards and other constructions only to see that once completed all of the things he built did not bring him fulfillment.

His quest went beyond building, partying, knowledge acquisition and drinking, but it even included acquiring possessions and money. In verse 7 he detailed how he enjoyed what he thought was the good life with servants, land, cattle and money. He even lost himself for a while in music. He brought in the best singers and musicians who gave command performances for him. He was in a position to lose himself in the best music of his day. In verse 10 he said, "Whatsoever my eyes desired, I kept not from them." If it felt good or looked good Solomon said he did it or acquired it.

Yet even with the music, money, building, wisdom, knowledge and constant parties, he still found that there was something missing. In verse 11 he said, "all was vanity and vexation of the spirit and there was no profit under the sun."

He reached a point when he hated life (v.17) and decided to just "chill out" concluding that there was a time for everything. He became philosophical and decided that life was about living and enjoying everyday because after he dies it can't be done. (v. 22)

At the conclusion of his search for what life is all about he recorded his finding in 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

The duty of Believers

What is the duty and privilege of a believer with respect to his life's priorities? Solomon gave us the key to understanding what really matters in life. The three points are illustrated in verse 13 and 14 of the text:

FEAR GOD: Solomon said he concluded that one of the truths that he learned about life is that he should fear God. The fear of God that he speaks of is not a spirit of cowardice, but a deep seeded sense of respect and awe for God. Every person should fear God's wrath if his laws are violate or his holiness is violated. This is the reason Israel would not go up upon the Holy Mountain of Sinai. It is also the reason Isaiah was reluctant to speak. He said in Isaiah 6:5. "Woe to me" I cried. "I am ruined For I am a man of unclean lips." When we read the Revelation and see how God's wrath will be poured out it give us reason to be cautious about violating his holiness. While at the same time living in literal respect for his holy will. What Solomon learned was that life was not about accumulating things but about respecting and carrying out the will of God. So the volunteer in the soup kitchen who initiates the will of God by feeding the pour gains as much or more satisfaction by carrying out the will of God as the man who spent his entire life chasing riches. The fear of God leads to worship

and praise. Those who do not fear God occupy their time pursuing the world or resting up to continue pursing the world. Those who fear God are quick to report, "It's not about the Benjamins" It's about doing the will of God. We are rewarded for fearing God. Psalm 34:9 says, "Oh, fear the Lord you His saints for to those who fear Him there is no want." The same idea is echoed in Psalm 128:1 "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways." If we fear God we will be blessed and what we do achieve in life has meaning and significance.

KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: How is it that keeping the commandments of God is more important than getting a large trunk of "Benjamins?" Solomon who had more "Benjamins" than he could count, said he concluded that keeping the commandments of God gave him better satisfaction in the end. God told Moses to tell the people, "You will walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice and serve Him and cling to Him." (Deut 13:4) Obeying God's commandments keeps us from self destructing. Obviously, we have failed at making up our own rules. We can't stop smoking, gaining weight, or doing many of the other things our doctors have warned us about. Without a higher command we would simply self destruct. The commands of God push us to be honest in our dealings with others, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment. A businessman who obeys God's commands places limits on what he will do to make a dollar. "It's not all about the Benjamins" there is a matter of integrity and obedience to God involved in every transaction. It's not about the quick dollar but about earning our living in accordance with God's command to be honest in our daily affairs. When it's only about the Benjamins we will cheat, steal or even kill to gain a few more dollars than the next man. When it's about obeying God, we may lose a few Benjamins, but sleep well at night knowing that God is pleased.

PREPARE FOR THE JUDGMENT: We should set priorities in life that can withstand three levels of judgment. The first is self evaluation. Can each of our actions stand the test of the man in the mirror. Galatians 6:3-4 says, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Like Solomon, we often find ourselves doing things for the sake of the Benjamins that conflict with the voice of our conscience. We often fool others, but the man in the mirror keeps telling us that we are on a wrong course. Our conscience speaks with a loud voice, but the Benjamins have a tendency to speak louder. The pursuit of the Benjamins can push us to do many things that we normally consider against our better judgment if we are not careful. Beyond the court of personal evaluation there is the supreme court of God's word. As we set priorities, we should do so while considering that everything we do will one day be brought before the judgment seat of God. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul says, ""For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." We can ignore the voice of our conscience and turn a deaf ear to the man in the mirror, but one day we will answer for all that we do before a higher court. Romans 2:16 says that will be the day when, ".. God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

Solomon came to the conclusion that life was not all about the Benjamins, but it had a lot to do with preparing himself to stand before the judgment bar of God with a clear conscience.

Benjamins Can't Replace The Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that overriding reasons why life is not all about the Benjamins and that is because the most important things in life, even a truck load of Benjamins can't buy!

With a pocket full of Benjamins we can buy companionship. People will surround us as long as we have the Benjamins. But even a truck load of Benjamins can't buy true friendship.

With just a few Benjamins we can buy sex on any street corner. But even a wheel barrel full of Benjamins can't buy true love.

With a few thousand Benjamins given to a worthy cause, you can get a statue built in your memory in the center of the city. But even a boxcar full of Benjamins can't buy the honor and praise of our heavenly father, if our lives were not according to his will.

Today, there are many people who know more about money than they do about the Lord.

If you ask them who is the man on the $100 bill they'll tell you, he's Benjamin Franklin!

If you ask them who is the man on the $50 bill they'll tell you, he's Ulysses S. Grant!

If you ask them who is the man on the $20 bill they'll tell you , he's Andrew Jackson!

If you ask them who is the man on the $10 bill they'll tell you, he's Alexander Hamilton!

If you ask them who is the man on the $5 bill they'll tell you, he's Abraham Lincoln!

If you ask them who is the man on the $1 bill they'll tell you, he's George Washington!

On the back of every Benjamin there is a four letter phrase, "In God we trust!"

I know you know Mr. Benjamin and I know you know Mr. Hamilton, but do you know the Lord?

You may know the Russian Rubal and the Japanese Yen, but do you know the Lord?

You may know the German Mark or the British Pound, but do you know the Lord?

You may know the Mexican Peso and the French Franc, but do you know the Lord?

It's not all about the Benjamins but, it is all about the Lord!

When we are sick, if you call Mr. Benjamin he'll call in the best doctors but the doctors can't heal, all healing comes from the Lord. We've got to Call on the Lord!

When we are in trouble, if you call Mr. Benjamin, he'll get you the best Lawyers, but even the best lawyers can't help sometimes, we've got to call on the Lord!

Call him in the morning!

Call him in the noon day!

Call him in the midnight hour!

A lame man thought it was about the Benjamins but the disciples told him "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have gift I thee!"

Judas thought it was about the Benjamins. He said give me 30 pieces of silver and I'll deliver him in your hands!

He found out it's not all about the Benjamins!

Even though they nailed Jesus to a cross and buried him in a borrowed tomb;

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No wonder the song writer declared you can have this whole world, Give me Jesus!

It's not about the Benjamins, its about the Lord!

No. 9012-Funeral

I Have Finished The Work

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 17, 2002

SCRIPTURE:" I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. John 17:4-5

Introduction

How do you know when your work is finished? When do you finally acknowledge that there are no more adjustments needed or finishing touches that can be added? For some that is a difficult question because they spend their entire lives striving to get things right and to make things better for those around them. It is difficult because despite their best efforts they never feel they have done enough. Often such people give all they have until one day they finally accept that they have finished.

There are some people who have an easy answer for that question. They look at their watches, notice the hour and say, "It's time to go."There are others who know they are finished because they have done all they plan to do whether they complete their work or not. This attitude reflects a life ethic that limits the amount of work completed to the amount of work pursued. Its an attitude that says whatever I get done is all that will be done. For these, a job is complete when they have done all they are going to do, regardless to whether or not all that needs to be done is done.

Have you ever watched those who work in their yards and keep them immaculate? They begin in the morning, bowed down on hand and knees, pulling weeds, trimming, edging, pruning and arranging. In the heat of the day they continue, with sweat dropping from their brow, fatigued but determined to complete their task before the day is done. Even as the day closes they still see more that can be done to make it prettier, more appealing to the eye.

When is a Saint's work done? When can a believer drop her yard tools, wipe the sweat off her brow and call it a day? When she has done her best and God is glorified. That's when she hears a voice that says come on in, its been a good day.

As Christians, we believe we must work until our day is done.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he prays in the garden of Gethsemane.

For three years Jesus taught and ministered to the people. In the final week of his life he faced the very real prospect of his death by crucifixion. In Gethsemane, he gives his final report. It is this prayer that shows us the humanity of Christ as he communed with his father about the immediate past and the future.

In this prayer he reviews his work which has glorified God. He retraces his entire life and ministry beginning with his childhood in Nazareth and the three drama filled years of his public ministry when he went up and down the hills of Judea and Galilee, preaching and healing and ministering to all the multitudes that followed him. During this time his life work flashed across the panoramic screen of memory and the thousands of people he inspired, the hurting people he comforted and the sick people he healed are all recalled.

Moreover he recalled all the lessons that he taught in the homes of the rich and powerful as well as sinners and publicans, standing on street corners and in synagogues. In that flashback would have also been the tears he shed over Lazarus and how he grieved at one point over the wayward direction of Jerusalem that slayed the prophets.

This review was a review of a life work that glorified God. It exemplified the epitome of godliness within the context of human frailty. It was the best he could do within the limitations of humanity. Yet, despite having giving all he had he also knew that there was so many that did not respond to his call.

Despite his dismay he told his father, "I have finished the work which you gave me to do."

Having finished his work, Jesus turned his attention to going home. He asked in verse 5, ""Now, Father, glorify thou me in thine own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made." He asked to be brought into the presence of God after having completed a life that glorified God on earth.

While he reviewed a work that glorified God he also looked to the future and saw his death and resurrection, both of which would also glorify God. It could not be avoided. It was sure. Yet, even in this instance he wanted to return home in a way that would glorify God.

Shortly after, he died on a Roman cross but arose to new life eternal with glory bestowed upon him by the father for the glory he brought by completing his work and mission on earth.

Glorifying God

Jesus glorified God by completing his work. How does a saint glorify God? What is our mission? Most saints don't have grand missions such as that of Christ which was to save the world. Most don't have the task of being a Mother Teresa or a Martin Luther King. The average saint doesn't have the dangerous tasks of bringing slaves to freedom like Harriet Tubman or building great institutions of learning like Mary McCleod Bethume. Most saints have simple but important missions. The simple yet challenging difficult and important.

MISSION OF CHRISTIAN PARENTING: One of the great missions of the average believer is that of Christian parenting. It is not an easy task, but it is an important mission that requires both precept and example to be effective. The children of Christian parents learn lessons at the breakfast table, around the coffee table and at the church communion table. It is the lessons of honesty, integrity and godliness. At the breakfast table Christian parents talk about the day ahead and point young minds toward progress and success. Around the coffee table parents listen and talk about what is and what should be. Around the communion table at church the family learns the importance of a God centered life. Most importantly Christian parents have the mission of teaching by example. They live the life they teach about on a daily basis. They teach and show their children the importance of Godliness and respect. A child that is blessed to be reared in a Christian home has an immeasurable gift that gives him a tremendous advantage in life. The mission of being a Christian parent is not an easy one. It is sacrificial and sometimes is disappointing and painful. It can drain a person's life energy as parents worry, sacrifice and pray constantly for their children. Yet, when children have been reared to sufficiently stand on their own, some parents live to see their work completed before their eyes and feel a sense of satisfaction in a job well done.

MISSION OF BEING A LOVING PARTNER: Just as Mary had the mission of rearing Jesus, she also had the mission of being a loving wife to Joseph. Being a faithful spouse is a life work. It means sharing a dream, enjoying a family and standing beside a loved one in a way that makes the words of a marriage vow true: "in sickness and in health, for better or worse, for richer or poorer." These are more than just words. God is glorified when a husband is loyal and faithful to his wife. God is glorified when a wife stands by her husband in every aspect of her promise, through difficulties and hard times, sickness, failure and even the prospect of death. When the world sees a Christian carrying out this mission with love and joy and a sense of commitment, God is glorified because he is the source of the power that makes it happen.

MISSION OF KINGDOM SERVICE: Every believer has a mission of kingdom service as well. Depending upon the gifts we are given, our mission may vary. If we are fortunate to have the gift of healing we may help others who are in pain by adopting a life work that helps alleviate the pain and calm the fears of others. If we have a personality that inspires and motivates children we may devote our lives to teaching or otherwise working with children to help them grow and mature. Believers often use their gifts in connection with the church and its ministries. God is glorified. Oh, how God is glorified when believers who serve him all the week in their avocations come together to sing his praises as members of a choir or a congregation of saints. Oh, how God is praised when his saints discuss his goodness and praise him with their friends in a Sunday school class. Oh, how God is glorified when believers work with the church to manifest his greatness and boldness so that all the world can see. God is glorified when we acknowledge him to others! God is glorified when we praise him in the congregation of men! This mission is a service that pleases him and brings him joy!

Come On Up to Glory!

Finally, brothers and sisters, while our mission on earth glorifies God, when our work is complete God glorifies it in a way that only he can do.

When a saints work is complete there is an abundant reward awaiting.

John, in the Revelation, was shown a great vision of things to be. However, just before that vision was shown he was given a message for the seven churches of Asia Minor. In that message God promised great rewards to the saints that overcome.

In Revelation 2:7 we read, "..To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In Revelation 2:8 we read, "..He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

In Revelation 3:5, we read, "..He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels"

In Revelation 21:7 all of the saints whose work glorified God will be told "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

This should be encouraging news for every saint, to know that our work for him will not go unrewarded.

It should be encouraging to us to hear the word of God declare that the mother who glorifies God by loving her children with a passion and concern that follows them beyond their childhood even unto their mature adult life will be rewarded!

It should be encouraging to us to hear the word of God declare that loving parents who glorify God by their precepts and examples will be rewarded and glorified themselves beyond this life.

It should be encouraging to us to hear the word of God declare that those who labor with the church serving, singing, teaching, studying and witnessing for God will be glorified themselves when this life is over.

When God is glorified he glorifies!

When God is lifted up, he lifts up!

When God is praised, he raises us higher and higher in his glory!

The question was asked, "When is my work finished?" Maybe the song writer gave us a clue with the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done. I'm going to work until the setting of my sun."

Until that time, whether young and strong or old and feeble and confined to their homes, continues to glorify God with every breath!

We continue to tell the story!

We continue to tell about God and his goodness!

We continue to tell the world about Jesus!

We continue to tell the world how he died out on Calvary and arose after three days! We continue to tell of his goodness until... our day is done!

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On Monday, October 14, 2002 Lillie Savannah completed a life that glorified God as a mother, wife and church worker. She glorified God in her life, he now glorifies her in death.

No. 9013-Anniv.-Church

Hallowed Ground

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 20, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Genesis 28:16-17

Introduction

Are there certain places or things that you consider special? What makes your special place sacred or special to you? Generally, those places that we consider special relate to unique experiences that have happened in our lives at a specific time and moment. Newly weds consider the site of their honeymoons or the places where they first met as special places. Athletes revisit the site of great victories and the sight of the large stadiums where they were cheered in victory renews floods of memories of special moments. While there are many places and occasions that we considered momentous, there are other places that are more personal. They reflect points in our lives when our perception, direction or sense of security was unalterably challenged or changed. These are the places where we met our own fallibility and stood in the shadow of a God who is bigger than ourselves. They became more than special; they became sacred.

However, When the families of those who were victims of the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center tragedy visit the site it is more than special to them. When they stand at the memorials erected for over 2000 people who lost their lives to terrorists, they are standing on hallowed ground.

When succeeding generations stand on the sites of great American Battlefields such as Gettysburg or Vicksburg or revisit the beaches of Normandy or stand in the heat of the Saudi Arabian desert, it is more than a special place. They realize a sense of awe as they appreciate the fact that they stand on great battlefields where brave men and women gave their lives for the cause of freedom. They know they are standing on hallowed ground.

This feeling of standing on hallowed ground is what every church congregation feels when it stands to celebrate its anniversary. For African-Americans, the history of a church is inextricably intertwined with the struggle of a people to sustain hope as it struggles to be truly free. The history of an African-American church inevitably announces the roll call of the saints who paved the way for the next generation to

have a better opportunity while clinging to an unwavering faith that God will make a way.

The second verse of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" epitomizes this feeling: "Stony the road we trod, Bitter the chastening rod, Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet Come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast. "

When we stand on ground that has been watered with tears, we are standing on hallowed ground.

When we stand on ground watered with the blood of the slaughtered, we are standing on hallowed ground.

We are standing on the shoulders of hundreds of men and women who bowed in prayer that we would see a better day.

Without a doubt we are standing on hallowed ground.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge the Lord has brought us a mighty long way. We move forward with ever present reminders that the very opportunity to hope and to have faith in this place was paid for with the blood of Christ. It is holy ground. It is solid ground. All other ground is sinking sand.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob's encounter with God in a place that became sacred and holy to him.

In Genesis 28, Jacob was leaving home after a dispute between he and his brother Esau over Esau's birthright which Jacob acquired through a crafty bargain. In anger, Esau pledged to kill Jacob if he ever saw him again.

As Jacob prepared to leave he worried about how he would be received by his angry brother. One night he made himself a ground bed with a stone for a pillow. While sleeping, Jacob dreamed of a ladder, or staircase ascending in ramp-like fashion. And on this ramp, in this dream vision, God's angels are seen going up and down.

Verse 13 records God standing at the top of the ladder renewing the promise he made to Abraham to give him all the land of Palestine including the very ground upon which he slept.

In addition, at verse 15, he promised to be with Jacob in his journey and to bring him back to the special place of promise. Whenever Jacob returned it would mark the anniversary of this promise. It would be about two decades before Jacob would return. When he finally returned, the place where he met God and communed with him would be a special place and a holy place, even though to others it would appear as just another stop along the way.

As the years passed, it took on even more meaning beyond sacred and special it became hallowed ground. It became a place that he described in verse 17 as nothing short of being the house of God. He named that place "Bethel" which means "The

house of God."

The place where he met God and received his promise remained in Jacob's memory over the years. When he returned, years later he recognized that he was on hallowed ground.

Four Types of Ground

Jacob's experience at Bethel revealed four types of ground that every believer experiences in the course of the Christian journey, certainly every church.

PROMISED GROUND: God made a promise to Jacob that he made to his father and grandfather that, "all the ground before you will be yours." Neither Abraham, Isaac or Jacob ever doubted God's promises. They were considered sure and reliable. Numbers 23:19 points out that "God is not a man that he should lie." If he said it he shall do it, if he has spoke it, he will make it happen. Just as Jacob trusted God's promise with all his heart, so should believers today. If God has shown the church a vision of what is to be, he shall do it. If he has spoken it, it shall happen. The family saw many difficulties, even years of slavery before Jacob's children saw the dream become a reality. When Joshua prepared to lead the people into the Promised Land after the death of Moses he was met by an angel. Numbers 5:15 says the angel told him to take off his shoes because he stood on holy ground. It was the land that had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There are many warriors who have gone to their reward carrying the promise for this church in their hearts. They never realized the promise of a day the church would have a modern building, various ministries and technology, but it was promised. Today, we stand on promised ground. It should be a reminder to every believer that God does not back down on anything he has promised. No wonder the song writer records, "Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!"

COMMON GROUND: Jacob named his special place Bethel. Over the years it became a very special place to the people because it was a common place for varying opinions to meet. When Israel looked for a place for the leaders of all of the tribes to meet to divide the promised ground, they came to a place in the suburbs of Bethel called Shiloh. It was common ground. There, people of varied interests met and put their differences aside to worship. Hannah brought her son Samuel to the priests at Shiloh. It was a place where the lowly could touch base with the powerful. It was common ground. Before Jerusalem became the center of worship, Israel traveled to Shiloh to worship because it was common ground. Today, the church represents common ground. It is the place where Democrats sit beside Republicans; blacks sit next to whites, the affluent sit next to the working poor; and persons who may have varying views on a variety of subjects come together in one place on one subject they all agree and that is that, "God is good, all the time!" Every believer should feel that in my Sunday worship I'm on common ground. In the military the officers and the enlisted men eat in separate buildings, but in the church, it's common ground. In the

community the rich eat at the country club and the working poor eat in cafeterias and the poor eat at homeless shelters, but in the church it's common ground, we all eat at the same table and sit on the same pews. Acts 10:34 makes it simple: "God is not a respecter of persons." Why? Because we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

HOLY GROUND: Jacob considered Bethel Holy Ground because there, he met God. So it is with each of us, the place where we meet the Lord is Holy Ground. For Jacob that little spot along the road that he marked with a stone pillar was Holy Ground because it is where he heard the voice of God. There are many who have met the Lord in a variety of places and under unusual circumstances. Some have met him sitting in hospital rooms as they talked to him for the first time. Some have met him after a great personal struggle and that place became a holy ground. For many people, the church is Holy Ground. It is the place where they come to make contact with God. It is the place where humanity reaches out to divinity. It is the place where God speaks through the written and spoken word, songs and prayers. It is the place where, for a few minutes we can feel the power and presence of the almighty in our lives. It is holy ground. When Moses met God at the burning bush he was told to take off his shoes because he was in the presence of God or on holy ground. Thus, when we come before God, we humble ourselves and come with humility as we stand on holy ground. We take off our titles. We are not Drs., mayors, or councilmen. We are not school board members or presidents of corporations, we are on holy ground! We are servants of the most high. Because the church is holy ground we intentionally dress differently and come at our best behavior. Because it is holy ground we bring our hopes and expect to leave with renewed or strengthened faith.

Hallowed Ground

Finally, brothers and sisters, while the church is promised ground, common ground, and holy ground, it is most importantly hallowed ground.

Hallowed ground is different from all of the other types of ground because it is ground that has been watered with someone's tears or blood.

Hallowed ground is the product of pain and sacrifice.

Hallowed ground is the outcome of struggle, conflict, agony, defeat and eventual victory.

When a young couple buys a home and starts a new life together on their own two feet, they are often standing on hallowed ground. It is often ground paid for by the sacrifice of parents, grandparents and great grand parents who spent their lives trying to make life better for their children. That ground is hallowed ground.

When we accomplish great feats in life, win awards and perform mighty works and stand to receive the praise of the public, we must never forget that at that moment we stand, we stand on hallowed ground. The opportunities we enjoy were paid for by thousands, even millions of unsung heroes who made it possible by their personal sacrifices.

That's what the church celebrates today... hallowed ground!

We enjoy a faith that has been secured by the sacrifices of men and women before us who were tortured and slain, and fed to lions in arenas.

We read the words of the apostles who were boiled in oil, decapitated, and crucified upside down for their beliefs.

Despite it all I hear Paul declare: In Romans 8:38-39, " For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I don't know about you but I have come to view the church as a place to meet God. It is hallowed ground.

It is hallowed Ground because Jesus told Peter, "Upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

It is hallowed ground because with the church, I can hear songs of faith that inspired our forefathers in the cotton fields of the South with the master's whip marks fresh on their backs.

When we sing, "I know the Lord will make a way!" Our voices mingle with the echoes of fallen warriors over the centuries. We are on hallowed ground!

When we chant the old words of the saints, "If I can't say a word I'll just wave my hand!" We're on hallowed ground.

When we stand on the rock of our salvation, the voices of our ancestors remind us that no matter how tough it gets, "The Lord will make a way!"

When we stand on the rock, God will turn our:

—Backward steps into forward motions; Failing health into growing strength!

—Losses and defeats into gains and victories; Hard times and bad times, into easy days and good times.

When we stand on the rock we are on secure ground. No wonder the song writer wrote: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

On Christ, Mary's baby and the lion of Judah!

On Christ, Ezekiel's wheel in the middle of the wheel!

On Christ, My bridge over troubling water!

On Christ, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary's hill!

On Christ, Who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights!

And early Sunday morning arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground……

All other ground!

All other ground is sinking sand!

No. 9014-Revival

Costumes, Masks & Disguises

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 27, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?Matthew 7:16; Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21

Introduction

Have you ever worn a mask, or a costume? During this time of the year many will wear costumes as they prepare for fall festivals. It's a time of make believe and fantasy. Costumes are fun. Just about everyone can remember a time when they dressed in a costume and paraded around the house wearing the clothing of one parent or the other. Often the pants were too large or the dress dragged the floor. Despite how awkward we felt or how silly we looked, we still had fun. In fact, it seemed that the sillier we looked the more fun we had. Wearing a costume allowed us to live out a fantasy for a short time. We knew it wasn't real but we had a good time playing "let's pretend." The costumes made us laugh. They gave us a chance to become someone other than ourselves. For a time we can even get to act like someone else.

There is a difference between a costume, a mask and a disguise. A costume usually suggests a role. Those who wear costumes are usually playing a role or are a part of an operation or unit that requires a certain look or image. Those who wear masks usually attempt to conceal their identity while a disguise is meant to change our appearance completely.

The famous Black poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar wrote a poem in which he said,
"Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

Dunbar said many slaves gave the image of being happy go lucky on the surface but they were hurting on the inside. The mask of contentment and joy with slavery concealed their inner pain and disappointment.

There are many of us who in one way or another can epitomize the truth of Dunbar's poem.

Each of us has an inward self and an outward self. The inward self is who we really are. The outward self is the face that we choose to let the world see, intentionally or

otherwise. We wear a sad face at home, burdened with a thousand troubles, yet leave our sad face on the door step as we put on a happy face and go to work or school. There are many children who wear masks that keep others from knowing their unhappiness with their family situation. There are many wives that put on a happy face for the world to see, but secretly they are hurting inside. Husbands? How many masks do we wear? Tough guy? Smart guy? Little guy really afraid of the big guy? How many masks do we wear?

William Butler Yeats developed a theory he called the "Doctrine of the Mask." He believed that all of us don masks when we face the world. He believed we are all so messed up inside that it is easier to mask what we really feal. Carl Jung meant essentially the same thing when he said that each of us needs to adopt what he called a persona, a face, to relate to the outside world. Shakespeare saw life itself as a play with each of as a costumed character who "struts and frets is hour upon the stage and then is heard no more." Athletes understand this principle well. Football players are known for putting on their game face just before a big game. Boxers practice an intimidating stare before the sound of the first bell. We all wear a mask at some time or another.

Masks don't always hide something bad. Sometimes, hidden behind the mask of a shy boy who stutters is a flamboyant superstar with a with mega voice, which was the case with James Earl Jones.

Sometimes hidden behind the mask of the slow learning imbecile who would never learn anything is the wonderful mind of men like Albert Einstein. Maybe hidden behind the mask of the little girl, born blind, deaf and mute, is a naturally brilliant mind, as was the case of Helen Keller. Sometimes the mask of the mean tough guy hides the gentle fellow on the inside.

One great truth of life is that we never really know people until we catch them without their masks; without their game face, without their public personality. We really get to know them when we know them without the mask.

Sometimes we don't like the man or woman behind the mask. Sometimes it frustrates us and makes us angry.

The beauty of our relationship with God is that he loves the man or woman behind the mask. He knows our inner spirit. Despite what he knows about us, he has chosen to love us anyway. Despite what he sees when our masks come off, he still loves us.

As Christians, we have come to love God more than ever. We love him because he looks beyond our faulty masks, disguises and false faces and sees someone worthy of loving. No wonder the song writer wrote, "Oh How I love Jesus, because he first loved me."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he warns believers not to be deceived by the disguises of deceivers.

As Jesus taught his disciples he warned them that there were many people who

were representing themselves to be ambassadors of the kingdom but were actually false prophets. While they wore the costumes of piety and religious appeal they were not completely truthful about the nature of the kingdom and their role in the kingdom.

He warned that they would come disguised as sheep, or children of the kingdom, but they were actually wolves on the inside. He warned that believers should look beyond just the surface into the character of a person to determine truth or a lie.

False faces, false piety hidden under costumes that project a false since of religious security would deceive some but not all of the elect.

Be warned, Jesus said, everyone who claimed to be of the kingdom was not an ambassador of the kingdom.

In teaching this lesson, Jesus warned all believers not to be deceived by the masks of the world but to seek the truth that can only come from God himself.

Some Masks Serve A Worthy Purpose

While the common use of masks is to hide something, this is not always true. Sometimes we wear masks to survive. It's not always wise to say everything we think, respond to every attack, or reveal every secret thought. Just as Jesus never let on to the Pharisees that he was troubled about the prospect of Calvary, or even told men who he was for nearly 30 years, it is often necessary to mask some things and keep them between ourselves and the Lord. Just as an oxygen mask provides a patient with pure oxygen to help him breathe there are times when every believer needs solitude and quite time, just to breath spiritually: without telephones, and cable vision and computer screens and screaming sirens. Like the movie star that puts on a disguise for the privilege of walking and taking in the view, sometimes we need to steal away and find God. Even more so, sometimes masks protect us. Isn't that what a gas mask does? When dangerous poisons are around us, doesn't a gas mask filter them out an allow us to breathe. In times of danger and difficulty such a mask could be a life saver.

The fact that God will be a protective and life giving mask for us in a time of trouble is probably what David had in mind in Psalm 27:5 when he wrote, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." God serves as a mask to hide us and protect us and give us room to spiritually breathe and find him.

Some Masks Hide Our True Feelings

When Moses went before the Lord he came back with a brilliance about him that was so awesome that it both amazed and frightened those who saw it. The power that illumined him was so great that he had to wear a mask to veil the power that was behind it. In Exodus 34:33-34 we are provided another insight. When Moses went in before the Lord, he took off the mask he wore in public and presented his real self to God.

There are many today that have a public game face they show the world that hides

the fact that they have been in the presence of God. So it is with many Christian youth. There are many youth in this generation who have had a mountain top experience. They have literally been in the presence of God at some point in their lives. They have felt his presence and understood the power of his being. Yet, they hide what they feel on the inside because it would not be the popular thing to do. They want to tell the world but instead they wear the mask of silence. They want to witness but they wear the mass of diminished testimony. Instead of the face of a believer that is happy with the Lord, many youth choose to wear a "hood friendly" mask that helps them to blend in with the crowd and gain popularity and the respect of their peers. What about our true feelings for God? We should not hide our love for God behind a mask. We should be willing to let the world know that 'he's sweet I know.''

God Sees Through The Mask

No matter how brilliantly crafted our mask is, God sees what others can't see. He is able to discern the real us. This is illustrated in the bible when God was looking for a king among the sons of Jesse. Jesse had 12 sons and 11 of them were great figures and stood as likely prospects to be king but the prophet Samuel asked to see the 12th son, who was considered unlikely to ever achieve much. He wore the mask of being a shepherd boy. He could do nothing but write poems and play a girls musical instrument. Despite their mockery, God allowed Samuel to look beyond the outer mask and see what was on the inside. After he chose David to be the next king, Samuel's words ring true in every ear. In 1 Samuel 16:7 we hear him say, "for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." That truth should encourage every young man. It should motivate every young woman. Despite what they may say about you in school or around the community, God knows the real you. He does not judge you by the same standard as others. He knows what you can be and what you will be. He looks behind your exterior and sees your interior. Sometimes he sees a bundle of talent waiting to be discovered. Sometimes he sees a wounded spirit waiting to be set free. While the world may not understand us, it is reassuring to know that God knows and understand the real "us" behind the masks.

One Day There will be no masks

There will come a day when there will be no masks, disguises or masquerades. It has not come yet, but the day is coming when each of us will see the beauty of God in all of his fullness. That's what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 13:12 when he said, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

One of these days we won't have to laugh when we really feel like crying!
One of these days we won't have to smile to disguise a broken heart!
One of these days we won't have to pretend that everything is alright to disguise

our miserable feelings

Then, face to face we will see the Lord in all of his goodness standing ready to reward the true and the faithful.

I'm glad to know that God looks beyond what we see to see something better. I'm glad that he is willing to accept us when everyone else is ready to turn us away.

I'm reminded of the true story of a young woman named Charolotte Elliott whose body was wretched with pain and misery. She smiled on the outside but was miserable on the inside because of her condition. One day a traveling minister came to her home for a visit when preaching in the area. Before he left he asked the young woman, who was obviously miserable and infirmed if she knew the Lord. The woman considered her condition and took offense to the preacher's words. Three weeks later the preacher happened by again and she told him that for three weeks she was worried about what he asked. She wasn't able to do anything but just sit in her house. She didn't have any strength to be a great witness. She wanted to know how to accept Christ. The preacher looked at her in her affliction and said, "come just like you are!" She accepted Christ that day and God released a song in her heart that is still sung around the world nearly 200 years later:

"Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come." She went on to write over 150 hymns to a God that looked beyond her frailties and said "come!"

Somebody here today thinks their life is too messed up to come to Jesus, but God already knows what's behind the mask!

Somebody here today thinks he has failed too badly to come to Jesus, but God already knows what's behind the mask, he'll pick you up and turn you around!

Somebody here today thinks there is no way that the real person inside can ever be acceptable to God, but God already knows just what you are and loves you anyway!

No wonder the song writer declared, I came to Jesus just as I was, weary wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!

I came to Jesus, who died on Calvary!

I came to Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

I came to Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

I came to Jesus as I was!

And he has made me glad!

No. 9015-Anniv.-Choir

Sing Unto The Lord A New Song

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 3, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth." Psalm 96:1

Introduction

Is there one song that describes your life? If you could pick a song that best expresses your feeling at the present moment what would it be? "Rock me baby?" "I want your body?" "Hood Rich?" or "Amazing Grace?" Those who have different experiences in life sing different songs. Those who are have been hurt may sing the blues with B.B. King. Those who look toward the future may sing "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow" with Fleetwood Mack. The songs we sing reflect our experiences and expectations. Those songs change from moment to moment since our lives our in constant transition.

To accurately get a snapshot of who we are, we need a song that tells where we've been, where we are now and where we are going. To do that may require all of us to sing a new song.

Socrates once said, "If I can write the music of a nation, I care not who writes the laws." His statement gave evidence to the power of music to both reflect and define the times in which we live. If our music sings about violence, murder and sadness, it may be because it is reflecting the world around it. At the same time that music reflects, it also projects images of what can be, should be or could be. Music is powerful.

The fact that music can be powerful is something that cannot be overlooked.

Consider the man who bought an African Parrot and discovered it could sing and talk. At home the man and the bird had long discussions about Africa, the slave trade and Negro spirituals. The bird wanted to learn a few Negro spirituals so the man taught him several Negro Spirituals and some of his favorite gospel tunes. It was amazing! He had a talking singing bird. No one at church would believe it. Finally, on the day of the choir musical he decided to take the bird to church with him. It was a strange picture to see a man come to a musical with a parrot perched on his shoulder. When the man told his friends that the bird could talk and sing his friends did not believe him. Before the musical began there were bets being placed everywhere. No one

expected the bird to sing. All through the musical the bird did not say one word. The man began to sweat. By offering time the bird still had not sung. As the service ended, the man had to payoff his bets and was real angry with the bird. Once in the car the bird started to singing loudly.

"Why are you singing now?" The man said "Don't you know I lost nearly $5,000 betting on you. Everybody cleaned up on me." The bird looked at the man and said, "Don't be stupid. If they won $5,000 because I didn't sing at the musical. They'll bet $20,00 that I can't sing at the Christmas program. By then, you and I both will be singing a new song!"

One of the most powerful communication tools is singing. David sang to cool the anger of King Saul. Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn before going to Mt. of Olives; The disciples sang before they ate. The word teaches that we should encourage each other by singing spiritual songs and hymns about God and his goodness. Those who have been given that gift have the responsibility and joy of ministering to others in a powerful way.

When God saved us he gives us a new song to sing. It was a song that wasn't about the moment but always entails how salvation, our blessing and our hope for the future. Because of his presence in our lives, we have a new song to sing.

As Christians, we keep singing our song with joy and hope. It is a new song about a familiar subject, which is the goodness of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he prepares to encourage Israel to sing a new song unto the Lord.

Israel has always been a nation that sang the praises of God. They sang in their humble national beginnings and during the enslavement in Egypt. They sang as they journeyed to the promised land. Moreover, they sang in never every part of their national experience. The only time they found it difficult to sing was during their captivity. It was then that there captors asked them to sing one of their famous songs and they answered, "How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land?"

Most of their songs were religious. Nearly all of them sang about God in some way or another. In modern times our songs are either secular or spiritual in nature. However, in biblical times nearly all songs had a religious flavor to them. The idea of singing and songs is referred to over 300 times in the bible. The phrase, "Sing unto the Lord" appears 17 times in scripture with 10 of those times in the book of Psalms. Of the 17 times that the phrase "Sing unto the Lord appears" three of them the phrase "a new song" attached to them.

There are three places where "Sing unto the Lord a new song" appears: Psalm 96:1; Psalm 149:1; and Isaiah 42:10. Each time this phrase is used the Hebrew word "Chadash" is used-which means, "In a fresh and different way!"

In the New Testament the phrase "a new song" is referred to twice (Rev. 5:9; and 14:3). The Greek word "Kainos" is used for "new" in these two instances. Kainos

refers to something that has never been experienced before. Because it is referring to something in the future that has never happened before the "new song" spoken of in the Revelation is talking about a song that has never been heard before. Listen to the words of Revelation 5:9, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; "

Therefore when Psalm 96:1 suggests that Israel should sing a "new" song, exactly what was meant? What was the emphasis? In consideration of how God saved Israel, blessed them and performed miracles for them in the presence of their enemies, David said Israel should sing a new song that encompasses all that God has done for the people involving their liberty, salvation and bountiful blessing.

The new song would be different from the song Moses sang when Pharaoh's army was drowned in Exodus 15:1.

The new song would be different from the one David sang in Psalm 13:6 in which he expressed his joy for the bountiful blessings of the Lord.

It would even be different from the song of Isaiah 12:5 in which the excellence of God was promoted. It would be a new song!

David considered all that God has done from salvation to blessings and what he will do in the not so distant future. It would truly be a new song.

What's A New Song

The 96th Psalm gives us a very clear picture of the composition of a spiritual song. Different from secular songs which reflect the world, spiritual songs are directed toward God, which makes them totally different. The verses of the 96th psalm form a spiritual checklist by which we can evaluate songs that purport to be for God. Generally, regardless to its popularity, the more of the 96th psalm that is in the song, the more endearing it will be to believers over time.

SPIRITUAL SONGS SING UNTO THE LORD: When songs are sung unto the Lord they are objective and not subjective. In any given worship service there should be songs that are objective. An objective song removes ourselves out of the picture and generally extol the greatness of God alone. Hymns and anthems are generally objective, they sing to the Lord without "me" in the picture. On the other hand the subjective song considers "poor me." It considers the terror and trauma of our lives and sings about our fear, anxiety or anxiousness. While "Nobody knows the trouble I see" sings about the Lord it is more about "my" troubles than God's greatness. "All Hail the power of Jesus" name on the other hand sings to the Lord and extols our desire for him to be crowned Lord of all. The song that sings to the Lord, brings happiness to the soul by helping us to focus on the greatness of the Lord. When we sing to the Lord we praise him for being him! The song is not for us but it is for him!

OUR NEW SONG FOCUSES ON THE SALVATION OF THE LORD. The new song a believer enjoys singing is a testimony about our ruin, remedy and regeneration.

These three "R's" came to us by the hand of God and they become the stuff of which our "new song" is based. Every song that a Christian sings should include his own testimony. No saint can boast that he has saved himself or has lived beyond the need for salvation. Thus, our songs almost always include lyrics such as those in Amazing Grace that say, "I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see" or the words from he touched me, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and shame, but then the hand of Jesus touched me and now I am no longer the same." The new song that we sing must always speak of our salvation.

OUR SONGS DECLARE GODS GLORIES AMONG UNBELIEVERS. There are many who do not know the Lord. When they see the joy of the saints in their everyday lives as they sing of his goodness in worships, their musical tribute glorifies God to those who do not know the Lord. That's the tone of the song that says, "Come we that love the Lord and let our joys be know, join in a song of sweet accord, join in a song with sweet accord and thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne." In face of those who do not know God the second verse says, "Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God. But children of the heavenly king, but children of the heavenly king may speak their joys abroad, may speak their joys abroad. We're marching to Zion, beautiful beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion, that beautiful city of God."

OUR SONGS GIVE PRAISE TO GOD REPEATEDLY. "Give" is noted here three times. "Sing" is noted in verses 1 and 2 three times. It is the law of repetition. It suggests to us that we should praise God repeatedly. Songs that give glory to the Lord and not to the artist, singer or the performers but to the glory of God. The song "I thank you Jesus" uses repetition often. It says over and over again "I thank you Jesus." Because "You've been my doctor and my lawyer" and a variety of other helps. How many times can we say thanks? If we had ten thousands tongues we couldn't clap, sing or praise him loud enough and long enough for all of the blessing he has bestowed upon us.

OUR SONG REFLECTS THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS. The desire of every believer, after being saved is to walk the Christian walk and talk the Christian talk. This desire is always reflected in the songs a believer sings. Songs such as, "I want Jesus to walk with me" suggest that the believer wants to live a life in Christ not out of Christ. This walk cannot be done along. Other songs such as, "Lord I want to be a Christian" clearly state the believer's desire to live the life of holiness with the help of God.

OUR SONG REFLECT OUR FAITH IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: When trouble, difficulties, and hardships come our way, our songs reflect our faith in the ultimate righteousness of God. We cling to the word of God that teaches that "all things work to the good" for those who love God, according to his purpose. Thus, our songs look up when everything around us is down. They express faith even in the midst of sorrow. That's when we sing "It is well with my soul" and "Count it all joy." We sing those words because they reflect our faith that "The Lord will make a way somehow."

Finally Brothers and Sisters, we must consider that the new song we sing tells our story.

When David encouraged Israel to sing a new song, he wanted them to sing a different song.

When David killed Goliath the people sang a song, "Saul hath killed his thousands but David hath killed ten thousand." We are not told to sing David's song, but to sing unto the Lord a new song!

When Israel was in Egypt their song was a song of desperation and trouble. It's words were directed to God and redirected to Pharaoh "Let my people Go!" We are not encouraged to resing the old song of desperation and frustration. We are urged to sing unto the Lord a new song!

When Solomon dedicated the temple, the people sang a song of accomplishment. We are urged however to go beyond singing a song of a single accomplishment and to sing unto the Lord a new song.

David told Israel to look back over its journey and to take in the whole picture. When you sing to the Lord, don't just praise him for one experience, but rewrite your words to praise him for entire experience.

Don't just thank him for the mountain top experiences, but sing a new song that thanks him for the valleys as well.

Sing a new song that thanks him for the sunshine and thanks him for the rain!

Sing a new song that thanks him for the good times and thanks him for the bad times too!

Sing a new song that thanks him for accomplishments we've made but also sing a song that thanks him for the lesson learned from failures and setbacks!

Our new song should tell our story.

It ought to tell how he pick us up turned us around!

It ought to tell how he planted our feet on solid ground!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new song to sing!

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!"

Who died on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose up from the grave!

Our new song tells where we have been, but one of these old days we are going to sing a new song!

One of these days, bye and bye, we're going to sing, "How I got over! How I got over! My soul looks back and wonders, how I got over!"

No. 9016-Revival

Shackles on my Feet

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 10, 2002

SCRIPTURE: God setteth the solitary in families. He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land. Psalm 68:6

Introduction

Have you ever sensed that the success that you seek in life could be achieved much easier if it were not for the obstacles in your way. In a quite moment, we often muse about the prospects of living a life without the obstacles. Obstacles: those people, occurrences and things that stand between what we have and what we want, seem to be everywhere. Some of them are external and beyond us. Others are self imposed, but yet they crush against us just as hard and even harder than any enemy's boot. Obstacles, they are often the excuses that we give for failed visions, unfinished symphonies and victories lost before they were fought. There is not a life that has been lived that has not had its share of obstacles, hindrances, setbacks and difficulties. Yet, there are literally millions who have loosed themselves from the tyrannical imposition and frustration that comes as a result of obstacles.

As a people we have seen our share of obstacles. We know what it means to strive to achieve a level of freedom only to be frustrated in our efforts as we find that the cost of our liberation
changed each time we came close to saving enough to buy our emancipation. We know what it means to have the rules of the game changed on us in business, sports, education, civic life and in the halls of justice, just as we learned to play by the rules and win. We know what it means to have a heritage and inheritance stolen from us by a nation who regarded us as only three fifths of a human being. The lack of an inheritance, land and a chance at the brass ring has hindered millions of our people that even a belated cry for reparations cannot justly address. These represent social, political and economic obstacles that have been placed in our way, yet we have overcome despite their presence. They have frustrated us and angered us but we have overcome.

Even in modern times the obstacles have not diminished. We strive to learn and educate ourselves but now we have the cumbersome burden of learning the rudiments of life while trying to focus on standardized tests that measure what we are able to remember on any given test day. It's an obstacle that frustrates our efforts to educate our children. It's almost as frustrating as our inability to find a job, or to

ever qualify for the promotion that others seem to get who are often less qualified than we are.

We have learned to deal with obstacles. We have adapted and learned how to cope and succeed despite the obstacles and frustrations. Obstacles make it difficult but they are not as destructive as shackles. By their nature shackles are used to retard or limit movement. When a man is shackled, he can still move, but his movement is limited. When a man is shackled he can still move but if he moves in a direction that is undesirable he can be easily overcome, permanently subdued and taken off his feet.

A recent song by Mary, Mary was entitled, "Shackles on my Feet." The lyrics of that song repeated several times brings to mind the nature of our situation. We have one set of shackles on our feet that have been imposed on us by our oppressors and another set that we have clamped tightly about us so tight that we hinder our own upward mobility. Shackles such as self hatred, doubt, lack of discipline, and loose morals are not imposed upon us by an outside enemy. They have become the enemy within that does more to destroy us than the obstacles that frustrate us in the political, social and economic spheres.

It's not just a social order problem; it also a personal problem. Many of us are shackled, chained and bound in so many ways that we can't get free. Whether it's the frustrated woman who is waiting to exhale one day and trying to get her groove back on another day, or the totally messed up brother who thinks its cool to wear his pants so low that he actually shows his raw behind, complete with brown spots, polka dots and Fruit of the Loom. The fact is that there are shackles on our feet. Shackles on ability to learn and earn! Shackles on our ability to rise and reach for the skies! There so many shackles at home, in our relationships, and at work. There are so many shackles that some can't think, so they drink and they get drunk. It's dangerous to have shackles on our feet.

What does God say about the shackles that bind believers? Is there any hope that we will break free from the shackles that bind us and take the wings of the heaven bound chariot and fly away?

God is sending a chariot of hope for every believer and we are offered a ride! Those who ride this chariot will be those who have broken the chain of sin, doubt, and faithlessness. Those who ride the heaven bound chariot will be those who allow God to break the chains that bind us and set us free.

As believers, we know that no weapon formed against us shall succeed and no chain that attempts to hold us can prevail against us. Christ came and died to break the chains that bind us.

His death and resurrection has set us free.

Exposition

This text focuses on David's faith that God would ultimately break the shackles of those who are in bondage.

David was a warrior king. He spent the bulk of his 40 years as King of United Israel

waging war with one country or another. As a youth and as king he grew in popularity with the people because of his reputation as a champion of those who were in bondage and to those who were held captive.

The 68th psalm is a reflection upon the way God used David's life and reign to break the shackles that prevented Israel from enjoying a full national homeland while attending even to the smallest level of enslavement of believers such as the loneliness created by the loss of a father or the loss of opportunity.

In this psalm, David recites the power and glory of God as he projects how God will ultimately bring believers to complete freedom if they will follow him and remain loyal to him.

Thus, David gives examples of God's powerful acts in the past as a clear reminder to present believers that he has acted in their behalf in the past with great power and will continue to do the same.

Believers are encouraged to "extol" or praise him (v4) who has champion the caused of the enslaved for many years. Israel knew this to be true because of their 400 year enslavement in Egypt, their 40 year wanderings in the wilderness and their struggles against overwhelming odds in the Promised Land. Because he is who he is, "Jah" which is a contraction for "Jehovah" is his name. "He is the Lord."

Because of Israel's faith, God vindicated them by setting right whatever was wronged. The innocent were avenged, the lonely were comforted and the chains that bound them were broken. (V6). For this, God is to be praised.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus brought wonder and surprise to the religious leaders of his time when he declared that God had sent him as a messenger of hope to those who were oppressed, enslaved and dispirited. Here he said, " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

What David said to the people in Psalm 68, Jesus announced as his mission as well. He seemed to define breaking the shackles as 1)healing the broken hearted, 2)giving hope to the dispirited 3)showing those who cannot see a better way 4)freeing those who have been enslaved from shackles.

Those who are shackled by heavy burdens of guilt, sin and doubt can have new hope and joy as they realize that Christ wants to set them free.

Breaking the Shackles

The 68th psalm gives us a formula and a reminder. It tells us how to break free and reminds us that God will break us free.

Let God Arise

Look at verse one again. It contains three powerful words that are the key to

breaking the shackles that bind us..”Let God arise!” There is a hidden implication in the very first word.. “Let.” It suggests that believers should allow God to come forth and do the things that he does. For too long we have not allowed him to do great works for us. While Jesus performed miracles in scores of towns and villages, he was not able to do great things in Nazereth. They would not allow him the opportunity. There are many today who have not enjoyed the great opportunities that God has in store for them because they won’t give God a chance. That means stepping out on faith. For some it might be going back to school and retraining ourselves, long after others think its too late. But to break the shackles, we must let God arise! There are others shackled to a very nonproductive life. The scripture still speaks, “Let God Arise!” To let God arise means releasing him to do what only God can do instead of trying to do it all by yourself. Do what you know how to do, then Let God arise. When you let God arise, step back and get ready to watch God work!

Rejoice Before God

Look at verse three again. It too contains three powerful words key relevant to breaking the shackles, “rejoice before God.” It is easy to rejoice when a victory has been won, it is more difficult when we are not sure of the victory. However, David encouraged believers to remember that when it comes to any battle where believers moving at the will of God, the victory is guaranteed! “No weapon formed against us” shall prosper, when our battle is God’s battle. No enemy can keep us down, when we are moving at God’s command. Therefore this Psalm reminds us that despite any shackles that may be holding you down at the moment, praise God, for help is on the way! Consider the woman who was in desperate trouble. She was behind in her mortgage, her bills were due, her husband had been laid off and in six months they expected to be homeless and destitute. As she told her plight to a friend while driving along a busy street she confessed that she put her entire situation in God’s hands. “I’m trusting him” she said. Just as soon as she said those words a there was a huge crash as the woman’s car was hit from behind. She was jarred quickly, the air bag exploded and pounded her in the face, the seat belt cut into her shoulder bone like a knife. As she lay on the ground waiting for the ambulance, the woman lay on the ground smiling, saying “Thank you Jesus!” Her friend was mystified. “Don’t you know that in six months you are going to lose everything you have, you don’t have a job, now you have no car. You turned to God and a crazy driver runs a red light and busts you up!. Why are you saying, Thank you Jesus.” The woman smiled again “The car that hit me...it belongs to State Farm Insurance. God works in mysterious ways!”

He bringeth out

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that no matter how tight fitting the shackles, God will bring you out.

Verse six has three more powerful words. “He bringeth out!” They are words of

hope and inspiration that suggest to us that no matter deep we get "in" God can bring us out! No matter how far we fall down, God can bring us up!

Today there are many who have found themselves in a variety of situations that have resulted in emotional, psychological, social and spiritual captivity.

Yet, we hear David reminding us in this psalm that there is no captivity that is powerful enough to hold down a child of God when God gets ready to bring him up.

The Great Houdini was one of the world's greatest escape artists. They could not build a cell that he could not escape from. He was locked inside of steel vaults, only to break free. He was chained upside down over a busy New York street and he escaped in front of the eyes of thousands. No restraints could hold the Great Houdini.

Yet, in all his greatness, the great Houdini's ability get free from locked situations does not compare in any way to what God can do when he gets ready to set a soul free.

There are many people today who understand the words of Mary, Mary's song better than others, because they literally feel like there are shackles on their feet.

These are those who have lost hope because their hands have been tied by situations out of their control.

They cannot move the way they want to because not only are their shackles on their feet there are ankle bracelets on their legs.

There's somebody here today who is frustrated because they can't do what they know they can do, or grasp what they need. Not only are their shackles on their feet and ankle bracelets on their legs there are handcuffs around their wrists.

There is somebody here today that feels restrained and restricted. Every time they try to do something to better themselves they are frustrated. Not only are there shackles on their feet, ankle bracelets on their legs and handcuffs on their wrists; they are wrapped up in straight jackets.

If you can't break free from the chains, the best thing to do is to find somebody who has the key!

I don't know about you but I know the man who has the key!

I saw him use the key when he broke the shackles of lameness that kept a man bound for 38 long years saying, "Take thy bed and walk!"

I saw him use the key when he stood in front of the grave of Lazarus and said, "Loose that man and let him go!"

I saw him use the key when two saints were locked in prison and prayed at midnight. That's when we learned that prayer is the key to the kingdom and faith unlocks the door!

I saw him use the key when he met the woman at the well. She was locked up and tied up in guilt and sin, but when he turned the key she ran through the city saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

Who is this man? His name is Jesus!

At the name of Jesus! Doors will be opened!

At the name of Jesus chains will be torn asunder!

At the name of Jesus the captives will be set free!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead! With all power in his hands!

No. 9017-Communion

God We thank you for this food

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 17, 2002

SCRIPTURE:For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:4-5

Introduction

Have you ever been told to eat all of your food only to find that there was something on your plate that you did not like? Most of us have had that experience. It is discomforting at the least. Everyone has at least one food type that turns them completely off. What one person considers tasty is considered nasty by another. No matter what the food item may be, there is someone who thinks it tastes terrible. We now many people who love chicken, but there are people who are completely turned off by chicken. The same is true of brussel sprouts, okra or even spinach. For every person who loves eating raw oysters on the half shell there is another person that hates the very thought. There are many that can't imagine eating snails or fish eggs, yet there are millions of people who not only eat these items but also call them delicious.

What happens when the food you dislike the most is on your plate? What do you do? You may respond like the little boy who was asked to offer the blessing for the Sunday meal. The little boy gave a typical blessing until he looked down on his plate. He then said, "God I thank you for the fried chicken. I thank you for the rice and gravy. I thank you for the mustard greens and corn bread and I thank you for the bread pudding. I also thank you for the macaroni and cheese. Amen." Puzzled, his mother asked why he asked blessings for food on the table one item at a time instead of his usual "God we thank you for this food." The little boy answered, "I gave thanks for the chicken because I like chicken. I gave thanks for the rice and gravy, macaroni and cheese and bread pudding because I like then. I love greens and corn bread. I thank the Lord for the food I like. Some of that other stuff on my plate I can't stand. If I gave thanks for the whole plate the Lord may get the wrong idea and give me more of what I can't stand!"

God blesses many of us with full plate. In fact, we're like David in the 23rd Psalm when he said, "my cup runneth over." A full plate in this context is not a reference to food but to a wide assortment of experiences that range from good times to bad times. Sometimes the items on our plate excite us and bring us joy. There are others

that may be good for us but we don't like them and have no plans to deal with them. At the close of the day many reflect on the day and stop to give God thanks, but not for the whole day's experience. Many of us are like the little boy, we don't want God to get the wrong idea and give us more of what we don't like, so we only thank him for the part of the day that we enjoyed.

The word of God teaches us not to be selective in our gratitude and thanksgiving. We are encouraged to praise God for experience, for all things work according to his will and every circumstance will work to our advantage in the long run. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks." That means that we should lift God up constantly and praise him for everything on our plate, even the things we don't like.

As Christians, we have learned that God serves us a full platter of experiences that are meant for our good. We look at what life offers and conclude, "I won't complain." We offer thanks for everything on our plate and give God the praise as we clean our plates and revel in every experience.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes a letter of encouragement to believers about receiving food served to them from the tables of gentiles.

Paul's letter was directed at a young minister named Timothy. Timothy faced believers who were being confused by newcomers to the faith who were teaching that they should continue the legalistic requirements of the Mosaic law even to the point of refusing to eat certain foods on their plates. The Mosaic law was very rigid. It placed unusual demands on believers addressing even the most minute of concerns over rituals and ceremonies, including what menu items should be included with every meal.

In short, the orthodox Jews believed that there were some things on their plates that they were not supposed to eat. They said they were unclean. Paul's teaching was based upon the biblical truth that God made everything good and edible. In Genesis 1:29 these words are written, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." So he intended plants for man's consumption. But what about meats? The word answers that question too in Genesis 9:3, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

There were foods that were considered unclean while Israel was in the wilderness. This was because of sanitary laws designed to keep down diseases, not because the creatures were made unclean.

Paul made it abundantly clear that everything God created is good. If it's on the plate we may not have a taste for it, but it's all good. It may even turn our stomachs, but it's good.

What's important, Paul emphasized, is the spirit of thanksgiving that we approach as we sit down to eat. If we approach the meal with a spirit a thanks, it's all good. When we approach our meal with a spirit of thankfulness we turn even the simple act of

eating into a worship, because we show thanks. Likewise when we approach our plate in life with a spirit of thankfulness we turn our entire lives into a witness as we demonstrate our thankfulness and gratitude to God.

Three ways we thank him

When we thank God for our food we do more than just bless the food we demonstrate an attitude about life.

GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD: When we thank God for our entire plate of food we acknowledge his goodness and greatness. Paul said in the text that everything God made was "good." And so it is. That's why the children's grace says, "God is great, God is good, God we thank you for our food. Amen" We thank him for whatever is on the plate because everything on it comes from a great and good God. The fact that God is good is not an issue with believers. We know that to be a fact. Just as a good parent may prepare a meal for us that has some items that are good for us even though we don't like them, we trust God's inherent goodness. We trust that if it's on my plate and God prepared it, then it's ultimately going to be good for me, even if it does not taste good to me. Psalm 107:9 says, "For he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." What is on your plate that you do not like? A lost job? A defeat? A disappointment? An illness? When you see items on your plate that you don't particular care for, remember God is always good, so whatever is on the plate will ultimately work out to your good. -All the time!

WE NEED GOD ALWAYS: When we thank God for our food, we acknowledge that we need him, all of the time. The man or woman that sits down to eat without offering a word of prayer does so because they do not see the need. Those who offer prayer do so because they recognize that they have a full plate of food not because of their own good works and ability but because of the will of God. "God we thank you for this food" is an acknowledgment that what is on this plate is not of my own accord but out of thy abundance. Likewise, it is also an acknowledgment that whatever we have in life has come as a result of our own labor but the grace of God. Moreover, it is also an acknowledgment that we cannot succeed without his help and guidance. The song writer said, "I need thee oh, I need thee. Every hour I need thee. O bless me now my savior. I come to the thee!" Blessed soul says, "Lord I have a full plate in front of me. I've been blessed but I need you to help me continue. I lift up mine eyes unto the hills. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!

WE ACCEPT WHAT HAS BEEN SERVED: When we thank God for the food, we acknowledge that we accept what has been served. The life of Christ was a full plate of sorts. He grew up happy and healthy. He had a profession that provided him a living and once he began his public ministry, he found popularity and a following. Despite the good things on his plate, there were a few untasty items. He never had a place to call his own. Once he mused that, "foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the son of man hath no place to lay his head." He rarely had a moment to himself.

People who wanted something from him without having anything to offer him in the way of Godly love often surrounded him. In the garden, as he prayed he saw something else on his plate. It was the prospect of the old rugged cross and crucifixion. He did not like that item on his plate. In fact, he even asked not to be served that portion. He wanted it taken off his plate, but he concluded, "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done." He demonstrated to us how to accept what has been served. When we offer thanks, it is a way of saying, "We accept what has been served." Showing thanks to God is a spiritual statement. It is an acknowledgment that we accept his will over our own. We accept his mission for our lives and although it may contain a bitter portion, "Thy will be done."

Compliment the Cook, Clean Your Plate

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that the best compliment that can be given to the person who prepares the food is an empty plate!

It doesn't matter how many times we tell the person who prepares the food how much we appreciate their food service, the real testimony is not in what we say, the real testimony is whether we clean the plate.

The cook often peeps around the door to get a glimpse of the faces of those who eat the meal she has prepared. Just seeing the smiling faces and empty plates is enough to compensate for the long hours of toil putting the meal together. If we say we are thankful for the food, but leave it on the plate untouched, the cook gets the real message!

God serves each of us a full plate of experiences, we offer thanks we should offer thanks for everything on the plate.

Job was served a full plate. On his plate there was wealth and prosperity, a large and fruitful family, good health and long life. But also on his plate were trials and temptations, death and sickness, financial loss and loneliness.

His friends encouraged him to curse God and die. But Job gave God thanks for the whole plate. He thanked him for the good times and he thanked him for the bad times and praised his name saying, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Can't you hear Paul saying in Philippians 4:12, " I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

That means that he learned how to deal with the whole plate.

When believers reach this point we say, "I have learned to praise God for abundance, but at that same time I have learned to praise him when things are tough. No matter what's on the plate, I have learned to praise the Lord!"

I don't know about you but I agree with the song writer's thoughts. When I look at my plate I see some good days. I see some bad days. But all of my good days outweigh my bad days, I won't complain!

Sometimes my clouds hang low and I can hardly see the road! I ask why the question Lord, why is there so much pain?

But the Lord knows what's best for me, that's why he put it on my plate, so I say, thank you Lord!

God we thank you for this food. We thank for this plate!

Thank the Lord in the good times!

Thank the Lord in the bad times!

Thank the Lord when the sun is shining!

Thank the Lord when the rain is falling!

Thank the Lord at the noon day but also thank the Lord in the midnight hour!

Thank the Lord when you're up! Thank the Lord when you're down!

I see Jesus in the garden saying father, you gave me a full plate but I've got this last cup filled with stuff I don't like. But nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done!

He took the good with the bad. He rode into Jerusalem when the people shouted "Hosanna!" But a few days later they cried out "Crucify him!"-he took the good with the bad.

They drove nails in his hands, but he never said a mumbling word!

They drove nails into his feet, but he never said a mumbling word!

He died out on Calvary without saying a mumbling word!

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the Grave with no complaints on lips and all power in his hands!

All power in his hands!

No. 9018-Thanks

Please and Thank You

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 27, 2002

SCRIPTURE: I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. Psalm 69:30-32

Introduction

Have you ever heard of magic words? We've heard of all kinds of magic. We've seen or heard nearly every revelation of magic there is, including magic beans, magic carpets and magic medicines that can cure anything. When it comes to magic we have just about seen it all. But suppose I told you that there was such a thing as magic words that seem to perform wonders when spoken, would you believe me? People who utter these magic words have reaped mounds of benefits. In fact, millions of people report that these two words have made a great difference in the way they have lived their lives. What are the magic words? They are Please and thank you!

A generation ago there was a children's television program entitled "Captain Kangaroo." The broadcast featured a wacky rabbit, a moose, and Mr. Green Jeans. Among the values the broadcast attempted to teach children was the simple importance of being polite and grateful. Captain Kangaroo called "Please and thank you" the magic words of life. He said they would open doors and create future opportunities as well. These ideas did not originate with The Captain. They were taught in every home, in every school and in every learning situation. Please and thank you truly can take us a long way.

What about God? Does he respond to Captain Kangaroo's magic words? Is he impressed with "Please and Thank you?"

The biblical record is filled with instances of the great and the small demonstrating the power of Please and Thankful before God. Whether in public or in prayer, many of patriots literally begged God for blessings. We also see numerous accounts of the biblical patriots returning to give thanks to God in a variety of ways.

Whether it's in our homes or on our knees before God, "Please and Thank You" have proven themselves to be magical words that make things happen in our relationships among men and before God.

As Christians, we have found that God responds to our pleas and to our words and acts of thanks. That's why we continually ask him for the desires of our heart

and then give him thanks when he responds.

Exposition

This Psalm focuses on David as he renewed his commitment to praise God and thank him in a way that will please him.

The Mosaic law spelled out an elaborate ritual in which the people were to show their thanks to God. Nothing was left to chance. Neither was anything spontaneous. It was all spelled out in the law. Special days were set aside called "Sabbaths" in which they were to praise God in a predefined way. They all said the same words. They all brought the same sacrifices. In so doing, the Mosaic law prescribed that God would be pleased with their demonstrations of gratitude. An Old Testament believer could guarantee that God would be pleased by following the formula spelled out in the Torah.

However, in this Psalm David is pledging to go beyond the requirements of the law indicated by his reference to Oxen and Bullocks in Verse 31. He wanted to please God by showing real thanks for all of his mercies.

David spent a considerable amount of time trying to figure out how to please God. In Psalm 116:12 he asked the question, "What shall I render unto God for all his benefits toward me? He answered his own question by saying he would take the cup of salvation, call upon the name of the Lord and pay his vows. Doing these three things was what David called "Thanksgiving." Praise, devotion and vows were essential parts of any act of thanksgiving according the Psalm 116.

Thus in Psalm 69:30 when David says I will "magnify him with thanksgiving" he is talking about giving God verbal praise but also includes in his Thanksgiving definition, devotion, as represented by the cup of salvation, and the payment of vows made.

Such praise is based on words, personal devotion and deeds. Such praise magnifies God and makes him bigger and grander in the eyes of unbelievers.

In addition, saying thanks "Pleases" God. The Hebrew word translated "please" is "yatab" which has a double meaning. In the first sense "yatab" means to glad, joyful and satisfied. This context refers to the recipient of an action, who is God. The second meaning is "to be well placed" which refers to the person performing an action. Together the meanings in the context of this Psalm make a dramatic statement, "when I offer real thanks for God's mercies, I make God glad and joyful and place myself well with him."

Thus, David made a very clear point, if we aim to please God in all that we say and do, he will reciprocate and place us well in his grace.

Pleas

This text suggest another truth, "To really say please, there must be some pleas." The word please itself is nothing without the word "pleas." When we say "please" we are actually pleading for help and assistance. Please is not a demand. Please is

not a command or an order. A person who says “please” is one who humbles himself and admits that he stands in the need of something that he cannot provide for himself.

A plea is a request. It is a prayer. The man who prays humbles himself before an almighty God. He asks for something, knowing that he is not entitle to have it, but asks out of mercy and grace.

When Naaman was told by the prophet to go and wash himself seven times in muddy water at first he resisted. He considered himself a nobleman and a man of high station. He almost lost a blessing because he could not humble himself and do the will of God. The Rich Young Ruler came to Christ and asked, “What must I do to be saved?” When he was told that he had to sell all he had and take up his cross, he was not willing to make such a sacrifice. He felt that he was worthy of salvation because he had kept the law since his birth. He left with receiving the blessing because he could not humble himself.

To humble ourselves before God is to offer him a plea. It’s a way of saying “Please!”

When we humble ourselves before him we say “Bless me..please!” “Heal me, please!” “Answer my request...please!”

Naaman found out that when you humble yourself before God, even leprosy can be healed.. if you say please!

Hezekiah found out that even if you facing death that you can be given a new extension on life, if you humble yourself.. and say please!

Please

While it is true that it takes some “pleas” to say Please, it is also true that it takes some deeds to really please.

David told us that to please God there must be three types of deeds or actions that will make him happy. We must praise and speak of him regularly, live a life representative of the cup of salvation, and pay our vows. Without these three deeds, we cannot please God.

Many people spend most of their time trying to please men rather than God. We want men to praise us as successful. We want men to salute us and give us credit. We want Oscars and Grammies, Tonies and Super Bowl Rings. We want the praises of men so badly that it becomes the full focal point of our lives. To get the approval of men we begin to respond to men and to obey them. Yet the word of God teaches us that we, “out to obey God rather than man.” We should want to please God rather than others.

We please God and make him happy when we worship him and testify of his goodness to others.

We please God and make him happy when we live a life that is sanctified and devoted to him.

We also please God and make him happy when we do whatever we have promised him we would do.

Many of us have made many promises to God. In moments of distress or trouble we promises to God. When we keep those promises to him, he is pleased.

Pleasing Place

It is also important to note that when we place ourselves so that we can please God, he places us in pleasing situations!

Remember the word David used, "Yatab." When you please God you make him happy but that also means that if you please God, he'll put you in a pleasing situation.

If you still don't know what that means look at it this way:

When you sit down today to a pleasant meal, that's "Yatab," you pleased God and he put you in a pleasing situation!

When you drive your automobile that gets you to your destination in one piece that's "Yatab," you pleased God and he put you in a pleasant situation.

When you put on your favorite suit of close that's "Yatab" you pleased God and he put you in a pleasing situation!

Malachi told Israel that if they would simply obey God and keep their vows that he would open up the windows of heaven and shower down so many blessings that they would not be able to handle them all.

A widow woman was obedient to God and found that her obedience pleased God and not matter how many times she went to her barrel it never ran dry. She pleased hem and he put her in a pleasing situation.

I don't know about you but I believe there is someone here today that is in a much more pleasing situation than you were just a few years ago.

Sometimes it may not seem like it at the moment, but if we please God he will put us in a better situation.

Daniel pleased God by continuing to pray. He was thrown into lion's den, but when it was all over, God raised him up to more pleasing situation.

Job pleased God by continuing to have faith. He endured considerable loss, but when it was all over, God raised him to a more pleasing situation!

The Three Hebrew Boys pleased God by remaining faithful to him, but not before they went to the fiery furnace. But when it was all over, he put them in a more pleasing situation.

Because God is so good. Because God has blessed us. That's why believers have learned the importance of saying thank you with their mouths; thank you with their consecrated lives and thank you with their service.

He didn't have to do it but he did!
He didn't have to bless us but he did!
He didn't have to help us but he did!
He didn't have die out on Calvary but he did!
But Early Sunday morning he arose up from the grave with all power in his hands!
Thank You!
Thank You Lord!

No. 9019-Inspiration

One Moment In Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1, 2002

SCRIPTURE:For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Psalm 30:5; And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Luke 4:5;For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17;In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:52

Introduction

Have you ever had a special moment in your life that you wish you could save forever? Every life has thousands of special moments that pass by so quickly that we wish we could catch them and freeze them for all time. What was your special moment? The look on your face after a victory? The birth of your child? The painful look of defeat or failure? When we experience great high's and great lows of emotion in an unusual fashion those are moments to remember. The Eastman Kodak Film Company coin a phrase a few years ago describing such moments as "Kodak" moments, because they are moments that defined who we were and how we felt at a particular point in our lives.

As holidays approach there will be many Kodak moments. We will take photographs either digitally or on film of special moments that may include weddings, teas, reunions, and family celebrations. They are happy moments that we want to remember all of our lives. Of course Kodak hopes that everyone will preserve their special moment with a Kodak product.

Life consists of many great moments that define who we are and where we are going. In a moment, a simple ordinary person can be transformed into a national hero.

In a moment the mundane can become extraordinary.

In a moment, a failing child can awaken into a fireball of success.

In a moment, what seems to be a failure can turn into a success.

A few years ago Whitney Houston sang a song entitled "One moment in time." The lyrics defined a special moment:

To taste the sweet, I faced the pain
I rise and fall, yet through it all this much remains
I was One moment in time
When I'm more than I thought I could be

When all of my dreams are a heart beat away
And the answers are all up to me
Give me one moment in time
When I'm racing with destiny
Then in that one moment of time
I will feel, I will feel eternity

Life presents each of us with a multitude of magic moments, windows of opportunity to do or say something that will significantly make a difference. Teachers call such times, "teachable moments." A teachable moment is the time when a student is focused and receptive to an idea or concept. It's a magic moment when the chemistry between teacher and student is just right and learning can be best afforded. There are also "Lovable moments" those times when even the hardest, coldest, rudest, most repugnant person seems accessible and able to give and receive friendship.

Life is also filled with defining moments. These are the moments in which we make decisions that define our direction for years to come. The day we graduate from high school is a defining moment. Yet, the day we decided to drop out of school and never return was also a defining moment that determines our future. The day we ask someone to marry us and the day that we accept, is a defining moment. That decision will change the course of our lives forever.

When God deals with us, he uses the entire package of moments as he relates to us. There are teachable moments, in which he teaches us what is important in life. There are lovable moments, when he shows us the depth of his love for us. There are defining moments when he prompts us to choose between his love and that of the world.

As Christians, we have come to recognize that every moment that God gives us is precious and should be used wisely. We have one life to live and each moment should be lived as if we only had one moment in time. One poet said:

"I only have one minute with sixty seconds in it
Forced upon me, didn't seek it, didn't choose it
But it's up to me to use it, give account if I abuse it
Yes, it is only just a minute but eternity is in it"

Time In The Bible

There is a unique note about the way the length of life is measured in the Bible. With only a few exceptions, when the scripture refers to time as it relates to God the reference is to "years." However, when the reference is made to man it is usually referred to in "days." Thus, Job 10:5 says, Are thy days as the days of man? Are thy years as man's days?" Then Exodus 20:12 says, "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The point is clear, when it comes to time, God has years that reach into infinity but when it comes to mankind, we only have a short period of time, measured in days.

Our days are but moments. We don't have many of them so we must learn what God wants us to learn from them.

Look at four types of moments that come into every life:

Difficult Moments (Psalm 30:5)

For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Psalm 30:5

No life is complete without some difficult moments. At the time that difficult moments appear they seem to last forever. When David, mused about this fact of life in Psalm 30:5 he concluded that difficulties, which he described as God's anger only lasts a moment. It suggests that the wrath of God is not against the person of a believer but against unholy actions. Difficulties are not permanent. They will not last always.

The Old Warriors understood this principle when they wrote the song that says, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

Are you having a difficult moment? It is not a condemnation. It is not a condition that will last forever. Financial difficulties, family problems, personal motivation, are all difficult moments. Even sadness and grief that bring us to tears are not permanent situations. In the quiet corridors of your mind say, "This too shall pass." It is a reminder that no matter what the frustration of the present, it will only last a moment and will pass.

Tempting Moments (Luke 4:5)

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Luke 4:5

Among the most frustrating times in our lives are those times when we flirt with temptation. Temptation comes when we have both the capacity and opportunity to do something that everything human in us says we should do but everything that we know is right tells us that we should not.

We are not tempted by the things we do not like or want. We are tempted by those things which we desire and would like to have but should not have.

That's what happened when Jesus was about to begin his public ministry. The devil carried him into a high place in the desert and prompted him to consider all the ways that he could use his Godly presence for himself. He considered turning stones into bread, and jumping from a mountain side to demonstrate that angels would catch him before he hit the bottom. In Luke 4:5 he was carried to a high mountain where the devil showed him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. He could have had it all if he chose to worship him.

It was a tempting moment. He could have had riches, power, fame, invincibility, all in a single moment; and the man inside wanted all of those things. Jesus rebuked Satan and chose to serve God just as quickly as the opportunity presented itself.

Have you had a tempting moment? Are you faced with one right now? Do the opportunities in front of you appeal to your self interests although they may take you

further from the Godly ideal for your life?

The tempting moment is "one moment in time" but the decision made can change the course of your life forever. One song writer said, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin." The decision to yield or not to yield is made in a single moment, but its effects last a lifetime.

Afflicting Moments (2 Cor 4:17)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:17

Afflictions rarely seem like moments to us. They seem like eternities. Physical afflictions, mental afflictions, and emotional afflictions can be extremely troublesome both for the persons who have them and for those who love them. A long term illness is more than an difficulty, it is an affliction. Yet, the word of God considers even such conditions "light" because they are not outside of the bounds of God to handle.

A woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years found Jesus in a crowd and concluded that if she could just touch the hem of his garment that her affliction of 12 years would be relieved. A man sitting by the pool waiting to be healed for 38 long years had an affliction that seemed beyond reach, until he met Jesus. These instances provide hope to those who deal with long term illnesses that they are not beyond God's power. They pronounce the word of faith that those who have been diagnosed as beyond recovery are not beyond God's power!

While afflictions can be reversed by God there are times, when for God's own purposes he chooses not to reverse an affliction. Paul was one of God's greatest ambassadors who had an affliction that Paul called a "thorn in his flesh." It crippled his efforts to work for the kingdom, slowed his pace and troubled him. Three times Paul prayed to God for relief from his affliction and his answer was always the same as he received in 2 Cor 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

When you have prayed that same prayer and receive that same answer, then take God's words to be true that his "grace" is sufficient. Paul wrote the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:17 and said, such afflictions are "light" and last but a moment when we compare them to glory that God is preparing for us in the future.

If you are a care giver, frustrated over the weight of the affliction of a loved one, God says "My grace is sufficient."

Transforming Moments (1 Cor 15:52)

I*n a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:52*

Just as there are joyous moments that come at the end of difficult moments.

Just as there are tempting moments and afflicting moments, there are also some transforming moments, in which we transform from what we once were to what we

will be.

A transforming moment is one moment in time when our entire view about life is changed from what it once was to what is should be. The prodigal son wasted his substance in riotous living in a far country. But as he prepared to slop the hogs in pig sty, with no food to eat and no place to call his own, he had a transforming moment. He said, "I will arise and go to my father and say father I have sinned against heaven and against thee." It was a moment of decision that changed his life forever.

When Saul traveled down the road to Damascus he was intent on persecuting the church and jailing every person that called himself a Christian. However, on the Damascus Road, he had a transforming moment. He saw a light and he heard a voice that challenged him to turn his life around and live for Christ.

Jonah tried to take a ship traveling in a direction opposite from where God wanted him to go. It wasn't until he had a transforming moment in the belly of a great fish that he decided to do what God wanted him to do and go where God wanted him to go.

Every child of God has experienced his own transforming moment. It's the moment when you decided to put down the old life and to pick up a new life!

Somebody here knows what it's like to begin the weekend with a clear head and a big paycheck, but to party so hard over the weekend that you wake up Monday morning with a hangover in your head and no money in your pocket! That kept going each weekend until their reached a transforming moment. In one moment of time they came to the conclusion that something had to change!

Somebody here knows what it's like to get frustrated with school and quit resolving to make it without an education, but just to be hood rich with everything in your mama's name! But in one moment in time, somebody decided that I've got do better. I've got to turn my life around!

When you reach a transforming moment, that's when you realize that it is better to:

-Live on the right side than to die on the wrong side!

-Stand on God's side than the fall with the devil!

-Walk around in heaven than to ride around in hell!

When we reach a transforming moment that's when we decide that "I need thee every hour, oh bless me now my savior, I come to thee!"

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:52 that one of these old days the trumpet of God will sound and the dead in Christ shall rise and then those of us who have been:

-Struggling with tough and difficult moments trying to make ends meet!

-Climbing up the rough side of the mountain!

-Crying briny tears in the midnight hour

...shall be transformed in one moment of time and caught up to be with the Lord!

That's why Jesus came down here; carried an old rugged cross, died out on Calvary and Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

Because one of these old days he's coming back again, in one moment of time...and we'll be caught up!

Caught up!

Caught up to meet him in the air!

No. 9020-Inspiration

When Shiloh Comes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 8, 2002

SCRIPTURE: The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Genesis 49:10

Introduction

As a special day gets closer, do you get excited? When special days come many people are filled with the joy and excitement of anticipation. It makes us anxious and we can't sleep at night. Sometimes even in the day, we dream about it. Is it an engagement? A Wedding? Is it the return of a loved one? Graduation Day? A Birthday? Christmas? When that special day gets closer it seems as if the days get longer, the clock ticks slower and the pages on the calendar never turn. "I can't wait" is the phrase we use! We are bursting with excitement.

Sometimes it's hard to wait, especially if you have been delaying something important for a long time. Consider the two boys who sat at the table and argued over which of them would get the first pancake their mother would make. She made the best pancakes in the world and they could not wait. The older brother was five years old and the younger brother was four. The older brother felt he should eat the pancakes first because he was the oldest. He always insisted that the oldest should be first. The two of the argued back and forth until the mother seized the moment and tried to use it for a perfect teaching example. "If Jesus were here" said the mother, "He would say, my brother can go first because I am my brother's keeper. I can wait." The two boys looked at their mother with a blank look, then the older one quickly stood and said, "Mother, you are right. I shouldn't insist on being first all of the time. Today my little brother can be Jesus..cause I sho can't wait!"

One of the hardest things about Christmas is waiting. We can't wait! But it's not always Christmas, it's hard to wait for many things that we want. We do have the joy of knowing that when it finally comes it will be well worth the wait.

Isaiah said that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not faint. Waiting is not easy, especially when we think about how great it will be when it comes.

As Christians, we are especially excited about the coming of the Christ Child. His arrival on the earth was a sign of renewed hope and faith. As we celebrate the anniversary of his coming 20 centuries ago, it stirs renew hope and about present

conditions. Even now we look past the difficulties of our present times to that great time, when "Shiloh Comes."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he predicts the coming of the Savior.

Jacob was the last of a triumvirate of patriarchs that included his father Isaac; and his grandfather Abraham. Jacob, the last of the three, lived a long and fruitful life that included 12 sons whose descendants became known as The Children of Israel. In the closing days of his life, Jacob called his sons together and talked with them about the immediate and distant future. His words came both as blessings and pronouncements of doom. As he spoke about each of his sons individually, he pronounced a great blessing on Judah.

Jacob prophesied that the leadership of the families would stem from the tribe of Judah for generations. Specifically, he said the scepter or the symbol of power would remain with them "until Shiloh comes." Shiloh was the name given to the one who would come from God to bring complete deliverance, freedom and hope to the people.

Over the years, "until Shiloh comes" has grown to be a statement of hope among believers who looked for encouragement when everything around them seemed hopeless.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem there was joy on earth because even the stars in the sky recognized that it was time for Shiloh to come.

There was a general expectation that there would be peace on earth when Shiloh comes.

There was a feeling that goodwill would exist among men when Shiloh comes. Because of Jacob's words there was a optimistic spirit that everything will be all right when Shiloh comes.

John, in the Revelation, said in the Revelation that when Shiloh comes the Messiah will be the Lion of Judah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Since the Lion is the King of beasts, John saw the Messiah as the king of king rising out of the family of Judah. Thus, he saw the Messiah's triumphant return in the second advent as the "Lion of Judah" strong and bold.

There were obviously great expectations about changes in personal and world conditions, "when Shiloh comes."

A Word from God

The name "Shiloh" has many meanings, one of them is "Message from God." That is what the world sought, a message from God. As the Old Testament closed and the New Testament opened 490 years had passed without hearing a word from God. There were no prophets. There were pronouncements. No encouragements or condemnations. There was 490 years of silence.

But when "Shiloh" came, the silence was broken. Jesus was both the message and

the messenger. John said, “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” When the word became flesh the message became the messenger.

True believers can’t go long with developing a hunger for the Word of God. There are many church members who can belong to a church and be absent from worship, bible study and learning situations, for long periods of times. They like the man who complained that the preacher at his church only has two subjects. “Every time I come to church he always preaching on the same thing. It’s either the birth of Christ or the resurrection of Christ, it’s time for him to get something new!” Christmas and Easter that’s good enough for some and too much for others. But there is something on the inside of true believer that pushes them to want to hear a Word from God. They want read the Word of God, worship in public, watch on television, and listen to tapes. They want to hear a word from the Lord!

As families make decisions about marriage, careers, children, business opportunities, morality and many other particulars, it is important that they seek the direction from God. Old Testaments Kings rarely went into battle without seeking a word from God. One King, Saul, wanted to hear from God so badly that he tried to conjure up the spirit of a dead prophet, just to hear a word from God.

They want to hear a word because they know that “When Shiloh comes”; when they hear a word from God they will have direction!

When Shiloh comes they can be sure about their decisions!

When Shiloh comes their doubts can be resolved!

When Shiloh comes God will move on the altar of the spirit and motivate them in a way that no other can!

It all happens “when Shiloh comes!

At Peace With God

Jacob gave the pronouncements of this text 1700 years before the birth of Christ. The words, “when Shiloh” comes meant a word from God but they also referred to one who would make peace between God and man. Jacob’s words were prophetic in that they warned him of a time when the people would not be at peace with God.

These words came before the deliverance from Egypt, the rebellions against God in the wilderness, the rejection of God in the Promised Land, and the acceptance of false God’s under the kings. All of these were instances in which the people were doing well, then turned their backs on the very relationship with God that made them prosper and broke the peace between themselves and God.

In a more personal way, we too have broken the peace with God. In our prosperity, there are many of us who have broken the peace with God. In our poverty we prayed hard for a crust of bread to eat and a corner to sleep in. Yet, one step away from extreme poverty, many have broken the peace with God and pulled away from the very qualities that made them successful.

A man passed along a road side and noticed a beautiful flower. He pulled it up

from the ground, placed it in a vase and placed it high on a mantel in his home. For a few days that flower appeared the same, but soon it began to wither around the edges. He wondered why? Then it dawned on him that what made the flower so beautiful was they way it was being fed. He placed it in a higher place but he also removed it from its fertile ground. So it is, with the man who begins an undertaking at peace with God but removes himself in search of a piece of the rock. He gets a piece of the rock but is not at "peace with the rock" and begins to wither.

Isaiah 9:6 describes Christ as the "Prince of Peace" because he and he alone could help to restore the peace between mankind and God. 1 Timothy 2:5 says it clearly "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" Paul tried to explain it to the Romans in Romans 5:1 when he said, "There being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When "Shiloh"-the sense of being at peace with God, comes there is an amazing change in our attitudes about life.

When Shiloh comes, that which once disturbed us, doesn't seem to bother us anymore!

When Shiloh comes, that which once seemed important is no longer germane to our quality of life.

When Shiloh comes, storms may rise and winds may blow, but our anchor holds!

When Shiloh comes, we can say triumphantly, despite what happens in the world, "It is well with my soul."

Help from God

Jacob's words must have sounded like a riddle to his sons as he said "until Shiloh comes." It was the first time in the bible that the word "Shiloh" had been spoken. Not only did Shiloh mean a word from God, and at peace with God, but it also meant, receiving help or deliverance from God.

Jacob's family spent generations trying to figure out the identity of the "deliverer."

Many felt that Moses was "Shiloh" because he performed miracles and led the people out of slavery. But Moses was not "Shiloh."

There were some who believed that Joshua was "Shiloh" because he too performed miracles and led them across the River Jordan.

From Elijah to Elisha, from Isaiah to Jeremiah, the people have tried to make one great personality or another the promised "Shiloh" who would be a help to the people and deliver them in times of trouble.

But it soon became obvious that there was only one person who could be "Shiloh"

Isaiah 19:20 says, "and he shall send them a savior, and a great one, and he deliver them!"

It doesn't take a great bible scholar to recognize the identity of Shiloh for in Matthew 1:21 an Angel spoke toMary and Joseph and told them they should name their son "Jesus" "For he shall save his people from their sins."

At His birth, the angels declared Jesus to be the Saviour "For unto you is born this day in the City of David a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

Shiloh is a savior!

Shiloh is a deliverer!

Shiloh is help in times of trouble!

As I close I'm reminded of the widowed school teacher who fell on bad times and was about to lose her home. She prayed to God and asked him to make a way. After her prayer she looked through an old scrapbook and her eyes fell on an old student of hers who gave her plenty of trouble because he always made trouble and was always late. She found his phone number and called him and when he found out that she was about to lose her house he promised to come to her side. A few days later the old teacher gathered her papers and prepared to go to meet her mortgage holder. She had a smile on her face that puzzled people who wanted to know why she smiled when she was about to lose her home. She only said, "My help is on the way."

As the old lady sat with her mortgager she continued to smile even though she didn't have a dime in her pocket. All she had to say to her agent was "my help is on the way." Just then her student came in the meeting with a check in his hands and paid off her note. With a smile on her face she said, "It took you thirty years to learn my lesson, but you finally learned how to show up on time!"

I don't know about you but I've found out, that "he may not come when you want him to but...when Shiloh comes, he's always on time!"

Good things start to happen when Shiloh comes. When Shiloh comes...

—People who were at the WORST start doing their best!

—People who were living in SIN start striving for HOLINESS!

—Hearts filled with sadness suddenly become filled with gladness!

—Those who walked in the dark, discover the marvelous light!

—Those who agonize over defeat, discover the thrill of victory!

—Those whose lives were out of tune, discover a new found harmony!

—Those who have fallen down, learn how to get back up again!

—Those who were crying, learn how to wipe their tears away!

Who is this man they call "Shiloh?"

Who is this man they call the Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor! Lord of Lord and King of Kings!

His name is Jesus, my rock in a weary land!

His name is Jesus, my shelter in a time of storm!

His name is Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

There are just a few more risings and fallings!

There are just a few more briny tears, but he's coming back again!

When Shiloh comes..crying days will be over!

When Shiloh comes....every mountain will be made low!

When Shiloh comes..every valley shall be exalted!

When Shiloh comes...

No. 9021-Christmas

Please come home for Christmas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 15, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:6-7.

Introduction

How do you know it's Christmas? It seems to come earlier every year! There was a time that the Christmas season began the day after Thanksgiving. We sensed we were in the Christmas season because instantly decorations and lighting sprouted everywhere. Christmas commercials began to air on television and we started seeing pictures of the man in the red suit, flying reindeer and nativity scenes. All that begins long before Thanksgiving in modern times, sometimes as early as late October. In many African-American communities, we know it's Christmas when grandmother or grandpa pulls out an old dusty copy of a song from the 1940's called "Please come home for Christmas."

The three bells that chime at its beginning generally signal that it's Christmas time in African-America. While other communities sing about, "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" or "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" the African-American community made its own contribution in the 1940's when Charles Brown and Gene Redd wrote the lyrics to "Please Come Home For Christmas."

Remember them?

Bells will be ringing the glad, glad news
Oh, what a Christmas to end the blues
My baby's gone, I have no friends
To wish me greetings, ooh, once again
Choirs will be singing Silent Night
Christmas carols by candlelight
Please come home for Christmas
Please come home for Christmas
If not for Christmas, by New Year's night

Why do families come home for Christmas? Some families come together from far and near to be together on Christmas day. It is the fellowship and reunion that draws

them. It is such a strong draw that they often travel hundreds of miles to share the family setting one more time. They make the trek home, because Charles Brown says, Christmas is "the time of year to be with the one you love."

We come home to old family traditions that have meaning and significance. Some families gather at the main house and sing and pray on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. For some, it's a tradition to rattle the pots and pans for the biggest meal of the year with everyone in the kitchen at the same time. Decorating the tree and wrapping presents is a ritual in many families. Reading the Christmas story as a family and saying a prayer of thanks before tearing open presents on Christmas day is a tradition in other homes.

We come home for Christmas in search of stability. In a world that changes so fast, we come home looking for that sense of stability and support that fed us and inspired us to continue despite our frustrations. Some come home to make amends. We come home to share a nostalgic moment with family and friends and to remember the good times. "It's the time to be with the one you love."

The best place to spend Christmas is at home. That doesn't mean your house, but where your heart is. That's why so many people travel thousands of miles at Christmas, to be where their hearts are. They want to be somewhere you feel comfortable, where you can be who you really are. Where you love and are loved in return. Home may not be as comfortable as the place you now live. The city may not be as fast paced as the one you see every day. In fact, mama's house may not be as plush as your apartment or condo, but wherever mama and papa and family lay their heads, under any circumstance, it is home. No wonder Charles Brown's simple song has survived for over 50 years; it says what we say to a distant love one, "Come Home for Christmas."

Two millenniums ago God did a strange thing. Instead of staying home in heaven, he decided to leave the comforts of his heavenly home to an uncomfortable, cold and ungrateful world. He left the warm radiance of heaven and braved the chill of the silent night to be among the people he loved. His heart was with the people so he came to make even a manger in Bethlehem a place to call home.

Damien Spikereit of the Berean Christian Church relates the story of a peculiar tradition in his family at Christmas. Every year his family put up a Christmas tree, strung lights and decorated the trees with tinsel and candy canes. At the close of the tree decorating ritual, his parents would take out a manger scene that had been in the family for generations. It was a typical scene with Mary and Joseph, wise men, shepherds and everyone standing around. His parents then placed the manger scene under the tree. It began when he was a child, but he noticed that every year before Christmas the manger was always empty. But on Christmas morning as the presents were opened and everyone hugged each other, he always noticed that the baby Jesus was in the manger! No one saw him put there. No one knows when, but he was there.

When love comes, Jesus comes and the manger is never empty.

As believers, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child into a world filled with animosity and hate, war and rumors of wars. We celebrate because when the one we love comes home, Jesus comes home and the manger is never empty.

Exposition

This text focuses on the details of Jesus' arrival on earth after a long journey to earth.

The book of Matthew details a lengthy genealogy that tells us the extent of the biological journey that proceeded through generations as he tracked the journey of Christ from heaven to this world. It is history that reveals a myriad of peoples, nationalities and races. It is a path that his reached into palaces and touched even the poorest of places. It included kings such as David and dark colored women like Ruth. It included saintly women like Mary and the not so saintly women like Rahab.

When the Book of Luke opens Christ's journey to this world after proceeding for hundreds of years was about to culminate. It begins with a familiar scene of an angel announcing to Mary and to Joseph that "The Holy Spirit has placed a child in you, and not just any child, He is the Son of God, the Messiah."

When Mary and Joseph accepted their surrogate status, Mary instantly becomes a surrogate mother. Joseph assumed the awesome task of serving as stepfather to the Son of God. As Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be taxed, the time came for the child to be born. His arrival was not without notice. Shepherds in the field were told by angels of the event. Others soon heard too. When the child was born he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn.

The journey Jesus made that is recorded in Luke details his arrival in the home of Mary and Joseph. The rest of the New Testament details the additional stops he made enroute to the home of every believer.

The Days were accomplished

Christ's journey from heaven to earth took centuries to unfold but by the time of this text it was down to a matter of days. When the days were finally accomplished, It was the day God would begin his mighty works among men.

Nothing happens before its time. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time and a season for everything, but nothing happens before its time. In youth, we are impatient and want the privileges of adult life without the maturity to handle the responsibilities. This was the case with the prodigal son, who could not wait for his inheritance. He wanted it quickly and instantly. He wanted it long before he was ready to handle what he would receive

Adults often hurry God. We can't wait for him to move. We pray and ask him for a blessing but then take matters into our own hand when God doesn't move fast enough for us. We ask him for a mate, then grab the first pretty looking thing that comes along, before God has a chance to move. Sera found this to be true. God promised she and her husband Abraham that they would have a child. Years passed and she was well passed the normal child bearing age. She tried to arrange for her husband to have a child by a surrogate because it appeared that God moved too slow. Then she heard the words, "Is there anything too hard for God to do?"

Galatians 4:4 tells us that when, " the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." In essence, when the time was right, God made his move.

In our lives today, we must remember that when God is ready, he will act!

When the days are accomplished, the prayer that we have prayed will receive an answer!

When the days are accomplished, the answer we seek will be delivered!

When the days are accomplished, the opportunity we seek will present itself!

She Brought Forth

In Bethlehem Mary delivered the baby Jesus in a stable. The fact that "she brought forth" is significant to us because in a greater sense when Jesus comes in any life he inspires, motivates and pushes us to "bring forth."

There have been many people in life who have testified that they would have given up on their dreams and aspirations but the power of God within them encouraged them to "bring forth." The only reason we would need to "bring forth" something is because it is hidden and latent. We bring forth that which is within us already but has not been realized. We bring forth potential.

When Jesus comes into our lives he helps us to bring forth our potential. He brings forth the courage that we need to tackle tough situations and difficult times. Hebrews 13:6 says, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." When Jesus comes there is a spirit of boldness that envelops every believer. We know that it can be done. We start to believe that all things are possible and the defeat leaves us. All of that happens when Jesus comes.

In the middle of adverse circumstances, she brought forth.

In the middle of tough times and bad living arrangements, she brought forth!

In the middle of whispers and stares from those who were turned off by their relationship, she brought forth!

In the middle of their poverty, she brought forth!

And when Jesus comes, we too can boldly bring forth that which is within.

We should Make room

Mary and Joseph went into Bethlehem and resorted to a manger, which was actually sort of a cave, behind an inn because when they knocked on the door of inn, they learned that there was no room. It was occupied. It was a busy season. They were not the only travelers and all of the rooms had been taken. They were given a secondary accommodation because the main place was occupied.

Often today Jesus knocks at our door but we are too busy to let him in. Revelation 3:20 gives notice, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." How does he knock? Does he appear in person and ring our doorbell or tap on the door?

Usually he calls us gently to serve him through serving others, while many respond; there are others who have no room. Sometimes he calls us to commune with him in prayer, public worship and private prayer time. While many hear his knock and open to him there are others who respond, there is "no room, no time, no way possible to do what he wants because their schedules are filled." In this sense, there are many today that have no room for the savior and relegate him to second place on their agenda while desiring to be first place on his.

We have an advantage that the Innkeeper did not have. Had he known that Mary and Joseph were bringing into his humble business the "King of Kings" he would have made room, even given them his own bed. Had he known that the Lord of Lords would be making history at his establishment he would have made it his business to make room for him. Today, we know who Jesus is and should take advantage of knowing who knocks, and always make room for him.

Our resolve should be similar to that of the prophet Isaiah who said, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me."

Don't Have Christmas Without Jesus

Finally brothers and sisters, we should mindful of the fact that while it is perfectly acceptable to join in the festivities surrounding Christmas; we don't want to come home to a Christmas without Jesus!

It is fine to have a beautiful Christmas tree that is decorated with pretty lights and candy cane, but we don't want to have Christmas without Jesus!

It is exciting to have tables full of food and the best cakes and pies in the world, but we don't want to have Christmas without Jesus!

It is an enriching experience to come home to give and exchange gifts and expressions of love, but we don't want to have Christmas without Jesus!

Christmas without Jesus is like a brand new car without gas!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cake made without sugar!

Christmas without Jesus is like a new toy but the batteries are not included!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cell phone with no minutes, a computer with no internet connection, and a copy machine with no paper!

Christmas without Jesus is like a coffeepot with no coffee, a bank account with nothing in it; and a magazine with empty pages!

No wonder the prayer of every Christian is "Please come home for Christmas" for without Jesus; there is no reason for the season!

When Jesus comes in your home, miraculous things start to happen.

We say, "Please come home for Christmas because we know that when he comes he will:

-Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties!

-Strengthen us in our weakness; encourage us in our trials!

-Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties!

-Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles!

On his way to my life, he stopped down in Bethlehem and made a stop in Nazareth!

He stopped by a place called Calvary and spent three nights in a grave!

On his way to my life, he died but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

One of these days he's coming back again!

I don't know about you, but I'll be somewhere listening for my name!

I want to ready when Jesus comes!

No. 9022-Christmas

Last Minute Gifts

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 22, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:9-11

Introduction

Have you ever waited to the last minute to purchase a gift only to find out that what you wanted to give is gone? While many people have nearly completed their Christmas shopping, there are others that have not begun. They wait until the last minute then rush through the stores trying to find the perfect gift for a friend or loved one, only to be told that it is out of stock.

Sometimes the frustration of last minute gifts can get on your nerves. Consider the man who had an in-law that really irritated him every Christmas. The woman was a real pest, badgering him repeatedly about getting her a gift. As Christmas approached, with one shopping day left he couldn't find anything she didn't have. She called nearly every hour to remind him not to forget her present. In frustration, he called up his friend at the funeral home and arranged to buy her a funeral plot. On Christmas morning the in-law opened the envelope and saw the gift certificate for a funeral plot. She was pleased because it was a valuable gift. She hugged her relative with a big hug. However, the next year at Christmas she started doing the same thing. Every day she called reminding him about her gift. On Christmas morning however, she did not get a gift from him. Angry she called him and wanted to know why she didn't get a gift. The man said, "Why should I get you a new gift this year, you haven't used the one I gave you last year!"

One of the most frustrating things is to brave the trauma of last minute shopping to buy a gift for someone, only to find out that they never use it.

That may be the way God feels sometimes. The bible tells us that God loved the world so much that he sent his only begotten son to offer salvation. In the past he sent Moses, Elijah, Samuel and many other great prophets, all with a message of reconciliation. When he ran out of remedies to resolve the issues of the world, as a last resort, he sent his Son to the world to bring the gift of eternal life. Yet despite the trouble he went through to get the gift to us, many people have never used what

he sent.

When Christ came he was given gifts, but as he left this earth, he breathed the Holy Ghost upon the world and with it came an astonishing array of gifts that, when used, will change the lives of all who are touched by them.

As Christians, we know the importance of giving and receiving gifts. It is important that we use the gifts he gives us so that we can prepare our hearts to receive the new gifts he has in store for us in the years to come.

Exposition

This text focuses on the gifts brought by the magi to the Christ Child.

Much ado has been made about these men from the East who came to worship the Christ Child.

Officially, the wise men are known as "Magi" or astrological wise men. They studied the stars and claimed to be experts in interpreting dreams and other magical arts. The wise men in this text saw the star in heaven that indicated the birth place of Christ. They chose to follow it although the journey would take them outside of their own land. Most theologians believe that the wise men in this text were from Babylon, Persia or the Arabian desert. They were not Jewish by religion or nationality. Popular folklore claims that there were three wise men, but the text does not cite a number. Many believe the number of three came as a result of the three gifts that the wise men brought to the Christ child.

The Magi saw his star in the East and at the last minute, gathered their gifts and went to see him. The wise men brought the Christ child gifts of Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Since these items were of immense value and were brought such a long way, they suggest the importance that the wise men placed upon the Christ child; who was even recognized by the great leaders of other lands as well. The fact that they came to see Jesus and that they brought him gifts as well, attests to the importance they placed on the deity of Christ. They gave the gifts and departed, asking nothing of him but returning filled with the joy of having seen the Lord for themselves.

When they arrived in Judea, Jesus was no longer in the manger. Verse 11 notes specifically that they came to see the Christ child in a house. The fact that they were not there when the shepherds and others experienced the first Christmas, did not diminish their desire to present their gifts.

The Gift of Gold

The first gift that the wise men gave to Jesus was the gift of Gold. Gold was valuable and used because of its rarity in biblical times. It was used in religious practices of both the Jews and pagans. It was generally a standard of finance and a symbol of physical prosperity.

Beyond the fact that gold has immense value, it is also timeless. Gold will be gold 100 years from the present day. You can melt gold, twist it beat it and shape it, but

it still will be gold.

What we have to offer God today should be 24 karat stewardship that can withstand beatings, twisting, anger, confusion and any other malady that may come our way. The beauty of a gold based relationship with God is that the quality of our service is never diminished by circumstances.

Even if we are tried in the fire or polished in prosperity we will come through like pure gold.

The golden gift is the gift our best. It is the best of our time. The best of talents and best of our treasure.

No matter what we give God, it cannot match what he does for us daily. The song writer said it best when he said "You can't beat God giving, no matter how you try. The more you give the more he gives to you. Just keep on giving because it's really true, you can't beat God giving, no matter how you try."

The Gift of Frankincense

The second gift that the wise men gave was the gift of Frankincense. Frankincense was an ingredient used in making perfume for the most holy place in the Tabernacle. It has always been associated with worship in the temples of Jews and the pagan alike.

Christians can give Christ the wonderful gift of worship, just as the wise men did. Praising God in the sanctuary. Singing his praises in songs and testifying to his greatness among the people are great ways to worship him.

We enter worship with an attitude of excited anticipation. We can't wait to worship and praise God.

Many recipients enjoy their gifts better when they know the person who gave the gift wanted to give it and was excited about the opportunity to give. In the same sense, God knows whether we are excited our opportunity to worship him or whether or not we view our worship experience as a chore or a burden that must be endured rather than shared with him.

We give God our devotion and show appreciation for his great works when we worship him and testify to his greatness.

No wonder the song writer encourages us to, "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and every where! Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.!"

The Gift of Myrrh

The last gift that the wise men gave to Christ was the gift of myrrh. Myrrh was an aromatic resin that had many uses in ancient times. In some areas it was used as the main ingredient of anointing oil. In other areas, it was used as perfume and a clothes freshener. Still other areas used its freshening qualities in preparation for embalming. Myrrh is associated with freshness, sweetness, even in moments of sadness.

The Christian can give to Christ, during the celebration of his birth, a freshness

and newness of spirit that dwells in his heart each and every day. There should be no such thing as a sad Christian. Just as myrrh is used in funerals, even in the moments of death a Christian still brings to the sadness and melancholy of death a gentle, fresh and sweet spirit.

The sweetness of the Christian life which is found in Christ is probably what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "There's a sweet, sweet, spirit in this place. ...it must be the spirit of the Lord."

We give God sweetness because he gives it to us daily. We sing about his sweetness in our songs and talk about it to our friends. "He's sweet I know! He's sweet I know! I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

Giving the right gift

Today brothers and sisters, people will give many things to each other but it would be great if we could give the Lord what he gave us. He gave us love.

The song writer said, "Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me."

It would be wonderful if we would give him our trust and devotion.

This Christmas the Lord would certainly be pleased if we gave the Lord a little more attention and a little less neglect.

It would be great if we gave the Lord a little more love and little less hate;

-A little more peace and little less confusion;

-A little more gratitude and little less ungratefulness;

-A little more prayer and little less lip service;

-A little more compassion and a little less heartlessness;

-A little more real Christian love and little less imitation;

-A little more "do as I do" and little less "do as I say"

-A little more "bended knee" and little less "crooked hearts"

Can't you hear God in your imagination, trying to make a decision!

"I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!"

"I could give them the moon, but after awhile, the moon would cease to shine!"

"I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for short and then comes the fall!"

"I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!"

"I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life!" But there will come a time when storms will rise!

"I want to give them a gift that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

"I want to give them a give that which will give them:

STRENGTH when they are feeling a little weak; COMFORT when they are feeling all alone!

VICTORY after they have suffered a defeat; HOPE when all hope is gone!

LIFTED HEAD when they are bowed down low; SIGHT when they can't see their

way!

What kind of Gift can God give? John gave us the decision:"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

He gave the gift that keeps on giving!

He was born in a manger, but he kept on giving!

He was wounded for our transgressions, but he kept on giving!

He was bruised for our iniquities, but he kept on giving!

They whipped him and tried him all night long, but he kept on giving!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, but he kept on giving!

They hung him up high and stretched him out wide, but he kept on giving!

He died but even in death, he kept on giving!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that God gave me a gift that keeps on giving!

I get a blessing every day because....

He keeps on giving!

No. 9023-New Year

Tough Shoes for Rough Roads

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 5, 2003

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 33:25 "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" Deuteronomy 33:25

Introduction

Have you ever had to match a pair of shoes for an occasion? There are some people who have many pairs of shoes that differ in colors and styles. They also have many kinds of shoes that are made for various types of occasions. Depending on how many shoes are actually in our closets, matching the right shoe with the occasion can be a task. Most people try to pick the right shoe to wear for comfort, effectiveness and appeal. Work shoes are heavy duty. Tennis shoes have a grip. Cleats are needed for the football field. There is even a house shoe to wear around the house. We pick the shoe to fit the occasion.

When we were young our parents picked our clothing for us. They would never allow us to pick our own clothes because we would inevitably pick what we liked, regardless to whether it was suited for the occasion. Parents had school shoes for us; then they also had "church" shoes. We could get in plenty of trouble trying to wear "church" shoes to school unless it was a special day. Our parents considered what was coming up and picked the shoes we would wear.

God does the same thing for us every year. Unlike us, he knows what's ahead and prepares us for what is coming. If left up to us we'd probably slip into the New Year wearing the same slippers we wore last year, slipping and sliding. There would be others that would wear Brogans that would be so big and bulky that they would break or trample anyone in our way. It would be fun to dance right through the year in our dance shoes or spend the entire year looking good in our shiny shoes. However, God looks ahead and prepares us for what he knows is coming and matches the shoes we will need with what is coming. If he sees rain, he pulls out the boots and rain shoes. If it's going to be a year on the beach, he pulls out the flip flops!

God knows what lies ahead for each of us and our faith rests on our belief that he knows what's best for us and will prepare us for whatever is coming this year. He will see to it that as we approach any difficult moment that we are fully equipped to handle every situation. He knows the future!

We don't know what the future holds, but we all have expectations. Consider the

three old men who sat on a park bench talking about the future. They decided to take a picture of their shoes and leave for the grandchildren. They spent a day guessing what their grandchildren would say about them after seeing their shoes. The first man said "50 years from now I want my grandchildren to look at my shoes and say I was a man who was very successful at achieving my goals." All of the men nodded their heads in agreement. The second old man said, "50 years from now I want my grandchildren to look at my shoes and say my shoes belonged to a man who loved his family." That was really noble. The third man bought himself a brand new pair of shoes but wouldn't take a picture. He said, "I don't know about you two but 50 years when my grandchildren look at my shoes, I plan to still be in them! –It may be tough pulling it off but I intend to be here!"

As Believers we are confident that if we abide in him and he abides in us that God will bless us in the coming year. Whatever comes our way; God will prepare a way for us and gives us the right shoes for the occasion.

Exposition

This text focuses on the blessing of Asher and the people of Israel as they prepared to enter into a new land.

Asher was the eight son of Jacob. The name Asher means "prosperity, happiness, and fortune." His descendants formed one of the 12 tribes of Israel. As the children of Israel, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness prepared to enter the Promised Land, Moses pronounced blessings upon each of them. Verse 24 of this chapter focuses upon his blessing upon the tribe of Asher. The blessing Moses pronounced was a blessing of prosperous opportunity. A similar blessing had been given to Asher himself by his father Jacob in Genesis 49:20. Now, as they prepared to enter into the Promised Land Moses says again what has been said before that Asher would be blessed with children and that he would dip his feet in oil, an expression which meant that his descendants would enjoy favor and opportunities to prosper.

Each tribe was given certain portions of the Promised Land to claim as their own. No tribe would possess their land without some element of struggle. Included in the lands assigned to Asher was a mountainous range that was rich with copper, iron and other minerals that would make them a wealthy people.

It was a great opportunity, yet the opportunity was not without its pitfalls. There many Canaanites in the land. Holding the mountains, with such richness would require considerable risk. Even life in the hills would be more difficult and demanding than the simple life of the plains and valleys. Despite its drawbacks, Asher was presented with a huge opportunity that also came with a promise. The Lord promised Asher that he would equip the people for the journey ahead by giving them shoes of "iron and brass." Of course he did not literally mean iron or brass shoes but that he would give them whatever was necessary to seize the opportunity that he was providing.

Under their feet would be iron, and copper and other minerals from which brass and other metals could be made. They would be sitting atop of one the best

opportunities available, but it would require much work. God promised to provide whatever they needed to make the journey.

He went further to encourage Asher even more by saying "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be." It was God's promise to Asher that whatever the coming days or years would bring, he would provide them with the strength to meet each new challenge that might deter them from achieving the great opportunity he gave them. If Asher was still nervous, God told all of the people in verses 26 and 27 that the "God who rideth upon the heaven" shall be your help to defeat any enemy.

In verse 28 he promised them that they would dwell in safety in the land that he promised.

If the people would seize the opportunity and blessing that he provided God promised in verse 29 that they would be happy, would be protected by his shield, and their enemies who doubted them would be made liars!

The tribes went forth to claim their territories with boldness. However, Asher, even though they heard the promise of God was reluctant to claim their give. They did not claim the mountain filled with rich minerals, they abandoned it and the Zidonians claimed what should have been their blessing. They did not claim their lands and possess them like the other tribes but instead contented themselves with working with less than their potential. They did well, but could have done better, but they chose to surrender their duty to God in the process. Among the tribes, In short they made a mess with that with which they were blessed because they failed to believe God and act in faith.

Don't be messing with your blessing

Today, there are many people like the people of Asher. They are messing with their blessing. Asher was the recipient of a great opportunity yet they chose to squander it rather than possess it. They allowed others to get what was supposed to be theirs.

In a similar sense there are many today who also fail to capitalize on the blessing and opportunities that God makes available to them. The year ahead will present many blessed opportunities for believers. Some of those opportunities may be in business development, career advancement, job opportunities, home improvement, and personal relationships. However, like Asher's opportunity, what the Lord has in store for us may require a considerable amount of work and involve a level of risk. Nothing good happens to us without hard work. Frederick Douglass once said, "Where there is no struggle, there is no progress." He said the man that wants progress without struggle is like the farmer who wants rain but does not want the thunder and lightning that comes with rain.

It could very well be that the opportunity that God will make available for some believers this year will not come without considerable struggle and sacrifice. Yet the opportunity is there! The opportunity to become spiritually stronger is there but it won't come without a commitment to study and dig deep into the mountain of God's

word to seize its treasures. The opportunity to strengthen a marriage is there, but it won't come without difficulty and some element of sacrifice. The opportunity to advance and to succeed in education or career development is real, but it will not happen until we trust God fully and make the first step.

In the year to come, don't go messing with your blessing by short changing yourself and underestimating your ability to achieve!

"You have not because you ask not" James 4:2.

If you fail to seize an opportunity because you think you may fail, you are messing with your blessing!

If you doubt God in any way and fail to do what you know you should do, you are messing with your blessing!

Don't settle for anything less than what God has promised!

Rough Roads need tough shoes

The coming year offers many challenges and opportunities; however, acquiring the blessings that God has in store for us may also require us to travel some rough terrain in the coming months. Like Asher, we receive his promise to provide iron shoes for the tough roads we may encounter along the way. The rough terrain we encounter is the route through which we are to achieve our ultimate reward. Asher was given mountains that were filled with rich minerals. The mountains were the reward of his descendants. They viewed them as too much trouble and gave them away.

What are the mountains we may face this year? They could be that extra responsibility we have assumed. They could be the added burden of a new mouth to feed, a new relationship to build, a new job or no job, a personal quest to achieve. Even overcoming an extended personal illness or that of a loved one is a great mountain.

Where is the blessing in a mountain? Where is the blessing in treacherous terrain? For Asher the blessing was not *on* the mountain but *in* the mountain. His blessing was in conquering the mountain. For us, the blessing is not in the challenge itself, the blessing is in the challenge. In itself sickness is not a blessing. It is a mountain. However, the blessing is in dealing with the sickness and watching God work his wonders and his will. Every person who has taken on such a challenge testifies of the intense closeness they experienced with God during and after their ordeal.

If we claim the mountain that we will face this year, God promises to give us iron shoes that will keep us from slipping and falling.

Strength of every situation

Asher and all of Israel were about to go into uncharted territory. They had no idea what lay ahead for them. Yet God promised them "as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Every year brings with it an assortment of days: good days and bad days and a few lazy days when nothing happens. There are some days coming that will be so

easy that the only strength we will need is just enough to push the button on the remote control to change the television channel. Then there will be other days that will be more demanding. These are days when we need considerably more strength. That's why this promise of God is important. It promises that when we need it, God will provide the strength for the journey.

"As thy days" refers to the demands of some future moment.

"So shall thy strength be" refers to the spiritual reserves that God will unleash, on an "as needed" basis. God does not give us everything at one time. He gives us what we need to make it through each day. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." He knows how many spiritual calories we will burn up every day and will give us enough strength to sustain ourselves and renew.

When we think we cannot continue, ask for strength and he will give us what we need! We may need regular or high octane; he knows exactly what we need each day. That's why David said, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want!"

In the coming year, don' worry, God will supply all of your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus!

The way may be tough, but God is enough

Finally, brothers and sisters, we are being told that the year ahead will be tough, but come what may, Jesus is enough.

The news is filled with wars and the rumors of wars. It is filled with bad financial news about companies failing, stocks dropping, and investments being lost. There is a good possibility that our sons and those of others on foreign shores may face each other one battle field or another. By all indicators there is a rough year ahead of us.

But we rejoice in the truth that even when the road is rough, God is enough!

We know he is enough because last year was rough and he was enough!

Somebody stumbled along the way, but God was enough!

Somebody became weak along the way, but God was enough!

He helped us move from one level of strength to another.

No wonder the song writer declares: "we bore our burdens in the heat of the day, we know the Lord will make a way, we've come a long way Lord, we've come a long way."

We moved from strength to strength by leaning on the Lord!

When there was no way, the Lord, helped us find a way! Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life." The road may get rough but God is enough!

When there was no hope, the Lord gave us new inspiration! The poet declares: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus
name." That reminded us that the rough may get rough but God is enough!

When there was no happiness, the Lord gave us a renewed joy! David cried out to God "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation"

When there was no strength the Lord taught us the value of patience. “For they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as Eagles, they run and not get weary. They shall walk and not faint.” The road was rough but God was enough.

I don’t know what the new year will bring, but I’ve decided, come what may to trust in the Lord, he will be enough!

If I stumble and trust in the Lord, he’ll help me to stand!

If I’m discouraged, he’ll give me new inspiration!

If I get weak, he’ll make me strong!

If I get lost he’ll help me find my way!

If I find myself in the valley of despair, he’s able to deliver me!

I don’t know how long it will be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know...

If Jesus leads me, through the storm and the rain!

If Jesus leads me, through heat of day and chill of the midnight hour!

If Jesus leads me, through trials and tribulations!

If Jesus leads me...

I shall get home someday!

Let us move into the new year with confidence that come what may from day to day! My heavenly father watches over me!

If I fall down, he’ll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!

If I stumble, he’ll whole my hand!

If I can’t find my way, he’ll guide me! That’s why I’ll say, “Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!”

The same hand that touched a blind man’s eyes!

The same hand that healed a lame man and made him walk!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death

But the same handsthat were raised in victory early Sunday morning...

I want those same hands to guide me every day!

No. 9024-New Year

But if not..

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 12, 2002

SCRIPTURE:If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Daniel 3:17-18

Introduction

What do you do when you ask for something and get "no" for an answer? One of the most frustrating moments in life is to ask for something and get "no" for an answer. Often children ask their parents for an item or two but get "no" for an answer. What do you do when "no" is the answer that you get? If you are a wife and your husband says "no" how do you respond? If you are a husband and your wife won't go along with your idea, what is your response? If you have a business plan and your banker says "no" to your proposal, how do you respond?

The way we respond when things don't go our way reveals a side of our character that is rarely seen and is often hidden. Responses often vary from anger, screaming, yelling, temper trantrums, pouting, vengeful acts and many other troubling responses.

There are some who ask for blessings but expect to receive from God but always expect to get a positive answer when they make a request. Consider the boy who constantly disobeyed his mother. Repeatedly, he did things to anger his mother. Finally, the mother told the son that he should talk to God about it. After a while the mother heard the son praying to the Lord and she walked away with a smile on her lips. After about an hour the son walked out of his room and told his mother that he had thought it over and talked to God in prayer. "Fine", said the pleased mother. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, He will help you." "Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Johnny. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

God always answers prayer, but his answer may not always be yes. Sometimes his answer is no. As believers our challenge is to trust God and be glad regardless to his answer.

We want to go through this entire year without any problems, but if not!

We want to be free of sickness or physical handicaps, but if not!
We want to be financially secure and prosperous this year, but if not!
We want to be successful in our relationships, but if not!
We want to win and to enjoy the victory, but if not!
We want to expand our boundaries and enjoy unheralded success, but if not!

What we have learned about life is the value of trusting in the Lord. He will provide for our needs, we don't really have to doubt him. We would like for it to go our way, but if not God is still good...all the time!

Exposition

This text focuses on three believers who acknowledge the permissive will of God, the power of God and their acceptance of his will.

The King of Babylon conquered all of the region of Judah and carried most of its craftsmen, scholars and thinkers back to Babylon. He began a three year program to repatriate these Jews so that they would accept the Chaldean customs. Among the three, were four men, commonly known as Daniel, Meshack, Shadrack and Abednego. The four were adamant believers in God's kingdom. They prayed regularly and even refused the king's efforts to re-educate them to the
Chaldean political viewpoint and life-style. Daniel interpreted a dream for the King. In so doing Daniel was given the opportunity to serve as a prime minister or leader of governors in the land. It was a position that he refused. However, he recommended similar positions for the three young men who were with him.

As foreigners and powerful political leaders in the land, the three young men and even Daniel himself were often the subject of efforts to oust them from power. One such move came when the King erected a statue of himself and sent out a decree that said when certain music was played that everyone should bow and worship his image. Those who refused to do so would be punished by being cast into a fiery furnace the same day. The king's Chaldean advisors made
certain that the resistance of the three was noted. The Chaldeans, who denounced Daniel and his associates to the king, were astrologers who wanted to predict a happier future for the king and his realm.

When the music played, as expected, three of the nation's highest governmental officers refused to bow. The king addressed them by asking whether they understood the order and the punishment for those who defied the order. They acknowledged that they understood, but they still refused to obey the order.

In a frustrating moment the king reiterated his command and the punishment. When he saw that the three Hebrew Boys would not bow he asked "who is that God that shall deliver you out my hand?"

In answering the King the Hebrew Boys made three affirmations: That God may permit it to be so, that he was able to deliver them, and that even if God chose not to answer as they wanted, they still had no plans to disobey him.

The King ordered that the furnace be prepared, but this time that it should be prepared seven times hotter than it had been on other days. The three young men were thrown into the furnace but were not burned by the fire. There was no smell of

smoke or fire on their clothes as well. As the people waited for them to scream, there was silence. Instead, the king looked in and called out to them. He then noticed an astonishing revelation. Instead of three men in the fire, he
saw four. The fourth one, he said, looked like the Son of God.

Facing the fires

The Hebrew boys by their example give us three attitudes of what to do when we face the fires of life.

IF IT BE SO, SO BE IT: **Unlike many of the biblical leaders of the past who had been given a promise of deliverance from God, the Hebrew Boys had received no prior reassurances that they would be delivered. David, when he moved against Goliath said, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand." Joshua, Moses, Elijah and many others acted in great faith because God reassured them. The Hebrew Boys, having received no assurances, relied on the nature of their relationship with God; that he would always do what was best for them and would never abandon them. There are many situations that believers face each year. We have not been promised deliverance from hard times, difficulties and sickness. Neither have we been promised that all difficulties will avoid us completely.**

Often, like the Hebrew Boys, we face difficulties without knowing whether we will be delivered from them or not. We are similar to these three in that we too are comfortable in our relationship with him to the point that we know that he will direct the final outcome of things such that it benefits our interest. Jesus called this relationship "abiding in him." If we abide in him and his Word abides in us, we have a sense of comfort in tough times that helps us face any enemy or ride
out difficult storms.

The words "if it be so" seem to say, "if it is God's will that this difficulty confronts me, then so be it." We are comfortable because we are supported in his word. Even if we have not been promised deliverance we are comfortable because we remember his words to us in Psalm 121:3 "
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber." In verse 7 we read "The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." That knowledge makes us comfortable enough to say like the Hebrew Boys, If it be so, so be it!

THE GOD WE SERVE IS ABLE: **The King wanted to know who is the God of the Hebrew Boys that they would think him so powerful that he could deliver them out of his hands. There were fully armed guards standing close by. All of the powers of the government were at the king's disposal. The prospect of deliverance from the king's hands were non-existent. The fire itself presented less of a prospect. It was made seven times hotter. Despite these impossible situations the Hebrew Boys confirmed their belief that "Our God is able."**

Like the Hebrew boys, we too must remain confident in God's ability. Two forces usually attack us in varying ways: There are forces more powerful than ourselves that

threaten to throw us in the fire; then there is the all consuming fire itself. Often when we are faced with forces outside of ourselves that are overwhelming we begin to believe that even God cannot deliver us. The powers of government are awesome and they can overwhelm a simple person. Subpoenas, police force, SWAT teams, prosecutors, court orders, investigations, FBI, Internal Revenue, legislative auditors and a plethora of examples of government power can be overwhelming. There are very few people that go through their entire lives without facing some aspect of government
power being used against them diminishing their personhood and threatening their individual freedoms. Often we feel defenseless against such forces and we feel even more defenseless against the actual flames themselves. When jail doors slam in your face or that of a loved one, our first response it to be overwhelmed. When we are the victims of attack, assault or malicious persecution the fire seems hottest and many are overwhelmed.

Yet the Hebrews resolved that our God is able. Even the power of the government is no match for God. That's what King Ahab found out when the state controlled prophets of Baal were challenged on Mt. Carmel. There, Ahab learned that the state's 400 prophets could not stand against the simple prayer of one man backed up by the power of God. No matter what our situation, God is able. No matter how bleak the picture seems, God is able. No matter how frustrating the moment may be, God is able! No matter how destructive the fire being built against us seems to be, God is able to deliver us!

BUT IF NOT: **The Hebrew boys were firm in their resolve to obey God. They knew their relationship with him and they knew his power to deliver them within his will. However, even if he chose not to deliver them, they resolved to be firm in their faith.**

This attitude of the Hebrew Boys challenges each of us to adopt a similar attitude of faith. It is an attitude that says, "Even if God does not act in the way I desire, I will remain firm in my commitment to him." This is the attitude of Job. Job lost much of his family, health and property in a series of events that can only be described as a tragedy. Yet, Job decided that despite that he
would remain firm. When challenged by his friends to simply curse God and die, Job remained firm even though the temptation was there. His body was covered in sores. His children had been killed. His fortunes had been lost. It would have been simple just to sit at home, curse God and die. Yet we hear Job boldly saying, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

For us that has a significant meaning.

It means that even in difficult times we will not retreat from our worship, praise and gratitude toward God. The one thing Satan really wants is our retreat from the service of the king! That's what Paul had in mind when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "..be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. "

When we are in trouble, we won't turn our backs on God!

When we have failed we will not blame him but continue to hold fast to our faith in him!

We want the greatest of health, but if not God..is still good!
We want to be free of financial troubles, but if not, God is still good!
We want to be free of external attacks and troubles, but if not, God is still Good!
Maybe that's what songwriter Douglas Miller had in mind when he wrote:
Though the storms keep on raging in my life and sometimes it's hard to tell the night from day still that hope that lies within is reassured as I keep my eyes upon the drifting shore I know he'll lead me safely to that blessed place he has prepared But if the storm don't cease and if the winds keep on blowing in my life my soul has been anchored in the Lord!

Trust in the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters it should be our resolve this year that no matter what comes, we will trust in the Lord.

It doesn't matter what comes our way the Lord will do what is best for us. We know this because in his word he has promised us that "all things work together for the good of them who are the called according to his purposes in Christ Jesus"

That means that even a bad thing can be made in to a good thing if we trust in the Lord

Our God is able to take any bad situation like:
FAILURE and turn it into success; DEFEAT and turn it into victory!
SADNESS and turn it into gladness; SORROW and turn it into joy!
HATRED and turn it into love; LOSSES and turn them into gains!
TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs; BROKEN HEARTS and turn them into happy souls!
Today Jesus is still saying the same thing...trust me!
Trust me because I love you!
Trust me because I died for you on Calvary!
Trust me because I rose in victory and claim the power!
Trust me because every day I'm right by your side!
Trust me when you are going through the mountains of frustration!
Trust me when you are struggling through the valley of the shadow of death!
Trust me when the storms of life are raging
I don't know about you but I will trust in the Lord until I die.

No.9025-Martin Luther King

A Man Who Turned The World Upside Down

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 19, 2002

SCRIPTURE:"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Jeremiah 1:9-10

Introduction

Have you ever met a person who really turned things upside down? In every sphere of our experience there are special people who seem to have aknack for upsetting the status quo, sometimes for the good sometimes for the worse. Usually such people are ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances, called upon to do the right thing in an extraordinary way. When everyone else is going left they usually ask why not go right? Sometimes just the question itself can turn things upside down.

The Children's tale is told of the Emperor's new clothes. It seems that several swindlers successfully persuaded the king that they had invented an invisible cloth that could only be seen by those with superior intelligence. Not wanting to admit that he could not see the cloth the emperor ordered the new cloth and decided to wear it in a gala parade. Everyone around the king knew better but no one would say anything because it would not be popular and would draw the anger of the king. In the parade the people applauded the king. They raved about the beauty of his new clothes, until one little boy saw the near naked king strutting around in his under clothes and shouted, "He doesn't have any clothes on!" That one statement from a tiny lad instantly caused everyone to laugh and the king's world and his stupidity was turned upside down.

History is full of accounts of men and women whose words and deeds stirred the world and turned it upside down. When Galileo suggested the idea that the world was round and not flat, it was considered a dangerous statement. He was instantly brought in by authorities and judged as a heretic. Yet that one single idea which challenged the known order of things eventually turned the world upside down and opened up a whole new world for exploration.

Whether it was Joan of Arc who challenged stereotypes of women and lead armies

in revolution, Martin Luther's protestant reformation, or Ghandi who lead the Indian people in a national campaign of civil disobedience to achieve liberation; every generation has seen a personality or two during its time that has stirred the world and turned things upside down.

Many have lived to see one or two such men in their life's experience. John Kennedy posed a challenge to America that lived long after him which was "to ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." His brother Bobby Kennedy challenged the young to dream and ask "Why not?" Both of these men upset the known system and turned things upside down.

Standing head and shoulder above the rest is Martin Luther King, Jr. He stirred a nation to consider its flaws and improve.

The dream of a nation living up to the true meaning of its creed still survives and it continues to turn the world upside down. While Dr. King was a man of peace, his words often cause violent reaction. The thought of a day coming when a Blacks and Whites would walk and work together as sisters and brothers turned the known world upside down. Implicit in King's dream-weaving - beyond the dream itself - was the sublime notion that it was all possible. That we could do it. That a dream, it may have been, but not a fantasy.

Even today, years after his death his idea of peace, nonviolence and world brotherhood continues to turn the world upside down.

It is not surprising that Martin Luther King was a preacher, from a long line of preachers. God has always provided prophets for every generation armed with the power of God himself to turn the world upside down. When one speaks and acts within the authority of God it upsets the apple crate. It shakes the very foundations of the order of things, angers leaders, raises fears and unleashes a wave of vengeance and reprisal in response. Dr. King was a powerful preacher who was born to turn the world upside down.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that God has a person in every generation who is willing to challenge what is right while standing on what is right, even if it means turning the world upside down. Even in our personal lives we rejoice in the truth that once Satan had control of our lives, until we met a man named Jesus, who turned our sinful lives inside out and upside down. Ever since we met him we have never been the same.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Jeremiah's response to a call from God to be a person whose life and calling would turn the world upside down.

Like most prophets of his time Jeremiah was born during a time when the everyday life of the Jewish people was dictated by world events. The people of God were mere pawns in a world wide contest for power that shuffled God's people around like so many chess pieces on a game board, sacrificed and lost in the pursuit of world dominance.

The major world players were Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt each of whom sought to be the dominate world power to secure its own independence and position. As the big nations struggled for power, the people suffered.

To respond to the crises God caused Jeremiah to be born with one intent which was to declare the word of the Lord and to tear up, root down, destroy and build up at the command of God. He was to turn the world upside down.

Jeremiah irritated and vexed six kings of Judah: Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Johoiachin and Zedekiah. Jeremiah often angered the kings as he challenged them to remember God's people. Once King Jehoiakim, cut up all of Jeremiah's writings as he tried to silence the ideas of the powerful voice of God's messenger.

Jeremiah really turned things upside down.

In Matthew 16:14 people saw a young 30 year old man from Nazareth who was doing some of the same things Jeremiah did. He had the audacity to challenge the scribes and pharisees and to suggest the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men, including Gentiles. When the people heard him upset the system in such a dramatic way they thought he was the reincarnation of Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Wherever he went, this man from Galilee upset people although his words and deeds were generally soft spoken and nonviolent.

Jesus lived only 33 years on earth. In the three years of his public ministry, the words he spoke and the deeds he performed led a centurion soldier at the cross to conclude: "Truly this was the Son of God."

He challenged traditional laws

Jesus often found himself in trouble with the established leaders of his time because he challenged the traditions and their application of the Mosaic law. His position was simple: people take precedent over laws, which was just the opposite with the Mosaic law.

Martin Luther King raised the very same issues in a modern circumstance. There were laws that existed by tradition that were unjust. There were laws that said a Black man could not drink out of the same water fountain as a white man. Or that Blacks could not be served in restaurants with whites or sit in the same section of a bus. They were unjust laws.

He turned the system upside down and caused considerable controversy when he suggested that Blacks should challenge unjust laws, knowing full well that when they challenged the law they would be arrested, jailed, beaten or even killed by the forces of government. Yet, millions of Blacks did just that. They challenged the laws in every city in the nation. They kept shaking and marching until the walls of segregation came tumbling down.

Today there are still cruel and unjust laws in our nation. Chief among the unjust laws of our nation is the death penalty, which applies an "eye for an eye" concept that Christ came to end. Because our system of laws is imperfect, even at its best, the death penalty establishes a system that places thousands of men and women on death row, often for crimes they did not commit. For the average citizen the quest is

not that big. It is often fighting the small injustices, infringements upon civil rights that guarantee every man and woman equal access to public facilities, information and accommodations and freedom from harassment.

Any person who takes on the system is threatening to turn it upside down and can expect a barrage of attacks on their character and threats to their lives. Their very existence threatens the security of the system.

That's why the political leaders of Jesus' time had to deal with him. He was turning their world upside down.

That is also the premise of the family of Dr. Martin Luther King. In his book "Orders to Kill" William F. Pepper details what the King family has accepted as a planned execution of Dr. King by non other thant the United States Government through the FBI. Why? He was turning the known world upside down!

He promoted world brotherhood

Jesus found himself criticized because he dealt personally with people who were considered untouchables. He often was seen in public talking with publicans and sinners; prostitutes and tax collectors, crazy people, homeless folks and even gentiles. Yet, Jesus persisted and demonstrated the nature of the kingdom of God, that it would be inclusive of everyone.

Dr. King promoted the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. That is a simple idea that said God is the father of us all and each of us are brothers and sisters in that respect. That was a controversial idea because it was a known an accepted truth that Blacks and whites were not equal and should live separately and avoid as much as possible any interactions on an equal ground. That same opinion was true for women as well, especially since they were perceived as weaker, dumber and certainly not on the same level as men.

Dr. King challenged us to tear down the walls that divide us. He kept painting the picture of a world in which skin color or race would be noticed only for its accentuated beauty and esthetic value rather than as a measure of intelligence or eligibility. That would be a world where the "sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners" would be able to sit down at the table of brotherhood. It would be a day when all barriers that divide us would disappear.

He did not want us to stop seeing the beauty of blackness or whiteness. He saw the day when it would not matter.

That idea can turn worlds upside down because even on an interpersonal basis many people still harbor attitudes about people of other races that border on racism. Some of our views about women in this country are truly sexist and divisive.

That's why the political leaders were upset with Jesus, he included too many people in his circle. He diluted the chosen people by including many untouchables and that upset the order of things. He was turning their world upside down.

He turned Satan's World Upside down

Finally brothers and sisters, while Dr. Martin Luther King's actions turned the civil order of this nation upside down, Jesus did something that no man can do; he turned Satan's world upside down.

Satan had a hold on the world but it was Jesus' mission to turn a world under the influence and control of Satan himself, upside down.

That angered a lot of people but he turned the world upside down.

The money changers in the temple were not happy, when he came into the temple one day and turned over the tables and beat them with ropes saying, "It is written that my father's house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have turned it into a den of thieves." That day in Jerusalem, he turned Satan's world upside down.

A man who had been infected by legions of demons came face to face with the Lord. They begged not to be killed and put themselves into a herd of swine and drowned them. The owners of the pigs were upset, he had turned their world upside down.

An adulterous woman who was caught in the very act of adultery, was brought before Jesus for judgment. He responded to them that "he that is without sin among them should cast the first stone." They left angry that day because he had turned their known world upside down.

I don't know about you, but I've found that Satan gets mad whenever somebody he had control of starts following the Lord. He gets mad because the Lord has turned things around.

I've found out that the Lord can take Satan's world and turn it upside down!

Satan gave us an attitude of defeat, but I know a man who took our defeat and turned it into victory. He turned our world upside down!

Satan gave us a spirit of sadness, but I know a man who took our sadness and turned it into gladness. He turned our world upside down!

Satan gave us a spirit of fear, but I know a man who took our fear and taught us to say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear." He turned our world upside down!

Satan gave us a spirit of failure, but I know a man who took our failures and turned them in the successes. He turned our world upside down!

He turned the world upside down when he set our souls free and gave us a home over in glory!

He turned the world upside down when he took an old rugged cross and marched it up Calvary's Hill.

He turned the world upside down when he died so hard that the sun refused to shine!

He turned the world upside down when he called upon his father and said "It is finished!"

I know the world was upside down, because a roman soldier, who was on top of the old world, saw him hanging from the cross. But when he saw the power of God in action, his whole world turned around and he said, "Surely, he must be the son of God!"

Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave with all power in his hands..he turned the world upside down!

No. 9026-Anniv.-Pastor

Born To Preach

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Jesus Christ Church of God
Monroe, La.

January 12, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. " Jeremiah 1:5***

Introduction

Have you ever wondered just how a minister is called to preach? Does he hear voices in the wilderness? Was he the recipient of a special assignment dispatched straight from heaven? Did God personally select him for this special then notify him in some kind of Damascus road experience? Over the years, we have heard a variety of explanations from men and women who tried to explain the nature of their calling. How do such men and women know they have been called? Do they see signs in heaven? Do they hear voices? The ways vary but the final end seems universal, at some point every person who has been called acknowledged a calling they knew long before the day of their public announcement.

While most religious groups refer to the public ministry as a "calling" it is a matter of tradition in the African-American community to think of a "call" rather than a calling. African-Americans, especially evangelicals such as Baptist and Methodist hold the "call" so high as an evidence of divine anointing that persons who begin in the ministry without professing some type of calling are viewed suspiciously. Some of the calls required a bold imagination. Others, were not so imaginable but were just enough to pass scrutiny of a suspicious or skeptical set of critics.

The bible gives numerous accounts of great men receiving calls from God. As just a lad Samuel heard the voice of God speaking in the still of the night, calling his name. On the road to Damascus Saul received a wake up call from the Lord who spoke to him in a blinding light. Abraham had a visit from angels. Elijah heard the voice of God as a still soft voice.

Have you heard some of the accounts? We have heard those who say boldly that they were plowing the fields and heard a voice calling them in the fields. We have also heard of those who told how they saw their names written in the sky. Whether they heard strange voices in the pastures or saw great visions in the sky, very few in the African-American community dare begin a career in the ministry without acknowledging a call of some kind.

It is closer to reality to understand that most people who experience what we know as a call were not suddenly selected by God to achieve a specific goal. Neither were they randomly selected to respond to an immediate need. When God called Samson into action against the Philistines, his call was not an after thought. Samson's birth was foretold. So were the births of many people who were the instruments of God in the biblical record. They were born to achieve a specific end. They were born, positioned and nurtured by God, prepared for a moment in time that only God knew was coming. What some describe as a call is more their decision to pursue a life calling set in motion at birth than it is a response to an impromptu decision by God made at the spur of the moment. While there are some that speak of seeing miraculous signs most respond to a calling given to them before they were born.

Every believer has a purpose. Each life is equipped with just the right combination of gifts and talents to accomplish a purpose. While believers come equipped to fulfill a purpose, they are not compelled to respond to the purpose. A new car is manufactured with a specific purpose, whether it is used for that purpose, or is used at all, is purely optional. The same is true for those who are designed to accomplish a spiritual end. Some recognize their purpose early in life. Others avoid what they sense to be a divinely inspired purpose for as long as they can. Those who do respond do so because they are literally born to preach.

As Christians, we know that God has a purpose for each of us. Our challenge is to recognize the hand of God operating in our lives, then respond to his call.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Jeremiah's response to his call and God's pronouncement that he was born to preach.

Jeremiah began his ministry as a young man. In his tender years, he responded to God's call by deciding to become a prophet early in life. Like most people who begin a new venture, he was nervous. His anxiety over his youth was so troubling to him that God himself had to put his mind at ease. In Jeremiah 1:5 God told Jeremiah, " Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, [and] I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. "

God's words came as an endorsement of what Jeremiah felt personally; that God had a great work for him to do. It was well beyond an instant response. Jeremiah came into the world equipped to serve. The only thing that remained was for him to acknowledge what God had prepared him to do and do it.

There were certain advantages to Jeremiah's decision to begin his ministry early. The foremost advantage was the fact that his ministry began before he had soiled himself with unclean living. The ancient biblical scholar Jerome said Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity (6:7), but that when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity (1:9), because, by reason of his tender years, he did not have much sin to atone for.

Jeremiah preached for over 50 years, according to some estimates , but he never

wavered from his initial calling which he acknowledged as a child. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed. It did not take long for it to become obvious to any observer that he was born to preach.

Born to Preach

Born to preach salvation: **The primary message of every preacher is the good news that salvation is both free and available. That was the good news that John the Baptist brought to the people when he preached in the wilderness of Judea. His message was a message of repentance because the opportunity to possess the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The message that John brought was not accidental. It was a message that was prepared in heaven and sent to the world by heavenly express. John's birth was special and his message was special. Repentance and baptism were the central themes of his message. Thousands responded to his message of hope and deliverance which was a part of his mission from birth.**

More than anything else the preacher brings a message of salvation and forgiveness. That message is the good news from heaven that God's grace can cleanse and purge any sin. Forgiveness is good news that broken lives can be restored and sin soaked lives can be made whole again.

Born to preach hope:**In Jeremiah's time there was a general feeling of hopelessness among the people. Israel had fallen from its once glorious position during the heyday of King Solomon. The people were in exile and without hope of ever returning to their homeland. The message that Jeremiah brought was one that he was born to bring. He was a divinely inspired instrument of God whose commission began at his conception and continued through his death. He preached words of hope to a people who desperately wanted to know that God had not forsaken them. Just as Jeremiah brought them words of hope and encouragement from the Lord, the preacher today also brings hope to those who are despondent over life's issues. It is the preacher who reminds the world that despite the difficulties of the times that God is still on the throne.**

Born to preach justice: **The people of God are often mistreated and abused. Whether the reference is to slavery in Egypt or to the Babylonian exile, the people of God have been the victims of an avalanche of injustices that have made life miserable for them. Yet, for every injustice inflicted upon the people there has always been a prophet to address the injustice of that moment. For Israel's enslavement in Egypt, Moses**

Born to preach Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters we must recognize that the people of God need to hear a word from the Lord. To hear that word God has a messenger for every generation.

God has a messenger who brings a message of hope for every generation, as well as a messenger of peace. But there is also the need for a messenger who will bring the good news.

The good news is not about Allah, or Buddha!

The good news is not about Krishna, or the Prophet Muhammad.

The good news is not about world powers, peace agreements and treaties!

The good news is not a bull market on the New York Stock Exchange or an increase in the minimum wage!

The good news is about Jesus!

God has a messenger who was born to spread the good news!

John said he was not the good news, but only one who bore witness to the messenger!

In a similar sense the preacher is not good news himself but he is the messenger born to tell the world about Jesus!

What is the preacher born to declare?

He is born to tell the world that Jesus is what makes water wet and what makes sugar sweet!

He is born to tell the world that Jesus is what gives salt its savor and what makes the world go round!

He is born to tell the world that Jesus is the man who is:

-Strength in times of weakness; Victory in times of defeat

-Healing in times of sickness; Comfort in times of despair!

The preacher is born to tell the world that he came to this earth and lived 33 long years!

The preacher is born to tell somebody that he died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Every preacher is born with a message! He's got to tell somebody about the Lord!

No. 9027-Blessings

Receivers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 26, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Matthew 20:7

Introduction

Have you ever asked God for a blessing? Often we ask God for blessings of one kind or another. Sometimes the blessing we request is financial. Sometimes what we want is spiritual. There are those who just want peace of mind. What we request of God varies from person to person and even then varies with each circumstance. There are many that ask God for blessings and always seem to get most of their request. There others that seem to miss their blessing one way or the other.

Believers today scan the bible and the panorama of life's experiences to discover the secret to living the blessed life. One of the first things that we notice is that there are a variety of biblical characters who all seemed to be what we can call "receivers." People whose lives were blessed by God.

Joseph was a receiver, even from a child he saw visions of what God would do for him and he remained faithful to the vision despite being falsely accused, thrown in a pit, and being sentenced to jail. It started with a coat of many colors and ended with a high place in the kingdom. Joseph received it all, the bad and the good and God blessed him.

Moses was a receiver. He grew up in a palace, spent 40 years in poverty and rose to lead his people to freedom from Egyptian Slavery. Moses was a receiver.It was not an easy task but he received everything God gave him.

The widow woman with the empty barrel was a receiver. She cared for her family the best she knew how and watched as God miraculously kept food on her table every day of her life. She was a receiver, despite living in the worst of times.

What do we as believers have in common with these and other biblical characters? We too are receivers. God blesses us the exact same way.

There are great parallels between life and organized sports. Among the great sports is football. Two teams are on a field one trying to win a victory over another. Each has a coach who sends in plays to team members whose role is strikingly similar to that of believers in the church today. God is our coach, heaven is our goal, Hell's

Angels is our opposing team and we are the Heavenly Crusaders. We are on God's team, a part of the church. We play offense and defense. We have found that we have a good coach who can carry us all the way to victory if we do exactly what he says.

There are many people who love to watch sports events, whether it is football, basketball, hockey, wrestling, it doesn't matter they just love sports. Just as some people love the church, public worship, just about any kind anywhere. Even though there are great parallels between the church and organized sports there is a difference when it comes to the loyalty of the fans. People will stop attending church for a variety of reasons but those same reason's don't apply to their love of sports.

Have you ever met a true sports fan who said, "I'm not going to any more games because before I get in the door good they ask me for money!" –Yet there people who claim to love the church who refuse to worship because they may be asked to give.

Sports fans don't care if the people they sit with are unfriendly, if the seats are hard, or if the weather is good or bad- Yet the people who claim to love the church stop attending because they say the people they sit with are not friendly, the seats are too hard and its to cold to get out.

Sports fans know the coach but many have never met him-yet there are many who claim to love the church because the pastor never came to their home to call on them personally.

Sports fans get angry with decisions of the referee in one game but still show up for the next game. Yet those who love the church repeatedly skip their worship because they upset over some decision made with which they did not agree.

Sports fans often sit with hypocrites and people who do not really love the team. There are even some at the games who do not come for the game at all but just to see the people, but they go anyway. Yet, the people who love the church often say they won't attend because some of the people they sit with are hypocrites and only come

Sports fans have attended games since they were children and love every minute. Yet, those who claim to love the church say they stay away from Sunday School and church because when they were children their parents made them come too frequently.

Some people have a greater love for their favorite sport than they do for the church.

If the church is God's team, then we should play close attention to the starting lineup and find our place on the line. We are all utility players. We play wherever God places us. Sometimes we have to tackle. Sometimes we have to guard. Sometimes we have to call the play and chair an action, sometime we have to run the play. Then there are times we are called to be receivers. When we put it all together it means victory for the church.

As Christians, we know the importance of serving the Lord. We know that if we serve him he will bless us immensely and we shall receive blessings from on high. He calls the play, throws the blessing and we receive, every day of our lives.

Exposition

This passage focuses on Christ teaching his disciples how to work in the kingdom and what to do to receive.

The text is a parable given by Christ to illustrate the nature of service in the kingdom of God. It is a continuation of chapter 19 verses 29 and 30. There Christ told his disciples that those who have given him first place in their lives even to the point of sacrificing their houses and even the friendship of mother, father and other relatives will receive a hundredfold reward.

Jesus planted the idea among his followers that those who wanted to receive the hundredfold blessing that he talked about must be willing to sacrifice and give of themselves. To receive they must first give until it becomes sacrificial. However, when it comes time to receive we will receive abundantly.

The two things believers can expect to receive are highlighted in verse 29: a hundredfold blessing and everlasting life. The conditions to receive both is an acceptance of Christ and willingness to put his cause before all others.

Chapter 20 finds Christ continuing where chapter 19 left off. He gives an example of as a "householder" who employs workers in the field. As each was hired they were promised that they would receive a penny. Those that were called early and even those who were called late in the evening all received the same reward. The premium was not on the length of their service but on the quality of their service.

At verse seven a group of men were standing idle at the close of the day. They too were hired and told "whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." When the day ended they too received pay for their one hour's work as well as a bonus that made them receive the same as everyone else.

Some who had worked the full day complained that late comers were receiving the same as they received (v12). They felt they should have received more although they received everything they were promised. The householder told them that they should not be concerned about what others received, only about what they received.

In this parable Christ reaffirmed that those who want to receive should be willing to put the interest of the kingdom of God first in their lives. If the kingdom is first then they should expect to become receivers in this life and in the life to come.

You Must Be Eligible to Receive

You must be eligible to receive. In football to receive you must have the right position and be wearing the right number (something other than 50-79). Even if you receive, without the proper authorizations you loose what you received. (all offensive players on the team become eligible once you receive or touch the ball). Those who want to receive blessings from God must position themselves to be receivers. How can that be? Jesus said in John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." If we want to position ourselves to be a receiver, we must abide in him. If we want blessings, we must abide in him! If we want to receive anything from him we must abide in him! At first glance that may seem to suggest that only certain people in the church can receive blessings because they

are in certain positions. But we need to remember the next rule about receivers and that is after the intended receiver touches the ball, everyone on the team becomes a receiver. That means we get joy when we see another believer get a blessing because that means the whole team can get in on the receiving business! We're shouting for you and we're shouting for all for the Saints because everybody instantly becomes a receiver.

Receivers run a pattern

The best receiver run their patterns: The receiver is told to run a zig zag pattern that looks foolish to the casual observer. It doesn't look like he's going anywhere, but when he gets to the end of the pattern, a good quarterback will have the ball waiting for him on the spot. The purpose of running the pattern is to confuse the opposing team that might try to stop him from receiving. A smart receiver not only knows the pattern but can execute it quickly by outsmarting his defender. In a similar sense those who want to be receivers in the kingdom of God must know how to run their pattern. It confuses the defender. They worship, rejoice, pray, work, serve, pray and worship. Then when times or tough, they confuse the devil by zig, zagging a little and it becomes pray, rejoice study, rejoice, worship, work, pray, pray, serve, rejoice worship! When times are good receivers run their pattern. When the game is intense, receivers run their patterns with the certainty that if they run the pattern that the blessing they seek will be right where it's suppose to be right on time. Even if a receiver runs his pattern he has to make himself open to receive. The devil will be on his case trying to stop him from being open to receive. That's why 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: " The devil wants to stop you from receiving we must move around in circles and step from side to side to make ourselves open to receive what God has for us.

You must know when to look up

You must know when to look up. Good receivers usually run their patterns without giving away the nature of the play or which direction the ball is coming from. When he has run the play, the good receiver knows when to look up and raise his hands. When he does it just right all a defender can do is tackle him, but its too late the receiver has the ball. That's the way it is with a believer. When we are running our plays the devil is trying to figure how to intercept what God has for us. He watches our moves, but we know how to keep the devil from getting what's ours and we also know how to look up. David said in the 121st Psalms, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made the heavens and the earth." If we want to receive, we must make ourselves eligible, run our pattern make ourselves open and look up! If you want to be healed, look up! If you want an answered prayer, look up! If you want a renewed spirit, look up and receive what God has for you!

You must receive the ball in bounds and hold on

Finally, brothers and sisters, if it is your intention to be a believer who is a receiver you must receive the ball in bounds and hold on.

No matter how great the receiver is he must receive the ball inbounds and he must hold on to the ball. He may slip down but if he slips down inbounds it still counts. He may be knocked down, but if he's knocked down, in bounds, it still counts! He may be turned upside down, but if he's turned upside down in bounds, it still counts!

There are many people who are trying to be receivers by being deceivers. They want financial blessings but the want to cheat, steal and rob. That's out of bounds!

They want to live large and have lives full of floss and gloss that they acquire by selling drugs and hot merchandise, that's out of bounds!

They want happy romantic lives but they want to have sexual pleasure without marriage and commitment, that's out of bounds!

They want respectability without accountability, they want to rise how while living low, and that's out of bounds!

When we live lives that are completely "off the chain" and completely out of bounds we may receive the blessing but it will be called back and we lose what we thought we had.

But Jesus said if you, "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, all of these things will be added unto you." That's inbounds!

When we receive and receive in Jesus name, that's receiving and receiving inbounds!

That's what Jesus meant when he said he came that we might have life more abundantly! It's receiving in Jesus name!

But brothers and sisters the most important thing that any receiver has to remember is how to hold on to the ball.

Even though you receive the ball, defenders will try to take it from you, but hold on!

I don't know about you but I believe the song writer was correct when he said, "this joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!"

I'm going to hold to his hand!

--Winds may blow, but I'm going to hold to his hand!

--Storms may rise, but I'm going to hold to his hand!

--I'm going tell everybody body that I'm on the winning team!

--Jesus is my coach and he has a winning track record!

--He died out on Calvary but arose after three days and nights!

--Hold to his hand, to God's unchanging hand!

Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand**!**

No. 9028-Black Heritage

Somebody's Calling My Name

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2, 2003

SCRIPTURE:And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. 1 Samuel 3:10

Introduction

What does your name mean? Were you named after someone? Is your name supposed to make a political statement of some sort? Or does it reflect the genre of names for your generation, with no particular meaning. Generally, names have a meaning. There are parents who labor over the selection of a name for their children for months because the child's name will often precede him into the world.

While there are many people who labor over the selection of their names there are others who get their names in the strangest of ways. Consider the pregnant woman who was injured in a car accident and slipped into a coma. They were able to save the twins she was carrying, which was a pleasant report when she woke up several weeks later. When she asked about the children she was told that she given birth to twins, a girl and a boy. The woman was a little upset however, when she learned that the children already had names. Who named them? What are their names. The doctors reported that she didn't have to worry that her brother came in and named them for her. The woman went into a rage. "My brother is a complete idiot. He could not think of a name for his dog let alone his niece and nephew. What did he name them?" The doctor said, he named the girl "Deniese." The mother said, "That's not bad. What did he name the boy?" The doctor said, "Denephew!"

As African-Americans, we have been called a variety of names. Most Blacks were imported to this country and their native names were taken from them and another given to them by their slave masters. A striking scene in Alex Haley's book "Roots" is the instance in which the master whipped Kunta Kinte until he accepted the name the master gave him and called himself "Toby." Generally, the slave's name identified him as the property of his master. On some plantations mothers were allowed to give the first name but the last name was the slave master's name. In the 20th century men like Malcom X would appear to urge Negroes to drop what he called the slave master's name and replace it with an "X" which would represent the name we never knew.

Those who hate us called us "Nigger" which is a crude variation of the term

"Niger" used in Acts 13:1 to describe Simeon, one of the leaders of the church of Antioch who was from Africa. In Acts "Niger" meant "the black." While we hate for others outside of our race to call us "nigger" there is a strange paradox in that we often refer to ourselves by the same name, with our own variation, as in "Negguh please!" Even the term "Negguh" is reserved for intra-race use and is viewed unfavorably if used by someone outside of our race.

As we entered the 20th century, we proudly called ourselves Colored People. It was a badge of distinction that identified us with all people of color in the disaspora. Our organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" accepted the name and its association with people of color everywhere.

In the 1940's we became race specific. Our name shifted from "Colored" to Negro. The new colored man was a soldier, fighter, educator and an equal partner in the American struggle. To be called a Negro was an intellectual statement. It was an elevation above the "colored" status that could only find meaning by association with others of color, borrowing from their contributions to establish our own sense of purpose.

In the 1960's we developed a sense of connection with the mother-land. We began to understand the essentials of Pan-Africanism which had been espoused by Marcus Garvey and others two generations earlier. We let our hair grow into large "bush" styles and called the style "Afros" as we wore Dashikis and sprayed our perfectly rounded air styles with "Afro-Sheen" spouting cute terms like "One-Two-Wazuri" (Beautiful People). We were the new Afro-American.

That phase didn't last long. Because by the late 60's we had redefined ourselves again. Our leaders told us that we should not be ashamed of our color. They did the unthinkable, they associated with the color Black. It was very hard for us to say because for so long we made jokes about everything that was black. Black cows give no milk. Black clouds mean rain. Black suits mean death. But when James Brown appeared on the cover of Jet Magazine without his "conked" haircut and put out his song, "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud" the redefining process became popular. We were a new people. We were "Black and Proud."

It took 20 years for us to accept the name "Black." The various generations among us used a variety of names, Colored, Negro, Afro-American and the new name, "Black People." As soon as we accepted that name another metamorphosis began, we became "African-Americans" This time the name referred to the culture rather than the color. It reflects a new trend around the nation, to identify persons by the culture in which they live rather than their color. Thus a Black man who is raised in a Jewish culture could accurately be defined as a Jewish-American. A white person raised in an Afro-centric environment could accurately be defined as an "African-American" by culture and upbringing. Today's names are edging away from color distinctions and favoring cultural distinction.

What matters most? What really matters is not the names that others have called us, or what we call ourselves. What matters is the name that God has given us.."child of God."

As believers, we are proud to be called children of the most high. The words of

the song writer summarizes our belief, “If anybody asks you who I am, tell them I’m a child of God.”

Exposition

Our text first considers the boy Samuel who hears God his name.

Samuel was bought to the temple by his mother Hannah and given to the service of the Lord in keeping of a promise she made to the Lord. At the time of this text, most theologians agree that Samuel was about 12 years old.

The aging Eli had sons of his own but they were ungodly and not fit for the kingdom. The young man Samuel became the trusted aide of Eli who lived to be 98 years old. Samuel worked with the aging Eli and assisted him in many of his priestly duties.

He slept near Eli so that he could hear if his mentor called him in the night.

The text projects that on several occasions the young Samuel heard someone calling his name. The lad awoke and went to Eli repeatedly and said you called so “Here I am,” only to find that Eli had not called. Finally, Eli told Samuel what you hear must be the voice of God calling your name. When was instructed to respond to God’s voice the next time he heard it and say, “speak Lord thy servant heareth.”

God Knows our Name

While God is a big God who holds the world in hands, he is also a personal God who knows each of us by name. When he calls us, he calls us by name.

Moses passed a burning bush and heard God call him by name. “Moses, Moses.”

God knows the name we will answer to and calls us by that name. Moses was an Egyptian name which meant “drawn out.” It was given to him by the Pharaoh’s daughter who drew him out of the Nile River while he was floating in a basket. Moses was a few months old at the time. He already had a name which certainly was not Moses. The name “Moses” was the name he answered to, therefore at the burning bush God called him by the name he answered to.

There are some names we don’t answer to. If someone calls out, “Hey, ugly!” We keep walking because we don’t answer to “ugly.” We don’t answer whenever someone calls us out of our names, thus when God gets ready to call our name he calls us by the name we answer to. What do you answer to? “Pookie?” “Shay Shay?” “Jay Jay?” God knows the name you answer to. Just ad a parent knows what name to yell down the street to get your attention and call you home, God knows what name to call.

He called Jeremiah by name.

On the Road to Damascus he called Saul by name.

When God speaks to us he calls us by name because he knows us one and all.

No wonder the old slaves sang “Hush, Hush, somebody’s calling my name. Oh my Lord oh my Lord what shall I do?”

Recognizing God's Voice

Today, there are many who hear the voice of God but do not accept it as such because they haven't learned to recognize the voice of God. In this text, heard the voice of God but thought it was Eli's voice. It never crossed his mind that God could be speaking to him.

There are some like Samuel, who hear God speak but they think it's Eli. Such was the case with Pharaoh as he listened to Moses, pronounce "Thus said the Lord God of Israel, let my people Go." Pharaoh heard the voice of God but dismissed it as the babblings of a deranged wanderer who would have himself be the deliver of his people.

These are those who receive the word of God and his wise counsel from the lips of an uncle, an aunt, a sister, a wife or even a husband. How often it is that we dismiss sound spiritual instruction simply because it comes from a source we can describe as Eli.

This requires each of us to develop an ability to hear God and to distinguish his voice. In John 10:27 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:" A child knows a parent's voice because they have heard it and understand how it sounds. A stranger's voice they won't hear.

That might require voice recognition training. That's what happened to the prophet Elijah. He hid in a cave for several days trying to hear the voice of God. There was a earthquake, a fire, and a strong wind, but God was not in either of them, only when God spoke to him in a still soft voice did he recognize the voice of the almighty.

Once we are able to hear the voice of God we hear it everywhere. One song writer said, "I hear God, in every church bell that rings. I hear God in every robin that sings." Once we know his voice, it is easy to recognize God's voice speaking, even if the actual words are coming from your wife, mother, pastor, or co-worker.

Samuel heard the voice of God speaking to him, but he never imagined that what he heard could have emanated from the mouth of God...he assumed that is was coming only from Eli.

Every voice is not God's

Just as there are those who hear God speak and think it's Eli, there are also those who hear Eli speak and think it's God.

Although God uses the minister as a vehicle through which he declares the word and points the way, still every Christian is admonished in 1 John 4:1 to "try the spirit" and "believe not every spirit" but test what is said against the word of God.

Have you heard a lesson, sermon, or teaching that sounded suspect. Test them against the word! If they are not supported in spirit by the word of God, it may be Eli speaking rather than the voice of God.

Elijah discovered that the voice of God does not always come in the biggest and

the tallest, or the strongest or the boldest but often comes in the smallest, simplest and most subtle of ways.

When God speaks an indelible imprint is made upon the soul of man.

When God speaks, mountains of indecision crumble into pebbles of resolution.

When God speaks, the valleys of despair are exalted to plains of hope.

When God speaks, rivers, filled with the tears of anguish are rolled back, revealing a pathway to brighter days.

I hear the song writer say, he speaks and the sound of his voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing. And the melody that he gave to me within my heart is ringing. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own; and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known!

Listening for Your name

Finally, brothers and sisters this text points out that Samuel lay awake that night listening for his name.

It's a good thing to wait on the Lord.

Isaiah told us that they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

When God's gets ready for us to serve, he'll call our name.

When God was ready for Noah to build the ark, he called his name!

When God was ready for Moses to return to Egypt, he called his name!

When God was ready for Jeremiah to become his prophet, he called his name!

When God was ready for Peter to become a witness to the word, he called his name!

But one of these days, when it's all over, God will be ready to give us a heavenly crown.

When he gets ready for us to walk the streets of glory, he'll call our names!

When he gets ready to pass ourt heavenly rewards, he'll call our names!

I'm waiting on the roll call every day of my life. I may be driving my car, but I'll be somewhere listening for my name. I may be flying in an airplane, but I'll be somewhere listening for my name.

I can see the roll call as the Saints line up in alphabetical order and

I can see them answer the roll one by one:

Somebody said:

A-Abraham and Aaron moved to the front the line.

B-Boaz and Bartholemew " "

C-Centurion Soldier saved at the foot of the cross, step forward

D-Daniel, fresh from the Lion's den, and David, a man after God's own heart, stepped to the front of the Line.

E-Ezekiel and Elijah, who flew away on a chariot of God...

F-Five bridesmaids who kept the lamps trimmed

G-Gideon, who won great battles with only 300 men

H-Hosea and Hannah who gave her son Samuel to be a priest for the Lord

I-Isaiah and Isaac, whom the Lord saved by providing a lamb in the bush.

J-I saw Judas try to slip to the front of the Line but an Angel said get back Judas, because you betrayed our Lord with a kiss on he cheek.

K-Lot but he didn't see his wife, for she turned to salt at Sodom and Gomorrah.

M-Moses and Malachi still asking "will a man rob God?"

N-Noah and Nehemiah, still rebuilding the walls.

O-Obadiah

P-Paul and Peter, who showed us the power of a midnight prayer.

Q-Queens and Kings of the Earth who humbled themselves before God

R-Rebekah, Ruth and Rachel

S-Samuel, and Stephen who was stoned to death for his faith

T-Thomas and Timothy who was commanded to "preach the word"

U-I saw you, from choir stands and the pews.

W-I heard them say Wright.....come on over to bright glory!

X-For the young people of Generation X

Y-For You, you and you

Z-Old man Zephaniah, who said judgment was sure to come!

I'll be somewhere listening for my name! Until that time I'll have to keep on telling the world about Jesus!

Jesus, Who died on an old rugged cross!

Jesus, Who arose after the three days and nights!

I'll keep telling the world that he's alive today!

No. 9029-Anniv.-Women

Is this Naomi?

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 9, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?" Ruth 1:19

Introduction

Have you ever browsed the photo album of a friend and stumbled across photos that were taken of them many years ago? Did you get a good laugh? Were they younger? Thinner? Prettier? Wildly dressed? Our old photos tell a story about us. They are invaluable because they become a measuring tool by which we can see how far we have come. They also remind us that we were not always as we are today? Old photos give us a snapshot of the way we were. Some who see those old photos may ask, "Is this you? Wow, you sure have changed! Or time has done you a favor!" Whatever their response those old albums tell the story of where we have been, what we have done and the depth of our struggle.

Even if we hide our old photographs, there are people who shared our journey who remember our experiences just as if they were yesterday. If we return home after a long absence, those who know us will take a long look at us and say, "Is that you?" Even though they are looking at us. Instantly they notice every change. They notice our hairstyle, clothing, conversation, disposition, attitude and spirituality or the lack thereof. If they notice something different they will ask, "Is that you?"

Paul spoke to believers in Corinth about what they once were and urged them to consider how God changed their lives. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 he said, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." That speaks volumes to the question, "Is that you?" In many instances, for the better, we are not what we once were.

Booker T. Washington once said we should not measure the value of a person by where he is today, but rather the long road he had to travel to make his arrival. Thus, when we see Christian women today, we must see them in light of the journey they have traveled to reach this point.

God has blessed the African-American woman in so many ways. She has endured some difficult moments in her history, yet she stands as a beacon of strength in the family, community and in the leadership of our race. When we see her today we may ask, "Is this Naomi?" Is this the woman of grace and beauty of our heritage and

history. The answer is obvious. She is the new Black woman, phenomenal, mystical, strong and full of faith. The Naomi we see today, is not what she used to be, because God has lifted her, changed her and strengthened her in many different ways.

As believers we triumph in the knowledge that God lifts us up and turns around, and plants our feet on higher ground. When those who see what God has done for us, they are amazed and ask, "Is that you?" And we say, "Yes, thanks to the grace of God!"

Exposition

This text focuses on a woman's struggle to survive, poverty, difficult times and loneliness, with the help of an all powerful God.

Naomi is the central character of this text. She was married to a Jewish man. The couple had two sons. When the land fell on hard times, the family moved into the land of Moab because it had been reported that there was plenty of food there.

In the course of 10 years both of Naomi's sons died leaving only their widows who natives of the land and Naomi herself. Naomi struggled to survive with little help and in the process changed considerably. At points in her struggle she even became bitter and blamed God for her circumstance, but she stopped short of abandoning her faith altogether.

She urged both her daughters in law to return to her own people because she was about to return to Bethlehem, knowing full well she would fight an uphill battle of public opinion and poverty. She left Bethlehem as a member of a financially stable class. She returned impoverished, rugged, bearing a few scars but older and wiser.

One of her daughters in law, Ruth, refused to return to Moab. She stood by the older woman, pledging to stand with her, go with her and to learn from her. "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God."

The two women returned to Bethlehem to the judgmental eyes of the Bethlehem community. Ruth was viewed as an outcast. Naomi was viewed in light of the last time they saw her. They saw the beautiful woman of 10 years earlier, and now they saw the rugged woman after only 10 bitter winters. When they saw her they asked, 'Is this Naomi?"

They saw her exterior and its obvious physical changes and asked, "Is this Naomi?" They asked the question before they came close of enough to hear her testimony. If they had they would helped Naomi to see, that despite appearances, God had been good to her, ever faithful and never left her alone.

The woman they saw was a walking and talking blessing, who had survived the toughest ordeal imaginable and was now trying to help another, younger woman to stand on her own.

If they had come close enough they would have known that this woman who stood before them may have changed her appearance but she was truly, "Naomi!"

Her Image and Status Changed

When Naomi left Bethlehem she was the image of beauty and her public image was one of high respect and honor. By no fault of her own, she endured hardship in Moab that robbed her of much of her outward status.

Long before the feminist movement Black women held power and position and were hailed as the greatest examples of beauty and grace that the world had ever seen. Nefertari, the queen of Egypt was married to Rameses II. She was the queen whose love affair with the Pharaoh resulted in great monuments being built on her behalf. Although she was depicted as a white woman in the movie the Ten Commandments, historian confirm that she was African. There were others such "Tiye" the Nubian queen of Kement, or Nzingha, or the Amazon queen of West Africa. The world is often unaware of the fact that 1000 years before the birth of Christ that Ethiopia was ruled by a long line of virgin queens whose beauty and splendor was known around the world. People called Ethiopia many names such as Nubia, Cush, Axum and Sheba. When Solomon reigned in biblical times he was visited by one these beautiful virgin queens, who came with entourage of servants and attendants that consisted of over 700 donkeys and camels and hundreds of guards and soldiers. 1 Kings 10:10 records that she gave Solomon 120 talents of gold, or over $3 million as a gift. There were so many Black queens and strong Black women that history simply scanned them. Cleopatra VII, Candance the warrior and many others help make the point that Black women have historically been women of power and strength.

American slavery became Moab for the Black woman. Forced to live in a different land in a different culture, the world stopped seeing her as a beautiful woman of elegance and grace. It only saw her as a slave, wash woman, and concubine. When the old women told the stories of what Black women once was unbelief inspired by her second class condition.

As the Black woman throws off the shackles of the past, the world asks, "Is this Naomi?"

History says I remember her as a queen and a woman strength. Is this Naomi?

Anthropology says I remember her as a woman of immense beauty. Is this Naomi?

Economist say they remember her as a woman who saved and managed. Is this Naomi?

Sociologist say they remember her as the strong member of the family who could stand behind her man but could stand alone if need be. Is this Naomi?

What the world soon learned is that while her social status may have changed because of geo-centric politics, they were looking at the same Naomi. Having living in Moab for so long she is a little more brassy and sassy, she is the new phenomenal woman. She's still strong, still beautiful, and still willing to stand behind her man but able to stand alone. Yes, this is Naomi!

She mentored another generation

In Moab, Naomi became close to the young women. She shared the rich heritage

of her life in Bethlehem. She showed them the godly way. When it was time for her to return to Bethlehem, one of the young women, Ruth, decided to go with her. In Bethlehem, Ruth was unaware of the customs, practices, history or even the social customs of Bethlehem. Naomi, took Ruth by the hand and showed her everything she needed to know. Gleaning fields was the custom for the poor, those who knew the custom knew how to keep food on the table. Naomi showed Ruth how to keep food on her table and she also advised her in her courtship that ultimately resulted in her marriage to a wealthy man. Their marriage produced a child that would be an ancestor to the earthly parents of Jesus.

Just as Naomi gave of herself to insure that Ruth would have a better position in life, women today have the same responsibility. Every woman should be the mentor to a young woman. The Naomi's of this generation are needed to take the hand of the Ruth's of the younger generation and show them the way.

Women who have succeeded in love and marriage should become advisors to young couples and show them the way.

Women who mastered the art of balancing career and family in a way that is rewarding should hold the hand of the young women of the next generation and show them the way.

There is so much to learn that cannot be learned without a mentor. The legacies of women such as Nannie Helen Burroughs and Mary McCleod Bethume who spent their lives promoting finer womanhood is evident in the great women of our times such as Condeleeza Rice, an advisor to the president; and Halle Berry an academy award winning actress, or the Williams sisters, who are world renowned tennis champions. The impetus to keep that flow of success going comes when every woman becomes a mentor for some young woman.

Your mentor is the woman who gets you ready to be on the stage of life, pushes to get your name on the program, then makes sure you have what it takes to look good when you finally make your appearance. A mentor is a connection, beyond mother and father that puts a young woman on the right track and keeps her on that track until she can stand on her own.

Today, women should see Naomi's role as a mentor as inspiration. Despite her age and declining presence, Naomi helped open doors for a young woman whose progeny changed the world.

Naomi was kept by God

Finally, there is one truth that we must not overlook. We must not make Naomi's mistake. In her old age she began to complain about the bitterness of some of her experiences, but forgot that in all of her trials God never left her alone.

Verse 21 is a tremendous paradox. It is a statement of bitterness and sweetness at the same time. It is a declaration of victory and statement of defeat. Naomi said "I went out full" and the "Lord hath brought me home again."

In a moment of weakness Naomi considered the fact that she left home with a

husband and two sons, and lost all three of them to hardship, famine and sickness. The human side of her said, “Look at what I used to be, look at what I have now!”

What Naomi did not hear were her own words, “The Lord has brought me home again!”

In all of her difficulties, God never left her alone. There was no way she could have endured the loss of a husband in a strange land without the Lord!

There was no way she could have sustained the loss of both of her sons and buried them in strange graves, without the Lord!

There is no way she could have survived the famine and sickness that took the lives of so many, without the Lord!

Even the fact that she was able to come home again, shows the goodness of the Lord!

Today, every believer whether male or female should take a look around and realize that there is very little we could have done in our history without the Lord!

Even if tempted to complain about life, we should remember that God has always been by our side.

God is always by our side.

I heard the song writer declare, “Winds may blow! Tattered and scorned! Storms my rise in my life, but he’s always right there by my side!”

No never alone! He promised never to leave me alone!

I don’t know about you but I’ve decided that I’ve got to have the Lord everyday of my life!

The old warriors said, ‘I don’t know what I’do without the Lord! When I look around and see what the Lord has done for me, I don’t know what I would do without Lord!”

I can’t even wave my hand without the Lord!”

I can’t even say my prayers without the Lord!

If it had not been for Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

If it had not been for Jesus, who arose from the grave for my sins!

I don’t know what I’d do without the Lord!

No. 9030-Anniv.-Men

On Him They Laid the Cross

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 16, 2003

SCRIPTURE:" And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." Luke 23:26

Introduction

There's a new Black man in town; have you seen him? He's reliable, disciplined, educated, fun loving, giving, goal oriented, financially stable and sensitive. Have you seen him? The thought of such a man gets the attention of women everywhere. Most single Black women are looking for the proverbial "BMW" Black Man Worth something who seems to be increasingly harder to find.

What we define as a BMW seems to change with every generation. Historically a BMW might have been a Black man who could share crop his acreage and provide for his family. It could have been a Black man who had a basic education with the ability to earn and save a few dollars. In recent generations the BMW was scaled down to mean a man who had a decent job. BMW meant "Black Man Working." Some are satisfied if they can simply find a "BMNIJ" A Black man not in jail.

Today, the Black man faces many hurdles that make his life both frustrating and challenging. A tremendous burden has been placed upon him by the society in which he lives that makes his task just as challenging as those of the Black men of history. Just over a century ago Black men fought to be free, to educate themselves and to build schools for their children. Black men fought against racism that threatened to eliminate them by lynchings and mob violence or by government design such as the infamous Tuskeegee syphilis experiment. In the 60's, another generation of Black men faced a new attack as our definition of ourselves changed from that of strong man who provides to the slick man who gets over. With the change in our definition also came a change in our own self expectations, our role in the family and our role as leaders of families and communities.

The image of the historical "Black Man Worth something" is endangered by a plethora of social factors, medical and economic factors that have placed a great challenge on the next generation of Black men. It is the burden to redefine what it means to be a "BMW." The burden is to lift a heavy cross laid upon our shoulders and carry it with the historic strength of our fore father.

What is our burden? We have a burden of protecting our health. Our life expectancy

is shorter today because of some race specific diseases that seem affect a higher number of Black men than others such as Diabetes, and prostate cancer and HIV/AIDS. Black men have a life expectancy of 71 years, six years less than white men according to the Joint Center. A Black child born in 1999 is expected to live 67 years, seven years less than a white child.

What is our burden? We have the burden of dealing with an increasingly violent nature developing within our race. In 2002 the Justice-Policy Institute reported that the number of young black men in prison has increased 500 percent over the last 20 years to the extent that there are more Black men in prison today than there are enrolled in colleges and universities. According to the Justice Department We are shooting, kicking, hitting, slapping, cutting, robbing, raping, beating each other in numbers so large that we are filling the prisons. What men should be aware of is that the FBI is reporting that 14 percent of the 20,000 or so murders that occur each year involve family violence. Black families are showing the most increase and black women who are the victims of battering and abuse are killing their mates at a higher rate than any other race.

What is our burden? Our burden is to change our thinking from BMW-where W stands for "with a hookup" to a Black man that is truly worth something, socially, economically and spiritually.

God is also looking for a BMW. He is looking for a "Believing Man who is Willing" following him and carry his cross with a strength that can only come from heaven.

As Christians, we have all decided to take up our crosses and follow Christ. The burden of the world may be heavy, but his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

Exposition

This text focuses on one Simon of Cyrene who was compelled by Roman soldiers to help Jesus carry his cross.

Simon was one of several Black people who shared a close proximity with the beginnings of the Church and witnessed the life and deeds of Christ himself.

Cyrene was the capitol of the province of Libya, located on the continent of Africa, about 11 miles South of the Mediterranean. Its inhabitants were men of dark complexion, enlarged facial features, and kinky hair. Cyrene was populated by people who were descendants of Noah's son Ham, through his third son Phut.

The sons of Ham, after the dispersion at the tower of Babel spread out into various parts of the world. The descendants of Cush, his first son, settled in the area we know as Ethiopia. Mizraim, Noah's second son, settled in the area we know as Egypt. Caanan his youngest son, settled in the area we know as the "promised land." His third son Phut, settled in Libya North Africa. All of these nations were populated by Black people.

During Biblical times many Blacks became converts to the Jewish faith. Although they were not Jews by birth they were impressed with the handiworks of God in their lands and they became believers. Moses married an Ethiopian princess while he moved in Pharaoh's court. The Blacks in Egypt had their armies and land devastated

by the plaques of God as they refused freedom to the Slaves. And the Black tribes of the Caanan land trembled in the presence of God as they watched the city of Jericho and others fall under his power.

Black people were loyal followers of the God of Abraham. There were thousands of Black Jews throughout the region, who studied the ways of Yaweh.

The presence of these Black Jews was not unusual in Jerusalem, for there were many. They were so committed to the Mosaic law that when the idea of Christianity was introduced in their circles they met it with vehement opposition. With regards to faith, the Black Jews believed the same as other Jews.

They believed in one God, Yahweh and the Mosaic law.

When Jesus began preaching the Gospel message, there were many Blacks, along with Jewish nationals that demanded his blood as well.

In the beginnings of the Church there was opposition among Blacks to this new Gospel message.

Acts Chapter 6 records how Black Jews rejected the message of Stephen who attended one of their meetings. Chapter 6:9 notes that he went to a synagogue composed of Libertines, Cyrenians and the Alexandrians, three specific Black African nations.

When Jesus was sentenced one of the Cyrenians who was distant from the events in the city was given the burden of carrying the cross. He followed Jesus carrying the cross until salvation was completed.

BMW-Black Man Withdrawn

When Christ was tried and convicted, Simon was not around. He was in the country, away from the center of activity. If we have a dilemma today it is the "Black Man Withdrawn" in the arenas of life where he is needed the most.

In many African-American homes the presence of a Black adult male is nonexistent. An increasing number of homes in our community are becoming female headed creating an imbalance in the family structure the affects of which are felt all over the Black community. There heritage foundation reported recently that there is a direct correlation between the absence of men in Black families and social dysfunctions such as criminal activity.

It is obvious that families are being created all over the Black community without the presence of men, a situation men need to correct.

Men should include themselves in the lives of their children, even if relationships between the adults are strained. Men should be more than, "Just my baby's daddy."

When men withdraw from the family, women are left to assume the role of both provider and home manager at the same time, which is an extremely difficult task which often leaves many loose ends. It's the loose ends that she is unable to handle alone because she is taking care of so many other things, that result in the dysfunction.

The next generation of fathers should "be there" for their children and for their families. It will be a sacrifice but it is extremely important. Men must do what men must

do.

BMW-With Assets

The burden was laid on him (Others laid a lot on him, blame, shame, pain) The burden of rising about all three was laid on him.

When the soldiers saw Simon they took the cross and laid it on him. His job was to carry a cross that he did not choose. Yet Simon carried that cross well.

America has laid a lot on Black men. Sometimes Black men thought it was more than they could stand, but with the help of God Black men have been withstanding.

What has been laid on the Black man: blame, shame, and pain! Anything that goes wrong, in the community is instantly blamed on Black men. Even if a child does wrong, many mothers will say you are, "just like your old daddy!"

Black men have the burden of rising above the blame, shame and pain game.

One way to do that is to become a BMW-Black Man With Assets. In our history Black men have sought to achieve many levels of BMW status. At first we wanted our freedom, that's a BMW-F. Then we wanted our education, that's a BMW-FE. Then we needed to be able to work; that's BMW-FEW. Today, we can go one step further, we need a Black man with assets or BMW-FEWA.

The latest model of BMW will require the new Black man to become asset oriented rather than income oriented. That will require a change in our thinking from generating a high income to building assets with that income.

The young Black man can ill afford to waste his resources. Each should strive to use income in ways that will build assets. This begins when each man learns to manage his time and money wisely by: Saving a portion of his income, investing in asset building opportunities in real estate, joint ventures, partnerships or stock or other investment plans.

A black man who earns a six figure income but does not know how to use it to build assets is a man who will be broke shortly afterwards because he lived large on his income but didn't build assets that count. Some of us have the latest cars, fine homes, stock portfolios, and high positions (jobs) in corporate America, but collectively we will remain an income-rich and asset-poor group of Africans in America.

-Income is earning money putting it in the bank. Wealth is owning the bank.

-Income is being able to buy a new car. Asset is owning the car lot.

Jesus added a spiritual twist to this idea when he spoke to his disciples. He questioned the logic of building income on earth without building assets in heaven. Matthew 6:19-20 Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Income is being able to borrow. Asset is being able to lend.

The burden of the next generation of Black men is to rise above being consumers to producers

Young Black men must not diminish the need for education. Without an education,

Black men will continue to be pawns in the big picture of life. Despite the lure of NBA and NFL contracts, every young Black man must resist the temptation to become a big spender with a high income rather than truly wealthy in mind, spirit and billfold.

BMW-Walking with Jesus

Finally brothers and sisters, if the world needs anything today it's a Black man walking with Jesus.

The bible record is complete with images of Black men who walked with Jesus and one who helped him carry his cross.

Matthew 10 says Jesus selected 12 men of varied occupations, from varied regions, and even mixed races, to tell the story.

Matthew 10:4 notes that among the 12 there was one Simon, the Canaanite, a descendant of Ham.

When Jesus moved from village to village, Simon, the Black man was walking with him.

When Jesus fed thousands, Simon the Black man was walking with him.

When a woman was healed of an issue of Blood, Simon the Black man was walking with him.

When he moved into the upper room, Simon the Black man was walking with him.

Simeon and Lucius were led by the Holy Spirit to lay hands on Paul to send him on his first missionary journey and carry the story of the cross to the lost.

The Black man's burden today is the same burden shared by Black men of times of old, that is to witness for God and to shoulder the burden of the cross.

We must walk with Jesus.

When we walk with Jesus we see the world from a different perspective.

When we walk with Jesus the world sees us in a different way.

When we walk with Jesus we step out on faith that doors that are closed can be opened.

When we walk with Jesus we stand with confidence that mountains that confront us can be climbed.

When we walk with Jesus we know that questions that are raised can be answered.

No wonder the song writer declared: "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me."

Simon of Cyrene walked the last mile with Jesus, carrying his cross.

Because he walked with Jesus Simon was able to:

-Tell his friends, I was there that day!

-Tell how he took and old rugged cross and put it on his shoulder

-that he carried it to Golgotha's hill!

-told how Jesus died!

Because a Black men along with men of all races walked with Jesus we too can testify that he stayed in the grave for three long days!

But early Sunday morning he arose!

9031-Youth

Hood Rich?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 22, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed about being rich? Nearly every person has dreamed at one time or another about being rich. It's the dream of having servants to bring you breakfast in bed and to come at your beck and call. Most of us will spend our lifetime trying to reach that dream, climbing over the history of those who have gone before us trying to reach that every changing and elusive plateau we call being "rich." One of the most popular Albums on the Billboard Top 100 is by a rapper named "50 cent" the name of the album is "Get rich or die trying."

Whether or not a person is rich or not depends upon what is being measured and whose doing the measuring. People who value intellect and genius called George Washington Carver a rich man. Although Dr. Carver revolutionized agriculture with his numerous discoveries he refused to patent a single one of discoveries and left them for the world to use freely. Many shook their heads saying they would have patented his 300 ways of making products from peanuts, crop rotation discoveries and other innovations instantly. They measured the value of his accomplishment by the amount of money it would yield, he valued it only by the number of people it would. Even though George Washington Carver died financially destitute, he was intellectually rich.

There are many people who lived their lives happily without achieving what the world calls the status of being "rich." Louis Satchmo Armstrong was one of the greatest Jazz musician that the world has ever known, yet it died leaving very little cash but a legacy of music and history. Harriet Tubman never had much in life but hard times. By some standards she died poor, but yet she had such a rich legacy. The same is true of Sojourner Truth, Phyliss Wheatly and countless others in our history. For varied reasons they all did not amass fortunes, but yet were considered "rich."

To be rich is to have more than is necessary to simply survive. It is to have an abundance of everything essential to living an unencumbered life. Those essentials change with every situation. Tom Hanks considered himself rich in the movie "Castaway" when he was able to finally start a fire. George Jefferson in the television comedy the "Jeffersons" considered himself rich when he moved to a "deluxe

apartment in the sky." What is rich to one man is poor to another.

Many of us are doing much better than we have been in the past but we are still poor people by nature, because there are some old habits we have that just won't die.

Many of us have fine bath tubs in our homes, but we still use dish washing liquid for bubble bath.

We have fine kitchens and the most beautiful cabinets but we still stock the shelves with Spam, vienna sausages and baked beans.

Most of us have gas or electric stoves now, but we still save the old chicken grease in a coffee can.

Most of us have television sets but still put aluminum foil around the antenna to see the picture or use pliers to change the channel-or better still, we use a clothes hanger for the antenna!

Most of us have one of two pieces of fine china but still drink water out of jelly jars.

Most of us can afford to wear a piece or two of designer clothing every now and then, but when we do we still leave the tag hanging so everyone can know it's new. Every now and then we get invited to formal occasions that require evening gowns, but we still can't resist the temptation to buy a pretty dress, leave the tag in place and take it back the next day for a refund.

Whether we are truly rich or not has nothing to do with how much we have, but it has much to do with who does the measuring. Jed Clampit, although he became wealthy with oil, was still considered just a Beverly Hillbilly. Loretta Lynn never quite outgrew the folksy ways she learned as a "Coal Miner's Daughter." The people around them set the standard, somehow they never quite measured up to what others called "rich."

The Hip Hop generation coined a new phrase to describe a new generation today that places a tremendous amount of emphasis on appearances. In the Hip Hop Generation it's fine for a young man to step out of a monster ride with chrome plated rims, wearing Tommy, FUBU and the latest Jordans then stand in line at school and eat free because he can't pay for his lunch. Those who have such appearances are called "Hood Rich."

The Rappers called "Big Tyme" captioned the essence of being hood rich in their recent album by the same name. One of the most popular songs was called "Still Fly." The words said:

Gator boots with the pimped out Gucci suits (With Da Gucci Suits)
Ain't got no job, but I stay sharp (Ehh-Ehh Ehh-Ehh, I Stay Sharp)
Can't pay my rent, cause all my money's spent (I Can't Pay My Rent)
But that's okay, cause I'm Still Fly (Uh,Uh, Damn! Cause I'm So Fly)
Got a quarter tank of gas - in my new E class (In My E-Class Benz)
Cause that's alright, cause I'm gon' ride (Hmm-Mmm)
Got everythang - in my momma name (We Got Everythang, In My Momma Name)
But I'm Hood Rich - dadah-dadah da-dah da-dah da-dah (Uh-Huh!)

How would God measure richness? Would he be impressed with our Platinum FUBU, Tommy Hilfiger, or Guicci brands? Would he be impressed with our Escalades,

Lexuses, Cadillacs, Hummers and SUV's? Do you think he would say, "that's tight!" and want to get himself all slugged up with a 24 karat grill? I doubt that anything we call being "rich" would impress God at all. If we had "Brewster's millions" he still wouldn't be unimpressed and would say "blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Those who want to see Jesus one day won't spend their lives trying to be "hood rich" because that won't matter in glory. What we really want is to be "God Rich" which is much more important than being simply "hood rich."

As Christians, our desire is to live the abundant life. We ask for everything in Jesus' name and he provides for all of our needs in ways that makes it abundantly clear that we are truly "God Rich!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes his second letter to the church at Corinth about the ultimate goal of the Christian experience.

The general theme of the 8th and 9th chapters of 2 Corinthians is receiving the abundant life then giving of ourselves to help others receive the same.

In this Paul said Jesus set the example. The words of the text echo across the centuries, "though he was rich, yet ... he became poor."

Jesus, as a part of the Holy Trinity had everything. He was rich in power and had omnipotence at his command and could do all things in the universe, yet he became poor. He laid it all aside, he became powerless so that, as he walked here among men.

Ray Stedman says Jesus was rich in love and had all the angels of heaven to adore him, "continually bowing down," as Isaiah tells us, "crying out, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts'" he laid it aside, he became poor and came to be the one of whom Isaiah could write, "He was despised and rejected by men ... we esteemed him not ... he was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted," {Isa 53:3-4}.

He was rich in resources because the word teaches that, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Yet he became so poor that he told his disciples, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head,"

He had no home, they had to borrow a manger in which he could be born; he had to borrow a penny when he wanted to perform a miracle; he depended on others for his clothes; he went about with no certain dwelling place; and when he died they had to borrow a grave in which to lay his body. He had no place; nothing of his own.

He was rich, yet for our sakes he entered into the poverty of human existence and held absolutely nothing back, not even his own life.

His purpose in doing what he did is that we might be rich in those aspects of life that would contribute to what he called the "abundant life" which is defined by a standard that cannot be measured by the economic standards known to man. Christ described true richness as having "treasures in heaven" that cannot be corrupted by time or stolen by thieves.

His journey on earth was to show believers how to move to the highest level of existence possible, to be "rich in the Lord."

What is Rich?

Just what does it mean to be rich? Jennifer Lopez, in her recent hit "Jenny from the Block" defined rich as having a lot. She says, "Don't be fooled by the rocks that I got I'm still, I'm still Jenny from the block Used to have a little, now I have a lot."

Simply having a lot does not make a person truly rich. It's possible to be a poor man who has a lot. It's possible to be a lonely woman who has a lot. It's possible to be broken spirited, unhappy, lost, dejected and hungry and still have a lot.

We see the accounts of so many people who have a lot who use drugs, commit suicide become alcoholics and otherwise destroy themselves and we wonder, "how could someone who has so much be so unhappy?" The answer lies in the fact that while many people have a lot they are still poor on the inside.

That's what Jesus came to address through his life journey on earth. Paul tried to explain this in Ephesians 3:16 when he said, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Jesus came to show us how to be really rich on the inside, which operates independent from what's going on outside.

There is nothing wrong with having a lot! There is nothing wrong with wearing nice clothes or living in a nice neighborhood or driving a nice car, but those are not the signs of the truly rich. The truly rich man is the one who could be just as happy living in a shotgun house as he is in a condominium. The truly rich woman is one who could be just as happy washing her own clothes as could having a maid service to do it for her. Having a lot and being rich are not one in the same.

True richness is a sense of well being, security and self worth that comes from the inside. The truly rich woman may be given a shanty in which to raise her family. But come back in a week and she has turned that shanty into a place that is filled with love and compassion. It's no longer a shanty, it is a mansion built by love. That's why papa and granny can sit down to a table full of mustard greens, rice and gravy and fried chicken and feel like it's food fit for kings, because real richness comes from the inside.

As youth begin their journey in life each should strive to become spiritually rich before you get wealthy. Those who are spiritually rich and not overwhelmed when they hit the big time. They are not swept away by the fast life or awed by the money they make. J-Lo's words seem appropriate. They say, "don't be fooled by the rocks I got, I'm still Jenny from the block." Real riches are not in rocks, but in the Rock. His name is Jesus.

The rich have a home

The real rich always have a place to call home.

We have seen the pictures of the homes of the wealthy. Some have 10 bathrooms, movie theaters, and bowling alleys and production facilities all in one place. While there is nothing wrong with such splendor, it good to know that a beautiful house does not make a home.

Some may discount the value of their little apartment or house, but what makes it a home is not where it is located or how much it cost. What makes it a home is the people on the inside.

What makes it a home is love.

The truly rich can have a home in a pup tent, shotgun house or a mansion it does not matter because it is the love of the people that transforms a house into a home.

In his quiet hours Rapper Tupac looked as millions but realized that none of his riches would get into heaven. He asked the question "I wonder if heaven got a ghetto?" Even after his death he still has a hit on the charts called "Thugz Mansion"

Tired of gettin chased by the police and arrested
Niggaz need a spot where WE can kick it
A spot where WE belong, that's just for us
That's the only place where thugs get in free and you gotta be a G at thug mansion
Leave all the stress from the world outside
Every wrong done will be alright (I wanna go)
Nothin but peace (I wanna go) love (I wanna go nigga)
And street passion, every ghetto needs a thug mansion
There has to be a place better than this, in heaven
So right before I sleep, dear God, what I'm askin
Remember this face, save me a place, in thug's mansion

The truly rich don't look for a thug's mansion but for a place in the kingdom of God.

Being God Rich

Finally, brothers and sisters, the essence of the Christian life is not to be "hood rich" but to be "God rich"

We are spiritual ballers banking heavy and flossing blessings and loving every minute of it.

We are "God rich" when we realize that as children of the king we have been given an unlimited debit card on the bank of heaven, with no daily limit.

We are "God rich" when we realize that we have a spiritual cell phone to glory, that never runs out of time, whether we call morning, evening or night, God's always got the minutes

We are "God rich" when we realize that God has a special FUBU line, just for us. He's got FUBU blessings, "for us and nobody but us." FUBU "for us, and nobody but us". He's got FUBU healings, "for us and nobody but us." He's got FUBU opportunities "For us and nobody but us."

We are "God rich" when we realize that Tommy Hilfiger can make us look good but a touch of His finger can turn night into day, bad into good and wrong into right!

We who are God rich don't need platinum chains around our necks, because we are children of the king and have gold under our feet.

Have you not heard, my father is rich in houses and in land, he holds the wealth of the world in his hands!

Unlike the hood rich who have everything in "my mama's name" the God can ask for anything "in Jesus name". I hear Jesus is in John 16:23 say, "..Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

When you are God Rich we can ask in Jesus name and if it's in the will of God, we will receive it!

Have you not heard, my father has a special line of shoes worn only by the God Rich. Saints have been wearing them for thousands of years. It's a brand God created when we the children of Israel were getting ready to cross over into a land flowing with milk and honey. But standing between them and the promised land was a wide river that was too deep to walk across and too wide to swim. Right there on that spot, God told Joshua to tell the priests to touch the water with their feet and their feet touch the waters of the Jordan river, the waters rolled back and they crossed on dry land.

Whenever a saint reaches a river that's too hard to climb, he puts on his Jordan's, not Micheal Jordan; not a tennis shoe. I'm talking about God's river crossing shoes and steps out on the word of God.

No wonder the old warriors sang, "I got shoes, you got shoes, all of God's chilluns God shoes, when I get to heaven gonna put on my shoes and walk all over God's heaven."

Those who are "God Rich" are not looking for Tupac's Thugz Mansion, because they already have a mansion. I heard Jesus say, "In my father's house there are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be also."

In the hood you might want to be called a "G" because you are a gangsta. But in my father's house there will only be "J's" those who people who belong to Jesus!

If you are a "G" your goal is to be hood rich. If you are a "J" your goal is to be "God Rich"-and belong to God.

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I belong to God. I belong to God. From the top of my head to the mole of my feet, I belong to God."

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There's peace and happiness there, in my father's house!

There's joy in my father's house!

He's name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary to make a way for me!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the gave with all power in his hands!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No. 9032-Inspiration

Praise God Anyhow

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Introduction

How do you act when things are going wrong? When things are going right in our lives we are the most agreeable people in the world. When things are going right, there are smiles on our faces, pep in our steps and we are surrounded by a virtual halo of goodwill, cheer, and enthusiasm. We sing loudly in worship services, give bold testimonies in bible studies and Sunday School classes and generally show off a countenance that says "Praise the Lord." When things are well with us we generally say, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good!" However, there are some of us that make a complete turn around when things are not going well in our lives. These are times when there is trouble in our families, or we are besieged with personal woes, there are some who have extreme difficulty keeping that smile on their face, or that pep in their step. That cheer they once had seems to dull and their enthusiasm fades. When things go well, they smile and give God praise, but when things go wrong, they find no joy in the Lord.

Which day is a good day? For the believer, every day is a good day. It is a day of thanksgiving, even days when trouble is obvious. There are some days when you know you're in for trouble. You know you are having a bad day when you call 911 and they put you on hold! You know you are having a bad day when your twin brother forgets your birthday! You're having a real bad day when your birthday cake collapses because of the weight of the number of candles. You are having a bad day when you read the obituary column of the paper and you see your name and picture. These might be extremes, but everyone experiences difficult and trying times.

As a nation we are living in difficult and trying times. We are hearing of wars and rumors of wars. Nations are rising up against nations. For the first time in its history, this nation is rising as the aggressor on the world scene instead of the arbitrator of world peace. Over 200,000 soldiers are poised for war and the national leadership is prepared to spend more than $95 billion dollars to wage war as it prepares to send

more of its sons and daughters onto the battlefield. All of this makes believers uneasy. Some even ask, where is God? Why doesn't he intercede and do something to stop the bloodshed that is on the way?

Jesus said such times would come. In fact, In Matthew 24:6 Jesus said we would hear of wars and rumors of wars as we get close to the end of time. He said these things must be, but when we see them they would be a sign that we are nearing the final age. So, how should we as believers respond when trouble comes our way? Whether it's personal trouble or national trouble, the response is the same, keep the faith. God will make a way!

As believers, we are confident that God is still in control of his world. Our faith is not shaken by troubles. We sing with confidence, "I'm so glad that troubles don't last always." We praise him during good times; but even when times are filled with trouble, we will still praise the Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Habakkuk as he encourages the people of God to have faith despite difficult times.

The prophet Habakkuk had the difficult task of preaching to God's people as their country was threatened with war and trouble. From the onset Habakkuk was disturbed because God seemed to let a wicked nation triumph and appear victorious in its attempts to bring judgment on the people of God. The Chaldeans were sweeping westward and appeared set on plunging the nation into war. The nation was on alert because the reports of the activities of its enemies were coming in daily. There was violence and threats of violence everywhere but God seemed unwilling to act to stop what was certain to be collision between great powers of the day. (1:1-4). This troubled Habakkuk, who could not see the justice in the death of the innocent and he asked why God seemed to ignore the approaching evil. All of the trouble the people faced seemed to arise from a little nation, generally ignored and obscure, but now claiming the attention of every major power in the known world.

God speaks to Habakkuk personally and shows him how he is working in the events that unfold before him to work out his will, even to the point of using what is obviously evil to accomplish an eventual good. In 1:6-11 God characterizes the national enemy as one that is terrible, dreadful and void of judgment or dignity (v.7) which credits its ability to survive and avoid destruction "unto his god." (v11). Yet, there is a vision and response from God for that difficult time because believers were becoming uneasy. They questioned why their sons and daughters would be plunged into a fight with an evil nation without an appropriate response from God.

Responding to the cries of the people, God shows Habakkuk a prophecy and a vision that reassures the people he is not asleep and is moving behind the scenes to accomplish his will. In 2:3 God notes that at the "appointed time" the truth of his word shall speak to the world situation "and not lie." He encouraged the people to

be patient. “Though it tarry” means, “it may seem like it’s taking a long time for him to act” but he says “it will surely come.” He encouraged all believers to approach the troubling times with an attitude of faith saying, “the just shall live by his faith.” (2:4)

Habakkuk announced that the world is in God’s control and not of those who worship idols, wreak violence or seem to be victorious in their evil ways. He proclaimed that God is still in control and master of the universe. He said the “Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” (2:20) In essence, be still and watch God do his mighty works in mysterious ways that seem illogical to the unbelieving heart.

Thus, Habakkuk concludes that although there are difficult times ahead and troubles all around, the just should not give up the faith.

Living by faith has implications. Its implications are spelled out in verses 17 and 18. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor ... shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Tough times are threatening and trouble is all around, the just and believers must resolve to “praise God anyhow!”

Ways to use your praise

What attitudes should believers have in times of difficulty, trial and instability. These passages in Habakkuk give us a clue:

ECONOMY CHANGES BUT GOD IS THE SAME: When the economy changes for the worse, there are many people who lose their praise. When their stock investments, 401k’s, IRA’s and other investment plans are doing well they feel like praising God. But what if they don’t? The symbols of economy in this text are in verse 17. When there are no figs on the fig tree, no fruit on the vine, no olives, the fields produce no harvest and the cattle and sheep are lost, that is a sign that times are obviously tough. The economy has taken a change for the worse. In biblical times these items were barometers of the economy, much like the Dow Jones Industrial Average or other investment reports help us to understand economic trends today. Habakkuk said when times are tough we should praise God anyway! Why? Because economies change, but God does not. Joseph became a ranking government official in Egypt when he predicted that the economy would change, providing seven years of famine and seven years of prosperity. God showed him how to save in good times to prepare for difficult times. Job experienced bad times in which he lost all of his money, investments and business enterprises, in addition to his children and poor health. Job’s response is memorable “The lord giveth and the Lord Taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” Our families have endured depressions, good times and bad times. What we have learned is the truth of Malachi 3:6, “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Because God doesn’t change, it does not matter whether the economy changes, we’ll praise God anyway! If the cost of living goes up we will still praise the Lord because economies may

change but God is the same!

WE TRUST IN GOD: There is a reason believers are able to have joy in difficult times; it is because we trust in God, who is the source of our salvation (v18). We may not understand fully what salvation is until we consider that each one of us has someone we count on to help us when we get our backs to the wall. We have a favorite friend, family member, co-worker or lender who we can usually count on to help us out of a tight. The person who helps us in bad situations and saves our skin, is said to be our salvation. We don't worry as long as our personal loan officer is at the bank or our backer is in place. Habakkuk says God is our salvation, he is our backer in all matters. Problems will not step around us because we are Christians, but we deal with them with an attitude of victory because we know the God of our salvation is behind us. Psalm 27:1 says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" That means we have nothing to fear because the God of our salvation will provide for us. David made it clear in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." A noted song writer put it this way, "I trust in God wherever I may be. Upon the land or on the rolling sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me."

PRAISE GOD IN TRIALS: The hardest time to praise God is during periods of trial. They seem to tear us apart, and pull us from side to side. Trials, if we are not careful, can steal our praise. Look at verse 19. The word of hope in Habakkuk is that God will "make my feet like hinds feet" or he will lift me up and "make me to walk upon high places." We praise God because we know that we may be on the low ground at the moment but in due time God will help me to walk on higher ground. Whatever valley we are experiencing, in due time God is promising "higher ground!"

We endure the low ground of sickness because we know in due time, he will make me to walk on higher ground!

We endure the low ground of financial distress, but we know in due time, he will make me to walk on higher ground!

We endure the low ground of family dysfunction, but we know in due time, he will make me to walk on higher ground!

Our troubling experience is low ground, but in due time, he will make me to walk on higher ground!

No wonder the song writer records, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land, A higher plane than I have found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

Praise the Lord anyhow

Finally brothers and sisters, while we may be concerned about perilous times or personal troubles, there is a blessing for man or woman who continues to praise God as he prays to God.

If Habakkuk said anything of value to Israel it was that despite the difficulties of the moment they should continue to praise and give thanks to the Lord.

The believer who is living through difficult trial continues to praise God because he knows that "all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord who are the called according to his purpose."

Thus we are admonished to wait, pray and praise, God will work it out.

When we wait on the Lord we put it all in his hands and then praise him in advance for the victory. That's why Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"

If we wait on the Lord, he will work it out! I heard him tell Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee"

Whatever it is that we need God's grace is sufficient and he will supply it, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be forgiven, God's mercy is sufficient to forgive us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need comfort, God's peace is sufficient to comfort us,so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be satisfied, God's storehouse is sufficient to satisfy us, so we praise god anyhow!

If we need healing, God's touch is sufficient to heal us so we praise God anyhow

If we need to be strong, God's power is sufficient to strengthen us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be challenged, God's work is sufficient to challenge us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be refreshed, God's God's fountain is sufficient to refresh us, so we praise God anyhow!

Why should I praise God in my troubles? When I'm surrounded with sickness, financial difficulties, family woes and money problems, why should I praise the Lord?

We should praise the Lord because such times are the times in our lives when we show the level of our spiritual strength. When it's all over, we'll be more valuable to the kingdom than we have ever been.

A raw diamond is worth thousands of dollars, but once it has been cut, shaped and molded in the master's hand, it is worth millions.

Gold ore, is worth thousands, but once he has been refined in the fire it is worth millions.

Yet some still ask, "Why am I literally being torn apart?" This is the question that Israel asked and in Jeremiah 18:2 God sent Jeremiah to the potter's house for the answer. He showed him a lump of clay on the potter's wheel, but the clay had a flaw that would reduce its value. To fix it, the potter had to tear down the whole lump of clay and reshape it all over again.

Why do I seem to be torn apart? Because the potter is reshaping the clay to increase its value!

A small bar of steel may be worth $5 until it is cut into a set of $50 horseshoes. That same bar of steel is worth $350 if its cut into sewing needles. That same bar is worth $250,000 if it is cut to form springs for expensive watches.

No wonder the song writer wrote, “Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way, thou art the potter, I am clay. Mold me and shape me after thy will, as in thy presence, yielded and still.”

Every Saint should be ready to be tried in the fire!
Before you go in the fire, praise the Lord!
When you are in the fiery furnace, praise the Lord!
When you come through tell the story, of how you got over!
Tell them about Jesus!
Jesus, Mary’s baby!
Jesus, our rock in a weary land!
Jesus, our bread when we are hungry!
Jesus, who died on an old rugged cross…
But Early Sunday morning arose from the dead with all power in his hands!
Even if times are tough, praise the Lord anyhow!

No. 9033-Funeral

Candles On the Cake

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La,

March 5, 2003

SCRIPTURE: The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Psalm 90:10-12 "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. 22:5

Introduction

Have you ever celebrated your birthday with a birthday cake? Most of us have had at least one birthday cake in our lives. It's a joyous moment. It begins when we are too young to remember. On our first birthday there are dozens of faces standing around cheering singing "Happy Birthday!" We didn't know why everyone was so happy, but we knew it must have been a great day because there was so much laughter and joy. There was one candle on the cake. As we grew older the number of candles on our cake increased too. Soon there were four candles then eight. One day there were 18, then there were 28. Then we stopped putting candles on the cake in our futile attempt to stop the onward march of time. At some point we simply put one candle on the cake to represent that age we don't want to speak about. It's always easy to blow out one candle thereby securing that elusive single wish, but it takes more effort to blow out candles when there is a large number of them. To some the candles on the cake represent our years. To others they represent blessings. Every candle marks another year that God has smiled on us in his mysterious and peculiar way.

If the candles on our cake represent blessings that we receive from God then we would need more than just one candle for every year. We'd need thousands of candles. We'd need candles for every minute and second we have lived. Every minute has 60 seconds. Every hour has 60 minutes and 3,600 seconds. Every day has 24 hours or 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. Every year has 365 days; that's 8,760 hours, or 12,614,400 minutes or 31,536,000 seconds. There is no cake big enough to hold that many candles. In fact, the Guinness Book of Records shows that the largest number of candles ever put on one cake was done in 2001. Then 2100 candles were placed on one cake to make the world record.

Suppose a person lives a very long time. Suppose a person lives 96 years 364 days and 17 hours. How long is that?

It's 1163 months.
It's 35,404 days.
It's 849,696 hours.
It's 50,981,760 minutes.
It's 3,058,905,600 seconds.

By any measure 96 years 364 days and 17 hours is a long time. Every second represents a blessing from the Lord! It would take a birthday cake as large as the State of Texas to hold that many candles!

There is a poem that reflects moments when we try to measure the length of life with with candles on our cake. It says:

96 candles were glowing in the dark
each one told a story, each one left a mark
There was a time, there were just a few
but the numbers grew, and the joys came new

When there were 16 candles, the world was mine
Those 26 candles found me in my prime
Was it 36 candles when I put my hand in his
Or was it 56 or 66
that I trusted him to fix-
my shaking hand, quivering voice,
making him my only choice
for this life and the life to come
preparing me a place in the glory of the sun?
Which was it?
I can't quite remember
from January to December
So many candles, so many claims
so many shining moments, so many flames

No cake was big enough for 76 candles
There was no place to put 86 for sure
But I lived, loved and endured
and enjoyed every minute,
I had in it
as I held
tight to faith secured

To help me light one more, you came
to light another candle in my name
to squeeze in another flickering flame
that flutters with every wind,

that takes my breath and
comes back again

96 candles glowed in the dark
each one told a story, each one left a mark
So, light a candle for old time sake
but don't weep or wake for me
For you see,
96 is all there was to be
shared between me and thee
I'm standing on the glorious shores of heaven
No candle
No cake or leaven
For I am with the Lord now
His light is number 97
-Wright 2003

As believers we know that every day we have in this life is a blessing from God. We have pledged ourselves to use each day wisely as we light a candle of thanks for every minute and every second.

Exposition

This text focuses on a Psalm of Moses in which the importance of using our days wisely is underscored.

Biblical scholars believe Moses wrote this Psalm during the wilderness travels about the same time as the events of the Book of Numbers. It emphasizes the importance of numbering wisely using our given time.

Moses makes the clear point that no individual should expect to live forever, especially on this side of Jordan. Therefore each is implored to "number" or carefully use each day to achieve the maximum results out of life.

In the verses preceding the text Moses emphasized that while God himself is beyond time (90:4) and oblivious to its effect, mortal man is not. A thousand years is only like a day to God, but even a few years take a toll on mortal flesh. The general expectancy is about 70 years (90:10) and those who have great strength live beyond that time, but even then, they too are soon cut off and fly away.

Thus, Moses concludes that every believer should seek to use available time wisely to assure that life is lived in a way that is pleasing to God and amasses rewards in the kingdom to come.

Using Time Wisely

Moses prayed that he might apply his heart to wisdom. That means that he desired to use his time wisely. What can be considered a wise use of time? What pursuits in life can be described as wisdom applied.

Since we all share the same sixty second time block together, what is the best way to apply it? One poet said:

"I only have a minute, 60 seconds in it, forced upon me I did not choose it, but I know that I must use it, give account if I abuse it, suffer if I lose it. Only a tiny little minute but eternity is in it."

LIFE OF GOOD WORKS: Our time is used wisely when we can say that our life has been filled with good works. Not necessarily great works that changed the world, but "good" works that changed conditions around us. Men and women should strive to use their available time to make the world around them better. The man or woman who helps someone in distress, assists someone in need, shows someone a better way, uses their life to good works. The word of God says, "Wilt thou know oh vain man, that faith without works is dead." The person who has great faith will also show his works at the same time. A noted song writer summarized the value of good works to believer's life by penning the words, "If I can help somebody as a pass along. If I show somebody that his traveling wrong.If I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain." Those who do good works with their available days, use their time wisely.

STRONG FAMILY PRESENCE: Our time is used wisely when we can say that we used our lives to promote strong family relationships. A mother or father's greatest reward is to know that everything that could possibly be done to help their children and grandchildren stand on their own feet has been done. That includes listening, advising, celebrating, supporting and even correcting them in ways that help them to grow and prosper. Building family takes time. It requires that each of us spend time together, listening, laughing, sharing, debating, working, praying and worshipping together. The person who uses his time to help build family relationships uses his time wisely and does not squander it foolishly.

LIFE OF FAITH: A person who lives a life of faith and service to God uses his time wisely. To some a life of faith is a waste of time because often it does not seem exciting. The life of faith is one that heavily revolves around the people of God. It is a life of Sunday School and worship, prayer, bible study and listening to the Word of God. It is a life rooted in trusting in God and praise. Trusting God is the obvious outcome of faith. It is the "blessed assurance" that come what may, God will make a way. It is a life that does not change with time because faith does not diminish with age. On the contrary faith deepens and becomes an even grander presence with age. The person who spends his or her life in service to the kingdom of God uses time on this side of Jordan building a life on the other side of Jordan that will never run out of time. That's a place that the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "I have heard of a land on a far away strand; tis the beautiful home of the soul. .tis a land where we'll never grow old."

No more Candles

Finally, brothers and sisters, we have the joy of knowing that while we blow out

candles on our cake on this side of Jordan, we are going to a place where there will be no more candles; for Jesus is the light.

In this life we need candles, lights just to see our way, but in the life to come there will be no need.

In this life we get older every second and add candles to our cake. But in the life to come there will be aging, or sickness or death.

In Revelation 22 John describes the beautiful city of God as a place that has streets made of Gold. In the midst of that city will stand a tree that bears 12 manners of fruit, whose leaves will provide healing for the nations, eliminating sickness, disease and death.

In that city, time shall be no more! Minutes, seconds, hours, weeks and days will blur into one long happy holiday.

In verse 5 John said they will need no candles either. They won't need candles to see or to mark the hour of the day or the passing of time because the glory of the Lord will radiant light for everyone and time will be no more!

That's the place where the wicked will cease from troubling!

It's the place where the weary will be at rest!

It's the place where every day will be like Sunday; where it will always be "Howdy" and never "Good-bye!"

No wonder the song writer says, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing it will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory!"

It's a victory won by Jesus out on Calvary when died for our sins!

It's a victory secured when he arose from the dead, Early Sunday morning!

It's a victory claimed when we accepted him as our Lord and savior!

"When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"

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On Saturday March 1, 2003 Luvella Gary went home to glory just hours before her birthday. Her family had come from far and near to celebrate her birthday. Here the poet once again:

96 candles glowed in the dark
each one told a story, each one left a mark
So, light a candle for old time sake
but don't weep or wake for me
For you see,
96 is all there was to be
shared between me and thee
I'm standing on the glorious shores of heaven
No candle
No cake or leaven
For I am with the Lord now
His light is number 97

No. 9034-Inspiration

Traffic Jams

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 9, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

Introduction

Have you ever been caught in slow moving traffic? Doesn't it always seem to happen when you have little time to get where you are trying to go? Sometimes traffic moves so slow that we can become wedged between a solid line of cars in front of us and behind as well as to the left and right of us. Even when you think about trying to squeeze yourself in another lane it seems like a huge 18 wheeler will pull up on both sides and sandwich your car in place. All you can do in such situations is just stare at bumpers and tap your steering wheel. There are some who get angry and blow their horns loudly at the cars in front of them, even though the car in front of us is helpless because there are 50 cars in front of it. It's frustrating.

What we do to amuse ourselves is interesting. We read bumper stickers. We wave at the children in the car in front of us who make funny faces out of the back window. We also read the messages on the back of trucks that tell us how much the truck pays in taxes every year. There are some who bring work from the office, read books, complete homework, have family prayer and even watch movies in their automobiles.

There are others who get so frustrated that they even get violent. There was a time when people who were upset would stand on the street and yell at each other. Studies have shown that since 1990 a new phenomenon has developed called "Road Rage" in which people not only shout but they pull guns and shoot each other as well as other types of violent responses to their frustration. In fact a study conducted by Mizell and Company of Bethesda, Maryland between 1990 and 1996 pointed to over 12,000 injuries and deaths a year attributed to "road rage" alone.

Waiting frustrates us. We wait at traffic lights at 3 a.m. in the morning when we are the only ones on the street. We wait for phone calls to be returned. We wait for an answer on our job application. We wait for test results. We wait at the post office. We wait in the pharmacy. We like things fast. That's why we have fax machines, cell phones, microwaves, and fast internet connections. A look of gloom comes over a person's face when we announce that we don't have email or a touch tone telephone. Experts say that we may spend six months of our lives sitting at stop lights and five

years of our lives waiting in some kind of line. All of that waiting frustrates us.

We get frustrated because things seem to move too slowly. We get angry when we get put on hold on the telephone or if we have to stand in line at the grocery store. Even though the clerk is scanning merchandise at double the speed of a few years ago, we still get upset when she has to stop to verify a check or when someone who has more than 10 items stands in the fast lane. It's not road rage, it's grocery line rage! There are some people in the grocery line that would shoot us dead for asking for price check with a long line behind us.

Traffic Jams frustrate us because they interrupt our normal flow of activity. We have packed out schedules tightly, and then traffic jams get in the way. We have to wait.

Suppose we could transform our waiting into productive time? Suppose use life's traffic jams as opportunities rather than view them as frustrations? When we learn how to do that, then we learn the true meaning of what it means to wait on the Lord.

As believers we try to pace ourselves. We try not to get so busy in life that our time with God becomes an interruption. Waiting patiently for God to move in our lives is a characteristic of the Christian life that we all aspire to achieve. When we achieve it, we know what to do in traffic jams.'

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells the people of Judah to patiently wait for God to move without frustration.

For 40 years the people of Israel were shifted from one world power to another. They prayed to God and waited for him to respond to their prayer of relief. The city of Jerusalem and its temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. For some forty years the Judeans had lived as hostages in a strange land; they were discouraged repeatedly in their efforts to liberate themselves and to return to their homeland. Their independence seemed to come slow. The stunning victory of Cyrus over the mighty Babylonian power (538 B.C.) and his decree of liberation for the Jewish exiles were events too joyous to recount. They waited impatiently for the time when they would return home, but everything seemed so slow. The prophets came telling them that God would prepare a way for them but the long highway home that they promised, seemed so far and so improbable. The prophets repeatedly told them that God would give them a divine pardon, comfort them in every major problem area, and promised the restoration of Zion and its Temple.

While the people believed God for their liberation, they were impatient. This prompted the prophet Isaiah to declare that they should not become impatient, but to wait on the power of God to help them take the appropriate steps. For Judah the steps included their liberation by the Persian government and the return home. While waiting on the command to return, they raised money, prepared for the journey and arranged their affairs in such a way that they were instantly ready whenever God gave the command.

It seemed like a slow pace for them, but they waited for God to move and

eventually he led them back to the promised at his command.

What it means to wait

What does it mean to wait? The common understanding of "wait" is that by waiting we simply sit still and do nothing. It's like sitting in a traffic jam. You tap you figures, pass time and do nothing. Yet "wait" means more than just sitting idly. Because the word "wait" is a verb it is an action word that can mean at least three things:

WAIT CAN MEAN EXPECTATION: While a person waits one of the things he does is to expect or anticipate something. His mind is not a blank, but he is busy anticipating big things to come. A woman who is pregnant is waiting for her baby to be born, but that waiting is hardly inactive. Much is going on. And there is a great deal that the mother does during the waiting that is purposeful and productive in terms of the health of the baby. She takes care that she does nothing that will interrupt or injure what she expects. In the same way a believer who waits with anticipation for what he expects from God. What are you waiting for? Is it something that you have asked God for but it seems as though your answer is not coming fast enough? While you are waiting, you should protect your spiritual life and make sure nothing happens that will interrupt or stop your blessing from happening. To live in expectation is to live constantly aware that we should think positive and prepare for what we are waiting for. A couple preparing for a child begins to do things in advance. They consider names, make a few purchases and even prepare a place where their baby will live. They don't just wait idly, the live in expectation. To wait, therefore, means to live expectantly! Live as if what you are waiting for is about to happen any minute, because in reality it could do just that.

TO WAIT IS TO BE READY: Another definition of wait is to be in readiness. Waiting involves preparation. In other words, it's not just about being still. It's about being ready to move when the time is right. A good illustration of this type of waiting is a relay race. The second runner in the race does not sit on her hands while she's waiting, does she? She stretches and limbers her muscles, then she begins to run alongside the other runner, ready to grab the baton and go. A detective on a stakeout also displays this kind of waiting. The detective works hard to stay awake and remain ready so that when the criminal shows himself, the detective is ready to spring into action. If you are waiting for something you must stay prepared just as soldiers who are waiting for the command to go to war, must stay ready, we too, must stay ready. Jesus told his disciples to watch and pray for they would not know the day or the hour when he would return. On other occasions, he told them to keep their lamps trimmed and to prepare for the return of the bridegroom.

INVOLUNTARY WAITING IS GOOD TOO: Even involuntary waiting is good too. A traffic jam is involuntary waiting. But there are other things that slow us down, such as temporary job layoffs, sicknesses, business failures, and other complications. All of these have a way of bringing our pace to a slow crawl. Despite how frustrating

these circumstances can be, even waiting in these contexts can be good. Sometimes traffic jams give us time to think. Sometimes these events which force us to move at a crawl's pace, give us time to think of those things which are really important. There are many who never take time to pray until there is a traffic jam. There are some of us who never talk to our family members, take time to enjoy our homes or anything else of value until we experience a traffic jam. Waiting in this context often has a purpose. There is a plant called the "wait-a-minute." What makes it unique is that it is its very sharp, often hooked thorns. When dealing with it, it would be wise to stop and wait a minute before plucking the flowers from is plant. There are many times in our life when it is wise to wait a minute and think before we move forward.

Even involuntary waiting can prove to be purposeful if we use the time to stop and think.

When God gets in the waiting

Finally, brothers and sisters, waiting becomes powerful when God gets involved.

When we are waiting for a change in our personal direction, rather than just idly waiting, wait on the Lord! That means we should expect something to happen, anticipate its coming by avoiding anything that disrupt and be ready to receive it.

If we are seeking a great opportunity, don't just wait, but wait on the Lord. Expect an answer to your prayer, don't do anything that will disrupt it and be ready to receive it.

If we are seeking direction, don't just wait, but wait on the Lord. That means to expect God to show you the way, don't do anything that will disrupt his direction, and be ready to receive it when it comes.

We are able to take the most frustrating moments and turn them into learning situations because we have learned how to wait on the Lord.

When you wait on the Lord, that which was impossible becomes possible.

When you wait on the Lord, that which was out of range comes a little closer.

When you wait on the Lord:

-Those who are weak get a little more strength. I hear Isaiah declare, "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

-Those who have fallen down, get back up again! That's why Job declared, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him"

-Those who have lost their hope, find spiritual renewal and power to say, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Wait on the Lord, and mountains will be made low!

Wait on the Lord, and valleys shall be exalted!

Wait on the Lord, and crooked places shall be made straight!

Wait on the Lord, and rough places shall be made plain!

Hold to his hand, hold to God's unchanging hand!

While you are waiting, keep your faith turned up high and hold to his hand!

While you are waiting, keep watching and praying!
While you are waiting, keep telling the story!
Tell everybody about the goodness of the Lord!
Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!
Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!
Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don't stop there..tell them how Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.
Wait on the Lord ...and everything will be alright!

No. 9035-Communion

Old Wine, Old Clothes and New Lives

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 16, 2002

SCRIPTURE: This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey. Joshua 9:12-13; And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. Luke 5:37-38

Introduction

Do you know people who have joined the church but still have many of their old habits? In any given week believers meet individuals in the marketplace or workplace, even in their homes who have associated themselves with a church but who still live their old lives. It is frustrating to believers because often these individuals are seen as examples of what it's like to be a Christian.

Most of us know of people who actively participate in a church without letting go of their previous life-style which are often inconsistent with the word of God. They are in church, but not in Christ and as a result they are frustrated because they have not experienced all that they should from their new relationship with Christ.

We know them. They belong to a church but they still:

-Drink alcoholic beverages and frequent clubs and honky tonks;

--Live with someone as husband and wife without being married; Enjoy pornographic literature, music and entertainment;

--Engage in sex without being married, or otherwise involve themselves in adulterous or impure relations;

Embrace Gay and Lesbianism life-styles as a matter of personal preference.

These friends of ours want the best of both worlds. They want blessings from God and the freedom to live as they please at the same time.

As believers, we strive to make our new lives in Christ real. When we share at the communion table we renew our vows with the Lord and reaffirm our commitment to walk in the newness of the faith with the Holy Spirit as our guide.

Exposition

This text focuses on how enemies of God's people used old bread, old wine and clothes to pass themselves off as believers of God.

Joshua led Israel on a march across the promised land that resulted in victory after victory. The kings of the land were frightened over this powerful army of former slaves that seemed unbeatable. In a valley which dissected two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim two altars were built by the people to renew their covenant with the Lord. They built an altar on Mount Ebal and sacrifices were offered in worship as the whole law and it curses were read from one mountain while the Blessings of the Covenant being read from mount Gerazim. They had held a huge open air worship service and rededicated themselves to God. This was a time of great blessing.

The Gibeonites were not Jews, but they believed that there was great power in the God of Jews. They sought to get the protection and blessing of God without actually being a Jew themselves. Somehow they learned of a Mosaic order given in Deuteronomy 20:10-20 that allowed Israel to offer peace treaties with countries that were a great distance away from them. So, the Gibeonites planned to deceive the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them by getting Israel to think that they represented the people of a nation from 'a distant land' and on that basis to seek to negotiate peace terms.

They decided to masquerade as friends of Israel who were from "a great distance." Verses 3-13 tells how it was done. They got together a delegation of men and made them up in such a way as to appear as though they had been travelling for a long time from a distant country. They put the oldest, most worn out sacks they could find over their donkeys and filled the sacks with dry, mouldy, old bread. They gave them old cracked wineskins and made the men in the delegation wear old worn out clothes. Their plan was to mix in with the Jews and make it appear that they had heard about the mighty things their God had done in Egypt and to the Kings on the other side of the Jordan River and because of what they had heard abut them and about their great God they wanted to make a peace treaty with them.

Joshua saw what appeared to be evidence that these people had been on a long journey. They saw old bread. The saw old shoes. They saw old clothes and immediately took the bait and gave them a treaty without consulting God or praying over the matter. Ultimately, the Gibeonites returned to their home cities. When Joshua came to destroy their cities they held out the treaties made with Joshua as their protection. Joshua honored his word and let them live, having been deceived by men bearing old wine, old bread, and old clothes.

In Luke 5:37-38, Jesus also makes a point about new wine. He said that no one puts new wine in old skins because new wine will burst the old skins. New wine, according to tradition must be put in new skins. That referred to the practice of using freshly tanned goat skins as receptacles of new unfermented wine. The new skins were freshly tanned. As the grapes fermented the skins stretched big enough to hold the contents. If new wine was put into old, cracked skins it would burst them and all would

be lost.

Together, the two passages make two important points

There are many who attempt to participate in the covenant blessings of God by appearance rather than practice. The Gibeonites wanted to appear as if they had been on a long journey but really had not. They did so to get blessings from God. There are millions of people today who do the exact same thing. They "appear" but do not "practice." These are the persons who wear a cross but do not bear a cross. They go to church but the church is not in them.

There are many however, who only appear to have been on a journey. They mingle in with the saints, wearing the right clothes, talking the right talk and appearing religious, hoping to get a blessing by their appearance even though there has not been any practice.

It is a dangerous thing to try to sup with the Lord unworthily. 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 notes that, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

As a general rule if you are practicing a sin for which you have not repented, you are out of step or communion with God. A believer should, examine himself, readjust, then participate in the Lord's supper at the next time. No blessing is derived from participating unworthily.

The only way the Gibeonites received a blessing by deception was by the failure of Joshua to pray before he decided to give them the treaty they wanted. Had he prayed their deception would have been revealed. At the communion, a participant presents himself to God directly, who cannot be fooled. Paul told the Corinthians that many have found that instead of blessings from sharing in the Lord's supper unworthily, they brought damnation, sickness and even death to themselves.

The nature of the believer's journey is a journey of faith and trust in God. By the time many believers appear at a worship of bible study each week, many of them have come through a long journey of trusting in God, faith and hope.

When you have spent time in prayer and bible study, you have been on a journey.

When you have help the poor and the needy and worked to uplift the kingdom you have been on a long journey.

When you have lifted the spirits of the weak and stood in the gap for the lost, you have been on a long journey.

When you have trusted God for your increase and placed your faith in him alone, you have been on a long journey.

Those who make this daily trek with the Lord have found it to be exhausting and refreshing, draining and rewarding at the same time.

This is a faith walk that God will open doors for us and tear down obstacles that get in our way.

Those who have been on this journey, sing with new meaning the old song, "I

wouldn't give nothing for my journey now." With fervor they lift their voices and sing, "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey, I want Jesus to walk with me."

New Skins for New Wine

The second passage points out a new truth, new wine cannot ferment in old skins. Those who want to live a new life in Christ must not live in the old wine skins ways. The two cannot mix. If the life is truly converted it will burst into the old life sooner or later. Married man can't put his new married life in the old single man's bottle. A converted believer can't put her new life in Christ in the old life-style. A spendthrift that stumbles upon a fortune has "new wealth" but if the old spendthrift ways continue, the wealth will soon be lost.

Our new life in Christ is spanking brand new, it does not fit into our old life-style. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

When the scripture speaks of "all things" what does that mean? It means four things about us change:

1) Attitudes. The way we see life and the way we respond to circumstances changes. As believers we see opportunity in failure, hope in despair and even a chance for victory in defeat. Our old attitude was one of failure, anger, frustration and defeat. Our new faith based attitude and our old spirit of doubt will not coexist together. One will destroy the other.

2) People. The people with whom we surround ourselves frequently define us. If surround ourselves with people who are about everything but the kingdom of heaven, then they have a tendency to influence us. But the "new wine" can't survive in the old skins. It has to change people, not abandon friends, but change running buddies. We are known by the company we keep. The old folks say, "Birds of a feather flock together." A person who is really new in Christ, changes the people with whom he associates.

3) Places. The places we go also reflect our spirituality. People who trust God and live the spirit filled life have little interest in going to any place that does not promote, encourage or build upon the spirit filled life. A truly spirit filled believer gets no fulfillment from going to dance halls, honky tonks, speak easies, discos and night clubs of ill repute. Thus, by his own choice, he narrows his list of places to those that benefit his new life in Christ.

4) Things. The activities in which a new creature in Christ engages are those that will build the kingdom. He's not interested in owning a set of burglar's tools or a device that help him steal cable television programs without paying for them, pornographic videos, and a variety of other "things." To be a truly new creature in Christ means to change the "things" that define us. We want to change them to "things" that will make us whole in Christ.

Our new lives in Christ must be lives that are nurtured in new skins. They can't

exist with the old attitudes, people, places and things.

A new cup for a new life

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that only those who are new creatures in Christ can drink from "this cup."

In sharing the final meal with his disciples Jesus told them that he would not eat with them until the kingdom building mission is complete. He broke bread and blessed it and urged his disciples to eat bread in this way as a memorial to the sacrifice of his body. He presented them with a cup of wine and urged them to view it as a memorial of his blood which would be shed to seal the new agreement that God was making with all men of every race and nationality who believe.

This cup, as Jesus related it, is the cup filled with "new wine" which is represented by the blood of Calvary.

There was a time, when we were full of the old wine, that we kept bottles of gin, vodka and wine ready for a quick sip.

There was a time, when we were full of the old wine, that we couldn't go to work or even church, without a nip or two!

There was a time, when we were full of the old wine, that we couldn't get through the week without finding a minute for a happy for hour!

But old things are passed away, and behold all things become new.

The cup that Jesus offered is filled with the new wine of salvation. No wonder the old warriors sang, "None but the righteous, none but the righteous shall see God."

"This cup" was to become the cup of victory. It would be sweet and savory to every one who tastes of it because Christ will have drank the bitter dregs himself.

"This cup" would seal the promise of power and greater blessings made to every Christian.

"This cup" when shared in true faith by believers would make: forgiveness possible, hope thinkable, the past bearable, the present liveable, the future faceable, heaven obtainable.

"This cup" shared by every believer washes away the sins of the world. For Galatians 4:4 declares, "for in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law..."

"This cup" answers the song writer's question: "What can wash away my sins?" by answering "Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, the burden bearer because he lifts the burdens of oppressed!

Jesus, the good shepherd, for he searches for his lost sheep

Jesus, the faithful friend, for he was willing to lay down his life for a friend

Jesus, the bright and morning star, for he guides lost travelers along the way!

Jesus, the fountain of living water, for he refreshes those who are weary. No wonder the song writer declared "I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad"

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose early Sunday morning!

Jesus, who has all power in his hands! All Power! All Power in his hands!

No. 9036-Inspiration

Ain't Gon' Study War No More

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 23, 2003

*SCRIPTURE: **"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat the swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 1:4***

Introduction

Would you like to see a world where there were no wars? We are preoccupied in modern times with war and the preparation for war. There has never been a time in history when war was not evident some place in the world. Even in the bible, the relative peace and tranquility of the Garden of Eden was interrupted when one brother, Cain, went to war with his brother, and killed him. The various reasons we give for war seem just in our own eyes, but rarely do our victims see our war as justified in any way. If we read the bible we see wars between the Jews and the Assyrians, the Jews and the Babylonians; not to mention the wars between the Jews and the Philistines, Moabites, Ammorites, Hittites, Jebusites and countless others. We have seen nation against nation, we have seen man against man; Jacob against Esau; David against Goliath; Saul against David and the list never seems to end. When we study history most of our studies are about the cause and effect of our wars. We study the glorious campaigns of the Greeks under Alexander the Great. We study about the grandeur that was Rome. We study about the French Revolution, The American Revolution, the American Civil War, The Spanish American War, World War 1 and II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and countless more skirmishes. Our preoccupation with war is so distracting that we can't focus on anything else.

In modern times we can watch the battles "live" on television.

We can see the devastation. We can feel the pain of millions of hurting people, whether it's decimated families as a result of the bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001 or the weeping and wailing of women and children as they watch families and livelihoods go up in smoke in Iraq.

We see so much war that we yearn for a day and time when there is no more war.

We yearn for the day when we can turn on the television and laugh, rejoice and celebrate with people around the world because we are at peace. When that day comes it will be a day of rejoicing.

In his last Sunday morning sermon before his death, preached at the Washington National Cathedral on March 31, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., declared: "I believe

today there is a need for all people of good will to come to a massive act of conscience and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'We ain't gon' study war no more.' This is the challenge facing modern men and women."

We ain't gon' study war no more! Those are stirring words that are the center of all of our hope. We desire to see the day when we won't study, prepare for or protect against war.

Such day is hard to imagine, but it is coming.

Imagine a day when men will differ but not feel the need to kill another man or nations of men to resolve their differences!

Imagine a day when men will want more, land, water, oil, and other natural resources, but not feel the need to kill others to possess it!

Imagine a day when we will be so busy enjoying and improving upon the quality of life that we will never want to waste our time or energy studying ways to disrupt or destroy.

The old slaves didn't have much education, but they lived in hope of such a day. It would be a day when they would lay down their swords and shields and study war no more!

As believers we know that as long as the world is populated, controlled and ruled by men who feel threatened by each other, intimidated by each other and who fear each other, there will be war. However, we look for the day that is coming when the Son of God shall rule, and we shall study war no more!

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Isaiah as he looks forward to the coming Kingdom of God and sees a time when men shall study war no more.

Isaiah was a very controversial prophet of his time. He preached to the Southern Kingdom about its sinful and materialistic ways. He was often criticized and sometimes viewed as being unpatriotic because he constantly clashed with many of the kings who reigned during his life.

He verbally chastised them for their obsession with power, greed, and immoral living while at the same time claiming to be a nation the served the true and living God. In chapter 1:10-17 he denounced the nation's claim to be holy and religious as hypocritical. He said their putrid immorality would lead to wars and more wars. Isaiah called those who wrapped their actions in religious piety "transgressors" in verse 28. He said the transgressors and the sinners would continue to clash until they destroy themselves.

That kind of talk was dangerous. There were some who viewed it as traitorous. They expected the man of God to wave the flag of Judah and endorse transgression in the name of nationalism. While many of the kings listened uneasily to Isaiah, one King, Manasseh, tired of the condemning words from the old man. Early Church fathers accepted as truth the historic account that said Manasseh ordered Isaiah fastened between two planks and had him sawn asunder.

While Isaiah talked against the immoral nature of men that leads to war, more than

any other prophet, Isaiah kept raising the hope of the people by reminding them of the not so distant future in the timeframe of God. What Isaiah saw coming was a day when there would be no war!

While chapter 1 closed in gloom about destruction, chapter two opens with the hope of construction and renewal for believers who would be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

He looked forward, to a time in the not so distant future, when the world would seek the Lord and his salvation and come to Mt. Zion or "the place where God is" and seek to learn to incorporate his ways into their daily lives. Verse three says it this way: "And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

God showed Isaiah a vision of a beautiful time that was coming. Its beauty is shared in verse 4, as Isaiah notes that it would be a time when men would transform their weapons into implements to better the world, that's the meaning of "beat their swords into plowshares." Instead of spending their resources building weapons, they will be transformed into means of feeding the hungry and providing for the improved quality of life of all. That's the meaning of "spears into fishhooks."

He saw a time when nations would not raise their swords or weapons of mass destruction against each other.

Most importantly he saw a time when we "shall not learn war anymore."

He said we "ain't gon study war no more!

War reveals our weaknesses

Isaiah disturbed Israel because he constantly reminded them that beneath their appearances that there was an element of ruthlessness within them. The nation was God fearing and spent a considerable amount of time in worship and in forms of godliness. Yet, beneath the appearances the sinful nature of Israel existed. What Isaiah saw then perhaps still exists today. We would like to believe that we believe in decency and fair play. We would like to believe that other nations are the bad guys because they assassinate, annihilate and destroy to gain profits, power and control, but we do not. War has a tendency to strip away the veneer and we see all men everywhere for what we are: sinful people who cannot avoid conflicts because it's in the nature of humans.. War makes us know that because of our sinful nature we will always be in one spiritual battle or another until the second coming of Christ.

War reveals the weakness of the systems we thought could prevent wars, such as the United Nations. We believed that if we could get the powers of the world to sit down together in the same room that we could resolve conflicts in a United and peaceful way that would establish a lasting peace. When we watched one conflict after another seemingly resolved or reduced in impact by the court of world opinion represented by the United Nations, we felt safe. We saw the fall of the Soviet Union

and felt at ease as the threat of nuclear war dissipated. We saw the fall of Apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and other events that gave us high hopes for international peace and economic reform. We saw presidents Richard Nixon open the doors to China and Jimmy Carter make great strides toward peace and Bill Clinton lead us to an era of economic prosperity we had rarely seen before and we started feeling good about things. Then a series of personalities appeared on the world stage whose natures were less congenial. They did not lend themselves to talk. The last of these personalities: George Bush and Saddam Hussein entered the world scene and revealed our weaknesses again. Both men became such impassioned enemies that they openly tried to assassinate each other with under cover operatives who have tried everything from poisoning food to sniper attacks. When all else fails, the two of them plunged their respective nations into what Isaiah called destructive conflicts between the "transgressor" and the "sinner." One points and says the other may have weapons of mass destruction. The other uses weapons of mass destruction to annihilate and destroy the other as the world watches in shock, tears and fear as we see the raw savagery of war. Many tried to avoid seeing it by changing the television channel but it never goes away.

Without a doubt war shows our strength, but it also shows our weaknesses.

World conflict begins small

What happens on the world scene begins small. It begins in marriages and in families. There are husbands and wives who worshipped together and enjoyed lives together who literally go to war with each other in divorce arguments. Often they use every weapon they know to completely destroy the other. Families are at war. One side of a family hates the other side and actively works to destroy the other. Neither has a moral ground, both are what Isaiah called either the "transgressors" or the "sinners." Even friends who sit at a table playing a friendly game of cards go to war with each other. One accuses another of cheating and winning the $10 pot, pulls out a gun and shoots a friend over $10.00. A young man who kills a store attendant to rob him of $50 in his cash drawer does the same thing as a nation that would destroy another to get its oil fields. The core tenet is the same, "Your presence is a hindrance to my ultimate success. I remove the threat when I remove you by any means necessary." That is the essence of war. It's two girls fighting over a boy. It's two young men fighting because one dissed' the other. When we attack each other with sticks, beer bottles, skillets, pots, rocks and bats, we are using conventional weapons. When we pick up a pistol, rifle or a shotgun, we are using weapons of mass destruction. Even though only two people are involved, our intent is to utterly destroy the other and we don't care who gets hurt in the process. World conflicts begin small. What we see on the world scene is the magnification of what is happening all over the world on a smaller scale. That's why Isaiah angered people when he kept telling them that their personal tendency toward immoral acts would ultimately lead to their destruction. Isaiah chapter 3 paints a very morbid picture of conflict and destruction that will result in judgment and destruction. The big wars start with the

little wars. In that respect, we are all condemned to be either a “transgressor” or a sinner.

War creates a yearning

Finally, brothers and sisters, war creates a yearning within us for a better world.

That’s when the words of Isaiah in chapter 2 have greater meaning to us. They create a yearning for the time that the prophet Micah said would be so beautiful that the wolf and the lamb will lie down together in peace and people will sit under the cool of fig trees in the summer without being afraid.

The more we hear of war, the more we long for the time that Isaiah talked about when men will turn their swords into plowshares and turn their spears into fishhooks.

The more we hear of devastation, death and destruction, the more we long for the time when God will lead us besides the still water and restore our souls.

The more we see the fallibility and weakness of the present world order, the more believers yearn for the coming of the Godly kingdom, headed by Christ himself.

The more we see the heavens and the earth being shaken by a powerful God, we should be thankful that he offers us a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Those who know the Lord must be busy during times of war, assured by our confidence that despite the destruction we see, God is in control.

We must be busy showing compassion to those who will be victims of war and to the soldiers and their families on both sides of the ocean who carry out the orders of their commanders.

We must be busy praying for the will of God to be known and shown!

We must be busy raising hope to a world that has been devastated. It is a hope that is based on nothing less than the blood of Christ.

That’s why the songwriter wrote, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name.”

On Christ, the author and finisher of our faith!

On Christ, the prince of peace and Lord of Lords!

On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

We must continue to see the coming day of our Lord.

When Jesus comes, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

When Jesus comes, the mountains shall be made low and every valley shall be exalted!

When Jesus comes the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places shall be made straight.

When Jesus comes, the old spiritual will have new meaning, “I’m going to lay down my sword and shield, down by the Riverside and study war no more!”

Tell the world it won’t be long.

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to give us a new song

No. 9037-Inspiration

When You Can't Get Enough!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 6, 2003

SCRIPTURE:"The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

Introduction

Do you know people who never know when they have enough? Gluttony is one of the mystical seven deadly sins, because it refers to people who do not know when they have enough. While it is frustrating not to have enough of things that are essential, it is also a problem when you have a sufficient amount of everything but still think you need more.

There are millions of people who don't know when they have enough. They have more shoes than they can wear and yet they still want more. They have more dresses than they can wear but they want more. They have more suits of clothing than they can ever think of wearing, but they still want more and more. They have difficulty answering the question, how much is enough?

Psychologists tell us that sometimes our desire to have more may reflect our past. If we have never had enough food, we may always want to get more food to insure that we have enough. If we've been deprived of other essentials, sometimes our inner spirit keeps telling us to get more to protect against the day when we won't have them. When we've been poor we want to get more to insure that we will never be without again. If we never had creature comforts, sometimes we want more to make sure that we have an ample supply for hard times.

There is a difference between our wants and our needs. Our needs are those things that are essential. We must have food, clothing and shelter. Our wants usually build upon our needs. We want certain kinds of food, certain kinds of clothing and certain types of shelter. Our wants and needs are different.

The Bible teaches us that to live well we must learn to know when we have enough. That means we must know the difference between our needs and our wants. We have enough when our needs are being met sufficiently. It is possible to have everything that we need without having everything we want.

Learning when we have enough is a difficult lesson to learn because we are constantly bombarded with the message that we need something else in order to be happy. If we don't have the newest, fanciest, or hottest item, then we're missing out on all the fun. This message extends to all areas of life. If we don't look like the most beautiful people we see in the magazines, if we don't have a life like the rich and

famous, or if we don't have the exciting friends and family that we see on TV, then we must be doing something wrong.

In the 1960's there was a song whose words included the phrase "I can't get no satisfaction!" Today, there are millions who are struggling in life without being satisfied. They push themselves harder and harder. Many have a loving spouse but are not satisfied, so they look outside their homes. They have a few dollars in the bank but they are always seeking ways to get more. They "can't get no satisfaction." Even in bible times they could have easily sung the words, "I can't get no satisfaction." In the beginning men were prosperous on earth, but they were not satisfied here; so they built a tower that they thought would reach heaven, only to have their languages confused for ever.

When is enough enough? When do we push back from the table of "more" and say enough is enough? The answer escapes us, but the outcome plagues us and is always present.

One of the benefits of being a Christian is that the spirit of God gives us a spirit of satisfaction. That spirit does not take away our ambition or our desire to succeed, but it does allow us to appreciate every day as a blessing and to trust God for our daily bread, one day at a time.

As Christians, we are proud to acknowledge that since we have found the Lord, we have developed a renewed appreciation for what we have without being uncomfortable or anxious about the things we do not have. We have come to learn that God cares for us and will supply all our needs, someway or somehow. God will make a way.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the relationship between God and his people.

David's life was one living example of all of the extremes of life. He enjoyed the comforts of being king of a united Judah and Israel. He also knew what it meant to be a hunted man, always struggling for existence and survival. The range of his struggles took him from being a mere boy who faced lions and bears in the field to challenging stand before the giant Goliath. Though surrounded by his enemies on all sides he was fed and sustained by the hand of God. He was as target for death repeatedly but survived it all.

In all of these situations God provided David with his needs, sometimes in ways that appeared strange to others.

When he faced the lions in the field or stood before Goliath, David may have wanted a sword and shield but God gave him what he needed; a slingshot.

When he was being hunted by King Saul and had nothing to eat, he may have wanted a steak dinner, but God gave him what he needed; bread from the priests table.

In all of his experiences, David concluded that what God gave him was more than enough to sustain him. This prompted him to write, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall

not want!"

David's words did not mean that he did not desire anything, but that he would not be left in want of those things essential to his well being, including green pastures, still waters, an anointed head and strength for the valley of the shadows of death.

The essence of Psalm 23:1 is that God will provide what we need and what God provides is more than enough to satisfy the hungry soul.

There's Enough in the Cup!

Today, we should pay close attention to how David evaluated his situation in Psalm 23. First, he took an inventory of what he had. He noticed that God had given him a sense of peace, shown him green pastures, prepared a table before him in the presence of his enemies, and anointed him with a level of prosperity that was enviable. When he measured it he concluded his cup was full. He was blessed so much that his cup was beyond full but actually ran over.

If believers today would take the same inventory we'd would come to the same conclusion. God has truly blessed us in so many ways. Our inventory list would include personal blessings, a few comforts, reasonable health, a hearty appetite, and a reasonable portion of strength. Like David, we could easily say, he has anointed our heads with oil. We've been blessed so much that if he blessed us anymore we would not be able to handle any more. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings see what God has done!"

When we measure what God does for us on a daily basis and really think about it we must conclude that God gives us "enough."

When Elijah ran from the face of King Ahab and hid himself by the brook, what did God do for him? Every day he was brought food by a raven and water from the brook. It was enough!

When the Three Hebrew Boys refused to eat the food of the king's table, the king was amazed that their meager personal diet sustained them. God had given them enough!

When that widow woman went to her barrel every day, she could have complained that God never filled her barrel, but she praised him every day because, every day she went to her barrel there was enough!

Enough doesn't change with the size of the cup!

There are many people today who are unhappy because they have enough! If that sounds strange, we must consider the real world in which we live. Once many people realize that their cup is running over, they change the size of the cup! They get a bigger cup. Our cup of blessings is proportioned by God to each of us. What we need is given to us by God independent upon what size container we try to put it in.

We have food, clothing and shelter, that's enough. Enough may mean a two bedroom house, with a little car, a change of clothes and food for each day.

However, if we change the size of the cup, enough is still enough. Enough doesn't change because we change the size of the cup. We may have a three bathroom house now, but all we really need is one, we have more than enough! We may have five pairs of shoes now, but all we really need is one, we have more than enough. We may have two cars now, but all we really need is bus fare, we have more than enough!

In Luke 12:16-18 Jesus gave a parable about a rich man who had filled his barns to the point of overflow. Yet he decided to build himself a bigger barn thinking that would certainly be enough for him to eat, drink and be merry the rest of his life. The man in the parable was chided for thinking the bigger barn would be enough. He did not realize that his salvation wasn't in the barn but in God who fills the barn.

In a similar sense, those who are succeeding at reaching higher levels should always remember that the salvation is not in "bigger" or "more," but in understanding that everything comes from God who supplies more than enough for us to eat, live and be happy.

If a man and his wife are not on one accord about the handling of their finances, opening another account want make them happy!

If a family is filled with hatred and frustration, building a bigger house won't give them peace.

If a man hasn't learned how to love one woman, having five girl friends on the side won't make him happy at home.

Enough doesn't change with the size or number of the cups.

Grace makes our cup Enough

One of the most important lessons we learn about being a Christian is that God provides what we need, when we need it, in proportion to our ability to receive it on an as needed basis.

Often those who are involved in building projects get letters of credit from a bank that guarantees that they have access to a certain amount of funds. As they need the funds they draw from their line of credit on an as needed basis.

In a similar sense every believer has a blessing account in glory. Our blessings come on an as needed basis. They don't come all at once and neither do they come without some conditions. Sometimes blessings come with restrainers to protect us from ourselves. That line of credit that is suppose to pay a contractor for building a building is available at the bank, but when you draw it down the check is made out to the contractor and the account owner to protect the account owner from himself. It's possible with that much money in hand at one time, someone might act the fool and forget about what's owed the contractor. So the blessing comes but it's made out to two parties rather than one.

Paul discovered that while God blessed him with many powerful blessings in his life, he sent every blessing coupled with a thorn in his flesh. Three times Paul prayed to have God remove the thorn so he could operate more freely, but God answered him each time by saying, "My Grace is sufficient!"

When we accept the Lord as our shepherd, we recognize that he provides and satisfies our daily needs. That's the level that we are trying to reach. We are striving to reach a point in our spiritual maturity in which we say, God provides my needs from his storehouse daily, I will not ever be without what I need, one way or the other. That means when I am lonely, if the Lord is my Shepherd, God will supply a sufficient amount of comfort for me. When I am sad, if the Lord is my shepherd, he will supply a sufficient amount of inspiration to make me glad again! When I am without a roof over my head; if the Lord is my shepherd, he will supply a way, through some means for me to have shelter. If my financial resources are low; if the Lord is my shepherd, he will provide what I need when I need it by making opportunities available for me! The level we want to reach is the level that truly believes that we have a friend in Jesus who is close to us that he will take care of our needs, in proportion to our ability to receive on an as needed basis.

When we reach this level of maturity the words of the old hymn have more meaning, "Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all. He is my friend from day to day, without him I would fall. When I am sad to him I go, no other one can cheer me so. when I am sad, he makes me glad, he's my friend."

Jesus tried to get his disciples to understand this one simple truth: As long as long as the Lord is my shepherd, there will always be enough.

One day Jesus was preaching to a crowd of 5,000 people. Somebody said, "Lord, how are we going to feed these people. All we have is two little fishes and five loaves of bread; and that's not enough"

In Matthew 14 He fed the 5,000 people in one day with 12 baskets left over! It was more than enough.

In Matthew 15, his disciples were worried again. They complained that they had 4,000 in the crowd but there were only seven loaves of bread and a few fishes, they said, "That's not enough!"

Jesus took the seven loaves of bread and fishes and blessed them and fed 4,000 for three days, with seven baskets left over.

The word for baskets in chapter 14 means "little baskets" the word for baskets in chapter 15 is "big baskets"

I don't know about you but that seems to say to me, that no matter what size your basket is, the Lord is "more than enough!"

He's got enough healing, to make you whole when you are sick!

He's got enough wisdom, to help you know right from wrong!

He's got enough sensitivity, to feel you when you fall on your knees and say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from, whether shall I go?"

Gideon thought he needed more than 300 men, but found out that God was enough!

Moses thought he needed more than just a rod, but found out that God was enough!

The world thought David needed more than five stones and a sling shot, but found out that with God it was enough!

No. 9038-Inspiration

The Testimony of the Stones

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 13, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out." Luke 19:40

Introduction

What if every place we have been and everything we have touched could suddenly talk and tell what we did there, would that be a story worth hearing? A famous blues singer, Little Milton Campbell had a popular song entitled "If walls could talk!" The premise of Little Milton's tune was that if the walls of hotels and secret meeting rooms could talk they'd have a story to tell. He even included shoes and other inanimate objects in his lyrics. It caught the imagination of millionsof people who wondered with amusement, just what story could be told if the things we touched in life could tell their encounter with us.

Each person has a story to tell. As we move from place to place we leave behind a testimony that will be told long after we leave. When a famous person visits a particular site or location, those who recall the visit will tell what happened when the famous person came to town. They will point to a place where he sat, a restuarant where he ate dinner and a hotel where he slep. Each point of interest has its own story. Those who travel and tour the country are often told hundreds of anecedotes about what famous people did when they came to certain places in their locality.

What if the things we touched could testify about us, what would they say? What would the books we read say? Or would they have anything at all to say? What would our bible say about the passages that we freqently read, or were the pages read at all? If called upon to testify about us, what would the movies we watch say? Would our home phone or cell phone reveal secret truths about us? If the inanimate things that we touch as we pass by were to testify to what we did and said when we passed by, it would be interesting to say the least.

The power of God touches every life in some way every day. Everyone of us has a story that we can tell about the day we came face to face with the power and presence of God. It is a testimony worth hearing!

As Christians, our lives are living testimonies to the goodness of the Lord. When all the world keeps silent, we should be living evidence that God is truly a good God whose mercy endureth forever!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' entry into the city of Jerusalem and the accolades given to him by the crowds.

Jesus was a popular figure at the time of this text. He had healed many people and his words were stirring hope in the crowds. When he descended the Mount of Olives on a donkey there was great excitement because many viewed him as a promising king who would liberate them from Roman domination. Those who walked ahead of him no doubt announced him coming.

Jesus entered Jerusalem about five days before the Passover. It was a time when families prepared to observe the Passover. Each Israelite family chose the lamb they would sacrifice for Passover on the tenth day of the month. As the people shouted "Hosanna," they didn't realize they were choosing the Lamb of God as their sacrifice. By their actions, the people were publicly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. When Solomon was anointed king, he rode into the city on a mule, to the shouts and praises of the people (1 Kings 1:43-45). Zechariah prophesied the Messiah would arrive the same way "gentle and riding on a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

The people began to take off their garments and to throw them on the ground before him and continued to shout "Hosanna." They were expecting Jesus to reveal Himself fully in power and glory as their Messiah-King.

As their excitement grew to a fever pitch the Pharisees were disturbed. They demanded that the noise of the crowd be silenced and that they enthusiasm they were showing for Jesus as the Messiah would be diminished. Despite their best efforts the crowd grew louder.

As the crowd shouted for him Luke 19:40 records Jesus saying, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

The implication of his words were powerful. That if the people were silenced that the very rocks around him would stand to testify of his mighty works.

The story the stones would tell

Jesus touched many lives in the course of his three year ministry in Palestine. It was a place filled with stones. If indeed the stones were called upon to testify there would be a variety of truths about him revealed. He walked on stones, sat on stones, prayed on stones, wept on stones and healed on stones. If the stones were to testify, what a story they would tell.

TEMPTATION STONES: Matthew 4:3-4 records the testimony of the temptation stones. When he began his ministry, he went into the desert for 40 days and nights. One of the first temptations he had involved the stones. The devil tempted him to use his power to turn the stones into bread because he was hungry. Jesus looked at the stone, then dismissed Satan, saying, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." These stones testify of his sinless nature and refusal to put himself before his people. In the wilderness,

he obeyed God, just as he did on Calvary

STONES AT THE WEDDING: John 2:6 records the testimony of six stone water pots that were filled at the marriage reception in Cana. Jesus attended the wedding and at the request of his mother, when the wine ran out, had the stone pots filled with water and turned it into the finest wine. These stone pots testify to his ability to provide and to literally make something out of nothing. He is still doing that today. He is still Jehovah-Jireh. That's why Philippians 4:19 reminds us that "..my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The stones testify that we should never forget the Lord will always make a way!

UNTHROWN STONES: John 8:7 records the testimony of dozens of unthrown stones. A woman had been caught in the act of adultery and was brought before Jesus. Moses' law said such a woman should be stoned for her sin. Jesus told the crowd, "Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone." No one was able to stone her because no one was without sin. Jesus told the woman to go and sin no more. The stones that were never thrown testify to the forgiving nature of the savior. When all others are ready to accuse us, he is willing to forgive. When all others are ready to condemn us, he is ready to give us one more chance.

TOMBSTONES: Matthew 8:28-34 records the testimony of the tombstones. A man had lived in the cemetery for many years running naked and was filled with demons until he encountered Jesus one day. On that day the demons left the man and Jesus made him whole. Then John 11:39-44 gives the testimony of the stone that blocked the tomb of Lazarus who had been dead for four days before it was moved. Once removed the people heard Jesus say, "Loose that man and let him go." The stones testify that whether it is a personality that is spiritually dead like the man in the grave yard or physically dead, that Jesus can take a life that has been ruined and hell bound and turn it around again. The tombstones testify to his amazing grace and ability bring new life to things long thought dead.

STONES AROUND PALESTINE: In Luke 19:40 Jesus said the stones upon the ground where he walked could testify about him. The stones around Jacob's well would tell of a day that he met a woman sitting at the well and gave her living water. She ran through the streets of the city saying, "Come see a man, who told me all I've done." The stones on the street where a blind man stood testify that one day he healed a blind man and made a lame man walk. These stones testify to the power of the living God. That's a testimony that every saint can share, because no matter where we go we tell the world that God is able. He'll leave no stone unturned until he answers our prayer!

The Star Witness

Finally, brothers and sisters, if there is testimony to be given we cannot ignore the testimony of the star witness.

The star witness is the stone that has the testimony that is crucial to proving the case!

Stones that were used by Noah to build an altar after the flood, testify to the mercy of God, but there is another stone that needs to testify. That stone is the star witness!

Jacob erected a stone on his way home and called the place, Bethel. That stone testified to power of meeting God, but there is another stone that needs to testify.

Joshua took 12 smooth stones and set them up as a memorial when the children would ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" They testified to the power of God to deliver, but there is another stone that needs to testify.

The stones of the Garden of Gethsemene testified in Luke 22:41 that he came to the garden to pray that this cup would pass away. But these stones heard him say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done." But there is another stone that needs to testify

The stones of Jerusalem's streets were under his feet as he carried the old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill.

These stones saw the women cry out and felt the burden of the cross as it dragged along one step at a time.

He died out on Calvary but there is still one more stone to testify…

They carried him to Joseph's tomb and placed him in a brand new grave.

I hear that stone testify, "They rolled me in front of the door and put a seal on me to keep his disciples from stealing his body. I sat in front of his body for three days and nights."

But can't you hear the stone getting happy when he told the rest of the story. "Early Sunday morning, I felt an unseen hand moving me away. It was an angel of heaven, rolling me away.!"

He's arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but I don't need a stone to testify for me

God is good!

He'll rock you when you get weary!

He'll wipe tears from your eyes!

He'll be a bridge over troubling waters!

He'll make a way out of no way!

He's all right!

He's all right!

No. 9039-Anniv.-Church

A Heritage Worthy of Celebration

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2003

SCRIPTURE-" Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. . Psalm 16:1-6

Introduction

How many ways can you say thank you? If you were in Mexico you would say, "Gra-ci-ous." If you were in Germany you would say,"Dan-Ka" and "Mercee" is what the French would say. There are many ways to say thank you, but they all express our heart felt emotions. It doesn't matter what language carries the thought. When we look at the sum total of an experience and consider how far we came to reach where we are, we can only look back and say "Thank You!" Whenever a believer takes time to look back at the goodness of the Lord it is a time to celebrate. It is a time to celebrate the goodness of the Lord!

Our heritage is the sum total of our experience. It is our present reflected in the mirror of what we were. If we pause for just a few moments on the roadside of life, and reflect on the goodness of the Lord we would instantly see the rich heritage of faith and blessings that have followed us a long the way.

Celebration is biblical. Whenever believers looked back upon what God did for them they celebrated.

When Abraham secured a wife for his son Isaac there was a celebration.

When Moses announced that after 400 years that Israel would finally leave Egypt, there was a celebration.

When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land which flowed with opportunity like milk and honey, there was a celebration.

When David finally secured the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Israel he was so happy that he celebrated by dancing nearly naked in the street.

When the Prodigal son returned home his father killed the fatted calf and ordered

a celebration.

At family reunions we celebrate our family heritage with a festive atmosphere, which includes plenty of food, reflection and praise to God for being wonderful, benevolent and protective towards us.

As Christians, we also celebrate our personal salvation. We give thanks to God for Calvary, for it is through Calvary that the blood of Christ gave us a reason to celebrate.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he gives "golden" advice about finding the path to everlasting life which is rooted in a goodly heritage.

This psalm has the title "A Mitcham of David." Five other Psalms have a similar title. There is no conclusive evidence as to what exactly is meant by 'mitcham." Many think it refers to its literal meaning "Write in gold letters," indicating that it is truly a 'Golden Psalm.'

One of the golden nuggets in this psalm is in verse six, "I have a goodly heritage."The other is in verse11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life!" This is the path that man has blindly groped for ever since he has been on earth. It is a right of way into the presence of God. The singer of this psalm tells of one who has found the way through, presumably a messianic reference to Christ. This is the path of our heritage. This path is described as a goodly heritage.

The path of life begins with our inheritance in him (v5). David notes that those who would enjoy life to its fullest participate in the divine inheritance. The way of life is within the boundaries or lines he has set for us. (Vs.6). God blessed David, as he does every believer. That blessing results in what he calls a goodly heritage which is worthy of thanks, celebration and joy!

Reasons to celebrate

Despite difficult times in which we have seen wars and heard rumors of wars, there is still reason to celebrate. Even though in recent times we have seen nation rise up against nation and experienced the bitter sting of terrorism, there is still reason to celebrate.

CELEBRATE OUR ESCAPE FROM DEATH: The church has helped believers withstand the troubles of our times. Our heritage is one that is filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself. The Psalmist writes, "Thou maintainest my lot" (v. 5) When our world is turned upside down by tragic events, it is easy to become cynical and disillusioned with life. When we witness how evil some people can be, it becomes difficult for us to trust anyone. Yet, we are able to celebrate when others are not because we know that God will never forsake us. Because we know he will never leave

us alone, we should celebrate! Because he has been with us as we walked through the valley of the shadow of death, we should celebrate!

CELEBRATE THE HELP HE HAS GIVEN-When we consider our heritage we can't help but give thanks for the help the Lord has given us. Every believer has experienced a time or two when we have been caught between a rock and a hard place. Those were the times when we faced trouble on every side. During such times we found that all we could really do was to say like David,'' I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.'' We discovered in our life journey that only the power of God could help us because we were powerless to help ourselves. Our only hope was for someone bigger than ourselves to help us. So the writer of the Psalm says, "Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, save me!'" (verse 4). Roy Buck tells the story of a little boy who was tugging at a big rock and doing his best to lift it. He was grunting and pulling at it but it didn't budge. His father came along and asked him if he was having any trouble. He said, "Yes, I am trying and trying and can't move the rock." The father said to him, "Well, son, are you using all available energy?" The boy replied, "Yes, Father, I think I am." Then the dad looked at him and said, "No, son, I don't think you are, for you haven't asked for my help." An important life lesson is that asking for help is usually a good idea. Asking God for help is an even better idea. Even if it seems as if nobody cares, God cares. Just ask Peter who found himself drowning after walking on water or cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. In the same way Jesus has helped every one of us. No wonder then that the song writer would declare 'All my help comes from the Lord.' When we celebrate, we celebrate his helpfulness. We celebrate his compassion. We celebrate his goodness; for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

CELEBRATE WHAT IS STILL TRUE: If there is a final reason to celebrate it should be the fact that what we celebrated in the past as a part of our heritage is still true today. The undeniable truth about God is that while conditions may change, our God does not change. He is still God. God did many things for those who are the heroes and heroines of our heritage, but what he did for them he is still doing!

Look at the stars they're still there! There is still a sense of order and purpose in God's creation!

Look at the moon it is still there! There is a still a calm sense of God's watchful eye over us at night!

Look at the sky, it is still there! It still forms a canopy over us to protect us, shower us and provide a thin veil through which we occasionally glimpse the heavens!

In our heritage experience we have come to learn some things about God that are still true today. God is: 1) Gracious-he loves me with a love I don't deserve. 2) Righteous-he always does what is just and right. 3) Compassionate-he has pity on me and doesn't give me the punishment I do deserve.

These alone are sufficient reasons to celebrate our Godly heritage! God has been good to us. He has been better than we have been to ourselves.

Let the church celebrate

Finally, we must consider that the Black church has a heritage of rich, emotional and heart felt expression of our faith in God. We have plenty of reasons to celebrate.

Celebrate the church because the church transcends any man. The church supercedes the mortal capacities of mere humans because it is a spiritual entity, built upon a foundation that is sure and strong.

Celebrate the church because it is molded and shaped by the will of God. The church that God builds is different from the church that man builds. The church that man builds is a:

MOTEL: for people just passing through on Sunday on their way to someplace else.

VACATION SPOT: where people come only once or twice a year.

ZOO: Where people come to watch other folk eat like hogs and act like monkeys

MUSEUM: Where people only remember "what it used to be like" and the good old days.

FASHION SHOW: Where people come to display the latest styles and their new wardrobes

PICTURE SHOW: Where audiences sit quietly as the deacons, preacher and choir put on a show

CERAMIC SHOP: Where everyone becomes easily chipped and have to be handled with care

ICE HOUSE: Where people with cold hearts give each other the cold shoulder.

But the church the God builds is different from man's church. It is a place of celebration.

Celebrate and give thanks for a church heritage built on faith in God. Celebrate because the church is a:

LIGHTHOUSE: Giving light to a dark and stormy world.

HOSPITAL: Ministering to those who are sick of sin and shame.

DIVINE FLOWER SHOP: Only in the church can you find the sweet Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley in the same place at the same time.

LIFE BOAT: Rescuing victims from the raging sea of life. The song writer declared: "Tis the old ship of Zion, get on board, get on board!"

SIGN POST: Guiding the lost to the straight and narrow path. That's why thousands cry out: "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand"

Our fathers brought their families to church and served as the spiritual leaders of their homes. We must not neglect this rich heritage of celebration and praise. We must continue to lead our families in spiritual growth. We must continue to celebrate the goodness of the Lord.

Whether we are singing the Dr. Watts Hymns or whooping from the pulpit we should continue to praise the Lord with a spirit of celebration.

We are a people whose heritage reflects that we have been sustained by an unfaltering trust in God.

It doesn't matter what generation we are from, good things happen when we trust in the Lord. When you trust in the Lord. A family that is:

WEAKENED by internal problems, can find renewed strength!

TROUBLED by disturbing questions, can find its answers!

FRUSTRATED by its failure to achieve goals, can find renewed hope!

BURDENED by the increasing problems of life, can find help in the time of need!

When Israel moved across the Jordan into the promised land there were some who wanted to abandon the God that brought them out of the wilderness. I can see Joshua, standing on the side of a mountain challenging all of those that would be faithful to God to come forward. I hear him declare "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Brothers and Sisters, stay on the Lord's side! Celebrate.

In good times and bad times, stay on the Lord's side and celebrate!

Through all of your risings and fallings, stay on the Lord's side!

Tell your children about the Love of God!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them about Jesus, who arose from the grave after three days and nights!

Tell them about Jesus, who is alive today!

I don't know about you, but as for me and my house...

We will serve the Lord!

Celebrate!

No. 9040-Easter

He's Still Rolling Stones Away

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 20, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." Matthew 28:2";And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great." Mark 16:3-4

Introduction

If your biggest problem was a stone, what kind would it be? Would it be a pebble; something that's bothersome but can easily be thrown aside? Would it be a hand sized stone, that can do considerable damage if it comes against us with enough force? Would it be a rock; big enough to get in the way, but not so big that we can't get rid of it with a little effort. Would it be a boulder, massive in size and impossible to move? The answer to the question is a matter of perception. One man's pebble is another man's boulder. What one person perceives as a major issue is considered small by others. There are times in every life when we feel like our entire lives are filled with pebbles, stones, rocks and even a few boulders. Whether they are small irritants that trouble us like pebbles or large rocks like discrimination, unemployment or player-haters, we all seem to have a stone or two in our lives. Most of us even have a few boulders too.

Generally, when stones get in the way we try to move them. We take off our shoes and easily rid ourselves of pebbles. We kick stones to the side! We walk around rocks, climb over them or just sit on them. But boulders are a different story. These are the ones that we feel are just too big to move. We have tried but they won't budge. That's when we realize that we can't do this thing alone.

Sometimes our response to the boulders and the rocks in our lives is down right crazy. Consider the two men who stood in the park every day at the same time acting very strange. One man seemed to lean and push against something huge and strained himself to move it. The other man always stood a few feet away from him and waved his arms. They were a sight to see, one pushing and the other waving every day. Finally, a curious passerby stopped and asked the man who was pushing a question, "What are you doing?" He asked. "Everyday I come to the park somebody keeps putting this big stone in the middle of the road." The passerby was curious because it was obvious that there was no stone, but the man was convinced and continued

straining trying to move it. “If I don’t move this stone, there is no telling what can happen.” The man said as he strained and pushed. The passerby asked the man who was waving, what he was doing. Without missing a single wave he told the passerby, “See that man over there. He’s crazy. Everyday he comes to the park and thinks he’s rolling a stone. He’s really crazy!” The passerby then asked the man, “What are you doing?” The man answered, “He rolls that stone in the middle of the street, I’m directing the traffic so no one will hit it!”

The hope that the resurrection brings is the good news that Christ is alive! The God who rolled the stone away for him is still rolling stones away today!

As Christians, we are excited to know that God is still in the business of rolling stones away. The empty tomb and the resurrected Lord are our best reminders that the God we serve is still alive and is able to easily move aside any stones that frustrate our Christian experience. God did it that Easter Sunday morning and today, he’s still rolling stones away!

Exposition

This text focuses on events that took place after the crucifixion as the women came to anoint the body of Christ. According to the text, Christ had been in the grave for three days and nights as he predicted in Matthew 12:40. Early on the first day, which was Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome set out to anoint his body with spices. While enroute the thought came to them that there was a stone covering the entrance of the tomb. This was no small pebble or lightweight rock. It was a huge stone, taller than a man, and requiring the services of several men to move. It had been placed in front of the tomb to keep Christ’s disciples from coming in the middle of the night, stealing the body, and claiming to the world that he had risen from the dead. The intent of the stone was to keep believers away from Christ. As they walked toward the tomb they became concerned about “who shall roll for us the stone away?” Although they were concerned, the women were not dissuaded, they went forward anyway! Once there, they learned that the stone had already been rolled away. An angel, which appeared as a young man, told them not to fear because Jesus had risen. They were told to go and tell the disciples about his resurrection.

The women left excited because not only had the stone been rolled away from the tomb, but the stone of doubt and fear had been rolled away from their hearts.

There was no doubt in their mind that although they met an angelic face at the door of the tomb, it was God who rolled the stone away.

Rolling Stones is God’s Work

The women came to anoint the body of Jesus with the full knowledge that there was a stone in from of it. Yet, despite that knowledge they went anyway, choosing to do their work living the other work to God.

There are millions of people who sit back and calculate the impossibility of their dreams and never pursue them because they see the stones. These are the ones who spend the rest of their lives saying "What if" and "I couldn't been but.." There are others who knew the odds were against them but prepared themselves to take advantage of any opportunity that presented itself.

Blessed opportunities are everywhere! But believers must not be intimidated by the stones. We should do our work and let God do his work. Our work is to prepare and take action. His work is to roll stones away.

When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, that was a tremendous challenge. Abraham obeyed. He took his son, laid him on an altar and then discovered that God had rolled the stone away, and provided him a ram in the bush.

When Israel fled from Egypt with Pharaoh's army in pursuit, they faced a watery death in the Red Sea of death by the king's army. Yet Moses marched forward anyway, only to learn that God had already prepared a mighty East Wind to roll back the waters and let them pass. He rolled the stone away.

When the Daniel was threatened with death if he did not stop his regular prayers, he continued doing what was right before God. When he was eventually thrown into the den of lions, he was not touched or scratched by the hungry beasts, because God had gone before him and silenced them. He had rolled the stone away.

In a similar sense believer should not be overly consumed with the difficulty of a task. If God has ordained it and what we seek is in his will, then we should prepare for it with certainty. Acting in faith is our duty, rolling stones is the work of the Lord.

Stones Were Meant To Keep Us Out!

The purpose of the stone in front of the tomb was not to keep Christ in, but to keep believers away from Christ. The religious leaders believed that Christ disciples would come and steal his body during the night and claim that he arose. The purpose of the stone was to keep them from Christ.

Today there are millions of people who are frustrated by stones that have purposefully been placed in their way. Sometimes the stones are the work of enemies that seek to prevent our success in a venture or achievement of some particular goal. These are the individuals who are afraid that if certain opportunities are opened to you that you may climb higher and succeed faster. To "slow your row" they put stones in your path. They reveal your weaknesses to others, or even invent weaknesses that do not exist. They become small armies of player/haters who try to stop you on every hand. Player/Haters who call themselves stopping a saint actually cause them to get bigger and better blessings. Matthew 5:11-12a says, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ÿRejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

At other times the stones are the work of our own hands. They represent our mistakes in judgment, bad habits, and weaknesses and tend to stand between us and success. Whether they have been placed by enemies or come as the result of our own

mistakes, stones are hindrances in our secular life.

There are millions of people, like the women on Easter morning, who want to come closer to God, but have found their way blocked by great stones put in our way by Satan to keep us away from God. Because of our own weaknesses we become consumed with a desire to party, drink alcohol, use drugs, indulge in illicit sex and other activities of the flesh. Our desire to involve ourselves in these interest has come between us and God.

As a result a stone comes between ourselves and God. We come to church but we feel nothing. We are no longer excited about our church involvement, we can't wait until it's over so we can get back to the world. These stones are not physical. They operate on the inside as the devil quietly steals our spiritual joy.

Like the women on the morning of the resurrection, there are many that are aware of the spiritual stones in their lives. They know they have not been as they should and they wonder whether or not they can regain access to God. Whether they can feel him again; whether he can live in their spirit again. They ask "Who shall rolls us the stone away?" Yet like the women of the text, when we come before God we find out certainly that God has already rolled the stone away, all we need to do is come to him.

God took Care Of the Unknown too!

The women were concerned about the stone in front of the door, because that's what they knew was there. What they didn't know is that not only was there a stone in front of the tomb, but it had been sealed and there were soldiers in front of it. The purpose of the soldiers was to keep believers away from Christ, even at the expense of their lives. The women knew about the stone, they didn't know about the soldiers! It was an unseen danger!

Today many of us worry so much about what we think are possible dangers ahead of us, without even knowing the unseen dangers that God has protected us from, just this day alone.

Sometimes they are noticeable, such as the times we barely missed an accident or were spared a misfortune and called it lucky. Those are the dangers we see, but there are countless dangers that we do not see every day, and never experience them, because they have been removed by an unseen hand on our behalf.

If God is taking care of the unseen dangers that we do not know to worry about, doesn't it seem self defeating to worry about the few dangers that we know of. The same God that removes the unseen soldiers, can roll the stone away?

His Stone was rolled away, so were many others

Finally, brothers and sisters, while the text focuses on the fact that God rolled away the stone in front of Jesus's tomb, believers should take note, that after Jesus arose there were many other stones rolled away.

In our excitement to tell the world about the stone that was rolled away from the tomb of Christ, sometimes we forget about hundreds of other stones that were rolled away on Easter Sunday morning.

Matthew 27:51-53 records these words, "ÿAnd the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, ÿAnd came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

The same God that rolled away the stone in front of Jesus' tomb, went to the tombs of hundreds of saints and rolled their stones away as well!

It wasn't just for his only begotten Son, but God rolls away the stones for all of his children!

On this Easter Sunday morning, we should rejoice because if his stone was rolled away, our stones will be rolled away because he's still rolling stones away!

Someone woke up this morning worried about a variety of problems. They are worried about a stone that has already been rolled away!

Worry makes us look at meager finances and ask, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" and help my ends to meet. But I hear faith answer from Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus."

Worry makes us look at our loneliness and ask: "Who shall roll us away the stone?" and be a constant friend; but I hear faith answer from Hebrews `13:5 "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"

Worry makes us look at all of our troubles and ask: "Who shall roll us the stone away?" and faith replies from Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work for good for them that love God, for them who are called according to his purpose."

The joy of the resurrection is that we don't have to worry about the stone in front of the tomb he's still rolling stones away!

The same power that rolled back the stone on Easter Sunday morning is still rolling stones today. No wonder the song writer declared "King Jesus will roll our burdens away!"

When the question is asked, who shall roll the stone away?

Lazarus, who shall roll the stone away? "I was in my grave, but I heard a voice declare, Lazarus come forth!"

Blind man, who shall roll the stone away? "I was once blind, until I met a man helped me to see again!"

Woman at the well, who shall roll the stone away? "Come see a man who told me all that I've ever done!"

Today the invitation is the same, "Come see a man!"

Come see a man who was crucified for our sins!

Come see a man who was buried behind a stone of rejection

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley and the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

He was held down by a stone of hatred!

He was locked down by a stone of prejudice!

He was blocked down by a stone of death

But early Sunday morning, the power of God ... Rolled the stone away!

No. 9041-Anniv.-Ushers

Don't Just Stand there, Do something

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 23, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "..Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

Introduction

What is the easiest ministry in the entire church? There are many that will say that the ushering ministry is the easiest. In the choir there are weekly rehearsals, music and words to be memorized, but ushers they just stand. Sunday School teachers must prepare lessons and materials as well as attend a teacher's meeting, while ushers just stand. Youth workers attend practices, drive vans, and put up with hard to deal with children, while ushers just stand. Deacons visit homes, fellowship with the sick and infirmed and spend countless hours, in personal service ministry, but ushers just stand.

Ushering is a frustrating ministry because it requires so much standing. When others are sitting, ushers are standing. When others are enjoying the soft comfort of the seats, ushers are standing. When others are refreshed and rested ushers are standing. Most of the ministry of ushers is standing and walking. It takes a very unique person to participate in the ushering ministry.

Is standing the entire ministry of ushers? Does an usher have to know anything, do anything, give anything or do anything other than stand. There are many that believe that the only thing ushers need to do is stand. That was the case of a platoon was about to stand before a General's inspection. There was one in the platoon did not understand well, but all of his buddies told him that all he had to do to pass any inspection was to stand up, look serious and answer the question. They insisted that he didn't have know anything or do anything. When they heard the name of the general that would do the inspection they were relieved, because this general always asked soldiers the exact same questions. The nervous private was assured that the general would never ask him to do anything. All he would have to do is stand. If the general asked any questions, they knew the answers. They decided to help him. They coached him telling him what to say when the General asked. When the general asks

how long have you been in the army, you say 2 years. When he asks how old are you, you say 22 years. When he asks are you getting good food and good care, you say both. The day of the inspection the General asked questions just as the buddies said, however the order was different, he asked how old are you and the man responded 2 years, sir. Well how long have you been in the Army? 22 years, sir. The general was getting agitated and asked What do you take me for a fool or an idiot? And the man responded BOTH.-

A soldier has to do more than stand at attention, and an usher has to do more than just "stand." Although it may come as a surprise to some, ushers are first and foremost Christians. Ushering is one of the courtesy ministries of the church associated with worship, but ushers have to do more than stand a post. There are many who think ushering is very easy because all that is needed is a pretty uniform, a warm smile and a wall to lean against. While that may be the common conception, those who do the work of an usher, know that it requires more than just standing and smiling, but usually that's all that is ever seen by the general public. They, like all other Christians, must study, prepare, and work the work of him that sent them while it is day, because when the night comes, no man can work.

As Christians, we take every opportunity we get to become doers of the word. We plunge ourselves into kingdom building with a zeal and excitement that cannot be matched anywhere in the world. Those who usher do more than just stand, they do the work of the Lord.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus' disciples watching the savior as he was caught up on a cloud and slowly ascended into heaven. Each disciple stood on his feet and gazed as the master drifted out of sight. When he could not be seen anymore they were still gazing into the heavens. Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into the heavens trying to see Jesus when he will be coming back again. "Why stand ye?" was the probing question that jolted these believers from passive amazement to active service. It was a question that challenged them to act on that which they knew was right and build the kingdom of God among men.

Rather than stand gazing these were awakened from their amazement and inspired to stand together, on one accord and work to build the kingdom Christ envisioned, as servants of the Lord.

Rather than stand aimlessly gazing, they chose to stand for the master in prayer and in supplication.(v14).

They chose to do more than just stand, they chose to do something.

The word "stand" has several meanings, or ways in which it may be used. It can be a noun or a verb. It can refer to posture or to ones conviction (his "stand"). It may be used as a word of admonition. Or it may be a word of command.

In the text it is a verb, indicating more than a passive existence but expected action.

In the New Testament this word "stand" is found in connection with some very important ideas that require believers to do more than just "stand."

Stand Against the Devil

Ephesians 6:11 reminds us stand against the wiles of the devil" That means we should do more than just stand still, but we should actively join the church's fight against the influences of the devil in the local community and around the world. The devil works to destroy individuals, families, communities and nations. We see the results around us as crime increases, drug use becomes common place and more children become the mothers and fathers of children. We should do more than just be members of the local church, but we should actively involve ourselves in ministries of the church that are addressing these problems.

You may stand, as an usher but you also need to take a stand against hunger. Don't just stand there, do something!

You may stand as an usher but you also need to take a stand against crime in our neighborhoods, don't just stand there, do something!

You may stand as an usher, but you also need to take a stand against juvenile delinquency. Don't just stand there, do something!

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You may stand as an usher, but you also need to take a stand against juvenile delinquency. Don't just stand there, do something!

Stand for right way

2 Thessalonians 2:15 reminds us of the importance of standing fast and holding on to the traditions of the faith.

There is a right way and a wrong way to de everything. Those who know the right way cannot afford to stand idle and allow wrong to succeed. One great philosopher once said, "The only way for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Believers cannot afford the luxury of standing on the sideline and watch as time tested traditions and values are threatened. We must make ourselves committees of one so that we can meet the challenges that are before us on every hand. We must join hands with other auxiliaries of the church that are working to demonstrate the right way. We cannot disassociate ourselves from the rest of the ministry and resolve that "After I stand, I've done my part."

You may stand as an usher, but you need to help keep the worthwhile traditions of your church alive through your participation. Don't just stand there, do something!

You may stand as an usher, but you also need to attend Sunday School and bible study and become better acquainted with the word of God, so you can teach others. Don't just stand there, do something!

You may stand as an usher, but you also need to visit the sick, and pray for the

weak and troubled. Don't just stand there, do something!

You may stand as an usher and take up offerings for the church, but you should also give in the offering before you take an offering from anyone else. Don't just stand there, do something!

Stand in God's Grace

Finally, we must consider that 1 Peter 5:12 reminds us that we stand in God's grace. We are saved by the grace of God, not so that we can enjoy salvation in solitude, but so that we can save others.

When Jesus prepared to leave his disciples he did not say to them "Stand ye therefore" but go ye therefore and teach all nations!

His command was not just to revel in the fact that they had experienced the grace of God themselves, but to do something!

Maybe that's why the angel questioned them in our text, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing in the heavens" They were told to witness but they were gazing!

Jesus said Go ye therefore and teach, but they were standing gazing!

Jesus said Go ye therefore and baptize, but they were standing gazing!

Jesus said Go ye therefore and Teach them to observe whatsoever things I have told, but they were gazing in the heavens!

Don't just stand there, do something

If the Lord has been good to you, don't keep it to yourself! Tell somebody!

If the Lord has blessed you, don't keep it to yourself, bless somebody else! No wonder the song writer wrote, "Make me a blessing, make me a blessing, out of my life my Jesus shine. Make me a blessing oh savior I pray. Make me a blessing to someone today!"

As I close, I am reminded of Pretty Patti, a young usher who was excited about her new uniform. Pretty Pattie enjoyed standing at her post at the back door passing out programs. She didn't mind passing out a program but she never wanted to do anything that would get her uniform wrinkled or even slightly soiled. So she was always given a position at the back door. As time passed she became jealous of Wrinkle up Winnie because Winnie's post was always down front where she could be seen. Before church was out each Sunday, Winnie's uniform was wrinkled and didn't look like Pretty Patti's. At the usher meeting she complained that she should be allowed to stand in the front instead of Wrinkle up Winnie. The president told Patti, "You are young. You have a lot to learn. The reason Winnie's uniform ends up wrinkled every Sunday is because she stands next to Big Bertha who shouts every Sunday and Winnie has to wrestle with her. Sitting next to Bertha is Snuff Dipping Sally, she likes to shout too, but she sprays snuff all over Winnie. You see, you think it's all about standing and looking pretty, but when the spirit gets loose, you might get a little wrinkled up and get makeup all over your pretty uniform, but when but the spirit is high you can't just stand there, you gotta do something!

A woman with an issue of blood saw Jesus coming, everything in her said, don't just stand there do something.

A widow woman whose son died, held her son's body in her arms. Everything inside of her said, don't just stand there do something!

A man who was sick tried to get to Jesus who was healing in a house. When they couldn't get pass the crowd somebody said, don't just stand there, do something!

I don't know about you but when I think about the goodness of the Lord, I can't just stand there, I got to do something!

When I think about how God blesses me every day, I can't just stand there, I gotta do something..I'll wave my hand!

I can't just stand there because there is work to be done!
I can't just stand there because there is a fight to be fought
And a victory to be won!
I can't just stand there because there is a testimony to be shared!
And a fire to keep burning
I can't just stand there because there is a prayer to be prayed
I can't just stand, because there is a story to be told!
Tell the old story, how Jesus, Mary's baby, died and rose from the grave!
I'll tell them that he rose from the dead and is coming back again!
I can't just stand. I've got to do something!

No. 9042-Anniv.-Church

What to do after being blessed

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Greater Liberty Baptist Church
New Orleans, La.

150th Church Anniversary

April 27, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them, arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Luke 17:19

Introduction

We spend much of our time asking God for a blessing, but what do we do after we have been blessed? There are many people who spend their whole lives trying to get a certain blessing, then once they receive it, find themselves completely lost.

If you land a new job or a position, goal that you have worked hard to achieve; what do you do next?

If you achieve certain educational goals such as high school graduation, a goal that has consumed nearly 18 years of your life, what do you do next?

If your number finally comes up after you've waited decades to win big, what do you do next?

Our responses to such situations vary. Some are blessed and adopt a spirit of gratitude. Some are blessed and never look up or look back.

When a church celebrates an anniversary, after having struggled for 150 years, what does it do? When it has been blessed to overcome the struggles of building, maintaining an expanding its ministries over many generations, what does it do next? When it has been blessed by the leadership of the sainted seven for 150 years, what does it do next?

There is a blessing in the numbers themselves. There have been seven pastors here in 150 years: Pastors, Wyatt, Shackey, Thomas, Copelin, Carmbs, Clark, and Woods. For a few months in the 1930 the church was led by small group of seven.

There something special about sevens. There are seven days in a week. Daniel saw seventy weeks of seven. Joseph saw seven fat cows and seven skinny cows.

There were seven letters written to seven churches in Asia minor.

Every seventh year in biblical times was a Sabbath year and after seven sets of Sabbath years the 50th year was called the jubilee, when all debts are settled and chains were broken asunder.

When this church celebrated its first jubilee in 1903, it had overcome internal strife, the civil war, reconstruction and the after effects of the Spanish American War.

When this church celebrated its second jubilee in 1953, it had overcome the great flood of 1927 which killed thousands, a depression and two world wars.

Now the church is celebrating its 3rd jubilee in 2003, after having overcome, the civil unrest of the 60's, Vietnam, and celebrated the election of Black city leadership and intense spiritual growth.

Since 1853 there have been 21 groups of sevens and three years of jubilee, making 150 years of blessings. There were no doubt some fat cow years and some skinny cow years, but through it all, God was blessing!

But two questions linger, "How was the church able to survive such a long a time?" The answer escapes those outside of church, but it is obvious to believers, "It was only faith and the power of God that brought us thus far."

After having come to this the third jubilee, the second question also lingers, "What do you do when you've been blessed?"

As believers, we know the answer to that question, we'll keep praising the Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on the actions of a man whom Jesus healed of a crippling disease.

The man was among a group of men who were crippled by the disease of leprosy. The group was composed of both Jews and Samaritans, who were normally segregated from each other by Jewish custom. However, since they all had leprosy, all shared the same treatment by the general community.

Leprosy is a generic term applied to a variety of skin disorders in biblical times. Its symptoms ranged from white patches on the skin to running sores to the loss of digits on the fingers and toes. Anyone who came in contact with a leper was also considered unclean. Therefore, lepers were isolated from the rest of the community so that the members of the community could maintain their status as worshipers.

Jesus did not consider this distinction between clean and unclean valid. A person's outward condition did not make one unclean; rather that which proceeds from the heart determines one's standing before God. Therefore, Jesus did not hesitate about touching lepers and even commanded His disciples to cleanse lepers.

When Jesus decided to socially mix with Lepers he made a statement about the nature of the kingdom. When he decided to heal 10 of them of their leprosy that made an even bigger statement.

Once the ten men had been healed they left shouting and rejoicing. Their entire lives had been changed. Cured of leprosy they would be able to enjoy life fully. They left with great excitement. Nine of them forgot about the man who healed them and

changed their lives forever.

However, as they left one of the ten, a Samaritan, returned and gave thanks to Jesus.

All of the men were healed but only one returned to give thanks.

Hermeneutically speaking the text is about healing.

Homiletically speaking the text is about the power of faith and gratitude demonstrated.

Dramaturgically speaking, that is looking at what actually happened, the text shows us what to do when we have been blessed.

Arise

When the leper was healed he came to Jesus' feet and glorified him and fell at his feet in humility. The first word Jesus unto him was "arise."

If we have learned anything about the Lord over the years it is that he lifts us up, picks us up and turns us around. No matter how low we have fallen he gives us another chance. The song writer is correct when he says, "We fall down, but we get up!" We are able to do so because Christ lifts the fallen spirit within us and stands us up again.

When the demonic man fell at Jesus' feet after spending years wandering among the tombs he was told to rise.

When the lame man who had not walked for 38 years met the Lord beside the pool he was told to rise, "Take thy bed and walk."

Even today, the church pauses in gratitude to say thanks for the power of his outstretched hands.

We have struggled through many difficult years, but thanks to the power of God, still we rise!

We have weathered storms of sickness, death and indecision, but thanks to the power of God, still we rise!

Satan has attacked us from the outside, and sometimes within, but thanks to the power of God, still we rise!

We have evangelized, and witnessed, preached and reached, sometimes with little more than hope in our pockets, but still we rise!

The leper of this text shows us the first thing to do when we have been blessed, arise!

If you have fallen down, and have been blessed to get up, arise!

If you were tired, and have been renewed, arise!

If you were dispirited, but have been restored, arise!

If you have tired along the way, hear the words of the old warriors, "I don't feel no ways tired, we've come too far from where we started from, nobody told me that that road would be easy. I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me."

Arise!

Go Thy Way

The man who was healed was told to "go thy way" or to return to your friends and be a witness.

The command to "go" is a call to action that was given by the savior to believers on many occasions after he blessed them.

When he met an adulterous woman who was caught in sin, he forgave her and told her to "go" and sin no more!

After resurrection he told his disciples, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations…"

The command to "go" given to the leper gives us the second action we must take when we have been blessed. When we have been blessed we should be a blessing to someone else.

After being blessed with the gift of salvation, the church should work to save others.

We should work to feed the hungry and give sight to those blinded by the hopelessness of an ungodly world!

We should continue to work to heal he wounds of the broken hearted and proclaim liberty to the captives!

Not only that but we should go and tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

Thy faith hath made you whole

Finally, Jesus told the leper, the ultimate reason for his blessing, "thy faith hath made thee whole."

This is a unique statement because there were 10 men healed, nine of them were healed because the Lord had mercy and compassion on their pitiful situations as expressed in their plea for help. However, the Samaritan man was distinguished from the rest. He was made whole because of his faith.

Intrinsic in this text is a dogma that has proven irreversibly true, that is that while prayer is the key to the kingdom, "faith unlocks the door."

How has the church survived all these years? The answer is in this text, "Thy faith has made thee whole."

In Luke 7:50, he told the woman with the alabaster box, "Thy faith has saved you."

In Luke 8:48 he told the woman with an issue of blood who touched the hem of his garment "Thy faith has made you well."

No wonder the song writer declared, "We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord. Trusting in his holy word, he never failed me yet."

As I close this morning I'm reminded of the man who was injured in an automobile accident. As the paramedics rushed him to the hospital no one noticed that his right severed right hand was lying on the floor board of the car. His son saw the hand and wrapped it up and carried to the paramedics. A team of specialists were brought in and the man's hand was reattached to his arm. Months later the man came home completely healed. He spoke to his son and said, "Son, tell me how did you know what to do with the hand." The boy looked his father in the eyes and said, "When I was in church I heard you pray, father I stretch my hand to thee, no other help I know,

if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go?" The boy said, "I knew if I put your hand in God's hand, everything would be alright." The father said, "Son, thy faith has made me whole!"

Today, believers should remember that no matter how tough it gets, hold to his hand.

No matter what comes your way, hold to his hand!

No matter how strong the opposition gets. Hold to his hand!

No matter how tempted you are to leave, hold to his hand!

If you hold to his hand there will be:

—Answers to spiritual questions

—Defeat for your demons

—Help in carrying your burdens

—Victory rather than defeat

—Stability in your crises

—Freshness in your testimony

—Depth in your devotion

—Power in your prayer

Hold to his hand; God's unchanging hand, build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hands!

Since God has blessed you, tell the world about his goodness!

Tell the world about Jesus!

Tell them how he died and stayed in the grave for three days!

Tell them that Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

God has been good; so hold to his hand!

9043-Inspiration

God Moments

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 4, 2003

SCRIPTURE:"And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh." — 1 Samuel 14:4 (KJV)

Introduction

Have you ever had to make a tough decision? We decide many things every day, but often those decisions are not really hard to make. We decide which dress to wear, or which tie is a better match. We decide which movie to watch, which restaurant at which to dine or even which articles to read in a magazine. We decide many things on a daily basis. However, ever so often we have to make a tough decisions. These are the kind we labor over in thought and prayer and worry about the outcome. They are even tougher if they involved life and death or life direction. Sometimes when we make such decisions we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place, in a difficult fix.

When we face the moment of decision and incorporate our faith in God in the decision making process, such moments are called "God moments." God moments determine our future; they are made at cross roads. No matter which way we choose we will never be the same. In his book, The Journey of Desire, author John Eldridge says believers often experience "God" moments when they have to bring a halt to business as usual and look to him.

The bible is filled with instances of "God moments" of decision. Abraham had his God moment when he laid his son on an altar of sacrifice. Moses had a "God moment" when he had to choose between being an Egyptian and living a life of luxury or that of being a Hebrew slave. Even Jesus had a "God moment" as he endured his temptation in the wilderness. Each believer will face many "God moments" in the course of their life's experience.

It's not always easy to make decisions. Consider the Farmer who hired a man to work. The man was young and strong and appeared quite able to handle any chore that he was given. First the farmer assigned him to paint the barn, a job he thought would take about three days. To his amazement the hired man finished the work in one day. The next day he asked his worker to cut a pile of wood and store it for use in the woodshed. It was a large pile, so he assumed that the job would take at least four days to complete. However the worker, completed this job too in just one day.

Finally the farmer presented the worker with a pile of potatoes and told him to sort them into three stacks. In one stack he wanted those that could be used as seed potatoes and replanted in the field. The second pile should consist of those that were good enough to be sold in the market. The third stack was to consist of those that were not fit for seeds, or to be sold, but could only be fed to the hogs. The farmer figured this task should take a few hours, especially since his new worker was so quick on the job. However at sun down the farmer returned and not a single potato had been separated. Instead of three piles there was still only one large pile of unsorted spuds. The farmer was baffled. This was the worker who painted the barn in one day and did four days wood cutting work in one but yet he had not sorted the potatoes by the end of the day. When he asked the worker the reason, his stumped worker responded: "I can work hard and fast and do anything that I am told. I'm sorry sir, but I can't do anything if I have to make a decision." Likewise there are many people who have considerable trouble making a decision.

God moments are moments of decision in which we make tough choices. They are not easy; but they are easier, if we let God help us decide.

As Christians we are often called upon to make decisions. At times we feel as if either choice we make will be insufficient. It's like being caught between a rock and a hard place. In such situations we have learned that the best decisions are those we make after we let God guide us in the decision making. When caught between a rock and a hard place we have found that the best way out is to "lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jonathan, the son of King Saul, as he finds himself between a rock and a hard place trying to free Israel from its oppressors.

The new nation of Israel was constantly at risk of invasion or was the subject of invasion by outside enemies. Chief among its enemies were the Philistines. At the time of this text the Philistines were the conquering forces in Israel. The swords and spears of the people had been taken from them. All Blacksmiths had been removed from the land to prevent them from making swords and spears to wage war against the Philistines. Very few in Israel had weapons, including the soldiers in King Saul's armies. As the Philistines pressed the people of Israel on every side King Saul stood powerless with 600 of his weaponless soldiers. According to this text the only person in this group that had a sword was Jonathan, the king's son.

When a Philistine scouting patrol was spotted on a mountainside, Jonathan considered their vulnerable estate and decided that even though he had only one sword that he would take on the entire garrison of Philistine soldiers. With his amour bearer at his side he began to climb the rugged terrain to the Philistine camp. He soon found himself in a physical strait that was symbolic of his political position: either way he turned in his climb to the top there was a hard rock on both sides. It was the same dilemma he faced in reality; death at the hands of his enemies at the top or death

at the hand of his enemies at the bottom. He was between a rock and a hard place. Faced with that choice, Jonathan chose to go up. Once on the mountain top he took on the Philistines single handedly and slew 20 men himself and sent the others running in a panic. He was in a peculiar and awkward position, but he chose to go forward in faith and God rewarded him with the victory.

God moments Are Rarely Isolated

Times of decision come upon all of us, only rarely do we ever have a week in which we only have to make one decision. God moments are rarely isolated. They come in threes, fives and double digits. They rarely come one at a time.

There are many today who are quite capable of handling such moments as long as problems come one at time. One problem at a time, makes problem solvers out of many. However, many do not fare very well when problems come from all sides and plummet us with a rapidity that is mind boggling. There was once a commercial for such moments that they medicine described as an "Excedrin Headache."

Double density problems are mind-boggling. The man that is working hard to deal with financial misfortune in his family has a big problem. He is trying to find a source of income to maintain his family and is trying to stay economically alive. It is extremely difficult when that problem is compounded by another major problem at the same time, such as ill health, which complicates matters even worse..

The woman that suffers sex discrimination in the work place and is persecuted outside her home has a major problem. At work she has to fight to maintain her respect and keep the forces of institutionalized sexism from diminishing her worth as a human being. However, if at the same time that she is fighting battles outside of her family she has to come home and fight battles in her family or with her family, the situation is made even worse.

Add to situations similar to these: failure and death, and there is a mixture of situations that many people find impossible to handle. Some give up. Some take their own lives. Some drag alone in awe.

In such situations we are undoubtedly between a rock and a hard place. What we should do when caught with double density adversity coming from every side, is follow Jonathan's example: when he couldn't go to the left or right because rocks were on every side, he chose to go up. Likewise, we should go up into the consolation of God.

God Moments Require Faith

A great truth that many learn is that God moments require faith. Believers who face such moments are guided by one overriding principle, "Where God guides, he provides." If God has launched you on a certain course and your actions are according to his will, he will provide a way. That's why prayer is essential before we make great decisions, because God only provides if he guides. We pray because we

don't want to be like the accountant who received an offer from the company to head the accounting division of this multinational company. The new job would pay him five times more than he presently made complete with stock options and large package of benefits. The accountant, told his superiors that he would have to pray on the decision. Several days passed by and friends of the family were curious as to the family's decision. One day a friend was talking to one of the children and asked, "has your dad decided whether he will take the new job or not?" The boy answered quickly, "Dad is still praying about it, but mom has everything packed and ready to go!" Even golden opportunities require us pray before we act.

When we face God moments without faith, we have a tendency to climb down, back down, or fall down.

David, when caught between the possible public scorn of a king that had committed adultery and the wrath of God climbed down to murder and killed Uriah.

Peter faced with the apparent destruction of the cause of Christianity and his own possible persecution, climbed down and disowned Christ three times before the cock crowed

Aaron faced with the disappearance of Moses into the top of a mountain for 40 days and the cries of the people for a god they could see, climbed down and helped them with their ungodly acts.

Yet verse six of this text finds Jonathan making a bold statement of faith: "For there is not restraint of the Lord to save by the many or by the few."

There are many when caught between a rock and a hard place who act out of practicality instead of faith and as a result, they climbed down.

"God Moments Mean it's Time to Look up!"

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we face "God moments" men and women of faith should look up, get up, and climb up!

That's the conclusion that David reached in Psalm 121. He said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and earth."

David had many God moments.

When he faced wild animals and that threatened his father's flocks, those were "God moments."

When he faced Goliath with only a slingshot and five smooth stones, that was a "God Moment."

When he was chased by Saul and treated as a criminal, those were God moments.

When surrounded on all sides, he still decided it was best to "look up!"

When faced with the tough decision about leading the people Moses climbed up into the mountains to talk with God, and God spoke to him and showed him the way.

Abraham, a man of great faith, took God at his word that his family would be blessed and would multiply and went up into God's will.

Daniel refused to be intimidated by the prospect of hungry lions and went up into God's protection.

The Hebrew Boys faced with death in a fiery furnace or eternal shame before God chose to go up into God's perseverance.

All of these men faced "God moments" they decided it was best for them to go up to God.

When we go up to God he will show us the way!

When we go up to God he will take our:

—Questions and give us answers!

—Problems and give us solutions!

—Indecisiveness and give us decisions!

—Rough places and make them plain!

—Mountains and turn them into molehills

I don't know about you, but I am convinced that no matter what the problems, God has a solution!

No matter how big the battle, God has a victory!

No matter how wide the chasm, God can help us to cross it!

No matter how big the adversary, God can help us to defeat him!

We serve a God who takes hollows out valleys and levels mountains!

We serve a savior who walks on water, floats on clouds and sits on the right hand of God.

When in distress, just call him.

Remember, God is still on the throne!

But the best demonstration of a God moment that we have ever seen is that provided by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemene. There, he had to decide whether to drink from the cup or to let it pass.

I heard him say, "Never-the-less, not my will but thy will be done!"

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No. 9044-Mothers Day

A Mother and a Friend Through Thick And Thin

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 11, 2003

SCRIPTURE: Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. John 19:25-27

Introduction

Have you ever had any fair weather friends? Fair weather friends are the ones who are with you when the going is easy but seem to disappear when you really need them the most. When your health is good and your circumstances are favorable fair-weather friends are in abundance. In fact, they seem to come out of the walls. But when the storm clouds begin to gather and the thunderous winds of change and turbulence begin to blow, fair weather friends are no where to be found. They vanish until times seem better. True friends are those who celebrate our sun shiny days and struggle with us through our storms. True friends are few in number. As a general rule, real mothers have proven themselves to be more than just biological agents by which life is given, but both mother and friend to the children they bare.

Unlike fathers, as a general rule, mothers have a special affection for their offspring that is unique, personal, and long lasting. While there are many fathers who are concerned, caring and protective of their children, a father's touch somehow lacks the longevity and depth of a mother's love. The term mother is used in the context of nurture rather than nature. Nurture cares for a child while nature simply births a child. In that context mothers, especially in the African-American community are often persons who may not have nature but who definitely participated in the nurture of a child. With all of its short comings, the African-American family still believes in supporting its own. It is not uncommon for a sister, uncle, aunt or the lady down the street to be called "mother" while our real mothers are called something else. One is a mother by nurture and the other is a mother by nature.

All of our years have revealed an undeniable truth about real mothers: through thick and thin, they love and support their children. Because mothers stand with their children through a myriad of circumstances does not mean that they support their

errors, mistakes and mis-directions. It does mean that they love them despite their flaws, errors and mistakes.

In a way, a mother's love is similar to God's love for all of his children. He is protective, supportive, and corrective in his dealings with us. He supports us on a daily basis. He corrects us whenever we go astray and he protects us from many dangers seen and unseen. That could easily be the description of good mothers. They are ever protective of their children, always supporting them and often painfully correct them. Because of the similarities, God may have given mothers a special blessing.

As Christians, we salute our mothers, who have been more than fair weather friends for us, they have stood with their children, through thick and thin. Even to the end, we lift our hearts in praise and thanksgiving for women we reverently call "mother."

Exposition

This text focuses on the sayings of Jesus' from the cross with the respect to his mother.

Mary is often cited as the perfect example of motherhood. Many mothers of the bible depict important truths about the believer's life. The widow woman, whose barrel never ran dry, showed a mother who prayed as she worked and God kept her barrel from running dry. The woman with the issue of blood depicted a woman who overcame illness because of the power of God. Sara is shown as a woman who was blessed to be a mother despite advancing age. However, Mary's life shows us many additional truths about God and the believer's expectation.

Mary was a participant in the life and ministry of Christ from conception through his resurrection. For thirty years Mary raised Jesus, attended to his physical needs and stayed close by his side. Only one event of the 30 years she raised him as a ward of house and supported him as an independent adult, there is only one event in the history of Jesus is recorded that being his going up to Jerusalem when he was twelve years of age, and his being found among the doctors in the temple (Luke 2:41-52). We see Mary and Joseph when Jesus was lost in the crowd. Shortly after scholars believe Joeseph died since there is no reference to him after the Jerusalem incident.

When Jesus began his public ministry little notice is taken of Mary. She was present at the marriage in Cana. A year and a half after this we find her at Capernaum (Matthew 12:46,48,49), where Christ uttered the memorable words, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" The next time we find her is at the cross along with her sister Mary, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and other women (John 19:26). From that hour John took her to his own abode. She was with the little company in the upper room after the Ascension (Acts 1:14). From this time she wholly disappears from public notice. The time and manner of her death are unknown.

There is enough documentation in the Word of God to truthfully say, without fear of contradiction, that Mary remained supportive of Jesus through his childhood, adult ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. When he was praised, she was there. When he was nailed to the cross, she was there, through thick and thin.

She was "there" for us

One salient characteristic of every good mother is the fact that she is generally "there" for her children, in every circumstance, giving personal love if not endorsement. Mary's associations with Jesus give us three ways that scriptures point out how Mary as a mother was "there" for Jesus.

THERE FOR US IN CHILDHOOD: Mary gave birth to Jesus and nurtured him in her home until he became a man. Good mothers today are "there" for their children. Today, there are millions of mothers who are making personal sacrifices to be "there" for their children. In today's time that is much more demanding that in Mary's time, but yet good mother's today are finding ways to "be there" for their children. They are attending school events, participating in school PTA, selling cookies for the Girl Scouts, cheering their children on the athletic fields and traveling countless miles to watch their children perform with school teams. Being "there" is more than showing up occasionally, it means being a part of a child's life experiences, which can be very traumatic at times. Being "there" sometimes means listening when children talk, paying attention to their doodlings and drawings and praising them accordingly. Being there means teaching life skills necessary for success and providing quality time for relationship building. Just as Mary was "there" for Jesus to hold his hand and support him, that spirit of "being there" is what is celebrated by children who know instantly that in every respect, good mothers have done their best to "be there" for them.

THERE FOR US WHEN WE ARE LOST: When Jesus was 12 he became separated from the family after leaving Jerusalem. The scripture shows Mary's absolute panic when she thought Jesus was lost. Mothers try to "be there" for their children when they sense that they are lost. Mothers live in a daily fear that something might happen to cause them to lose their children. Whether its being kidnapped by predators or stripped away from them by other means, mothers are always trying to "find" their children. Mothers spend an inordinate amount of their time either looking for lost children or trying to insure that they are never lost. In a greater sense, mothers also spend time trying to help children who have lost their way in life. Most children lose sight of their goals at one time or another. On occasion they drift far from the mainstream. When mothers sense that their children are losing it, they often stop what they are doing to try to help them find themselves. Some father's don't understand it, but every mother does. Mothers seem to have a maternal instinct to find their children when they are physically lost or lost in life. Many wandering sons and daughters have found their way back home because mother found them at their lowest point and showed them the way back. When we are lost, mothers help us to find our way home. They always leave a light on for us and rarely sleep until they know

we are safe.

THERE FOR US IN CELEBRATION: When Mary attended the wedding with Jesus it was a joyous celebration. It was a happy moment. Good mothers are those who try to share our happy moments with us. They celebrate our birthdays with us and cheer for us when we graduate from kindergarten. They are in the crowd at our pee wee league baseball games and they work to help us become cheer leaders, student council officers and earn slots on the homecoming court. They help us look pretty for the prom, sit in the audience when we perform at school and stand with us as we graduate from college or vocational school. At our weddings, she shares the important moment with us. Our scrapbooks are filled with snapshots of the magic moments in our lives, most of which mother was a part, even if by long distance. She listens as we tell all of the details of our celebration. She laughs with us and helps us enjoy the moment. Achievements in life are important, but they are even more important if the people we love are there to share those moments with us. In this respect mothers enter the sacred ranks of those we call our best friends. She is among that small group of people whose presence is essential at each magic moment and milestone in our lives. Good mothers know the importance of "being there" to celebrate with their children. It's because she is "there" to share our moments, that a good mother is showered with praise and love by her children.

THERE FOR US IN DIFFICULTY: Not only do good mothers share our magic moments; they also share the heart wrenching moments of difficulty, embarrassment and public scorn with their children. When Mary stood at the cross with Jesus, she was close enough to hear his trembling voice. Most of the others withdrew themselves in fear or embarrassment, except Mary, who stood by his side even in his most difficult moment. Good mothers are just like Mary, they stand beside their children when everyone else has abandoned them. Sometimes we really mess up our lives by dumb actions, stupid mistakes and insensitivity. Sometimes our actions prompt us to fail or otherwise suffer embarrassment. Despite their distaste for the stupidity of our decisions in life, good mothers never give up on their children. They stand with them publicly even if they find it necessary to bless them out privately. When the crowds disappear and our fame has turned to infamy; mothers are there for us. When we are being nailed to the cross by enemies and tragic circumstances. Mothers are there for us. When we are stretched out on hospital beds unable to care for ourselves, mothers find a way to see that we are cared for, often personally doing it themselves. When the world laughs at us she hears the words of Jesus, "Woman behold thy son!" She doesn't see a felon in a courtroom she sees her son or daughter. She doesn't see a person wrongfully accused in the court of public opinion, she sees her child, and though he or she is hanging on the cross, a good mother often risks her own safety and security to "be there" for a child who has reached the lowest point in his or her life. In difficulties, mother is always "there for us."

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that, whether it was in a manger in Bethlehem or at the foot of a cross on Calvary, Mary stood by her son, through thick and thin.

That's the testimony of every good mother, in the thick of things, when times are good, mother is there! Acts 1:14 lets us know that when Jesus ascended to heaven that Mary was in the crowd too. Among the disciples confident of his return who were comforted by his promise never to leave them but to send them a comforter.

She had had been with him through thick and thin. Good times and bad times.

She had been there at the manger and was there in his finest hour. Through thick and thin, like a good mother she was there.

Good mothers in this respect are just like Mary. They are with their children through thick and thin.

Even in the thin of things, when times are tough, mother is always there.

Though times are difficult good mothers are there for their children, but who is there for mothers?

When children are frustrated and wake crying in the middle of the night, mother is there, but is there anybody there for mother!

When children need somebody to listen to them and tell them which way to go, mother is there, but is there anybody there for mother?

When the storms of life are raging children count on mother to calm the winds of doubt and confusion, but is there anybody there for mother?

Just like mother is there for her children, God is there for every good mother. He's only a prayer away.

I'm reminded of three elderly ladies who reflected on their lives. One lady, bragged that she didn't need anyone to provide for her and and bragged that she had a .357 magnum to protect her if anyone came to bother her. The second lady said she too lived alone but she had a .44 and knew how to use it. The third lady said she had 1-44 and a 27:1 and she was ready no matter what came her way. One night the newscaster announced that a burglar had been caught in the neighborhood of three old ladies. The next day talk about their experience. The first woman said "I tried to use my .357 but I forgot to load it and the burglar took all my belongings. The second woman said she fired her .44 but it knocked her through the door and the burglar got away. The third woman said "Nothing happened at my house. I'raised seven head of children. I've learned what to do." The two ladies wanted to know her secret and she replied: "While you carried a .44 I carried Psalm 144 which says 'Blessed be the Lord my strength...my goodness, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield, in whom I trust.." To her friend she said "You carried a .357, but I carried Psalm 27:1 ' The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?' When you went home you were alone, but I've got somebody who will never leave me alone!"

I heard him declare and "Lo I am with you alway, even until of the earth"

No wonder the songwriter wrote, "I've seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll. I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which tried to conquer my soul. I've heard the voice of my savior he bid me still fight on. He promised never to leave me,

never to leave me alone!
No never alone!
He promised never to leave me ..never to leave me alone!
He has
—Muzzled the mouths of lions that came to devour us!
—Quenched the flames of fires that tried to consume us!
—Conqueredthe enemies that came to destroy us!
—Penetrated the walls built to divide us!
—Unlocking the prisons designed to hold us down.
No never alone!
All the way to Calvary, through thick and thin!
All the way to a borrowed tomb, through thick and thin!
Early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!
One of these days, through thick and thin he's coming back again!

No. 9045-Communion

What's For Dinner?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 18, 2003

SCRIPTURE: And he sent Peter and John saying, go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. Luke 22:8

Introduction

Did you know that what you serve or do not serve for dinner says a whole lot? Dinner time, that's what they say up North (it's supper down South) is an exciting time of renewal and family fellowship. What's on the table or not on the table usually sets the tone for the evening. If we come home for dinner and silverware is set and the fine China dishes are on the table, then we know guests are expected. If there is turkey or duck on the table, it must be Christmas or Thanksgiving. If there is home fried chicken on the table it could mean that it's Sunday; and if it's Kentucky Fried or Churches, it could be any day of the week. Chitterlings and Hog maws mean grandma's at home because you can't cook chit'lins in the microwave and that's all mama knows. If we all have to sit at the table together instead of going into separate rooms there must be something going on, especially if it's not a holiday. Bar-be-que could mean something too. It could be the fourth of July or Labor Day or Memorial Day. If we get home and see take-out boxes from Sunday on the table, it means somebody's tired. If mama tells daddy to go in the kitchen and fix it himself, that means there's going to be a fight. There is no doubt that much can be learned from watching the table.

If there are many place holders on the table there is a good chance that grand parents have prepared the table.

If everybody is fixing their own plate, right out of the pot, it could mean a young person prepared the food and can't see the value of messing up too many dishes just to wash them again. If they prepare the food, what won't be on the table is anything that has to be washed after it's over. There may even be paper plates.

What's on the table may give a hint to who is expected to be at the table. When some family members come for dinner, the food is soft and there is no salt. When others come the whole hog is on the table and there are plenty of salt shakers everywhere.

To a large extent our culture dictates our table. At most Afro-American tables there will be some "heart attack" food somewhere. Hispanic families are not far behind with helpings of beans and grease. German families drink beer at most meals, even the children. In some parts of the world wine is served with meals along with the water.

What's on the table is often dictated by our culture. There won't be any pig feet at a Jewish table. Muslims won't be asking for a slice of ham. They don't eat pork. Hindu families will have no meat at all. The cultural differences are distinct and unique.

What happens at the table gives a hint about the family's relationship with God. At some tables people will dig in instantly, with the exception of Thanksgiving. In Christian families everyone pauses to bless the food and to give God thanks. Whatever the family eats for dinner is considered a blessing from God and worthy of thanks.

Those who have been blessed to come home to prepared dinners a few times a week can testify to their anticipation. They know the ability of the cook. While they may not know what's going to be served, they know that it will be prepared to the fullest and will be good for them.

As Christians, we believe God prepares a table for us everyday. Even spiritually, God prepares a table for us that will refresh us, keep us and strengthen us until he the return of Jesus in his glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he prepares to observe the Passover with his disciples.

The time of the text was just before the time of the Passover feast. It was one of the special observances that was ordered by Moses. It celebrated the rescue and deliverance of the Israelite slaves from Egypt. When it was instituted, the Israelites were directed to take a male lamb without blemish, one year old, and kill it on the 14th day of the first month. This was to be done during the evening, and the lamb was to have it's blood sprinkled with a branch of hyssop on the two side posts and lintel of the door of the Hebrew houses. This was done so that when the Lord passed through Egypt on the night of Passover, He would see the blood on the door post, and would spare the first born child of that house.

Many Jewish homes still observe the Passover in the orthodox sense. Very little has changed about the ingredients or procedure used to observe the Passover.

Each ingredient in the meal had a significance and meaning. None was selected for health or taste reasons. The only significance of the meal was purely spiritual in nature

The actual dinner Passover dinner was called a SEDER or a chance for the story of God's deliverance of people to be retold in the family cirle. Included in the Passover Feast are the following items, MATZOS or unleavened bread, the ROASTED SHANKBONE or slain lamb, the ROASTED EGG, the MAROR or bitter herb's, the HYSSOP PLANT and the KARPAS or green vegetable.

The MATZOS or unleavened bread represented the separation of the Israelites from Egypt and their hurried departure. This came about because during the time of the exodus, the Israelites did not have time to wait for the bread to rise in the oven, so they removed it, hot and flat, and that is what they ate.

The ROASTED SHANKBONE or slain lamb represented the Paschal Lamb, a special animal sacrifice was offered on the altar of the great Temple in Jerusalem on the Passover Holiday.

The ROASTED EGG represented a second offering that was brought to the Temple on Passover. It was known then as a festival offering, becoming a symbol of the triumph of life over death.

The MAROR or bitter herbs reminds us of the bitterness of slavery under Pharaoh, and the unpleasantness of the slave experience.

The HYSSOP PLANT was very common plant which signified faith that the Lord would indeed spare their children and their houses from any hurt harm or danger by using the plant to apply the blood of the lamb to the door posts.

And finally, the KARPAS or green vegetable served as a reminder of freshness giving hope and renewal.

What for Dinner

What's on the table for the Passover has not changed. However, Jesus took bread and wine and blessed it and gave a new meaning to the observance for Christians. The Passover represented the old covenant between God and man but the Lord's Supper would represent a new agreement. The Passover was symbolic of a people leaving one experience, while the Lord's supper represented believers beginning a new relationship with God based on faith in Jesus Christ.

THE BREAD: Jesus took the bread and blessed it. In so doing he told his disciples that the bread would no longer represent the haste with which Israel left Egypt, but it would now represent his body which would be given as a sacrifice for them. The disciples were not eating his body, the bread "represented" his body. The bread does not transmortify, or turn into his body, it only "represents" the physical sacrifices of Christ that were given so we might have a new agreement with God. In the Passover, a slain lamb was the sacrifice, prepared with bitter herbs, and eaten with a roasted egg that meant a triumph of life over death. For the Christian, the body of Christ embodies all of these symbols and more. His body is the slain lamb given in the bitterness of the Calvary experience to give us triumph over life and death. It does not matter what kind of bread we use, because it is just a symbol. The Passover required unleavened bread but believers use all kinds of bread: wafers, soft dough bread and even crackers. The symbol is not in the type of bread but in what it represents.

The bread represents our belief that life consists of more than merely existing to acquire bread but to please God. Jesus made that clear when he said, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The bread also represents our belief that our God provides for our daily needs according to his will. In Christ we pray in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

When a believer sees bread on the table. He or she sees Jesus, our provider and sustainer, making a way for us in spirit and in the body. He remembers Jesus saying that Moses gave Israel bread in the wilderness but he was the bread of life that came

from above. That's why believers sing, "Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

THE WINE: In the Passover, the Hyssop plant represented how the people used it to paint the door posts of their houses to escape the death angel. For believers, the blood of Christ represents the payment made for our sins by Christ. Wine was not mentioned in the original concept of the Passover, however, traditionally wine was later added by the priests. Each person was obligated to have four cups of red wine at the Passover meal, even if it had to be paid for out of the public treasury. A blessing was given and they drank the first cup of wine and ate bitter herbs. Secondly the son of the house would ask the importance of the Passover and the father would tell everyone present the meaning. Then they drank the second cup of wine. After the third cup a grace was said after the meal. They drank the fourth cup to complete the celebration. In Luke 22:20 Jesus took that last cup and said, " Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. " That last cup had no special significance. Jesus told his disciples that the cup would represent his blood.

Early believers gathered in large crowds for the Lord's supper. They mixed the Passover's four cups of wine and roasted lamb together with their new faith and turned the Lord's supper into what was known as "love feasts." The food and wine became a focal point of the Lord's supper to the point that in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Paul had to chastise believers for coming to the Lord's supper to eat and drink instead of doing that at home. As a result, today we have the symbols of a small cup of juice or wine and a crumb of bread. This emphasizes the symbol rather than the food and the wine.

The wine represents the blood of Christ.

The blood of Christ is the power of salvation

Because of the blood of Christ we have the hope of a new life and a guaranteed place in the kingdom of heaven.

One song writer summed up our belief this way, "There's power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb."

When believers see the wine on the table we see the sacrifice of Christ who shed his blood for us. It doesn't matter whether the symbol is grape juice, grape drink, or real wine, it represents the blood of Christ which was shed for us.

Get ready for the meal

Finally brothers and sisters, God is getting the table ready for us but are we ready for the table?

Somebody can remember their childhood when grandma stayed in the kitchen for long hours with no air conditioning, with a sweat towel over her shoulder making corn bread and with something frying on every eye of the stove. She worked all day to be sure that the dinner was ready.

When we ran in the door, we ran straight for the tables, but she would make us

get up and go wash the dirt off our hands and sweat off our faces. The table was ready, but we were not ready for the table.

Since the beginning of time God has been preparing a table for us, making things right. from the beginning of time. There is no fancy table cloth. No shiny silver ware, but everything on the table was just what we need.

Jesus the master table setter stood back in heaven and

—Surveyed our valleys, and said I'll put some valley food on the table.

—Measured our mountains, and said I'll put some mountain nuggets on the table.

—Calculated our losses, and said I'll put some victory food on the table

—Comprehended our sorrows, and said I'll put some happy food on the table!

—Inventoried our mistakes, and said I'll put some correction food on the table

—Counted our failures, and said I'll put some success food on the table

When God lays out the dinner table, he prepares so much that there's always something left over.

On day Jesus spoke to 5,000 people. There was not enough food to feed such a large crowd, they only had two little fishes and five loaves of bread. But God had already set the table. There was enough food to feed the multitude with plenty of leftovers!

Maybe that's where those old fashioned mama's get the idea. When they cook, they cook for the neighborhood.

It's not one two or three or slices of bacon, but whole slabs of bacon!

It's not one or two pieces of chicken, but enough to feed the family for days!

It's not an ear or corn or two, but there's corn on the cob for days!

That's the way God prepares our table.. he's got more than we need!

When dinner is ready and the table is set, somehow everybody gets the word.

When we were in the country, the bell would ring and hurry from the fields singing, "it's getting late in the evening and the sun is almost down."

If we were playing under the street light in the project and heard big mama's voice, we cut through a few back yards and over the over the fence to rush in the back door!

We were excited about getting home because supper was on the table.

One evening Jesus assembled his disciples around a supper table in an upper room. He prepared a table of remembrance. He told them to eat this bread in remembrance of me! Drink this wine, in remembrance of the blood that would be shed for them!

In the Upper Room there the dinner table was ready, and the Savior who was ready for the Table!

As Saints eat from the Lord's table, we are eating from God's dinner table.

To prepare the table, Jesus had to live among men for 33 long years!

To prepare the table, he had to suffer the humiliation of his critics!

To prepare the table, he had to pick up an old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha's hill.

To prepare the table he had to die out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

The table is ready! Are "we" ready for the table?

No. 9046-Graduation

Are We There Yet?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 25, 2003

SCRIPTURE: Behold, "I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them." Deuteronomy 1:8

Introduction

Have you ever taken a trip and asked the question, "Are we there yet?" It usually happens when the family is traveling from one destination to another and the little ones in the car are really excited about the trip to Disney Land, the beach or to grandma's house. It seems that the car is not driving fast enough. The highway seems to crowded and the minutes that pass seem like hours as the anticipation grows. The aggravating question is asked repeatedly by little minds, "Are we there yet?" It's especially aggravating when it is asked only 30 minutes into a five hour drive and is asked repeatedly every five minutes. For the youngsters in the back seat things are going toO slow. The anticipation is killing them. When they think about the fun and excitement they expect they can't wait, so they ask again, "Are we there yet?"

That's the way it is with graduation. For 18 years a student has had one goal in life and that is "graduation." When it finally comes and they walk down the isle with their tassels dangling in the corner of their eye and cameras flashing as the make each proud step, they feel a sense of accomplishment. When they walk across the stage and receive a diploma, shake a principal's hand and wave to the crowd that admires their accomplishment it is a great moment. Once in their seat, they open their case and steal a quick look at their name scripted in fancy letters on a sheep skin diploma and they swell with pride. After the celebration is over, the gifts are received and the praises subside, there is a question that graduates must answer, "Are we there yet?"

Is high school graduation the end goal? Have we finally arrived? Are we "there" or do we still have quite a ways to go to get where we trying to go?

How far is the distance between "here" and "there?" There is no universal answer to that question because "there" is defined by each person's life goal. For the person who aspires to great heights in life, "there" is a distance away. For others, "there" may be just a little closer. "Here" represents the sum total of our life journey to this point. It accounts for everything we have experienced, information we have learned

and directions we have taken. “Here” represents the point in time where yesterday and today meet. “There” represents the terminal point in the distant future that is the focus of our journey. Between “here” and “there” is a meandering life journey that will be full of challenges, blessings, successes and failures. Although the distance between “here” and “there” may be short in actual time required, the weakness of our humanity may make the journey longer than necessary. Sometimes we even learn that we have taken a wrong turn and need to get back on track.

In a spiritual sense, we are also on a journey. A journey towards heaven. We’re not there yet, but we are taking one step at a time, toward God’s promised land.

As Christians, we press toward the mark of the high calling. From “here” to “there” is a lifetime journey, but we have pledged ourselves to go forward and never look back, with faith as our guide and heaven as our goal.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he gives final instructions to Israel in the short period before they actually crossed into the promised Land.

Generally, the book of Deuteronomy has three divisions that recite for the hearing of the young, how God cared for the people in the wilderness, how he gave them the law and finally what future blessings he has in store for them. The first four chapters review God’s love and care of Israel in the wilderness. Most of the people he addressed his remark to were only children when, forty years earlier, God performed miracles for their parents and gave them a renewed promised of the prosperous land. So Moses chose to recite for their hearing the wonderful love that God showed the people while they were in the wilderness as he led them with a pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, and guided them through the trackless, howling desert. He tells how God brought water from the rock to satisfy their thirst in a vast and waterless area. And how he delivered them from their enemies again and again; how he fed them with manna that did not fail.

The second division is a great resume of the law. The Ten Commandments appear in the Bible for the second time here, beginning with chapter five, verse 27. Here are the laws on divorce, on faithlessness and the various penalties they could expect if they broke God’s laws once in the promised land or on their journey.

The third division of the book, chapters 27 through 34, is a mighty revelation of the future, both in terms of blessings and of curses upon Israel.

In the text, Moses begins by talking to the young people who are about to begin their journey; encouraging them to possess what the Lord has given them and not to wander along the way.

Possess What God has Promised

Youth today must be willing to walk the straight and narrow path toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God. God has promised each believer a joyful, fulfilling and blessed life if they follow his rules (That does not guarantee any life

style, bank account or state of mind or body) He has promised each believer the victory if they possess what he has given.

Youth can answer the question, "Are we there yet?" When they can truthfully say, "I have possessed that which God has for me, with my faith, integrity and Christ centered life in tact. If we possess what God gives but lose our Christ centered life, faith and integrity along the way, then we are not "there" yet. We are there, when we have done what God wanted us to do, the way he wanted it done.

There are three steps to possessing what God has in store for us.

THERE MUST BE A DESIRE TO POSSESS: If you are content with what you are today, then you will never be any better than you are now; you may become worse. Israel was first told to possess the land 40 years earlier by Joshua and Caleb, but they went around in circles for 40 years with no desire to possess the land because it was too difficult to do. To posses what God has for us we must "want it" bad enough to pursue it with a passion. We must want to be a doctor, lawyer, engineer, nurse or auto technician bad enough to block out all distractions and pursue it with a passion. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said there is a blessing for those who "hunger" for righteousness; they shall be filled. The years between 18 and 25 (depending on your profession) are "possession years." Generally 25 to 35 are the years in which we secure what we have possessed. We spend 36 to 65 cultivating our possession and 65 until death being supported by our possession. With a few exceptions, the years between 18-25 are crucial years in which you stake our claims or let them slip away.

THERE MUST BE AN UNDISTRACTED FOCUS: Many begin the journey through young adult life with a passion for success only to be distracted along the way. Those who seek to possess God's blessings, must keep their eyes on the prize. The distractions will be numerous, all of which promise you that you will be able to handle them and that you are not really being distracted. Some distractions involve the party life, fatal personal attractions, early parenthood, fast track, get rich the quick way schemes and scams, larceny, drugs and alcohol, and the intoxicating liquor of success itself, distracts many. Possessing what God has to give means never taking your eye off him or the prize. Paul said he was persuaded that nothing would distract him: life or death, things past or things present, height or depth, neither angels or principalities. Young graduates should begin this next phase of their lives with the same resolve. Nothing will take me off the goal or reduce my love, faith, worship and service to God.

YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO SEIZE THE MOMENT: Life presents special moments when opportunities are ripe for the claiming. When he spies gave their report, the moment for Israel to claim their possession was upon them, but they did not seize the moment. Carpe Deum, is the Latin phrase for "seize the moment." It means that we must act in faith when opportunities appear. That means we must prepare for the moment. When the job you're looking for appears in the want ads you may get all excited, until you see the training requirement posted with it. You have the ability and the skill but lack the academic training necessary to seize the moment. The years between 18-25 are the years when your basic academic training is secure. Some areas may require longer. The amount of training, experience, and academic preparation

you receive in the next seven years will determine whether your possession in your generation will be a mountain, molehill or desert plain. To a large extent they determine whether you will be the coach or the water boy, supervisor or the worker, the one who designs video games or the one who plays them; the producer or the consumer. It all depends on the direction you take in the next seven years. Prepare now for the door of opportunity that will be opened for you in a few short years. When the opportunity comes "seize the moment."

Are we there yet?

Finally, we should consider that while we know where we have been we don't know what the future holds. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

As graduates move forth to take possession of the rewards of their faith they should always remember that no matter what the distance between here and "there," God is only a prayer away.

God's guiding spirit will let us know when we are traveling the right path, even though we might think we have made it.

When we graduate from high school we learn quickly that we are not there yet?

When we get scholarships or enroll in college are we there yet?

When we graduate from college and land the job of our dreams, are we there yet?

When we find a mate and marry, and begin a family, are we there yet?

When we have achieved success in our chosen fields, are we there yet?

For the believer, even a young believer, we have not made it there until we live our lives in a way that will be pleasing to God and in his mercy he welcomes us into the kingdom of heaven.

A young lady began a career as a dancer after being the student of an aging but world renown dance instructor. Anytime the young lady made errors, the dance instructor would carefully point out her strengths and the errors too. "Never be pleased with what the crowd tells you. You have made it only when he who gave you the gifts is pleased with how you have used them." For years, the young lady won accolades and prizes for her dancing but she would never be satisfied, she'd call her teacher and ask in a childlike manner, the same question she had asked for many years, "Have I made it?" But the answer would always be the same. Draped in success, robed in diamonds, furs and jewelry, the dancer became extremely famous, but the old lady gave the same answer. It troubled the dancer that she had fame, money and influence but her teacher always said the same words. One night she had an inspiration. She went to church and volunteered to teach spiritual dance to elementary students. There were no flashing lights, or limousines, but she gave the little girls the best she had. When she called her teacher and told her of her actions the teacher said, "Now you are on the right path." –You have made it only when he who gave you the gifts is pleased with how you use them.

As you begin this seven year journey put Jesus first, because he can guide you safely through.

We don't know what rivers we'll have to cross, but we know that if we put Christ first, he will guide us safely through.

I'm reminded of the story of some travelers who followed a trail to a town located high in the Swiss mountains. They were warned that sudden snows could wipe out the trail and they might get lost. The guide told the travelers not to worry but to keep looking for the cross! Soon a storm came and the paths were covered. The people panicked because the covered trails and because their guide was walking in the horizon looking for a cross. They felt doomed. As they all gave up hope the guide returned shouting: "Follow the cross, follow the cross." He pointed to a giant lighted cross high on a hill in the horizon. It had been erected by the townspeople to guide travelers lost in the storm.

The storms of life might cover your path, but keep your eye on the cross!

Follow Jesus: the truth that never lies; friend that never forsakes, fountain that never runs dry, the way that never deceives, and anchor that never fails!

Follow Jesus who died and arose for our sins!

Another song writer put it this way: "Where he leads me I will follow. I will follow, follow, follow him!"

No. 9047-Inspiration

Walk Right Or Get Left Behind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 1, 2003

SCRIPTURE*: "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Ephesians 5:2*

Introduction

Is it possible to be the only person doing the right thing while everyone else is doing wrong? Often Christians are frustrated because they refuse to go along with the crowd when the crowd is doing the wrong thing. We have seen it so many times. Everyone at the office party takes a drink to be sociable; everyone but you. Everyone seems to fake injuries if there has been a minor accident; everyone but you. Everyone keeps the change if a clerk gives them too much change; everyone but you. Sometimes believers draw criticism because they do the right thing instead doing the wrong thing like everyone else around them. Yet, the goal of every believer is to do the right thing, even if they must do it by themselves.

Sometimes our willingness to go along with the crowd can get us into a world of trouble. Consider the mice that came to the mouse convention with some exciting news. It seems that the humans had left cheese lying around the building without covering it up as they usually do. One young mouse came to the podium and addressed the convention. "There is opportunity all around us. There is free cheese everywhere all we have to do is go out and grab some." All of the mice squeaked their approval; that is all except uncle Fat Rat, the old veteran of the mouse convention. He was a wise old mouse who had lived many years. Uncle Fat rat did not jump up and down with joy like the other mice. He didn't join the army of young mice who went out to get some of the free cheese that was lying around everywhere. Neither would he let his nephew Mickey move from his side. He only shook his head. Mickey protested that everyone else was going and he shouldn't be the only one sitting by himself. After a while there was an awful snapping sound all over the building, followed by the squeaks and skirms of aching mice who had been snared as they reached for the cheese. Uncle Fat Rat looked at Mickey and said, "Let this be a lesson to you son, free cheese always gets your tail in a trap; even in a crowd."

The bible warns believers to beware of following the crowd, especially if the crowd

is ungodly. Psalm 1:1 says "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, or sitteth in the seat of the scornful." It's a stern warning for believers to be influenced by the ungodly and the worldly. At the same time, Jesus warned his disciples that the road to destruction is wide, but straight is the gait and narrow is the way that leads to the kingdom of God. The masses seldom follow the narrow path but take the super highway approach to life. Believers are encouraged to take the narrow road, even if they have to walk by themselves.

As believers, we praise God for showing us the right path. We praise him for giving us the strength to resist temptation and live for him constantly; because it's not easy to walk right when everybody is walking wrong.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he gives instructions to the Ephesians about Christ like living.

Paul, in writing to the church at Ephesus, emphasized the importance of walking right before God. Believers were encouraged to "Walk in love as Christ hath loved us."

Paul told the Ephesians how they should walk and he also advised them where not to walk. Walking after Christ is the desired walk. Walking after the world is the walk believers are encouraged to avoid. Believers are instructed to do those things which are "acceptable unto the Lord" (v10) and to avoid fellowship with those things which are wrong. Fellowship implies participation and endorsement. Believers won't be able to always avoid contact with ungodly activities, but that does not imply that they must endorse or participate in them.

By verse 15 Paul's point is clear. Believers should carry themselves in ways that reflect their walk with God. Many will find God only by walking in the footsteps of believers. They are the only bibles that many will ever read.

A Closer Look

A closer look at verse 15 in the Greek gives us the full power of the text:

SEE: The Greek work for "See" (Blepo) means "to discern" or to see with the spirit. Discernment is a spiritual gift that is noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. It is the ability to view life situations with a spiritual rather than a carnal eye. It is difficult to walk in the dark because it is difficult to see. With the carnal eye we see people, but when we discern we see the spirit within them. Those who see things spiritually see well when no one else can see anything of value, but they can also see in what appears to be good. So Paul first says, "See" with a spiritual eye so that we might walk right.

THEN: The Greek word "then" (Oun) means "therefore" or to take into consideration the preceding. What Preceded verse 15 was Paul's warning to believers about what they should stay away from. Beginning at verse three he lists whoremongering, filthy talking, and generally acting in ways that are not becoming of Saints as being frowned upon. Believers are the only bible that some read, thus their actions or failure

to act reflects on the faith.

THAT: The Greek word for "that" (Pos) means "in what way." It means "what, how, and why." It challenges believers to consider what we do and say, how we say it and do it and why. Each believer is called upon to consider the how, what and why of all of our actions because they comprise the nature of our life in Christ.

WALK: The Greek word for "walk" (Peripateo) means "to be occupied." It also means how one moves and regulates himself. Our walk in life does not refer to literal steps but to the way we occupy and direct the course of our daily lives. Are we occupied in pursuits that would please God? Are we regulated by him or are we out of control? Paul told the Ephesians that we should strive to be occupied doing what God wants us to do, always regulated and directed by the Holy Spirit.

CIRCUMSPECTLY: The Greek word for "Circumspectly" (Akribos) means "exactly, diligently or accurately." The person who is circumspect attempts to do things according to the will of God. His desire is to accurately depict the spirit of the kingdom of God and to diligently work to bring it about.

FOOLS: The Greek word for "fools" (Asophos)means being unwise. Being unwise is not a measure of intelligence, but a measure of how intelligence is used. The unwise person knows that a certain practice or relationship is dangerous for them but their intelligence cannot translate what he knows into wise acts. When we act unwisely we become fools. The entire book of Proverbs as well as other biblical accounts warns believer repeatedly to distance themselves from fools because their unwise actions will affect them ultimately.

WISE: The Greek word for "wise" (Sophos) means to "formulate the best plan and execute the best action. The wise person considers all options then takes the best route, even though it may not be the most popular or the easiest route.

Taken collectively, Paul's words to the Ephesians say, "View life with a spiritual eye that discerns beneath the surface of what we see and experience, so that we might see clearly where we are going, avoiding sinful activities as we strive to accurately reflect the Christian lifestyle in a way that shows wisdom rather than foolish living."

Walking the Right Road

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who walk the right road are on their way to glory.

Jesus told his disciples that his teachings would not be easy, or popular, but they would be demanding because the majority of people will shun you because of your commitment to him. You will travel a road where only a few will go.

But yet Jesus encourages us to enter into the strait gate! Walk the road traveled only by a few.

We should not be discouraged by the loneliness of the walk. For although there are few travelers, it is a walk that was started by Jesus himself.

As the trailblazer of our salvation, Jesus blazed a trail that was followed closely by his 12 disciples so much so that it became clearly recognizable.

The early church, growing by the thousands, walked that narrow trail until it grew

into a rugged, but rocky road.

There are many who have walked the road in the past, but the travelers of this generation are still being called upon to enter in the strait gate. The road to destruction is wide. It is no longer a trail, but has become a super highway.

It is traveled by some of our class mates, sorors, frat brothers and club members. It is traveled by some of our political allies, bosom buddies and even some of our church members.

But this road is an ungodly road...and it leads to destruction.

This road leads to drinking and gambling in all of its varied forms.

This road leads to hatred, envy, and evil conversations.

This road leads to sexual infidelities and all forms of ungodliness.

But children of God is encouraged to keep their hands wrapped in the winding chain and to walk the road to Glory.

Although the road might get a little rough we are encouraged to walk on.

Walk On! Though tear drops cloud our eyes.

Walk On! Though disappointments place stumbling blocks in our way.

Walk on! With hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone!

There are three roads that we must walk before we get to glory.

First, we must walk the ROAD TO DAMASCUS. Saul found God on the Damascus Road when he had a conversion experience with the Lord.

The Damascus road is the road you travel when you give your life to Christ.

The Damascus road is the road you travel when the Spirit of the Lord fills you for the first time.

On the Damascus road the Lord gives you a new experience, a new song to sing, and a new testimony.

Travelers on the Damascus road sing, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me."

There is another road we must travel and it's the JERICHO ROAD.
Jesus said it's not good enough just for us to be saved and filled with the spirit...but we must walk the Road to service to our fellow man.

He told the parable of the good Samaritan to point out to us that our obligation is not just to our own, but to go out into the highways and byways and show God's love to all those we find.

When we travel the Jericho road we ask not for "whom the bell tolls" for we know it tolls for the least of these it tolls for us.

When we travel the Jericho road we show the love of Christ when we help a hungry child, give shelter to a homeless stranger, or provide comfort for those who are in despair.

I heard a songwriter say, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain, If I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain."

There is another road, and it's the road to Calvary.

No matter how many others that we help we must continue to show lost sinners the road to Calvary.

We must tell the word that a living God came and died and arose on the third day.

We must tell them that the journey toward forgiveness begins with a walk on the road to Calvary.

Tell them Jesus died on Calvary that they might have life.

The road to Calvary puts out feet on the road to the New Jerusalem.

Every child of God should be on his way to the New Jerusalem.

I hear David say, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for though art with me."

I'm on my way to the Canaan Land!

The road gets rough and the going gets tough and the hills are so hard to climb...I started out a long time ago, there is no doubt in my mind I've decided to make Jesus my choice.

No. 9048-Deacon's Ordination

Your Title is On Your Towel

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 8, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. John 13:4-5; "He that would be chief among you, let him be servant." Matthew 20:27***

Introduction

How many sets of towels are there in your home? Most families have at least two sets of towels in their homes. Depending on family size, there could be as many as 10 or 15 sets of towels in a home. Generally, a towel set includes a bath towel, wash cloth, and a hand towel. They are usually beautifully decorated and come in all sizes and colors. Some towels are fluffy and soft, others are see-through thin. Some are very expensive or some are bargain brands. No matter how many sets of towels a family has, there is probably one or two sets they get used more than others. Many people use, wash and reuse the same towel for years until we finally retire it to join other retirees that are generally used to wash the car.

While there are a few towels in our homes that are pretty and decorative, most towels, whether they are cloth or paper, are designed to be used. They have a job to do. Whether they are soft and fluffy or thin and see-through, they have a job to do. The nature of the towel is to be of use and service.

If we think about it, every believer is like a good towel. We too are designed with a purpose and have a job to do. Sometimes, like the decorative towels that hang in our bathrooms for guests to see, we just hang around and look pretty. Most of the time, however, we are a little ragged around the edges because we do what towels doâ•¦we serve.

The best towel is the one that gets the job done. It can be ugly or cheap, but it's a good towel if it gets the job done. Even a good towel is no good if it can't be used because it's just for show. A good rule of thumb is: If the towel can't be used, then take it off the rack!

As believers we are called upon to be servants in the kingdom of God. The highest honor of every believer, especially those who lead, is to be called a servant. When the Lord returns, we expect him to reward us with the words, "Servant, well done."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives an example to his disciples about the nature of service in the kingdom of God. It comes on the night of the last supper. With all of his disciples surrounding, him Jesus makes one final attempt to get his disciples to understand the meaning of service in the kingdom of God. Just a short while earlier two of his disciples came to him requesting to sit on his right hand and his left hand when the kingdom of God became a reality. The two, James and John, desired to have high positions in the new kingdom. They sought to ensure themselves a position of power and influence in the kingdom by securing a promise from Jesus that once the kingdom of God was in place that they would have the highest positions. Their desire was to be great. Jesus rebuked them by letting them know that greatness in the kingdom of God was not the same as greatness among men. His words to them were simple, "he that would be great among you let him be your servant."

When he dealt with James and John Jesus gave an example, but in this text instead of simply having an example Jesus decided to show his disciples an example of what he meant my greatness in the kingdom of God. As all the disciples were gathered for the last time, Jesus stripped himself of his garments took a towel and wrapped it around himself; took another towel, and a basin or water and began to wash the feet of his disciples. As Peter watched Jesus wash the feet of his disciples he refused. As he saw the man he had come to accept as the son of God kneeling down with a towel and a pan of water washing the feet of his comrades, it seemed a very humiliating picture. When Jesus came to Peter, Peter's response was to say to him that he would not be allowed to wash his feet. And Jesus responded by saying that if Peter refused to allow him to wash his feet then he would have no part in the kingdom of heaven. At that, Peter responded that he wanted the Lord to wash him all over.

The purpose of the illustration was to show the disciples how to acquire real greatness in the kingdom of God. The illustration that Jesus gave also pointed out the importance of humility in the service. If the son of God himself could bow on his knees and wash the feet of his friends then certainly those who chose to follow him could be expected to do the exact same thing. In no uncertain terms Jesus made it very clear that in the kingdom of God those who wear a title acquire the title through their use of the towel.

As his ministry came to a close Jesus gave his disciples instructions about the nature of their contributions to the kingdom of God. In a similar sense, deacons in the church receive a similar charge, "He that would be greatest among you let him be your servant."

In Matthew 20:27 the word used for servant means slave, bondsman or a person who gives himself up to another's will. There is one word in the New Testament that is always closely associated with descriptions of the leaders; that word is "Diakonos" which means "one who executes the command of another." In the King James version of the bible the word "Diakonos" has been translated to mean one of three English words, "Servant, Minister or Deacon."

In modern times two of the words: minister and deacon have become titles by

common use, while servant has been relegated to a lower status. In our sexual bias, we have associated the words "deacon and minister" to men and the seemingly empty description of "servant" to women. Yet, the Greek makes no such distinction. The same word, "Diakonos" that described Phebe as a "servant" in Romans 16:1 is used in 1 Timothy 3:10 to describe the office of deacon. In Matthew 20:26 Jesus uses the word "minister" to describe those who would be truly great, but when we strip away the English translation and look at the original Greek, we get the word "Diakonos" or servant. Whether it referred to a man or a woman, diakonos, meant "one who carries out the will of another."

In the Kingdom of God, greatness is not determined by the title one wears because they are superficial. When we strip away the titles we get to what really counts, the "diakonos" or the service. The emphasis in each of the three ways the word diakonos is translated is upon service to others. Whether the person is called: minister, deacon or just plain servant, they all mean the same thing because greatness is not in the title but on the use of the towel.

Three Towels

The responsibility of every deacon can be summarized by a set of towels, each of which represents an approach-attitude which will be necessary for the fulfillment of their charge.

FACE TOWEL: Face towels are usually used in personal grooming. It's what each person uses to wipe away uncleanliness from their own person and a make themselves presentable to the public. Every deacon needs his own face towel. This emphasizes the importance of deacons keeping their own spiritual lives in check. Deacons constantly monitor their own family life, their own spirituality, and their own relationship with God so they may be able to present themselves faultless before the throne of grace. The deacon is a perpetual student of the scriptures. He or she takes the words of 2Timothy 2:15 to heart, "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, but rightly dividing the words of truth." James 1:23-27 says each person should stand before the mirror of God's word and examine himself and make corrections if what he sees does not measure up to God's expectations. The title of deacon is empty and meaningless if the lifestyle associated with the title doesn't match. The deacon who doesn't study, pray, worship, or present himself as one close to God is one who has a title but has no towel. The good deacon begins with the face towel, securing his own spirituality as he prepares to serve others. The title is on the towel.

CRYING TOWEL: There is a small portable towel that many carry with them every day is called a handkerchief. Often a handkerchief is used to wipe away stains. They are also used to wipe away tears. The deaconâ•™s ministry sometimes can be very frustrating as it appears that people are not very receptive, yet deacons must wash away their tears and frustrations and serve anyway. A popular poem puts it this way:

People are often unreasonable, illogical,
and self-centered; Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish,
ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some false friends
and some true enemies; Succeed anyway.
If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.
What you spend years building, someone
could destroy overnight; Build anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness,
they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.
The good you do today, people will
often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.
Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give the world the best you've got anyway.
You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.

So, use your crying towel to wipe away the frustrations that may come in your heart. The good deacon serves out of humility and love for God, not for the accolades of the public. The deacon's title is not in the position; the title is on the towel.

DISH TOWEL: Contrary to popular belief a person who becomes a Deacon is not one who is called to be a decorative towel; one that looks pretty but is never to be used for fear of getting dirty. The best deacons are really dish towels. Dish towels come into service after the celebration is over and the company is gone. The dish towel comes in contact with the dirt and grime of life and life's leftovers. Jesus said, "ye are the salt of the earth" implying that true servants must come in contact with tasteless elements of life and bring flavor and meaning.

The deacon touches people at their point of need and spends considerable time working with them, helping them clean up their act, and washing them with hope and inspiration. There are many homes that have used the same dish rag for so long that they have become "holy" towels because there are so many holes in them. They are reluctant to throw that old dishrag away because it somehow cleans the dishes just right. As deacons minister to members of a congregation the start with a title, but after they have visited the sick, helped resolve family problems, prayed for the frightened and otherwise responded to the needs of those in trouble, they become "holy" towels. No longer Brother Jones or Sister Smith, they suddenly become "Deacon" Jones and â•œDeaconâ•• Smith because their service has made them "holy" in the eyes of the membership.

Some dish towels do the washing, others are called dry towels, because they absorb the moisture from dishes. Some deacons are good at that, they listen and absorb and feel our pain. Many members have found that they feel better after talking to their favorite deacon who took the time to listen to their family trouble, absorb it

and not wring it out for the world to see. Not only do many people have dish towels that are holy, there are many who have dry towels that are holy too. Deacons become special men and women in the sight of those whom they serve when their towel is used so much that they become holy. That's when it is clear that the title is on the towel.

Help Lift Him Up

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the function of the deacon is to assist the Pastor as he lifts Jesus up.

The good deacon contributes to the spirituality of worship and helps create an atmosphere in which the people can see and feel the presence of God.

The good deacon has a responsibility both to the pew and the pulpit. The responsibility to the pew is to promote spirituality and provide individual service. The responsibility to the pulpit is to promote protect and provide for the Pastor.

His obligation to his pastor is to promote the vision that God has given him for the congregation. He should use all of his resources to help explain it, teach it, encourage it and implement it.

His allegiance to his pastor also requires him to protect his pastor. The deacon, through his personal and private consultations, advises his pastor in matters that will protect him from harm. He protects the pastor's reputation by defending him against untrue accusations, insults, and malicious attacks.

Finally, his obligation is to provide for his pastor. The deacon's allegiance to his pastor motivates him to insure that the pastor has what it takes to take care of his family, and to represent the church in the community and the assembly of the Saints.

When a good deacon does his job well the people are able to see Jesus.

When a deacon does his job well he becomes a sweat towel. One who labors in the morning and prays at night for the betterment of the church.

A good deacon is a man or woman of spiritual cloth. A cloth towel is better than a paper towel. Paper towels are temporary and good for light jobs, but can't be used but once. A good cloth towel can be washed, dried and used again.

A good deacon has been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb, and is ready to serve over and over again!

A good deacon is not a beach towel that is good for laying around and chilling out. A good deacon is like a hand towel, that is always close by and ready to serve.

That's what the prophet meant when he declared, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!"

If the Lord needs somebody to help minister to the lonely, here am I send me!

If the Lord needs somebody to offer prayer for those in distress, here am I send me!

If the Lord needs somebody to shout hallelujah and say Amen, "Here am I send me!"

If the Lord needs somebody to tell the world about Jesus, â•œHere am I, send me!"

When it's all over the true value of a deacon will be whether his service helped us to see Jesus!

When we are lonely, the good deacon, helps us know that Jesus is a comforter in our lonely hour

When we are sick, the good deacon, encourages us to never give up hope because Jesus is a doctor in our sickroom!

When we are in trouble and can't see our way, the good deacon reminds us that Jesus can make a way out of no way!

When we are lost, the good deacon reminds us that Jesus is the way the truth and the light!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

If you want to be a good deacon.

Help us lift him up!

No. 9049-Inspiration

What to do in an Emergency

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 29, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. Psalm 27:5***

Introduction

Have you ever been in a threatening situation that required a quick response on your behalf? Whether we are young or old, most of us have faced an emergency situation at one time or another. Such situations required quick responses on our behalf or there would have been considerable loss of life limb or property. When a person has faced an injury from an accident or some other source, quick action is required. Knowing what to do in emergency situations can often be the difference between life and death.

The circumstances that prompt emergency situations vary from the major to the minor. Emergency situations can arise from something as simple as tripping over an item and falling down a flight of stairs to an airplane crash. Each situation can introduce variables that can result in emergencies that require immediate attention. Every spirit of endeavor has its emergencies. There are financial emergencies; medical emergencies; as well as social and political emergencies. There are generally five situations that require immediate assistance as it relates to human health. Generally, these cases involve stopped breathing, no heart beat, severe bleeding, choking, and poisoning. Sometimes an emergency situation will not result in a loss of life, bleeding or choking , but it can introduce unfavorable result if not attended. That's what happens when nature calls and the words of the commercial become a reality, "Gotta go, gotta go, gotta go right now." Now that's an emergency!

Those who are called on to respond in emergency situations must do three things: stay calm, take action and get help.

We know what to do when there is a fire. Instinctively we also know what to do when there is a flood or natural disaster. But what do we do when there is a spiritual emergency? What do we do when our spiritual lives are in danger and we need an emergency response? Saints spend most of their lives preparing for such emergencies. We study the Bible, worship and praise God and learn what to do when emergencies arise. The response for the Christian in a spiritual emergency is the same as it would be in a natural disaster. When we face a spiritual emergency we should stay calm and remain confident that God is in control.

As Christians, we are confident that no matter what the situation, the God we serve is able to deliver us. We do not panic in emergency situations; we do what we must and when we've done all we know how to do, we know how call for help!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains his confidence that God would readily be available to help him in times of an emergency.

Perhaps more than any other Old Testament character, David was familiar with emergency situations. His entire life, at some point or another, seemed to be either a major or minor emergency. As a child he attended the flocks of his father and was faced with emergency situations repeatedly. Wild animals such as lions and bears came to attack his sheep, David responded to each instance by staying calm and taking control. Even when he faced the giant Goliath, David knew what to do in an emergency situation. His life was in imminent danger, yet he displayed confidence. As a musician for King Saul his life was often threatened as the King threw his spear at him in rages of jealousy. As a hunted out law he was repeatedly surrounded by the armies of King Saul and faced life-threatening circumstances in every circumstance. David remained calm, did what was necessary, and always called on God.

In the 27th Psalm David demonstrates two aspects of his emergency preparedness plan. The first aspect of his plan was to trust in God. His statement of trust was, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." That statement was an affirmation of his belief that God was in control of every circumstance, every situation and every emergency. The second aspect of David's plan prompted him to take whatever action that was necessary to correct a situation that was within his power. In some instances, David was the instrument of forgiveness and compassion such as the time when he entered into a cave and had an opportunity to slay the sleeping Saul but did not do so he could show a compassionate spirit toward his adversary. In other cases it was necessary to correct himself that he might be able to act quickly to resolve a national dilemma. That's what happened in the 51st Psalm when David declared, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." David also knew how to call for help. In the 121st Psalm David made a declaration and plea for help when he said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who maketh the heaven and earth."

Whatever the situation David seemed prepared to respond. He was confident in God, knew what to do, and knew how to call for help.

Confidence in God

The most salient characteristic of the Christian experience is faith and trust in God. Confidence and faith in God sustains believers in difficult and tough times. Without trust in God believers would be unable to survive the treacherous times in which they live. The confidence of the secure believer inspires hope in others. In difficult times

it is this feeling of confidence that inspires the believer to say "all is well." Even when those around them are panicking believers are able to stand boldly, assured that God is still on the throne and still hears and answers prayers. Such confidence inspires believers to sing the words of the songwriter, "The Lord will make a way somehow." When Israel stood at the Red Sea with pharaoh's armies behind them and the Red Sea in front of them there were many people who recognized they were in an emergency situation. Many people panicked. They complained against God and also complained against Moses. It was Moses who stood on the bank of the Red Sea and said to the people, "Stand stilll and see the salvation of the Lord."

In a similar sense, modern-day warriors also stand firm in the face of a dangerous time, confident that God will make a way out of no way. Our confidence is based on the fact that God has actually moved and acted in our lives. He has made ways for us. He has opened doors for us and made a way out of no way. Thus, in dangerous times we act in confidence because we know that our God is able. The confidence we display inspires all those who see us move with less fear and apprehension. Those who are less likely to be strong in dangerous and emergency situations draw strength from those who appear to be in control because they act in faith. Their faith cheers us. Their faith makes us bold. Their faith calms our fears. Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you."

Take action in faith

In an emergency situation confidence alone is not enough. Confidence must be followed by direct action. In a first aid situation the person who provides the first aide is simply giving first and needed care until the services of a doctor can be acquired. The first aide we provide is not the ultimate solution but is a temporary action designed to bring a dangerous situation under control until a higher power takes over. A person who has lost hope and has given up on life is in an emergency situation. We may counsel with that person, pray with them and encouraged them in that moment of weakness but our action is an emergency response not a permanent solution. The permanent solution is for the person to find hope in the hands of a loving God. We may console a friend was lost a loved one and is bordering depression but our response is only an emergency response not a permanent solution. Our friend can only be comforted by a power higher than ourselves. Yet, while our response is temporary in nature it is just as necessary as the response of a paramedic in an emergency call; it keeps them going until they are in more capable hands.

To responsibly respond to an emergency situation each first aid care giver must be prepared to respond. A little advanced training helps out a whole lot. When people face emergency situations, sometimes they are helped if someone who is confident and in control prays for them. In an emergency, sometimes people do many other things but they forget to pray. The confident believer usually finds a quiet way to reinstate hope in a person who is in a dangerous situation by leading them in prayer. When the apostles found themselves in a dangerous situation and were locked away

in a jail cell they decided that it was a perfect opportunity for them to pray. There, in the middle of the night, they prayed and God answered their prayer.

When things are going wrong in the family, that's an emergency situation, it's a good time to pray.

When we face unemployment and don't know exactly how ends will meet, that's an emergency situation; it's a good time to pray.

When we face long-term sicknesses and life-threatening ailments which elude modern medical cures; it's a good time to pray.

When we make mistakes that may cost us opportunities, fortunes or careers as a result of our blunder that's an emergency situation; it's a good time to pray.

To respond to emergency situations we need to be prepared. Out preparation should include how to pray and it should include the knowledge of what God has done for others. When we face emergency situations where household funds seem to be low and there's nowhere to go, we should know from our preparation how God took the widow whose barrel was almost empty and kept it from running dry.

When we face emergency situations where we are threatened because of our ideas and beliefs, we should know from our preparation how God stood behind Daniel and the three Hebrew boys even in the face of the threat of the Lions Den and the fiery furnace.

When we face situations where it looks like the tears will never cease to fall and we cry all night long, that's when we remember from our preparation how the word of God says, "Weeping endures of the night but joy comes in the morning."

When we face situations where it appears that God will not hear our prayer and has abandoned us, that's when we remember from our preparation the words of the old hymn, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I've tried him for myself."

When we reach an emergency situation we should be prepared, and know how to pray!

Call for help

Finally, brothers and sisters, in emergency situations, everyone should do what you know how to do, but always call for help.

Most cities have emergency response systems in place that responds to community calls for help. A citizen who calls the fire department expects a team of firefighters to arrive in minutes to help put out a fire. When our lives or property is in danger we call the police department because they are trained to handle dangerous situations. When there is a medical emergency we call for an ambulance with hopes that the emergency response team can get us to a hospital in time.

There was a time when homes prepared for emergency by posting the phone numbers to the fire department to ambulance and the police department a prominent places near telephones around the house. Today, most homes only use one number-911. When we call that number we get help from everywhere. The 911 operator always speaks to you in a calm voice, tells you what to do, then sends help. If you don't know where you are, your address flashes on the screen.

God has his own emergency response system. In case of emergencies we can dial 1-1-1, one for the father, one for the son and one for the Holy Ghost. All we need to say is "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know; if thou withdraw thyself from me whether shall I go?"

We don't have to give an address because the word says in Psalm 139, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me."

Nearly everywhere you go there are things that remind us what to do in emergency situations. There are signs on the walls and notes on the labels of cans and packages. They are written in English and Spanish, with pictures for those who cannot read and Braille for those who cannot see.

If you are riding an elevator you may see a sign that reads: " In case of fire do not use the elevator, use the stairs." The elevator give us a quick way up and a quick way down, but in an emergency an elevator is not dependable because it may get stuck or the cable may break. Maybe that's why there is no elevator to heaven but there is a stairway to Heaven. Jacob said he saw that stairway to Heaven with Angels ascending and descending. We are climbing Jacob's ladder and every round goes higher and higher.

If you go to a theatre, you will see rows of little lights on the floor. They are not for decorations, but they show you the way out in case of emergency. No wonder the scripture declared, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

Many senior citizens who live alone wear an emergency bracelet. When they fall on the floor or can't move themselves they just push the button and say, "Help, I' have fallen and I can't get up!" The prodigal son must have worn an emergency bracelet. There, standing by the pig sty he declared, "Help I've fallen and I can't get up!"

In every car, invisible to the eye, hidden behind the dashboard and inside the steering wheel is an emergency device called an air bag. In an emergency situation it instantly inflates and forms a cushion all around us to protect us from colliding forces. No wonder the word of God has shown us that God builds a hedge around the righteous to protect them in from dangers seen and unseen. David said, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me

Every public building is prepared for emergency situations. They are equipped with smoke detectors, sprinkling systems and fire extinguishers. It's the same for spiritual warriors too. When the Three Hebrew Boys were in the Fiery furnace one of the must of read the spiritual sign that says, "In case of fire..call on the Lord!" They didn't needed the sprinkling system, the fire extinguisher was never used and the smoke detector couldn't detect any smoke because there was a fourth man in the fire.

In case of an emergency, we should read instructions some cleaning fluids in your cabinet, "in case of ingestion, do not induce vomiting, call the poison control center."

In case of emergency don't try to take matters into your own hand! Call Jesus!

Jesus, our shelter in a time of storm!

Jesus, our rock in a weary land!

Jesus, our bridge over troubling water!

Jesus, who died for us out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in hands! In case of emergency, call on Jesus!

No. 9050-Inspiration

Punctuation Marks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 13, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way." Psalm 37:23***

Introduction

Have you ever read a letter or document that wasn't punctuated properly? Did it have questions without question marks? Did it show great emotion at points without exclamation points? Were there commas missing or semi-colons used where colons should have been? Such a letter can be read, but we can often miss the meaning if the punctuation is misplaced or is not placed at all. If you were asked to choose a punctuation mark that best describes your spiritual life, what would it be? When we read or write, punctuation marks give us clues about the mood, tone and state of mind of the subject matter displayed or discussed. When we see periods we dropped the inflection of our voice and stop. When we see question marks, we raise the inflection of our voice indicating uncertainty. An exclamation point indicates excitement while a comma indicates a pause. The believer's life is best described not by a single punctuation mark, but by several which, in combination, demonstrate a life correctly punctuated for the Lord.

One of the great challenges of biblical translators was to translate the words of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the bible into English in a way that would help the modern reader understand the tone, mood and power of God's word. What made it difficult is the fact that neither the Hebrew or Greek text had any punctuation marks. There were no commas. There were no semi-colons, periods or even paragraphs to indicate when one thought ended and another began. Trying to understand the word of God became a prayerful labor of love that required the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There are many people we meet in life whose lives seem to lack punctuation. We can't figure them out. We can't tell when one point of their lives begins and the other ends. Like a run on sentence, their Christian life runs on into a worldly side of them that pops up without notice. We can't figure them out. They are like question marks! They run on and on without commas or periods that indicate order and organization. Making matters worse, they even have trouble deciphering their own lives.

A life without proper punctuation is confused and frustrated. A life punctuated by the spirit of God is just the opposite because it has meaning, definition, and excitement, all provided by a God who provides the key to our ultimate happiness.

As Christians, we are proud that God has given meaning to our lives by answering life's big questions and showing us the true purpose and meaning of life.

Exposition

This text focuses on David's reminder to believers that God orders and gives meaning to their lives so that he is pleased with the result.

The text comes as David explores the frustrations of believers who are troubled by the apparent success of those who do not choose to be faithful to God. The search for meaning and importance in the life of a believer is a central theme of the 37th psalm as David points out that the unrighteous may at times appear to succeed but will ultimately have their day of reckoning. David's answer to that frustration was to assert that God orders the steps and the lives of those who are faithful to him and put their trust in him.

David said two important things in the 37th psalm and verse 23. First he said, "The steps of a good man are ordered." The reference to "man" is gender neutral in the sense that the phrase "man" can refer to both a man or a woman. The steps mentioned in the text refer to the usual, daily, and regular routine of those who strive to do that which is right in the eyesight of God. The steps refer to the incidents of our lives. These are the high moments and low moments. These are the days of excitement, thrills and joys as well as the days of struggle and trial. The steps are not ordered by God in the sense that they are commanded by him. They are ordered by God in the sense that he arranges them for us in such a way that we are able to understand, appreciate and gleaned from each day its fullest meaning. In this sense, God punctuates the daily routines of our lives in a way that causes us to pause at the right places, stop when we should, and get answers to the right questions.

The second part of the verse says, "and he delighted in his way." At first glance it appears that this verse refers to the good man or the good woman. It appears that God orders the life of each individual and the individual is pleased with what God has done. However, the verse more likely suggests that God is pleased by the individual who allows his life to be ordered by God. The emphasis of the text is not upon an individual who helplessly allows God to mold him and shape him against his will, but on an individual who pleases God because he freely allows God to shape him in a way that pleases the almight. God delights in the correctly punctuated life. It has meaning, order and a sense of divine purpose that pleases him.

The believer who seeks the ordered life is the believer who says to God, "order my steps" in a way that pleases you, "I submit myself to your will."

Punctuation Marks God Uses

God uses a variety of punctuation marks or our lives in ways that will be pleasing to him among those punctuation marks that he uses are:

—QUESTION MARKS: Life poses many situations which raise questions in our

mind. For David the question was why do the ungodly seem to prosper while the godly seem to suffer? For Job the question was, "Why the righteous seem to suffer when they have done apparently no wrong?" Every life seems to be filled with one question or another. Usually the questions come in our lives when we meet trying and frustrating moments. Death brings questions. Sickness brings questions. Failure brings questions. Questions are a part of the believer's experience. They are not out of place neither do they suggest any disrespect or lack of faith in God. Some of God's best have asked questions. The prophet Malachi asked the question, "Will a man rob God?" Even Jesus on the cross asked "why hast thou forsaken me?" When believers have questions we are compelled to turn to God for the answers. Only God can give us the assurances that we need and the answers to the interrogatives that trouble us. Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he said "where can I go but to the Lord?"

—PERIODS. Periods provide a notation of finality. Whenever there is a period at the end of the sentence we know that a complete statement has been made. In the same since periods have a sense of closing Does not lives. A life is Miss punctuated often we placed question marks where we should put periods. We asked questions on label or what troubles instead of closing that chapter of our lives. We focus on why he did this and why she did that instead of placing a period and closing that chapter and moving on. They are many believers today who still maintain open files on their past. They have difficulty closing out their old lives as they watch the old and the new collide in run on sentences that only cause confusion and misunderstanding. When Moses left Egypt he put a period after the 40 years that he spent as a Prince of Egypt in pharaoh's court. If he had tried to continue he would not have been the ambassador for God that he turned out to be in the last phase of his life. Failed marriages, failed relationships, and failed experiences have caused many people considerable hardship simply because they could not put a period on that chapter of their lives and move on. We thank God for the periods in our lives that help us to close one episode of our lives and move to something new.

—COMMAS: Commas separate components and indicate a slight pause, in the sentence. When we get to a comma, the sentence is not over. We slow down for a bit but we continue. When God punctuates our lives sometimes he inserts commas to force us to pause, slow down and reflect. He does not bring that episode of our lives to an end, but he just wants us to pause. When we are going too fast, sometimes he has to force us to pause. When we refuse to take a break, he has to force us to pause. The forced pauses are those times in our lives when God inserts commas that do not bring us to an abrupt halt but do slow us down long enough to make it to the end. The "ordered" steps of a good man are those steps which have periods, commas and question marks in all of the right places.

—COLONS: Colons suggest that a series or a list is about to begin. When we see a colon we get ready for one action to follow another. The colon is the warning. So it is in the believer's life. Sometimes difficulties and blessing come in rapid succession. There are days when everything seems to go right and one good thing happens right behind the other. Then there are those days when everything that can

go wrong does just that. Appliances break, cars won't start, keys are lost, and the succession seems to never end. Colons warn us that these are expected. When Jesus spoke to his disciples he placed a colon in their understanding of world events by saying they should expect to hear of wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, fathers against sons, and mothers against daughters; these would be the beginning of sorrows. It was a listing or series of events that was given as a warning. Sometimes God gives us warnings and signals of what is to come. Without the colons we are not prepared for the series that eventually comes. The life that is ordered is forewarned and prepared for whatever comes and is able to say, "It is well with my soul."

—APOSTROPHIES: As a general rule, apostrophes are used to indicate ownership or to join two words in a contraction. They are important because they let us know when ownership is claimed and when it is not. A believer's life is punctuated in ways that shows those things which God accurately calls his own. Once, Jesus was shown a coin and asked whether it was lawful to pay taxes. Jesus answered by saying, "Render unto Ceasar the things that are Caesar's and render unto God the things that are God's." The believer's life is filled with apostrophes because he realizes that everything he has belongs to God. It is God's car, God's house, and God's money, on loan to us. A properly punctuated life recognizes the ownership of God and respects David's claim that, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." We recognize that God holds the universe in hands and owns everything in it.

Exclamation Points

Finally, brothers and Sisters, while God punctuates our lives with question marks, commas, periods and colons, he also gives us exclamation points!

The Exclamation point is a vertical line underscored by a dot. It signifies some dynamic, powerful and enthusiastic interjection.

Exclamation Points are reserved for life's strong points and profound accomplishments that excite the spirit and set our hearts on fire.

Exclamation points in prose are used sparingly, but the believer's life is sprinkled with exclamation points. The exclamation point marks the moment in a believer's life when he has something to shout about!

While the King James version of the bible has many periods, question marks, colons, commas and apostrophes, there is one thing missing from the King James version of the bible, there are very few if any exclamation points!

You would think that when David killed Goliath and the women began to sing Saul has killed his thousands but David has killed his ten thousands," that such a deed would have included an exclamation point!

You would think that when Moses stood on the bank of the Red Sea and declared, "Stand Still and see the salvation of the Lord," that such a dramatic moment would have included an exclamation point!

You would think that when Daniel arose from the Lion's den without a scratch

on his body, that such an accomplishment would have merited an exclamation point!

You would think that when the Three Hebrew Boys came forth from the fiery furnace without a single trace of smoke on their bodies that such a task would have mandated an exclamation!

You would think that when the woman at the well ran through the city saying, "Come see a man that told me all I've ever done," that such a moment of excitement would have been followed by an exclamation point.

Exclamation points in our lives are self defined. They define those special moments when God has given us something to shout about. One man cannot look at another man and determine where the exclamation points should be.

Some people have lives that seem to be filled with exclamation points. They always have something to shout about.

They see the sun rising in the morning and going down in the evening; that gives them something to shout about!

They see a few neck bones in a bowl, a slice of piping hot corn bread with a mess of fresh picked greens and that gives them something to shout about!

They turn the ignition of their brand new car and start clapping their hands and praising God! It may not seem like a big thing to some people but the man whose had nothing but old jalopies that never started gets excited when he finally gets a car that starts! It's something to shout about!

I can't tell you where to place the explanation points in your life. You can't tell me where the shouts go!

You don't know like I know, what the Lord has done for me! You don't know, you "wasn't" there, you don't know when and you don't know where. You don't know what the Lord has done for me!

When Jesus came to the world he gave everybody something to shout about!

When he healed the sick and raised the dead he gave everybody something to shout about!

When he died out on Calvary and arose Early Sunday morning....He gave the world something to shout about!

No. 9051-Anniv.-Church

What City is This?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 20, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2***

Introduction

Have you ever traveled the highways and found yourself in unfamiliar surroundings? Those who travel are familiar with such moments. Those were the times when you dozed off in the back seat only to awaken and find yourself in an unknown place. After quickly scanning the landscape for a recognizable landmark or sign post without much success, we sometimes ask, "What city is this?"

Cities are defined by their citizens, culture and heritage. They are usually recognized by their skylines and specialties. We recognize St. Louis by the Gateway Arch. We know we are in New Orleans when we see the Superdome. The Space Needle towers over Seattle just as the Eiffel Tower looms over Paris. Sometimes cities are defined by the people who live there. Large signs announce that the city is the home or birthplace of one personality or another. The signs help those who pass by to identify the city, set their bearings and continue in the right direction.

Every year magazines across the country print lists of the best cities in which to live. Safety, low crime, community, culture, entertainment, and economy are many of the factors that are used to determine whether the cities selected are truly the best cities. Major cities complete for these honorable mentions and promote themselves as a great place to live or the safest city or even the cleanest city.

While we have seen many cities in our experience, none that we have seen will be able to compare with the city God is preparing for his people. The word explains that, "Eye hath not seen" the greatness that God is preparing. The patriarch Abraham moved through out his region "Looking for a city." He never found what he was looking for as he moved from place to place. Paul wrote that believers have a place prepared from them, "not made with hands."

The City of God is such a lure to us that we sing about its coming. Dr. Isaac Watts wrote words that summed up our hope when he wrote: "Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known; Join in a song with sweet accord, Join in a song with sweet accord and thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne. We're marching to Zion, Beautiful, beautiful Zion; We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city

of God."

As believers, we live in this city, but we are looking for the city of God, the beautiful city of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he paints a picture of the coming city of God. The book of Revelation is a picture of hope for the believer. It gives us the snapshot of the events to expect in the last seven years of time. Its first three chapters provide encouragement and warnings to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Chapters four through 20 contain the vision of the events that will occur during the last seven years of the world as we know it. It provides pictures of the great White throne surrounded by 24 elders and a host of Angels and God himself who holds the book of judgment in his hand. John presents a vision of the final days of this earth when Satan will be bound and the millennium kingdom of Christ will be established for 1000 years. It also presents a picture of the coming Day of Judgment when the ungodly shall stand before God and receive their final sentence for the lives they live contrary to the will of God.

The final picture the Revelation presents is one on hold to the believer. John said he saw coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband, the city of God. This new city would be the capital in God's new creation of heaven and earth. What John saw was both the city and the population called the bride of Christ. This new city will be populated by all of the Old Testament believers, members of the church, and those who will come forth out of the great tribulation. This new city will be different from any city that anyone will have ever seen. It will truly be the city of God.

Who Will Live there?

When the city of God becomes a reality, we live there? The heavenly city will be a community of people who have fellowship with God. There will be no class distinctions with a rich sections and poor sections. There will be no racial distinctions with segregated sections for Blacks in one side, Whites in one side, Hispanics on another, and everybody else stuck in a corner.

The redeemed will live there. The people of God will be there. Every group of believers will be judged by the spiritual dispensation that governed them. Old Testament believers, judged by the Law of Moses and the spirit of godliness that existed before Moses, will be there. Members of the body of Christ, commonly called the church, will be there. Those who will come to accept Christ during the last seven years of tribulation and trouble will also be there. Combined, they will be called the "Bride of Christ."

Most importantly, God will be there. John heard a voice, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will

be with them and be their God" (3). That's the whole point of heaven, God is there.

The City's Light

One unique aspect of the City of God is that it will have no sun or moon to provide its light. On this earth we depend on the sun and moon for light but in the city of God the sun and the moon will no longer exist. Instead of receiving reflected light from a star, we will receive our light from God himself.

He shares much of that light with us today. His light brings understanding, peace and hope to a troubled world. We are reflectors of his light in the world. He's our light because he has brought to us a saving knowledge of God.

In the City of God the presence of God will radiate everywhere. There will be no light bulbs, florescent lamps, flood lights, flash lights, laser lamps, or even Christmas lights. We will live in a world where darkness in presence, thought or spirit will not exist. His glory will shine all around us, as we truly come to understand that Jesus is the light of the world.

The City's Size

In verse 16 John said the city was laid out like a square, 1500 miles in all directions. The city will have a wall that symbolically assures the inhabitants of safety and security. The thinking of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah said, "We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts" (26:1). Looking at the city more closely, John noticed that it had 12 foundations on which appeared the names of the 12 apostles. They were the founders of the faith and gave their lives to secure its blessing. In a similar sense, every church door opened today owes a debt of gratitude to its founders, men and women whose lives and dedication laid the foundation for what we know today. Their lives and contributions are seen as precious stones in the foundation of the City of God.

The city will have 12 gates that will never close. Verse 25 says, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." The gates, like the walls are for symbolic purposes only, they will never be closed. No doors will ever again be closed in our faces. No opportunities will ever again be denied us. No blessings will ever again be stolen from us. On the gates will be written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, for the City will be the dwelling place of the true Israel, the redeemed Church.

City's Life Source

In Chapter 22 John describes the city's life source. In verses 1 and 2 he says, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every

month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Adam and Eve had the Garden of Eden for their abundance and lost it, but the new city will have its own symbol abundance, the tree of life. It's described as bearing fruit 12 times, yielding its fruit every month and its leaves for the healing of the nations. That means the end of sickness. It means the end of cancer, AIDS, Sickle Cell Anemia, and Arthritis. All sickness and death will come to an end in the City of God.

What city is this?

Finally, brothers and sisters, the joy that believers share will be heightened when we make it to the city.

On our way to Zion we'll pass through many cities. Like Abraham, we are looking for a city that has foundations; a city that was made by the hands of God.
What city is this?

If the city has a hospital in it, we have not made it to the city. The city we are looking for will have no hospitals for there is a tree that sits in the middle of it that will bear 12 manner of fruit that will be good for the healing of the nations!

If the city has street lights in it, we have not made it to the city. The city we are looking for will have no street lights because the glory of the Lord will surround the day and night.

If the city has a cemetery in it, we have not made it to the city. The city we are looking will have no morticians, cemeteries or tombstones because death will be a thing of the past.

If the city has a police station, we have not made it to the city. The city we are looking for will have no laws to be broken because its citizens will be governed by the love of God.

What is this city? It's a city not made with hands!

Is it Babylon? Babylon was known for it hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the world but it was not a city made by the hands of God.

Is it Bethel? Bethel was a place where Jacob wrestled with an angel one night. It was not a city made by the hands of God.

Is it Bethlehem? Bethlehem was certainly an important city. It was the birth place of David and the birth place of Christ; but Bethlehem was not a city made by the hands of God.

What city is this? There is no place we know that equal its beauty and grandeur! New York City is the largest city in the United States, and is the center of world trade. Even its five boroughs that have combined to make the, "The big Apple" can't hold a candle to the City of God.

Although Denver is a city that sits a mile high in the mountains, with a mile high stadium, and is the place that makes most of the country's coins and holds large deposits of its gold, even Denver, cradled between the cliffs of the Rocky Mountains can't compare with city of God whose streets are paved with gold.

Even though Atlanta prides itself as the city too busy to hate and is the home of great names such as Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy and CNN, all of the pride

that Atlanta can muster cannot compare to the pride believers will have in the City of God.

Dallas has oil wells, football and basketball teams, universities and a huge number of millionaires but even the rich succulence of Dallas won't be able to compare with the City of God.

The music of New Orleans with its Cajun food, Mardi Gras parades and jazz music, will be no comparison to the good times that will roll when the Saint's go marching in the City of God.

Although Chicago sits snugly on the Chicago River as the 3rd largest city in the nation and boasts an historic history that includes being the home of the world's first skyscraper, it cannot compare with the City of God.

Los Angeles is known as the City of the Angels, and is praised as a city of sunshine, hope, and culture. But Los Angeles loses is luster when compared to the City of God that is filled with angels and won't need the sunshine because God is there!

What city is this?

Then John said, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth...and I saw the holycity New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

It's a city not made by the hands of men!

It's a city with not one foundation but 12 foundations!

It's a city with 12 pearly gates! Three gates to the North! Three gates to the South. Three gates to the East. Three gates to the West.

It's a big city that measures 1500 miles square, with more mansions than a thousand Beverly Hills. Jesus said, "In my father's house are many mansions if it were not so I would have told you."

What city is this? It's a city called heaven!

What city is this? Its streets are paved with gold!

What city is this? It's always howdy and never good-bye!

What city is this? Nobody in it wears eyeglasses, there are no wheel chairs and old folks homes!

What city is this? It's a land where we'll never grow old!

What city is this? It's the beautiful city of God!

Until I get there I'm going to keep telling the story about Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9052-Youth

When Generation X Meets Jesus

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 27, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, Selah." Psalm 24:6

Introduction

Are there any similarities between one generation and the next? During the late 60's and early 70's a strange thing started happening to young people. They started to distance themselves from their generation before them. Whatever their parents were for, they seemed to rebel against. They protested against the old ways and decided to live a life filled with, love, pot and sex. The sociologists called it a "Generation Gap." For the first time, on a national basis the young generation was rejecting the predefined standards of their parents and grandparents.

In 1991 Douglas Coupland wrote a book and coined a phrase. The book and the phrase was entitled, "Generation X." Coupland describes those individuals who were born in the period between 1961 and 1971 as those who generally resent the generation that came before them and blame them for the ills of the world. Coupland is also the author of another book which is entitled, "Life without God." In all of his books Mr. Coupland takes a cynical look at the postmodern society and comes to the conclusion that those born in the late sixties and after are the first generation of individuals in this country to live without God. This new generation that Coupland sees lives in a world where everyone makes their own rules, does whatever pleases them because each individual is believed to be his own universe, is his own god, and maps his own course.

The music of that generation reflected that idea in its infancy. Isaac Hayes wrote, "Do your thing" and the Isley Brothers, followed with, "It's your thing, do what you wanna do!" Free from the restraints imposed upon what they believed to be an absentee God, the generation promoted the idea that "If it feels good, do it." Time Magazine even promoted the idea on its front cover in April of 1966 by asking the question, "Is God dead?"

Generation X became the first generation to experiment with living a life without God.

While many in generation X attempted to live their lives without God, there were others who concluded that God was essential to life. However, they chose to modify their concept of God from being one who rules and controls to one who is a facilitator of the individual as he strives to "do his own thing." So, even though they still profess God they do so only to the extent that he is useful to accomplish their personal goals. A generation of BK believers evolved. BK or Burger King is known for its motto, "Have it your way" and the generation X believers became those who molded their belief in God to fit their way of life.

Thus, generation X rebelled against most of the teachings standards, customs and rules of the generation preceding them. If they were challenged about their apparent lack of godliness those of Generation X quickly responded that God wanted them to come "as you are." The inference is that God's role is to assist, promote, build and protect without constraining the individual with obsolete rules and biblical mandates. In this context, God had an obligation to individual believers but generation X felt its obligation to God only required an acknowledgment of God, occasional praise and a private sense of spirituality. Believers of generation X founded themselves a religious perspective in which God plays a part, but not a commanding role in their daily lives.

As each generation struggles with its own search for identity and relationship with God many might find Solomon's conclusion as their own. Solomon concluded after trying to live without God that the whole essence of life was to, "fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

As Christians, we are part of a special generation. The Bible calls it a chosen generation which is called out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he asks the question, "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?"

This text presents the majesty and grandeur of God. It raises the question of eligibility to stand in the presence of God. It presents life as a climb toward a spiritual level of maturity which will allow us to stand in the presence of God. Generation after generation has sought to make itself worthy to stand in God's presence. David presented a very simplistic formula for any believer to adhere to and then expect to be worthy to stand in the presence of God. In David's mind all that was required for a person to achieve perfection was that he had to have a clean heart, clean hands, and a morally straight life.

In the New Testament Jesus built upon the essential core morality that David gave as a basic foundation. Jesus taught that despite man's best effort he will never be able to achieve perfection on his own. The sinful nature of man causes one of the three essentials in David's formula to always lack something. Either our hands are not clean, our heart is impure, or our lifestyle is otherwise tainted. The New Testament teaches, "All have sinned" and fallen short of the expectations of God. In the context of the New Testament we cannot make ourselves pure or make our hands clean

enough to stand before God. Even at our best we are still just filthy rags. What each generation comes to learn is that we need Jesus to make us perfect enough, righteous enough, clean enough, and justified enough to stand in the presence of God.

David concluded in verse six that the generation that learns what it takes to stand in the presence of God is the generation that seeks God and searches to see God and know him in the beauty of his spirit. That happens when Generation X meets Jesus.

X-Box

The games of Generation X reflect the overall philosophy of the generation. The games the children play represent a child's version of the system and order they aspire to achieve. Whereas an older generation may have played games such as, "Mama may I?" or "Kick the can" the children of generation X find little interest in these games. "Mama may I?" Suggest following the rules and getting permission. The children of the x-generation prefer games where they are in control and make the rules rather than have to follow rules. Tapping into the psychology Microsoft developed a computerized set of games for the children of Generation X. It is called Xbox.

The Xbox is a Microsoft game station with all kinds of action games. The Sony Play Station is a competitor of XBox. The Play Station has some good games but are not as inspiring as those of the Xbox. Number one is "Sims - There goes the neighborhood." The sideline of this game says: "Now you control mom." Other games include: "Grand Theft Auto, Mortal Combat, Ghost Recon, Halo, Steel Combat, Enter the Matrix, and The Hulk.

X-box games put kids in control. Here, everything is relative depending on your position inside or outside of the matrix. In some games, you decide who wins and you decide who loses. You are in control.

The children of generation X find it easier to live inside the box than outside of the box. Inside of the box they are in control. In the world outside the box they are controlled by others. So, many youth live inside of their Xboxes and similar video games. It is a world which they understand and can control the final outcome.

While many youth bury themselves in the matrix on the Xbox there are others who have come to the conclusion that life is more than an Xbox. Many have come to the conclusion that they are not yet ready to be in control and need to be controlled by a power greater than themselves. In the Xbox they set the rules and determine the destiny, but outside of the box they learn very quickly that they need the power of God in their lives.

Many youth around the world have come to know Jesus and have said to him, "Have thine own way or have thine own way thou art the potter I am the clay."

X-files

These days the hit TV show "The X Files" has prompted another revival of interest

in extraterrestrials, alien abductions, government conspiracies to cover up the truth, and generally all that is paranormal and weird. They generally feature Agent Scully trying to track down a strange creature who, when she finally finds him, turns out to have some weird characteristic.

The X files grew out of the early 1970's fascination with space aliens and the unknown. X obviously stands for the unknown.

Today, there are many young people who have opened their own X file. Like Agent Scully, they are trying to track down the unknown. Many challenge the system and order before them and want to explore the unknown. Ironically, what is unknown to most youth is known to their parents. Yet the unknown is a provocative enticement to the young who unnaturally curious.

The young world is marked by many things which have warnings or advisories attached to them. Certain movies they buy are marked with an X. Certain magazines are marked with XXX's. There are even CD's and DVD's that are marked with XXX's. These are the forbidden and the unknown.

They are marked with Xes because the Xes indicate that the contents could have a damaging effect upon the values and direction of young people who are exposed to the contents. Yet the very presence of X increases the curiosity of young people who want to know the contents of the package marked X.

There is a sexual X-file. To the very young it is an unknown realm. Some are drawn to explore this realm even before they are ready.

There is a social X-file. This is a world of night life and parties, that sometimes involves drinking, smoking or drugs. It is a world of loose living, fast action and multitudes of temptations. Many young people who open this file find it difficult to get back on the right track.

Youth need a guiding hand to keep certain X files closed and to keep them focused on developing their mind and body. That which is forbidden is forbidden for a reason. That which God places out of our reach is done so for a reason. It is God's way of protecting us from ourselves. Thankfully God controls the joystick and not we ourselves!

X-Man Meets Jesus

Finally, we must consider what happens when generation X meets Jesus.

Many of the children of generation X are fascinated with the X-man, cartoon character which has been made into a movie hero. The X-man is a mutant. He changes from one thing to another. The X represents his changing nature.

There are many young people today who are X-Men and X-Women. They are social and moral mutants who change from day to day.

X-men may change moods, personalities, attitudes and directions constantly, always running always trying to escape. Many find it difficult to deal with the children of Generation X and write them off and useless and incorrigible.

While the world is ready to throw away the X-Man and the X-Boy, Christ is standing ready to receive them, forgive them and help them ascend into the presence

of God.

A strange and powerful thing happens when X-men meet the Lord!

There is a powerful influence that changes lives when the people of generation X come in contact with the power of an almighty God.

The bible tells of a biblical X-man who ran through the grave yard naked. He was called a wild man by some and a lunatic by others. He was an X-man because everyone had written him off as useless, but when that wild man came face to face with Jesus, demons left him and he sat at the feet of the Lord.

The woman at the well was an X-woman. She had five X-husbands and was working on number six. But when she met the Lord at the Well, she ran through the city saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."

When the X-man meets the Lord he is transformed from the X-generation to the chosen Generation. That's why 1 Peter 2:9 declares, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

When X-generation meets the Lord he turns over the joystick and the controls of his life to the powerful hands of God. He says, "Use me Lord in thy service!" That's what the word means when it says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and behold all things become new!"

When Generation X meets the Lord they open a spiritual X-File. His old life is marked with an X. He becomes an:

-X smoker;X drinker; X drug user; X Delinquent

An EXamination of the EXplanation can EXplain, this EXclamation, "I've found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

It doesn't matter what generation you are from, powerful things happen when you meet the Lord!

When generation X meets the Lord, powerful things begin to happen!

I'm not talking about just joining a church, singing in the choir, or being on the usher board but when you really meet the Lord!

David asked, who shall ascend into the presence of the Lord? The answer is those who have a clean heart, clean hands and a saved soul!

When you come into the presence of the Lord, sometimes tears come to your eyes and clapping gets in your hands!

When you come into the presence of the Lord, you feel a little prayer wheel turning. You feel a little fire start burning.

Like fire shut up in my bones!

You have to tell somebody!

I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who died for our sins!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

I've got to tell somebody!

No. 9053-Inspiration

Can You Hear Me Now?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 10, 2003

SCRIPTURE:" Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:" Isaiah 55:6

Introduction

Have you ever tried to use your cell phone only to find that you had no signal? It doesn't matter what kind of phone you use or how elaborate the services to which you subscribe, if you can't get a signal. You may have a phone with unlimited minutes, but it is no good if there is no signal. You may have a phone with a large array of features such as call forwarding, instant recall, voicemail, and a variety of other handy features, but none of them are many good if you can't get a signal. In fact, no phone has a value at all if you can't make a connection. If the call can get through on its way out or on its way then the phone has very little use and value.

There is a television commercial for Verizon that shows a man walking around the countryside asking "Can you hear me now?" He will pause and then say, "Good" and move to the next location where the conversation is repeated. This happens over and over again. Apparently, the intent of the commercial is to let you know they have better cellular coverage than the competition. The nature of cell phones is that they are able to provide communication because of a vast network of cellular antennas stationed around the country. In highly populated areas there are a large number of antennas that both pickup and broadcast signals. There are places in the country where there are very few of these special units. If you happen to be between antennas there is a possibility that you may be out of range because you're in one of the dark areas between the reach of the nearest antenna. In such case your phone may give a message that there is "no service." When there is no service no matter how elaborate your phone, it is useless until you come into range of an active cellular antenna.

That's the way it is with God sometimes. Often in the busy rush of our lives we can find ourselves so far away from God that we can't find him. Those are the times when it appears that despite our best efforts to connect with him, he can't seem to hear us. We pray, but it does not seem that our prayers get through. We cry out, but it seems as though our prayers and cries do not reach the ears of God. It's as if we have moved out of range and position ourselves in a dark valley, so dark and so deep that God cannot or will not respond to our cry.

There is never a time when God does not know where we are or what we are doing.

There is never a time in God is not aware of our faults, faults, or troubles. He knows where we are because he is omnipresent which means he's everywhere as the same time. He knows what our faults are because he is omniscient, which means that he knows everything. We are never beyond his power because he is omnipotent, which means that he is all powerful. While there is never a time when God does not know where we are, there are times when our actions, attitudes or states of mind make it very difficult for us to hear God or to find him.

Whenever we find ourselves unable to connect with God, we can do like the man in the commercial and move from place to place trying to find the magic spot where God will hear us or we can switch carriers. That was the point of the commercial in the first place. The idea was not to keep moving from one place or another asking "can you hear me now?" The point was to switch to a carrier with a strong enough signal to connect with us wherever we may be on the face of the Earth.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we have a good connection with God. We hear him and he hears us. We don't need a special place to talk to him because he always knows where we are. We rejoice in the fact that the God we serve always hears and answers prayer.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's prophecy in which he appeals to the people of God to listen and "hear" the Word of God to receive both life and abundance.

The 55th chapter of Isaiah begins with an invitation to everyone that has a "thirst" for righteousness to come before God's presence (55:1). Many are working futile efforts to build godless lives that will reward them little. Thus the prophet asks in verse 2 "wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? Why do you labor for that which does not satisfy?" The appeal is made to Israel: "Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (v3) God appealed to all to end their merry-go-round experience and come to him with the promise that he would provide for their needs and shower them with the blessing of happiness as well as peace of mind and soul.

Yet, he warns that those who seek him should take advantage of the opportunity while it exists. Verse six says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." In essence they were challenged to take God's offer seriously and respond to it quickly."

Hear Us When We Call

When we call on the Lord we fully expect to get a response. God hears us:

WHEN WE PRAY: The best way to make a connection with God is to pray. He always hears our prayers. It may appear at times that God is not listening or is not present but he is always present and he always hears a believer's prayer. The

daughter of an old man was worried about him because after being hospitalized he began talking to a chair. She asked the new pastor of the church to visit him. Sure enough the pastor found the old man talking to an empty chair. When asked to explain the old man said, "I've never told anyone this, not even my own daughter," said the man. "But all my life, I've never known how to pray until my best friend said to me: 'Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here's what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, and place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith, see Jesus on the chair. So, I've tried it and liked it so much that I do it every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me taking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or cart me off to the funny farm." Two nights later, the daughter called to tell the pastor that her dad had died that afternoon. "Did he seem to die in peace?" the pastor asked. "Yes, when I left the house early that afternoon, he called me to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store, I found him dead. But there was something a little strange, in fact beyond strange — kind of weird. Apparently, just before Dad died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside the bed." When we pray, no matter when or where we pray we will get a connection. If we pray from a church pew or a hospital bed, we can connect with God. If we pray in car or on the side of the road, we get through. No matter where we are we get through loud and clear.

WE ARE IN TROUBLE: "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. (Psalms 34:17) When we are in serious trouble its good to know that we still have a storm proof connection. That's what the disciples of Christ learned when the storm began to rage and they feared they would drown. In the storm they called on Jesus who was asleep below and quickly found out that even in the storm, Jesus is still master of the winds and the waves. It is reassuring for each of us to know that even in the storm we still have a good connection. In our troubles we cry out:

—Lord, I'm head over heels in debt, can you hear me now? Good!

—Lord, I'm experiencing family troubles that are tearing us apart, can you hear me now? Good!

—Lord, I'm being persecuted by my enemies on every side, can you hear me now? Good!

It is reassuring to us to know that regardless to our situation, God hears us.

IN OUR PROSPERITY: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18. While we call on God in times of difficulty and distress, we also call on God in good times, just to say thanks. There are many who know how to call on God in 9-1-1 situations but they forget how to call him when things are going well. That was the situation when Jesus healed 10 lepers. As they all left, one of the men came back to say thanks for the healing. There are many believers want to be sure that God hears them in their time of trouble but they also want God to hear them in their moments of triumph, blessings and victory. These are the ones who say:

—Lord, I thank you for my health and strength, can you hear me now? Good!

—Lord, I thank you for my family and friends, can you hear me now? Good!

—Lord, I thank you for my achievements and accomplishments, can you hear me now? Good!

There is no special place to give thanks to God. We don't have to wait until a church worship service. We can connect on the job, at school, or even while we are driving our cars. God will hear us wherever we happen to be!

Listen When God speaks

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we want God to hear us when we are in trouble or distress, we must also listen to God.

Just as we ask the question, can you hear me now? God also asks the same question.

Sometimes God answers us directly. Then there are times when God answers but we must listen to hear his response. That's what the man learned who was drowning in flood waters. He prayed to God saying "Lord, I'm out here on your word, please save me. Let me hear from you." As the flood waters rose a man in a boat came to help but the drowning man refused saying, "I'm waiting to hear from God." Soon after, another boat came and the man refused again. Later a rescue crew in a helicopter came to save him but the man refused again saying "I'm waiting to hear from God." As the man began to drown, he saw the glories of heaven open up and an angel appeared. He asked the angel, "Why is God letting me drown, why didn't I hear from him?" The angel responded, "He sent you two boats and helicopter, what more do you want? He answered you just didn't hear!"

Often God speaks, but we don't hear him even though powerful begin to happen.

We should listen for God to speak because when he speaks things change.

When God stepped out on the blackness of creation he spoke a word and said let there be light and there was light.

Noah listened when God spoke and prepared for a flood.

Moses listened when God told him to stretch out his hand over the Red Sea and that the people would walk across on dry land.

Ezekiel listened when God showed him the valley of dry bones and told him that these bones can live.

When we God speaks he often responds to our life situations

God can speak to our doubts and turn them into confidence!

God can speak to our weaknesses and turn them into strength!

God can speak to our failures and turn them into successes!

God can speak to our insecurities and turn them into assurances!

God can speak to our difficulties and turn them into opportunities!

God can speak to our defeats and turn them into victories!

God can speak to our enemies and turn them into lifelong friends!

No wonder the song writer declares, "Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by!"

God has tried to speak to mankind for generations, but the world would not hear

him.

What he has been trying to say throughout all time is that he loves every man woman and child, but the world never seemed to hear him.

Down in Bethlehem he sent his son, born of a virgin, and seemed to ask, "Can you hear me now?

When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, the voice of God spoke saying "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Can you hear me now?

When the blind were given their sight and the lame were able to walk again, that was God demonstrating his love, asking "Can you hear me now?"

One day on Calvary Jesus, was nailed to an old rugged cross. When the sky turned dark and the earth began to shake, it was God asking, "Can you hear me now?"

But Early Sunday morning, Jesus arose from the dead!

The angel declared, he is not here. He has risen from the dead, just as he said!

As an astonished world looked at the empty tomb, God seemed to speak from heaven say, "Can you hear me now?"

No. 9054-Communion

Dead Man At the Dinner Table

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 17, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Romans 6:1-6; "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." John 12:1-2.

Introduction

What did your friends say when they first heard that you were born again? Were they enthusiastic? Were they skeptical? Were they cautiously optimistic? There are many people who knew us before we knew the Lord. They knew us before we attended church, read our bibles, and lived the spirit filled life. Many of them went to school with us. Some of them were our drinking buddies, party friends, and partners in crime. When they heard the news that you had given your life to Christ what was their reaction? Some of our friends believed us while others took a wait and see attitude. We became a curiosity. We became a person to be observed from a distance as old friends and acquaintances monitored our movements and actions to see if our conversion to this new life in Christ was for real. Some made it their business to challenge our new life, which threatened their own. Others were influenced by our change and did the same themselves. As time passed, many came to believe that we were truly sincere when we announced our new life in Christ and that our old sinful self was truly dead.

One of the realities of life is no matter who we are today there is someone who remembers us the way we were. There are many successful people today who live balanced Christian lives, are conservative in their thought, and are models of respectability. But before they became the models they are today, there are those who can remember what they once were. They remember the wild party man. They remember the girl who teased all the guys. They member the boy who cheated on every test he ever took. They remember the braggarts and the thugs. They remember the promiscuous and the wall flowers. In fact, many who knew you at another time

have difficulty accepting the fact that you and no longer the person you used to be. At reunions, your old life is constantly rehashed. Your old antics and episodes of bad behavior are constantly retold for the amusement of all present. What many of them fail to accept is the reality that the person they refer to in their moments of amusement died at some point and a new man or woman in Christ now lives. Some like what they see; some don't.

There are some people who are very hard to convince. They don't believe water is wet and neither do they believe that fat meat is greasy. When you tell them that the person that they knew no longer exists, they laugh. They can't believe the person they remembered so well has truly changed. Consider the crazy man who had trouble accepting the fact that he was not a dead man. He had strange dreams of himself being a dead man walking. His family became wary and sent him to a psychiatrist who spent many laborious sessions trying to convince the man he was still alive. Nothing seemed to work. The man was convinced that he was dead. Finally, the doctor tried one last approach. He put aside his medical books and decided to use a little homespun horse sense. As the session began the doctor asks his patient, "Do you believe a dead man can eat?" The man answered "No." He showed him pictures of funerals and caskets and asked what he believed the dead men ate for lunch. The crazy man was finally convinced that dead men can not eat. The doctor felt good. So he put the crazy man to a test to see if he was cured. He carried him into the next room and showed the man a table full of the best food this side of heaven. When the crazy man saw the table filled with collard greens, fried chicken, yams, rice and gravy, corn on the cob and piping hot corn bread he became excited. The doctor felt good. He had cured his patient. As he placed an overflowing plate of black eyed peas, neck bones, macaroni and cheese and home made sweet potato pie in front of his patient the doctor asked a question as his patient dug in. "You believe that you are dead. Now that you are eating all of this good food, what does that tell you?" The crazy man looked up with a chicken bone in his hand and said, "I guess I was wrong. Dead men can eat!" It's just hard to convince some people!

Many who haven't seen us in a while are surprised to learn that we are truly different people. Our interests have changed. Our conversation has changed and our direction has changed. We are truly new creatures in Christ; old things are passed away and everything has become brand-new.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we enjoy our brand-new life in Christ. The old sinful man and the old sinful woman that once was, no longer exists. Those who come looking for the dead man they knew will be disappointed because in the place of that dead man or woman is a new creature washed in the blood of the lamb.

Exposition

The two passages of scripture that form the basis for this text both show instances of new life.

Paul, writing to the Romans tries to explain what happens to a person when he

becomes a Christian. When a person becomes a Christian his old life, which enjoys sinful activities dies. In the first six verses of Romans Chapter six Paul addresses the question of whether or not a person can be a Christian and still maintain a lively interest and involvement in life styles that conflict with a Christian way of life. Can a man or woman be a true Christian and maintain the lifestyle of a swindler, drunkard, fornicator, adulterer, homosexual, slanderer or thief? Paul's answer is in verse two. Those who are true Christians have died to their old sinful ways and have no desire to walk that path again. A person who is really and truly a Christian loses all desire to do anything that would be against the will of God. For all practical purposes, the old person who lived before he knew Christ dies.

When we become a Christian we make a spiritual connection with the body of Christ. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit in a way that buries our old personality and raises up a new person connected to the body of Christ, going in a different direction, with new interests, new desires, and a new walk. This spiritual death and spiritual resurrection is what is commonly referred to as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It's the point in which our old inclination dies and our new perception in Christ rises. It happens on the inside and it shows on the outside. After we have been spiritually baptized believers are baptized with water as a sign to others that there has been a change on the inside.

John the Baptist told his followers, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there comes One after me, greater than I, who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" John 1:33. Ray Stedman notes that "The baptism of the Spirit happened first, historically, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon 120 people who were gathered in the temple courts, fusing them into one body, joining them to the head, which is Jesus, and thus formed the church, one body in Christ, all members one of the other and members of the Lord Jesus himself." Since that time millions have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, as they left their old lives behind and began new lives. While some teach that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is something the comes after a person believes and evidences itself by special feelings and signs and wonders, the bible teaches that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is the process by which a sinful person dies and is buried with Christ and emerges spiritually connected with the body of Christ.

A person who continues a lifestyle of sin never died to sin in the first place. That person was baptized with water but not with the spirit. That person had the symbol but not the substance. If the old sinful man or woman still lives then the person is not a part of the body of Christ.

People are naturally curious whenever a person claims to have died and now lives again. The case of Lazarus was even clearer because his death and resurrection was not a spiritual event but a physical one. The resurrection of Lazarus was exceptional. In two other cases persons were resurrected a short time after their death. Critics could claim it could just be a mistake concerning their real deaths and that the supposed "miracles" of Jesus were just a coincidence. Since the resurrected ones were children, their testimony might be considered suspect. But Lazarus was a respectable citizen of Bethany, old enough to answer all the questions many wanted to ask. Because he

had remained four days in the grave, no one could question that he was really dead. The friends of Jesus were present at this supper and, according to verse 9 the common people as well. They were probably numerous, drawn by the same curiosity: to see a man who had been dead!

Not only were they curious but there were many who felt threatened by Lazarus, especially the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Yet, the new life that Lazarus was given was a great witness for Christ. While the scriptures don't tell us what happened to Lazarus, oral histories of the church report that Lazarus became a leader of the church in Marseilles and served as the pastor of that flock until he was beheaded by Domitian in the second half of the first century. All of his life he was living proof of the resurrection power of Christ.

Curious About the New Life

When Jesus ate supper in the Bethany home, Lazarus was there at the time. The apparent presence of both Jesus and in Nazareth attracted a crowd of curiosity seekers. These were men women who could not resist the temptation to get a candid look at both the man who was raised from the dead and the man who raised him at the same time. People were naturally curious to see a man who was once dead living again. Word spread quickly through the city and the crowds began to assemble.

People are curious about believers who say they have been born again as well. At work, they are observed by coworkers who watch them from a distance. At school they are also observed by schoolmates who privately take mental note of every action and deed of students who claim to be born again. Lazarus had been brought back to life and people were curious to see if it was real. Those who are born again claimed to have a new life and people are equally curious to see if that new life is for real. The first test of that new life comes when the curious see that we are actually alive in Christ and dead to the world.

Ephesians 2:2 says, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The curious soon find that you are truly a new person, alive in Christ but dead to the world. The man that looked pornography, and made sexual advances toward his co-workers died. The woman that was angry, hateful and vengeful toward everyone around her died. The student who regularly breaks the rules, disrupts class and causes problems for the entire school died. Those outside the faith watch to see if it is so.

Curious About the New Relationship

When the curious found Lazarus they were impressed because not only did they see him alive but they also saw him with Christ. The passage says Lazarus and Christ sat at the same table. When the curious saw Lazarus they also saw Christ. People who were initially attracted to the phenomenon of Lazarus' resurrection got a chance

to see Christ too because when they found Lazarus they found Christ.

It is very seldom that you'll find a child of God outside of the presence of the spirit of God. A saved individual abides in Christ and Christ abides within that saved heart. Regardless of circumstance a saved person is always with Christ. In difficulties Christ is with him. In success Christ is with him. In sickness Christ is with him. The saved man or woman remembers Christ words when he said in Matthew 28, "and Lo I'll be with you always even until the end of the earth."

So the curious watch to see if there's truly a new man or whether the old man still lives but is just dressed differently. Those who have been truly washed in the blood can sing the words of the song, "and he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known."

Convinced by His Testimony

Finally, verse 11 notes that many who heard Lazarus' testimony believed and followed Christ.

The Sadducees wanted to kill Lazarus because his new life was attracting so many people away from Judaism. It was a foolish thought, however, because the same God that raised him once could simply raise him again if he desired to do so. Yet the strength of Lazarus' testimony proved strong enough to convince many people to follow the Lord.

Today there are many people who watch believers and are either drawn to the cross or repelled from it by what they see.

Those who know us well, will be the first to know whether or not the person they once knew has died or whether or not he just joined a church. Those who know us, know whether we are really new creatures or whether we are truly born again.

The curious come to see a dead man at the table, but what they find instead is a new person alive in Christ.

They came to see a defeated man at the table, but what they find is a man who has been given the victory.

They came to see a confused man at the table, but what they found was a man confident in the God he served.

They came to see a dead man at the table but what they found was a man with a story to tell.

Every child of God ought to have a story to tell.

Tell the world about a dead man they once knew, who led a wild life that was tamed and turned over to the Lord.

Tell the world about a dead man who was lifted up high in pride but the Lord showed him that "Blessed are the poor in spirit of theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Tell the world about a dead man who was inconsiderate of the feelings of others but the Lord showed him that "blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

Tell the world about a dead man who sought revenge, looking for an eye for an eye, but the Lord showed him that "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the

earth."

Tell the world about a dead man whose motives were not pure but the Lord showed him that "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Jesus extends an invitation, saying "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

If the old man has died and a new man lives, join me at the supper table.

If your old watering holes has lost its flare and tempting attraction; join me at the supper table

If there is a newness about you that makes you want to strive for complete perfection in the Lord, join me at the supper table.

If your old life was filled with hate but your new life is filled with love, join me at the supper table!

If your old life was drenched in despair but you new life is filled with hope, join me at the supper table.

If your old life was punctuated with wrong doing, but your new life is showered with good deeds and forgiving spirit, join me at the supper table

If your old life sweltered in the wilderness of sin but your new life bathes freely in the oasis of salvation..the table is ready!

The world may be looking for a dead man at the supper table but he picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground.

I've got to tell somebody, that my old man has died!

I've got to tell somebody, that I met a man who changed my life!

I've got to tell somebody, that he died out on Calvary!

I've got to tell somebody, that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave

I've got to tell somebody….

9055-Funeral

He Ain't Heavy, He's my Brother

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 23, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" Romans 12:10

Introduction

What makes a brother a brother? Is it mere biological proximity that makes a person a brother or sister? Is it simply being a person who shares a common parent, is raised in the same family setting, and shares a common heritage sufficient to earn the title brother? Is being a brother a mere biological statement? Certainly biology plays a part in the initial designation of brotherhood and sisterhood but we cannot limit those whom we choose to called brothers and sisters only to those who share the same parentage. While many brothers begin their life experience together sharing common genealogy and common history not all continue to relate to each other in ways that would be expected of those who share such a common bond. Brotherhood and sisterhood goes beyond familial ties. True brotherhood and sisterhood is rooted in love and compassion.

In the African-American community we have generally defined persons who share the same mother as whole brothers and sisters. Those who share the same father but not the same mother we refer to as half-brothers and sisters. Yet, there have been many people who have learned that designation such as half-brothers and half-sister have no meaning because they grew up relating and responding to each other without any distinctions whatsoever. If one brother broke a rule who was a half-brother he did not get half a punishment he received a whole punishment. And when parents passed out hugs and kisses the half-brother or the half-sister did not receive a half of a hug or half of a kiss but whole hugs and kisses. In fact in many African-American homes there are many who lived in our homes, share in our families, and labored with our family experience but were not related to us by blood. Nevertheless, we refer to them as our brothers and sisters. The designation of a person as a brother or a sister in the family context, from the African-American perspective, has as much to do with actions and demonstrations of love as it does biology.

The story is told of the cripple boy who wanted to go to school like the other

members of his family but he was unable to walk. They were poor and lived five miles from the school with no transportation. Each day, the little boys brothers would take turns placing him on their back and would carry him the five miles to school. Even in the rain, cold and biting snow, they carried him on their backs. One day a school mate, amazed at the fact that the little cripple boy never missed a day at school, stopped one of the brothers as they walked in the door and asked, "You carry your brother on your back to school everyday, then carry him back home, doesn't that bother you? Isn't he heavy?" To that the brother responded, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

In the late 60's Neil Diamond wrote a song entitled, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." The words say:

The road is long, with many a winding turn
That leads us to - who knows where, who knows where
But I'm strong, strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy - he's my brother
So on we go, his welfare is my concern
No burden is he to bear, we'll get there
But I know he would not encumber me
He ain't heavy - he's my brother

A sense of family and brotherly love ignores the difficulty, weight and frustration that may come with standing with a brother or sister. That love runs so deep that the difficulty itself is comparatively light.

As Christians, we share the love of God with everyone we meet, especially to the members of our family. There is no bond that is stronger, no burden too difficult for us to share: "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul as explains the nature of the brotherly relationship.

The essence of Paul's teaching is that true brotherhood is best demonstrated through love in action. "Kindly affectioned" carries with it a sense of compassion and action. Consider it in its context, "Kindly affectioned to one another in brotherly love." In C.S. Lewis' book, The Four Loves, he says there are four basic kinds of love. He gives them their Greek names: agape — the God-like self-giving love even toward enemies; philia — the love of friendship and camaraderie; eros — the love of romance and desire and sexual attraction; and storge — the love of affection that arises through natural attachment. The word in Romans 12:10 is a form of this last word, storge. To be specific, it is philostorgos — tender affection, especially toward precious family members.

The word for "love" or "be devoted" refers to a special kind of love. It's used only here in the whole New Testament. But it is not a rare word outside the New Testament. The word is "Philostorgos" which means to cherish one's kindred. It refers to "tender affection, particularly family affection" this verse underscores the unique element

that is present in every real family, a sense of affection toward each other that goes beyond mere family membership but affectionate actions and deeds.

But Paul goes even further. He notes that brothers should "prefer one another." It means that brothers and sisters work to "Out love" each other. There is a constant exchange of acts and deeds that sometimes appears as if one brother is trying to do more good things than the other. One good deed is returned by an even greater kindness as family members try to "out love" each other. It creates a warm feeling of oneness that can only exist where love abides.

Families that are strong are those that demonstrate tender affection, love and concern for each other.

What makes brothers unique?

What is it that makes brothers unique? There are several qualities that are unique to brothers and distinguish them in a very unusual fashion. While these qualities possessed by most brothers there are a few exceptions to the rule.

BROTHERS SHARE THE SAME HISTORY: most brothers share us similar history. Many brothers are fortunate to have shared many years with each other. Whether these years were good or bad they still form the foundation of the family experience and are the stuff from whence memories are made. Whether they hailed from a peaceful fun loving family or one that was filled with trauma, brothers share the same history. Their memories are the same. Their experiences, especially in their early childhood are strikingly similar all the old their interpretation of those instances and experiences may be strikingly different. Although Jacob and Esau when different directions in their adult life, they shared the same childhood experiences. Obviously Jacob's interpretation of their childhood was totally different from that of Esau's but yet their memories were the same. Today, brothers and sisters may live in different parts of the country but they share the same family history. They recall the same events and the feeling of oneness that develops between them is often caused because they touch and agree in their history. Many brothers were fortunate to have good parents who taught them in the old way and that history is recalled as they teach their own children in similar ways. That history is recalled each time they reflect upon their past.

BROTHERS KEEP EACH OTHER: In the Garden of Eden Cain asked an important question of God. He asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We have learned that since that time that true brothers keep each other. The Bible gives us at least five ways that brothers keep each other.

First, Brothers look out for one another and attempt to protect each other from hurt or harm. 1 Timothy 2:1 lets us know that brothers look out for one another.

Secondly brothers rejoice in the prosperity of other brothers. In verse 15 of this text we see this clearly underscored. Brothers do not respond like Joseph's brothers when he dreamed of prosperity by throwing one brother or the other in a ditch; they rejoice in the prosperity of their brothers.

Thirdly, brothers share each others' misery. That's the spirit of Isaiah 63:9. It's

a spirit that says we will share each others' are times and troubles. One brother's burden becomes the burden of another.

Fourthly, brothers forgive one another's injuries. Matthew 6:14,15 makes it clear that forgiveness is a mark of the believer. In the course of life brothers will often offend each other to the point of anger but true brothers are forgiving in nature.

Lastly, John 3:17 reminds us that brothers help each other in times of necessity. These are the times when you can't look after yourself. These are the times when you are no longer strong and able to fend or provide for yourself; that's a good time to have brothers for true brothers help one another with necessities with respect to sickness, finances, and other resources. When a brother is a real trouble that's when he learns the value of having a real brother.

BROTHERS SHARE THEIR FAITH: Brothers share their faith with each other. One brother who is strong in the faith feels a responsibility to share that faith with a weaker brother. That faith is shared in two ways. Sometimes it is spoken of in family circles and in one-on-one encounters. These are times when those brothers who are strong in the faith share the strength of their testimony with weaker brothers. The best testimony is a second way. It is by example. These are the occasions when one brother doesn't talk about his faith but he lives it in front of his brothers. In hard times and good time he demonstrates his belief in God and faith in Christ in ways which are undeniable to his brothers; he loves them. Sharing faith among brothers is evidenced in the Bible. When Young Andrew heard Jesus speak he was impressed with the words of Christ and he came and brought his older brother Peter to the Lord. Brothers constantly work to seek the salvation of their kindred. They are never satisfied; they continue to witness, to testify and nudge each other closer to the Master's feet. In any family there's always a family member or two that needs a little help in matters of faith and godliness. That's when it's good to have a brother to show us the way.

Closer than a brother

Finally, brothers and sisters, it is good to have a brother, but it is even better to know Jesus; then we have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Many know the joy of having brothers or sisters, but that joy is surpassed by the joy of knowing the Lord, because he is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Yes, a brother shares the same history with us, but we serve a God who knew us before we were born, struggled with us in our cradle and will know us long after we are gone, he's a friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

Our brothers look out for us, but true believers have come to know that the Lord is always looking out for us because he always makes a way out of no way.

Our brothers share our hard times, but the God we serve has never abandoned us or left us alone, he's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

No wonder the song writer would say, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer."

There are some things that brothers, despite their best intentions, can't do for us. The time will come when you can't take care of ourselves. That's when we learn to sing, "Be not dismayed what ere' betide, God will take care of you!"

There will come a time when your body gives away and you your strength slips into weakness, that's when we remember to sing, "All my help comes from Lord."

Brothers and Sisters, we it comes time to cross from this life into the next, our brothers can stand by our bed side, but there is another hand that helps us over to the other side.

That's the hand of Jesus, he sticketh closer than a brother!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, our bride of troubling water!

Jesus, our bright and shining star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose after three days!

Jesus, still calls out to all of his brothers and sisters, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. For my burden is easy and my yoke is light."

No. 9056-Blessings

Windows in Heaven?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 31, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." 2 Kings 7:2***

Introduction

Have you received a blessing that you could not explain? These are the kind of blessings that have no rational basis for their occurrence. They just seemed to fall out of heaven. When you explain these blessings to your friends they are very skeptical. They look for some practical reason that is the basis for your blessing. They do not accept your explanation that what you have received came from God himself. Yet, there is no way to explain it except that God opened a window in heaven and poured out a blessing upon you.

The kinds of blessings that we have received in these ways are varied. Sometimes the blessings are financial. These are the times we receive money, land, all other assets that we were not expecting and that would normally evade us. There are times we receive physical blessings. It's those mysterious times when we were expecting a major illness, surgery, or lengthy rehabilitation only to receive a blessing from heaven that eliminated the need for surgery or long-term-carealtogether. There was no explanation for it; it seemed to just fall right out of heaven. Even job opportunities have been made available to many of us without much intervention on our part; again they just seemed to fall right out of heaven.

Those who do not believe as we believe doubt the fact that there is any such thing as miracles or divine intervention. We have been taught however that the God we serve rewards those who are faithful, obedient, and trusting by opening the windows of heaven and pouring out blessings upon them in ways so numerous that they cannot be comprehended fully. The prophet Malachi spoke of one such window when he told believers that those who bring their tithes and offerings to the store house position themselves to be recipients of God's blessings as he opens up windows in heaven for them. Similar blessings are pronounced upon believers who trust God, and obey him in every respect. Jesus said those who seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness should prepare to receive an abundance of blessings that will follow their obedience.

God promises to open the windows for us and to give us a chance to share in the

bounties of heaven.

Sometimes open windows present opportunities that are too difficult to resist. Consider the man who was arrested for burglary after he was caught with a handful of watches and jewelry while standing outside of the home of his intended victim. With his hand still in the open window, officers arrested him and carried him to jail. At his trial his lawyer came up with a very clever defense. The attorney told the judge that his client saw an open window and for some reason his arm got a mind of its own and decided it would go through the open window feel around and take what was inside. The lawyer said the rest of his client's body did not participate in this activity. The only part of his client that went through the open window was his arm. The lawyer said it would be unfair to punish his client's entire being because his arm went through the window and committed a crime. The judge commended the young lawyer for his unique defense. In fact, the judge agreed with the lawyer. Only the man's arm was guilty of theft. The judge said, "Using your logic I therefore sentence your clients arm to five years in prison. Either the arm can go by itself or the rest of him can go along too!"-The open window was just too much to resist.

God does open windows of opportunity for the faithful. We can't explain it. We don't know how he does it. Neither do we know when he will do it. But every believer has experienced at least one time in his own Christian experience when God has opened up the windows of heaven and poured out unexpected blessings upon them.

As Christians, we maintain our hope that no matter how difficult our times may become, God is able to make a way out of no way. We agree with the songwriter who wrote, "The Lord will make a way somehow when beneath the cross I bow."

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which God opened a window in heaven, poured out a blessing, and baffled all of those who doubted the faith of those who believed.

The text focuses on Elisha the prophet in the circumstance of Israel's siege by the Syrians. The Syrians had surrounded the city and placed it under siege. The Syrians resolved that rather than fight the Israelites they would simply surround them and starve them to death. As the siege continued month after month food disappeared. Starvation loomed and the Israelites became so hungry that they ate their horses and then they even began to eat each other. (6:28-30). Every effort to find food inside of the walls of the city was fruitless. Inside the city they faced death. Outside of the city they faced death at the hands of their enemies. It seemed hopeless.

The King, for the most part, had led the people away from the worship of God. The prophet Elisha constantly prophesied against him. In many instances Elisha foretold the fall of both the King and the Kingdom of Judah. When the famine came as a result of the siege the King blame much of the nation's plight on the prophet Elisha and sent a messenger to tell him that the king had ordered his death.

As the messenger approached, Elisha made a prophecy that in one day's time food would be so abundant that a measure of flour would be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley could be sold for a shekel, indicating an abundance of food.

The messenger responded in verse two, “If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?”

Elisha responded that it would come to pass but the messenger himself would see it with his eyes but never enjoy it.

On the next day there was food every where as if the Lord had truly opened a window in heaven and provided it, and in the rush to get to it the people trampled the messenger under their feet.

The appearance of food in the midst of the siege had no rational basis. There was no way to explain it except that it was a miracle from God. The miracle served two purposes. It reminded the faithful that even in the worst of times that God can make a way. It served as a warning to skeptics to never doubt God’s ability to deliver his people and those who of faithful regardless of how difficult to situation may seem.

Windows in Heaven

As we consider our relationship to God in may help us to understand it we could give that relationship in the context of one kind of window or another. For certainly there are portals in heaven through which God views, hears, and responds to human need. If we view our relationship in the context of five types of windows we might better understand our relationship to God.

PICTURE WINDOWS: Picture windows are large windows that provide for high visibility. We can stand in a picture window and see a large portion of the street. At the same time picture windows allow us to see out, they also allow others to see in. A picture window without a curtain or a blind offers any passerby a look into the inner workings of your home. We understand our relationship with God better if we can see it as a picture window. God has a giant plan for each of us. The more we study his word and the more we know him the better we are able to see and recognize his hand in all aspects of life. When we have a picture window relationship with God we recognize that all things will ultimately work to our benefit as long as we abide in him and his Word abides in us. That picture window perspective helps us to be able to weather any storm with a full knowledge that God will ultimately work out any circumstance to our advantage. While the picture window allows us to see God’s plan the picture window also less God’s see us. I heard the Psalmist say in Psalm 139: “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.. thou knowest my thoughts afar off..Whither shall I go from thy spirits. If I ascend into heaven, thou art there, if I make my bed in hell, thou are there. God knows all about us. There is a picture window in heaven through which we can see him and he can see us.

SHATTER PROOF WINDOWS: Some windows are made of very thin glass that shatters easily. Such windows can be broken, cracked or completely destroy by even the smallest pebble. Then they are other windows which are shatter resistant or shatterproof. So it is with the faithful. There are many life instances that can shatter the hope of the faithful and crumble it into small pieces. Sometimes the smallest things can shatter our excitement demolish our enthusiasm and utterly kill our hope. It may be something as simple as a setback, a lost love,a lost job, a troubled marriage, a

personal difficulty, or a sickness that set us back and throw us for a loop. Yet the believer's relationship with God is one that is synonymous to shatterproof glass. Nothing that this life can offer will dissuade us from keep in the faith with God. Job was a righteous man. Despite a series of difficulties that would have destroyed the average person, Job refused to allow his faith in God to be shaken or shattered. When his friends saw his failing health his financial difficulty and the death of his children they urged him to curse God and die. Yet Job refused to allow his faith to be shattered. He responded, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." That's the commitment of every believer; to be committed to God regardless of the circumstance. That was a commitment of Paul when he told the Romans in Romans 8:38-39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If difficulties come our way, our faith is shatter proof!

If we are hit with set backs and disappointments, our faith remains shatterproof.

The Lord will make a way.

PORT HOLES: We get an even deeper understanding of our relationship with God when we are able to recognize life's portholes. Portholes are openings on the sides of ships that allow light and air to come in. Unlike regular sized windows portholes are small. They let the lighting and but they're not big enough to let you out. They are some experiences that we have in life that seem very difficult. As the ship of our life rocks and reels it is the portholes that allow us to see glimpses of light and get fresh air and restore our hope while we work our way out of our circumstance. There are dark times in life when difficulties weigh us down. These are the times when it seems as though everything is black. That's when we get a beam of light that seems to shine directly from a portal in heaven. That's the moment when we are freshly inspired to remember that weeping may endure for a night but Joy comes in the morning. If that single portal of hope that motivates us to go on remembering that God is still on the throne. From time to time God sends that single ray of hope; that isolated moment of inspiration; that unique message of perseverance that carries us on the wings of faith.

Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when the words of the old standard him were written, "beams of Heaven as I go through this wilderness below guide my feet in peaceful ways turn my midnights into days. When in the darkness I would grope faith always sees a star of hope and soon from all life's griefs and dangers I shall get home someday." It's portholes that sustain us day by day and they remind us that God will make a way.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS: Stained-glass windows are associated with worship. They have a tendency to inspire a sense of all and the presence of God within us. Inside a sanctuary a person worship God and stained-glass window has a tendency to block the world out while letting the light of God's word illuminate his presence. Stained-glass windows should remind us to constantly seek God's presence. In the presence of God we can hear him speak. In the presence of God we can worship him in spirit and in truth. In the presence of God we can get a sense of

direction for our lives. In the presence of God we receive encouragement and sometimes reprimand as we struggle to live according to his will. In worship, we block the world out and let God in.

Stained-glass windows are unique in that they reflect the light of God in different ways for different moments. One who worships in a church service gets one look of the church at 11 a.m. through stained-glass windows. However, sitting in the same seat at 4 p.m. with the light coming from a different direction and angle the entire edifice of the church with stained-glass windows looks entirely different. What that says to every believer is that in worship God's light shines upon us in a way that will provide us a clear perspective for that moment. If we worship him and bring before him out sadness his light brings us gladness. If in our worship we bring to him out burdens his light lifts our burden and makes them bearable. If in our worship we bring him our praise, his light brightens our countenance and deepens our joy. That's why the Psalmist would say, "I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord." In the presence of the Lord we are renewed and given new strength.

Keep Looking Up

Finally, brothers and sisters, our relationship with God should be like a skylight, every time we look up we see the Lord.

There are many buildings that have skylights, or glass openings in the roof. Skylights keep bad weather out but they always give us a chance to look up and see the heavens.

David reminded us that there is a blessing in looking up. In the 121st Psalm he said, I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help my help cometh from the Lord which made the heavens and the earth."

When Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, with lion's all around him, he kept looking up, and God delivered him!

Whatever our situation today, we should remember that it is not hopeless; God can open up a window in heaven and make a way out of no way.

We don't know how God does what he does, but we know that he always makes a way!

I don't know about you, but I know there are windows in heaven from whence blessings flow!

I've seen that window open and:
-heartaches turned to happiness
-burdens turned to blessings
-weaknesses turned into strength!
-doubts turned into convictions!
-problems turned into opportunities
-sadness turned into joy!
-sickness turned into health!
-suffering turned into rejoicing
-lost souls found salvation at the cross!

There must be a lot of windows up there, because everyday I get a blessing.

On Monday, I get a blessing! On Tuesday, I get a blessing!

I know the source of my blessings. His name is Jesus!

He was born down in Bethlehem! He was raised down in Nazareth! And one evening on a hill called Calvary he died for my sins! But early Sunday morning a window was opened in heaven and he arose from the dead, with all power! All power in his hands!

No. 9057-Funeral

Joy Comes In The Morning

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 12, 2003

SCRIPTURE: For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Psalm 30:5

Introduction

Have you ever felt like crying? There are times in every life when each of us feels like crying. Crying is universal. Everyone cries. Babies cry and adults cry. No matter what sex, race or nationality we happen to be, we cry. Usually our tears represent the condition of our spirit at the time. When our spirit is full, one-way or the other, we cry.

Sometimes we cry when we are sad. Death, sickness, failure, and disappointment are powerful emotions that control our spirit and move us to cry. David wept over the sickness of his son. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. It is not unusual for us to weep in times of trouble or despair; it is a way of emptying our soul.

Sometimes we cry when we are happy. We cry at weddings, reunions, graduations and special ceremonies marking achievement. If we watch a movie that has a happy and sentimental ending, the tears flow like a river. They are tears of joy. These are moments when we are so happy that we cannot contain ourselves.

Sometimes we cry for no apparent reason. Consider the little boy who would not stop crying. No matter what his mother did, he would always cry. The lady next door thought she knew the answer to the problem and assured the mother that she could stop her son from crying. So, the mother took him to the neighbor kicking and crying. The neighbor tried many of her "stop the child from crying" methods but to no avail. Finally, the neighbor asked, "Would you like to eat something?" The child's crying dwindled to a whisper. "Yes Ma'am" he sniffled. "I want some worms." The neighbor was hopeful so she went into the yard and dug a cupful of baits and brought them to the boy. She said, "Here they are." The boy sniffled, "I want them fried." Since his sniffles were less and her plan seemed to be working, the neighbor ran into the house and fried the worms. When she presented them boy said he only wanted one. There was only one sniffle now, so the neighbor picked one worm out of the plate and presented it to the boy. Then the boy sniffed once and said, "I only want half and you eat the other half." The neighbor reluctantly swallowed one half and gave the other to the little boy. Then the boy fell on the floor and started crying louder than

ever before. The doctor said, “What’s wrong. I dug up the baits. I fried them for you. I selected one for you. I cut it in half and even ate half for you. What’s wrong?” The little boy said, “You ate my half!”- There are times when nothing we do will stop us from crying.

Though everyone cries, there is a day coming when crying days will be over. There is a day coming when weeping and lamentations will end. There is a day coming when sadness, sickness and death will no longer exist. John stared at that day in the Book of Revelation and heard the voice of God say, “And God shall wipe all their tears away.”

As Christians, we look forward to the day with great hope. When it finally comes, the joy that will accompany its arrival with overshadow whatever sadness we have experience in this life to the point that we will share David’s testimony that, “Weeping endureth but a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the transient nature of weeping and the eminent approach of joy in the aftermath of difficult times.

This psalm was used in liturgical services many years after David’s death. At the time of its writing, theologians believe that the song was a Testament to David’s joy in having overcome difficulties of his own personal failure. The occasion of the psalm is believed to be the dedication of a palace that David built for himself shortly after becoming king. After being confirmed by the elders of both Israel and Judah, David was anointed king over all Israel, and sought out a new seat of government. He chose a Jebusite fortress, “the stronghold,” on the hill of Zion and made it Israel’s capital, and established here his residence, and afterwards built for himself a palace by the aid of Tyrian tradesmen.

When the palace was complete, he dedicated it to God. Matthew Henry notes that when the new palace was dedicated this psalm is believed to be the song of dedication that capsulated God’s activities in David’s life through favor, difficulties and ultimate salvation.

Before he entered his new house the very first time, David gave praise to God, upon reflection, for his life’s experience.

The psalm extols or praises God for lifting him up over the course of his life and showering him with great favor. It even praises God for difficult times referred to as times of weeping and for the joy of overcoming described as the morning.

With the elders of Israel observing, David stood at the threshold of his new house, looked back and lifted his heart in gratitude for being the recipient of God’s favor, which had brought him out of the pastures as a shepherd boy, and rescued him on many occasion from the hands of death.

When David looked back he saw the merciful hand of God that helped him endure his own weaknesses and personal trials and thanked God for being with him during his weepings and lamentations.

Before he entered, David considered a great truth that when compared with the

sum of his days, his times of difficulty were but a night that would shrink in comparison to the joy that would come in the morning.

The new house he would enjoy was a testimony to the truth David discovered, "Weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Experiencing God

David's reflection upon his life is the same as that of any believer. We too have shared the same three experiences that David shared in his life time.

GOD'S ANGER: God's anger is a terrible thing. Generally, we bring down the wrath of God upon ourselves by some deviant act or another. The cities of Sodom on Gomorrah were destroyed by the anger and wrath of God because of their ungodliness. Annanias and his wife Sapharia both died because their hypocrisy angered the Lord. Those who work against the people of God also draw God's anger. That's why the entire army of Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea because they angered God by attempted to re-enslave Israel. In the course of every life there are times when we anger God because of our lack of faith. Even while he's doing great things for us sometimes God's get angry with us. That was the case when the disciples saw the wind and waves rocking their ship and called upon Christ in fear. Even as he rebuked them asking, "Where is your faith?" he stilled the winds and the waves saying, peace be still.

There is no life lived that that at some point has not angered or frustrated God. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Yet, in all of our faults, he has looked beyond our faults and saw our needs.

Life gets slippery when it wet. This life before for us, like all others has slipped along the way somewhere and drawn the anger of God. Yet the words of the songwriter constantly remind us that, "We fall down, but we get up. A saint is just a sinner who fell down and got up!"

When we get up, we find our way to the house of God then we serve, teach and praise him with the full knowledge that is a forgiving God and that his anger endureth but a moment.

GOD'S FAVOR: The ultimate blessing for any believer is to receive the favor of God. When a person is a favorite, he receives special treatment, access and considerations that may not be required. They are received because someone has a special attachment to us. Although Jacob had 12 sons, Joseph was his favorite. He received a coat of many colors not because he earned it but because he was favored by his father. Jacob and Esau were twins, but Jacob was favored by his mother who worked to secure him the blessing from Isaac. What he received was not deserved but given out of favor. When a believer considers his life, he immediately recognizes that he has been the recipient of God's favor. It is great to be blessed but is better to be favored by God. Blessings indicate reciprocity; that is a reward for work performed. Favor on the other hand, includes blessings for no reason other than the fact that God loves us and counts us among his special children.

When a man or woman lives a long full life, reaches retirement and is able to enjoy

most of the fruits of their labor, that is an indication that they know what it means to enjoy the favor of the Lord. When we realize that we have been favored that's when we can truly say, "He didn't have to do it but he did."

He didn't have to bless me but he did!

He didn't have to heal me but he did!

He didn't have to save me but he did!

While others revel in the fact that they have been blessed, those who have learned this truth are able to say, "I'm more than blessed, I'm enjoying the favor of the Lord!"

WEEPING: There have been times in our experience when we've had to weep. The very first thing we do when we get into this world is cry. But shedding a sentimental tear at a wedding or at the happy ending of a movie is not the same as weeping. The Hebrew word for "weeping" in this text means continuous like a steady dripping. Jeremiah, was so concerned over the lost glory of Israel that he steadily lamented over her lost estate, enough to fill the entire book of Lamentations in the bible. We've all had to weep. Whether it was over a family member that seemed to go astray or the condition of the world. We've all continually wept. This is the kind of weeping that Jesus did for Jerusalem before he entered. He said he'd like to take the entire city under his wing like a mother hen would her chicks and protect them and nurture them.

Sometimes we weep like that. Mothers weep for sons and daughters. Fathers weep for families. Sometimes its uncles, aunts and grandparents, who are concerned about the affairs of each family member to the point of weeping

Those who weep also learn how to trust in the Lord. It is only their trust in the Lord that allows them to stand strong for their families. That's when the words of the song become real, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. He's my friend and he's my guide. I found out that if I trust him he will provide."

Those who weep learn quickly how to take their concerns to the Lord in prayer and leave them there!

Joy in the morning

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider David's epitaph, "Weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

David wrote his own epitaph as he prepared to enter into his new house.

He had experienced the anger of God.

He had experienced the favor of God.

He had experienced the valley of weeping.

Now as he stands on the threshold of his new house, David declares, "Weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning."

David's words are but a type of what every believer should expect who experiences the valley of weeping.

It's the same testimony shared by the old warriors who labored in hope despite difficult times singing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

The saint who has labored in the vineyard and weathered the melancholy

loneliness of the night looks forward to the breaking of the dawn; because he knows that joy comes in the morning.

The saint who has faithfully visited the sick and prayed the prayer of faith, looks forward to the rising of the sun, because he knows that joy comes in the morning!

The saint who has helped the poor, fed the hungry, and shared the compassion of God with the forgotten masses looks forward to the break of day, because he knows that joy comes in the morning!

I don't know about you but I've found out that you can move from weeping to joy!

I've found out that:

-The darkest nights are followed by the brightest days!

-A great and heavy burden is followed by a multitude of blessings!

-The sorrow of today is followed by pleasant times of tomorrow!

-The weakness of the moment can be the blessing of the hour!

-The difficulty of the day can prove to be the blessing for the week!

I've found that no matter what comes my way that the Lord is able, to make a way out of no way!

The Lord will provide:

-Patience in the middle of problems!

-Contentment in the middle of criticisms!

-Support in the middle of suffering!

-Stability in the middle of strain!

-Hope in the middle of hardship!

He's able to lift up a bowed down head

He's able to dry a tear stained eye!

Just like David stood in front of his new house, looked back, and gave God thanks, one day, every saint of God is going to leave his old house and get a brand new home in the heavens.

Paul told the Corinthians is 2 Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Servant, you cried tears of sorrow over the pain and misfortunes of your friends; you cried through the long night as you visited the sick and elderly!

Servant, you cried tears of compassion when you saw people with no food to eat; you cried as you stumbled through the night carrying plates of food in your hand!

Servant, you cried tears of concern when you saw family members confused and dispirited; you cried as you struggled through the night to show them the right path!

Servant, you cried tears of disappointment as your health began to fail; you shed tears of steel as you struggled to cope with your faith.

Servant, you cried tears as you told men and women about Jesus who died out on Calvary and arose on Sunday morning!

Weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!

In the morning, there will be no more sadness!

In the morning, there will be no more heartaches!

In the morning, there will be no more disappointments!

In the morning, crying days will be over because there will be joy!

I heard a songwriter say, “One of the mornings and it won’t be very long, you’ll look for me and I’ll be gone….” I’ll have new legs and I’ll be walking around heaven all day!

Come and go with me, to my father’s house!

In my father’s house there is joy!

In my father’s house there is peace!

No more crying there, in my father’s house

There’ll be joy! Joy! Joy!

—

On Monday August 8, 2003 Ceasar Clark cried his last tear in the night of this life. He spent is life devoted to the welfare of his family and friends and wept for them. Weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

No. 9058-Inspiration

Lifted by the Hand of God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 14, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."*** ***Mark 9:27***

Introduction

Have you ever had to ask someone to help you? Every now and then everyone needs some help from somebody, sometimes. Whether it is a large under taking or something small, we all eventually need a little help.

Sometimes we need help and won't ask for it.

Sometimes we need help and won't accept it.

Sometimes we try to help ourselves. Self help is generally described as those actions which tend to improve one's social or economic condition. In the 60's there were a number of efforts made to assist people as they tried to lift themselves by their own "boot straps." Some worked to help people get jobs, or acquire homes, others worked to help people improve socially.

There were some people who couldn't be helped by a self help program because they were spiritually lost. Their desire and thirst for personal achievement had vanished. The inner drive needed to climb out of their dilemma was not present. They were hopeless.

That's where the Lord came in. When we could not help ourselves, Jesus gave us a helping hand. When we were spiritual wanderers, Jesus showed us the way.

As Christians, we are ever thankful to God for his mercies and kindnesses, for without his strong, saving hand, we would still be sinking in the sea of life.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus healing a child who had been declared lunatic or dumb on the request of his father. The people of the community were curious to see how Christ would handle the healing of this youth, especially since his cure escaped his disciples. Christ rebuked the evil spirit and charged the spirit to come out of him immediately. It was an effectual, clean removal of the evil spirit within the boy that barred his return. Had the spirit left of its own accord it would later returned but it was removed by Christ himself and it would not return. Facing the superior power of Christ the evil spirit released the boy and Jesus took him by the hand, Matthew Henry notes

that the emphasis is on kratesas means he took fast hold of him, and strongly bore him up, and he arose and recovered, and all was well.

Jesus took his hand

The text verse first notes that the boy who was lifted came in Christ himself. Jesus took his hand.

There are many great things that can happen when our hand is in Jesus' hand. Outside of his hand and on our own power we can do nothing.

Today there are too many people who will not put their hand in Christ's hand. Even in this text, the boy did not give his hand to Christ, Jesus took his hand.

There are many circumstances in life when the Lord must take our hand because we are too stubborn, obstinate and too mean to take his hand.

Perhaps that's why the Lord often pushes himself into our picture and simply takes our hand. He interrupts our busy schedules, and intrudes on our daily lives just enough to take our hands.

No wonder the songwriter would declare, "Take my hand precious Lord, lead me on and let me stand. I am tired. I am weak. I am worn."

Jesus lifted him

There are many today who desire to be lifted but they have no strength.

But God has a plan to lift every one of his children. It is not his intention that his people wallow in despair, live in poverty or be in want. There four considerations that each of us should make as we ask God to lift us.

WE MUST GET A NEW LIFE: The first step to lifting ourselves is to get rid of our old lifestyle and to get a new life. Our old lifestyle is filled with negative attitudes and habits as well as empty spirits. The new life Christ offers includes a completely new approach to life. 2 Cor. 5:17 reminds us that any man that is in Christ is a "New creature" and that old things are passed away and all things become new.

WE MUST INFUSE OURSELVES WITH INSPIRING IDEAS: The second step involves receiving the flow of inspiring ideas, encouragements and supports that come from the Holy Spirit. Many can't reach their goals because they can't get themselves motivated or fired up to go for it. Christians who are climbing out of the marrow of life must make time for the Holy Spirit to speak to them through bible study, regular worship and personal prayer.

This inspiration that we speak of serves the great purpose of encouraging us when we despair by reminding us that when we can't see a way that Jesus is a way maker. It reminds us that when we can't open the door of opportunity that we serve a God who opens closed doors.

WE MUST DEVELOP A BOLD FAITH: The third step involves developing a

strong faith that God will provide. There are many who are in a miserable estate because they have lost faith in themselves, their fellowman and in God. They have concluded that nobody cares. But when friends, family and loved ones have turned their back on you, our faith tells us that God Cares!

What is faith? Faith is knowing that you are walking the tightrope of life unsure whether you will make it to the other side without falling, but you step out anyway knowing that if you fall that God's safety net will catch you and put you back on your feet again! Faith is the Substance of things hoped for and evidence of things unseen. Faith is stepping into the dark corridors of unknown tomorrows confidently saying, "I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future"

WE MUST TRAIN OURSELVES: The fourth step needed is training. Without training we cannot realize the full potential of what God has in store for us. We lose much of the inspiration available if we are not trained. Our faith is never fully developed if we are not trained to use our bible and to understand our faith. Even in the secular sense training is required. Many apply for jobs with little or no training and although they get out to seek opportunities they cannot get them because they are not ready to receive them. 2 Tim 2:15 reminds us to "Study to show thyself approved a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the words of truth."

The Man Arose

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must notice that the man who was down allowed the Lord to lift him up and he arose.

The fact that he arose is significant, especially since many people resist efforts by others to help them. Many people have devoted their entire lives to trying every effort possible to lift others by their own bootstraps only to find out that those they try to lift still will not rise.

There are many who have drug dependencies and despite the efforts of well-meaning friends, government agencies, churches and a plethora of assistance efforts, they still do not rise.

The fact that this man, holding on to the hand of them Lord stood to his feet suggests a powerful desire on his part to stand once again.

If we want to stand and the world has knocked us down; the Lord is ready to lift us up.

Somebody here today knows that the Lord is a rock in a weary land and a shelter in a time of storm. He will pick us up!

I hear the saints testifying through the years:

—A woman with an infirmity for 18 years who was bowed and could not be lifted up was touched by Jesus and stood tall and straight.

—Peter's Mother in law who had been stricken with a fever was healed when Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up!

—Peter walking on the water began to sink and cried out to Jesus Lord Save Me!

Somebody here can testify with the songwriter: “I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no, but the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me, now safe am I.”

I was sinking in the sea of:

—Foolishness but love lifted me and gave me wisdom

—Weakness but love lifted me and gave me strength

—Sorrow but love lifted me and gave me joy

—Despair but love lifted me and gave me hope

—Loneliness but love lifted me and gave me comfort for my soul!

When nothing else could help..love lifted me!

But before he lifted me up he had to be lifted up himself.

I hear him say, “And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me!”

They lifted him up on an old rugged cross!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

Like us he was down, but God lifted him up!

The world had counted him out but God lifted up!

When God lifted him up, he started lifting me and you up!

I don’t know about you, but I’m so glad that Jesus lifted me!

I’m so glad that he picked me up and turned me around!

I’m so glad that he gave me a new song to sing!

I’m so glad that Jesus lifted me!

No. 9059-Inspiration

Air Pudding

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 21, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion." Isaiah 29:8***

Introduction

Have you ever heard of air pudding? It is an amazing food that is great! If your mind can an imagine it, it just pops up right in front of you. Do you like steak? Air steak pops up in front of you. You see it just as plain as day. You can see yourself slicing it watching the succulent juices flow. You can see the fork as it brings each morsel to your mouth. You can chew it and swallow it easily. However, when you finish, all you had was air pudding.

Do you like chocolate cake? An air cake will just pop up in front of you, whenever you are ready. The cake has a rich icing! Can't you see it? Put your finger on it. Lick your finger. Doesn't it taste great? As you swallow the slice of cake, you can taste it rolling around on your tongue and sliding gently down. But when you finished, all you had was air pudding.

Air pudding an imaginary food that you eat when you cannot get what you want. You see it just as if it is there and go through all of the motions as if it was there but it is just imaginary. Air pudding can be anything: Steak, pork chops, rice and gravy. Air pudding never fills you up. You just keep eating but you are never satisfied because it is an illusion.

Many are trying to achieve, succeed and do great things in life with only a superficial belief in God or no belief in God at all. They dream of happiness and the good life. Without God that dream is simply air pudding, an illusion that will always escape them.

As Christians, we know that if we, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" and his righteousness, all of the things we dream about can become a reality. If we fail to put him first, they will always slip through our fingers and all we end up with is "air pudding."

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he gives a prophetic warning to Israel that about vain hope in the power of man instead of the power of God.

Historically, the text describes an instance in which the prophet Isaiah prophesied that there would be a day when Jerusalem, called "Ariel" in verse 1, the City of God, would be surrounded by its enemies.. Jerusalem was the City of David. It was the place where the altar of God existed and where sacrifices were made. It was called "Ariel" because Ariel means "Lion of God."

When surrounded by enemies many put trusted Ariel as it came to represent their rituals and sacrifices. Their confidence rested the fact that historically the people followed the ritual to the letter and religiously went to the City of God as commanded.

Isaiah notes that the people of Jerusalem would ultimately be saved from the impending attack of its enemies. The army that sought to enrich itself by Israel's destruction would soon be destroyed. Its dreams of riches and war spoils would become like a bad dream in which a man dreams that he is eating in the night and wakes up hungry.

Isaiah's prophecy did materialize. The armies of Assyria came to lay siege against Jerusalem. Rather than fight the people, they tried to starve them out. Inside the walls, the people trusted the history of the city itself and its history of sacrifice and ritual as a 'Holy Place" that made the invulnerable. Outside the Assyrians waited with dreams of riches and victory. Ultimately, God sent an angel that destroyed the army of the Assyrians, on the spot, in a moment. The next morning what bothered Israel was no more. It was like a dream in the night.

The message of the prophecy is two fold. Believers should keep trusting in God not in empty rituals or symbols. Those who think that holy things, or places will vainly put their trust in that which is powerless. At the same time, those who seek to fight against the people of God and seek to prosper at their expense are dreaming an "empty" dream that will not come to fruition.

Trusting in Symbols Is Like "Air Pudding"

The text notes that Israel placed a lot of hope and faith in its symbols or religion and ritual. When surrounded by enemies there were many among the people who felt like their association with the city of God alone would protect them from their enemies. They held on to their symbols. Yet, Isaiah warned that counting on symbols was like dreaming of "air pudding."

GOOD LUCK CHARMS: There are many who place and inordinate amount of trust in good luck charms. They wear them around their necks, wrists, and ankles, and place them in strategic places around their homes. Some carry a rabbit's foot on a chain. Some have medals and medallions around their necks. Whether it is a horseshoe over your do way or special hoodoo powder that you think will keep the Hanks away, there is no saving grace or special protective powers that can protect

you from the enemy in times of trouble. Neither is there any protective grace in religious symbols. Placing a cross in certain places in your home does not make your home more spiritual or blessed. Sprinkling holy water on your furniture does not make it special or protect it from harm. Posting a large bible in your living room that is never read, does not bring luck to your home. Trusting in symbols is like air pudding. It's a nice dream but in times of trouble don't count on it.

RITUALISM: Ritualism is not a panacea either. Many believe that by simply showing up at a church service every now and then that they are somehow insulated from troubles and protected from enemies. They believe if they stand, sit, clap their hands, and otherwise participate in the ritual that these exercises alone will protect them in difficult times. Just as Isaiah warned the people of God in this text that their reliance upon their ritual and sacrifices in the city of God would not sustain them or protect them in difficult times believers today must also remember that our salvation is not in simply showing up and participating in a ritual but in our daily walk with God. The salvation is not in the ritual or the tradition, while both have their place, it is in our faith and trust in God. We should participate in the ritual "because" of our faith not in the "place" of our faith. Those who count on their occasional appearance at a worship service to earn them brownie points in heaven are trying to spiritually survive on air pudding.

Expectations of success without God is "air pudding"

In a similar sense, those who expect to succeed in life without God are also dreaming of air pudding. The world poses many dangers and obstacles to the quest of every believer to achieve success and fulfillment as each pursues life goals. Those who believe that they can achieve any level of success in this world without the assistance of the almighty are dreaming a dream based on air pudding. Without the power of God believers will find it impossible to reach the heights they seek because it is the power of the Holy Spirit which empower, strengthens and fortifies us for the struggle necessary for success in kingdom building.

Those who think they can work hard and their work alone will ultimately result in success without an active faith in God, have a life dream that is based upon air pudding.

Education, while essential, is not the totality of that which is required for a believer to achieve. We must also have God.

Training is important but it never supersedes the need for God in our lives. Ambition is important but it never supplants our need for the presence of God.

The songwriter said it clear, "Without God I can do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

Trusting in God Brings Victory.

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who put their whole trust in God will get more

than just "air pudding" out of life; they will be the recipients of the favor of God, which is better than being blessed.

The enemies of Judah camped around Jerusalem seeking to destroy the people of God. They expected a victory against God's people.

They dreamed of the day they would take Judah away captive. But it was air pudding!

They dreamed of how good they would feel once they destroyed the people of God. But it was air pudding.

In this text, the enemy is Assyria, an army that surrounds the people of God. In the lives of believers, the enemy is Satan who goes to and fro every day of our lives trying to destroy the people of God.

It is his dream to destroy everyone who calls himself a child of God. But his dream of conquering a child of God is air pudding; because we are more than conquerors in him who loved us.

Believers enjoy a special relationship with God. He may chastise us but it's a dangerous thing for anyone else to hurt a child of God.

It's a dangerous thing to rise up against a child of God.

If the enemy is dreaming that he can destroy a child of God by knocking him down, it's air pudding. Because we fall down, but we get up!

If the enemy dreams of halting our progress by giving us the spirit of fear, it's air pudding; because, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid."

If the enemy is dreaming of hurting a child of God but cutting off his supply of income and resources, it's air pudding; because, "My God shall supply all your needs, through Christ Jesus."

If the enemy is dreaming of destroying your optimism and forcing you to look down on life, it's air pudding; because David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

If the enemy is dreaming of stripping you of all your resources and leaving you in want, it's air pudding; because, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

If the enemy is dreaming of a day when you'll turn your back on God, it's air pudding; because "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

I don't know about you, but I've found out that trusting in the Lord is not illusion, but it's the real thing.

If you trust in the Lord he will take your:

—DOUBTS and give you confidence; WEAKNESSES and give you strength

—DESPAIR and give you hope; DEFEATS and give you victories

—PROBLEMS and give you solutions; FAILURES and give you success!

No wonder the songwriter said, "I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

Though storms rise in your life, trust in the Lord!

Though winds may blow, trust in the Lord!

Trust in the Lord, who died out on Calvary!

Trust in the Lord because Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

Stay on the battlefield and trust in the Lord!

No. 9060-Youth

Putting First Things First

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 29, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:59-62; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" Matthew 6:33***

Introduction

Do you ever have problems deciding what should be done first? One of the most difficult life lessons to learn is how to set priorities. Priorities refer to those things which are most important. Those who have mastered the art of prioritization have learned to make a list of those things which are important in their lives and then spend the remainder of their lives working the list. Youth often find themselves unable to work their list themselves so their parents set a priority list for them, then force them to work the list. As youth mature, they begin to make their own priority list, which is often different from the one designed by their parents. Learning to set priorities, then stick to them is an important life lesson for any youth.

Learning to prioritize is not a youth specific dilemma. Many adults have difficulty prioritizing their lives too. On paper, the lists of both adults and youth look admirable. A typical list puts the things related to God first, family second and career and education last. Such a list implies that worship, service and obedience to God is a person's first priority; everything else is secondary; Second are family concerns such as the health and welfare of family members, as well as marriage and relationship concerns come after God. Finally, concerns about employment, education, career advancement, and personal fortune are last on the list. In reality many believers struggle with their life's priorities, trying to keep them straight. Some have dismissed a list that always puts God first as impractical. They have revised their priorities slightly to keep God at the high end of their lists but not necessarily at the top.

The priority list of a non-believer usually includes a number of actions, but worship, service and obedience to God is not on the list.

How does your life priority list read? There are many youth whose priority lists are similar to this one: 1) Succeed in school and get good grades 2) Be popular 3) Have Fun 4) Worship, serve and obey God. Many adult priority lists usually read similar

to this one 1)Career and economic concerns 2) Family and Relationships 3)Worship, service and obedience to God.

As Christians, we are resolved to put God first in our lives, confident that he will provide for all of our needs in return.

Exposition

These text address the importance of setting priorities then once selected sticking to our chosen priorities.

Matthew 6:33 refers to setting priorities. Jesus spoke to his disciples about setting priorities. They too were individuals who had to balance their secular needs and desires with their desire to advance the kingdom of God. Jesus made it very simple but still challenging. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." In essence, Jesus said put the things of God at the top of your list and all of the other concerns you have will come in due time. The challenge he posed was one that put serving God above every other consideration. A rich young ruler was given that challenge and told that it would mean forsaking his riches for the cause of the kingdom. The ruler went away without becoming a Christian, having already set his priority list.

While Matthew 6:33 refers to setting priorities, Luke 9:59-62 refers to keeping our priorities straight once we have set them. The former refers to make a Christian priority list while the latter refers to actually working the list. In Luke Jesus explains the commitment necessary of those who choose to serve in the kingdom. It involves three individuals that are presented with an opportunity to serve in the kingdom, one requested to serve and two were asked to serve but all were awed when they discovered what was expected of a servant in the kingdom.

One man volunteered to serve and made a bold pledge to go wherever he was needed. He pledged to follow Christ "withersoever thou goest." It was a bold pledge and Christ sensed that he may not have understood the extent to which he was committing himself, so he explained the prospects of hardship, poverty and homelessness that might come upon those who truly follow him. He noted that even foxes have holes and birds have nests, but Christ, and those who follow him have neither. Whether the man was intimidated by these conditions it is not said, but no one that is truly a Christian would be dissuaded by the price of following Christ.

The second man was asked to serve, but he had family concerns and wanted time to take care of them. The immediate concern was the death of his father and he wanted time to bury him, which by Jewish would have taken a week because of the purification period required in the law. Jesus responded that he should, "let the dead, bury the dead" as a way of saying that the things of the world should be taken care of by the people of the world, but those in the kingdom must concern themselves with kingdom building.

A third man was also asked to serve, but he took his service as a suicide mission of sorts and needed time to say farewell to his family and friends. He wanted time to set his affairs in order because he considered that he may never return. Jesus rebuked

him for his hesitation and his slow response to heaven's invitation.

In these three examples Jesus underscored that those who commit to serve and go back on their pledge for reasons of family, business, or friendship are not fit for the kingdom. The greatest servant is the one that puts his hands on the plough and does not turn back.

Combined, the two texts say that would should put God first and once have done that, keep our commitment to him by faithfully working our priority list.

Discover the main thing

Youth who are trying to learn to manage their own lives should consider three truths necessary to their spiritual and personal growth.

One big decision of every Christian youth is to discover, "Who I am, and what I will do with my life." Children constantly watch television screens, read magazines and review other sources of information to focus on images that suggest to them what they can be. At first the focus is on a profession: a doctor, fireman, police officer, or some other highly visible profession usually appears. They look exciting. In teenage years youth begin to think of lifestyles and begin to select careers that will produce enough income to support the life style they desire. At this juncture, the life style and not the career is the main thing.

At some point, youth starting asking, what does God want me to do with my life? That's when youth start considering ways to serve God with their talent and abilities. But what about the lifestyle of riches and fame they considered. Lifestyle becomes secondary when doing the will of God becomes the main thing. Jesus has promised that if we make contributing to the kingdom of God our highest priority, all of the other things will be added.

Many youth have decided that they want to help heal people who are sick or to improve the living conditions of the poor or even to write music that would lift broken spirits of the lost. This became their "main thing." In their teen-age years they decided on a course of life that plunged into a life work dedicated to a particular area of service in the kingdom of God. They decide to teach school to help build the kingdom; finance is secondary. They decide to become missionaries to advance the kingdom, life style is secondary.

Step one for every youth is to set priorities in their lives to discover their main thing in life then devote all of their energy toward achieving the main thing.

Is my main thing and God's thing the same thing?

Christian youth always want to do what is right in the sight of God. That means they want to know whether my thing and God's thing are the same thing. Before he began his public ministry Jesus had to make a similar decision. In the wilderness for 40 days and nights he wrestled with the issue of making his thing the same as God's thing. Satan presented him a variety of opportunities to turn his talents and abilities into avenues that would make him famous and powerful. Jesus wanted his main thing

in life and God's thing to be the same. Ultimately he rebuked Satan and chose to make God's thing his thing. Each Christian youth that is deciding upon a life priority should ask themselves whether their the choice they are considering will build the kingdom of God or tear it down. The young girl that sees herself as the next "Trina" or J-Lo, should ask whether or not such a life will help build the kingdom of God or destroy it. The young man who desires to be a hard core rapper should ask whether or not that that main thing and God's kingdom are the same thing.

It is just as difficult for youth and young adults today to decide about their main thing as it was for Christ in the wilderness. The world offers so much temptation. Choosing the Godly way often seems to be the road to less power, less fame and less money. Yet, the words of Jesus keep ringing in our ears, "and all these things shall be added unto you."

Choosing your main thing usually begins in Jr. High School. That's when a girl says, "I want to change the world so everyone has a place to live and food to eat." That desire, is a Godly dream, becomes her main thing. Another youth says, "I want to use my voice to inspire to people to reach higher. That goal becomes the main thing. Another says, "I want reach thousands of lost boys on the corner and show him a better way." That becomes the main thing and could be the reason that explains a sports career choice for some. It gives them a way to do their main thing and help thousands.

Keep the main thing, the main thing

Finally, brothers and sisters, while every youth must discover their main thing, figure our whether their main thing and God's thing are the same; they must also stay focused to keep the main thing, the main thing.

It is very easy to get distracted in life and lose focus.

Many college age young adults lose focus of the main thing and get off course.

Many adults have squandered many years of their lives because they failed to make achieving their main thing, their main thing.

Jesus told his disciples that a person who decides on a Godly life course then switches to something else is not fit for the kingdom.

For believers, working for the Lord is the main thing. We must keep the main thing, the main thing.

Samson was born a Nazarite, with a mission to protect the people of God. But when he allowed himself fall for an ungodly woman, he lost his power and ended up blind. He didn't make the main thing, his main thing.

David was a man after God's own heart. He wanted to build a kingdom that was dedicated to God.But he found himself sidetracked by an affair with Bathsheba and the country suffered. He asked God in the 51 Psalm, "Restore unto me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." He had to make the main thing, once again his main thing.

Job showed how it should be done. He was a man of immense wealth and influence who lost both health and wealth at the same time. When his friends told him to curse

God and die, Job remembered the main thing in his life, which was to serve and trust God. He said, "yea thou he slay, yet will I trust him." He kept the main thing, the main thing.

Serving God and obeying him should be the believer's first priority. As it relates to serving God the health and welfare of our family's should be the believer's next highest priority, fame, riches, and power are only important as they relate to achieving the main thing.

Our goal is to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The youth who is able to say no to activities that will keep him away from the things of God is one who has learned how to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The youth who is able to hang up the telephone, turn off the television set and focus on his or her studies in school, is one who has learned how to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The athlete who has learned that no matter how great he is one the football field, he must develop his mind and spirit as well, is one who has learned how to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The youth who decides to follow Christ rather than the world is one who has decided to make heaven his choice. This is the young man or woman who has decided that being a favored child of God is the main thing.

Christian youth want to walk with the king. It becomes their main thing!

Christian youth want to live lives that are pleasing to God. It becomes their main thing!

Christian youth want to do something with their lives that will make the world better in the name of God, that's the main thing.

But we must keep the main thing, the main thing.

Jesus said once we have decided that the kingdom of God and its righteous is your main thing, we must stick to our commitment.

Simply putting your hands on the plough won't guarantee that you can plow a straight row. This the secret that the small boy learned as he watched his father plough the fields with a one man plough. He noticed that his father put his hands on the plough, stirred the horse and ploughed straight ahead. His rows were always straight, it seemed easy. One day the father gave the boy his chance to plough a straight row. His father went to the end of the field and said "keep your eye on me." The boy stirred the horse and the plough moved. He kept his eye on the blade of the plough and watched out for stumps and rocks. He looked back to see how far he had come and amused himself at what an easy job it was. When he made it to the end of the row his father showed him his handiwork, instead of a straight line, the boy had plowed an "S" because he took his eyes off his father, looked down, around and back. His row would have been straight if he had kept his eyes on his father.

I don't know about you, but I've decided to keep my eyes on the cross and follow Jesus.

One song writer said, I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back!

Follow Jesus, who died for us on Calvary!

Follow Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!
Make Jesus the main thing, and all other things will be added!

No. 9061-Revival

Life Savers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 5, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"For whosoever will save his life will lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:24***

Introduction

Have you ever saved anyone's life directly or indirectly? Has anyone saved yours? The value of human life is so important in our society that awards are given to those who go beyond what is expected and save lives. Soldiers on the battlefield, public servants such as firemen and police officers and even ordinary citizens are often recipients of public praise when a life is saved. Often those who save the lives of others do so at the risk of losing their own. A fire fighter who plunges into a burning building does so at the risk of his own life. A police officer who enters a dark and suspicious building to save the life of a victim does so at the risk of his or her own life. Such meritorious service is the stuff that elicits our praise and thunderous applause. There are many people who are alive today because of a life saver.

There is a popular candy called "Life Savers" which, despite its age, is still popular in every part of the nation. The multi-flavored candy comes in strawberry, watermelon, cherry, raspberry, and blackberry. In the 1970's there was a famous television commercial where someone would lose a game or mess up something important and a person nearby would offer them a life saver candy to cheer them up. Giving a person a Lifesaver became a way of saying cheer up, "everything is going to be alright." It was a positive suggestion to persons surrounded by negative influences. It was a small but friendly sign of hope that despite the darkness of the situation better times were ahead.

Believers know what it means to be saved; they have been saved themselves. Believers know what it means to face the fiery flames of public scorn or to feel themselves drowning in the sea of life. Likewise, believers also know what it means to be lifted from the jaws of death, despair, and failure at the very moment when it appeared that all is lost. Nearly every believer has had what can be called a "Peter moment." That is a moment in our experience when we felt ourselves sinking and cried out to God for help and salvation. We were saved from our predicament only by the grace of God.

Sometimes God altered circumstances to save us. Sometimes God saved us

through the advice of a family member, friend, or coworker. Sometimes God saved us from ourselves by closing certain doors to keep us from totally destroying ourselves. Our very lives have been saved by the grace of God.

Just as we have been the recipients of life saving grace, believers also try to be life savers to others. In thousands of silent, seemingly invisible ways, believers lift the spirits of those who are sinking in life.

Each time they feed a meal to a hungry person, they become a lifesaver.

Each time they help a family drowning in financial difficulty, they become a life saver.

Each time they direct a child to a path that is clear and straight, they become a life saver.

Each time they show a lost soul the way back to Calvary, they become a life saver.

When they bring words of inspiration and hope to those who are at their wits end; just in the nick of time, they become "life savers."

As Christians, we owe our lives and our salvation to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even today, in moments of depression and despair we can feel his gentle touch as he reminds us to cheer up because our God is a "life saver."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of self-denial.

As Jesus explains the nature of the kingdom of God to those who are listening, he appears to introduce a paradox. In order to gain the kingdom of God one must be willing to do just the opposite of what human nature demands. Jesus introduced the concept of self-denial. In verse 23 he makes it clear that those who would follow him must be willing to pick up their cross of self-denial and plunge into the unknown world with Providence as a guide; willing to lose all if necessary to achieve the ends of the kingdom.

This idea of self-denial is paradoxical because it asks human beings to do that which is not of their nature. The nature of a human being is self preservation. In fact, it is generally said that self preservation is the first law of nature. If that is true, then what Jesus says in this text is that self preservation is the LAST law of God. Self denial, in its purest form, is the act of placing the will of God before our own will. This means that we are not to do our own will in anything. Self-denial ultimately means that we refuse to follow our own will in favor of the will of God.

Jesus says the man that wants to save his life must lose it and conversely the person who is not willing to lose his life cannot save it. It is a round about way of saying that each believer is challenged to plunge himself into the service of God and the building of the kingdom as a primary motive and reason for every action they do; even when everything in them says that instead of building the kingdom they should build a better life for themselves. Building for ourselves is our nature. Building for the kingdom is the nature of the new creature that is born within us when we accept Christ as our Savior.

Kingdom building becomes the higher cause that motivates individual pursuits

rather than self interests when a person denies himself. Self-denial is a disciplined and restrained pursuit of a higher calling. It is the quality about an individual that causes him to forgo the pleasures of the moment for the greater good. The person who chooses to lose what he could possibly gain out of life for the purposes of the kingdom is the person who chooses to gain in the kingdom even if it means a measurable difference in what he is able to achieve in this world.

Jesus called on every believer to be saved themselves and then to become a life savers. The challenge he presented was for every believer to allow the power of grace to leave them from oblivion; then allow themselves to be used as instruments of God to save others. A life saver is a saved life that works to save others.

Thus, when Jesus challenge believers to be willing to lose their lives in order to save it he actually challenged them to put their own immediate concerns second-place and the put the cause of the kingdom first place in their lives.

Reaching for the higher good

The quest of every believer is to pursue the highest good. The highest good always reflects the will of God. Sometimes the highest good does not offer the highest immediate benefit. The highest good in any endeavor is that which will glorify God because it lifts fallen humanity, heals broken spirits and restores hope to those in despair. The highest good is reflected in every endeavor of life from the smallest activity to the loftiest undertaking. When we achieve, or seek to achieve the highest good we seek to do that which will help the kingdom of God to become a reality. The man who opens a business to provide a service or product that will be beneficial to the public seeks to highest good. If his only purpose in the business is to make money, than often the highest good is lost. Many Christian businessmen earn far less because they choose the highest good over their self-interests. They are others who make more but they do so by ignoring the appeal of the highest good. Such a Christian businessmen shows a willingness to lose his financial opportunity while preserving his place in the kingdom. That's what Christ meant by being willing to die for the cause of the kingdom.

In every endeavor that we undertake we should seek the highest good. We should view it as an opportunity to help someone, comfort someone, or otherwise make life better for others. That means our energies are dedicated to a cause greater than ourselves. The Freedom Riders who rolled buses in the sixties did so at the threat of their lives. They were involved in a pursuit that was higher than their personal pursuits and they were willing to lay down their lives for the greater good. The same is true for people who make similar sacrifices but in less dramatic ways. The man who donates a kidney does so at a sacrifice. The person who cosigns a note for friend does so at a considerable risk. The parent who foregoes personal advancement to seek the advancement of their children; and many others are examples of persons who to denied themselves to achieve the greater good. It is this greater good that Christ speaks of when he points to the value of self-denial which is necessary for any person who would call himself a believer.

Achievement without a higher good is empty

Achieving personal goals without pursuit of a higher good is not a satisfying experience. There have been many people who have plunged themselves into a variety of activities designed to achieve personal goals that have divorced themselves from a higher good. Those who have done so have generally found that although they often achieve their goals what they achieve was empty and did not satisfy them. They bought a house but they did not get a home. They married a mate but they did not marry a husband or a wife. They have a job but they hate going to it every day. They make money but even the money they make does not satisfy them. They sought to satisfy themselves but not to achieve a higher good. Perhaps this is the reason why so many people are unsatisfied with their position in life.

There is a direct correlation between pursing a higher good and satisfaction. Many earn comparatively little in their jobs, but find their work satisfying. They enjoy what they do. Those who volunteer to help the elderly, tend to the sick or to help those who are fallen in a variety of ways, do not expect to earn great amounts money; yet they are extremely satisfied because they are serving a higher good.

Pursing the higher good brings rewards

Finally, brothers and sisters, pursuing the higher good does bring its rewards.

While Jesus told his disciples to be willing to lose their life in order to save it, he was not implying that those who choose to serve a higher good will not be rewarded. Neither was he implying that serving the higher good is a thankless pursuit.

If the scriptures teach anything they overwhelmingly say one thing with a solid voice; serving the Lord will pay off after while.

Included in the message John was given for the seven churches of Asia minor was the phrase, “I know that works.” That means that God is aware of our dedication to the kingdom. Just as these churches were told of a reward that awaited those that overcome, the same is true for believers today.

If you have been saved and you are working to save lives and lost souls then your work is not in vain.

The God you serve is both a life saver and a life giver!

Tell the man who has fallen on skid row that Jesus saves!

Tell the woman who has throw up her hands in despair that Jesus saves!

Tell the wandering spirit that can’t find his way, that Jesus is the way!

For I heard him declare I am the way the truth and the light. No man cometh to the father except by me.

Tell the man with a bowed down head, that Jesus lifts bowed down head’s.

Tell the woman who can’t see a way out, that the Lord will make a way out of no way.

Tell them that not only does he say lives but he also gives life.

Lazarus found that when all hope was lost that he gave him a physical life.

The woman at the well found that he gave her new spiritual life, so much so that she ran everywhere saying, “Come see a man.”

Tell your neighbor sinking in a world of problems that just in the nick of time he is a life saver!

No wonder the song writer declared, “I was sinking deep in sin. Far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me. Love lifted me. When nothing else could help. Love lifted me.”

To save my life, he picked up an old rugged cross!

To give me new life, he died on that cross!

Somebody said, he saved others but he can’t save himself!

After three days and nights the world soon saw that our God is not only a life saver, but he’s also a life giver!

Early Sunday morning. he who saved lives, was given new life.

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9062-Revival

So Close But So Far Away

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 12, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"When Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts 26:28-29***

Introduction

Have you come close to completing a goal but stopped short of succeeding? That's the time when you were just one step away from victory; one score away from passing; one mile away from arriving; and one interview away from being hired. Sometimes it's more frustrating to come up just a little short than it is if the degree of separation were even larger. It's frustrating to stand in the long line, then get to the counter only to find out that the person in front of you is the last customer of the day. It's equally frustrating to play a long hard game only to lose about one point. That's when we get a clear appreciation for what it means to almost succeed.

We are all familiar with almost. Most of us have an "almost" story. Whether it's the gamble that almost paid off or the big sale that was almost closed, we all have an "almost" story. Some people we know seem to have a suitcase filled with "almost" stories. It's their claim to fame. "Did I ever tell you about that giant fish I had on the line? I wrestled with him for almost 10 minutes before he got away. I almost had him."

The confused job seeker always had an almost story. "He said he would have hired me but he needed someone with brown hair. I almost had that job so I went back the next day and he said he needed someone with red hair. I almost had it so I dyed my hair red and he said he hired the last red head just before I walked in the door. I almost had that job too!"

Have you heard it? "Did I ever tell you about the time I was almost selected as the Employee of the Year?"

"They say he almost made the big leagues."

There is a never ending stream of people who almost won the battle, who almost climbed the mountain, who almost found the treasure.

"Almost" is a cousin to "nearly," "next time," "if only," and "just about." When someone says "almost" it usually refers to missed opportunities, aborted efforts, and fumbled chances. It's honorable mention, 1sst runnerup, second place, burnt cookies and what would have been a beautiful cake if it had not fallen in the oven.

Consider “Almost Annie Car Sale.” Almost Annie Almost finished school but should never quite pass a test. She was almost married but groom ran away at the altar. Her life was filled with “almosts.” When her started giving her trouble she tried to sell it but couldn’t. She said, “I almost sold the car until the buyer looked at the speedometer and saw the car had 200,000 miles on it. All day long people were looking at it and just before the plunked down the cash the saw the mileage and changed their mind. I almost had that car sold. What can I do? Her friend whispered, “I know how to get it sold, it’s not quite legal but I have a friend who knows what to do.” She gave Almost Annie the phone number and disappeared. A few days later, she saw Annie in the market and asked, “Did you sell the car.” Annie said, “Almost.” The friend asked, “What went wrong this time?” Annie said, “Nothing went wrong, someone was trying to buy it and I almost sold it to them until I looked at the speedometer and saw that it only had 50,000 miles on it. If that’s all the miles it has on it, I may as well keep it for myself.”

These six letters have written the epitaph of many people today.

“He almost got it together.”

“They almost worked their marriage out.”

“He almost got control of himself.”

The most disheartening of these is the epitaph that reads, “He almost became a Christian.”

As Christians, we are glad we serve the true and living God. We are not undecided or straddling the fence. We are not “almost” believers; we know God is real because we can feel him in our hearts.

Exposition

This text considers Paul as he invites King Agrippa to be a Christian.

The Jewish leaders were disturbed about Paul’s teachings. Repeatedly they had appealed to the Roman government to prosecute him. He had appeared before Festus and found no fault in him and then recommended him to King Agrippa for his opinion.

King Agrippa was the last of the Herods. These were the kings who, although not exactly Jews, nevertheless belonged to the Jewish faith. They were Edomites, descendents of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. The first of the line was Herod the Great, who killed all the babies in Bethlehem when our Lord was born, in an attempt to prevent the ascension of the Messiah. His son, Herod Antipas, had John the Baptist beheaded in prison. His grandson, Herod Agrippa I, put the Apostle James to death with the sword. Finally, his great-grandson, Agrippa II, was appointed by the Romans to be tetrarch of Galilee, to have authority to appoint the high priest in Jerusalem, and to administer the temple. He was a Roman vassal, but all Jewish and Roman historians agree that he was a scholar and an expert in Jewish affairs..

Our text first considers Paul as he addresses Agrippa who had a knowledge of God, and of godly things. However, Agrippa’s understanding was more toward the philosophical than belief.

In this context, Paul comes to preach in a private audience with the king. He told

of his Damascus Road experience and no doubt talked of temperance, justice and judgment to come, just as he had to Felix and Drusilla a little earlier. It was a powerful, stirring, and demanding message that appealed both to the intellect and to the heart of King Agrippa.

Agrippa's response was very clear. Almost he was moved to take the step toward being a Christian; but not quite enough. Felix heard Paul deliver a similar message and asked Paul to come back at a more convenient season. Aggippa's answer was "almost." That answer brought him close to being a Christian; close to the kingdom of God; close to the throne of grace…but so far away.

The word almost is descriptive of the present circumstance of many people today. They are so close but so far away!

Some fail because they ride the rail

There are many people who are straddling the fence. They desire to live the Christian life but the world seems so inviting. They don't want to turn loose one and take hold of the other, they want to hold on to both. They want a wife and girl friend. A husband and a secret lover. They are afraid to take a stand. They find it easier to hang on to both. The late Charles Kuralt was host of CBS News' Sunday morning for many years. He was a respected journalist and family man. That much was known to everyone. But when he died, many were shocked to learn that he had two families; neither knew about the other for nearly 20 years. He straddled the fence. He tried to love and take care of them both. With respect to faith, there are many today who straddle the fence. They proclaim a faith in God on Monday, but they really put their faith in the horses, dice, bingo parlors and gambling casinos. They want to hold on to both to hedge their bet. Elijah faced this dilemma when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest atop of Mt. Carmel. He asked, "How long halt ye between two opinions, if God is God, follow him. If Baal is God, then follow him." There are millions of people today who attend church on occasion. They try to live right and obey the law. However, despite being so close, they have never given their lives to Christ. Simply being close to the cross does not substitute for picking up the cross and following Jesus. The Rich young ruler walked away in defeat when he was told to deny himself and follow Jesus. Like many of us he was so close but so far away.

Satisfied with being Stratified

A person who is stratified is a person who reaches a certain level and gets comfortable. The quest to win is replaced by a quest to simply place. The quest to be an honor student is replaced with just being happy to pass. The quest for excellence is replaced with an acceptance of mediocrity. The young man or woman who almost graduated from high school, becomes satisfied and stratified, when they become comfortable without a high school diploma. The family that lives on public assistance becomes stratified if it becomes comfortable with a life of welfare and stops

trying to improve their education, training and living conditions. While the bible teaches that believers should be content or at peace in whatever state that life gives them, it does not mean that they should give up and throw in the towel. A person who plays a game of cards doesn't quit because he's not dealt a good hand. He plays the hand he is dealt with every skill he has available. Many people who begin the game of life with a bad hand, end up winning because they refused to be satisfied and stratified.

Do you have a speech impediment? Don't resolve that I could have been a great speaker if…… Do like James Earl Jones, refuse to be satisfied and stratified and rise above it!

Do you have an physical impairment? Don't resolve that I could have been a great athlete if… Do like Wilma Rudolph, who overcame braces and trembling feet to become an Olympic champion. Refuse to be satisfied and stratified.

Were you born poor and find life gives you a hard way to go? Don't resolve that I could do but if…Rise up like John H. Johnson of Johnson Publishing company who took pennies and turned it into million. Refuse to be satisfied and stratified.

Refuse to almost succeed!

Refuse to almost get your GED!

If you do, you'll join the ranks of those who are so close but so far a way!

What was far away, gets closer every day

Finally, brothers and sisters, while this text focuses on those who are so close but so far away, it must also be noted that for believers, what was far away, gets closer every day!

For those who give up, "almost" is a statement of finality. It indicates a frustrating end that came up short. However, for those who are still struggling, "almost" means what was once far away is coming within our reach.

To those who have not given up on, "almost" has a new meaning.

Almost means that you have been running a steady race, the finish line is in sight.

Almost means that you have been climbing life's weary mountain and now you can see the summit at the top.

Almost means that you have been through the horrid weaping of the midnight and the dawn is on the horizon.

Somebody asked the question, "How far is the promised land?" It's closer to day than it was yesterday!

And I'm too close to turn around!

John in the Revelation heard the souls of the martyred saints and asked, "How long?" Just a little a while longer, came the answer, we're almost there.

Almost; just a few more risings and fallings!

Almost; just a few more settings of the sun!

Almost; after while, bye and bye, it will all be over down here!

One songwriter answered with these words, "I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know,

If Jesus leads me, who carried an old rugged cross!
If Jesus leads me, who died out on Calvary!
If Jesus leads me, who arose early Sunday morning!
If Jesus leads me, I shall get home someday!

No. 9063-Inspiration

A Crazy Faith that Makes A Whole Lot of Sense

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. 2 Kings 4:26 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:11-13***

Introduction

How do you maintain a healthy mind and spirit when the world around you is so crazy? It's not an easy task that's for sure, but the daily struggle of every believer is to maintain a balance in an unstable world. What gives us a sense of sanity in such situations is a healthy Christ centered spirituality that helps us balance the craziness of this world with the assurances of the kingdom of God. Without the sense of a godly presence or divine master plan in which we are integral parts, this whole world be uselessly crazy.

This is a crazy world. Our nation spends $100 billion or more to bomb a country and destroy its infrastructure then spends $150 billion to rebuild what it tore down! That's crazy.

A poor child stands in a lunch line in school wearing a $200 pair of shoes, $100 pair of pants, a $400 gold chain around his neck, diamonds in both ears, and a thousand dollars worth of gold in his teeth. What makes it crazy is this million-dollar man is eating free lunch. That's crazy.

When churches need armed guards; schools need metal detectors and law enforcement profiles anyone who wears a turban as a possible terrorist, we know we are living in dangerously crazy times.

Such times really challenge our mental stability. Believers struggle hard daily to overcome our fixation on these crazy situations, because we see so much craziness all around us. Consider the two men who stood in the park every day at the same time acting very strange. One man seemed to lean and push against something huge and strained himself to move it. The other man always stood a few feet away from him

and waved his arms. They were a sight to see, one pushing and the other waving every day. Finally, a curious passerby stopped and asked the man who was pushing a question, "What are you doing? He asked. "Everyday I come to the park somebody keeps putting this big stone in the middle of the road." The passerby was curious because it was obvious that there was no stone, but the man was convinced and continued straining trying to move it. "If I don't move this stone, there is no telling what can happen." The man said as he strained and pushed. The passerby asked the man who was waving, what he was doing. Without missing a single wave, he told the passerby,

"See that man over there. He's crazy. Everyday he comes to the park and thinks he ís rolling a stone. He's really crazy!" The passerby then asked the man, "What are you doing? The man answered, "He rolls that stone in the middle of the street, I'm directing the traffic so no one will hit it!"

If we are not careful, we can worry so much about this life that we make ourselves crazy with grief, anguish and pain. It is better when each of us is able to consider the circumstances of life from the context of being a child of God and resolve that, "All is well, because God is in control." That's not in the psychology book, but it's certainly in God's book the Holy Bible.

As Christians, we see the craziness of this world but we are not overwhelmed by it because we know the Lord. Knowing him gives a sense of balance, spiritual strength and mental stability that exceeds human understanding. Whatever craziness life brings, we know a God who makes meaning out of crazy things and that gives us peace.

Exposition

This text focuses on how lives that operate on faith display confidence, despite circumstances, that God will meet the needs of those who are called according to his purpose. Such faith provides assurance and balance for believers that contributes to a balanced spiritual and mental health.

The prophet Elisha's life was illumined by mighty miracles. Each had a special purpose and served as a demonstration of the power of God. On one occasion, Elisha came to say regularly at the home of an elderly god fearing couple that had no children. At verse 16 Elisha, acting as God's emissary, announced that she would have a child within a year's time as a reward for the kindness she had been shown. The next year the woman conceived. She had a son that grew old enough to walk and play. One day the child became ill and then died while sitting on her lap (v20).

Even though her child had died, the woman did not panic. She carried the boy into the room used by the Elisha on his overnight stays and shut the door. As she left to seek out Elisha, she told her inquiring husband "It shall be well." When she reached Elisha his servant asked: "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child?" Though her son lay dead upon a bed in her house, she responded, "It is well." That seemed a bit odd. To some it may have even appeared a little crazy, but to the woman it made a whole lot of sense.

Her statement suggested that she looked beyond the tragedy she saw earlier in her home. She looked to the God of Elisha. She felt if she could reach Elisha he could intercede with God and the situation could be reversed. She was so confident that she refused to leave until Elisha accompanied her home. Once there the prophet inspected the situation and then after a short while walked from the room with a living boy.

To the woman it was no surprise, she was confident that God would supply her need.

That is exactly the point that Paul makes as he writes to the Philippians. He noted that in his life time he had experienced abundance and periods of depravation. Through it all, he learned not to get excited, but God has always supplied his needs.

Together, these two biblical passages give a clear picture of confidence in the power of God to deliver. Faith in such a God may seem crazy to those who do not believe, but it makes a whole lot of sense.

Believers deal with reality rather than reject it

M. Scott Peck defines mental health as our ability to be dedicated to reality and truth at all costs. In fact, Peck, believes that the tendency to avoid reality and the problems inherent in it that is the primary basis of all mental illness. Reality for some people is disturbing. It is easier to escape it rather than live through it. A common phrase in our vernacular is "Deal with it!" That means tackle the realities around you rather than retreat from them.

How? That's where our faith becomes the crucial factor that provides the spiritual balance needed to overcome tearful situations with the love and embrace of an all powerful God. The links between spirituality and mental health are impressive. According to a Gallup poll, Americans who were identified as being spiritually strong were twice as likely to say they were "very happy" than those identified as being low in spiritual commitment. Spiritually oriented people are also much less likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, be divorced or unhappily married, to commit suicide. While spiritual commitment does not guarantee immunity from suffering or escape from stress, it does seem to be linked to enhanced joy and mental health.

The spiritual man or woman has learned how to deal with it. This sense of spirituality brings perspective. Consider the man who was driving his custom-made truck along the highway with a neighbor. The truck drove and rode well. Everything went well until the neighbor notice that the gas needle pointed to "E." Even though the needle pointed to empty, the driver never seemed to flinch. There wasn't a service station for miles, but yet the driver was so cool and collected. His passenger didn't take it so calmly. He kept watching the needle and looking desperately for a gas station. As the needle dived over into the red, he saw the driver push a little red button and he kept driving. When they finally reached a station the passenger said, "why weren't you worried when your gas tank hit empty." The driver smiled and said, "When I custom made this truck I installed two tanks. When my regular tank runs out, I just switch to my auxiliary tank and keep driving. The "E" means exchange tanks. It means, "Everything is under control!"

When the world gets crazy, believers know how to switch tanks and ride on "E."

A Sense of purpose

A man or woman who knows the Lord is able to maintain a spiritual balance in a crazy world because they have a sense of purpose and divine destiny. The nineteenth century Polish poet Cyrrian Norwid wrote "To be what is called happy, one should have (1) something to live on, (2) something to live for, (3) something to die for. The lack of one results in drama. The lack of two result in tragedy." Martin Seligman, the eminent psychologist, notes that the lack of meaning in our society today has reached epidemic proportions. He emphasizes that finding meaning requires "an attachment to something larger than ourselves."

All of these smart men and women simply repeat in different words what Jesus tells every believer. "If you want to save your life, lose it. The man that loses his life saves it." That paraphrase explains Jesus' teaching that believers find meaning and purpose in life when we plunge ourselves in a calling and mission greater than ourselves. Those who have a sense of purpose are able to deal with life. Martin Luther King said, "Any man who has not found something for which he is willing to die, is not fit to live." When we find our purpose, then we achieve balance and sanity in a crazy world.

Keep Your Eye on Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, we are able to overcome the craziness of this world when we are able to keep our eyes on Jesus. That's when we remember that despite difficult times, all is well.

In a crazy world of discrimination and hatred, Martin Luther King saw Jesus and maintained his dream of a future reality where love and peace would abide. Considering the times in which he lived, it was a crazy, but since he knew the Lord, it made a whole lot of sense!

In the crazy world of Nazi Germany, German theologian Dietrich Bon Hoeffer endured two years in a Nazi concentration camp clinging to his belief that God loves everyone even Jews and Blacks. Considering that he was about to be executed for his beliefs, it was a crazy position, but he knew the Lord and that made a whole lot of sense.

In this crazy world, believers still maintain a vibrant hope. As Rubin Alves put it, "Hope is hearing the melody of the future, faith is to dance it."

David dance nearly naked, it was crazy, but considering the blessing he enjoyed, to him it made a whole lot of sense!

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended, folks thought believers were crazy and drunk. However, they were not crazy; they were in the presence of God and that made a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when you're sick, but since God is able to heal the sick, it's not crazy, it makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when you don't have any money in your pocket, but since the word of God declares that, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness

thereof" then praising God makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when a loved one has died, but since Jesus has promised us life after death with him in heaven, then praising God makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy but believers are able to smile in the midst of troubles and stand firm in the midst of strong winds, because God is still on the throne. It may seem crazy but it makes a whole lot of sense.

Faith in God takes an ugly situation and makes it beautiful

Faith in God finds

—Strength in the middle of weakness; success in the midst of failure; peace in the midst of confusion; joy in the midst of sadness; comfort in the midst of loneliness.

In closing, I'm reminded of the true story of Horatio Spafford, who was a successful businessman who suffered extreme financial failure. His son died and the world seemed to topple around him. To take a rest he sent his wife and four children overseas on a boat to later join them. But the ship had a wreck and his four children died along with others. As he joined his grieving wife, Spafford read his bible and considered all that had happened to him and looked at the waters that had buried his children. His whole world had been destroyed, but yet he sat down and wrote these words, "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul!"

I don't know about you but I have learned how to say, "It is well!"

Storms may rise, but it is well!

Winds may blow, but it is well!

It is well because Jesus, my fortress in the storm is on board!

It is well because he died, and rose for my salvation!

It may seem crazy, but I still declare, It is well! It is well, with my soul!

..and that makes a whole lot of sense!

No. 9064-Anniv.-Church

The Lord has blessed this house

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 19, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." 1 Kings 9:3

Introduction

Have you ever had an occasion to look at your entire family and say to yourself the Lord has truly blessed this family. Every family has experienced a variety of situations over the years. Some of those situations have been joyful while others were painful. But, in those moments when we reflect upon our family, considering both the good and the bad; we still conclude that the Lord has blessed this house.

On special days, we reflect on the journey we have taken to reach this point. We see the mountains and the valleys in which we have spent so much time sharing each others joy or crying on each others shoulder. When we sort out the good days from the bad day's we still conclude that the Lord has blessed this house.

Though the years have brought us a mixed bag of health and sickness; youth and age; strength and weakness; through it all we still conclude that the Lord has blessed this house.

Though we have trudged through financial hard times when money was extremely tight or none existent, before seeing our way through, we still conclude that the Lord has blessed this house.

Though the years have sometime brought us disappointment, death and disability that challenged the very core of our faith, now looking back, we still conclude, that the Lord has blessed this house.

In a similar manner church families also reflect. Churches also see good times and bad times; fat years and lean years; mountain years and valley experiences. When churches pause to reflect, churches often respond in the same way as the individual family; "the Lord has blessed this house."

As Christians, we pause to review our journey so far with the Spirit of gratitude;

fully aware that the God we serve has blessed us more than we deserve. When we think of the long journey, we can only conclude that the Lord has blessed this house.

Exposition

This text focuses upon God's response to a prayer made by King Solomon.

Early in his reign, Solomon asked God for wisdom to lead the people. Later in his reign asked for God's blessings upon his plans to build a house for God. This text focuses upon God's answer to Solomon's request. In his answer God reveals that the temple constructed by Solomon's hand was an acceptable offering. In verse three God says, "I have hallowed this house." It is a noteworthy phrase because the fact that God hallowed this house meant that he had consecrated it for divine purposes. It was offered by the hands of men; it was accepted by the power of an eternal God. It was God's prerogative to hallow it—to sanctify or consecrate it. Matthew Henry says, "Men cannot make a place holy, yet what we, in sincerity, devote to God, we may hope he will graciously accept as his; and his eyes and his heart shall be upon it. Those whom God hallows or sanctifies, whom he sets apart for himself, have his eye, his heart, his love and care, and this perpetually." God promised Solomon that he would establish him and his descendants upon the throne of Israel for ever, provided they served him with an upright heart.

Solomon dedicated a building and God hallowed it. However, in the New Testament we are told God no longer lives in a building. Instead he lives with the body of every believer because our bodies are the temple of the living God. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? " New Testament Christians do not refer to any building as the "house of God." Church buildings are not the houses of God — believers are.. When believers gather together in one place, the whole place becomes the temple of the living God; God dwelling among his people by the Spirit. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in their very midst.

While Solomon acknowledged God's blessing of the house of stone,wood, gold and silver; believers praise God for blessing their temple, which is their bodies.

Like Solomon, when we look back, we see that God has blessed this house.

Blessed The facility

God told Solomon, "I have hallowed this house" the immediate reference was to the temple. The temple was an elaborate construction. Using money that David stored for the project and taxes, Solomon began the project with a sum that is estimated at two to three billion dollars. It took seven years to build the temple with the labor of 183,000 Jews and strangers, 153,600 Canaanites, 80,000 hewers of wood and stone, and 3600 overseers. The parts were all prepared at a distance from the site of the building, and when they were brought together the whole immense structure was

erected without the sound of hammer, axe or any tool of iron. (1 Kings 6:7). The facility was huge and elaborate.

The house was designed as the house of God, not for the people; therefore there were no pews in it and only priests, by strict rules, were even allowed inside. God said, "I have Hallowed this house."

The homes of believers are special places, hallowed by God. Our houses should be special. They should be places where God lives because our houses are where God lives.

Have you wondered why you can live in a fine hotel for several days, but yearn to get back to your house, which often is without the luxuries of a five star hotel? The bed in the hotel was nice, but there is no bed like the bed in your house. Your bathtub, your chair, room, sofa..they all seem special. For the believers the meaning is simple God has "hallowed this house." We should be careful about what happens in "this house" because God has hallowed it. Cursing, alcoholic beverages, lewdness, illegal drugs and ungodly activity should be out of place in any house which God has hallowed.

It is the same with church facilities. They are the places where we learn, fellowship and worship. They may not be as elaborate as those of others but they have meaning to us because God has "hallowed this house."

Blessed the Family

Solomon's blessing extended beyond the facility, it reached to his family. God promised Solomon the same blessing that he gave to David his father. He promised to bless his family as long as it remained within the arms of God. It was a family blessing for the House of David.

The term "house" is often used in the bible to refer to an extended family. The "House of David" refers not to the facility or his dwelling place but to his family. The House of Abraham or the House of Jacob referred to family. This makes God's words to Solomon even more meaningful, "I have hallowed this house" or this family.

Anniversaries are family celebrations. As the church celebrates, it also marks the celebration of family involvement and fellowship with the church family. Older families, celebrate their memories of learning and sharing burdens and moments of happiness with the church. New families celebrate new beginnings and expectations. Church anniversaries are times of family celebration and happiness because it is not just the anniversary of the church, but a celebration of the blessing that God has shared with every family within the church.

The church anniversary is a family celebration because its strength is tied to the success and welfare of its families. The old maxim is true, "So goes the family, so goes the church."

Families should celebrate because it is with the church that they said their speeches, performed in plays, played the piano, danced spiritual dances, sang in the choir, spoke, taught, learned, traveled, wrote, laughed, cried, married and buried their

dead.

Families should celebrate because it is with the church, that families have found counseling in times of trouble, help in times of need, and even reprimand when it was going in the wrong direction!

Families celebrate because God has "hallowed this house" and this family.

Blessed Legacy

Solomon's blessing began with the temple, extended to his family and ended with his legacy. A legacy is something that is passed from one generation to the next. It is a heritage of custom, ritual and expectations that are intrinsic to a family and inseparable from its sense of purpose and destiny. In verse five of the text God promised, "I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel." That's a promise of legacy. It's a promise to Solomon's posterity. It's a promise that House of David would be sustained because God has "Hallowed this house."

Every family has a legacy. Many today live in houses paid for by their parents, own land left to them by their ancestors, and are the recipients of benefits that have been provided by someone in a previous generation. Very few people rise high without drawing on the resources of someone who loans them the benefit of their treasure or good name.

Likewise, no church can celebrate its anniversary without reflecting on those who plowed the ground and planted the seeds of faith to bring it to its present point. Many church founders have gone to their rewards; their work lives on after them.

They left a legacy of tradition, custom, pride an even idiosyncrasies that have inspired us and moved us to climb higher toward our eventual destiny.

The memories of the deacons, ushers, choir members, Sunday School teachers and youth leaders who have gone before us linger in our mind. When we reflect, we see how God "hallowed" their lives as they pushed us one step closer to the ideal.

We celebrate the old warriors who, without pianos organs, praised God on dirt and sawdust floors and lifted their voices high!

We celebrate the old warriors who, without formal education learned and taught the word of God to us until it was etched in our hearts

We celebrate the old warriors who declared, "I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow!"

We celebrate them because God has "hallowed this house."

There's a blessing in this house

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we celebrate our history, heritage and legacy, we must also remember that there's still a blessing in this house!

God's promise to Solomon was not a one time pronouncement on the day of

dedication, it is a statement of truth to all generations. There is a blessing in this house!

There is a blessing in this church family!

There is a blessing in this fellowship!

There is a blessing because God has "Hallowed this house."

Today brothers and sisters, every believer should resolve to be faithful to the church because there is a blessing in this house!

The church is more than a mere religious institution it is a fellowship of the redeemed who all believe that there is a blessing in this house!

The church is more than an organization, it is a living organism of those who have been saved by grace, born again and work together because they believe there is a blessing in this house!

The church is a fellowship of those who are washed in the blood and sanctified for the service of the Lord. The church is an army of saints who all believe there is a blessing in this house!

The church is a bond of believers who have come to learn that God is a mighty present help in a time of trouble!

There are those who believe that those who worship with the church waste their time, but we know that there is a blessing in this house!

There are those who laugh at our faith in an unseen God and our weekly pilgrimage to be in his presence, but we don't laugh because we know that there is a blessing in this house!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that when God blesses; it's a real blessing.

When God blesses the impossible becomes possible!

When God blesses the unreachable becomes reachable!

When God blesses the unattainable becomes attainable!

God blesses in this house. We don't know how he does it, but he does!

Maybe that's why the songwriter wrote, "There's a blessing in this house for you. Even though you can't see it the Lord knows you need it! There's blessing in this house for you!

It's a blessing that was paid for on an old rugged cross!

It's a blessing that was secured with a crown of thorns!

It's a blessing that was guaranteed when Jesus died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He's still blessing…

He's still blessing this house today!

No. 9065-Youth

Not Harry Potter's House

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 26, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18:6***

Introduction

Have you ever read a fairy tale? Fairy tales are children's stories about unbelievable things that happen in other worlds to funny, amusing and amazing characters that in many ways emulate and imitate the people children see in the real world. In fairy tales, children learn about good and evil and they dream. There is always a witch or evil person and simple but understandable characters always represent good. There are hundreds of short fairy tales. One full-length fairy tale of the 1930's was the "Wizard of Oz" it was complete with a good witch, a bad witch, a tin man, a scarecrow, a lion, Dorothy and a dog named Toto. Everyone knew the tales were not true, but we dreamed of the Emerald City of Oz and believed that if we could be as courageous as Dorothy could we'd get home one day.

Every generation has its fairy tales. There has been a storm of protest over the five books of British author J.K. Rowling about a young British boy who is plunged into the magical world of Hogwarts to fight evil and champion good. The series is a modern day fairy tale complete with all of the figures of most fairy tales, witches, magic and goblins. The protest over the books is that many think they encourage children to believe in the occult.

Critics of the books say children will be attracted to Satanic forces as well as experiment with magic and the occult because of reading the books and watching the movies that follow. There have been book burnings and revival crusades around the world against the Harry Potter books. The protests have proven the old maxim to be true, if you want someone to do something, "tell them not to do it." As a result, over 150 million copies of the Harry Potter books have been sold.

Connie Neal in her book, "What's a Christian to do with Harry Potter?" suggests that there are many parallels between the fairytale world of Harry Potter and that of young believers. She suggests that Christian parents should help children see the parallels and use Harry Potter as a tool in the Christian faith, like any fairy tale, rather than view it as heretic literature that should be banned.

Who is Harry Potter? Young Harry Potter is a fictional character who lived with harsh relatives called the Dursleys, where he was forced to sleep in a closet at the

foot of the stairway. Soon he realized that that he had some very special powers.

One day he a special invitation to visit the land of the Hogwarts, a magical parallel world that exists along side this world. Harry was invited and convinced that if he entered into this parallel world that he would find his true destiny. If he chose to accept the invitation, he would be shown how to enter the magical world by stepping through an invisible transport station between tracks nine and ten. Once in the world of the Hogwarts he would be schooled in the magical arts and prepared to meet his destiny.

Once in the magical realm he attended school at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Young Harry was to be the champion of good over evil, but before doing so however, he would have to face many evil persons and use the magic that he learns in the world of the Hogwarts to save himself and others depending on him.

Harry Potter is a modern fairy-tale, much like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Alice in Wonderland, Little Red Riding Hood or the three Little Pigs. In fantasy worlds like these, good always wins and evil loses.

Children need to understand the complicated world in which we live. Fairytales help young minds sort things out and invite them to dream about magical places where evil does not win and people do live happily ever after.

Is there such a place? Is there a miraculous kingdom beyond the looking glass, where love will abide and the evil wolves, trolls and goblins will not exist?

Can there possibly be a place where no child will ever attend another funeral, see another relative get sick or be hurt so badly that he or she cries? Can there be such a magical place where the fun of a good day never ends because there will be no night? Is it possible to find a place where no one gets old, no doors have locks and there are never any fires, drive by shootings or drug dealers?

Is there such a place where there are no more housing projects, rent collectors, nights without utilities, or fear of any knock on the door at night?

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a place where the streets were made with gold, all houses were mansions, and peace was everywhere and everyday would be Christmas day forever?

Today, the good news is that there is such a place! Unlike Harry Potter, you will not find it in the land of Hogwarts. It is called the kingdom of Heaven. There is nothing magic about it. It is no fairy-tale.

It is a land prepared by God himself for every believer.

As Christians, we see the troubles of this world and dream about a better place. As children we played in fantasy worlds of make believe. As we grew in grace, we soon learned that our Lord is not a fantasy or make believe but he is real and is alive today.

In the Potter's House

Every believer who seeks to understand his own relationship should consider three houses, the first of which is the Potter's House.

Jeremiah 18 focuses on God telling the prophet Jeremiah to visit the Potter's

House to understand how Israel and each person is in the hand of God. Jeremiah went to this house and noticed a man who worked with clay, called a potter. The man molded and shaped the clay in a variety of ways. On some occasions, the potter noticed that there was trash or a foreign object in the clay so he tore it all down and rebuilt his creation. In verse six God asks, "Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand."

The lesson young believers learn first about the real world is that we are all in God's hands. He makes us, shapes us and molds us. Why would God want to do that? Because in the new world he is creating for us only certain kinds of people will live there. Galatians 5:22-23 gives us a clue as to the spirit of these people. They will possess love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, and temperance. Like a piece of clay, God molds us and shapes us to prepare us for a life in the kingdom.

When we become believers, we tell God to hold us in his hands and have his way. His way is often different from the ways of those around us. At school, the Christian youth is often different from many others on campus. He or she talks different, studies different and relates to others differently. They are not different in a Nerdy way, but different in a good way that singles them out as individuals who are obviously being shaped and molded for some great work.

It becomes obvious to those who watch Christian youth that they have been to the Potter's house and are being guided by the master's hand.

The Doer's House

Matthew 7:25 focuses on another house, which is the next step needed to prepare for the Kingdom of God. It's the doer's house. Jesus said people who hear his words and teachings and actually live by them will be like a man that built his house upon a strong foundation or a rock, which stood when storms came. Jesus said, "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

The house in this illustration is the life direction of the individual believer. It is personal. It is direct. The person who expects to enter the kingdom of heaven must be a person who actually believes in and lives by the principles of Christ.

To be a doer, we must hear the gospel preached, believe what we have heard then act on what we believe. Belief and repentance are essential, even for young people.

There is an old myth that says a child is free to sin because his sins are counted toward his parents. The reality is that no parent is held responsible for the sins of their children. A child who does not know right from wrong is covered by grace or the love of God alone. A child who knows right from wrong and chooses to do wrong will answer to God for himself, even if he is six, eight or 10 years old.

A child who builds his life on the right decides to do the right thing. Being honest is the right thing. Refusing to steal is the right thing. Honoring your word is the right thing. Giving your best is the right thing. Living a life that is based on what you learned in Sunday School and bible study is the right thing. It's what Christ talked about when

he referred to building your house on a solid foundation.

These are difficult times, but if you get a reputation for always trying to do what is right, you will weather the difficult times that will come in your life.

There is an old saying that says, "When you are right, God joins your fight. When you are wrong, you fight alone."

Maybe that's why the songwriter declares, "In times like these, we need an anchor. In times like these, we need a savior. Be very sure. Be very sure. Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock."

My Father's House

Finally, the believer who has been to the Potter's House and has secured a Doer's House is ready to go to "My Father's House."

Jesus constantly talked about his father's house. It is the final destination of every believer, including young people, who have been the Potter's House and built their houses on the solid rock.

"My Father's House" is a reference to the kingdom of heaven. It is a reference to the coming place where the saints of God will spend eternity.

While Harry Potter's land of the Hogwarts is a fantasy world of make believe and magic, the Kingdom of Heaven will be a real place.

In John 14 Jesus told his disciples that he is presently preparing a place for all believers in his father's house. In verse two he said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

Where is "My father's house?" The entire universe is my father's house! It is too big to even imagine and comprehend. Isaiah 66:1 says, ".. The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"

In "My Father's House" there are many "abiding places" that will provide a homeland for the soul.

Jesus said he's going to prepare a place for us. Why would he need to prepare a place for us? It's because he knew then what scientists now call the second law of thermodynamics; that this world is winding down! Time is coming to an end.

As we begin to hear of wars and rumors of wars, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

As we begin to hear of earthquakes, famines and pestilences in diverse places, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

As we begin to hear of global warming, diminished ozone protection, and cloning of human beings, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

Come and go with me, not to Harry Potter's House, but to my father's house!

In my father's house, the wicked will cease from troubling!

In my father's house, the weary will be at rest!

In my father's house, every mountain will be made low!

In my father's house, the crooked places will be made straight!

In my father's house, everyday will be Sunday. It's always howdy and never good

bye!

Bye and bye when the morning comes, we'll tell the story of how we've overcome.

We'll tell the story about Jesus, and how he saved our souls!
We'll tell the story of how he died out on Calvary and arose from the grave!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
There is joy! Joy!
Joy!
..Not in Harry's Potter's house..
But in my father's house!

No. 9066-Anniv.-Choir

Victory Songs for Every Day Battles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2, 2003

SCRIPTURE:"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy F83 another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. 2 Chronicle 20:21-24.

Introduction

Have you ever reached a low point when you could not even smile? Those days come when you leave for work or school with a heavy load on your shoulder and you feel low. Times such as these come when we face difficult tasks, moments of uncertainty, or feel overwhelmed by the enormity of a problem. Those around us notice our sullen demeanor and try to cheer us up, because the look of fear or defeat is apparent in our eyes. Whenever a believer is caught off guard, those days do come. Most of the time, however, believers constantly remind themselves that no circumstance or weapon formed against them can prosper, if their cause is just and God has promised a victory. In our darkness midnight we still have a song to sing.

There is never a single day when the enemy, Satan, does not attempt to surround the people of God. His motive is to seek and destroy.

Since there is never a day that the enemy is not waiting for an opportunity to ambush us, then Saints should constantly be aware of his presence and prayerfully approach each day.

Our days should begin with a song of victory that begins when we tell Satan to get behind, because victory is mine!

Satan doesn't know what to do when a saint begins to praise the Lord. Confusion sets in and he is frustrated.

Praising God is both an act of affirmation and an act of gratitude. It is a statement of faith in what's coming-affirmation; and a statement of thanks for what has been

done-gratitude. When Satan does his best to defeat a believer and he keeps on singing praises to God, he doesn't know what to do.

A country preacher sold a mule to a friend, and told him that the mule was not an ordinary mule, he was a holy mule that had been trained to run in an instant fast trot anytime he heard the words, "Praise the Lord," and to stop only when the rider said, "Amen."

The buyer mounted the beast and commanded, "Praise the Lord," and the mule shot off like a rocket. The startled rider panicked. "Whoa!" he screamed. The mule was headed straight for a cliff, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" At the last second he remembered the minister's instructions. "Amen!" he shouted, and the mule screeched to a halt right at the edge of the cliff. As the new owner peered down at the valley below, he wiped his brow and sighed, "Praise the Lord." -Without waiting a second, the mule took off!

As Christians, we begin each day with a song of victory on our lips. The day ahead will include several skirmishes and a battle or two. We sing a song a song of victory as we walk out of our doors because the battles ahead are not ours but the Lord's.

Exposition

This text focuses on a battle in Israel's history that wasn't fought by soldiers but was led by the choir.

Jehoshaphat was the King of Israel at the time of this text. He spent most of his reign trying to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. He made the worship of God the primary religion of the land again. He established mobile schools run by the prophets to go to the various sections of the land. In all his ways he attempted to do what was right and pleasing to God.

Despite his goodness, enemies formed against him. Conspiracies and coalitions were put together by Moabite and Ammonites. Another invading horde of desperado came in from the North to join the invasion parties. None of the groups that rose up against Jehoshaphat were natural allies. They were suspicious of each other, greedy and treacherous.

When Jehoshaphat learned that they had formed a powerful alliance to destroy his people he called the people to the house of God and prayed. He called for a national season of fasting and prayer. (V. 3 and 4). Hebrew kings that were faithful to God often did just as Jehoshaphat did, they called on God for answers to pressing national dilemmas. In verses 6-12 he prayed to God and listed all the ways he had been loyal and faithful. Then he asked God to protect the people from their enemies.

In verses 14-18 God answered Jehoshaphat by sending the prophet Jahaziel to deliver the oracle from the God. The prophet told him that the battle that Jehoshaphat was about to fight would not be his battle, but would be the Lord's.

It would be a complete victory.

There would be no doubts about its outcome and it would be complete and undeniable.

Jehoshaphat received the prophecy with reverence and gratitude. At verse 18,

it is noted that he bowed his head in prayerful respect.

Because he had received the promise from God, Jehoshaphat did a strange thing. Instead of ordering his foot soldiers to ready themselves for a fight or that black smiths would make more swords. He called upon the singer and musicians, the entire tribe of Levites, which consisted of thousands of singers and musicians to lead the army singing and playing music that gave praise to God.

As the armies of Israel marched praising God without sword or shield, before they arrived all of the coalition of the Ammonites and Moabites turned on themselves in a dispute. The survivors of that group then clashed with the horde of Edmonites from up North. They fought so hard that they killed each other off, down to the last man.

When Israel came marching up the way with their hymnbooks, and musical instruments the battle had already been fought and their enemies lay sprawled on the ground.

It took them three full days to collect all of the gold, silver and other things of value from the dead bodies.

Just as God had promised, they won the battle. Their only weapons were songs of praise and musical instruments.

Three Times To Sing Praises

There are three times we should sing praises to God:

PRAISE BEFORE THE FIGHT: Before we begin each day we praise God for what is going to happen. It is our personal affirmation or statement of trust in the promise he has given us. We don't praise God to get a promise. We don't send the praise up SO a blessing will come down, we send the praise is because a blessing IS ALREADY coming down! Praise is the dynamic force that brings the immutable promises of God in contact with the quickening Spirit. Praise is not coercion; it is a catalyst. A catalyst is an agent that causes a reaction between two or more forces, and yet remains unaltered when the reaction is finished. The affirmation of praise is the same both before and after the victory is won! You can praise God today for what He has promised, and you can praise Him tomorrow for what He has accomplished. One songwriter said, "You don't have to wait until the battle is over, shout now!"

PRAISE GOD DURING THE BATTLE: Praising God does not insulate us from facing the enemy. Jehoshaphat received the promise of God that he would be victorious, but he still had to face the enemy. The difference is that that they had the promise of the Lord. Upon hearing God's promise of victory, they began to praise the LORD! Moab was still waiting in the trenches. Ammon was preparing for the battle. The enemies on Mt. Seir were sharpening their swords. The battle plans were drawn. Alliances had been made. The enemy was just as real, and just as ready to fight. The only difference was Judah now had a promise. J. O. Sanders says, "Peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God!" Therefore, we don't praise God because there are no battles but because he is with us in the battle. We don't praise him because all of our enemies have given up on us but because despite their presence we have the promise of victory.

PRAISE AFTER THE BATTLE: The most obvious time to praise the Lord is after a battle has been won. Then it is a statement of gratitude for victory.

In Exodus 15, Moses sang a song of praise to God after Israel's enemies were defeated and drowned in the Red Sea. In Exodus 15:1 Moses said, "I will sing a song unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously.."

While it is a good thing to praise God for blessings received, believers must be careful with our praises. We should not keep God on probation, withholding our praises until he gives us something we want or responds to our circumstance in the way we desire. Our praise should not take on a complimentary air that says, "You did a good job, God, keep up the good work!" Our praise to God should not be conditional. We praise God because he is good, not because we won! We praise God because he is merciful, not because we were victorious. Even if things don't turn out the way we want, we praise God anyway, because he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

Keep Singing your song

Finally, brothers and sisters every saint should always stay close enough to God to keep singing your song.

In Psalm 66:1 David said, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands." The indication is that we should prepare to sing a song to praise to God in any circumstance.

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 Paul said, "We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair: persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed." No matter what the situation, if God has made you promise, let God fight the battle and keep singing your song.

In 2 Corinthians 6:9 Paul said Christians were known yet regarded as unknown, dying yet live on; beaten yet not killed; sorrowful yet always rejoicing; poor yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything!

No matter how tough the battle, if God has made you a promise, keep singing your song.

No matter how difficult the road ahead, keep singing your song!

In the midst of sickness and despair, keep singing your song!

If you have a song, you can encourage yourself with a melodic reminder that the battle is not yours but the Lord's.

Therefore we should be careful not let any circumstance steal our soul, lest we forget the victory that's on the way.

Paul showed us that if you have a song of faith, you can sing your way out of jail!

You may sing like a frog, but don't let anybody take your sing!

Your voice may be so bad that that the woodpecker stops pecking and the humming bird stops humming, but don't lose your song.

You may be in the shower, it's alright to sing your song!

You may be driving along in your car, it's alright to sing your song!

You may be carrying out your duties at work, it's alright to hum your song!

Whenever you lose your song, you lose your hope! That's what happened to

Israel while it was exile. They were in captivity, a long ways from home. They hung their harps on the Willow Trees and said, “How can we sing Zion’s songs in a strange land.

As saints, we should never let anyone take away our song.

You may lose friends but don’t lose your song! That’s what the songwriter meant when he said, “Winds may blow, friends may go. But he’s always right there by my side.”

You may lose your time, but don’t lose your song. That’s when you say, “I do not know how long t’will be, nor what the future holds for me. But this I know, if Jesus leads me. I shall get home someday!”

You may lose your way, but don’t lose your song. That when you sing, “I said to my soul, take courage oh, the Lord will make a way somehow!”

You may feel abandoned, but don’t lose your song. That’s when you sing, “Be not dismayed whatever betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. Through every day, over all the way, he will take care of you!”

You may be troubled by your test, but don’t lose your testimony!

In the midst of trouble, keep singing your song!

In the midst of bad times and heartache, keep singing your song!

In the midst of persecution, keep singing your song!

In the midst of indecision and doubt, keep singing your song!

“I sing because I’m happy. I sing because I’m free. For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!

With a song on your lips, keep telling the world about Jesus!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary!

Tell them how he arose after three days and nights with all power in his hands!

Keep telling the world that the same love that lifted him, lifted me one day; when noting else could help, love lifted me!

No. 9067-Love

When Love Don't Love Back!

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 8, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John 1:11

Introduction

Have you ever loved someone and he or she didn't love you back? Many people today are frustrated because they seem to give their all to others but never get back anything close to what they give. Sometimes it involves married couples. At other times, it involves people who are dating. This feeling of frustration sometimes involves relationships between parents and children or between siblings. It is a part of human nature to want our acts of love appreciated and returned. When our affections are not returned we are thrown for a loop and suffer as a result.

There are four types of love. All but one of them requires love to love back to exist. Eros, or romantic love is the kind of love that generally exists in romance. It operates at its best when both partners love back. Philia, or brotherly love also works best when it is returned. Acts of brotherly love, compassion and friendship thrive when they are returned by the recipient in some way. Storge, or the love that exists between family members such as father to son, mother and daughter is also dependent, to a great extent upon reciprocity. When a mother loves a child, this type of love grows best when the mother is loved back.

The ideal type of love however is Agape. It is the kind of love that God has for everyone. It is the kind of love that God has; it does not require the recipient to love back. It exists and even grows stronger even if it is not returned. Most of us spend our lives trying to achieve this level of love. Some parents have achieved it for their children. They love, even though they are not being loved back. Some who work to help their fellowman, continue to show love even though the people they help seldom love them back and often hurt them. There are some in relationships who have perfected Agape love to the point they have perfected the ability to love a spouse even when that love is not returned.

Sometimes we spend many years running around in circles, frustrating ourselves until we learned that we've been involved in one sided love affairs. Consider the man who filed for a divorce against his wife. When he stormed out of the house, he said he would never come back again. Two weeks later, he wrote her a very beautiful love

letter that said, “Darling, I am so angry with myself. You have tried to love me but I wouldn’t love you back. You gave me your heart and I broke it. You gave me your affections and I trampled them. You gave me your love and I squandered it. I now realize what a fool I have been. I can’t sleep thinking about you. Being away from you is breaking my heart. I want to love you, like you have loved me and enjoy our life together as partners. Will you forgive me?” –With All my love, your husband. P.S., Congratulations on winning the $100 million lottery last week!-There’s nothing like $100 million to jolt us into reality!

As Christians, we are learning to love as God loves. Our goal is to perfect the act of perfect love. He has given us the example. He loved us when we wouldn’t love him back. Even in our stubbornness, he loved us anyway. That’s the kind of love we are striving to achieve. Most of us have not achieved it yet, but working on it everyday!

Exposition

This text shows us how God showed loved to the world but his love was not received.

John tells us in a moment, the nature of God’s love for the world. God loved the world with intensity. He loved the world so much that he sent the word, to be born among men, to show us how to really love each other in response to God’s love.

The verse, “He came to his own and his own received him not” has a twofold meaning according to Ray Stedman. The phrase “He came to his own” in the neuter gender means he came to his own home, his own things and his own place. The second time “his own” is used it is in the masculine gender implying his own associates, his own relatives, his own family; “received him not.”

The Jews were Jesus’ own people. Palestine was his own place, because it was promised to Abraham generations before. He came to show love to his own people in his own place and they received him not.

What was Jesus’ response? He loved them anyway. He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities.

He came in love. They did not love him back.

He loved them anyway.

Track the way love acts

Love has telltale signs. 1 Corinthians 13 4-7 tells us how love acts. “Love suffereth long and is kind. Love envieth not. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly. Seeketh not her own. Is not easily provoked. Thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

It understands, endures, believes, trusts, and turns itself inside out as it considers how one would like to be treated in the same circumstance.

Love is not the possession of a thing. Rarely will those who feel like they are a

thing, love back.

Love is not the manipulation of a tool to achieve another end. Those who feel they are being used rather than truly loved, rarely love back.

Love is not the ownership of a slave. Those who feel denigrated to little more than a servant have difficulty loving back.

When love doesn't love back, perhaps we should check to see whether what are giving is really love at all.

We Love like that, when we've been loved like that

It's easy to love when you have been loved. It's harder if you have never had an example of real love in action. God has given an example of love for all of us to pattern after, even if we have not seen it in operation in our own experience.

"Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that." Ephesians 5:1-2.

We have a tendency to love others the way we have been loved. If we have not received the fullness of love, we do not complete give the fullness of love to others. When we have been loved, we know what it means to love. God showed us what it means to be loved when the word became flesh and dwelled among men.

Paul Jones says "Christian love is one's total response to being totally loved without deserve, without limit, and without qualification." God loves us without deserve, without limit, and without qualification. We love like that, when we've been loved like that.

We can love back, when we recognized that we have been loved like that.

Ready to love

Sometimes love doesn't love back because everything is not in place.

Love does not love back if the right person comes along but at the wrong time in our lives. The right person often comes but we are not ready for love. We are not ready to love unconditionally. We want to be loved but we have not reached the point in our lives when we want love someone else the way we want to be loved. We can't be loved because we are not ready to be loved. Love happens when we are ready to love and be loved, not simply be the recipient of love.

Love does not love back if the time is right, but we have the wrong person. We are ready to love. We are ready to share and show compassion but the person we have chosen is not ready to love. The person is ready for good times but not ready to love. The persons\ is ready for sex, but not ready to love. The person is ready for sharing an apartment, splitting the bills and shacking, but not ready to love. When that happens, we love but love doesn't love back.

God figures into the equation when he creates within each person the desire to give love without considering or expecting to be loved back. When both partners love like God loves they discover instantly that they have right person; and because they both know God, the time is right.

When this happens, they love and love back at the same time.

Love until it no longer hurts

We are learning to love as God loves. In the process of growing stronger in our capacity to love, all but a fortunate few grow through a period of hurt. We hurt because we expect to be loved back and our partners, family members or friends never quite meet our expectations.

When you love, do not expect something in return. Love with all your heart.... until it hurts... and until it no longer hurts."

It hurts to love and not be loved back.

It hurts to be concerned, but the one you are concerned about is not concerned. Be concerned until you no longer expect concern to be returned.

It hurts to support the one you love but the one you love does not appreciate your support. Support until you no longer expect appreciation for your support.

It hurts to give of yourself to the one you love but the one you love does not notice your giving or even try to give back. Give until you no longer expect the one you love to give back, just to receive.

It hurts to be injured in your spirit by the one you love because of betrayed trust and repeated breaches of faith. Keep hoping and trusting until it no longer hurts. God compensates you for trust betrayed and the injuries become less noticeable.

Love keeps coming back

Finally, brother and sisters, we should consider that the most salient feature of Godly love is that love keeps coming back!

Ibra January notes that God's love in its simplest sense is that it keeps coming again and again, and again, and again, and again!

We are not quite able to understand God's love but there are times in our experience when we have seen it in action.

Renita Weems, an African-American scholar and theologian, writes this about Godly love in the context of a growing relationship:

"If our hearts could speak, they'd confess that we've walked away from each other untold times. We've failed to honor each other with the names we've called each other to each other's face and behind each others back; cursed each other for not recording checks; felt revulsion for each others bodily sicknesses and have gone off in our minds and married, bought homes, and had children with others, fitter and finer than the one were wedded; to all of this we have done millions of times. And we've returned to each other again and again, remarkably, mysteriously, wondrously, begging each

others forgiveness, sheepishly, desperately, earnestly, disremembering what it was that drove us away, pledging again to talk before giving in to the urge to walk away. We keep coming back to each other. To keep a vow is not to keep from breaking it but to keep trying to discover its meaning."

To know real love is to know how to keep coming back, forgiving and starting again and again.

This is the kind of love Jesus spoke of when he said in John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We will never know what to do when love does not love back until we know the Lord in a special way. It's then that we can see how he loves us. As we duplicate how he loves us, we learn what to do when love does not love back!

To know what to do we must know the Lord and comprehend the depth of his love.

The Savior could have remained in the celestial realms of paradise, yet he chose a lowly birth in a Bethlehem stable.

He could have remained seated in the courts of heaven, yet he pulled off his royal robes walked the dusty streets of Galilee.

He could have spent the remainder of eternity, listening to angels extol the greatness of his name; but he chose to suffer humiliation and insult at the hands of people he came to save.

He loved the world, but the world received him not!
He loved the world, but the world rejected him!
He loved the world, but the world put a crown of thorns on his head!
He loved the world, but the world put a purple robe on his shoulder!
He loved the world, but the world nailed him to an old rugged cross!
He loved the world, but the world stuck a spear in his side!
He loved the world, but the world didn't love back!
But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!
He's still loving the world!
He's still lifting us up!
He's still lifting broken spirits!
He's still lifting bowed down heads!
He's still mending broken hearts!
Oh How I love Jesus! Oh How I love Jesus! Because he first loved me!

No. 9068-Communion

Eating Between Meals

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 16, 2003

SCRIPTURE: *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 1 Corinthians 11:26*

Introduction

Have you ever eaten snacks between your meals? Most of us have enjoyed a fine meal only to find ourselves snacking on a variety of treats before the next meal. The typing quantity of our snacks differs from person to person. Chips, cookies, candies, and a variety of treats are commonplace for many people who nibble and crunch between every meal. Besides the fact that we increased our calorie intake as well as our sugar and carbohydrate levels, eating between meals has a tendency to dull our desire for the next meal.

Many children do not understand why their parents frown upon snacks between meals. They insist that even if they eat a candy bar, a bag of chips, a soda pop, and a sweet cake or two, they will still eat a hearty meal. Parents lead their children away from snacks between meals because they know that despite their children's bold mental appetites they know that eating between meals makes it harder to eat the main course.

Snacks in themselves are not detrimental to our health. Many snacks are both tasty and nutritious. In balance, they provide energy, and reasonable calorie intake when considered alone. However, in abundance, or preceding major meals snacks can have a negative effect.

There are many believers who have at one time or another, eaten a full meal at the Lord's table only to lose their appetite for the next meal, because in between time they have dined on a variety of snack foods. The snack foods have dulled their desire for real spiritual sustenance at the Lord's table. As a result, they're not hungry when it's time for the Lord's supper to be served because they have satisfied themselves with a variety of snack food. Because they're not hungry, some miss the Lord's supper altogether. Others dine out of habit but are not excited about what's on the table. In this sense, snack foods give believers the false impression that their needs have already been met because they are not hungry.

It's a main course that brings the nutrition necessary to sustain us. For the believer, the Lord's supper represents the main course. It's the time when he or she spiritually renews their vows to God and commits himself or herself to a life of faith

that is rooted in our dependence on God.

As Christians, we appreciate the Lord's Supper because it symbolizes our relationship with Christ and his promises to us. From week to week and month to month, we live on those promises and we hunger for their renewal. When it comes to renewing our relationship with Christ, snack foods won't do.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's explanation of the Lord's supper, its purpose and the frequency of its observance.

Early believers, especially in the church at Corinth, observed the Lord's supper frequently. The observances became so large that they became what was known as "love feasts." There was plenty of food and drink for everyone. Somewhere in the observance, the Corinthians lost sight of the real meaning of the Lord's supper. This prompted Paul to write the words of this text reminding them of its true meaning.

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the sacrifice of Christ. The wine or juice used in the observance reminds believers of the blood of Christ which was shed for our sins. The bread is a reminder of Christ's body that was given as a ransom for our salvation.

Corinthians were warned that they should not come to the observances just to eat. In fact, in verse 34 believers were told to stay and home if they were hungry and attended the Lord's Supper just to eat.

Paul addressed the matter of frequency of the Lord's supper by using the words "as often" to describe the frequency of the observance. "As often" leaves the matter of frequency to local congregations. Thus, various congregations around the world have different levels of frequency. Some Eastern churches observe the Lord's supper only once a year. The Church of England requires its participants to observe the ordinance at least three times a year. Catholic churches generally observe it at nearly every mass. African-American congregations of nearly all denominations usually observe it once a month, with some describing it as their "pastoral" Sunday.

Many contend that things done too frequently lose their significance, thus long intervals exist between each observance. All agree that matters of frequency are not as significant as the meaning of the observance.

The Lord's Supper is a spiritual meal. Spiritually, we renew our vows to God and examine our relationship with him. It is a time of reflection and introspect, wherein we inspect the quality of our service to the kingdom. For many, it is a time when they see God clearer and with more meaning than any other worship service. They hunger for its return and make haste to find a seat at the Lord's Table.

There is a blessing at the table; that's why many hunger for the observance and protect the solemnity of the moment.

Between Meals

Since the Lord's supper represents the sacrifice of Christ and is a blessed moment in the life of a believer, what do we do between meals? Many believers are tempted to nibble on snacks between blessings and lose their hunger for God in the aftermath.

SWEET THINGS: There are many people who have a craving for sweet things between meals. Sweet things give a surge of energy and temporarily satisfy cravings. There are many who have a few sweet things that destroy their spiritual appetite. Men have sweet things. Women have sweet things. Sweet things, whatever they are, dull our hunger for spiritual things. In fact, there are many who lose their entire appetite for spiritual matters because they are living on a diet of sweet things.

NUTTY THINGS: There are many who have plunged themselves into "nutty things" that occupy their time and seem to satisfy their needs to the point that they have lost interest in spiritual things. As African-American men move into the middle class many routinely skip Sunday worship, even the Lord's supper to play a round or two of golf. Some women have found Sunday to be a perfect time to shop and browse the isle of their favorite store. One person's recreation is another person's "nutty thing" such as, sky diving, mountain climbing, high adventure treks or just sitting home and watching one sports event after another on television. It's easy for our recreation and pastimes to take the place of spiritual growth and strength. Those who exist on such a diet aren't very hungry for the things of God.

WET THINGS: There are still others who have developed a taste for "wet things" other than water. Beer, wine, and hard liquor have become regular fare for them to the point that they must have a "wet thing" associated with any activity. If they fish, they must have a "wet thing." If they hunt, watch television, or even mow the lawn, they must have a "wet thing." Over consumption of alcohol has been a destructive force that Has destroyed families, careers and lives. Those who must have "wet things" find little interest in the Lord's Supper which only offers a taste of grape juice that has no kick. They soon lose interest in spiritual things as they focus on their need for "wet things" to satisfy themselves.

The Main Course

Finally, brothers and sister, the Lord's supper is the celebration of a seven course meal, portions of which have been served to us all week.

Those who have dined in a five star restaurant are familiar with a seven course meal. If you have eaten a heavy load of snacks, very few people could actually eat a full seven course meal.

Depending on the restaurant, a seven course meal includes, (1) Breads and butter; 2)A salad 3)A soup or pasta, 4)A meat entrée 5)Fish or seafood Entrée 6)A desert and fruit 7)Coffee, Tea and cheeses.

God serves believers a seven course meal every time we come to the Lord's table. He prepares us with appetizers, feeds us two main courses and leaves us with dessert.

Yet, there is no room for such a meal if, in between the meals, all we have is a diet of snacks.

What does a believer do between one blessing and the next? Do we need a worldly snack to tide us over! Because we know the Lord provides us with a full table, believers avoid snacks between meals.

There are many that look at the full plate that the Lord offers and conclude that "he has prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. He annointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

After a good meal, those who shared the meal, usually thank the person who provided and prepared the meal.

That's why those who have received blessings from the Lord, give him thanks everyday.

What should we do between blessings? We should praise the Lord!

Between one blessing and the next, we should be busy praising God!

Praise him because he is good and mercy endureth forever!

Praise him because of his wonderful works!

Praise him because he continues to give us a full plate every day of our lives!

Praise him because he came to earth, born of the virgin Mary!

Praise him because he lived among men for 33 years!

Praise him because he died on an old rugged cross for the remission of our sins!

Praise him because Early Sunday Morning he arose from the dead, with all power in his hands!

No. 9069-Funeral

The Last School Bell

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 22, 2003

SCRIPTURE: Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Deuteronomy 4:5

Introduction

Do you remember answering school bells? Most of us remember the school bells. When we were students, they signaled the end of one class and the beginning of another. Sometimes, there were recess bells. At other times, there were lunch bells. A few times a year, there were fire drill bells. The ringing of each bell indicated that one process or another was either beginning or ending.

Generally, we have been conditioned to live by the bell. Like the proverbial Pavlov's dog, we respond to the ringing of the bells. In some Sunday schools, the superintendent rings a bell to begin worship or to begin class. In some stores and shops, we ring a bell to get service. Visitors at our door usually ring the doorbell. Farms and ranches generally have a dinner bell. There are wedding bells and there are church bells. There are warning bells and there are death bells.

There was a time when the ringing of a church bell during the week signaled death. The slow tones of the bell rang throughout the community as those who heard it wondered who had gone to meet their fate.

In 1631, John Donne a noted clergyman of his day, sensed the approach of death. He wrote his own funeral sermon and posed for a painting in his funeral shroud. He had seen the phases of his life and was comfortable with his end as he wrote these memorable words, " ....No man is an island, entire of itself...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

If ever a profession understands the reality of bells it would be the teaching profession. It seems at times that one bell or another governs the entire life of a teacher. The beginning of class is signaled by a bell. The end of the school day is also signaled by a bell. After many years on the job, some teachers dread hearing the first school bell of the year, and rejoice greatly when they hear the last school bell.

Between the first bell and the last bell teachers mold and shape young minds. Henry Adams once said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Between the first bell and the last, teachers spend the bulk of their lives lecturing, preparing, scolding, begging, pasting, filling out reports, recording

grades, checking papers, worrying about students, being frustrated with administrators, and staying up late at night searching for the best way to reach the children they teach. Between the first bell and the last bell, teachers prepare students for life; the best teachers prepare them for eternity as well.

There has been considerable debate about how much time teachers teach. Some feel that football and basketball coaches should be given extra compensation because they work long hours after class. Certainly, that claim is true, but it is also true of every good teacher. Long after the school bell closes a day, most teachers are still at work, investing in the lives of their students as tutors, sponsors, play directors, program planners, band leaders, dance instructors, trip coordinators and many other unknown, thankless and payless jobs. Even at home, teachers find themselves reading essays, preparing bulletin board material and working often into the wee hours of the night. Long after the bell tolls an end to the teaching day; good teachers linger out of a sense of pure dedication alone.

Between the first bell and the last bell teachers do what comes natural to them. They teach. That may seem easy to some, but most people know that "everybody can't teach." The worse thing that can be said about a preacher is that he can't preach. The worse scorn that can be said about a teacher is that she "can't teach." Consider the notorious gambler who was ordered by the court to take his child to school. The gambler protested that he taught his child everything he needed to know and didn't need school. On the first day of school, the teacher wanted to see how much her students already knew. She asked the gambler's son for a demonstration of what he knew. The teacher asked, "What comes after one?" The boy answered, "two, three and four." The teacher was impressed. "What comes after five?" The boy answered, "six, seven and eight." It seems that the boy was really learning at home. "What comes after nine?" Asked the teacher. The boy quickly answered, "Ten." "What's after ten?" The boy smartly answered, "That's easy, Jack, Queen, and King!"-Everybody can't teach.

Between the first bell and last bell teachers love. An old school teacher celebrated her 80th birthday with a grand party. It proved to be a marvelous occasion, highlighted by the presence of a great number of her former students. It seemed that she taught school in one of the worst sections of the city. Despite the rough neighborhood and the tough students she faced, she saw many of them become doctors, others lawyers, educators, ministers, honorable craftsmen, and skilled technicians. When news of her 80th celebration spread, many of her former students showed up. She was asked what secret made her teaching so rewarding? She said, "Oh, I don't know. When I look at the young teachers in our schools today, so well-equipped with training, computers, technology and their fancy teaching techniques; I really wasn't prepared to do all of that. I had nothing to give my students but love."

Good teachers teach, but somewhere between the close of the school day and the first bell, they also live. Good teachers are mothers, grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers. They laugh and talk, wash dishes, iron clothes, shop, read, and enjoy their families. Somewhere in a crowded day they find the time, perhaps in the wee

hours of the night, to pray and talk to God; he gives them strength for the journey and renewed inspiration.

As Christians, we celebrate the life of good teachers. We rejoice that God gave them to us. When we hear that the bell has tolled for one of our teachers, we too are diminished, because that bell has told for me.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses in his last days, urging Israel to teach their children and grandchildren what they have been taught about the Godly life.

The Book of Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of Moses. Written in the closing years of his life, Moses repeated again what he taught the people for over 30 years or so. The supremacy of godliness and the strict observance of God's law was the central focus of his teaching.

In this text, Moses notes that he taught the people what God taught him so that they would be prepared for the future that awaits them. He charged them to keep the law, do the law and cherish the law of God all of their days.

Since the moral law came from God himself, it was a treasure that should be taught to each succeeding generation. The law of God taught the importance of godliness, clean living, abstinence and the value of honesty and integrity to his children. Thus, Moses maintained that every parent had the responsibility of teaching these principles to their children; and should they be blessed with long life, to teach them to their grandchildren. They should be taught at home and in the public square. The importance of teaching was underscored to the point that Moses instructed that the laws of God should be taught in the morning, at noonday and at night; that they should be inscribed over the doorposts of their houses.

Although Moses lived for 120 years, he knew he would not always be present to be Israel's schoolmaster. Soon the last bell would ring. Yet, the principles he taught were everlasting and should be continued throughout the generations. Those children of coming generations would need these guiding principles to possess their individual promised lands.

Thus, Moses closed his life by giving one final lesson to Israel before the last bell rang for him. It was the lesson that the people should fear God, walk in his ways and he will help them to possess the bright future in front of them.

The Ringing of the Bells

Every life could easily be characterized by various periods. In each of these phases of our lives we learn things about ourselves and our relationship with God, our family, and other people. It's as if life is a preparatory school, preparing us for a greater experience in eternity.

FIRST BELL: The first bell of our lives awakens us to who we are and where we are going. It also awakens us to the existence of God and our relationship to him.

When the first bell rings, we attend Sunday school, we learn about Christ, participate in church activities, and we learn that God is truly a good God. At some point in the first phase of our lives many people accept Christ as their personal savior. And begin a spiritual journey that we will follow all of our lives. There is an inherent beauty in that first phase. Our ideals are pure and our view of the world is not contaminated by failures and frustrations. The first bell is our youth and adolescents.

SECOND BELL: The second bell of our lives signals our pursuit of marriage or a career or both. If God is merciful and benevolent as he always is and desire a mate, he helps us find the right mate, exchange our vows, and begin a life journey with our soul mate by our sides. It's during this second bell that we perfect our craft and intensify the effectiveness of our witness. It's the phase where good teachers get better and better teachers achieve their best. For some, it's also the time when we learn to be good wives and husbands and struggle to learn, love and live lives with another person

THIRD BELL: The third bell of some lives is parenting. That is a hard period of time that usually covers between 20 to 25 years. It is a time of sacrifice and struggle, joy and frustration that all seem to come at the same time. When the third bell rings, babies cry, school buses roll, and there is an endless rush to PTA, choir rehearsals, youth meetings, recitals, teas, and debutante balls. The third bell is hectic as one child after the other demands a moment of time to kiss a hurting finger or to solve a major problem. The third bell is a tough period.

FOURTH BELL: The fourth bell is retirement. It's like a lunch or recess. It's a time to relax and reflect. It's a time when there are a few minutes to yourself to contemplate and enjoy. Even then, some teachers are not completely free because many have to pull lunch duty or keep their eye on a class. Even so, many, even in retirement, find that when the fourth bell rings, their retirement is cut short when they are called back to the classroom to substitute or fill in because they are needed. That's when teachers learn that good teachers never really retire, they keep teaching until they run out of chalk.

The Last Bell

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that just as there is a first bell that begins every life, there is a last bell that indicates that it's time to go home.

Teachers love the classroom, but they don't want to live there forever. When the last bell rings they want to go home.

So it is with the life before us. This life, lived so well, answered the call of every bell.

When the first bell rang, she accepted Christ and dutifully decided to live for him all of her life, working in the church and to the best of her ability.

When the second bell rang, she married a handsome man and pursued a teaching career. In sickness and in health she stood by him in love and devotion as she taught the children of others.

When the third bell rang, she gave birth to her children and reared them in the

Godly way. As Moses commanded she preached to them and lectured them about honesty, cleanliness, Godliness and the way of honor. Throughout their lives they never left her classroom as she gently urged, suggested and even demanded that they stay the course.

When the fourth bell rang, she retired from the classroom, only to be called back on occasion. She worked in her church and enjoyed her family well passed her three score and ten years.

Every teacher knows that when the end of the day draws near there is an axious feeling that begins to bubble inside. It's anticipation!

We've enjoyed the laughter, but we anxiously await the last bell to ring!

We've enjoyed the smiling faces, but we impatiently watch the clock, waiting for the last bell to ring!

That's what Paul had in mind when he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!"

When the last school bell rings, teachers pack away their chalk and erasures, overheads and roll books

When the last school bell rings, desks are cleared, drawers are emptied and bulletin boards are cleared.

When the last school bell rings, the weary teacher breathes a sigh of relief, takes a breath of hope and looks forward to going home!

Home, where the wicked will cease from troubling

Home, where the weary will be at rest!

Home, where every day will be Sunday and it's always howdy and never good bye!

Home, where crying days will be over!

Home, where we'll be in the presence of God!

Home, the place Jesus came to tell us about!

Home, the place Jesus called "My father's house!"

So we would have a place to call home, Jesus, the divine superintendent carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's Hill!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

He's tolling the bell for every saint saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burden I will give you rest!"

Come home!

Come home!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

—

On Sunday November 16, 2003 Retha Lewis heard the last bell ring. She erase her board, packed her papers, folded away her plans and quietly went home.

No. 9070-Thanksgiving

We Are Pilgrims Too

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 23, 2003

SCRIPTURE: These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:13-16

Introduction

When did you first learn about Thanksgiving? Most of us learned about Thanksgiving in school. Like children, today we learn that the Pilgrims came to America in 1621 on ship named The Mayflower. We were taught about the difficult times they endured as they went through their first year in the new world. They endured a tough winter, cold, diseases and misunderstandings with many of the natives. When the first harvest was complete and food abounded they decided to have a day of thanks to God for helping them survive that first year. That was generally known as the first official thanksgiving observance in America.

In 1789, President George Washington declared that November 26, 1789 would be observed as a day of Thanks in all of the United States. However, it was not repeated the next year. It was a one time celebration. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation naming November 26 at a national day of thanks. Finally, in 1941, Congress made the last Thursday in November Thanksgiving Day.

It began with the pilgrim's act of gratitude an ended with a holiday that is observed only in America.

For some, Thanksgiving day does not have the meaning that George Washington had in mind. It is just turkey day.

For some, Thanksgiving day does not mean what it meant to the pilgrims, it is just a good day to watch the Thanksgiving Day parades and football games.

Those who view it as a day to praise the Lord, you will probably gather their families together under one roof and reflect upon a year of activity and give God praise and thanks for the good times.

We celebrate Thanksgiving in America by looking first to the pilgrims who came to this country seeking a way to worship and please God commensurate with their conscience. Here they found a land and peace with God.

But we too are pilgrims. We too are seeking God. We have not found eternal peace because we are citizens of another country on our way home, praising God all the way.

It all began with the pilgrims, but it's not about the pilgrims of Plymouth Rock. It's about the Pilgrims who believe in the Rock of our Salvation, because we are pilgrims too.

Just as the pilgrims who came to America endured difficulties and hard times, we too have seen our difficult days. We are pilgrims too!

Just as the pilgrims suffered sickness and death; we too have seen our share. We are pilgrims too.

Just as the pilgrims struggled to survive that first year, we struggle to survive every year, we are pilgrims too!

As Christians, when the official Thanksgiving Day comes, we give thanks to God for his mercies and blessings because we are pilgrims too!

Exposition

This text, inspired by God but written by an unknown writer, describes every believer as a pilgrim on the journey toward the Promised Land.

Generally described as the faith chapter, Hebrews 11 traces the activities of several of the patriarchs of biblical faith as they journey from one place to another in faith that God would lead them safely. Each sought to find a place to worship God, give him praise and live in peace. They were looking for a city that would resemble the paradise of Eden. The city they sought did not exist and cannot exist as long as the frailties of man exist. Such a city would have to be a city not made with the hands of man.

By describing believers as pilgrims, it is suggested that this earth is not our home, that we are on a journey looking for something. After finding it, we expect to return home.

We are Like the Pilgrims

Since we are pilgrims on this earth, we share similarities with the pilgrims of Mayflower and as a result should give praise to God for the same reason.

WE HAVE SEARCHED FOR GOD: Like the pilgrims, many of us have searched for God and found him. Over the years, there are many who can testify that they have truly come to know God in a better way than they have ever known. Many have turned from their wild ways and have given God a higher place in their lives. Many are reading their bibles more, talking about God more and have developed a thirst for information about and insight into the will of God for their lives. The moment we actually find God is a powerful moment. It is an exciting moment that cannot be described. The pilgrims of Plymouth Rock came searching for a place to worship God and realize his presence. When they found it, they gave thanks. We give thanks to God for leading us to him. We give thanks for his mighty works in us and for the relationship he has created

between us. We give thanks for the feeling of joy and appreciation that exists in our families as one member after another also finds God and way more personal than ever before. We give thanks because we are pilgrims too!

WE HAVE ENDURED DIFFICULTIES: Like the pilgrims, we too have endured difficult times. For the Pilgrims it was a difficult winter. We understand that because we endured many difficult winters, summers, springs and autumns. Yet in all of our difficulties God has been good.

We have faced sickness in our families as well as, failure, frustration and financial trouble.

We have wrestled with wayward children, struggled to hold on to marriages and have worked fought against attempts to destroy the unity of family bond.

We have even faced the pain of death. Yet, God has still been good.

When the winter passed, the pilgrims assembled themselves and gave thanks. A cynic would have counted their losses and blamed God. But the pilgrims looked back with a sense of gratitude.

We are pilgrims too. We agree with the songwriter who said, "I've had my good days, I've had many hills to climb. But all of my good days, out weigh my bad days. I won't complain."

Not only do we not complain, but also we give thanks and celebrate the goodness of God in all things. We are pilgrims too.

WE HAVE A SPIRIT OF THANKS: Like the pilgrims, we have a general spirit of thanks for what life has put on our plate. They could have had a different spirit, but they gave thanks for everything. We are thankful to God for everything, not just those things that we like. Consider the boy who sat down to thanksgiving dinner with his family. The food was piping hot and it appeared that this thanksgiving would be one to remember. The table was covered with all kinds of foods! There were meats, pies, cakes, dressings, ducks, hens and turkeys. The food looked delicious. Except for the broccoli. He hated broccoli! When his mom fixed his plate she killed his appetite when she put the biggest spoonful of broccoli on the plate. His stomach turned. Soon his father asked him to bless the food for the family. All heads bowed, but the boy never said a word. They waited and despite his mother's urging, the boy would not bless the table. Finally, his father asked him to explain the problem. "I don't know what to do. I can't give thanks for the food because mama put broccoli on my plate. If I had gave thanks from broccoli, I'd be telling a lie-and what's worse, he might give me more!" Like this little boy, some people are unhappy with some aspect of their lives and they believe giving thanks might bring more of it, so they don't give thanks at all.

The pilgrims gave thanks for the cold and the disease and for those who survived. They thanked God for bitter winter and for warmth of the summer.

Since we are pilgrims too, we should thank him, remembering that the word says, "In everthing, Give thanks!"

Everyday is Thanksgiving

Finally, brothers and sisters while the pilgrims observed Thanksgiving after their first winter, and George Washington declared a single day of thanks in 1789, modern day pilgrims should not wait for a presidential decree, but should give thanks everyday!

God blesses us everyday, so we don't have to wait until the last Thursday in November to give thanks. Everyday should be thanksgiving.

The word indicates that we are to offer thanks to God every day!

1 Chronicles 16:18 says, "Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds upon the people!"

Psalm 92:1 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto thy name!"

Psalm 106:1 says "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endured for ever!"

Psalm 140:13 says "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence."

When we wake up in the morning, give thanks! However, Psalm 119:62 says even "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments!"

When we break bread, give thanks!

When we close out a day, give thanks!

We give the Lord thanks for giving us a:

—Peace that can never be troubled!

—Foundation that can never be moved!

—Promise that can never be broken!

—Refuge that can never be conquered

—River that can never run dry!

—Victory that can never be lost!

—Wealth that can never be stolen!

We offer thanks for Jesus who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

Thank you Lord for giving us one more day!

No. 9071-Anniv.-Church

The View From Mt. Nebo

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 23, 2003

SCRIPTURE*: "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan." Deuteronomy 34:1*

Introduction

Have you ever seen a breathtaking view from a high place? When you are able to see things from a high place, they seem different. From a high place, a man can see the entire forest, when all he has seen before were individual trees. From a high place, a man can see an entire city, when all he saw before was individual houses and streets. From outer space, we are able to see the entire earth, when all we could see before that was our little portion of the earth. Things that you considered big when you were on the base of the mountain look small when viewed from the top. When we climb higher, we get a panoramic view of things that allows us to see a wider, broader picture of life rather than a narrow perspective.

Many people have trouble understanding the big picture. It is difficult for them to see how they relate to the whole forest because all they ever see is individual trees. A child sees the little picture of life. He receives a "D" on his report card and feels his parents should be pleased because he passed. He can't see the big picture of how that "D" will compare in the competitive world where brain and intellect are rewarded and "D's" are completely disregarded. A person unfamiliar with a route may become discouraged as they travel a back road and only see trees and unfamiliar sights. But, the person who charted the course knows where the road leads and how traveling this road will connect with a final destination. He can see the big picture.

So it is with churches. Often church members can't see the big picture, they get frustrated along the way because all of their efforts seem futile.

Every now and then, as churches stop to reflect on their journey, God takes them to the mountaintop to allow them to see the big picture. From a high place, they are able to see from whence they have come and see where they are going. They see the hills, valleys and deserts they have already crossed and they see the tough terrain ahead.

The view from the mountaintop gives them both an appreciation of the past journey and inspiration for their new journey.

The view from the mountaintop breaths hope for those who have perhaps

concluded that it is all fruitless and non-productive.

The view from the mountaintop revives their spirits as they prepare to go forth into an unknown future.

As Christians, we thank God for mountaintop experiences. Anniversaries, such is the one celebrated today, gives us a chance to look back at the long journey, and to look forward to the great land promise that lies ahead.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as God shows him a view of the promised land from atop Mt. Nebo.

Mt. Nebo is part of a range of mountains of which Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Nebo are alternative names for the same location. God called Moses to the top Mt. Nebo and allow him to see the beauty of the land of promise.

From Mt. Nebo, Moses was able to see Gilead, Hermon, Tabor, Ebal and Gerizim.

From Mt. Nebo, he could also see Jericho, the lower Jordan, and the Mt. of Olives.

From this panoramic view of the Promised Land Moses was reassured that that the 40 year journey from Egypt to the River Jordan was not in vain. The land was truly as God had promised, flowing with opportunity, as freely as milk and honey.

Shortly, after Moses died but the people marched on to enter the promised land and claim the promise of God.

From Mount Nebo

Every Church that celebrates an anniversary climbs Mt. Nebo for moment. From that mountaintop experiences it draws three conclusions:

THE JOURNEY AHEAD IS WORTH THE STRUGGLE. Believers should be encouraged when they look to the future; God has great plans for his church and its individual congregations. There is poverty all around us, but from Mt. Nebo we can see a day when all of God's children will enjoy the riches of God's treasure. There trouble all around us, but we can see a day coming in the kingdom of God when there will truly be peace on earth. There is hardship and difficulty now, but we can see the day coming when crying days will be over. The Word of God teaches us that, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things." Martin Luther King used this picture of Mt. Nebo, when he said, "I have been to the mountaintop. I have seen the promised land." Every believer should also say in his heart that God has great rewards in store for us. "Eye hath not seen nor has it entered into the hearts of man" to even imagine the great things that lie ahead for us.

THE JOURNEY HAS BEEN WORTH THE SACRIFICE: Believers should be encouraged as they stand at this point in their journey, atop Mt. Nebo, to know that the sacrifices they have made have not been in vain. The very fact that Moses was able to stand atop Mt. Nebo and view the promise land was a blessing in itself. It meant all of his obedience and sacrifice was not in vain. Many believers have made great

sacrifices to promote the kingdom of God. Many have served when they were sick. Some served sacrificially unto their dying day. Many have given of their money and land until they could not give anymore. Many have given their best years to the promotion of the church. To these the Lord will respond, "I know thy works." Sacrifices will not go unrewarded. Sacrifices have been meaningful; so meaningful that the songwriter wrote, "I wouldn't give nothing for my journey now!" The church has reached this point because of the sacrifices of believing members and God will reward every sacrifice in a great way.

THE JOURNEY IS A CREDIT TO THOSE BEFORE US: as Moses stood atop Mt. Nebo, he had to look back for a moment. He had to remember those who left Egypt with hope in their hearts, on their way to the promised land. Now as the children and grandchildren of those old warriors stood at the base of Mt. Nebo a sigh of appreciation can be heard across the centuries. No church should ever forget the contributions of the old warriors that have paved the way. New members to a congregation should be aware that whatever comforts they presently enjoy, were provided by a generation of saints before them. Their names are varied and the contributions many, but the record would not be complete if their sacrifices were ignored. The story must be told of the old warriors who marched out of slavery to establish churches with little more than faith and a handful of dirt. The story must be told of old warriors who worshipped by the light of lanterns and kept warm by wood burning stoves. The story must be told of the old warriors that kept the church doors open despite depressions, hard times and wars.

Who will tell the story?

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we stand atop Mt. Nebo and see the challenges ahead, the question is asked, who will tell the story?

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

Moses saw the promised land from the top of Mt. Nebo, but I know a man, who saw the world from the top of Mt. Calvary

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Go forth from Mt. Nebo, in pursuit of the promised land and holy ground!

Keep trusting in God!

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9072-Thanks

So Blessed, I'm A Mess

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 27, 2003

SCRIPTURE: 22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: 29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. Genesis 27:22-23; 27-29.

Introduction

Have you ever been in a mess? Ideally, life should be sensible, orderly, logical and righteous. Most of the time it is a mess. What is "mess?" It is the absence of logic, truth and order that we call "mess." If it is not logical or does not make sense, it's mess. If it is not true, it is "mess." If it is disorganized and out of order, it's "mess."

When an issue is illogical or does not make sense, we say it's a bunch of mess.

If several people are gossiping and spreading untruths about someone, we call what they say, "mess." If a meeting is disorganized and everyone speaks out of turn, we say the meeting was a "mess."

When a house, room or situation is out of order and in complete disarray, we say it's a "mess."

To avoid being a mess we must have all three: logic, truth and order. Whenever anyone of the qualities are absent from a situation, it becomes a mess.

It's possible for a situation to make sense and be truthful but fail because it is terribly disorganized and has no order. It becomes a mess.

It's possible for a conversation to be orderly and logical but not have an ounce of truth in it; it becomes mess.

Whenever one of the three qualities is missing, it's a mess.

When our lives are out of control, in disarray or when we begin to do things that are illogical, stupid, and unfaithful to the truth, we start to feel that our lives are a complete mess.

When we can't get control of our time, reel in our bad habits, arrange our lives in the way we know is right or discipline ourselves, we say we are in a mess.

Most people have made a mess of our lives because we either lost, logic, truth

or order in our lives. Some of us have made a complete mess of our lives because we have lost all three.

In the midst of our mess, there is God, who restores sense, truth and order to our lives. Thus, in our mess, we are blessed by his eternal presence and willingness to favor us with benefits even though we are not worthy.

As Christians, we are thankful to God for his mercies and his benefits to us, despite the fact that we are unworthy to receive them.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob receiving a blessing from his father.

Jacob and Esau were twins but Esau was the oldest of the two by minutes. Rightfully, Esau should have received the blessing of inheritance but their mother tricked the aging father into giving the blessing to the young Jacob. Jacob was not worthy to receive the inheritance blessing.

Isaac blessed Jacob to have increase, lordship and success. It was a powerful blessing for a life that was really a mess.

Jacobs's life was really a mess. Because of the stolen blessing, he and his brother were at odds. In fact, his brother threatened to kill him the next time he saw him.

He worked seven years to get the woman he loved, and then discovered that he had to marry her sister too and work seven more years. After 21 years, he had 12 sons by two wives. He was blessed but he was in a mess.

He returned home but had to face his angry brother.

In that mess, he wrestled with God until he received a final blessing that changed his name from Jacob to Israel.

He was so blessed, he was a mess!

Even in his difficulties, frustration and self created mess, Jacob was blessed!

In our Illogical Mess God Continues to Bless

It made little sense for Israel to turn to a golden calf when Moses went into the mountain for 40 days and nights. God brought them from Egypt and drowned their enemies in the Red Sea. It made little sense for them to claim they needed a God they could see. When Moses returned from the mount with the 10 commandments in his hands, he found a people that were completely blessed, but were yet in a mess.

What Israel did, made little sense. When we think about our lives, there are times when we have done some things that have made little sense. We have said cruel things to a spouse who has done nothing but love us. We have wasted resources we know should have been used for better purposes. We have done all this, with the full knowledge that should be doing better. It doesn't make sense.

Even as it relates to God, we have really related to him in ways that have not made sense. We doubted him in our times of trial, when we know that he has never abandoned us in the past. We have turned to other gods that demand our time and attention, when God has never failed us. It doesn't make sense. Often our spiritual

lives are a complete mess.

Moses had to tear down the golden calf, bring Israel to its senses and challenge the people to be on the Lord's side.

When we come to our senses, we realize that God has been good to us. Even while we are doing stupid things that make very little sense, creating a big mess for ourselves, God loves us. In our illogical mess, God continues to bless.

In our unfaithful mess, God continues to bless

Hosea was a great prophet of God who was told to marry a prostitute to make a grand demonstration of God's love to an unfaithful people. Gomer was a prostitute, yet Hosea married her, loved her and cared for her, despite her continued wicked ways. She was unfaithful to him yet when the world abandoned her and left her in a mess, Hosea embraced her and continued to love her, despite her mess.

In this way God said to Israel, you have not been truthful or faithful to me, yet I have loved you. I have loved you but you have cheated on me. I have loved you but you have played the harlot.

Even today, we have created a mess for ourselves being unfaithful to God. He blessed us with a television and we spend more time with the television than him. He blessed us with a set of golf clubs, but we know more about our putters, drivers and irons that we do about him. He blessed us with a job, but we know more about our career than we do about his love. Largely, we have been unfaithful to him.

If we are untrue or unfaithful in any way then we create a spiritual mess. It's a mess of our own creation.

Gomer found out that the worldiness around her was not true. Only God's love was true. In her mess, God was there.

There are many today who are completely caught up in the world. It has created a mess for them as they abandon the faith and give their allegiance completely to their pastimes and recreational pursuits. Yet in all this mess, God is still blessing us and loving us and calling us to come home.

In our disordered mess, God has blessed us

Paul wrote the Romans and explained that sin keeps our lives in a mess. We want to do right, but ultimately do wrong. We desire to do the right thing but somehow we always end up doing the very things that we do not want to do.

In Romans 7:24 after looking at his miserable estate Paul said, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He concluded that it was Jesus who straightened out his mess and blessed him.

Like Paul, many today are in a terrible mess when it comes to many things. We can't seem to get a grip on things. Every new year we resolve that we will do better but just a few days later we are back in a mess.

We want to do right, but we can't get a grip on things; but we end up in a mess.

We want to be active in the church but we are so disordered that it never happens; our worship attendance is a mess.

We plan to read our bibles more and to prayer with others more, but we end up doing other things; our bible study and prayer life ends up in a mess.

We said we were going to spend more time with our family and to put a cap on our spending practices, but we ended up in a mess.

Yet, even in the mess we have made of our lives, God has been merciful to us. Often we have lost control, but he remained in control.

We have failed to do our part but he has always succeeded and has blessed us by doing his part.

We have come up short on our end but God has blessed us anyhow!

Blessed despite our mess

Finally, brothers and sisters, God is not blind to the mess we have created for ourselves. He blesses us despite our serious efforts to mess up our lives.

He has blessed us in spite of the mess we created!

He has been good to us, even though we constantly mess around!

In spite of our mess, God has continued to bless.

He blesses us not because he endorses our mess but because he loves us more than he hates the mess we created.

He blesses us out of love, to give us one more chance!

David, messed around and took another man's life and his wife. When he saw the mess he created, he said in the 51st Psalm "Create in me a clean heart oh Lord, and renew a right spirit within me!"-God blessed him despite his mess.

The prodigal son was knee deep in slop, in a terrible mess. He stopped to think how the servants in his father's house had food to eat but he was hungry and feeding swine. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and say Father I have sinned, before God and before thee." That father blessed him, despite the mess he had made of his life.

While David and the Prodigal son strayed away and caused a mess, Job was in a mess because of his success. He had committed no sins. He had been faithful in every way, but his life was still a mess. Death had invaded his family. He lost all of his money. His health began to fail, all at the same time. Yet, Job said, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." –He blessed Job despite the mess Satan made in his life.

When we've been a mess..

When we've been IN a mess..

And when we have been hurt BY mess and God still blesses us, what shall we do?

We shall praise his name and say thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me despite the mess that I've made of my life!

Thank you Lord, for taking my weakness and turning it into strength!

Thank you Lord, for taking my doubts and giving me assurance!

Thank you Lord, for taking my failure and giving me victories!

Thank you Lord, for taking my discouragement and giving me hope!

Thank you Lord, for taking my test and giving me a testimony!

Thank you Lord, for looking beyond my faults and shortcomings and seeing my need!

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus came into a messed up world to make it a blessed up world!

He came among messy people, who called him Lord to his face and tried to get him killed behind his back.

He came among messy people, who shouted "Hosanna" on one day and "crucify him" a few days later.

In middle of the world's mess, God sent his best!

The world was messed up but he came to be lifted up that all men might be saved!

A messed up world, put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!

A messed up world, nailed his hands and feet!

A messed up world, stuck a spear in his side!

And he died, out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

I'm not worthy for all these blessings because I'm messed up!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me one more!

No. 9073-Inspiration

God's Way, Not My Way

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 30, 2003

SCRIPTURE:Being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia. . — Acts 13:4; There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. Proverbs 14;12

Introduction

Have you heard the song "I did it my way?" In the late 1960's a number of artist began singing a song first published by Paul Anka but made famous by Frank Sinatra. It was also a part of the regular repertoire of Sammy Davis, Jr. and Nina Simone. The Song rejected the opinions of others and even the direction of God. It promoted the idea of doing our way, regardless.

Some of the lyrics give a clue:

Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew.
But through it all, when there was doubt,
I ate it up and spit it out.
I faced it all and I stood tall;
And did it my way.

I've loved, I've laughed and cried.
I've had my fill; my share of losing.
And now, as tears subside,
I find it all so amusing.

To think I did all that;
And may I say - not in a shy way,
"No, oh no not me,
I did it my way".

For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has naught.
To say the things he truly feels;
And not the words of one who kneels.
The record shows I took the blows -

And did it my way!

Frank Sinatra sold millions of copies of that record. Years after his death a new generation still sings that song and believes that it is important to do it "My way." Have you ever stopped to wonder whether "My Way was God's way?" Many who are doing things their own way and are satisfied.

Sometimes "My way" and God's Way" are two different ways.

As Christians, we desire to do it God's way or no way at all. Most of us have tried the Burger King approach to life; that is, "Have it your way." We have since learned that God's way is the best way.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul and Barnabas as they take the Gospel message outside of Antioch to the world following God's direction.

The Book of Acts gives a record of the beginning of the church. It shows church leaders wrestling with whether or not to take the Gospel message beyond Israel or to keep it for their race alone. It also records their response to the will of God.

Chapter 13 records that the church, growing in large numbers of Jews, was led by the Holy Spirit to expand into a different direction; that is, to take the Gospel message to other parts of the known world.

The church responded by sending Paul and Barnabas on what was called their first missionary journey. They went first to Seleucia, which was about 15 miles away then to several other ports.

They overcame their first hesitation about the mission and decided to follow God's orders. In doing so, their efforts were blessed and their reward was great.

Our way or God's way is the theme of Proverbs 14:12, which says there is a way that appears "right" in our eyes, but yet is not God's way. "There is a way that seems right to man" implies that we think our way is what God wants, but our way usually leads to death and destruction.

The greatest reward comes from those who seek God's will then follow it in their lives.

Four Parts of God's way

If we look closely at the first 12 verses of this chapter, we can see the result of doing things God's way. God blesses what we do if do it his way. Watchman Nee a Chinese writer says, when something is done God's way four things happen:

GOD INITIATES IT: Verse 2 of this text notes that it was the Holy Ghost that gave them the idea to take the missionary journey. The idea came from God. Where did we get the idea to be a Hip Hop rap star? Did it come from God? The idea to be a doctor, teacher, medical assistant, nurse, musician or preacher, did it come from God. If God gives the idea us then he will bless it because he initiated what we do. If God does not initiate the idea then it is "my way" not "God's way."

IT DEPENDS ON GOD TO SUCCEED: Verse 3 says they "Fasted and Prayed." That means they sought God's direction and help to make the plan succeed. They were just two poor men who were about to take the gospel message on foot around the world. The possibility of success was extremely limited without God. In fact, they depended totally on God for their success. Many who are doing things God's way are counting totally on him for its success. Before they began, they prayed and fasted. They needed God's help to succeed and so do we. If what we do does not depend on God to succeed but our own efforts, then we are doing it "my way" not "God's way."

IT WAS CONSISTENT WITH HIS WORD: Verse 5 says they preached the word of God. They stuck to doing what God said do. For these two, it was to preach; others must be true to the word of God as well. Everything we do must be consistent with the spirit of the Word of God to be blessed. Dope dealers, pornographers, and those who profit for illegal activities are involved in undertakings that are inconsistent with the word of God. When it is consistent with God's word then it is blessed because it is "God's way, not my way."

GOD IS GLORIFIED. Verse 12 notes that when they finished their work, God was glorified because those who heard were "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." When it's done God's way, he gets the credit in the end. Whatever we do is done for God's glory. Our career, business or life mission has one purpose, that those who benefit from our life work will be "astonished" at the power of God. When we do that, we do it God's way, not "My way."

God's Way is the Blessed Way

Finally, Brothers and Sisters we must consider that God's way is "blessed way."
If we want what we do and say to be blessed by God then it must be "God's way."
God's way is the blessed way.
When our actions reflect the will of God they will, without a doubt be blessed.
My way leads to being lost, but God's way is a sure direction.
My way leads to weakness, but God's way is blessed with strength.
My way results in discouragement but God's way results in new inspiration.
My way results in confusion but God's way is blessed with clarity and meaning.
Every believer should strive to do what God wills not what "I will"

If we proceed God's way then nothing can stop of from achieving our goal, because it is in his will.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane made the point clear. We heard him tell his father, "Not my will but thy will be done."

It was God's will that he would carried an old rugged cross.
It was God's will that he would die out on Calvary.
It was God's will that he would be buried in a borrowed tomb.

But it was also God's will that early Sunday morning that he who was buried in weakness would rise in strength.

It was God's will that he who was crucified in shame would be raised in everlasting

glory.

And it's God's will that he will come back again for all of those who are willing to live life..God's way!

No. 9074-Christmas

Mary's Christmas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 14, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn Luke 2:7***

Introduction

How will you spend the days leading up to Christmas? Cooking? Shopping? In prayer and fellowship or perhaps a little of it all? During this time of the year, many people greet each other by saying, "Merry Christmas!" It is a greeting of cheer that sometimes comes from those who would not normally give us a simple good morning on the elevator. "Merry Christmas is a salutation that is supposed to help spread a spirit of cheer, joy and happiness across the land.

On the first Christmas morning, there were no plans for shopping, family feasts or numerous presents. The air was cold, the ground was hard and accommodations for a young man and his wife were limited. Yet, in a little town called Bethlehem, a mother by the name of Mary spent the days before Christmas praising God and spent Christmas day and nearly every day for the next 33 years singing a Christmas carol 365 days a year.

As believers, we join the thousands who wish each other a merry Christmas. As we look closer at the attitude of this divine mother, we learn that what we really pray for is that every would have a "Mary Christmas!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Mary as she celebrates the birth of her firstborn son.

Mary was about 15 years old at the time she learned she was pregnant with the Christ Child. She was awed and afraid at learning that God had selected her and that she was already pregnant. "How can this be?" She asked. He answered her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her so that the child's conception would be divine. Then he gave Mary the added confirmation that nothing is impossible with God by telling her that her kinswoman Elizabeth who was old and barren was also pregnant.

When she saw her kinswoman Elizabeth, her soul leaped with joy. It was a confirmation of what the angel said. She immediately recognized that God was about to change the course of all human history; the most important three decades of all

time were about to begin.

She was awed that God would occupy himself with an obscure, humble,young virgin.

Mary was so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she broke out in a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat. “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.

When she gave birth to Jesus, Mary celebrated the first Christmas. Before anyone else in the world had a chance, Mary celebrated Christmas sitting next to a manger holding a little child.

Mary’s Christmas

The sure way to celebrate a merry Christmas is to observe closely Mary’s Christmas.

WE CAN HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS, IF WE HEAR WHAT MARY HEARD. In the days preceding the birth of the Christ child and on the day of his birth, Mary heard the voice of God. She heard God speak to her about her coming birth. When Christ was born she heard the voice of a cackling little baby, but she knew it was also the voice of God among men. Between the sounds of wrapping paper, ringing bells, and Charles Brown on the radio, we must be sure that we heard what merry heard if we want to have a Mary Christmas. She heard the voice of God. Even if you have experienced the death of a loved one or have had some difficulty, Christmas is a happy time if we can hear what Mary heard. She heard the voice of God telling her that everything would be alright and that she would be blessed. We too, must listen for the voice of God with our own individual messages. The very fact that we can hear God is a blessing in itself. That’s what the songwriter had in mind with the words, “I come to the garden alone; while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling my ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells my I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, no other has ever known.

WE CAN HAVE A MARY CHRISTMAS IF WE ARE WILLING TO LEAVE OUR COMFORT ZONE. Mary had to walk at least part of the way to Bethlehem. In her ninth month of pregnancy that must have been an uncomfortable walk that a great distance enduring many days; yet she was willing to leave the comfort of her home in Nazereth to obey God. It would have been easy for her to make an excuse. Even after Christ was born, she did not hesitate to step outside of her comfort zone. Matt 2:13-14 shows us that both Mary and Joseph were willing to leave their respective comfort zones to obey the will of God. We can find happiness when we do something for someone else. Sometimes doing that forces us to come out of our “comfort zones. We often seek the security of our safe havens of assurance and fail to act to help others, when something on the inside of us tugs at heart to move outside of the safety of our comfort zone as we reach out to someone else. We can have a

Mary Christmas if we make someone else happy. It may take some risk on our part, but it's the way to enjoy a "Mary Christmas."

WE CANHAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS IF WE ARE WILLING TO ENDURE A LITTLE SUFFERING. Jesus promised a reward to those who endure suffering, persecution or hard times because of their belief in him. Despite the misery that accompanies childbirth, even when there is a comfortable hospital bed and a midwife or doctor, childbirth is still painful. Yet, when Mary was told that she would conceive and bare a child she was willing to endure the suffering to please God. Not only endure the suffering of the childbirth itself, but also the suffering of those who would ridicule her because of an awkward relationship between herself and Joseph. Today, there many who have learned how to be joyous, despite their difficulties. They say like Paul that they "count it all joy" to be in diverse circumstance of suffering because they know that ultimately God's overwhelming purpose will prevail.

If there is sickness all around us, we can find a reason for joy if we consider Mary's Christmas.

Mary's Christmas was optimistic. It reveled in the joy that trouble don't last always.

Even in our discomfort, we can say with the songwriter: No cross, no crown; no pain, no gain.

Sing Mary's Song

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that we can have a Mary Christmas if we learn to sing Mary's song.

During the Christmas season, we hear many songs.

Sometime we may hear, "Silver Bells."

Sometimes we hear, I' dreaming of a White Christmas!

There are times we hear, "Merry Christmas Baby or Please Come Home for Christmas."

Singing Christmas carols alone does not guarantee us a joyous Christmas unless we've learned to sing what Mary sang.

While our text tells us about Mary giving birth to the baby Jesus, Luke 1:46 tell us what she started doing while she waited for Christmas, she sang, "My soul does magnify the Lord!"

It we want to have a Mary Christmas we must learn to magnify the Lord!

When a soul magnifies the Lord, praising God becomes an everyday experience. In the days leading up to Christmas, this was Mary's song daily. Mary's song must have been what the songwriter had in might when he wrote, "This is my story, this is my song. Praising my savior all of the day long. This is my story. This is my song. Praising my savior all the day long."

As we wait for Christmas, believer's should praise God with an intensity that ignores the difficulty of our time but recognizes the greatness of God

Even if there is no room in the Inn, we still declare God's goodness because his mercy endureth forever. No wonder the songwriter declared "then sings my soul, my

savior God to thee. How great thou art! How great thou art!"

When we have a Mary Christmas we'll sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

We magnify God because only he can take a:

Drunkard and make him sober; LIAR and fill him with truth!

THIEF and make him an honest man; PERVERT and make him pure again!

SAD HEART and make it glad again; WEAK SPIRIT and give it new strength

LOST SOUL and him find his way; BROKEN HEART and make it whole again!

My soul magnifies God because only he loved the world enough to send his only begotten son into it!

My soul magnifies God because of a Little town called Bethlehem and baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

My soul magnifies the Lord because one day out on Calvary, Jesus...

Mary's Baby! The Rock of My Salvation

Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Jesus, Fountain of my joy!

Died on an old rugged cross!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the Grave, with all power in his hands!

No. 9075-Christmas

Destiny's Child

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 21, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 ;"..The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Luke 24:7***

Introduction

Have you ever looked into the eyes of newborn and wondered, 'What shall this child become?' It is a mystery to us what the Lord has in store for every little child that is born. Those who have become mothers this year have joined millions of mothers before them wondering what God has in store for their sons and daughters.

Society has a way of stereotyping persons and limiting their ability to achieve by virtue of the circumstance of their birth. What could possible come from a child born in a small town on the poor side of the tracks with the wrong skin hue? What possible good can ever come from such a child?

If the birth of the Christ child says anything to us, it is that each child is born in this world with a divine purpose that is not altered by its circumstance but is nurtured by its circumstance. The talented child has a purpose. The smart child and the physically strong have a purpose. However, the mentally challenged child has a purpose too. The poor child and the child with few gifts also have purposes.

Destiny is generally defined as "A predetermined course of events considered as something beyond human power or control." In a spiritual sense, destiny can be described as a prepaid plane ticket to a destination already set, if we accept it, buckle our seat belts and take the journey.

As Christians, we thank God for sending his son to this world. It was his destiny to insure our salvation. It should be our destiny to live our lives according to his purpose.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Israel in which the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the Messiah.

In describing the birth of Christ, hundreds of years before his birth Isaiah makes it abundantly clear that the birth of Christ was not a chance occurrence, but part of God's divine order. The world, having known sin would be given a chance to know salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. The fact that Isaiah described all of the names by which Christ would be called using the word "shall" indicated that his coming would not be a chance happening but would be essential to the process of redeeming mankind.

The child that would be born would be wonderful and a mighty counselor. The child would be born with a destiny. That destiny was to show mankind the way to back to God.

If destiny indicates purpose then the purpose of Christ's coming was to provide us with the chance of spiritual adoption. To accomplish this end he had to pay the penalty for sin. To do that, the Law of Moses required death. That is why our text verse in Luke 24:7 says, "The son of man MUST be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Christ was born to die, but he died to rise again to give us hope of renewed life in the kingdom.

Destiny Clarifed Leads to Determination

The circumstances of Christ's parentage and birth gave an indication of his destiny. While Mary and Joseph knew the nature of his being, they were not sure, at his birth, the nature of his final destination.

Jesus was born in a small town, to poor parents, in very restricted and impoverished circumstances. His destiny, in these circumstances was not clear it had to be discovered. By the age of 12 it appears he had learned his destiny because after being found in the temple with the scholars he said, 'It's time for me to be about my father's business."

Clarifying who we are and what we are about is important to every person. Often others who observe us, know us better than we know ourselves. Sometimes they see all of our faults and shortcomings as well as our strengths. We only see our strengths and often overlook everything else. Determining destiny requires determination.

The circumstance of Christ's birth did not limit his destiny but sensitized him to the circumstance. Similarly, our birth circumstance does not mean that you cannot become an attorney, physician, scientist or educator. Having walked a mile in this shoe, we know what it means to live this experience and are prepared to respond.

Destiny, once accepted, leads to destination

In Bethlehem, Christ's destiny is indicated by the circumstance of his birth. In Jerusalem, he became aware of his purpose and father's business. However, it was in the wilderness that Christ accepted his destiny and locked in his destination.

Christ knew his destiny but he did not fully accept that destiny until he went into the wilderness for 40 days and nights. It was a time of soul searching and deciding

life direction.

At the time of this crossroads, Christ was 30 years old. His decision was not about a job or occupation. He already had a job, he was a carpenter. He already had a way to make a living. His destiny decision was not about a career but about fulfilling a life purpose.

Often our destiny decision and our career decision are not the same. While there are a few whose destiny and careers are congruent, most have little correlation between their destiny and their job. A person flips hamburgers at McDonald's to earn a living, but a person should be living to carry out a greater purpose. A person may run a business, but that business is a means to live but he or she lives for a greater purpose and that purpose is our destiny.

Many parents work jobs that tear away at their health, and rob them of their energy. Those jobs are not their purpose. They see a bigger purpose. They work the job to help their children make the big difference that changes the world. They see their purpose as being the one to make their children's purpose become realities.

Once we have accepted our purpose, our destination is confirmed. Like the Christ Child in Bethlehem, we were born with a destiny. Once we accept that destiny, then we become a child of that destiny or destiny's child. When we truly become destiny's child, everything we do and say is dictated by our perceived destiny and our destination becomes clear.

When Superman puts on the Superman suit, what comes after is predetermined. Once Batman puts on the Batman suit and drives the Bat Mobile, what he does and things he says are pre-determined. Once Spiderman puts on the Spiderman suit, the rest is history. Once a believer puts on the whole armor of God, his destination is locked in and becomes clear.

Romans 8:30 underscores this thought by making it clear that once we accept our purpose the rest is pre-determined. We are predetermined to be called, justified and glorified in the eyes of God.

Because of our destiny, we are able to sing with the songwriter, "I'm determined to walk with Jesus, yes I am. I'm determined to walk with Jesus, yes I am. Through hard trials tribulations, persecutions I am determined. I'm determined to walk with Jesus yes, I am."

Destiny, once pursued, leads to glorification

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, once we have decided to pursue our destiny, it will lead to glorification!

The prophets announced Jesus' destiny hundreds of years before his birth.

The angels declared his destiny to Mary and Joseph and announced it to shepherds grazing in the fields.

Jesus clarified his destiny when he talked with the scholars in the temple.

He accepted his destiny after 40 days of prayer in the wilderness.

However, in the garden, he made one final decision, to pursue his destiny,

regardless of the costs, to the glory of God. He did not want to face Calvary but his prayer was “Never-the-less, not my will but thy will be done.”

It was his destiny to be born in Bethlehem because he was a destiny’s child.

We have seen many children born with a destiny, but they were not Destiny’s child.

Jacob and Esau were twins. They both became fathers of great nations. While each of them were children with a destiny, neither of them was Destiny’s child.

Moses was born in slavery but rose to become a prince of Egypt, and a deliverer of his people. While he was obviously a child with a destiny, he was not destiny’s child.

John the Baptist was a born a child with a destiny to be one crying out in the wilderness, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. While he was a child with a destiny, he was not destiny’s child.

Down in Bethlehem someone more than a child with a destiny was born.

If all he had was just a destiny, then he would have grown up to become rich and famous!

If all he had was just a destiny, then he would have had buildings named after him and occupation pages in history books.

If all he had was just a destiny, he would have been a great historical figure represented by statues in the silent halls of museums.

If You a child with a destiny you may try to set your own direction and determine your own destination.

However, When you are destiny’s child, your life is in God’s hands. You go where he tells you to go. You do what he tells you to do.

Down in Bethlehem, Destiny’s child was born.

His mission was to Bring:

—Hope to the disillusioned and Salvation to the Lost

—Life and provide it more abundantly

—Peace on earth and goodwill toward men

—Comfort in the midst of calamities & Strength in weakness

—Assurance in the midst of agonies & Power in the midst of problems

—Safety in times of trouble and Shelter in time of storm!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born, his name was Jesus!

It was his destiny to be born in Bethlehem!

It was his destiny to be raised in a town called Nazereth.

It was also his destiny to carry an old rugged cross up Golgotha’s Hill and die for our sins!

But, just as it was his destiny to die on Calvary, it was also his destiny to be raised from the grave, early Sunday morning!

Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and every where that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and one of these old days, it is his destiny to come back again!

No. 9076-Funeral

Why Then Call Ye Me Naomi?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 27, 2003

SCRIPTURE: ***"I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me."Ruth 1:21; "And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Ruth 4:17***

Introduction

What do you think your parents had in mind when they gave you your name? Does it have any significance? If you were named after a parent or grandparent or another relative, have you ventured to wonder what qualities your parents saw in these persons that would warrant them giving you their names? If you were named after an uncle or an aunt, what about their lives appealed to your parents to urge them to name you after them?

In biblical times, names had meaning. The name given to a child had significance. It was never given because of its beauty or sound, but it had importance. Isaac named his first son "Esau" because he saw the redness of his skin. Pharaoh's daughter saw a little boy floating in a basket and drew him out of the water. She named him Moses, which means "Drawn out." When he was in exile, Moses named his first son "Gershom" because he said, "I have been a stranger in a strange land." Mary was told to name the little boy born in a manger in Bethlehem "Jesus" because he would "Save his people" and thereby be called wonderful, counselor, almighty God and prince of peace.

In the not so distant past, many African-Americans followed the biblical tradition. We named our children after bible characters because we wanted them to emulate the characteristics of the great personalities of the bible. There were men named, Paul, James, Peter, Samuel, Ben or Benjamin, David, etc. There were many women named Mary, Martha, Deborah, Elizabeth and others. In the African-American tradition, there were two names that were rarely, if ever, given to Black Children. One of those names was Jezebel, the evil wife of King Ahab. The second is the name Jesus. While it is common in Hispanic communities to find children named "Jesus (Heysus), it is extremely rare among African-Americans.

Buried in a biblical name, is often the secret purpose of a life. It embodies the hopes and dreams of parents, perhaps even a divine revelation of things that are to come.

What is the meaning of this name Naomi? In Hebrew it means, "Sweetness" or

"graciousness." A mother who names her daughter Naomi could possibly have hoped that the spirit of Naomi would guide this new life. If so it would be a life that would endure bitterness, but remain sweet. It would be a life that would achieve an ultimate godly purpose, and it would be a life that would know the way to God and show others the same way.

As Christians, we believe that every life has a purpose, which is not always clear to us. We rejoice in all of God's ways know that all things work to the good of them that love Lord, according to his purpose.

Exposition

This text focuses on a woman who struggled understand the reason for affliction and realized it in her offspring.

Naomi is one of two central characters in the book of Ruth. She was married to a Jewish man. The couple had two sons. When the land fell on hard times, the family moved into the land of Moab because it had been reported that there was plenty of food there.

In the course of 10 years both of Naomi's sons died leaving only their widows who were natives of the land and Naomi herself. Naomi experienced both joy and affliction in the course of her life. There were points in her struggle she even became bitter and blamed God for her circumstance, but she stopped short of abandoning her faith altogether. On the contrary, she had that faith renewed significantly.

She urged both her daughters in law to return to her own people because she was about to return to Bethlehem, knowing she would fight an uphill battle of public opinion and poverty. One of her daughters in law, Ruth, refused to return to Moab. She stood by the older woman, pledging to stand with her, go with her and to learn from her. "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God."

On occasion, Naomi considered her situation and questioned her affliction. Her name, Naomi, implied sweetness. Yet, during some of her difficult times, she found life to be anything but sweetness. At one point she concluded that her name should have been Mara, or bitterness because she felt the Lord was unfairly afflicting her. In reality, Ruth was the epitome of sweetness. She was dutiful in service and kind and gentle to her daughters by law. She even showed sweetness to Ruth.

What possible blessing could God have in store for Naomi? After experiencing such a difficult time, what blessing could possibly await her that would warrant the affliction and difficulties she experienced?

Naomi could not see God's purpose at the time. In fact, she died without even knowing what a tremendous impact she made on the history of the world.

She worked to position her daughter by Law, Ruth to marry Boaz. Out of love for Ruth, Boaz reinstated the inheritance which her husband lost when he moved to Moab. When Boaz and Ruth bore their first son, it legally became the grandson of Naomi. The women of the community came out to celebrate the birth of the child. Yet, they did not celebrate "Ruth" they celebrated the fact that Naomi had an heir and found meaning for all of her difficulties. At the moment, it seemed insignificant except

that this child, born out of the sweetness of Naomi's life work would be the grandfather to King David, the greatest king of Israel. Because of her sweet life's work, even further down the line, a child would be born in Bethlehem, who would save his people.

Ruth's ultimate life purpose was to pave the way for something greater. Her offspring were the reasons for her being, her affliction and her return home. Through her life and influence, the world was ultimately blessed.

Endure Bitterness but Remain Sweet

What do we learn from Naomi's life? First we learn how to endure bitterness but remain sweet.

It would be great if life was a bowl of cherries, mostly sweet with a few pits; but the reality is that life often deals us a few lemons.

The challenge is to endure life's lemons without losing our own sense of sweetness. In the bible Naomi had to deal with a number of bitter situations that included death, poverty, and hard times. They seem to come one after the other. No sooner than she could overcome one, others came.

At one point she almost became spiritually bitter. Somehow she continued to do sweet things. She worked and helped others. Hundreds of kindnesses she displayed made it clear that she was the sweet woman everyone knew, despite her difficulties.

We should be the same, when we endure life's bitter moments and experience sickness, death and despair. We should resist the temptation to become bitter and angry with the world. Yes, we should continue to help others, counsel, assist the hurting and to bring sweetness to others. We should endure the bitterness that life gives us but remain a sweet savor for all who know us.

Achieve our Godly Purpose

A second lesson we learn from Naomi is that she achieved her godly purpose.

The ultimate purpose for the biblical Naomi was to pave the way for the birth of King David and ultimately, Jesus of Nazareth. During her lifetime she didn't know what a great impact she would make, but she achieved that end.

The biblical Naomi took many years, until her old age to achieve her purpose. Yet, it is not always prescribed that our life's purpose will require 70 or 80 years. It could be 15, 20 or 39 years.

The Apostle Paul, having completed his purpose wrote 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Every believer should strive to identify his purpose and achieve it in a way that will glorify God.

Know the Way to God

The final lesson we learn from Naomi is that she knew the way back to God and brought somebody with her.

Naomi, following her husband, lived in the land of Moab but never forgot God. Her heart always longed to go home. Ultimately, she decided that she had to go home. In the process, her great faith in God influenced Ruth to follow her. Following her home, Ruth said, "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God."

When we know how to find the Lord, it doesn't matter how difficult life gets, we have a blessed assurance!

When we know how to find the Lord, in moments of despair we are able to call upon him.

After suffering difficulties and hard times, Naomi said, "I'm going home!"

There are many people who believe they can make it through life without attending church, reading the bible or worshipping the Lord." The inherent danger is that you can stay away so long, that you forget the way home!

Jacob stayed away from home for over 20 years, but after-a-while he had to say, "I'm going home."

The Prodigal Son lived in the far country and wasted his substance, but when he came to himself, he said, "I'm going home."

So, what have we learned about the life named Naomi before us?

We have learned that it was a life whose purpose was to bring sweetness and graciousness to all she met.

We have learned that the purpose of this life was not tied to its longevity but to the power of its example!

Thirty nine years may seem a short period of time. But at 39, Martin Luther King had taught the world how to dream. At 33, Alexander had conquered the world. At 21, Tiger Woods dominated the world of Golf and Mike Tyson was heavyweight champion of the World. At age 20, Venus Williams and her 21 year old Sister Serena, turned the world of tennis upside down by sweeping the major world championships.

But down in Bethlehem a baby was born and he was given a special name. His name was "Jesus" because he would save his people!

At the age of 33 hanging on an old rugged cross he said, "It is finished."

However, the story doesn't stop there because Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

He's coming back again to get his own.

When he comes he's going to give us new names.

If you came here named "sadness" then get ready to be called "gladness!"

If you came here named "Failure" then get ready to be called "success!"

If you came here named "Defeat" then get ready to be called "victory"

No wonder the songwriter declared, "I got a new name, over in glory and it's mine! Mine! Mine!"

Come here Naomi, you stayed sweet down here, despite sickness, and trouble, over yonder your name will be sweeter! Because, "Every day with Jesus is

Sweeter!
Sweeter!
… than the day before!”

—

Thirty Nine years ago a child was born and named Naomi. True to her name, Naomi Pollard-Seals, remained sweet despite bitterness, achieved her purpose and went back home.

No. 9077-Christmas (After)

Throw Away the wrappings, not the gift

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 28, 2003

SCRIPTURE: A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth. Proverbs 17:8

Introduction

What did you do with all the trash that accumulated on Christmas day? Many families bagged up their trash and prepared it for collection. Across the nation landfills were deluged with millions of tons of boxes, ribbons, bows, packing materials, lace and other debris that was discarded to make room. Depending on the number of people in the house, especially the number of children, many families found themselves walking in a virtual sea of trash as anxious mothers went around the house stuffing wrapping paper into trash bags to make room.

Christian homes spend a considerable amount of time focusing on Christ during the Christmas season. They make sure their children understand the real meaning of the season. They sing Christmas Carols, and read the story of the incarnation from the bible. They attend special Christmas programs with the church and enjoy a heightened sense of spirituality during the Christmas season.

However, as Christmas ends many people instantly begin to take down the decorations. The lights are removed from the houses. Christmas postcards are removed from the yards. Trees are dissembled. Artificial trees are packed away until next year. Live trees are tossed away or submitted for recycling. The elaborate decorations that adorned our homes are removed. Even, the left over turkey is recycled into turkey salad, freezer bags are stuffed; and soon after Christmas, there is little sign that there was a Christmas celebration.

Nearly everyone can remember an instance of a gift of one kind or another becoming mixed with the wrappings. As the trash was thrown out, so was the gift. The picture of taking down and throwing out after Christmas is reflection of what happens in many lives. The words of hope embedded on cards are thrown out, the star that points to God is removed, and the lights that remind us of “the light of the world” are taken down. Manger scenes disappear too.

Sometimes gifts, especially small ones are tossed out with the wrappings,

trappings and trash. Those who pilfer through the trash at the curbside are amazed at what people throw away. Some gifts are discarded accidentally. Others are discarded on purpose. Whatever the case, there are many who throw away the gift along with the wrappings.

As the Christmas season ends and a new year dawns, Christians should throw away the trash and unwanted things in their lives as we prepare for the year to come. However, we should be careful, not to throw away the wonderful spirit of love, charity and brotherhood we felt at Christmas, just because the day of celebration has passed.

Exposition

This text considers the importance of gifts, for they tend to prosper the recipient.

Solomon was the writer of the proverbs. They are the accumulated wisdom of his life experience.

As King of Israel Solomon received many gifts from both the subjects of the land and foreign dignitaries. The Queen of Sheba traveled by caravan to meet him. She brought with her gifts from Africa. Solomon had 300 state arranged marriages that came with gifts or dowries, as well as special political treaties that brought peace to the land

Thus, Solomon concludes through his experience that gifts are precious in the eyes of the recipients. Used wisely, good gifts can lead to increase.

In a similar sense, Jesus came to the world as a gift. He was not wrapped in special paper, but swaddling clothes. He was not an object to be admired but a person to love and be loved. He was, by any definition, a gift to man. He was the embodiment of man's hope to reconcile himself with God and live with him forever. This is what prompted Paul to write to the Romans in 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus was the perfect gift, given by God. Yet, After Christmas, many began to push him aside to make room for new challenges and adventure. Just eight days after he was born the people started trying to re-wrap and him and send him back to God. Herod's decree found many boy children slain as the government tried to get rid of any semblance of the Christ child. They wanted nothing left. They destroyed everything related to him. His family had to flee to Egypt to hide. Later, his hometown shunned him. Some of his brothers and sisters doubted him. The leaders planned to kill him and one of his disciples deserted him, another betrayed him and those he came to save shouted, "Crucify Him!"

He was a gift from God but the people were throwing away the gift while clearing out the wrapping paper.

What To Throw Out

As we prepare for the new year, there are many things that should be thrown out because they cloud our spiritual development. Throwing out the spiritual trash should be a sign of the times.

TAGS: Nearly every item we purchased during the Christmas season came with a price and a label. We should throw away the tags and labels. Many spent all of this year trying to acquire a specific tag or label on their suits, shoes sweaters and cars. Sometimes the pursuit of those labels and tags overpowered us. Why not remember that the word of God teaches in 1 Corinthians 6:20 "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The only tag that we really need to keep is the one that says, "God's child."

WRAPPING PAPER: There will be tons of wrapping paper thrown away after Christmas. Wrapping paper is only used for outside appearances. Some gifts are beautifully wrapped but don't match what's on the inside. Many spent a great portion of this year on wrapping paper matters of life. We worried more about appearances than we did our spirituality. We worried more about our nails, hair, suits, clothing and outward trimming than we did how we looked on the inside. However, the word of God teaches us that it's the inside that counts. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "..For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

PACKAGING: Nearly every gift comes in a package. Whether in a box or plastic wrap, the purpose of the package is to keep the gift in place. The idea is to keep the gift safely within the box. This year there are many people who were boxed in by life. It's frustrating to be boxed in, sealed so tight that you can't get out and it's almost impossible for anyone else to get close to us. Careers, business opportunities, and personal improvements are often boxed-in by those who told us what we want to do is impossible. We can't achieve because it cannot be done. Next year why not operate out of the box? What not shoot for the impossible. Matthew 19:26 reminds us that "With Men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Don't be boxed in next year, throw out the boxes!

UNMAILED CARDS: There are many people who intended to send cards to their friends and family this year, but they never got around to mailing them. They are addressed with dated personal messages, but somehow how we never found the time to mail them. That's what happened to many of us this year we have been crippled with procrastination, or putting things off. The list of things we put off doing this year grows by the day. Now, next year's list is already filled because of this year's leftovers. Parents, students, and Christians have really procrastinated immensely, especially when it comes to improving their relationship with God. We said we would study our bibles more, but put it off. We said we would pray more but put that off too. We found it so hard to do what we said. Joshua 24:15 says, "..choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Throw away procrastination.

BEER CANS: There are some church members (not Christians) who celebrated Christmas by getting drunk and partying heavy. Our trash will tell the story. Some will have beer cans as well as wine and whiskey bottles in their trash this year. For many, being drunk with the wine of the world has become a habit they have found hard to break. Many cannot have fun, watch a football or basketball game on

television or enjoy the fellowship of their friends and family without alcohol and drugs. That's unfortunate because the word of God reminds us in 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" We need to be spiritually sober as well. Throw out the intoxicating fixation we have on the world and sober up next year.

Don't throw away the gift

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we are throwing away the wrappings, don't make a mistake and throw away the gift.

There are many who are trying to make plans for the new year, but even before this year ends, they have already crowded their schedule with expectations and plans that do not include the things of God.

The gift of God is available to men today. It is free to all that will accept him, but many are throwing away the gift.

Jesus came as the gift of God to a dying world. He came, saying to the:

—CORRUPT, if you accept my gift, I'll make you pure.

—FOOLISH, if you accept my gift, I'll make you wise.

—WEAK, if you accept my gift, I'll make you strong.

—TEMPTED, if you accept my gift, I'll help you overcome.

—LOST, if you accept my gift, I'll help you find your way.

—SINNER, if you accept my gift, I'll save your soul!

Jesus presented himself as the perfect gift but many threw away the opportunity.

Nicodemus threw away the gift when he was told that he had to be born again!

The Rich Young Ruler threw away the gift when he heard that he had to sell all he had, take up his cross and follow Jesus

However, when Jesus met the woman at the well and told her that the gift of God stood in front of her. He offered her living water that she would never thirst again.

She didn't talk about throwing it away!

She didn't talk about refusing the offer!

She ran through the city shouting, "Look what I got, Come see a man!"

Come see a man, who died out on Calvary!

Come see a man, who rose on Sunday Morning!

Come see a man who saved my soul!

No. 9078-New Year

No Fear in the New Year

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 4, 2004

SCRIPTURE: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

Introduction

What is your greatest fear for the New Year? Do you fear failure, defeat, sickness or loss? Depending on the person, the new year brings with it the propensity for fear and caution. Fear is regular with most of us. We wrestled with fear when we were children. Then it was fear of darkness and monsters like the Boogie Mann. When we were teens, we were no longer afraid of the Boogie Man but we were afraid of being rejected by our friends or being the object of jokes. We also feared any kind of humiliation and we were plagued by the question, "What if I mess up?" When we reached adulthood, our fears grew up too. Our Boogie Man has become the fear of disease, death, financial problems and other storms. Last year we wrestled with many of our fears. Some are bringing old fears into a new year.

What does it mean to have "No fear?" It means the elimination of general anxiousness and specific apprehensions. In Hebrew the word for fear used in Psalm 27:1 is "Ary" which means to stand in awe of something. In The New Testament the word for fear is "Phobia" which is the fear of a specific thing. The person who stands in awe of another force is defeated before they began. That's why boxers stare down their opponents at the center of the ring to make them stand in awe of them.

A person who is generally fearless can suddenly become fearful in a Phobic situation. There are over 700 kinds of phobias: Acrophobia, the fear of high places; Claustrophobia, the fear of tight close places; Agoraphobia, the fear of open places, Ergophobia, the fear of work; Phobophobia, the fear of fear itself. These are the kinds of fears that can reveal a woman strong enough to fight off a male attacker, but will run and stand on top of a table at the sight of a mouse. It's the fear that makes a man laugh at the face of danger but whimper when he sees a spider because he has a fear of spiders.

Last year many of us stood in awe of the mass of problems that surrounded us. We were also haunted by specific fears about certain things that troubled us all year. As the new year begins, we are tempted to bring our old fear into the new year.

As Christians, we should sing the words of David with great joy, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom

shall I be afraid?"

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the source of his strength and faith. Some scholars believe that David wrote the 27th Psalm in his old age at a point when he fainted in battle while facing the son of Goliath. (2 Samuel 21:16-17). In that instance, one of his soldiers, Abishai rescued him just as the giant was about to kill him. After that battle, the people resolved that David would no longer go to the front of battles because he was the light of Israel. If were to be slain, the light of Israel would be put out.

In writing the 27th Psalm, David responds to Israel who looked to him as their light by saying that the Lord is his light. Even in old age or in the face of unknown obstacles, he still maintained that he would not be afraid. He viewed himself as a reflection of the light of God rather than being a light, just as the moon reflects the light from the Sun rather than shine on its own power.

David's statement of faith suggested that even as the unknown approached him that he was not hesitant because the presence of God was always with him and gave him courage.

It is this courage that he seemed to carry with him everyday that prompted him to ask the question, "Whom shall I fear?"

David earned the right to make this declaration of faith. He probably knew more about fear than any king of Israel. Most of his life he was on the run and did not know from one year to the next whether he would live or die at the hands of King Saul. Later on in his life he was threatened by his own son Absalom. Through all of these situations, he learned to overcome his fears by placing his trust in God.

Trust and obey became David's watch words. In the face of fear, trust God. In the face of doubt and confusion, obey God. He learned quickly that to trust and to obey was the secret to overcoming fear.

This Year, Fear Will Disappear

Many people have learned how to overcome adversities by trusting completely in God. They have learned the secret to perfect peace.

In Isaiah 26:3 God said, "I will keep in perfect peace all who trust in me, who thoughts are fixed on me!"

Perfect peace does not mean that there will be no storms, but it does mean that when storms come we are confident that the God we serve is able to keep and protect us from all harm and danger.

The idea of Psalm 27 is to focus on God rather than our fear. Focus on the fact that God can deliver.

Rather than fear what you will do if your job plays out, focus on the fact that even if it does play out God can make a way, has made a way, and will make a way.

Rather than fear what may happen if you get a bad diagnosis from your doctor, focus on the fact that even if the news is bad, that God is able!

In the face of fear, In verses 4-7 David is focused on God. He is living in his presence, looking at his beauty, and listening to his voice. Because of this focus on God and dwelling in his presence, David can lift his head with confidence and sing with joy as we see in verses 5,6. In vs. 7-14 he again is focused on God and prays to him in the midst of this trouble and is reminded that God will never forsake him (vs. 10) and will always guide him (vs. 11), therefore even though he does not receive an immediate answer or relief he can still say in verse 13, "I am still confident..."

Anxiousness Will Disappear this year!

If we stay focused on God this year our anxiousness will disappear. Philippians 4: 6-7 says, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. Then the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Anxiousness is a form of fear. It is an uneasiness that we develop because we worry about the outcome of a situation. "What if?" becomes our worry.

What if I get fired?

What if I get sick?

What if I lose?

Anxiousness comes because we fear that a negative result will work against us in many ways. Yet, that is just the opposite of what believers come to know about God. Those who distrust God worry about the outcome of a situation, those who trust him know that regardless to the outcome, it will be for their good and according to the will of God.

The word teaches us that "All things" work for the good of them who love the Lord and are following his purpose in life. Millions of believers have experienced this truth. God works out the situations that are entrusted to him for our advantage.

Does that mean that believers should not plan or be concerned about the days ahead? Certainly not! We should make plans, but don't worry about the outcome of the plans. We should run the race but not worry about the outcome of the race.

A general rule of thumb for believers is, "If you are going to worry, don't ask for God's help. If you ask for God's help, don't worry."

A worry free new year is a year that we really begin to trust God for the outcome.

A worry free new year is a year that anxiousness disappears and trust and faith appear in a bold new way!

When trouble is near, still no fear

The new year won't be a vacation year from trouble. Trouble doesn't stop looking for ways to taunt and destroy us just because there is a new year. Yet, despite the

presence of troubling situations, we should have no fear in the new year. Verses 2-3 indicate that David expects to have trouble in his life - note that he says, “when evil men...” And “when my enemies...” David’s use of the word “when” is indicative of the fact that he expects to have times of trouble in his life. God makes a way for us to be free from troubled hearts but not from troubled times. David’s conclusion was “and army beseech me my heart will not fear.” David says, “even then I will be confident.”

Confidence like that only comes when we are sure of the outcome. That’s where the believer has the edge. The word of God teaches that when a believer is operating in the will of God “No weapon formed against me shall prosper.” When we are moving in the path that God wants to go, no obstacle, enemy or trouble will be able to slow our march toward fulfillment because God himself will clear a path and make a way for us out of no way.

The point of David’s psalm is not to expect trouble to disappear but to be confident that when trouble comes, God will make a way.

He did not expect his enemies to lay down and roll over, but he was confident that God would give him the ultimate victory as long as he operated within God’s will.

To fear trouble is to doubt God’s ability to arise victorious!

To fear trouble is to second guess God’s power over the enemy!

To Fear what can happen casts a shadow over the ultimate triumphant outcome that every believer expects.

The old warriors of our faith would look trouble in the face then begin to say, “I’m so glad that trouble don’t last always!”

Somebody else would sing, “Victory is mine! Victory is mine! Victory today is mind. I told Satan to get thee behind, Victory today is mine!”

It’s a New Year But the Refuge is Still Here

God is our refuge our strong place to hide in storms. In the new year, that refuge is still here.

Last year God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm. The calendar has changed but God is still the same. He is the same God we served last year and his power has not diminished because another year has passed. It may be a new year but our refuge is still here!

As we begin a new year, believers should resolve to keep a resolution we had last year, and that is to keep trusting in the Lord!

It does not matter whether it is a new year or an old year, but it’s a good idea to keep trusting in the Lord.

We trust in the Lord because history has shown us that those who trust in the Lord face the unknown without fear.

We trust in the Lord because saints who have trusted him have been rewarded with answered prayers, a few earthly pleasures and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves:

—Noah trusted the Lord and he brought him through the great flood!
—Abraham trusted the Lord and he showed him the Lamb in the bush!
—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!
—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage
—Daniel trusted the Lord and he protected him in the Lion's Den
—Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord. I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

There will be no fear this year because if I am:
—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!
—At Fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!
—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength
—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!
—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!
—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.
—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend
—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!"

I'm reminded of a family in the hill country often walked a path over the hills and through the valley to visit relatives. One night the father walked with his wife and children along that beaten path, but a sudden fog appeared. No one could see anything because of the thick fog but the father kept moving at the same pace. The son called out to his mother, "Mother shouldn't we slow down. We can't see where we're going." The mother said, "I can't see how to put one foot in front of the other myself. But your father has walked this trail since he was a boy. When he walked backed and forth to grandma's, he walked this trail. When he carried wood for Aunt Carrie, he walked this trail. When he came home late at night from working in the fields, he walked this trail. No, son, I can't see anything, but your father knows the way, we'll just hold his hand!

You may not be able to see how to put one foot in front of the other, but your father in heaven knows the way!

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross! Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand, the Lord knows the way!

No. 9079-Inspiration

My Kindness shall not depart from you

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 11, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Isaiah 54:2-3; For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. Isaiah 54:10.

Introduction

Have you made plans to change anything this year? While no one should simply change for the sake of changing, there are some things we need to change to come closer to the Christian ideal We may need to change our diet to improve our health. We may need to change our financial practices to get control of our business affairs. We may need to change our bible study and worship habits to improve our spirituality. We may need to change our general attitude about life to enjoy its bounties fully. What is for certain, those who do not change anything will probably get no further than they have in the past.

There is an old riddle that says, Two toad frogs sat on a stump. One took a notion to jump off, how many are left? Two! One took a notion to jump, but that's all. Many of us have "Notion Motion." We take a notion to improve ourselves but more often than not, our notions never translate to motion."

If we are to personally progress in our spiritual relationship to God it must be more than just a notion.

If you've decided to save money toward the house of your dreams, put some motion in your notion!

If you've decided to spend more time with your family, put some motion in your notion!

If you've decided to improve your grades in school, put some motion in your notion!

If we do everything the same we get the same result. Consider Two hunters got a pilot to fly them into the far north for deer hunting. They were quite successful in their venture and bagged six big bucks. The pilot came back, as arranged, to pick them

up. They started loading their gear into the plane, including the six deer. But the pilot objected and he said, "The plane can only take four of your deer; you will have to leave two behind." They argued with him; the year before they had shot six and the pilot had allowed them to put all aboard. The plane was the same model and capacity. Reluctantly, the pilot finally permitted them to put all six aboard. But when the attempted to take off and leave the valley, the little plane could not make it and they crashed into the wilderness. Climbing out of the wreckage, one hunter said to the other, "Do you know where we are?" "I think so," replied the other hunter. "This is just about the same place where we crashed last year."

If we do the same thing we did last year, we end up in the same place.

What about our relationship with God? Will it be the same this year as it was last year? Have you taken a notion to do better or is your notion in motion? Has the resolution you made to intensify your bible knowledge and participation in the church remained a simple notion or have you actually begun to put your notion in motion?

As Christians, we remember the words of James which remind us that "faith without works is dead." Let's plan to increase our spirituality and service this year by "enlarging our spiritual territory." When we do, God has promised that his kindness will not depart from us.

Exposition

This text focuses on God encouraging Israel to prepare for God's continued blessing in the time ahead.

In this passage, Israel was at a very low point. They had gone through a succession of wicked rulers who had led them astray from God. The Kingdom had been divided and weakened. First the northern, and then the southern kingdom had fallen to their enemies. The land had been laid waste, the walls torn down. Even the temple of God where they worshipped had been ram sacked and destroyed by their enemies.

Most of Israel's problems were self-inflicted in that they resulted from their failure to remain true to God and God hid his face from them.

In 54:2-3 Isaiah calls them to: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.

It is an expansion in spiritual capacity. It is expansion of their faith in the ability of God. They were reminded that God has done great things for them in the past, but here Isaiah wants them to know that God is going to do even greater things for them in the near future. They cold not see it then, but it was on its way.

They were encouraged to prepare for changes, to stretch their boundaries and expand in powerful ways!

Verse 10 is a statement of assurance. Even if mountains and hills are somehow moved, God will remain loyal to his people. He will continue to bless them immensely

and his kindness will continue. The people were told to remember his promises and prepare to receive a mighty blessing in the near future.

Enlarging your capacity for God

It is possible that God wants to do a bigger work in your life this year than he did last year? What stopped him from doing that last year? What will stop him from doing it this year? It's possible that last year our tent was too small for any big work and we were not staked properly?

If you have ever camped, you know that tents come in different sizes: Two person, three person or even cabin size tents that can sleep eight to tent people comfortably in separated rooms. What won't work in a camping experience is a "big man in a little tent."

Last year, many of our lives were little "one man" tents. There was just enough room in our schedule for what we wanted in life. Some had a two person tent and there was cramped space for two; maybe a spouse or immediate family. But our schedules and lifestyles weren't big enough for God to fit.

We were plagued with little tents all last year!

We expected little. But, he is a big God who just can't fit into our small expectations.

We achieved little. But he is a big God who does big things and can't fit into little tent achievements.

We even dreamed little! But he is a God who does things beyond our fondest dreams, he's too big for our little tent dreams.

If God is going to do a great work in our lives this year, we must change our tents. That's what Isaiah had in mind when he said, "Stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation."

Get a bigger tent!

In this context, a bigger tent is not physical. It is not a bigger house or automobile. It is not a larger collection of shoes and hats. A bigger tent means stretching out to provide more room for God.

More room for God means, more room for personal bible study and prayer.

More room for God means more time for worship and praise.

More room for God means more time for kingdom building activities in association with the people of God.

More room for God means more time for Christian fellowship and interaction with the family of God.

Making room for God often requires making some drastic changes in the way you do things. It may mean dropping some things, adding some things or at the very least changing some things to make room for God.

He's a big God, but he can't fit in a little tent!

Don’t put a big tent in the wrong place.

Many of us had the right size tents last year, but we ran into trouble anyway because we tried to put a big tent in the wrong place.

Tent placement is important for a happy camper. A person who pitches his tent on the side of hill with the door facing uphill, will catch plenty of water if it happens to rain, even though he’s in a big tent!

A person who chooses to pitch his tent at the bottom of hill will also find himself swimming in water if there his hard rain.

Regardless to the size of the tent, if it is pitched in rocky, or muddy terrain, it will be an uncomfortable situation.

Often many spiritually strong believers pitch their tents with the wrong crowds and experience tough times as a result. Abraham and Lot decided to part company. They had to choose between the mountains on one side and the valleys of Sodom and Gomorrah on the other. Lot, a religious and God-fearing man, chose to pitch his tent in the profitable, but spiritually dangerous city of Sodom. He pitched his big, god fearing tent, in a city filled with gays and lesbians. Ultimately, he lost his wife and fortune because he pitched his tent in the wrong place.

Often as believers, we involve ourselves in some spiritually dangerous enterprises, because we can make money doing them. Quick hustles, get rich quick schemes or even gambling experiences that involve people who are otherwise spiritually strong, are clear cut examples of people who have a big tent but they pitch them in questionable places. How many big tents are frequently seen pitched at the bingo parlor, casino, nightclub, betting parlor, racetrack and other places that don’t allow enough space for such a tent to spread?

Isaiah warned Israel to enlarge the “place” of their tent. Be sure you pitch your tent in a space big enough to accommodate the Mighty God that you serve. It may very well be that last year, we pitched our tents in the wrong places, and despite our faith in God, where we chose to pitch our tents, caused us considerable problems that would not have ordinarily been the case.

This year, we may need to make a few changes.

We need to pitch that big faith that we have in a God on the right terrain, pointed in the right direction, in a way that will give God the space he needs to do what he want to do in our lives.

Strengthen thy stakes

There is one truth about life that is inescapable: big tents need heavy duty pegs and stakes.

Believers have chosen to change their tents this year, must read this last phrase of verse 3, “strengthen thy stakes.” Make sure the pegs that hold your down your bigger tent are secure.

When we operated in a little one man tent we may have used a little peg or no peg

at all. After all, the tent wasn't that big and our weight alone could probably keep it in place. However, when we change the size of our tent, we can't use the same little pegs or no pegs that we used on the little tent!

Big tents need heavy duty stakes to keep them in place. The bigger the tent, the bigger the peg needed to keep it in place.

If you have a big faith, you can't keep in place with a small peg.

Big faith is fed by regular worship and praise. You can't switch to a big tent this year and your worship and bible study habits are the same as they were with the little tent.

You can't switch to a big faith experience, but your Sunday School record remains the same as it was last year!

You can't switch to a big faith experience and your level of bible knowledge is the same as it was with the little tent.

How do we get bigger stakes? First by hearing the word of God regularly. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Secondly, we study more. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth."

Thirdly, we should pray more. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing."

Strengthening your stakes may require changing something. To keep the strong place God has in your life alive and secure, we may need to change something this year! We may need to change a few things to make it happen the way he wants.

One thing is for certain: Big tents need heavy duty stakes

God's Kindness will not Depart

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider that those who make room for God in their lives can expect his kindness to be with them, regardless to what the rest of the year brings.

Isaiah told Israel that it had endured difficult days, "Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit." Yet, God reminds them to prepare to receive the kindness of God in a way that will not be interrupted!

While we all acknowledge that we must change the size of our tents, where we pitch our tents and how we secure our tents, we assured that in our changing, God's kindnesses toward us will not change.

We must change to get closer to him, God does not and will not change the way he shows kindness to us.

We must change to show more thankfulness to God, but God's kindness to us, will never change!

Even though we didn't have room for him in our little tents last year, God was kind us!

Even though we often pitched our tents in the wrong places, God was kind to us!

Even though we often failed stake our tents with proper amount of study and prayer, God was merciful to us. He looked beyond our faults and saw our needs.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that the kindness of God remains the same.

I'm encouraged when I read that "mountains may be removed" but my kindness will not depart from you! Hills may be removed, "but my kindness will not depart from you!"

God's love for us, does not change!

God is still the same!

When we learn that God is changeless, the changing times in which we live cannot affect us!

Because God's kindness will not depart from us,

—There is no battle we can face that will stop us!

—There is no mountain that will be to hard for us to climb!

—There is no valley too deep for us traverse!

—There is no night too dark for us to make it through!

—There is no crisis that we cannot control!

—There is no storm so strong that we cannot weather it!

—There is no enemy so frightening that we cannot defeat it!

I'm glad to know that, when I've failed, he still turns failure into success!

I'm glad to know that, when I'm weak, he still turns weakness into strength!

I'm glad to know that, when I have questions, he still provides the answers!

I'm glad to know that, when I am frustrated, he still gives me hope!

It sure feels to know that even if I mess up, he might whip a little bit, but "my kindness shall not depart from you."

It was a kindness that began in a manger in Bethlehem and ended on an old rugged cross!

It's a kindness that makes miraculous things possible, if I call on the name of Jesus!

You know him…

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

No matter what comes this year, remember…

God's kindness

…shall not depart from you!

No. 9080-King Day

Who Is He That Overcometh?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 18, 2003

SCRIPURE: ***"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:5***

Introduction

Have you ever heard the song, "We shall overcome?" In the year 1900, an African American, Charles Tindley, who was the pastor of a Methodist Episcopal Church, wrote a hymn called, "I'll Overcome Some Day." Some 60 odd years later, that hymn was the basis for the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." Today it still symbolizes the struggle for freedom - freedom from oppression, freedom from pain and suffering, freedom from everything in this world that attempts to pull us down and convince us that all hope is lost.

The words speak of triumph over life's struggles, and they speaks of signs of the fulfillment of hope - people walking hand in hand, walking free, without fear, without being alone, we shall overcome.

The chorus reads:

Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome some day

Martin Luther King was the face and the voice of a movement that began many years before he was born. The quest to overcome, despite circumstances motivated slaves and slave leaders such as Nat Turner and others to vigorously protest the institution of slavery at the risk of their own lives. Women like Sojourner Truth championed the cause of freedom even while chains and shackles rattled in the South.

The giants of our race repeatedly reminded us that we should resist until we overcome. A. Phillip Randolph successfully organized the brotherhood of sleeping car porters and in 1937 forced the giant Pullman Co. to recognize the importance of the Black man in America. But even then we had not overcome.

Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs and hundreds of women made significant inroads with President Franklin Roosevelt threw his wife Eleanor for the advancement of our race. Even though President Truman ordered the integration of the Armed Forces it still became apparent that we had not overcome.

Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP won a significant battle in 1954 in the Brown versus school board decision. Even though the Supreme Court of the

land said segregation must be ended with "all deliberate speed" even then, it became apparent that we had not overcome.

When young women like Rosa Parks and thousands like her found themselves forced to sit in the back of the bus, buy their food at restaurants at the back door, and sit in the colored sections of public accommodations it became obvious that we had not overcome.

A. Phillip Randolph called for a national march to dramatize the fact that African-Americans were still not first-class citizens in the eyes of the law. He called for the march and Bayard Rustin organized the march on Washington in 1963 that resulted in the flamboyant Martin Luther King telling the world, "I have a dream." As 200,000 people cheered Dr. King that day, it became apparent that we still had not overcome.

In the succeeding years the civil rights act and voting rights act was passed, a man walked on the moon and Blacks were elected to public offices in increasing numbers across the nation. Three Blacks who ran for president Julian Bond, Shirley Chisholm, and Jesse Jackson raised our sights and pointed out our needs to and national audience. Yet with Blacks on the Supreme Court, thousands of black elected officials across the country, new law's and protections on the books, and the segregated public accommodations, it still became apparent that we had not overcome.

It became apparent that overcoming was going to require something more than simply getting new legislation, or electing people to office from our neighborhoods.

Overcoming was going to require a new mindset and national attitude predicated on love and respect for the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

He that overcometh will do so not by the power of his own might or even through the force of law, but will do so by the power of God almighty.

As Christians, we still sing "we shall overcome" but we know that the final victory will be won when the power of God is recognized by every man woman and child.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he explains the unique relationship between believers and Jesus Christ.

There had been a false teaching circulated among believers that sought to make a distinction between Jesus and the Christ. It seems that the teaching suggested that Jesus was an anointed individual who at his baptism became the Christ when God spoke in the form of a dove and said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. John's discourse in this fifth chapter makes it plain that Jesus and Christ are one in the same.

John maintained that because Jesus and Christ were the same believers who followed his teachings could expect to overcome all obstacles that stood between themselves and the heavenly ideal.

John introduced idea of the "world" as anything that opposes the kingdom of God. In John's day, the world most certainly meant the Roman Empire as well as Jewish cynics who persecuted and prosecuted Jews for their belief in Christ. When

John spoke of the world he made reference to circumstances that were hostile to all that is in the Christian heart and mind.

It is a world to be overcome because it stands in the way of the realization of the Christian ideal.

It is a world to be overcome because it stands in the way of universal love for all people.

It is a world to be overcome, because it is a world war and violence that is just the opposite of what the kingdom of God represents.

It is a world to be overcome because it represents the antithesis of the Christian ideal. In this passage, then, the world means human life and society, so far as it is alienated from God.

In John 16: 33 Jesus made a very conclusive statement. He said, "I have overcome the world." It was a concluding statement to a life that had refused to become a part of those things in the world that world against the will of God. In the wilderness, Satan offered him three chances to seize the world for himself and he overcame and rejected Satan three times. He was tempted on many occasions to use his considerable power and influence for himself and refused to do that too. He even refused to hate those who hated him and who spitefully worked against him. He continued to promote that message, refusing to bow to the world, choosing the high ground rather than the low ground. This allowed him to say, "I have overcome the world."

Following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ Himself, the poor man, the beaten man, the unsuccessful man can yet say, "I have overcome the world." What does that mean? It means despite adverse circumstances, tragedy, and difficult situations we continue to do that which is right, strive for that which is godly, and oppose anything that would alienate us from the will of God.

Revelation 21:7 finds John using the same phrase again this time echoing the words of Jesus, he that overcometh shall inherit all things.

Tough love is true love

One of the great truths about Martin Luther King is that he promoted the concept of brotherly love. In verse two of this text John makes it clear that it is difficult to love God and not treat God's children. In the same context, is impossible to love God and not love God's children. Whenever children of God suffer injustices God is not pleased. Poverty, racial discrimination, social injustice, and economic inequities leveled against one segment of society by another indicates an imbalance that makes it difficult to enjoy the fruits of the kingdom. Often it becomes necessary to use tough love to create a situation where real love can exist. Tough love acts are those deeds and actions that appear to be adverse to the idea of love but whose purpose is ultimately to demonstrate love.

It's tough love that forces a parent to discipline a child going astray. It's that same kind of tough love that calls a nation going astray to task. Sometimes tough love is disruptive. Sometimes tough love causes controversy, but it must be done. To get the world to see what is done to the "least of these" is also done to God. John said,

when we love the children of God, we love God.

Even though the world hates those of different races, we who know God have overcome hatred and have learned to love everyone

Even though the world hates those of different social classes, we who know God have overcome classism and have learned to loved everyone regardless to class or status.

Bringing that to the world's attention often gets us in trouble. It's a tough love that must be done.

Martin Luther King, promoted brotherly love and compassion for the poor to the extent of marching, protesting and even going to jail. It was a tough love. This tough love required participants to absorb the hatred and anger of their enemies without fighting back or returning hate for hate. Those who followed Dr. King were certainly among those who learned the principles of tough love.

We must overcome the world

The perfect world that Martin Luther King envisioned has not been realized. It is a world where men will be judged by the content of their character; not by the color of their skin. That world has not arisen yet. We are still in a world that still belches the same hatreds that it did when King was alive but just in different ways.

Verse 4 of the text gives us the key factor that has brought us thus far and will help us to overcome; that word is "faith."

We who have faith in God, will overcome.

Dr. King spoke against a pointless war in Vietnam, and this generation faces a war for oil profits in Iraq. Young men and women are dying needlessly as large corporations reap in billions of dollars to clean up and rebuild what we bombed and tore down. Bleak as it seems, we shall overcome.

Young Black men were being lynched, bombed and beaten in Dr. King's time. While the lynching method has changed young Black men are still being lynched today. Beginning in the fourth grade millions of young black men are being placed on a track that begins with special education and for too many ends with lives of poverty or even worse prison or death. Racial profiling has made a new set of crimes across America called, "Driving while Black." –Even in this respect, through faith in God, we shall overcome.

We may get discouraged when we learn that that the fastest growing industry in America is prisons. It's troubling to know that we have more Black men in prison in America than we do college. It's ironic that even Black neighborhoods profit from prison related jobs and cry for help when prison populations drop and threaten closings in a particular area.

But even in this respect, we shall overcome!

Our families are taking a social whipping right now, but we shall overcome!

We have desegregated our schools but we have not integrated our hearts, but we shall overcome that too!

Dr. King spoke against poverty and led a poor peoples campaign that championed

the cause of poor people, working people and the less fortunate. When he died in Memphis Tennessee, he was trying to help garbage workers who were complaining about low wages. Poverty still exists in America. The federal government has reduced its assistance to the poor, without at the same time increasing efforts to provide job training and job opportunities.

Our history tells us that there was a period under the New Deal when the government provided jobs for millions, building roads, repairing streets, writing music, teaching literacy and thousand of occupations, but someone called that a give-a-way. But no one seems to mind that this country is spending billions to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq after we bombed them searching for two men. We spend billions there but we won't spend $1 billion in our own country to guarantee a decent job, a warm bed and a crust of bread to the least of these our brothers.

We shall overcome that too.

We shall overcome these injustices because the God we serve is still on the throne. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps.

We shall overcome because God still holds the faithful in the palm of his hand.

James Weldon Johnson said it right, "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who hast brought us thus far along the way. Thou who has by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray. Let our feet, stay from the places our God where we met thee, lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee. Shadowed beneath thy hand may we forever stand, true to our God true to our native land.

When we overcome

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that in verse five John asked a question and provided an answer. He asked, "Who is he that overcometh the world? Then he answered it by saying, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

If you looked closely at verse 4 you read as the the word declared, "Whatsoever" is born of God overcometh the world.

Whosoever specifies the person and ignores the circumstance. But whatsoever, includes both the person and the circumstance.

"Whatsoever" is big enough to deal with the problem of poverty and but it is specific enough to feel the pain of the poor man.

The poor of America, living in cardboard boxes and rat-infested shanties, can still sing we shall overcome!

"Whatsoever" is big enough to deal with the problem of unemployment, but is specific enough to focus on one man's quest to find a job

The unemployed of America, who have worn out there shoes walking from place to place trying to find a job can still sing, we shall overcome!

"Whatsoever" is big enough to embrace the problem of education in America, but it is also specific enough to focus on the struggles of one teacher and one student trying to see the light of day

Those who educate and those who are falling between the cracks of a system that

puts more priorities on tests than classroom performance, can still sing we shall overcome!

"Whatsover" is big enough to look at the troubles of the entire African-American culture, but is specific enough to see the struggle of a single Black mother who knows that trouble don't last always.

Those who are the victims of race related troubles on the job, in school and in the community, can still sing, "We shall overcome!"

John asked the question, "Who is he that overcometh?

He that overcometh is the man who believes that God I serve is bigger than the problems I have!

He that overcometh is the woman who believes that no matter how tough the road gets, the Lord will make a way somehow!

He that overcometh is the man who believes that you must stand for something in life or you'll fall for anything!

He that overcometh is the man who declares that God is able, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!

John said in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things!"

He that overcometh will enjoy that day when the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

He that overcometh shall enjoy that day when the mountains will be made low, rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight!

Storms may rise! But he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here!

He that overcometh will keep telling the story!

He'll keep telling the world about Jesus and a place called Calvary!

Bye and Bye when the battle is over, we'll tell the story!

How he died on an old rugged cross!

We'll tell the story!

How he rose from the grave

We shall overcome!

Oh deep in my heart, I do believe..

We shall overcome someday!

No. 9081-Inspiration

Upgrade Your Expectations

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 25, 2003

SCRIPTURE: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Philippians 1:20

Introduction

Have you ever used an outdated product? There are many products on the market today that will be out of date before the end of the these times, it will be outdated shortly after it is taken out of the box, requiring an update.

In the 60's the world raved over Boom Boxes. They were large radios that had powerful sounds, but they were soon made out of date by Walkman headsets that could deliver the same sound without disturbing anyone else. Those who had Boom Boxes had to update

Those who bought 78rpm records found that the 33rpm albums were better, forcing an upgrade. Those who bought albums soon needed to upgrade because Eight Track tapes were the new craze. They were quickly replaced by Cassettes, forcing another upgrade. Cassettes were short-lived when CD's became available.

Upgrades are everywhere. VHS movies are now being replaced by DVD's. If you own VHS players, you will soon need to upgrade.

Rotary telephones require upgrades to touch tones. Microwave ovens are displacing stovetops for warming food and digital cameras have almost replaced film and made Polaroid photos a blast from the past.

Even television is switching to digital and digital is switching to High Definition. If you have an old television in the near future, you will have to upgrade to see anything because everything will be HDTV.

When you thought you were comfortable With CPM computers and 5 ½ inch floppy drives, then came Windows 95 and 3 ½ floppies. No sooner than you adjusted to that, you had to upgrade to Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows ME then CD ROMs instead of floppy drives. Some have already discovered that their Windows 2000 needs upgrading to Windows XP.

As long as you want the same results and nothing breaks, there is no need to upgrade. If your 8 track tape still works and you like only those tapes, then you will never need anything else. But when something goes wrong, or you want something new, that's when you know its time to upgrade.

What about our relationship with God? Have we upgraded our relationship or is it unworkable? When we accepted Christ as Savior, we expected and received Salvation. But, many have not upgraded our relationship to the next level which is to accept him as our Lord.

Is it time for a spiritual upgrade? Is it time for us to study on a deeper level or do we still need the picture stories? Is it time to know how to pray or should we be content with "Now I lay me down to sleep?" Is it time to walk in the spirit with Christ as our Lord or should we continue walking in the dark?

We know it is time for an upgrade when our new CD circumstance won't play in our old 8 track method. It's time for a spiritual upgrade.

As Christians, we continually upgrade our relationship with Christ. We want to be closer, reach higher, and dig deeper to know him and realize his purpose for us. Each time we upgrade, he takes us to another level that takes us closer to our ultimate goal.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul explaining his expectation to move to the level of spirituality that would magnify Christ the greatest.

Paul spoke of his "earnest expectation" that Christ would be magnified completely through his life's work. It was the final level of accomplishment that he sought for his own spirituality that had moved from being a persecutor of the church to a promoter of Christianity in the world order.

Paul's experience in the faith was a continuous upgrade. He upgraded from a reprobate to an advocate. He upgraded from an advocate to a champion. We read how he described the faith as a continuous upgrade like a babe that begins with milk then needs the meat of the word. We read his letter to Corinthians in which he spoke of maturing in his thinking and understanding saying, "When I was a child I thought like a child, I spake like a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

In this text, he speaks of his desire and expectation to upgrade to one final level, that of being a catalyst through which others might better see Christ. It's the highest level of spirituality. He wanted to achieve this level, not for himself but for the God he served.

Upgrade our personal life

Is it time to upgrade our personal lives? When we stop to think about it, we may have a personal life that is moving but it is not getting us anywhere. We are not growing, maturing, or getting stronger. What we are doing is O.K., but is it time for an upgrade? Our ability to effectively manage our time, resources and affections usually reflect themselves in quality personal lives.

Time management is a killer. In the African-American community, we have a declining respect for time. We usually start everything 30 to 45 minutes late and never know when to end. That reflects a time management problem. Success at any venture

requires the ability to manage time. There should be time for the three "Ps" Planning, paperwork and prayer. We need time to adequately plan, do the necessary paper work to accomplish goals and time alone to pray, read and think. If you have not been allocating the kind of time needed to advance yourself, maybe it's time for an upgrade. Like that old 8-track tape, what you are doing now may work fine, until something breaks. Then you'll realize you should have upgraded many years ago.

Managing our money is another killer. Since most of us are just one paycheck away from poverty (If we miss one paycheck we're in serious trouble), money management is extremely important, yet it is one of the areas in which we are extremely vulnerable. We tend to buy with our eyes rather than with our heads. Often we look for symbols rather than substance and as a result, most of us spend ourselves into debt. Credit cards usually kill us because a person who owns multiple credit cards with a zero balance is still considered in debt because they have the capacity to charge huge sums. We know we only need one card, but we can't find the courage to cut up the other seven. Many of us have no savings or investments. Even the poorest person can save something if he or she really wants to save; all we need to do is take one week out of each month and spend nothing! Not a bag of chips, cup of coffee, candy bar, or movie rental. Save that week's money and we have a plan! It may be time to change the way we manage our resources. What we are doing now works, until something breaks. Then, like the old 8 track tape, we discover we should have upgraded several years ago.

Some may have to pay attention to our romantic lives. There are many singles whose romantic lives are completely out of control. In a desperate search for mates and happiness many have plunged themselves into a downward spiral that is endless. Broken hearts, crying, arguments, fights, cheating and wrinkling sheets is getting to be so regular that we think it's normal. If you are dating a man or woman that makes you happy but in the back of your mind you know you are incompatible, it might be time for an upgrade. If you've been shacking and playing house for a while now but one of you is hesitant to get married, it may be time for an upgrade. It may be time to upgrade to love rather than lust. It may be time to upgrade to commitment rather than convenience. It may mean dumping the old 8 track and getting a CD, a person who is committed and devoted.

The same is true for those who are married. If couples are experiencing strained relationships, it may be time to upgrade, to get help and not simply continue doing what we've been doing. If we keep doing that which did not work last year, we'll get the same results this year. Upgrade!

Upgrade Family Life

Is it time to upgrade our family relationships? The strength of the family is directly related to several elements: Quality time, understanding, support, and love. Generally, that's what makes families work well.

Too many families underestimate the importance of quality time. Quality time is

time dedicated to the interest of other family members, with nothing else on the agenda. It's the time that a husband and wife spend together doing what others might call the mundane and ordinary. It's the family gatherings, the in-house talent show, the animated funny moments when everyone feels free enough to let their guards down and laugh and relax. It's the shared moments that make quality time essential to every family. Look at your plan for this year, how much quality time is planned. Are family trips in your schedule? If your kids are participating in school activities, will the family participate with them or will they go it alone and you pick them up afterwards? Do have a get-a-way in the plan? If not, then maybe it's time to upgrade your family plan. What you are doing now may seem to work fine, like the old 8 track. But when something breaks, then you realize that you should have upgraded years ago.

The same is true for support, love and understanding. Families support each other. Family members rarely involve themselves in major undertakings without the support of their family. When the family supports a family member it means defense and offense. It defends family members when they are wrongfully attacked in pursuit of a stated goal. At the same time a supportive family takes the offense and uses all of the resources at its disposal, including time, talent and money to help a family member achieve a goal. A family loves its family members even when the tears roll in disgust over some mistake and bad turn. That's family support. Has your family been supportive of family members in the past? If not, maybe it's time to upgrade. What we have been doing in the past may seem to work fine, like that old 8-track tape. When something breaks you find out you should have upgraded years ago.

Upgrade our spirituality

Finally, brothers and sisters, there may also be a need to upgrade our relationship with God.

Our relationship with God defines the level of our expectations from him. The more we know about God the more we know what to expect from him.

The more we study about God, the more we understand his ways!

The more we study his ways, the more we understand the movement of his hand!

We can't approach a Digital God with 8 track expectations!

We need to upgrade our expectations to match the power of the God we serve!

When a widow woman realized that she was down to her last cup of meal and her last cruz of oil. She expected to eat her last meal and die. Then she heard a word from the Lord that told her to upgrade her expectations. When she expected more from God, and acted in faith, every day she went to that barrel, there was food to eat. Bur first she had to upgrade her expectations!

There's somebody like this widow woman today! Our resources are running low. Our money is drying up and we expect complete failure. But we should not expect a total loss on anything, we should upgrade our expectations and know that the God

we serve is working it out!

Job's friends saw his miserable situation and could see no way out. His money was gone, health failed and only fragments of his family remained. They concluded that Job should just curse God and die. Job's friends had an 8 track expectation that needed to be upgraded.

I hear Job declare, "Oh Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Oh Elhu, you need to upgrade your understanding of God.

Just because you heard that I lost all my money, you expected me to give up on God!

Just because you heard that my children were killed, you expected me to give up on the Lord!

Just because you heard that my health is failing me and I covered with sores, you expected me to give up on God!

You need to upgrade your expectations! Everything I have belongs to God. The Lord giveth and the Lorth taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him!

If you are holding your head down today, thinking that everything is lost, upgrade your expectations! God is still on the throne!

I hear the word of God declare, "Lift up your heads oh ye gates and the king of Glory shall come in. Who is the king of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty? Who is the king of Glory, the Lord mighty in battle!"

Upgrade your expectations! As long as God is still on the throne, if you are:

—Praying for Rain, you need to get your umbrella ready!

—Praying for bread, you need to grease the pan!

—Praying for a job, you need to get your resume ready!

Why? Because God is able!

God is able to take our:

—TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs!

—MISFORTUNES and turn them into good fortunes!

—STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!

—DEFEATS and turn them into successes!

—SET BACKS and turn them into step ups!

Don't stop expecting God to bless you!

Don't stop expecting God to make a way for you!

Don't stop expecting God to open doors for you!

There is only one door. I heard him say in John 10:14, " I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"

His name is Jesus!

He came and died to raise our expectations and give us new hope!

He died on an old rugged cross to raise our hope!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to secure our hope!

No wonder the songwriter declares, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name!

No. 9082-Funeral

Yes, Jesus Loves Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 31, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:17-18***

Introduction

If you had to name one song you learned as a child, what would that song be? For many people that song would be "Yes, Jesus loves me." Whether it was vacation Bible school or in a Sunday school class, those who grew up around church related activities are familiar with the song, "Yes, Jesus loves me." Its simple words entail some great truths that are not diminished by time. Though many years have passed since many of us have sung those words as children, we still know them because they are engraved in our spirit. We hold the simple words of the song with a sacred trust and endearment that is equaled only by our love and respect for those persons who taught us the simple words and lived them in front of us.

Do you remember the words? "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. For the Bible tells me so."

The words to the simple song are over 140 years old. Millions of children have sung these words around the world as they have been translated into thousands of languages. The song was written by Anna Warner, the daughter of a wealthy New York City lawyer. When he lost most of his fortune in the 1837 depression, the family was forced to move to a home on Constitution Island in the Hudson River. It was then that Anna and her sister Susan began writing to earn money. Among the first songs she wrote what the words to this little song. In her hard times and difficult moments her simple statement of truth was sold to make ends meet. As if God himself had blessed the words, her family was able to survive and millions of others since that time have been encouraged by the words of this hymn, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

The person who teaches this song to children teaches the more than just a song. They teach them a personal belief that is reflected in the life they live and in the testimony they give. A child learns the words to the song, and then looks to the teacher for life examples of what the song means.

Children are like new converts to the faith, they have a feeble, unrefined, even

unpolished sense that God loves them but it is not sustained in knowledge but only by the example that they see in front of them. The teacher who teaches the words in an example that lasts long after the Sunday school class has ended. Even as adults, on some infant level he may remember having heard, "God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son..." and rest comfortably with the knowledge that God loves and cares for us.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that God loves us. His love transcends our weaknesses and shortcomings. We know this because the Bible tells us so.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians in Ephesus about the nature of God's love. Not only did Paul talk about the love of God, but he demonstrated it until his dying day. He wanted all believers to know the full measure of God's love.

Paul felt that fully knowing God would help them to receive and appreciate the "fullness of God." Only through understanding the full nature of God's love can Christians comprehend the value of Christ's sacrifice and the beauty of the Christian life.

Paul said a Christian can consider that he has comprehended the fullness of God when he knows about God's love in four different ways, all of which he tried to demonstrate in his own life. We cannot comprehend what the words "Yes, Jesus loves me" really mean until we see the words dramatized in at least one life lived in front of us. For believers, Jesus himself was the example. He gave us a pattern to follow as we love others the way he has loved us. God loves us with breadth, depth, length and height. We should love others the same.

How Jesus loves us.

The one who teaches children about God's love has the responsibility of teaching more than just the song but they have to give an example in the course of their lives that they truly believe that Jesus loves them. They demonstrate this in all four aspects that Paul referred to in his letter to the Ephesians.

BREADTH: What is the breadth of God's love? When we use the word 'breadth', we think 'wide' and 'broad.' To demonstrate the breadth of love means to show compassion and love that reaches out beyond our own sphere of operation. The breadth of God's love is best described by the simple children's song that says: "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red, yellow, Black and White, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world." His loves takes in the whole world, but that does not mean that he ever loses sight of the importance of the individual. While Jesus' love is expansive enough to take in the whole world, it is narrow enough to focus on my personal estate. He cares about the world and about me too. That is why the emphasis in the children's song is on two words, "love" and "me." He loves everybody in general and he loves me in particular.

The teacher who teaches such a song to children, shows them her willingness to love everyone, of every race and class with equal intensity while remembering that God also loves the teacher too.

LENGTH: What is the length of God's love? It refers to the persistency and consistency of God's love to man. It is a measure of the course that God's love has traversed to reach each individual. God's love is so long that it has reached from the infancy of creation through the ice age, stone age, creation of man, the great world flood, the rise and fall of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome. It has withstood the inquisitions of the dark ages, survived the American civil war, two world wars, Korea, Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm. God's love is so long that it has extended from the beginning unto this present moment. The trail of his love leads right to your doorstep. What all that means to a child is that when we love like God loves you stick with things a long time.

The teacher who has to teach this value to children demonstrates it by her ability to be consistent and persisted and all that she does. They are usually big numbers that indicate the longevity and persistence of a great teacher. A marriage that lasts over 50 years is an indicator of length. It teaching career that lasts over 40 years is an indicator of length. Even to teach children one single song for over 50 years is an indicator of length and persistence.

DEPTH: What is the depth of God's love? How deep is God's love? The depth of Christ's love is further demonstrated when we consider how far he had to travel from his throne in glory to finally get to us. For us, it shown by how far we are willing to go to show love. There are many who love, but their love is shallow and superficial.

There are many who love genuinely. They exemplify the breadth of love and show respect and love for all people. They show a length of love in that they have loved for a long time without giving up.

However, the depth of love is shown not by how many people you love, or how long you have loved, but how much risk you are willing to endure for the person you love. This is the kind of love displayed when a mother sees her child standing on a railroad track with a speeding train only seconds away and dives to save the child at the risk of her own life.

This is the kind of love Jesus spoke of when he said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The teacher who teaches this aspect of God's love must show by example that there are no limits to what they will do to make just one child happy. Love them, give them a card, or even adopt a child and love him like her own. It is the depth of love that is demonstrated by the one who teaches the song, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

The height of God's love

Finally, bothers and sisters there is a fourth aspect to God's love that we must grow to understand, it is the height of God's love.

The height of God's love shows what he has lifted us from and where he is taking us.

It was the love of God that reached down and picked us up from the miry clay of sin, washed us in the blood of the lamb and set us on a course toward heaven.

Paul said this final dimension of the love of God shows us the height of his love. he shows us this height by lifting us up higher than we have ever been before.

The teacher who teaches this truth to children must be able to say, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

I came to him low, but he has lifted me higher!

I came to him in sadness but he gave me gladness!

Yes, Jesus loves me, because he lifted up my bowed down head!

Yes Jesus, loves me, because he fixed my broken spirit!

Yes, Jesus loves me, because he healed by wounded soul!

Yes, Jesus loves me, because when I wasn't able to take care of myself he put me in caring hands!

Yes, Jesus loves me, because before I drew my first breath, he came to this old earth, lived for 33 years, died and rose again to give me one great opportunity.

He died, to lift me up!

He died, to take me higher!

He died, so that when this life is over, I would take the wings of eagles and fly away!

—

On Wednesday, January 28, 2004 Lucille Toston went home to be with the Lord. For over 50 years, she taught and sang to little children, what she believed in her heart and demonstrated in her life, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

No. 9083-Inspiration

The Play of the Day

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 1, 2004

SCRIPTURE***: "And the Lord said unto Joshua, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." Joshua 3:7***

Introduction

Have you ever done something that saved the day? Most of us have had at least one experience of doing something that affected the outcome of something important. It may have been in an athletic competition or fast action taken in an emergency. It could have been an innovative idea you introduced to your employer or some other action that had the net result of saving the day. When we do what is necessary in a spectacular or extraordinary way, just in the moment of time, it's a special moment.

The 'Play of the Day" is a special feature of a sports cast in which commentators tell of special plays that made a difference in the outcome of a game. It's not unusual to see replays of 90 yard touchdown runs, or interceptions that have been returned for touch downs. As teams ready themselves for Super Bowl competition nothing would suit any team member better than to get an opportunity to make the "Play of the Day" in a super bowl contest.

A play of the day is a memorable moment. In 1998, the Fox News network showed an unbelievable play of the day. The play was from a high school basketball game between a big huge high school, and the smallest school in that division. The big school was heavily favored going in, but somehow, the small school managed to hang on throughout the game. Finally, there was only one second left in the game, the small school had the ball under their own net, and they were one point behind. They called time out and went over to confer with their coach. When they came back, one boy lined up with the ball outside the court. He slapped the ball before putting it into play. When he did, several of his teammates got down on all fours and starting barking like dogs. The players on the other team turned around to see what was going on. And when they did, the boy with the ball passed it to the team's ace shooter and he lofted it through the air. The clock ran out as the ball swished through the net to win the game. It was the play of the day.

A play of the day is an exciting moment. Sometimes players get so excited when they have made outstanding plays that they jump up and down with joy and

demonstrate their excitement sometimes by dancing in the end zones, much to the anger of their owners and managers.

The greats of Super bowl history are known for making many great plays when it counts. From Bart Starr in 1967, Joe Namath in 1969, Doug Williams in 1988, to Tom Brady in 2002 to Dexter Jackson in 2003, football world has been fascinated with its most valuable players, those who repeatedly seem to be able to make the "play of the day."

God needs a few MVP's. Those who are willing to go out each day and, through faith, make the play of the day.

All of us are on God's team. He has devised a playbook and game plan for our eventual victory. Each of us should begin each day fired up, motivated and determined to make each day a victorious day for God.

As Christians, let us resolve to approach today and every day as a day of victory. A day when we resolve that "This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he is told by God to prepare for a great day because planned to magnify him in the eyes of the people.

For Joshua, the time following the death of Moses was an extremely difficult time. For 40 years, Moses led the children of Israel. He made the big plays. It was Moses whom God used to bring down the 10 plagues of judgment on Egypt. It was Moses whom God used to stretch forth his rod over the Red Sea and cause the waters to roll back. It was Moses who showed the people bread from heaven in the wilderness and delivered God's ten commandments. Now, Moses was dead and Joshua was the quarterback.

God reassured Joshua that he would stand with him, just as he had stood with Moses. He was told to prepare for a victory, "This day will I magnify thee in the sight of all Israel." Joshua went forth that day, not knowing exactly what God would do, but prepared to work the game plan. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the priests were told to proceed toward the swelling River Jordan. When their feet touched the water, the waters rolled back for them, just as they had for Moses a generation earlier. It was a feat so miraculous that it was obvious that only God could have caused it to happen. On that day, the rolling back of the Red Sea was the defining moment for Joshua. It was the day in which he was magnified in the eyesight of the people.

Joshua 4:14 gives the report of the impact of that one day on the life of Joshua. It says, "On that day the Lord Magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel:and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life."

On that day, it was the rolling back of the River Jordan, but that was not the only day. On another day, it was the sun standing still. On another day, it was falling walls around Jericho. Day after day, God seemed to work with Joshua to pull off mighty

acts of faith, to the point that the people came to expect him to be a man used by God to make the big plays in their national life.

The word makes it clear, what Joshua already knew. The great feats that Joshua accomplished were not performed under his own power, but by the power of God. Joshua was magnified in the eyes of the people, but Joshua himself gave God the praise and the glory for he was the real source of Joshua's great acts.

He Sanctified Himself

In late 2003, Lawrence Taylor of the New York Giants made a tearful confession in a news interview with 60 minutes. In his confession of drug use and other problems, he also told how he and other team members hired prostitutes and sent them to the hotel rooms of the opposing teams in big games, with the stated purpose being to tire them out before the game. The gullible players could not resist and usually entered the game unrested and fatigued.

Joshua told Israel in verse 5 to "sanctify yourselves." To sanctify yourself means to set yourself apart from the rest.

If believers want to have any chance at all of making the play of the day for the Lord, each of us must sanctify ourselves and commit ourselves to the goal of lifting up the kingdom of God. Just as Taylor and other plays attempted to do things to weaken their opponents, Satan is busy trying to weaken believers as well. Daily he travels throughout the world going to and fro, seeking someone to devour and destroy.

Sanctify ourselves means to be prayed up and spiritually charged!

Sanctify ourselves means that we have put on our game face and are ready to face the world!

Sanctify ourselves means that we are spiritually and mentally ready to tackle whatever comes against us.

Review The Game Plan

In the locker room and in pre-game sessions, the coaches often review the game plan. No team enters a big contest without a game plan. It's the strategy that takes into account the strengths of its team and the known weaknesses of its opponents. Therefore, the coach of a team takes special pains to review the game plan and make sure that each person is acquainted with what is to be done.

That's what happened in verse eight. Joshua called the people together to rehearse the game plan. The priest would carry the ark of the covenant in front of the people. The people were to stay back about 4/5th of a mile. When the priests feet touched the water, they would trust God to do a big work and prepare to move when God responded as expected. That was the plan. It was executed to the letter and the rest is history.

Every now and then believers should review their game plan and the instructions from God. There are some plays that we don't understand but we must carry out anyway and trust the wisdom of the coach. When we face every day trusting God,

he will roll back the waters and make the big plays possible. He'll open up the holes in the line. He'll make complete the passes and ward off blockers. But we must trust him every step of the way.

We may not understand all that God wants us to do, but our resolve should be, "If the Lord wants me in the game. Here am I send me."

Whatever you want me to do.. Wherever you want me to go.

Here am I, send me!

Get Ready for the Victory

Finally, brothers and sisters, every good team comes out of the locker room fired up and ready to pursue the victory. Usually there is a band playing and a crowd is cheering!

Joshua told Israel that God was planning to do a great work for the people. He said the opponents of the nation would see the glory of the Lord revealed before the end of the day.

Every believer should be just as confident as a football player coming out of the locker room. He or she should be fired up and ready to live each day for the Lord.

One thing is for certain, no player has every made the play of the day if he refused to get in the game.

For believers, we get in the game when we pick up our cross and follow Jesus.

Jesus never said to his disciples that bearing the cross would be easy, only that it was necessary.

There are many who have never made the play of the day because they turned down the opportunity to bear the cross, despite its many blessings.

The Rich young ruler turned down salvation because he wanted it without taking up the cross. Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

Felix and Drusilla turned down the cross because they wanted to wait until a more convenient season. Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

Agrippa turned down the cross although he was almost persuaded. Must Jesus bear the cross alone? I don't know about you but I found out that "There's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me!" Brothers and sisters there is power in the cross. At the Cross the:

-Neglected get attention and the outcast finds a new home!

-Problems find solutions and lingering questions find evasive answers.

-Heartaches go away and hurts will be healed

-Crying eyes will be dried and burdens will roll away!

When Jesus died on Calvary, was buried in a borrowed tomb and arose early on Sunday morning!

It was more than just the play of the day! It was the play of a lifetime!

That's why the saints are still singing, "Victory is mine!" Victory is mine!"

I told Satan to get thee behind. Victory today is mine!

No. 9084-Annv.-Men

Where do real men stand?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 8, 2004

SCRIPTURE:*"And Elijah came unto all he people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." 1 Kings 18:21-22.*

Introduction

What is your definition of a real man? The answer to that question varies depending on the respondent. Recently a pollster toured various high school campuses asking young men their definition of a real man. The standard responses fell in four categories, physical, defiance, social, and sexual issues. These were standards used by the young describe a real man. It seems that many concluded that a real man is the biggest, badest and toughest. So, many young men, to prove themselves men set out to be the baddest and the toughest on campus, proving themselves to be strongest and the fastest of the their. Strength was associated with manhood. Social priorities were also considered the measure of a man. The man who had the most friends, the most money or was the most influential was considered a real man. So young men struggled to hold positions that would gain them social prominence. They believed social prominence would make them a real man. The third area was sexual. Most high schoolers believe that the many who could "score" more with the ladies was a real man. In fact, the higher his reputation as a lady-killer, the more he is considered a real "man." Therefore, many young men felt the need to prove their manhood to their peers. The third category was Deviance. There were many who defined their manhood by their willingness to defy the accepted standards of the day. If they were successfully able to drink, gamble, steal or use drugs in addition to any other activity that defied the rules, they were considered men. The poll found a large number respondents believed that a real man is someone who does whatever he wants to do, when he gets ready, regardless to what anyone else feels.

Even though the study only polled high schoolers, there are many adults who still share that same view today. Real men in their eyes must be physically strong, have money, power, influence and sexuality. Anything shorter than that is less appealing.

While there are many variables that determine real manhood, it has become a proven truth that a man who can do the right thing when all others around him are doing wrong and is willing to shoulder responsibility for the care of himself and those

in his charge, has learned the secret to real manhood.

As Christians, men have learned through the generations that those who have the courage to stand for what is right and to obey the command of God have been characterized as real men, in the sight of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Elijah as he stood alone against a wicked king.

Elijah was one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. Perhaps the greatest moment in his life is epitomized by his challenge of the prophets of Baal atop Mt. Carmel. Elijah was the prophet of record during the reign of King Ahab and his wicked queen Jezebel. Jezebel worshipped an idol God named Baal and influenced her husband, the king, to do the same. This displeased God, who moved Elijah to challenge Jezebel and Ahab. On numerous occasions, Elijah went before the queen and pronounced judgment on the royal couple's wicked ways. Obviously, she was not pleased. A unit of the king's soldiers was sent to arrest Elijah, but the great miracle worker, called down fire from heaven and consumed them at God's command.. Jezebel threatened Elijah with death. It is an understatement to say that she hated him.

Elijah's decision to stand against the evil dictates of Ahab and Jezebel was courageous. It was certainly life threatening. Jezebel was known to be vicious and wicked. She was a destroyer. In all of Israel, only one man would challenge her, a fact that irritated her to the point of paranoia. Yet, Elijah stood strong.

In a great contest on Mt. Carmel, Elijah completely humiliated the prophets of Baal. He challenged the false prophets to get their God to answer them by answering from heaven with a fire that would consume an animal sacrifice. Despite the dancing, wailing and pleading of the Baal prophets, there was no answer. When his turn came, Elijah quietly called on God and he immediately answered with fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice as requested.

When he decided to stand for what was right. Elijah proved himself a man. When he chose to be active rather than passive about the problem he faced, he proved himself a man. But, when he chose to stand on God's word, he was more than just a man, he was a faithful man in "godly hands."

The Issues That Face our People

Where do real men stand on the issues that face our people? While there are thousands of men who are taking bold stands when it comes to the socioeconomic issues that effect our people, too many are still not willing to take a stand.

FAMILY: Where do real men stand when it comes to the family? The Black community is suffering today because of lack of male leadership in the family. Our women have become single parents operating as heads of households. Too often, even those families that have husbands still find wives, for the most part, operating as if there were no husbands, because the men of the family go separate directions

from their wives and children. When it comes to family, where do real men stand? Our history tells us that the man was once a strong presence in Black families. Despite slavery and racial discrimination, Black men stood strong as defenders of the family and the faith. It was Black man who braved who the threat of lynching and physical abuse to stand firm with his wife and children at all costs. Yet, today only a dwindling minority of African-American families have the benefit of a real man in the family. The real man dedicates every resource at his disposal to care, nurture and protection of his family, even at the risk of personal loss. The real man takes the lead in his household, and is wise of enough to delegate tasks to the most capable family members without deserting the responsibilities of the same. The real man does not have to earn more money than his wife, neither does he have to be physically stronger than anyone in his family. He is a man by virtue of the strength of his character and richness of his wisdom. A real man leads his family spiritually. He represents Christ in his home. When his children close their eyes at night, he is keenly aware that his daughter's prayer to God "Our father, who art in heaven." He is careful, because his son's image of God what he sees in his own father. The real man stands strong in his family because he defends it in every way possible.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM: Where do real men stand with respect to economic independence. For years, our men fought for social freedom. Once freed, we found another slavery, which is the slavery of economics. When jobs are scarce and money is little to nothing, where do real men stand? Some have the notion that a man should do anything to feed himself and his family. This is true, if by anything it is mean any "moral and just" thing. Many men have taken the road to least resistance today. Too many are selling drugs, bootleg movies and CD, stolen merchandise, and involving themselves in a variety of unlawful activities all under the guise of economics. They brush off the illegality of their actions by saying, "A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do." Despite hard times, no real man defends crime as an economic necessity. Our history shows that we have lived through wars, slavery, floods and depressions, but, for the most part, the men of our families refused to steal or involve themselves in wrongdoing in the name of "doing what we gotta do." Real men don't steal to get money. Real men don't abrogate that which belongs to others just to enrich themselves. Real men make tough choices to build economic security. Real men complete the training they need to be competitive in the economic market. A young boy who claims he's a man but can't force himself to study or complete his education, may wear a man's pants, but he's still not a man. The man who throws his money away gambling, drinking and living large, may have fun, but he's living loosely like a boy, and is a far cry from the man he wants to be. Our history shows some unique patterns. We have seen men with little or no resources rise high in the world of business, finance and economics because they used they had faith, courage and a willingness to work hard. We can't have economic freedom if we are not willing to work. We can't have freedom if we are not willing save and invest. We can't be independent if we spend everything we have on keeping up with Joneses. Where does the real man stand? He stands on the side of wisely using his **r**esources instead of wasting them away.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FREEDOM: Where does the real man stand in the

social order? For many years, we have sought many political solutions to our social situations. In the process, many of our men conveniently forgot themselves in the process. The ultimate goal of the Black man is to pull himself out of poverty and social decay, then reach down and pull himself up. Many people spend their entire lives trying to break the chains of bondage and get free only to spend the rest of their lives trying to sip mint juleps and tea with the master in the big house. They operate on the false notion that if they make enough money, buy big enough houses, and go to enough parties at the big house that eventually the master will forget they were once slaves. That's a mistaken notion. The master will never forget, neither will his children. You may be dressed up with diamonds around your neck, but in his mindset, you are still a slave. Rather than emulating the master, real black men, use their resources to help the poor, distress and the huddled masses who still yearn to be free. Real black men have a sense of connection with the mother race to the point that they can never distance themselves from the problems and issues that effect the poorest of those left behind. Where does a real Black man stand? A real black man stands on the side of issues that will help the poorest of his people in the shortest period of time. The real Black man may find it necessary to stand alone against the prophets of Baal, who yell at him and ridicule him on every turn. But, real men will stand anyway!

"A Godly man"

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is only one thing better than a real man and that is a good man in godly hands.

Elijah was a good man. By any standard, he was a real man. Strong, independent and courageous. But what made Elijah more appealing is the same quality that made many of the strong men of the bible great, they were real men in godly hands.

Abraham was a good man, but when he put his trust in God and moved at his command, he became a good man in godly hands.

Jacob was a good man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he became a better man, because he was a good man in godly hands!

David was a good. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." –He became even greater because he was a good man in godly hands.

A good man in godly hands is a powerful man because God uses him!

A good man in godly hands is an influential man because God controls him!

A good man in godly hands is an effective man because God directs him!

Where do real godly men stand?

Real men stand on the side of the Lord!

That is why Joshua told those who chose differently, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

As men go forward in the world they should always remember to take the Lord

with you!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

If you want to make this journey, you got stand on the Lord' side; you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you got to walk!....

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Who died out on Calvary!

Who arose Early Sunday morning!

I've got to walk with the king!

No. 9085-Anniv.-Women

For Such A Time As This

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 15, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"…and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14***

Introduction

Are there any strong Black women in your family? Is it a mother, sister, grandmother, or aunt? If there are, you probably are among those who realize that such women as these always seem able to tackle the problems that exist and rise to the occasion. Whatever the problem, many families always seem to have a granny, aun-tee, or Muh-Dear, who appears to be given to the family by God for "such a time as this."

The African-American community has a rich history of women's heritage. Black women have played important roles in advocating, promoting and championing the causes of our race. It seems that God has always touched a few women in every generation to rise above the norm and speak, lead and champion the cause of their families specifically or our race in general.

We have heard the names before and know them like the backs of our hands. Women such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Phyllis Wheatley are the champions we study about in school as they fought against slavery, prejudice and the right of our people to be free.

In the time when America had accepted the institution of slavery, the thundering voice of Sojourner Truth, raised its consciousness to a new level. The attention she received and the impact she made was if she was born for "such a time as this."

Harriet Tubman, dangerously moving into the South to help slaves escape on the Underground Railroad, came at a time when slaves were looking to be free but could find no way. Her boldness made it clear that she was born for "such a time as this."

Wheatley wrote poetry and prose in a time when Negroes were thought to be incapable of constructive thought. She raised that consciousness in way that made it obvious that her very birth was divinely timed so that she could be available for "such a time as this."

No matter what generation of our history we study, from Nefertari in Egypt to Carol Moseley Braun in America, there are Black women who always seem to rise to champion the cause of our race. Their very lives seem to suggest that they were born, especially suited for times "such as this."

No generation has been without great women who have championed our causes. However, the greatest champions are not in the history books. They are in our own families. Each family that looks into its own history won't have to look too long before it finds a long line of women who seemed to have been born for "such a time as this."

Our history is that of mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who seemed to have been equipped with the essentials necessary to address the circumstance of the family. In the time in which they lived, they had what it took to get the family through. Whether it was courage, scholarship or willingness to rise above depravation, God always seemed to use them in peculiar ways, as if they were born for "such a time as this."

As Christians, we salute the African-American woman because God has used her beauty, courage and strength throughout the generation to help lift our race. Today, she is still doing the same. It is if her very existence is for "such a time as this."

Exposition

This text focuses on Esther as she is told that her rise to throne of Persian was destined so that she could save her people from destruction.

The story of Esther concerns a king called Ahasuerus, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, who married a young Jewish girl named Esther, a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem. It also involves her cousin, Mordecai, who became a judge in the city gates in Susa, the capital of Media-Persia; and an officer of the King's court named Haman.

The events of the Book of Esther take place when Israel was in captivity under King Ahasurus. Many of the Jewish people had been allowed to return home to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and restore their worship, others for various reasons stayed. The story is that of a king and his kingdom. The king divorces the queen who is at his side when the story opens, and thereby becomes a lonely man by his own decree. He is powerless to change the decree after it is issued, and in his loneliness, he begins a search for a new queen. Esther, under the control of her cousin, Mordecai, is brought before the king and he falls in love with her. Because of her beauty, he immediately chooses her to be his queen and exalts her to the second place in the kingdom.

Esther's rise to the throne was well timed. There was a movement being planned by Haman to destroy the Jewish people. She would ultimately be the single presence that would make the difference. Haman managed to pull the wool over the king's eyes and deceive him into signing a decree to destroy all the Jews in his kingdom. Haman and Mordecai are instantly in direct conflict because Haman was "the enemy of the Jews." Learning that Mordecai is a Jew, he vows to eliminate him from the kingdom. Mordecai overhears the plot and gets word to Queen Esther that she would need to act to save the people. He is confident that the people would be saved, either by her hand or by someone's hand because God would not allow his people to be destroyed. Thus he utters the words of this text, "and who knoweth whether thou art come to

the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Eventually Esther is able to expose Haman's plans, and save the people but not before watching Mordecai raised to a position of prominence and Haman hanged from gallows he built for Mordecai.

Potential to Position

Esther had considerable potential. She had natural beauty, charm, wit and intelligence. What she did not have was position.

African-American history has shown that Black women have always had natural beauty, charm, wit, courage and strength. Until recent times, Black women have been historically blocked from positions where their intrinsic value could be utilized fully.

While barriers against Black women are falling, many still remain. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that while 62 percent of Black women are now in the American workforce, most of the jobs are still technical, sales, and administrative support areas. These are jobs that do not offer high wages or full packages of benefits. Slowly the barriers are falling. In 1987 there were 172,200 businesses owned by Black women. By 1996, there were 405,000. Black women are moving into the workforce, business community, government and world leadership in large numbers. Sociologists point to the Black woman's attention to education as a primary reason. In the last decade there were 918,000 Black women enrolled in higher education, with only 55,300 in prisons, according to the U.s. Justice Department (1995). That is significant for our people because it is just the opposite of what is happening to Black men. In the same time period there were 556,000 Black men in college and 711,600 in prison.

The declining presence of Black men in educational circles and in leadership is paving the way for Black women who are moving from potential to position, for "such a time as this."

As women move from potential to position, they should always remember the "Esther Factor." Esther never forgot who she was and used every opportunity at her disposal to help her people. The Esther Factor, is the challenge of Black women today who are being encouraged not to forget that they are Black. As they begin to move in social socials outside of their own community, don't forget the huddled masses of your people who still need your help. Use your influence to reach down and help someone else.

Once in a position, Esther risked losing it all to help her people. She succeeded but she could have lost it all. The Esther Factor is the combination of faith and remembrance that prompts every successful woman to do what she can to help those who follow after her.

Esther Appealed to the King

Once in her position, Esther appealed to the King to save the people. Likewise, the Black woman cannot afford to become silent. The barriers are falling but she must

continue to raise the consciousness of America.

While 62% of Black women are in the work force, they still earn only 89 percent of the salary of white women.

The fact 62 percent of Black women are working reflects other factors as well, one being that 62 percent of Black families are headed by single women. Marriages are declining in the Black community. In 1950, 62 percent of Black families were headed by a married couple. By 1998, only 37 percent of our families have a marriage presence.

This is no time for Black women to become comfortable. Black women still face a dilemma. In America 41 percent of all abortions are performed on Black women. The pregnancy rate for young Black women 15-19 years of age is twice that of white women. Rates of domestic violence among Black women are three times the rates of white women.

On top of all of that, the educated Black woman has a man problem. The field of available educated Black men is declining as more Black women become professionals with fewer Black male professionals from which to choose. This fact has increased the "jungle fever" syndrome as black women start looking to other races to find a mate.

The Esther Factor in this circumstance, focuses on the need to keep raising the consciousness of those around us that the social ills that are destroying our people are real. Therefore, women's organizations should intensify their efforts to attack the problems that effect our people. We cannot ignore them, we must appeal to the king! Appeal to the government! Appeal to the school boards! Appeal to the ruling powers of this nation on behalf of the huddled masses who are desperately in danger of destruction.

Women who have achieved have been placed in their position, "for such a time as this."

God's Hand in the Plan

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that Esther was successful because God had a hand in the plan.

The name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther. Even though his name is never mentioned it was evident that his hand was in the plan.

Esther rose from obscurity to prominence in way that could only happen unless God's hand was in the plan.

Esther was able to change the course of events that would have destroyed our people, only because God's hand was in the plan.

Black women who have succeeded historically may give some credit to changing times, increased education and increased opportunities; but what's really making things happen is that God's hand is in the plan.

I'm reminded of the church mother who was always so confident that the Lord would make a way. The young women of the church asked her one day, "Tell why you are so confident." The old lady said, "When I was girl, my mother taught me to ride my bicycle and she ran beside me. I could feel her hand holding me as I paddled along. One day, I rode a long distance. When I stopped I realized that mama wasn't

beside me. I asked mama, how was it that she was not there but I still felt her hand. She told me that she gave out of breath but she knew the Lord was beside me. I didn't see his presence, but I felt his hand. Ever since that day, I've learned that if God's hand is in the plan, everything is gon' be all right!"

Every man or a woman who makes a move in this life, should recognize God's hand in the plan.

If you have made advancements in education, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have made career advancements, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have made achieved family goals, it was God's hand in the plan.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable become probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable become thinkable!

It's the same hand the carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

The world intended it for bad, but God had a hand in the plan.. and early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9086-Funeral

A Work of Art

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 21 2004

SCRIPTURE***: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." Psalm 27:4 "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Psalm 90:17***

Introduction

If your life could be depicted by a painting, would it be a DaVinci, Picasso or graffiti? If your life were described as a piece of music, would it be a well-composed symphony or the disconnected loud chilly sounds of rock? If your life were portrayed in a dance, would it be a ballet, a slow drag or something in between? Each of our lives is a work in progress. Whether it becomes a masterpiece or a mass of confusion without meaning and significance is up to each person. We daily make decisions and take directions that either contribute to the beauty of our work or detract from its overall importance.

There is a little artist in each of us. There is a little dancer, a little musician, a little painter, a little flower arranger, a little decorator, a little designer in each of us. There are others that are born with more than just a little artist in us; they are born with a giant inside of them that looks for ways to get out and express itself. Schools try to expose children to various art forms to help them discover whether there is a little artist within or whether there is a giant waiting to get out. Most of us do not get beyond drawing stick people, singing Old McDonald, and painting with finger paints. There is a little artist in most of us. Then, there are others who seem to blossom. They have something bigger than the rest of us. They have a special eye; a special ear; or a special touch that helps them see what we cannot see, hear what we cannot hear and feel what we cannot feel. That person is the artist.

The artist is the person who prescribes to the philosopher's assessment of art by saying, "God is beauty and beauty is God. That's all you know and that's all you need to know."

There are generally two terms that we used to describe the way we perceive those around us. There are some people we describe as "a piece of work." Generally, when a person is described as a "piece of work," it usually means that that person defies normal expectations. It's generally not a term of flattery, but is more of a putdown. On the other hand, when anything is called a "work of art" it generally means that

it exemplifies the essentials of perfection and workmanship requiring great skill and attention to detail.

Consider the little boy who learned a lot about God's skill by looking at the snow. Little Bobby was spending the weekend with his grandmother. His grandmother decided to take him to the park on Saturday morning. It had been snowing all night and everything was beautiful. His grandmother remarked... "doesn't it look like an artist painted this scenery? Did you know God painted this just for you?" Bobby said, "Yes, God did it and he did it left handed." This confused his grandmother a bit, and she asked him "What makes you say God did this with his left hand?" "Well," said Bobby, "we learned at Sunday School last week that Jesus is sitting on God's right hand! So if Jesus is sitting on God's right hand then he did all of this with his left hand!"

When God made the world in six phases, it was a work of art. When he created the rivers, streams and oceans, it was a work of art. When he clothed the earth with flowers, trees and grasses it was a work of art. When he made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, that too was a work of art. Sin found a way to corrupt God's perfect man in the garden. Since that time, it seems men and women have spent their lives trying to recapture the perfection lost in the garden. Those whose lives come close to the godly ideal are said to have led lives that were works of art.

As Christians, we strive to live according to the godly ideal. We strive for perfection but often find that it is elusive. Despite our best efforts, we still see flaws and mistakes. We have the assurance, that if we trust him and overcome, that he will give us a crown of life. It is the artist's reward.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expressed his desire to give pleasing service to the Lord.

In Psalm 27 David made it clear that one of the major objectives of his life was to live in communion with God. Living in communion with God cannot be done without a humble and committed spirit. This spirit helps believers create a life work that is a masterpiece or a work of spiritual excellence.

David said his entire life was consumed with one desire. That desire was to live in the presence of God in a way that was pleasing to him. As a shepherd boy, a wanderer and as king, he wanted to please God and do those things that would meet God's approval.

David did just that, most of his life. He had a few flaws and made some mistakes along the way, but his life is described as enviable. He was described as a man after God's own heart.

In Psalm 90, he asked for the beauty of God to be upon his life work in a way that all men would truly see God's beauty. He asked that God would "establish the beauty of God" upon those who live for him. Through him, they sought to create great works. Matthew Henry reminds us that God's servants cannot work for him unless he work upon them, and work in them both to will and to do; and then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us when the operations of his

grace are apparent upon us.

We can do no good work on our own, without the power of God.

If a life is a work of art, then the hand of God is upon that life.

How to create a work of art?

Just how can we create a work of art? If a man or woman wanted to shape their lives into a work of Art for God, what should he or she do?

There are many people who are born with an artistic touch. Even without joining a church, believing in God, they can write music, draw, arrange flowers, decorate and a plethora of other expressions. However, the person who wants to use that gift for God must get to know him on a personal basis and accept him as his personal Lord and Savior.

This is the man or woman who goes beyond mere art and begins to shape their lives into works of art.

INNER LIFE: The godly artist reflects an inner life in all that they do. The inner life is the communion he or she shares with God. God's spirit communes with them in special ways through this inner life that helps them see what appears to be a bunch of weeds and arrange them into flowers. People who desire to make their lives a work of art, cannot do so without a spiritual communion with God. It's that inner life that brings peace, joy and satisfaction.

INNER EYE: The godly artist has an inner eye. The inner eye of the artist sees value in what others have thrown away and can always find a way to take something ugly and make it beautiful. This inner eye helps them see what others cannot see. It is a special gift that comes from God. The artist can take a vase of flowers and arrange them in a way that inspires. The artist can see the value of a scrap of paper, pop sickle sticks or bottle tops. Others pass these things by and think little of them, but the artist sees "value!" This is the same way God sees those who are less fortunate, down cast and lost. He sees our value and takes something that others call ugly and makes it beautiful.

INNNER TOUCH: The godly artist has an inner touch. We feel with our hands. But the godly artist feels with her soul. Very few godly artists can create anything until they are touched themselves. A variety of terms are used such as "inspired" or "moved." Ultimately, the net result is that the godly artisan can do nothing until God touches them. The godly singer prays for God's touch. The godly musician prays for God's guiding power. The godly artist stares at the canvass waiting for God to send a beam from heaven. The person who desires to create a work of art of their lives is one who desires to move at God's command and direction.

A work of faith

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that a life that is a work of art, is a work of faith.

A person who creates a work of art is one who is never fully pleased with what they do, but they are stirred by hope and faith in God.

Artists are sometimes cranky and hard to get along with. Sometimes an artist can be argumentative and just down right hard to cantankerous.

What of the woman who tries to make her life a work of art? What should she do?

The woman who wants to make her life a work of art must go beyond the natural talents, she possessed from birth. She must transcend the natural and seek God's help for the supernatural.

When she transcends herself she is able to realize, what David meant when he said wanted to be saturated with the beauty of Lord.

The woman who wants to make her life a work of art must know the Lord.

She must acknowledge him, serve him and be obedient to him!

She must live her life in accordance to his will and let him use her to create as much beauty as she can in her home, in a classroom full of students, or in her church!

She must see with godly eyes!

She must hear with godly ears!

She must touch with godly hands!

Even when advancing age slows her steps, dims her sight and dampens her spirit she must continue to see God in the beauty of the flowers and hear God in the birds that sing, and feel God in a sister's last touch!

The woman who wants to make her life a work of art must keep her faith in the eternal Christ!

She must remain faithful to Christ, who died on Calvary!

She must remain hopeful that Christ, who arose on Sunday morning, will be with her in a dying hour!

She must hold to his unchanging hand..

.. until her dying breath!

—

On Sunday February 15, 2004, Ozelle Taylor, a godly woman who tried to bring beauty into this world, took her last breath. Her life was a work of art!

No. 9087-Youth

What's In Them Genes?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 22, 2004

SCRIPTURE:"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of the water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5

Introduction

Have you been keeping up with all of the news concerning gene research? Science has discovered that we are born with a set of genes that determine our race, physical traits, and abilities. They have found ways to isolate these genes and discover what makes them work. They can even alter some of them in ways that will prevent diseases. What's amazing is that they can reproduce DNA and can produce clones, or duplicates of living creatures. They have done it successfully with sheep, cows and other animals. While it is illegal in the United States to clone human, it will only be a matter of time before the process will be applied to humans as well.

We are born with genes that control our physical lives. Yet, spiritually God is challenging every believer to be "born again."

Our physical genes control the way we look and other factors but our spiritual genes control our soul. We are born with a set of spiritual genes that are sinful in nature. Our entire focus in life is self-preservation and self-promotion. We are encouraged spiritually to look hard at that set of spiritual genes and trade them in for spiritual genes that are born of God.

As Christians, we revel in the fact that we are born, but we rejoice in the fact that we have been born again.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he spoke to his disciples about the importance of being born again.

Being born again is the phrase that is used to describe the process of regeneration. It means that a person becomes different in his thinking, actions, goals and motivation. Being born again puts a believer on a different spiritual track. It is a track toward the kingdom of God. Jesus said no person could expect to enter the kingdom of God unless he is truly born again.

A person who is born of the water and of the spirit is controlled by a different set

of spiritual genes.

He is truly a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things become new.

Influence of Our Genes

Three factors influence what today's Black youth will become: genes, environment and the hand of God.

Social scientist have been studying the differences between Black or poor children and white children for years. Generally, they have concluded that heredity or "genes" play a large role in determining how far a Black child or any poor child goes. Heredity is our history. It's what we get from mama and papa and great grandfather. It is passed down from one generation to the next in the biological make-up of children and siblings.

There were two ideas about us. The white community said Black children were taught that they could not learn because they were intellectually inferior to whites. They said we scored poorly on tests and could not succeed in any capacity that required us to think because our brains were smaller than those of whites. They said running was in our genes. They said playing basketball or football is in our genes, but thinking and decision making was not a part of our heredity. Even when we played football, many doubted that a Black could be a quarterback in the NFL because quarterbacks have to think.

The leaders of the Black community would not accept that idea. Men like W.E.B. Dubois, writing in the Crises magazine kept pointing to the mental ability of African-Americans. Paul Lawrence Dunbar and others of the Harlem Renaissance composed music, wrote books and plays that marveled America. Carter G. Woodson blasted the white man's assessment of Negro intelligence in what he called the 'Mis-Education of the American Negro." He started Black history week so the Blacks could see the proof of their own worth and not buy into the notion that something in their genes made them intellectually inferior.

Even though Black scholars dispelled the myth, the white opinion about our inferiority continued. That opinion held until Blacks started doing things in he white man's world that required undeniable intelligence by his standard. When James "Shack" Harris became the first Black quarterback in the NFL, opinions changed. Arthur Ashe moved in the tennis world. Others like Warren Moon and Doug Williams, dispelled the notion because they showed that Blacks could think, even on the football field. Jesse Jackson ran for President, Andrew Young became the Ambassador to the United Nations. When Blacks by the thousands began to graduate from college earning terminal degrees and began heading major corporations, writing books and heading Fortune 500 companies, it became obvious that there was nothing wrong with the genes of Blacks. There was no trait of ignorance among our people that was hereditary. Even the worst critics of our race concluded that ignorance is not something that is peculiar to Black people. It's not in the genes!

Influence of Environment

In 1994, Herrnstein and Murray released an 845 page study called "The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life." The premise of the study was that intelligence is hereditary; whites and the affluent have it, but Blacks and poor whites will always be 15 IQ points or so behind.

The study questioned the value of programs like Head Start, which attempts to give poor children exposure to the essentials of learning at an early age to offset the impact of their poverty. The Bell Curve conclusions affirm what Head Start critics believe, that the programs like Head Start can't help the poor because the children are gene deficient.

In 2003, the Journal of Psychological Science released a study that challenged the Bell Curve. It showed that environment, not genes alone, also impacts the intelligence and success potential of children, especially poor children and Black children. The study was important because it confirmed what Black people already knew, there is nothing wrong with out genes, there is something wrong with what goes on in many of our neighborhoods and homes.

As a general rule, we have become very relaxed with respect to education expectations. We have accepted mediocrity as par for the course. We are not angry when white students who sit in the same class with our children score high on tests but ours score low. We are not upset that school systems allow our boys to play sports even if they have less than average grades. We are not upset if poor children, whether they are Black or white are given the same experiences as those in schools dominated by the more affluent. We have accepted mediocrity as norm for ourselves and have lost our fight. Those who can afford it have stopped fighting altogether, they have pulled their children out of public education and placed them in private schools. Those who lead public schools should study what works. Head Start, around the nation works. Why is it that poor Black students in Head Start do well, but that same student, once in the regular school system begins to perform poorly. Head Start is parent oriented. Its teachers visit homes and plans programs and activities for at risk children that transcend their class. The results of Head Start is not measured by standardized tests that place pressure on teachers. Its students, even at four years old attend plays, ballets, participate in dramas, go to the library, visit the mall and hundreds of out of class experiences that impact their thirst for learning. Leaders should study what is working and fight every effort to accept the present system that does not work.

It's not all in the school system. The bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." Too many of our families are raising children rather than rearing them. Many of our families need serious adjustment. It's not in the genes, it's what goes on and what does not go on at home. It's not a child's genes that makes him leave home with his pants so low his underwear shows. It's not a child's genes that makes a girl makes a girl wear a dress so short that her panties show! It's not a child's genes that keeps him in front of a television set until after midnight watching BET videos instead of studying Math, English and

Science. It's not the genes that makes a 12 year old find a Walt Disney movie boring because it's not rated "R." It's not in the genes, it's in the parenting. Parenting is a hard job. Single parenting is even harder, but it has to be done.

If our youth do not excel, it's not in the genes. What we do at school, home and the neighborhood makes a difference too.

Influence of God's Hand

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a factor that has not been measured by the Bell Curve or the Journal of Psychological Science, that is the importance of religious upbringing.

There is something about a child who knows the Lord.

There are no significant studies to document this truth other than what is generally known among believers, children who know the Lord and are taught the Word of God approach life with a different attitude than others.

The child who lives in a godly home walks out of his door every morning feeling good about himself and the day ahead. Even at 10 years old, she says in her heart, "the Lord will make a way."

The child who knows the Lord, lives confident that no matter where he lives God cares!

Somebody here knows something about the Lord. You don't claim to be a scholar or an expert but you have had some dealings with the Lord.

I don't know about you but I have found out that when nobody else:

—Cares, that the Lord is concerned about me

—Forgives me, that the Lord is willing to forget

—Accepts me, that the Lord receives me with arms wide open

—Wants me, that the Lord accepts me as a child of the king

The difference between a child of God and others is not in the genes, it's in the soul. One deals with the DNA and other deals with BA or Born Again!

The difference between a child of God and others is not the environment they are from but where they are going to!

The difference between a child of God and others is in the spiritual genes.

When the world talks about jeans it means Levis, Prada, but God is talking about spiritual genes!

When the world talks about jeans it means BabyPhat and Calvin Klein but God is talking about spiritual genes!

When the world talks about jeans it means Iceberg and Sergio, and wonders with Ginuwine, "What's in them jeans?"

Spiritual genes are designer genes, made in heaven and custom made to fit every believer!

Those who have God's spiritual genes, never give up hope, because their hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness!

Those who have God's spiritual genes, never stop trying because they are holding on to God's unchanging hand!

Those who have God's spiritual genes, don't worry about what neighborhood they are from, they believe they can achieve because "I am a child of the king"

Spiritual genes are so impressive that the world wonders, "What's in them genes!"

God is looking at our spiritual genes, the condition of our souls, and is asking, "Is there any room for me in them genes?"

Is there any room in your life to give a little praise to the Lord?

Is there any room in your life to send up a prayer to heaven?

Is there any room for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Is there any room for the one who died for you on Calvary but rose Early Sunday morning?

When you look at your spiritual genes you can say like the old warriors, "I know I am a child of God, although I move slow!"

No. 9088-Black Heritage

Ye Shall See
The Glory of the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 7, 2004

SCRIPTURE:"In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?" Exodus 16:7

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you looked at something but could not see it? Have you ever been in a situation and looked in every direction but could not see a way out? If you are like most people, you probably remember a time or two when good things were happening but all you could see were the things that were going wrong.

An old proverb says "It's hard to see the forest, if you're looking at the trees." That's the way it is in life, sometimes we miss the beauty of the forest because all we can see is the chipped bark on a single tree. There are times in every person's life when we complain a whole lot about what we do not have and forget about the great blessings that we do have.

A poor family lived in a shack on the outskirts of town. There was great alarm in the city when the fire bells began to ring and the volunteer fire department made a mad dash to put out the flame. By the time the flame was finally extinguished, there was nothing left but a pile of charred rubble. The husband pulled his wife and children together and hugged them and as he looked at the smoldering remains of his little shack he said, "Thank you Jesus." The son was puzzled. "Daddy, what are you happy about? Our house is gone. Our clothes are gone. Everything we have is gone! I can't see anything to be happy about." The father looked at the son and said, "All you can see in the pile is what we lost. I look at that same pile and praise God that what could have been in the pile, is not there and that is us!"—Sometimes it's good to be able to see good that happens in every difficult situation.

African-Americans have a proud and rich heritage that stands tall. We have often complained about the adverse circumstances that have beset us, while at the same time failing to see the great blessings that God has given us as a people.

We who are the great grand children of slaves and sharecroppers have much for which to be thankful, if we just look around and see the big picture.

As Christians, we see the difficulties of our past. We also see the troubles of the present moment. We are strengthened because we have the assurance that one day we shall see the glory of the Lord!

Exposition

This text focuses on a promise received by the children of Israel that God would shower blessings upon them after hearing their cries.

The children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt for about 400 years. As slaves, they were treated as chattel, and forced to build the mighty architectural wonders that have awed the world for centuries.

During the time of their captivity, the children of Israel prayed to God, but they also complained to God. At times, it appeared that they complained more than they prayed. They often accused God of ignoring their pleas while at the same time failing to see all the different ways that God blessed them.

This text focuses upon Israel as they journeyed toward the promised land. In the course of their journey, the whole nation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness (v2). They complained about everything they did not have, whether it was food, water, or protection from their enemies. In many instances God heard their complaints and responded with immediate aid and assistance. As their complaints continued, God made them one additional promise in verse seven. He promised that in the morning he would give them a blessing so unique that the people would glorify him as being a God who provides for his people in times of trouble.

Although God blessed them repeatedly during their 400 year enslavement Israel was not able to see it. What they saw was the bitterness of their enslavement. They did not see all of the ways God blessed them despite their unfair political and social circumstance. However, this text finds God making a promise that he would provide bread in the wilderness, in a way they could see and he would be finally glorified.

What the could Not See

During Israel's enslavement, there were many ways that God sheltered and protect them but they could not see them. Their focus was so intense upon the tragedy of thir circumstance that they could not see how God's hand moved in their situation. Today, like Israel, we too have often been guilty of failing to see the many ways that God has blessed us as a people despite the hard and difficult history we have endured in this nation.

COULD NOT SEE GOSHEN: While the Israelites could see Egypt they had difficulty seeing Goshen. Goshen was the area in which Egypt kept the slaves. It was not fertile. It was difficult ground, yet God seemed to bless Goshen in ways that were uniquely obvious to everyone except the Israelites. When water turned to blood in Egypt, the water in Goshen was pure. When disease covered Egypt, the same diseases did not impact the people of Goshen. When the death angel struck down

the first-born of every home in Egypt, those in Goshen who had to blood of the lamb over their door posts were protected. Yet, despite these obvious ways in which God blessed them Israel still complained. They could not see Goshen.

In a similar sense, African-Americans often focus on the tragedy of our slave experience while failing at the same time to see the way God blessed us in Goshen. We talk about the slave masters whip, and our bitter feelings about that, but we failed to see how God sustained us despite our enslaved state. We talk about how we were forced to eat the scraps and leftovers from the master's table there were fit only for the hogs, but we fail to see how God took the leftovers and turned them into gourmets. Obviously, we have had a slave history, but that history was also a time when we felt the mighty hand of God moving throughout our lives in a powerful way.

COULD NOT SEE THE RED SEA: even though it was a truly miraculous event, the children of Israel even had problems seeing the Red Sea when they faced a difficult moments. As they left Egypt, the king's army follow them but was prevented from reaching them by a pillar of fire that stood between the army and them. At the Red Sea, they had reached a point of no return with their backs seemingly against the wall, and God opened up a way out of no way. The children of Israel grumbled on the other side and somehow could not see all the ways that God had blessed them as they met and overcame one obstacle after another. Even today, we sometimes complain about the obstacles that are set before us without seeing the varied ways that God has caused the walls to tumbledown. Whether it was legal slavery, the separate but equal doctrine of Plessey versus Ferguson or the Brown versus the Topeka Kansas school board decision, it is obvious that each time we came before you Red Sea or faced destruction by the approaching armies of our enemies, God has stood in the gap on our behalf. Every battle we have fought, we have done so realizing the presence of God without whom no victory could have been won. Even today, as we complain about difficulties and troubles that we face, we must always see the ways in which God is dealing with one problem or another just in the nick of time.

COULD NOT SEE IN THE WILDERNESS: Just as Israel could not see in Egypt or could not see at the Red Sea, they also found it hard to see in the wilderness. In the wilderness, they often suffered difficulties associated with the nomadic life. Water was always short and resources were few. They could not plant crops, or make new clothes. They were susceptible to disease and without military protection while they were in the wilderness. Yet despite this susceptibility, God blessed them but they could not see.

They could not see how they wore the same clothes for 40 years but they never wore out.

They could not see how they were protected from their enemies despite their own ability to defend themselves.

They could not see how they were provided water out of nowhere despite a drought situations. God bless them, but they could not see.

In a similar sense, African-Americans today are living in the wilderness of America. We complain about the disadvantages that have crippled us, while at the same time ignoring the many ways God has blessed us.

We who once slaves are now advisors to the president, governors of states, mayors of cities, and leading communities in thousands of elected positions across the nation.

We who were once slaves have developed a spiraling Black middle-class, business community and cultural community.

We who were once slaves in the wilderness of America have been uniquely sheltered, protected, and nurtured by nothing other than the hand of God.

And while we aggressively work to make our way through this wilderness, we must not be so narrow in our focus that we fail to see what God has done for us in the wilderness.

In the wilderness, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In the wilderness, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In the wilderness, God has been our we out of no way.

In the wilderness, God has been out of bridge over troubling waters; even if we could not see it.

Glory in the morning

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider God's promise to Israel and his promise to us today, "In the morning ye shall see the glory of the Lord."

When Israel traveled in the wilderness of Zin, they could not see the many ways that God blessed them, even though he gave them quail meat every day. Yet, I hear God saying, "In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

When they could not find water to drink, they could not see how God led them to a placed called Marah and gave them sweet water. Yet, I hear God saying, "In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!"

When they were thirsty and needed to wet their dry lips, they could not see how God led them to a place called Meribah and gave them water from a rock. Yet, I hear God saying, "In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord."

It does not matter whether we came to this nation on the Mayflower or on a slaveship, we should be able to look at our own family history or struggle and say in our own mind, "Look where he's brought me from."

Whether it's from the poverty of the barrios or the abject neglect of the ghetto, every child of God should be able say, "Look where he's brought me from."

Whether its from sleeping four to a bed on corn shuck mattresses or eating hog bacon for breakfast, pig ears for lunch and hog chit'lins for supper, every child of God ought to be able to say, "Look where he brought me from!"

God told Israel, "I have one more thing to give you, that you definitely be able to see."

God said, I have given you:

—WATER in the wilderness, but in the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

—FOOD when you were hungry, but in the morning, ye shall se the glory of the Lord!

—CLOTHES on your back, but in the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

In the morning, I'm going to send you bread from heaven.

I heard Jesus say, Moses gave you bread in the wilderness, but I am the bread of life.

In the morning, we'll be able to sing, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of heaven. Feed me till I want no more!"

Hang on brothers and sisters, there is a new day coming!

In the morning, it won't matter whether you are black or white!

In the morning, it won't matter whether you are Hispanic, Asian or Native American

In the morning, every mountain shall be made low!

In the morning, every valley shall be exalted!

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

No wonder the songwriter said, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the faithful lightning of his terrible swift sword, his truth is marching on!"

Glory, Glory Hallelujan, his truth is marching on!

It started marching over 2000 years ago!

It started marching to a hill called Calvary!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

In the morning, we shall see his glory!

Glory!

Glory!

No. 9089-Anniv.-Men's Day

The Man That Feareth the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 14, 2002

SCRIPTURE: "Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." Psalm 128:4

Introduction

Have you ever met the man who claimed to be fearless? There are some men who readily boast that they are not afraid of anything. They brag that they are not afraid of pain, death, danger or anything walking or breathing. Such men boldly claim to be invincible Titans who fear nothing.
Even young men have a tendency to take on immense danger to prove themselves. Sometimes the smallest guy on the campus decides to take on the biggest and baddest guy he can find just to prove that he is fearless.

The macho feeling that many men have derives from their desire to impress upon everybody everywhere that they are afraid of nobody.

In reality, all of us are afraid of something, even though we may act otherwise.

Everyone is afraid of something. Some of us are afraid of the dark.

Some of us are afraid of losing our positions or our jobs.

Some of us are afraid of what people say.

When it comes to men there are generally two categories: The self made man and the man who fears the Lord.

What can a man do to guarantee he will be blessed by God? Is there a certain thing he can do or say?

If he fears the Lord, both his wife and children shall be a blessing to him.

The self made man and the God fearing man

The self-made man is one who believes that he is the captain of his own ship and the controller of his own destiny.

He says "I and I alone" control my future. They used with vivid magnification, that word "I." They said, "I am this and I am that." Sometimes they can believe that they entire world circulates around them. This is the condition of the man who wakes up in the morning, looks in the mirror and truly believes that he is God's gift to women.

He feels that women should fall on their knees and thank God for the privilege to look at him.

Have you seen the self-made man? He is the one who says, "My education!" "My hard work!" are responsible for my success! The self-made man uses these words many times in the course of his life.

Some self-made men are so conceited that they believe they can do things without anyone else.

A self-made Man had one focus in life, earn money and nothing else mattered. One night he had a dream that he was being served in a fine restaurant filled with rich and important people. He ordered a variety of fine cuisines and dishes for himself and his guest that were expensive and prepared by the world's finest chefs. However, each time the waiter brought out his tray instead of the fine foods he ordered, all he was served was a slice of bread.

"There must be a mistake" he told the waiter noting that he had ordered several fine selections. The waiter said there had been no mistake. Angry, the man left and went to several other restaurants and at each place all would receive was a slice of bread. Finally, the man went to the owner of the restaurant and asked for an explanation.

The owner said the customers of the shops in this land can only be served by the concerns of their heart. "You see customers here with meats and sweets because their lives are concerned with substance and compassion. You see some with cooling drinks and tasty entrees because they drink from the fountain of life and commune regular with the Saints." The man looked ate his plate and asked "But why did you give me just a slice of bread?" The owner responded, "because your sole interest in life is making a living and acquiring the material possessions that life has to offer." The thought "I have to have more than just a slice of bread every day!" Then the man looked at the face of the owner and recognized the face of Jesus and he woke up from his dream.

Disturbed, he opened his bible to read and fell upon this verse: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

As Christians, we know that there are things in life more important that possessions, money, power and influence. These things come from God. They are means to achieve an end but they are not an end in themselves. We cannot live happily with just what this world offers us. There is a more evasive but substantive truth we all know, that to be really happy we must walk in the Lord, and cling to every word that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Exposition

This text focuses on God speaking to Israel explaining the reason he caused them to endure the hardships of the wilderness and the good things that can follow if they obey his commandments.

At the time of this text, Israel had wandered in the wilderness about 40 years on a journey that should have taken weeks. They were moving from slavery toward a

brighter future. Along the way, they were exposed to a variety of troubling setbacks that frustrated them, troubled them and delayed their entrance into the promised land for years. On the way to the promised land, they were pursued by enemies, scorched in the desert, exhausted from the lack of food and water, and plagued by internal rebellion. God in this text says all of these hardships were intentional. They were part of grand design that was arranged to teach Israel the one lesson they would need to enjoy the great things that would be available in the land God was preparing for them. They would need to learn humility.

In the midst of each struggle God had to teach Israel, just as it stood on the border of the promised land that it should always remember the source of any opportunities that come its way and never become high minded. When they feared that they would be recaptured and returned to slavery, God opened up the Red Sea and saved them. When they feared that they would starve to death for lack of essential nutrition, God sent them quails for meat, rained down bread from heaven and caused water to spring out of a rock when there were no streams. In total disorganization, disputing among themselves, he caused them to wander into they could number and organize themselves, establish a system of leadership, repel rebellious influences and band together behind one leadership for a common cause.

God's intent was not to destroy Israel but to humble and season Israel as a nation that it might be prepared for the great opportunities that were going to be available to them and still be God's people at the same time. So, although it appeared at once that they would be recaptured and returned to slavery, God opened the Red Sea to allow their escape to let them know, that they survived only because there is a God in heaven. They complained about meat and water and God supplied it in a way that they knew had to come from God and him alone. They had no bread and God did not lead them to green pastures where they could grow the wheat themselves and mistake the source of their blessings, he rained down bread from heaven, such that there would be no mistake. He made his purpose altogether clear: "that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

The man who fears the Lord

The man who fears the Lord is a man who lives a good life before his children and his wife., but most importantly, he lives a good life before God God.

The man who fears the Lord is an example of trusting in God and holding to his word.

When the young men of a congregation see men tell the story! They tell the story of mountains climbed and valleys traveled!

They tell the story of a young man who came to himself in a pigpen and decided that "in my father's house" there is plenty of what I need.

I heard somebody testify, "I met God one morning, my soul feeling sad, heart heavy laden, with a bowed down head. He lift my burdens and made me so glad all that I know is, there is something within."

They tell the story of answered prayer. A man who knows the Lord knows that the Lord will answer prayer.

You don't have to be an old man to talk to the Lord!

You don't have to be a rich man to talk to the Lord!

You don't have to be an educated man to talk to the Lord

All you need is a clean heart and contrite spirit and you can tell him what you what!

They tell the story of men who bowed down before God to worship and praise him! Tel the story of the prophet who said, "Here am I, send me!"

The man who fears the Lord tells the Lord to have his way. He agrees with the songwriter who said, "Have thine own way Lord. Have thine own way! Search me and try me, master today. Whiter than snow Lord, wash me just now, as in thy presence, humbly I bow!"

Men who fear the Lord tell the story of salvation and redemption.

Men who fear the Lord are quick to testify that one day the savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground"

I heard the songwriter declare, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same"

He touched me!

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

A man who fears the Lord has to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

The man who fears the Lord has to tell somebody that Lord is my light and my salvation, "Whom shall I fear?"

He's got to tell somebody!

Tell somebody!

No. 9090-Communion

Hunger Pangs!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 21, 2004

SCRIPTURE: For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Psalm 107:9

Introduction

When was the last time you were really hungry? I Mean really hungry? On occasion, most of us have a few hunger pangs you get when it's time for a meal. It's a little signal we get, like a growl in the stomach, that says it's time to eat. This usually happens when you have missed more than one meal and you have become weak and shaky and your stomach is contracting and creating acids that are reacting against your stomach lining because their is nothing there to absorb them. You know you are really hungry when it's been so long since you have had something to eat that chewing on a toothpick actually tastes good. You dream of a T-bone steak, cooked to perfection, smothered in onions and a little gravy, with a baked potato drowning in butter and sour cream on the side. You know you're hungry when you are trying to work and you are dreaming about fried chicken, rice and gravy and butter beans. You know you're hungry when you can taste the food in your mind and feel it going down.

Along with hunger comes thirst. When you get really hungry you also get thirsty. That's when you have this dry condition in your mouth that feels like it's full of cotton. Your lips are parched and you can't even get enough saliva to spit. You are almost delirious with thirst. You dream of immersing yourself in cool clear water, and drinking a couple of buckets full.

Most of us have not really experienced real hunger and thirst. We've been a little hungry. We have missed a meal or two, and we have been a little dry. We have heard our stomachs growl a time or two, but somehow we did not actually starve, we found something to eat and something to drink. We understand this kind of physical hunger. Even with our brief encounters and yearnings for Big Macs and Pork chops, we can imagine what it's like to be in real hunger, with nothing but a dream to feed upon.

When was the last time you were spiritually hungry? Not the guilty feeling we feel because skipped church, or bible study or Sunday school, but spiritually hungry. The guilty feeling we have is like a growling in our soul. It's our soul's way of saying that there should be something here for me to feed on but there is nothing. Spiritual

hunger is discomforting. It is unsettling. The longer it goes, the worse it gets. It churns. We feel lost and we wander. We start complaining a lot. Our lives seem to get out of control. We panic. Frustration sets in easy. We despair.

When we are spiritually hungry, we can't focus and everything is out of balance. Spiritual hunger is devastation. If we go to long with spiritual food we reach a point of starvation. We lose substance, fire, inspiration, faith and hope. A Christian who has lost, substance, fire, inspiration and hope becomes a bag of bones. God showed Ezekiel an entire valley of dry bones and asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?" The answer he gave is that they could live if they were fed the Word of God.

As Christians, we constantly feed ourselves the word of God. It satisfies our soul. It's the thought that prompted the songwriter to say, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. sweetest name I know. Fills my every longing. Keeps me singing as I go."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he meditates on the ability of God to fill the hungry soul.

David, as King of Israel, often mused about the goodness of God. In reflection, he remembered the times when he was not king that he was hungry and exhausted. Hunted by King Saul as a criminal and a vagabond, David was hungry and drained on numerous occasions. On one occasion he even ate the sacred bread that was reserved for worship, just to survive.

More than his physical exhaustion, David was also spiritually drained. As a shepherd boy, he fed his soul regularly singing psalms and praising God on the hillsides as he watched his father's sheep. Through the long days and nights he constantly fed himself with psalms, prayers and other meditations that kept him focused on the goodness of God. These moments of meditation were food for his soul. They were times when he was spiritually nourished. However, when he became a hunted man, David was constantly on the run. He seldom found the time to feed his body let alone his soul. He was both spiritually and physically hungry.

This psalm reflects David's praise of God and reiterates his belief that faith in God satisfies the "longing" soul. Longing in this context is from the Hebrew word "Shaqaq" (Shaw-kak) which means to rush to and fro or to churn. The longing soul is uneasy, it churns and is unsettled. The longing soul is the yearning soul. The longing soul is the searching soul. The longing soul is the hoping soul. David said, "The longing soul" is satisfied by the goodness of God.

Spiritually Starved

There are conditions that contribute to spiritual starvation that are first indicated by hunger pains.

FAMINES: Whenever there is a famine, there is a lack of available resources to maintain the body's systems. We have seen the product of famines in areas of the

world such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Iraq after the Persian Gulf War, and the conflict between the Serbs and Croats in former Yugoslavia. We have seen what starvation can do physically. Yet, there are spiritual famines too. A spiritual famine exists when there is no worship, praise, prayer and study available anywhere. This was the situation with our forefathers who often slipped away from their slave huts at night and put their heads under tubs and prayed and sang to the Lord. It's what many of those who have moved away from their roots find themselves yearning for, some good down home preaching, old Dr. Watts Hymns, and a few foot stomping songs. When no true worship exists, there is a famine. When no true praise exists, there is a famine. When the word is not being taught, there is a famine. When famines occur there are hunger pangs and starvation can result. The church must insure that there is no spiritual famine. It must insure that the worship, praise, prayer and study are available to all who hunger for more.

MALNUTRITION: Malnutrition occurs because a person does not get enough of the essentials necessary to sustain a healthy existence. We need a certain amount of water and nutrients on a daily basis to maintain our health. Those who are mal-nourished begin with the regular hunger pangs, but it goes further as time passes. Dizziness and weakness occur. There is also a loss of bone mass. There is a loss of fat deposits and large quantities of water. The liver, spleen and muscle tissue then suffer great losses of weight. The starving person becomes extremely weak and lethargic as body temperature, pulse rate, blood pressure and basal metabolism continue to fall. Eventually a starving person dies. The same is true spiritually. There are many believers today who are mal-nourished. While there is no famine, they simply are not getting enough of what they need to maintain themselves spiritually. Every now and then we feel the spiritual hunger pangs that give us the sign, that we need to be fed, but we continue on a self imposed spiritual strike that is destroying our spiritual health. We become spiritually weak when we are mal-nourished. Our metabolism rate slows down as we become inactive in the ministries of the church. We lose substance, we start acting dizzy and doing really dumb things when we are spiritually starved. It won't be long before we are walking zombies, only shells of what we once were because we have drained ourselves of what is needed. No wonder Jesus told Peter in John 21:16, that if he loved him he must "feed my sheep." Each believer needs a regular method of meditation, prayer, bible study and a set time for private devotion and public praise. It's the way we nourish ourselves. The alternative is to try to feed on what you once did. That only goes so far. Spiritual death is the ultimate end.

FASTING: Fasting is a religious discipline that is sanctioned in scripture. Those who fast do so as the result of a spiritual hunger pang. Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. We don't know the extent of his fast or what kind of fast he endured but the fact that he fasted confirms the spirituality associated with fasting. In Matthew 17:21 Jesus teaches about moving the mountains of life through fasting and prayer. Those who fast have felt a spiritual hunger pang and respond in penitence, mourning, and supplication. Those who fast suggests a self-denial that opens one to God and to the immaterial aspects of life. Through fasting believers focus

themselves on a specific area of their spiritual need and intensely pray for its resolution. Fasting is different from dieting. A person who diets thinks about the body alone. A person who fasts thinks about body and soul. A person who is concerned about his health may go on a diet and feel hunger pangs afterwards. On other hand, a person who is concerned about his soul feels spiritual hunger pangs first and THEN goes on a fast.

Those Who Hunger Shall be filled

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled.

Like David, every believer has a longing that needs to be satisfied. It is an insatiable desire to do God's will and to be in his presence.

There are some things that are essential for our substance, that when we are not able to get to them, we start to get hunger pangs.

Every now and then, you may go to a fine restaurant with the real napkins and solid silver utensils. You may look at the menu and see Squid Ala King, Caviar, and Escargot But after a few days of that you start to get hunger pangs and dreaming about real food. You'd trade it all for a bowl of mustard greens and corn breads. Even if you had no silver utensils, you'd eat it with your fingers.

Every now and then, you may get a chance to hear the New York Philharmonic orchestra or hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sing Handel's Messiah. But after a few of days of that you start to get hunger pangs to hear a real choir sing, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

If you understand that then you understand what David meant when he said "he satisfies my longing soul." He satisfies every longing. He fills every empty cup. He provides bread for every hungry soul. I heard him say, "I am the bread of life. He that eateth of this bread shall never hunger!"

Somebody here today knows what it's like when your soul gets hungry.

When your soul is hungry you only see the impossible, but after you are fed the —IMPOSSIBLE becomes possible.

When your soul is hungry you only see the improbable, but after you are fed the —IMPROBABLE becomes probable.

When your soul is hungry you only see the unbelievable, but after you are fed the —UNBELIEVABLE becomes believable.

When your soul is hungry you only see the unconquerable, but after you are fed the

—UNCONQUERABLE mountains are made low.

After you are fed

—IMPASSABLE valleys are exalted.

—UNDESIRABLE rough places are made plain.

—UNRELIABLE crooked places are made straight.

I hear the old warriors say, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

Lord, I hold up my hunger for more faith, feed me till I want no more!
Lord, I hold up my hunger for strength, feed me till I want no more!
Lord, I hold up my hunger for obedience, feed me till I want no more!
Lord, I hold up my hunger for blessings, feed me till I want no more!
The bread we need to feed our hunger pangs was not baked in a bakery!
The bread we need was not delivery in a bread truck!
The bread we need cannot not be found on the shelves of a store!
The bread we need came down here over 2000 years ago into a little place called Bethlehem, “The house of Bread”
He died on an old rugged cross, between two thieves!
But Early Sunday morning!
Early Sunday morning, he arose, with all power in his hands!

No. 9091-Palm Sunday

Faces in the Crowd

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 4, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen" Luke 19:37

Introduction

Have you paid close attention to the faces in a crowd? Anytime an important personality comes to town there are a variety of people that come out to meet him. Not everyone in the crowd is supportive. Some are critics. Some are skeptics. There are even enemies in the crowd. The rule is true of any crowd. If a popular preacher comes to town, there are faces in the crowd. If a rock star comes to town there are faces in the crowd. If an elected official comes to town, there are faces in the crowd; some smiling, some angry, some happy, some sad. Only the fool believes that all of the faces of any crowd are what they seem to be. The wise are well aware that among the variety of faces in the crowd is a mixture of optimism, pessimism, truth and deception. They all make up the faces in the crowd.

Often sports events are broadcast on television. The stands are filled with thousands of people. Generally, the people are faceless until the network cameras zoom in close and we see the faces in the crowd. Sometimes we see the strangest things when the camera zeroes in on the individual faces in the crowd. Sometimes we see people cheering wildly. Sometimes we see a man sitting alone. Perhaps we see a father and a son or a group of seniors. Each person has his own reason for being present. Each face has its own story.

What the world sees on Palm Sunday is a savior who is uniquely familiar with the faces in the crowd. He is not oblivious to their struggles, fears and aspirations. It's not the physical face that he sees. He's not noticing our eyes, lips and our brows. He knows the face of disposition. He looks beyond our game face to see our inner face. He knows whether we are truly saved or whether or not we have the face of a believer but not the heart. He knows the face of our spirit. He is not adverse to our hopes and dreams. He sees and knows all about us and feels what we feel and weeps over our failures as he rejoices with our triumph.

Luke is the only Gospel writer that records what happened after Christ saw the cheering faces in the crowd that shouted Hosanna so loudly. Beginning at verse 41 he records how Jesus paused before entering the city and wept over the thousands

of nameless faces reaching for hope and salvation but were lost in a maze of trouble. Jesus wept after seeing the faces in the crowd. He was not a happy man. There were too many that that smiled before him that would instantly be willing to cut him down if given the chance.

As Christians, we know we are not nameless faces to God. The God we serve knows us and is concerned about us in so many ways. We are more than just names, faces and Social Security numbers to him; we are children of the King.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus on the outskirts of Jerusalem, as he prepares to enter the city.

Jesus' ministry carried him to many of the towns surrounding Jerusalem. In each of these instances Jesus was a humble servant who sidestepped public acclaim. He often told those He healed to tell no one. When the crowd started to swell, He moved on. But now Jesus deliberately comes into Jerusalem in a fashion that would strengthen the people's conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Book of Zechariah says, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Zech 9:9

By coming into Jerusalem Jesus was in effect proclaiming that He was the one they have been waiting for; the one who was righteous and was bringing salvation. The people cheered for Jesus using the words of Psalm 118. This Psalm was commonly used to greet pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for Passover. But this greeting seemed different. The people believed that the one they had looked forward to for all these years was now riding into the city of Jerusalem.

As Jesus rode into the city the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for Passover took off their coats and put them on the ground for the donkey to walk upon. They took Palm branches and waved them and also threw them on the ground in front of Him. It was the equivalent to rolling out the red carpet today.

As Jesus passed through the crowd, there were many faces that flashed by him in a blur. Poor women, religious leaders, angry Zealots, and children. They all pushed and shoved and shouted his name. Except for the fact that he was the Son of God and knew the concerns of each of them, they would have all simply been …"faces in the crowd."

Doubting Faces in the Crowd

When Jesus passed through the crowd, there were many who were prepared to crown him King that day, but before the end of the week would change their cries for a crown to shouts of crucify him. Who was in the crowd?

There were Pharisees in the crowd. Filtered throughout the crowd were Pharisees. They were not interested in being identified with Christ, they wanted to monitor

his actions. They weren't shouting. Neither were they singing or waving palm branches or laying their coats down. They decided that Christ was an imposter and made a decision not to follow him. They were a stubborn kind. They were in the crowd but they were not a part of the celebration. They stubbornly resisted. If they had a favorite hymn it was probably, "I shall not be moved." Even today there are Pharisees in the crowd. Those who stubbornly resist Christ. They attend a worship service because they have to be there but they have stubbornly said in their hearts, "I may have to be here but I don't have to enjoy it." The Pharisees in any crowd are the disinterested observers who note the enthusiasm of others but seldom join in the celebration.

The Curious were in the crowd. Jesus was no doubt a curiosity. People came from everywhere to just to see the man who could raise the dead, feed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread, or the man who could heal the sick. They just wanted to see. Even today there are a large number of people who are curiosity seekers. They just want to see what's going on. They want to see the parade they don't want to be in the parade. They want to watch the worship; they don't want to participate in the worship. The curious are fascinated by the process and attracted to the crowd itself. The bigger the better. However, curiosity does not save our souls. Neither does curiosity bring us closer to God

Judas was in the crowd. Christ was surrounded by his disciples. He didn't go far without all 12 of them being close by. Undoubtedly, Judas was in the crowd. When the crowds cheered Judas was happy and smiled because he thought Christ would become what he was not, an avenger of the people. On Palm Sunday, his face was among those smiling. However, in just a few days he would be meeting with the Sanhedrin to plan ways to betray him. Even in the church today there are those who expect one thing from the church and when they do not receive it are ready to betray it for 30 pieces of silver. There are many who expect the church to pay their bills for them and when it doesn't happen they betray the church. There are others who expect the church to perform a variety of services or assume a variety of positions and when that does not happen they abandon the crusade. Their faces are in the crowd on Palm Sunday, but they are the same faces in the crowd that shout crucify him, days later.

Committed Faces in the Crowd

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there were many doubting faces in the crowd, there were many believing faces in the crowd!

The crowd shouted Hosanna and rejoiced with great hope! While there were doubters in the crowd there were other faces in the crowd that truly believed.

The healed were in the crowd! Jesus healed many people of sicknesses that ranged from being lunatics to leprosy. Some of those whom he healed were no doubt in the crowd!

Is there anybody here in the crowd today, who can testify that God is a healing God?

Is there anybody here who can say, when I was sick, he healed my body and cooled

my fever?

Is there anybody here who can say, he's been a doctor for me in my sick room; a Balm in Gilead?

In that crowd were those who received miracles because of their faith.

I see an old lady who had an issue of blood for 12 long years. Even though others doubted, I can see her pushing her way through the crowd saying, "If I can just touch the hem of his garment I can be made whole."

Is there anybody here who stepped out on faith and put their trust in the Lord?

Is there anybody here who can say, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, because I've tried him for myself"

In that crowd were the followers of John the Baptist who placed great hope in the coming of the Messiah!

Is there anybody here who has placed all of his hope in the power of the Lord?

Is there anybody here who continues to hold on when everyone else lets go?

Is there anybody here who can sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name!"

In that crowd there were some whose lives had been blessed by the Lord. I see Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well, whose lives were turned around. I see Lazarus who was raised from the dead! They were shouting Hosanna like the rest of the crowd because they had already been blessed!

Is there anybody here who can say, the Lord has blessed my life?

Is there anybody here who can say, I've been blessed more than I deserve!

Is there anybody here who can say, that he saved my soul, picked me up and turned me around?

Is there anybody here who can testify that when I was:

—WEAK he gave me strength

—LONELY he gave me comfort!

—CONFUSED he gave me direction!

—LOST he showed me the way!

Is there anybody here who can call his name?

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, the Fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But, Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Is there anybody here who knows him?

Is there anybody here?....

No. 9092-Easter

The Women, The Tomb and the Scars

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 11, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." Matthew 28:6-7 "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great." Mark 16:4. "And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." John 20:20

Introduction

Suppose someone you thought was dead showed up a few days after the funeral? What would be your reaction? For some the initial response would be fear? Others would be skeptical. They would demand proof that the person they saw was not a ghost or a figment of their imagination. The evidence would need to be clear and undeniable. Then and only then would they believe that what they saw was not just a hallucination.

This was dilemma that the disciples faced on the day of the resurrection. They had witnessed the crucifixion in all of its gory detail. Now, they were being asked to believe that the man they saw crucified and buried was indeed alive.

Theirs was a circumstance of hope lost and found again. They were cautious before accepting this new truth demanding to consider the testimony before they believed.

It is the same with anyone who has participated in what seems to have been a failed experience. When reassured that all is not lost we want to be sure, by the testimony, that the evidence is clear and the assurance is sound.

In the case of the resurrection of Jesus the evidence of his death was certain. These 11 men were with him in the garden when the temple guards came to seize him.

They were close by when he was tried by the Sanhedrin Council and found guilty.

They were close by when Herod mocked and ridiculed him.

They were in the crowd when Pilate handed him over to the soldiers for crucifixion.

They watched as he carried a cross toward Golgotha.

They watched as he was nailed to the cross and lifted up high.

They were present when he gave up the ghost and died.

They saw him buried in a freshly hewn tomb.

They saw the stone rolled in front of the tomb and guards placed in front of the tomb.

For the disciples there was considerable evidence of Christ's death. What they needed to breathe new energy into their hopes and dreams was testimony and evidence that he was truly alive.

They received their evidence in three different testimonies that resulted in the disciples being glad instead of sad.

Similarly, today there are thousands who face the prospect of failure, defeat and hopelessness. The message of the resurrection is that despite what seems to be lost, hope is still alive, failure can be overcome, and the power of God has not been conquered. Like the disciples, we look for evidence and the events of resurrection provide the testimony.

The Testimony of the Women

The first evidence came from the testimony of the women. Three days and three nights earlier Christ had been crucified and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph, a friend of the cause. Several women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the Mother of James (Luke 24:10), prepared spices to anoint his body and waited until both the Sabbath involving the Feast of the Passover and the Weekly Sabbath had past; then came to the tomb to complete their task "very early" in the morning on the First Day of the week. They found that the body of Jesus was missing.

An angel told them "He is not here, but is risen." The angel explained how Jesus predicted his resurrection and how its fulfillment resulted in the empty tomb. When the women remembered his words, they returned to the disciples excited an inspired as they told what they had seen. They had come to the place of the dead seeking a dead leader and they left knowing that they were serving a living God.

The women gave a testimony of their experience. They told what they had seen and heard.

Even today, those who are low in spirit and face impossible situations receive their first inspiration from those who have shared their experience with God. Those who have been touched by the hand of God perform a mighty work when they share what God has done in their lives with others.

There is nothing more encouraging to a person who faces the prospect of fighting cancer than to hear the testimony of a cancer survivor. The words of a person who has failed in business and found success after failing multiple times is encouraging. The encouraging words of persons who have overcome adversity serve as evidence that we too can do the same.

That's why it is important for every believer to share the benefit of their experiences in life with others. Each time we testify about God's greatness, power and strength, we provide a testimony that helps convince someone else that no matter how dark it gets, there is always a bright light in heaven. Each time we testify, we say

like the songwriter, “He touched me, he touched me. And oh the joy that floods my soul. Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole.”

The women gave the disciples their testimony, but they were not completely convinced.

The Tombstone’s Testimony

The second evidence was the testimony or proof provided by the tombstone that was rolled away. The Roman government placed sentries at the site of the tomb and sealed it to keep his disciples from stealing the body in the night. The entry to the tomb was blocked by a huge stone, taller than a man, and requiring the strength of several men for movement. As they walked toward the tomb they became concerned about “Who shall roll for us the stone away?” Although they were concerned, the women were not dissuaded, they went forward anyway! Once there, they learned that the stone had already been rolled away. An angel, who appeared as a young man, told them that Jesus had risen and invited them to see the place where Jesus had lain. The women proceeded with great confidence throughout the entire experience. They never flinched or became afraid.

That too is the message of Easter; that stones which represent troubles, and problems in our lives can be rolled away.

The stone rolled away by the power of God was a powerful testimony. It was undeniable. So is the testimony of anyone who has had stones rolled away in their lives.

It is difficult for anyone who has been incarcerated for a crime they did not commit to maintain hope until they see others for whom jail doors have been opened and convictions overturned.

It is difficult for those who have been victimized because of their race, sex or age to maintain hope until they see others who have achieved despite the stones.

Although the stone was an inanimate object with no mouth of its own, it could not have spoken louder if it had ten thousand tongues. It was undeniable evidence that God was in the business of resurrecting that which is dead and breathing new life.

The joy of the resurrection is that we don’t have to worry about the stone in front of the tomb because it’s already been rolled away!

The same power that rolled back the stone on Easter Sunday morning can roll back the stones in our lives. No wonder the songwriter declared, “King Jesus will roll our burdens away!”

The Testimony of the Scars

The disciples themselves were secluded in a room with the doors shut and locked and Jesus appeared in their midst saying “Peace be unto you.”

The disciples were amazed and thought they were seeing a ghost. But when Jesus

showed them the wounds in his hands, side, and feet (Luke 24:39) they instantly believed him.

Thomas, who was not present at Jesus' first appearance to his disciples came to the second meeting very skeptical. He had heard their stories about how Jesus came through locked doors and appeared in their midst but he vowed not to believe until he himself could put his fingers in the wounds of the risen savior himself. When Thomas finally saw Jesus and saw the scars left by the nail prints in his hands and feet, it did not require his touch but he instantly responded, "My Lord and My God." (John 20:28)

It was the testimony of the scars that made believers of the disciples in the first meeting.

It was also the testimony of the scars that convinced Thomas.

Scars tell a story. Every scar or scratch on a person's body has a companion testimony.

One scar might have been received in an automobile accident, that should have been death but God save us, and left a scar.

Another scar, may have been from a battle wound that could have taken our lives, but God snatched us from the hand of death and left a scar to remind us.

There is a scar on someone's head, another on someone's hand or leg. Each scar testifies to a time when God saved us from death, and left a scar to remind us.

Those who know the Lord have a story to tell and he leaves his mark on you.

When you meet the Lord he leaves his mark on you and you begin to see things differently. When you meet the Lord the:

—SKIES seems to be bluer
—SUN seems to shine brighter
—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter
—FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller
—AIR seems more refreshing
—STARS seem to have more luster
—BURDENS seem lighter
—FAITH seems stronger
—HEAVEN seems closer

No wonder the song writer declared, "I met God one morning, my soul was feeling sad, heart heavy laden with a bowed down head. He lift my burden and made me so glad, all that I know there was something within."

John said when the disciples saw the evidence they were glad!

Just like those disciples, every believer has something to be happy about!

Somebody is glad today; glad to be reminded that God is still able!

He's able to:

—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops
—Take midnight's and turn them into noon days
—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers
—Defeats and turn them into victories
—Take our losses and turn make them work for our gain

We are glad because we still have an opportunity for new life.

We are glad because we still serve a risen savior who gives us hope!

No wonder then that the songwriter would say, “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know, he holds the future and life is worth the living because he lives.”

Today we celebrate the victory of life over death and joy over sadness.

Though he was tempted in the wilderness, betrayed him in the garden and crucified him on an old rugged cross..

He lives!

No. 9093-Communion

The Stranger on the Road

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 18, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them," Luke 24:29-33

Introduction

What road have you chosen to walk in life? Early in each life we decide the road we will travel. Some travel the road traveled by many. Others take what M. Scott Peck calls the "The Road Less Traveled." It is the road that takes us to a predetermined destination, although traveling alone.

Roads sometimes begin as simple trails blazed by pathfinders like Lewis and Clark who cut trails and navigated rivers from the Northern to the Southern boundaries of our nation. Others like John C. Fremont blazed trails through the Rockies as our nation pushed West to achieve its manifest destiny.

Those paths became trails that were followed by wagons that carved them into roads. Today many of those roads are the super highways and expressways that cris cross our nation in a never ending series of loops, turns and stretches.

In our Christian experience there are also some roads that each of us must take. These roads lead to one destiny or another, determining our fate and leading us to higher heights.

Those who choose to walk the Christian road don't find a crowd. They often travel alone. This prompted Jesus to say in Matthew 7:13, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:"

Since the Christian road is a lonely road, any stranger we encounter on the road gets our attention. Any person who shares the wisdom of his experience along that road will motivate us and inspire us to higher heights.

As Christians, we don't expect the road we walk to be filled with the crowds. While we know we may see an occasional stranger on the road, we all want the Lord to walk with us. David said even if the road carries us through the valley of the shadow of death, he comforted in knowing that "thou art with me."

The songwriter summed it up by saying, "I want Jesus, to walk with me. All along this tedious journey. I want Jesus to walk with me."

Exposition

This text focuses on the events immediately following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Two men who had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus and heard the news of his resurrection walked the road to Emmaus. They discussed the events they had seen and suddenly Jesus joined them as they walked, but they did not recognize him immediately. He showed them in the scriptures how the events that occurred had to be, because they were a part of a divine plan.

It was not until he began to break bread with them in his familiar fashion that they recognized that they were in the presence of the Lord and their hearts "burned within them" with excitement and enthusiasm.

They Walked With Him Without Recognizing Him

The men on the road to Emmaus walked with Christ but did not recognize him. Even today, there are many people who walk with Christ without knowing him. There are millions of people who have been associated with the church, work in its ministries, sing, pray and even attend its worships but do not know him.

There are many who are church members but are not Christians. They are members of a church but they are not a part of the body of Christ.

Is it possible to walk with a person and not know him or her? Is it possible to live in the same house with people and not know them?

Often people live with each other for many years only to discover a side of a mate that they had never known because the situation had never occurred. There are many who have never seen their mate cry or handle a devastating defeat or a debilitating sickness. Some are surprised to learn that they have been living with a stranger.

Even family members can get to be strangers in our own houses. We become strangers when we know little about each other's dreams, aspirations. Parents who are unfamiliar with the social lives of their children soon become strangers. Children who don't know their parents as something other than simply "parents" usually are strangers in the same house.

Even in a church it is possible to sit on the same pew with a person for years but not know much more than the person's name and what kind of work they do.

The men on the Emmaus Road had an excuse for not recognizing Christ instantly; they had not been around him much. But what excuse do we have for not recognizing the person who lives in the same house with us?

In 1972 Harold Melvin and Blue Notes wrote a song entitled, "If you don't know me by now, you will never, never, never know me!" The same message was contained in a song by Roy Orbison entitled, "You Don't Know Me!" He sang about man who

was really the best person for the woman of his dream but she took someone else's hand because "You don't know me."

Husbands and wives should get to know each other.

Co-workers should get to know each other.

Church members should get to know each other. In so doing, we are all better able to see how each is trying to work out their salvation in light of the walk on the Emmaus road.

They had an eye opening experience

The men on the road to Emmaus were not able to see Jesus until they had an eye opening experience. It was not what he said, so much as what he did. He broke the bread and offered it in a way that was uniquely his style. Once they had an eye opening experience they were able to see Jesus.

When Jesus broke the bread it was a defining moment for the men traveling on the road. The moment of the "breaking" was decisive because at that point they understood. There are many who now testify that they have had defining moments, when they were able to see clearly what they had not been able to see before.

For many, their defining moment was not the Emmaus Road but the Damascus Road. On the Damascus Road, Saul saw the light and heard the voice of God for himself. He was never the same. It was a defining moment.

What was your defining moment? For years your parents warned you about certain pitfalls in life, but you could not see them. What was your defining moment? You may have dated your husband or wife for months or even lived together before you married. What was your defining moment? What opened your eyes to beauty of your relationship?

Defining moments come when everything that you have learned, seen and heard merge at one precise moment in a way that makes everything crystal clear.

It's the moment you decide that I must do something about my future.

It's the moment you decide I can't go on like this, something must change!

It's the moment you see that my present course is leading me toward disaster.

Moreover, the Damascus road is the road you travel when the Spirit of the Lord opens your eyes and you experience the presence of God for yourself.

On the Damascus Road the Lord gives you a new experience, a new song to sing, and a new testimony.

Travelers on the Damascus road sing, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me."

They were excited about what they saw

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that after they met the stranger on the road they were excited about what they saw.

The men on that road did not recognize Jesus until he broke the bread. What did he say? What did he do that made them recognize him? It is not recorded what he did, but we know the last time he broke bread with his disciples he told them that the bread represented his body that would be given for many. He said the wine would represent his blood that would seal the New Testament.

When they saw him do something that was uniquely associated with the ministry of the Lord, their eyes were opened and they became excited about what they saw. Verse 31 says that after they saw him, he vanished. They looked around and he was gone, just as quickly as he appeared, but not without exciting them.

They said, "Did not our hearts burn within as he talked with us by the way?"

It's hard to know you have been in the presence of the Lord and not get excited!

The woman at the well found it was hard to contain her excitement. She ran through the streets of the city saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

Jesus healed 10 lepers one day, as they all walked away, one was so excited that he came back to say, 'Thank you, Lord!"

When the Lord has picked you up and turned you around and place your feet on the right road, it's not hard to get excited.

We may have begun our journey on the road to Emmaus, but after our eyes were opened we started walking the road to glory!

Every child of God is encouraged to keep his hands wrapped in the winding chain and to walk the road to Glory.

There is only one road from here to glory, because I heard Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth and the light!"

There may be wide roads and there may be side roads, but there's only one road between here and heaven.

An old man took his small grandson on a trip to what grandpa called home. The little boy fascinated with the fine highway. He loved count to lines in the highway and see the pretty cars as the raced by. After a few hours however, his grandpa turned on an old dirt road. Gone were the hard pavement, brisk traffic and brightly colored lines. The road was bumpy. It wound through trees and went over hills. At some points it was filled it pot holes. The little boy asked his grandfather, "Why did we have to take this ugly road with all of these mud holes. Nobody is on this road? Why could we stay on the pretty road with all of the cars" The grandpa looked over at his grandson and said, "Look up on the top of that hill, that's we're going. There's only one road up that old house and it goes straight up that hill. The highway is pretty, but it won't take me where I'm trying to go and that's up that hill!"

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame!

To get to that cross you have to walk the road to Calvary!

We must tell the world that one day we walking the road to destruction, but we met a stranger on the road who turned our lives around!

We must tell somebody that his name is Jesus!

We must tell somebody that that he died on Calvary, but…

Early! Early, Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9094-Inspiration

Give it up for God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 25, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Jeremiah 20:9; "Quench not the spirit." 1 Thessalonians 5:19***

Introduction

Have you ever watched the master of ceremonies of a comedy show introduce an entertainer? Generally, the MC will say a few words to the audience to loosen up the crowd and prepare it to receive the next act. If the next act is a relative newcomer or an unknown the MC will say, "Let's give it up for…" and ask the audience to receive the coming performance. The lights in the auditorium flash "applause." Prompting wave at the studio audience and urge them to applause for the performer.

The purpose of asking the audience to "give it up for" a performer is to create an atmosphere that welcomes the performer and encourages him to do his best. The audience is asked to release its good will and warmth to receive what is coming.

Two things rarely happen. It is rare for the MC to ask the audience to "Give it up" for a known crowd pleaser. The star elicits his own applause because of his greatness. Secondly, after the entertainer has finished his return, the MC does not have to come back and ask the audience to give it up for them again. What he did drew its own applause.

When we say, "Give it up for.." we are turning loose and letting go!

What happens however if are we about to praise God? Those who don't know him need someone to tell them to "Give it up for God!" Those who have seen him work and watched him operate in their lives don't have to be told to "Give it up for God" because they start cheering just as soon as they hear his name!

Those who know the Lord don't need an applause sign or a cue to praise the Lord. Neither do they look over their shoulder to see if anyone else is praising him; they do it because that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord of Lord!"

As Christians, we feel compelled to praise the Lord because he is good and his mercy endureth forever. Whether we clap our hands, stomp our feet, or just nod our heads and smile, we have to respond when we think of the goodness of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the church at Thessalonica about giving true praise to God.

Verse 19 is a short but powerful verse, "Quench not the spirit." It was an admonition to the church to allow the free expression of enthusiasm and excitement about God's goodness in the assembly of the saints or the working of his will in the congregation. The verse explains that no one should work against the will of God or expressions of acceptance and excitement about the will of God being fulfilled.

The Holy Spirit is often represented in scripture as a holy fire. John told his disciples that he baptized them with water, but one coming after him would baptize them with fire. He represented the Holy Spirit as fire. In Acts 2:3 the Holy Spirit descended upon believers on the day of Pentecost like fire.

It is the fire of the Lord that breathes life into ministries and the works of God. Without that Holy Ghost fire it stops. It is the fire of the Lord that motivates churches to reach out to the needy, care for the sick, heal the broken hearted and to keep reaching for the impossible. It is also the fire of the Lord that prompts believers to stand boldly before the throne of Grace expecting God's blessings on them as they carry out his will.

In this first instance, therefore, "Quench not the spirit" has reference to doing or saying anything that has the effect of slowing, stopping or otherwise hindering the work of the ministry. In our way of understanding it, "Quench not the spirit" means don't rain on God's parade. Quench not the spirit is not a request; it is a command to believers. We should be extremely careful about placing ourselves in the way of God's moving hand. It is a contest that we cannot win.

In the second instance, "'Quench not the spirit" refers not so much to the carrying out of the will of God but to expressions of appreciation about the will of God being done. Believers who are baptized in the spirit are driven by an inner fire that burns without ceasing. It is this fire that Jeremiah referred to in Jeremiah 20:9 when he thought about keeping the Gospel message to himself and telling no one, only to discover that he was motivated by something within him that was like fire shut up in his bones. He said he wasn't going to tell anybody but could not keep it to himself.

Those who are excited about what God has done for them, show it in many ways. The bible has shown us a variety of ways in which people have shown their excitement about God's actions. David was so excited about the return of the Ark to Israel and other blessings that he danced nearly naked in the streets. The Psalms suggests that we should come before the Lord with singing; even lifting holy hands is described as an acceptable way of praising God. The 150th Psalms says we should praise him upon the cymbals and the harp and the loud sounding cymbals as we "let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.." Moreover we are told that we show praise to God through keeping our vows to him, sharing in the work, drinking from the cup with him.

It is clear that the preponderance of scripture teaches a variety of ways to let the

spirit manifest itself. There is no certain way to praise the Lord. Therefore, one group should be careful not to impose its standard of praise upon another. Whereas one person praises God with silence an order, another group doesn't feel that job is complete unless they stand on their feet and "give it up for the Lord!"

Paul's advice to the Thessalonians was simple, "Don't try to stop the work of the spirit neither try to stop those who want to praise the spirit for His work."

Even in so doing, Paul warns us to be careful that we don't receive every pretense as a working of the spirit. In essence, a work may be done by the church but it may not be empowered by the spirit. We should try the spirit with the spirit. Likewise, everyone who claps his hands and stomps is not always praising God. It is possible that other spirits might be at work. We should be cautious about the sister who is filled with the Holy Ghost one minute but is ready to cuss you out the next. The Holy Ghost doesn't leave us, he is always with us. The woman who cusses us out after he finishes shouting may have had a good shout but it wasn't the work of the Holy Spirit. In verse 21 he urges believers not to receive "all" spirits without trying them first.

The sum total of the teaching is that we should not stand in the way of the Holy Spirit's work by either trying to stop the work from happening, refusing to do our part, or talking it down. Neither should we attempt to stop anyone from true spirit led expressions of gratitude for God's goodness.

Three reasons to give it up

We should be willing to "give it up for God" without hesitation because he has helped in so many ways:

HIS FIRE PURGED US: Every believer should be willing to give it up for God because he has purged us of our sins. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to purge our sins. That is, wipe the slate clean. Isaiah 53 reminds us that he was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities……with his stripes we are healed." Whenever we consider what we once were, we should be willing to give it up for God. Every believer can testify that, "I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God, because of Jesus, I'm not what I was." The simple truth of the matter is that the blood of Christ "purged" us of all of our sins. Think of it! No matter what we have been in the past has been wiped clean. It's gone. Our neighbors and friends won't ever forget but God forgives! 1 Corinthians 6:11 reminds each of us that, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. So when it comes to giving God praise, those who have been picked up and turned around should be among the first to "give it up for God!"

HIS FIRE REFINED US: The Holy Spirit refines us. Whenever gold or other precious metal was extracted it had to be refined. The process was to heat the ore to such temperatures that the gold separated itself from the rock, mud and other minerals. Biblically, it is called being "tried in the fire." Every believer knows what it

means to be tried in the fire. That's when we get our little test. It comes in different ways. Sometimes we are tried with health issues. At other times there are financial problems. Our test could even include relationships, career challenges or major career difficulties. Those who have weathered such storms know what it means to be tried in the fire. When we come through, like pure gold that is refined, all of the raw ore seems to float away leaving behind a purer spirit, a more sensitive nature, and a closeness to God. We went into our situation crudely but we arose more refined and able to stand whatever life throws at us. The Holy Spirit is the refining agent. The Holy Spirit separates and then polishes us as we prepare for greater service. Anyone who has been to God's refinery has no trouble "giving it up for God!" No one has to prod us or push us or prompt us. Whenever we remember the refinery, we are quick to "give it up for God!"

HIS FIRE MOTIVATES US: The Holy Spirit motivates; that's what Jeremiah learned. Sometimes, just as he did Jeremiah, he motivates us to continue. There are other times when he has to take extraordinary means to motivate us. Jonah tried to go in the wrong direction. He ignored every warning. It took three days in the belly of a whale before he was motivated to do what he should do. The same was the case with Saul who had to be stricken on the Damascus Road. After three days and nights of blindness, he was motivated to do the right thing. The Holy Spirit directs us and motivates us. Those moments when we found ourselves in a slump were impossible times. We came to a complete halt and it was only the Holy Spirit that prompted us to get going again. The same is true when we were saved from big mistakes. Sometimes it was the stumbling block that frustrated us that saved us from the troubling situation. When we have been motivated to go the right direction by the Holy Spirit, it is no problem for us to "give it up for God." When we has picked us up and turned us around and place our feet on solid ground, it's not hard at all to "give it up for God!"

He gave it up for us

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should give it up for Christ, because he gave it up for us!

Long before we saw a need to give it up for the Lord he gave it up for us.

We know God gave it up for us because the bible tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

He gave it up for us by showing us his love.

It was a love that was:

—higher than the heavens
—deeper than the oceans
—lovelier than the sunsets
—sweeter than the honeycomb
—stronger than the wind
—fresher than the morning dew

It was a love that could not be:
—measured for it is immeasurable
—described for it is indescribable
—evaluated for it is invaluable
—comprehended for it is incomprehensible
—explained for it is unexplainable

There's no other love that can:
—bless and benefit
—penetrate and saturate
—glorify and magnify
—satisfy and beautify
—encourage the discouraged!

We should give it up for God because he first gave it up for us. No wonder the songwriter declared, "Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me."

Somebody came to the worship service today sporting your DC degree. Day Care Center Certificate. It certifies that you know how to act! You were told in Day Care to sit politely and to be quiet in your seat. We may forget many things, but we remember what we learned in Day Care. Somebody came to the worship today, determined to keep their praise turned down low.

I said I wasn't going to tell anybody but I can't keep it to myself.
I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!
Jesus, who died on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!
I said I wasn't going to tell anybody but I got to give it up for Jesus!

No. 9095-Inspiration

I Surrender All

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2, 2004

SCRIPTURE. ***"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sigh I of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. James 4:7-10***

Introduction

What is the secret to personal success? Books have been written that purport to reveal the secret to success in nearly every walk of life. Many are so taken with the drive for success that they are willing to do just about anything. A recent television series looked at the mothers of little children who rob their children of their childhoods as the prep them to win beauty pageants. Fathers who want their sons to be professional athletes begin them on a ritual in that direction before they can begin walk. It seems everyone is looking for the secret to success.

There are thousands of books that tell us how to succeed. Donna Brooks' "Seven secrets of successful women" is a bestseller. Erin Conroy has a book called "20 secrets to success with your child." Og Mandino has one called "Secrets of Success and Marriage." The list of success driven books, videos and audio tapes is unending. It seems everyone wants to write a book about how to succeed in something. The reason they are so popular is because it seems, "everyone wants to know."

Whether we are successful in life depends heavily upon how we define success. If we define success in terms of material things, then we spend our lives trying to accumulate as many material things as possible. We count ourselves a success if we have them and can keep them and we say we have failed if we cannot get them or lose them. If we define success in terms of quality of life concerns such as peace, happiness, and inner joy, then we may find success with or without material things. If we are looking for a "secret to success" the bible gives us a very unusual way to succeed that is totally different from what the world teaches. In fact, it is so unusual that many reject what it teaches because it does not appear logical in light of today's times. The bible says to be "exalted" or "lifted up" that means to succeed, we must "humble ourselves before God" and God will do the rest. That means, do the will of God without seeking success itself and God will take care of the rest.

Consider Uncle Willie's great success. Uncle Willie was a humble man who never

tried to force his way on anybody. In fact, many would describe him as a pushover. He never said much. He never said anything when a construction company parked bulldozers and heavy machinery on his land while they were building a road close by. He never said much when he heard some of the workers shooting a rifle and laughing one night. But when be easy pickings. He pressed Uncle Willie hard to except a full settlement of $10,000 for the cow. He was surprised that Uncle Willie never asked for anything, he just listened. The lawyer insisted that Uncle Willie should sign the settlement document. Neither party could reverse the settlement once made. It was final. After they made the settlement and the check was delivered, the young lawyer could not help but brag. He told Uncle Willie, "You know, I hate to tell you this but I put one over on you in there. If you had gone to court, I couldn't have won the case. The men were on your land unauthorized. They were shooting a rifle and drinking. We would have lost the case without a doubt. Uncle Willie didn't want to brag, but he had a confession to make too. "Well, I'll tell you, I was a little worried about winning that case myself, because much to my surprise, that old cow came home this morning!"

As Christians, we have learned that doing God's will has its rewards. Sometimes we receive them in material things, everything we receive them in heaven. We are successful if we surrender ourselves to his will and allow him to take control of our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on James, the brother of Jesus, as he gives believers a very unusual formula for success: Stay close to God and he will lift your up.
In the first eight verses of James 1 he encouraged Christians to do good works with the full knowledge that there will be those who will detract from the work as they attempt to thwart its success.

He described these efforts as "divers temptations." It is used to suggest that the world will attack persons trying to live the Bessie, his prize-winning cow didn't come back from that same field the next morning Uncle Willie filed a complaint. The company, fearing a lawsuit, sent a smart young lawyer to settle with Uncle Willie out of court. The young lawyer saw the humble old man and decided he would Christian life from all sides.

In Chapter 4:7 he begins to reveal several secrets to success. He says to gain God's favor we should: submit ourselves to him, resist the devil, draw nigh to him, cleanse ourselves, be serious, and do our work with a spirit of humility.
This spirit of serious, humble work for the kingdom, despite "divers" temptations requires a total surrender of self to the cause of Christ. In essence it requires us to lose our own life to the cause of Christ. We are victorious only if the cause of the Christ is victorious.

Success is defined not by personal standards but by our participation in a life plan that is bigger than our own, endorsed in heaven.
To achieve this goal we must surrender all.

In John 5 told his followers the source of his great deeds was not in himself but was in God. His hand touched the lame but it was God that made them walk. He spoke the words to the blind but it was God that made them see. Lepers were made whole after leaving his presence only because God willed it so. The simple acts and words he spoke would be powerless and empty were it not for God taking them and making them into powerful instruments to perform his will.
In John 5:30 Christ said "I can do of mine own self do nothing." He pointed to a great truth. To do his mighty works he had to reach a point in his life in which he decided to lose himself in the will of God. It was the point when he decided to surrender all, and God decided to lift him up.

The Five Secrets to Success

James lists five secrets to success for every believer.Together they guarantee each believer a successful spiritual life.

SURRENDER TO GOD: The first step is to surrender ourselves to God. What does that mean? It means that we must give up our entire way of seeing and measuring things and see the world through "Kingdom" glasses. First we have to surrender our sense of personal confidence. This is the notion that we can accomplish anything, alone. When we surrender to God we change our attitude to one that says, "I can't do anything without God." I can't succeed in business, school or my profession without God's blessings. Once that is done, then kingdom building becomes the highest priority. Surrendering is not easy. Everything in us wants independence. Everything in us says, "Seek your own, do for yourself, and reach your own goals." Surrendering requires us to put our own goals on the back burner and to put those of Christ on the front burner. Those who are unable to surrender, will also find the remaining four secrets difficult as well, because they are almost impossible to accomplish without an attitude of surrender. Those who are able to surrender themselves can say with the songwriter, 'All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give. I will ever love and trust him; in his presence daily live. I surrender all. I surrender all. All to thee my blessed savior. I surrender all."

RESIST THE DEVIL: The second step to spiritual success is to resist the devil. The devil pushes us to promote ourselves in many ways. He promotes us to do things so that we can receive personal pleasure, credit, praise or power. We are told that if we want to spiritually succeed we must resist these motivations. We should ask the question, "Why am I doing what I am doing? What is my motivation? When it is over do I expect praise, credit or power?" If so, we are encouraged to resist devilish impulses. The weapons we use to resist the devil are: faith and prayer. A man or woman who operates on faith and prayer is able to resist the devil. God will help us recognize that a certain act is not according to his will, when we pray before we act. He will also help us to stand when the devil attacks. To resist the devil we cannot afford to abandon our prayer lives. If we went through this week without taking time to read our bible or share in a moment of personal prayer, our resistance will be low. Satan will find plenty of room to impose himself on our thoughts and actions. He can't

get a word in if we are constantly focused on the Lord and his kingdom.

STAY CLOSE TO GOD: One of the by products of surrendering to God and resisting Satan is the fact that these two steps will automatically draw us, closer to God. Review the verse again, "Draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you." It means that when we draw close to God he will meet us half way, and meet us at our coming. Staying close to God is not as easy it seems. There are things that we do to stay close. To stay close to someone we want to be in their presence, talk with them, listen to them, and share experiences with them. It is a natural tendency for us to be drawn to those who want to be around us and to shy away from those who don't want to be close to us. In this respect, God is the same way. If we want to be close to him, then he makes special effort to be close to us. He is close enough to us to know our needs, sense our weakness and to respond to us in the nick of time. We are close enough to him to know his will, appreciate his love and give him praise. That's why the songwriter wrote, "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to the cross where thou has died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

BE SERIOUS: We are warned to "cleanse ourselves" if we want to succeed in spiritual things. This means we should make sure our motives and reasons for doing things are pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." When we do any work for the Lord it should be with one objective only, "that God be praised." If we sing so we can be praised, perform a service so we can be praised, or minister so we can be praised, then we need to check our motives. The text says, "purify your hearts." To be successful in Christ, we must do whatever we do for the intent of glorifying God. It is not sufficient for example, to give God praise for a work that was not intended to build his kingdom. An explicit rapper who gives God the praise for his media success does not praise God in this manner because the purpose of an explicit CD was not to build the kingdom of God. God would get the praise from the work, not from the words of praise given at the award ceremony.

HAVE, A HUMBLE SPIRIT: The last step James gives is to approach everything with a humble spirit. That too is against the normal flow of humanity. Usually, we like being praised for what we do. It is our nature to seek that praise because it helps promote our personal agenda. The humble person knows that he or she is not able to accomplish anything notable without God's help; thus they shy away from being boastful. We can't accomplish anything unless we are willing to put ourselves in the background. Humility is hard because it is against our nature. It is easy, if we have surrendered ourselves to God in the first place. When that happens, we don't want to take credit for his work in our lives.

He will lift you up

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who surrender themselves to God have this assurance, "He will lift you up."

To be lifted up means to be raised up in honor and respect.

To be lifted up is to be picked up when you have been knocked down!

To be lifted up is to have doors opened when they have been closed in your face!

To be lifted up is to be set free when you have been a captive all of your life! He's brought me from a mighty long way!

Those who surrender to the will of God are those who trust him for everything and put him first in their lives. The Lord has promised in Matthew 6:33 that those who "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his "righteousness" shall all of the other things added unto them.

If I surrender all, when I've failed, some way or another, he will turn my failure into success!

If I surrender all, when I'm weak, some way or another, he will turn my weakness into strength!

If I surrender all, when I have questions, some way or another he will provide the answers!

If I surrender all,, when I am frustrated, some way or another he will give me hope!

I surrender all!

I surrender all!

All to Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

All to Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

All to thee my precious savior, I surrender all!

No. 9096-Mother's Day

Behold Thy Mother

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 9, 2004

SCRIPTURE. ***"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. " John 19:27 "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Acts 1:14***

Introduction

Have you ever taken a good at your mother? Beyond the facial features and other physical attributes, good mothers have qualities that are often reflected in their faces. Look at the lines above your mothers eyes. These lines form when we think a lot. Mothers who have lines carved into their foreheads are said to be mothers who fought a lot during the course of their experience. If there are lines between eyebrows is saying that they suggest she frowned a lot and probably spent many hours upset about one thing or another. If there are lines around her nasalabial folds at the comers of both sides of her mouth, then she is said to be one who smiled a lot and shared many happy moments. The faces of mothers usually reflect an assortment of smiles and frowns and thoughfulness that we often overlook until we take a good look at our mothers.

If we take just a single day and observe the mother in our home without saying a word, what would we see? In many homes we would see mother change quickly from one role to another. In one instance she is an alarm clock; but in another she is a gourmet chef. For some she becomes the crossing guard, the van driver and parttime chauffeur. In just a few minutes she instantly transforms into a working mom dashing into the workplace and dashing back home at the end of the day, just in time for cheerleader practice, church rehearsals, spring training and lastminute grocery shopping. In between the time, somewhere in the day she finds time to pray, pay bills, fix what's broken, and think of ways to keep from breaking what's not broken. If we take a good look at the mother in our family, many would come close to this description.

Children watch their mothers. Even when their moms are not looking, children always seem to observe the various moves of their mothers. They watch how she walks. They watch how she talks. They know when she's feeling good. They also know when she's down in the dumps. Just as moms watch their children, children also spend time watching their mothers.

The little ones watched mom for many days make tea without tea bags. It was

strange, but mom ordered special tea leaves to make her brew. On Mother's day her children decided that it would be a great idea to treat mom by bringing her tea in bed. That morning the kids proudly marched into Mom's bedroom and awakened her with a kiss and shout, "Happy Mother's Day!" Mom was surprised to see her little ones, four, five and six years old had a tray prepared with folded napkins, a flower a Mother's Day card and a piping hot cup of her favorite home brewed tea. "I didn't know you knew how to make tea" Mother said. "Oh yes, said the six year old, we watched you every day. We put the tea leaves in the water and let it boil." Mother was delighted as she lifted the cup to her lips the six year old added, "We couldn't find the strainer you used so we used the fly swatter! "The mother also dropped the tea cup. "You did what?" The six year old quickly added, "Don't worry we didn't use the new one you just bought, we used the old one." The mother hugged each girl and told them they were so sweet she lost her taste for tea!

There are many examples of good mothers in the Bible. The most fascinating example however, is that of Mary the mother of Jesus. In the manger, in celebrations, in times of trouble, even hanging from the cross, Jesus kept his eye on his mother. She was never far away, from his cradle to his cross, to his grave; his mother was right by his side.

As Christians, we have learned that the qualities of Godly love are displayed in both godly fathers and mothers. If we want a description of Godly love and all we need to do is to observe a godly mother and we will see God's love in action. If you want to truly see what God's love is about then, "behold thy mother."

Exposition

These two texts give us striking snapshots of Mary, the mother of Jesus as she stands by her son at the foot of the cross and as she stands with other women waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Mary is the consummate picture of motherhood. In the course of her life she experienced nearly every emotion shared by mothers of every generation. Whether it was the joy of childbirth or the pain of watching her son in disgrace or the ecstasy of seeing him glorified, Mary's experience in motherhood is strikingly similar to that of every in the mother in the world.

John shows us Mary at the cross. No one but a mother can understand how she must have felt standing at the foot of the cross watching the child she carried in her womb fastened to a Roman cross by both hand and foot. John records the words of Jesus from the cross as he looked down at his mother and commended her care into John's hands. His words, "behold thy mother" were an invitation to John to embrace Mary as his own mother and for Mary to embrace John as her own son. His words to Mary were, "Woman behold thy son."

The Act of the Apostles shows Mary for the last time. She is gathered with other women who were praying for the power or of the Holy Spirit which had been promised by Christ in his last days. Even though she was the mother of Jesus, she did not neglect joining the other women in prayer and supplication. No one knows what

happened to Mary after this text. She is never mentioned again in the New Testament. The Bible does not say what she did, where she lived, or where she died. What we know about Mary is that she spent most of her adult life being a mother to her son; through miraculous good times and tragic bad times, she was always by his side.

Mary at the Manger

The first place we see Mary is at the manger. The Bible introduces Mary as a young woman of humble spirit who is selected by God to bring into the world the promised Messiah. At the manger, and all of its associated incidents, Mary gives us the first picture of motherhood. The historic picture we have of mothers is that of a mother holding a child in her anus. The most important times in a child's life are those years spent in the presence of a loving mother. As an embryo or fetus a child learns its mother's voice and becomes attached to her in both body and spirit. Good mothers are careful about the manger experience of their children's lives. Good mothers know that these are the most impressionable years. They give of themselves to help mold and shape their children into the best that God would have them to be. The manger represents the formative years in a child's life. It's the time when his selfconcept is formed and his personality is shaped. It's a time when he learns the meaning of love, discipline, and discernment between right and wrong. Good mothers resist the temptation to delegate this responsibility to others. It's something that only a mother can do. At the manger, in her home, or in the company of the family, Mary demonstrated what a good mother does in the formative years of a child's life.

Mary at the marriage

The bible gives an account of a marriage celebration in which Mary and her family were participants. This is the famous account of the incident in which Mary asked Jesus to provide more wine for the guests when the supply ran out. At the marriage we see Mary involved in a family celebration. It was a happy time. It was a festive time. She shared in this moment. Even today good mothers follow Mary's example because they share in the celebrations of their children. Whether it's a birthday party, or the celebration of some achievement at school or on the athletic field, good mothers are part of the celebration. Celebrations only have value if they are shared by those who can appreciate the significance of the moment. Since mothers know the difficulties that led up to the moment of celebration they know the importance of the moment. When every child thinks back to their first birthday party, many recall the face of mother and granny and the one who played mother at all of their important moments. Mothers know the importance of sharing celebrations and great moments. They seemed to tackle the words of Diana Ross when she said, "Success is nothing unless you have someone you love to share it with you." In this respect, mothers show the love of God by sharing moments of celebration.

Mary at the cross

The Gospels give us a striking account of Mary in the crowds following her son, listening as they called for his crucifixion, watching as he carried a cross on his shoulder, as they buried him in the tomb. What the Gospels show us is a mother who shared the full gamut of her child's experience including his tragedy. There are many mothers today who understand how Mary must have felt standing at the cross watching her son dying in humiliation. One of the most striking scenes in the movie "The Passion of the Christ" is the scene that showed Mary desiring to reach out for her son as she saw him fall under the weight of the cross. Every mother in the audience could relate to her and the tears began to flow. Good mothers feel the pain of their children. They may be thousands of miles away but there seems to be a builtin instinct that signals to every mother when something is going wrong with a child. Mothers have the ability, it appears, to empathize with their children. They can feel them and touch their inner souls.

At the cross many of Jesus' friends deserted him. The Bible says they watched from afar. But Mary stood by her son and watched him in his most vulnerable moment. Likewise, mothers today stand with their children even when the world has deserted them and their standing in their most vulnerable moments. Mothers do not always agree with the circumstances of their children's affliction, tragedy or accusation. When their children have done wrong, they support them but their support does not mean that they endorse wrongdoing. Like most God fearing women they detest the wrong that their children may have done but they still love the children. Similarly, God loves us the same way. He detests the wrongs that we do, but yet, he still loves us as individuals. At the cross, Mary shows us the extent and the depth of the mother's love. At the same time she shows us the compassion of love at work even in our most vulnerable moment.

Never Left Him

Finally, brothers and sisters, we see Mary in prayer waiting to be sustained by the power of God.

Jesus said "Behold thy mother!" As we behold Mary, we see the complete picture of motherhood.

When we behold Mary in the crowd in prayer, waiting for the power of God we see what motherhood is about.

If we want to see a snapshot of motherhood then we have to behold women like Mary.

Modem society has cheapened motherhood. Since 1993, an average of 1.5 million babies have been aborted each year because those babies would have inconvenienced the mother or interrupted her career opportunities. Yet, even as millions cheapened motherhood, there were millions more who exercised their right of choice

and chose life over death.

That choice was a Godly Choice. It was the choice of love.

Motherhood gets even cheaper as society experiments with cloning, fertilizes eggs in testtubes and grows babies in artificial wombs.

Motherhood has been cheapened so much that the world is looking for examples of real motherhood.

If you are searching for that good example, listen to the words of Jesus, "Behold thy mother!"

Behold thy mother and you will see a mother who would work herself into the ground to put shoes on her children's feet, while her own shoes may have holes in the soles.

Behold thy mother and you will see a mother who will feed her children a full course meal even if it means going to bed hungry herself.

Behold thy mother and you will see a mother who is so strong that she will fight off a legion of enemies attacking her children, but so meek that she will cry if she reads a few kind words on a card of thanks.

If you want to see an example of how God can make a way out of no way, behold thy mother!

If you want to see an example of how God can help you fight the battles of life and keep a smile on your face, behold thy mother!

If you want to see an example of how God can build you up when you are torn down and can plant your feet on solid ground, behold thy mother!

On the day of Pentecost, Mary was in prayer. That gives us the final picture of the godly mother. She is a praying mother.

A praying mother knows that if she puts life's concerns in God's hands he will make a way out of no way!

A praying mother knows when she has fallen down, God will pick her up again!

A praying mother knows that when she has failed, God will give her a second chance!

A praying mother knows that when she is weak, God will renew her strength!

A praying mother knows that if she can wait on the Lord, he will realize his will. The word says, "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount on wings as eagles. They shall run but not get weary. They shall walk and not faint."

If you want to see somebody that the Lord has brought a mighty long way, "Behold thy mother!"

If you want to see somebody that has a story to tell, "Behold thy mother!"

The story that mama tells is the same story that the godly father tells. It's a story about God's amazing Grace.

It's story of Mary's son!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday Morning....

No. 9097-Communion

Shortening Bread

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 16, 2004

SCRIPTURE: And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:35

Introduction

What if there was a magic cure for every problem or ailment that we could conceive? What if there was an answer to every question we could pose? What if there was an instant solution to every problem that we face; would it be considered something important? We have seen many miracle cures, magic snake oils, and cure-alls from all around the world. No matter how they are promoted as the singular cure for everything that's wrong with the world how bodies and humanity, these magic cures always seen to fall short of our expectations. In simpler times, Grandma seemed to have a cure for everything. There were a few things that Grandma gave to everyone that appeared to be the cure for everything wrong with us. Among those things was something called Castor Oil. If you had a stomachache the solution was Castor Oil. If you were constipated, the solution was Castor Oil. If you were simply feeling bad, the solution was Castor Oil. If you broke the family rules the punishment often included a couple of spoonfuls of castor oil. If it wasn't Castor Oil it was B.C. Powder. Grown folks seemed to take B.C. powders for just about everything. If not that it was Standback. The commercials on television said take a Standback and snapback. In every home there seemed to be a few magic solutions to every problem.

One of those surefire remedies for nearly every illness whether it was real or imagined was a strange one. One miracle cure all for just about everything wrong with every child with a small problem was something called shortening bread. Shortening bread was one of those cure-alls that seemed to heal nearly every sickness of the body. When we think of shortening bread what immediately comes to mind is the words of the children's song. They took him to the doctor, and the doctor said, "Give them children some shortening bread." Shortening bread was so popular a solution to illnesses that did not require major medical attention that even doctor's prescribed the home remedy. Those who remember the children's song have heard many versions of it but many other lyrics are similar to this: "Mamma's little baby loves shortening, shortening, Momma's little baby loves shortening bread"

One of the verses is, "Three little children, lying in bed, two was sick and the other

most dead; Sent for a doctor, and the doctor said, feed those children some shortening bread." No matter what our ailment, it was believed by many that shortening bread was the cure.

That brings to mind some familiar words of Jesus as he spoke to his disciples. He often told them about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven and his relationship to the Kingdom. He often characterized himself in many ways, one of which was to use inanimate objects to personify himself. In one instance he said he was he was a door by which everyone had to pass to make it to the Kingdom. In another instance he said he was water that would keep those who were thirsty and satisfy them. In John 6:35 he compares himself to bread. The verse reads, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger..."

It was supposed that shortening bread was good for whatever ails us. Whether it was children or any other ailment, the prescription was shortening bread. However, Jesus is the bread of life, he's better than shortening bread.

As Christians, we know there is no magic cure for the illness of the world. But there's something else that we know. We know there is one name that we can call when we stand in need of help whether it's spiritual or physical. That name is the name of Jesus. He's better than shortening bread. He is the savior of the world.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explained the nature of his ministry.

Crowds followed him wherever he went in hopes of catching a glimpse of one of his famous miracles, or better still to be a participant in a miraculous event..
The people were so excited about what they saw that they immediately wanted to make Jesus their king because they envisioned feasts for everyone under his administration. They wanted more fish and more bread. Jesus rebuked the crowd for following their growling bellies, seeking food. He offered them food, but it was not of mere fish and bread. He told them that just as Moses gave them manna or the "bread from heaven" in the wilderness so had the father made it possible for them to have a greater bread. He summed up this truth by telling them "I am the bread of life: he that comethto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." What Christ told the crowds was simple, "If its fish and bread you seek, keep looking; but if its food for your soul that you want, I can satisfy your needs."

What's In Shortening Bread?

Jesus said I am the bread of life. Have you stop to think that means? Let's break down the ingredients in the traditional shortening bread recipe and see what they mean in the Christian life.

FOUR CUPS OF FLOUR: Many of the modern moms made shortening bread with fancy store-bought flour. It's the kind that comes in the package marked enriched white flour. There's something that should get our attention about that word

enriched. If we look closely we will find that the enriched flour is not really enriched at all. When you purchase flour in the store, the fiber and natural vitamins have been removed and the flour is 'enriched' (man made vitamins are added at the discretion of the manufacturer) and bleached to preserve shelf life. Enriched really means stripped of its natural fiber and vitamins. The old-fashioned flour was not enriched. In fact, it was so old-fashioned that Grandma had to sift the flour to reduce the number of grains that finally made it into a recipe. Jesus said I am the bread of life pointing to another troop about flour. When we eat whole-wheat bread or grains or cereals we absorb a sufficient supply of fiber and other nutrients that help us to avoid a variety of illnesses and diseases. The fiber absorbs toxins in the digestive system and moves them out of your system quickly when combined with drinking plenty of water. When Jesus referred to himself as the bread of life, was he speaking of bread made of whole-grain or enriched flour? Probably not.

The bread of bible times was not "enriched." Today, there are many people who profess Christ but what they are really professing is an enriched version of Christianity. This version of Christianity is stripped of all the vitamins and fiber need to make it the real bread of life. It's a bleached out version that is convenient, quick, and marketable. This version of Christianity is sold to millions who are fooled by its fancy wording, thinking that empty religion is really the way to an "enriched" life. We must remember that whole-grain foods are living foods. When we eat a piece of meat, it is dead. When we nibble on a potato chip it is dead. But whole grain foods are alive. If we planted any one of the kernels of wheat in whole grain bread, it will grow. All it needs is the proper surrounding and it will sprout! When Jesus said, he is the bread of life he meant he gives life. He gives new life to dead things. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; behold old things are passed and all things become new." Good Shortening Bread used plenty of living bread; so should every believer.

ONE POUND OF BUTTER: One of the main ingredients in shortening bread is butter. Even though the name says shortening bread there is no shortening in the bread. However there is a substance in it that makes baked goods soft. That ingredient is butter. The typical shortening bread recipe calls for 1 lb. of butter. That's about four sticks of butter. That's a whole lot of butter for just 4 cups of flour. When mixed with the other ingredients, butter tends to make the whole batter soft. A few generations ago butter was hard to come by. A cow had to be milked, and the milk had to be churned through a time intensive process called churning. Producing butter was not as simple as going to go to market and buying a few sticks for the refrigerator. It required a whole lot of work. A whole lot of churning. It took a lot of time. People who have been married for many years understand churning process. Their successful marriages took time to churn and work out their differences slowly and laboriously until the cream rose to the top, and the butter appears. Butter is the end result of a tremendous amount of work. This is true for all relationships. You don't get cream and butter without churning. A full churn of butter can soften up a lot shortening bread. Perhaps that's what Jesus had in mind when you get speaking to his disciples about the great sacrifice they would make to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven. There were many wanted him to incite a more vigorous, violent, and

aggressive Kingdom. However, what he sought to do was to inspire a gentle approach to Kingdom Building. It was one that encouraged forgiveness and turning the other cheek. What he wanted was a whole lot of butter. In these tough times we too need a gentler spirit for a world on the brink of war every day.

ONE CUP OF BROWN SUGAR: Shortening Bread is basically a soft dough that is sweet. Many folks don't call it shortening bread at all, they call it sweet bread, because it contains a cup of sugar; not just any sugar, but brown sugar. If there are two cups of sugar sitting on the table, what's the difference if one is brown and the other is white? Plain white sugar is pure sucrose. It's been processed a lot. Brown sugar is often sticky and is often made by adding syrup or molasses to the mix which gives it its color. Both cups of sugar give the same amount of sweetness but brown sugar, when mixed with the other ingredients has a tendency to stick. In shortening bread, the brown sugar not only sweetens but it binds the mixture together. It's a great truth about the spirit of Christianity, it has a tendency to bind and hold together that which is falling apart. Put another way, "A little sweetness goes a long way." How many people are trying live their lives without sweetness? Husbands and wives are bitter, citizens in the community are bitter, church members are bitter, sisters and brothers are bitter. But, a little brown sugar goes a long way! The experts we get more calories from brown sugar, as well as nutrients. A cup of brown sugar contains 187 milligrams of calcium, 56 milligrams of phosphorous, 4.8 milligrams of iron, 757 milligrams of potassium and 97 milligrams of sodium. A little brown sugar goes a long way. Families and churches who show each other just a little love have a tendency to stay together. The song writer said, "I need you. you need me. We are all apart of God's family." Love is sweetand . God is Love. He is a sweet presence that prompted the songwriter to say, "There's a sweet sweet spirit in this place. And I know it must be the spirit of the Lord."

The Bread of Life

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that what Jesus offered his disciples was not shortening bread, but the bread of life.

The people were accustomed to bread, but this notion of the bread of life was something new.

They were accustomed to unleavened bread, but the bread of life was more than just unleavened bread.

They were familiar with the showbread which was used by the priests at the temple; but Jesus talked about unleavened bread.

Jesus said those who have the bread of life would never hunger.

He was God's wonder bread.

God's bread gives:

STRENGTH to those who are weak; INSPIRATION to those who are frustrated and confused!

HOPE to the hopeless; RENEWAL to those who are in despair!

PICKS UP those who are let down; LIFTS UP those who have been let down!

SAVES those who are lost and gives NEW ENERGY to those who wait on him. For I hear the word declare that "they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!"

God's bread is

QUICKER that hoe cakes. While we are still praying, our help is on the way!

LIGHTER than light bread. Those who wander in the dark will find that he is the light of the world!

SWEETER than raisin bread. His goodness takes the bitterness of hard times and sweetens its taste. No wonder the song writer said, "I found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

MORE FILLING THAN SHORTENING BREAD

MORE ASSORTED THAN CORN BREAD. Corn bread is good with greens, rice and gravy, stew meat or chicken. If there is nothing else, corn bread goes good with just corn bread and gravy. But God's bread goes with every situation. In my days of happiness, God is there! In my moments of sadness, God is there too! When my soul is hungry, God is there! No matter what my situation, God is there!

God's bread is better than wonder bread because he helps us to grow in many ways.

No wonder the song writer declared: "Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

When God saw a world hungry for the bread of life, he decided to share his only begotten son to feed them the power of salvation!

One evening, 2000 years ago, Jesus, the bread of heaven, took an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

He died on that cross so that we might live!

But early Sunday morning, Quicker than instant biscuits in a hot stove!

Early Sunday morning, faster than light bread browns in a hot toaster!

Early Sunday morning, God's shared bread arose from the grave with....all power in his hands!

No. 9098-Inspiration

Pursuing Your Dreams

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 20, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." Zechariah 3:7***

Introduction

What could stop you from pursuing your dreams? What could possibly come against you that could stop you from achieving your spiritually ordained goals and dreams? As a general rule, the first thing that stops most of us is the fear of failure. We are afraid that we might try and might fail in the process. We are afraid that we would not be accepted or the we may lose in the venture. Our fears and apprehensions are generally those things that stop us from achieving our dreams. On occasion, forces outside of us also work against us. These enemies and adversaries who spend most of that time planning and plotting ways to prevent us from succeeding. Notwithstanding our personal fears and the activity of our adversaries, what else is there that could stop us from pursuing our dreams?

Many people have some very ambitious plans for their lives that were made many years ago. At the start of each new year many sit down to evaluate whether or not any progress has been made toward achieving those goals. Sometimes our own reality check reveals startling results. Sometimes we discover that while we've had a year of activity, in reality we are no closer to our goals than we were a year ago. Misdirected activity may keep us going at a steady pace, but almost always takes us where we don't want to go. A year of misdirected activity usually concludes with little progress toward realizing goals.

What about our personal dreams? Are we any closer to making them become realities than we were a year ago? Are we pursuing our dreams or have we given up on them and dismissed them as unreachable? Robert Fulghum in his book "It was on fire when I laid down on it" tells of a young lady who was sitting on a suitcase and crying in the airport for several hours. He learned that she had run out of money. She had spent two days waiting in the airport standby with little to eat and too much pride to beg. Her plane was about to go and she had lost her ticket. She had been sitting in that one spot for hours just crying. She lost all hope of ever getting home. A nice couple wiped the girl's eyes and agreed to talk with the airport officials to help solve her problem. She stood up to go with them, turned around to pick up her belongings.

And SCREAMED. They thought something terrible had happened to her but no...it was her ticket. She found her ticket. She had been sitting on her ticket the whole time.

In a similar sense many of us have been sitting on our tickets to fulfillment and success afraid to move or feeling sorry because of our circumstance. Some have spent whole years sitting on their tickets watching others catch flights towards their destinies. They too could do the same except they have given up on themselves.

Satan attacks us in many ways and attempts to stop us from achieving our dreams. He likes for us to believe that dream is impossible. He likes for us to conclude that the obstacles all insurmountable. The image of the dream ordained by God stands on one side while on the other the enemy is standing with sword drawn. Many back away from their dreams thinking they are impossible. They simply sit on them.

As Christians, we know all things are possible! If our life goals are in accord with the will of God, nothing can stop us from achieving our destinies, except our own unwillingness to pursue our dreams with vigor and persistence. God holds the reins of life. He also showers blessings upon those who choose to use their life tickets rather than sit on them!

Exposition

This text focuses upon assurances given to the prophet Zachariah by God himself concerning Israal's dreams and hopes for the rebuilding of the kingdom.

The book of Zachariah is a book of encouragement. It serves the same purpose for the Old Testament as the book of Revelation serves for the New Testament. It paints a picture of hope for every believer struggling to achieve a stated purpose or goal.

Zechariah was a contemporary with Haggai, one of the prophets who ministered to the remnant who had returned from captivity in Babylon. Although they were back in Jerusalem rebuilding the temple and the city, they were still vassals of Babylon, still subject to the Gentile nations around them, without much hope for the future. They had one goal and one dream, which was to rebuild the walls. Zecharaiah's words came as an inspiration to the believers who, on occasion, were frustrated with the entire process and watched their dream fade in front of their eyes.

In a series of five visions Zachariah is shown how God will ultimately restore Israel and the priesthood to the picture they saw in their dreams. Chapter three focuses on the fifth vision which shows an image of Joshua the high priest and Satan. It depicts the high priest attempting to achieve the dream and Satan attempting to resist the fulfillment of the dream. It shows a quest and it shows an opposition to the quest. It shows a desire to succeed and an opposition to that desire to succeed.

Zachariah presents an image of Satan opposing the efforts of believers; then shows how God rebukes Satan as he attempts to put stumbling blocks in the way of believers. At verse two God speaks to Satan and says he rebukes him. To be rebuked is to be rejected, reprimanded or chastised for some wrongful act or infraction of the rules. In the vision, Satan is rebuked because he worked against the dream of the

people to rebuild the temple and restore the worship and praise of God.

In the context of this vision Joshua represents the hopes and dreams of Israel and Satan represents all forces working against that dream. At verse seven the central focus of this text, an angel delivers an important reminder to Joshua. The angel's words were encouragement and reassurance. "If thou wilt walk in my ways and if thou wilt keep my charge" the angel began; then God will fix it so that the people of God will be able to achieve their dreams according to his will

Two important factors were listed for those believers who wanted to succeed in realizing the rebuilding of the kingdom and the restoration of the temple which were their immediate dreams.

Those factors were that every believer should walk in God's ways and keep his commandments.

That formula was clear in the book of Zachariah. The essence of the message remains true for believers of all generations.

Rebuke Satan

One of the important things that Zachariah Chapter three says to us is that if we are going to pursue our dreams successfully, Satan must be rebuked. God will rebuked him especially when his efforts interfere with the attainment of a godly ordained dream or aspiration. Translated to our day, Zachariah's words simply mean we should not allow Satan to steal our dream. Stay in contact with God give him your best and God will take care of Satan for you.

Don't let Satan or any of his imps, steal your dream.

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States, did not begin school until he was nine years old. Despite that slow start he harbored a dream of being the President of the United States. Once educated and matured he became a college president, governor and was finally his name was submitted as a nominee of the Democratic Party. The party turned Wilson down 46 times until he was finally nominated and elected President of the United States.

Concerning the achievement of dreams Wilson said: "We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day or in the red fire on a long winter's evening. Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nourish them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true." Don't let anyone steal your dreams!

Today there are many young people who will begin to weave the fabric of opportunity on the loom of life to make their dreams come true. As school bells begin to ring again, young people are faced with the challenge to seize the opportunities provided in school and weave them into learning experiences that will help them move closer to realizing their goals.

However, believers should be careful and remember Woodrow Wilson's advice: "Don't let anyone steal your dreams!" There are many ways that your dreams can be stolen from you, but the ones that happen most often involve negative self talk,

misplaced opportunity, and twisted visions.

Three Ways Satan steals Your dream

NEGATIVE SELF TALK: Negative self talk refers to "putting yourself down" or under estimating your own ability to achieve. The young man who dreams of being an airline pilot must not convince himself that he can't achieve his goal. If he constantly tells himself it can't be done, he steals his own dream. The young lady who considers the amount of study required to become a nurse, steals her own dream if she starts to tell herself that she's not as good as others who have achieved the same goal.

The road that leads to your selected dream may be bumpy and difficult, but it begins with Positive self talk. I can make it. If they can do it, so can I. The secret is to learn as much about your dream as possible, find out what you need, and then be willing to set out on a course to make it happen; regardless of what others say.

As Christians we constantly feed ourselves with positive self talk. "I can do all things through Christ that strengteneth me."

MISPLACED OPPORTUNITY: Some miss the chance to realize their dreams because they failed to use the opportunity to prepare themselves. Though it may not appear important, all information you learn today may help you seize an opportunity tomorrow. There are millions today who are singing a sad song. They are saying "If only I hada" each time they see their opportunity pass them by. Today the subjects you learn in school may seem unnecessary and even boring, but learn them anyway. It is better to have it and not need it than it is to need it and not have it.

TWISTED VISIONS: Some have their dreams stolen from them. Like the Swindlers who cheated the emperor some will never achieve their dreams because they are convinced that taking a short cut can make it happen faster. Some athletes have lost dreams because they took short cuts, taking steroids to boost their natural capacities. Some professionals have chosen to steal and cheat their employers to achieve their goals and have their careers ruined because they tried to take the short cut. Some sell drugs. Some use drugs. It is the devil's nature to attempt to steal your dream. When the devil steals your dream, it is no longer a dream, but a nightmare.

Walk with God

Finally brothers and sisters there is a word of hope for those who are pursuing dreams; walk with God and he will facilitate dreams that are according to his will.

Israel was frustrated over the presence of Satan in their lives as they attempted to rebuild the walls and reinstitute to worship. In their frustration, Zachariah gave them a word from the Lord. That word was simple. Walk in my ways and I will reestablish your house keep your courts and help you to walk in places you've never dreamed.

This promise to walk in unknown places as others stand by is God's promise to

believers to mystify their critics to a complete halt as they watch believers achieve God's ordained goals.

Believers are encouraged to walk in God's ways.

To walk in God's way is to walk in faith.

Through faith we can achieve the unachievable.

Through faith we can accomplish the impossible.

Through faith we can reach the unreachable.

Those who trust God and step out to pursue their dreams must do so with the full knowledge that as long as their dreams are in accord with the will of God for their lives they will succeed! It may take time! Their may be obstacles, but they will succeed!

Why are you sitting on your dream? Look at verse 8!

To achieve our dreams we must stop sitting on them and trust in the Lord!

When we trust in the Lord we don't worry about the frustrating turns that the road of life offers! We walk by faith knowing that the Lord will make a way!

Standing in the way of our dream might be a:

-Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!

-Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!

-Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Those who trust in God:

-Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

-Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable

-Live for the incredible; Achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

I don't know about you but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Storms may rise! Winds may blow!

I will trust in the Lord till I die!

but as you reach for your dreams don't forget to tell the story.

Tell somebody about Jesus!

Tell somebody how he died!

Tell somebody how he arose after three days and nights!

Tell somebody that he is alive in your soul today!

No. 9099-Membership Improvement

Clay Feet

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 30, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." Daniel 2:31-33.***

Introduction

How long did it take you to discover that someone you admired was riddled with imperfections? When you were a child you thought your parents knew everything, could handle everything, and made no mistakes. How old were you before you learned differently? When you started dating your husband or your wife how long did it take for you to discover their imperfections? In your long discourses and conversations with your friends have you discovered their areas of weakness as well as their strengths? One the most frustrating experiences in our lives is to discover that those whom we admire are not perfect. Perfection is an elusive quality. Very few of us have experienced any relationship that is completely and totally perfect. What we learn in the long run is at all of us have our strengths as well as our weaknesses. We learn very quickly that the Superman that we admire may be strong and invulnerable too many things, but even Superman has a weakness call kryptonite.

Even the strongest person discovers sooner or later that he or she has a vulnerability; an area of weakness. Often we delude ourselves into believing that we have no weaknesses that whatever faults and problems that we encounter all the results of the weaknesses of others. If we failed it was not our weakness it was the fault of someone else. If a bad decision was made we did make a bad decision, someone else is the blame. And if we acted illogically, it was only because someone else made an error. Sooner or later we will come face-to-face with the truth which is that we too have faults and shortcomings.

We make this discovery in a variety of ways. No two people come to this realization in the same way. Sometimes, it's over a period of time. Sometimes it's a single incident that strikes home the truth that we have a flaw. Usually other people will see it before we do. Sometimes our flaws are minor and they can be overcome quickly. Sometimes they are devastating in their effect. Nearly every hero in the Bible

demonstrated great strength and also some level of humanity that demonstrated a flaw. Even Jesus in his humanity was so angry with the moneychangers in the temple that for a slight moment he forgot the principle of turn the other cheek and ran the moneychangers out of the temple beating them and turning over tables. If Jesus, in his humanity, not in his godliness, had a flaw it should not be a surprise then, that we too have flaws.

Consider Sister Caledonia was a proud member of the Do Right Baptist Church. The members lived in fear of her scornful eye and mean disposition whenever they broke the rules or tradition. Most folks thought Sister Caledonia was a perfect woman. She never did anything wrong. However, the children of the Church seem to notice that every Sunday she would leave out of church at least twice. At the beginning of each service and the middle of each service Sister Caledonia would say, "Don't worry and don't care, I'm just going to get some fresh air." She did this every Sunday without fail. One Sunday, the little children decided to follow and to see what the perfect member did once she was outside. They noticed that around back, behind the church that Sister Caledonia reached under a loose board and produced a square bottle kept in a brown paper bag. It had to be water, what else would Caldonia be drinking; and it was clear. She took a big swallow and then breathed in the fresh morning air, then replaced the bottle. After a little fresh air she returned to the church service waving her hands and praising the Lord. The little children noticed that the little bottle was nearly empty. So they decided to do Sister Caledonia a favor. They poured out the contents of the bottle and replaced it with fresh water from the well. When Caledonia returned for some more fresh air she was angry when she tasted the contents. She stormed back into the church service and sat down angrily. When asked the nature of a problem she said, "I do believe and I do declare that the devil done polluted all my fresh air."—Even Caldonia was not perfect.

In fact, most of the Bible heroes that we know were all flawed individuals
Eve ate the fruit
Cain killed Abel
Noah got drunk
Moses murdered a man
Samson liked his women
David had an affair
Solomon got a big head
Jonah refused to obey
Peter denied the Lord
Thomas doubted
Paul persecuted Christians

The list could go on and on. And this is the same for me and you. If each of us were to write a list of all our imperfections it would take a volume to record them and we would still need more paper.

Are you looking for the perfect husband? He hasn't been born yet. Are you looking for the perfect wife? She hasn't been born yet. Are you looking for the perfect child

or perfect parent, there are no such creatures. Every person with whom we share a relationship comes with a bag of relationships that includes strengths as well as weaknesses.

As Christians, we are happy to know that the God we serve is aware of our weaknesses and chooses to love us anyway. The song writer put it so succinctly, "he looked beyond our faults and saw our needs."

Exposition

This text focuses on Daniel's interpretation of the dream of a king who dreamed he saw a great statue but fell because it had clay feet.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and his heart was troubled. What made it worse was the fact that he could remember what the dream was and this troubled him ever the more. He determined to force his soothsayers and wise men to ease his troubled heart. He commanded them to tell him what he saw in his nightmare. The second command was that they give him the right interpretation of what he had seen in that dream. If they failed they and their families would be killed.

The wise men could tell or interpret the dream. However, after considerable prayer, Daniel came before the king with the answer he sought.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream involved a statue with a Head of Gold, Breast and Arms of Silver, Belly and Thighs of Brass, Legs of Iron, and Feet and Toes of Iron and Clay mixed together.

It was interpreted as being a dream that depicted all of the history of man from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (head of Gold) and the Babylonian Empire, through the rise of the Medio-Persian Empire (chest and arms of silver), then the rise of the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great (bronze stomach and thighs), then the rise of the Roman Empire under the great Caesars (Legs of iron). Then the Roman Empire would split into the two divisions shown by the legs and the Iron. The final earthly kingdom would be represented by the feet and toes of mixed iron and potter's clay to show just that while there is strength and power in this final kingdom, there is also much weakness and impurity.

The last world kingdom will be crushed by the Rock who is Jesus Christ. The Rock will become a mountain that fills the whole earth. His kingdom will never end.

For Nebuchadnezzar the dream was devastating. It meant that with all of the power, knowledge and splendor he had been able to amass, he still had "clay feet."- a vulnerability.

Exposition

Nebuchadnezzar's statue depicted the rise of a flawed world power. On a personal level, it could also represent our own quests:

HEAD OF GOLD: The head of gold represents our tendency to depend heavily upon our intellect and learning and less upon our heart. The man whose life is ruled

by a head of gold depends totally upon the logical, practical and the politically expedient. Matters of the heart play a secondary role. In the Star Trek movie series, Dr. Spock was is Vulcan who is incapable of making any decisions that are not logical. He does not respond to emotion or passions such as love, hate or fear. If it is not logical it does not compute. Likewise there are many today who test every situation against their knowledge and wisdom and leave little rule for matters of the heart. Perhaps that's why Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." Head of Gold. A man with a head and no heart, is a smart man but a heartless man who will do anything to accomplish an end. A woman with head without a heart is very intelligent woman who is prone to do some very stupid things.

ARMS OF SILVER: The arms of silver represent our outreach. There are many today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes. Outreach is essential to kingdom building. We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus. Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes. When we help others it must come from the heart. It must be done out of love. That's what 1 Corinthians 13:3 means when it says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing."

BELLY OF BRASS: The belly and thighs of brass represent our self indulgencies. When we think of the belly we think of satisfaction, getting full; getting what we want. The brass belly people are those who are ruled, not by their heart but by their sense of self. They are carnal in nature, self seeking, party animals who live only for the next pleasing moment with no thought of its effect on others. A man who does not want to marry a woman or commit himself to her but still wants to have sex with her, could care less what happens to her afterwards. He wants to be satisfied. That's what matters most. We've seen this belly response in presidents, governors and great men and women of our times. Smart people who did many great things, but were flawed because of brass bellies. These are the things that we do because it satisfies us, even if it hurts others. Polished brass looks good. In many cases, it looks as good or better than gold. But it soon loses its luster and has to be frequently polished to maintain its luster. So it is with those with brass appetites. They find that satisfaction eludes them and although they have plenty, can never get enough!

IRON LEGS AND CLAY FEET: The legs of iron represent our determination. Many of us have determination. Determination is a quality that is important to every life. It takes a determination and will of steel to pursue a dream until it is realized. It takes a strong determination to motivate ourselves to keep going forward even when others around us are slowing their pace. However, what we are determined to do must be in line with the will of God. It is good to have an iron will. It is good to have an iron determination, but that will must be according to the purpose of God, otherwise iron

will is mixed with the will of man-which is clay. Strong determination, based on something other than the will of God will not stand. Jesus said if we abide in him and his words abide in us that we can ask what we will and get it because our will and his will are one. In the Lord's prayer he said, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." It is good to be determined, but let's make sure what we are determined to do is in line with the will of God, otherwise our iron will is mixed with clay and we fall.

Broken Man Restored

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that Nebuchadnezzar saw the kingdom of his dream toppled by a rock that became a mountain and filled the whole earth.

For Nebuchadnezzar, the presence of this rock was a nightmare. It signaled that what he envisioned would have to give way some greater power.

In the same sense, each of us cannot not achieve what God wants on our own. Our will and our desires must be broken, reshaped and remolded into the will of God. That's the point when we say with the songwriter, "Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and shape me after thy will. As in thy presence, yielded and still."

Nebuchadnezzar had a great kingdom, but it had clay feet that would be broken by a rock.

It would be replaced by a kingdom of believers were broken by the rock but are now standing on the rock!

What is this rock that is so strong that it can bring down the mighty but build up a mighty nation? What is this little rock that is so small that it could appear insignificant at its beginnings yet grow to cover the entire world?

This little rock superseded the empire of the Babylonians.

This little rock surpassed the empires of the Medes and Persians!

This little rock surpassed the glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome!

This little rock began in Bethlehem and continued to grow in Nazareth

This little rock grew larger has he fed thousands, healed the sick and raised the dead.

This rock is Jesus.

This rock is Jesus, yes he's the one! He's the one who died on Calvary!

He's the one who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He's the one who arose, Early Sunday morning!

This rock is Jesus, the only one!

Be very sure! Be very sure! Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No. 9100-Graduation

Three F's and One A

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 6, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7***

Introduction

What do you think would happen if you brought home a very bad report card? Would the family celebrate or would there be tension in the air? Homer Simpson in the cartoon, "The Simpsons" says his family is a family of underachievers. Whenever his son Bart brings home a "D" the family gives a party and celebrates. Underachieving is the Simpson family tradition. That probably would not happen in any other home. Most families would be upset with students who brought home bad grades, especially if the grades did not reflect the student's best effort.

Thinking about grades brings on nightmares. It is directly related to student stress and parent high blood pressure. Many homes are tense in the aftermath of a report card review.

Consider the boy who received his last set of grades before graduation. He was always a slow kid and sometimes he never got the point. With nine weeks left before graduation he received his grades. He had three-F's and one A. The young man looked at his grades and bowed his head. He asked to meet all of his teachers in a conference at the same time. As he paced the floor he had the look of fear on his face. "My dad can be pretty mean. I've seen him nearly rip a phone book in half when he gets angry. One day I saw him break a two by four with his bear hands; he knows Karate. It's just one more report card before graduation. I thought you should be warned. I'm not trying to scare you or anything, but my dad says, If my grades don't change, even if I'm a senior, somebody's going to get a spanking!"-He still didn't get the point.

For High School seniors there is no day that can bring emotions to a peak like roll call day. Even those who know they have done well in their studies are nervous on roll call day. They want nothing to go wrong. They want it to be official. They want to hear their name called among those who will graduate and receive the reward of their diploma.

Graduation day is exciting, but it won't be as exciting as the day when the saints of God will hear the roll called up yonder! That will be a great day when every believer

will graduate from mortality to immortality. It will be the day when we will put on our robes and tell the story of how we made it over!

As Christians, we look to our graduation day with great hope. The band won't play "Pomp and Circumstance" and neither will there be a stage full of diplomas. But we'll be in the presence of the Lord and will hear him say well done. Until then, we must struggle to make the grade, counting on his grace to give whatever extra points we need to make it through. To get a spiritual passing grade we must keep our faith in tact, never fear or stray from the course and always remember that God is by our side.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes final instructions for his young student Timothy who was about to graduate into full manhood in the Gospel.

This text is written at the close of Paul's long and the lustrous career in the ministry. He traveled the known world three times in missionary journeys. In these journeys he established churches in every part of the known world. As far away as Greece and Asia minor. As close as Jerusalem and Antioch. During the course of his experience Paul learned to depend upon the Lord. In moments of weakness he learned that God's grace is sufficient. He had been jailed once and was falsely accused for the cause of Christ. He was now in his second imprisonment under colder and harsher terms. Now a letter is being written to his young student by the name of Timothy, giving him instructions that will help him as he graduates in his own life experience.

In his first letter to Timothy, he gave him instructions concerning his own moral character. He advised him to be an individual who was of good report, sober in his thinking, and rules well his own house. In his second letter he encourages him to remember that he comes from a faithful household. He recalls the strength and power of Eunice as he reminds his young student that much of the strength, faith, and power that he saw in Eunice he also sees in him. What he sees in Timothy is a natural gift and ability that is lying dormant waiting to be tapped. He encourages him to stir up the gift. This phrase "stir up the gift" is meant to encourage Timothy to use the talents that he has been given to its maximum potential.

In verse seven which is the focus of this text, he encourages Timothy to go forth with boldness without a spirit of fear. His reminder to him is that God has not given us a spirit of the but a spirit of power and of love and of accomplishment. This was an important message to Timothy because he was a young man who would soon be standing on his own. He was a young man who was comfortable standing in the shadows of Paul. He was a young man who was comfortable as long as he was sheltered and secured under the wing of the master teacher. Paul saw himself decreasing and he saw young Timothy increasing. In short, Timothy was about to graduate and this was his baccalaureate sermon.

Paul's message was very simple, go forth but don't go forth with timidity. Go forth, but don't go forth afraid. Go forth, but don't go forth expecting to do anything except succeed.

Three F's

Paul's message to Timothy seemed to contain three F's. These three principles would be a guiding Light to the young graduate and show him the way as he stepped into the world as a man in his own right.

FACE YOUR FEARS: If you are to succeed in life you must learn to face your fears. Everyone has fears. Whether or not you have fears is not question. Whether your fears control you is the question. A brave man is not one who does not have fear, but one who can do the right thing in the face of fear. Young graduates are in the same situation as young Timothy of this text. You have always been in the company of a great teacher whether it is at home or at school. Now you are graduating to another level. There will be fears. It is natural, but don't let your fears control you. A recent study at a prominent university made a startling discovery about how fear controls our actions. In a class, 10 students were selected to participate. Nine knew they were participants, the other did not. Two lines were drawn on a black board, one shorter than the other. Each student was told to identify the shortest line. One by one, each of the nine students did as they were instructed. They picked the short line and said it was the longest. The 10th person knew they had picked the wrong line but since they all seemed very confident in their answer, he also picked the short line as the longest. He was afraid to be different from the rest. Henry David Thoreau challenged a generation of young minds when he told the world that he "marched to the beat of a different drummer." He did not want to do things just because everyone else did it; but listened to a cadence set by a distant conductor. It meant he had to be courageous enough to face his fears and do the right thing.

This may mean refusing to participate in activities that clearly violate your principles.

This may mean supporting that which your mind tells you is best, even if the crowd goes the opposite way.

This may mean reaching inside yourself for an inner strength to face the enemies of life, even though you are afraid.

God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and strength.

Prepare, think it through, seek spiritual guidance, then stick to your guns, come what may!

FORGET YOUR FAILURES: The second principle we should remember is to forget your failures. During your school years there have been many times that you did not succeed. You may not have won election to a student post or a spot on a coveted team. You may have failed or performed poorly on a test or just plain messed up in other ways. If you are going to succeed, expect to fail sometimes, get over it and keep going. Thomas Edison tried dozens of prototypes for the light bulb before he got the right one. The Wright Brothers crashed many times before they finally made their air plane fly. Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron struck out more times than they made hits but they became Home run champions because they kept coming back to the plate. Philippians 3:13 says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth

unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Forgeting failures doesn't mean completely. We should forget the pain, frustration, and the overwhelming spirit of defeat we feel when we fail. After we have done that we should analyze every failure to learn why we failed and devise ourselves a plan of action. Why didn't I do well in school? Is it because I'm dumb? Probably not! Generally the reason lies somewhere between our study habits, home environment and learning atmosphere. All three of those are variables that can be changed. If I try again, changing the variables my result may be different.

Figure out why you failed! Analyze and capitalize! Synthesize then realize!

The Victory of a failure is not that it knocked you down; it's knocking you down so hard that you never get up and try again. That's when failure gets a victory.

There will no doubt be times ahead in which you will fail. When it comes, get up and try again. Keep trying!

When you encounter failure remember the words of Winston Churchill during a commencement address during the middle of World War II. Of all the speeches he gave to graduate this speech is remembered over 60 years later. Mr. Churchill rose to the podium, looked at the graduates and said, "Never give up." He waited about 30 seconds then sat down.

Never Give up!

FIX YOUR FOCUS: One of the hardest things for young graduates to do is stay focused. For years your parents have kept you in focus. They have reminded you to study; stopped you from over obligating yourselves and even selected your friends. They have tried to help you keep your feet on the ground by stirring you away from the fast lane, into a more controlled path. Your parents have stirred you away from activities and associates that detract from your goals. They have kept you in focus. Many who have gone before you quickly lost their focus as soon as they left home. The temptations and freedoms of young adult life took them off the straight and narrow path down a winding road of parties, buddies and a thousand other distractions. It became hard for them to focus. Once out of focus they were unable to see straight. Just as a camera can momentarily focus on a shiny object we wear and jump out of focus, so can a human life. We must keep our eyes on the prize. Paul asked, "Who shall separate me from the love of God?" Then he concluded that nothing would pull him away from his intended goal that was to demonstrate the love of God.

One way to stay focused is to worship regularly. If you get away from regular worship and bible study the very first thing that happens is you get out of focus. When you are out of focus sex, making money, partying or some other activity catches your eye. The next thing you know, you are completely out of focus.

There are some times in your life when you need to be in church the most. You need to be in church between 1 and 17 because during this period you learn the rudiments of life. You need to be in church between 17 and 25 because this is the time when you are tempted to get out of focus the most. You need to be in church from 25 to 50 because these are the difficult years of temptation, frustration as well as opportunity. You need to be in church between 50 and 100 because these are the years

when you need to be anchored in your faith in an unchanging God. Anytime before age 1 and after 100 you can probably afford to miss a week or two of worship and bible study.

Fix your focus and you will never stray.

Always Acknowledge Him

Finally, brothers and sisters, I have give you three F's: Face your fears, Forget your Failures and Fix Your Focus; but there is one final letter, it is "A." In all thy ways "Acknowledge Him" and he will direct your path.

Acknowledging God means more than just saying Lord help me get my diploma. It means in everything you do, ask whether what you do is true to the will of God. If you submit yourself to the will of God, it does not matter what anyone else says or thinks, he will direct your path.

In all thy ways, that means college and technical school!

In all thy ways, that means climbing the career ladder and pursuing a family!

In all thy ways, acknowledge him and he shall direct your path.

Follow your faith, and you can do the impossible!

Follow your faith, and you can reach the unreachable!

ollow your faith, and you can achieve the impossible dream!

That faith has been secured for you by a God who loves you. I know its true because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

That faith has been assured to you by a savior who said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

That faith has been declared to you by a savior who promised us that no weapon formed against you shall prosper as long as you stay in the will of God.

That faith has been proven to you on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!

It was proven with nail scarred hands, a wounded side and a bowed down head!

It was proven Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave!

Face your fears!

Forget your failures!

Fix your Focus!

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path!

No. 9101-Inspiration

My Life Guard

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 13, 2004

SCRIPTURE*: "Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is they keeper: The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." Psalm 121-4-7.*

Introduction

How safe do you feel if you swim in a pool without a life guard? Lifeguards are important people. As the summer approaches many will cool them selves as they swim in pools, ponds, bayous and rivers. Generally, it's a good idea to have a life guard anytime we are swimming in enough water to drown ourselves. In the rural South there are many places that are popular for swimmers, but they are also dangerous. Rivers claim the lives of hundreds each year as persons are caught in currents and dragged away. Bayous, ponds and even backyard pools have claimed their victims as well. It's obvious that those who swim or recreate near or in open water need a life guard.

As a rule, lifeguards are trained in spotting people who are in trouble, dashing to their rescue and reviving them if they have taken in too much water. There was a recent television series called "Baywatch" which focused on the lives of lifeguards on the beaches of California. The television show gave us a glimpse of what life guards do. It was also popular because it showed well built men and gorgeous women running around in swimming suits all day. The essence of Baywatch was that it underscored the importance of lifeguards. They are important people.

Sometimes we live our lives like careless swimmers or those who recklessly play near the water. We can easily get in over our heads, get caught in a current and find ourselves going down for the last time. That's when it's good to know that we have a life guard. Our life guard does not sit on a high chair in the sun or run around in a bathing suit. God is our life guard. He watches over us every day in every way, even when we are not in water over our heads.

As Christians, we are reminded that God is always by our side. He watches and protects us. He doesn't take a break or go to sleep. He is on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He is truly "My Life Guard."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the believer's security in God. The believers are urged to remember the source of their protection and security is in God himself. For Israel, the mountains and hills of Palestine afforded them protection against enemies and a certain sense of security. The Psalmist, pointing to the hills, was not implying that the assurance of every believer is in the literal mountains and hills around them, but in the power of the God who provides the protective environment in which they are able to sleep secure each night.

The God we serve protects us and keeps us continually. The first line of reference is the hills themselves, but beyond that, it is God's hand, moving through the hills that brings our greatest assurances. The hills are symbolic. They represent the way God provides help. They are not the help themselves.

The 121st Psalm presents God as the perpetual protector of the believer. This psalm presents the believers journey as one that is filled with perilous climbs through rocky mountains and hills. The idea that God will not suffer about what to be moved represents the truth that God will not allow us to slip outside of that which he wills. That is to say that he protects us from any slips, falls or attacks from enemies that are not according to his will. No enemy can approach us, or defeat us, unless for some reason it is God's will.

Verse 4 presents us with a reassuring promise that the God who protects us is always on the job. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" is the phrase that is used to describe how God maintains a constant vigil around us, watching us, protecting us, encouraging us, building us, and saving us from dangers seen an unseen. We may sleep but God never takes a break nods or takes his eyes off of us.

The 121st psalm presents God as the believer's body guard, life guard, night watchman and security system. It is through the knowledge that God is always there watching over us that we journey through life confident that we are never alone.

Life Guard Watches Over Us

There are many similarities between the nature of a life guard and the protective nature of God. The similarities help us to understand how about protects us get the same time explains how even with these protection we seem to find ourselves in dangerous situations.

THE LIFEGUARD SITS HIGH: As a general rule the lifeguard sits high enough to see every aspect of the domain of a swimmer. Because he sits high he can see East and West North and South and can observe many swimmers at the same time. The same is true with God. From his throne in heaven God is able to observe all of his creation. He sees everything we do. From his vantage point there is no escape or hiding place. David referred to the hills indicating that God sat high and looked low with a penetrating vision that recorded all activity of the creatures below. Thus, we are reminded that God always sees us. Whether we are driving a car or sitting at home.

Whether we are on the battlefield or relaxing on fishing pond God always sees us. We are never outside of his view.

THE LIFEGUARD CAN SPOT TROUBLE: The lifeguard knows how to spot trouble. At a swimming pool or recreation area the lifeguard will often blow a whistle to warn swimmers who are engaged in dangerous activity. Like playful children in a swimming pool we are not aware at times that what seems to be fun can actually be dangerous. The lifeguard warns us to walk and not run. He warns us not to dive into shallow water or engage in dangerous horseplay such as holding someone underneath the water. His whistle is a warning to us. Sometimes we heed the warning and at other times we ignore what the lifeguard tells us to do. Because the lifeguard sees trouble in our actions, sometimes he puts us out of the pool. God operates the same way in the lives of believers. He often observes the dangerous activity in which we get ourselves involved. He watches as we dive into shallow waters. He sees some activities that we get ourselves involved in which endanger ourselves and our families. He warns us in many ways. Sometimes he warns us in our conscience. Most often he warns us through the preached word. He often sends us signs and signals; but often we ignore them. Sometimes, for our own good, He has to move us out of one arena of life to another. Sometimes, for our own good, he has to remove us from certain situations for time until we learn to follow the rules. That's one reason we have a lifeguard. Not only does he sit high but he also is able to warn us when we are going astray.

THE LIFEGUARD KNOWS WHAT TO DO: The lifeguard knows exactly what to do if we get in trouble. By virtue of his training and experience the lifeguard knows how to throw us a lifeline, reach for us with a pole, or dive in and bring us to the shore. Even the best swimmer can get in trouble. Leg cramps, Charlie horses, and fatigue can cause even good swimmers to sink. The lifeguard knows what to do when a swimmer goes down. He is trained in rescue techniques and is strong enough if necessary to make a leaping dive and to bring in a drowning swimmer. So it is in life. Even the strongest Christian reaches points in life where fatigue, and cramping experiences cause them to go down. These are those moments when we experience of temporary losses of faith, when we question God, or doubt his abilities. These are those moments when we are tempted to stray from the godly path. In such moments the lifeguard knows what to do. Sometimes all that is necessary is for him to tug at our conscience. At other times he has to pull us out of some situations by slamming doors in our faces or causes things to happen to make us change course. Then there are times when the full grace of God has to dive in and gets us when we are in deep and over our heads. He knows what to do!

When there is no life guard

The believer moves daily with the knowledge there is a lifeguard on duty. The person who is outside of the faith, swims even when he sees the sign "No lifeguard on duty, swim at your own risk." It's dangerous to swim without a lifeguard. It means no one is watching. No one who has a trained eye is on duty. No one who will warn us if we

are going to far is around. No one who can pull us out if we go under is available. When we swim in these circumstances, we swim at our own risk.

There are millions today who are trying to live their lives with no spiritual lifeguard on duty. They are living at their own risk!

We don't like it when the lifeguard blows the whistle and tells us to stop one activity or another, but we know it keeps us safe!

We feel comfortable knowing that if something goes wrong that the lifeguard can pull us to safety!

However, those who swim where there are no life guards do so at the risk of losing their lives or injuring themselves. Spiritually, when we operate without our lifeguard, we run the risk of falling into sin and away from the favor of God.

Without a lifeguard we can get involved in a thousand activities that can hurt us. Without a lifeguard we can plunge ourselves into a thousand currents that can pull away from safety.

Without a lifeguard we risk losing heaven!

Life Guards No How to Save Us

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that the Lifeguard knows how to save us when we appear to be lost!

One reason we feel safe when there is a life guard on duty is because we know he knows how to save us.

Even when we have taken in too much water and appear to be breathless, the life guard knows how to revive us.

No matter who we are, there are times when we find ourselves sinking in the sea of life.

Burdened by the cares of life there are many who have given up hope!

Weighted by the frustrations of life there are many who retreated from the faith!

Consumed by the issues of life there are many who have absorbed so much failure, so much misunderstanding, so much hardship that they are sinking to bottom of the depths.

Overcome by the troubles of the world there are many who are overwhelmed by the concerns of everyday life!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Throw out the life line! Throw out the life line, Someone is drifting away! Throw out the life line, Someone is sinking today!"

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that I have a life guard; for like the songwriter, "I was sinking deep in sin, sinking to rise to rise no more, but the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me, now safe am I."

But even the life guard has limitations. These limitations are placed on him by those whom he is charged to save.

It doesn't do any good to have a life guard if we ignore his warnings!

It doesn't do any good to have a life guard if he tells us to stopping running around and we keep on running!

It doesn't do any good to have a life guard if he tells us not to dive in shallow water

or try to swim in water over our heads and we do it anyway!
It doesn't do any good to have a life guard if he tries to throw us a lifeline but we won't grab it or he dives in to save us but we won't let him bring us in!
I know a life guard who sits high and looks low!
I know a life guard who never slumbers or sleeps!
I know a life guard who is trained in the soul saving business!
He's not on Bay Watch but he is on faith watch!
He's watching when I get up in the morning!
He's watching when I go to sleep at night!
His name is Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega!
He is the beginning and the end!
He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9102-Inspiration

Rise and Shine

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 10, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:1-5.***

Introduction

What happens when you get up on the wrong side of the bed? Getting up on the wrong side of the bed is a colloquialism that refers to a person who begins his or her day with a bad attitude. Generally, when we begin a day grumpy, complaining or disinterested, someone will comment, "He got up on the wrong side of the bed today." It has nothing to do with the side of the bed, but it has a whole lot to do with the attitude with which we begin each day.

There is a correlation between the way we begin a day and the way the day progresses. If we begin the day with a frown, it seems that the day frowns on us. If we begin the day with a growl, it seems that the day growls and barks at us. If we begin the day with a smile and a spirit of rejoicing then the whole day, regardless to what happens seems to smile back at us.

When we begin the day without God's presence, either side of the bed is the wrong side. Nothing is right, everyone is wrong, the world is dark and pessimism is the order of the day.

The psalmist tells us how to rise each day. Psalm 118:24 puts it this way, "This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." That's how to rise, no matter what side you arise from. If God gives us another day, it's going to be a good day, so go forth and rejoice and enjoy it to its fullest.

No matter what side of the bed you rise from, people will notice. If you are grumpy, they will notice. If you are cheerful and exuberant, they will notice that too! When they ask why, it gives us the opportunity to answer and tell of the goodness of the Lord.

The spirit that begins the day, rules the day. Many teachers are frustrated when they see students angry at school. Many soon learn that they left home that morning amidst arguments and confusion. Sometimes a boss who has had an especially difficulty time at home comes to work bring his bad day with him. In the same sense, the person who leaves home with a positive spirit, powered by the Holy Ghost is

beaming with enthusiasm as he walks in the door.

The same is true about failures, troubles and setbacks. Since we all face these difficult moments, how we handle them depends upon our attitude. If we face them alone, we see every day as a bad, dark, miserable day filled with more trouble, more bad news, bill collectors, difficulties and failures that seem to come one after the other. When we feel this way, every side of the bed is the wrong side.

But when we put our trust in the Lord, we are able to rise each day and know that though difficulties may come, the Glory of the Lord will shine on each day that we put our trust in him. Psalm 31:1 says, "In thee oh Lord, do I put my trust" That trust gives us the confidence to rise each day confident that God will work it out.

As Christians, we trust God everyday to do the Clint Eastwood thing for us, "Make my day." He does it every time!

Exposition

The Jews were in exile for many years. Isaiah prophesied of their triumphant resurrection after their long period of exile. He used the term "Arise" which means to get up from the dust. Even more, the chapter is prophetic. It looks far beyond their present moment and sees the time when the church of God will rise out of the exile, subjugation and domination of Israel to be a recognized presence among men.

Shine, in this context means "to be enlightened to enlighten." The day of their imminent return to better times was approaching. Yet in their rising they are told to "Shine" not in the context of showing off but in a way that enlightens others to the glory of the Lord.

Darkness covers the earth, thick (gross) darkness upon the people. Those outside of the knowledge of God often see the darkness of current conditions and even get pessimistic about people in general, seeing only their dark side. It is described as a "thick" darkness, implying that no light was shining anywhere. But the glory of the Lord hovers over the people of God in that they continuously see hope even in difficult times because the glory of the Lord shines upon them.

The people of the world, represented by the term "nations" will take note of the power and spirit of believers and will be drawn to God as they witness what he does for his people.

Arise

Today believers must hear the words of this text in the context of their own lives.

DARKNESS: Darkness for Israel was their exile, for individuals it may mean many things. Darkness represent times when we can't see our way or stumble along in confusion. Whole nations can be plunged into darkness as evidenced by the declining world situation around us. Individuals reach dark periods too. It is dark when it is hard to see and there is pitch black darkness when we can't see anything. Those who have lived in the rural have experienced pitch black nights. With no street

lights or other helps, a walk down a country road on a moonless night is pitch black. Sometimes individuals reach a point when life appears "Pitch black" or darkness covers us with a surreal "thickness" that does not show any sign of light.. It's pitch black when all hope is lost. It's pitch black when you decide to give up trying. It's pitch black when you throw in the towel. It's pitch black when you can't see a light at the end of the tunnel. Many marriages are pitch black. Many financial situations have reached pitch black levels. What is our response? Believers have learned that though they often walk through dark periods, it is never pitch black as long as God is on the thrown. Like Motel 6, in dark times, he leaves a light on for us, so we can see our way! An old song by the Mighty Clouds of Joy says, "There's a bright side somewhere!"

ARISE: For Israel the command to arise" was a national call to prepare to move. It has the same meaning for individual believers. Arise means, get up from where you are. Life often knocks us down, but we are encouraged to arise. A great scene from the Movie "Rocky" showed Rocky on the canvass and his corner man shouting "Get up!" With everything hurting and though badly bruised Rocky stands and says "I ain't going down no more." Succeeding in life does not mean that you won't be knocked down, but real success comes when you know how to rebound after being knocked down. The command to rise is personal. It means do not wallow in your failure and drown yourself in anguish and self pity. Get up from where you are! To arise is to gather new strength, just as Samson who lost his strength and his sight, found new strength to do a final great work for the Lord. To arise is to see a new perspective, just as Saul wallowing in the dust of despair on the Damascus Road, arose with a new look on life. As believers, we too can receive a new perspective when we see every situation in light of God's word.

SHINE: Believers must shine. When the Bible encourages us to shine, it does not mean we are to showcase, gloat or brag. We are to shine in the context of the three dimensions of its meaning. To shine is to emit light. Our light is the Lord. The psalmist says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Our confidence in God should radiate from us. It should blossom, bloom and envelope us. Not only emit light but shine also means to reflect light. We are reflectors in the sense that we have no real light of our own, we only reflect the joy that we receive from the Lord. Just as the moon has no real light but only reflects light from the sun, we too should reflect the never yielding light of the Lord every day. To shine also means to be "apparent." That means that the source of our joy, strength and salvation should be obvious. God is our strength and light in darkness and our strong tower. Our speech, actions and daily activities should shine. We are not asked to sparkle or bling, bling, we are asked to shine! If we sparkle then people would look at us and marvel at our accomplishments. If we bling bling, then people will praise our craftiness as the reason for our success. However, we are asked to "rise and shine and give God the glory!!"

His Glory is Over You!

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider what happens when we rise; the world takes notice and the glory of the Lord is seen.

Isaiah makes it clear that after a believer overcomes darkness, rises and shines, that the glory of the Lord is seen by both non-believers and the kings of the earth.

The believer who begins each day trusting in the Lord, is covered by the glory of the Lord! It surrounds us on ever side. The glory of the Lord calls special attention to his miracle working power and causes the skeptics to consider the power of our God.

The believer who rises to face each day with a positive attitude is illuminated by the glory of the Lord. This light from heaven provides a path through the darkest night and a road protection against any malady or ill will that comes against us outside of the will of God.

We face each day with a positive attitude, even if we face dangers, because God is still on the throne!

We face each day with an upbeat spirit, because we God is still in control!

We face each day with a feeling of confidence, because we know that no matter what happens today God is our protector, shield and strength.

Consider the old lady who was trapped in a winter storm in the black of night. As the snow began to build higher, the townspeople began to worry when she was reported missing. The old lady was too weak to move the snow that was covering her. With the little strength that she had remaining she said, "Lord be a fence all around me." The snow covered her completely in the night. However, the townspeople searched through the night. Just before daybreak a townsman spotted yelled to the group that he found the old lady. After they dug her from the snow and warmed her by a fire, the rescuer said, "We never would have found you if you had not thought to hang your flashlight over where you laid." The old woman said, she never hung a flashlight. "But it had to be," said the volunteer "we saw the light shining just over where we found you." The old lady said, "that was no flashlight, that was the glory of the Lord, he is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

The glory of the lord is a beacon light in the middle of our nights!

The glory of the Lord shows us the way when we are lost!

The glory of the Lord brightens our midnights!

The glory of the Lord builds a fence of protection around us. I heard David declare,

"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Isaiah said when God blesses you, "His glory shall be seen upon you!"

In the morning when we rise, if you say thank you Lord for a good night sleep, his glory shall be seen upon you!

In the morning when we step forth in faith, his glory shall be seen upon you!

In the morning when we greet the world with a smile, his glory shall be seen upon you!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I woke up this morning with my mind, staid on Jesus. I'm walking and talking with my mind, staid on Jesus!"

If you are down, arise and shine and give God the glory!

If you have failed, arise and shine and give God the glory!

If you are down in the dumps, arise and shine, and give God the glory!
Glory!
Glory to his name!
Glorify God who sent his only begotten son!
Glorify him who died out on Calvary!
Glory to him who was buried in a borrowed tomb!
But early Sunday morning, after three days nights, I heard a voice from heaven say, “Arise and Shine!”
Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

No. 9103-Anniv.-Homecoming

The Way It Used To Be

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 18, 2004

SCRIPTURE: ***"Thus says the LORD, `I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts, `Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. `And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts, `If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the LORD of hosts. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, `Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.' Zechariah 8:3-8***

Introduction

Do you believe there will never be a time when things will return to the way the used to be? There was once a time when people felt safe, God was supreme, and life was much simpler than it is today. Do you believe such a community atmosphere can exist once again? God says, it's not impossible, in fact, the day is coming when things will be the way the used to be.

Those who have been away from home for a while, often get homesick. They yearn for the place of their past. Those who have never left, look with a nostalgic eye to their past and wonder if it's ever possible to go back to the way we were.

There are many who can remember a quieter more friendlier time. They remember being able to sleep with only the hook on their screen doors latched. They remember times when neighbors were friendly, children were respectful and there was a general feeling of love. They remember a time when churches were filled, the spirit was high and things were at peace. Many look for those times again, only to learn that they are distant memories.

Time marches onward and the past marks time, keeping pace with a steady walk rather than a brisk trot.

Those who have known a time of peace and tranquility yearn for its return. It is invaluable to them. A wise old gentleman retired and purchased a modest home near a junior high school. He spent the first few weeks of his retirement in peace and contentment. Then a new school year began. The very next afternoon three young boys, full of youthful, after-school enthusiasm, came down his street, beating merrily

on every trash can they encountered. The crashing percussion continued day after day, until finally the wise old man decided it was time to take some action.

The next afternoon, he walked out to meet the young percussionists as they banged their way down the street. Stopping them, he said, "You kids are a lot of fun. I like to see you express your exuberance like that. In fact, I use to do the same thing when I was your age. Will you do me a favor? I'll give you each a dollar if you'll promise to come around every day and do your thing." he kids were elated and continued to do a bang-up job on the trashcans.

After a few days, the old-timer greeted the kids again, but this time he had a sad smile on his face. "This recession's really putting a big dent in my income," he told them. "From now on, I'll only be able to pay you 50 cents to beat on the cans."

The noisemakers were obviously displeased, but they did accept his offer and continued their afternoon ruckus. A few days later, the wily retiree approached them again as they drummed their way down the street.

"Look," he said, "I haven't received my Social Security check yet, so I'm not going to be able to give you more than 25 cents. Will that be okay?"

"A lousy quarter?" the drum leader exclaimed. "If you think we're going to waste our time, beating these cans around for a quarter, you're nuts! No way, mister. If you want somebody beat on those cans for you, you do it yourself!!"
And the old man enjoyed peace and serenity for the rest of his days.

Even though many people have become prisoners in their own homes, locked behind dead bolts and padlocks, bars and security systems, the good news is that God is still on the throne. "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." He has promised to restore the joy of our salvation in his own due time.

As Christians, we live in hope that better times can be restored on this earth, with the full knowledge that the God we serve is able to preserve the good of today, while restoring the peace and tranquility of a simpler time.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Zechariah's prophecy that God will re-establish his kingdom on earth.

The text takes place at a point in time after Israel returned to Jerusalem from many years of exile. Although they were back in Jerusalem rebuilding the temple and the city, they were not completely free. Old times had not been restored. They were still vassals of Babylon, still subject to the Gentile nations around them, without much hope for the future. It was a discouraging, depressing and difficult time for the people. Zechariah makes this prophecy in this midst of this circumstance.

The prophecy begins by noting that God "jealously" guards his people and despite their exile he still considers them his people and will not allow evil forces to destroy them completely.

It will be a kingdom that will be like no other, filled with prosperity and peace. This is a messianic prophecy, which looks beyond the present into something that is coming in the future. It is a sign of hope for believers.

God spoke of Jerusalem in the positive. Whereas in the past he spoke of Jerusalem as a harlot that cheated on him with idol gods, he projects that Israel once returned from exile would no longer be considered a harlot but the "City of faith." It was a hard lesson, but the words of the prophecy have been realized. Not once, after Israel returned from exile did it ever worship idol Gods again. It took separation from home and total destruction of everything they held sacred to make them once again a "City of faith."

Verse four notes the social climate that God would restore. It would be an atmosphere of peace and serenity that would contribute to peaceful golden years and happy times.

Verse five makes reference to boys and girls playing happily in the street without worry or fear. An abundance of children is seen as a great sign for the future. If a community has no children its existence is threatened. When they left Israel in exile, death was everywhere. Men, women and children were killed. The future was dark. However, a brighter day is envisioned here. It is a day when children will be playing happily in the street.

Verses six and seven notes how Israel upon returning to Jerusalem and seeing the walls down and destruction everywhere doubted God's promise. It appeared an impossible task. All that they had known was gone. It appeared beyond repair. God told Israel that the promises he makes may seem impossible in light of what they saw, but he warned them to never doubt his power to make good on his word to them. These great truths of the omnipotence of God are repeated throughout scripture. Believers in every generation are reminded never to doubt what God can do.

Although it appeared impossible, from the east to the west, God promised to regather and restore his people to a splendor and grandeur they once knew.

Hope for Difficult Times

This text makes two important points for this generation.

TOUGH TIMES DON'T LAST: Israel endured a multitude of setbacks during its period of exile. It was carried a long ways from home and stripped of its association with all things that were important. The days of exile were tough times. They were depressing times, yet a word came from God that Tough times won't last always; things would return to the way they used to be and better. Modern believers often find ourselves in the same predicament as Israel, facing tough times and enduring difficult moments. It is very easy to consider the condition of our world and become pessimistic. African-Americans experience similarities with the children of Israel in their exile. Like Israel, we have seen the life we once knew taken from us. We see families that were once strong that are now weak. We see men whowere once at the forefront now wittingly taking a backseat.

We see the destruction of our children, often by influences outside of our control, but often by situations we create. We see children now who dress, act and talk like adults. We see a declining quest for excellence in Education and increasing number of about children targeted for social and economic failure. Comedian Bill Cosby has

created a storm of protest around the country recently because he spoke out loud what many people are thinking. He said we are producing a generation of children who are not ready to integrate themselves into the mainstream. Their failure to learn to speak English language correctly, know how to dress correctly, and to acquire necessary Education and skills will doom them to a life of ghetto mediocrity. The Black politicians became angry with Mr. Cosby but millions of parents nodded their heads in agreement. We see moral values that we once held dear degenerating before our eyes. When we see all of this we come to the inevitable conclusion that these are hard times.

In the midst of all this, God sends a word to modern day believers just as he said a word to Israel through the prophet Zechariah. The walls can be rebuilt. The life you knew can be restored. The pride you once had can be rejuvenated. The drive you once demonstrated can once again be seen. Dr. Robert Schuller has a book entitled, "Tough times never last, tough people do." It is a basic truth that every life will experience tough times. It is also a basic truth that tough times don't last always. Those who have been toughened own the tanning racks of time have learned that with God's help they can endure the most difficult time. That's what the old timers meant when they sing the song, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

GOD CAN DO THE IMPOSSIBLE: When God told the Children of Israel that he intended to reverse the difficult times in which they were living, there were many who thought that was impossible. When he said the times would be wonderful again, peace and safety would be returned to the point that old men would sit on their porches and enjoy the day and children would safely play in the neighborhood, many thought that was too marvelous. God asked them the same question that he asks us to day, "Just because it is too marvelous for your imagination, does that mean it is too hard for God?" God's answer to them is the same answer he has for us, don't think that it can't be done because you can't visualize it, believe that it can be done if God wants it done. Nothing is too hard for God. That's the lesson Sara learned when she was informed that although she was approaching 100 years of age she would have a child. She laughed at the prospect. Then God asked, "Is there anything too hard for God?"

Many who have left home and returned are appalled at what they see. All around them they see boarded up buildings, decay, and neglect, and they wonder to themselves whether they will ever know the joy of the time of their youth. They can, with God's help. This was the hope that God restored to Israel and it is the same hope he brings today, that from East to West, he will bring things together again, but we must roll up our sleeves and prepare to make it happen and receive it when it comes.

Better than it used to be

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when God puts it back together, it will be better than it used to be!

Israel hoped to see the same walls rebuilt. It could not envision anything better than the sacred walls of Zion.

Israel hoped to see the same streets, synagogues and rituals restored, it could not imagine anything better than coming into the city for the feasts and enjoying the excitement of Passover and other great celebrations.

Israel's hope only extended to the restoration of what once was.

However, God planned to go much further than simply returning them to the old days, because even the old days were not without their own unique problems and difficulties.

God promised to gather the people from the East to the West and be in their midst. He was not talking about rejuvenating the Old Jerusalem, he was talking about bringing them into a new Jerusalem, that would be better than it used to be!

How can anything be better than the way it used to be? We can't imagine it, but "eye hath not seen" nor can we imagine the good things that God has in store for those who love him!

The way it used to be, folks had clothes that they wore to work during the week, then they had their Sunday clothes. Everybody had Sunday clothes and Sunday Shoes. God's got something better than the way it used to be, because in the new Jerusalem, everyday will be Sunday. It will always be howdy and never good-bye!

The way it used to be, whenever folks got sick, big mama always had a home remedy, Sassafras was the laxative, hot totties when you had a cold. But God has something better than it used to be, because over yonder, in the New Jerusalem, God's going to plant a tree that will bear 12 manner of fruit, whose leaves will be good for the healing of the nation!

The way it used to be, children were told to come in before it gets dark, because it gets dangerous when it gets dark. God's got something better than it used to be, in the new Jerusalem it will never get dark, because the light of the Lord will shine everywhere!

The way it used to be, when someone had a problem friends would gather around them and wipe their tears away. But God's got something better than the way it used to be, because in the new Jerusalem, God shall wipe their tears away!

By and By when the morning comes, we'll see a day that will be better than it used to be!

By and By when the morning comes, we'll enjoy a life eternal, that will be better than it used to be!

By and by when the morning comes, no matter how good it was, we'll enjoy a life that will be better than it used to be!

By and By when the morning comes, when the saints of God are gathering home. We'll tell the story of how we've overcome!

We'll tell the story!

We'll tell the world about Jesus..how he died on Calvary!

And Early Sunday morning, arose from the Grave!

By and By, it will be better than it used to be!

No. 9104-Youth

I May Be Young But I Know

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 25, 2004

SCRIPTURE: O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Psalm 71:17

Introduction

When you were a child, what were you taught about God? Today, there are millions of adults who believe in God. Their first notion of who God is and what is like came from what they heard said at home about God. Those who were fortunate to live in God fearing homes, knew plenty about God even when they were little children. Those who were brought to Sunday School, learned bible scriptures and participated in discussions with their peers, learned much about God. It was not unusual to hear a six or 10 year old able to discuss the attributes of God in an intelligent way, despite their youth. It was a way of saying, "We're young, but we know."

There are many ways that children learn truths about life. Most of those ways do not involve any special classes, expenditures or special considerations. Many learn truths listening to their parents telling them truths and interpreting events in their lives in such a way that they grow in understanding, despite their age.

Parents teach important values to children in many ways. We learn these values so early in life that we literally "know" them before we go to school for the first day.

Tony Brown in his book, "What Mama Taught Me" refers to seven core values that he was taught as a child by his mother. Brown said he was taught:

a) The value of being yourself
b) The value of understanding your purpose
c) The value of being of one race, the human race
d) The value of understanding history
e) The value of being true to yourself
f) The value of living joyfully
g) The value of keeping the faith

These were values that were taught in Brown's home and most other homes in the God fearing African-American community. We were young, but we "knew" these principles like the back of our hands.

When parents do what they should, children learn about God. They know who he is, what he does, what he expects and what to expect of him. They may be little

but they know.

As Christians, we begin to know the Lord when we are young. As we mature we know him increasingly better. Even today, the youth of Christian homes, have one thing in common with other believing youth around the world, and that is they "may be little but they know."

Exposition

David prayed that God would stay with him in his senior years as he did in his youth.

In his youth he was taught by his parents what he should know about God. It was a prerequisite of Jewish households that fathers teach sons about God. David, coming from a God fearing home was taught early what it means to worship and serve God. What David learned helped him immensely through the trials of his young adult life, his ascension to the throne as King of Israel and gave him strength in his old age.

This text shows David in his old age, still remembering what he was taught in his youth about his security with God and the power of God to hold and protect him.

All believers experience the same cycle. We learn about God in our youth. The principles that we learn stay with us, all through our lives.

Taught the fear of God

One of the first truths that children are taught about God is that we we should fear and respect God.

Many can remember grandparents who required children to sit still when it rained or stormed. They would point out the window and acknowledge God's work. In the spring they would point to the flowers and the green grass and associate it with God.

One strange teaching always bothered some; that was the saying that whenever it rained that "God was doing his work." Many children wondered why God's work was only the rain, but never the sunshine, until they heard grandparents say, "What a beautiful day God has made."

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 encourages all believers to "...Fear the Lord...." The idea is to show children the power of the God we serve. He is an awesome and powerful God as evidenced by the earthquakes, darkness, thunder, and lighting on Mount Sinai when Moses was given the Law. That would naturally cause them to "fear" him. But the fear that Moses was really speaking of is that feeling of awe, respect, and reverence one has toward a loving God who offers joy, peace, and eternal life.

This idea of fear is not a matter of trembling and shaking. It is the fear that springs from recognizing that he is God, our Creator, and we are his creation. It is the fear that comes from recognizing that it is he who gives us the very next breath of life on this earth, and as a result we find our hearts filled with love for him and thankfulness to him.

It's the kind of fear and respect that the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "Oh Lord, my God, as I in awesome wonder, consider all the world thy hands have

made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder and marvel at the power thou hast displayed. Then sings my soul, my savior God to thee. How great thou art. How great thou art."

It's what makes even the little children say, "He's got the whole world in his hands!"

When children learn to fear and respect God they accept his majesty and his presence in their lives everyday.

God Loves Me

The second truth that we learn about God as children is that he loves everyone including the little children.

Often Jesus was criticized for taking up so much time with children, who would often surround him listening to what he had to say. Jesus' response to those who wanted to cast children aside was "suffer the children to come unto me and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven." He encouraged adult believers to be as honest and straight forward in their faith as children and they would posses the qualities that would make them inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven.

Every child needs to know that God doesn't just love adults, but he loves little children too. Every parent and grandparent should make it their duty to teach this truth to the children of their family.

The bible teaches that God loves everyone in the world. It's the truth imbedded in the simple song, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

But beyond the fact that Jesus loves the world, every child needs to know that God identifies with them personally, not as a group, but specifically. That's hard to understand. How a God so big, could know my name and address. It's mind boggling to realize that God is so powerful and personal that he can focus on me alone.

When we grasp that idea then we start to understand the power of the children's song, "Yes, Jesus love me. Yes, Jesus love me. Yes Jesus loves me, for the bible tells me so."

Children may be young but they know, Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Depend upon God

Another great truth that ever believer knows about God is that he will provide for their needs.

In our prayers, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." That's a prayer that says we count on God everyday for what we need to survive and thrive in this world. It's a truth that we learn we are children.

In God fearing homes, children have heard grandpa and grandma say, "The Lord will make a way" more times than once. It's a truth they start to learn about the grace

of God. Often we worry about what we have or do not have in life. Our worries reach a point that we cannot sleep at night and we toss and turn. However, some remember what they learned in their youth. God will make a way.

When his disciples had such concerns Jesus told them to look at the natural activity around them. In Matthew 6:25 he said, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Birds go out each day, not knowing what they will find but yet God arranges for them to fall upon what they need for that day. He challenges us to think, "If he will do that for the birds, then he'll do that for me.

That's the truth imbedded in the song, "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come. Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Children may be young, but they know he watches over them.

How to Pray to God

A child who learns how to pray learns a wonderful lesson. There are many adults today who still do not know how to pray.

Prayer is talking to God. Children learn to pray in steps. They begin by learning their "Our Fathers." After that they learn to make their prayers personal by asking God to bless "grandpa and grandma, teacher" and some add the family dog and other children's concerns. In a simple way, children begin to learn that talking to God is easy and simple. Some are taught the children's bedtime prayer.

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

This is a prayer of confidence in God as the ever-present protector of one's life on earth, during death, and into eternity.

As adults face trying times in their lives they remember what they learned in their youth: tell God and he will hear.

That's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer."

Prayer is the key to the kingdom. Faith unlocks the door.

When children are reared in God fearing homes, they may be little, but "they know."

How to Trust in God

A great truth that is taught to every believer is that we should trust in the Lord. David, in Psalm 31:1 said, "In thee oh Lord do I put my trust." It means that we depend on God. It means we count on God. It means we put our confidence in God that he will protect us, guide us and bring us into his perfect will.

Those ideas are taught to us as children. We are taught to do the best that we can in any situation, then afterwards, trust God to do the rest.

A grandfather had spent much of his life teaching his grandchildren great truths about God. One thing he taught them was two words "Let God." He told them to let God work it out. One of his grandchildren formed the letters of "Let God" with blocks. He was proud of the blocks and kept them on his mantle for many years. After the death of his wife, the grandfather was hurt and alone. He would not talk to anyone, not even his grandchildren. He could not shake the bad feeling he had about the loss of his wife. One day when his great-grandchildren came to see him they tried to cheer him up. His favorite grandchild pointed to the words on the blocks and said, "God changed them!" When the grandfather turned around he saw that the letter "D" had fallen to the floor and what remained shook him like a message from heaven."Let go!" Trusting God also means to let go and let God's will be done.

So we sing the song, "I will trust in the Lord, until I die."

Children may be young, but they know what it means to trust in the Lord.

God always forgives

The final truth that children learn is that no matter what they have done, God will forgive them and give them another chance.

The idea of forgiveness is essential to our faith. It is what separates God from false gods of the heathen idol worshipers of the world, that require human sacrifices and mercilessly destroy the ungodly. Our God forgives.

It's an important truth for every person to learn because as we grow to become adults we quickly learn that we make many mistakes, do dumb things and get into loads of trouble. When we are children, we learn that God always forgives us when we tell him we are sorry and stop doing the wrong things.

When we ask forgiveness God takes a spiritual eraser and erases all of the bad things we did and gives us a clean blackboard.

Some people think that's not possible, but little children learn to sing the song, "Only Believe, all things are possible, only believe."

It works that way for children who have made mistakes as well as adults.

What makes the eraser work?

When it comes to sin it is the blood of Christ who died on an old rugged cross and arose from the dead that he might have the power to erase the sins of anyone who asks him forgiveness.

Are you that person?

You may be young, but you can come forth now and say, "I am young, but I know the Lord."

No. 9105-Inspiration

They Considered Not the Miracle of the loaves

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 8, 2004

SCRIPTURE:" For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened." Mark 6:52

Introduction

Have you ever forgotten something you should have known? That's one of those occasions when the answer you sought was known to you, but for some reason escaped you. It was a simple answer, if fact, its simplicity made the fact that you missed it astonishing. Sometimes we dismiss such moments jokingly by saying, "I knew that!" We knew it, but we just could not see it at the time.

Often truths are right in front of our eyes but we can't see them. A young lady has a companion who loves, respects, and admires her but she can't see him. She spends years looking for the perfect love without considering what was before her. What she needs is close by, but she is looking for another. A trusted service provider has solved your service problems over the years successfully and on time, yet when a new service need arrives we scan the yellow pages looking for an expert, without considering what we have trusted in the past in the same situation.

Sometimes we forget or simply ignore what is before us or what has worked for us in the past. We look so hard for answers that we can't see them when they appear. When we finally see what we should have seen all along, we are astonished at ourselves and respond, "I knew that."

That's the way Israel was with God. They constantly sought solutions to perplexing problems by every means except the one that had always proven true for them in the past. In Egypt, God provided special provisions for them in the land of Goshen. In the wilderness he provided food for them for 40 years and clothes that never wore out. Yet, in the promised land, they desperately worried about how they would survive without the daily rain of "manna" and turned to other gods. They didn't consider all that God had done for them in the past. When they were promptly reminded by Joshua and others, their collective response was strikingly similar to, "We knew that."

In a similar sense, we often forget who God is, what he can do and what he can

do for us. In our daily struggles we wrestle with many difficulties, often forgetting the one that has successfully helped us through countless situations in the past. That's why a regular study of the bible keeps God's image before us. In times of trouble we remember that God is a refuge and a source of strength a "very present" help in time of trouble.

After worrying and struggling for so long, we suddenly remember God then conclude in our embarrassment, "I knew that.".

As Christians, we should never forget what God has done for us. Neither should we forget that what he has done before he can and will do it again. We keep his name before us so that we can remember that he is an awesome God who reigns supreme over every situation.

Exposition

This text focuses on a situation in which the disciples worried needlessly about storms and troubles when they forgot the power of the Lord.

After performing a great miracle in which he fed 5,000 people with two fishes and five loaves of bread, the disciples were seen aboard a ship toiling in a storm. Jesus appeared walking on the water. They were amazed at how the wind ceased.

John 6:21 describes this same incident an added a detail the others Gospel writers omitted, " and immediately they were at the land whether they went."

This was not the first time that Jesus had quelled a storm. In Mark 4:39 he came to them in the midst of a storm and spoke to the wind saying, "Peace be still" and the winds ceased. In chapter 6, he simply came on board their ship and the wind ceased.

The disciples were amazed that not only did Jesus walk on the water and quite the storm but they were immediately zipped over the water to their destination.

Their amazement or wonder is explained in verse 52 "for they considered not the miracle of the loaves." Neither did they remember the previous time when he silenced the storm. Their hearts were not focused on the power of God and they forgot, for a moment, what an awesome God they served.

The disciples had been in Christ's presence when he performed miracles in the past. They should not have been surprised when he performed any miraculous act, because they, more than all others, should have known his power and ability.

He provided the bread

The miracle of the loaves was not a singular act. Jesus performed a similar miracle on at least one other occasion. In Matthew 14 He fed the 5,000 people in one day with 12 baskets left over! In Matthew 15, his disciples were worried. They complained that they had 4,000 in the crowd but there were only seven loaves of bread and a few fishes. Jesus took the seven loaves of bread and fishes and blessed them and fed 4,000 for three days, with seven baskets left over. They saw how he repeatedly provided bread for them, but they did not consider what he had done for them in the past.

When we struggle to earn, preserve and manage our daily bread, is it possible that we forget the miracle of the loaves?

A simple life reflection makes it obvious that what we have achieved has been done only because God has provided us with our daily bread. We worry about the light bill, water bill, house note, car note, medical bills and a plethora of other problems. Often we make ourselves sick without considering how these same problems were handled in the past. We prayed and asked God for help and strength. In his own miraculous way he opened doors of opportunity and miraculously created a way for us to keep bread on the table.

In the bible it may have been 5,000 people who miraculously received bread, or a single widow woman whose barrel never ran dry. In either instance God provided the bread that was needed. In our lives, the miracle may not be for 5,000 people but it could very easily be a family of five, or eight, or ten, etc. In the past, God has provided the miracle of loaves for our families repeatedly. In one instance it may have been a job that was provided. In another instance it may have been a loan application that was approved. In yet another instance it may have been a great shopping bonanza that provided what was needed at a price when your means. In hundreds of ways, God has provided the bread for us; yet like the disciples we sometimes worry because we forget "the miracle of the loaves."

Perhaps that's the meaning of Psalm 103:2-5, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

If we are worrying about our bread today, it is because we have forgotten the miracle of the loaves.

The Storm

The disciples were troubled by the storm that was quelled when Jesus came aboard. This was not an isolated event, it had happened before.

In the instance of this text Jesus came in a storm and it ceased. In Mark 4:39 he was asleep below deck on a ship when a storm arose and he questioned their faith as he spoke to the winds and the waves saying, "Peace Be Still."

There are many today who react to storms like the disciples who lost faith. Even though they knew Jesus was on board in Mark, they screamed, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Even though they knew Jesus was close by in Mark 6, they were still intimidated by the storm.

Even today, believers who know what God can do, are often intimidated by the storms that toss them to and fro. Storms are just wind and rain. On other occasions there is thunder and lightning or even winds of hurricane force. We worry whether we will be able to weather this storm.

This storm could be the loss of a job.

This storm could be the sickness of a breadwinner.

This storm could be a family difficulty.

This storm could be a serious marital problem.

This storm could be a financial disaster.

When we worry about the storm, it may be that we have forgotten that we serve a God who can speak to the winds and they will obey his will, or just by his mere presence, storms will disappear.

That's why we love the song that says, "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me."

Walking on Water

The disciples saw Jesus walking on water, but walking on water was not an isolated event. In Matthew 14:26-32 Jesus is shown walking on the water. Peter came to him walking on the water and for a few moments did the impossible, until he stopped to think about it.

When Jesus walked on the water it was, by all interpretations, an impossible feat. It was equally impossible when Peter walked on the water for a few moments. Despite its impossibility the bible record tells us that it happened. They did the impossible!

Life often present us with impossible situations. These are the times when the odds appear stacked against them and there is no way to succeed. Sometimes the situations are economically based.

Money problems worry many people. On any given for some, debts are increasing and income is decreasing. Some have lost jobs or experienced investment losses. Many people think their finances are such a shambles that it is impossible to repair. It's the kind of problem that requires them literally to walk on water to resolve. Troubling Interpersonal Relationships create impossible situations. Many have reached crucial points in their marriages and relationships. Some marriages seem beyond repair. Trying to mend such relationships requires the ability to walk on water.

While we worry about the impossibility of our situations, we forget that with Christ, we can walk on water. We can do the impossible! Even though Peter is known for sinking when he tried to walk on water alone, we often fail to remember that when Christ pulled him from the water, he walked on water, holding to Christ's hand until he returned to the ship.

Are you in an impossible situation? Does it require you to walk on water? With God's help, we have walked on water before. If we despair it's because we have forgotten the miracle that God helped us perform in the past.

God can do it

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember to remember the God of our salvation.

The disciples were astonished because the considered not the miracle of the

loaves. Neither did they remember the miracle of Christ walking on the water. Moreover, they did not remember how he quieted the storm.

Today, we must remember to remember where our blessings come from.

Before we burden ourselves with unnecessary worry, we should remember that we serve an awesome God who reigns and blesses us in many ways.

The disciples saw Jesus operate and thought it was incredible because they forgot what he had done before.

Is it incredible that the those who are sick are healed? Only those who have forgotten how God healed their sicknesses and lifted them from their sick beds are amazed at his healing power!

Is it incredible that those who have failed have been given second chances? Only those who have forgotten how they repeated failed in life but have been restored over and over again are amazed at his spirit of forgiveness.

Is it incredible that the lost find their way again? Only those who have forgotten how they took the wrong paths in life, only to be placed on the right road again are amazed at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Believers are don't worry today, because they remember what he did yesterday.

Somebody remembers that when they were:

WEAK he provided them strength

DOWN he picked them up!

DEFEATED he gave them the victory

DISCOURAGED he restored their hope!

LONELY, he gave them comfort

TROUBLED he gave them peace of mind

Somebody remembers how he came to a little town called Bethlehem

That he died on an old rugged cross!

Somebody remembers that Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

He's still blessing us today, just like he did yesterday!

No.9106-Inspiration

No Shortcuts

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 15, 2004

SCRIPTURE:" And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke 4:3-4.

Introduction

Have you ever taken a short cut? In today's time there is a demand for getting things done fast. To achieve the desired result, many look for short cuts and seem to achieve their goals quicker than others who take the long way around.

Everyone knows of short cuts. Children who walk to school often find short cuts through alleys and across yards. Students in college read the "Cliff Notes" version of novels or watch videos instead of reading the books. Drivers try to avoid traffic by cutting through neighborhoods only to be stopped by buses, trucks and trains that take even longer.

Some short cuts actually cost us more in the long run. The student who copies information takes a short cut to get good grades. In the long run, .the short cuts cost the student, in lost opportunities. Some athletes take steroids and drugs to help them win competitions; they are short cuts that often end in elimination. There are many who want riches quickly, so they take the short cut and steal. There are homebuilders who build homes from inferior materials. Their shortcut often means high profits but losses down the road. Some cooks take shortcuts in the kitchen that often result in failed recipes. Stockbrokers take insider trading shortcuts and often land in trouble with the law. Too often short cuts cost more in pain, suffering and frustration than is gained.

Even though shortcuts often mean sacrificing substance for symbol; despite the risks, shortcuts are still appealing to many.

Consider the man who worked hard all of his life to earn a living. Despite his best efforts he was never able to accumulate anything more than enough to pay the rent and keep his head above water. At the rate he worked it would take him 20 years to save enough money to get the things he wanted. So, when his neighbor left for a vacation he decided he would take a short cut; he'd steal a few of the appliances and things from their home and sell them for extra money he would use to get ahead. Inside the home he saw jewelry, and clothing items that would be valuable. As he began to

bag a few items he heard a voice that said, "Jesus is watching you." He was horrified. Someone saw him. Then the voice yelled again, "Jesus is watching you!" In a panic he turned on the light only to see a talking parrot. He was relieved. "Was that you talking?" the man said, "Sure was!" answered the parrot. "What's you name?" asked the man? "Charlie." Came the answer. "That's a dumb name to give a parrot. What kind of idiot would name a parrot Charlie?" The parrot answered, "The same kind of idiot that would leave all this jewelry and money at home and name that killer pit bull behind you, Jesus!" —The man took a short cut, that didn't pay off.

There are times when taking a shortcut is acceptable even advisable. However, there are some things in life that are too important for shortcuts. We do take shortcuts with out education, careers, our personal relationships, professional training or quality of life. Neither do we take short cuts when it comes to our faith and relationship with God. The bible warns us that the road to destruction is broad and traveled by many, while the road to glory is narrow and traveled by only a few who choose to travel through life on highway 111, despite the appeal of life's short-cuts

As Christians, we are challenged to look for the best roads but to avoid dangerous shortcuts that can lead us to unknown destinations or dead ends. The words of the songwriter are very true, "Follow Jesus; take no chance at getting lost." It may often seem like the long way around, but it the long run is the shortest road to paradise.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus after he had communed with God for forty days. During this time he was tempted to take three short cuts in his life, all of which he turned down.

Those forty days must have been a wonderful experience. He had just come from the baptismal scene which had ended when God declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." So, in the beginning of his ministry, Jesus faced a crucial decision making period in which he had to decide whether to take the long way around or take the short cuts.

The passage shows the devil meeting Jesus at a point in his 40 day fast and meditation. The devil presented Jesus with three temptations: 1) To turn stones into bread and satisfy his human needs and desires 2) To worship the devil and free himself from being plagued by the devilish plots and tricks that would follow him all through his ministry and 3) Throw himself off the side of mountain in the full view of thousands of people below who would witness when God sent angels to catch him before he hit the ground.

All three of the temptations would have jump started Jesus' career with popularity, fame and certain world power. There would be no doubt that he would be the one true Messiah because he would be the one man who could turn stones into bread and be rescued by angels dispatched from heaven.

He could change the world from such a position. He could order governments to follow his rule. He could outlaw hypocrisy and open the floodgates of opportunity for thousands.

The short cut that was presented to him presented him with a quick opportunity

to do many things, but it would not do the one thing he came to do, obey God and carry out his will.

Jesus recognized Satan's three offers for what they were: shortcuts. He refused them and went the long way around. It was a way of sacrifice and pain, but it provided what the world needed, which was salvation.

Road to Success is not quick

The essence of the Christian experience is best demonstrated by the story told by an old preacher by the name of J. Wallace Hampton. It seems that there was a very wealthy man who owned a construction company who was fond of his foreman. He left on a long journey but entrusted the foreman with a large sum of money, a set of plans and instructions to spare no pains or expenses in building this fine luxury home. Whatever it cost in money or time was to be dedicated to this building. The foreman was irritated at the amount of time that this project would take because some of the materials needed would have to be imported from other places. The foreman proceeded to build the house. He used materials that were less than specification. Molding, trimming and finishings were quickly thrown together. Instead of imported gold he used he used imitations. In many areas he used quick to attain inferior materials that helped him save time but was less than acceptable quality. When the owner returned he looked at the house with great pride. Without inspecting it, he called all of his workers together and presented the foreman with the keys to the house. "You have been so faithful to me, that I wanted to reward you with a house built solid, secure and lacking nothing. I give you the keys. The house you built is yours." –The foreman could have had a lavish mansion; instead he had a house made of shortcuts.

So it is with our lives. We often build our lives on shortcuts, even our spiritual lives. Yet there are no shortcuts to building secure lives in Christ.
1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." It indicates that

The Christian life is sometimes stressful and difficult, but it is more precious than gold once achieved.

The Christian life involves three elements for which there are no shortcuts:

NO SHORTCUTS FOR FAITHFUL LIVING: Faithful living is the central part of the Christian life. It means that we live daily trusting in God and walk by faith. There are no short cuts to trusting God. Sara lived most of her life trusting God's promise that she would bear a child. When years passed and she bore no children she decided to take a shortcut, using her maid Haggai as a surrogate. It didn't work out. It caused problems. When she was nearly 100 God's promise was fulfilled, but not before she took a shortcut that nearly ruined her family.

There are no shortcuts when it comes to trusting God. We walk each day by faith.

In matters of finance, family, career opportunities, education, and spiritual strength there is no substitute for trusting the power of God. One songwriter summed up the issue by saying, "Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

NO SHORTCUTS FOR SERVICE: There are many who want to fulfill their obligation to serve God by taking shortcuts. God gives each of us certain gifts that are to be used in his service during our lifetime. Among these gifts which are outlined in 1 Corinthians 12, are: knowledge, faith, healing, wisdom, insight, arts and communication skills, and language skills. Although every member has at least one gift, there are many that have several gifts but choose not to serve. They seem content with shortcuts, one time "show your face" type acts that may or may not be repeated. It means a gift that is expected to be used in kingdom building is being used elsewhere but not in the kingdom building process on a regular basis. Service to God through serving others is time consuming. Helping the poor, the needy, the old and feeble, the young and helpless requires time, energy and money on a regular basis. There are no shortcuts, no quick ways to do it.

NO SHORTCUTS FOR WORSHIP: There are many want to worship God but they want the quick micro-wave version. They desire a quick fix that will last them come back in about two months. They like quick seminars or 1 minute manager type sessions that can result in quick faith. Yet worship and praise are not designed to be quick fixes for worshipper, they are expressions of praise and gratitude for God.
A quick fix worship has the same effect as a high school graduation in which you are marched across the stage hurriedly, given a sheet of paper then pushed off the stage quickly. The quick fix worshipper does not have time for the worship, he or she comes late and leaves early and is usually impatient. Yet there is no quick fix for worship. Although a worship may be televised, that is a quick fix. Although you show up once a month, that is a quick fix that does not build faith. Even though we have heard many songs that the choir sings, they build faith. Even though we have studied many of the Sunday School lessons before, their study builds our faith. Even though we are familiar with many of themes of the pastor's sermon, they strengthen our faith for the lean years. Romans 10:17 reminds us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." There are no shortcuts.

There are no shortcuts to heaven

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that there are no shortcuts to heaven.

We live in a world that proposes shortcuts for everything. No matter what it is, someone has found a shortcut, but there is no shortcut to heaven.

Late night infomercials sell shortcuts to everything. One man has a shortcut to riches in one month after using his plan.

Another has a shortcut to losing weight promising as much as 50 pounds in 50 days. Another sells a machine that offers as shortcut to producing abdominal

muscles and losing fat. Each promises a shortcut to real estate wealth, business success, and physical health in 60 days or less. There are companies that offer college degrees over the internet. All you do is put in your credit card and click whether or not you want a Baccalaureate, Masters or PhD degree.

Yet there is an unseen commercial that is broadcast on channel 666, the devil's channel, 24 hours a day. It offers a shortcut to heaven.

That commercial says, "Get the best of both worlds. Have fun on earth and enjoy the streets of gold in an all expense paid lifetime in glory. With our easy plan you can join a church, rarely participate, rarely give an offering, rarely serve and still walk the streets of heaven. Our plan has been successfully used by millions who have learned the secret to getting blessings without really trying or serving. If you want to join millions who are taking the shortcut to heaven without worship, service or faithful living, call this number right now 1-800-666-6666." At the end of the commercial there are small words that scroll across the screen, "Shortcuts to heaven require a layover in hell and may be hazardous to your eternal life."

There are no short cuts to heaven! The only way to the kingdom of heaven is through faithful service to Jesus Christ. I hear him say in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the father but by me."

When God was ready to save the world, there were no shortcuts. It needed a spotless lamb without sin that would be the eternal sacrifice for the sins of men!-There was no shortcut!

He needed someone who would be willing to bear the horrors of the cross and the humiliation of men. There was no shortcut!

He needed someone who would be willing to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, there was no shortcut!

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

He didn't take a shortcut. He sent him down through 44 generations!

He sent him by way of Bethlehem, Egypt and Nazareth! There were no shortcuts!

Down in the garden, I hear Jesus ask, is there another, shorter, more painless way than the way of the cross? The answer came-there are no shortcuts!

He died on Calvary and stayed in the grave for three long days!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He didn't take a shortcut!

He talked the talk and walked the walked!

He did it all just for me!

No. 9107-Youth

New Seasons are better than Re-Runs

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 22, 2004

SCRIPTURE:"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Introduction

Are you tired of watching re-runs? Broadcast television usually takes the summer off and the airways are bombarded with re-runs of popular shows. Whether the show is "Martin", "CSI" or "Monk" –there are re-runs in the summer. Generally, the producers spend the summer months preparing for the new season with better shows and better, more entertaining versions of old shows. Until the new season begins however, everyone is stuck with re-runs.

Dejavu is a word which closely resembles "rerun." It means that we visited this experience before. When someone sees anti-war protesters on television protesting against the Bush Administration, it looks like a re-run to those who saw Vietnam protesters do the same thing. Some who listen to modern Hip Hop music insist that they are really hearing reruns of James Brown, Roberta Flack, the Isley Brothers and the Temptations. Others who watch political events, economic down turns and plethora of other situations, feel a sense of dejavu-"we've been here before."

As a new school year begins many students will begin a completely new season. There will be many who will improve their grades, act more mature, manage their time more wisely, and grow spiritually during the new year. However, there are others who will not see a new season at all. Beyond the fact that they have a few new clothes and new notebooks, for many students, this school year will be a re-run of last year.

What if last year was not our best year and this year is a re-run? The results will be the same. The only way to have a new season is to do things differently from last year. Our new season may have the same format but with a fresh new storyline, a few new character twists and other changes that will make our "show" an improvement over last year. However, if our study habits are the same and our relationships and personal performance is the same as last year, then we already know how the show will end because it is a rerun—it will end just like last year. No matter how many times you watch a re-run, it always ends the same way. You can stop the tape, play it

backwards, or fast forward, but it will end the same way. The same is true about the school life experience, if we do everything like we did last year, we can do it faster, slower or little backward, but the end will be the same…a re-run.

Ironically, the same is true about our spiritual lives. We won't grow any closer to God if we continue to approach him the same way we have in the past. The best we can get is a re-run, and re-runs end the same way. If we want to draw closer to him then we must do something differently than we did in the past. If we worship the same way, serve the same way, study the same way, or pray the same way—then we get the same results-a re-run.

As Christians, we strive to come closer to God every year. Christian youth should strive to begin a new school year with new enthusiasm and expectations. We should be determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past as we move closer toward our educational and spiritual goals.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the nature of the new life in Christ.

Jewish believers were often confused about the relationship of their new Christian life to their Jewish upbringing. Many viewed Christianity as simply an important addition to their Jewish faith. The believed they could continue their devotion to ritual and Mosaic law and simply add a few Christian components that would make their lives complete.

Paul echoed the teachings of Christ when he told them that the Christian life was a completely new experience, not a addition to their former faith. The old faith, the old allegiance to ritual was no longer meaningful.

In addition, he challenges the old way of life that is based upon appearances rather than true faith. In verse 12 he uses the phrase "glory in appearance" as a way of explaining how the old carnal man related to Christ. It was a matter of superficial living, doing that which appeared real but was actually not real. The emphasis, he noted, should be from the heart, which is the way of the new believer.

Thus, he concludes that any person who is truly a believer of Jesus is a "New creation"- a believer from the inside out rather than the outside in. His life is a brand new episode rather than a re-run of past mistakes, errors, or false notions about life.

What Paul said was simple, "living for Christ" should not be a re-run of our worldly lives with "church" added, but a completely new experience that begins with Christ as the center and God as a guide.

Seasons often end with a cliff Hanger

Today there are many people waiting to see how this next chapter in our lives will unfold. Some youth ended the last school year with a cliff hanger ending, just like the closing episode of a television. A cliff hanger is where the audience is kept in suspense as to the outcome of a traumatic experience. Often they don't learn the outcome of the final episode until they see the beginning of the new season. That's

what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. His experience on the road was filled with trauma. For three days and nights no one knew the outcome until he arose three days later to announce that he would live for Christ. The same was the case with Jonah aboard the ship. When he was thrown overboard, no one knew how the episode would end. It was a cliff hanger. No one knew how it would end until he emerged three days later.

How many youth ended the last school year with a cliff hanging experience that did not clearly indicate what would happen the next year. Some had a bad experience academically. School closed on an academic cliff hanger. Some had a discipline problem and even their tenure in school was questionable. School closed on a disciplinary cliffhanger.

Cliff hangers are dramatic. Cliff hangers mark great turns and shifts in direction.

There are many today who are ready to begin a new season after a cliff hanger ending to the last season. Will there be a change? Will grades improve? Will we be better this year? Last season closed with these questions, now it is time for the new season to begin.

Ratings Determine the life of the show

Why is it that many popular shows are continued into the next year? It's because the shows are supported by sponsors who have their reasons, usually public demand, why they support a particular show. If the sponsor likes the show and it shows positive signs, it is continued and often expanded into the next year. If the show has no prospect of growth or profitability, it is dropped and all the public gets is re-runs.

In a similar sense, every believer has a sponsor, who is the Lord. There are some segments of our show that have very low ratings. The rating company is not the Nielson Company that will conduct an overnight viewer poll, but from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not rate how popular an action is or whether or not the majority of your friends support what you or approve of what you have done. It measures what we do and say by one standard, which is God's law.

How does the Holy Spirit rate our favorite music? What kind of rating would our music videos garner? Would we get a favorable rating for our night activities? Our sinful lifestyle can get us in deep ratings trouble that threaten to pull our "show."

One way that God pulls our "show" is to withdraw his peace. The peace of God comes with his warm embrace. When we knowingly draw low ratings with God, he removes his peace from us. Psalm 95:11 says that those who sin will not "enter into my rest." Peace at home. Peace at school. Peace in our personal lives is one of the results of good "God ratings." In addition, when our ratings drop, we may lose our heavenly sponsor. Jesus speaking to his disciples said in Matthew 7:23 that those who practice sin will hear him say, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Thus, it behooves us to consider what we did in our last season. If it rated low, then we need to seriously consider changing our content before we lose our sponsor.

Every believer knows the futility of trying to succeed without God.

Even though we are smart, we can't pass a single test without God.
Even though we are strong, we can't win a single game without God.
Even though we are popular, we can't achieve a single goal without God.
The songwriter put it this way, "Without God I can do nothing. Without God, I'd surely fail. Without God, my life would be drifting. Like a ship without a sail."
Without God, all we get is re-runs of bad seasons.

A New Season

Finally, brothers and sisters we must resolve to begin a new season, without re-runs of last year.

Unless our last episode was sheer perfection, with no room for improvement, then we don't want a re-run.

Unless our grades were absolutely perfect, we don't want a re-run.

Unless we achieved every goal we imagined without once slipping in our own sight or in the sight of God, we don't want a re-run.

Paul reminds us that if a person is in Christ "Old things are passed away, and all things become new!"

Paul emphasized that beginning anew is more than just having a new appearance, but more importantly it is having a new motivation and direction.

So while we begin the school year with new shoes on our feet, they should mean that we are planning to walk a new walk this year.

While we begin the school year with new pants and dresses, they should mean that we are planning to dress for success and put on the whole armour of God this year.

While we begin with new books, notebooks and book bags, they should mean that we are planning to not only have new ways to carry our books but new ways to learn what's in the books we carry.

Old things are passed away.
School suspensions are passed away!
Less than our best grades are passed away!
Frequent tardies are passed away!
Confrontations with teachers and principals are passed away!
Cigarettes, alcohol and drugs are passed away!
Illicit sex, wild parties and riotous living are passed.
Old things are passed away and all things become new.

The new season should also show evidence of our renewed commitment to continue trusting God and praise his Holy name!

When we put our trust in the Lord he makes our:
-RACE worth running and our BATTLE worth fighting!
-COURSE worth finishing and our FAITH worth keeping!
-DIFFICULTIES worth facing and our BURDENS worth bearing!
-ANXIETIES worth enduring and our TEARS worth shedding!

When we trust in the Lord, we turn dark days into sun shiny days; MIDNIGHTS into noontimes and hard times into good times!

As our new season begin we should continue to praise the Lord.

We should praise the Lord because his:

Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant

Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

We should praise the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he's going to help us to climb!

We should praise the Lord for the bills he's going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job he's going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home he's going to help us to buy!

To guarantee a new season without re-runs millions of dollars are paid to create a new season. As the new season begins, it doesn't happen without a price.

To guarantee us a new season, without re-runs somebody had to pay the price.

The price couldn't be paid in dollars, but only by the ultimate sacrifice.

The song writer said, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain but he washed it white as snow"

Jesus came and died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, guaranteeing my new season!

No. 9108-Inspiration

God of the Valleys and Alleys

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 29, 2004

SCRIPTURE:"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.ÿWho passing through the valley of Baca F257 make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Psalm 84:5-7

Introduction

Have you every been in a dark alley, all by yourself? It doesn't matter whether you have walked through an alley a thousand times, there is still an unsettling feeling about going through a dark alley alone. We don't know what lurks in the darkness. We are nervous about the unknown. We contemplate a plethora of tragedies that could possibly beset us as we walk or drive through an alleys.

There are two words that describe the same situation for different folks. City folks describe a passageway that leads between or behind two buildings or rows of buildings as an "alley." They are usually narrow passage ways often used by garbage trucks or delivery vehicles to collect refuse. They are not usually well kept and are out of sight of the main thoroughfare. City folks are familiar with alleys. They are usually dark, lonely and often they are dangerous. Out of the sight of prying eyes, many tragedies occur in alleys. Distant from help, alleys offer few ways to escape, no place to run. Alleys make us claustrophobic. We feel cornered in alleys. That's why we don't like dark alleys because we know what can happen in them.

Country folk don't see many alleys, but they have many valleys. In many ways a valley can be similar to an alley. A valley is an area of land that lies between two mountains or high regions. Those who travel through valleys are vulnerable to enemies who may lurk unseen in the mountainside. In times of peace and prosperity the valley is a beautiful place. However, in times of peril, attack and storm, the valley is a dangerous place. No one embraces the idea of going through the valley, with all of its shadows, alone.

Sooner or later every life will face either a valley or an alley. Whether it's the immediate tragedies of life posed by poverty, social decay or despair that result in alley experiences, or the deeper, personal life wrenching experiences that rob us of hope and inspiration in valley experiences, sooner or later all of us will have either

a valley or alley experience, both are just as frustrating and dangerous. Either one is difficult to face alone.

As Christians, we are reassured that our God is a God both of the valleys and the alleys. We don't know what evil lurks in the alley or the valley, but if we should travel through them holding to his hand, he will provide for us, bring justice upon anyone who attacks us, and show us the way out.

Exposition

This text focuses on David's confidence that God would bring him before his presence despite traveling through the Valley of Baca.

The temple, built by Solomon, drew worshippers from across the nation. Many walked the long dangerous journey to Zion, braving weather, wild animals, and thieves. For some, the journey took weeks and was a great expense. Some met sickness, misfortune and hardship along the way. It was a difficult way, but they constantly marched forward, by the thousands, with the single purpose of worshipping God at Zion.

Along the way, they cheered themselves singing about the blessedness of being in the presence of God. Verse two notes their "yearning" to be in God's presence. They sang about how their souls "cried out" for the living God. Their desire to make it to Zion was intense. Though they walked several weeks to attend a worship service that occupied the smaller part of one day they resolved in verse 10 that "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." They traveled day by day with their minds focused on the Lord!

The hardships and struggles they encountered along their way is generally described as "passing through the valley of Baca." Whether Baca was a real place or not, it had significant meaning to the pilgrims. Most think that the Valley of Baca refers to the line of Baca-Trees or mulberries that lined the valleys surrounding Jerusalem from any direction. In the heat of the day, travelers would find them for shelter from the sun. In the valley of Baca-Trees they often found wells of water, replenished by the rains that helped strengthen them for their journey. Those who passed through the valley of Baca, were said to have passed through the valley of "weeping," for it was a hard and frustrating pilgrimage that brought many tears. When the pilgrims reached Zion they sang about their victory over the valley as in verse 6: "who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well. The rain also filleth the pools."

There are many "Baca" situations in life.

Just as the pilgrims could not get to Jerusalem without going into the Valley of Baca, modern Christians will find that we can't make it to the kingdom of heaven without encountering our own Valley of Baca. The Valley of Baca is that experience that challenges your faith, shakes your confidence, weakens your spirit, and dashes

your hopes. A valley is a depression. When you go through a valley you begin at a high plane and start going downward until you reach the lowest point. To get out of a valley requires a great commitment, because it is harder to climb up than it is to walk down.

When times get tough and you can't see your way, you have entered the Valley of Baca!

When you look for help but only get hurt, you have entered the valley of Baca!

When you seek pleasure but only get pain, you have entered the valley of Baca!

When you seek satisfaction but only get sorrow, you have entered the valley of Baca!

When you look for hope but only get despair, you have entered the valley of Baca!

We serve a God who is a God on the mountain top, but he is also a God in the valley!

The three Hebrew Boys faced the fiery furnace, in the valley, but they told the world "our God is able to deliver us."

Daniel met ferocious lions in the valley, but remained confident that God could turn lions into kittens.

David met the cold hand of death, in the valley, and resolved "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Life's blind alley situations

At various turns in life we enter blind alley situations. Blind alleys are those circumstances in which we are cornered by no action of our own, but the unfair unjust circumstances of life take us on a path in which we cannot see an escape.

Often we are frustrated by life's blind alleys. They are the circumstances that result in bad things happening to good people. That's the essence of a tragedy, when a bad thing happens to a good person. It's what happened to Job. He was a good man who faced a blind alley situation. Bad things were happening to him repeatedly, death, financial disaster, loss of family and many other problems. There was no place to escape and no place to turn. Yet, even in the blind alley of life, Job resolved to remain faithful to the Lord. The poor widow woman faced a similar blind alley. With no money or resources she did all she knew how to do. Finally she gather two sticks and her last cruz of oil and prepared to make a final cake of bread for herself and her children.

Every believer knows what it's like to face a blind alley situation where you are helpless against powers greater than yourself, defenseless with little room for escape or retreat and your every action is falsely interpreted with often terminal results.

What's your blind alley? Is it a sickness that you cannot overcome?

Is it a financial loss that seems colossal?

Is it an unwarranted attack by enemies upon you or your family?

At first glance, we are frustrated by blind alley situations. Why is it that the just suffer injustice?

Why is it that the good suffer at the hand of the bad?

Why is it that those who labor in the vineyard of life seem to have such a difficult time?

Why doesn't God help the helpless avoid blind alleys?

These are questions we all face when we find ourselves in life's alley looking down the barrel of situations that are being used against us, to an undesirable end. What purpose comes from allowing a believer to wander into a blind alley only to fall into the hands of enemies?

That was the question that the disciples asked in John 9:1-7 when they noticed a blind man who stumbled through the alleys all of his life. They wanted to know the purpose of situation. Was it a family sin that brought this upon him? Did he do something wrong? Jesus answered by saying that the man's entire purpose in life was to provide an opportunity for Christ to do a great work through his circumstance and thus bring salvation to many.

Since each of us has a purpose in life, our blind our alley situation could very well be the one circumstance that God uses to correct wrongs that exist for generations to come. He did it so many times. People received a new view of mentally disabled people when Jesus cured the man who ran wild in cemeteries. They began to see the mentally disabled as human beings. The woman at the well came from a blind alley circumstance, but Christ used her social stigma to show the value of every human being, even those once thought dispensable. Even Lazarus was allowed to die to demonstrate the power of the Lord over life and death situations.

The great preacher Robert Schuler, underwent a sickness that incapacitated him for a while. In the interim he wrote a book by the title, "Life is not fair, but God is good."

That should be our resolve, Life may present us with unjust situations, but God is still good!

When we reach blind alley situations and can't see our way out, we only have one resolve, to "lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and earth."

Rivers run through Valleys

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that rivers run through valleys and all alleys are not dead ends, if we walk with the Lord.

The presence of a river running through a valley reassures a believer that there is a way out, for every river flows somewhere.

Every alley has at least one way in and one way out. Even if a mountain blocks our way, we have the assurance of knowing that we serve a mountain moving God.

So, David in verse seven sends a word of hope to the pilgrims in the valleys and alleys of life. One way or the other, every pilgrim, every believer will appear before God.

Whether we walk through the valleys and alleys of this life or have to be carried through on the wings of Eagles, we shall all be brought before the glorious presence of God.

The great satisfaction of every believer is that no matter how deep the valley or dark the alley, there is always hope.

No matter how difficult the terrain or treacherous the path, there is always hope!

No matter how frustrating the moment or aggravating the circumstance, there is always hope!

No matter how challenging the obstacle or intimidating the foe, there is always hope!

That's why the songwriter declares, "My hope is built on Nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!

We have hope that"

If we stumble and trust in the Lord, he'll help us to stand!

If we are discouraged but trust in the Lord, he'll give us new inspiration!

If we get weak and trust in the Lord, he'll make us strong!

If we get lost and trust in the Lord, he'll help us find our way!

If we find ourselves in the valleys and alleys of despair, he's able to deliver us!

I don't know how long it will be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know...

If Jesus, who gave his blood for us on Calvary..

If Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb..

If Jesus, who arose after three days and nights

If Jesus leads me, through the storm and the rain!

If Jesus leads me, through heat of day and chill of the midnight hour!

If Jesus leads me, through trials and tribulations!

If Jesus leads me...

I shall get home someday!

No. 9109-Funeral

Ushered Into The Presence Of The Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 3, 2004

SCRIPTURE: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8

Introduction

What makes ushers important to the ministry of the church? It's not their uniforms or the fact that they often distribute programs or meet people at their point of need. It's not their stations or the fact that they help make us comfortable. What makes ushers important is that they usher us into the spiritual presence of the Lord. They prepare us, set our mood and position us so that we can fully experience his presence in our worship life.

What ushers do for believers in relation to the regular worship is a precursor to what every believer can expect when it comes time to meet the Lord face to face. That will be a grand day when we are ushered finally into the physical presence of the Lord.

Everyone who comes to worship does not have the same predisposition. Some of us are rather strange. The people they meet at the door must meet even the most eccentric person and usher them into the presence of the Lord.

A certain college student attended the university worship services regular. They called him Kookie Kelly because all Kelly ever wore was a T-Shirt, jeans and he usually wore no shoes. He never bothered anyone, he just had a strange way of doing things. It was not strange to see him come to the university worship services, since he was saved, dressed in what he believed was acceptable. He was surrounded by college students who thought little about his attire.

One day Kelly decided to attend church at the giant church across the street. It was a very well dressed and quite conservative congregation. Kelly, wearing his trademark T shirt and jeans appeared at the front door, where the ushers looked at him with a strange look. Kelly felt proud of himself. He wore a freshly washed and ironed pair of jeans and his favorite T-Shirt was clean and wrinkle free. He even wore shoes that day. The ushers were about to tell him about the church dress code when

Kelly simply walked past them looking for a seat. The church became silent.

All the seats were filled. There were no empty seats in the back, so Kelly walked to the front. It was filled too. So, just as he often did at college worships, he sat on the floor next to the front seat and reverently waited for the worship to begin.

The members were astonished. They were even more astonished when the head usher, an 80 year old man with a serious look on his face and a cane came walking toward Kelly. Everyone expected the worse for the college student. As the head usher walked slowly up the row the church fell silent. All eyes were on the old man as he raised his cane after each step, with his eyes fixed on Kelly. Everyone knew what he was going to say to Kelly. They waited. When the old usher reached Kelly, he slowly laid down his cane and with a great deal of effort sat next to Kelly, smiled and said, "I can't let you be the only one who gets a front row seat." Kelly smiled. He had just been ushered into the presence of the Lord.

As Christians, we know our time on this earth is limited. We look forward to the day when we shall step out of mortality into immortality. When that day comes, it will be the day we will no longer be an usher but will actually be ushered, into the presence of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains how a Christian moves from this life to the presence of the Lord.

Paul describes our present bodies as "Tabernacles" or dwelling places of the spirit. In this life our spirits groan about the discomfort and claustrophobic conditions in which they are forced to live. In this life, our bodies are but shells that contain our spirit before it returns either to God or eternal damnation. The longer we live, the more cramped the living space. Bodies wear, and health fails. Paul says in verse four, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."

Paul's words are encouraging to believers who need to know what happens next. Believers need to know the order of things. We need to know what to expect.
He answers the question, "What happens to a believer when this tabernacle is dissolved?" His answer is brief and concise. When we are absent in the body, or at the moment of our departure, we are instantly taken into the presence of the Lord.

In this body, we walk by faith because we cannot see. We are not fully in his presence, here. Here we live on his promises and dream of being in his presence to realize the fullness of his glory. We approach his presence when we pray, worship or praise him. We are "fully" in his presence when we are able to see him in his fullness. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."

Our Christian life experience prepares us and literally shows us the way to the throne of grace. It is the sum total of that experience that ushers us into the presence of the Lord.

How to be ushered

This text verse is very short. It gives us a real truth: When we are absent from the body, we are present from the Lord. We have to go just a little further to understand how this statement is true for a believer. We need to know how we are instantly transported from this life to the presence of the Lord. We need to know what we need to do to get ready for such a departure. We need to know how to get our feet planted firmly on the ramp and prepared for takeoff! There are a few things we need to make this transition real in our experience.

WE MUST WANT TO BE IN HIS PRESENCE: No matter how experienced the usher, no one can bring a person into the presence of the Lord that does not want to be there. Ushers can open the door, but we must want to enter into the presence of the Lord. There are many who do not want to be in God's presence. We see them every time the saint's gather. They prefer to stand outside and talk, or linger in the bathrooms, kitchen or lobby areas. Many come late so their time in the presence of the Lord will be limited. They clearly don't want to be in the presence of the Lord.

Yet, powerful things happen when we open up and come into his presence. The story is told of the man whose wife grieved over the death of her sister. She took the death very hard and mourned an unusually long time. The husband tried everything to bring her out of her depression. He bought her gifts, roses and even carried her on a two week cruise. None of those things seemed to lift her spirit. One Sunday morning, he opened his bible to the 23rd Psalms. He held the bible with one hand and her hand with the other and read to her. Many months after they sat on their porch and reflected back on that dark period and the wife confessed to her husband, "I really appreciated the roses, gifts and the attention you showed me when my sister died. But when I heard you read the words, "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, though art with me;' you ushered me into the presence of the Lord." Then, my burden was lifted and I saw the light."

Ushers can only open doors. Those on the outside must want to be in the presence of the Lord. True believers want to be in the presence of the Lord because:

-Burdens are lifted in the presence of the Lord.

-Problems are solved in the presence of the Lord!

-Spirits are revived in the presence of the Lord!

Even if we cannot see, we want to be in the presence of the Lord!

Even if we must walk on a walker or move around in a wheel chair we want to be in the presence of the Lord!

Even if doing so is a struggle week after week, we want to be in the presence of the Lord.

WE MUST WANT TO BE INTIMATE WITH HIM: Persons who want to know the Lord, must allow themselves to be intimate with him. When we leave this world and come into his presence, we must be prepared to continue an intimacy that began in this life. What does it mean to be intimate? Intimacy and being in the same room with a person are not one and the same. Intimacy is best described as "In-to-me-see." Those who are intimate allow others to see into their inner being. Those who are

intimate with us know our faults and failures. They are also know our strengths and good points. They know our fears as well as the level of our courage. They know how we think because of "in-to-me-see." That's the way it is with God. When we come into his presence we do not come to watch a choir sing or hear a performance by a preacher. We come to be in the presence of God. He listens as we pray and hears the thoughts of our hearts. We listen as he speaks through the ministry of song and his spoken and written word.

We don't just want to be in the worship, we want to be closer. The songwriter said, "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to the cross where thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

This intimacy we share down here grows so close that we don't even need to be in a church service to talk to him. In the quiet of a nursing home we can talk to him. In the wee hours of the morning when others are sound asleep he can talk to us. No wonder the songwriter declares, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

To be prepared to be in his presence requires spiritual intimacy in this life before we reach the other side.

I am ready

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must be ready to be ushered into the presence of the Lord.

The prophet Elijah sensed that his time was drawing near. He began to walk toward the destination in which he would move from this life into the next. When the time came he moved instantly from this life into the next, aboard a mighty fiery chariot.

Enoch walked with God all of his life, sharing intimate thoughts and dreams. One day at the close of his life, his family looked for him and he was gone. The bible says he "was not" because he walked with God.

When a saint senses that time is growing short, she begins to sing the words of the late Rosemary Clooney's song, "This old house:"

This ole house is afraid of thunder
This ole house is afraid of storms
This ole house just groans and trembles
When the night wind flings its arms
This ole house is gettin' feeble
This old house is needin' paint
Just like her it's tuckered out
But she's a-gettin' ready to meet the saints
Ain't a-gonna need this house no longer
Ain't a-gonna need this house no more
Ain't got time to fix the shingles

Ain't got time to fix the floor
Ain't got time to oil the hinges
Nor to mend the windowpane
Ain't a-gonna need this house no longer
She's a-gettin' ready to meet the saints

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6-7, ". I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"

I am ready!

I have lived the Christian Life for decades. I am ready!

I have confessed my belief in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I am ready!

I have worshipped and praised you when I was young and in my golden years. I am ready!

I have ushered believers into your presence, to glorify for your name, Now I am ready!

I have testified to your goodness and everywhere I have glorified your name. I am ready!

I have told the world that Jesus died on the cross, but he arose from the dead and is alive today

Now, I'm ready!

I'm ready!

I'm ready to be ushered into the presence of the Lord!

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On Sunday August 29, 2004, Sister Dovecenia McDonald took her last breath. Instantly, she was ushered into the presence of the Lord!

No. 9110-Inspiration

The Perfect Storm

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 19, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? Mark 4:37-41

Introduction

Have you ever been through a storm in your life? What was the most memorable? Recently, the entire nation has been glued to television sets listening to reports about the impact of Hurricane Ivan in the Southern portion of the nation. We have seen the gruesome photographs of property damage in the billions of dollars, lives lost and destruction that will take years to repair. We empathized with the people of the Florida, Alabama and other areas that have suffered the impact of these storms that have come with rapidity. Some areas have endured three hurricanes in the same month. Even storm prepared communities that live along the coast seem at their wits end as result of this month's great storms. While there was a great amount of physical devastation, there was very little loss of life due to early warnings and evacuations.

We never really get accustomed to storms. Last year it was Isabel, and Isadore in 2002. In 2001 it was Allison and before that Leslie. Each year the storms seem to get bigger and more destructive. Each year they seem to come with more frequency, if only in our perception.

Of all the hurricanes through the centuries, only one has been called the perfect storm. The perfect storm occurred on Halloween day in 1991. On this day a very strange thing happened. Three different weather elements collided in the aftermath of Hurricane Grace that created one enormous storm that has was unprecedented. Those who study the weather tell us that a high pressure on the edge of a cold front, the remnants of Hurricane Grace and a low pressure system that hung around and didn't move, resulted in a collision of the three that resulted in a great storm in the Atlantic that produced tidal waves 100 feet high. A movie entitled "The Perfect Storm" was a hair raising account of this great storm and the helplessness of the

people who were caught within its grips. The best selling book by Sebastian Junger, upon which the movie was based, gives its readers a sense of what it feels like to be caught up in forces beyond your control or understanding.

We know something about storms, the physical kind and the storms of life.

We know about Hurricane Grace, Andrew, and Ivan but what about the storms of life? Can there be such a thing as a perfect storm?

The perfect storm with respect to the weather is created when all of the conditions are right for a big disaster.

However, the perfect kind of storms to have in our lives are the ones where we enter them with the full knowledge that God is still in control, and that anything that results a part of his perfection and divine will be for our good.

As Christians, we know that the perfect storm in our lives is not based on the intensity of the storm or the amount of damage that is caused, but its perfection is seen as the result of God's perfect and divine will.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Jesus restored peace in the middle of a storm.

Jesus and his disciples were riding in a boat to reach a place of peace and rest from the crowds that followed him. As his disciples, most of whom were able boatsmen, handled the ship Jesus went below deck and went to sleep.

In Palestine, there were two rainy seasons: the early rains of October and the latter rains of March. Between autumn and spring the Jews expected the rain to fall in large quantities and prepared themselves for its coming. The winter rains often brought thunder and lightning, strong winds that toppled houses and caused destruction. On the sea these rains often came quickly and with little warning.

This is the context of this passage. Without warning, a great storm arose and the shipmen became afraid because of the severity of the storm. As the wind and waves increased in intensity many feared for their lives until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. They went to him and found that he was asleep. One cried out "Master, the tempest is raging…carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus awoke, saw the tempest and quieted the storm with the simple words "Peace Be Still." Immediately the storm ceased.

Preparing for Storms

Those who live in storm tossed environs usually prepare for storms. They understand the severity of storms and many have what is necessary to survive. Some may ask, how can a person continue to live in areas plagued by hurricanes and storms? The same question could very well be asked of those who live in artic climates where temperatures drop to 15 and 20 degrees below zero or in desert areas where drought destroys crops and sweltering heat waves turn fertile ground into dust. The tropical islands that lure us to postcard vacations are often plagued with earthquakes,

volcano eruptions and tycoon winds that bring death and destruct. Go north and get the chill and the cold. Go south and get the blistering heat. There is no paradise on this earth, that does not have its share of discomforts.

Likewise, there is no person who can expect to go through this life without encountering one storm or another. Since we know there is a likelihood of storms arising we must be prepared. Some have found it useful to prepare by:

STORING AMPLE SUPPLIES: Veterans of storms know that once a storm hits, certain items are difficult to obtain but necessary, among them are drinking water, food supplies and medicines. Many who live in storm prone areas try to store ample supplies to sustain themselves during storms. We do the same in life; we store up the essentials of faith during calm times to be used during stormy weather. We don't know when stormy weather will come but when it comes we reach into our storehouses for the essentials needed to wait out the storm.

POWER SUPPLIES: In great storms there is an instant power loss. When power is lost everything stops, food spoils, mobility is limited, communication is crippled, and modern life screeches to a sudden crawl. That's why many in storm prone areas maintain personal generators and fuel, designed to provide limited power during storms. Every Christian should know how to get power during and after a storm. The songwriter said, there is power, power, wonder working power in the blood of the lamb. In times of calm we store up power to be used in the storm. How do we store up power? We hear the word of God in times of calmness and it builds our faith. Romans 10:17 says, "Now faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Hearing the word builds faith and we draw on this faith during the stormy periods of our lives, without it we would not be able to survive.

KNOW WHERE TO GO: Sometimes, no matter how much preparation we make the storm is greater than we can handle. That's the way it was with Hurricane Ivan, Andrew and others. No amount of preparation could help them once the winds began to blow. That's when the wise began to evacuate to safe ground. In these communities there are signs posted everywhere designating evacuation routes. They are not necessary for the locals, because they know the way out, but for those who may be new to the area, these signs show them the way to higher ground. In times of storms believers know how to find a refuge. We don't need an evacuation sign. The word of God says, "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble." A refuge is a safe place. Believers know the way to God and constantly lean and trust him to take them to higher ground. Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he said, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land, no high ground I have not found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

The Perfect Storm

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that what makes a storm a perfect storm is the faith that we carry into it; that after the rain, the sun will shine.

That's the way to endure the perfect storm; remember that no matter how destructive or massive the storm, that after the storm, the sun will shine. God is still

on the throne.

The disciples on the ship encountered the perfect storm because any storm is a perfect storm as long as Jesus is on board.

Today storms still break out in our lives, but it's good to have Jesus on board. The storms of life are varied. Storms are sometimes economic. Money problems wreck lives like tidal waves, as relationships crumble and families shatter. However, no matter how fierce the storm, there is still hope as long as Jesus is on board.

When Jesus is on board there is:

-Hope for the hopeless

-Light for darkened paths

-Inspiration for the dispirited

-Encouragement for the discouraged

As long as Jesus is on board, we can call on Jesus and he can speak to the winds and command them to "be still!"

When Jesus speaks to the storm he summons the eye of God to shine upon us. Many people believe that the eye of the storm is the most dangerous part, but in reality, in the eye of a hurricane the wind does not blow, there is a stillness all around.

In the eye of the storm, there is a wall all around those within.

It's a good thing to be in God's protective eye. The songwriter says, "His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Every Christian family knows and expects storms to occur at any given time. We don't pray to have lives without storms, we anticipate storms and prepare to make them perfect storms.

The perfect storm is the family difficult that threatens the life, security and happiness of its members, but all faith remains in tact because each knows that God is still in control

Families that have enjoyed the sunshine of life, also should expect its storms, periods of crises, death, and sadness.

The way we respond when these moments come, transform them into the perfect storm because they reflect our faith that God's love for us has not been diminished by the winds and the wave.

That's when we remember that even though the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls and the rain pours ...after the rain, the sun will shine again.

When the storms of life begin to rage the Christian responds, "My soul is anchored in the Lord" as we trust in his word. That's the perfect storm!

His word reminds us that after the rain, the sun will shine again.

When the rains come, we remember Romans 8:28 that "all things work to the good for them that love God."

When the storms have raged for a long time we become weak; but we are strengthened when we remember that God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" That's the perfect storm!

When the storms come, we remember that even as the winds howl and the waters rise, Romans 8:37 still remains true: "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." That's the perfect storm.

When the storms rise, it is important for every Christian family to have Jesus on board.

When Jesus is on board we are in the perfect storm!

When Jesus is on board, we have the assurance that no matter how rough the storm, the sun will shine again!

It's a perfect storm when it paints a trail of tears as we consider our losses, but we remember that after the rain, the sun will shine!

It's a perfect storm when it burdens our hearts and makes our souls heavy, but we remember that after the rain, the sun will shine.

It's a perfect storm when we remember that, after the storm, crying days will be over!

After the storm, the SON will shine!

When the Son of God shines hope is renewed!

When the Son of God shines faith is revived!

When the Son of God shines Happiness is restored and joy will never end!

The world tried to hide his glory in a storm of protest!

His enemies tried to destroy his majesty by nailing him to an old rugged cross!

His detractors try to bury his omnipotence in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning, after storm....

The SON was shining again!

No. 9011-Inspiration

The Three Bears

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 26, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; 5 For every man shall bear his own burden. 17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Galatians 6:2,5,17.

Introduction

Have you ever been fascinated by fairy tales? Most adults can remember a time when we lived in the world of fairy tales. It was a land of witches, and wicked stepmothers, wolves, grinches and trolls. Our eyes were fascinated as the stories were read to us by our parents or teachers. Sometimes we found it difficult to sleep as we thought of the hideous creatures, conjured in our vast imagination, that we described as demons and little imps that were the characters of every fairy tale.

We have heard a variety of fairy tales. What's your favorite? Snow White? Hansel and Gretel, The Three Little Pigs? Little Red Riding Hood? While they are depicted as children's stories, by today's standards they would be considered inappropriate. An evil queen trying to kill Snow White? Hansel and Gretel putting an old lady in the furnace? Two pigs die and one kills the wolf in revenge! An innocent little girl eaten by a wolf! By today's standards, the fairy tales of old are fading into the dusty corners of book shelves.

Generally, fairy tales have some moral. Sometimes they don't. Such is the case with Robert Soutney's 19th century story of the "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," The story gives the account of a family of bears: Mama, Papa and Baby Bear, whose home was stumbled upon by a little girl by the name of Goldilocks who was lost in the wood. Goldilocks, finds their home empty but eats out of their food, sits in their chairs and sleeps in their beds before dashing out of the window. Though disturbed at her intrusion, the three bears seemed ready to bear it all with understanding, but Goldilocks was gone before they got the chance to say anything other than "there she is…"

Countless versions of the three bears have been told over the decades. Even the one that found baby bear standing in front of judge in a custody battle between Papa Bear and Mama Bear.

The judge asked Baby Bear would he prefer to leave with Papa Bear.

"No sir" said Baby Bear" "He beats me all of the time."

So the judge offered to allow him to stay with Mama Bear.

"No sir. That would be even worse because she beats me more than he does." Said the Baby Bear.

Asked where he would like to go, the Baby Bear said he had an Aunt Bertha in Chicago.

"What makes you think your Aunt Bertha won't beat you like Mama Bear and Papa Bear."

"Well, your honor, "said Baby Bear. "She lives in Chicago and the Chicago Bears don't can't beat anybody!"

So it appears that fairy tales have three bears, baseball has bears and comedians have three bears.

Many people may not have paid it much attention but there are three bears in the bible too! David killed a bear that attacked his father's flock 1 Samuel 17:34-37. Children who made fun of a bald headed preacher were attacked by a bear in 2 Kings 2:24; and Daniel had a vision of a rising powerful nation and depicted it as a bear in Daniel 7:5.

Those are three physical bears, but there are three more bears that point to three great truths about our relationship to God and each other and all three are in the same book of the bible: Galatians chapter 6.

As Christians, we should learn the lesson of the three bears of Galatians 6. They teach us the importance of knowing who we are, accepting responsibility for our actions and help us shoulder their burdens. Together, they tell the bible's story of the three bears.

Exposition

This text presents three ways in which the spirit of Christ is shown in the life of a believer.

The Book of Galatians is part of a set of Epistles written by Paul that address the idea of "Christ in you" or daily living with the spirit of Christ in your life.

Galatians is not a letter written to a single church but is addressed to a number of churches. These were churches begun by Paul when he was on his very first missionary journey, traveling with Barnabas into the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra.

In Lystra, on one occasion, he was stoned and dragged outside the city and left for dead after having first been welcomed and treated as a god. In all these cities he experienced persecution.

Why was he persecuted? Was he a thief or murderer? No. He was persecuted because he promoted the idea that those who are in Christ are different people, who bear the marks of Christ in their own lives and live with a burden to help bear the burdens of others until his return.

The purpose of all of the epistles is to present Christ on a kindergarten level of truth that is easy for us to understand, exactly what it means to be a Christian.

Galatians 6 is a continuation of Galatians 5 in which Paul taught believers about

having the fruit of the spirit. In Galatians 6 he shows us how this spirit of meekness, love, longsuffering, patience and general compassion shows itself when life has invaded our inner sanctums, places of refuge, and disturbed our peace.

Galatians 6 focuses on three ideas that demonstrate one aspect of the Christian attitude. It indicates that we belong to God, are held responsible for our actions and should help others who are struggling trying to shoulder their responsibility.

Paul uses the word "bear" three times in Chapter 6 in verses two, five and 17. These three "bears" paint a simple picture of what it means to be a Christian.

"I" Bear

If we look at the three bears of Galatians 6 in the reverse order of their appearance, we get an easy to understand picture of the Christian life.

Verse 17 says, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Those questioned his loyalty to the cause of Christ were reminded that his life was living testimony that he belonged to God.

Those who know the Lord, usually have a story to tell. When Paul told the Galatians about the marks in his body it was a gentle reminder that he been stoned, beaten and left for dead. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 he paints the picture clearly:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Thus, Paul made it clear that he had earned the right to say, I belong to God, for "I bear" the scars that testify of my sacrifice. He could have easily sung the words of the songwriter, "I belong to God, from the top of my head to the soul of my feet, I belong to God."

There are many today who can say with Paul "I've been there. I bear the marks."

The obligation of every believer is to share a personal testimony that says "I have been where you are going, now let me take you where you have never been."

Someone has tried alcoholism, and overcame it only by the Grace of Jesus. They say, "I bear the mark."

Someone has led a life of crime and survived it only by the power of God. They say, "I bear the mark."

Someone has led a loose sex life and overcame their compulsion only through the blood of Christ. The say, "I bear the mark."

"I bear" is a personal testimony. It confesses that I have not always belonged to God, but I have made many mistakes and suffered for them.

"I bear" is a way of saying "I have paid my dues." I know I am a child of God for he has touched my life and left his mark on me in ways that have changed me forever.

"You bear"

There is a second "bear" in Galatians 6. At verse five we read the words, "For every man shall bear his own burden." While the word bear in verse 17 refers to marks that witness, the word bear in verse five refers to "responsibility." Each person must be responsible for his/her own actions. The old timers put it this way, "Every tub must sit on its own bottom."]

Each believer has to account to God for their own stewardship in this life. 2 Corinthians 5:10 puts it this way, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

For what things are we obligated to bear responsibility?

We must bear responsibility for our sins. Every sin we commit is recorded in God's Holy book. Sins for which we have not repented will come up again. This doesn't include just the biggie size sins but the regular and small size sins as well.

We must bear responsibility for to our families. This is something that no one can do but you. No one else can take the place of parent who reads the bed time story to a child. No one else can take the place of husband or wife who desires quality time with their best friend in the world. No one else can shoulder our responsibility to our family. "You bear" has the responsibility of keeping marriage vows and holding them sacred.

In the same sense "You bear" has a responsibility to God and the church. Each believer bears the responsibility to keep vows that you made to God. Many promised God that if he would give them a job that they would do certain things. "You bear" is held responsible for that promise.

"You bear" responsibility for the vow you made in your hour of need. God expects you to do exactly as you promised. "You bear" the responsibility to develop a quiet time when you and God alone can communicate through prayer, inspirational reading, and personal devotion.

"You bear" the responsibility for doing your part to support the worship, study and ministries of the church.

"You bear" the responsibility to give liberally from the blessings that God has put within your grasp. "You bear" bear the responsibility to pray for the sick and seek the salvation of your kindred and acquaintances.

Because we bear the mark of Christ and belong to him, we also bear the responsibility to demonstrate our faith in our personal behavior, relationship with our family and support of the church.

Let's Bear

While verse 17 uses the word "bear" as a witness and verse five uses it to indicate "responsibility," verse two uses it to indicate "a heavy load."

Verse two says, "2Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

What does it mean to bear another's burden?

I recall an episode from my childhood in which I had a red wagon. I wanted to ride

my friend in the wagon but the other boys in the neighborhood jumped in too, including colossal sized "Genebo." I couldn't pull the wagon. A couple of friends helped by pushing the wagon. Then one of them said to me, "Somebody's got to get out of the wagon." When we took a few boys out, it was easier to pull.

When we take a "Let's bear" attitude we done one of two things or both. We help a friend in need pull a heavy load and find a way to convince to unload unnecessary burdens.

Everyone has a life wagon that we are pulling. If all we had to pull was our personal concerns we could handle that load. However, family problems jump in the wagon, finance problems jump in the wagon, health problems jump in the wagon; then on top of that a few "Genebos" jump in the wagon such as adultery, gambling, alcoholism, crime, drug addiction. When all of that gets in the wagon its heavy to pull.

That's where the third bear comes in, "Let's bear."

"Let's bear" is that small group of Christian friends who we will allow access to our situation. Let's bear is that friend who doesn't mind pushing with you, but is also close enough to you to say, "You have to put down the whiskey bottle." Or "You must stop cheating on your husband", "or "You have a gambling habit, you must seek help," or "You have allowed your business interest to pull you away from God, come back"

Let's bear is the believer who is willing to push and pull with us, but who is also strong enough to us to tell us we need to unload and not care if we get angry.

We are compelled to labor with our friends in the faith when they are carrying heavy loads not of their own choosing. We are also compelled to help friends in the faith who are caught up weaknesses that they do not even comprehend.

"Let's bear" is different from the other bears because "let's bear helps a brother or sister struggling with a load."

"You bear" is different from the other bears because "You bear" places responsibility on each of us for the load we create.

"But I Bear" is even more different because I bear doesn't say, "you bear" but "I bears" says,

"I have found a friend who is all the world to me, his love is ever true. I love to tell how he lifted me and what his grace can do for you."

Saved by his power divine. Saved to new life sublime~

Life now is sweet and my joy is complete for I'm saved! Saved! Saved!

Somebody here today is not just one of the bears, but there is somebody here today who has a "three bears" testimony!

Somebody knows what it means to be "You bear" for they have borne their burdens in the heat of the day!

Somebody knows what it means to be "Let's bear" because they sing, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain."

But then there is somebody who can say, "I bear" witness that our God is able.

I've been down and he has picked up;

I've stumbled but he has put me on my feet again!

I've cried and he'a wiped the tears from my eyes!

I bear witness that if you trust in the Lord and lean not to your own understanding, he will direct your path!

No wonder the songwriter said, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

He is a prayer answering God! He is a burden bearer!

His name is Jesus!

He carried a heavy old cross up Golgotha's hill.

The songwriter asked, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone all the world go free. No there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me!"

He died on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning…

No. 9112-Revival

A Place Called Perfect

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 3, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." 1 Corinthians 13:10

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed of a life in which everything is perfect? Most of us at one time or another have sought the ideal for ourselves and the world around. As young people we dreamed of a perfect world, a perfect family, a perfect school, a perfect church, and generally a perfect life.

As adults, we gradually folded our dreams of the perfect world and tucked them away. Occasionally, a book or a movie revives our thoughts about achieving perfection. The movie, "The Stepford Wives" showed a community with perfect wives, although they were mechanically created. The movie "Pleasantville" showed another perfect community where everyone lived in the perfect television world of the 50's families in black and white.

Our desire for perfection is probably residual. As part of God's perfect creation we naturally desire perfection. When God created the first family he placed them in the perfect paradise! He called that paradise Eden. There, everything was perfect. God designed us to live forever and to prosper in everything that we wanted to do. We were given dominion over all creation and told to go forth and fill the earth. Whatever happened to that place called Perfect? Can did such a place actually exist? Man has searched for "Utopia" which only another name for a place called "Perfect", but it seems that the harder we try to find it, the farther it goes away from us. There can be no place called "Perfect" as long as mankind is absolutely imperfect. There was a place that was perfect. It was a place of no pain, no sorrow, no sickness, no death and no sin. God created the Garden of Eden and put Adam and Eve in that garden in their perfect state of innocence.

It wasn't very long until their perfection and innocence were destroyed and all of mankind has had to suffer the consequences of Adam's rebellion and disobedience, but, don't just blame Adam, for there is not one of us who would not have done the same as he did if we would have been in his position. It is obvious, in the beginning, God wanted man to live in a place called Perfect!

Recently, Walgreen's began a series of commercials that revived our quest for perfection. This is the commercial that announces that a place called "Perfect" has

been found. In that place called "Perfect," there are no dirty clothes or dishes to wash, no alarm clocks to wake up to, no sickness, no pain, no arguments, no bills to pay, nor is there anything that will make life anything less than absolutely perfect. Of course the commercial, reminds us quickly that everyone who hasn't found the place called perfect have found Walgreen's.

Most of us have had to settle for less than perfect because we have failed miserably in our search for perfection.

We have tried looking for the perfect man but then he was either good looking but broke. If he had some money and good looks he didn't know how to treat a woman. Some men have sought the perfect woman but either she was too tall or too short. She rarely had everything necessary to complete the entire picture of what we called the perfect woman.

It is doubtful that many of us live in a place called "Perfect" It is also doubtful that many of us have found the perfect husband, wife, mother, father, sister, brother church or school.

As Christians, we know that the closest we can come to perfection in this life is to draw close to God. True perfection in this life is impossible to achieve. Here, we see through a glass darkly, but one of these days we will come face to face with God's perfection and he'll prepare for us "A place called perfect."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians about the nature of the Christian's struggle to live out the full meaning of the Christian life in this world.

His immediate discussion was about the importance of love, which he said was the greatest of the gifts. This life, he explained is but a prototype of the life to come. We see through a glass darkly in this life, but when we have come into the perfection of Christ we will see everything clearly.

What is perfection? In Greek, the word translated "perfect" often in the New Testament is "teleios." "Teleios" shows up many times in the New Testament, and it almost always is translated "perfect." It almost always means "mature."

Thus, when Matthew 5:8 uses the word "Telios" when it says, "Be ye therefore perfect" it shows Christ commanding disciples to grow in maturity in the faith. Perfection comes with time and experience.

We are not expected to instantly come into the full knowledge of God or to instantly become sinless. We are expected to mature in our relationships, thinking and understanding coming closer to the elusive goal of perfection. If we should come up short in that maturing process, we fully expect the grace of God to cover all the ground that we left uncovered.

You don't have to be perfect

You don't have to be perfect to live in the place called perfect, but it doesn't hurt

to try. One of the fallacies circulating about salvation is the belief that coming to Christ requires us to achieve perfection first. Many are reluctant to become Christians because they know that there are many issues in their lives they feel must be worked out first. The issues are varied. They often include alcoholism, adultery, drug abuse, or criminal activity. They are not the only items on the list, but most of us believe that the list of imperfections must be perfected before we can honestly consider becoming a Christians.

This is flawed conception because we are unable to perfect ourselves, even though perfection is our goal. In church circles, we call it "sanctification." Sanctification is the process of becoming perfect. The old timers call it "working out your soul's salvation." In essence, we accept Christ in our present state and then begin working to achieve perfect. Little by little we overcome first one imperfection then another, getting closer to the idea. Any believer who has been loyal to the faith for a while can testify that while they are not what they want to be, they are much stronger in the faith now than they were when the first came to Christ.

If I'm not perfect how do I get there?

If we are not perfect, how can we expect to get to the place called perfect? If God is perfect and God is looking for people to take to a perfect place, how can we really expect to go to the place called perfect if we have so many imperfections. While God is perfect, he is not looking for perfect people. He is looking for people who are willing to do their best to achieve perfect and trust him to make up the difference. This idea of "taking up our slack" is called "grace."

Some of the strongest and most effective voices for God have been people who were imperfect, but were made perfect by the "grace" of God. In Genesis 6:8, we read that Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." When God decided to flood the world and destroy everything left living on the face of the earth, he spared Noah. Why? It wasn't because Noah was perfect. If we know anything about Noah we know that he had a bad habit of getting drunk. That fact alone lets us know that Noah was not perfect. While he was not perfect, Noah found grace in the sight of God. Samson had a lot of strength, but he wasn't perfect either. He had a love for strange, ungodly women. Yet God used him to help deliver Israel. Peter was a bold man but he denied Christ three times. He certainly wasn't perfect. Paul, by his own confession, was far from perfect. In 1 Timothy 11:15, "This is the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." God can use imperfect people to achieve his perfect will. You don't have to be perfect to begin our journey to the place called perfect.

How can I be made perfect?

You may not be perfect, but you can be made perfect. There is a slight difference in the meaning of the phrases "made perfect" and "make perfect." The difference explains how the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life. When we think of "make

perfect" we tend to apply this phrase to ourselves. We think we should make ourselves perfect before we come to Christ. Repeatedly, however the scriptures refer to being "made perfect." For example, when Jesus prayed his last prayer In John 17:23, he said he had completed his mission to have them "made perfect." In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Paul asked for the thorn in his side which made him imperfect to be removed, but God answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee and my strength is made perfect in weakness."

To be made perfect is to be justified. For every sin we commit, grace balances the scale. For every wrong, Grace helps make us right with God.

This is not a license for us to keep doing wrong things, it is what is given to every believer, automatically who believes in Christ. Those who are trying to do right have the knowledge of knowing that even if they don't get everything right, that God understands and will take care of the rest. We are not perfect, but his grace fills in the blank spaces and makes us perfect in the sight of God.

How do you start the process? Romans 10:9 spells out how it happens. First you believe in Jesus Christ as the son of God and that God raised him from the dead. Tell that belief to someone else in a church service or otherwise. If you do this, you are still a person who is not perfect, but your new trust in God starts a process that from that day forward, changes things so that you are "made perfect" in the sight of God.

A Perfect Place for Made Perfect People

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when it's all over, God has prepared a perfect place for all of the people he has made perfect with his blood.

There may not be a place in this world populated by perfect people, but there is a place called perfect.

Abraham traveled all of his life, looking for a place called perfect, it was a city not made with hands!

Elijah received a one way ticket to the place called perfect!

In this place called perfect:

—There are no wars because there is only peace, in the place called perfect!

—There is no hatred, because there is only love, in the place called perfect

—There is no sadness, because there is only gladness, in the place called perfect!

—There is no weakness, because there is only strength in the place called perfect!

—There is no death, because there is only life in the place called perfect!

I know there is a place called perfect because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

The place called perfect is a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

It will have perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

It will have perfect lighting, because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

It will have perfect medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go the place called perfect!

If you want to go with us it begins when you believe in God who had a perfect son!

If you believe he lived a perfect life and died a perfect death on an old rugged cross!

If you believe he's alive because he arose early Sunday morning; then

Come and go with me, to my father's house!

There will be perfect peace!

Perfect joy!

Perfect happiness!

In my father's house!

No. 9114-Anniv.-Church

Behold the Tabernacle of God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 17, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "And I heard a great voice from heaven saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and he be their God." Revelation 21:3

Introduction

Have you ever moved into a new house or apartment? It's a little unsettling to move. Even though we look forward to our final destination, moving itself is a pain. Not many people go through their entire lives without moving at least once. For some, moving has become such a regular phenomenon that they keep their bags packed, and very few items are ever taken from their storage boxes. There is a sense of permanence and finality that comes with being one place, at least, where we won't have to move again

If moving is unsettling, then regular changes of roommates can also be unsettling. College students learn quickly about room mates. Sometimes we get good roommates who thoughtful, clean and orderly. Then sometimes we get roommates from hell. Those are the ones who are everything but orderly. Forrest Gump's rule also applies to roommates, "Roommates are like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get."

It would be great if we could live in one great place, with a roommate straight from heaven! Such a place would be a Godsend. It would be great!

Suppose I told that God has been trying to live with us since the beginning of time but we have either, put him out, shut him out or have lived so badly that we were like roommates from hell? That is the whole story of the bible in a nutshell. God has been trying to live with us in many ways but often we have turned him away. In some cases, he moved in and we moved out. He came close and we moved away. In other cases we just moved altogether. 1 Chronicles 17:5 says, God had no real place to live with us and he moved from "tent to tent and from one tabernacle to another."

We are encouraged however, because while the bible shows us the many ways that God has tried to live with us and in us, it ultimately shows us that one day he will finally live with those who want to be his people and he will be their God.

As Christians, we look forward to the day that God is not only around us, and near us, but that will be with us through all eternity. Our hearts will jump with joy when we hear the angels proclaim, "Behold the Tabernacle of God.!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the John's revelation of the future state of the church and the relationship of all believers to God.

John painted a picture of the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. This is the beautiful home of the saints, the final destination of the church and millions of believers. They will be in the presence of God.

A voice will announce (v3) some very important words, "Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God." It is a statement of finality. It suggests the end of a long struggle to achieve oneness!

The word "Tabernacle" is used in verse three. It means "Dwelling Place of God" in scripture. It is the place where God lives. It is the place where he and his people meet each other. The name has its origins in the Old Testament. God instructed Moses to build a tent in which he could be present with the people in their journey from slavery to freedom. Thus, he commanded Moses in Exodus 25:8 that the people should build him a sanctuary "so that I may dwell among them." In verse nine God refers to this dwelling place as a "Tabernacle." Moses constructed it according to seven principles God laid out.

It was to be constructed and maintained by offerings from the people (Exodus 25:2)

It was to be constructed by people who God would give the wisdom to guide its construction (Exodus 36:1-8)

It was to be constructed in every detail by the divine pattern (Exodus 25:40)

Exodus 39:32 says Moses finished the work. Although it was a meticulously constructed tent with lavish trimmings, people still could not get close to God as he wanted them to be. It had beauty and grandeur. It indicated that he was God, but it did not indicate that the people who came near it were his people.

John saw a different Tabernacle or dwelling. He saw God finally dwelling with his people in a way that he would be their God and they would be his people. What John saw was a picture of the great day when God himself comes to dwell among men in a mighty and powerful way that will bring joy without end!

When God Moved In

God has tried many ways to dwell with mankind. In each instance we have either moved away from him or shut him out completely.

IN THE GARDEN: In the Garden of Eden God dwelt with Adam and Eve in perfect harmony. It was a heavenly arrangement in which Adam and Eve had everything they could imagine at their disposal. God dwelled with them until a roommate from hell moved in, in the person of Satan himself. Satan came between the lovely arrangement between God and mankind and it resulted in man being put out of the garden. In a

similar way many of us have enjoyed heavenly arrangements until we became influenced by third parties that came between us and God. Whether it was a roommate from hell or a hellish influence like the pursuit of money, power or glory, it separated us from God. Outside of the garden Adam and Eve found themselves living a decent life but they were never again as close to God as they were in the Garden.

The remainder of the bible consists of a description of God's efforts to make it possible for man and God to live together once again.

IN THE TABERNACLE: The tent God ordered Moses to build was called a tabernacle. Exodus 40:33-35 says when the Tabernacle was completed God's presence entered the tent and stayed there. God's tent was at the center of the camp of nearly a million Israelites. His tent was at the center of all of their movements. In this tent was the 10 commandments, the Ark of the Covenant that was covered by the Mercy seat, represented along with other instruments represented the presence of God. It was holy ground and reminded the people that as long as God was the center of their actions he would dwell with them. Even in our history, the "tabernacle" has been the century of the life of the Black community. The old churches were fashioned after that tent tabernacle, with rails that separated the people from the holy places, anointed "communion" tables that were considered sacred and special places where we meet God and sanctuaries in which we respected enough to watch our speech, put on our best attire and be at our best behavior because we were in the place we expected to encounter the presence of God.

God promised to dwell with Israel only if the people kept his covenant to the letter. They often failed and when they did, God moved out and left them alone. Many of us have learned painfully what it is like to have God to move out on us. Like Samson who lost his great strength when God left him, we too know the feeling of defeat that comes when God moves out. He moves out when we bring another roommate in. He moves out when we fail to keep our word to him, neglect the worship, withhold our offerings and generally approach him with a very relaxed attitude.

IN THE TEMPLE: From the time of the wilderness journey until they reached the Promised Land God moved from tent to tent with no permanent place, until Solomon built the temple. The temple was a permanent version of the tabernacle. It had the same layout and design, the same furniture and the same function. Like the Tabernacle, when the temple was dedicated the presence of the Lord entered into it. Yet, even in all of its splendor the temple was a place where God lived, but not a place where he dwelled with man; there were no seats for men to sit and all worshippers had to stand outdoors. Even with such a great temple the people continued to sin causing God to send prophets to warn them that he planned to move out and leave them to their own evil devices. When God moved out, he took the fence of protection he had built around them away. The Assyrians destroyed the people from the North and the Babylonians destroyed them from South. When God stopped dwelling with them, everything they enjoyed crumbled around them.

It is the same today. If God leaves us our whole world would crumble. The semblance of prosperity we enjoy, the reasonable health that favors us and the good fortune that seems to smile on us from time to time will all crumble around us without

if God does not dwell with us.

IN THE BODY OF HIS SON: The temple or tabernacle built by Solomon was destroyed, but Herod tried to build it back. It looked the same but the presence of God never re-entered that building as in the past. God did a remarkable thing by coming to dwell with men in body of his son. John 1:1 says the "Word was God," and in verse 14 we are told that this "Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." This reference to the coming of Christ uses a rare and unique word when it says that He "dwelt among us." It is the specific word that means to dwell in a tent. The New Testament portrays Jesus as the embodiment of the spiritual tabernacle; God living among men. Through His death on the cross Jesus offered a sacrifice that really would allow man and God to be reconciled. In His death the veil covering of the most holy place in the physical temple was torn apart, Matthew 27:51 For this reason we no longer approach God in a physical tent or temple, but through the temple of the body of Jesus Christ. God tried to dwell with us in the body of his Son but the world rejected him and crucified him.

IN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS: In a tent, in a temple or even the in the body of his own son, the people have pushed God always. God has gone one step further. Now he attempts to dwell with men by making each individual a sanctuary. In essence, our bodies are viewed as the "temples" of the Holy Ghost. In essence we don't come to the tabernacle we "are" the "New Tabernacle" wherever we go. Because wherever we go our bodies are living temples of the Holy Ghost. That's why Christians are careful about where they go and the kinds of activities in which they participate because where they go, the church goes. God dwells with his people in the church, which is the spiritual body of Christ.

Behold the Tabernacle of God

Finally, brothers and sisters we rejoice in the knowledge that John gives, that when the new Jerusalem comes the angel will declare, "Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men!"

God tried dwelling with Adam and Eve in the Garden and they pushed him out and he put them out.

God tried dwelling with Israel in a tent and the people pushed him away.

God tried dwelling with his people in Solomon's temple and the people would not come near!

God tried to dwell with us in the person of his own, soul and the people crucified him.

God has tried dwelling with many of us on a personal basis, but we have turned out to be a roommate from hell.

But John saw a day coming when God would finally work things out.

It would be a day when the people of God would be true sanctuaries and worthy vessels.

That will be the day when we will have come full circle from Garden of End to the

tree of life and the river flowing from the throne of grace.

Behold the Tabernacle of God, people who have come through the storm and the rain!

Behold the Tabernacle of God, people the mountains and valleys!

Behold the Tabernacle of God, people who have seen the lighting flash and heard the thunder roll and felt sins breakers dashing against their souls!

Behold the Tabernacle of God, people who been through the fire and been through the flood, but have come forth as pure gold!

Behold the Tabernacle of God, people of are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ and tell everybody every where they go about the goodness of the Lord!

Behold the Tabernacle of God; they have been washed in the blood of the lamb!

Who is the lamb?

His name is Jesus!

The Lamb of God, who died out on Calvary..

But early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!

Behold a "New Tabernacle" that will dwell with God through all eternity!

No. 9115-Revival

The Suit Won't Make You Fly

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 24, 2004

SCRIPTURE: Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again. 2 Corinthians 10:7

Introduction

Is it possible to put on a costume and magically assume the qualities it represents? During this season of the year there will be many families that will purchase costumes for their children to participate in one of many fall festivals. Wearing the costumes, for a few hours, youth pretend to be someone or something else. There will be many little devils walking the streets in a few days as well as a few angels. Wearing costumes is a fun pastime that we enjoy all year round. Often children dress up like parents. Actors on the stage and screen often wear costumes too. There is something fascinating about putting on your favorite costume and becoming something that we are not.

While the fall is costume time, there are many who wear costumes as a part of their everyday life. The staff at Burger King and McDonalds wear costumes. Doctors, nurses and aides wear costumes. Soldiers wear costumes. The bus driver wears a costume as well as the school crossing guard. Everyone, it seems has a costume.

Little children are often confused about costumes. They sometimes believe that it's the costume that makes the person. So anyone who wears a chef's hat is a cook and anyone who wears the same brand of shoe as Knobe Bryant of Shaq is guaranteed to become a famous basketball player. We associate many of our heroes with their costumes, including great wrestlers such as the Hollywood Hulk Hogan, the Rock and Sting. We associate the costume with person and pretty soon the costume itself takes on a life of its own as we attribute the inanimate little piece of cloth with supernatural powers.

It calls to mind in the early years of the "Superman" television show how many children bought Superman costumes thinking the costume would make them fly. In 1953, the children who saw Superman fly actually began jumping out of windows themselves trying to fly. There was a national panic as children across the nation were not aware of movie special effects. They saw Clark Kent run for a phone booth and then change into a red and blue suit with an "S" on his chest. Once he was wearing

the costume Clark Kent seemed to become Superman. The concluded that it was the suit that made Superman fly.

Even the TV show didn't go that far. It wasn't the costume that made superman fly, but where he was from, Krypton. He could fly with or without the costume. There was an unseen force that kept him in air, leaping tall buildings with a single bound, running faster than a speeding bullet and stronger than a locomotive. It certainly wasn't the suit.

A soldier wears a uniform, but is it the uniform that makes him a soldier?

A doctor often wears a surgical gown and mask, but is it the gown and mask that make him a doctor?

A lawyer wears a suit and tie and carries a brief case, but is it the suit, tie and briefcase that make him an attorney?

It's the training and discipline that makes the soldier. It's the years of study and internship that makes the doctor.

It's thorough knowledge of the law and debate that makes the lawyer. It's not the clothes they wear,

Just as the preacher could preach without his robe, a choir member can sing without a robe and an usher can greet people without a uniform. We can even attend church without wearing "church clothes." Remember them? That was the time when we wore church shoes, church dress, and our "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes. Somehow we felt that these special clothes and shoes made us special, at least for an hour or two on Sunday morning.

As Christians, we know that while we may enjoy dressing up for worship or for church activities, there is no salvation in what we wear. Man sees our outward appearance, but God sees our heart. There is nothing wrong with looking well and dressing well for the pleasure of others, but what is more important is that God is pleased with what he sees. Our real power is not from the suits of clothing that we wear, but from lives that are clothed in the power of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the nature of his authority as a witness for Christ.

While Paul established many churches in his three missionary journeys, he regularly had to defend himself with believers in Corinth. In Corinth there were those who were highly critical of him because he lacked the appearance of an Apostle. There were others among the Corinthian church who had the look and feel that the church expected of an apostle. They had the words, the sound, and the personal demeanor. They claimed Christ as theirs in a boastful way that often forgot that rather than owning Christ, they were owned by Christ, empowered by him and controlled through him.

By all standards Paul did not look the part of Apostle. He had a physical malady that may him hard to look upon. He often asked God to remove this "thorn" from his side. His competitors at Corinth wore the right clothes and talked the right talk but

did not have the one thing that Paul possessed, the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Paul's critics claimed that he wrote strong and powerful letters (v10) but in present his appearance is horrible and his speech is terse.

In this Paul reminded them a man might appear to be learned in many subjects, but yet not be learned in Christ. He may have a wealth of experience but have no experience at all with Christ. He may be able to look the part and dress the part of a believer but in actuality, not be able to actually live the part from day to day.

Paul's critics boasted of their oratorical skills and other gifts as a way of cornering the market with respect to faith. While they boasted of their abilities, Paul reminded them in verse 7 If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. In essence he said boast a special claim on the Lord, should remember it is Christ who has a claim on us, not the other way around. We can claim no gift, power, talent or ability aside from the anointing of the Holy Spirit who gives us the ability to do anything. Without God nothing we have succeeds. He is the source.

Answering his critics therefore, Paul lays out a critical truth. Believers should not be overly consumed with appearances. Everyone who looks well, dresses well and speaks well may not necessarily have the spirit of God in them. At the same time, everyone who does not have the same appearance or costume of another cannot be judged as unlearned or incapable. The power is not in the appearance, it is in the anointing that comes from God. Those who have been blessed in this way by God don't need the "suit" to assume their roles, they can function with or without the appearances that society expects.

Costumes Are Deceiving

Often the costumes we wear are deceiving. They allow us to appear to be what we are not.

CHURCH MEMBER COSTUMES: There are many who wear church member costumes. They are complete with everything associated with being a church member. We wear the right clothes and even carry a bible. Before we leave we want to make sure that we have on the right costume. Church dresses, church shoes, and everything make us look good are part of the costume. While there is nothing wrong with dressing nice, every believer should be careful to put on the whole armor of God. Ephesians 6:11 encourages every believer to "Put on the whole amour of God." When a believer is fully dressed, he or she is dressed on both the inside and the outside. The whole amour of God refers to qualities that are not seen with the naked eye. Beginning at verse 18 Paul told the Ephesians not to forget truth, righteousness, preparation of the Gospel of peace, faith and salvation. At verse 18 he tacked on one final aspect of the believer's costume, which is prayer. There are many who put all of their emphasis on the costume, without thinking about what's beneath the costume.

A Christian's costume is not seen with the naked eye. He or she has a power source that empowers and lifts spirits, forgets and strengthens in times of weakness.

What makes a believer strong is not whether or not he wears designer clothes but whether or not he begins each day prayed up, determined to walk by faith, doing the right things and resist evil. What makes her powerful is the anointing of the Lord upon her life as she walks out the door, regardless to the value of her clothing. The Power is not in what the world sees after you walk out your door, but what went on inside you, before you walked out!

Don't look to dress like a Christian, be a Christian. It's icing on the cake when you can look good on the inside and the outside at the same time. That's when you know that it wasn't the suit of clothes you wore that brought your blessings but the Grace of God.

When a believer overcomes an obstacle, it wasn't because of the suit; it was because of the power of God.

When a believer triumphs in the midst of adversity, it's not because of the suit he wears on Sunday, it's because the hand of God has lifted him from his trouble.

When a believer receives a promotion on the job, a business opportunity, it's not because of what they know, where they graduated from college or their business contacts; that's what the world sees, they know that the real secret of their success lies in the power of God.

The power is not in the costume, but in a God who anoints us daily for his service.

The suit won't make you fly!

SCHOOL CLOTHES: Most students have what we call "school clothes." The emphasis upon wearing designer clothing to school is so high that many school systems around the nation have tried to switch to school uniforms as a way of shifting the emphasis away from clothing. That fell through when the national designers started designing school uniforms. Somehow, we get the notion early that what we wear has something to do with what's on the inside, especially as it relates to price.

Students spend more time selecting and their clothes than they do studying as if the clothing will make the difference between a passing grade and failing grade.

If there could be a connection between dressing well and grades, then most of the average high school would be filled with honor students

Too many students worry about the hair on their heads without worrying about what's in their heads. A weave may help you look good, but it won't help you pass your test.

Too many youth worry about whether they have shoes endorsed by Jordan and or whether they have the NIKE brand, without considering that simply wearing the shoes won't make them better basketball players or students.

Many men wear the pants, which is the man's costume, but it's the women in their houses that are really shouldering the man's responsibility. It's not the pants that makes a man a man, but his ability to assume responsibility for himself and his family.

It doesn't matter whether the brand that hangs from the suit is FUBU or Versache if the person who is wearing the brand is brainless, undisciplined and immoral.

When we learn that truth then we learn that "the suit won't make you fly!"

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that any person who dresses well but does not know the Lord is "all dressed up with no place to go!"

The whole purpose for getting dressed up is because you are preparing to go somewhere!

When a believer dresses up he spends most of his time looking in the mirror. Not the mirror on the wall but the mirror of God's word.

The man who wants to show off for the world keeps the label hanging from his suit, so the world can see the designer's name.

A dressed up believer wants his label to show too. He has life designed by the hand of God and he wants the label to show where he goes. If anybody asks, you who I am, tell them I'm a child of God!

A man who wants to look good makes sure his shoes shine!

A dressed up believer also wants to shine! That's why he sings, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Every where I go, I'm going to let it shine!"

A man or woman who does not know the Lord may spend time dressing up, but they'll soon find out that they have no place to go!

One of these old days the Lord is coming back for his church.

He'll find them, having washed their robes in the blood of the lamb, dressed and ready to go.

Dressed, with their loins girded in truth!

Dressed, with the breastplate of righteousness across the chest!

Dressed, with their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace!

Dressed, with the shield of faith in their hands!

Dressed, with the helmet of Salvation on their heads!

One of these old days the Lord will say, "Come on up a little higher." And as they say are caught up to meet him in air, I can hear the unsaved crying out!

"What about me? I'm dressed. I'm wearing designer clothes!"

I hear the answer, "There's nothing wrong with wearing a good suit. Nothing wrong with a pretty dress, but it ain't the suit that makes you fly. If you want to see Jesus, you must be born again!"

You must believe that he is the Son of God

You must believe that he died out on Calvary!

You must believe that early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

You must be dressed and ready for his return!

One glad morning when this life is over, not because of the suit but by the power of God, I'll fly away!

No. 9116-Revival

There's a Devil On Every Level

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 31, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "Put on the whole amour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]." Ephesians 6:11-12. "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Introduction

Do you believe in the devil? When most people think of the devil images of a man with horns, wearing a red suit, carrying a pitch fork instantly come to mind. The devil is seen as a monstrous creature whose look and presence is frightening. This is the snapshot we remember from reading Dante's "Inferno" written in the 14th century. Since that time there has been a general fascination with the devil. In the time since Dante, we have learned much about the devil. We know where he comes from, we know how he got here, we know how he operates and we know his final end. The more we know about the devil, the more we are able to understand how he operates in this world. We can't defeat this enemy unless we know how to recognize him and ultimately how to rid ourselves of his influence.

There is a growing interest in the devil in our society. Despite that growing interest there are many that still do no believe the devil is real. Many agree with Sigmund Freud that the devil and concepts of the devil are simply figments of the psychic imagination of man. Philosopher Bertrand Russell says both the devil and God are projections of the hopes and fears of man, God being the personification of our hopes and the devil being the projection of our fears. A Gallop poll shows that only 34 percent of Americans believe that the devil is a real presence. The same poll shows that 36 percent of Americans believe there is an evil presence in the world, but they do not connect that presence with a real devil. Many of those who answered the poll also claimed to be Christian. They said belief in devil is a figment of superstition and folklore. Most Americans are fascinated with the devil and demons, but most place the devil along side other creations of folklore that have been exploited by Hollywood including: The Mummy, Freddy Kruger, Jason, and Frankenstein.

However, we know that while the devil does not wear a red suit, carry a pitch fork and drink hot sauce, he is never-the-less a reality in the world and in our lives.

The late "Flip Wilson" created a character for his comedy show called "Geraldine." Geraldine had a statement she said on the program each week, "The devil made me do it." In this way Flip and the rest of America blamed all of their problems on the devil. We laughed at Flip. We laughed at the idea that the devil could make anyone do anything, but the devil is certainly not a laughing matter.

As Christians, we know that God is real. Just as God is real there is also a fallen angel who operates on different levels in this world. He works against God, his people and his purposes in every way possible. Until he is finally destroyed the devil will continue to roam the earth causing problems for everyone in every level of life. We are encouraged to know that God is still on the throne and that time is running out for the devil and those who follow him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he warns believers to stay on guard against the devil. It also shows Peter warning believers that the devil constantly looks for an opportunity to bring trouble in a believer's life.

Both Paul and Peter make it clear that the devil is a real presence and is a threat to the lives of believers. Paul saw him as a force to be reckoned with on a day to day basis. Peter saw him as a relentless predator that always seeks opportunities to devour or destroy believers.

As we study scripture we learn certain truths about the devil that makes us understand how he operates:

Where the devil came from

Before this earth was created the devil was an angel in heaven. He enjoyed access to the heavenly realms and was stunning and beautiful in appearance. There are two passages of scripture that tell us what the devil was in heaven and what happened to change his relationship with God. One is Isaiah 14:12-15. This passage tells us of the great angel Lucifer who desired to be equal and more powerful than God. Verse 13 says, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:" This ideas is confirmed in Ezekiel 28:11-17 in which this same angel is described as perfect, beautiful and a resident of the "mountain of God."

The two passages point out that Lucifer wanted to compete with the glory of God. He wanted to have complete rule over all creation and to be recognized independent of and perhaps superior to God himself.

Because of his vanity and quest to overshadow God himself, he was thrown out of heaven and sent to live on the earth which was dark, flooded and without form. Along with the devil there were many who followed him who were thrown out of heaven as well. Jesus made reference to this in Matthew 25:41. These angels that were thrown out with the devil are generally referred to as demons, who move and act at his command.

We next see him in the Garden of Eden, having taken the form of a serpent, tempting Eve to defy God as he had done in heaven.

In the highest level, heaven, the devil was there.

In the lowest level of creation, in the Garden, the devil was there too.

There is a devil on every level.

How the devil operates

How does the devil operate from day to day? Peter said he spends most of his time prowling like a lion looking for a person to separate from God. His purpose is to turn as many people away from God as possible. He and his demons or angels are constantly busy attacking the people and causes of God.

He personally attacks the righteous for sport. Job 2:1-6 gives the account of the devil in heaven making a bet that he could destroy a good man by the name of Job. In this passage he tells God that he has been busy going to and fro in the earth trying to test the authenticity of their faith. Job is given as an example of pure faith and his faith is put to the test. Similarly, the devil does believers the same today. He looks for ways to attack the righteous for no good reason other than pure sport. Like tourist who want to see if they can make the guards at Buckingham Palace laugh, the devil tries believers just to see if their faith is as true as they claim.

He tempts the righteous to do wrong. Mark 1:13 gives the account of Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days and nights. During this time the devil appeared to tempt him three different times. Jesus was tempted with alternatives that would pull him away from God or at the least, cause him to tempt God. He has not changed his method. He is still tempting the righteous to do wrong. He tempts us with power, glory, sex, riches, popularity and a plethora of other temptations to get us to turn away from God.

He discourages us. Luke 22:31 finds Christ reminding believers that the devil tries to sift us like wheat to separate us and discourage us from the work of God. It is Satan who tells us that our load is too heavy or that we cannot succeed. It is the devil who whispers to us that we will not succeed. He keeps our minds focused on what may happen if we fail instead of what happens if we succeed. Satan discourages us by giving us a spirit of fear, defeat and anxiety. That spirit is the product of Satan's constant grinding and sifting us, as he tries to get us to give up in discouragement.

He incites us to lie to God. Acts 5:3 describes how Satan can incite or motivate a believer to lie to the Holy Ghost. In the text it was Annanias and his wife, who lied about their gifts to the church. He incites us to lie about and to God in many ways. He incited Peter to disown Christ at the crucifixion. He even gives believers plausible explanations for disobedient behavior. He tried to explain to Eve that God's prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit was really aimed at keeping her from being able to realize the fullness of her creation. It sounded reasonable. Even today, believers who sin against God have been provided explanations by the devil to justitify their deviant actions. In this way, the devil incites them to work against God, or at the least to become inactive soldiers in his army.

How to Defend Against the devil

How can a Christian defend himself against such an enemy? How can we, as mere mortals, defend ourselves against a fallen angel who is assisted by millions of angels who have only one mission in their lives which is to destroy us? There are a few steps:

1) Learn to identify the devil. An act that would not be pleasing to God or counters the principles of the faith could very easily be from the devil.

2) Defeat the devil with word of God. There is relationship between our knowledge of the scripture and our ability to defeat. If we are generally ignorant of God's word we are gullible for every trick Satan can produce.

3) Try every spirit with the spirit. 1 John 4:1 reminds us to test, compare and investigate every "spirit" or leaning against what the Word of God teaches. Everything that sounds good is not always good.

Paul told the Ephesians to put on the whole amour of God to protect against the wiles of the devil. We may be sheep but we don't have to be dumb sheep. Smart sheep live to give much wool, dumb sheep are served as lamb chops at the devil's banquet

The Devil Can't win

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that the devil can't win, if we stay close to God.

Staying close to God requires us to constantly remember that the devil will never leave us alone. No matter where we are or what we do in life, the devil will find us. You can't hide from him.

If we live in a card board box on a city street or in a mansion, there is a devil on every level.

If we have graduated from college or dropped out of school, there is a devil on every level.

If we are self employed or punch a time clock, there is a devil on every level.

If we are a students of a boring teacher or a teacher with a boring class, there is a devil on every level.

If we are unsaved sinners on the street or saved sinners in the church, there is a devil on every level.

We should be vigilant and always aware that Satan is looking for a chance to attack us, defeat us and destroy our very essence.

The one thing we have learned from out study of God's word is that when Satan attacks us on one level, God always moves us to another level.

It's amazing how the devil lays traps for us, but God always moves his children to another level.

It's amazing how things that the devil meant for bad, God moved us to another level, where it turned out to our good.

It didn't just start with us.

The devil had Joseph thrown into a pit because he dreamed great dreams, but God moved him to another level, and made him a prime minister of Egypt.

The devil had David chased as a vagabond and criminal because of Saul's jealousy, but God moved him to another level and made him King of Israel.

The devil had Daniel thrown into a lion's den because he refused to stop praying, but God moved him to another level, and increased his influence over the land.

The devil had Herod to order the death of all baby boys to prevent the savior from being born, but God move the baby Jesus and his family to Egypt, and protected them on another level.

One evening out on an old rugged cross the devil sought to stop Salvation by destroying the Son of God, but Early Sunday morning God moved Jesus up to

Another level!

With all power in his hands!

Rejoice Saints the devil was defeated on Calvary!

One of these days, the devil and all of his angels will be thrown into the lake of fire where they will exist in torment forever, on another level!

No. 9117-Anniv.-Choir

Watch Director Before Singing Your Song

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 14, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Ephesians 5:19

Introduction

Have you ever watched the director of an orchestra or choir? Those unfamiliar with orchestrated presentations usually underestimate the importance of the director to a performance. On the surface, the director appears to be a person who stands in front of a group and waves his hand. In fact, it doesn't appear that the director's job is that difficult at all. Anyone should be able to stand in front an orchestra and wave his arms with a little stick. In many large orchestras, the role of the conductor seems unnecessary, especially since musicians only glance up at them every now and then. Conductors play a greater role than simply waving their hands in front of the orchestra. The conductor is the trainer and interpreter of a musical presentation. The conductor sets the mood and establishes the pace of the presentation. Very few presentations are successful without the influence of a skilled director.

In African-American music circles the conductor is important. Whether it's Quincy Jones directing jazz or a high school band director directing the Star Spangled Banner, directors are important.

Nowhere is the director more important than with contemporary Black Gospel music. While the musicians have learned to watch the director, in modern times it has become fashionable for the audience to watch the director who have become an essential part of the choir. In some parts of the country directors are better known than the choirs they direct. In fact, good directors do well, regardless of the choir in front of them. Today, it seems that the director is expected to direct the song, dance a little, sing a little and give the audience an eyeful as well as an earful.

Every choir member knows that it is important to watch the director because directors often stray away from the rehearsed presentation. In fact, very few final presentations are the way they are rehearsed. Directors alter their presentations as they feel the spirit move. So choir members learn to read the directors signs. They

watch him closely.

In orchestras, instrumentalists are urged not to pat their feet to try to keep rhythm because their rhythm comes from the director who may change the pace at any given time. In choirs, members are urged to watch the director instead of singing songs the way they are traditionally sung. Sometimes there are unrehearsed repeats and some notes that were cut short in rehearsal are held in the actual performance.

In many ways God is a conductor. He sets our tempo, mood and pace. Each one of us plays a little tune with out lives. We are encouraged not to try to set our own pace but to watch the conductor. Sometimes he changes the flow of things at will. We must be observant and vigilant, ever ready to play or sing whatever tune he requires.

As Christians, we know God is the conductor, we stand ready to move at his command. That's the way a believer is with God. He studies the word to know what God wants. He seeks to be approved before God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul urging the Ephesians to follow God's instructions in holiness and spiritual living.

The entire 5th chapter is devoted to urging Christians to follow God's direction with respect to personal discretions, marriage relationships and our general walk in life.

We should express our in songs of praise to God, songs which have greater meaning because we are following his direction.

He encourages believers to sing Psalms of David, aptly set to music. He also encourages the singing of hymns, those songs He encourages us to sing spiritual songs that emerge from the soul as a testimony of our belief and hope, trust and faith in God.

All of the songs we sing are a testament to our followship as Christians.

Our lives are directed by his word. Our songs reflect the lives we live. Thus, the text encourages to make melody in our hearts, not only with our voices, but the entire essence of our being reflects the glory and majesty of lives directed by God.

We get more out of our psalms, hymn, spiritual and words of praise when we watch the director, and follow his direction.

Songs Without A Director

There are many whose lives are like songs without direction.

SHOWER SONGS: There are times when we sing in the shower. There is no director. There is no concern for pitch or tune or balance. We just sing, without direction. Unfortunately there are many whose lives are like shower songs. They have no specific direction. They live wildly, without guidance hitting whatever note that pleases them at the moment. Shower songs only sound good in the shower. If we had

to listen to a recording of our shower songs we'd probably frown. Likewise, when look back on the shower song time of our lives, we would instantly note how far we moved away from the mark living on our own without God.

SOLOS: There are many who will not sing with a choir, they only sing solos. They want to do their own thing. Instead of following a director, the musician has to follow them. That's not a bad thing, that's generally the way solos work, unless a person is trying to live his life like a solo. Such a life is similar to a shower song but instead of being a private decision, they live publicly doing their own their thing, singing their own song, without direction or guidance.

Directors Teach What Singing is About

More than just waving their hands, directors teach what songs are about. To really sing with meaning and feeling we must allow God to direct our lives. When he conducts he reveals certain truths to us.

SINGING IS TO BE FROM THE HEART: If a church choir held an audition, it wouldn't what would be the criterion? The criterion should be whether or not a person is a great singer, for most church choir singers are not, but they are individuals who have a heart for the songs they sing. Verse 19b: ". . . singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Many think of the church choir as a show place to make a name for themselves. The do just the opposite of verse 19, instead of "singing and making melody with your heart" they "sing and make melody with their mouths. The phrase "with your heart" signifies that you mean what you sing and you feel it!

SINGING IS TO BE TO EACH OTHER: In the shower, a believer sings to himself and for himself. Those who sing in public should sing to each other. They should look at the people they are singing to and reach out to them. Look at Verse 19 again, ". . . speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." We can't obey this teaching in solitude. God calls us to speak in song to one another.

To sing to each other we should get together and sing as a congregation and as small groups. We should sing in each other's hearing and want to be heard by each other.

SINGING IS TO BE "TO THE LORD." Singing to the Lord implies that songs should be God centered or Christ centered. This means that what we sing should reflect our nature, that our lives are God centered. Everything we do and say is centered around our central beliefs about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Our songs are a reflection of that belief. What we choose to sing should be worthy of presentation to the master.

SINGING SHOULD VARY IN FORMS: Those who sing should be trained to sing in various forms and styles, delivering the same witness in a variety of ways. Verse 19 says, ". . . speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs..." Those who sing to the Lord and to others select the style of song appropriate for the moment. The psalms, what we call "Anthems" speak dramatically about the power of God. Every singer should know how to witness with the power

of the word transcribed into anthems. Hymns attest to the greatness of God as he relates to us. They are standards that have survived the test of time and linger long in the hearts of believers around the world. Spiritual songs are those that speak from the soul and experience of believers. They testify about what God has done in the life of a believer. They are about blessings received, hope renewed and prayers answered.

God Directs the Life before we sing the Song

When God is the director of our lives, he pushes us to get our lives ready to sing our song. Why? Because it's hard to sing to the melody when your life is out of tune.

Choir directors themselves should be men and women are at the very least men and women of strong conviction and spirit filled lives. They do more than just direct the songs, they help choir members get their lives in tune. That's why its so important that choir directors themselves strive to be spiritually strong constantly studying the word, living a spirit filled life and witnessing. Many successful choir directors are not best vocalists in the world, rarely sing a solo, and sometimes play no musical instruments at all, yet the they bring out the best from their singers because of their testimony.

Their life appears to be in tune and their encouragement helps choir members get their lives in tune, ready to sing.

That's the way God directs our lives. He works constantly to get us in tune.

Those who have been on the journey, know that it is extremely difficult to sing a melody to the Lord if our lives are out of tune with his word.

It is hard to sing about faith, if we know we have no faith.

It is hard to sing about strength, if all we show is weakness.

It is hard to sing about our hope in the Lord, if we have given up on God ourselves!

It is hard to sing about walking the narrow road, when we are running down road to destruction.

God Directs and Arranges

Finally we must remember that not only does God direct our lives, he also arranges and rearranges because he is the composer.

We know that God is the composer because the scriptures remind us that "the earth is the Lord's and fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Psalms 24:1)

God is the composer because he was the one who created the earth from darkness, spat out the seven seas, bulged the mountains up and unfolded the canopy of heaven to reveal the stars, moon and the celestial heights. He who composes, sets the timing of each measure of events, and the key in which each life should be played.

As the composer, God arranges the melody, harmony and rhythm of our lives.

The melody of a composition is the set of notes and rhythms that are unique and identify it from all others. The notes are the same notes that other compositions have,

but it's how they are arranged, timed, and orchestrated that makes the difference. The Christian life is a pleasing melody whose acts, deeds and words, have been arranged, timed and executed in a blend that produces a pleasing tune.

Every life, like a keyboard has the same keys. The difference is in the arrangement. Satan gives us one arrangement, but God rearranges.

Satan arranged things for bad, but God rearranged things for our good.

A good life, like a good song, has harmony. Harmony is achieved by combining various notes in such a way that they give a pleasing sound. Harmony is not automatic. The notes don't simply fall into place they have been arranged to achieve balance.

The new songs that choirs sing, only have three part harmony. There is usually no part for the basses. They are told to sing the same as the tenors just an octave lower.

But when God sets up a life he sets it up in four part harmony. He won't tell you to copy the life of somebody else. He'll arrange things in your range.

That must have been what the songwriter had in mind when he said, "What God has for me, is for me."

A good life, keeps a rhythm that is dictated by God. He sends us a blessing every day.

The rhythm of a song is indicated in the time signature. A song is three-four time, four-four time or sometimes in cut time. If the song is supposed to be fast it may say, "Allegro." If it's suppose to be slow, it may say "Molto."

One thing we know about the way God arranges time, is that he is an on time God. He may not come when we want him, but he's always on time.

When God gives us a song to sing, we need be sure we sing it in the right key.

There are seven notes in a musical scale and seven days in a week. How each week goes depends on the key we select at the beginning of the week. If we begin the week in the Key of F we will have at least one sharp along the way. If we begin with key of B Flat we will have at least two flats.

But there is one Key that every believer should know. It's the key of C. the same letter that begins the word Christian. In the key of C there are no flats or sharps. Not because every day is going to be perfect, but because no matter what comes our way, we "count it all joy!"

If it sickness comes my way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

If heartache comes my way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

If disappointment comes m way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

I don't know about you, but I'm going to keep my eye on the director!

If I follow Jesus, he will direct my paths!

Follow Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Follow Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

Follow Jesus, take no chance of getting lost!

No. 9018-Gratitude

Giving Thanks for Wondrous Works

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 26, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." Psalm 26:7

Introduction

Do you have a reason to be thankful? Has the Lord blessed you in a special way? When we stop to think about it, we have many reasons to give thanks because God has poured out both his bounty and mercy upon us. What would be the essence of our testimony? What would we say? We would have a lifetime of blessings, both seen and unseen, to talk about.

Thanksgiving requires a spirit of humility. Each person who gives thanks is keenly aware that all accomplishment is achieved apart from his/her works or deeds. No one can successfully give thanks if he/she secretly believes that there is nothing for which they owe a debt gratitude. Thanks by its very nature recognizes the fallibility of human effort without godly assistance. Having received blessings, those who are aware of their inability to achieve on their own, feel compelled to give thanks because it acknowledges the need for a higher power.

There are many who approach God and his blessings in the manner of the cartoon character Bart Simpson. In one episode Bart is shown at the table preparing to eat the Thanksgiving meal. When he was asked to give the blessing over the meal Bart was reluctant. He did not feel the blessing was necessary but decided to comply with the request. So he began his prayer this way: 'Dear Lord I don't understand why I should thank you for the hard earned food on this table that we had to buy,we had to cook and we had to put on the table. It seems like we should be thanking ourselves. Amen' The Simpson family was needless to say, speechless.

A popular commercial empasizes the importance of Thank You. In a variety of stressful situations instead of arguing and fighting everyone simply says "Thank You." In the commercial the power of a simple thanks is demonstrated. Years ago there was a popular television program called Captain Kangaroo. The Captain always taught the children who watched the show about the value of saying "please and thank you," which the Captain called 'Magic words.' Even though it was a children's

show, the truth about thankfulness is nevertheless true. It is good to have a spirit of gratitude every day.

A simple thanks is amplified when it is made known to others. Good news is contagious. When others see a great work done they join in the chorus of people who give praise to the source. The same is true with God. As those who have been blessed raise their voices in thanks, the sense of gratitude that they display spreads to others.

As Christians, we are not ashamed to tell those that we know about the goodness of the Lord. We see what he has done for us and we know what he can do for others, so we gladly publish his good works everywhere we go.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he gives six characteristics that are unique to the righteous.

In verses 1-2 he notes that the righteous are usually open to examination. Before God their lives are open books.

In verse 3 obedience is highlighted. David notes that he has tried to walk in the truths of the Lord consistently.

In verses 4-6 David reflects on his general victory over the efforts of the wicked to influence his life in favor of living the Godly life.

In verses 9-10 he reiterates his desire not to be obstructed or frustrated by the wicked schemes of the ungodly.

In verses 11-12 he restates his desire to walk in the steps of the Lord with integrity.

The text focus is on verses 7-8 in which David declares that God has been so good to the righteous that they should declare and publish his good works for everyone to see and hear of his greatness. Accordingly, he says that believers should let the world know that they love the Lord and they love the indwelling of his spirit in their lives daily.

Thanks Begets More Blessings

Thanks gives rise to more acts of kindness, and more acts of kindness only bring more thanks.

When we show our gratitude for a kindness, it promotes more kindness. On the contrary, ingratitude does just the opposite. Mark Otero tells the story of a farm family's attitude of gratitude about its lifesaving pig. It appears that a woman was visiting some people who lived on a farm, and she noticed a pig limping in the backyard with a wooden leg. She asked the farmer, "What happened to the pig?" The farmer said, "Oh, Betsy is a wonderful pig. One night the house caught fire and she oinked so loud she woke us and we got the fire truck in time to save the house." The woman said, "That's really something!" The farmer continued, "That's not all, one day my youngest fell in the pond and Betsy oinked so loud that she got our attention and we were able to pull my daughter out of the pond in time." The woman said, "That's

really amazing! But I still don't understand why the pig has a wooden leg. The farmer said, "Well, when you have a pig that special, you don't want to eat him all at once!" Gratitude didn't run deep for the three legged pig.

When gratitude does run deep however, it usually spawns more acts of kindness. There are some who show gratitude for every kind act. As a result people are always falling over themselves to do something else nice for them. The same is true with God. Those who are truly grateful often find that he constantly rewards their gratitude with more acts of kindness.

What to give thanks for

Often we thank God for physical blessings, but we should also thank him for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind. This spirit of thanksgiving is supported in scripture. The verb 'to give thanks' occurs thirty-eight times and the noun 'thanksgiving' another fifteen times in the New Testament. The Word of God makes it clear that it is very important to give thanks.

Sometimes there is the thought of thanks for spiritual blessings. Thus, we find that when Jesus began the service of Holy Communion he gave thanks for the bread and the wine (Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:17,19). Paul gave thanks for spiritual blessing (Rom. 7:25) For what blessing did he thank God?). What religious blessings do you have for which you should give God thanks?

But we should also be thankful for blessings concerning the things of this life. Jesus gave thanks before a meal (Matt. 15:36). And when he healed ten men who had leprosy and only one came back to thank him, Jesus asked where the others were (Luke 17:15-18). He expected people to be thankful for good things. Paul spoke of some foolish people who among other things did not give thanks to God (Rom. 1:21). He himself was ready to see God's hand in all sorts of happenings and he thanked God when he came to Rome as a prisoner and some Christians met him (Acts 28:15).

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, "In everything, give thanks."

Publish it

Finally, brothers and sisters, David gave us an impossible directive. He said we

should tell all the good works the Lord has done for us.

How can anyone tell all of God's good works? It will take a lifetime and longer for even one man to tell what God has done for him.

Yet with one loud voice we who have received must try to tell of the mighty works of God.

Even in our telling we won't be able to tell it all.

In November of 2004, Bill Clinton opened his presidential library. In the center, situated on an area of almost 30 acres are 76 million pages of documents, 2 million photographs and 75,000 museum artifacts, including a library and museum. Even though it tells more about him, including the Monica Lowinsky affair, than any other president, it still does not tell it all.

David said tell it all, but we just can't tell it all.

When it comes to talking about the goodness of the Lord, I just can't tell it all.

What I can tell you is that when I'm sick, he's doctor in my sick room!

When I'm in trouble he is my refuge and my strength!

When I'm weak he is the strength of my life!

When I'm low, he picks me up and turns me around!

When I need a blessing he's always on time!

I can't tell it all but I want you to know that:

He's a shelter in a time of storm!

He's a bridge over trouble water!

He's a lawyer for every courtroom!

He's a rock in a weary land!

I can't tell it all but I can tell you that one evening about 2001 years ago he died out on Calvary!

I can't tell it all but I can tell you that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I can't tell it all but I can tell that he's alive today!

No. 9119-Funeral

God's Maintenance man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 28, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." Titus 3:14

Introduction

Have you ever had a need to call a maintenance man? Very few of us go through life without ever needing the services of a maintenance man. Those who live in apartments, public housing, condominiums, or who own vehicles, equipment or other incidentals usually find that they need a maintenance man at one point or another. These are skilled men in both repairing things which are broken and preventing things from breaking. They are usually well-trained, knowledgeable and efficient. Good maintenance men are like insurance policies, it is better to have them and not need them than to need them and not have them.

We need maintenance personnel because they keep what we own operational. One farmer once said, "The trouble with milking cows is that they won't stay milked." The same can be said about many other things. The trouble with cutting the grass is that it won't stay cut. The trouble with trimming the hedges is that they won't stay trimmed. It's not so hard to dust our homes, the problem is that they won't stay dusted. A car, once washed won't stay washed. Hair that is cut won't stay cut. Clothing washed last week won't stay clean; neither will any bath we take be sufficient for a lifetime. Despite our best efforts everything about our lives requires a little maintenance. Maintenance keeps us operational.

It appears that everything needs maintenance. Houses, no matter how well constructed, still need maintenance. Paint chips, wallpaper peels, and lighting fixtures sometimes fail to work. Automobiles, no matter how well-made, still require regular maintenance to function properly. They require maintenance because they are just like that cow that won't stay milked; they need attending on a regular basis because they won't stay fixed.

The same can be said about the house of God. Both the edifice in which we worship and study and the spiritual house of God within us need regular maintenance. To serve both these needs God has a team of spiritual maintenance men, called deacons, who work to maintain both the house of God and the temple of God which

resides within every believer. They work to repair that which is broken and to prevent things from breaking both in the physical building and in the spiritual lives of believers.

As Christians, we know that we must work daily to maintain the faith. There are times when we need a little help to maintain. We thank God that he has spiritual maintenance men for every generation, to help us maintain a healthy relationship within the kingdom of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instruction to Titus concerning helping the church to maintain good works.

Paul often traveled from one city to another as he established churches in his three missionary journeys. He was often assisted by men who traveled with him. They had the specific task of helping newly formed and more established churches to hold fast to the faith.

This letter to Titus encourages Titus in the same way he had earlier encouraged Timothy, both of whom who had the job of maintaining the church. By maintaining, Paul expected Titus to promote the preaching of the Gospel, guard against false teaching and to continue to do good works.

This was not an easy task since, in Paul's absence, many foreign beliefs attempted to creep in among believers. There were many who were not as strong in the faith as they should be, and others who needed motivation. In verse 14 Titus is told that they should maintain good works for the church to be fruitful. Fruitfulness is interpreted to mean good works, lifestyles and faithfulness that will build up the kingdom of God. To accomplish this end Titus would have to teach, counsel, assist and correct the members of the body of Christ, under Paul's direction, in ways that would help them grow and mature in the faith.

Paul established these churches in his journeys, he left Timothy and Titus to move among them with one charge "maintain good works." Timothy, Titus and others, working as Paul's assistants became the first spiritual maintenance men.

Maintenance Men

The deacon's job in the church is unique, because by definition a deacon is a servant of the people. During the tenure of his service the good deacon will serve three types of members.

HIGH-MAINTENANCE: High maintenance members require a lot of attention. Generally new members are like "maters" in a garden. Once planted they have to be propped up, inspected for bugs, and constantly checked everytime a strong wind blows. Galatians 6:2 encourages us to "Carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Deacons often wear out cars and consume countless hours of time with such members who seem to depend upon him for every small facet of their spiritual lives. What frustrates many deacons is that many members remain

high maintenance "maters" long after they should have developed a maturity that does not require constant high maintenance.

LOW-MAINTENANCE: There are some members of the congregation who require little or no maintenance. They work in the church, they give and serve almost anonymously. They can be described as "Tater" people. Taters don't require much maintenance. Once planted, they grow, run and multiply without much attention. These are members who have grown in the faith. It is what Hebrews 6:1 calls going "on to maturity." Low-Maintenance members are a joy to the deacon because these members require little of him because their faith is secure, planted deep, and even if dirt is thrown on them, like taters, they continue to grow.

NO-MAINTENANCE: The last kind of members services by deacons are members who refuse maintenance. They are bug infested, but they don't want any maintenance. They are like a stalk of cotton with boll weevils crawling everywhere, but they won't let him help in any way. These members won't worship, won't pray, won't pay, won't study or serve. They frustrate their deacons because the deacons know that without maintenance, it won't be long before they become spiritually dead.

Maintenance Man's Maintenance Plan

While every maintenance man helps maintain others, he also has his own maintenance plan. In fact, maintenance men are sticklers for following the maintenance plan. For example, new cars come with a factory warranty wherein the company guarantees to take care of certain things, as long as you follow the maintenance plan. It may call for oil changes after a certain time, flushed radiators a while later and other maintenance items that may seem unnecessary at the moment.

The maintenance plan says fix it before it breaks, while we operate on the notion that "If it ain't broke don't fix it." –So many of us ignore the manufacturer's maintenance plan.

God has a maintenance plan for the maintenance man. It's the same maintenance plan he has for every believer. After we begin the new life in Christ we should let the holy spirit check our oil, and change our filters. If we are beginning to slip in our worship, giving or praise we need to change our belts before they break.

The maintenance man stays prayed up, attends Sunday School, bible study, and is constantly aware of the need to follow the divine maintenance plan.

Gurarantеed Warranty

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider that if the maintenance man follows God's maintenance plan, then his warranty is guaranteed.

New cars have a warranty for so many years or so many miles, after that the warranty is no good.

Midas Muffler gives a warranty on its mufflers for as long as you own it, but when it changes hands, the warranty is off.

Many used cars give no warranty at all, except what the law requires, and you

often drive off the lot with little or no warranty at all.

But God offers every believer an eternal warranty, his personal guarantee, written in the blood of Calvary and guaranteed by the Holy Ghost.

If we begin with him as a new creature, old things will pass away and all things will become new.

If we follow his plan of salvation and walk by faith, you have his word that, he that overcometh shall inherit all things.

God's warranty is not on our body.

He doesn't promise that our hair won't turn gray.

He doesn't promise that our footsteps won't slow!

He doesn't promise that our eyesight won't dim!

The warranty is not on the body it's on the soul!

The warranty is not on the bumpers, windshield or fenders. The warranty is on the motor.

In John 11:26 Jesus "..whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

That's a warranty!

One day, like the maintenance man, every believer will have to say. I believed in my heart and I followed your plan.

When my seasons changed, I followed the plan.

In the summer of my life I checked my anti-freeze to be sure I didn't run to hot or wild.

In the autumn of my life, I checked it again to make sure that that old age and physical decay wouldn't freeze my faith.

I'm now in the winter of my life. Everything has just about given out on this body.

I spent eight years in a nursing home. It's time to trade up, is my warranty still good?

Can't you hear the answer bellowing across the eons of time?

I promised Abraham a ram in the bush, the warranty was still good!

I promised Elijah fire would come down from heaven, the warranty was still good!

I promised The Three Hebrew boys I'd be with them in firery furnace, the warranty was still good

I promised Daniel a good night's sleep in the Lion's den, he found out that the warranty was still good!

Over 2000 years ago a man named Jesus, died out on Calvary

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to announce..

Maintenance man, you followed the plan!

The warranty is still Good!

Come on up!

Come on up!

On Monday, November 22, 2004 Deacon Frank Allen, called in his warranty and traded up. In body and spirit, he was God's maintenance man!

9120-Inspiration

Hurry Up and Wait

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 5, 2005

SCRIPTURE:" Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" Psalm 27:14

Introduction

Have you ever been in a hurry but had to wait? This is the season of "hurry up and wait." Nothing seems to move fast when you are in a hurry. One line feeds into another long line and we wait. If you try calling your favorite company for service, be prepared to wait through a long list of automated directories. Take a trip to the mall to buy that item you want, but be prepared to wait. Are you in a rush to get from one place to another? Be prepared to wait. In fact, some people do just that. They carry books to read on buses, subways and in traffic jams. In airports, gas stations or food stores, waiting is a part of our daily lives.

No one likes to wait, we prefer things quicker. While Old Fashioned grits tastes better, no one really wants to wait 30 minutes for them to cook. Peculated coffee takes longer to brew and tastes better, but instant coffee gets the job done. The world is moving to quicker, faster and instant, because we can't wait.

Everything seems to be faster these days. Movies are shorter and get to the action faster. Songs are faster, speakers are faster, life is faster and we live faster trying to keep up, rushing to the necessary in a hurry to get to the unnecessary so that it can be done quicker and faster.

Everything and everyone seems to be faster except God, and the things of God?

When we pray, why can't we get an instant answer? Why must we wait so long to get an answer? Isn't there a fast lane for people who have less than 10 items on their prayer list?

At times God seems to move slow, while we are in a hurry. Why can't he move any faster?

At the close of the Old Testament the people were promised that a savior would come. About 490 years passed and the deliverer never came. They waited, but it seemed the longer they waited the longer it took. Finally, a baby was born in Bethlehem and the child grew and announced that what they had been waiting for had finally arrived.

He came in the fullness of God's own time.

As Christians, we have learned the importance of waiting on God. We know that

he moves at his own pace. We are tempted to assume a "Hurry and wait" attitude until we remember that the God we serve is an on time God, who "May not come when we want him, but he's always on time."

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he encourages believers to patiently wait on the Lord.

It is the last verse of a great psalm that tells a brief history of the results of David's own waiting. It is a history of David's experience with God. He waited and God answered in varied ways.

There was a point in his life when he was surrounded by enemies, but David waited on God. God caused those enemies to stumble and fall. (v2)

While he waited David worship fervently. His desire was to be in the presence of the Lord in his tabernacle, to worship, give in the offerings and to make sacrifices. In worship he sang praises to God and he joyfully told others of God's goodness. He enjoyed the beauty of God's presence and felt that while he waited, he would find spiritual shelter from the storms of life because God would, "hide me." In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me." (v4-6)

While he waited, David also prayed. He diligently sought the will of God in prayer. In his fear and apprehension, he sought God's presence and strengthening hand. His prayer was "hear my voice, when I cry." It is a good thing to talk with God while we wait for him to respond to our need. (v7-8)

David waited in confidence. He was sure that no matter what his situation that God would not forsake him. At verse 10 he notes that even if his parents, his father and mother, would forsake him and give him up as a lost cause, he knew that God would "lift me up." This confidence David shows is remarkable considering that at the time of the writing he was little more than a vagabond, a criminal in the eyes of the king and a hunted man. Despite it all, he remained confident. (v10)

David concluded that it is best to wait on the Lord. Believers are encouraged to take courage and wait for God to act out his will in their lives.

Waiting on the Lord-"They that wait on the Lord shall inherit the earth."

The believer who waits on the Lord assumes the role of the beggar who waits for the merciful favor of a benefactor. To wait on the Lord in this context is to approach him from a position of want and need. We want him to give us what we need and he alone can supply what we need. Waiting on the Lord is to assume that our father is rich in houses and land and that he holds in his grasp the power to grant what we desire. The beggar asks because he knows that the person he asks has what he needs. He also asks, knowing that only if he asks can he let his needs be known.

To wait on the Lord does not mean we stop asking. "Wait" in this view is to

approach God in humility. It does not mean that we stop praying or seeking an answer because we are waiting. Waiting does not mean that we stop praying. It does not mean that we stop hoping. It does not mean that we stop looking or begging for his mercy. It means that we approach God as a full fountain with our cups out, waiting to be filled.

What do we wait for? We wait to hear the Masters response. In ancient times, it was customary for students to walk closely behind the master instructor. Sometimes they would wait for hours in the courtyard for the master to appear and then once he appeared they followed him closely waiting to absorb any word they might receive. Sometimes they followed him for hours. On some days, he said nothing at all. In all this is students followed him religiously knowing that whenever he did finally speak it would be well worth their wait. So it is when a child of God waits on the Lord. We wait for him to make his appearance and sometimes even after we feel his presence we wait to hear him speak. We listen closely for his voice. We read his word, searching for the subtle ways in which he speaks to us. We listen to his word as it is explained to us by teachers, and pronounced to us by preachers. In each instance we are waiting on him to make his presence and will known to us.

Like those students, who waited patiently to hear a single word or thought from the master teachers, we too have learned that it is well worth our time to wait on the Lord.

Waiting on the Lord is to trust that our benefactor has the capacity to respond to our request.

Waiting on the Lord is to constantly cling to hope when all else fails.

Waiting on the Lord is to reach up when the world has dropped its head.

Waiting on the Lord is to say in the words of the song writer, "Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and shape me, After thy will. As in thy presence, I'm yielded and still."

Waiting upon the Lord-"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

There is another way to wait on the Lord. It is the approach of the confidential aide and the employer, the servant and the master, or the trusted advisor and the benefactor. This relationship exists when both the master and servant are so close that one knows the subtle signs of the other and senses what is needed before hand. In such a case only the slightest nod, or curve of the eyebrow, gets the job done.

The servant who knows the master's habits anticipates what the master wants and only requires a subtle look, a lifted eyebrow or a raised finger to achieve a needed result. This is the ultimate in being waited upon; to have what one needs provided even at a glance.

Believers who wait upon the Lord are those who walk so closely with him that they can almost anticipate what the Lord would want them to do and the prepare themselves to act or not to act at his command. They do not go into battle, but they stand prepared on the hillside waiting for his signal. Believers become this close with

God when they constantly commune with him and seek his will. They know how he thinks and acts and they wait for him to give the smallest sign to proceed or to withdraw. Sometimes it is the smallest act, but yet they know its meaning and act accordingly.

This is what happened when Gideon sought a sign from the Lord as to whether to go into battle. Once he received the sign he sought, he waited upon the Lord for his signal to advance. His waiting was not to sit idle but to prepare to take action if necessary, but not to take a single step until God commanded it to be taken. It was also the case with Abraham, whom God told to move out of his homeland. He waited upon the Lord, but his waiting was not inaction, he began doing what was necessary but would not move until he received the actual command from God.

If we sense the will of God, like that servant who watches the master across the room, waiting for a nod, we watch the hand of God and wait upon him. We know it when we see it because we know him well. How will we know? Just as Elijah knew when he felt the earth quake and a mighty rushing wind and could distinguish that neither was from God, so can every believer who walks close to God know that still soft voice that beacons us to action or inaction if need be.

Waiting upon the Lord is to be ready for action, as he gives the slightest sign.

Waiting upon the Lord is to be rested and renewed in our determination to accomplish his will. We do this knowing that the strong shall faint and the young shall get weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew with strength."

Waiting for the Lord-"Blessed are they that wait for him.

The final way to wait for the Lord is to tarry for his promise. In this sense, we wait not in a sense of weakness, begging for grace or in a sense of readiness, watching for a single command. Wait, in this context, is to anticipate with excitement the fulfillment of a promise.

Waiting for the promise is as exciting as a child waiting for Christmas. We anxiously wait for the great blessings that are coming!

While we wait we should not be idle, but we should be busy doing his work. Jesus told the parable of the 10 virgins who waited for the bridegroom to make his appearance. While all of them were waiting for his return, only five of them were ready for his return by having their lamps properly trimmed.

Luke 8:40 and similar passages gives three instances of how the word spread that Jesus was coming to town and how the people waited for him. The people "gladly received him" and were waiting for him. Rarely did Jesus enter a village without finding people waiting for him. They waited in expectation. They waited in anticipation.

Jarius waited because he had a daughter that was ill. He did not wait in vain.

A woman with an issue of blood waited. She did not wait in vain, because when she touched the hem of his garment she was made whole.

A ruler in the synagogue whose daughter died waited. He did not wait in vain for Jesus used it as an example of God's power and she was raised from the dead.

What are you waiting for? The defeated are waiting for the final victory. Jesus

has promised that victory. He told John, "He that over cometh shall inherit all things."

The weak are waiting for more strength? The faint in strength are waiting for God's promise to Isaiah, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

The discouraged are waiting for encouragement? In their discouragement the word of God says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

The confused are waiting for answers! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understandings. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths."

The lonely are waiting for comfort. Jesus said, "And lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the earth."

I don't know about you, but I've decided to wait on the Lord!

If I wait on the Lord he'll make a way out of no way!

If I wait on the Lord he'll take my defeats and give me victory!

If I wait on the Lord, he'll take my despair and give me hope!

If I wait on the Lord, he'll take my bad days and turn them into good days!

I'll wait because, "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but who lean on Jesus' name!"

It seemed like a long time, but in the fullness of time God sent his son!

In God's own time, he carried a cross to Golgotha's hill!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

I don't know about you, but decided to be like Job and say, "All the days of my

9121-Christmas

Ho, Ho, Ho!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 12, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: 5For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Zechariah 2:4-6 "1Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. " Isaiah 55:1; Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down." Ruth 4:1

Introduction

Do you know the three most famous words of the yuletide season? They are attributed to a jolly man who wears a red suit. He usually says, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" When children hear those words they conjure up dreams of toys and pretty things. "Ho, Ho, Ho!" means joy, excitement and good times! That's the image each of us has when we hear those words at Christmas time.

What most people don't know is that the word "Ho" is used in the English language to attract attention and to exclaim delight! One "Ho" is excitement, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" means real excitement is on the way.

Everyone likes to hear exciting news. We celebrate a marriage announcement. It's exciting news. We celebrate new homes. We celebrate new beginnings! It's exciting news when a child is born!

The words "Ho, Ho, Ho!" ring out this time of year. They seem to create an atmosphere of excitement the creates what we call the Christmas spirit. The business community wants us to get excited, so they hire men in red suits to sit in malls and stand in front stores and yell, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" They hope we'll get so excited that we spend lots of money in their stores.

But did you know the man in the red suit wasn't the first one to say, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" Long before there was a man in the red suit announcing excitement to the world the words "Ho, Ho, Ho!" rang out from heaven and were written down in the word of God.

The two letter word "Ho" is used four times in three different places in the King James version of the bible. Each is associated with exciting news! Each announces a great message that should be heard. That message is that God is good, is concerned and truly loves the world.

As Christians, we are encouraged to hear the exciting news that this season brings. Whether it's the man wearing the red suit, or words from the bible, each time we hear the words, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" we think of jolly happy times ahead, all provided from the abundance of our God.

Exposition

These three text each introduce an exciting message, prefaced by the two letter word 'Ho!"

There are three exclamation terms used frequently, each has its own meaning.

The first of these exclamation terms is "Ha" which is found in Job 39:25. It is expression of amazement and joy.

The second is "aha." It expresses joy and satisfaction, but it is malicious, such as used in Psalm 40:15 of the cruel satisfaction that enemies feel at our demise when they say, "aha"

The third is the term "Ho." It expresses great excitement and satisfaction without malicious intent or amazement. The term "Ho" has an evangelical tone to it because it usually announces messages from heaven or the advent of a divine action that will bring good news.

That's exactly what the word "Ho" does in the three places where it is used in the bible. It announces good news from heaven and a divine plan about to be unveiled.

A Redeemer Is Coming

Ruth 4:1 shows Boaz using the term "ho" to announce to the elders of the city that he intended to redeem the lands of Naomi and thereby preserve her family name. That was a great announcement. It was the announcement of coming redemption.

If we celebrate anything during the Christmas season, it is the celebration of redemption. For Naomi, it meant someone was paying the price so that her family land would be restored and she could rebuild her life. For us, redemption means essentially the same. Someone is paying the price for our salvation. That someone is Jesus Christ.

That's is the exciting news that this season should instill in each of us; that the opportunity for salvation, atonement, and forgiveness is among us, through the grace of God. We are saved by the blood of Christ. His sacrifice on Calvary made atonement for our sins. By his stripes we are healed and forgiven.

That the meaning of, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Thus, when we hear the man in the red suit say, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" what we hear isn't an announcement about tearing open presents on Christmas day! We hear, "Ho!Ho! Ho!" -Salvation, Atonement and Forgiveness!

Isaiah 55:1 uses the two letter word "Ho" to announce the coming of true satisfaction.

One of the fascinating songs of the 1960's was "I can't get no satisfaction." It painted a dreary picture of people trying to get more, buy more and have more, but derive little satisfaction from what their efforts. Even today, there are many who correlate satisfaction with an abundance of toys and trinkets under the Christmas tree.

Last year children gave a list of things they thought would satisfy them. However, no sooner than they had opened the packages they wanted something else. The words of the song linger, "I can't get no satisfaction!"

Isaiah made an announcement from heaven and preceded it with the word "Ho!"

Those who want real satisfaction can find it if they become followers of Christ in earnest; not just church members. He makes the startling revelation that satisfaction does not require money because we can eat the meagerest of meals and be happy in him.

In the absence of real love, we are always dissatisfied. We are always thirsty. We are always yearning for more. No car or house is big enough. No gift is fine enough.

Nothing done satisfies. We thirst for something money can't buy or satisfy. True satisfaction is what Jesus offered when he said, "If any man thirsts, let him come and drink of me?"

So verse two raises crucial questions. Why are we spending money for things that do not satisfy us or working ourselves to the bone to acquire more while enjoying life less? It answers those questions by announcing that any man or woman that chooses to draw close to God will find true satisfaction that is not dependent upon the number of gifts under the Christmas tree.

Love, contentment, and satisfaction, those are three things that the Gospel message reminds us about this season. When we hear the words, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" We should think, Love, contentment and satisfaction! That's the spirit of Christmas.

Security Restored

Zechariah 2:4-13 announces the restoration of security for God's people.

Immediately, it speaks of Israel the nation. In a greater sense it speaks to the people of God. God will build a fence or a "wall of fire" around believers that will prohibit the enemy from completely destroying us.

In the wake of September 11, 2001, Americans are still anxious about security issues. We want to feel safe again, without wondering if our mail will have mysterious white powders in each envelope or whether our cars will explode in the street or our planes will be destroyed in the air. We want to feel safe again.

Not only do we want to be safe from international terrorists, but we also want to feel safe from the terrorism many of us experience at the hands of some police officers or agencies of the government who breach our privacy and ignore our rights, often

in pursuit of their own agendas.

The excitement of this text is that God will be a moving fence around us. He will be an invisible presence that goes where we go. We will be "a town without walls" because where we go, he goes. So Zechariah introduces this text, not with one "Ho" but with two, "Ho, Ho!" That means this is great news to believers, security is come!

Zechariah reminds of that we are safe, security, and protected by the power of the almighty God who will not suffer our foot to be moved.

So when we hear the words, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" this season, we should not think of chestnuts roasting on an open fire, but let's be reminded that this season is about the coming of God's promise. For us "Ho, Ho, Ho!" should mean: safety, security and protection!

Exciting Announcement

Finally, brothers and sisters, this season reminds us that we all have something to be excited about.

On the street corners the man in the red suit can only get us excited about shopping, buying and receiving gifts.

But, Ho, Ho, Ho! There's something we all have to be excited about and that's the goodness of the Lord!

Whenever we start talking about the goodness of the Lord, we get excited!

We get excited when we are sick sick, he's adoctor in our sick rooms!

When I'm in trouble he is my refuge and my strength!

When I'm weak he is the strength of my life!

When I'm low, he picks me up and turns me around!

When I need a blessing he's always on time!

We get excited because

—He's a shelter in a time of storm!

—He's a bridge over trouble water!

—He's a lawyer for every courtroom!

—He's a rock in a weary land!

I have tried him and I know he satisfies!

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a:

—Mountain that he didn't help me to climb;

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Cross that he didn't help me to bear

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Battle that he didn't help me to fight;

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Enemy he didn't help me defeat!

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Darkness that he didn't help me see my way through;

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been Crises he didn't help me confront!

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Trial that he didn't help me endure;

Ho, Ho, Ho there has never been a Burden he didn't help me to carry!

Ho, Ho, Ho a child was born in Bethlehem!

His name was Jesus try Jesus!

He lived 33 long years and died on Calvary!
The buried him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning
Ho, Ho, Ho! He arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

No.. 9122-Christmas

After Christmas Visitor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 26, 2004

SCRIPTURE:"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.ÿAnd being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." Matthew 2:11-12

Introduction

Did you have visitors for Christmas? One ofthe joys of the Christmas season is the arrival of visitors whether they are family or friends. Sometimes our house guests or visitors have come a very long way to get to us. Many have stood in long lines at airports, spent grueling and uncomfortable hours on highway buses or drove extremely long distances, often through inclement weather for the expressed purpose of dropping in to share a joyous moment with us. During this time there is fellowship, lively conversation, food and good times. That's one of the joys of the Christmas season, sharing joyous moments with family and friends.

In Bethlehem, when Christ was born, there were special visitors who came on the night of his birth. Shepherds who were grazing their flocks by night came to visit the couple and to see the Christ child whose birth had been prophesied many years before.

Today, technology allows us to visit in many different ways, so we received our visitors in many ways. Some received phone calls from relatives and friends. Soldiers, away at war, often visit home by means of satellites and the internet. Many received telephone calls from distant places with warm words and exciting news. Others received letters and cards from friends and acquaintances that brightened up your day. Still others were more traditional, they came in person to smile, stay awhile and leave.

There is one aspect of Christmas visitations that we should retain. We were ready for the arrival of the day. Not only were we ready but we actually looked forward to its coming and were prepared for any visitors. That's the way it should always be.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the woman who heard that the King was coming to visit her house, so she began to eagerly prepare. As she looked for the king, a man dressed in ragged clothes knocked on her door asking for water. She told the man she had no time to give him water because she was waiting on a visit from the

king. A while later, a beggar knocked, asking for food. She brushed him aside as well because she was expecting a visit from the king. A third man was a cripple who needed help, but the woman was too busy for him as well. As the day came to a close, the woman was disappointed. She had been notified that the king would visit her home but he did not come. She complained to the palace officials and soon received a reply that read, "His majesty the King paid a visit to your home on the day appointed, not once but three times. First he came as a man seeking water, then as a man seeking food, then as a cripple. On all three occasions you would not receive him. He came to bring you blessings but you refused him, he shall not return."

We should be ready for any way that the Lord chooses to visit us, because anytime he comes, he comes to bring us news from heaven, advice and direction, or blessings from his abundance, saying "Behold I stand at the door and knock." When he knocks, we should be ready to entertain him.

As Christians, we are always mindful that we don't know the day or hour that the Lord will visit us in the days to come. We should be ready to receive him in any manner that he makes his appearance and to graciously entertain his presence and receive his gifts.

Exposition

This text focuses on a group of astrologers, known as Magi, who visited the Christ child after Christmas.

The Magi, often called "Wise Men" came to Bethlehem from the "East." We don't know how far from the East they traveled. If the distance was real far they could have been from China. If it was not so far, then these wise men could have traveled from what we know today as Iran or Iraq. In either instance, they would not have been able to travel from China or Iraq overnight, it would have taken about two years at the least, even more depending upon the distance.

While many paintings show the Magi along with the Shepherds bowing at the manger on Christmas night, it is more likely that the Magi made their arrival after Christmas, about two years later.

There are several clues to this mystery between verses 11 and 16 of this text. When the Magi arrived, they found Mary and Joseph in a house, not in a manger as they were on Christmas night. (v11). That same verse refers to Jesus as a child not as an infant, indicating time had passed. Verse 16 notes that when the wise men stopped in Jerusalem looking for the Christ child, Herod devised a plot to have him killed. Suspecting the child was at least two years old, he ordered the slaughter of boys two years old and under, to rid himself of a possible competitor to the throne. These three notations indicate that the Magi were not Christmas visitors but were after Christmas visitors who came, unannounced and unexpected to bring gifts to the child and his family. Had they brought those gifts on Christmas night, Mary and Joseph would have given a different offering eight days after Christ's birth at verse 24. Here they made a required offering because of the birth, but they gave the poor man's offering of two pigeons. It would have been a much bigger offering had they

received presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh from the Magi.

On Christmas night, people knew that a child was going to be born. The angels had announced it to Mary and Joseph and to the shepherds. Visitors were expected. Two years later, Mary and Joseph were probably not expecting more visitors to see the Christ Child, but they were received graciously and their home was blessed as a result.

Divine Visitors

The visitors who came to Mary and Joseph were divinely appointed. They came bringing inspiration, adoration, and blessings. Whether it was Christmas night or years later, Mary and Joseph were ready to receive heavenly visitors. In a similar sense we should also be ready whenever circumstances, appointed by God are visited upon us.

GOOD NEWS: When the shepherds visited they brought good news. In the course of a year, God often brings good news to families. Like Mary and Joseph, we sometimes get our good news in the strangest and most awkward circumstances. Many of us would have been angry that they were shut out of the INN, forced to give birth in a cave-like manger. In the midst of that difficulty there was good news announced in heaven. No matter how difficult our situations get in life, we should always look for the good news from heaven.

The good news is that God is still on the throne and is working out his will in the lives of men each and every day.

The good news is that though we may not have all that we want in life and are far short of our own expectations, God is still blessing us.

To hear that good news we must study and listen to his word and be ready for him to speak.

PROTECTING HAND: When Herod sent word to kill all of the baby boys, an Angel warned Joseph of the approaching danger and the grace of God guided the family to Egypt, sheltered from harm. Because Joseph was a praying man he was able to received the Angelic visitor that warned him and prepared him for tough times ahead. In the same way, God visits us. He warns us of impending danger and gives us direction. Yet, we cannot receive divine visitations unless we are prepared to receive them. We receive direction from God usually in our prayer time and private meditations. In our quiet time, God directs us and shows how he will protect us.

When God visits he reveals to us the danger of certain actions we may take.

When God visits he shows us what to do and reassures our souls that we are safe in his arms.

No wonder the song writer declares that, “He walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known!”

BLESSINGS: When the Magi came to Mary and Joseph they brought great blessings. For Mary and Joseph it was Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. When God visits our lives he brings great blessings. We should always be ready to receive him,

for we don't know when or how he will cause opportunity to knock on our doors.

When a job opening appears, that's God knocking at your door!

When a financial blessing is made available, that's God knocking at your door!

When we recover from sicknesses, overcome addictions and rise above difficulties, these are blessings that were left behind when God unexpectedly knocked on our doors!

We should be ready, we don't know when he will come to visit us.

When he comes to bring us a blessing open the door and let him in!

Visitors Leave Differently

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should follow the example of those who visited Mary and Joseph, and do what they did after Christmas; they told everyone about the goodness of the Lord.

When the Shepherds returned from their visit they were praising God for they had seen the Christ Child.

When the Magi returned, the scripture says they did not go back the way they came, but returned "another way.

Likewise, after Christmas, we who have been in the presence of God should tell what we saw and heard when God visited us.

What we tell should be from our own experience. There was no experience for the shepherds like seeing the Christ Child themselves. When they told others, they gave a testimony about something they had experienced themselves.

Those who are preparing to leave the city, returning to far destinations, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of family get togethers, reunions, fine foods and fellowship. It is a story of God's love.

Those who are taking down decorations and packing them away, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of beautifully decorated homes, bright colors and festive spirits. It is a story of how the love of God brought joy and hope into the hearts of every family member.

Those who are still carrying out the bags of wrappings, ribbons and boxes that contained so many presents, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of opened presents, gifts given and gifts received. It is a story of how God loved the world so much that he gave the greatest gift.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Every Saint has a story to tell!

It is the story that began in Bethlehem and ended in Jerusalem!

It is a story that began with a borrowed manger and ended with a borrowed cross and an empty tomb!

It is a story that began in the darkness of night, but ended Early Sunday morning!

It is the story that Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to this earth, died and rose again that we might have a chance to everlasting life!

No. 9123-New Year

Possess
And Be Blessed

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2, 2004

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.ÿAre they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh? For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day. Deuteronomy 11:26-32

Introduction

Do you have a plan for the new year? Have you set some goals and objectives for this year? Often we make resolutions and decisions about the new year. We have resolved that we are going to do things differently, live more productively and achieve desired results. Often our plans are very imaginative and creative, yet each year we seem to end the year having just marked time. The plans were good. The ideas were good, but somehow all of our best plans never got any further than the planning stage. In fact, they always seem to fizzle just days after we get started. Everything always seems to go wrong.

Now that the new year has begun each of us must analyze our previous year and make a determination about our approach this year.

There may be three things we need to do differently this year if we intend to make this the year that we take possession of what God has in store for us. First, we will need to change our perspective. Our entire life circumstance has a completely new look when we see it from a different position. A tree looks big when we stand it front of it. It looks small from the window of an airplane. The difference is perspective. The same is true with our problems and challenges. They look big when they are close, they are smaller from God's perspective. This year, it may be better if we see our goals from a godly perspective. Then we can see them clearly and will not be intimidated by the size of the task. Secondly, we may need to change our outlook or expectations.

We can't possess what's in store for us if we don't really expect to succeed. If we enter a challenging situation expecting to fail, that failed outlook will keep us from achieving our goal. Thirdly, we need to see what we want to do from the view point of what can be done with God's help. That's called seeing life through God's eyes.

That's when we start seeing every problem as an opportunity for God to do a mighty thing.

As Christians, we know that God has great things planned for us in the coming year. We plan to possess what he wants us to have and be blessed. To achieve that end we plan to rid ourselves of the curses that plagued us last year as we obediently work to possess the promises the new year offers.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it prepared to enter into the promised land, faced with the prospect of obeying God or living in disobedience.

Just before his death, Moses gave instructions to Israel about entering the new land. He told the people that they would make it to the promised land, but once there they would have to decide the terms upon which they would attempt to possess the land.

This decision was to be made early, and it would be characterized by two mountains that sat side by side, Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. To symbolize their choices six of the tribes were told to climb Mt. Gerizim and six tribes sent representatives up Mt. Ebal. In the valley below the Priests with the Ark of the Covenant and all the people waited. Then the entire nation looked to Mt. Gerizim and heard blessings pronounced on those who chose to possess the land in accordance to God's holy law. When they finished, they turned to Mt. Ebal and heard curses pronounced on all of those who came into the new land with an attitude of disobedience to God.

The two mountains were a striking contrast. Mt. Gerizim was very fertile and rich. It symbolized the way God would bless the obedient. The other mountain was Mt. Ebal. Scholars say it was named Ebal because the name means "barren." Ebal was barren, dry and stony. It represented the outcome of the possession efforts of the disobedient.

Unique to the situation is the fact that both mountains were situated in a region that was not conducive to fertility. Gerizim would be fertile not because of any natural attributes but only because the providence of God would make it so. The only difference between Gerizim and Ebal is the favor of God. Without his divine hand, both would have the same result, barrenness.

The two mountains were spiritually important for Israel because they represented the worst and best prospects for the future. As they stared at the two mountains, it was clear that curses would result in bad times, but the favor and blessing of God would be much more preferred.

Whether they would make it to the promised land was not a question. Both mountains were located on the "Other side of Jordan." What they would do once there, was the decision the people had to make. They had to decide whether to try

to possess their dreams while operating under God's curse, or whether to possess the land while enjoying God's favor.

At the threshold of their new experience, they had to decide how they would stand with God in the days ahead.

Discipline of Possession

There is a discipline associated with Possession. To possess and be blessed we must establish a personal discipline designed to possess that which God has in store for us. For 40 years Israel was content with its life in the wilderness. Their routine was rather mundane: Each morning they arose, went outside and gathered manna that had appeared overnight, drank water from the rock, took a few quick peeks at the pillar of cloud that hovered over the camp, did a few chores and their day ended. They made it through a day, but the did not come one step closer to possessing what God had in store for them. Possessing requires something different. It requires a new discipline and even a new way of thinking to possess what God has waiting for them on the other side of Jordan.

Is it possible that our daily regimen last year was similar to that of Israel in the wilderness. Each day we arose, ate some food, did a few chores or went to work or school, touched based with a few friends, came home, watched some television and went to bed. For many people, with a few modifications, that was their life last year. There is nothing inherently wrong or evil in that routine. However, it is an existence approach to life rather than a possession approach. An existence approach only wants to make it through each day. If the day closes without a sickness, tragedy, accident, or major frustration, we concluded that it was a good day. Many people experienced 365 such days last year. They made it through.

If we intend to do more than simply make it through this year, then we must switch from an existence mode to a possession mode. That means our whole approach to life shifts from "making it through" to possessing what God has for me. For Israel, that meant learning to do things differently. To possess the promised land they had to learn new skills. Farming was new to most of them who grew up in the wilderness. They had to learn the technology of the day and develop ways to maintain themselves. The land that they were destined to possess would be one that required them to do everything differently from the past.

If you are considering switching into a possession mode this year consider these attitudes:

READ AND THINK POSITIVELY: To fully possess and be blessed, you must read and think about ennobling things each day. Mark your bible with seven passages that you intend to read each week, one each day. Walk out of your door with the power of the word on your mind. Step out ready to possess and be blessed. Don't think "survival" think-possession. Don't think make my quota, think, "exceed my quota." Don't think, "pass the test" think, "Ace the test." This requires a transformation in the way you think. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove

whatÿis that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Mind transformation occurs when we become selective about what we read, the videos we watch, the music that we listen to. Mentally and spiritually, we are what we read, think and hear. This year, let God's word, spirit lifting music, soul enhancing movies and videos change your mode from existence to possession.

DUMP THE GARBAGE: To fully possess and be blessed, we must rid ourselves of people, places and things that trashed our lives last year. There were some people whose presence in our lives cursed us last year. Some places we went last year brought curses upon us. Some things we did last year, brought us nothing but trouble. If we are going to possess what God has in store for us for the coming year we will need to take out the trash. There is very little improvement you can make to your house or apartment if all of the garbage from last year is in your bedroom! When trash builds up in your life it stinks. If you don't take out the trash in your house, the stench will fill your house and get into your clothes. Everywhere you go, the stench will follow you, like a curse. If last year's garbage is in your living room, kitchen and closets. If your whole life is filled with last year's trashy people, places and things, the first thing we will need to do to possess what God has for us is "take out the trash!"

TRUST AND OBEY: To fully possess and be blessed, we must trust and obey God. Israel moved into the unknown. They were about to possess a land that was new to them, come face to face with people who intimidated them and face insurmountable obstacles at Jericho and other places. To possess, they would have to trust God completely. Whatever new frontier God has put in front of us, requires our complete trust in him to fully possess it. Whether it is a new career, business opportunity, educational pursuit, or a change in life-style, we cannot possess it without trusting in God. That's why David said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and Lean Not Unto thine own understanding." To trust God means to courageously go forward. It does not mean you will not be nervous, cautious, and careful. It means that you will not be intimidated by the prospect of failure; you will "walk by faith and not by sight." As you trust, you will also live in obedience to God's commands. Obedience does not guarantee success, but it does guarantee God's favor. Obedience does not insure that everything will be easy for you, but it causes the favor of God to show you a safe route through a stony, pit filled road. This year, decide to trust God to make it happen for you. Obey his commands and watch him turn stony roads and infertile lands into valleys of productivity.

Posses and be Blessed

Finally brothers and sisters, every believer should go forward into the future, confident that if God goes with us we can possess whatever is for us and be blessed.

Israel chose to march forward in faith, trusting in God. Their journey into the promised land resulted in unbelievable accomplishments. The Jordan rolled back and they walked through on dry ground. The Walls of Jericho tumbled down and the sun

stood still.

Because they were blessed their march into the promised land was blessed.

Every child of God should take courage and move into the future with the same confidence. As long as God is by our side, he will strengthen our heart.

Moses found himself faced with the Red Sea, but found that sea waters can roll back and make a dry path, when God stands by your side.

Joshua found himself faced with the high walls of Jericho, but found that even high and well fortified walls can tumble down when God stands by your side.

A widow woman whose barrel of food had run low found that, there is always bread from heaven when God stands by your side.

Hezekiah received his death notice and all the family was called in, but he found out that even death has no power, when God stands by your side.

When the Lord is with you, it won't matter how rocky the road or how high the mountain. When the Lord is with you there is:

-Peace in the midst of your Problems

-Calm in the midst of your crises

-Gladness in the midst of your sorrows

-Assurance in the midst of your affliction

I don't know about you but I have decided that I need the Lord to stand by me. If the Lord stands by me, he'll give me a:

-light to shine in my darkness

-Straight path to walk, when I can't find my way

-Lift up when I've fallen down

-Strong hand to hold, when I'm feeling weak

No wonder the old warriors sing "Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race, I can't run this race alone!"

As the new year begins, we should make ourselves a commitment to stay with the Lord.

Jesus, is a way maker, bridge builder and problem solver

Jesus, who died and rose from the grave will stand by your side if you'll just call him!

When the storms of life are raging, stand by me!

When the world is tossing me, like a ship out on the sea, thou who rulest wind and water... Stand by me!

No. 9124-Blessings

FUBU Blessings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 8, 2004

SCRIPTURE: The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psalm 126:3 ; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20

Introduction

Has anyone ever done something for you and you sensed that it was special and personal? We like the personal touch. We like knowing that we are not just a face in the crowd. The generic card is fine, but most people read the personal note on the side before they read the pre-printed note on the card, because the personal note is for us. Gifts that are hand made are personal. Generics get the job done but personalization is more effective.

We are impressed when things are for us and nobody but us.

FUBU is a popular clothing company that began in 1992 in the home of Daymond John who came up with the idea to make and sell his own tie-top hats as a means of making "easy money." He mortgaged his home for $100,000 and turned half of it into a factory and the other half into living space for he and several neighborhood friends that began what they called "Team FUBU"-The name FUBU identified a clothing line that is "For us and By Us." The "us" was obviously the Hip Hop Generation both Black and white.

The idea of something being "For Us and By Us" suggests that whatever is being offered is uniquely for a targeted group and comes from persons associated with the target group. Thus, FUBU took off and is now a major brand name around the nation and in many parts of the world.

Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address expressed a similar enthusiasm. He promoted our national government as being a government "Of the people, by the people and for the people." It had a certain uniqueness that cannot be denied.

Biblical History has shown that God often identified nations, races, families and even individuals and made them special targets of blessings and special considerations over the years. The Children of Israel were once God's special race, or chosen people, and were given the benefit of his protection, grace and blessings. Even the Messiah himself came to the world as a member of this special chosen race. The family of

Abraham was blessed with abundance over the years as was the family of David and others. Their families received blessings that were uniquely targeted to them, according to God's purposes. There have been millions of individuals who have been targeted to receive special blessings from God, for reasons they have not been able to comprehend, but were obviously according to his purpose.

The ways that God blessed believers varied. Sometimes he blessed them with wealth and expanded their territories as he did with Abraham and Jabez. Sometimes he blessed them with ingenuity as he bless Jacob who could take any bad situation and turn it into good one. Sometimes he blessed them with bold spirits such as he did with Elijah and Elisha. At other times his blessings involved healings such as those given to thousands of blind, cripple, and mentally ill people who followed Christ.

As Christians, we know that all blessings come from God. He showers us with blessings daily and gives us the benefit of his benevolence. What he gives us are FUBU blessings- that are For Us and Nobody But us! In return we should give him the best that we have to offer.

Exposition

This text focuses on the special ways in which God blessed Israel and Christ blesses believers with blessings that are for us and nobody but us.

Israel enjoyed the special favor of God for many years. God raised them from a slave population to a rising world power under Solomon. All along their journey they took pride in being God's chosen people. Why God chose them remains a mystery, but it was evident that God was keeping a promise made to Abraham many years before, to make a great nation out of his descendants.

There were blessings that seemed to be for them and nobody but them. In Egypt when famine covered most of the land, there was food and fresh water for them, and nobody but them.

When they traveled through the wilderness, there was manna from heaven and quail meat everyday, prepared for them and nobody but them.

Why? It certainly was not because of their goodness or strong faith. They constantly complained, lost faith and wanted to go back. It was only the grace of God.

When David wrote Psalm 126 he reflected on the ways that God, "turned the captivity of Zion." It was a special act that brought joy to their hearts and singing on their lips. They felt special again because "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Writing to the Galatians the Apostle Paul noted the personal nature of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. Within the plurality of the "whole world" that is noted in John 3:16, he made it clear that the sacrifices of Christ were "for me." He personalized it with his own blood and narrowed the field of those eligible for salvation to those who believed. His sacrifice on Calvary would be for those believers and nobody but them.

Whether it's the Old Testament or the New Testatment, God's method is the

same. He showers blessings on believers that seem to be "For us and nobody but us."

Why Is He Blessing Me?

When things go wrong, we often ask, "Why me?" We review our lives to see if we have done something to deserve the conditions we face. The same should be true when we have been blessed. We should ask, "Why Me?"

BLESSINGS HAVE PURPOSE: Whenever we are blessed we should remember that God doesn't do anything by chance. There is a reason.

There is a reason he allowed us to get our jobs and others were turned down. There is a reason we were spared losses of death and tragedy that others face. There is a reason we are not standing in a soup line for a meal every day. Nothing happens by chance. If God is blessing us there is a purpose. Each blessing we receive is usually connected to the expansion of the kingdom of God in some way.

EXPECTATIONS FOLLOW UNDESERVED BLESSINGS: Most of us already know that we do not deserve the blessings we have received. We have not lived up to our spiritual potential. Yet, God keeps blessing us; why? In Luke 13: 6-9 Jesus gave the parable of the fig tree that was not producing any fruit. The order was given to cut the tree down but was suspended when the gardener asked for a chance to give it special treatment for a while. If after such special treatment, it still did not produce, then it could be cut down. That tree received special fertilization and pampering but had produced nothing. However there was an expectation that the tree would ultimately bear fruit. The fact that we have been blessed in our negligence, does not suggest that God is pleased with our lack of service. It means that he is dunging the fig tree. There is an ultimate expectation that the tree should bear fruit or the special treatment will cease. We are expected to be more than recipients of blessings; we are expected to produce fruit for the kingdom of God.

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING: Whatever the reason that God chooses to bless us, we should remember that he has individually selected us to receive what it is that we have received. Consider the billionaire who rose to riches on the belief that God will make a way. One day he announced that he would give $10 million to an unnamed person in an open ceremony. He rented a football stadium an announced that the person who would receive the gift must be present and wear a locket that is a family heirloom. Over 150,000 people showed up on the appointed day, all wearing lockets in hopes of receiving the $10 million prize. After two days of reviewing each person the billionaire left, disappointed because he did not find the person he sought. However, sitting on the curb next to his limosine was a man wearing a familiar locket. When the billionaire saw it he asked the man to open it and it revealed half a picture of a Negro woman. The billionaire opened his hand and fitted the piece of a picture that he had carried all his life to the one in the locket. "You are the one." He said. "You shall receive my prize." The homeless man asked, "Why me? Because of this old locket my great grandmother gave me?" The billionaire explained that when he was a child his nanny rocked him and sang to him. One day he played with her locket and

tore the picture inside. He cried because there was no way he could put the picture back together. She didn't get angry, she just kept saying, "The Lord will make a way, child." I don't know what happened to her but I remember her words, the Lord will make a way." I made that the motto of my life and in her memory son, I give you this $10 million in hopes that this might be the way to put the picture back together again.- Go and be a blessing to someone else."

Why is God blessing us? Why is he being so kind to us when we certainly don't deserve what he has given us? Has God made a mistake? Did he really intend to bless someone else and we received it because of a heavenly error? Nothing God does is by mistake or without forethought and purpose. If we have been the recipient of blessings we know are undeserved, it is obvious God has some reason for treating us with so much favor. What that reason is escapes us, but we know it exists. One thing is for sure, if God is blessing us, he definitely expects us to be a blessing to someone else.

For Us and Nobody But Us

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that the greatest blessing of all is salvation, and it's for us and nobody but us.

We are excited when we think about the fact that despite our weaknesses and short comings that God chose do perform a great act of love for us and nobody but us.

Each believer should get joy in knowing that our relationship with Christ is personal. We are not lost in a cloud of believers. What he does, he does for me, and nobody but me!

When Paul wrote to the Galatians he was excited that Christ loved us so much that he would make great personal sacrifices with no other motive than to do it "for me and nobody but me."

That means that everyday we should thank God for our FUBU blessings, because what we get is for us and nobody but us.

Believers should remember that the sacrifices of the savior were personal. Christ had no other reason for giving his life than to make a way for us.

Christ had no ulterior motives and nothing to gain himself. His sacrifice on Calvary was a pure act of love and affection. It was, without a doubt, for us and nobody but us.

The people of Mesopotamia built a great tower to make a name for themselves. However, when Jesus decided to pick up the old rugged cross it was not to make a name for himself. It was already written that "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" that he is Lord of Lords. When Jesus died, it was not for a name but he died for us and nobody but us.

Solomon built a great palace to have a beautiful place to live. But when Jesus decided to go to Calvary it wasn't to secure a palace in glory for himself the heavens were already his throne room and earth his footstool. I heard him declare in John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Sin used us and did things to us; but the grace of God did something for us, and nobody but us.

Sin did something to us and pushed us down, but God's grace did something for us, it picked us up. He did it for us and nobody but us.

Sin did something to us and left us filthy, but grace did something for us and washed us in the blood. He did it for us and nobody but us.

Sin did something to us and placed us on sinking sand, but grace did something for us and placed our feet on solid ground.

He did it for us and nobody but us.

Not only has the Lord done things for us in the past, but every day he's doing something "for us."

In the morning, we get a FUBU blessing. He's doing something for us and nobody but us!

In the noonday, we get a FUBU blessing. He's doing something for us and nobody but us!

In the midnight hour, we get a FUBU blessing. He's doing something for us and nobody but us!

Christ carried an old rugged cross, not for himself, but for us and nobody but us.

They drove nails in his hands, not for crimes he had done, but he did it for us and nobody but us.

He died out on Calvary, not for himself, but he did it for us and nobody but us.

But early Sunday morning, he did something else for us. He arose from the grave with a victory over death and the grave.

Because he died for us and nobody but us, he established our FUBU rights to the tree of life, it's for us and nobody but us!

Because he rose for us and nobody but us, we have a FUBU claim on the future. Eyes have not seen all of the wonderful things he has prepared, for us and nobody but us.

No. 9125-King Day

The Meaning of the Dream

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 16, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof." Daniel 2:3-6

Introduction

Have you ever had a dream but could not understand its meaning? It's a frustrating experience to dream strange dreams and feel they have some significance, but the answer evades every attempt at interpretation. We've had a few strange dreams in our lives that were really weird. As we told the dream to our friends or associates, they laughed with us, but still we were puzzled about the meaning of the dreams. It is even more frustrating to have a dream and not remember it, especially if it was a good dream. That's when you strain your brain trying to recollect the details of a dream that clicked through your mind in the night. No matter whether they were great dreams or small dreams, we struggle to find the meaning of our dreams.

The experts say that our dreams have meaning because they reflect in a jagged way, our inner mind and soul. In our dreams, images tumble around that seem to have little meaning, but often they do. For example, the experts say dreams about airplanes involve our concerns about reaching new destinations. Plane crashes in our dreams often represent failure or uncertainty about direction. Dreams about doors are said to represent being shut out or an opportunity unlocked. Dreams about tall and significant trees often refer to power and greatness; when such trees are cut or fall down it points to a flaw of some kind.

Telephones in dreams reflect communication. Those who dream about dialing wrong numbers, phones that don't work, or the inability to get to the phone are said to reflect frustration over difficulties in communication. Those who dream about calling 9-1-1 are calling out for help in their dreams.

Our nocturnal dreams reflect our desires, fears, hopes and frustrations. The experts say it is very difficult for a person to sleep without a dream. So, all of us need to dream.

Beyond the dreams of our sleep there are also the dreams of our waking hours. Just as we need to dream to sleep, we also need to dream to spiritually thrive and emotionally survive. Dreams propel us and sustain us. Those who want to stagnate us need only to take away our dreams.

In the history of the African-American struggle we have been sustained by the dream of freedom. When we were slaves we dreamed of being free to work our own land, chart our own course and make our own destiny. We dreamed of being fully recognized under the law. We dreamed of educational opportunities for our children and the chance to succeed without the hindrance of racial prejudice. We dreamed of a colorful world where color would be recognized and celebrated but not used as a diminishing factor or a barrier to success.

If you want to kill a person, a family, or a race of people, stop them from dreaming!

Consider the slave master who made a point of trampling on any dreams that his slaves would ever have of becoming free. Even when it came to the slaves dreams about heaven the master thought it important to trample those dreams too.

One day the master called in his favorite house slave Tom. "Tom" said the master. "I had a dream last night." The old slave who had a reputation for being quick witted and wise, bowed his head, faked ignorance and said "you did Massa, lets hear bout' yo' dream!" The master said "I dreamed that I died and there was some sort of mixup and I ended up in Nigra heaven. It was an awful looking place. There was Nigras everywhere. The streets were muddy. The buildings were falling down. Watermelon rinds and pig's feet were laying everywhere. It was a horrible looking place." The old slave was quick to answer but he had to find a way to say it just right where the master, who wasn't too bright, would not get the point.

"Massa. I'se glad that you mention that, because it be a strange thang because I had a strange dream too. I dreamed I died and there was a mixup and I ended up in slave master's heaven. It was a real pretty place. It had streets that were shiny and yellow like Gold. It had 12 pretty gates that were smooth and pearly white. They had rows and rows of big houses called mansions and they lined every street. There wasn't no trash laying around, no water melon rinds and no hog pens. It was a real clean place.

"There was just one thang that looked kinda strange ...there wasn't a single soul in the whole place!"

If you want to kill a child, tell him that he is nobody and is doomed to failure! Kill his dream! Tell him that because he's slow in school that he can never learn! That's what they told Albert Einstein but he wouldn't accept that interpretation. Tell him that because he stutters that he will never be an actor; that's what they told James Earl Jones but he wouldn't believe it! Tell him that because he's real short he'll never play basketball; that's what they told Spud Web but he wouldn't believe it!

If you want to kill a relationship, let something or someone kill your dream and it will die on the vine!

The significance of Martin Luther King's dream is that it presents an achievable goal to us that keeps us living, striving and pursing the elusive dream of freedom and respect. Yet, even today there are those who are interpreting the dream to mean

everything except what Dr. King taught. Then there are others who have forgotten the dream altogether and have made one of their own.

As Christians, we share the Christian dream. We dream of a world where everyone recognizes the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We dream of a world where the Christ of Martin Luther is King.

Exposition

This text focuses on Daniel as he is challenged to both reveal and interpret the meaning of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel was a prophet with the unusual gift of interpreting dreams through the revelation of God. This text gives us a clear example of his exercise of this unusual gift in the courtyards of Babylon. Like Joseph who also interpreted the dream of Pharaoh in the Book of Genesis, Daniel was called upon to tell the king the meaning of a dream that would have far reaching impact upon his kingdom.

The King had a dream that seemed to have a divine origin but he could not remember the dream and therefore had no idea what the dream meant. The king ordered all of his astrologers and soothsayers to tell him what he dreamed, under the threat of death. He did not know what he dreamed, but was sure that if he heard it again, he would recognize it. He needed to know what he dreamed, but they were unable to accommodate his demand. He threatened to cut them in pieces and destroy their families if they could not tell the meaning of the dream because "the thing is gone from me." -It bothered him, not to remember his dream.

Daniel told the king his dream and interpreted its meaning. He dreamed that he saw a great statue that had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron but feet of iron and clay. The statute would be toppled by a stone cut out without hands and brought to the ground. The dream represented the great kingdoms of the earth that would succeed and gain greatness in the land. The stone represented the coming kingdom of Christ that would grow without the power of any human hands but only by the power of God. It would ultimately be the power of the world, with Christ as its king.

For his explanation of the dream and interpretation, Daniel was rewarded with high esteem and position in the land, because he knew the meaning of the dream.

The Thing is Gone From Me

King Nebuchadnezzar was troubled because the "the thing has gone from me." He did not know what he dreamed. As our nation, reflects on the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, some 45 years after he announced it in the summer of 1963, there are many who can say, "The thing is gone from me."

What is the dream? America has lost sight of the dream and in many ways 'the thing has gone from us."

While many focus on the conclusion of Dr. King's famous speech which summed

up his dream, many have forgotten the essence of the dream detailed in the body of his speech that day in Washington D.C.

Many have forgotten that he dreamed about an end to poverty in America in which the poor are on an "island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity." Many have forgotten that the main thrust of Dr. King's movement was to lift the Negro out of poverty and despair.

Many have forgotten that his was a call for justice in a land where white policemen were killing and beating our fathers, sons and daughters and walking away unscathed. Hear his words, "And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality." Many have forgotten his demand that "Justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." -The thing has gone from us.

Many have forgotten his call for America to cash its promissory note to Black America that would open the door of opportunity for us, breaking down barriers of racism and hatred.

Many have forgotten his call for us to challenge unjust laws and his denunciation of wars waged against impoverished people for profit and gain.

Because "the thing is gone from us" we have made a dream of our own and proceeded to interpret it.

The dream we created uses statistics that document poverty to get grants for the well connected at the expense of the poor.

The dream we created becomes silent about police brutality, killings and police murders if our protest will injure our political friends.

The dream we created is distant and foreign to the Dr. King's dream. We many ways we can say like Nebuchadnezzar, "the thing is gone from me."

The Meaning of the dream

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God gives a meaning to every God-given dream!

Joseph had a dream that his brothers would one day bow down to him. They became angry, but there was a meaning in the dream! He became the prime minister of Egypt and they bowed down to him!

The butler and the baker had dreams! But there was a meaning to their dreams. One man died while the other was released from prison.

It's a good thing to have a dream and know what the dream means.

It's an even better thing to refuse to let anyone misinterpret your dream, trample it or cause it to die.

If we have a god-given dream that is empowered by the Holy Ghost, there is a meaning in your dream, don't let it die!

Abraham had a dream of the land of promise, though he wandered for many years in strange lands, his dream refused to die!

Moses had a dream of freedom and sovereignty for Israel, though he never made it to the Promised Land himself, his dream refused to die!

Martin Luther King had a dream of equality and brotherhood, though he was slain by an assassin's bullet, the dream refused to die.

But even greater than Abraham, Moses and Martin Luther King, there is Jesus, who went beyond merely having a dream, Jesus IS our dream.

Jesus is our dream of moving out of our:

—Hunger and acquiring a satisfied soul!

—Darkness and walking into the marvelous light

—Sinking sand experience and standing on the Solid Rock!

—Spiritual Slavery to complete spiritual freedom!

—Defeat into the glory of victory!

—Despair to unspeakable joy!

He is our dream of moving from "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world" to 'I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

There is meaning in the dream!

Because he was misunderstood he was rejected by the people in his own home town, but there was a meaning in the dream!

Because he dreamed of a new day he was persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees, but there was meaning in the dream!

Because they did not know who he was, they whipped him mercilessly all night long and tried him in hostile courts, but there was meaning in the dream!

Because they could not believe the essence of his dream, they hung him on a cross, stretched out between two thieves, but there was meaning in the dream!

Though buried in a borrowed tomb and guarded by soldiers the dream refused to die, for Early Sunday morning the Vision of Bethlehem, and the nightmare of Calvary became the resurrected dream of the world!

There is a meaning in his death, it means that because he died, I have a right to the tree of life!

There is a meaning to his resurrection; it means that because he lives, I can see tomorrow!

Because he lives……!

No. 9126-Youth

Heavenly Nicknames

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 23, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. Revelation 3:12

Introduction

Do you have a nickname? Many people have an official name, but they also have a nickname. Most of us have three names: Our official name, the short cut version of our name, and a nickname. Our official name is given to us at birth by our parents who chose our names for various reasons. A father named his son Martha because he knew he would always have to fight people because of the name and he wanted hid to be tough. The man named George wanted a son, but he got a daughter, so he named her Georgia. There are various reasons behind our official names. Sometimes we are often referred to by the shortcut version of our names. T-nan-zi-de-shun is often shortened to "T" and Me-man-de-meticia is shortened to "Me Me." Sometimes we often dislike our names and drop our official names and use our middle name or shortcut versions of our names.

Short cuts are not "nicknames." They are just short ways to say long and cumbersome names.

Nicknames often describe a hope, experience or a family designation. People, professions even states have nicknames. Louisiana is called the "Sportsman's Paradise." Florida is the "Sunshine State" and Missouri is called the "Show me" state.

Our heroes and superstars have names; we know "Shaq" means Oneal and "Iron Mike" means Tyson. Sometimes we never see the real name just the nickname, such as "Ice T" or "Ice Cube" or "Mr. T."

Many of our nicknames are often earned during our youth. They are usually associated with some memorable experience good or bad, to which we are associated. As we think of our friends and acquaintances, just recalling the nickname itself brings back many memories of our youth. Youth today, will earn a nickname or two by their behavior or exploits with their peers. These nicknames will follow them all of their lives.

Our parents pick our names, we pick what name we will use, but we seldom get to choose our nicknames. We can call ourselves whatever we want, but nicknames

that stick are usually given to us by others. It reflects the way others see us. Jesus assembled his disciples and asked, "Whom do men say, I am?" They gave him a variety of names that were used to describe him that ranged from "John the Baptist" to "Elijah." Peter concluded that "Thou art the Christ."

"The Christ" - it was a name that stuck for the young man who simply had one name which was "Jesus." That name embodied his mission on earth and was the sum total of his journey here. While many think that Jesus' name is Jesus Christ, with Christ as his surname, in fact Jesus only had one name "Jesus" who was from Nazareth, to distinguish him from Jesus who may have been from another city or town.

"The Christ" is what we would call a "nickname" because it described Jesus. "The Christ" is a name which means the "anointed one." The term "Christ" is used 514 times in the New Testament. In fact, it is used so much that many came to believe that it was part of Jesus' name, "Jesus Christ." Rather than being his name, it was really his nickname, a name which reflected how he was perceived among the people. Those who referred to Jesus as "the Christ" were those who followed his life and mission and were convinced that he was who he claimed to be- the savior.

If "Baby Face" describes the entertainer who had a face like a baby and "Scar face" describes Al Capone; if Madonna describes a singer and the Refrigerator describes a huge football player, what kind of nickname would describe our life experience?

If we were given a nickname to describe our Christian life, what would that nickname be? Native Americans take the names of animals to describe themselves. What would our nicknames be? Big Bear, because we are so strong, Lion because we are so bold; or mouse because we are so timid. If we always repeat what others say they may call us Parrot or Hawk if we appear to be a predator.

Like it or not, people have nicknames for us that seldom go away.

As Christians, we want to be known as a "Child of God." That's the name that is important to us and the only name of consequence that will matter when the roll is called up yonder.

Exposition

This text focuses on the close of a set of epistles written to the seven churches of Asia Minor telling them the evaluation of their service by the savior.

John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shared with the churches certain insights into their service. He prefaced many of his letters with the words, I know thy works, and closed them with "He that overcometh" which contained the promised reward of faithful believers.

In this summary written to the Church in Philadelphia, John tells of three types of names that the faithful can expect to receive from the Lord.

Matthew Henry says each believer will be a monumental pillar in the new temple of God upon which will be written the nicknames of the faithful.

The names written will be the name of God, in whose cause we engaged, whom we served, and for whom we suffered in this warfare; and the name of the city of God.

It is the name of the church of God, the New Jerusalem, which came down from heaven. On this pillar shall be recorded all the services the believer did to the church of God, how he asserted her rights, enlarged her borders, maintained her purity and honor.

The new name of Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the captain of our salvation will be assigned to us to reflect the quality and fervor of our service.

The name of God

John said in that great day, when the battle is over, in the temple of God, will be inscribed the name of God.

Today, we have a variety a names we call God, some are biblical; while some are from our experience.

When we are sick we call upon him as JEHOVAH-RAPHA, because that means, "I am the Lord that healeth thee.' We have learned that he is a healing God. When we are sick, it's good to know that Jehovah-Rapha is a great healer for whatever ails our body or soul.

When we can't see our way, we call on JEHOVAH-JIREH because that name means 'the Lord is our provider." When our supply of resources is running low, it is good to know that the Lord will provide.

When our money is gone and provisions have nearly disappeared, it is good to know Jehovah-jireh is available in such situations.

When there is confusion everywhere, we call on JEHOVAH-SHALOM because that name means that God is our peace. In this troubled world we must experience God as our peace. In times of confusion, many have found God to be a God of peace.

When there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to call upon Jehovah-shalom who brings peace in the midst of confusion.

When we have failed we called on JEHOVAH-NISSI because that name means the Lord is our banner of victory. He is the lord of hosts and commands the vast heavenly army. He will fight the battle for us and give us the victory. He will lift our head and honor us. We need not fear shame and failure when we have God as our Jehovah-Nissi.

Among the various names inscribed on the temple of God will also be the common names we use when we call upon God. It may be "Lord", "Lordy", "My God." We gave God these nicknames because they reflect the way we have experienced him in our lives.

Name of the Church

The second name that will be inscribed on the pillars of the temple will be the name of the church, the New Jerusalem.

This is the place where our service to the church, specifically to the local congregation will be recorded.

Here we will see our nicknames that will reflect our years of service. We don't know exactly how the names will be written but written somewhere on the pillars might be:

CHOIRBOY: For the man who sang faithfully in the choir.

BIG HEART: For the believer whose heart was open to others.

HANDY MAN: For the member who always fixes things that are broken.

SUPERTEACHER: For those who use their gifts to teach about the kingdom.

COOKIE: For those who baked, cooked and served others with their gift.

We are earning a nickname, whether we like it or not. We are often told the good nicknames to our faces. Behind our backs, our negative nicknames are mumbled such as:

BENCH MEMBER: The one who belongs to the church but does nothing in it.

BOSSY: The one who takes over and runs every project with a stern and dictatorial style.

MESSY: The one who enjoys dabbling in destructive conversation that tears down rather than builds up.

FREE LOADER: The one who enjoys the privileges of membership without paying their fair share.

ABSENTEE: The one who is seldom present when the congregation worships, serves or fellowships.

HUNGRYMAN: For the member who comes to fellowship only when food is served.

MOTORMOUTH: For the member who always talks through every worship service or NODOZ: for the member who sleeps through every worship.

Unfortunately, those who have negative nicknames won't find their names written in the temple of the Lord because none but the righteous, shall see God.

Our New Names

Finally, John said Jesus the Son of God will give every believer a new name.

In the new kingdom Jesus himself will rename the saints. He will take away the names given to us by our parents he will give us new names, that reflect our relationship with the kingdom of God.

It is not recorded what our new names will be, but only that the names will reflect our service to the savior.

The first two names reflect the names of God the father and our service to the city of God or the church. The last name will reflect our relationship with the savior. So verse 12 finds Jesus saying "I will write upon him my new name."

What nickname will Christ give us to describe our service?

Somebody may well be called FAITH, because when the whole world gave up they continued to trust in the Lord

Somebody may well be called COURAGE, because when others trembled in fear they remained bold, depending on the Lord

Somebody may well be called HOPE, because no matter how dark our way

became, they always believed that the Lord will make a way!

Somebody may well be called, LOYAL because no matter how many others abandoned the Old Ship of Zion they remained faithful to the church

Won't it be a great day when we all get to heaven and review the millions of names of the pillars of the temple and find our nickname written in the blood of the lamb?

Today youth are trying to develop a good name, there is no better nick than to be called that is better than a child of God.

It's alright to be called "Poochie" or "Sweetthang" or "big dawg" but it's even better to be recognized in heaven as a child of the King.

When you are in the family of God you are blessed with a powerful family name, the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:12 says "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The name of Jesus is known around the world and even in heaven. For Philippians 2:10-11 says, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus, somebody nicknamed him the King of Glory;

Jesus, somebody nicknamed him the Lord mighty in battle!

Jesus, somebody nicknamed him a bridge over troubling water!

Jesus, somebody nicknamed him King of Kings and Lord of Lord!

Jesus, who died on Calvary on rose on the third day.

One of these days he's coming back again to bring us a new name!

No wonder the song writer said, "I got a new name, over in glory and it's mine, mine!

No. 9127-Inspiration

Dancing In The End Zone

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 6, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod." 2 Samuel 6:14

Introduction

Have you ever been so happy you felt like dancing or shouting? If you have then you share the exuberation of those who achieve great goals and find it difficult to hold their peace or contain their excitement. Our responses to great news and victories may range from the power filled "Yes!" to actually getting from our seats shouting, dancing, hugging friends and celebrating. Usually our excitement mirrors our association with the history of the accomplishment. When we know the long struggle that led to the moment, it's hard to keep silent; and even harder to resist dancing, shouting and other forms of excitement.

We often see these great moments at athletic contests; when players achieve touchdowns. The fans are screaming and the players are excited too. But about 20 years ago a phenomenon began in the end zone. Young Black players began "dancing in the end zone" when Icky Woods began the Icky Shuffle. Through the 80's and 90's we saw a number of end zone routines by athletes who celebrated their touchdowns with a variety of dances, shuffles and steps. The end zone excitement was part of the game. The fans liked it and the players pushed to make touchdowns so that they could perform their end zone dance.

The owners were not amused. Referees have been instructed to flag anything that appears to be "excessive end zone celebration"

So, When Deion "Primetime" Sanders began his famous high step enroute to an interception or a touchdown the NFL began to crack down. In the year 2000, The St. Louis Rams were unstoppable and they knew it. They had a memorable team dance to reassure the opposing team and the St. Louis fans: The "bob and weave." Regardless which team member scored, several players would huddle in a circle and demonstrate the famed dance. At this point the refs had enough and began to unfairly penalize the Rams each time they did it.

But the end zone celebrations continued and began to become rather silly. In 2003 New Orleans Saints wide receiver Joe Horne's end zone dance included a cell phone antic. Terrell Owens of the Philadelphia Eagles had a Sharpie Signing routine that really irritated the owners. When he put the cell phone down and danced with the

cheerleaders, he was fined for that too. Last year the Detroit Lions were penalized for jumping on top of each other after a TD. They were excited for their pre-season victory after a miserable 2003 year.

What's interesting about NFL owners is that while they punished players for dancing in the end zone in real games, the NFL video games called "NFL Street" offered "style points" for players who danced in the end zone. Dancing in the end zone was OK if the owners made money, but not if the players and the fans had a little fun on their own.

Regardless to what we think about the end zone dances, one thing is certain, the only players who were dancing in the end zone were those who had scored touchdowns. It's hard to stop the excitement when victory is so near.

That's the way it was when Jesus came to town on Palm Sunday. The people were shouting and cutting palm branches and throwing them in the street. They shouted so loud that the officials warned Jesus to tell his followers to keep silent and he answered, "If these hold their peace, the rocks would cry out."

It's hard to hold your peace when God has done something good for you. You may not do a Dieon Sanders high step, or a bob and weave like the Rams but we have our own little private dance that cannot be denied. We simply can't hold our peace, once we make it to the end zone.

As Christians, we are eternally grateful for the blessings God has bestowed upon us. We never stop praising him and giving him glory for each of life's victories.

Exposition

This text focuses upon David as he danced a great dance in celebration of the return of the Ark of the Covenant.

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of the presence of God with Israel. It was golden cubical that was ordered constructed by Moses during the wilderness journey of Israel. It symbolized the presence of God with the people. The enemies of Israel noticed that they seemed to be victorious whenever they had the ark and the Philistines stole it from them. Yet it only brought them trouble and inflicted hemorrhoids on the men of each city that housed it.

Israel felt lost without the Ark. However, it was returned to Israel but was kept in a house and guarded for 20 years. David wanted the ark to play a greater role in the kingdom. God's presence was important. He ordered the ark removed from the house where it was kept and it was brought to Obed-edom with great fanfare. However, enroute one of the Levites inadvertently touched the ark while attempting to keep it from falling and was struck dead. While the ark brought trouble for the Philistines, it brought great blessings to Obed-edom.

David ordered a second attempt to get the ark to Jerusalem, especially when he heard of the great blessings that came to Obed-edom because of its three month presence (v10-11). When the Ark finally arrived in Jerusalem, after so many failures and having been in the hands of enemies, stored in a house for 20 years and out of public sight, David was overwhelmed.

David was so excited that he stripped off his clothes to his ephod, or what we would call underclothing. For a king to assume the ceremonial role of common priests, dancing and leaping with all of his might, celebrating before the people was considered undignified for a man of his status. If no one else in the kingdom said anything to him his wife Michal despised his naked dancing (v16). When she called him to task about it at verse 20 she was rebuked and never touched by David again. She remained childless all of her life.

David had achieved a victory for the Lord. He celebrated the return of God's presence in the life of the nation. He danced a dance of spiritual celebration. It was a moment of victory he would not be denied.

To dance in the end zone, you have to make a touch down

David danced in the streets of Jerusalem because he had scored a major victory for the home team. The ark was home at last. If the ark had not come home there would have been no dance.

If there is no achievement, there is no dance.

Today, there are many people who cannot dance an end zone dance because they are afraid to come out of the comfort zone. Those who succeed are those who are willing to run for the end zone, which requires a willingness to assume some risk.

To get to the end zone we must emerge from our comfort zone mentality, suit up and get in the game. It can't be won from the sidelines or from the comfort of our living rooms as we sit around and talk about what we should or should not do, but rarely do anything ourselves.

The comfort zone is attractive. In the comfort zone we lose very little, because nothing is at risk. Those who are in the comfort zone accept the status quo and settle for mediocrity. In Philippians 3:12-14 Paul says he didn't put much stock in what he had already attained but constantly pursued the elusive prize of the high calling of Christ. In verses 13-14 he says, "13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

To dance in the end zone we have to keep striving for the prize. We can't get comfortable because the devil never takes a vacation. He's constantly looking for an opening. We're looking for the end zone but the devil operates a zone defense in which he attempts to interrupt every person who wants to be a receiver of God's blessings.

There is no dance in the comfort zone. If you want to dance in the end zone you must be willing to emerge from your comfort zone and stand tall for the Lord.

We achieve our best results in life when we have a sense of urgency. That's when we really do our best. NFL statisticians have figured out that many teams score three times better in the last two minutes of the game than they do in the entire game. Why? It's the sense of urgency.

The problem with the comfort zone is that there is no sense of urgency; so we

become satisfied with where we are and we miss the big dance.

God's presence gives us power for the dance

Why did David want the ark of the covenant returned? Because it symbolized the presence of God!

Without God, no believer is able to achieve desirable spiritual goals. The game of life is draining, tiring and cumbersome. Somewhere along the way we run out of power and the end zone looks further away.

Even in a football game, team members who are well conditioned can run out of power. In 1965 the Florida Gators football team was mediocre at best. Struggling in the heat and humidity of the Deep South, the players were fighting a tougher opponent within themselves than they had ever fought on the gridiron - they had great difficulty finishing the game in champion-like form because they were dehydrated. So a team of University doctors developed a carbohydrate-electrolyte beverage that kept the team properly nourished throughout the game. Before the eyes of thousands of fans, the team's second half performance improved and in 1967 won the Orange Bowl. As you may know this beverage is on every sideline around the globe keeping athletes performing at their best. Of course, this beverage is known as Gatorade.

To make it to the end zone, at some point, every believer will need some spiritual "Gator Aide"-the boost needed to give them enough inspiration, motivation and drive to make it to the end zone. Gatorade gave the Florida Gators an edge over their opponents; the power of God gives every believer that same edge.

It's that edge that allows us to continue when everyone has stopped.

It's that edge that pushes us to get up when we have been knocked down!

It's that edge that urges us to go on when others have stopped!

It's that edge that gives us new spirit when we are completely dispirited.

On our way to the end zone, we need the power of God to aid us to achieve victory.

Dancing in the End zone

Finally, brothers and Sisters we must remember that the end zone dance is one man's celebration of a touch down in the game, but when the team wins, everybody joins the dance!

That's the unique nature of the end zone dance. It is often one man's celebration. At most, a few others on the team may join him in marking that big moment in the game.

However, when the game is over, and the favorite team wins, watch the people in the stands! Everybody will be dancing!

While the text focuses on David's Dance, one man's lone celebration, it did not mean David celebrated alone. Verse one tells us that there were 30,000 people in the celebration.

When the final victory is over all of God's children will be singing and shouting.

When God gives a single person a blessing or healing, you may sing and shout hallelujah!

When God has been good to us, we just feel like shouting!

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's a whole lot of shouting in the end zone.

Whenever we think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving in the end zone.

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole of lot foot patting in the end zone!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a whole lot of hand clapping in the end zone!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

Every time we think about the mountains we've climbed and the valleys in our way, we feel like dancing in the end zone!

He's been a lawyer in our courtrooms!

He's been a doctor in our sick rooms!

He's been a bridge over troubling waters!

We're shouting because of what he has done.

We're celebrating because of what we expect him to do.

We're excited because he's been good to us and we just can't keep it to ourselves.

But when the final victory is won, the whole congregation of the saints will be dancing in the end zone!

When God lifts one person from his sick bed and makes him whole again, that man and his family dance in the end zone, but when God establishes the new kingdom and announces that there will be no more sickness or pain, we'll all be dancing in the end zone!

When God frees one person from the destructive grip of Satan's hand, he will dance in the end zone, but when Satan is finally bound and cast into the everlasting people, we'll all be dancing in the end zone!

If you think there is dancing in the end zone at a football game, what do you think will happen the battle for this life is over?

If you think a super bowl is a great contest; let me tell you about a contest that happened at a place call Calvary!

It was a contest between those who were Patriots to the Roman and Ecclesiastical powers and those who could mount up on wings like Eagles and run, and not be weary, walk and not faint! Somebody said this man named Jesus may have a good record but he doesn't have a chance.

He has fed 5,000 with five loaves and two little fishes!

He has raised the dead and healed the sick.

But he doesn't have a strong defense. He believes in loving his enemies and turning the other cheek!

They crucified him on Calvary!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning.. he arose with all power in his hands

That’s not the end because one of these days, he’s coming back again and the saints will be…

Marching!

And Dancing in the end zone!

No. 9128-Anniv.-Womem

Sweet Berries on a high bush

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 12, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel. Isaiah 17:6

Introduction

Have you ever known people who accepted less than they deserved in life? There are many people who spend their lives with less than they deserve, always one step below where they could have been and one step away from what they deserve.

Historically, the Black woman in America has never given her just rewards. It has never recognized her beauty, respected her intelligence, embraced her industry or promoted her virtues. Despite her obvious strength, the black woman has always been seen with less than an appealing eye from the general American society.

Generally, Black women have had to promote themselves with positive self talk to remind themselves and each generation, that they should reach high, dream big and never accept anything less than they deserve.

Zora Neale Hurston, was one of the great black writers of the 20th century. In her prize winning Novel, "Their eyes were watching God" there is a quotation that is studied in literature classes across the nation. It is a piece of advice that a Black parent gave to an offspring that reflected one black woman's despair when she saw a child accepting less than the best in a mate. Advising the daughter the woman said, ""Ah wanted you to school out and pick from a high bush with sweet berries."

That's the challenge of Black women today, to "school out and pick from a bush with sweet berries." It's the challenge to be carefully selective about everything that affects their own lives and their lives of the offspring.

This is advice, though rooted in the agricultural terminologies associated with our agrarian past, is still wise today.

Every Black woman deserves the best for herself and her offspring. Whether it's a mate, a house, or a lifestyle each should "school out and pick from a high bush with sweet berries."

As Christians, we know the importance of faith. Faith allows us to believe ino ourselves and in the power of God to make the improbable possible. This is the faith that inspires every woman to believe that with God they can reach the sweet berries

and high places.

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy of Isaiah that details the nature of a small remnant of Israel that would remain faithful to God in the midst of changing times.

Specifically the text focuses on the impending desolation of the strong cities of both Syria and Israel. For Israel this desolation would mean sweeping changes in what was their traditional lifestyle. Thousands of their best minds would be captured and carried away into a strange land, to learn strange practices and be returned only a shell of what they once were. They were Jews who had been overly influenced by the Assyrian gods, traditions, and ungodly activities. As a result of this troubling change in the character and nature of God's chosen people, the Samaritans would ultimately be rejected by all of Israel.

Despite the changes that would come, Isaiah prophesied that there would be a remnant, or a small cluster of believers, who would remain untouched by the sweeping waves of changes and influences. This remnant is characterized as "gleaning grapes" a phrase lifted from the Mosaic law which required the owners of a field or an orchard not to harvest an entire field but to leave a portion unharvested or ungleaned for the poor. The "gleanings" are the portions of the harvest that were untouched.

With respect to the impending sweeping changes, verse six notes that a small cluster of believers, characterized as berries, would be preserved. They would be preserved because they would be high and away from the reach of destructive fingers of social decay. They were high or removed effects of Syrian influence. They were "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough" or those on branches out of reach of invading influences.

Olive berries were generally picked either green or Black. Preserved in salt and brine, both were marketable, but the Black olive berries were those that remained on the vine the longest and were often considered the juiciest.

Verses 7-8 note that when the time of these changes come, there would be believers who would remain faithful to the "Holy One" or God and would not become a part of the vast majority of the people who will become dependent on other gods and let them influence their lifestyle and morality. The reference to "groves and images" in verse 8 refers to idol gods. "Groves" were small wooden images of the Canaanite God Asherah.

The text clearly shows how the coming devastation would effect God's people causing many to turn away; but a remnant would survive remaining loyal to him and giving him praise because they were berries on a high bush.

Character of the Sweet Berry Woman

As the sun continues to rise on the 21st century Black woman, there are sweeping changes that are impacting an overwhelming majority of our women. Like Israel in the

text, many of the changes will sweep through coming generations.

Despite the changes that we have seen, like in the text, there are many women who have remained "sweet berries on a high bush" as they demonstrate the finer qualities of Black womanhood, despite the modern trends that lean otherwise.

Among the qualities of this "remnant" of sweet berries are qualities that Proverbs 31 call the characteristics of the virtuous woman. They are are:

CHARACTER: Four character traits are unique to the "sweet berry" woman. She is a reflection of strength, honor, wisdom and kindness. Strength, in this sense, is not a physical measure. It is a measure of will and fortitude. It is her capacity to continue when it appears impossible or improbable that success will result. Likewise the "sweet berry" woman is one who has a sense of honor and impeccable integrity. It is her quest to do the right thing and to carry and present herself in an honorable fashion. An important part of her character is her ability to act wisely and to make prudent decisions that are in the best interest of her family. Wisdom is not a measure of her intellect or her scholarship, but her ability to weigh available options and act responsibly. Finally, her character is marked by her capacity to show kindness to everyone, in words and in deed.

LOYAL TO HER HUSBAND: A "Sweet berry" woman is marked by Her loyalty and devotion to her husband. Proverbs 31: 11-12 says: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Despite her other qualities a good woman is measured by her loyalty to her husband, according to the scripture. Her actions toward him are of such a nature that he can "safely trust her," meaning that his trust will not be breached. Moreover, her loyalty to him is not conditional, but is permanent, encompassing the full range of life's experiences: prosperity and hard times, sickness and health, good times and bad times. Her loyalty to her husband is "all the days of her life," until death separates them.

LOYAL TO HER FAMILY: The "sweet berry" woman is loyal to her family. She is a very industrious woman who seeks ways to provide the best for
her family and yet be economical. She saves, pinches and economizes in every way possible to make the family's resources go further. Her children are never seen without the best clothing and grooming her family can provide because of her tireless and energetic labor.

A FRIEND TO THE NEEDY: The "Sweet berry" woman not only cares for her husband and family, but she also works very diligently to help the poor and the needy. She is concerned about the sick. She visits the sick and helps the less fortunate and those in a position of need. She does not wait until the needy make an appeal to her, but takes the initiativeto reach out and touch someone with compassion.

The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice.

There is an old saying among African-Americans, it is "The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice." It's a colloquialism that developed as we began to see ourselves in a different light. Instead of being ashamed of our blackness, we became proud of

it and we celebrated blackness in all of its variant shades.

If our self image and self esteem is compared to the degree of our "blackness" then certainly the colloquialism applies.

The challenge for Black women is to promote the beauty of their blackness in a way that elevates their own self image, while not denigrating the image of others.

Self esteem is related to our image of ourselves. Many women have placed limits on their own potential. Instead of schooling out and picking sweet berries from a high bush, they have stooped to accepting sour berries from the lowest bushes around. That results from a low self esteem.

Self esteem has much to do with what you think of yourself, what you want for yourself, and what you will accept for yourself. Those with high self esteem look for the sweet berries of life, but those berries may be in a high bush that will require them to elevate themselves to reach them.

Thus, women are challenged to:

ELEVATE THEIR SELF IMAGE: The way a woman sees herself impacts what type of life berries she chooses. If she sees herself as Maya Angelou says, as a person who walks like she has "Oil wells pumping in my back yard." Then she is not likely to do things, go places or have close associations with anything that does not match her image of herself. When a woman recognizes her intrinsic beauty, she's not likely to disfigure herself. When she recognizes her value to her family and community and knows the importance of her presence, she's not likely to think of herself cheaply. Our history replete with efforts to make the Black woman develop a negative self image. She was given pictures of white women and told that her kinky hair was ugly and that the silkly hair associated with whites was "good hair." She was told that her Black skin was ugly that lighter skin was prettier. She was told that her large lips were atrocious, her large hips were obstructive and her plump figure was fat. She was told that her mind was not equal, she could not achieve, that she was best fitted for domestic and manual labor not thinking or creating.

To reach for the sweet berries you must first believe that you have a right to them. Those who do not believe themselves worthy of reaching the high berries of life, give up. When they give up they drop out of life and satisfy themselves with less than the sweetest berries from the low brush.

ELEVATE WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF: Moreover, every woman should elevate what she wants for herself. Blackness is not a deterrent, it is an asset. It is not a stumbling block to success, it is a stepping stone. No woman should put limits on her dreams. Elevating dreams requires us to remove self imposed limitations that focus on race or social backgrounds. It is not a sin for a woman to aspire to greatness. Neither is it a sin for her to dream of being an engineer, astronaut, concert pianist Secretary of State or professional boxer. In all of these areas, Black women have found success, indicating that every woman should not set her sights on just being a domestic worker or flipping hamburgers at a fast food chain. A positive self image remembers our true nature and believes that with God's blessing, anything is possible.

ELEVATE WHAT YOU WILL ACCEPT FOR YOURSELF: Every woman who

knows who she is and what she wants, should also resolve to elevate what she will accept for herself. Many women have accepted less than they deserve and sentenced themselves to lives of mediocrity. A black berry woman deserves a black berry man, not a nut or dried up date, or prune. A black berry woman should not accept anything that comes along or allow herself to be treated in any way except what is befitting of a sweet berry from a high bush. Black women should not embrace derogatory names that refer to them as "garden tools." Neither should they embrace trends, fashions or popular idioms that minimize their place is the backbone of our race. The black berry woman should be discriminating in what she wears, who she associates with, where she entertains, and with whom she shares her life. She should elevate what she is willing to accept.

The Black Berry Woman

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember the final words about the faithful remnant, they will be true to the Holy One and will constantly praise his name.

A black berry woman is one who has high self esteem, high expectation, and a strong faith in God.

One thing is certain about black berries is that if you handle them long, they will leave their mark on you.

We remember the black berry woman teaching us to never go to sleep at night without saying our prayers and never eating our food without giving God thanks!

We remember the black berry woman telling us that "What's good for the goose is good for the gander."

We remember the black berry woman telling us, "I brought you in this world and I will take you out!"

How many families today have the mark of a black berry woman?

This is the woman who is striving to be a sweet berry on a high bush.

This is the woman who carries herself with dignity and honor and works hard to see to it that her children look well every day.

This is the woman whose every move is empowered by an unseen source. It's the same help that David talked about when he wrote: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

The black berry woman can only do what she does because she knows the Lord!

The black berry woman knows that prayer changes things!

The black berry woman knows how to call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Jesus, a sweet savior!

He's sweet I know!

No. 9129-Anniv.-Men

A Mighty Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 20, 2005

SCRIPTURE:" So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God." 2 Chronicles 27:6

Introduction

What is your definition of a good man? The definition of a good man differs depending upon the respondent. Men are often judged by a variety of standards that fluctuate depending upon circumstances. Everyone seems to have a different definition of a good man.

If you ask a woman to describe a good man, she may respond that a good man is one who is a protector, provider, and progenitor.

If you ask a man to describe a good man, he may respond that a good man is one who is strong, sure and secure.

Expectations about men vary, depending on our perspective.

On the sociological order a good man is one who is a strong presence in his family. One who loves his wife, protects and defends his family and makes provisions for their sustenance, education and future. In the social order, a good man is one who demonstrates leadership in his home before his wife and children.

On the physiological order a good man is one who has a commanding physical presence. His manhood is determined only by his physical strength or his ability to reproduce. By this definition a man is not a man who is not physically able to defeat another man at most or stand up to him in battle at the least. On the physical order, a man is not a man, if he is so weak in strength that he must ask his wife to open jars for him, instead of the other way around.

On the intellectual order a good man is one who is smart, calculating and is able to out think, outwit and outsmart opponents in any area where intellect and learning is essential. A man who has strength but not brain, is considered a "jock" but he is less than a man in intellectual circles.

Historically, African-American men have been considered good men. Despite slavery and second class citizenship the African-American man has stood tall to meet the standard of manhood in all categories.

Our men have protected their wives and children against slave owners, Klansmen and others that would destroy them, even to the point of sacrificing their lives.

Our men have chopped and picked cotton, worked in fields and factories, and

labored by the sweat of the brows to provide for their wives and children. While it was our mothers who prepared the food and preserved the food, it was our fathers who kept food on the table by one means or another.

Our men have set examples for their children in strength and manliness. They have shown their sons what it means to do an honest day's work and given their daughters an image of what to look for in a husband. They were strong and witty, inventive and wise.

The African-American man of history was a "good man" by any definition. However, today, the image of the African-American man is fractured. Each succeeding generation of men seems to lose a few more qualities that have historically defined our men. Instead of protectors of our children, there is a generation of men in which the overwhelming majority does not even know its children. There is a growing number of men in every generation that provide for their children by court order and leave their wives, ex-wives and girl friends to provide for their children the best they can.

There is a growing sense of insecurity among each generation of men as we seem to diminish on the intellectual order. In our past, it was our men who were the graduates and scholars. It was our men who went off to college and lead our efforts, yet today we are seeing a sad reversal on the intellectual order, as fewer African-American men rise to the top of intellectual circles where scholarship is the measure of success. The number of male scholars is declining drastically with no end in sight.

Too many in this generation have become, "Just my baby's daddy" or have stopped being men altogether, turning away from heterosexuality and reverting to homosexual lifestyles.

The absentee father, the "just my baby daddy" man and the "Adam and Steve" man have changed the playing field for African-American families. This has hastened the call for a new generation of "Mighty Men" who must rekindle the image of manhood of our history, avoiding the mistakes of the past and new efforts are made to restore the strength and reputations of Black men.

As Christians, we know that God has blessed godly men of all generations. We trust him to bless the men of our families to provide, protect and secure us with the help of God. Those who achieve this goal will earn the favor of God and will be remembered by all as "Mighty men."

Exposition

This text focuses on the short reign of King Jotham of Judah, whose lifestyle and character was described as being that of a mighty man.

Jotham was the son of Uzziah, king of Judah. He is one of the few bible characters in which there is no record of any negative activity. Even David, who was a man after God's own heart, had his Bathsheba and Samson had his Delilah. Saul had raging fits, Abraham lied about his wife, and Adam sinned in the garden. When it comes to Jotham, nothing is written negatively about him.

His father Uzziah was a good king, but became stricken with leprosy. Although

forbidden to do so, he often entered the temple of the Lord with his leprosy. With that exception Uzziah was generally considered a good king. His son, Jotham assisted his father for the last seven years of his life and then followed him on the throne after Uzziah's death.

For 16 years he ruled Judah, secured its cities and protected the nation from its enemies. He ruled in the fear of the Lord, always seeking his advice and guidance before taking actions and God rewarded him with blessings and favor. In the course of his reign, Jotham became a "mighty man" in the sight of the people and of his adversaries.

Imitating Mighty Men

Jotham is described as a man who imitated his father's best traits and rejected his mistakes. The word "Howbeit" as used in the text explains how he continued the good works of his father but did not continue his habit of entering the temple of the Lord, which was restricted to certain members of the clergy of his time.

Today, every African-American man should study the men of our past. We should emulate their best qualities and reject their mistakes. That study should begin with our own families. No matter what the world says, every son should know his father for himself. Not the way others interpret his father, but to know him for himself. In so doing, every young man will soon learn his father's strengths and his weaknesses. Every black child needs to know his or her father because the best and the worst of their fathers have been passed on genetically

Jotham imitated his father's strengths, so should we. We must look at our fathers and grandfathers and learn about them. Imitate anything about them was strong and virtuous and reject their mistakes. Then we must look beyond our immediate families into our extended community for those men among us who have great achievements and learn of both their strengths and weaknesses. No matter what man we name, if he is human, he will have a weakness. We must study the men of our families and our race and emulate their strengths, but learn from the weaknesses and avoid them.

Single mothers should be very careful about the way they present images of their 'baby daddy" to their children. Care should be taken to point out the strengths of a father as well as his weaknesses. Moreover, every child who accomplishes anything reflects in part, the strengths of their father, even if he has not been present in their lives. Every child does have a father somewhere, even if that father has not played an active role in their lives; it is that strength that should be recognized, while rejecting his failures.

Jotham Became mighty

Verse six of this text notes an important phrase, he "became mighty." It indicates that Jotham was not mighty because he became king, but he subsequently became mighty in the eyes of the people because of his acts.

In the same sense young men today must understand they are respected as men

by the women of their family not because they wear pants, or sometimes possess a larger stronger statue. A woman doesn't consider a man a "mighty man" because he can yell or fight or beat her up. He is mighty because of his actions.

A man becomes mighty before the eyes of his wife and children when they see him in action. That's what happened in this text. The people of Israel saw this 25 year old King go to war, build cities and secure the land and he "became mighty" in their eyes. A man becomes "mighty" in the eyes of his wife when she sees him take charge and act decisively.

When the family faces a financial crises and father takes charge and steers the family clear with difficult and decisive actions, he becomes a mighty man in their sight.

When the family faces death, sickness, or attack and father acts to unify, encourage and strengthen the family in its weakest hour, he becomes a mighty man.

When the chips are down and he steps up, that's when a man "becomes" a mighty man in the sight of his family.

He does not have to be rich to be a mighty man.

He does not have to be an intellectual genius or college graduate to be a mighty man.

He can even be temporarily employed, confined to a sick bed or a wheel chair but still be considered a mighty man by his family. Why? Because it's his strength of character, wisdom, and courage that makes him a mighty man.

(A wise wife will always reassure a husband who is frustrated over the loss of a job or other inability that he remains a mighty man in her eyesight).

Jotham became a mighty man because of deeds among the people. Every African-American man will be seen as a mighty man to his children if he provides for and protects them, even if he estranged from their mother.

There are thousands of men who are no longer lovers with the children's mothers but those mothers respect them as "mighty men" because they do what a man is suppose to do.

Wouldn't it be nice if mothers could say, "Me and him don't get along, but he sure takes care of his children. Anything they need time or money he gets it for them."

That's a sign that in at least one woman's eyes, he has become a mighty man.

The Mighty Man has a mighty God

Finally, brothers and sisters we should note that every mighty man serves a mighty God.

Verse six of this text gives us the reason that Jotham succeeded in life, because he prepared his way before the Lord.

The more Jotham let God use him, the mightier he became.

He shifted from being simply a good man to being a mighty man before the Lord.

There is a difference between a good man and a mighty man.

A good man may love his wife and take care of his children, but that doesn't make him a mighty man.

A good man may protect his wife and children and secure their future, but that

doesn't make him a mighty man.

A good man may fine upstanding citizen in the community with a noteworthy reputation, but that doesn't make him a mighty man.

A good man may be religious but still not allow God to use him, every good man is not a mighty man.

A good man may go to church and participate in church activities, but every man who goes to church is not a mighty man!

A good man may obey the laws of the land and pay his taxes, but every man who obeys the law and pays his taxes is not necessarily a mighty man.

A mighty man is a good man in God's hand. A mighty man is a saved man. To be a mighty man in the eyesight of God, a man must put himself under the power and control of an almighty God.

When a good man is in God's hands he becomes a mighty man.

Jacob was a good man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he became a mighty man, because he prepared his way before the Lord and placed his life in godly hands!

David was a good man. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." -He became a mighty man because he humbled himself before God and put himself in God's hands!

A mighty man is a powerful man because God uses him!

A mighty man is an influential man because God controls him!

A mighty man is an effective man because God directs him!

The mighty man never goes forward unless he takes the Lord with him.

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

If you want be a mighty man you must stand on the Lord's side; you got to walk with the man who was more than a man, he was the Son of Man, a mighty man!

He became a mighty man in our eyes when was born in a manger down in Bethlehem!

He became a mighty man when we ran the money changers out of the temple!

He became a mighty man when shattered taboos and talked with the woman at the well

He became a mighty man when he picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill!

Early Sunday morning the women went to the tomb looking for a dead man.

What they found was an empty tomb vacated by a mighty man!

Storms may rise, in our lives but our Lord is a mighty man!

Winds may blow in our lives but we will stand because our Lord is a mighty man!

No. 9130-Youth

Keep Your Eyes On The Prize

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 27, 2005

SCRIPTURE:Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.1 Cor 9:24 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

Introduction

How do you define winning? Generally, we consider ourselves winners if we achieve a goal. Goals vary depending on the arena. A politician who gets the most votes in an election is a winner. A businessman who succeeds in reaching a corporate goal is a winner. An athlete who defeats all opponents is a winner. Champions are generally viewed as winners, even if they ultimately lose. A world record holder is considered a winner even if that record is subsequently broken. A football player that makes it to Superbowl as a member of the championship team is considered a winner, even if he sits on the bench the entire game. Achieving the goal is what determines winners.

Before we can achieve a goal, we must define the goal. That's the challenge to every youth, defining life goals. Defining goals is to determine "What I actually want to achieve in life." Once defined, our life goal becomes the "main thing." The quest thereafter becomes the challenge to keep "the main thing, the main thing." That means staying focused, avoiding distractions and pursing the goal with all vigilance.

Consider the young hound dog who was eager to go on his first hunting trip. He pleaded with the old dog for a chance to go on the next hunt to show off what he knew. He was young and his instincts were sharp and fresh. Being young he could pick up a scent in the air and trail it to the ground and get to his prey long before the old dogs. His first hunt was a bear hunt. The young dog picked up the trail and moved ahead of the others barking and running. The old dog sniffed the ground and kept running. Soon the young dog picked up the scent of a young deer that had cross the trail. He stopped changed directions and went barking after the deer. As he neared the deer, he caught scent of a rabbit that had crossed the deer trail. He stopped, changed directions and ran after the rabbit. The rabbit carried him through dense forest areas and through the brush, but the young dog never gave up, until he caught another scent in the air and he stopped and chased after it. In this fashion, the young dog

continued all day until at the end of the day the old dog came upon him, having successfully cornered the bear, and told the young dog these words, "Son you're a good dog, I've known you since you were a pup. But if you're going to track bear and you don't want to fail, you must keep your nose to the ground and your feet on the trail."

There are many objectives along the road to success. Objectives and benchmarks are markers that must be achieved to finally get the prize. There are very few dreams in the world that do not require a general education. Historically, the black and the poor did not have opportunities for higher education. The sports arena was viewed as a ticket to an education. Historically, we played ball to get an education; sports was our ticket.

There was a time when education was the main thing. So, poor youngsters joined local basketball, baseball and football teams with hopes of winning a scholarship to get an education. By the thousands our youth joined the ranks of local sports organizations with hopes of winning a scholarship to a college for the expressed purpose of getting an education; that was the main thing.

As the years pass, history records a striking phenomenon. Black hundreds of thousands of youth each year focus their attention on professional sports. They see the big contracts and endorsement deals and dream of themselves in the Superbowl. Very few dream of themselves as college graduates.

Our history shows that while we were once excluded from many sports, we have arrived. Blacks make up 80 percent of the team rosters in the National Basketball Association and nearly 70 percent in the National Football League. Blacks have won 41 percent of baseball's Most Valuable Player titles over the last 25 years, although blacks account for just 17 percent of the players.

Young blacks see success in three areas: sports, rap and street corner pharmaceuticals. They don't see many reports of Blacks making it big because of education. This gave rise to a shift in the emphasis. Those who can't rap and won't sell drugs see only one other alternative and that is to succeed in professional sports. That marks a shift in the definition of the main thing. Instead of participating in sports to get an education, many youth now use the attainment of a limited education to get into sports.

Getting to the NFL or NBA has become the main thing with too many young people and acquiring an education has become the means to achieve an end. They ignore the fact that the odds of making it with an education are higher than their chances of making it into professional sports. A recent study by Northeastern's Center for the Study of Sports in Society found that the odds of a high school athlete succeeding in any professional sports is 10,000 to 1 and playing in the NBA is a 50,000 to one shot.

The idea of getting just enough education to become eligible for the draft is common among young Black athletes. Their game plan is simple: work to graduate, get into a big league school, play well for two years then leap into the big leagues and drop out of school. Or, even better, get drafted like Lebron James, right out of

high school.

The result is that many Black athletes are concluding that they only need enough education to make them eligible for the pros. Many begin college but never graduate. According to the NCAA, there are approximately one million high school football players and 500,000 high school basketball players in the United States. If all of the Black males in these groups were to attend college and graduate what an impact this would have on all sectors of our community life.

The challenge to young athletes is to keep their eyes on the real prize, remembering that an education is never lost with age, or injury. It grows and gets better with time. Sports should be a means to achieve the best possible education, rather than the other way around. Getting the best possible education should be the main thing.

Young athletes should not forsake their studies seeking careers in the pros because, the rules are changing. Just when every Black youth began to feel that he would succeed in sports with a minimum of education, the rules are changing. The NCAA has tougher admission requirements. Schools and governments are cutting funding for youth sports programs to keep up with shrinking budgets. Inner-city playgrounds and recreation programs are diminishing.

Some states such as Louisiana perpetuate the dumb jock stereotype by allowing students to participate in sports if they maintain a "D" average, with the full knowledge that they will never meet NCAA standards for admission to the big schools where pro scouts are watching and waiting. The idea seems to be "use them" and then "lose them" when they are no longer eligible for high school play.

It's getting tougher to get into a reputable school on sports skills alone. Many high school super jocks, find themselves getting offers to Jr. Colleges instead of major universities because their grades could not match up.

It means the era of the dumb jock is coming to an end.

Student athletes who focus on their education are assured entrance into college, even if they are not superstars on the field. However, the dumb jock is finding increasingly more doors closed in his face after his high school years have ended.

As Christians, we have an even greater goal. That goal is to carry out God's will for our lives. Just as the athlete must stay focused, so must the man or woman who wants to see Jesus one day, stay focused and keep his eyes on the prize.

Exposition

These two text focus on Paul's teaching that Christians should study and remain focused on their goal, which is to do God's will.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24 Paul uses the illustration of athletic competition to make his point. He is aware that the Corinthians were famliar with the athletic festivals compared the Christian struggle to the competitors in the Olympic games. Paul said those who compete in the games, train and compete for the sole purpose of winning a material wreath upon their heads. However, those who run the Christian race do so to claim the crown of righteousness reserved for the victors.

The Christian competitor competes for the prize of salvation and glory before

God.

He trains and conditions himself to enter the race and to perservere until victorious.

The Philippian text encouraged them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life.

These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

How to Keep your Eyes on the Prize

There are three things the text suggest that should be done to keep our eyes on the prize. We sift these from reviewing Paul's letter to the Philippians.

DON'T GET THE BIG HEAD: Paul remained humble, throughout his life. Obviously, God had endowed him with great talents and gifts but he always received them with an attitude of humility. Although Paul was a learned scholar who spoke many languages fluently and was well versed in the scholarship of his day, he told the Philippians at verse 13, "I count not myself to have apprehended" that is to note that while he had learned much in life, he was keenly aware that he did not know everything. He counted heavily on the Holy Spirit to reveal many things to him and to call others to his remembrance. Humility is a key factor in success. It's the element of your character that constantly reminds you that the world does not revolve around you, but you are part of God's grand scheme of things. The Christian athlete says, "I succeed, because God wills it so, not because I am who I am." Remaining focused, in this context is not to get so wrapped up in their pursuit of the game that they neglect the "main thing" which is to do God's will.

STOP LOOKING AT YOUR TROPHIES: Paul's life was intensely focused on the next objective, not his past accomplishments. His past accomplishments included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. In the same sense, remaining focused means not dwelling on past achievements or failures. Trophies and news clippings of past successes are great for history, but each new challenge requires a focused effort to succeed. You can't win today's game by presenting your trophy to the new opponent. You must keep your eyes on the prize.

DON'T GET DISTRACTED. Lastly, Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. The prize of the Christian athlete is to do God's will. The cheers of the crowd will fail. Newspaper reporters, endorsement contracts, and other major deals will fade, so it is imperative for each student athlete to remain focused on the prize.

In Romans 8:35, Paul summed it up this way, "Who shall separate us from the love

of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Then he answered in verse 37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." The prize of the Christian athlete is to do God's will. The cheers of the crowd will fail. Newspaper reporters, endorsement contracts, and other major deals will fade, so it is imperative for each student athlete to remain focused on the prize.

Student, Scholar and a Child of God

Finally brothers and Sisters, each student competitor should remember that the main goal at this point in his/her life is to be a master of their textbook, a student of their playbook, and an example of the Holy Book

The goal of the Christian Athlete is to be a student, a competitor and a child of God.

While succeeding in the secular world requires us to maintain a focused life, this text today, reminds us that the Christian's primary focus is to achieve the prize of the high calling of God which is in Jesus Christ.

Paul said simply that he was pressing on toward the mark! He chose to focus on Heaven and its promise of joy everlasting!

He chose to focus on Jesus and his promise of everlasting life!

Those who keep their eyes on the prize never lose sight of what they really want to do with their lives and that is to serve and please God.

Keeping your eyes on the prize may mean getting closer to some things and moving away from others. It will mean avoiding ungodly activities of every kind.

It may even mean backing away from some job opportunities because they will take you away from your main goal, which is to see Jesus.

But keeping your eyes on the prize also means that from time to time you need to get closer to keep yourself in focus with God. There will be times when the swiftness of the world takes you so fast that you lose sight of God. As life begins to blur that's when you bring it back into focus by walking closer to God.

Walking closer to God helps keep life in focus when the world becomes a blur.

Walking close to God builds strength for troublesome times and answers troublesome questions. No wonder the songwriter says, "Just a closer walk with thee. Grant it Jesus if you please, daily walking close to thee. Let it be, dear Lord, let it be!"

Daniel's life journey took him thousands of miles from home but he never stopped looking toward Jerusalem and praying three times a day because his eyes were on the prize.

The Three Hebrew Boy's lives took them in and out of the fiery furnace, but their eyes were on the prize!

Paul was beaten, jailed and criticized but he declared, "Nothing shall separate me from the love of God." His eyes were on the prize!

Jesus, the precious lamb of God, endured the hardships of life, temptations of Satan and the rejection of man, but he kept his eyes on the prize!

As he carried an old cross of Calvary and died for the sins of the world, his eyes were on the prize!

Early Sunday morning he arose to claim the victory and challenge everyone who follows to keep your eyes on the prize!

No. 9131-Inspiration

Now, Run and Tell That

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 27, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seethe the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. 9For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." John 20:1-9

Introduction

Have you ever heard news so exciting that you had to share it with someone else? Good news is hard to keep. We feel that we must share it with someone else. The longer we hold it the harder it gets to keep it to ourselves. In rural times folks would load up the horse and buggy and ride into town shouting their good news. "Gold, I struck gold!" shouted the old gold miners. "It's a boy!" shouted the anxious father! "My son is home" shouted the father whose son came home for the war. In a variety of ways we have all shared special moments that were especially exciting. Those moments we best savored however, when they were shared with others.

When bargain hunters hear that there is going to be a sale, they quickly pick up the phone to tell a friend about red tag sales, 75 percent off specials or going out of business sales. When someone has had a baby or achieved a victory, the news spreads fast. Bad news spreads even faster, outrunning good news by a mile a minute. It appears everyone wants to be the first to tell exciting news whether it is good or bad.

Consider the old man who spent a lifetime collecting valuable antiques. Experts valued his collection worth millions of dollars. The old man had no heirs and spent his time gazing at a picture of his son that was drawn when the boy was just 12 years old. It was poorly drawn, as an artistic work, and had no value except that it had a likeness of his son, who died in the Great War. One day it was announced that the old man had died. With no heirs, his entire collection of antiques would be up for sale. The entire city was abuzz with news that passed from one house to the next. Each

person seemed to run from house to house telling of the great antique bargains that would be up for sale cheaply.

On the day of the auction people gathered from many states. The auctioneer announced that the auction would begin with the simple drawing of the old man's son. He asked $100. After a long pause he asked again but there were still no takers. Someone yelled, skip the picture and let's get down to the real auction; but the auctioneer said the terms of the auction were that the picture had to be first. Finally, a friend of the old man's recognized that it was a sketch of his son and offered $100 for the penciled drawing. As the auctioneer announced "sold" he promptly closed the auction. The crowd was angry because they wanted to get a chance to bid on millions of dollars in antiques. The auctioneer said the auction was over because the old man's will said whoever gets the son gets it all. Now, run and tell that!

Today, there are many people who tell everything they know but the one thing they should tell they don't. They should tell people about the Son; the son of God that is. They should tell people that God's son came, died and rose for our sins. They should tell them that if they get the son, the get forgiveness, blessings and eternal life. They get it all. What they should tell they keep to themselves, but yet, it's the best news of the day.

As Christians, we are excited about the goodness of the Lord. We lay claim to our heavenly inheritance. We embrace the son and proudly announce to the world that Jesus is Lord and lives in our hearts.

Exposition.

This text focuses on the action of the women and the disciples on the morning of Christ's resurrection.

Christ was crucified and buried in a newly hewn tomb owned by Joseph. It was guarded by soldiers upon the request of the religious leaders who feared that Christ's disciples would come by night and steal his body. After three days and nights Mary came early Sunday morning to anoint his body with spices. When she arrived she found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. She was told by angels to go quickly and tell the others. She ran and delivered the news.

When Peter and John heard the news they ran. John outran Peter, but when he reached the tomb was afraid to go inside. He stooped and looked in but did not enter. Peter did not run as fast as John but he was the first one of the two to actually go inside the tomb. He bore witness that Christ had actually risen from the dead.

The two of them ran to tell the others what they had seen. They were excited. They were revived because the master had done as he said he would. He had risen from the dead.

Mary told the "what" but not the "why"

Mary told what happen, his body is gone. But she didn't tell why because she did not fully understand what she saw. In a similar sense, there are many people today

who know what has happened to them in life, but have not fully apprehended the why? Mary knew that the ground shook. She knew that the stone was rolled away. She knew there was no body in the tomb, but she did not know why.

Often in our frustration over life events we see the "what" but we fail to apprehend why? We've felt events in our lives with earthquake intensity: a death, a sickness or family crises. We know what happened, but we have not figured out the why.

Sometimes, we suspect the why, even if we don't want to admit it. When we've been disobedient to God's word, slack in our worship, bible study and giving; we suspect the reason but we are not quite sure. Like Mary, we quickly attach another reason other than the obvious. Mary concluded that the religious leaders had stolen Christ's body. She did not consider the possibility of his resurrection from the dead. So, she ran to tell others the "what" but she did not report the "why."

Two men in the bible enjoyed great prosperity in life. Jabez prayed to God to enlarge his territories and received an answer to his prayer. Job lived a righteous life and was blessed immensely. Jabez' blessing came as a result of his prayer. Job's blessing came as a result of his righteous living. When Job's fortune turned his friends asked, "Why." Job knew why. God was testing him and he resolved, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

The events of that Sunday morning are more than mere news reports. Those who tell it must deal with the "why." The tomb was empty because Christ arose as the first begotten of the dead. He was the first person to rise from the dead with eternal life. Why was the tomb empty? Because Jesus rose as he said he would, guaranteeing life to all believers. That's big news. Now, run and tell that!

John told the "when" but not the "how"

John was the fastest runner. It terms of opportunity he was first but he could go no further because at the tomb he did not have the courage to go in.

Moreso than Peter John had the opportunity to know more about the "how" of the resurrection than the others because he arrived at the empty tomb first, but lacked the courage to step into the unknown. Like so many of us, John prepared, ran fast, but lacked the courage to seize the opportunity before him.

The Latin phrase "Carpe Diem" means "Seize the Day." It suggests that there is a window of opportunity that is available for each person but we must take opportunities when they present themselves. To do that we must understand the "how" of life. We must understand "how" God operates. We must understand "how" he weaves events and circumstances to open or shut doors of opportunity.

To seize opportunity we must have as much education and training as possible, run as fast as we can at word of the "when" then be prepared to enter the unknown and seize the day.

John ran "when" he heard the news of the empty tomb, but when it came time to seize the day he did not "how" to make himself step into that dark and gloomy unknown.

The good news is that God has rolled the stone away for believers. The

opportunity we have waited for looms just inside, but we must seize the day! Now, run and tell that!

Peter had the most to tell

Peter was the last one to the tomb but he had the most to tell because he actually went in and saw the evidence of the risen Lord for himself.

Peter saw the folded clothes and the tomb's interior. The order suggested that Christ had done just what he said. He was convinced. He saw it for himself.

Likewise, those who have experienced Christ for themselves have the most to tell.

Lazarus had more to tell about Christ's life reviving ability than anyone else, because he experienced it himself.

The woman at the well could speak of his compassion and forgiving spirit, because she experienced it herself.

The man who sat by the pool for 38 years could testify to Christ's healing, because he experienced it himself.

Mary could talk about the stone being rolled away. John could talk about the darkness he saw from outside the tomb, but Peter had the most to tell. He went in for himself and came out with a testimony.

That's the way it is with anyone who steps into the embrace of the savior; he leaves with a story to tell.

Now Run and Tell That

When they all left the empty tomb they had a testimony, some more than others, but they had a story to tell.

That's the way it is with every believer, we all have a story to tell.

What we tell about the Lord is as exciting as the news the disciples heard on the morning of the resurrection. God is still a good God.

If you must tell something, tell the world that God is a protecting God.

Like David we can testify from our own experience that, ""God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in
a time of trouble."

If you want to tell something run and tell that!

Somebody has seen their family sustain a prolonged attack by the enemy only to bounce back victorious. They have seen their finances dwindled down to nothing only to be restored by a no interest line of credit from the bank of heaven. They have seen the protecting arm of God shield them against the wind and waves of life, without the loss of one.

If you want to tell something run and tell that!

If you just have to tell something, tell the world that God is a blessing God!

In the course of our short lives God has blessed us immensely. He's opened doors that we could not see.

Somebody here has been blessed because of the goodness of the Lord.

Somebody here is eating better, sleeping better and riding better than they have been because the Lord is blessing.

David told us what to do when we have been blessed. In Psalm 105 he said, "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people."

In essence, what David said, when God has blessed you, don't keep it to yourself, let the world know what God has done.

If you just have to tell something, tell the world that God is blessing me in the morning. He's blessing me in the noonday. He's blessing me in the midnight hour.

Everyday the Lord is blessing me,. Now run and tell that!

Not only has the Lord protected us and blessed us, but the Lord has directed us.

I heard David say, "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths."

When we can't find our way, he will guide us and direct us. When we are lost in the wilderness of life, he will show us the road to glory.

No wonder the song writer declared, "Guide me oh thy great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thou powerful hand."

If you just have to tell something, run and tell that!

Since you know all of our faults and our failures, there is something else you should tell the world. Tell the world how the Lord saved our souls!

Tell the world how we tried to reform ourselves but couldn't do until the Lord stepped in.

If you've just got to tell something, run and tell that!

If you are weak, he will renew your strength, Now, run and tell that!

If you are lost, he will help you find your way. Now, run and tell that!

If you have fallen flat on your face, he'll pick you up and stand you on your feet. Now, run and tell that!

If you are confused, he will give you direction. Now, run and tell that!

If your body is racked with pain, he will be a Balm in Gilead, Now, run and tell that!

I don't know about you but every now and then when I think about the goodness of the Lord I've got to tell somebody!

I've got to tell somebody that when I'm down, he'll pick me up and turn me around!

I've got to tell somebody that when I'm slipping, he'll plant my feet on solid ground!

I've got to tell somebody that one day when I was lost that he died upon the cross!

I've got to tell somebody that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

He lives, I know he lives. He walks with me and talks with me! Now, run and tell that!

He lives, I know he lives, He's still making a way for me out of no way! Now, run and tell that!

He lives, I know he lives, because every now and then I feel him moving in my

soul!

Now, run and tell that!

No. 9132-Inspiration

Dealing With Hot Water Situations

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 13, 2005

SCRIPTURE:My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 2:2-3;12.

Introduction

Have you ever been in a hot water situation? If you are like most people you have probably experienced one or two hot water situations in your life. What's a hot water situation? Generally, a "hot water situation" is one that threatens us, troubles us or scares us in a way that is beyond the ordinary. We are generally uncomfortable when we are in hot water. We are sometimes anxious and nervous when we are in hot water. We are rarely at our best when we face hot water situations. All of those who have survived such situations have a story tell and have learned tremendous truths about life.

Let your mind reflect on all of the situations you have faced in your life. More than a few of them were hot water situations. Did you get in trouble with the law or the Internal Revenue? Did a friend betray a confidence and reveal a secret? Did an enemy succeed in their efforts to destroy your reputation or a coveted opportunity? Did you get involved in an unhealthy relationship? Whenever we get into any situation that increases our anxieties and fears, the water gets really hot.

There are times we want to be in hot water. Millions of people travel to Hot Springs Arkansas each year for one expressed purpose, to take a bath in the waters drawn from the natural hot springs that run underneath the city. The waters are said to have medicinal value so people actually pay to get into hot water. At home, many find that after a long hard day, a hot shower or tub of hot water is both relaxing and cleansing. However, neither of these represents a hot water situation. It's a really tough dilemma in which we experience considerable trouble.

How do we get ourselves into hot water situations? Many of us have asked ourselves that question a thousand times. How did we get in this situation? Two

Cajun fishermen were trying to cook a special batch to go along with their crawfish, shrimp gumbo and Jambalaya. They both wanted some frog legs. One of the fishermen was an expert and always came to the community gatherings with big platters of frog legs. The other one had everything except frog legs. When asked why he never had any frog legs the disappointed Cajun said, "Every time I try to put the frog in the pot of hot water he just jumps right out. As soon as he touches the water; he just jumps out. What's your secret? How do you get yours to stay in the hot water?" The successful Cajun said, "it's a little secret of mine. You put the frog in cold water and then you turn the fire down real low. After a while as the water starts to warm, you drop in a few flies and the frog will be so busy enjoying himself eating them flies that he won't even notice that the water's get hotter and that he's been cooking for the last 30 minutes. The next thing you know, you've got Frog Legs!" Isn't that how we get in hot water? We don't jump into hot water, we know the pot's sitting on the stove and we know what happened to other frogs that jumped in the pot, but we can't resist the flies. Gradually, we could feel things getting hotter but the flies are so good. They next thing you know we are cooked.

As Christians, we know that we will encounter many difficulties in the course of life. We will see many mountains and many valleys. We will know joy and sorrow. However, we know that no matter how hot the situation, God will always be with us and will never leave us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on the way believers should approach situations that test individual faith.

James, the Brother of Jesus, was the recognized head of the church at the time of this writing. He warned believers that as Christians they should expect to find themselves in a variety of troublling situations. It was especially true during the beginning years of the church because there was an intense animosity against the church. Many believers faced tremendous persecution from both Jews and Gentiles, not to mention the regular difficulties of daily living.

James addresses the attitude that Christians should take into a troubling situation. That attitude should exemplify faith and patience that ultimately will be rewarded by a loving God.

Into the Water

James gave these observations in the text. They apply to believers today.

COUNT IT JOY (v2): Strange as it may seem, James says we should count it joy when a troubling situation occurs. The "divers" in this context means diverse or different kinds of tempting situations. Tempting situations are those in which a believer's faith is tested. The phrase "Count it all joy" does not mean that we go out and place ourselves in tempting situations just to see how faithful we are or to see what God will do. That would be as silly as driving your car the wrong way on a one

way street just to see if God would truly protect you. It does describe a mindset or an attitude that belivers assume when troubling situations occur. Count it all joy, simply put, means that the hot water situation we face is a chance to "show what we are made of" spiritually. We don't go out looking for tough situations, but our mindset is that when they come, it's a chance for us to test our faith and to watch God work.

FALL INTO: "Fall into" describes how a truly saved person gets in hot water. Generally, a saved person does not open the door to a hot water situation; he doesn't just dive in for the fun of it. James describes it as "fall into." The nature of a saved man or woman is that he or she attempts to avoid "hot water" situations as much as possible. A believer doesn't consciously walk into a "hot water" situation for the thrill of it. He doesn't open the door of a house of prostitution and walk in just to see if he can walk out the same way he went in. She doesn't take her hard earned money to race tracks and casinos just to see if what they say is really true. The believer doesn't go out and intentionally involve himself in an activity knowing that it could result in an injury or sickness. "Fall into" means that we have been drawn into it unwittingly. Often, we end up in tempting situations without really knowing that it's happening, before long we are hooked. We don't develop a gambling habit on the first visit, we develop the habit slowly. We don't become a drug addict overnight, it develops. We don't become addicted to cigarettes or alcohol overnight; it's a slow process that is so deceptive that we actually don't realize that we're in hot water.

We get in hot water situations because we tested the water first, saw that it wasn't really that hot and were drawn in, and like the frog in the pot, we were not aware that while we were catching a few flies, or enjoying ourselves, that the water was getting hotter all the time.

God does not put us in "hot water." Satan does. Like a roaring lion he walks to and fro trying to discover who will be the next person to plunge into his pot of hot water. Satan has fun troubling us. He enjoys turning up the heat and watching us at first enjoy the warm water then watching us sweat.

DIVERS TEMPTATION: "Divers temptation" means temptations or tough situations could in all shades and colors. Our temptations could be financial, physical, spiritual or moral in nature whenever such situations occur, according to James, the believer should view it as an opportunity to "let God work."

When money runs low and we can't make our ends meet we are in hot water.

When our relationship or marriage is on the brink of breakup, that's hot water.

When we contract a disease or a debilitating sickness, that's hot water.

When we cheat or spouses, or dabble in immoral activities whether they are major such as drug use and sales or something as simple as buying bootleg CD's and videos from people who have stolen them, we create "hot water" situations. We know that the videos are stolen, we know that it's against the law to receive stolen merchandise, but we buy them anyway and lie back in our tub of hot water and catch flies!

Temptations vary so we must constantly be on watch for every kind of temptation that can come our way.

TRYING OF YOUR FAITH: (v3) "Trying of your faith." James made sure that the believers understood that hot water situations "try" or test us. Why would God allow

Satan to put a believer in a situation where he could be spiritually injured? He does it for the same reason that a football coach plays a scrimmage game, to test his players to see how they respond in situations similar to the real game. In actuality, we never know our spiritual strength until we are actually tested.

Most of us have Sunday school faith. We talk a good game about believing in God and stepping out on faith in God until the real tests come. We talk about what we should or should not do in theoretical situations. We won't know the reality of it, until we actually get in the water.

A carrot has plenty of color and is brittle when it's fresh from the field or market. In fact a carrot is loaded with vitamins and color. It looks good, but if we boil a carrot in hot water, when it comes out it is soft and mushy. Many people have carrot faith. It looks and sounds good when it's fresh and raw. But after they have been in the hot water for a while, they are different. Their hope has gone soft. The faith in God has been shaken. Their beliefs are not as strong as they once were. They still have the color on the outside but what was once a solid faith is now borderline, to say the least.

An egg is a symbol of life. It is filled with life giving potential. An egg, if properly fertilized and incubated can give forth new life. However, when you put an egg in hot water for a long period of time it changes. It comes out hard boiled. Many people were full of life and potential before they met their hot water situation. Many of them were optimistic and had a very positive view about life. However, after their hot water experience they became hard. Although they looked the same on the outside, they no longer had the life giving potential on the inside.

That's what James means by the phrase "the trying of your faith." It means you don't know what you will do until your been tested. Then you'll find out the measure of your strength.

Tea-Bags and Hot Water

Finally, brothers and sisters we need to consider what happens when a strong believer falls into hot water situations, and the blessings that await them when their testing has ended.

Between verse 4-11 James encourages believers to demonstrate faith in every situation. He encouraged us not to be double minded, looking back and against the faith. His words encourage us to be strong in the faith, enduring the hour of testing.

At verse 12 he concludes all his comparisons by saying, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

What James seemed to say to believers is that each believer should develop a "Tea-bag" spirituality.

T.E.A. could easily be an acronym for the true believer.

T. This is a believer who Trusts God,

E. This is a believer who remembers that in "Everything" he gives thanks.

A. This is a believer who remembers that he is never Alone.

Hot water situations have a tendency to bring to the outside what's really on the inside.

The man who secretly doubts the power of God to change any situation may carry his bible and attend church regularly, won't be able to hide his doubts when he gets in hot water, because hot water brings what's on the inside out!

The man who only gives lip service to God's ability to heal, will appear to be a strong tower of faith, but he won't be able to hide his lack of faith, when he gets in hot water, because hot water brings what's on the inside out!

The woman who talks about love in public but can't forgive won't be able hide her true feelings when she gets in hot water, because hot water brings what's on the inside out!

The child who sings about the power of God on Sunday but doesn't really believe what they sing, won't be able to hide their lack of believe when he or she gets in hot water, because hot water brings out what's on the inside out!

If the hot water brings out what's really on the inside, what happens when the TEA-Bag Man meets hot water?

When the CARROT man hits the hot water, it softens his hope and weakens his faith.

When the EGG man hits the hot water, he loses his optimism and spirit and becomes hard boiled.

But what happens when the TEA-bag man hits the hot water situation? The hot water will bring out the TEA that's in me!

If you put a TEA-bag Christian in hot water, it will bring out what he really believes!

In hot water the TEA-bag believer says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding."

In hot water, the TEA-bag believer says, "In Everything give thanks." When I'm down, give thanks! When I'm up, give thanks! When the water gets boiling hot all around, give thanks!

In hot water, the TEA-bag believer says, "I'm never alone." He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. Though my situation gets hot I'm hear him say, "Lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth."

The longer the Carrot man stays in hot water, the softer he gets.

The longer the EGG man stays in the hot water, the harder and more bitter he becomes!

But the longer the TEA-bag man stays in hot water, the stronger he gets!

The longer, the stronger!

The hotter, the better!

Have you been tried in the fire? Did you come through as pure Gold?

I know a man who had a real hot water situation.

They falsely accused him and brought him to an unjust court!

They whipped him all night long!

They nailed him to an old rugged cross!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

The hot water didn't change him! He changed the hot water!

TEA=Tried, empowered, anointed.

Hot water does not make tea, the tea is in the bag. It brings out the flavor in the tea

In the end, the tea changes the water, the water has no effect on the tea.

No. 9133-Inspiration

Why Palm Trees?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 20, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." John 12:12-13

Introduction

If your spiritual life was compared to a tree, what kind of tree would best represent your life? Would you be a tall tree or a small tree? Would you be a tree at all, maybe just a small bush? What's your tree?Some of us could very easily describe ourselves as:

PINE TREES: The pine tree grows tall, is distinguished by its pointed top, drops cones and burns fast. There are many people who are like pine trees. They are here and there and everywhere, but they seem to burn out fast even though they grow tall. They are good for starting a fire but are not good for the long haul.

SWEET GUMS: These trees are known for a sap that is called sweet but is not really sweet at all. They are what the world calls "Sweet Daddies" and "Sugar Mamas." They give the appearance of sweetness but often leave a bitter taste in every where they go. They are the heartbreakers and home wreckers. They look sweet but are far from being as sweet as they look.

EVERGREENS: The Evergreen is unique in that its most noteworthy characteristic is that it looks good all the time. The evergreen has no essential purpose other than to look good. There are people are the same way, overly concerned about their looks from head to toe. Beyond their looks however, there is little else that they do that benefits anyone.

WEEPING WILLOWS: The Weeping Willows stands drooped. Its broad limbs slump downward. It looks defeated. There are many people today who have lost their drive and ambition. They have adopted defeatist attitudes about life and have succumbed to the pressures of society. A weeping willow always has a sad story, one after another. His or her song is always a "somebody done me wrong song." They weep, cry and complain all the time.

OAK TREES: Oaks grow tall but their wood is hard and their fruit is inedible. These are people who are stubborn and set in their ways. They are thick skinned, slow to change and adapt. They are not bad trees but they have a tendency, because of

their stubbornness, to produce fruit that is inedible. A few nuts here and a few nuts there. Unfortunately, their children grow up just like them because the "acorn" doesn't fall far from the tree.

FRUIT TREES: These are trees that bear fruit, plums, pears, oranges and a variety of edible refreshing fruit. If these trees represented a life they would represent the Christian life, that reflects the fruit of the spirit referred to in Galatians 5:22-23. If you are a fruit tree you are an invaluable asset to the kingdom.

The bible tells of the life of Christ in frequently associated with trees and vines. He compared the kingdom heaven to grape vineyards. He prayed in an Olive Tree Orchid and constantly referred to fig trees. And when he came into Jerusalem for his final days on earth before the crucifixion he was saluted by a crowd that praised him bearing the leaves of Palm Trees, shouting his praises and calling his name.

As Christians, we know that every word of the bible has significance. The mention of a type of flower, animal or even a tree as a significance. When Christ entered Jerusalem he was greeted with Palm Tree branches, it seems small, but there is plenty of food for the soul when we answer the question, "Why Palm Trees?"

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem just days before his crucifixion.

When Christ rode into Jerusalem the people cut down branches of Palm Trees, waved them in the air triumphantly and cast them down before him. His entry into Jerusalem is called the triumphant entry. It was full of symbolisms, each of which had great meaning for the immediate future and for the church as a whole.

The scriptures foretold his arrival in triumph. He rode upon a borrowed donkey, instead of a white horse, to signify the humble nature of his arrival. The people shouted "Hosanna" and great words of praise for him as a conquering hero, especially after his recent miracle involving the resurrection of Lazarus.

Adding to the symbols was the simple act of cutting Palm branches from the trees and waving them in the air. Even this act, had great significance when closely observed.

In scripture, the Palm Tree has always been configured as a "type" of the faithful believer. In Exodus 15:27 the 70 descendants of Jacob who came to live in Egypt in the midst of difficult times are called "Palm Trees"-indicating their ability to survive in Egypt despite adverse circumstances. 1 King 6:29 describes how Solomon decorated the interior of the great temple with palm trees symbolizing how the nation of Israel had flourished despite unfavorable conditions. Psalm 92:12 compares the happiness and joy of the righteous to the flourishing nature of a palm tree.

As a symbol, the palm tree came to represent the triumph of the people of God against tough times. The symbol was drawn mainly from the nature of the Palm Tree itself, able to survive unbearable conditions and finally flourish.

Why Palm Trees?

So of all the trees that were available along the way, including an abundance of olive branches, fig trees and bramble, those who greeted Jesus selected Palm Branches because of their spiritual significance for the arrival of the promised Messiah.

As Palm Trees are waved before him, it is as if the life of every believer present or in the future was also being presented in praise and adoration before the Son of God.

Why the Palm Tree? Palm Trees Grow Tall: Palm trees, unlike other trees, have branches that shoot straight upward. None of its branches grow out of its side. Believers like the Palm Tree, are different from others. They don't sample the world, here and there, trying to grow from the side but they constantly reach higher and higher as they mature in the grace of God. Maybe that's why they sing the old song, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land. A higher plane than I have found. Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

Why the Palm Tree? Palm Trees only grow in the purest soil. They will not grow in filthy places well dunged like other trees. The palm tree loves to put down its roots by the rivers of water. In that same sense, a true believer can only grow in the purest of circumstances where his roots grow deep into the waters of the word of God. Believers soon learn that they can not grow spiritually if they are not planted firmly in the word of God.

Why the Palm Tree? A Palm Tree, when young, is very weak and feeble and can hardly stand by itself. Usually, three or four palm trees are planted together and in this way they support each other and stand against storms. New Christians and young Christians are rarely able to stand alone. They need the support of others in the faith to help them weather the storms, drawing strength from each other. So the fellowship of the saints is important, because that fellowship shared with others helps weaker believers in moments of doubt and temptation.

Why the Palm Tree? Palm Trees are always green. They are green in the winter and they are green in the summer. They never cast their leaves neither do they fade because of an abundance of sap that flows from the roots. Believers are like Palm Trees because our faith is not affected by the difficulties of the day. Whether it rains or whether it shines believers still hold fast to their faith in God's goodness. This is because we are constantly fed from the root of the word. Our faith builds from constant hearing. Romans 10:17 says, "Now faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." That's what keeps a true believer Palm Leaf Green, even in the toughest times.

Why the Palm Tree? The palm tree grows best when it is most pressed down. When the heaviest weights are hung upon it, it seems to grow taller and straighter. Though it is pressed it still endures. Is this not the same with every believer? The more the world puts on us, the stronger we become. Sickness, trouble, and persecution destroy those of little faith but believers seem to always bounce back and grow even taller in the faith and stronger. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10 says, "We are troubled on every

side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Like the palm tree, the more the world puts on us, the more we are able to bear and the stronger we become.

Signs of victory

Finally, we must consider that the palm tree was a symbol of victory.

When Christ entered Jerusalem the people waved palm branches because of all that they symbolized.

But the questions still lingers, "Why Palm Trees?"

They symbolized their constant praise to God and longing to be lifted closer to him!

They symbolized their quest to grow in the purity of God's word and their willingness to sink themselves deep into the mysterious realm of the Kingdom of God.

They symbolized their ability to survive despite repeated attempts to destroy their nation by many kings and nations!

They symbolized the truth of David's words in Psalm 1, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. His leaf shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The palm branches symbolized their faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, they cut down palm branches to symbolize the victory he offered over sin!

They symbolized the victory he offered over Satan and the forces of darkness!

They symbolized the victory he offered over death and the grave!

As the palm branches waved in the air they came to represent all of their hopes in the power of an almighty God.

They waved the Palm branches because he was the perfect answer to an imperfect world.

He was the perfect hope for imperfect tomorrows.

He was the perfect mold for imperfect marriages.

He was the perfect melody for every imperfect song.

He was the perfect pattern for every imperfect life.

They waved palm branches in the air because somehow they knew:

—SIN could not shame him: DOUBT could not defeat him!

—FEAR could not frustrate him; BURDENS could not bewilder him!

—DEMONS could not defile him, DIFFICULTY could not restrain him!

—PERSECUTION could not distract him; TEMPTATION could not mislead him!

—DISEASE could not disable him; HATRED could not control him!

Why palm trees? Because every believer is like a palm tree, standing tall, lifting our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help!

Why palm trees? Because every believer sinks his roots deep in the word of God and joins with the song writer in declaring, "My hope is built on nothing less than

Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name!"

Why palm trees? Because like palm trees we have withstood the storm and the rain and he's always been by our side!

Like palm trees whose leaves are lifted in the air, we hear the words of the old warriors, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whiter shall I go."

The crowd shouted "Hosanna!"

They shouted Hosanna to welcome Christ as King. But they also shouted Hosanna because they served a God who would:

—HEAR them when they prayed!

—OPEN doors that had been closed in their faces!

—RECEIVE them when the world turned them away!

—SATISFY them when their souls were thirsty!

One of the strange things about Palm Sunday is that the same people who waved palm branches and shouted Hosanna on Sunday were not talking about palm trees a few days later.

Instead of waving palm branches they were shouting crucify him!

Instead of palm trees they were bringing out an old rugged cross!

On an old rugged cross, he who was PRECIOUS died for the WORTHLESS.

On an old rugged cross, he who was FORGIVING died for the UNFORGIVING!

On an old rugged cross, he who was PERFECT died for the PATHETIC.

On an old rugged cross, he who was MAGNIFICENT died for the MISERABLE!

On an old rugged cross, he who was STRONG died for those who were WEAK!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Hosanna! He's still the king of Kings!

Hosanna! He's still the Lord of Lords!

No. 9134-Black Heritage

How I Got Over!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 6, 2005

SCRIPTURE:"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." Deuteronomy 28:1-2

Introduction

How is it possible that a once enslaved people could come so far? We who had one time become what Frantz Fanon called the 'Wretched of the Earth" have risen to be leaders of nations are free men and women. How is this? How is it that despite impossible odds, an entire race of people who were doomed to destruction and servitude could avoid oblivion and instead of being destroyed, actually prosper? Many rationales have been given for the African-American survival and growth in the United States, but none quite explains it better than the fact that we have been the beneficiaries of God's amazing grace.

Defined, Grace is unmerited favor. It is blessings that have flowed from the providence of God to the undeserving. It is not payment for a job well done or credit earned for achievements realized. Grace is God's love that is shared with all who will accept his benevolence.

If any race understands God's Grace, it should be those who have experienced life's bitter pills. Those who have tasted the dregs of life and wallowed in the mud of one man's abuse of another, understands what it means to experience God's Grace.

Our people, brought to these shores, for the most part, against our will have broken the shackles that bound us and have risen.

We have picked the cotton, contributed toscientific development, built schools, expanded agriculture, represented this nation on foreign shores and loaned our wealth of inventions, novelties and joy. We have given America the songs of our past, the blues of our sorrows and the spirituals of never dying hope. And we have given America our blood in great battles to guarantee its freedom.

How is it possible for any race of people who have suffered so much to do so much, were it not for the grace of God.

Through the Grace of God we have come. James Weldon Johnson puts it this way, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, we have come, treading

our path through the blood of the slaughtered."

When we look back, we understand the lyrics of the Old Negro Spiritual "How I got Over! My soul looks back and wonders, How I Got over!" Only those who know about the love of God for all of his people, especially the wretched of the earth, can understand the mystery of how we got over!

As Christians, we know that it has been the Grace of God that has prepared us, protected us and provided for us over the centuries. It will be the Grace of God that will see us through.

Exposition

This text focuses on the final instructions of Moses to the Children of Israel before they entered into the Promised Land.

At 120 years old, Moses was aware that the people would make it to the land of promise, although he himself would not get there with them.

In the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28, which means "a second look", Moses repeats promises and curses that he had given earlier on the instructions of God.

As long as Israel remained a people that were God fearing and obedient to God, they were to enjoy the blessings of God in every aspect of their lives, despite their circumstance of over 400 years of slavery which had robbed them of opportunity, experience and inheritance.

These former slaves were promised to be blessed if they lived in the country or if the lived in the city (v3); Blessed with many babies called, "the fruit of thy bodies" and shall be blessed to the point that what they planted or herded would be prosperous. (v4). In addition, these former slaves would be blessed with a full basket or rich foods (v5). Despite plots to destroy their movements that will be blessed going in and coming out (v6). The enemies of these former slaves will be defeated in front of their very eyes(v7). The places and ways that these former slaves store and preserve their resources will be blessed and fruitful. (v8). The people of the world will see how God raises up this people and will become afraid of them because of their babies (v10) and the way that they dominate and multiply and cover the land.

In addition, these former slaves were promised that in God's time he would send favorable blessings in the right season to the point that those who were once slaves will be sufficient, able to build their own houses and secure their own destinies without begging or borrowing. (v12).

These former slaves were promised that God would lift them from subservience to leadership. From being chattel to champions, "And the Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail." (v13) They were to be lifted above, no longer thought of us as being second class or beneath.

For the most part Israel remained loyal to God, and God kept his promises. In the instances in which they strayed away from God, the blessings that were promised in the first 14 verses were substituted with the curses of those that began at verse 15.

Israel succeeded because it was guided and protected by the grace of God. He

lifted them up out of the miry clay and planted their feet on dry ground. His grace alone is how they crossed over from being a nation of slaves to a dominating force in the Promised Land.

The Reasons We Have Survived

As a general rule, the Black community is a type of the Children of Israel. We have survived generations of difficulties and frustrations because, for the most part, we have subscribed to a strict belief in God and have remained faithful to God as a people. As a result, God has favored us with his Grace.

Blessed in the Country or the City: Like Israel, we have been blessed whether we lived in the country or in the city. In the country, he protected us in sharecropper shacks with newspaper covered walls and wood burning stoves. He touched the ground with his finger and the cotton we planted grew tall and the bolls were full. Our families grew strong and he protected us from the sicknesses and illnesses that should have destroyed us because of our diet and rural lifestyle. Likewise, in the cities he blessed us. He helped us survive slum neighborhoods, and rat infested apartments owned by absentee landlords. We were not supposed to survive in the city because we had little learning, fewer opportunities and only the work of factory workers and domestics to maintain our families. Yet, whether in the country or in the city, we survived and flourished.

Blessed with large families: Like Israel, God blessed us with a spirit of family and a love for children. We had plenty of babies. Black babies, brown babies, yellow babies. We have babies, babies with plenty of hair, silky hair, kinky hair, and curly hair. Babies with naked bottoms, cloth diapers and Pampers. We had plenty of babies raised by a neighborhood of mamas, aunties, grandmas and next door neighbors. Everybody in the hood was a mama. It worked because somehow God gave us a sense of family that caused us to look at our neighbor's child as our own child and bad children were spanked by all of their mama's and papas in the neighborhood and then by their own too. Our babies came fast and families with 10 brothers and sisters were not unusual. God blessed those families with an abundance of love if they had nothing else; it's the only way that families with so little could be so large and still thrive.

Enemies rebuked before our eyes: Like Israel, we have seen our enemies rebuked and chastised before our eyes. We trembled when men rode through our community in white sheets and called themselves the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. We watched them lynch our mothers and fathers, beat our sisters and spit on our dreams. Some of us fought back like Denmark Vessey,Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey,Huey Newton and Malcolm. But most of us listened to Booker T., and Roy Wilkins, A. Phillip Randolph and Martin and we waited for God to move. It was hard, but we held our peace until God got ready to move. And when he moved he opened the floodgates. Our enemies changed colors when the courts said Rosa Parks had the right to keep her seat, James Meredith had a right to attend Ole Miss and Black folks could order a cup of coffee from the front door instead of the back. When God started moving,

he did it right in front of our former enemies. He did it in a way that no one could deny that it wasn't by the power of the people as the Panthers demanded but by the Power of an almighty God.

No longer the tail: Like Israel, we who were once slaves saw our destiny change. We could dream of being more than a fine shoeshine boy and a Pullman Porter. God promised people like us that we would no longer be the tail. We watched with our eyes when Frederick Douglass and Andrew Young became Ambassadors, and William Brooke became a Senator. Our hearts stirred at even the possibility that we could be president. When Shirley Chisholm, Julian Bond, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton ran for president and matched intellect and skill with the brightest minds in white America, we could see that in our life time, the tail would become the head. Every time we see Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice making powerful decisions and Young men like Senator Obama walking the Halls of Congress, we see the tail becoming the head. In thousands of cities across the nation, we who were once locked out and forced out are being pushed to the top by an unseen force acting on a centuries old promise that those who were once last will be first and the tail would become head.

We Have Been Blessed because of the Lord

Finally, we must consider that our rise as a people has been closely associated with our faith and obedience to God.

With that we should pay close attention to what Moses promised Israel. They would continue to be blessed as long as they remained close to God. Moses warned Israel that if the people defied God, became disobedient and began to follow other gods, the blessings they enjoyed would discontinue.

That warning remains true for our people today.

If we stray away from God we threaten the blessed relationship with have with God.

Without God's protection we will build fine houses but they will not be homes; we will still have babies but our sense of family will diminish; we will still make gains but they will be empty and shallow; we will still see our people rise to high positions but we will become increasingly disappointed with those like us who lead us, because they do it without God.

Without God we will still prosper to a degree, but we will enjoy it less.

Without God we may eat caviar but it won't taste as good as fried chicken.

Without God we may dine on filet mignon but it never quite matches the flavor of a salaciously flavored pork chop.

It was nothing but the grace of God that brought us and taught us through the years.

We know it was the grace of God because he touched the hearts of those who once oppressed us and changed their hearts.

In 1748 a young slave trader became fed up with trading slaves, buying and selling human flesh. He became troubled in his spirit. That night a terrible storm broke out

and John Newton cried out “Lord, have mercy on us.” When the storm subsided his eyes were opened.

He had seen the error of his ways. His eyes were opened!

He decided to put away his life as a slave trader and he sat down and wrote the words that ring out across the centuries:

“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found, blind but now I see!”

Because of his Amazing Grace, we should keep trusting in the Lord.

If we trust in the Lord, he will make a way for us out of no way!

If we trust In the Lord, he will build a bridge for us over troubling waters!

If we trust in the Lord, he will be a shelter for us in a time of storm!

When the world asks, how did a nation of slaves come so far, we can only respond, it wasn’t anything but the grace of God!

It’s the grace of God that wakes me up in the morning!

It’s the grace of God that puts me to sleep at night!

It’s the same grace that has brought me thus far and the same grace that will see me through!

I don’t know about you, although some folks say it’s country and old timey, I’m going to keep telling the story! How I got over!

I’ve got to tell somebody about a little baby born in Bethlehem!

I’ve got to tell somebody about a man who healed the sick and raised the dead!

I’ve got to tell somebody about a man who died on an old rugged cross; but Early Sunday morning, arose from grave with all power in his hands!

How I got over! How I got over!

My soul looks by with wonder at how I got over!

No. 9135-Inspiration

Giving God a Helping Hand

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 10, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 "I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" Genesis 17:15-17; And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. Genesis 16:2

Introduction

Have you ever given someone a helping hand? We usually offer a helping hand to people who appear to need assistance. Whether it is a family stranded on the wayside or a friend in a personal strait, helping hands are offered whenever it appears to us that someone has done all they know to do and has exhausted all remedies.

Modern Good Samaritans are becoming rare entities. Despite the passage of Good Samaritan laws that protect those who give a helping hand, many are afraid to stop to help a traveler on the road for fear that the traveler may very well be a roadside predator waiting to rob and attack the Samaritan. The wounded man of biblical fame would have had a difficult time in modern times because the Good Samaritan would be assuming liability for moving the wounded man, should moving him save his life but injure him in another way. Without liability protection, the Good Samaritan could run the risk of being sued by the person that he tried to help, especially if in the course of helping the victim someone misinterprets his actions as touching the victim inappropriately during mouth to mouth resuscitation efforts or Heimlich maneuvers. If the Samaritan carried the wounded man to a hospital, in many places he could become liable for expensive hospital treatments if he gives his name in the emergency room. Giving a helping hand today, is risky business because too often those who are helped including doctors, EMS personnel and well intentioned passers-by too often become victims themselves.

Despite the risks however, there are many who still offer a helping hand when it appears that someone has reached a point of helplessness.

Sooner or later everyone reaches a point in their lives when they need a little help. No one is so independent that they will never need anyone. Everybody needs

somebody, sometimes.

What about God? Have you ever reached a point where it appeared that God seemed too slow or unable to accomplish a desired end? What was your response? Did you wait for him or did you, like millions of others before you, try to give God a helping hand.

You know how it's done. You ask God for a little extra financial help, he either takes a long time or seems unable or unwilling to do what you ask, so you decide to help him out by selling drugs, buying lottery tickets or fencing hot merchandise.

You ask God for a healing, but he seems to take so long that you start going to Voodoo doctors, casting spells on yourself and saying special chants.

You ask God for increase, and then put your own thing together when it looks like he's moving to slow.

When we pray and then start our own operation while we are waiting, then we are giving God a helping hand. Does he really need a helping hand? There is nothing that we can do that God can't do better. He doesn't need our helping hand.

As Christians, we are growing in the faith. We are also growing in patience. It is a painstakingly slow learning process but we are learning that there isn't anything that is too hard for God. If we wait on him and move at his command, what he has promised us can be achieved.

Exposition

This text focuses on Sarai's attempt to fulfill her own prayer by arranging a surrogate birth for her husband.

God promised Abraham that he would have a child by Sarai his wife. The son would continue the heritage and promise given to Abraham. However, Abraham was advancing in age and so was Sarai. Sarai, wanted to insure that Abraham had an heir. Since it was the custom of the day for surrogate children born of those in the head of household's employment to become heir, Sarai suggested that Abraham have a child by his maid. At length, Abraham agreed and the child Ishmael was born.

Sarai doubted whether God could keep the promise made to her husband in light of her age. However, God did keep his promise to him. She did bear a son. His name was Isaac.

Sarai's own arrangement caused a major family problem however. Bad feeling developed between she and Hagar as jealousy developed between the two women because Sarai could bear no children. It resulted in Hagar's banishment from Abraham, taking the child with her.

God Often Leaves No Timetable

Abraham believed God would give him the son that was promised; however God did not give him a timetable. When God told Moses to speak to Pharaoh he gave him a timetable to relay to the king. Joseph spoke of seven lean years and seven fat years

in his dreams. There are moments when God is exact. These are times when he gives a timetable, there are other times when God says it will be but he does not give a timetable.

Like Abraham we are tremendously frustrated when it seems that God has neglected or forgotten about our situation. The hours drag out. The weeks come one after the other without a word from God. When we hear nothing, we often believe that God has forgotten. That's when we take matters in our own hand.

Sarai decided to please her husband by arranging a surrogate to bear a child for him. However, God's promise was that she would bear him a son, not a surrogate. Often when we make our own arrangements, they are less than what God has promised.

He promised us victory, but we settled for a truce.

He promised us success, but we settle for enough to hang on to.

He promised us happiness, but we settled for accumulations of things.

Whenever God seems to move too slowly we must remember that his estimate of time is not the same as hours. We think in days. He thinks in millions of years. What to us is a lifetime is but a second to him. The 90th Psalm reminds us that a thousand years to us is like a day to the Lord. It's obvious that our time and his time estimates are not the same.

We should not be frustrated when it appears that God has forgotten us. We should remember that God always hears us. It was many years before God acted on his promise to Abraham. It was 400 years before he responded to the prayers of Israel in slavery. It was 430 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament; before God sent the messiah.

The old folks put it this way, "He may not come when you want him, but he's always on time."

When We Help out we usually mess up!

Sarai tried to help God out and messed up pretty bad. Her plan seemed logical and reasonable. She followed the protocol and talked it over with her husband. He consented and the deed was done. However, afterwards trouble erupted in the family.

There is no record that Sarai and Abraham prayed about their decision. They talked about it and then did it.

Often we have the same dilemma. We act without prayer. However, it is extremely important for believers to pray over actions before undertaking them. Prayer is essential. If we don't pray up, we'll usually mess up!

Had they prayed God would have reassured them that his promise would be fulfilled, but Sarai didn't pray she had her own plan.

What plans do you have floating in your mind right now? Have you made plans for yourself, spouse or children? Have you prayed about it? Have you asked God for guidance?

To pray for direction is different from worry. Prayer involves asking God for direction with respect to the options before you. In solitude, we seek God's

reassurance that what we want is what he wants. After personal prayer, we then check the scriptures to see if our course of action is consistent with the word of God. Then we watch for signs to confirm what we believe God has told us. Once we have received confirmation we prepare to move as he commands the events that affect our lives in an ordered march toward fulfillment of his promise.

There are times when God does what he promises immediately. There are other times when he takes a slower approach. It's much like a mother who promises that a cake will be made. She could either bake the cake and it is sitting on the table when her children come home or she could take them through the step by step preparations of gathering the sugar, flour, milk, etc, and talking them through the entire preparation process. Whether she bakes the cake or shows them how to make a cake depends on her purpose; the purpose often determines the speed of delivery.

We pray for money, but it may very well be that God takes the long way around. Rather than money just showing up, he takes us through all of the preparatory steps: education, training, employment and investment, then money. Some think the path God has chosen is too slow, so they try to help him out. We want a happy family, his way requires marriage, but we try shacking. Every time we try to do it ourselves we mess up! Our feeble efforts underscore the truth of Proverbs 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. "

God can keep every promise he makes

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should be aware that God never makes a promise that he cannot keep, for there is nothing too hard for God to do.

Sarai laughed when she heard that God was going to bring them a child in her old age.

There are many who doubt God's power, who laugh when they hear what God promises to do for us.

They laugh when God promises to pick us up when we have fallen down!

They laugh when God promises to forgive us for our sins and give us one more chance!

They laugh when God promises to open the windows of heaven and bless us with health, strength and possibly even gold and silver!

Those who know the Lord, have learned not to laugh. When God says it, it will be done.

God promised Joshua that once in the Promised Land that he would deliver them and give them the victory. It was a hard promise for a man to fulfill, but it was easy for the Lord! When the people marched around the walls for the seventh time and trumpet sounded, walls that looked like a hard thing, turned out to be an easy thing in the hands of the Lord. Joshua asked for another hard thing later, "If I had a little more sunshine, I could win this battle", the Lord took hold to the earth and stopped its rotation and caused the sun to hang in the noonday sky! It was a hard thing for man, but "elementary" for the Lord.

God promised Abraham that he would give him a child, despite his advancing age;

it was a hard thing for man to do, since his wife was 99 years old, but it was "elementary to the Lord." Sara even laughed about it, because she too thought this was too hard, even for the Lord. But when Isaac was born, his birth proved that God can fulfill hard promises.

Every child of God should be encouraged to know that if God promises you something, you will receive it! But we should be sure of what God promises!

God didn't promise:

—That every day would be Sunday!

—That a little rain would never fall!

—That it would always be up and never down!

—That it would always be victory never defeat!

He promised that whether sunshine or rain he would never leave me alone!

Somebody laughed when they heard that there was child born in Bethlehem who was the only begotten son of God.

Somebody laughed when they heard there was a man who was giving sight to blind and causing the lame to walk!

Somebody laughed when they heard there was a man who was raising the dead!

Somebody laughed when they put an old rugged cross on his shoulder and forced him to carry up Golgotha's hill.

Somebody laughed when they put a sign over his head that said he was the King of the Jews!

Somebody laughed when they drove nails in his hands!

Somebody laughed when he hung from the cross, and taunted, "If you are the Christ come down from the cross and save yourself!"

Somebody laughed when the buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning, without anybody's help…

He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9136-Cross

Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La. 7

April 17, 2005

Scripture: Luke 23:49: "And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." Luke 23:49 "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." John 19:25

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you desperately needed help, but you felt all alone. Most individuals have many acquaintances that range from co-workers, club members, neighbors, to business associates and classmates. Many of these acquaintances are frequent faces during the times of our lives when everything is going great. When we are healthy, influential or beneficial in some way, the number of acquaintances that are near to us seems innumerable. We often wonder how we attracted so many acquaintances. However, when we fall into a difficult way that large crowd of acquaintances seems distant. The acquaintance that always wants to talk, never answers the phone when we are in need. The acquaintances that enjoyed our presence in the club are rather distant once we face a false accusation that could result in a trial or heavy legal expense. Somehow, when we seem to need the support of our acquaintances the most, they seem to disappear.

There is a difference between friends and acquaintances. All of our friends are acquaintances but all of our acquaintances are not our friends. At what point does a person become your friend? If they show you a kindness do you call them your friend? If they lend you some money or give you something to eat, is that qualification enough? Friendship is not easy to develop. What is a friend? For the answer consider the woman who had spent some seventy years as maid and servant to Miss Lucy, a wealth Southern belle. Now the mistress had died, and in an effort to comfort this old black maid, a neighbor said, "I'm so sorry to hear of Miss Lucy's death. You must miss her greatly. I know you were dear, dear
friends." "Yes'm," said the servant, "I am sorry she died. But we wasn't friends." "Not friends?" said the lady, "I know you were. I've seen you laughing and talking together lots of times." "Yes'm, that's so." Came the reply. "We've laughed together, and we've talked together, but we was just "quaintances. You see, you don't become friends until we have shared each other's pain. We never shed no tears. Folks got to cry together before they become friends." Only those who are willing to share our pain can truly call themselves our friends.

Most of us have a very small handful of friends but many acquaintances. We are usually able to distinguish our acquaintances from our friends by the way they respond to us in moments of peril and need. Our acquaintances may have met us at a social function, business meeting or chance occasion. Our acquaintances may have been persons introduced to us by others, we know there names and may even serve with them in one capacity or another. The more we have or the more we influence we bring with us, the more acquaintances we seem to attract. Everybody wants to say they know you, belong to your club, and say they have been touched by your life in some way; especially if such a relationship is profitable in some way. It is possible to have thousands of acquaintances, especially if you are popular for one reason or another.

Friends on the other hand are very few. Our friends share our happy times and celebrations. They are close to us but they have no secret agenda. When they call or visit us they truly came to share a moment with us, without another item on their agenda. Our friends are usually the first ones to differ with us when we are wrong and still love us. Moreover, our friends share resources whenever such sharing will benefit the other. Friends, never take advantage of their friendship for the personal gain of one at the risk of personal loss for the other.

Jesus has proven to be a friend to believers in many ways. He's been there for us in our most vulnerable times. As the world drives nails into our hands and raises us up in humiliation, weakness or shame, he is near in our cross bearing times. He is more than an acquaintance, he is a friend. No wonder the song writer would write, "What a friend we have in Jesus."

When we are on the cross, he is near; but are we always as near to him as he is to us? God loves us but is it reciprocal?

As Christians, we strive to stay close to the cross of Christ because there we have found a spiritual fountain from whence we are blessed immensely for which we are willing to pledge our lives to champion its cause.

Exposition

This text focuses on the people who followed Christ during his moment of trial and crucifixion.

It is unique that those who followed Jesus closely and reverently are here described as acquaintances. As he was crucified many people gathered to watch. The makeup of the crowd varied. There were some who were among those who shouted "crucify him." There were others who were among those who shouted "Hosanna" when he entered Jerusalem. Clearly identified among those who watched were people who were close to him during his ministry; some of whom were identified as his friends.

Luke refers to the crowd generically as "acquaintances." These individuals stood at a distance, beat their breasts and went home. The act of beating their breast was an act of mourning. It demonstrated remorse, pity and a general spirit of lament.

There were many people who suddenly became "acquaintances" with him during

his hour of trial. They stayed as far away from the cross as they could get. There is no record of Lazarus being near the cross, even though he was raised from the dead by Christ. The lame man, who was healed by Christ should have been there, but he wasn't at the cross. Neither was the blind man who had his sight restored. In fact, with the exception of John, all of the other 10 disciples were no where near the cross on that dreadful day.

John 19:25 names the handful of the faithful that dared stand near the cross. John said, "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. They dared to stand near the cross. It was obviously a bold confession of faith because those associated with Christ would certainly become targets themselves. They could actually be crucified themselves because of their close acquaintance with him. Despite the danger, there were five that dared stand near the cross.

There were 5,000 who came for fish and bread, but only five would stand near the cross.

There were 12 that followed him for three years, but on the day of the crucifixion only one of them, John, stood near the cross.

The whole city turned out to greet him when he entered Jerusalem,. There were literally thousands of people, but only five of that crowd would dare stand near the cross.

Those who stood near the cross had their reasons. Jesus was more than just an acquaintance to them, he was a man who was willing to lay down his life for those he considered friends.

Near The Cross

Those who chose to stand near the cross were people who were more than acquaintances to Christ. They were more than nameless faces in the crowd who would safely beat their breast, dropped their heads and go home. They were individuals whose lives had been touched and whose eyes had been opened by his presence.

MARY WAS NEAR THE CROSS-BLESSED: Mary stood near the cross. Until she stepped forth as the mother of Jesus, she would have been anonymous in the crowd. She was not from Jerusalem; she could have remained just another face in the crowd. By standing near the cross she focused attention on herself. Like Mary, there are many mothers today who go beyond the bounds of safety to support their children. She rejoiced with him at the wedding celebration and followed him closely from village to village. Now, even in his hour of humiliation she stood near the cross. Jesus saw her compassion and concern and commended her to accept John as her son and charged him to care for her as his own mother (v26). Mary symbolized every God fearing mother in the world. They stand near the cross because there they find the love of God showered upon them. It is through the grace of God that such women are able to stand. He provides for their care and holds them in his hand. Mary was rewarded as she stood near the crowd. So is every other mother who stands close to the Lord in the best and worst of times. It is the reward of the cross that draws them

closer every day.

JOHN WAS NEAR THE CROSS-RESTORED: John was near the cross. He was a restored man. At the garden of Gethsemane when Christ was betrayed John was among those who scattered and hid themselves. Like Peter, John denied Christ by hiding. Yet, he stood at the cross because he was a forgiven and restored man. There are many today who stand near the cross because they are restored men and women. These are the men and women whose lives were broken by the circumstances of life but have been given second chances. John represented millions who have been given a second chance. Only those who have bottomed out in life and felt the life saving hand of God touch them and lift them, understand what it means to have a second chance. Only those who have felt the scorn of society and heard the clanging doors and rattling keys of prison cells know who know what it means to have a second chance. Only those who have failed miserably only hear God say, get up and try again, know what it means to have a second chance. He stood near the cross because it was Christ's actions on the cross that gave him his second chance. His restoration and forgiveness was based on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. As far as he was concerned he could not be just an acquaintance, he had to stand near the cross.

SALOME WAS NEAR THE CROSS-ENLIGHTENED: Salome was Mary's sister. She was the wife of Zebedee. She was introduced in Matthew 20:20-23 when she tried to bring her two boys James and John before Christ and secure positions for them in the new kingdom, on both his left and right hand side. Jesus asked did she know the depth of her request. He wanted know whether they were willing to drink from the cup before him." She wanted a crown for her sons, but learned from Jesus' own words that if there is no cross, there can be no crown. Salome stood at the cross having learned that service to the kingdom of God will require sacrifice. Her two sons did drink from the cup. James was killed as Martyr and John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos before he died. When Salome stood at the cross she represented all of those who have since learned that there can be no crown of righteousness until we have drank from the bitter cup of sacrifice. Her eyes were opened and she stood at the cross ready to serve or sacrifice her life if necessary to advance the kingdom of God. Her stand, near the cross, was an announcement of her willingness to bear her own cross, in order to receive her own crown.

MARY MAGDALENE WAS NEAR THE CROSS-REDEEMED: Many Magdalene was a woman from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons. They made her life miserable and threatened to destroy her. Jesus redeemed her and gave her life new meaning. Because she was saved from a dreadful life, crippled by sin and plagued by demons, Mary Magdalene had no where to go but to the cross. Not only did she stand near the cross but she was also near the empty tomb. She had experienced redemption and there was only one place she wanted to be and that was near the savior. There are many today, who share Mary Magdalene's testimony. He has freed many of us from demons of past mistakes, failures and fears. He has freed many of us from guilt and the burden and pain of mistakes. Those who have been redeemed stand near the cross because:

—Jesus moved out of the light of heaven to bring light in their dark world.

—Jesus made himself sin, to deliver us from guilt and shame.

—Jesus made himself poor, to give us an opportunity to rise up in faith.

Those who have been picked up and turned around by the power of God have only one place to stand and that is near the cross.

Near the cross is where believers should be

Finally, brothers and sisters, believers should be reminded that there is both a witness and a reward for those who stand near the cross.

When five individuals stood near the cross, while thousands of acquaintances and onlookers looked afar off, there willingness to stand near the cross was a testimony.

It was a testimony to their faith in Jesus as the son of God.

It was a testimony to their faith that God would protect them from the enemies of the cross.

Those who are willing to stand near the cross also will be recognized and rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are not ashamed of the cross on this earth will be recognized by Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

The reward of the faithful is a crown of righteousness and eternal life.

Every child of God should stay near the cross because being near the cross means that we are more than just acquainted with the Lord. It means we know the Lord.

We know he answers prayer, because we've tried him for ourselves!

We know the Lord will make a way, because he's made a way for us out of no way!

We know the Lord heals the sick, because we have been on our sickbed and he has lifted us up.

The prayer of every saint is, "Jesus keep me near the cross."

Keep me near the cross because the cross is a symbol of his grace!

Jesus keep me near the cross because only the power of the cross can:

—lift me from the gutters and put me in glory.

—take me out of prison and put me in paradise.

—snatch me out of the jaws of hell and put me in paradise

—turn my moment of despair into days of delight

No wonder the song writer declared "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

At the cross, there is hope in your moment of despair!

At the cross, there is strength for your moments of weakness!

At the cross, there is love when the whole world hates you!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus died for the sins of the world!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus made our burdens bearable!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus made our mountains climbable!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus made our deepest valley crossable!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus made our daily pressures manageable!

On an old rugged cross, Jesus made our pain and suffering endurable!

Jesus keep me near the cross!
That's where he died out on Calvary!
But Early Sunday morning!
Early!
Early!

No. 9137-Anniv.-Ushers

Doors Looking for A Keeper

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 20, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" Psalm 84:10

Introduction

If God placed an advertisement in the newspaper that sought a door keeper for his house, how would it read? Could it read something like this, "Door Keeper Needed for the House of God? Experience with God necessary, must be able to stand firm, keep a pleasant smile and witness for the master. No pay but the job offers an excellent benefit package." If such an ad were placed would there be many takers?

Only special people respond to God's search for doorkeepers. These are the ones who are willing to go the extra mile to help bring others into the presence of the Lord.

If we were to advertise for a doorkeeper we would have to recognize one truth that: "If a building requires or utilizes a doorkeeper, the kind of door keeper obviously would depend upon the house."

David identified the type of doorkeeper needed when he specified the house. The doorkeeper needed was for the house of the Lord.

The usher is a special kind of doorkeeper. The usher's job and responsibility is defined by the door he or she keeps.

An usher is not a:

BOUNCER: A bouncer guards the door at a saloon, night club or house of ill repute. The bouncer watches for people who are unruly, those who carry weapons and may get physical with those who are disruptive. A church usher is not a bouncer because the door he or she keeps is not the door of the house of ill repute. The job of the usher is not to put people out but to welcome them in by showing the love, warmth and benevolent spirit of our God.

JAILER: A jailer guards the door of a prison. The door he guards has many locks, fortified by steel. These doors are designed to keep prisoners in place. His job is to insure that no one leaves out, breaks out, or slips out without permission. However, a church usher is not a jailer, because the door he or she keeps is not at a jail house but the House of the Lord. The job of the usher is not to keep people in church by locking them down, but to make them so comfortable and welcome that they want to stay, and went they leave, make them want to come back again.

TICKET TAKERS: A ticket taker is usually an usher at a theater or performing

arts center. He or she takes your ticket and shows you to your seat, as you prepare to watch the show. A church usher is not a ticket taker, because ticket takers stand at the door to prepare visitors for the show, and the House of the Lord is not a show place, but a place where God shows up and meets his people.

VALET: A valet is an usher at a hotel. Usually the valet will meet you at the door, help with your luggage, park your car and perform other courtesies. His job is to see to it that you find your assigned place comfortably. However, a church usher is not a valet, because after the valet meets you at the door and helps you he expects a tip. Church ushers help worshipers in many ways but the only reward they expect to receive will come from God himself.

GUARD: A guard is usually at the doors of many businesses, public institutions and some churches. They are often armed. The guard inspects everyone who comes in and serves as a deterrent to those who might want to attack, rob, steal or kill. The guard usually carries a weapon, a radio and cuffs to bind a suspect's hands. However, the usher who stands at the door of the house of God is not a guard. He stands at the door but there is another guard for the word says, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." He doesn't have a walkie talkie but he's in constant communication with the Lord because "he walks with me and talks with me." He doesn't have handcuffs to hold worshippers hands down because he's constantly saying, "Father I stretch my hands to thee." The usher is obviously, not a guard.

When the saloon door looks for a keeper, it wants a bouncer!

When the jail door looks for a doorkeeper, it looks for a jailer

When a theater looks for a doorkeeper, it looks for a ticket taker!

When a hotel looks for a doorkeeper, it looks for a valet.

When a business or public building looks for a doorkeeper, it often wants a security officer.

But when the Lord looks for a door keeper, he's not looking for a bouncer, jailer, ticket taker, valet or guard; he's looking for a child of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on David's expression of love for the presence of God.

Scholars believe that it was written, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, during the time he was temporarily exiled from the Holy City during the rebellion of his son Absalom. During this period of time he was unable to be in the holy city, or be near the place of worship; he yearned to be in its presence. The 84th Psalm finds David saying that he yearned to participate in the ordinances of the temple (v1) He expressed his desire toward them in verse 2-3. In verses four through seven he wrote of the joy of those persons who have a chance to be near God.

At verse 10 he makes it clear that he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than be outside in the tents of iniquity.

His expression of love for God, the house of God and the presence of God was a testament to his faith. The fact that he would rather have been a door keeper in the temple than a king in wilderness indicated the extent of his great faith. Having been

through both doors in the course of his life, he found the doors of the Lord to be most fulfilling.

Looking for a Keeper

The house of God is in need of a door keeper. The nature of the house, determines duties of the job and the qualifications for the job.

To be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord there are a few prerequisites:

THE DOORKEEPER MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH THE HOUSE OF GOD: Those who desire to be doorkeepers should be familiar with the house of God. Isaiah 2:3 says, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The doorkeeper should be one who knows the way to the house of God and knows the teachings of the Lord. In addition the doorkeeper in God's house must know how to act in the house of God. 1 Timothy 3:15 says, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.." The house of God doesn't need just any doorkeeper but its doors demand a person familiar with the House of God.

THE DOORKEEPER MUST NOT BE A PATRON OF THE WORLD: Doorkeepers should be individuals who have come out of the world. In Psalm 84 David refers to the ungodly life as the "tents of wickedness." If the bouncer comes to church he should not recognize the doorkeeper at the church as a regular patron of his saloon. The doorkeeper has made a conscious choice to leave the tents of wickedness and serve the Lord. That's why David used the phrase "I would rather" be a doorkeeper. "I would rather" indicates that the doorkeeper has been in, about or around the tents of wickedness at some time or another but has chosen to be a servant in the House of the Lord. He resolves like Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Let us hear the conclusion of the matter, fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

THE DOORKEEPER MUST BE HUMBLE: The doorkeeper understands, perhaps more than anyone else, that his entire existence is by the grace of God. He does not look down on the worshippers who enter. Neither does he criticize them or humiliate them in any way because he recognizes his own weaknesses and dependence upon God. He knows what it means to be low in spirit and he knows what it means to be lifted by the hand of God. Paul was a great Apostle but God gave him a thorn in his flesh that kept him humble. Likewise the doorkeeper should always keep a humble spirit, remembering what God told Paul, "My Grace is sufficient."

Doors of the House

Finally, brothers and sisters we must be aware that the doors of the house of God are not like other doors.

The doors of the house of God are the threshold that marks the entrance into the

presence of God.

People who enter the doors of the House of God expect the spirit of God to flow.

They want to experience the power of God because his:

—GLORY is much greater; his power is much stronger.

—METHODS are much wiser; his NAME is much sweeter.

—PRESENCE is much closer; his PROMISES are much surer.

The doors of the House of God need born again keepers. His doors are not like the doors of the world.

His doors are not:

—SLIDING DOORS that let the devil slip in and out, but they are open doors that usher us into the presence of a God who can turn our burdens into blessings, our defeats into victories, our problems into praises and our weaknesses into strengths.

—GARAGE DOORS that open so we can come in and park; but his doors are open to those who are willing to work until their day is done; work until the setting of their sun.

—SWINGING DOORS that allow encourage us to freely go in and out of the world; but his doors are unlocked doors that will be opened to anyone who knocks. I hear him saying, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The doors of the House of God are looking for a keeper.

These doors are:

STORMDOORS because when the storms of life are raging the presence of the Lord will be a protection for us. Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

SAFE DOORS because he protects us from attacks of Satan and builds a shield around us. We are safe in his arms. No wonder the song writer declared "Leaning, leaning. Safe and secure from all alarms! Leaning, leaning. Leaning on the everlasting arms.

AUTOMATIC DOORS because he blesses as soon as we come near his arms stretch wide open to do for us what he has done for so many others. No wonder the song writer declared, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others he'll do for you. With arms wide open he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do."

The doors of the House of God are looking for a keeper who believes in a God:

—Whose love never grows old;

—whose patience never runs out!

—Compassion is never outdated!

The doors of the House of God are looking for a keeper who believes in Jesus!

The son of the living God!

Who died on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning…

No. 9138-Youth

Get Real

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 24, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. John 20:26-31.

Introduction

How do you know what is real and what is not? There are millions of people today who are struggling to discover whether or not their existence is real or just an illusion. They ask, "Is this life really happening or is this entire experience just a dream." Youth are bombarded with such ideas that are presented in the context of popular moves. The Movie "Total Recall" showed Arnold Swaartzeneggar playing a man who lived in a time when people will purchase the memory of a vacation without actually going on the vacation. In that memory pack anyone can be programmed to be anything they desire. Laurence Fishburne stars in the movie "The Matrix" which creates an alternate life to this one. The alternate life has freedom fighters and people to be set free. The "Matrix" existed on the energy produced by human beings and gave them an illusion to live in. Discerning the real from the imagined is one of the hardest jobs of youth. Youth ask many questions about life, their surroundings and even about the church as they try sorting into compact compartments those things which they have found to be real and others which are only imagined.

It's not long before children reach an age in which they learn to distinguish what is real and the surreal. Discerning youth have learned the truth about Easter Bunnies, rabbits that lay colored eggs, the Tooth Fairy, leprechauns at the end of the rainbow, and the fat men who wear red suits at Christmas time. This level of discernment comes first, then follows the next level as they compare what they see around them to the picture they have been given of the ideal life.

Television presents many scenarios that young people take for the real world. Are all families as homogenous, loving and understanding as those we see on T.V? We laugh, but some T.V. families are closer to the reality that we know than others. Which best describes your family, The Huxtables? The Parkers? Or is it the families we see in Muddeah's Family Reunion or the "Friday" movie series. Even cartoons

present a challenge to help children discern real from reality. In cartoon land there is rarely an instance where the good guys lose, bad guys get away or the hero is unable to free himself from a trap. In cartoon land no one goes to church and there is no talk of sin. Only on television can a man be touched by an angel, get powerful blessings and walk right into heaven without ever going to a church or a synagogue.

Even harder for youth is the task of trying to discover truths about their own lives. Are we really who we claim to be or is it all a cute little game we play? Is the girl who goes to school each day with modest clothing, that includes knee length dresses and skirts, loose fitting pants, and blouses that conceal rather than reveal; is that her reality or the reality of others? Is the young man who wears a belt, ties his shoe laces, tucks his shirt tail in his pants and wears pants that fit rather than two sizes too large, is that reality for him; or is that someone else's reality.

Many young people are like the people in the Matrix. They live in two worlds. One they consider the real world, the other is considered a necessary alternative to keep from being grounded. They live in the world of Lil Boosie, Lil Kim, Lil Bow Wow, Ice Cube, Ice T, TI, 50-Cents, C-Murder, Girls Gone Wild, BET and Snoop Dogg. Yet, they live in an alternative world that has thousands of rules, tests and judgments often given by people who seem to have problems keeping themselves real. This alternative world is the world of rotary telephones, black and white TV, the Temptations, Curtis Mayfield, B.B. King, Gladys Knight, Dolemite, Red Foxx, Run DMC. For many this alternative world also includes Sunday School, Church, Youth Choirs, Preaching, Bible Schools and Youth Retreats.

How does God fit into the mix? Is he inside the Matrix or outside. Is he a part of your real world or is he a part of the alternative world only? What about the devil? Is he real or does he fit along side other less than real bad guys like, Werewolves, vampires, mummies and other creatures of a scary but unreal underworld?

Is heaven real? Will there actually be a place where we will live throughout eternity? Will there really be streets of gold? Will there really be infinite happiness and joy in this distant place. Is it real?

These are the questions that flash through the mind of many teens as they sort out their lives.

As Christians, we take heart in knowing that many young Christians have found their answers. From their own experience comes a testimony that cannot be denied. He's real. That's why they declare with the song writer, "Jesus is real, I know the Lord he's real to me!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Thomas as he expressed his doubt that the risen savior was actually real.

The text verse occurs a week after the resurrection. It was the Sunday following Easter. On Easter Sunday Jesus appeared to his disciples in a miraculous way. They had locked themselves behind closed doors out of fear. They were afraid that the temple guards would come and arrest them, accusing them of stealing the body of

Jesus. They feared they would be crucified. They literally feared for their lives. So they shut the doors tight and would not let anyone enter or leave. Verse 19 notes that in the midst of their fear Jesus came, despite the closed doors and appeared among them physically.

Thomas had the dubious distinction of being one who doubted the resurrection of Christ. When the disciples assembled themselves after the crucifixion, there was obviously much anxiety among them. The doors were shut and locks were in place. Then suddenly Christ appeared in the midst of them.

Thomas did not trust what his eyes were seeing. It appeared that the savior was standing before him in the flesh.

It appeared that the image he saw was that of Christ. However, Thomas was not sure. Too many things had happened and they happened so fast. He had earlier said he would not believe that Christ had risen unless he could touch the wound prints with his own hands. Thus, when Christ appears in this text He invites Thomas to do just that. It was then that Thomas knelt in submission and belief not needing to touch the Lord. He believed what he saw. He concluded that Christ was not a fake but a real presence before him.

When he bowed, he acknowledged Christ as the Lord and worshipped him.

Discovering The Real Me

Between the all the mixed images that we project to the world, where is the real "me?"

Youth often believe that their clothes or possessions define who they are. Thus, in youth wearing fashionable clothes is a must because many feel that they are defined by what they wear.

However, the real "us" is on the "inside." The inside represents our morals, values, habits, fears, beliefs, hopes, frustrations and dreams.

The goal of every Christian youth is to work on the inside and perfect its various parts.

On the inside is a core value system which indicates whether we lie or steal. What we believe about being loyal, whether we are friendly and polite or whether we can be counted on in a pinch.

On the inside lies our tendency to either obey rules or rebel against them, to see things from a positive point of view or to see them negatively. On the inside we discover whether we are spendthrifts or frugal money managers. On the inside we learn whether we are cowardly or brave.

Most importantly, on the inside lies what we believe about God. It's where our faith lies.

The major objective is to get the inside straight first.

Once the inside is straight, then the next objective is to integrate what's inside with the outside.

When we "integrate" our goodness to our outward selves another word comes into play; that word is "integrity." Integrity implies that both the inside and the

outside are the same.

When our inside and our outside is the same then we are "real."

Being "real" does not always mean that a person has reached an admirable state. It is possible for both the inside and the outside of a person to be corrupt. In this case, being "real" means being totally corrupt. This person is "real" but with low integrity. The opposite is to be "good" with high integrity.

God is not impressed with out outside, unless the outside and the inside are the same. We have to be "real." He looks first at the inside.

That's what the prophet Samuel discovered when he went to anoint a successor to King Saul in the bible. When all of David's brothers stood before the prophet, none of them were selected even though they looked appealing on the outside. They lacked a high degree of integrity: their outside nature and their inside were inconsistent.

David on the other hand had the temperament, intellect, spirituality and courage necessary to be king. It showed on the outside and the inside. Not only did he have integrity. He had a high degree of integrity.

Youth should strive to "be real" but to let their realness reflect a high degree of integrity.

The youth who insults others and is disrespectful to adults, can dismiss his actions as "I'm just being real" but that "realness" if it is genuine reflects a low level of integrity.

Being real with God

Finally, brothers and sisters, youth should "get real" with God.

Every Christian believer should try to make their spiritual life with God the same as their school life among their peers.

The Christian who sings, "I'm determined to follow Jesus" on Sunday should also reflect that determination on the school campus on Monday.

The Christian who reads and studies the bible in Sunday school and Wednesday nights should let the truth of those studies reflect themselves when it's time to socialize on Friday and Saturday nights.

Those young people who still maintain double lives, one on the outside and one on the inside should "Get Real" with God.

Their Sunday and their Monday must become one and the same.

While some young people have difficulty making their church life and their school life the same, there are others who are "real" when they proclaim their love for Christ.

There are millions of youth who testify "Yes, God is real for he has washed and made me whole."

Thomas knew Christ was real and not a spirit when he saw the marks in his hand and the hole in his side. We know he is real because we have seen the marks that he has made on our lives.

Those who know the Lord have a story to tell and he leaves his mark on you.

When you meet the Lord he leaves his mark.

When you know the Lord is real you begin to see things differently.
When the Lord is real to you
—SKIES seem to be bluer
—SUN seem to shine brighter
—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter
—FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller
—AIR seems more refreshing
—STARS seem to have more luster
—BURDENS seem lighter
—FAITH seems stronger
—HEAVEN seems closer
John said when the disciples saw the evidence they were glad!
Just like those disciples, every believer who knows that God is real has something to be happy about!
Because he's real, he can:
—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops
—Take our midnights and turn them into noon days
—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers
—Take our defeats and turn them into victories
—Take our losses and turn make them work for our gain
Somebody asks, "You are just a youth, how do you know he is real?"
Don't you hear the answer?
"I know the Lord is real because I can feel him in my hands!
I can feel him in my feet!
I can feel him in my heart!
I can feel him all over me!
He's so real that he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!
He's so real that he died for all of my sins!
But Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No. 9139-Inspiration

I Hear God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 1, 2005

SCRIPTURE: And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth." 1 Samuel 3:2-10.

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt God speaking to you, but you were not sure? Often God speaks to us in a variety of ways but we are not positioned to either hear him or recognize his voice. Sometimes when God speaks we don't recognize his voice at all and mistake him for another. It would be a completely unfortunate for God to speak to us but we miss his message because we were not able to discern his voice.

We hear many voices everyday. We hear news commentators, radio personalities, talk show hosts, political leaders, rappers, preachers, teachers, parents, relatives, and incantations of the mystics. Each claims to speak with some level of authority. How do we know which voice to receive? How can we filter out bad voices without blocking the true voice of God at the same time?

How do you hear God? What method do you use to discern God's will for you? In the Old Testament the priests carried to lots in their robes which were called Urim and Thummin. When a believer wanted to know the will of God they would simply cast the lots for a yea or nay response.

Today people spend millions of dollars to hear a divine voice. An instant industry that has popped up to service those who want to hear from a god, any god, in a hurry. In 1990 a company called Psychic Friends Network was established that connected 2000 psychics across the country and promised to give callers who dialed a 1-900

number answers to their questions. Singer Dionne Warwick hosted the 30 minute commercials. It raked in $125 million a year. Others jumped on board and by 1994 the industry took in $624 million a year. By the end of the century, analysts reported $1.2 billion a year receipts.

There is a troubling component for African-Americans. Most of the networks target poor Blacks and others with low incomes. They prefer to use almost exclusively African-American celebrities like Billy Dee Williams, Phillip Michael Thomas, Dionne Warwick, LaToya Jackson, and Nell Carter as hosts. The studies show that most of the respondents to the sites are Black, poor and all have money and love problems.

When Black people want to hear a divine word on a hurry, there are companies ready to give them anything they want to hear for the price of a 1-900 phone call.

When God speaks his voice is a source of inspiration, encouragement, correction and salvation. However, we must listen intently and study systematically to discern that what we hear or even what we read in the bible is actuallu the voice of God speaking to our life situation.

As Christians, we know the importance of the hearing God and rejecting strange voices. To hear him, we know we must pray regularly, study intently and live according to his direction. When we walk closely with him, without a doubt, he will hear us.

Exposition

This text focuses on young Samuel as he responds to the voice of God.

At the time of this text Samuel is about 12 or 13 years old. He had been brought to the temple by his mother, Hannah, as an infant so that he could be raised in the service of the Lord.

For years Samuel was a servant of the Priest Eli who was very old. Eli had two sons who were also priests but they were very ungodly in their manner. Samuel was reared to be the next high priest, even though it had not been revealed to him by God.

One night while Samuel was sleeping he heard a voice calling to him. Thinking it was Eli calling, Samuel raised himself on three separate occasions and went in to Eli, ready to be of service. Each time the old priest responded that he had not called him and sent him back to bed. Then Eli realized that God was speaking to the lad. He instructed him when he heard the voice the next time that he should respond, “Speak Lord for thy servant heareth.”

Ways That God Speaks

Those who want to hear a word from God have found that God speaks in one of three different ways, sometimes in all three at the same time.

SPOKEN WORD: The first way to hear God speak is through the spoken word. Young Samuel heard God’s voice through the spoken word. In the silence of the night God spoke to him in a voice that was clear and audible. His experience was not unique because Elijah while hiding from the forces of the King in the mountains, waited to

receive the word of God. There was an earthquake, but God was not in it. There was a strong wind, but God was not in the wind. There was fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, there was a still small voice that spoke to him and asked "Elijah, what doest thou here?" Elijah was given specific instructions by the spoken word of God himself.

Of the many means to communicate with us, God often chooses to speak to believers directly. When he speaks to us about decisions that are personal, and private, others may not know and probably will not understand what we say or appreciate the gravity of our experience. However, when God speaks to us about decisions that will affect others, the biblical record shows he has a pattern of also speaking to those who are to be affected. When God spoke to Abraham about Sara having a baby in her old age, he also spoke to Sara, although she was amused. When he spoke to Mary about the coming Christ child, he also spoke to Joseph. When God spoke to Hagar, who was not a believer in Yahweh, about the future of her unborn child Ishmael, he also spoke to Abraham as well. The pattern is clear. whenever God speaks to a member of your family about a matter that will impact the whole family, he will speak to other family members too, but not necessarily at the same time.

If it's a personal encounter, others may not know, unless we tell them. If God speaks to us about things that will affect others, at some point he will tell them too.

PREACHED WORD: In addition, God speaks through the preached word. Paul, writing to the Romans, emphasized the importance of the preached word of God when he asked, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14 He continued in verse 17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God has a message for entire nations, states, cities, communities and even respective races. Many do not hear the message because they neglect regular worship and listening to the preached word of God.

When we hear God speak, we should respond like Samuel, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth."

WRITTEN WORD: God speaks to us through his written word. To understand God's word requires study. Why? Because there are 783,137 words in the bible broken up into 66 books, 1,189 chapters; and 31,101 verses. You can't simply open the bible and point your finger and say, "Speak to me Lord." Why? Because there are 6,468 commands, 8000 predictions, and 1,260 promises in the bible. Without study, and proper application, simply opening your bible and reading a verse for direction is equal to superstition. What do you do when you want to hear from God about your life's direction? Hopefully, it is not like those who have a superstitious approach to hearing God. Consider the man who bragged about his fool proof method to hear what God wanted. He said he said his method always shows him the right thing to do. One day he woke up feeling he could not get what he wanted in life. He opened his bible to a verse that said "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." He went out confident that's what God wanted him to do, be satisfied. On another day he was financially in need. He worried about his fate. In distress he opened the bible again and pointed his finger to a verse that said "my God shall supply all your needs." He was reassured. For years he read a bible verse each day and did what it said. One day

however his finger fell on Matthew 27:5 “and went and hanged himself.” He was startled by this message so he pointed his finger again and came to John 13:27 that found Jesus talking to Judas saying “That thou doest, do quickly.” Guided by what he thought was the word of God, the man went out and hanged himself.

We can hear God speak to us through the written word if we study the word and apply it correctly. Paul, writing to young Timothy encouraged him to study the written word of God. In 2 Timothy 2:15 he said “Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the works of truth.” The study of the word of God is essential to Christian life. It is not sufficient to read the word of God, but it must be studied with an able teacher and proper study aids to get the full meaning. Through reading and studying the word of God, God is able to speak to the individual.

The Word of God is a source of great strength and encouragement. David declared “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. ..these words have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God.”

We Must Be In A Position To Hear God

Finally, brothers and sisters, to hear God we must be predisposed to hear him speak.

Samuel was able to hear God’s voice because he was a serious student of the bible, prayed regularly and was obedient.

At first he heard a voice but did not know what he heard. But because he followed his instructions, he not only heard God but understood what he was supposed to do when God spoke.

With so many voices in the world, we are not always sure that what we hear is from the Lord, but when we confirm that what we hear is truly from the Lord, we should be on watch for confirmations.

Consider the man who was drowning in flood waters and he prayed to God saying “Lord, I’m out here on your word, please save me. Let me hear from you.” As the flood waters rose a man in a boat came to help but the drowning man refused saying “I’m waiting to hear from God.” Soon after, another boat came and the man refused again. Later a rescue crew in a helicopter came to save him but the man refused again saying “I’m waiting to hear from God.” As the man began to drown, he saw the glories of heaven open up and an angel appeared. He asked the angel, why is God letting me drown, why didn’t I hear from him?” The angel responded, “He sent you two boats and helicopter, what more do you want? He answered you just didn’t hear!”

We must listen to the different ways God speaks.

That’s why the song writer said, “I hear God in every robin that sings, I hear God in every church bell that rings. Billows may roll, storm clouds assail, my anchor holds, God doesn’t fail. He’s in control the captain of my soul. I hear God.

We must hear God because he is:

—A Light to walk by, without it we’ll stumble in darkness!

—A Sure foundation, without it mankind builds on sandy foundations!

—A Two Edged Sword, without it man fights a losing battle
—A Refreshing Fountain, without man's thirst is unquenchable.
We must hear God because he is
—bread to the Hungry,
—comfort to the lonely,
—assurance to the anxious,
—hope to hopeless
—strength to the weak and peace to the troubled soul,
—rest to the weary!

No wonder the song writer said, "I heard the voice of Jesus said, come unto me and rest. Lie down, lie down, thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!

I hear the word of God declare, "Trust in the Lord!"
Trust the savior who died out on Calvary!
Trust the Lord who was buried in a borrowed tomb!
But early Sunday morning, he arose..
With all power in his hands!

No. 9140-Mothers

Who is My Mother?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 2005

SCRIPTURE:But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. Matthew 12:48-50.

Introduction

What do you know about your mother? Do you really know her? There are many who live in the same house with the mother in their families and do not know them. Of course, we know their names and their vital statistics: birthday, maiden name, education and other information available on any resume"; yet with all of that knowledge can we answer the question, "who is my mother?" There are many children who live under the same roof with their mother and do not know her yet? They are familiar with her but we don't really know the woman we call mother.

Mother's day is a celebration of motherhood? It's a day when the entire family celebrates because every member of the family has or has or has the presence of mother or mother figure in their lives. Today's celebration is a celebration of the women in our lives who we have come to know as mother. These are the women of our birth and most importantly the women who have stepped into our lives after birth. Some are mothers by nature; others are mothers by nurture.

But who is the woman we call mother? For some children it is years before they know. Consider the little girl who became separated from her mother in a busy train station. The little girl began to cry and was afraid. A new worker at the information desk found the little girl and tried to console her. She was Polish and not familiar with the way things work in the African-American community. She asked the girl, "What's your mother's name?" The little girl responded, "Muh-dear!" Armed with a name the Polish attendant, announced over the intercom, would the African-American woman who answers to the name "Muh-Dear" please come to the information desk. In a few seconds there were 40 Black women standing in front of the counting saying, "You asked for me? I'm Muh-Dear." As the mother came forth, glad to see her daughter, the attendant looked at all the other women standing at the counter and said, "Do all of you have the same name?" The grateful mother said, "Ma'am, in our neck of the woods, every mother is named "Muh-dear."

While most mothers know every detail about their children, very few children

really know their mothers. What they do know is rarely a clear picture but a distortion of reality. As the years pass, many of us get to know our mothers better as we appreciate who they are and what they are to us. Most importantly, the more we know about what a mother is supposed to be, the more we conclude that in many regards we have one biological mother and many mothers who are playing a role in our lives.

Who is your mother? How well do you know her? What is her big dream for her life? What is her greatest fear and frustration? Do you know her successes? What about her failures? Does she feel loved and appreciated? Has she ever cried or been broken? How deep is her love? How wide is her charity? How far will she go for you? Why? Do you know her well enough to do the same for her?

Motherhood is not always a matter of biology but it is a matter of relationships. Those who are fortunate had more than one mother and scores of supportive relationships that make it necessary to thank God for my birth, but also for those who gave me nurture after birth. These women are my mothers.

Hilliary Clinton wrote a book that was based on an African proverb that it "takes an entire village to raise a child." Book. In her book based on that proverb Senator Clinton wrote about motherhood of a single mother and concept of a village of mothers who had one thing in common, they all wanted to see every children protected, nurtured, and encouraged. Her thesis was based on a truth we have experienced in the Black community for decades: A single child can have a single mother, but it takes many mothers to rear a single child.

As Christians, we give God thanks for our mothers. We celebrate who they were, who they are, and they have helped us to be. We thank God for every mother that he has sent and pray he will continue to bless them with health and strength.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he establishes the familial relationship between all saved individuals in the kingdom of God.

This incident is given in three different accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke. They all report, in varying degrees, Jesus' comments about the relationship of those in the kingdom of God.

Jesus often spoke to large crowds of people who listened intently to his words. Often his words were challenging and difficult for the leaders to accept. Some thought he was a mad man. When his Mother and his brothers heard that he may be drawing undo attention, perhaps their fear for his life compelled them speak with him. When they approached, his response, which at first seems a put down, serves to give us a lesson in relationships in the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. According to Mark, they were there out of some concern for Jesus. They had heard a rumor that Jesus had gone out of his mind! [Mark 3:21] Matthew does not explain their presence in this way. He simply says that someone gets word to Jesus that his mother and brothers are outside wanting to talk to him. And Jesus simply rejoins with the question that holds our

attention this morning: “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”

He answered his own question when he said that those who do the will of God are his brothers, sisters, and his mothers.

In the family of God we have many brothers. It is reason that we address each other as brother and sister. But we also have many fathers and mothers. We have many mentors, teachers and spiritual givers in the faith. These make up the community of believers.

By his words, Christ established our relationship to each. Each believer is the mother to every other believer’s son or daughter. Each believer is the brother or sister of other believers. And we are interdependent upon each other.

Jesus’ answer was clear; his brother, sister or mother in kingdom of God would be those who share in the pursuit of God’s will.

Who Is My Mother?

Jesus’ response to those who questioned him about his mother broadened the definition of mother from that which is biological to that which is based on sharing a mothering relationship. In that context, there are many in the African-American community especially who have had a mothering relationship; most often it was our biological mother, but often it was someone else. For some the answer to the question, “Who is my mother? is “Auntee.” For others its “Grandma.” For still others it is the lady across the street. For still others, mother is a counselor, youth leader or mentor, with which a bonding relationship has developed.

Who is my mother?

SHE IS MY CHAMPION. Youth study the lives of successful people every day but many have found no greater champion than the mother in their lives. They studied her story. They have heard the family accounts of her struggle to stand on her own two feet. They have seen her sacrifice, scrape and “make-do” to provide for her family; rising after being knocked down; recovering from wounded spirits, while stubbornly announcing, “I’m still here!” Mother is a champion in the eyes of her children. They have seen her wounded. Sometimes they have seen her cry. They know she is often hurt, disappointed and frustrated, but still she rises each day to love them and provide for them, often at her own risk. Those are the marks of a champion. Like Esther in the bible, many mothers have risen through difficult times “for such a time as this.” Who is my mother? She is my champion.

SHE IS A FENCE BUILDER: Mothers are fence builders. They build fences in the house and outside of the house to keep us within our boundaries. Good mothers define the perimeters for the children; they don’t allow them to run freely. Those fences that mother erected were designed to keep us from wandering into danger. At first they were little barricades in a room. Then they became rules that define when we could come and when we could go. They even defined what time we had to be home from the game, which movies we could see and what kind of music as acceptable. We hated those fences. We dreamed of the day they would disappear. All we could see was that the fence kept us in, but we failed to see what the fences kept out. They

protected us from predators, child molesters and unforeseen danger. We hated the fences, the rules we thought were harsh and unfair, but they kept us alive in an increasingly violent world. On those times when we jumped the fence we found out quickly how it protected us all along. Samson's mother constantly warned him about strange women. She tried to protect him from them but Samson jumped the fence and lost his hair and strength in the lap of a strange woman. Who is my mother? She is the woman who tries to shield me and protect me from myself, with an invisible fence that keeps danger at a distance.

SHE CREATES SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS: Mothers help create and share significant moments. Sometimes these moments are for celebration and at other times they help create opportunities. Naomi was not Ruth's biological mother, but she helped Ruth enjoy a significant moment when she married Boaz. Solomon's mother shared his crowning as king after using her influence to insure that David had appointed him his successor. Our important moments are not as major as becoming a king or marrying into wealth. They begin with little things; yet our mothers help create them. When we think of the important moments in our lives, they were often moments that were created by our mothers. Birthday parties don't just happen, often that significant moment is created by the efforts of our mothers. We see the balloons, cake, gifts and the smiling faces, all of that was arranged so that she could share a significant moment with us. It's important that every child has a chance to share a significant moment. When we formed our first letter with feeble shaky hands, mother shared that significant mother. She probably took a picture or two. When we played our first Pee-Wee League football game, she sat in the stands waving, watching and supporting. When we were inducted into honor societies, mother smiled and joined the applause; afterwards there was a treat or celebration. Mothers rarely miss an opportunity to create or share a significant moment with their children. They don't see it as work or a waste of energy and resources; they see it as love in action. Who is my mother? She helps create and shares my significant moments.

SHE INSPIRES CONFIDENCE: Mothers inspire confidence in their children; they give them a sense of security.There are schools of thought that suggest that it is good for a mother to cuddle her new born as much as possible because it develops a sense of attachment and security in the newborn. Good mothers instill this sense of security and attachment far beyond the cradle. Mothers inspire confidence in their children. They push, encourage, promote and coach them in a variety of areas. Each child who has a good mother backing them leaves home believing that there is at least one person in the world who really believes in me, my mother. Jacob didn't' think much of his abilities, but his mother did. In fact, she supported him so much she went overboard trying to create opportunities for him. Elizabeth kept telling John The Baptist that he was destined to do a great work for the Lord. Those words from mothers lips ring in millions of ears today, "You can make it! You can be somebody!" inspire confidence. They push children to achieve, excel and succeed. Everyone needs someone who believes in them; for many that someone has been their mother. Who is my mother? She is the woman who inspires confidence in me, even when I don't believe in myself.

She places me in God's hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, our mother makes sure that we are securely placed in the hands of God.

Mother does more than just put food on the table, dress her children, check the grooming and monitor the school performance. She does more than promote their academic growth, insure their financial security and promote stability; she also insures that they know the Lord.

Hannah told the Lord that she would put her child in God's hands if she were blessed to give birth. No sooner than the boy Samuel was old enough, he mother brought him to the place of worship and put him in God's hands.

In God's hands, Samuel became a great scholar!

In God's hands, her son became a great prophet!

In God's hands, her son became spiritual leader of the nation!

Jesus said made it clear that in the Kingdom of Heaven believers may have many mothers, those who are doing the will of God.

There are many here today who have also had many mothers. These were the women who saw to it that you came to church; and others who saw to it that you acted correctly once you got there!

These were the women who taught you to say your prayers and to sing "Yes, Jesus Love me."

Who is my mother? She is the one who is concerned who am I am in the world and who I am before God.

Who is my mother? She is the one who insures that her child has:

—Food to eat here, but she is also concerned that her child be fed the Word of God, for she has heard the scripture say "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

—Clothes on his back, but she is also concerned that he wears the breastplate of righteousness and that his feet are shod with the Gospel of the preparation of peace, that he wears the helmet of Salvation and carries the shield of faith.

—Has a place to call home, but she also worries about whether he'll have a home in the kingdom of heaven.

—Birth and delivery in this world, but she also is concerned that he is born again into the kingdom of God.

Who is my mother. She is the one that will teach her children to trust in the Lord.

Somebody here can remember a time when the family was in a tough spot and mother mumbled, "We'll just have to put our trust in the Lord."

Every Christian mother knows there is wisdom in trusting the Lord.

If I trust in the Lord I will:

—Overcome strong temptations

—bear heavy burdens

—withstand mighty persecutions

—cross the loneliest of valleys
—endure the saddest of sorrows
—live through darkest of nights
—sail through the roughest storms
—climb the tallest of mountains
Who is my mother? She's the one who knows how to call on the name of Jesus!
Jesus, Who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, Who arose after three days and nights!
Who is my mother?
She's a woman who knows how to call his name!
Jesus!
Jesus!
Jesus!

No. 9141-Communion

What's In the Bread?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 15, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Introduction

What's your favorite bread? Have you ever wondered what's in it? Today many people are concerned about the ingredients of their foodstuffs. There are labels on packages that describe the nutrients, fat, water and additives in almost everything we consume. Today people want to know what's in it? What is it made of? That curiosity also includes our bread.

People around the world eat bread. Breads are usually made from the grains available in the area where a person lives. The main grain in America is wheat; that's where most of our bread comes from, crushed ground wheat made into flour. Each country has bread that is unique to its culture:

WONTON-The Won Ton is bread made from noodle dough dumplings that are generally filled with meat. They are usually boiled in soup but they are often fried or eaten as a side dish. It is associated with Asian foods.

TORTILLA: The tortilla is corn dough patted into thin flat rounds and fried on a hot griddle. They are also made of flour. It associated with Hispanic and Mexican diets.

CHAPATI: Flat chewy rounds of bread, served with rounds of curries, peanut butter or honey. It is associated with the people of India.

PITA: Is a pocket bread from the Middle East that is flat and hollow inside.

CROISSANT: A flaky, crescent shaped roll associated with the people of France.

LEFSE: Flat bread made from mashed potatoes, flour and liquid fried on a griddle. It is Scandinavian bread.

PIZZA: Is a popular bread pie that was first made as a way of using left over dough. It is associated with the people of Italy.

BAGEL: Is a chewy baked roll with a hole in it; eaten with cream and cheese. It is associated with Poland.

Not only are there breads around the world, African-Americans have our own breads that are unique to our culture.

We know about corn bread, and biscuits.

We know about hoe cakes, and Cush!

We know about hot water corn bread, shortening bread and even crackling bread..

We are familiar with our kind of bread and we know how it is made.

However, what about the bread of life? What's in it? How do we get it? What do we do with it? What does it do for us?

When Israel wandered in the wilderness God provided them with bread that seemed to come from heaven. They called it "Manna" which means, "What is it? It represented God's blessing, mercy and providence. Every day God took care of them. That was bread in the wilderness; but it only met an immediate need. It was not eternal.

As Christians we are encouraged to know that there is another bread that is eternal. Though it may come in the wilderness of our lives, it is nevertheless, bread from heaven.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus and he tells believers how he is the spiritual nourishment they need in the wilderness of life.

Crowds followed him wherever he went in hopes of catching a glimpse of one of his famous miracles, or better still to be a participant in a miraculous event..

The people were so excited about what they saw that they immediately wanted to make Jesus their king because they envisioned feasts for everyone under his administration. They wanted more fish and more bread. Jesus rebuked the crowd for following their growling bellies, seeking food. He offered them food, but it was not of mere fish and bread. He told them that just as Moses gave them manna or the "bread from heaven" in the wilderness so had the father made it possible for them to have a greater bread. He summed up this truth by telling them "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." What Christ told the crowds was simple, "If its fish and bread you seek, keep looking; but if its food for your soul that you want, I can satisfy your needs."

What's In the Bread?

Whether bread is nourishing or not depends upon its ingredients. It's the combination of the ingredients that provides what we need for life, health, nourishment, abundant living.

Homemade bread contains several ingredients that might be symbolic of what we need from the bread of life.

FLOUR: Flour is associated with our spiritual life. Flour is the product of all of God's creation: the sun, wind, earth, and rain. From the depths of the earth God gives the life sustaining presence of wheat for bread and corn for meal. In a similar sense God's graces work together to provide the essentials of life for every believer. Without the flour there is no bread; it is the essential element. For the believer, Christ is the essential ingredient for a spirit filled life. He is what makes life meaningful, joyful and fruitful. Without Christ there is no Christian marriage. There may be a house, but

there is no home. There may be a few things, but unless Christ is the main thing, all of the thing will have little importance to us. Faith in Christ, is finely ground in the crucible of life's experience and the essential all of the breads that we know.

WATER: Water is associated with spiritual health. Water is used in the baking of bread. Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her living water. In essence, his spirit would be the essence of real living. There are many today whose hearts are beating but they are not living. They move around each day but they are not living. They have a few things but they may as well have nothing because they are not really living. To really live we need the constant stream of spiritual support that only comes from God. Jesus is the living water that constantly flows. Anything that tries to live dies soon, without water. Marriages, careers, even relationships. Nothing else will substitute; it must be water. There are many today who are spiritually dehydrated. They are trying to live without drinking spiritual water. Professionals report that we need eight glasses of water a day to keep our systems functioning. Often we substitute coffee, cold drinks, alcohol and other wet substances for water and get by; but soon we learn that nothing takes the place of water. Likewise, many are substituting many things for Christ. They all serve their purpose but can't take the place of water. To have a healthy spiritual life we need worship, bible study, prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He brings the living water.

SALT: Is associated with nourishment. Jesus told believers "Ye are the salt of the earth." Bread is made with a small amount of salt. Salt preserves, freshens and flavors. Before there were refrigerators, salt was used to preserve meat and other foods. In rural areas salt was even used to brush teeth and combined with soda, was used as a deodorant. Salt also flavors. When Jesus said that believers are the salt of the earth he meant we should be all three: a source of preservation, sanitation and inspiration. Jesus said he was the bread of life and that he was the living water. However, he charged believers to be the "salt" of the earth. He said "Ye are" the salt of the earth. We have the responsibility of bringing the bread of life to a starving malnourished land. We must be the ones to inspire the world to bring the love of Christ to every challenging situation. We must help the poor and needy. We must champion the cause of the downtrodden. We must stand up for justice. At the same time, we must bring new hope and inspiration to a world that has lost hope. We cannot afford to lose our savor and become stuck in the shaker because it's damp in the world. Without the salt, the people of God, the world lacks what it needs to sustain itself.

YEAST: Yeast is associated with abundant living. In bread, yeast works like magic. The yeast causes the bread to rise. Without yeast, it stays flat. Yeast is composed of living elements that grow quickly, producing a pan of bread much larger than was first made. Jesus said, "I have come that ye may have life and have it more abundantly." What is abundant living? Is it the accumulation of possessions, money and power? Persons who seek Christ for that purpose usually interpret his words for that end. But does the Christ who urges us to live humbly, despise showy displays, and rid ourselves of as many possessions as possible, really mean by abundant living, that we should seek "living large" as a lifestyle. The abundance that he speaks about involves those variables associated with the kingdom of God. These are an

abundance of love, peace, joy and overall happiness and contentment. The abundant life is not measured by how much we have, but how we are able to enjoy what we have. If we have boats but never enjoy them, what good are they? If we have families but never experience the love of family members, what good is the home? If we have money constantly accumulating but we have no peace because of it, are we really living? The abundant life is a Christ centered life that gets great joy out of every blessing it receives no matter how great or small. The abundant life that Christ speaks about has nothing to do with cars and houses; stocks bonds and investments. The abundant life is the life that is filled with as much gratitude for a pork chop as it is for an 18 ounce steak. We know we have it when we are able to "count it all joy."

Knead the dough

Finally, brothers and sisters, we don't get bread until we knead the dough.

When the yeast, water, salt, flour and other ingredients are mixed together they are usually twisted, mashed, and turned in a process called kneading.

We may have all of the elements but they have to be kneaded before they can become bread.

The Christian life is similar. Before we can really testify about the goodness of God we have to go through something first.

There is no testimony unless there is first a test.

Today, we present to you the bread of life containing the essentials to sustain and motivate us to live abundantly, justly and courageously.

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. It's bread from heaven.

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. This bread satisfies. Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. This bread gives eternal life. In John 6:47-48 Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life."

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. It is given for the salvation of the world. In John 6:51, Jesus says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

It is bread that has been kneaded in the crucible of the fickle attitudes of mankind.

It is a bread that has been prepared through 33 years of life in a sinful world!

It is bread that has been prepared, kneaded and broken for us.

It is bread that was humiliated for our wickedness; and chastised for our impurities.

It is bread that was judged for our crimes and condemned for our rebellion.

It is bread that was despised for our corruption and cursed for our perversion.

It is bread that was:

—wounded for our transgressions; brusied for our iniquities.

—pierce for our guilt.

—tortued for our shortcomings.

—beaten for our wrongs.

He was born in the Bethlehem which means the house of Bread!

He fed 5,000 people bread, from two fishes and five loaves of bread!

He offered the lost the bread of life!

And out on Calvary they hung him up high!

But when they buried him in that borrowed tomb they forgot something about heavenly bread. It is made with heavenly yeast!

Go ahead! Drive nails in his hands!

But Early Sunday morning, "I'll rise again!"

No. 9142-Graduation

Graduating to Another Level

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 22, 2005

Scripture: "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" Galatians 3:25

Introduction

When you graduated from high school, were you quite sure what to do next? While graduation from high school is an important event in the life of a graduate there are many who approach graduation with a spirit of anxiety. There is anxiety because graduation brings with it so many unknowns about the immediate and distant future. If it means anything, graduation means that the graduate is moving from one level to another in the educational process; perhaps even one level of personal development to another.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the number of people who are graduating from high school in America is increasing. For the first time the Census Bureau is reporting that 85 percent of all Americans over the age of 25 have completed at least a high school education. An amazing 27 percent of adults over 25 years old had a college degree. The numbers tell another story as well; even African-American students, who have been stereotyped as under achievers, have reached an all time high as it relates to high school achievement. In its report entitled, "Education Attainment in the United States, 2003" the Census Bureau reported that 80 percent of all Blacks above 25 years of age had a high school diploma, which is an all time high for our people.

Obviously, graduating from high school is important. It marks our transition to another level in life.

In our graduation we move from our childhood to our young adult years.

Our graduation is a mark of our maturity and ability to handle life on a different level. That was the feeling of the parents who were excited about their son's graduation. They wanted to savor the moment so, after the graduation the family pulled out the Kodak to take a family picture. However, the photo they took looked very formal. "Let's try to make this look more natural" said the mother. "Son, put your hand around your dad's shoulder." She said. Before his son could move the father said, "If you want it to be more natural, why not have him put his hand in my pocket, that's where it's been all his life. I'll know he's graduated when his hand comes out of my pocket and stays in his own."

Some who graduate get a diploma but don't move to another level. They just have a diploma. That's what some folks learned when they saw Eddie Joe's graduation. Eddie Joe had a hard time making it through high school. When the role was called Eddie Joe found out that he did not make the cut. He would not graduate. At the graduation ceremony, he watched as members of his class received their diplomas. When the last class member marched across the stage the class all stood and chanted "Give Eddie Joe a chance!" The chant became louder and louder. Eddie Joe was called to the stage and given a one question test in front of the whole community, as his class mates chanted "Give Eddie Joe a Chance." If he answered the question correctly he would graduate. They asked Eddie Joe the following question, "If you have five apples in one hand and five apples in the other hand, how many do you have?" Eddie Joe struggled for a moment then answered, "Ten." Instantly, the entire senior class shouted, "Give Eddie Joe another chance!" -Obviously graduation doesn't mean that everyone has moved up.

We should graduate from one level to another spiritually as well. God expects us to come closer to Him and mature in our thinking and understanding. Paul made that clear when he saidwhen he was a child he thought like a child but when he became a man he put away childish things.

As Christians, we know the importance of any graduation. However, we also know that it is our maturity in Christ that will determine the quality of our Christian life. In that respect, we want to move from dependence on the world to a walk of faith that is guided by the power of God.

Exposition

This text considers Paul addressing the church at Galatia concerning the relationship between the law and the life of faith.

Many new believers were confused about the nature of the Christian life. They understood the Mosaic Law and its requirements for strict adherence to the Ten Commandments and over 600 additional rules given by Moses. Obedience to the law earned the right to claim righteousness.

Paul explained that the law was a tool to use to show man how to be righteous before God. Obeying the law became a way to reconcile themselves to God. It was a mediator of sorts.

Before Christ came asking that believers walk by faith, each was guided by the law.

In a sense, Paul said, the law was like a school master, constantly instructing us rigidly.

The word used for schoolmaster in Greek is the same word used for Tutor. In the Greek world in which they lived the wealthy hired tutors to mentor and teach their sons. The tutors were strict. They watched their students and monitored their movements. The tutors kept them in line even if they wanted to get out of line.

Paul said the law worked that way with the Children of Israel. Even if they wanted to get out of line, the law kept them in place. It was a schoolmaster to them.

However Paul notes that "after that, faith comes." Otherwise, when we walk by faith there is no need for the law any longer because it is inscribed in our hearts.

Paul encouraged the Galatians to move to another level of spirituality; one not governed by rigid rules, but one governed by a desire to do the will of God.

The first level

Today, graduates are similar to the Galatians who had been governed by a strict set of rules that attempted to dictate, control and direct their every action. For the most part today's graduates have spent 18 years following the "law." The law for young believers has been the rules set down for them by their parents, school, church and other agencies of influence.

WE WERE TAUGHT THE RULES: The rules were very strict. They involved truthfulness, cleanliness, grooming, hygiene, social skills, religion, education and even what was watched on television or read in magazines. At times the rules seemed endless, constricting and demanding. What graduate cannot remember the household rules about telling the truth, not stealing, and returning home at the appropriate time. Others recall the rules about cleaning up, performing chores and completing home assignments and other school work.

WE WERE PUNISHED FOR BREAKING THE RULES: Graduates can also remember times when they were punished for not following the rules. Sometimes privileges were taken. Sometimes there was corporal punishment. We learned very quickly that if we violated the rules there would be repercussions. As a result, we generally followed the rules, except for those few times we decided to be mischievous.

OUR PARENTS HELD OUR HAND: During our elementary and high school years, our parents held our hand and assisted us in many areas of our development. Conscientious parents pushed us to complete our assignments on time and to achieve excellence. When some of these graduates would have accepted low scores and grades barely high enough to pass, some parents insisted on more. When there were goals to be met parents were there too. Whenever the pace slowed, parents were always close by to insist that we get back in the race. It was comfortable knowing that a parent was standing there all of the time. One of the advantages of the first level is that there is usually someone around to hold your hand and walk you through the process.

These criterions are what Paul described to Galatians as being on a level of strict adherence to the Mosaic Law. The law accomplished the purpose of laying out the rules, setting the boundaries and holding the hand of believers as they walked through life. Before Christ, the law was permanent. With Christ, the law is just the first level.

And After That, Faith

Finally, it is important for us to see Paul's words in verse 25, "After that, faith."

Here he points believers to another level "After that." He indicates that a time has come when the hand holding ends; the rules though inscribed in our hearts are now understood in the greater sense rather than the specific.

While the rule at home may have been to call if you will be late coming home from school, the greater sense of the rule is to make sure your loved ones know your whereabouts.

While the rule may have been to turn your homework in on time, the greater life rule is to complete objectives, targets and goals on time.

While the rule may have been not to talk back to your parents, the greater life rule is not to be insubordinate to your superiors.

After that, said Paul, we are governed by a higher rule that is not written on paper but in our hearts.

After that, points to another level.

After that, points to a time beyond the past.

After being monitored day and night by the watchful eye of our parents, after that "Faith."

After being chastised and criticized for our failures and shortcomings, after that, "Faith."

What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

Paul said, "After that, Faith"

After Graduation, it is time to walk by faith.

When we walk by faith we hear the voice of God!

When we walk by faith we stand on the promises of God!

When we walk by faith we move from high school to the Gospel College!

In the Gospel College

—My Principal is God the father.

—My tutor is the Holy Spirit.

—My counselor is Jesus.

In the Gospel College.

—Our textbook is the bible, for the word says, "These words shall I hide in my heart that I might not sin against God."

—Our field of study is the world, for Jesus said, "Go ye therefore…"

—Our College is not Grambling or Southern, Harvard, or Yale but our college is the Rock of Ages.

This rock is Jesus, Yes He is the one!

This rock is Jesus, the only one.

The song writer said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand."

If you want to graduate to another level, you must know Jesus!

If you want to graduate to another Level...

You must graduate from simply being born to being born again!

If you want to graduate to another level… Your high school diploma won't be sufficient; you must keep climbing to the next level because you must have a spiritual BA degree.

The song writer said, "You must be..

You gotta be…

Can't you see; you got to be born again.

Moving from one level to the next is easy when you know the man in charge.

At your university he or she is Doctor Somebody or another. But we know the man in charge as Dr. Jesus.

He transferred to this earth by coming down through 42 generations.

He was born in Bethlehem that was His first level.

One day in Jerusalem he told the teachers, "It's time for me to be about my Father's business"

That was His next level.

He preached for three years and picked disciples, that was His next level.

One evening he picked up an old rugged cross and decided to carry it to another level.

He had no cap and gown! Instead of a cap He had a crown of thorns.

Instead of a gown He had a purple robe on His shoulders!

But He marched across the stage of Calvary!

Instead of a diploma, all He had in His hands were nails and scars.

It was a long graduation. It lasted three days and three nights.

But early Sunday morning, the heavens recognized Him!

The earth shook!

The thunder rolled!

When they came looking for Him, an angel announced.."He's not here!"

He's gone to…

Another level!

No. 9143-Funeral

A Mother's Mite

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 30, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." Luke 21:2-4

Introduction

Have you ever noticed how mothers pay close attention to the "little things" in our lives? Somehow they never seem to miss a single detail about their children; they know their rhythm, cadence and moods. Mothers pay close attention to us; and they tend to share our lives closer than others. They understand our frustrations, feel our pain, share our joy and become one with us. Age doesn't diminish this quality; it seems to grow with time. They are still concerned about the little things despite the passage of time.

The Latin word "Minutum" means the very smallest part. It is the word upon which "minute," a very small part; or "minute" a small part of an hour or "mite" meaning a very small thing, is based.

In a way, mothers symbolize the way God pays attention to every believer. He watches, observes and appreciates the countless "small things" as he assesses our lives.

As Christians, we are glad to know that God knows all about us. He knows when we have lived life well and how we enjoyed every day. When we have cast in our last mites in life; he also knows when we have given life all that we had.

Exposition

This text shows how Jesus noticed the actions of a poor widow who gave "all the living she had."

The account of this widow is told both in the Book of Mark and Luke. Its brief account shows Christ halting from his business to admire and praise a widow who gave two "mites" in the offering. Combined both of her mites were only valued at a half penny. Her offering indicated that she was a woman whose life was familiar with the "little things" but despite her poverty, called penury, found a way to share what little she had.

The fact that Christ sorted through the crowd and focused on the woman with two mites, showed us how he pays attention to those that the world thinks are insignificant; and pays attention to their action.

Sensing her sincerity and devotion Christ summarized this woman's life. He knew that the two mites she gave represented the best that her life could give. When she walked boldly before God she knew she was giving her best. So did Jesus. He said, "She hath cast in all the living that she had."

The Widow's Mites

Look closely at the widow in this text. She gave two mites. Each mite tells a story about the widow's life.

Our mites are the "little things" in our lives. They are the countless acts of kindness, love and charity that seem small at a glance but reflect themselves in children and grandchildren who are stronger, bolder and positioned to make great accomplishments.

What are the little "mites" of a mother's experience? It's the diligent mother who pays attention to the little things that others don't notice: whether a daughter's hair is comb, her dress is neatly laundered or the ribbons in her hair are adjusted properly. She glories in seemingly insignificant accomplishments, revels over baby pictures, cheers over school achievements or proudly glows while staring at a pair of majorette boots, a grandson, and wedding photographs.

Mothers are important because, unlike fathers who often see the big picture or no picture at all, mothers are intricately involved in the details of the lives of their children. They are concerned about little things. They worry over small problems, tackle the smallest of chores, and seem to make major issues about small things like cleaning up a room, sweeping floors or washing behind the ears.

Even after their children are grown with children of their own mothers continue to focus on the small things. They remember birthdays, and graduations, anniversaries, and retirements and revel in the accomplishments of each daughter or grandchild. They keep the little cards, and reverently tuck each new photograph in albums that grow daily with hundreds of pictures and memories of the "little things."

When we think about it, what we miss most about loved ones when they are not with us is the attention given to the "little things." We remember the approving smile, the regular phone call, the repetitious questions about our welfare and the constant mothering we receive even from a distance. While we worry about major career choices, income and job security, they seem to focus on the small things that once mattered to us but never stopped being important to them. These are the "mites" of family life.

It's the little things that build strong families. It's laughter and good times. It's jokes and goofy things. It's shopping and sharing, supporting and hugging. The little things are important but never important enough to lose our sense of family and belonging and loving. It's easy for the little things to divide families, too. Little jealousies, little doubts, insecurities, anxieties and differences can tear families apart.

Strong mothers spend considerable time focusing on the little things that divide families and they become the unifying force that keeps siblings enjoying and loving each other, supporting and caring for each other as they revel in the beauty of life's precious little moments, shared with family and friends.

Many mothers in the African-American community are familiar with "mites." They know how to grow strong families with nothing to work with but "little things." They knew best how to feed a family a little cornbread, a little rice, a few beans and every little part of a hog they could find. They knew how to wash clothes in a tub, save the grease from frying chicken in a can for the next time; as well as how to clean fish, pick greens, shell peas and make biscuits from something called "scratch." Mothers knew the art of stretching a dollar, clipping coupons, saving S and H and Gold Bond Stamps, while saving a penny or two for something called a "rainy day."

The little things, the mites, never seemed to bother Christian mothers. Even though they only had a little more than a pocket full of mites, we remember our mothers giving to help others, sharing our family's two mites with other families who had only one mite or no mites at all. Mothers who have lived in alleys themselves know what it's like to live in the backstreets of life. They have been through the valley of despair; they know what it means to have even one mite and willingly share what little they have with others.

This is the legacy that great mothers leave their children: rejoice in the little things. Enjoy each other's little moments. Make do with whatever little things life has given you; turn every situation into an opportunity; and rejoice constantly in every little thing; for each is a blessing from God.

Jesus said of a widow such as this one, "she gave all the living that she had."

Might as in a possibility

While the first "Mite" refers to little things, the widow in the text also gave a second mite; but this mite is a homonym. It sounds like "mite" but it's spelled "might."

Might in this context could mean a variety of different things, each represents what mothers such as the one in the text give their children.

MIGHT AS A POSSIBILITY: One "might" is used to indicate possibility or probability. Good mothers see the possibility in their children. They look at them when they are young and they see lawyers, teachers, professionals, wives, and even mothers. They see them owning their own homes, living independent lives, rearing their children and living out their dreams. Mothers see all that as they comb hair, give good night kisses and night time hugs. More than any others, Mothers see what their children "might" be in life. Many begin work when their children are young to make "possibility" become a "probability" and then a "reality." That's why they work so hard to give them experiences that surpass their own. They push them to achieve in school and extracurricular activities. They put them in the hands of organizations and groups that teach them the finer aspects of life, complete with social graces, charm and etiquette. They often deprive themselves of many of life's comforts to help the "possibilities" of their children to become "realities." That's what Hannah did for her

son Samuel. She put him in the hands of those who could help him to achieve his potential. She saw the possibility and helped young Samuel achieve the reality. She saw what he might be. Naomi saw young Ruth and realized what she "might" be if the opportunity ever occurred. Naomi guided Ruth in a way that increased the "probability" of her possibility becoming a reality.

Mothers are filled with hopes and dreams for their children. They know they won't be with them always but they never stop dreaming or hoping for their children. In their senior years, great mothers see the "might be" in their grandchildren too. They never doubt that God can help them achieve possibilities, so they continue to see the "might be" in every one.

The mother who exhausts herself to help her children realize their own potential earns the designation Jesus gave all such widows, "She gave all the living that she had."

MIGHT AS AN EXPRESSION OF MOOD: Another "might" is familiar to mothers, it is not possibility but the "might" that indicates our mood. This is the might that answers, "I might or I might not. It depends on how I feel."

Mothers don't always feel happy about every situation. They are not happy if the family is not happy. They are not happy if the relationship of a child is threatened. They are not happy if there is a loss of property, health, freedom or safety of anyone in the family.

Sometimes the burden of being widows affects their moods. They seem to be happy one day and sad the next. One day they are laughing and joking and the next day they are deathly ill. One day they are on a plane flying from one part of the country to another and the next day they are in a hospital bed. Like the mighty swing of the Pendulum, they go back and forth between good days and bad days. What they do in life, in these cases, depends much on their mood.

As the years pass however, it becomes increasingly clear that while the pendulum swings regularly between ups and downs; the spiritual mood of Christian mothers is always that of joy. Perhaps that's what James had in mind when he said in James 1:2 that we should "count it all joy." The believer's joy is indefatigable; it never tires or diminishes. If you ask whether they will go shopping, you may get an "I might" answer, but if ask whether they still love the Lord despite their ups and downs, the answer is always, "God is good, all the time." Unlike happiness, joy is not circumstance driven. We are only in a happy mood if things are going well, but the joyful mother learns to say like Paul, "I have learned to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

When Jesus sees any mother, swinging on the pendulum of life moving from sickness to health and back again, but constantly fighting on with an indomitable spirit; he sees her like the widow at the box and says, "She gave all the living that she had."

God took her mite and turn it into might!

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is one other homonym for "mite." It's the one that reminds us that God can take our "Mite" and turn it into "Might." He can take our little things and turn them in to big things.

That's the lesson good mothers teach their children when they are young; that with God all things are possible. That's why they load their children into cars and carry them to Sunday school and Bible School. That's why they taught them to say their prayers at night and give God thanks everyday, because God can take their "Mite" and turn it into might!

The bible is filled with countless examples of widows who had little but accomplished great things, mostly through the lives of their children. We often see these widows foraging through life, making do with a single "mite" that God magnifies with his might.

The good mother tells her children, "You may live on a back street, surrounded by lumber mills and dusty roads, existing on a mite or two, but we serve a God who also has might, but his might is not like our mite.

The good mother reminds her children to pray but, we can only do little things with our mite, but God's might is not like our mite, he can do anything!

God's might is not like our mite, because we may:

—Grow WEAK but God is always strong!

—STUMBLE but God is always able to pick us up again!

—FAIL but can God do anything but fail!

Good mothers tell their children, to remember the words of Zechariah 4:6, "Not by might, nor by power, but my spirit said the Lord of hosts!"

Good mothers show their children how to live, by the way she lives!

Good mothers show their children how to walk by faith, by walking with God themselves!

Good mothers show their children how to deal with frustrations, by throwing all of her trust on the Lord.

Good mothers show their children how to wrestle with sickness and refuse to give up until the last breath is drawn!

Good mothers show by their own example what David meant when he said, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me!"

It was God's might that protected her!

It was God's might that provided for her!

It was God's might that opened doors she could not see!

A few days ago, God looked down and saw this mother, wrestling with all her mite.

Her pulse rate had slowed but she was hanging on with her little mite!

Her breathing had become almost impossible; but she held on with her little mite!

Her heart could hardly keep a rhythm but she held on with her little mite.

When she had given all she had,

Jesus, The Lord strong and mighty!

When all her mite had slipped away!
Jesus, The Lord mighty in battle!
Who died out on Calvary, an arose Early Sunday morning
Jesus heard her soul cry out:
"I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thou powerful hands!"
With one sweep of his powerful hand…
This mother who only had a little mite..
Was safe in the arms of the Lord!

—

On Tuesday, May 24, 2005, Dorothy Mae Johnson, gave up the ghost. She was a widowed mother who didn't have much, but to her husband, daughters and her God, "She gave all the living she had."

No. 9144-Member Improvement

Beautiful But Flawed

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 29, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7b; "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16

Introduction

Have you ever met a person who had no flaws? We encounter many different kinds of people including family, friends and associates on a regular basis. In all of our encounters, however, we have not stumbled upon the perfect person. At best, we find good people. Sometimes we even find great people. Regardless to their greatness, however, we soon discover that they too have flaws.

Many people are frustrated in their search for the perfect person. They meet a friend, and in the initial meeting the person appears to have all of the finest qualities. However, soon after we find that although he or she has many fine qualities, our perfect person has a few flaws. Our flaws vary; they differ from person to person.

The list of flaws can be endless. Our findings are similar to these: He's a strong man, but he drinks. She's a good wife, but she's a spendthrift. I like him but he talks too much. I like her, but she doesn't talk enough. He is a great worker, but he never comes to work on time. He could really go places in life, if he didn't have that gambling habit. She's really ambitious, but she is so conceited. He is a great football player, but he doesn't have enough sense to put in a spoon. He really treats me nice, but is just so ugly. She is really a good girl, but her attitude is terrible. He has all the qualities of a good manager but he can't seem to manage his personal life.

Even in the church world flaws are evident. Our flaws are generally indicated by the words that follow the "but" in any description that is given about us. He is a great pastor, but. She's a great church member, but. He is a wonderful deacon, but. She's a great Superintendent, but. Our youth are outstanding, but. The presence of a "but" indicates that there is a flaw somewhere.

Obviously, even the best of us have flaws. That's also the reason that God's grace is so important to each one of us. The grace of God recognizes our flaws, but still gives us the opportunity for salvation despite our wretched nature. One songwriter said, "He looked beyond my faults and saw my needs."

Many people are humbled by their flaws. In fact they are so humbled them begin

to see themselves as unworthy to serve. They compare themselves in the mirror of God's word and see so many shortcomings, errors, and mistakes that they feel they cannot ever measure up to what God wants us to be because they have so many flaws.

What we learn as we grow in the faith is that God loves us, flaws and all. We also learn that God sees us differently than we see ourselves. We see unworthiness, he sees potential. We see failure, he sees a comeback. We see inadequacy, he sees, opportunity. We see defeat, he sees a chance for victory.

As Christians, we give thanks to God that he loves us despite our faults and shortcomings. If he required perfection we would all fall short. We rejoice, because our Lord is both able and willing to present us before God, despite our faults and flaws having made us perfect through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's selection of David to serve as the second king of Israel, despite his flaws.

Israel had a failed experience with King Saul, its first king. According to 1 Samuel 9:2, Saul was a good looking man on the outside. In terms of physical appearance, he was head and shoulders above the rest. He had all the of outward appearances of attractiveness and charisma that pleased the crowds. The people were happy. Soon however, they discovered that what Saul had on the outside did not match what he had on the inside. First, they found that despite his manly physique, that he was a coward before the dreaded Goliath. Later, they found that he possessed a jealous spirit, a vengeful and violent personality and an uncontrollable anger. The flaw that seems to stand out most was his lack of humility before God and unwillingness to repent. This made him undesirable before God.

This text introduces the next king, David who was selected, not because of the strength of his physical appearance but because of his strength of Character. Samuel went to the home of Jesse and without announcing his purpose reviewed all of his sons. First to come before him was Eliab who appealed to Samuel because of his stunning physical presence (1 Samuel 16:7). God warned Samuel not to concern himself with the outer looks, but to be guided by the character. Other sons came: Abinadab, Shammah and four others. One son did not come, because he did not have the look of a king. He was a shepherd boy who loved to play the harp, write psalms and sing. When Samuel saw him, bright eyed, with sun tanned rough skin (v12) the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is the one." David was selected to serve as king of Israel because of his character rather than his outward appearance.

In a way, David was similar to Saul. He was a flawed man. He sinned greatly. He even had a soldier killed and took his wife. The difference is that David humbled himself before God, asked for forgiveness and repented. He put himself, weaknesses and all in God's hand, and God made him great.

We love flawed people, but not the flaws

This text shows a side of God's nature. He loves flawed people, but not their flaws. In a way, we are the same. We seem to be strangely attracted to people who are flawed, and acknowledge their flaws; they are seen as more like us.

That may be the reason some great people are still loved by the masses even though it turned out that they have a multitude of flaws. Bill Clinton was one of the greatest presidents but he had his Monica Lewinsky flaw. John F. Kennedy was a great man but he had his Marilyn Monroe flaw. Martin Luther King dreamed of peace and freedom and died a hero, but he too had a fatal attraction to outside romances. Thomas Jefferson was a great American, but he had a secret lover in slave row. Marion Berry was a popular mayor of Washington DC but it turned out that he used cocaine. Jesse Jackson is a great African-American hero, but it turns out he is the father of a "love child."

We find it easy to identify with flawed people, why? Because they are a lot like us; we are flawed too. Those who admitted their flaws and repented were quickly forgiven; because we can relate to people with flaws; they are just like us.

Maybe that's why Berry was re-elected by overwhelming margins, Bill Clinton is still revered by millions, Jesse Jackson is still a great spokesman social reform and Martin Luther King's picture still hangs on our walls; they all turned out to be great people who are just like us, flawed.

Job was a perfect man before he was tested, but he turned out to be a good man who was flawed, just like us.

Samson was a strong man, but he was a man with great flaws, just like us.

David was a man after God's own heart, but he was a man with flaws, just like us.

Paul was a strong advocate for God, but he had a thorn in his side that troubled him, just like us.

Thomas was a follower of Christ, but he often doubted, just like us.

Peter was a great leader of the church, but he often lost his temper and cowered in the presence of trouble, just like us.

What we learned from all these men is that God never stopped loving them even though he hated their flaws. When they proved that they were able to deal with their flaws, God proved he was willing to forgive them.

The same is true with every believer. When we acknowledge our own weakness, then God is able to bless us.

Love overlooks a multitude of flaws

Those who love us are aware of our flaws; they choose to love us despite our flaws.

Many couples spend years fighting each other because one sees the flaws in the other. They wound each other, curse, fight, and say cruel things because they constantly see the flaws in their mates, without seeing their own. Defending

themselves, their mates fight back by showing their partners that they too have flaws, and the fights continue and escalate until they either divorce or come to an agreement to love each other while each works on the flaws the frustrate the other.

Those who succeeded in marriage can testify that things change in marriages once each partner recognizes their own flaws.

James S. Hewitt puts it this way,

"When the other fellow acts that way, he is ugly; when you do, it's nerves.

When others are set in their ways, they're obstinate; when you are, it is firmness.

When your neighbor doesn't like your friend, he's prejudiced; when you don't like his, you are a good judge of human nature.

When he tries to treat someone especially well, he's sucking up; when you try it, you are being thoughtful.

When he takes time to do things well, he's a slowpoke or lazy; when you do, you are deliberate and careful.

When he spends a lot, he is a spendthrift; when you do, you're generous. When someone picks flaws in things, he's cranky and critical; when you do, you are creative.

When he is mild-mannered, you call him weak; when you are, it is graciousness.

When someone dresses especially well, that person is extravagant; when you do, it is tastefulness.

When he says what he thinks, he's spiteful; when you do, you are being frank.

When he takes great risks in business, he's foolhardy; when you do, you are a wise financier.

We get closer in our relationships when we start to see ourselves the way others see us; that's when we start to see our own shortcomings.

Those who love us know us and despite what they know about us; they choose to love us anyway.

We can love people without agreeing with them. We can love them without accepting their vices. We can love people without loving the wrong things they say, or do. We can even love people without condoning or participating in their sinful practices. If that was not the case, who would love us? If that was not the case, how could God love you and me?

To love people is to love them, flaws and all.

While they and God work on their long list of flaws love them anyway! Love ignores a multitude of flaws because that's the way God loves us. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

God knows all about us

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that God knows all about us, including our flaws.

When God selected David to become King of Israel, he knew he wasn't perfect, but he never stopped working on him.

That's the way God dealt with all of the saints. He knew they were not perfect but

he never stopped working on them.

Today, God knows that we as believers are not perfect, but he's still working on us.

One way God works on us is through the help of brothers and sisters in the faith, who labor with us, put up with us and work on us, with the goal of helping us overcome our flaws.

That's why James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

That's why a believer who is caught in a weakness asks the church to pray for me!

I hear every saint crying out in the words of David, "Create in me a clean heart oh God, and renew a right spirit within me."

One song writer said, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet.

We still have a few flaws; but God is not through with us yet!

When God gets through, the man who complains all the time will have a new song, "I've had my good days; I've had many hills to climb. But when I think it over; all of my good days outweigh my bad days and I won't complain."

When God gets through, the woman who is bitter over the loss of a loved one will be able to say, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

When God gets through, the man who is hopelessly lost to sin, will be able to say, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the see heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me. Now safe am I. Love lifted me, when nothing else could help, love lifted me!"

When God gets through with me, I'll be able to say, "God gave me a song that the angels cannot sing. I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!"

If you see me not walking right, remember God is not through with me yet!

If you see me not talking right, remember God is not through with me yet!

If you see me not living right, remember God is not through with me yet!

I'm so glad that the Lord has not stopped working on me!

He started working before I was born!

He started working on me in little town called Bethlehem!

He started working on me when he carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

He started working on me when he died out on Calvary!

But, Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

Every day of my life, he's still working on me!

Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet!

When God gets through with me, I shall come forth as pure gold!

No. 9145-Anniv.-Pastor

A Taste of Glory Divine

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 12, 2005

SCRIPTURE: And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. Joel 2:26-27

Introduction

Have you ever tasted the dough before the cake was actually made? Often children watch their mothers make cakes. They watch with excitement as the sugar, flour butter and other elements are mixed together. There is always a great anticipation as a child waits for his mother's permission to put his finger in the bowl and taste the dough. As a child tasting the dough is an exciting experience. Children run their fingers around the entire bowl, and lick their fingers clean. The taste of the dough gives them an idea of the sweetness of the cake that is to come.

In a way the anticipation they share is the same anticipation every believer has of all the great blessings that God has in store for them. The pastor of a congregation is following God's recipe as he shows individual members how to bake the cake of life. Through preaching, teaching and leading he gives them a foretaste of things to come. Like the child's finger in the bowl, what we see, hear and learn from the pastor is just a foretaste, but it is enough to encourage the down hearted and inspire another generation to continue living the Christian life until our Lord returns.

In 1 Corinthians 14:3, the Apostle Paul gave a very brief, but conclusive definition of preaching. He said, "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Paul told the Corinthians that preaching accomplishes one of three purposes. He said, that preaching either edifies, inspires, or comforts. Through edification, preaching builds us up and strengthens us to endure difficult times, and to prepare us for the ultimate test that comes upon any who choose to live the Christian life. Through exhortation or inspiration preaching inspires us to live the Christian life to its fullest. Through words of comfort, preaching helps us to handle, absorb and to understand the difficulties of life.

If we put it another way, what Paul said was that preaching, prepares believers in this life by helping to strengthen and build them, encourage and motivate them, and sustain and comfort them as they deal with the issues they face each day; in preparation for the life to come. Preaching gives them a foretaste of what is to come.

The church needs to hear the words of the Gospel. The Gospel brings hope to those who are wrestling with the difficulties of life. The Gospel brings understanding to those who are confused about their direction. The Gospel brings hope and comfort to those who are suffering during their life's journey. The Gospel is the good news that comes from God. This good news brings strength. That's what Romans 10:17 means when it says, "Now faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

The preacher brings the confused masses a word of faith and a "glimpse of glory divine." This is what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of Glory Divine…"

When the church celebrates, salutes and honors its pastor, it encourages him, but in a greater sense it also celebrates the vision and the Gospel message that he brings to them. The preacher makes no promises, heals no sick, or places no soul in heaven. This is all the work of God. Thus, we also celebrate the "glory" and majesty of God, working through the pastor to accomplish his will among believers.

As Christians, we thank God for regularly encouraging us with a taste of his glory divine. We thank him for our pastors, because through them we are able to "lick the bowl" of the eternal life he is preparing and get a foretaste of what is to come.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Joel as he gave the disheartened people of God a vision that provided them with a "A Taste of Glory Divine."

Joel was a prophet whose message was directed to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. At the time God dictated this writing to Joel a famine, a plague of locust and a drought had devastated the land. The people were completely disheartened by all that they saw. They could not envision their recovery from such devastation.

Joel called upon the elderly men of the nation in Joel 1:2 to testify to the gravity of the destruction by comparing it to a more pleasant time. He encouraged them to share their dreams and reflections of by gone days with their children that they may gain an appreciation for the things God would do to restore them. The reflections of what God provided for them would feed the hope of those starving for a word for their present situation.

In verse 23 of the text, Joel focused on the "former rains" or the past blessings that were given to the people as a way to give them an idea of what God planned to do in the future. In just a short time God promised to bring the former rain and latter rain at the same time. In this way, God planned to do even bigger things for the people if the repented from the sins and placed their hope in the mighty power of God

Joel said, when the people repent that God would pour out his spirit on all flesh..that sons and daughters would prophesy..that old men would dream dreams, but the young men would see visions.

He painted a picture at verse 26 of plentiful food and satisfaction. At verse 30 he spoke of God's promise to show them wonders in heaven that would be so miraculous that no one would be able to deny the power of God.

Joel's preaching provided a taste of renewed blessing to a disheartened people.

He gave them a glimpse of God's plan to restore them and sustain them.
He gave them a peek into the eternal blueprint for their salvation.
He gave them a taste of glory divine.

Taste the Rewards of Obedience

Like the prophet Joel, the modern pastor has the responsibility to show his congregation the great things that God has in store for them if they remain loyal to him. One evidence of that loyalty is obedience to God.

On a regular basis the pastor encourages his congregation to be obedient to God because God will reward those who keep his word.

The pastor encourages members to be obedient to God in their living, in their giving, and in their praise. He constantly reminds them that God has promised to open up the windows of heaven and pour out blessings upon them if they will simply remember their vows, pay their tithes and walk humbly before him. He paints a picture of what is to come when they are obedient and follow God's command. It is a picture of reward. It is a picture of hope. It is a picture of eternal peace.

Tilden Edwards in his book "Spiritual Friend" said an old legend tells of a man who went to see a great man of God and asked for guidance in his quest to become a holy man. The old teacher told the man he was to plant a dry stick in the sand and to water it daily.

The man went home and planted the stick in the sand, but the only source of water was many miles away. He left each evening to fetch the water, and returned at dawn each day.

For three years the man patiently fulfilled his instructor's command. Month after wearying month, he watered and waited, watered and waited, with no signs of life.

At the end of the three years, a change took place. The stick suddenly put forth leaves and in a short period of time bore fruit. The old teacher came to look at the fruit. He picked it up and carried it to the table of the residence.

He then invited all of the people in to eat. He said to them, "Come and taste the fruit of obedience."

That's what the pastor does every Sunday. He shows believers, a taste of the fruit of obedience.

He gives them a taste of what to expect if they obey God's command.
Those who obey God can expect to see the sunshine after the rain.
Those who obey God can expect strength in the midst of all their weaknesses.

This is the hope that the pastor brings. It's a taste of the glory that God will bring upon all, who are obedient to him.

Taste the wonders and sweetness of God

The pastor also introduces believers to the wonders and sweetness of God. Often we see the world but we do not see it. We see the birds flying in the air, but yet we

do not see them. We hear the tolling of the bells but yet we do not hear them. Somehow, although we are here in the midst of all the wonders of God we seem to miss the beauty of the entire experience.

The pastor helps us to see and taste what God is doing for us everyday. He helps us to look around and see God's handiwork everywhere. Even in our own lives, when we think God has abandoned us, the pastor helps us to see God's fingerprints in our lives. He helps us to look up and see the source of our blessings. When we are eating the apples that fall to the ground, he helps us to look up and see the tree from which they have fallen.

A.Z. Towzer in his book, "Pursuing the knowledge of the Holy" said, "In the midst of this great coldness toward God there are some, I rejoice to acknowledge, who will not be content with shallow logic. They will admit the force of the argument, and then turn away with tears to hunt some lonely place and pray, "O God, show me thy glory." They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God."

When we get a taste of what God is all about, we see things differently!

When we get a taste of his goodness we sing like the song writer who said, "I hear God in every church bell that rings. I hear God in every robin that sings."

The goodness of God is indescribable. We have to experience him for ourselves. That's what Psalm 34:8 means, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

There was a little fellow who was returning home from a store with a pail of honey in his hand. A gentleman who walked beside him saw him slip one finger down into the pail. Then, because his mother had told him never to wipe his sticky fingers on his blouse or trousers, it found its only logical destination, his mouth. It really tasted good. After he had done this several times, the gentleman approached him and said, "See here, Sonny, what have you in that pail?" "Some honey, sir." "Honey-is it sweet?" "Yes, sir." "How sweet is your honey?" "It is very sweet, sir." "Well, I do not understand you. I asked you how sweet your honey was, and you have not yet told me. How sweet is it?" "Why, it is very, very sweet, sir." "Well, you are a funny little fellow; I asked you how sweet your honey is, and you just tell me it is very, very sweet. Now, can't you tell me really how sweet your honey is?" The little fellow was impatient by this time, so he stuck his finger down into the honey, and holding it up said, "Taste and see for yourself."

We salute the pastor because he keeps reminding us to taste and see!

He constantly reminds us to try God for ourselves.

We salute him because he keeps reminding us of the wonder and sweetness of our Lord!

"He's sweet I know. He's sweet I know. I've found a savior and he's sweet I know."

Taste of What is To Come

Finally, brothers and sisters we should celebrate our pastor because he continues to bring us God's vision of our glorious future.

In Joel 2:28, the prophet presented a vision that gave them a taste of the glories that God was preparing.

Joel said, when the people repent that God would pour out his spirit on all flesh; that sons and daughters would prophesy; that old men would dream dreams, but the young men would see visions.

A vision is a picture of what will be. It is a taste of glory divine!

A dreamer paints a picture of how things used to be and what he imagines they will be.

The pastor is a visionary; he does not talk so much about what was, as much as he tells the story of what will be, what has been promised by God. He gives us a taste of glory divine!

Amos saw a vision of a church well ordered in the visions of the plumb line.

Zechariah saw a vision of a new city of God, with walls not made with hands.

Ezekiel saw a vision of a splintered nation coming together again in the vision of the dry bones.

Daniel saw a vision of the downfall of pagan nations and the rise of the Christian Church, with a stone carved from a mountain by the hand of God.

Isaiah told of his vision in chapter six of his book. I hear him say, "In the year King Uzziah died, I also saw the Lord." He was sitting on a throne, high and lifted up...his train filled the temple and about him was the seraphim and each one has two wings, to hide his face, to cover his feet and to fly.

The pastor gives us an apocalyptic vision that peers into the unseen realms of the distant horizon.

It's a vision:

—Of a time when every day will be Sunday and it's always howdy and never goodbye.

—Of a day when the night of weeping has ended and joy has come in the morning.

—Of a day when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

—Of a day when the hearse wheels won't roll and the siren song of the ambulance will be silenced forever.

—Of a land where we will never grow old!

It's that vision that keeps us going. It motivates us, edifies us, and comforts us!

It's a vision that began in a little town called Bethlehem.

It's a vision that was continued on a hill called Calvary!

It's a vision that was completed early, Sunday morning when my Lord and your Lord arose the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but every now and then I get a taste of glory divine!

Every now and then I can feel him..

Moving in my hands!

Moving in my feet!

All over me!

No. 9146-Anniv.-Men

God's "Good Things"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 19, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" Galatians 6:9-10.

Introduction

Have you ever had a "good thing?" In our neck of the woods, a "good thing" is a person who goes out of his way to show us a kindness, perform a charitable act or other form of generosity. A woman who has a good thing, has a man who treats her like a queen, loves her with a fervent passion, defends her honor, provides for all of her needs and many of hearts desires within his ability. Such a "good thing" never stops doing good. He calls constantly, brings her flowers regularly and never forgets to keep telling her that he loves her. A man who has a good thing is equally blessed. He has a woman who sweetens his coffee with a good morning kiss. She constantly thinks of him and does so many acts of kindness that he can't count them. She works and trusts him to manage what is saved and what is spent. She loves him and never stops letting him know that he is her "good thing." Children have parents who are "good things." These are the parents that see to it that they have the best opportunities, clothes, and even games for baby girls and teenage toys for bigger boys. It's not hard to know when you have a good thing.

There is a difference between a good thing and a "fool." A good thing does what he does out of love. His acts of kindness are done with his eyes wide open, with no deception. He does it because giving is what love does. The woman who is a "good thing" is nobody's fool. She understands that "love" is an action word and she constantly seeks ways to show her love through her action. Her constant displays of love are what make her a "good thing." A fool does good things, but does it thinking that the actions will win the affections of the other. Affections are rarely won by the loving acts of another; often they are used in the way Bill Withers put it in his song, "Use me till you use me up." Fools get used, "Good things" are appreciated, cherish and loved in life; and missed when they are gone.

There are millions of Black men who can be characterized as "good things." Why? Because they are continuously doing great things in their families, communities and churches. While there are many reports about the "bad things" in our community who are robbing stores, raping, murdering and living lawless lives, very little is said about

the millions of "good things" who are making their communities better places to live, loving their wives and children and supporting their churches with their time and resources.

God is looking for men who are willing to be "Good Things" for the Lord. These are men who willing to continue doing good to all.

As Christians, we have committed ourselves to witness for Christ and serve him, while at the same time meeting the needs of those around us. When men show love for their community, family and church by constantly doing good things, they give evidence of their faith in God. We should resolve to continue doing good is this way, so that our "good things" will not come to and end.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul's instruction to believers about relationships with one another.

Galatians is filled with instructions to believers about displaying the qualities of Christianity in our daily living. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first 10 verses pick up where chapter five left off. It encouraged believers to constantly display the fruit of the spirit on a daily basis. Chapter six continues with more instruction; this time about our responsibilities to each other. The last part of the chapter verse 11-14 warns believers against false teaching that was cropping up in Christian circles.

This text comes from the portion of the chapter that focuses on our relationships with each other. While Paul constantly uses the masculine terms "man" and "men" in his admonitions to the church at Galatia, the instructions are not gender specific. So while he says in verse 10, "Let us do good to all men" it does not men that are acts of kindness and goodness should be limited to males only. "Men" in this context means mankind or humankind.

His encouragement is clear; we should not tire of doing good things, but should seize every opportunity to do as many good things as possible; not resting upon what we have done in the past, but doing all the good we can, while we can. Believers are encouraged to do good things for all people, but especially to those who are in the household of faith. The household of faith is a reference to the church or other Christians.

Thus, believers are encouraged to be a "good thing" outside of their immediate "household of faith" but to be especially sure that they not tire of doing good things within their own households. Believers have a family house of faith and community of believers house of faith; neither should be neglected when good things are being done.

In verse nine Paul remind the Galatians that there will be a reward for those who do not tire and continue to be "good things" for those around them. It is the promise of "Well done" from God that motivates God's "good things." It is this promise that separates them from fools who perform countless acts without recognition of reward for thankless recipients. It is this promise of reward that pushes them to go further,

never tire and keep showing the love of God to all people regardless to race, creed or national origin.

God's "Good Things"

While every believer shares in the commission to do good, men who are heads of the "household of faith" must respond on a higher order. God's men must do "good things" in a way that gives credit to God and builds our race. There are three areas where God's "Good Things" are needed.

GOOD THINGS IN THE COMMUNITY: God's "Good Things" are needed in the community. No matter what place we pick in America, the plight of the Black community seems to be the same. Our neighborhoods are suffering, our children are being mislead and our problems are worsening. Those who try to escape by moving out of the neighborhood usually find that the subculture follows them or worse, they bring it with them. Across America, Black men sensitive to the problems of our community are organizing themselves. The million man march in 1995 raised the consciousness of millions. National fraternal organizations such as the Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi, Prince Hall Masons, The National Baptist Convention and others are energizing men to organize and take action.

Millions of Black men are forming organizations such as the 100 Black Men of America with units all over the nation. The aim of the push is to get Black men who are successful to do more than simply be successful, but to roll up their sleeves and plunge into the problem. To attack the problem men are being encouraged to: 1) Serve as a one to one role model for a Black boy; that is to go beyond serving on boards and committees but to actively work in a structured way where one man directly interacts with at least one boy that is not his own as a mentor. 2) Promote Educational excellence 3) Give volunteer service to the community 4) Promote male responsibility training for Black males 5) Promote the importance moral behavior by precept and example 6) Promote a respect for God and family.

There is no comparison for what can be done if men of good character roll up their sleeves and do good work. Men who responding to this need should hear the words of the text, "don't be weary of doing well" and keep doing good things.

GOOD THINGS IN THE FAMILY: Black men are the heads of the "household of faith" or the local family. The text implies an intrinsic responsibility to the family when it says, "especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The meaning cannot be overlooked; we must serve the community, but we must take care of business in our own families. Those who serve on boards or who lead governments have an even more awesome responsibility, because beside their responsibility as community leaders they also must function in their own families as husbands, fathers, uncles and grandfathers. They must avoid the danger of substituting one for the other.

The strength of our people has been in the solidarity of our families. Black families need their "good things" to do "good things" at home.

Though poor, ostracized and endangered, the African-American family has survived in strength. Yet, while there are millions of families that are still thriving, a great many of our families are showing signs of disintegration. As our families become more tolerant of deviant behavior and less homogeneous, the community feels the impact.

The extent of the damage becomes clear when we consider that 23 percent of 20-29 year old Black men are either in jail or on probation at any given time. While there are more than 600,000 young Black men enrolled in college there are more than 800,000 under the control of the criminal justice system. The nation spends more than $3 billion a year to keep them locked up, making privately owned prisons the fastest growing new business in America.

Teen pregnancy is hitting an all time high with African-American teens topping the lists. We are plagued with a dilemma of problems created by a generation of babies making babies.

Our families need God's "Good Things."

Mothers need "Good things" as loving husbands and providers.

Children need "Good things" who are present and functioning in their lives.

Millions of men are being good things and doing good things at home. These brothers should remember the words of the text, "Don't be weary of doing well" and keep doing good things.

GOOD THINGS BEFORE GOD: The Black man must continue to do good things in the larger "Household of faith" which is the church. Through his church he can join shoulders with other men of faith and gain faith, fellowship and friendship as he praise God and attacks the evils that threaten the households of family that he loves.

The problem that God's men face is huge, however, with God it is not insurmountable.

God's men must stay before God because one fourth of our young men are involved in the criminal justice system at a time when they should be beginning families starting careers and learning skills. They need good men who know God to help them.

God's men must stay in the presence of God because one fourth of our youth are struggling to raise babies while they are still babies. They need good men who know God to show them a way out of their dilemma.

God's men must stay on their knees asking for God's help because one fifth of our male population remains unemployed. The unemployed need good men to bring the words of hope and assist them in their struggle.

A man who is a good thing knows he can do many things, but he can't do

In Due Season we shall reap

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider Paul's words to the Galatians in verse 10 and remember that in due season we shall be rewarded for doing "good things" for the Lord.

While Christian men are encouraged to continue doing good works, the reality of the matter is that many are frustrated in their service, because it is often unrewarding and thankless. Those who have spent time working in the vineyard, reaching out to those who are struggling in their walk with God or with troubles and burdens in their lives, find it is easy to become discouraged when the harvest is poor.

The reality is that many give up after a short time because the work is difficult and at times disheartening.

Yet, today brothers, we are reminded by God's word that "in due season" God will reward true believers for their work.

What is "due season?" It means, when God gets ready.

When God gets ready, that which was impossible becomes possible!

When God gets ready, doors that were closed are suddenly opened!

When God gets ready, narrow roads become major boulevards!

Therefore men are encouraged to keep working, and keep doing good things, because in due season, God will give the rewards!

The world has prematurely announced the death of the Black man. But we serve notice today, that God's "Good Things" are still doing good things in the name of the Lord!

Whenever there is has been a great need, God has always moved in the ranks of God fearing men to help them do good things that were considered impossible!

Whenever there was a demand there have been men at work!

When Israel faced the impossibility of the River Jordan, God moved when men started doing good things!

When Joshua led Israel around the walls of Jericho, God moved when men started doing good things!

When Gideon led a small army of 300 against a force of thousands, enemies were defeated when just a few men started doing good things!

Whenever there has been a mountain God has had a man!

For Mt Sinai God had Moses doing a good thing!

For Mt. Ararat God had Noah, doing a good thing!

For Mt. Carmel God had Elijah, doing a good thing!

And when the world needed salvation on Mt. Calvary God had a man who was more than just a good thing, he was the best thing that ever happened to the world.

John said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

His name is Jesus!

Who died on Calvary but rose after three days!

One of these days, he's coming back again!

When he comes back, let him find every man busy doing good things!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I'm going to work until my day is done! I'm going to work until the setting of my sun! I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done!"

No. 9147-Graduation

Walk With Me Lord!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2, 2006

SCRIPTURE: The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. Habakkuk 3:19

Introduction

How did you feel when you finally graduated and made that walk across the stage to receive your diploma? For many it was an exciting and memorable moment. As you climbed the steps, could you feel the electricity in the air? Could you hear the cheers of the audience and the thundering applaud? A camera flashed, a faced smiled, a hand was extended, and the leather case was put into your hand. A few steps later and you were back at your seat! It was a Kodak moment.

Many people walked across the stage with you that day. Your parents, grand parents, your coach, scout leaders, that special teacher and the small band of people who have supported you for many years.

Very rarely has a graduate made the final walk alone. Always, there was that small cloud of well wishers, supporters and family members who have labored with them for many years to help them reach that day.

The Christian graduate knows another certainty; that unseen by the hundreds of eyes that watched the stage that night, but certainly felt, was the guiding hand of the Lord, who more than all the others who cheered, was mainly responsible for us making that final walk.

As Christians, we have the assurance that we will never walk alone. As long as the Lord is our strength and we abide in him, he will give walk with us to the high place we strive to reach alone.

Exposition

This text focuses is on the prophet Habakkuk as he considers the frustrating experience that Israel had encountered as it pondered the next step in a series of events, carrying them toward an unknown future. The book of Habakkuk presents a picture of a believer struggling to discern, understand and resolve the issue of the

immediate future.

In chapter one, the issue of the frustrations of the righteous as compared to the seemingly easy way of the ungodly is addressed. Habakkuk was concerned that it appeared that those who were not faithful to the Lord were rewarded, while those who worked hard seem to have a more difficult time. In versus five through seven of chapter one Habakkuk received God's answer. God said, "for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." God told Habakkuk that he was preparing to deal with all the forces that had troubled them in a strange and amazing way. He would not understand how God would work this out; and at first it would appear as if God had made a mistake. However, soon God would take those very forces that had worked against them, and use them to their advantage. The very forces that worked against the people of God were about to be used by God himself to open doors for the people.

God speaks to Habakkuk personally and shows him how he is working in the events that unfold before him to work out his will, even to the point of using what is obviously evil to accomplish an eventual good. Responding to the cries of the people, God shows Habakkuk a prophecy and a vision that reassures them that he is not asleep and is moving behind the scenes to accomplish his will. He encouraged all believers to approach the troubling times with an attitude of faith saying, "the just shall live by his faith." (2:4)

Thus, Habakkuk concludes that although there are difficult times ahead and troubles all around, the just should not give up the faith.

Living by faith has implications. Its implications are spelled out in verses 17 and 18. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

He concludes that God will strengthen him, lead him away from destructive forces and take him to the high places of his destiny.

I will work a work in your days

Those who stand on the threshold of life, pondering their next move should share Habakkuk's frustration. They should also share the good news he heard from God in verse 1:5, "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you."

In the course of our lives there have been plenty of things said about each of us. Graduating classes usually have predictions, such as the "Most likely to succeed" or "The least likely to succeed." It's easy to spot those who may be the most likely to succeed because they seem to have everything going for them, charm, good looks, and charisma. Every graduating class is usually baffled at their first class reunion ten years later, that those whom they thought would not succeed actually did better. The school fool is a minister. One of the slowest members of the class has a PhD. The classmate who never seemed to have a dime, became a multi-millionaire.

When graduates calculate their potential in life they should not overlook the Habakkuk factor: "What happens when God works a wonderful work in your life." There are no limits on your potential once you consider the Habakkuk factor, "When God works a work."

That is exactly what God promises frustrated believers who are at the cross roads of life, frustrated about the future; he promises to work a work in your life, not in distant future, but "in your days"; in the near future.

When God works it out, you will be amazed. In the text, God took the very forces that worked against Israel and used it to their advantage.

When you see the changes that God puts you through and start noticing how your attitudes and disposition changes for the better, you won't believe yourself. Don't be amazed, God said it would be that way. In this same verse, God said, "which ye will not believe though it be told you."

When God works a work, he turns out a fine piece of work. To do that sometimes God has to do a spiritual number on us. He may have to tear us down to build us up. Isn't that what happened at the potter's house? When the potter found a flaw in the clay he had to tear it completely down and build it back again. Either we can work the work of him who sent us from the start, or wait for God to bust a spiritual cap on us to turn us to the right path.

When God works it out, our walk will change.

When God works it out, our talk will change.

When God works it out, our dress will change.

When God does his thing in our lives, we'll look at how far we've come and sing the words to the old song, "How I got over! How I got over! My soul looks back and wonders, How I got over!"

Live by Faith

The second truth that Habakkuk revealed is that the "just should live by faith." (2:4) Just what does that mean? If you are a young graduate, "live by faith" means to go forward in life, confident that whatever life brings, God will make a way.

The very definition of faith tells the story in Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen."

To live by faith is to always believe that godly goals can be achieved even though, at present, there is no evidence to support the belief.

Young believers have never traveled the independent road in life, although they have been dreaming about being independent all of their lives. It is a nervous road, but each is encouraged to live by faith.

Living by faith is not the same as being foolish.

It's foolish to get a $500 a month apartment with no means of regularly paying the rent. That's not living by faith.

It's foolish to charge your new credit card to the limit, talk up all the minutes on your phone, and spend all of your laundry money on video games. That's not living by faith, that's foolishness.

When we enter an arena of life responsibly and things happen outside of our control, that's when we walk by faith that the Lord will make a way.

When tuition is due and there seems to be no way, despite your best efforts, that's when you live by faith that the Lord will make a way.

Using your utility bill money to Pimp your ride then praying to God to get the light bill paid is not living by faith, that's foolishness.

Habakkuk said the "just" live by faith. The just are those who "do right" by God.

The just are those who try to live by his commandments, conduct themselves according to his precepts and follow his examples. The just, says the word, "shall live by faith."

That means young graduates should go out in life confident that God will make a way for whatever he has promised to happen.

If doors are closed in your face, If I "do right" by him, God will make a way!

If enemies surround you on every side, If I "do right" by him, God will make a way!

If I fall down more than I stand up; step down more than I step up; If I "do right" by him, God will make a way!

Living by faith, means we never doubt that the Lord will make a way somehow!

He'll help me walk to high places

Finally, brothers and sisters, every believer should remember that if we walk with the king, he will take us to high places

Habakkuk said the Lord was his strength in difficult times and that he counted on the Lord to raise him up on his hind legs like a deer and escape danger.

He remained confident that he will "make me walk to mine high places."

Habakkuk decided to walk with God rather than trust the devil.

He decided to walk by faith, rather than place his trust in forces of men.

He decided to let God move in a big way rather than waiting for crumbs from the devil's table.

Verse 19 gives the final phrase of hope to young believers, "he will help me walk to my high places."

It doesn't matter how big your dream if you put your hand in God's hand he will help you walk to your place!

Walking with God is a steady walk! You cannot drag your feet. Your ascent up the mountain of success must not be slowed by a lack of synchronization.

God will walk you to your high place but you must make a step. There is no time for malingering and idleness, walking with the king is a steady pace.

In Matthew 28 Jesus told his young followers to "go and lo" he would be with them always. That's different from the way the devil walks with us.

In the country, when a visitor returned home, it was customary to walk "piece-a-way" back home. You didn't walk all the way, but just a little bit.

That's the way the devil walks with those who trust in him. He doesn't go all the way, but just a little bit.

The devil is like the rapper "50 cent."

All he wants from you is a little bit!
All he will do for you is a little bit!
All he will ever give you is a little bit!
All he'll let you have is a little bit!
All he'll let you dream is a little bit!
All he'll let you do is a little bit!
All he'll let you achieve is a little bit!
The only amount you'll ever receive is a little bit!
The only height you'll ever climb is a little bit!
The only happiness you'll ever find is a little bit!

I have news for you this morning, we serve a God who has the power to do more than just a little bit!

I hear the guard asking the three Hebrew Boys, "Is your God able to deliver you?" And the answer comes, "He's able!

Well the devil is asking this graduating class, I had you for a little bit, but can you afford to leave me behind? Is your God able?

But somebody in this class is saying right now, "he's able. I know he's able!

He brought us through pre-school and kingergarden, six years of elementary, two years of Jr. High and four years of high school, he's able!

I know he's able because we fell down, but he picked us up again!

I know he's able because we messed up, fessed up and he blessed us up again!

I know he's able because we broke our parent's heart but they never stopped loving us!

I know he's able because when I should have been dead and gone, he gave me a second chance!

The other day, you walked across the stage and received your diploma in your hand!

Today, every believer should say in his heart, I'm going to walk with the king and keep my hand in his hand!

As you go through life, come what may, walk with the king!

If you walk with the king, storms may rise and winds may blow; but you'll have shelter in the time of storm!

If you walk with the king, he'll take your weakness and give you strength.

If you walk with the king, he'll take your failures and give you success!

If you walk with the king, he'll take your bitter experiences and make them sweet.

No wonder the song writer says, "I want to meet all the disciples. I want talk with the angels; I want to walk with the king!

I want to walk with the king, who loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

His name is Jesus! The King of Kings!
Jesus, The Lord of Lords!
He died out on Calvary, but early!
Early Sunday morning….

No. 9148-Cross

The Statue of Liberty

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 3, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1

Introduction

Have you ever visited or seen photographs of the Statue of Liberty? It is a majestic statute that towers 305 feet over the New York harbor and seems to beckon those who yearn for freedom and liberty to come to its shores. The curious from around the world have climbed to its massive crown and peered out across the bay on almost a daily basis since it was opened in 1886. It was closed to tourists in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks but in 2004 resumed its role as America's primary symbol of freedom and independence.

The idea of the statue took root after the Civil War. European abolitionists conceived the idea as a symbol to America' victory over slavery and its commit to invite men of color to lives of freedom and liberty. Between 1865 and its final dedication in 1886 there was large influx of immigrants from all over the world including Jews, Catholics, Scotts, Germans and French. By dedication time the statue came to represent not only America's victory over slavery but its invitation to all who yearned to be free. It was shipped from France to America in 214 crates, and then painstakingly reassembled at a cost of over $75 million dollars.

On a bronze plaque on the wall of the statue's museum are the words of a poem by Emma Lazarus, called the New Colossus. The closing lines of that poem have become closely associated with the Statue of Liberty:

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

People from around the world come to America upon the invitation of the principle the statue represents: liberty and freedom for all. It was invitation to come here to be free from persecution and to be free to pursue happiness with government, class or unreasonable legal restraints.

Liberty is the real reason for the 4th of July celebration. However, this is a liberty that is often taken so lightly that many only think of the day as a chance to Bar-Be-Que, watch a sports event, or see a fire works display as we pig out and chill out. Some may hear a band play the "Stars and Stripes For ever" or glance at a television show.

To many it is too soon to celebrate liberty as long as there are still large portions of the nation that are still not treated equally, including minorities, women and Native Americans. They can relate to the words of Frederick Douglass in 1852 when he said:

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.... - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."

Much has changed since Frederick Douglass said those words in 1852. While we are not yet fully free, we have made great strides toward that end and enjoy liberty more extensively than any other nation of the world.

While our celebration includes a salute to the Statue of Liberty, there is another "Statue of Liberty" for which every born again believer gives thanks. Just as many of us have never walked up the steps of the 305 foot colossus in New York, none of us have seen this statue with our physical eyes. Although we have never seen it, it has affected our lives even more than that statue in New York Harbor.

The statute to which I refer isn't really a statue at all; it's the Old Rugged Cross upon which our spiritual liberty was guaranteed by our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

It stands high on a million church steeples and proclaims to the world, "Whosever will let him come." Liberty is not free. It was paid for with a price. For America it was paid for with the blood of millions on battlefields from Bunker Hill to Baghdad. For our souls, it was paid for with blood of Jesus Christ.

The cross symbolizes and embodies our quest to present ourselves spotlessly before God.

As Christians, we have two symbols of our freedom. The Statue of Liberty represents our physical freedom and the cross of Calvary which represents our spiritual freedom. It's a freedom that is not announced in declarations of independence or written into constitutions. It is freedom that will come when we all step foot into the Canaan Land where we will be free both in body and in spirit.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia explaining the liberties and freedoms associated with salvation.

Paul undertook three missionary journeys in his career. One of them established churches in the towns of: Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe, of which were part of the Roman province of Galatia.

Paul's letter specially addressed how the Christians in Galatia should respond to their new freedom in Christ. He instructed them to remember that their freedom in Christ was to be proactive, freedom to build, not freedom to pursue fleshly activities.

Christianity frees believers from the rituals and legalisms tied to the Mosaic Law,

Paul taught. This liberation from the Mosaic Law should not be viewed as an opportunity to indulge themselves but as an opportunity to advance the kingdom of the Savior.

That's what he means when he says we should stand fast in our Christian liberty. If we step back into legalism, we risk entanglement and bondage. The Jews of Paul's day knew what legal bondage meant (Acts 15:10). Circumcision was the seal of the old covenant, so Paul warns the Galatians that to turn back to the old covenant is to rob themselves of the blessings Christ purchased for them. Christ cannot profit the sinner who rejects grace and trusts law; Christ cannot profit the saint who seeks to live by the law instead of grace. "Circumcision" in vv. 2-3 stands for the entire Mosaic system.

Paul never taught anyone to forsake the moral laws which are embodied in the Law of Moses. But he did tell people that now that Christ had come the need to observe the ceremonial law is no longer present.

The cross stands as a symbol of that liberation not only from the shackles of Moses but also to the shackles of sin that once burdened every believer to a life of misery and shame.

What We are Free From

The primary message of Galatians as that the cross of Christ has freed us from many hindrances.

FREE FROM GUILT: Because of the Cross of Christ we are free from the guilt associated with past mistakes. Every believer has a past, no matter how young. Guilt burdens many people who blame themselves for deaths, sicknesses or the misfortunes of others. Sometimes the blame we have placed on ourselves is correct because we were contributors to bad situations. However, the cross of Christ represents the point in our lives in which we were absolved of all past sins, mistakes, addictions and immoralities. It is best symbolized by Jesus when he talked with the woman who had been caught in adultery and was about to be stoned. Here Jesus absolved all her past indiscretions and told her to go and sin no more. It was over, done and nailed to the cross. It means the same for believers today. Once we have given our sins, short comings and mistakes to Christ he absolves us of the guilt and punishment. He takes our ugly past and nails it to the cross. With the removal of the guilt and stain, we are now free to live, build and witness for him, walking daily in the light.

FREE FROM GRIEF: The cross of Christ stands as a reminder to us that he has borne our sorrows, and "with his stripes we are healed." There are many who are still grieving a personal loss. It doesn't matter what the loss, the fact that we are still grieving is a form of bondage. What Christ does is lift our grief by renewing our hope. What is that we have lost? A loved one? A relationship? An opportunity? Without hope we grieve endlessly. We can't ever pick up and move on with our lives. When we see the empty cross and hear Christ's words "And Lo' I'll be with you." We know that there is hope as long as he is around. Mary and Martha found hope even after the death of Lazarus. A widow woman found that despite an empty barrel that God

could still make a way. Each time we see the cross, it reminds us of God's wonder working power and we sing the song, "There's power, power, wonder working, in the blood of the lamb. There's power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb."

FREE FROM DEPRESSION: It's not hard to become depressed. It usually happens when life's circumstances surround us and we cannot get a grip. We slip into a depression under the load of increasing rejection, failure, pain and personal loss. There are times we are so depressed that we don't even want to leave home. It would be fine if we could sleep for days, until the storm passes. Depression destroys lives, families and marriages. While everyone experiences a depressing moment or two, the Cross of Christ has a tendency to lift our spirits. Just when we think we are at the end of our rope, we see the cross of Christ, and then decide to tie a knot and hold on. Just when we think we have fallen to our lowest point, the Cross of Christ reminds us that "We fall down, but we get up." Just as we begin to wallow in self pity over our troubled family, marriage or life situation, we see the cross of Christ and remember that it doesn't matter how the storm rages, as long as Jesus is on board we will be safe. The cross stands as our statue of liberty, remind us of all the ways that the blood of Christ has set us free.

What We are Free to Do

Just as the cross of Christ freed us from the bondage of guilt, sin, depression, and misgivings; we must remember that this new freedom we have sets us free to enjoy the enriched spiritual life.

Many know what they have been freed from, but they have no idea what to do with their freedom other than pursue worldly desires.

That's what happened when the old slave heard that since the Civil War was over that he was free. The master tried to discourage him from using his new freedom by pointing out how dependent the slave had been on the plantation economy. "If you get free Tom, what will you do?" Said the master. "You can't read and you can't write. You don't own any land and don't have any money. You don't even have a horse to leave on." Said the master. The old slave who had been subservient and respectful all his life then said, "Boss, is I free yet?" When the master assured him that he was free the old slave said, "We'll boss, I don't rightly know what it means to be free. But one thing I do know, even if I have to leave here walking, I won't be slaving for you no more!"

The cross reminds us of what we are free to do.

We are free to enjoy the promises of God. God has promised to go with us as we journey through this life. He has promised to make a way for us in the wilderness of life and let the manna flow from heaven if we are obedient. When we see the cross it reminds us that we are free to stand on the promises of God.

We are free to enjoy the protection of God. David said "God is my refuge and my strength." He has promised to be a shelter for us in a time of storm. When we see the cross it reminds us that the Lord will be our shield and strength in times of trouble.

We are free to boldly approach the throne of Grace.
Because we are free, we can boldly talk to God and tell him what we want.
Because we are free, we can tell him about our troubles trying to run this race.
Because we are free, we can go to God in prayer. It's a good thing to be free enough to talk to God in prayer!

The cross is more than a statue

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that the lady in the harbor is a statue, but the man on the cross was the living God.

Those who look to the Statue of Liberty in the harbor see the American dream, but those who look to the little cross on the hill go a little further, they see a God who makes dreams possible.

The statue of liberty offers freedom to all who come to American shores. Christ offers liberty to all who come to the cross.

The Statue of liberty marks the place where freedom begins, but the cross marks the place where bondage ends.

Cross reminds us of what has been replaced.
Hate replaced with love,
Sadness has been replaced with joy,
Confusion has been replaced with peace,
Impatience has been replaced with patience,
Insensitivity has been replaced with kindness,
Stinginess has been replaced with generosity,
Lack of faith has been replaced with faithfulness,
Rudeness has been replaced with gentleness.
The cross reminds us of a sin record that no longer exists.
The cross reminds us of a mistake that has been forgiven.
The cross reminds us of an error that has been erased.
But more than anything else the cross reminds us that we serve a living Lord.
The cross marks the place where we came in contact with the power of the Lord.

The cross marks the place where we stepped out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

The cross marks the place where we traded in our lives of sin for the hope of salvation.

That's why the song writer wrote, "At the cross at the cross where we first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I'm happy all the day."

The cross is more than a statue!
The cross is that power that can change my darkness into light!
The cross is that power that can take my downs and turn them into ups
The cross is that power that can pick me up and turn me around again!
It's more than a statue!
It's where Jesus died over 2000 years ago!

No 9149-Inspiration

Bring It On

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 26, 2005

Scripture: ***"So now Israel, what do you think God expects from you?" Just this: Live in his presence in holy reverence, follow the road he sets out for you, love him, serve God, your God, with everything you have in you, Deuteronomy 10:12 (MSG Version)***

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself doing less than your best? Both youth and adults alike find that there are many areas of their lives which have been approached half heartedly. Those are times that we do less than our best. As children, our parents try to teach us to do our best, but the lessons are so hard to learn. We swept the floor as we were instructed, but we only swept in the open places; going further would be troublesome. We washed the dishes, but when the water became greasy, we didn't change it; doing so would have meant more time. We mowed the grass but we missed many areas and left little ridges in the lawn. It was done, but was it our best? We washed the car, but left several areas untouched. Was it our best? Probably not.

Old habits are hard to break; those who were once children who gave less than their best grew up to be adults, who continued as adults the mistakes of the childhood. That's when we see the employee who gives his boss less than a full day's work, but still wants to get paid. That's when we join organizations and do less than our best to attend and participate in their activities. There are some who routinely fail to dot their "I's" and cross the "T's" not because they don't know how, but because it's just too much bother.

They make a practice of giving less than their best.

The phrase "bring it on" is popular among those of this generation. It is a call to meet a challenge with everything you have. A popular teen movie by the same name features school cheerleader squads competing for a national title. One team is from a poor neighborhood, the other is affluent. The affluent team felt sorry for the poor team because they had trouble raising their money. The poor team however, was able to raise its own funds and accepted no charity or mercy as they rose to the challenge of the national competition. The poor girls in the movie only requested that the other teams "bring it on" when they came against them. They would only be true champions when they had beaten the best. Their fighting words were: "Bring it!"

When it comes to God, do we bring it? Do we serve him with everything we have? Do we give him our best without excuses, poor mouthing and complaining? Whether we do or not, that is exactly what God expects from us; nothing less than our best.

As Christians, we should resolve to "bring it" when it comes to God. If we sing in the choir, usher, preach or serve in a ministry we should never fail to "bring it on!" God is such a great God, we should give him nothing less.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses giving instruction to Israel about the challenges that lay ahead.

The Book of Deuteronomy, which means the "second look," was written at the close of Moses' life. He gave advice to Israel to direct them through the remainder of the journey to the Promised Land. He also gave them warnings about challenges that would lie ahead.

The generation he addressed was mostly people who knew only the nomad life of the wilderness. There were some older men who knew about the Egyptian experience first hand, but most of them were born in the wilderness, during the nation's 40 years of wanderings. Throughout the book he repeated most of the laws and instructions he gave in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

At the age of 120 Moses gave his last instruction to the people. He told them what to do to meet God's expectations once they entered the new land.

To meet God's expectations each man, woman and child was expected to live justly, worship God, live according to his law and to promote Godly purposes with everything they have in them.

Surely, great challenges lay ahead for them but they were admonished to meet the challenges head on with everything within them.

Giving their best effort is the meaning of that phrase in verse 12, "And to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." The Living bible says,"And to love him, and to worship him with all your hearts and souls? "The Century Version says, "Love him. Serve the Lord your God with your whole being." The Message translates it this way, "Love him, serve God, your God, with everything you have in you."

When we approach the worship and service to God we should not do it half stepping, but should make every effort to bring every ounce of energy, talent and devotion to focus on building his kingdom.

Don't half step, bring it!

Youth should Bring it

Just as Moses spoke to the young generation in this text, God's message is the same to the young of this generation: "You will face challenges as you mature. As you face each one, don't half step, bring it on!"

BRING IT IN EDUCATION: This generation more than any other should be prepared to face the educational challenges ahead. The youth who heard Moses speak were about to face new challenges they had never experienced. They would be forced to till the land for the first time. They would also make clothing, forge weapons and build houses for the first time. It was all brand new to them, yet Moses said, approach the challenge with everything you have within you, "bring it." Education should rank high among youth priorities. Every young faces challenges similar to those of Israel. They will be participants in the Information age, whereas their parents were participants in the industrial age. Creating, managing, maintaining and manipulating information will be the educational challenge of the next generation. Reading will be a priority as technology makes great use of computers. Youth who cannot read, or do not read will find themselves on the bottom end of the tier as the best opportunities pass them by. Even worse, recent studies by the national program Project Read show that there is a connection between youth who cannot read and the tendency to become involved in criminal activity. It's staggering to consider that the average 15 year old in the criminal justice system reads at a 4th grade level or below. When it comes to education, youth should bring it! Students who score well on tests and earn high grades are also those who read well. The first step to reading well is to read more. Read anything: Comic strips, corn flake boxes, novels, newspapers, magazines; just read because reading is essential. Just reading what is required is half stepping. Just earning a high enough grade to pass, is half stepping. If this generation is going to tackle the challenge of education, bring it! Give it everything that you have!

BRING IT IN EXPECTATIONS: This generation should set high standards for itself, and expect to succeed. Each child born in the wilderness clearly expected to make it to the Promised Land. In contrast, their parents never expected anything more than to get out of slavery and wander in the wilderness until their death. Yet Moses told the young to prepare for the Promised Land to expect to get there! Two young men slipped over into Canaan and took a peek into the future. After seeing the Promised Land they never doubted that one day they would live in the land of their future. That should be the same resolve of youth today. Each youth should mentally take a peek into the Promised Land and see themselves in the future. Youth must begin to see themselves as successful men and women. They must envision themselves as professionals and workmen who achieve a level of success in their chosen areas. You will never become a doctor unless you can see yourself as a doctor! Unless you can visualize yourself in a courtroom, you will rarely become a lawyer. Unless you can see yourself running a large corporation with a large staff of employees, it will probably never happen. Jesse Jackson had it right, first your mind most conceives it, and your heart has to believe it, before you can achieve it. Raise your expectations.

Don't expect to be on welfare all of your lives, dream bigger and 'bring it!

Don't even dream about the "great day" when you'll be able to get your own welfare check; dream about the day you earn enough money to pay more in taxes than you earn in a year.

Dream big and bring it! Food Assistance is nice for an emergency, but you want

the ability to buy your own 16 ounce steak, live in your own house and drive a car that you own!

Don't even dream about having your own food stamps one day!

You must expect great things and believe God's word in 1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Trust God, set high goals, accept nothing less and bring it!

BRING IT IN YOUR LIFESTYLE: God wanted Israel to be just and honest in their dealings and exemplary in their conduct. Many youth half step when it comes to their lifestyle. Many are half and half. They want to be Christians but they also want to be popular too. In quest of popularity, many youth have adopted a style of dress that's half and half. Half Christian, meaning modest, and half worldly. There are many that are half stepping when it comes to music, videos and literature. When around Christians they listen to Christian music and talk church talk. However, when around friends of the world they switch to their other side and become engrossed in some activities that are incompatible with the Christian life.

What does God expect? He expects every believer to live the Christian life with everything ounce of strength within them, not half and half, but all of the time! God expects young Christians to live among those of the Hip Hop generation but not be a part of any activities and styles that are inconsistent with his word. He clearly expects what he said in, Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." It means that young Christians don't follow the crowd! We dress and talk like Christian ladies and gentlemen, recognizing that we are the only bible that some of our friends will ever see. When they see us, they should get a snap shot of godliness. If you are Christian, don't half step in your lifestyle, bring it! If you love the Lord, don't just love him on Sunday, everyday of the week, bring it!

Bring it in Worship

Finally, Moses told the Israelites that they should fear the Lord, Love the Lord, Serve the Lord and Walk in his ways!

Moses urged the Israelites not to half step on the Lord when it came to loving, obeying and praising him!

Too many adults and youth approach their relationship with God and his church with a "grain of salt." It is half stepping at best and "no stepping" at worse.

We are encouraged to fear the Lord. That means to respect him because he is a mighty God and there is no other like him. We should not partially respect him, but respect him all of time. When it comes to fear and respecting God, bring it on!

We should love the Lord because he first loved us. When we were too mean to love ourselves he loved us. That's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me."

If we are going to love the Lord, let's bring it on! Don't just love him when things

are going well, but when the storms of life are raging, bring it on!

We should serve the Lord and walk in his ways, because walking with the Lord is a safe walk through the valley of Baca and the mountains of distress and even through the valley of the shadow of death.

If you plan to walk the Christian road don't tip toe, but bring it on!

What does God expect? He expects us to "bring it!" He expects us to do our best and he'll take care of the rest!

God doesn't expect us to win, he expects us to "bring it", and do our best!

God doesn't expect us to be the champion, he expects us to bring it and give our own championship performance

God doesn't expect us to be first, he expects us to "bring it", to give everything we have in the pursuit of being first and when we have done our best, he is pleased.

God expects for us to never give up hope.

As long as God is still on the throne, if you are:

—Praying for Rain, you need to get your umbrella ready!

—Praying for bread, you need to grease the pan!

—Praying for a job, you need to get your resume ready!

Why? Because God is able!

God is able to take our:

—TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs!

—MISFORTUNES and turn them into good fortunes!

—STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!

—DEFEATS and turn them into successes!

—SET BACKS and turn them into step ups!

Jesus didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walke by showing us how to bring it!

The Devil challenged Job to continue serving God despite his hardships and Job answered, "Bring it on!"

In the wilderness the devil tempted Jesus three times. The devil threw down a challenge and Jesus picked it up, saying bring it on!

I know you will turn many people against me but bring it on!

I know you will cause men to whip me all night long, but bring it on!

I know you will allow them to put an old rugged cross on my shoulder, but bring it on.

I know they will drive nails in to my hands and feet, but bring it on!

I know you will put me in a borrowed tomb, but bring it on!

They crucified him, out on Calvary!

He died, for you and me, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his!

If Satan wants to mess with any who believe, I can' hear the Lord saying, "I died so that they might have a chance to live…

Bring it on!"

9150-Thanks

Publishing Our Thanks

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 8, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 26:7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

Introduction

Do you have a reason to be thankful? Has the Lord blessed you in a special way? When we stop to think about it, we have many reasons to give thanks because God has poured out both his bounty and mercy upon us. What would be the essence of our testimony? What would we say? We would have a lifetime of blessings, both seen and unseen, to talk about.

Thanksgiving requires a spirit of humility. Each person who gives thanks is keenly aware that all accomplishment is achieved apart from his/her works or deeds. No one can successfully give thanks if he/she secretly believes that there is nothing for which they owe a debt of gratitude. Thanks, by its very nature, recognizes the fallibility of human effort without godly assistance. Having received blessings, those who are aware of their inability to achieve on their own, feel compelled to give thanks because it acknowledges the need for a higher power.

There are many who approach God and his blessings in the manner of the cartoon character Bart Simpson. In one episode Bart is shown at the table preparing to eat the Thanksgiving meal. When he was asked to give the blessing over the meal Bart was reluctant. He did not feel the blessing was necessary but decided to comply with the request. So he began his prayer this way, 'Dear Lord I don't understand why I should thank you for the hard earned food on this table that we had to buy,we had to cook and we had to put on the table. It seems like we should be thanking ourselves. Amen' The Simpson family was needless to say, speechless.

A popular commercial emphasizes the importance of Thank You. In a variety of stressful situations instead of arguing and fighting everyone simply says "Thank You." In the commercial the power of a simple thanks is demonstrated. Years ago there was a popular television program called Captain Kangaroo. The Captain always taught the children who watched the show about the value of saying please and thank you, which the Captain called, 'Magic words.' Even though it was a children's show, the truth about thankfulness is nevertheless true. It is good to have a spirit of gratitude every day.

A simple thanks is amplified when it is made known to others. Good news is

contagious. When others see a great work done they join in the chorus of people who give praise to the source. The same is true with God. As those who have been blessed raise their voices in thanks, the sense of gratitude that they display spreads to others.

As Christians, we are not ashamed to tell those that we know about the goodness of the Lord. We see what he has done for us and we know what he can do for others, so we gladly publish his good works everywhere we go.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he gives six characteristics that are unique to the righteous.

In verses 1-2 he notes that the righteous are usually open to examination. Before God their lives are open books.

In verse 3 obedience is highlighted. David notes that he has tried to walk in the truths of the Lord consistently.

In verses 4-6 David reflects on his general victory over the efforts of the wicked to influence his life in favor of living the Godly life.

In verses 9-10 he reiterates his desire not to be obstructed or frustrated by the wicked schemes of the ungodly.

In verses 11-12 he restates his desire to walk in the steps of the Lord with integrity.

The text focus is on verses 7-8 in which David declares that God has been so good to the righteous that they should declare and publish his good works for everyone to see and hear of his greatness. Accordingly, he says that believers should let the world know that they love the Lord and they love the indwelling of his spirit in their lives daily.

Thanks Begets More Blessings

Thanks gives rise to more acts of kindness, and more acts of kindness only bring more thanks.

When we show our gratitude for a kindness, it promotes more kindness. On the contrary, ingratitude does just the opposite. Mark Otero tells the story of a farm family's attitude of gratitude about its lifesaving pig. It appears that a woman was visiting some people who lived on a farm, and she noticed a pig limping in the backyard with a wooden leg. She asked the farmer, "What happened to the pig?" The farmer said, "Oh, Betsy is a wonderful pig. One night the house caught fire and she oinked so loud she woke us and we got the fire truck in time to save the house." The woman said, "That's really something!" The farmer continued, "That's not all, one day my youngest fell in the pond and Betsy oinked so loud that she got our attention and we were able to pull my daughter out of the pond in time." The woman said, "That's really amazing! But I still don't understand why the pig has a wooden leg. The farmer said, "Well, when you have a pig that special, you don't want to eat him all at once!" -Gratitude didn't run deep for the three legged pig.

When gratitude does run deep however, it usually spawns more acts of kindness.

There are some who show gratitude for every kind act. As a result people are always falling over themselves to do something else nice for them. The same is true with God. Those who are truly grateful often find that he constantly rewards their gratitude with more acts of kindness.

What to give thanks for

Often we thank God for physical blessings, but we should also thank him for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind. This spirit of thanksgiving is supported in scripture. The verb 'to give thanks' occurs thirty-eight times and the noun 'thanksgiving' another fifteen times in the New Testament. The Word of God makes it clear that it is very important to give thanks.

Sometimes there is the thought of thanks for spiritual blessings. Thus we find that when Jesus began the service of Holy Communion he gave thanks for the bread and the wine (Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:17,19). Paul gave thanks for spiritual blessing (Rom. 7:25).

What religious blessings do you have for which you should give God thanks?

But we should also be thankful for blessings concerning the things of this life. Jesus gave thanks before a meal (Matt. 15:36). And when he healed ten men who had leprosy and only one came back to thank him, Jesus asked where the others were (Luke 17:15-18). He expected people to be thankful for good things. Paul spoke of some foolish people who among other things did not give thanks to God (Rom. 1:21). He himself was ready to see God's hand in all sorts of happenings and he thanked God when he came to Rome as a prisoner and some Christians met him (Acts 28:15).

We give God thanks for seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, "In everything, give thanks."

We Should Publish our thanks

Finally, Brothers and sisters, we should Let the world know how good God has been to us.

The text uses the word Publish which immediately brings to mind the various

types of media in our world today. The text seems to say that we should be ready to broadcast it around the world or to use any means at our disposal.

Moses published the first words from God written on tablets of stone. He published over 600 laws on scrolls made of papyrus. The laws of God told his people what he expected from them and what they should expect from him.

God published the first five books of the bible, through the hand of Moses. He told of the great work of creation and his blessing of life to the world.

But now it's our turn.

Every believer can write a book on the goodness of the Lord!

In chapter 1 We'd have to talk about how he blessed us through dangers seen and unseen.

In chapter 2 We'd have to tell the world how he picked us up and turned us around!

In chapter 3 We'd have to tell how he healed our bodies, cooled scorching fevers and eased excruciating pain.

In Chapter 4 We'd have to talk about how he blessed us with a few material blessings and expanded our territories.

In Chapter 5 We'd have to tell how we strayed away in sin and he accepted us back again; and kept right on blessing us!

In Chapter 7 We'd have yo tell the world how much he loved the world. He loved it like John said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

To make sure the world gets the message, we'd have to set up an instant message on the internet; publish a web page, and send a direct call over our satellite based cell phone!

We have to tell the world about his goodness!

We have to tell somebody that he is bread when you are hungry!

We have to tell somebody that he is a shelter in a time of storm!

We have to tell somebody that he is our lawyer in a courtroom!

—Our doctor in a sickroom!

—Our bridge over troubled water!

His name is Jesus!

—The Son of the Living God!

—The Lily of the Valley!

—The Bright and Morning Star!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hand!

Go, tell it on the mountain! Over the hills and everywhere!

Tell them that he is able!

Yes, able!

Able!

No. 9151-Funeral

Delivered into The hands of the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 10, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. Exodus 1:20

Introduction

What were the circumstances of your birth? Were you born in a hospital or in a private home? When your mother delivered you was she assisted by a doctor or were there others? We have heard countless family stories of strange births under very peculiar circumstances. We've heard of babies born in the back seats of cabs, in elevators and on the sofas of their living rooms. In African-American circles our history is filled with the accounts of thousands of babies born who were delivered not by doctors or nurses but by a small army of sainted women known as midwives.

Among the heroes of African-American history is the Black midwife. A midwife does more than just deliver babies, especially among the poorest of our people. The midwife is close by or present at every birth, whether at home or in a hospital. She is a constant presence who touches the life of every family. She is usually gentle but can get a little cantankerous. Before many of our people had access to hospital and professional medical care, the midwife was usually the first and main contact of expectant mothers during her pregnancy, and throughout her labor and postnatal period.

For thousands of poor Black women the midwife is a deliverer. These mothers see her as an extension of God's own hand, reaching out and touching them in their time of need. It is not unusual for midwives to have a little talk with God before a delivery. Neither is it unusual for them to talk to God in mumbling undertones as they pray to God for help in difficult situations.

Many midwives feel they have one responsibility and that is to deliver a new life by helping a mother before her pains come, during her pain, and after her delivery. She often gets her greatest reward when she delivers a newborn into the welcomed arms of its mother.

The life we celebrate here today is one of a long line of midwifes who came to

America from countless villages on the continent of Africa. There midwives were revered, loved and depended on by the entire village. The Grand-midwives taught the apprentice midwife the traditional rituals of womanhood, childbearing and family care. These sacred rituals included prayer, homage and respect for the ancestors, massage, and preparation of food, breastfeeding, postpartum care and much more. As the pilgrims came to America, so did the first Black lay midwife came to America in 1619. She brought with her a knowledge of health and healing based on her African background.

Today, we celebrate the life of a woman who has delivered countless babies into the loving hands of waiting mothers over the course of her career. She learned her skills the hard way, watching and observing and cloning the skills of her mentors. God used her hands to deliver new life into waiting arms.

Those were difficult times when mothers had a home remedy for every ailment and folks counted on God to deliver them through hard times on the wings of advice from aged seniors who were guided more by the power of God than by formal medical training.

When our friend began her ministry it was against a backdrop of self help and reliance on the Lord that delivered them from certain death and destruction. The midwife did more than deliver babies. She became a counselor and home economist. She was an advisor to mothers in every way of life that would help them lead lives that were healthy and close to God.

Under the guidance of older saints and midwives, young mothers learned how to survive.

Without a college degree in business administration, mothers were taught how to turn a sugar bowl, mattress and handkerchief into their own Savings and Loan Association, saving for rainy days. It didn't pay any interest, but God supplied the grace!

Long before mama got a chance to worry about the health of her children, God had already completed the diagnosis and the prognosis and sent help on the way!

It seemed that the old midwives knew what to do about everything; much more than just delivering babies.

If a child had a fever, a little Sal hepatica around the neck would drive the fever away. In the cold of winter, a table spoon of Castor oil every other day, kept the doctor away! If there was a splinter in a foot, it was nothing that a little fat salt meat and the Lord couldn't handle!

Long before mama started to worry about what her children would wear, God took the needle and thread of heaven and threw out Tommy Hilfiger and gave them clothes by mommy and His finger!

Somebody remembers how mama would break out the old Singer sewing machine with the foot paddle on the floor or use a needle, thread and a thimble to make the girls dresses out of left over materials, but the left home they looked like they had step out of a Sears Roebuck catalog!

Long before mama had a chance to worry about how she would feed her children, the Lord had prepared a table for her in the presence of her enemies.

The Lord showed mama how to take the scraps and turn them into gourmets. It was only the hand of the Lord that could take bread crumbs and turn them into dressing. It was only the hand of the Lord that could that show mama how to bake possums and coons in giant pans surrounded by candied yams.

Only the hand of the Lord could show mama how to pickle a pig's feet, fill a stack of Mason jars full of canned peaches and pears and call them home made preserves!

Yes, Midwives did more than deliver babies; they did everything to deliver new life into a mother's waiting arms.

Exposition

This text focuses on the blessing received by midwives in Egypt when they were obedient to God.

The Exodus account tells of the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, as they were instructed by the Pharaoh to kill the male children born to Hebrew women. Listening to the voice of God and refusing to kill the first-born sons of the Hebrews as Pharaoh had ordered, the midwives were responsible for the delaying a massive slaughter of children long enough for one chosen child to escape in a basket and grew up to be the promised deliverer of the people.

Verse 17 says their actions resulted in saving the lives of the male children. As a result of their obedience to the voice of God, verse 20 says, God dealt well with the midwives themselves and the people multiplied.

Biblical midwives were never rich people. In fact they were often considered a lowly but respected class. They didn't have much were accorded special privileges not enjoyed by others. While other Hebrews were prohibited from working on the Sabbath or even traveling, the Law of Moses exempted midwives, who were permitted to travel well beyond the allowed distance because of their special status. Despite the special traveling status they were still considered low.

Even in this low state, God dealt "well" with them. One way God blessed them is pointed out in verse 21, "he made them houses." "Houses" in this context does not mean that he build dwellings for them, but he blessed them with a large number of descendants themselves. "He dealth well with them."

She Delivered Life into Waiting Arms

A great midwife is remembered for the result of her life's work: she delivered life into waiting arms. In the course of his life's work a midwife helps families by playing a variety of roles, all of which are necessary to deliver life into waiting arms. For many, the calling was a ministry and a calling from God and they often moved and made split second decisions guided by little more than years of experience and the whispering voice of an almighty God.

BEFORE THE PAINS COME: Before a mother has her first pain, the midwife is there insisting that mothers take care of themselves. Even today, there is still a need

for prenatal care in the African-American community. We need to hear the voice of experience warning mothers against smoking and drinking, especially while expecting. We need the voice of the old warriors to stir young expectant mothers toward regular clinical care and help. In the bible it was done before a mother's pains come. Today, we still need that strong and experienced voice to guide a new generation to healthy deliveries.

WHEN THE PAINS COME: When a mother delivers, the midwife is there if no one else is available. Not only is she there for the physical pain of birth but she is also there for the painful adjust to being a mother, especially for the first time. Today, many mothers need the help of the experience mothers to help guide them through that difficult period of adjustment. It's a painful period of 2 a.m. feedings, lost sleep and feelings of inadequacy. Only a person sent from God can help deliver a mother from such a painful and anguishing adjustment. Today, we still need those strong voices to tell us what we should do without fear…especially when the pains come.

AFTER THE PAINS ARE GONE: Though many do not know it, the midwife does not disappear after a baby is born. Often the midwife stays in contact with a mother in a unique bonded relationship that works in partnership with health and social care services to help meet each mother's individual need. These needs include the socially excluded mother, the disabled mother and mothers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. After the pains are gone, often the midwives become the voice of God, delivering them from a dizzying experience; showing them the way out.

Delivered into the Hand of the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must recognize that while a sainted midwife may deliver new life into waiting arms, there will come a time when her own life must be delivered safely into the arms of God.

No matter how long a person serves a ministry, there comes a time when she realizes that her time is drawing near.

The prophet Elijah sensed that his time was drawing near. He began to walk toward the destination in which he would move from this life into the next. When the time came he moved instantly from this life into the next, aboard a mighty fiery chariot.

Enoch walked with God all of his life, sharing intimate thoughts and dreams. One day at the close of his life, his family looked for him and he was gone. The bible says he "was not" because he walked with God.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6-7, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"

I am ready!

After a long a fruitful life and hundreds of babies delivered, I'm ready!

After birth my own children, and grand children, and great grandchildren, I'm ready!

I have lived the Christian Life for nearly a century I'm am ready!

I have confessed my belief in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I am

ready!

I have worshipped and praised you when I was young and in my golden years. I am ready!

I have delivered crying babies into waiting arms, to glorify for your greatness, Now I am ready!

I have testified to your goodness and everywhere I have glorified your name. I am ready!

I have told the world that Jesus died on the cross, but he arose from the dead and is alive today

Now, I'm ready!

I'm ready!

I have delivered others to new life, I am ready to begin my new life!

I'm ready to be delivered into the hands of a Loving God.

No. 9152-Anniv.-Homecoming

A City Which Hath Foundations

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 17, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:10

Introduction

What do you call home? The house in which you live? A certain city? Your family? At one time or another, we have referred to each of these as home. Sometimes the terms are interchangeable but they do not always mean the same. A house is not a home; a house is where a home lives. A city is not really a home; it's a place where you reside; and if it's the place of your upbringing we usually refer to it as home. Even a family household is not home if congenial conditions do not exist.

Simply put, a home is wherever love is.

Every community has a home builders association. It specializes in buying and selling houses. They say "home" because home has a better ring to it than "house builders associations;" then they would sound like contractors. If the home builders association was to advise us on building homes, then certainly they must advise us to build the home before we build the house.

The key to building a good home is to build it on a strong foundation. The best homes are those that are built on the principles of God's word; they stand when all others falter.

Many are confused on this subject.

They call it a home, but it's actually a residence. A residence is where we reside for a short time. There are some people who have more than one residence; only one of which is their home.

Some have an address. An address is a place to receive mail. They are rarely present, never participate in the life of the home and only stay long enough to pick up their mail and leave.

Some have a domicile. A domicile is the legal place of residence. It's the legal address.

It's possible to have a domicile, a residence and two houses and still not have a

home.

Home is where love is.

In a strange way, a saint is like all of the above. The saint resides on earth in a principal domicile called a body, gets mail at an address that he knows is just a temporary residence.

That saint has a home but his home is not in this city or any city on this earth. He has a home in a city that has foundations, that is made by the hands of God.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that Jesus is preparing a home for us. When we get there, "what a day of rejoicing that will be." That's the joy we'll share when we get home.

Exposition

The text focuses on Abraham's search for a place to call home.

Hebrews 11 focuses on the matter of believers living by faith. It cites the faith of many of the Patriarchs of the bible as it shows that even the first believers operated often on faith alone.

Verse 10 zeros in on the belief of all Jews in the Diaspora that God is an architect or a builder of the world as referred to in Hebrews 3:4. Their life quest was to find the great city of God on earth. The Ancient philosopher Philo saw heaven as the "mother city" that is designed and constructed by God. The general belief was that somewhere on earth, if men lived right, a replica of the "Mother City" could be created.

Some saw the city of Jerusalem itself as that city. Others, especially the new Christians saw the "New Jerusalem" of the Book of Revelation as the city of God for the future age.

Whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, scripture ties the final destiny of believers to a city made by God, a place they could finally call home.

A particular characteristic of the City of God is identified by five words in the text, "a city which hath foundations."

The phrase seems to suggest something special about the foundations. The foundations of any building are important; because if they are weak the building will ultimately sway, like the leaning tower of Pisa.

The place that Christians want to call home is a city, built on a strong foundation that can stand the storms of life and the tests of time. Jesus referred to such a house in a parable of two men. One built his house upon the sand and another upon a rock. When the storm came, the house built upon the sand sank. However the house built on the rock stood.

So it is with the Christian traveler, he too is looking for a place to call home; many lives like great cities have been built, but not on strong foundations.

Without Foundation many have fallen

The church is built upon 12 foundations which stand high among all of its intrinsic beliefs they are: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, obedience, and trust.

When the church stands on the word of God which is the embodiment of these beliefs, it is invincible. It becomes a city built by God. It becomes a City which hath foundation.

We have seen cities in history that were grand and noble but had no foundation. Despite their splendor, these great cities have risen but have fallen into ruins. Their fall brings greater meaning to the five words of this text, "a city which hath foundations."

These five words point us to six legendary cities that were great but had no foundations; if they had a place in reality at all.. When we see them, then we understand why Abraham might have passed them by just as he did pass by many of the cities on the plains.

BABYLON: Babylon, the great was one of the great cities of the bible. We know it as the city of Nebuchadnezzar and Beltshazzar. We know it because it renowned for its beauty and grandeur, its hanging gardens and its architectural splendor. Yet Babylon was a city without foundation. It laughed at the true God and it became known as the place where the hand of God wrote an epitaph on the wall. "Your days are numbered." A young man named Alexander the Great marched through Babylon and began its great fall. By 141 BC Babylon the great was just a memory; gone from the face of the world.

ATLANTIS: Atlantis was a legendary ancient island, whose existence and location have never been confirmed. The first mentions we have are from the classical Greek philosopher Plato, who said that it was destroyed by possibly an earthquake or tsunami about 9,000 years before his own time. The Greeks, the Romans, and the Europeans wrote about this beautiful island city fabled to be paradise on earth. Jules Verne wrote a book called "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" in which his characters visited Atlantis. Even J.R. Tolkien made references to it in his book "The Lord of the Rings."- Whether or myth or fact, all agree that even the Atlantis of the legend does not exist anymore.

CAMELOT: Camelot is the name of the stronghold of the legendary King Arthur, from which he fought many of the battles that made up his life. When we think of Camelot we think of Knights such as Sir Lancelot and King Arthur himself. Where is Camelot? Its specific location is currently unknown some doubt whether it ever existed at all although it is described as many days' journey from Avalon. Despite its legendary grandeur, high protective walls and promise, Camelot no longer exists, if it ever existed at all. In Modern times the election of John F. Kennedy as president of the United States was said to be a period of promise in which the young president promised "Camelot" to America. The period was ended by Kennedy's tragic assassination, which is often compared to the fall of King Arthur. The line "Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was

known as Camelot" from the musical 'Camelot', has been used in pop culture to refer to this period.-

MEMPHIS: Memphis (Egypt) was the largest city of ancient Egypt. When we think of Memphis we think of the children of Israel in bondage and of Ramses II the great pharaoh of the bible. Memphis was a sprawling city of 30,000 with pyramids and great stone buildings. Yet in 641 the great city of Memphis was abandoned. The surrounding cities dragged its great stones away to form their own cities and towns.. Today, Memphis is nothing but ruins.

TROY: The city of Troy is the city of great legends which have been passed down by the ancient writer Homer in the Odyssey. When we think of Troy we think of the legendary wars that were fought over one woman, Helen of Troy. The name of Achilles, the invincible hero who died from an arrow to his heel immediately comes to mind. Troy was deemed invincible until the Greeks brought in a large wooden horse as a gift, came inside their walls and destroyed the city. Nine times Troy was rebuilt, but even these great efforts could not sustain it. Today it is only ruins.

POMPEII: Pompeii was a beautiful city that prospered as a sea passage. Despite the education of its populous, Pompeii remained loyal to the goddess of fire and rejected the almighty. On August the birthday of the goddess of fire, the city was shaken by a giant earthquake. It had withstood earthquakes before; but it was not ready for both an earthquake and a Tsunami at the same time. The city was buried under tons of ash and fire and since has been the subject of movies and archeological studies.

Strong foundations

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must stick with the church because it is the New Jerusalem, a city with foundations.

Abraham spent his life looking for a city with foundations but he never found it because, the city is not yet complete but is taking shape day by day.

The word tells us that each believer is a living stone in that city. It is built on a sure foundation, which is the word of God.

Every city is built on something, but we need to be sure we build on a sure foundation.

Those who built the great fallen cities of the world built them on something. At the time of their construction they were not the loose constructions of idiots. They were built on something, but what motivated them to grow and keep growing was not based on belief and the teachings of the living God.

They had no sure foundation and today many of the great cities of the past are but mere ruins crumbled in a way Spurgeon says resembles mounds of sand crumbled by children with wooden spades.

We can only conclude that they were not cities with foundations of faith strong enough to sustain them in difficult times and powerful enough to propel them to rebuild after turbulences

Abraham moved about from place to place looking for a city that was made by the

hands of God.

What was this city?

It could not have been Bethel. Although Bethel was a well constructed city important in biblical history. It was named by Jacob one night after he had a dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven. But Bethel was a place where Golden calves were built and idol worship flourished. It was a city not made by the hands of God.

It could not have been Bethlehem. Bethlehem was certainly an important city. It was the birth place of David and the birth place of Christ. It was the home of Ruth and place of the anointing of the king of Israel. But Bethlehem was razed by the Roman army 200 years after Christ. It was a beautiful city whose foundations have been destroyed. It was not a city made by the hands of God.

It could not have been Sodom and Gomorrah? They were the twin cities of the plain. Known for their industry and commercial importance. But they were cesspools of immorality and homosexuality and were destroyed by God with fire that rained down from heaven. They were not cities made by the hands of God.

It could not have been Jericho. It was a powerful city surrounded by large walls that defended it against enemies. But its walls were destroyed by Israel led by Joshua who marched around them 7 times and blew trumpets at the command of God. It was not a city built by the hand of God.

Where is the city?

John said "I saw a new heaven and a new earth...and I saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

It's a city not made by the hands of men!

It's a city with not one foundation but 12 foundations!

It's a city with 12 gates!

It's a city that measures 1500 miles with 300 foot walls

In its center stands the tree of life which produced fruit every month of the year and whose leaves were good for the healing of the nations!

I'm looking for a city! A city called heaven!

That will be a great homecoming day!

Until then I've decided to stay with the church because it's a city that have foundations! It is built upon a rock!.

No wonder the song writer declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

Until I get there I'm going to keep on telling the story!

I'm going tell them about Jesus, who said "I go to prepare a place for you"

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

I'm going to stay with the church because it is a city which hath foundations!

No. 9153-Youth

Age Ain't Nothing But A Number

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 24, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

How old is too old? How young is too young? That question has been the focus of discussion for generations. There never seems to be a clear definition in any society about what age is the right age. For youth the question of "When am I old enough?" gets to be a real issue. The answer is usally, "When you are old enough." While many youth are looking for a specific number such as 15 or 16, they are frustrated when those birthdays come and parents still have not loosened the reins any. That's when they learn that while age is a measure of many things, when it comes to maturity; age ain't nothing but a number.

Life would be easy if we could say specifically that every stage of life begins and ends at a certain age, then there would be more clarity. As it is, the best we can do is guess about expected levels of maturity. Sometimes those guesses are correct, often they are inaccurate but nevertheless etched in stone.

For that reason many have begun to ignore specific numbers; a practice which often gets them in trouble with society. Carleen Brice, in her book, "Age aint nothing but a number" details the attitudes of middle aged Blacks who reflect upon their perceptions of the world, life and beyond after reaching middle age. Those in the middle age like to believe they still have "it" and disregard their age.

The Late singer, "Aaliyah" had a hit song by the name of "Age ain't nothing but a number." It questioned the difference in age between herself and a prospective lover. She published the song in 1994 when she was 15. She married singer R. Kelly, her producer, at age 15 but told him she was 18. After the news broke, her parents had the marriage annulled. As far as her parents and the courts were concerned, age was more than just a number.

Both youth and adults have trouble figuring out what's too old, and what's old enough?

While an adult has a freedom to hear and speak his peace at age 18, a child does not have all the rights to free speech, assembly and movement as an adult. Age is more than just a number.

Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones is 62 years old and still the king of Rock, for

him age is just a number.

At age 13 Michelle Wie of Hawaii became the youngest golfer to win the US. Amatuer Golfer's Publinx. At age 15, this year, she became the first female golfer to qualify in the U.S. Men's tournament. For Michelle Wie, age ain't nothing but a number.

In some places age is more than just a number; it's the law. In Louisiana a 15 year old can get a learner's driving permit and a 16 year old can drive but can't own a car. Age is not just a number, it's the law.

A person under 16 cannot work in a factory, workshop or a construction site. A person under 13 can't work in a restuarant or a grocery store. A 14 year old can't work without a permit; Age is not just a number, it's the law.

At age 12 you can't watch a movie where people get killed, but it's OK to watch animals with the voices of people die violently. At age 13 with your parents to guide you, you can watch people get killed and participate in heavy kissing in movies.

At age 17 you can watch a movie without your parents where people have sex, curse and get killed.

An angry parent can cause legal problems for that high school senior who gets too personal with a freshman; or that college student who gets a kick out of dating young high school girls. In all of these cases age is more than just a number, it's the law.

The age maze is not just a frustration of teenagers.

At age 30 you can manage a million dollar corporation but you can't be president of the United States until you are 35.

At age 20, if you are attracted to a 50 year old wealthy man you are a gold digger.

There are 31 states that consider a child grown at 18; Montana and Nebraska say 19; Hawaii is age 20.

You can go to prison at 17, sign a contract at 18; but aren't fully recognized as "grown" until you're 21.

At age 60 if you are attracted to a 25 year old beautiful woman you are a dirty old man.

At age 50, although you've lived a half century, you're still too young to get a senior citizen's discount

. At age 65 you can get the senior citizens discount but then you find it difficult to buy insurance on your life, health or even your automobile.

George Bush the senior jumped out of an airplane in his 70's, John Glen went back into space well into his senior years and body builder Jack Leland is still on television showing people how to be physically fit in his 90's. When people ask them how they continue at their age, they say, "Age ain't nothing but a number."

But there are some areas that are not amusing. We watched in horror the recent accounts of the 23 year old Florida teacher who had sex with a 14 student in the back of her SUV, in a school classroom and in her apartment. We watched in disbelief as a 30 year old teacher went to jail for her romance with a 15 year old; then after serving several years in prison married the boy young enough to be her son. Often we cover up cases of students and teachers getting intimate, if those involved are well liked

in the community; but they happen every day. It's obvious that age is more than just a number.

When we look at the confusing maze of expectations that change regularly, the line is often blurred between what is acceptable and what is not. Each community seems to have its own standard.

Other than intimacies between adults and children, other age differentials seem to depend heavily upon maturity. Rather than citing a specific age, many are moving toward evaluating youth maturity as a guide to whether young people are given certain privileges and responsibilities.

Maturity does not come with a specific age; it is demonstrated by youth who show the adults around them that they can make responsible and wise choices and exercise discipline and integrity when acting alone.

As Christians, our goal is to demonstrate Christian values in our daily lives. Regardless of our age, we show God on a daily basis that we have disciplined ourselves to live by his law and show him gratitude for our blessings. When God decides whom he will bless, he sees only obedient children. When it comes to whom he chooses to bless, age ain't nothing but a number.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instructions to young Timothy to prove himself despite his age and not be intimidated by those who would despise or discount his youth.

It is believed that Timothy was in his late 20's or early 30's at the time of this writing. He was being prepared to carry on the work of Paul who was nearing the end of his preaching career.

In biblical times only the elderly were considered wise enough to teach others or lead in spiritual matters. In the ancient world, age was respected and equated with wisdom. Years of living was thought to have given an elder insight that comes with his years. While Timothy had physical strength and sharpness of mind, Paul knew he would find it difficult to be successful without the benefit of age. Wrinkles and white hair associated with authority is what he needed and did not have.

In ancient times a person was expected to be 40-60 years old before being qualified to understand and counsel which explains why young Timothy may have been hesitant.

What is significant here is that Paul introduces new criteria by which we evaluate the ability to assume responsibility before God. Is not age, but character.

Ways maturity is reflected

While maturity is not always reflected by a specific age, the Apostle Paul does present four measures of maturity for young people. In his advice to Timothy he listed the following maturity measures in verse 12:

WORD. Generally, one of the highest measures of a person is the value of their

word. The way we honor our "word" says volumes about us. When we make a commitment do we keep it? If we take on an obligation, do we follow through? Can we be trusted to not knowingly tell a lie? Young people demonstrate at early ages their level of maturity by the way they keep their word to their parents and guardians. Those around them learn very quickly whether they can be counted on or whether they say things they never intend to do. All of our childhood is spent learning the importance of our "Word." Wise parents are careful about giving their "word" to their children. They teach the importance of promises and commitments by their own example. In the bible, once a man gave his word, it was irrevocable. It was done. A man or woman who honors his word shows the first mark of maturity, regardless of his age.

CONVERSATION: The second mark of spiritual maturity, involves our conversation and general deportment. No matter what we say, our actions speak louder than our words. Our deportment is a peep hole to our souls that reveal hidden character secrets. The kinds of words we use, what we make jokes about, what we discuss, the way we dress, walk and talk, all reveal our level of maturity. The way we carry ourselves, to a large extent, reflects our spiritual maturity. A spiritually mature Christian is aware that we are charged to "walk circumspect fully." That means we must walk and talk in ways that avoid even the appearance of evil. We are ambassadors of Christ 24/7. This awareness does not come at a certain age in life; it comes when the Holy Spirit has awakened in a sensitivity within us that puts the demands of the cross ahead of our own. When we reach that level, parents, friends and acquaintances instantly see a change in our conversation and our daily walk.

PURE MOTIVES: Paul lists four virtues that indicate the maturity of our motives. Charity, Spirit, faith and purity, combined indicate another level of our spiritual maturity. These four govern how and why we act. Charity refers to love and compassion. Spirit refers to divine guidance. Faith refers to trust in God; and purity refers to our desire to do right. These four virtues acting together reveal a person who is mature, often beyond their age. They reflect the youth who takes the initiative to help, assist out of love, lead by the power of God, trusting in God continuously with only the purest of motives. Even simpler put, it describes the youth who cleans the house on their own initiative out of love and respect for their parents who work hard to provide for them. They have no other motive for doing so, no secret agenda but they do so because it is their way of showing love and support for the family. This level of maturity reflects the youth who trusts God to guide them and is led by his spirit daily. This maturity level is not given to a certain age, but it is obvious to parents and friends when it has been reached.

No certain age to praise him

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that there is no certain age to begin praising the Lord. When it comes to praising the Lord, age ain't nothing but a number.

Neither is there a set age that we should start living the Godly life.

Don't let anybody tell you that you are too young to know anything about the Lord.

There are many young Christians who know a whole lot about the Lord. In fact, there are some young people who are more spiritually mature than their parents.

The Christian youth may be young, but many are maturing rapidly in the faith.

The Christian youth is an example in Christian conversation in the words they use and jokes they tell.

The Christian youth is willing to volunteer to help others out of love without asking "what am I going to get out of it?"

The Christian youth is guided by what they have learned about God from Sunday school, bible study and personal devotion.

When it comes to living the Godly life, age ain't nothing but a number!

When it comes to praising God for his goodness, age ain't nothing but a number!

A youth who is five doesn't have to wait until he's 75 to praise God for being a good God. When it comes to giving thanks, age ain't nothing but a number.

Whether you are nine or 99, you can go to God in prayer, and he will answer. When it comes to prayer, age ain't nothing but a number.

Whether you are six or 46, God can make a way out of no way. When it comes to getting God to make a way for you, age ain't nothing but a number.

Whether you are eight or 38, God can save and he can heal. When it comes to asking God for a healing, age ain't nothing but a number!

Somebody said, David, you can't fight Goliath, you are just a kid. David told them that the Lord had helped fight lions and bears and the Lord would help him defeat Goliath.

Somebody said Samuel was too young to be a prophet, but I can hear Samuel answering, "I was sleeping and heard the voice of God calling and I said, Speak Lord your servant hears!"

Somebody said Jesus what are you doing in the temple listening to the teachers, you're just 12 years old, and Jesus said, "It's time for me to be about my father's business."

No matter what your age, you should be willing to tell somebody about Jesus!

When it comes to testifying, age ain't nothing but a number!

When it comes to telling the world about his wonder working power, age ain't nothing but a number!

Tell them how he lived and tell them how he died!

Tell them how they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from that grave with all power in his hands!

Tell them….

No. 9154-Love

A Language That God Understands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 31, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.; And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:1;13

Introduction

Have you ever talked to someone and concluded that they did not understand a word you said? We often feel that we have spoken a million words to our spouses, parents or associates, but not a single word has been understood. Often we get angry with them and accuse them of not listening. Is it possible that they heard what we said but failed to understand it because it was spoken in a different language?

A language is a system of communicating thoughts and feelings through one of three ways: Voice sounds, gestures or written symbols. There are 6912 known languages in the world today. Even among the 6912 languages there are thousands of dialects or variations of each known language. Communication is extremely difficult between people of different nationalities, cultures, races or dialects if those who are attempting to communicate do not speak the same language.

Communication is sometimes frustrating. Often people of the same nationality and race find it difficult to communicate with each other because they do not speak the same language. The words of one generation mean something different to those of another generation. The expressions of one culture are not interpreted the same in another culture. To communicate effectively therefore, those who are seeking to be understood or heard must speak the same language.

We have seen this principle in effect in our own experience. A classroom teacher soon learns that students in her class respond to her differently. While one student in the class responds to a gentle touch and a word of encouragement and can be disciplined by simply expressing disappointment at their deviant behavior; that method will not work for another student in the class who does not understand the language of gentleness. There are some who only understand when the teacher is able to communicate in the language that they know.

There are some parents and grand parents that speak with body language. A

frowning eye from a stern grandmother can pin a child to his seat. A raised finger and a tilt of the head for others sends a message that many children understanding clearly. They know how to read grandmother's body language.

There are many marriages that experience difficulty because husbands and wives do not speak the same language. One speaks the language of action the other the language of words. One partner is a doer and is frustrated because the other does not "do" back. The other party speaks the language of talk and revelation and is frustrated because the other does not talk back.

Politicians take polls to learn what's on the mind of the people, when they make speeches they learn to talk their language. It's often hard to talk to politicians unless you have learned the language of polls, votes, public opinion and re-election; its' the only language many seem to understand.

Sometimes there are differences between the pulpit and the pew when they don't speak the same language.

Parents and children often have difficulties, especially when parents can't seem to understand the language necessary to communicate with their children or when children have not learned how to speak the language that their parents understand.

Sometime ago there was considerable controversy in the African American community concerning whether or not it was proper for educators to use what was known as Ebonics to communicate with many students in a language they understood as they were taught the essentials that they needed for survival in the greater world.

Even those who have perfected the gift of language often find that while they can speak the language of others they still have difficulty making the parties understand what they mean. Thus, those who have the gift of interpreting a language are needed. These special people have the gift not only of telling you what was said but also to make sure that you understood the meaning of what was said. They have both the gift of language and the gift of interpretation. Both the gift of language and the interpretation of language are unique gifts of the spirit endowed upon some believers in varying degrees by a loving God.

When you get ready to talk to God, what language does he understand? Whether your language is Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, French or Ebonics, God understands the language of the human heart. He understands the language of love; its compassion, obedience and loving acts. Those who speak that language can always talk to God and know he understands.

As Christians, we talk to God frequently. We know he understands us because we talk the language of heaven. Regardless of our race or nationality, we know he understands because we speak the language that he understands.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Paul as he emphasizes the importance of love over any of the gifts.

In the previous chapter Paul had painstakingly listed many of the gifts of the spirit.

He noted that all gifts come from the same source which is God's benevolence. He enumerated nine categories of gifts among them being the gift of language and the interpretation of language. In speaking about the gifts he made special note of the fact that all the gifts come from God but not all believers possess all the gifts. The purpose of each gift is to advance the kingdom of the Savior.

The nine gifts that were listed in this letter to the Corinthians represented categories of gifts which were not exclusive. Other gifts were listed in succeeding letters to other congregations. The theme, however was the same for each gift recipient; the gift came from God, no one person has all gifts; and believers working in concert the church can utilize all of the gifts anyway that will advance the kingdom of the Savior.

The 13th chapter is the second of three that focuses upon the gifts. While the 12th chapter provides a list of the categories of the gifts the 13th chapter provides a warning of sort. It begins with the word "though" which indicates that it is continuing a thought that was begun in Chapter 12. What Paul said in a nutshell was the gifts that were listed in Chapter 12 were admirable and would have great utility in the kingdom building process however; they were not to supersede love and acts of love.

So he begins by saying "though I speak with the tongues of Angels" an obvious reference to the gift of language and interpretation of language that had been referred to in Chapter 12. Paul makes it extremely clear that what is important to God is that all believers learn to love each other and demonstrate that love through their acts and deeds. The 13th chapter ends with a final emphasis that the three things most essential to believers, gifts notwithstanding, are faith hope and love; with the greatest of these being love.

What language does God understand?

The Scripture gives us an idea of what language God understands. When we surveyed the preponderance of the teachings of the Bible we discover that God understands us when we speak in one of several languages:

THE LANGUAGE OF OBEDIENCE: Believers who want to talk to God can be sure that he would understand them if they speak in the language of obedience. As Jesus pondered the prospect of Calvary he prayed seriously in the garden. When he prayed he used the language of obedience. His prayer to God included how he had obediently carried out the divine plan. He talked to God about his mission on earth, his instruction of the disciples, his proclamation of the word, and his introduction of the kingdom of God. Even as Christ asked that the cup that was set before him be passed over he still spoke to God in the framework of obedience. His words to God were simple: he wanted the cup to pass but only if it was God's will. The example Jesus gave in the garden should indicate to each of us that as we attempt to talk to God we must talk to him first in the language of obedience. In this context we speak to God and say to him that we have attempted to carry out his will to the best of our ability and despite our requests we would be willing to submit ourselves to his divine

plan. God places a premium on obedience and those who speak to him in obedience speak his language. The word of God makes it clear that obedience is important to God. Leviticus 20:22 says obedience is important to holiness. Deuteronomy 28:1 reminds us that there is a blessing for obedience. Psalms 40:6 reminds us that obedience is the best sacrifice. Those who want to talk to God in the language of disobedience and expect him to hear them may have difficulty getting their prayer through; since God understands the language of obedience.

THE LANGUAGE OF REPENTANCE: God also hears us when we talk the language of repentance. David talked to God on many occasions; but there were some occasions when he and God were not speaking the same language. After his sin with Bathsheba David found it difficult to communicate with God. God was listening for repentance while David was asking for blessings for the kingdom. It was only when David began to speak the language of repentance saying in Psalm 51 "Create in me oh God a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me" that he and God began to speak the same language. In a similar sense there are many people today who are attempting to speak to God about a variety of issues in their lives seeking divine intervention without personal repentance. Is useless to go to God in prayer and ask him to bless you steal leaving an ace state of sinfulness. As long as that state exists our prayers are wasted because we're speaking a language that God cannot hear in the context of our present living arrangement. We must go before God as David went in a spirit of repentance knowing that only then can we expect for him to hear us. Until we repent it's even difficult to find God let alone communicate with him. Isaiah 55:6-7 puts it this way, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH: God hears and understands the language of faith. Those love live by faith find that God understands their language. And God spoke to Abraham in the language of faith and Abraham responded in the language of faith. And Abraham not been a man of faith he would not have understood what God meant when he said take your son and sacrifice them to me. After the command was given there is very little record of any conversation between God and Abraham. Abraham's actions spoke about his faith. God responded to him in the language of faith and provided a lamb for him in the bush. Often God gives us instructions people of faith understand God's language and they act upon what he says. Those who do not understand that language are often confused about the actions of fateful people. In addition we should note that when we ask not for something that is according to his will we should ask it in faith but leaving that he has the power to make what we ask happen. James 1:6 that we should ask in faith with nothing wavering; that means ask without ever doubting that God can make it happen. When we ask in this way then we are talking a language that God understands.

The language of Love

Finally, brothers and sisters, if we must talk to God in the language of Love; it's a language he understands.

Paul told the Corinthians that they may have an abundance of gifts but greater than all of them combined is love. Love is the language that God understands most.

Love is an action word that gives birth to many other words.

Where there is love there is compassion. Compassion is an outgrowth of love. We can't talk to God about having compassion on us unless we men and women of compassion ourselves.

Those who work to help the poor and distressed in the world, speak a language that God understands, for he said in Matthew 25:40 "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Those who show love to the least of these are speaking a language that God understands.

Those who lose themselves in God's will learn how to speak another language that God understands; they learn to speak the language of prayer. Jesus said in John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Those who abide God's will learn to speak to God in a language he understands.

There are some who believe that speaking to God in a language he understands requires us to use an unknown tongue to get across to him. However, I have sneaky suspicion that when you know the language that God understands there are a whole lot of ways to talk to him. In public, we have to talk where those who hear can understand, but when you get by yourself, there are who lot of ways to talk to the Lord.

Somebody remembers grandma standing at the old ironing board moaning an old Dr. Watts Hymn. The children would ask: "Grandma, what are you moaning?" Somebody remembers her answer, "I'm just talking to the Lord chile; the devil don't like it when you moan." God understands a sincere moan.

God understands our body language too. That's why the old warriors declared, "If I can't say a word, I'll just wave my hand!"

God understands the language of sincere prayer. We can argue about whether we should stand or kneel, raise our hands or shut our eyes; but the fact remains, a sincere prayer is a language that God understands.

When you are down an out and pray in faith for God to make a way, you are talking a language that God understands!

When you have been defeated on every hand and pray to God for a victory, you are talking a language that God understands!

When the world has knocked you down and pray to stand up one more time, you're talking a language that God understands.

When the rejects your best service and pray to works not to be in vain, you're talking a language that God understands.

Why? Because prayer changes things! When you talk to God in faith, you are talking a language he understands!

When you talk to God in obedience, you are talking a language that he understands!

When you talk to God in repentance, you are talking a language that he understands!

When you talk to God in love, you are talking a language that he understands!

We know he understands it because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

It was the language of love that prompted him to pick up an old rugged cross and carry it Calvary!

It was the language of love that he spoke when he said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

It was the language of love that he spoke when he said, "It is finished!" He died out on Calvary. But early Sunday morning..

No. 9155-Inspiration

No Weapon Formed Against Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 7, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." Isaiah 54:17

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to count the number of weapons that have been used against you? During the course of our lives many of us have been attacked in a variety of ways. We have been hit with sticks and showered with stones. Some have been shot, and others have been the victims of beatings with pipes, tree limbs, razors, tasers, and bullets. In fact, many of us have been bombarded by almost every imaginable weapon yet somehow we seem to always escape much to the anger of our enemies. Whether we know it or not God often places a protective shield around believers who are attempting to live according to his law. This protection does not mean that believers are invulnerable to attack but it does mean that those who maliciously attack children of God usually find that their efforts do not achieve the desired result. They do not prosper. They do not succeed.

In recent years we have become familiar with weapons that have been used to destroy individuals and nations. We have seen the power of our national military arsenal on display. We have seen missiles that can be fired on one end of the world and cause destruction on the other. We have seen smart bombs that reportedly can pinpoint a target miles away and destroy single buildings while leaving others around them still standing. We've seen chemical weapons that can destroy whole cities by cultivating viruses and diseases that kill men, women and children. We've seen homemade bombs strong enough to blow up a Jeep or an armor plated tank.

We have seen atomic bombs like those that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II that had the capacity to kill millions of people at one time. We are familiar with Trident missiles stored on submarines beneath the sea that can be launched on a minute's notice and destroy targets thousands of miles away.

We are generally afraid of weapons of mass destruction, especially if those weapons are in the hands of those who are unpredictable enemies. So, our nation went to war against the people of Iraq based on information that they possessed

weapons of mass destruction that could possibly be used against us by a leader who had the propensity to use any weapon to destroy those he perceived as enemies of the nation.

The source of war and destruction is Satan. He causes nations to rise up against nations and conjures wars and rumors of wars. He does the same with individuals. Satan is constantly busy devising ways to destroy or frustrate the people of God. We know this is true because the word of God says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Satan is busy forming weapons against the people of God. While these weapons may not necessarily be atomic bombs or smart missiles they are nevertheless just as lethal. The devil is forming weapons against God's people even as we speak today.

However, we have one great assurance that helps us to face each day. This assurance is the knowledge that no matter what plans, plots, schemes or weapons that Satan devises to be used against us they cannot prevent the unfolding of the will of God. Such weapons will be useless against those who are carrying out the causes of righteousness supported by the power of God himself.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that while Satan may often frustrate us he will not succeed in thwarting the will of God. No matter how destructive the weapon he attempts to use against us, it will not succeed if our efforts reflect the will of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promise to Israel that its enemies would not destroy its divinely appointed destiny.

This section of Isaiah contains prophecies that are Messianic, meaning they refer both to the current situation of Israel but also to the coming church age. For example, the 53rd chapter referred to Christ being "wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquities." It depicted a period when the people of God would be rejected, crucified and knocked down.

The 54th chapter presents a brighter picture. It denotes the restoration of believers, like the risen Lord, who wil not be utterly defeated by their enemies but will arise to greatness despite their opposition. It is a snapshot of the church in general and believers in particular. The 54th chapter presents an assurance to believers that those who attack them will be limited in their effectiveness because the tools and instruments they will use are within his power because he created them.

The assurance of believers is that God is in control. In verse 16 God maintains that every weapon that enemies of the faith use is under his control. He reminds believers that both the "smiths" or the artisans and the warriors called "wasters" are under his control. Weapons were generally forged by "smiths." The smiths were a class of metal workers whose primary function was to make tools for agriculture. Standing over large fires, they worked with iron and with copper alloyed with tin (bronze). In times of war however, these rather domestic peace loving people churned out swords,

spears and battle axes instead of ploughshares. In later years a trend was developed in the English culture for families to take names related to the family trade. A family whose trade was to work with gold became "Goldsmith" or "Silversmith" for those who worked with silver. Generally the Smiths and the Wrights such as Playwright or Cartwright were people who were identified by their trades. The power of the weapons can only go so far. The strength of the destroyers can only go so far; God is in control.

Despite the presence of so many weapons believers are assured that none of them will succeed in defeating the Christian cause or its people when attempting to carry out a Godly work. The promise is not that weapons would not be formed or that believers would not be attacked and victimized. The assurance is that the divine plan will not be interrupted. Christ was crucified through the legal weapon of the Roman court, beat with cords and stabbed with a sword, but it did not succeed in destroying the church. Thus, the promise is given that no weapon formed against a divinely appointed cause will succeed.

Weapons Formed Against Us

What are the weapons that are formed against believers? In biblical times the weapons formed against God's people included:

KNIVES AND SWORDS: These were the most common weapons. A man with a sword would often control his enemy in a physical confrontation. Often a man with a knife, stabbed his victim unexpectedly in the back. Believers have experience many "in your face" confrontations with enemies of the faith. Threatening words and physical confrontations are used by some; while others smile in our faces but stab us in the back. Confrontation and deception are weapons formed by the enemy; they may do damage at the moment but the Christian involved in a just cause will ultimately triumph.

SPEARS: Spears, or Javelins could be thrown from a distance and would penetrate through tough defensive armor. We have seen our share of spears, thrown at us with great force, sometimes shattering our strongest defenses. How many have had their defenses shattered by the spear of deceit? How many partners have been speared romantically by lovers who knew their vulnerable spots and attempted to destroy them. Despite the powerful thrusts of spears, we still hear the promise, "No Weapon formed against you shall prosper" and we rise again.

BOWS AND ARROWS: Bows were used to project Arrows that were shot from great distances in battle, requiring special defensive techniques to avoid death. Sometime arrows were poison tipped. Every believer knows what it means to be hit with an arrow that seemed as though it came from nowhere. It's when child protection agents knock at your door because an enemy has fired a secret arrow from a distance. It's the co-worker that gives false information to your boss to get you fired. Sometimes it is one arrow, at other times the sky appears to rain arrows upon us. Yet, even as we are showered with poison tipped arrows, the promise still lingers, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."

SLING SHOTS: These hand held devices were used to throw missiles such as

rocks accurately for great distances. Slings threw simple things like rocks to cause damage. We have seen our share of rocks thrown. They range from misunderstandings to disputes over trivial matters such as who won a game. Sling shots throw small things such as false accusations, innuendos, and rumors. Sometimes they hit their mark, cause us great damage and wound us. Even in this area the scripture still remains true, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."

BATTLE AXE: Battle Axe, was a large destructive axe used for hand to hand, up close combat. The battle axe had but one purpose, to get in close and destroy an enemy, piece by piece. Sometimes we feel the blades of battleaxes swinging at us trying to destroy us piece by piece. No sooner than we recover from one blow that it seems the enemy hits us with another. First it hits our relationship, then our children, or our job. We often feel that we are being torn to shreds. We see the enemy smiling, but before we give up, we should heed the words of this text, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."

We have weapons too

What many believers forget is that while the enemy has weapons that he is forming against us, we have weapons too. We are engaged in a warfare with the devil and his imps. Our response however is not to respond spear for spear, sword for sword, or knife for knife. Our warfare is completely unorthodox; it uses the unexpected. Why? Because we are fighting a spiritual warfare. Paul told the Corinthians, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 2 Corinthians 10:4. Like David, who used the unexpected to bring down Goliath, so must believers do the same.

DEFENSIVE WEAPONS: We know what weapons the enemy uses therefore we need defensive weapons. Ephesians 6:11-18 gives the weapons needed for our defensive warfare. These weapons include the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, and peace loving footwear. Ephesians 6:18 gives the strongest of the defensive weapons which is prayer for ourselves and for others who may be under attack.

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS: Our offensive weapons are unusual and highly unorthodox, but they succeed because they have been ordered by our commander-in-chief. They may even seem strange. There are scores of weapons at our disposal but these five give us an idea what we have been commanded to use.

1. Returning Good for evil. In Luke 6:35 Jesus said, "Love your enemies, and do good to them." This may sound counter productive because it requires us to return evil with good. This is a powerful weapon that makes it difficult for an enemy to continue to attack you with passion.

2. Joy in the Midst of Trials. James 1:2 says we should, "Count it all joy" when we are being tried. That really sounds strange. It confuses the enemy who is trying to destroy our faith, hope and happiness to see believers still praising God in the middle of all of their problems.

3. Trust in God Always. Psalm 37:3 reminds us that though the wicked seem to triumph all around us, our best weapon is to "trust and the Lord and do good." The enemy does not know what to do when you continue to do good and trust God despite the enemy's attacks. He is utterly confused.

4. Give Thanks. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." When the enemy sees believers giving thanks for arrows, spears and even the swords thrown at them, he is totally thrown off guard. He meant to discourage but believers continue giving thanks.

5. Never be Distracted. Romans 8:38-39 told us to keep going forward, and never get distracted by the enemy or the weapons that he is forming. Paul said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No Weapon

Finally, brothers and Sisters, there is no weapon more powerful than the prayers of righteous men and women.

The arsenals of the world have powerful weapons, but they cannot match the power of a single prayer.

The Air Force has an arsenal of F-15 and F-16 Fighter planes and B-1 and B-52 Bombers that can deploy in minutes. It has flying predators that can spot an enemy in the air and fly home without a man in the cockpit. It has missles and warheads that cost as much as $1 million each that seek and destroy an enemy thousands of miles away. But all of the fire power of the air force can't match the power of a single sincere prayer.

The army has an arsenal of weapons that includes the new M-107 rifle that can shoot and destroy a target nearly two miles away. It has computer equipped uniforms for soldiers, tanks, artillery, and machine guns that can level a high rise building. But all of these weapons can't match up to the power of a believing man praying to an almighty God.

The Marine Corps has an arsenal of New M-16A2's that comes with a grenade launcher and laser optics. It has tracking vehicles, aircraft, Amphibious units and an arsenal of weapons that can seek and destroy an enemy instantly. But when saints go into prayer, God can send an answer from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli!

The Navy has aircraft carriers that are as big as floating cities. The navy has boats that can fly, planes that can float, and enough fire power to bomb a target while sitting in the middle of the ocean or launch a nuclear missile from a submarine under the sea. Believers may not have planes that can float on water, but they know how to talk to the man who can walk on water!

When saints start praying, the weapons of the enemy are useless!

The devil shoots bullets of hate but they bounce off a wall of love!

The devil sets booby traps of failure but saints keep finding success!

The devil tries to break our defenses but we keep seizing the offensive!

The world knocks us down, but we get up, because no weapon formed against us can prosper!

Spurgeon put it this way,

"Though it be forged upon the anvil of the devil's greatest subtlety, no weapon can prosper against thee,

"Though it be clothed in elusive attire of crafty words and cheap schemes, it shall not prosper against thee.

"Though it be bathed in the poisonous words that drip from decietful lips, it shall not prosper against thee."

When the bible says no weapon it means every weapon!

That means you can talk about us, but it will not prosper!

That means you can call us everything but a child of God, but it will not prosper!

That means you can try to stop us from claiming what God has ordained, but it will not prosper!

That's the lesson that the devil has not learned!

We taught him the lesson 2000 years ago but he did not learn!

He threw everything he had at Jesus!

They falsely accused him, it convicted him but it did not prosper!

They physically abused him, it hurt him physically, but it did not prosper!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, it humiliated him, but it did not prosper!

They crucified him on an old rugged cross, and buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, he arose as a living testimony, that "No weapon formed against me shall prosper!"

All power is in my hands!

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No. 9156-Youth

This Present Age

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

August 10, 2005

SCRIPTURE: And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deuteronomy 11:19

Introduction

Have you ever taken a good look at the youth of today? Are you happy with what you see? Are you disappointed? If you are unhappy are you doing anything about it? With all of our power and might, those who know the Lord should prepare to minister to the present generation as we tell them about the goodness of the Lord.

The old warriors of the church still sing an old hymn in long meter. The words were written by Charles Wesley, but the old slaves added power and emotion when they sang, "A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify A never dying soul to save and fit it for the sky. To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will." The words demonstrated a commitment felt by one generation to know God themselves then tell the story to "the present age."

Even though that old song has been passed down for hundreds of years, its meaning is clear; the mission of the church is to seek the salvation of "this present age."

Many adults look at the youth of this generation and shake their heads. They conclude that this generation is lost. They see only the negatives. Does that sound like something new? Consider this quote: "Youth today love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, no respect for older people, and talk nonsense when they should be working. Young people do not stand up any longer when adults enter the room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay their legs on the table and tyrannize their elders." If that quote seems to describe today's youth, then consider that those words were spoken by the Philosopher Socrates, thousands of years ago, describing the youth of his time.

Each generation has its own mark. Each had its own peculiarities and idiosyncrasies that were frowned upon by the preceding generation. Whether or not we hailed from the Charleston generation with its finger waved hair, short dresses and beads or whether it was the Boogie-Woogie generation of Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and the jitterbug; each has known its own peculiarities.

There are some who came from the Bobby Sox generation. It was a time of black and white shoes, thick socks, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and the 55 Chevrolet.

There are some who hailed from the Woodstock Generation: marked by long hair, anti-war protests, Afros, stage plank shoes, and dashikis. Some came from what has been called the "Pepsi generation" who feasted on Kentucky Fried Chicken; listened to Prince and the Purple Rain, Bobby Brown, and Run DMC.

Now there is before us a new generation, similar to those of the past but is yet different. This new generation is generally described as the Hip Hop Generation. It is a generation of rap music, ear ringed ears, baggy clothing, R. Kelly, Snoop Doggy Dog, and Beyonce. This is the generation that today's youth are encountering. The temptations they face are similar to those of previous generations, but the advent of technology makes it extremely more difficult to resist and to handle.

The generation before us is no different from the previous in terms of potential and its propensities. It has the potential to do great and powerful things and to achieve excellence, just as previous generations. It also has the propensity, or the tendency to deviate, just as the previous generation. This underscores the importance of the church's mission to the present age, "We must tell the story" to this generation.

It is the mission of today's church leaders to tell the story to "this present age." That brings to mind the r the little girl who was very close to her grandmother. Grandmother always took time to come to her room, pull up the old rocking chair and read her stories from an old story book given to her by her mother. The stories were funny. Mother Goose, Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Wonderland, Goldilocks and the Three Bears…they were all amusing stories. Grandmother would sit in that old rocker and read one each night without fail. After a while Grandmother took sick. Shortly after the little girl learned that grandma was gone to be with God. Only one thought came to her mind. The question plagued her day and night. She knew that grandma was with God. She knew that Grandma was safe. However, the question that bothered her was, "Who will tell the story?" As she came home that night her mother came into her room and tucked her daughter in bed. Tired, she sat in the old rocking chair. Instantly the little girl sat up in her bed and displayed the biggest smile. "Why are you smiling so?" The mother asked. The girl pointed to her mother sitting in grandma's chair! The little girl pulled out the old story book that had passed through three generations and put it in her mother's lap. "You are sitting in grandma's chair. You must tell the story!" Instantly the mother began to feel grandma's presence. She opened the book and read. Night after night she repeated the story until her daughter fell fast asleep!

The youth of this present age will be leaders in the church and its various, auxiliaries and ministries. This generation must be prepared to witness for Christ in every aspect of their lives, including the family, church and the world beyond. Christian youth are being called upon by the millions to rise from their generation and choose to serve a mighty and powerful God who has chosen them to be his witnesses. The challenge to rise up and witness for Christ is what lies before this generation. The challenge to know him in every way and tell others what we know faces every

Christian youth.

As adult Christians, we know that God has a special task for us. However, the youth of "this present age" may not fully know God for themselves or their relationship to him. We must ask him for strength to teach the youth of this generation the power and the majesty of almighty God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he tells the nation of Israel the story of God's goodness and mercy toward them as people.

The journey of the children of Israel from Canaan to Egypt in a time of famine to huge nation of wilderness nomads, nearly a half million in number is memorable.

Without a doubt, Moses was the pillar of the Israelite nation. His youth was a litany of deeds and accomplishments that included surviving the wilderness, seeing the burning bush, facing Pharaoh, maintaining the wilderness existence for 40 years. However, in his senior years, Moses assumed the role of teacher for the people.

The entire book of Deuteronomy is a written record of Moses' many efforts to tell the story of the Israelite journey. The name "Deuteronomy" means "A second Look." Moses retells the story. It is not simply a recounting of the journey but an account of God's dealings with people. That aspect is what distinguishes biblical history from secular history. While secular history tells the story of man's journey, biblical history tells the story of the journey with respect to God's relationship to the pilgrims. Thus Moses notes it's not so much the telling of the story that is important as is the emphasis on God's dealings with mankind in the process.

The thrust of these text verses seem to fall in three categories.

Each believer is charged to know the story themselves. They are charged to have the word of God in their hearts and to constantly remind themselves of God's goodness by keeping them visible in glaring ways. Knowing what God has done from first hand experience has the effect of serving as frontlets or guides that keep us from straying too far to the left or to the right.

Each believer is also charged to teach their experience to the next generation; their children. Thus it is not sufficient adult Christians to know what God has done for them, but they must also take advantage of every opportunity to teach the principles of godliness to their children.

The text seems to speak to the mission of the church as it instructs parents: At any given opportunity the good parent should tell the story. In the morning, noon, or at midnight, they should tell the story. Moses goes even further in Deuteronomy 11:19-20 "…speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates."

Believers will be rewarded for their faithfulness to their duty. The reward will come in the form of long life. In addition, their children and grand children will enjoy a richer happier life because they took the time to tell the story at every opportunity!

Thus, Moses emphasized the importance of telling the story. Adult Christians

must live the story and believe God it in their own hearts. It becomes the mission of the church to tell that testimony to the children of "this present age" and expect to reap the reward of long life and blessed posterity for their faithfulness to God.

Satan Is Busy in This Present Age

Satan is busy causing problems today just as he caused problems for every preceding generation. He is busy interfering in the lives of the youth of this generation.

Satan has a plan to gain new recruits among today's youth. It is designed to lure them into subcultures that often negatively affect their spirituality.

Often the church becomes relaxed, but Satan has been busy. Recent studies have revealed that by the age of 16 the average child will watch 200,000 acts of violence on television; in addition to 33,000 murders, 20,000 sex acts, 35,000 naked bodies and will hear 150,000 songs that will urge him to have sex, drink alcohol, shoot someone, or get high. These are the statistics for the average American youth. Consider the fact that African-American youth spends 50 percent more time watching television and listening to the radio than all others and it is not hard to understand the complexity of our situation.

This present age is developing a taste for things that are vulgar, violent, and sexy. It is reflected in the movies youth like most. Though there were scores of new movies in the last three years the ones that were favorites of African-American teens were those most violent or had plenty of cursing and sex.

In the midst of all these influences, a new counter culture has developed over the two decades, called Hip Hop. It is a music driven voice of youth rebellion that reflects a language, culture, fashion and hairstyle that is counter to mainstream influences.

The new counter culture attempts to teach youth to go against mainstream cultural standards. If, for example, boys are expected to wear their pants fitted on their waists, Hip Hop urges them to wear them loose on their hips. Instead of wearing shirttails in, Hip Hop suggests that they wear them out. Instead of buckling belts, Hip Hop suggests that they be worn unbuckled or no belts at all. Since it is expected that men do not wear earrings, Hip Hop suggests that men wear earrings. Rather than take hats off in the building, Hip Hop suggests that they keep hats on, and turn them backwards.

The cigarette and alcohol have targeted African American youth as easy prey and have finance many segments of he Hip Hop Movement. Alcohol companies who influence youth to drink secretly back many of the rappers. The rap group 8-Ball is backed by Eight Ball Old English 800 Malt Liquor; Ice Cube was promoted by St. Ives Malt Liquor; and it is no coincidence that a few years ago when Snoop Dog started singing about the joys of "Gin and Juice" that packages of gin and juice began showing up in liquor stores around the country.

Even sadder, hundreds of thousands of youth are graduating from Hip Hop to levels in which they must prove that they are willing to do anything to prove that they have the "juice" or ultimate courage. This includes, drugs, promiscuity, even murder.

Satan has a grip on millions of young people in this present age who are caught up so tight they cannot turn loose.

The Church's Challenge

In the midst of this generation there is a small nucleus of youth who are standing firm for Christ. These youth, the missionaries of their generation, must be groomed to witness to their peers in this present age.

That makes the challenge of the church even more formidable. Its mission is clear and succinct. The words of Moses are even clearer today than they were when he spoke them in the Book of Deuteronomy. We must "teach" this present age.

How? What can the church do?

The church can return to the concepts of our forefathers in rearing our children. Hillary Clinton discovered the principle and wrote about it in her book, "It takes a village." She learned what our fore parents already knew; everyone around a child influences and contributes to his growth and development. The church must adopt the village approach to youth. We must involve ourselves in the entire lives of the youth in our care and nurture their faith.

We must teach, through hands on activities in real time.

We must utilize proven tools to reach and teach. Organizations such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have proven to be useful tools used by churches around the world to reach youth with a spiritual message while they have fun. We must use scouting in a greater way.

We must involve ourselves in the education and Christian education of our youth. Churches must become concerned about the academic performance of their youth as well as their Christian education. Programs for after school tutoring, ACT Prep and other academic based project will help them in school. At the same time Sunday School, bible study and youth Christian Education will help them grow spiritually. We must increase our involvement in the Christian Education and secular education of our youth.

The mission of the church is to minister to this present age with the word of God in a meaningful way that tells the story of what God has done in the past and what he is doing today.

Testify to this Present Age

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church has the obligation to answer the question that this generation begs for an answer, "Who will tell us the story?"

The church's response should be the same as that of Isaiah, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I Lord, send me!"

Who will tell this generation that Jesus is calling out to them, reminding them that he has great work for them to do?

Who will challenge this present age to step out of their generation into his elite group of young Christian warriors as a part of the Chosen generation?

When Satan starts influencing our young they must be prepared to answer. When Satan plants the idea that there is "nothing wrong with a little bump and grind" the Christian youth remembers that the word of God says, "The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost".

Christian youth have their own "bump and grind" We bump Satan out of the way and "Grind" him under our feet

Who will tell this generation that we serve a God who turns:

Darkness into light; failure into success;

Weakness into strength; lost hope into fulfilled dreams;

Who will tell the story of the goodness of the Lord?

Who will tell the world that those who trust in the Lord can:

-Face the unfaceable; conquer the unconquerable

-Bear the unbearable; suffer the insufferable

The Lord needs believers in this generation who are willing to use all available means to witness to this present age that God is still a good God!

Who will tell the story of how God take poor families from North Carolina, Louisiana and Mississippi and hundreds of places around the world and lift them up to high heights!

Who will tell the story told by our forefathers?

Whoever tells the story must decide to live the life and walk the walk, before they try to talk the talk!

If you are going to tell the story, you must know Jesus for yourself!

You can't tell your story until you can tell his story!

Tell them about Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Tell them about Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Tell them how he died on Calvary! Tell them how he arose after three days and nights!

Who will tell the story to this present age?

The church should say, "Here we are, Lord…send us!"

No. 9157-Revival

Devil You're Fired

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 14, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:8

Introduction

Have you ever been fired from a job? What was the reason given? What was the real reason? For various reasons employers find it necessary to fire workers. Sometimes employees are fired because of poor performance. At other times they are fired because of management decisions. There are times when we are fired unjustly to make room for someone else who has won the favor of a superior. Sometimes we are the victims of race, sex or age discrimination, especially if you are nearing retirement age; some companies think it its practical to fire you for some dumb reason to keep to avoid retirement benefits that could linger for decades. No matter what the reason we are not happy when we hear the words, "You're Fired!"

Donald Trump has made a name for himself as a tough businessman. Business comes first, all other matters are secondary. Trump is a flamboyant millionaire who likes to boast about his ability to make hard decisions and close the deal. He has made and lost millions all while in the public view.

On his television show, "The Apprentice," he criticizes young professionals who work hard to please him. They hope to win a chance to manage one of Trump's casinos, hotels or scores of other businesses. They must prove to Trump that they are tough enough, shrewd enough, and aggressive enough to make a profit no matter what the cost. Those who fail to make their companies work hear Trump's famous words. "You're Fired."

Once a person is fired from Trump's show they leave immediately. It's over! There is no recourse. They are never heard from again!

In a way, the devil has been getting into much of our business on a daily basis. He calls us into the boardroom of life and wants to know why we are not doing more, getting more, climbing higher. Why?

As far as the devil is concerned the only thing that matters is that we make it to the highest plateau. That's where we meet with him and find him upset because we let simple things such as morals, scruples or integrity get in the way of success. The devil says you should use your sexuality to get a promotion. Skim money from your boss if you keep his books. Take advantage of every opportunity to succeed, even

if people you know and respect may hurt in the process.

He promises to make us executives in one of his many enterprises. You'll make money and be famous for a while. Your name will be in lights and you will be popular for brief period. You will have all of the luxuries associated with the good life for a while. That's what the devil promises.

It's tough when you work for the devil; he never does what he promises. One day while walking down the street a pimp, known for his generosity in the neighborhood, was hit by a bus and he died. His soul arrived in heaven where he was met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter himself.

"Welcome to Heaven," said St. Peter. "Before you get settled in though, it seems we have a problem. You see, strangely enough, we've never once had a pimp make it this far and we're not really sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," said the pimp. "Well, I'd like to," replied St. Peter, "but I have higher orders. What we're going to do is let you have a day in Hell and a day in Heaven and then you can choose whichever one you want to spend an eternity in."

"Actually, I think I've made up my mind, I prefer to stay in Heaven," said the pimp.

"Sorry, we have rules..." And with that St. Peter put the pimp in an elevator and it went down-down-down to hell. The doors opened and he found himself stepping out onto fine green carpet. There was plenty of food, ribs, chicken and some of the finest women he had ever seen. Some of the women who were once in his stable were there; they cheered for him. They ran up and kissed him dead on the mouth and they talked about old times. They danced a little and drank a little. The pimp met the Devil who was actually a really nice guy who dressed very well in designer threads. He had a great time telling jokes and dancing. He was having such a good time that before he knew it, it was time to leave. Everybody shook his hand and waved good-bye as he got on the elevator. The elevator went up-up-up and opened back up at the Pearly Gates and he found St. Peter waiting for him.

"Now it's time to spend a day in heaven," he said. So he spent the next 24 hours lounging around on clouds and playing the harp and singing. He had a great time and before he knew it his 24 hours were up and St. Peter came and got him. "So, you've spent a day in hell and you've spent a day in heaven. Now you must choose your eternity," he said. The pimp paused for a second and then replied, "Well, I never thought I'd say this, I mean, Heaven has been really great and all, but I think I had a better time in Hell." So St. Peter escorted him to the elevator and again he went down-down-down back to Hell.

When the doors of the elevator opened he found himself standing in a desolate wasteland covered in garbage and filth. Old watermelon rinds were everywhere. There flies, chicken bones and garbage for miles. He saw some of his friends who were dressed in rags and were picking up the garbage and putting it in sacks. The Devil came up to him and put his arm around him.

"I don't understand," stammered the pimp, "yesterday I was here and there was green grass, pretty women, parties and fun. Now all there is, is a wasteland of garbage and all my friends look miserable."

The Devil looked at him and said, “Face it my brother, Yesterday we were recruiting you, today you are an employee. Welcome to hell.”

The devil has been running the lives of many people, causing them considerable trouble. It’s time for him to get back and leave us alone.

We should give him Donald Trumps Words, “You’re fired”

As Christians, let us resolve to tell Satan he no longer has any control over us. Let’s reject for good and make Jesus our choice.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he makes a major decision about the direction of his life and fires the devil.

Before Christ began his public ministry, he spent 40 days in the wilderness to pray for strength and direction. Those forty days must have been a wonderful experience. He had just come from the baptismal scene which had ended when God declared, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” So, in the beginning of his ministry, Jesus faced a crucial decision making period in which he had to decide whether to take the long way around or take the short cuts.

The passage shows the devil meeting Jesus at a point in his 40 day fast and meditation. The devil presented Jesus with three temptations: 1) To turn stones into bread and satisfy his human needs and desires 2) To worship the devil and free himself from being plagued by the devilish plots and tricks that would follow him all through his ministry and 3) Throw himself off the side of mountain in the full view of thousands of people below who would witness when God sent angels to catch him before he hit the ground.

All three of the temptations would have jump started Jesus’ career with popularity, fame and certain world power. There would be no doubt that he would be the one true Messiah because he would be the one man who could turn stones into bread and be rescued by angels dispatched from heaven.

He could change the world from such a position. He could order governments to follow his rule. He could outlaw hypocrisy and open the floodgates of opportunity for thousands.

He was presented with a quick opportunity to do many things, but it would not do the one thing he came to do, obey God and carry out his will.

Jesus recognized Satan’s three offers for what they were: temptations. He refused them and went the long way around. It was a way of sacrifice and pain, but it provided what the world needed, which was salvation.

When the devil works for you

What would you give to succeed? What price are you willing to pay? The devil is willing to work for you, get you what you want, but you must pay the price.

The classic tale of “The Devil and Daniel Webster” depicted a man by the name of Jabez Stone who sold his soul to the devil for seven years of prosperity. In the end,

the Devil came to collect and Jabez Stone regretted his deed and went to court with the great attorney Daniel Webster as his counsel. The struggle for his soul is depicted in the tale; that same struggle exists today.

When the devil works for us, it is not for minimum wages. A minimum wage worker is employed by the hour. He begins his work at a certain hour and stops at a certain hour. He is paid for time expended at the lowest wage allowed by law. The devil is not a minimum wage worker. He is a highly paid professional who never stops working. In the morning, noon or midnight the devil is busy. He never takes a break or a day off. If you go on vacation he goes with you. If you go to church he goes there too. He's constantly by your side. He doesn't work for minimum wage, his experience is too extensive. His knowledge is too broad. He won't work for the minimum wage, he wants the maximum, which is your life. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The devil wants you to work yourself to death. Party yourself to death. Drink yourself to death. Snort yourself to death. Worry yourself to death. Sin yourself to death! That's the wage he requires.

When the devil works for us, he is not a temp. A temporary worker fills in for a short time, then leaves. Temporary workers get no benefits and have no future expectations with the company. When the devil works for us, he is not a temp. He doesn't expect to leave soon. He has great expectations for his future life with us. We often hire the devil is a temp, but he intends to stay. We involve ourselves in tempting situations "one time" and find that one time ended up being too many times.

We only intended to have sex "one time" but the devil had no intentions of being a temp. We intended to use drugs "one time"; steal one time; cheat one time; we intended to flirt with temptation only one time, but the devil has no intention of being a one time devil.

Are such temptations from God? Isn't it God that actually tests our strength? James 1:13-14 gives the answer " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." We are tempted because we hired the devil, maybe on a temporary basis, but we hired him never-the-less. Many of us are miserable today because the temp we hired will not leave.

When the Devil works for us he is a day by day worker. A day by day worker is one step lower than a temp, who fills a vacancy for a short period. Some temps work for months at a time, but a day by day worker, works one day at a time, gets paid when the day is over and doesn't expect to come back the next day. The devil is not a day by day worker. His work never stops and he will be back the next day. One of the hardest things to do is break old habits. Those who have been addicted know that the lure of the addiction keeps coming back, especially if we keep frequenting the same people, places and things. If you hire the devil he will not work for just one day and go away; tomorrow he will be back!

Firing the Devil

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that the only way to get rid of the devil is that he must be fired.
In the wilderness, the devil tempted Jesus, but found that he was fired before he even started.

Those who are troubled by the presence of the devil in their lives must get him fired. Unfortunately, we are not able to fire him ourselves, because we don't have the authority to fire him. Jesus was able to rebuke Satan because he is God and all power is given to him in heaven and on earth.

Trying to fire the devil yourself has the same effect as one employee trying to fire another employee with the same level of authority. In cases such as these a higher power must do the firing.

How many have tried to fire the devil, only to learn that he wouldn't quit.
We said, Devil you're fired, "We're going to stop smoking" but he wouldn't let us quit!

We said, "Devil you're fired, "We're going to stop drinking, using drugs, chasing after illicit sex" but he wouldn't let is quit.

That's when we learned that if the devil is going to be rebuked or fired it means nothing if we do the firing.
Our best efforts to get rid of the devil are not enough. We can:

—LAY HIM OFF, but a person who is laid off expects to come back to work when conditions change. He's not really fired.

—RELOCATE HIM, but a person who is relocated is not fired; he is given the same job in a different place.

—DOWNSIZE HIM, when a company downsizes it doesn't get rid of everybody, just some of its workers. When the devil is downsized he is not fired we just don't do as much wrong as we once, did but we still enjoy sinful living.

The only way to fire the devil is to do two things: Resist him, then report him to the boss!

If you want to fire the devil, don't try to do it yourself, take it to the Lord!

If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out! Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!

When you truly belong to God and the devil starts messing with your life, take it to the Lord!

When the devil causes the storms of life to rage he will rebuke the winds and the waves!

That's we hear the Lord say, Devil you are fired!

Devil, you're fired; this life is totally committed to me!

Devil, you're fired; this life is living in under my protection!

Devil, you're fired; the salvation of this believer is safe and secure!

You can't fire him, but Jesus can!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary's hill!

Jesus, who died but arose early Sunday morning!

You can't fire the devil, but Jesus can!

No. 9158-Communion

We Ate That Yesterday

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 21, 2005

SCRIPTURE: And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: 6 But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. Numbers 11:4-6

Introduction

Have you ever eaten leftovers? Believe it or not there are many people who refuse to eat leftovers. They stay away from leftovers as if they would catch a deathly disease from them. They won't eat any kind of leftover. Left over chicken. Left over rice. Left over turkey or ham. They won't eat anything that they know is a leftover. They insist that everything must be freshly prepared. Then there are others that will eat the same thing everyday until there is no more and grow fat and happy. If chickens are fried on Sunday, they will eat chicken thighs, breasts and drumsticks until the gristle on the bone is gone! The dog who waits for leftovers in these houses will starve to death because they even eat the crumbs from the chicken crust, drink the juice off the greens, and sop all of today's gravy with yesterday's biscuit.

A leftover is the food that's left from a previous meal. It is not spoiled. It remains tasty and is just as nutritious as it was when it was first prepared. There are two schools of thought with respect to leftovers. One line of thinking is that left over food does not taste as good because it has been refrigerated for a time. The other line of thinking is that left over food often tastes better because the seasonings have had time to lock themselves into each item. But there is a third consideration: Whether or not we eat leftovers, has a lot to do with how long it has been since we've last eaten. The man who is starving to death will eat any food, even the same food, repeatedly for years.

Apparently Christ had no problem with leftovers. Even though he often created large meals for large crowds, there were occasions on which he ordered the leftovers to be gathered. One of those instances was in Matthew 14:20. In this instance Jesus fed 5,000 people but 12 baskets of leftovers were collected. Matthew 15:37 shows how Jesus took seven loaves and some fish and fed 4,000 people, but seven baskets of leftovers were collected. Obviously some in the crowds received fresh bread and fish

on the day Jesus presented them, but somebody, somewhere, enjoyed that meal again, from the leftovers.

Many of those who refuse to eat leftovers do so for no other reason other than the fact that it was served before. They want and demand fresh food or no food at all.

There seems to be one big exception to the, "I don't eat leftovers rule" and that's the fact that we'll eat leftovers, over and over again if we really liked what was served! I have a sneaky suspicion that the kid who complains about food being reserved wouldn't complain if there was pizza on the school menu Monday through Friday.

In a similar sense, there are people who are frustrated with God because he keeps blessing them the same way everyday. They want specific blessings. They want a variety of blessings. They want new blessings!

If God blessed you yesterday with health and strength, should we snub our nose at him because he gave us the same amount of health and strength he gave us yesterday and nothing new. If he blessed us with a roof over our head in the past, should we be angry with him because he blessed us with that same roof day after day? Should we be angry because he keeps putting the same cornflakes on our shelves with the same kind of milk, day after day. Should we get upset with because he blessed us with a car that runs and everyday, he keeps giving the same car and it runs just like it did before?

As Christians, we don't complain about God's blessings. We are thankful for everything he puts before us. If he keeps blessing us over and over again; we love the leftovers!

Exposition

This text find Israel complaining that God keeps providing the same miraculous food everyday. They wanted something different.

Israel's journey in the wilderness of Sin was one that tired and frustrated them. They complained to God of insufficient food and water. God heard their murmurings and told Moses to tell them that they would receive blessings of sustenance from him that would undeniably be an evidence that he was leading, providing and caring for them.

As promised, there was a small round thing that blanketed the ground around them. It was so abundant it appeared to be a frost. The people were surprised at what they saw and described it as "Manna."

It is commonly thought that the name "Manna" means "Bread from Heaven." Since God promised that he would rain bread of heaven, many have assumed that the name "manna" meant "bread from heaven." Actually, "Manna" means "What is it?" From the Hebrew word "Man hu." It came from the statement of surprise and wonder that the people gave when they saw it laying on the ground like a frost, they exclaimed "Manna?" or "What is it?"

The manna was a blessing from God, however, the people complained because the same blessing came day after day.

The people complained because they wanted God to provide them with delicacies of their choice. When they left Egypt they had animals with them. Although they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, at the time of this text, they had an ample supply of cattle and other animals, but these were not part of their regular diet.

What did they want? They wanted fish because they were accustomed to the fish they regularly received in Egypt. They didn't want steaks, they had enough cows to produce regular steaks or ground beef or chuck roasts; they wanted fish. The livestock was often used in sacrifices and to pull wagons, and to produce milk so they did want to deplete their herds.

In addition, they wanted variety. Five types of produce are mentioned in verse five: Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. In the wilderness they wanted watermelon. They could use leek plants to make salads or serve them with bread highlighted with a touch of garlic. They could even eat cucumbers, melons, and onions without cooking them.

Instead of what they wanted, God gave them manna. Verse seven describes the manna as being like a very small seed, such as the coriander seed. Thy ground it into a flour and made cakes of bread that had a greasy, oily taste. Miraculously, without other staples to provide nutrition, the manna supplied all of their daily needs.

The people continued to complain and God provided them with quails by the millions. Soon they grew tired of quail meat and complained again.

It was obvious that the arrival of the manna and the quail everyday was a daily blessing. However, the people complained because God blessed the same way everyday. They wanted to be blessed in the way of their choosing.

Choicy Blessing

Often we are like the Israelites who constantly complained about the blessings they received. Like spoiled children we say, "We ate that yesterday" when are going to get something different. Revisit Israel in the wilderness and compare their complaints to our own:

SPECIFIC BLESSINGS: Israel wanted a specific blessing which was fish. Their discontentment was not that they were starving, but that they were not being fed specifically what they wanted. Similarly, we often want specific blessings from God. We don't want a means of transportation we want a specific make, model and color. We don't want a roof over our head, we want that roof located in a certain section of town. We don't want don't want a good night's sleep we want to sleep on a specific type of mattress and bed linen. Daily God provides our needs but often we get uncomfortable because we get specific. Good feeds us, but we complain, "We ate that yesterday." We want what we want, when we want it.

VARIETY OF BLESSINGS: Israel complained because their blessing was the same. Manna seeds fell, they baked them, and the next day the same manna was in the same place. They wanted variety. Similarly, we too complain about the monotony of receiving the same type of blessing all of the time. It didn't matter the blessing they received help them survive a wilderness journey, they complained for variety. We

are accustomed to menus and food lines. We are attracted to restaurants that offer a variety of meats, salads and desserts. We want the menu to include variety. Some of us even feel that way about our worship, even though what we get is good, we want variety. Some feel that way about their marriages, even though what they have satisfies, they want variety so they slip around. Many complain to God for a variety of blessings without knowing that he already provides variety. He blesses us economically, socially, educationally, physically, and emotion. We can't count all the ways that God blesses us. One song write said, "Count your many blessings, see what the Lord has done."

NEW BLESSINGS: Israel complained because they wanted new blessings, not the same thing. Is it possible that we can take each day's blessing for granted to the point that rather than thank God for what we have been given, we refuse to receive it because it is the same blessing we had yesterday? Lamentations 3:22-23 is a passage that addresses this subject. The profit Jeremiah lamented over the condition of Israel but at the same time recognized that every day God was actually giving them a new blessing and a new act of mercy. It reads, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Each day of our lives presents new challenges and God responds by providing us with sufficient grace and mercy to see us through each new day. The song writer says, "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided, Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

We don't mind the same blessing

Finally, brothers and sisters rather than complain about receiving the same blessing, we should be praising God because he still blesses us today, like he did yesterday.

We consider what God does for us day after day, we should have little to complain about.

I don't mind if God blesses me today, like he did yesterday. If he blesses me like he did yesterday, everything will be alright!

Like Israel we have all faced our Egypt experiences and God keeps delivering us. But there is somebody complaining that God keeps delivering us in the same way. The are waiting for him to do something spectacular. But I won't complaint if God delivers me today like he did yesterday, as long as I get delivered.

Like Israel we have faced our Red Seas. But somebody is complaining that every time we get to the Red Seas of life, God does the same thing, he just rolls back the waters. Why doesn't he add some variety. Why doesn't he build a bridge over the Red Sea or dry it up all together. I don't know about you, but I won't complain, if he rolls back the water today, just like he did yesterday, as long as I walk through on dry ground.

Like Israel we have been through our wilderness experiences. But somebody is complaining that God keeps giving us the same water in the same old way. Why

doesn't he spring forth a fountain in the mountain. Why doesn't he shower the wilderness with rain and created a lake resort? I won't complain if he makes a way for me today, like he did yesterday, as long as he continues to make a way out of no way.

The story is told of the church that allowed its members to complain about what they didn't like.

One member said the choir sings the same old songs.

Another member said the deacons pray the same old prayers.

Somebody else said the preacher preaches the same old sermons.

After everyone finished there was an old mother who sat on the front. They asked her for her complaint.

She said, "I don't complain about the choir's singing, because God gave me a song to sing, that angels can't sing because I been washed the blood!"

"I don't complain about the deacons praying the same prayer, because I know that prayer changes things!"

"I don't worry about the preacher talking about the same God every Sunday, because the same God who brought me over the mountain will carry me through the valley!

I don't know about you, be glad to take yesterdays blessing again today!

If God answered my prayer yesterday, I don't mind if he answered it again today!

If the Lord healed me yesterday, I won't complain if he heals me again today!

If he put food on my table yesterday, I'll be really grateful if he does it again today!

Again and Again he blessed me with more than I deserve!

Again and Again he raised me to heights I have never seen!

Again and Again he inspired me when my head was hanging low!

Again and Again he saved me from the plots and plans of my enemies!

Again and Again he showered me with mercy although I moved incredibly slow!

Again and Again he washed me in the blood of the lamb!

I hear him say, do it over and over again. For as often as you do this, you do it in remembrance of me.

It's the same bread we had last time, because it reminds us of the body of the Lord!

It's the same wine we had last time, because it reminds us of the blood the same savior!

It's the same blood, but the blood never loses it power!

It reaches to the highest mountain! It flows through the lowest valley. It's the blood that gives me strength from day to day. It will never lose its power!

This blood that shed on an old rugged cross!

On this cross Jesus died, but Early Sunday morning, he arose!

Every day of my he rises again, just like he did yesterday..

…and that's all right!

No. 9159-Inspiration

20/20 Vision

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 28, 2005

SCRIPTURE: For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

Introduction

Do you wear eyeglasses? If so, what can you see without them? There are many people who wear eyeglasses to adjust the sharpness of their vision. Often glasses help us to see things that are far away. Sometimes they help us to things that are close to us. Either way, eyeglasses serve to improve the way we see the world around us.

In America, Optometrists measure the sharpness of our vision by measuring what we see at a distance of 20 feet. A person who has 20/20 vision is one who can see clearly what is normally seen at 20 feet. A person with 20/100 vision means that he must be as close as 20 feet to see what others can normally see at 100 feet.

What about our spiritual vision? Is it 20/20 or 20/100? Can we see and understand the world with a spiritual eye with 20/20 vision or do we have 20/100 vision?

When we are saved, the Holy Spirit fits us with a set of spiritual glasses that helps us to see the world with 20/20 spiritual insight. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we would always be moving around in the world blindly. "That's why one song writer wrote, Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, blind, but now I see!"

Our spiritual glasses could actually be called "Son glasses." Not sunglasses that we see in the stores, but a set of spiritual eyes that we get when we know the "SON" of God.

When it comes to our spirituality, there are two types of glasses: Those that help us see the SON of God in everything and those that try to block us from seeing the SON. The goal of one type is to help you see the world as God's sees it. The goal of the other is to keep us from seeing God by concealing our true identity. These kinds of glasses reduce the amount of SON light we are able to see.

There are many who face the world every day with a distorted view of life. They are wearing SON blockers but they need SON glasses that can help them see the whole scope of life from a new perspective.

As Christians, we know that we see a very small part of God's universal plan for mankind. We see with the carnal eye. However, when we look with our incarnate eye,

aided by SON glasses, instead of being blinded by what we see, we view life with a spiritual eye.

Exposition

The 13th Chapter of Corinthians is the second of three in which Paul examines the gifts of the spirit and compares them to spiritual graces. The Corinthian church had been divided into four parts over the issue acquiring and using gifts of the spirit.

He focuses on one of the graces, "love", showing how it is superior to any of the gifts such as tongues, prophecy or knowledge. He noted that some gifts, like tongues, or prophecies would cease to exist (13:8) but the real strength of the Christian life would never be diminished by time or condition. He showed how the grace of love, for example is far more important to acquire than gifts. As he detailed how love operates he noted that if he had all of the gifts but didn't have the grace of love, instead of operating on a higher level, he would be empty. His words in verse two " And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Paul noted that a time would eventually come when every believer would be able to see clearly the truths of God's word. Diminished perspective is common, but those who come to know God fully get a new perspective. The new perspective gives them a new appreciation of what is truly important, lasting and most effective in the service of God. He compared the new perspective to that of a mature person over a child. Perspective makes the difference.

The carnal man sees life as though looking through a dark glass. The perspective is not Godly. However, Paul reminds us that the time is coming when all will share the same perspective and see the same things. That day will come when we will all see Jesus face to face!

Aspects of 20/20 Spirituality

Those with 20/20 spirituality are those who have had their vision corrected by the power of God. Whether we are students in school or adults going into the workplace, we need to enter with God's way of seeing things or we won't be able to see our way.

Without God's spiritual glasses that gives us 20/20 vision:

LIFE MAY BE A BLUR. If we lose sight of our objective, our energies and activities are spread out over a variety of patterns that are blurred and unclear. Moreover, even if we keep our objective in sight but fail to concentrate our energies, our lives still become a blur.

NEAR SIGHTED: The near sighted can't see their goal because they can only see things that are close to them. They live for today. Therefore their energies are not concentrated on achieving a goal because all they can see is today. They follow the general creed that they should eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow may never come. The Holy Spirit corrects nearsightedness and helps us to focus clearly on those

things that are present as well as in our distant future.

FAR SIGHTED: The far sighted person is just the opposite. He or she is able to see the goal, but can't see how to manage the daily flow of time, talents and resources to achieve the goal. They see their goal but can't discipline themselves to make it happen. They see the NFL but can't focus on the high school and college education that comes before the NFL. God's spiritual glasses correct this flaw in our spiritual sight and help us to get control of our lives now in preparation for the future.

Why We Want SON Glasses

NOT TO IMPROVE OUR LOOKS. There are many who buy sun glasses to improve their looks. Sun glasses are purchased because of the way they will make the wearer look. The emphasis is placed upon the frames. Will the frame make the wearer look good? Will the frame accentuate the wearer's positives?

In a similar manner many approach life from the viewpoint of getting that which makes them look good and feel good regardless of any other consequences. The "sun glass" perspective of life suggests that we should do that which makes us look and feel good as priority items. This is the attitude of the free wheeling, happy-go-lucky person, who constantly seeks the next thrill and refuses to take life seriously.

We don't want God's SON glasses because they will make us look good to our friends, but because they will help us look good to GOD.

NOT TO REDUCE THE LIGHT: Some buy sun glasses to protect their eyes from the sun. Regular sun glasses reduce the light we see. It makes things appear more pleasant than they really are. They alter reality. There are many who live in an altered state of reality. On the other hand, SON glasses work to help us walk in the light rather than blocking out the light. When we walk in the light we are able to grow stronger in our relationship to God.

SUN GLASSES MAKE DARK TIMES EVEN DARKER: On dark days, sun glass people have an even more difficult time because sun glasses make things darker by blocking out the light.

In difficult times we need the light. Sun glass people find dark days are even darker because their perspective makes things worse. Sun glass people can't see the bright side of bad situations. Things are dark; and because they see with the carnal "sun glass" eye they see the bad side of everything. A lost job, love or fortune is terminal when seen from the perspective of sun-glass people. They give up on themselves and life in general.

However, when things get dark we don't want them to get darker, we want to be able to see the light; that's when God gives us 20/20 vision and helps us walk in the light.

Because we can see clearly

Finally, brothers and sisters, we rejoice because we can see clearly as long as we let God show us the way.

Because God has given us 20/20 vision we have both 20/20 hindsight and 20/20 foresight.

We can now look back and realize, with 20/20 vision that if it had not been for the Lord on our side we would have been lost.

We can now realize, with 20/20 vision, that it was only the power of God that picked us up and turned us around.

But our 20/20 spiritual vision also helps us see our own future. Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." 20/20 vision helps us to see through the storm and rain to the bright side of tomorrow.

20/20 vision helps us see through the difficulties of the moment to the day when everything will be alright.

Wearing SON glasses, a Christian gets a new perspective on life that puzzles those around us who wonder what is wrong with us.

A Christian always wears his or her SON glasses but there are special times when we must be sure they are close by. They are SON glass moments.

When hard times approach and it seems like we can't make our way, that is a SON glass moment. Reach for your SON glasses and you'll remember Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

When death has invaded the ranks of your family and friends and you reach an all time low, that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember 2 Corinthians 5:1 "..if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

When it looks like you've placed yourself in an impossible fix that you cannot escape, that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember 2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"

When it appears that every thing is going wrong and you are headed for a catastrophe that is a SON glass moment. That's when you remember: Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

When life seems to have reached its darkest point, that is another SON glass moment. That's when you remember: Psalm 30:5 "..weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

When you are wearing your SON-Glasses dark days look a little brighter.

- Hard times feel a little easier; heavy burdens get a little lighter

- Failures become opportunities for success; Setbacks as changes in direction!

Who is the maker of these SON glasses? Who is the author and finisher of this faith?

It's not Ray-Ban, Oakley, Smith or Diesel..

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who arose from the dead! Jesus! Jesus!

No. 9160-Communion

I know it was the Blood

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 29, 2006

SCRIPTURE:"For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever." Exodus 12:23-24

Introduction

To whom or to what do you attribute your success. Many people attribute their present status to a variety of influences that include both major and minor influences. Many say their ability to write is because wonderful teachers took their hands in their hands. There are many musicians who look back on a tough music teacher who insisted on rigorous discipline as the source of their musical talent. Still others accredit a tough coach for athletic skills and abilities or some other challenging mentor who developed their abilities. Everyone attributes their success to one influence or another.

There are many who say that the reason for their professional success is their education from fine institutions such as Southern University, or Grambling. Yet, education alone does not guarantee success. There are many people who have superior education who are incarcerated. There are others who have exquisite educational backgrounds but are unemployed. Obviously, there is a reason behind the success, a secret that is unrevealed to the general public that accounts for whatever we have accomplished.

There are some who credit their business success to their networking management skills. They conduct workshops and clinics to show others how "they" did it. Business knowledge, management skills and experience play a major part in our business success, but there are millions of people with the same skill and ability who did not succeed. There has to be component that makes your situation different from the others. What made your effort succeed when similar efforts of others failed? What's the difference? Obviously, just your knowledge and skill alone did not make this happen.

In the same sense, there are many who attribute their salvation to type of church to which they belong. Is being a Methodist, Catholic or Baptist that saved us from ourselves? Is it holding membership to a church with a high ceiling, large steeple and comfortable settings that saves us? Does church membership itself impact our

salvation at all? There are millions of church members who fill our pews on Sunday but are not saved. Many of these may preach, teach Sunday School or work in church ministries and still not be saved. If church membership alone could do the trick then all of us could boast a sure salvation, because we "belong."

The source of our success and our salvation is the same. Nothing but the grace of God can account for our ability to overcome the many obstacles that we have faced.

Nothing but the Grace of God can account for our overwhelming rise despite adequate opportunity.

Nothing but the Grace of God can account for our survival in these perilous times.

When it comes to our salvation, we know that it isn't our church, denomination or service that saves us because that's something that can only be done through the blood of Christ.

As Christians, we are sure that our salvation is from one source. We don't think or guess about it. We agree with the words of the song writer who said, "I know it was the blood that saved me."

Exposition

This text focuses upon the children of Israel as they received instruction upon leaving the land of Egypt, enroute to the promised land.

The people suffered considerable hardship while in slavery. They were treated as second class human beings, no more than chattel or stable animals. The endured much and suffered long. Yet deliverance was upon them. God himself stood ready to answer their prayers for deliverance.

Moses commanded each family to kill a lamb and to paint their door posts of their homes with its blood. It was promised that prior to the deliverance they were to eat a sacrificial lamb then wait for God's death angel to pass. Those who were securely behind a door post with blood on all three sides would be saved from the coming death. However, those outside of this protection would experience the death of their first born sons.

As the death angel passed, the first born of Egypt and Goshen died unless the blood was stained upon their doors. Those inside were saved.

Thereafter, that night was celebrated as the "Passover" so that all could remember how God's death "Passed Over" them and had mercy.

The blood represents God's Protection

For Israel the blood over the door posts was more than simple lamb's blood over a doorway. The blood meant when trouble came they would be under the protection of God himself. The Egytians were not sure about the Threat Moses gave the Pharaoh, but there were many who had witnessed other acts of God which demonstrated that his people were in deed protected. Today, people of God protected by GOd as well. We are not protected from evil in the sense that no evil can befall us. We are protected from the ultimate effects of evil. Satan attacks the people of God on every hand, but

he never succeeds. Our body may fall prey to many of the attacks of Satan but our spirit remains forever married to the savior. This was the case with Job. His soul was protected while his body was attacked. Job responded, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve him." We rejoice in the truth that "No weapon formed against us shall prosper." Just as Satan attacked Christ himself, he could not succeed at touching his soul. We too enjoy that same protection.

The blood represents God's Provision

For Israel the blood represented God's provision. They were about to take a journey without knowing how long it would take or how they would be fed. They ate in haste and carried a minimum of supplies with them. They counted on the power of God to provide for them. Just as Israel carried with them what they could, we today should do the same. In our daily occupations we should do our best to provide for our daily sustenance. Oftn however, even our best is not good enough. That's when we count on the Lord to provide. Like the Widow who trusted God to provide although all she had was two sticks and a cup of meal and a cruz of oil. She did what she could and counted on God to provide the rest. We have learned that God will provide. The blood of Christ does not promise us prosperity, but it does gives God's promise of provision of our daily bread. Jesus reminded those who doubted God's provisionary powers to consider the birds of the air, how they are fed by God constantly. The song writer added, "His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

The blood represents God's Revelation

Under the protection of the blood in Goshen, the Israelites received directions that reflected the revelation. They were told of their ooming deliverance. It was a welcomed revelation. Because of the blood of Christ believers to days can also expect a revelation of things to come. No matter how difficult the times, the blood of Christ has assured us the victory. It has been revealed to his in the very ways that he has carefully provided for us. It has been revealed in the way that he has protected us through difficulties. Moreover, it is revealed to us in his written word. No wonder the song writer declares, "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, Oh what a foretaste of Glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of his spirit, washed in his blood." His blood gives us the assurance that the cause of the kingdom of God will ultimately be victorious. It is a special revelation that is guaranteed by the blood of Christ himself.

It was the blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that we owe our lives and our salvation to the blood of Christ.

There is no other source to which we attribute our hope. That's why the song writer declared, "My hope Is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Some may attribute their life's journey to education, but I know it was the blood.

Some may think their hard work has brought them thus far, but I know it was the blood.

Some may envision themselves as the source of their own good fortune, but I know it was the blood.

There are some things in this world that we cannot attain without the blood.

There is a fountain from which you cannot drink, but the power of the blood brings you to that fountain!

There is a promise that you cannot claim, but the power of the blood allows you to claim that promise!

There is a hope that you cannot enjoy, but the power of the blood allows you to enjoy that hope!

The song write asked the question, "Shat can wash away my sins?" Then he answered what every born again Christian already knows, its "Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you've been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and turned it into love!

I know it was the blood that took my despair and turned it into hope!

I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and turned it into honor!

I know it was the blood that took my enemies and turned them into friends!

I know it was the blood that took my worries and turned them into confidence!

One day when I was lost, he died!

He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that saved me!

He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!

He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!

But early Sunday morning arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 9061-Inspiration

Gone With The Wind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 4, 2005

SCRIPTURE:" The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself doing well one day, only to watch all that you have achieved disappear before your eyes? It is a disappointing feeling when lives are lost and possessions and livelihoods all vanish. When we review what is left behind, we may agree with Margret Mithcell, that they are "Gone with the Wind."

America has faced many tragedies in its history, some of which have been historic in scale reducing cities to rubble, destroying livelihoods and stealing lives. It seems that every generation has to face its share of tragedy which purges our landscape and clears the way for rebuilding. Margaret Mitchell's Book, "Gone with the Wind" described the complete destruction of the City of Atlanta a city that was known for its beauty and eloquence but was married to a system of slavery that was unacceptable. When Atlanta was burned by General Sherman, it was more than just buildings that were destroyed, an evil system died too. An economy and way of life based on slave labor was effectively "Gone with the Wind." Yet, Atlanta was completely reborn and now stands as a shining example to the world as the city "too busy to hate." Out of its tragedy came a great opportunity to rebuild.

Similar tragedies have plagued great cities in America. In 1900 Galveston, Texas was hit by great waves from the ocean that had such great force that 6,000 people were killed. The city of Galveston was literally wiped off the map. Yet, instead of dying the city arose like a Phoenix from the ashes. It was rebuilt, but this time with great storm walls to protect itself from evil winds. It stands today as a city that refused to be a footnote in history, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1871 the great Chicago Fire destroyed much of Chicago. The skeptics said Chicago was gone. Thousands died. Yet, today Chicago stands. Just as San Francisco stands after having been brought to its knees by an earthquake. It stands just as New York City stands after absorbing the sheer hatred of terrorists after the September 11, 2001 destruction of the world towers. They refused to be footnotes, of great cities that were "Gone with the Wind."

Now, America sees several great cities and towns about to be tested at the same time. When the winds of Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast with category 5 force, not one city but nine great communities felt her blows. While the world sees one city, New Orleans there were nine in total that felt the devastation of Hurricane Katrina: New Orleans (1.2 million);Mobile, AL (198,000); Gulfport, MS (71,000); Biloxi, MS (50,000); Psacagoula/Moss Point/Gautier, pop. 42,000;Slidell, La (26,000); Ocean Springs and Long Beach (17,000), and Bay St. Louis/Waveland(12,000). It's nine great communities whose combined death toll is expected to be in the double digit thousands that now must decide whether they will become historical footnotes and be "Gone with the Wind" or whether they too will rise from the chilling grips of disaster and seize the moment to make a new and brighter future.

Sometimes, it takes great winds to move us. On a personal level, we often involve ourselves in activities and directions that threaten us, but we ignore the warnings. It is only when great winds of change overwhelm us that we rise from the rubble and do what must be done in a better way.

It's hard to understand the winds of change and the destruction that tears at us with tremendous force. We don't know where they come from and where they go. We only know that when they leave they take with them much of what we possess and love, but they always leave more behind than they take.

So as the world considers the devastation of the dark days of August in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and mourns what is gone, we must also consider what has been left behind. It is an opportunity to rebuild in a way that pleases God and draws the applause of the Saints.

As Christians, we must not view the destruction of these nine communities and mourn what is "Gone with the wind." We must praise God for the life and opportunity that remains behind.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of the wind.

The immediate circumstance surrounding this text involves Jesus as he explains the nature of the Holy Spirit and how it operates. Those around him, such as Nicodemus, asked "How can these things be?" In answering them Jesus explained the nature of the Holy Spirit by describing the nature of the wind. In his explanation, we learn a great truth about the wind from the maker of the wind himself.

The wind, in Jesus' words in verse 8, blows where it wants. We hear the sound of the wind but cannot see it. We can track its movements by watching what it touches and its effects on various environs; yet we know little about when it comes, when or where it will go. We cannot control the wind. We cannot detour the wind and force it to change its direction. We don't know where the wind is going, but we can definitely tell where it has been.

The comparison was designed to let us know that just as we do not know with precision the nature of the wind, neither do we know, with precision, the workings of the Holy Spirit especially as it relates to being born again.

Being born again means that we begin again brand new. We start over with a clean slate and a new appreciation for our relationship with God. We are new people. Paul, writing to the Corinthians said, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Being born again is starting again spiritually as if we were little babes with renewed energy, vigor and zest. Everything that once inhibited us does not exist anymore. Fears, doubts, anxieties, failures, short comings and hang-ups are all.. "Gone with the Wind."

Measuring Your Wind

Each of us is affected by the various winds blow in our lives, but how can we measure our wind. How can we tell that a storm is coming? How do we know when situations are about to change? How can you measure your wind?

In the late 1700's a rear Admiral in the British Navy by the name of Francis Beaufort, developed a method of describing or measuring the wind which has become known as the "Beaufort Scale."

There is a parallel to the 13 stages of the Beaufort Scale to the winds that blow in our lives.

CALM: The first four stages of the Beaufort Scale describe what is called "Calm." It involves light air and a gentle breeze. We only notice the leaves on trees in motion, nothing more. When we are calm, we are unmoved, unfazed undisturbed. Generally we are at peace. The wind blows but it does not disturb. Calmness comes with spiritual growth. It is not natural. We are inclined to be everything but calm, but those who trust in the Lord have learned to be calm.

STRONG BREEZE: The next three stages see changes that move from a moderate breeze to a strong breeze. In a moderate breeze the dust swirls and paper on the ground flies and small trees begin to sway. In a strong breeze umbrellas become difficult to open and large branches on trees begin to sway to and fro. Strong breezes move some people to make changes in their lives. Some change their direction, careers and relationships. Strong breezes change spiritual relationships too. We don't stay long when there is a strong breeze because it's pushing us to move although we often push against it only to find that our umbrellas of protective excuses usually can't open or get caught up in strong breezes.

GALES: The next four phases involve what Beaufort calls gales. In moderate gales it's hard to walk against the wind. In Fresh gales, cars often veer off the road. In strong gales there is structural damage to houses and in whole gales trees are uprooted with 60 MPH winds. When we reach gales in our lives, we can't hold our lives on the road, everything becomes uprooted and our lives are turned upside down. We behave like crazy people, we talk like fools and we even dream crazy dreams, experience paranoia and hurt those that we love most. Gales are destructive. They uproot marriages and friends and turn lovers into enemies. Gales are terrible winds that damage our spiritual structure. Some even start to doubt and distrust God. In gales, they ask, "Why us?" As the whole foundation of all they believe slips from

under their feet and is boomeranged away in the wind. Faith gets challenged when the gales come.

HURRICANES: The last two stages involve storms and finally Hurricanes. When hurricanes come the winds reach above 100 miles per hour. High waves are produced on the sea as high as 25 or 30 feet that come crashing down on the shore with power and force, causing widespread structural damage. A hurricane releases the energy of a 10 mega-ton nuclear bomb exploding every 20 minutes. Hurricanes root up, destroy, wash away, trample and wreck anything in their paths; then as quickly as they come they are gone..taking with it nearly everything that was, but always living something behind. Many lives have been hit by Hurricanes that bear their own names. Many of us have destroyed our own marriages, destroyed our own businesses, relationships and opportunities. It was a hurricane bearing our own name that did the most damage, most of the time. When we looked up much of what we thought was important was "Gone with the wind" our task is to build upon what was left behind.

What The Wind Can't Take

Finally, brothers and sisters, the winds of great hurricanes can take away our houses and possessions. The winds may rob us of loved ones on this side of glory. But there is one thing that is never "Gone with the wind" and that is our faith in the power of almighty God.

Gone with the wind may be furniture and appliances!

Gone with the wind may be shoes and clothing!

Gone with the wind may be photographs and a few what nots!

But when the storm left us alone it could not take our faith in God.

When we have faith in God we learn how to talk back to storms and defy them to steal our future.

That's what Kirk Franklin had in mind when he wrote these words, "Because of faith I have a brand new day. The sun will shine and I will be Okay. That's when I told the storm to pass. Storm you can't last, you got to go away!"

Storm, you won't take away my hope, because "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and Righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name."

Storm, you won't take away my trust in God because "I trust in God wherever I may be. On mountain peeks or on the raging sea. Though come what may. From day to day. My heavenly father watches over me."

One of the images that was shown in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was the image of a young man who rummaged through the remains of what was left of his home. His house was leveled to the ground. His car was gone. Everything he had was gone with the wind. But underneath the rubble he found his guitar. He said with that guitar he planned to rebuild his life again.

Somebody here is despondent because of who and what has been lost, but down in the rubble!

Down in the rubble!

Down in the rubble there is something that the storm left behind.
Down in the rubble is an undying faith in an all powerful God.
With this faith, raise up from the contaminated waters and rubble hope for a new life!
Talk to the storm!
Tell your storm “I know a savior, his name is Jesus”
He refused to be blown away by the winds of hatred and despair.
They nailed him to an old rugged cross. He died on Calvary..
But early Sunday morning…he enabled the faithful to say!
I may be down, but I’ll rise again!

No. 9162-Missionary Service

Your Labor is not in Vain

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 8, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:58

Introduction

Do you ever feel that your work is unappreciated? There are many who work hard on a daily basis but they never receive any indication that their work is appreciated. Many are not looking for a trophy or a plaque. Neither are they seeking a full-page feature in the local newspaper. Sometimes, just a simple thank you from their employer would satisfy them. Employers often overlook this truth. Many of them take their workforce for granted and reduce workers to little more than paid labor, without feelings.

Sometimes that attitude exists even in the church. Many dedicated workers often feel their contribution to the church's ministry is overlooked or unappreciated. Experienced pastors and church leaders have learned the value of a simple "thank you." They have learned that a sign of gratitude can let church volunteers know that their labor is noticed.

Who are these laborers? They are Sunday school teachers, youth workers, janitors, musicians, ushers, trustees and deacons, food service volunteers and van drivers. They perform a myriad of unseen services but are nevertheless valuable to the church ministry.

We often recognize pastors and musicians with great days of appreciation, but what about countless others whose work is equally important? The church, in some small way should show love to these volunteers as well.

In the greater community characterizes the worker with terms spoken with a patronizing tone such as "common laborer" "employee" or "manual laborer."

Once a year the nation salutes working people in the nation. The day, called "Labor Day," is generally a salute to the working man and woman.

President Grover Cleveland signed Labor Day into American law in 1894 as he sought to win the affections of the nation's working people after using Federal troops to break up railroad workers strike. To appease workers, he initiated the salute to the working people of America and organized labor. From its inception in the 1880's to 1950's the labor movement grew. In 1955, the merger of big labor organizations to form

the AFL-CIO was the high point of worker accomplishments.

In 1938, organized laborers pushed for and received a national minimum wage. The government placed restrictions on the number of hours a worker can be forced to work in a week without overtime pay. Restrictions were also put in place to protect children from companies that would profit from child labor.

In 1955, it is estimated that 50 percent of American workers were members of unions. By 1995, that number decreased to less than 15 percent. Today, it is estimated that only about 13 percent of American workers are unionized.

Only when workers organized were they able to acquire a 40-hour work week instead of 60-hour work week, including sick leave, maternity benefits and pensions. Unorganized, workers were discriminated against, fired for political or sexual reasons and enjoyed no job security.

Without organized labor, some companies will exploit the disorganization of workers. Minimum wages will be cut or stalled, benefits will gradually disappear and unions will be ignored. Without political strength government bodies will not pass laws that will protect workers in their areas.

Once each year many people celebrate "Labor Day" without even knowing why it is celebrated. To most it marks the last day of summer. It is the last day of relaxation from labor before it's time to return to labor.

Every day is "Labor Day" in the eyesight of God. He is always aware of the works of every believer and rewards each person accordingly.

As Christians, we know that the work we do for Christ is meaningful and will be rewarded. Our labor is never in vain.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he gives words of encouragement to those who work in the master's vineyard. The intent of the text is reflected in the six key words:

Steadfast

"STEADFAST" This word is "hedraios" (hed-rah'-yos), derived from a word meaning "to sit", it means: "sitting, sedentary, or by extension: firm, immovable, and steadfast." In this context, the word means to take a strong stance so as not to be knocked off our feet.

Each believer must position himself in life to stand strong against the attempts of Satan to dissuade us from the Christian service. Steadfast means to be firm in our faith and in our Christian walk.

Unmovable

"UNMOVEABLE" This is "ametakinetos"(am-et-ak-in'-ay-tos), and it means: "not to be moved from its place, to be unmoved"; metaphorically: "to be firmly

persistent." Being "unmoved" has some different connotations. The song "I shall not be, I shall not be moved" sometimes refers to the pew a person sits in. Or it could have to do with a kind of emotional deadness; a person may come to church and be "unmoved" by the worship, or the invitation to salvation. But here, the meaning is clear. To be unmoved means that nothing can move us out of the job we have been assigned by the Lord. The believer who is unmovable is not one that cannot change, but one who cannot be persuaded to quit or throw in the towel in our area of service.

Always Abounding

"ALWAYS ABOUNDING". This is the word "perisseuo" (per- is-syoo'-o), and literally means "to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure". Furthermore, it means "to overflow, or to be abundantly furnished with, to have in abundance, to be in affluence, to excel or exceed." This is the word used in the story concerning the feeding of the multitude - after everyone was miraculously fed, there was an abundance, there were "left-overs" (John 6:12). It also is used denote "wealth"; Jesus said, "...a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15) Therefore, in our text, the message is that we should strive to be wealthy in doing the Lord's work, to excel in the Lord's work. Whatever we do for God should be our best. We should give him 100 percent. We should not be satisfied with just getting by, but we should strive to abound!

Work and Labor

WORK comes from "ergon" (er'-gon), and means "business, or employment, that which any one is occupied". Or it may refer to what is done, "a product, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind." It's an act, or a deed. Our work for the Lord is our "job for God". Something we actually do that is required by His call, we are His servants. It has a description, it requires time and "energy", a word coming over directly from the Greek.

LABOR is the word "kopos" (kop'-os); it is found 20 times in the NT, and refers not so much to the hard work, but the weariness which accompanies it. In its most primitive form, the word means "a beating", like that administered by the task masters. Consequently, it means "trouble", or "intense labor united with trouble and toil." In I Thessalonians 1:3, it is the word used in the expression, "labor of love".

We should be willing to give our time and energy to the service of the Lord so that we can do a "good job" in his service. While some may say "You don't have to go through all that trouble" we should want to "trouble" ourselves for his service.

Vain

"VAIN" is the word "kenos" (ken-os'), meaning "empty, vain, or devoid of truth." It is used to describe places, vessels, etc. which contain nothing, or of men who are

empty handed, or come without a gift. Metaphorically, it would mean “destitute of spiritual wealth”, or acts which result in nothing, are vain, fruitless, and without effect - having no purpose. It can even mean “senseless”, and “foolish”.

When we work for the Lord our work will never prove to be empty or void. Even though at times it may appear that it is unprofitable we are encouraged to know that even the smallest jobs in the church are important and valuable to kingdom building.

Colossians 1:28, 29 reminds us that we “labor according to His power”.
God’s work is done every time we pray for another person; when we call someone on the phone or send a note of encouragement. It’s the “labor of the Lord” when we teach a child, teen, or other adults; when we paint the wall in a Sunday School room, or change a light bulb in the hallway, or manage the sound system, play an instrument or sing, or work on a committee, or care for the offerings that are brought.

Therefore

Finally, brothers and sisters, We must consider the first word in the text, “THEREFORE.” It refers back to what has been written before. Therefore points to the previously mentioned reward for Christian service.

“Therefore” points to the great reward that God has for those who trust him.

Therefore reminds us that God has a reward and a place for those who labor in the kingdom.

I don’t know about you but I’m working to achieve the “therefore..”

There is a lot of power in the “therefore” because the word of God says..

Psalms 1:5, “Therefore” the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Luke 6:36, Be ye “therefore” merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Luke 12:40, Be ye “therefore” ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Romans 14:19, Let us “therefore” follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

2Thessalonians 2:15, Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle

The reward for our labor is promised in the “therefore.” In heaven, the place of the the “therefore”

It’s a place paid for by blood of Christ on Calvary!

He died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

“Therefore,” Let not your heart be troubled!

Come and go with me, to my father’s house!

Your labor is not in vain!

No. 9163-Inspiration

For Whose Sake Are We Blessed?

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 11, 2005

SCRIPTURE: Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite 1 Kings 15:1-5

Introduction

Many today are existing on good will that was meritoriously earned by their grandparents. In small communities, goodwill is often extended to the grandchildren of a patriarch who left a good reputation. Aware of this fact, many seniors spend their remaining years trying to make sure that they leave a legacy for their grandchildren that will open doors for them, rather close doors in their faces. As a result many go to great lengths to emphasize to the new generation the importance of a good family name and reputation. Many youth have found opportunities available because grandparents worked, sometimes unseen, to provide for their education and nurture.

Consider the little boy who grew up in the only house in his subdivision that had trees. His family lived in the area for several generations and trees of all kinds surrounded his house. All of the other houses had small shrubs, pretty grass but they had no trees. In the summer, the boy enjoyed the shade of the big trees that were almost 75 years old and climbed high in their limbs. On his 13th birthday, the boy's father came home with a small seedling in his hand and took him by hand in the yard. When questioned him his father said, "It is the family tradition for every child on his or her 13th birthday to plant a seedling in the yard.â•• How long will it take for this tree to get tall enough for me to climb?" asked the boy "About 50 years." Came the answer. "I'll be too old to climb it then," said the boy. "We have trees around this house because your great grand-parents came here on their 13th birthday and planted the first tree. The tree you are about to plant is not for you, it's not for you to climb,

it's to provide shade for your great-grandchildren."

A strange phenomenon is happening in the African-American community, our grandparents are rapidly assuming the role of parents. In increasing numbers, it is a grandmother who is the contact person at the local school. It is grandmother that is problem solver when a grandchild has a personal problem. It is the grandfather that co-signs a grandchild's loan; and it is grandfather, who is often called to referee disputes of grandchildren. While many families still have the presence of a strong Godly grandfather, because an increasing number of our families are female headed, it also means that more than any other generation, grandmothers become the focal point of strength in the African-American family.

We celebrate and revere Godly grandparents because they are our connection to the world beyond us.

We celebrate our Godly grandparents because they show us the old time way.

We celebrate our Godly grandparents because they have shown us the way to please God, through precept and example.

As Christians, we know that God has blessed us through our ancestors. We have learned from both their strengths how to walk the path that leads to eternal life.

Exposition

This text focuses on Abijam the grandson of King David, who was blessed in his reign as king, because of his grandfather, David.

Abijam was the grandson of King David. King David was a good man, who had a few flaws of his own, but his humble spirit and intense faith made him a "man after God's own heart." David's desire was to establish his "house" or generations before the Lord. Because of his great loyalty to God, despite his imperfections God blessed his children, for his sake. Some of David's descendents strayed away from what they were taught. This was the case with his son Rehoboam and his grandson Abijam.

David is a type of believing, faithful grandparent. Abijam is the type of a grandchild that is the recipient of favor from God, not because of his own works but because of the life of a grand parent.

In reality, Abijam was like his father who ruled for 17 years outside of the laws of God. He literally ignored God's instruction and direction and lived according to his own standard. Abijam was a descendent of David, he knew that family history of loyalty to God but ignored it.

In this text Abijam constantly found himself at war with his father's enemy Jeroboam. He constantly found himself in conflict with the armies of Jeroboam until, Jeroboam attacked Abijam with all of his forces. Although overwhelmed, Abijam successfully defeated Jeroboam's armies completely, stopping once and for all the menace that the invasions caused.

The text indicates that his heart was not perfect before the Lord, like David his grandfather. The text says "father" but the term father is often used in biblical explanations to mean father, grandfather and sometimes even great- great grandfather. Despite not having the perfection of heart, God blessed Abijam for David's sake.

The text indicates that God showed mercies to a grandchild because of piety of a grandparent.

Godly grandparents influence us

The human race is different from other elements of creation in that we influenced by your grandparents when other elements of creation are only influenced by the parent. A young bird huddles close to its parent until it grows strong enough to fly on its own. The grandparent of that bird plays no role in its life. Kittens and puppies are protected and nurtured by their parents, but we don't see any involvement, affection or recollection of the grandparents. The only connection that plants seem to have with the previous generation is that they bud and push away the last lingering leaves of the previous generation of plants. A new rose is not influence by grandpa rose.

However, among humans grandparents influence us. If that grandparent is a godly person that influence is for the better. Often grandparents have more influence over our children than we do, especially if we are extremely flawed. In that context, grandparents influence history. Pastor Glenn Pease notes that "Hezekiah was one of the best kings God's people ever had, but his father was Ahaz, and he was one of the worst they ever had. But his grandfather was Jotham and he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Hezekiah took after his grandfather rather than his father, and the result was victory for the kingdom of God."

The glory and the lingering influence of grandparents is that their lives reach beyond their own lifetimes and grandchildren as great grandchildren learn of their strengths and weaknesses and emulate them. Each succeeding generation seems to grow weaker and more worldly, until a grandchild or a great grandchild remembers the life work of a grandparent and points its generation back to some level of sanity. In this way, grandparents influence history, for generations to come.

The first 17 verses of the Book of Matthew records 42 generations of grandparents. Beginning with Abraham, every grandfather is listed leading up to the birth of Christ. It is literally the grandparentâ•™s hall of fame. Each of the generations was blessed because of the life work of the grandparents.

Even when grandchildren seem to mess up things, God somehow seems to reward godly grandparents long after their life journey ends by blessing their grandchildren.

Abijam was not living right, but God had mercy on him because of his grandparents. David was his grandfather, a god fearing man. Jesse was his great-grandfather, a strong man who walked after God. Obed was his great-great grandfather one who knew the Lord's presence. Ruth was his great-great-great grandmother one who told Naomi his kinsman great-great-great-great grandmother Naomi, "You people shall be my people and your God shall be my God." Abijam was blessed, not because he deserved to be blessed, but because a long line of grandparents before him caused God to frown on his actions, but to show him mercy for their sake.

Three R's

There are three R's that each generation must appreciate with respect to grandparents.

ROOTS: Our grandparents give us roots. We are often blessed because of our roots. Where we come from often helps us define who we are. It is a strange truth exists among human life: Often a bad parent becomes a wise grandparent. Experience becomes a great teacher. Many grandparents didn't learn the lessons of life as parents, their wisdom did not come until they were grandparents or great grandparents. As parents often underplay the importance of spending quality time with our children, as grandparents, we learn better. As parents we are usually unable to spot the qualities of previous generations in our children. However, as grandparents we see a little of Grandpa in that smart but free spirited grandson. We see a lot of great grandma in the daughter who is highly industrious and proud. Grandparents can also see the flaws of previous generations duplicated in another. Because they know the family roots, they earnestly work to prevent a reoccurrence of a grandfather's failure in a grandson, or a grandmother's weakness in a great grand daughter. They also go into prayer for their grandchildren, and God often answers that prayer, shielding and protecting undeserving grandchildren, for the sake of a believing grandmother.

RELATIONSHIPS: Grandparents are people too, but grandchildren will never know that unless there is a relationship between them. Believe it or not grandparents were once young, but life didn't stop because you were born and they were suddenly grandparents. Relationships are needed to better understand and appreciate grandparents. Many grandchildren are surprised to learn that grandma and grandma are not old fixtures from the past stuck in a corner, but they seem to have so much fun, why? Because they have learned how to live, after spending a lifetime learning how to make a living. Grandchildren need private time with grandparents, without the parents around, so they can build relationships. When relationships are built children learn that grandpa can tell the funniest stories. He learns that grandma can sing; that the two of them can dance, tell jokes, and laugh until they cry. They also learn that grandma and grandpa still go on dates and enjoy romance! Relationships help grandchildren to learn the one important truth they need to know about life; how to live a fruitful life.

RESPONSIBILITY: We are blessed because, whether we like it or not, grandparents get in our business. They are the voice of responsibility in most families. We pride ourselves in all the new things we purchased with a credit cards, but grandpa wants to know our credit score, has it been raised or lowered as result of spending. They are the voices that keep warning us to spend more time at home and less with our friends, political connections, business partners and drinking buddies. They keep getting in our business. Even when parents butt out grandparents have a way of asking all of those questions that trouble us as we persuade ourselves that we are doing great. A mother or father may hesitate to inject themselves into a dispute

between a husband and wife, but grandma will get deep into it forcing loose ends to meet. Grandparents are not perfect but experience has taught them the virtue of responsible living.

Reverence

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a fourth "R" that we learn from godly grandparents and that is reverence.

Whether grandparents know it or know they have more influence on their grandchildren than their children. Grandchildren are drawn to their grandmothers and grandpa's. One of the qualities they learn from them is reverence to God.

One granddaughter told her Sunday School teacher that her grandmother has a boyfriend she talks to on the side. Surprised the teacher listened for more. "They have a thing going on." Said the Little girl. I've never seen him but I know he's there because I've heard her talking to him. One day she planted a garden and she talked to him and everything grew. She planned a Thanksgiving meal and invited him to come, I didn't see him but he must have helped because she kept thanking him. She talked to him about my grades in school and they changed." The teacher asked, "What's this boyfriend's name?" The girl answered, "I don't know his first name, but I know it starts with D. his last name is Lord. Grandma kept saying D-Lord will provide. D-Lord will make a way. D-Lord will bless. My grandma and D-Lord got a thing going on!"

Every Godly grandparent has a thing going on with D-Lord!

This so because those who have experienced life in all of its shades and nuances, seem to know the Lord best. Often for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have weathered the storm know the power of the Lord. Often, for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have soaked their pillows with tears, wrestling with the tragedies of life, have learned that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning!" Often, for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have watched bare cabinets and survived on light bread and air pudding, know that if they keep the faith, that Lord will make a way somehow! Often for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have stood face to face with sickness and risen from their sick beds time and time again know that God is able! Often for their sake, we are blessed.

Just as we are blessed because of our grandparents, we are also saved because of the Grace of God.

We didn't deserve what God did for us by sending his Son, we are saved for his sake.

Our prayers answered only in his name. We have a place in the kingdom only for his sake.

Grandparents know that it is nothing but the grace of God that saves us and raises us everyday!

Ask any grandparent and they'll tell you...God is able!

God is able to take our:

-BURDENS and make them light; DISAPPOINTMENTS and give us renewed hope!

-FRUSTRATIONS and give us encouragement; DOUBTS and give us confidence!

-WEAKNESSES and give us strength; FEARS and give us courage!

Those who have walked the Christian journey can testify that God is a prayer answering God. They sing with confidence the words of the old hymn, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I tried him for myself!"

Every godly grandparent needs to keep telling the story!

Tell your grandchildren about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell your grandchildren that they must know the Lord for themselves!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them how early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Tell them in the morning!

Tell them in the evening!

Tell them in the midnight hour!

Tell them no matter what comes their way...God is able!

No. 9164-Communion

The Lord Sees and Provides

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 18, 2005

SCRIPTURE:" And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." Genesis 22:14

Introduction

Have you ever asked for something only to be told, "We'll see?" As children, we have often asked our parents for one item or another, without ever getting a definitive answer, just "We'll see." We often ask for permission but get the elusive answer, "We'll see." We think we are entitled to promotions on our jobs and apply for the advertised positions with eagerness, but answers deflate our enthusiasm when we hear, "We'll see." If we apply for bank loans with risky credit even our bankers say, "We'll see." Ask for admittance to a high competitive college and often the response is "we'll see." "I'll see what I can do" is usually just short of a confirmation. It implies a time of evaluation, consideration of risk and review of history. It injects the possibility of denial, but leaves the door open, depending on other extenuating circumstances.

In 1955, the United States government, fighting the cold war against communism, began a practice that became known as "plausible deniability." Powerful people in government were able to give orders for often illegal activities such as wiretaps, assassinations, etc without taking the blame for the results. Government officials took a wait and see approach. If the action turned out favorable, all was well. If it failed, the government denied any knowledge of the activity. The government took a "We'll see" approach to its questionable actions.

Whenever we hear the phrase, "We'll see" we are never quite sure whether it is a polite way to turn us down or reason to have hope. "We'll see," means different things to different people.

Consider Nebo the town drunk when he came to the big revival. The whole town prided itself in the fact that all of its citizens were baptized believers on their way to heaven, except Nebo. They prayed for him all the time but each time they brought him close to a decision all he would say is "We'll see..." Out of wine, out of money and real thirsty Nebo came to church on communion Sunday. Deepwater Baptist Church had a great reputation for serving whole glasses of the finest wine on communion Sunday. The church was always full on Lord Supper days for some strange reason. The unsaved on the mourner's bench, that meant Nebo, were only served water

instead of wine. The choir sang greatly that Sunday, but all Nebo would say to the invitation was "We'll see." The deacon prayed well, but all Nebo would say was, "We'll see." The preacher preached a powerful sermon but all he would say was, "We'll see." During the communion service the members all got full glasses of the finest wine this side of heaven, but the one sinner in town got a glass a water. Prompted by a powerful thirst Nebo jumped up and shouted, "I want to join the church if!" The whole church shouted hallelujah, but the preacher asked, Nebo what he meant by "If." Nebo said, "Well, the preacher said God could do miracles and right now, he needed a miracle. I want to be a member of the church if he could turn water into wine. If I joined today, do you think that miracle could happen today?" Without thinking the whole church answered, "We'll see."

Consider the city boy who finally gave in to the pleas of his country relatives to spend a summer with them. The city boy had become accustomed to the order of things in his city environment. In his home the beds were neatly made, the floors were mopped and everything was cleaned. The servants in his home wore plastic caps when they cooked, the silverware was polished and the table was always neatly set. He was not sure that he would enjoy an entire summer in the country, with his distant and unrefined relatives.

Once in the country his uncles greeted him and aunts who made him feel warm and comfortable. So far so good. It appeared he could make it through the summer. Inside the home, he found the hardwood floors whitewashed, the beds neatly made and the table setting was neat. All silverware was polished and in order. This second test met his approval.

As he moved to his room, he passed the kitchen door and saw Aunt Mabel mixing ingredients for a large pan of dressing. She stopped, pulled out a small tin can, pulled out her bottom lip and loaded it with Bitter Garrett snuff. As she hummed and prepared the dressing, the snuff juice started running down the side of her mouth. He watched with amazement as the juice began for form a large juicy ball at the tip of her chin. Just below the snuff ball was the pan of dressing. A movement of her head to the left or to the right could be fatal.

As he watched one of his uncles approached him with a question, "Well my boy, have you decided to spend the whole summer with us, or will you high tail it back to the city?" The city boy took a long look at the snuff juice on the tip of Mabel's chin and said, "We'll see." The uncle asked, "We'll see what son?" He looked at the dressing bowl and answered, "We'll see where the snuff drop falls!"

When we present our situations to God, does he take a "we'll see" attitude. Like the government, does he adopt a role of plausible deniability, accepting credit for things that work out and denying the bad that occurs? Does he let us down easy by just saying, "we'll see" and never without giving us a real answer?

The Biblical record suggests that God considers each of our requests and measures them by two factors: His will for our lives and our history of faith and sacrifice. Combined, a true believer usually provides that God sees our need and provides for it every day of our lives.

As Christians, we are convinced that when God sees what we require and hears

our pleas, he will provide for all of needs and many of our wishes because he is Jevovah-Jireh, our provider.

Exposition.

This text concludes the description of the Patriarch Abraham's decision to comply with the command of God that he sacrifice his son Isaac.

The willingness of Abraham to obey God is one of the finest examples of faith in scripture. When he traveled to the mountain top Abraham carried with him the essentials of the sacrifice, fire, wood and his son.

Abraham's obedience is often referenced but there is a wealth of importance in the question asked by young Isaac, "Where is the lamb?"

Just before he sacrificed Isaac, God showed Abraham a ram caught in the bushes that became the ultimate sacrifice instead of his son.

He named the place Jehovah-Jireh, or "The Lord sees and provides."

The power of this text is in the name that Abraham gave the site. It is commonly reported that Jehovah-Jireh means, "God will provide" but it just as important to know the full meaning of the name is that the Lord sees and the provides. In the Hebrew the phrase, "Yahweh Yir'eh" for "provide" means "The Lord sees."

In Old Testament times the people of Israel were commanded to worship the Lord in his holy mountain three times a year. Exodus 23:17 notes that God commanded men to appear before the Lord for worship and to bring their sacrifices. This is described as "being seen" by God. To be seen or taken seriously the believer had to worship and sacrifice. In return, God would "Yir'eh" or "be seen" as he provided for them.

Those who did not worship and sacrifice did not expect to be "seen" by God.

Abraham came to the mountain willing to sacrifice everything to please God. In this instance, it was not necessary to do so, but God "saw" his willingness and then provided a "ram in the bush."

This is the main point of this text; Abraham becomes the type of a believer who seriously desires to please God in every way, even to the extent of actually sacrificing his son. In the same context, we are shown God's response to worship and sacrifice…provision of what he needed.

The text shows God looking at the worship and sacrifice of the believer, then providing needed blessings based on that evaluation.

Because he both sees our need and supplies the response, he is seen as our Jehovah-Jireh,our provider.

God Sees Our Need

There are three aspects of our lives that God sees:

GOD SEES OUR NEED: God sees our daily needs. He scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive. Physiologically, we need food, clothing and shelter at the offset. Beyond that we need

health care and emotional support. The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. A widow woman who struggled to provide for family saw God meet her need by giving her what she needed on a daily basis. Christ saw the health care need of the man sitting by the pool for 38 years and provided it for him. The Apostles saw a lame man at the temple gate and answered his plea by saying, "Silver and Gold have I none but such as I have, give I thee." Mary and Martha grieved over the loss of Lazarus and we see Jesus responding to their need in a unique way. The preponderance of scripture teaches that God sees the immediate need of every believer. Whether our needs are financial, involving the payment of loans, meeting daily demands or just making ends meet; God sees our need. This should be a reason for hope for every believer because we know that our individual situation is not unnoticed by the savior. Therefore, the songwriter asks, "Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

GOD SEES OUR FAITH: God sees our faith. He knows those who trust him and believe in him. While the world may laugh at the man who constantly says, "The Lord will make a way" God does not laugh; he sees that man or woman and responds accordingly.

Faith believes that God can act if he chooses, despite the impossibility of a situation. We do not know how, but we believe he can. Jesus has often noticed people with such faith. A widow woman with an issue of blood for 12 years had little chance of making it through a crowd of people to see him, but he she believed if she could just touch the hem of his garment she would be made whole. Jesus noticed her in Matthew 9:22 and said her "faith" has made her whole. Another woman of a different race came to Jesus asking help for daughter. She knew that the odds against getting a Jew to help a nameless woman of Tyre and Sidon were great, but she chose to do so anyway. In Matthew 15:28 Jesus noticed her faith and said, "Oh woman, be it unto you, even as thou wilt."

The late Adam Clayton Powell had a campaign slogan as a Congressman from Harlem, it was "Keep the Faith, baby." That is what those who trust in God must do; keep the faith because God sees our faith. Though times may get difficult in our lives, we must keep the faith. Though the odds against our survival, restoration and resurrection are great, we must "keep the faith."

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen. Faith achieves the impossible because it somehow gets God's attention. When God sees our faith, a resolution to our problem is just a step away, according to his will.

GOD SEES OUR SACRIFICE: God sees how far we will go for him. He sees how much we will give up for him. He sees it as we show it everyday.

The story is told of four church members: "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody." Each time the call for sacrificial service was given the response was always the same.

"Is there a person who is willing to stay late and help prepare for the service?" Came the call. Everybody thought Somebody should be glad to do it and Somebody

felt assured that Anybody would come forward. Who responded? Nobody.

A second call was issued, "We need volunteers to share in the prayer and visitation of the sick?" Everybody said Anybody who is a Christian should be glad, and both of them expected Somebody to come forward. But who came forward? Nobody.

After a challenging Sunday School Lesson about the love of God toward man, the question was asked, "Which of us will be willing to lay down his life for a friend?" Anybody felt Somebody should be willing, and both of them thought Everybody who claimed the Christian life should be willing to sacrifice himself. But who was really willing to sacrifice? Nobody.

Of course, when it was time to go to heaven and receive the reward for sacrificial service Everybody was willing, and Somebody stood in line first, just in front of Anybody. But who received a reward because of sacrificial service? Poor old Nobody."

God sees our sacrifices. He sees us give beyond a tenth of our earnings to support the work of his kingdom. He sees us give our time and talent to a point that it goes beyond being just liberal, but actually sacrificial. What is important to believers is not that our names appear in the newspaper or that we are given credit for our work. What is important is that God sees our sacrifice.

God Provides our Needs

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when God sees our need, sees our faith and sees our sacrifice, he will provide our needs.

That is the important lesson that believers learn in the course of our life's journey: When The Father, Son and Holy Ghost say, "We'll see" it does not mean, We'll get back to you later. It is not a put off or a put down, but it means, Jehovah-Jireh, God will see and provide accordingly.

Abraham called the place where God provided Jehovah-Jireh, because it's the place where God said, "We'll see."

When we go to God with medical needs, he says, "We'll see" and we call him JEHOVAH-RAPHA because that means 'I am the Lord that healeth thee'.

When we go to God for peace amidst terrible storms, he says, "We'll see" and call him JEHOVAH-SHALOM because that means that God is our peace. In this troubled world we must experience God as our peace.

When we go to God for victory over adversity, he says, "We'll see" and we call him JEHOVAH-NISSI because that means the Lord is our banner of victory. He is the lord of hosts and commands the vast heavenly army. He will fight the battle for us and give us the victory.

When we want our needs met we go like Abraham and we call him JEHOVAH-JIREH because he both sees our needs and provides.

When our supply of food is running low, it is good to know that the Lord will provide.

When our money is gone and provisions have nearly disappeared, it is good to

know will continue to provide for us

When there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to know that God can bring peace in the midst of confusion.

No matter how tough times get, God is still God. He is still our God whose

-Power never weakens
-Grace never disappoints
-Love never leaves
-Promises never fail
-Glory never diminishes
-Joy never ends
-Foundation never shakes
-Truth never changes
-Supply never shrinks
-Blessings never stop coming!

If you think God does not see what you are going through, remember the words of the song writer, "We are our heavenly father's children, and he knows just how much we can bear!

God sees our tears in the midnight hour!

God sees our concern for our families and loved ones!

God sees our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

Abraham called the site of the sacrifice Jehovah-Jireh. It was a place of sacrifice. It was a holy place.

Scholars now report that Solomon built a great temple on the very hill of Abraham's sacrifice.

However, over a thousand years later, on the remains of the same hill, built like a skull, outside of Jerusalem called Golgotha, another sacrifice was made!

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

On the same hill where Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb?"

God made the eternal sacrifice of his only beloved son!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

Everyday he is still Jehovah-Jireh!

He sees my need and makes a way out of no way!

He's name is Jesus!

Jesus! My provider!

Jesus! No other name I know!

No.9165-Inspiration

Life is not Fair, But God is Good

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 25, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Psalm 73:2

Introduction

Do you sometimes feel that life has been unfair to you? When you consider all that has happened to you in your life's journey, do you sometimes feel that it just isn't fair that not everything is turning out perfectly? You gave it all you had but your team lost? You followed all the rules but that which is important to you has slipped through your fingers. Sometimes we feel like shouting, "Life is not fair!" We have thought about it a time or two, but we wouldn't say it aloud. What we've been thinking is half true.."Life isn't fair." The other half is that while life is not fair "God is good."

In an ideal world, everything would be perfect. Good would always be rewarded and bad would always be punished. In an ideal world, those who work hard would be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Farmers who till the soil and plant crops would be able to expect great harvests. Investors who wisely invest in myriad of opportunities would be able to reap a handsome profit. Those who are careful about their diet and manage their health according to all of the rules would be able to enjoy a life free of sickness and disease. In the ideal world, only criminals would go to jail those who would not work would not prosper and those who showed little industry would not be able to be the recipients of great reward.

Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world where everything is fair. Our world is far from the ideal. In our world, the best teams do not always win the game; the best man does not always get the girl and it often rains on our well-planned parades. It angers us sometimes that the hardest worker does not get the raise and the bad guys actually get away.

Sometimes those who try to do right get frustrated when they are included in tragedies. We often feel we should have been exempted by virtue of our special relationship with God. After all, we are his children; shouldn't we expect God to make the rules of life apply fairly to us?

In reality, life is not fair; Because life is not fair we don't always want fairness from

God? If we don't want fairness from God, what do we want? We want God's goodness. We want his mercy. We want him to give consideration to our weakness and tilt the scale to our advantage. That's something he couldn't do if he was always fair. He can show mercy upon us because mercy is a part of the goodness of his divine nature.

As Christians, we know that life often deals us troublesome blows that seem unfair. However, we serve a God who takes the unfairness of this life, add his goodness and become recipients of his mercy. We can deal with the unfairness of life, as long as we remember that God is still good.

Exposition

This text focuses on the question of the fairness of life and the goodness of God. Scholars believe the writer of the Psalm is Asaph, a chief musician. This psalm takes analytical look at the position of the righteous in the scheme of things. He raises the question of why the godly suffer so frequently.

The text explores the situation but begins by giving the conclusion. The last verse of the chapter also restates the conclusion.

Between verses, 2 and 27 Asaph probes the unfairness of life especially as he looks upon the difficult times of the righteous, as compared to the easy life of the unrighteous. In moments of despair, his soul shook to the point of slipping in his faith (v2).

What did he observe? He observed how the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to prosper. He observed how the righteous were afflicted by tragedy but many of those who disrespected God were able to escape; not only escape but prospered because of the misfortune.

When he considered the many ways that life is unfair it was frustrating. At verse 16, he notes that even the thought of the ultimate unfairness of life "was too painful for me."

Asaph reached a turning point in his building frustration (v17) "Until I went into the sanctuary of God." He understood better when he was able to place his frustrations before God and God showed him a clear picture how God operates. He emerged with an "understanding." When he understood the nature of God he considered himself a bit foolish (v22) for complaining.

When he carried his frustration to God, he considered that in all of what he called the unfair situations of life, he has continually been with the Lord and the Lord has been with him. (v23). He shifted his focus to his relationship with God. When he did, he noticed that God continuously held him up by the power of his hand.

Then he came to a reassuring truth in verse 24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. "

Though the difficulties presented by the unfairness of life often pressed him to his limits of what his body and heart could endure, God always gave him strength. At verse 26, he says, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. "

He went into the sanctuary of God frustrated about the unfairness of life, but he arose

with a new conclusion, that God is good and he should draw closer to him, especially when life seemed unfair, so that he could declare the goodness of God among men.

What should we do when the unfair occurs?

When we are plagued by the unfairness of life, what should we do? Many respond in a variety of ways. Some respond like the coach who complains that the referee has made an unfair call. We can yell and scream and throw a tantrum. Others choose to sulk and wallow in self pity because life has treated them unfairly. Some give up entirely. What should believers do?

ENTER THE SANCTUARY OF GOD: Whenever believers are depressed over their life situations, those are good times to enter the sanctuary of God. Your sanctuary is the place where you meet God. It may be your church edifice. It may be in the silence of your bedroom. It may be at your kitchen table. In your sanctuary, your private place, talk to God. That is the time that God clears your mind and gives you clearer picture. Do not stop praying because life has been unfair, that is the time when we should pray more. Do not stop worshipping, worship more. In the sanctuary, Asaph came to an understanding. In your sanctuary, reaffirm your trust in God and he will help you understand. Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding."

ITS NOT ALL BAD: The difference in the believer's attitude and that of the non-believer is that we see the good in every situation. Obviously, there is an inherent unfairness when a believer suffers a loss but a non-believer arises unscathed, but we are confident because we know that for believers, all situations work out to our advantage in the end. It may be bad, but it is not all bad! It may look terrible, but it is not completely devastating. Why? Because the word of God reminds us that "all things work together for good for them that love the Lord and are the called, according to his purpose." That means there is a blessing in every problem, every tragedy, every storm, every attack, every loss and every devastation. The devil meant adverse circumstances for our hurt but God makes them turn out for our God.

HE HAS NEVER LEFT YOU: Before believers succumb to the temptation to doubt God, they should remember that God has never left them alone. That was Asaph's conclusion. He remembered that in times past he never dropped his faith in God and God never left him alone. When believers consider their walk with God, they soon realize that even though they have lived in an unfair world, God has responded to the unfairness of the world by giving extra favor to believers. It was unfair for Israel to be punished so hard by Egypt but God showed favor toward them in the land of Goshen because they received fresh water and fertile lands even when others suffered drought. God has favored us too. If he would have been fair to us he would have let us drown in our own sins, but he lifted us by his grace. If he would have been fair he would have allowed the world to trample us when we failed in school, in business, in our marriage or in a life pursuit; instead he favored us with one more chance. The fact is, God has been extremely unfair in his dealing with us. He saved us when the fair thing to do is to give us what we deserve. It's a good thing that God

has not given us what we deserve but given us his grace! He has never left us, although the fair thing to do would have been to leave us like we often leave him. He has never stopped blessing us, although the fair thing to do would be to stop blessing us every time we stop praising him or paying our tithes and offerings. He has never abandoned us. He has never left us alone.

When we think life is unfair, remember God is good!

Finally, brothers and sisters, whenever we get the blues and want to focus on the unfairness of life, we should remember that God is always good.

When we reflect on all that happens to us in any given year, think of God's goodness to us. The ungodly focus on what went wrong, what was lost, the pain and the grief. Believers are not oblivious to loss, but wee see the goodness of God too.

We see the goodness of God because we study his word. We cannot turn many pages without being reminded of the goodness of God.

Psalm 31:19, "Oh how great is thy goodness which thou has laid up for them that fear thee."

Psalm 100:5 "For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations."

Psalm 106:1, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he good and his mercy endureth forever."

Inherent in God's goodness is mercy and grace. When God shows us mercy he goes beyond what is fair and gives us what we do not deserve, which is the benefit of his favor.

God's favor gives us strength when we should be weak!

God's favor gives us victory when we should suffer defeat!

God's favor gives us hope when we should be in despair!

God is so good that even when we are not at our best God still loves us. When we are faring less than our potential God has showered us with love. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Life is not fair but God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

I don't know about you but I've found that God is good all the time!

In the midst of sorrow, God is good, because he brings us joy!

In the midst of conflicts, God is good, because he brings us courage!

In the midst of danger, God is good, because he brings us safety!

In the midst of weakness, God is good, because he bring us power!

In the midst of defeat, God is good, because he brings us triumph!

In the midst of the storm, God is good, because he speaks to the wind and waves!

God is so good that he sent his Son to die for us on Calvary.

He is so good that Early Sunday morning he Christ arose from the dead! He's so good that he looks down on us every day and showers us with blessings from heaven!

Life is not fair, but I'm so glad that God is good!

No. 9166-Revival

Extreme Make-Over

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2, 2005

SCRIPTURE:" Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. " 2 Corinthians 5:17

Introduction

What if you could change something about your appearance, what would it be? There are many who stare into the mirror and often wish there was a way to change their appearance. Some would change their ears. Others would change their eyes. Others would order a nose that was a little less prominent or lips that were either larger or smaller. Some would even like to brighten their skin or darken it a bit. There are some who dream of being thinner and others who are trying desperately to gain weight. If there were a way to make ourselves over, it would be interesting to see the results.

Americans have a pre-occupation with our appearance. We spend millions on cosmetics, clothing, and many other extras to improve our outer appearance.

If we were born with brown eyes, we will buy ourselves a set of blue eyes.

If we were born with short hair, we will buy longer hair and weave it in place.

If our faces begin to wear with age, we will have it artificially lifted.

The popular television series, "Extreme Makeover" focuses on the preoccupation with outward appearances. Each week the nation is shown before and after scenarios of individuals who were unhappy with their appearance, then placed in the hands of professional hair stylists, cosmetic surgeons, dentists and fitness experts. These experts perform complete physical makeovers of the participants, courtesy of liposuction, implants and cosmetic surgery. When the contestant returns the audience sees a physically attractive person who looks very different from the original. The audience cheers as the new "made over" person walks out on the stage.

There is nothing wrong with desiring to improve our physical appearance. There is nothing wrong with a great hair do or facial that improves our appearance. We should remember, however, that the physical makeover only changes the outside; however, the inside remains the same.

What if there was a new TV series called, "Extreme Spiritual Makeover?" The host would show a person who was well dressed, attractive to the eye, but ugly on the inside. Film clips would be shown to the audience of the contestant wearing nice

clothes, looking physically attractive but cursing, lying, stealing, cheating, and displaying the worst attitude in the world. The participant agrees to place himself in the hands of three experts: The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. After a period of prayer and repentance, the participant is shown returning to the stage smiling and happy after being completely made over by the power of God.

There is good news. God offers an extreme spiritual makeover to anyone who is willing to be a participant. You will still look the same on the outside, but you are guaranteed to be 100 percent different on the inside. The word of God calls this extreme makeover being "born again." It's the idea that you are remade in the image of God. Romans 12:2 says we should not be "conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." This makeover begins with the heart and soul and extends itself even to our thinking. It is a complete makeover that yields and brand new person.

As believers, we rejoice in the fact that God is in the makeover business. If we trust our lives to him, he will make us over again.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he explains how being "in Christ" helps us to become new creatures.

Paul, who was once a persecutor of the church, became one of its greatest supporters once he become "in Christ." The key to being the new creature or new person is not simply to be around Christ but to be "in" Christ.

A person who is "in Christ" goes beyond simply acknowledging Christ in a public confession of faith. Being "in Christ" goes even further than simply being associated with the visible church. "If any man be in Christ," as George Whitefield puts it, means to "partake of the benefits of his sufferings. To be in him refers not only to an outward profession, but by an inward change and purity of heart, and cohabitation of his Holy Spirit."

A person who is truly "in Christ" places his or her entire life in the hands of God, to manage, control, direct and order. A person who is "born again" literally places his or her soul in the hands of God.

These changes happen on the inside. They do not alter our physical appearance, but they do alter the way we relate to others as well as the way talk and respond. Those who know us will instantly see the change in our attitudes and responses to life situation.

Sin makes us ugly

Romans 3:23 makes it abundantly clear that we have all sinned. We have all messed up in one way or the other. One person's sin may have been obvious because everyone sees it, and another man's sin is less visible, but never-the-less still a sin. There are no little sins and big sins. Any sin is an infraction of the law and all sin carries the same penalty.

Sin makes us ugly on the inside. The prophet Isaiah describes our plight and our appearance: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

The theologians call our sinful way “original sin.” It means we were born with a defect that makes us do what we do not want to do, say what we do not want to say and go where we do not want to go. It is a part of the nature that came with our birth package. It is inside of us and it makes us a very unattractive person.

We have so much sin in us that we are not only unattractive we are down right ugly!

The hardest part for anyone to admit is that he or she has ugly ways, ugly attitudes, ugly dispositions, and ugly feelings. We usually like to believe everyone else is ugly, but certainly not us.

Once we conclude that we are ugly on the inside, then we realize the need for a make over.

Make-up and Dress up Won’t Do.

Some approach their spiritual lives the same way they approach the outer appearance. When they see ugly scars and marks they try to apply make-up.

Make-up by nature touches up and covers up our flaws in the same way that a make-up can cover a bruise or a cut to hide it from view. We can cover up a bruise but it is still there. We can hide the blemishes in our face under a layer of rouge and base, but the blemishes are still there.

The same is true spiritually simply apply make up to a sinful life does not change it; it only covers up the flaw.

Attending church on Sunday and reading the bible while you live with a person with whom you are not married, is a cover-up. It is a thin layer of make-up that has the proper appearance but covers-up an ugly spiritual arrangement.

Expressing love for God who we cannot see hides the fact that we hate a few people that we can see. Our public expressions tend to hide our true feelings.

Jesus was met by a rich young ruler who had all of the appearances of a devoted man. He asked what he had to do to be saved. He was shocked when Jesus said, “One thing thou lackest, sell all you have, take up your cross and follow me.” What he was told required a complete change on the inside. Jesus told Nicodemus that to be completely saved he had to be born again.

Make-up often requires a rouge. Rouge, technically is a coloring that makes something appear pretty or filled with cheer. Many lives have rouge applied. They look cheery but its just rouge, made up to put on a good public face,

Sometimes it includes mascara. Mascara, by definition is applied to the eyelashes to brighten their appearance. The word mascara has Spanish origins. It means to wear a mask. We wear masks to hide what we really area. There are millions of ugly lives that are hiding behind layers of mascara.

Makeup never changes us, just the way we appear.

The same is true about dressing up. We can wear the finest but our clothing does not change us. Underneath the designer dresses and suits, weaves and wig, shoes and slacks is the same person; unchanged.

Make-up and dress-up, while important to our outer appearance does not impress God, who sees behind the makeup and knows that nothing has changed.

We Need A Make-over

What we really need is not make-up but a makeover. It is a complete spiritual remake. Not a touch up. Not a highlighter. We need a make-over.

What we need can only be done by God he is the divine Surgeon who can do what we need.

Our make-over will involve taking out a few things and putting in others.

We'll take out hatred, fear, anxiety, bad attitudes, hatred, impatience, grumpiness, rudeness, bad language, uncontrollable desires, and immorality.

What will we put in? Two passages of scripture gives us an idea what we need.

Galatians 5"22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law".

Colossians 3:12-17, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

When we get a make-over, we become new creatures in Christ. New from the inside out. Now made up, but made over in his image.

Old Things are Passed Away

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that when we get a total spiritual make-over, old things are passed away and all things become new.

When God changes us, we may have the same outer appearance but everything else become brand new.

Naaman, needed a make-over, he was told to go and bath himself in the muddy water, seven times. When emerged after the seventh time, he was a brand new man.

The woman at the well came looking for water, but she left a brand new creature, old things were passed away and all things had become new. She said, come see a man who told me all I've ever done.

David was a man after God's own heart, but he had committed a great sin. He

prayed to God saying, create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me. He walked away a new man, old things had passed away and all things were made brand new.

When we get a spiritual makeover, our old failures and shortcomings are passed away and he gives us something better.

When we are truly made over, God takes out:

—DESPAIR and replaces it with a replaces it with delight!

—BURDENS and turns them into blessings!

—WEAKNESSES and turns them into strengths!

—FAILURES and turns them into successes

—RESLESSNESS and turns it into peace of mind

—OBSTACLES and turns them into opportunities!

—Enemies and turns them into friends!

On television, the Extreme Make-over is paid for by sponsors and advertisers, trying to sell a product.

But when we get a spiritual make-over, there are no advertisers or sponsors because Jesus paid it all.

I hear him say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus paid for our make-over over 2000 years ago.

Nailed to an old rugged cross on a hill called Calvary, Jesus told his father, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

He paid for our make-over when he bowed his head and died.

He died on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave..

With all power in his hands..

Power to make my life brand new!

Power to make me over again!

No. 9167-Anniv. Women

The Esther Factor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2005

SCRIPTURE:"…and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

Introduction

Recently as we watched the tragic accounts of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Louisiana, we saw the pictures of women, holding on to children and scraping resources to protect them against flood waters and starvation. These women, both old and young, were a reflection of the strength of our women to stand tall in crises and be the hands and feet of God.

It wasn't just during Hurricane Katrina, the African-American community has a rich history of strong women. Black women have played important roles in advocating, promoting and championing the causes of our race. It seems that God has always touched a few women in every generation to rise above the norm and speak, lead and champion the cause of their families specifically or our race in general.

We have heard the names before and know them like the backs of our hands. Women such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Phyllis Wheatley are the champions we study about in school as they fought against slavery, prejudice and the right of our people to be free.

In the time when America had accepted the institution of slavery, the thundering voice of Sojourner Truth, raised its consciousness to a new level. The attention she received and the impact she made was if she was born for "such a time as this."

Harriet Tubman, dangerously moving into the South to help slaves escape on the Underground Railroad, came at a time when slaves were looking to be free but could find no way. Her boldness made it clear that she was born for "such a time as this."

Wheatley wrote poetry and prose in a time when Negroes were thought to be incapable of constructive thought. She raised that consciousness in way that made it obvious that her very birth was divinely timed so that she could be available for "such a time as this."

No matter what generation of our history we study, from Nefertari in Egypt to Carol Moseley Braun in America, there are Black women who always seem to rise to champion the cause of our race. Their very lives seem to suggest that they were born, especially suited for times "such as this."

No generation has been without great women who have championed our causes.

However, the greatest champions are not in the history books. They are in our own families. Each family that looks into its own history won't have to look too long before it finds a long line of women who seemed to have been born for "such a time as this."

When women seem to appear on the scene in at just the right time, with just the right amount of strength; the bring into a situation the "Esther Factor." This is the power of God using one woman to take actions that save a generation.

Our history is that of mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who seemed to have been equipped with the essentials necessary to address the circumstance of the family. In the time in which they lived, they had what it took to get the family through. Whether it was courage, scholarship or willingness to rise above depravation, God always seemed to use them in peculiar ways, as if they were born for "such a time as this."

As Christians, we salute the African-American woman because God has used her beauty, courage and strength throughout the generation to help lift our race. Today, she is still doing the same. It is if her very existence is for "such a time as this."

Exposition

This text focuses on Esther as she is told that her rise to throne of Persian was destined so that she could save her people from destruction.

The story of Esther concerns a king called Ahasuerus, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, who married a young Jewish girl named Esther, a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem. It also involves her cousin, Mordecai, who became a judge in the city gates in Susa, the capital of Media-Persia; and an officer of the King's court named Haman.

The events of the Book of Esther take place when Israel was in captivity under King Ahasurus. Many of the Jewish people had been allowed to return home to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and restore their worship, others for various reasons stayed. The story is that of a king and his kingdom. The king divorces the queen who is at his side when the story opens, and thereby becomes a lonely man by his own decree. He is powerless to change the decree after it is issued, and in his loneliness, he begins a search for a new queen. Esther, under the control of her cousin, Mordecai, is brought before the king and he falls in love with her. Because of her beauty, he immediately chooses her to be his queen and exalts her to the second place in the kingdom.

Esther's rise to the throne was well timed. There was a movement being planned by Haman to destroy the Jewish people. She would ultimately be the single presence that would make the difference. Haman managed to pull the wool over the king's eyes and deceive him into signing a decree to destroy all the Jews in his kingdom. Haman and Mordecai are instantly in direct conflict because Haman was "the enemy of the Jews." Learning that Mordecai is a Jew, he vows to eliminate him from the kingdom. Mordecai overhears the plot and gets word to Queen Esther that she would need to act to save the people. He is confident that the people would be saved, either by her hand or by someone's hand because God would not allow his people to be destroyed.

Thus he utters the words of this text, “and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Eventually Esther is able to expose Haman’s plans, and save the people but not before watching Mordecai raised to a position of prominence and Haman hanged from gallows he built for Mordecai.

Follow the Trail

Today, African-American women should follow the trail of Godly women who lived with honor and dignity and struggled in hope. The record of African-American Ansistahs is long and glorious and deserves the study of those who begin the walk themselves.

Every woman who begins a walk down a career path should be able to recognize the foot print of the persons who have blazed the trail. Those who were successful all had something in common. Paul called it “honor” which meant to him that they lived godly lives, kept their word, and gave service to others.

In the past, God has prepared godly women for service in the kingdom and endowed them with special gifts. If this generation gains anything from reviewing the women of the past it should be how they were prepared themselves and use their gifts for God. Look at the components of women who used the Esther Factor in their lives. They were:

PREPARATION: Women like all others, must be prepared. Gone are the days when it was believed that learning was a man’s pursuit because a woman’s place is confined to a dish pan and a wash pot. Women of the past learned what was required to compete in their generation. They learned to read and write. In other times they learned to type on typewriters and to operate machinery. Likewise, women must prepare themselves for the challenges of the 21st century which means acquiring verbal and language skills and a proficient use of technology. A woman who has no email address has stamped a date on her preparation that flashes “smart but out of touch.” Despite her resume, she presents herself as one who is not prepared to transact business in the mode of this generation. To be women of honor, women must prepare.

STRUGGLE: Women must be prepared to struggle. To paraphrase Frederick Douglass, success cannot come without a struggle. The person who wants success without struggle is like the farmer who wants rain, but does not want the thunder and the lightning associated with rain. The women of our history have shown a unique willingness to struggle. Whether it was the slave mother who labored to protect her children or women who defied laws of segregation as they worked to change social circumstances. Today’s women should study the struggles of how God touched others in their career. Such study allows this generation to expect a struggle and to prepare themselves to overcome.

PLAYED THE GAME: Women must play the game with dignity and grace. That is what is learned when we study the record of others. They were able to maintain amazing dignity about themselves, despite adverse circumstances. They may have

lived in shanty houses with wooden floors, but those floors were kept clean and spotless. They may have worn dresses woven from flower sacks, but they were always neat and clean. The way a woman carries herself is the way she plays the game. The world is wary of the woman that cusses like a sailor and walks like a cowboy. Moreover, the woman who strives to honor her word, care for her family and be true to her husband or vow of celibacy is deemed a woman of honor by the general community. She is revered because of the way she plays the game..

Remember the Esther Factor

As women move into the maintain stream of American community life, they should remember that their rapid rise is not accidental. It is the hand of God moving in the gender that causes women to realize great success. It is God's hand, moving in often unseen ways, that is putting the pieces of the puzzle together for women. Women should remember the Esther Factor: Without God, we can do nothing.

While barriers against Black women are falling, many still remain. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that while 62 percent of Black women are now in the American workforce, most of the jobs are still technical, sales, and administrative support areas. These are jobs that do not offer high wages or full packages of benefits. Slowly the barriers are falling. In 1987 there were 172,200 businesses owned by Black women. By 1996, there were 405,000. Black women are moving into the workforce, business community, government and world leadership in large numbers. Sociologists point to the Black woman's attention to education as a primary reason. In the last decade there were 918,000 Black women enrolled in higher education, with only 55,300 in prisons, according to the U.s. Justice Department (1995). That is significant for our people because it is just the opposite of what is happening to Black men. In the same time period there were 556,000 Black men in college and 711,600 in prison.

The declining presence of Black men in educational circles and in leadership is paving the way for Black women who are moving from potential to position, for "such a time as this."

As women move from potential to position, they should always remember the "Esther Factor." Esther never forgot who she was and used every opportunity at her disposal to help her people. The Esther Factor, is the challenge of Black women today who are being encouraged not to forget that they are Black. As they begin to move in social socials outside of their own community, don't forget the huddled masses of your people who still need your help. Use your influence to reach down and help someone else.

Once in a position, Esther risked losing it all to help her people. She succeeded but she could have lost it all. The Esther Factor is the combination of faith and remembrance that prompts every successful woman to do what she can to help those who follow after her.

Watch How Others Have Used The Esther Factor

Finally, women should follow the path of great women of our past.

These were the women of faith who answered the question, "What doth the Lord require of us" by giving themselves to his service.

Their trail is long and clear.

If we follow the trail of Hannah it will find her telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts. If we follow the trail of Ruth, we'll hear her say, "You people shall be my people and my God shall be your God."

If we follow the trail of the woman at the well, we'll hear her say, "Come see a man" who told me all I've ever done.

Those before us have made it clear that following the Lord is a rewarding experience.

When you follow the Lord you have somebody who can help you:

-carry your burdens

-face your future

-fulfill your responsibilities

-fight your battles

-solve your problems

-overcome your temptations

What doth the Lord require of us? That we worship him! We should worship him with the:

-spirit of Mary of Bethany

-power and strength of Deborah

-grateful and humble heart of Mary Magdalene

-faith of Ruth and the enduring hope of Rahab

What doth the Lord require? That we live for him everyday and every hour!

Dr. Watts declares "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify. An ever dying soul to save to fit it for the sky."

What does the Lord require? That we love our neighbor as we love ourselves! What does the Lord require?

That we tell the world of the goodness of the Lord!

I must tell of the goodness of the Lord!

I must tell them how he touched my life one day, picked me up and turned me around. I must tell them how he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill!

I must tell them that he died for me..

But early Sunday morning ... He arose with all power in his hands!

No.9168-Anniv.-Pastor

Exalted for a Purpose

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2005

SCRIPTURE: "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Psalm 89:19

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why God placed you where you are today? Understanding the mysterious ways of God has been a puzzle to many over the centuries. We are no exception. We often wonder what why God selected us, out of all of his creation, and placed us in the unique spot that we occupy in the world today. It is humbling when we consider that God could have chosen anyone, anywhere to do what we do. Yet he chose use. We ask, "Why me?"

We are not alone in the query, many others before us have also asked the same question. David said in Psalm 8:3-4, " What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? " Job asked in Job 7:17, "What is man that thou should magnify him?" Psalm 144:3 asks, "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him?"

The humble see the place that God has given them and ask, "Why me?"

The humble pastor charged to shepherd a congregation asks, "Why me?

The humble person who has been lifted to lead large assemblies, associations and conventions, often asks, "Why me?"

To those who pose this troubling question to themselves the answer comes in Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Unseen by the hand of man God has exalted Godly leaders to a station and position that would promote the building of his kingdom and provide spiritual help for those who follow him.

Often we cannot see God's hand, but there is no doubt that God's hand is in the plan.

Everything that happens has a reason and purpose, according to God's divine plan. When a Godly leader is selected and placed in a position, it is not accidental. God is in the plan.

When a man or woman of God is given a gavel or pulpit, it is not a coincidence of nature. God is in the plan.

We cannot see how God works, but he is always in the plan, even in the simplest

of ways. Consider the little rabbit that was fascinated with its newfound speed. The bunny loved to out run the creatures of the wood. He out ran the toad frog and Brer snake could never catch him. In fact, he took on ever creature of the woods to test his skill. The little rabbit was disturbed however, because each time his folks let him go to the woods alone, mama rabbit would prick the bottom of his foot with a thorn. When they left, without explanation, the little rabbit limped around for hours in pain. When they returned they said nothing. After a while, the little rabbit was concerned and asked mama rabbit the question, "Why do you stick my foot every time you leave me alone, it doesn't make sense and it seems cruel for you to do me this way." Mama rabbit hopped over to her son and said, "There is a hound dog and hunter that love to chase little fast rabbits. Knowing you, you would give them a run. It may not make sense to you now, but it's better to be a living bunny with a sore foot than a dead rabbit with a fast reputation." It did not make sense to him at the time, but that sore foot was keeping him alive.

God is doing things for us and to us for a reason!

There is an unseen hand that operates in every life work. That unseen hand guides and controls, tears down and builds up. That unseen hand is called providence, the will of God working itself out among men. The believer knows the power of God is working everyday, even though he cannot see his hand directly, his presence is felt.

As Christians, we are encouraged when we remember that God has placed our leaders before us for the purpose of encouraging us, directing us and comforting us. He looks among the lowly, finds the mighty, who often think of themselves as unworthy, and exalts them to achieve his purpose.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he considered how God selected an ordinary shepherd boy to serve as king, and would, in the distant future select his "holy one" in a similar way, from among the people.

The 89th Psalm in its original context is a reference to David. He was a man of very humble background. He was a good man from a good family but he was not a "big shot." His family was well known and had a great reputation but they were not "big wheels." They were ordinary God-fearing people.

The names of his family members are recited with great respect today, but during his time the names of Jesse, Obed, Boaz, and Ruth, did not move mountains or cause any great alarm. David's family was far from the aristocratic circles of Israel. In terms of pedigree, David had no qualifications to be king of Judah. Yet, God looked down upon him with favor because he saw in his humility a great strength that made him mighty.

It is the same means that God used when he sent his "Holy One" to live on this earth. He was born in a manger, among the most obscure of circumstances, to a family that was poor but respectful, hardworking and godly. In this context, God reached down among the people and touched the lowly but mighty Jesus, and exalted him to his right hand.

In a similar way, God still looks among the lowly, finds the mighty, and lifts them up to lead and to serve.

Among the lowly masses of men, he sees what we cannot see and moves them mysteriously to a higher ground, to achieve his purpose.

Among the masses of women, he selects the Esthers, Ruths, Marys and others who are humble in spirit, low in station, but mighty in faith and exalts them. That is why Esther was told, in no uncertain terms, that it could well be that God raised her to be queen of Persia, "for such a time as this."

Just as David saw the hand of God at work, placing him in a position of leadership in the nation, spiritual leaders should come to the same conclusion that God has reached down among the lowly and exalted us for "such a time as this."

Lowly but Mighty

God recognized David's inner qualities and strengths, before he raised him to his position. The text uses the word, "mighty" to describe him.

Truly, he was mighty, even though he had not fought a single battle on a battlefield. He was mighty in the ordinary ways of a shepherd boy.

He demonstrated might as he protected his father's flocks from lions and bears.

He demonstrated might even as he stood before Goliath with only five smooth stones and a slingshot.

God still recognizes "might" in our leaders today.

He sees the man or woman who is able to demonstrate great faith in the ordinary struggles of life.

He sees the woman who recognizes the bright side of every situation and demonstrates confidence in God when others lose hope.

He sees the man who is not intimidated by the prospect of hard times, or peril, but continues to cling to God's unchanging hand.

Despite our race, color or sex, God still reaches down among the lowly and exalts men and women of strong character and raises them to positions of influence for the purpose of advancing the kingdom.

Exalted To Do What?

Why does God exalt a person to a high position? Certainly, it is not for personal praise, honor or glory. It is to advance the kingdom of the Lord and to bring salvation to the people.

The challenges are great because the needs are great.

The woman who is exalted by the hand of God must be the voice of God on behalf of an exploited gender.

The exalted woman cannot afford to become silent. The barriers are falling but she must continue to raise the consciousness of America.

While 62% of Black women are in the work force, they still earn only 89 percent

of the salary of white women.

The fact that 62 percent of Black women are working reflects other factors as well, one being that 62 percent of Black families are headed by single women. Marriages are declining in the Black community. In 1950, 62 percent of Black families were headed by a married couple. By 1998, only 37 percent of our families have a marriage presence.

This is no time for Black women to become comfortable. Black women still face a dilemma. In America 41 percent of all abortions are performed on Black women. The pregnancy rate for young Black women 15-19 years of age is twice that of white women. Rates of domestic violence among Black women are three times the rates of white women.

The exalted man cannot afford silence either, because the declining Black male presence in leadership, the home and church has created a dilemma. For black women the dilemma is real because the educated Black woman has a man problem. The field of available educated Black men is declining as more Black women become professionals with fewer Black male professionals from which to choose.

Whether male or female those who lead must continue to raise a standard for our people.

This is why God reached down into the ranks of the people and found men and women of character and strength and raised them to positions of influence. They have the mission of speaking to our race and our generation in the name of the Lord.

Leaders are exalted, but they are exalted for a purpose.

She who leads must keep raising the consciousness of those around us that the social ills that are destroying our people are real.

Therefore, women's organizations should intensify their efforts to attack the problems that affect our people. We cannot ignore them.

Like Esther, women must appeal to the king!

Appeal to the government! Appeal to the school boards!

Appeal to the ruling powers of this nation on behalf of the huddled masses who are desperately in danger of destruction.

He who leads must keep telling the dispirited masses that despite hurricanes, earthquakes and rising tides, that God is still on the throne!

He who leads must keep raising the banner of hope for a world that is wallowing in despair.

Together, male and female, those who have been exalted should sound the trumpet that reminds the world that God is still in control!

God's hand is in the plan

Finally, the exalted leader should help the people see God's hand in every plan.

From a position of strength and influence, the leader who knows the Lord is able to see God's hand in the plan of life. He or she is obligated to help others see the hand of God.

Though David was hunted as a criminal and suffered ridicule and estrangement, he recognized God's hand in the plan. He was being prepared for a promotion that

he knew nothing about.

So, the consecrated leader has the purpose of reminding believers to be aware of God's hand in the plan.

If you have made advancements in education, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have made career advancements, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have achieved family goals, it was God's hand in the plan.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable becomes probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

It's the same hand the carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

The world intended it for bad, but God had a hand in the plan.. and early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9169-Anniv.-Church

Standing on the Rock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 16, 2005

SCRIPTURE:"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink Numbers 20:7-8; "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

Introduction

Today, when we hear the word "Rock" different images come to mind depending on our perspective. Some hear the term "Rock" and think of a very popular Samoan wrestler who has also become a movie star known as "The Rock."

Others hear the term "Rock" and think of Sylvester Stallone's movie series about an Italian boxer known as "Rocky Balboa."

Some think of Elvis Pressley singing a hit song a half century ago entitled, "Jail House Rock."

Still others will remember the notorious California Prison officially named "Alcatraz" but infamously called, "The Rock."

The term "Rock" means different things to different people; but what does it mean to believers? What do believers think of when we hear the term "Rock?"

We sing about "Rock of Ages Cleft for me" and "Take me to the rock."

When David was asked to define the rock, he said in Psalm 18:31, "For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? "

It is plain to every believer that the "rock of our salvation" is Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the church looks at its history and heritage, it does so with a clear remembrance that whatever progress it has made has not been because of any work that its members have done, but only because the church has chosen to build its future on a true foundation. It has succeeded because it has been standing on "The Rock."

When the church celebrates its anniversary, it is both a corporate celebration and a personal celebration. It is a celebration of how as individual "living stones" in the church, God has blessed us. It also a celebration how God has blessed the church as a unified body because we have stood firm in our faith in God, despite difficult times.

As Christians, we know about the "Rock" but the "Rock" we know is not a

television star. The “Rock” we know is the “solid rock” of Jesus Christ.

Exposition

These two texts are indicative of the way scripture depicts Christ as the rock of our faith.

In Numbers, Christ is depicted as the rock that provides. When Israel wandered in the wilderness, the people grumbled for water. They complained to Moses and Moses took their complaints to God. In response, God commanded him to take the rod in his hand, and go and SPEAK TO THE ROCK, and it should give forth water.

If we read it too fast, we will miss Christ in this text. However, a more careful reading reveals a hidden truth, “and IT shall give forth HIS water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock.”

When God spoke to Moses, he described the source of the blessing the people would receive as both “IT” and “HIS.”

The “IT” of this text is a pronoun that refers to an inanimate, powerless entity.

“IT” refers to an irrelevant object made of stone.

However, the blessing would not come from the “IT” it would come from the “HIS.” Note the text says, “and it shall give forth “HIS” water.

“HIS” in this text is also a pronoun but it does not point to the inanimate stone but to an animate being.

“HIS” shows Moses pointing to the power of Christ providing what the people needed in the wilderness.

For this reason perhaps, Moses was commanded to speak to the rock in this text. Instead, Moses struck the rock twice and his disobedience resulted in his not being allowed into the Promised Land.

In Matthew, Christ is seen as the foundation upon which the church is built. At the beginning of his ministry, Christ began to assemble his apostles. He saw in each person, characteristics that would be useful to the expansion of the kingdom.

At one point, Christ paused in his discourse to ask his disciples how the public perceived him. Several stood and told of the various ways that Christ was being received. Some saw him as John the Baptist. Others saw him as the prophet Elijah. However, Christ narrowed the scope of the questioned and asked, “Who do you think I am?” It was then that Cephas stood and said “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16).

In response Jesus said, “Thou art Peter.” In the Greek, it is “Petros” or a piece of a rock. Jesus said it was the kind of belief that Peter displayed that would be the substance of the church that being faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Jesus said upon this “rock I’ll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The word He used for “rock” was not accidental. It was “Petra,” which implies a great massive rock. While Peter had grown in his relationship with Him, Christ reaffirmed that the church would not be built upon “Petros” or the Little Rock, but it would be built upon “Petra” the massive rock, which is Christ himself.

Combined, these two texts reveal Christ as a rock that provides in times of need

and sustains the work of the church as its true foundation.

Speaking To The Rock

In Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God was always with them. They saw him by day as a pillar of cloud. By night, they saw him as a pillar of fire. When they were in need they only had to speak to him, but instead of talking to him, they often complained.

Moses was told to speak to the Rock and He would bring forth the water. In the same sense, the church has learned through its history, that there is power in talking to the Lord.

The church as a corporate body and as individuals has survived many difficult times because it learned how to talk to the Lord.

Hezekiah was appointed to die, but added 15 more years to his life, after he spoke to the Rock.

Elijah brought down fire from heaven and consumed the prophets of Baal, after he spoke to the Rock.

Peter and John were able to heal the sick and perform great miracles, after they had a little talk with the Rock.

Moses learned that there is no great blessing derived from yelling at the Rock, but from speaking to the Rock.

Likewise, he learned that there is no great blessing from striking out at the Rock, but it comes from speaking to the Rock.

The people learned that their blessing did not come from complaining and murmuring at the rock, but from speaking to the Rock.

The history of the church is filled with examples of believing men and women who weathered difficult times because they learned the art of speaking to the rock.

It has been the experience of many that when the church talked to the Lord, he heard its cries.

That is what prompted Dr. Watts to write, "I love the Lord, he heard my cries and pitied every groan. Long as I live while trouble rise I'll hasten to his throne."

Maybe that is what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer."

Speaking to the rock was perhaps what the songwriter meant when he said, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

Blessings from the Rock

Moses was shown the result we should expect from speaking to the rock. "It" shall bring forth "his" water.

The church is the instrument that God has used to bring forth "HIS" blessing to God's people.

The church is not a building, but an assembly of baptized believers in Christ. Yet,

God has used the assembly of believers in ways that have brought forth his favor.

Our people have been blessed because of the church, the old ship of Zion.

We have worshipped under brush arbors and abandoned saw mills.

We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors.

We have praised him in the chill of winter with logs burning in huge heated stoves. We have sweltered, without air conditioning, in the humid and scorching heat of a thousand summers.

Yet God has used our feeble assembly, worship and praise experiences to bring forth his "water" in a thirsty land.

Through the church God has delivered us as a people from the Egypt of slavery to the borders of the Promised Land.

Through the church, God has sustained us through lynchings, murders, discrimination, depressions and unbelievable hardships.

Through the church, God has raised up our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits.

Through the church, God has brought forth leaders to champion our causes and speak to our troubled souls.

No wonder the text then says, "it" shall bring forth "HIS" water.

Without a doubt, the church has been the instrument God has used to save us when we were lost, lift us when we were fallen, and restore us when we were rejected by the world.

"It" has brought forth his water.

No wonder the song writer thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

Standing on the Rock

Finally, brothers and sisters, while Moses shows us how to speak to the rock and how to expect blessings from the Rock, Matthew shows what happens when we stand on the rock.

The church has survived over 2000 years not because of its philosophy and historicity, but because it has been standing on the rock.

When the church stands on the rock, it super cedes the mortal capacities of mere humans because it is a spiritual entity; built upon a foundation that is sure and strong.

Jesus told Peter, that upon "this rock" he would build his church. This makes a distinction between the church that Christ builds and anything built by man. The church that man builds is a:

MOTEL: for people just passing through on Sunday on their way to some place else.

VACATION SPOT: where people come only once or twice a year.

ZOO: Where people come to watch other folk eat like hogs and act like monkeys

MUSEUM: Where people only remember, "What it used to be like" and the good old days.

FASHION SHOW: Where people come to display the latest styles and their new wardrobes.

PICTURE SHOW: Where audiences sit quietly as the deacons, preacher and choir put on a show.

CERAMIC SHOP: Where everyone becomes easily chipped and have to be handled with care.

ICE HOUSE: Where people with cold hearts give each other the cold shoulder.

But the church the God builds is different from man's church. The Church that Jesus built is a:

LIGHTHOUSE: Giving light to a dark and stormy world

HOSPITAL: Ministering to those who are sick of sin and shame

DIVINE FLOWER SHOP: Only in the church can you find the sweet Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley in the same place at the same time.

LIFE BOAT: Rescuing victims from the raging sea of life.

SIGN POST: Guiding the lost to the straight and narrow path. That's why thousands cry out:

"Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand"

Who is this rock? He is different things to different people.

To the astronomer He is the Sun of Righteousness.

To the baker He is the Living Bread.

To the banker He is the Hidden Treasure.

To the biologist He is the essence of Life.

To the carpenter He is the Sure Foundation.

To the doctor He is the Great Physician.

To the educator He is the Great Teacher.

To the farmer He is the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.

To the florist He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.

To the horticulturist He is the True Vine.

To the judge He is the Righteous Judge.

To the juror He is the True Witness.

To the jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.

To the toiler He is the Giver of Rest.

To the Sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

To the Christian, He is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer and Lord!

Who is this rock? One songwriter said, "This rock is Jesus. Yes, he is the one. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the Solid rock."

The church is standing on the solid rock of faith.

The church is holding on to the solid rock of hope.

No wonder the Songwriter wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus, blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean of Jesus' name.

On Christ, who carried a cross for me up Calvary's hill.
On Christ, who let them drive nails into His hands.
On Christ, who died on Golgotha's hill.
On Christ, who arose after three days and nights.
On Christ, the solid rock I stand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

No. 9170-Youth

Make-A-Wish (And Receive It)

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 23, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." 1 Kings 3:5 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7

Introduction

Have you ever made a wish? Did it come true? Young people wish for a variety of things as they fantasize about lives that have yet to materialize. Many wish to become famous singing stars. Some wish to become great professional athletes. Many wish for riches. The wishes that begin in our childhood carry over to our adult lives, because "wishing" is not just something for children.

Men have always wanted to transform their fantasies into realities; we've never quite figured out how to do it. Many myths, fables and legends have developed around our fascination with "wishing."

It is said that if we throw three coins in a fountain of water and make a wish that it will come true. So, when you travel you will often find many coins in fountains, representing the wishes of tourists who have passed.

It is said that if we make a secret wish and tell no one what we wish, then blow out all of the candles on a birthday cake with one breath that the wish will come true.

It is also said that the if we see the first star of the evening and say the words, "Star light, star bright, won't you grant my wish tonight" that our wish will be granted.

An old favorite is the "wishbone" of a chicken. It is said that if two people make a wish and break the breastbone of a chicken, the person who gets the longer portion of the bone after it breaks will get their dream to come true.

Judy Garland in the Wizard of Oz, wished that she go 'Somewhere over the rainbow."

The legend that has been told and retold to children in thousands of ways is the story of Alladin and the Wonderful lamp. According to the legend, Alladin came upon a wonderful lamp in which lived a Genie. The Genie appeared and granted whatever wish that Alladin made. One day he carelessly laid the lamp aside and it was stolen by an evil magician. Alladin spent many years searching until he finally found a way to get his lamp returned and wishes granted.

Whether it's blowing out the candles on a birthday or rubbing a magic lamp, we have shown a fascination with wishes that has not subsided with our age.

The "Make-A-Wish" foundation is a world wide ministry that attempts to grant some of the wishes of terminally ill children. Some of the wishes have included visits to Disney Land, meetings with popular entertainers, or provision of special toys. The foundation has made thousands of children happy by granting them one of their special wishes in the last days of their lives.

What if you were given the ability to "Make-A-Wish" and were told by God to ask what you wanted and it would be given to you? What would you ask? What would you wish for? Cars? Money? Jewelry? Fame? Popularity? The latest pair of shoes?

As strange as it may sound God gives each of us the opportunity to "Make A Wish."

Often he gives us just what we ask for, so we are warned to be careful what we ask for, we might just get it!

Actually, God does give us the ability to ask, believe and receive within limits. He does it without a magic bottle, candles on a birthday cake or coins in a fountain. He does it by his own power based on our obedience to his word and willingness to live according to his will.

As Christians, we are excited to know that God is the ultimate "Make-A-Wish" man. If we can conceive it, and believe it, we can achieve it, if our wish reflects the will of God for our lives.

Exposition

This text considers Solomon at the beginning of his reign as King of Israel. Solomon, who succeeded his father David on the throne of Israel, became King at a very young age. He was awed by the complexity of the job of being King and was troubled by his lack of leadership maturity in such a capacity. One night God spoke to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask anything that he wanted from God and he would receive his request. Solomon asked God to give him wisdom and understanding to lead the people in the ways of God.

God was so pleased that Solomon did not ask for riches or fame, but only asked for wisdom that he decided to give him what he asked for, in addition to some of the things that he did not ask in his request. With the wisdom he received from God, Solomon was able to attain all of his life's ambitions. He dreamed of building a kingdom the splendor and grandeur of which could not be equaled in the world. He dreamed of building a great temple for the worship of God, and a great palace second to none in the world. He dreamed and God made it happen for him, although at the time it seemed impossible for him to accomplish.

The Make-A-Wish Secret

There is a secret to approaching God with a Make-A-Wish request. It is the key to making the wish come true. For Alladin the secret was rubbing the lamp. The secret of Dorothy's ruby slippers was knowing how to click your heels three times. There

is also a Make-A-Wish secret when we approach God. The secret is found in John 15:7, "If ye abide me and my words abide you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall given.." Matthew 6:33 adds to it, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you."

What does it mean to "abide in me?"

We must approach God as a partisan rather than as a mercenary. A mercenary approaches the army for pay. He works hard but without loyalty to a cause. He stops working the first time he misses a paycheck. A partisan joins an army because he believes in a cause, pay is secondary. So it is with Christ. Those who accept his cause, teachings, philosophy of life, and objectives are partisans. What they want is what he wants. All others are mercenaries, seeking to get what they want. Because partisans want what's best for the cause, that which they ask for will be granted.

To abide in Christ is want what he wants and nothing more.

So the wish from a person who abides in Christ is not what "I want" but "I want what I want, if God wants what I want."

What does it mean to put the kingdom of God first? When we dream, aspire and hope, our dreams, wishes and hopes should be that whatever we do or become will help the kingdom of God to expand and grow. If our desire is to expand the kingdom with our wish, then it will come to be. And God promises that as we work to expand the kingdom, all of the other things on our list will be added as well. However the interests of the kingdom of God must be first.

Our Make-A-Wish List

As we make our personal Make-A-Wish List, we should remember the words of one author who put it this way:

I asked for strength, God gave me difficulties to make me strong
I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.
I asked for riches and God gave me plenty of work to do
I asked for courage and God gave dangers to overcome
I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help
I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I received nothing I wanted, but everything I needed.

Key to Getting An Answer

Finally, we must consider that the key to getting God to grant our wishes, in his will, is prayer.

Prayer is the sincere desire of the heart and when that prayer reflects our desire to do the will of God we get God's attention quickly.

I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things!
Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!
Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!
Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!
Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!
Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!
Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!
Daniel will tell you that prayer is good for the Lion's den!
The Three Hebrew Boys will tell you that prayer is good for the fiery furnace!
I know what prayer can do! I've tried it for myself!
In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!
In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!
In Jesus' name, wounds have been healed!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!
Abide in him, trust in his word, and ask what you will in Jesus' name and it shall be done!

No. 9071-Youth

God or a Genie, Which?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 23, 1976

SCRIPTURE: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened Matthew 7:7-8 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Matthew 4:3-4

Introduction

If you found a genie in a bottle and were given an opportunity to make one wish what would that we should be? There are many people that would have a variety of answers to that question. Some would use the opportunity to ask for anything that they wanted by asking for another wish.

The television series I dream of Jeannie depicts a man who found a bottle in which a beautiful woman appeared each time he unstopped a magic bottle. The woman would appear in a puff of smoke and grant whatever wish that he desired. The appearance of the genie often caused him problems even though his wishes were granted. He had a friend who constantly wanted to use the bottle for his own personal desires. He also had a superior who was always suspicious of him because he seemed to have things that can only appear by magic. The television show made us laugh as we watch the lives of the characters affected by the genie in the bottle. The television show was fictional but our desire to have our wish granted is not fiction.

Many cartoons reduced the challenge that each person faces into a simple decision between right and wrong. The challenge in cartoons is usually depicted by good being presented to us as a little angel with wings that sits on one shoulder and whispers divine truths in one ear while a little devil sits on the other shoulder and whispers devilish truths in the other ear. The cartoons make us laugh but the image of a person being torn between what is right and what is wrong is not humorous.

There are two forces that fight for the souls of every individual. God wants our souls and the devil wants our souls. We are often pulled from one side to the other as each force struggles for a first-place position in our lives. It would be simple if we could look on one shoulder and see a man wearing a red suit and recognize him as the devil or look on the other shoulder and see a man wearing a white suit and recognize him as the Lord. Unfortunately, the choices available to us are not that

simple. We have to learn to discern the voices that we hear and recognize that each of them represents either a force for good or a force for bad.

To gain control of our lives both forces offer us the opportunity to advance ourselves according to our purposes. Each promises to give a certain things if we would commit ourselves to their cause. God promises us eternal life with him in a heavenly experience. The devil promises us fame, power, and riches in this life if we will follow him. Each force promises to be available to us if we would simply call upon either of them. On a daily basis, we are forced to choose between one or the other.

As Christians, we are aware that the devil grants wishes. We are also aware that God is in the prayer answering business. When we hear the voices of good and evil speaking to our souls, we have found it best to listen to the voice of God and serve him alone.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus as he taught his disciples the nature of their relationship to the kingdom of God.

One of the core attributes of Christ's teaching is the idea of faith in God. Through faith, Christ taught that anything is possible as it relates to improving, expanding, and building the kingdom of God. Nothing that a believer wants or desires can be kept from him. In other conversations, Jesus told his disciples that as long as they remained true to the purpose of building the kingdom of God that whatever they asked God would provide.

In this context, Jesus lays out a dramatic picture of God providing for the wants and needs of believers, according to his purpose, if they were only ask, seek, or knock. Whatever was required to build the kingdom would be available to them. Whatever would be needed to advance the cause of Christ and the kingdom of God on this earth would be opened to them. Nothing would be kept from them if they asked in faith, and believed they would receive.

In essence, what Christ said was if you're one of my children, ask me for it, and if it will be good for you, it will be done.

Matthew chapter 4 gives us an instance in the life of Christ at the beginning of his public ministry when he went into the wilderness to decide for himself which voice would command his allegiance. After 40 days in the wilderness, when he was both fatigued and spiritually drained the devil appeared to him and offered him the choice between God and himself.

Christ was tempted to use his relationship with God for his own desires. He was hungry so he was told how easy would be for him to take stones and turn them into bread. He was a country boy from Nazareth with no royal upbringing so he was told how easy it would be for him to gain popularity. As a lone individual he lacked the political backing and the power to change social circumstances so he was told that he could simply jump off the side of a mountain in the Angels would come to his defense.

In those moments, Christ had to make a decision about his own life and which

forces he would hear. There, in the wilderness, he chose to follow God. He summarized his decision by telling Satan, "Get the behind me Satan."

How to get what you want

When we want something from God how do we get it? How do we get his attention? How do we let him know that we want something? In the television series, it was simply a matter of unstopping the magic bottle and the genie appeared. When we need something, how can we call upon the inner force within us to help us achieve our goal?

The forces of good and evil within us are waiting for us to call.

Both God and the devil are waiting for you to call upon them. Quicker than you can snap your finger or bat your eye either of them will appear.

To get the devil to appear all you need to do is think an evil thought or desire a wrong thing. Instantly he will appear to grant your wish. If you want money, the devil will suggest ways that you can get money without working for it. He will convince you that it is the best way and the quickest way to achieve your goal. If you want fame or popularity he will do the same. He will promise you anything you want, but there is a price that you must pay. He wants your soul.

When we want something from God we pray. When we pray we talk to God and tell him the sincere desires of our heart. When we pray we pour out our souls to him. We empty our spirit and prostrate ourselves before him. When we pray God hears us and responds to our prayer request. The only requirement that God has of us is that we abide in him and that his words abide in us.

Those who called on the devil

There are many who chose to call on the devil to make their wishes come true.

Eve, while living in the Garden of Eden listened to the voice of the devil and chose to eat from the forbidden fruit because she wanted the knowledge of good and evil. The devil granted for which added resulted in her being banned from the garden for ever and cursed.

Cain listened to the voice of the devil when both he and his brother able brought their sacrifices and offerings before God. A spirit of jealousy developed within him as he listened to the devil speak to his soul. He committed the first murder when he listened to the devil.

King Nebuchadnezzar desired to be esteemed greater and more powerful than God. He listened to the devil and trampled upon the things that were important to the worship of God. The price he paid was several years of insanity as he ate grass like an animal.

Judas desired to build a treasury to quicken the overthrow of the Roman army. He listened to the voice of the devil and for 30 pieces of silver the trade Christ to his enemies.

There are many who have listened to the voice of the devil and have paid for their

weakness with their lives, fortunes and souls.

Those who called on the Lord

There are many who ignored the voice of the devil and called on the Lord.

Noah desired to live a fateful life according to the will of God. Although all of the people around him chose to ignore God's warnings nor sought direction from God, built an ark, and survived a flood.

Enoch wanted to walk with God. He spent his entire life communicating with God and talking with him. Because he talked with God on a daily basis and walked with him constantly he did not see death.

The three Hebrew boys desired to be faithful to God even in the face of death. They desired to please him and when they were thrown into a fiery furnace, God protected them.

Young King Solomon desired to be wise during his reign as king. God appeared to him in a dream and asked him to request anything that he wanted and it would be granted. Salomon requested wisdom and God gave it to him.

Those who desire to do God's will have found that all they had to do was ask, knock, or seek and God made a way for them.

Listen to his voice

The conclusion of the matter is this: every believer should listen to the voice of God.

It has been proven in the lives of the patriarchs of the Bible and in the lives of living saints that those who place their hopes and faith in God will be rewarded.

When we want a blessing from the Lord we should not have a problem deciding whom we will serve. Our response should be the same as that of Joshua when he stood on the side of the mountain and declared, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Judy Garland in the movie the Wizard of Oz click the heels of her ruby slippers to get what she wanted, but as for me and my house we will call upon the Lord.

Some people might wish upon a Star or break wishbones to get what they want, but as for me and my house we will call upon the Lord.

Some people might blow out the candles on birthday cakes or throw coins in the fountain to make their wishes come true, but as for me and my house we will call upon the Lord.

if we call upon the Lord, he will make a way out of no way.

If we call upon the Lord, he will build a bridge over our troubled waters.

If we call upon the Lord, he will build is up where we are torn down.

If we call upon the Lord, he will give us strength in the midst of our weakness.

If we listen to his voice, we will hear him speak.

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear falling all my ear the son of God discloses.

And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

The voice we will hear will be the voice of the man who carried across for us.

The voice we hear will be the same voice that cried out from the cross, "Father why hath thou forsaken me?"

Is the same voice that said, "it is finished."

He died on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

Which voice shall I hear?

As for me at my house, we will serve the Lord.

No. 9172-Inspiration

Trick or Treat

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 30, 1973

SCRIPTURE: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole amour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole amour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:10-13.

Introduction

Have you ever played "Trick or Treat?" This is the season when many people in America will dress up in weird costumes, usually represented the most evil characters from real life and fiction and walked the streets at night in small groups of ghouls, monsters, witches and other hideous characters. It's called Halloween, a night when all of America celebrates evil, ugliness, death, murder, witchcraft and all other sorts of evil. Among the aspects of celebration is the idea of "Trick or Treat" where youth move from house to house, adorned in costumes looking for sweets. Many adults are familiar with trick or treat because it was a childhood game they played too.

Across America, there is an excitement about the celebration of Halloween.

Second to Christmas, Halloween, is one the largest celebrations in America. While it is becoming unpopular to promote the birth of Christ in Christmas celebrations, it is strangely acceptable to promote witchcraft, Satan and evil during Halloween.

Halloween gets its origin in Irish history. It appears that the Celtics celebrated their new year on November 1st. The eve of the New Year, the Celts celebrated Samhain, the Celtic Lord of death. The celebration marked the beginning of their new year that, in November would bring cold, darkness and decay. To celebrate the New Year the Druids built huge bonfires and citizens dressed in animal skins and heads used in sacrifices. For hundreds of years this Celtic tradition continued. In 837, Pope Gregory IV declared November 1st as "All Saints Day" a day to remember all of the men and women who died for the cause of Christ as martyrs. Since there was already a celebration in place for November 1st many people merged the practice of the Druids into the new custom of celebrating the Saints. As a result, on October 31st the church continued many of the Druid customs, on the Eve of Hallowed Saints Day. What they did on the 31st of October was connected to pagan Druids. What they did on

November 1st was a celebration of the life of the saints.

In time, many people celebrated the celebration of death, evil and Satan on 31st and very few people, especially those outside of the Catholic church, even knew that November 1st was Hallowed Saint's Day.

As time passed, other traditions were added to the evil celebration. Another bit of Irish folklore was added. The Irish tale of Jack O'Lantern came from the tale of a man named Jack who was a man who could not enter heaven or hell and was condemned to wander through the night with only a candle in a pumpkin for light.

Once in America, the Hallowed Saints Day celebration took a different twist. The Irish Catholics focused on all Saint's Day and a new tradition of moving from door to door asking for donations for food for the All Saints Day feast began. Those who gave to support the memory of the saints would be blessed. Those who refused would be cursed. At the end of the celebration, the villagers would dress in costumes to appear as ghosts so they escort the spirits of the dead to the outskirts of town before sunrise.

What began to materialize in by the 1920 is the practice of "Trick or Treat." Urban youth dressed in evil costumes, knocked on doors, asked for donations of goodies and punished those who did not give. Trashcans were turned over, windows were soaped, and other acts of vandalism were performed as "tricks" for those who did not give "treats." Trick or Treat became a threat. In the 1930's the Boy Scouts of the America tried to make trick or treating fun instead of fearful. The scouts and other organizations began organizing the "good" children to visit stores and shops in the day, but still dressed in costumes, to avoid the evil pranks of the tricksters at night.

Despite their efforts, the evil of the nightly prowl from house to house continued. Even if no evil was done to a non-participant, evil things were said about any resident who did not provide a treat.

Organizations like the Boy Scouts tried to organize ways for this holiday to become safe and fun; they started the practice of encouraging "good" children to visit shops and homes asking for treats, so as to prevent criminal acts. So even today, on the night before All Saints day, the celebration of evil is at its highest and hardly anyone remembers that the next day is All Saint's Day.

While we are trouble by death and murder all year, the world celebrates murder and death on Halloween night.

While we bemoan tragedy, mayhem and destruction all year, for one night every year we celebrate it!

While we preach and teach against Satan and all his works, on Halloween the nation joins to increasing flood of revelers who celebrate Satan and his followers.

As Christians, we should be aware that we are at war with Satan. He is the enemy, who will use every means at his disposal to defeat and destroy the cause of Christ. Rather that celebrate evil, we choose to celebrate good. We choose lift Jesus up and stomp Satan down..not just on Halloween, but every day of the year.

Exposition.

This text focuses on Paul writing to the church at Ephesus explaining the nature of the Christian enemy.

Paul reminded believers that the Christian struggle is not against any human being, but against an unseen force. Our struggle is against the influences of the devil on our society. The phrase he used was the "wiles of the devil" which means the subtle but destructive ways of Satan.

He repeatedly reminded the Ephesians that the Christian struggle is not against people but against the evil force that drives people to do evil things. That's what he meant by the phrase, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." The results of this influence is spiritual wickedness in high places.

It is through these influences that ticks have been played on the good people of comprise the kingdom of God.

It is these influences that have played cruel tricks on the world.

These evil influences have resulted in wars.

These evil influences have resulted in millions politically motivated deaths around the world.

It is these influences that have allowed injustice to flourish instead allowing justice run down like waters.

Therefore, Paul warns believers to be on guard against the subtle ways that Satan eases himself into our lives. We are warned to be aware of the tricks he pulls to destroy our hope and our faith.

Rather than allow Satan an opportunity to trick us again, we are encouraged to be vigilant and armed with whole amour of God to never give him a chance to invade the sacred trust that we have with our Lord and Savior.

Biblical Tricks or Treats

Believers have seen the devil operate. The bible is filled with instances of the devil playing evil, vicious tricks on the people of God.

Esau was the oldest of a set of twins by minutes. Because he was the oldest, he was destined to receive the inheritance. However, a cruel trick was played on him. When his father Isaac prepared to bless him, his mother sent him away and slipped his brother Jacob into the room, dressed as Esau and stole his blessing. This trick caused bad feeling between the brothers for many years.

Paul's words remind us that it was not the flesh and blood of the two brothers that should concern us but the evil spirit that motivated the trick.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira were members of the early church. All members of the first church pledged to sell their worldly goods and give to support the church. While others sold their possessions, these two decided to play a trick on the Lord and act as though they had given their share. They both dropped dead because of their trick.

Who motivated the selfish, greedy trick they played? Paul told the Ephesians that the real culprit for any evil act is Satan.

When Lot's wife left the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah just before the destruction, she was saved with the specific instruction not to look back. When she heard the destruction, she decided to play a quick trick on her husband and sneak a peek. She turned into a pillar of salt.

We have seen how Satan plays tricks and attempts to destroy the people of God on every hand.

Like a roaring lion, Satan goes about looking for ways to destroy God's people.

He plays tricks in our family.

He plays tricks with husbands and wives.

He plays tricks on our jobs.

He even plays tricks with our physical health and spiritual well being.

We are warned to always be on guard.

The Devil meant it for bad

There are times when the devil plays dirty tricks in our lives, meaning it for our destruction, but God turns it into good.

Job was a righteous man who had done no wrong. Yet, despite his righteousness, the devil played tricks with his life. He lost many of his family members, his wealth and most of his health. It was a cruel trick.

He meant it for Job's bad, but God took that trick, turned it around and used it for Job's good. The word says that Job's last days were better than his first days because God turned the trick into a treat.

Joseph was despised by his brothers because he dreamed. They played a cruel trick. They took his coat of many colors and threw him in a pit. They later sold him into slavery in Egypt. In Egypt, he was falsely accused and thrown into prison. Yet, despite the tricks played on him, God lifted him from the prison and raised him high in the kingdom. He became an important man in Egypt because God turned the devil's dirty trick into a treat.

Daniel was the subject of an evil trick. His enemies had a law passed that forbade anyone from praying to their God. They knew Daniel always prayed. Because of the new law, anyone who prayed would be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel continued to pray even while he was in the lion's den. The next morning the king was surprised to learn that Daniel was still alive, because God had turned a trick into a treat.

On a daily basis, the devil plays tricks on the lives of believers. We are able to survive, not because of our own goodness, but because God takes what the devil meant for bad and turns it into good.

Devil has only tricks, but God has treats.

The devil only has deception, but God has realities.

We know it's a trick when the devil says we are failures, because we serve a God who turns failure into success!

We know it's a trick when the devil says we can't, because we serve a God who

takes can't and turns it into "can."

We know it's a trick when the devil says we are defeated, because we serve a God who takes defeat and turns it into victory

We know it's a trick when the devil says we can't be healed, because we serve a God who has enough power in the hem of his garment to heal the sin sick soul.

We know it's a trick when the devil says we can't get up, because we serve a God who can pick us up and turn us around; and plant our feet on solid ground.

The devil has a trick for us, but God has a treat for the victims of all of the devils tricks.

Have you fallen because of the devil's tricks? We fall down but we get up?

Have you feet slipped on the sinking sand of life? Why not stand on the solid rock?

This rock is Jesus, the only one!

The devil played dirty tricks on him and nailed to an old rugged cross!

The devil played tricks on him and buried him in a borrowed tomb!

The devil played tricks on him and locked him in the grave for three days and nights!

But early Sunday morning!

God took the dirty trick and turned it into heavenly treat!

Early Sunday morning…he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9173-Anniv. Pastor (Female)

Walking In The Spirit of Love

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2005

SCRIPTURE:"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. 5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. 2 John 1:4-6

Introduction

How important is the Christian walk to you? Is there anything that could prompt you to change your walk and turn in another direction? The Christian life is one that is challenging and rewarding. Those who live for Christ have reached the conclusion that there is nothing they would trade for the Christian life experience. Walking in the spirit of God is inspirational. It is rejuvenating!

That is a bold statement because it means believers would reject everything the world offers if it means giving up their lives in Christ.

Anniversaries are milestones. They are points along the way where we pause to evaluate the journey.

They are also times when we think about the person who has been leading us in the journey, what has been taught and how well we have followed.

Anniversaries tell us how far we have come and they help us measure how far we have to go.

When we celebrate the anniversary of the pastorate, we reflect upon our journey toward perfection under the leadership of the shepherd of the flock.

After traveling 30 years in his earthly journey, Jesus reached a point of decision and reflection. The devil offered him a chance to satisfy himself but he refused to walk after the flesh but chose to follow the spirit.

In effect, he told the devil, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

As Christians, let us remain firm in our belief that the Christian walk is the godly way. Let us also salute the pastor the Lord has given us to guide us along the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's letter to Christians who were meeting in the homes of believers.

The letter is directed to the leader of the church group described as "lady." The

name “lady” in Greek means Kyria. It is the Greek equivalent to the Aramaic name Martha.

It is believed that the church members during the dispersion were often the victims of persecution. Addressing the letter to the “lady” instead of to the Greek, “Kyria” or the Aramaic “Martha” is believed by many scholars to be a code that would disguise their identities if the letter was intercepted.

Kyria was obviously a female leader of a house based church or possibly a city based network of house churches.

John encouraged this woman to continue in the truth of the Gospel. The truth he explored was the need for believers to continue walking in the spirit of love.

Kyria is addressed in a twofold manner, both as a mother and as leader of her house based congregation or the network of house based congregations. John uses the phrase “thy children” indicating either her own children or those who were followers of Christ under her care. “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth.” “Walking in truth” refers to the manner of life, meaning walking in obedience to the commandments from the Father.

The importance of Kyria’s role as leader of both her children and those who followed her in the church is emphasized in this text. Her main function as it related to the ministry of the word was to show the “children” or believers how to walk in the spirit of love in their daily lives.

The teaching that the Lord Jesus gave was “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” — not just because you are called “Christian” but because Christians love one another.

The text lays out the challenge of those who lead believers. The challenge is to show believers how to balance our daily walk with both truth and love. Without this balance, any church will be lopsided. The role of the leader in this text was to teach believers how to love and walk in truth.

What Kyria was charged to do, was emphasized by all of the apostles. She was charged to teach believers how to walk in the spirit of love.

The Nature of our Walk

The term walk is used to indicate an actual physical act of walking. It is also used to symoblize the activities of an individual life.

In this sense, a person can walk to his neighborhood store; this is the physical interpretation. However, a person who pursues a certain lifestyle is also said to have a “walk” in life.

The Christian is to walk in newness of life, (Rom. 6:4), after the spirit, Rom. 8:4, in honesty, (Rom. 13:13), by faith, (2 Cor. 5:7), in good works, (Eph. 2:10), in love, (Eph. 5:2), in wisdom, (Col. 4:5), in truth, (2 John 1:4), after the commandments of the Lord, (2 John 1:6).

Where Not to Walk

The diligent pastor continues to teach believers through precept and example where "NOT" to walk.

We are repeatedly warned in scripture not to walk after the flesh, Rom. 8:4; not after the manner of men, 1 Cor. 3:3; not in craftiness, 2 Cor. 4:2; not by sight, 2 Cor. 5:7; not in the vanity of the mind, Eph. 4:17; not disorderly, 2 Thess. 3:6."

Galatians 5:16-17 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

In every way imaginable, the pastor must help believers understand that they are never away from the sight of God. He always sees us because he never slumbers or sleeps. Consider the man who decided to steal a few of the appliances and things from his neighbor's home and sell them for extra money.

Inside the home, he saw jewelry, and clothing items that would be valuable. As he began to bag a few items, he heard a voice that said, "Jesus is watching you." He was horrified. Someone saw him. Then the voice yelled again, "Jesus is watching you!"

In a panic, he turned on the light only to see a talking parrot. He was relieved. "Was that you talking?" The man said, "Sure was!" Answered the parrot. "What's you name?" Asked the man? "Charlie." Came the answer. "That's a dumb name to give a parrot. What kind of idiot would name a parrot Charlie?" The parrot answered, "The same kind of idiot that would leave all this jewelry and money at home and name that killer pit bull behind you, Jesus!" -He learned the hard way that Jesus is always watching.

Where to Walk

T he pastor of a congregation has the important but delicate job of teaching believers where to walk.

While the text in Galatians 5:16-20 emphasizes where believers should not walk; at some point the diligent pastor must show believers "where to walk."

The Christian faith is not a long list of "Thou Shall Nots." However, it is a simple list of "How tos."

The Christian faith does not say, "Keep Off The Grass." It is a faith that says, "Walk on the Sidewalk."

The Christian walk requires balance and rhythm.

Every believer should have a regular routine or rhythm that promotes the Christian life walk.

Regular bible reading at a set time each day establishes a rhythm, a pattern and a routine that regularly feeds the soul. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." As such, a believer who has no pattern of bible reading runs the risk of walking in the dark.

Prayer at a set time each day and more if need be helps strengthen the believer's walk. The word teaches us to pray regularly and with fervor. James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Bible study should be a part of a believer's walk. The easiest bible study is Sunday School. 2 Timothy 2:15, reminds us to "study to show thyself approved."

Worship is a necessary part of the believer's walk. Very few real Christians are comfortable when they are repeatedly absent from worship services. Hebrews 10:25 warns Christians not to "forsake" or "skip" public worship. Worship inspires Christian living. It motivates service. Those who frequently skip public worship break the rhythm of their spiritual walk.

The Pastor's Walk

Pastors who have walked the walk as well as talked the talk, deserve our praise and prayerful support.

Our praise and acts of gratitude encourages weary pastors to continue walking the walk themselves as they also show us how to walk.

Members of a congregation watch the walk of their pastor and draw inspiration from each step. They resolve that no matter how long they have been on the battlefield that will continue. I can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but lead by a faith driven pastor they say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but encouraged by their pastors they resolve, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans, others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all watch the pastor's walk and say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

Why do we salute our pastors? Because they have taught us to walk in faith.

Why do we honor them with special days? Because they have taught us how to call on the name of the Lord!

When our strength is failing, we may not remember to call on El-Shaddai, the almighty God..but there is a name!

When we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we may not remember, Jehova-Rohi, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"..but there is a name!

When we are feeling like we're making this journey alone, we may not remember "Emmanuel" the everlasting God, but there is a name!

We love our pastors because they continually remind us that, there is a name.

It is the name songwriter wrote about when he declared, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me

I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It's the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved!

It's the name of Jesus!

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me."

He loved me so much that he hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9174-Blessings

Obtaining the Favor of the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 13, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." Psalm 5:12; For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD." Proverbs 8:35

Introduction

Do you have favorites? Most of us have a few favorites in nearly every category of life. We have a favorite color and football team. We have a favorite hat we like to wear and some have a favorite pair of shoes. We have favorite television shows, favorite singers, and favorite songs. We have favorite teachers, preachers and churches. We even have favorite foods, such as bologna sandwiches or French Fries. We have favorite sides of the bed, favorite soaps and favorite colognes and perfumes. When we think about it, we all have a few favorites.

Most of us can remember persons who were favorites in school. Remember the teacher's pet? The "pet" was the one who was given permission to "take" names and perform other "adult" tasks in the class. The teacher's pet always volunteered to do things for the teacher including passing out papers, erasing the black board and many other special tasks. In time, that special volunteer received special treatment and sometimes a special seat at the front of the class.

In the corporate world, many get opportunities for advancement because someone in a position of authority likes their work and makes opportunities available to them. Sometimes we are promoted because someone returned a favor to person who is impressed with our performance.

Sometimes playing favorites can cause trouble. Jacob favored Joseph because of his special love for his mother and it caused problems. Jacob's mother played favorites between him and his brother Esau, there was trouble. Playing favorites in the family, in relationships and many other areas can often be troublesome.

When we ask someone to "do me a favor", we are requesting him or her to do something for us in return for mutual goodwill that we have shown them in the past. Many have come to learn a great truth about favors, "favors are once received, but twice paid." If you ask a favor, be prepared to repay it twice, because favors know

their way back to your front door.

What about God, does he play favorites?

God does not play favorites when it comes to salvation; everyone shares the same degree of salvation. Acts 10:34-35 makes it clear that God is not partial. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." God has no favorite race or class of people. Any person that chooses to fear and respect him and carry himself righteously with obedience is accepted into the category of "favorites" of God. He does not exclude us, but we must include ourselves.

As Christians, we know that God does favors, little extra things, for believers who obey him and live righteously. These "favors" are done because our obedience has endeared us to him. In essence, God "likes us" and does many favors for us. The favors he does are not exclusive. Any believer can receive the "favor" of God. What he does for one, he will do for the other, if they too will believe in him, obey him and live righteously.

Exposition

This text focuses upon David as he indicates how God bestows favor on the righteous.

The idea of God's favor is a hidden truth of scripture. Grace and favor are similar principles in scripture. Both terms come from the same root word but they have slightly different meanings.

Grace is unmerited goodwill. It is what is received although we do not deserve it. Salvation is an evidence of God's grace. We who are saved have done nothing to deserve it, yet we have it.

Favor is different. A Favor is an extra pleasantry or help that God bestows upon us because of our relationship with him. Unlike Grace, which is unmerited, favors are merited to a degree.

David said the Lord will bless those who are righteous with favor, which will surround him like a shield. David's son, Solomon wrote in Proverbs 8:35, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord."

These texts indicate that favors from God can be obtained. We can get God to show us extra kindnesses and goodwill that will seem to those who observe from a distance to be a shield all around us.

David indicates that the key to obtaining favor is righteous living and obedience.

Those who fail to obey God lose favor with him. Jeremiah 16:13 says, "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favor." Isaiah 27:11 also indicates God's attitude toward the disobedient "..Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor."

Grace indicates that God does not play favorites when it comes to salvation. Even

those who do not deserve it can be saved. However, among those who are saved, God does show special favor to those who are righteous, loyal and obedient.

How to Obtain Favors from God

We receive the Grace of God out of his mercy and kindness. We are saved because Christ loved us and died for us on Calvary. We obtain Grace by accepting Christ as our personal savior. What about Favor? How do we obtain favors from God?

OBEDIENCE: To obtain favor from God we must be obedient. God does not smile on us if we are disobedient to his command. God smiles on us when we live and give righteously. Remember Peter's words in Acts 10:34-35, he that lives in the fear of the Lord and lives righteously is accepted. Others are rejected. Cain and Abel show us how two men can come before the Lord, one obtains a favor from the Lord and the other does not. We must live and give righteously. Living righteously implies doing God's will every day. Giving righteously implies sharing our financial gifts and spiritual gifts according to God's plan. To obtain a favor from God we must both "live and give" righteously.

PRAY FOR FAVOR: We usually ask for favors. Those who are obedient to God and live according to his will are in a position to ask for favor. Job 33:26 says, "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness." The certainty of getting a favor from God is indicated here. Job says, "And he will be favorable unto him." In Psalm 106:4 David is shown asking for favor. "Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." Those who live and give by God's rules are expected and encouraged to ask him for favors.

Sometimes we ask God to show favor to others on our behalf. There are millions of people today who are enjoying some aspect of life as a result of a favor request of a saint. While Israel complained and grumbled in the wilderness, Moses prayed to God and asked a favor for them. In Numbers 11:15 Moses said, "If I have found favor in thy sight.." bless them with meat to eat. In a similar sense, many today have meat to eat, not because of our goodness, but because God is showing favor to a saint somewhere who has prayed for us.

WISE ACTIONS PRODUCE FAVOR: Whenever we act wisely, making life choices that embrace the will of God, we earn the favor of God. Wise actions, according to the will of God, is referred to as wisdom. Wisdom is what is referred to in Proverbs 8:35, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD." When we act wisely and respond to life situations by asking the question, 'What would God have me do?" Then God is pleased. He smiles on us and gives us favor.

When we choose a Godly wife or husband, it shows wisdom and God shows favor on the relationship.

When we choose to show mercy and to forgive, it shows wisdom and God smiles and shows us favor.

When we have a thirst for truth rather than lies, God smiles on us and shows us

favor.

When we demonstrate that we can patiently wait for God to move in any life situation, God smiles on us and shows us favor.

When God Smiles on us

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that good things happen to those who are favored of the Lord.

It is good to be blessed by the Lord, but it is even better to enjoy his favor.

Those who are favored by the Lord are those who get more than they deserve. They get the shield of God around them.

Samuel was the greatest prophet of his time, but only because he enjoyed the favor of the Lord. 1 Samuel 2:26 says, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men."

Job's life went through many ups and downs but he survived every test because he enjoyed the favor of the Lord. In Job 10:12 he said, "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

Mary was selected to be the surrogate mother for the Christ child because she enjoyed the favor of the Lord. Luke 1:30 says, "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God."

David was the greatest King of Israel because he enjoyed the favor of the Lord. Acts 7:46 says David was a man, "Who found favor before God.."

God smiles on those who have his favor.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God has smiled on me.

When God smiles on us, he gives us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

—ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

—COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because God favors us we are able to:

—Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

—Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

—Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

Because God smiles on us, we have:

—Joy in spite of our sorrows: Peace in spite of our problems

—Contentment in spite of our burdens; Assurance in spite of our frustrations

—Comfort in spite of our pain; Victory in spite of our defeats

No wonder the song write declared, "God has smiled on me. He has made me glad!"

I'm glad that he is a wonder working God!

I'm glad that he is a favor giving God!

I'm glad that he is a soul saving God!

I'm glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!

I'm glad that he carried it to Golgotha's hill!

I'm glad that he died for me out on Calvary!

No. 9175-Member Improvement

When The Chickens Come Home To Roost

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2005

SCRIPTURE: And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Luke 22:61

Introduction

What happens when our past comes back to haunt us? Has it ever happened to you? It's when a chapter in your life that was once closed is suddenly reopened or revisited. It's when you stare at the results of a failed experience returned before your eyes. In happens in all areas of life. It's that moment when you look at the bad habits of one of your children and realize that you are looking at yourself at the same age. It is very frustrating when we see it unfold in front of our eyes.

In 1963 after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, most of white America became angry with Black Muslim leader Malcolm X when he made a disturbing analogy. Malcolm said that America operates with a double standard. Abroad, it opposes governments that do not support freedom for all citizens; then denies freedoms to its own. In addition, he said, the nation attempts to assassinate and remove leaders of opposing nations through the covert actions of the CIA and other secret government organizations. He said the assassination of John F. Kennedy was a case of "When the chickens come home to roost."

The phrase, "When the chickens come home to roost" is a colloquialism that refers to the tendency of chickens on a farm to roam freely. In the day, they are often seen under the house or pecking long distances from the coop. However, when the sun begins to set, without fail, chickens will always come back home to perch themselves on the roosts.

In America today we are living in difficult times, caused partially by the errors and mistakes of our national past. The chickens have come home to roost.

We have promoted violence and explicit sex in the media, even to the point that daytime soaps and cartoons are now filled with violent and irreverent material. The results are before us. We have a violent society that takes murder and violence lightly

and expects every good movie to have at least one hot sex scene. The chickens have come home to roost.

In the 1960's we began a "War on Poverty" that was supposed to eliminate poverty in America. Decades later, we see a subclass developed before us. This subclass has become dependent upon public assistance, food allotments, free lunch, subsidized rent and other acts of charities. Before us today is a generation of which a growing number is trapped in an endless cycle that is destroying our families and the moral fiber of our communities. The chickens have come home to roost.

We have removed God from our schools and public places. Prayer at athletic events, assemblies or in classrooms has been abolished. In many areas, Christ has been removed from Christmas, substituted with an X or a mere "Happy Holidays." Now, we see a nation that has less respect for God and no fear of him. It is a nation that is gradually degenerating. The chickens have come to roost.

Even in the church, the chickens have come home to roost. There are many who are looking at the results many years of neglect and spiritual decay before. Churches that allowed their men's programs to die are now frustrated with the scarcity of males in the fellowship. Churches that have treated their teaching ministries lightly have fallen prey to "Praise, Worship, and Prosperity" cults that have outgrown the body of Christ. The chickens have come home to roost.

As Christians, we know that whatever we do today, will meet us again in a few years. We should do our best to lift Christ up before this present generation. When we fail to do what we should do with enthusiasm and power, we deny him to a world of unbelievers. That denial will come back to haunt us one day, "when the chickens come home to roost."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he tells Peter that he would deny him instead of standing with him.

Jesus was on trial and being falsely accused. On the outside, while Jesus was being tried on the inside, Peter waited to hear the result. As people recognized him as a disciple of Christ Peter became afraid and began to deny knowing Christ. After his third denial, he heard the cockcrow. Then he remembered what Christ had told him earlier, that before the cock crowed he would deny him three times.

Peter was one of Christ's elect leaders. There were 12 disciples selected out of many. Peter was among three out of the 12 disciples that became Jesus' inner circle. Yet, when Christ needed him the most, Peter denied him.

The crowing of the rooster, perched on its roost, reminded Peter just how far he had strayed.

The crowing of the rooster, firmly attached to its roost, forced him to look at the contradictions of his life. In private, he professed a great faith in Christ, but in the face of a hostile public, he denied him.

The crowing of the rooster brought it all home.

Peter was so hurt when he looked at how far he had drifted away from the savior that it made him weep. Later, he ultimately, revived himself and became a strong leader of the faith, but not before the "chickens came home to roost."

Church leaders must answer too

Today, there are many in the church who began their service in the same way that Peter began; they came with a fiery passion that his faded almost to a point of denial. However, believers need to be aware that we will give an account of everything we do for the Lord as members of the body of Christ.

GIVING: When the chickens come home to roost, members who began their service as tithers but have reduce themselves to "nickel and dime" donors, will stand before God and answer Malachi's question, "Will a man rob God?" In reality, many believers rob God each week, forcing the church to operate at less than its maximum potential. The same believers often use portions of funds that would have been their tithes to purchase lottery tickets, gamble or to pay their cable bill. Such members do the same as Peter, they deny Christ at the offering table.

WORSHIP: When the chickens come home to roost, those who refuse to worship or sit in worship services like statues refusing to say "Amen" or show any sign of gratitude for the blessings of the Lord, will find themselves outside of the ark of safety and in their place, the rocks will cry out "glory and honor!" When God has blessed us, we should be willing to praise him and lift him up in the sanctuary so that everyone can see the joy we share in the Lord. Instead, many whom God has blessed richly, choose to stay home regularly and refuse to praise him publicly, or if they do worship, it is in a very unresponsive manner. Like Peter, these believers deny Christ in the sanctuary.

BIBLE STUDY: When the chickens come home to roost, Sunday school teachers who refuse to come to teacher's meeting and members who refuse to come and be taught, will remember the words of 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly diving the word of truth." Too many believers are trying to live the Christian life without learning the word. Others are attempting teach information without first learning it themselves. Those who refuse to study the word, like Peter, deny him by refusing to study of the study of the word.

LEADERSHIP: When the chickens come home to roost, Church leaders who fight and jockey for power, position and control in the church, will remember Jesus' words that, "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant." When James and John asked Jesus for high seats and positions, he warned them that prestige in the kingdom does not come from titles but from service. Unfortunately, there are many who fight for control and power in the church, who are unable to drink from the cup of service; instead, they deny Christ in humility and followship.

PREACHING: When the chickens come home to roost, associate ministers who constantly want to preach but fail to follow the instruction regime of the pastor, will remember the words of Paul instructing them to study, follow and humble themselves.

Those who share the preaching ministry should follow the model of Paul and Timothy. The associates should learn, study and carry out ministries assign to them in preparation for the time that their turn comes. However, today, many associates are just that "associates" who sit in the pulpit, but deny Christ in the fulfillment of the ministry.

HOMOSEXUALITY: When the chickens come home to roost, gays and homosexuals who flaunt themselves openly in worship saying they were born gay, should remember Christ's words to the rich young ruler, "You must be born again." Many churches have turned a blind eye to this growing problem. God loves every person, despite his or her sexual purposes. However, does not love the sins of his people. Because the church is often silent in this area, homosexuality even within the church is increasing. In the area of morality, often the church denies Christ.

Like Peter, many believers have denied Christ in one or more ways. Their actions speak louder than their words because they declare, "I don't know him!"

Reap What We Sow

If there is one certainty in life it is that we shall reap what we sow. Moreover, we shall reap in accordance to that which we have sown. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Those who are intolerant of the views of the others will be the most irritated when their views are not tolerated. That's when the chickens come home to roost.

Those who are impatient with others, will be the most disgruntled when others complain that they themselves act too slow. That's when the chickens come home to roost.

Those who are insensitive to the needs of the poor or elderly will be among the first to complain when they themselves appear neglected when the chickens come home to roost.

Those who steal from others will cry the loudest when someone steals from them. They'll learn that, when the chickens come home to roost.

Those who stab others in the back, will die a slow death when they become the victims of their own ways, when the chickens come home to roost.

Those who pass up a person in distress along the way will complain the loudest when they themselves are passed up, when the chickens come home to roost.

The tragedy of evil deeds is that we do them also unto Christ. In Matthew 25:40 he reminds us that what we have done to the "least of these" we have done also to him. It will all be remembered, when the chickens come home to roost

Evil deeds haunt us, good deeds reward us

Yet while the word teaches us that the evil that we do comes back to us,

there is also a promise to those who do good, it will come back as well.

We are encouraged to do as much good as we can for as many as we can as long as we can.

If we sow goodness, when the master returns, instead of haunting us with punishments he will have blessings for us.

Therefore every believer should do great works in the church and lift the cause of Christ.

We should cast our bread on the water. Casting our bread on the waters means serving with the same passion and fire that we brought to the faith in the beginning.

When we cast our bread on the waters it will come back, but not without a blessing.

Casting our bread upon the waters, means reaching out to hungry people with a loaf for the spirit and a word of hope for the soul!

Casting our bread upon the waters, means reaching out for the homeless with a comfortable place to rest and a chance for a heavenly home!

Casting our bread upon the waters means looking beyond the rough exteriors of wayward children and seeing the sensitive interiors that cry out for love and affection!

Casting our bread upon the waters is giving a helping hand when we see no chance that the favor would ever be returned.

Casting our bread upon the water means to return to the Sunday School, Usher Board, Women's Ministry, Deacons service, Music Ministry and a plethora of
areas of service as resolve that, "For God I'll live and for God I'll die."

When the Lord pays, that which we have cast upon the water comes back in mighty ways!

We must tell the world about the bread of life! We must tell them about the Love of God through his Son Jesus Christ!

We must tell everyone we meet about the Lord.

We need to tell somebody about the Love of God!

We need to tell somebody about Jesus! Who died! And arose from the grave!

Tell them he's coming back again! I hear him saying:

"You helped the poor and the needy...Come and go with me!"

"You gave a plate of food to a hungry man...come and go with me!"

"You stood up for those who could not defend themselves...come and go with me!"

"You showed compassion to the helpless....come and go with me!"

"Come and go with me to my father's house!"

In my father's house there is peace!

In my father's house there is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 9176-Membership Improvement

Wake Up, Straighten and Fly Right

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2005

***SCRIPTURE:** And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. Romans 13:11-14.*

Introduction

Have you ever been bent out of shape? "Bent" is an African-American colloquialism that usually refers to persons who are completely messed up. Sometimes it is alcoholism, drug addiction or a plethora of other possible maladies. Those who are "bent" are usually lulled into a denial of their situation and do not accept their position at all. They are "bent" so bad that straightening up seems out of the question.

There are many today who asleep. They are messed up, tangled up and tied up into the world so tightly that they cannot get loose. Yet, deep inside they want to do what is right.

Consider the pastor who tried to a get a man to come to church for many years. Each time he went to see the man his invitation was always refused. The man said, "Reverend, when I get straight, I'll promise you, I'll come to church." The minister tried to persuade him to come to Jesus while he had time, but the man always refused saying, "I can't come the way I am. When I get straight. I'll be there." Before the pastor could visit the man again he received news that the man died in his sleep. At his funeral, the pastor struggled to find a kind word to say about the man who never came to the church once in life. The pastor finally said, "My friends there is one thing that I can say about our friend. He kept his promise. He promised me he would come to church when he got straight. Well, now he's straight and there he is."

Straightening up is difficult for many people. Straightening up requires us to wake up and change our direction in life. The late Nat King Cole had a hit tune that was sung around America. Some of you may remember the words:

Buzzard took a monkey for a ride in the air
Monkey thought that everything on the square
Buzzard tried to throw the monkey off of his back
But the monkey turned around and said, “Hey listen Jack!”

Straighten up and fly right
Straighten up and stay right
Straighten up and fly right
Cool down bubba don’t you blow your top

Ain’t no use in jiving
What’s the use of diving
Straighten up and fly right
Cool down bubba don’t you blow your top

Nat King Cole’s humorous little song had America saying words that carried very serious implications, we all need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

When it comes to our relationship with God, we need to wake up straighten up and fly right!

When it comes to our relationships with the church, we need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

When it comes to our relationship with each other, we need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

As Christians, we know that it is essential for us to repent and turn away from sin, if we intend to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Nat King Cole said it one way, but Jesus said it in no uncertain terms: if want to enter the kingdom, we must be born again.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul’s epistle to the believers in Roman about the importance of Christians being awake and alert.

The Roman world was extremely liberal and embraced a variety of ungodly believers. Christians living in Rome were often tempted to involve themselves in ungodly activities sponsored by the Roman state.

Paul warned that Christians should belong to the light, not the dark. He characterized the loose living and low morals of the Romans as reflecting darkness. He characterized the Christian life as being that of walking in the light. Paul said Christians should be awake and alert, behaving as those who have seen the light of the Gospel. The call to awaken is the call to alertness and awareness of the world that surrounds every believer. His message is very clear, wake up because the day is at hand.

The decadence of the world involves a multitude of sins. In this text, Paul lists a number of sins that believers should avoid. Believers are encouraged to “put on

Christ" —that is, make Christ Lord of our daily lives and to "make no provision for the flesh." We are encouraged to avoid anything that will cause us to sin.

The call to wake up is also a call for believers to straighten up and prepare for the coming of the Lord.

Wake Up

There are many in the church who are asleep to the sin that is in the world around them. The storms of life are raging, but ye they sleep.

Just as Jonah was asleep onboard the ship while all the men on worried about their fate, there are many who just a guilty as Jonah who are asleep to storm of sin that is raging around them.

Those who are asleep are sleep walking. Their eyes are open but yet they remain sound asleep, walking in a world of darkness.

Some love to live in the dark. If they were vegetables, we would call them potato people. Better yet, we call them "tater" people. Taters love the dark.

TATERS LIVE IN THE DARK: Taters are products of the dark. They grow off the work of other plant components, the leaves, which are above ground doing all of the work. Yet in the church, there are millions of "tater people" who sit in the dark and let others do all of the work. They are not sinful people, they have Christ in them, but they have not reached a point of being "In Christ." Taters need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

TATERS WILL ROT IF LEFT ALONE: Although taters live in the dark, the very darkness they enjoy will destroy them if they are not uprooted in time. A tater, left in the ground too long will rot. Tater people are the same way, that's why God's Holy Spirit constantly tugs at them to get them to move out of the darkness, into the marvelous light. In the dark, their fate is sealed. In the light, there is life. Taters need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

TATERS HAVE EYES BUT THEY CANNOT SEE: Taters have many eyes but they cannot see a thing. There are many tater people who are the same way, they have eyes but they cannot see a thing. They cannot see how God operates in their lives. They cannot see God's plan for them. They cannot understand God's ways. Neither can they "see" God's vision. Taters need to wake up, straighten up and fly right.

TATERS MUST BE PREPARED TO BE USED: As a food, taters generally are not ready, just as they are. To get a tater ready to eat it must be fried, or baked, or boiled or mashed other otherwise prepared. While there are a few folks who like them raw, most folks stay away from an unprepared tater. Tater people are the same way, they are not useful just being taters, they must be prepared first. Sometimes God prepares tater people by exposing them to just enough heat in life to make them usable. He does not fry the French fry until its black, but just enough! He does not boil a potato until it falls apart, but until it's soft enough to mash. There are some tater people who have hard personalities, terrible ways and corrupt attitudes. They are not ready yet, God is still turning up the heat and he is not through yet. Taters need to straighten up and

fly right.

TATER PEOPLE HAVE A VARIETY OF NAMES: The Tater personality usually results in a variety of descriptions. There is Dick-tater, he wants to tell everyone what to do. There is Agi-Tater, who always stirs up dissent. Hesi-tater, who always puts off doing that which is necessary; Ro-tater, who moves from one thing to another. Tater people, by whatever name we call them, seem to reflect darkness rather than light. They have a light, but it never shines. Taters need to straighten up and fly right.

Straighten up

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider our need to clean up and straighten up.

Paul says in verse 13 that we should "walk honestly" in the world. That means we must straighten up. In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul wrote, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with witch you were called, with all lowliness & gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."

When we straighten up, we begin to live a life that is pleasing in the sight of God.

Paul says that when we straighten up we will put off a few things: Revelry & drunkenness: wild parties, sexual orgies, brawls, and riots, Lewdness & lust: sexual immoralities, Strife & envy:

To really straighten up, believers must walk in the light.

When we turn from the darkness and walk in the light we show we know what it means to straighten up and fly right.

If those who walk in the dark are "potato people" then those who walk in the light would have to be called "tomato people." Or "Mater" people.

When you straighten up and fly right you become a Mater instead of a Tater.

While taters live in the dark, maters live in the sunshine. Maters bloom in the garden, grow on the vine and abide in the word of the Lord! That is what Jesus meant when he said in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

When you straighten up you become one God's "Mater people."

MATERS ARE READY TO SERVE. While taters must be prepared to serve, maters live ready to serve. A gardener can walk through the garden, see a fine mater and pick it right there. Mater people are ready to serve the Lord. Maybe that's what Isaiah 6:8 means when it says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

The continuous testimony of a true believer is, "Use me Lord in Your Service"

If you need me to pray, use me!

If you need me to sing, use me!

If you need me to wave my hand, use me Lord in your service!

MATER PEOPLE HAVE MANY SEEDS: While taters have to be cut up before they can grow, Maters have seeds. They have plenty of seeds. Seeds for growth and seeds of faith. Mater people are always planting seeds for their growth and

prosperity.

Maters are known by a variety of names, we may know a few of them of them. There is:

ANI-MATER, who takes things that don't usually move and makes them come to life. If you have a program that is dead, you need an ani-mater to get it going again!

AMALGA-MATER, who takes things that are loose and unconnected and brings them together

ESTI-MATER AND APPROXI-MATER, two folks who always have an idea of what it will take to get a job done!

ACCLI-MATERS, those who help others to get adjusted in a new situations. They have a special touch that settles rather than disturbs, inspires rather than confuses.

We need to be careful in life, because there are some taters that try to look like maters; they are generally called "imi-tators!"

One thing about mater people is that they can be sealed by the Holy Ghost.

Someone remembers grandma, picking maters in the garden!

Someone remembers grandma going to the store to buy the Mason Jars!

Someone remembers grandma boiling those jars in hot water while she'd get her peaches, pears together. Somewhere in the bunch, grandma would also include a few maters. When the jars were sterilized, the maters are put in the Mason jars while the water is hot. Grandma would say, "Don't screw the top too tight, wait for it to pop!" When it pops, she'd say it's time to lock it down.

When the maters were sealed in the Old Mason Jars, grandma would store them away. It did not matter how, long because they were sealed.

That's what Ephesians 1:18 meant when it says, "...after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

When we are sealed with the Holy Ghost we have a testimony to give and a story to tell!

It's a story of how he brought me out of darkness, into his marvelous light!

It's story of how he woke me up out of my deep sleep and straightened up my life!

It's a story of how he picked me up and turned me around!

It's a story of how he died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

Jesus gave me a light and I'm going to let it shine!

Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!

No. 9177-Youth

The Fantastic Four

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 27, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Daniel 1:17; "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel 3:24-25

Introduction

Do you remember the comic book, the Fantastic Four? There are many super heroes that have fueled the fantasies of children and adults for generations. Many of these super heroes have been in our lives for several generations. Generally, they fight evil and champion the cause of good.

Who is your favorite?

For some, Superman is the best of the super heroes. He came from the Planet Krypton just before it was destroyed. Because of the yellow sun of this galaxy he assumed super powers that allowed him to leap tall buildings with a single bound, become more powerful than a locomotive and run faster than a speeding bullet.

There are others too. Remember the Incredible Hulk? He was the mild mannered man who was exposed to gamma rays which turned him into a green monster when he became angry. Spiderman was able to climb buildings and perform incredible acrobatics with a new found ability to emulate the web tendencies of spiders. There are others including: Batman and Robin, Wonder Woman and the Green Lantern. A new generation was exposed to the Power Rangers and an African-American super-hero, Spawn.

Many of the super heroes of Marvel comics have been presented to a new generation through Hollywood. Nearly every comic book hero has a movie. This year, one of the block busters was the movie, "The Fantastic Four."

The Fantastic Four became super heroes as a result of a mistaken scrambling of their DNA. One came to possess the ability to stretch like rubber. A female member of the group soon realized she had the ability to become invisible. Another had a very hot temper and when he was pushed turned into a human torch. The fourth could feel no pain. Together the Fantastic Four were able to perform powerful feats, overcoming evil as they championed the cause of good in the world.

The Fantastic Four, like all of the super heroes, were ordinary people. Many of them like Spiderman and Super Boy were just teenagers. Yet, at some point they came to know that they possessed extra abilities, under certain conditions, that could be used for the betterment of mankind.

America cheered as it watched the Fantastic Four on screen and read the comics, but did you know that God has a Fantastic Four relationship with every believer?

Through his presence in the life of a believer God transforms an average student, band member, football player, dancer or cheerleader, from being just an ordinary person, to a spirit driven achiever. This Fantastic Four is not the stuff of comic books or movies. This Fantastic Four is the winning team of The Father, The Son, The Holy Ghost and You!-The Fantastic Four.

As Christians, we are strengthened by the knowledge that God helps us rise about the ordinary to do the extraordinary. Together with our unseen backup team, every believer steps into the world, not as one person, but with the assurance that three others are always present. What a team, the trinity and me!

Exposition

This text focuses on three believers who acknowledge the permissive will of God, the power of God and their acceptance of his will.

The King of Babylon conquered the entire region of Judah and carried most of its craftsmen, scholars and thinkers back to Babylon. He began a three year program to repatriate these Jews so that they would accept Chaldean customs. Among the three, were four men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

commonly known as Daniel, Meshack, Shadrack and Abednego. The four were adamant believers in God's kingdom. They prayed regularly and even refused the king's efforts to re-educate them to the Chaldean political viewpoint and life-style.

It wasn't long before it became obvious to all who observed them, that these four men had a special anointing. They were able to do things that others could not do. The Three Hebrew Boys had great wisdom and knowledge. Daniel had the gift of wisdom and the special ability to interpret dreams.

What they said and did was fantastic. Their deeds and wise acts were fantastic. Their unyielding faith in God was fantastic as well.

Daniel interpreted a dream for the King. In so doing Daniel was given the opportunity to serve as a prime minister or leader of governors in the land. It was a position that he refused. However, he recommended similar positions for the three young men who were with him.

As foreigners and powerful political leaders in the land, the three young men and even Daniel himself, were often the subject of efforts to oust them from power. One such move came when the King erected a statue of himself and sent out a decree that said when certain music was played that everyone should bow and worship his image. Those who refused to do so would be punished by being cast into a fiery furnace the same day. The king's Chaldean advisors made certain that the resistance of the three was noted. The Chaldeans, who denounced Daniel and his associates to the

king, were astrologers who wanted to predict a happier future for the king and his realm.

When the music played, as expected, three of the nation's highest governmental officers refused to bow. The king addressed them by asking whether they understood the order and the punishment for those who defied the order. They acknowledged that they understood, but they still refused to obey the order.

In a frustrating moment, the king reiterated his command and the punishment. When he saw that the three Hebrew Boys would not bow he asked, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?"

In answering the King, the Hebrew Boys made three affirmations: That God may permit it to be so, that he was able to deliver them, and that even if God chose not to answer as they wanted, they still had no plans to disobey him.

The King ordered that the furnace be prepared, but this time that it should be prepared seven times hotter than it had been on other days. The three young men were thrown into the furnace but were not burned by the fire. There was no smell of smoke or fire on their clothes as well. As the people waited for them to scream, there was silence. Instead, the king looked in and called out to them. He then noticed an astonishing revelation. Instead of three men in the fire, he saw four. The fourth one, he said, looked like the Son of God.

Four Gifts

Every believer is given special gifts with which to help build the kingdom of God. Every person does not have the same gift. The purpose of the gifts is to help expand God's kingdom. Like the Hebrew Boys and Daniel, there will be many who will attempt to entice young believers to use their gifts in ways that will not be pleasing to God. In addition, there will be those who will be "haters" or those who will unfairly criticize believers because of their gifts. Daniel 1:17 lists the four gifts of the Hebrew Boys that made them stand out in their generation.

KNOWLEDGE: The gift of knowledge is a unique gift. It is the unique ability to acquire vast amounts of information, mentally catalog that information, and recall it when it is needed. 1 Corinthians 12:8 list "knowledge" as one of the categories of gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are many who have acquired knowledge through hard work and long hours of study. Others seem to have knowledge without much study at all. We watch contestants on television game shows such as Jeopardy and "Who wants to be a millionaire?" and we wonder how the contestants learn so much information. Afterwards many contestants report that they rarely study at all, it just comes to them. The gift of knowledge is essential to building the kingdom. God needs those with knowledge to help broaden and expand the kingdom of God. Youth who have this unusual gift should decide early in life whether they will use their gift for doing good in the name of the Lord or for personal enrichment or worse, evil purposes.

SKILL: Skill refers to developed proficiency. Skill is developed through training and experience. Whereas knowledge is a gift, skill is a learned attribute that is accentuated when it is supported by an associated gift. A person can become a skilled

floral designer, through training and experience. That same training, in the hands of a person born with a natural eye for beauty, can do wonders with simple things. Skill requires practice, many hours of practice. The great musicians play well because they practice regularly. Writers write! Singers, sing! Communicators speak every time they get an opportunity. In addition, skill is obtained from observing and studying the techniques of those who have mastered a skill or a craft. The prophet Elisha studied in the school of prophets. He watched and observed Elijah for many years. Elijah showed him what it took to be a prophet and the young man watched. He too, became skilled in prophetic works, scripture and communion with God.

LEARNING: The Hebrew Boys were young men who took the time to learn. They learned foreign language because they were able to speak with the Chaldeans. They learned math and economics because they were government advisors of Babylon economic policy. They learned nutrition because they refused to eat unhealthy foods. They were considered special because of their learning. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "Study to shew thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth." Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear and increase learning." The young would be wise to get all of the learning they can possibly attain while there is time.

A young boy walked along the trail one day and he heard a voice speak to him. The voice said: "Gather as many stones as you can and tomorrow you will be both glad and sad." Seeing no one, the boy kept walking and he heard the voice again, repeating the same message. After hearing the message a third time, the boy decided to pick up a few small stones and put them in his pocket. After doing so the voice stopped. The next day the boy walked along the trail and he heard the voice again, with the same message. He decided he had spent enough time picking up stones and wasn't going to spend any more. On the third day as he was going through his pockets he found the five stones he picked up the first day and turned to diamonds, rubies and emeralds and were extremely valuable. He jumped up with joy. He was excited over what he had. Then he felt his pocket from the second day and remembered that he didn't pick up any stones that day. It was then that he heard the voice again: "Gather as many stones as you can and tomorrow you will be both glad and sad. Glad that you picked up some, but sad that you did not pick up more." The same is true about learning. Get all you can now, the day will come when you will wish you had more.

WISDOM: The Hebrew Boys were held in high esteem because they displayed wisdom. Wisdom is related to knowledge, skill and learning, because it refers to the wise use of all three. Wisdom, in the words of Dr. Ava Pierce, is knowing "When to say yes and when to say no. When to hold on and when to let go." It is the prudent application of skill and learning at the right time and place. There are many people who have knowledge but have no wisdom. There are many who learning and skill, but lack wisdom. Those who reject wisdom are referred to in scripture as fools. Many young people ruin themselves because they act foolishly rather than wisely with their parents, teachers and school mates. They never read the words of Proverbs 10:23, "It is sport to a fool to do mischief, but a man of understanding hath wisdom." The

child that disrespects his parents, teachers and adults, acts foolishly. Those who rebel against authority at school and break every rule act foolishly. Proverb 4:7 sums up the matter, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Christ Makes Us Fantastic

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that in addition to their knowledge, skill, learning and wisdom, the Hebrew Boys had a fourth presence that was always with them; the presence of the Lord.

That's what makes them Fantastic! The Lord was always with them.

They trusted the Lord and leaned not to their own understanding!

They each had special gifts and talents that they used to glorify God and in their decision making, they chose to put him above all others.

Three men stood high in the kingdom when the king's trumpet sounded!

Three men remained standing when the rest of the kingdom bowed in submission and reverence to a godlike king.

Three men stood before the judgment seat of the king, on trial for their lives.

Three men heard the king when they were asked, "Will your god deliver thee?"

Three men answered with one resolved, "We don't know if God will deliver us but we know he is able!"

Three men watched as the heat of the furnace was raised seven times hotter than usual.

Three men were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace and flames of fire enveloped them.

Three men suddenly stood in the fire; they stood like smoky shadows and aberrations.

I heard the king ask, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel 3:24-25

It was the fourth man in the fire, who made these young men fantastic!

They had knowledge, but when faced with the fiery trials of life, they were saved by the fourth man in the fire!

They had skill, but all of their skill could not save them in a moment of trial, it was only the fourth man in the fire!

They had learning and wisdom, but when things got really hot, they needed the fourth man in the fire!

1 John 5:7 says there are three witness bearers: the father, the Word and the Holy Ghost and these three are one. That means any time we get in the fire we are not alone. There are four men in the fire, the Father, The Son, The Holy Ghost and you!

What enemy can stand the power of the Fantastic Four?

What obstacle can stand in the way of the Fantastic Four?

What challenge is too great for the Fantastic Four?

The world declares, “we thought we had him down, but behold there is a fourth man in the fire!”

His name is Jesus! The Alpha and the Omega!

Jesus, The Lily of the Valley and the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

When God is present, there is nothing that can stand in the way of the Father, the Word, the Holy Ghost and You! The Fantastic Four!

No. 9178-Communion

What if Mary Had An Abortion?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 18, 2005

SCRIPTURE: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6; "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 22:42

Introduction

Have you ever wondered, "What if Mary had exercised her right to choose and had an abortion?" When we look into the eyes of a newborn we often wonder, 'What shall this child become?' It is a mystery to us what the Lord has in store for every little child that is born. Yet, it is a mystery that some will never unravel because, for a variety of reasons, they choose to abort the life of the unborn before it develops into God's plan.

There are many reasons given for the decision to abort a child. Some see their poverty and do not wish to bring a child into that poverty. Some are frustrated with the world and feel another child would only add to complex frustrations that already exist.

Consider Mary's dilemma. She was an unwed teenager. She was poor. She was from a small town that held very few prospects for success for a newborn. What possible good can ever come from such a child?

If the birth of the Christ child says anything to us, it is that each child is born in this world with a divine purpose that is not altered by its circumstance but is nurtured by its circumstance. The talented child has a purpose. The smart child and the physically strong have purposes as well. However, the mentally challenged child has a purpose too. The poor child and the child with few gifts also have purposes.

If Mary had aborted Jesus, it was an option even in biblical times, she would have cheated the world out of a chance for redemption.

This is the dilemma that the entire issue of abortion presents. Women's rights groups in America promote a "Woman's right to choose." Pro-life groups, promote the phrase "Choose life." Somewhere between the two ideologies is the right choice. A woman does have the right to choose what shall be done to her body and her life. The difference, however, is when that choice is executed. The choice that is available

must be made at the point when a woman decides to have intimate relations. That is where the right to choose should be exercised. After a child is conceived, biblically, that right ceases because a new life, complete with its own set of choices, begins.

God has plans for every life, even while the child is undeveloped in its mother's womb. The prophet Isaiah made note that before he took his first breath

God had named him and appointed him to a service. In Isaiah 49:1, 5 he says, "Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name...and now the LORD says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant..." The prophet Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

The bible is undeniably clear that the fetus growing inside of a pregnant woman may have been begun by "accident, tragedy, or loose living" but once begun the child is assigned a purpose, and identity. The process of God's wonder working power begins at conception. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:13-16).

Because a destiny is assigned to every life that begins, those who choose to abort a life, also choose to interfere with that assigned destiny.

What if Jocebed had decided that life as a slave was miserable and without purpose? If she had exercised her right to choose Moses, would never have been born?

What if Elizabeth had decided that she was elderly and the risks of bearing a child could be dangerous? If she had exercised her right to choose, John the Baptist would not have been born.

What if Mrs. King had decided that there is little hope for a poor Negro child in a world that will discriminate against him because of his color? If she had chosen to have an abortion, Martin Luther King, Jr. would never have been born.

Women who bring children into the world, regardless of the circumstance of conception, are blessed of the Lord because they chose to give life rather than to deny the unborn the opportunity to live, grow and perhaps be a blessing to the world.

When Mary pondered the child that grew in her womb, she also considered her own future. Certainly she would be ostracized by the whispers of neighbors who would point to the fact that she was engaged but she wasn't married. She would certainly find it difficult, but was determined to let the child she carried achieve his destiny; to become the savior of the world. The government would be upon his shoulders. He would be the Prince of Peace.

As Christians, we aware that God has purpose for every life. Like Mary, we have chosen to put our futures in his hands and trust him to lead us into the unknown.

Exposition

Hundreds of years before his birth, Isaiah made it abundantly clear that the birth of Christ was not a chance occurrence, but part of God's divine order. The world, having known sin would be given a chance to know salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. The fact that Isaiah described all of the names by which Christ would be called using the word "shall" indicated that his coming would not be a chance happening but would be essential to the process of redeeming mankind.

The child that would be born would be wonderful and a mighty counselor. The child would be born with a destiny. That destiny was to show mankind the way back to God.

If destiny indicates purpose then the purpose of Christ's coming was to provide us with the chance of spiritual adoption. To accomplish this end he had to pay the penalty for sin. To do that, the Law of Moses required death. That is why Luke 24:7 says, "The son of man MUST be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Christ was born to die, but he died to rise again to give us hope of renewed life in the kingdom.

In Luke 22:42 Jesus prayed in the garden. His immediate desire was to avoid the cross and all of its associated humiliations, sufferings and brutality. He asked that this "cup" would be allowed to pass from him. However, despite his reservations over accepting the way of the cross, he also wanted to complete his mission and his destiny. He refused to abort that mission because of how it would personally affect him. He said,"Never-the-less not my will, but thy will be done." His decision not to abort carried him to a day of humiliation and torment but provided eternal life for all of those would believe.

Abortion threatens many areas of life

There are many who abort the possibilities that exist for their lives out of fear. Fear of being characterized as a failure. Fear of discovery. Fear of embarrassment. The fear of what man can do makes many people anxious. Sometimes what we fear is not something that will happen to us but what people will say about us or what they will think of us. Franklin Roosevelt, dealing with the fears of the American people after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and just before entering World War II said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!" Sometimes our fears prompt us to do that which ordinarily would not be an option with us. That is the case when a man or woman aborts that which has begun because of a fear of what might result.

While abortion as a moral issue is debated across the country, there are many other areas of our lives that suffer from the threat of abortion as well.

ABORTED DREAMS: There are many who have great dreams for themselves, but circumstance has prompted them to cut that dream short. A student who dreamed of being a doctor aborted that dream when he stumbled upon the fact that certain anatomy and biology classes needed for his studies would be difficult. There are many who have dreamed great dreams but have abandoned them because the pursuit

of the dream seems so far reaching. Is there anything too hard for God? Is the possibility of failure so great that you believe that you and God cannot overcome its threat? Abraham and Sarai dreamed of having a child, but as age progressed neither had conceived. After a century of life their dream came true. Despite the risks to her health and the cutting remarks of neighbors, Sarai refused to abort that possibility. She leaned on God for support and carried the child to its full term. The rest is history. If we carry our dreams to full term, despite our fear of failure and discovery, God will bless us for the act of faith even though he frowned on the weakness that prompted our failure in the first place.

ABORTED MISSION: There are many who began life with a fire and commitment to perform a great work for God, somewhere along the road they became afraid, frustrated or disgusted and aborted the mission. Missions in life vary between the man who made it his mission to help the poor in his neighborhood to the woman who began helping the church youth or children's ministry. There are many who begin their missions with a great boldness then suddenly disappear. This was the case with the prophet Elijah who boldly stood before King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and declared the word of God. When they retaliated against him, he disappeared. He hid himself in the wilderness by a brook and attempted to retreat from his mission. God fed his daily in his retreat for a while. However, God would not allow him to abort the mission. He stopped the food supply that was coming to him daily, brought by a raven. He dried up the brook that supplied him fresh water. It was then that Elijah began to discover that he could not abort his mission it had to be carried to its logical conclusion. He arose, despite his fear of persecution and God protected him from the death he feared and he accomplished his mission. Have you begun a mission for God but aborted that mission for one reason or another. Put your faith in God and continue. The blessing is in the completion of the mission. The blessing is in the end result, not in the frustrations along the way. Work while it is day because when the night comes, no man can work.

ABORTED DESTINY: There are many who give up on their own destiny. Despite the frustrations of our present situation there is a destiny for each of us that should not be denied. Often our entire purpose in life is not to create the solution to a great problem, but to be the one who creates an opportunity for the one born to solve the problem to appear. John the Baptist constantly reminded the world that he was not the answer to the sins of the world. His destiny was to "prepare the way" for the one who would come after him. Jesus was the the long awaited Messiah. But what if Mary had an abortion? Would the other children she bore have the same anointing as the aborted Christ child? Since Mary had other sons and at least one daughter the scripture record does not indicate that any of them shared the same destiny as Christ, even though they had the same Mother. Christ and Christ alone was the one anointed. What if Mary had an abortion? We don't know what destiny God has in store for us or the children we bear, adopt or inspire. What we do know that if destinies are interrupted what God intended could be altered in a great way?

The child who should grow to become the scientist who discovers the cure for cancer, can never achieve her destiny because her life is prematurely aborted.

The child who has been anointed while in his mother's womb to lead the nation into an era of peace and tranquility, will never accomplish his destiny if he is aborted before he takes his first breath.

The circumstances of Christ's parentage and birth gave an indication of his destiny. Jesus was born in a small town, to poor parents, in very restricted and impoverished circumstances. His destiny, in these circumstances was not clear; it had to be discovered. By the age of 12 it appears he had learned his destiny because after being found in the temple with the scholars he said, 'It's time for me to be about my father's business."

As Joseph stared at his adopted son with amazement, he must have asked the question, "What if Mary had had an abortion?"

In the community around us there are many who have risen to excellence as teachers, doctors, officials and athletes. What if our mothers had exercised their right to choose and aborted our destiny?

That is the core issue of the abortion debate. Does anyone have the right to abort the destiny of another? While we may have a choice with respect to our own destiny, do we have that same right with respect to the destiny of another person?

When Mary pondered the same question. She chose to allow the child she carried to fulfill his destiny. She set the example for all who followed. She chose to allow God to work out the details of the life of the child she carried and for her own future. She chose not to have an abortion.

Christ did not deny his destiny

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that just as Mary refused to abort her child, Christ refused to abort the purpose of his life which was to become the Savior of the world.

It would have been extremely easy for Christ to abort his life's purpose. He had many opportunities.

In the wilderness, he was tempted three times to abort his mission, but each time he chose to carry his mission to term, despite the effects it might have on his own life.

When he was criticized by religious leaders for the tenacity and fervor of his mission, he could have easily toned it down but he chose to speak in the power of the Lord unto salvation.

Those who carry the unborn today must have the same resolve. Whether our unborn children are planned or unplanned, we must trust God at this point to care and protect both mother and child. We have options available, but we must remember that the sin that concerns us is not the deliverance of the unborn but in the conception of the unborn.

If we have repented for that sin, God has forgiven.

Now, God blesses mother and child during the remaining trimesters because there is a calling to fulfill.

Mary did not have an abortion because she chose to trust in the Lord.

Those who trust in the Lord are confident that no matter what we have done and where we are, God cares!

Somebody here knows something about trusting the Lord. We don't claim to be scholars or experts, but we have had some dealings with the Lord.

I don't know about you but I have found out that when nobody else:

—Cares, that the Lord is concerned about me.

—Forgives me,that the Lord is willing to forget.

—Accepts me, that the Lord receives me with arms wide open.

—Wants me, that the Lord accepts me as a child of the king.

In the Garden, Jesus the child Mary refused to abort, prayed to his father. He asked him to let this cup pass from him.

He did not want a crown a thorns on his head.

He did not want to be whipped all night long.

He did not want to be stripped naked and hung on a Roman cross.

He did not want to have nails driven in his hands.

He did not want to have a spear stuck in his side.

Yet he refused to abort his mission!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!

I'm glad Mary didn't have an abortion.

But I'm even happier that Jesus did not abort his journey from the manger to cross!

I'm glad because he gave me a chance for a brand new life!

It's a wonderful hope that the world now enjoys but would not have, if Mary had had an abortion!

No. 9179-Christmas

Interior Decorations

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 18, 2005

SCRIPTURE: And they shall take the blood and strike in on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Exodus 12:7, 13.

Introduction

When did you start decorating for Christmas? The time varies by individuals. Some began on Thanksgiving Day. Some as late as Christmas Eve. The decorations put us in the mood for Christmas.

Christmas decorations range from a string a lights around the outside of our homes to elaborate light shows that entail thousands of lights, animated reindeer, nativity scenes and other yuletide decorations. Each year some families use the same decorations, adding a few more lights, scenes and depictions along the way.

There are many neighborhoods that have become showcases during the Christmas season, drawing thousands of spectators who drive through the brightly decorated areas in awe of the beautiful lights and Christmas scenes.

Some entire communities are known for light shows and Christmas displays that annually attract thousands to see the decorations. Since Christmas decorations attract visitors and puts people in the mood for shopping and spending, many cities invest in decorations that adorn telephone posts, public buildings and thoroughfares. It all creates what is known as the Christmas spirit.

Even the White House joins the national celebration by lighting a giant Christmas tree on the White House lawn. The highly decorated and bright illuminated tree is supposed to indicate the spirit of Christmas exists in the nation.

Decorations, while beautiful, are temporary. Sooner or later the tinsel, the trinkets, and the lights will come down to be stored away until next year. Sometimes the spirit that came with them is packed away until next year as well. That spirit of helping the poor, giving freely and love for all, somehow, gets packed away with the Christmas decorations.

Our decorations may be a true reflection of our culture. We are fast becoming a nation that pays more attention to the outside than the inside. By contrast, God's exteriors always point in a substantive way to an interior reality. When God puts something on the outside it has a connection with what's going on inside. It is not

superficial.

There is great emphasis on exterior decoration during this season. Yet, we must always remember that the decorations that impress God the most are our interior decorations. God is not impressed with the beautiful exteriors if there is a dark spirit of divorce, anger, distrust, hatred, and vengeance that exists inside. The exterior has the right look, but the interior should have a connection to the exterior.

As Christians, we are always mindful of the true spirit of Christmas, which is reflected on the outside but begins on the inside. There is great joy on our faces because there is joy in our heart. That joy is because daily we celebrate the presence of the Lord and the peace he brings.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's instruction to Israel that they should decorate the door posts of their homes with the blood of a lamb and be ready on the inside.

Israel had been slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. As vassals of the state, they built roads, pyramids, palaces and other works for the Egyptians. They prayed constantly for deliverance. This text occurs on the eve of their deliverance from Egypt.

They were ordered to kill a lamb and to prepare it for eating with bitter herbs. They were also ordered to take the blood of the lamb and use it to paint the exterior door posts of their homes. This strange decoration would be a sign to God's death angel to spare anyone on the inside of that home from the death of the first born, which was the 10th and final plague against Egypt.

As promised, the death angel came. Each home that had the blood stained exteriors were saved. Those without this peculiar decoration suffered the death of their firstborn, whether they were Israelites or not.

Inside the homes the people were obedient, filled with joy and hope because it appeared that the terrible midnight of their enslavement was about to end. The joy they shared on the interior was because of the blood on the exterior of their doors.

Interior Decorations

Many of our homes are very livable and pleasing to the eye. However, only the very fortunate have the resources to design and furnish their homes with the advice of a professional interior decorator. To design a room an interior decorator keeps four components in mind: purpose, theme, color and balance. In a spiritual sense every believer needs the same four components if he or she allows the Holy Spirit to decorate the interiors of their lives.

PURPOSE: The purpose for which a room will be used will indicate the type of furniture, flooring, and its general décor. The same can be true for a Christian life. It is almost impossible to shape our spiritual lives until we have decided upon our life's purpose. What is our purpose? Is it gaining riches? Having all the fun we can? Helping others? Making an important mark? Guiding and protecting our families? We must

prayerfully discover our purpose before we can adequately decorate our interior because the design of our inner lives is closely associated with our purpose.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that the purpose of the Christ Child was to become the Prince of Peace, the Almighty God and Counselor. With a clear purpose, Christ's spiritual life was easier to shape because his purpose was clear to him; he was to be the savior of his people. This fact was indicated even by his name, "Jesus", which meant he would save his people. Any spiritual décor that would develop in his inner self would be in line with his perceived purpose.

Self discovery is a very important aspect of human development. When we do not know who we are and where we are going it is difficult to adorn, decorate and design our inner lives in accordance with the will of God and his divine plan.

THEME: Interior decorators design a room using a theme. The room will have a certain look such as Western, Colonial, or Futuristic. In respect to our spiritual lives, it is the style, method or means by which we pursue our purpose. Decorators will insist that everything put in a room remain true to its theme. The same is true with the lifestyle that we develop as we pursue our purpose. There should be consistency. It gets ugly when we mix the styles. We praise God on one day and get down and nasty on the dance floor on the next. The styles are confusing when we drink communion wine on Sunday and Malt Liquor on other days. Such confusing signs indicate that we have a conflicting spiritual theme. As believers we adopt a life theme that is consistent with our personality. Many of us are leaders others are followers. Some are support team members and others are support team leaders. Some are soloists and some are members of the choir. We know our purpose and we have a consistent life theme that helps us achieve what we see as our life's purpose.

Even leadership styles differ while purposes are the same. Martin Luther King and Shirley Chisholm were confrontational; Andrew Young was a consensus builder. The Black Panthers were revolutionary and the NAACP is aggressively conservative. Each has the same general purpose but a different theme.

Similarly, Samson used physical strength as his theme. Solomon used great wisdom and diplomacy. Elijah and Elisha were oratorical. John the Baptist was confrontational. Jesus assumed a humble and unassuming style about his life, from his humble birth in Bethlehem to his crucifixion on Calvary; he remained true to his theme throughout his life.

COLOR: The interior decorator insures that the color of a room set its mood or attitude. Bright colors are cheerful and lively. Dark colors are sad and lonely. As we pursue our life's purpose what color describes our attitude? Bright and lively colors that indicate our lively and positive attitudes or dark colors that suggest our dark dispositions, serious, grave and somber thinking, always leaning to skepticism or pessimism.

David painted himself as a man full of praise and joy, writing over 100 psalms that encouraged all believers to make a "joyful noise unto the Lord." Paul painted himself with a blue of courage and determination. Christ painted himself with the color of commitment to mission and doing his father's will. If yellow represents cowardice, then certainly Judas could be described by that color. Many believers have adopted

a dominate color that describes our lives. If it's the wrong color, then we need to redecorate our interior.

BALANCE: Decorator's insist that a room's design have balance. We're in balance when there is not too much of one thing and too little of another. Believers strive to achieve the balanced life. When we are balanced we can walk without stumbling. When we are out of balance, we fall.

Sometimes we can lose focus and get completely out of balance. A limousine encountered a red traffic light and was waiting for it to change when a small Hooptie also drove up. It looked to be beat up Volkswagen. The brother in the Limo rolled down the window and started bragging that his car was best car that money could buy. " It has ABS, airbags for all passengers, automatic climate control, onboard computer control system, photo chromatic glass, mini bar, a television with satellite dish and hydraulic shock."

At this point the Hooptie owner rolled down his window and pointed, "But do you have a video in there?"

The brother in the Limo had been dissed. He immediate bought a video for his limo.

A few days passed by, and again the limo was at a traffic light when the limo brother spotted the Volkswagon again. He bragged about his limo and showed his layaway bed.

"But does it have GPS?" asked the Volkswagon owner as he drove off.

Upset the limo owner hurredly had a GPS system installed. He laughed a few days later when he saw the little Volkswagon pulled to the side of the road with it windows all steamed up. Steam was even coming from the windows and water was dripping on the ground.

The limo brother knocked on the window and said, "I got a GPS system now!"

The Volkswagon owner said, "You got me out of my morning shower to tell me that?"

There are many who have no balance in their lives. They are constantly trying to get more and keep up with their neighbors or outdo someone else. There can be no happiness until we have real balance in our lives.

Paul told believers he learned to live with and without resources. Whatever his circumstance he has learned to count it all joy.

We Need An Interior Decorator

Finally, brothers and sisters, if we want our spiritual lives designed correctly, we need to call in a decorator.

Most of our spiritual lives are like our homes, they are smorgasbords of loosely connected things that look good to us but don't go well together.

We often do what we do without a purpose or design, we just put things together. It soon becomes obvious that we need a spiritual interior decorator.

Professional decorators are expensive, so we do it ourselves. But I know a spiritual decorator who is willing to work for any believer without a charge.

Maybe that's why Christ came to this earth. To help us put order and design to

a confused world. To bring peace to world that was a ball of confusion.

The Christmas season prompts us to open our doors and invite in the Christ who will help us to strike a balance that will bring peace on earth and joy to the world.

During this season we see a babe in the manger but we also see a crucified Lord who comes offering us a sense of purpose, theme, color and balance in our lives.

The coming of the Christ Child gives every man or woman an opportunity to redecorate their lives with the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

We may do many things to decorate the outside, but we need Christ to decorate the inside.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that I've got an interior decorator to give my life a purpose. "For God I'll live and for God I'll die!"

I'm glad that I've got an interior decorator to give me a consistent walk and light to shine. "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!"

I'm glad that I've got an interior decorator to give me the bright color of joy and the ability to say, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

I'm glad that I've got an interior decorator to help me have balance; to say "I've had my bad days and I have had my good days, but I won't complain!"

Only the blood of Christ on the outside can make sure that our insides are pleasing to God.

When Israel was told to find a lamb and decorate their door posts with its blood, it was but a shadow of the blood of the Lamb of God, shed on the outside on a hill called Golgotha, to save the people on the inside.

The blood of the lamb, shed on the outside, gives hope on the inside.

The blood of the lamb, shed on the outside, gives peace on the inside.

The blood of the lamb, shed on the outside, gives joy on the inside.

I know it was the blood the changed me!

I know it was the blood that redecorated my life!

One day when I was lost, he died..on an old rugged cross!

But early, Sunday morning….

No. 9180-Christmas

Praise Party at the Manger

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 25, 2005

SCRIPTURE:"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Luke 2:20

Introduction

Do you take special note of your birthday? If you are like most people, you are keenly aware of your birthday. People note their birthdays in a variety of ways that range from something as simple as circling a date on a calendar to elaborate parties and other celebrations. Birthdays are important to us because they recall memories of celebration and happiness. As children, we were taught the joy of a birthday celebration. Most mothers can recite the birth dates of every one of their children. While fathers often struggle to remember those dates, mothers can often recite not only the date, but the day of the week and hour of the day that each child was born. She remembers both the joy and the pain of each date as if it was yesterday.

What happens on your birthday?

Many people receive special treatment on their birthday. Many stores offer discounts to those celebrating a birthday, a few businesses give an employee a day off to celebrate their birth.

We often receive gifts when we celebrate our birthdays. Sometimes friends and people who don't know us will give us money on our birthday, even though they are never prompted to do the same on any other day of the year.

On occasion, there is a birthday party. They begin with ice cream and cake in our youth. Sometimes adult parties can become extravagant; some border on the prohibited. On rare occasions, the honoree might be treated to a surprise birthday party.

We know how WE celebrate our birthdays. We are familiar with all of various ways; but how do we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Son of God? It is celebrated through praise, worship and fellowship.

As Christians, we mark the birth of Christ as an important date, worthy of celebration. Like the shepherds, angels and hosts of heaven, we come before his presence with offerings, singing and adoration. We leave, as they did, praising his name.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the celebration that surrounded the birth of Jesus.

Joseph and his 15 year old Fiancée' Mary came to Bethlehem to register for the tax which had been ordered by King Herod. Their family was from Bethlehem, so they made the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to enroll, even though Mary was pregnant and due for delivery at any time.

In Bethlehem, they found that all inn space had been rented. The best they could do was to spend the night in a cave-like area used to house and feed animals. During that night Mary brought forth a son, who was named Jesus, because his birth marked the entry of God on earth in the form of a male child.

Joseph had no time to call in friends and relatives. They did not have time to plan a proper celebration, but there was a celebration anyway.

Though the Christ child had a manger for a crib, there was a Holy Ghost party at the manger.

The celebration was orchestrated in heaven by an angel of the Lord. Those who came to the manger started celebrating before they arrived.

Verse 2:9 says "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.." This was the invitation that was given to several shepherds in the field. They were being notified that the long awaited savior had been born. It was a reason to celebrate. The angel brought great news. In verse 11 the angel said, "For unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Another invitation was sent out to the whole world. God fixed a star in the sky that could be seen around the world. In the East, several wise men saw the star and recognized its meaning. They boarded camels and began a long journey to get to the Christ child. They prepared gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

But the angels didn't wait for the wise men. Neither did they wait for the shepherds. They started celebrating before the first guest showed up.

What began as one angel making an announcement soon became a whole multitude of angels that were praising God and shouting "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men."

When the angels finished singing and shouting, the shepherds decided to join the party. Verse 15 says, "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

On their way to the manger the shepherds were celebrating in the streets, telling everyone what they had seen and heard. Though others would not join them the shepherds came to the manger anyway, ready to praise the Lord.

Once they arrived they saw the child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laying in the manger.

When the shepherds left the manager they left shouting and glorifying God for all the things they had seen and heard.

The praise party they attended that night continues even to this day.

A Holy Ghost Praise Party

How was the birth of Christ celebrated? When we look at the angels and the shepherds we get an idea about what happened at the praise party at the manger.

PRAISED HIM FOR WHAT THEY HEARD: Verse 20 says the shepherds praised God for what they heard. What did they hear? They heard that a savior was born. They heard that God was about to answer Israel's prayers after 400 years. What they heard brought them hope and increased their faith. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." They heard a word from heaven and what they heard gave them a reason for praise.

Whenever there are difficulties in our lives, we get extremely happy whenever we hear that there is a word from heaven!

Whenever there is sadness, we lift up our heads when we hear that there is a word!

Whenever there is failure and defeat we are encouraged, when we hear that there is a word!

What have you heard?

I heard that if I am lonely, he will be my comfort!

I heard that if I am sad, he will bring me cheer!

I heard that if I am afraid, he'll remind me that the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

At the birthday celebration, they praised him for the hope and inspiration they received from what they heard:

PRAISED HIM FOR WHAT THEY HAD SEEN: It is good to praise the Lord for what you have heard, but it's even better to praise him for what you have experience yourself. The shepherds left the manger praising God for what they had seen. What they had heard gave them hope, but what they had seen became a testimony.

No one can testify to what they heard, but only to what they have experienced themselves.

We may have heard Grandma tell us that God will make a way, but we can only testify when we can say, "He has done great things for me."

We may have heard grandpa tell us that God will answer prayer, but we can only testify when we can say, "I know the Lord will answer prayer because I tried him for myself."

We may have heard auntie say, "God is a good God in a time of storm" but we can only testify when we can say, "I've tried the man, and the man is alright!"

What his been your experience with the Lord? Has he opened doors for you? If that's the case then you should understand why the shepherds praised him, because he has showered them with blessings of mercy, forgiveness and salvation!

Like the shepherds, we've seen some things about God.

WE HAVE SEEN that if we trust him:

—Misfortunes will not scare us!

—Troubles will not torment us!

—Sorrows will not terrify us!

—Disappointments will not provoke us!
—Perplexities will not vex us!
—Burdens will not restrain us!
—Prosperity will not spoil us!
—Poverty will not frustrate us!
—Failure will not overcome us!

No wonder the song writer said, "I have seen the lightning flashing. I have heard the thunder roll. I've felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I heard the voice of the savior, he bid me to still fight on, he promised never to leave, never to leave me alone!

When shepherds left the party

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when the shepherds left the party, the party wasn't over.

Matthew 2:9-10 tells us that it took a little while for the wise men to make it to Israel. The angels had come and gone. The shepherds had come and gone, but the wise were shouting on their way.

Verse 9 says, "And lo the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy!

It took them a little while to get to the party but when they came, they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

When the angels left the party, the shepherds picked up where they left off.

When the shepherds left the party, the wise men kept it going!

When the wise men left the party every believer joins the celebration, because every child of God has something to shout about!

The angels were glorifying God in heaven because the savior had been born, they had something to shout about!

The shepherds were shouting in the fields because the promise of God was being fulfilled, they had something to shout about.

The wise men were shouting as they traveled across the desert, they had seen a sign from God written in the stars, they had something to shout about.

Whenever the Lord has done something for you, you have something to shout about.

Whenever we think about how God has blessed us, we have something to shout about.

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, we have something to shout about.

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, we have something to shout about.

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere, we have something to shout about.

This Christmas Christians are doing a lot of shouting, but it's not because of the

man in the red suit, but we're shouting because of Jesus!

The man in the red suit lives at the North Pole; but we are shouting because Jesus is not only at the North Pole but he's at the South Pole, the East Pole and the West Pole, he is everywhere.

The man in red suit rides in a sleigh; but we're shouting because Jesus is not confined to sleigh but he rides on the wind and can walk on the water.

The man in the red suit comes but once a year; but we're shouting because Jesus is always by our side!

The man in the red suit fills your stockings with goodies; we shouting because Jesus supplies all our needs.

The man in the red suit comes down your chimney uninvited; but we are shouting because Jesus stands at your door and knocks, and waits to be invited in.

The man in the red suit lets you sit on his lap; but we're shouting because Jesus lets you rest in his arms and lay upon his breast. "Lie down, lie down thy weary one, thy head upon my breast!"

The man in the red suit doesn't know your name, all he can say is "Hi little boy or girl, what's your name?"; but we're shouting because Jesus already knows my name. He knows my down sitting and my uprising and thoughts of my mind before I think them.

The man in the red suit has little helpers to make little toys; but we're shouting because Jesus doesn't need any help, he can be God all by himself.

He mends wounded hearts, repairs broken home.

And all by himself he said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

We're shouting because the little baby born in Bethlehem lived on earth for 33 long years!

We're shouting because one day he picked up a cross and died for us on Calvary!

We're shouting because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

We're shouting because one these days he's coming back again and there will be A holy Ghost party in heaven!

We're shouting because there ain't no party like a Holy Ghost party because a holy ghost party don't stop!

No. 9081-New Year

Back Up This Train

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 2005

SCRIPTURE:"I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: — 1 Kings 2:2-3

Introduction

What will it take for you to succeed in the New Year? Lots of money? Fame? Popularity? As the New Year begins there are many who are making resolutions to change one aspect or another of their daily routine in hopes that they will find success in the coming year.

There are many who are riding a fast train to hell and have decided in the words of Al Green's 1967 song, "Back up Train" or in the words of the Hip Hop Generation, to "Back This Thang Up!" Either way, there some who have concluded that they cannot continue in the same direction. Something must change.

A tall pine tree stood for many years in the great forest. Its branches spread in all directions. It loomed high over the other trees and its thick trunk suggested it had endured many years. At the foot of the pine there was a little pine cone that lay around on the ground. He boasted to the other seeds that lay around that he was a mighty pine and would someday grow strong and tall. Meanwhile, he simply lay around and enjoyed the shade from the father pine's strong branches. The father pine constantly talked to him to show him what life was all about. However, the cone was content to know that he could one day be a pine and he idled away his time.

One night, lightning struck the mighty pine and down it fell with a mighty thud. In the days that followed the pine cone stood in the same place where the mighty pine stood and tried to take his place. He stretched out his arms, but they were not huge branches. He gave off no shade and did not tower over the other trees as did the mighty pine. His heart dropped in frustration. Then he heard the voice of the mighty pine whistling through the wind, "within you is the potential for greatness, for you are the offspring of a pine. But to achieve your greatness, you cannot lay around. You must bury yourself in fertile soil, take root, sprout and grow with a made up mind. Then you will be a tree my son, then you will be a pine."- Similarly, we can't attempt to succeed if we continue to idle away the years as some have done in the past. We

must back and redirect.

Three things contribute to our success and spiritual growth: The right crowd, strong roots and a made up mind. Many believers with great potential are lost because they plant themselves in infertile soil, have no strongly rooted principles, or cannot discipline themselves to do what is necessary to achieve their life goals.

If we have lost sight of these three essentials then it is important that we back this thing up, get on the right train and do the right things in the New Year.

Exposition

This text focuses on David in the closing years of his life. It targets the advice that he left with his son who was about to begin his tenure as King of Israel. It was advice from a godly father to a godly son about how to approach his unknown future.

His advice to Solomon was that he should "be strong." He then explained what he considered necessary for Solomon to be "strong."

In verse three he begins to list off the requirements for the strength that he urged Solomon to acquire. He told Solomon to: 1) Walk in the Way of the Lord, and 2) Keep his commandments. The reward for living a life in fertile circles based upon Godly principles was noted: "That thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself."

David's advice came from his own experience. He was raised in a God fearing home. He was blessed to have a good father and mother that provided for him in every way. David was taught the way of the Lord when he was young and he exemplified courage and faith at a young age as he took on the giant Goliath. He was both courageous and humble. In his own life, he tried to do what was right, but also learned a very good lesson: that despite age or experience that a man never out grows temptation. Even in his flirtations and weaknesses, David talked privately with God and asked for forgiveness, a clean heart and a clean spirit.

David could advise his son about strength and character because they were the hallmarks of his own life. He was honest, hard working, humble, and a man of principle himself. In the latter years of his life he achieved a degree of comfort. However, he spent a great part of his life in the humility of the pasture and in the company of the common people. He was not always in line with the will of God, for on occasion he strayed. Yet he was the kind of man that was "after God's own heart."

There was a point in David's life, when he had to stop and back up. He had authorized a murder, took a man's life and perjured himself in the matter of his adultery with Bathsheba. Before he could go forward he had to back up and get straight with God. He asked God to "Create in me a clean heart Oh God, and renew a right spirit within me." Before he could go forward he had to back up.

The ability to back track, correct mistakes, and ask forgiveness is essential to what David called being "strong

We will need strength in the new year

How do you determine if you are a strong believer? You cannot measure your strength by your looks, physical attributes, or money. There are three accurate measures that will allow us to gauge our spiritual strength.

One measure of a Christian is the measure of character. If the chips are down, can we think straight and keep our families on steady courses? When face with threatening situations can we remain firm? Can we resist the temptation to succeed by evil devices or triumph at the expense of others? These are questions that form the basis for an analysis of strength. A Christian of great strength displays character when it is needed most. It is an inner strength that is hidden from the naked eye but is displayed in moments of crises.

Every believer should demonstrate Christian character. No Christian should steal, cheat, lie or involve themselves in activities that demonstrate weak character. If we are to succeed in the new year we must show strength to avoid loose lips that sink ships, wandering eyes that pry into the lives of our neighbors, and feet that always seem to walk in the wrong places.

If we demonstrated a lack of character last year, then maybe it's time to "Back this thang up" and get on the right train.

Measure a Christian by the strength of his/her commitment. There are many believers who have come up short with respect to commitment. A real Christian man has a commitment to his wife and children. A real Christian woman never neglects her husband or children. If you want to measure a real Christian man, measure him by his faithfulness to his wife. Measure a Christian woman by her faithfulness to her husband.

There are many "church members" who showed less than desirable commitment to their families last year. There are many who forgot their vows to stand by each other in sickness and in health for better or for worse, "forsaking all others." Many have not had the time or interest to work in the church because their zippers were down and skirts were up most of the year.

If we are to succeed and be "strong" in the coming year we must, "back this thang up" and get on the right train. We can't please God and the devil too. We must get it straight with God and with those closest to us.

In many ways, many believers relate to the church just as they relate to their families, there is no commitment or love. We are simply "shacking" with the church, getting all we can without making any promises. If we want to succeed this year, we must keep our vows to God and move from shacking with the church to a married relationship with the church, forsaking all others. The word teaches that the reward for doing so is great. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33.

If we are to succeed and be "strong" in the coming year, we must "back up this train" and put our lives on the right track."

Measure believers by the strength of their faith. Faith, is acting on the unseen in hope that God will take over and make a way. Strong believers are good planners,

providers and sober thinkers. However, strong believers are also men and women of faith.

They are believers who know and acknowledge that there are some things they cannot control that God must provide.

These are the believers who learn to lean on the Lord.

These are the believers who join with the songwriter and declare, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. And I found out that if I trust him he will provide."

There are too many "church members" who had very little faith last year.

They had no faith that God would provide their finances so they did not tithe or even give regularly. They pinched and stole from God's resources, because they would not trust him to refill their barrel.

They had no faith that God was stronger than their personal problems so when the first winds blew they disappeared and we did not see them in Sunday School, bible study and general worship.

Some lost faith all together and stopped serving God.

Yet, the "strong" Christian knows the importance of faith and patience. Nothing can really be done without trusting God completely. To do that requires faith.

With faith, we can achieve the impossible!

With faith, the improbable becomes probable!

With Faith all things are possible.

Back Up This Train

Finally, brothers and sisters as we prepare to step out into a new horizon, we must make sure that we don't do it like we did it last year, we must "back this thang up" and get on the right train.

When we measure our role as Christians, we must not measure ourselves by the size of the church to which we hold membership, but we must be measured by the strength of our creed.

To be strong we must be men and women who live the lives that we sing about in our songs.

This year, let our strength reflect our willingness to help somebody. That's when we will sing the words of the song, "If I can help somebody as I pass along..if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living shall not be in vain."

This year, let our strength reflect our willingness to back up this train and ask forgiveness for our mistakes.

This year, let our strength reflect our renewed faith that God will make a way.

This year, let our strength reflect our courage to do the right thing without fear because the Word declares, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear, the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

This year, let's back up this train and pledge to operate on faith rather than doubt. It's a faith that will prompt us to ask the question, "Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come. Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he."

His eye...which peers beneath the transcendental depths of my sorrow;

His eye...which penetrates with x-ray like vision, the secret corridors of my mind;

His eye...which traces the meandering aerodynamics of a fluffy winged little bird;

His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me!

This year let's resolve to "back up" and put our trust in an almighty God.

A God who gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

Back up this train and start placing your hope in the Lord.

Then you'll be able to say my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

I hear the words of Andre Crouch, "Take me back! Take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first believed!"

Back up this train and take me back to the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away!

Back up this train to the cross. "It was there by faith, I received my sight and now I'm happy all the day!

At the cross Jesus died and gave up his life!

At the cross the strength of dying is renewed and faith of the doubting is restored

One day when I was lost, he died upon a cross, but he arose to become the rock of my salvation

"On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

All other ground is sinking sand!"

No. 9182-New Year

Will this be your Jubilee year?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 1, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Leviticus 25:10; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19.

Introduction

What if you were told that as of today, all of your debts were paid in full; how would you feel? Wouldn't that be a good feeling? Mortgage paid. Car note paid. Utilities paid. Credit cards paid. Student loans paid. What if even the amount you borrowed from a relative is also paid in full? Wouldn't that be great? Those who have actually paid off a mortgage or paid off an account know that there is a tremendous sense of relief knowing that the debt has been paid. Often it is like a load lifted off your shoulder.

Worry over debts is the culprit that has sent many to hospitals with anxiety attacks, high blood pressure and stress. We are a nation that knows the color of red ink. Our personal debts never seem to disappear and our national debt has reached the trillions. It's so big that they just stop counting. Entire industries have developed to help us get out of debt through consolidation and other means. Bankruptcy was once a quick solution but new laws that went into effect in 2005 made that harder to do. It all leaves us facing the loss of our homes and other property as we struggle to avoid the proverbial "poor house."

We know about our debts to the bank, mortgage holder and the credit card company, but what about our spiritual debts?

Because we are sinners we have been running up a huge debt with the devil. He has given us an unlimited charge card and has allowed us to charge it. He tells us to have fun now and pay later. Party now… pay later. Commit adultery now..pay later. Drink alcohol now..pay later. Use drugs now, pay later. Even snub and defy God now..pay later. The invoice for our sins gets longer by the minute. What we owe grows faster than the national debt. When we least expect it the devil knocks on our door and demands payment. He wants our souls.

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal through

Jesus Christ our Lord." The devil wants us to pay up, we have debt with him. He wants our lives on this earth and he wants our eternal life in payment.

Wouldn't be great if we suddenly discovered that the debt for our sins has been paid? The mortgage on our future has been canceled and we are now free; wouldn't it be great to know that? It would be a reason for praise and thanks.

As Christians, we know that Jesus has freed us from the debt and burdens of sin. He has closed the chapter on our shortcomings and given us a new chance. As we enter a new year we thank him for canceling our debt and giving us a chance to start over again with all spiritual debts paid.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses' instruction to Israel to observe the year of Jubilee.

The instruction, given by Moses, was designed for the people as they prepared to move to the Promised Land. It described the people's relationship to the promise land to which they journeyed. They would make it to the Promised Land, but Moses made it clear that the land and all in it belonged to God, they were being allowed to use it.

The people were reminded that they would be tenants using land and other possessions loaned to them by God. Because they would never own what belongs to God what they came in possession of could not be exploited for the enrichment of some and the impoverishment of others .

In Old Testament law once land was placed in the hands of a family, that family could never permanently lose the land because it did not belong to them. They were allowed to lease land to others. A family could lose the use of land because of debts or because of the enslavement of its original owner. However, the family could not permanently lose their land because it belonged to God.

The Jubilee principle was established to provide a way for a person to reacquire that which was lost or sold and to start again.

The Jubilee worked this way. Every seventh sabbatical year (49th year), was to be followed by a year of Jubilee (25:8-13). A blast of the Ram's horn announced the beginning of a special year in which all debts, mortgages documents of enslavement and other legalities were canceled throughout the land.

The motto for the year was to proclaim liberty. Its primary purpose was to get family property and the family back together again (vv. 10, 13). This meant that all property (except in walled cities, cf. vv. 29-30) was to be restored to those whom God originally granted possession by God. It also meant all Hebrew slaves were to be released to return to their family property.

While selling land was not encouraged, it was sometimes necessary. When it was sold, the price was figured on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee, that is, computing the number of years left for harvesting crops until the next Jubilee would return the land to its original owner. The closer a sale was to Jubilee the lower its cost.

In Luke, Jesus announced his mission on earth which was to set the captives free and to announcement the beginning of the New Testament version of Jubilee, which

was restoration through faith in Christ.

In the Jubilee year, that which was lost was restored; those who were enslaved returned home and families were reunited to their Godly purpose. In Christ, the spirit of Jubilee continues, giving everyone a chance for restoration.

Our year of Jubilee

African-American families celebrate January 1st as Jubilee Day. On January 1, 1863 Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation set all slaves free in states in rebellion against the United States. Like, the children of Israel, we waited patiently in watch meeting services and pledged to remember our enslavement. The Jews remember their deliverance with roasted lamb and unleavened bread. We remember ours with: black eyed peas, hog jowls, chitterlings, and other food of slavery, with the warning that should we forget we would have bad luck and be returned to slavery.

For African-American families, January 1st marks our Jubilee celebration.

Will this be a year of Jubilee for your family or will you remain enslaved to those things which held you back last year?

If this is your Jubilee year three actions should be taken:

Get Back what you lost

Often we lose possession of things that are important to us. We lose them in one of two ways. We are either willing part with them, or part with them by hook or crook. Sometimes we treat what we have lightly and lose it. Esau had a birthright that he took lightly. He took his role in the family lightly and sold his inheritance to his brother for a bowl of porridge. Like him we often sell ourselves short. No one takes away our opportunity to succeed we give it away without a fight. We decide to drop out of school. We decide not to pursue that elusive dream. We give up.

The other way we part from what should be ours is that it taken from us by hook or crook. That's when we are cheated and deceived or become the innocent victims of crooks. The devil operates by Hook or Crook. He tries to take anything he can. What has the devil taken from you during the last year? Was it peace and joy? Did the devil rob you of your sense of direction and send you running to a thousand unknown places. If this is your year of jubilee it will be the year in which your peace and joy is restored. David, in Psalm 51 said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." If this is your jubilee year take back your peace of mind, that spirit of satisfaction that you once had but lost as the devil found ways to keep you disturbed, unsettled and unhappy. The peace of God, once lost, frustrates us and keeps us upset. But when peace returns, we are able to weather the storms of life and say, "It is well with my soul."

If this is your year of jubilee, then it will be the year you decide to "get it back."

Did you lose your hunger for spiritual things? Get it back?

Did you lose your thirst for education? Get it back?

Did you lose your man over something petty? Get him back!

Did you lose your woman over trivial matters? Get her back!
Did you lose your self respect, get it back!
If you lost something last year, let this be your year of jubilee and get it back!

End your Slavery

The Israelites often were sold into slavery to pay debts. When debts became due, those who didn't have enough possessions to settle their debts found that the only thing they could do was to sell themselves into slavery to the indebted. During their enslavement that which they had going for themselves was lost. They spent their energy building someone else's fortunes. At Jubilee, they were freed from enslavement and were able to once again pick up their own lives.

If this is to be the year of our jubilee, we must end our enslavement to lifestyles, habits and attitudes that have enslaved us.

We must end our enslavement to drugs, cigarettes and alcohol. Alcohol, Cigarettes and drugs have destroyed millions of otherwise good families. To get drugs mothers have abandoned their children, fathers have left homes and lives have been shattered. Even those who attend church, pray and study regularly find themselves hopeless chained to alcohol and cigarettes that are killing them with a slow death.

We must end our enslavement to gambling. We can't really be free until we learn to trust God fully. Gambling, suggests that we do not trust God but pure "luck." Some began gambling on a notion and after a short period began increasing their stakes, winning some, but often losing increasingly more. Now, they are hopelessly hooked to a point where thousands of dollars each year are spent at Casinos, Bingo Parlors, and slot machines. It's an enslavement that destroys marriages, crumbles families, and squanders meager financial resources.

We must end our enslavement to the party scene. There are millions of young Christians who are hopelessly enslaved to party scenes that are filled with explicit music, sexually provocative dancing, and unchristian like behavior. Because they have been raised in God fearing homes, many know they should not walk that path, but they have become enslaved and can't seem to break free.

The Apostle Paul shared a similar predicament. He said when he wanted to do right, he ended up doing wrong. He knew he was doing wrong but could not help himself. That's when he knew that he was caught in the grips of sin.

If this is to be the year of jubilee, then we must end our slavery! We must break the chains that tie us to things we want to avoid.

Paul asked, who can save me? Who can free me? He found his answer in the power of God to brake his chains.

Get back to God

Finally, brothers and sisters, if this is to be our year of jubilee then we should get back to God in a serious way.

Israelites who lost their land and freedom were separated from their Godly purpose. At jubilee they had the opportunity to get back to what God intended for them.

There are many who have strayed away from what God has in mind for them.

There are many who have begun a different course in life that has taken them away from the church and the development of their spiritual lives.

They don't seem to have time for Godly things anymore but they have plenty of time for business pursuits, politics, clubs, fraternities, sororities, athletics, money making opportunities and socializing. None of these are bad in themselves, but God should never play second fiddle to the things of the world.

If this is to be our year of Jubilee, it will be the year that we return to the bridge that brought us over!

If this is to be our year of Jubilee, it will be the year that we say in the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Why should every family get back to God? It's because the family that worship and obeys God together, stays together.

Families should get back to God because despite our stubbornness, God has had a hand in our plan.

We need to put God back in our plan.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick us down, but God will pick us up!

—The world may strike us out, but God will give us home runs!

—The world may think we are losers, but God will make us winners!

—The world may think we are weak, but God will make us strong!

We need to get back to God in the New Year because:

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable becomes probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

We need to get back to God because even when we were too stubborn to come to him, he came to us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This year we will get back to God because he has blessed us, raised us and saved us!

We need to get back to God because he "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity."

We need to get back to God because one day when I was lost, he died upon a cross!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He has come to set the captives free!

He has come to settle our debts!

He has come to welcome us home!

No. 9183-Inspiration

And The Lord Passed By

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 9, 2005

SCRIPTURE: "And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so. when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"—1 Kings 19:11-13.

Introduction

Have you ever seen the hand of God moving in the events that have affected your life? When we reflect on our life's experiences it is often easy to see God's hand moving in our lives. Unfortunately, there are many who cannot see God's hand as it moves, only in the aftermath. Whether we notice it or not, there is never a year that passes that the Lord does not visit us in one way or the other. How do we receive God when he visits us? Do we try to shut him out? Are we angry? Happy? Afraid? Is he a welcomed guest? We will feel the hand of God move in our lives this year, just as we have in times past. We have one confident resolve: No matter what happens, our lives will ultimately be better because "the Lord passed by."

There are many who welcome visitors; but not all visitors are welcomed. That was the case when Leroy's mother came to visit. Leroy and his mother in law never seemed to get along. She seemed to spot every flaw in his character and her presence made him so uncomfortable. As his wife's birthday approached, the mother in law called to say she would pass by to say happy birthday to her daughter and might stay a few days. When she pulled into the drive way her 5 year old grandson ran out to meet her. "I'm so happy to see you grandma!" He said as he squeezed her around the waist. "Now that you are here now I can get to see the trick daddy promised us." The boy added. Curious the grandmother asked, "Just what trick is that?" Innocently the boy responded, "Well, daddy said if you spend another night in our house he was going to climb the walls and pull out his hair. Now I get to see him do it!"

Would you be comfortable if the Lord dropped in your home for a visit? Would you invite him in or talk to him through the screen door? Would you have to quickly change the television channel, remove certain DVD's off the shelf, hide a few books under the mattress and switch the radio channel? Would his visit make you nervous? Robert Boyd Munger in his book, "My heart Christ's home" raised the question of

what would happen if the Lord visited us. He maintains that many of us would not be able to entertain him in the living room, we'd have to change our appetites for the dining room, we'd have to clean our closets, because there is too much trash in our lives for him to visit. Munger's position is that Christ would be an unwelcomed visitor if he passed by many spiritual homes because there is so much house cleaning needed.

Yet, every year the Lord passes by and knocks. Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." When many hear the Lord knocking the respond in the words of that 50's era Dave Edmun song, "I hear you knocking, But you can't come in, I hear you knocking, Go back where you been." The last person they want to visit is "the Lord." These would count themselves lucky if the Lord would just pass them by and not stop at all."

For some he's not a visitor because he lives with them. These are the ones who can sing boldly the stanzas of the song, "He lives" -especially the part that says, "You ask me how I know he lives, he lives within my heart."

As Christians, we know that the hand of the Lord will pass our way in the months to come. We do not know the day or the hour, but we know his hand will touch our families. We look forward to the visitation of his spirit daily and welcome him not just to pass by, but live with us every day of our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Elijah as the Lord revealed himself to him and questioned him.

Elijah was a great prophet who was used by God to challenge the prophets of Baal. In numerous displays of faith Elijah successfully demonstrated the power of God over Baal. Most notably his great contest on Mt. Carmel in which God answered him with fire. God used him to pronounce his anger at the evil reign of Ahab and Jezebel and held back the rains on the land. He even predicted the untimely death of the queen, for which he was hunted by the King's soldiers.

Elijah hid for a while and was fed and nourished by the providence of God. A raven brought him morsels of food everyday, and despite a drought in the land, the Lord caused a brook to flow near him.

Despite God's benevolence Elijah continued to run away from his mission. He hid in caves and was not seen by those around him. He was a prophet underground.

God sought him out and passed by. Elijah experienced a great wind, a terrible earthquake and fire, but God was not in either of them. A while later, he heard a still, soft voice questioning him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Elijah expected God to be in the obvious. He expected God to be in the fire, wind and earthquake; he had seen God speak with fire before on top of Mt. Carmel. He knew how God responded to Moses on Mt. Sinai as the mountain shook. He knew how the wind from God's nostrils blew back the waters of the Red Sea and Israel crossed over at a calm time. He expected God in the obvious. But none of these were signs of God's

presence this time. God came to him in the not so obvious way; in a still small voice.

When the Lord passed by, Elijah heard the voice of God question his inactivity. He could not level a defense for why he was not doing more than simply existing, enjoying God's grace.

Elijah was told to resume the faith because there were 7,000 believers who needed his help and leadership. In a still small voice, God stopped by to tell him that it was time for him to move on.

God's ways are mysterious

There are many today, like Elijah, who look for God in the obvious without realizing that God moves in mysterious ways. When the hand of the Lord comes in our direction we would be mistaken to assume the obvious. Don't expect an announcement from heaven with lights flashing announcing that the hand of God is moving in a circumstance. God's ways are mysterious. They are difficult for us to understand. Often even the strongest Christians have to stay alert to recognize the ways that God approaches us.

You've heard the story of the King who wanted to reward a deserving servant with a great prize which he would deliver himself. A certain woman received notice that she was being considered for the prize. She was notified that the prize would be delivered by the King himself. All day she waited for the king to arrive. Instead of the king, a beggar came in the morning, but she quickly turned him away. Later a cripple man came to her door and a man seeking a drink of water, both of whom she turned away because she wanted to be ready for the King. At the end of the day the king announced that he went in person to deliver the prize to the winner but he was turned down. The woman protested that the King never came. He sent a message that he came to her door three times in the same day: as a beggar, cripple and a man seeking water, but was turned down all three times. The woman was disappointed that she lost her prize because she did not recognize the king when he came to visit.

In a similar sense, the Lord has thrust his hands in our affairs in ways that we least expect. He has brought us good news in ways we did not expect. He has visited with us in the most peculiar ways. Looking back, we can now see the many ways that God has protected us, directed us and provided for us. Sometimes he appeared in the strangest of ways. Abraham had three visitors who came to visit him one day. They were enroute to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Although they had no wings or halos on their heads, Abraham instantly recognized them as angels of the Lord and responded accordingly.

The event we complain about attending may be the one event that God uses to visit his blessing upon you. The person you least want to talk with may the person chosen to bring you great news of blessings from heaven.

It is true, God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

Be sure God is in it

Every circumstance you encounter is not of God. Every situation that confronts you may not be created or directed by the hand of God. We need to be sure God is in it. Elijah felt the wind blow, the earth shake and the fire rage, but God was not in any of them. Similarly, we must learn what is from God and what is not. 1 John 4:1 says we should, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirit whether they are of God:"

In the days ahead, believers should prayerfully seek to learn whether situations we encounter are really from God. The general idea is to put each situation to the three fold test. Is the situation consistent with what we know to be the nature of God. If we are presented with an opportunity to succeed but it would require us to get involved in an illegal activity, would God be in that venture. Is it the nature of God to encourage believers to do wrong? Secondly, is the situation consistent with the word of God? If there is a sickness, loss or even a death, is that consistent with the word of God. Since good people, like Job, and others have often been tested in the bible, then it is possible that our loss could be a part of the permissive will of God. Will this situation serve to strengthen me? Since the word teaches I can do all things which strengthen me through Christ; any situation which will ultimately strengthen me and make me stronger may be from God.

Just because a situation offers you an opportunity does not mean God is in it. If you kiss another man's wife and the earth shakes, the winds blow and she lights up your fire, it does not mean God is in it? God would not encourage any woman to be unfaithful to her husband. God ain't in it.

A simple country rule applies, "Before you begin it, make sure God is in it!"

Listen to God, and do what he says!

When God visits our life situation with the full weight of his majesty, there is a purpose. If God is trying to tell us something, we should be wise enough to do what he says. In Elijah's case God was ready for him to move on with his life. It took a little while for Elijah to get the message. The raven stopped bringing him food but he didn't get the message. The brook dried up but he still didn't get the point. When he sat still for a moment he heard the voice of God telling him to move on.

When God visited Mary and Joseph it was to advise them that they would rear the Christ child to manhood.

When God visited Moses at the burning bush it was to send him on mission before Pharaoh.

When God visited Lazarus after he had been dead for four days, it was to raise him from the dead.

There are many today who are just like Elijah. We just haven't received the message, but God is trying to tell us something. When God passes your way, listen to what he has to say. He usually speaks to us in what we call our "first mind." Sometimes we ignore that "first mine" and listen to another voice. Like Elijah, it may be time for us to move on with our lives.

Have you been dating but he or she won't make a commitment? Listen to the voice of God about your situation.

Is your job unrewarding, dead-ended, offering few opportunities for advancement? Listen to the voice of God!

Are you spiritually drained because of a lack of time for worship, prayer and bible study? Listen to the voice of God.

Are you active but seem to constantly go around in circles, getting no place? Listen to the voice of God!

God will answer you in one of two ways. He will tell you like he told Moses, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" or like he told Elijah, it's time to get back to what you were doing in the first place!

When we do what God tells us, there is no limit to what we can accomplish in the days ahead.

When the Lord Passes by

Finally, Brothers and sisters we must consider what happens when the Lord passes our way.

Elijah experience the full power of God when the Lord passed by. He felt the ground shake, the wind blow and heard a still soft voice.

The text simplified all of these wonderful acts by saying, "And The Lord passed by."

I'm glad to know that "The Lord passed by" does not mean that the Lord passed him up. Because if the Lord passed him up, there would have been no still small voice calling. If the Lord passed him up there would have been no earthquake, strong wind or raging fire.

The woman who suffered from an issue of blood was troubled with her malady for 12 years, but when the Lord passed by, she said, "If I can just touch the hem of his garment I will be whole."

We know how that woman felt because we too have wrestled with sicknesses that have troubled us day and night, but when the Lord passed by, things began to turn around.

The woman at the well was ostracized by the community, and scorned for her wicked lifestyle, but when the Lord passed by, he lifted her soul till she ran everywhere saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."

We know how she must have felt because we too have wrestled with our own sins, unforgiven by both family and friends, but when the Lord passed by he forgave our sins and planted our feet on solid ground.

We know what happens when the Lord passes by; it means that blessings are on the way.

When the Lord passes by, we become more determined to:

—Bear our burdens, no matter how heavy they may become!

—Face our enemies, no matter how fierce they fight against us!

—Resist temptations, no matter how enticing they may be!

—Conquer our fears no matter how overwhelming they may become!

—Defeat our doubts no matter how stubborn they may be.

I see what the Lord has done for you, but this year I want the Lord to pass my way too!

When the storms of life begin to rage, I want the Lord to pass my way!

When rivers of doubt cloud my faith, I want the reassuring presence of God to pass my way!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Pass me not oh gentle savior. Here my humble cry. While on others thou are calling, do not pass me by!"

While on others you are showering blessings, do not pass me by!

While on others you are granting healings for sick bodies, do not pass me by!

While on others you are mending broken hearts, do not pass me by!

While on others you are raising bowed down heads, do not pass me by!

Savior! Savior!

Who died out on Calvary!

Savior, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Savior, who arose early Sunday morning!

Savior, hear my humble cry! While on others thou are calling, do not pass me by!

Pass my way but do not pass me up!

No. 9184-King Day

And God Answered With a Dream..

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 15, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. Judges 7:15

Introduction

What is your dream? No one who succeeds in life, does so without a dream. Our dreams motivate us, inspire us and direct us toward a goal. At first the dreams sound silly to those who hear them. The little illiterate slave boy who dreamed of reading and writing grew up to be Booker T. Washington, because of God's providence and a dream. The little projects kid, who dreamed of being a soldier, grew up to be General Colin Powell and U.S. Secretary of State. The little poor girl, who wanted to be a writer, grew up to be Lorraine Hansberry one of the greatest writers of her time.

Our success is propelled by our dreams. A man without a dream for himself and his family lives a life without a purpose and direction. A woman with no dream becomes lost in the sea of life and ends up shipwrecked.

Dreams are precious. Some may laugh at our dreams, but they are serious to us, because Godly dreams guide our lives.

Because we dream big, we push ourselves to study and learn as much as we can.

Because we dream big, we are motivated to keep climbing higher to reach our goal.

When we talk to God and ask him for success, how do you think he answers? Often he answers us by giving us a dream. It seems like a small gift, but Godly dreams are so powerful that they live for generations.

Today, the nation celebrates the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who inspired an entire nation to dream about a day when Justice would run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Long after his life the dream he inspired continues to direct, new generations to help ctrate a nation that recognizes the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.

As Christians, we thank God for hearing our prayers during our enslavement, disenfranchisement and most difficult years. We also thank him for men like Martin

Luther King, Jr. When we heard his words, we realized that God had answered us with a dream.

Exposition

This text focuses on the way God saved a whole race of people with the power of a dream.

At the time of this text the main enemy of Israel was the Midianites. They were a warlike people who constantly troubled Israel raiding their crops and fields. The size of the Midianite armies continued to grow because of alliances with the Amalekites and other Arabic nations. They seemed invincible to Israel because they swept upon them riding camels and quickly disappeared. Thus, by sheer size and stealth, the Midianites seemed unstoppable to the Israelites.

God responded to the prayers of Israel by selecting one man he would use to bring down the barriers of tyranny. The man he selected was from one of the poorer tribes, without a claim to notoriety or leadership. The words of this man would inspire Israel with new hope. However, the man was not to be a man of war, even though he prepared a small army. He would lead his people to victory in a non-violent way that would scatter his enemies and make them realize the power of God.

The man he chose was Gideon. The weapon that God would use to motivate Israel to stand up in faith was not a sword, shield or a chariot but a simple dream.

Once selected, Gideon wanted assurances that God was truly calling him to lead Israel against the Midianites. He repeatedly asked for signs from God and received them. Gideon, thinking that he would need a large army to fight the 50,000 soldiers of the Midianites assembled an army of 30,000 only to learn that it was too large. He asked those who really were not up to the fight to go home. A final test reduced his number from 30,000 to 300.

With such a small number, Gideon did not know how he was to be successful against 50,000 well trained soldiers. God directed him to slip into the camp of the Midianites and would see the salvation of the Lord. Once in the camp at night, he overheard two Midianite soldiers talking about a dream one of them had in the night.

The soldier spoke of dreaming that he saw a barley biscuit rolling down the mountainside and cutting down the tent in the Midianite headquarters. His friend put an interpretation on the dream. He said the barley cake was the despised leader of the Jews Gideon coming down out of the mountains destroying the Midianites. That dream struck fear in the hearts of the Midianites but it also inspired Gideon to hear it. It was another sign from God.

As word of the biscuit dream spread from tent to tent among the Midianites, Gideon returned to his 300 men and told them about the dream. The message of the dream inspired the Israelites. Quickly, Gideon put a plan together that called for each of the 300 men to carry a covered torch in one hand a trumpet in the other. The 300 men positioned themselves on the top of the mountain, in three groups of 100, in the Black of night. At Gideon's command the soldiers broke the covers over their torches, blew their trumpets shouted, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon"

The Midianites saw Israel and remembered the dream. All 50,000 of them panicked and ran in fear..

Gideon won the battle without a battle.

It was won by the power of God, who answered their prayer with a dream.

Will God Be With Us?

More than anything else, Gideon wanted to know that God was with him in his struggle. That's why he constantly looked for signs. He needed to be sure that God would be in the fight on Israel's side.

The leaders of the Civil Rights movement, for the most part were Baptist preachers. Men such as Andrew Young, Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson and Martin Luther King, were symbolic of the men who have led our people over the years, all of whom, like Gideon wanted assurances not that the Lord was on their side, but that they were on the Lord's side.

In his Book, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" Martin Luther King constantly wrote about his desire to do the will of God. Only through responding to hate with the power of love could the movement be assured that it was on the Lord's side.

The temptation was great to arm Negroes across the nation with machine guns, shotguns and any other weapons available because the Midianites we faced were well armed, large in number and had great force. Men such as Malcolm X ridiculed Martin Luther King for urging Negroes to love their enemies. Bobby Seale and Huey Newton of the Black Panthers urged young Blacks to arm themselves for their own defense and H. Ralph Brown cried across the nation, "Burn baby Burn."

To insure that we remained on the Lord's side, Dr. King urged our people not to return hate for hate and blow for blow but to endure the pain of beatings, powerful fire hoses, and other abuses without allowing our enemies to pull us to the level of hate. We were not able to defend ourselves against the Midianites of racism and hatred with might, that's why we had to remain on God's side.

The people asked how can we hope to tear down the walls of segregation and racism without the weapons of war? The people asked, and God answered them with a dream.

Dreams strikes fear in our oppressors

The Midianites were afraid. They had heard of Gideon, the crazy leader that only had 300 men against 50,000; but they were not afraid of him until they heard about the dream.

The greatest fear that slave masters had was that their slaves would one day dream of being free. Tough and demanding rules were put into place to keep the slave from dreaming. He could not be taught to read because reading would lead to dreaming, dreaming would lead to revolt. Leaders who encouraged Slaves to be free were dangerous. Even the sermons of preachers were monitored to insure that the slaves only dreamed about being free in heaven and not on earth.

Just as Joseph wasn't a threat to his brothers until he started dreaming, Blacks in America were not perceived as real threats until we collectively started dreaming.

We dreamed of being school teachers and ministers. We dreamed of voting and running for office. We dreamed of being on boards of banks and major corporations; of owning basketball and football teams instead of playing for them. When we began to dream we became dangerous.

As long as we wanted to be a doctor's assistant the system was happy with us. We became dangerous when we started dreaming about being doctors.

We are no threat as long as we want to ride the back of the truck and collect garbage. We become dangerous if we start dreaming about forming corporations to become minority contractors who can own the garbage company.

We are not dangerous if we are constantly making withdrawals from the bank, we are dangerous when we start dreaming about owning our own banks and depositing our withdrawals in something that belongs to us.

We are not dangerous if all we want to do is play on a football team, we become dangerous when we start dreaming of owning the football team.

That was why Martin Luther King was considered dangerous. As a man, he was not a problem, but his dream threatened the status quo. His words were giving hope to an entire race. His words were giving inspiration to an entire race of barley biscuit people who might roll down the hill of time and destroy life as it was known.

In reaction to the dream token representation was given to us. Set asides were created for us and equal opportunity commissions were set up to help us.

But in the middle of America's midnight, an entire race of barley biscuits came running to the voter registration booths. Instead of voting for whites to represent us, we started running ourselves. We started our own businesses, television networks, and we even bought a basketball team.

We asked God to give us a chance to be free, and he answered us with a dream.

Dreams inspire us

When Gideon told the men of Israel about the dream, they were inspired. They knew that the dream meant God would ultimately give them the victory.

Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision the people perish" We are inspired by leaders who have vision, who can help us see what we have not seen and thirst to achieve it.

When Gideon reported the dream he heard and the Midianites own interpretation of the dream, they could visualize their success. They could see themselves victorious

It's important for believers to visualize their success. Dreams help us see what is not. The late Bobby Kennedy is credited with the phrase, "Some men see things that are and ask, Why? I dream of things that never were and ask, why not?"

Martin Luther King, like Kennedy, dreamed of things that never were and asked, why not?

Why not have a nation that is not focused on war but on peace?

Why not create a society in which every person has an opportunity to achieve regardless of race creed and color?

Why not have an inclusive society that embraces people of all walks of life as children of an almighty God?

Dr. King asked, can the sons of former slave and the sons of former slave-owners sit down together at the table of brotherhood? He asked, and God answered him with a dream.

Dr. King asked, can the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering in the heat of oppression, be turned into an oasis of freedom and Justice? He asked, and God answered him with a dream.

Dr. King asked, will there ever be a day when men will be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of the skin? He asked, and God answered him with a dream.

He asked, can freedom ring from the snow capped Rockies of Colorado; can it ring from the Mighty Mountains of New York or the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania; can freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia and Lookout Mountain of Tennessee? He asked, and God answered him with a dream.

How God Answered

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, we must consider that God often answers us in ways that we do not expect.

Who would have expected a baby in a basket to be the answer to Israel's prayer of deliverance from slavery?

Who would have thought that a wild man preaching in the desert could cause a whole nation to tremble in expectation of the coming of the savior?

Who would have thought that a child born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes would be the answer to our plea for salvation?

When Israel cried for deliverance from Midian, he answered them with a dream.

But when our souls cried out for deliverance from sin, he answered us with the unexpected, he sent us his son.

"For God so loved the world that he sent his owly begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

He was criticized and ostracized for our sins.

When the stain of sin cried out for a sacrifice, God answered and sent us Jesus!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousands!

He died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his answer.

Today as we reflect on the life, of the martyrs of the struggle, we still ask, "Will we ever be free?"

And he answers us with a dream!

No. 9186-Inspiration

Mine, Mine, Mine

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2006

SCRIPTURE: But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. Isaiah 43:1

Introduction

Have you ever wanted something all to yourself? My house. My car. My clothes. If someone takes something from us we usually fight for it or over it. We are God's people. We are his and his alone. The right of ownership is important to America. We take pride in what we own, more so than things that we rent or borrow. When it's ours we relish the possession of the item, no matter what it is.

It bothers us when we have to part with anything that we own. That was the case with the Texas rancher who owned a prize calf. It expected great profits from the calf and was very upset when the calf was hit by a motorist while it was crossing the road. The driver went to the owner of the calf and explained what had happened. He then asked what the animal was worth. "Oh, about $200 today," said the rancher. "But in six years it would have been worth $900. So $900 is what I'm out." The motorist sat down and wrote out a check and handed it to the farmer. "Here," he said, "is the check for $900. It's postdated six years from now." -Somehow a postdated check couldn't replace the cow.

Nothing takes the place of the special relationship that believers have with the savior. We are his special people because he formed us, gave us life and pointed us in the right direction.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that God considers us his own and will always be with us through every difficulty

Exposition

This text shows God claiming ownership of the people of Israel.

In Genesis 12:1 God made a promise to Abraham. That promise involved giving great sums of land to Abraham's descendants, as well as giving them a special role in the salvation of mankind. They became known as the "Chosen People." Here, God reaffirms that special relationship. It does not imply that all other nations and peoples

are not loved dearly by God, but only that Israel was God's in a special way. Beginning at verse two examples of the effect God's commitment to stand by, protect and empower Israel are given. The first example shows God's commitment to the children of Israel. . Isaiah reminds Israel of God's commitment to be with them regardless of their circumstance. Nationally, Isaiah looked toward rough times that were ahead. War and captivity loomed but God wanted the people to know that even though rough times were coming he would still be with them.

God's words to Israel were clear: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee..when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." These words emphasize a clear commitment by our Lord to be with his people in their time of need.

Likewise, Jesus giving a final charge to his disciples before he returned to heaven charged them to go, preach and teach what they had seen and heard in all parts of the world. Regardless of the difficulties that were to come he reminded them that he would be with them always, even unto the end of the earth.

Advantages of being God's Own

There are definite advantages to being one of God's own. Like Israel, we often forget what God has done in the past. Because Israel was his own, God repeatedly blessed them in a variety of ways that included:

PROVIDING FINANCIAL NEEDS: There are many who face financial needs today who have lost faith. They can't remember a time when God helped them once and have lost sight of his ability to help them again. 1 Kings 17:13-16 shows us how God helped the poor widow of Zarapheth. She was the woman that used all of her resources to the point of only have two sticks, a cruz of oil and a cup of meal. Elijah the prophet told her to act on the command of God, and everyday her barrel had enough meal for food and her oil never ran out. This is an instance where God responded to a household needed of a family once. But has he ever repeated that? 2 Kings 4:1-7 shows another woman whose sons were about to be taken in lieu of a debt she could not pay. The Prophet Elisha came to her with a word from the Lord. It seemed silly at the time, but he told her get as many empty pots as she could and place them in her house. Every pot she could get was filled with oil. She was told to sell the oil, pay her debt and praise God. God did it once and he did it again!

Because we are God's own, there is no financial need in our families that God cannot meet! Whether it is putting food on the table or resolving giant sized problems like mortgages and massive debt. God has done it once he can do it again!

MAKING A WAY OUT OF NO WAY: Sometimes it appears that there is no way for us to escape a dilemma. When we look to the left and to the right there seems to be no way over, under or around a situation. However, because we belong to God, we should think like David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

We have seen God part impossible waters before. In Exodus 14:21 God caused Moses to stretch out his hand and he parted the water for Israel to cross on dry land.

It was a remarkable feat. But did he ever repeat that miracle? Joshua 3:15-16 records how Joshua and the children of Israel were about to enter into the Promised Land but a swollen River Jordan blocked their way. Yet God ordered them to proceed forward. As the feet of the priests touched the water, they miraculously rolled back and the entire host of Israel crossed on dry land. Why was this miracle performed? Because Israel belonged to God.

GOD HEALS HIS OWN: There are times when we consider illnesses and sicknesses, we forget about God's healing power and the special fact that he looks after his own. Matthew 4:24 says "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" Over and over again. Blind men, lame men and women, leprosy, even deathly sicknesses were all healed repeatedly. People tore the roofs off houses and pushed their way through crowds just to touch the hem of garment, because they knew he could do it.

Today as we face a multitude of health related problems we must remember that there is no sickness that is outside of the power of God. God has defied the known science of the day and continues to do it today. Are you stricken with an illness, God has healed you and members of your family before, he can do it again! Are you worried over a dark prognosis? God has will continue to heal his own.

CONFIDENCE COMES FROM BEING GOD'S OWN: There is a certain element of confidence that is associated with being God's own. It's a quite assurance that because he is there, everything will be alright. There was once a church mother who was always confident that the Lord would make a way. The young women of the church asked her one day, "Tell why you are so confident." The old lady said, "When I was girl, my mother taught me to ride my bicycle and she ran beside me. I could feel her hand holding me as I paddled along. One day, I rode a long distance. When I stopped I realized that mama wasn't beside me. I asked mama, how was it that she was not there but I still felt her hand. She told me that she gave out of breath but she knew the Lord was beside me. I didn't see his presence, but I felt his hand. Ever since that day, I've learned that if God's hand is in the plan, everything is gon' be all right!"

That's the same confidence that every believer has. It is a quite faith that because we belong to God he will guide events and circumstances to our advantage. Why? Because we are his own.

WE HAVE PEACE: Sometimes we worry instead of trusting God. We worry because we forget that we are God's own. Worry robs us of our peace. Isaiah 9:6 describes Christ as the "Prince of Peace" because he and he alone could help to restore the peace between mankind and God. 1 Timothy 2:5 says it clearly, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Paul tried to explain it to the Romans in Romans 5:1 when he said, "There being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have peace in Christ when we remember that he is in control of all events. Nothing can harm us or destroy us outside of his permissive will. The fact that we are his own and he protects his own help us reach "Shiloh" the sense of being

at peace with God, comes there is an amazing change in our attitudes about life.

When Shiloh comes, that which once disturbed us, doesn't seem to bother us anymore!

When Shiloh comes, that which once seemed important is no longer germane to our quality of life.

When Shiloh comes, storms may rise and winds may blow, but our anchor holds!

When Shiloh comes, we can say triumphantly, despite what happens in the world, "It is well with my soul."

We can achieve this peace because we are his own.

All Mine

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while we are on this earth nothing belongs to us, but there is a reward that will be all "mine."

Jesus' life on earth was representative of what every believer should expect. He had nothing on this earth, not even a place to lay his head.

When Jesus said that he had no place to lay his head he was not implying that he had nothing in heaven.

We know his father still loved him because on the day of his Baptism the spirit of God came as a dove and said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

When Jesus said he had no place to lay his head, he was not a man without a home, but he was a man away from home:

-Not a man without a possession, but a man separated from it.

-Not a man journeying to find a home, but a man on his way home.

-Not looking for a home to buy, but a man looking for friends with whom to share his home.

Jesus was on a pilgrimage of love, preaching the coming kingdom, but this earth was not his home. Nothing here was important, but back in glory, sitting on the right hand of God, all the cattle on a thousand hillside belonged to him.

Likewise, every child of God is a pilgrim on his way to Canaan land. The place where you lay your head is only your dwelling but it's not your home!

Down here, Jesus didn't have much, but he wasn't worried about it, because I heard him say, "In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you"

-Come and go with me to my father's house!

-Come home with me and I'll show you a place:

-Where hearse wheels never roll..and it's mine!

-Where tears never fall..and it's mine!

-Where tempers never rise..and it's mine!

-Where doubts never appear..and it's mine!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I've got a new home over in glory and its mine, mine, mine."

Come and go with me and I'll show you a Savior who cares about you!

He cares about you whether:
-You drive a Lincoln or a Lemon
-Its GED, PH.D or no degree
-Your clothes of French sale or rummage sale!
-You pay with VISA or ask with Please “Suh”
He cared so much that John 3:16 says that God gave his only begotten Son.
He cared so much that he died on Calvary!
He cared so much that he arose on Sunday morning!
Come and go with me and I’ll show you a place that is mine! Mine! Mine!

No. 9187-Youth

Get Right or Live Trying

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 24, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Ezekiel 18:30-32

Introduction

What are you willing to die for? Martin Luther King once said that if a man has not found something that he is willing to die for, he's not fit to live. Is there anything you are willing to die for at this moment? Would you risk your life or future for an idea? For love? For money? For country? Over the years there have been many people who have proven that they are willing to risk their lives for ideas, goals and people they value greater than life itself.

Many youth chuckle at the idea of dying for anything, but there are millions of young people around the world who prove themselves willing to risk death regularly. To achieve a thrill there are many who will race cars at high speeds around hairpin turns in the middle of the night. To have "fun" some will risk death by attending nightclubs known to be places where death lurks around every corner. Thousands of youth risk their lives and freedom for the thrill they derive using or selling drugs.

Youth are not alone for there are many adults who also risk their lives and futures on ideas, goals and activities. Some of them are laudable others are generally lost causes, not worthy of the risk.

In the Movie "Get Rich or Die Trying" a young man, who depicts the rapper 50 cent, has a troubled life in the ghetto. The youth is reared in the meanest of ghettos in a dysfunctional family. His life is surrounded by drugs, violence and dysfunction. His role models in the community were drug dealers, who he said "are like God to me." As he formulated his philosophy of life the young man concluded that the major goal in life is to earn respect. From his vantage point respect is not earned from being good and holding down a minimum wage job. He believed that respect is earned from having money being rich. The only route to achieving riches that he saw available to him was either being a gangsta or a rapper. The movie details his quest to get rich first as a gangsta, criminal and dealer who ultimately ended up in prison. The second was to

become a rapper. After earning riches as an explicit gangsta rapper, he no longer sells drugs to people on the street, but gangsta ideas and lifestyles to another generation who now look up to him and say, "you are like God to me."

The tragedy of the movie is that it suggests to a generation of young people that the only routes to success are selling drugs or being rappers. Acquiring riches is seen as the one goal in life worth dying for. His goal of getting rich or die trying, by any means necessary, unfortunately has been adopted by many in the present generation.

Our Lord presents us with a different perspective on life. He points us to success, but success that does not seek riches as a goal but rather as a byproduct of obedience to God and dedication to the advancement of the kingdom of God. Matthew 6:33 summarizes this promise, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things that shall be added unto you." The goal of every Christian youth is just the opposite of what 50cent says. Instead of "Get Rich or Die Trying" our goal is to "Get right with God or spend every day of our lives trying." We have been promised that if we live honestly, trust God and do that which is right in life that we will build the kingdom of God. A byproduct of our commitment "all of these things" promised in the book of Matthew.

As Christians, we have found it true that God will reward those who put him first in their lives. We live every day of our lives trying our best live justly and to walk humbly before God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Ezekiel as he urges Israel to walk right before God and witness the return of his glory.

The presence of the Glory of the Lord has been an important aspect of the life of Israel. To have his presence was their goal in life. However, the book of Ezekiel details how Israel moved away from God seeking prosperity in worldly ways. In response the glory of the Lord gradually began to leave them.

Ezekiel opens with this heavenly glory in the vision (Ezekiel 1). Ezekiel's visions tell of the departing of this glory (Ezekiel 9:3). First it left the cherubim for the threshold of God's house (Ezekiel 10:4), then to the east gate (Ezekiel 10:18-19), and finally clear away from the Temple and city to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:22-23). Thus gradually the glory of the Lord left the Temple and Holy City. Then captivity came.

This was Ezekiel's message to the nation. Their captivity was a result of their sin, and before they could hope for return to their land they must return to their Lord. This message reaches its climax in the impassioned words of Ezekiel 18:30-32.

The text makes it clear that the godly life leads to the blessed life. The nation had tried living for carnal reasons, but the word of God projected that living for God meant happiness. It was a happiness worth achieving as a life goal.

We should live trying to...

PLEASE GOD: The rapper 50cents tells youth they should get rich or die trying. However, rather than to die trying to get rich, the word of God teaches that it is better to live trying to please God. Pleasing God should be our highest priority.

Solomon evaluated his life and came to the conclusion that although he had attained riches, wealth, power and position, the only true happiness he really knew came from knowing God. In Ecclesiastes 12:13 he said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

Like Solomon, we often find ourselves doing things for the sake of getting money. That pursuit conflicts with what we know to be right as Christians. Unconsciously, many are living by a 50cent Gospel that is not worth a dime. We say are not influenced by the power of the dollar but we are. We often fool others, but the man in the mirror keeps telling us that we are on a wrong course. Our conscience speaks with a loud voice, but the Benjamins have a tendency to speak louder. The pursuit of money and riches can push us to do many things that we normally consider against our better judgment if we are not careful.

To please God we must constantly listen for his voice as he tells us what to do. Consider the woman who prided herself in always trying to do what God wanted done. Obedience to God was so important that whenever God spoke to her she carried out his commands to the letter. Some devilish teens in her neighborhood tried to take advantage of her obedient spirit.

At night they gathered outside her window and whispered in a voice that tried to imitate an angelic tone, "If you bake it, they will come!-Pound!" The next morning the woman arose and baked a pound cake and called in the neighborhood boys and offered them generous slices. Buoyed by their success, the boys whispered to her again, "If you bake it, they will come, Lemon!" Just as she did before she baked a lemon cake and offered them giant slices.

On the third night the boys whispered, "If you bake it, they will come, Chocolate." She heard the voice, but immediately afterwards she heard the giggling boys outside her window. She arose and baked a cake but mixed several boxes of Ex-Lax with the chocolate icing. She called the boys in and gave them generous slices. As they were eating, she said, "I heard a voice that said, 'if you bake it they will come.' But then I heard other voices, outside my window."

As the boys finished their cake they had this sudden urge to find a bathroom. She said, "The voices I heard told me to tell you, if you eat it, you will run!"

Sometimes the voices that we hear do not tell us to please God!

Solomon came to the conclusion that life was not all about riches but it had a lot to do with preparing himself to stand before the judgment bar of God with a clear conscience.

GIVE OUR BEST:50cent saw only two options life: dealing drugs or rapping about a drug related life. Youth should broaden their horizons to see that God provides

many more options for success and happiness other the dealing drugs or being a gangsta rapper. When we speak of rappers, we are not so naive as to condemn a genre, for there are many rappers who have clean, wholesome, even godly messages. However, gangsta rap has a tendency to glorify the lowest level of our life while those who pimp that image become millionaires.

Rather than die trying to get rich, we should live trying to give life our best, reach for the best and reject all of the rest.

Rather than die trying to get rich, why not live trying to reach a goal in life?

Rather than die trying to get rich, why not live trying using the talents and gifts God has given us to the best of ability and to his glory?

He has promised us if we glorify him in our life work, he will add all of the other things. They will come.

A day will come when we will answer to God whether we took the short cut in life to attain riches and fame or whether we took the long way around and tried to live our lives by his word and protected by his grace.

We should do so while considering that everything we do will one day be brought before the judgment seat of God. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul says, ""For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

MERIT GOD'S FAVOR: The fallacy of the 50 cent philosophy of life is that it can't buy us a nickel worth of God's favor. It is grace that saves us from sin, but it is God's favor that blesses us beyond what we deserve.

It is better to live trying to gain God's favor than it is to die trying to get rich!

To have a full, happy life we need all of God's favor, most of which cannot be attained by riches.

With riches we can acquire things, but we can't buy what really matters.

We can't buy love, that's a sign of God's favor.

We can't buy joy, that's another sign of God's favor.

We can't buy health or healing. We can pay doctors and purchase medical insurance with our riches, but health and healing are a part of God's favor.

We can't buy peace of mind only security systems. Peace of mind is a result of God's favor.

We can't achieve anything in life outside of the will of God. Whatever we have is the result of his favor. We gain his favor by turning our backs on the 50cent ideas of this world and seeking the kingdom of God.

We must reject that evil voice that says get rich or die trying and replace it with a voice that says, "Get right or live trying!" We give our best to do God's will he favors us.

If the purpose of our business, financial investments, education or profession is to do a good work to build the kingdom of God, your venture will earn God's favor. or my profession without God's blessings. It means that kingdom building has becomes your highest priority.

When kingdom building is number 1 in our lives, God rewards our efforts with his favor, which is more than a 50cent philosophy any day.

The dreams of youth can happen if..

Finally brothers and sisters there is a word of hope for those who choose to live their lives, trying to do his will.

Ezekiel told Israel that the glory of the Lord would return when they started to live right again. Likewise, those today who have lost the glory of the Lord while pursuing goals less than godly in purpose can restore the Glory of the Lord in their lives, return to the godly path.

When the glory of the Lord returns we will be able to walk on paths we've never dreamed.

Youth are encouraged to remember that the Lord offers them more than a 50 cent mentality.

You can be more than a rapper who sings about drugs and the hard life!

You can be more than a young hoochie mama who pops her coochie in hard core videos!

You can be more than a gangsta, player or pimp!

If we live trying to do God's will the glory of the Lord will return.

When the glory of the Lord comes..

Believers will be able to walk in faith.

Through faith we can achieve the unachievable.

Through faith we can accomplish the impossible.

Through faith we can reach the unreachable.

When we trust in the Lord we don't worry about trying to get 50 cent, and a pocket full of Benjamins.

When we trust in the Lord, we know the Lord will make a way!

When we trust in the Lord we can:

—Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

-Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable

-Live for the incredible; Achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

I don't know about you but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Rather than "Get rich or die trying" I've decided to trust in the Lord until I die!

Rather than get rich or die trying, I've decided to put my trust in the man who decided to die to save me.

His name is Jesus

He died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't want to get rich or die trying, I want to get right and live my life trying to please God!

No. 9187-Funeral

If I Could Be Like Mother

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2006

SCRIPTURE: "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" Matthew 12:49-50; "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Psalm 17:15

Introduction

What if we had all of the strength of our mothers and none of their flaws; wouldn't that be great? As children we look at our mothers in awe. They appear larger than life to us; able to do the impossible and reach the unreachable. When we cut a finger, our mothers had that magic kiss that could make the hurt go away. When we were frustrated, mothers knew the right words to help us through our frustration. She always appeared so strong, but yet so vulnerable at the same time. She always appeared wise but seemed to always depend on a higher power than herself. If we had just a fraction of her strength, we could be like her and draw from the same spiritual wells that seem to feed her daily.

While there are many children that emulate their mother's strength, wisdom, and inner peace, they do not really know the woman they call mother. What do you know about your mother? Do you really know her? They are familiar with her but we don't really know the woman we call mother.

Motherhood is not always a matter of biology but it is a matter of relationships. There are many who have children and establish the biology but are not successful in establishing relationships with a single child that they bring into the world.

A mother who is able to bring a child into the world and maintain a strong, loving relationship with that child is more than a biological mother; she is a mother of strength.

If that mother has one child and maintains that relationship she is a good mother, without a doubt. What if that mother is able to maintain that relationship not with one, but with three, six, eight or ten children? Such a woman would have to be a woman of great strength.

When we see mothers such as these we want to emulate their finer qualities. We want to be like them in many ways. Girls try to copy everything they love about her. Boys have a hard time finding a way, because they often look for wives who have most of the strengths of their mothers.

As Christians, we give God thanks for our mothers. We celebrate their strength and love. We celebrate the lives of our mothers and cherish her memories because of what she meant to us. Even in death we celebrate mother because, while we want to be like mother, we realize that mother spent most of her life trying to be like Jesus. She never seemed to be satisfied with anything she did and kept trying to do better. She wanted his perfection.

Even as we mourn today, we are happy because, she has found even greater strength in the presence of the Lord. She is stronger now because she has finally reached the perfection she strived for all of her life. In her absence we now strive to be like her and live to say the Lord face to face.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he establishes the familial relationship between all saved individuals in the kingdom of God.

Jesus often spoke to large crowds of people who listened intently to his words. Often his words were challenging and difficult for the leaders to accept. Some thought he was a mad man. When his Mother and his brothers heard that he may be drawing undo attention, perhaps their fear for his life compelled them speak with him. When they approached, his response, which at first seems a put down, serves to give us a lesson in relationships in the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Jesus asks the question, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

In answering Christ established our relationship to each other. We are interdependent of each other. Jesus' answer was clear; his brother, sister or mother in the kingdom of God would be those who share in the pursuit of God's will.

His probing question challenged everyone present to think about their mothers, asking quietly, "Who is she and what is the source of her great strength?"

David, in Psalm 17:15 seem to summarize the quest of most believers. We desire the strength, peace and love that seem to come from the believing life. We see those qualities first in our mothers. David said his greatest desire in life was to behold the face of God in righteousness. Then, he said, he would be satisfied, because then he would be like the beauty of God. He said when he awakens after this life, he felt assured that he would awaken with the strength and "agape" love of God. He wanted to emulate the strength he first saw in his mother, but would only find when he awakens with the likeness of God.

What We Want to Be

In many ways our mothers represent the highest standards of what we want to be. We are often frustrated because achieving her level of strength seems so challenging that we think being "like" her is impossible

We want to emulate many of the strengths she has demonstrated before our eyes.

WE WANT HER STRENGTH: Every son or daughter wants to emulate the strength of a good mother. They have heard the family accounts of her struggle to stand on her own two feet. They have seen her sacrifice, scrape and "make-do" to provide for her family; rising after being knocked down; recovering from wounded spirits, while stubbornly announcing, "I'm still here!"

Some mothers have reared families alone. That takes more strength than those who have the help of a good husband. These mothers are husbands and fathers, bread winners and bread bakers at the same time. Mother is the pillar of strength in the eyes of her children. That is not to say that they have never seen her frustrated, hurt or depressed. They have seen her wounded. Sometimes they have seen her cry. They know she is often hurt, disappointed and frustrated, but still she rises each day to love them and provide for them, often at her own risk. Those are the marks of strength and character that every surviving child wants.

We want her strength. We want her ability to stand with her children, even if she has to stand alone. We want her strength to remain active in the life of her family until her dying day.

We want that spirit within her that seems to say, "For God I'll live and for God our die!"

WE WANT HER WISDOM: Those who have many sisters and brothers know that mother is often called upon to demonstrate the wisdom of Solomon as she solves disputes settles arguments and brings peace into the home. We have watched our mothers demonstrate wisdom beyond her years. It was a wisdom we knew she derived from a source greater than herself.

We want that wisdom. As we watch our mothers however, we know that wisdom did not come through formal education. We know this because there are many people who have college degrees but do not act wisely with their lives. On the other hand there are many who have very little formal training beyond the necessary but have demonstrated great wisdom.

Wisdom has been defined is "knowing when to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on and when to let go." Those who have had great mothers in their lives have seen this wisdom demonstrated. These mothers seem to instinctively choose the right directions, make the right choices and decisions.

As children we watched our mothers and admired her "wisdom" and grew to respect her wisdom and accepted her answer when we asked "why" and she said, "Because I said so!" We knew somewhere along the way, mother would prove to be right.

WE WANT HER CONFIDENCE: Mothers inspire confidence in their children; they give them a sense of security. They push, encourage, promote and coach them in a variety of areas. Children who have a good mother backing them leave home believing that there is at least one person in the world who really believes in them; their mothers. Jacob didn't' think much of his abilities, but his mother did. In fact, she supported him so much she went overboard trying to create opportunities for him. Elizabeth kept telling John the Baptist that he was destined to do a great work for the Lord. Those words from mother's lips ring in millions of ears today, "You can make

it! You can be somebody!" inspire confidence. They push children to achieve, excel and succeed. Everyone needs someone who believes in them; for many that someone has been their mother.

We want to be able to inspire confidence in our children the way the way mother inspired us.

We want to be confident that no matter how the winds of life blow, God is in control.

We want mother's unwavering confidence that despite the storms of life, God is always in control.

We want to be like her because she is the woman who inspired confidence in us, even when we did not believe in ourselves.

Her Hands were in God's hand

Finally, brothers and sisters, we want to be like our mothers because, their hands were in God's hands.

Hannah told the Lord that she would put her child in God's hands if she were blessed to give birth. No sooner than the boy Samuel was old enough, his mother brought him to the place of worship and put him in God's hands.

In God's hands, her son became spiritual leader of the nation!

Jesus made it clear that in the Kingdom of Heaven believers may have many mothers, those who are doing the will of God.

Who is our mother? She was the woman who saw to it that we came to church and saw to it that we acted correctly once we got there!

Who is our mother? She is the woman who taught us to say our prayers and to sing, "Yes, Jesus Love me."

Who is our mother? She is the one who is concerned about who we are in the world and who we are before God.

Who is our mother? She is the one who insures that her children have:

-Food to eat here, but she is also concerned that her child be fed the Word of God, for she has heard the scripture say "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

-Clothes on their backs, but she is also concerned that they wear the breastplate of righteousness and that their feet are shod with the Gospel of the preparation of peace, that they wear the helmet of Salvation and carry the shield of faith.

-A place to call home, but she also worries about whether they will have a home in the kingdom of heaven.

-Birth and delivery in this world, but she also is concerned that they are born again into the kingdom of God.

Who is our mother? She is the one that will teach her children to trust in the Lord.

Somebody here can remember a time when the family was in a tough spot and mother mumbled, "We'll just have to put our trust in the Lord."

If I could be like my mother I would learn that if I trust in the Lord, I will:

-Overcome strong temptations

-bear heavy burdens

-withstand mighty persecutions

If I could be like my mother, I'd always remember that no matter how tough times become, "The Lord will make a way!"

If I could be like my mother, I'd always remember that I have to serve the Lord until my dying day!

If I could be like my mother, I'd always remember that the Lord has promised never to leave me alone!

If I could be like my mother, I'd always know that even in my senior years, God can give me strength!

If I could be like my mother, I'd always remember how to call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, Who arose after three days and nights!

If I could be like my mother, one day when this life is over, I'll fly away!

If I could be like my mother, one day when I'm through struggling and toiling on this earth, I'll mount up on wings like eagles!

If I could be like my mother, one day I'll go to sleep on this earth and wake up leaning on the everlasting arms.

No. 9189-Missionary

Ordinary People for An Extra Ordinary Mission

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2006

SCRIPTURE: "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:1-2; Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20

Introduction

Have you ever felt insignificant? There are many people who feel that their contribution to the church is small and insignificant. Their names are never listed, their deeds are rarely reported, their gifts are too small to mention and their part is so small that it is not worthy of note. They don't feel special or even essential. They feel uncomfortably "ordinary."

Those who feel insignificant and unworthy are not alone, especially when it comes to service in the Kingdom of God. The prophet Jeremiah felt insignificant when God called him to be a prophet at a young age. Isaiah felt unclean and unworthy to stand as an ambassador for God. They felt there were others who were much more significant than themselves. Yet, despite their reservations, God chose these "ordinary" people to achieve an extra ordinary work. Ordinary people like Moses, who couldn't talk before people; ordinary people like Isaac, who was an honest man, a good man, but boasted nothing special about himself; ordinary people like the twelve disciples, none of them rich, or famous, or studied - just twelve common men with uncommon faith.

John the Baptist was as ordinary as you can get. Living in the wilderness, surviving on locust and wild honey, he heralded the coming of Christ. He was an ordinary person who led and extraordinary life.

A little boy who came to hear Christ speak brought two fishes and five loaves of bread that Christ used to feed 5,000. He was just a boy. His part was small but God used this ordinary boy and his ordinary possession in an extraordinary way.

There are many people who are willing to play first fiddle in the church, but what about second fiddle. What about committee member instead of chairperson? What

about the person who carries out details instead of the person who creates a big idea. How far could a local congregation or an association of churches reach if it were not for the legions of "ordinary" members from small churches and large churches, with and without formal education, with and without financial resources, contacts and "pull?" How much could any effort achieve without "ordinary" people?

As Christians, we know that each of us is precious in the sight of the Lord. We are all important and necessary to the kingdom building process. That commission was given to every believer, even those who consider themselves insignificant and unworthy. God wants to use an army of ordinary believers to do an extra-ordinary work.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives instructions to 70 nameless disciples to precede him and announce his coming as he moved toward Jerusalem.

Jesus selected 12 of his disciples to serve as apostles. To these 12 he conferred special gifts that would allow them to perform signs and wonders as they moved about the world preaching the Gospel. The 12, were identified in scripture by name. They formed an important inner circle that helped administer the kingdom program after the death and ascension of the savior. These 12 also had a symbolic significance, especially since Israel is noted for its 12 tribes.

Unlike the 12 apostles who were the inner circle of the Kingdom, the 70 disciples appointed by Christ were nameless but essential. They were important but ordinary. Just as the 12 had a symbolic significance, so did the number 70.

When Moses selected elders to help him, he selected six men from each of the 12 tribes. Historical writings have explained that Moses placed seventy two lots in an urn. Seventy of the lots had the word "Elder" written upon them, two were left blank. The seventy men who drew the lots with the word "Elder" became Moses' assistants. Those with blanks were sent home. The number Seventy continued among the Jews. We can trace it in the 70 translators of the Bible into Greek, and in the seventy members of the Sanhedrin, or supreme court. Thus, when Christ chose 70 he kept the Old Testament tradition of choosing 70 leaders to carry out a great delegated task.

The task of the 70 was to go before Christ into the various towns and communities on the road to Jerusalem and announce his coming. The mission was important, yet their names would never be called.

The mission of the 70 was evangelistic. It was also introductory. As Jesus moved toward Jerusalem he would stop by the places that they would prepare. Their work, unseen and unreported by history, helped bring men to Christ in important ways. They were ordinary people who had an extraordinary mission that was performed to the glory and praise of God even though they were never recognized for their work by men.

At verse 20 the 70 returned to report their success. They had succeeded in introducing the savior despite the attempts of Satan to interrupt them. The opponents

that they described as demons could not oppose them. The power of God's anointing was upon them. Jesus noted that while they celebrated their success in carrying out the mission, they should rejoice that their deeds have been noticed in heaven and their names written down in heaven.

Ordinary People

The great significance of Jesus' selection of the 70 is that they were ordinary. That is important for believers today because, while there is a need for laborers in the harvest, those selected need not all be apostolic. They don't need to be special. They can and must be ordinary people.

When the church selects deacons to minister to the spiritual needs of the congregation, often it is the ordinary person who does the best job. The ordinary man recognizes the importance of the task rather than his own self importance. The ordinary deacon serves the church, supports his pastor, and does whatever is necessary to help build the kingdom. The self centered deacon is selective about his areas of service and often refuses some tasks that he thinks are beneath him.

The ordinary deaconess and mother ministers to the women of the congregation out of love and concern. If she is ordinary, she serves in humility and promotes the kingdom to the best of her ability. While there are legions of ordinary deaconesses in the church, there are also a few who are self centered. They refuse to dress appropriately if the attire does not fit their tastes. They often refuse other areas of service they consider not worthy of their status. Yet, Christ needs ordinary deaconesses to perform an extra ordinary task.

The ordinary layman may be called upon to work in a variety of areas of men's work in the church. These areas may include working with young men and boys, church maintenance or other areas of men's ministry. The ordinary man does not catch a boat like Jonah and run from responsibility, but says in the words of Isaiah, "Here am I Lord, send me." There are some men who think of themselves as too important for ordinary tasks. But it's thousands of ordinary tasks once performed that make the church's work succeed.

An Extraordinary Mission

While Jesus may have selected 70 ordinary men, the mission upon which they were sent was anything but ordinary. In fact, it was extra-ordinary. The 70 were sent to 35 cities to announce the coming of the Kingdom. It explains why crowds were often awaiting Jesus when he arrived in certain localities. This happened because the advance teams of ordinary men had accomplished their missions. The same is true today. The church needs ordinary people, but the mission is by no means ordinary. It is extra-ordinary.

Unlike a corporation, whose mission is to build a customer base regardless of the spiritual state of its customers, the church's primary mission is to save the lost, then

nurture saved souls once they are saved. That's not an ordinary mission. If the mission was simply to fill the pews with "customers" it would be a matter of waging a marketing campaign that consisted of a free worship, with food coupled with great entertainment. The pews of the church would be filled and each church could say, "Mission accomplished." However, we have an extra-ordinary mission. We must go beyond corporate marketing campaigns; we must build the kingdom of God, which requires us go to beyond filling the pews; it requires us to spiritual feed and sustain those in the pews.

That's not an ordinary mission. It is extra-ordinary.

Beyond that the church needs to reach out. There are many today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes. Outreach is essential to kingdom building.

We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus.

Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes. When we help others it must come from the heart. It must be done out of love. That's what 1 Corinthians 13:3 means when it says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing."

To save the lost, nurture the saved, and keep reaching out in love is not an ordinary mission, it is an extra-ordinary mission.

An Extraordinary reward

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that while God wants ordinary people to carry out an extraordinary mission, he also plans an extra-ordinary reward for those who accomplish their mission.

When saints complete their mission God has a reward for them, but is not an ordinary reward. It is an extra-ordinary reward.

It is not a trophy because trophies corrode and fall apart.

It is not a gold watch because watches can't measure time in a place where there is no time.

It is not a plaque because plaques are reminders of past accomplishment; but they have no significance in a place where there is no past but only a future.

John, in the Revelation, God promised great rewards to the saints that overcome. It would not be an ordinary reward, but it would be extra-ordinary.

In Revelation 21:7 all of the ordinary saints who complete their extra-ordinary mission will be told, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

This should be encouraging news for the ordinary saint; to know that our work for him will not go unrewarded.

It should be encouraging to us to hear the word of God declare that the ordinary saint who worked to build the kingdom will receive an extra ordinary reward.

It should be encouraging to know that those who perform a thousand ordinary tasks in extra ordinary ways will receive an extra ordinary blessing from the savior.

We the ordinary, must continue to lift Jesus up in extraordinary ways!

We the ordinary, must work until our day is done; until the setting of our sun!

We the ordinary, must labor in hope and faith that God will provide an extraordinary increase!

We the ordinary, must keep our eyes on the extra-ordinary reward!

It will be a great day when ordinary people walk down the golden streets of an extraordinary place called "The New Jerusalem!"

It will be a great day when ordinary ushers, church clerks, janitors and choir members, step across the threshold of extraordinary mansions, in the kingdom of heaven!

When we get to this extra-ordinary place, it will be filled with ordinary saints who have spent their lives doing extra-ordinary work!

I don't know about you but I want to be in that extra ordinary place where every day will be Sunday; where it's always "howdy" and never "goodbye!"

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Until that day, we the ordinary members of the church must continue to tell the story.

We must continue to tell about God and his goodness!

We must continue to tell the world about Jesus, who was born into an ordinary family, lived and ordinary life among ordinary people!

We must continue to tell the world how he died out on Calvary but after three days and three nights, something extraordinary happened! He arose from the dead and is alive today!

Today, the Lord is providing extraordinary blessings to ordinary believers who are carrying out an extraordinary mission, in an extraordinary way!

No. 9190-Inspiration

Dealing With Punting Situations

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 5, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him as he said unto you." Mark 16:7

Introduction

Have you ever made it through an entire year and did everything as planned? Were there times when you fumbled? Were there times when you met the unexpected? If you are like most people you often meet life situations that force you to alter or change your plans. Those are the times when you have to drop back and rethink and start again.

In that sense, life is like a football game. No football team is able to play an entire game and make every first down without a few turnovers. Sooner or later, they will find it necessary to drop back 10 and punt. Even Super bowl championship teams find themselves in punting situations because the offensive team did not pick up a first down or two.

The way it works in football is that each team gets four tries to make 10 yards of progress by either running or passing the ball. The opposing team tries to stop them from making those 10 yards. If the offense fails to get 10 yards it has to give up the ball to the other team. They usually do that by kicking the ball, punting it away.

Punting situations are usually not fatal. They frustrations and set backs but they usually do not mean that the game is over, depending on the time remaining. Generally, punting situations are frustrating because they suggest that the opposition has blocked our attempts at success. But it ain't over until it's over.

We know that is true because we have the lives of many historic personalities that show us that it is important not to give up because we face punting situations. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. Einstein didn't talk until he was four, and didn't read until he was 7 years old. Walt Disney was fired from his job at a newspaper because he lacked imagination and had no good ideas. Thomas Edison was a school dropout who failed 25,000 times in the course of his life. Henry Ford went broke five times before he launched the enterprise that made him a wealthy man. Each man reached a punting situation his life, several times; but they refused

to give up. They dropped back, regrouped and came back again.

As many watch the Super Bowl and other football contests they will notice that regardless of the greatness of a particular team they will face a punting situation at least once in the game. To do otherwise would mean either that they are a superhuman team or they are playing the worst imaginable team with absolutely no defensive ability. As you watch the game, count the number of punting situations, fumbles and turnovers you see. They occur very often. However, the mark of champions is that they do not throw in the towel the first time they are unable to achieve a goal. What do they do? They go back to the bench, analyze what they did wrong, devise a new strategy and go back into the game, determined to win.

When you see the same the offensive team that had to punt a few minutes earlier back on the field again, it shows that the team members did not consider themselves defeated because they had to punt. They are trying again, but harder this time. The great actress Mary Pickford put it like this: "If you have made mistakes, even serious ones, there is always another chance for you. What we call failure is not the falling down, but the staying down." And she is right.

In many respects, Life is like a football game; because the stakes are high, it's not just a regular game; it's a super contest between good and evil. As individuals we play a position on the Christian team. God is the owner, the Holy Spirit is our manager and Jesus is our coach. Sometimes we are allowed to call our own plays in the game of life, but often the plays are sent in from the bench. They are all written down in a play book called the bible.

Often we try to execute plays but are stopped by an opposing force that has read our offense and stops our progress. When our progress stops, the game is not over. We go to the sidelines and have a little talk with the coach; then get back in the game.

As Christians we are pleased to know that the church is a winning team. No matter how hard the devil tries to frustrate us or bring us to a stand still, we know he will not be victorious. Whenever he stops our progress, we simply drop back ten and punt. After we have a little talk with Jesus, we get back in the game and give life the best that we have.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode of biblical history in which a disciple had failed miserably and given an advantage to the enemies of the Kingdom of God, but was called back into the ministry despite his error.

It takes place at the site of the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection.

The women came to anoint the body of Jesus but found the tomb empty. They were greeted by an Angel who told them that Jesus had risen. A message from the Lord was left behind for the disciples about where to meet him. Of all eleven of the disciples, Peter was singled out.

Peter had disgraced himself and did not consider himself worthy to be an apostle. While Jesus was being tried before the high priests, Peter stood outside in the court yard and warmed himself by the fire. Three times while standing there he denied

knowing Jesus when asked. On the third denial he swore and cursed and acted outrageous as he tried to convince people that he was not a follower of Christ. When he had completed his denials a rooster crowed for the second time, reminding him of words of Jesus that before the cock crowed two times he would deny him thrice.

Although he was the man who leaped forward to cut off a soldiers ear in the garden, walked on water, and was called "the Rock" by Christ himself, Peter was unsure of himself and no one knew about his feelings. He felt his failure at a time when Christ's
life was on the line was unforgivable. He sunk to an all time low and did not consider himself a disciple.

When Peter, the strongest member of Christ's inner circle betrayed the faith, he gave the enemies of the kingdom an advantage. He fumbled the ball. He caused a turnover. He wasn't benched by the coach, he benched himself. He had to regroup. He had to rethink and analyze his actions.

The Angel's message for the disciples "And Peter" was a special call to Peter to get back in the game. Christ is risen! Peter received the news and made a frenzied dash to the tomb. He ran so fast that he was the first disciple to make it to the tomb. He championed the cause of Christ and became the strongest leader of the early Church. He promoted the cause of Christ until his death. He never denied the Lord again even though it meant being crucified upside down on a Roman cross.

Punting Situations

When do we know we have reached a punting situation? When our progress has stopped! When that happens we have to copy the strategies of others:

ANALYZE OUR MISTAKES: When our progress stops, we don't quit the game; we review our actions with an open mind. Our progress may have been halted by a team that is not superior to ours but because they were able to take advantage of our mistakes and weaknesses. When David sinned with Bathsheba; God punished his kingdom. When he analyzed why the kingdom was suffering David cried out to God "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

Those who win are those who are able to drop back, analyze and regroup.

Consider the difference between the loser and the winner:

—A winner makes a mistake and says "it's my fault, I'll do better next time." A loser says "It wasn't my fault."

—A winner never stops trying. A Loser never stops giving excuses. (Abraham Lincoln was a failure in business, lost two elections to the state legislature, was defeated for Congress twice, defeated the Senate Twice, had a nervous breakdown and his girl friend died, but he never stop trying until he became president of the United States."

—A winner says "I'm good, but I can be better." A loser says "At least I'm not as bad as other people."

—A winner learns from people who are superior to him. A loser tries to tear down those who better.

—Winners never quit. Quitters never win.

Those who win don't quit the game because they face a punting situation; they drop back, punt and analyze.

DETERMINE A NEW STRATEGY: If you constantly face punting situations, it may be time to get a new game plan. The job of a successful defensive team is to read the plays of the offensive and stop its forward drive. That's the way Satan is in the lives of believers. He constantly watches our actions and looks for an opportunity. If we use the same play every day; it won't be long before he's able to stop our progress.

There are many who look for happiness in life in a variety of ways. Satan, like a roaring lion, walks to and fro trying to find a way to stop our progress. He looks for weaknesses in the offensive.

Perhaps you are trying to progress, but without a strong faith in God. Satan knows your play and exploits your lack of faith by creating doubt.

Perhaps you are trying to build a strong family, but without paying serious attention to bible study and worship. Satan knows that a family that genuinely prays together usually stays together, so he exploits the family's weakness and creates divisions.

If we are caught in a sin and continue in that sin daily, Satan knows your play and reads your offense. He exploits your weakness and stops your progress.

The Philistines were troubled by Samson. He was too strong for them to defeat; so they studied his actions. They discovered that he enjoyed the company of beautiful Philistine women. They devised a defense, using Delilah that stopped Samson's blitz. She cut his hair and brought him down. In blindness, Samson regrouped. He asked God to renew his strength and used another plan. In so doing he destroyed thousands of his enemies and made the play of the day.

Samson changed his play. So did Saul on the Damascus road and the woman at the well. They defeated Satan by changing their plays from trusting in the world, to trusting God. By doing so they devil was not able to force them into many punting situations.

There is an old saying that puts it this way, "If you do what you've always done, you're going to get what you always got." We need to learn from our mistakes and failures, and use them as springboards to change, growth and entirely new ways of being and doing. In other words, with God's help we need to invent and reinvent ourselves time after time after time, successfully confusing Satan.

GET BACK IN THE GAME: Those who have faced punting situations should not beat up on themselves and wallow in self pity. After denying Christ, Peter was tremendously despondent. He was sitting on the bench. Jesus called him back into the game. Chuck Jones, the animator of Bugs Bunny, says, "I don't believe we learn by our triumphs. I think we learn by our mistakes. Goodness knows, it's not that you want to. But it's the stumblings that give us some clue as to what we're really driving for."

Sitting on the bench and wallowing in self pity won't help. Holding our heads in our hands and staring at our failures to the point that we let them overwhelm us

can cause a major depression. Our failures will become increasing larger to us. We won't be able to get past them. Nor am I saying that we need to deny the mistakes we've made, even though most of us would like to do that. Neither wallowing in our failures nor denying them does anyone any good.

After a punting situation we need to get back in the game. The call of Christ is: "Get back in the game!" You might count yourself as unworthy but the Lord who made you and knows all about you says, "Get back in the game!" Eventually in the game of football, the offensive team will get the ball back; they'll get another opportunity to play and succeed. They have a second, and a third and a fourth chance, and so do we.

God is like that with us. He gives us another chance. Author Anne Tyler adds another dimension. She says, "I've never quite believed that one chance is all I get." While God is the God of the second chance, he is also the God of the third, fourth and 50th chance. Get back in the game.

Not A Ring But a Crown

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that every player in a Super bowl wants to get a super bowl ring to wear on his finger, but every Saint is trying to get a golden crown.

When a team comes out of a locker room and runs onto the field it has one thing on its mind; winning.

So it is with every believer. Each day we step forward into the super bowl of life, we should do so with a positive attitude that is reflected in Philippians 4:13, I can do anything that strengthens me, through Christ.

Even if we have faced punt situations and have fumbled, with God's help we have a chance to turn a losing situation into a winning situation!

Even though we've had to punt, God gives us another chance to turn:

—defeat into victory!

—Shame into respect!

—Disgrace into honor!

—Fear into Faith!

—Desperation into hope!

—Sorrow into Joy!

—Eternal Death into Eternal Life!

If a team makes it to the Super Bowl, it does not matter whether it wins or loses; the team members get a Super Bowl Ring; it is the symbol of their success.

To get that ring each player is willing to endure pain and punishment as they struggle for inches and yards of turf to make touchdowns.

To get that ring they take hits, fall down and get back up again!

To get that ring they give everything they have with all of their hearts.

But there is a reward for believers that is greater than a Super bowl ring.

It's what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that

No. 9191-Anniv.-Women

Diary of a Glad Black Woman

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 12, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." Psalm 92:4

Introduction

Have you ever kept a diary? Diaries are journals of our personal thoughts and observations about a variety of subjects. Generally, a diary is our personal musings about life. For many, journals are therapeutic. They help us to vent emotions and express our inner feelings.

Diaries record our thoughts before they have been refined, polished and ready for public consumption. They are extremely personal.

The Diary of Anne Frank detailed the horror of the holocaust and one Jewish woman's experience. Terre Teen Boone's "The Hiding Place" also details in detail one woman's tragic experience. The book, "The Color Purple" tells the story of a Black woman who details her experience with a dominating man who abuses her and separates her from a sister she loves.

Tyler Perry's stage play, "Diary of a mad Black Woman" tells a blow by blow account of woman whose husband left her for another woman, then fell on hard times; giving her the opportunity to either forgive him or heap vengeance upon him. The stage play was a huge success, but the movie won critical acclaim as it astonished Hollywood with its phenomenal success.

Most of the diaries that are studied seemed to be written by women. They seem to detail the frustrations of millions of women who are "waiting to exhale" or trying to "get their groove back." However, writing dairies is not the exclusive domain of women alone. Men also record the thoughts in diaries. Both are ways that the present is recorded or frozen in prose.

A new phenomenon began a few years ago with the advent of the internet. It is called "blogging." Blogs are online journals in which bloggers share their thoughts on a variety of subjects from their private lives to politics. Diaries are often very revealing.

While diaries often tell of our frustrations, they also record our joys and victories. A mother writes to her diary about her feelings just before the birth of a child. A girl describes in detail her preparation for the senior prom. A son tells about his first opportunity to play on the varsity football team.

We also talk about God in our diaries. In fact, many diaries are addressed to God as they attempt communicate their inner feelings.

The diary of a frustrated person may be filled with sad accounts. But what about people who have been blessed? How would their diaries read? What would be their daily log?

Dear God: Today, I realized how much you have blessed me and I smiled as a drove to work.

Dear God: Yesterday, you answered my prayer. I'm happy about it.

Dear God: Today, I was able to complete the financial deal I began. Thank you. You made me happy.

Every day, God gives each of us enough experiences to write in our diaries for week.

As Christians, we are thrilled to know that our experience with God has made us glad. Whether we are men or women we can say with the song writer, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad."

Exposition

This text focuses upon David as he considers how God made him glad.

There are 150 psalms, most of which were written by David. During various periods of his life, David wrote his inner feelings and prayers to God. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he also wrote many of the psalms, which were what we might call spiritual journals that recorded regularly what he felt about God the quality of his relationship with God.

In this text, David he looks at the mercy and goodness of God and decides that it is a good thing to praise God in the morning and at night because of the way he blessed his people.

The goodness of God as it is reflected in the life of David, gives him reason to be glad.

The 92 Psalm reads as if David were writing a diary saying, "Dear God" you have been so wonderful to me that I want to sing your praises with a harp. He wanted to praise God for all of his works in his life.

In the remainder of the psalm he lists a variety of reasons why God has made him both happy and glad.

He said fools can't see the way they have been blessed, but the saved and consecrated know God is the reason for their blessing it makes them glad.

David's journal entry shows that he is glad because God provides for him and is performing a work of grace within him everyday.

What A Glad woman looks like

Most Black men have seen a mad Black woman. We don't need Tyler Perry's

movie to let us know what some Black women will do when they get mad. It's dangerous to be around a mad Black woman. Al Green went to sleep one night with a mad Black woman and he woke up with a chest full of hot grease. A mad black woman is dangerous. That's what the cheating husband found out when he tried to go back home. Not only had he cheated on his wife, but he gave his girlfriend all of the money needed to pay the household bills. His wife was mad and he knew it. He begged on hands and knees for forgiveness. He told his friends at work that his wife had forgiven him because she was giving him gifts. She gave him an electric razor, an electric toothbrush, and an electric blanket. Finally he said, 'I know she loves me because she gave me a hair cut, messaged my head with water, and sat me down in a brand new electric chair!"

We know what a mad Black woman can do, but what about a "Glad" black woman?

Have you seen a glad woman? If you look at her closely you'll see what a "glad" woman looks like.

S**HE SEES THE BRIGHT SIDE:** If you look into her eyes and you'll see the picture of a woman who can see the bright side rather than the dark side of life.

Unfortunately, today there are too many people who are so mad that they can't be glad and they make life miserable for others. They are what we easily describe as the "but" people. Their usual response is "but"

She sang a good song, but!

She did a good job, but!

She played well, but!

The glad woman is content with life and is not threatened to see the good that is said and done by others.

When others see defeat, the glad woman sees the bright side, she sees opportunity.

When others see despair, the glad woman sees the bright side, she sees hope.

When others see the pain of their trials, the glad woman sees the bright side; she sees the ecstasy of victory on the horizon!

The reason for the optimism of the glad woman is underscored by the words of Paul "All things work to the good of them that love the Lord."

SHE SPEAKS WITH JOY AND HAPPINESS: Have you ever seen a glad woman? Listen to her talk and you will hear words of optimism and joy flowing from her lips.

How can she be so positive in a word that discriminates against her because of her race and among some Black men who discriminate against her because of her sex? She's able to demonstrate joy and happiness because she has had an experience with the Lord welcomes the opportunity to tell others about Jesus.

The woman at the well had plenty of reason to be mad. Her life was a failure and she was the talk of the town; considered nothing more than a tramp. But one day she met a man at the well and he told her the secrets of her life. At that moment she was chilled, filled and thrilled. She ran through the streets of the city crying "come see and man."

A glad woman is a woman who has had a relationship with God and doesn't mind

talking about it.

A glad woman happily declares, “I was lost but now I’m found, blind but now I see”

A glad woman says it loud and proudly, “The love of God picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground.”

Even in the midst of poverty and hard times the glad woman declares, “I sing because I’m happy, I sing because I’m free, for his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.”

SHE TRUSTS IN THE LORD: If you look at a glad woman close enough, you’ll find that she trusts in a power great than herself; she trusts in the Lord. That’s why she has been able to stand for so long?

When the Black woman was ridiculed, dehumanized and raped during our enslavement, she continued to trust in the Lord.

When she watched her babies stripped from her breast and sold like another farm animal, she continued to trust in the Lord.

Even though she ached and sang, “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, a long ways from home,” she continued to trust in the Lord.

It’s that trust that helped her to stand strong in the midst of adversity.

There were some who God mad, but there others who looked beyond the heartaches and tears of that moment. With a smile on their lips the looked over the horizon and began to sing, “I’m so glad that that trouble don’t last always!”

The glad Black woman trusts in the Lord because she has learned that God is:

-peace in every perplexity

-a guide for every journey

-the victory of every battle fought!

-the shelter in the raging of the storm

-the provider for every man’s satisfaction.

No wonder Job declared that despite advancing age, declining health and an ever increasing number of ailments, “Yea though he slay me yet will I trust him.”

Watch Her Testimony

Finally, brothers and sisters, if you want to see a glad black woman you just what her testimony.

A mad black woman is filled with rage and frustration; but a glad black woman is filled with hope and the joy of the Lord and she doesn’t mind letting the world know that “this joy I have, the world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.”

The heart of a glad black woman rejoices because it feels the goodness of God in the flower that blooms in June.

The eyes of a glad black woman rejoice because they see the goodness of God every flower the blooms!

The ears of glad black woman rejoice because they hear the love of God in every robin that sings and every church bell that rings!

The spirit of a glad Black woman rejoices because God has given her peace with

this life down here.

If you want to see a glad black woman read her spiritual diary!

On Monday, the glad black woman says, Dear God, I thank you for what you going to do for me and my family this week!

On Tuesday, the glad black woman says, Dear God, I want to thank you for protecting me from hell hounds that have tried to break my spirit.

On Wednesday, the glad black woman says, Dear God, "It's been another day's journey, I'm glad about it. You gave me health and strength, and I'm glad about!

On Thursday, the glad black woman says, "I'm glad man didn't make sunshine because today it would have never shined on me. I'm glad I can sing, "Jesus is all the world to me.. whether sunshine or rain, harvest of grain he's my friend."

On Friday, the glad black woman says, Dear God, the Eagle flies on Friday, but I'm going to hold on a little longer because I know that, "They that wait on the Lord shall mount on wings as Eagles. They shall run and not be weary; walk and not faint!"

On Saturday, the glad black woman says, Dear God; today is the last day of the week. It's a time to rest. I'm glad about because I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad."

On Sunday, the glad black woman says, Dear God, this is the day that the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!

If you ever see a glad black woman follow her home and you'll see a glad black man, glad sons and daughters and house filled with joy!

If you ever see a glad black woman you'll find a woman who is looking through the trouble all around her; she has fixed her eyes on the man from Galilee!

If you want to see a glad Black woman, white woman, Chinese woman, Hispanic woman Native American woman, then find a woman who knows about the goodness of the Lord!

When you know about the goodness of the Lord you have a story to tell and a testimony to give!

I don't know about you, but I can testify that I'm glad that the Lord woke me up this morning!

I'm glad that he clothed me in my right mind!

I'm glad that he put food on my table!

I'm glad that he saved my soul!

I'm glad that even though he didn't have to do anything for me he did it anyway!

I'm glad that even though he didn't have to bless me he did it anyway!

I'm glad that even though he didn't have to help us he did it anyway!

I'm glad that even though he didn't have to pick me up and turn me around, he did it anyway!

I'm glad that even though he didn't have to die out on Calvary, he did it anyway!

He died, yes he died.. But Early Sunday morning he arose up from the grave with all power in his hands!

Thank You!

Thank You Lord!

I'm glad that you've been so good to me!

No. 9192- Mission

An Extraordinary Mission

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction

Have you ever felt that your efforts were insignificant? Often those who serve in church ministry feel that what they do makes little difference in the˜large scheme of things. They feel themselves insignificant because they are just ordinary people doing ordinary service that is too simple and too ordinary to make a difference.˜

This feeling is not unique to church ministry leaders. Teachers feel that way sometimes. They give their best energy and time to prepare a lesson that seemed to go in one ear and come out the other. Parents feel that way too. Those who work in the criminal justice system often see so many cases of misplaced values parading before them that they wonder whether there is an end to the revolving door that seems to have trapped some in an endless spiral and will not turn them loose. Those who help the poor, the elderly or the homeless are equally frustrated. This is when wonder whether they should continue their ordinary, but good work. They wonder, "Should I should keep ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, collecting food for the needy, or working to help the homeless?" Some give up and call it quits.

There are millions of believers today who are frustrated withÿthe ordinary and routine nature of their good works. Jesus experienced the same feeling after he healed ten lepers and watched them walk away. Soon after however, one returned and said thanks, which made it all worthwhile.

What motivates ordinary Christians to continue their work, despite the fact that it is often unnoticed and sometimes not appreciated?

We are motivated by our desire to please God.

We are ordinary people with an extraordinary mission. It is beyond extraordinary; it is a mega-mission.

While we have an extraordinary mission often we do not have the resources necessary to accomplish our mission. All we have is Jesus' promise "And Lo" I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the world." While it may seem little at first, upon

second thought we realize that we have an extraordinary mission with an extraordinary promise to back it up.

Why do we service? Consider the story of the ordinary country cook, well known for his fine recipes and gourmets, who received an invitationÿ from the king to prepare the food for the king and his lords. It was both an honor and a scourge at the same time because whenever an ordinary cook was selected for such an assignment he had to provide the food as well as prepare it, which made it even more difficult.

The cook had only one egg in his pantry, but he was so honored to be selected that he set out on his journey confident that providence would help him. On the way, he met a man who offered to trade him a cow for his egg because he had broken one of his master's dozen and would rather part with his own cow than face his master's wrath over the loss of a single egg. They traded.

Later the cook met a farmer who was holding his favorite cat. The farmer complained that the cat had nothing to drink, all he had was fields of vegetables, none of which the cat would eat. The cook traded the farmer a pail of milk from the cow, which he traded for a wagon of vegetables that he pulled along by hitching it to the cow. On the way he met a butcher and a baker who had walked many miles, they offered to work for him if he would just give them a ride. So the cook gave the butcher a ride in the wagon of vegetables that he traded for a pail of milk from the cow he traded for the egg.

The king saw the arrival of the cook, laden with a cow, a wagon of vegetables and a butcher and he was amazed at the variety the cook brought with him. As the cook prepared to make the king's bread he realized that he had no eggs, but then there was a knock on the kitchen door and lo, there was the lad who traded him the cow delivering the dozen of eggs for the king's pantry. With beefsteaks from the cow, cold milk, bread and an assortment of vegetables, the king rewarded the cook, who gave all the credit to a little faith and a single egg. "I was running low, but I was on a mission for the king, and I knew the Lord would make a way." said the Cook as he smiled and received his honors.

As Christians, we are on a mission for the king, we may have reservations about the fact that we are just ordinary people with ordinary resources,ÿbut we should always remember that the Lord will make a way while we go forward on his promise never to leave us alone.

Exposition

This text is called the "Great Commission." It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to theÿdisciples giving them their final assignment. They were not well known men at the time. They were ordinary men to whom he was giving an extraordinary mission.

He told them to get the word out about salvation and redemption to the entire world; to baptize believers and then teach them the way of life prescribed for Christians.

While Jesus gave his disciples a mission, he did not give them any special

equipment except his words of promise in these closing commands. This commission includes two important words: “Go” and “Lo.” As Jesus gave his disciples the command to go, inclusive of all of the hardships and sacrifices that “go” would entail, he also gave them a “Lo” which was a promise of his perpetual presence with them regardless of their circumstances or peculiar situations.ÿ

In a few short years, this commission resulted in the expansion of the faith to Asia Minor, the Cities of Greece and to nearly the entire known world of their time. It appeared to be an impossible mission, given to penniless disciples who had nothing to move on but faith and the “Logo” of God.

Not an ordinary mission

The church has an extraordinary mission that must be carried out by ordinary people. That mission is toÿspread the good news about the kingdom of God to the entire world. This extraordinary mission has a three fold purpose to: “Preach,” “Reach,” and “Teach” the world about Christ through administration of the Word and through the example of our Christian compassion.

PREACH THE WORD. The Church has a responsibility to provide for the preaching of the Word of God. At home, it is done through providing for ministers to administer the word and declare it to us. However, the responsibility for the preaching of the word goes beyond the home front. It also extends itself to the missionary field in distant places. There are still places in the world, despite all of our modern technology, that have not heard the word of God. There are corners of the earth that have not been exposed to the preaching of the Gospel and therefore have not had the opportunity to join the Christian fellowship. Our mission is to provide for the preaching of the Gospel on foreign shores. Today there are missionaries who are working in Africa, Europe, South America and on every continent of the earth trying to get the message across. The supplies they need, including bibles and materials must be supplied by believers back home. Our mission is to “go” and if we can’t physically “go” the next best thing is to “send -go” and contribute freely to the missionary efforts of our convention.

REACHING THE LOST. The church also has a responsibility to “Reach out” to those who are both lost and hopeless. While our mandate to “Preach” extends both far and wide, our mandate to “reach” begins at home. It begins with the lost members of our family and neighborhood. It begins with the lost in our own community. That mandate suggests that the church must promote Christian Charity at home, or “home mission.” Unlike foreign mission, which primarily supports the preaching of the gospel in foreign lands, home mission combines the gospel message with Christian action on the home front. Home missions includes: Food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless. It includes education, crime prevention, and a show of compassion for children, victims, and the helpless of every race and nationality. In this regard, we follow Christ’s example by first meeting the people at their point of need, responding to that need and then working to save their souls. People are more inclined to listen and respond when the church seems to respond to their peculiar needs.

We need arms of silver, like those of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, representing our ordinary service. There are many today who are involved in various forms ofÿordinary outreachÿfor a variety of reasons. Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes. Outreach is essential to kingdom building. It may seem ordinary and insignificant but we must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus. It becomes an extraordinary work when our outreach comes from the heart.

Missionaries who carry out this charge can sing with real meaning: "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living is not in vain....If I cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living is not in vain."

TEACHING THEM. Preaching and Reaching the lost are two essential elements of the command to go, but there is also the command to teach them "whatsoever things I have told you." This introduces the third missionary objective of the church, which is Missionary Education. Those who come to the church must be taught what Christ wants them to do and trained so they can reach others themselves. 2 Timothy 2:15 reminds us to, "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needth not be ashamed." That underscores the importance of Christian Education and Mission Education in the missionary process. Mis-education and a lack of Christian education has prompted many mission groups to turn their efforts into church versions of their social club or sorority, in which the sponsorship of a rapid succession of one day "events" supplants a structured ongoing program of missionary service.

Ordinary service but Extraordinary rewards

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that those who carry out this extraordinary mission build up treasures for themselves in heaven.ÿ

Everyÿordinary, but good deed, done in the name of our Lordÿadds to our treasure in heaven. Matthew 9:41 reminds us that even the man that gives a cup of water to a stranger in the name of Jesus, gets a reward. Those who help the homeless, help the infirmed, visit the sick, feed the hungry, heal the hurts of families, and respond to personal needs and crises, build up treasures in heaven. These are all ordinary deeds that will receive extraordinary rewards.

Those who support kingdom building by liberally giving their time, talents and money also build up treasures in heaven. It often seems small but every ordinary minute that a believer gives will receive an extraordinary reward..

Those who give time, talents and money at a sacrifice get "over time" pay in kingdom dollars. That's why the church at Thyatira was told in Rev. 2:19, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." That's notÿordinary pay, it'sÿovertime pay!

Our ordinary work on earth glorifies God and when our work is complete, God willÿglorify us in a way that only he can do.

In Revelation 3:5, we read, "..He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess

his name before my Father, and before his angels"

In Revelation 21:7 all of the saints whose work glorified God will be told "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

This should be encouraging news for every saint, to know that our ordinary work for him will not go unrewarded.

It should be encouraging to us to hear the word of God declare that the mother who glorifies God by loving her children with a passion and concern that follows them beyond their childhood even unto their mature adult life will be rewarded!

Today many are striving to carry out the ordinary mission that Christ has given them. Though their treasuries are meager, there are many who do the best they can to support the work of missionaries, help the poor and needy and to teach the masses.

One truth that every saint who has stepped out on God's word has discovered is that if the Lord gives you a "Go" there is always a "Lo." For every "Go ye therefore" there's is always a "Lo, I'll be with alway."

Lo represents the promises of God:

When storms rise, "Lo" means he'll say peace be still.

When sickness comes, "Lo" means he'll be a doctor in your sickroom.

In the middle of failure, "Lo" means he will give you victory.

In the middle of doubt, "Lo" means he'll give you assurance. No wonder the song writer declared, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine"

A traveler drove his automobile through the plains and the desert. When he came to the mountains, his passenger wondered how such an old car would make the high mountains. The traveler looked at his passenger and said, "When I travel the plains, I can make alright, but when I make it to the mountains, I put it in low and away I go"

I don't know about you, but I have found out that you can do amazing things when you remember the promises of God and count on lo!

A Widow woman who was down to her last barrel found she could eat on lo!

A woman sick with an issue of blood found she could be healed if she touched lo!

Peter found that as long as he kept his eyes on Christ he could walk on lo!

When your mountains get high, just remember Jesus said, "Lo" I'll be with you!

When your burdens get heavy, just put it on Lo and remember Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that are burden and heavy laden and I will give you rest!"

We can go forth on his word that was proven out on Calvary!

We canÿgo forth on his promise that was secured by his nail scarred hands!

We can go forth on his power that was proven EarlyÿSunday morning when he arose from the grave!

We, the ordinary can do the extraordinary, if we step out on his word and remember his promise,ÿ"Lo, I'll be with you, always, even until the end of the world!"

No. 9193-Youth

Watering Our Roots

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 26, 2006

EPHESIANS:"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19

Introduction

Can you name two people who are most responsible for bringing you into a fuller appreciation of your life's goals? Can you name two experiences which worked to give you a sense of direction and purpose? Can you name two groups with which you have associated that have helped you to greater appreciate the length, depth and height of life? Each of the people we have encountered, experiences we have shared and associations we have known represent our roots. They are the essence of what we have been taught; the source of our direction and nurture. The fact that we have such roots is admirable because it sheds light on our history. Our history is important because it explains many of our actions and indicates much of our direction.

The primary role of every mentoring generation is to provide what Julie Yarborough calls "Roots and Wings" to the younger generation. If we define the role of the community, school, family and church as it relates to youth, it would most definitely be to provide "roots and wings" to children.

Roots in the context of society represent those things essential for a child to survive and thrive. They include a general knowledge of the world around them, the intricacies of their culture and that of others, an acquaintance with the past, an appreciation for traditions, and the perfection of a skill or trade.

Roots in the context of religion represent those things essential to thrive spiritually. Spiritual roots include a knowledge and respect for God and his law, including how to pray and worship, an appreciation for religious traditions, and the perfection of a spiritual life that is based on hope and trust in God.

Societal and spiritual roots serve to ground us in the same way that the roots of trees and plants ground them. The root system of a tree performs many vital functions. In winter, it is a store-house for essential food reserves needed by the tree to produce spring foliage. Roots absorb and transport water and minerals from the soil to the rest

of the tree. Roots also anchor the portion of the tree above ground. It is the same with us. Our roots sustain us and they keep us anchored in times of storm.

Our role goes beyond just developing roots. We must also help believers realize their capacity to stretch their wings and fly. Every child needs to believe they can achieve. They also need someone to believe in them. The community, church and school must not only develop roots it must help youth believe in themselves; that they can fly!

Remember the words of the song by R. Kelly?

I believe I can fly
I believe I can touch the sky
I think about it every night and day
Spread my wings and fly away

That's what the church must help young people do; believe that with God's help and anointing they can lean on the everlasting arms and fly away.

It is essential therefore that we continue to "water our roots" and "stretch our wings."

The late Howard Thurman said we remember those who helped us when we water our roots. We remember what they did for us, but we also consider the great possibilities that lay before us because of them. When we water our roots we are inspired to stretch our wings.

As Christians, we thank God for rooting us in his word. We also thank him for those who have helped us strengthen our faith and pointed us in the right direction. Because of them, we not only have roots but we also have wings.

Exposition

Paul writes to the Ephesians about his desire that they strengthen themselves in faith through the Word of God. The idea of Christ "Dwelling in our hearts" is introduced in Verse 17. It refers to Christ being at home in our hearts. His presence is referred to as our roots. The word "heart" is from the Greek word Kardia which is used in the bible to refer to the inner life or the life of the soul.

The most important weapon that believers have is Christ (The Word of God) rooted in the soul. Because the word of God is rooted in our soul we are able to combat temptation, sustain our hope and continue look up optimistically. The more we hear, study and practice the Word of God, the greater our faith. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" suggests that the more we hear the Word the stronger our faith becomes. The stronger our faith, the deeper our roots.

Our Roots

It is important for Christian youth to have roots and wings.

There are two types of roots that every believer needs, cultural roots and spiritual roots.

Our cultural roots refer to our heritage. We need to know what makes us who we

are. When we know our culture, we develop a sense of pride and self worth. We see an image of ourselves as people of potential and accomplishment.

When we see Halle Berry, Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman and Sidney Potier receive Oscars, we see people like ourselves, achieving. We feel the same when we see Lebron James excel in Basketball and Venus and Serena in Tennis and Condeleeza Rice travel the world as the U.S. Secretary of State, we see people like ourselves, accomplishing great things.

Their roots are like our roots. Most of them have the same history that we have. They are from the same soil. Their accomplishments inspire us to achieve.

Our cultural roots reach back to the Motherland; to Africa. They explain our rhythm, our strength. Our roots explain our diet, and social problems and even our diseases.

Our roots explain our music, art, dance and family relationships. Only those who know our roots can understand the way we party and socialize; the way we mourn and cry; and the way we pray.

Inclusive of our cultural heritage is our social history. Not only should we know the names of those among who have achieved, but we should also know the history of our struggle; a struggle that has left its mark on every African-American family. Any study of African-American history should begin with the present family and go back as each family tells the story of its past and present and the slow evolution that has brought the family to where it is today.

Our spiritual roots refer to our faith. The faith of African-Americans defines us in a way that gives meaning to our cultural roots. We pray the way we pray because of what we believe about God. Sometimes we shout and get "happy," our songs are spirituals and gospels that sing from the soul of our experience.

It is safe to say that most African-Americans have some semblance of religion. Some of us may be Baptists and others Church of God in Christ. We may be full gospels, Adventists, Methodists or Catholics, but we most of us have some level of belief in God. Even the man who does not attend church as often as he should doesn't blame God, he quietly admits that God is good all the time.

It is our general belief and hope in God that has sustained us through slavery, depressions, world wars, and segregation and civil rights dispute. It's our belief that one God would make every mountain low and would exalt every valley that has encouraged us to continue.

This generation of adults has the responsibility to see to it that both the cultural and spiritual roots of our children are firmly rooted in our cultural heritage and our belief in God, regardless of their denomination or sect.

Water our Roots.

Just as we pay attention to flowers that grows by watering them frequently, we must also pay close attention to watering our roots. When potted plants die it is generally related to the fact that they did not get enough water. The roots die without water and when the roots die, so does the plant.

So we must refresh, relive and rejuvenate our knowledge and appreciation of our culture, to keep it alive. When we celebrate our heritage, we water our roots.

The same is true with our faith. It too must be watered. Prolonged absence from public worship, bible reading, and spiritual renewal, can result in spiritual roots that are thirsty for the water. Jesus said he gives to everyone who desires the water of life. Those who drink from him will never thirst. Our souls thirst for spiritual renewal, without it our roots dry and rot.

The taller a plant or tree grows the deeper its roots sink. Giant trees need deep roots. Small weeds don't need much of a root at all. Likewise, those who intend to grow tall in life should position themselves so that their roots can both be fed and run deep. David said in Psalm 1 the man who lives according to God's law, "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." If you intend to grow tall in life then let your roots grow where they can be fed by the waters of life. Tall trees need deep roots. Those roots include deep roots in our culture and in our faith in God.

How much watering do your roots require? It depends on many factors, one of which is your location. A plant in a plastic pot may not need as much water as a plant in a porous pot. The plastic pot holds the water the other lets it escape easy. The same is true of those who live in the Afro-centric neighborhoods, attend afro-centric schools and churches. They are surrounded by our culture and watering experiences constantly. Those who live outside of the traditional Afro centric community must make a concentrated effort to insure that their roots or watered or they will see to exist as they have known themselves. Roots in dry pots require more water.

Roots that are below ground anchor that which is above ground. Often we don't see the roots in small plants, but it's the roots that help the plants to stand in times of storm. You can cut the limbs off of a tree, but if it has living roots, soon twigs will spout where limbs once were. Roots bring new life and they keep trees and plants from blowing with every wind. For young people this is an important truth. Without roots, youth are tempted to roll along through life as tumbleweeds, having much movement but accomplishing little. However, youth who have roots develop slowly but surely into productive contributions to the kingdom of God.

We Can fly

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that because we have roots, can take wings and fly!

Young men and women who are well rooted in the culture and faith, learn very quickly that they can take the wings of eagles and soar high in life.

If the first function of the community, home and church is to give youth a sense of roots, another function would be to show them that they can take wings and fly!

Our roots teach us our heritage, culture and discipline. They should us what has been done and how it was done.

The next logical step is for us to show our young their potential then show them

how to fly. Each youth needs to know that they have a responsibility to "try" to spread their wings while they still have parents to help them. Youth can do this by exercising some independent thinking and initiative while parents are still there to support you if you fail. Strive for the honor roll in school. Seek a small job with a neighbor and strive to do it well. Go beyond what is required in your home and do things without being told..."try!" If you try, you take the first step to "fly!"

Those who desire to spread their wings in the future must get all the practice they can while they are in the nest. Try out for the football team!

Tryout for the band, choir or drama club. Display your talent in the talent show, even if the whole school laughs, knowing that if you fall there will be at least one person in the audience to catch you before you hit the ground.

If you want wings, you must draw from your roots. Your roots tell you, that if you want to go high you need the power of the Lord behind you. It takes some a little longer than others before they understand that they must have power.

A 747 was halfway across the Atlantic when the captain got on the loudspeaker: "Attention, passengers. We have lost one of our engines, but we can certainly reach London with the three we have left. Unfortunately, we will arrive an hour late as a result." An hour later the captain made another announcement: "Sorry, but we lost another engine. Still, we can travel on two. I'm afraid we will now arrive two hours late."

Shortly thereafter, the passengers heard the captain's voice again: "Guess what, folks. We just lost our third engine, but please be assured we can fly with only one. We will now arrive in London three hours late." At this point, one passenger became furious. "For Pete's sake," he shouted. "If we lose another engine, we'll be up here all night!"

Some youth mistakenly believe that they can fly without an engine.

The spiritual engine that helps every believer to fly is the power of God.

The more of God's power we have, the faster we get to where we're going. The less we have the longer it takes.

Without his power we don't fly at all! No wonder the song writer would declare, "Without God I can do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

The power of God brings us:

—Encouragement in times of despair

—Strength in times of weakness

—Comfort in times of sorrow

—Inspiration in times of difficulty

I don't know about you but I've learned that you can't make without the Lord!

Maybe that's why the song writer declared: "Walk with me Lord, Walk with me, while I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus, to walk with me"

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning…

No. 9194-Heritage

A Life With Roots

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 24, 1979

SCRIPTURE: "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:3-9

Introduction

How rooted is your life? Every life needs to roots to grow and to prosper. Without sufficient roots we cannot expect to survive long in a world that changes constantly. We are rooted well when we know who we are, where we have been, and where we are going.

Despite the importance of a well rooted life, there are many today whose lives have virtually no roots; or if they are rooted have found themselves tangled in a web of societal concerns that strangle them constantly. This is the dilemma of many youth who must try to develop a life with roots in fertile soil that is free of the entanglements that will destroy them.

The quality of our lives, like the root system of trees and plants depends on how well we are rooted. The root system of a tree performs many vital functions. In winter, it is a store-house for essential food reserves needed by the tree to produce spring foliage. Roots absorb and transport water and minerals from the soil to the rest of the tree. Roots also anchor the portion of the tree above ground.

It is the same way with a believer's life. Our spiritual and cultural roots become a storehouse of the essentials we need to survive difficult times. Through our roots we absorb what is needed to sustain our lives and we feed upon what we are able to glean.

We are also anchored by our roots. They keep us from being blown away by every wind. The taller the tree the deeper the roots. They keep us on the ground.

As Christians, we are happy to be rooted in the Lord. His word has been sown in our hearts. It is nurtured in the fertile ground of our faith. We have lives that are rooted in faith in God; that faith sustains us each and every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable given by Jesus in which he explained how the Gospel message is received by many.

The sower, which is Christ himself, is shown spreading seeds, which is the word of God. Some of the seeds fall on the roadway, they do not take root and germinate. They are eaten by the birds.

Some of the seeds fell on stony ground. Here, there is enough dirt to cause them to spring up quickly, but not enough for them to take root. They spring up quickly and seem to flourish for a while. However, because they had not roots, they soon withered away.

Some were sown among thorns. They were able to grow but because they grew among thorns, they could not flourish because the roots of the thorns entangled them and strangled them as they grew together.

The final group was sown on good fertile ground. This batch of seeds multiplied itself tremendously as much as 100 times.

The types of ground represented the receivers of the word. Some are hearers only and let it pass. Others are interested but do not study or deepen their knowledge and the shallowness of their faith will not stand in the heat of the day. Still others are so tangled in the affairs of the world that the word of God is choked in their lives.

Jesus said this parable to illustrate the importance of individual roots in the faith rather than simply hearing the word with the ear. Such roots come because of a love of God and serious study of the word.

Rooted in Knowledge of the Word

Today, each believer should strive to develop a life that is well rooted. Similar to the way trees and plants are rooted, we should strive to develop life styles that reflect the fact that we are rooted.

First we should be rooted in knowledge. The bible places considerable emphasis upon being rooted in the word of God. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Those who study develop roots in spiritual knowledge that will sustain them against the heat of criticism and persecution.

We should learn our denominational creed. We should learn what the bible teaches about Christ, his life, death, burial and resurrection. We should have a full knowledge of God's plan of salvation.

Rooted in Knowledge of Ourselves

We should also have a working knowledge of our own identity. We must truly know who we are before we win others.

We must know our culture and the history of our race. We must know the journey

that we have traveled and those who have helped us along the way.

In addition, we must also know how God worked to help us along that journey.

Booker T. Washington once said that we cannot judge any man by where he is at the moment but by where he has come from to get to the present moment. Thus, we need to know our journey to fully appreciate what God has done for us in the past.

Those who have a knowledge of themselves, that is: Who we are, where we've been, and how we arrived at the present moment; have a clearer focus upon the world around them. The knowledge they attain serves to ground them and give them roots.

This knowledge sustains them against even their worst critics.

Rooted in Faith Based Conviction

When we have roots in biblical knowledge and the ways of God we begin to deepen our faith and our convictions.

We are not born with convictions. They are viewpoints about life that are shape by the information we have accumulated through study and experience. Those who study the word of the God and hear the word regularly, build up their faith and make their convictions certain.

When we have been deprived of the essentials of life and see them miraculously appear, we then know that God will make a way out of no way.

When we have experienced sickness and experienced the healing power of the Lord, we know that he is a doctor in our sickroom.

When we have been lost and all alone and then felt his reassuring presence, then we know that he is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Experiences such as these build and strengthen our convictions.

Such roots also extend themselves to our involvement in our community. We serve and give of ourselves out of a sense of conviction. God is a good and compassionate God. Because that is our belief we help the poor, feed the hungry and show compassion in times of need.

Convictions even prompt us to take stands against injustice. Martin Luther King once said that a man who has not found something for which he is willing to die, is not fit to live. That is conviction.

We serve other and stand up for justice out of a sense of conviction that comes from having a life rooted in the Word of God.

It Takes Time For Roots to Grow

Roots do not develop overnight. It takes time to learn the intricacies of our faith and culture.

A true faith cannot be copied by watching someone else and imitating what they do.

We cannot sing a song that someone else sings and sing it with the same passion until we have experienced a few things.

We cannot give a testimony about our lives until we have had a test. Why?

Because there is no testimony without a test.

There are many who are not developing roots but they want to appear to be men and women of faith. They often fool us. We don't find out that they are not all that we thought until difficult times come.

Even in our "blackness" there are many who talk a Black talk, until it comes time to be "black" in their actions. They also fool us. We don't find out that they are not really "black" until we watch their inability to respond because of a lack of roots.

To develop roots we must share the experience from our soul.

To develop a faith we can't simply make a profession with our mouths, we must walk with the king.

Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Such a close life is what Ephesians 3:17 calls being grounded and rooted in the Word of God.

When our lives are rooted, God is always close to us. He's never far away.

In closing, I'm reminded of the soldier who went into battle with great confidence. The men in his squad were inspired by his great faith that God would protect until his time came. In one battle the soldier was felled by a sniper's bullet. The men of his squad rushed to his side and pulled him behind the lines. They thought he was dead. As they pulled him through the mud, his eyes opened and a smile came on his face.

He was wounded, but a bible that he kept next to his heart had absorbed the bullet.

When one of his friends opened the bible they found the bullet lodged on the verse that said, " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that he was wounded for me!

I'm' glad that he died for me out on Calvary!

I'm glad that after three days and nights that he arose from the dead!

I'm glad to be rooted in his word and grounded in my faith!

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

No. 9195-Funeral

Finishing Well

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 7, 2006

SCRIPTURE: When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. John 19:30

Introduction

Have you ever started something that you did not finish? We have an uneasy feeling about starting any effort that we cannot finish. Yet, there are millions of people in the world who start well, but they cannot finish at all.

We see this phenomenon often in life. A person begins a project, but somewhere in the middle of that project he loses interest and drops the project. Students in school drop out and never finish. Some begin businesses but never finish. It is frustrating.

It is equally frustrating in the church. Many begin to serve in a ministry of the church, do well, and then burn out along the way. They start but they can't finish.

That's why we are especially pleased with those who have the ability to both start an effort and complete it too.

In the Christian life, how one finishes, is more important than how one begins.

The importance of the Christian life is to finish well.

Finishing well is the right way for a Christian to close the final chapter of life's book. It testifies to the reality of our faith. It leaves for those who remain a legacy of inspiring memories.

People are deeply impressed when they see a godly believer finish life with calmness, dignity, and grace, in pain, but surrounded by people who cared for them. From the day they began as a Christian they stayed the course and finished life as a Christ. They finished life well.

As Christians, we follow Christ's example. He came to this world, served his purpose, completed his course and finished well, giving God the glory and the praise.

Exposition

This text focuses On one of the seven last sayings of Christ on the cross.

The three words "It is finished" were short but they testified to the completion of a mission that began in heaven and was completed on Calvary.

What was exactly finished?

All of the counsels of the Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled.

It is finished; all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished.

It is finished; the ceremonial law is abolished; the substance is now come, and all the shadows are no longer necessary.

It is finished; an end is made of transgression by bringing in an everlasting righteousness.

His sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul, and those of his body.

When Christ bowed his head on the cross and spoke those three words, he signaled that he had completed his purpose. With only love in his heart and a peace in his soul he finished well.

How to Finish Well

To finish the Christian life well, we must first recognize the nature of our race.

Unlike a secular race, the crown of victory is not given to the Christian who lives life the fastest. Neither is the crown given to the person who is the strongest. The Christian race is given to the person who finishes well.

Believers are not in a race for heaven. We are not required to have more faith than someone else to be saved. We are not required to have someone else's praying ability or spiritual strength. We do not have to compete with each other to get to heaven.

We run a different kind of race. Our race is a race to finish and finish well.

How we finish can only be guaranteed by the choices of today. We need to live every day as if it were our last—because it could be.

Secondly, it does not matter whether you have stumbled in the Christian race, as long as you get up and finish the race. There are many believers who have made mistakes early in life but have picked themselves up and turned themselves around.

Oh, how we wish that we could run our race without ever making mistakes, stumbling or making mistakes.

Oh, how we wish that we could erase the bad judgments we encountered the wrong turns that we made.

Fortunately, the Christian life does not hold our past against us. What is important is that we get up and continue to the finish.

There are times when we are frustrated and want to give up, but we continue to the finish.

There are times when we are sad and the tears flow from our eyes, but we continue to the finish.

There are times when we are so angry at life itself that we want to throw up our hands, but we continue to the finish.

The race is not given to the swift or to the strong, but unto the believer that can endure to the end.

Hold On to the key

Finally, bothers and sisters we must understand that God has a reward for those who finish well.

That is the significance of what Christ did for us on Calvary. He finished well so that he could reward believers as they finished their life courses.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The crown that he referred to is reserved for those who finish well.

These are they who can sing, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

I came to him low, but he has lifted me higher!

I came to him in sadness but he gave me gladness!

These are they who say, even though I became aged and house bound he lifted up my bowed down head!

These are they who say, "Even though parts of my body were broken, he gave me a spirit that would never break."

A traveler approached three men he passed on the road and gave them each a small key and made each one promise him that regardless of what they met along the road they would take the key and hold onto it until the morning.

As the night passed, they came upon a forest fire that raged ferociously. Consumed by the heat one of the men turned around, the other two continued.

However, they came upon a great storm which bent the trees and nearly buried both men in torrents of water. The second man turned back. However the third man clinched his fist around the key and kept going.

In the morning he met another traveler who asked him, "Have you been through the fire? Have you been through the storm? Do you still have the key?" To these the man answered yes.

The traveler responded, "You have earned the reward of Gold that this box contains. But tell me, what made you go on?" The man answered, "I've been through the storm and the rain. I've been through fire, but I had to keep going because I promised that I would hold out till the morning comes!"

The way to finish is to hold on until your change comes!

That's what Jesus did!

He carried his cross to Calvary and at the end the angels heard him declare, "It is finished"

But Early Sunday morning…

—

On March 1, 2006 Sister Carlena Gary took her last breath. She ran a good race and she finished well.

No. 9196-Friends

A Friend in High Places

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 19, 2006

SCRIPTURE: Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

Introduction

Have you ever called on someone you knew to do you a favor? Occasionally, everyone has a need to call on someone to perform a service for them; a service that requires a special preference. It can be a simple as calling on a friend in government to "take care" of a special problem or getting special permission for child to make up a test in school. Sometimes we use our connections with well placed persons to get things done for an organization to which you belong or a cause we support.

There are some who value our membership in the club or group to which we belong by what we can "bring to the table." Often what we have to offer is a Rolodex filled with private cell numbers and special ways to gain access to people in high places who can make things happen. When others are stumped, there's always someone who seems to know the right people in the right places who can make things happen.

Someone in your family needs to be bailed out of jail without a bond? Someone has access to a friendly judge.

Need to cut through the long waiting line for a service? Someone has a friend who works inside and will get to you first.

Can't get in to see the mayor, governor or Senator? Someone has direct access to them and can arrange your meeting.

From time to time everyone needs a friend in a high place. The more such friends you have, the more "clout" you have. The late Mike Royko notes that clout never works its way down, it always goes up. Clout is what you have if you can call city hall and a parking ticket disappears. Those with clout can call a Senator and his secretary will put you through, or he'll call you back quickly. Clout is how some get unexpected promotions on the job. It's also how some get sweetheart contracts for their relatives and friends. The mayor who visits with the governor and come back with $10 million in pork barrel projects for the city has clout. The governor who has

clout with the White House can bring home extra deals for the state. The president who has clout with the United Nations can get special considerations for his country around the world.

Occasionally, we all need someone who can cut through the red tape and help us when we can't help ourselves. It helps to have a little clout; to have a friend in a high place.

How much clout do we have with God?

Those who trust in God and are obedient to his word usually find that they have a friend in a very high place, who can cut through all of the red tape of this life and make things happen for them. We don't need the names and numbers of a long list of spiritual numbers, we only need one contact, his name is Jesus. His heavenly cell number is 1-1-1 (One for the father, one for the Son and One for the Holy Ghost.)

That's why the song writer says, "What a friend we have in Jesus" because he is in a high place who can help us when we pray.

As Christians, we all know that we have a friend in a high place. He is placed on the right hand of God himself. If pray to God in his name, we can cut through all of the spiritual red tape that exists and bring our case before the almighty. He is a real friend, in a high place.

Exposition

This text focuses on a reminder to the Hebrews, that Christians have a mutual friend in Jesus, who sits on the right hand of God.

While on earth Jesus told his disciples that a true friend sticks closer than a brother. A true friend, said Christ, is one who is willing to lay down his life for a friend. He declared that he is a friend to every believer.

After the crucifixion, Christ ascended back to heaven; he passed through the clouds (v14) and is now sitting on the right hand of God. He is both our high priest and our sacrifice. He is in a high place. Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. Now he has taken His place at the right hand of the Father, to rule eternally over the universe. We didn't elect Him to this position, The Father appointed him. He chose his Son to be our Savior and gave him a seat of authority on his right hand.

Verse 15 makes it clear that not only is Jesus in a high place, but he is one who knows us and has been through similar circumstances. He is not just sitting on right the right hand of God, in a high place, he is our advocate. Advocate intercedes, promotes and defends. That's what Christ does for believers each day.

As a result of our friendship with Christ believers are encouraged to "draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (v16) We are encouraged to boldly ask God for what we need through our advocate and friend, Jesus Christ.

He Knows Us

The text makes it clear that our friend in a high place has not forgotten us, now that he has returned to the seat of power. He knows us and remembers our trials.

HE KNOWS OUR FRUSTRATIONS: Christ lived on earth as a human for 33 years. He knows what it is like to be "us." He knows the limitations of the human body and psyche. He knows what we can do and what we cannot do. He also knows our limits. We are often frustrated when we seemed limited in our abilities and opportunities. Revisit verse 15 again. Christ has been tempted like us. He knows our frustrations. He "learned" and "grew" just as we did. He experienced hunger after his 40-day fast; He was so exhausted he fell asleep on his disciple's fishing boat. He seldom had transportation and walked almost everywhere he went. One of his best friends betrayed him, he was lied on, falsely accused, persecuted by the government and was often held at a distance by his brothers and one known sister. He even experienced death. Without a doubt he knows our frustration and our weakness.

HE IS OUR HEAVENLY ADVOCATE: Our constant sin separates us from God, but our faith and belief in Christ, reconnects us with him because of his sacrifice on Calvary.

From His place of glory at the right hand of His father, our powerful Friend showers many favors upon us:

—He makes intercession with the Father for His saints (Rom. 8:34).

—He hears and acts on our prayers (Jn. 14:13).

—He makes all things work for our good (Rom. 8:28).

—He sends the Holy Spirit to comfort and instruct (Jn. 16:7).

—He prepares an eternal dwelling for us in heaven (Jn. 14:2).

We have a Friend in high places! A real man, bearing the marks of his crucifixion, continually intercedes for us in heaven.

HE WILL HELP US IN OUR NEED: Not only does our friend serve as our advocate while sitting on the throne; he proves himself a friend when we need him. An old proverb says, "A friend in need is a friend in deed." It seems to say that to be a great friend must be in need, but what it means that the time to show friendship is when a friend is in need. The last words of verse 16 emphasizes that our savior is a friend in our time of need. He proves us graces "in the time of need." This emphasize "what" and "when." He provides us what we need, when we need it. Not before as we would like and never late. The old song has it right, "He may not come when you want him, but he's always on time."

Because we have a friend

Finally, brothers and sisters, we are reminded that because we have a friend in high places, we can boldly ask God with an honest expectation that our request will get through.

It is because we have someone who knows us and has not forgotten us sitting on the right hand of God that we are encouraged to ask what we want with boldness.

The “therefore” in the text assumes certain conditions have been met.

It assumes that we know Jesus and have accepted him as our Lord and Savior.

It assumes that we are being obedient to his commands about living, giving and worshipping.

It assumes that we are living by faith and not by sight.

Those who meet these conditions have the expectations that come after “therefore.”

After therefore, the word says, “let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” All of the exposition on Christ as our high priest and our need for his assistance is glued to the “therefore.”

An ordinary citizen cannot expect to go boldly into the office of the governor of the state an state their demands.

An ordinary citizen can’t expect to go to Washington and instantly have a meeting with a U.S. Senator.

An ordinary citizen can’t walk through the gates of the White House and walk into the president’s office and expect to be heard.

But that’s not the case with our King. We are told to “draw near with confidence.” To come with “confidence” means that we come boldly or with a sense of assurance before the Lord.

We can go with confidence because have a friend in a high place who meet us, greet us and get our request before the most high God.

No wonder the song write declares, “What a friend, we have in Jesus!”

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we can’t see our way, he makes a way out of no way!

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we have fallen down, he picks us up and turns us around!

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we have dropped our heads in despair, he dries our weeping eyes!

What a friend we have in Jesus, when we feel abandoned, he promises never to leave us. Never to leave us alone!

What a friend we have in Jesus, who showed us the greatest love!

He carried an old rugged cross!

He was raised up and stretched out in humility!

He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity!

No greater love can a man show than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends!

He died one evening, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave will all power! All power in his hands!

No. 9197-Deacon's Ordination

The Ministry of the Spoons

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Progressive Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 26, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. Numbers 3:7; "The golden spoons were twelve, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary: all the gold of the spoons was an hundred and twenty shekels." Numbers 7:86

Introduction

Which best describes the best servant of the church, a knife, a fork or a spoon? The answer to that question was received one day by a young deacon on his way to his ordination. At the breakfast table that Sunday morning he asked his family to tell him what kind of deacon they hoped he would be. When his daughter's turn came she didn't say anything for a while but just watched as the grits were dipped from a big bowl to her small bowl. Then, in a burst of inspiration his daughter said, "Be a spoon daddy! Be a spoon!" Surprised, the father asked his little innocent daughter why she wanted him to be a spoon.

"At school the boys take forks and pick the best food out of my plate. Forks are grabby and sticky."

"Why not a knife?" asked the father. "Knives cut things and tear things up. Knives are scary. You can't eat with them; just slice things up." She said. "You should be a spoon because spoons can scoop up lots of stuff and pass it around. The big spoon passes stuff out of the big dish and puts it on the plate. The little spoon scoops up everything even soupy stuff. When there is bug or something, a knife can't cut it and a fork can't stab it, but a spoon can scoop it up and throw it away."

The father looked at his daughter with amazement and smiled. After his ordination that day received a present from several people who wanted to wish him well. One present stood out most from the rest. When he opened it he saw shiny spoon with a handwritten note from his little daughter, "Be a spoon Daddy! Be a spoon!"

Today, we celebrate the beginning of a ministry to the tables of the church. We celebrate and consecrate those who have accepted an assignment to become a utensil for the building of the kingdom. They are charged not to become forks or the "gimme" people who always try to fill their own plate at the expense of others. Neither are they charged to become knives or "divisive" people who are always trying to divide, slice and cause confusion.

Today, we celebrate the ministry of the spoons! These who begin today are charged to be servants. They are charged to be different from the knives and forks. Instead of taking, cutting and dividing they are charged to serve. They are charged to scoop up everything that is good for the church and put it on individual plates. They are also charged to scoop out the bugs in the soup.

The church never has enough spoons! It has plenty of knives and forks. But we need more spoons! Have you ever noticed that in good silverware sets there are always twice as many spoons as anything else? A service for four includes four knives, four dinner forks, four salad forks, but eight spoons. That is because everyone knows that spoons get used for more things and in more ways than do knives and forks. You can't eat soup with a knife or a fork, but you can eat steak with a spoon if you have to. If necessary a good spoon can even do a small amount of cutting.

Today, of all those who serve the tables of the church, we celebrate the spoons!

As Christians, we are happy to be servants of the most high God. We gladly tell him, use me Lord in your service. He has given us a charge to keep and a God to glorify!

Exposition

This text focuses on a charge that was given to the Levites who were commanded to serve the Tabernacle.

The Levites were biblical tribesmen who dedicated their lives to the service of the Tabernacle of God either as priests or its protectors, managers and providers. The Levites were selected for this special work and charged by God himself to perform duties at the tabernacle .Their work made it possible for the people to come to the tabernacle and offer sacrifices for the atonement of sins.

The Levites were very useful to the Tabernacle. They spent most of their lives serving the Tabernacle and promoting the worship.

The specific task of the Levites was to do the work of the tabernacle (vv. 7-8). The Levites were charged to obey the directives of Aaron the High priest. They were reminded that they were Levites but they operated with limitations. They could not approach the sanctuary itself (v. 10). This reference to the sanctuary clearly outlines the limitations of the Levites—they could not serve as priests by offering sacrifices or by performing other functions in the tabernacle.

The non-priestly Levites were servants of the priests and servants of the Tabernacle. They were charged to serve the whole congregation and the Tabernacle all of their lives.

At chapter 7 each of the tribes brought offerings for the tabernacle. Over a 12 day period, each time brought golden spoons filled with ten shekels of gold. In all verse 86 says, "The golden spoons were twelve, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary: all the gold of the spoons was an hundred and twenty shekels."

In preparation to service, the Levites were anointed and the spoons were given

for the offering; 12 golden spoons.

Spoons we don't need

There are some spoons that are not needed on any deacon board.

There is no need for **PLASTIC SPOONS** that are cheap and superficial. The plastic spoon deacon looks like a deacon but is not able to stand the heat in times of trouble. He melts. Neither is he able to set the example in tithing, worship and study. Plastic spoons are mass produced, cheap and easy to find. But God does not set his table with plastic spoons.

Neither is there a need for **GREASY SPOONS**. A greasy spoon is slimy and unclean. The greasy spoon deacon is one who does not give a good example of the faith in his personal life. He is the deacon who drinks alcohol, frequents clubs, cheats on his wife, gambles, or is otherwise unfaithful to the cross. Greasy Spoons on the table ruin everyone's appetite because they indicate impurity. God does not set his table with greasy spoons.

Moreover God has no need for **SOUVENIR SPOONS**. These are the little spoons purchased in novelty shops as for memory of journey. The souvenir spoon remembers that "we were once there" it is not expected to actually be used. The deacon's ministry cannot serve the congregation if all of its members are souvenirs of past years of service but do no service in the present. God does not set his table with Souvenir spoons.

Spoons we need

There are many who have the misguided notion that deacons are ornaments on the tabernacle, designed to look good but not serve. Many see a set table with many beautiful pieces of silverware that are only for decorations. However, deacons are not ornaments to sit on the front seat of a church and look pretty as they read scripture or sing a hymn. Every spoon on the Lord's Table is expected to be used. A full setting for the deacon's ministry requires each deacon to have a complete set of characteristics that makes him a complete servant. He must consider:

LADLE OF MISSION: The deacon's ministry needs men who are charged to become Ladle. A ladle is a spoon with a long handle that can reach into a bowling pot or a bowl of punch and bring back a taste what is there. In a similar sense the church needs men of long reach and sense of mission. These are men who can see the full picture of the church's mission in the world and are prepared to go far and wide to help it reach fruition. When Jesus said, "Go ye therefore.." he challenged the church to extend itself beyond its local walls into the world. That takes a long handle spoon. It takes servants with reach and vision. God needs a few long handle spoons to accomplish his purpose.

TABLESPOON OF HOLINESS. The deacon's service is marked as a Holy

service. A main scriptural requirement of a deacon is that he be full of the Holy Ghost. This means he is controlled by, led by, and committed to a program and agenda that is greater than his own.

What makes him a holy man is not his ability to sing hymns or pray eloquently in a church service. What makes him a holy man is his willingness to deny his own interests in pursuit of the things of God. Because he is a holy man he is present whenever the church studies the word, praises God, prays or fellowships. He is a holy man because he sets the example for those who look to him and will resolve, if the Holy man can't do it, certainly I can't be expected to rise above him.

TEASPOON OF HUMILITY: The deacon's service is marked by humility. That's the nature of a teaspoon. It does not think of itself as big or powerful, but only as a small teaspoon. The first deacons were selected to serve in very unrewarding positions. They did so humbly without assuming that they were greater than they actually were. The deacon today is a servant and humility is the key to his greatness. Those who remain aware that the church does not serve them but it is they that serve the church, go far in resolving complaints, aiding church growth and complimenting the leadership of the church.

SERVING SPOON: The serving spoon reaches into large dishes and brings out food to be placed on individual plates. The deacon's service is marked by helpfulness. They are appointed by the pastor to help him in implementing the vision he has received from God. The deacon owes the pastor the benefit of his best thinking and support which is best characterized by the initials "DD". Deep Deliberation, to give him the best advice; Diplomatic Difference, to differ with him in private outside of the earshot of the membership; and Daring Defense, to defend the pastor from unwarranted attacks, false accusations, and assaults on his integrity.

Dessert Spoons

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must remember that while there are spoons for serving, reaching, and stirring, there is also a dessert spoon.

A Dessert spoon looks like other spoons except it has a pointed edged and is used for enjoying the desserts after the meal is consumed.

Every deacon, like all other Christians, wants to receive his reward. There is a reward for every true servant. That reward is not to sit in a place of high recognition in the congregation, more than anything else he wants to see Jesus.

So the deacon is charged to lift Jesus up!

The deacon is charged to do that which is necessary to help believers keep their eyes on the cross, because their salvation is not in the deacon or the preacher but in Jesus.

We must see Jesus!

When we able to see Jesus the world looks better and we see life with a clearer perspective.

To see Jesus the deacon must help the congregation lift Jesus up.

We've got to lift up Jesus because Jesus said: "And I, if I, be lifted up from the

earth, will draw all men unto me."

We've got to lift up Jesus because when we lift up Jesus there is:

—Light for those in darkness and Blessings for the cursed

—Glory for those in gloom and Victory for those are defeated

—Hope for those in despair and Joy for those in sorrow

—Strength for the weak, and Peace for those who are confused.

—Healing for those who are sick, and Salvation for the Lost

Lift up Jesus so the world will know that he is the:

—Fountain of our joy, and Bread on our table

—Song of our midnight hour, Pilot of ship

—Answer for our questions, and solution to our problems

—Lawyer on our case, the doctor who never lost a patient

Lift up Jesus and show us how Jesus took an old rugged cross and turned it into a symbol of our salvation.

Lift up Jesus and tell the old story of his death on Calvary and how he rose early Sunday morning triumphant from the grave!

Lift up Jesus and let the world know that he lives!

He lives!

He lives!

No. 9198-Easter

From Celebrity to the Cross

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 9, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And the multitudes that went before him, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest Matthew 21:9; "And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Luke 23:18-21.

Introduction

Have you ever met a celebrity? There is a national curiosity about those who have achieved celebrity status. Movie Stars, sports heroes, politicians and even celebrity preachers all attract our attention. We are curious about them. We want to see what they wear, how they look, how they live and we want to hear what they have to say. We buy magazines that have pictures of celebrities. We wear clothes that bear the names of celebrities. We cook our food on stoves that bear the names of a celebrity. We even want to eat in restaurants where celebrities have eaten or tend to frequent.

When a celebrity comes to town, the crowds tend to gather; all seem to seek the same thing. They want to get a look at the celebrity.

We'll wait in line for hours to get a celebrity to autograph a book, a ball or just a sheet of paper. We'll drive for hours to stand in the crowd and watch the celebrities get out of cars and walk into a building for 10 seconds.

There are obvious benefits that come with celebrity. There are many who have turned their celebrity into high paying jobs and position. Ronald Reagan was a famous movie star. He turned that fame into a political career that made him President of the United States. Arnold Swartzeneggar is famous as the movie hero "Terminator" but he turned his celebrity into a political base that catapulted him to become governor of California.

Celebrity has its disadvantages too. There are very few moments of privacy for a celebrity. There are no quiet walks in the parks or strolls down the grocery store isles or evenings at the movies for celebrities; not without crowds of paparazzi following them everywhere they go. Even the personal lives of celebrities are discussed openly and all of their family laundry is reported for the entire world to see.

By definition, a celebrity is a person who is well known or renowned. To many, celebrities are heroes and heroines to whom we attribute godlike qualities and status.

Often we are shocked to learn that celebrities have political views that are different from our own. We also learn often that many have religious views that are strange, marital habits that always keep them in divorce court and personal issues that require the services of shrinks.

We have an image of our favorite celebrity that we do not want altered. When reality doesn't match the perception, we lose our enthusiasm. That's when the crowds thin. That's when the cheers cease and a celebrity disappears into the vast emptiness of anonymity.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem as a celebrity. There were crowds of spectators who came for miles just to get a glimpse of the man from Galilee. He was an obvious folk hero whose reputation had been promoted by 70 people who went before him in 35 pairs preparing the way for his arrival. When Jesus arrived, he received a celebrity's welcome and there were shouts of Hosanna and Hallelujah!

He was received as a conquering hero. His approval ratings were extremely high. The crowd was eating out of his hand! Yet, in a few short days; the crowds who celebrated the famous would reduce him to infamy and call for his execution.

As Christians, we celebrate Christ the savior, not Christ the celebrity. We celebrate the Rock of Ages, the Bright and Morning Star, not a rock star. The Christ we celebrate is not a celebrity but a friend who gave his life for us. In turn, we celebrate his birth, life, death and resurrection every day of our lives.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he makes what has been called a "triumphant entry" into Jerusalem. Jesus had taught and healed for three years throughout the region and his reputation had spread from village to village. He had become a celebrity to many, although he never sought celebrity status.

Many thought of him as a great prophet, healer and divine teacher and were drawn to greet him as he entered Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem riding a colt. As he entered, the multitudes greeted him and threw their garments along the road to honor him. Others cut down branches from the palm trees and waved them in the air and shouted praises to him as he passed. They shouted "Hosanna" which was Aramaic for "Save Us."

Upon his arrival into the city the people praised him as the one who would save them. However, just a few days later the same crowd that praised him shouted demands for his death. The high priests and other religious leaders were displeased at the praise he was receiving and they consorted on ways to turn all the shouts to doubts. They accused Jesus falsely, produced false witnesses, and used their political influence to destroy him. Ultimately, the same crowd that called his name in praise also called out his name in condemnation. The lips that shouted Hosanna on Palm Sunday cried out "Crucify Him" a few days later.

Seeking Celebrity

There are several truths about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his reception that we should not ignore.

JESUS DID NOT SEEK CELEBRITY: The world has a way of approaching celebrities that is different from its approach to ordinary people. If a man is a celebrity we are willing to "give it up" for him.

Have you ever watched the master of ceremonies of a comedy show introduce an entertainer? Generally, the MC will say a few words to the audience to loosen up the crowd and prepare it to receive the next act. If the next act is a relative newcomer or an unknown the MC will say, "Let's give it up for…" and ask the audience to receive the coming performance. The lights in the auditorium flash "applause." Prompting wave at the studio audience and urge them to applause for the celebrity.

Jesus is no celebrity, but yet those who trust in him "give it up" for him everyday. They praise him without end without an applause sign or a cue card.

Believers are compelled to praise the Lord because he is good and his mercy endureth forever. Whether we clap our hands, stomp our feet, or just nod our heads and smile, we have to respond when we think of the goodness of the Lord.

HE EMPHASIZED CHARACTER OVER CELEBRITY: What the crowds expected from Jesus was demonstrations of the things that made him a celebrity in their mind. They wanted fish and bread or to see a miracle or two. He was their conquering hero; their celebrity and they sought to see it for themselves. However, Jesus was not about celebrity, he was about character.

In his book, True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits, Dick Keyes writes that a celebrity is "one who is famous and well publicized," well known "apart from how they became known. Celebrity itself is indifferent to moral character," he adds. One can be famous "but still a thoroughly obnoxious person and menace." It is important for each of us to look for character, purpose and direction in those whom we elevate to hero status in our lives. Celebrity alone is not sufficient.

Adolph Hitler was a celebrity and because most Germans were mesmerized by his celebrity they did not look closely into his character and millions died. The state of Louisiana several years ago nearly elected David Duke, a Ku Klux Klansman, as governor of the state; fortunately enough people looked behind the celebrity and looked at the character.

Today, believers must become concerned with character and ignore celebrity. When it's all said and done only what we do for Christ will last, celebrity or no celebrity.

CELEBRITY DOES NOT LAST: There were a lot of spectators in the crowd on that first Palm Sunday. They cheered, they waved palm branches, they shouted. But when they learned the demands of discipleship, they switched teams. By Friday, they were shouting, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

The celebrity that was showered on Jesus was based on the misconception that he would lead them against Rome. When it became obvious that this was not the case the celebrity status faded; quickly.

Even in our world today we must be keenly aware of the fleeting nature of praise. The same people who praise us on Sunday are willing to crucify us on Thursday. Preachers who are given appreciation programs on the First Sunday have been known to be voted out before the end of the month. Praise and celebrity are fleeting.

Those who choose to follow Christ should do so with the full knowledge that following him will not generate celebrity and fame, but may cost them heavily in a secular sense.

Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Jesus bids us come and die with him. That is the cost of discipleship.

He came looking for a cross

Finally, brothers and sisters, when Jesus came to Jerusalem he was not looking for celebrity; he was looking for souls to save and a cross to bear.

The people approached him with the intensity of the welcome provided a celebrity, but he did not seek celebrity status.

The Scribes and Pharisees were visibly upset about the celebrity treatment Jesus received. They were noticeably concerned about the shouting and praise he was receiving. They asked his disciples to have Jesus to hush the crowd.

But Jesus said there was a reason for the shouting. The people were enthusiastic about the coming redeemer, even though their enthusiasm was misplaced. If they would be silent then the rocks themselves would cry out.

The religious leaders then could not understand then just as many understand today, whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's a whole lot of shouting going on.

Whenever we think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving going on!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole lot foot patting going!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a whole lot of hand clapping going on!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

We're shouting because of what he has done.

We're shouting because of what we expect him to do.

We're shouting because he's been to us and we just can't keep it to ourselves.

I don't know about you, but there are ought to be a lot of shouting going on in the homes of the Saint's.

Every time you think about the mountains you've climbed and the valleys in your way, you ought to feel a shout coming!

He's been a lawyer in my courtroom! I think I feel a shout coming on!

He's been a doctor in my sick room! I think I feel a shout coming on!

He's been a bridge over troubling waters! I think I feel a shout coming on!

He came to town in a lowly fashion, riding a colt, but the crowds made him a celebrity. The same crowd that greeted him with celebrity status just a few days later changed their shout to "Crucify him.

It was not celebrity that prompted him to pick up the old rugged cross.

It was not celebrity that made him take the abuse and torment.

It was not celebrity that urged him to show compassion to those who were persecuting him.

It was not celebrity but it was divinity mixed with humanity that made him go to Calvary. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Out on Calvary, he died, that I might live!

The man they buried in a borrowed tomb was not a celebrity but Savior.

He was not a star, but the man who behind the stars!

He was not known around the world, but he held the world in his hands!

Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but I feel a shout coming on!

No.9199-Easter

Famous Last Words

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 9, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34; "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" Luke 23:43; "Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit." Luke 23:46;"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46; "I thirst" John 19:28 "He said to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold thy mother! John 19:26-27; "It is finished" (John 19:30)

Introduction

Do you remember the last words of a friend or a relative? Somehow those last words took on a spirituality and life of their own. They bounce off the walls of our mind as we remember regularly their meaning and importance.

A minister tried to explain the importance of saying every word as if it was to be our last word, called upon a little girl to come to the front of the church. The preacher placed his arms around the little girl and explained that before leaving this earth Jesus said his parting words. They were his last. Then the preacher asked the little girl a question, but he wasn't prepared for the answer. He asked, "What were the last words you spoke, just before I called you up here?" The little girl said, "I hope he is not long, because I gotta use it!"

So much for famous last words; but we do remember them.

On his death bed Huey P. Long, former governor of Louisiana, gasped for air and said, "Don't let it end this way, I've got so much to do." His last words were the epitaph of a life lived on the cutting edge of change but filled with guts and glory.

A condemned murderer by the name of James French had some comical last words as they strapped him into the electric chair said, "How about this for tomorrow's head lines, French Fries!"

A criminal by the name of James Rogers who was about to be executed by a firing squad was asked if he had a last request and he said, "A bullet proof vest."

We often remember people by the last things they say to us. In fact, we seem to respect the last wishes of the dying more than we respect their wishes while they were alive. Family members will fight to carry out the wishes of a dying relative to the letter, but often ignored those same wishes in better times. The last things we do linger. They have a way of encircling us and shaking out dormant personalities as we hear those last words reverberate in our ears.

Moses had written the first four books of the bible. He had said everything there

was to be said, some thought. When he was 120 years old he started saying his last words and they ended up being the entire Book of Deuteronomy.

The last words we say are powerful.

A man who has lost a loved one to some tragedy, remembers the last words that were said. He is encouraged if those words were, "I love you." Those words are encouraging and strengthening. However, if the last words spoken were words of condemnation, hatred and fear spoken in rage and anger, we are devastated with guilt and failure. We remember those words forever.

Last words reverberate. They linger.

That's why the last words of Jesus on the cross seem to ring in our ears. These seven sayings are often repeated more than his teachings. While hanging on the cross, amidst groaning, blood and death, these words ring out over the centuries because each of them presents a framework by which the Gospel and its declaration of inclusive love will be judged. There are seven last sayings of Christ on the cross. No single book of the bible contains all seven of the sayings. There are three in John, three in Luke and there is one in Matthew.

Together, their message lingers.

They seem to say that as a man Jesus died and was buried, but as the divine he lives and is preparing for us a place in paradise.

As Christians, we remember the last sayings of Christ. More than that, we remember the last acts of Christ which included his death and his resurrection; all for our sins.

Exposition

This text focuses on the last words of Jesus on the cross.

There are seven sayings attributed to the savior as he hung on the cross. Each of the sayings indicate his nature.

We see his humanity when he felt forsaken and as he hung on the cross and called out to his father for sustenance, asking "Why hast thou forsaken me." We see his physical weakness when he complained about "thirst."

We see his concern for his mother's welfare when he told his disciple to "Behold thy mother." But we also see his compassion for a faithful disciple when he told his mother, "Woman, behold thy son."

We see his forgiving spirit when he asked his father to forgive them for they know not what they do.

We see his dying act of mercy when he spoke to the thief and promised him that "Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise."

We see the completion of his mission when he said, "It is finished."

We see him place his life in the Father's hand when he said, "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit."

These last sayings are famous around the world because of their truth, power and humility. They are memorable and divine because these famous last words came from the savior himself.

Every Word Memorable

The last words of Christ were memorable, but so were all of his words. Each of them were memorable because they were spoken by the Son of God himself. They were packed with truth and the power of God.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "Love your enemies" it was a divinely inspired word. It meant that every believer should demonstrate the love of God in every action, even with respect to our enemies.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" it was a powerful word of truth that challenged each of us to approach life with sincerely of spirit.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "You have not because you ask not" it was a declaration of faith that those who believe in God can accomplish the impossible if they exercise faith. In such cases the only hindrance to any possibility is asking in faith.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock" it was his invitation to all to allow him entrance into our lives by invitation rather by force; by warm embrace rather than fear.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted," it indicated that those who have empathy and sympathy for others will find comfort in their own days of weakness and trouble.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" it indicated that we should be willing to forgive those who have offended us just as we expect God to forgive us for our transgressions.

It wasn't his last word, but when Jesus said, the son on man "shall come as a thief in the night" it was a warning that believers should stay alert and prepared for the imminent return of the savior.

No Hope In Man's Words

Today there are millions in the world who invest their hopes in men as their saviors.

We cling to the last words of those we deem as great and turn to men only to discover that our heroes are weak and powerless to deal with the awesome struggles that we face.

We remember the words of Jefferson, "That all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

We remember the words of Lincoln quoting the savior, "that a house divided against itself cannot stand."

We remember the words of John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

We remember the words of Martin Luther King, "I may not get there with you, but I've been to the mountaintop. I have seen the Promised Land and we will get there

one day."

While remember these memorable words from great men, they are somehow powerless to help us in our lowest moments.

In our lowest moments when we can't see our way, we need to hear the word of Jesus reminding us that his eye is on the sparrow and watches over us!

When the world points an accusing finger at us, we need to hear Jesus tell those who scorn us, "he that is without sin, let him cast the first stone."

When we are lost and spiritually sinking in the sea of life, we need to hear Jesus say, "No greater love than this, that a man would lay down his life for a friend."

What a mighty God we serve!

Through the power of his words, Lazarus walked from his grave after four long days.

Through the power of his words, he spoke to the wind and waves and quieted their discord; causing some to ask, "What manner of man is this that the wind and waves obey his will?"

Through the power of his words, A man who was lame for 38 years took up his bed and walked.

What a savior, whose words, whether they were his first or his last are able to protect, deliver and bestow prosperity as he so desired.

Who can protect us better then the Lord?

The psalmist reminds us that the Lord is our fortress in a time of trouble and a shelter in a time of storm. David declared in Psalms 27 that the "Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" "..In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His Tabernacle shall He hide me." (v5).

Who can deliver us better than the Lord whose words of hope have delivered us from despair?

Who can bestow blessings upon us better than our savior who by his very word can open up the windows of heaven and shower down more blessings that we can handle?

Who can bless us better than the Lord? Whose words shall linger in our hearts?

We remember the patriots of America declaring, "I have not yet begun to fight." But we should hear the word of God declaring, that "eye hath not seen, nor has it entered into the hearts of man, the great things God has in store for us."

The last words we remember should not be those of Abraham Lincoln who many called the savior of our nation.

Lincoln was called "Savior","the Emancipator" and "Liberator" but he was not the Savior.

He was a deliverer, but he was not the savior!

He was great, but he was not the greatest!

He was strong, but he wasn't the strongest!

He had power, but he didn't have all power!

He was high, but he was not the highest!

He was victorious, but he didn't have the ultimate victory!

If you have a savior who can not respond to you, then you have nothing.

If you have a savior who cannot:

-Protect, then you have a cup that can't hold water.

-Deliver, then you have a match that cannot strike.

-Bless you, then you have a light that cannot shine.

We need a savior we can call on and He will answer. I hear the song writer declare: "..Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry, while on others thou art calling do not pass me by."

The Last Word

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that while Christ spoke seven last words on the cross, he himself was both the first and the last word.

On Calvary there was a cross, but God had a Word for that cross. Not just any word, for John said, "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God!

Every now and then even the best saints feel like they are on crosses, but don't worry, the God we serve always gets the last Word!

If you have experienced defeat, our God has the last word, because he can take defeat and turn it into victory!

If your experience has brought you a bowed down head, God's got the last word, for I heard the word declare, "Lift up your heads oh ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in!

If life's problems have given you sadness, God's got the last word, he can take your sadness and give you gladness!

If life has given you doubt, God's got the last word, he can take your doubt and give you assurance!

If your troubles have given you bondage, God's got the last word; he can take your bondage and give you freedom!

For every cross you bear, God's got the last word!

For every ditch someone digs for you, God's got the last word!

The world may declare, "Put him down!" But for every "put down" God's got the last word!

They took the first word and nailed him to a cross. They heard him speak seven words and thought that was the last of the word.

On Calvary, Jesus dropped his head in the locks of his shoulder, but that wasn't the last word!

They stuck a spear in his side, but that wasn't the last word!

He cried out to his father, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." But that wasn't the last word!

Even though they buried him in a borrowed tomb and he stayed there for three days and nights; that wasn't the last word either, because Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

One of these old days he's coming back again. When he does I want to be in the number who hears his last words to saints, "Servant, well done!"

No. 9200-Inspiration

You Can't Keep A good Man Down

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 16, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And they shall scourge him and put him to death and the third day he shall rise again." Luke 18:33

Introduction

Have you ever felt that life has thrown you a few wicked punches? Have you ever felt yourself going down for the count? How did you respond? Did you get up? Or did you stay down? Sometimes it appears that there are forces working against us that we cannot see; sending us to the canvass more times than we would like. When life hits, it seldom slaps or throws baby punches. It hits hard.

When life hits it seems as if everything happens at the same time. Those are the times that we agree with Job that "man born of woman is full of trouble." Job would know, especially since he experienced the full gamut of losses that range from death of his family, personal sickness and financial failure all at the same time. There are days that we feel like Mr. and Mrs. Job; knocked down, turned around and turned upside down.

One of the salient aspects of the 1970's film "Rocky" is that the main character played by Sylvester Stallone, Rocky Balboa, refused to give up his quest to go the distance with the World Champion. He didn't expect to win; he just wanted to go the distance. He was knocked down, battered, bruised, and beaten badly, but each time he was knocked down he rose to his feet, finally declaring, "I ain't going down no more!" The series, five movies in all caught our imagination because we can empathize with anyone who has been knocked down. We pull for them because we can see ourselves transposed in their situation. We want them to get up, because we want to believe we can do the same.

One Sunday morning over 2000 years ago, we got an example much better than Rocky. It was that Sunday morning that we saw a man who had been beaten, ridiculed, nailed to a cross and speared in the side; we saw him get up from the grave. We know from the written word of God that Rocky's word could apply to that Sunday morning, "I ain't going down, no more."

If the resurrection of Christ means anything to believers, it is that Christ, as a man,

took the same punches that life throws at each of us: disappointment, betrayal, physical abuse, persecution and every other problem we face. He went down, but mustered the strength to rise again repeatedly.

Donnie McCurklin's song says it best, "We fall down, but we get up. A saint is just a sinner who falls down; and gets up."

The resurrection is about arising from setbacks. It's about overcoming troubles, disappointments and failures. It's about starting all over, when it seems though it is hopeless.

As Christians, we celebrate the resurrection because it brings us hope. We are overjoyed because Christ overcame every obstacle put in his way and arose triumphant over death, the devil and the grave. We are happy because he proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that, "You can't keep a good man down."

Exposition

This text considers Christ as he prophesied about the remaining days of his life.

This text marks the third time that Jesus made reference to his impending death and resurrection. Each time, his disciples did not fully understand what he meant.

The first time Jesus told of his impending death, he focused on his rejection by Israel's leaders (Luke 9:21-27).

The second time, he added the element of betrayal (Luke 9:44-45). When he spoke of how he would be betrayed by those close to him, even then they did not understand him.

In this passage Jesus mentions that what will happen to him has been foretold by the prophets. Those involved, he said, would go beyond just the Jews but would also involve the Gentiles who would mock, insult, spit on, flog, and kill him.

His disciples were frustrated over his repeated statements about his approaching death. They were so overwhelmed that many of them did not even hear his statement about rising again.

They only saw their leader prophesying his downfall.

They could not see beyond the fall. They did not see the renewal only the defeat.

Four Keys to Getting Up

The overriding truth of Christ's resurrection is that those who follow the same path as Christ can expect the same result. We can expect to be knocked down and to experience difficult times. We can also expect to rise again. There are four keys necessary to unlock the truth of the resurrection's power in our own lives:

STICK TO YOUR PRINCIPLES: The very first way to go down and stay down, is to compromise your principles. Our principles are the set of beliefs that guide us every day. A godly man or woman is guided by a set of beliefs about God. Even when a believer is knocked down, his principles do not change. Christ gave us a glaring example of this when he was persecuted and tormented. He believed in the principle

of love, even for enemies. Even when he was spit upon, tortured and crucified by Roman soldiers he remained true to the principle by which he lived. As believers, we believe certain things about God. We believe that God is a healer, deliverer and savior. We believe he hears and answers prayers. We believe that no matter what we go through in life he will lead us through it. Whenever, we lay down our principles; that's the first step toward staying down.

It is our principle that keeps us from becoming a prostitute to pay the rent.

It is our principle that keeps us from stealing to keep the lights on!

It is our principles that keep us from immoral activity.

If you want to destroy a race of people and keep them down; destroy the principles by which they live. Take a race once associated with strong families, hard work and racial pride, and strip away their principles and you can knock them down and keep them down forever!

Even when we are down, we should take page from the life of Job and say, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I trust him."

NEVER LOSE YOUR PASSION: Your passion is the energy, enthusiasm and excitement that you bring to your life's work. Your passion is what makes you rise early and stay up late doing what you enjoy doing.

If we ever lose our passion, especially when we are down, it will be very hard to get up.

The religious leaders had difficulty dealing with Christ because no matter what they did to him he never lost his passion. He walked among men and talked freely of forgiveness and mercy and hanging on the cross; even there, he never lost that passion to bring people to God. In one breath he invited a thief to join him in paradise. In another breath, he asked his father to forgive them for they didn't know what they were doing. Even on the cross they could not steal his passion!

Yet, there are some, perhaps even sitting in this room, who have lost their passion for life. They just don't care anymore. They don't care about school, work, their families; or even themselves.

An ugly husband and an ugly wife who are passionately in love can weather any storm. However, a beautiful woman and a handsome man won't last a week in the sunshine without passion!

When the devil wants to keep a good man down he goes after his principles, then works on his life's passion. Once these two are taken, we're down for the count. If you want to get up, keep your principles and never lose your passion.

KEEP YOUR SENSE OF PURPOSE: Every believer has a purpose. Often it eludes us. We have no idea what it is that God wants us to do. But those who have a sense of "manifest destiny" or the idea that it is my divine command to work toward this end; have a sense of purpose.

Elijah moved about daily with a sense of purpose, to stand before the King and declare the word of God. Moses knew his purpose was to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land.

There in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed to his father in earnest. In his prayer he let it be known that he never lost sight of his sense of purpose. That purpose

was to come to the earth and show mankind the way back to God and to be the one sacrifice needed to reconcile them with the creator. That was his sense of purpose. It was the one reason for his journey on this earth.

It is our sense of purpose that propels us to PERSISTENTLY PURSUE A HIGHER PLATEAU. When we have a sense of purpose we keep getting up when we are knocked down because there is something that we are striving for that requires; yes, demands that we get up!

George Foreman lost the heavyweight championship of the world in 1974 and went into a shell that sent him soul searching. In 1977 he became a Christian, gave his life to Christ and emerged a man with a purpose. He boxed to raise money to help his church and youth center and to have a way to talk to wayward young men. He boxed with a purpose until at age 45 he became the oldest man ever to win the heavyweight title.

When we are driven by a godly sense of purpose there is no end to what can be done.

It is extremely easy to defeat any person who has lost his sense of purpose.

Without a sense of purpose we do stupid things, live recklessly and squander our resources. Without a sense of purpose our destiny eludes us.

If you want to keep a good man down; then steal his sense of purpose and he'll stay down every time.

A Good Man Gets Up

Finally, Brothers and sisters, we must consider that the resurrection proves without a doubt that you can't keep a good man down.

There is no doubt that Jesus was a good man. Beyond that, he was the son of the living God.

The record bears witness that Jesus was not only a good man but he was a man who came with a divinely inspired principle, passion and purpose.

The world tried its best but they could not take away his principle, passion or sense of divine purpose.

Judas thought that his betrayal would be the end of the crusade; unfortunately he didn't live long enough to find out that, you can't keep a good man down!

The Scribes and Pharisees thought their judgment based on lying witnesses and false testimonies would put an end to Jesus of Nazareth, but they soon learned that, you can't keep a good man down!

Pontius Pilate thought he could wash away blame for the death of the Judean king, but he soon found out that even the power of a Roman procurator, can't keep a good man down.

These men had to learn what every true child of God already knows; when God is with you; you can't keep a good man down!

Every time the world stabs you in the back and betrays you, think about the events of Calvary and say to yourself; "I won't be dissuaded because you can't keep a good man down!"

Every time the world falsely accuses you and puts your name on the highways of life; remember the events of Calvary and say to yourself, "I won't give up because, you can't keep a good man down!"

The world can't keep you down because you serve a living God.

The world can't keep you down because there is no:

—Battle the Lord cannot win;

—Burden the Lord cannot lift;

—Loneliness that the Lord cannot comfort;

—Promise the Lord cannot keep.

—Dark Cloud the Lord cannot brighten;

—Heartache that the Lord cannot soothe.

I know a good man, who was so good that somebody called him bread in a starving land!

So good, that somebody called him a bridge over troubling water!

So good, that somebody called him a doctor in the sick room!

So good, that somebody called a lawyer in our courtroom!

So good, that he picked up an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary!

Somebody got worried, so they put a rock in front of his tomb, to keep him down!

Somebody got worried, so they put a seal on the rock, to keep him down!

Somebody was still worried so they put soldiers to watch the seal on the rock that blocked the tomb, so they could keep him down!

But early Sunday morning, the world found out that you can't keep a good man down!

Early Sunday morning he arose, with all power in his hands!

No. 9201-Anniv.-Ushers

Ushers Standing On Holy Ground

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 19, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "And the Captain of the Lord's Host said unto Joshua, loose thy shoe from off they foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. Joshua 5:15

Introduction

Do you get the feeling that people come to church today without any respect? There was a time when believers, especially African American believers, had a great deal of respect for the church building. We were careful about what we said, where we walked, where we sat and what was done on church grounds. Somehow it was respected as Holy.

One of the main functions of ushers is to help create an atmosphere of holiness in the church edifice. The ushers insure a sense of order and continuity that is essential for the smooth flow of a worship service and for the spirit to fill our hearts.

Ushers know what to let in a worship service and to what to keep out. Ushers know the art of keeping soiled shoes outside.

Our practices today are similar to the practices of biblical times with respect to the wearing of shoes. In Biblical times, it was expected that persons would take off their shoes when entering a neighbor's home, or a place of worship. Often the feet of the guest were washed by the host or his servant. Jesus used the practice to show Christians the humility needed for service in the kingdom.

When Jews sealed a contract, they took off their shoes and exchanged them to seal the deal. When a marriage was consummated, shoes were exchanged and when a man wanted to divorce his wife the law required only that he put it in writing and sit her shoes outside of his tent.

Moses found that he could not approach God wearing his shoes and God told him to take off his shoes because he stood on Holy Ground.

As Christians, we have come to realize that when we come to worship we are Standing on Holy Ground. We cannot bring soiled spirits before God. We must be committed because we are taking on a Holy work. We are receiving a Holy commission requires a humbleness of spirit that all should recognize when they come face to face

with God.

Exposition

This text finds Joshua as he is told that he is standing on Holy Ground when he stands before the Lord.

The fifth chapter of Joshua finds the Children of Israel on the Canaan side of the Jordan River. The Lord had protected them in the wilderness for 40 years, hand fed them with quail and bread from heaven, and roll by the waters of Jordan for their crossing convenience.

Joshua now stood as the leader of the people. Moses was dead. With the exception of Caleb, all those who left Egypt with them forty years earlier were dead

As Joshua prepared to begin enter the Promised Land he received a warning .. before you take off your shoes, for the ground on which you stand is Holy Ground.

...This ground was promised to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob.

...This ground is the realization of the Word of God.

...This ground is Holy Ground because you are now standing on the promises of God.

Before you enter on this Holy Ground, you must take off your shoes that represent your old soiled way of life.

This Ground

Those who enter the sanctuary of the Lord are on Holy Ground. Often those who frequent the church edifice regularly forget that it is Holy Ground and reduce it to the same level as a club house, school house or play house. Ushers must gently remind those who come to worship that when they enter the house of the Lord that they are entering Holy Ground. It is our point of contact with the almighty.

This Ground is where we find compassion. Today, many come to worship seeking compassion. They have come from homes filled with despair and dejection, looking for a word of hope. The hungry child and the hopeless man both come into the presence God hoping to see the face of God and to hear his voice. They come to the place because they hope to be in the presence of true compassion, if only for a moment. They come because they have heard that if they can come before the presence of the Lord and bring their burdens he will show them love and compassion.

This Ground is where we find peace and love. This ground is where many come to find peace and love. They have left a world filled with distress and trouble and they seek consolation, peace and security on “Holy Ground.” 1 John 4:16 says, “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Those who share meet others at a point when they are most likely to recognize God. Those who enter Holy Ground instantly know that they are in a special place when they sense the feeling of peace and love that emanates from the ushers they meet.

When they see a smiling usher they know they have entered a special place.

When they see a compassionate usher, they know they have entered a special ground.

When they see a loving usher, they are relaxed and comfortable because they sense they will find the peace of God on Holy Ground.

This Ground is where many come to find Joy. The world has taken away the happiness of many people. They see sadness on the television; the read about sadness in the newspaper and they hear of sadness on the radio. There are many who come to worship so that they can feel the Joy of the Lord.

On Holy Ground we stand at the point of Joy.

There is no greater evidence that God is alive than at the point of joy!

At the point of Joy, God shows himself in victory!

At the point of Joy, God reveals himself as the provider!

At the point of Joy, God introduces himself as the sustainer! Psalm 30:5 "..weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

At the point of Joy, God is realized as a forgiving presence. Psalm 51:12 " Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

Thus, every usher has the responsibility to help believers to experience the joy of the Lord.

Their own testimony should be, this joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!

Ushers Too Must Stand On Holy Ground

Finally, brothers and sisters, there are many ushers who spend time insuring that others know about the Holy Ground on which they stand without realizing that each usher stands on Holy Ground too.

There are too many ushers in the church who treat their service on the usher board more seriously than they treat their loyalty to the Church itself.

There are many who will pay their usher board assessments and fees but will not pay God his tithes and offerings.

There are many who will faithfully show up for their station on the usher board but will skip bible study, Sunday school or other related activities of the church.

There are many who will frown on unruly persons in the worship then talk all the way through the worship with other ushers.

Ushers too must remember that they have to take off the worldly shoes when they come before God because they are on Holy Ground.

More than that, we must not bring our old sinful ways before God, because we are on Holy Ground.

If our shoes represent what we need to take off and leave behind then there are a few pairs of shoes we need to take off.

DRESS SHOES: Look good and shine well but have little utilitarian purposes. Some come to the church wearing their spiritual dress shoes, looking good but doing nothing. Take off your dress shoes before you enter Holy Ground.

PENNY LOAFERS: Are inexpensive and marked by a distinctive penny that is

placed in their tongue. There are some who come to church with a miserly attitude. They want to attend the services and the full rights of membership but they don't want to pay a single penny for the furtherance of the Lord's program. Take off your penny loafers before you enter Holy Ground.

TAP SHOES: Make a lot of noise. There are some who come to the church and once they are there they want to make a lot of noise, create a lot of commotion and interrupt the free flow of the spirit. Take off your tap shoes before you enter Holy Ground.

SLIPPERS: Are worn at home out of the sight of the public, mainly for slipping and sliding around the house. There are some who come to church hoping to slip and slid in the world outside of the view of the Lord. Take off your slippers before you enter Holy Ground.

BROGANS: Are hard, tough and hard shoes. If a person steps on your foot wearing brogans he'll hurt your feet. There are many who come to church wearing brogans, intending to walk on everybody and step on everyone else. Take off your brogans when you enter the House of God.

Standing on Holy Ground, we praise the Lord and lift him up!

Standing on Holy Ground, our souls can magnify the Lord!

How can a soul magnify the Lord?

When a soul magnifies the Lord it tells the left hand to meet the right and clap in praise of God!

When a soul magnifies the Lord, it tells the tongue, the lips and the voice box to join together and lift him up!

When a soul magnifies God it tells the left foot and right foot together in a mighty cadence that does the work of God!

Standing on Holy Ground the song writer declared "then sings my soul, my savior God to thee. How great thou art! How great thou art!"

Standing on Holy Ground we magnify the Lord because he loved the world enough to send his only begotten son into it!

Standing on Holy Ground we can see him 2000 years ago stretched out on Calvary

Standing on Holy Ground we can see Jesus

Mary's Baby! The Rock of My Salvation

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Fountain of my joy!

Died on an old rugged cross!

My soul magnifies the Lord because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

No. 9202-Family

Family Secrets

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 30, 2006

SCRIPTURE: For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Mark 4:22-23

Introduction

Does your family have any secrets? Nearly every family has a secret or two. Some family secrets have been kept under wraps for many years and have never been shared. The keepers of many family secrets are its elderly members. Often they have witnessed many events in the life of the family, which are often shared in family circles. The family stories are told at gatherings, reunions and fellowships. Young ears listen as the old timers tell of the hard times, difficulties and triumphs of the family. Often what they do not hear discussed at these family gatherings are the family secrets.

Consider the preacher's wife who loved to help people. She was known to be a sucker for a sad story. One day there was a knock at her front door and man began telling her an ugly secret about a family in the city. "It is a secret that I can only share with you, because you have a good heart" he said. He said very few people knew that the family down the street was headed by a woman who had eight children. Her husband died and left them penniless. They were struggling to get by, and then the woman lost her job. On top of that she became ill and her children are starving. Now, to make matters worse they are about to be evicted from their home because they are two months behind on their $600 rent. It's a well kept secret, but they are going to be put on the street, in the cold, unless someone pays their $1200 back rent. Stricken with compassion the minister's wife said, "That's so sad." Both she and the visitor wiped tears from their eyes. As she reached for her checkbook she asked a question, "May I ask, who are you?" The man broke down in tears and bawled his answer, "I'm her landlord."

What kind of secrets do families keep quite? Things that would embarrass the family remain secrets forever, locked in the memories of those who would rather let it die with time. Dark family secrets often involve incest, theft, adultery, or even marriages between close family members. Other family secrets include abortion, homosexuality and anything else that family members consider to horrible to even talk about. The ugly secrets are rarely talked about in family circles, but they are

whispered regularly by everyone outside of the family, who all seem to know family secrets.

In the South family secrets are just that, family secrets. Everyone helps us keep family secrets by never mentioning them in public. William Faulkner, one of nation's great writers, often used the idea of "secrets" in his novels. One such Faulkner story was "A Rose for Emily." Faulkner wrote about a woman who poisoned her love and kept his body in the attic so he would not leave her. The irony of the situation is that everyone one in the town knew her secret and helped her keep it from outsiders.

The bible is filled with family secrets too. Children have not learned what to keep secret so they ask questions. Can you imagine the questions that Jacob's children must have asked, "Daddy, is it true that you married my aunt and my mother too?" David's grandchildren probably asked, "Is it true that grandfather had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband killed?" Sssssh. It's a secret "Is it true that uncle Absalom killed uncle Amnon from raping aunt Tamor?" Sssh "Is it true that when grandpa Moses was prince of Egypt that he married a Black woman from Africa?" Sssh. It's a secret.

While there are dark family secrets that are kept hidden, there are other family secrets that are meant to be discovered. These are the special keys to its survival, strength, growth and tenacity over the years. These family secrets are passed on from one generation to another. They are the secret recipes of life that have been passed from one generation to the next, with pride and faith.

The best secret of a Christian family, is not really a secret at all. It is the reason that the family seems to stand strong in face of adversity, grow instead of wither, increase instead of decrease. That secret is the family's faith in, obedience and dependence upon God. It has been the secret that has carried families through difficult times and tough days.

One of the best kept family secrets is that the strong man the world sees everyday, prays regularly to God for strength.

The mother who appears to know the answer to every problem, has a secret source of her wisdom; she talks to God regularly.

The family that seems to stand invincible to outside attacks, secretly prays hard and leans heavily upon the power of God to sustain it against enemies.

Jesus is the secret of our smile in the midst of trouble, courage in the face of threatening situations and power in the face of weakness.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge the God is always by our side. His presence is our lives his guiding hand, is the secret to our salvation and our hope.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he reveals that secret truths about the kingdom of God must be shared with others.

The kingdom of God was a great mystery for many years. Although it had been conceived from the beginning it had been kept secret for thousands of years. In Matthew 13:35 Jesus told his disciples that he would reveal to them a secret about

God's plan of separating the good and the bad. He said this plan was old, but he would tell it. "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundations of the world."

Jesus encouraged his disciples to view the kingdom of God as a lighted city that sits on a hill that should not be hidden. Each individual is encouraged not to keep God's work in their lives secret but to let their lights shine. In Luke 11:33 Jesus said no man lights a candle, then puts it under a bushel to hide it, but puts it on a candlestick where it can be seen. That is what he wants believers to do, tell the secret of their faith and the kingdom of God to others.

Whether we tell it or not, Jesus said in our text, it will come out one day. It cannot be kept secret. Anything that is hidden will one day be revealed.

Believers are encouraged not to keep their relationship with Christ a secret but to tell it everywhere they go.

Secrets to Strong Families

How is that some families seem to be strong and others seem weak? How is that while some families seem to be happy and thriving that others are angry, sad or falling apart? What is their family secret? Strong Christian families share similar traits; among these are:

LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER: Learning to live together is a secret that many successful families share. When several individuals live in small spaces, called our houses, it's possible for everyone to get on everyone else's nerves. We have to agree on how it will be done. Strong families have developed understandings about every aspect of family life: How long the phone will be used, who uses the bathroom first, respecting individual privacy, who leads and how, who decides disputes, etc. Families that are strong understand the role of each member of the family but relate to each other in a spirit of love, forgiveness and support that makes living together as a family an enjoyable experience.

COMMUNICATE: Strong families talk to each other. There is a difference between talking "to" each other and talkgin "at" each other. Find a family that is strong and you will also find a family where its members talk to each other. A vital part to communicating is "listening" to how other members of the family feel. Jesus often talked to his disciples, but there were times when he wanted to know what they though of him? Strong families devise methods to measure themselves in the context of the family. Often this is done through family meetings or dinner table small talk. True communication comes when each family feels that they have permission to speak freely. Once we know how we are perceived, those who want to do better will adjust accordingly.

LEADERSHIP: Strong families are marked by the presence of a clear chain of command in the family context. There is no doubt as to the leader of the family. The leader of the strong family leads by demonstrating love for the family, and faith in God. Wives respect husbands as leaders of families when husbands love them like Christ loved the church. If wives feel that the family is not being loved or neglected in

important ways, the husband's leadership decisions are challenged and trouble brews. Women who lead families must love their families in a similar way. When this done, their role as family leader is clearly defined. If they leader doesn't take care of the business at home, leadership is challenged and conflicts result.

HAVE FUN: Strong families have fun "together." Families do things that every family member describes as "fun" enjoy each other's company. Family vacations, outings, camps, retreats or getaways are essential to building the "fun" factor into families. One of the secrets to happy families is that they have "fun" together. If your family is filled with so many "issues" that it can't have "fun" then everyone is waiting to get out as fast as they can. When you are the "Happy fun family" family members can't wait to get home and never want to leave. Unfortunately, there are a large number of families today in which some members of the family have concluded that their family is "no fun" and they look for excuses to stay away as long as they can. If your family never does any "fun" things, you can make it stronger if you plan a few, every now and then.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER: Another secret of strong families is that they support each other. A child is on the football team, look for the strong family in the stands. A father is climbing the ladder in the company, look for the strong family to back him up. A mother is trying to go to school at night to achieve a goal, watch the strong family drop in behind her to help make it possible with as few problems as possible. There are some families that do not view the interests or dreams individual members as important. Our families become strong which each member embraces and supports other family members as they pursue their dreams. That support may be as small as words of encouragement, our presence at a ceremony or lending financial support. Even in tough times, strong families stick together, share hardships, expenses, burdens and difficulties.

The Big Secret

Finally, the big secret of Christian families is that they demonstrate a collective faith in God by worshipping and serving God together.

There is an old saying that the family that "Prays together, stays together." The word "together" goes beyond just praying at the same time, but it means that they are praying for the same thing.

Families that are trusting God together for the same common purpose find strength in each other and stay together.

Families that are asking God together for the same common good, cling together.

The big secret of strong families is that they love each other with a love that overlooks weakness, faults and shortcomings and sees only the person being loved.

Families are strong when every member of the family feels loved, appreciated, and respected, despite their differences or idiosyncrasies.

Those who want to know the secrets of a believing family should know that strong families have an unfaltering trust in the power of God.

Strong families place their hope the Lord. That's why the song write declares, "My

hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

Some think the secret of strong families is money or education, but if you talk to the members of a strong family they will tell you it was nothing but the Grace of God.

Although education helped, it wasn't education that opened doors that were closed in our faces.

Although it helped to have a dollar in our pockets, it wasn't a pocketful of Benjamins that made a way out of no way.

There is much to be said about hard working families, but even hard work is totally responsible for the survival of our families; it was nothing but the grace of almighty God.

There are many dark secrets in every family but there is a God who knows all of our dark secrets. David, in Psalms 139:1 said, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

God knows are dark secrets, but there is another secret that strong families have learned. That God can take the secrets of our dark past, wash them in his blood and make them white as snow.

No wonder the song writer asked, "What can wash me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

What is the secret of standing when everyone else is falling? It's nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What is the secret to having when everyone is losing? It's nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What is the secret of getting up when everyone around you is falling down? It's nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Our families are able to stand with hope in times of trouble because we know God is able. That's why the song write wrote, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others he do for you."

Our families are able to withstand the storms of life because we know that we serve a God that is able to speak to the winds and say "peace be still."

Every believing family member knows the real secret, it's in the blood of Jesus.

It's the power of the blood that makes sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

One day when I was lost, He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that saved me!

But an even bigger secret is that early Sunday morning he arose from the dead and is still blessing our families everyday!

No. 9203-Inspiration

Hold What You've Got

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2006

SCRIPTURE: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58; Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Ephesians 6:10

Introduction

Have you ever seen people who got it and lost it because they could not hold on to it? There are many people in the world today who have spent their entire lives striving to attain, only to lose what they have attained because of their inability to hold on.

John Milton in 1667 in his famous "Paradise Lost" wrote about the glory of Adam and Eve in the Garden, what they had acquired and how they lost their heavenly state.

Douglas Andrew in his book, "Missed Fortune 101" writes about people who gained fortunes quickly in life only to lose them. They had it but lost it because they could not hold on to it.

We have seen the legacy of many African-American athletes and heroes who rose to power, prominence and fortune but ended up poor and nearly anonymous. They had it but lost it because they could not hold on to it.

There have been many who sought after love, and attained ecstasy, but for one reason or another lost it. They had it but lost it because they could not hold it.

The same is true of those who spend their entire lives striving to acquire the power of God, then for one reason or another lose it because they could not hold on to what they acquired.

It is a tragedy at the least to have experienced the power of God in our lives then lost that power for one reason or another. Therefore our focus in life should include how to attain God's power but also how to maintain it once we have acquired it.

In the late 1960's a famous singer named "Joe Tex" produced a series of records including "Tramp" and "Papa was too." Included among his hits was an album entitled "Hold on to what you got." For Tex, it meant maintaining his present course, always in the shadows of James Brown, but for us today, that title means something else. It means holding on to the power of God within us.

As Christians, we are encouraged to be strong in the Lord and to remain

unmovable in our faith and service in God's kingdom. This dedication and faith is possible if every believer understands that is important to "Hold what you got!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul giving advice to the Corinthians that encourages them to hold on to their faith, commitment and newly released power of God.

Paul uses several words to describe how the Corinthians should "hold on." These words are: steadfast, unmovable, abounding, work, and labor. Together they explain his formula for keeping a firm grip on their faith in the power of God.

"STEADFAST." This word is "hedraios" (hed-rah'-yos), derived from a word meaning "to sit", it means: "sitting, sedentary, or by extension: firm, immovable, and steadfast." In this context, the word means to take a strong stance so as not to be knocked off our feet. To hold on to the power of God each believer must position himself in life to stand strong against the attempts of Satan to dissuade us from the Christian service.

"UNMOVEABLE." This is "ametakinetos"(am-et-ak-in'-ay-tos), and it means: "not to be moved from its place, to be unmoved"; metaphorically: "to be firmly persistent." To be unmoved means that nothing can move us out of the job we have been assigned by the Lord. The believer who is unmovable is not one that cannot change, but one who cannot be persuaded to quit or throw in the towel in an area of service.

"ALWAYS ABOUNDING." This is the word "perisseuo" (per- is-syoo'-o), and literally means "to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure". Furthermore, it means "to overflow, or to be abundantly furnished with, to have in abundance, to be in affluence, to excel or exceed." Its message is that we should strive to excel in the Lord's work. Whatever we do for God should be our best. We should give him 100 percent. We should not be satisfied with just getting by, but we should strive to abound.

WORK comes from "ergon" (er'-gon), and means "business, or employment, that which any one is occupied". Or it may refer to what is done, "a product, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind." It's an act, or a deed. Our work for the Lord is our "job for God". Something we actually do that is required by His call, we are His servants. It has a description, it requires time and "energy", a word coming over directly from the Greek.

LABOR is the word "kopos" (kop'-os); it is found 20 times in the NT, and refers not so much to the hard work, but the weariness which accompanies it. In its most primitive form, the word means "a beating", like that administered by the task masters. Consequently, it means "trouble", or "intense labor united with trouble and toil." In I Thessalonians 1:3, it is the word used in the expression, "labor of love".

Both our labor and work should be an expression of our love for God; performed cheerfully and with dedication.

Writing to the believers in Ephesus, Paul encouraged them to "be strong" in the faith. To be strong in the power and might of the Lord meant that believers should

demonstrate the power of God through their unwillingness to yield to temptation and the eagerness to unleash the power and might of God as the work in various fields of ministry.

Use the Power to Keep the Power

In Acts 1 we see believers receiving the power of God. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit enabled them to do miraculous works and speak languages they had not studied, for the purpose of demonstrating that they were truly recipients of the apostolic commission to "go ye therefore."

In a similar sense, believers today have come to realize the power of God in our lives. 1 Corinthians 13 seems to suggest that the apostolic gifts of Acts 1 will "fade" and "cease" one day, but the power of God will not. Love, is the greatest power we have; it will now lose its power. God is love.

We must strive to hold on to the power of God in our lives. Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives us special insight into how this is done.

To hold on to the power, we must be steadfast and unmovable. We must not be swayed by every new religious movement that comes along. We must not let circumstances or events dissuade us from kingdom building. There are too many believers that are church hoppers. They jump from church to church, religion to religion and faith to faith. In the process they become confused and misdirected and lose the exercise of their power in the Lord.

To hold on to the power, we must busy ourselves with the Lord's work. We must use the various gifts that we have in his service. Singers, musicians, counselors, organizers, youth workers, teachers and a long list of others with powerful special gifts should use them in the service. A member who joins the body of Christ and sits on his/her good intentions is of little service to the kingdom. There is no great reward for being a "bench" member. The reward is in our service. The reward is for how we use the power.

We should remember that either we "use it" or "lose it."

To keep the power, we must use the power. We must work until our day is done. Ironically it is using the power that helps us keep the power. A person who buys a brand new automobile but never drives it will soon find that there will be engine problems over time, because it is never driven. A race horse has to keep running to keep its speed. A boxer has to keep fighting to keep his skill. Likewise, a believer must keep using the power of God in work and labor to keep the power flowing.

That's what the song writers had in mind when they wrote, "I'm going to work until my day is done. I'm going work until the setting of my sun. I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done."

We Must Hold on

We must resolve in our hearts to hold on to what we have. When we hold on we

earn the favor of God on our lives. We resist any temptations or difficulties that would entice us to let go.

A traveler approached three men he passed on the road and gave them each a small key and made each one promise him that regardless of what they met along the road they would take the key and hold onto it until the morning.

As the night passed, they came upon a forest fire that raged ferociously. Consumed by the heat one of the men turned around, the other two continued.

However, they came upon a great storm which bent the trees and nearly buried both men in torrents of water. The second man turned back. However the third man clinched his fist around the key and kept going.

In the morning he met another traveler who asked him, "Have you been through the fire? Have you been through the storm? Do you still have the key?" To these the man answered yes.

The traveler responded, "you have earned the reward of Gold that this box contains. But tell me, what made you go on?" The man answered, "I've been through the storm and the rain. I've been through fire, but I had to keep going because I promised that I would hold out till the morning comes!"

We must hold on till the morning comes!

Hold to his hand, God's unchanging, unmovable, all powerful hand!

We must hold on to what we have. We must hold on to the power of God.

Keep the Power Flowing

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must keep the power flowing.

To keep the power of God flowing in our lives we only need to look at how electrical power flows into our homes. God's power works the same way.

WE MUST BE CONNECTED. If you want the power of God to keep flowing you must be connected to the power source. No matter how elegant or expensive the home or where it is located, if we look close we'll see a set of wires somewhere connecting it to a power source; either hanging from poles or buried underground; there has to be a connection.

If you want to keep the power of God, you must be connected!

You must connect with your local church!

You must connect through bible study!

You must connect through public worship!

You must connect through service!

DON'T BLOW A FUSE. If you want the power of God to flow, you must not become so overloaded with the cares of the world that you blow a fuse or trip a breaker. Fuses blow when the line is overloaded.

If you want to keep the power flowing, take time to be with God. Take time to pray and praise him for his wonderful works.

When the cares of the world overtake, "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there."

YOU MUST PAY THE BILL. There are many who are connected to the power

source but they still have no power. They attend church, study and pray, but they still have no power. Why? One of the may reasons for power disconnections in our homes is that we failed to pay the bill. If you don't pay the bill, the power is connected.

There are many believers who live great lives but they rob God in tithes and offerings. They do not tithe, they pay something on it. If you pay on your utility bill but never pay what is required, pretty soon there is a disconnect notice.

To keep the power flowing we must keep our vows to God, pay our tithes and give our offerings cheerfully.

We are not paying for salvation because salvation is free. When we pay our tithes and give offerings we demonstrate obedience and love and earn God's favor, anointing and extraordinary power.

She held on to the Power

In closing, I want to remind the saints of God that there is a blessing in holding on to the power of God.

I'm reminded of the old lady who became lost in a snow storm. As the snow began to build higher, the townspeople began to worry when she was reported missing. The old lady was too weak to move the snow that was covering her. She had a little flashlight she kept shining hoping someone would see the light. The snow covered her completely in the night. However, the townspeople searched through the night. Just before daybreak a townsman spotted yelled to the group that he found the old lady.

After they dug her from the snow and warmed her by a fire, the rescuer said, "We never would have found you if you had not thought to hold on to your flashlight. Tell me how did the batteries last so long?" The old woman said, her batteries went out an hour after she was lost. "But that couldn't be," said the volunteer "We saw the light shining just over where we found you." The old lady said, "That flashlight kept shining by the glory of the Lord. I wasn't holding on to the flashlight son, I was holding on to the power of the Lord!"

Every saint should hold on to the power of the Lord!

Power of God can make the weak strong and give rest to the weary!

The power of God can lift the fallen and raise up a bowed down head!

The power of God can bring victory to the defeated and joy to the sad

This power is in the blood of the crucified lamb.

This power is from Jesus, the son of the living God, who died out on Calvary!

He stayed in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave all power in his hands!

The power of his resurrection.

The power of his blood never diminishes.

It reaches to the highest mountain! It reaches to the lowest valley!

The blood that gives me strength, from day to day, it will never lose its power!

No. 9204-Inspiration

Is This the Life I Ordered?

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 7, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6

Introduction

Have you ever ordered a menu item at a restaurant only to learn later that what you received wasn't what you ordered? Where were you? Were you at a cafeteria, fancy restaurant standing in line at Mickey D's? It doesn't matter where you were when it happened, it's the results that troubled you the most. You didn't get what you ordered!

It's really frustrating to pull up to the drive through and order your Whopper or Big Mac by the numbers only to learn that the cashier didn't get it right. There are a few things that make your order distasteful so you request that they hold those items. Were you the one who asked for no salt and for your burger to be cut in half? Did you specifically ask for Pepsi and not Coke?

If you are like most people, there have been a few times when you received everything you didn't want and none of what you really ordered. That's when you mash the button or peck on the window and say, "Excuse me, but this is not what I ordered!"

It's the same way in a restaurant. The steak you ordered was to be cooked well but when it was delivered it was rare with the blood oozing out. Didn't you ask for brown gravy instead of white gravy? They are both white, but there is a big difference between Ranch dressing and blue cheese. That's when you tell your waitress, "This is not what I ordered."

Then there are the times that a friend talks you into ordering unfamiliar ethnic foods from a menu with no pictures. What is stuffed Woo Chang anyway? You make your entry in the social circles of the elite and notice that there is no fried chicken, rice and gravy or French fries on the menu. What do you do? You listen to the order of the person sitting at the next table and order a serving of Caviar and Escargot. When the waiter brings you an order of fish eggs and snails, you choke and ask, "Is this what I ordered?"

Sometimes it's that way in life. We don't often get the life that we order. Sometimes we get what we ordered and don't like what we received.

In our youth, we were very specific about what we wanted, but it seems somehow that we didn't get the right order. Someone else got our order and we got theirs! We ordered the big house, not this one! We ordered the mansion, not this one! We ordered the easy life, flying around the world in the first class section of jet planes. We ordered an unlimited checking account and designer clothes that we wear only once and throw them away. We ordered luxury, health and eternal youth! That's what we ordered! Remember?

When we look in the bag of experiences that life has given us we are often discouraged when it turns out that very few of the experiences we asked for ended up in our bag. Now at 25, 45, 65 and 75 we're asking, "Is this what I ordered?"

What happened to that fine sexy model I said I was going to marry? What happened to that macho super man with rippling muscles and washboard abs that I said I would sweep me off my feet?

Did somebody else get my order?

Unfortunately, life is not like Burger King where you can, "Have it your way!" We don't have the option of going through heaven's drive thru window and ordering the kind of life we will live on earth. We can't pick what color we will be, whether we will be tall or short or whether we will live life trouble free. We don't get to choose from the menu: Life #1, #2 or #3 with an extra side order of the things we like best. It just doesn't work that way.

As Christians, we have come to learn more about God. We have learned that life is not like ordering a value meal. No matter what we order it is sure to come up short. Something will be missing. Those who know the Lord have learned to let God decide what's best for us. As we mature spiritually we don't ask, "What happened to the life I ordered?" Now we say order my steps so I can live the life you have given me according to your will.

Exposition

This text focuses on a Proverb of Solomon that points to the importance of allowing God to direct our lives instead of self direction.

Solomon was the third King of Israel. He is respected as a man who possessed great wisdom. Most of his wisdom was given to him by God. However, some of his wisdom was learned in the school of hard knocks.

As a very young man Solomon became King of Israel. He recognized the enormity of his position and prayed for guidance. One night, while he slept, God appeared to him in a dream and gave him the opportunity to wish for anything he wanted as King. God promised to give him whatever he wanted. It was a chance to pick life the way he wanted, down to smallest detail. Riches, fame, possessions and anything else were available to him if he wanted. In 1 Kings 3:9 he decided that it would be best to have an understanding heart and let God lead him.

Thus, much of the Book of Proverbs is a collection of the wisdom of Solomon. It reflects what he had been given by God through revelation and what he learned through the experiences of his life.

Proverbs chapter 3 refers to one of the great truths about life that Solomon learned and reduced to a mere proverb, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path."

When we think on it now, what it says is simple. Let God set your course rather than picking your own direction. Whenever we are to make choices about what to do in life, consult him, and he will direct us to the path that we should take.

Have it Your Way

What if we could really have our way? Suppose we could get on our knees at night and hear God say to us, what he said to Solomon, "have it your way!" Order up a life any way you choose what would be the result?

Most of us would order a "Whopper" of a life. It would be a McLife. But Whoppers and Big Macs are big but they also come packaged with everything on them. Most of us couldn't enjoy having a whopper of a McLife, because there are too many things on it that we don't like.

If we could order a McLife for ourselves we would delete anything that has an element of bitterness to it. That means we would:

HOLD THE MAYONAISE: Mayonnaise is made mostly of egg yolks, and lots of oil. But it's made mostly of lemon juice, oil and powered onions. Lemon juice is bitter. Onions are mostly bitter. Because the eggs, mayonnaise can go bad if left unrefrigerated. We want nothing that can possibly go bad, plus it is a little bitter too, so we say, "Hold the Mayonnaise."

HOLD THE MUSTARD: Mustard is made by grinding tiny mustard seeds into a powder and mixing it with spices. Jesus said if we could move mountains if we had the faith of one mustard seed. So you would think that the life we order would contain a life live by faith. Not so, because mustard is made by mixing the mustard seeds with vinegar and spices. That means living by faith could be a little tough to swallow, so way say, "Hold the Mustard."

HOLD THE PICKLES: A pickle is actually a cucumber. Numbers 11:5 says the Children of Israel loved cucumbers. They often ate them raw. However a pickle is cucumber that has been through a whole lot. Pickles have endured, vinegar, salt, pickling lime and much more. In life, when we lose our health, we are in a pickle. When we lose our money, we are in a pickle. If we lose our job, we are in pickle. When we choose the life we want for ourselves, we say, "Hold the Pickles."

HOLD THE ONIONS: Onions add taste to recipes but when you cut into an onion it releases substances that form "sulfenic acids" that turn into a gas. These gases can mix with the water in your eyes and turn into a mild form of sulfuric acid. To get rid of the acids that could harm your eyes your brain sends out a signal that makes you cry, but the crying is good for eyes because without the tears the acid would burn your eyes. If you live in this life, you will have to cry sometime. You try your best to prepare something that would be good but the sulfuric acids of worry, pain, and anxiety get in our eyes and we have to cry. Many see life that has crying and tears

and they say, “Hold the Onions!”

Hold the TOMATOES because they are slippery and slimy. They look too ugly.

Hold the KETCHUP too because it’s got tomatoes in it and it looks like blood.

Hold the LETTUCE because it’s green and raw and I need nothing in my life that is raw!

When we remove everything that we don’t like about life, all that is left is meat and bread. When Israel wandered in the wilderness they ate quail meat and bread for years. They complained because they wanted cucumbers, onions, garlic and all of the other things they missed.

There are even some who don’t like the meat because they are vegetarians, so they eat veggie burgers.

Without all of the extras and the meat, there is nothing left but the bread.

Then we hear the word of God declare, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

That’s probably why God does not allow us to “have it our way.” It takes some of the things we don’t like about life to make it worth living and to give it substance.

Let God Direct Your Path

Finally, we should consider the wisdom of Solomon about our lives: Lean not to our own understanding, ask God and he will direct our paths.

If we ask God to prepare a path for our lives, be assured that God will not give us a plain life. It may have a little of everything.

God will give us lot of sunshine and often a little rain.

He’ll give us a little happiness and sometimes a little pain.

He’ll give us an hour to smile in and a few minutes of trouble.

He gives us a bed to sleep in and the children to make the joys double.

When God give you a mountain, remember there’s a valley around the way.

If God orders us moment of sadness, he’ll throw on a happy day.

We wouldn’t like it if the son always shined and night never came.

If we were always victorious and won every game.

The life that God give is not from Burger King.

The life that God gives is from the King of Kings.

There is a difference between Burger King and the King of Kings.

There is a difference between Mickey D’s and the master of the seas.

At the drive through window at Burger King, if you ask and pay for it, you can get your order super sized.

When your order is super sized you get a few more fries and they double the size of the drink. That’s the way its done and Mickey D’s and Burger King.

But I heard Jesus say, “I’ve come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

That means that an obedient saint whose life is ordered in the will of God does not have to ask or pay anything extra, his life is automatically “super sized.”

God told Malachi that for those who are obedient that he would open up the

windows of heaven and pour out blessings more than believer could receive.

That means that if we are obedient, you don't have to ask for it, because God will automatically super size your blessing.

Because Samson was obedient God super sized his strength, and he became the strongest man in the world!

Because Solomon was obedient God super sized his wisdom and he was the wisest man f all times.

Because Abraham was obedient God super sized his faith and he lived his life in bosom of the Lord.

Because Methuselah was obedient God super sized his life to 969 years.

Because David was obedient God super sized his humility and became known as a man after God's own heart.

Because Hezekiah was obedient God super sized his life and gave him 15 more years.

God super sized our blessing too.

He's super sized the joy of our families.

He's super sized our health and strength.

He's super sized our business and finances.

He's super sized the strength of marriages.

But that's not the best part.

A Burger King you have to pay extra but when a saint goes to the window of heaven he hears the word, "You can't pay for your blessing because Jesus paid it all."

Jesus, the Lord of Lords!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Died out on Calvary; but Early Sunday morning …

No.9205-Mothers

The Mystery of Motherhood

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 14, 2006

SCRIPTURE:But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:7-9

Introduction

Have you ever considered what makes mothers tick? There is a certain mystery that surrounds motherhood that has left every succeeding generation in awe. Despite our best efforts it has always seemed to elude our understanding. The best scholars have tried to figure it out as well as theologians and philosophers but none have been successful in their efforts to unravel what can only be called the mystery of motherhood.

We all like mysteries and we enjoy trying to figure them out, but we haven't been able to figure out the mystery of motherhood.

For us a mystery is something confusing, complicated, unknown, or even unknowable. If we cannot fathom something, we say, "It's a mystery to me."

In the mystery of motherhood we know what mother did but we have never been able to figure out how she has been able to do it. Even today as we watch mothers we know what they do but we still have not figured out how they do it.

It's a mystery how a mother can kiss a cut finger and the hurt seems to go away.

It's a mystery how advice that a mother gives always seems to come true.

It's a mystery how mothers seem to have eyes behind their heads to discover even those things that we thought were hidden and out of sight.

The real mystery of motherhood is the realization that somehow God has given them a special sensitivity that makes them hear things, see things, and feel things in ways that are mysterious to the rest of us.

There are many things about mothers that will remain mysteries. These are things that we probably never will understand.

We will probably never understand why Hannah asked God for a child and promised to give that child back if she could just have the privilege of being blessed in childbirth. It's a mystery.

We will probably never understand why Jocebed would take her newborn son

and put him in a basket and set him afloat on the river Nile and risk death by crocodiles rather than hide him from Pharaoh's soldiers. It's a mystery.

We will probably never understand why the mother who stood before the King would rather give away her child to an undeserving, lying, neighbor than see that child cut in half by King Solomon' sword. It's a mystery.

There are many things about life that remain mysteries to us, but every now and then, God rolls back the curtains and gives us a peek into his works that helps us understand the awesome way he has designed life and those to whom he has entrusted life.

As Christians, we believe that God has given the gift of motherhood to women. In addition to that gift he has also bestowed upon mothers of faith certain mysterious gifts that even mothers themselves have yet to understand. No matter how we try, only godly mothers seem to understand the mysteries of motherhood.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains how God reveals spiritual wisdom to the saints revealing mysteries that have been hidden for centuries.

Paul explained that the mysteries of the faith have baffled the political and religious leaders of the world for centuries. They are unable to understand them because they view divine truths with a carnal eye that cannot understand the ways of God. Colossians 1:26 notes that these mysteries "hath been hid from ages and generations, though now made manifest to the saints."

Even though Jewish biblical scholars studied the Mosaic Laws and great philosophers studied the holy scriptures, they were unable to unlock the meaning of the various types and shadows that were a part of Old Testament tradition. For example, they read about the animal sacrifices but they did not understand that these sacrifices were just a type of the sacrifice to be given by the Lamb of God. But the true meaning is now revealed to the saints.

The wisdom that saints discover helps them in their peculiar role in the kingdom of God. Preachers are allowed to understand and see certain of the mysteries that others cannot see. Prophets like John who was given the Revelation or Daniel who was given the secret of visions was allowed to share other aspects of the mysterious secrets that were ordained by God from the beginning.

Verse 7 indicates that as we unravel the mysteries, what we learn and experience is "to our glory."

What God reveals to his elect, even the great men of the world cannot understand. Verse 8 notes that the princes of the earth and its great men are ignorant of the mysteries in front of them. This is perhaps what Jesus referred to on the cross when he asked his father to "forgive them for they know not what they do." They did not understand the mystery.

The mysteries of God are so immense and profound that mortal mankind cannot even imagine the great things he has in store for those who have faith in him. The wisdom, understanding and ability that God reveals to his saints in their specific area,

is above understanding and beyond comprehension. “Eye hath not seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man” the mysterious things that God has in store for those who love him.

Mysteries

In view of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, we now understand why mothers seem to be empowered to do more than the ordinary woman. How she is able to do what she does is a mystery that is revealed to motherly saints, but continues to baffle others.

MYSTERY OF THE MULTI-TASKING MOM. Whenever a person does more than one task at a time, it is called multi-tasking. It is a mystery how mothers seem to master the art of multi-tasking, performing a variety of tasks at the same time. In one instance she is an alarm clock; but in another she is a gourmet chef. For some she becomes the crossing guard, the van driver and part time chauffeur. In just a few minutes she instantly transforms into a working mom dashing into the workplace and dashing back home at the end of the day, just in time for cheerleader practice, church rehearsals, spring training and last minute grocery shopping. In between the time, somewhere in the day she finds time to pray, pay bills, fix what’s broken, and think of ways to keep from breaking what’s not broken.

It is a complete mystery how mothers are able to do all of these things and do them without becoming insane. A recent study revealed that if the multi-tasking skills of the average mother were applied to the corporate workplace she would earn a salary of $123,000 a year with benefits. How she is able to do it at home, is a mystery.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DOT.COM MOM. Today’s mother lives in a very difficult time that is much more complex than that of her mother or grandmother. She is what we could call the dot.com Mom. She is the mom of Pop Tart breakfasts, Fast food lunch, and microwave dinners. She is the mom of the quick shower, wash and wear clothes, pampers and throw away paper plates. When she considers her grandmother, it’s a mystery how they survived? Who has the time to wash clothes by hand and hang them on a clothes line? How grandmothers did that is a mystery that can be figured out on the way to the washateria. Who has the time to use cloth diapers and safety pins? How grandmothers were able to do that is a mystery we can unravel as we drop a used pamper in the trash and get a new one from the box. Even as grandmothers look at their granddaughters and shake their heads at the difference in parenting over the generations, they still see the mysterious bond between mother and child that has not diminished even though they eat instant oatmeal, drink powdered milk and drink store bought water out of a bottle. Despite the complexities of our present age, today’s mom still manages the one ingredient that makes mothers unique. They still love. That’s the mystery that never seems to diminish or lose its power.

THE MYSTERY OF MOTHER-CRAFT: Somehow good mothers are able to connect with their children and teach them what can be called “Mother-craft.” It’s how to live and relate to others. This is a mysterious lesson that is learned mostly

from mothers. When mothers hug their children, love them and respond to them in love, the children learn to embrace and work well with others. Mothers who laugh and play with their children, teach them to have real fun in their family relationships. It is fun that does not depend upon artificial stimulants for its sustenance.

These qualities are mysteriously molded in the id and reflect themselves in the ego of every child.

It's mysterious how children are affected by what happens to them in their tender years. It's a mysterious relationship between mother and children that impacts children long after they have left home.

It's a mystery we cannot fully understand.

God Moves in Mysterious Ways

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that every mother knows God moves in mysterious ways.

Somehow godly mothers seem to know no matter what the situation, God will make a way.

It's a mystery, we haven't quite figured out how he does it but, long before we ask him, God is already working on the answer to our prayer.

It's a mystery but before mama started to worry about how to pay the light, water, and gas bills, God was already planning to show her how to manage!

It's a mystery, but God is still revealing the secrets of management to mothers who don't have Harvard MBAs. It's a mystery how these mothers have learned to turn a sugar bowl, mattress and handkerchief into their own Savings and Loan Associations, saving for rainy days. It didn't pay any interest, but God supplied the grace!

It's a mystery how God made old country remedies that made you sick to smell them, made you well when applied with the faith of God.

It's a mystery but mama learned that a little Sal hepatica around the neck would drive the fever away.

It's a mystery, but God showed grandmother that in the cold of winter, a table spoon of Castor oil every other day, kept the doctor away!

It's a mystery but we have not quite figured out how a little piece of salt fat meat and the Lord could heal a foot with a splinter.

It's a mystery, how God showed old mothers how to make stylish clothes out of needle and thread.

Even today, it's a mystery how mothers are able to wash a load of clothes, talk on a cell phone, change the channel on a television set while balancing a baby on their laps and refereeing the fights of two others at the same time.

It's a mystery how a mother who only makes $5.15 an hour can travel to the grocery store in a car whose tires are slick as glass, riding on fumes alone because a tank of Gas costs a whole days work; and still come home with enough food to feed a family.

It's a mystery how some mothers feed the children of a dead beat dad who

complains that sending $200 a month to take care of his children is more than he can bear.

It's a mystery, but every mother knows that God moves in mysterious ways!

It's a mystery, but God can take weak mother and make her strong!

It's a mystery, but God can take a doubting mother and give her confidence!

It's a mystery, but God can take a single mother and give her the strength of two.

It's a mystery, but God can take a failed mother and give her a chance to succeed!

We don't how he has done it, but there is one thing that we do know that the mother who knows the Lord is able to mystify the world as he does the incredible and achieves the impossible.

If you are amazed at the mystery of motherhood then, I'll show you another mystery!

It's a mystery that the world has never been able to understand. It's the mystery behind the mystery of motherhood.

It's the mystery of the power of an almighty God.

It's a mystery how God can clap his hands and make the thunder roll!

It's a mystery how God can bat his eyes and make the lightning flash!

It's a mystery how God can take a step through the valleys and bulge the mountains up!

It's a mystery how God can pluck off a little light from the sun and spangle the night with the twinkling of the stars!

It's a mystery how God rolled back the waters of the Red Sea and Israel crossed on dry ground.

It's a mystery how Daniel survived a night in the Lion's den without a scratch on his body!

It's a mystery how the Three Hebrew Boys were not burned in the raging fires of the fiery furnace!

But there's a real mystery that happened over 2000 years ago. It's the mystery on the mountain side!

It's the mystery of how a man who could raise the dead and heal the sick would carry a cross up Calvary's hill.

It's the mystery of how a man who had been crucified and lied on could tell his father to "forgive them for they know not what they do!"

It's a mystery how a man could die on a borrowed cross, be wrapped in borrowed clothes, be buried in a borrowed tomb, could arise Early Sunday morning with all power in his hands!

It's not a mystery anymore!

The mystery is solved! His name is Jesus!

He is the power and strength of every good mother!

No.9206-Bible Study

Searching for The Code

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me." John 5:39

Introduction

Have you heard the news reports about secret codes that have revealed here-to-fore unknown truths about God and the Christian faith? It's hard for any believer to escape the flood of books, movies and television broadcasts that seem to suggest that secrets clues about God's intention for the world have been discovered. Those who write the books and produce the movies earn millions of dollars with their project; but when the dust settles we are still no closer to finding the real truth.

In 1997 Micheal Drosnin shocked the world with his book entitled "The Bible Code." He lined up all of the text in the Hebrew Bible, removed the spaces and devised a computer program that could search out certain words that fell mathematically in order. He claims that the words produced were secret codes about the future.

For thousands of years scholars have poured over the predictions of Nostradamus, claiming that he predicted everything from World Wars to Hitler's rise to the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

The latest in the secret code genre of books and movies is Dan Brown's book, "The Davinci Code." It has sold over 40 million copies and there is a movie starring Tom Hanks that tells Brown's fictitious tale. Brown contends that the artist Leonardo DaVinci, a member of a secret group pledged to protect a vital church secret, placed hints in his drawings of the "The Last Supper" and the "Mona Lisa." The secret, he claims, is that Jesus was secretly married to Mary Magdalene and she was pregnant at the time of his crucifixion. The child grew and perpetuated a kingly line of successors to Jesus. Brown claims that the Catholic Church ordered the destruction of any books that revealed these secrets, and would not allow any of the thousands of books about Jesus at that time to be included in the Bible if they revealed that secret. To keep it secret, murders were committed, and a variety of atrocities were perpetrated on the world. Wow!

There seems to be a natural curiosity about God's plan for the world. Amazingly, those persons who claim to unlock the secrets of God's plan for the world or other secret codes are never believers; they are always skeptics and non-believers whose

efforts to discover secret codes usually result in raising doubts in the minds of believers. The experts themselves rarely become believers as a result of their discovery of secret codes.

What is the response of believers to this rush of books, movies and films that reveal the secret codes? Should we join the millions of believers who protest the writing of such books or the production of films such as the "DaVinci Code?" Should we become overly alarmed? How do we protect ourselves from being fooled by every new secular trend involving our faith?

Protesting is fruitless; it builds publicity and results in increased visibility for code writers. Becoming alarmed to the point of aggressively fighting the free speech rights of others is of no use either.

How do we protect ourselves against being fooled? For the answer let us consider two sheep dogs that were acquired to guard the sheep of a certain shepherd. The shepherd told the sheep dogs to guard the sheep with their lives because there were dangerous wolves in the hills that would destroy simple and powerless sheep. The sheep dogs went to work. One sheep dog prided himself in the fact that he could spot a wolf a mile away. He studied the ways and sounds of wolves. He felt qualified to stand guard over the sheep. The second sheep dog had heard about, but had never seen a wolf. He was new on the job and felt uneasy. While the first sheep dog laid back against the tree and watched for fanged teeth, pointed ears and cold deadly eyes, the second dog just watched the sheep. As days passed, the routine was the same; the first dog watched for wolves, the second never took his eyes off the sheep. One day the wolf decided to dress up in sheep skins and slip pass the sheep dogs. The first dog, looking for tell tale signs, missed the wolf. But the second dog immediately began to bark and growl and attacked the wolf and ran him away. Later the first dog asked: "How were you able to discover the wolf and you'd never seen one and I missed it?" The second dog answered: "You spent your time studying wolves; I spent my time studying sheep. I know how a sheep sounds, looks and moves from head to toe. I didn't know what a wolf looked like, but when I saw those big O' feet, I knew it wasn't a sheep!"

We protect ourselves from those who would deceive us by studying the word of God and searching the scriptures for the truths necessary for our Christian walk.

As Christians, we are glad that God has given us his word and revealed its truths to us privately and through revelation. Through studying the word we know that we will be able to survive any challenge to our faith, because our faith is based on nothing less than the word of God himself.

Exposition

Our text indicates that there is a rich treasury of inspiration, encouragement and hope for those who are willing to "search" the scriptures.

The Bible, is actually a collection of 66 sacred, inspired writings bound together in one book that we call the "Bible" after the Greek word "Biblia" which means "books!"

Our text suggests that we should "search" or look among these scriptures, for the essential truths that lead us to salvation and sustain us while we struggle to live the Christian life.

Searching the scriptures requires training and practice because we don't find what we are looking for unless we know how.

While there are no secret codes in the bible, there are revelations of truth that can be found if the scriptures are "searched" in a way that compares, contrasts and analyzes for spiritual insight.

There are no secret anagrams or meanings that are discovered when read backwards. There are no meanings alien to the divine character. The truths of scripture are revealed when we search the scriptures earnestly.

Searching the Bible

The books of Drosnin and Brown have many people searching the bible as many questions are raised. Yet there should be a reason for our search that is beyond mere curiosity raised by a movie or a book on the New York Times best seller list. There are several things we should keep in mind as we search the scriptures.

SEARCH FOR TRUTH NOT CODES: While there are many who energetically search the bible for secret codes and meanings, believers should search the bible for God's truths, trusting him to reveal its secrets for our lives as we study and pray.

The search for truth must be systematic, not left to pure chance.

There are many who open their bibles to a page and wherever it happens to open they read that passage and assume that it holds some secret message for them, like a daily horoscope. They feel their fingers were mysteriously guided to this passage and God spoke to them through that passage.

This is haphazard searching. It is like searching for an auto mechanic by opening the yellow pages to the first page you see, point blindly, and saying God led your finger to call the number you find, even if it is a plumber.

When the text verse says "search the scripture" it does not refer to random selection, but rather to a disciplined study of the scriptures.

1 Timothy 2:15 makes it clear, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

To study the Word is to read it for understanding, compare it with other scriptures, visualize it with the help of historical background, and clarify it through repetitious analysis.

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH SUPPLIES MEANING: Those who are captivated by a search for secret codes focus on the past but find little hope for understanding the meaning of the present. The purpose of the bible is to provide meaning and understanding for believers today. If that's the case, then why would God find it necessary to hide that meaning in secret codes? If there are secret codes, why would he allow non-believers like Drosnin or Dan Brown to discover them and profit from them while confusing the body Christ at the same time? If the DaVinci Codes are revealed, do they provide hope to the world or raise more skepticism and doubt? If

the purpose of the bible is to provide individual meaning and guidance to every individual, what will the search for these secret codes mean for each individual?

The bible speaks to the human condition in emphatic terms. They are true and clear. They are not secret. They provide meaning and substance for our lives.

OUR SEARCH PROVIDES GROWTH: We need to study the word of God intensely for two reasons: our own personal spiritual growth, and so that we might adequately lead others to Christ. A study of God's word and its application to the various situations of life strengthens each of us in our faith and commitment. When we study the word we gain hope for the future, strength in moments of weakness, and the will to persevere.

OUR SEARCH REVEALS GOD'S WILL: A personal study of the word and Nature of God gives individual satisfaction and strength. It helps us understand God's will for our lives. We search the bible for God's will not for a special secret code. A diligent search will reveal the truth that we can rely upon as the will of God for our lives.

A woman stood in front of the judge and tried to explain her strange habits. "Your honor" she began, "The Lord told me to do it. Before I left home I told the Lord to show me what to do. I opened my bible and I pointed to a verse that said, 'my God shall supply all your needs.' When I saw them pork chops laying there and nobody was looking I knew the Lord laid them out there for me." The judge listened as the woman continued. "About that ring. Just before I left home I opened my bible and pointed to a verse that said, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." When I saw that ring I wanted it. It was so shiny. I took it because the bible told me "I shall not want." The judge praised the woman for her belief in God. Then asked her to come to the bench where she kept her bible open to the Ten Commandments. The judge said point right here. The woman touched the bible and the judge said, "God's got another message for you, you pointed to "thou shalt not steal." You've got 2 years in jail!"

A diligent search of the bible can reveal God true will for our lives, no an unconfirmed hunch or a roll of the dice.

What we find is no secret

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we search the word we don't look for codes and secrets, but what we find is no secret; we serve an all powerful God.

The great commission of Matthew 28 has given every Christian the responsibility of becoming missionaries for Christ. This awesome task of leading men to Christ and leading the way in displaying Christian empathy requires considerable preparation, training, and study. Paul's message to young Timothy was to "study." This can also be applied to this vast army of laypersons, teacher's and leaders that compose the body of Christ today.

We must search the word for truth and hide that truth in our hearts.

When we search the word, the truth we find will give us the courage to witness, the faith to endure trials, and the inspiration for moments of desperation.

We should search the word because the Word of God:

—feeds me when I am hungry!
—comforts me when I am lonely!
—corrects me when I am wrong
—refreshes me when I am tired!
—satisfies me when I am thirsty!
—lifts me when I am low!
—challenges me when I am indifferent!
—sustains me when I am afraid!
—directs me when I am confused!
—motivates me when I am discouraged!
—soothes me when I am dying!

No wonder the scriptures declare, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Hide your word in my heart Oh God."

When we search the word of God what we discover is not a big secret.

We discover that God is a healing God.

We discover that God is a prayer answering God.

We discover that God is an awesome God.

What we discover is not a big secret wrapped in special codes that must be deciphered with computers.

When we search the word we learn what we have already found to be true; that God is in the blessing business.

It's no secret that God will:

—Bless me when I'm burdened;
—Cheer me when I'm sad;
—Strengthen me when I'm weak;
—Calm me when I'm troubled;
—Revive me when I'm weary.

I heard the song writer say, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you!"

The biggest truth of the bible is not a secret. It's not a hidden code.

The biggest, most promising truth of the bible is that "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son so whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This is the truth that came to the world over 2000 years ago!

This is the truth that was revealed by the son of God picking up an old rugged cross and carrying it to Golgotha's Hill!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

It is not secret!

There are no special codes!

If you call upon him today, he will answer!

God will take care of you!

No. 9207-Inspiration

It Speaks of Monumental Living

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 28, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "..and through it he being dead yet speaketh." Hebrews 11:4b

Introduction

What do you think of on Memorial Day? In 1868 the nation began observing Memorial Day as a way to pay tribute to those who died in the Civil War. It has since grown to be a day to salute the memories of those fallen in all wars. However, for millions of Americans, Memorial Day is just another three day holiday that will give them a chance to get away from the daily routine of the work place and relax. To these, Memorial Day is a brief moment to relax in an extended chair with a pit of bar-be-que and case of their favorite refreshments. It is just another day for fun and family.

Memorial Day means something different to millions of families who have been affected by a loss incurred in the pursuit of freedom and independence for this nation.

Memorial Day is a day to remember.

It is a time when we remember that the freedoms that we enjoy have come at an extremely high price. Men and women have given their lives for the opportunities we enjoy. How many? Sometimes we forget how many. American Revolution, 25,324; War of 1812, 2,260; Civil War, 863,153; Mexican War, 13, 283. World War I, 126, 200; World War II, 418,500; Korean War, 33,600; Vietnam War, 58,226 killed and 153,000 wounded; 2986, World Trade center terrorist attacks, and the Iraqi War, 2464 dead with nearly 48,000 wounded.

It is a time when we remember the words of Abraham Lincoln in His Gettysburg Address:

"It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task of remaining before

us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

It is a time when we wrestle within ourselves to make sense of war and the resulting casualties. It is a time when we reflect on the words of hope from the word of God which promises us that one day, when Christ returns that we will study war no more. That will be the day that the lion and the lamb will sit down together. It will be the day when we beat out swords into ploughshares. It will be the day when we focus our energies on resolving the problems incidental to life rather than building offensive and defensive war strategies.

Memorial Day is a time when we force ourselves to remember the pain and the sacrifice others have made; and rededicate ourselves to the principles for which they pledged themselves.

The late Archibald Maclease wrote a poem entitled, "Young Dead Soldiers do not speak" which captures the flavor of why we celebrate Memorial Day. One phrase says,

The young dead soldiers do not speak.
Nevertheless, they are heard in the still houses:
who has not heard them?
They have a silence that speaks for them at night
and when the clock counts.
They say: We were young. We have died.
Remember us.

One way to remember is to build memorials. In Oklahoma City there is a memorial to those who died in the infamous bombing. A memorial is being constructed for those who died on September 11. In Washington there are many memorials, the latest being World War II memorial. Memorials prompt someone to ask in the future, "What happened here? Who died there?"

More important than building a monument is that those who follow capitalize on the sacrifices made with monumental living. That's what Tom Hanks in the movie "Saving Private Ryan" said to Private Ryan after many men died to save his life. He was challenged to live worthy of their deaths.

As Christians, we cling to the memory of the sacrifice of our soldiers, but also the sacrifice of our Savior. As we remember what he did for us; the best monument we can erect for him is to give him "monumental living."

Exposition

This text focuses on how the blood of Abel speaks to others in coming generations.

This text refers to an incident recorded in Genesis 4:4-8. Abel presented a sacrifice before God that was accepted and found favor with God. His brother, Cain became jealous and killed him.

The death of Abel was unwarranted. Matthew Henry says he was righteous, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person. His death was not forgotten.

The death of able represented the death of the innocent. It represented the struggle of the righteous to do what is right before God and the enmity felt by those who fight against the cause of righteousness.

The fallen, like Abel, leave a legacy of faith for others. That's what Hebrews 11 focuses upon, the characteristic of faith. It is lifted up as it is evidenced one by one by great soldiers of the faith: Abraham, Moses, etc. The fact that Abel's life of faith is lifted up thousands of years after his death is a monument to his life and a reminder that God will not allow Abel's sacrifice to die with him but his sacrificial spirit would be shared by others who would follow.

The last phrase of verse Hebrews 11:4 says, "and through it he being dead yet speaketh." And through what? And through the way he lived: righteously, honorable and acceptably before God, he still speaks today. Abel's death was a monument, but how he lived should inspire monumental living in others as his spirit speaks to all who will hear."

Still they Speak

In the movie "Saving Private Ryan" Ryan worried whether he had lived a life that was worthy of so many sacrifices. That is our challenge today. Our challenge is to live the kind of lives that give a testament to the price paid.

We hear the soldiers of Mclease's poem, "We were young. We have died. Remember us."

We also hear our savior saying similar words as he orchestrated the Lord's Supper, "this do in remembrance of me." He said.

How can we remember the sacrifices of those who have gone before us and paved the way? They are not here but "Still they speak."

Not just soldiers on the battlefield, but we also remember those in our families who have given themselves sacrificially for us. We remember the grandmothers and grandfathers who gave their health and strength to help us. We remember them with reverence.

They speak to us today. We hear their voices, challenging us to live righteously, honorable and acceptably before God.

Monumental Living

The best monument to the lives of the fallen is not a tablet or marker of stone, but through exercising the freedoms won for us with "monumental living."

Monumental living is living freely and exercising freedom.

Monumental living is holy living, righteous living, and godly living.

The best testament to the sacrifice of those who paid the ultimate price is to exercise your freedom.

We have freedom of speech; we should speak up for those things which are right; even if you are by yourself.

We have freedom of religion, we should stand boldly for the God we serve and

worship him regularly.

We have the right to vote, we should not let those who sacrificed their lives be draped in a dark shroud of useless futility; we should vote, in every election large or small. Men and women have died that we might have that chance.

We have a God given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that is protected in our constitution; we should seize opportunities and seek to rise above the squalor of desperate living and rise to monumental living!

Abundant Living

Finally, we must remember the sacrifice of the savior as we rise up to live a monumental life that glorifies his names.

It has been 2000 years since Christ died; still he speaks to our souls every day!

He speaks of the godly heritage that we should not forget.

He speaks of the power of faith in an almighty God.

He speaks of the power of hope that no matter how dark the hour that "Weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

We hear him challenge us to rise up to monumental living, saying, "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly!"

When something is monumental it is larger than ordinary!

Our tribute to the savior is to live spiritually monumental lives that are: Holy, righteous, godly and Christ-like!

Monumental!

Monumental living is learning how to live a happy, doubt free, confident life!

Monumental living is living a guilt free life!

This is the kind of life that remembers that we are spiritually free because of the sacrifice of Christ. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. And the chastisement of our peace is upon him. With his stripes we are healed.

To live a monumental life may mean dying a thousand deaths. It may mean self sacrifice. It may mean giving of your time, talents and resources above and beyond!

It will most certainly mean that we will live worthy of the sacrifice of our savior!

We remember how he came to this world and lived for 33 years.

We remember how he died on an old rugged cross!

We remember how three days later he arose from the dead!

We remember him with..

Monumental living!

No. 9209-Graduation

Diamonds in the Rough

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 4, 2006

SCRIPTURE: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

Introduction

How did you feel the day after you graduated from high school? If you are like most people there was a feeling of accomplishment and achievement. There is no feeling like a high school graduation. After 17 or 18 years a goal has been accomplished, and a dream has been realized. After nearly two decades of trial and error, frustration, failures and setbacks, a shiny moment filled with joy and excitement passes in a blink. It flashed, sparkled and passed as quickly as it came.

Now that graduates have had time to look at their diplomas and hold them close, the question that comes to mind is "What's next?" For nearly two decades graduates have focused on one objective, putting on a cap and gown, walking across the stage and receiving a diploma. Now that the long sought after moment has passed, graduates wrestle with the prospect of the future.

What makes the next step scary is that we don't know what lies ahead. We knew our way around our high schools. We knew the teachers, the principal, and the routine. We knew the location of the library, the Captain of the Football team and school Alma Mater. After all, we were seniors. We were the envy of the school. We were the veterans, the experienced and most mature on campus. But, we are not sure about tomorrow. We just don't know.

We don't know what we shall be; we hope that we'll find love, happiness and success. That's what two childhood sweethearts thought when they fell in love in high school and graduated from high school together. They sat next to each other in the graduation and called each other sweet names. After graduation they went out to eat and called each other more sweet names. After graduation they married, raised a family and were happy. After 60 years of marriage a friend of the family visited them and noticed that they still appeared to be deeply in love. The man constantly referred to his wife as "My Love"," My sweet"," Sugar Dumpling" and "My darling." That impressed the guest who was amazed that after 60 years there was so much love. While the wife was in the next room the guest said, "It is so great to see you share so much love after 60 years. You still call your wife so many loving terms." The old

man whispered to his guest, “I have to confess; I call her all of those sweet names because I forgot her real name about 10 years ago.”

While we don’t know what we shall be, we do know what we can become in the hands of God. In God’s hands rough little pieces of coal, buried beneath mountains of dirt and grime can become diamonds. In God’s hands, we can achieve and become more than anyone ever expected.

Today, we are diamonds in the rough, but when God gets through with us, we shall share his beauty and see him as he is.

As Christians, we share the happiness of every graduate. Yet, the happiness of this point is the same happiness that the miner finds when he stumbles upon an ugly stone in the bottom of the earth. On the outside it looks like an ugly cousin to a chunk of coal, but on the inside it is a beautiful diamond waiting to be cleaned, cut and polished in the master’s hand. In God’s hands, “Eye have not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Exposition

This text explores the future state of every person that is in the family of God. John, writing his first epistle about 57 years after the resurrection of Christ, explains to believers the nature of the Christian relationship to God. He explains first that we who are believers are the sons of God. John, speaking to believers in this text, affirmed that while believers were certain of their relationship as “sons of God,” not everything is known about what we shall be in our future state.

Beyond a few glimpses given to us by John about the coming city of God and passing snapshots of the form of bodies in the life to come little is known about what God has in store for us. However, John points out that while we don’t know every detail we do know that when Jesus makes his appearance we shall understand many things that we don’t understand now.

Today, it is difficult for any of us to visualize all that God has in store for us. We cannot picture it. We cannot imagine it because there is nothing in this life comparable.

Today, we can only see the soot and the coal of life. Yet the word of God keeps reminding us, that in God’s hand, what life has in store for us is beyond comprehension.

Diamonds in the Rough

A Christian graduate is a diamond in the rough. The phrase is a metaphor for the original unpolished state of diamond gemstones, especially those that have the potential to become high quality jewels.

Potential is a word that describes how we are not yet what we can be.

But if we have graduated from high school, isn’t that a sign of success? Haven’t we achieved a great accomplishment?

It takes a lot of work to unearth a diamond. Even in a diamond mine there is only one part diamond per 14 million parts of worthless rock. Approximately 46,000 pounds of earth must be mined and sifted to produce one half carat gem.

In a similar sense it took a long time and a lot of work to unearth what walked across the stage a few days ago. A Christian graduate is a diamond in the rough. It took 17 years of mother's knee, kindergarten, elementary school, Jr. High and High school to bring it to the surface.

Very few see the true value of a Christian graduate; but every child of God can see that value because he can see God chipping away at our rough spots. In the years to come it will seem like he is wasting his time. He will work on us with chisel in hand because he sees our brilliance.

God started searching for us before we were born. What he started in us, he will accomplish. Not just on the inside, but on the outside as well. A few years from now, if you stay in God's hand you'll look back, and you may not even recognize yourself! You will come out with His characteristics. You will not be the same because He has formed and shaped you after His image.

John said he will keep working on us until we are like him.

So the refinement process begins. Graduates have yet to be cut, refined and polished to their fullest potential.

Graduation is not an end; it is the beginning of a polishing process.

Graduation is the point when the next step begins. It's when a girl learns to be a woman; a boy learns to be a man.

For some, this grueling process will take seven or more years. It will be a tough journey in which little rough diamonds are cut and refined.

No Fakes

Because the refining process will require tremendous time, personal discipline and dedication, there will be many who will attempt to take short cuts that will produce something short of the diamond that they should be. Many will be satisfied if they can be something that looks like a diamond, even if it is not a real diamond.

Even today, there are many who are quite comfortable with an imitation of success. Theres is an imitation of the life God would have for them.

There is a difference between a real diamond and a fake diamond.

Fake diamonds look like real diamonds but they are not the same. There are many young people who spend their lives content to have fakes rather than the real thing. They fake grades in school rather study to have the real ones. They wear fake designer clothes, fake jewelry and move away and live lives with fake diplomas, fake careers and fake identities.

Fake diamonds look real but there is a difference.

Fake diamonds are valued at 1/10th of the value of a real diamond, although they often look the same.

Fake diamonds, like cubic Zirconia are pretty like diamonds but are not as durable. They may nick or scratch. It doesn't take much to scratch a fake diamond. Life will

offer many tough situations in the years to come, those who diamonds will come through without a scratch on their optimism, enthusiasm or quest for success. They are durable. They are sustained by the glory of God.

Fake diamonds stand to be tested. Real diamonds can be tested for color, clarity, cut and confidence. Fakes can't pass the test. There are many try to pass themselves off as diamonds until they are tested. A Jeweler tests a diamond by looking at its color, clarity and the way it is cut. There are many who may shine like a diamond but they can't pass any societal test.

Fake diamonds are transparent. You can see through them. There is always something inside of a real diamond, like a small rock inside of the diamond. There are many who are obvious fakes. They brag about what they have and who they are but somehow they are transparent. We are able to see clean through them. Some even brag about being happy but are really sad; boast about inner peace but are in turmoil. The Christian graduate is like a diamond that has a rock inside. Who is this rock? He is the rock of ages.

Fake diamonds are always perfect. Real diamonds have flaws. Be wary of the person who claims he or she is perfect. No one is perfect. Neither is a diamond. Real diamonds are flawed and it is the flaws that help it to reflect the light so well. Without the flaws it would not be so beautiful or brilliant. So it is in life, our mistakes, errors and life flaws define who we are. The tragedies, misfortunes and even our idiosyncrasies in life define us. It is our flaws and weaknesses that humble us before God. They perfect man or perfect woman sees no need for God. The flawed man or woman stands on his feet because he knows how to kneel before God.

In God's Hands

Finally, every Christian Graduate should remember that, in God's hands he can be all that God wants him to be.

What God promises is more than the U.S. Army slogan, "Be all you can be." All we can be is limited.

We can be rubies, emeralds, but all of them are not as beautiful as diamonds.

We can stones of jasper and pearl, but all of them are not as beautiful as diamonds.

We can even be Moissanite, which shines more than a diamond but doesn't last as long. It is the next best thing but a diamond is not second best to anything.

All we can be will always be something less that what we can be. However, our God is not to be all we can be, but to be all God wants us to be!

What does God want?

God made us in his image and we are valuable to him!

Today, young graduates are diamonds in the rough, but if they place themselves in the master's hand, he will shape them and cut them and forge them into what he wants them to be.

Consider the drunk who searched the garbage for a taste of wine and found what he believed was an old fiddle. "It's nothing but an old fiddle" he thought and tossed it aside. A second scavenger came and found the old fiddle, he tried to play it but he

got was screeches and scratches and he threw it away because it had no value. A third scavenger sold the fiddle to an antique store whereupon a great violinist happened upon it. The violinist tuned its strings and gently rubbed the bow them. Out came the finest sound, much to the amazement of all. As the violinist bought the fiddle and walked out of the door, the owner remarked "it was just an old fiddle, until it was touched by the master's hand."

Brothers and sisters, it is not important what you have in your hands. However it is important that what you have has been touched by the master's hand.

Today, you may be a diamond in the rough, but powerful things happen when you have been touched by the master's hand.

When you've been touched by the master's hand, nothing can stand in your way! Feel free to dream the impossible dream! Fight the unbeatable foe!

In the master's hand, defeat turns into victory!

In the master's hand, failure turns into success!

In the master's hand, loss turns into gain!

In the master's hand, a life not given much chance is shaped!

These are the hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross!

These are the hands that born the prints of the wounds of the world!

These are the hands of the man who died out on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

In these hands lumps of coal become….diamonds!

9210-Family

The Family That Prays Together

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2006

SCRIPTURE:" And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." Acts 12:12

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that some families seem to be strong, united and happy, while others are not? What seems to keep them together, bond them closer, and make them stronger as the years go by? These families seem to stand invincible to outside attacks, secretly pray hard and lean heavily upon the power of God to sustain them against enemies.

The secret ingredient that has bound such families for centuries is one simple truth: The family that prays together, stays together.

The praying family is not one that grudgingly follows a ritual that has been traditional for many years. The praying family is one that prays for God's will and then passionately acts to carry out God's will.

Without an active faith, the words of a prayer are useless. Families have learned that ritual does not save us. Faith in God does.

A man and his family and a family of bears happened to be in the same area of the woods. The father told his children, "We must stick together and pray." As he spoke, the papa bear told his family, "We must stick together to survive." It had been a while since the man and his family had been to church. In fact, they had actually skipped church to spend Sunday in the woods, after all this was the new generation and the old family traditions were not really important; especially the part about going to church. As they walked through the woods they came face to face with the family of bears, who instantly began to chase them. Running as fast as they could they found themselves up against a stone wall. There was no way out. The bears were in hot pursuit. As the bears closed in the family members said, "We must stick together and pray." They joined hands and cried out in desperation, "Lord we ain't suppose to skip church, we sometimes cuss, we don't pay tithes like we should and we sometimes sleep in church, but please forgive us and save us. Please make that family of bears

Christians." Instantly the man's prayer was answered. The bears became Christians. They all fell to their knees and clasped their paws together and said in unison, "God, bless the food we are about to receive.!" –The family must pray together but it must live and pray in a way that is pleasing to God.

As Christians, we know the importance of prayer to individual believers. Morever, we know that things start to happen when a family of believers begins to pray together as they live by the will of God. Such a family makes the old proverb true,"The family that prays together stays together."

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter's deliverance from prison by an angel of the Lord after the prayer of the Christian family.

The Christian family endured considerable persecution in its early years. Those who professed Christ stood to lose life and property. Their only hope to survive was to stay together, help each other and to pray for each other.

The Christian family had already experienced the stoning death of Stephen. It had also lost James. At this writing, Peter was imprisoned. His death had been ordered by King Herod.

To prevent his escape he was chained between two soldiers who had orders to protect him with their lives.

The Christian family meeting in houses prayed for Peter's release. They prayed in faith that God had the power to supercede the order of Herod one way or another. The prayed without ceasing.

God heard their and sent an angel to loose Peter's shackles and lead him out of prison, while the Church family still prayed for him.

Peter's deliverance was a direct result of the prayer of the Christian family to God. They interceded for him and lifted him up to God. As a result of the unity of their prayers God responded and their family circle was not broken by this act of persecution.

The Power of Family Prayer

The people who prayed for Peter were his brothers and sisters in Christ. They were a prototype of the nuclear family. Their prayer model for Peter gave families in every generation a guide and reassurance that families that pray together can stay together.

What truths do we learn from the prayers of the Christian family? We learn that:

FAMILY PRAYER IS NOT ABOUT ME IT'S ABOUT US. Those who prayed for Peter were not praying for themselves individually; they prayed for Peter. The distinction shows us the difference between an individual prayer and a family prayer. When the family prays, it prays for the members of the family. Think back over the history of the family. Think of the elders who endured the hardships of slavery, reconstruction, the depression and civil rights era discrimination. Our ancestors who

prayed, prayed for the family. If we listen in our spirit we can hear them praying for their children and grandchildren; great grands and the unborn. Their prayer was that God would protect the family from enemies outside and from evil influences that may filtrate inside the family.

The prayer of the old slaves and sharecroppers was for "us." It is the same way that Jesus taught the Christian family to pray. He said "Our" father; "forgive us…as we forgive," "Lead us not…but deliver us" from evil. The emphasis of the praying family follows this model, we pray for each other. That's why the song writer said, "I pray for you, you pray for me, we all are part of God's family."

FAMILY PRAYER REAPS BENEFITS: When the Christian family prayed for Peter; it reaped an immediate benefit. Every prayer that is prayed gets an answer. It is not always what we like, but it is according to God's plan. That plan includes our best interest. Look at the family today. It has come a mighty long way. Was it because of the strength of the present generation? Probably not. This generation has benefited from the prayer and unity of the preceding generations. The relative peace and happiness that this family enjoys is not an accident. It is a benefit of the unified prayers of our ancestos who prayed under brush arbors, often with tubs over their heads to muffle the sound of their voices. We have doctors, teachers, ministers, and host of other working class and professional members of our family because somebody, way back then said, "Lord bless my grandchildren, keep them safe. Hold them in the hollow of your hand!" As a result of those prayers we have sons who preach and daughters who grow up in the fear of the Lord. As a result of those praying patriarchs before us, this family has become a pleasant resting place for weary souls who know that when the whole world has abandoned them, there is an oasis of support in the dry thirsty desert of America. There is cooling water in from heaven from clouds seeded by the prayers of an axious family that never ceases to pray for our success and safety.

The family that prays together reaps benefits today and in the generations to come.

The family that prays together enjoys the happiness that has been passed down from one generation to another. It is a happiness that is able to sing with joy in the midst of trouble because they know that "trouble don't last always!"

Can't you hear grandma's prayer? "Lord bless my grandchildren!"

Can't your hear grandpa's prayer? "Lord let my grandsons reap the benefits of your saving grace!"

The family that prays together reaps its benefits.

THE FAMILY NEVER STOPS PRAYING: While Peter was imprisoned, the Christian family never stopped praying for him. Even when it looked hopeless, they continued to pray together. They were not satisfied that they had prayed once for Peter; they continued to pray repeatedly. So it is with our family today. We must always pray for our family members, even when it appears that the heavenly decision is already made; we must pray.

We must pray for the family member that has become a victim of alcohol or drugs.

We must pray for the weak family member who has embraced a criminal life style.

We must pray for incarcerated family members.

We must pray for those who are spiritually lost.

We must pray for family members experiencing marital problems.

We must pray for the young and the restless who are standing on the edge of night, going through their secret storms.

We must never cease to pray because the biblical record has shown us that the prayers of the righteous have been known to bend the will of God.

For these reasons, the family must contine to pray, day and night for the wayward, the endangered and the troubled. We must pray until something happens.

GOD OPENS DOORS EVEN AS THE FAMILY PRAYS: As the Christian family prayed for Peter, it was unaware that God was already answering its prayers. When Peter appeared at their home they were praying for him. It must have been joy in that house when they realized that while they were asking, God was answering; while they were hoping, God was delivering! That's what Isaiah 65:24 means when it says, "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." It's the same thing Daniel found out in Daniel 9:20-21. While he was praying God has sent the angel Gabriel to answer his prayer.

Every family needs doors opened; that's why it prays!

The family prays for jail doors to be opened!

The family prays for business opportunity doors to be opened!

The family prays for career opportunity doors to be opened!

The family prays for the doors of divine insight to be opened!

Every saint can testify that there has been an instance in their own lives when we found out that while we were praying God had already begun to open doors for us, just in the nick of time.

No wonder the song writer declared, "He's an on time God, yes he is. He may not come when you want him, but he'll be there right on time. He's an on time God, yes he is."

Praying Together Means Staying Together

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that the big secret of the Christian family is that prays together and stays together.

We have heard this old saying in our family for generation. We can hear its words ringing in our ears, "The family that prays together, stays together."

The word "together" goes beyond just praying at the same time, but it means that the family is praying for the same thing.

Together, means we are on one accord.

In crises, we are together!

In goodtimes and badtimes we are together!

If one family members is down we don't beat him down, we pull toether to give him a hand up.

If one family member is troubled, we don't frown on them in their time of trouble; we pull together and remind them that, "Weeping endures but a night but joy comes

in the morning!"

The family that prays together trusts God together for the same common purpose and finds strength in each other.

The family that prays together asks God for the same common good and clings together.

The family that prays together loves each family member with a love that overlooks weakness, faults and shortcomings and sees only the person being loved.

The family that prays together trusts in the power of God.

The family that prays together places its unfaltering hope in the Lord. That's why the song writer declares, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

Some think this family has survived slavery, hardship and distress because of the large number of professionals and those who have at least a high school education. But if you talk to the members of the family who know the Lord, they will tell you that it was nothing but the Grace of God.

Although education helped, it wasn't education that opened doors that were closed in our faces.

Although it helped to have a dollar in our pockets, it wasn't money that made a way out of no way.

There is much to be said about hard working families, but even hard work is not totally responsible for the survival of our families; it was nothing but the grace of almighty God.

It was the power of prayer!

Prayer can make the impossible possible!

Prayer can make the improbable probable!

Prayer can give hope to the hopeless!

Prayer can raise up a bowed down head!

Prayer can change a wayward and bring a prodigal son home!

Prayer can turn bitter defeat into the sweet victory!

The family that prays together can stand when everyone else is falling? It's standing on nothing but the blood of Jesus!

The family that prays together can "have" when everyone is losing? It achieves because of nothing but the blood of Jesus!

The family that prays together gets up when everyone around it is falling down? It's able to get up because of nothing but the blood of Jesus!

The family that prays together has hope in times of trouble because it knows God is able. That's why the song write wrote, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others he do for you."

Our families are able to withstand the storms of life because we know that we serve a God that is able to speak to the winds and say "peace be still."

The family that prays together is preserved, sustained and saved by the wonder working blood of Jesus.

It's the power of the blood that makes us sing with new meaning, "I know it was

the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

One day when we was lost, He died up on a cross! we know it was the blood that saved us!

The family that prays together knows the name of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning with all power in his hands!

No. 9211-Anniv.-Homecoming

Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 16, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "And if any man love not the lord let him be anathema, Maranatha." 1 Corinthians 16:22

Introduction

Have you ever watched the lines at a theme park for a popular ride? Depending on the popularity of the ride, the lines can be tremendously long. Yet, despite the lines, the long wait, the unbearable heat, fatigue, those who want to experience the thrill of a short ride, will bear it all.

Six Flags theme parks are located all over the nation. In the summer months temperatures can range as high as 105-110 degrees. Despite these heats, lines form early in the morning and continue all day for super rides on roller coasters and swinging boats and other thrillers. It is not unusual to see spectators nearly faint, but refuse to leave their place in line. Waiting, anticipating and looking forward to the moment when they will get to experience the big thrill.

When they finally get their ride, participants scream and holler as they twist and turn for a few short minutes, then it's over. They declare, the thrill was worth the wait, the heat, and the frustration.

If that thrill is worth the wait, imagine the thrill that believers can expect when Christ comes home.

We are waiting for his return. In a way we are like those in line at Six Flags. We are enduring the frustrations of this life, complete with its ups and downs, sickness, losses and pain. We are struggling in the heat of this wilderness experience, waiting for his return. However, unlike those at Six Flags, we don't expect a short ride that will be over quickly. We expect first to be caught up with him in the air, in the twinkling of an eye. After the judgment is complete we expect to spend eternity with him in a paradise called heaven.

We are waiting for his return. Sometimes we get anxious and "can't wait."

We want him to come home, because when he comes home, it all begins. So we cry out "Come, Lord Jesus" –Come home!

As Christians, we look forward to the day of Christ's eventual return. It will be a great homecoming. We watch and pray because we do not know the day or the hour. What we do know is that when we all get to heaven, it will be a day of rejoicing that will be well worth the wait!"

Exposition

This text focuses on a benediction of hope given by the Apostle Paul as he encouraged believers to stay focused on the final homecoming of the Lord.

Throughout his letter to the Corinthians Paul addressed a variety of issues that frustrated believers.

There were some that were concerned with whom they should follow, whether Cephas, Apollos or Paul.

There were others who were frustrated in the competition that arose among them concerning the possession of gifts. Some felt more blessed because they had one gift that the other did not have.

The role of women in resolving disputes was addressed as Paul concluded that God is not a respecter of persons, but admonished the women to express opinion on church.

Paul saw the issues, disputes and bad feelings that developed among the Corinthians as frustrations that distracted them from what he believed should be the main focus of the church, the second coming of Christ.

He constantly reminded them that the important thing for every Christian to do is to love God and to love each other. The entire 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians emphasizes the importance he placed on love among believers.

So, in closing his letter Paul used two Aramaic words to summarize the challenge of the Corinthians Anathema Maranatha.

Anathema is a word which refers to those who do not love the Lord, his church or each other. These will be judged by God and will receive his curse.

On the other hand, Maranatha is a word which means "Come, Lord Jesus." The Greek version of this word is used Revelation 22:20 "Come, Lord Jesus." It epitomizes the hope of every believer that Jesus is coming back, and he will deal with the anathemas of this world.

The fact that Christ will come back to reunite the Saints with him for eternity is the glad hope of the church. It is the reason for the church's faith and sacrifice. Paul's expression of "Maranatha" is thus an expression of excitement that is so bold that overshadows the frustrations represented by the anathemas. It is an expression of a wonderful hope of an exciting, refreshing and joyous experience in a new body, in a new place, with all of the Christian family united as one body and praise to God.

Paul summed it up in one word.."Maranatha!" Come Home Lord Jesus, we can't wait.

When He Comes

When Christ comes it will be a great homecoming celebration. It is what we are all waiting for. There are at least three things that we expect to happen when Christ comes. They are the reason that we share Paul's plea for "Maranatha!"-Come, Lord Jesus!

HE WILL JUDGE: When Christ comes he will sit in judgment over the kings of the earth. Matthew 25:31-32 says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:" This underscores why Paul would use the word "anathema." He knew that Christ would take care of every person who persecutes, frustrates or throws stumbling blocks in the way of believers who are carrying out the will of God. Often, we spend considerable time worrying about the "anathemas" of life to the point that we get stressed out and even sick with anger and tension. When Christ comes home He will take care of all anathemas; those who have cursed you, fought you and hurt you while you tried to live according to God's will.

HE WILL REWARD: Not only will Christ come to execute judgment on the anathemas of the world, he will come to bring a reward for the righteous. It is the promised reward that motivates us to continue in service for the master. Paul told us that he expected to receive a crown of righteousness, but not for him only but to all that believe. In addition, the book of Revelation, paints a clear picture of the rewards we can expect when Christ comes. Revelation 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 21:7 says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I shall be his God and he shall be my son. That's why believers are anxious about the return of Christ. We are waiting on our reward. It's the reward that motivates us to endure the frustrations of this life. We endure the anathema because of what will come with the Maranatha.

HE WILL REUNITE: When Christ returns he will reunite all believers together, even those who have died in past generations. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 makes it clear that when Christ returns, those who have died in past generations will be caught up, then those who are alive will also be caught up to join him in the air. From that day forth we, our family of believers, will never again be separated from God. We will be reunited. The thought of the day when we will all be together again makes us shout, Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus! The thought of the day when we will enjoy the presence of believing loved ones all at the same time in the joy of the Lord prompts all of us to say "Maranatha!" Come, Lord Jesus.

God has a place for believers

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when Christ comes for that last homecoming, he will take us to a place called heaven.

Today, the church is celebrating homecoming, with preaching and singing but this is just a preparation for the last homecoming!

For over 2000 years the church has been passing out invitations to the last homecoming and shouting Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus told his disciples in John 14:2-3 "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto

myself, that where I am ye may be also."

The Angels declared in Acts 1:11 "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

We heard their voices and we join the chorus of saints around the world who are shouting, Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus! Because when you come:

-Doubts will be dissolved; Longings will be satisfied
-Tears will be dried; Hearse wheels won't roll
-Problems will be solved; Thirsts will be quenched
-Burdens will be lifted; Debts will be canceled
-Mountains will be made low; Valleys shall be exalted

I don't know about you but I'm waiting in line. I'm not worried about the anathemas, but I'm looking forward to the Maranathas!

I don't know about you but I can't wait to get to the place called heaven.

In the place called heaven:

-There are no wars because there is only peace; Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus we can't wait!

-There is no hatred, because there is only love; Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus we can't wait!

-There is no sadness, because there is only gladness; Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus we can't wait!

-There is no weakness, because there is only strength; Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus we can't wait!

-There is no death, because there is only life; Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus we can't wait!

I know there is such a place because I heard Jesus say, "In my father's house there are many mansions!"

The place called heaven is a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus, we can't wait to get to the place called heaven.

No wonder the song writer wrote: When we all get to heaven. What a day of rejoicing it will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory!

The World Shouted, Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus and he was born in Bethlehem!

He carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I'm so glad that the story doesn't stop there. The world is still shouting! Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!

I don't know about but I want to be ready when he comes home!

Come and go with me, to my father's house!

There's peace and happiness there!

There no more crying there!

In my father's house there is joy!

Joy! Joy!

No. 9212-Anniv.–Church

The Heavenly Vision

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2006

Scripture:" Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Act 26:19-20

Introduction

What vision has God given you for the church? Every Godly leader at some point in his or her life has seen a vision of what should be. That vision is clear, succinct and attainable at the time that it is received. No leader who has led the people forward has done so without a vision from heaven. It is the blueprint, life map and navigation plan by which church leaders operate. Without a vision the church stands still. Without a vision the church does not progress. Without a vision the people perish.

There is a difference between a vision and a mere childhood fantasy. A vision, in the spiritual context, has the characteristic of possibility based on the strength of our belief and vigor of our pursuit. Fantasies are pictures in our minds that we admire but will always be beyond our reach because we don't really believe they can be and are not willing to devote our energies toward their realization.

There are some people who really have a problem with visions, especially those they cannot see. Many pastors are challenged by those who say those immortal words, "I just can't see that Bro. Pastor. I just can't see it." That brings to mind the weary worker who called into his job to say he would be absent from work. Curious he was asked the reason for his absence. The worker said, "I have a vision problem." His supervisor expressed sympathy for his situation and asked the nature of his vision problem. "Do you have glaucoma?" The worker answered "No." Is it astigmatism, are you near sighted or far sighted." The worker said, "I just can't see." The supervisor was getting worried so he asked, "Just what exactly is wrong?" The worker said, "I can't see myself coming to work today. I just can't see it."- That explains why some people can't see divinely anointed visions; they don't want to see them.

In his book *The Wilson Era*, Josephus Daniels, secretary of the navy under Woodrow Wilson, relates how he once asked Andrew Carnegie what was the secret of his remarkable success. Carnegie replied, "I owe it all to my flashes."

"You mean," said Daniels, "that you have heavenly visions, and like the man in the Scriptures you were not disobedient to your visions?"

"Call it that if you like," answered Carnegie, "or call it flashes; but it was the following of those silent admonitions and directions which brought me the success you say I have achieved."

Whatever may be said about the flashes in the business world, there is no doubt about flashes of divine impulse in the moral and spiritual world. When they come, happy is the man who, like Paul, is not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Every church leader who knows the Lord has shared the experience of receiving a heavenly vision. Unlike, Mr. Carnegie, we don't call them flashes. We call them "heavenly visions." These are moments when God reveals his will for his people. Those are moments that he reveals his plan, sometimes in minute detail.

Unlike flashes, heavenly visions are glimpses of what should be with the promise of God that if pursued in faith, they will be.

As Christians, we know that God provides visions to our leaders for the direction of the church. We constantly pledge ourselves to follow his direction and to help make the visions become realities.

Exposition

This text considers Paul as he pleads his case before Festus and Agrippa.

Paul was a man whose Christian life was vision driven. He was propelled by the power of a "theophany." An epiphany by definition is a sudden intuitive leap of understanding. Paul did not have an epiphany; what he had was more. A theophany is a compelling, commanding, demanding vision or revelation that comes directly from God.

In this text Paul uses the phrase *ouranai optasia* (Unto the heavenly vision). It is the only place where he describes his experience in this way. It was truly a heavenly vision.

On the Damascus Road Paul had a theophany. Standing before Festus and Agrippa he explained his calling, what he saw, and his motivation.

It is here that he tried to explain the nature of his "heavenly vision" and his obedience to what he saw and experienced.

Paul experienced a heavenly vision that was a commanding power. It was also a demanding power that superseded earthly goals and aspiration. Paul could not confer with men for their direction; neither could he yield to the left or to the right for convenience, compromise or practicality. If he had done so he would have been as Jonah and ran away. Instead he accepted the commission and applied himself accordingly.

At verse 20 Paul said, when he saw the heavenly vision he began "immediately" to follow its plan. He began preaching the gospel then just as men do now when they receive the gospel. They begin to witness for Christ immediately, even while they are studying in seminaries, praying and receiving more revelations, they do not wait they begin immediately.

The vision prompted him to start at home, or the place of his conversion, then abroad. He preached throughout all the coasts of Judea, in the country towns and villages, as Christ had done; he made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews, as Christ had appointed, and did not leave them till they rejected it themselves. He preached Christianity 101. He did not go about to fill people's heads with airy notions, did not amuse them with nice speculations, nor tickle their ears.

Paul carried out what he saw in the vision. He was to preach to Jews and Gentiles around the world. His vision was to challenge them to repent of their sins, turn to God and evangelize others. He remained true to that vision. He traveled around the known world of his day three times, establishing churches wherever he went, remaining true to the heavenly vision.

Some are living in fantasy.

There are many in the church who are nostalgic. Nostalgia is reliving the good old days. Nostalgia has its place but it is a fantasy to believe that we can return to the "good old days."

It is a fantasy to believe that we return to the days when one dollar could buy five gallons of gas, an RC cola and a stage plank.

It is a fantasy to believe that we can return to the days when everyone sat at the table, there were no microwave dinners and James Brown was the godfather of soul.

Nostalgia has its place, but God's vision for the church is always in the present and the future. It's what must be done now to accomplish what he wants done tomorrow.

While it is good for us to remember, the church cannot afford the luxury of lingering in the past, wishing and hoping that things would return to what Barbara Streisand calls, "The way we were."

This means that the church must seek ways to implement the heavenly vision in light of the way things are, not the way we wish them to be.

Every flashy idea is not a vision

Believers should remember that every flashy idea is not a heavenly vision. Dale Carnegie called his visions "flashes." Everyone that has a "flash" is not necessarily receiving a vision from heaven. Jesus warned believers to be on guard because there would be many false prophets who claim to speak words inspired by God. In Deuteronomy 13:1-18 the death penalty is prescribed for persons who claimed to see visions from heaven that later proved not to be true. Dreamers or visionaries whose words have the effect of leading people away from God's plan were given the death penalty. The responsibility to try the spirit by the spirit is upon believers. The false visionary will be punished, but those who walk after false visions will, at the very least, retard their blessings because of their meandering ways.

What is the vision?

God has a vision for the collective church. He also has a vision for each individual unit of the body of Christ.

God has shown one consistent vision to all of the leaders of the Body of Christ. The day will come when evil will be defeated, justice and mercy will prevail and the kingdom of heaven will be a reality.

That's the heavenly vision that motivates believers!

It is the vision that our preachers preach about.

It is the vision that our teachers teach about!

It is the vision that our choirs sing about!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Sing the wondrous love of Jesus. Sing his mercy and his grace. In the mansions bright and blessed he'll prepare for us a place. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory."

To implement the heavenly vision pastors must hear the voice of God and respond to his voice with boldness. This may require pastors to move out of their safety zones and strive for higher heights in the faith.

In addition, churches must be prepared to walk new paths. The vision that God gives may present challenges that represent changes of direction for some congregations.

It may mean giving more to the education of our youth through the support of Selma University and similar efforts.

It may mean giving more to support to positive activities that will help them develop into stronger Christian men and women.

It may mean devising programs that will strengthen the home, promote finer womanhood and build manhood.

It may mean showing more concern for our elderly by increasing our elder care ministries.

It may mean expanding our revival efforts beyond three or five nights or preaching in the church facility and take our efforts into the highways and byways through non-traditional ways.

It may mean expanding the ministries of our churches to respond to new challenges with the changeless Gospel of Christ.

The heavenly vision is compelling and its implementation is even more demanding upon individual churches as well as local districts and state affiliates. We must work together to may the heavenly vision a reality.

The heavenly vision motivates

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that it is the vision of heaven and its great reward that motivates us to serve in the kingdom of God.

If there is no heaven then we are wasting our time going to church on Sunday.

If there is no heaven then we are wasting our money giving a tithe to our churches.

If there is no heaven then we are wasting our lives, sacrificing to attain a state that will never exist.

Yet, we know that there is a heaven.

Through the prophets and thousands of preachers over thousands of years we have been given a glimpse of its greatness and it has inspired us to join the struggle!

It was a heavenly vision that prompted Paul to travel the world in three missionary journeys, setting up churches and preaching the word of God.

It was a heavenly vision that prompted Abraham to leave the safety and security of his homeland in search of a city not made with hands.

It was a heavenly vision that prompted David to store up gold and silver to build a temple for the Lord even if he could not build it himself.

It was a heavenly vision that took Ezekiel into a valley of dry bones, to answer the question, "Son of man, can these bones live again?"

It was a heavenly vision that placed Peter on top of the mount of transfiguration to see a sight so grand that he wanted to build three tabernacles on the mountain top.

It was a heavenly vision that opened up the panoramic curtains of glory to John while exiled on the Isle of Patmos and showed him a Revelation about the world to come.

The beauty of the heavenly vision is that it not only shows us what should be down here, but it also shows us what will be.

The heavenly vision shows us the beauties of heaven.

What is there about Heaven that generates such enthusiasm that men and women would dedicate their whole lives just to see it!

New York City is a great city with many sights to see. But after you have seen the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations and historic Harlem, despite their beauty, the sight to see and the place to be is the place called heaven.

St. Louis is a beautiful metropolis which is home of the famous Gateway Arch. But after you have seen the engineering miracle of St. Louis, the sight to see and the place to be, is the place called heaven!

New Orleans attracts thousand to what some have called the 8th wonder of the world, The New Orleans Superdome, but after you have marveled at the awesome spaceship sized superdome and witnessed the pageantry of Mardi Gras, the sight to see and the place to be is still the place called heaven!

Atlanta attracts millions to see the tomb of Martin Luther King, but after you have seen Dr. King's tomb and visited Atlanta underground, the sight to see and the place to be, is still the place called heaven!

The Alamo of San Antonio draws millions to reflect on the battle cry, "Remember the Alamo" but the sight to see and the place to be is the place called heaven!

Whether its the beautiful homes of the stars in Hollywood, the beautiful view of Lookout Mountain in Tennessee or the rumbling waters of Niagara Falls, the sight to see and the place to be, is the place called heaven!

I don't know about you but I want to realize the heavenly vision!

I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!
I want to see the streets paved with gold!
I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates!
I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!
I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!
I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!
Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!
Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
No more dying there!
No more crying there!
No more sickness and pain!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9213-Christian Education

What Youth Must Know About God

By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2006

SCRIPTURE: Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Deuteronomy 4:9

Introduction

Today's youth know more information than any generation before them, but what do they know about God? While many know a variety of subjects that range from algebra to how to operate an XBOX 360, many know very little about God. Many youth know the entire schedule for the NFL regular season, can recite the words to nearly every new song, but know little about God. Many know the names of every movie star, the track record of every super athlete and all the tricks of the "Grand Theft Auto" video game, but what do they know about God?

There are many ways that children learn truths about life. Most of those ways do not involve any special classes, expenditures or special considerations. Many learn truths listening to their parents telling them truths and interpreting events in their lives in such a way that they grow in understanding, despite their age. The great truths about God are taught first at home through the teaching and examples of parents.

One of the truths taught is that there is a difference between knowing about God and really knowing him. Consider the smart little mouse that knew more information than any mouse around. He read constantly and often led debates about the virtues of living the life of a mouse. One day, since he had such great knowledge, he decided to conduct a class for the other mice. The class would teach them all he knew about Cats. He posted signs everywhere announcing his class. The young mice were excited, because this was one of the smartest mice around. If anyone could help them learn about cats, he could. On the day of the first class, the room was filled with little mice. However, there were no old mice present. Just the little ones. There was a big guy who came too. He sat in the back of the room. The mouse proceeded to lecture the little mice about cats. The cat has nine lives. The cat has fur and great claws. The cat purrs and meows. The cat has peculiar looking eyes. He went on for many minutes. Suddenly the guy in the back of the room stood and showed his teeth and started

chasing all of the little mice. The young mouse ran outside the room and barely escaped being clawed. Several days later the little mouse met a group of old mice and he asked them a question. "Why didn't you attend my class on cats the other day?", he asked. One old mouse responded, "You know what the book says about cats, but you had never seen a cat yourself. We didn't come to your class because we have seen cats and we know what cats eat for lunch!"

In a similar sense there are many today who know about God, but their daily lives suggest that they really don't Him.

When parents do what they should, children learn about God and they get to him for themselves. They know who he is, what he does, what he expects and what to expect of him.

As Christians, we begin to know the Lord when we are young. As we mature we know him increasingly better. The responsibility of every believer is to educate the young about the nature of God. They should know his laws and expectations as well as his goodness and grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses in his last days, urging Israel to teach their children and grandchildren what they have been taught about the Godly life.

The Book of Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of Moses. Written in the closing years of his life, Moses repeated again what he taught the people for over 30 years or so. The supremacy of godliness and the strict observance of God's law was the central focus of his teaching.

In this text, Moses notes that he taught the people what God taught him so that they would be prepared for the future that awaits them. He charged them to keep the law, do the law and cherish the law of God all of their days.

Since the moral law came from God himself, it was a treasure that should be taught to each succeeding generation. The law of God taught the importance of godliness, clean living, abstinence and the value of honesty and integrity to his children. Thus, Moses maintained that every parent had the responsibility of teaching these principles to their children; and should they be blessed with long life, to teach them to their grandchildren. They should be taught at home and in the public square. The importance of teaching was underscored to the point that Moses instructed that the laws of God should be taught in the morning, at noonday and at night; that they should be inscribed over the doorposts of their houses.

Thus, Moses closed his life by giving one final lesson to Israel before his death. It was the lesson that the people should fear God, walk in his ways and he will help them to possess the bright future in front of them.

Youth must be Taught

Believers are implored to teach the word of God to each generation. We must teach

because the word of God commands us to teach:

Deuteronomy 4:9 says, "..but teach them thy sons; and thy son's sons."

Deuteronomy 4:19 says, "And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it."

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 says, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. "

2 Timothy 2:14 says, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers."

2 Timothy 3:15-17 says, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

These passages from the word and others like them make it clear that believers have a mandate to teach the word. Christian education is therefore a high priority in kingdom building.

We Must Study

1 Timothy 2:15 makes it clear, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

To study the Word is to read it for understanding, compare it with other scriptures, visualize it with the help of historical background, and clarify it through repetitious analysis.

Most bible studies in the Baptist Church are done through the Sunday school. The church provides for each family, study materials, or books that give an explanation of the scriptures being studied to aid us in our private and family study. Each Sunday, teachers are present to answer questions and lead discussions on truths or points you have discovered in your study of the word.

Although bible study is essential to strengthening faith, there are too many Christians who neglect bible study. We hear them all over America: "I just don't like Sunday School. When I was a child my mother made me go and I said when I grow up I'd never go again." In other places we hear them say "I don't like Sunday school, they may call on me to read."

Even more unfortunate is the truth that there are many who lead in churches across the nation, whose witness is strong and powerful, neglect the Sunday morning bible study.

Since bible study is crucial to every Christian, the church should pay special

attention the caliber of people we select to teach. Those who cannot make themselves available to attend the meetings of teachers and to improve themselves while in service through the church training program should be lovingly phased out!

This training gives him the courage to witness, the faith to endure trials, and the inspiration in moments of desperation.

The word of God:

—feeds me when I am hungry!
—comforts me when I am lonely!
—corrects me when I am wrong
—refreshes me when I am tired!
—satisfies me when I am thirsty!
—lifts me when I am low!
—challenges me when I am indifferent!
—sustains me when I am afraid!
—directs me when I am confused!
—motivates me when I am discouraged!
—soothes me when I am dying!

No wonder the scriptures declare, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Hide your word in my heart Oh God."

If you hide your word, it will:

—Bless me when I'm burdened
—Cheer me when I'm sad
—Strengthen me when I'm weak
—Calm me when I'm troubled
—Revive me when I'm weary!

Hide your word in my heart oh God!

We must know God for ourselves

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that all the learning in the world is insignificant if we do not have a personal relationship with God.

To achieve success in the Christian life is to go beyond a mere knowledge of biblical facts, we must know the Lord.

To meet the master's directive for educational success, we must be sure that every generation knows more than the words of the Lord, but that they truly KNOW the Lord themselves.

You might be able to explain that there are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the Old and 27 in the New, but you must know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible contains books of prophecy, literature, history and doctrine, but you must also know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible has 3,586,489 letters 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, and 1,189 chapters but you must also know the Lord.

You may know that the longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9, and the shortest

in the English language is John 11:35 “Jesus Wept” but you must also know Lord for yourself!

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high. That’s why the old warriors cried out “Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the song writer says, “You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself!” You got to know Jesus, you don’t need nobody else!”

Every saint should keep telling the world about the words of God, but we should also let the world know that we know Lord ourselves!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how He lived on this Earth for 33 long years!

Tell them how He bore an old rugged cross!

Tell them how He died out on Calvary!

But, don’t forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9214-Christian Education

Education for the Generation

By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;" Deuteronomy 4:9

Introduction

What does every believer need to successfully live the Christian life? There are many essentials needed but foremost on the list is the need to know God. Knowing God is the key to a spiritual relationship that will lead to salvation and a happy, fruitful life.

We receive our first education about God at home. When you were a child, what were you taught about God? Today, there are millions of adults whose first notion of who God is and what he is like came from what they heard said at home. Those who were fortunate to live in God fearing homes knew plenty about God even when they were little children. Those who were brought to Sunday school, learned bible scriptures and participated in discussions with their peers, learned much about God. It was not unusual to hear a six or 10 year old able to discuss the attributes of God in an intelligent way, despite their youth. It was a way of saying, "We're young, but we know."

There are many ways that children learn truths about life. Most of those ways do not involve any special classes, expenditures or special considerations. Many learn truths listening to their parents telling them truths and interpreting events in their lives in such a way that they grow in understanding, despite their age.

Parents teach important values to children in many ways. We learn these values so early in life that we literally "know" them before we go to school for the first day.

When parents do what they should, children learn about God. They know who he is, what he does, what he expects and what to expect of him.

As Christians, we begin to know the Lord when we are young. As we mature we know him increasingly better. The responsibility of every believer is to educate the young about the nature of God. They should know his laws and expectations as well as his goodness and grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses in his last days, urging Israel to teach their children and grandchildren what they have been taught about the Godly life.

The Book of Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of Moses. Written in the closing years of his life, Moses repeated again what he taught the people for over 30 years or so. The supremacy of godliness and the strict observance of God's law was the central focus of his teaching.

In this text, Moses notes that he taught the people what God taught him so that they would be prepared for the future that awaits them. He charged them to keep the law, do the law and cherish the law of God all of their days.

Since the moral law came from God himself, it was a treasure that should be taught to each succeeding generation. The law of God taught the importance of godliness, clean living, abstinence and the value of honesty and integrity to his children. Thus, Moses maintained that every parent had the responsibility of teaching these principles to their children; and should they be blessed with long life, to teach them to their grandchildren. They should be taught at home and in the public square. The importance of teaching was underscored to the point that Moses instructed that the laws of God should be taught in the morning, at noonday and at night; that they should be inscribed over the doorposts of their houses.

Although Moses lived for 120 years, he knew he would not always be present to be Israel's schoolmaster. Yet, the principles he taught were everlasting and should be continued throughout the generations. Those children of coming generations would need these guiding principles to possess their individual promised lands.

Thus, Moses closed his life by giving one final lesson to Israel before his death. It was the lesson that the people should fear God, walk in his ways and he will help them to possess the bright future in front of them.

Four Education Directives

In the first 10 verses of Deuteronomy chapter 4 Moses lays out four principles for spiritual success that should be taught to each generation:

KNOW WHAT GOD REQUIRES: Just as Moses told Israel to Harken to the commands of God (v1) each generation of believers today should be aware of what God requires. We should know his laws. We should know about the rewards for those who are obedient and we should know the penalties for those who fail to meet his requirements. The prophet asked, "What doth the Lord require?" The answer to the question was that we should be just and walk humbly before God.

KEEP GOD'S WORD PURE: Moses urged Israel to protect God's word from alterations (v2). Each generation should be taught what "thus saith the Lord" not variations based on the teaching of the latest trend. Those who want spiritual success must base that success on the unaltered word of God. The fact that the bible has persevered through all of the centuries should show how he himself has protected

its truths. Those truths must be protected and passed on to each generation without adding to or subtracting from its meaning.

KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS: Moses urged Israel in verses two and five to keep God's commandments. To "Keep" the commandments is to go beyond just knowing them. To keep them is to do them. No believer can expect to develop a strong spiritual life without keeping the commands of God. This important truth must be taught to our children. They must keep the commandments of God with respect to their individual lives and in the life of the church.

BE CAREFUL IN OUR DAILY WALK: Moses urged Israel to "take heed" in v.9. To take heed means to be careful. We should be careful as we conduct our daily lives to be sure that we do not forget the laws of God, what he requires of us and who we are. We should walk in the path of the Lord ourselves and then teach our children how to walk in that same path. It is often easier to talk the talk than it is to walk the walk. Here we are encouraged to walk and talk before our children so that they will learn the perfect will of God.

These four principles help believers to hide the word of God in their hearts and to display it in their everyday lives.

It is no wonder then that the scriptures declare, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Hide your word in my heart Oh God."

If you hide your word, it will:

—Bless me when I'm burdened

—Cheer me when I'm sad

—Strengthen me when I'm weak

—Calm me when I'm troubled

—Revive me when I'm weary!

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—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

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But, don’t forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9215-Inspiration

Waking Up In Someone Else's Dream

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 30, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." Romans 12:6-8 Let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. Romans 12:6 (Msg translation)

Introduction

Has there ever been a point in your life when you felt you were living a life that was picked out for you by someone else? You dressed the way someone else told you. You joined organizations that someone else picked for you. You wore clothes that someone else selected. You chose a profession someone else named for you. Did you pick your college or did someone plan that for you too? Often we spend most of our lives living out someone else's idea of what we should be. One day after many years pass we finally wake up and realize that we living someone else's dream.

We have seen it in many instances. We have seen the father who didn't make it to the pros, try to live his unfulfilled dream by pushing his son to do what he couldn't do. We have seen the mother who relives her childhood aspiration to be a cheer leader, majorette, beauty queen or debutante by pushing her daughter to walk the path of her secret desire.

When we woke up this morning, did we wake up in our dream, or that of someone else? Is there a wife who is living her husband's dream? Is there a husband who dreads his life because secretly he'd like to wake up just once and find himself living out his own dream?

It's frustrating when others constantly belittle your dream or aspiration by comparing you to others; diminishing your self confidence and self esteem.

Jacob and Esau were twins. Esau being oldest should have received the right of inheritance from his father Isaac. Jacob had no problem with that but his mother

thought otherwise. She pushed him to go a direction in life that caused him misery and frustration for nearly 20 years. He lived out his mother's dream and cheated his brother out of his birthright. He lived out his uncle Laban's dream and worked 14 years before he could wake up in his own dream with Rachel by his side.

Even beyond parental influence, sometimes we waste many valuable years trying to live up to someone else's expectations. We spend our lives trying to meet the ideal that they have set for us; to the point that we never really get a chance to be who we want to be.

That was the theme of the Movie, "Runaway Bride." It was about a bride who was engaged several times but panicked several times just as she began to walk down the isle. It turns out that she lost herself in becoming the woman each man wanted her to be and realized as she walked down the isle that she was not living her dream but someone else's and she ran.

But who are we? What did God put us here for? What are we supposed to do with our lives?

Each believer has a purpose and lives that are lived according to that purpose are generally happy and fulfilled. Rick Warren in his book, "The Purpose Driven Life" makes the point that each person has certain gifts and abilities bestowed on them by God for a specific purpose. The challenge is for us to discover our purpose and spend our lives doing what we were put here to do.

That brings to mind the Message Translation of today's text, "Let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each or trying to be something we aren't." The plain English version of this passage makes it clear that it's not a good idea to wake up living someone else's dream, but that we should strive to "be what we are made to be" and do that to the best of our ability.

As Christians, we give our best in the master's service. We can't be what someone else wants us to be, we must be ourselves and revel in the completeness of our task and the unity of our purpose, which is to glorify God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he reminds believers that they must do what they have been equipped to do for the kingdom to the best of their ability.

Paul made it plain that each individual has a different assortment of God-given abilities. Some abilities or gifts may be similar to that of others, but some are given more than others "according to the grace" (v6) that God chose to shower upon us. No believer should feel that he has to measure up to the gifts of someone else or be in competition with another when it comes to service in the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:4 reminds us that there are "diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." Some gifts are called the "grace gifts or "charismata. These gifts involve communicating or prophesying to others in a variety of ways that range from speaking, teaching, art, music, dance, and variety of other communication based abilities. Our gifts are performed in proportion or in agreement with the amount of faith we exercise.

Paul mentioned six other gifts after he talks about prophesy in verse six. He lists ministry or serving... teaching... encouraging... contributing... leadership, and showing mercy. The six are not often viewed as abilities by some but they really are. There are many who are gifted followers. They are the nameless "Indians" who do the detail work for those who are gifted to be "Chiefs." Everyone can't teach, but those who can, are able to make it plain. Whatever our gifts we should exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

Look at the gifts:

"Exhortation" is the Greek word paraklesis, literally "a calling near" or "a calling for." In other words, exhortation is comfort. Some folk have the gift of being able to comfort. Those who can "exhort" or inspire and encourage have a unique gift.

"He that giveth" is he that shares his earthly possessions. God may have given you a gift of making money — and that is a gift. I know several Christian businessmen who have the Midas touch. That is their gift.

"He that ruleth, with diligence" refers to the gift of leadership. There are certain men who are leaders, and they need to exercise their gift in the church so that everything might be done decently and in order. The business of the church requires a man with the gift of administration. Leadership ability is a gift that is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 as "standing over" others in the Lord. Everyone cannot lead.

"He that sheweth mercy" indicates the gift of performing acts of kindness. For instance, there are some believers who can bring a sunbeam into a sickroom, others cast a dark shadow.

Paul noted that we were given the gift and put here for a purpose. The question is whether we will do what we are meant to do or whether we will spend our lives living out someone else's purpose.

The Waking Moment

What was your waking moment? That was the moment when you realized who you were, and what you must do with your life? Your waking moment comes when everything that you have learned, seen and heard merge at one precise moment in a way that makes everything crystal clear.

It's the moment you decide that I must do something about my future.

It's the moment you decide I must work the work of him that sent me.

AT THE MOMENT OF YOUTH: For some, the waking moment comes in their youth. Young Solomon was just a youth when God spoke to him in a dream AND challenged him to rise to his destiny. In that dream God told him to ask for anything he wanted. In that moment Solomon decided to equip himself to live out his destiny. He asked for wisdom, received it and woke up each day, not living his father's dream but his own. When Jesus was missing after several days of worship and study in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph found him studying with the scholars, he surprised them when he told them at age 12 that it was "time for him to be about his father's business." Many young people are struggling to find their own "waking moment"-The point which they finally define themselves and understand what it is that God has for them

to do on this earth. At that point they make a conscious decision to live for him and carry out his will for their lives.

AT THE MOMENT OF DESPAIR: For the prodigal son, his waking moment was at the moment of despair. He defined his life by what his friends told him. He defied his parents and demanded his portion of goods instantly. In a far country, he lived the dream of his friends. He partied with them and had good times. Then one day he noticed that all of his friends were gone, along with his money. When he took a job slopping hogs, he reached his waking moment. The bible says, "When he came to himself." Like the prodigal there are many who have to hit the bottom before they realize that they have spent their lives living someone else's dream. When the prodigal woke up he saw himself in a nightmare. He was feeding swine. Likewise the young man or woman who wakes up addicted to drugs or alcohol realizes that he has been living a nightmare, trying to live in someone else's world. The gifts of his birth were not being used. The god-given talents possessed had not been developed. The course that was his destiny was not being pursued. Today, there are millions who should conclude as the prodigal did, "I will arise and go to my father."

AT THE MOMENT OF DECISION: On the Damascus Road, Saul saw the light and heard the voice of God for himself. He was never the same. It was a defining moment.

Moreover, the Damascus road is the road you travel when the Spirit of the Lord opens your eyes and you experience the presence of God for yourself.

Before we experience God we view our abilities as talents. After we experience God we understand that what we have is designed for a greater purpose. My ability to organize, my knack for making money, my ability to counsel, my ability to feel the pain of others, my voice, my musical talent, are all more than just abilities once we know Go. When know God we see them as gifts from God and we seek to use them in his service.

The world gave us a dream life, rich, famous, maids, butlers, cooks, gold trimmed toilet seats and diamonds. Each morning we awakened trying to meet the world's expectation, we get frustrated as we compare what we have with Bill Gates.

But one day we met the Lord and we saw things totally different. We understood our purpose and now we wake up living our own dream life…serving the Lord with all of our might.

On the Damascus Road the Lord gave us a new experience, a new song to sing, and a new testimony.

On the Damascus road we sang, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me."

God blesses dreams according to his will

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that if we have been waking up in the wrong dream, the power of God can make it right!

There have been many who have awakened to find themselves in the wrong

dream. That's when they realized that they were not using their gifts for his service but were squandering them by the way.

One morning Samson awakened and realized that his head was in the wrong lap. For the sake of a beautiful woman he had told his secrets and lost favor with God. When he finally awakened he could not see with his eyes, but he could see with his spirit and God gave him his power one more time.

One morning Jonah awakened and realized that he was living in a nightmare. Out of disobedience he chose to run away from Nineveh and not preach the word to them. When he finally awakened he was inside the belly of a big fish, he realized that he trying to something than what God told him to do. He repented and preached, and Nineveh repented, as the power of God moved over the city.

One morning Moses awakened and realized that he was living another man's dream. As slept on the silk sheets of Egypt he came to know that he was put on this earth for the purpose of leading Israel out of bondage. Through his life an entire nation became free.

There is somebody here today who is living a life that someone else has chosen, while the life that God equipped them for is untouched?

There is no happiness like the happiness shared by the man and women who know that they are doing God's will. This truth keeps them walking in God's ways.

To walk in God's way is to walk in faith.

Through faith we can achieve the unachievable.

Through faith we can accomplish the impossible.

Through faith we can reach the unreachable.

When we trust in the Lord we don't worry about the frustrating turns that the road of life offers! We walk by faith knowing that the Lord will make a way!

When we wake up in someone's dream we might find:

-Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!

-Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!

-Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Those who trust in God:

-Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

-Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable

-Live for the incredible; Achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

I don't know about you but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Storms may rise! Winds may blow!

I will trust in the Lord till I die!

When you awaken to a new reality don't forget to tell the story.

Tell somebody about Jesus!

Tell somebody how he died!

Tell somebody how he arose after three days and nights!

Tell somebody that he is alive in your soul today!

No. 9216-Inspiration

Search for the American Idol

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 6, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's; Genesis 31:19. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? Genesis 31:30. "Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not." Genesis 31:34

Introduction

Have you ever worshipped an idol? When that question is asked most believers shake their heads. Most of us have not bowed before statues of strange gods. Most of us are not like those we have seen on uncharted islands who dance naked before giant statues and sacrifice virgin girls them once a year. Most of us quickly answer, "I don't worship idols!" In the primitive worlds, worship of the idol is the focus of every life. The idol is god and they order their lives according to its dictates. Worship of the idol becomes the supreme goal of the primitive. It is more important than anything else.

The television show, "American Idol" weekly showcases individuals willing to brave national embarrassment to become the next "American Idol." Once they become the idol they become the object of worship, adoration, envy and inspiration of millions who want the chance to land a professional career and earn millions of dollars.

It's interesting that while many people quickly claim they have never worshipped an idol, would not hesitate to become an "American Idol."

What is an idol? An idol is a false god. Sometimes it is an image. Sometimes it can be person who is adored excessively, often blindly to the point of consumption. Sometimes it is an object or possession that we do anything to acquire and anything to keep.

What is most important to us is that which consumes our dreams and thoughts. If that is not from God, then it can quickly become our god.

Very few believers acknowledge the presence of idol gods in their lives or homes, but they are there consuming our thoughts and they become the object of life's quest.

They could be the cell phones that beep, ring and blink at us. They make us jump when they ring and they often require a tithe of our income and a free will offering for extra minutes. They punish us when we do not pay with silence, that kills us.

They could be our computers. A maze of little idols sitting on our desks, and laps with funny names like Dell, Sony and Gateway. We carry them on our hips and call them Treos. We listen to them speak and sing to us day and night with little plugs in our ears that block out the world and so we can hear our gods speak through our IPods.

They stare at us from many rooms of our houses: Big screens and flat screens and ready to command our attention for ours at a time at the click of a button. We call them televisions with High definition, surround sound and 100 channels of cable.

They could be closet full of shoes that we clean polish and cherish highly; they could be the shine on our car or the glitter of our rims. Could be the gold we wear on all of our fingers, around our necks and even on our teeth? Could it be an Xbox 360 or our fishing boat or a football?

While there is nothing inherently wrong with owning a cell phone, a car, new shoes a computer, television, automobile or any other possession, believers must be extremely careful not to let the things we use possess us rather than the other the way around. When we pay more for our cell phone bill, cable connection, internet access and other toys than we do to our church, then the extra things of our lives are quickly possessing us. When the pursuit and maintenance of our "things" gets to the point that it takes over our mind, then they are becoming our gods.

How can we tell? Use this measure. Which would upset you the most, to miss a day without television, a phone or internet or to miss a Sunday worship or midweek? That could give us an indicator of how our things are reaching from an obscure abyss and seizing hold of our lives and are becoming our idols.

Why is that millions want to be the American idol? Usually it is so they can make enough money to buy houses, cars, clothes and jewelry. The pursuit of "things" if we are not can become an all consuming passion to the point that they possess us and become our idols.-They even come before what God wants.

As believers, we strive to give God first place in our lives. There are many idol gods in the world but none of them will ever take the place of our real God, who we love obey and trust with all of our being.

Exposition

This text focuses on a passage of scripture that shows how upset a man became when someone stole his gods and what a woman was willing to risk to get and keep them.

The text focuses on Jacob's decision to return home after working nearly 20 years for his uncle Laban. Upon leaving his wife Rachel went into her father's cabinet and stole the family gods. When Laban returned he was upset because Jacob left, but he tremendously upset when he learned that not only had Jacob left with his entire family, sheep and servants, but he also took his idols. This upset him. He overtook Jacob and confronted him with a question "I know you wanted to go home, but why did you steal my gods?"

Jacob was not aware that his wife had stolen the gods and took an oath that

anyone in his company who possessed the gods would be killed. Rachel knew the danger but she hid the idols in a camel sack then sat on it when her father came to search. She apologized for not standing and made up a lie about her month cycle being the reason.

She kept the gods. However, before Jacob could return home God commanded him to rid himself of all idols in the camp. It had to be done. They were found and destroyed and Jacob returned home.

The scripture does not tell why Rachel stole the gods, only that she did it. Recent research has revealed that people of the area believed that possession of the family gods meant a right of inheritance. A father passed the gods to his son indicating that he now owned his fathers possessions. Rachel theft of what is called the "teraphim" may have been to insure that she had an ample supply of "things" and possessions once she reached Jacob's homeland.

Jacob's God was powerful, but the teraphim were insurance.

Jacob's God was wonderful, but the teraphim would guarantee that "things" she loved could be acquired.

She trusted Jacob's god but she trusted the teraphim more; with them came "things."

Dealing with Idols

Today, believers must come to grips with the possibility that there may be idols in our homes. These idols are so cherished by us that we are willing to steal, lie or risk death to keep them. How many of us would kill an unarmed burglar who we caught leaving our homes with our television, cell phone and computer? How many of people steal, buy hot merchandise and cheat just to get these same items. Some steal them and risk their lives to have them.

A look at Rachel and Laban in this text sheds light upon the impact of idols on our lives.

IDOLS APPEAL TO OUR CARNAL NATURE: Those things that we idolize appeal to our carnal nature. It is our desire to advance or protect ourselves even at the expense of others. Rachel stole the idols knowing that in her family it meant her brother would not receive his inheritance. The sisterly love she felt was overpowered by the prospect of going to a strange land without an inheritance. She was willing to steal to have the capacity to acquire the lifestyle she enjoyed. Is that not the case today? The things we idolize often motivate us to cheat and steal. Those who shoplift hear the voice of an idol god calling to them? Those who embezzle from their companies hear the same voice? Thieves burglars and others do not steal to eat, they steal to survive; they steal to thrive in the fashion of their gods. The man who steals does not care about the injury or loss to his neighbor, employer or victim. His idol god commanded him to steal even though Jehovah commands, "Thou shalt not steal." The command he follows is the voice of his god.

IDOLS WILL CAUSE OUR PAST TO CATCH UP TO US: When Laban realized that his gods had been stolen he pursued Jacob even though Jacob had a seven day

head start. For many days Rachel felt she had gotten away with her theft. She was safe in the mountains. Then one day, out of the blue, Laban showed up. Her past had caught up with her. In a similar way there are many of us who spent our lives running from our past, only to have it catch up with us. Young spend thrifts soon stare their wild pasts in the face when they try to buy a house and are faced with a low credit score. Those who have had secret lives hidden from family and friends are frustrated when their past catches up with them. Crimes, offences and shady dealings of the past usually will catch up with us. Jesus, speaking to his disciples said in Luke 12:2-3, "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."

IDOLS INDICATE OUR THE LEVEL OF OUR TRUST: Our idols indicate the level of our trust in God. Rachel watched how Jacob prayed to God and was blessed. She saw how he prospered despite opposition because of his God. When she agreed to go home with Jacob she was placed in a position of trusting God for herself, not just observing Jacob. She trusted Jacob's God but she trusted her idols more. There are many who share her dilemma. We trust God but we trust our idols more. We trust God but only to the extent that he will get us the idols that we need. It's the idols and what they promise that motivates many people above and beyond what God offers. Jacob however, trusted God, not idols and God provided for him, protected him and brought him safely home. There is nothing wrong with having a healthy bank account, but don't put your trust in money; you have it today and it's gone tomorrow. The song writer said it best, "I will trust in the Lord until I die."

OUR BIGGEST IDOL IS "ME"- Rachel stole the gods but her biggest idol was Rachel. The idols were not for Jacob, but they were for her. Is it possible that the biggest idol that we all have is ourselves? We idolize ourselves and see the world, even the church, from the context how it will help me. If we look at a photograph of ourselves in a group, we judge the quality of the photographic by how well we look in the picture. If we don't look good, it's a bad picture. If we look good and everyone else looks terrible, it's a good picture. We idolize ourselves. We stare at ourselves in the mirror, primp and pamper ourselves. Like Rachel, want a set of gods that will take care of "me." We search for a church that will meet "My" needs and serve me, visit me, call me, pray for me, feed me, pay bills for me, and help me. It never entered our minds that we should seek a church where we can meet the needs of others: feed others, help others pray for others. It never dawned on us to make ourselves available to God for whatever he needs done; we want a convenience store God where we can run get what we need and leave.

An unknown author wrote these words, ""I would like to buy $3 worth of God please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of milk or snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to love a white man or to volunteer at a homeless shelter. I want ecstasy. Not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb not the new birth. I want a pound of eternal life, served quickly; and make that order "to go." I would like to buy $3 worth of God please, make it quick because I'm in a hurry.

When we put ourselves before God, we become our biggest idol. The commandment is still true, that "thou shalt have no other gods before me."-even if that god is me.

Turning Loose Idols

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that our quest is not to become an American idol but to be an obedient child of God.

To be an idol or to possess an idol is to put something in front of God. We hear the word of God in Matthew 6:33, "but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things things shall be added unto you."

Idols solicit the wrath of God and if hang on to them they will bring us down, but if we turn loose the idols, God will lift us up.

Today there are many who are generally good, law abiding people who are frustrated by their pursuit of idols that are making their lives miserable.

We know that our idols are taking over when:

—We jump when our phone rings, but ignore a call from God

—Instead of driving the car, the quest to keep and maintain our car drives us

—We keep record of our computer passwords, but know little about the word of God

—When we play games on our cell phones even in a bible study or worship

Idols can take your:

—Happiness and turn it into sadness; Peace and turn it into confusion

—Success and turn it into a failure; friends and make them your enemies.

—Can take your love of life and turn it into a secret storm!

—Can tear your marriage to shreds and send you to the divorce courts.

If you can let go of your idols, there is a hand that will lift you up!

If you can let go of your idols and troubling spirits, there is a hand that will reach down and pull you up! It's the hand of Jesus!

If you let go of this world he'll give you a new song to sing. That's what the song writer had in mind when he said "You can have all of this world just give me Jesus!

Jesus! Our shelter in a time of storm!

Jesus! Our rock in a weary land!

Jesus! Who died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning, arose from the dead!

He is the Lord and him do we trust!

No. 9217-Missionary Service

Ordinary People With An Extraordinary Purpose

A Sermon By The Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2006

SCRIPTURE: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction

What do Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and Booker T. Washington have in common? They were all ordinary people whose lives made a difference to millions. Their social circumstances, economic conditions and opportunities were the same as millions of others just like themselves. What they had in common was the fact that they were ordinary people. While they were similar to millions because of their ordinary existence they were different because, unlike the others, they had an extraordinary purpose for being here. History has shown that all of them achieved the purposes for which they were born and our race is better because of them.

Have you ever wondered why God placed you where you are today? What is your purpose? Understanding the mysterious ways of God has been a puzzle to many over the centuries. We are no exception. We often wonder why God selected us, out of all of his creation, and placed us in the unique spot that we occupy in the world today. It is humbling when we consider that God could have chosen anyone, anywhere to do what we do. Yet he chose us.

We ask, "Why me?"

"I'm just an ordinary Joe; why me?"

"I'm just an ordinary Jane; why me?"

When we consider the work that God has placed into the hands of a legion of ordinary believers, each of us is humbled that God has placed the awesome task of reaching the world on his behalf in the hands of such ordinary people as ourselves. For some reason, the master wants to use the simple, ordinary things of life to achieve his great purpose. Perhaps that's what David had in mind when he wrote in Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Unseen by the hand of man God has exalted an army of the ordinary to do the extraordinary.

Often we cannot make sense of God's choices or his decisions. Often they don't make sense to us. We know he has a reason but we just don't understand why he used so many ordinary common people to become prophets, and leaders. Neither can we see why he would use an ordinary boy's lunch to feed 5,000. We don't know why he does what he does but obviously he has a purpose.

Using ordinary people to achieve a great purpose is baffling. It doesn't make sense. But many godly things don't make sense to us initially. Consider the little rabbit that was fascinated with its newfound speed. The bunny loved to out run the creatures of the wood. He out ran the toad frog and Brer snake could never catch him. In fact, he took on every creature of the woods to test his skill. The little rabbit was disturbed however, because each time his folks let him go to the woods alone, mama rabbit would prick the bottom of his foot with a thorn. When they left, without explanation, the little rabbit limped around for hours in pain. When they returned they said nothing. After a while, the little rabbit was concerned and asked mama rabbit the question, "Why do you stick my foot every time you leave me alone, it doesn't make sense and it seems cruel for you to do me this way." Mama rabbit hopped over to her son and said, "There is a hound dog and hunter that love to chase little fast rabbits. Knowing you, you would give them a run. It may not make sense to you now, but it's better to be a living bunny with a sore foot than a dead rabbit with a fast reputation." It did not make sense to him at the time, but that sore foot was keeping him alive.

God gave a great mission to ordinary people. It doesn't make sense to trust such a lofty purpose to the ordinary, but he did. We know his purpose is clear and is just. We don't question his decision; we simply carry out his will.

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that God looks among the lowly and gives them a mighty mission. We may think of ourselves as unworthy, but God plans to use the church to reconcile a lost world back unto himself.

Exposition

This text is known as the great commission. It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the disciples giving them their final assignment. He told them to get the word out about salvation and redemption to the entire world, to baptize believers and then teach them the way of life prescribed for Christians.

The believers who were assembled before Jesus as he gave this commission to go into the entire world were ordinary people. They were fishermen and laborers; some were publicans some had been labeled as "sinners" before the met Christ.

They were about as ordinary as could be. There were no leaders of the synagogue, wealthy or powerful people in the group. Neither were their emissaries of the king or representatives of the Roman Empire in this group.

These were simply ordinary people who were given an extraordinary job to do; to evangelize and disciple the known world!

This commission that Christ gave his disciples, in a few short years resulted in the expansion of the faith to Asia Minor, the cities of Greece and to nearly all of the known world of their time. It appeared to be an impossible mission, given to penniless disciples who had nothing to move on but faith in the promises of the savior.

They were ordinary believers who were commissioned to perform an extraordinary task; and they did it well.

The Purpose of the Church

The church began with ordinary people and has existed for over 2000 years, sustained by ordinary people. There have been many who have become great as a result of their work in the church, but the overwhelming majority of the church's army of believers have been ordinary people.

Today, the church still needs ordinary people to achieve its extraordinary purpose.

The mission today the same as the one given to the church in the Book of Acts. We must "Go ye therefore" and teach, preach and reach all nations. That's an extraordinary purpose.

Our mission is not to have a great worship on Sunday, raise a lot of money and go home. We must evangelize. To evangelize means we must reach into the hell holds of the world and extend the firm but forgiving hand of God to an uncaring world. Moreover, we must teach the Word of God to those we save. Beyond that we must equip them to live the Christian life through their relationship with brothers and sisters of the faith.

That's not an ordinary mission. It is extra-ordinary.

Beyond that the church needs to reach out. There are many today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes. Outreach is essential to kingdom building.

We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus.

To save the lost, nurture the saved, and keep reaching out in love is not an ordinary mission, it is an extra-ordinary mission.

The Recognizes its Purpose

What makes the church strong today is that it is made up of millions of ordinary people who understand their extraordinary purpose.

This understanding provides believers with the ability to maintain a spiritual balance in this crazy world because they have a sense of purpose and divine destiny. The nineteenth century Polish poet Cyrrian Norwid wrote "To be what is called happy, one should have (1) something to live on, (2) something to live for, (3)

something to die for. The lack of one results in drama. The lack of two result in tragedy." Martin Seligman, the eminent psychologist, notes that the lack of meaning in our society today has reached epidemic proportions. He emphasizes that finding meaning requires "an attachment to something larger than ourselves."

All of these smart men and women simply repeat in different words what Jesus tells every believer. "If you want to save your life, lose it. The man that loses his life saves it." That paraphrase explains Jesus' teaching that believers find meaning and purpose in life when we plunge ourselves into a calling and mission greater than ourselves. Those who have a sense of purpose are able to deal with life. Martin Luther King said, "Any man who has not found something for which he is willing to die, is not fit to live." When we find our purpose, then we achieve balance and sanity in a crazy world.

The reason the church cannot be defeated is because its cause is championed by legions of believers who are empowered by God, intent on achieving a Godly purpose, even at the risk of death.

What Shall We Do Then?

Finally, brothers and sisters we must reaffirm our conviction that despite the fact that we are just ordinary people we are determined to carry out our extraordinary purpose.

It is frustrating sometimes to consider that great commission given 2000 years ago. It is frustrating when we consider how improbable it appeared to those who heard the commission given.

An impossible mission was given to an improbable crowd of untrained, unlettered missionaries, sent on a journey to achieve the unreachable and the unattainable.

It was an extraordinary mission.

The ordinary foot soldiers in the army of God must continue to lift Jesus up in extraordinary ways!

The ordinary laborers in the world's vineyard must work until the day is done; until the setting of the sun!

The ordinary believer who prays and works in hope and faith that God will provide an extraordinary increase, must continue without ceasing.

We the ordinary, must keep our eyes on our extra-ordinary purpose.

The church has seen a great example of the ordinary doing the extraordinary.

Down in Bethlehem an ordinary child was born, but that child had an extraordinary purpose.

This child's life was in God's hands. When your life is in God's hand, you go where he tells you to go. You do what he tells you to do.

Down in Bethlehem, a child with a purpose was born.

His mission was to Bring:

—Hope to the disillusioned and salvation to the lost.

—Life and provide it more abundantly.

—Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

—Comfort in the midst of calamities & strength in weakness.

—Assurance in the midst of agonies & power in the midst of problems.

—Safety in times of trouble and Shelter in time of storm!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born, his name was Jesus!

His purpose was to give us salvation.

Our purpose is to advance his kingdom around the world.

Our mission is to help the world see the invisible hand of God in the affairs of men.

Our mission is to let the world know that if it has made advancements in education, it was God's hand in the plan.

Our mission is to let the world know that if it has made technological advancements, it was God's hand in the plan.

Our mission is to let the world know that if it is to be saved it must acknowledge God's hand and accept him as Lord.

Our mission is to help the world see God's hand in the plans of man.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable becomes probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the ordinary can achieve the extraordinary!

It's the same hand the carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

The world intended it for bad, but God had a hand in the plan began in Bethlehem and ended early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9218-Inspiration

Who Is Your Pilot?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 13, 2006

SCRIPTURE:" In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. " Proverbs 3:6

Introduction

Have you seen a real funny commercial on television lately? There are some that can really crack your sides. There are three that are absolutely hilarious. One is the set of commercials for Di-tech. They have a series of scenarios that end with the line, "Lost another one to Di-Tech!" Then there is Geico. They have a series of commercials that feature an Australian accented Gecko. But the one that really cracks sides are the series of commercials that interrupt the story line to announce the product.

One funny one deals with a man who gets into a helicopter and the man in the cockpit takes off. Below, on the ground, there is another man waving his arms and shouting. The passenger then asks the man in the cockpit, "You are the pilot aren't you?" The man answers, "No, but I did spend a night at a Holiday Inn Express!" - He wasn't a pilot, the real pilot was on the ground screaming and yelling and waving his arms!

The man jumped into a helicopter and left his pilot on the ground, waving his arms and screaming like crazy! That was funny!

Is it possible that some of us jump into life like it's one big helicopter ride and leave that pilot on the ground? When it happens in real life, it is everything but funny.

Just like the man in the commercial we often ignore those screaming, meddling, busy bodies on the ground. We just want to take off with our lives. We never stop to ask, who or what may be driving our lives.

Many of us have made the mistake of jumping into life and leaving the pilot. We knew we need a pilot but we wanted to get away so badly that we never stopped to ask. We just wanted to get into something as quickly as we could.

As Christians, we recognize that God directs our lives. We never leave home without him. He's in control and is the captain of our souls. He is our pilot.

Exposition

This text focuses on a Proverb of Solomon that points to the importance of

allowing God to direct our lives instead of self direction.

Solomon was the third King of Israel. He is respected as a man who possessed great wisdom. Most of his wisdom was given to him by God. However, some of his wisdom was learned in the school of hard knocks.

As a very young man Solomon became King of Israel. He recognized the enormity of his position and prayed for guidance. One night, while he slept, God appeared to him in a dream and gave him the opportunity to wish for anything he wanted as King. God promised to give him whatever he wanted. It was a chance to pick life the way he wanted, down to smallest detail. Riches, fame, possessions and anything else were available to him if he wanted. In 1 Kings 3:9 he decided that it would be best to have an understanding heart and let God lead him.

Thus, much of the Book of Proverbs is a collection of the wisdom of Solomon. It reflects what he had been given by God through revelation and what he learned through the experiences of his life.

Proverbs chapter 3 refers to one of the great truths about life that Solomon learned and reduced to a mere proverb, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path."

When we think on it now, what it says is simple. Let God be your pilot. Follow his direction, consult him, and he will direct us safely to the path that we should take.

The nature of the Pilot

The way that God directs our paths is strikingly similar to the way a pilot directs a plane.

PILOTS HAVE FLOWN SOLO THEMSELVES. Every licensed pilot knows how to fly a plane because he has flown solo himself. No one would want a pilot who has never flown a plane before. We want a pilot with experience. Yet, often we ignore the wisdom of those who have been where we are trying to go and strike out with a pilot who has never flown himself. When Jesus came to the earth he came on a solo flight. He could have come with the hosts of heaven at his side. Instead, he came to walk the lonely trail of life just as each person does. He experienced danger, hunger, fatigue, failure, joy, acceptance and rejection. He endured pain, agony and even betrayal. That's one of the reasons that we accept him as our pilot because he has flown this life solo before. He knows how we feel. None of us should attempt to travel this life guided by persons who have not experienced life itself. Even with this knowledge however, there are millions today that still take off with a pilot who has never flown solo himself.

PILOTS FILE FLIGHT PLANS: A good pilot files a flight plan with the Federal Aviation Authority before every trip. A flight plan tells departure time, expected arrival time. It also tells what will be done in case of bad weather, how many will be on board and name of the pilot. No one should want a pilot who doesn't know where he is going and doesn't know what to do when the storms break out. When Jesus left heaven, he and his father worked out a plan to save fallen man. They knew when

he would arrive. They also knew that 33 years later he would make a departure. When storms came, Jesus had a plan; he spoke to the winds and the waves and the obeyed his will. He knew where he was and where he was going at all times. Today there are many who have no idea who they are or where they are going in life. They have no plan, they just live day by day. We can experience deep trouble when a person who has no plan tries to lead others who have no plan. It's a tough trail to walk when the blind lead the blind. Anyone we accept as our pilot should be one who has a plan and has filed that plan with the FAA with the Father's Approval and Anointing.

PILOTS WAIT FOR CLEARANCE FROM THE TOWER: Pilots never take off, land, change altitudes or change directions without getting clearance from the tower. The air traffic controllers see what the pilot cannot see. They know what above and below them. They also know when the path is clear. Pilots never move without tower clearance. Jesus constantly prayed. On mountainsides, in homes, on boats and ships and even in the Garden; Jesus prayed for direction and clearance. Even on the last night that he spent before his captivity he requested clearance to change course. He did not want to go to Calvary, he sought a route change. Even while he was asking however, he said "Never-the-less" not my will but thy will be done. Today every believer should immolate Christ in this respect. He would not undertake a venture unless he received the approval of the father. Neither should we. Prayer is our communication with the tower. Prayer is our way of asking for permission to take off, land or change course. Sometimes all we need to do is change the altitude, but we ask God about that too. A good pilot never moves without clearance.

When the Lord Is In Control

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that we have a better chance of making it home if God is our pilot.

There are many people today who sport license tags on their cars that say, God is their co-pilot. The co-pilot is not the pilot; he's the second man in charge. He takes over only when the pilot cannot.

In this life, brothers and sisters, it is better to be the passenger and let God be the pilot.

When God is our pilot he will lead us and direct our paths.

When God is our pilot it won't matter whether we meet turbulence and strong winds, he is the master of the wind and waves!

When God is our pilot it won't matter if danger lurks behind every cloud, because our pilot can see on the other side of trouble.

When God is the pilot he leads. That's why we say:

Lord lead me. Like you lead the children of Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night!

Lead me...through the wilderness of hard times that looms on my horizon.

Lead me...through the dark shrouded midnights that will darken my days.

Lead me...through shadow laden valleys of difficulty.

Lead me...through and meandering streams of uncertainty!

Lead me, guide me along the way, Lord you lead me I cannot stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord lead me.

I heard an old pilgrim say, "Guide me oh thy great Jehovah. Pilgrim in this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thy powerful hand!

One song writer said, "I do not know how long twill be, or what the future holds for me. But this I know, if Jesus leads me, I shall get home someday."

I don't know about you but I want Jesus to walk with me and guide my footsteps along the way!

Jesus, my bread in starving land!

Jesus, my way out of no way!

Jesus, my shelter in a time of storm!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, arose from the dead!

I want Jesus to lead me. Where he leads me I will follow; all the way!

No. 9219-Inspiration

Look where he brought us from!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2006

SCRIPTURE: "But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers." Deuteronomy 6:23

Introduction

How far have you come to get where you are? Very few of us have arrived at our present positions in life without going through many experiences. If the truth be told many of us would have to admit that we have experienced a variety of changes in the course of our lives that have helped to shape and mold the way we think, act, and move. For the most part we are not the same as we were many years ago. Most of us have learned some tough lessons in the school of hard knocks. These lessons combined with our experience have given us a great appreciation for those who have succeeded because our experiences have helped us to understand that no one succeeds without struggle. Perhaps that's what Frederick Douglass had in mind when he said, "Where there is no struggle there is no progress."

Booker T. Washington once said that we cannot judge a man by where we find him at the present but we must judge a man by how far he has had to come to reach his present state. Certainly Booker T. Washington could speak to this subject for he was an individual who emerged from slavery to educate himself and to climb above the low expectations of all those around him. Those who visited his fine home in Tuskegee, Alabama had to be constantly reminded that he was not always an educator or a scholar. Neither was he always a man who was acquainted with the president of the United States or other great leaders of the land. Only when we considered his lowly origins could we grasp the enormity of his accomplishment. That's when we, like all others, look in amazement and say to ourselves "look where God has brought us from."

On occasions such as these we gather to celebrate our victory over low expectations and negative influences. We celebrate our victory over obstacles, stumbling blocks, and adverse circumstances. We celebrate our refusal to accept defeat or be conquered by the pessimism of those around us. When we celebrate we also look back, with a nostalgic eye, over the long meandering road that we have

traveled. We celebrate our victory over the mud and miry clay that threatened to swallow us and drown us in self pity, a myriad of excuses and an ocean of procrastination. When we look back over the pitfalls from whence we have arisen we can't help but say, "Look where he's brought me from."

When we consider the danger of the moment we realize how blessed we have been. Five years ago we were among millions in this country who became aware of our vulnerability when we saw the attack on the World Trade Center in New York. We are enduring the pain of daily watching the death toll associated with the war in Iraq. We are still trying to heal as a result of the devastating effects of hurricane Katrina a year ago. Yet, despite all that, we stand today as a living testimony that God is able. When we look back we can't help but say, "Look where he brought me from."

As Christians, we are grateful to Almighty God who has raised us and protected us through all the years. He has brought us a mighty long way. In the words of the song writer, "I don't believe he brought us this far to leave us."

Exposition

This text focuses on the final instructions of Moses to the Children of Israel before they entered into the Promised Land.

At 120 years old, Moses was aware that the people would make it to the land of promise, although he himself would not get there with them.

In the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28, which means "a second look", Moses looks back over where God has brought them from and peeps over into the future as well.

As Moses stood atop Mt. Nebo, he had to look back for a moment. He had to remember those who left Egypt with hope in their hearts, on their way to the Promised Land. Now as the children and grandchildren of those old warriors stood at the base of Mt. Nebo a sigh of appreciation can be heard across the centuries.

Today, the story must be told of the old warriors who worshipped by the light of lanterns and kept warm by wood burning stoves. The story must be told of the old warriors that kept the church doors open despite depressions, hard times and wars.

When we look back, like Moses, we must say to the world, 'Look where he's brought me from!"

Twas Grace that Brought us

How have we been able to come this far? Was it luck? Was it ingenuity? The words of the old hymn of the church might give us a clue:

"Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

Defined, Grace is unmerited favor. It is blessings that have flowed from the providence of God to the undeserving. If any race understands God's Grace, it should be those who have experienced life's bitter pills. Those who have tasted the dregs of life and wallowed in the mud of one man's abuse of another, understands what it

means to experience God's Grace.

Our people were brought to these shores, for the most part, against our will but we have broken the shackles that bound us and have risen.

We have picked the cotton, contributed to scientific development, built schools, expanded agriculture, represented this nation on foreign shores and loaned our wealth of inventions, novelties and joy. We have given America the songs of our past, the blues of our sorrows and the spirituals of never dying hope. And we have given America our blood in great battles to guarantee its freedom.

How have we come this far? It was nothing but the Grace of God. James Weldon Johnson puts it this way, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, we have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered."

When we look back, we understand the lyrics of the Old Negro Spiritual "How I got Over! My soul looks back and wonders, How I Got over!" Only those who know about the love of God for all of his people, especially the wretched of the earth, can understand the mystery of how we got over!

How He brought us

When we look back we see that God where brought us from, but how did he do it?

How did he bring people like us so far?

He blessed us with his favor in a variety of ways:

Blessed in the Country or the City: Like Israel, we have been blessed whether we lived in the country or in the city. In the country, he protected us in sharecropper shacks with newspaper covered walls and wood burning stoves. He touched the ground with his finger and the cotton we planted grew tall and the bolls were full. Our families grew strong and he protected us from the sicknesses and illnesses that should have destroyed us because of our diet and rural lifestyle. Likewise, in the cities he blessed us. He helped us survive slum neighborhoods, and rat infested apartments owned by absentee landlords. We were not supposed to survive in the city because we had little learning, fewer opportunities and only the work of factory workers and domestics to maintain our families. Yet, whether in the country or in the city, we survived and flourished.

Blessed with large families: Like Israel, God blessed us with a spirit of family and a love for children. We had plenty of babies. Black babies, brown babies, yellow babies. We have babies, babies with plenty of hair, silky hair, kinky hair, and curly hair. Babies with naked bottoms, cloth diapers and Pampers. We had plenty of babies raised by a neighborhood of mamas, aunties, grandmas and next door neighbors. Everybody in the hood was a mama. It worked because somehow God gave us a sense of family that caused us to look at our neighbor's child as our own child and bad children were spanked by all of their mama's and papas in the neighborhood and then by their own too. Our babies came fast and families with 10 brothers and sisters were not unusual. God blessed those families with an abundance of love if they had nothing else; it's the only way that families with so little could be so large and still

thrive.

Enemies rebuked before our eyes: Like Israel, we have seen our enemies rebuked and chastised before our eyes. We trembled when men rode through our community in white sheets and called themselves the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. We watched them lynch our mothers and fathers, beat our sisters and spit on our dreams. Some of us fought back like Denmark Vessey, Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey, Huey Newton and Malcolm. But most of us listened to Booker T., and Roy Wilkins, A. Phillip Randolph and Martin and we waited for God to move.

It was hard, but we held our peace until God got ready to move. And when he moved he opened the floodgates. He did it in a way that no one could deny that it wasn't by the power of the people as the Panthers demanded but by the Power of an almighty God.

That's when we all say, "Look where he's brought us from!"

What He brought us to

Finally, brothers and sisters it's good to look back and see where the Lord has brought us from. It's also good to consider what he brought us to.

When Israel crossed the River Jordan, Joshua placed 12 stones in the river bed and another 12 on the edge of the river as land marks. He said when the children of future generations see the land mark and ask "What mean these stones" that they should then be told the story of how God brought them through the sea and the wilderness to safety on the other side.

David looked back and concluded in Psalms 126:3 "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad"

When we look back we see how the Lord has taken our misfortunes and turned them to our advantage.

When we look back we see how the Lord took our:

—heartaches and turned them into hallelujahs

—sorrows and turned them into joy

—deficiencies and turned them into sufficiencies

—frustrations and turned them into faith

—Perplexities and turned them into peace

—miseries and turned them into miracles

When we look back, it helps us to make sure that we are going in the right direction. No wonder the song writer would declare: "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand!"

When we think about how far we have come, we close up our fancy hymn books and neatly arranged chords and listen to the old warriors declare, "I love the Lord, he heard my cry!"

Look where he has brought us from!

When we were weak we heard the word declare' "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost be upon you"

When we were hopeless we heard the song writer declare “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what foretaste of glory divine!”

When we were defenseless we remembered that “A mighty fortress is my God. A very present help in a time of trouble”

When we remember where he has brought us from we remember that the Lord is ABLE:

-To encouraged the faint!

-To Strengthen the weak!

-Clothe the naked!

-Protect the Feeble!

-Notice the Neglected!

Look where he brought me from!

He brought me from living dangerously to the foot of Calvary!

He brought us from dope and popping pills to salvation at Golgotha’s hill!

He brought us from a life of floss and gloss to a new beginning at the foot of the Cross!

Look where he brought me from!

He brought me along a new road that leads to Jesus!

Jesus!

The same yesterday, today and forever more!

Jesus, who let them drive nails into his hands!

Jesus, who hung out on an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who dropped his head in the locks of his shoulder and died for our sins!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

When we look back, we see that it’s been Jesus walking beside us all of the way!

That’s why our testimony is: “Walk with me Lord, Walk with me, while I’m on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!”

You walked with my mother, now walk with me!

You walked with my father, now walk with me!

Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 9220-Family

Where Be All His Miracles?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 10, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. Judges 6:13

Introduction.

Do you sometimes wish you had the spirituality of your grandparents? There are many people today who remember their grandparents as spiritually strong men and women who seem to have a calmness about themselves that defies description. The further back we go, it seems the more spiritually connected our grandparents were, indicating that even in our own opinion we are not as close to the godly ideal as we'd like to be.

Grandparents are important to every family because they are our connection to our past and the immediate source of wisdom and experience.

Those families that are fortunate enough to have godly grandparents are doubly blessed because they set the tone for the family. Often, as long as they live, the direction of the family as a whole remains on course. They provide a sense of direction that keeps family members on target.

Grandparents are important to every family. Their role should never be minimized or diminished.

That was the thinking behind the establishment of "Grandparents' Day" that was instituted by presidential proclamation on Sept. 6, 1979, and occurs each September on the first Sunday after Labor Day.

* It's purpose is to honor grandparents

* To give grandparents an opportunity to show love for their children's children.

* To help children become aware of the strength, information and guidance older people can offer.

The 1979 presidential resolution said, "Grandparents are our continuing tie to the near-past, to the events and beliefs and experiences that so strongly affect our lives and the world around us. Whether they are our own or surrogate grandparents who fill some of the gaps in our mobile society, our senior generation also provides our society a link to our national heritage and traditions."

Honoring grandparents didn't just begin in 1979. Grandparents are recognized in

the Bible for their role in our development: “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children...” (Proverbs 13:22). Even the Apostle Paul commended his young associate Timothy’s upbringing. In 2 Tim. 1:5, Paul recognized Timothy’s “unfeigned faith ... which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois.”

Grandparents seem to have a knack for making the worst situation into a challenging opportunity. Colorful memories, invaluable learning experiences and principles borne of a strong moral fiber are but a few of the priceless particulars of the investments our grandparents made in us.

As Christians, we are grateful for our grandparents. We strive to emulate their faith, strength and patience. They are blessing to every family.

Exposition

This text focuses on Gideon as he is challenged to reclaim the faith of his grandparents before rising to face the challenges of his times.

In the period of the judges Israel had no king. They experienced a succession of dangerous times each related to the degree of their faith in God. They constantly fell on hard times as they attempted to emulate the Canaanite tribes around them, including worshipping their god, Baal.

For seven years they were being raided and attacked by the Midianites. Yet, they continued to abandon the faith and righteous path followed by their grandparents. Gideon’s father was among those who had succumbed to popular traditions and erected a statue of Baal and worshipped in the groves. It was an abrupt departure from the path taken by the grandparents of the nation.

Gideon was personally tapped to raise Israel from its condition, but first they would need to return to the old path. It would be necessary to turn from Baal worship and return to the worship of the God of their grandparents.

When Gideon was first approached about his mission, he was frustrated and angry. He questioned whether the faith in God displayed by his “fathers”-a term for his ancestors or grandparents, was all that it was said to be in the stories told around family campfires.

Around those campfires grandparents talked about the miraculous way that God brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, fed them Manna, and brought them into the Promised Land. The family conversation was filled with talk about the miracles of God.

Gideon questioned the relevance of those accounts, considering their present situation. What happened to the miracles that happened in his grandparent’s day? That’s when Gideon learned that he would lead the people to reach back beyond his father’s generation, to that of his grandmother and grandfather and return to God; then the miracles experienced in the past would happen again.

Gideon proved worthy of the challenge. He and 10 men began with his father’s idols and tore down the statues of Baal. They went into the groves and other places of Baal worship and did the same. Soon God performed miracle for Gideon’s generation just has he did for his grandfathers. With an army of just 300 men he

defeated the entire 30,000 plus army of the Midianites, without lifting a sword or the loss of a single life.

It was a miracle just like that of his ancestors. It came when the grandchildren rekindled the faith of their grandparents and once again put their trust totally in God.

What Godly Grandparents teach us:

Gideon looked to his grandparents because they seemed to possess the strength that he sought. There were several qualities they possessed that he wanted to reclaim.

GOD IS IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE: Gideon's father tried to adjust himself to the circumstances around him, changing his God and values to fit those of his neighbors. However his Grandparents recognized an eternal truth, that "God is in every circumstance.

All godly grandparents seem to share this characteristic. They see God's hand in every situation. Whether it is finances or family matters they see God at work. Even in sickness and distress they feel God's presence. In reality, there is never a time when God is not moving, bending and shaping situations so that they will ultimately be for our good.

That is the quiet assurance that grandparents bring to the family circle; that God will work it out. We've all heard one grandparent or another say, "The Lord will make a way somehow." It indicated confidence and trust in God. It is a truth that is reflected in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

It comes to us in those familiar phrases we hear grandparents say, "It's going to be alright","Just trust in the Lord", and "Keep the faith." Although we have heard them repeatedly, they represent the sum total of a grandparents experience with God.

WE STRUGGLE IN THE NOW, GOD MOVES IN THE NOT YET: Gideon's grandparents differed from his generation. His generation could only see the events and the circumstances that were happening to them in the present. Even Gideon at the beginning questioned why God was not responding to their dilemma. His grandparents recognized that even while they struggled that God operated in the realm of the "not yet."

This truth is what we see demonstrated in the lives of our grandparents, God always answers our prayers and is ahead of us, answering our prayer, even though we can see how. That's the meaning of Isaiah 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. " That means that God operates in the "Not Yet" preparing, opening, and clearing the way for those who trust him.

In the "Not Yet" or the not to distant future, God is working it out.

In the "Not Yet" God is making a way!

In the "Not Yet" he is molding, shaping and creating within us!

That's what Grandparents know and what many grandchildren will come to know as well.

WE SHOULD NEVER LOSE HOPE: Gideon's parents lost hope that Israel would

ever achieve its freedom from its oppressors. Gideon worked each day in bitterness and despair over their condition, until he remembered his grandparents.

Any family that loses hope is lost. Hope sustains us in difficult times. It helps us to weather storms, endure droughts and survive catastrophes.

It is this sense of hope that godly grandparents bring to each family. This is the same hope that propelled Abraham to "hope against hope" that he would have a son even though he was 100 years old. It is the hope that motivated Hezekiah to never doubt that Israel's captivity would be turned or that his own life could be extended. It is the same hope that prompted Daniel to pray facing Jerusalem despite a death decree from the king. Such hope is life giving.

Grandparents never stop hoping that a wayward member of the family will come home.

Grandparents never stop hoping that a family member caught in the clutches of Satan will be released or that a son or daughter will find the right path.

It is this hope that endears grandparents to us. They never give up on us. They believe in us and they always have hope that we will succeed and find our way in life.

They show us how to be at peace

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that grandparents show us how to be at peace with ourselves and with God.

Grandparents by virtue of their age and experience have learned the essentials of life. They have learned how to sort out the important from the "not so important" in life, and thereby have learned how to live at peace with God regardless of their situation.

In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

That means that it does not matter whether the world pitches us fast balls, curve balls or sucker balls, we can handle it. If we get a home run or strike out, we are at peace as long as we come to the plate and give life our best swing.

To be at peace with God means trusting God and walking with God.

Don't ever let anyone play down the significance of walking with God.

—Abraham walked with God and he pledged him the Promised Land!

—Moses walked with God and he built a bridge for him over the Red Sea!

—Joshua walked with God and he carried him across the Jordan!

—Enoch walked with God and "was not!"

No wonder the song writer declared, "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey. I want Jesus to walk with me."

I'm reminded of the grandmother who prayed to God that one of her grandchildren would one day graduate from college. It was a prayer of faith because no one in this poor family had even gone to college; they didn't have the money. One day when grandmother came to visit she placed an empty frame on the wall. When questioned

what it was for she said, it would be the frame for her granddaughter's diploma. Years passed and the frame remained empty, but the granddaughter was inspired to make it happen. As the grandmother watched her daughter walk across the staged she smiled and gave thanks. Soon after the grandmother visited her granddaughter who was married and struggled with finances. Before leaving the grandmother left an empty purse on the kitchen table. The granddaughter asked, 'The purse is empty grandma, what does this mean?" The grandma looked up at the diploma on the wall and said, "The same hand that filled the frame will fill the purse."

I don't know about you but I believe that same hand that made a way out of no way, is still making a way today!

Gideon asked the question, "Where be all his miracles?" And the answer is that same hand is doing miracles today.

The same hand that opened up the Red Sea, can open doors today!

The same hand that rained down bread from heaven in the wilderness, could put food on our tables!

The same hand that brought down the walls of Jericho, can bring down the walls of trouble and difficulty in our lives.

This hand is the hand of an almighty God!

If we put our hand in the hand of the man from Galilee, he'll make a way for us!

We should follow grandma's example and keep trusting in the Lord!

We should follow grandpa's example and keep calling his name!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary..

But early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

Keep calling his name…

No. 9221-Faith

The Faith Factor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2006

SCRIPTURE: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7; "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. "Hebrews 11:1

Introduction

What is the difference between those who succeed in life and those who fail? Some will answer opportunity, resources, contacts and a variety of other answers. While a combination of these are consistent with success there is one ingredient that is common to everyone who succeeds; that ingredient is faith. Review the life of anyone who has succeeded at a great undertaking and you'll find that they possessed a great amount of faith in their own abilities and an even greater faith that with God's help they could achieve success.

There is a very popular television reality series called the "Fear Factor" that has caught the imagination of the nation. To win a $50,000 prize, three men and three women are recruited from across the nation to compete in three stunts that will challenge their physical and mental strength. Generally, the program challenges participants to overcome their fears to complete a stunt and get closer to winning the big prize.

Just about every kind of fear possible is included: snakes, spiders, deep water, high cliffs, sky diving and dozens more are presented. Contestants have jumped between moving trucks, leapt out of 12 story buildings, bobbed for plums in a tub of snakes and been buried in 300,000 worms. What separates the winners from the losers is their ability to overcome their fear of snakes or their fear of drowning or their fear of death to win the prize. The "fear factor" is what separates the winners from the losers.

Those who are afraid begin to speak fearful words and express doubts. They will also act in fear and actually believe that what they fear will come to pass even before doing it.

Our fears keep us from being all we can be. They hold us back.

We should remember that we are called upon to live by a spirit of faith, not a spirit of fear.

Faith and fear work the same way but the application is just the opposite.

The key to success in life is not the fear factor but the faith factor. The faith factor

causes us to triumph over our fear of death, being in want, failure, humiliation or any other obstacle. The faith factor is so intense that it determines the difference between those who succeed and those who hesitate and fail.

As Christians, we walk by a faith that overcomes our fears. This faith helps us to live the rich and spiritually rewarding life of a saint. Our faith in God lifts us above the cares of this world as we seek to build the kingdom of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on advice given to Timothy by the Apostle Paul regarding the superiority of faith over fear.

Timothy was a young man in faith. He had many gifts and talents with a bright future ahead of him, but on occasion he approached his destiny with timidity. Paul left him to minister to the church in Ephesus which was growing in size. There was a tremendous rivalry among many who wanted to be named deacons, elders and even bishops in the church. Many of these had a variety of beliefs, experience and considerable reputation in the local church.

Timothy was intimidated by his youth and relative inexperience. He was also intimidated by critics who doubted his abilities in light of his skeptics.

Paul encouraged Timothy not to be controlled by a spirit of fear. He encouraged him to use the spirit power, love and faith in God to overcome his fears. This courageous spirit would give him the power to overcome any feelings of inadequacy he might have so that he can accomplish his mission in life. For Timothy that mission was to be a minister for Christ.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is the best definition of faith in the bible, by many accounts. It is the essence of everything we hope for even though we can see how it will happen. The entire chapter gives examples of great men and women of the bible who had faith and hope even though much of what they hoped for was not immediately seen. Their lives will guided by faith alone.

The power of faith is above the power of fear. It is stronger than doubts. It overpowers all apprehensions. This message of faith is what Paul brought to young Timothy and to all believers, “God has not given us a spirit of fear.”

The Faith Factors

Certainly, we are encouraged in scripture to act in faith, not in fear. Faith is the “substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” When we operate in faith, we do not operate in fear. We are not controlled by the fear factor, but the faith factor.

The faith factor has three important considerations:

FAITH CAUSES YOU TO KNOW IN YOUR HEART BEFORE YOU SEE IT WITH YOUR EYES: A unique characteristic of faith is that those who have it seem to have a confidence and assurance in their hearts, long before they see anything

with their eyes. There are many who subscribe to the old axiom that "seeing is believing." They contend that if you see it with your eyes then you can believe it, not until. However, if you have to see it before you can believe then it is not faith. The man and woman of faith believes God even before seeing it. That was what made Abraham unique. He believed in his heart that God would provide a sacrifice, long before he saw the ram in the bush. He didn't know how God would do it, but he believed that God would make a way. Sure enough, just in the nick of time, God came through.

There have been many believers in a similar situation. Faith causes you to know that God will cause a door to open even if every door you can possible see is slammed shut. This kind of faith is described in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Faith is Moses standing in front of the Red Sea knowing that God will make a way, but only seeing a sea of water in front of him. He stood still as his skeptics criticized him and the weak in spirit began to doubt, then God moved and the Red Sea opened.

Is that you? Standing before the Red Sea believing that God will make a way but not knowing when? Fear tries to set in. What if he doesn't do it? What if I fail? Then the faith factor locks in and we hear a small voice say, "Stand Still and see the Salvation of the Lord."

FAITH MEANS TO BASE YOUR ACTIONS ON YOUR BELIEF: Those who have faith often "act" in faith. Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Noah believed that God would one day cause a flood that would destroy the world. But he went beyond just believing it, he based his next action on his faith. He built an ark the size of a small battleship on dry land, acting totally on his faith.

Our challenges are seldom that great, however there are many of our actions that are based on faith alone. Sometimes those actions relate to our families, our businesses, our employment or career. We operate totally on faith. When that happens what we do may seem silly to others, almost as silly as Noah and his family appeared to others, building a ship on dry land.

Faith requires us to visualize the outcome and act. It's just the opposite of fear. The fear factor causes us to visualize what could happen if we fail, put our hand into a barrel of snakes, or bungy jump from a 12 story building. We visualize it and respond immediately, even before we do it. The faith factor works the opposite. We visualize what will happen when God acts and begin to act accordingly. We begin to smile and rejoice now. We begin to feel better when we can visualize the victory that is coming. The fear factor will drive you crazy. The faith factor gives you strength, sanity and a spirit of peace.

Faith feeds courage. Paul Tillich in his book "Dynamics of Faith" says there are permanent doubts like those of the scientist and the transitory doubts of the skeptic in every situation. Faith overcomes both of these by feeding our courage to step over

them and act. When Paul was ship wrecked and the men on board lost all faith, he declared in Acts 27:25, "So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."

Faith is taking actions based on your believe that "it will happen just as he told me."

FAITH IS KNOWING OUR PRAYERS HAVE BEEN HEARD ALTHOUGH WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED THE ANSWER. A person of faith never doubts that God hears his prayer. Why? Faith does not operate outside of obedience. Myles Munroe in his book, "Understanding the purpose and power of prayer" says that when there is willful sin in our lives we are not in harmony with God and God will not hear us. Certainly pastor Munroe's conclusion has foundation in the scripture because Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." People of faith know that if we are in harmony, in communion, with God he will hear our prayers, and answer them. Why? 1 John 3:22 says, "..because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

Israel prayed the same prayer for 400 years even though they never saw anything happening. They knew God heard them, but waited for him to move in his own time; and he did. Hannah prayed the same prayer for years, but each year she never had a child. She knew God heard her, so she waited patiently for him to act and he did, in his own time.

Faith is knowing that since we are living in communion with God and are obedient to his commands that he hears us, considers our requests and will grant our prayer request according to his will. That's the meaning of 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"

Just as faith feeds courage, faith also feeds patience. After we pray we know that our answer is on the way. That knowledge feeds our patience and we quietly wait for God to move. Until God moves we P.U.S.H or pray until something happens. We pray constantly, waiting, knowing and believing that it will. That's the faith factor. We know God hears us and will get answer so we never give up!

Celebrate Our Faith

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that those who overcome their fears and walk by faith will never be disappointed.

Those who live by faith in God are never disappointed. So we celebrate our faith

When Job's trial ended, his faith was rewarded, there was a celebration!

When Israel reached the Promised Land, their faith was rewarded; there was a celebration!

When David returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he danced in the streets; there was a celebration!

If we are living by faith today but have not yet seen the answer to our prayers, we may as well get ready for the victory party and let the praise begin!

We don't have to wait until the battle is over, we can shout now!

That's the power of the faith factor! We know that no matter how it turns out, we win because "All things work together for the good of those who love the Lord and are the called according to his purpose in Jesus Christ."

Are dark clouds forming over your horizon? Is fear consuming your actions?

Be of good cheer, "Lift up your heads on ye gates, and king of glory shall come in"

By faith, we believe that no matter how tough our times get, God is still in control!

By faith, we are strengthened when we remember that our God is a God whose:

-Power never weakens; Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes; Joy never ends

-Foundation never shakes;Truth never changes

-Supply never shrinks; Blessings never stop coming!

And he is able! Yes, he's able!

He's able to see our tears in the midnight hour!

He's able to see our concern for our families and loved ones!

He's able to feel our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

This is faith, symbolized by an old rugged cross!

The cross the marks the place where our faith in God began!

The cross marks the place where we stepped over our fears and started trusting in God!

The cross marks the place where we stepped out of the darkness into the marvelous light!

That's why the song writer wrote, "At the cross at the cross where our first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received the light and now I'm happy all the day."

Because of the cross, We still have faith!

Jesus died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning, he arose to take all of our fears and replace them with faith in the power of almighty God.

No. 9222-Harvest

Come Before Winter

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2006

SCRIPTURE: "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14; Do thy diligence to come before winter. 2 Timothy 4:21

Introduction

As the first chills of autumn come upon us, we must ask; "Are we prepared for winter?" During the spring and summer of each year we enjoy the warm air, beautiful flowers and sunshine that each season brings. They were seasons of movement, expansion, relaxation and vigorous pursuit. However, the coming of autumn marks the season of harvest and preparation for winter.

As the leaves lose their fresh green touch and the chilling rust of harvest begins, we ask ourselves, "Are we prepared for winter?

As light sweaters and jackets, replace tee-shirts and bare chests, we ask, "Are we prepared for winter?"

Aesop told the cute little story of the ant and the grasshopper. The ant worked all summer gathering crumbs and other food supplies and carrying it to his ant hill. The grasshopper refused to work; he simply played and hopped around all during the summer months. In fact, he even laughed at the ant and taunted him for working so hard. The harvest months came. Soon after, the chilling snows of winter also came. The grasshopper had no food because he had not prepared for winter. Inside the ant hill, the ants dined and feasted. They had food supplies to last them through the winter. As the grasshopper shivered they were at peace. They were prepared for winter.

Three generations ago most of our people were not city residents. Most of us lived on the farm. We were like the ants. On the farm we stored hay for the animals. Mother stored fruits in jelly jars and canned vegetables. Meat was smoked and salted to carry them through the hard months ahead. There were many who even stockpiled fire wood to keep the fires going through the winter.

It was important to keep the fires going. Without the fire the family would freeze. Even with all of the food, preserves and other preparation the family had to keep the fires going or face the reality of death.

The prepared believer is like the ant; he's prepared for winter. It's not a slow down time, a time where he shivers and starves, but it is a time for him to rejoice because he is ready for winter.

In a greater sense, the believer is prepared for the winter of this world.

The Great American author John Steinbeck wrote two novels that showed us the outcome of poverty and winters of despair. In 1939 he wrote, "The Grapes of Wrath" that was about poor families of migrant workers struggling against the dust bowls of the West. In 1961 he wrote, "The Winter of our Discontent" that was about similar struggles of poor families against odds. Steinbeck painted a dreary picture of life for those unprepared for the chilly responses of this world.

As we prepare for winter, we must resolve that we will ready ourselves for whatever storms that may come and plague us.

Our coats and sweaters are being prepared. Our snow chains and shovels are readied. Our fuel supplies are checked, and our doors and windows are weather stripped. Some even have generators and fuel supplies safely stored away in case of power failure as well as supplies of canned and dry food safely tucked away.

We are prepared for hard times, difficulties, missteps and troubles.

We are prepared because we have sown our seed in the heat of the day, now we are harvesting the product of our seed, and our faith is at its highest peak. We are ready for winter.

But just as our fore parents had to keep the fires burning, we must do the same.

Every time we feel the chill of difficulty, we should throw another log on the fire and keep our hopes, faith and dreams going through the winter.

As Christians, we are not intimidated by the coming of winter. We keep looking forward to the coming of the Lord. Storms may rise. Winds may blow, but we are determined to keep our fires burning and our faith in tact as we serve the Lord with a passion and fervor that swells from our hearts.

Exposition

Our text first considers Paul as he writes to Timothy urging him to come to his assistance before winter.

Paul wrote to young Timothy of his struggles and difficulties and solicited him to come to his aide and give salutations to special persons in the ministry. He urged Timothy to come to him and bring him certain books to read.

Paul urged Timothy to come before winter.

This special urging was necessary because traveling by sea was almost impossible during the winter months. Generally these months ranged from November to March. Even the periods from September to November were risky, but certainly sea travel would not be advisable during the winter months.

Timothy could not sail from Ephesus in winter, but even if he took the overland route north of Greece he would still need to sail across the Adriatic, which was also closed. If Timothy delayed, he would not be able to come until spring—and Paul might not still be alive then.

It was important to Paul that Timothy prepare to come to him before winter as they both prepared to minister during the winter to those in spiritual need.

The despite the approach of the winter of his life, Paul remained focused on what

he called “the prize.” His resolve was firm. He intended to press on toward the prize of the high calling of God.

The goal that he emphasizes and describes as the prize, is the same goal that every Christian desires: to reach heaven, to see Jesus and to be rewarded for our works while on earth.

Paul was prepared for the cold winters that lay ahead for him, yet he was not intimidated by their approach. He was prepared to witness for God despite chilling effects of persecution and trouble symbolized by the coming of the winter of his ministry.

Despite the approach of winter, he kept his eyes on the prize.

Three faces of winter

As the harvest begins and the approach of winter becomes a reality, there are three aspects of winter we should consider:

EACH SOUL SHOULD PREPARE FOR WINTER: As individuals, our goal is to live our lives in accord with the will of God and to use whatever talents he has given us in such a way that he will be glorified in the process, even in the winter. We must prepare ourselves to serve the Lord with gladness and to share our blessings with others. In a spiritual sense, we must also prepare for those moments in our lives when we feel the chilly fingers of disappointment, failure and frustration. We know such days will come for as the poet says, “Into each life a little rain must fall.” We must prepare for the rain, cold and the storms of life as individual believers. We must read our bibles, pray and praise our God to build up stores for winters that come into our lives each year. Like the five wise virgins, we should keep our lamps trimmed, watch and pray every day as we keep our eyes on the cross, which is our prize.

EACH CHURCH FAMILY SHOULD WORK IN THE WINTER: As a church family our goal should be to move in the general community in such a way that we make a positive impact on the quality of life of those with whom we come into contact with daily; especially in the winter. We cannot afford to wrap up in the warm blankets of our own security and ignore the condition of others. In the winter the church must provide the warmth of Christ.

A generation or two ago, most folks had space heaters in their homes. Space heaters sat out on the floor with flames protected by grates. When it became cold, people stood by heaters to warm their hands. Often, many backed up to the heaters to warm their back sides. When it’s cold in the winter, those who are victims of the cold expect heaters to have fire in them. In the winter of this life, the church must keep a fire going. One of the worse feelings is to stand in front of a heater with no fire in the cold of winter.

Churches must turn up the fire in the winter. Churches must keep the spirit high, in the winter.

When the lost, frustrated and troubled come for worship they expect to find the fire. They should not come out of the cold into the cold. They should feel the fire of the Holy Ghost in the church community; especially in the winter.

THE COMMUNITY SHOULD RESPOND IN THE WINTER: Every community of believers should prepare to respond to tragedy and the effects of a cold world with the love of God.

Poverty does not know a season, but it seems to flourish in the winter. When there is poverty we must act to relieve it.

Even though winter comes, there is still hunger. Where there is hunger we must provide both the spiritual and physical bread of life to the full extent of our ability.

Even though winter comes we still need life's essentials. Our goal is to seek the full employment of our people, the proper education of our children; to protect our families against destructive forces such as drugs, crime, juvenile delinquency, and declining morality.

Even though it is winter we must not take our eyes off the prize. We must remain focused. To provide housing for the homeless, counseling for the insecure, and a spiritual support group for those striving to live the Christian life is our goal!

Even in the winter we must continue to lift up the name of Jesus and thereby make a difference in the quality of life of the community. That is our goal. We must keep the fire going!

Keeping The Fire Burning

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church should labor to keep the fires of the spirit burning at all times, especially in the winter

We must keep the fires burning because we never know when a wayward child may come home from experiencing a cold, cruel world!

I srael kept the fire burning at the Tabernacle until the construction of the Temple of God.

In 2 Chronicles 7 at the dedication of the temple, Solomon prays to God and asks him to accept the temple as a place of worship and asks God to consecrate it for his worship.

God answered Solomon's prayer lighting the fire on the altar in the new temple just as he had in the tent of the Tabernacle.

He answered Solomon's prayer request by saying, "If my people, who are called by my name would humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and heal their land."

They kept that fire going...even though the nation later split in two over civil differences.

They kept the fire until they were taken into captivity. Then the fire in the temple went out.

When the fire went out the spirit of the people dropped to an all time low!

When the fire went out hope dissipated!

When the fire went out faith waned!

It is dangerous in the church, when the fire goes out!

People give up hope, when the fire goes out!

People lose confidence, when the fire goes out!

The church grows cold, when the fire goes out!

The fire is gone out when the people are no longer guided by the spirit of God but have been taken captive by a foreign power!

The Old Testament closed with Israel shivered in the winter of its own discontent. They had no word from God. For over 400 years they shivered in the cold, looking for a new fire from heaven!

They were looking for a fire that would not go out!

They were looking for an eternal fire from God!

In the winter months ahead, we need the fire from heaven!

The Holy Spirit is the fire from heaven!

The Spirit of God is not quenched by rising storms or the chill of winter.

He keeps us warm through the power of faith.

The church should labor to keep the fire burning!

We should keep sending up the praises and putting logs on the fire!

Even in the winter we should keep telling the old story!

Even in the winter, tell the world about Jesus!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary!

Even in the winter, tell them how he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But tell them, that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Keep the fires burning!

Keep your eyes on the prize!

Keep sending the praises up.

Even though winter comes keep reminding the world that God is still on the throne!

No. 9223-Inspiration

What You Looking At?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 24, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth." Psalm 33:13-14

Introduction

Have you ever caught someone looking at you? Whenever someone stares at us it makes us extremely uncomfortable. Instantly, we start checking ourselves to be sure that everything is in place. We check our hair and clothing. Women check to see if that slips or not hanging and men double check flies. When someone stares we instantly try to figure out what it is about us that is making them stare. Because staring makes others uncomfortable, our parents often taught us not to stare at people or to point our fingers at them because it makes them uneasy.

People have a tendency to act strangely whenever someone stares. A man takes a beautiful woman in a crowded public place then gets angry because other men stare at her. Instantly, he's in their faces with his fist balled up, angrily yelling, "What you looking at?"

A woman dresses sexy, showing all of her endowments, and then gets mad at other women who are shaking their heads at how much of her personals are on display. In anger, she turns and asks them, "What you looking at?"

It's not proper grammar to say, "What you looking at?" with that end of sentence preposition that irritates English teachers, but that's the way it is said in common vernacular. "What you looking at?"

"What you looking at?" is often a question tinged with confrontation. It is often a subtle warning to cease and desist. Stop looking. Stop staring.

When our friends and neighbors stare at us we say, "What you looking at?" But what do we do if we find out that the one who is looking at us not a neighbor but God?

Do we respond, "What you looking at?" Probably not.

The fact is, God is always looking at us. He watches us 24/7. He sees us and knows all about us. He sees us in every circumstance. He sees us at our worse and at our best.

God does more than stare, he looks at us hard. He sees every strength and he also sees every flaw.

Because God is looking at us all of the time, we can feel comfortable that we are never out of his sight. He looks and he keeps watch over us day and night.

Who is God watching? He is the good Shepherd. He is watching his sheep.

As Christians, we should rejoice that our God is watching over us and looking at us very hard. That gives us the assurance that just as his eye is on the sparrow, we know he watches us.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains both the omniscient and the omnipresent nature of God.

God is the creator of the universe but is not so distant that he is not conscious of the acts and thoughts of each person he has created. God knows his creations better than they know themselves.

While God looks upon "all" of his creation he also looks at each component. He sees both the forest and the individual trees.

In Psalm 139 David referred to the omniscience of God when he noted that God knows what he is thinking even before he thinks it. He knows all, yet looks on his creation with an inquisitive eye, watching each person in a peculiarly personal way.

Because God is omniscient, or has perfect knowledge, he can look at each of us in a divinely perfect way that cannot be hidden from his view or blocked out. He looks at us in ways that no one else can.

Because god is omnipresent, or is present everywhere at the same time, he can look at everyone, around the world at the same time individually, privately and respond to us in the same way.

For this reason, David said God is deserving of praise because he looks on his creation with love and compassion.

When Man Looks

When man looks at us, man generally sees what he wants to see or what we want him to see.

People have a tendency to look for the worst in us. They see all of our flaws and short comings.

They are looking at the mistakes we have made. All of us have made them in the course of our lives. Since our lives are open books, everyone seems to know about our mistakes. They follow us like dark clouds always hovering overhead. When man looks at us he usually sees our mistakes.

When man looks at us he sees our weaknesses. Even the best patriarchs of the bible had weaknesses. You name the great man or woman and you'll find a person with a weakness. David was a man after God's own heart, but he had a weakness for Bathsheba. Solomon was wise but he had a weakness for pretty women. Absalom could have ascended to the throne of Israel but he had a weakness for power. Judas was the treasurer of Jesus' inner circle but he had a weakness for money. We all have weaknesses. It's our weaknesses that our critics see. The say, "he's a good man ..but" or "she's a good woman, but."

When man looks he sees our contradictions. He sees our confusion and he sees our frustration and fear in times of peril.

When man looks he sees everything that is wrong with us.

Since we are imperfect beings he always has plenty to see. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

When man looks all he can see is how far we are from the glory of God. He sees a pitiful, flawed wretch who, if not for the grace of God, would be condemned forever.

When God looks

God looks too, but when God looks he is not looking for things that are wrong, even though he sees them. When God looks, he looks after us, he looks through us, and he looks at us.

GOD LOOKS AFTER US: No matter who we are, it is good to know that God is looking after us. God sees our troubles and he is looking after us. 2 Kings 14:26 says, "The LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel." God saw the troubles that his people endured under ungodly leaders and taskmasters. He saw that they had no help and responded. God does the same for every one of us. He sees our troubles and knows our afflictions. In our troubles he looks after us just as he did Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness and in the Canaan Land. What is God looking at? God is looking after us every day!

GOD LOOKS THROUGH US: God looks through us. Even though we can fool many of the people around us, God looks through us and peers deep into our inner souls. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Psalm 139 says he knows our "down sitting and our uprising." He even knows the thoughts of our mind before we think them. He knows what we really think and feel. We can't hide it from him. Isaiah 59:15 "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." God also sees us when we are at our worse. He sees us when we lie, cheat or steal. It displeases him to see us secretly living against his will then pretend we are righteous. What does God do about it? Verse 18 of Isaiah 59 gives us a hint. He saw what they were doing wrong. It displeased him and responded by giving them a dose of their own medicine (v18). God sees our sins and sometimes leaves us to reap the penalties associated with it.

GOD LOOKS AT US: God looks at us directly. Though there are millions of people in the world God can focus on one individual. He looks at our houses, at the numbers posted on our doors. He looks at us personally. Does that amaze you that God can disaggregate a large crowd and pinpoint one individual? Mark 5:32 gives an example of Jesus moving through a multitude of people and a woman with an issue of blood touched his garment and he stopped and looked. The verse says, "And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing." The Lord looks at thousands but he can focus on the problems of one person because

he looks at us closely; looking and listening to our words and feeling our pain. That's what happened when a woman was distressed because she had no income. Her husband and son died, she had no source of income. Bills mounted. In frustration she cried. Luke 7:10 says, "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." When Christ looks, he looks for opportunities to help us and lift us to better our lives. He looks for opportunities to resurrect us and give us new life!

He sees sheep that need a shepherd

Finally, when God looks at us, he sees sheep that need a shepherd.

We are not naïve enough to believe that God only sees our good; we know he sees our weaknesses too. But while he sees our weaknesses, he also looks at our humility before him and repentant spirit.

2 Chronicles 12:7 says, and "When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves" he decided not to destroy them but to give the people one more chance.

We are like sheep that have gone astray, God looks at us and realizes that we need a shepherd.

So David wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

He looks after us like a shepherd and leads us beside the still waters.

He looks over us like a shepherd and prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies.

He looks at us and anoints our head with oil until our cups run over!

When God looks at us he focuses all of the infinite resources of creation on our situation!

When God looks at us he summons the legions of heaven to the edges of glory so they can watch as he pays close attention to the whispered prayer of the least of the saints.

When God looks at us he prepares the angels of the third heaven to harness the powers of time and eternity as he prepares to wave his majestic hands.

What you looking at? We are looking at a God who can take our stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!

What are you looking at? We're looking at a God who can turn our handicaps into handrails.

What are you looking at? We're looking at a God who take our troubles and turn them into triumphs!

What are you looking at? We're looking at a God who can take our inabilities and turn them into initiatives.

Lift up your heads on ye gates and the King of Glory shall come in!

Lift up your heads, look at Jesus!

Just one look and he'll dispel your doubts and renew your faith!

Just one look and he'll ignite your passions and restore your hope!

Just one look and he'll take away your despair and give you joy!

I don't know who you looking at, but I'm going keep my eye on Jesus!

I want Jesus to keep looking after me!

I want Jesus to keep looking over me!
I want Jesus to keep looking through me!
I want Jesus to keep looking at me!
Jesus, he's greater than any burden you may be bearing!
Jesus, he's more powerful than any enemy you may be facing!
Jesus, stronger than any problem you may be facing!
Jesus, Mary's baby!
Jesus, my rock in a weary land!
He died out on Calvary..
But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!
I'm so glad that he's looking….
At me and you!

No. 9224-Christian Education

Prepare To Change The World

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2006

SCRIPTURE:"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:11-17

Introduction

How many coaches would put their football teams on the field without the proper training and preparation? What about baseball? Would a basketball coach allow his players on the court if they did not know the fundamentals of ball handling, rules of the game, or the fine points of the team's strategy to win?

When coaches of teams whip their players into physical shape, teach them the fundamentals of the game, and prepare them for the contest, they "equip" them for their night under big lights. Only a sorry coach would dare send players on the field who are not equipped with the essentials to play the game.

In reality, this is true in many walks of life. It does not matter about the name of the field of endeavor, we want each practitioner to be sufficiently equipped for their area of service. We don't want an ill equipped doctor operating on us. Neither do we want a poorly equipped mechanic repairing our automobiles. We want them to be fully trained and equipped.

Consider the little boy who wanted to be a fisherman so bad that he could not wait. The boy read many books about fishing and was captivated by the lure of sitting on a boat and catching many fish. One day he decided he would slip away and go fishing. He put on a fishing hat, jumped in the boat and paddled out to the middle of a pond; just as he had seen in many books and movies. He looked at the water for a second or two and waited. Then it dawned on him that he was not prepared to catch fish. He didn't have a fishing pole. He did not have any bait or lures. He didn't even have a container in which to place to fish if he had caught them. The only thing he really had

was a desire to catch fish, but he wasn't really equipped for his fishing trip.

Is it possible that often the church approaches its ministries in the same way? We have a desire to catch fish for the Lord or to evangelize and make disciples but we don't have the skills, training or biblical education necessary to either catch men for Christ or to hold them after we catch them. We have plenty of excitement and zeal but we are short on knowledge.

This underscores the importance of Christian Education in every church. Through Christian Education, believers are taught the basics of bible knowledge and principles. Its aim is to help believers become "Christ like" in their everyday living. Leadership Training goes one step beyond. Its goal is to train believers to lead other believers in various areas of ministry. Together they are generally called "discipleship." The goal of discipleship is to help equip believers to better serve the Savior.

As Christians, we know that we should prepare ourselves for kingdom building. Only when we are properly equipped can we expect to give our best service to the master and help change the world.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that the gifts given to saints were designed to equip them for ministry.

Paul noted that saints are equipped (perfected) for ministry in a variety of areas closely associated with their gifts. He listed evangelists, teachers, pastors, and prophets as examples of various areas of ministry for which believers should be equipped.

Equipping the saints helps create an orderly spiritual state among believers and then works to strengthen, confirm, and advance them in their proper place and function. Operating in this context, each believer contributes to the good of the whole. Proper preparation for ministry insures that the doctrines of the gospel are correctly interpreted and that believers successfully discharge the functions of their specific ministry.

The purpose of equipping or perfecting the saints is the edifying of the body of Christ; that is, to build up the church, which is Christ's mystical body, by an increase of their graces, and an addition of new members. All are designed to prepare us for heaven which is noted in verse 13 with the phrase "Till we all come."

Christ charged believers to go into the entire world and preach the gospel, baptizing, teaching and reaching in his name. He provided believers with certain gifts to equip them to do that task. These gifts, when amplified by the Holy Ghost and training, would equip the saints to do what he wanted them to do.

Preparing to Change The World

To change the world for Christ, believers must be prepared to think, believe and act like Christ. That implies that there are several areas that may need adjusting

spiritually. There are several challenges before us.

WE MUST BE EQUIPPED TO THINK SPIRITUALLY INSTEAD OF LOGICALLY: Sometimes we give too much credit to our own knowledge. We often depend heavily upon our intellect and learning and less upon our heart. The world equips us to think logically and to discard anything that is not logical. The man who depends totally upon the logical, practical, and the political, views matters of the heart as secondary. There are many today who test every situation against their knowledge and wisdom and leave little rule for matters of the heart. Perhaps that's why Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." We must be equipped to think without spirit and not always lean to our own understanding.

WE MUST BE EQUIPPED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS: Believers must be equipped to change the social conditions in the world around us. Before we can go to all the world, we must respond to the needs of the local community. Everywhere you look there is poverty around us. We must equip believers to help others to lift themselves out of poverty. We must show them how to effectively respond to the homeless and helpless of our community.

We must equip each believer with the training necessary to snatch our youth out of the jaws of social death that is destroying them little by little. We must also implement programs that will strengthen families, and improve marriage relationships. We must be equipped to deal with a growing crime problem in our community while at the same time preparing to minister to those who are incarcerated.

Nearly every family has someone who has been touched by the criminal justice system. We must equip ourselves to respond by showing our members how to develop prison ministries that minister to the incarcerated and to those who are released.

Right now we are not fully equipped to respond. That's why we need training that we might respond to those who are care givers, those in need of medical attention or even to those who are struggling to learn the basics of personal management.

The "Perfecting" of the saints, in this context, means equipping believers to respond in a way that edifies our savior.

WE MUST EQUIP BELIEVERS TO KNOW THAT THEY DON'T KNOW: One of the hardest tasks of the church is to show believers that there is a need for them to know. Too many believers think they know it all or at the least that they know enough, so they are not interested in Christian education. Sometimes we can delude ourselves into believing that we know more than we actually know.

Consider the smart little mouse that knew more information than any mouse around. He read constantly and often led debates about the virtues of living the life of a mouse. One day,since he had such great knowledge, he decided to conduct a class for the other mice. The class would teach them all he knew about Cats. He posted signs everywhere announcing his class. The young mice were excited, because this was one of the smartest mice around. If anyone could help them learn about cats, he could.

On the day of the first class, the room was filled with little mice. However, there were no old mice present. Just the little ones. There was a big guy who came too. He sat in the back of the room. The mouse proceeded to lecture the little mice about cats. The cat has nine lives. The cat has fur and great claws.
The cat purrs and meows. The cat has peculiar looking eyes. He went on for many minutes. Suddenly the guy in the back of the room stood and showed his teeth and started chasing all of the little mice.

The young mouse ran outside the room and barely escaped being clawed. Several days later the little mouse met a group of old mice and he asked them a question. "Why didn't you attend my class on cats the other day?" He asked. One old mouse responded, "You know what the book says about cats, but you had never seen a cat yourself. We didn't come to your class because we have seen cats and we know what cats eat for lunch!" We must equip believers to realize that they don't know it all.

WE MUST SHOW BELIEVERS HOW TO STUDY THE WORD: 1 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

To study the Word is to read it for understanding, compare it with other scriptures, visualize it with the help of historical background, and clarify it through repetitious analysis.

What is the challenge?

The challenge is for the church to reemphasize its commitment to the importance of preparation and training. This commitment reemphasizes that no matter how much we love a brother or a sister and want them to participate on a leadership level of our auxiliary, we refuse to do so if those brothers or sisters are not willing to commit themselves to a minimum level of training and in-service preparation.

This training should equip every member to at least have basic bible skills. To know that Genesis is in the front of the Bible and not the back!

This training should orient every member to know the history, heritage and program of the church and how the church program is reflected in the Word of God.

This training should prepare every leader, through attitude and aptitude, to serve in his chosen area of church work.

But more than that, this training gives each leader a greater appreciation and understanding of his faith. Training helps him to appreciate the songs of the choir, the sermons of the pastor, and sacredness of the worship.

This training gives him the courage to witness, the faith to endure trials, and the inspiration needed for moments of desperation.

We must know God for ourselves

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we can't change the world for God if we do not have a personal relationship with God ourselves.

You might be able to explain that there are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the Old and 27 in the New, but you must know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible contains books of prophecy, literature,

history and doctrine, but you must also know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible has 3,586,489 letters 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, and 1,189 chapters but you must also know the Lord for yourself.

You may know that the longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9, and the shortest is John 11:35 "Jesus Wept" but you must also know Lord for yourself!

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high. That's why the old warriors cried out "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the song writer says, "You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself!" You got to know Jesus, you don't need nobody else!"

When we have been changed, then we can show others what a changed life looks like!

When the world around us has been changed, then we are ready to change the rest of the world!

Every saint should keep telling the world about the words of God, but we should also let the world know that we know Lord ourselves!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how He lived on this Earth for 33 long years!

Tell them how He bore an old rugged cross!

Tell them how He died out on Calvary!

But, don't forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

9225-Anniversary

A Ransom for Our Souls

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2006

SCRIPTURE:When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. Exodus 30:12; "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" 1 Peter 1:18-19

Introduction

How do you say thanks to God? When we look at our history, we see a long journey that has brought us from slavery, through the wilderness, to our present state. We often gather together to celebrate, commemorate and rededicate ourselves to God who is responsible for our lives and being. Each time we meet, it marks an important anniversary, a milestone of faith and another time to reflect and unify ourselves for the rest of the journey.

In 1996 the nation stood in awe as one million Black men assembled on the mall in Washington, D.C. to celebrate what was called a "Day of Atonement." There were pledges made and old vows of manhood were renewed. They celebrated the beauty of our people and our men, but most of all there was a call for us to atone or straighten up our act. They also recognized the need to give more of themselves to make atonement to God.

Celebration is biblical. Whenever believers looked back on what God did for them they celebrated.

When Abraham secured a wife for his son Isaac there was a celebration.
When Moses announced that after 400 years Israel would finally leave Egypt, there was a celebration.

When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land which flowed with opportunity like milk and honey, there was a celebration.

When David finally secured the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Israel he was so happy that he celebrated by dancing nearly naked in the street.

When the Prodigal son returned home, his father killed the fatted calf and ordered a celebration.

When we meet to celebrate our journey as believers, we rejoice. We rejoice because Jesus gave us the grand opportunity to live God centered lives here and even

beyond this life. We rejoice because He gave himself as a ransom for our souls!

That's enough reason to celebrate. It's also enough reason to rally ourselves and give thanks to God for His goodness, mercy and loving kindness.

How do we celebrate this kindness from God? We celebrate differently than those of the world. The story is told of a 90 year old, hard of hearing man, who went to see his doctor for a checkup. The doctor gave him his report and the man celebrated the news. A few days later the old man was seen walking down the street with two gorgeous women on his arms. Later, the doctor talked to the old man who was still celebrating.

"You seem to be doing great" the doctor said.

"I'm doing just what you told me, doc. You said for me to get two hot mamas and be cheerful." The old man said.

Surprised the doctor said, "What I said was, 'You have a heart murmur, be careful!' These hot mamas are killing you!"

When believers celebrate important days we must do it the right way. We must celebrate God's way. We must give him praise, give him our resources and we must give him our contrite spirit.

As Christians, we must let the world know what God has done for us. As we celebrate we should also bring our gifts and repentant spirit before the one who gave himself as a ransom for our souls.

Exposition

This text focuses on the gifts Israel brought to God as a memorial for his great works in their lives and to make atonement for their sins.

Moses ordered all men 20 years old and above to register themselves for service to God. In connection with their registration each was to pay one fifth of an ounce of silver to acknowledge that God had bought back his soul and protected him from the plagues of the wilderness. The ransom was individual in nature. Each man had to stand for himself, both the poor and rich; each paid the same amount.

Those who participated in the memorial acknowledged that they received their lives from God, that they had forfeited their lives to him, and that they depended upon his power and patience for the continuance of them; and thus they paid homage to the God of their lives and avoided the plagues and punishments that their sins deserved.

The money was used in the service of the tabernacle. Wesley notes that some of it was used for the purchase of sacrifices, flour, incense wine, oil, salt, priest's garments and other essentials. In addition the silver collected was used to build a portable foundation for the tabernacle. There were 603,550 men who brought their silver offering to that first memorial celebration. The silver collected weighed over four tons. Most of it was melted down and shaped into a portable foundation for the tabernacle. Whenever Israel moved the tabernacle moved.

The foundation for the tabernacle, made of the atonement offerings of the people, moved too. When the tabernacle was set up in a new place, the foundation was set

in place. The entire tabernacle with its lavish curtains, tapestries and gold ornaments rested on a foundation made from the atonement offerings of over 600,000 men.

The foundation of Israel's worship was built on the atonement offerings of the people.

The dwelling place of God was built on a foundation of the sacrificial gifts of the people.

The foundation of faith is atonement. This truth was even symbolized in Egypt as Israel was commanded to paint the three sides of their door posts with the blood of a lamb. While the blood on the three sides of the door posts required only faith in God to do as he said, no blood was applied to the threshold or the floor.

The foundation of complete salvation is in atonement. You didn't have to be an Israelite to be saved from Egypt's death plague; all you needed was enough faith to stand behind the blood. But complete salvation would require atonement. So only three sides of the doors were painted in blood; the final act would require atonement.

In the book of Exodus, atonement was both an individual and collective act. Each individual brought a sacrifice and paid a tribute. The atonements they made brought protection from the plagues of the desert and other hardships, but they did not extend to the life beyond the wilderness.

In the New Testament we have learned that neither silver, gold nor any of the corruptible things of this world can save our souls or guarantee us a place in the kingdom of heaven. Our gifts and offerings are still required to sustain our worship and show our love but they cannot purchase our salvation and redeem our corruptible souls.

As the silver of the atonement offerings of Exodus was the foundation of atonement, the blood of Jesus Christ is foundation for our redemption. This is the point that Peter made in his epistle. We are bought with a price and that price is the precious blood of Christ; the blood of an innocent person, a lamb without blemish and without spot. When Christ shed his blood he redeemed us, saved our souls and guaranteed us a place in the kingdom.

Thus, we saints memorialize our atonement by presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, giving of gifts and celebrating the blood of Christ, the foundation of our salvation, which was given as a ransom for our souls.

We Must Commemorate our Journey

As we focus on the anniversary of the church and its long journey we must commemorate. To commemorate is to honor the memory of something. For the church commemoration is to remember the old warriors who have fought the battles to help bring the church to this day.

We remember those who praised God in more difficult times, without air conditioning, or musical instruments.

We remember those who praised the blood stained banner with Dr. Watts hymns and short metered hymns.

We remember those who gave of their nickels and dimes to build crude worship

centers in which to offer prayers for the generations to come.

We commemorate those who continued the journey even though they experience times when they were caught between a rock and a hard place. Those were the times when they faced trouble on every side. During such times they found that all they could really do was to say like David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

We commemorate their dependence on the power of God because they were powerless to help themselves. When we look back we realize that their only hope was for someone bigger than themselves to help them.

We commemorate their faith that God cared about them and loved them.
When we commemorate, we applaud God's helpfulness, and compassion.

We commemorate his goodness to our forefathers and to ourselves for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

We Must Rededicate ourselves for the journey

As we commemorate our journey we must rededicate ourselves for the journey.
One of the ways to rededicate ourselves is to draw closer to God.
To rededicate ourselves in this context is to renew our pledge to surrender ourselves to his will. One of the by products of surrendering to God and resisting Satan is the fact that these two steps will automatically draw us, closer to him.

Our rededication signifies our desire to walk close to God in the present and future just as we have in the past.

We rededicate ourselves to the support of his church and its various ministries by the giving of our sacrificial service and offerings.

We rededicate ourselves to Christ because he gave himself as a ransom for our souls. We draw strength from our redeemer and want him close. That's why the songwriter wrote, "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to the cross where thou has died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

We should celebrate our Journey

We should also celebrate our journey and give thanks to God for his mercy.
The Israelites celebrated their journey by the giving of special offerings and renewing their pledges of faithfulness to God

They celebrated their journey by giving thanks.
Should we do less?

Every believer's celebration is filled with thanksgiving

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank

him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, "In everything, give thanks." When we consider our journey we can't help but give thanks for the help the Lord has given us.

We must tell the story of our journey

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead we must tell the story.

We must tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Today as we commemorate, rededicate and celebrate, we must tell the world that in the midst of these fearful times, there is still a reason for joy; it's a strange combination, only enjoyed by those who know that the church is built on Christ, and that is a sure foundation.

The Tabernacle of the Old Testament was built on a foundation made of the silver sacrifices of 600,000 men.

There has never been a record of the Tabernacle falling down.

It withstood windstorms, sandstorms and rain!

For all of the years of Israel's journey it never fell once, because it was pitched on a sure foundation.

The Church today is built upon an even stronger foundation, Jesus Christ. The solid rock. Because of this foundation we are able to:

—stay CALM in midst of crises

—have PEACE in the midst of problems

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

This foundation is the solid rock!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

Moses saw the promised land from the top of Mt. Nebo, but I know a man, who is the foundation of our faith

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!
Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!
Jesus, who gave himself as sacrifice for our salvation!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!
Jesus….
He was the ransom for our souls!

No. 9226-Prayer

Hacking Into Heaven

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 8, 2006

***SCRIPTURE:** If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7*

Introduction

Do you know someone who has been the victim of identity theft? Today, there is considerable concern about protecting our identity against hackers who steal our personal information and buy things in our names. Over the years there have always been persons who were successful at stealing the names and Social Security numbers of others and getting rich on stolen purchases. However, lately we have become overly concerned with this problem with the spread of the internet.

There is hardly a day that passes that we do not hear about someone who has become the victim of hackers. Hackers are persons who are experts at learning secret passwords and codes to gain entry into forbidden areas. No area is immune to hackers. They have hacked into U.S. government files, even the Veteran's Administration and the FBI. They have hacked into banks and stolen millions of dollars from individual accounts. Even student hackers have tapped into school computers and changed grades. Airplanes have been grounded, police departments have been confused and whole cities have been shut down as hackers found their way into secret systems, using stolen access codes and security information.

Despite efforts of many companies, no one has been able to stop the growing army of hackers, some of whom are as young as 13 years old. Why do they do it? Just to show that it can be done.

While hackers have successfully tapped banks and law enforcement agencies, there is one area that seems impregnable to hackers. They have not found a way to hack into heaven.

Believers have access to the greatest resource in the world, the Grace of God, yet there are many who have not yet learned how to access the resources of heaven.

You can't hack your way to God. Even though you may try, you can't steal someone else's identity and gain God's blessings. What God has for those who abide in him and lose themselves in his will, is hacker proof.

As Christians, we are confident that we have access to God through Jesus Christ. He has given us the pass code, which is his name. His name is then compared to the list of names of those who abide in his words, obey his commands and walk in his

will. That gives us an access code that even the best hackers can't break.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of the believer's ask/receive relationship with God.

Jesus told his disciples that if they continued to "abide" in him and allowed him to abide with them, then they could ask what they wanted and they would receive.

The Greek word for "Abide" in this text is "Meno". It has various meanings but generally means to "remain." Specifically it means to "remain as one, without a difference." When Christ used this word explaining the ask/receive relationship he noted that there should be no difference between his will and the believer's desire or his desire and the believers will. The believer loses himself completely in the will of God and there is no difference.

The second key word of this text is the phrase "ye will." The Greek phrase for "ye will" is "ethelo" which means to "have in mind" or an intention.

When the receive clause of this text is combined with the "ask" clause they seem to say, if a believer's desire is based on the beliefs, teachings and purpose of the savior then whatever he asks will be granted.

The secret of the text the believer knowing the will of God, adopting it as his own, then allow God to respond to their request in his way.

There are four passages of scriptures that layout the way believers gain access to God to get answered prayers. John 15:7 says "Remain (abide) in Jesus and his words in you; John 15:16 says, to ask in "My name"; 1 John 3:22 "We receive because we obey his commandments."; 1 John 5:14 "we ask according to his will."

These three truths: Asking, submitting and obeying, form the impregnable security code that guarantees believers access to the throne of Grace.

Hacker Proof

There are three things that must be done to get a prayer through to God. We must:

OBEY GOD: Obedience is required before we hope to get God to hear our prayers. We can't live in disobedience and expect him to hear us each time we pray.

SUBMIT TO HIS WILL: We must ask God for those things that are according to his will for us. It should be our desire not to go in any direction he does not want us to go or do anything he does not want us to do.

ASK IN JESUS' NAME: We should always make our prayer requests in Jesus' name. We are not worthy to stand before God. He is our mediator and ushers us to the throne of Grace.

These three elements are the access code that gets our prayers through.

Those who try to pray to God without the proper access, are trying to "hack" their way into the throne of God. Yet Jesus reminds us that he is the way, the truth and the life. No man gets to the father without him. Despite this knowledge many try to

hack their way into heaven anyway.

IDENTITY THEFT: There are many who try to hack into heaven by appearing to be Christians. They attend worship, preach, sing in the choir and serve in church ministries and assume the identity of Christians. They talk church talk and float in church circles long enough to fool the most inquisitive believer. However, they notice that when they pray, nothing seems to happen. Why? They were not able to gain access to the throne of grace because they appeared to be Christians but they were not really walking the walk. Jesus said to "Abide in me" not "Sit beside me." There is a difference. The person who fakes the Christian life can sit beside a Christian but can't get access because the heavenly security code requires us to also present an abiding life that can be verified in the heavenly database.

STEALING THE PASSWORD: There are many hackers who gain access to prohibited information by stealing the access codes and illegally using them. A hacker who can get your login name and your password can usually hack his way into your files. With the proper pin number and your debit card, a hacker can clean out your bank account. So, many try to steal access codes. There are many who try to hack into heaven by praying using the password that they read in the bible. Jesus said, ask it in my name. It doesn't take very long to figure out that the name of "Jesus" is the password, so they pray and use the name of Jesus as if it is a magic password that will instantly open any closed door. So, a man or woman who lives outside of the will of God doesn't understand why their password is rejected. Sometimes they get angry. That's what happened to Cain when his sacrifice was not accepted. He killed his brother. Stealing the words "in Jesus name" out of the bible won't guarantee access but access is encrypted, it requires believers to present a life that is obedient to God and one that is submission to his will to unlock the code. Stealing the Password won't give a non-believer access to God because there are two other parts that are needed: obedience and a willingness to submit to the will of God.

SPIRITUAL FIREWALLS: Some spiritual hackers try to get blessings and other special considerations from heaven by slipping in a disguised prayer. They are not aware that heaven has a spiritual firewall. A firewall is a barrier between a local computer and the internet. It keeps intruders out, but sends and receives mail from those who are authorized. You can't pray a prayer in Jesus' name while living in disobedience or choose not to submit to him and expect that prayer to get pass the heavenly fire wall. Your prayer is the prayer of an intruder and firewalls keep out intruders. Firewalls are selective about who is allowed access. But there are some hackers who speak so well that their prayers sound good enough to pass inspection. However next to the firewall, heaven has virus protector and spam filters. A spam prayer is one that is disguised well but usually gets stopped because it comes from the same source, or ip address. What is a spam prayer. That's short for "Slick, prayer, ain't, much." Spam prayers won't get pass the firewall and the spam filters because they are not from persons who know the access code: An obdedient life, submissive to God's will, requesting in Jesus' name.

If You've Lost Your Password

Finally, brothers and sisters, if you have lost your password or never really had one, you can get another by just asking.

There are many people in the world who have not prayed in a while. In fact it has been so long they have forgotten how. Their lives have been out of touch with God and some have been disobedient. There are still others who have forgotten how to submit themselves to the will of God.

If you have forgotten your password, you always get back. It's just a matter of sending a request and it comes back to you.

Have you been away from God so long that you have forgotten how to really pray? Have you lost the three components that you need to gain access: an obedient life, a desire to submit to his will, and request in Jesus' name? All you have to do is ask God to forgive you and its done. David sinned so bad that God turned his back on his family and the whole nation. But David dropped to his knees and said, Create in me a clean heart oh God. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and renew a right spirit within me.

It's a matter of saying Lord, I'm a sinner who has lost his way. Forgive me. I want to obey you, abide in you and lose myself in your will. Give me access to the throne of grace.

If you have never received a password and want to be able to have access to God, it's a matter of accepting Jesus Christ as your personal savior. His blood will save you. The holy spirit will place a firewall around you and the Lord himself will guarantee you access to the throne of Grace by the power of his name.

It's a great thing to have access to God.

When you have access to God, you know that your prayers get through!

I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things!

Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!

Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!

Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!

In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!

In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

Abide in him, trust in his words, and ask what you will in Jesus' name and God will hear you when you pray.

No. 9227-Prayer

Friend, Will You Pray For Me?

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 15, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." Job 42:10

Introduction

Have you ever prayed for anyone? We often pray for ourselves. We talk to God about our health and our wealth. We have prayed about our future and the pursuit of our dreams, but have we really poured out our hearts to God for someone else? What about this week, have you really prayed, not just thought about, but really prayed for someone else? This is the prayer of concern we have for a friend who is struggling or even for an enemy who is misdirected. This is the prayer for a co-worker or even for your employer. Most of our prayers are for ourselves, but many of the most powerful prayers we pray are not for ourselves but are for others.

Each time we pray for someone else we access the throne of God and unleash power from heaven on their situation. The more believers pray for others, the more we focus the attention of the almighty on our concern. This is known as "intercessory prayer" or praying on behalf of others who may not even know that are the object of prayers.

Does praying for others do any good? In 2002 citizens on the East Coast were terrorized by the DC snipers who were randomly shooting people in several states from the trunk of a car with a high powered rifle. A group of 50 truckers came together and prayed for the families and for the terror to stop. A few days later, one of the truckers spotted the car in which the two snipers were sleeping. He called in the license plate numbers to the police and parked his truck across the exit to prevent an escape. In 15 minutes John Muhammad and John Lee Malvo were arrested. They were later convicted of multiple murders. John Lantz, one of the praying truckers, attributed their arrest to the power of prayer. He gave the $500,000 reward money to the victims' families and the glory to God.

Praying for others does not always mean praying for someone outside of your household. It can also mean earnestly praying for your spouse, mother, father and your children. When you pray for your wife, it is the time when there is no mention of yourself but your desire for God to bless her. Praying for your husband is directed totally for his uplifting. Praying for your parents means asking God to bless them, enlighten them and strengthen them. Praying for our friends and neighbors is the

same way. In these prayers we just lift them up before God with all of our hearts. When we pray for others, we remove ourselves from the picture completely and focus on them.

As Christians, we know the power of intercessory prayer. It unleashes powerful forces in heaven and targets them in a positive way upon those for whom we pray. In a strange way, we are also blessed when we lose ourselves praying for others. When God blesses those for whom we pray, he blesses us too.

Exposition

This text focuses on Job as he prays for his three friends.

Job was a good man whose faith in God was being tested. Satan wagered God that Job would lose faith and deny him if he lost the temporal supports that made his life comfortable. God allowed Satan to test Job with one condition; his soul could not be touched.

Job was afflicted with financial ruin, failing health and the death of his children. It all happened at once. His bright, positive, creative personality was suddenly taken captive by a spirit of bitterness, anger, self pity and depression. Nothing happened. His business plunged even further. His health condition did not improve; he even lashed out at his wife and at God.

Adding to his problem was a visit by three of his best friends. For seven days they just looked at him and said nothing. During this time his friends never prayed at all. Not once. They just looked at him and shook their heads.

When they spoke, they began to accuse Job of hiding a secret sin, that only God knew about. They said no good person could have such problems.

His friends told him that God had abandoned him.

His friends told him to he was the cause.

His friends talked to him and about him, but they never once prayed for him.

They analyzed his problem; they dissected it in many ways. They discussed his problem.

But they never once offered a single prayer for him.

Job became angry at his self righteous friends who condemned him for wrongs he had not committed. He lashed out against them. He grew bitter toward them. He resented their presence.

His mental condition deteriorated further. He could not think. He could not plan new business ventures. He could not use the creative mind that had made him rich and prosperous. The positive godly spirit of optimism and hope that was the reason behind his great success was now held captive to bitterness against God, his situation and his friends.

God spoke to Job's three friends and convicted their hearts for the unfair way they judged their friend. Then God spoke to Job and he too became convicted of his bitterness toward his friends and his doubts about God.

Even after hearing from God, Job was still held captive.

The key verse of this passage is verse 10, "And the LORD turned the captivity

of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." The captivity of Job was his depression, his bitterness, his anger, and his doubt. Even though his three friends made a sacrifice offering to God in remorse for the way they responded to Job, they still would not or could not and did not pray for Job. When Job found it in his heart to pray for them-then his captivity, his depression, his bitterness, his anger and his doubt lifted from him.

He became a brand new man. In time his fortunes returned, even greater than before, when he prayed for his friends.

Whom should we pray for?

There are four types of people who should be the object of our prayers.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED US: Each of us has been helped by someone along the way. We should constantly pray for people who help us. Children should pray constantly for their parents. Spouses should pray for each other. Our employers, mentors and benefactors should be high on our list. Anyone who has given of themselves to help us should be the object of our prayers. This type of prayer shows gratitude and humility. It acknowledges that we were helped and asks God to bless those who have blessed us. God will respond to your prayer in the same way he responded to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you." When we pray for those who have helped us we tell God that my teacher, my co-worker, my neighbor, my friend has blessed me..please bless them. And God will hear us when we pray.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HURT US: It is easy to pray for those who have helped you. It is harder to pray for those who have hurt us. That was Job's situation. His friends hurt him. He could not forgive them or pray for them and that dark feeling held him captive. Praying for those who hurt us requires us to forgive them. This spirit of forgiveness requires us to say three things: I will not say anything about this ever again to that person; he is forgiven. This is how God forgives us: "He casts our sins into the depths of the sea and remembers them against us no more," (Micah 7:19) Second, it means I will not talk to anybody else about it. I will not complain to anybody; I will not bring it up again and rehash it with anybody. Third, it means I will not talk to myself about it anymore. I will not play it over in secret all the time. I will not set up the motion picture projector in my mind and run it all over again until it arouses me and angers me and gets me all upset again. I will not replay my anger over and over again. When we reach the point in our lives when we can pray for those who hurt us, we turn our own captivity. Job prayed for his friends, even though they did not pray for him, but his captivity was turned because of his spirit. Jesus said in Luke 6:28, "Pray for those who hurt you." When we do, God will hear us when we pray.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO NEED US: We should pray for those who are need. There are many people who stand in dire need of prayer everyday. Their needs vary from financial needs, to health concerns. Some have family issues and relationship and marital issues. We should pray for those who are in need and keep them before. The Word of God urges us to constantly pray for Saints who are in need. Ephesians

6:18 (KJV) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Who needs us? The pastor needs you to pray for him because through his strength you are made strong. The choir director needs you to pray for him, because through his spirit you are inspired to sing. The deacons need you to pray for them because out of the strength and solidarity of their homes you can help you build yours. Each believer needs other saints to pray for them because each of us needs to know that there are friends rooting for us, praying for us and asking God's favor on us. We pray for those who are in need and need us, God will hear us when we pray.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW ANYBETTER: There are many people who do not pray or will not pray for themselves or others. Sometimes it is stubbornness but in other times it is because these friends of ours do not know any better. They don't know how to pray. That's why it's important to pray for those who don't know any better.

We pray for the husband and wife whose relationship has deteriorated to a litany of curse words, threats and violence. They have done everything to each other, but neither has prayed for the other. They don't know any better.

We must pray for those who still get a thrill out of the party life of night clubs and bars as the years of their lives pass right by them. They won't pray until tragedy strikes, we must pray that God will open their eyes without the need of a tragedy to bring them to their senses.

We must pray for the young who may race through life without thinking and all the while making a world of mistakes.

We must pray for our friends who know how to do many things but do not know how to pray. We must lift our co-workers and friends up before God in prayer; many of who do not know any better. When we pray for those who do not know any better, God hears us when we pray.

What Happens When we pray

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider what happens when we pray.

Believers should remind themselves that wonderful things begin to happen when we pray for those who have helped us.

We received amazing relief and new spirit when we reach the point where we can pray for those who have hurt us.

We are rejuvenated and energized when we pray for those who need us.

We are showered with blessings when we pray for those who don't know any better.

What happens when we pray?

When we pray, we get the assurance that we need in times of difficulty.

When we pray, we strengthen our faith in the power of God.

When we pray, we release the burdens that cause us grief and despair.

When we pray, we get a feeling of peace and security that flows from the throne of God.

When we pray, we arise with a sense of victory, knowing that we have put it in God's hands.

When we pray, we re-establish our faith on the unshakeable ground of God's word.

I am reminded of the story of an organist who was getting ready to play as the church service began. When he put his hands on the keys there was no sound. Everyone knew something was wrong, so the preacher quickly got up and led in prayer. The janitor was aware of the fact that they hadn't plugged in the organ. So he went during the prayer, plugged in the organ, wrote a note and handed it to the organist. The note said, "After the prayer, the power will be on."

I don't know about you, but after a good prayer, it seems like the power comes on.

When the power comes on you can:

—Resist Temptation and Overcome the devil!

—You can fight a good fight and finish your course!

---You can withstand the heat and survive the storm!

After Job prayed for his friends verse 11 says all of his friends and family came together and brought gifts and celebrated. What a celebration! What a homecoming! What an anniversary!

I was once lost, but now I'm found, blind, but now I see!

Now I see, but I don't see Job praying for his friends, I see Jesus in a garden praying for his friends!

Now I see Jesus, saying father let this cup pass from me, but nevertheless not my will, but thy will be done!

Now, I see Jesus, bearing an old rugged cross for friends who would betray him!

Now, I see Jesus, looking down upon friends too afraid to speak for him;

Friends, to ashamed to own him

Friends, too embarrassed to be associated with him.

Now, I see Jesus hanging on an old rugged cross saying, "father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

Now, I see Jesus, who not only prayed for his friends but died for the; and Early Sunday morning, arose from the dead that they might have life and have it more abundantly!

Now that I have prayed for my friends..

Now, I see Jesus!

9228-Inspiration

When God Builds A House

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2006

SCRIPTURE: And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 2 Samuel 7:12-13

Introduction

Have you ever received good news and bad news at the same time? There are times when we get both good news and disappointing news at the same time. Often the good news helps us deal with the bad news.

Generations ago the old timers treated many sicknesses with a nasty medicine called, "Castor Oil." No one really knew how it worked but it seemed to cure a wide variety of ailments. The old timers would force the sick to take Castor Oil but then they would provide a slice of orange or something sweet to follow it or to "help it go down."

Often life gives us a heavy dose of Castor Oil in the form of our disappointments. Yet, we recall many times when we were able to swallow life's disappointments because they were often followed by a little "orange juice" that helped it to go down."

That's the idea behind today's message. A great king, David, receives some very disappointing news from God, but in the same message he also received some great news that completely overwhelmed his disappointing news.

As Christians we know that God moves in mysterious ways. Sometimes he brings he good news and sometimes the news is less favorable, but no matter what kind of news receive we have learned to see God working in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on a covenant between God and David, delivered by the prophet Nathan.

David was the recipient of tremendous favor from God from his youth. God blessed him to rise from shepherd boy to King, and recognized him as a man after God's own heart.

God took David from the sheep-cote or the pasture and raised him. Nathan reminded David of his humble beginnings so that he would never lose the spirit of

humility necessary for continued success. Throughout his tenure he was often reminded of his origins so that he would not forget from whence he came.

Nathan reminded David that God had given him success and victory over his enemies (v. 9): "I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, to protect thee when pursued, to prosper thee when pursuing. I have cut off all thy enemies, that stood in the way of thy advancement and settlement."

God made him famous. He was famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more popular than any of the great men of his day.

Verses 10 and 11 give a parenthetical reflection in which David is told that God would make him successful so that the people would be happy with his administration. David was promised a long life that he would enjoy with his grandchildren.

David specifically was promised that he would receive a quiet place, free from invasion, fear of attack or war. He was also promised that he would be able to enjoy the place because the Philistines, (called the "Children of Wickedness) would not attack them as they did during the period of the judges. David, the land, and the people would enjoy a period of rest from the troubles of war.

This chapter began with David expressing concern that there was no permanent tabernacle for God. He wanted the crowning act of his administration, his legacy to be the building of a great temple for God. However, David's desire was not to happen because, instead God had decided to build David a house.

The house that God would build would not be a tabernacle or a building made from stone, wood or precious jewels. The house proposed, would be through a great family through whom the world would be blessed. God had already promised to make David a great name, but now he promises to make him a legend in the nation and in a great family as well.

This great family would be the house of David, built by the hand of God.

God made David promises concerning his son Solomon, his successor to the royal line of Judah. Those promises were: that God would advance him to the throne; that long after David's death that Solomon's reign would be clear and uncontested; and Solomon would build the great temple that David desired.

God promised to establish a father/son relationship with Solomon. He promised that he would take him into the covenant of adoption (v. 14,15): He promised to correct him if there was occasion, just as a father would and would not disinherit him (v. 15). This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David (v. 17); and God kept his word.

God honors those who reverence him

David wanted to show love and reverence for God by building God a house. He had no desire for personal gain; he only wanted to reverence God. Even though God would not allow him to do all that he wanted to do, God honored David by blessing his family. Even today, it is a good thing to reverence God, to please him and praise him. There are many ways that we want to reverence him but find that we can't. Like David, God does not allow us to do all that is in our hearts, but he notices and is impressed with our intent. In return he blesses our families.

David sought Prosperity to glorify God

Much of David's reign as king was spent making the peace and accumulating tons of gold and silver. However, David's purpose in accumulating wealth was not for himself, it was to finance the construction of the Lord's House. That should be a lesson for believers today. As we seek to prosper financially, our upward push should have God in mind. As we prosper, our desire should be that we can use that prosperity to help build God's kingdom. We should be willing to give to the church and its ministries from the storehouses that God has filled for us. We asked to be blessed so that we can be a blessing to God's program. The song writer said, "Make me a blessing. Make me a blessing to someone today." It did not say give me a blessing, but make my life a blessing. As we strive to climb up, let us resolve that the reason for our climb is because we want to be in a better position to bless God's work. When God sees our reason, he will bless our climb.

In the midst of Disappointment God promises us

David was disappointed that he would not be able to build the temple for God, but although he was let down by the words of the prophet, he was inspired and lifted by the promise of God. God promised a long life, a peaceful death, and great family heritage. What a promise! In the middle of his disappointment God turned the despair of that hour into a moment of joy. It was as if God said, "I have some bad news and some good news, which one would you rather hear first." The bad new is you won't get to build my house. The good news is "I'm going to build a house for you." In our disappointments there is always hope. There is an old saying that behind every dark cloud there is a silver lining. The song writer says, "There is a bright side somewhere." In our disappointments God always shows us his grace. In our sickness, tragedies and setbacks, God speaks boldly to our situation and we find hope. That hope is in the promises of God. The covenant that God makes with us is what keeps us going. We have his word that he will make a way for us out of no way and be a bridge for us over all of our troubling waters. Therefore even if life gives us disappointments, we don't give up because God is still on the throne.

A God-Son Relationship

God told David that his son, Solomon would have a father son/relationship with him. That was significant because while God describes the relationship he will have with David's son, who would be his "God-son" he shows us what it means to be a "God-parent." As a god-son, Solomon would literally be adopted into the family of God, complete with all of the privileges of being a child of God. It also meant that the god-son could also expect to be disciplined by the God father as well as protected and provided for by the God father's hand. The God-Father's promise is given in the

text, ""If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men, but my mercy shall not depart away from him."

God Will Uphold Your House

Finally, brothers and sisters, this text suggests that God will uphold, bless and protect the godly home.

For David, the words were simple but strong, "Thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever."

It meant God would be watching out for his family over the years, protecting, providing and insuring its survival and growth from generation to generation.

Today, we should get renewed hope when we think about how God is watching over our families.

Because God is watching over our families we can sleep in the midst of the storms of life.

In the midst of slavery our forefathers could sing, "All day, All night angels watching over me my Lord."

Because God is watching over us, we don't get overly concerned when things get tough because "his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me."

Because God is watching over us, we don't wallow in self pity when we slip, because "'we fall down, but we get up!"

Because God is watching over us, we don't wither and shrink in the face of trouble, because we know "trouble don't last always!"

Because God is watching over us, we can have joy in the midst of sorrow!

Because God is watching over us, we can have peace in the middle of confusion!

Because God is watching over us, we can have faith in the middle of doubt!

Because God is watching over us, we can have love although we are surrounded by hate!

Because God is watching over us, we can have happiness although all around us is only sadness!

Because God is watching over us, we can have hope in the middle of panic because

" We are our heavenly father's children…and "he knows how much we can bear!"

He knows, yes he knows!

He knows, when we have come to the end of our rope!

He knows, when our faith is challenged and our hope is waning!

He knows, when our names have been put on the highway and we have been called everything but a child of God!

He knows, yes he knows, just how much we can bear!

I don't know about you but I've decided to stay on the battlefield!

I've decided to keep telling the story of Jesus and his love!

I've decided to keep telling the world how he came to this wicked earth!

I've decided to keep telling the world how he died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave

With all power in his hands!

9229-Youth

When Children Pray

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 22, 2006

SCRIPTURE: Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:13-14.

Introduction

Have you ever listened to a child's prayer? A child's prayer is often simple and precise. It is said with meaning and with sincerity that mirrors the best prayers of many adults. Often set in rhymes, children's prayers say in a few words, what adults say with a thousand words.

What child's prayer do you remember?
Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take.

Many of us have heard at least one variation of this prayer:
God is great and God is good
And we thank God for our food
By God's hands we all are fed.
Thank you, God, for daily bread..

These model prayers are meant to be training tools for children to teach them the kinds of things they should say. It is not expected that they should grow into adults and still close their day with "Now I lay me down to sleep." As they mature the model should no longer be needed.

Children understand spiritual things even when we think they don't. The class was studying sea mammals. A bright student asked her teacher if he thought a whale swallowed Jonah as she'd learned in Sunday school. The teacher said, "No, a whale couldn't swallow a man because, though a whale's a huge sea mammal, its throat's too small for a man to pass through." "Oh," said student, "When I get to heaven I'll ask Jonah about it." The teacher challenged her: "But suppose Jonah didn't make it to Heaven but went to the bad place? Then what?" The little girl was full of faith, so she didn't have to think too long about that. She shot back, "In that case maybe you can ask him yourself."

Young children generally have not had their senses dulled by the ways of the

world. The young still have the potential for believing things adults have already dismissed as impossible or even ridiculous. Psychologist tell us that there is a space of time in the development of every child in which they extremely open to faith issues, belief in the supernatural, and expectancy that, when they pray with seriousness, their prayers will be answered.

During this period of development children are impressionable. They believe without question and they expect the implied result. Because they trust their parents completely, they believe that a fairy took the tooth from beneath their pillow and replace it with money. They believe in the Easter bunny. They believe that a man in a red suit can fly in a sleigh all over the world in a single night and slide down chimneys. Their parents said it, it must be so. They believe and they expect the implied result.

Believers should be very careful what we allow to filter into the minds of children during the impressionable years when they are open to issues of faith, belief and expectancy. Many children are marked for life believing that witches fly on broom sticks, vampires suck blood and that Jason rises from the dead every Friday the 13th.

It is during this window of time that children should be taught many of the basic faith issues, how to talk to God and what to expect from him. Every child should be taught to say a simple prayer at night and one for mealtime and another for special occasions.

Often, when adults pray, they do so out of a sense of routine and ritual. However, when children pray, it's the "real deal."

As Christians, we are striving to have the essential childlike qualities that will help us to talk to God in a way that is sincere. To reach that level of maturity we should observe the spirit and purity of the young and perhaps in some way emulate the moments, "when children pray."

Exposition

his text focuses on an instance when children were brought to Christ and he received them.

There are two lessons in this text. The first lesson indicates the master's desire that parents should bring the children before the Lord. The parents in this text were bringing young children, even babes to see, hear, touch and be touched by the master. They also wanted Jesus to pray for them. Jesus rebuked his disciples for trying to push the children away, indicating that he considered children important to the kingdom of God.

The second lesson of the text is the matter of faith. Jesus said, "For such is the kingdom of heaven." He noted that the faith of these little children is the kind that adults will need to fully appreciate the kingdom of heaven that he preached.

There are some believers who have been specially gifted when it comes to faith. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists nine categories of gifts. One of these categories is the gifts related to faith. While all believers may have a measured amount of faith others, have an abundance of "child like" faith that is referred to hear. This is the faith that moves mountains and believes the impossible and reaches for the unreachable.

Young children have this great faith at the beginning. They believe in the impossible. Jesus said that is the kind of faith that those who enter the kingdom of God will possess.

Three elements of children's prayer

There are three elements of a child's prayer that adults should emulate:

FAITH IN THE FATHER: Children have complete faith in their parents. They trust that no matter what the problem, that their parents will take care of the matter. They never doubt for a second that their parents have the ability to secure what they need. When a child prays to his heavenly father, it is the same. They have no doubt that God can answer their prayer. Adult believers must approach God like children, in this respect. We must believe that no matter what our concern is that God can handle it and has the power to deal with it in the way that we ask.

Consider the family members who went to the hospital to pray for the elderly grandmother. The little girl learned in Sunday School that God can heal the sick, so she prayed for her grandmother. As the family assembled at the hospital each family member was told to bring something that symbolized their faith in God. The room was filled with adults who held prayer books, bible, crosses and rosaries in their hands. The little girl was the only child in a room full of adults. After about an hour the grandmother awakened out of her comma. As her eyes opened, the first thing she saw was her granddaughter holding a pair of house shoes. Asked why she was holding house shoes the girl said, "They said for each person to bring something that showed how much faith they had in God. I prayed for you to go home. Since I know God can make that happen I brought your house shoes, so your feet wouldn't get cold when on the way home."

We need the house shoe faith of a little child to fit ourselves for the kingdom of heaven.

WE SHOULD EXPECT AN ANSWER: Very young children expect to receive an answer to their prayers. It does not matter whether they prayed for an elephant for their birthday or grow up over night like Tom Hanks in the movie "Big." They expect what they pray for. Children take God literally at his word. If God said it, it will be done. Children have a way of targeting their expectation, to one thing and one thing only. Consider the children who were given snacks after Sunday school there was a pile of apples and a big plate of cookies. The Sunday school teacher put a sign up on the apples. "Take only one apple. God is watching." One little girl took the sign literally, so she made her own sign and put it with the plate of cookies. Her sign said, "Take all the cookies you want. God's watching the apples." She expected God to be focus on the apples. She never once considered or expected that God would stop watching the apples.

That's what many adults have lost, the spirit of expectancy. Too many believers don't expect anything to happen when they pray. We say the words but we really don't expect anything to happen. That's why Jesus says we must become like little children; we must expect God to answer.

WE SHOULD BE PERSISTENT: If you've ever had a child to ask for you something, you know that they can get on your last nerve, asking you repeatedly for the same thing. They never give up. Yet, that is the spirit that Christ is saying we must have when we pray. Since we know that our father in heaven can do what we want, we should never tire of our asking. Jesus told the parable of the importuning neighbor who beat on his neighbor's door at midnight, even though his neighbor was asleep. He kept beating so long that the neighbor finally opened the door to let him in. Jesus called that importunity or persistency. Just as children never give up, adult believers should never give up when we pray. Pray persistently, even when it doesn't look like it will do any good we should pray. Remember to P.U.S.H. (Pray until something happens). God may have already made up his mind but persistent prayer can change things. He has been known to "repent" or to change his mind. That's what persistent prayer can do.

A Prayer of Thanks

Finally brothers and sisters, we must not always pray to God asking for something, we should also pray to say thanks.

It may sound too simple for the adult mind, but it does not take a Harvard scholar to understand that a simple "Thank you" can go a long ways in life.

When God has blessed us we need to know how to say thank you.

We should say thank you because we serve a God who is in the prayer answering business.

If the week is about to begin with financial troubles looming everywhere, take it to the Lord in prayer.

If there is a problem in your family that you can't solve take it to the Lord in prayer.

If there is a job that you are trying to secure, take it to the Lord in prayer.

If there is an opportunity looming on your horizon, take it to the Lord in prayer!

After you have prayed about it, step back and watch God work!

God can take bad situations and turn them around!

God can take unemployed hands and help them find work!

God can take empty purses and filled them with blessings!

God can take failures and turn them into successes!

God can take sicknesses and turn them into examples of good health!

There has never been a problem that God couldn't solve!

There has never been a valley too low to God to pull you out!

There has never been a mountain to high for God to climb!

There has never been a river so wide that God couldn't cross it!

Call on Jesus!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Call on Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

9230-Anniv.-Choir

When Ordinary People Sing

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.Matthew 28:19-20; "Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth." Psalm 96:1

Introduction

We are familiar with the songs that describe the feelings of the rich and famous, but what are the songs of ordinary people? Frank Sinatra sang, "I did it my way" but what does the ordinary believer sing? Lena Horne sang, "Stormy Weather" and Aretha Franklin sang, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" but what songs do the faithful sing on their daily journey toward the Canaan Land? Our songs usually describe our experiences and our hopes. They sometimes define where we have been and where we are going.

The songs of ordinary people describe us.

Is there one song that describes your life? If you could pick a song that best expresses your feeling at the present moment what would it be? "Rock me baby?" "I want your body?" "Hood Rich?" or "Amazing Grace?"

Those who have different experiences in life sing different songs. Those who have been hurt may sing the blues with B.B. King. Those who look toward the future may sing, "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow" with Fleetwood Mack.

The songs we sing reflect our experiences and expectations. Those songs change from moment to moment, since our lives are in constant transition. To accurately get a snapshot of who we are, we need a song that tells where we've been, where we are now and where we are going. To do that may require all of us to sing a new song.

Consider the church choir that traveled to New York for an appearance on a national television show. The church, proud of its choir, rented an entire floor of a hotel for them and sent the keys and registration information in advance to the director. All they had to do is get to their rooms and rest before the broadcast. When they arrived in the city, they were brought to an extremely fancy hotel and told that their rooms occupied the entire top floor of the 50 story building. Just as they prepared to go up, the elevator broke down. That meant they would have to take the stairs. The

director told the choir, "all things work to the good" and with good spirit they decided to sing as they went up the fifty flights of stairs, each of the 49 choir members would lead a song and the director would sing the last song. As they began they sang, "We're marching to Zion." At the 10th floor they sang, "We are climbing Jacob's Ladder", at the 30th floor they sang, "We're climbing up, the rough side of the mountain," at the 40th floor they sang, "I won't complain." When they made it to the 50th floor the choir director began to sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I see!" The choir members asked why, at the top of the stairs he chose to sing such a sad song instead of a song of victory. The director dropped his head and said, "I left all of our keys at the front desk!"-The choir members looked him and said in unison, you sang the right song!

As Christians, we are on an extraordinary mission from God. Our mission is to go into the entire world for Jesus. We are ordinary people but we are on an extraordinary mission for the Lord. When we sing about our experiences, we also have an extraordinary song.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he commissions his disciples to evangelize the known world.

This text is often called the "Great Commission." It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the disciples giving them their final assignment. They were ordinary men to whom he was giving an extraordinary mission. In a few short years, this commission resulted in the expansion of the faith to Asia Minor, the Cities of Greece and to nearly the entire known world of their time.

The experience of the disciples would obviously give them a new song to sing. Because of the challenges that they would face and victories they would achieve.

Singing was part of the Jewish experience. They sang of their humble national beginnings and during their enslavement in Egypt. They sang as they journeyed to the Promised Land. Moreover, they sang in nearly every part of their national experience. The only time they found it difficult to sing was during their captivity. It was then that there captors asked them to sing one of their famous songs and they answered, "How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land?"

David penned the 96th Psalm and challenged believers to sing a new song. In consideration of how God saved Israel, blessed them and performed miracles for them in the presence of their enemies, David said Israel should sing a new song that encompasses all that God has done for the people involving their liberty, salvation and bountiful blessing.

In the context of the New Testament mission the disciples were beginning a new journey that would require new songs as well.

The new song would be different from the song Moses sang when Pharaoh's army was drowned in Exodus 15:1.

The new song would be different from the one David sang in Psalm 13:6 in which he expressed his joy for the bountiful blessings of the Lord.

It would even be different from the song of Isaiah 12:5 in which the excellence of God was promoted. It would be a new song!

When ordinary believers consider what God has done from salvation to blessings and what he will do in the not so distant future. The song we sing will truly be a new song.

When Ordinary People Sing

When ordinary believers sing, what should be our main points of concern? If we were recording artists, entertainers and performers, we would be concerned about stage presence, projection, marketability of our songs, audience appeal and many other considerations of the music business. However, we are ordinary believers in Christ, what should be our concerns?

OUR SONGS SHOULD BE CHRIST CENTERED: Our songs should be God centered or Christ centered. This means that what we sing should reflect our nature that our lives are God centered. Everything we do and say is centered around our central beliefs about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Our songs are a reflection of that belief. What we choose to sing should be worthy of presentation to the master. Because what we sing will be presented to the Lord, those who sing should feel compelled to rehearse such that they always present God their best. Without proper rehearsal and preparation, then what is presented "to the Lord" is less than the best and is a negative rather than a positive reflection on the singers. No singer should be happy with themselves if they sing with the choir but fail to block out time to adequately prepare. Singing to the Lord is serious business. It comes from roots that are deep in faith and impact the spiritual growth of the church.

OUR SONGS SHOULD REFLECT OUR TESTIMONY: Our song must be in tune with our testimony. Many believers, even those in the choir, are not strong singers. In any given church choir, most will testify that while they can blend in with others, it is hard for them to carry the melody unless there is a strong person in their section to set the tune. When that person is missing, they sing but sing softly, afraid they may sing out of tune.

So it is in life. Many believers, whether they admit it or not, depend upon each other to stay in tune. Outside of the body of Christ it is easy to start singing another tune. It is easy to get distracted and get our lives off track. We depend upon each other, to stay on track.

We depend upon that phone call from another believer who questions our sustained absence. We depend upon words of encouragement and even the words of chastisement we receive from our teachers and ministers to help keep us in tune. We depend upon the support of friends of the faith who have the melody to keep us in tune we lose our note.

For this reason we must constantly pray for those who set the tune for us. We must constantly pray for our pastor, teachers, musicians and choir leaders. Church musicians are those who believe in God and testify with their instruments! Choir directors don't just wave their hands, they testify with their lives! We should pray

that they stay in tune with God!

Those who have been on the journey know that it is extremely difficult to sing a melody to the Lord if our lives are out of tune with his word.

It is hard to sing about faith, if we know we have no faith.

It is hard to sing about strength, if all we show is weakness.

It is hard to sing about our hope in the Lord, if we have given up on God ourselves!

Our song must reflect our testimony.

ORDINARY FOLKS SHOULD SING ORDINARY SONGS: Ordinary folks often sing ordinary songs. Some of them are old melodies passed down through the generations. Some are simple tunes. Those who sing to ordinary people should be trained to sing in various forms and styles, delivering the same witness in a variety of ways. Ephesians 5:19 says, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" Those who sing to the Lord and to others select the style of song appropriate for the moment. The psalms, what we call "Anthems" speak dramatically about the power of God. Every singer should know how to witness with the power of the word transcribed into anthems. Hymns attest to the greatness of God as he relates to us. They are standards that have survived the test of time and linger long in the hearts of believers around the world. Spiritual songs are those that speak from the soul and experience of believers. They testify about what God has done in the life of a believer. They are about blessings received, hope renewed and prayers answered.

Trained music leaders usually insure that varied forms are represented in every worship, hymns, psalms and spiritual songs. This too represents the course of every spiritual life: a devotion to God, dealing with God, and Testimony about God.

THE PRAISE OF GOD SHOULD BE OUR REASON FOR SINGING: When ordinary people sing, they have no reason to sing except to praise God. Man who sings about God in the shower. The housewife who sings while cleaning her home. The mother who sings while attending a child; all have one purpose, to praise God. Those who sing for other reasons might find their songs don't achieve their purpose. Consider the man who bought an African Parrot and discovered it could sing and talk. At home the man and the bird had long discussions about Africa, the slave trade and Negro spirituals. The bird wanted to learn a few Negro spirituals so the man taught him several Negro Spirituals and some of his favorite gospel tunes. It was amazing! He had a talking singing bird. No one at church would believe it. Finally, on the day of the choir musical he decided to take the bird to church with him. It was a strange picture to see a man come to a musical with a parrot perched on his shoulder. When the man told his friends that the bird could talk and sing his friends did not believe him. Before the musical began there were bets being placed everywhere.

No one expected the bird to sing. All through the musical the bird did not say one word. The man began to sweat. By offering time the bird still had not sung. As the service ended, the man had to payoff his bets and was real angry with the bird.

Once in the car the bird started singing loudly.

"Why are you singing now?" The man said "Don't you know I lost nearly $5,000 betting on you. Everybody cleaned up on me."

The bird looked at the man and said, “Don’t be stupid. If they won $5,000 because I didn’t sing at the musical. They’ll bet $20,000 that I can’t sing at the Christmas program. By then, you and I both will be singing a new song!”

Unlike the bird, when we sing praises to God we have no secret agenda or reason. We sing because we are happy. We sing because we are free. His eye is on the sparrow “and I know he watches me.”

Our song tells about our extraordinary journey

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we sing about God and his goodness, it should tell the world that we are just ordinary people with an extraordinary story.

When David encouraged Israel to sing a new song, he wanted them to sing a different song.

When David killed Goliath the people sang a song, “Saul hath killed his thousands but David hath killed ten thousand.” We are not told to sing David’s song, but to sing unto the Lord a new song!

When Israel was in Egypt their song was a song of desperation and trouble. It’s words were directed to God and redirected to Pharaoh “Let my people Go!”

We are not encouraged to re-sing the old song of desperation and frustration. We are urged to sing unto the Lord a new song!

When Solomon dedicated the temple, the people sang a song of accomplishment. We are urged however to go beyond singing a song of a single accomplishment and to sing unto the Lord a new song. David told Israel to look back over its journey and to take in the whole picture.

When you sing to the Lord, don’t just praise him for one experience, but rewrite your words to praise him for entire experience.

Don’t just thank him for the mountain top experiences, but sing a new song that thanks him for the valleys as well.

Sing a new song that thanks him for the sunshine and thanks him for the rain!

Sing a new song that thanks him for the good times and thanks him for the bad times too!

Sing a new song that thanks him for accomplishments we’ve made but also sing a song that thanks him for the lesson learned from failures and setbacks!

Our new song should tell our story. It ought to tell how he picked us up turned us around!

It ought to tell how he planted our feet on solid ground!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new song to sing!

“I’ve been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!”

Who died on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose up from the grave!

Our new song tells where we have been, but one of these old days we are going to sing a new song! One of these days, bye and bye, we’re going to sing, “How I got over! How I got over!

My soul looks back and wonders, how I got over!”

No-9231-Prayer

Ashes on the Altar

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 5, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon..." Numbers 4:13

Introduction

Have you ever felt that your prayers never made it through? Perhaps it was a time when you prayed fervently but, despite your most sincere prayer, you felt that your prayer went nowhere? When those moments come we feel frustrated because we desperately need to get a breakthrough in our lives, but we can't get a prayer through.

Many of us are desperately praying for a breakthrough. The clouds of disappointment, trouble, sickness, failure and frustration have overshadowed us for so long that we desperately look for the day when the grace of God will breakthrough and shine on us.

We pray for a breakthrough!

We pray for a blessing!

However, sometimes we get the idea that our prayer for a break through is not getting through.

There may be a reason that our prayers can't get through. This reason would explain why we come to the altar in prayer but leave without reaching the throne of grace.

Could it be possible that we are bringing something to the altar that puts out the fire of God's benevolent spirit toward us?

Are we bringing our ashes to the altar rather than our humbled spirit?

A preponderance of bible teaching makes it very clear that those who have not humbled themselves before God cannot expect to have their prayers heard. If we come to our personal altar in prayer but are not straight with God our prayers don't make it out of the room; certainly not before God's throne.

Look at just a few scriptures: Job 27:8-9 refers to our hypocrisy. It notes that if we say one thing and do another, that God will not hear us when we pray to him in times of trouble. Job 35:12-13 indicates that when we are lifted up in pride and full of ourselves, that God will not hear us or even regard what we say with any degree of seriousness. Those who are living lives outside of God's will find that not only will

their prayers not find their way to God, but that God will get as far away from them as he can. Proverbs 15:29 reemphasizes this truth by making it plain that God hears those who are living according to his will but stays far away from the unrighteous. Those who support treachery and death in its various forms will also find it difficult to get a prayer through as well. Isaiah 1:15 says, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Based on these truths John 9:31 says, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

All of these scriptural references point to one truth, if we want to approach the altar of God with our requests and prayers, we must be humble, repentant and live according to his will.

We can't bring sinful ashes to the altar and expect a break through.

As Christians, we know God will hear the prayers of the righteous. We approach the altar of prayer with humility and a spirit of sacrifice, with the full knowledge that God will hear us when we pray.

Exposition

This text focuses on a description of how the ashes of the altar of God were handled.

The Tabernacle of God was a portable tent that moved whenever the people broke camp. There were elaborate instructions given in this chapter about the dismantling of the Tabernacle and for the handling of the altar. Among the detailed instructions were those relating to the handling of the ashes of the altar.

Altars were places where believers made animal sacrifices to God. There were specific rules for handling the altar. Among the many rules were those that the fires of the altars be kept burning perpetually and that the ashes be removed regularly.

The animal that was sacrificed represented a particular sin. The ashes were all that was left behind of that sin. The ashes were carefully removed from the altar, but not even the attendants were allowed to look at them.

Ashes were never allowed to accumulate. The Levites arranged for the ashes to be carried away daily so that they would not suffocate the fire on the altar. The fire on the altar represented the presence of God. Ashes threatened to extinguish the fire.

The ashes on the altar would never be thrown away. They were taken outside of the camp, mixed with water and used in purification ceremonies for those who were impure in some way. The application of the ashes indicated a purity restored.

No attendants were to look at the ashes. A purple cloth was placed over the ashes by the priests so that the Kohathites, who were charge to empty them, would not see them again. The ashes of the sacrifice were considered holy, since they were what indicated God's acceptance and forgiveness of a sin.

Removal of the ashes was essential to maintain the flame on the altar of the presence of God. Removing the ashes symbolized that sins, once forgiven, were

never seen or heard from again.

Whenever someone needed purification the old ashes, mixed with water, were applied and sprinkled upon him to signify that he had been restored.

In the New Testament there is no animal sacrifice. Christ himself became our one time sacrifice. We come to him on the altar of our heart and bring him our sins in a spirit of humility and repentance. We go and sin no more. Those ashes, those sins are forgiven and covered with the purple robe of Grace and will never be held against us. Like the ashes in the water was used to help others find restoration, the ashes of our experiences, in the form of our testimony and reformed lives will also help others to find God and atonement for themselves.

Hebrews 9:13-14 says that through sacrificing goats and sprinkling ashes believers of old found forgiveness, but for us Christ is our sacrifice and source of atonement.

When we approach God in prayer, we do so with a sense of humility and repentance from our sins. Because we are humble, and have repented, Christ is our sacrifice and God hears us when we pray.

Without Christ, we simply kneel before God and pour ashes on the altar.

Our Ashes

Many can remember a time when houses, especially those in the rural, had wood burning stoves. Many have memories of cutting wood and feeding the flames of those iron stoves. Every farm youngster learned very quickly that emptying the ashes was just as important as feeding the fire more wood. After a long night of slow burning oak, the next morning those big heaters were filled with ashes that had to be removed before the fire could be successfully revived.

Many of us are unsuccessful with getting our prayer through because there are still ashes on our altars. Here are a few:

ASHES ARE RESIDUES OF WHAT ONCE WAS: When an animal sacrifice was given, the ashes represented all that was left of that sin. There are many people who still have residues in their lives; residues of what once was. Often we come to God in the spirit of the old carnal man or woman. There are residues of our street life, thug life, whore mongering life, gambling life, mean and vengeful life still present in our lives. These residues indicate that we have not fully given ourselves over to God, the old sinful man is still there, controlling, directing and suggesting. We try to pray, but we can't get our break through because we can't get past the residues of a lost love, a painful defeat, an awful humiliation, and lost pride. When we come to the altar instead of bringing our humility, repentant, we bow asking for our break through, with a bag full of residues that we pour on the altar. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, all things are become new."

There are no residues. When we approach God in prayer, the old man or woman will never be seen again but for the purpose of testimony to help restore the faith of others.

ASHES REPRESENT OUR BITTER EXPERIENCES: There are times when our bitter experiences frustrate our prayers and prohibit our breakthrough. In Exodus 32:19-20 Moses was angry with the people for their worship of a golden calf while he prayed to God on the mountain. He took their idol and burned it and ground the ashes and residue into a powder and poured it into their drinking water. Its bitterness reminded them of their sin. There are many today who have had some bitter experiences in life and cannot seem to let go of them. When they try to pray they bring the ashes of that bitter experience with them. When they pray for their children, they can't look at them without remembering the bitterness of their Exes. They pray for their spouses but still remember how they hurt us. They pray for their church, but still have a bad feeling about someone in it who has offended them. They pray for their enemies but still have not forgiven them. We can't get a prayer through because our bitterness has been ground into the fabric of our daily lives. Yet, Christ calls on us to move on with our lives. Didn't Paul say, "..forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:14) If we try to pray while still in our bitterness, we bring ashes to the altar.

ASHES SMOTHER FIRES: One reason the ashes were removed from the altar on a daily basis is because, ashes smother fires. The fire on the altar represents the presence of God; the very spirit of God himself. However, there are some who cannot experience the presence of God because they pour ashes on the altar. They come before God with so much mess, stress, drama and trauma that they extinguish their own fire. We have seen them come to worship so angry with a family member that they can't benefit from the worship experience. Someone approaches the altar for prayer out of a sense of obligation, hoping that it doesn't last too long; they put the fire out. A prayer is being offered for someone who has done you wrong and that upsets you;you put your fire out. We bring a bag full of our personal ashes to the altar and pour them on the praise, prayer and worship experience, then get upset because our bad spirit-puts out the fire on our altar. When we approach God we should bring a repentant life that is a sacrifice that will not put out the fire it will be embraced by the spirit of God. We can't get our break through until we are through pouring ashes on the fire.

Praying For Your Break Through

Finally, brothers and sisters, remember if we want our prayers heard we must empty the ashes.

When the priests ordered the ashes emptied not single ash was left behind. All residues were carefully raked up and a purple cloth was placed over them so that they would not be seen, even by the persons who would carry them outside of the camp.

When we come before God we must empty the ashes!

We want God to give us a financial breakthrough but we're still playing the lottery and counting on bingo; we've got to empty the ashes!

We want God to repair our shattered marriages but we are still playing musical

beds; we've got to empty the ashes!

We want a new house, but we have not prepared a home to put in the house; we've got to empty the ashes!

We want a pay raise on our jobs, but we are not willing to do anything extra to deserve it; we've got to empty the ashes!

We want to be treated with respect, but we treat others like dogs; we've got to empty the ashes.

If we want God to hear us we must come to him in a spirit of repentance and humility. The only thing God wants to hear from a sinner is "I repent. Please forgive me."

John 9:31 says, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." That's a fancy way of saying, if you want to pray for your break through, empty the ashes first, and then talk to God.

Why should you empty the ashes before you try to pray?

The ashes represent yesterday's problem but you are looking for today's solution.

Ashes represent yesterday's questions but you are looking for today's answer.

Ashes represent yesterday's failures, but you are looking for today's successes.

— We may have been fed yesterday, but we need a meal today!

— We may have been blessed last week, but we need a new blessing this week!

— We may have been anointed yesterday, but we need another anointing today!

We need to come before the altar of God today, but we can't bring him yesterdays ashes!

If we come before God with humility and empty yesterday's ashes, we can get a breakthrough for today:

— If we can get a breakthrough today, we can better deal with yesterday's fools!

—If we can get a breakthrough today, we can stop worrying about yesterdays problems!

—If we can get a breakthrough today, we can see the victory ahead instead of dwelling on the failure behind!

Ashes on the altar keep bringing up what used to be, but we have been transformed by the renewing of our minds!

Ashes on the altar keep a bitter taste in our mouths, but we say with the song writer, "I've found a savior and he's sweet I know."

But when you can go to God in prayer, everything looks different.

— BITTERNESS turns into SWEETNESS!

— WEAKNESS turns into STRENGTH!

— SICKNESS turns into HEALTH!

— And HUNGER turns into SATISFACTION!

When the priests in the Tabernacle removed the ashes from the Tabernacle they covered them with a purple cloth so they would never be seen again.

I don't know about you but I get happy when I think about the purple cloth.

When I think of purple I think about Jesus being given a purple robe and a crown of thorns on his heads.

The ashes on the altar were covered with a purple cloth and Jesus wore a purple robe.

It was a purple cloth that covered the ashes of the sacrifice, but it was purple robe on the shoulder of the savior that represented his agony and pain for us.

It was a purple cloth that hid the ashes from prying eyes. But Jesus was wearing a purple robe while everyone watched as he carried the old rugged cross!

That purple cloth hid the ashes, but it wasn't his purple robe that washed away our sins, it was nothing but the blood.

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; nothing but the blood of Jesus.

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

9232-Anniv.-Choir

Singing Your Prayer and Praying Your Song

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 12, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16

Introduction

Do you ever find yourself singing songs of faith through the week? There are times when we are performing our routine chores that we find ourselves singing songs of faith. The vacuum cleaner is humming, but there is a believer somewhere that is cleaning up and singing. There are some who sing while washing the car, sweeping, ironing or just driving along in their automobiles. Songs of faith just seem to pop in into our mind and we begin to sing and repeat the words of confirmation in our mind. They encourage us. They motivate us.

When we accepted Christ, he gave us a new song to sing. Before Christ all we sang was a "somebody done me wrong song." After Christ, we began to sing new songs that expressed our hope and faith. Kirk Franklin's famous song, "The Reason Why We Sing" notes that people often ask questions about why Christians sing. He answered in the words of an old song written in 1905, "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

A trademark of all true Christians is that they pray and carry a melody in their hearts.

We pray to talk to God about our concerns and our desires.

We sing to praise God for his greatness. We also sing to express our joy, hope and sometimes our sorrow.

In our times of trouble we prayed to God for relief; then we sang, "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world."

In our times of confusion we prayed for direction; then we sang, "We'll understand it better bye and bye."

In times of victory we prayed and gave thanks; then we sang, "Free at last, Free at last, thank God almighty I'm free at last."

In times of death, we prayed for assurance of salvation; then we sang, "Swing low,

sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home."

In times of spiritual fullness we prayed for his anointing, then we sang, "There's something within me, that holdn't the reins."

These are the songs that we sing to accompany our prayers. That's why the role of the church singers is so important. Believers assemble remember the songs that are sung. More importantly they remember the people who sing them. Even as they mop the floors or carry out routine duties at work, the songs and melodies they have heard and faces and testimonies of the singers, give them an opportunity to merrily sing a song that brings them joy, even in the midst of hard times.

As Christians, we know the importance of praying and singing. Combined, they place us in the presence of God continuously praising him for his goodness and his mercy.

Exposition

These texts give examples of biblical teachings about singing and praying. Throughout the written word of God believers are instructed to sing and pray. Individually, they give us specific instances that may seem to indicate that we should pray or sing only in certain circumstances. There are texts that show believers praying only in times of trouble. There are others that show believers singing only in time of happiness.

However, the preponderance of scripture teaches that believers should sing and pray all of the time.

These texts are examples that, when disaggregated from the whole, seem to isolate when we should pray or sing.

James 5:13 says, " Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Read alone the verse says we should pray only when we are afflicted with a problem, sickness or trouble. The indication is that pray is reserved for tough times and cannot in any wise be considered outside of trouble. The same verse seems to suggest that we should sing when we are happy. The initial implication is that we should sing only when everything is going the way that we want.

Yet, Acts 16:25 gives an expanded circumstance. This text says, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." This text shows Paul and Silas praising God and singing while imprisoned at midnight. By any definition their songs were not reflective of a merry circumstance, yet they were singing in a very depressing situation and at midnight.

The preponderance of scripture teaches that we should sing and pray constantly. While we should pray to God in our afflictions or sing when we are merry, we should pray to God and give him thanks in every situation. Similarly, we should sing his praises when we are merry and even when we are in the midst of the most adverse circumstance.

Psalm 14:33 says, "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. "

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;

teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

How to sing your prayer

Our songs reflect the focus of our hope and faith. Our prayers are focused on God's will as well.

OUR SONGS AND OUR PRAYERS ARE UNTO THE LORD: When songs are sung unto the Lord they are objective not subjective. In public or private worship our songs and our prayers should be objective. Objective songs and prayers remove ourselves out of the picture and generally extol the greatness of God and his will alone. The best prayers and songs focus on the Lord's will without "me" in the picture. On the other hand the subjective song and prayer considers "poor me" and ignores the will of God. The song and prayer that focuses on the Lord, brings happiness to the soul by helping us to focus on the greatness of the Lord and doing his will not ours.

WE SING AND PRAY TO GOD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCE. Regardless to our circumstance we sing and pray to God. When David watched his father's flock he sang and prayed. When he faced Goliath he sang and prayed. When he was hunted by King Saul, he sang and prayed. Even when he was disappointed with himself he sang and prayed the memorable words, "Create in me a clean heart O Lord..and renew a right sprit within me." We praise God because if we had ten thousands tongues we couldn't clap, sing or praise him loud enough and long enough for all of the blessing he has bestowed upon us.

WE PRAY IN FAITH, WE SING IN FAITH: The desire of every believer, after being saved is to walk the Christian walk and talk the Christian talk. This desire is reflected in the way we pray and what we sing. Our prayer is that God will always be with us. We sing that prayer with songs such as, "I want Jesus to walk with me." This walk cannot be done along. Other songs such as, "Lord I want to be a Christian" clearly state the believer's desire to live the life of holiness with the help of God.

When trouble, difficulties, and hardships come our way, we pray to God in faith. We also sing about our faith in the ultimate righteousness of God. We cling to the word of God that teaches that "all things work to the good" for those who love God, according to his purpose. Thus, our songs look up when everything around us is down. They express faith even in the midst of sorrow. That's when we sing, "It is well with my soul" and "Count it all joy." We sing those words because they reflect our faith that, "The Lord will make a way somehow."

We Pray in Thanks, We sing in thanks

Finally, we should remember that while we pray with a spirit of thanks, humility and gratitude we also sing in a spirit of thanks as well.

In our prayers we acknowledge the goodness of the Lord and give thanks.

When we sit at the table and eat we give thanks.

When we lay down to sleep at night we give thanks

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, "In everything, give thanks."

It's easy to sing and pray when we are being blessed. It's harder to pray and lift our voices in song in our troubles and tribulations.

Yet, even here, we should sing our prayer, and pray what we sing.

Sing what we pray about because we know that regardless of our God is still good.

If there is nothing in your refrigerator but ice cubes, God is still good, we ought to be singing and praying over the ice cubes!

If you lose your job and are forced to walk the street looking for a job, we ought to be singing and praising God for the fact that you still have two feet!

On our sickbeds we should sing and praise God for our doctors and your nurses and praise God that that he's the main surgeon in the operating room.

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings! That's when you are able to sing "I'm Glad God gave me a second chance!"

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences! That's when we sing our prayer and say, "His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me."

Prayer can take our stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones! That's when we start to sing, "I know the Lord will make a way."

Prayer can take our weaknesses and turn them into strength! That's when we sing, "All my help comes from the Lord."

Keep singing and praying because God can make a way out of no way!

Keep singing and praying because God can open doors that have been closed in our faces!

Keep singing and praying because God can pick you up and turn you around.

I know what prayer can do! I've tried it for myself!

If you pray and sing in Jesus' name, burdens can be lifted!

In Jesus' name, finances ca be restored!

In Jesus' name, wounds can be healed!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I woke up this morning with my mind staid, on Jesus. Singing and Praying with my mind, staid on Jesus!"

Staid on Jesus!Staid on Jesus!

No. 9233-Member Improvement

The Feast After the Fast

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "If my people, which are called by name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from the wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 "Seven days shalt thou keep a feast unto Jehovah thy God in the place which Jehovah shall choose; because Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt be altogether joyful." Deuteronomy 16:15

Introduction

How do we get God to hear us? When there is something important on our heart and we want to get the attention of the almighty, what can we do to get his attention? We can't jump up and down, wave our hands or post a banner; that won't get his attention. Neither can we expect him to respond to vain repetitions and empty words. The way to get God's attention is to humble ourselves, and atone for our short comings.

That's what Solomon found out when he was about to dedicate the temple and asked if this great building would get God's attention. God's answer was memorable: "If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from the wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 If we want to get God's attention, then we must first be willing to humble ourselves and atone.

What God said to Solomon sounded simple, but humbling ourselves is very difficult for some people. Humbling ourselves requires us to suggest that we are dependent upon someone or something for our existence. Humility runs against our very nature. By nature we are proud and self sufficient. Yet, God is saying if you want to get my attention you must humble yourselves and pray.

The word "humble" in scripture is associated with self humiliation or the crushing of self. It is the same word that is used for "fast" in many instances. God requires a degree of humility on our part. It's the point when we empty ourselves to say to God "I need thee every hour. I need thee."

Psalms 35:13 clearly makes this association when it says "I humbled my soul with fasting". Thus, when people in Biblical times were commanded "to humble yourselves", they immediately understood what action was required: fasting.

Believers who fast usually sacrifice something of great value to them to demon-

strate their humility before God. Their "Fast" gets his attention. In addition, their humble spirit also introduces an attitude of repentance because it breaks down the barriers of pride and arrogance that may have kept us from atoning for our sins.

The purpose of fasting is not to earn credits, to gain leverage, or to impress people, but to truly humble ourselves so that God's blessings may flow.

When we have completed our fast and made our petitions to God, we should celebrate and praise God for hearing us and considering our prayers in light of our sacrifice.

As Christians, we know that there is power in prayer, especially prayer that is preceded by sacrifice and atone for our evil ways. After we fast and pray, God hears us and begins the process of healing our land.

Exposition

This text focuses on both a fast and feast that was commanded by God for Israel.

The Mosaic Law required all Israelites to restore their fellowship with God by making atonement for their sins. Once each year the entire nation observed a fast on the Day of Atonement and made animal sacrifices to obtain forgiveness for their sins.

The Day of Atonement is the only Fast Day in the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 23:27 required the people to "humble" or "afflict" themselves before the Lord. Humble meant to fast and mourn over the displeasure they caused God by breaking his laws. Anyone who refused to fast on the Day of Atonement would be cut off. Leviticus 23:29 says "If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people."

On that day, the people fasted, for it was on that day that the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was concealed.

Atonement was necessary before the people could receive blessings. Sacrifices were required God before they could expect his continued presence. So the people fasted and prayed as they waited for the priest to go before God on their behalf and present their petitions for redemption on Yom Kippur.

Five days after the fast, the people celebrated the fact that God had heard and received their sacrifices. This celebration was called the feast of the Tabernacles. It lasted for seven days. According to Holman, on the first day, booths were constructed of fresh branches of trees. Each participant had to collect twigs of myrtle, willow, and palm in the area of Jerusalem for construction of the booths. Every Israelite was to live for seven days in these during the festival, in commemoration of when their fathers lived in such booths after their Exodus from Egypt.

After the fast and the feast they returned to their various walks of life, confident that God heard them and received their offerings and sacrifices.

Fasting Focuses on Humility

The spirit of fasting focuses on the need for personal humility. It is essential to

getting a prayer answered.

Often we ask God for things but we are unwilling to humble ourselves to receive what he gives. Pride often stands in the way and blocks the door of success for far too many people.

There are many who are unemployed, but rather than take a job below the level to which they are accustomed, many choose to remain unemployed.

There are many who find themselves in tight spots, and avoid seeking help from members of their own families out of pride. There are some who have encountered financial crises and choose to face a loss of dignity in the community and commit suicide out of stubborn pride. The Christian way, however, is a humble way. It is a way of life that places the will of God before our own desires, and places obedience to God first in our lives.

Fasting Brings Us Down To Earth

It is possible for us to become self absorbed, to the point that we believe that the world owes us something. When we humble ourselves before God we realize that he is all powerful and that without him we are nothing.

When we reach that point we hear the Psalmist ask the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

We are helpless masses of tissue that cannot be sustained itself without God.

Man has 263 bones, 600 muscles, and 970 miles of blood vessels. He has 400 cups on his tongue for taste, 20,000 minuscule hairs in his ears to tune into sound, 40 pounds of jaw pressure, 10 million nerves and branches. He has 600,000,000 air cells that breathe in his lungs. His heart beats 4,200 times an hour and pumps 12 tons of blood everyday. Without God, none of it works! It's just as mass of tissue.

When we consider our helplessness, we are humbled. We are brought down to earth and recognize that we need God to survive.

Celebrate After the fast

Finally, brothers and Sisters, after we have fasted and humbled ourselves before God we should follow Israel's example and celebrate!

The Feast of the Tabernacles was seven days long and it included praises to God and good food. They celebrated because of their fast, atonement and because of their sacrifice.

Fasting is an exhausting experience, whether it is one day, three days or 40 days. After 40 days in the wilderness Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread.

What keeps believers going is the hope of the feast after the fast. It's the day when prayers have been heard and God has answered. That's a day of celebration!

On the last day of our fast, some of us may feel like the author of the poem that said,"

'Twas the feast after the fast, and I just couldn't sleep.

I tried counting backwards, I tried counting the sheep
The leftovers beckoned — The dark meat and white,
But I fought the temptation with all of my might.
Tossing and turning with anticipation
The thought of a snack became infatuation.
So I raced to the kitchen, Flung open the door,
And gazed at the fridge full of goodies galore.
I gobbled up turkey and buttered potatoes,
Pickles and carrots, beans and tomatoes.
I felt myself swelling so plump and so round,
Till all of a sudden, I rose off the ground !!
I crashed through the ceiling. Floating into the sky....
But I managed to yell through a mouthful of cake
My fast is over, it's time to celebrate!
When the fast is over, its' time to celebrate!

We celebrate because our atonement was not made on an Old Testament altar of stone and wood!

We celebrate because our sacrifice was not an oxen or a bull, but our atonement was made by the Lamb of God.

We celebrate because when we have fasted and prayed, Shiloh, the Son of God comes!

We celebrate because good things start to happen when Shiloh comes. When Shiloh comes...

-People who were at the WORST start doing their best!
-People who were living in SIN start striving for HOLINESS!
-Hearts filled with sadness suddenly become filled with gladness!
-Those who walked in the dark, discover the marvelous light!
-Those who agonize over defeat, discover the thrill of victory!
-Those whose lives were out of tune, discover a new found harmony!
-Those who have fallen down, learn how to get back up again!
-Those who were crying, learn how to wipe their tears away!

Who is this man they call "Shiloh?"

Who is this man they call the Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor! Lord of Lord and King of Kings!

His name is Jesus, my rock in a weary land!
His name is Jesus, my shelter in a time of storm!

His name is Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Celebrate his greatness!
Celebrate his sacrifice!
Celebrate the King of Kings!

No. 9234-Anniv.–Church

Hold on Church, Help Is On the Way

A By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2006

SCRIPTURE: Samuel then took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Jeshanah and named it Ebenezer (meaning, "the Stone of Help"), for he said, "The Lord has certainly helped us!" 1 Samuel 7:12

Introduction

What does the church of today have in common with its founder and its forerunners in the faith? Its founder is Jesus Christ. All believers share a common faith in him. Its forerunners struggled and fought many difficulties, doubts, frustrations and fears to promote the kingdom of heaven. Believers today share similar struggles, fears and frustrations despite the passing of years. Each community of God fearing men and women must hold on to its faith and vigorously promote the kingdom of God with all of its energy. We must hold on just as our fore parents held on. If we feel weak along the way we must remember that "help is on the way."

The world asks a penetrating question about this little community; the same question asked in the biblical record, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We answer that this community has brought forth generations of God fearing men and women who have made a difference.

This is the community from whose womb many great minds have come forth and as we celebrate the history of this church, in a greater sense we also celebrate the heritage of our community as well.

Conditions are much different than they were many years ago when this congregation was founded.

Then, there were no air conditioners, electric lights or even musical instruments. There were only paper fans, candles, coal oil lanterns and the patting of our feet.

Then, there were no beautiful pews, choir robes and water fountains. There were only hard benches, cotton sack dresses and dippers full of water from the well.

Then, there was no central heating and air and fellowship halls; only the old wood burning stoves, and ash pans and picnic baskets on the grass.

Then, there were no restrooms for men and women with free running water; only

the out house out back and a Sears and Roebuck Catalog.

Then, Sunday school was a real school where even the old folks learned the bible and how to read and write.

Despite what they didn't have, the old warriors, fresh from slavery, believed that even in this community God could bring forth a great people.

That's why this anniversary is important today, because it marks a milestone in our journey in which God helped us to reach out of our poverty and despair and grasp a star of hope.

So, we have assembled ourselves here to give tribute to what has been, what is, and what will be by the Grace of God.

As Christians, we recognize that the trail of life that marks our journey is speckled with markers, large and small. We stand today to testify of the strength of our fore parents and to affirm our own faith that we will not give up the struggle but hold on until the end. It's been long journey has been difficult but rewarding. rough. Today, we say to all those who may be tempted to give up, that God did not bring you this far just to leave you. Hold on, your help is on the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Samuel as he raises a stone that recognizes God for his past, present and future work in the life of Israel.

The Ark of the Covenant had been out of Israel's hands for 20 years. Over the course of the 20 years, they labored in hope and in prayer, that God would bless them with its return. Assembled in the wilderness the people prayed to God for forgiveness of sin. In an elaborate ceremony, they poured out water on the ground to symbolically demonstrate their humility before God. They made a public confession of their sin, condemning themselves and praising God for his goodness.

As they met in the wilderness, committed to living for God, the Philistines saw them and prepared to attack them with a vengeance. However, God confused the Philistines in their attack amidst a great thunderstorm. Despite the Philistine's overwhelming numbers, Israel, for the first time in a long time defeated its enemy and arose victorious.

In an act of Praise, the prophet Samuel erected a great stone to commemorate God's great work in their lives. He called the stone "Ebenezer" which means "the stone of the help."

Erecting stones, altars and monuments was not unusual to Israel.

In naming this site, Samuel says "hitherto" the Lord hath helped us.

The word Hitherto in Hebrew is "Ad" which suggests a continuum in time. It is different from the "has" helped us which suggests that the time of God's help has passed. It is different from "did" help us because it suggests that the help is over. Hitherto, being a continuum reaches back to what God has done, brings it to what God is presently doing and carries it further to what God will do in the future.

The Ebenezer stone therefore was different from all other stones. It marked what God did on a certain day in time, what he continues to do and what is expected in the

future.

We look at how they held on

The church today celebrates history today. In effect, we stand by our own Ebenezer Stone as we look back and remember the struggle.

The old warriors obviously did not have what we have today, but what they had then was a tremendous faith in God. It was a faith that carried them through many trials.

The history of this church is inextricably intertwined with the struggle of the people of this community to sustain hope as they struggled to be truly free.

Our history is inevitably a roll call of the saints who paved the way for the next generation to have a better opportunity while clinging to an unwavering faith that God will make a way. As that roll is called we hear the names called and revere them all as gallant warriors on the Christian battlefield in this hallowed county.

When we look back we sense the struggle of the founders as they began this congregation.

As we look back we can sense the great meaning of the second verse of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" when it says, "Stony the road we trod, Bitter the chastening rod, Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet Come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast. "

When we stand on ground that has been watered with tears, we are standing on hallowed ground.

When we stand on ground watered with the blood of the slaughtered, we are standing on hallowed ground.

We are standing on the shoulders of hundreds of men and women who bowed in prayer that we would see a better day.

These were men and women who resolved that despite racism, the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings, cross burnings and hard times that they would hold on

In the midst of high water and droughts, scorching heat and chilling cold they resolved to hold on to God's unchanging hand; to build their hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand.

We must hold on too!

The Ebenezer Stone is not just about the past but it looks at what God is doing now. While we celebrate the struggles of the past generation we also focus on our present struggles. That's the beauty of the Ebenezer stone. It does not simply say God was good for Daniel and the Three Hebrew Boys, but it also says that God is still able to deliver.

The Ebenezer stone does not simply say that God was good for grandma! It does

not simply say God was good for grandpa! It does not simply say that God was good back then, but it also says that is still good right now!

Hitherto reaches over into the past and brings God into the present.

Our forefathers faced many challenges and held on.

In a similar manner we too face our challenges and, like them, we must hold on.

The church must inspire every young believer in this community to believe that he or she can achieve greatness with the help of God.

We have the same challenge as our ancestors, we must disprove the notion that because we are from Antebellum South that "no good thing can come out of Nazareth."

We must help every believer struggling against the odds to survive and thrive to hang on to their faith because God is still on the throne; help is on the way.

We must fight against illiteracy, poverty, broken families moral decay just as our fore parents did the same.

We must hold on to our faith, just like the old warriors and sing, "I am on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I would serve him till I die; I'm on the battlefield for my Lord."

Hold on to the Corner Stone

Finally, brothers and sisters, we celebrate how the old warriors held on to the Ebenezer Stone, but today we celebrate because we are holding on to Jesus the chief corner stone.

We are on a journey toward the Canaan Land. Each believer in the chief is a beam, brick or floor board in the heavenly kingdom.

God is building a heavenly kingdom, in which each saint is a living stone and a living sacrifice. The kingdom of God, though built with living stones, must have a cornerstone.

The cornerstone is the foundation upon which the kingdom is built.

The corner piece of the kingdom of God is the same stone that the builders rejected!

The corner stone of our hope is not made of bricks or mortar.

The corner stone of our trust cannot be affixed to the edge of a building!

The corner stone of our faith is the substance of our hope!

I don't know what the tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now! I'm going to hold on until my change comes

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

We should hold on because there is a reward for believers who overcome!

Rev. 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life..." so hold on!

Rev. 2:11 says, "..he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." So hold on!

Hold on because he that overcometh will inherit all things.

We should hold on because as long as the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is the justification for my faith!

The Lord is the chief corner stone of my hope!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9235-Christmas

A Good Thing Is On the Way

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 10, 2006

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah." Jeremiah 33:14

Introduction

Have you ever wondered how anything good can come out of your present situation? There are times when it appears that circumstances and condi tions are hopeless. A child seems hopelessly lost. A marriage seems hopelessly beyond repair. A friendship seems hopelessly scarred. A relationship seems hopelessly flawed. When that feeling comes, it leaves us frustrated. We feel beyond help. Yet, the promises of God still loom over us and linger near. "In the days ahead, I will perform that good thing."

We are surrounded by promises. Sometimes we hear so many promises that we become immune to them. Politicians promise to change things, but we usually get the same thing. Spouses promise to love each other until death do them part but it usually means until they get tired of each other. Salesmen promise us that the product they are hawking is an amazing bargain, but often it turns out just the opposite. We even promise ourselves that we are going to do better, but usually end up making better promises.

We hear so many promises that it gets hard for some to believe any promises; even the innocent sounding promises. "I promise you, tomorrow will be a better day." "I promise you, everything is going to be alright." "I promise you that if you do good in school in eat your vegetables you will be pretty and strong, strong, loved and liked."

Unfortunately, there are many who live by the promises of their family and friends only to discover that reality is not able to keep up with their promises. The world is notorious for breaking its promises. They all seem too good to be true.

What about the promises of God? Can we count on them? The great D.L. Moody said, "God never made a promise that was too good to be true." If God said it, you can believe it. If God promised it, it will come to pass.

It gets hard to remember that when things are not going well, but it is still true. God will keep every promise that he has made to you and your family. The coming of Christ reminds of his words, ""In the days ahead, I will perform that good thing."

During advent our attention focuses on the coming of Christ into the world. That

also reminds us of the new life and renewed blessings that are associated with his coming. His coming was the fulfillment of God's promise to mankind. His coming is also a reminder of God's promise to every believer. When we think of that it gives us hope, regardless of our situation. Why? Because God's word promises that "In the days ahead, I will perform that good thing."

As Christians, we are encouraged by the knowledge that God never makes a promise that he cannot or will not keep. When he promised the world a Savior, he delivered. He has promised some good things to us as well; he will deliver.

Exposition

This text focuses on a promise of God given at a time when it seemed like everything was lost.

The words of this text were given at a time when the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the Babylonians who decided to lay siege against the city and starve its residents into surrender. The people saw nothing good in their situation. For many it was hopeless (32:1). The words of this prophecy came as an assurance from God that through his power that he would destroy Babylon, and restore Judah after their exile. However, God warned them that for now there would be no immediate relief for their situation. (30:12-15).

However, in the future, God would restore Judah to health, rebuild her cities, and fill the nation with joy (30:17-22). In His loving-kindness God would restore His covenant with them; it would be an everlasting new covenant written on their hearts (31:1-3,31-37).

Even though the prophecy did not promise any immediate relief, it gave the people hope because God promised a good thing to them in the interim. The fact that they would be restored also meant that they would not be destroyed. That was a good thing. They would survive and rebound.

Jeremiah believed God's promises that the nation would return to the Promised Land. Since God created the earth and controls everyone on it, it is possible to believe that God could cleanse the sins of Judah, restore people and joy to the land, set the messianic branch from the line of David on the throne, and reestablish worship in the temple (33:1-22).

The Good thing that God promised Judah was that there would be a deliverer. There would be savior born among them.

The coming savior would be a good thing. He would be a good thing for the nation and he would be a good thing for every believer. He would bring restoration and a new kingdom.

As God promised, Judah was taken captive. They did experience a hard time in exile while in Babylon, but they were also returned to their homeland, just as God promised.

Under the Persians they were finally allowed to return to their homeland. The remnant restored to the land became the channel through which the promised Messiah came, born in David's natal city Bethlehem. They became the bridge through which the

promised Messiah would come.

As Israel waited, they heard the words of God declaring, "In the days ahead, I will perform that good thing."

Five Promises of God

What has God promised believers? There are many promises God has made to believers, some were specific to an individual. Others were specific to an entire generation. The promises are varied but follow these five patterns:

I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE: God has promised believers that he will never leave us alone. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us not to be overly disturbed about what we don't seem to have because not a day passes in which God leaves us alone. "I will never leave thee or forsake thee."

I AM THY SHIELD: Often believers are weary about directions that we face in life. We are like Abraham who was sometimes hesitant to act because of the large mass of enemies around him. God says to us what he said to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, "I am thy shield and thy great reward."

I WILL STRENGTHEN AND HELP THEE: When we are weak or caught in a weakness, we are overwhelmed by our own inabilities. That's when God speaks to us like he spoke to Isaiah and reminded him that what strength he needed God would supply. God spoke directly to Isaiah but he spoke to us too in Isaiah 41:10 when he said, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

I WILL GIVE YOU REST: A great promise of God is to find rest and relief from our many burdens and problems. Jesus told those who followed him that one of the rewards of living the believer's life is the ability to find peace and rest. God promises to give us that rest. Christ reaffirmed it in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHOLD: Believers have the reassurance that any good thing that true believers desire will not be withheld from them. Good things are those things which are according to God's will. If what we want is in God's will it is a good thing and it will never be withheld. That's a promise that is reaffirmed in Psalm 84:11 which says, "No good thing will He withhold from them that work uprightly"

Responding to the Promises God

The promises of God are real and sure. However, there are many in the world who are skeptical of God's promises because they have seen the promises of so many others fall by the wayside.

That is not the case with God. Anything that God promises he can deliver.

There are many who cannot bring themselves to trust God because men have failed them. Their employers have failed them. Their co-workers have failed them.

These are the individuals who find themselves doubting God.

Like Sarah, they find it amusing when God makes a promise that seems impossible in light of the circumstances.

Like Pharaoh, they believe that faith in God's promises are the folly of the ignorant and whatever signs we see are cheap magician's tricks.

Like King Saul, they believe that should follow their own mind because God's will should only be trusted when his will mirrors our will.

The coming of the Christ child should say to those who may doubt God, that he is truly able to do exactly as he says.

The skeptics doubt God and dismiss this celebration as an opportune time to celebrate anything they desire. However, the believer does not see it that way.

Believers are anxiously excited about this time of the year because it reminds us of one of the greatest evidences of God's power, the incarnation of his Son in Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem we see God's promise to Israel realized.

In our own lives we revisit over and over again how God's promise effects our own lives. When we think of the baby and the cradle in Bethlehem, we are reminded that "In a few days, I will perform that good thing."

It won't be long

Finally, this text reminds us that it won't be long before God acts on his promise to us.

The text says, "Behold the day is coming" which is an announcement of truth that God is not slack, the good thing is coming.

In a similar manner each of us should say to ourselves, the good thing that God has promised us has not been forgotten but it is on the way.

Behold the day is coming, when there shall be peace on earth.

Behold the day is coming, when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

Behold the day is coming, when we will lay down our sword and shield and study war no more.

There may be some who might believe that God has forgotten his promise as it relates to their situation, but God is not slack. Whatever he promises he will bring to pass.

How long will it take that good thing to reach you?

How long will it take the blessing that you seek to finally arrive?

How long will it take the good thing that you are waiting for to finally happen?

How long will it take for you to finally turn the corner and things begin to look up?

When we consider that answer we must look at Bethlehem.

There had been no message from God for 400 years, then suddenly a star appeared bringing them hope.

Long before they saw the light from the star, the light was on its way? How long

did the light take to reach earth?

The answer might amaze you. Our solar system is about 6 billion miles across. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, contains roughly 400 billion stars, the nearest of which (Alpha Centauri) is 26 trillion miles away, or 4.5 light-years.

At the rate of 186,324 miles a second, light travels about 5.8 trillion miles in a year.

When God decided to cause the North star to shine brightly, it took 400 years for that light to reach earth from the North Star.

The star the wise men saw, began shining at the close of the old Testament and took 400 years to get to the earth. Long before they saw it, God had already begun to make good on his promise.

Are you frustrated because it appears that your good thing never seems to come, be assured that the words of this text are still true, in a short while God will perform the good thing he has promised.

Can God do what he says? The record bears testimony that God is able!

He's able to take our:

—Fears and turn them into faith; SADNESS and turn it into gladness!

—WEAKNESS and turn it into strength; RESERVATIONS and turn them into confirmations!

—FAILURES and turn them into successes; LOSSES and turn them into gains!

Down in Bethlehem, God performed a good thing!

A baby was born in a manager!

That baby changed the world!

Down in Galilee, God performed a good thing. The sick were healed and the blind were given their sight.

Down in Jerusalem, God performed a good thing, the price for our salvation was paid on an old rugged cross!

Jesus, Mary's baby!

Jesus, the Lion of Judah!

Jesus, was born in a manger and died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

Don't worry about it anymore!

Your good thing is on the way!

No. 9236-Christmas

How Far is Bethlehem?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 17, 2006

SCRIPTURE: And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:4-7

Introduction

Is it possible that there can be a great distance between you and something that is actually really close? There are some distances we expect even though they are disheartening to think about. The drive to California through Texas is long, but it doesn't seem long when we divide it into 200 mile jumps. It is totally discouraging, however, to reach Amarillo and see a sign that says "Los Angeles 1,073" miles. Then suddenly, California is a long distance. Air travel has reduced travel time from days to a matter of hours anywhere in the world. Distances in actual miles remain the same but the time it takes to get there has been reduced tremendously.

It's a long distance from one side of the world to another.

It's a long distance from one side of the country to another.

It's a long distance from one end of the state to another.

But there are even closer destinations that are farther away.

Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq are located next to each other on the map. They share the same religion and economic interests but they are millions of miles apart.

Democrats and Republicans share seats in the United States Congress but they won't sit on the same side of the aisle. On many issues there are millions of miles apart.

One side of the city is only a few minutes drive from the other, but it may as well be thousands of miles away; the two sides of town rarely meet in mutual exchanges.

Even within our families there are members who are only a phone call away but it may as well be a million miles away because the phone rarely rings.

There are spouses who live in the same house but live a million miles apart.

Often we can be so close-but so far away.

If you have ever traveled the highway and glanced the mountains in the horizon; you have probably noticed that after you have driven a hundred miles or so, the mountains still seem far away. In frustration, we look at the fuel, expense and time we

have expended and it appears that we have come no closer because the mountains are still far away. We know we have traveled some distance it doesn't appear any closer.

We have traveled many miles in our own lives this year. Some feel that they are no closer to the mountain than they were when they began the year.

We feel we are no closer to the mountain if we only focus on how far we have to go and how long it will take to get where we are going.

However, we feel closer to the mountain if we focus on the distance already traveled, what we have accomplished so far, and what we will do when we get there.

Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem by foot. It was short by airline standards of today, but it was a great distance for a pregnant teenager and her fiancée' who had to travel over rough trails, ridges and down valleys. For those riding chariots or wagons the distance was shorter. For Mary and Joseph it was a great distance.

How far is your Bethlehem? How far is the destination, goal or aspiration you have set for youself? If you are moving toward slowly toward that mountain, no matter how far away it seems; it's getting closer every day.

As Christians, we are on our way to the Promised Land. Sometimes in our frustration, we think we are not moving as we should, until we look back to see from whence we have come. That's when we realize that the Lord is brought us a mighty long way and we resolve to march on until we claim the prize.

Exposition

This text focuses on the details of Jesus' arrival among mankind.

It was a long and tedious journey, but yet it was necessary.

For Jesus the journey was from heaven to earth. The book of Matthew details a lengthy genealogy that tells us the extent of the biological journey that proceeded through generations as he tracked the journey of Christ from heaven to this world. It is history that reveals a myriad of peoples, nationalities and races. It is a path that his reached into palaces and touched even the poorest of places. It included kings such as David and dark colored women like Ruth. It included saintly women like Mary and the not so saintly women like Rahab.

When the Book of Luke opens Christ's journey to this world after proceeding for hundreds of years was about to culminate. It begins with a familiar scene of an angel announcing to Mary and to Joseph that "The Holy Spirit has placed a child in you, and not just any child, He is the Son of God, the Messiah."

For Mary and Joseph, the journey was shorter but just as far. When Mary and Joseph accepted their surrogate status, Mary instantly became a surrogate mother. Joseph assumed the awesome task of serving as stepfather to the Son of God. As Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be taxed, the time came for the child to be born. His arrival was not without notice. Shepherds in the field were told by angels of the event. Others soon heard too. When the child was born he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn.

The journey Jesus made that is recorded in Luke details his arrival in the home of Mary and Joseph but his journey did not stop there. The rest of the New Testament details the additional stops he made enroute to the heart of every believer. In some cases that journey was farther away than any other.

Journey to Bethlehem differs for Many

In miles, Bethlehem was not far from Nazareth, but in terms of the mindset of those involved, the distance varied. When we look at the mindset of the major characters related to journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, we may find ourselves embedded within some of them. Their distance from Bethlehem might also be our distance from really knowing and responding to God.

FOR MARY AND JOSEPH IT WAS A JOURNEY INTO FAITH: Every Jewish man resented paying taxes to Rome. His journey had to be a journey of resentment mixed with patriotic shame? It was an act of faith because it meant he would take his pregnant fiancée through the public roads and suffer the humiliation and stares of those who would see an unmarried couple walking to Bethlehem. For Mary, the journey to Bethlehem meant the prospect of delivering her child on the roadside. Her ancestors delivered children in the desert, but the journey to Bethlehem meant she would need the same strength. Both Mary and Joseph knew God. They acted on faith not their fears. Today, there are many among us who know God as well. The distance between the fulfillment of our destines and this present moment may very well be the degree of our faith above our fear. How far is Bethlehem? It is as close as our faith in God.

FOR HEROD IT WAS NO JOURNEY: King Herod sat in his palace, five miles away from Bethlehem, but it could have been 5,000 miles. He saw the Christ child as a threat to his power. He was only five miles away, but he would not go to worship him, in fact he sent soldiers to try to kill all male babies. He was only five miles away, but he was so far away from God. For Herod the distance to Bethlehem unfathomable; it was too great to even be considered. Yet, even today, there are many who for reasons of their own, will not come to God. There is a church in every neighborhood, but they will not walk in the door. There is preacher on nearly every television channel, but they flip right past them. For these the acceptance of God and humbling themselves before him requires a nearness that they escapes them. Perhaps that's why the song writer declares, "draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord to the precious bleeding side." How far is Bethlehem? For those who still refuse to praise God or to acknowledge their need for him, the distance is great; not because God is faraway from them, but because they refuse to come close to him.

FOR THE SHEPHERDS IT WAS A JOYOUS JOURNEY: There were shepherds close by who watched their sheep by night? They were only a few minutes from the shelter where they found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. For them, the journey from the pasture to the manger was a short joyous jog. They heard the song of the angelic hosts and they were happy.. Without doubts and anxieties they left their flock and walked full of songs and praises of joy singing,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will." The same is true today of those who are close to God. We sing his joy and his praise constantly. We know that it was God who woke us up this morning and it will be God who will put us to sleep tonight. We know that he provides for us and protects us, so we gladly sing his praises for all the world to hear. How far is Bethlehem? For the true believer the journey to worship on Sunday is no distance or trouble at all. It's a happy time that brings us closer to God. How far is Bethlehem? For the true believer it's not close enough?

FOR THE WISE MEN IT WAS A LONG JOURNEY: When the wise men finally arrived, they brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They traveled a great distance to be in the presence of God and brought him the best that they had. It was a long journey that took them many months, but they took the journey because they wanted to see the Son of God. Today, there are many who come into the presence of God after having made a long journey themselves. There are some of us who have been through difficulties, death, fear, suffering, incarceration, financial loss, family problems, marital dysfunction and many other ills in the course of our lives. We come before God bringing him tithes of our time, talent and resources much as the wise men brought their three gifts. We offer ourselves to his service because we are thankful for the journey. We've come a long ways to be in God's presence and we thank him everyday for his mercy and his grace? When God has brought you through; how far is Bethlehem? It's not far at all when we think of his goodness and his grace.

How Far Are We From God?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider that the distance between ourselves and God can only shortened only by the blood of Christ.

As we celebrate the advent of Christ there are many today who are still a great distance from him; just as we are great distances from those family members we do not speak to, those enemies we cannot stand, and those haters who frustrate us.

The gap between ourselves and God is too great for us to forge alone. That's why Christ came to the earth to build a bridge for us to reconcile and come together again with God. His love is the same bridge that shortens the distance in estranged relationships. Without him it cannot happen.

Each believer should ask the question, "For me, how far is Bethlehem?" What is my spiritual state? Am close but still far away?

Those who find themselves at a distance from God should resolve to come close and let the love of God flow in their hearts.

The distance from us to God is a close as the cross of Christ, he is the mediator between God and man.

When God saw the condition of the world he sent out the divine call for a messenger and Christ answered, "Here am I send me."

It was a long distance from heaven to earth, which took light years to travel.

However, it was an even longer distance from Bethlehem to the hearts of mankind.

For the non-believer today, Bethlehem is a long distance.

However, those who know the Lord know that our God is never distant; he's only a prayer a way.

How far is Bethlehem? How close is God?

He's close enough to:

-Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties!

-Strengthen us in our weakness; encourage us in our trials!

-Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties!

-Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles!

On his way to my life, he stopped down in Nazereth and stopped by a mange in Bethlehem.

What began in a wooden manger as a sign of God's love on a wooden cross as a sign of man's hate!

What began in Bethlehem:

— made the long journey to our heart in the form of a merciful God

—made the long journey to our souls in the form of a forgiving God

—made the long journey to our faith in the form of a hope giving God

God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten son that he gave his only begotten son!

It was a long way to Bethlehem, but he traveled through 42 generations.

He was born in a manger, on his way to a place called Golgotha!

On his way, he stopped by a place called Calvary and spent three nights in a grave!

On his way to my life, he died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

How far is it to Bethlehem?

He's only a prayer away.

No. 9237-New Year

What do I do with all this Stuff?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 31, 2006

SCRIPTURE:"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Luke 12:17-19.

Introduction

Ask children what they received for Christmas and a few might answer, "I got a bike, a computer, a game and a lot of stuff." Some have looked at all of the boxes, paper, and other wrappings and scratched their heads as they asked, "What do I do with all of this "stuff?"

Stuff; it's everywhere. You have stuff in the kitchen. There are pots and pans in our kitchens that haven't been used in years, but we keep them. Cups, mugs, jars, plates and other dishes have accumulated too. There are seasonings in our cabinets that are so old that they can't give taste anymore.

Our closets are filled with stuff too. Some hanger rods are bending from all of the stuff we hang on them. If we put one more box on the top shelf everything would fall. We have stuff on the hangers, stuff on the floors, and stuff in the corners.

We have stuff stacked in the hallways.

We have stuff in boxes and hanging out of boxes.

Our carports are filled with stuff. Our attics are filled with stuff. Our storage houses are filled with stuff. Even the trunks of our cars are filled with stuff.

Now that Christmas is over we now have more stuff –to stuff somewhere among our other stuff.

Stuff has a way of generating more stuff. Harvard economist Juliet Schor theorizes that stuff has what she calls the "Diderot Effect." The idea is that one new stuff item has a tendency to generate more stuff. Someone gives us a new piece of china, so that requires a new goblet, glassware and even a new cabinet. A new pair of shoes generates a new dress to match and perhaps a scarf, hat and other accessories as well. Stuff begets more stuff.

Neuro scientists at UCLA have produced a study that suggests that we get a good

feeling from accumulating the most stuff. It is somehow related to serotonin, a chemical that is produced in the brain. It seems that the university studied 19 tribes of monkeys over a period of time and concluded that the most dominant monkeys in every single tribe had 50% more serotonin in their systems.

The connection made is that when we get stuff, serotonin is released. Somehow we feel the more stuff we have the more successful we are. This serotonin release thing contributes to the feeling that we win in life if we have a big house with rooms that we never use, two cars, a boat, clothes we rarely wear, toys with visit occasionally, and tons of gadgets, utensils, artifacts, collectibles and more money than we can spend. We could stack it all in our front yards and take a picture and declare "We won!"- Why? Because we collected the most stuff. In the terminology of the UCLA study, we are the dominant monkeys on our blocks.

Conversely, there is something in us that concludes that we are less successful if we get rid of some of our stuff. No serotonin is released when we throw away stuff or give it away. So we accumulate stuff and find that it's hard to get rid of it.

As we prepare to enter the new year, we now have to decide how we are going to deal with all the stuff that we handled this year. Not so much the gifts received from Christmas, but the stuff that we accumulated this year.

Consider the young woman who had found herself a new apartment and was preparing to move. Her girl friend had come to help her but found her sitting in the middle of packing boxes crying. When asked to explain her tears she said, she never realized how much "stuff" she had accumulated. "I'm not going to be able to take all of this to my new apartment" she moaned. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" There were what-nots and souvenirs, gifts, mementos, gadgets and plethora of others. She was a complete mess. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" Her friend, who had faced the same dilemma once said: "Take only what you need to get where you're going!" With that, the young lady painfully decided to leave behind many things which tied her to the past and took only those things she needed to claim her future.

As the new year begins, we are faced with a similar challenge, "What am I going to do with all this stuff?"

As Christians, we have learned that there are many things in life that we think are important but they are really not. What matters is the stuff related to God and family. All of the other things just get in the way. So in the new year we will carry on the stuff that will bring us closer to what's really important. The rest we will leave behind.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable Jesus told to illustrate the futility of accumulating material goods without laying up treasures in heaven.

The parable presented a man who had accumulated a tremendous amount of material goods. In the agricultural setting of scripture, a man who had great harvests stored them in his barn for the difficult times. A full barn meant that he had what he needed to make it through the tough times of the winter months ahead. However, this

man had accumulated much more than he needed. Rather than share it with others, he posed to tear down his barn and build a bigger more spacious barn so that he could keep all of the "stuff" he had accumulated. In so doing he proposed that he would be able to eat, drink and be merry for many years.

The man in the parable associated his ultimate happiness with "stuff." He did not consider the source of the stuff, but only that the more he accumulated the happier he thought he would be. The source of his stuff was the blessing of God on his labor. Verse 16 says he "brought forth plentifully." That means God gave him increase more than he needed. Rather than focus on the source he focused on the stuff. He focused on the harvest and thought his joy would come from what was reaped and stored.

This was the same mistake that some Israelites made when God rained down manna from heaven for them during their wilderness journey. Many saw the manna on the ground and attempted to accumulate it even though they knew they were forbidden from doing so. Those who tried to get more manna than they really needed found that it was infested with worms the next day. Yet, many insisted on gathering more of that manna stuff.

Verse 19 makes it clear that he believed that the man in the parable believed his security, pleasure and happiness rested in his goods. He looked at all of his stuff and said, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

The parable gave a warning that should not be misinterpreted. The parable warned that those who focus on the stuff rather than the source will find that they will pay a high cost for all of their stuff: their souls. However, those who value God foremost are in connection with the source of the stuff and will always have access to more.

The parable should not be interpreted to mean that there is something wrong with having a big barn, being successful or being blessed in material ways. The parable does warn that each should remember that there is a concern more important than stuff. That concern involves God and family.

What do we really profit if we accumulate a lot of stuff but endanger our relationship with God and our relationships with those we love in the process?

Too much stuff can get in the way of real happiness. That comes from the blessings of God and the love of family.

Effect of Lots of Stuff

What is the accumulated effect of having lots of stuff? Stuff affects us in many ways because while we have a great deal of material stuff we also have lots of emotional stuff too. When we consider stuff we should remember that:

TOO MUCH STUFF GETS IN THE WAY: During the previous year have you found yourself dealing with so much stuff that you really could not focus on important things in your life. Before you could finish dealing with one issue there was another and another. There was so much stuff that you had to deal with that it prevented that quality time you wanted with your family or that service you wanted to give to the church. All of the stuff that you dealt with last year didn't make you

any happier; mostly it posed stumbling blocks for you. Hebrews 12:1 suggests that we should turn aside from stuff that blocks our way. It says, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." In the new year, we must not let stuff get in the way.

DON'T LET OTHERS DUMP THEIR STUFF ON YOU: There are many who received problems that others dumped on them during the year. What kind of stuff gets dumped on you? These are the things that others should do but don't want to do so they looked for someone to dump it on. There are many who have been frustrated this year because we have been handling stuff that was dumped on us by someone else. In addition to your own issues, many have had to spend much of this year dealing with unsolicited issues dumped on them by others. If you let them people will dump their stuff on you, and leave you to deal with it. This does not suggest that we should be insensitive to the needs of others, but it does suggest that you select what you want to receive rather than being dumped on. But if we are to see the new year with a clear mind, it gets easier without dealing with the "stuff" dumped on us by others.

GET RID OF STUFF YOU DON'T NEED: Often we accumulate stuff that we thought we wanted or needed at the time. Often we visit bargain sales and garage sales and come home with our arms filled with stuff that that we think we want. In a few hours, the novelty wears off and that stuff takes its place along side all of the other stuff that we purchased in the past thinking we either wanted it or needed it. Do we really need so much stuff? Probably not, but we thought we wanted it. Life is the same way. Why do we have so many shoes, suits, dresses, hats, sweaters; some we haven't worn for years? We thought we needed them at one time. Somehow life teased us that things would improve if we only purchased a little more stuff. As we consider the new year we might want to lay aside some of the stuff we thought we wanted but didn't. We can leave it behind in the new year, especially if it does not take us where we want to go.

SOME STUFF IS GOOD STUFF: Before you throw out all of your stuff, remember that some stuff you have is good stuff. Granted that there is much stuff we don't need, there is also plenty of good stuff we need to keep. Be careful not to dump good stuff along with the other junk. Take an inventory of what you have. What can you live happily without? We have some stuff that bothers us sometimes but when we think about it, its good stuff. If you have a wife who loves you, is faithful and caring; that's good stuff, think twice before you throw her away. If you have a husband who loves you and provides for you and meets you needs, despite his flaws, he's good stuff. Are you in a relationship that has some trouble but overall it is growing in trust, faith and happiness? That's good stuff? Are you on a successful career track but are irritated by a few things that happen on the job, think about it; the job you have may be good stuff. Any stuff that you have that will help you get to where you want to go, is good stuff.

Remember, if you throw away good stuff, someone else will pick up it up before you get a chance to turn around because "one man's trash is another man's treasure."

Get the Right Stuff

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that there is nothing wrong with having stuff, but we must make sure we have the "right stuff."

Jesus said the man in the parable had a lot of stuff, but he didn't have the right stuff.

He had a barn filled with the fruits of his labor, but he didn't have the right stuff.

He had plenty resources at his disposal and successes under his belt, but he didn't have the right stuff.

The right stuff is those things essential to building our relationship with God.

As we prepare to go into the new year, we must strive to carry only the stuff we will need to get where we are going.

We need to leave fear behind, because it causes us to miss opportunities that God has in store for us. Fear is the wrong stuff.

We need to leave worry behind, because it causes us to doubt God's ability to make a way out of no way.

What we need for the new year is the love of and the grace of God…that's the right stuff.

The grace of God gives us:

—Peace when the storms are raging!

—Hope when all around me are in despair!

—Courage to fight our battles!

—Determination to fulfill our duties!

—Believe when others doubt!

—Go Forth, when others hold back!

—Work, when others sleep!

—Love, when others hate!

What we need to do in the new year is to trust in the Lord. When we trust and obey, he'll make a way for us!

Trust in him who will not leave you!

I don't know about you but I'm going to trust the man who had the right stuff.

Nobody else could do it: Not Moses or Elijah; not Peter, John or Paul!

His name is Jesus, he had the right stuff!

He came and he died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead because he had..the right stuff!

No. 9238-Funeral

Return to Everlasting Joy

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35:10

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why a Christian funeral is often called a "home going celebration?" What could there be to celebrate at a memorial service? What reason would anyone have for celebration at the time of death?

The answer is simple. In the Christian mindset, those who are absent from the body are present with the Lord. That is the goal of every Christian, to live a godly life on earth and to return to the presence of God when this life has ended. At a home going service, we celebrate the "return" home of a saint and renew our faith that soon we shall do the same.

The reasons for rejoicing in the face of death are obvious to believers.

We rejoice because, despite the difficulty of living in uncertain times, God has blessed a loved one to live a long fruitful life. For many women a fruitful life means to pursue a godly dream, live a Christian life and to bear at least one child. A woman who does more has achieved the ultimate success. That's a reason to rejoice.

To survive wars and difficult times with faith in tact is a reason to rejoice.

To live faithfully through seven decades in which others are falling, doubting and trembling, is a reason to rejoice.

Today, we celebrate two important truths. We celebrate a life lived in our presence and we celebrate a life that has returned to the presence of God to live forever.

The life that has been lived with us has brought us help, strength and great inspiration.

The spirit that we memorialize has returned to God is has been rejoined with the creator for all eternity.

That is a reason for celebration!

As Christians, we are those for whom Christ died to pay the ransom for our salvation. We live for him in this life's journey. But when this life ends, the ransomed will return to God. When the ransomed return, that will be a great day of celebration.

Exposition

This text shows the prophet Isaiah telling the dispirited that those who have been ransomed by God shall return to his joy.

In the first nine verses of Isaiah 35 the prophet paints a picture of a hopeless people, living in a dry land with despair everywhere. Into the seemingly hopeless situation the word of God brings a message of joy and hope. The deserts will be transformed and be filled with pools and streams. The desert and wilderness will be given the glory of Lebanon and the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.

In the middle of what appeared to be a sad situation, Isaiah brought a word of joy and hope to Israel. Isaiah saw an earth full of joy because it had been restored to perfection.

He saw the land of hope and glory.

He saw the paradise of every believer's hopes and dreams.

He saw a reason to celebrate.

Verse10 pictured the joy of the ransomed as they returned to enjoy the promise of God.

For Israel the ransomed would return to Zion. They would worship God fully and freely as God opens doors of escape for them from Babylon.

For Israel the return of the ransom would be a time of singing, rejoicing, praising and living in the city of God.

For Israel the return of the ransomed would be a time of celebration.

For the church the return of the ransomed has a similar meaning.

When believers in Christ return to God there is great celebration in heaven. There is rejoicing and singing. There is a spirit of reunion.

The greatest joy is yet to come. When all of the Saints of the New Testament and the believers of the old dispensation come together at the throne of Grace that will be a time.

When the ransomed of the Lord return, it will be a great time.

The Ransomed Live Full of Joy

Those who know Christ as Lord and savior live their lives in joy. They are able to maintain a sense of happiness despite their difficulties because they know God's promise.

Our sister was one of the ransomed. The fact that she maintained her faith despite advancing age and all of the difficulties of rearing her children remains a mystery to those who do not know the Lord. They ask, How could she be joyful facing so many of life's frustrations as well as those of a mother and grandmother?

How can we be joyful when we have wrestled with sickness, failure, frustration and moments of fatigue and loneliness?

How can we be joyful when our lives are filled with ups and downs, but with more downs than ups? We are healthy one day, sick another day, healthy again then sick three days.

How can we be joyful?

How can we be joyful when we have attended the funerals of family members and friends and watched the world around us diminish a little at a time.

How can we muster the strength to be joyful under such debilitating circumstances? We can only be joyful in every circumstance if we have truly learned the meaning of joy. Real joy comes from our reliance upon God for each day and the knowledge that he is always there.

The Ransomed Live above Circumstance

The ransomed of Isaiah 35 lived above the adverse circumstances of their day because they were sustained by the hope of their return.

In the Old Testament, joy was closely associated with circumstances. Joy was a mental sensation that was accompanied by an outward expression that was shown by singing, shouting, leaping and dancing. That's what happened when David returned the Ark of the Covenant to his people that he was so joyful that he stripped off his clothes and leaped and danced in the streets. In the Old Testament, joy was associated with a circumstance. If the people won a battle they were joyful. If they lost a battle there was no joy. If there was a festival they danced and sang. Without the occasion, there was no joy. Their joy was tied to a circumstance.

However, in the New Testament joy is not viewed the same way. Joy is not associated with any circumstance or situation.

Believers derive their joy from the knowledge that there is a great plan unfolding which ultimately ends with their good.

Therefore, believers "count it all joy." Believers find reason for joy in every circumstance because we know when the great plan completes itself we will be the victors. The secret to real joy is to have the assurance that no matter what the circumstance may be, that God is working it out for our good in this life or the life to come.

The Secret of their Joy

The secret of this joy is to quietly know that he will never abandon us, but will continue to provide for us on a daily basis, despite appearances. In such circumstances don't look for us to jump and leap like David did. There may even be a tear in our eyes as we respond to the frustration and pain of the moment, but on the inside there is joy! That's why, as strange as it may seem, a believer can be advanced in age to a point that she is not what she once was and still sing, "I've Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My heart."

Believers who watch a loved one advance in age and slip away in death before their very eyes can still say, "It is well with my soul" because they know it is a part of the divine order and as such.."all is well."

Those who want to know how to be joyful must know the Lord. Only an abiding faith in God can help a wounded family find a reason for joy in the midst of death. Only

a blessed assurance can help a weeping daughter find a reason to keep singing the praises of God.

Those who want to know how to be joyful, must begin their search by first finding the Lord.

The Ransomed Will Return With Great Joy

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when this life is over the ransomed will be ushered into the presence of the Lord.

The prophet Elijah sensed that his time was drawing near. He began to walk toward the destination in which he would move from this life into the next. When the time came, he moved instantly from this life into the next, aboard a mighty fiery chariot. He was on his way home.

Enoch walked with God all of his life, sharing intimate thoughts and dreams. One day at the close of his life, his family looked for him and he was gone. The bible says he "was not" because he walked with God. He had returned home.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6-7, ". I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

I am ready to return home!

I have lived the Christian Life for seven decades. I am ready to return home.

I have confessed my belief in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I am ready to return home.

I have worshipped and praised you when I was young and in my golden years. I am ready to return home.

I have testified to your goodness and everywhere I have glorified your name. I am ready to return home!

When the ransomed return home there will be a lot of shouting in heaven.

Even though we are crying right now, there are many saints in this family that are shouting on the inside.

I don't know about you, but there ought to be a lot of shouting going on in this family.

Every time you think about the mountains this sister has climbed and the valleys in her way you ought to feel a shout coming on!

Why? Because God has been good to this entire family.

He's been a lawyer in your courtroom! We ought to feel a shout coming on!

He's been a doctor in your sick room! We ought to feel a shout coming on!

He's been a bridge over troubling waters! We ought to feel a shout coming on!

We ought to shout because he picked up an old rugged cross and shouldered the burden of my sin to ransom our souls!

We ought to shout because out on Calvary, he died, that we might live!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb..

But, early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I think I feel a shouting coming on!

When the ransom return home there’s going to be a lot of sing!
When the ransomed return home there’s going to be a lot of shouting!
When the ransomed return home there there’s going to be a lot of joy!
Joy!
Joy!
Joy… When the ransomed return home!

No. 9239-New Year

Go Forth In His Presence

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 7, 2007

SCRIPTURE: And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Exodus 33:15; "Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the Lord's covenant moved from the camp." - Numbers 14:44

Introduction

What have you planned for the new year? Have you talked to God about it? There are many people who make plans to do a variety of things but seldom take time to talk to God about their plans. The success or failure of any venture depends greatly upon the grace of God. We can make business plans, arrangements for our careers, and even plan a variety of extracurricular activities but none of them can come to fruition without the grace of God.

There are many people who mistakenly assume that what they want and what God wants is the same thing. They assume that God sits in heaven and tells each believer "thy will be done." They also assume that the good life they have been leading entitles them to the victories, successes, and blessings that they desire. Because they assumed themselves to be worthy they move forward in life with certain presumptions based on their assumptions. Unfortunately, many soon find out that it is not a wise thing to move forward in the future with the presumption that God will bless our endeavor. Every believer should strive to hear from God in the year to come. It is only by hearing from God that we can be sure that we are moving in the right direction.

There are many people who assumed much about life and we operate on assumptions. Consider the church that mourned the loss of its finest members and everyone was completely lost about what to do. The member's name was "Someone Else." The church deacon was asked to give the eulogy for Someone Else. He said, "Someone Else's passing created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. Someone Else has been with us for many years, and for every one of those years, Someone Else did far more than the normal person's share of the work. Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results. Someone Else can work with that group. Someone else was very popular in the church. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, or a meeting to attend, one name was on everyone's lips, "Let Someone Else do it." It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the largest givers in the church. Whenever there was a

financial need, Everyone Else just assumed that Someone Else would make up the difference. Someone Else was a wonderful person, sometimes appearing super-human, but a person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everyone expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone. We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did?" In the obituary the church felt relieved when they saw Someone Else had a child. They shouted for joy when they learned that the child's name was "Anybody Else." They hoped anybody would grow to be the member that someone else was?

Sometimes we assume too much and make great mistakes because we operate on our assumptions.

As Christians, we know that we can be successful. However, we will presume that he will bless us. We will diligently seek his and ask favor, knowing that if his presence Goes with us we will be victorious in the year ahead.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of God's presence in any direction we take.

In Exodus 33:15 Moses asks God for his presence and pledged not to move until his presence went with them. Each time it was time for them to move God came in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. When the cloud moved they moved, not before or after.

Numbers 14 gives us a striking contrast to Exodus 33. Here, the people were camped at Kadesh Barnea, near the border entrance to the long-awaited Promised Land. There were 12 spies sent to investigate the new land but Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who announced faith in God to take them into the land and conquer their enemies. The other spies saw all the dangers and refused to take the risk. The people of the camp shrank in fear because of their report. They decided not to enter in.

The ten spies who caused the people to doubt and murmur dropped dead instantly (Num. 14:37). God was angry about their murmuring. Moses interceded and asked God to forgive them. Thinking they had been forgiven the people quickly decided, on their own, that they would now go up and claim the promised land. But they thought their repentance was enough to right their wrong. They presumed this was all that was necessary.

Moses informed them they were wrong to assume that they had God's favor but they ignored him and went to battle against the Amalekites anyway. They were defeated and did not understand why God promised them the land but allowed them to lose it on their first attempt to take it.

They did not wait for God's presence as Moses did in Exodus 33. They jumped in without his favor and blessings and could not claim what he had for them because they did not move at God's direction.

Because of their presumption God made them wait 40 years before they claimed the promise.

Moving Into the New Year

There are several considerations we should bear in mind as we move into the new year.

If we doubt God's promise someone else may claim it. The 12 spies reported that the land was fruitful. Yet, 10 of them doubted the ability of the people to claim it. They took into consideration their lack of military experience, armaments of war and battlefield knowledge. They were people who had lived as slaves for 400 years unaccustomed to the strategies and disciplines necessary. They had shear numbers, but nothing else. They doubted and caused others to lose faith. As a result, they died and others claimed what should have been theirs. If believers today approach the promise of God with a spirit of fear and skepticism, we too might suffer the same fate. There are doors of opportunity that are being opened for many this year. Some will doubt their own abilities to and fail to act. When they fail others will step in and take their places. What is it that you doubt? A career move? A relationship shift? A business decision? If we move into the new year and we fail to act out of a spirit of fear it is most certain that someone else will take advantage of the door we would not open. Why not decide to step out on faith this year and claim the promise that God has for you?

We should not move without the presence of the Lord. Moses in the wilderness was a type of the Christian traveler. He told God definitely that he would not move without his presence. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," v. 15. He speaks as one that dreaded the thought of going forward without God's presence, knowing that their marches could not be safe, nor their encampments easy, if God was not with him. We are the same. Believers know that we dare not venture into the new year without the presence of the Lord. We need him. Despite our mistakes and errors, blunders and mess ups in the past we need him as we venture into the unknown. Our prayer is simple, "If God is not going with me, I'm not going." What is your venture? Marriage, business, education, career development, family improvement? The answer should be "If God is not going with me, I'm not going in that direction."

Despite the promise, wait for God. What happened to Israel should be a lesson for believers today: "Even though God has promised it, don't act on the promise until God says it is time to move." That's what believers must glean from this text. The land of Canaan had been promised but many of the tribesmen wanted to attack before God gave the order. In fact God told them to retreat to the Red Sea, wait because certain defeat awaited them. They however they presumed that God wanted them to have the Promised Land so it was their destiny to be successful. Because of their presumption, they did not wait on God's command and were bitterly defeated in their quest. They went forward but failed because they presumed that God would automatically be with them in their quest. It is possible that God wants us to approach a problem but in a way totally different from what we have in mind. What God had in mind was miraculous. It included a river rolling back to reveal dry land. It included the sun standing still. It included mighty walls falling down. He wanted them to wait.

They wouldn't and paid a price.

A young man accepted for the African missionary field reported at New York for passage, but found on further examination that his wife could not stand the climate. He was heartbroken, but he prayerfully returned to his home and determined to make all the money he could, to be used in spreading the Kingdom of God over the world. His father, a dentist, had started to make, on the side, an unfermented wine for the communion service. The young man took the business over and developed it until it assumed vast proportions. His name was Welch, whose family still manufactures Welch's grape juice to this day. He has given literally hundreds of thousands of dollars to the work of missions every year. He has done much more for mission work through his grape juice donations than would have been accomplished by his own plan.

At first he assumed that God wanted him to personally go on a missionary journey. When he acted on his presumption he failed only to see why. God had a bigger and more effective plan in mind. The same is true for believers today. Don't assume that every opportunity that falls in your hand is something God wants you to use in a pursuit you have selected. Pray and seek what God wants you to do with it.

When God Gets Ready

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that while we can't move until God gets ready, when God gets ready, we've got to move.

While Israel acted foolishly when they first approached the Promised Land, over the course of the next 40 years, they learned to trust in the Lord and move at his command.

Every time the pillar of cloud lifted in the day time, they were ready to move!

Every time the pillar of fire lifted in the night time, they were ready to move!

At God's command they packed their tents and moved at a moment's notice!

Moving forth into a new year, is like obeying spiritual traffic signals.

There are times in our forward progress we come to a stop light.

Moses brought Israel to the Red Sea but God said stand still "and see the salvation of the Lord." Lest anyone get the notion that it was the power of Moses, stand still.

Lest anybody be confused as to the source of your miraculous activity, stand still and watch God work!

Then there are times we approach a caution light, flashing warning us to proceed with care. As Israel journeyed through the wilderness God said, I'll provide meat and bread for your table, but proceed with caution. Don't get more than you need.

In the new year, God promises to provide for our needs, but we need to proceed with caution. Don't move to slow, but don't move too fast. God will make a way.

When God gets ready he'll give us the green light.

When God got ready Israel moved into the promised land and walls started to fall down!

When God gave the command flood waters rolled up and they crossed on dry land.

When God gave the command the earth ceased its natural orbit and the sun stood

still.

When God gave the command the victory shout was declared.

I don't know about you, but I've decided to move at God's command!

I won't worry about the clouds!

I won't worry about the storms!

I'll just keep my bags packed, because when God gets ready, I've got to move!

I do not know how long it will be nor what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus

The Lily of the Valley,

If Jesus, the bright and morning star!

If Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

If Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

If Jesus leads me, I shall get home some day!

No. 9240-Funeral

This Jordan

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 13, 2007

SCRIPTURE: Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. Joshua 4:22

Introduction

If you had to select a body of water to represent your life what would it be?There are many who would choose an ocean because their lives are expansive and huge in their scope.

Some would say their lives were lakes. They were beautiful but counted on others to keep them filled.

Still others would describe their lives as quiet streams that formed from gathering the fallen drops of blessings while flowing quietly through life, purifying itself along the way.

There are many whose lives have been bayous and ponds, relaxing, fulfilling and peaceful.

There might even be a few swamps in the picture. These are the lives that turned out to be wasted, unproductive and desolate.

If our lives were like the Sea of Galilee they were be subject to sudden storms. If they were like the Nile, they would overflow every now and then.

Many believers have lives that are typified by the Jordan River.

The Jordan River is significant in the biblical context.

It empties into Lake Huleh, but before the Jordan empties itself it takes several paths. It begins with a seven mile journey that makes its way through areas of marsh consisting of reeds, bulrushes, and papyrus. In this area there were many dangerous lions in biblical times.

On leaving Lake Huleh, the Jordan flows for about ten miles to the Sea of Galilee. In this short stretch, it descends to 696 feet below sea level and carves a deep and winding course for itself through the center of the valley. Much of its course is characterized by rocky gorges and valleys.

From the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. After leaving the Sea of Galilee the river passes through an especially fertile region. The length of this stretch is between 55 and 65 miles, but the river curves and twists for during this distance.

This Jordan marks a 73 mile journey of ups and down, twists and turns, gorges and valleys through many dangerous marshes reeds.

If this Jordan marked the trail of a life, it would parallel the various nuances of that life including its ambitious beginnings, meandering turns, sudden drops and steady march to the sea of the dead. Yet there is a mystery about the waters of the Jordan that also parallels the life of all believers. It's a mystery whose trail empties into the sea of the dead but continues beyond. Only the faithful know the secret of the Jordan's waters once poured into the Dead Sea. Only the faithful can answer the plethora of questions that have puzzled the curious for centuries about these mysterious waters we call Jordan.

As Christians, we know that our lives take many paths. We sometimes rise and sometimes fall. Like a river we flow, twist and turn. We encouraged to know that when we come to the end of life's twists and turns, we shall empty ourselves into the arms of God.

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it crosses the River Jordan and enters the Promised Land. The crossing of Jordan was the first new miracle that was performed under the leadership of Joshua. It required the waters of the mighty Jordan River to roll back and hold still for a day as nearly 600,000 people crossed over on dry land.

The Jordan posed a formidable obstacle to Israel. Its banks had overflowed and made crossing impossible. Yet, Joshua prepared to cross on the command of God.

He commanded representatives of the 12 tribes to take 12 stones out of the river and place them in a heap in the river and to carry 12 other stones with them from the river bed to the other side. Once on the other side the stones were set up on the bank as a permanent tribute to God for his wonderful works.

When children, in future years, come to the site and see the huge stones standing in a pile in the midst of Jordan and another, just like them, on the right bank of Jordan, they will ask the meaning of the stones. Their questions will give the elders an opportunity to tell them of the great things God did for Israel when he helped them cross Jordan.

The stones symbolized the presence of God in the past and the need for God's presence on the other side of Jordan as well.

Those who looked into the waters of the Jordan would see the stones and know that God was with them.

Considering This Jordan

As we consider this Jordan, the life before us, we can only see the wonderful way that God has touched this life.

THERE WAS HEALING AT THIS JORDAN: The bible gives an account of the Prophet Elijah ordering Naaman to bathe himself seven times in the River Jordan to be healed (2 Kings 5). Though Naaman reluctantly obeyed, he still found that there was healing in this Jordan. So it has been with the life before us. In the course of these many years, this life has been dipped many times in the healing waters of God's

graces. Even as we stand on the banks of "This Jordan" and see the stones that mark how God moved, we should remember that there is no sickness that is outside of the power of God. God has defied the known science of the day and continues to do it today. At this Jordan we look at how God has blessed a life with healing and restoration repeatedly over the years, it should remind us that God has reversed dark situations before and he can do it again!

THERE WERE MIRACLES AT THIS JORDAN: The Jordan River was the site of many miracles. When its waters rolled back for Joshua that was a miracle. When Elijah and Elisha smote its waters with a mantel and it also rolled up like a scroll, that was a miracle too. When we stand today and peer into this life, those who are close can recall many miraculous events over the years. These are the things that happened that should not have been or things that should have happened because of recklessness that were miraculously prevented. When we peer into "This Jordan" and see the stones, they remind us of these miracles. Our moment of reflection makes it obvious that what we have achieved has been done only because God has provided us with his miraculous intervention every day. In his own miraculous way he opened doors of opportunity and miraculously made a way for us out of no way.

THERE WAS WORSHIP AT THIS JORDAN: The first part of Jesus' ministry was centered around the Sea of Galilee but the remainder of his ministry found him pursing a course down the East Side of the Jordan River. At the Jordan River, thousands came to worship him. At the River, thousands came to be spiritually fed and to learn from him. As we peer at the stones in "This Jordan" we also see the reflection of a life that enjoyed worship and was regularly in the presence of God. This should be the epitaph of every believer; to live a life of praise, worship and peace within. In the presence of the Lord we find hope, renewed faith and peace. As we look into "This Jordan" we see the stones that show a life that enjoyed the presence of the Lord.

THERE WAS SALVATION AT THIS JORDAN: John the Baptist performed most of his baptisms in the River Jordan. Here those who repented for their sins found forgiveness and the grace of God. Even Christ himself was baptized in this Jordan. When we see the stones that mark the course of "This Jordan" we should see a soul that was given to God in humility and subjection. We should be happy about this Jordan because it was at the point of conviction that he wiped our slates clean. Isaiah 53 reminds us that he was "..wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities……with his stripes we are healed." When we consider this Jordan we are happy because it was that he picked us up and turned us around and give us a brand new life.

Where do the Waters Go?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the answer to the question first posed. When the waters of the Jordan reach the Dead Sea, is that all? Where do the waters of the Jordan go?

There a strange phenomenon about the waters of the Dead Sea that also typifies

the life of a believer. The Jordan River empties an average of six million tons of water every twenty-four hours into the sea. There are no outlets from the Dead Sea. No rivers or streams flow from it. With so much water pouring in daily from the Jordan, why doesn't the Dead Sea fill up? Where do the waters of the Jordan go?

There is only one place for these waters to go. They must go up! The intense heat of the Dead Sea and the acidity of the waters cause them to evaporate and they return to the clouds.

What a picture of a life that has flowed through mountains, valleys, and gorges for 73 years to reach what some would call the sea of death.

Yet, every believer is encouraged to know that while there is no way out the hands of death for the lost; those who believe and trust in Christ shall be caught up, in a twinkling of an eye to meet him in the air.

Don't look for the waters of this Jordan in the Dead Sea, they are not there!

They have been caught up. It happened in an instance! They were returned to the presence of God.

Don't look for believers among the sea of the dead. We must remember the question of the angel to the troubled on the resurrection morning, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

What happens to the waters of Jordan when they have emptied themselves into the Dead Sea?

What happens to waters that have flowed through valleys, and gorges and alleys and nursing homes?

What happens to waters that have emptied themselves into the cold chilly hands of death?

They are caught up!

When a believer comes to the end of this life she stands and sighs in the words of the old hymn:

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie
All o'er those wide extended plains
Shines one eternal day
There God, the Son forever reigns
And scatters night away.
I am bound, I am bound, I am bound for the Promise Land"

We are caught up into the arms of the savior!

Caught up into the arms of Jesus!

Who died for us out on Calvary and early Sunday morning arose from grave!

Caught up to be the Lord!

—

On Monday, January 8, 2007, Henrietta Jordan, ended her 73 year course and emptied herself into the hands of God.

9241-Reunion

Together Again

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2007

SCRIPTURE:And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city. 1 Samuel 20:42

Introduction

Have you ever attended a reunion? Those are times when those who have been apart for many years reunite to remember the past, celebrate their present and to anticipate their future. Reunions are joyous occasions because, for a moment, those who have walked different paths in life all walk the same road. Whether it is a high school reunion, family reunion, or the reunion of distant friends or groups, these gatherings have special significance to all involved.

Even more significant is the reunion of friends separated by years but conjoined in the spirit.

Today, circumstance has brought these friends together again.

Together again they reaffirm their faith in God.

Together again they renew their commitment to promoting the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Together again they stand before God pledging to continue their mutual love and respect today and in the years to come.

As Christians, we celebrate our uniqueness and individuality. However, we also celebrate how together God has blessed us to do his great work in a mighty and more powerful way.

Exposition

This text focuses on a pledge of trust that existed between the descendants of two families across the generations.

David and Jonathan were close friends, despite the fact that Jonathan's father, King Saul, made it unlawful for anyone to befriend David and had pledged to kill him as a threat to the throne.

Despite the circumstance these two men responded to each other as friends. Jonathan promised David that he would find out whether it was safe for him to return to the King's palace and would notify David by a secret plan they developed. The

two promised each other that regardless of their situations that the succeeding generations of each family would find friendship because of their pledge together.

David escaped capture that night. The pledge made between the two men lasted for generations. The men and their families were bound by a pledge of trust that would last for many years.

When the bond was made it was expected that David might be the ultimate victim of Saul's hatred. Jonathan was prepared to keep his pledge to David's descendants. However, The end of 1 Samuel reports the end of Saul and three of his sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua, at Mount Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:1-13). Their bodies were first hung on the wall of Beth-shan and later retrieved to Jabesh. Many years later, when David became King he showed mercy to the descendants of Jonathan throughout his reign. He kept his promise to descendants of those who had befriended him.

The Way We Were

Whenever there is a reunion, there are reflections. The first reflection is upon the way we were. Barbara Streisand had a hit song a generation ago entitled, "The way we were." In it she said we have "Misty, water colored memories of the way we were." She added that what is too painful to remember, we just choose to forget.

AT FIRST THEY WERE NOT EQUALS: When Jonathan and David first met they were not equals. One was the son of privilege; the other was a mere musician; a servant. In our first encounters we are often mere prototypes of what is to come. We remember the silliness of youth, brash and foolish stunts, and the clarity and intensity of our dreams and idealism. In our first encounter one might be the quarterback and the other the water boy. One might be the homecoming queen another one who never made the court. One might have been the favorite and the other the constant reject. Circumstances beyond anyone's control resulted in our first encounters which were sometimes strained and awkward. Our best memories are of the acts of kindness shown despite our differences. Our worst memories reflect the ill feeling some harbored because of our differences.

THEY TREATED EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT: Despite the differences of their stations David and Jonathan treated each other with respect. Friends and the strongest adversaries are mutually bound forever whenever there is a respect between them. A man can be slave and hold his head high with dignity. A man can, by law, be a master but is not obligated to be a brute as well. Aretha Franklin sang about it in the 1960's in her song, R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Everyone wants respect. Two tough teams fight for a championship but only one wins. They both leave the game with a respect that lasts for a lifetime. When we reflect upon the way we were, we do so often with an eye of respect for what was then. It is a respect that has lasted a lifetime.

THEY REUNITED WITH JOY: When David and Jonathan met briefly in the wood (1 Samuel 23:16-18) their reunion was filled with joy. They exchanged friendly embraces and spoke of old times. They were happy to see each other. Whenever old friends meet a sense of joy fills the air. There is laughter and rejoicing because those who reunite share a common victory over time, adverse circumstances and struggle.

It is joy that cannot be duplicated and emulated. It ensues from the heart.

THEY PLEDGED TO SHOW KINDNESS: When David and Jonathan met they pledged that they would be faithful and kind to each other from generation to generation. That is a byproduct of great reunions. Many opportunities are gained for the descendants of friends, for the "sake" of an old friendship. Many youth have found doors opened to them because of someone who knew their grandparents well. Some have been the recipients of special benevolence because of pledge made many years before. Reunion is also a time to renew pledges of support, love and trust through the next generations out of respect for "the good times." Over the years love and mutual respect has existed, despite the adverse circumstances around them. Today, we should pledge to let brotherly love continue throughout all of our generations.

Where we are going?

Finally, brothers and sisters, while reunions such as these reflect on the way we were, we would be remiss if we did not peek into the future and take a glance at where we are going.

Over the years these have been separated but we look forward to day when we will be together. We look to the day when we will be together again at the feet of Jesus.

When we are finally together again there will be neither white nor black, Jew or Greek, slave or lower class!

When all of God's children get together again we're going to have a good time!

When we are together again, we'll sing and shout as "My soul looks back and wonders how I got over!"

When we are together again, we'll tell the story of how we struggled together, cried together and overcame together!

We will tell the story of the savior, who gave his life for our sins!

We will tell the story of how he died out on Calvary!

We will tell the story of how Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

When we are together again, at the foot of our savior, that's going to be a powerful meeting day.

I don't know about you, but I want to be at that great camping with the Lord!

I want to be at the meeting.

I want to be there when they declare him king of kings!

I want to be there when they crown him Lord of Lords!

I don't know about you, but I want to be at the meeting!

I want to be there when the saint's go marching in!

When we are together again, what a Time!

Every day will be Sunday! What at Time!

It'll always be howdy and never goodbye! What a time!

Over yonder, the hearse wheels won't roll and crying days will be over! What a time!

No. 9242-Communion

Light Bread

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 21, 2007

SCRIPTURE: And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. Numbers 21:5 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:35.

Introduction

Have you ever eaten light bread? Those who are from the South are immediately familiar with the term "light bread." However, those from other areas of the world may scratch their heads and respond differently when we asked to describe "light bread."

Southerners use the term so frequently that we often forget that the rest of the world gets a totally different picture of the meaning of "light bread."

When we say, "light bread" we often refer to loaf bread that is made of wheat flour and leavened with yeast. Others may think of "light bread" as a synonym for "white bread." Some may even think that "light bread" refers to the color of the bread. Therefore, wheat bread and raisin bread is not considered "light bread" because it's too dark.

We Southerners refer to "light bread" as way of distinguishing it from cornbread, hot water bread, cornpone and biscuits.

There is a reason behind this madness. The term "light bread" actually refers to the fact it is made from yeast that "lightens" it and makes it rise. Light bread, in reality, can be either the whole wheat type (brown) or white, as long as it is made with yeast.

Many of us have fond memories about light bread. We make sandwiches with light bread. Kids like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches made with light bread. We put light bread in a small oven and make toast. We crumble light bread and make dressings and puddings.

While many people love light bread, there are times when we complained about so much "light bread." We wanted rolls. We wanted hot corn bread with butter oozing out of it. We wanted biscuits. We wanted sweet bread and every now then a few hoecakes. Even though it was filling, we complained if all we had was "light bread."

Is it possible that we approach our blessings from God in the same way? Is it possible that there are some who tire of the same old blessings and complain because

we want some variety? Do we tire of the same old house; the same old car; the same bed; the same old food; the same old husband; the same old wife? We're doing reasonably well, but do we sometimes become dissatisfied with satisfaction?

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that God provides us with our daily bread. Each day is a blessing. We never tire of his mercy. The more grace she showers upon us the more we are happy to receive. He is the light of the world and the bread of life. We can never get too much "light bread."

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel's complaints about "light bread" and God's response.

Numbers 21 gives an account of the wonderful way God blessed Israel as it approached the Promised Land and their response to him with grumbling and complaints.

As Israel approached Canaan they were attacked by the residents of Southern Canaan. God led them victoriously in the battles that ensued and they were victorious. It seemed that they were invincible. God was on their side.

They were anxious. They wanted to march into the Promised Land through the land of Edom but the king of Edom would not grant them permission. They became frustrated and began to complain.

Their complaints were retrospective. They complained about the fact that they had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. They complained that they hadn't had any new clothes during that time. They complained about the fact that they were not able to secure food and water like others, but had to depend on miracles from God for 40 years.

They complained because they received "manna," the food of the angels, which they called "light bread." Charles Spurgeon says it was easy of digestion, healthful, and the very best kind of food for them in the wilderness; but they wanted something more substantial, something that had a coarser flavor about it, more of earth and less of heaven.

This term "light bread" is found only in this text. The Hebrew word for light as it is used here (qel?q?l) means contemptible, worthless, and vile. They complained about the bread they received from heaven and dismissed it as "light bread" and looked upon it with contempt.

They complained because God was personally taking care of them in miraculous ways.

The actions of Moses, the people, the light bread and the brazen serpent were types of Christ found in the New Testament.

In the New Testament people complained and grumbled against God. Paul referred to it in 1 Corinthians 10:5. Many people rejected Christ who was the bread of heaven. In John 6:35 Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life. He noted that those who receive him as the Son of God will see approach life in a new way that will cause them never to thirst or hunger for the things of this world. Yet, the people tired of this man who called himself the light of the World and the Bread of life.

In the wilderness they complained about light bread. When Christ came, he too was light bread from heaven. They complained and crucified him because they were tired of "light bread."

Bread of Life Issues

ISRAEL COMPLAINED RETROSPECTIVELY: There are many who complain even while they are being blessed. When Israel could not have its way and found the route through Edom blocked the people began to complain retrospectively. This angered God.

It angers God when we constantly bring up perceived problems of the past while dealing with the issues of the moment. Even in our relationships we have a tendency to drag up what was once done wrong, repeatedly. It is never forgotten but relived. We complain retrospectively, even though what we complain about may not be related to present situation. When Israel did this, God became angry, just as we do when people do the same.

Instead of complaining retrospectively, it would be better to recall the "good times" retrospectively. Think of the goodness of God, the blessings of God and the mercies of God in the past and it will minimize our complaints.

LIGHT BREAD WAS SUBSTANTIAL: Though Israel complained and rejected "light bread" it was substantial for them. Through 40 years in the wilderness, unable to plant crops or secure supplies of fruits and vegetables, they existed on light bread (manna) quail meat and water. Just as big mama found many ways to make bread in our past, they did the same. They baked it, fried it, rolled it, boiled it and prepared it a variety of ways. God provided both the taste and the nutrients necessary to feed their bodily systems. Light bread was more than enough. Not only was it substantial but it was available in abundance. It was not rationed.

In our wilderness we have found that God provides blessings for us too, on time every day; even though we complain about them. No matter how we look at it, we have been blessed by the powerful hand of God.

THEY WANTED MORE THAN LIGHT BREAD: Israel complained because they felt they deserved more than light bread. This was a sign of ingratitude. The ungrateful person feels worthy of all blessings and murmurs when he does not get more. Is that why we complain so much? Do we really deserve any blessings that we receive? The faithful have found that Christ is more than enough for us. In fact, if the truth is told, many of us would have to confess that we are having trouble dealing with the blessings we already have.

Thank God for the Light Bread

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should give God praise for every slice of light bread he puts on our table.

Jesus is the light of the world and bread of life. He is our light bread. When he comes into our lives he comes to put bread on the table.

Whenever God prepares a table, it is an overflowing table.

There are many that instantly place anything called lite into a category of things that have little substance or weight or importance.

When people in the world think of light bread they may be tempted to put our spiritual light bread into the same category with bread lite.

Bread lite, could mean bread that is low on calories. What we have is not bread light but light bread.

Some may confuse light bread with Budlite, Miller-lite, low calorie beers or lite music and lite entertainment which is not strong any direction.

When saints talk about light bread we are talking about the man who said in John 8:12, " I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.

When saints talk about light bread we are talking about the man who said John 6:35, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

We don't complain about our bad days, because our good days out number our bad days.

Whatever each day brings is another slice of God's light bread.

When we are blessed with finances, we that's a light bread blessing!

When we are blessed with healings, that's a light bread blessing!

When we blessed with spiritual renewal, that's a light bread blessing

As Saints eat from the Lord's table, they are eating from a As Saints prepare to eat from the Lord's table, we are mindful of the fact that on this table is God's light bread, Prepared in heaven and delivered in Bethlehem, which means the house of bread.

On this table is God's light bread which took many generations to prepare and 33 years to deliver.

To prepare the table, he had to suffer the humiliation of his critics!

To prepare the table, he had to pick up an old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha's hill.

To prepare the table he had to die out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

I thank God for the light bread; and I won't complain!

No. 9242-Building Fund

Rise Up and Build

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2007

SCRIPTURE: Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. Nehemiah 2:18

Introduction

Did you know what it takes to successfully complete a building project? It takes vision, cooperation, resources, patience and prayer. Many believers walk into fine buildings that have been erected by others and admire what they see without knowing the extent of the sacrifice and dedication of those who led the building effort. Building a building for God is more than a "notion." It is a labor of love and faith.

Those who succeed in such projects are empowered by a burning vision that drives them to see the project through, despite opposition and frustration.

Frustrations and opposition are expected. Very few building projects have been completed without one of the two or both. The reasons that people oppose projects range from promotion of their personal agendas to doubt about the builders or the building plan itself.

There were once two evil brothers who opposed the church's building project. They were rich but they used their money to fight the building project because they wanted the land for personal reasons.

They hired others to fight against the church's project while they sat piously in church worships. They even hired protestors to attend zoning meetings. They used their influence to cause confusion among church members. They were purely evil in their intent to stop the church's project.

Suddenly, one of the brothers died. Even in death, the remaining brother sought to control things. He went to the pastor and presented him with a check for the completion of the building project, in full. However, the gift had one condition. "I have only one condition," he said. "At the funeral, you must say my brother was a saint." The pastor thought about all that these two brothers did to fight the church, but reluctantly gave his word and deposited the check.

The next day, at the funeral, the pastor did not hold back. He shocked the congregation when he told them of all the evil ways that this brother had tried to stop the church's building project. "He was an evil man," he said. In addition, the pastor

added, “He cheated on his wife and abused his family.” The surviving brother was visibly angry. He gave the pastor an eye that said he wanted his money back. The pastor ignored him and finally concluded by saying, “but despite all of his evil, deceptive and crooked ways, compared to his brother, he was a saint.”

Overcoming opposition, building unity and inspiring hope is the challenge of those who venture to lead any building project for God.

As Christians, we know that building for God is a challenge. However, if we trust God and follow his direction, we shall be successful and the glory will go to God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the challenged faced by Israel as the people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

Almost 100 years after the Jews had returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, the walls around the city and the gates had remained in ruins. The people were disillusioned, in debt and intimidated by the awesome commitment that rebuilding the walls would require. They had excused their failure to rebuild the walls on fierce opposition from surrounding nations and their poverty.

Nehemiah refused to accept their excuses and despite the danger inspected the walls at night (2:15). He then called an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. He was an excellent leader who demonstrated engineering knowledge and brilliant organizing ability (ch. 3). He encouraged them while reminding them that they would have to watch, fight and pray.

Nehemiah presented the challenge and the people responded to the challenge with the common consensus “let us rise up.” It was a testament of faith for a people that had sat idle for so long. The work began.

Trouble arose from without and from within. Sanballat, in league with other leaders of the area, opposed Nehemiah’s rebuilding of Jerusalem. If the Holy City regained prominence, it would erode the powers of the surrounding cities. It was a political contest designed to keep Jerusalem from becoming the economic power and influence of its golden years.

Sanballat and his friends tried to stop the work, but without success (ch. 4). Trouble from within was economic. Building the walls suffered because of a labor shortage; farms were mortgaged. Many could not work on the walls or support the building program because they were plunged into their personal financial woes. Even this did not dissuade Nehemiah. He sat out to improve the financial condition of the people so they could turn their interest toward rebuilding the wall. Some received direct financial aide that helped them become strong enough to help.(ch. 5).

The people had a mind to work and the massive task of rebuilding the walls was continued. It was massive work requiring thousands of workers spread out over miles of landscape. Even as the people worked, enemies both within and without kept a steady stream of delaying tactics flowing.

As in the past, Sanballat had done all he could to stop their work through ridicule and threats. He then sent word to Nehemiah, saying: Come, let us meet together in

one of the villages in the plain of Ono (Nehemiah 6:2), about 28 miles from Jerusalem. But Nehemiah sent messengers to them, saying, I am doing a great work, and cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you? (6:3).

After Sanballat had made five attempts to meet with Nehemiah, he finally resorted to accusing him of rebelling against the king of Persia (6:5-7). When this failed to stop Nehemiah, Sanballat hired a prophet to prophesy Nehemiah's death. Nehemiah did not yield to their threats for he had faith that the God of Heaven . . . will prosper us. . . . So the wall was finished . . . in fifty-two days, far sooner than even they themselves had imagined.

Meeting the Challenge

To meet the challenge of building, today's believers must study the pattern of the Nehemiah experience and follow it for direction.

LEADERS MUST BE CONVINCED: Leaders of Godly building projects must be convinced that God's work must be done and informed of the need for the work. At the same time that this is being done, leaders must be aware of the need for spiritual strength for God's work to succeed.

OPPOSITION SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED: No project has ever been completed without some form of opposition. Leaders should not be surprised that some individual or group of individuals oppose a worthy building project. Rather than being surprised, leaders should anticipate opposition and attempt to resolve points of opposition in through careful planning and involvement of others. Some opposition is not to the plan itself, but stems from the fact that some feel excluded from a worthy project.

ORGANIZATION AND COOPERATION NEEDED: To meet the challenge of a building enterprise that merits God's blessings, leaders must be prepared to work hard, organize well, solicit cooperation and be willing to give credit where credit is do. The project that succeeds does so because the leader is up to the challenge and his sense of commitment inspires others to help.

WEARY WORKERS MUST BE ENCOURAGED: Not only was Nehemiah a great organizer, but he was also a person with the ability to encourage those who were weary of the struggle. That happens in the course of any building project. People get tired. They want to give up. However, leaders who are convicted to complete God's work must be able to encourage and motivate believers to continue. They cannot be driven; they must be inspired to continue for the sake of the kingdom of God.

The Church must meet the challenge

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church must meet the challenge to build because we are building for the Lord.

To meet that challenge the church should make sure that we have the right tools.

We will certainly need many tools that include:

A MEASURING LINE: The distances in the master plan are drawn to scale. One

inch on paper equals several feet in practical distance. Those who build in life must be able to practically apply the principles of the Bible and our faith to real life situations. These truths prevent the believer from going off course or making steps in life that are off course. The good builder measures his actions and knows just how far to go. Psalm 37:23 puts it this way: " The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

A PLUMBLINE: For the building to stand solidly every part must be level. An instrument called a plumbline was used in the bible to allow the builder to know whether or not a board, a window, or wall for example lined up correctly. Similarly each believer needs to check himself against the standard of God's word to make sure his action lines up with the will of God. Like a building, it is possible to nail down a board that is out of line, but it will show up later. That's why the psalmist wrote: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23

SAWS AND HAMMERS: We must have saws and hammers to cut through the apathy and discontent of those who oppose the work. We must have the hammer of God's word to drive home nails of wisdom, strength and power that will hold the project in place.

To meet the challenge, leaders must stay focused on the mission.

The church should not be dissuaded from its mission and should rise to meet the challenge.

All of the Patriarchs before us have done great works. They have risen to meet the challenge.

Noah's Great work was to build the ark. Though critics assailed him, he said in his heart, let us rise up and build!

Moses' Great work was to lead the children of Israel to freedom. Though many doubted him and wanted to return to Egypt, he met the challenge and said let us rise up and march to freedom!

David's great work was to secure the kingdom of Israel. He was tempted on every hand to hang up his sword and shield, he rallied the people by saying let us rise up and build a nation!

Solomon's Great work was to build the temple. Though discouraged at the complexity of the task and the complaints of the people, he encouraged the people to rise up and build a temple.

But there was another great challenge that we need to tell you about.

Come and go with me out to Calvary and see the challenge of the cross! It was the challenge of building the kingdom of God!

Hanging out on the cross, a great work was criticized and despised!

I hear the critics at the cross saying your great work seems to be:

A battle lost; A horrible defeat; A pathetic end to a glorious beginning

It didn't seem like much, sitting out on a hill, but the great challenge of redemption was underway!

The cross was a great challenge because it represented the greatest of all victories.

The cross was a great challenge because it was highest of all accomplishments!

The cross was a great challenge because it was the finest of all hours!

The cross was a great challenge because it was noblest of all events!

I heard somebody say to Jesus, “If you are who you say you are, why don’t you come down?”

He didn’t come down, but Early Sunday morning, he got up!

With all power in his hands!

Jesus’ Great challenge was to save my soul by going to Calvary.

I’m so glad that he me the challenge rebuilding my life all over again!

No. 9244-Inspiration

Touchdowns in the Wrong End Zone

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 4, 2007

SCRIPTURE: Say to the people of Judah: 'This is what the Lord says: When people fall down, don't they get up again? And when someone goes the wrong way, doesn't he turn back? Why, then, have the people of Jerusalem gone the wrong way and not turned back? They believe their own lies and refuse to turn around and come back. Jeremiah 8:4-5

Introduction

Are there times in life when you feel yourself working harder for the other guy than you are for yourself? These are the times when our mistakes, goof-ups and fumbles in life are so numerous that we did more to hurt our own cause than to help it. If we were members of a football team, the other team would cheer every time we ran onto the field because we are guaranteed to do something to help our opponents win.

There are also times when we analyze our own activity and realize that there are times when we are our own worst enemies. Many of our problems are the result of our own ineptitude. if we were football players, we would be the fumbling quarterback, the slippery fingered receiver or the tackle who does everything but tackle.

Even worse, we are often the guys on the team who get big chances to do great, recover fumbles, then run the ball to the wrong end zone, giving the opposing team a safety.

Adam Sandler played a dysfunctional water boy in the 1998 movie, "The Waterboy." In one episode he found himself running at super speed in the wrong direction. While audiences laughed at Sandler, there have been instances where this has actually happened. We have seen it many times in the pee-wee leagues, when an excited player ran in the wrong direction.

Running in the wrong direction is not just something done by those in the pee-wee leagues of life. However, we have also seen it in professional football as well. There are many so-call pros who often do the exact same thing.

On October 25, 1964 at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, CA during a contest with the 49ers and Minnesota Vikings, Defensive End Jim Marshall, pursuing a scrambling 49ers QB from behind, recovered a fumble and ran with the it in the same direction he had been pursuing the play toward his own end zone. In other words, the WRONG

way. It went down in history in football history as obviously one of Marshall's most embarrassing moment.

The best players can get confused in the excitement of the moment and run in the wrong direction. They hear the cheers in the stands, but the cheers are from the folks supporting the other team!

As Christians, it is good to know that we serve a God who won't stop loving us, even if we after we have fumbled miserably in life. We are encouraged to know that he always gives us another chance and through his grace, gives us an opportunity to win the game of life.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Jeremiah as he described the stubborn way that Israel backslide against the Lord, going the wrong way and refusing to turn back.

Jeremiah spent most of his days as a prophet trying to warn Israel that its sinfulness and backsliding ways angered God. The people had a history of turning from God to other gods. They trusted political allies instead of God. They followed the leadership of foreign kings rather than godly kings and they abandoned their devotion to the almighty God. God sent prophets, Jeremiah being one of them, to warn them but they would not hear. God called their actions "forsaking" him.

In this text God gives a message to Jeremiah to deliver to the people. It was received in light of their stubbornness. Verse one of this passage continues from chapter seven, enumerating ways in which Israel would be humiliated and desecrated by its enemies. It begins by pointing out that the bones of their relatives would be pulled from their graves and left to rot in the sun as a conscious affront to them. Such humiliation was a result of the sins of the people, which could be rectified by repentance, but Judah stubbornly refused. Jeremiah, relaying God's message, said the people were stubborn in their sinfulness; so stubborn that they would not correct themselves. Verse four makes it clear that even if a man falls down he rises to his feet again. If he turns the wrong way he tries to return to the right path. Yet, Israel, in its stubbornness, would not even use the logic of the ordinary; that is, use its common sense to correct itself after going in the wrong direction.

Matthew Henry asks the question, "Why do not they, when they have fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; why then has this people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?"

The backsliding ways of Israel are compared to the ways of a sinner who knows he is going in the wrong direction but continues without a pause. In the old Testament it is called backsliding or forsaking God. In the New Testament it is called apostasy. When faced with such an indictment the common response is to correct ourselves, regroup and find our way back to the right path. However, the man or woman that is caught in the grip of sin, not only does not turn back but continues to forge ahead, oblivious to the fact that his course does not help him succeed but hurts him more

than anything else.

Israel went forward, despite the shouts of God through Jeremiah that they were going the wrong way, to turn around and correct themselves. They realized an ultimate return only when they heard the voice of God and returned from their captivity to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah.

End Zone Truths

THE CLOSEST END ZONE MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT GOAL. Israel often made alliances with neighboring countries to guarantee its safety. Following God was the long term goal, but that was a distance away. Alliances and deals with foreign neighbors were closer, quicker and more tangible. Like Israel, many of us have assumed the same attitude about life. We seek to realize our dreams by running to the closest end zone, taking the shortest cut, or bending the rules just a little bit. Sometimes we are on the 10 yard line facing a 90 yard march. In football, 90 yards is long way. It would be so much shorter if we could just turn around and run a touchdown in the end zone nearest us. It would also be easier to get rich through trick schemes, theft and deception. We could cheat a few people and steal a little too, each of these methods would get us into AN end zone, but it would not be the RIGHT end zone. Sometimes we want to take the road to least resistance. Paul wanted to travel to Asia Minor to establish churches. It was nearby, but God sent him to Macedonia, a long ways away; that was his goal. Phillip wanted to be a missionary in the big city but God sent him on a missionary journey in the wilderness, a long ways from anywhere; a single eunuch riding in a chariot was God's goal for him. The shortest cut, the quickest route, the fastest way, may not be what God has in store for each of us. We could easily cross into an end zone that's close by, but it would only be the right end zone if following the will of God is the goal.

END ZONES OFTEN LOOK A LIKE, WE MUST KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. There are times in life when goals and objectives can be confused. Believers must constantly study to remain focused and know the difference. Among Israel's various ways of angering God was a practice it established of setting up two places of worship when God ordered one. One was set up in the tribe of Dan, designed to prevent the people of the North from traveling to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. It had a ritual, sacrifice and claimed that its goal was the same as the same as the one in Jerusalem. Caught in the middle, many of the people could not see the difference and stopped at the closer worship site, angering God. Even today, it gets hard for many, in the confusion of religions, ideas, denominations and non-denominations, to discern what is right. They get turned around. In their zeal they run hard, but later discover that they have been running in the wrong direction. In football a player must know his end zone and remain focused on his goal. Believers, must do the same. We must know our goal and not lose focus when tempted to join look a like religions, denominations and non-denominations. Many who fall into these traps can't tell the differences and fall prey, thinking they are all the same. Paul told Timothy a simple solution in 1 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved, a workman that rightly

divides the word of truth." The same is true in every matter of life. Goals and objectives should not be so confused that we neglect to our main priorities to achieve lesser objectives. It's easy to get off track thinking that we are going in one direction while traveling in a totally opposite direction. We must keep our eye on the prize and press toward the mark of the high calling of Jesus Christ. In so doing we must be extremely careful not to waste time and energy running toward what appears to be right, but is actually the wrong end zone.

YOU CAN'T CHOOSE ANY GOAL YOU WISH AND WIN. One of Israel's preoccupations was their tendency to follow the most convenient god of a foreign nation. They worshipped God, but they also had a few other wooden images too. This angered God too. In verse 19 God said, "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?" It became obvious that they simply could not choose any god that was convenient at the moment and run with him if they wanted God's blessing. In football, plays can choose any end zone they wish and run toward it and expect to win the game. Their end zone is predetermined for each half. They can't change it at a whim. In life, the same wisdom applies. We can't make up the rules as we go along, doing as we please and expect to win. Yet, there are many who try to do just that and unsuccessfully attempt to please God or somebody else, whichever appears to pay more at the time. As believers, we must keep our eyes on the prize. We have but one goal, that is to please God, and through his grace, attain citizenship in the kingdom of God. To achieve that goal we press on toward our final end zone and don't turn back.

We can Turn Around

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that if we have been running toward the wrong end zone, we can still win the game.

Israel was stubborn. The people knew they were running in the wrong direction but they would not change. What we should observe is that although they were running in the wrong direction God still offered them a chance to return.

t does not matter how we became disoriented. It does not matter how we ended up on the wrong track, running furiously toward the wrong end zone, God offers us, even begs us to turn back.

On New Year's Day, l929, Georgia Tech played UCLA in the Rose Bowl. In that game a young man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for UCLA. Picking up the loose ball, he lost his direction and ran sixty-five yards toward the wrong goal line. One of his teammates, Benny Lom, ran him down and tackled him just before he reached the end zone. The Bruins were forced to punt. Tech blocked the kick and scored a safety, demoralizing the UCLA team.

The strange play came in the first half. At halftime the UCLA players filed off the field and into the dressing room. They sat around on benches and the floor. But Riegels put a blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, and put his face in his hands.

When the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before

playing time, Coach Price looked at the team and said, “Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second.” The players got up and started out, all but Riegels. He didn’t budge. The coach looked back and called to him. Riegels didn’t move. Coach Price went over to where Riegels sat and said, “Roy, didn’t you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second.”

Roy Riegels looked up, his cheeks wet with tears. “Coach,” he said, “I can’t do it. I’ve ruined you. I’ve ruined the university’s reputation. I’ve ruined myself. I can’t face that crowd out there.”

Coach Price reached out, put his hands on Riegels’ shoulder, and said, “Roy, get up and go on back. The game is only half over.”

I don’t know about you but I’m glad to know that the game of life is not over at half time.

Life is not over because we made a mistake or two or three. We can still win, this game! It’s just half time! Amazing things happen in the second half of our lives.

In the first half Jonah ran as far away from God as he could, but in the second half he preached so hard in Ninevah that he saved a nation!

In the first half, Saul persecuted the church with all of his mind and soul, but in the second half he became the champion of the cross!

In the first half, the woman caught in adultery was condemned to death, but in the second half she was forgiven and told to sin no more.

In the first half, the woman at the well, came to the well looking for a man, in the second half she ran to tell everyone, come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done.

In the first half they took a young 33 year old man from Nazareth and tried him before unjust courts.

In the first half they found him guilty and put a crown of thorns on his head.

In the first half they nailed him to an old rugged cross.

In the first half they stuck a spear in his side and buried him in a borrowed tomb!

When they closed him in the tomb, the first half ended.

Something was going in the locker room during half time because the earth quaked, the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, the veil of the temple was split into.

Early Sunday morning, the second half began!

Early Sunday morning, the he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

If you’ve been running the wrong way, get back in the game. God will give you the power you need for the second half and your final victory!

9245-Anniv.-Pastor

His Eyes Are On The Prize

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2007

SCRIPTURE: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14.

Introduction

Why do we celebrate the ministry of a pastor? We celebrate the anniversary of a pastor's ministry because it helps us place a milestone in time, marking progress made toward the goal. We celebrate such occasions because they involve our own accomplishments as well. When the pastor succeeds we succeed. Whatever he has accomplished, we have accomplished. When he fails we fail. So our celebration is a pause to encourage a pastor who marches vigorously toward the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ.

There are many who are called to preach, but not everyone has the personality or strength of character to be a pastor.

Pastors, unlike counselors, must give advice and also be able to take advice.

Pastors, unlike managers, must be able to manage resources and create resources as well.

Pastors, unlike analysts, must be able to discern the strength of an approach but be able to act upon the results.

Pastors must remain focused at all times keeping their eyes on the prize that Christ has offered to every believer.

Only the foolish pastor will waste his time in meaningless battles, frivolous disputes and unnecessary confrontations. Pastors are men of God; they have little time to waste with sparring partners. He always keeps his eye on the main event.

At anniversaries, whether they are long term or short term in nature, we both celebrate and evaluate the pastor.

What we usually find when the evaluation is over is that the great pastor never takes his eye off the prize.

Whenever men evaluate a pastor there is always a conflict between the ideal and the real; between what we want and what we will settle for. If men were to evaluate the pastor he would always come up short because:

If the pastor is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is gray, he's too old for the young people.

If he has five or six children, he has too many; if he has none, he's setting a bad example.

If he preaches from notes, he has canned sermons and is dry; If his messages are extemporaneous, he isn't deep enough.

If he uses too many illustrations, he's neglecting the Bible; if he doesn't include stories, he isn't clear.

If he preaches the truth, he's too offensive; if he doesn't preach the truth then he's a hypocrite.

If he fails to make everybody happy, he's hurting the church; if he does make them all happy, he has no convictions.

If he drives an old car, he shames his congregation; if he buys a new one, he's stealing the church's money

If he receives a large salary, he's in it for the money!

If he gets a small one — It's because he can't preach anyway and that's all he's worth!

As Christians, we know that we are on our way to the Promised Land. That is the prize that we all seek. We celebrate our spiritual leader for his efforts to keep us focused on that prize as we continue our daily pilgrimage to the land of promise.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi summarizing his own great faith, purpose and life ministry.

Paul's pastoral ministry was energized by the Holy Spirit. He was vigorous in his support of the Church and the work of the saints. Despite his circumstances he committed himself to "follow after" (v12). The phrase is from the Greek word "di?k?" which means to pursue with vigor. That is the definition of his ministry and that of any others similarly situated.

The young pastors who would pick up the mantel behind great men such as Paul would hopefully embrace the spirit of "di?k?" that would help them learn to follow after the predecessors with a degree of wisdom and respect, while leaving a trail of their own for others who will "di?k?" or follow after them.

The essence of Paul's ministry was to accomplish his goal in the name of Christ. Always, he pressed towards that mark. He pursued his ministry as a runner who runs a race never stops short of the end but continues to victory. Heaven is called the "mark," because it is that which every good Christian has in his eye.

Ultimately, Paul wanted to go to heaven. It was the prize he preached about for every believer and for himself. It was the mark of the prize of the high calling.

Thus, Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

A Spirit of Humility

The pastor is celebrated because of his/her humility. It is not easy to be humble; that is why the church celebrates this quality in its leader. The greatest pastor is the one who is a humble servant. When the pastor begins his pastorate he/she begins with an empty title. The pastor must earn the title through a humble spirit and faithful service. Jesus said, he that would be greatest among us should be our servant.

Humility is a character trait that should not be ignored by any pastor because the wise man knows that he does not know everything and can be wrong in matters of policy, procedure and tradition, but is never wrong about the surety of his faith.

Paul remained humble, throughout his life. Obviously, God had endowed him with great talents and gifts but he always received them with an attitude of humility. Although Paul was a learned scholar who spoke many languages fluently and was well versed in the scholarship of his day, he told the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended" that is to note that while he had learned much in life, he was keenly aware that he did not know everything. He counted heavily on the Holy Spirit to reveal many things to him and to call others to his remembrance. Knowing that God spoke and moved through him, Paul was always humbled to know that he had not accomplished anything alone, but it was always God working through him.

The best men in the world readily own their own imperfections. They are aware that they have flaws and work tirelessly to insure that these imperfections do filter through to their life work.

Pastors must always remind themselves that they too are imperfect. Sometimes pastors even behave foolishly, making unnecessary mistakes and causing injury. The wise pastor will recognize the error of such a position and apologize for his own imperfections and adjust accordingly.

The humble pastor also studies intensely because he/she knows that they do not know everything; hence they continue to study to show themselves workmen that need not be a ashamed but workmen who divide rightly the words of truth. Only the fool thinks that he or she knows enough or even worse, thinks he or she knows everything. Matthew Henry puts it this way, "Those who think they have grace enough give proof that they have little enough, or rather that they have none at all; because, wherever there is true grace, there is a desire of more grace, and a pressing towards the perfection of grace."

An Intense Focus

The pastor is also praised because of his intense focus on the ministry. It is not difficult for a congregation to lose sight of its goal. The pastor remains focused and keeps the congregation on track. That's why the congregation celebrates his intense focus; because he keeps them on track; and when they lose their way, helps them find their way back.

Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. Whatever was done in the past remains as history. He chose, even in a moment of crises, to always look to the future.

The wise pastor looks back with appreciation on the works of those who preceded him, giving praise and honor to those who paved the way, while at the same time remaining focused on the future. The pastor's eye is always on the prize. It is always on Calvary. His eye is always on Christ, the Solid Rock.

A Sure Destination

The pastor must be sure of his destination, firm in his faith, and unwavering in his belief that God's promises of heaven are true and forthcoming.

Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as a witness to the power of God and there would be no turning back.

Eyes on the Prize

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that our prayers should never cease for the pastor because we need his eyes to stay focused on the prize.

The great pastors are those who keep their eyes on the cross and never lose sight of the reason for their ministry.

The church should always pray that the pastor does not get distracted to the point that he can't find Jesus. When that happens it means his eyes are NOT on the prize.

I'm reminded of the metropolitan church that was looking for a pastor. It had a list of applicants with impressive resumes. However, among the applicants was an elderly country preacher who came to stand before the pulpit committee. "What are your qualifications? Where is your resume?" The preacher was asked.

He then opened a large paste board box and said "this is my resume" He pulled out a "rub board", a pair of knee pads, and a compass with stone glued to its backside.

When asked to explain the country preacher, with fire and eloquence said, "This rub board is the first page of my resume' it tells you who I am. It says that I'm a child

of God, washed in the blood of the lamb."

Holding up the knee pads he said, "These knee pads suggest to you that I know and believe in the power of prayer, for prayer changes things.

This compass says when things get dark and we can't see a way, that I know how to follow the direction of his word and find the rock that is higher than I. Brothers and sisters I know how to find Jesus!" When he finished an old member of the committee stood and said, "One of our applicants is from Harvard, another is from Yale, but this man knows how to find Jesus, he's got his eyes on the prize!"

When the pastor has his eyes on the prize, the church is able to see Jesus!

When we can see Jesus, it doesn't matter how rough the road becomes; we know everything will be alright!

When we can see Jesus, our faith is reaffirmed!

When we can see Jesus, our strength is renewed!

When we can see Jesus, joy is restored!

Preach the word preacher!

Preach it in season and out of season!

Keep your eyes on the prize!

Tell them about Jesus!

Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus! Who arose from the dead!

Tell them that he's coming back again to claim his own!

Until that day…keep your eyes on the prize!

No.9246-Annv.-Women

Women Knead Their Dough

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 11, 2007

SCRIPTURE: The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Jeremiah 7:18

Introduction

Have you ever watched a small ball of dough rise. As children, many have watched their parents prepare breads the old fashioned way. They watched as mother took the lump of dough in her hands and squeezed it, turned it, shaped it; and even powdered it. We watched through the glass door on the oven as the dough seemed to sit for a while with nothing happening. Then, as the temperature began to increase, we saw the dough begin to rise and enlarge. We watched a mother guarded the kitchen and would not allow anyone to slam doors or open the oven. She protected the kneaded dough until it grew firm. We saw it form a brown crust. We smelled the aroma. We saw dough turn into bread.

But first it was kneaded.

When something is kneaded it is pressed or squeezed into a uniform mass as by folding, pressing or stretching with the hands. Before many breads are prepared the dough is kneaded first.

Often we only see the final products of bread stuffs. We do not see how they were first kneaded, shaped and plunged into the heat of the oven to become what we admire.

Many women today can relate to the entire concept of both being the bread maker and being the dough. As bread maker, many women are functioning as home managers and even career managers. They are working in the market place and functioning successfully in the world of commerce. Yet, these same women who are so strong in once instance are also very fragile in another.

Women need to be kneaded.

The successful women of history have been kneaded: squeezed, pulled, shaped and turned. Theirs is the story of women who have overcome obstacles placed before them involving gender and race. They have triumphed despite the pulling and turning; despite the heat of the oven.

J. Clay Smith, in her book "Rebels in Law" chronicles the struggles of Black women to succeed, especially in the area of law. She began with the struggles of Charlotte

E. Ray, the first Black woman lawyer in 1872 and continued through the struggles of Anita Hill with her famous fight against now Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Her litany of women who struggled includes: The Late Barbara Jordan, Patricia Roberts Harris, Carol Mosely Braun, Patricia Roberts Harris and many others. Smith detailed the crucible of testing set before women in the legal profession but not before detailing the struggles of all women to endure the same.

Like a lump of dough that sits alone, there is a fear of being alone. It is good to know that they are not just sitting idly but that they are being watched over carefully by an eternal hand.

The struggles of women in the past have proven to be the substance that helped them rise.

Like the dough on the pan, women and everyone who hopes to succeed need to be kneaded. They need careful attention; to be watched over like the dough in the oven to keep them from falling. They need someone greater than themselves to check on them from time to time to be sure that that they don't over bake and are not under-risen.

They can become a perfect loaf if kneaded properly, watched carefully and nurtured while they rise.

That's what God does for all of us. He kneads us from time to time. He shapes us, molds us and then allows us to feel the heat of the fire but keeps us from falling flat, and removes from the fire after we've had enough heat to help us to stand on our own.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that our God keeps us and protect us and kneads us, like dough, until we rise.

Exposition

The text focuses on women of Israel kneading dough.

Jeremiah constantly preached to Israel concerning its allegiance to God. He often depicted the people in the context of being shaped and molded in God's hand like pieces of clay at the Potter's House. Despite God's goodness to them Israel often strayed. This text is one of the examples of how far they strayed.

There were two pagan gods served most by nations that surrounded Israel, Baal and Asheroth his wife. She was called the "Queen of Heaven." She was often represented by the moon. The sale of moon shaped objects and artifacts was a prosperous trade of the period. Those who had something moon shaped in their homes seemed to succeed. So, many Israelite families followed suit.

One of the ways they adopted the pagan practice was to make moon shaped cakes in honor of Asheroth. They believed the practice would help them become successful. Entire families pitched in to make the moon cakes. Thus come the words of verse 18, "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven…"

While they were doing it for a pagan reason, the text sheds light on division of labor in the ancient household, the children gathered wood, the fathers kindled fire and the women kneaded dough." Kneading dough was considered women's work.

Kneading the dough was considered her function and so it remained for hundreds of years.

Kneading Dough

Today, women are still kneading dough. They are still homemakers and professionals, cooks, and teachers, ambassadors and presidential candidates. Women are kneading the dough all over the world.

In the African-American community women are kneading the dough as they assume leadership of an overwhelming majority of our homes, fill our classrooms and lead our families.

Women knead to provide for their families.

Women knead to gain self respect!

Women knead to help build the kingdom of God!

While women are kneading the dough, women themselves are being kneaded by the society in which they live.

How are they kneaded? Black women are most often rape victims, according to Africana Voices Against violence. Every nine seconds in America a Black woman is punched, slapped, kicked or emotionally abused. According to EUR World, every two seconds a Black woman is referred to as a "ho" or female dog.

Even in their own race black women are kneaded and discriminated against. Schools promote young black girls as sex objects at athletic events by dressing them in thinly clad uniforms for the amusement of crowds of mostly paying men. Black preachers humiliate Black women preachers by belittling them in public and refusing to honor their calling. And some black churches tell them that God thinks they are second class citizens doomed to forever follow in the shadow of men in the kingdom of God.

Add this to her struggle for economic independence, and intellectual freedom, and it becomes obvious that the black woman is certainly being kneaded, twisted, turned and pulled every which way but loose.

It is from this torment that today's black woman emerges; still standing, despite the insults, humiliations, obstacles and frustrations before her. She continues to rise.

Maya Angelou's famous poem, "Still I rise" expresses every woman's hope of triumph over adversity and trouble.

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

I rise! I rise!

Women are Needed

Lest the all knowing men of this world forget, God made Eve, who was the first Black woman nested in the Kenya in a garden on the continent of Africa. He made Eve because women are needed.

The late James Brown wrote a song once that said, “This is a man’s world, but it wouldn’t be nothing without a woman or a girl.”

The African-American community today would be lost without the Black woman. She is needed because she is the cornerstone of our race.

The statistics tell the story. While there is a good chance that 28 out of every 100 Black men will spend time in state or Federal prison, only 3 out every 100 Black women are expected to do prison time. There are two times as many black women in college as there are men.

Black women are in Congress, there is Black woman serving as Secretary of State and Black women are leading our communities, dominating our politics and holding our communities together. There is no doubt that Black women are needed. Without them, there would be no life as we know it.

Women need to be needed

Our women need to be needed. The world often treats her as if she is of little value, but in the words of Isaac Hayes, she “needs to be loved by someone.”

She needs to be held high instead of trampled down!

She needs to be embraced for her accomplishments rather than put down!

She needs to be lifted up for her strength rather than ridiculed for her weaknesses.

She has needs to rise.

There are many women today who are being kneaded by circumstance but have not risen because they, like many others, have too little patience. It takes time for a sweet, tasty bread to rise. In Old Testament times the children of Israel were ordered to eat bread without yeast when they were on the move. Even when they prepared to leave Egypt they ate bread without yeast. Leavened bread had to rise, then be baked. Those on the move ate unleavened or flat bread because they didn’t have time for it to rise.

Today, women need time to rise. In the rush of preparing for family and career, women need time to rise. It’s a moment of solitude in which you can read, reflect and finally exhale. In addition we need time to speak to God in our solitude. That means time to pray and to listen to him speak to us.

If we are to rise, all of us need time. Being on the go all of the time requires flat bread. It also results in flat pie crusts that we reluctantly call spiritual lives.

Women Need God

Finally, brothers and sisters, while women are kneaded by life's circumstances and the evils of the world, we must also remember that women need God.

In this respect, women and men share the same need. We all need God.

We need God to help us overcoming the bitter stings of adversity we face every day!

We need God to motivate us to continue to rise above the despondency of our circumstance!

No wonder the song writer declared, 'I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee. O bless me now my savior I come to thee!

We need the Lord to turn our midnights into days!

We need the Lord to take our weaknesses and turn them into strengths!

We need the Lord to take our failure and convert them into triumphs!

I don't know about you but I agree with the song writer who said, "I don't know what I would do without the Lord. When I look around and see, what the Lord has done for me, I don't know what I would do without the Lord!"

I can't even wave my hands without the Lord! When I look around and see what the Lord has done for me. I don't know what I would do without the Lord!"

We need the Lord in the morning!

We need the Lord in the midnight hour!

His name is Jesus!

The lily of the Valley!

The bright and morning star!

He died out on Calvary!

But early, Sunday morning….he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9247-Funeral

Peace, At Last

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2006

SCRIPTURE:He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. Psalm 55:18

Introduction

What does it mean to really be at peace? Between birth and death each of us struggles to achieve three states: fulfillment, joy and peace. These three intangibles always seem beyond us. As soon as we get close to them, they seem to slip through our fingers or linger just beyond our fingertips.

Fulfillment

Fulfillment is elusive. It begins with a dream that is larger than we can perceive but still small enough for us to receive and believe. We are fulfilled when we realize the dream in our own lives. Sometimes we dream of love and being loved. Being loved means being appreciated for oneself; not for what we can do for others. To be loved is to inhale the compassion of those who care for us and to exhale the same spirit in all that we meet. Many spend their lives trying to find someone to love them. The direction it comes from does not matter; we feel fulfilled when we are loved.

Joy

Joy is elusive too. We often substitute happiness for joy only to find out that happiness depends upon intangibles to exist. Many have reduced happiness to one word definitions that glow with the fleeting glimmer of comet then vanish. Happiness is sexy. Happiness is fame. Happiness is fortune. Happiness is glamour. Those who grasp for happiness often find that despite its illusions that it is no substitute for real joy. Happiness is superficial.

Joy is different. It does not depend upon fortune, glamour and the flashes of a thousand cameras. Joy wells from within us. It is a delicate mix of dreams, achievement and godliness that makes it all worthwhile. Many achieve happiness but find that it's like a melting cone in the summer; it doesn't last long. Those with inner joy have something that money, beauty, glamour and fame cannot buy. Happiness comes from

things, but it dwarfs in comparison to joy. It is like a spring before a sea; it is a stream, but joy is an ocean. For this reason joy is elusive, evasive and is obtained only by those who know the difference. God shows the secret path to joy to those who know him and teaches them the difference between happiness and real joy.

Peace

Peace is the crown jewel of our life's quest. Each person desires peace. When we have peace the hostilities end. The pushing and shoving ends. The reports and misinformation ends. The words of commentators, anticipators, prognosticators and haters, end too. When we are at peace the tongues still wag but we soar above them or fly below their radar. When we are at peace the headlines may continue to blare but we won't read them or be affected by what they report. As others quarrel, dispute and concern themselves with trivialities, formalities and insecurities; we soar above them, or just below their radar, oblivious, insipid and unnerved. Peace is not just the cessation of hostility. It is not a cold war or a cordial agreement to continue in disagreement without the appearance of disunion. Peace is silence while the world screams. It is tranquility while the world anguishes.

Peace is elusive too. The rich seek peace, but often find that their money gets in the way. The famous seek peace, but often stumble over the notoriety of their own names. The beautiful seek peace but discover that it is hard to find because of the glare of a thousand flashing lights that leave them groping, searching, reaching but never quite grasping what they want most: to be noticed, but left alone.

Exposition

This text, written by David, expresses his joy at finally finding peace.

Psalm 55 details a life that was frustrated, weary and worn. This psalm represents the cry of a soul that, though surrounded by many was lonely, afraid and frustrated. Listen to the words of the Psalmist in verses 4-6, "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

These are the musings of a soul that was surrounded by many people who were battling him. They fought him and they fought over him. They questioned his intentions. They mocked his loyalties and second guessed his friendships, relationships and involvements. The words of David, inspired by God for this record, echo across the centuries in verse 18, "He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me."

The battle that was against David came from many angles. He was a target of the government, critics, Philistines and many others. There were many against him; so many that he wished he toyed with the idea of taking the wings of a dove to soar into the heavens and escape it all.

However, while David considered those that were against him, he also considered that there were many who were not his enemies. He considered he had many admirers, supporters and defenders. He considered the priests who offered him showbread when he was hungry at considerable risk to their lives. He considered the hundreds of men who followed him in battle and fought bravely to defend his honor. When he considered these, he remembered that while there were many against him, "there were many with me."

These thoughts set his mind at ease.

These thoughts gave him a sense of calm.

These thoughts gave his soul peace.

David found peace by calling upon God. In verse 16-17 he said, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

Together these texts givesa clear message: Those surrounded by hostility, trouble, ridicule and vicious words, can find peace in the presence of God.

To Be At Peace

What does it take to be at peace? In a statement from "Walden," Henry David Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." There are others who quite certainly who live their lives in public desperation, searching, yearning for peace.

In the bible in Luke 2:36-38 there is a woman named Anna. She married at a young age, became a widow a short time after and spent her remaining years in search of a child. Any other comparison we might have of ourselves or anyone we may know to the Biblical Anna would certainly be oxymoronic. It would be contradictory because the biblical Anna reached a level of perfection that would make most of us, or anyone we know, pale in comparison. The one aspect of Anna's life that we might all share is the desire to find, see and touch the child that defines our legacy.

When life's curtain falls, we can be at peace if we are buried with those we love and can be assured that our offspring are provided for and loved.

Those who want to bring us peace can help this happen. In the bible Joseph was a famous man in Egypt. He was prominent, wealthy and powerful. He could have been buried among the Pharaohs of Egypt but his request was to be buried among those whom he loved most. When Israel marched out of Egypt 400 years later, they carried the bones of Joseph with them, to bury them among his loved ones, so he could finally rest in peace.

Those who want to help us rest in peace should focus on those we leave behind; our living legacy.

If you want us to rest in peace..take care of our offspring. Love them. Nurture them. Embrace them.

That knowledge will help us approach our graves in the words of William Cullen Bryant, "not like the quarry-slave at night, scourged to his dungeon, but…like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams."

When we finally rest with those we love having provided for the nurture and maintenance of those we leave behind, we can find, in death, the peace that often escaped us and evaded us in life.

Rest in Peace

At the close of each life there is an epilogue. It is the final statement that our lives leave to the world.

It is what we learn from a life experience.

We have learned much from the life that we celebrate today. We have watched this life rise from obscurity to notoriety. We have scrutinized every detail. We have observed its search for fulfillment, joy and peace. We know the quest. We know the struggle. We know the pain. As we observe and read its epilogue we can relate to the errors because we have made them. We can admire the successes because we aspire to them and we can embrace the search closure because we want that too.

As Christians, we recognize our own frailty and inability to always do the right things or make the right choices.

It has been my experience, that those who love God most find the most fulfillment, joy and peace.

Those who trust God most, rise above the storms of controversy that this life creates.

Those who depend upon God most, go to their graves confident that "all is well."

This confidence comes because of our faith in Jesus Christ, who came to this world fully flawed like all of us.

He endured the humiliation of the cross and an undeserved death but arose from the grave on the third day to bring hope to all believers.

This hope is that despite our weaknesses..

Despite our failures and flaws..

Despite our doubts and insecurities..

Despite even untimely deaths…

Despite what is written, or spoken about us..

Through him we can rest in peace..

At last.

No. 9248-Funeral

A Postcard from Heaven

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 10, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is .." Jeremiah 37:17a

Introduction

Have you ever received a post card in the mail? Post cards are simple little cards that contain short messages. We usually enjoy post card messages. On the front there is usually a beautiful picture that describes a picturesque setting. On the back there is a small space for a message. Usually the message is short: "Having a great time, wish you were here!" The post cards bring smiles to our faces because they are reassuring. They let us know that everything is alright.

Today there are all kinds of cards: Post cards, greeting cards and e-cards. It is even possible to get a living card. Those who want a special way to sing happy birthday or Merry Christmas can purchase a singing card; that's when live singers appear at your loved one's door and sing happy birthday or some other cheery message. They sing the message then disappear.

A card can often say the exact words we want to say. Sometimes when we say things the words come out wrong. Consider the maid who always answered her boss by writing messages on small cards. One day she started talking to her boss but wouldn't only say one phrase. One day the boss woman sat on the porch talking to her maid. The woman said, "On my first anniversary my husband brought me a diamond bracelet." The maid looked at her and said, "Isn't that nice?" A few minutes later she said, "On our second anniversary, my husband bought me that Mercedes Benz in the front yard." The maid looked at the car and said with a nonchalant smile, "Isn't that nice?" As an afterthought the woman said, on our third anniversary my husband bought me this beautiful five bed room house." Again the maid answered, "Isn't that nice?" Then the woman asked the maid, "What did your husband give you for your anniversary?" The maid answered by saying, "When he heard I was going to take a job working in this neighborhood. He told me to write everything on cards; then he gave me a month's tuition in a charm school." The woman said, "Why would he do that?" The maid, answered, "I learned how not to say what I want to say. Now, I have charm. When I really want to say, "Who really gives a cotton pick? I have learned to say…"Isn't that nice?"

We all like receiving post cards and greeting cards, but wouldn't it be nice if we could receive a post card from heaven? Just when we are at our lowest, wouldn't it be nice to get a word from heaven that said everything is alright? Just when we are overcome with grief and sadness, wouldn't it be nice if there was a special delivery from heaven with a few short words that put us at ease?

The person who sends a greeting card is sympathetic, able to feel the need of others for a moment of joy and happiness. Each card they send may be on a piece of paper, but the words they contain are from the soul. They are little messages from the heart of a concerned soul.

God sends us messages from heaven on a regular basis, too. Sometimes he gives us visions. Sometimes he gives us dreams.

Sometimes he shows us his love by sending us mothers whose lives are living, talking, preaching, teaching and loving post cards that send us a message that God loves us.

As Christians, we are grateful for the many ways that God blesses our lives with messages from heaven. When we are sad he sent us "melodies from heaven." When we needed guidance to find our way, he sent us mothers, with a lifetime of short messages direct from heaven.

Exposition

This text focuses on a question that was asked of the Prophet Jeremiah.

In the Old Testament, whenever a king or a leader wanted direction, inspiration or information from heaven he often sent messengers to the prophets asking, "Is there any word from the Lord."

It was a phrase that expressed their desire to receive a word of hope or inspiration from heaven. In Jeremiah 37:17 the king sent a messenger to the prophet Jeremiah to seek a word from the Lord before entering into battle. Sometimes the kings were happy with the word they received. There were times, such as in this text that they received bad news.

Whether it was good or bad, they wanted a word from heaven.

In Jeremiah 23:35 those who sought a word asked, "What has the Lord spoken?" It was their desire to hear from heaven.

God has sent messages from heaven in numerous ways. Sometimes it was through the direct voice of God. When Moses went into the mount for 40 days and nights and returned with the 10 commandments, he heard the voice of God. When the people heard God's voice directly they were afraid and asked that he would speak to Moses instead.

Sometimes a message from heaven came in the form of visions. Ezekiel was given the vision of the dry bones in the valley. Through this vision the people learned that the people would be restored if they would listen to the word of the Lord.

Another way that God sent messages from heaven was through dreams. Daniel displayed the unique ability to dream dreams and to interpret dreams as a way of helping them understand messages from heaven.

Then there were times when messages from heaven were delivered in person. When Sara learned that she would bear a child in her old age, the message was brought by angels, in person. Angels, in person, went to Sodom and Gomorrah and delivered a message to Lot and his family that saved most of them and condemned the cities at the same time.

Thus, believers have received messages from heaven through the preached word, dreams, visions and through the physical presence of message bearers from heaven.

Godly Mothers are post cards

A good mother is a like a living messenger from heaven in a family. Not all mothers are good mothers, some are hell's angels; but good mothers are different.

Our mothers are the mirrors by which we measure ourselves. They are our frame of reference. We emulate their strengths. We want to stay away from their weaknesses. Like mirrors we tilt them, turn them and sometimes crack them, but they still remain the one constant by which we measure ourselves.

We hear their messages constantly. In reflection they seem to be the same words we hear from preachers on Sunday. They seem to be the same words we read in the bible. We hear them in our sleep and think about them every day.

Do you hear her messages in your sleep? It was a post card from heaven!

When you go into the world, never forget who are? Hold your head up high and respect yourself?

Never lie, because if you lie you will steal!

Always worship God, give him your best!

Godly mothers never stop sending us messages. They call us on the phone; they send us emails. They visit us and celebrate with us and even in the middle of the celebration; they send us more messages.

When God wanted to send us a post card from heaven; he sent us mothers.

One last Postcard

At death, wouldn't it be nice if we could receive a post card or little greeting card from our loved one; to reassure us that everything is alright?

The words of the little poem would certainly apply:

When you get where you are going
Drop me a line or two
Just to let me know you got there safe
Just a word or two
Not a book or long letter
Just a post card or two
In my dreams, in a song
Just a word will do.

Yet God has sent us a post card in his word to remind us that everything is alright.

John 1:1 says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in

me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." – That's a message from heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:1 1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." That's a message from heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." That's a message from heaven.

God sent us a Living Post Card

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that God sent us a living post card in the form of his Son Jesus Christ.

Hallmark Cards is a multimillion dollar company that specializes in marketing greeting cards with the right words for every situation. The company's slogan is, "When you care enough to send the very best." They have cards for all occasions: sympathy, birthday, all seasons and sometimes the cards say, "Just thinking of you."

That's what God did for the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Before Hallmark, God cared enough about us to send the very best.

Jesus was our living post card from heaven to remind the world that no matter how bad it gets, God still loves us.

When we feel low we ask, is there a word from the Lord?

And after while, bye and bye, we get a post card from heaven!

No matter what our situation may be, the post card we get is always the right one because he is the right card for the occasion.

Jesus is the world's best all occasion card.

In our moments of sadness, he's the right card because he brings us gladness.

In our moments of sickness, he's the right card because he brings inspiration and hope.

In our moments of despair, he's the right card because he brings us renewed faith.

The despondent ask, "Is there a word from the Lord?"

And every believer answered that there is a word from the Lord!

He was a postcard from heaven…delivered through 42 generations..

He was God's loved letter to the world!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

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On Saturday, March 3, 2007, Joyanease Gill went home to be with the Lord. She left one final post card that reads, "Having a great time! See you when you get here."

No. 9249-Building Fund

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2007

SCRIPTURE: "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them." Genesis 49:29

Introduction

Building campaigns require teamwork, but have you ever looked at your team and concluded that your team can't win? Whenever we conclude that what we are trying to do is impossible, then we have already given up. Sometimes, when we look at the members of our team we doubt our own ability to see the project to the end. This doubt comes because we forget what our team can do in God's hands.

Those in the church are not alone. In many walks of life there are people like us who embark on a project feeling the final outcome is fruitless. Teachers feel that way sometimes. They give their best energy and time to prepare a lesson that seems to go in one ear and come out the other. Parents feel that way too. Those who work in the criminal justice system often see so many cases of misplaced values parading before them that they wonder whether there is an end to the revolving door that seems to have trapped some in an endless spiral and will not turn them loose. Those who help the poor, the elderly or the homeless reach the same point. In frustration, many good people often wonder whether they should continue their good work. They wonder they should keep ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, collecting food for the needy, or working to help the homeless. All of these efforts build the kingdom but they are frustrating to many.

When a church building project is divided into 12 groups, it is reminiscent of the 12 tribes of Israel. Sometimes groups would like to pick their own members to get the perfect team, without realizing that it is not the team but the power of God that makes the team work.

The founders of the tribes were 12 brothers who looked like a losing team. Among the brothers were many who could not get along, one who was guilty of incest, several who were hot tempered and violent and many who were talented. Despite what appeared to be a clumsy, flawed, team of brothers, God used this family of brothers and blessed them in such a way that the world has become a better place because of them.

As Christians, we have learned that nothing is impossible in God's hands. He can help us build and succeed if we have a mind to work. It does not matter who is on our

team or committee. What matters is whether our team is in God's hands. If we trust in him, God favors us with blessings from on high. Together we can build a great work for him and he will get the praise.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he blesses and prophesies the future of his 12 sons who later became known as the Children of Israel.

Throughout the bible there is reference to the 12 tribes of Israel. This reference is to the descendants of Abraham through his grandson, Jacob.

Abraham and his wife, Sarah, gave birth to Isaac, the son of promise, who was married to Rebekah, granddaughter of Nahor.

To Isaac and Rebekah were born Jacob and Esau.

Jacob married both Leah and Rachel, daughters of Laban.

To Jacob and his wives were born twelve sons, who, having migrated to Egypt, became the foundation for the twelve tribes and for the fulfillment of the promises originally made to Abraham.

Jacob wrestled with God and he was blessed. His name was changed from Jacob to Israel. Thus, his 12 sons became known as the children of Israel. Each of them headed a specific tribe.

Though Israel had 12 sons, there were actually 13 tribes when Israel moved into the promised land. This happened as the tribe of Levi was set aside to care for the worship of God. The tribe of Joseph was split into two half tribes named: Ephraim and Mannasseh. In the promised land references to the 12 tribes of Israel include all 13 tribes.

The Tribes blessed

Reuben: Reuben was blessed to be the firstborn of Israel. That carried with it the prospect of honor and privilege. Yet because he had relations with his father's wife he was punished. Although Ruben repented his tribe bore the mark of his indiscretion. In the history of this tribe there were no judges, prophets or priests. They were not allowed to excel, according to v4. "Thou shalt not excel." The Tribe of Rueben remained loyal to the nation and fought to build its great legacy. From Rueben we learn how our actions can have an adverse affect on the future of our families. But also from Ruben we learn humility and repentance as we work to build the kingdom.

Simeon and Levi: Both blessings and hardships became the lots of Simeon and Levi. The character of Simeon and Levi was similar. They were passionate and revengeful, fierce and uncontrollable; their swords were weapons of violence. Jacob prophesied that these two tribes would be separated from the rest (v7). Simeon's descendants were scattered among the tribes, always looking for settlements. The descendants of Levi received no inheritance in the Promised Land. Verse 7 notes that Jacob was upset with their anger and cruelty, but not with them as individuals. He

never stopped loving these two sons who were overtaken by fiery passions. Today, we too should remember that God often hates some of the things we do, but he never stops loving us. He often chastises us because of our actions, but we are still counted among the children of God.

Judah: A great blessing was given to Judah because he was a child of continual praise to God in worship and in lifestyle. Judah's name signifies praise, in allusion to which he says, Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, v. 8. God was praised for him praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him. Judah became a royal tribe, producing princes and kings. Judah also became a strong and victorious tribe, through whom the promised savior was born many years later in Bethlehem. When our lives are lived according to God's will we praise him both in our worship and through our lifestyle. He is praised through us. He is praised by us. As a result those who, like Judah, live lives that praise God will be rewarded.

Zebulun: The tribe of Zebulun became a prosperous tribe by the sea coast. Jacob fortold their future before his death; that Zubulun's posterity should have their lot upon the seacoast, and should be merchants, and mariners, and traders at sea. This was fulfilled when, two or three hundred years after, the land of Canaan was divided by lot, and the border of Zebulun went up towards the sea. It proved that God's promise, after all the years, did not return empty. Like Zebulun many of our forefathers were made promises about the future of their children. Though interrupted by slavery, hard times, depression and racial discrimination, those promises are being fulfilled this very day. God never forgot the promise to Zebulun, just as he never forgets promises he made to our fore parents concerning us. We are blessed today because of the prayer requests of a thousand grandmas and grandpas who prayed for the success of their descendants.

Issachar: The tribe of Issachar became known for the hard working nature of its people. They were strong and industrious, fit for labor, particularly the toil of husbandry. They succeeded because they worked so hard they appeared to be slaves to the land. Yet they found peace in the labor. Today, we should remember that God blesses the family that works hard and obeys his will. He gives that family something that money cannot buy; peace and happiness. This was the great gift of Issachar, the gift of peace and a reward for working to build the kingdom.

Dan: Dan became a tribe known for producing the great judge Samson. He was strong and bold, yet sometimes he was like Jacob described, "a snake on the road." In his strength Samson glorified God. In his weakness, like a snake that bites the heel of horse, he brought the nation shame. Dan brought Israel hope but it also was the source of its shame at times. Samson in his last days proved the strength of the Lord when he destroyed the Philistines in one last act of courage. Even today, the best of believers are sometimes like Dan. Somedays we are strong. On other days we are so weak that we bring shame on our families and even the church. Thanks to the mercy of God, although we fall down, we do get up to give him the ultimate victory as we work to build the church.

Gad: The Gadites were men of war fit for the battle. In the Promised Land they were constantly exposed to attacks by their neighbors, the Moabites and Ammonites; and,

that they might not be proud of their strength and valor, he foretels that the troops of their enemies should, in many skirmishes, overcome them; yet, that they might not be discouraged by their defeats, he assures them that they should overcome at the last. We, like the Gadites should be soldiers in the army of the Lord. We should be aware that we will have to fight Satan many times. There will be time when Satan appears to win but ultimately we, like Gad, will overcome at last. The Lord has promised us that, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things."

Asher: The tribe of Asher was a prosperous tribe. Their works were blessed and they became a very rich tribe, replenished not only with bread for necessity, but with fatness, with dainties, royal dainties. They sold their produce to other tribes, and perhaps to other lands. Like Asher, believers who live in obedience have the blessings of Asher as an indicator of their reward. Asher did more than just survive, it was a tribe that thrived; and God received the glory. Asher's success is a picture of hope for every believer, that even in this life, we can enjoy many of the creature comforts of this world, while working to build the kingdom of God. God provided all of Asher's needs, and most of their wants. He will do no less for those who trust him today.

Naphtali: Naphtali was a tribe that lived true to its blessing. Like a doe finds freedom by the strength of its hind legs and escapes capture, this proved to be the destiny of this tribe. It was known for its wrestling, and the blessing entailed upon it signifies prevailing; it is a hind let loose. The same is true for believers today who have the spirit of Naphtali; to be escape the troubles and discord of life. Those who have this spirit seem to escape the worries and musings that trouble others, as if they were propelled by spirit hind legs that help them to retreat from the troubles of the world and find peace with God. For Naphtali, this blessing was a gift. To those who have the spirit today, it is also a blessing.

Joseph: The tribe of Joseph was very large and full. Joseph is compared to a fruitful young tree; for God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. His two sons were as branches of a vine, or other spreading plant, running over the wall. More is recorded in the history of Israel concerning Joseph than concerning any other of Jacob's sons; and therefore what Jacob says of him is historical as well as prophetical. Joseph was the object of the special love of Jacob and was blessed accordingly. Today, God has no special children to which he gives coats of many colors. Everyone of God's children is special in his eyes. In response to his love we can expect the blessings that Joseph enjoyed. He and his children were blessed, despite family troubles, hard times and even imprisonment. When we are the loved of God, despite our circumstance, God will raise us too.

Benjamin: The blessing of Benjamin was that his would be a warlike tribe, strong and daring, and that they should enrich themselves with the spoils of their enemies- that they should be active and busy in the world, and a tribe as much feared by their neighbors as any other. There was something special about the people of Benjamin. Most of them were left handed and they were respected. From Benjamin came Ehud the second judge, and Saul the first king, were of this tribe; and so also in the last times Esther and Mordecai, by whom the enemies of the Jews were destroyed, were of this

tribe. Even St. Paul was of this tribe. There are many of us today, who live on the left hand side of life, but God can bless and use us to build the kingdom. Like Esther, he can raise us up for "Such a time as this." Like Paul, he can give us strength to "fight the good fight and finish our course." As we build the kingdom today, we should keep the vigor and passion of Benjamin in mind and let our work and energy earn the respect of those who watch as we build the kingdom of God.

God is the cornerstone

Finally, we should remember that God is building a heavenly kingdom, in which each saint is a living stone and a living sacrifice.

The kingdom of God, though built with living stones, must have a cornerstone.

It does not matter what tribe you represent or where your stone is placed in the wall of faith, as long as Jesus is the cornerstone of your hope.

The cornerstone is the foundation upon which the kingdom is built.

The corner piece of the kingdom of God is the same stone that the builders rejected!

The corner stone of our hope is not made of bricks or mortar.

The corner stone of our trust cannot be affixed to the edge of a building!

The corner stone of our faith is the substance of our hope!

The Lord is the justification for our faith!

The Lord is the chief corner stone of my hope!

I heard the song writer declare, "The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion is great in the world today. Persecution my come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it''s in Jesus!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

9250-Inspiration

Dig My Ditch

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 18, 2007

SCRIPTURE:" And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." 2 Kings 3:16-18

Introduction

Has anyone every dug a ditch and intended it for you? Digging ditches has a negative connotation in many areas of the nation because the phrase generally means that a person who digs a ditch for us is attempting to entrap us in some way. They want us to fall. They want our progress to stop. Usually our enemies dig ditches and hope we will fall into them, like hunted animals, and meet our death. Over the years, thanks to the grace of God, many have avoided life's ditches.

What it means to dig ditches depends on the purpose. In warfare a ditch may be a short hold in the ground that may be filled with pointed poles designed to entrap an enemy. In olden days an enemy that attacked would fall into the ditch and be pierced by the pointed poles. Thus, those who dug ditches in this context were attempting to defeat those that they perceived as enemies, whether the perception was real or imagined.

A long ditch is called a trench. Trenches were often used for protection against enemies. Soldiers in battle often dug trenches on the front lines to protect themselves against mortars and the gunfire of an enemy. In this context the ditch was a shield rather an instrument used to destroy and enemy.

In medieval times, the Lords often built huge castles. Around the castles were deep ditches that were filled with water. These ditches were called moats. They protected those inside the castle from attack.

Ditches even mean different things in different parts of the country. In the South poor neighborhoods are marked by the presence of drainage ditches in front of homes and huge drainage ditches and pump stations located near residential areas. If the ditches are clogged a person who comes to clear our ditches is welcomed. The crew that cleans the ditch in advance of a rainy spell is actually invited to "dig my ditch." If you dig my ditch my water will flow and there won't be a flood in my yard.

There are parts of the country that fight over ditches. For example, in Colorado where water is scarce, it is illegal for a landowner to stop someone from coming onto his property for the purpose of clearing or digging out a ditch to help water to flow. In fact, in Colorado, your ditch can run through my land but I don't have a right to use any of the water in it or from it. Digging ditches and diverting water is a big issue in a state where ditches are used to move water from one place or another.

What if God told the saints, that he was going to bless us but to get his blessing we would have to deal with a few ditches? Could you handle that? Suppose God said, not only will you face ditches but you must dig your own ditch, if you want his help; could you handle that? If God said something like that would digging a ditch be a good thing or a something that would hurt us?

As Christians, we know that those who trust in the Lord will be guided by his directions. Even if he told us to dig our own ditch, we know that it would ultimately work to our advantage because he seeks only to save and strengthen us. If God tells us to dig our own ditch the response of the real believer is, "How deep and how wide?"

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy of Elisha in which believers are told to dig ditches and receive a blessing.

The circumstance of this text is that Jehoram, son of the evil King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, had formed an alliance with Jehoshaphat and the King of Edom to quell a rebellion by the king of Moab. Enroute to their battle the three kings wandered in the wilderness of Edom so long that their combined army was almost devastated from thirst.

They learned that the prophet Elisha was in the company and begged him to ask God for a blessing for them. At first, Elisha refused to help Jehoram. He told the king to appeal to the prophets of his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel. However, for Jehoshaphat's sake, he asked God for direction.

After hearing from God Elisha ordered them to dig many ditches to hold the water that woud come the next day without wind or rain.

He moreover predicted that Moab would be utterly defeated. Everything that Elisha prophesied actually happened and God's promise was fulfilled.

Because they dug their ditches, they had water to drink and achieved a great victory.

Ditch Digging

ASK GOD BEFORE WE ACT: 2 Kings 3:6-8 indicates that the King of Israel asked two other kings to help him fight a battle. They went up together to fight, but there is no record where they asked God first. Verse 9 says they, "fetched a compass" which means they went around in circles for seven days. When they ran out of water and had no other alternative, then they started looking for a way to talk to God.

Often, the humanity in us leads us to take matters in our own hand. Our humanity often overpowers our spirituality. Just as the kings acted without consulting God we often do the same. Without God's guidance they wandered in the desert for seven days going around in circles.

The same happens to us today when we lean toward our senses, knowledge and experience without asking God for direction. In business, education, relationships and life in general, all too often we act first and pray after we have walked around in circles for several days, months or even years. The bible encourages us to "trust in the Lord and lean not unto our own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path."

If the matter concerns our finances, pray and ask God for Guidance first!

If the matter concerns our family, pray and ask God first!

If the matter concerns our relationship or marriage, pray and ask God first!

Don't act, get lost, then look for God to show you the way out. Precious time is lost wandering. God will answer, but he will not give back the years we lost wandering in the wilderness. It is best to ask God before we act.

DO WHAT HE TELLS YOU TO DO: The kings asked Elisha to talk to the prophet and shortly afterwards the prophet gave them an answer from God: "Make this valley full of ditches." It sounded very weird. They were told to dig an entire valley full of ditches, but they were also told that there would be no wind or rain or storms to fill the ditches. It seemed like an exercise in futility.

Even today, obedience to God can seem like a futile exercise. That's where trusting God comes in the picture.

There are some things that God tells us to do that seem very difficult and impractical such as loving our enemies, doing good to those who despitefully use us, or giving the person who sues us for our shirt our coat as well. Those are difficult, but sometimes what God asks us to do even seems impractical. It seems a waste of time to keep calling a business about a job when they have turned us down every week for the last 10 weeks. It seems illogical to give food to others when we have very little for ourselves. It definitely doesn't make sense to dig ditches in a dried up valley.

Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death." If we want to survive and thrive in this world we must learn to follow God's way. If God says, "Make this valley full of ditches" then get out of the way and let me "dig my ditch."

It seemed silly to Naaman to wash himself seven times in the muddy waters of a river. But when he did what God ordered him to do, he came up a healed man.

When the widow woman needed money to keep her house afloat, God answered her with what seemed to be a very dumb response which was to go her neighbor and borrow as many empty vessels as she could and put them all over her house. In the morning she found every vessel full of expensive oil.

It made little sense to the host of the wedding to fill jugs with water when what they needed was wine. But they did it and water turned to wine.

If God says dig a ditch, dig the biggest widest ditch you can dig and then get ready for God to do his thing.

DON'T WORRY HOW GOD WILL DO IT: The scripture never told us how God performed this miraculous deed. He never told them how water would come in the ditches without rain or wind or through any of the usual ways; he just willed it to be so.

Likewise, we don't know how God plans to open that door that closed in our faces, We just know that he has the power to do it.

God is sovereign. He can respond anyway that he pleases. If we are sick he can heal us through a doctor or a hospital or without any medical instruments whatsoever he can will to be so. He can resolve our financial crises by giving us a great job or he can will a settlement to come your way that was completely unexpected.

The water that filled the ditches did not come in the usual way, but God filled the ditches. A promise from God is a promise received.

God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

We don't quite know how he will do it, we know that God can work it out!

We don't know how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after four days, we just know he did it!

We don't know how the woman with the issue of blood was healed by just touching the hem of his garment, we just know that he did it!

We don't know how the man who was blind from birth was able to see, we just heard him say, "I was once blind, but now I see."

Trust God to the point that you may not know how he will do, but you know the Lord will make a way somehow.

There is more to come

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God told these kings that if they would make ditches in the valley, there was even more to come.

Look at how easy it was for God to respond to their needs. Verse 19 says, "And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord."

To the men thirsty in the desert it was a heavy situation, but God says, "this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord."

Today, we are struggling to keep or heads above water, but God says, "this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord."

To us the monthly house note and utility bill is a heavy burden, but God says, this is but a light in the sight of the Lord."

To us the frustrations of keeping a relationship together is a troublesome load, but God says, this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord."

Our health is failing, but even that is a light thing!

Our career challenge is not taking off, but even that is a light thing!

Our personal goals seem to be bogged down, but even that is a light thing!

When you think about it, all God wants us to do is to trust him and make the first steps. He wants us to make ditches in the valley. He wants us to do all that we know how to do, "then take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there."

If God says make ditches in the valley, the man of faith does not grab a hand trowel; he makes sure that he gets the biggest shovel he can find; even a backhoe.

When your enemies see you digging a ditch, that is, you are walking by faith; they

think you are silly because they don't understand!

They don't know like we know that when God gets ready, he doesn't need the thunder, the wind or the rain, he showers us with blessings.

When Noah spent a hundred years building the ark, the people laughed but he was digging his ditch!

When Jabez asked God to expand his territory, it looked impossible, but he was digging his ditch!

When Abraham acted on faith and put his son on the altar, it looked fanatical, but he was digging his ditch.

I don't know about you, but when God tells me to make ditches in the valley and get ready for a blessing, I tell the world… get out of my way and let me dig my ditch!

When Jesus came into the world people tried to stop him, they thought they were digging his ditch, but he was digging my ditch! He was getting ready to bless me!

When they arrested him in the garden, they thought they were digging his ditch, but he was digging my ditch!

When they whipped him all through the night, they thought they were digging his ditch, but he was digging my ditch.

When they nailed him to an old rugged cross, he was digging my ditch!

When they stuck him in his side, that was a light thing in the sight of the Lord!

When they buried him in a borrowed tomb that was a light thing…because

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Every day he's still blessing me!

Every day he's digging my ditch!

No. 9251-Inspiration

Christ is Worthy

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2006

SCRIPTURE: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Revelation 4:11

Introduction

Have you ever looked at the stars and the moon against the backdrop of clear summer night? If you have, there has probably been a time in your life when you were amazed with the power of God. He put everything in place. He fixed the stars in the sky and hung the moon and the sun.

Our God is an awesome God. The stars in our galaxy remind us just how great God is and how worthy he is to be praised.

Not only the stars, but when we look around the universe we see so many reasons that we should lift up God's name and give him praise.

He is worthy.

We don't need the Hubble telescope to peer into the emptiness of space to tell us that he is great; we realize it every time we see a shooting star flash across the horizon or gaze upon the big dipper and the little dipper. We know he is worthy.

As Christians, we too are fascinated with the beauty of the universe and with the stars, moon and sun. However, it is not these alone that excite us; it's our desire to know more about the one who made the universe. It is not the creation of the planets that fascinates us; it's the creator of the planets that captures our spirit. The more we know about him the more we conclude that he is worthy of our praise. Our quest is to know our God in a closer, more personal way each and every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's description of the glories of the Lord in his vision of the end times.

John received this vision while he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos. The entire book of Revelation covers a 1007 year period of time in which judgments will be released upon the world that remains, the Anti-Christ will rise, Satan will be locked up for 1000 years and the enemies of God will be defeated.

John's vision is a beautiful picture of what is in store for the saints. It is also a

picture of what lies ahead for the ungodly.

Chapter four begins with a picture of John being called into a throne room where he sees three kinds of beings.

First, God the Father is described, ruling his universe in unquestioned sovereignty.

He also sees four living creatures that Ezekiel calls "cherubim." Ezekiel chapter 1 describes a very similar set of details to what we see in Revelations 4. Ezekiel saw a giant chariot with great wheels. He also saw four creatures with the same kind of faces that John saw. (Ezekiel 1:10)

The third kinds of beings that John saw were twenty-four elders. These individuals are not described clearly anywhere else in scripture. The elders are on thrones, as is God, and they are beautiful in appearance as he is.

Opening The Door

Chapter four of the Revelation explains to us in an undeniable way, that God is worthy of our praise. It shows us through sights and symbols of a vision how the very universe itself recognizes his greatness and pronounces that he is worthy to be praised. Verse by verse it explained to us in the context of his vision.

Verse one begins with the phrase "After This." What does mean? After what? It is a reference to the glories that had been revealed in chapter 1 and the messages to the seven churches which were given in chapters 2-3. After these things John saw a door opening and a voice saying "Come up hither."

The fact that John heard a voice parallels the experience of the Saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, they will hear a voice at the rapture. Also like John the saints will be transported into heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Morever, like John, the Saints will hear a voice before being taken into heaven in the rapture (1 Cor. 15:52)

In verse two John says he was "in the spirit." It is a similar phrase which was also used by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1:3 and 3:14. While in the spirit John was allowed to see, in vision form, the great throne room of God. It was surrounded by 24 elders who represented the tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. These elders are not angels. In scripture angels are never shown wearing crowns or sitting on thrones.

Verse five makes references to thundering and lightnings proceeding out of the throne of God. This indicates the power and majesty of God represented by the awe and respect that thunder and lightning commands from every creature of the universe.

The seven lamps of fire represent God's continuous judgment and the seven spirits are the same ones referred to in Revelation 1:4.

While there are seven spirits, there are also seven aspects or characteristics of the Spirit of God. They are characterized in Isaiah 11:1-2. As you read this text you should note the seven aspects of the spirit: he rests on us, he gives us wisdom, he gives us understanding and counsel, might, knowledge and fear (respect). Those who claim to possess the spirit of God show these evidences of his presence on a daily basis.

In verse six, two phrases, “Sea of Glass” and “Four Beasts” appear. The sea of glass refers to the shiny floors of the throne room. They were so shiny that they appeared to be a sea of glass. The four beasts represent all of creation, which is usually the meaning of the number “four” in prophesy. Being full of eyes means all of God’s creation calling attention to his holiness.

All of these beasts that are listed in verses 6 and 7 represent all creation praising God for his holiness and greatness.

A great hymn of the church is based upon this passage. The words are: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Early In the Morning Our Song Shall Rise To Thee; Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty. God in three Persons, blessed Trinity”

All creation, including the 24 elders, bows down before him. Even though they sit on thrones and wear crowns, they will cast their crowns before him. It is a picture of how all of creation will acknowledge the omnipotence of God.

John’s words make it clear why we should assemble ourselves and give him praise; because he is worthy! Listen at John’s words again:

“And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created!”

The testimony of every saint today should be the same as the majesty words of John..He is worthy!

He is worthy because he is good

Christ is worthy because he is good.

We see the goodness of God because we study his word. We cannot turn many pages without being reminded of the goodness of God.

Psalm 31:19, “Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.”

Psalm 100:5 “For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations.”

Psalm 106:1, “Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.”

Inherent in God’s goodness is mercy and grace. When God shows us mercy he goes beyond what is fair and gives us what we do not deserve, which is the benefit of his favor.

He’s worthy because he gives us strength when we should be weak!

He’s worthy because he gives us victory when we should suffer defeat!

He’s worthy because he gives us hope when we should be in despair!

He’s worthy because he gives us health when we should be crippled with sickness!

He's worthy because he gives us joy when we should be saddled with sadness!
He's worthy because he gives us peace when we should be filled with confusion!
He's worthy because he gives us faith when we should be sinking in doubt!

Christ is Worthy

Finally, brothers and sisters, John makes it clear that despite the presence of angels, cherubim, and elders, it is Christ who is worthy

Standing in the presence of God, he saw the great throne room of God, with floors shining like a sea of glass, and 24 elders sitting before him.

In his hand he held a book that was bound together with seven seals.

John lets us hear the thunderous voice of all creation ask the question, "Who is worthy to open the seals" that will pour out the wrath of God upon the world in the time of tribulation?

Who is worthy to usher in the closing events of this present age? Who is worthy?

None could answer for themselves, but all recognized the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David.

They were looking for the lamb.

Isaac, as he climbed to the top of the mountain of sacrifice asked Abraham his father: "Where is the lamb?"

As Jesus approached the River Jordan, John the Baptist declared for the entire world to hear: "Behold the lamb of God"

Now John in Revelation declares "Worthy is the lamb!"

The lamb is worthy because is both eligible and qualified!

Salvation required someone who was able to live a life without sin!

Salvation required someone who was able to bear the criticisms of men and suffer the sting of their hatred!

Salvation required someone willing to lay down his life in payment for the sins of the world!

Revelation 5:9 gives the answer "Thou are worthy ..for thou was slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation.."

What makes the Lamb Worthy? Because he was "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity, and the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his stripes we are healed!"

What makes the lamb worthy? Because he and he alone has taken our:

—Darkness and turned it into light; Sadness and turn it into joy!

—Failure and turned it into success; Defeat and turned it into victory!

—Weakness and turned it into strength; Misfortunes and turned them into opportunities

He's worthy because one day he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary! There he died!

But Early! Early, Sunday morning! He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9252-Inspiration

Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 1, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out." Luke 19:40

Introduction

Has there ever been an occasion when you knew you should have said something but you didn't? If you are like most people there are many times in which you have felt the urge to say something that needed to be said but you just didn't do it.

There are times when we should have spoken against an evil, but chose to keep quiet. Those who speak against a popular but immoral practice will not be appreciated by the majority. In a society of thieves, a man who speaks against stealing is not very popular. In a society of crooks and cheats, the person who speaks against crookedness and cheating is often hated. When faced with the option to speak against evil and face possible ostracism by friends and co-workers, many choose to hold their peace.

There are also times when we should speak up. Those who witness crimes are often afraid to speak up. They know information that can help resolve a crime but they refuse to speak up. They are motivated in this instance by a desire to avoid involvement or interruption of their daily routines. When those who should testify refuse to do so often justice is miscarried. When faced with the request to testify to the truth, many choose to hold their peace.

There is a time and place to speak up. If we miss the window of opportunity, what we say amounts to very little. If we are sued, there is a prescribed amount of time for us to speak up and deny the claims, otherwise a judgment is entered. Many criminal offenses are governed by a statue of limitations that sets the length of time a person has to act. After the time passes; the case is closed. If we fail to speak at the right time, we lose the opportunity.

There is a component to traditional marriage ceremonies that asks whether any person in the audience knows any just cause why the couple should not be married to "Speak now, or forever hold your peace."

What if that proposition was reworded to read, "If anyone present knows any

just cause why God should be praise, let him speak now or forever hold his peace." There would be many who speak up instantly. There are others that will remain silent.

Too frequently, concerned about public opinion, we keep the good news about what God has done for us quiet. We boast about the big fish we caught, our promotion on the job, and a host of other secular achievements. We can hardly wait to tell our story to others. It's as if we are ripping at the seams, and bubbling over, we have to tell somebody. If it's about the world we freely testify, but sometimes, if it is about God, we are reluctant.

How often it is that those who know God best fail to tell of his goodness to their friends and are ashamed to let others know that are trying to obey his will in every respect.

Trying to hold back praises to God is difficult, for God will be praised.

As Christians, we should always be ready to speak up for the Lord. We should be ready to testify, that God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

Exposition

Our text first considers Jesus on the occasion of his entry into Jerusalem, the final leg of his journey to Calvary.

His arrival sparked considerable interest since the Sanhedrin Council had concluded that he must die as result of increasingly attractive and Persuasive miracles that, in their eyes, did good but divided the people at the same time. The healing of an impotent man on the Sabbath (John 5), A blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:16) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead had attracted many people to Jesus who viewed him as the one person who could unite them in battle against the Romans and restore the kingdom. The Sanhedrin plotted to kill Lazarus so that he would not be walking proof of Jesus' power and they plotted to have Jesus himself crucified.

Upon his entry into Jerusalem on Friday the 9th of Nisan (March-April) the People were ecstatic! They cut branches from palm trees, waved them and threw their coats along the way to welcome him as a conquering king.

The cried "Hosanna" "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Christian church recognizes this event as the day of the Palms and celebrates it each year on the Sunday preceding Easter as "Palm Sunday."

When he entered the city, the scribes and Pharisees saw the crowds and were visibly upset that his followers were shouting and praising him for his Lordship. They warned Jesus to tell his disciples to be quiet. That's when Jesus declared to them that if they were to be silent the very rocks would cry out to him.

It was ironic however, because by Wednesday morning, Nisan 14 (The day before Passover), that same crowd that was shouting "Hosanna" a few days earlier now shouted and cheered when he was nailed to a cross.

If he has helped You, Speak Now!

One reason that people shouted for Christ is because he had helped them. He had

healed a blind man and raised Lazarus. They had something to shout about.

In a similar sense, each believer should speak of for God, especially when we consider what he has done for us.

We can all remember times when we were caught between a rock and a hard place. Those were the times when we faced trouble on every side. During such times we found that all we could really do was to say like David,'' I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.''

That's when we had nowhere to go but to the Lord.

We should speak now, because the world needs to know that God is still in the blessing business.

We should speak now, because the world needs to know that God still heals.

When we speak now, we acknowledge the fact that when we were powerless to help ourselves we called on the Lord and he helped us.

When we speak for him, we celebrate his divinity, and his infinite goodness.

When we speak for him, we celebrate his helpfulness.

When we speak for him, we celebrate his compassion.

We lift high his goodness for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

If he has saved you, Speak Now!

In the crowd on the day of his triumphant entry, were many people who Jesus helped by healing them, but there were others who were speaking up for him because he saved them.

The woman at the well didn't wait for a crowd, she ran through the streets of the city saying, come see a man! The woman caught in adultery was another whose sins were purged. Voices like theirs were certainly intermingled in the crowds that shouted Hosanna.

Every believer should be willing to praise the Lord because he has purged us of our sins.

We speak now because he purged our sins. He wiped our slate clean. Isaiah 53 explained how it was done. He was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities……with his stripes we are healed."

Whenever we consider what we once were, we should be willing to testify that, "I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God, because of Jesus, I'm not what I not what I used to be."

The simple truth of the matter is that the blood of Christ "purged" us of all of our sins. Think of it! No matter what we have been in the past has been wiped clean. It's gone. 1 Corinthians 6:11 reminds each of us that, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

We should speak now because he picked us up and turned us around!

We should speak now because he planted our feet on solid ground!

We should speak now because while we were yet sinners, he died for us!

Speak now, he's coming your way

The crowds gathered to greet Christ because he was coming their way. They wanted to see him and to be in his presence. They shouted for joy because the Lord was passing by.

Good things happen to us when the Lord passes our way.

A lame man who had been ill for 38 years found that he was able to walk when the Lord passed by.

A man who had been blind since his birth was able to see, when the Lord passed by.

A woman with an issue of blood for 12 long years was able was made who when she touched the hem of his garment. She received a healing with the lord passed by.

When the Lord passes our way, we don't want to be silent! We know if we can just get his attention he will call on us. When the Lord passes by is the wrong time to keep silent.

Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Pass me not oh gentle savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others thou are calling, do not pass me by."

Those who need a blessing should cry out, "Savior, Savior hear my humble cry; while on others thou are calling, do not pass me by."

If you need a blessing, speak now..Savior!

If you need a healing, speak now..Savior!

If you need a new spirit, speak now..Savior! Hear my humble cry!

The best time is now

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that best time to testify to the goodness of the Lord is now!

When Jesus came into Jerusalem there were a lot of people shouting and giving testimony to his fulfillment of prophecy.

They spoke then! They did not wait!

Whenever the Lord has done something good for we should speak now!

Whenever we think about how God has blessed us, we should speak now!

Speak now, whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around

Speak now when we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere.

Speak now and testify to what he has done.

Speak now and testify to what we expect him to do!

Speak now and testify to what he's been to us!

Every time you think about the mountains you've climbed and the valleys in your way, you ought to be ready to speak now!

If he's been a lawyer in your courtroom! Speak now!

If he's been a doctor in your sick room! Speak now!

If he's been a bridge over troubling waters! Speak now!

Speak now because though the crowds shouted, "Crucify him" he picked up an old rugged cross and shouldered the burden of my sin!

Speak now because out on Calvary, he died, that I might live!

Speak now because they buried him in a borrowed tomb..

But, early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

If God has been blessed you, you ought to speak now..or forever hold your peace!

No. 9253-Easter

We Shall Wear A Crown

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 8, 2007

SCRIPTURE: And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head:" Mark 15:17 "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10

Introduction

Have you ever been frustrated to the point that you felt yourself being crucified wearing a crown of thorns? Sometimes our troubles make us feel that way. We feel that instead of wearing a crown of victory, all we get is a crown of thorns. What are our thorns? Troubles, heartaches and disappointments; thorns!

Financial loss, relationship dysfunction, career failure; thorns! Depression, divorce and disease are just some of the thorns we deal with daily. Despite their troublesome nature, at least the thorny crowns we wear deal with our personal troubles. Suppose you had to wear such a crown for someone else? If you can understand that, then you can understand the enormity of the sacrifice Christ made for us on Calvary.

The crown of thorns that was placed on the head of Jesus has become an important symbol for Christians around the world. It symbolized his pain, agony and death. Christians see the crown of thorns as a symbol of his suffering on our behalf. For that reason there was considerable controversy in 2006 when rapper Kanye West appeared on the front cover of Rolling Stone magazine wearing a crown of thorns. Two months later Madonna opened her world tour by wearing a crown of thorns on the first night. Believers don't appreciate anything making a mockery of the thorns because they represent Christ's suffering for us.

Pieces of the crown of thorns have been passed down through generations. Many of the relics of Christendom began circulating around the world after the capture of Constantinople in the 13th Century. Among the relics were pieces of the cross, a bottled tear of Christ, blood from the cross, parts o the sponge and reed used to feed Jesus vinegar and the purple robe. Most precious was the crown of thorns, which was dismembered and given to different monarchs as trophies. In return for ten thousand pieces of silver the crown of thorns was sold to the kings of France by Baldwin III. Today several countries purport to have thorns that were on the original

crown of the thorns. In France, the Notre Dame de Paris, displays the Crown of thorns (without the thorns) once each year on Good Friday. In Naples Italy, the Santa Maria Incoronata displays a fragment of the crown of thorns. The Cathedral in Barcelona Spain displays a single thorn; The United Kingdom, Belgium, Pisa Italy and several other places in Europe all claim to possess one or more of the thorns from the original crown.

The crown of thorns that Jesus wore at his crucifixion was a symbol of his suffering for us. It was a forerunner of the crown he would receive later as King of Kings. Those who faithfully follow him also expect to wear crowns similar to his. We expect to share his suffering and pain. We also expect to wear crowns of victory in heaven.

While Spain, France and England all claim to have thorns from the original crown, today true believers know that we also share the same thorny experience of Christ as we strive to live for him. We share his thorns, not with a thorn in a glass case, but through our own sacrifices and pain as we strive to live the Christian life.

Like the Apostle Paul who prayed that his "thorn" would be removed, we too have one or more thorns. Al though we have prayed for their removal God has seen fit to leave us one or two. The thorns that Christ wore were meant to demean, belittle and harm him, but they only lifted him higher toward his purpose. Likewise, our thorns were meant to cripple us, humiliate us, trouble us and break us, but they will become our badge of honor in the hands of God.

Every time a believer experiences a "thorn" we should remind ourselves that God takes thorns and turns them into jewels for our crowns.

As Christians, we are grateful for sacrifices Christ made for us. His crown of thorns will soon be replaced with a crown of glory. The message of the resurrection is that because he lives, we have hope. He came in humility, died and lives today. Like him, we shall wear both a crown of thorns and a crown of victory.

Exposition

This text focuses on the crown Jesus wore at his crucifixion. It also causes us to consider the crown of victory he will give all believers when he returns.

Three of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark and John detail the crucifixion in a way that describes a crown of thorns that was placed on his head. The event takes place after the Lord's Supper and after Christ is arrested at the garden. He had been tried before Jewish leaders and was brought before Pilate for final judgment.

A large crowd had assembled and according to J. Vernon McGee, there were many individuals planted in the crowd with orders to begin a chant to crucify him. Pilate asked repeatedly what he had done to merit death. The hired chanters screamed louder "Crucify him!" At that point Pilate yielded to the demands of the crowd and washed his hands to the entire affair.

Christ was turn over to the soldiers, as was any criminal. The soldiers were brutal and misused prisoners sentenced to die. It was not unusual for the soldiers to torture prisoners and to play cruel games with them, designed to humiliate them. In Jesus' case the soldiers mocked him by placing a purple cloth around his shoulder, purple

being the color of royalty. They placed a reed in his hand, then a crown of thorns on his head. It was the akanthine (Acanthus) crown, shaped like a wreath of victory but filled with thorns. They saluted him in mockery as they ridiculed him.

Later that morning both the purple robe was stripped from him and he was crucified wearing his own clothes, wearing a crown of thorns. After three days and three nights he arose in victory.

For Christ, the final victory will come when he returns from heaven surrounded by the hosts of heaven to defeat Satan and destroy this system as we know it today. Revelation 19:12 says when he returns he will be wearing, not one crown, but many crowns. After returning with his many crowns, believers who endure will be given a crown as well.

John, in Revelation 2:10, writes a word of encouragement to believers in the church at Smyrna. They were told that they may endure many trials and tribulations for the cause of Christ, including imprisonment for some of them. Yet despite the difficulties they faced, they were encouraged to keep the faith because those that endured to the end would be given a crown of life.

Our Crowns

In this life we are motivated by our desire to receive our crown in glory. It is this hope that is renewed when we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. With respect to our crowns the bible makes it abundantly clear that we shall be a crown and be crowned. We shall bear a crown of difficulty but we shall also wear a crown of victory in the end

WE ARE CROWNS: Isaiah 62:3 says, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." The church is God's pride and joy. Each believer showcases God's handiwork. The prophet Isaiah made it clear that those who had ridiculed believers, doubted their faith and mocked them will be put to shame because believers are the crown of God's glory. God holds believers in his hand. Our very lives are in his hand. He heals us, blesses and protects us because we are "royal jewels" in his sight. We are children of the king. While there are times when we don't shine like we should, in fact we need a little rubbing to bring back our gloss; we are nevertheless jewels in the eyesight of the Lord. We are his crowning achievement. We are crowns in God's hand.

WE ARE CROWNED: Psalm 21:3 says, " For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head." The word used for preventest means before he rises. David made it clear in this text that God crowns believers with blessings of goodness even while they are sleep (preventest); while we rise. The verse says before we rise God crowns us with good blessings. Before a true believer rises in the morning God has already crowned us to have a blessed day. Before we open our eyes. Before we get in the shower! Before we walk out the front door we have been crowned! The true believer doesn't have to ask for a blessing, it's automatic!

THERE WILL BE THORNY CROWNS: Mark 15:17 says, "And they clothed him

with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head," It shows us that despite the fact that we are a crown, and wake up with a crown of blessings from God, there are evil people and circumstances in the world that will bring thorns into every life. The soldiers put the crown on Jesus' head but they did not act alone. The Sanhedrin council, Pontius Pilate, Herod, a lying witness, a friend who denied him, all worked together to put the thorns on his head.

Look at that!

He made the blind man see, but they gave him, a crown of thorns!

He made the lame man walk again, but they gave him, a crown of thorns!

He called Lazarus from the grave, but they gave Him a crown of thorns!

He fed the hungry and forgave men of their sins, but they gave Him a crown of thorns!

For all of His work and sacrifice, all He received was a crown of thorns to wear and an old rugged cross to bear!

We should not be naïve to believe that the devil leaves us alone because we become a Christian. He looks for ways to stick a thorn in our side. He searches for ways to destroy us and to make life miserable. For Christ the crown of thorns and the agony of the cross were part of the price that had to be paid. He could not achieve one without the other. Believers should remember if there is no cross there is no crown. If there is no pain there is no gain. Each time we are pricked by the thorns of life, we must remember that the thorn is necessary to get to the crown.

We shall Receive a Crown

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that because of the resurrection of Christ, we shall wear a crown of glory.

1 Peter 5:4 puts it this way "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

It means that those who have been faithful to the cause of Christ will be rewarded. We shall wear a crown.

The crown that we plan to wear will be given to us by God himself and not man.

That's what happened to Jesus. The soldiers gave him a crown of thorns. It was a crown made by man.

When man gives you a crown he gives you a crown, it usually turns out to be a thorny crown. When man gives you a crown it usually turns out to be a:

—BURDEN, and not a blessing

—CANCER, and not a cure

—HINDRANCE, and not a help

—SORROW, and not a joy

—LOSS, and not a gain

—PAIN, and not a pleasure

—CONDEMNATION, and not a pardon

—TORMENT and not a treasure

They took Jesus, with a crown of thorns on his head, and marched him toward

Calvary!

With a crown of thorns on his head, he who was:

—JUST suffered for the unjust; HOLY suffered for the unholy

—BEST suffered for the worst; HIGHEST suffered for the lowest

—DOCTOR suffered for the sick; LAMB suffered for the wolves

—MASTER suffered for the servants; KING suffered for the beggars

—PRINCE suffered for the paupers;

When they nailed him on the cross, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

When they pierce him in his side, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

When he dropped his head and died, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

But Early Sunday, morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

That Sunday morning he traded in the cross..

He traded in the crown of thorns…

And paid for our salvation!

No wonder the song writer declared, "So I'll cherish the old rugged cross. Till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown!

Because he lives we have hope for tomorrow!

Because he lives, one of these old days…

We shall wear a crown!

No. 9254-Family

The Lord of the Rings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 15, 2007

SCRIPTURE*: And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Mark 10:8-9*

Introduction

Do you have a wedding ring? Do you want one? A great social ethic has developed in our society with respect to wedding rings. People who love each other to the point that they want to commit themselves to a lifelong relationship, wear wedding rings. One of the things that attracts women to wedding rings is the presence of one or more diamonds which dazzle and shine on their fingers. Some men have wedding bands made of gold, without the diamonds. Our fascination with rings grows is enormous. When we are in love we show them off. When we are in trouble, we pawn them. When our love turns sour, we never want to see them again.

Today we wear rings on our finger to indicate our marriage status; but it wasn't always that way. The wedding ring was part of a dowry and in the bible the first ring given for marriage was actually an earring. In Genesis 24:22 Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac his son. The Lord led him to Rebekah and the initial token offered for her hand in marriage was a large golden ring and two bracelets. The King James Version calls it an earring. The other versions simply call it a ring.

Ring customs have changed over the years and vary from place to place. In Greece, a double ring ceremony presents a silver ring to the wife and gold ring to the husband. In ancient times the people of Pliny sent irons to the betrothed to indicate marriage intentions. Some rings were made of brass, others were made of copper. Some were circles worn on the hand but there were some that were shaped like keys. Some parts of Irish peasantry still believe that a marriage without a gold ring is not legal and that every real woman had a wedding by the time she was 13. The Amish and Quakers wear no rings because they have pagan origins. The Church of England requires a ring for its ceremonies, no matter what its material. In America brides and grooms wear rings of gold and silver on the fourth finger of the left hand because the ancients believed that there is a vein that runs from that finger directly to the heart which is the seat of love.

The rings symbolize a union that is forever. There are times when some forget

what forever means. Consider the man who dreamed that he died and went to heaven with his two best friends. It was a beautiful place, but all three men made it there before their wives. The dreamer was met by a tall angel with a clipboard who was making transportation assignments. Since each new arrival was a sinner saved by grace, everyone in heaven received rewards based on their works in life. Transportation, in the dream was given based on one's faithfulness to his spouse. "Were you faithful to your wife?" The dreamer was asked. "Yes. I never cheated on her. See I'm still wearing my ring." As a reward for his faithfulness he was given a Rolls Royce. The angel met his two friends and asked the same question. The first friend said, "I cheated once. It caused us a great problem, but we worked it out. I'm still wearing my ring!" The angel smiled and said, "You can drive that SUV over there!" The second friend confessed that he had really been a bad boy. He chased every woman in town; but the last one was a preacher who made him repent; that's how he made it in. The angel frowned at a man who cheated on his wife so much, but since he was saved by grace he was given a small Volkswagen bug to use with no gas card. Considering their pasts, all three men felt good about themselves. One day the dreamer parked his Rolls Royce against a cloud and cried like a baby. His friends asked why he was so sad. "I saw my wife today?" His friends were happy. She made it in, too. "Was she still wearing her ring?" The dreamer nodded his head but started crying. "Why are you still crying?" The man looked at his friends and said. "She was not wearing my ring and she was riding a skate board!"

J.R.R. Tolkien wrote a series of books that were later made into movies called "Lord of the Rings." It was based upon ancient beliefs that there were Ring Lords who controlled the world by the possession of a set of rings. Tolkien said, there was "one ring to rule them all, one ring to find them; one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them." It was believed that he who had the rings had to power to rule, bind and control.

Today, we give and exchange rings in engagement and marriage, but who is "The Lord of the Rings?" What power controls, directs, binds and motivates our marriages? Who is it that brings us together, finds us and binds us?" We have rings, but who is the Lord of the rings?

As Christians, we have one Lord and one savior and he is Jesus Christ. He has loved us with an unconditional love that makes him supreme in our lives. He is the Lord of our lives and the Lord of our rings.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus teaching that God himself is the Lord of Christian marriages.

The text notes that there is but one Lord of a union that has been created by God. God himself joined together a divinely sanctioned union.

He is the power that attracts them, builds them and sustains them. He has, in wisdom and goodness, appointed them who are thus joined together, to live together in love till death parts them.

Man did not invent the institution of marriage. It is a divine institution. It is to be religiously observed because it is a figure of the relationship between Christ and his church.

Because Christ will never leave his church, never abandon his church and always provide for his church, and the marriage relationship is symbolic of that union, marriages are forever. Just as Christ is Lord of the lives of every believer; he is also Lord of the Rings.

Who Is the Lord?

There are many today who wear wedding rings that are beautiful. The true value of the ring is not in how many carets that are in its diamond but in the symbolism that it represents. Initially the ring represents a promise made. But the ring also represents that entity you respect as the Lord of the Ring. The controlling power and influence of the marriage is the true Lord of the ring. Each believer must ask the question: Who is Lord of my ring?

CONVENIENCE SHOULD NOT BE LORD OF THE RINGS: There are many couples who marry out of convenience. In this instance the marriage is based on something other than love. King Solomon had about 300 wives and 700 concubines. Each of his 300 marriages was for the purpose of convenience. If he married the daughter of an opposing King he avoided war with her father and won an ally. He had no real interest in her, just the convenience the relationship provided. Today, there are many who marry for convenience. Some are look for a maid, cook or a sugar daddy. Like some immigrants who come to this country and marry for sole purpose of getting a green card and a right to stay here there many others who marry for convenience. Convenience is the Lord of the rings. It dictates everything. When it is no longer convenient the marriage dissolves because it was not based on real love.

SEX SHOULD NOT BE THE LORD OF THE RINGS: There are many who marry for the benefit of intimacy. Samson had an unusual sexual attraction to Philistine women. He married one and had a career ending relationship with another named Delilah. His carnal attractions drove him to do things that were fatal for him. That attraction became his Lord. Even today, there are many who marry only for intimacy. Every decision in their lives is based its effect on their intimate moments. When intimacy becomes the overriding concern of a marriage then sex becomes the Lord of the Rings. But if health or some other factor interferes with intimacy; the Lord of the Rings is suddenly incapable of keeping a couple together.

MONEY SHOULD NOT BE THE LORD OF THE RINGS: If a couple marries with financial concerns as their primary reason for unity, it is a formula for disaster. 1 Timothy 6:11 says, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” It’s a simple way of saying that when money and money concerns become the reasons for our actions and decisions it is an invitation for sorrow. Too many marry because he has money and or she has money. Some

marry because of the potential for money and much divorce over dispute involving money or lost financial potential. When money becomes the Lord of the Rings, it will prove powerless to help couples to navigate the rapids of troubling times. Money as Lord of the Rings cannot save the ship from sinking, but those onboard who blindly seek it or vainly try to guard it, go down with them ship and increase their sorrows.

It's not in the ring but the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, when believers see the rings that symbolize the sacred trust, our joy is not in the ring but in the Lord of the Rings.

Rings alone are meaningless. They are just bands of gold. The real power is not in the rings, but in the Lord of the Rings.

If convenience is not the Lord of the rings; and neither is sex or money; who is the Lord of the rings?

Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God must be the Lord of the Rings. He is the only ring lord who is able to deliver us.

The wedding ring worn by a marriage partner symbolizes a vow made between them. However, it also symbolizes a trust in God.

Marriages that are built upon an unfaltering trust in the Lord, will survive any storms that the world brings because we put our trust in him.

We don't place our trust in our rings, but in the Lord of the rings.

The man who wears a ring may sometimes act the fool; that's why we keep trusting in the Lord of the rings.

The woman who wears the ring may raise suspicions and doubt.; that's why we keep trusting in the Lord of the Rings.

When we trust in the Lord we don't worry about the frustrating turns that the road of life offers!

Guided by Lord of the rings, we walk by faith knowing that the Lord will make a way!

Standing in our way might be a:

-Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness. It's not in the ring but the Lord!

-Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies! It's not in the ring but the Lord!

-Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible. It's not in the ring but the Lord!

Those who trust in God:

-Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

-Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable

-Live for the incredible; Achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

Why is Christ the Lord of the Rings? He is Lord of the rings because he has demonstrated real love. He has shown us the meaning of love.

He is Lord of the rings because he loves us with a love that is

—higher than the heavens
—deeper than the oceans
—lovelier than the sunsets
—sweeter than the honeycomb
—stronger than the wind
—fresher than the morning dew

He is Lord of the rings because he loves us with a love that cannot be:

—measured for it is immeasurable
—described for it is indescribable
—evaluated for it is invaluable
—comprehended for it is incomprehensible
—explained for it is unexplainable

He is Lord of our lives because when we were too stubborn to love ourselves, he first loved us!

He is Lord of our lives because when we thought we were beyond forgiveness he gave himself for us!

He is Lord because one day he picked up an old rugged cross and went to Calvary!

He is Lord because he hung on a cross to bless us and benefit us.

He is Lord because he died so that sin would not penetrate and saturate us

He is Lord because early, Sunday morning he arose to glorify and magnify us!

Because he is Lord, not just of rings but lives, he blesses us every day!

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No. 9256-Anniversary, Women

When Women Pray

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14***

Introduction

Should women pray? While the church world is divided over the role of women in the church, there is no question that women, as well as all believers, should pray.Why should women pray? Women should pray because prayer is the key to kingdom and faith unlocks the door. Women should pray because their families count on them to be connected with God. Women should pray because the task before them each day requires them to be fully prayed up to successfully accomplish their goals.

When should women pray? The Word of God says all believers should pray unceasingly. That means we pray all of the time. In the morning, we pray. While we are driving our automobiles, we pray. At night, we pray. During all of the times in between, we pray.

Where should women pray? We should pray whenever and wherever the spirit moves. Elijah prayed on a mountain top. Jonah prayed in the belly of a whale. Noah prayed in a ship. Jesus prayed in a garden. There is no special place for us to pray. The old warriors once sang a song that said, "Every time I feel the spirit, moving in my heart, I will pray!"

What should women pray for? All believers should pray that God's will would be accomplished in their lives. In that respect we pray that God would guide us in the direction that will help us to realize his will. Jesus prayed and simply said, "Not my will, but thy will be done." Women should pray that God's will would be done.

Jesus tells us that if we abide in him and he abides in us that we can ask whatever we want and it will come to pass. Once immersed into his will, what we ask is only that what he wants us to have. Since what we pray for will help us to carry out his will, then it will be granted.

As Christians, we have learned how to place our lives in God's hands. When we pray we say to God that we are willing to humble ourselves before him, repent and seek his face. He has promised us that when we do that that, he will hear us and heal our land.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's response to a prayerful request for the presence of God by the children of Israel.

Solomon constructed a great temple that was to become the literal house of God. He prayed prayers to God that the building would be consecrated for the presentation of their sacrifices to God. It would be a very holy place of worship. God seemed to answer the prayer when mysteriously a fire from heaven ignited the altar in the temple. It appeared that God had answered their prayer.

The real answer to the prayer came later in the night, as Solomon slept. That's where verse 14 takes place. God spoke to him in a dream and gave Solomon the details associated with the answer to their request. The people asked for forgiveness, healing, and salvation. They saw the fire and took it to be the sign. The fire was symbolic of half the promise. Acquiring the other half would be the responsibility of the people. To keep the fire of God's presence going, symbolizing the healing of their land, the people would be required repent and turn from their wicked ways and to continuously seek the mercy of God.

Their initial prayer brought the first fire from heaven. However, it would be their continual prayer, repentance and dependence on God that would keep it going, symbolizing the healing of the land. Only the introduction of "strange fire" would interrupt the flow of God's blessings.

Thus, the prayer of the people attracted the presence of God on the national scene. However, verse 14 makes it clear that national prayer, plus repentance and humble, holy living would be required to keep that fire going, bringing true healing to the land. God expects that his people, who are called by his name, if they have dishonored his name by their iniquity, should honor it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must humble themselves under his hand, and pray for the removal of the judgment, and seek the face and favor of God; and yet all this will not do unless they turn from their wicked ways and return to the God from whom they have revolted.

Women should pray

We should listen closely to God's words to Solomon because in them lies a great truth. If we want to heal our family, our community and our nation, we must pray, seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways.

We can't pray without repentance and humility before God. Therefore, we must acknowledge that real prayer is needed. Real prayer will be associated with repentance.

God called on Solomon to be a king of prayer. He's calling on women and every believer, to be men and women of humble, repentant, prayer as well.

WOMEN SHOULD SURRENDER TO GOD: When believers pray to God we draw nigh to him and humble ourselves before him. When we draw close to God

he will meet us half way, and meet us at our coming. Staying close to God is not as easy it seems. There are things that we do to stay close. To stay close to someone we want to be in their presence, talk with them, listen to them, and share experiences with them. It is a natural tendency for us to be drawn to those who want to be around us and to shy away from those who don't want to be close to us. In this respect, God is the same way. He is close enough to us to know our needs, sense our weakness and to respond to us in the nick of time. We are close enough to him to know his will, appreciate his love and give him praise. That's why the songwriter wrote, "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to the cross where thou has died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

PRAYING WOMEN SPEAK TO THE ROCK: Women who place their hopes and trust in God know that when they pray they speak to the Rock of Ages. In the wilderness, Moses was told to speak to the Rock and He would bring forth the water. In the same sense, women have learned through that there is power in talking to the Lord.

Our families have survived many difficult times because it learned how to talk to the Lord.

Hezekiah was appointed to die, but 15 more years were added to his life, after he spoke to the Rock.

Elijah brought down fire from heaven and consumed the prophets of Baal, after he spoke to the Rock.

Peter and John were able to heal the sick and perform great miracles, after they had a little talk with the Rock.

The history of the church is filled with examples of believing men and women who weathered difficult times because they learned the art of speaking to the rock.

It has been the experience of many that when the church talked to the Lord, he heard its cries.

Perhaps that is what prompted Dr. Watts to write, "I love the Lord, he heard my cries and pitied every groan. Long as I live while trouble rise I'll hasten to his throne."

Maybe that is what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "What a friend we have in Jesus; all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer."

Women who speak to the rock know what the songwriter meant when he said, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

He will hear us when we pray

Finally brothers and sisters, women should note that as long as we are children of God we and we are called by his name; he will hear us when we pray.

If my people! Listen at that!

If my people, those who are washed in the blood of the lamb!

If my people, those who are climbing up the king's highway!

If my people, who are on the battlefield for the Lord!

If my people, who are called by name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land!

If we come before God in humility and repentance, he will hear us.

When we come we should come looking for mercy and grace!

We come to the throne of God, looking for grace although we don't deserve it. We come in confidence that God will look beyond our faults and see our needs.

Praying women who are called by God come before his throne seeking his mercy and his grace.

His grace is sufficient for:

—The poor, no matter how pathetic their poverty.

—The tired, no matter how feeble their steps.

—The burdened, no matter how exhausted their body.

—The lonely, no matter how pitiful their situation.

—The wretched, no matter how despairing their circumstance.

—The sick, no matter how painful their diseases.

Grace can:

—Take heavy burdens and make them bearable.

—Take high mountains and make them climbable.

—Take deep valleys and make them crossable.

—Take lonely nights and make them livable.

—Take lost souls and make the savable.

I heard a song writer say, "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!"

We come before the throne of God looking for Grace!

We come before the throne of God looking for Jesus.

If you you're looking for Jesus you can find him by simply opening your heart and calling on him and he will come when you need him and he's always on time!

Call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose from the grave early Sunday morning!

Call him! Call him!

And he will hear from heaven and heal our land!

No.9256-Inspiration

Rebounders

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 6, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." Psalm 51:12***

Introduction

Have you ever faced a high goal, took your best shot and missed? Very few of us have ever been 100 percent successful in every endeavor. Even the best of us have missed a few goals, somewhere along the line. Our team doesn't always win. Our cause does not always arise victorious. Our plans do not always succeed. Our investments do not always pay off. Our dreams are not always realized; at least the way we envisioned them. When we give life our best shots and miss; we can respond in one of two ways. We can sulk and wallow in despondency or we rebound, regain control and mount another effort.

It's important to take your shot in life, but it's equally important to be prepared to rebound, if you miss.

A rebound in basketball is the act of successfully gaining possession of the basketball after a missed field goal or free throw. We often hear about great basketball legends like Michael Jordan, Wilt Chamberlain and Allan Iverson who seem to score about 30 points in every game with very little effort. What we don't hear much about are some of the most important players on a basketball team; it's rebounders. These are men such as: Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Russell and Bob Pettit. They specialize in saving bad shots and recovering missed shot by other players.

There are two types of rebounds: There is a defensive rebound. This person capitalizes on an opportunity that has been missed by others. When Joseph was thrown into a pit and later into prison by his brothers out of sibling jealousy; he rebounded from their action and rose to become the Minister of Agriculture of Egypt. That was a defensive rebound.

There is also an offensive rebound. This is person who bounces back after his own missed opportunity. When Samson erred by trusting the secret of his strength to Delilah he missed his shot at destroying an enemy of God. However, in the end, though blinded and captive he rebounded after his own mistake and brought down more Philistines at once than he had ever done before. Peter was a strong supporter of Christ until one night he showed cowardice by denying him three times in the same night. He rebounded from that one weak night to become one the strongest

champions of the Christian cause.

When it comes to basketball there is no name that can equal the name of Wilt Chamberlain. Wilt Chamberlain led the NBA in rebounds in 11 different seasons, has the most career rebounds in the regular season (23,924), the highest career average (22.9 rpg), the single season rebounding records in total (2,149) and average (27.2 rpg), most rebounds in a regular season game (55) and playoff game (41) in the NBA, has the most career All-Star Game rebounds (197). That's a powerful record on the basketball court.

In matters of faith in God what is your rebound average? When opportunities missed by others opened themselves to you, did you act on them? When you missed your shot at a special goal did try again or give up. Were you able to bounce back from a failure, setback or disappointment or did it cost you the game?

As Christians, we know that we serve the God of the second chance. Through his grace if we fall down, slip or miss our chance, we can rebound through his power and become all that he wants us to become.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he asks God to help him rebound from a tragic error that cost one man his life and brought shame on the nation. This psalm is the result of an instance in David's life which he made a major error despite being given a golden opportunity.

David was on his palace roof one day when the army had gone out to battle and he saw a beautiful woman bathing herself. He entered into an adulterous relationship with her for she was a married woman. Her husband, Uriah, was a soldier in the king's army. He was away from home fighting for his nation.

A love child was conceived in the relationship and David panicked and tried to cover it up David ordered Uriah to be put in the forefront of the battle where he would most certainly be killed. When news of Uriah's death reached the king he felt he had safely covered his sin. In Psalm 32 David records how he felt during that terrible time when he was trying to cover up his sin. "When I kept silence," he says, "my bones grew old through my groaning all day long. For a year he tried to live with a bad conscience. But, as the story records, God sent a prophet to David. God loved this king, loved him too well to let him go on covering up and thus damaging himself and his entire kingdom by this hidden sin. So God sent the prophet Nathan to David.

Nathan approached David in a way that he could not deny and singled him out as the man responsible for both adultery and murder. In a prophetic moment the prophet Nathan pointed a finger at the king and said, "Thou art the man!" David knew then that his sin was uncovered.

At this point David recognized for sure that he had fumbled. He fell on his face before God and out of his remorse came the fifty-first Psalm. He asked God for forgiveness. Once restored, he rebounded to become the greatest King in Israel's history.

Rebound: Regain the Initiaitive

Despite our best intentions there are times when our best attempts fail. We give life our best shots and they miss. Those are the times that we must remember to rebound. When we rebound we regain the offensive. We take the initiative again. We regain control of our lives.

There are times when it appears that everything is going wrong. When that happens we must remain positive and plan to rebound. If we don't rebound our lives will always be on the defensive.

Barely making it every day is a defensive action.

Keeping things from falling apart is a defensive action.

Just trying to survive is a defensive action.

To rebound is go beyond playing defense. We have to get on the offensive in order to win in the game of life.

Whether it is your career, family, relationship or business the ability to rebound is what makes the difference.

Great rebounders take whatever comes their way, hurl themselves at the ball, and take possession of it for the sake of the team.

Our challenge is to let the power of God use us in a way that we rise above any obstacles that come our way. No matter what hits us, we keep getting back up.

If the world hits us with defeat, let's rebound with an attitude of victory.

If the world hits us with failure, let's rebound with determination to succeed.

If our relationship misses the goal; let's rebound by giving it another shot.

Redound: Do something that counts

If you watch a basketball player closely you'll notice that it's not enough to rebound the ball. After he regains possession of the ball he must do something with the ball. Rebound is to get it back. Redound is to do something with it once you get it. To redound something is to get a result or have an effect.

When Peter failed Christ on the night of the trial, he had to rebound. But Peter went further, he became a redounder. He began to encourage and build the faithful in a way that helped the church to grow beyond its fondest imagination. When Paul redounded he became the greatest missionary and ambassador for Christ the world had ever seen. He went beyond just getting possession of missed opportunity, but he made a difference after he got another chance.

In basketball, it is extremely frustrating for one team member to work hard to get a rebound only to lose it because he cannot redound-or turn it into points on the board.

It's that way in life too. Many people get that second chance, that golden opportunity but find themselves unable to make it work for them. Opportunity literally falls in their laps but they can't redound!

To capitalize on a life that is rebounding from drugs, we redound by remaining

drug free and helping others do the same.

To capitalize on a life that is rebounding from cancer, we must redound by giving hope to others by sharing our experience.

To capitalize on a marriage rebounding from trouble, we must redound by helping others who may be walking our once failed path.

To rebound is to come back, to redound is to make a difference with our comeback in the name of the Lord.

Abound: Get Right With God

When we rebound, and redound the result is to abound. To abound is to be filled or plentiful.

When David prayed to God, he prayed for restoration. He was making rebound, with a pledge to redound. His goal was to abound in the joy and salvation of the Lord. However, he knew that he could not do this unless he straighten things out with God. Herein lies the key to abounding. It's what David did.

When Saul prayed to God but when he prayed, his prayer was that God would save his reputation, despite his sin. When David prayed, he asked God to create a clean heart within him, regardless to the impact it might have on his reputation. He truly wanted to get right with God.

That's the final key to the three-fold rebounding process. Get right with God, regain the initiative and take steps to make it count.

A rebound makes little difference if the redound does not lead to abound.

What we want from a rebound is to abound again.

David said, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

When David turned his life over to God he demonstrated to God that he was willing to give him another chance. He rebounded and lived out the remainder of his reign in the glory of the Lord. Not only did he rebound but he also abounded in the name of the Lord.

Resound

Finally, brothers and sisters, if God has given us a chance to rebound, redound, and abound, then we should be willing let our rejoicing resound loud as the rolling sea.

When something makes a lasting impact, when it lives in memory beyond the normal length of its days, when it reverberates beyond space and even time, we say that it resounds.

To resound something puts it on a grand scale.

How grand are the mighty works of God?

David, in Psalm 8:3-4 asked the same question when he said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou

visitest him?

The greatness of his creation resounds to the battlements of heaven!

The greatness of his healing power resounds to the borders of the Promised Land!

The greatness of his restoration power resounds to the limits of the heavenly realm!

No wonder James Weldon Johnson would declare, “Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening sky, let it resound, loud as the rolling sea.”

Because God has blessed us, our praises should resound!

That’s what the woman at the well did, she ran through the street saying, “Come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done.”

She let her praises resound!

Because God has plucked us from the very mouth of despair and given us a chance to rebound, we our praises should resound!

Because God has lifted our lives out of the miry clay and placed our feet on solid ground, our praises should resound with a thunderous roar of victory!

We should be glad to let our praises resound in every hill and valley! In every state and city!

“Bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name!”

I was down, but he me to rebound. More than that he helped me to abound!

We should be willing to tell the story!

Tell them about Jesus, whom they nailed to an old rugged cross!

Tell them about Jesus, who was crucified for our souls!

Tell them how they thought he was down until…early Sunday morning arose to make the rebound, gave us the faith to redound and sent the Holy Spirit to help us abound!

Thank God for the rebound!

Thank God for Jesus!

No. 9257-Mothers

Mother by Nurture

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 13, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." Isaiah 66:13***

Introduction

Is there a difference between being a "baby mama" and a mother? The common term "baby mama" refers to a female who gave birth to a child. The term became popular in the Hip Hop Generation. It refers to a female who gives birth and that's all. The term mother implies more than just the act of birth. It implies that everything essential to a child's survival is provided: food, clothing, shelter, love, encouragement, environment, protection, education and motivation. The sum of all conditions and acts that influence a child's development is called nurture. A baby's mama is a mother by an act of nature. The real mother is a mother by nurture.

Sociologists have differed over the years as to the importance of nurture. Robert Pool, a U.S. Science journalist, says for three hundred years the idea that nurture is the determining factor in human actions has existed. As a result efforts have been made to change people's environments, because of the belief that we can make a better humanity; reduce crime, fight poverty and change the social order. Pool notes that nurture only goes so far because other factors such as intelligence, personality traits, perhaps even propensity to commit crimes may be the result of inherited nature.

In essence a mother by nature puts us here and with the help of the father, stamps us with certain personality traits, physical characteristics and propensities. The mother by nurture is the person who has to deal with us after we have been gene stamped in the womb and put here.

The mother by nature and the mother by nurture are not always the same person.

The natural mother is a mother by nature. The one who gives meaning to life is the mother by nurture.

As the nation celebrates motherhood, it celebrates the millions of women who are mother's by nurture.

Just who are the Mother's by nurture? Mostly they are birth mothers who also nurture their children. Very few African-American women officially give up their children to adoption, even if they can't nurture them. A 1996 study by Mosher and

Barach tracked a significant decline in the number of African-American women who gave up their children through adoption to less than two percent. What that study doesn't take into account is the fact that while many young black women don't give up their children for adoption; the real nurturing has been turned over to: grandmas, aunties, sisters and "ladies down the street." It is so common, that in many areas of the black community it is common place to see grandma and auntie officially acting on behalf of a child.

Since grandma is the one providing the attention, encouragement, discipline, education and other needs; grandma is often the unofficial mother by nurture.

The same could be said for adoptive mothers and stepmothers who did not bring a child into this world but have provided all of the nurture needed for someone else's child.

It is difficult to be a godly mother in an ungodly world. It's even more difficult to be a mother by nurture. The stepmother who tries to nurture is often frustrated when she hears an angry teen yell, "You are not my mother" despite her best efforts. The woman who could not have children herself is often frustrated at her own inability while striving to love an adopted child as her own. A grandmother whose patience, health and nerves are not what they once were, wrestles to pour out love and attention on another generation's child, left on her doorstep for nurture.

Each year over 140 million greeting cards are sold for Mother's Day along with $7 billion for presents and Mother's Day dinners. Sixty million roses are delivered and more long distance phone calls are made on this one single day than on Christmas. The praises are to the Mother by Nurture: Mothers, grandmas, aunties, stepmothers and "The only mothers we've ever known."

Whether by nature or by nurture, good mothers deserve praise and respect. Proverbs 31 says such mothers are praised by their children because they are great examples of the virtuous woman.

As Christians, we celebrate those who have birthed and nurtured us. We also celebrate those who have provided us Christian nurture even though they were not our biological mothers. They are the ones through whom God has blessed us and as we praise him, we praise them as well.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells of the wondrous way that God will bless Israel.

The nation of Israel had fallen upon hard times. The glory it once knew as the premier example of how God blesses a nation had become a mere shadow of its former excellence. It now stood in exile, mere chattel, a nation of slaves and vagabonds. The people cried out to God for deliverance and received an answer.

The prophet Isaiah delivered God's response by characterizing the people as a mother facing the ordeal and prospect of birth pains. Isaiah raised the expectations of the people to a new height when he prophesied that God would respond to their pleas even before they had a chance to travail long in their troubles. "Before she

travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." (v7) The answer to their prayers would be delivered even before their travail had been completed.

Isaiah's summary was a paradox to say the least.

From the lips of the prophet Isaiah God characterized himself as a mother and soon to be delivered Israelites as his newborn children who would be delivered so quickly that it would prompt people to ask, "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things?" (v8)

In the prior verses God compares Israel to a mother, but at verses 12-14 God compare himself to a mother. By noting that he would nurture them or care for them by providing for their survival and comfort. Not only would he be like a mother for his own chosen people he would even extend his loving nurture to gentiles, who were not his own, like a flowing river (v12.)

Scripture usually relates three fifths of the nurture of a child to its mother: Isaiah 66:13 lists her as a comforter; Proverbs 31:1 characterizes her as the primary teacher of a child; and Zechariah 13:3 says that she is the disciplinarian of the child. The other two functions: Provision and protection are assumed to be the role of the father. However when a mother was a widow or a single parent like Hagar they assumed all five of the functions.

In this text God assumes the role of the nurturing mother, promising in Isaiah 66:13 to comfort believers like a mother comforts her child.

He will provide nurture for believers by doing what good mothers do: comfort us, teach us, discipline us, provide for us and protect us.

The nurture of God.

The text shows us how God promised to provide nurture for Israel. By comparing himself to a mother, we discover certain truths by looking closely at the word "comfort."

AS A MOTHER COMFORTS: God promises to comfort us as one who is comforted by a mother. How do mothers comfort? Mothers comfort us through healing our wounds . We learn very quickly that good mothers seem able to heal wounds that are as simple as pricking a finger or as complex as marital problems or career failures. Mothers have the capacity to heal.

Mothers also encourage us. When we are dispirited a little talk with a good mother can often inspire us to move forward and never quit. Their words motivate us. Since God says he will be to us like a good mother, then the song writer must have had it right, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

Mothers forgive us. Loving mothers are not always pleased with our actions, but they never stop loving us. We know that behind all of that tough talk and rough exterior there is a compassionate spirit that is always willing to forgive and receive a repentant child.

Mothers teach and discipline us. Loving mothers teach us what they know and then help us get the best teachers when what we need extends beyond what they

know. They teach us right from wrong. They teach us the value of truth, honesty and cleanliness. They also teach us to pray. Not only do they teach but they also discipline us and force us to grow up straight as trees rather than wild as weeds.

God told Israel in the text that he would nurture them the same way that good mothers nurture and comfort their children.

I WILL COMFORT YOU: God says "I will comfort you." It is a personal promise from a personal God. Think of yourself talking to God, just as you would a good mother. Transpose your mother's voice for that of God saying "Mama gon' take care of it baby, mama gon' take care of it." With our heads leaning on his everlasting arms, we should picture ourselves telling our problems to God and listening for his promise to personally respond. "God's gon' take care of it." That's when we take our concerns about our sickness to him and know that "God's going to take care of it." That's when we take our financial worries, our marital problems and our career frustrations before him knowing that his response will be "I will comfort you."

Isaiah 41:10 says, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Maybe this passage is what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Be not dismayed what ere betide. God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you. God will take care of you, through every day, ore' all the way. He will take care of you. God will take care of you."

COMFORTED IN JERUSALEM: The comfort that God promises believers in this text would be provided in Jerusalem. Jerusalem had a twofold significance. They were discomforted because of the destruction of Jerusalem, its temple and its walls. It was the immediate focus of their discomfort. But Jerusalem was also the place where they met God. By saying that he would comfort them "In Jerusalem" God promised to comfort them at the point of their frustration. The point of our frustration may be a specific loss or a family problem. "In Jerusalem" is God's promise to meet us at the point of that frustration and comfort us by doing exactly what a mother does, cutting through the fine talk and saying it bluntly, "Boy you better shut your mouth and listen to what I'm trying to tell you!" In the same way, God met Jonah trying to run and Saul trying to persecute on the Damascus Road. He meets us at what old warriors called the "turn row" and comforts our souls.

But "In Jerusalem" also has another meaning. Jerusalem was the focus of Israel's worship. In Jerusalem they met God, paid their tithes and made their sacrifices. In Jerusalem they met God. Maybe that's why so many mothers saw to it that their children made it to church on Sunday because they knew that "In Jerusalem" God would help them find their way.

Even today millions of mothers are warning wayward children just as God is warning us, "Girl you can't make it in life without God, you need to find your way back to the church house."

Can't you hear mother saying, "You can't find God in a club, you got to find your way back to the church. What you looking for ain't there. God has to provide it, son.

The comfort you seek is in the hands of the Lord!"

She Wants To Be Like Him

Finally brothers and sisters, this text shows God comparing himself to a good mother. God knows that we often can't understand his ways, so he compared himself to a good mother, not because he wants to be like her, but because he knows that all godly mothers want to be like him.

Godly mothers try their best to replicate the way God loves us through the way they love their children.

When God compares his love for us to a mother it is not because she has stumbled upon some eternal secret that he desires for a pattern. He uses her for an example, because a Godly mother is trying to be like him.

When God says he will teach us, like a mother teaches, it's not because he wants to emulate her teaching methods but because she often emulates the way he teaches us. He walks with me and talks with me and tells me I'm his own!

When God says he will discipline us, like a mother disciplines, it's not because he wants to duplicate the way she disciplines but because she tries to discipline us the way God disciplines us, with love and forgiveness. How is that? "With arms wide open he'll pardon you!"

When God says he will even provide for us, like a mother provides, it's not because he wants to copy the way she provides but because she often tries to provide the way God provides. She's confident that "God will make a way somehow!"

When God says he will protect us like a mother protects, it's not because he wants to pattern himself after the way she protects, but because he knows that she often protects her children the way God protect us; he builds a fence all around us every day!

"Who is the woman we honor?" She is more than just a mother by nature, "just my baby's mama!" She is a woman who tries to love us the way God loves us. More than that she is a woman who trusts in the Lord.

Good mothers have found that when you trust in the Lord, he will turn your:

-Hardtimes into good times; Setbacks into leap forwards

-Defeats into success; Failures into victories

-Darkness into light; Weaknesses into strengths!"

Who is this woman? She is the one who has learned that "weeping endures for a night but joy comes in the morning!" She is the one that declares "I know the Lord will answer prayer for I've tried him for myself."

Mother is a woman that has decided to keep her hands in the winding chain and hold on just a little while longer.

Hold on mothers because one of these days…

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, my rock in a weary land!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary

Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning

No. 9258-Anniv.- Pastor

Showers of Blessings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

May 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26***

Introduction

Everyone has, at one time or another, asked for a blessing, but have you ever asked to be made a blessing? It's easy to ask God for a financial blessing and wait for the cash flow to begin. It's also easy to wait for a physical blessing and wait for the healings to commence. The same is true for blessings for our families, careers and other pursuits. It is more difficult to ask God to make our lives blessings to others. That would mean that the purpose of the blessing is so that we might be better positioned to bless others with the blessing that we receive.

The pastor of a church prays for a blessing, so that he will be able to bless others.

For that same reason churches pray for their pastors to be blessed, so that he will better able to bless others.

In 1924 two men were roommates in the Moody Bible Institute. Both of them were anonymous and had no idea how God was going to bless them to bless others. The men were: George Shuler and Ira Wilson. At the institute, they combined their talents and wrote the lyrics and music to a cute little song that had a powerful message. They called the song, "Make me a blessing." Wilson wrote the lyrics and Shuler wrote the music. At first, the song was rejected by music publishers, so Shuler had one thousand copies printed to distribute on his own. It still fell on deaf ears. Then God seemed to move and one of the 1,000 copies fell into the hands of George Dibble, an outstanding singer who was at that time director for the International Sunday School Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Dibble asked for permission to use the song and it was granted. Soon, people everywhere were singing the song and publisher requested to distribute copies. Between the time Ira Wilson wrote the lyrics and the time the song began to be so well know, Wilson apparently forgot he was the author. Until he died, he never remembered that he had written the words that had blessed so many lives. It was insignificant to him, but God took the words of a young man studying the bible, and blessed them in such a way that they continue to bless millions today.

The words to the song are: "Out in the highways and bi-ways of life. Many are weary and sad. Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife, making the sorrowing

glad. Make me a blessing. Make me a blessing. Out of my life may Jesus shine. Make me a blessing, oh savior I pray. Make me a blessing to someone today.

That is the mission of every Christian; to live in such a way that the light of God's love will shine through us and bring light to a darkened world. We want to be blessed, so we can bless others.

As Christians, let us continue to ask God to bless our pastors. Let us ask that he would shower them with blessings. We want God to bless them because through our pastors, God blesses us.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Ezekiel as he foretells the coming of the church and a true pastor, through whom the world would be blessed.

Israel was in ruins. This once great nation, at the time of the text, was scattered all over the known world. Their homeland was destroyed and its the best minds co-opted. They were so scattered and broken in spirit that at one point the prophet Ezekiel saw them as dry bones in a valley. Yet, God constantly sent them a word of hope that they would be revived.

The bones could live again and great blessings were on the way.

This text is another of those places in which God told Israel they would be restored. Verses 11-16 speak of how the people were scattered because of ungodly leaders, who often posed as religious leaders and destroyed their heritage and their faith. (v. 2-6) Yet God says he himself would seek out his people and promised to intervene personally on Israel's behalf. Specific to Israel, God promised to restore Israel to her land and to pasture her like sheep in good grazing land. He promised to do what the false shepherds had failed to do and that is to bring them back, strengthen them and to shepherd them.

The great promise that God made to Israel and to all believers is that the congregation of the broken hearted, dispirited, lost and hopeless will have a shepherd set over him them (v 23-24)and through him God would bless the people and resurrect their lost hope.

Through the great Shepherd, which would be Christ, believers or the church would be the recipients of showers of blessings as he worked to restore the people and bless them with peace and joy.

The Preacher is a Blessing

A congregation is blessed in relationship to the way its shepherd is blessed. If the shepherd is blessed with a logical and organized mind, the congregation is blessed in the same way. If he is blessed with a keen insight into the scriptures, the congregation is the recipient of excellent teaching. If he is blessed with a charitable spirit, the congregation is blessed because of his benevolence. Thus, every congregation should pray that the pastor is blessed because when the pastor is

blessed the congregation is blessed. Look at what God said to Israel in this text:

"I WILL MAKE THEM A BLESSING": None of us can bless others unless God has first blessed us. We need God's divine anointing. We need divine workmanship. God blesses the congregation by first divinely blessing the pastor. God helps the pastor in many ways, but all of those ways work together to place him in a position where he can be a blessing to the congregation of the saints. We need God's help for every action that we undertake. We can do nothing alone. The same is true for the pastor. He is not self sustaining. He needs a blessing and we need a blessing. We want God to bless him because we are blessed through the strength of our faith which is strengthened regularly by the preaching of the word.

I WILL SEND THEM SHOWERS: Pay close attention to this promise in the text. Watch what it says and also watch what it does not say. It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "I will send them showers." It does not say I will send them a mist of blessings, but showers. It does say not say he would send them a drizzle of blessings, but showers. What does that mean? It means that believers who are faithful to God and heed his word can expect an outpouring of blessings in God's own time and in his way. Remember, God has said that he will set up his shepherd and through him he would send these showers. Through him we would hear the word declared and learn, week by week, how to gain access to our own showers of blessings. Most of us know this is the truth because we have experienced showers when we listened to the preached word and also experienced droughts when we did not. Though we may have complained about some of our food, whether or clothing was fashionable, or the size or location of our homes; must of us would have to agree, that God has been faithful in providing us with all three. He has been faithful to us in the same way. No matter how we look at it, we have been blessed by the powerful hand of God. These blessings came to us in undeserved showers and torrents.

NOT JUST ONE BUT SHOWERS: If you read the text closer you will see another truth. God used the word shower in its plural form. He could have said, "a shower of blessing." However, he said, "showers." That means more than one blessing and more than one kind of blessings. On any given Sunday the pastor pulls a drawstring tied to God's grace that unloads showers of blessings upon believers. What is our need? Food? That's a shower! Clothing? That's another shower! Shelter? That's a shower, too. We often worry about our physical need for food, clothing and shelter. But thanks to the Grace of God we receive it in showers from on high. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. There was no way for them to make new clothes or shoes, but God provided for them by allowing their clothes to last, in perfect condition, for 40 years. In Matthew 15:36-38 Jesus took seven loaves and a few fishes and multiplied them enough to feed the crowd and leave seven baskets of leftovers. When Israel moved into the Promised Land they lived in houses they did not build and ate from crops they did not till. In every instance, in the nick of time God provided more than enough for their physical needs. If we are running through dry spells, God's got a shower on the way. Get your umbrella ready! That's what the preacher does for us, he reminds us that despite wilderness

of this life's experience that God will make a way. We need to keep him in our prayers so that he can keep reminding us that there are showers of blessings on the way; not just barely enough, but more than enough to sustain us!

SHOWER FOR THE SEASON: Not only has God promised to provide showers for believers, but he has also promised to bring "the" shower in season. That means that while there will be many showers that will come to the faithful, all of those showers won't come at the same time. Each will come in his season. However, the preacher must keep reminding us about God's benevolence, goodness and sometimes angry nature. He must preach to us in season and out of season so that we will be ready to receive our blessing when its season comes. We are often frustrated because we ask for snow in the summer and do not receive it or ask for spring rains in the dead of winter. Some things do not come until their season, but when they do come they will always be on time. When our season comes God's grace will be poured out upon us.

When we have God's grace, we have more than enough!

When we have God's grace, the barrel is never empty!

When we have God's grace, we never walk in a courtroom with an able attorney!

When we have God's grace, we never enter a sickroom with a first class physician!

When we have God's grace, we have more than enough!

God Blesses The Pastor

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that God has exalted the pastor and blessed him so that he can bring the good news of salvation to the people.

God has not exalted this pastor and showered him with blessing for his personal praise, honor or glory.

This pastor is being blessed so that he can advance the kingdom of the Lord and to bring salvation to the people.

The pastor is blessed so he can continue to raise a standard for our people.

This is why God reached down into the ranks of the people and found men and women of character and strength and raised them to positions of influence.

That why we stop to show appreciation. A little praise can go a long way. A pat on the back can often compensate for a multitude of iniquities.

Every child of God should set up a milestone in his life that says, "Thank you Lord for what you've done for me...you've been better to me than I have been to myself."

Today, we show appreciation, in anticipation of continued showers of blessing from our Lord!

Today, we are commemorating deeds and works, in anticipation of more to come.

Every child of God lives in anticipation of the revealed promises of God.

Every child of God wants to see the day when everyday will be Sunday, it's always howdy and never goodbye.

Every child of God wants to see the day when the mountains will be made low and the valleys will be exalted, the crooked place shall be straight and the rough places made plain.

Every child of God wants to see the holy city, with 12 gates made of pearls, sitting on twelve foundations.

Through preaching of the word, we have received our spring showers! Our Summer Showers and even our winter showers!

I don't know about you but I'm glad that regardless of my season, I've got a shower on the way!

Brother Pastor, Preach the word! In season and out of season! Preach the Word!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them about Calvary!

Tell them how he died on an old rugged cross!

But don't forget to tell them Early, Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

He lives!

And he's sending down showers of blessings every day!

No. 9259-Inspiration

Don't Forget to Remember

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 27, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever." Joshua 4:7***

Introduction

Are there times when you must be reminded to remember? It's easy to forget to remember so we mark our calendars with special notes to remind ourselves to remember a birthday, an anniversary or some other important event. There are some things that are too important to forget, so we establish markers to help us remember. We call those markers, memorials; they testify that something important happened and someone worth remembering lived.

That's what Memorial Day is all about. It's about remembering. The bible has about 230 references to remembrance and remembering. In each, believers are encouraged to appreciate the value of remembering what was done for them by others. As Israel cross the Jordan 12 stones were erected so that the children could remember how God delivered them. Similar acts of remembrance are recorded throughout the bible, including Christ's memorial meal at the last supper. Even here, he said, "Do this in the remembrance of me."

Memorial Day is the time that the nation remembers that our freedoms have been bought with a price. In the Civil War, 365,000 Northern soldiers were killed, and 133,000 soldiers from the South died. In World War One, 116,000 American soldiers died. In World War Two, 407,000 American soldiers died. 54,000 American soldiers died in Korea, 58,000 died in Vietnam, 148 died during Desert Storm. As of Friday of this week there were 3,438 American Soldiers that have died in Iraq and 390 in Afghanistan. While thousands have died, others have become disabled. In the Iraq war the non-fatal casualties include: 22,091 soldiers, 795 Navy, 2,157 Marines; and 1,145 Air Force combatants.

Obviously, tomorrow is not about bar-be-ques or days in the sun. It's a day to watch, listen, learn and pay respect to those who have given their lives and those who have placed themselves in harm's way to protect our way of life.

There are many whose Memorial Day reflections spand many years as they think of fathers and grandfathers. Others think of just a few years ago; or two weeks ago. Still others think of sons and daughters who are this very day, standing in the

mouth of danger.

The following words were written a generation ago by the late W.T. Purkiser. He edited a Christian publication named "Herald of Holiness." His words were not in recognition of a national holiday, but they certainly apply:

"God has created us in such a way that we can remember. If we could not remember, we could not grow. We would be forever confined to an immediate present. We would be quite literally going around in circles, and very small circles they would be. But God has also created us in such a way that we can forget. If we could not forget, we could have no future. We would be tied to the past in such a way that we could never get free. We must actually do both. We must remember. And we must forget."

Perhaps Mr. Purkiser was right; there are some things we should forget. We should forget bad things that have been done to us, that remembrance ties us inextricably to the past. We should forget past sins that condemned us and brought shame on our lives. We should even forget the errors, blunders and mistakes we made because they often make us afraid to go forward. But just as we should forget we should also remember. We should remember the good that has come from the events of the past. We should remember how God has blessed us. We should remember the price that has been paid by others as we ask ourselves what price we are willing to pay.

In a memorable moment in the movie "Saving Private Ryan" Tom Hanks played a soldier who died trying to save the life of private Ryan who was the only remaining son of a woman who had lost all of her other sons in War War II. Many men died to bring Ryan home safely to his mother. In his dying breath Hank's character challenged Ryan to make his death count for something. "Make it count" was his dying charge.

As Christians, prepare to celebrate this day of memorial, we will fly our flags on our porches and reflect back on those in our families who paid the price. Our challenge, as the current recipient of American freedom is to insure that their sacrifices on their altar of freedom be without purpose. Our challenge is to make it count.

Exposition

This text considers Israel as it crosses the River Jordan and enters the Promised Land.

Joshua commanded representatives of the 12 tribes to take 12 stones out of the river and carry them to the other side. Once on the other side the stones were set up on the bank as a permanent tribute to God for his wonderful works. When children of the future come to the site and see the huge stones standing in a pile in the midst of Jordan and another, just like them, on the right bank of Jordan, they will ask the meaning of the stones.

Their questions will give the elders an opportunity to tell them of the great things God did for Israel when he helped them cross Jordan. Those on the bank also stood

as a sign of their expectation of great things to come from God in future generations. Together, the stones symbolized the presence of God in the past and the need for God's presence on the other side of Jordan as well. It was the children of the post Jordan generation recognizing the great work God has performed for their fathers and expecting the same for themselves.

Remember the soldiers who died

John 15:13 reminds us that there is no greater love that can be demonstrated than the fact that a man is willing to lay down his life for his friends.

As we remember, we must keep in mind that since the beginning of this nation over a million men and women have died for our freedoms. From Crispus Attucks to Iraq, African-Americans have given their lives for this country. Even in the American Civil War African-Americans fought for both the Union and Confederate sides. Literally thousands of Blacks were Confederate soldiers who fought and died, with the promise of freedom, to preserve the South. Even though many Blacks were segregated in War War II units like the Tuskegee Airmen took to the airways and Navy men died on ships at sea. Ten thousand Black soldiers built a highway across the ice in Alaska to protect our Northern borders and thousands of others died.

We must remember those of our own race who are have died on recent battle fields in Iraq, 340 or about 10 percent of the dead in Iraq are African American, most under the age of 25.

We don't celebrate Memorial Day, we commemorate. We remember that Freedom is not free. Our freedom has been bought with a price.

Remember the warriors in our families

Moses told Israel that a day would come when the children would ask, "What mean ye by these stones." He said their question would give occasion for the sacrifices of their ancestors to be retold for their hearing.

In every family there have been warriors who may or may not have been soldiers; but they were nevertheless warriors. They fought for the survival of our families. Slave mothers and sharecropper fathers. Maids, butlers and janitors, Pullman Porters, cooks and cab drivers; all were silent warriors fighting battles to help their families reach their present levels of achievement.

On Memorial Day, as we remember, we also remember the soldiers in our families. Those who fought in the military and the grandpa's and grandma's who ran our households like generals. We remember them because they fought for our survival, often defending us against abuse, threats and death.

Memorial Day is an appropriate time for families to place a flower on the grave of the old warriors of the family, especially those who fought for their families and their country as well.

To children, Memorial Day has little meaning until it is put in the context of our

personal experience. When the story of your father and grandfather is told to a child, Memorial Day becomes something personal. Until then, it's just a day off.

Remember the savior

As we remember what sacrifices have been made for our freedom, we should also remember what price was paid for our salvation; and who the made the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Before we came to Christ we were without hope. We were sinners condemned to die because the payment for sin is "death." (Romans 6:23) Yet, Christ made himself the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

"He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity." He was chastised for our faults and failures and because of his sacrifice; we have a chance to the tree of life.

We should always remember that "freedom is not free." Someone always pays.

Someone had to pay all of our drinking and gambling!

Someone had to pay for all of our adulterous acts!

Someone had to pay for our abuses and misuses!

Someone had to pay for our miscalculations and mistakes!

Who paid? The song writer says, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe!" Sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow!"

As we commemorate Memorial Day let us remember the God of our salvation, without whom we would have no hope.

As we commemorate, let's lift up in praise to the God of our salvation!

Praise him for his mercy!

Praise him for his goodness!

Some years ago, a noted photographer spent months taking pictures of people as they came and went from the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. One morning, before anyone else was there, he noticed a new remembrance at the wall. There was a picture of a soldier, a medal, a picture of Jesus, and a simple, three-word inscription. As he was focusing his lens on the scene, an elderly man came up behind him and put a hand on his shoulder. "Excuse me," he said, "but do you like it?" The photographer told him how impressed he was with it. The man replied, "I'm glad. I put it there." Suddenly, that little three-word inscription came to life for that photographer. It said, "Only one son."

God brings us to a cross where His "only one Son" gave His life for us and he is asking us to remember!

He's asking us to remember that when we faced our Jordan how he rolled the water's back for us!

He's asking us to remember that when we are in the midst of the river of our difficulty that there was a rock on the other side.

The stone upon which this generation stands is the same stone upon which your parents stood. This stone is Jesus, the chief cornerstone of the church. He is the stone which the builders rejected.

Don’t forget to remember that the God of yesterday is God in this present age as well.

Don’t forget to remember that the Lord is still in the blessing business.

Don’t forget to remember that there is no:

-Weakness that the Lord cannot strengthen!

-Pain that the Lord cannot ease!

-Burden that the Lord cannot lift!

-Loneliness that the Lord cannot comfort!

-Door that the Lord cannot open!

-Prayer that the Lord cannot hear!

I’m glad that there is a rock on this side of Jordan.

This rock is Jesus: The center of hope!

Jesus, the savior of all souls!

Jesus, Our helper in a time of trouble!

Jesus, who died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

Jesus, the rock of our salvation!

I heard the song writer declare: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name! On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!”

No. 9260-Graduation

Little Ships Need A Big God

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 3, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships." Mark 4:35-36***

Introduction

After graduation, what's next? Graduates are familiar with life on this side of graduation, but what's on the other side? We understand Head Start, pre-school and kindergarten, because they are on this side of graduation, but what's on the other side? We understand elementary and middle school because they are on this side of graduation, but what's on the other side? We understand high school and have adjusted ourselves to its demands and rigors; but high school is on the other side?

Life on the other side of graduation is a world which graduates have not experienced. They have learned from a school system with teachers, grades and a battery of tests on this side. But on the other side of graduation there is another school which also has teachers, grades, classes, and many extremely difficult tests. It is called the school of hard knocks.

In the school of hard knocks, life is the curriculum, tough times is the teacher, challenges are the classes, ups and downs are the tests, and whether you succeed or succumb are its tests. You can't avoid the school of hard knocks. If you try to avoid going because you don't like what it teaches, it will track you down. The teacher in the school of hard knocks is extremely tough; tougher than any teacher you had in high school. This teacher gives tough assignments such as how to pay your own rent. How to stay out of jail. How to succeed. Unlike school, this teacher never gives an easy assignment, never uses a substitute and could care less if you pass or fail.

Graduates are about to board a boat to cross a channel towards their future. Marian Wright Elderman, head of the Children's Defense Fund is often noted for her saying to children, "The sea is great, but all we have is our little boat." Our boats are small, the sea is great, but God is big and greater than the sea.

In that context, Graduates must consider themselves as youth about to begin a journey to the other side of graduation in a journey that appears to be a "piece of cake." At graduation the sea is calm and it appears to be an easy ride, but make no

mistake, the strong winds will blow, the gales of wind with blow incessantly and the journey will be challenging. Yet graduates should not be intimidated. They should remember: our boats are small, the sea is great, but God is bigger and greater than the sea.

As Christians, we face the future with confidence. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. As long as we keep our trust in God, it won't matter how tough the sea, we will make it safely to the other side.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Jesus took a boat to cross the sea to rest on the other side and the storm those who followed him faced along the way.

Jesus often taught crowds of people for long periods of time. This text focuses on an instance in which he desired to withdraw to rest. That was difficult because the crowds found him wherever he went. On his occasion he sought to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. As he departed in his boat, there many who sought to go to the other side as well. They followed in little ships.

The historian Josephus records that were often as many as 300 boats on the Sea of Galilee at one time. There were many boats available, but few would risk taking the sea during certain periods because they knew the nature of the Sea of Galilee. The wisest travelers stayed clear of the sea at night and when weather threatened.

Despite what they knew about the dangers of the sea, the disciples in the boat with Jesus set sail, only because they trusted him. But the book of Mark records there were other little boats that followed him. The Book of Mark is the only Gospel account that focuses on this little detail.

The people in the other boats were prepared to face the unknown, to get to the other side. Despite the threat of the sea they didn't worry about the dangers ahead they followed Jesus. They were willing to risk their lives and fortunes to follow him.

As they journeyed to the other side a storm broke out. Jesus was on board the main ship, asleep. As the waves began to rage and the thunder rolled, those on board the ship became nervous. Those that followed in the little ships were nervous, too. Yet, the navigated by following the boat that carried Jesus.

The disciples and those in the little boats made it to other side, because they followed Jesus through dangerous waters.

Their boats were small, the sea was great. They made it to the other side because God is bigger and greater than the sea.

The Sea Ahead

Christian Graduates, who want to make it to the other side, must take a note from the believer's in this text: Though the sea was great, and the prospects of danger was great, they launched their little boats and followed Jesus. Before you begin your journey to the other side should:

CHECK YOUR SAILS: Boats were propelled in ancient times by paddles or sails. Paddles required a tremendous amount of manpower to move even a small boat. Sails were able to harness the power of the wind to move them along. Experience sailors knew how to position their sails to catch the wind. Even when wind comes from a different direction the sails on a sail boat shift to catch whatever wind is available and push the boat forward. Graduates must prepare themselves to keep the wind in their sails. There will be many experiences in life that will seem to work against you. Don't worry about which way the wind blows, shift your sails to harness whatever wind comes your way. If life throws you lemons, shift your sails and make lemonade. Anyway the wind blows set your sails to harness every opportunity.

The wind of a Christian's sail is faith that God is bigger than any ill wind you may face. Luke 18:27 says, "..things which are impossible with men are possible with God." To keep our faith in tact we must stay in the wind. If two sail boats are racing, one will try to get in front of the other to catch the wind. The one that catches the first wind moves ahead, the other drops behind for lack of wind. Graduates should be careful not to let worldly activities steal their wind. Stay in church, never stop praying and worshiping God. These activities build your faith. Faith is the wind that fills your sails and propels you to the other side.

SEA LEGS: Those who travel on boats learn that while they are steady on land, it takes a good set of sea legs to stand firm on the sea. The constant movement of the ship, rocking from side to side, unsettles some. People are known to throw up and get sea sick. For graduates, the journey to the other side will require sea-legs. The waters ahead will be rocky. They are not for the faint hearted. It's important you not panic as you travel to the other side. God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and strength. When storms rise keep your sea legs. Prepare, think it through, seek spiritual guidance, but don't panic. There are many kinds of crises that include everything from financial failure to tragedy? If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith...we are likely to panic. That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard the ship and a storm developed. The shipped rocked and turned and many on board envisioned themselves as dead men. There was no escape. The winds were too strong and they were too far away from the bank to swim. Death appeared imminent. Then someone remembered that Jesus was on board.

Our fear sees the worse that can happen. Our faith knows the best that can happen.

Our fear sees the downside of the situation. Our faith sees every situation as an opportunity to stir the dormant power of God within us that speaks to the storm and says, "Peace be still."

COMPASS: Every ship has a compass. It helps them find their direction. The compass remains sure in the day or night. It always points the ship in the right direction. The biggest obstacle graduates will now face is the challenge to remain focused. It's easy to get lost if you lose focus on what is important in life. The world tempts us with many opportunities to get off track, they will be distractions. Young

graduates walked across the stage on the day of their graduation excited and happy. Some graduates have already lost their focus and traveled down dangerous side roads. If your dream is to be a doctor, lawyer, fashion designer, musician, stay focused. Stay on track. That's what's unique about God. We may change our direction but God is constant. The word says he is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is a constant. If we keep our lives focused on the will of God he will take us in the right direction. The people who followed Jesus in the little ships probably had no compasses in the little fishing boats. Knowing they were in dangerous waters, they kept their eyes on Jesus. Even when the storm raged, they kept their eyes on Jesus.

When the storms in your young lives rage, keep your eyes on Jesus.

On the other side

Finally, graduates, remember we need faith to take us to the other side, but we need an anchor to keep us from drifting on the other side.

There are many adult Christians today who successfully made it through the storm of young adult life and made it to adulthood because they set their sales, had strong sea legs and keep their eyes on Christ. However, once they became adults they forgot that ships that are not properly anchored will drift back into the sea.

The devil won't stop working in your life because you weather a few storms. He will look for opportunities to get you back on the sea. That can happen if you are not anchored.

Each believer must anchor their lives. Big ships need heavy anchors.

You can't use anyone else's anchor, because their anchor may not fit the size of your boat.

Crossing over into adulthood you must keep your eyes on the Lord.

If we keep our eyes on the Lord even though the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls and the rain pours; we are not worried because our little ship is following Jesus In the years ahead, whether on the college campus or in the military, it doesn't matter how the winds blow as long as Jesus is on board.

When storms rage we must remember Romans 8:28 that "all things work to the good for them that love God."

These are terrible times and without an anchor you can drift aimlessly back into the storm!

In times like these, you need a savior. In times like these you need an anchor, be very sure. Be very sure. Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

This rock is Jesus, the lily of the valley!

This rock is Jesus, the bright and morning star!

This rock is Jesus, who died on Calvary but arose early Sunday morning!

Be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No. 9261-Funeral

But Then, Face to Face

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12***

Introduction

Has someone helped you in life? Most of us have had someone to help us along the way. They mentored us, loved us or reared us with such intensity that we felt that they were like a brothers, sisters or mothers to us. Upon reflection we, we realize how much our survival and success depended upon the benevolence and charity of that one person in our lives who made the difference.

When that person is no longer with us, do we feel empty? When we feel empty, it is as if everything we have has suddenly disappeared. We feel empty when we reach for that which has always been there and it is there no longer. Nothing can create the feeling of emptiness and spiritual poverty like the death of a loved one. We're at a complete loss when that happens. We don't know what to do. We become weary and our souls wander.

These are the moments that our souls cry out for just one more look; one more face to face conversation. One more chance to say thank you!

Many today are able to enjoy a better life because someone emptied themselves to show them the road. Perhaps it was a father, who worked quietly to provide a home, education and an opportunity for his children. Perhaps it was a mother, who gave of herself until there was nothing else to give.

Perhaps it was someone who reached down and snatched you from the very mouth of hell and placed you into the arms of God. This is the person who caught you in your waywardness, placed your feet on solid ground then pointed you in the right direction.

There are millions of people who can testify of how they found a better life because someone gave them the best they had. They gave the richness of their lives in making it possible for others to find the way.

When our lives come in contact with a person such as this, we meet love face to face. We see love in action in front of our eyes.

When people pour out their love for others their lives become beautiful songs that are sung before us every day. We hear them sing a melody with their voices, but we watch the melody of their lives. Even after they are gone from us we can still

hear their melodies lingering.

They helped us with a life that sang, “If I can help somebody as I pass along. If I can cheer somebody with a word or song..then my living shall not be in vain.”

They gave us a spirit of joy with a life that sang, ”I’m happy with Jesus alone!”

They gave us a spirit of fellowship with a life that sang, “Oh I want to see him, look upon his face!” and “What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms!”

When our loved one is no longer with us, our soul sings a song that looks toward the future, “Only a look at Jesus!” is our great hope!

When the death of such a mentor, whom we loved like a mother, father, brother or sister, we long to see them one more time; face to face; to tell them thanks for a job well done.

As Christians, we praise God for the rich experiences that he has allowed us to share with wife, mother or someone who was like a sister to us. We praise him for lovely song that was lived before us and we anticipate the day when we shall see each other again, face to face.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians, emphasizing the importance of love.

In chapter 12 Paul detailed nine categories of gifts, describing them as being from one source. In chapter 13 he emphasized that none of the gifts superseded love.

Our best gifts and acts of love only reflect our imperfection. We do what we do because we are acting on what we know. However, Paul said, we know in part. Our best knowledge and abilities are imperfect.

When love is demonstrated in this life, we get a glimpse of the nature of God.

When love is shown through the kind deeds of others, we see a small snapshot of the compassion of God.

When love is evidenced in the warm caring life of a believer, we get a peek into the hidden nature of God’s soul.

“Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face!”

The joy of every believer, especially in times of death or peril, is wrapped around the words, “but then.”

“But then” speaks of a time after the sadness of trouble is over!

“But then” speaks of a time when crying days will be over!

“But then” speaks of a time when we are through rising and falling!

Our faith is tied to the “but then” of this text because it points us to a time when we shall see Jesus. Then, face to face, we shall see clearly the true meaning of love!

When we see Jesus we will see love personified!

When we see Jesus we will see love glorified!

When we see Jesus we will see love identified!

Now, we see a little love, shown to us in the lives of a few people around us, but then..face to face, we shall see Jesus and understand!

Our Life is Our Song

The life we live is a song. It's either a song of praise and joy or it's a song filled with melancholy and blues. One reason we enjoy the songs of some believers more than others is not because they sing better, but because they live the songs they sing about.

There are some who love to sing.

They sing from their souls.

Yet, what made their songs important to us is that they reflected what they really believed. "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

They believed it when they sang, "He's sweet I know!"

We could feel their anticipation when they sang favorites such as, "Only a look." It was if she anticipated a day when she would see Jesus face to face!

When they sang, their songs came from their experience, conviction and hope. They characterized their lives and dreams.

On a lighter note, all of us should take a page from our sister and make our lives and our songs meaningful. Consider the church choir that traveled to New York for an appearance on a national television show. The church, proud of its choir, bought an entire floor of a hotel for them and sent the keys and registration information in advance to the director. All they had to do is get to their rooms and rest before the broadcast. When they arrived in the city, they were brought to an extremely fancy hotel and told that their rooms occupied the entire top floor of the 50 story building. Just as they prepared to go up, the elevator broke down. That meant they would have to take the stairs. The director told the choir, "all things work to the good" and with good spirit they decided to sing as they went up the fifty flights of stairs, each of the 49 choir members would lead a song and the director would sing the last song. As they began they sang, "We're marching to Zion." At the 10th floor they sang, "We are climbing Jacob's Ladder", at the 30th floor they sang, "We're climbing up, the rough side of the mountain," at the 40th floor they sang, "I won't complain." When they made it to the 50th floor the choir director began to sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I see!" The choir members asked why, at the top of the stairs he chose to sing such a sad song instead of a song of victory. The director dropped his head and said, "I left all of our keys at the front desk!"-The choir members looked him and said in unison, you sang the right song!

A Life of Encouragement

A great Christian's life is a life of constant encouragement and love to others. They do what all believers should do; we should encourage each other and let our lives sing! That's why the word of God says "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." God calls us to encourage one another. To sing to each other we should get together

and sing as a congregation and as small groups. We should sing in each other's hearing and want to be heard by each other. We should let our lives sing!

She helped others stay in tune

Strong Christians not only love to sing, they help others stay in tune. If you've ever noticed a church choir, there is a truth that many will admit cannot be denied; many people in the choir are not strong singers. In any given church choir, most will testify that while they can blend in with others, it is hard for them to carry the melody unless there is a strong person in their section to set the tune. When that person is missing, they sing but sing softly, afraid they may sing out of tune.

So it is in life. Many believers, whether they admit it or not, depend upon each other to stay in tune. Outside of the body of Christ it is easy to start singing another tune. It is easy to get distracted and get our lives off track. We depend upon each other, to stay on track.

We depend upon that phone call from another believer who questions our sustained absence. We depend upon words of encouragement and even the words of chastisement we receive from our teachers and ministers to help keep us in tune. We depend upon the support of friends of the faith who have the melody to keep us in tune we lose our note.

Some of us need a person who carries a great tune beside us to help us find our pitch! They keep us in tune!

When we are sad, they cheer us!

When we are angry, they calm us!

When we are disappointed, they give us reason to rejoice!

They can do this because they keep helping us restore our faith.

It is hard to sing about faith, if we know we have no faith.

It is hard to sing about strength, if all we show is weakness.

It is hard to sing about our hope in the Lord, if we have given up on God ourselves!

It is hard to sing about walking the narrow road, when we are running down the road to destruction.

When our faith gets weak, it's good to have someone close to us, whose life is in tune who can help us tune in to the life we should be living; to get in tune with God.

When the Savior Returns

Finally, brothers and Sisters, Paul reminded the Corinthians that the love we have seen shown in the life and works of those around us is only a glimpse of what is to come when the savior returns.

The joy we have known in this life cannot compare to the joy he has in store for us!

We see people helping others in the neighborhood that's a glimpse through a glass darkly, but when we see Jesus, face to face; that's when we will see perfect love!

When we see caring souls doing great works in the name of the Lord, that's a glimpse through a dark glass, but when we see Jesus, face to face, that's when we will see perfect love!

When we see a believer pour out to others from the depths of the soul, that's a peek through a translucent glass, but when we see Jesus, face to face, then we will see perfect love!

Our friend had a song that said, "I'm happy with Jesus alone." Some don't understand that kind of happiness because they can't see Jesus. But one of these days, bye and bye, we are going to meet him and he will give us a new song.

He's coming back again! That's when we will see him face to face!

When he comes back, he will give strength to the weak!

When he comes back, he will give hope to the distraught!

When he comes back, he will give joy to the saddened!

When he comes back, he will bring victory to the defeated!

When he comes back, he will give us all a new song to sing!

That's when we shall sing, "I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free! His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!"

I sing because when I'm weak he gives me strength!

I sing because when I'm lonely he comforts me!

I sing because when I'm failing he gives me victory!

I sing because when I'm falling he picks me up!

I sing because when I'm filled with sadness, he gives me gladness!

Even death has invaded us and our hearts are heavy the saints of God still sing, "To God be the glory, to God be the glory for the things he has done! With his power he hath raised me! With his blood he has saved me! To God be the glory!

Glory, for his life on this earth!

Glory, for his death out on Calvary!

Glory, for his rising Early Sunday morning!

To God be the glory for the things he has done!

No. 9262-Missionary Duty

Christ Only, Always

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2***

Introduction

What is the mission of the church? What is its primary focus? If those questions were asked to the average pastor or lay member of a church congregation the responses would be as varied as the number of people asked. Many people have varying ideas about the mission of the church, its focus and message.

Some feel that the mission of the church is to worship the Lord. Worship and praise is the primary focus of their interest. As a result they spend most of their time planning programs to worship the Lord. There are special worship programs, praise programs, anniversaries, youth worship programs and a variety of other programs that promote worship. Associated with worship are music, ushering and other particulars associated with the formal liturgy. Giving God true praise is the mission of the church in this context.

There are others who feel that the mission of the church is to minister to the less fortunate. They believe that they are accomplishing their mission if the church offers a variety of programs to help the needy and to relieve the suffering of the general community. As a result, such churches emphasize: homeless programs, programs for homeowners, credit repair and others that address the social ills of the community. Those who hold this view feel that responding to the needs of the less fortunate is the primary mission of the church.

There are some who feel that church should be the place where people can find Christian mates, improve family relations and participate in clean, healthy social encounters. They spend considerable time trying to address the socialization needs of their members by planning marriage retreats, singles ministries, family programs, counseling ministries, encounter groups and many other ministries aimed at developing life around the Christian model.

Some see church growth as the main mission of the church. They believe that the church's mission is to get as many members as it can and to build the associated buildings and facilities to nurture them. As such, these churches spend time promoting attendance and activities that will increased the church numerically.

They think the mission of the church is to reach thousands, to bulge the membership rolls, tear down church buildings and to build the biggest church in the city. Increasing income, building buildings, and showing members how to grow in the same way is seen as the mission of the church.

Spiritual growth is seen by others as the mission of the church. They perceive that teaching members to grow spiritually is the main emphasis of the church. As a result they enthusiastically promote prayer vigils, prayer meetings, prayer conferences and personal spiritual growth programs that will help members to become less carnal and more spiritual minded.

Evangelism for some is the primary focus of the church. They believe that the entire mission of the church is to promote revivals and outreach ministries designed to gain converts to the faith. Their idea of evangelism is to stage religious events called revivals in which a guest speaker is invited, paid several thousand dollars to preach and members attend. If a crowd comes to the revival and a few people join the fellowship they feel they are meeting the Christian mandate to "Go ye therefore…" Such churches have a spring revival, fall revival and maybe even youth revival, all usually have offerings that generate revenue for the church, which is also a secondary motive for many of their so called evangelistic efforts.

Are any of these alone, the primary mission of the church? When Christ charged his disciples to "go ye therefore" what was the essence of their mission? It was not to establish large buildings, raise money, establish extensive programs and plethora worships. The mission was to go to the world and preach Jesus and him crucified!

While ministries of the church may be vehicles to put the principles of Christianity into practice, the church should not forget that its primary ministry is to preach Jesus only, always.

The goal of the revival should be to preach Jesus only, always!

The goal of the worship should be to preach Jesus only, always!

The goal of any programs or projects the church undertakes should ultimately be to preach Jesus only, always!

It's not about politics, church buildings, money or large congregations; it's about Jesus only, always!

As Christians, we know that we have been given a mission to reach the world for Christ. Our efforts should always focus on Jesus only, always. That is mission and the primary focus of all of our efforts.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that his primary mission is to preach Jesus and him only.

Paul was a very learned man. He could speak several languages, thanks to the gift of tongues; he was also a scholar, politician and religious student. He had many gifts and by virtue of his training could address a variety of subjects in his personal appearances and writings. Yet, in his letter to the Corinthians he noted that despite his vast knowledge, he decided not to focus on any effort other than to preach Jesus

Christ and him crucified. His focus was to make a show of no other knowledge than this, to preach nothing, to discover the knowledge of nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

The good news is about Christ. The good news is about his message of salvation and hope. The good news is about his death and resurrection. This is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a minister's preaching and the primary mission of the church.

The church's primary business, Paul explained, is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it. Any one that heard Paul preach found that this was his constant theme. He was an educated man but he preached about Christ only, always. If there was a warring spirit he preached about Christ only, always. If there was trouble in the land, he preached about Christ only, always. It often appeared that he knew nothing but Christ and him crucified. Whatever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he demonstrated. He taught and preached that Christ is the solution to all.

When he preached Christ only, the Holy Spirit came and provided the power.

When he preached Christ only, the Holy Spirit empowered the church to respond in ways that could not be mistaken. It became obvious that God was the power that resolved the problem; not the the potency, practicality or the originality of anything performed by man.

Thus, Paul encouraged the church preach Christ only, always; and God would do the rest.

Preaching of Christ only, always involves thee major components: Redemption, Propitiation, and Justification. When these three are addressed by the church, Christ only is preached. When they are abandoned the church becomes a faith based organization eligible for government grants and state support, but it ceases to be the living presence of God among the people.

SALVATION: Too many churches have neglected the message of salvation, substituting it with praise and worship, or mentioning it only on special days such as communion Sunday or during revivals. The nature of the church is that it constantly reminds the world that Christ offers salvation or redemption. Redemption stresses the "ransom payment" made by Jesus' blood in delivering us from sin (Titus 2:14). The ministry of the church is to seek the salvation of the lost within the House of Israel and in the Gentile world. That means among church people and non church people. The message of Christ is the message of salvation. We should preach Christ as the only source of salvation because he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities and by his stripes we are healed.

PROPITIATION: The church performs many good works through its ministries, but those ministries do not satisfy the wrath of God or provide salvation. The word "propitiation," which refers to Jesus' death as "satisfying" God's righteous wrath (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17). Because of Christ's death we have a chance to the tree of life; the payment of death having been satisfied. The church must preach the grace of God. We must constantly remind the world of the source of that grace which is Christ only, always.

It is the grace of God, provided by the blood of Christ, that gives us an opportunity to do build a better community and revive the spirit of liberty within our people. Our history as a people is evidence of the grace of God. Our history as churches give evidence to his saving grace. Our families and our individual lives all give evidence of God's grace.

When we preach the grace of God, we must remind the world that it can come from Christ only, always; because there is no other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. That's why the church must continue to preach Christ only, always!

JUSTIFICATION: When the church preaches Christ it also preaches justification. Justification is the results of Salvation and Propitiation. It shows us the results of the cross. It pronounces that we have been acquitted or declared righteous and free from the punishment of guilt although our actions have made us guilty. (Rom. 3:24).

The cross introduced us to the mercy of God.

The church must continue to preach Christ and how he came and died to pay the price for our sins and because of Christ we have been justified and are the recipients of his mercy.

It's the mercy of God that forgives the undeserving.

It's the mercy of God that lifts the fallen.

It's the mercy of God that heals the sick.

It's the mercy of God that turns the defeated into the victorious.

When we preach Christ only, always; we constantly preach Christ as the author and finisher of our faith. Christ only, always. It is through him that we live and have our being.

Always preach the cross

Finally, brothers and sisters, just as no real sermon excludes Calvary and the cross, no church should exclude Jesus and him crucified from its ministry.

Today, preachers have become too modern. They are preaching sermons about how to avoid stress, live prosperously, without high blood pressure.

Is that what Christ commissioned the church to do? Did he say "Go ye therefore and teach all nations how to avoid stress, live prosperously while avoiding high blood pressure?

We are challenged to promote Christ only, always.

There is a Wal Mart store in nearly every community. Written above the doorway of every store in giant letters is the word "Always." The advertising slogan is that the store is dependable and reliable.

Yet, despite the slogan, there are times when Walmart is not "always" available. But, when we preach "Christ only, always" we are preaching about a God who will always be there for us.

Always is not a slogan from Walmart, when it comes from God it means that he will be there for us "always."

The church should remind the world that God is there, always!

When the world presses, Jesus says just call my name, I'll be there! "Lo I'll be with you alway, even unto the end of the earth."

I hear the Lord declaring, wherever you go I'll be there! Psalms 139:7-12 declares "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?...If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there!"

He was there when:

—Sun first began to shine; and the moon first began to glow; so preach Christ only, always!

—Moses led Israel across the Red Sea; When Hezekiah received 15 more years; so preach Christ only, always!

—5000 were fed with two little fishes and five loaves of bread; so preach Christ only, always!

—Lazarus was raised from the dead; so preach Christ only, always!

—Paul and Silas called to him in a midnight prayer meeting; so preach Christ only, always!

—John was shipwrecked on the Lord's day out on the Isle of Patmos; so preach Christ only, always!

When our burdens get heavy he'll be with us always!

When we are facing an extreme danger he'll be there always!

Preach Christ only, always.

Tell the world about Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross.

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose from the grave after three days, is still saying, "I'll be with you always!

Christ only, always!

Christ only, always!

Always!

No. 9263-Anniv. Pastor

Feed the Flock

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2007

Scripture: ***"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28***

Introduction

Who feeds you when you are hungry? When we were children we counted on our parents to feed us or provide for someone to feed us. Either they put the food on the table directly or they arranged for someone to feed us or put food on our plates. We recognized that the food we received was coming by way of our fathers and mothers.

It is the same with our spiritual food. God feeds us. Sometimes he feeds us directly. Most often he arranges for our spiritual food to be served to us through the pastors of our church, whose job it is to give us a balanced meal that will be good for our souls when we hunger and thirst.

Most of us have not really experienced real hunger and thirst. We've been a little hungry. We have missed a meal or two, and we have been a little dry. We have heard our stomachs growl a time or two, but somehow we did not actually starve, we found something to eat and something to drink. We understand this kind of physical hunger. Even with our brief encounters and yearnings for Big Macs and Pork chops, we can imagine what it's like to be in real hunger, with nothing but a dream to feed upon.

When was the last time you were spiritually hungry? Not the guilty feeling we feel because skipped church, or bible study or Sunday school, but spiritually hungry. The guilty feeling we have is like a growling in our soul. It's our soul's way of saying that there should be something here for me to feed on but there is nothing. Spiritual hunger is discomforting. It is unsettling. The longer it goes, the worse it gets. It churns. We feel lost and we wander. We start complaining a lot. Our lives seem to get out of control. We panic. Frustration sets in easily. We despair.

When we are spiritually hungry, we can't focus and everything is out of balance. Spiritual hunger is devastation. If we go to long with spiritual food we reach a point of starvation. We lose substance, fire, inspiration, faith and hope.

A Christian who has lost, substance, fire, inspiration and hope becomes a bag of bones. God showed Ezekiel an entire valley of dry bones and asked, "Son of man,

can these bones live?" The answer he gave is that they could live if they were fed the Word of God.

Our pastors are charged with the responsibility to watch over the church and to feed the hungry sheep of God's flock. Through them God feeds the rest of us.

As Christians, we count on the shepherds of our flocks to feed us the word of God. It satisfies our soul and fills our every longing.

Exposition

This text focuses on instructions given to ministers for the care and nurture of the church.

Paul encouraged ministers to pay attention to the flocks over which they have been placed giving their care and spiritual maintenance his utmost attention.

He urged ministers to:

Take Heed: The various ministers in the church were instructed to "Take heed to the flock" to see to it no part of it is neglected. Ministers are charged to look beyond their own households to show a constant regard to the souls of those who are under their charge, as shepherds have to their sheep, that they may receive no damage.

Holy Ghost: The Holy Ghost in this text is referred to as a person of the trinity. This indicates that God has placed the pastor in his position. God has breathed his blessing upon his ministry and God has given him the authority to act and move.

Overseer: In this text, the word "episkopos" is translated overseer. In other places such as 1 Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:7 the same word is translated bishop. A bishop is a preaching elder to a little flock, not an administrator and leader of many flocks. Acts 14:23 refers to elders in the same way. Thus, the terms overseer, bishop or elder all refer to the local pastor and are used interchangeably according to the tradition of the local congregation.

Feed the flock: Ministers must spiritually feed the church by performing all of the parts of the shepherd's office. The choice of words in this text narrows the focus of the pastor to a single congregation rather than a large conglomerate of congregations. The Greek term " poimnion" is used for "flock." It means, little flock. It indicates that pastors should focus ministries upon the flocks that they have been given to shepherd. They are charged to lead the sheep to green pastures, lay meat before them, do what they can to heal those not inclined to eat, provide a wholesome doctrine, and see that nothing is wanting that is necessary.

Watch Yourself

The pastor of any congregation has the great responsibility of watching over the flock but before he can do that, he must watch himself.

Pastors must be good stewards of their own spiritual lives, ruling well their own households and ministering to their own families. There are many pastors that

neglect their families as they try to minister to the house of God. The word of God places primal importance on the leader's ability to manage his own affairs well.

He who cannot manage his own finances, cannot effectively steward the finances of the church.

He who cannot manage his own family cannot advise the church about the management of many families.

He whose moral life is a shambles is in no position to edify others.

He who has little time to study the bible cannot encourage others to do what he is not able to do himself.

Thus, before the pastor can watch over the flock of God he must "take heed" of his own spiritual life and be sure of his own salvation. Paul was a great evangelist and teacher but before he could get others straight he had to find the Lord on a street called straight.

As pastors, we must lead by example. We must tithe, by example. We must lead others to pray by being a praying example. We must lead moral lives by example. We show others we are willing to learn and they will learn.

Before we try to watch over others, we must watch ourselves.

Watch The flock

Pastors must watch over the flock. This word "watch" is not in the sense of observing, but in the sense of protecting the church from evil influences and observances.

Generally, pastors must guide the congregation away from ungodly practices and beliefs. This is not always well received. Consider the new preacher who came to Hollow Creek Baptist Church and immediately started to change things. The members of the congregation became upset with him, especially when he replaced their straw offering basket with one of those big city style silver trays. Weekly there were changes one after another. While there were many critics, one sister always seemed to support him, Miss Cassie Bell. When he told drinking Joe he had to keep his licker outside, Cassie Bell said "You right Reverend!" She told the members, "It's his place to do that!" When he told Carrie Mae that her dresses were too short, Cassie Bell said "You right Reverend!" Again she said, "It's his place to do that!" But when he told Miss Cassie Bell to stop dipping snuff in the church service things changed. Cassie Bell jumped to the floor and yelled, "Wait a minute church, this preacher done got off track. We need to put this preacher in his place!"

When pastors correct there is often resistance. Yet, despite the resistance, the pastor must keep watch over the flock. Interpersonal differences, feuds, and petty arguments between members can causes breaches in the faith that can do irreparable damage to the body of Christ. It is the awesome responsibility of the pastor to Watch over the flock in this respect.

Feed the Flock

Pastors must also feed the flock of Christ. To do that he must be present.

There are too many absentee pastors who are trying to pastor churches by remote control while they conduct 40 revivals a year and travel the country making a name for themselves. While there is nothing improper about a pastor taking on a revival or two each year, pastors must remember they are called to feed and shepherd a flock. An evangelist travels the country. A pastor stays put. The pastor is a like a good husband. He can't take care of his wife and family if he is gone most of the year showing others how to take of theirs.

The pastor feeds the flock through the preaching of the word. There is something about the pastor helps the members connect with the word. It is good to have a guest occasionally, but spiritual food goes down better when served by the pastor. Prolonged absences by the pastor usually results in a church with spiritual malnutrition.

The pastor is a motivator and inspires the church to serve and give. When congregations learn that the pastor will be away for a length of time, there are many who will not attend worships (or give) until he returns. It should not be that way, but unfortunately it is a reality. Absentee pastors hurt both the attendance and finances of a church congregation, because our folks have a way of misplacing their focus on the person who delivers the word rather than the word itself.

Pastors must prepare themselves to feed the flock. There is nothing worse for a worshipper than to come to a morning worship to find out that the pastor has not properly prepared himself. Members can tell when the pastor has been in the word. They can also tell when he has not fully prepared their spiritual meal because they can taste the rawness of his half done delivery. Pastors must study to prepare themselves for each sermon, but in the broader sense they must also seek to formally educate themselves. An honorary doctorate does not mean we have studied, it means we have been honored. We must formally educate ourselves with the broad body of knowledge necessary to feed the flock.

Pastors must feed the flock because there are predators waiting to destroy it.

Pastors must feed the flock because spiritual famines mean death to a congregation!

Pastors must feed the flock because Christ commands us to do so.

If you love me, feed my sheep!

When Sheep are fed and led

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider what happens when the pastors properly watch over the sheep they are both fed and led to live the abundant life.

When there is a watchman on the wall, the church is warned against impending danger. In a time of peril the question is asked, "Watchman, what of the night?" Keep the watchman on the wall so he can herald the condition of the night!

When the Pastor watches over the church the Lord will show him visions that will give us hope! That's why Ezekiel said "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley

which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel 37:1-3

When the pastor watches over the church we will hear the gospel declared and our faith will be strengthened. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:14-15

When the pastor watches over the church Jesus is lifted up.

If we lift Jesus up mighty things begin to happen!

If we lift Jesus up, the wicked will cease from troubling!

If we lift Jesus up, the weary will be at rest!

If we lift Jesus up, no matter how dark the hour, we will remember that joy comes in the morning!

If we lift Jesus up, no cloud will overshadow our sky!

If we lift Jesus up, the sinner can find salvation!

If we lift Jesus up, the despairing man can find hope!

If we lift Jesus up, the world will come to know him for he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

As long as the pastor watches over the church there will always be a way to hear a word from the Lord!

When there is a word from the Lord:

—We can see victory in the midst of defeat; Triumph in the midst of tragedy

—We can enjoy peace in the midst of confusion; Joy in the midst of sadness

Because the pastor watches we have somebody who can tell us the old story!

Because the pastor watches he can tell us about Jesus!

Jesus, the lighthouse in the stormy sea!

Jesus, the leaning post in a trying time!

Jesus, the river of water in a dry thirsty land!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

As longs as the pastor watches, he can keep reminding us that one of these old days, Jesus is coming back again!

He's coming!

He's coming back again!

No. 9264 Anniv.-Men's Day

Born to Serve

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2007

SCRIPTURE: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Genesis 1:26-28 "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: Psalm 8:4-6

Introduction

Black men, like all men, have a purpose; have you figured out the reason you are here? Have you ever wondered why God placed you where you are today? Understanding the mysterious ways of God has been a puzzle to many over the centuries. We are no exception. As we read the word, sometimes we wonder why God selected our gender, out of all of his creation, and placed us in the unique spot that we occupy in the world today. It is humbling when we consider that God could have chosen any animal in his creation to do what we do, but he chose us.

We are not alone in the query, many others before us have also asked the same question. David said in Psalm 8:3-4, " What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? "Job asked in Job 7:17, "What is man that thou should magnify him?" Psalm 144:3 asks, "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him?"

The psalmist question has enormous implications for expectations that God has for such a lowly creature as man. The psalmist words, linger: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him."

What is man? He has 263 bones, 600 muscles, and 970 miles of blood vessels.

What is man? He has 400 cups on his tongue for taste, 20,000 minuscule hairs in his ears to tune into sound, 40 pounds of jaw pressure, 10 million nerves and branches in his body.

What is man? He has 600,000,000 air cells that breathe in his lungs.

His heart beats 4,200 times an hour and pumps 12 tons of blood every day.

What is man that God would give him such an awesome task of leading and dominating all of creation?

As Christians, we know God created a beautiful world and placed man in control. He is a great who has a reason for all that he does. Christian men have the responsibility to live up to our commitment to exercise leadership in the home, church and general community as stewards of God's great creation. He made us a little lower than the angels, but if we carry out our mission he'll give us a song that even the angels can't sing, "I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb, I've been redeemed!"

Exposition

These texts focus on two passages of scripture that describe the purpose and function of man.

Genesis gives a description of God's creation of the world by singular spoken phrases such as, "Let there be light," and "Let there be a firmament," and "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth." However, God decided to make man it switched from a singular act into a word of consultation, "Let us make man." The creation of man was a collaborative effort between the Father, Son and the Word, indicated by the phrase, "let us."

Man was created with an expressed purpose in mind, for which the rest of the world was created as a preliminary. Now that the preliminaries were settled God said, "Let us make man."

Let us make man so he can have dominion over the rest of creation.

Let us make man of flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, and given him authority over creation.

Let us make man and ally him with the elements, from the dust, but full of life; of the animals but far superior, but just lower than the angels.

Let us make man in our image. In the image of the fatherly God. In the image obedient son. In the image of the empowering, forceful and inspirational Holy Ghost.

Both Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm 8:4-6 indicate that man was created with the idea of having dominion over the earth.

The power to dominate creature is not intrinsic. Man does not have it within himself. That power comes from God. God gives him the power over the earth and living thing that moveth upon the earth, which are more under his care and within his reach.

When man fell into sin in the garden, much of the original power he possessed obviously diminished, yet his charge to have dominion continues. It continues so strongly today that it is necessary to provide safety, support and nurture and survival.

Whenever man is not dominating the other creatures devour him. In a contest between man and a lion, if man fails to dominate the lion survives and man becomes breakfast.

Men were created by God, for the dominance of created world.

Today, men of God, commit themselves to do what they were created to do: serve, protect, and nurture the part of the world that God puts within their grasp.

Lack of Commitment

God told men to exercise leadership and responsibility in the world. However, there is an obvious lack of commitment among African-American men, many of whom have abandoned the godly charge to exercise "dominion" or responsibility in the home, church and general community.

This increasing lack of commitment is leading to a troubling trend among Black men. It is a trend that is threatening our very existence.

There is a trend toward violent crime that is making young Black men an endangered part of our society. Three out of every five Black boys is expected to have a run with the law, be in jail or dead before they reach the age of 30. That's staggering. According the United Negro College Fund, the number of Black men attaining college degrees since the 70's has been outpaced by the number of Black women who have increased 55 percent while Black men have increased only 20 percent. Black men are having women problems as they are viewed less eligible by a more educated professional Black woman who refuses to marry down to a man who is not her equal.

The trend toward absentee fathers is destroying our families. The image of the Black man is under attack. Gone are images of the strong Black father of yesteryear who took nothing but grabbed a shotgun to protect his wife, children and land. Gone are the images of men so proud that they would rather die free than live as slaves. Gone are the images of the hard working, God fearing Black man who believed in teaching his children about God, keeping his word and giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Gone are the images of the Black father who understood the value of a dollar and saved to provide a future for his children.

This trend is so troublesome that it is the focus of much concern by our leadership. The National Urban League released a report this year entitled " The State of Black America 2007: Portrait of the Black Male, will focus upon the plight of black men in the United States." It concludes that "Empowering black males to reach their full potential is the most serious economic and civil rights challenge we face today."

Despite the problem there seems to be a lack of commitment on the part of our black men around the nation to address the issue.

What type of Commitment is Needed?

God made men in his image, with a commitment to take charge and lead. What can men do to carry out their godly mandate? There are three things our families, churches and communities need. But there are three that Christian men should

consider that are within their abilities to do but will still require committed men.

FAMILIES NEED PROVIDERS: A man who provides for his household to the best of his ability commands the respect of his both his wife and children. He can't exercise "dominion" if he is not the provider. He can't be the boss if he can't shoulder the cost. The provider is not expected to do that which is beyond reason, but that which is within ability.

Children who see their fathers doing their very best to provide a roof over their heads and putting food on their table, develop a respect for them. Even when a woman has lost her romantic attraction for her former mate, she still respects the man who does not abandon his children and provides adequately for their care, education and safety. Men who provide for their children are not compelled to do so by the courts. They do so out of love. In the context of marriage most of his resources would be applied to the care of his children. Even outside of marriage, the man who provides knows that the costs are the same. He assumes his responsibility without an order from a court. Such a man is never described as "just"' my baby's daddy, He is my father, my provider.

FAMILIES NEED STRONG MEN AS ROLE MODELS: A man who lives a life that is exemplary before his wife and children commands their respect. Abraham became a role model for his family because he sought to do the things that were right and just in the eyesight of God. Because this was his standard, his children and associates came to respect him for the moral tone of his life. Likewise, the man who obeys the law, works hard and lives a clean cut, ordered life, is a commanding presence. Those who refuse to involve themselves in illegal activities, public drunkenness and wild uncontrolled actions command the respect of their children, who know the real deal. His children take note. His mate takes note. The community takes note. When he is in the presence of his family, he is welcomed not frowned upon. When he is in the presence of his wife or even his former mate, she treats him with respect because he is always the gentleman and refuses to stoop lower than the standards he purports. When a man does this he is more than just a human who wears pants, he is viewed as a real man.

FAMILIES NEED GOD FEARING MEN: A man who orders his life by the word of God commands the respect of his wife and his children. Such a man may not walk the streets daily with a bible in his hands or have a huge cross dangling around his neck, but the principles of godliness are hung around his heart and nailed to the door posts of his soul. The man who is led by God shows it in his Lifestyle and manner. In a society that casts a god fearing man as a wimp, there is a tendency of some to shun the image of being a spiritual man. Yet, that is the very characteristic that drew Abraham close to God, the fact that he was willing to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. The God fearing man seeks the will of God and strives to follow it, thus shepherds his family in the direction of the almighty.

Committed man in Godly hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is only one thing better

than a good man and that is a committed man in Godly hands.

Our charge is the exercise leadership in the family, church and community. To do that requires commitment. It requires men to be more than just good men, it requires them to be committed men.

Elijah was a good man. He was strong, independent and courageous. But what made Elijah more appealing is the same quality that made many of the strong men of the bible great; they were committed men in godly hands.

Abraham was a good man, but when he put his trust in God and moved at his command, he became a committed man in Godly hands.

Jacob was a good man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he became a better man, because he demonstrated that he was committed man in Godly hands!

David was a good man. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." He was great because he was a committed man in Godly hands.

A committed man in Godly hands is a powerful man because God uses him!

A committed man in Godly hands is an influential man because God controls him!

A committed man in Godly hands is an effective man because God directs him!

Where do committed men stand?

Committed men stand on the side of the Lord!

That is why Joshua told those who chose differently, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

As men go forward in the world they should always remember to take the Lord with you!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

If you want to make this journey, you've got to stand on the Lord' side; you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you got to walk!

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Who died out on Calvary!

Who arose Early Sunday morning!

I've got to walk with the king

No. 9265-Youth

Giants

(The Bigger They Are The Harder The Fall)

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

June 23, 2007

SCRIPTURE: And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 1 Samuel 17:49

Introduction

Have you ever faced a giant? Probably not in the sense of physical person, but many of us have faced giant sized problems, situations and obstacles. These are frustrations and obstacles that stand in the way of the accomplishment of our dreams.

What could stop you from pursuing your dreams? What could possibly come against you that could stop you from achieving your spiritually ordained goals and dreams? The giants we have may have different dreams but each has the same purpose which is to stop us from succeeding. They intimidate us and make us afraid. They yell at us, and make us feel small in their sight. They push us to conjure dreams of failure and defeat. They make us think the only result possible for us is failure.

Once, Israel sent 12 spies into the Promised Land to bring back a report. They came back with a report that said that they could not win because the land was filled with giants who made them feel as small as grasshoppers. Yet, there were two men among them, Joshua and Caleb who said that God was bigger than any giant and he ordained their future. They would not listen to these two and they wandered aimlessly for 40 years until the whole generation died out. The Giants intimidated them and they cowered down.

As Christians, we should not be afraid of the giants that try to intimidate us. Our God is bigger than any giant. If our life goals are in accord with the will of God, nothing can stop us from achieving our destinies, except our own fear and unwillingness to put our trust in him.

Exposition

Our text focuses on the Children of Israel under King Saul. They were faced with

the challenge of ridding the promised land of the hostile Philistines.

A challenge had been issued by the Philistine champion, Goliath, to send their best man to fight him in a duel to the death.

The Israelites however, could not control their fears. They shook in their sandals and wondered who would be the one that would fight Goliath. King Saul, himself a great warrior, would not meet Goliath. His sons were great warriors but they would not fight either. They were all afraid of the size of Goliath. Their fears got the best of them.

However David, a little shepherd boy, took up the challenge. He refused to wear the king's armor or to use swords and shields. He chose only to carry his shepherd's bag and his sling shot.

Though he went forth there was certainly concern in his heart because of nature of his foe. That concern was reasonable because he faced a giant, fabled to be 13 feet tall. There was fear in his heart.

He faced an opponent who wore a coat of armor that weighed 194 pounds.

David was concerned but not intimidated.

Goliath's spearhead weighed 23 pounds and his shield was so large that it required a man to carry it in front of him as he walked. There was fear in David's heart.

But something on the inside of the young man helped him to get a hold on his fear and he stepped forward to the side of the brook and selected five smooth stones with which he killed the mighty Goliath with a single stone.

Giants of Youth

Youth today face many giants as they pursue their futures. Without the confidence that comes from God some may be intimidated. A 2007 poll taken among thousands of young adults revealed what they believed to be the giants that faced their generation.

The survey of 600 young people between16 to 22 years found that they are inwardly focused — on their future marriages, parenthood, homeownership, education and communities, with most worried about family breakdown, the prospect of poverty, becoming a victim of violence and the fear of failure.

To deal with the giants they will face youth should remember:

GOD WORKS INSIDE OF US TO TACKLE THE GIANT OUTSIDE OF US: When David went forth to tackle Goliath God had already created one spot of vulnerablity. David had to be ready on the inside to face the giant. While God's word goes out to create opportunities for us God's word also germinates in us. Youth should strive to study the word of God intensely because it will take root on the inside to give us the courage to tackle the outside.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson coined a phrase that epitomizes what this text is about, "If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, I can achieve it." The belief that we can tackle the giant begins inside of us. It grows in proportion to our faith in God and confidence in ourselves.

Joseph was not the most likely of all of his brothers to be a success. Yet, even while he was a boy he dreamed of a day when he would be so successful that even his family members would bow before him. It was as clear as day to him. He never doubted that it would come to be. Even when he was jailed or falsely accused he still believed what God had shown him in the fields would become a reality. The same was true for the little boy David. He believed God would protect him in any situation. When he was threatened by the king or when he faced Goliath, he remained strong and bold. Faith in God is the key to a young believer's success. It is that faith that motivates you to reach for the unreachable, climb for the unclimbable while you dream the impossible dream.

REMEMBER YOUR SUCCESSES FORGET YOUR FAILURES: When asked why he thought he could defeat the giant, David told everyone who asked that he had been attacked by lions and bears while guarding his father's flocks and had overcome them all. He remembered his successes. He could have remembered how he was teased by his tougher, older brothers but he remembered his successes. Likewise, when we face our giants we must forget our failures.

During your school years there have been many times that you did not succeed. You may not have won election to a student post or a spot on a coveted team. You may have failed or performed poorly on a test or just plain messed up in other ways. If you are going to succeed, expect to fail sometimes, get over it and keep going.

Thomas Edison tried dozens of prototypes for the light bulb before he got the right one. The Wright Brothers crashed many times before they finally made their air plane fly. Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron struck out more times than they made hits but they became Home run champions because they kept coming back to the plate.

Philippians 3:13 says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Forget the failures remember the successes and keep trying. When you encounter the giant prospect of failure remember the words of Winston Churchill during a commencement address during the middle of World War II. Of all the speeches he gave to graduate this speech is remembered nearly 70 years later. Mr. Churchill rose to the podium, looked at the graduates and said, "Never give up." He waited about 30 seconds then sat down.

Never Give up!

USE WHAT YOU HAVE: The giant that David faced well armed and shielded. David could have used the weapons others used but found them to be cumbersome. He used what he had and knew best: his slingshot and five smooth stones, only one of which would be needed, when guided by the hand of God.

Every child of God needs five smooth stones to fight against the fear of Satan.

Preparation: We should take every means possible to prepare ourselves by diligently studying the word. The word of God is sharper than a two edged sword and more deadly against sin than a spear.

Determination: We should be reverently committed to living the Christian life.

We should be dedicated to the Godly pursuit and prepared to follow it, come what may.

Motivation: Motivation is the inner instinct that inspires one to act. No war can be won unless the troops are moved to carry the battles. There must be a will to triumph if fear is to be conquered.

Inspiration: Inspiration is a driving spiritual force. It sprinkles down from the throne of God and endows mortal man with faith and hope.

Salvation: There is no way to fight off the fear of attacks by Satan without Salvation. We must accept Christ and be covered by his blood in all of our ways, and he will direct our paths.

The Bigger They Are…

Finally brothers and sisters every believer should remember that big giants should not intimidate them because the bigger they are the harder they fall.

The soldiers in Saul army did not have David's faith. They assumed that the bigger the enemy, the bigger their fall. But David kept his distance from the giant, to give him falling room.

In the same since, young believers should not try to face giants to closely, stay prepared, inspired, motivated and prayed up, but keep your distance, so that when the giant you face falls, he won't fall on top of you.
Expect him to fall and leave him falling room.

Once the Lord gave Zachariah gave the people a word from the Lord when they faced challenging situations.

That word was simple. Walk in my ways and I will help you to walk in places you've never dreamed.

This promise is just as good today as it was then, face your giants with faith in God and he will bring you into the land of your dreams.

Believers are encouraged to walk each day by faith.

To walk in God's way is to walk in faith.

Through faith we can achieve the unachievable.

Through faith we can accomplish the impossible.

Through faith we can reach the unreachable.

Those who trust God and step out to pursue their dreams must resolve that although there may be giants, can still succeed!

The giant standing in the way of our dream might be a:

-Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!
-Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!
-Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Those who trust in God:

-Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!
-Believe he unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable
-Live for the incredible; achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

I don't know about you but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Storms may rise! Winds may blow!

I will trust in the Lord till I die!

When you giant falls, don't forget to tell the story.

Tell somebody about Jesus!

Tell somebody how he died!

Tell somebody how he arose after three days and nights!

Tell somebody that he is alive in your soul today!

No. 9266-Patriotism

The Pursuit of Happiness
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 1, 2007

SCRIPTURE:" The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

Introduction

What does it mean to be happy? Many have spent most of their lives in the pursuit of happiness. From the child striving to find happiness in a toy to adults trying to find it in automobiles or mansions, most of us have spent a considerable amount of time in pursuit of happiness.

In America, we celebrate what we believe to be our God given right to chase our dreams.

We fought a war with Great Britain because we believed that each individual should be free to chase his own dream and forge his own future.

The words of the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson on July 4, 1776, summed up the thought processes of the great thinkers of his time. In declaring our independence from the tyrannical rule of King George of England the Declaration said:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident,
That all men are created equal,
That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,
That among these are: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."-

Despite its flaws, America still provides most of its citizens the golden opportunity to pursue happiness, chase dreams and follow after rainbows.

A while back, Will Smith starred in a movie called "Pursuit of Happyness." It detailed the true story of a man who had a dream of being a stock broker and would not abandon that dream despite a series of setbacks that left him as a single dad who was both homeless and unemployed. Despite his difficulties, he persevered and achieved his dream. Because he became a millionaire, many think that was the reason for his happiness. However, in the movie he had both a dream and a commitment to his son. His happiness was complete when he could be a father for his children.

What is your definition of happiness? Some believe that if they had a park bench to spend the night they would be happy. Those who have the park bench say they would be happy if they had a soft bed on which to sleep. Those who have a soft bed

believe they would be happy if they had a big house in which to put the bed. Those with a big house believe they would be happy if they had a bigger house than their neighbors. The neighbors believe that they would be happy if they could live in a neighborhood so big that you couldn't follow them, trying to be happy.

The search for happiness took Solomon on a meandering course through his life. He attempted a serious study of nature and astronomy but found no happiness in his studies. He built a temple, a palace and many fine buildings and still was not happy. He gathered tremendous wealth and splendor during his reign and found no happiness. He tried women: He married 300 women and maintained 700 state support concubines; but even 1,000 beautiful, sexy women could not make him happy. He tried music, art and even idleness, too. He finally concluded that the real way to happiness was through the fear of and service to God.

To Pursue real happiness is to pursue God. To find him and know him for yourself is the epitome of real happiness.

As Christians, we know that real joy and happiness comes from God. The abundant life that he promises is not so much about accumulating things as it is about having a joyous relationship with him. That is a joy worth pursuing.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of the believer's relationship to God.

Jesus often told his disciples parables to explain complex religious concepts. One concept is God's promise of the abundant life.

The picture that Christ gives is that of sheep, a sheepfold, a shepherd and a pasture. The sheep are the millions of people who are struggling to live better, more complete lives that are completely and totally acceptable to God. The shepherd is Christ himself who stands at the door of the sheepfold greeting and acknowledging every sheep by name. The sheepfold is the church through which the sheep will find guidance, understanding safety and inspiration.

Believers come into the sheepfold to get life and the life they develop in the sheepfold is the same life they take with them outside of the sheepfold and that life and relationship helps them find what verse nine calls "pasture."

Jesus makes it clear that those looking for the abundant, joy filled, life can only find it in him. Those who have found eternal life, have also found meaning for their lives that is described in these verses as "pasture." If you are a sheep, a green pasture is synonymous to happiness. It is what you need in abundance! Thus, Jesus says "I am come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."

We seek Christ to acquire salvation. Once we receive salvation we learn how to really live and be happy in Jesus. Jesus challenges believers to pursue the abundant life; not riches, affluence, although these may have their place, but a life that gives them a deep appreciation of the things that really matter in life including church, family and the community of God.

We hear the phrase quoted often, “Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” When John Locke first said it the phrase was: Life, Liberty and Property. Locke believed that no one had the right to acquire possessions. Later Adam Smith coined the phrase, “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Property.” Jefferson went further by replacing property with the idea that everyone has a right to pursue his own idea of happiness free from government intervention.

Yet, when the believer hears these three ideas, we cannot help but reflect on the teachings of the savior about:

LIFE: In John 17:3 Jesus said, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” It means that you are now really living until you know God. There are many who swim the beaches of Caribbean and tour the beauty of South sea islands. They cruise on ships, fly first class, and relax by a cool pool; but they really don’t know what living is until they know God in the truest sense; not belonging to church or singing a praise song or, but really knowing him. Those who know God are set free to really live. It’s really living to be able to buy a pair of shoes and not feel compelled to buy a name brand. It’s really living to be able to laugh and have fun without the need for a strong drink. Yet, there are many who have known life with its crutches; so their entire life is a pursuit of the crutches rather than the the good life that somehow evades them because of a lack of divine purpose, sanction and direction. Thus, those who know God, learn how to live and to live more abundantly.

LIBERTY: John 8:36 says, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” Liberty is the ability to move and act without restraints. Sin enslaves us. It keeps us in bondage. An alcoholic is in bondage. He or she cannot make it through the day without a drink. A person addicted to cigarettes is in bondage. A drug addict is in bondage. So is a person who hopelessly entangled in an adulterous relationship, homosexuality, lesbianism and a host of other sinful addictions that range from gossiping to theft. The saving grace of Christ sets us free from these shackles. It’s like chains falling off our legs and arms. When we are saved we are finally free. We have liberty in Christ.

HAPPINESS: Our text indicates that true happiness comes when we know how to live abundantly, joyfully, without the necessity of anything that chains us, binds or hinders us. True happiness for believers is the joy of the Lord. Joy is greater than happiness because joy is not dependent upon anything other than the grace of God. Happiness needs money, cars, houses, and many things to survive. Joy needs only the grace of God. The love of God carries us beyond the mere pursuit of happiness.things; but the real joy of the Lord. With the love of God abiding in him, a man or woman could live in a shack, drive an old car, and eat grits and gravy for breakfast and be filled with joy every day. That’s why David, when he lost it, prayed to God to “restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” We want to live beyond just being happy, because the pursuit will never end. We want to revel in the joy of the Lord.

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a state that is better than happy; it is to live a life that is favored by the Lord.

A favored life is one that is better than lucky, and more excellent than being blessed.

The favored life is one that is filled with joy even in the absence of the incidentals associated with happiness.

The man or woman who is favored has learned the joy of living and has been set free from the rat race of pursing happiness.

Jesus said, "I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly!"

When you live the abundant life God gives you a heavenly spirit.

When you live the abundant life God takes your

-Weaknesses and turns them into strengths.

-Failures and turns them into successes!

-Defeats and turns them into victories!

-Doubts and turns them into confidence!

When you live the abundant life storms may rise and winds may blow, but God will make a way!

There was a time when went out of our way in pursuit of happiness. We filled the gambling casinos, bingo parlors and midnight crap shoots.

In pursuit of happiness we engaged in countless secret encounters in cheap hotels, wrinkling sheets, kissing three frogs trying to find one prince.

In the pursuit of happiness, our best friends were not Matthew, Mark and Luke but they had names like Jack Daniels, Seagrams and Johnny Walker Red.

But when we found the joy of the Lord, we stopped looking for happiness because we've been changed, washed in the blood of the lamb!

We once sang, Don't worry be happy. Now we sing, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!

I've got a new life!

I've got a new walk!

I've got a new talk!

I've got a new story to tell!

I've got to tell everybody about Jesus!

I've got to tell them how he died on Calvary!

I've got to tell them how he stayed in the grave for three long days!

..But Early Sunday morning!

I've got to tell somebody!

That Early Sunday morning he arose in my life!

No. 9267-Missionary Service

The Power of One

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 22, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you" Joshua 23:10***

Introduction

Have you ever looked at the world around you and felt helpless? You probably asked, "What can I do about it, I'm just one person? I can't change the world!" If there is injustice in government can one person make a difference? If children are not learning in school, can one person change that? If there are hungry people all over the city, can one person make a difference? The answer is "yes" one person can make a difference. History is filled with instances where one person made differences that changed the world around them.

We are familiar with many people who changed the world as we know it today.

We know of Susan B. Anthony who changed the way the world treats women though her life work.

We know about Martin Luther King, who changed the way America responds to race and humanity issues.

We know about Mahatma Gandhi who changed life for millions in India and around the world through his use of passive resistance.

We know about Bill Gates and Steve Jobs who changed the way the work communications through their work with computers.

There may be others that we do not know like Julia Butterfly and sat in the branches of a 1000 year old tree for two years to save it from destruction and thereby called attention to a national need for more environmental concerns.

The historic record extensively documents the many ways that one person made tremendous contributions that changed the world around them forever. Their efforts demonstrate the power of "one."

What can one person do? Alone, probably very little. But one person with God can do more than anyone expects; in fact such a team is always the majority. That's the way God has worked in history. He called one person, blessed their efforts and changed the world.

As Christians, we know that with God all things are possible. There is no battle that he cannot win and no problem he cannot solve. When we act in fact, he multiplies our actions and multiplies the power of one in a way that makes the

impossible, possible.

Exposition

This text focuses on a farewell sermon given by Joshua as he admonished Israel to boldly claim the promises God made to the people.

At the time of this writing Joshua was an old man who was speaking to the tribes in the last days of his life. What we would call a convention was convened for the purpose of hearing his last words to them. In this chapter he details what God had done for them (v. 3,4,9,14), and what he was ready to do yet further

He urges them to persevere in their duty to God and cautions them against all familiarity with their idolatrous neighbors.

During Joshua's lifetime many of the Canaanites had been driven from the land, however there were still many present. In some places they were unusually strong in number. Joshua encourages the people to know that if they remain true to God that he would give them the land as promised.

Joshua 23:6,14 both make it clear that those who desire to be blessed must obey the word of God. If we do, not one word of his promise to us will go unfulfilled.

Signs of that would come in the form of single individuals who would perform miraculous feats that would cause thousands to flee. In the years that would follow such as the time in 1 Samuel 14:13 when a thousand men ran from Jonathan, or when David chased away the armies of the Philistines by single handedly destroying their champion Goliath; Or Samson as he defeated thousands of Philistines with jawbone of a donkey. Each case demonstrated the prophecy of verse 10 and the power of one person, whose life is in the hands of God.

Passion and Purpose

Brett Blair wrote this famous phrase, "I'm only one but I am one. I can't do everything but I can do something and what I can do I ought to do and that by the grace of God I will do."

How can you make a difference? You are just one person. We begin to make a difference when we pursue a problem with passion. We are the most effective when we attack a problem with what Mahatma Gandhi called, "Saturga" or soul force; the unwillingness to stop until the desired end is achieve if only by sheer force of the soul alone.

Things start to happen we one person decides to become an unbeatable foe. Such a foe, powered by purpose alone will eventually arise victorious.

Robert Kennedy once said, "Never underestimate what one person can do." One person can stand up and drop the pebble in the water, but when that person learns to organize himself to get others to drop pebbles, then the world takes notice. Alone, the world dismisses us as oddballs, weirdoes and square pegs that can't fit into round holes. But when the world notices that others are latching on to your idea, it

begins to take notice and gradually things change.

Changes are made when one man or woman of faith decides to take a stand. That is the first stone in the pond. The ripple begins when that person learns how to network with others in a vigorous effort that causes other stones to be dropped in succession; enough to create a wave, enough to make a change.

The power of one gets personal when you receive a mental phone call from God. That's when he brings a problem to your mind and pushes you to say, "somebody ought to do something." We realize the power of one, when we react to that mental phone call by answering, "I will do something about it."- That's the power of one.

It's one man who will stand up to the government on behalf of others to oppose a wrong.

It's one parent who will change a policy of a school system that is wrong.

It's one neighbor who refuses to allow the destruction of a neighborhood.

It's one worker who dares speak up about workplace injustices.

That's the power of one.

When does it begin?

When does the power of one begin? It begins when we respond to "if only" situations. It's when we respond to situations with a "yes."

If only someone would feed the hungry. The power of one is realized when we respond "I will be that someone."

If only someone would help the children. The power of one is realized when we respond, "I will be that someone."

If only someone would help the poor. We begin when we say, "I will be that someone."

I will give time to make it happen.

I will give money to support it.

I will give my energy to help move the mountains of resistance.

I will answer the phone call from heaven which asks me "who will" by answering "I will be the one."

An unknown author once said, I will be the one because:

One TREE can start a forest; One SMILE begins a friendship

One STAR can guide a ship at sea; One CANDLE wipes out darkness

One LAUGH will conquer gloom; One HOPE will raise our spirits

One TOUCH can show you care; One LIFE can make a difference

Are You The One?

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when God wants to respond to the troubles of the world, he could send legions of angels but he usually sends just one.

Hannah had no idea that Samuel would be a judge when she brought him to the

temple, after all the priest Eli already had two sons, but Samuel was the one.

Esther had no way of knowing that she would become Queen of Persia, but God used her to save his people. She was the one.

That's the way it works, you may be the one that God has sent.

Are you the one who God has anointed to rear an abandoned child?

Are you the one that God has appointed to mend a breach in your family?

Are you the one that God has ordained to speak to the problems of your generation?

Are you the one that God has sent to respond to special situation? At the time you may not look like or even feel like you are the one; but looks are deceiving.

David did not look like he was the one that was to save Israel by slaying Goliath. He was just a boy, but he was the one.

Saul did not look like he was the one that would establish the church around the world because he was its main detractor, but he was the one.

Samson had no real desire to champion the cause of God against the Philistines, after all he loved their women, but he was the one.

John baptized many people in the river Jordan and while he was locked in prison he sent word to the master to ask "are you the one?"

"I know you are from a town called Nazareth, but are you the one?!

"I know your stepfather was a poor carpenter and your mother was poor too, but are you the one?

When God was ready to save the world he could have sent cherubims riding chariots to rain down fire, but he only sent one.

Who is the one sent from God? His name is Jesus! He is the one!

Jesus is the one.

When nobody else cares, he cares because he is the one!

When nobody else knows, he knows, because he is the one!

When nobody else can, he can, because he is the one!

When we need assurance, he is the one!

When we need inspiration, he is the one!

When we need comfort, he is the one!

I don't know about you but I've found out that there is only one God and one mediator between God and man and that's Jesus!

There is only one way to heaven and Jesus "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the father, but by me." When you want to get to heaven, he is the one!

There is only one name that can save us from our sins. "..for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It's the name of Jesus, because he is the one!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

He is the one!

No. 9268-Church Anniversary

A New World Order

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." Revelation 21:5

Introduction

Have you ever imagined how beautiful heaven will be? We have no idea what lies in store for us in the kingdom of heaven; what we do know is that it will be beautiful to the eye and to the soul.

Each of us has a different perception. Some of us envision a land filled with lakes and rivers that will make heaven a sportsman's paradise.

There are some who see a land where the sun never sets, clouds never fill the sky and everyday is Sunday.

The sociologist sees a world where every person is respected, valued and treated with dignity. If the world is ordered by social planners there would be no poverty, disease or ailments to hinder our progress. In this world war would cease and friendships would abound.

The economist dreams of a new world, too. In her world there is a balance of trade, no interest rates and zero unemployment. The gross national product would always be high and the economy would always be lively. In this world, all bills would be paid on time and in full at the end of each month.

Politicians dream of a world in which their party is in control and power is in their hands. The politician's dream world would have no term limits, ethics restrictions or investigations into wrong doing. In the politician's world there would be elections, be there would never be an opponent; forever.

Everyone has a personal concept of what a new world order should replicate, imitate or duplicate. No two people have the same idea. Consider the cat and the mouse that lay side by side on a porch one day, musing about their idea of dream world. The mouse was fat a plump and lay on his back looking into the ceiling. He said he would have a perfect world if he could have all the cheese he wanted, without fear of mouse traps. He dreamed of a world that offered all the leftovers needed to make a skinny mouse fat. As he talked, the skinny cat stared at him instead of the ceiling. The cat began to talk about his dream world. The cat saw himself surrounded by his favorite foods, but unlike the mouse it was not cheese and leftovers. His dream world would be to live in a land filled with what every mouse loves; mice.

When the mouse heard that, the cat's dream became his nightmare!

Today, the church is preparing believers for life in a different world. It is a world that will be new and eternal; much different from the world we know today. While we each have a different world in mind, our Lord has a different world in mind for believers. The church is challenged to prepare us for it because it will be one that will be completely out of this world!

As Christians, we know God is preparing a better world for us. We look forward to the promised kingdom of God. It will be a new world order. It will be a different world from this world. It will be a better world than this world. It will be different and because Christ will be there, it will be a glorious world for us all!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' revelation to John about the future state of the church and the relationship of all believers to God.

John painted a picture of the most glorious of the end time events, the coming of New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. This is the beautiful home of the saints, the final destination of the church and millions of believers. They will be in the presence of God.

The emphasis of verse five is that everything in the new order will be new. New implies that it will be unused, untarnished, untouched and pure. The new order that God promises will be wonderful because it will be a place where believers will be in the presence of God.

The new world's greatest attribute will be the fact that it will be the dwelling place of God.

A voice will announce (v3) some very important words, "Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God." It is a statement of finality. It suggests the end of a long struggle to achieve oneness!

John saw a picture of the new world that is to come. He saw God finally dwelling with his people in a way that he would be their God and they would be his people.

What John saw was a picture of the great day when God himself comes to dwell among men in an eternal order ordered by his own presence.

As the Church Celebrates

As the church celebrates its journey; it should celebrate its humble beginnings, its present state and its future. It remembers what was, what is now, and it looks forward to its future state.

Churches should strive to remember "From whence cometh thou?" The humble beginnings of every congregation in comparison to its present always remind a congregation of the great work that God has done through its members. In addition, congregations that reflect also see how God has lifted them and related to them in

a personal way that has magnified his name and their greatness in his eyes.

Churches are encouraged to remember to continue striving to advance the kingdom of God with the reward in view. The reward is promised to the churches in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

LIFE IN THE NEW WORLD: The church helps believers realize that they are heavenly travelers, on a journey to a new world.

What's valuable and important to us in this world will have no value in the new world to come.

Our Porsches and other imported vehicles are extremely valuable in this world, but in the new eternal world, they won't be worth a heavenly dime.

Our Rolex watches are worth thousands in this world, but in the new eternal world, watch will have any value because time will be no more.

Our tailor made suits and designer clothing, may fill our closets in this world, but in the new eternal world, the angels won't be wearing Tommy Hilfiger, Liz Claiborne and FUBU. I'm going to put on my robe and tell the story!

Our designer shoes won't have any value up there, because we're going to put on golden slippers and walk all over God's heaven!

Our diamond rings and pearl necklaces will have no value when we get to heaven, for the very foundations of the city will be made of precious stones and the 12 gates of the city will be made of giant pearls!

Our 401K and our IRA, Stock Portfolios and investment plans are good in this world, but it won't mean anything in glory, because there my father is rich in houses and land and he holds wealth of the world in his hand!

NO RACISM IN THE NEW WORLD: The church must continue to remind believers that the new world is coming; it will be a world here the racial injustice will not exist.

While racism exists in this world, in the world ahead, color will not be a criterion. In the new world order, Jews, Chinese, Japanese , Africans and a thousand other races will work side by side because all

NO MONEY PROBLEMS IN THE NEW WORLD: When the New kingdom begins believers will live a different economic world. There will not be a high emphasis on money in the new world, because money is only used to possess "things" and services; up yonder everyone will have access to the same things and all believers will struggle to serve rather than be served themselves. Gold will be plentiful because every street will be paved with it. Precious gems will be plentiful because the holy city will sit on 12 foundations made from precious gems. There will be no money problems in the new, eternal world.

God has a place for believers

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when this old world is over, God has prepared a new world for all of the people he has made perfect with his blood.

There may not be a place in this world that is heavenly, but there is a place called heaven.

Abraham traveled all of his life, looking for a new and eternal place, a city not made with hands!

Elijah received a one way ticket to the new and eternal place,

-There are no wars because there is only peace, in the new and eternal world.

-There is no hatred, because there is only love in the new and eternal world.

-There is no sadness, because there is only gladness, in the new and eternal world.

-There is no weakness, because there is only strength in the new and eternal world.

-There is no death, because there is only life in the new and eternal world.

I know there is going to be a new world because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

The place called heaven is a place on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

The New Jerusalem will have perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

The New Jerusalem will have perfect lighting, because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

In the new and eternal world there will be no medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go the place called heaven.

If you want to go with us it begins when you believe in God who had a perfect son!

If you believe he lived a perfect life and died a perfect death on an old rugged cross! If you believe he's alive because he arose early Sunday morning; then

Come and go with me, to my father's house!

In the eternal kingdom that is coming there will be peace, joy and happiness!

Come and go with me!

Come and go with me!

No. 9269-Building Fund

Nehemiah's Challenge

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. Nehemiah 2:18***

Introduction

Have you ever had a vision that only you seem to see and understand? Heavenly visions are those that are inspired by God and powered by the Holy Spirit. David had a vision for the building of a temple. He spent his lifetime beginning the work and his son completed what he began. Joseph had a vision about the relationship between himself and his brothers. In Egypt he built grain storage bins that were successful and his visions became true. Peter had a vision on a roof top. It was a vision of the disciples building the church on the principles of faith and carrying it around the world. We are familiar with visions. However, it is only when we embrace them with a mind to work that they ever become realities.

God has a great plan for the church. Generally, he gives his plans for such undertakings to his appointed leader. In a local congregation it's the pastor. In a district, it's the moderator; on a national basis it's the president. The unique nature of God's vision is that every small vision given to local congregations is somehow tied into a larger vision that he has in mind. God builds several small churches and according to his grand plan, often it is expected that the small churches band together and build an even greater work than none of them could do alone.

Usually there is not much problem between the time that God gives the vision from heaven and the time that is received by the preacher. The preacher receives the vision for the church and sees it clearly. He is aware of his meager resources but does not question God; he just accepts the challenge. The problem usually comes when the vision is shared from the pulpit to the pew. Church folks don't usually respond the way God wants them to respond.

Sometimes we can really complicate building projects. Imagine what would have happened to Noah had he received the command to build the ark today, among people like us. Imagine that Noah that in a few months that he planned to destroy the world and would make it rain until the whole earth is covered with water and all the evil people are destroyed. Imagine that the Lord told Noah that he planned to

save a few people, so he was commanded to build an ark. In a flash the Lord gave Noah the plans for the ark. No one could really see the full picture but him.

Now imagine that after a few months the rain clouds began to form in the sky and the rain began to drizzle. Noah had not cut the first board, gathered the first animal or any food. From Heaven The Lord shouts,

"Hey Noah, where is my ark I told you to build?? He sent a lightning bolt to wake up Noah and added a thunder clap for emphasis. The skies began to cloud up and rain began to fall. The Lord saw that Noah was sitting in his front yard, weeping. And there was no Ark.

Noah said, "Lord please forgive me but when I told all the church folk about the ark one told me that we couldn't start without a church business meeting. Another man told me that the church should not be in the building business but in the soul saving business. One man said he didn't think it was such a good idea because I didn't have any boat building experience. Another said the plans need review by a committee to be sure they meet building codes. One group said they would not give a dime on such a fool hearted project. I had trouble getting money for the project because some said it would take away from their projects.

Suddenly the rain stopped and the sun began to shine. Noah said, "Lord, are still going to destroy the world?" The Lord said, I still plan to destroy the world but I think you've stumbled on something worse than hell?" What's that? Noah asked. The voice answered, "A world full of Church folks will make a hell out of any plan."

Perhaps that's what God often trusts visions in the hands of a few to be shared with many. When too many people are involved there will be committees and committees usually spell the slow death of many building projects.

As Christians, we should strive to clearly see the vision that God has inspired and embrace it its sanctity. Then we should roll up our sleeves and prepare to make the vision and reality in the name of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Israel as it accepted the challenge to rebuild the walls.

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he was shocked at what he saw. The walls around the city and the gates had remained in ruins. The people were disillusioned, in debt and intimidated by the awesome commitment that rebuilding the walls would require. They had a variety of excuses they gave for why the walls had not been rebuilt. Anything he suggested, they said it would not work. Every new idea he presented, they said, "we've tried that before."

Nehemiah accepted the challenge of building but he refused to accept their excuses. Despite the danger he inspected the walls at night (2:15). He then called an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. He was an excellent leader who demonstrated engineering knowledge and brilliant organizing ability (ch. 3). He encouraged them while reminding them that they would have to watch, fight and pray.

Nehemiah presented the challenge and the people responded to the challenge

with the common consensus "let us rise up." It was a testament of faith for a people that had sat idle for so long. The work began.

The people had a mind to work and the massive task of rebuilding the walls was continued. It was a massive work requiring thousands of workers spread out over miles of landscape. Even as the people worked, enemies both within and without, kept a steady stream of delaying tactics flowing.

Nehemiah was an unusual person. He was strong yet persuasive. He was humble enough to be cupbearer to the king but he was strong enough to push the project to the end. He was a man of action; he got things done. He knew he could reason with the people but he also knew how to use the power of his office.

Meeting the Challenge

As the church undertakes building projects today, it is a good idea for believers to study the way Nehemiah approached the challenge of building. There are three points for us to consider:

HE EXPLAINED THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE. Nehemiah challenged the people to look at their circumstance. They looked at the broken walls and the abandoned city. Although he had been in Babylon, Nehemiah said, "Ye see the distress that we are in." Today, the challenge is the same. We who lead building campaigns must help the people "see" the distress of the situation. Why is it that they lived in Judah but could not "see" the circumstance? Their eyes saw the need but their heart could not accept the challenge to rebuild. They were in a state of denial. Nehemiah boldly said what many of them knew was right; the challenge had to met. It is the same today; the challenge of building to increase our opportunities for missionary work is before us. Like Nehemiah we can say, "Ye see the distress we are in." Many who hear the sermons and presentations know the need that has been ignored because of an unwillingness to "see" with the eye of faith, what could be done. Yet, the challenge must be met.

HE TOLD THEM OF THE ORIGINS OF HIS PLAN: Nehemiah explained the origins of his plan. He said, "I told them of the hand of my God which was upon me." Often the pastor of a church or the moderator of a group of churches is given a vision that is shared with no other. He has no other choice, because God gives it to him. When God makes a plan, he also chooses a man who can stand to deliver it to the people. Today, those who face the challenge of building see the man, but they need to know the origin of the plan.

When the church builds it is not for financial gain or pride.

When the church builds it is not a petty competition to outdoor others or footrace to see who can build the most first.

When the church builds it is responding to the command of God to expand his kingdom, promote its mission at home and abroad. The origin of the church's plan is God himself. We have felt the hand of God on us. He has position us, and empowered us. It is now up to us to meet the challenge of building.

THE PEOPLE RESOLVED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE: After

Nehemiah presented the situation, he encouraged them to join him in the work. He had the authority to mandate many things because he had letters from the king; Yet he spent precious time convincing them of the need. When their eyes were finally opened and they could "see" their situation with eyes of faith; they knew what needed to be done. When they learned the origin of the plan; that it was from God, the people resolved to rise up and build. It was not just lip service. They fell in line in large numbers, working day and night to rebuild the walls.

The project was finished ahead of schedule, because they had a mind to work together.

They faced opposition, but they had a mind to work.

They faced grumbling in their ranks, but they had a mind to work. They faced the prospect of attack from enemies, but they proceeded forward because they had a mind to work. They "Strengthened their hands" and did what was needed to be done in the name of the Lord.

Meeting the Challenge

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who want to meet the challenge of building should rise up and resolve like Judah and say, "Let us rise up and build."

Donald Campbell, in his book "Man in charge" says there were many ways that Nehemiah met the challenge of building:

—He established a reasonable and attainable goal.
—He had a sense of mission.
—He showed respect to his superior.
—He prayed at crucial times.
—He made his request with tact and graciousness.
—He was well prepared and thought of his needs in advance.
—He identified himself as one with the people.
—He set before them a reasonable and attainable goal.
—He assured them God was in the project.
—He displayed self-confidence in facing obstacles.
—He displayed God's confidence in facing obstacles.
—He did not argue with opponents.
—He was not discouraged by opposition.
—He courageously used the authority of his position.

To meet the challenge, leaders must stay focused on the mission.

The church should not be dissuaded from its mission and should rise to meet the challenge.

To meet this challenge we need the power of God. We can't meet this challenge on our own.

There are some things we cannot do by ourselves. We need the Lord, he's like American Express; we don't leave home without him.

Our work will need blessing, but we can't bless ourselves. No matter how hard we

work, we cannot bless ourselves. While it is true that we can be a blessing to someone else we can't bless ourselves. If we need a blessing, we have to call on the Lord.

Our work will need answered prayers, but We can't answer our own prayers. No matter how clean and moral we live our lives, we do not have the capacity to answer our own prayers. Getting an answer to a prayer requires us to call on the Lord.

Our work will require save souls, but we can't save our own souls. Salvation is the act of cleaning the slate and restoring a good relationship with God. We can't save ourselves, because there is only one name under the heavens whereby we must be saved. It's not our name, but the name of Jesus!

Before we meet the challenge of building, therefore, we must meet the challenge of the cross.

Come and go with me out to Calvary and see the challenge of the cross! It was the challenge of building the kingdom of God!

Hanging out on the cross, a great work was criticized and despised!

I hear the critics at the cross saying your great work seems to be:

A battle lost; A horrible defeat; A pathetic end to a glorious beginning

It didn't seem like much, sitting out on a hill, but the great challenge of redemption was underway!

The cross was a great challenge because it represented the greatest of all victories.

The cross was a great challenge because it was highest of all accomplishments!

The cross was a great challenge because it was the finest of all hours!

The cross was a great challenge because it was noblest of all events!

I heard somebody say to Jesus, "If you are who you say you are, why don't you come down?"

He didn't come down, but Early Sunday morning, he got up!

He got up, with determination in his heart!

He got up, with vision in his eyes!

He got up, with salvation in his blood!

He got up, With all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that he got up with the power to meet the challenge of raising us and saving us!

I'm so glad that he met the challenge of rebuilding my life!

No. 9270-Anniv.-Pastor

The Watchman's Challenge

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2007

SCRIPTURE: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence." Isaiah 62:6

Introduction

Why do you need a pastor? There are some skeptics who believe that the church does not really need a pastor. They believe it can run efficiently by a board of deacons and trustees who can get someone to preach for them Sunday by Sunday. They mistake the pastor for a mere motivational speaker, hired to give a speech, who should collect his check and go home. Yet, the pastor is more than a mere speaker; he is God's voice in these turbulent times. Moreover, he is the conduit through which God speaks to the people and through whom the concern of the people is kept before God.

The pastor's job is often a lonely one. In the local congregation he is the one voice in the wilderness, the sole watchman on the wall who is constantly pointing the way to God and reminding God of the needs of the people.
His voice is often a lone voice that offers words from heaven that encourage the church in difficult times and speaks to God in ways that he will hear.

From his vantage point, the pastor sees the big picture of the flaws and strengths of his people. That same vantage point gives him access to God on their behalf that no mere motivational speaker has.

As Christians, we know the value of the man of God who echoes the voice of God in our life situations. His voice brings us a word from heaven that is refreshing to our ears. It also brings our petitions before God in these turbulent times.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he presents the man of God as watchman on the wall.

Isaiah constantly reminded Israel that its concerns would constantly kept before God and that God would keep his word before them.

The prophet would be the instrument through whom God would speak to the people and hear their collective concerns. In some instances Isaiah characterized the

prophet as a “voice in the wilderness.” In this text he is compared to a “watchman” on the wall.

This comparison is important because in biblical times watchmen were placed in the towers and walls that surrounded cities to warn the people of any approaching enemy. While on guard they never slept. At certain points they would check in by indicating with a prearranged sign that all was well.

Using the comparison of watchmen, Isaiah indicates that pastors, like watchmen, were to always be on guard for the benefit of the people. Watchmen were charged to give themselves no rest until the petitions of the people were brought before God and until the promises of God to the people were realized. That’s the meaning of the phrase “No rest till he establishes Jerusalem;” the pastors, or watchmen were to continuously warn the people about dangers and pray to God for the people.

The “watchmen” were to hold God to His promises, knowing that is what He desires. God’s people should pray for things even when they know God has promised them.

The voice of the prophet served the purpose of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord, warning them of danger, and keeping their concerns before God. He announced the glad tidings of heaven to the people. He urged them to prepare for salvation and be fit to receive it.

What Watchmen Do

There are three functions that pastors as watchmen must undertake:

WATCHMEN WARN OF DANGER: God told Israel “I have set watchmen on the wall.” It indicates that God has appointed pastors and caused them to be placed in a high position for his purposes, one of which is to warn the congregation of danger in turbulent times.

Our modern times are dangerous. Our communities are filled with news of drive by shootings, school murders, the war in Iraq, health problems, marriages dissolving, and a general decline in morality.

The world is thirsty for news from heaven. It is thirsty for divine direction in the wilderness of these turbulent times.

The watchman on the wall must constantly remind the church of the dangers of relaxing our guard and flirting with the enemy. We are often tempted to copy the ways of those who are embracing the world so that we can attract large numbers and build larger congregations. The watchman on the wall must warn the people of the dangers ahead in these turbulent times.

The watchman also reminds his congregation that despite the danger of these times and the dryness of the wilderness there is an oasis of water; there is a word from the Lord.

Through preaching the Word, the watchman shows believers how to find restoration and refreshment for souls languishing in the heat of the wilderness and to protect themselves against the wiles of the devil.

WATCHMEN NEVER STOP PRAISING: The watchman never rests from his prayer and praise vigil for the people. He knows the concerns of his congregation and is constantly talking to God about them. In addition, to praying for them he is constantly thanking God for his blessings and leading the people to do the same.

In these turbulent times, it is easy to focus on the dangers that exist and forget how God has blessed us. The watchman leads us in our prayer requests but he also leads us in giving God thanks for his mercies.

The watchman constantly reminds us to pray and give thanks to God.

We should pray "unceasingly" and give thanks for everything.

We should give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We should thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We should thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We should thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We should thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

The watchman on the wall, reminds us to constantly pray and praise the Lord.

WATCHMAN NEVER RESTS: The text indicates that the watchman on the wall never stopped reminding the people of God's expectation. However, if you look closely at the text you will note that he also never stopped reminding God of his promises to the people. The text says the watchman "give him no rest." God implores believers to ask him for their desires. In fact he expects us to ask him repeatedly.

Jesus told the parable of the man who had settled in his bed at night and was asleep when his neighbor knocked on his door at midnight seeking help. The man tried to ignore the neighbor but he kept knocking. Finally, because he kept knocking the man opened his door and helped the neighbor in need. He told believers to have a spirit of "importunity" or constantly asking God.

The watchman never lets up. He is always asking God to bless the people, save the people and restore the people.

It's the watchman who declares in the words of the song writer, "It's me, it's me oh Lord standing in the need of prayer! Not the preacher, not the deacon but it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer!"

It's the watchman who declares, Lord remember your people in these turbulent times!

It's the watchman who declares, Lord we are out here on your word, don't leave us alone!

It's the watchman who declares, Lord we have wrapped our hands in the winding chain, forget not your mercies toward us.

The Watchman Must Speak Out

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that this is no time for the watchman to be silent, he must speak out!

Israel needs to hear a word from the Lord in these times of uneasiness over the war, the economy and the state of our family.

We need to hear a word from the Lord when our children are having children, fathers are abandoning their families, and opportunities seem to evade.

Every believer looks to the wall and asks the question, "Watchman, what of the night?" He waits to hear a word from the Lord.

The watchman on the wall should speak with a voice that cannot be muffled by the turbulence of our times!

The watchman on the wall is a voice that speaks to every situation of our lives.

The Watchman on the wall speaks about love in the middle of hate!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about joy in the middle of sorrow!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about strength in the middle of weakness!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about success in the midst of failure!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about going forward when the world says turn back!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about life in the midst of death!

The Watchman on the wall speaks about rest in the midst of these tiring turbulent and fatiguing times!

This is the voice that says the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!

This is the voice that says to my wandering spirit, "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou are with me!"

It's the voice that says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"

The preacher's voice echoes through these turbulent times, declaring the good news!

It's a voice that tells the world that Jesus, the son of God lived on the earth for 33 long years!

It's a voice that declares with certainty, that he died out on Calvary; but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!"

As long as there is danger in the world, the preacher must keep on preaching!

As long as storms of war, poverty and injustice continue to rise the watchman on the wall must keep on preaching

Preach the word!

Preach it in season. Preach it out of season!

Tell the world that God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

Tell the world about Jesus!

Tell the world that he died, but early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave.

From the walls declare God is still on throne!

From the walls declare God is still in control!

No. 9271-Inspiration

God Will Make A Way

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 5, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19***

Introduction

Have you ever faced a difficult path and wondered how you would make it through? Most of us face paths of uncertainty on a regular basis. We know when we are facing such a dilemma when the way around, through or over it is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

We've all faced impossible situations but we remember, that while can't see a way; God makes a way for his own, if we patiently wait for him to move.

Consider the little girl who was taking her first train ride. Wide-eyed with fascination, she watched as telephone poles, cars, and farms whizzed by. When the train approached a river, she became frightened and cried out, "Mommy! The train is going into the river!" But a bridge carried it across to the other side. Later, as the train sped toward a mountain, the child again called out in fear, "Mommy, we are going to run into that mountain!"But a tunnel at its base let the speeding train pass through. "Oh," said the youngster, "someone must have gone ahead and made a way for us."

That's what God does for every believer. He runs ahead of us and makes a way. All we can see right now is the mountain, but he's cutting tunnel's just high enough for us to get through.

One of the ways that Satan intimidates Saints is by giving us a spirit of fear. When we are afraid we are edging toward defeat because it indicates that we have lost our faith. The believer concludes that we do not control what mountains, rivers or roadblocks that may hinder our journey, but we know that if we traveling the path God wants us to go, he will go ahead of us and make a way.

As Christians, we are confident that our God is able to make a way for us, even when the situation appears gloomy. When it gets really bad, the faithful will always remember, "The Lord will make a way somehow."

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he reminds Israel of God's promise

to be with them in return for their faithfulness. Much of Isaiah's prophecy deals with warning Israel to trust in God rather than its own devices, political allegiances, knowledge or ways. The nation faced the prospect of destruction at the hand of the Assyrian army. The Assyrians were a devastating world power. They were destroying all that came in their path. Israel spent decades trying to secure themselves against possible attacks by the Assyrians. Israel made alliances with Egypt and other smaller countries. It built its own army to its maximum potential. Israel rested upon what it had learned and its connections in the world of diplomacy to protect the nation.

However, they heard from the prophet Isaiah that they should not depend heavily upon the alliances, knowledge or their military strength, but to "wait on the Lord." His constant theme was let "the Lord lead you."To reassure them, Isaiah began to remind them of the great wonders God had done for them in the past. He reminded them how God had made a path for them that carried them through the red sea and across the desert. He urged them to look back at the victorious journey of their ancestry and take heart because that same God was still with them with undiminished power and ability.

This chapter of Isaiah focuses on his attempts to show the people the mighty acts God has done for them in the past and to point them to the future. His purpose is to reassure them that their future is safe in his hands. Isaiah 43:2 is a clear example of God's words of hope to them, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It is both a prophetic statement and a vision of hope. It is a statement of fact because it suggests that there would be a time when Israel would pass through the water and walk through the fires of life. It is prophetic because of the assurance in his words: "I will be with thee."

After rehearsing how God's power had been displayed in times past and reminding them of how God broke the powers of mighty nations opposing them in the past (v17) God tells Israel at verse 18 not to dwell on the past, because he would do a new thing for the people. Just like he had blazed a path for their forefathers he was about to do a great thing in their lives as well. God promised ". I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." (v19)

This 43rd chapter of Isaiah is important to believers because it recalls God's promise to Israel and to every believer faced with the prospect of the unknown, that whatever the circumstance, those who trust in him will find that God will make a way.

How He Makes A Way

HE IS A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLE WATER: God became a bridge over Israel's troubled waters. His bridge is not like the bridges of men. When the bridge across Interstate 35 in Minnesota collapsed, it caused a national fear because this

bridge collapsed. This bridge shrinks by two feet each when the temperature reaches -20 degrees and expands as much as 12 feet in heat of the summer. It carried 141,000 cars a day. In time it simply collapsed. But the Federal Highway Administration says there are 152,000 more just like it in the U.S. today. Made man bridges collapse, but when God becomes a bridge over our trouble water, there ain't no danger.

Sometimes God doesn't bother with bridges at all he just parts the water. In Exodus 14:21 God caused Moses to stretch out his hand and he parted the water for Israel to cross on dry land. Joshua 3:15-16 records how Joshua and the children of Israel entering the Promised Land but a swollen river Jordan blocked their way. Yet, God ordered them to proceed forward. As the feet of the priests touched the water, they miraculously rolled back and the entire host of Israel crossed on dry land. 2 Kings 2:8 records how Elijah and Elisha came to face the

Jordan the waters rolled back for them when they were struck with his mantle!

He can be a bridge over troubling water, or he can simply part the water; either way, He can make a way of no way.

EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE HIM, HE'S MAKING A WAY: When we are faced with difficulties we can't see clearly. That's when our faith has to keep reminding us that, even when we cannot see him, God's is making a way. Israel could not see God working in Egypt or at the Red Sea, they also found it hard to see in the wilderness. In the wilderness, they often suffered difficulties associated with the nomadic life. Water was always short and resources were few. They could not plant crops, or make new clothes. They were susceptible to disease and without military protection while they were in the wilderness. Yet despite this susceptibility, God blessed them but they could not see.

They could not see how they wore the same clothes for 40 years but they never wore out.

They could not see how they were protected from their enemies despite their own ability to defend themselves.

They could not see how they were provided water out of nowhere despite a drought situations. God bless them, but they could not see.

In the wilderness, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In the wilderness, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In the wilderness, God has been our way out of no way.

In the wilderness, God has been help in times of trouble even when we could not see it.

IF JESUS IS WITH US, WE WILL MAKE IT THROUGH: There are times when life hits us hard and feel that we are down for the count. That's when we panic. Panic situations may involve the disability of a loved one, a fire, an automobile accident or death in the family. If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith...we are likely to panic. We are less likely to panic when we remember that as long as God is with us, we will make it through.

That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard a ship and a storm

developed. They panicked until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. Jesus came to the deck, unmoved by the storm and said, “Peace be still.”

Our fear sees the worse that can happen. Our faith knows the best that can happen.

Our faith remembers that as long as God is with us, he will make a way.

God will provide what we need

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when God sees our need, sees our faith and sees our sacrifice, he will make a way.

Brothers and sisters we are strengthened when we remember that sees what we need and he also sees what we have done to build his kingdom.

He sees what troubles us and he knows that we have given him our best in service, there should be no doubt in our minds that he will make a way.

To make a way for us he becomes many things. He becomes:

JEHOVAH-JIREH, because he will provide.

JEHOVAH-RAPHA because he says, ’I am the Lord that healeth thee’.

JEHOVAH-SHALOM because he provides peace in the middle of confusion.

JEHOVAH-NISSI because he is our victory in the presence of our enemies.

When there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to know that God can bring peace in the midst of confusion.

No matter how tough times get, we must remember that the Lord is still able to make a way. He can make a way because he is a God whose:

-Power never weakens; Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes; Joy never ends

-Foundation never shakes; Truth never changes

-Supply never shrinks; Blessings never stop coming!

God sees our tears in the midnight hour, he will make a way!

God sees our concern for our families and loved ones, he will make a way!

God sees our despair over our current situation and even when we can’t see it, our help is on the way.

Our help came down through 42 generations!

Our help was born in the little town of Bethlehem!

Our help is the same help that healed the sick and made the lame walk!

Our help is the same help that made the blind see and raised Lazarus from the dead!

Our help is the lamb of God

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary! But early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

Every day, he is still lifting bowed down heads!

Every day, he is still wiping tears from weeping eyes!

Every day, he is still making a way out of no way!

No. 9272-Inspiration

When Storms Come

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 12, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? Mark 4:37-41***

Introduction

When storms rise in your life, how do you respond? There are a variety of ways to respond to every storm that comes through our lives, we all have our way. There are some who run and hide when storms rise. When we put our heads under the cover, somehow we feel that the storm will have less intensity if we don't see the lightning, the bending of the trees in the wind or hear the thunder roll. There are others who recognize the strength of a storm and seek shelter; because in storms it gets hard to see, hold your footing or see the signs. Then there are others who ignore the storm and foolishly travel full speed ahead into the unknown. It is not a question of whether storms will rise in our lives; the question is when and then how we will respond.

Max Lacado tells the story of a boy and man who both build castles. The little boy builds a castle on the beach. He takes time to build the castle with popsicle sticks, bottle caps and everything else he could find. It was a labor of love. The man built a castle for himself, too. He formed a business out of nothing; it was a hard struggle. The boy built his castle on the beach and knew the waves could wipe it away at anytime. The man built his castle but tried his best to protect it from the rising tide. He worried about taxes, bills and other concerns. The man and the boy both built castles but their attitudes were totally different. The man hovered over his castle and worried constantly about things that would make it fall. He screamed at the tide and said, "You can't have it! It's mine, I built it!" The boy saw the tide rising tide and kept building his castle and enjoyed it every day. One day the tide came in on the boy's castle in the sand; he jumped to his feet with no regrets. The wave crashed his castle. The man tried to stop the tide but it came despite his best efforts. The boy picked up his tools and smiled. He walked away holding his father's hand.

That is the secret to handling storms; always hold the father's hand. We should enter storms with the full knowledge that God is still in control, and that anything

that results a part of his perfection and divine will be for our good.

As Christians, we know that storms will come. Our best efforts won't stop them from coming. If we worry for years, they will still come. What matters is that we are able to face them, holding our father's hand.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Jesus restored peace in the middle of a storm.

Jesus and his disciples were riding in a boat to reach a place of peace and rest from the crowds that followed him. As his disciples, most of whom were able boatsmen, handled the ship Jesus went below deck and went to sleep.

In Palestine, there were two rainy seasons: the early rains of October and the latter rains of March. Between autumn and spring the Jews expected the rain to fall in large quantities and prepared themselves for its coming. The winter rains often brought thunder and lightning, strong winds that toppled houses and caused destruction. On the sea these rains often came quickly and with little warning.

This is the context of this passage. Without warning, a great storm arose and the shipmen became afraid because of the severity of the storm.

As the wind and waves increased in intensity many feared for their lives until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. They went to him and found that he was asleep. One cried out "Master, the tempest is raging, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus awoke, saw the tempest and quieted the storm with the simple words "Peace Be Still." Immediately the storm ceased.

If We Meet Storms..

There is no person who can expect to go through this life without encountering one storm or another. Since we know there is a likelihood of storms we should prepare to meet them head on.

WE NEVER KNOW WHEN STORMS WILL COME: On the sea in this text, it was extremely difficult for those on the water to know when a storm would arise. The area was known for instant storms, even when the skies were clear. The Sea of Galilee sat 680 feet below sea level and it was surrounded by mountains when formed a funnel that could instantly blow in hurricane force winds. Those who traveled the sea had to stay ready. It's the same with every believer; we never know when the storms will rise, even though the sky appears clear.

Each day when we rise we have no way of knowing whether a storm will break out before the day ends. The believer approaches each day confident that no matter what happens in the course of a day, God will work it out because he has promised that "all things work to the good" of those who are trying act according to his purpose. We assume the attitude of the song writer who said, 'I do not know, how long it twill be, or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me,

I shall get home someday."

NEVER LET STORMS CATCH YOU UNPREPARED: If you live in an area that is subject to instant storms you should be prepared. We shouldn't be like those we see often who hear a storm is coming but wait until the last minute to get storm supplies. We should be ready for the storm.

To weather a storm we need a sufficient supply of faith, stored up before storms, just for such occasions. That's why we worship and hear the word of God regularly because "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

We should prepare for times when the light of hope will go out and have our own little light that will shine in the darkness. Moreover, we should have a known safe place of refuge and we should know how to get there. The word of God says, "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble." A refuge is a safe place. Believers know the way to God and constantly lean and trust him to take them to higher ground. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land, no higher ground I have not found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

WE CAN SOAR ABOVE THE STORM: When storms rage, it sometimes appears that it's everywhere. However, technology now lets us know that a storm may exist over a city or just your side of town and not affect anyone else. Likewise storms don't take up the whole sky. Charles Lindbergh was known for his transatlantic solo flight. At one point in his flight he came upon a sudden storm. He couldn't turn his plane, called the Spirit of St. Louis, to the left or to the right. It seemed that the storm was everywhere, until he did an unusual thing for his time, he took his plane up into the storm and the above it. Above the storm he saw the sunshine. As storms rage in our lives with hurricane force, perhaps we too should soar above the storm so we can see the SON. David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth." When storms come, lift up your eyes so you can see the SON; soar above it riding on the wings of faith.

When Storms Come

Finally, brothers and sisters, when storms come keep your faith in the power of almighty God.

When storms come, they can upset our nerves and shake our confidence.
When storms come, they can weaken our strength and try our patience.
But when storms come, they can never destroy our faith in the power of God.

That's what Kirk Franklin had in mind when he wrote these words,
"Because of faith I have a brand new day. The sun will shine and I will be Okay.
That's when I told the storm to pass. Storm you can't last, you got to go away!"

That might be a good idea, to talk to your storm; because when you talk to the storm in your life you are actually defying the devil. You are serving notice that you are prepared for the long haul and that while he rages you intend to keep your eyes on the SON.

When Jesus was awakened below deck on the ship being tossed in the sea, he did not shake; in faith he talked to the storm, saying, “Peace be Still.”

Believers, when storms rise we should speak a word of faith to our storms. What we speak should be our testimony of confidence that no matter how the storm rages we know God is able.

Talk to your storm and defy its furious winds!

Storm, you won’t take away my hope, because, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and Righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name.”

Storm, you won’t take away my trust in God because, “I trust in God wherever I may be. On mountain peaks or on the raging sea. Though come what may. From day to day. My heavenly father watches over me.”

Talk to the storm!

Tell your storm, “I know a savior, his name is Jesus”

Tell your storm you will not be defeated by hopelessness and fear.

Tell your storm that ‘I know a man who can speak to the winds’ and they will obey his will.

His name is Jesus!

They nailed him to an old rugged cross.

He died on Calvary..

But early Sunday morning…

No. 9273-Communion

A Green Olive Tree In the House of God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 19, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." Psalm 52:8***

Introduction

What is the state of your spiritual life, right now? Are you happy with the quality of your life in Christ? Most of us are not totally happy with our spiritual lives because we are constantly fighting against time and circumstances that seem to eat away at the small amount of time we have available to be alone with God. Our spiritual lives should be a contrast to the world around us, not a reflection of the hustle, bustle and business of a multi-dimensional, multi-tasking age. Our spiritual lives are important, especially to the Christian because the spiritual contact we have with God is the very essence of what we are about.

The Bible often compares those who are strong in the Lord to trees. Psalm 1:3 says, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Repeatedly, God makes the comparison of the believer to trees. The trees he selects to make the comparison are not random selections. Each is chosen because it has certain characteristics that are unique to the believer's life.

There are many trees God could use to compare us to but they somehow fall short.

He could compare us to Maple trees because there are times when many of us act like saps.

Our hard heads makes it easy to compare us to coconuts.

There are days when could call us pecan trees because we act like nuts; or banana trees because we often act like monkeys and lose track of our manners.

It's a good thing he didn't compare us to any of these.

When we think of fig trees we think of lives cursed like the tree that bore no fruit. When we think of gopher wood, we think of the tree used to build Noah's ark. When we think of Palm trees we think of Christ's grand entry into Jerusalem; and when we think of the Dogwood tree we think of Christ's crucifixion on the cross.

When it comes to spirituality, the tree most often associated with God's spirit is the olive tree. King Solomon considered olive trees a great source of national wealth. In payment for his service Solomon gave Hiram, over 140,000 gallons of olive oil in payment. In Matthew 25:1 it was olive oil that the 10 virgins needed in the lamps, because it was burned for light. Olive oil was used for baths, too. That's what Naomi told Ruth in (Ruth 3:3) about taking a bath an anointing herself before seeing Boaz. Prophets were anointed with oil when they began their ministries and priests were anointed with oil before they began their duties. In the New Testament the sick were often anointed with oil as in James 5:14 as a symbol of healing presence of God.

The olive tree is therefore closely connected to anointing and the spiritual presence of God in scripture.

When the word says, "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God:" it is pointing to the nature of the spirituality of the believer."

When we think of our spirituality we have this shining example before us that the spiritually strong are like a green olive tree in the house of God.

As Christians, our desire is to become spiritually strong. We want the anointing of the Holy Ghost upon our lives. We want his presence and his power for our lives every day.

Exposition

This text finds David contrasting the life of the righteous with that of the unrighteous.

David had been plagued by an evil Edomite by the name of Doeg. In the first six verses of this passage David details the nature of Doeg, an unrighteous man. He deviseth mischief, works deceitfully, loves evil more than good, lying more than righteousness, and loves to devour others with a deceitful tongue. He predicts the downfall of the evil one by noting that God would destroy him and root him out.

By describing the nature of Doeg, in this text, David also describes the nature of the ungodly, unholy and spiritless person in any generation. The man void of spirituality is not guided by the spirit of God and works deceitfully and sinfully in the world. He will ultimately be cast down.

In Psalm 37:35 David described the wicked as a green "bay tree." Green bay trees, grow big and green in rich soil, but they ultimately yield no fruit and are cut down. In Psalm 1:4 David says, "The ungodly are not so, but are light the chaff which the wind driveth away."

At verse 8 David them speaks of himself as a symbol of the righteous man. He characterizes himself as green olive in the house of God.

Because the believer strives for the anointing of God on his life and the presence of his spirit daily, he will flourish. David said he would praise the name of God forever, because of what he had done in his life. The unrighteous man who lives without God's spirit is destined for doom. The man led by the spirit of God will survive and flourish, like a green olive in the House of God.

Like Olives

David made some comparisons to the spiritual nature of believers when he said, 'I am like a green olive tree in the house of God." A Closer look at this phrase is where we find ourselves in this text.

NOT JUST OLIVES BUT GREEN OLIVES. David did not say he was an olive tree in the house of God but he was a specific kind; a green olive. Green olives and black olives both come from the same tree. The difference is that green olives are picked and preserved before they ripened and black olives are preserved after they ripen. Green olives are slightly tart and will add a flavor to bland foods. Black olives just blend in without making much difference. Believers who are strong in their faith are like green olives in that the strength of their testimony and spirituality strengthens others who are not so strong.

Believers who have a strong faith and sense of God's presence are those who come from spiritual rootstock whle those around them but have chosen another path. Rather than be a mighty oak in the forest of the devil they have chosen to be a "green olive in the house of God."

GREEN OLIVES GO THROUGH SOMETHING: Olive trees take beatings. In ancient times, the green olive was preferred. Because it was green it did not fall to the ground like the black, ripe olive. The tree was beaten with sticks repeatedly until the green olives fell. Then they were placed in a brine and pickled. After pickling them for several months, then they were ready for use.

Green olive trees go through something. Many of us have grown stronger in our faith today, because we have been through something. We've been beaten by the sticks and stones of life. We've been whipped by circumstance and kicked by catastrophe. We've been tried in the fires of life and dipped in the salty waters of disappointment and failure. We understand what David meant, because "we've been through something."

Yet we hear the words of the song writer say, "I've been through the storm and the rain, but I made it." We made it through the ups and downs and bitter tears; we made it through!

OLIVE TREES ENDURE DROUGHTS WELL. Olive trees endure droughts because their roots are deep. Strangely enough olive trees grow best in hot, calcareous regions. They can even grow on top of dry clay. It doesn't matter much because their roots run deep. When their roots run deep they find the underground water supply that keeps them flourishing although all the earth around them is dry and parched. They grow on the sides of mountains, hills and stony areas. In America, some parts of California have olives because have enough heat and calcareous soil.

When it gets hot, olive trees are cool. When droughts dry out everything above ground, olive trees reach underground. If we are like green olive trees, we too have roots that sink below eye level. We have a powerful, rooted faith, that helps us to survive and thrive even when the ground around us is parched, dry and baron. Paul Jones must have been thinking about the green olive when he wrote. "I've had my

good days and I'd have some hills to climb. I've had some weary days and some sleepless nights, but when I look around and think things over; all of my good days, outweigh my bad days. I won't complain."

The Mt. Of Olives

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is something else we should think of when we think of the Olive Tree, and that is the Mt. of Olives.

The Mt. of Olives was not just one tree; it was a mountainside full of olive trees.

The Mt. of Olives was a 2 1/2 mile mountain ridge that was covered with hundreds of green olive trees.

The Mt. of Olives rose 200 feet above the city of Jerusalem.

David crossed the Mt. of Olives when he ran away from Absalom

Ezekiel saw a fiery chariot coming down from heaven and landing in the Mt. of Olives.

Zechariah saw a vision of the coming day of the Lord, from the vantage point of the Mt. of Olives.

In a remote corner of the Mt. of Olives, was a place in which caretakers would take the fermented olives and pour them in a vat. Sometimes, large stones would be placed upon them and the oil would be pressed from the olives.

At other times there were some who took off their shoes and stomped the olives until the oil came out.

The Hebrews called this place, "Gethsemane" because it was placed where they came to press out the oil.

Somebody here today has had your own "Gethsemane" because you have had to press out the oil.

Gethsemane is the place where weary knees bow in prayer before an all powerful God to press out the oil.

Gethsemane is the place where tear filled eyes lift up to the hills from whence cometh their help as they press out the oil.

Gethsemane is the place where weary hands are lifted up to God declaring, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!

Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives and told his disciples to go into Jerusalem and prepare for the Passover.

As they supped, he took the cup and blessed saying, "This is my blood, which is shed for you." He took the bread and said, "This is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me."

When he finished the meal he went out to the Garden of Gethsemane, because it was time to press out the oil.

Can't you hear that conversation?

Father, I've done all that you assigned me to do.

Father, I've made lame walk and the blind can now see!

Father, I've made disciples and commissioned them to go throughout the earth!

I just have one request. If it's possible, let this cup pass from me, but never-the-less, not my will, but thy will be done!

He prayed so hard that his sweat was like blood, he was pressing out the oil!

They led him before three tribunals, he was still pressing out the oil!

They whipped him all night long! He was still pressing out the oil!

They nailed him to an old rugged cross, he was still pressing out the oil!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power!

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 9274-Faith

Pleasing Him For Whom We Serve

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6***

Introduction

Are there Saints that you know who have pleased God through their service in the church? There have been men and women throughout the ages who have committed themselves to living faithful lives that would please God. Living a life of faith is not gender exclusive. Men can lead lives of faith and women can do the same. The great commission that God gave to all believers in Matthew 28 is that we all should go into all the world and teach, reach and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We please him when faithfully carry out the mission of reaching the lost for Christ.

As every saint reflects upon life, one of the most satisfying feelings experienced is to know that the time, talent and resources that have been poured into what we believe is an honorable service, is truly acceptable and pleasing to him that called us into his service. Nothing could be worse than to live our entire lives, only to learn that we were driving the right way, but on the wrong street.

What pleases God is to see believers live by faith and trust. When God's sees men and women who have put their hand to gospel plough and refuse to look back, he is pleased.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we faithfully serve our God by giving him the best of our service. God is pleased when we walk by faith, live by faith and serve by faith each and every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of faith for any believer.

New Testament believers are reminded that faith is essential to the Christian life. It's very nature is the unseen. It is the belief with sufficient physical evidence to confirm.

Much of what believers know about God has been through our past experience. Based upon our past experience combined with what we read in the word we make a projection about the future. That projection is what is called faith. It is a hope rooted in the nature of God and our past experience with him. Without faith we cannot please God because we must accept that he is God and come to him first.

Matthew Henry says, we must believe that God is, and that he is what he is, what he has revealed himself to be in the scripture, a being of infinite perfections, subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Observe, the practical belief of the existence of God, as revealed in the word, would be a powerful awe-band upon our souls, a bridle of restraint to keep us from sin, and a spur of constraint to put us upon all manner of gospel obedience.

We cannot please a God we don't know. To know him fully, we must try him for ourselves.

Marks of the Faithful

THOSE WHO SERVE GOD MUST SERVE IN FAITH. The telltale mark of every believer is the motivation for his/her service to God.

Consider the ancient king who wanted more women enlisted into his army of house servants. He sent out word that a contest would be held to determine those best fit to serve in the king's elite group of servants. Fifty women answered the appeal. Most considered serving in the king's service as a chance to advance themselves. The king's servants had fine living quarters, daily food supplies, money in their pockets and glory. They trained themselves for what they thought would be the test of their worthiness. When they entered the courtyard, the king brought all fifty of them into his kitchens and complained about the dullness of his silver goblets, plates, knives and forks. Suddenly, the king turned and asked his 50 competitors if they would help shine his silverware. All 50 agreed. As the day wore on the women began to grumble. "We came to train for the royal service, not to be silver polishers."

At the end of the day they were ushered out of the palace gate, but only 49 women left. The next morning they returned and the guard noticed that one was missing. The guard soon found the 50th competitor all soiled and fatigued. He had spent the entire night shining all of the king's silverware. The King announced that only one of the 50 competitor's was worthy to be in the royal service. He kept the 50th competitor. Answering the questions of the 49 he said, "Your test was not in your ability to impress me with your manners or dress, but in your commitment to the king. The 50th competitor had one thing none of you possessed. She was willing to faithfully please the king!

Those who serve in faith are those who please God.

POOR SERVICE DOES NOT PLEASE GOD: Service that is poorly rendered does not please God. Consider the brother who flew on a plane for the first amid all of the talk of late arrivals, he was a bit nervous. He dashed in at the last minute, found a set and at exactly 3 p.m. in the evening the plane landed. Leaving

the plane the brother was smiling. He never understood why the others on the plane had such bad attitudes. He first congratulated the flight attendant and then shook the pilot's hand.

"I want you to know captain, that I don't quite understand why the others are grumbling. I think it's great that this plane was schedule to arrive at 3 p.m. and at 3 p.m sharp it landed, as promised. I hear so much bad news about planes and people grumble so much that I just had to compliment you for getting us here at 3 p.m. on the money. In fact, I'm going to call your home office and let them know how pleased I am.

The others should be pleased too.

The pilot was about to accept the compliment but a man behind the brother said, "What you don't know is that this plane was scheduled to arrive at 3 p.m. yesterday. It's a day late and whole lot of people are not pleased."

The difference between the life work of a nonbeliever and that of a saint is that the nonbeliever serves for personal glory, profit and fame while the saint does his service without thought of personal gain. He does it to please the King!

THROUGH FAITH WE MAKE THE JOURNEY: We who are trying to please God sometimes stumble. We are only able to make the journey because of our faith. Sometimes Christians forget the power of their faith.

When faith seems to falter, we need to remind ourselves that although it looks dark and defeat appears imminent God is still on the throne. Every child of God believes in miraculous God. We constantly remind ourselves that no matter how frustrating the situation might seem it never reaches a point of complication beyond the miraculous power of God.

The songwriter said "God is still on the throne, within you bosom you have the phone" Your miracle is just a prayer away, God is on the line.
Another songwriter said "Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want, if you sick and you want to get well, tell him what you want."

THROUGH FAITH WE NEVER GIVE UP: In effort to please God there are many who have made great personal sacrifices as they have worked to build the church. They worked in faith but never gave up. If we listen closely we can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but still they proclaim –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but still they proclaim, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans; others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now." We all say, "I've come too far to turn around."

THE BIGGER THE GOAL THE STRONGER THE FAITH: Those who

acting on great visions that God has given them, must be reminded that the bigger your goal the stronger the faith that is needed to achieve the goal. It's what every Boy Scout knows. If you put up a big tent you need be stakes to hold it down. The bigger tent, the bigger the stakes.

If you have a big dream you can't keep it in place with a small peg of faith. Big faith is fed by regular worship and praise. To feed that faith our worship and bible study habits must change.

Big dreams require big faith experiences but we can stake out our dreams if our level of bible knowledge does not grow to fit our dream.

How do we build faith? First by hearing the word of God regularly. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Secondly, we study more. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth."

Thirdly, we should pray more. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Strengthening your stakes may require changing something. To keep the strong place God has in your life alive and secure, we may need to change something this year! We may need to change a few things to make it happen the way he wants. One thing is for certain: A service that pleases God requires a strong faith.

God will provide what we need

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when God sees our faith and sees our sacrifice, he will provide our needs.

That's what faith is all about; knowing that God will make a way.

Faith reminds us that whatever we need, God will supply.

When we go to God with medical needs, he says, we call him JEHOVAH-RAPHA because that means 'I am the Lord that healeth thee'.

When we go to God for peace amidst terrible storms, we call him JEHOVAH-SHALOM because that means that God is our peace. In this troubled world we must experience God as our peace.

When we go to God for victory over adversity, we call him JEHOVAH-NISSI because that means the Lord is our banner of victory. He is the lord of hosts and commands the vast heavenly army. He will fight the battle for us and give us the victory.

When we want our needs met, we call him JEHOVAH-JIREH because he both sees our needs and provides.

No matter how tough times get, faith reminds us that God is still God. He is still our God whose:

-Power never weakens; -Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; -Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes; -Joy never ends

-Foundation never shakes; -Truth never changes

-Supply never shrinks; -Blessings never stop coming!

We walk by faith, we step out each day, confident that God sees what we are going through and he will make a way. That's why the song writer wrote, "We are our heavenly father's children, and he knows just how much we can bear!

God sees our tears in the midnight hour!

God sees our concern for our families and loved ones!

God sees our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

I know he'll make a way because he loves us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

Every day we faithfully work to please him!

Every day we faithfully work to glorify him!

Every day we faithfully work to lift him up!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

By faith, I'm going to work to please him!

I'm going to work until my day is done!

No. 9275-Anniversary Choir

Heavenly Music in the Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19-20***

Introduction

Have you ever listened closely to the music in the church? When we hear a popular worship selection today, if the first thought that comes to mind is "that sounds like" a secular song we have heard, then that music will do little to usher believers into the presence of God. It will cause the worshipper to stand in the sanctuary in what appears to be godly praise but imitate the actions of those in the secular world.

If we listen with a secular ear we may hear the sounds of popular music transposed for use in a spiritual setting. Our secular ear may hear the chords of the organist that remind us of Lionel Hampton, the syncopated beat of the drums that reminds us of Max Roach, and the twang of the guitar that reminds us of B.B. King's "Lucille." In some cases, if we listen with our secular ear we can feel the pulsating rhythm of Kirk Franklin but we think of James Brown.

In that context, instead of worship, the music creates a false middle zone for the believer, allowing us to have a piece of the world and praise God at the same time.

Music in the church is extremely important because it draws the line of separation from the spiritual and secular. It is representative of our culture but at the same time it is definitely not of the world. Its purpose is to praise God.

With or without accompaniment, Christ based music, gives believers a chance to praise God and to testify about his mighty works.

The best church music is not the music that sounds best to the ear, but the music that gives a testimony of our experience.

Consider the case of Sad Sally who came to church frequently but rarely moved her lips whenever the congregation sang. She sat politely and stared at the choir and other members, but never sang a word herself. She continued this practice for many years and it disturbed some members who entertained bad thoughts about her because she would never sing. One Sunday however, the entire church was pleasantly surprised when they saw Sad Sally singing. Her face lit up and she was

beaming with enthusiasm. After the service several members surrounded her and asked why she seemed so jubilant. Sally told her friends that she had been fishing the day before and was caught out in the middle of lake when a storm suddenly came up from nowhere.

It blew the waters and top sized her little boat. She prayed to God for mercy because she knew she was seeing her last day. Just as quick as the storm started it stopped and soon she could see the sun again. When she was plucked from the water and brought to shore she thanked the Lord.

"This morning I just had to sing along when I heard the choir say, 'When the Storms of life are raging..Stand by me.' I've heard it many times but somehow I understood it when we sang 'I was sinking deep in sin far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within sinking to rise no, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

"I almost shouted when I heard the words "Love Lifted me!"

When you saw me grinning, it was because the choir was singing "There's a bright side somewhere.

My lips couldn't be still when I heard the choir say "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Because I was lost but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

At that point the church members knew why Sally was singing so much in the service; she had found something to sing about.

So it is with the music of the church. It should reflect our experiences, yet always lift Christ and glorify his name.

As Christians, we celebrate God's goodness without music and songs. As African-American Christians, we have much to sing about; thus we lift him up high in every way we can, leaving the world behind us, and keeping the Cross of Calvary in front of us.

Exposition

Paul, writing to the Ephesians encouraged them to praise the Lord continuously by being filled with the spirit and singing his praises. He urged them to sing one of three kinds of songs when moved by the spirit of God: Psalms, Hymns and Spirituals. These were offered to Christians as alternatives to the drunkenness and lewdness offered by the world. In them, Paul notes Christians who walk circumspectly in the world "redeem" their time and use it wisely to witness for Christ, which includes the songs they sing.

Paul encouraged the Ephesians to demonstrate their joy and gladness in music and song, designed to both praise God and encourage each other. More so, Paul encouraged believers to use their music, singing and psalms to give thanks to God for everything; his acts of kindness, his mercy and for affording us hope in times of hopelessness.

The first of the three kinds of songs Paul mentioned are Psalms. These are great collections of poems, mostly written by David, that express gratitude and thanks to

God for his mercy and goodness. When the early church sang Psalms the reference was to the 150 selections that were taught in the synagogues. These included: “The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want” of Psalm 23 and “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” of Psalm 46. These songs, in modern times, are called anthems and sing to God and praise him for his goodness, greatness and graciousness to mankind.

Paul also noted the Hymns. These are expressions of faith in the cause of Christ whose ultimate purpose is to inspire us to continue in the Christian struggle. They often speak of 0ur trial, suffering and triumph as well as our continued faith that his victory will lead us to a better and brighter day in the kingdom of God.

Thirdly, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to sing spirituals. These are songs that express the mood of our soul and spirit in hard times, frustration, failure, and death. They tell how we feel at the moment, but also express our faith that despite the frustrations of the hour, hope still lingers on the horizon.

Paul encourages every Christian to make melodies in their hearts that give praise to God, and express our faith. Even in our darkest hour, he suggests that we should give “thanks always for all things unto God.”

Hymns are for God

Studies of the style and manner of ancient Jewish worship note that much of biblical worship involved praise of God, worship of God and sacrifices to God. The overwhelming majority of the music used in worship was for God’s hearing. Solomon built a billion dollar temple for God that had no pews, because it was for God. There were families of Levites who sang continually in the Tabernacle, but there was usually no one present to hear them, because they were singing “to God” and for his hearing alone.

In comparison, today, much of the music in the church is “for the audience” and little is to God.

Paul urged believers to sing hymns, but many churches today no longer sing hymns. In fact there is a concerted effort to completely remove hymns from the worship in Black churches, substituting them with praise songs. Despite the popularity of many new trends the word of God is unchanged; we are encouraged to include hymns as we as sing songs of praise and encouragement.

The late Dr. C.V. Rodgers, a noted church musician and pastor once said, “For the definition of a hymn, we would have to allude to Saint Augustine who stated, “it is the praise of God by singing; included in this statement would be praise, and devotion to God, and if both are not present, then there is no hymn.”

The hymn as we know it and sing it today could be defined as a song of adoration and praise to God.

In the church of the first century, the term “hymn” was applied to all songs in praise of the Lord.

A happy person will sing. One of the best ways of praising the Lord is through song. Singing is not only praise, worship and prayer; it is also dedication and

determination to serve the Lord. Singing praises change the whole attitude of man. You cannot sing and complain at the same time. Singing will not only help you have victory over sin, Satan, and self, it will also help you keep the victory.

If music is the universal language, hymns of confession, of praise, of petition, of hope, of comfort, of adoration and hymns of consecration could easily become the medium through which rejoicing Christians can join one great chorus expressing their deepest feelings. With these thoughts uttermost in our minds, let us make maximum use of the great hymns of our Church and make them an integral part of our worship service.

Music should reflect biblical truths

Church music should always represent biblical truths. Not every song that sings about Jesus or God reflects what the bible teaches. In 1973 the Angelic Gospel Singers produced a hit Gospel selection entitled, "Jesus will never say no." The song said whenever we ask Christ for something and believe he will never say no. In 1996, The Williams Brothers updated it, noting that believers can call him in the morning or evening and he will never say no. The Same song was again revisited by the Florida Mass Choir using the same thing. For over three decades of believers have been told in song that that if they pray and believe that whatever they ask for can be received.

In reality the bible teaches that we must abide in Christ and his words abide in us. Our abiding is of such that we tag all of our prayers with "thy will be done." That being the case, there are many times when we ask, but we get the answer, "no" or "wait a while."

Believers should not sing a composition that is not in keeping with the teachings of our faith regardless of its beauty, sweetness or piety. We should ask, what Christian truth does it express? Is it in keeping with my religious beliefs? Does it set forth truth supported by the scriptures or is it just pretty and sound good? What action or commitment does it demand of me or is it just "jazzy"? Do the words challenge me to some higher or clearer plane of Christian growth? If we can answer "yes" to these questions, we are headed in the right direction.

Music from our experience

It is difficult to sing songs about the Christian faith with enthusiasm, unless our lives are in tune with the Lord. The words come out but don't have meaning. A sound comes out of our mouth but without power and witness. This text suggests several measures Christian believers should take to stay in tune with God and give meaning to the melodies their lives sing.

SINGING IS TO BE FROM THE HEART: If a church choir held an audition, it wouldn't be the criterion? The criterion should be whether or not a person is a great singer, for most church choir singers are not, but they are individuals who have a heart for the songs they sing. Verse 19b "singing and making melody with your heart

to the Lord." Many think of the church choir as a show place to make a name for themselves. They do just the opposite of verse 19, instead of "singing and making melody with your heart" they "sing and make melody with their mouths. The phrase "with your heart" signifies that you mean what you sing and you feel it!

SINGING IS TO BE TO EACH OTHER: In the shower, a believer sings to himself and for himself. Those who sing in public should sing to each other. They should look at the people they are singing to and reach out to them. Look at Verse 19 again, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." We can't obey this teaching in solitude. God calls us to speak in song to one another. To sing to each other we should get together and sing as a congregation and as small groups. We should sing in each other's hearing and want to be heard by each other. The second implication is that it is justifiable to sing songs that are not directed toward God but toward each other for the purpose of testimony, edification, and exhortation.

SINGING IS TO BE "TO THE LORD." Singing to the Lord implies that songs should be God centered or Christ centered. This means that what we sing should reflect our nature that our lives are God centered. Everything we do and say is centered on our beliefs about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Our songs are a reflection of that belief. What we choose to sing should be worthy of presentation to the master. Because what we sing will be presented to the Lord, those who sing should feel compelled to rehearse such that they always present God their best. Without proper rehearsal and preparation, then what is presented "to the Lord" is less than the best and is a negative rather than a positive reflection on the singers. No singer should be happy with themselves if they sing with the choir but fail to block out time to adequately prepare. Singing to the Lord is serious business. It comes from roots that are deep in faith and impact the spiritual growth of the church.

Music should glorify God

Finally, brothers and sisters, the music of the church should glorify God and not ourselves.

There are many who sing, but their reason for singing is to "make a name" for themselves.

There are many who play instruments but their reasons for playing the music is to get into the sound and to earn a reputation for themselves.

Yet, when we praise God with music we should remember the words of Psalm 150:

"Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

I don't know about you, but I've found out that you may not have the best voice

in the world but when you are praising God from the heart and God gets in your song, it always comes out right!

When you know the Lord, you can sing his song!

When you know the Lord, you can lift him up in praise!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "I've tried the man and the man's alright!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "I don't feel no ways tired, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!

When God gives us a song to sing, we need to be sure we sing it in the right key.

There are seven notes in a musical scale and seven days in a week. How each week goes depends on the key we select at the beginning of the week. If we begin the week in the Key of F we will have at least one sharp along the way. If we begin with the key of B Flat we will have at least two flats.

But there is one Key that every believer should know. It's the key of C, the same letter that begins the word Christian. In the key of C there are no flats or sharps. Not because every day is going to be perfect, but because no matter what comes our way, we "count it all joy!"

If sickness comes my way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

If heartache comes my way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

If disappointment comes my way, if I begin my week in the key of Christ, I count it all joy!

I don't know about you, but I'm going to keep my eye on Jesus

If I follow Jesus, he will direct my paths!

Follow Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Follow Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

Follow Jesus, take no chance of getting lost!

No.9276-Funeral

When the Bridegroom Comes Again

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast. Matthew 9:15;"Then I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth, for the first Heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband." Rev. 21:1-2***

Introduction

Wedding ceremonies are exciting experiences, but suppose the promise is made but the groom is swept away by fate before the ceremony? Those who are left behind are frustrated, and distraught because of so many lost expectations, hopes and dreams. It is easy to be dismayed at the sheer irony of such a situation.

Believe it or not every believer has experienced this case. How? As believers we are the bride of Bride of Christ. Christ is the bridegroom. He courted the church for several years but was abruptly taken away, leaving his bride saddened, but not without hope, because he promised to return again and one day complete the ceremony.

Christ is called the bridegroom in scripture many times. In Matthew 9 and 25 he is called the bridegroom six times. John the Baptist referred to him as the bridegroom in John 3:28-36. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the church is referred to as a virgin or a woman who is engaged to one man who is Christ the bridegroom.

If the groom is gone and the bride is left alone, what should those in the wedding party do? How should those who are left behind feel? What consolation do we have? Perhaps we could follow the example of a young woman named Anne Steele. Miss Steele encountered one trial and disappointment after another. Being a devout Christian, she continuously sought to praise God—even in sorrow. She was engaged to be married, and had looked forward to her wedding day with eagerness. The big day finally arrived and so did the guests—but the groom was missing. After about an hour of waiting, a messenger brought the tragic news that Anne's fiancé had drowned. The sudden shock was almost too much for her, but after a while she

regained her spiritual composure.

Later Anne Steele penned the song that is still found in many hymnbooks:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart
From ev'ry murmur free;
The blessing of Thy grace impart,
And make me live to Thee.

That's what those who are left behind should do, give God thanks for the moments of grace that have been shared: for friendship, children, and a life lived with expectation and love.

That's also what the church is doing. We are thanking God every day and walking with him in our spirit. The song writer said, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses And the voice I hear, falling on my ear The Son of God discloses And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own; and the joy we share as we tarry there None other has ever known."

As Christians, we are always saddened when we think of the bridegroom, Christ, leaving us. The pain of the loss of the savior in the flesh is overcome only when we remember that he is coming back again to complete the ceremony and to take his bride at last.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he explains the nature of his disciples to himself; they as the groomsmen and himself as the bridegroom.

The followers of John were critical of the disciples because unlike other followers of John they did not participate in regular fasts. They pointed to the fact that they and the Pharisees fasted often to demonstrate their piety but the disciples did not.

Christ seized the opportunity to teach a lesson about the relationship between himself, and his followers who would be known as the church. He explained that his disciples were the "children of the bride chamber" or the groomsmen at a marriage. They were celebrating because the bridegroom, Christ himself, was with them. However, soon the bridegroom would be abruptly taken from them, and then they would fast and pray.

Here he paints the picture of himself as the bridegroom.

John in Revelation 21:1-2 was shown the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. The city and its inhabitants are referred to as the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ refers to both a place and a populace. The City is the New Jerusalem. The populace is the large congregation of believers from all times that will live with Christ under the new "covenant" marriage throughout eternity.

Together, these passages present Christ as a bridegroom who will be taken away before the ceremony, but not before engaging himself to the church.

Unlike today, in biblical times, a woman was officially the bride once an engagement was announced. There was no union of course, but for all religious and legal purposes they were husband and wife. The groomsmen or "children of the chamber" had the job of traveling to the home of the bride to bring her to the ceremony. The wedding feast itself would last for 7 days, but the bride was considered married a month before the actual ceremony. The month before the ceremony was called the "days of the marriage" (Manners and Customs of Bible Lands).

Christ said his disciples will fast and mourn for a while when he left before the ceremony, but he constantly reminded them that he would not leave them comfortless, but he would send the Holy Spirit to comfort them. He also reminded them that he would return again to complete the ceremony.

Christ makes it clear that he is not a runaway groom who leaves his bride standing at the altar never to return. He is coming back again. In the New Testament, there are 318 references to Christ's second coming. That averages one out of every 30 verses. Furthermore, 23 of the 27 New Testament books refer to his return.

That's what John saw in the Revelation, the bride coming to the ceremony. He saw the church and all believers like a bride finally coming forth to complete the marriage ceremony with the Lamb of God.

What Should we do?

What should a bride do if the bridegroom is suddenly taken away? What about others who would have been in the bridal party, the family and friends? They all should respond the same way the church is responding to the absence of Christ.

GIVE THANKS: The church, in the absence of the bridegroom, lives with an attitude of thanks. We thank God for all blessings that he has given us and continually praise him for his wonderful works. The same should be true for those who have had a loved one seemingly snatched from before them by providence. We give God thanks for the pleasant memories, and the warm words of faith, and hope that have been shared. The children give God thanks for having known a father. The parents give thanks for having had such a wonderful son. The bride gives thanks for promises made and for a lingering love that will last forever. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Even in death, we should give thanks.

SERVE IN FAITH: The church, in the absence of the bridegroom, serves in faith. Jesus commanded his disciples, in his absence to love their neighbors and to show that love through their words and deeds. The same charge is given to those who mourn today. In the absence of the bridegroom of this family, show love to each other and to others. Plunge yourselves into the welfare of the surviving family members, the nurture of children in the family, the care of the aged and promotion of loving acts and deeds. Those who expected to be in the bridal party should not be idle they should spend each day in service to God through their relationships with others. This we should do humbly and consistently all of our days.

NEVER LOSE HOPE: In the days immediately following the death of Christ the church was reminded by Peter and the other disciples, not to lose hope, but to keep the faith. Even when Jesus rose to heaven on a cloud, an angel stirred their hope when he said in Acts 1:11, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Today, the bridal party, friends, family and the bride should not give up hope. God is still on the throne. He has not run away. He has not abandoned us. He still loves us and will provide for us every day of our lives. That's why the song writer said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

When the bridegroom comes

Finally, brothers and sisters, the joy of the church is the same joy of a believer; one of these old days, the bridegroom is coming back again.

We don't know the day or the hour but when it comes, the music of Heaven will play and the shout will go out.

Matthew 25:1-13 gives the parable of the 10 virgins who had their lamps trimmed waiting for the wedding ceremony. After waiting a long time the shout went out "the bridegroom cometh" but some were not ready.

I don't know about you but I want to be ready when he comes!

The church, the bride of the Christ, needs to be ready when he comes!

The coming of the Bridegroom will begin the day when those who are a part of the Kingdom of God will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

When the Bridegroom comes, there won't be tears in her eye, but there will be joy in her heart, for God shall wipe away all tears!

When the Bridegroom comes, there won't be any fear of sickness or death, for the former things shall be passed away!

When the Bridegroom comes, every saint will have a new song to sing!

When the Bridegroom comes it will be too:

TREMENDOUS to talk about; too THRILLING to think about!

DELIGHTFUL to dream about; too SATISFYING to sing about!

PRACTICAL to preach about; GLORIFYING to gloat about

I don't know about you but I want to be in that number when the bridegroom comes!

I want to see Him; See Him face to face!

I want to tell him about my journey, trying to run this race!

His name is Jesus, the Bridegroom of the church!

Jesus, the lover of my soul!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose from the dead!

I want to be there when the Bridegroom comes!

No. 9277-Inspiration

They That Wait On The Lord

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 16, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)***

Introduction

How much time to do you spend every day waiting? Most of us detest waiting. It seems that we spend most of our lives waiting on something. We wait for the coffee to brew. We wait for water to boil, popcorn to pop, and for all the commercials to pass before we can watch our rented DVD.We wait for the train to pass. We wait for our tax refund check. We wait in lines at stores. We go out to eat and wait in more lines. Before we come home we wait in a traffic jam.

If we call someone on the phone we wait. If we get them on the phone we while they put us on hold because they have call waiting.

We wait in line the doctor's office, the first day of school and at the health clinic.

We finally get enough money for cablevision then have to wait a week to get it installed.

We can't wait for our children to be born, and then spend the next 18 years waiting for them to leave.

Most of us don't like waiting, we have very little patience. Most of us have as much patience as the truck driver who dropped in at an all-night restaurant. The waitress had just served him when three gangsta types came in riding pimped out motorcyclists. The gangstas seemed as if they were spoiling for a fight. One grabbed the hamburger off his plate; another took a handful of his French fries; and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it. The trucker did not respond as one might expected. He waited patiently for them to stop. Then, he calmly rose, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door. The waitress followed him to put the money in the till and stood watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night. When she returned, one of the cyclists said to her, "He ain't much of a real man is he?" She replied, "He ain't much of a truck driver either, he just ran over three motorcycles out in the parking lot."

Sometimes we all run out of patience.

But suppose we are waiting on God? Do we run out of patience? If the world

snatches our burgers, steals our fries and drinks our soda do we run over its cycles? The ability to wait on the Lord is characteristic of the Christian life that is learned over time. We don't become Christians and instantly learn how to be patient, it develops as our faith and trust in God grows.

Our quest in the faith is to learn to wait patiently, knowing that when we do, God will lead us in the right direction.

As Christians, we strive to become more patient by trusting God more and walking each day in faith. When we know God is working on our situation, we can patiently wait until he works it out and shows us what to do.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells the people of Judah to patiently wait for God to move without frustration.

For 40 years, the people of Israel were shifted from one world power to another. They prayed to God and waited for him to respond to their prayer of relief. The city of Jerusalem and its Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. For some forty years, the Judeans had lived as hostages in a strange land; they were discouraged repeatedly in their efforts to liberate themselves and to return to their homeland. Their independence seemed to come slow. The stunning victory of Cyrus over the mighty Babylonian power (538 B.C.) and his decree of liberation for the Jewish exiles were events too joyous to recount. They waited impatiently for the time when they would return home, but everything seemed so slow. The prophets came telling them that God would prepare a way for them but the long highway home that they promised, seemed so far and so improbable. The prophets repeatedly told them that God would give them a divine pardon, comfort them in every major problem area, and promised the restoration of Zion and its Temple.

While the people believed God for their liberation, they were impatient. This prompted the prophet Isaiah to declare that they should not become impatient, but to wait on the power of God to help them take the appropriate steps. For Judah the steps included their liberation by the Persian government and the return home. While waiting on the command to return, they raised money, prepared for the journey and arranged their affairs in such a way that they were instantly ready whenever God gave the command.

It seemed like a slow pace for them, but they waited for God to move and eventually he led them back to the promised at his command.

Six Ways to wait

What does it mean to "Wait on the Lord?" Some confuse waiting on the Lord with foolish idleness. The utility bill is due but the misinformed believer watches television, waiting on the Lord. The car is out of gas but the misinform believer keeps driving, waiting on the Lord. To wait on the Lord does not mean that a person

should sit around and wait for their dreams to fall out of the sky fully developed. To wait on the Lord means to have confidence while working that God will provide the strength persevere and the outcome according to his will.

In 1985 David Maister in a study entitled "Psychology of Waiting Lines" noted that those who approach waiting with positive attitudes usually feel that their waits were not long. Those who approach periods of waiting negative attitudes usually concluded that the same period of time was longer. Our attitude about waiting determines the waiting experience.

There are six truths every believer should consider about waiting:

DO SOMETHING WHILE YOU WAIT: Isaiah encouraged Israel to prepare for action while they waited. In the interim they raised money and made other preparation. As we wait for God to move in our lives we should not spend our days staring at the calendar. There is an old saying, "A watched pot never boils." Do something while you wait. It is true that occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time. If you have applied for a job, don't sit and watch the phone all day. Those who busy themselves in kingdom building activities find that it is easier to wait and the time quickly passes.

ANXIETY MAKES THE WAIT LONGER: If while we wait we begin to doubt our decisions, the wait seems longer. It's like choosing a checkout line at store then worrying if you chose the right line when the other line starts to move and yours stands still. Sarah had an anxiety attack as she waited on the promise of a child. She saw others having children and herself getting older and the wait seemed endless. She decided to change lines and hire a surrogate only to find that she was in the line in the first place. When you choose to place a matter in God's hand, don't waste time worrying about your decision. If you are going to worry, then don't give it to God. If you give it God then don't worry, he will work it out.

UNCERTAINTY MAKES WAITS LONGER: The end of Israel's wait was never assigned a date. Isaiah assured them only that in God's own time he would come. Appointments raise expectations; waits are longer when appointments are not kept. A person will arrive 45 minutes early for a 9 a.m. appointment, but grow impatient if the appointed time is extended or missed. When we know what to expect the wait is shorter. When we don't know, it gets longer. If God gives a time expect it. When he told Israel to prepare to leave Egypt in the morning, they packed and waited and the morning they left. Usually, however he gives no specific time. Even when Christ came to earth the scriptures report that he came "in the fullness of time" or when God was ready.

Believers who place a date and time when they expect God to act frustrate themselves because God does not move by our time. They wait seems longer because we have placed a time limitation on God's action. What we do know is that when the time is right God will move. The saying is, "He may not come when you want him, but he's always on time.

UNFAIR WAITS SEEM LONGER. We don't like people to cut in front of us. When we see others who have not waited as long as we have get blessed our wait seems longer, but is it? Believers sometimes frustrate themselves by watching the

ungodly skip the line and seem to get ahead in life. That frustration makes our godly life seem to move at a snail's pace. What does the word of God say about this? Psalm 37:1 says "Fret not thyself because of Evildoers neither be thou envious of the workers of iniquity." Worry about them, makes your wait seem longer because you perceive that you are being treated unfairly. Just remember God says Psalm 37:25 says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." No matter how life cuts in front of us, remember God won't run out of blessings before we get to check out.

WAITS ARE LONGER WHEN YOU WAIT ALONE: Those who wait have longer waits. The line moves a little faster if there is someone to share the experience. The lines at Disneyland and Six Flags can be long but children are not intimidated by the wait because they usually stand in line with a friend. They spend the time sharing ideas, experiences and chatter as the line edges toward the front. If believers wait on God alone, it seems such a long time. Those who interact with others in the faith in bible studies, classes, ministries and other activities find that before they know it their turn to be blessed has arrived. Hebrews 10:25 says believers should not forsake assembling with other saints to encourage and inspire each other. We help others in their wait; they help us in our wait.

THE MORE WE WANT IT THE LONGER WE WAIT: We are willing to wait longer for what we really want. If we perceive the value of an object to be great, then we will endure wait to achieve it. If we think a college education is essential then we will plunge into the four or eight years needed because we value the outcome. When the last version of Harry Potter was released the lines formed a day before. Apple's Iphone had lines wrapped around buildings. People waited long periods of time because they wanted what was being offered. What does God offer us? He offers us his blessings on our lives. Believers are prepared to wait for him to bless us because they believe his blessing is important enough for the wait. Job said in Job 14:14, "all the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change comes."

Wait on the Lord

Finally, Brothers and Sisters we must consider that those who patiently wait on the Lord, won't be disappointed, because what he's got for us is well worth the wait.

Every believer is going to wait on something in this life. It is not whether we are going to go through a lot of waiting in our lives, but how we are going to wait. Isaiah reminds us that that "they wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The flip side of this is, "Those who wait without the Lord shall wear themselves out!"

Those who wait without shall spend many sleepless nights!

Those who wait without the Lord, shall get old with worry before their time.

Those who wait without the Lord, will expend all of their energy and run out of steam.

The Word of God encourages us to wait patiently on the Lord.

Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness faith." Longsuffering is the ability to wait on the Lord.

Psalm 27:14, says, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Lamentations 3:26 says, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Isaiah said they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

We are able to take the most frustrating moments and turn them into learning situations because we have learned how to wait on the Lord.

When you wait on the Lord, that which was impossible become possible.

When you wait on the Lord, that which was out of range comes a little closer.

Everybody is waiting on something.

What are you waiting for?

The defeated are waiting for the final victory. Jesus has promised that victory. He told John, "He that over cometh shall inherit all things."

The weak are waiting for more strength? The faint in strength are waiting for God's promise to Isaiah that their strength would be renewed.

The discouraged are waiting for encouragement. In his discouragement David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

The confused are waiting for answers! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understandings. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths."

The lonely are waiting for comfort. Jesus said, "And lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the earth."

I don't know about you, but I've decided to wait on the Lord!

Wait on the Lord, and mountains will be made low!

Wait on the Lord, and valleys shall be exalted!

Wait on the Lord, and crooked places shall be made straight!

Wait on the Lord, and rough places shall be made plain!

Hold to his hand, hold to God's unchanging hand!

While you are waiting, keep your faith turned up high and hold to his hand!

While you are waiting, keep watching and praying!

While you are waiting, keep telling the story!

Tell everybody about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!

Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don't stop there..tell them how Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

Wait on the Lord ...and everything will be alright!

No. 9278-Inspiration

Run and Not Get Weary

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 30, 2007

SCRIPTURE:*"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)*

Introduction

Have you ever been weary? No matter how strong we are there are times when we get weary. What is weariness? Weariness is the day you come home from working hard all day, only to find that your family is expecting you to work all night. Weariness is the day you leave your job and find yourself bringing your work home with you because it never seems to end.

Weariness is having your hands full with two children, then learn that there is another one on the way.

Weariness is dealing with your own troubles, those of your spouse and children, then have your best friends to call and share their troubles as well.

Weariness is when we look at our stack of unpaid bills as it gets higher but our income remains the same although we work harder every day.

Weariness is trying to share in a relationship only to feel that despite your best efforts nothing has changed for the better.

We are weary when we start to feel so run down and run over by life's events that we want to run out. That's weary.

Weariness is what we feel when we run the race of life for a lap or two. Those who run track condition themselves to endure the strain of a long race. The smart runners learn to pace themselves, and save themselves for the final sprint. Their know that their conditioning helps them overcome the fatigue and weariness of the marathon; when their legs will feel like concrete blocks and bolts of pain will shoot through their thighs. Only their conditioning and pace allows them to continue at a steady pace, without slowing and faltering.

The story is told of the physically challenged boy who entered the Special Olympics to run a 1/4 mile jog around the track. It was a challenge for young man whose braces made his legs heavy and his handicap slow his pace. As he walked three fourths of the way, he could not seem to put one foot in front of the other. He did not have the strength and almost fell. His father, sensing that if he fell he would lose all hope, ran onto the track and held his son's hand. Holding his father's hand

the boy pushed himself to make every calculated step until he crossed the finish line. The boy was excited he looked up at his father and said, “Can I go again?” The father said, “I thought you were tired?” The boy said, “I may be tired but I can do it as long as you hold my hand!”

Maybe that’s what the Canton Spirituals meant when they wrote the lyrics to the popular song that says, “Lord, hold my hand, while run this. I don’t want to run this race in vain. Guide my feet, Lord, while I run this race. I don’t want to run this race in vain.”

That’s the secret to running life’s race without being weary. We should run it holding to God’s hand and never lose our grip.

A popular song puts it this way:

“Time is filled with swift transition-Naught of earth unmoved can stand-

Build your hopes on things eternal, Hold to God’s unchanging hand.

Trust in Him who will not leave you, whatsoever years may bring, if by earthly friends forsaken, still more closely to Him cling. Hold to God’s unchanging hand! Hold to God’s unchanging hand!

Build your hopes on things eternal, Hold to God’s unchanging hand.”

As believers, we are running the race of life. It is race that we cannot win unless we hold to God’s unchanging hand.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells the people of Judah that God would bring them strength for their journey.

For 40 years, the people of Israel were shifted from one world power to another. They waited impatiently for the time when they would return home, but everything seemed so slow. The prophets came telling them that God would prepare a way for them but the long highway home that God promised, seemed so far and so improbable. The prophets repeatedly told them that God would give them a divine pardon, comfort them in every major problem area, and promised the restoration of Zion and its Temple.

While the people believed God for their liberation, they were fatigued and tired from their long wait. This text encouraged them to remember that would keep them from being overcome by weariness. He would keep his promise; it seemed like a slow pace, but he would move at his time and place

Rest for the Weary

When frustrations begin to pile up on us, it seems that there is no rest for the weary. But there is a way for us to catch our wind while we make our Sprint. The secret is to watch those who run great distances. Unlike the sprinter who needs speed to win his race, the distance runner needs endurance. The great marathons such as the grueling 26 mile Boston marathon or the marathon of cycling, the Tour de

France, all require endurance. Those who are champions of these events have uncanny endurance that separates them from the pact.

CONDITION OURSELVES: Every person who runs a long race conditions himself by running short races that get progressively longer. A person who has not run for years does not hit the track and attempt to run a mile. He feels good about the first hundred yards, then he loses his wind, his pace slows and he breathes hard and sweats profusely. It may have been easier if he had walked first, jog later and after some time tried his run. To run this race we need to be in condition. We condition ourselves for life by engaging in small walks with ease then gradually taking on more. God often trains us. He puts loads on us to bear. When we bear them successfully then he gives us heavier ones. Pretty soon we know that we are in such condition that no matter what life brings we can run the race and not be weary.

RUNNERS TRAVEL LIGHT: Watch runners in marathons. They wear light clothing that will not slow them down or get in the way. A person running a marathon would not come wearing a back pack filled with books, trinkets and toys. The weight would slow him down so badly that he would have no chance of victory. Is that not the problem that many people bring to their life's race? Too many are trying to run their race, but they are carrying too much baggage! Past relationship worries are baggage! Baby Daddy-Baby Mama issues are baggage! The demons of our past that haunt us are baggage! If we are to run this race without getting weary we must lighten our loads! Jesus said, ""Come unto Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) That means we can give him our baggage then run our race. The way it should be run.

PUT ON YOUR RUNNING SHOES: We must not try to run your race wearing the wrong shoes. Those who run the distance wear shoes made for distance runners. These shoes have plenty of support because of the continuous pounding the feet receive. They also have a few spike points to grip but not enough to delay speed. Too many people in life are trying to run their race in the wrong shoes. Some are trying to run wearing Slippers and Slides because they want to slip and slide their way through life. Some wear sneakers because they just want to sneak by. Others wear high heels because they want to look good even if they can't run far. What about the person who wears combat boots and tries to stomp his way through life? All of these shoes won't support us when we are running. We may have to take off our shoes, just as God told Moses, "Take off your shoes for ground upon which you stand is holy Ground." When we plan to run on holy ground we must have feet shod with the Gospel of peace.

CONSTANTLY LOOKS AHEAD: The great trainers tell us that distance runners rarely look back. They are not concerned with position. They remain focused on the future. When you look back it slows you down. Consider the man who sat at the bar drinking one whiskey after another and looking back at the calendar. Soon it became obvious to the bar tender that he was about to hurt himself. The bar tender asked, "What's the matter? Are you having troubles with your wife

again?" The man nodded his head and began to cry. He looked back at the calendar again. The bartender said, "I don't usually get in the business of my customers but your wife should be ashamed of the way she belittles you, talks about you and hits on you in front of other men." The man heard that and looked back over his shoulder again and started crying. "What happened this time?" the bartender asked. "My wife told me she was leaving me for 30 days" the man said as he looked at the calendar again. He cried like a baby. "Well you should be glad" said the bartender, "As mean as your wife is to you, you should praise God for a joyful month of peace. Don't be sad, be joyful!" At that, the man started to cry even more. "What are you crying about?" The man answered, "My wife left me for a month...and today is the last day!" Every time he looked back at the calendar he got weary.

RUNNERS PACE THEMSELVES: Those who run distance races know that their race is different from that of a sprinter who gives his race everything he has in one mad dash for the finish line. The distance runner who tries to sprint through a marathon won't last long. Life is a marathon. It requires stamina, strength, endurance, discipline to live it well. Discipline is the ability to set an even sustainable pace then stick to it. No matter how many people pass you by. No matter how the crowd may urge you to break your stride. No matter how energetic you feel at the moment.. the person who paces himself will endure to the end without becoming weary. There are many who approach life as a sprinter, but sprinters can make the distance run for speed is not a quality needed, but endurance is. God promises believers the ability to run and not be weary..that's endurance.

God won't let go

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that as we run this race, and Jesus runs with us, he will see us through.

It is still possible to get weary, even though we are in condition, run light, wear the right shoes and run at a steady pace. We are able to make it day by day because the moment we get too tired to make another step, the power of God seems to give us our second wind.

Your second wind is that surge of energy and strength you get even when you thought you have given all.

Your second wind is what happened when life kicked you down and somehow you struggled to your feet again.

Your second wind is what happened when you failed in school and went back to try it one more time.

Your second wind is when you failed in an attempt and decided not to accept failure but to give it your best shot.

Your second wind is when you business venture collapsed and decided to start it all over again.

Your second wind is when the floods of life washed your past but you decided not to let it stop you from building a future.

Your second wind is when your children disappointed you so much that you

could not see any future, then you decided to try one more time, urged on by the power of God.

If you are feeling weary hold on, your second wind is coming.
Jeremiah 31:25 says, “I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.”

Hold on, your second wind is coming!

Isaiah 41:10 says, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Hold on, because God says ye shall run and not be weary!

Hold on to God’s hand.

If we hold to God’s hand he will guides us.

He will slow us down if we run to face, he will speed us up if we run to slow; and if we get too high he will bring us down.

When life gets difficult and tiresome, hold to God’s hand.

When God is holding our hands, even if we stumble a little, he still holds on!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to take care of my family, I don’t want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to deal with the raging storms in my life, I don’t want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to make sense of the madness that surrounds me, I don’t want to run this race alone

Lord, take my hand, when I can’t see my way!

Lord, take my hand, when I can’t turn to the right or the left!

Lord, take my hand, when I’m confused and don’t know what to do!

Lord, take my hand, when I’m weak and give me strength!

Lord, take my hand, when I have fallen and help me up again!

When you find yourself running out of hope, call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, a strong hand that will not let you down!

Jesus, a mother to the motherless!

Jesus, a shelter in a time of storm!

Call on Jesus, who reaches out to us with nail scarred hands!

Call on Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

Call on Jesus and he’ll give you your second wind!

No.9279-Revival

Walk and Not Faint

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 7, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)***

Introduction

Have you ever seen those who begin with a blaze but at some point along the way, they throw up their hands and quit? They run out of steam, energy and passion to continue. It's what the bible calls a condition of being "faint."

To be faint is to lose your energy, vigor, inspiration and fire. To be faint is to become weary, frustrated and fatigued. It's when you just don't have it anymore.

The difference between the winners and losers in life is not decided by who can run fastest, or who is the swiftest in the crowd. It is often decided by those who can endure to the end without falling along the way.

This principle applies to marriages, relationships, business endeavors, educational pursuits, political campaigns and any other pursuit in life. Victory is not always guaranteed to the one who can begin with blaze like the grasshopper, but the one who can slowly and methodically pursue a course like the ant.

It takes speed to run in a flash when the starting pistol is fired; but it takes strength for the long pull.

That kind of strength only comes from God.

As Christians, we know what it means to rely on the strength of God. Those who are inspired by the passion and energy of the savior continue to do so, even as the years go by because God's power gives them strength to continue forward, despite the frustration of peril or monotony; to continue forward and not faint.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he tells the people of Judah that God strengthen them if they became weary as he promised them that they would not faint.

For 40 years, the people of Israel were shifted from one world power to another. They waited impatiently for the time when they would return home, but everything seemed so slow. The prophets came telling them that God would prepare a way for them but the long highway home that God promised, seemed so far and so improbable. The prophets repeatedly told them that God would give them a divine

pardon, comfort them in every major problem area, and promised the restoration of Zion and its Temple.

While the people believed God for their liberation, they were fatigued and tired from their long wait. This text encouraged them to remember that would keep them from being overcome by weariness. He would keep his promise; it seemed like a slow pace, but he would move at his time and place

Man Walks Piece-A-Way, God walks all the way

Many years ago when friends came to visit, they did not drive cars, call on the phone or send text messages; they walked to your home. After a friendly visit, especially as the sun began to set, the visitor would prepare to return home. It was customary for the host to share a portion of the return journey with the guest. It was called walking "Piece-a-way." Those who walk piece a way have good intentions, but they don't intend to walk the entire journey, just so far. The visitor has to walk the rest of the journey alone, often along dark dusty, dangerous roads.

In life, we soon learn that though our acquaintances are many, only a few are willing to go "piece-a-way" with us in times of trouble and even fewer are willing to stand with us all the way. That's why we appreciate all that others do for us but we still put our trust in God.

There are times when even our parents forsake us and leave us alone. Those are the lonely times that we can only call on God. Psalm 27:9-10 says, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." The song writer says, "What a friend we have in Jesus." It is a testament to the fact that when all others fail God will be with us and strengthen us. When God walks with us, he does not walk "Piece-A-Way" he walks all the way. In Matthew 28 he said "Lo, I'll be with you always, even until the end of the earth."

Dangers of Walking with strangers

We are very hesitant to walk or ride with strangers; and rightfully so. We have been warned all of our lives not to walk, talk or ride with strangers. That makes good sense, but we can't begin our walk with the child's understanding of strangers. A little girl was told by her mother, never get in the car with strangers. The girl understood the instruction clearly. One day an unfamiliar man drove up to her and offered her a ride home. He smiled and offered her a lollipop. Remembering her mother's instruction the girl said, "My mother says I'm not supposed to ride with strangers, are you a stranger?" The man said no and she took a ride with him and was never seen again. She understood that she was not to ride with strangers, but she didn't know what a stranger was.

In the same sense many today are on guard to stay away from evil, but often we

are not sure what evil looks like. It never comes to us wearing a sign that reads "evil." It usually appears innocent. The child predator on the internet presents himself as a friend, not an evil person. The co-worker who encourages illegal activity, does so smiling and laughing. The music that talks about drugs, murder and sex, has a good beat and exciting, it's not really evil. Psalms 1 reminds believers that there is a blessing for those who do not walk in the counsel of ungodly people. The ungodly are strangers to the godly walk. Their direction is not the godly direction. Those who want with God are in no danger because he is no stranger.

Are you tempted to follow the lifestyles of those who are strangers to Christ. Then consider the epitaph that was written on the tombstone in a British cemetery:

Pause my friend, as you walk by
As you are now, so once was I
As I am now so you will be
Prepare my friend, to follow me.
A visitor added,
To follow you is not my intent
Until I know which way you went!

WALK ON GOD'S SIDE OF THE ROAD

Those who hike a walk along roadside know that there is an important rule: Those who walk must always walk facing the traffic. In America, that's usually the left side of the road. In Europe, it's the right side. We walk facing the traffic so that we can see and be seen by what may be coming up the road and avoid dangers. It's a safety precaution.

Believers who are walking the road of life must be careful to walk on God's side of the road. When we walk on the side of the road where God is he helps us see what is coming up the road. 1 Corinthians 12:10 calls that this ability to see what can't be seen as "discerning spirits." That comes from walking on God's side of the road.

There are some things we can see, but there are times when there is something coming on the other side of the hill that only God can see and he pushes us aside just in time to avoid a catastrophe. Our responsibility as believers is to walk with God. Genesis 5:22 notes that Enoch walked with God. If we walk with God he will walk with us and direct us. We walk with God by spending time in the Word of God; A consistent prayer life; A time of frequent praise; and regular witnessing, and living holy lives. When we walk with God we enjoy the song that says,

And He walks with me, and He talks with me;
And He tells me I am His Own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

WALK AT THE SAME SPEED GOD WALKS

Occasionally, we walk with someone who does not walk at our speed. They are either too fast for us or not fast enough. Either way it irritates us. God walks with each us of at the speed necessary for our stage of life. He does not walk with everyone at the same speed, but everyone who wants to walk with him must walk at his speed, because he sets our pace. God knows us better than we know ourselves, he sets the pace for our life walk. Many of us are moving fast in life, but it's possible that we may be moving faster than God wants us to move. There are others who are moving slowly and cautiously, but it may be too slow for the pace that God has set for us. It's important that we move at the pace God has set for us. That means we should not walk faster than God is walking. Don't linger behind either.

The speed isn't important, only that you are traveling the speed that God wants us to. The assignment for some will require a faster pace than others, because He will expect more from some than others. Don't walk faster than God is walking. Normally God's pace is much slower than ours. We are always wanting God to hurry up, but you can't hurry God.

We can tell when we are dropping behind in our walk. That's when we miss a Sunday or two at worship, bible study and personal devotion. We have to keep up with God to walk with him. At the same time there are those who try to get ahead of God. You see them: They claim blessings in advance "in the name of Jesus" even if what they claim is not God's will. We should wait to discern God's will for us in life before we get ahead of him.

YOU CAN'T WALK WITH GOD AND HOLD HANDS WITH THE DEVIL

Many want to walk with God but their lifestyles embrace the devil. They have not kissed him yet; they are just holding hands. There are many who remember walking their dates home from special occasions. Today that walk may be short, from the car to a front door but those who are holding hands walking up the sidewalk have plans for the front porch.

There are many believers who think they can successfully walk with God and hold hands with the devil at the same time. They haven't kissed him, yet but each time they get closer and closer to drinking that alcohol, smoking that cigarette, going to that club, using drugs, watching that pornographic movie and doing the forbidden.

Samson tried to walk with God and hold hands with Delilah and it cost him his life. David tried to walk with God while running around with another man's wife and he lost the joy of his salvation.

If we are going to walk with God we must not embrace evil influences at the same time. In Exodus 20:5 God says, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." All of those who want to walk with God should follow Joshua's example and resolve, "As for

me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

God will Not Allow Us to Faint

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when we walk with God, he will not allow us to fall faint.

There is a promise for believers between verse 29 and 31. The word "faith" meaning, fatigue, exhaustion, and weariness is used three time.

In verse 29 he promises power and strength to them that are faint and have no strength. It is a promise that is reserved for believers, those who wait with him and walk with. They are drained and weary and he with strengthen them. Those who are very weak, he will give strength.

In verse 30 he gives everyone a reality check: even the youth shall be faint and weary. It lets us know that there will be times when even the young will throw up their hands and feel like giving up, but we must wait on the Lord.

Then, in verse 31 he makes us a final promise, if we walk with him he will not fall faint. He will hold us up with power of his might, if we will just wait on him.

That's how great grandma did it. In the heat of the day in cotton fields of Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina, she decided, I'll wait on the Lord.

That's how great grandpa did it. In the exhausting heat of the Mississippi delta and the exasperating tensions of the killing fields of Alabama, he decided, I'll wait on the Lord!

We know that's what they were doing because we heard the old warriors sing:

Walk together children
Don' you get weary
Walk together children
Don't you get weary
Oh, talk together children
Don't you get weary
There's a great camp meeting in the Promised Land

If we walk with the Lord, he will give us strength for the journey.

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet sorrow, but God will take sorrow and turn it into joy!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet weakness, but God will take weakness and turn it into strength!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet defeat, but God will take defeat and turn it into victory!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet confusion, but God will take confusion and turn it into understanding!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet hard times, but God will take hard times and turn them into good times!

If we walk with the Lord, he'll lift us up when we stumble!

If you walk with the Lord, he'll carry you when we can't make another step!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Walk with me Lord, walk with me! While

I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!"

If we keep traveling in the right direction, it's going take us to where we want to go!

I don't know about you, but I have decided to keep my hand in God's hands!

I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!

I've got to tell them how he gave me brand new walk and a brand new talk!

I've got to tell somebody how he died out on Calvary!

I've got to tell somebody how he arose early Sunday morning!

His name is Jesus!

He walks with me and talks me!

If he walks with me..I shall not faint!

No.9280-Family

When The Family Struggles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 3, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD." Genesis 25:22

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when your family was not at peace? Most families have experienced a few times when there was dissension in the family. Families generally consist of collections of individual personalities, goals, and ambitions. On occasion those personalities, ambitions and goals collide, especially if they are not the same. They also collide when personalities of equal vigor meet. It is not unusual for any family to experience internal struggle; it is expected, however, that Christian families resolve struggles in light of God's word.

There are many families today that are divided and broken because of bad feelings that have divided them over the years. Angry families hold grudges for years and treat blood relatives like outcasts and worse than strangers. It's all a part of what is known as the "family feud."

On television, family feuds appear to be simple games where everyone leaves smiling. A host introduces two families that are all smiling and cheering, hugging and kissing each other as they play against another friendly family for prizes and awards. In real life, family feuds are no fun. Sometimes they continue from generation to generation. Take, for example, the notorious Hatfield-McCoy feud.

It hit newspaper front pages in the 1880's, when the Hatfield clan feuded with the McCoy clan from across the border in Kentucky. Historians disagree on the cause of the feud — which captured the imagination of the nation during a 10-year run. As many as 100 men, women and children died. In May 1976, Jim McCoy and Willis Hatfield — the last two participated in a ceremony dedicating a monument to six of the victims. McCoy died Feb. 11, 1984, at age 99. He bore no grudges — and had his burial handled by the Hatfield Funeral Home in Toler, KY.

There was great disagreement even among the Disciples of Christ as to which of them would get special places of honor in the kingdom. As James and John sought special favors from Christ the seeds of a bitter rivalry were sown but were quickly dispelled by the master. His message to them and to us today is that God loves us all, and gives favor to whomever he pleases in whatever way he pleases.

As Christians, we have learned to love our brothers and sisters, and family

members. We celebrate their accomplishments, mourn their failures and give God the praise and the glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on a family struggle that began in the mother's womb and continued for many years thereafter.

Rebekah is a snapshot of many mothers in many ways. She was young and beautiful, devout, faithful to her husband, industrious and protective of her children. She was the sister of Laban, married to Isaac. She is first presented in Genesis 24:1 where the beautiful story of her marriage is related. (B.C. 1857.) For nineteen years she was childless: then Esau and Jacob were born, the younger being the mother's companion and favorite. (Genesis 25:19-28)

She demonstrated great faith when she never gave up hope that she would bear children even after 19 years of failed efforts. But if she was a woman of great faith, when it came to one of her children she proved herself capable of devious means to assist him in gaining a foothold in life. It was Rebekah who suggested the deceit that was practiced by Jacob on his blind father. She directed and aided him in carrying it out, foresaw the probable consequence of Esau's anger, and prevented it by moving Isaac to send Jacob away to Padan-aram, (Genesis 27:1) to her own kindred.

While carrying Jacob and Esau, Rebekah was troubled by an unusual movement in her womb. She had no idea what the movements meant and they could not be explained by the midwives and women who assisted her. Her husband, Isaac, asked God to bless his wife with a child (v21) and the Lord answered by allowing her to conceive, not one child but two.

The unusual movement prompted Rebekah to question whether or not her pregnancy was a blessing or a curse. "If it be so, why am I thus?" If this pregnancy is a blessing from God, what explains the complicated struggle going on inside her? She could feel the intensity of the movement. She sensed an atmosphere of battle. If her condition was of God, blessed and sanctioned by him, she wondered, "Why am I thus?"

For an answer she asked God and he answered and gave her peace. She was told that she was carrying twins, both of whom would be the fathers of great nations that would struggle and compete with each other over generations. "Two nations are in thy womb and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other and the elder shall serve the younger." (v23)

From the onset, Rebekah felt the life struggle of her children. It was abnormal and unusual. She wondered how she could be the recipient of a blessing from God if such abnormal activity was a part of her being. No one else could feel what she felt. When Rebekah talked to God, she received an answer that helped her understand the children she would bear and her role in the process.

How Families Divide

A close look at the passage that surrounds this text paints a clear picture of how this family began its struggle. In many instances, it bears a close resemblance to the development of struggles in our own families.

HUSBAND PRAYING FOR HIS WIFE: (Gen. 25:20-21): When Isaac was 40 years old he married Rebekah (v 21). He had lived with her 19 years without any children. Concerned about their lack of children he "entreated" the Lord for his wife (v 22). Entreated is a Hebrew word lenochach ishto which means he went to God directly, purposely, especially, for his wife. The Lord answered the prayer and she became pregnant. Verse 22 shows us a man praying to God about a situation that stressed his marriage and God answering. Even today, when there are situations that stress marriages, we should pray and seek God's direction. Just as he answered Isaac, he will answer us as well.

STRUGGLING CHILDREN: The babies struggled in the womb (v 22). The word used for struggle is yithrotsatsu, meaning that they dashed against or bruised each other, there was a violent agitation, so that the mother was apprehensive both of her own and her children's safety. Rebekeh sensed that something different was happening. Parents who are observant should be able to notice the differences in their children. They are not the same as each seeks his/her own identity. Good parents should follow the example of Rebekah and consult God for answers.

DIFFERENT DESTINIES: Rebekah sought an explanation for the dilemma in her womb (v23). She learned that the children she bore had different and unique destinies. They were destined to father two great nations. Biblical scholars agree that what was predicted concerning Esau and Jacob was not verified in themselves, but in their posterity. The Edomites were the offspring of Esau, the Israelites were of Jacob. The same is true today. Every child in a family has a unique destiny of his/her own. Often parents try to shape that destiny by forcing their children to become doctors, lawyers or some professional with a high earning potential, only to find that their children have dreams of their own. When they are forced to go against their own dreams, struggles result.

NAMING THE CHILDREN: At birth, twins were born (v24). The word for twins is thomim, from which comes Thomas, properly interpreted by the Greek word, Didymus, which signifies a twin; so the first person who was called Thomas or Didymus, we may take for granted, had this name from the circumstance of his being a twin. The children were named Jacob and Esau. The giving of names in the ancient world was a significant act. A name was believed to affect a person's destiny; so the person giving the name was exercising some degree of control over the person's future. One of the twins was named Esau. The name means to make firm or hard, and also to come to man's estate, to grow old. Probably he had this name from his appearing to be more perfect, robust, etc., than his brother. The other was named Jacob (v26) which means to defraud, deceive, to supplant, i.e., to overthrow a person by tripping up his heels. The name also describes a person who dogs another's steps or betrays. Hence this name was given to Jacob, because it was

found he had laid hold on his brother's heel, which was emblematical of his supplanting Esau, and defrauding him of his birthright. When we name our children, the names should have some significance. Today, among African-Americans it appears that names have no significance, usually they are cute and unique, long and oddly spelled but they have no meaning. When children ask why they were given their names parents should be prepared to tell them what their name represents.

DIVIDED LOVE: The two boys were different. Esau was a "man of the field" a phrase which meant he supported himself and family by hunting and by agriculture. Jacob is described as a "plain man" or a perfect or upright man; dwelling in tents—subsisting by breeding and tending cattle, which was considered in those early times the most perfect employment. Both were successes at in their areas but instead of their parents loving them both equally verse 28 notes that Isaac love Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob. A consequence of this divided love the peace and unity of the household was divided. It is the same today whenever a man or a woman shows makes a difference in children a struggle ensues. All parents should double their efforts to love all of their children with the same intensity and passion to avoid developing struggles in the family.

SQUANDERING INHEIRITANCE: The text shows that Esau traded his inheritance rights for a bowl of porridge. The birthright concerned only the material inheritance from the parents. The inheritance was divided into the number of sons plus one. The eldest son then received a double share. This was a customary practice throughout the ancient Near East. What Esau traded was his right to receive a double portion of the inheritance, not his entire inheritance. He still kept his 1) Authority and superiority over the rest of the family. 2)Reception of the father's blessing 3)Position as next in honor to his parents. Today, many struggles exist among family members over the division of inheritances. Many stop speaking to each other for years because of disputes over the division of properties left behind by parents. Additionally, many family members struggle with each other as to the order of influence in the family after the death of the Patriarch or Matriarch. By custom, in the Black community, it is always the oldest sibling who leads, but the oldest is not always the wisest and struggles ensue. Children should be careful about the dispensation of their inheritances especially since they often represent the life work of their parents.

No Struggles in God's Family

Finally, brothers and sisters we must learn from this text that there should be no struggles in the family of God.

Sibling rivalry exists because children want to outdo each other for a special favor. When it comes to our spiritual relationship many of us feel that we must compete for blessings from God.

James and John, two of Christ's disciples, lobbied for good positions in the kingdom of heaven, above their comrades. Their request caused dissention in the

group, but was denied by Christ who reminded them that all blessings are given by God for his own reasons.

Likewise, today there are many adults who are still trying to get themselves high praise from God by out-doing someone else. To sponsor a bigger program, chair a more important committee, or otherwise co-ordinate some great work for the kingdom, is seen as the key to divine endorsement and favor.

God gives us the perfect model. He does not bestow grace upon us because we have out done someone else, but because he loves us. There is nothing we have to do to earn it. We don't have to be the head of anything, over anything or at the front of anything; he will do for us simply because he loves us.

In the same sense, every parent should create an atmosphere in the home where competition between siblings is unnecessary. It should be an atmosphere that accepts the value, worth and contribution of each family member that is both recognized and appreciated on its own merits. We should try, as best we can, to love as God loves, with unmerited grace.

In closing, I'm reminded of the little girl and her brother who had argued all day long about first one thing then another. They never seemed to get along. She screamed at him "I wish you were dead!" and he ran out into the cold. Lost and alone, her brother shivered in the cold. As time passed and it became obvious that something was wrong, the little girl went into the blizzard, calling out his name as she went. When she finally found him, curled in a small ball, covered by snow and shivering, she somehow reached down and put him on her back and walked against the wind to get him back home. She staggered under his weight, but step by step she continued. She made it to the house of the village doctor still holding him on her back. The doctor rushed to help her and said, "I know he must be heavy." The little girl replied "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

This is the kind of love Jesus showed for us when he bore an old rugged cross up Calvary.

With a bloodstained brow and whip marks on his back he carried the cross to make it plain what real love was about "that he would lay down his life for a friend.

" He died and he rose again to demonstrate to us the love of God.

No. 9281-Anniversary, Church

Why the Church Celebrates

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. Nehemiah 8:9-10***

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to consider just how far you have come to reach your present point in life? Each of us has traveled a long and meandering road to reach this milestone on our life's journey. Our paths have brought us through a myriad of experiences that have included successes and failures. Along the way, we have witnessed many changes and have learned to take them in stride. Our joy is to know that despite the road that we have traveled that there has been one constant in life that has never changed; that is the love of God. It never changes.

Why does the church celebrate its anniversary? It celebrates anniversaries because each year is a milestone in the journey toward the Promise Land. Through the years the church has toiled diligently and faced many obstacles, yet it has survived and thrived because it is sustained by the power of an almighty God.

The world has changed in years since this church began lifting up Christ in this community. The world has changed but Christ has remained the same. That's why we celebrate.

We celebrate because this church has lifted up Christ through many generations. Its message has not changed; it is still "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

There was a time, in grandpa's time, that the Black community was well defined. Everyone lived on one side of the track. Everyone who lived on the other side of the track was either white or a traitor to the community. Today our children live in a different world. Now communities are rapidly being defined by economics rather than by color. The people on the other side of the track are no longer defined by color but by economics.

As this change occurred, this church lifted up Christ. That's why we celebrate!

There was a time, in Grandma's day, when folks knew their neighbors by name. Neighbors shared food, cared and supported each other. Today we live in a different world. Very few neighbors know the names of every family on the block, very few

exchange food and hospitalities, and even fewer support each other in times of frustration and difficulty.

Despite the fact that many are becoming less personable, this church has lifted up the name of Jesus, who knows us better than we know ourselves. That's why we celebrate

There was a time, a few generations ago, when Sundays were set aside for worship. All businesses except those providing essential services shut down on Sundays. Attending movies, baseball games and playing cards on Sunday was considered a sin, even by those who didn't go to church. Today, we live in a different world. Mom and dad often leave for work on Sunday just as they do on Monday. Malls are open and Sunday afternoon football has become the religion of choice for millions of men who bow reverently before the altars of ESPN, CBS and NBC.

Despite the fact that the world shows little respect for him, this church has gathered since its inception to teach and preach commitment to Christ, the kingdom of God and the community. Even though the world has changed, Christ has not changed in all these years. That's why we celebrate.

Yes, this is a different world, much different than great-grandpa's time. Today, Youth see sex, murder and crime in every movie they watch, kids are going to prison at age 12, people are blowing up schools, drugs are rampant and homes are threatened.

Despite all of the bad news that time has brought with it, this church still rises to bring a word of hope from the Lord. This church has lifted up Christ and provided hope for those who may be overwhelmed by the swift changes of our times.

Its message has been consistent over all the years and is best reflected in the words of an old hymn by Jennie Wilson:

Time is filled with swift transition,
Naught of earth unmoved can stand,
Build your hopes on things eternal,
Hold to God's unchanging hand.

That's been the message for all these years, "Hold to his hand, to God's unchanging hand. Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hand."

As Christians, we celebrate the anniversary of the church because it reminds us that despite the changing nature of the world that God is still in control. We celebrate because these years have shown us how faith and perseverance can lead to victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Nehemiah's challenge to Israel to celebrate the goodness of God.

The books of the law were read to the people and they mourned as they thought of times past and their present condition. Ezra was impressed that they were sincere in their mourning; however Nehemiah was concerned that instead of mourning their

past they should be celebrating. Despite the condition of Jerusalem at the moment Nehemiah saw reason to celebrate.

The fact that they mourned meant that their hearts were tender and receptive to God's words. It meant that they saw themselves as guilty before God.

Nehemiah commanded the people to stop mourning and to end their grief. There was work to do and it could not be done if the people were constantly mourning lost pasts and morbid futures.

The time for mourning had past; it was now time to celebrate what remains and what will be done in the future. The people complied. Verse 11 notes that they made mirth or celebration. They shed tears of joy for the journey thus far and for the victory they anticipated.

Reasons to Celebrate

As we pause today, to revel in this moment, we give God praise for his blessings. We pause to celebrate in three different ways:

CELEBRATE OUR VICTORY: Like Israel, the church today has faced difficult times. There are some who mourn what has been lost, and lament regularly over the current state of world affairs. Yet, just as Nehemiah encouraged Israel to put aside is mournful nostalgia, we too must stop our mourning of what has passed and the difficulties of the moment and realize that there is work to be done in a spirit of celebration.

In the midst of fearful times, there is a reason for joy, it's a strange combination, only enjoyed by those who have uninterrupted faith in the Lord.

Those who have faith can:

—stay CALM in midst of crises

—have PEACE in the midst of problems

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

Churches should strive to remember "From whence cometh thou?" The humble beginnings of every congregation in comparison to its present always remind a congregation of the great work that God has done through its members. In addition, congregations that reflect also see how God has lifted them and related to them in a personal way that has magnified his name and their greatness in his eyes.

Churches are encouraged to remember to continue striving to advance the kingdom of God with the reward in view. The reward is promised to the churches in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son"

CELEBRATE TO GIVE THANKS:W hen we consider our heritage we can't help but give thanks for the help the Lord has given us.

Every believer has experienced a time or two when we have been caught between a rock and a hard place. Those were the times when faced trouble on every

side. During such times we found that all we could really do was to say like David,'''' I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.''''

We discovered in our life journey that only the power of God could help us because we were powerless to help ourselves. Our only hope was for someone bigger than ourselves to help us. So the writer of the Psalm says, "Then I called on the name of the LORD: ''O LORD, save me!''" (verse 4).

Asking God for help is an even better idea. Even if it seems as if nobody cares, God cares. Just ask Peter who found himself drowning after walking on water or cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. In the same way Jesus has helped every one of us. No wonder then that the song writer would declare ''All my help comes from the Lord.'' When we celebrate, we celebrate his helpfulness. We celebrate his compassion. We celebrate his goodness for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

WE CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE: When the church celebrates it rejoices in the way that God has sheltered us through difficult times and has remained present for us in every situation. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself. The Psalmist writes, "Thou maintainest my lot" (v. 5)

When our world is turned upside down by tragic events, it is easy to become cynical and disillusioned with life.

When we witness how evil some people can be, it becomes difficult for us to trust anyone.

Yet, we are able to celebrate when others are not because we know that God will never forsake us.

Because we know he will never leave us alone, we should celebrate! Because he has been with us as we walked through the valley of the shadow of death, we should celebrate!

Now is the time to celebrate

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that now is a time to celebrate the victory that God has in store for us!

When Moses spoke to Israel he constantly pointed them to the land before them, with the ever present reminder that as long as they stay close to God the blessings from heaven will continue to flow. The implication of Moses'' comments were simple: Turn away from God and expect trouble, stick with God and expect an enriching experience.

This was Nehemiah's message to Israel. Repent for past sins, forget past mistakes and get ready to do a great work for God today.

Thus, we rejoice in the years that have passed. But there is work to be done!

We cherish the memories of those who began the work of old, but now we must

celebrate the work that must be done today.

The same God that helped the founders of this church will help us today. He does not change.

The times change, but God never changes. In Malachi 3:6 God said, “I am the Lord and I change not...” Hebrews 13:8 makes it clear that the nature of God never changes. It says clearly, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

God does not change.

HE IS STILL OMNISCIENT: God has not changed. He still knows all about us. That’s why the 139th Psalm declares, “Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off...” God knows what we think. God knows what we feel. God knows our doubts. God knows our fears. He also knows just how much we can bear.

HE IS STILL OMNIPRESENT: God has not changed. He’s still available to us wherever we go. That’s why the Psalmist declared, “ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If, I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea” thou art there. If I’m riding in an airplane, God is there. If I travel to a faraway place God is there. We know he’s there because Jesus promised in Matthew 28, “And Lo I’ll be with you alway, even until the end of the earth!”

HE IS STILL OMNIPOTENT: God has not changed. He’s still all powerful. There is nothing God cannot do. When Sara doubted God’s ability the angel asked, “Is there anything too hard for God to do?”

I don’t know about you but I’m glad to know that God does not change! That’s a reason to celebrate!

He’s brought us from a mighty long way! That’s a reason to celebrate!

We celebrate because when we have failed, he still turns failure into success!

We celebrate because although we are weak, he still turns weakness into strength!

We celebrate because when we have questions, he still provides the answers!

We celebrate because when we are frustrated, he still gives us hope!

In the past, he’s been with us, but I’m glad to know that wherever I go, He’ll still be by my side!

All I have to do is call on his name! His name is Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

He’s coming back again to take us to a land! A land where we’ll never grow old!

No. 9282-Revival

When God Calls

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 14, 2007

SCRIPTURE ***"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24:" I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not." Isaiah 66:4***

Introduction

Do you have a cell phone or know someone who has one? Cell phones are becoming increasing popular today and in many parts of the country, they are replacing land lines. Nearly everyone has a cell phone. Businesswomen and working men have cell phones. Students have cell phones, grandmothers have cell phones. There is a company that makes cell phones for babies.

They have a variety of names: Razers, I-phones, Flip Tops, Blackberries, Treos and the latest craze, the I-phone.

The technology exists today that makes connectivity a premium.

There are cell phones which take photographs and movies. The movies recorded on some cell phones can be instantly uploaded to CBS news or YouTube without the need of a computer.

There are cell phones that record conversations and print out a transcript.

There are cell phones that allow callers to leave a voice message, then transcribe the voice message and send it to your email or to your phone as a text message.

There are cell phones that will open your garage door, change the channel on your television set and operate anything in your home that operates with a remote control unit.

There are cell phones that play stereo music and razor sharp videos in wide screen.

There are cell phones that allow you buy and sell stock or make an e-trade without talking to a broker, transfer money from your account with a touch of a finger; and you can even listen to a conversation on a cell phone with no hands or wires, using a Bluetooth headset.

There are cell phones so small that they can fit in your pocket, but despite their size can beam a map from a satellite and give you voice directions to your destinations.

It's called connectivity. It means wherever we are in the world, if there is a cell

phone signal you can be connected to all that is important to you.

It would seem that with all of this connectivity that our lives would be easier and simpler because it is so easy to get stay connected.

Connectivity has a price. We pay dearly to stay connected. Today, many of our cell phone bills are higher than our electric bills and almost as much as our rent. All that connectivity also turns us into literal cell phone junkies. We cook on the cell phone, shop on the cell phone, travel on the cell phone, and drive our cars on the cell phone. Some men go on dates with one woman and talk to another on the cell phone.

We are a busy generation, cell phones has made it easier to stay in touch.

But what happens when God calls?

Is it possible that when God calls that we are in the middle of something important and we inform him that we'll get back to him later; when we get our lives straightened out?

Is it possible that he sends us a message to do something for him but we refuse to do it because it comes at the wrong time, or would make us look silly or undignified?

Is it possible that we refuse to connect with him because we can't deal with him right now; not with my new job, my campaign, my new house, my household responsibilities, my children, and all of my troubles?

As Christians we should resolve to that whenever God calls, we are ready to answer and to hear his voice. If the Lord dials our number, when should make sure that he gets through.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he reminds Israel of the ways God has tried to respond to the needs of mankind and man's thoughtless response.

This last section of the book of Isaiah covers the final events of world history, and closely parallels the book of Revelation. The book of Isaiah is in many ways a miniature Bible. It divides like the Bible. The Bible has 66 books, and Isaiah has 66 chapters. The Old Testament has 39 books, and the first division of Isaiah has 39 chapters. The New Testament has 27 books, and the second half of Isaiah has 27 chapters. The theme of the last of Isaiah is the theme of the last of the Bible: the end!

Yet before the end, God looks at the people of Israel and tracks the way he has attempted to respond to their need and their empty response. Though God has attempted to contact them through prophets and messengers for hundreds of years they have virtually ignored him. He has repeatedly attempted to minister to the people yet they have turned a deaf ear. This prompts God, as he considers the future state of believers to say, "I called them but they would not answer." In Isaiah 65:24 he notes that in the future believers will be of such that they will know that before they can call, the answer will be on the way.

Their desire to build altars, make animal sacrifices and concentrate on the ritual is the final element of frustration for God. In Isaiah 50:2, God asked for Israel to give a reason it did not answer his calls. Here he said, "Wherefore, when I came, was

there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?"

Israel frustrated God by not answering his call, although he always answered their prayers.

When God Calls Us

This matter of connectivity should be extremely important to believers. In our secular lives we work hard to stay connected. We are wired up with machines on our sides, in our purses, plugged into our ears in the dashes of our cars; nearly everywhere because we want to stay connected to those who are important to us.

If we receive a call it does not matter where we are, what we are doing we will instinctly pick up the phone and answer, even if we have to step outside to do so. The person making the call seems to command or demand our attention.

Yet, there should be concern on our part about being connected to God?

Do we respond the same way when God calls?

Just as God tried to call Israel many times in the text, he also tries to call us. What happens when God flips through the heavenly rolodex and decides to call our number?

DO WE OFFEND GOD WITH OUR RING TONES? There are many today who purchase ringtones for their phones that are extracted from popular music. There are others who arrange for music to be played on their phones to substitute for the traditional ring that a caller hears. There are many church members who have ringtones on their phones that do not identify them as children of God. Is it possible that God can choose to call upon a special person to deliver a blessing but when he calls he gets "Lil Wayne, Lil Boosie, Bow Wow and 50 cent?" Will he say "did I dial the wrong number?"Our lifestyles are our ring tones. Do our week day lifestyles suggest something different than what we say on Sunday morning? Is God pleased? If we live our lives in deference God's will he will leave us to our delusions (66:4) and turn us over to reprobate minds.

OUR LINES ARE BUSY AND OUR BOXES ARE FULL: We are busy people. We stay on the phone. Our lines stay busy. If anyone calls us no one gets through and our voice mail is activated. But even then it's hard to get us a message because our mailboxes are full. The irony of mailboxes is that we have received the messages but they are still often unheard because it takes too long to listen to them all.

When God calls us is it possible that our lines are busy. Even if he leaves us obvious messages do we fail to get back with him because it takes too long? Saul was a busy man. He busied himself persecuting the Jews. God needed to talk to him but he could never get through. It took an experience on the Damascus Road to get him to put the phone back on line. If we intend to hear from God must have some appointed time in which he knows the line will be clear.

Israel, once in the Promised Land, received many messages from God. For 150 years they received warnings from God that destruction loomed. As a succession of

prophets gave the same message repeatedly, the nation never "got back!" When they finally decided to answer it was too late.

There are many who dread how much time it will take to get back with God. Worship is time consuming. Prayer time is time consuming. Service is time consuming. They place God's calls in their box of "good intentions" but never get back to him.

CALLER ID SCREENS OUR CALLS: The caller I.D. is a device that allows a phone subscriber to see the phone number and sometimes the name of the person making a call. The subscriber decides whether to answer the call based on the identity of the person calling.

There are some who anticipate that they are receiving a call from God and try to avoid him by not answering. However, cell phone technology won't allow us to truthfully hide. The same technology that allows us to not answer a call, also assures the caller that you knew they called, because their number will be listed in their call log. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve tried to avoid God after they ate the forbidden fruit. They did not want to hear from God when they realized he was coming. There are many today who consciously avoid hearing from God. They won't read a bible, attend a bible study, or listen to the preached word. They try to hide from God.

When we Call God...

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God doesn't answer our calls to him in the same way we treat him.

God does not use heavenly Caller I.D. Box to see if the call is coming from you and decide whether or not he wants to hear from you.

He does not listen to our prayers and thoughts and play like he is not at home.

There won't be a recorded voice in heaven that answers: "for blessings press 1. For healings press 2. For Forgiveness press 3. To speak to God himself press G.

When we call God it won't matter what type of phone we use. Down here the recorded voice says press 1 if you have a touch tone phone. If you have rotary phone stay on the line. But when we call heaven, it won't matter what type of phone we use. It won't matter whether we are old fashioned or modern, the Lord will answer prayer!

When we use our cell phone we usually use a calling plan. We get so many daytime minutes and so many nights and weekends. But when we call God it won't matter about the time of day. God's got his own calling plan. We can call him in the morning, noonday or even at the midnight hour! You can call him up and tell him what you want.

When you purchase a cell phone the company wants you to get a contract to guarantee that you won't leave them. They want a two or three year contract. But when you get your hookup with the Lord, he gives us a contract that's better than one year or two years with the cell phone company. I hear him so and "Lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the earth."

One final thing about your cell phone. If you are ever in an emergency, your cell phone can get help.

There is a universal number that you can call anywhere, it's 1-1-2.

You can dial 1-1-2 and get a fire truck, ambulance or police.

Even if the keys on your phone are lock you still dial 1-1-2

If your phone service to friends has been disconnected you can still dial 1-1-2.

God's got a better plan than 1-1-2, because 1-1-2 comes after 1-1-1.

1-1-1 is a universal spiritual number that goes straight to heaven.

Even if you have been disconnected from God you can still dial 1-1-1.

Even if you have been locked out be guilt and shame, you can still dial 1-1-1.

Even if you have moved so far away from God that you can't get a signal, if you dial 1-1-1 an angel of mercy will catch your roaming call and deliver it to heaven. What do you say when God answers your call, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, oh whether shall I go?"

Two thousand years ago the world sent up an emergency, "Save us from our sins"

God sent prophet after prophet but every message went unanswered!

Then God decided to stop calling. He sent his only begotten son!

His name is Jesus!

He came and lived among men, but they didn't get the message!

He healed the sick and raised the dead, but they didn't get the message!

But when he died out on Calvary….. Somebody shouted out, 'Surely, surely, he must be the Son of God!"

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave..

You can call him in the morning! You can call him in the midnight hour!

Call him in the noonday. Call him at the midnight hour!

No wonder the songwriter said, "Jesus is on the mainline tell him what you want! Call him up and tell him what you want!

Call Him!

Call Him!

...and tell him what you want!

No. 9284-Youth

Beware of the Bloodsuckers!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 28, 2007

SCRIPTURE*: My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. 17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. Proverbs 1:10-18.*

Introduction

During this time of the year, there are many people who are preoccupied with things that take life and leave a blood trail. For generations, October has become the bloodiest month of the year. There are more movies, television shows, and books available in October than any month of the year because there seems to be a national fixation on anything that takes life and leaves a blood trail.

For many years on television we watched Buffy the Vampire Killer, Dracula, Blacula, Blade, and Night of the Living Dead. All of these movies and television broadcasts featured persons who survive to one degree or another by draining the lifeblood of others. Other movies such as Friday the 13th, Halloween, Amityville Horror, the Texas Chainsaw murder and many others glorify the taking of life and leaving a blood trail. Even children's video games are filled with blood and gore. There is a national fascination with blood and blood suckers.

All of the movies are fictional. Buffy the Vampire Killer is a figment of someone's imagination. Dracula was written by Brian Stoker in 1897 and told the fictional story of a Transylvania count who sucked the blood from beautiful young ladies to sustain his own life while condemning the women to existences described as the living dead. Modern author Anne Rice has made millions with novels such as "Interview with the Vampire." There are even gay and lesbian vampires, Asian Vampires and there have even been black Draculas played by Fred Williamson in the 1970's who played Blacula and the current king of the blood suckers, Wesley Snipes, who stars in the Blade vampire movies of today.

In the movies, blood suckers are exciting to watch, but there are real life blood suckers that are not funny, exciting or glamorous.

Bloodsuckers are everywhere. In nature, trees lose their life substance when certain vines wrap themselves around them and suck the sap from them. Farmers

call the vines sap suckers. Those who study birds tell us that the Yellow Belly Sap Sucker bores holes into trees and drinks its sap. Leeches, Lamp Eels, and mosquitoes draw blood as well.

Bloodsuckers are those things in life that drain the life out of us. They steal our joy, happiness and peace of mind and leave us like walking zombies with no passion or spirit. They don't appear once a year in October; they exist everyday of the week, 52 weeks a year.

When life seems to be draining us of our life substance, that's when we thank God for Jesus.

It is the grace of God that renews us and gives us new energy, power, hope and inspiration.

Our Lord does not ask us for blood, he gives us blessings through his blood, if we trust him.

As Christians, we are aware that there are many forces in life that drain our life substance. We give thanks to God for his Son Jesus who gave his blood to give us a chance to an abundant, everlasting life.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's warning to young people, to avoid evil associations that will drain them of their godly virtue and righteousness.

The book of proverbs offers wisdom in three categories. Chapters 1-10 offers advice to young people. Chapters 11-24 offers advice to men and women and chapters 25-31 offers advice to kings, rulers and the those who desire to be virtuous women. The purpose of the proverbs is to give wisdom in small snippets, or wise sayings that will be a guiding influence on those who want to live the godly life.

The young are advised in this text to avoid evil friends, associations and influences because the forces of evil are out for the blood of the innocent. Their motives are not pure and ultimately their ways will lead to their own destruction and the destruction of all who associate with them.

This text presents evil influences as being bloodthirsty sinners who desire to devour and destroy that which is good for the sole purpose of robbing the innocent of their "Precious substance." (Proverbs 1:13) and leaving them empty and void.

The warning to the young is to stay clear of anything and anyone that encourages them to do evil, the ultimate end of the evil will be their own downfall. The young who follow after evil we share their fate.

How they work

How can a person fall into the influence of evil so easily? How are youth so easily fooled into endorsing or accepting evil? Let's look at the text closely.

EVIL IS ENTICING: Look at Proverbs 1:10, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."The word entice means to lure, pull, seduce, attract by offering

hope of benefit. In the movies the fictional vampire always wins the confidence of his victim and promises them immortality before he sucks them dry. Evil people do not convince others to follow them by saying, let's go do something evil. Usually they project a positive result by saying, "Let's rob the store so we can get money," or "Let's ice the dude. He dissed us. We got to protect our rep." In many cases the evil person does not force potential partners to come with them, they win their confidence through flattery and pretensions to be their "hommies."

Bloodsuckers usually entice us by using one of four methods or all four: 1) They offer us the opportunity for profit, pleasure, fun or good times 2) They offer us the opportunity to prove ourselves to others 3) They offer the prospect of anonymity: No one will know. Faced with these options, many youth fall into the trap of the bloodsuckers. Christian youth should exercise care because evil influences have one goal and that is to entice the young and the gullible into the hands of the ungodly.

Yet, the word of God warns young believers to "consent thou not" meaning that young believers should not run with ungodly crowds or befriend them because they do not mean them well. In this context they are bloodsuckers, waiting to get their fangs into another innocent life.

DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT IS PRECIOUS: Look at Proverbs 1:13. It illustrates how evil people target the "Precious substance" of believers. What is precious substance? The word translated precious in this text comes from a Hebrew word which means: Honor, reputation, and excellence. Substance is from the Hebrew word which means: everything of value. Verse 13 shows the evil influence targeting everything of value to the young including their reputations, their achievements, their personal honor and dignity. Youth enter the world with a very precious substance only to find that the world is filled with bloodsuckers and predators ready to take it away. Youth are generally innocent: They trust people and thus become fair game to bloodsuckers who abuse their trust. They desire to be accepted and become targets to those who show them shortcuts to popularity. They enter the world as innocent children and become targets of those who stick their fangs into them and rob them of their childhoods by enticing them to be grown before their time. Every industry that can legally target young people aims their commercials at them with one goal in mind and that is to acquire their "Precious Substance." Proverbs 1:15 gives a stern warning to youth, "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:"

LAY TRAPS FOR THE UNSUSPECTING: Look at Proverbs 1:17. It indicates that those who would stick their fangs into our youth and drain them of their precious substance, lay traps for them. Sin is characterized in this text as a net. Hunters often catch their prey by hanging large nets out of sight and over their heads. A prey that is trying to be careful may watch the ground for the obvious but miss the net overhead that, once dropped, entangles them to their own destruction. The traps used against our young are often not the obvious, but the not so obvious. A Christian youth would instantly reject an invitation to smoke weed or drink alcohol because he's looking on the ground for the net. He's not prepared for the way that alcohol is introduced to him by the music industry in songs and videos and by paying for

brands and labels to be shown in movies. It won't be long before an unsuspecting youth is caught in the net and the bloodsuckers begin their work. The church must work to expose the traps and make youth aware of those who would take advantage of them. The devil never rests. He's always looking for a way to destroy the faithful.

THEY LAY WAIT IN THEIR OWN BLOOD: Look at Proverbs 1:18. It has a very powerful message to those who would take up company with or befriend evil. The evil will find their own life purpose lost, and those who are with them can expect the same. "They lay wait in their own blood" seems to say "What goes around comes around." The ultimate end of the violent law breaker is a violent death or jail. There is no glory in the notion promoted by rapper 50 cent that we should strive to get rich or die trying. There is no glory in a violent death trying to get rich by illegal means. The drug dealer and gang banger may appear to get away with their crimes, but they are naive to think they will evade capture all of their lives and will live to ripe old ages. In 2006 the City of Philadelphia had 406 murders, mostly young blacks killing each other. This month 10,000 black men took to the streets to train themselves in conflict resolution and mentoring to save young black men from killing themselves. The gangsta mentality promoted by the music industry and some rappers is sucking the life blood from young black men increasing the odds that they will be dead or in jail before they reach their 30th birthday. The murderers and thieves often find themselves laying in a pool of their own blood, the victims of drive bys and senseless violence.

Thank God for the Sun

Finally brothers and sisters, while you are watching your vampire movies this week, pay close attention to one important comparison. The creatures of the night are afraid of the sun.

No matter how powerful the night walker happens to be, he shrivels and crawls when he comes face to face with the sun.

They may have lived for hundreds of years in the darkness, living on the blood of their victims, but I find it interesting that even the most tenacious creature of the night runs when the sun starts to rise.

They may be the masters of the underground, but when the sun rises, all of their power is destroyed.

They may be the most feared creatures at midnight but when the sun shines on them, they lose all of their power.

Therein lies the secret that every young person should learn; to be free of the creatures of the night we must walk in the light of God's word.

When we walk in the light the SON rises in our soul and devil can't do you no harm.

James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

When the sun rises in your life, the devil will get away from you.

When the sun rises in your life, the demons that try to possess you will depart.

In the movies, I also notice that whenever the bloodsucker vampire sees the old rugged cross, he has to run away!

I don't know about you, but I thank God for the SON and I thank God for the cross!

The cross of Calvary is symbol of our salvation! Thank God for the cross!

At the cross, the power of sin is broken and the power of salvation is released!

At the cross, the sprit of bondage is shattered and a new spirit of freedom is unchained

At the cross, those who have been disillusioned receive new hope!

At the cross, those who have been discouraged find new inspiration!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith. I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

Young warriors, don't worry about the creatures of the night, just keep walking in the light!

Don't worry about the powers of darkness, just keep your hands in God's hand and the devil will leave you alone!

Bloodsuckers may try to sap your life blood and leave you without hope, but I'm so glad that "there is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilt and stain!"

There is power, power wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb!

Lift Jesus Up and stomp the devil down!

Jesus, my light in a world darkness!

Jesus, my defender against all enemies!

Jesus, my shield in the midst of battle!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning rose up from the grave!

Tell them about Jesus..and watch the devils leave you alone!

No. 9284-Anniversary, Men

Men Building With God's Good Hand

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Nehemiah 2:18***

Introduction

It is always good for men to come together, but what do we talk about? When some men get together they talk about sports events, fishing or hunting. Others talk about their cars, or other specialties. Some men talk about women. Christian men may talk about all of these, but they will most certainly talk about their lives in Christ and share their experiences along the way.

Whenever men get together there are always different types. Some are old some are young. Some are hard workers and some don't work as hard. Consider three laymen who worked in the church who bragged about their dogs. One of the men was a brick layer, the second was a cook and the third was the lazy sort. The bricklayer called his dog, "Come here Stonewall, show your stuff." Instantly his dog jumped into the back of the truck and started throwing bricks to the ground and before long had built a small bar-be-que pit right in front of their eyes. The men were amazed but the cook called his dog, "come here Pork Chops, do your thing." Instantly his dog jumped into the back of his truck grabbed a slab of pork ribs from the cooler, built a fire in bar-be-que pit, slapped the ribs on the fire, swabbed them with bar-be-que sauce and opened a can of Coca Cola. The men were really excited. Then the lazy man called his dog, "Come here excuses, do show your stuff." The lazy man's dog grabbed the ribs from the bar-be-que pit, drank the Coke and left the bones for everyone else to clean up as he and the lazy man went home.

Whenever men get together there are some hard workers in the group, but there are also some lazy men in the group that leave nothing but the bones.

When the work of the church is done however, it won't be the lazy man that God uses to complete his mission. It won't be the lazy man because he sits back and waits for someone else to do the work. When men have a mind to work, amazing things can be done.

Occasions such as these are especially encouraging when we have been guided

by the hand of God and protected under his wing. It's the hand of God that empowers us, motivates us and encourages us. It's the strong hand of God that carries us across the wilderness of despair to the lofty peaks of success.

As Christians, we want to busy ourselves with kingdom building work. In so doing we bring God's favor upon ourselves and our families.

Exposition

This text focuses on the people of Israel whose commitment to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem resulted in it being done far ahead of schedule.

Almost 100 years after the Jews had returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, the walls around the city and the gates had remained in ruins. The people were disillusioned, in debt and intimidated by the awesome commitment that rebuilding the walls would require. They had excused their failure to rebuild the walls on fierce opposition from surrounding nations and their poverty.

Nehemiah refused to accept their excuses and despite the danger inspected the walls at night (2:15). He then called an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. He was an excellent leader who demonstrated engineering knowledge and brilliant organizing ability (ch. 3). He encouraged them while reminding them that they would have to watch, fight and pray. The work began.

Ye see the distress we are in (v 17)

Nehemiah asked the people to do assess the situation. He said "Ye see the distress we are in." He pointed to broke walls and a broken national spirit.

Today, those who build are still appealing to us to assess our situation. The cry is still, "Ye see the distress we are in."

Today, men must take a hard look at the situation we face today. Our homes are shattering; our sons are being targeted for death or jail.

Our daughters are prey of pedophiles and sexual predators. Crime in our community is rising and increasingly our image is being destroyed. If we have more black men in jail than in college, that's a distressing situation.

Statistically, three of five black males will have negative contact with a police officer, land in jail or be killed before age 30. That a distressing situation.

"Ye see the distress we are in" but the challenge is to rebuild the walls. It's not too late, even though the degree of disrepair is staggering. We must take positive actions to rebuild our families.

Men's groups can mentor young fathers and husbands to help them understand their role as husband, father, lover and provider for their families.

We must work diligently with our boys to help shape them.

We must rebuild interest in boy scouting, Jr. Laymen and other boy's work programs that we have allowed to die in our churches.

We must speak to the issues of drugs, crime and delinquency that ravaged our communities. Either we will address them or they will overtake us and destroy us completely.

We see the distress of our situation, what shall we do?

Let us build up

Essential to the task of rebuilding the national spirit was the reconstruction of the walls and the restoration of the temple. The people saw the extent of their situation but did not take any action to correct the problem. They saw the temple razed, polluted and desecrated but did nothing. They saw the walls broken but only looked. Nehemiah challenged them to build the walls for safety. The prophet Ezra echoed those sentiments also with the challenge to restore the temple.

When men decide to work together there is congealing of spirit and purpose that contributes to unit. When men work together there is a common cause and purpose. Divisions and differences blur and energy is concentrated when men work together.

Nehemiah challenged the men of Israel to join him in the rebuilding project. “Let us build” is the keyword to his encouragement.

Let us work together for the sake of increased unity. As we work together in this work we will become a stronger band of brothers dedicated to one purpose.

One Man’s vision

Whenever the people are inspired to rebuild, renew and regenerate it is usually the result of one person’s vision. In the text, Nehemiah had a vision, and he shared it with enthusiasm, inspiring Jerusalem’s leaders to rebuild the walls.

In the same way that Nehemiah had a vision to build; our executive secretary also had a vision for us. That vision looked beyond the shambles that existed in his day toward a picture of the vision of tomorrow. He saw men working together for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God and to expanding his kingdom.

We should never underestimate the power of one person. One powerful God given vision can inspire people to act and to achieve. When God inspires visions we should never underestimate our ability to make that vision happen. So it is with us. God has given one person the vision and we work together in the name of our Lord to make the heavenly inspired vision a reality.

The Hand of God Upon Me

Finally, brethren we must consider that when God’s good hand is upon a work, it will be blessed.

The text makes special note of God’s good hand, not simply the hand of God. Its implication is that the hand of God can help us if we are in his will and it can delay us or stop us if we are out of his will.

The hand of God stopped Jonah as he fled from his mission.

The hand of God drowned Pharaoh's army as he pursued them across the Red Sea.

The hand of God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and turn Lot's wife to salt. But Nehemiah told Israel about God's other hand. That God's good hand was upon him.

God's good hand is his blessing hand.

God's good hand is his anointing hand.

God's good hand is his door opening hand.

God's good hand is his way making hand.

God's good hand is his soul saving hand

God good hand is powerful; that's why we should hold to his hand.

The sense of security we derive from holding on to God's good hand comes from the fact that God is a pillar of strength.

We hold to God's good hand because there is nothing too hard for him. (Jer. 32:17).

He can handle any problem set before him. In answer to that same statement Isaiah 59:1 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." So every believer should hold to God's hand. Even in difficult times and wait for him his deliverance. Don't give up. He can and will take care of it.

As we hold on to each other's hands, let us not forget to hold to God's hand.

As we make practical plans to realize what has been visualized let's not forget to hold to God's good hand.

I'm reminded of a man who had fallen from a cliff and dangled by the end of a rope being held by his friend. The friend yelled to him to hold on "I've got the rope!" As the man was eased down he suddenly made a huge drop followed by a sudden stop. Then he was eased to the ground. On the ground his friend came and hugged his neck. The man said you scared me there for a minute; you let me go for a second. The friend responded, "I did let go. I tried to hold on but I couldn't. The rope slipped out of my hand. Then suddenly, I received a surge of strength from somewhere and picked up the rope. You made it to the bottom, but I don't know who was holding the rope!" The man lifted his hand to the sky and gave praise to God. "I couldn't see his hand, but I know who was holding the rope!"

Who's holding the rope for you?

When troubles get you down, who's holding the rope?

When doctors give up on you, who's holding the rope?

When friends slip and let go, who's holding the rope?

When your best efforts fail and you seem to be lost, whose holding the rope?

The man who is holding the rope is the same man that carried a cross for us back on Calvary's hill.

He died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning, he got up with all power in his hands!

No. 9285-Missionary Service

Into All the World

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2007

SCRIPTURE: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. " Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction

What would happen if the Gospel of Jesus Christ is carried to the whole world, starting with this community? Would lives change? Would the community become safer, friendlier more compassionate place to live? Most Christians acknowledge that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is life changing. It's ultimate impact would be world changing if it ever reaches the masses.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is magnetic; so magnetic that Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all men unto me."

The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news.

It's good news to the gambler, hustler, pimp and prostitute.

It's good news to the drunkard, cheater and womanizer. It's good news to the homosexual, transvestite and lesbian.

It's good news to the pedophile, wife beater, thief and murderer. It's good news to the drug addict, gangsta rapper, crooked politician, and sexual predator.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news to all who are lost and need to know that despite their wretched condition that the power of God can raise them up?

Yet, there are many in the church who want to keep all of this good news to themselves.

Instead of broadcasting the good news to the gambler, thief, murderer and drunkard, we generally keep it to ourselves.

How is this so? Don't we conduct in-church revivals? Don't we stage city wide revivals? Don't we tell the story every Sunday?

While we preach the good news every Sunday and stage revivals regularly, very few of our efforts are designed to go into the world, they are generally designed to preach to those in the church and to anyone who happens to come in out of the world by chance.

There are many in the church community who have redirected the gospel message and made it exclusively for the church and none others. We speak against

sin in the church. We offer hope to the lost, in the church. We lift up Christ, in the church.

Rarely do we go outside of the church. Billy Graham's daughter Anne Graham Lotz once appeared on a popular news talk program. The interviewer asked, "Are you one of those who believe that Jesus is exclusively the only way to heaven?" He added, "You know how mad that makes people these days!" Without blinking she replied, "Jesus is not exclusive. He died so that anyone could come to Him for salvation."

Salvation is not exclusively for the church; in fact the church is a body of those who were formerly in the world who now are part of the body of Christ.

Jesus wants us to change the world, but to do that we have to reach the world. Many churches are effectively reaching the "church", but not the world.

When we plan a revival, where do we send the announcements? To churches.

When we place radio advertising for our revivals, what channels attract our attention first? Religious channels.

When the crowds come to our revival, who makes up the largest part of the audience? The church.

What would happen if the church actually went into the world, starting with this community and carried the gospel message? What would happen if preachers, deacons and the faithful went into the bars, night clubs and honky tonks and witnessed for Christ?

What would happen if we actually invaded the hip hop world with young ministers who know how to talk the talk in a way that would actually reach that generation?

What would happen if we stopped having revivals to revive ourselves and actually went into the world?

Jesus said if we lift him up where the lost could see him, he would do the rest.

As Christians, we have a powerful challenge to go into all the world with a life changing message. To do that, we must actually go into the world and not just to the church. The Gospel of Jesus is world saving and soul lifting! We must intensify our efforts to reach every lost soul in his name.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus giving instructions to his disciples to go into the world with the good news.

For three years Jesus taught his disciples about this world and another, far different world that would come, called the kingdom of heaven. In preparation for the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus told his disciples to teach, preach, baptize and witness in every part of the world to create a prototype of the kingdom of heaven on earth. He called his prototype the kingdom of God.

As whole communities accepted Christianity, the world around them changed. It affected their business dealings, interpersonal relationships and general life-styles. The new world that Jesus sought was one in which the great priority of life

would be placed upon the value of the heart rather than on the material things. Jesus' world would certainly be different.

It would be highlighted by those who denied themselves pleasures to seek the common good of all.

It would be a world in which each citizen loved his or her enemies and prayed for those who spitefully abused them.

It would be a world of active nonviolence in both thought and deed.

It would be a world of total dependence upon God and faith in his ability to supply needs.

Each disciple was challenged to go and deliver the message about this new world to the present world and to make preparations themselves for life in the world to come.

The World Needs the church

More than ever, the world today needs the church. With a plethora of social problems, declining moral values and the constant threat of war it is more obvious now than at any other time that the world needs the church.

FAMILIES NEED THE CHURCH: The church has a responsibility to respond to the issues that plague Black families. It begins when the church translate its Sunday rhetoric into real action. In St. Louis in June 2007 The Rev. R.B. Holmes, president of the National Congress of Christian Education urged black churches to set goals for reducing by 25 percent the rate of black divorce, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, murder and HIV infection by 2012, and increasing the adoption of black foster children. He said it was time for black clergy to lead a movement, not unlike the fight for civil rights 40 years ago.

The Black family needs the church more than ever. The church must challenge the culture and forces that have hurt the black family and community, including those who "demean, degrade and belittle our mothers and daughters. To do this the church must partner with others to provide senior citizen housing, charter schools, mental health clinics, opportunities for first-time home-buyers, even restaurants to train people for work.

Such action puts the word of God into concrete forms that people can see and helps families survive and thrive.

THOSE WHO HAVE LOST HOPE NEED THE CHURCH: There are many men and women today who are throwing up their hands in defeat, resolved that they are in a lost cause. The defeated need the church. The defeated need to know that God is able to respond to their needs. When they feel that God does not know or care about their situation they lose hope.

Parents who have talked to and chastised wayward children with little or no visible effect have dropped their heads and dismissed them as reluctant lost causes. They need the church.

Many marriages have ended in the divorce courts because husbands and wives, frustrated with the presence of uncomfortable symptoms, have thrown up their

hands in defeat. They have dismissed their sacred vows as a lost cause. They need the church.

Many men and women who have been living on the wrong side of the right track take a low opinion of themselves and think because thy are not, did not, and could not, that they cannot, will not and should not ..be anything less than a failure and have dismissed themselves as a lost cause. They need the church.

Somebody within the sound of my voice thinks he or she is a lost cause. Somebody feels that his or her life is in such a shambles that they are beyond the reach of the mercies of God.

The church needs to let the world know that there is no reason to lose hope because God is still on the throne.

As long as God is still on the throne there is no reason lose hope because there is no despair that God cannot console, no problem he can't solve and no depression he cannot relieve.

The church needs to go into the world to let the world know that regardless to the problem, God is able.

THE CHURCH REACHES INTO THE WORLD: The church must go into the world and bring the message of God's grace in both precept and example.

There are many churches today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. In each case they are attempting to reach into the world in the name of Jesus.

Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes.

Outreach is essential to kingdom building. We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus. Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes. When we help others it must come from the heart.

It must be done out of love. That's what 1 Corinthians 13:3 means when it says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing."

The church must show and tell the world that God cares; thus, we are compelled to go into all the world.

Show the world another world

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church has the responsibility of going into the world to show those in the world, a better world.

We cannot afford to sit on our good intentions and send God on missionary journeys. We should not try to send God but to go into the world ourselves in the name of God.

We must go into the world with the gospel message of hope.

We must go into the world with the gospel message of salvation.

We must go into the world with the gospel message of compassion and concern.

We must lift Jesus up knowing that if we lift him up he will draw all men to himself.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change lives.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change communities and nations!

We must tell world about Jesus, whose life and sacrifice made a world of difference.

We must tell them that he was born in a manager in Bethlehem and reared in a little town called Nazareth; he made a world of difference!

He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

They called him Jesus; he made a world of difference!

Before he left he told his disciples to stay ready because "I'm going to create another world! "That where I am ye may be also!"

In that world, every day will be Sunday and the Sabbath will have no end!

In that world, it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

In that world, hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the song writer declares, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"

In that world we'll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

In that world we'll live eternally!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No. 9286-Revival

It's Robe Washing Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 4, 2007

SCRIPTURE: ***And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:13-14***

Introduction

Do you have a wash day in your home? No matter who you are, there is a washday in your home. Wash day is the day in which you or somebody you hire takes all of your dirty laundry and gets it clean. There are many who have the convenience of having all of the utensils for washday in their homes. They have washers, dryers, ironing equipment and everything thing else necessary to make wash day tolerable. Whether we meet our wash day responsibilities at home or hire it out, it must be met, sooner or later.

Wash days are necessary regardless of whether we are rich or poor, white or black, immigrant or native born. It is an equalizer. You can buy a tailored made shirt or a cheap one off the rack, but at the end of the day they both are candidates for washday. Your finest dress or most beautiful blouse may have cost you a fortune, but regardless of its cost, sooner or later it's going to face a wash or laundry day.

If we wear it, it will be soiled and will need to be cleaned.

In times past wash day was more difficult than it is today. In the distant past women would take clothes to a river, pond or creek and rub them together in their hands or against stones. Later, lye soap, a rub board and a tin tub modernized the process. Someone invented a machine with an agitator in the middle called a washing machine which left only the wringing and drying to be done by hand. Then someone invented a wringer that sat on top of the washer; followed later by a dryer which made the clothesline and clothespin obsolete. These were expensive, many people still do not own them, and so today Washaterias still exist where families use public washers and dryers.

Washday is a humbling experience because it reminds us that no matter who we are or high important we are, everyone has dirty laundry in their homes. We don't see it or like to think about it, but everyone has an appointment with a washroom; they will either do it themselves or pay someone to do it for them, but everyone has a washday.

The same can say about our lives. No matter who we are or how important we think we are, at the end of the day, we are all stained, some more than others, but stained never-the-less.

Just as industry has not discovered a material that will not stain or soil, neither has God created a life that is sin-proof. No matter what our station in life, we are vulnerable to sin. Preachers and deacons sin, members in the pew sin. Everyone sins. That's why Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

On wash day we apply every known technique to clean our clothes, often they appear to work, but sometimes need something stronger. The whites didn't get white enough, so we added Purex. A certain stain didn't completely come out so we worked on it longer. Then we realized that certain stains needed special solvents to remove them; then and only then were the stains removed.

That's the way it is with the Christian life. We are all sinners, people with stained and dirty spiritual lives that are constantly being washed by the Holy Spirit and dipped in the blood of Jesus."

As Christians, we are humbled by our vulnerability to sin. However, we are equally strengthened to know that there is no stain in our lives that the blood of Christ cannot remove.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's vision of the last days in which the faithful appear in white robes.

The Revelation tells the events which will take place in the last days. It describes two specific periods of time which are yet to come. One is a seven year period that is called the great tribulation. At the end of this period the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. The second is a 1000 period in during which Christ rules on earth and Satan is bound. Before the heavenly kingdom begins there are many who will come to know Christ in the last days who will be persecuted because of their faith; these will be rewarded.

Revelation 7:14 focuses on the appearance of a small army of martyrs who stood before the throne of God dressed in white robes proclaiming victory.

Their presence and attire is both prophetic and symbolic. It is prophetic in that it shows us what will happen in the last days. It is symbolic in that it represents the triumph of every believer over the plots and plans of Satan for their lives.

These represented in the vision came through great tribulation, imprisonment, loss of property and goods and even the loss of life itself. Their victory shout that is released at the end of the tribulation period equals the victory shout of every believer who has suffered, sacrificed and endured loss for the sake of the kingdom.

Of special interest is that each of them is wearing a white robe that has been washed in the blood of the lamb. The fact that their robes will be washed indicates that at one time they had been stained, but cleansed through the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. The robes were made white by power of the blood of Christ. Thus, they

will stand before the throne of God as victors. Their once stained robes will symbols of their triumph over the impact of evil in their lives.

How to wash our robes

John's vision was of an event that will occur in the last days. But what about now? Can a person who is stained with sin be forgiven, cleansed and given a new start in life? How can we wash our robes?

ADMIT WE ARE DIRTY: There are many who don't wash their clothes until they can see the dirt or smell an odor. They know that they are soiled because they have been worn, but they are not disturbed about dirt until it shows. If there is no visible stain or foul odor some ask, "Why wash it; can't we just wear it again?"

Whether it's the sheets on our beds, the socks on our feet or a shirt or blouse, there are many who say, "it ain't dirty until you can see it or smell it." They have the same attitude about sin in their lives. Many feel that unless a sin shows there is no need to worry. As long as we are not caught drunk, gambling, living a gay lifestyle, stealing, or engaging in other immoral acts, there is no need to wash our robe because our dirt doesn't show. Yet, God knows our secret. He knows that we appear to be living moralistic lives, but he also knows our secret sin. Psalm 90:8 says our secret sins are in front of God, he knows we are dirty and need of cleansing. When we also reach that conclusion that's when we agree that it's robe washing time.

WE MUST SEPARATE: Before dirty clothes can be machine washed they must be separated. It's one of the first rules we learn about wash day; colored and white clothes don't wash together. One will have a deleterious effect on the other if they are washed together. That same spirit holds true for the person who wants forgiveness for sin and a brand new start. You can't come to God and bring the world with you. You can't serve God and the devil at the same time. We must separate ourselves from our sinful life. We still know our old drinking buddies but we don't go that direction anymore. They are still your friends, but you are no longer running buddies. My old buddies chase women or hunt men but I don't go there anymore. We can't join the kingdom of God and still embrace our old lifestyles, doing the same things, going to the same places and hanging out with the same people with the exception that now we go to church on Sunday. 2 Corinthians 6:17 says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." If we try to hang on to the world and get the bleaching effect of the anointing at the same time, the results will be the same as washing whites and coloreds at the same time with bleach added. Instead of the whites being whiter they are off white, pink or light blue. If you have decided that it's robe washing time, then it is also time to separate and leave the world behind.

WANT THE STAIN REMOVED: We must want our stains to be removed, cleaned and renewed. That may sound strange, but there are many who are not willing to do what's necessary to remove the stains in their lives they simply have decided to do what they can to keep the stain from being seen without really

removing it. There are many stain removers today that market themselves as stain removers, but they are actually stain concealers. They advertise that they contain whiteners that remove the stain but in actuality the whiteners don't remove the stain they whiten or brighten the area around the stain to make it appear to have disappeared. Often we don't care if the stain is really gone, as long as it is not visible. For salvation to work in our lives we have to move one step beyond not wanting it to show, we have to want the stain removed. We can hide it by attending a church service or singing in a choir or serving in the church. For a while it will appear that there is no stain, until it shows up. Our stain is hidden temporarily because of the brightness of the anointed ones around us. When we reach the point that we want a clean spirit, that's when we know that it's "robe washing time." That's when we say like David in Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." That's when we say Lord, don't cover it up but remove the stain of sin in my life. Make me over again!

Solvent must match the stain

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember that to really remove a stain, you must use the right stain remover; the solvent must match the stain.

We have to match the solvent with the stain because it takes certain kinds of solvents to remove certain stains from our person or our clothes

Many activities we undertake that are sinful are not visible to the public but are never the-less dirty.

There is a soap for every kind of dirt.

There are special soaps designed to clean spotless every kind of dirt and stain.

If there is dirt on...

DISHES we use Joy Dishwashing liquid
DRAINS we use Drano
CLOTHES we use Tide and Bold
WHITE CLOTHES we use Purex or Clorox
BABY we use Mild Ivory
BODY we use Irish Spring
HAIR we use Alberto Conditioning Shampoo
CARPET we use Rug Doctor Cleaning Solution
CAR MOTOR we use hot steam and water
TEETH we use Gleem or Colgate
TOUGH STAINS....We SHOUT IT OUT!
RING AROUND THE COLLAR we use Whisk!

But if there is a serious sin stain on our lives, what do we use?

But if you have a tell tale ring around the soul, there is only one thing that can clean it white as snow...

The song writer said "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me while again, nothing but the blood of Jesus....Oh precious

is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Jesus, who hung on an old rugged cross!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!
But early Sunday morning…this same Jesus..
God up with all power in his hands!

No. 9287-Revival

Can Lighting Strike Twice?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 11, 2007

SCRIPTURE: He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. Job 37:3-5

Introduction

What are the chances that you could be blessed more than once in the same way? The historical record is filled with references to people who seem to live charmed lives as good fortune seems to follow them wherever they go. In life, they seem to have the Midas touch that turns everything they try into a success. What are the chances of great opportunities coming your way repeatedly? Some would say looking for that to happen is like looking for that "fat chance." They ask, "does lightning strike the same place twice?" The answer is very simple; God does bless the same person more than once, just as lightning often strikes the same place twice.

Those who don't know the Lord like to believe that good things only happen once in a lifetime. We often hear that "Opportunity only knocks once" so we should answer when we hear the first knock. Believers have learned that every opportunity that knocks is not a godly opportunity. They have learned to let ungodly opportunities pass, confident that if opportunity knocks once, when God gets ready it can knock again.

There are many who limit God's ability by saying that some experiences in life are "once in a life time occurrences." It means that there are things that can only happen once in the normal life of human being. But can God be limited to once in a lifetime occurrences? In 1962 Astronaut John Glenn went into outer space in a once in a lifetime experience. But in 1998, 36 years later at the age of 77 Glenn put on a space suit and went back into space again and did more than he did the first time circling the earth 134 times, traveling 3.5 million miles in nine days. George Bush Sr. parachuted from a plane in 1944 during the war. It was viewed as a once in a life time occurrence until he celebrated his 75th birthday by parachuting again, then celebrating his 80th birthday with even another dive, proving that what God has allowed to happen once he can do again.

Chief among the common notions is the idea that "lightning never strikes the

same place twice." It implies that a place once struck by lightning can never be struck again. If the lighting strike produced something good, it is said that it will never happen again, so enjoy it. If it produced something bad, it is said there should be relief because at least the bad thing can't happen again.

Thunder and lightning are biblical symbols that refer to God. In fact, the bible is filled with symbolic language that tries to demonstrate the nature of God. Psalm 29 describes God as the powerful God of the storms who speaks with the voice of thunder and sends lighting crashing through the trees. Matthew 24:27 describes the second coming of Christ as being sudden. It says, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

When the bible speaks about lightning and thunder it often refers to God's actions toward men.

If that's the case, a close look at lightning will reveal a little of God's nature. Lightning occurs when there is a discharge of electricity between positive and negative charges that accumulate in thunder clouds. On occasion positive charges are attracted to something negative on the ground and lightning strikes the ground. On occasion activity on the ground attracts negative charges as well.

Contrary to popular opinion "Lightning can and does strike the same place twice." Roy Sullivan, a national park ranger is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for surviving seven strikes of lighting. There is an area between Tampa and Orlando Florida called lightening alley. According to Wikipedia, in this area lightning strikes an average 50 times a year for every square mile of the distance between the two cities. Researchers reveal that the Empire State Building in New York is struck by lightning in the same place about 23 times a year and was once struck eight times in a 24 minute span. Lightning obviously can strike the same place twice.

If the grace of God has given us opportunity, blessings and mercy, once like a bolt of lightning right out of heaven, can he do it again? If he blessed us once can he do it again? If he showed us mercy once, can he show us mercy again? If favored us once, was it a once in a life time favors. Can he do it again? Can lightning strike twice?

One thing we learn as Christians is that what God does once he can do again. God is not a "one time use" deity that acts miraculously once but cannot do it again. If there have been blessings bestowed on others, he can bless us too. If he has blessed us before, he can bless us again, and even greater.

As Christians, let us rejoice in the knowledge that our God is not limited by time or circumstance. He is able to bless repeatedly; he can strike as many times as he wants.

Exposition

This text focuses on two ways that we are mortals see the hand of God, in the thunder and lightning.

Elihu is the speaker in this text, who is a friend of Job. Job was beset by a number of maladies and setbacks that Job described as vexations.

The book of Job shows the full gamut of life experiences that the godly can expect. He was a good man who lived a righteous life before God. Despite his best efforts, Job found that he experienced not one, but multiple blows that took away both his health and fortune. His children killed, his cattle were stolen, and he broke out into sores and was afflicted to the point of death.

Elihu described the events that were happening to Job as the actions of God. Job 37:2 he described the events that happened to Job as the "noise of his voice" and the "sound that goeth out of his mouth." Elihu said in verse Job 37:3 that God has directed these events as though they were "his lightning."

Elihu said it was obvious lightning that Job faced was the handiwork of God.

In the end God shows us that just as he struck Job with the lightning of his grace once in his life by making him a great family man with great resources, he could make lightning strike twice for him and do the same again. Job 42:10 says the Lord "turned his captivity" and "the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." More money, better health, a large family and even greater happiness than he ever knew was the result.

The nature of lighting

Job 37:3 speaks of God directing the lightning that we experience. If we look at the way lightning makes contact with the ground we can get a better understanding of how God directs our lightning experience. We know that negative or positive activity on the ground attract lightning. We also know that any single lightning bolt we see is actually made up of several smaller parts called strokes. When lightning strikes it is actually three or four strokes at the same time. That understanding may be the key to several spiritual truths.

Many believers can attest to lyrics of the song that says, "I have seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll and felt sin breakers dashing trying to conquer my soul." But what attracts the lightning to us:

OUR FAITH ATTRACTS LIGHTNING: It was Job's great righteous life that attracted the lightning. Job 1:1 says that he was perfect and righteous. That righteousness caught the devil's attention. That reminds believers that they become targets of the devil whenever they attempt to live the Godly life. 1 Peter 5:8 says, the devil is like a hungry lion looking for someone to devour, destroy and annihilate. It's almost as if the devil throws lightning bolts at us when we make up in our minds to do right. Each bolt doesn't seem to be a single event but a series of small things that all seem to happen at one time. That's what happened to Job. His children, wealth, then his health..all hit him at one time. Thus, believers should stay prayed up and on guard because the more we want to be Christians the more the devil tempts us otherwise.

WHEN LIGHTNING FLASHES, STAY HUMBLE: When the lightning began to flash what was his response. His friends urged him to curse God and die.

In Job 13:15 he responded, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him…" He remained humble and faithful to God. The National Weather Service says that if we get caught in a lightning storm that we should bend down and lean forward with our hands on our knees, touching as little of the ground as possible, becoming less of a conduit. In a similar sense there is significance spiritually to the man or woman who bows in prayer and submission to God when the lightning is flashing, testing our faith. Great Grandma didn't know much about weather science, what she knew was that when the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled, God was doing his business. She made her children sit still and humble themselves before God. No matter how the lightning flashes during your faith test keep humbling yourself before God and you will be less of a conduit of evil thoughts and actions that result from broken faith.

OUR SINS ALSO ATTRACT LIGHTNING: While it was Job's faith that attracted the lightning, our negative actions can attract lightning with the hope that they will bring about a positive result. It was the sin of homosexuality and Sodomy that drew anger of God and fire from heaven in what some describe as huge lightning bolts destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It was the sin of pride and vanity that stopped the building of the Tower of Babel and was his sin with Delilah that drew the anger of God upon Samson. Our sins can attract lightning; negative lightning. This kind is not a test of our faith but the results of our sin. There are many whose very lifestyles are attracting lightning bolts of misfortune that seem to come in waves, one behind another. Each lightning bolt is a message from heaven. God is trying to tell us something. A believer who faith attracts the lightning humbles himself. The person who sins attracts the lightning gets humble but does more. 2 Chronicles 7:14 tells us exactly what to do, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Lightning does strike twice

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember that while our faith attracts the attention of the devil it also attracts the grace of God.

When God sees a believer trying to living the godly life, he rewards them with favor and grace.

The grace of God is not a once in a life time occurrence for a specific need, but the word reminds that "My grace is sufficient."

It was the grace of God that woke us up this morning and started us on our way! I'm glad that grace is not a once in a life time opportunity, but every day, I see his grace in my life.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God doesn't just bless me one time, but he blesses me so many times every day!

When you take a shower,- and have hot water, you're blessed!

When you flip the switch and the lights come on- you're blessed!

When you sit down and eat a mess of greens and cornbread- you're blessed!

I'm glad that lightning strikes more than once in the same place.

I don't know about you but the Lord has brought me through:
—Valleys of loneliness and vales of tears
—Winds of Persecution and Storms of Opposition
—Nights of Despair and Days of Frustration!
But I'm so glad to know that if he did it once, he can do it again!
Thank you Lord for turning my:
—Failures into success
—Enemies into friends
—Sorrows into Joys
—Duties into Delights
—Miseries into Miracles
I'm so glad that there is still a fountain filled with blood that flows from Emmanuel's veins, Sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain!
His name is Jesus!
He died out on Calvary for our sins!
But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!
He blessed me once I know he can do it again!

No. 9288-Missionary Duty

If You Catch Them, I will Clean Them

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Mark 1:17

Introduction

Have you ever had friends who had a great day fishing to share their catch with you? When they brought you those, Brim, Perches and other fresh water favorites, were they already cleaned? It's great to receive fish as a gift but it's even better when someone gives them to you already scaled, washed and ready for the frying pan.

Cleaning fish can be a nasty job. Those who catch fish enjoy the thrill of the catch, but those who must clean fish have a dirty, smelly, messy job. There are many people who enjoy catching fish, but they detest cleaning them. They often catch many fish then give them to a friend as a gift, uncleaned.

When we receive uncleaned fish we are grateful for the gift, but we may not always be happy with the prospect of cleaning them.

Different fish are cleaned different ways. Those who clean fish such as Brims and Perch usually have to scrape them. Scraping is messy because it usually splashes scales everywhere: on the hands, arms and anywhere within a scrape zone of four or five feet. On the other hand Catfish must be skinned, not scraped. Some find that you need special tools such as a pair of pliers to skin a catfish. No matter which way that is done, cleaning fish is an unsavory experience.

The person who cleans fish must know what to keep and what to throw away. Did you know that in some parts of the country there are people who fry fish with the eyes in place; so they don't throw the eyes away? In some circles fish eggs are considered delicacies. In many parts of the South those who clean the fish leave the head in place, they fry fish with the head on it. Others cut the head off but don't throw it away; they use it separately.

There are some who believe fish heads have special power. Consider Fish head Frank known to everyone in the neighborhood as one of the smartest men in the fish business. Frank started as a man who cleaned fish. It wasn't long before he owned the fish market. One of his neighbors was curious about the source of his smartness so he asked Fish head his secret.

"I wouldn't share my secret with just anyone, I don't tell many people, but the secret is Fish heads." When you clean the fish you don't through away the heads. You eat enough of them, you'll be really smart."

"You sell them here?" the neighbor asks.

Only $4 apiece," says Fish head.

The neighbor bought three fish heads from a big smelly bucket. A week later, he's back in the store complaining that the fish heads had not made him any smarter.

"You didn't eat enough," said Fish head. The neighbor goes home with 20 more fish heads. Two weeks later, he's back and this time he's really angry.

"Hey, Fishhead," he says, "You're ripping me off. You're selling me fish heads for $4 a piece when I can buy the whole fish for $2. You're ripping me off!"

"You see?" says Fish head. "You're smarter already."

Today, Jesus challenges every believer to be a fisher of men. However, while he wants us to catch lost men, we have the joy of knowing that he doesn't expect us to save them from their sins or pay the price for their redemption.

Our task is to learn to be fishers of men. Cleaning them is beyond our ability. Only the blood of Christ can do that.

As Christians, we are thankful to God that Christ, through his death on Calvary, has made atonement for our sins. As believers, our task is to get this good news to as many people as possible, knowing that if we catch them, the blood of Christ will wash them white as snow.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he challenged the apostles to become fishers of men.

As Christ assembled his inner circle of disciples he challenged them to use their secular skills for spiritual purposes; building the kingdom of God. The phrase "I will make you fishers of men" refers to the transformation of their former calling into a spiritual one. The targets of this particular invitation were fishermen by trade. They were asked to do what they knew how to do best, fish; but using the same basic principles Christ said he would show them how to become fishers of men.

According to Matthew Henry, it was usual with Christ to speak of spiritual and heavenly things under such allusions, and in such expressions, as took rise from common things that offered themselves to his view. David was called from feeding sheep to feed God's Israel; and when he is a king, is a shepherd.

Calling men in one profession and challenging them to use their skills in the business of kingdom building was the nature of Jesus' relationship with the disciples. His constant reminder to them was that they did not necessarily need the power to do what needed to be done, but that he would do it through them.

The emphasis therefore is on the "I will make you.." part of the text. It is here that Jesus challenges his disciples to catch men in the spiritual net and he would do the rest. For this work Jesus will qualify them, authorize them and give them the commission to fish for souls.

To become a fisher of men the disciples had to follow Christ completely. They had to separate themselves and follow him as their Leader. That means they had to learn the nature of the new calling and how to retrain themselves for spiritual fishing.

Those who would get an acquaintance with Christ, must be diligent and constant in their service to him. The apostles were prepared for their work, by accompanying Christ all the. Those who are to fish for men, must follow Christ, and do it as he did, with diligence, faithfulness, and tenderness.

Christ never told his disciples that they would save those that they brought to the faith. They were never given the responsibility to sacrifice themselves to pay for the sins of believers. Their job was to catch the lost; salvation would be a work of the Holy Spirit living within them.

How to fish for men

If the church is to become fishers of men, perhaps it should use a few rules followed by most fishermen.

GO WHERE THE FISH ARE: Every avid fisherman knows that there are certain places that fish congregate, depending on the type of fish caught. Some fish must be caught in fresh water; others are scavengers and hang around muddy areas; some are salt water only. Regardless to what type of fish we are trying to catch, we must go where the fish are. Jesus commanded his disciples to "Go ye therefore." That was a command to scatter themselves across the earth in every nook and cranny to spread the Gospel message. The church that wants to become fishers of men must follow the same rule; we must go where the fish congregate. We often wait for the fish to jump in the boat; right into the frying pan. We are reluctant to go where they congregate; which is usually some place other than church. We must go into the highways and byways, brothels and juke joints, discos and bingo parlors, bordellos and casinos and cast our net. Don't worry about how we will clean them; Christ's command to us is to witness, testify, teach and baptize; he will do the rest.

USE THE RIGHT BAIT: What fisherman expects to catch a wide mouth bass using an earth worm for bait? Avid fishermen can testify that every species of fish has its own lure or bait. Those who fish with a cane pole and earthworms can catch Perch or Brim. But those who want the big fish must use lures. In terms of sport fishing, a lure is an object attached to the end of the fishing line and designed to resemble and move like an item of fish prey. Lures are equipped with one or more single,double, or treble hooks that are used to hook fish when they attack the lure. An exception is fly lures, commonly called "flies" by fishermen, which either float on the water surface, slowly sink or float underwater, and are based on real behavior of insect being resembled. Whether we use an old fashioned earthworm or a fancy lure; we must use the right lure. The same is true when people are drawn to the church. We should be wary of luring men to the church with promises of prosperity, riches and health. It gets their attention but it does not introduce them to the saving power of God. We should not attempt to lure them into the church out of sympathy

for the loss of a loved one; this usually wears off as the memory of the loved one fades. We shouldn't try to scare them into the church either with damnation presentations that chill the soul but do not warm the heart. What we should do is preach Christ and him crucified. It is not trickery or a slick lure; it's his love for us. We don't have to do anything else but lift him up; he says, "If I be lifted up from the earth I'll draw all men unto me."

BE INCONSPICUOUS: To become successful fishermen you need to become almost invisible. When fish see the fisherman they scatter. The best fishermen have learned that fact.

Dr. Mark Guy Pearce once related an experience that presents a good lesson for the soul-winner. He said he was out fishing for trout; he had toiled wearily and caught none. His equipment was excellent but he was unable to catch any fish. Finally he came upon an old fisherman whose sack was full of trout. He asked him how he was so successful.

The old fisherman answered: "There are three rules to follow in trout fishing: first, keep yourself out of sight; second, keep yourself further out of sight; third, keep yourself still further out of sight."

The preacher walked away musing upon this thought: That is the best advice I have ever heard for becoming a successful fisher of men. I must keep myself out of sight and put Jesus Christ in full view.

We must always remember to keep Christ foremost; it is not about us, it is about him. If we catch them; he will clean them.

Fishers of Men

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that our job is catching the fish, cleaning them is God's job.

Cleaning fish can be a dirty business, that's why some don't like to fish. Yet our savior is not asking us to clean the fish, only to catch them.

He is asking us to preach the word that will increase their faith because faith "cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

He is asking us to teach the word that will increase their knowledge if they study to show themselves to be workman that rightly divide the works of truth.

He is asking us baptize the world in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he has told us.

But while he is asking to preach, teach and baptize, he is not asking us to save a single soul.

He is not asking us to personally pay the price of redemption!

He is not asking us to give our blood in payment for their sins!

He is not asking us to clean the fish; just catch them and he'll do the rest.

If we catch them, Christ is prepared to clean them.

He has prepared a way for our salvation. Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

As great preachers, lay teachers and ministers won souls for the kingdom the cry went out through time and eternity...the Lord needs somebody to save them from their sins. Who will go?

Abraham couldn't go; he had to deal with the lamb in the bush!
Moses couldn't go; he had to administer the commandments!
Elijah couldn't go; he had to wrestle with the prophets of Baal!
Ezekiel couldn't go; he had to envision the dry bones in the valley!
Daniel couldn't go; he had to spend the night in the Lion's Den!
Malachi couldn't go; he was possessed by a people that were robbing God!
John the Baptist couldn't go, because he wasn't worthy to untie his shoes!
Down the halls of time I hear a voice saying "prepare me a body" I'll go!
It's a messy job but I'll do it!
It's a bloody job, but I'll do it!
He came to a prepared body!
He died on a prepared cross!
He was buried in a prepared tomb!
But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave! He's alive today!
Keep spreading the good news!
If you catch them, he will clean them!

No.9289-Inspiration

What's taking you so long?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2, 2007

SCRIPTURE:"Meanwhile, the congregation waiting for Zachariah was getting restless, wondering what was keeping him so long in the sanctuary." Luke 1:21 (message)

Introduction

Did you make a resolution at the beginning of this year? Have you been working on it? If not, what's taking you so long? There are many people who made wonderful pledges at the beginning of the year, but now, with only a few weeks left in the year, they still have not done what they said they would; even worse, many have not even made the first step.

Is there something that you know you should be doing but you are not doing it? For some there moves they need to make in their relationships, but as of yet, nothing really has been done. Why not? What's taking you so long?

There are others who have important business decisions that are constantly being put off. They need to be made for betterment of the business, but they have not been done. Why not? What's taking you so long?

For one person it's a health matter for another it is a family issue and for still another it is a moral dilemma that needs attention; we know it needs to be done but we avoid it like the plague. If it needs to be attended to, why haven't we done so? What's taking us so long?

Everyone has a good reason why they take so long to do things. Consider the new pastor of the local church who had a great reputation for finding bible verses to say what he wanted to say to members. One day he visited Looney Larry's house. Looney Larry had a reputation for doing strange things; the preacher was warned but he went anyway. When he rang the Looney doorbell he heard someone in the house but no one ever came to the door. After 15 minutes of knocking and ringing the doorbell he decided to leave Looney a note written on the back of his card; it only said "Revelation 3:20 What took you so long?" Looney took that card that was slid under his door and looked up the verse in the bible; it read, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The next Sunday the ushers passed the preacher a note from Looney Larry, it had a bible verse written on it: Genesis 3:10 "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked." -He couldn't find his pants that's why it took him so long.

When it comes to our spiritual lives there are some who were out of the church

for many years before they finally returned. What took them so long? If we listen to their testimonies we will hear their horror stories of misfortune, failure, troubles, lost causes, dark alleys and lonely night. They will also tell you that they lost many precious years in the world chasing the illusion of happiness, trying to shake the money tree and settling for nuts on the ground. They are happy now, but it took them such a long time to get it together because they were convinced that what they sought was right around the corner, in the next roll of the dice, on the next bingo card, or in the arms of the next woman or man. It took them a long time to see it, but when they came face to face with God, they were speechless. The only thing they could say is, "I was once lost, but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

Jesus is standing at the door of your heart knocking, why don't you let him in?

As Christians we know that the best day in our lives is the day we decided to trust God completely, fully without fear or doubt. He's still calling for someone to trust him today but there has been no answer. What's taking you so long?

Exposition

The text focuses on Zacharias who went into the temple to burn incense and ended up staying a long time.

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were a priestly couple who had worked faithfully in the service of God all of their lives. There two great things that could have crowned their lives as they served in their senior years, both of which they felt were out of their reach considering their age. One great accomplishment would have been to have a child and the second would have been to have the opportunity to enter the temple, burn the incense and pronounce the blessing at the end. Since they both had reached old age, they felt both of these opportunities had passed them by.

Yet, despite their age God chose this devout couple to do both. Zacharias was a priest but he was just one of thousands of priests, many of whom waited lifetimes for a chance to lead the worship and pronounce the blessing for a week. God ordered circumstances so that Zacharias was selected.

While in service an angel appeared to him inside the Temple. This troubled Zacharias and made him afraid. He was told that he and his wife would have a child who would be the forerunner of the Messiah; his job would be to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. Zacharias doubted that possibility, again looking at his old age, and was told that he would have a child but because of his doubt he would not be able to speak until it had come to pass.

Zacharias' encounter with the angel extended his time in the temple much beyond the usual time. Outside the people became impatient. When he finally appeared they wondered, what he took him so long? Then they figured out that he must have been in the presence of the Lord and seen a vision.

Zacharias shortly after his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and John the Baptist was born. It was a long time coming, but God was about to move on the face of the land.

What takes us so long?

There are generally three reason why we take a long time to do things, all of which have been demonstrated in this text. An examination of each one might give us spiritual insight into ways to deal with our tendencies to put off that which we know must be done.

WE ARE DELAYED BY OUR TROUBLES: Luke 1:12a says, "And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled.." Had it not been for the fact that he was troubled, Zacharias would have performed his priestly duties and shortly after would have blessed he people, but he was troubled. In a similar manner there are many of us can't quite get it together because of troubles in our lives. We spend most of our lives responding to trouble. Bills, family problems, marriage problems, school problems, parents, children, bosses, losses, gains and pains all spell trouble. We tell ourselves that when we get through dealing with our troubles then we will have time to find the Lord.

Instead of waiting until our troubles are over, the bible says when trouble comes that's one of the times we should look for the Lord, not afterwards. Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." While trouble is rising we get it together, then. We should not try to wait until trouble is over to get ourselves together because we need to be together to deal with the trouble. Those who know the Lord agree with the song writer B. Chase Williams who said, "Trouble in my way. I have cry sometime. Lay awake at night, but that's alright. Jesus will fix it, afterwhile."

Don't until your troubles end to start getting your life together; do it now. What are you waiting for? What's taking you so long?

WE ARE DELAYED BY OUR FEARS. Look at the be part of verse Luke 1:12 "..and fear fell upon him." Zacharias was afraid when he saw the angel. No reason is given, but some think he might have been afraid that he had made a mistake that was about to bring judgment on him. He may have been afraid of the wrath of God or humiliation in the face of the people. Whatever the reason, "fear fell upon him." Therein lies the second reason that some are taking so long to get their lives on target. Fear. Many are afraid that they will fail and become the object of ridicule of their friends. We are afraid that we may make a mistake. So that business never gets started. That expansion never happens; that relationship never begins; or never ends they way we know it should. Because we are afraid we often missed opportunities God presents to us. Yet when we are engaging in a godly we have the assurance that he will be with us. Isaiah 41:10 puts it this way, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Fears hold us back and stands in the way of what God has in store for us. Yet we should hear the words the angels told Zacharias, "Fear not." We should hear the words told to the women at the tomb, "Fear not." We should hear what was told Joshua at the Jordan, "Fear Not." What's taking you so long?

WE ARE DELAYED BY OUR DOUBTS: Often it takes us a long time to get to our level because of our doubts. Look at Luke 1:20. It says, "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." When Zacharias was told that he would have a child in his old age he doubted it. God chose to bless him anyway but he received a small punishment for his slackness in faith. He doubted God. Doubt means that there is distrust. It means that we believe in God but we don't trust him to handle our situation. That often happens when we leave the mountaintop experience of worship and move into the valley of reality. When we are faced with the hard circumstances that life presents, doubts enter our minds. Those doubts keep us from doing what we should be doing. They detain us. They restrain us. They hold us back. It should have taken Israel about two weeks, a month at the most to leave Egypt and make it to the Promised Land. However, because of their doubts they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Doubt is why it took them so long. If we want to claim our promise we must trust God. To trust God is to stand in the face of adversity like the three Hebrew Boys when questioned whether God would deliver them. Our response should be the same as theirs "Our God is able to deliver us..." It should be the same as Daniel, faced with a tenacious and horrible death in the lion's den, but he entered it confident that God would make a way. Our faith should be the same as that expressed by song writer Daryl Coley when he said, "But if the storm don't cease and if the winds keep on blowing in my life my soul has been anchored in the Lord." Why is it taking you so long to become anchored in the Lord. When will you get it together? What's taking you so long?

God moves in his own way

Finally, we must consider that the people were in a hurry for a blessing, but God moves in his own time.

Luke 1:21 notes that, "..The people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple." They had come from great distances and hundreds of miles to make their sacrifices but they would not leave until they received the blessing which was the benediction of the worship.

Normally, it was a short amount of time for the priest to burn the incense and close out the worship with the blessing, so they became anxious and wanted to know what was taking Zacharias so long.

They were in a hurry to get their blessing, but when Zacharias returned they realized that he had been in the presence of God and God moves in his own time and way.

Sometimes we want a blessing and we want it in a hurry. We want to hurry God as if he is constrained to move and act according to our will. That's why the song writer says, "You can't hurry God, sometimes you just got to wait. He may not come when you want him, but he's right on time."

This text was not so much about Zacharias and Elizabeth personally, as it was evidence that God hears our prayers but he answers them in the fullness of time.

For 500 years the descendants of Abraham wandered from place to place, looking for a city not made by hands. In their frustration they remembered God's promise to Abraham and somebody asked, "What's taking you so long?"

For 400 years Israel labored in the slave pits of Egypt crying out to God every day. In their desperation they kept asking, "What's taking you so long?"

For 40 years the people wandered aimlessly in the desert unable to cross over into the land of promise because of their fear. They remember God's promise to Isaac and Jacob about a land flowing with milk and honey and they asked, "What's taking you so long?

For over 400 years between the last words of Malachi in the Old Testament there was no word from heaven or prophet from God. They remembered God's promise and somebody asked the same question again, "What's taking you so long?"

Don't you know that we are struggling down here? What's taking you so long?

Don't you know that we can hardly make ends meet down here? What's taking you so long?

Don't you know that we are living from day to day and are literally standing on your word? What's taking you so long?

Don't you know that we are being discriminated against and treated as second class citizens? Tell us, what's taking you so long?

Don't you know that many of our leaders are selling themselves to Caesar for handfuls of silver and empty seats of power? What's taking you so long?

Our homes are falling apart and our people becoming dependent on the Roman welfare, handouts and begging in the streets? What's taking you so long?

Can't you see God reaching down from glory, saying I've heard the cries of my people. I'm sending them a voice crying in the wilderness saying "prepare ye the way."

In the fullness of time God sent John to tell the world that God was getting ready to move!

Can't you hear the commandment, tell them John that God is getting ready send somebody from heaven to answer their prayers and show them that God cares.

The world could care less about the burdens we bear, but in the fullness of time God would send somebody who would say, "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.!

The world could care less about the tears you shed, but in the fullness of time somebody's coming from heaven to say, "And God shall wipe all tears away!"

The world could care less about your cares and wants, but in the fullness of somebody's coming that that will remind that the "Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

In the fullness of time God searched the staff files of heaven and looked for someone to send, but every man every name that pop up on the screen had a problem.

—David had blood on his hands!

—Samson had a woman problem

—Hosea had a cheating wife

—Esau had a crooked brother who may cause a problem!

—Balaam had a pocket full of bribery money

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Send me and I'll tell them that "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Send me and I'll tell them that "blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

Send me and I'll tell them that "blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted!"

Send me and do more than tell them, I'll show them how much God loves the world!

When the time was right, he was born down in Bethlehem!

When the time was right, he was healed the sick and raised the dead!

When the time was right, he fed thousands and made the blind see!

When the time was right he picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

He's alive today and he's knocking on your door! What's taking you so long to answer?

No. 9290-Christmas

A Heavenly Visitor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 16, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78-79

Introduction

Have you ever had visitors in your home? During the holidays many expect visits from their family and friends. Some visits are expected and antici pated with great joy. There are other visits that are unexpected and still others that seem to never end. There are occasionally a few visitors that we dread.

Visitors in modern time differ from those of times past. A few generations ago, visitors came to visit for weeks or months at a time. It was not unusual for a cousin, aunt or in-law to visit for the entire summer or at least a few weeks. The front porch was a place where many families received visitors. Equipped with rockers and swings visitors in the past would sit on the porch and talk for hours before leaving. Technology has reduced visiting to mere contacts. Today visits are made by land base telephone, cell phones, video cams, text messaging, email, Facebook and MySpace pages. Personal visits are reserved for very special people and even those must be short.

Special preparations are usually made when we expect visitors. Visitors receive our best manners, eat out of our best plates and are afforded our most cordial courtesies. There are some visitors who are not really visitors at all. They are so familiar to our homes that we don't view them as strangers to our homes. When they visit, the shoes stay in the middle of the floor, there is no quick clean up and they know to make themselves at home if they can find an empty chair. These are the ones with whom we feel comfortable, safe and open; with no need for pretense. These visitors are not really visitors at all, because they are almost family.

However, even among family members there are always some whose visits are always anticipated, welcomed and seem all too short. Remember when Grandma visited your home. The children were excited when they heard that grandma was coming to visit. It seemed to be their greatest joy; anticipating her arrival. When asked why they were so excited about Grandma's visit, they all had the same reason. When Grandma comes to visit she pays attention to everything they do and rejoices in their accomplishments. If there is a button missing or broken toy, she fixes it. She

gets in the kitchen and feeds us big meals. She listens to us when we tell her funny stories. When get hurt she tells us what to do to get better. She never leaves without hugging us and telling she loves us.

That may explain the reason the Christian world is excited about Christmas. We are excited because God came to visit man on earth. We celebrate because he listened, rejoiced, healed and blessed when he came. He did not leave without showing the world how much he loved each and every person.

As Christians, we celebrate Christmas because it marks the time we celebrate the coming of a heavenly visitor. He comes into our lives to brighten our days, correct us when we stray, bless us, heal us and love us. He shows us that he loves us every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on Zacharias' anthem of praise to God and his joy at having received a heavenly visitor in his family.

There are three songs or anthems in the 1st chapter of Luke. The first is Elizabeth's anthem as she sang about the visit of Mary saying "blessed is Mary, blessed is the fruit of her womb." The second song was Mary's song, known as the Manificat. In her song Mary rejoiced because God had magnified her. The last is Zacharias' song called the Benedictus which was prompted by the birth of John the Baptist at which time his speech was restored.

In his song Zechariah recalled hundreds of years of God's movement among the people, beginning with Abraham and going on into eternity. Then, he personalized the story by praising God for choosing his son to play a key role in the drama of the ages.

Zacharias praised God for visiting both himself and Israel and that dayspring of their experience when both sat in despair to bring them hope. For Zacharias God's visit came at a time when he thought he was beyond the point of blessing. God's visit reminded him that nothing is impossible with God.

GOD VISITS US: Luke 1:78 indicates a great truth: God does actually visit the world in general and with people in particular. Zacharias acknowledged the visit God to his family and the approaching visit of God to the world in the person of his Son Jesus. David wondered what was so special about mankind that God would so closely watch each of us. In Psalm 8:4 he asked, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psalm 8:4—

There is power in the word "visited." The word translated visited is from the Greek word episkeptomai – which means to go see about, lookout for and relieve. It indicates that when God visits he intends to check on us, see about us, lookout for us and relieve us. God visited Adam in the garden to check on him. He visited Israel in the Wilderness to lookout for them. He visited Hezekiah in his sick room to relieve him.

Today, we should not be afraid for God to visit us but should invite him. When he comes he brings blessings and encouragement peace and hope. That's why some

of the old warriors sang, “Spirit come in the building if you don’t stay long.” When God visits he honors us with his presence. We don’t want to miss an opportunity to visit with him that’s why we sing “Pass me not oh Gentle savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou are calling, do not pass me by.”

HE NOT ONLY VISITS US HE BECOMES LIKE US: The unique nature of the incarnation is that God not only chose to visit us but for a while he chose to become like us. That’s unusual because Kings may visit their subjects but they do not think of living like them. Christ visited us on earth for 33 years. He was born the way we were born, lived in the community mankind just as we have, and experienced all of our passions, triumphs, joys and disappointments. He even wept. He not only visited, he assumed our nature. The incarnation marks “God with us.”

God sees our daily needs. He scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive. He sees our need for food, clothing and shelter health care and emotional support. The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. In Matthew 6:28 Jesus told his disciples to consider the lilies of the field how God feeds and clothes them. He said if God pays attention to the lilies he would also care for their needs.

It’s easy for him to see it because he is with us.

No matter what our situation God sees our need. This should be a reason for hope for every believer because we know that our individual situation is not unnoticed by the savior because he is with us each and every day. Therefore, the songwriter asks, “Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.”

HE NOT ONLY VISITS WITH US, HE VISITS IN US: When Christ ascended into heaven he sent the Holy Spirit to live in us on a daily basis. He makes our bodies his temple through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this visit he does not take a body of his own but lives within us. Because God lives in us he directs and motivates us. Those moments when we found ourselves in a slump were impossible times; we came to a complete halt and it was only the Holy Spirit that prompted us to get going again. The same is true when we were saved from big mistakes. Sometimes it was the stumbling block that frustrated us that saved us from the troubling situation. It has been the Holy Spirit; living in us who helped us passed our most troubling moments. We can’t quite describe how God lives in us. One song writer said, “Something within me that holdeth the reigns. Something within that banishes pain…all that I know there is something within.”

At our darkest hour.he visits

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that when we are at our darkest hour, God visits and brings us a ray of hope.

Luke 1:78 says that God comes to us as the dayspring of our experience. The text says the “dayspring from on high hath visited us.”

What is this dayspring? The word dayspring is from the Greek work “Anatole”

which means the rising up. The dayspring refers to a time of each day when the darkness is broken by the gradual rising of the sun.

Luke 1:79 indicates that the dayspring from heaven will bring light to them that are in darkness and guidance to those who are lost.

In our darkest hour God visits us and becomes our dayspring.

In our darkest hour, when we don't know which way to go, God visits our souls!

In our darkest hour, when it appears that all is lost, God shows us the light of day!

In our darkest hour God rises up in us.

When God rises up we can see glory of his light.

When God rises up there is no fear of the howling winds!

When God rises up there is no anxiety over the possibility of failure!

When God rises up there is no frustration over the meddling of the devil!

When God rises up there is no wonder about what tomorrow will bring!

When God rises up there is no dismay at the viciousness of life's storms!

I don't know about you but I've found out that in the darkest hour, God always seems to show up and rise up!

When God rises up my burdens seem lighter! Maybe that's why he said "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest…My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The birth of Christ should remind us that a heavenly visitor is with us; that God's spirit is in us and that no matter how dark it gets he is our dayspring.

In the darkness of our silent nights he gives new life to our withering hopes!

Christmas should be a reminder that God so love the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Christmas should remind us that over 2000 years ago that the world received a heavenly visitor who brought with him the gift of life and hope!

Christmas should remind us that no matter how troubling our times may become that as long as God is with us and God is in us we will always see the light of day.

The heavenly visitor has been called by many names.

Somebody called him the bright and morning star!

Somebody else called him the sweet rose of Sharon!

Somebody else called him Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace and King of King

His name is Jesus!

He was a heavenly visitor born in Bethlehem,

While he visited, when folks were hungry he fed them;

When folks were hurting he healed them.

He celebrated at the wedding he cried at funeral of a friend;

But when it was time to go, he couldn't leave with showing the world how much he loved us.

He picked up an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary.

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave saying in his spirit..'Goodbye world, I'm going home!"

No. 9091-Christmas

Some Assembly Required

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 22, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

Introduction

Have you ever bought a new toy or gadget, then noticed the sign that read: "Some assembly required?" One of the most dreaded experiences of Christmas is those long hours trying to assemble the pieces of a bicycle, desk, computer table, or other special product that the salesman said could be put together in a snap.

There are many who remember a floor filled with nuts and boats, diagrams and a wide assortment of tools. The item we purchased looked so grand in the showroom. Somehow, we never thought that huge indoor treadmill we purchased would have to be assembled piece by piece. Even a small table comes in a flat box that has to be assembled. Bookshelves must be assembled. Chairs must be assembled. The only way that you can avoid the drudgery of assembling it is to pay someone to assemble it for you or bribe the salesperson to sell you the model in the showroom.

How do you feel when you see the mass of plastic bags, warranty papers, screws, nuts and bolts? If you are like most people you feel as though you need a PhD to sort out the process successfully. The entire process can make you feel really stupid, especially when someone comes along and puts it together without any trouble at all.

At Christmas time, it appears that the best toys always require some assembly. Isn't life the same way? Great relationships are not bought on the shelf, already put together; there is some assembly required. Great families take years of trial and error to build. There is no off the shelf husband already perfectly assembled; neither is a great wife delivered straight from the wife factory, some assembly is required. Great children don't just happen. An excellent report card in school won't just appear; some assembly is required.

But what about the Christian life? Does it happen instantly? Do we accept Christ and get the Christian life delivered to us with everything in tact? When we are saved, we get all of the pieces delivered to us, complete with instructions. We usually spend a large portion of our lives learning to assemble a life that will be pleasing to God.

On Christmas morning the shepherds found the gift of God, lying in a manger. In the manger was salvation, peace, and blessings. There was only one problem; it was not already assembled. Even today, those who find Christ will soon discover that great life they seek in the Lord does not come pre-assembled; it requires a little work.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that the Christ Child came to the world on Christmas morning as a gift from heaven. We have accepted him joyfully and now commit ourselves to the task of assembling the holy, happy, peaceful and spiritually rich life he gave us when he was born into the world in Bethlehem but into our souls they day we accepted him in our lives

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke's account of the birth of the Christ child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, God's gift to the world.

Mary and Joseph had been told of the birth of Christ by an angel. They knew his birth was special. More than simply special his birth would be God's gift to a troubled world. It was his way of reconciling a distant world to a loving father.

The gift of the Christ Child was a sign from God that he still loved the world enough to allow a part of himself to assume human form and absorb the punishment for their sins.

God's "gift" is available to everyone. It was the perfect gift. Scripture tells us that "...when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." He who was perfect came to us in the form of Jesus Christ.

The gift that God gave the world on Christmas day was the gift of his son.

The gift that he gives us is the opportunity to live an abundant life, happy and fulfilled. The gift he gives is the opportunity to achieve a happy marriage, spirit filled lives that are both productive and praise worthy.

When the angel looked into the manger they didn't see all that. All they saw was a baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Today the great gifts God has in store for us may seem ordinary. That's because today, just as it was then, there is some assembly required.

Putting it together

Two boys talked about what they received for Christmas. One boy bragged that he had received a new bike. The other boy said he got a bike for Christmas two years ago. He said it had 10 speeds, dual hand brakes, high speed tires, lights, reflectors, a G.P.S system, self inflating tires, and satellite monitored night direction.

"Wow said his friend. You've had that for two years?

"That's right "the boy said.

" Why haven't I seen you riding it?

"Mama said she did not feel like putting all that together, so it's still in the box."

There are many of us who have been given the fruit of the Christian life, but it's still in the box.

How do we begin to put it all together?

WE MUST ASSEMBLE THE PIECES: When assembling boxed items, there is usually a list that tells us what is in the box. The list will say there are so many long screws, so many short ones. So many of this and so many of that. The check list allows lets us know what's suppose to be in the box. Those who are the parents of youth must help them figure out what's in their box; what gift talents and unique abilities came in their package. A sharp wit, a quick mind all have meanings. A sense of humor, a touch of stubbornness means something as well. An ear for music, the ability to dance or sing give hints. God gives each of us gifts according to the purpose we were sent here to accomplish. The prophet Jeremiah learned that God ordained him for a special purpose while he was still in his mother's womb. The same is true with us, we come here just like the babe in the manger; sent for a purpose with a pre-ordained life. But, it doesn't come assembled. The girl with the amazing ear for music and tone has to assemble the gift, by perfecting her talent. The youth with the gift of knowledge must sharpen that knowledge with mental challenges that will sharpen them. The pieces must be assembled. Yet there so many today that have reached adulthood and still have not begun to assemble the pieces. We can't quite figure out what this thing is suppose to be. That carries us to the next step.

WE NEED A PICTURE. Most boxed items come with a picture of how the product, once assembled, should look. They show us a snapshot of what the final product will be. Without that picture assembling the product is not impossible but it is difficult. It is the same with the lives we are trying to assemble; we need to picture ourselves as we shall be. We all have haters and detractors who are extremely critical of the disassembled mess that we make of our lives.

We need to start picturing ourselves differently.

We should see ourselves as happy families.

We should see ourselves as content and fulfilled, without it the world will give us its picture which, at best is only a caricature of who we really. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." It means, we can't see the fullness of what God wants to be now, but one day we'll see it all.

All we can see now is the husband who can't stop drinking or running away. All we can see is the nagging wife who always complains. All we can see is the son who dresses with his close hanging preparing for jail and a daughter who dresses ready for a strip club. Unfortunately, that's the way they see themselves right now. But one day, they will see the full picture. The song writer said, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me. When God gets through with me, I shall come forth as pure gold.

WE NEED TO READ THE INSTRUCTIONS: Nearly every product comes with an owner's manual. In the first few pages it usually tells how to put the product together, how operate it, how to maintain it, and what to do if breaks down. Many people never read the owner's manual, they think they know already; saying they all work the same way. The life that we have been given comes with an owner's manual, but many of us don't read it. We think we know how to assemble our lives

without it. Yet, the word of God tells us how to put our lives together, how they should operate, how to do preventive maintainence to avoid breakdowns, and what to do if something breaks. Many don't read the instructions but there are others who can't read the instructions because the language is foreign to them. Often the instructions on a product are written in several languages, but English is on the flip side. When we flip the sheet we can understand. There are many who can't understand the word of God because they are trying to read it from the wrong side of life, but once in the spirit it makes a whole lot of sense. Learning how to assemble the Christian life requires reading the manual. That's why 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

MISSING SCREWS: There are many people who are trying to live great lives but they are missing a few screws. Most of us remember the feeling of satisfaction when we have finally assembled a product and looked it. It looked great; then we discovered that we left out several screws and bolts. If you are like most people, you probably said, it'll be OK, and refuse to go through the trouble of putting every screw and bolt in the right place.

It is that way with our lives, too. We have most of it together, it's standing pretty good, even if we have left out a bolt or too so we don't worry about what's missing. Some are missing regular church worship, bible study, or the tithe. Some families are missing fun time, romance, and just happy days. There are some who conclude that we seem to be doing pretty good without that bolt or that screw. Leave it out. The rich young ruler came to Christ and asked what he needed to assemble his life well enough to enter the kingdom of God. He had put it all together, then Christ said, "One thing thou lackest." He needed the spirit of humility but he left it out. For us our one missing screw might be discipline, commitment or more spirituality. Life seems to work well without that one item until a few weeks later the handle bar on the bike slips out of place, then a book shelf falls, a tire falls off and our lives fall apart.. The screws are there for a reason. Life doesn't come ready to use out of the box, some assembly is required.

Batteries not included

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that many products strike fear in us when we see the words "Some Assembly Required" but we are equally frustrated by the three other words in small type, "Batteries not included."

There are many model airplanes, remote control cars and other products that once assembled can't operate without power. Usually the batteries required are AA cells, AAA cells, D cells and 9 volt batteries. Without the battery the pretty toys we buy are just expensive pieces of plastic and wood.

No matter how well they are assembled many products need power to operate.

But there are many toys on the market that operate well, but the batteries are not included.

That's the difference between the Christian that has been assembled with the

help of the Holy Ghost.

The Christian life needs power, but it does not use batteries. It operates on a spiritual solar cell that is powered by the Son. The son who gives our power never goes down. David in Psalms 121:4-6 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."

If the Holy Ghost has helped you to assemble a Godly life, God will give you the power.

Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"

You can assemble the pieces but it's the Holy Ghost who gives the power.

You can build a house but it's the Holy Ghost who makes it a home!

You can shack together in the same house but it's the Holy Ghost who makes is a marriage.

You can put together a successful profession but it's the Holy Ghost who makes it a ministry.

You can assemble group of singers but it's the Holy Ghost who makes it an angelic choir

You can assemble lights and wrap them around a tree but it takes the Holy Ghost to light up the world.

No wonder the song writer declared, "We'll walk in the light. Beautiful light. Shine all around me by day and by night, Jesus the light of the world!"

It was just a little baby in a manger, but the God we serve presented the world with a gift that once assembled would cause the world to sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come let earth receive her king."

It was just a little cross out on Calvary, but the God we serve presented the world with the gift of salvation that once assembled would cause the world to sing, "I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see!"

It was just a little tomb in the garden, but Early Sunday morning God gave the world the gift of hope that once assembled, would cause the world to sing, "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!"

9292-Inspiration

And the grace of God was upon him

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

December 30, 2007

SCRIPTURE: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." Luke 2:40

Introduction

When you look back over the road you have traveled, what accounts for your journey? There are many who credit their journey to a variety of sources including: education, opportunity, intellectual ability, connections, politics and hard work. There are some who attribute their journey to just plain luck. Many began this year praying for luck, hoping that they would be lucky enough to survive any hard times they may encounter. They also hoped they would be lucky enough to be successful in their careers and varied personal pursuits. When they reach this point they say, "I was lucky."

Was it luck that you survived the storms of life this year?

Was it luck that you overcame that family problem that plagued you?

Was it really luck that landed you the job that you sought?

The new housing opportunity that became available to you, was it by pure luck?

Some never realize the real source of their good fortune. Consider Ungrateful Gary who never gave his wife any credit for the love she had shown him over the years; it made her sad but she loved him anyway. One day Ungrateful Gary took sick and remained in coma for several months. His loving wife stayed by his bedside every day. She read to him, cared for him and loved him back to life. One day he awakened and saw her sitting by the bed holding his hand and motioned for her to come near. He whispered, "While I was in my coma I finally figured something out. When I lost my job, you were there. When I filed bankruptcy and lost the house you were there. When I was fired off my job, you were there. When I totaled the car and ended up in this coma you were there. I have finally figured it out." The wife became so excited because it finally appeared that Ungrateful Gary saw how much she loved him. Then he said, "What I found out is that every time something bad happened to me you were there. Now, I wake up out of this coma and the first face I see is yours; if I could get rid of you, my luck would change." He was so ungrateful that he could not acknowledge that without her his luck would surely change-for the worse.

While there a few who attribute their journey this year to the black eye peas and hog maws they ate on New Year's day or to the lucky rabbit's foot they rubbed or the horseshoe they placed over their door, or the four leaf clover they found; there are others who know that it wasn't luck at all. It was nothing but the grace of God.

The grace of God surrounds and strengthens us. God's grace places someone by our side in times of trouble to help us. The grace of God causes a full plate to be placed on our table when we hunger. The grace of God puts us in the hands of the right doctor, teacher, coach and mentor. Some call it luck, but those who know the Lord know that it's the grace of God.

As Christians, we reflect on the journey we have shared and often peek into the future. We know that it wasn't luck because it was grace that brought us thus far and it will be grace that will see us through.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Christ Child after Christmas; showing how the grace of God was upon his young life.

After Christmas, Mary and Joseph obeyed the Mosaic Law and presented themselves to the temple. They brought the Christ child to be dedicated, blessed and circumcised according to the Mosaic Law. In addition they came to bring their offerings of two turtledoves or two pigeons. They were met by Simeon an older man who did not see death until he had seen the savior. He was also blessed to encounter Anna the prophetess before leaving Bethlehem.

In this text the word "Grace" is translated from the Greek word "charis" which refers to the divine influence upon the heart and life of an individual in a way that is reflected in its direction and purpose. The definition seems to suggest that the recipients of God's grace are those whose hearts and lives are being directed to achieve a divine purpose.

Thus when Luke says "and the grace of God was upon him" he indicates that the life of the Christ child would be divinely influenced and directed to achieve a divine purpose.

It explains how this child was protected in the days after Christmas from soldiers of Herod who sought to kill him.

It explains how, with hundreds of soldiers searching for him, his parents were able to slip him out of the country to live in a foreign land.

It explains further, how Joseph, a poor man was able to survive and provide for his family in Egypt. Moreover, it explains how the wise men found them in Nazareth, almost two years after his birth, and brought them enough funds to carry them for many years.

All of these events were evidences of the divine influences in the child's life to help him achieve a Godly purpose.

When we follow the life of Christ, we get a clear idea of what it means to have the grace of God upon our lives.

GRACE OF GOD SERVES A DIVINE PURPOSE. When the grace of God

is upon us it is for a divine purpose. Dr. H.W. Beecher relates the story of the traveler who came upon a bridge in a storm. Despite the howling winds he rode across the bridge to find lodging in an inn. The next morning he was asked how he was able to cross the bridge. The man answered he just rode across. The inn keeper took him to the bridge site and showed him that the bridge washed out days earlier. Only a strip of plank lay across the raging river and he managed to cross it in the middle of a storm, without missing a step. The traveler nearly fainted when he saw the 100 foot drop that could have been his fate. Then the innkeeper asked, "Where are you going?"He answered, "I'm delivering a vaccine to the hospital across the valley; without it hundreds will die." –The innkeeper then answered, "Now you know why you were able to do the impossible, grace carried you across the bridge because you are an answer to someone's prayers."

In the same sense, God's grace is upon us for a reason. You may be the answer to someone's prayers. We were saved from the fire for a reason. We survived the hardships of the past year for a reason. The accident we encountered should have been fatal but we survived for a reason. The conflict in your family should have destroyed your spirit but it didn't, for a reason. The people you have met have helped you out of all others, for a reason. There has been divine influence in the affairs of your life, not by chance or luck, but that you might achieve a divine purpose.

THOSE WHO ASSIST A DIVINE PURPOSE SHARE ITS GRACE. All of the people who helped the Christ child seemed to have been blessed. Simeon and Anna were blessed in their old age; the inn where he was born has blessed the town of Bethlehem for 2000 years; even the town in which he lived was blessed because it was the town of his childhood. Everyone who helps accomplish a divine purpose is blessed. We frequently refer to a widow woman in the Old Testament whose barrel never ran out of meal because of faith action. She was an example of a person being blessed because of divine purpose. The prophet Elijah was being used by God for a divine purpose. When the woman sought to help him, she found that her barrel never ran dry. She was blessed because she tried to help a man on a divine mission. Rahab hid the Jewish spies in the Promised Land; she was later blessed because she helped them.

Today, there are many people who are the recipients of residual grace, because they helped achieve a divine purpose. Those who rang the Salvation Army bells, served food to the homeless, helped the less fortunate, visited the sick, cared for wayward children or gave a helping hand many small ways are people who helped achieve a divine purpose. Many are the recipients of God's grace because they helped advance the kingdom of God in hundreds of small ways that seem insignificant but yet important to God's purpose.

THOSE WHO RECOGNIZE GRACE ARE HUMBLE: Those who realized the influence of God's grace in their lives are humble. They do not brag or consider themselves great in their own eyes because they know that without God's divine influence they would be nothing. So they are not quick to boast; they know they are empty without him. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul said, "But by the grace of

God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He made it clear that whatever success he had achieved was only through the grace of God, not his own genius. He said God's grace was "bestowed" or given to him, not earned, but freely given. The Christian recognizes that he/she has been guided to this point in life, not by our own knowledge but by the wisdom and intervention of God himself. That knowledge should humble us to know that we are what we are only by his Grace.

When Grace is upon you

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider what happens when God's grace is upon you.

We know that God's grace has a divine purpose. We know that those who help in that divine purpose share in his grace. Moreover, we know that the recipients of God's grace should remain humble. But what happens when God's grace is upon you?

How does your live change when the grace of God is upon you?

When the grace of God is upon us, the wise will recognize that is not luck, but the hand of god gently nudging us in right direction.

That's when we should know that it's time to stop playing around with our lives; its time to begin to live out our purpose.

When the Christ child grew up he recognized the he was being blessed for a purpose. Even at the tender age of 12 he said "It's time for me to be about my father's business."

When grace is upon us we are about our father's business.

When grace is upon us we will be busy doing good in his name.

When grace is upon us we know that God smiles on what we do.

God smiles on us because of the children that we help along the way.

God smiles on us because of the elderly spirits that lift every day!

God smiles on us because of broken hearts we help to mend on our journey

When god's grace is upon us, it means God is smiling on us and is guiding our footsteps.

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand!"

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God has smiled on me.

When God smiles on us, he gives us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

—ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

—COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because of God's grace we are able to:

—Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

—Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

—Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

Because God smiles on us, we have:

—Joy in spite of our sorrows: Peace in spite of our problems

—Contentment in spite of our burdens; assurance in spite of our frustrations

—Comfort in spite of our pain; Victory in spite of our defeats

No wonder the song write declared, “God has smiled on me. He has made me glad!”

I’m glad that He is a wonder working God!

I’m glad that He is a favor giving God!

I’m glad that He is a soul saving God!

I’m glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!

I’m glad that He carried it to Golgotha’s hill!

I’m glad that He died for me out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9293-New Year

The Year of my Increase

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 6, 2008

Scripture:"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Luke 2:52

Introduction

Do you plan to do better in the New Year? Without making any specific resolutions have you decided that you will try harder to really improve your life? If so you are among millions who have also made that same decision. Unfortunately, you were also among the same number that resolved to do better last year but ended up in the same position. There is a reason some of us improved over last year; we did something differently than we did the year before and stuck with it. Others say they will improve but instead of reaching higher ground they remain stuck in sinking sand. Our goal this year, however, should be to make this year the year of our increase.

Before we can improve, we need to analyze our situation correctly and honestly. Consider the man who bought Felix the leaping frog. The man decided that he could really make it big if he took a year and taught the frog to fly. He enrolled the frog in a class that taught him time management, organizational skills and gave him a motivational talk every day. At the end of the year the class ended and the frog came home with a certificate. In the first week of the New Year he tested the frog's flying ability by throwing him out of a first floor window. The frog dropped to the ground but could not fly. Several days later the frog was dropped from the 3rd floor window. He still crashed. After a refresher course he carried the frog to the 10th floor and threw him out of the window; the frog flapped his legs but landed on a pile of rocks and died. The man analyzed all of the events of the last year and finally figured out the problem. The must have faked his grades in school, so he planned to do better in the coming year by finding himself a smarter frog!

When we analyze the reason for our missteps, it's easy to blame the frog, but we should consider whether or not our failure was based on a flawed premise to begin with. So we found our men in clubs then wonder why they don't want to spend time with us, but like hanging out at clubs. She cheated on her last boyfriend and talked to you and you are wondering why she cheats on you. You failed to learn how to add but you think if you keep taking a test on division repeatedly you'll one day you will pass. We desire to be wealthy but we spend foolishly and never save. If we are going

to improve we can't blame the frog! The first step to improvement is to come to grips with the real reason for our failure to improve.

We can improve upon our present circumstance only by changing our course. If we've been working entry level jobs all of our lives, things won't change until we retrain ourselves for the next level. Some get frustrated and want the boss to pay more for entry level positions; but we never consider the possibility of increasing our skill level beyond entry level. To increase we must add something to what we had last year. We must live smarter, wiser and respond to life with more maturity if we are to increase this year.

What about our relationship with God? If we are going to increase our spirituality and get closer to God then we must improve upon what we did last year. I was a member but I gave very little service last year. I gave financially, but nothing like I should have. I prayed occasionally but not regularly. I read the bible but I avoided bible study. I came to church but I still enjoyed the party scene too. If we repeat what we did last year, we will get the same results. If we do, then we shouldn't blame your failure to increase on God or the church. We can only blame ourselves.

To increase we must add something to what we already have. We must get closer to God this year.

As Christians, our desire is to increase and improve our relationship with God. Each New Year gives us another opportunity to seek higher ground and to draw closer to him.

Exposition

This text focuses on how Christ grew toward his purpose and life's work, which was the salvation of mankind.

Luke paints three pictures of Christ. We see him as Christ the baby, small and fragile, destined to spiritual greatness. We see him as a boy, accepting the challenges of manhood. Finally we see him as an adult, shouldering the responsibility of the world as he carries the cross.

As a boy, Jesus learned many things expected of boys. Joseph was a carpenter, thus he immediately learned to be a carpenter in the Jewish tradition. He learned the scriptures early, committing them to memory as he prepared for his manhood. Yet there were other things that he was learning too, which was not common for poor boys. We know he learned to write for John 8:6 gives us an instance in which he wrote on the ground. There is little doubt that he was able to read both Hebrew and Greek. He was obviously maturing rapidly, concentrating on that which he would need to fulfill his life mission.

The Law required all Jewish men to appear before the Lord God at three major feasts in Jerusalem every year: The Passover, which included the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Feast of Pentecost; and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Luke 2:41).

In all of the preparation for returning to Nazareth, Jesus was lost in the crowd of family members. They found him learning from and teaching the rabbis in the

temple.

When they found Him, Mary's words were: Son, why have you thus dealt with us? Behold, your father and I have sought You sorrowing (2:48). And He said to them, Why is it that you searched for Me? Didn't you know that I must be about My Father's business? (2:49).

The text (Luke 2:52) then spans 18 years of time. In that span of time it explains that Christ increased in wisdom and statute as well as in favor with God and man.

Four ways we should increase

INCREASE IN WISDOM: To increase in wisdom, is to increase in discernment. Wisdom and knowledge are not the same. There are many in life who have great wisdom but do not have discernment. The old timers called discernment "common sense" or "horse sense." Every believer should want to increase in wisdom. A wise man generally leads a happy life. Proverbs 3:13 says, Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." It is knowledge that shows us how to earn money; it's through wisdom that we are able to keep it. Good looks and charm can help us land a husband or wife but it is wisdom that shows how to keep what we have gained. It is hard work and ingenuity that helps us get to the top, but it's wisdom that teaches us how to stay on top. If we gain a lot in the coming year without the wisdom and understanding necessary to hold on to it, it will all be for nothing. That's why Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." As we press forward into the New Year, we should resolve that this year will be the year that we increase in wisdom and understanding.

INCREASE IN STATUE: To increase in statue involves physical growth. It also involves maturity. In fact that Greek word in the text for "statue" from "helikos" which means maturity. Although Christ was only 12 years old at the time he was lost in the temple, he was tremendously mature for his age. Maturity covers a wide range of expressions. Maturity touches on our relationships with family members. Do two grown people throw temper tantrums like children? It touches on how we handle victory and defeat; and how we receive and respond to praise? The immature Christian responds to life like a child, sees the world as a child without the ability to see deep into the realities of life. If this is to be the year of our increase we should strive to become more mature in our thinking, relationships with others, and in the way we handle the frustrations of life. We should remember 1 Corinthians 13:11 which says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

FAVOR WITH GOD: To grow in favor with God means to live in such a way that God chooses us to be the main instruments of his will. Associated with that selection, comes all the things necessary for us to achieve our purpose. Mary was a woman who found favor with God. She was humbled by the selection, because of that favor she found that she was protected, directed, provided for through his grace. Jesus increased in favor. It means that each year he become more subject to

the will of God and more willing to give of himself to do what God wanted done. Associated with that, despite being poor, the family carpentry business did well; resources became available to them thanks to unexpected gifts of gold, Frankincense and Myrrh; and there were no reports of disharmony in their home. To increase in favor WITH God is different from favor FROM God. Favor with God indicates how God feels about us. Favor FROM God indicates what God has done for us based on how he feels about us. Do not confuse favor with prosperity. A football player who has favor with the coach has earned his respect. He gets favor from the coach when he is called to get in the game. He is called in the game not so he personally prosper but because he can help the team win. He can take a hit and may be flipped upside down but he can score. High pay and praise may be the result but that's not why he was put in the game. We are trying to win the world for Christ. God selects us and endows us for a service because he knows we can take the world's best shots and still score. If we happen to prosper in the process, great but that's not why he put us in the game. This year, let's increase with favor in God. Let's say "Put me in coach" I'm ready to be a witness.

FAVOR WITH MAN. Christ increased in favor with man. Think back: Christ was favored by man in connection with what he did to win the favor of God. He was favored because he healed the sick, raised the dead and gave sight to the blind, but all of those miracles were performed because he was favored by God. That leads us to a great truth: believers receive the favor and praise of men because they have the favor of God. In our football example: the player who makes the touchdown receives the praise and adulation of the crowds only because he had the favor of the coach who put him in the game. What does that imply to us therefore? It may explain why some of us are always selected to get in the game: serve on the committee, chair the action, coordinate the activity, help with one ministry or another, we are selected or favored by man because it is obvious to all who see us that we are in favor with God. This means that if we intend to increase in favor among men this year, we should work to increase our efforts to earn the favor of God. Those who have the favor of their peers have their trust, support and confidence. That comes most often to those who have found favor with God.

Increase in faith

Finally, brothers and sisters, if this is to be the year of our increase then it must be the year that we increase our faith in God.

There can be no increase in wisdom, maturity, and favor with God and man unless there is a proportionate increase in our faith.

We need to increase our faith in our own abilities, assisted by the power of God.

We need to increase our willingness to step out on God's word although the waters and storms of life are raging.

The just shall live by faith. That means we walk with the Lord, not in the same old beaten path, but every year we climb higher.

Last year we were weak, but in faith, we want to increase from weakness to

strength.

Last year we were defeated, but this year we want to increase from defeat to victory.

Last year we were discouraged, but this year we want to increase from discouragement to hope.

Last year we were lonely, but this year we want to increase from loneliness to comfort

Last year we were troubled, but this year we want to increase from trouble to peace of mind.

If we increase our faith this year we can do the impossible!

If we increase our faith we can reach the unreachable!

If we increase our faith we can achieve the impossible!

This faith we need for the year has been secured for you by a God who loves you. I know it's true because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This faith has been assured to you by a savior who said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This is the faith that has been declared to you by a savior who promised us that no weapon formed against you shall prosper as long as you stay in the will of God.

This is the faith that was proven to you on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!

This is the faith that was proven with nail scarred hands, a wounded side and a bowed down head!

This is the faith that was proven Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave!

No. 9294-King Day

King's Forgotten Dream

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 20, 2008

SCRIPTURE: ***"Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. Daniel 2:2-5***

Introduction

Have you ever forgotten a dream? There are some who can recall a time when you dreamed a wonderful dream but awakened only to learn that you had forgotten the dream. You knew it was a great dream but you couldn't quite remember what it was. There are some dreams we remember vividly in intricate detail, but we are troubled by those that we can't remember.

The idea of forgotten dreams does not apply to nocturnal dreams alone. There are many who have abandoned the dreams of their youth and forgotten them.

Do you remember that dream? Do you remember dreaming about your career? Do you remember dreaming about your future relationship, the kind of house you would live in and the goals you wanted to achieve? Some never abandoned their dreams and achieved many of their goals. Others were side tracked. They woke up one day, years later, realizing that they had forgotten the dreams altogether.

Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired and challenged the nation to rise up to a higher calling. He challenged America to become one that recognized the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He spoke against unjust wars, unjust laws and injustice in the courts. He worked to eliminate poverty, organize workers and to eliminate racism and sexism on every front.

In 1963 he told the nation, as thousands assembled on the national mall in Washington D.C. listened, that he had a dream for America that was deeply rooted in the American dream. His words have been repeated by the two generations that have followed since that historic day.

Yet, as time passes, it becomes increasingly evident that while America remembers his speech, it has obviously has not fully embraced the dream or has abandoned it altogether.

In America, we remember the speech and its words of peace, but our nation still

engages in unjust wars on foreign shores for the sole purpose of securing oil interests in Iraq and Iran. Yet, Dr. King dreamed of an America at peace with itself and the world.

In America, we remember the speech and its words of racial unity, but just last year over 30,000 people were still marching to protest racial injustices in Jena Louisiana.

We remember the speech and its words of brotherhood under God, but the nation is moving away from Godliness in every respect.

A new generation today is embracing the hope offered by Barack Obama who looks at Dr. King's dream and says "Yes, we can." This same generation rolls up its sleeve and prepares to take the ideas of Dr. King and put them into action in the spirit of community epitomized by Hillary Clinton in her book, "It takes a village."

As Christians, we know that God gives us dreams and their interpretations. It is incumbent upon us not to forget or abandon our dreams because they have emerged from the crucible of circumstance as symbols of our faith that God will make a way. We must keep hope alive.

Exposition

This text focuses a king who had dream but could not remember its content.

The two chief characters of the book of Daniel are Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and Daniel, a prophet of God. In addition to the prophetic vision recorded in Daniel there is frequent reference to the ability of God to deliver his people and to reveal dark secrets.

Much of the prophetic force of the book revolves around two dreams given to King Nebuchadnezzar by God almighty.

This text focuses upon his first dream about a statue, built tall and high, composed of various elements whose fall was caused by a stone not made by hands. It was a dream of the coming kingdom of Christ.

It was a dream of something that would happen in years to come, not about something that would happen in his tenure.

It was a dream of the fall of a kingdom, but not a fall that would happen in his lifetime. It was a dream of the building of a kingdom, but not something that would happen under his authority.

This dream that revealed to him the things of God was soon "gone from him."

It became Daniel's job to tell him what he dreamed and then to tell him what it meant. With God's help Daniel was able to tell him his dream and to tell him what it meant. That was important because the dream had "gone from him."

Integration

Tamar Jacoby in her book "Someone Else's House" notes that while we have gained much since Dr. King's historic speech, much has yet to be accomplished.

The King dream in its fullest, says Jacoby, is to realize King's "vision of a single, shared community in which both blacks and whites would feel they belong" and race is not a consideration.

While our community embraces that dream in theory, for the most part we have not decided to fully embrace what Dr. King dreamed. We have torn down some of our barriers. We have desegregated, but we have not integrated. We live in desegregated neighborhoods, but for the most part we remain separated from our neighbors of a different color.

We are live by a social see-saw of values. One day we promote the King dream and the next day we hanging on to our blackness.

We want to be Miss America but we still hang on to Miss Black America.

The dream requires us to let go, but we are reluctant to do that.

The dream says, no one should refer to another as a N***r, but we still call ourselves by the very name that angers us if someone of a different race says the same thing.

We say we want to be judged by our character, but something in us still pushes us to vote for skin color over character every time.

We say with our lips that we want integration but many often belittle a student who speaks correct English as one who is acting "white."

We have come a long way toward achieving the dream, but, if the truth be told, as a people we have been reluctant to turn lose old ways.

Today, we have a modified version of Dr. King's dream that seems to yearn for whites to become less racist while we hang on to ours.

When it comes to King's dream of full integration, for many of us, "the thing has gone from me."

Economic Development

The dream of Martin Luther King involved more than racial parity. It involved revolutionary economic ideas. In fact, his ideas were so radical that many felt their wealth threatened by his dream.

In 1967, King addressed the Southern Christian Leadership Council and laid out an agenda that included using his influence to push for a guaranteed annual income for all Americans and full employment, sustained if necessary by the government. In that same speech he further endorsed the idea of promoting a redistribution of wealth, taking from the rich and sharing with the poor. In this way, he planned to eliminate poverty in America.

King's dream would require churches to plunge themselves into economic development and housing opportunities for the poor.

We have not embraced that part of the dream yet, because many of us still invest our resources in building bigger church buildings and supporting our Sheppards in lavish lifestyles.

We like to dream about eliminating poverty but only a small number of Black churches are doing more than lip service to address the problems of the poor in

America; we're mostly concerned with building the treasury and bigger buildings.

When it comes to King's dream of economic development to eliminate poverty, "the thing has gone from me."

Promoted Non-Violence

A year before he was assassinated, Dr. King caused considerable controversy when he spoke against the Vietnam War, while the nation was at war.

Adam Fairclough's book, "To Redeem the Soul of America" details how Dr. King felt America's involvement in the Vietnam War was morally and politically wrong. He chided the nation for using up precious resources and lives in a fight that had nothing to do with protecting American freedom.

If King was against unjust wars, he was equally opposed to violence, lynchings, shootings, murders and black on black crime.

Today, the nation embraces the dream with our lips but we demonstrate that we are not quite ready to embrace it in practice.

Dr. King's dream would prohibit us from engaging in wars, unless our liberty was being threatened; not just our oil interests.

Dr. King's dream would be opposed to all violence and killing, including: murder, the death penalty, abortions, and black on black crime.

The man who praises Dr. King as man of non-violence hasn't yet embraced the dream if he goes home and beats his wife.

The man who perpetrates a drive by shooting of an innocent person on a street corner may say he believes in the King dream, but he is far from it.

Even when it comes to non-violence, there are many who must say, "The thing is gone from me."

King Promoted Godliness

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that while great civil rights leader, the greatest idea he promoted was the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Living to the godly ideal was the essence of the King dream. We all fall short of the ideal; King fell short himself, but yet it is the goal of every believer.

We should never get to the place where our faith slips away from us and we say with Nebuchadnezzar, "The thing is gone from me."

Today, America embraces Dr. King's dream with its lips but in every area of our civic life we are attempting to place distance between ourselves and God.

The dream is for us to have one nation under God!

The dream is for us to boldly say what's written on our money, "In God we trust!

The dream is for us to hold to God's unchanging hand!

This dream did not begin with Martin Luther King, it is a dream given to the world by Christ himself.

It is a dream that one day, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary would be at rest!

It is a dream that one day, every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low!

It is a dream that carried Christ to Calvary. It is the dream that motivated him to die on an old rugged cross.

It is a dream that was reinvigorated by his resurrection, early one Sunday morning.

It is this faith of our fathers that has kept our dreams alive.

It is the faith of the sainted warriors of our past who kept our hope alive!

As each succeeding generation marches toward its destiny, it is important that each generation familiarize itself with the dream of Dr. King and countless others who have lifted their voices to say, "I have dreamed a dream."

We must hear Frederick Douglass dreaming of our eventual freedom from slavery.

We must hear Booker T. Washington dreaming of the skilled and trained Negro workforce.

We must hear W.E.B. Dubois dreaming of the day when our thinking and intelligence would be self evident.

We must hear Marcus Garvey dreaming of the day when we would be proud of our blackness.

We must hear A. Phillip Randolph dreaming of the day when the working man of color would get his fair share.

We must hear Malcolm X dreaming of a day that we will thirst for freedom by any means necessary.

We must hear Shirley Chisholm dreaming about a day when our leaders will be boss, black and unbought.

We must hear Jesse Jackson dreaming of the day when we move from the outhouse to the White house.

We must hear Thurgood Marshall dreaming of the day when justice will run down like waters from the Supreme Court

We must hear General Colin Powell dreaming of a day when we shall study war no more.

Every believer must not forget the dream and what it really means.

We must say in the words of James Weldon Johnson:

"God of our weary years, God of our silent tears. Thou who has brought us thus far along the way.

Thou who has by the might, led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray.

Lest our feet, stray from the places our God where we met thee.

Lest our hearts, drunk of the world we forget thee.

Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand. True to our God; true to our native land!

Amen.

No. 9295-Youth

Ring My Bell

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 27, 2008

SCRIPTURE:*"And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not. And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD." EXODUS 23:33-36*

Introduction

In your lifetime, have you actually heard a church bell ring? There are many who can recall a time when the bells of churches actually rang. It was a common occurrence. Bells of churches rang to give warnings, calls to worship, and to celebrate. Nearly every church had a bell. In fact, the architecture of churches of the past required that a tower be erected to house a bell. Churches raised thousands of dollars to buy expensive bells that sometimes weighed as much as 1,000 pounds.

In the past, nearly every church had a bell ringer. The bell ringer was important because he was the man who lived close by who always rang the bell to alert others of an important matter, to invite them to worship or announce a celebration. These bell ringers were church members who took upon themselves the responsibility to communicate with others messages of importance to the local community.

For most of the 20th century those few churches that still rang bells used them to announce a death in the community. The ringing of the church bell became synonymous to a death notice.

Despite their popularity for centuries however, there is a generation among us that has never heard a church bell ring? New churches that are constructed do not have bell towers. The cost of installing bells is staggering. Those that do have bells seldom ring them as lawsuit weary trustees worry that the vibrations from the huge iron and bronze bells could shake the buildings, fall and injure someone resulting in lawsuits.

The fact that few in this generation have heard a church bell ring, might reflect a growing trend in America, that is moving away from serving God to be served by God. If God cannot be of service, the many are choosing not to worship at all.

Today's youth are living in a generation that knows very little about God and less about being a Christian. A recent report by the Consultants for Religious Tolerance,

an international religious study group, showed that the number of Americans claiming to be Christian was 86% in 1990 and has been declining by 1 percent a year ever since, even though the population has been growing at nine percent per year. Americans are shifting. They are studying less about religion and have gradually shifted from denominations such as Baptist or Methodist to non-denominations which are less demanding, then to just "believing in God" and finally to not having any real religious life at all.

A new generation of churches have arisen that are trying to appeal to the those with no religious life, noting that they do have to change anything they are doing; just think positive and be blessed. To attract larger crowds God is being marketed like Burger King's slogan, "Have it your way." Anyway you want to come. Anyway you want to dress. Anyway you want to live.

Those who follow this new trend have dropped anything that is traditional from the worship such as hymns, Dr. Watts, traditional gospel music and liturgy. In its place are gospel rap, Gospel Hip Hop, praise teams, high energy praise dancers, extensive technology, laser shows and highly emotional worships. There is very little emphasis on repentance or the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ for moral atonement. Instead there is increased emphasis upon coming to worship to be blessed and to prosper.

Church bells may not ring anymore but God still needs bell ringers! He still needs witnesses in this generation. While there are many new ways to worship God, there is no reason why both the old and the new cannot be embraced. As we build new bridges there is no reason to burn those that brought us over. In this generation, God needs young people, who will ring the bell for him; who will be his witness and testify to his goodness.

As Christians, we are commanded to go to every part of the world and be witnesses for Christ. We commanded to sound the alarm, call the lost to Christ and pronounce the glory of the Lord wherever we go. The bells on the churches may be silent but our testimony must be loud and clear: God is great and his mercy endureth forever!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the precise instructions given by God for the making of the priest's robes, including the peculiar use of bells.

In this text God gives Moses some very specific instructions concerning the construction of the High Priestly garment for Aaron. Moses was specifically required to make the garment with gold bells that were to be sewn onto the hem of the ephod so that the sound of the bells, as he moved inside the Holy Place could be heard. Whenever the priest moved those who heard the bells knew that he was not dead but still alive. The entire priest garment was topped by a shield that had the words Holiness to the Lord inscribed upon it.

The idea of bells declaring the holiness of God is also reflected in Zechariah 14:20, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, "Holiness unto the

Lord."

The bells announced the presence of God in the affairs of men. The priests were constantly moving before God. The horses of Zechariah had bells on them wherever they went. It was a prophetic view of a day that would come when the declarations of God's goodness would be declared by many, wherever they go; they would declared, "Holiness unto the Lord."

It is significant that the bells worn by the priests indicated that they were alive and well. This is important because the priests also announced warnings to the people if they were straying away from God as well as proclamation about God's ultimate goodness and mercy upon the people.

Worship Bell

Traditionally, church bells called believers to worship. The ringing of the church bell reminded all of the sacredness of holy days and the necessity of assembling for worship.

Church bells are growing silent in this generation, not just on the buildings but in the general community.

Sunday, a day once reserved for worship has been overrun by the demands of the marketplace. Business is now conducted on Sunday in many parts of the nation. Casinos, bars and restaurants and clubs are now allowed to be opened on Sundays because they can generate more revenues for local governments.

The worship bell is growing silent; not the bell on the church but the witness and testimony of the people of God who continuously elect persons to government leadership positions who disrespect the Lord's day be secularizing it to a point it is no longer a holy day.

Yet, God needs someone in this generation who will ring the bell for his holy days and will testify to the importance of worship in the life of every believer. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that sits on a hill that cannot be hidden."

When we worship God we agree with Johann Neethling and, "declare the truth about God's worth, God's honor, God's greatness, and God's love. We declare it to Him, we declare it to host of heaven, and we declare it to all creation."

When we assemble on Sundays each believer rings a bell that says to the world, God is a good God and we believe it!

Beyond that, we ring our bells every day by the quality of the work we do, the integrity that we demonstrate, the genuineness of our friendship and love, our humility, our compassion, our kindness and thoughtfulness, our generosity, and our readiness to serve and to give.

Warning Bell

Bells have also been used to give warnings. In the past, whenever a community

faced imminent danger the church bell would ring. It sound traveled through the hills and echoed in the valleys; its tone meant trouble was forthcoming.

This generation isn't hearing the church bells much because the church has become awfully silent on many of the issues of life. Taking stands on God's word is not popular, it reduces crowds and diminishes offerings; so warning bells are infrequently heard.

The church bears the responsibility to alarm the world around us that while God certainly is a God of love and mercy – he is also a Holy God, a righteous God, a God of justice who hates sin and evil.

This generation needs to hear the few warning bells that still ring out that some of our ways anger God.

God is not pleased with the growing number of people embracing homosexual lifestyles. While he still loves the people he will not sanction homosexual and lesbian marriages.

While God gives a woman the right to choose, he is not pleased when she chooses to use her choice to kill the unborn through abortion.

God is not pleased with rapid increase in divorces, increased alcoholism and drug dependency, thefts and murders.

There is a generation that has not heard the warning bells, all they have heard is the politically correct ideas being promoted in the marketplace and on television.

If our witness is silent then the church will be held responsible for our failure to sound the alarm and announce that danger is ahead.

Celebration Bell

Bells are used to celebrate significant and special moments in our lives. There are still areas of the country that ring church bells when a couple gets married or to announce great achievements by the community or the church.

The church announces to the world that our God is a God of happiness, joy and restoration.

Christians are happy people who enjoy living happy holy lives in Christ.

This generation isn't hearing the celebration bells of the church anymore. Too many churches neglect the development of the young to the point that they cannot feel the joy of the church only its condemnation, lectures, sermons and a long list of "Can't do","Can't go","Catch Watch" and "Can't listen to."

This generation needs to hear the joy bells ringing. It needs to know that being a Christian is great! It needs to hear the testimonies of those who have learned the joy of the Lord and are intoxicatingly happy as the walk with the King.

They should see how Christians celebrate marriage, birthdays and have fun!

They need to hear the bells ring! They desperately need to know that being a Christian is not a death sentence but a step up to the abundant life.

They need to hear the joy bells ring!

We need to celebrate with the believer whose soul was saved by the blood of Christ!

We need to celebrate with the woman who survived breast cancer because of the grace of God!

We need to celebrate with the man who overcame alcoholism to live a full and happy life with his family!

This generation needs to hear the joy bells ring!

Victory Bell

Finally, brothers and sisters this generation must hear the victory bell that comes through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord!

In July of 1776 a bell tolled from Independence Hall in Pennsylvania, it proclaimed the words of Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

That bell became known as the Liberty Bell.

Despite its historical renown, the bell in Pennsylvania cannot resonate louder than the shouts of saved believers praising God for their victory over sin and the grave.

When believers think about the goodness of the Lord they have to tell somebody.

When I think about how good the Lord has been, I have to ring my bell!

I don't know about you but I've got to tell somebody! If I can't say a word, I'll just wave my hand!

I've got to tell somebody that God will pick you up and turn you around! I've got to ring my bell!

I've got to tell somebody that God will answer your prayer! I've got to ring my bell!

I've got to tell somebody about Jesus, who died out on Calvary! I've got to ring my bell!

I've got to tell somebody that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

I've got to tell somebody that he's alive today!

I've got to tell somebody I've got to ring my bell!

No. 9296-Funeral

An Honorable Discharge

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2, 2008

SCRIPTURE: Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.2 Timothy 2:3-4 "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12

Introduction

Has anyone from your family ever served in the military? There are very few families that have never had any of its members to serve in the military. There are a few that have long histories of producing men and women who have given of themselves to serve and protect our nation's freedom. These veterans know the importance of God and country because they have served meritoriously as a part of the nation's defense operation.

Saints who spend their lives helping others and serving in the kingdom of God are soldiers in the army of God. They volunteered for the service, with the full knowledge that being in God's army requires sacrificial service that may not draw the accolades of society. They knew it could be dangerous! Like good soldiers, every saint stands ready to defend the faith regardless of the cost.

Today, a soldier who knows the Lord serves in two armies: One for the nation and one for the Son of God.

As Christians, we strive to serve God to the fullest every day. We stand ready as a soldier to serve and protect the kingdom of God. We have the joy of knowing that our honorable service will be rewarded.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instruction to Timothy concerning service in the kingdom of God.

Paul uses three similitudes to demonstrate to Timothy how his life work can please God. He referred to the commitment of a soldier in verses three and four, the discipline of an athlete in verse five and the persistence of a farmer in verse six.

Paul uses the similitude of a soldier to describe the Christian life.

As Paul wrote to young Timothy he pointed to the Roman military as his example

because military service then, as it does now, involves self-sacrifice, endurance, discipline, vigilance, obedience, ready cooperation with others, sympathy, enthusiasm, and loyalty.

Every believer pleases God if he enters kingdom service with the commitment of a soldier. This was a important comparison for Paul because the Roman Soldier was selected for service in the legions partially on his commitment to Rome and the Emperor. Soldiers who were committed fought harder, complained less and endured more than all others. They stood head and shoulders above the rest because their commitment was based upon a love for God and country and not personal glory.

To be a good soldier, Paul said young Timothy should be prepared to "endure hardness"(v3) with a sense of commitment and loyalty. It also required a sense of commitment. In Paul's mind, commitment meant having a singleness of purpose. One goal, one mark, one prize is all that was before him, all others were secondary.

Volunteers make the best soldiers:

There are three types of soldiers: Draftees, volunteers and mercenaries. A draftee serves because he is required to do so under threat of imprisonment. A draftee has reservations about his service and would quit if given the option. A mercenary is a soldier for hire. He fights for any army willing to pay him, has little devotion for the cause and fights for the money and the money alone. A soldier who volunteers believes in the cause and does so out a love for his country.

The military has learned that volunteers make the best soldiers.

The same is true about those who choose to be soldiers in the army of the Lord. Those who decide to take up the Christian life should not enlist because they are being drafted against their will. Neither should they become a Christian because they think it's a short cut to prosperity and blessings. Those who serve in the army of the Lord are those who believe in the kingdom of God. They volunteer to teach, preach, sing, or witness. Because of their volunteer spirit, they remain committed to the cause of Christ long after all others have gone. They also go the extra mile because they are soldiers in the army of the Lord.

When does this idea begin? For the military it might be inspired by the visit of a recruiter or the enticement of a television commercial. However, for the army of God it begins when the home teaches children what is necessary to motivate them to be soldiers in the army of the Lord. They are trained to say their prayers, read the bible and inspired to live the Christian life by choice. The home encourages them to volunteer their services for the Lord.

Know his colors

When a man joins a military unit he operates under the colors or shield of his regiment. The shield tells the story of all of those who have gone before and what

the unit is about. The 11th Bomber Squadron at Barksdale Air Force base, for example, is known as the "school house" for bomber training. It is the only unit in the world providing all aspects of B-52 aircrew training. The best of the best come to Barksdale for 127 days of training. It has produced some of the nation's best aviators since 1917 when it was organized. Even its maintenance crew is among the best in the world; these men, who do not fly airplanes, know how to keep them flying year after year. A soldier who serves there learns quickly that he is a part of something bigger and more historic than himself.

The same is true of the Christian soldier, when we begin our faith journey we are introduced to the historic roll call of faith bearers is listed in Hebrews 11 each preceded by the words "by faith." By the grace of God we strive to walk nobly in the footsteps of those who have gone before us.

In the same sense every Christian soldier should know the Christian warriors in your family. From generation to generation we should know our ancestors, their weaknesses and strengths. We know the unique way that God has blessed our families

Obedience and discipline are needed

A boy joins the military and a few months later he returns home a man. What makes him a man? The uniform? Certainly not.

He becomes a man as the result of the rigid training ritual he endures, usually called "Boot Camp."

He learns what it takes to be a soldier. He learns to march and live in sync with others. He learns to take orders, respect leadership and how to follow the chain of command. He learns when and how to speak up and when to keep his mouth closed. He learns how to conduct himself as a gentleman and accept others as brothers.

In short, he learns how to obey.

Anyone who expects to be a soldier in the army of the Lord must learn the same. It's not the uniform that makes him a soldier, it is his faith in God and his willingness to discipline himself to follow the will of God.

It's the discipline to learn the bible.

It's the discipline to obey God rather than man.

It's the discipline to have our steps ordered by Lord.

Boot camp for the military begins when a child leaves home but the soldier in the army of the Lord first learns discipline at home. He learns to obey the rules of his home, then the church and the greater community. He learns to budget his time and money wisely and he learns respect for those in authority. Those who want to be soldiers in the army of the Lord need discipline and self control

The Discharge

Finally, brothers and sisters, when a tenure of a soldier is complete he looks

forward to going home; to do that lawfully he needs a discharge.

In the closing scenes of the Movie "Glory," which told the story of the 54th Massachusetts during the Civil War, the soldiers were preparing to attack an armed fort with the full knowledge that many of them might die. The commander looked at the flag bearer and asked the question, "If this man should fall in battle, who will pick up the flag?" That flag bearer did fall and another soldier picked it up.

The question before us today remains the same, if this soldier has fallen, who will pick up the banner?"

Who among his classmates, friends and family members will pick up the banner?

Who will demonstrate the character needed to be the next loving husband to one wife alone?

Who will step forward to be the next caring father and obedient son?

Who will step forward to be the next faithful servant of the most high God?

Now that a soldier has fallen, who will pick up the blood stained banner and stand tall for our Lord?

I heard the old warriors say, "We are soldiers in the army. We have to fight although we have to cry. We've got hold up the blood stained banner. We've got to hold it up until we die."

When a soldier joins the army he enlists, but when he gets out he gets a discharge. But a good soldier doesn't want just any kind of discharge; there's a certain one he's looking for because the benefits of being a soldier depends on the kind of discharge he receives.

If he has served meritoriously but has had a few problems, he may receive a general discharge, it's O.K. but he does not get all of the benefits.

If his misconduct has brought shame to the service, he might receive a "Less than Honorable discharge"; it's not the worse but it does not carry any benefits either.

If he has been court-martialed and found guilty of violating the uniform code of military justice, he will get a dishonorable discharge. A dishonorable discharge is the kiss of death. Very few people will hire you, government jobs are closed to you and your chances of moving up in life are limited. Despite your service, there are no benefits.

But if you've been a good soldier and you were faithful to your wife.

If you've been a good soldier and you were a loving dad to your daughter.

If you've been a good soldier and you were an obedient and loving son.

If you've been a good soldier and you served honorable in the service of the Lord;

You can expect to receive on the wings of an angel, an honorable discharge and all of its benefits.

That's what I like about serving in the army of the Lord, being a soldier for the Lord, has so many benefits.

That's why David in Psalm 103:2 said, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all his benefits."

That's why Psalm 116:12 asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all of his benefits toward me?"

Paul wrote Timothy and told him that he had received his discharge notice and he was looking forward to receiving the benefits of salvation.

I can hear him saying, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, but not for me alone..”

For one of these old days, somebody in the 11th Bomber Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base, will receive a discharge notice from the commander in chief.

Paul told Timothy when the battle is over, we shall wear a crown!

Until that day we must continue to put on the whole armor of God and tell the story!

We must tell the world about Jesus!

Tell them that he lived!

Tell that he one day he died!

Tell them that Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

—

On January 24, 2008 William Broadway Smith, III took his last breath as soldier in the armed forces of this nation and in the army of the Lord. On the wings of angel he received an honorable discharge.

No. 9297-Victory

Don't Leave Until the Game is Over

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2008

SCRIPTURE*: "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things." Luke 23:48-49; For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief. Proverbs 24:16*

Introduction

Have you ever looked at the scoreboard, predicted the outcome and left a game before it was over? There are times when we leave early and find out that what seemed obvious changed and the outcome was different than we expected. Sometimes when we leave early we miss the good part! Nobody likes to miss the good part!

Often, we leave an event or an activity early to avoid traffic or to make another appointment on time. When such an occasion comes we try to stay until it appears that we have entertained the climatic moment and the conclusion is predictable.

Often our favorite team is losing the game. The final minutes of the contest are approaching but it appears the outcome won't change. In our car radio we hear, the good part!

Miraculously our team comes from behind and wins! We left before the good part!

Often we leave a movie early, after it appears that the outcome is obvious, only to learn that we left too early! It had a totally different and surprising conclusion. We missed the good part!

Our hero was losing the boxing match in every round. His face was mauled and he appeared spent. We couldn't bear to watch any more and left before the match ended. We learned later that in the last round our hero rose up with a mighty gust of power and defeated his opponent. Again, we missed the good part!

As many watch today's Super bowl game many will probably assume that the New England Patriots will win the game because they are undefeated. Yet the New York Giants have been known to come from behind and win. In fact the Giants have made it to the Super bowl by coming from behind in all three of their playoff victories. If they are losing, it would not be unusual for them to come from behind

in the last 10 minutes of the game. The Giants have led the league with five fourth quarter victories. The reason you can't leave before the game is over is while the Giants are first in come back wins, the Patriots are second; they had four fourth quarter wins last year. Both teams are known for come back victories. Don't change your channel or give up on your team; anything could happen!

It all means that no one should leave before the game is over.

Those who stay to the end have learned one of life's most important lessons it may not always be wise to leave before the game is over.

In our quest for self improvement the saints of God remind the world that we may be knocked down on occasion, but don't count us out! Don't leave before my game is over!

As Christians, we are encouraged each time we think of the life and death of Christ. We see the events that day and how people gave up on him and we see ourselves. Our faith teaches us, not to give up, even if we are nailed to a cross..stick around until our games are over.

Exposition

This passage of scripture considers the attitude of the crowd at the death of Christ.

The crowd that observed the crucifixion was mixed. In its midst were supporters of Christ, many of whom were silent in their love for him. It also included the high priests who demanded his death, soldiers and the curious. All had assembled to watch the events of the crucifixion as they unfolded.

Since no one had ever been known to survive a crucifixion, once the process had begun, the outcome was predictable. The man nailed to the cross was doomed to die. End of story.

When the spectacular events stopped, there was only silence. The limp body of a fallen leader was hanging on the cross!

It was at this point that this text notes that the crowd, having apparently seen all that there was to see began to disperse. Verse 48 simply says that they came to see the sight, they saw the things that were done, smote their breasts and "returned." Even his disciples moved far away, including the women that stood so close were now far away. They waited for a great miracle that would have prevented his death. As they started considering their own safety, they moved away from the cross, and watched from a distance.

All parties thought it was over! There had been thunder and lightning, but it was over! The veil of the temple was split, but it was over! The ground shook, but it was over! They "smote their breasts, and returned."

Those that left thought it was over! They left depressed, sad and disheartened! They were disappointed.

However they left too soon! They left before it was over! They counted Jesus out before the match had ended!

An angel asked the women who came to the tomb the important question: "Why

seek ye the living among the dead?" The events that occurred three days and three nights earlier were only a part of the story! But the rest of the story is the good part!

Don't Give Up

As believers, our quest to achieve godly goals is never left unchallenged. Every dream that we have is met by an obstacle or challenge. Each time we try to take a step forward there is an unseen force working equally hard to push us backward. Whether the goal is secular or purely spiritual in nature there will be a challenge. Our challenge is not to give up. There are three truths to be considered in this respect.

WE WILL FALL MANY TIMES: Solomon in the book of Proverbs notes in Proverbs 24:16 that a man or woman who is living according to God's rules falls. He did not say that there is a probability that the good people will fall or that that it his highly possible. He noted that the just fall not once but seven times. (Seven being a complete number here meaning many times). If you stop there you will leave before the gave is over. You will not see the whole essence of our struggle in this life. The rest of our story as believers comes after the comma; "and riseth up." In essence, "We fall down, but we get up." If anyone judges you when you are down, they make a mistake, tell them they will find your final end behind the comma. But not only will they find your final end, they will also find their own because the rest of the verse says, "But the wicked shall fall into mischief."

ENEMIES HAVE COUNTED US OUT! The first groups of people at the crucifixion site were the enemies and curiosity seekers. Many of us have experienced many troubling moments in life. We have been knocked down, set back, trampled upon, walked on, stomped, persecuted, violated, ridiculed and dogged. We have felt the bitter sting of the cutting remarks of our enemies. We have felt the foot of our oppressors on our necks. There are many who have been knocked down in every round of life. Lost jobs, broken marriages, failures, disappointments, death and lost opportunities have dealt very powerful punches that have floored even the strongest believers. Many, watching from a distance, believe because we have been floored so many times that the outcome is inevitable. Don't leave! It ain't over until it's over!

The critics see struggling souls on thousands of crosses! They see men who have dropped out of school, failed in a pursuit or otherwise in a hopeless situation and they drop their heads saying it is all over! They see people living in poverty; or trapped in the claws of ignorance and they respond "it's all over!" They see drug dealers, prostitutes and hustlers and they say, "It's all over!" The message to the critics is simple, "Don't count any saint out because a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again!

DON'T COUNT YOURSELF OUT: The second group is represented by those in verse 49, "All his acquaintances and the women that followed him.." These were his disciples and other believers. Not only had the critics counted the Christian cause out, but they disassociated themselves from the cross! They counted themselves out! They had to be reminded of the words of Christ when he told them that

he would be crucified but would rise again after three days and nights. They had to be reminded because they forgot.

It would be tragic if a believer who knows the word of God and believes in the power of God would do to himself what the world has already done by counting himself out! The reality is that believers expect to be hit by the experiences of life. On occasion, we expect to be knocked down. But each time we are knocked down we get back up! That's why Paul wrote in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Therefore we are not intimidated when hit by principalities, powers, present conditions, a bad past or anything else; nothing, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." John put it this way in 1 John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Romans 8:28 put it this way, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Don't count yourself out; a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:

Don't Leave

Finally, brothers and sisters, it would be a mistake for anyone to assume that a person who is following the word of God can be defeated by the antagonisms of this world. Whenever a saint is down in the game of life, don't leave until the game is over!

Many people now find themselves in the fourth quarter of life and trailing by three touchdowns. In football and in life, the game is not over until the time runs out. Don't leave until the game is over.

The biblical record is filled with instances that show indicate that its unwise to leave before the game is over, because God seems to get in a believer's life in fourth quarter.

Joseph's life was destined to greatness! He saw himself doing something great for God. But his dream met head on with that of his brothers who were equally determined to stop him. They threw him in a pit. It appeared that it was over, his brothers left him there thinking that his game was over. But God raised him from the pit and placed him in the palaces of Egypt. It just proves that a just man falleth seven time but riseth up again. Don't leave until the game is over!

Samson was a strong man who was brought down, chained and blinded. As he stood in chains without strength or sight it appeared that it was over, until we look at the rest of the story! He repented for his sins and slew thousands of Philistines in his last and final act!

Job was a pitiful sight. Once strong, wealthy and healthy he was broken to a poor man with ill health. Job's story looked to be one of defeat, until we see the rest of the story! He was blessed more after his trial than he had been before! All of these went to prove that we should never count a saint of God out just because they are down! Stick around! Wait for the rest of the story! Remember a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:

Over 5,000 people found out that there is a blessing in waiting to get the rest of the story! When it looked like there was nothing to eat, some may have left to go home. They should have stuck around they would have enjoyed a feast!

When the winds were blowing mightily the disciples thought their ship would sink, some believed it was all over! But the good part was not in the storm, it was in the rest of the story! Jesus rose to rebuke the wind saying peace be still!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a God that can help us to come back even in the fourth quarter of life, when we have failed miserably and fallen behind.

We serve a God who can take:

—Defeat and turn it into victory; failure and turn it into success

—Misfortune and turn it into good fortune; Tragedy and turn it into opportunity

—Blunders and turn them into wonders; Doubts and wipe them out!

At Calvary the world thought the Savior was out, but they learned what we now know when it comes to people of God, don't leave until the game is over!

They buried him, thinking it was over!

But Early Sunday morning he arose!

A good man falleth seven times, but riseth up again!

No. 9298-Anniv.-Deacons

Running With The Horses

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2008

SCRIPTURE: ***If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? Jeremiah 12:5***

Introduction

Do you feel that you are ready to handle greater responsibility? Our present condition is always a precursor to something greater. No matter how difficult our present circumstance may appear we must always remember that it is only a proving ground for more challenging days that may come in the future. Today's strong wind may be tomorrow's hurricane. Today's dry spell may be tomorrow's drought. Today's headache is tomorrow's migraine. Whatever we are experiencing today is just practice for more challenging times to come.

A believer who is asked to serve as a deacon or trustee of the church is an individual who has met the biblical test of prior service. Many think there is a difference between biblical prerequisites for a deacon and a trustee; with the latter requiring less. In actuality, all church leaders have the same moral and faith requirements. Trustees are legal entities required by the government to hold responsibility for corporations. Yet, those selected as trustees should meet the same requirements of any person serving as an elder of the church.

1 Timothy 3:10 urges believers to exercise care in the selection of elders, whether they are preaching, teaching, helping or business elders. They must be "first proved." The same admonition is given in 1 Timothy 5:22 which says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man…" The idea is that any person considered for the sacred service of church administration should have proven himself while "walking with the footmen" before being selected to "run with the horses."

Therefore, all of those who are selected to lead the people of God should have been tried in the fires of life's experiences and having shown a propensity toward spiritual understanding and guidance.

As Christians, we know that every experience we have in life is preparatory for something bigger. Those who are asked to lead in the kingdom are those who have been tested in life's crucible and are ready for more difficult and demanding tasks. Those who serve, do so with the greatest joy because their service helps bring the kingdom of God into a greater realization.

Exposition

This text finds the prophet Jeremiah being told that his present experiences were proving grounds for the great work to come.

Jeremiah was one of the great prophets of Judah. Prior to being elevated to a greater ministry, Jeremiah had been proven by God. His preparation wasn't in a classroom but in the community. During times of peace, God gave him the unpopular task of prophesying about the fall of Jerusalem. He was immediately persecuted and his life was threatened as the number of his detractors and enemies increased.

When Jeremiah complained God answered that if he found his present circumstances difficult, his future situation would be even more difficult (Jer. 12:5). God used two metaphors to make this point: a race and a cross-country walk. If Jeremiah had raced with men on foot and was complaining about being worn out, how could he hope to compete later when he would have to run with horses? If he could trust in God only in a time of peace, how would he manage when the going got tough?

The phrase, "Contend with horses" refers to the next level of service. In peace Jeremiah had to prove that he could handle the verbal abuse and threats leveled at him. A time of war was approaching, when his ministry would also be needed but the pressures would be greater.

Thus, Jeremiah found it incumbent upon himself to prove that he could not only walk with the footmen in times of peace, but that he could also, "run with the horses" when the going became tough.

Get Ready to Run with the Horses

The word for deacon in Greek means "servant." The word for Trustee comes from a Hebrew word in Genesis 15:2 "ben-meshk" which means "son of acquisition." The title was associated with Eliezer who was a trustee or steward to Abraham; responsible for all of Abraham's possessions. He was available whenever Abraham needed him, was fully committed and deeply loyal. He constantly sought God's guidance to serve Abraham well.

Deacons and trustees are believers who serve as loyal guardians of the faith and physical properties of the people of God.

It is a task that will certainly require those selected to be able to run with the horses.

What does it take to serve as a deacon or trustee? What does it take to run with the horses?

TOUCHED BY GOD: Those who want to run with the horses must first show that they walk with Lord. Jesus told Nicodemus: "You must be born of the spirit." No believer who assumes the role of a church deacon or trustee can expect to please God if that person does not know the Lord for himself. Thus, all of a believer's past

experiences come together to demonstrate a faith in God in matters of the spirit. That means those chosen to serve have proven themselves to be persons who can walk by faith. They have proven it in their personal lives and in their relationship with the church. Most often, such a person will feel inadequate. The feeling of adequacy is natural because it admits human limitations and requires a dependence on God. Such persons have learned that God is able to do what they cannot do alone so they plunge into life with a positive spirit. In the words of Martin Luther, "God carves the rotten wood and rides the lame horse." Or in the more recent words of former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden, "Don't worry about the horse being blind. Load up the wagon."

Those selected to serve in the highest levels of church leadership need God's spirit to lead them as they start to run with the horses.

WILLING TO BE OBEDIENT: Those selected to run with the horses have already been trained in the school of life, to a certain degree, except on a lower level. However, once they move into a higher level of leadership they must submit to a higher order of training; a discipline that requires them to be obedient to God in every respect. Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses, and test them to see if they are completely trained. The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to do without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience. They turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience he gives them a signal to go back to drink. Those who want to run with horses must be trained to obey God's will completely and fully. That means to stop in full stride if God says so or to leap or race if he gives the command. They obey the word of God and remember that it better to "obey God rather than man."

ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS: Those selected to run with the horses should be able to "take care of the business" of the church. Deacons and trustees adhere to theological principles about their moral conduct and sound business practices as they handle the resources of the church. They know that they are called upon to look after the financial well being of the congregation. Romans 12:11 reminds us that such leaders should not be "slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. This requires any deacon or trustee to have personal integrity and an understanding of responsible business practices. A trustee who can't manage the finances of his own house is not able to "walk with the footmen" and is certainly no able to "run with the horses." A trustee who leaves his own house in disrepair may not be ready to "run with the horses" when it comes to seeing after the business of the church. A deacon who makes reckless gambles with his own resources as he walks with the footmen may be inclined to do the same with the church's resources after he is selected to "run with the horses."

Those selected to serve as deacons and trustees there must show that they are able to take care of business for the Lord. That means that they are ready to run with the horses.

Serving the Lord has it rewards

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that those who run with horses and run well, will get a crown of life.

Every now and then it is good for believers to remember that serving the Lord does pay off after awhile. The same is true for those who lead in the church. The reward is great because their task is greater than the ordinary believer.

Those who serve as deacons and trustees have been called to run with the horses; that won't be an easy job because there are so many kinds of horses in the world to deal with.

You may have to run with STALLIONS. Stallions are aggressive and pushy. It takes a special kind of person to deal with stallions because they try to push their ideas through and will trample all others. If called upon to run with stallions, be prepared to run and not get weary.

You may have to run with PONIES. Ponies are known for their gentleness and intelligence. Sometimes ponies can be stubborn and even devious. If called upon to run with ponies, be prepared to trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thy own understanding.

You may have to run with TROTTERS. Trotters are used in harness racing. They are accustomed to moving at a standard pace; it's hard to get them to do more than a trot. Yet, if you are called upon run with trotters remember the Lord needs servants whose feet are swift to spread the gospel of peace.

You may have to run with CLYDESDALES. Clydesdales are big and pretty; but they can also pull a lot of weight. It's great to work with people who are well known, know what they are doing and who can also pull their weight for the Lord. If you are called upon to run with Clydesdales remember that "all of my help comes from the Lord.

You may have to run with THOROUGHBREDS. Thoroughbreds are horses that have been bred and trained by the finest. Even among deacons and trustees there are some who consider themselves thoroughbreds, trained in the best schools with years of hands on experience. They are sometimes hard to deal with. If you have to deal with thoroughbreds, remember that "pride comes before a fall" and keep your hand in God's hand.

You may have to run with a few OLD NAGS. The old nag can't run anymore. It only remembers past races and constantly complains about anything new. There are many deacons and trustees who are blessed to be old, but some have allowed themselves to become not just old but "nags." If you are called upon to deal with the nastiness of nags, think about the goodness of the Lord, and run your race.

We have to run with the horses until the victory is won!

We have to run our race until our day is done.

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he penned the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done.

There is no reward for those who sit on the stool of good intentions singing, "I shall not be moved" but only for those who use their God given abilities and run with the horses.

Run with the horses and God will give you his joy!

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into race and knowing that before the race begins the victory is won!

That's why we are ready to run with the horses!

When we run with the horses in the name of the Lord, no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victory!

When we run with the horses in the name of the Lord, weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

When we run with the horses in the name of the Lord, storms may rise and winds may blow, but we won't worry because God is still on the throne!

Those who run with the horses also have a testimony. It's about the joy of knowing the Lord!

Run and tell the world about Jesus!

Run and tell the lost that He is still saving souls!

Run and tell the blind that He is still giving sight!

Run and tell the infirmed that He is still healing the sick.

Run and tell the skeptics that He is still alive today

Run and tell the world that over 2000 years ago that they crucified him on an old rugged cross.

Tell them that they buried him in Joseph's tomb but Early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as he arose from the grave with all power in his hand.

As you run with the horses tell the world that he is alive and lives he lives in my soul!

No.9299-Inspiration

Living Behind the Shield

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 17, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Psalm 3:3

Introduction

Do you ever feel as though you were a target with a whole lot of people aiming at you? Those who do sometimes feel that they have a bull's eye painted on their lives and the world as taking aim at them. We feel that way when things go right for everyone else but they go wrong for us. We feel that way when trouble seems to find our addresses and locates us despite our best intentions of staying out of its way. It seems as though we are always ducking dodging some kind of trouble that seems directed especially at us.

There is a reason why believers feel like targets; because we are. 1 Peter 5:8 says it clearly, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." That means believers are targets everyday of their lives. The devil is waiting for an opportunity to destroy your home, marriage, relationship, business, character or even your dreams.

Since believers are targets, it's only reasonable to want protection from life's dangers. We want a shield.

The type of shield we need depends on the source of danger. A police officer often wears a bullet proof vest. Ships are equipped with life jackets and life boats. Cars have airbags. Some planes are equipped with parachutes. All of this equipment is designed to shield against injury.

But what about our spiritual lives? If the devil is roaring and trying to destroy us, who protects us?

God is our protector and our faith in him is our shield. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesians 6:16. God is not a type of shield, but he is our shield. He envelopes us completely as the devil takes his best shot at us every day.

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that God is always with us. Even as the world takes pot shots at us, if we live behind the shield of faith, the devil will not be successful because anything he does work to our Good, thanks to the grace of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on David when he spoke of his faith that God Would be a shield around him.

This text was penned by David when his son Absalom revolted against him and attempted to overthrow him as king. Refusing to treat Absalom as an enemy, David was forced to leave the place and the holy city. As armies led by his son formed against him, David spoke to God and in his prayerful thoughts expressed three important truths:

"Thou art a shield for me." In battle the type of shield would be chosen to suit the type of combat one expected to encounter. If siege was being laid to defend city walls, a body-length shield that would provide protection from arrows and sling stones raining down from the walls. If hand-to-hand combat in the open field was expected the small maneuverable shield that could be used to ward off thrusts by sword or spear was used. The full Hebrew phrase means "that art a shield about me" to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me." The phrase "for me" personalizes God's role in the life of the believer and brings him close to each believer's situation. The fact that David saw God as a shield "for me" and "all about me" indicated his confidence that there were certain advantages and benefits accrued because of his relationship with God.

"Thou art my glory." Even as David's glory in the kingdom faded, he remained confident that the source of his glory was God. Absalom had won the hearts of the people. In Hebron they had actually declared him king. Yet, here David praises God knowing that his glory did not come from the accolades of men but from God himself. God selected him and anointed him King while he was yet a boy; and it is God who would lift him up.

"The lifter of my head." David was extremely frustrated that his favorite son was rebelling against him. It hurt and wounded him more than it angered him. His head was bowed low. His spirits were drained. The phrase "lifter of my head" referred to his personal frustration and discouragement, but it also referred to David's hope that God would restore his full kingdom to him. The hope was that in due time "thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail." "lift up my head" is also used to show that a person is being exalted or elevated in the sight of others. Psalm 27:6 says, "And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. It was as an expression of his hope of full restoration because it is God who restores that which is loss.

Three Truths

David's talk with God reveals three important truths that all believers must know to strengthen their Christian walk.

GOD SHIELDS ME ON ALL SIDES: Believers who trust God have the assurance that God is protecting from all sides. It is difficult to protect against everything that would impact our lives. We try our best. We buy health insurance to protect against sickness, life insurance to protect our families in case of death. We put locks on our doors to protect against burglars; and alarms on our cars to protect against thieves. We have metal detectors at airports to protect against terrorists, encrypted passwords to protect against identity theft, even the president as the Secret Service to protect against assassination. We are constantly trying to protect ourselves from failure seen or the unseen. The knowledge that God is a shield about us helps us to feel secure in his hand because we are shielded on all sides and on all fronts. He is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He can shield us on all sides because he can see the unseen dangers ahead; we cannot. Even if we could, there are so many variables in life that we cannot protect against every eventual possibility. That's why rejoice in the knowledge God shields us on all sides.

THE SOURCE OF MY GLORY: When believers receive honors we instantly recognize that those honors are the result of God moving in our lives. God exalts us or puts us into positions in life for a divine purpose. He is the source of our glory. It is his involvement in our affairs that his resulted in our promotions, commendations and awards. It is his constant presence that has glorified us. It does not matter whether we are elected to a political office, appointed to an influential position of leadership or accomplish a great feat. The believer knows that the source of his accomplishment is God himself is humbled by that fact and never takes credit for what God has done through him.

RESTORES OUR STRENGTH: God restores us in two ways. When we have failed or have become frustrated, it is God's presence that lifts up our bowed down head. Sometimes our failure is caused by our own sin. When David sinned he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God!" and God restored him. Frustrations, failure and defeat zap our strength. That's when we pray to God and he hears. When we have experienced considerable loss, God also restores us, much like Job who lost considerable possession and family members. God did not bring back what was loss but restored his possessions and rebuilt his family to a point that it exceeded what he had loss in the beginning. We should be encouraged that God restores that which is lost to a believer and does it in a way that will better prepare him to promote the kingdom of God; often bigger and grander than before.

Get a Shield

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who do not have a shield can get one by accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

There are many in the world today who spend their lives living in front of the shield instead of behind it. When we live in front of the shield we do not enjoy its protection and security.

We know we are living in front of the shield of God when we are confident to take matters into our own hands.

We know we are living in front of the shield when we suffer and setback but can't snapback!

We are living in front of the shield when we find ourselves knocked down by a putdown.

We are living in front of the shield when we find ourselves knocked out because we got knocked up!

Living in front of the shield means living without the protective grace of God. Without God's grace, there is no chance of victory of the devil.

We must live behind the shield; it's the only way we can defeat the devil.

That's why Ephesians 6:16 says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Those who live in front of the shield are walking targets for the devil who is taking aim.

Those who live in front of the shield don't spend much time praying because they believe they can take care of things themselves!

Those who live in front of the shield often miss worship because they feel it is a good thing to do but not essential to their success.

Those who live in front of the shield seldom read or study their bibles because they don't see the real need.

Those who live in front of the shield notice that their:

—Attitudes become pathetic; Relationships are usually ruined!

—Lifestyles become wicked; Thoughts become vain!

—Goals become selfish and their desires become carnal!

Our only chance for salvation comes from the Lord. That's why Romans 5:8 says, "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!

While we were living lives of quiet desperation, reaching for the unreachable, trying to grasp the impossible Christ died for us so we would have a chance to get behind the shield of God's amazing grace!

If you live behind the shield of faith and never stop trusting God you can:

—CONQUER all circumstances; DESTROY all doubts!

—DEFEAT all discouragements; OVERCOME all opposition!

—FACE all fears and; DEFY all devils

—STAND all storms; MOVE all mountains!

—DISPEL all darkness; FIGHT all battles!

While we were yet sinners, God was preparing a shield for us!

While we were absorbed in the cares of the world, God was making a way!

While we were yet sinners, Jesus, the Son of the living God, picked up and old rugged cross!

While we were yet sinners, the nailed his hands and feet!

While we were yet sinners, he died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9300-Inspiration

Living life in "High Def"

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 9, 2008

SCRIPTURE: ***The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10***

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt the desire to move up to another level? That's the time when you look at your present situation and conclude that while you are not doing badly, that you should strive to climb up a little higher. No one wants to remain at the same level forever; we all desire to improve.

There are many of us living black and white lives in a color TV world. We have resisted the temptation to upgrade, satisfied with that black and white box in our living room or bedroom.

In the mid 1950's many in the African-American community started getting television sets in our homes. Those first TV 's sat in fine pieces of furniture, down on the floor, with round black and white picture tubes.

The picture tube was made larger and, as time passed, color was added. When Color was added, there was a need to upgrade from black and white to color TV.

When the cameras started sending bigger sharper pictures to our sets. Many of our analog TV sets were not able to show these breath taking pictures so pictures were sliced up and modified to fit our old fashioned TV's. We saw a picture, but what we saw wasn't the entire picture.

A while back someone came up with the idea of making a television set that could show everything being sent to it just the way it was being sent, without chopping up the picture or fading the colors. They introduced it to the world and called it High Definition Television or HDTV.

These new TV sets have a sharper picture that is crystal clear and instead of chopping up the picture to make it fit into our standard box, it shows all of the picture in a format that is wider, deeper, clearer and 10 times sharper than our old TV.

That sounds like the history of our lives. Before we were saved we saw life from a worldly view, but when we accepted Christ we saw the world differently; it was colored by the grace of God. We started going to church and staying away from night clubs and bars. That was a good picture, but it was not the full picture. Only a few of us saw the whole picture that was sent to us from heaven above; that's the part of the Christian life that deals with abundant living. It is always chopped off and

modified to fit our limited time and attention.

There are some today, who are ready to move up to the next level. They want to experience life in High Def.

That's the good news from heaven. God invites us to upgrade to an abundant High Defintion life in Christ.

As Christians, we thank God for Jesus because he made it possible for us not just to have life, but to have it more abundantly.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of the believer's relationship to God.

Jesus makes it clear that those looking for the abundant, joy filled, life can only find it in him. Those who have found eternal life, have also found meaning for their lives that is described in these verses as "pasture." If you are a sheep, a green pasture is synonymous to happiness. It is what you need in abundance! Thus, Jesus says "I am come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."

We seek Christ to acquire salvation. Once we receive salvation then we move to the next level: we learn how to really live and be happy in Jesus.

Jesus offers believers the abundant life; not riches and affluence, although these may have their place, but a life that gives them a broader and deeper appreciation of the things that really matter in life including church, family and the community of God.

Advantages of the High Def Life

People see high definition living the same way they respond to high definition television.

SOME UPGRADE IMMEDIATELY: As soon as they heard that there was a better way, there were many who immediately upgraded their situations. While others are living standard lives they are already enjoying the high def life.

SOME HAVE NOT SUBSCRIBED TO THE SERVICE: There many who have new televisions with the label "HDTV" on the front, but they have not subscribed to the service. They wear the cross, they attend a church and wear the Christian label on the outside but many have not subscribed completely to the Christian way of life. They have a new set but they are still seeing the old picture.

SOME DON'T HAVE IT AND DON'T WANT IT: There are many who do not have HDTV and don't want it. They are satisfied with what they have and don't want more, especially if it requires them to do anything more than they are presently doing.

THOSE WHO WANT MORE, UPGRADE: Those who want the abundant life that Christ taught about move up to another level spirituality that reflects itself immediately in the four dimensions of the high def life: Daily living, relationships,

finances, service and spirituality.

High Definition Service

Regular believers join the church and become bench members; they have no place of service. If they serve, they require recognition and praise constantly. High def believers feel compelled to serve in the kingdom. They have a willingness to serve without the necessity of pay or recognition in any way that is possible. The high definition believer actually accumulates riches in heaven through their service to others. Matthew 9:41 reminds us that even the man that gives a cup of water to a stranger in the name of Jesus, gets a reward. Those who help the homeless, help the infirmed, visit the sick, feed the hungry, heal the hurts of families, and respond to personal needs and crises, build up treasures in heaven. Those who upgrade to high def see an immediate change in their attitude toward service in the kingdom.

High Definition Finances

One of the areas that is visibly affected when we switch to high def living is our finances. Many have joined the church but they have not subscribed to God's plan for our finances. We have not accepted that everything we have belongs to him and is being managed by us. Often we waste our resources, fail to use them wisely and plunge ourselves into financial quicksand.

High Def believers move up a little higher. The most important change shows in their attitude about their money: They throw away less, save more, avoid debt and give more to God's kingdom. High Def believers seem to have more, even though they give more than they did as just regular believers.

Jesus told many parables explaining how we are stewards over the "talents" we are given and how we will be blessed if we manage them well. Moreover, those who give time, talents and money at a sacrifice get extra rewards from God.

The high definition believer handles money on a different level, because now he or she sees clearly that their finances have been entrusted to them by God. Because of that new insight he doesn't have to modify our blessings to fit our limited standard attitudes about resources.

High Definition Relationships

Many believers are involved in personal relationships as singles, married couples or families. When we upgrade to high def living our relationships instantly change.

In a low def single life we may wear the "church" label without subscribing the the Christian lifestyle. We may still drink, use drugs, have "protected" sex, or even live together all while wearing the "HD" label. Actually, they belong to a church but they haven't subscribed to Christ's teaching about being unequally yoked or in engaging in unholy activities. A high def single doesn't waste time on low def

relationships based on sex, partying, drinking or drugs. The high def single lives a happy, monagamous, morally pleasing life until God sends the mate. They see clearer the kind of mate they they need and resist the temptation to modify what God has for them by accepting only what can fit into a low def life.

The same is true for married couples. In low def, they live in the same house but they are not real spiritual partners. A marriage reaches high def when a husband and wife become one in everything. We don't have your bills and my bills, everything becomes "our." In high def, we become one spiritually. We worship together, discuss Godly things together, pray together and seek God's will together.

There are low def families too. A low def family has no quality time together, do not support each other, and show little interest in the pursuits of family members. Low def families may not worship God together; sometimes not at all.

High Def families on the other hand spend time together, enjoy each other, support each other and serve Christ together.

Many are happy with low def relationship, marriages and families. Others want what Jesus called the "Abundant life."-They want to upgrade to high def relationships

High Definition Living

Those who live lives in low def are often frustrated by the twists and turns of life. They see a job lost, a family sickness, failed effort, a flooded or burned home, and experience the pain of death. Because they live in low def they can't see the entire picture.

Because everything God has in store for them must be modified to fit their picture the rest of each situation is usually chopped off to fit their low def life screens.

What's missing? What's missing is Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." That's the part that is off the screen of the believer who lives in low def.

The high def believer can see the whole picture: He sees a trouble, but he also sees God's promise that no matter what kind of trouble finds him, it will work out to his advantage as long as he or she keeps their hand in God's hand. The high def believer sees life clearer and sharper and takes that attitude into every arena. Everything works out for the believer and those who live high def lives know that are able to weather the toughest storms because they know God's word is true.

High Def Believers can clearly see the blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember the high definition believer is able see God clearer because he's able to see the blood.

Ask any sports fan why they want to watch their favorite team on HDTV and

they'll tell you because they can see every play in such sharp detail and they feel closer and miss nothing.

Those who live high definition spiritual lives want to be close to God. To stay close to God means you want to be in his presence, talk with him, listen to him, and share experiences with him.

High definition believers have the joy of knowing that wherever we go. He is close enough to us to know our needs, sense our weakness and to respond to us in the nick of time.

If we live in low def we can forget that God is in control of things.

When we live our lives in low def:

We think we have lost the war because we lost a battle!

We think we can't get up again because we have fallen down!

We think we can't straighten up because we're so mess up and bent out of shape

We think we can't succeed because we've failed so many times

Somebody here today once lived their lives in low definition, faithless, hopeless and without faith in God. I know that true because the word says in 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. "

We have been washed in the blood we start seeing things in high definition and we remember the power of the blood

A high def believer always remembers that God is able!

When you move up to high definition you get everything God has in store for you.

Hezekiah received a low def message to set his house in order because it was time to die, but he turned his face to the wall and decided to move up to high definition and God gave him 15 more years.

A widow woman looked at her cupboard and realized she had no food, but she decided to move up to high definition and put her trust in God and her barrel never ran dry!

David lived a life of sin and betrayal. He was the epitome of low definition living but one day he prayed to God, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and renew a right spirit within me." And God turned his life around.

The power of the blood can change lives!

The power of the blood can save souls!

The power of the blood can guarantee the grace of God!

Today, there is a special offer from heaven, you can get hooked up to High Definition living without paying a thing because "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe."

Out on Calvary, Jesus paid it all!

He died that we might have life and have it more abundantly!

He died that we might have a chance at the tree life!

He died to save our souls from sin!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave all power in his hands!

He's broadcasting 24 hours a day and sending our joy and happiness!

Can you receive his signal?

No. 9301-Funeral

The Master Calls And He Calls for Thee

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2008

SCRIPTURE: And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. John 11:28

Introduction

Have you ever received a call in the early morning hours and expected bad news before you answered the phone. The general belief is that when someone calls us at 3 a.m. in the morning it must mean bad news. We usually expect to be told someone is seriously ill, injured in an accident, imprisoned or worse, that someone has died. Most of us have received one of those kinds of calls.

How we feel about such a call has a lot to do with when we receive the call and also who is on the other line.

We feel the same way about visits. If the doctor makes a house call we feel someone is seek. If the local mortician stops by for a visit and we see his hearse parked out front, we think someone has died. If the preacher calls and he's wearing a black suit, it means its either communion Sunday or he's getting ready for a funeral. If the policeman calls, someone is in trouble. If the teacher calls, someone has acted up in school.

If your mother calls, and she calls out your whole name..it means you are in big trouble.

We respond in different ways to different kinds of calls; but how do we respond when God calls. Sometimes God beckons us to reshuffle our time, reapply our talents and to refocus our attention on the works of the kingdom.

There are some of us who react to God's call the same way we react to Mother's call...we let him call a few times and then get in a hurry when we think he has called his last time. But, there are others who respond quickly to his call and respond "Here I am."

We can't judge God's call by the time or the day or night. He called Samuel in the middle of the night; it wasn't bad news, it was news that he would be a holy man of God. He also called Solomon in the night and spoke to him in a dream and reveal to him that he would receive great wisdom. In the middle of the day he called Saul

on the road to Damascus and told him it was time for his life to change.

Neither can we judge God's call to be glad tidings or scorn. Sometimes when God calls he brings judgment such as he brought upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sometimes when he calls he interrupts our sacrifice such as he did Abraham and provided a ram in the bush. Sometimes when he calls, carries into a valley of dry bones.

Then there are times when he calls us to join him, as was the case when Christ called all 12 of his disciples.

As Christians, we know that whenever God calls for us, it's a good call. Whether its service, sacrifice or to come to be with him; our lives and our eternity will be blessed whenever God calls.

Exposition

This text focuses on news that Mary received from Martha, that the master called for her.

The two sisters were upset over the death of Lazarus. They were mourning Lazarus' loss and Christ had comforted her. Then he sent word to Mary because he wanted to comfort her too.

Note Martha went and very discreetly told Mary that the Master cometh. She called her secretly, and whispered it in her ear, to note that his invitation was personal and not global for others. It indicated the way that God speaks to each believer, privately and personally.

The call that Mary received did not come from anyone else; it came from the master himself. That is significant because often we are called by other forces and other powers to do their bidding, but Martha distinguished this call and noted that it was the "Master" who called.

She called her by order from Christ; he bade her go call her sister. This call that is effectual, whoever brings it, is sent by Christ. The Master is come, and calleth for thee. "Lazarus is gone, and our comfort in him is gone; but the Master is come, who is better than the dearest friend, and has that in him which will abundantly make up all our losses. He is come who is our teacher, who will teach us how to get good out of our sorrow (Psa. 94:12),

When Christ our Master comes, he calls for us. He comes in his word and ordinances, calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for us in particular, for us by name (Psa. 27:8); and, if he call thee, he will cure us, and he will comfort us.

God Calls us to begin a work

God calls every believer to undertake a great work. He never calls us to an insignificant or unimportant work; no matter what others think. It is always a great work. Our work may be to be the strength of our families. It may be to help the poor

and the needy. It may be highly visible like public service or almost invisible, like that of a private home nurse. Regardless to our work it is important.

Our work could be to serve as the minister of music of the church. If so, it would be a challenging work that would require training, patience and a praying spirit. This would be a great work because it would please God, edify him and glorify him among mankind.

Each begins a special ministry when we are called by God.

When God calls us to work how should we approach our task. How should we use the gift we have to his glory. The person who wants to use that gift for God must get to know him on a personal basis and accept him as his personal Lord and Savior.

INNER LIFE: When the master calls us, we need to keep a strong inner life. The inner life is the communion he or she shares with God. God's spirit communes with them in special ways through this inner life that helps them see what appears to be a bunch of weeds and arrange them into flowers. This requires a spiritual communion with God. It's that inner life that brings peace, joy and satisfaction.

INNER EYE: When God calls us we must develop an inner eye to see the value in what others have thrown away and can always find a way to take something ugly and make it beautiful. This inner eye helps them see what others cannot see. It is a special gift that comes from God. This is the same way God sees those who are less fortunate, down cast and lost. He sees our value and takes something that others call ugly and makes it beautiful.

INNNER TOUCH: When God calls us we must develop an inner touch. We feel with our hands. Saints feel with the soul. When God call us he does something to us. We use a variety of terms to describe what he does. We say we are "motivated" or "inspired" or "moved." The godly minister of music prays for God's guiding power just as the godly artist stares at the canvass waiting for God to send a beam from heaven. When God calls we must be willing to move at his command.

God calls us to end our work

When we finish our work on earth God was glorified. When it's done God's way, he gets the credit in the end. Whatever we do is done for God's glory. Our career, business or life mission has one purpose, that those who benefit from our life work will be "astonished" at the power of God. When we do that, we do it God's way, not "My way."

Be Ready When He Calls

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that when the time comes, we need to be ready to answer when he calls.

When God called Mary when immediately went to answer his call.

When she answered his call she received good news that lifted her spirit.

When she answered his call she found joy in the resurrection of the risen Lord

and a renewed faith that God was in control of life's circumstances.

This is the kind of life we celebrate here today.

We celebrate the life of one who heard the call of Christ and spent her life doing his work.

She was the kind of woman whose epitaph is inscribed in the hearts of those who knew her, for every day of her life is a testament of faith and courage!

When the chilly finger of death touches the life of such a woman, what can be said about her?

A thousand litanies only dwarf such a life!

What can you say about her?

All we can do is sing the words of the song that says "May the work, I've done, speak for me!

May the service I give, speak for me! May the life I live, speak for me!"

Each of us must hear when God speaks, for he calls every one of us to the cross.

When God speaks an indelible imprint is made upon the soul of man.

When God speaks, mountains of indecision crumble into pebbles of resolution.

When God speaks, the valleys of despair are exalted to plains of hope.

When God speaks, rivers, filled with the tears of anguish are rolled back, revealing a pathway to brighter days.

When God calls we should each say, Speak Lord, and show me the way

Show me the way of truth and righteousness!

Show me the way of glory and honor!

Show me the way of triumph and victory!

Show me the way that leads me to Calvary!

Show me how to appreciate the fact that you died for me on an old rugged cross!

Show me how to remember in my sadness, that Early Sunday morning Christ arose from the grave!

No wonder the song writer wrote: When He calls me, I will answer....I'll be somewhere listening for my name.

9302-Easter

C.S.I.

(Cross Scene Investigation)
A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 23, 2008

SCRIPTURE: ***Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Luke 24:12***

Introduction

Have you ever played detective? If you have, it was the time when you decided to become Colombo and figure out what happened, how it happened, when it happened and why it happened. We've been the detective in our homes, on the job and in the community. In fact some of us are so good that we can solve murders on television before the program is half over. We like mysteries and we like solving them as well.

We have always been fascinated with those smart detectives who find the real killers: Whether it was the legendary Sherlock Holmes, Dick Tracy, Perry Mason or Murder She Wrote, we enjoyed watching them. We found ourselves fascinated at how they used scientific investigation of the smallest pieces of evidence to expose the killers. What these crime solvers use is called "Forensic Science" or bringing science into the public forum

Forensic science is one of the fastest growing professions in America thanks to a television series called: CSI short for Crime Scene Investigation. There are no less than three CSI programs now: CSI-New York, CSI-Miami and CSI-Las Vegas. Because of CSI juries are not so quick to condemn suspects, they now wait for the forensic evidence of hair skin samples, blood splatters, DNA, fingerprint analysis and laser- guided projectile examinations, accurate fiber and chemical analysis, Luminol applications and nationwide data base reports before they make decisions.

Depending on the quality of the forensic evidence, forensic investigators can usually tell you what happened, who did it, when and how they did it. Sometimes this has been achieved with just the smallest amount of hair, blood or skin tissue; even years after a death.

Defense attorneys have used forensic evidence such as DNA to prove clients not-guilty. Prosecutors have used forensic evidence to condemn slick crooks who would have otherwise escaped capture.

Without a doubt, a thorough crime scene investigation can bring out the truth.

As Christians, we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. What evidence could a thorough examination of the scene reveal to us? If we look at the cross and the empty tomb, what truths can we learn about these two events that would help us to reach a decision about the power of God in our lives? More importantly, what evidence could we find in our lives that he is truly risen and is our Lord and savior?

Exposition

This text focuses on an inspection made by Peter on the morning of the resurrection; an inspection that left him wondering about what he saw.

Christ had been crucified and buried in a new tomb borrowed from a wealthy man of the area named Joseph. His body had been hastily removed from the cross so that it would not be hanging on the day of preparation regarding the Passover Sabbath. After both the Passover Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) had passed the women came to tomb and found his body gone. When they reported what they had seen to the apostles (v11) their report was dismissed as idle tales. The women's report was dismissed because they had been at the crucifixion and watched from a distance and saw Christ's brutal death.

Yet, they had been at a distance. There had been no close inspection of the cross, the tomb or the details surrounding the mysterious report of the women.

Peter ran to the tomb to investigate for himself. Once inside he saw nothing but the strips of linen cloth that were used to wrap the body for burial. The cloth strips were neatly folded and laid by themselves. He was extremely specific in his observations, taking note of every detail with his own eyes, not counting on the testimony of the women.

The testimony of the women, the empty tomb, and the folded cloth posed a mystery to Peter because the text notes that he came to investigate the report of the women but left "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." He left no wiser than he came.

Yet if he had remembered the words of Jesus and compared what he saw to Jesus prophecies then it would have been plain.

The query continued as they talked about what they had seen are reviewed every piece of evidence, trying to understand. On the road to Emmaus two men reviewed the details of his death, burial and the women's report. They did not understand it all but "when their eyes were opened and they knew him."

From that point forward the matter was settled; the case was closed. Jesus had truly risen from the dead.

Cross Scene Investigation

There are many today who do not believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like the apostles, who at first dismissed the reports as nonsense or idle tales, there are many today who do not believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

However, a theoforensic investigation of the cross and tomb scenes might lead us to the truth. That truth is important for believers because our salvation hinges on the fact of his death, by which we are saved and his resurrection by which we have the gift of eternal life.

IDENTITY OF THE DECEASED: They removed from the cross the 33 year old body of a Jewish man. The CSI team noticed that His DNA indicated that he was the son of an earthly mother but his father was of supernatural origins. Who was he? Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God with us." He was the son of God.

TIME OF DEATH: John 19:31 sets the time of his death as the day before Passover or the day of Preparation; it was Wednesday the 14th day of Jewish month of Nisan. That's the forensic report. Theoforensic report confirms that finding because Luke 23:44 Notes that he hung on the cross from the 6th to the 9th hour or from 12 noon to 3 p.m. The time of his death is marked at 3 p.m. Wednesday evening.

CAUSE OF DEATH: The forensic evidence suggests that the two most likely causes of his death were asphyxiation and hypovolemic shock. Contributing factors included dehydration and blood loss, and perhaps stress-induced heart arrhythmia or congestive heart failure. Luke 23:46 just says, "He gave up the ghost and died."

EVIDENCE OF TRAUMA: There was evidence on his body of trauma, thorn prints in around his forehead and whip marks on his back and bruises indicating that he had been exposed to considerable blunt force trauma. The bible says in John 19:1-3, "1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands."

BALLISTIC EVIDENCE: Three spikes were found on the scene. The Forensic evidence indicates that the spikes were used to nail him with arms outstretched but not taut. The iron spikes were placed between the radial and ulnar arteries, leaving them unharmed. The nails transected the median nerve causing great pain but without fracturing the bones. Then they flexed his knees, laid one foot atop the other, and drove an iron spike through the second intermetatarsal space, which is between the second and third foot bones, without severing any major arteries. No arteries were cut, no bones were broken; it was as if something was being nailed to cross besides his hands and feet. The theoforensic report gives the answer in Colossians 2:14 which says, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." He nailed our past broken laws and failures to the cross.

FLUID EVIDENCE: Lab tests show human saliva, but the saliva did not match his DNA- It came from others around him. Those that he came to save, spit upon him and made fun of him. Can this be true? The theoforensic record bears out the facts in Matthew 26:67 "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,"

PRESENCE OF TOXINS: At the cross there was considerable blood. However lab tests reveal that there were strange toxins in his blood. He did not drink from

the cup at his last supper and had only vinegar while on the cross. What are these strange toxins in his blood? 2 Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Our sins were in the toxins in the blood. That meant his blood was shed for our sins. Matthew 26:28 says, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Investigation Summary

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the findings of the investigation

The cross scene investigation concluded that it was the hands of Romans soldiers that nailed him to the cross, but it was the sins of the world that caused him to lay down his life. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquity; the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And with his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

When Peter went into the tomb he conducted his own CSI investigation. There was no body in the tomb. The burial clothes had been neatly folded to the side indicating that there was an orderly departure.

He left "wondering" meaning that he was trying to put it all together.

The women came Early Sunday morning and found the stone had been rolled away!

An Angel of the Lord spoke to them asked, "Why seek ye the living among the dead, he is not here. He is risen.." (Matthew 24:5)

We now have the investigative report that establishes who died, what time he died and how he died.

We also have forensic evidence and eye witness reports that establishes that he was buried but arose from the dead.

The report would tell us about that tragic day in Jerusalem, but what if there was a CSI team called upon to investigate his presence in our lives? Would they find any evidence of the blood of salvation in our spirit. Would they be able to discover whether he has risen in our hearts?

When the CSI team winds up the investigation and closes the case, what does the investigation reveal for our lives?

The investigation concludes that despite the devil's best efforts, God is still on the throne!

As long as God is still on the throne everything is going to be alright!

Because he lives, I can face each day standing on the promises of God

Because he lives, I can get up if I mess up and start all over again!

Because he lives, There is no mountain to high for me to climb!

Because he lives, there is no valley of frustration so wide that I cannot cross!

Because he lives, there is no defeat that I cannot turn into a victory

Because he lives, there is no failure that can conquer my soul and hold me down!

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,

Because He lives, all fear is gone;

Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!
I’m glad that he came down here and lived for 33 years.
I’m glad that he died on an old rugged cross for me!
But I’m so glad that early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with..
All power in his hands!

No. 9303-Youth

Pull Your Pants Up

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2008

SCRIPTURE: Wherefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, [be] sober [and] hope with perfect stedfastness in the grace [which will be] brought to you at [the] revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the number of African-American males who now wear their pants below their waists? It seems to be a growing concern in our community so many young men find it fashionable to dress in a manner that is socially unacceptable, bordering on indecency. Across the nation, seniors in the Black community are shaking their heads as they bemoan what is happening to African-American young men. Some are tempted to reach out to every young man, grab his pants and say, "Pull your pants up."

It's called "Saggin" and it is a growing clothing trend among the Hip Hop generation. Yet, it is not exclusively a "black thang" because there are many whites who have embraced the style as well.Sagging began a while back, some say in the 80's when groups like KidNPlay, Groove B. Chill and others began to appear in music videos with their pants sagging. Since that time the gangsta trend has made the "jail house" look of sagging pants extremely popular to youth who want a way to give adults an "in your face" response to normalcy.

Before adults get too self righteous about clothing fads that have shocked the previous generation, truth requires that we note that the sagging pants is not the first clothing trend that shocked adults.

At the turn of the century, it was considered unthinkable for women to wear dresses that revealed their ankles. In the 1920's the flappers wore short shimmy dresses that labeled them as loose and immoral.

Remember the James Dean rebel look of the 50's where boys appeared with their shirt tails out, leather jackets and tee-shirts with rolled up sleeves. Boys who wore these clothes were considered gangsters and thugs.

The Beatles shocked America with the mop air styles and the Jackson Five shocked America with their huge Afro's, then considered a symbol of rebellion.

The Mini-skirts were so short when Tina Turner and Ikettes showed up on American Band Stand that the censors almost banned them from the airways, but not before inspiring a whole new fashion trend among the youth.

We were totally crossed out when children started wearing their clothing backwards, a style popularized by the group Kriss Kross.

There have always been fashion trends in every generation that have troubled the older generation.

What's troubling about sagging is that it does not seem to be a passing trend that will die as the generation matures. It seems to represents to represent a mode of thinking that rejects rules, established order and traditional.

It's been around for nearly 30 years and instead of fading into fashion trend history, has assumed a life of its own with no end in sight.

Sagging pants are associated with a "Sagging mindset." The sagging mindset is associated with low self esteem, short term goals, a subculture lifestyle and a serious identity crises.

Such a mindset is described in the bible as a "reprobate" mind. It is not the unique province of "saggers" there are many people who do not have sagging pants but they do have a "sagging mindset."

The word of God challenges everyone not to conform to this world but to be transformed by their renewing of the mind. That's the goal. When the mindset changes and starts looking up; the pants will follow.

As Christians, our goal is to keep looking up toward our God. If we keep our eyes on him and reach up; our pants will follow.

Exposition

In this text Peter encourages believers to raise their minds to a new level of thinking as they prepare for the Christian journey.

It was traditional in biblical times for men and women to wear long robes. Whenever the men had to move quickly or move freely without any hindrances they rolled up their robes and tucked them in their waistbands or belts.

Peter used this example as he urged believers to prepare themselves for the Christian struggle by "girding up their loins" or rolling up their robes - of their minds; that is prepare their minds for what lay ahead. Anything that would slow their pace, hinder their movement or distract from the service of God was to be rolled up to give place to God's service completely. The great biblical scholar Matthew Henry interprets the passage this way, "gather in, and gird up, their long and loose garments, that they may be more ready, prompt, and expeditious in their business, so do you by your minds, your inner man, and affections seated there: gird them, gather them in, let them not hang loose and neglected about you; restrain their extravagances, and let the loins or strength and vigor of your minds be exerted in your duty; disengage yourselves from all that would hinder you, and go on resolutely in your obedience."

Thus believers are reminded raise their thinking as they prepare to serve Go.

Reasons for Lifting Our minds

There are many areas in which black youth can upgrade their mindsets to help accomplish the will of God:

TIGHTEN UP THE REBELLIOUS SPIRIT. Every generation has faced the rebellious spirit of its youth. The young seem to have fun rubbing their seniors the wrong way. Consider this quote: "Youth today love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, no respect for older people, and talk nonsense when they should be working. Young people do not stand up any longer when adults enter the room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay their legs on the table and tyrannize their elders." If that quote seems to describe today's youth, then consider that those words were spoken by the Philosopher Socrates, thousands of years ago, describing the youth of his time.

While rebellion is not knew, youth can tighten up. They can show more respect for their elders. While no one expects them to clone the previous generation, they can also work to demonstrate a level of restraint that holds their rebellious spirit in check.

In that respect, youth should tighten up their rebellious spirit so that they can do God's work.

OPEN UP TO RECEIVE OPPORTUNITIES: God has created many opportunities for today's youth, but they cannot be received with a "Sagging mindset." Youth must pull up their attitudes to receive God's blessings. His word will only be given to sanctify and endorse those dreams and aspirations which are according to his will and purpose. Opportunities become available for those who reflect God's will and mindset. Samson was a young man who recognized early that he had special physical gifts. However, Samson had a fascination for women of the Philistine race or off-limits to the men of Israel. Samson had been given strength but the strength was to be used in ways that pleased God. Because Samson chose to use his special gift outside of the will of God he awoke one morning to find himself without his special gifts. He became just as every other man no more or no less. Samson's situation lets us know that God gives us special opportunities that allows us to enjoy them as long as we used them in ways that pleased him. Youth today should be aware that we please God when we live our lives that are according to his purpose. Therefore each young man or woman should ask God for guidance to determine his will. If we live according to his will we will open up to great opportunities.

YOUTH SHOULD LISTEN UP: A large part of the reason so many young men are "sagging" is because they have been listening to the wrong person, Satan. For the most part the "sagging mentality" is being promoted by enemies of our community who profit from marketing to us at our expense. The idea is to promote the weaknesses among us as examples that represent us all.

Our youth should listen to the right voices. Who told them there were no Black men? Why did you believe it when you look around and see men driving cabs, buses, working in offices, holding positions in government, working in high finance and making life and death decisions across this nation? Who told you there were no Black men? Who told you that a Black man ain't nothing? Why did you believe that when the legacy of nearly every Black family includes stories fathers and grandfathers who gave their lives on farms, serving as Pullman Porters, butlers, janitors, teachers, preachers and professionals to keep their families together?

Who told Black youth that all they need to succeed in life is athletic skill? Why do you continue to believe when you know that nearly every NBA or NFL superstar has a college education an even the rapper Master P, was one of the smartest students in his high school class?

Youth must listen up to hear the voices that will raise them up to a higher level that can be achieved with their pants down.

WE MUST LIFT UP EXPECTATIONS. A new counter culture has developed over the called Hip Hop. It is a music driven voice of youth rebellion that reflects a language, culture, fashion and hairstyle that is counter to mainstream influences.

The new counter culture attempts to teach youth to go against mainstream cultural standards. If, for example, boys are expected to wear their pants fitted on their waists, Hip Hop urges them to wear them loose on their hips. Instead of wearing shirttails in, Hip Hop suggests that they wear them out. Instead of buckling belts, Hip Hop suggests that they be worn unbuckled or no belts at all. Since it is expected that men do not wear earrings, Hip Hop suggests that men wear earrings. Rather than take hats off in the building, Hip Hop suggests that they keep hats on, and turn them backwards.

The cigarette and alcohol industries have targeted African American youth as easy prey and have finance many segments of he Hip Hop Movement. Alcohol companies who influence youth to drink secretly back many of the rappers. The rap group 8-Ball is backed by Eight Ball Old English 800 Malt Liquor; Ice Cube was promoted by St. Ives Malt Liquor; and it is no coincidence that a few years ago when Snoop Dog started singing about the joys of "Gin and Juice" that packages of gin and juice began showing up in liquor stores around the country.

Even sadder, hundreds of thousands of youth are graduating from Hip Hop to levels in which they must prove that they are willing to do anything to prove that they have the "juice" or ultimate courage. This includes, drugs, promiscuity, even murder. Satan has a grip on millions of young people in this present age who are caught up so tight they cannot turn loose.

Yet we are being called to gird up our loins and lift up our minds so that we can move to a higher level beyond what the Hip Hop world is offering.

Close to God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that as we pull up or gird our loins we get closer to God, regardless of our age. We are never too young to pull up our pants or to get closer our Lord.

There are many youth who live with a pants down mentality, but most Christian youth are trying live up and look up to Jesus rather than looking down on the ground with their pants down.

The Christian youth is an example in Christian conversation in the words they use and jokes they tell.

The Christian youth is willing to volunteer to help others out of love without asking "what am I going to get out of it?"

The Christian youth is guided by what they have learned about God from Sunday school, bible study and personal devotion.

When it comes to living the Godly life, his mind is up and his pants are up!

When it comes to praising God for his goodness, his praise is up and his pants are up.

Youth want to give God praise for keeping his hand on their plans.

If you have made advancements in education, it was God's hand in the plan.

Never too late to pull them up

If you have made career advancements, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have achieved family goals, it was God's hand in the plan.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable become probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable become thinkable!

It's the same hand the carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

The world intended it for bad, but God had a hand in the plan.. and early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9304-Inspiration

Making Time When You Have No Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there he was gone." 1 Kings 20:40

Introduction

I don't have time!" Have you ever said that? Most of us at one time or another have said something, "I'm running out of time" or "We don't have time for that" or "How much time will it take?" We are a very impatient people. We have busy schedules filled with activity that at the time seems important. We are so busy that even never seem to have enough time.

You know that you are this type of person when you find yourself saying, "I want it now!"

We have been inundated with a long list of time saving devices that instead of saving us time, have given us less time for quality experiences as we squeeze in more. We have been reared on 30 second T.V. commercials, 30 minute sit-coms, and 60 minute mini-dramas. We want high speed internet access and can't stand to wait even a few seconds to view the website we've selected.

We spend our lives in a series of "can't wait situations." When we're young, we can't wait to go to kindergarten. Then we can't wait to get out of school. Then we wait to fall in love and get married. Then we can't wait to have kids. Then, as parents, we can't wait for the kids to go off to school. Then we can't wait for them to graduate.

Have you ever noticed that the more expensive the restaurant, the longer you have to wait? There are actually five different waits you must endure; first, you wait to get a seat, then you wait to get a menu, then you wait to order, then you wait for the food, and then you wait for the check. And then they have the audacity to call the person who serves you the waiter!

We just don't have enough time. We ride the elevator to save time but then we get impatient with the elevator because it's too slow. Have you ever watched the people on an elevator after they pushed the button? Some people are "swayers;" they

sway back and forth as they wait. Others are "bouncers;" they bounce up and down while waiting for the elevator. And then there are "pushers;" they're always pushing the button, thinking that might speed things up.

Sometimes our hurry up attitude affects other people. Consider the woman who was upset because she and her husband's dream vacation was interrupted by a trip to the dentist. She had shopping to do, places to go, things to do and the dentist office was going to take too much time. "I want a tooth pulled, and I don't want Novocain because I'm in a big hurry," the woman said. "Just extract the tooth as quickly as possible, and we'll be on our way." The dentist was quite impressed. "You're certainly a courageous woman, because that could be painful." he said. "Which tooth is it?" The woman turned to her husband and said, "Show him your tooth, dear."

When we say we don't have time, does that include God, too? Unfortunately, for many people prayer, worship, bible study, and ministry building activities are not included in their personal priority lists because they take too much time. God gets second place; or depending on the day of the week, no place at all, he falls somewhere behind the beauty shop and televised sports.

As Christians we recognize that we have a responsibility to exercise steward over our time, talents and resources. Since all of our time belongs to God, we should make sure that we appropriate whatever time we need to serve him, worship him and glorify him before others. He has all the time in the world, and if we give him first place he will reward us by taking us to a place where time will have no end.

Exposition

This text considers an illustration about what happens when we are so busy going here and there that we neglect God.

The story was given by a prophet to King Ahab after the king had disobeyed a command of God to destroy the Assyrian army and its king.

The prophet gives the king a story to pronounce God's judgment. A servant went into battle and was given a man to guard and told if the man is lost the servant would lose his life. The servant said he was "busy here and there" and failed to keep an eye on the prisoner. The king pronounced a death sentence on the servant and in so doing pronounced his own sentence as well.

This servant assumed a responsibility, took on a task and didn't carry it out because he didn't have time. He was busy doing something else.

The servant was not lazy for the text says he was "busy here and there." The text indicates that whatever his activities were "here and there" they were less important than that which he had left undone.

The central focus of the Christian revolves around God, family, occupation, fellowman and social mobility.

The majority of the time of a Christian, that is his ripping and running, activity, application of his talent, use of his time and finances all revolve around God and family. The priorities of Christians always focus first on God and family and all other considerations are secondary.

How many are neglecting their service to God and to their family while they are running "here and there" for the club, their job, or political organization?

The text says, "..as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

The best things require time

The best things in life require some time. We may not have a lot of it, but the more we give it, the better it seems to be. For example Old Fashioned oats takes longer but it tastes better. Old fashioned home cooked burgers are slower, but taste better than Big Macs and Whooper. There are other areas too.

RELATIONSHIPS TAKE TIME: Instant people have a problem building relationships. We can become so instant oriented that we judge relationships with people based upon how much time that will consume. So, caller-ids on our phones help us to ignore those that will take up our time or waste our time. Relationships take time. You may not have a lot of time but building a relationship takes plenty of quality time.

LOVE TAKES TIME: Instant love is frustrating. Love and the word instant are incompatible because love deals with two things: feelings and action. Love is a succession of feelings that are nurtured through time spent together. A minute here and a moment there is instant love, but it is also frustrating love. Love is also an action word; it is better shown that spoken. Love that is shown over time is better than instant love any day. You may not have a lot of time, but a love that last takes time.

KNOWING GOD TAKES TIME: It is possible to get in such a hurry that we have little time for God. Things that are godly often take up tremendous amounts of time. Bible study is not quick, it takes time. A real prayer life is not instant, but it takes time. True worship is not instant, it takes time. A person who never has time considers the amount of time set aside for worship, prayer, bible study and spiritual growth as an encroachment upon his schedule. Such a person looks for the quick version that can give a quick fix. Is there an instant way to tell God thanks for his blessings? Is there quick way to praise him for his goodness?

TO MAKE TIME REQUIRES DISCIPLINE: If we want to start carving out time for God it will require a measure of personal discipline on our part. Discipline for life is generally imposed, but works best when it is self imposed. If education is knowing "what you gotta know, to do what you gotta do" then discipline means, "doing what you gotta do, to get what you gotta do, done." The hallmark of discipline is when it is self imposed. It's when you force yourself to do "What you gotta do, to do what you gotta do." That's when you make time for God and kingdom building. You may not have a lot of time but you discipline yourself to make time for him.

God takes His time

Finally, it is good that we remember that despite the hurried pace of our world it better for us to wait and let God be the instant God that he is.

There was no person whose daily life was more crowded than Jesus. He was constantly surrounded by crowds who wanted to see him or touch him. Jesus always found a way to slow his pace by retreating in a boat, praying in a garden, or crossing over to the other side.

What he came to do could not be done instantly it would take time. When Jesus told his disciples that he was the bread of heaven, it wasn't instant bread but it was bread that had been prepared from the beginning of time.

Thus, the word of God encourages saints not to be in a hurry, but to learn to wait on the Lord! Isaiah said, "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!" Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

While it's not advisable for us to hurry God, it is good to know that we serve an instant God.

While it's not recommended that we tell God when and how to act, it is good to know that we serve an on time God!

Sound travels at a speed of 1085 feet per second, but before we speak the words of any prayer, the answer is on the way!

Light travels at speeds above 5,000 feet per second, but long before we can see it, God makes a way out of no way!

A widow woman with an issue of blood pushed her way through a crowd. When she touched the hem of his garment, instantly she was made whole! A centurion soldier asked Jesus to speak the word for his daughter's healing, and instantly it was done.

No wonder the song writer declared, "He may not come when you want him, but he's right on time!"

Since God is on time for us, every saint needs to make time for Him!

Since God is on time when we need a blessing, we need to give him more of our time!

Since God is on time when we need a healing, we need to give him more of our ourselves!

We need to be busy building the kingdom, giving him all of our time.

I keep so busy working for the kingdom:

—I don't have to see what time you came in because I'm trying to make it in!

—I don't have time to see who you were with, because everyday I'm walking with the king!

—I don't have time to speculate how much you have in the bank, because my father is rich in houses and land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hand

—I don't have time to worry about what kind of shoes you are wearing, because when I get to heaven I'm going to put on my shoes and walk!

In the fullness of time, God sent his only begotten Son to be a living sacrifice!

He was not in a hurry; he took his time, coming through 42 generations.

But in the fullness of time, he picked up an old rugged cross!

In the fullness of time He died on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, right on time; he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9305-Inspiration

Something to Live For

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21

Introduction

Have you ever wondered, "What am I here for? What's my purpose?" That may seem like the kind of question some philosopher would ask, but it is a necessary question for every believer to ask. "Why am I here?" "Do I have a purpose?"

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that if a man has not discovered something he is willing to die for, then he is not fit to live. That means that each of us is searching to discover the purpose for which we were placed on this earth; once we discover that elusive truth, we should be willing to lay down our lives to achieve its end.

A group of young people were once asked, "Do you believe that your mother would jump in front of a speeding car to save your life?" Each child answered, "Yes." A second question was asked, "Do you believe she would give up her life if it would save yours?" All of them said, "Yes." But when the questioned was reversed the answer was surprising, "Would you jump in front of a speeding car to save your mother's life? Would you die so that she could live?" Only a few hands were raised. The youth had not reached a point in their lives when they could love or sacrifice to a point that they were willing to give up everything.

Christ gave us the ultimate example when he came to this earth, willing to die for people who would not return the favor. He died so that we might live. Now, our goal should be to also have something to live for, that we can love so much that we are willing to die to achieve it.

As Christians, our desire is to do God's will. We know that is a higher calling than one that is self oriented. We are called to serve him. It is something to live for and something to die for as well.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's assertion that his highest life goal is to live for Christ and even to die for his cause.

Paul spent the remainder of his life, after the Damascus Road experience, lifting

up the name of Christ. He endured hardships, difficulties and sacrifices all for the purpose of building the kingdom of God.

In a similar sense, every believer should strive to live as Christ lived. The glory of Christ ought to be the end of our lives, the grace of Christ should be the guiding the principle of our lives, and the word of Christ should be the ruler of our lives.

Paul maintained that the whole essence of the Christian life is to achieve our purpose in him. It is derived from Christ, and directed to him. He is the principle, rule, and end of it.

Those who have this life purpose, like Paul, count it a great gain; even an everlasting gain to give their lives in his service or for his kingdom. Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; for he loses all his comforts and all his hopes: but to a good Christian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery and the perfection of his comforts and accomplishment of his hopes; it delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the possession of the chief good.

In Christ, Paul found something to live for and something to die for.

Something to live for

What makes the church strong today is that it is made up of millions of people who understand that the have a godly purpose.

This understanding provides believers with the ability to maintain a spiritual balance in this crazy world because they have a sense of purpose and divine destiny. The nineteenth century Polish poet Cyrrian Norwid wrote “To be what is called happy, one should have (1) something to live on, (2) something to live for, (3) something to die for. The lack of one results in drama. The lack of two result in tragedy.” Martin Seligman, the eminent psychologist, notes that the lack of meaning in our society today has reached epidemic proportions. He emphasizes that finding meaning requires “an attachment to something larger than ourselves.”

All of these smart men and women simply repeat in different words what Jesus tells every believer. “If you want to save your life, lose it. The man that loses his life saves it.” That paraphrase explains Jesus’ teaching that believers find meaning and purpose in life when we plunge ourselves into a calling and mission greater than ourselves. Those who have a sense of purpose are able to deal with life. When we find our purpose, then we achieve balance and sanity in a crazy world.

The reason the church cannot be defeated is because its cause is championed by legions of believers who are empowered by God, intent on achieving a Godly purpose, even at the risk of death.

Learn your life’s purpose

Each of us should strive to learn God’s purpose for our lives. There is an intersection between the skills and talents that we have today, that have brought together over hundreds of years of genetic refinement for one single purpose. The skills and talents that you have coincide with the quadrant of world history that you were born into, the needs that have arisen in the community you share as neighbors, and what God intends and wants for us. When we use our God given skills and talents

to impact the community around us we create what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

Look around you.

There is something sick in your community that you need to heal. This sickness may not be physical; it could be psychological or social. There are sick leaders and sick situations. Is it possible that your talents have been given to you to heal this situation?

There is something new needed in your community; something new that you need to start. You know what it is because you keep saying, "Why don't they do this?" or "They should do it this way?" or "We don't have this, why not?" It's a sign that something new is needed. When you look at your gifts and talents to talk, convince, organize and make things happen; maybe this new thing is your purpose.

There is something boring that you need to liven up. You noticed that programs need a little life, bulletins need a little spice, activities need a little pep; even sermons need a little more creativity. But when you look at your talents and skills, you know what it takes to make things more beautiful, enjoyable and exciting; maybe that's your purpose.

Discover your purpose and commit to it

When Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and nights; he went to confirm his purpose. He arose from that experience determined to achieve his purpose, even if it meant his own death. When he made this commitment he was a young man. Once he confirmed his purpose he decided to preach in his hometown, to recruit disciples and to build until he created a spiritual movement. He fed them. He healed them. He taught them. Soon he set his face towards Jerusalem.' He had to confront the political and religious leaders of his day. That was his challenge in his place and time. And his life was all over by the time he was 33.

We should do the same. We should discover what God has for us to do then devote our energy toward making it happen. We should pursue it with everything that we have.

The time is now

When should you begin pursuit of your life's purpose? There is a Latin phrase "Carpe Diem" which means seize the day or seize the moment. The time is now.

There is a bug that lives on the lakes in the deep south that lives its entire life cycle in 24 hours. In the morning it hatches and zooms through all the wonder of youth in the morning. By noon, it begins courting and in the late afternoon there are a swarm of these bugs that rise over the lake like funnels because the females will only mate with the guys that can fly high, so up they go. By sunset, the casualties of age are

beginning to take their toll on some of them but the swarm continues through the evening. In the early hours of the dawn the next day, there are only a very few of them left and by the time the sun is in the sky the whole generation has passed. Our time on this earth is not as long as appears. Like that bug our time is short we must Seize the Day.

We must do something significant with our lives. We can't afford to remain distant, aloof, keeping our options open. The result of that path is that at the end of the day we don't achieve anything of significance, anything of meaning.

The time to act is now.

Christ had something to live for

Finally, brothers and sisters, we remind you that we serve a Lord who gave us the example, he had something to live for and something to die for.

Every person should have a "mission statement" which summarizes why you think God put you here and the mission you feel obligated to accomplish before you leave this earth. You may not know your mission but God has certainly ordained you and equipped you with the tools for your mission before you were born.

If your mission is from God it will have redeeming characteristics that will uplift, build and strengthen life in one or more persons.

Often the Saint finds himself agreeing with the Song Writer who pleads, "Make me a blessing, make me blessing. Out of my life let Jesus Shine. Make me a blessing oh Lord I pray, Make me a blessing to someone today."

Another song writer put it this way, "If I can help somebody as I pass along ...if I can cheer somebody with a word or song then my living will not be in vain."

Down in Bethlehem a little child was born with a mission. His mission was to Bring:

—Hope to the disillusioned and Salvation to the Lost.

—Life and provide it more abundantly.

—Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

—Comfort in the midst of calamities & Strength in weakness

—Assurance in the midst of agonies & Power in the midst of problems.

—Safety in times of trouble and Shelter in the time of storm!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born, his name was Jesus!

His purpose was to give us salvation.

Our purpose must be to tell the world about him!

Tell the world that:

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When put our hand in God's hand the impossible becomes possible!

When put our hand in God's hand the improbable becomes probable!

When put our hand in God's hand the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

When put our hand in God's hand the ordinary can achieve the extraordinary!

We must tell the world about Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

He had something to die for

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead..

He had something to live for!

No. 9306-Inspiration

The Lawman's Lawman

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE:"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 10:16-18;And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. Mark 9:4-5

Introduction

Every generation has been fascinated with lawmen and female law enforcers. We have watched them wearing their shiny badges with awe. Every boy at one time or another has toyed with the fascination of becoming law enforcement officer. Today, even girls dream of being law enforcement officers, FBI agents and deputies. Whether it's the Kung Fu and comedy antics of Jackie Chan in Rush Hour or the Tough Guy of Walker Texas Ranger, youngsters admire the heroes.

Name the generation and there is a lawman upon whom the people trusted most and feared least.

Who was your favorite lawman?

Was it Lash La Rue with his twisting walk, stinging whip and sidekick Fuzzy Jones? Was it Hop A Long Cassidy who always wore a big white hat? For some, Wild Bill Hickok represented law and order, along with his sidekick Jingles, who would always shout, "Wait for me Wild Bill!" Matt Dillon loved Dodge City so much that he saw more of Festus Hagan than he did Miss Kitty. Roy Rogers and Dale Evans wore no badge but along with Gene Autrey they were the symbols of law and order for an entire generation; just as the thundering hooves of the mighty horse Silver always brought on the Lone Ranger and Tonto.

What does it take to be a lawman? What does it take for a man or a woman to choose a career that is thankless, uncomfortable and dangerous? What kind of man or woman is it that would risk his life for meager wages, work long hours, and strain his/her own family's relationship to respond to the beck and call of the law?

Obviously the men and women who pursue such a career are responding to a higher calling beyond a mere paycheck. Such a man receives orders from a chief higher than his/her boss. Perhaps they give their lives to this service because, without knowing it, they are guided by the hand of God.

The public looks to the officer of the law to serve and protect. But who does the

lawman look to for protection and inspiration. Who is the lawman's lawman?

As Christians, we have learned that there is one law giver and one hand that guides us all; the hand of God. Following his lead, we have gone through dark and lonesome valleys, and climbed rigorous mountains. Sustained by the unseen, but present, spirit of God we have been able to shoulder burdens we thought were too heavy to bear. We thank God continuously for Jesus, the Lawman's lawman.

Exposition

This text focuses on a point when Jesus appeared on the mount of transfiguration with Elijah and Moses, champions of God's law, point to Christ as the fulfiller of God's law.

Jesus took Peter, James and John to the top of a mountain. There, they saw Moses and Elijah and Jesus in a transfigured form standing with them.

Moses was the law giver. It was he who had gone to the mountain top and received the 10 commandments. It was he who had become known as the lawgiver, although the actual laws themselves came from God.

Elijah was the greatest of the law enforcers. He challenged evil governments and even queen Jezebel herself. He challenged wrong doing wherever he saw it and brought down fire from heaven to confirm his actions.

Jesus appeared not as law giver or a law enforcement prophet but as one who would fulfill the laws of Moses. The presence of Moses and Elijah confirms his role and his purpose. He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it, by the command of God.

As the fulfillment of the law Jesus would go beyond the hard core enforcement of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the law required rigid enforcement with harsh penalties that included banishment and even death. Yet, Hebrews 16 says that Christ will bring a new covenant. In this new covenant the laws of God will be written in minds and hearts of men.

In the new kingdom, obedience to God will be in the hearts of men.

In the new kingdom, doing what is right will be in the hearts of men.

In the new kingdom, the original purpose of the laws of Moses, will be fulfilled in Christ and exhibited in the lives of believers.

God's law sets our standard

The laws of God tell us what we should be. They set the high standard, which we are to live and govern ourselves. The moral code, reflected in the 10 commandments teach us clearly that we should acknowledge God and him only, reverence our parents and live morally pure lives, void of cheating, stealing, and murderous tendencies. The 10th commandment, thou shalt not covet, even deals with how we should maintain our thoughts and desires. When each of us stands before the law, we fall short. We see our errors and know immediately how miserably we have not lived up to the ideal believer's life.

The law sets the standard for each of us. It is rigid and unchanging. It says live up to this standard or die. There is no room for compromise or compassion. The letter

of the law must be carried out in every circumstance.

Obeying God's law gains favor

To obtain favor from God we must be obedient. God does not smile on us if we are disobedient to his command.

God smiles on us when we live and give righteously. Remember Peter's words in Acts 10:34-35, he that lives in the fear of the Lord and lives righteously is accepted. Others are rejected. Cain and Abel show us how two men can come before the Lord, one obtains a favor from the Lord and the other does not.

We must live and give righteously. Living righteously implies doing God's will every day. Giving righteously implies sharing our financial gifts and spiritual gifts according to God's plan. To obtain a favor from God we must both "live and give" righteously.

Those who embrace God's law are shielded

Those men and women who embrace God's law are shielded on all sides. Believers who trust God have the assurance that God is protecting from all sides. Law enforcement officers were a shield but God goes further than that he becomes a shield around those who trust him. The knowledge that God is a shield about us helps us to feel secure in his hand because we are shielded on all sides and on all fronts. He is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He can shield us on all sides because he can see the unseen dangers ahead; we cannot. Even if we could, there are so many variables in life that we cannot protect against every eventual possibility. That's why rejoice in the knowledge God shields us on all sides.

Lawman's Lawman

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who have respect for the lawgiver may look to Moses or Elijah, but those who embrace the whole picture look to Jesus, the fulfiller of the law. He is the law man's lawman.

Our Lord and savior is the author of the law and the end of the law.

He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Those who keep his laws in their hearts will be rewarded.

Those who labor in the kingdom faithfully will be rewarded.

Every now and then it is good for believers to remember that serving the Lord does pay off after while.

We have to work while it is day because when the night comes, no man can work. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he penned the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done. I'm going to work until the setting of the sun. I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done."

Warriors, keep on embracing the law and love of God!

Warriors, keep standing behind the shield of faith
Warriors, keep on telling the story!
Tell them about Jesus! Tell them how he died on Calvary!
But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!
Tell them about Jesus!
The Lawman's lawman!

No. 9307-Inspiration

Talking Asses

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? Numbers 22:27-29

Introduction

Have you ever tried to warn someone but they would not listen? How did you get their attention? Did you yell at them? In the heat of an argument did you throw something at them? Did you scream or pull your hair out? Was someone hit? The ways that we use to get attention may vary but it's obvious that our actions have attracting attention as a goal.

There are many who ignore logical warnings and wise advice. They only respond when something gets abnormal. They won't respond to "Don't stay out to late." They only understand when someone sticks a finger in their face and shouts loud enough for the whole neighborhood to hear, "You better make sure you have your butt in this house before 12 or I will wipe the floor with your ugly behind."

Getting attention is essential. That's the lesson that the mule handler learned when he came to town. He had a reputation for getting his mules to move when all others in the area were too stubborn to actually do anything. One day the handler's mule stopped in the middle of town and refused to budge. The entire town looked out of its windows to see how the expert managed to get his mule to move when all others were stuck with stubborn animals that refused to budge. First the handler talked to the mule peaceably, but he would not move. Neither did the mule budge when he delicately pulled on the reins or gave him a voice command. Then the handler stopped, went to the wagon and found a 2x4 board. He then hit the mule on the head with the board. Instantly the mule began to pull as ordered. The people were amazed and they asked the handler his secret. He said, "There's really no big secret; if you want the mule to move, first you have to get his attention. When you are dealing with an ass, sometimes it takes a board up side of his head to get his attention."

That may a bit demonstrative, but it helps make the point that life sometimes offers us many attention getters. Sometimes we don't get the point until life hits us in the head.

Often we don't hear him and he has to get our attention.

As Christians, we know God has a plan for our lives and he tries to share it with us daily. We want to listen to him and allow him to speak to us without the need of unusual things such as talking donkeys.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's efforts to stop one of his prophets from doing something wrong, but was forced to make a donkey talk to get his attention.

This text occurs when the 40 years of wilderness wandering were almost over and Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land. The Kings of the Promised Land were immediately threatened by the sight of nearly a million people about to come into their region. Further, word had spread about how mighty these people could be with the Lord on their side. King Balak of Moab realized that against such supernatural help from their God their armies would have no power.

Balak devised a scheme to use their God against them. He sent messengers to enlist the aid of a famous prophet named Balaam. If the great Balaam would curse the Israelites, his curse could counteract the blessings they so obviously enjoyed. Then the Moabite army might have a chance against them.

The king offered Balaam large sums of money to curse Israel which he thought would cause God to abandon them. Balaam knew God's command; he also knew what was right to do, but the attraction of the money was too great for him to turn down.

He started along the road to do the deed and God placed an angel in the way to stop him. Balaam did not see the angel, as big and as obvious as he was, but the donkey saw him and started trying to turn. Balaam beat the donkey and continued down the road. This happened three times, but on the last time God opened the donkey's mouth and caused him to talk and tell him that there was an angel in the wrong warning him about doing the wrong thing.

Eventually, Balaam got the point. He didn't get the money from the king, but he issued a prophecy that is remembered for all time, "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Scepter will rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). These words foretold the Messiah, the Christ, Whose birth was announced by the appearance of a star. He Himself is the "bright morning star" of the book of Revelation (Revelation 22:16), the Victor Who will vanquish His enemies, those close at hand and those afar off."

That was the message he was supposed to give in the first place, but God had to get his attention first from the mouth of a talking donkey.

Three Important Balaam Events

There are times when travel the wrong road. We are going in the right direction but somewhere along the way we took a wrong road.

God sends us angels on both occasions. When we are traveling right and face life troubles his angel protects us and shows us the way. Lot lived in the city of Sodom.

When the city faced danger because of its sinful ways, God sent angels to warn him and give him direction. Lot listened to the instruction and was spared destruction. His wife did not and she turned into a pillar of salt.

Sometimes we walk through life challenging experiences, that bible calls it walking through Valley of Baca (Psalm 84:6). That's when we encounter those experiences that challenge our faith, shake our confidence, weaken our spirit, and dash our hopes. When times get tough and you can't see your way, you are going in that direction. That's also when God sends his angel to show us the way.

When you look for help but only get hurt, God sends an angel.

When you seek pleasure but only get pain, God sends an angel.

When you seek satisfaction but only get sorrow God sends an angel.

God also sends an angel when we are about to go the wrong way. That's what happened to Balaam. The angel warned him; but he was so consumed with his own idea and plan that he could not see him.

When we can't see the angel, that's a Balaam event. It's a time when God is trying to tell us something but we will not hear.

We should strive to stay close to God so we can always know his will.

Difficulties are signs

There are times in our lives when everything seems to go wrong and we can't figure out why? Sometimes we forget or simply ignore what is before us or what has worked for us in the past. We look so hard for answers that we can't see them when they appear.

Balaam's donkey walked down a narrow road that had a wall on each side. When the donkey saw the angel standing in the road with its sword drawn it tried to turn and bashed Balaam's leg against the wall. Balaam felt the pain, he saw the way the donkey was acting, but still didn't understand what was really happening. God was sending him a sign.

In a similar sense we too experience many difficulties trying to travel a road that is against God's will for us. Our methods keep us crashing against one wall or another. Often, we take out our frustration on everyone around us: our spouse, children, friends, co-workers, employees, church members and anyone else who happens to be there at that moment. Like Balaam, we strike out but we don't ever consider that what may be happening to us could be a sign from God on high.

Whenever difficulties come in our way, go to God in prayer. Ask him for direction and for the wisdom to understand the signs that he is giving. It is then that we will understand his will for our lives.

He opened his eyes

Number 22:31 says, "Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face." After God opened the mouth of the donkey, he also opened the eyes of Balaam. When Balaam's eyes were opened he could see the danger of that lay ahead and he could also remember the power of God.

In our difficulties sometimes we forget that we serve a mighty God who provided special provisions for us in Egypt and during our wilderness journey. Yet, in the Promised Land, they desperately worried about how they would survive without the daily rain of "manna" and turned to other gods. They didn't consider all that God had done for them in the past. When they were promptly reminded by Joshua and others they remembered the power of the God they served.

When our eyes our closed it's easy to forget who God is, what he can do and what he can do for us. In our daily struggles we wrestle with many difficulties, often forgetting the one that has successfully helped us through countless situations in the past. When our eyes are opened we remember that God is powerful.

When our eyes are open we are able to see God's plan for our lives in its fullness

Consider all he has done for us

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember that God will not abandon us; he will always send us a sign.

Abandonment has never been the problem with God; he is faithful to give us a sign.

When Noah experienced the flood and the waters descended after a year, God sent him a sign of the rainbow.

Gideon faced the prospect of fighting Midianites with a small army and God gave him a sign.

Even today the world is seeking answers from God and it cannot see the signs.

The signs he sends may not be as dramatic as talking donkeys but they are all around us.

Before we burden ourselves with unnecessary worry, we should remember that we serve an awesome God who reigns and blesses us in many ways.

Some see the sick and injured healed in hospitals and sometimes without a doctor's care, and can's see that it is a sign.

Only those who have forgotten how God healed their sicknesses and lifted them from their sick beds are amazed at his healing power!

Some see those who have failed receive second chances, but that can't see that as a sign.

But those who have experienced repeated failure in life and have been restored over and over again know that they have received a sign from God.

Believers who trust in God don't need talking donkeys to tell them that God warns them, protects them and provides for them. They know the Lord works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

Believers don't worry today, because they remember what he did yesterday. When the world needed a final sign of God's love, he did not make an donkey talk nor make it rain for 40 days and nights. He did not make the sun stand still or roll back the waters of the Red Sea.

He sent his only begotten Son as a sign of his love for the world

Thos who know him have seen the signs. When we were:

WEAK he provided them strength
DOWN he picked them up!
DEFEATED he gave them the victory
DISCOURAGED he restored their hope!
LONELY, he gave them comfort
TROUBLED he gave them peace of mind
Our sign came to a little town called Bethlehem
Our sign died on an old rugged cross!
But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!
He's still blessing us today and sending us signs of his love

No. 9308-Inspiration

One Free Thing In a World Where Everyone Pays

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Introduction

Is it possible to get something for nothing? America is a nation that subscribes to the the notion of quid pro quo, that is something is received in returned for something of equal value or something for something. We find it difficult to believe in anything that presents itself as available without a counterbalance of that which is of equal value.

That is the reason that many people have accepting the gift of salvation; they believe if it is free it must not have real value because everything of value has to be purchased with a price. That's what our educated minds reflect.

We are definitely educated. Our scientists have explored nearly everything imaginable to man: the moon, outer space, the deep, the brain, the mysteries of our bodies. We have instant access to knowledge through our TV sets, radio, and the Internet. We can learn the secrets of the deep. We can see firsthand as a satellite of ours zooms past the monster planets in our solar system. We can see cells split. We have knowledge of things happening thousands of miles away instantly. We have knowledge beyond belief. The average citizen knows more than most of the learned men of the past knew. Yet, with all of our knowledge we can't understand something as simple as God giving the world a gift of eternal, for which no one has to pay anything to receive.

We are taught that everything and everyone has a price.

We are taught that we pay for everything.

We pay to be born, we pay to live, and we pay when we die. We even pay to be buried or cremated.

We are accustomed to asking "how much" to any proposal, request or new initiative. We attach a cost analysis to every undertaking.

That's why we have some much trouble accepting that "God so love the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish

but have everlasting life."

What God offers is free, but we are suspicious of free things; there is always a hidden string attached.

As Christians, we have come to know that while salvation is free to us; it was bought with a price. It is free only because he who purchased it chose to resell it to us for a profit of some kind, but he chose to give us to us without a charge. Salvation is truly free.

Exposition

This text points to salvation as a free gift from God in contrast to death as a payment for sin.

Paul, writing to the Romans explained the results of sinful living as compared to the results of following Christ.

The cause of sin is laid at Adam's feet. His disobedience in the Garden of Eden ushered sin into the world and all generations that follow are now compelled to suffer the punishment for his sin. Romans 5:12 says, "When Adam sinned; sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout the entire world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned."

The payment for sin has been spelled out in scripture in undeniable terms. Those who sin will suffer the scorn of God. Nearly every prophet has been a voice against sin. Each raised their voice against sin and spelled out the doom of those who practice sin. Isaiah 3:11 "Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The prophet Ezekiel went even further: Ezekiel 18:4 says, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Paul, writing to the Corinthians spelled it out in no uncertain terms by listing off the various categories of sinful behavior that will draw the wrath of God. He then told them repeatedly that the payment for that behavior would be exclusion from the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

The unrighteous will receive his ultimate punishment which is a cruel and horrible death.

Those who are righteous will receive the reward of eternal life. Paul notes on numerous occasions that the righteousness that Christians have is not of their own. They have been made righteous or justified by Christ who has taken the punishment for any unrighteousness they may have previously committed. Their daily effort to live for him, despite occasional slips, will be rewarded. It will come as a free gift to them because the penalty for their sins was paid for by Christ himself on Calvary. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Those who obtain salvation therefore, acquire it free of charge, but it does not

come without a price. The salvation they enjoy has been purchased by Christ himself at the expense of his suffering and blood on Calvary.

What's the catch?

The nature of salvation is that it is free. Christ died for us on Calvary that we would have the opportunity to life eternal, without a cost.

Instinctively we ask, "What's the catch?" What is the secret part that is being held back until the end of the sale? That's the way we think because we have seen the slick salesman who shows a product and demonstrates how well it works, but never discusses the cost. The clean our carpet, shampoo our rugs and clean our dishes with a fantastic product that is nothing short of a miracle. We are attracted to it until we hear the cost. Their training has given them instructions to withhold the cost to end. So we wait for the catch.

Yet when we hear that salvation is free and there is no catch we are mystified at how this could possibly be the case.

Nothing is really free, is it?

Food is available but it is not free.

Clothing is available but it is not free.

Homes are all around us but they certainly are not free whether we are purchasing home or renting. The amounts we pay make it obvious that shelter is not free.

Gasoline is not free.

Heating oil is not free.

And the cost of electricity is going up daily. It's obvious that is not free.

Yet, we are being told that salvation is free, with no catch. Can this be so?

When it comes to the things that man makes and reproduces, nothing is free. Those who are suspicious of free things have a right to raise an eyebrow of concern at free offers.

There is a price to pay for everything, including our choice of lifestyle!

We should remind the drunkard, that while he is free to drink, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the drug addict that while he is free to shoot up and get high, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the dealer that while he is free to market packaged death at a healthy profit, there is a price to pay!

We should remind the homosexual that while he or she is free to engage in sodomitic sexual encounters that this freedom does not come without a price!

Everything has a price!

Sometimes the price is hidden and cannot be seen, but there is a price!

Sometimes the tag is marked "free" but the real price shows up later!

Whatever the case, there is nothing free anymore!

Somebody must pay the price!

However, when it comes to salvation, Christ has made it available free of charge

Salvation is the one free thing in the world. It is available to everyone, without

a catch.

Even salvation had a price

Finally, we must consider the spiritual gift that Jesus offers to anyone who will believe on him. It is salvation. It is offered free, but it too has been paid for!

For many years Herbert W. Armstrong sent copies of his magazine, "The Plain Truth" to millions of people around the world absolutely free! There was never a request for a donation or solicitation of any kind. Many were puzzled at how he could afford this "free" magazine. What many didn't know is that the magazine had been paid for by members of the World Wide Church of God, which Armstrong founded. It was free to the recipients, only because Armstrong's church members paid the price!

So it is with our salvation.

Salvation is free not because it's cheap or without worth, but because it has been paid for by Christ himself and presents it to us as a free gift!

Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when these words were penned: "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!"

I don't know about your but I'm glad to know that Jesus paid it all!

I'm glad to know that he loved me enough to absorb the punishment for my sins!

I'm glad that he suffered humiliation for me!

I'm glad that he shed his blood for me!

I'm glad that he died out on Calvary!

But I'm even happier that early Sunday morning that he rose up from the grave offering me the free gift of life!

Nothing's free anymore, but thanks to Jesus, Salvation comes without a price!

You pay to come in the world, you pay to leave but salvation is the one free thing left, because Jesus paid for it with his own blood!

No. 9309-Revival

What's Done In the Dark

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. Luke 12:2-3

Introduction

Have you ever known people who seemed to do wrong for years but eventually got caught? We've seen it on many occasions. Bank robbers who robbed banks and escaped capture for decades found themselves suddenly under arrest because someone recognized them 30 years later. We have seen the confessions of murderers, serial killers and even petty thieves put an end to investigations that were closed after many years when new revelations re-opened the cases.

As African-Americans we have seen former Klansmen who were able to hide their involvement in lynchings, murders and bombings during the 60's suddenly convicted after new evidence appeared that enabled law enforcement officers to convict them for their hideous crimes.

It all brings to mind the old maxim that most parents and grandparents tell their children, "What's done in the dark, will come to the light."

In 1970 Little Milton Campbell released a hit song entitled "If walls could talk." In that song he raised the question of what would happen if the walls of secret meeting places, hotel rooms and other clandestine places could tell what they know. He asked, "What if shoes could tell" all of the secret places that they have gone. The song became a hit because so many people had so many secrets. The playwright, Tyler Perry, even wrote a stage play that focused on the same subject, "What's done in the dark."

Sometimes our wrongs appear to be successfully hidden until God does a close inspection. Those who have ever attended a Six Flags family event know that if you leave and expect to return that your hand is stamped with an invisible florescent stamp. That stamp is not visible to the naked eye. However, when you return your hand is exposed to a black light. Under the black light the stamp is clear. That happens because the black light detects phosphorus in the ink of the stamp and shows it up.

If you walked around all night with a portable black light, you would discover that

there are phosphors all over the place. There are lots of natural phosphors, in your teeth and fingernails, among other things. There also a lot of phosphors in manmade material, including television screens and some paints, fabric and plastics. Most fluorescent colored things, such as highlighters, contain phosphors, and you'll find them in all glow-in-the-dark products. Clubs use special black light paint that glows different colors. You can also buy fluorescent black light bubbles, invisible black light ink, fluorescent black light carpet and even fluorescent black light hair gel.

The idea is simple, if it has phosphorus the black light will show it up.

That's the best way to understand how sin appears to be hidden. Much of what we do is hidden from the public eye, but God's eye is light a black light. All of our sins are visible to him. We cannot hide them.

What we do in the dark is always seen by God and will be brought to the light for our neighbors to see as well, in due time.

As Christians, we are constantly aware that God monitors our activities daily. He is aware of everything that we do. We know that he knows all of our secrets so we don't try to hide them from him. There is no place for us to run or hide from his power and oversight. Whatever we do in the dark, will come to the light.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus'' instruction to his disciples about hypocrisy. The principle teaching that Christ gave his disciples was to be true to God to the Christian fellowship. When we talked to the 12 disciples or to the 70 that he sent out in two he cautioned them to avoid being hypocrites.

He warned them to make their public lives consistent with their private lives; their public words they same as those they said in private. They would be ambassadors for him in every area of Israel; he warned them not to be found privately inconsistent with what they said and did in public.

Even as he spoke to his disciples there was a Judas among them, who was a hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ's disciples were the best men then in the world, yet they needed to be cautioned against hypocrisy.

While he spoke to his disciples directly, he spoke to all of his followers indirectly when he warned them not to be hypocrites: doing one thing in the dark and another in the light.

The great theologian Matthew Henry put it this way "It is to no purpose to dissemble, for, sooner or later, truth will come out; and a lying tongue is but for a moment. If you speak in darkness that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your public professions, it shall be heard in the light; some way or other it shall be discovered, a bird of the air shall carry the voice (Ecclesiastes 10:20), and your folly and falsehood will be made manifest. The iniquity that is concealed with a show of piety will be discovered."

It all means, "what's done in the dark will come to the light."

OUR DARK PASTS CAN HAUNT US: What happens when our past comes back to haunt us? Has it ever happened to you? That's when a chapter in your life that was once closed is suddenly reopened or revisited. It's when you stare at the results of a failed experience returned before your eyes. In happens in all areas of life. It's that moment when you look at the bad habits of one of your children and realize that you are looking at yourself at the same age. It is very frustrating when we see it unfold in front of our eyes.

In 1963 after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, most of white America became angry with Black Muslim leader Malcolm X when he made a disturbing analogy. Malcolm said that America operates with a double standard. Abroad, it opposes governments that do not support freedom for all citizens; then denies freedoms to its own. In addition, he said, the nation attempts to assassinate and remove leaders of opposing nations through the covert actions of the CIA and other secret government organizations. He said the assassination of John F. Kennedy was a case of "When the chickens come home to roost."

The phrase, "When the chickens come home to roost" is a colloquialism that refers to the tendency of chickens on a farm to roam freely. In the day, they are often seen under the house or pecking long distances from the coop. However, when the sun begins to set, without fail, chickens will always come back home to perch themselves on the roosts.

That's the way it is with sins done secretly, even though they were years ago; sooner or later what we have done in the dark will come to the light as the chickens come home to roost..

WE MUST ACCOUNT FOR SINS DONE IN THE DARK: There are many today who allow themselves to go over the edge. Many are paying a heavy price for their sin. Some are behind prison walls at this very moment. Some have lost their health and strength as a result of their activities.

Sometimes those who operate in the dark forget that Jesus is watching. Consider the man who decided to steal a few of the appliances and things from his neighbor's home and sell them for extra money.

Inside the home, he saw jewelry, and clothing items that would be valuable. As he began to bag a few items, he heard a voice that said, "Jesus is watching you." He was horrified. Someone saw him. Then the voice yelled again, "Jesus is watching you!"

In a panic, he turned on the light only to see a talking parrot. He was relieved. "Was that you talking?" The man said, "Sure was!" Answered the parrot. "What's you name?" Asked the man? "Charlie." Came the answer. "That's a dumb name to give a parrot. What kind of idiot would name a parrot Charlie?" The parrot answered, "The same kind of idiot that would leave all this jewelry and money at home and name that killer pit bull behind you, Jesus!" -He learned the hard way that Jesus is always watching.

Each individual must remember that a day comes when we must account for what we have done in the dark. Jesus is watching.

That day is not always in the distant future. Sometimes we pay instantly. What is the price we pay for an experiment with drugs? What is the price we pay for criminal ventures? What is the price we pay for hot tempers, cold shoulders, and lukewarm persuasions? Many have paid dearly for going over the edge. Like Israel, some have paid with their lives. Some are still paying.

There are many who have learned that when they stand on the edge of godliness and sin and choose to go over the edge, they will incur the wrath of God. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

GOD'S LAW SHINES A BLACK LIGHT ON OUR SINS: Like a black light, God's law brings our sins to the light. They are hidden from the public eye but the commandments of God are so clear and specific that we cannot deny our own failures. The laws of God tell us what we should be. They set the high standard, which we are to live and govern ourselves. The moral code, reflected in the 10 commandments teach us clearly that we should acknowledge God and him only, reverence our parents and live morally pure lives, void of cheating, stealing, and murderous tendencies. The 10th commandment, thou salt not covet, even deals with how we should maintain our thoughts and desires. When each of us stands before the law, we fall short. We see our errors and know immediately how miserably we have not lived up to the ideal believer's life.

The law sets the standard for each of us. It is rigid and unchanging. It says live up to this standard or die. There is no room for compromise or compassion. The letter of the law must be carried out in every circumstance.

We cannot escape the all seeing eye of God's law because it forces us to see ourselves in light of what we have done in the dark. Since we all have sinned, we need Christ to forgive us and give us another chance; even for those things we have done in the dark.

WE CAN REPENT FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE IN THE DARK: God sees what we do in the dark, but God also hears us when we ask forgiveness for what we have done. David talked to God on many occasions. After his sin with Bathsheba David found it difficult to communicate with God but God was listening. He heard when David began to speak the language of repentance saying in Psalm 51 "Create in me oh God a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me" that he and God began to speak the same language.

In a similar sense there are many people today who are attempting to speak to God about a variety of issues done in the dark. When we talk of what we did in the dark, we must speak to God with an attitude and spirit of forgiveness. It is useless to go to God in prayer and ask him to bless you steal leaving an ace state of sinfulness, operating in the dark. As long as that state exists our prayers are wasted because we're speaking a language that God cannot hear in the context of our present living arrangement. We must go before God as David went in a spirit of repentance knowing that only then can we expect for him to hear us.

Until we repent and come out of darkness, God will not hear us.

God hates what we do in the dark, but loves us

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that hates the wicked things that we do in the dark, but he never stops loving us.

God hates sin, but he loves the person affected by the sin.
God's love is a powerful love that overcomes our weaknesses!

That weakness may be homosexuality, drunkenness, gambling, fornication, adultery, wild living, drugs, or criminal activity.

The good news is that there is no sin that God is not willing to forgive.

There is nothing done in the dark that God will not forgive in the light!

There is no crime committed in the dark that God will not pardon!

There is no evil deed we have done in secret that God will not forgive openly.

There is no mistake that he is not willing to forget and give us a new chance.

There is no orientation that he is not willing to redirect.

There is no life so broken that he cannot fix it.

There is no life so lost that he can't help you find it again!

There is no lifestyle so spiritually draining that he can't breathe new life into it!

God's love is a soul saving love that overlooks our past faults and only sees our willingness to live for him.

That's why Christ came to this earth, to give us another chance!

That's why he died on an old rugged cross!

That's why he arose after three days and nights.

He did it all to give us one more chance to come out of darkness into his marvelous light!

No. 9310-Inspiration

The Greatest Loser-Wins!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 6, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Mark 8:35-37

Introduction

If you had an offer to become filthy rich but you would have to give up heaven to get it, would you make the deal? That's a disturbing question that has been the subject of considerable debate over the centuries. There have been many people who have taken the deal; they have chosen to lead worldly based successful lives that have often forced them to abandon their quest for Christ, heaven and the kingdom of God.

The world defines success by the amount of money and property a person acquires. A winner is a person who accumulates large sums and a loser is a person who has little or nothing, regardless to the quality of their character or spirit.

While many ascribe to that idea in religious circles they find it very difficult to apply that principle to their daily lives.

James Michener in his book, "Alaska" describes a lifestyle of native Alaskans that is a case in point. He notes that many natives pride themselves in accumulating a large amount of property, seal skins, furs and other valuable assets. However, once a person reaches that level, a great celebration is called and he gives it all away in exchange for an emblem he wears that denotes that he made it once. The native then begins to accumulate again; only to give it away. The value is in emblems received not in the things accumulated.

Anyone who tries that in the lower 48 would be called a fool.

In 1985 Richard Pryor starred in movie called "Brewster's Millions." The basic idea is that a man was told that he could inherit $300 million if he could prove himself by spending $30 million in 30 days. It sounded like a great idea except that he could not give the money away, could not invest it, could not tell anyone why he was doing it, and had to end up with nothing at the end of the month. If he was broke at the end he was a winner, because there was a bigger prize that others did not see.

That generally describes the Christian view of possessions and the world. The idea of seeking the kingdom of heaven above everything else is one of the basic premises of Christianity. Christ constantly urged believers to deny themselves, take

up their crosses and follow him. In essence he wanted them to lose themselves in the pursuit of God's kingdom. There is another prize, that the world can't see that awaits them.

As Christians, we know that our faith carries several paradoxes. We become great by being servants. We gain when we lose and we live when we die. The world can't quite understand those ideas, but we know that there is a bigger prize that the world can't see; it's the approval of Christ our Lord.

Exposition

In this text, Christ tells believers that the way of the cross requires sacrificial living.

There were many who came to Christ thinking that association with him would mean instant success. They had seen him heal the sick, raise the dead and even feed thousands of people with small handfuls of food. Being a Christian, in their mind, was the sure way to avoid sickness, have plenty to eat and acquire the good life.

However in Mark 8:34 Jesus warned them that those who lived by the principles of Christianity must be willing to "Take up his cross." Under Roman law, a criminal condemned to death by crucifixion was required to carry his cross to the execution site, as Jesus was required to do (Luke 23:26). In essence, believers must be willing to part with any possessions they own, their careers or even their lives to achieve the kingdom of God.

The person who became a follower of Christ was willing to risk the loss of life, liberty and property for the cause of heaven. Those who were not were described as persons who wanted to "gain the whole world" but lose their souls.

Jesus made it clear in this passage that the person who wins, in God's view, is the person who loses himself most for the cause of Christ. The greatest winners are those who lose most.

What we need to lose

The "Biggest loser" is one of the hottest new reality television shows. The compelling weight loss reality drama features two celebrity fitness trainers who join a team of top health experts to help overweight contestants transform their bodies, health and ultimately their lives. The contestants who win are the ones who lost the most. Even those who did not win the big prize won too, because they changed their lives losing the bad habits that that were causing them to gain, but to their disservice.

It's not hard to see the spiritual parallel to this game show. Because the contestants had to be willing to lose more than just weight. They had to radically alter their lives including their eating habits, exercise habits, sleeping, free time and every other factor. They had to become different people. They had to lose their old bad habits forever.

NO CRASH DIETS: In a crash diet a person severally restricts calorie intake, bordering on starvation, for a short period of time to achieve weight loss. After it ends

the person usually begins a yo-yo effect of eating more than usual and regains all that was lost and more. There are many who approach Christianity the same way. They pull themselves out of the clubs, bars and ungodly activities instantly and starve themselves spiritually. They come to church, but little else changes at home or personally. They do not develop a bible study regimen, prayer life or engage in spirit based service. Soon they are back in the world, worse than they began. This is what happens when a person tries to kick the world cold turkey. He goes on a crash diet but doesn't really change his life style. He stops clubbing but he does not replace it with Godly living. It's a void waiting to be filled. Matthew 12:43-45 says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

HEALTY LIVING IS SACRIFICIAL: People who win by losing, ultimately change their lifestyles. They soon recognize that everything in life that may be good to us may not be good for us and they start to make permanent changes in what they choose to do. They become aware of when enough is enough. That's one of the main essentials of successful diets, participants must be willing to change what they eat, when they eat and how much they eat; if they can't do that then they are doomed to remain in the same situation. Spiritually healthy lives are the same. We must be willing to change our spiritual diet: What books we read, movies we watch, music we listen to, and places we go for entertainment. We can't maintain a strong spiritual life if we are drinking, hanging out with drinking buddies and girlfriends, watching pornographic movies, engaging in illicit sex, listening to provocative music and debasing ourselves. To really gain, we must be willing to lose the world completely; give it all up for a completely new spiritual life that is rewarding, happy and filled with joys that come from the Lord. Otherwise, all of our other efforts are in vain. We just gain dead weight.

EXERCISE IS ESSENTIAL: Every health expert includes exercise as a necessity for those who want to lose weight. We are a sit down generation of couch potatoes. No one wants to exercise anything more than our fingers on the remote control or the keypads on our cell phones. We're getting so lazy that even children in school are making low grades in physical education because it's too much trouble to dress out. Our grandparents walked miles to school, now school buses carry us around the corner. There are some who want a ride to the bus stop. Spiritually, it's the same; many of us do absolutely nothing in the church. We come to worship and sit down. We have no place of service, we participate very little. We enjoy watching others. We have become spiritual couch potatoes. Many won't even clap their hands, wave their arms or move their lips to say amen because that's too much trouble. Yet we are called upon to exercise our faith. Many will not do out actively serve to help the poor, visit the sick, feed the homeless, care for children or otherwise serve in ministry as a demonstration of our faith. James 2:20 reminds us that "faith without works is dead."

That means we have to put our faith in action. We have to become active in the kingdom of God rather than passive observers. Without exercise we become dead weight.

Keep Your Eye on the goal

Finally, brothers and sisters, as believers we must keep our eyes on the goal, which is to lose whatever stops us from making heaven our home.

Christ told his disciples that we should make heaven, not the world our number one priority. In Matthew 6:33 he said, “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Making heaven our home is our Goal.

Living by faith and trusting in God is our goal.

That means there are some things we need to lose.

We need to lose our frustrations, to gain great confidence that God will make a way. There are many today who are weighed down by the burdens of life. They are weighed down by worry and depression. We need to lose that heavy weight; the greatest losers become confident winners in the Lord.

We need to lose our fears, to gain new courage. There are too many of us who are afraid to grab opportunities. We need to lose the heavy weight of fear. They greatest losers become fearless winners in the Lord.

We need to lose our despair, to gain new hope. There are many in the world today who have given up on God. They feel that everything is so messed up that it cannot be repaired. So broken it cannot be fixed; so soiled that it cannot be cleaned. We need to lose the heavy weight of despair. The greatest losers join the ranks of the hopeful, who cry out, “We fall down, but we get up.”

We need to keep our eyes on the prize and get rid of anything that is weighing us down.

Hebrews 12:1 says, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”

If you want to win lose yourself in the Lord!

The greatest loser becomes the winner!

If we lose our doubts we win greater faith!

If we lose our frowns we win a smiling personality!

If we lose our stinginess, we win a generous spirit!

If we lose our bitterness, we win a brand new sweetness!

If we lose our weakness, we win a new found strength!

If we lose our confusion, we win a life of peace!

If we lose our defeated heart, we win the spirit of victory!

What we lose makes it possible for us to win the rewards that God has in store for us.

What we win is calm in spite of our circumstances!

What we win is blessings instead of our burdens!

What we win is happiness instead of hardships!

What we win is determination in spite of our discouragements!

What we win is help in spite of our handicaps!

What we win is faith in spite of our frustrations!

What we win is salvation in spite of our sins!

Consider the woman who gave all she had to help neighbors that were stricken by hurricane. Then the day came when she had nothing herself. There were some who laughed at her saying "you gave everything you had and didn't take care of your own." When she couldn't feed her children there was a heavy weight on her shoulder.

In the middle of the night she prayed to God to lift this heavy weight from her shoulders. In the middle of the night God spoke to her. She wrote down the words and as she wrote the words it seemed as if the weight of all her losses shifted to that piece of paper.

Later that morning she entered a grocery store and asked the owner for enough food to make a meal for her children. When he asked how much she could afford, she answered, "I have nothing to offer but this piece of paper. The store manager thought he gave her a clever response when he said, "Put your piece of paper on the scale and you can have its weight in groceries," The placed the paper on the scales and the manager said "We shall see how much food this is worth,"

To his dismay nothing happened when he put a loaf of bread on the other side. He was even more upset when he added other items and it would not balance. When all of the items she needed to make several meals were finally placed on the scales, it balanced. The owner was puzzled at how such a small piece of paper could balance the combined weight of her groceries. He opened the paper and read the words she had written: "My God shall supply all your needs....."

No wonder the song writer said, "You can have this whole world, but give me Jesus!"

Give me Jesus, who picked up an old rugged cross for me!

Give me Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Give me Jesus, who arose from the grave Early Sunday morning!

Give me Jesus, who stands today and the right hand God offering crowns of glory to all who are willing to lose the world and win the victory in heaven!

No.9311-Inspiration

Give me my stuff back

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 13, 2008

SCRIPTURE:"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

Introduction

Have you ever had anything stolen from you? It's very frustrating to discover that something you value has been taken away by thieves. Most of us have had something stolen. It may have been money, CD's, items of clothing, or jewelry. Occasionally, the stolen item is larger. Some have had their automobiles stolen.

It gets bigger. Some have had their careers stolen.

Bigger. Some have had their wives or husbands stolen.

People will steal anything these days. If you chain your bicycle to your carport, thieves will steal the bicycle, the chain and the carport post.

Stealing has become an art form. People steal paintings, tin cans and dirty laundry.

People will steal your clothes out of the washeteria.

You can buy a guard dog to protect your property; but you should be careful because there are people who will steal the guard dog and the guard dog's house.

People will steal your computer then steal with your computer. They steal your identity, your password and your credit.

People will steal your medicine, your syringes, your aspirins and your left over Viagra.

People steal wigs, weaves and fingernails.

People will steal your trash barrel and your trash.

People steal cell phones, your minutes; and your ring tones.

People will steal toilet tissue; hand wipes, and urine samples.

There are people who steal electricity, cablevision, and siphon gasoline out of their neighbor's cars.

If it could be done there would be people who would steal the wet out of water and the white off of rice, sweet out of sugar and the hot of fire!

People will steal!

It hurts when someone steals something from us? When that happens we want to get it back.

It's bad when someone steals something from us, but it's even worse when we wake up one day and realize that the devil has stolen our relationship with God.

That's when we realize that we don't pray anymore. We don't worship anymore. We don't feel God's presence anymore. We don't have faith anymore.

We had it, but the devil stole it.

If you enjoyed that relationship with God and somehow lost it; you should join the rest others who are similarly frustrated and say, "I want my stuff back."

As Christians we know that we serve a God who is in the recovery business. He can help those who have lost something through the tricks of the devil to get it back. That retrieval process begins however, when we say, "Give me my stuff back."

Exposition

This text first considers Jesus explaining the nature of the thief as he reminds his followers that he is the good shepherd, the guardian of the door to the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus explains in this passage that the thief has three major functions: to steal, destroy and to kill, all of which have been forbidden in the commandments of God which specifically remind us that, "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not kill."

Jesus warns us to beware of thieves, they are treacherous people!

Naboth had a vineyard which he worked to develop into one of the finest in the kingdom. His grapes provided the substance for wines served to the king and other noblemen of the kingdom. It was the product of many years of work and sweat. Queen Jezebel noticed the field and tried to buy it from him but he would not sell it, so she had him killed and then took his field. She took his life to steal his vineyard!

Uriah married a beautiful and charming woman whose radiance caught the eye of the king. The king ordered Uriah placed in the front of the battle so he could be killed and immediately after his death, he married his wife. He took a man's life to steal his wife!

The function of the thief is to take away and destroy.

Who is the thief?

While this text painstaking describes what the thief does, the thief himself is never identified in this text. Yet, the thief has been identified in other biblical episodes.

Job 1:7 shows Satan, the devil, appearing in heaven having after walking to and from on the earth. He had been causing trouble on earth and God challenged him to test his servant job. The devil was given liberty to steal and destroy recklessly in Job's life. The rest of that chapter describes how the devil stole Job's wealth, health, and destroyed his family. Yet, Job refused to surrender.

1 Peter 5:8 says "Be sober, vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Together these to passages reflect what the rest of scripture teaches: The thief

is the devil and his job is to steal and destroy.

When we see the increase in crime and destruction in our world, it means that the devil is busy. Stealing and destroying is his business.

We see the hands of the person who burglarizes our homes, but it is the devil in the background, making it happen.

We see the handiwork of those who plot to find ways to destroy our homes, communities and even our nation. We see them but we know that it is the devil prompting, guiding, directing and encouraging the evil deeds that are troubling us.

That's why Peter reminds believers to "be sober" because the devil never stops looking for a chance to steal from us and to enlist to steal from others.

What does he steal?

We know what the devil does, but what exactly does he steal? What does he steal from us?

We have seen the devil operate in our own lives. We have seen him steal from us. Obviously, we have seen the tangible things that have been stolen, but other things have been stolen as well.

There are many intangibles, things that cannot be seen, that have been stolen from us.

SELF ESTEEM: Many people have allowed the devil to steal their self esteem. They have reached a point in their lives where they think little of themselves and have devalued their names and reputations. Some have even taken pride in being "ghetto", "Gutter" and "trash." Some young men have reached a point that they even wear their pants so low that their undergarments show, and some young women have begun to dress like tramps and refer to themselves as garden tools.

The devil has stolen their self esteem! Their sense of personal pride has been stolen! Their pride and dignity has been stolen! Those who are Satan's victims should rise up and say, "Give me my stuff back!" I want my dignity back. I want my self esteem back!

WORK ETHIC: The devil damaged an entire generation when he stole its work ethic. There are many today who have no desire to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. They want something for nothing. We look for the world to give us a free lunch, a welfare check, and a subsidized apartment while we spend our time with games on our Play station and cruising the neighborhoods. Many who do work become clock watchers: showing up late and spending the last 30 minutes of the day watching the clock; doing as little as possible. The nation is shocked and appalled because there immigrants slipping into our country illegally who have the work ethic we once had. They will do any kind of work: Operate computers or scrub floors and will do it all night long if necessary because they have a work ethic.

If the devil has stolen the work ethic of too many people; they have become lazy. Yet, I sense that there are many today, who want back what has been stolen. They want to go back to school, prepare themselves and work hard to climb the ladder. These are the ones who will look the devil in the face and say, "Give me my stuff back!"

DREAMS: Too many among us have stopped dreaming. We have given up altogether. We once dreamed of owning a business, graduating from college or

breaking the ceiling in one area of another. We ran into a few road blocks and some gave up. We see thousands of people today who live like mindless zombies with no hope, ambition, or dream. The devil stole their dreams.

Barak Obama and Hillary Clinton are electrifying the nation because of one thing; they are helping people to dream again. African-Americans are once again dreaming about possibilities. Women are once again dreaming that barriers can be overcome. They are both attempting what was thought to be impossible and their quest bubbles down to each of us. The devil stole our dreams from us. Someone closed a door in our faces because were black or a woman or handicapped and some gave up. The devil stole our dreams from us the year we failed to graduate from high school, had a child out of wedlock, or faced failure in business or careers. Some rose to their feet in the aftermath, but many are still down.

If the devil has stolen your dreams, we challenge you today, rise to your feet and look him in the eye and say, "Give me my stuff back!" I want my dreams back! I want my hope back!

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: The biggest thing that the devil has stolen from this generation is its relationship with God. A godless generation is a dangerous generation. That's why we see shootings and murders on college campuses and even girls fighting each other like men on national television and the internet. A generation of godless parents has destroyed homes and broken families. A generation of godless children has wrecked their own lives and those of all they have met. When the devil stole our relationship with God he took stripped us naked and left us to the mercy of our own whims.

What happened to family prayer? The devil stole it!

What happened to Sunday school? The devil stole it!

What happened to sexual purity? The devil stole it!

What happened to our personal relationship with God? The devil plunged us into a world of activities and distractions that were so alluring that we became drunk with the wine of the world. In our drunken question for power, popularity, money and possessions...the devil stole our relationship with God.

If the devil has stolen your relationship with God; if you are not same as you were a few years ago and feel that something is missing; it's time for you to stare down the devil and tell him in no uncertain terms: "I want my stuff back!"

God will restore the stuff you lost

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is good news! Satan may have stolen all of the stuff that makes lives; but God is in the business of restore what has been taken.

Satan's aim is to steal and destroy, but there seems to be limits on what God will allow Satan to do to a believer.

Satan sent a beautiful woman to steal the strength of Samson. Satan tried his best to complete destroy and humiliate him. He had his eyes put out and threw him in prison. But that's as far as he could go.

Satan put an adulterous spirit into the heart of King David. It made him act a

complete fool. He committed murder, and staged a cover up. As a result he was completely humiliated. He was indicted by the prophet Nathan, stricken with venereal disease and suffered immensely. But that as far as he could go.

How can you get your stuff back?

Samson though blind, prayed to God and asked forgiveness. And God gave him his strength back and more than he had at first.

David, though broken in spirit, prayed to God and said in Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God and renew a right spirit within me." And God gave him his health back and restored him to his position as a "Man after God's own heart."

How can you get your stuff back?

Jesus said the thief comes to steal and destroy, but he came to give it back to you, but and give back more abundantly!

We must turn to God and declare, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw from me, whether shall I go."

We must tell the Lord:

Satan stole my hope and I gave up on myself; I want my stuff back!

Satan stole my dreams and aspirations; I want my stuff back!

Satan stole the peace in my family; I want my stuff back!

Satan stole my personal pride and dignity; I want my stuff back

Satan stole my relationship with my spouse and I lost what I had; I want my stuff back!

Satan stole my thirst for spiritual growth; I want my stuff back!

Satan stole the joy of my salvation; I want my stuff back!

The Lord knew one day you want your stuff back!

That's why he picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill!

He died on that cross; but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

What's that in his hands!

It's all of the love that the devil stole!

It's all of the joy that the devil stole!

It's all of the faith that the devil stole!

It's all in his hands for those who will just say, "I want my stuff back" and accept him today!

No. 9312-Inspiration

Always on my mind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 4, 2008

SCRIPTURE: How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them. Psalms 139:17

Introduction

Has there ever been someone or something on your mind? There are people we always think about. There are some conditions that we always pray about. There are some situations that we always focus on. There are some decisions that we always contemplate.

When something is on your mind you can't seem to shake it. Thinking about it absorbs your time and energy.

Mothers always think about their children. They think about their safety and happiness. There is not a day that passes when their children are not on a mother's mind.

Lovers always think about their romance. Sometimes they day dream about what can be and what will be. All through the day the thoughts of their sweetheart are always on their mind.

Young minds dream about the future. They see themselves as rich and successful, happy and famous. There is not a day that passes that the dreams of bright futures are not on their mind.

In 1972 Brenda Lee recorded a simple lyric that resonated around the world, "Always on my mind." Elvis Presley sang it and Willie Nelson made it number one. It was about a man who didn't treat his lover affectionately but wanted her to know that she was "Always on my mind."

Maybe I didn't love you quite as good as I should have,
Maybe I didn't hold you quite as often as I could have,
Little things I should have said and done,
I just never took the time.
You were always on my mind,
You were always on my mind

What about our relationship with God? Is he always on our mind, does he consider us constantly?

We could take Brenda Lee's song around and the result show what the scriptures teach us that God says about us:

Maybe you didn't love me quite as good as you should have
Maybe you didn't obey me quite as often as you could have
Little things you should have said and done,
You just never took the time
but you are always on mind

Although there are times when we don't think about God; times when he is the furthest things from our mind. We are always on his mind.

As Christians, we should rejoice in knowing that wherever we go, even when we have spiritual lapses and stop thinking about him, he never stop stops loving us. We are always on his mind.

Exposition

This text finds David expressing praise and thanks that God always has his thoughts on us.

David acknowledges that when he thinks about it, he can see how good God has been to him, constantly. His personal history showed God protecting him as a Shepherd boy, as young man fighting Goliath and as King. Even when he sinned, God constantly thought of him and expressed concern over his condition.

Jeremiah 29:11 says God always has thoughts of peace for the faithful and regardless to our condition he often plans surprise endings or the "unexpected" to our situation.

It's because we are always on the mind of God that no one can count us out when we are down, because just when it appears that our game is over, he does the unexpected to provide us with that surprise ending.

Spurgeon says, "In our sorrows He observes us incessantly, and not a pang escapes Him; in our toils He marks all our weariness, and writes in His book all the struggles of His faithful ones."

Three words from the text

PRECIOUS: David describes this constant observation by God as something precious. When something is precious it is highly esteemed and valued. That which is precious is dear to us. God's goodness to us is precious because he has brought about things for our good, beyond anything that we can think of on our own. Jeremiah 31:28 notes that God has watched over us to build us up and the plant us on fertile ground. That thought is precious to us. It is comforting and reassuring to know that no matter what comes our way, God says, you are always on my mind.

THOUGHTS: David used the word "thoughts" to describe God's focus on us. God's thoughts about us go beyond just his ideas about us but venture to his intention and plans and purpose for us. God is constantly working his plan in our lives. He is working it, or thinking of us, even when we do not recognize his presence. Sometimes that closed door is part of God's plan to direct us to a better open door.

Sometime he allows us to mess up so that will let him fix us up. It's all because we are in his thoughts, planning ways to guide us, direct us and nudge us in the right direction. David said, he sends up praises when he thinks about the fact that God is constantly planning for us and working the plan. When we can't see him operate we must hear God say, "You are always on my mind."

SUM: David used the word "sum" to tell us to add up what God has done for us and it won't be hard for us to conclude that he is constantly thinking of us. When we think about the many ways that God has blessed us our total will be "great." How many times has God made a way out of no way? How many prayers has he answered for us? How many rivers has he helped us to cross? How many battles has he helped us to win? If we count them we can only conclude that God has been good to us in "great" way. Psalm 40:5 says, " Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." No wonder the song writer would declare, count your many blessing and it may surprise you what the Lord has done. Our blessings have come because God says, "you are always on my mind."

Keep our mind on God

Finally, brothers and sisters, while it is good to look back and know that we are always on the mind of God, we must be sure that God is always on our mind.

We have good reason to keep our mind on God.

He has been good to us

He brought us out of some tough times!

He sustained us in the midst of our difficulties.

For this reason we should close out each day saying, "I may not have done all that I wanted to do, but Lord's it's been a mighty good day."

However when we begin each new day we should say with the song writer, "I woke up this morning with my mind, staid on Jesus."

"Walking and talking with my mind, staid on Jesus"

"Singing and Praying with my mind, said on Jesus"

The Lord showered Blessings on Israel during its difficult time. However, Jeremiah wanted them to know that what God did for them in the past is not a historical footnote.

It's the Lord's mercies that have kept us from being consumed. That's what Jeremiah meant when he said if it had not been for God's mercies we would have been consumed!

Consider the little boy that was told by his father to chop enough wood to keep the fire burning through the night. It was late in the fall, when the weather was warm in the day, but cold at night. The father said a hard freeze was on the way. The little boy was disobedient. It was so warm that he could wear short pants and he couldn't see the need of chopping so much wood. He collected a few sticks and put them in the woodbin. As he curled up on his pallet the flicker of the flames put him to sleep.

A few minutes later the flames started to burn low. A cold chill draped the room as the temperature began to drop. The little boy curled up in a ball and began to shiver and shake. When he awoke the next morning there was frost on the ground but the house was warm. There was a blazing fire in the fireplace. When he asked his father, how could this be, his father said, "You didn't do everything I told you to do, but you're still my son. I couldn't let you lay in the cold unprotected. I chopped enough wood to keep the fire going. Every time, it started to burn low, I put on another log. The little boy said to his father, "I haven't done everything I was supposed to do, but you kept the fire going to keep me from freezing. I don't know how to thank you, because every day you're always putting another log on the fire!"

In the winter of our discontent, God keeps putting another log on the fire! He keeps on blessing me!

Every day, there's another log of mercy on the fire!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided, great is thy faithfulness Lord unto to me!"

Over 2000 years ago we were on the mind of God.

Because we were on his mind he sent his only begotten Son to live among men!

Somebody knows him. His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning

Tell somebody no matter how bad things get our God says, "You are always on my mind!"

No. 9313-Mother's Day

Go not empty unto thy mother

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 11, 2008

SCRIPTURE:"And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law." Ruth 3:17

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to make your mother proud? Most of us want to do something with our lives that will please our mothers. We want to show them a "good report card" for our lives. Even after death we still want to please them.

It is the nature of every child who has had a loving mother to try to meet her expectations. No matter how high one climbs or how much is achieved; it never seems adequate until what we have done meets mother's approval. This began when we were children. We brought mother our drawings and waited for her approval. When we said speeches in school, we heard the crowd applaud but we waited for mother's congratulations. When we graduated, the diploma meant so much more because of mother's approval.

Meeting his mother's approval is what a four year old had in mind after his mother, frustrated with all of her duties as a mother began to scream "I think I've lost my mind." A few minutes later the mother was puzzled when she saw her son walking through the living room, looking behind things. "What are you doing?" she asked. The boy answered, "You said you lost your mind, I'm trying to help you find it." –Obviously he brought a smile to his mother's face.

Just as we seek ways to meet mother's approval, shouldn't we also try to meet God's approval? If we've lost something that would please God, shouldn't we be busy trying to find it? When God is pleased with us, we are assured of his continued blessings and helpful presence in our lives.

As Christians, we should strive to do our best to the expectations of Godly mothers. A godly mother expects no more of us than God expects; that is that we do our best.

Exposition

This text focuses on words told to Ruth, that she should not return to her mother's

home empty.

The story of Ruth tells the story of a young woman from a foreign land who came to Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi after the death of her husband.

Naomi advised the young woman in all matters. Since she was motherless, Naomi mothered her. Among the instructions and guidance that Ruth was given were directions to glean the fields of a wealthy man named Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi's. She also succeeded in helping Ruth win the heart of the wealthy man who assumed the role of kinsman redeemer, continuing Naomi's family.

Ruth was instructed in matters of life, love and godliness.

The text indicates that Ruth followed Naomi's instruction and entered Boaz's tent and slept at his feet. When Boaz awakened to find her in his tent he sent her home to avoid the appearance of evil. However, before leaving he took her veil and poured out six measures of barley so that she would not "return empty" to her mother.

Naomi saw that Ruth had followed all of her instructions and had returned with an increase; she advised her to wait patiently on the Lord for everything else.

Ultimately Boaz and Ruth are married and their first child, Obed, is accepted legally as Naomi's child continuing her family's name and inheritance rights.

One of Obed's descendants, many years later would be Jesus of Nazareth.

Ruth respected, obeyed and trusted her mother's guidance and both mother and daughter were blessed. Now the whole world is blessed by the fruit of her womb, Jesus, the savior of the world.

Following Mother's Teaching

RUTH FOLLOWED NAOMI'S INSTRUCTION. In every way, Ruth remained true to Naomi's advice. At times it seemed unorthodox and cumbersome but she followed her instructions to the letter. She made the right choices and was recognized as a virtuous woman. The fact that she was a "lady" caught Boaz's attention and he treated her that way. Ruth 3:11 notes that Ruth was respected in the community as a virtuous woman. "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Every mother strives to teach her children the values that will cause them to be respected in the community. Honor, integrity, cleanliness, morality and godliness are chief among these virtues. Mothers teach their daughters the essentials of finer womanhood and the sons the qualities of manliness. A child who follows the guidance of a godly mother in these matters will not come back a loser; the mother will be proud, regardless of their station in life, of the child who learned the lessons of their youth. Even in her absence, children should remember their mother's instruction and conduct themselves in ways that would make her proud. In this respect, long after childhood is past, children bring honor to their mother's by the lives that they live.

SHE RETURNED WITH ALL SHE COULD HANDLE. Ruth left empty but returned having accomplished all that was in her ability. Boaz poured out for her six measures of barley. The exact measure was not specified. It could have been shovelfuls, single or double handfuls. Ruth 3:17 says, "And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in

law." He filled her veil with as much as she could handle at the time. Following her mother's instruction she returned with something to show for absence. She brought home all she could carry. In the same respect, a mother is pleased when her children perform at their maximum capacity. Not all children perform at the same level, godly mothers are pleased when a child is doing his/her best. Every child honors mother best when they demonstrate to her that they are doing the best they are able to do in life. In our careers, personal affairs, and family interests we should strive to make our mother's proud of us by doing all that we can with what he have been given. Even when mother is not presence, we should strive to continue to make her proud by doing all that we can to achieve maximum results with the gifts we have been given.

SHE RETURNED WITH AN INCREASE. The Hebrew word "reqam" is used for empty. It means vain or without reward. Naomi's desire was to help Ruth succeed. Ruth return to show that Naomi's labor with her had not been in vain or wasted. Naomi was pleased to see the increase but knew there was more to come. Every child should strive to show their mother's some life improvements. These are not necessarily material assets such as homes and cars, but extends itself also to improvements in personal living, goals, attitude and spirituality. When we show our mothers, even if they are not present, that we are improving ourselves and learning important life lessons, godly mothers will be happy and proud. As we increase in wisdom and knowledge, we make our mother's proud.

Wait on the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, Naomi taught Ruth a final lesson: After you have done all you can do, sit still and wait on the Lord.

After Ruth returned to Naomi having done all that she was taught; and

After Ruth returned with all the barley that she could carry; and

After Ruth provided an increase in her situation.

Naomi told Ruth to sit still.

Ruth had done all she knew how to do. She had gleaned the fields and come home with an increase. All she could do is be still and put it in God's hands.

If there is one thing that every godly mother tries to teach her children, that would be how to wait on the Lord.

Patience is one virtue that godly mothers all seem to have. They have learned to wait on the Lord.

A praying mother knows that if she puts life's concerns in God's hands he will make a way out of no way!

A praying mother knows when she has fallen down, God will pick her up again!

A praying mother knows that when she has failed, God will give her a second chance!

A praying mother knows that when she is weak, God will renew her strength!

A praying mother knows that if she can wait on the Lord, he will realize his will. The word says, "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount on wings as eagles. They shall run but not get weary. They shall walk and not

faint."

That's why mother has learned to "Be still" and let God work it out!

If you let God work it out mountains will be made low!

If you let God work it out valleys shall be exalted!

If you let God work it out crooked places shall be made straight!

If you let God work it out rough places shall be made plain!

Consider the mother who whose children came home to give her a report on the progress of their lives and to present her with mother's day gifts. One daughter said, "Mother I'm a businesswoman and I have a successful career. I'm bringing you what you asked, one of my business cards." The second daughter said, "Mama I've graduated from college with my PhD. I'm a professor at the university. I've done what you asked, I didn't come home empty. Here's a copy of my diploma to hang on your wall." Finally, her son came. Unlike his sisters, the son dropped out of school, became an alcoholic and stayed in and out of jail. But on mother's day the family was surprised to see him come home. He was cleaned up and well groomed and looked very good. He said, "Mama I didn't succeed in business or graduate to get my PhD. In fact, I wasted much of my life on drinking, drugs and fast living. But one day, as I sat in an alley and drank the last drop out of my bottle, I heard your voice speaking to me, saying, "trust in the Lord and he'll bring you out." I gave my life to God in that alley that day. It's been a year now mama, and I haven't had a drink, but I kept the empty bottle. I don't have a business card or a diploma for your wall, all I have is an empty wine bottle and a full testimony. 'I want to thank you for never giving up on me. I want to thank you putting me in God's hands."

Every child should say thank you to mother for putting you in God's hands!

When we are in God's hands he's always by our side

When we are in God's hands he's with us in the midst of blessings or despair

When we are in God's hands he's with us in the midst of riches untold or poverty and depravation

If we keep our hands in God's hands, we make our mother's proud

If we live our lives in a way that pleases God, we make our mother's proud!

So keep telling the story!

Tell everybody about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!

Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don't stop there..tell them how

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9314-Anniv.-Church

Another Day's Journey

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

Introduction

Have you ever awakened in the morning and, just for a few moments, thought about how far you have come? Laying there, staring at the ceiling, have you ever thought about the rough years of your life when you faced difficulties that threatened your safety and existence?

Did you think about your children? Your spouse? Your siblings?

After a few moments of reflection, you probably gave God thanks for the journey and arose to face the new day with a positive spirit.

On days such as that you sing the words of that old song by the Mighty Clouds of Joy, "It's been another day's journey and I'm glad about it."

When churches celebrate anniversaries we are at high point in our history. We have the advantage of hindsight. Through hindsight we can see the long meandering path we have traveled to get here.

We see the mountains and valleys of challenges and disappointments.

We see those deserts that were so dry and desolate that we thought we'd never make it through.

We also see the rivers and the streams. We see the streams of tears and rivers of despair that we have crossed. When you are able to see things from a high place, they seem differently. When we climb higher, we get a panoramic view of things that allows us to see a wider, broader picture of life, rather than a narrow perspective.

Every now and the church stops to reflect on its journey, God takes believers to the mountaintop to allow us to see the panoramic view. From this high place today we are able to see from whence we have come over the last 35 years and see where we are going.

As Christians, we thank God for journey. We consider all that we have endured we understand that it has all work to our Good. The struggle; it was all good. The sacrifice; it too was all good. Our obedience; it was all good. Anniversaries, such is the one celebrated today, gives us a chance to look back at the long journey, and to look forward to the great land promise that lies ahead.

Exposition

This text finds Paul explaining to the Romans the nature of the Christian experience as it relates to the Christian journey.

He explained to the Romans that the entire life of man is a divinely guided pilgrimage that moves him toward a glorious end. The entire 8th Chapter of Romans, believed by some to be one of the most inspirational books of the bible, focuses on the Christian's need to be guided by the spirit. It is the spirit of God that will guide and keep us despite the difficulty of our struggle.

Paul notes that we should concentrate on the end, rather than the difficulties encountered along the way, or the difficulties ahead. The central thought of this text verse is that we should focus on the outcome rather than the troubling details of the moment.

This powerfully short verse, when coupled with the rest of the 8th Chapter suggests that Christians should approach each event confident that as long as we are guided by the spirit of God that all things will work "together" for our good and we will eventually profit from every situation no matter how frustrating it appears at the moment; or how long the journey.

A Wonderful Journey

Today, as we reflect on many years of struggle, there are many here who look back with a touch of nostalgia. There are some who have shared most of those years and a small group who have shared the entire journey. They say collectively, "It's been a wonderful journey."

Like Paul there are many believers who have worked to help build the church.

Like Paul, I can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but still they proclaim –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs.

Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but still they proclaim, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans; others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common.

They all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now." We all say, "I've come too far to turn around."

Many yeas ago there was no John Pee Kee or Kurt Franklin. There was no Donnie McKurlin, either. There were no CD players, IPods and internet. It was a time when people would live their voices and shout, "I love the Lord he heard my cry. Long as I live while trouble rise I'll hasten to his throne."

Yes, I've come a long ways on this journey; and thanks to God it's been a wonderful journey.

God was on the Journey

Israel left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, but all of that time God never left them. We have been on this journey a long time and God has never left us either; even though sometimes we felt we were struggle all along, God was constantly working things to our advantage.

Israel could not see God working in Egypt or at the Red Sea; they also found it hard to see him working in the wilderness. All some could see was the difficulty of their journey.

On the journey they were blessed but couldn't see it.

They could not see how they wore the same clothes for 40 years but they never wore out.

They could not see how they were protected from their enemies despite their own inability to defend themselves.

They could not see how they were provided water out of nowhere despite drought situations. God blessed them, but they could not see him at work.

We're celebrating today because unlike Israel, we HAVE SEEN what God has been doing for us. We are celebrating because we have seen how much he has blessed us and how far he has brought us.

In our journey, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In our journey, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In our journey, God has been our way out of no way.

In our journey, God has been out of bridge over troubling waters.

Today, we celebrate another year of the journey. I don't know about you, but I just say, "It's another day's journey, and I'm glad about it!"

Tell the story

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead, the question is asked, who will tell the story?

This congregation has withstood tremendous difficulties over many, many years.

Our young men have seen war in Afghanistan and Iraq and our daughters have faced new challenges to their womanhood.

We have seen the price of gas soar from 75 cents a gallon to nearly $4.00 a gallon.

We have seen great leaders fall and new leaders rise.

We have seen new inventions that have marveled us, cars that talk to us, beds that put us to sleep by the number and little stoves that heat food faster than ovens. If we forget our keys, somebody who we can't opens the door for us; we now televisions no knobs; that can change channels with a push of a button.

In these precious years as the world changed, this church has remained stable,

trusting in a God who is the same yesterday as he is today and will be tomorrow.

We have kept our hands in the winding chain.

Who will tell the story?

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side!

Today we celebrate our anniversary, but that's not what I'm glad about!

Today, we celebrate the church anniversary, but that's not what I'm glad about!

I'm glad that after all these years, God is still on the throne. He's still King of Kings and Lord of Lords and I'm glad about it!

As long as God is still on the throne there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

What I'm glad about is that as I walk through this tedious journey, I don't have to walk it alone.

Why? Because I know a man!

I know a man, who had a lonesome journey that was 33 years on this earth!

I know a man, who healed the sick and raised the dead!

I know a man, who can cool scorching fever and heal aching pain!

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Tell the world, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9315-Anniv.-Men

A Man for the Journey

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2008

SCRIPTURE: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt you were not able to go on? Those were times you felt so frustrated that no matter how much effort you expended it appeared it was useless? Many believers feel this way at one time or another, but usually regroup after prayer. The power of the Holy Spirit energizes and inspires them to continue. With God's help they get faith for the journey.

African-American men have been on a long journey in this nation. For most of our time in America our people have been led by Black men, who have overcome many obstacles to lead us to our present state.

African-American men have made great achievements over the years despite hindrances. Depending upon who is asked, what hinders men differs. Men may cite the lack of opportunity, job skills and access to power. Women may have a different view.

Black men have made remarkable accomplishments over the years, despite a history of deprivation, slavery, racism and denial of equal opportunity. These accomplishments have been made despite adverse circumstances over the years.

Today, we look back over the years and we also look ahead. The future for Black men is only limited by our ability to see beyond any obstacle and discern that God has planned for the renewal, restoration, preservation and elevation of our race and gender.

If we watch our television every day we can watch the presidential election and see a new sense of pride in African-American men.

Black men who want to achieve should seek God and he will send them answers. They should not be deterred and God will show them a way!

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that God helps us overcome obstacles. He works everything to our advantage whether it is good or bad; it will all work to our good if we continue to trust him.

Exposition

This text finds Paul explaining to the Romans the nature of the Christian experience

as it relates to setbacks and persecutions on life's journey.

He explained to the Romans that the entire life of man is a suffering experience designed to move him toward a glorious end which is in heaven. The entire 8th Chapter of Romans, believed by some to be one of the most inspirational books of the bible, focuses on the Christian's need to be guided by the spirit. It is the spirit of God that will guide and keep us, despite the frailty of the human flesh and will.

Paul notes that we should concentrate on the end, rather than the means of any experience. The central thought of this text verse is that we should focus on the outcome of a matter rather than the troubling details of the moment. This powerfully short verse, when coupled with the rest of the 8th Chapter suggests that the Christian should approach each event of life looking at the end rather than the means, confident that as long as he is guided by the spirit of God that all things would work "together" for his good and he will eventually profit from every situation not matter how frustrating in appears at the moment.

For men, it means that no matter how difficult our struggle, God will make it worth our while, in the end.

God Will work It Out

Black men have fought tremendous battles to reach our present place in the world. We have not fully attained all that we should have, but we are all on our way.

Much has been placed against us, but God has worked it out for us. That's why the scripture keeps reminding us that "All things" work to the good of those who are called to God's purpose. He will work out to our advantage no matter how bad it seems.

Slavery, ignorance, poverty and lack of opportunity have been the main hindrances to the achievement of African-American men. Yet, despite these obstacles, however, African-American men have excelled. God is working it out; so we should not give up the journey.

Look at our history

Frederick Douglass was not hindered by the circumstance of slavery. He arose from slavery to become a great abolitionist, news paper publisher, statesman and politician. The peculiar institution of slavery threatened him but did not hinder him. It haunted him but it did not stop him from achieving excellence.

Booker T. Washington spent his life fighting ignorance. A former slave, he challenged the notion that blacks could not achieve and established Tuskegee Institute to promote higher learning for Blacks. God worked it out

Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder represent extremely talented African-American men who were not hindered by circumstance. Both born blind, they achieved greatness in the area of music creativity in their respective generations. God worked it out.

Barack Obama was born to mixed parents and grew up like most of us, but right

now he is poised to possibly become the next president of the United States.

Don't give up the journey

Like Paul there are many men who have worked to help build the church. These are the men who have rolled up their sleeves and led the church in giving, worship and service. Even though it has been many, many years, they have been frustrated along the way but committed to making the journey by faith.

Like Paul, I can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

What have men in this church been doing all these years?

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed pots and mopped floors, but still they proclaim –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but still they proclaim, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans, others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support.

All have one thing in common. They all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now." We all say, "I've come too far to turn around."

Some have been on the journey longer than others, but they wouldn't take nothing for their journey.

Some here can remember walking to church on country roads, trying to keep cool while fanning hot air!

Somebody remembers a time before there was central heating and air, when the entire church was heated by huge space heaters that drove away the cold until the spirit warmed up the church!-We've come so far to turn back now!

Somebody remembers a time before Kurt Franklin, John Pee Kee and Donnie McKurklin. There was a time folks used to sing without music and instruments.

Some old sister would sing, "I love the Lord he heard my cry. Long as I live while trouble rise I'll hasten to his throne."

We've come a long ways, but I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

Look to the future

Believers should be encouraged when they look to the future; God has great plans for his church and its individual congregations.

There is trouble all around us, but we can see a day coming in the kingdom of God when there will truly be peace on earth. There is hardship and difficulty now, but we can see the day coming when crying days will be over.

Every believer should also say in his heart that God has great rewards in store for us. "Eye hath not seen nor has it entered into the hearts of man" to even imagine the great things that lie ahead for us.

God needs good men

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is only one thing better than a real man and that is a good man in Godly hands.

When a real man puts his hands in God's hand there is not limit to what he can achieve on his life's journey. We need only to look at the journey of other saints for confirmation.

Elijah was a good man. By any standard, he was a real man. He was strong, independent and courageous. But he was more than just a man; he was a good man in God's hands!

Abraham was a good man, but when he put his trust in God and moved at his command, he was a good man in God's hands!

Jacob was a good man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he was a good man in God's hands!

David was a good. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." he was a good man in God's hands!

A good man in God's hands is a powerful man because God guides him on his journey!

A good man in God's hands is an influential man because God controls him!

A good man in God's hands is an effective man because God directs him

As men go forward in the world we should always remember to take the Lord with us!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

If you want to make this journey, you've got to stand on the Lord'' side; you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you've got to walk with the King!

Winds may blow, but you've got to walk with the King!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Walk with Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

Jesus, who is alive today!

On your journey, keep your hand in God's hand and walk with the King!

No. 9216-Inspiration

Loved Us, Washed Us, Raised Us

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 18, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Revelation 1:5-6

Introduction

Have you ever been loved by someone? Those who have been loved by someone will testify that it is a tremendously satisfying experience. When we are loved we feel safe, secure, understood, accepted, appreciated and supported. Most of us first experienced being loved in the care of a parent. In their presence we felt all of the feelings associated with being loved. We transferred that experience to all of our life situations. Some have been loved by special teachers, mentors, coaches, churches and special organizations.

We are attracted to those who love us. Conversely we try to get away from situations in which we do not feel safe, secure, understood, accepted and appreciated. As each of those ingredients diminishes, we feel less loved and start looking for ways out.

It's amusing we think of those first expressions of love we received. Was it a love note in school? The one that began with the words, "Roses are red and violets are blue, sugar is sweet and I love you." Did it have little boxes to check if you like me, or if you don''t. In modern times, you may have received a silent text on your phone or an email expressing love.

What we call falling in love has to do with an attraction that is based on the quality and number of the love ingredients. Around this person I feel safe, I can be myself without pretense. Around this person I feel protected because my name, reputation and person will be defended. I feel understood because this person knows the real me while others may only know the superficial. This person makes feel like I am a King or Queen and my every act or deed is appreciated. I feel supported in my successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses.

When we have all of that we are loved! It takes your breath away!

Did you know that God loves us that way. His love for us is unconditional. He knows

us, understands us, appreciates us, protects and supports us. He has tried to tell us that many ways.

He didn't send us text message or a roses are red note; he sent us Jesus; his only Son, HE is our love letter from God

As believers, we are happy we have received God's love letter. We listen to him speak and we receive his words because he loves us, saves us and raises us each and every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he notes the nature of Christ''s love for us. Stranded on the isle of Patmos, John received a revelation from Christ that revealed the events that were to come in the last days. In it Christ showed John the various ways that he had loved the church through his blessings and personal sacrifices.

He also showed how he had saved the church through his death on Calvary.

Morever, he showed how he would raise the church to its ultimate glory as his bride.

Christ as the living Word of God who dwelled among men to demonstrate the way of real love that began in creation and will extend unto the final restoration in the last days.

Love Demonstrated

When we seek to understand the nature of real love, what we should do is looke at the way God loves us. Anyone who really loves us; will respond to us in much the same way. It also applies to the way that we love; because when we love we, too, will love like God loves:

GOD LOVES US: What does it mean when someone says, "I love you." What they are saying is "I love you the way God loves me." How is that? 1 John 4:16 says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Since God is love the phrase "I love you" is "I God you." God loves us unconditionally and without season. Even when God is angry with us; he loves us. Even when we separate ourselves from him, he loves us. Even when we act stupidly, selfishly, or thoughtlessly, he continues to love us.

It's difficult to say, "I love you" if we have not come to terms with the fact that we ourselves are imperfect and that God loves us despite our imperfections.

We when are loved like God loves, we understand the meaning of a song by the late Jackie Wilson that said, "Someone to share, somone to care, lonely hours and moments of despair;to be loved, to be loved, oh what a feeling to be loved!"

The love of God is indescribeable. It''s what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,

Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me.
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame,
O magnify the precious Name of Jesus.

Praise His Name!

Another song writer summed it up this way, "Oh how I love Jesus. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me."

HE WASHED US: We praise God today because he has washed us or forgiven us for our shortcomings. One way to know that we are loved is that those who love us have demonstrated the capacity to forgive us for our failures. No matter how we measure ourselves we will come up short. Those who love us, see our failures more than others and choose to love us anyway. Again, it''s the way that God loves us. We feel loved when are past mess ups are forgiven. We feel less loved when we are constantly reminded of our shortcomings.

One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to purge our sins. That is, wipe the slate clean. Isaiah 53 reminds us that he was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities……with his stripes we are healed." Whenever we consider what we once were, we should be willing to give it up for God. Every believer can testify that, "I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God, because of Jesus, I'm not what I was." The simple truth of the matter is that the blood of Christ "purged" us of all of our sins.

He washed us in his own blood. He forgave us and made it right.

He tore up old distrusts and gave us a new covenant.

He demonstrated forgiveness in its purest sense; and showed us what it means to truly love.

RAISED US: We are loved by someone we can feel them lifting us up. We see evidences of it every day. John in Revelation 1:6 said Christ has lifted us to level of kingship and priesthood in the eyesight of God. In the same way, those who love us, lift us up, edify us and strive to build us up in every way. We feel loved when we can sense that those around us are trying to lift us, raise us. Even if a parent is chastising us, in a strange way, we still feel loved because we feel that the ultimate goal of the chastisement is to lift us up.

Despite our imperfections, Christ wants to lift us up in the eyes of God.

Despite our flaws and failures, Christ wants to help us achieve our maximum.

Despite our idiosyncrasies, Christ still wants us to succeed, according to his purpose.

He loves us unconditionally, practically and with only one purpose: to bring us to the altar as the spotless bride of Christ.

This is the kind of love that we sing about when we say, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

To Him be glory

Finally, brothers and sisters, because Christ has loved us, we should give him glory and praise!

There are no words that can describe the love of God for his children; yet we are compelled to try to give Him glory for He has done for us.

John said to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Long before we knew what it meant to love he loved us.

For that we give him glory!

Long before we knew what it meant to forgive, he forgave us!

For that we give him praise!

Long before we knew what it meant to be raised up, he raised us!

For that he has dominion and power forever.

We know God loved us because the bible tells us, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

He didn’t talk about love he show us his love.

He loved us with a love that was:

—higher than the heavens

—deeper than the oceans

—lovelier than the sunsets

—sweeter than the honeycomb

—stronger than the wind

—fresher than the morning dew

It was a love that could not be:

—measured for it is immeasurable

—described for it is indescribable

—evaluated for it is invaluable

—comprehended for it is incomprehensible

—explained for it is unexplainable

There’s no other love that can:

—bless and benefit

—penetrate and saturate

—glorify and magnify

—satisfy and beautify

—encourage the discouraged!

We should give God glory because he first gave it up for us. No wonder the songwriter declared, “Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me.”

I said I wasn’t going to tell anybody but I can’t keep it to myself.

I’ve got to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

I said I wasn’t going to tell anybody but I got to give it up for Jesus!

No. 9317-Youth

Catch the Wind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 1, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." Psalm 18:10

Introduction

Have you ever flown a kite? There are many who remember the joys of kite flying and cherish the memory of windy March days and a sky filled with colorful kites speckling the skies. Just about every boy knew how to get a kite in the air and how to keep it there. Kite flying became a necessary skill.

Kite flying is over 2000 years old. It began in China and is now a pastime around the world. The most famous kite flying incident in America happened in 1752 when Benjamin Franklin and his son flew a kite in an electrical storm to harness the power of electricity.

Some can remember not only flying kites, but making them as well. Before the era of store bought kites, kids made their own kites. Many used news paper that was held together with glue. The glue was homemade, too; using the best flour-water mixtures of the modern kitchen. Small sticks were used, tied in the middle to form a cross. Old stockings were used to make the tails. There were some who became quite skilled a kite making and kite flying that they became kite flying experts.

There is one truth those who fly kites have learned and accepted: to successfully fly a kite one must figure out a way to catch the wind. With wind, even the best kites can't stay afloat.

If our future dreams, goals and ambitions were kites, the same would be true: if we want to achieve our goals, we must catch the wind! Without wind a kite crashes. Our ambitions crash, too unless sustained by the power of God.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that our goals and dreams can be realized when sustained by the wind of God's spirit. His presence in our lives makes the difference. It is the determining factor between whether we succeed or fail.

Exposition

This text describe describes God as a source of power and strength because God himself rides on the wings of the wind.

The empowering presence of God is represented by two words: ruach, in the Old Testament and pneuma, in the New Testament.

Ruach is associated with the life force of humanity. The ruach of God is his breath and his power as represented in Job 12:10 that says, "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." Ezekiel was carried to a valley filled with dry bones and told to prophesy to the winds to give them life. Ezekiel 37:9-10 says, " Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Thus, the ruach of God of the Old Testament is the literal breath of God that gives life to and power to the lifeless.

David in Psalm 18:10 projects God as being so powerful that he controls and monitors the breath necessary for any man's existence. He literally rides on the wings of the wind. He is high. He is powerful and He is excellent.

The New Testament equivalent to breath is pnuema. It is best represented by John 20:22 which says, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:" In the New Testament pneuma is translated "Holy Spirit" or Holy wind. It is the Holy Wind of God that empowers us to do his will and to soar above obstacles, frustrations and opposition. His presence is the pnuema or "air" that we breathe.

Thus from the Old Testament we learn that God is the ruach or the life force we need to survive. He controls that force and rides it like the wind. From the New Testament we learn that God is the wind, the very spiritual air that we breathe and need to succeed in this life and beyond.

We Need Wind

Young believers launch themselves into life with a head full of information and a heart full of dreams. With their diplomas in hand many will seek to make their dreams become realities on the weight of their knowledge and skill alone. Some who can think well think their superior knowledge is all they will need. Others who can dance believe that alone will be their ticket to success. Others can play musical instruments and excel in sports, but mistakenly believe they can launch their futures without the real need of anyone else outside of themselves.

Those who think this way should study kite flying for an important life lesson:

YOU MUST RUN WITH IT: Most who have tried to fly a kite know that barring a extraordinary strong blast of wind, to get a kite in the air you must run with it. As you run the kite pulls against the tension on your string and it begins rise. Herein lies the truth, if you can't run with it, the best kite won't get off the ground. Each youth must take the skills and talents that God has provided and use them to the best of your ability. If you sing, your career won't take off in the shower. If you dance or play an instrument, you must use it. If you are an athlete you must develop your skills to best of your ability and seek every opportunity. In Hebrews 11 most of the verses

begin with two words, “by faith.” A litany of patriarchs were listed to achieved great things in God’s will by faith. Those who intend to get their dreams off the ground must be willing to step out on faith and “run with it” to get it in the air.

KITES WITHOUT TAILS FLY CRAZY: Most flat kites come with some type of tail. The tail of the kite works to keep its nose pointed into the wind. Without the tail the kite turns upside down, round and round and does crazy stuff. For young believers, your religious training and reverence to God is your tail. It keeps your dreams pointed toward those things which are godly. If you pursue your goals and dreams and disconnect yourself from God’s presence you will find yourself doing crazy stuff, going round and round, acting erratic and crashing. Matthew 6:33 reminds every believer to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you.” Otherwise, don’t lose your tail!

DON’T GET TANGLED UP: No matter how successful you are at getting your kite into the air it won’t stay up long if you get it tangled up in wires and branches. Too many entanglements will disturb your upward climb. This is a lesson to young believers today. There are many who have ambitions of flying high in the world, but they are trying to launch a high flying life among low level entanglements. Drugs, night life, boys gone wild, girls gone wild, drunkenness, loose living, shacking, pre-marital sex and general loose living are low level entanglements that keep you launching higher. That’s why, Ephesians 6:11 encourages us to, “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” When we are wrapped up and secured in the word of God, there is no danger of being tangled up in the tricks of the devil.

WE MUST GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS: Usually the wind needed to sustain a kite in the air is high in the air. We can run with it, but sooner or later we must let out enough string, keep tugging on the line until we can get our kites into the streams of air that keep it afloat. When that happens the person on the ground does have to run anymore. The kite soars on the power of the wind alone. It will soar for hours if uninterrupted. It is soaring not by the ability of the person on the ground but it is soaring because it has caught the wind. Young believers must know that if we want to catch the wind we must move to a level where the wind blows. The wind of God does not blow in night clubs, discos, freaky nights, and spring break beach parties. We catch the wind of God in our praise and worship moments. We catch the Spirit of God in our bible reading and quiet times. The world will keep knocking on your door asking you to run, run run, but all of your running keep make your goals soar, to do that they must catch the wind. To get them there we must go where the wind blows. That means we must be in the presence of God.

When we Catch the Wind

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that once we catch the wind, there is no limit to how high we can go.

Those who have flown a kite successfully cannot describe the feeling they get when they the string tugging against their hands and watch it move higher and higher.

In fact, its ability to go higher is only limited to climb higher by the amount of available string.

That's the way it is when a life catches the wind of God. There is no limit to how high we can go or what we can do. We are only limited by our fears, doubts and preparation. The lesson is obvious if you intend to catch the wind, bring plenty of string.

Get as much formal education as you can, so once your dreams catch the wind you have room to climb!

Get rid of your fears and doubts so that once your goals catch the wind you will have the courage to reach out and grab them.

You will only be limited by the amount of preparation, courage and faith you bring into the soaring experience.

There is a Latin word used to describe what we have been saying today, it is "Capta Ventum" it means "Catch the wind." Those who are guided by the hand of God know there is a time when the wind is right and God's spirit is moving in a life. That's described by the Latin term "Ventus Secondus" –a favorable wind!

I'm told that the best time to fly kites is in the month of Month of March because there is always an abundance of favorable winds. It's kind of hard the rest of the year because you have to wait for the winds to blow.

When you've been trying live according to the will of Lord, God sends a "favorable wind."

When you can't seem to get the next step of our life moving right direction, God sends a "favorable wind."

When you try every means you know how, but you can't seem to get your life in the air, God sends a "favorable wind!"

When you catch a favorable wind there is nothing that can stop you from achieving God's will for your life!

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."- That's favorable wind!

When you catch a favorable wind, times might get tough but God will provide!

Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."- Favorable Wind

When you catch a favorable wind, you may run out of strength and energy but takes your hopes and dreams beneath his wings, higher! Higher and higher!

Call on Jesus! Let the spirit of God take you higher!

Jesus, let him open doors for the performance of his will!

Jesus, let him lift you up to another plane

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

Catch God's available wind and there is no limit to where you can go!

No. 9318-Youth

The Tragedy of Losing Jesus

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 8, 2008

SCRIPTURE: But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. Luke 2:44-46

Introduction

Have you ever thought, for a second, that you lost a child? It is a scary feeling to look for a child that was near one second and find that child missing in the next. Yet, thousands of families each year are plagued by fact that children are missing from homes.

The problem of missing children is growing every year. In 1982 the FBI reported just over 152,000 children in the United States. By the year 2000, there were over 876,000 and today there are over 1 million missing children reports investigated each year. The U.S. Justice Department makes it even plainer: There are over 2,100 missing children reports filed every day in America.

Why are there so many? Law officials say a small number of the reports are related to kidnapping. Some are the result of run-a-ways, and still others involved baby snatching, thefts of babies from hospitals, and thefts of children by one parent or another.

All of this results in thousands of families each day literally mourning the loss of one or more missing children. To get them back some parents have taken the offensive. They have plastered the pictures on the walls of post offices and safe houses around the nation. They have floated their names and photographs over the internet and place their pictures on the back of milk cartons with the words, "Have you seen this child?" or "Missing."

While it is an awful feeling to lose a child, it's an even worse feeling to lose a child who still lives and sleeps in our homes every day. There are no real statistics to document it, but we can sense from observation that there is a growing number of children who are estranged from their parents, they have no connection with them at all: They don't share intimate thoughts, discuss their dreams and frustrations, share a sense of family or bond and most of all, they feel no real love for their parents. When this occurs the child is eating and sleeping under a family roof, but his/her mind

and heart is missing from the family circle.

There are more families with children lost in the house, than there are with children missing out of the house.

If a child is missing out of the house, parents go out of their way to find them. What about children missing in the house? Shouldn't the search to get them back be just as vigilant?

Whether missing from the family circle or missing in the family circle, it is a tragic feeling to lose a child. It hearts the heart. It is an irreplaceable loss; that's why many do what they must do to get them back.

There is a sense of relief felt when we hear reports of missing children that have been found. There is also joy in the family when a child lost to the family has been restored.

That's the way it is with God too? Many members of the church have lost Jesus somewhere along the way. He was there one minute and the next He was gone. We were careless, thoughtless and neglectful and we lost him in the crowd of our busy schedules and hectic lives. When we have lost Jesus there is an empty feeling on the inside.

Yet, there is hope. We can search for him, find him and get him back in our lives. As Christians, we know the joy of having Jesus in our lives. We shudder at the thought of losing him by our own thoughtlessness or assumptions. We also rejoice in knowing that if we have lost him, we can find him again.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Mary and Joseph lost Jesus in the crowd. Joseph and Mary and Jesus made the three or four day trip to the Temple for Passover every year. At the Temple there were separate sections for the men and for the women. Normally children would be with their mothers, but when a boy was twelve, as Jesus was on this particular occasion, he could be with either his father or his mother. That is where the problem arose. Apparently Jesus wandered off and both parents thought Jesus was with the opposite parent. When they discovered he was missing, they searched for three days before they found him.

When Mary found Him she asked Jesus, "Why did you do this to us?" Jesus answered her simply as if to say: "Didn't you know I had to be about my Father's business?"

The text notes that Mary and Joseph stopped what they were doing and immediately went to find the child that was lost. When they sought him, they found him.

Losing Jesus

A Close look at Mary and Joseph's parenting experience in this text reveals truths that every parent should note:

THEY ASSUMED TOO MUCH: When Mary and Joseph began the journey, they

made an assumption about Jesus; but they assumed too much. Luke 2:44 says, "But they, supposing him to have been in the company." They assumed that everything is all right. On the way up, to Jerusalem he was never out of their sight, but on the return, they made assumptions about his presence. Today, there are many parents who assume too much. When their children don't talk to them they assume that it's because they are growing up. When their children find it a burden to be in the presence of their parents, they assume it's because they want to get into the world. When they have been shut completely out of the lives of their children, many parents assume that everything is still fine as long as there are no children out of wedlock and no one is in jail.

Yet, despite the assumptions, there are millions of youth who growing and maturing and seeking their own destinies, while parents are assuming. Luke 2:42 points out that Jesus was thinking different thoughts and plotting a different direction for himself and his parents knew not of it? Today, parents should not assume anything. There must be time when the family talks, laughs, dreams and shares its ideals. Don't assume anything: ask. Is everything all right? Are you happy? What can we do to make life better for you? What are your plans for your life? Is there any way I can help you? There are millions of missing children in their homes, while parents assume everything is fine. Millions are thinking about suicide, considering running away, experiencing sex, drugs or alcohol and a plethora of other maladies and like Mary and Joseph their parents knew not of it. Don't assume anything.

THEY SOUGHT WAYS TO FIND HIM: When Mary and Joseph realize that Jesus was lost they sought to find him. They looked among family members and then returned to where they last saw him. Luke 2:45 says "And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him."

Today, parents face the same dilemma. Some have discovered that there is a wall that has developed between father and son, mother and daughter. Some parents are busy trying to find their lost child. They seek help from family members and acquaintances and they back track to their last happy moments and try to pinpoint the moment that a child began to drift away. Recheck your parenting skills, is it possible we slipped along the way?

Sometimes we would like to blame it on divorce, poverty or evil world, but if we backtrack close enough we can set a child adrift we:

1.Let your child see a conflict between your home life and your church life.

2.Permit your child to choose his own companions without restraint or direction.

3. Give your child a latchkey and allow him to return home at any hour of the night.

4. Make no inquiry as to where and with whom he spends his leisure hours.

5. Insure that he goes to church but one or both parents stay at home

6. Let him expect pay for every act of helpfulness

7. Let him spend his church-time hours outside the building instead of in the church

8. Never let your child hear you pray

9.Show no interests in your child's school or personal life especially after 6th grade

10.Let your child select the television programs he watches and music he/she hears

To reclaim what has been lost, families must rearrange some priorities with less emphasis on maintaining material status or winning grudge fights with spouses. Families need time-together, quality time.

Travel to places of interest to all members of the family. Talk, listen, laugh, have fun, attend school functions, participate in the social lives of children and be a positive factor in children's lives to the point that the last person they want to shut out of their lives is the parent who loves them. Go back to where you last had it, reclaim it, and build again.

THEY FOUND HIM WHEN THEY CAME TO THE TEMPLE: Joseph and Mary search everywhere for Jesus, but they found him when they returned to the temple. Today, families are struggling against all odds to rebuild lost relationships. But we should pay close attention to Luke 2:46, "....they found him in the temple.." No family today should down play the importance of a God fearing family that worships together and serves God together. We can consult family advisors, counselors, or television doctors but all of their advice can not measure up to the restored love and joy that families realize when they come before God together.

Even when parents are separated, children need to worship regularly in the presence of their parents. Worship gives a sense of direction, order and purpose to young lives. It helps young people see that despite any frustrations they face in life, that God can and will help them to overcome.

Families who have lost children in their family circles can find them again when they return to the presence of God. It doesn't happen overnight, but God spirit has a way of working itself through the hard shells that separate and bring in the light of God's love. Those who have missing children should seek God's help in finding them.

Finding Jesus

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must remember that if we have lost Jesus, we need to back track until we find him.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem and they lost him in the crowd, but after a while they missed him and began to backtrack until they found him.

You may not have a lost a child, but it is possible that you may have lost Jesus.

You may not have a wayward son or daughter, but it is possible that you assume too much and lost Jesus.

You may have a close relationship with your child, but it's possible that you have a failing relation with God, because you lost Jesus.

If it's been some time since you've opened up to God, do like the song writer and say, "Lord take me back, take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received thee, take me back, take me back dear Lord to where I first believed."

Somebody will find him in a bible verse, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"

Somebody will find Him in a children's verse, "Yes Jesus loves me, because the

Bible tells me so."

There is one more thing you should note in Luke 2:46 that for three days and three nights they thought they had lost Jesus.

For three days and three nights, the worried all day and all night long because they thought the lost Jesus!

But after three days of searching they found him with resurrected hope.

But 21 years later Mary and Joseph found themselves standing on a hill called Calvary, watching nails being driven in His hand and feet.

When they saw him drop his head in the locks of His shoulders they felt they had lost Jesus!

When they buried him in a borrowed tomb they thought they had lost Jesus!

For three days and three nights the mourned for him because they thought they had lost Jesus!

But, early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands! If you have lost Jesus, you can find him today. He's only a prayer away!

No. 9319-Installation

The Call for Sacrificial Service

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2008

SCRIPTURE: And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Mark 8:34

Introduction

Have you ever accepted an important task, and then asked yourself the question, "What have I gotten myself into?" There are many who aspire to great heights without counting the costs. Those who rise to the top of their professions usually do so at a great cost. They spend thousands of dollars on their education and training, countless hours networking contacts, and even more hours preparing. Once at the top, many find that the demands of the position are endless, requiring considerable sacrifice of time and resources. Ask any person who has chaired a major project, headed a corporation, held a political office or managed a home.

The best example however is the nature of church leadership. Those who lead in the church usually find that it is time consuming, spiritually draining, and physically demanding. Church leadership is a call to service that goes beyond mere titles and protocols; it is a call to sacrificial service.

I am reminded of the story that said the animals decided that they would treat the farmer with a fine breakfast to demonstrate their appreciation for all of the years he has kept them. The cow said, "We should give him a glass of milk and butter for his bread." Inspired by the cow's suggestion the hen quickly added, "We could serve him bacon and eggs for breakfast, too!" At the mention of bacon, the pig was visibly disturbed. The others wanted to know what was wrong with their suggestion. The pig answered: "To serve the farmer milk, all the cow must do is give some milk and the farmer gets, cream for his coffee, milk and butter. All the chicken has to do is lay an egg and he gets scrambled eggs, but in order for him to get bacon on his plate, I have to do. You will give something, but I will have to give my all!" -The pig understood the meaning of total sacrifice.

Those who live for Christ must be prepared to give up the whole pig. They must

be willing to deny themselves completely and plunge themselves into the service of the Kingdom of God and its people.

As Christians, we are aware of the importance of sacrificial service. Christ showed us what it means to live a sacrificial life; to do the same we must be prepared to deny ourselves and follow him.

Exposition

In this text, Christ tells believers that the way of the cross requires sacrificial living.

There were many who came to Christ thinking that association with him would mean instant success. They had seen him heal the sick, raise the dead and even feed thousands of people with small handfuls of food. Being a Christian, in their mind, was the sure way to avoid sickness, have plenty to eat and acquire the good life.

Mark 8:34 Jesus warned them that those who lived by the principles of Christianity must be willing to "Take up his cross." Under Roman law, a criminal condemned to death by crucifixion was required to carry his cross to the execution site, as Jesus was required to do (Luke 23:26). In essence, believers must be willing to part with any possessions they own, their careers or even their lives to achieve the kingdom of God. The person who became a follower of Christ was willing to risk the loss of life, liberty and property for the cause of heaven. Those who were not were described as persons who wanted to "gain the whole world" but lose their souls.

In this passage, Jesus used the term "whosoever" repeatedly. It was not a reference to just Jews, but anyone of any race, nationality or persuasion who was willing to take on the burden of the cross can become a part of the kingdom of God.

Those who have been selected to humbly lead the flock of Christ are the "who-so-evers" to whom this text makes reference. Those who choose to step into the realm of leadership of men and women, must first assume the role of followship of Jesus Christ. That will require considerable sacrificial living.

Three Sacrifices

When God places a pastor in a position of authority, he has a definite reason for causing it to happen. There is a message he wants delivered and goal he wants attained. To do that the pastor must approach his station with an attitude of humility and a spirit of dedication. Why does God exalt a person to a high position? His purpose is to advance the kingdom of the Lord and to bring salvation to the people.

The challenges are great because the needs are great.

Today, we consecrate and ordain a man who has been touched by the hand of God. We celebrate the fact that God reached down into the ranks of the people and found a man of character and strength and raised them to the pastorate to speak to this generation in the name of the Lord.

Leaders are exalted, but they must be willing to make sacrifices to effectively minister to God's people.

He who leads must keep telling the dispirited masses that despite hurricanes, earthquakes and rising tides that God is still on the throne!

He who leads must keep raising the banner of hope for a world that is wallowing in despair.

God calls the pastor to serve and ordains him in his mother's womb. His official ordination calls upon him to deny himself and follow his mission totally. He is called to three areas of sacrifice:

SACRIFICIAL LIVING: The call to "Deny Yourself" is a call for sacrificial living. As pastors, the word commands that we not be excited by what the bible calls "filthy lucre." In plain language it means that the pastor is not money hungry. Because he lives a sacrificial life, he denies the pursuit of wealth and riches as he pursues the building of God's kingdom. That does not mean that the pastor should be broke and penniless, it means that he seeks first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, rather than his own wealth. Sacrificial living requires self denial; it is a character trait only shared by special people; those whom God ordains are those have been touched by the hand of God in a way that their pursuit of the kingdom is foremost in their mind. The call to serve as pastor is also the call to sacrificial living.

SACRIFICIAL SERVICE: The call to "Deny Yourself" is also a call to sacrificial service to others. The Greek word "Diakonos" is translated "minister" in English. It means to serve. More than anything else, the pastor of the congregation is a servant. In fact, the greatest pastors are those who serve the needs of people most. Service to God through serving others is time consuming. Helping the poor, the needy, the old and feeble, the young and helpless requires time, energy and money on a regular basis. There are no shortcuts, no quick ways to do it. It requires sacrificial, time consuming service. While many may see the pastor as an exalted figure, sitting high in the congregation of God, there are others who know that it is more than fancy robes, titles and sermons. Unseen by the public are the homes visited, hospital bed prayers offered, and family disputes resolved. Unseen are the troubled souls that are comforted, youth that are encouraged and marriage saved. This level of service requires time. The time given is usually time that the pastor gives at a personal sacrifice to his own family and personal leisure. He does so willingly because he heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Deny yourself and follow me."

SACRIFICIAL SPIRIT: The pastor is called to follow Christ with a spirit of humility. Humility is important to kingdom building because it promotes Christ above self interest. It is our nature to seek praise because it helps promote our personal agenda. It is natural for each person to desire personal glory, honor and praise, but to build the kingdom for the savior, God must get the glory; we must always be second to Him. The pastor demonstrates this spirit in everything he does and says. The humble person knows that he or she is not able to accomplish anything notable without God's help; thus they shy away from being boastful. We can't accomplish anything unless we are willing to put ourselves in the background. Humility is hard because it is against our nature. It is easy, if we have surrendered ourselves to God in the first place. When that happens, we don't want to take credit for his work in our lives. The call to "deny yourself" is a call to humble service, recognizing God as the

source of all blessings and strength.

God's Man And God's Plan

Finally, the pastor should help the people of God see God's hand in every man's plan.

The pastor who approaches his ministry with the attitude of sacrificial service, sees the mission that God has given him and asks, "Why me?"

The self denying servant who has been lifted to lead large assemblies, associations and conventions, often asks, "Why me?"

To those who pose this troubling question to themselves the answer comes in Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Unseen by the hand of man God has exalted Godly leaders to a station and position that would promote the building of his kingdom and provide spiritual help for those who follow him.

Often we cannot see God's hand, but there is no doubt that God's hand is in the plan.

When our work is touched by the hand of God there is reward for all of our sacrifices.

When we deny ourselves and stand as ministers of his word, God lifts us higher!

God gives us calm in spite of our circumstances!

God gives us is blessings instead of our burdens!

God gives us happiness instead of hardships!

God gives us determination in spite of our discouragements!

That means we must put our lives in God's hands!

When we put our lives in God's hands we depend totally on Him to lead us and provide for us

So, we say to this pastor today: Go forth and declare the word!

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

God will give you the plan!

When God is behind the plan, the impossible becomes possible!

When God is behind the plan, the improbable becomes probable!

When God is behind the plan, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

With everything you have you must tell the world about Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary and died!

Tell them that Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power!

All Power!

All Power in His hands!

No. 9320-Youth

If you dance to the music, you must pay the piper

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 22, 2008

Scripture:"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Matthew 16:24; "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Introduction

Have you ever made a choice? We've all made choices in life concerning a variety of subjects. Some of our choices were wise and prudent, others were foolish. We choose our friends, husbands and wives, and our professions. We choose the amount of education we will obtain, the kinds of clothes we will wear and even what parties we will attend. We choose the kind of car we will drive, clothes we will wear and what channels we will watch on television. We make choices every day. There is one truth we also learn, for every choice we make there is consequence which will either punish us or reward us.

Remember the story of the Pied Piper? According to legend, the German town of Hamelin in the year 1284 was totally over-run by rats. The popular poem by Longfellow claims that the rats were even big and bad enough to scare away cats, and the people were beside themselves. One day, a mysterious stranger appeared and offered to take care of the problem – for a hefty fee. The townspeople agreed, and then watched in wonder as the stranger piped his way through the streets, luring all the rats out of town and depositing them in the nearby river. Voila! Hamelin no longer had rats, and the people were happy.

However, when the Piper returned for his payment, the townspeople refused to give him his due. Understandably angry, the stranger piped his way through the streets again. But this time he lured the children away from their homes and up inside the mountain, where they disappeared forever.

From this story a number of proverbs have been used over the years including: "You must pay the piper" and "If you dance to the music, you must pay the piper."

The cute story forces us to consider the consequences of our choices in life; and that's really the sum total of our lives, the results of our choices.

We can choose to study or not study, but there are consequences.

We can choose to refrain or to engage, but there are consequences.

We can choose to smoke or be smokeless, but there are consequences.

We can choose to sleep in one bed or many beds, but there are consequences.

We can choose the high road or the low road in life, but there are consequences.

Consider the man who had a pet turkey that would not stop gobbling. He put the turkey in a closet but it kept gobbling loudly. He locked it in a guest room, but it kept gobbling even louder. He locked it in a cabinet and turkey gobbled even louder. Finally, he decided to lock the turkey in the refrigerator. In a few moments the turkey stopped gobbling. In fact, he became so quiet that the man became worried when he open the door the turkey was sitting quite still and began to speak. It said, "I'm so sorry for gobbling so much. I you won't have any trouble out of me anymore, I promise." Astonished the man asked the turkey, "What changed your mind?" The turkey answered, "Well, I saw a chicken in one bowl and a duck in another; I don't know what they did, but I think it's best for me to keep my mouth shut." -He considered the consequences.

Every choice we make in life has consequences, that's the important life lesson each youth must learn.

That includes our choices about obeying God and following Christ. There is a major life choice that each person must make in life at some point. It is the choice of whether to accept Christ or deny him. There are consequences for those who choose to deny him and rewards for those who choose to follow Him.

Truly, life is about choices, but so is our eternal life; it's about choices as well.

As Christians, we have decided to follow Jesus and take no chance of getting lost. We know if choose to dance to the music of the world, one day we'll have to pay the piper. However, if we choose to follow Christ, heaven will be our reward.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus encouraging his disciples to follow Him, instead of the world.

Jesus explained the nature of living for the kingdom of God; it is sacrificial living. He told His disciples that those who choose to follow Him should be prepared to accept their particular lot in life and work with it in a spirit of self denial.

He described our lot in life as our "cross." Our cross is our set of talents, gifts and traits, that is also inclusive of our limitations, fears, flaws and doubts. Our cross is our particular circumstance in life. Christ challenged his followers to pick up their divinely appointed crosses, and use them for God by following Him.

Christ was not asking them to carry His cross, but He challenged them to pick up their own crosses and follow Him. Their crosses would be their daily frustrations, troubles and setbacks, coupled with their hopes, dreams and aspirations. Each believer must deal with the issues and choices that life presents in a spirit of self denial for the purpose of advancing the kingdom of God. Following Christ means to approach life in a manner that follows the example of Christ, using whatever we have been given to his glory.

In this text, Christ presents the choice. However, Paul, in Romans 6:23 presents the believer with the consequences of the choices. He breaks it into two parts: The wages of sin and its consequence, which is death; and following Christ and that consequence which is eternal life.

Each person is given the option of choosing whether to live for God or to live for the world; but the consequences of our choices are waiting ahead of us; they will be there when we get there.

Life Choices

Youth are faced with more choices than any generation before them.

The television channel is symbolic their dilemma. In their grandparents day the only choices were CBS, NBC and ABC. Today there is also FOX, BET, CNN and hundreds of other channels available. Their great grandparents chose between radio and black and white TV. Today, youth can chose radio and Color television and can watch and listen to both at the same time.

That may explain the difficulty youth have making life choices. There are so many channels.

PARENTS MUST TEACH CONSEQUENCES: Small children have very few choices. They must attend school, church and eat their vegetables. There is no discussion. Parents are obligated to exercise control over children; often making choices for them. Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This training often requires parental control over the people, places and things that impact the lives of their children. A small child is unable to make choices about what to watch on television, listen to on the radio or what time to go to bed. Left to himself a small child will watch television all night, eat ice cream and candy for all three meals and never go to school. Often that control requires punishment as a way to teach children that there are consequences for wrong action. Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Thus, parents are compelled to help children learn to make wise choices through loving, but strong discipline. It is a parent's responsibility to teach children to make wise choices and to show them that bad choices have consequences.

YOUTH CAN'T STRADDLE THE FENCE: Many youth have not decided whether to follow Christ or embrace the world. In effect, many of them are the citizens of two worlds: God's world that of secular society. Even intelligent youth have difficulty making choices. That's why many Christian youth have music libraries filled with secular music that contradicts their spiritual lives. Many youth attend church and religious activities, but bring their IPods with them. On one channel they listen to Marvin Sapp, Tye Tribbet and Kurt Franklin and on another they hear: Lil Wayne, Lil Boosie and Alicia Keys. On Sunday morning and Wednesday night they, sit down, praise God and put a dollar in the offering, but when the concert comes they spend $35, stand up and raise the roof. Many have not made up their minds, whom they will serve and have resolved to hedge their bets by keeping one foot in both

worlds. This was the dilemma that the children of Israel faced when they came into the Promised Land. In Egypt they had few choices, but in the Promised Land they had so many, some tried to remain loyal to God while enjoying the gods of Canaan at the same time. That's why Joshua said in Joshua 24:15"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Today, Christian youth are encouraged to hear the call of Jesus saying, "Follow me."

CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES: All choices have consequences. Our lives are not predestined and detailed day by day, but the consequences of our choices are predestined. We are free to make choices but each choice has a consequence. A youth that chooses a criminal path knows the consequences of that choice: jail or death, it's just a matter of time. A youth who chooses not to study in school reaps the consequences which is academic failure. Those who choose to engage in premarital sex know that there are consequences for that choice. The youth who chooses not to get job training faces the consequence of trying to find a job without a skill; that means unemployment. The choices come with consequences. Living without salvation has its consequences as well. That is the reason for Paul's warning: those who choose to live a life of sin will pay with their souls; "The wages of sin is death." We have been given the free rein to make choices that impact our lives but we are reminded that if we dance to the music, we must pay the piper.

The Gift of God

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that while bad choices reap unpleasant consequence, those who follow Christ will receive eternal life.

Following Jesus has its rewards.

Following Jesus presents us with the promise of eternal life and a heavenly home.

What is in store for those who choose to live for Christ is indescribable. 1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

That's why every child of God should make up in his/her mind to follow Jesus.

We can choose to dance to music of the piper and skate right into hell or we can walk with the king.

If we walk with the king, heaven is our reward!

To follow Jesus, you must trust him with all your mind body and soul.

As I close, I'm reminded of little boy whose two story house caught afire. As the flames grew hotter the father said, "Follow Me" and I'll get you through." As the smoke filled the room, the boy saw and open window and turned loose his father's hand. He became lost in a maze of smoke and fire. When he reached the window he found himself trapped with fire all around. He heard his father's voice on the ground saying, "jump into my arms!" but the boy wouldn't jump. He yelled out, "I can't see

you! I can't see you!" The father said "I told you to follow me but you let go of my hand, don't make the same mistake twice! Now jump!" The boy yelled back, "But I can't see you!" and the father answered, "It doesn't matter you can't see me, what matters is that I see, you!" The boy jumped safely into his father's hand.

We should follow Jesus because even when we can't see him, he's got His eyes on us!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you light in the darkest of night!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you hope in the midst of despair!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you happiness in the midst sadness!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you strength in the midst of weakness!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you peace in the midst of confusion!

Follow Jesus and he'll bring you Understanding in the midst of Misunderstanding!

Follow Jesus and hell carry you to mountains of joy and bliss. He'll lift you from the valleys of sorrow and despair!

I heard a songwriter declare, "Follow Jesus, take no chance at getting lost. Follow Jesus, he's got rivers you have to cross, Follow Jesus, he's got a safe mountain plan. If Jesus can't take you to the top, there's nobody else who can!

Jesus, the lily of the valley!

Jesus, who Daniel saw as stone carved without hands!

Jesus, who Ezekiel saw as a wheel in the middle of the wheel!

Follow him to Calvary!

Follow him to Resurrection morning!

Follow him to Paradise!

No. 9321-Inspiration

Send in the Clowns!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 29, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. " 1 Corinthians 2:14

Introduction

Have you ever been to the circus? If so, you have probably been fascinated by all of the excitement of people in costumes, strange animals, music and the assortment of people you saw. Some circuses feature a variety of dare devil acts that range from men being shot from cannons to high wire trapeze acts. There is always plenty of popcorn, cotton candy and fun.

One of the largest circuses in the nation is the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey circus. It travels on a huge train and often performs in civic arenas. Large circuses like these usually host three rings of activities at the same time. A lion is performing in one ring, elephants are kneeling in another, and juggling in still another.

A three ring circus is a busy event. It's often hard to keep up with all of the activities. The main attraction is usually in the center ring and is accompanied by considerable fanfare before it begins. It generally features a tight rope walker or netless trapaze act; designed to thrill and chill the audience.

Even with all of the animals, music and drama of a circus the part nearly everyone likes the most are the clowns. With huge feet, big lips, colored faces and outrageous costumes the clowns make us laugh. Their antics bring smiles to our faces as they present comedic caricatures of life in a slapstick fashion that amuses us. They are simple, sincere, naive and trusting and appeal to the childlike qualities in all of us.

Every circus is filled with drama, danger and possibility of death, but in needs the clowns. In fact, in most rodeos the clowns are the ones who distract bulls and raging bucking horses to save the lives of bronco riders. It's the clowns that save the day. If someone is about to be hurt or there is danger approaching someone will yell, "Send in the clowns!" The people laugh, but it is the clowns that save the lives of many riders.

Sometimes life is like a three ring circus. We are constantly walking a tight rope trying to keep from falling. Many have no safety net to catch them. Every step is a danger to them. There are many who face angry lions, caged in by invisible walls that threaten their lives every day. There are many whose daily lives are juggling acts in which they juggle their families, careers and personal interests just as a performer in the circus.

There are times when all three rings of life's circus are happening in our lives at the same time: We walk the tight rope, fight the lions and juggle all at the same time. Sometimes all of this drama, tension and trouble makes us ask, "Where are the clowns?" "Send in the clowns!"

Several years ago there was a song by Judy Collins entitled, "Send in the clowns!" In the song Collins notes that sometimes our lives get out of joint and gets so mixed up that it becomes like a circus with its uncertainty, confusion, loves sought and loves loss that it all gets frustrating. Then in the song Collins sings: "But where are the clowns? There ought to be clowns!"

The clowns may seem to act foolishly but they are men and women who have a specific purpose: They bring joy. They practice joy making, keeping our spirits high and bringing smiles to those who are frustrated with life.

In this world those who believe and trust in God are often considered the clowns of society. There are many who believe that Christians are foolish. They don't party hard and get drunk; they take a tenth of their money and give it to a church, stay married to one person, won't use drugs, don't gamble, and often take considerable abuse from their enemies. In worship they cry, sing loudly, and clap their hands uncontrollably. They give much of their money to help others and often do without themselves.

The world says we are the clowns! There world says we are foolish!

But when the three ring circus of life gets too much for it to bear, danger is pending, hope is lost and the world is on the verge of despair, someone says, "There ought to be clowns? Where are the clowns? Send in the clowns?"

As Christians, we believe whole heartedly in God. We trust Him, obey Him and place our hope in him. It may seem foolish to others, and at times we may appear as the clowns of life, but trusting in God is the centerpiece of our faith.

Exposition

This text explains that spiritual things may seem foolish to those who do not understand the way God operates.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, explained that the mysteries of the Christian faith have baffled the wisest, smartest people of all times. In 1 Corinthians 2:6 he notes that even the great princes of the world have not been able to understand our faith, unless they themselves were believers. The truth Paul explained is that only spiritual people are able to receive spiritual truths.

Believers receive God's word as divine because it has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. We see the wisdom in what we do, those who have not been led by the Holy Spirit cannot see this wisdom and see our faith and works as foolishness.

To them we are little more than clowns, religious fanatics who are humorous to watch and sometimes comical.

However, those who know the Lord, not only understand the story of Christ, and him crucified, but also understand the deep and mysterious ways that God moves

Fools for God

In a strange way God has used many people in biblical history in ways that appear foolish, but exemplified the strange way that God works:

NOAH LOOKED LIKE A CLOWN: Noah spent 100 years building an ark in the desert. The sight of a huge boat the size of a small battleship in the desert must have appeared very foolish to those who saw Noah. In fact he looked like a clown. He was a man nearly 600 years old and his sons, themselves elderly, building a boat in the wilderness. Yet, Noah operated on faith that God would do as he promised. In a similar manner, believers today must continue to act on our faith in God no matter how foolish it looks to others who snicker and laugh at us. Noah looked like a clown until the rains came. As those who laughed saw the waters rising the clowns were safe inside the ark. Those who trust God have the same assurance, he will never abandon us on any promise that he makes. We can safely trust him regardless of what people think of what we say and do.

MOSES LOOKED LIKE A CLOWN: Moses, at 80 years old, must have looked like a fool standing in front of Pharaoh with nothing but a staff, commanding the most powerful leader of the known world to "Let my people go." We can almost hear the laughter as they saw him standing in dusty sandals and tattered clothes claiming to speak for an unknown, unseen God. Yet, Moses stood courageously because he knew that no matter how foolish it appeared to Pharaoh and his advisors, God not one to be mocked or intimidated. The laughter of Pharaoh stopped as God brought down 10 plagues on Egypt, killing even the son of the Pharaoh. When he could not take it anymore, he must have asked, "Where is the clown? Send in the clown and ask him to stop this madness." Today, there are many who are intimidated by the boldness of believers. We stand firm in our beliefs even if that means tackling the most powerful in our nation. It looks foolish to those who do not know God as we know him, but just as Moses knew God's plan, we too know God's plan. We stand boldly against injustice, immorality and evil, even though we may stand alone and people laugh. We know God is not mocked and His word will not return void.

SARAH LOOKED LIKE A CLOWN: At 90 years old Sarah was pregnant. She must have been an odd sight to see, almost a circus attraction as people stared and wondered at how a 90 year old woman and her 100 year old husband could produce a child. Behind closed doors they probably laughed alone. In fact, Sarah herself laughed when she hear it for the first. Yet, God was true to his promise to Abraham. Even though faith may seem humorous to those who do not know the Lord, those who have tried God for themselves know that faith in God is always rewarded because no matter how foolish it might sound to others, if God has promised it, it shall be.

PAUL LOOKED LIKE A CLOWN: He spent a lifetime traveling the country speaking against Christians, yet after his Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, Paul returned to the very places where he spoke against Christ and became his greatest spokesman. He must have looked very foolish to those who remember what

he once was and compared it to his new identity. In a similar way, there are many who don't understand our transformation from the people we were many years ago to our present lives. We changed the people we run with, the places and go and the things we do. They think we look strange because we are not what we once were. They don't know we know. They don't know what the Lord has done for us. We may look foolish to them, carrying a bible and attending bible study. We may look foolish praying before we eat and staying away from the clubs, but they don't know what we know about the Lord. If they did, we would not foolish to them.

Send in the Clowns

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should not be discouraged by those who mock our faith, for Jesus surrounded himself with many who critics called clowns!

Paul said the natural man can't understand the things of God for they appear to be foolishness.

Those who trust in him and follow him appear to little more than naïve clowns.

I don't know about you but I don't mind being a clown for the Lord because I know when things get tough, God is only a prayer away.

It's strange how people who laugh at you, know how to find a child of God when the going gets tough. When times get tough, somebody will remember the clowns!

The clowns who live across the street and go to church on Sunday morning!

The clowns who study their bibles and praise God in worship!

The clowns who are rejected by the socialites because they refuse to defile themselves with the world!

Where are the clowns?

It seemed a foolish thing for a man who claimed to be the son of God to surrounding himself with publicans and sinners, prostitutes and tax collectors. To them it was an assembly of clowns.

Clowns who closed their businesses and markets because they heard him say, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men!"

Clowns who boarded boats in the midst of stormy weather on faith that he could speak to the winds and the waves and they would obey his will!

Clowns who believed that he could speak to a blind man and make him see again!

Clowns who believed that he could help a man who had been lame for 38 years by just telling him to take thy bed and walk!

Clowns who believed that they could be healed if they could just touch the hem of his garment!

Clowns who believed he could feed 5,000 with two little fishes and five loaves of bread.

Clowns who believed that a man who had been buried in his tomb for four days could rise by just speaking the words, "Lazarus come forth!"

Clowns who believed him when he said, If you destroy this temple I can build it again in three days.

Clowns who believed that even if they nailed he him to an old rugged cross that

they could not take his life, but he would lay it down for his friends.

Clowns who believed that even if they buried him in a borrowed tomb and posted a guard in front of the door that Early Sunday morning He would rise again!

I don't know about you, but I don't mind being a clown for Jesus!

If you want to know what he Lord has done…

Send in the clowns!

No. 9322-Funeral

The Fix-it Man!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 28, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "But also on that Judgment Day I will restore David's house that has fallen to pieces. I'll repair the holes in the roof, replace the broken windows, fix it up like new. David's people will be strong again" Amos 9:11 (Msg)

Introduction

Have you ever needed the service of a fix-it man? The fix-it man is that fellow who seems to have the ability to tinker with everything from the breaks on a car to an air conditioning system. You break it and the fix-it man can put it back together. Tinkers have unique gifts. They understand how things work. They can dissect the most complicated machinery and in a short time, analyze how it works and put it back together again.

There is a fix-it man for just about every problem.

If the refrigerator breaks, call the repairman; he can fix-it.

If an appliance fails to operate, there are people who specialize in making them work again.

If there is a hole in your wall, call a carpenter; he can fix it.

If there are holes in the soles of your shoes, call the shoe repairman; he can fix it.

If the car doesn't operate correctly, see a factory trained mechanic, he can fix it.

If there is a leak in your house, call the roofer; he can fix-it.

There are even people who let us talk to them and they fix our psychological maladies.

Doctors fix our broken bones, cuts and bruises.

If we don't like the way we look plastic surgeons try to fix that, too.

There is a fix-it man for just about every problem that exists.

Yet, despite our best efforts, there is no one in the yellow pages that can fix a broken heart. There is no specialist that can heal a wounded spirit. There is no website that can save a lost soul.

He's not in the yellow pages, but there is a divine fix-it man. His name is Jesus.

As Christians, we are encouraged to remember that Christ is heaven's fix-it man. Whatever we need, God's got it. Whatever is broke, He can fix-it. Truly God is a great God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Amos as he projects that the house of David would suffer loss and distress but would be fixed and expanded beyond its expectations.

This text is prophetic because it was delivered at a time of Israel's prominence. It was given at a time when many of the descendants of David were doing well professionally, succeeding in business, thriving politically and educationally. It came as both a warning and a promise. The warning was that despite the apparent successes that lay in the future, that the family of David would suffer losses and deaths.

It wasn't a happy picture that he painted. It meant that there would be times when they would mourn and experience hurt, despite their apparent successes. During this time there would be a sense of terrible loss, and emptiness. In those times they would remember the days of happiness, and joy. They would remember the happy days when they enjoyed family, friends and festive celebration. They would remember the days when they gathered and sang Zion's songs and cheered each other.

Yet, the day would come when they would mourn the death of a generation. In that day they would count their losses, like so many sheep, and lament the decline of the Davidic family circle.

The prophet Amos, who was not very popular when he talked about days of mourning, broke from his typical discourse in this text and also offered words of hope

He began to talk about a time when that which is broken would be fixed; that which is hurt would be healed and that which is mourned would be restored.

Amos said to Israel that when it sat in mourning, red and teary eyed, that God would fix the broken places and restore the joys of times past.

The prophet pointed them to the coming of a descendant of David who would reestablish his kingdom, restore the family prominence and would rule forever.

Amos referred to Christ who would raise the tabernacles again and rebuild them as he lifted the spiritual state of the family to a level that would far exceed anything it had ever known, even under David at his height.

Beyond that, in verse 12 Amos projected that in the years ahead, despite the coming of periods of mourning that God had great things in store for the descendants of David. Their territories would be expanded to include Edom and even lands possessed by the heathen. In the years to come, those who would be called "by my name" will be the heirs of the Promise made first to Abraham and continued Isaac, Jacob, David and his descendants.

The prophecy points to one person as the hope of those in despair; Jesus the Son of God. It is Jesus and the establishment of his kingdom that provides the hope for those who suffer loss. He is the wonderful restorer of loss joys. He is the perpetuator of diminished capacities. Through faith in Him, though in exile and in gloom the people would find hope, because God has anointed and appointed him to fix their vulnerabilities to the point that we will never hurt again.

The text speaks to every family similarly situated as Israel, to focus on the promise of God, not its losses; not that which is broken, or its hurts. The text looks beyond the immediate loss and sees Jesus, who will come in the hour of name and fix that which has been broken and restore the joy of the Lord to all who are called by his name.

Three Fixes

Christ is the personification of the prophecy of Amos. He came in person to announce the establishment of his Kingdom and now, today, he makes Himself available to all who are called by His name to act as their personal fix-it man. How does it do that? He does the three things that are unique to every fix-it man.

HE REPAIRS THAT WHICH HAS BEEN BROKEN: There are many reasons why things break. Sometimes they break because of negligence on our part. At other times it is just wear and tear. Sometimes it's not broken at all, it's a matter of loose connections. In our lives as well, there are a few things that are broken. There are a few problems that we have caused on our own. There are others that are the result of years of wear and tear, and strain of shouldering burdens for so long. There are still other problems that we have that are just the result of loose family connections; loose church connections, and loose connections with life itself. To these Jesus says in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." He comes to fix that which is broken. He comes to repair the broken family, the altered relationship and lost hope. He comes to say that you may have broken your life, but I'm here to help you put it back together again. He's here to help us connect with God again and restore the power of his love.

FIX ARRANGE AND REARRANGE: Some problems that exist in our lives are the result of misalignment. To fix us, God has to rearrange a few things. A man experienced difficulty with his computer and called the repairman complaining that every day between 2-4 p.m. the computer went haywire and would not function. The repairman didn't take a second to see the problem. He said the computer sat next to a window. Between 2 and 4 p.m. the sun shined through the window and overheated the computer. All the repairman had to do was to rearrange the location of the terminal and the problem was solved. Sometimes our lives need to be arranged and rearranged to fix what is wrong. If things are not going exactly right, perhaps we need to let the heaven's Fix-it man rearrange us. Psalm 37:23 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." The song writer said, "Order my steps in word dear Lord, lead, lead me, guide me every day. Send your anointing father I pray. Order my steps in your word.

TO FIX IS TO STRENGTHEN: A good fix-it man not only attempts to address our problem but to make adjustments that will strengthen and extend the length of operation of the repaired part. To do that he cleans, lubricates and makes necessary adjustments. These adjustments increase the life expectancy of the product and extend its operative life. The spirit of God has a way of working in our lives to give us strength. If we are patient he will renew us. Isaiah 40:31 says, " But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles;

they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." We are strengthened when we worship, study and hear the preached word. In his presence the belts are tightened if they are loose, drained spirits are restored, and we are inspired by the spiritually lubricating ideas sent to us from the throne of God. Even when we are weak, after a loss, God fixes that, too; by the presence of His spirit which carries us through the dark into the light.

Jesus will fix It

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remind ourselves that, no matter what problem we have or how low we feel at the moment, Jesus can fix it.

Amos told Israel that the day would come when tears would fall from their eyes. He said the day would come when there would be hurt in the family circle, but he reminded them of something that offered us all hope, that God's fix it man would be available to all of those who are called by His name.

When we look for a fix-it man we might looking in the phone directory and see many listings.

There is Jones and Son, they fix air conditioners!

There is Smith and Son, they fix washing machines!

There is Edwards and Son, they fix refrigerators!

There is Washington and Son, they fix automobiles!

There is Jackson and Son, they fix plumbing!

Very seldom can we find a universal fix-it man; somebody who can fix everything. But God is a universal fix-it man.

You won't find Him listed in the Yellow Pages but your find in the pages of the Bible.

You might find Him listed under Omni, which means all or everything

Omni-present, He can fix it anywhere and anytime.

Omni-scient, He knows everything and how to fix every problem.

Omni-potent, He's got all power in his hands.

If you look a little further you might find Him under Jehovah:

When you are walking the valley of the shadow of death he's listed as Jehovah-Rohi, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

When you are sick and in pain, you'll find him under Jehovah-Rapha, "I am the Lord that healeth thee!"

When your pocket book is broke, your bank account is broke and you can't see your way, you'll find Him under Jehovah-Jireh, "The Lord is our provider."

When you can't find any peace because there's trouble everywhere, you find him under Jehovah-Shalom because "God is our peace."

When your efforts have failed and you feel down and out, you'll find him under Jehovah-Nissi, "The Lord is our banner of victory!"

It all means that even as we sit here, troubled by the concerns of this sad moment, Jesus will fix it!

Though tears may fall from our eyes, Jesus will fix it, after while!

He died out on Calvary But Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

Every day, I'm glad to know, if I am broken in my spirit; Jesus will fix it after while!

No. 9323-Blessing

Thou art now blessed of the Lord

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 13, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well. Genesis 26:24-29 " That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD." Genesis 26:29

Introduction

Has your life been blessed by the Lord? No matter what our short comings, disappointments and failures, most of us would agree that, despite our misgivings, we have been blessed. Blessings come in a variety of ways. Sometimes are blessings are financial. Sometimes they are spiritual. Sometimes we enjoy the blessing of reasonable health. There are many who have both spiritual and material blessings in abundance.

Charles Dickens once wrote this memorable statement: "Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

Dickens had it right, when we actually reflect on our present blessing we are amazed at what God is doing for us right now. In fact it only takes a minute to see the gift of life itself, the warmth of friendships, the riches of good health, the power of love, the glory of a sunrise, the privilege of prayer, the joys of music, the satisfactions of work, the treasures of books, the beauty of art, the warmth of summer, and the grace of God.

All of these are indications that God is blessing us right now!

That may be what the song writer had in mind with the words, "The Lord is blessing me, right now. Yes he is. He woke me up this morning, and he started me on my way.

The Lord is blessing me, right now."

Another song writer put it this way:

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,

And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God hath done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Sometimes we can't see that we've been blessed because we can only see the mess. If you purchased a new Volkswagen and waken the next morning to find out that it had stripped clean by the neighbors, you wouldn't feel blessed. So you move to a different part of town and buy a new Volvo, completely loaded, but find that the neighbors there stole the tires, panels, seats and the stereo system, you wouldn't feel blessed there either. So, you move one more time to a bigger, finer neighborhood and this time you purchase a BMW 760, but your neighbors strip that one, too. This time you move into an elite neighborhood, and purchase a Lincoln Navigator, this time it is not stripped but standing in your front yard are all of your former neighbors wanting to know what they can do to be blessed like you. Even when it appears that we are not being blessed God is working it out.

As believers, we know that God takes everything life throws at us and turns it to our advantage. We praise him because even at this very moment, he is blessing us in ways that we cannot see.

Exposition

This text focuses on how God blessed a believer so well that even his enemies had to beg his pardon.

The central character of the text is Isaac, the son of Abraham. It takes place as Isaac and his family lived in the land of the Philistines. The Philistines watched Isaac closely and it seemed that he was been blessed: his crops flourished, his people were at peace and there seemed to be a spirit of happiness and joy in his camp.

Envious of his blessing the Philistines filled up all of Isaac's water wells with dirt. Isaac moved to another section of the land, dug new or reopened old wells and God blessed him more. The Philistines in every section he moved to, filled up his wells with dirt.

Driven away by the Philistines Isaac camped in the Valley of Gerar. He dug three wells there, but the Gerarites claimed that two of the three wells Isaac dug were theirs.

In what looked like a cowardly move Isaac never fought over the wells, he just moved on, dug news ones and then God went to work blessing his crops and his enormous family.

Soon his enemies noticed that the more they harassed Isaac, the more God blessed him. They decided to meet him personally and declare a truce. When they met with him they were forced to acknowledge that "thou are now blessed of the Lord."
When God has blessed

God blesses believers continuously, even in the presence of their enemies. The text indicates that God has blessed the people in three frameworks of time: the pas, the present and the future.

GOD HAS BLESSED US IN THE PAST: God appeared to Isaac in Genesis 26:24 and identified himself as the same God that blessed his father, Abraham. "I am the God of Abraham." His father was blessed with health, strength, wisdom and a business sense. God told him to travel from place to place and God opened doors for him in every place he went. In the past God had been good to Isaac's family. Today, each believer should reflect upon the many ways that God has blessed his/her family. Through many toils and dangers we have come to arrive at our present point. Your house, employment, education and finances did not have the capacity that it has today. God has blessed each of our families in so many ways: We've moved from Ice boxes to refrigerators, wagons and buggies to brand new cars, from shot gun houses with holes in the roof to fine apartments with air conditioning. God has been good to us. He has blessed us in so many ways. We too, can say, we have now been the blessed of the Lord.

GOD IS BLESSING US NOW: God told Isaac in Genesis 26:24 to "fear not, I am with thee." That was active statement in the present tense. It meant that God was with Isaac in the present and thus he had no reason to fear. It was obvious. Everywhere Isaac went, God opened doors for him. He made ways for him out of no way. God was not simply an anachronism, but a living presence. Today, believers have that same assurance. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28 "And lo, I am with thee alway, even unto the end of the world." That makes God a God of the here and now. He is a God of today's situation, today's challenge, today's difficulty, today's blessing. Today, God is opening doors for believers. He is solving problems and answering prayers. Even as we speak God sent the answer to someone's prayers down the shaft of time to reach them just in the nick of time.

GOD WILL BLESS US IN THE FUTURE: In Genesis 26:24 God told Isaac that 'I will bless thee" that is a statement of future intent. It declares that God plans to bless him and his posterity for generations to come. Thus, Isaac had the assurance of knowing that God planned not only to bless him in the moment but as days unfolded he would continue to bless him. That should be encouraging news for believers. Those who are faithful can expect God to relate to them the same way. Not only is he blessing us today with health and strength but those who are faithful can rightfully expect to be blessed well into the future, because of their love and devotion to God.

The Blessed of the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, this text shows us what we should do when we have been blessed.

When we realized that God has blessed us more than we deserve, what should be our response? Genesis 26:25 notes, "And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there.

Isaac built and altar and began to worship and praise the Lord, and offer sacrifices.

Today, believers who have been blessed should take note of Isaac's example; when we have been blessed, we should not hesitate to praise the Lord and offer sacrificial service.

We should praise the Lord even if we are given a cross, because if there is no cross there will be no crown!

If we are given a sip of sadness, drink it because there's a gallon of gladness on the way!

If we are given a taste of failure, swallow it because real success is on the way!

If we experience a few days of sickness, endure them because there will be years of better living ahead.

If we share a day of defeat, bear it because there will be a year of victory coming soon!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that when God blesses; it's a real blessing.

When God blesses the impossible becomes possible!

When God blesses the unreachable becomes reachable!

When God blesses the unattainable becomes attainable!

God blesses the Christian. We don't know how he does it, but he does!

That's why we come to the house of prayer, thanking him for our back then blessing, looking for our right now blessing, and waiting for our "yet to come" blessing

Maybe that's why the songwriter wrote, "There's a blessing in this house for you. Even though you can't see it the Lord knows you need it! There's blessing in this house for you!

It's a blessing that was paid for on an old rugged cross!

It's a blessing that was secured with a crown of thorns!

It's a blessing that was guaranteed when Jesus died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He's still blessing…

He's still blessing everyone of us, right now!

No. 9324-Communion

Just A Little Nip

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Holy Trinity Baptist Church
Chicago, Il

July 6, 2008

SCRIPTURE:Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6-7 "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:17-20

Introduction

Have you had a little nip? Just a little bit? There was a time when some believers were in the world and indulged at the fountains of insobriety! While there are a few exceptions, most have had a taste of whiskey, wine, scotch, gin, Vodka or beer. Whether it was at a teenage party, a fraternity or sorority rush, or while fishing in the bayou, there are many who have had a nip, even if only a "little nip." Once we became believers, Baptist pledged to stop nipping and sipping because our little nips might cause someone to become a drunkard.

Folks outside of our faith think Baptists are a little too conservative. What's wrong with a little nip? "A little wine is good for the belly," they claim. In fact, there are many denominations of believers that do not go as far as the world's Baptists. They don't promise not to nip or sip or drink a fine wine with their dinner. They have no prohibitions against a nightcap or sherry every now and then. They say the Baptists are a little backward and behind the times.

Most of us know at least one person who can't stop at a little nip. There are some places where it has been reported that some even need a nip to make it through the work day. Most find it very hard to restrain themselves. They must have another nip. Consider the town drunk who left a church revival and decided to stop drinking. However, he felt he wasn't strong enough to stop cold turkey, so he decided to reduce his drinking and stay sober longer. On the way home from the revival he stopped by the local bar and sat at the counter. "I am a new man" said the town drunk. "Yes sir, bring me four bottles of Johnny Walker Red!" The bartender brought four full bottles of the cheap wine and everyone at the bar watched as the town drunk emptied

each bottle one after another. He gave a slight hiccup. The ordered again. “Bring me three bottles of Johnny Walker Red.” To the amazement of everyone around he summarily drank all three of the bottles in what seemed like single gulps. As he wobbled on the seat and struggled to keep from falling, he struggle to straighten himself and said, “Bartender, bring me two bottles of Johnny Walker Red!”

Everyone in the bar stopped and watched as the town drunk emptied two more bottles of red wine.” Finally, the drunk held up one finger. Hardly able to sit on the stool he said, “Bring me one bottle of Walker Red Johnny.” He sat on the stool a long time and stared at the bottle. Then he told the bartender “I made up in my mind to drink less so I could stay sober longer, but something ain’t working. I ordered four bottles, then three, then two, now one. Something ain’t working because it seems likes the less wine I order, the drunker I get!” Some people don’t know when enough is enough!

The alcohol industry makes it hard for many to say, “This is my last little nip!” Black young adults are special targets of the alcohol industry. They make it hard to resist a little nip because the industry spends millions each year to get inside the heads of young people. Studies show black youth listen to an average of 17 hours of radio each week, so liquor companies target them with commercials, inserted in the lyrics of songs glamorizing drinking. In the six major markets of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Detroit, and Dallas black youth were exposed to more alcohol based advertising than other races combined.

Radio has been used to hit from one side, but Cable TV has been used to hit from the other. The shows blacks watch get the most alcohol advertising, especially shows watched by the young: CSI, Without A Trace, Girl Friends, and others rank high as targets for African American youth.

If that doesn’t do it, then the industry pays millions each year for stars to appear in movies drinking 40 ounce bottles of malt liquor or gin and juice.

If that doesn’t do it, black oriented magazines such as VIBE and others feature more advertising in the print media and hundreds of billboards in black neighborhoods about alcohol.

The end result is that it gets real hard for us to say, “This is my last little nip!”

Spiritual Emphasis

This text focuses on the spiritual importance of the Passover meal.

A part of the meal was wine. Each Passover participant was served four cups of red wine. If a person was poor and could not afford the wine the person was expected to sell his clothing, or pledge himself as a laborer to acquire his four cups of wine. If unable to work, then the wine was to be provided from the public treasury. In addition to the wine, the meal consisted of bitter herbs, unleavened cakes of bread, and the Passover lamb.

Participants at the Passover followed a specific order or ritual. Exodus 6:6-7 formed the basis of the use of the four cups.

I WILL BRING YOU OUT: As the ceremony opened the first line was recited or chanted "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians." It was a reminder of God's promise to Israel that he would free them from their 400 years of bondage. After the opening chant everyone drank the first cup of wine.

I WILL FREE YOU: After the second cup was poured, the son of the house or someone who represented him would ask "Father, what does this mean?" Then the father would explain the story of Jewish slavery and how God lifted them from slavery and allowed them to leave Egypt and come to the Promised Land, crossing the Red Sea on dry land and surviving desert journeys. After the story is told, then the second line of Exodus 6:6-7 would be recited "I will free you from being slaves to them." Then the family would drink from the second cup of wine.

I **WILL REDEEM YOU:** The meal was eaten at this time. After the meal an,after meal grace, was given and the third cup was filled. The third cup was preceded by reciting the third line from the Exodus text: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."

I WILL BE YOUR GOD: Then a fourth and final cup was poured, with the 4th line of the text, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God." When they drank the last cup they sang Psalm 115 to Psalm 118, which closed the observance.

Just a little nip

In the New Testament Jesus met with his disciples in the Upper Room he met to observe the traditional Passover. The bitter herbs, unleavened bread, wine and Passover lamb were all present, but they were to take on a new meaning from that time forth. There would only be bread and wine. No bitter herbs. No lamb. Jesus himself would be the lamb. The bread would represent his body and the wine would represent his blood shed for the redemption of sin.

There was a time when people observed the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-34) with big parties. There was plenty of food and lots of wine. People actually became drunk at the Lord's Supper. He told them that the purpose of the wine at the Lord's Supper is not for people to get drunk! The purpose of the bread is not for participants to get full! It was just a little niplet!

Paul encouraged them to eat and drink at home, but not at the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to help believers remember not to get full or to get drunk.

Four Cups in One

This marked the day that the Passover became the "Lord's Supper" in the Christian community.

He gave us a four in one cup that compresses the original four cups into one cup. However, this four-in-one cup was still to serve as a reminder to believers about the God we serve. It should remind us that:

God will bring you out! It does not matter what part of Egypt has kept us enslaved, this cup should remind every child of God that God can and will bring you out! The Three Hebrew Boys were asked as they were about to be thrown into the fiery furnace, "Is your God able to deliver you?" Their answer is our answer today. Our God is able!

This cup is just a little nip but:

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to open up a way out of no way!

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to be a shelter in a time of storm!

Let this cup remind you that no matter what you may have gotten yourself into, God can bring you out!

God will set you free! It doesn't matter what type of chains hold you in bondage God is able to set you free! Jesus met a lame man who had been struggling under a crippling bondage. He told the man, "thy sins are forgiven..rise up take thy bed and walk!"

Let this cup remind you, that you don't have to suffer under bondage for something you did a long time ago! God will set you free!

Let this cup remind you, that whatever guilt that you are suffering based on something that you have done wrong, God is able to set you free!

I heard Jesus say, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!"

God will redeem you! No one should ever forget that our God is the God of the second chance. He will redeem us from our sins. Jesus told the parable of a man who came upon a fig tree that was not bringing forth figs and the owner gave word to have it cut down. But the garden worker asked for permission to fertilize and work with the tree and it was spared destruction. In the same way Jesus gave me and you a second chance!

Let this cup remind you that God is still giving second chances to those who have walked in the wrong direction!

Let this cup remind you that God is still offering a second chance to those who have fallen and can't seem to get up!

I'm glad that God gave me a second chance!

Finally this cup should remind us that God is still God!

Despite the trials and tribulations that may suggest otherwise, God is still God!

He still sits high and looks low! He wants to be our God, and he's only a prayer a way!

Let this cup remind you that whatever comes your way that "God is still on the throne!"

Let this cup remind you that Jesus died on an old rugged cross!
Let it remind you that he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Let this cup remind that after three days and nights that he arose from the grave!

God is able !

God is able!

No. 9325-Anniv-Homecoming

Three Trips Home

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 20, 2008

SCRIPTURE:"Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem." Ezra 1:3; "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:2-3

Introduction

Have you ever attended a reunion? It's a time when everyone who has a common bond returns to celebrate life and to compare the old with the new. Generally, it is a time to remember. The year 2008 is the reunion year of the eights: 1998, 1988, 1978, 1968, 1958, 1948, or 1938. Next year will be the year of the nines. Reunions and celebrations are generally joyous and sometimes heart breaking as tributes are paid to classmates lost along the way. They are celebrations when they salute each other's achievements, praise dedicated teachers and reflect on old times.

Family reunions, unlike, class reunions don't have specific years. They are held whenever they can get everybody together. There are some that are annual events, others are Pentennials. Still others are held whenever someone in the family assumes the headache of assembling the family Klan together.

In the church world, reunions are called homecomings. Theoretically, it's a time when those who are away find an excuse to come home and share a moment of celebration in the place where their faith began.

In many respects, churches are like incubators, giving spiritual birth to great souls who will one day be able to live outside of the protected, incubated environment of home and breathe on their own. However, no matter how far we go in life, we never forget our first love or our first church experience.

The place where we learned about the Lord is always called home even though we may be miles away from our original locale; the little church where we began is always thought of as "home." Often, when we leave this earth, our hearts desire is to be brought back home.

Believers are on a spiritual journey. This world is not our home. Like Abraham, we are pilgrims, looking for a city not made by hands. We will make three stops along the way, all of which are moments of great celebration.

As Christians, we celebrate because when we finally get home, it will be a day of rejoicing. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory.

Exposition

This text focuses on three homecomings of Israel detailed in the Old Testament records. It also points to a fourth homecoming that will not be limited to the Old Testament event and personalities but will be the homecoming of the Saint's as detailed in the New Testament record.

In these trips home detail the journey of Israel, and the journey of the saints as we all make a pilgrimage to a final place we will call home.

The text details the Old Testament journey of Israel from exile back to Jerusalem. The people had been away from Jerusalem for many years. They yearned to go home. They wanted to relive the days of their youth, the grandeur they knew under Solomon and enjoy the national prominence they shared as a powerful force in the community of nations.

Cyrus, as King of Persia, issued a decree that allowed them to return home. Everyone did not want to return, but in the first trip home there were: 42,360 Jews, 7,337 servants, 200 singers, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, 6720 asses and 5,400 gold and silver vessels. When they returned home the built an altar to worship God and laid the foundation for the temple.

They were sidetracked and all work on the temple stopped.

It took about 20 years to complete the rebuilding of the temple, but it was not as great as the temple that Solomon built. It did not have the splendor and lavish display of wealth and finery of the first temple. They had a building, but there was no worship. The people were too busy building lives for themselves to pay attention the details of worship.

That prompted the 2nd homecoming, in which Ezra returned with another 1,754 men, more gold and silver and a divine charge to restore the spiritual life of the people. Ezra impressed upon the people the importance of placing the Torah or the scriptures at the center of community life. He succeeded in accomplishing this goal, despite the fact that people had almost abandoned their study of the scriptures, worship and preeminence of God in their lives.

But even, as that happened the entirety of Jerusalem was vulnerable to attack by its enemies. They had no walls.

That prompted the 3rd homecoming, in which Nehemiah, not with a large contingency, but to lead a rebuilding effort. He came and led a masterful effort to rebuild the massive walls around in the incredible short period of only 52 days.

Yet, the decree which Cyrus read was part of a greater prophetic picture. Initially, it pointed to the Jews returning to Jerusalem, but it also began the countdown to the time when there would be one final homecoming; not in Jerusalem but to the New Jerusalem.

The prophets, using Cyrus' decree as a starting date, prophesied the coming of Christ, the time and place of his birth, the date of his crucifixion and even projected

the period of the revelation when all of God's children, will get together for a great homecoming.

That's the scene in Revelation 21:2-3. It is a scene of all believers on their way home from the Old Testament, the church, and those who came out of the tribulation and those who died for cause of Christ. All of these believers, trillions of them are called the "Bride of Christ." This number will consider of a vast number that cannot be counted of all races and nationalities: blacks and whites, Jews, Arabs, Pakistanis, Hispanic, Greeks, Germans, Polish, Irish, Italian, Native Americans, Russians, Slovaks; you name the race, they will all be there!

All believers are looking for the great homecoming that is on its way. What a day of rejoicing that we will.

Three Homecomings for Believers

RETURNING BACK HOME: The first homecoming occurred when we who strayed away from God came home; that is, we returned to the spiritual path we began. Many of us grew up in the church. We were taught the difference between right and wrong, but at some point, most of stray a little too much one way or the other. Like the Prodigal Son, we had to adventure into the world and give it try only to be confronted with the realities of life: the whole world loves you when it thinks you are somebody, or when you have something to offer. What we ran to differs from person to person, but at some point, most believing adults came to a cross roads where we had to decide for ourselves, what would be our final destiny. Would we live for God or die vainly trying to be happy. For the prodigal the moment of decision came when he was penniless and hungry, he said "I will arise." That personal decision changed his life. For all of us, the first homecoming in our experience is when we reach a decision to return to God or stay the course and never lead. We made our decision, we found our Lord willing to accept us with arms wide open.

HOME GOING: The second stage in our journey will be our home going. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The great re-assurance that every believer has is that after this life ends that there is a home-going. We rejoice in the fact that this home going is instant. 2 Corinthians 5:8 reminds us that when we are absent here, we are present with the Lord. Home goings are celebrations of lives lived and journeys almost complete. When we leave this place we will not be completely finished. We cannot receive our rewards or complete the celebration until two things happen: Christ must himself be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then he will bring us all into his kingdom.

Until that happens all of the saints from Old Testament and even to the present are waiting patiently. In Revelation 6:10-11 the tribulation saints are pictured as waiting impatiently. They ask "How long?" and are told, in 6:" And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." The second stage of the journey is our home going. It will be quick, painless and a joyous reunion, but even is not the best. The

best is yet to come.

THE GREAT HOMECOMING: The great homecoming of Revelation is the third and final part of our great homecoming celebration. It is foretold by John when he saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. It will be a great of the saints of all ages. It will come at a time when there will be a new heaven and a new heart.

The New Jerusalem, will be a square shaped golden city, approximately 1500 miles square. It will sit on 12 foundations and have twelve gates. Its streets will be made of gold and there will be dwelling places for millions of people. The occupants of that city will be the righteous of all ages. Believers past and present will make up that moment.

What will make it such a great celebration is because all of those that we loved who knew the Lord will be there. Parents, grandparents, spouses, brothers and sisters, best friends…all will be there. Who won't be there? Regardless to what television says, everybody won't be there. Only those who knew Christ in the pardoning of their sins will be there. Outside of the New Jerusalem, says Revelation 22:15 will be the wicked, described as dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, cheats, liars and other unrepentant sinners. It will be a great celebration because it will be a family affair.

The Last Homecoming

Finally brothers and sisters, believers should be happy because the third homecoming of our experience will be our last homecoming.

In Revelation, John painted a picture of the Last Homecoming. He saw a picture the Old Testament believers and departed Saints had been resurrected from the dead and living Saints had been raptured in the air! He saw a picture of the Tribulation converts receiving the mark of lamb in their foreheads and 144,000 Jews marching toward the throne.

Then John said he saw another number that no man could count, on their way to the last homecoming, marching out of the great tribulation. What are these? These are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb!

I don't know about but I think that's going to be a wonderful day when we celebrate our last trip home.

That will be the day when all of our:

-Doubts will be dissolved
-Longings will be satisfied|
-Tears will be dried
-Hearse wheels won't roll
-Problems will be solved
-Thirsts will be quenched
-Burdens will be lifted
-Debts will be canceled
-Mountains will be made low

-Valleys shall be exalted

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "When all God's children get together, what a time, what a time, what a time. We gonna sit down by the backs of the river, what a time!

When we all get to heaven..

-There will be no more crying

-There will be no more tears in the midnight hour

-There will be no sickness and pain!

I don't know about you but I don't want to miss homecoming day, when we all get to heaven. What a day of rejoicing it will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory!

It's a victory paid for by Christ himself!

It's a victory that shouts hallelujah for sins forgiven and mistakes forgotten!

It's a victory that proclaims "I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb and I'm on my way!

It's a victory that paid for on Calvary!

It's a victory that confirmed by three days in a borrowed tomb!

It's a victory that was ratified Early Sunday morning, when Christ rose from the dead, with all power in his hands!

"Come and go with me, to my father's house there is Joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 9326-Inspiration

Good Fortune in My Misfortune

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 27, 2008

SCRIPTURE: It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Psalm 119:71

Introduction

Has life ever given you a wake up call? Those who have traveled are familiar with a service of hotels to offer a wakeup call to their guests. At a certain hour, we are disturbed from our sleep and awakened. It's usually a constant ring of the telephone until we awake. There is never anyone on the other end of the phone; the call itself was sufficient. Life has a way of giving us a wakeup call, bringing us into maturity and helping us to see the world through different eyes. Until that happens we sleep through our nights and most of our days, unaware of the passing of time or the urgency of the moment. For most of us, our wakeup call comes as the result of a trial, test and challenge that forces us to see life from a different perspective.

Often our wakeup calls come in a "Moment of truth" experience. In that moment, we realize great truths about ourselves and life in general. It's in a moment of truth that we see just how fragile the gift of life is and how little control we have over life itself.

It's in a moment of truth that we realize the importance of the little things and the insignificance of fame, popularity and wealth.

Usually, moments of truth come as the result of crises; when our peaceful slumber receives its wake up call. Then our slumber is disturbed by stark realities and we awaken to new truths. Nothing highlights this moment of truth better for us than affliction, adversity, extreme difficulty, life threatening situations, prospect of death, failure or destruction. In the face of crises, we reach a moment of truth, when we discover that which has been hidden for many years.

Many have found God in their moment of truth; in the midst of their affliction. In those moments the suddenly realized that despite all of their education, contacts, friends, social status, resources and connections, what they really needed was to be in the presence of God. That's when they decided they needed his grace, forgiveness, love and mercy.

These moments vary. For some it came as they faced a health crises. For others, it came as result of a marital problem. Others reached their moment of truth while dealing with issues related to their children. Still others faced their life crises when they experienced the death of someone they depended upon for guidance in life.

These moments of crises and what the word calls misfortune. Yet, the word of God reminds us that there is good fortune in every misfortune; especially when we are prompted to change our direction for the good because of our misfortune.

As Christians, we do not relish afflictions and difficulties. However, we know that every situation, even an unfortunate one offers a nugget of good fortune. God has promised that all things, including misfortune, will work to the good of those who called according to his purpose. That's the good news: There is good fortune in every misfortune.

Exposition

This text focuses on David explaining that his troubles and misfortunes turned out for the best because the refocused his attention to God.

Psalm 119:56-72 is a passage in which David explains his discovery that God deals with him according to His word. He asks for instruction to prevent himself from straying. In Psalm 119:69-70, he declares that his trust in God even though has been slandered. In Psalm 119:71 he admits that through his affliction he realize more great truths about God, which really worked to his advantage.

David used the word affliction in verse 71. Affliction does not always mean a physical sickness or disease. Affliction is a term used to describe a variety of misfortunes that include physical attacks, loss of fortune, misunderstandings, family disputes, and trouble in general.

David was a good man, who occasionally strayed. In misfortune, he found good fortune when he returned to God. That's when he was able to see clearly that even his difficulties had a divine purpose that would work to His good.

The New Testament records the same truth: Romans 8:28 says, " And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

That means that there is good fortune, even in our misfortunes.

The value of our misfortunes

Misfortunes prompt us to think seriously. It is easy to take life lightly. When life is one big party filled with drinking, food and sex, who has time for serious thinking. We don't worry about education, futures, family or our spirituality. It is only when we are deprived of the means to achieve our leisurely pursuits by a misfortune that we take time to think. When lose our money or our health then the spell of our life in the fast lane is broken; then we start to think seriously. When did the prodigal son start to think seriously about the depth to which he had fallen? When he had wasted

his substance! When did Elijah move from beside the brook and start to move as God commanded? When the brook dried up! When did Jonah decide to go to Ninevah and preach as God commanded? After he was swallowed up? Sometimes misfortunes swallow us up. We are swallowed up by drugs, criminal activity, laziness, and a general sense of apathy. Sometimes it's only when the brook dries up that we start to think seriously about our situation. Often we don't attempt think seriously about our preparing for a career change until we hear news that the company that employs us is about to shut down. We think seriously about our finances, when the money runs short. We start to watch our gas consumption when the price of gas begins to escalate. We didn't worry about it much before, but our misfortunate situation often makes us become experts. On the Damascus Road, Saul was stricken with blindness for three days. In that time he gave serious thought about his direction and in life and arose from that dilemma as one of the greatest ambassadors for Christ. The misfortune of his blindness turned out to be his good fortune, according to the will of God.

Misfortune awakens our faith. Often we are prompted to renew our faith in times of misfortune. David was completely absorbed in his personal concerns and follies. When he was a youth, he prayed regularly and possessed faith so strong that he even challenged Goliath the giant. As king, however, he became absorbed in the quest for power and lust. His faith weakened, his prayer life almost vanished. While he was riding high David did not write many psalms. However, in the middle of his trouble when his kingdom suffered and he personally developed a disease, he found his way back to God. Psalm 51:10 records his personal plea for restoration, " Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

In Psalm 121:1 he then wrote, "1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." It is strange how we sometimes take the Lord for granted until misfortune come. While we are doing well, we can't find the time or interest to pray, attend bible study, or worship. The bible in our home is often unread. But when plagued with misfortune we open the bible searching for consolation, and brush off the cobwebs from our prayer skills. The prophet Daniel developed a prayer life that was unique in times of good fortune and misfortune. During periods of good fortune he prayed three times a day. When he was elevated to a high position in the kingdom, he prayed three times a day. When misfortune came and he faced the prospect of death; he prayed three times a day. He did not start praying three times a day and stop when his misfortune passed. If there is a nugget of good fortune in our misfortune it might be that it awakened in us a renewed quest to be in the presence of God and to communicate with Him on a regular basis.

We empty ourselves in our misfortunes. In our moment of misfortune we suddenly realize the need to empty ourselves and start again. The story is told of the man who kept a jar of rocks on his desk. When asked why he kept a bottle of rocks on his desk he answered that the jar represents his life in Christ? Answering questions ,he said, once he filled his life with things he thought brought happiness: cars, money, status, and social status. He said his jar was filled with sand and small pebbles. Although he knew he needed God, prayer, worship and bible study in life, which were like large stones, he had no room for them because the sand and pebbles took up all

of the space. One day he faced a crises in his life, that no money, friends or connections could help. He needed God but then realized that his life was so full of unimportant things that he had no room for Godly things. At that moment he dumped out the sand small pebbles and put the rocks in first. He was amazed to learn that even though there were large godly rocks in the bottle that when he poured in small pebbles and shook them up there was room for more. He added sand of wealth, career, and shook it up and found there was still room for more. He added the water of joy and happiness and found that he could have a full happy life; if he put the things of God first. But it was in his moment of misfortune that he finally understood Matthew 6:33 "See ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you.

There are many who emptied themselves and started over when they reached a moment of truth that was prompted by an unfortunate situation. When they found God they found good fortune in their misfortune.

The value of Misfortunes

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we learn to trust God more in our misfortunes and usually arise stronger.

Our afflictions, in a sense our proving ground in which our faith is tested.

A new automobile is tested in situations that it will likely to experience before it is placed on the market. The test reveals what needs to be done to improve it efficiency, safety and performance.

The Christian life is tested as well; our proving ground, however is in the middle of our affliction.

We never know how strong we are until we are tested.

We never know how strong our family bond is until it is tested.

We never know how strong our relationship is until it has been tested to the limit.

We never know the strength of our loyalty until we get an invitation to betrayal.

We never know what we will do when the chips are down, until the chips actually run out.

What we learn in our misfortune is that regardless of the situation, God is still good.

I don't know about you but I've found that God is good all the time!

In the midst of the misfortune of sorrow, God is good, because he brings us joy!

In the midst of the misfortune of conflicts, God is good, because he brings us courage!

In the midst of the misfortune of danger, God is good, because he brings us safety!

In the midst of the misfortune of weakness, God is good, because he bring us strength!

In the midst of defeat the misfortune of, God is good, because he brings us the victory!

In the midst of our darkest hour, he will show us the way!

That's when we realize that God will flip our misfortune and work it to our

advantage, according to his will.

I don't know about you, but I am convinced that no matter what the misfortune, God can turn it into good fortune!

No matter how big the battle, God has a victory!

No matter how wide the chasm, God can help us to cross it!

No matter how big the adversary, God can help us to defeat him!

We serve a God who takes hollows out of valleys and levels mountains!

We serve a savior who walks on water, floats on clouds and sits on the right hand of God.

He's the same savior; he came to this earth

And suffered the misfortune of Calvary!

Endured the misfortune of three days in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning, he turned misfortune into good fortune!

He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9327-Prayer

Jesus is on the Mainline

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 3, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Psalm 85:8 "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him." Psalm 91:15

Introduction

Suppose each time you talked on your phone, several of your neighbors could hear your entire conversation? It would definitely be an inconvenience and an invasion of privacy. Yet, there was a time when all residential telephone service was available only with a "party line."

A party line was a shared telephone line where several residents acquired service through the same local phone loop. If the phone rang in one house it rang in all of them at the same time. Each subscriber knew their calls by knowing their special ring. Phone calls were not private; there were plenty of opportunities for neighbors to listen to conversations and feed community gossip mills.

The time of party lines was very impersonal as well. Phone customers depended on operators to make long distance calls. The operator, sometimes a neighbor or associate, had to be given the name and number of the person you were calling and your billing information. When your call finished, the operator knew who you called, when you called and how long you talked. The operator could also listen in on our phone call.

As technology improved party lines, and two party lines, decreased. There are still a few places in the country that still have party lines such as Santa Anna Canyon, CA that has 81 phone customers hooked up on a party line.

As the party lines decreased, they gave way to the mainlines or direct calling. With mainlines, the callers placed their own calls directly, could talk in private and did not have to worry about unauthorized eavesdroppers.

It's good that heaven doesn't have a party line; if it did the devil might listen in when we call to pour our hearts to the Lord. When we need to talk to God there is a mainline; a direct line to the throne of Grace. That mainline is prayer, and through prayer we can speak to God and He speaks to us.

As Christians, we are always happy to know that God is only a prayer away. When we call, He answers, when He speaks we listen.

Exposition

The text focuses on David as he proclaims his decision to wait to hear God when He speaks.

David constantly talked to God. He talked to God in moments of weakness and in strength. He found his conversations with God to be encouraging and rewarding, soothing and healing.

This text finds David saying, "I will hear what God the LORD will speak. When we believe that God hears us, it is but natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the words which can speak peace to our troubled spirits; the voices of men are feeble in such a case, but God's voice is power; He speaks and it is done, and hence when we hear him our distress is ended."

When our soul is troubled, God will speak peace.

When our soul is confused, God will speak direction.

When our soul discouraged, God will speak encouragement.

When we are feeling lost, God will speak salvation.

In Psalm 91:15 David records God saying that when a believer calls on Him, that He will answer. He also noted God's promise of deliverance to those who are in trouble. He will respond to every believer by being accessible to him.

Thus, we are free to talk to God at anytime. When he speaks however, we should be ready to listen.

Calling on God

Whenever a believer puts in a call to heaven, he can expect a response. Since that is the case, believers must be aware of three truths:

WE MUST RECOGNIZE WHEN GOD SPEAKS: Believers must be able to distinguish the voice of God from the plethora of other voices that they hear around them daily. Often, when we call friends, someone may answer that sounds similar to the recipient, but those who know the voice of the recipient may hold their message until the right voice is on the line. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish God's voice. Samuel was a young boy, sleeping in the temple, when he first heard the voice of God calling upon him in the night, but he did not know that it was God. He sought the help of the priest who told him what to do. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush and told him to lead Israel to freedom. God spoke to Elijah while hiding in a cave. Elijah had many experiences that could have been interpreted as the voice of God: A strong wind, and an earthquake. He finally found God in a still soft voice. When Jesus was baptized all of those standing by the bank heard the voice of God as He spoke in the form of a dove saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus said in John 10:27, " My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

WHEN WE CALL ON GOD, HE WILL ANSWER: David notes in Psalm 91:15 that when a believer puts in a call to heaven, there will be no answering service on the other end. God will answer directly. Look what he says again in Psalm 91:15, "He

shall call upon me, and I will answer him." It is often irritating to call someone and receive their answering service or answering machine. Often the recipient is standing beside the machine listening, deciding whether to pick up. When we call, God won't tell us to leave a message after the beep and He'll get back with us later. He says, "He shall call upon me and I will answer." That's important for every believer to know, that we have access to heaven in time of trouble. We have a direct line in heaven. In the White House the President has several telephones; one of them is a red phone that is tied directly to top Pentagon officials in case of military urgency. There are no receptionists or recordings, when it rings; it gets through to the president. Since God is omnipresent, He is able to respond to all of us at the same time. That means we all have a main line, a red phone, that we know he will answer in our time of need.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS, WE SHOULD DO WHAT HE SAYS: Many people have a list of emergency numbers that they call in time of trouble. If we get the person we need on line, what good does it do us if they tell us what to do and we refuse to do it? If we get a lawyer, doctor, or Emergency Medical Specialist on the line and they give us instructions but we refuse to carry them out, we wasted their time. The same should be true when God speaks to us. When God gives us our direction, we should do what He says. To fail to do what he says amounts to wasting His time. Sometimes the instruction is awkward and embarrassing. That's what Naaman found out when he was told to publicly bathe seven times in muddy water. Sometimes he tells us to do what we don't want to do. That's what Jonah found out when he was told to preach to the people of Nineveh and ended up in the belly of a whale. Sometimes we want a quick answer right now, and he says wait. Isaiah had to remind Israel that "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." As believers, we must be prepared to not only to call on the Lord, but to listen when the Lord calls on us and to be ready to call on Him.

When you call on God, expect action

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we call on the Lord, we should expect action.

God is a God of action, when we call on him we should be prepared to move at His command, recognizing that He has the authority to be our problem solver.

Often when we call agencies in our city or state they will listen to our problem, then tell you that they can't help you because your problem is not in their department.

The good thing about calling on the Lord, is that all problems in his problem.

A blind man found new sight in the Optometry department.

A lame man found new legs in the rehabilitation department.

A wild man that had been running through the graveyards found new sanity, in the psychiatric department.

Lazarus found new life in the new life division.

Five thousand people found food to eat in the food service department.

A wretched man found himself in the Lost and Found department; he came out saying "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch likes me. I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

It's good to call on the Lord because he's able to deal with our issues. A woman came to Him, with an issue of blood. She'd been dealing with the issue for 12 years, he dealt with her issue with one touch dialing, she just touched the hem of his garment and was made whole.

It makes no difference when you call on the Lord, Jesus is always by the phone.

One song writer said, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want. He can take:

—THE UGLINESS of this world and make it beautiful, tell him what you want!

—SADNESS and turn it into gladness, tell him what you want!

—DIFFICULTIES and make them easy, tell him what you want!

—BURDENS and make them light, tell him what you want!

—DULL THINGS and make them interesting, tell him what you want!

—BAD THINGS and make them good, tell him what you want!

—FALLEN THINGS and lift them up again, tell him what you want!

—BROKEN THINGS and put them back together again! , tell him what you want!

Call on the Lord, and He will answer!

His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

His name is Jesus, the answer to all questions!

His name is Jesus, the solution to all problems!

His name is Jesus, the bright and morning star!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning….

No. 9328-Inspiration

Strength for the Victory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2008

SCRIPTURE: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13

Introduction

Have you ever began a task only to learn that it was more formidable a task than you thought? Many of us have had that experience. Whether it was the household handy man who decided to add a room to his house only to learn that he has termites, or the shade tree auto mechanic who started out to change spark plugs but discovered that there is a major engine problem; often tasks that, at first appear simple turn out to be major challenges. Yet, while they may require more attention than we had planned the room can be added and the car engine can be repaired. That's one of the great discoveries that we have made in life, that no matter how big the mountain, God has the power to move it or help us to scale it. For every mountain God has an army of believers ready to climb to its summit and claim the victory.

Unlike the world which faints at the prospect of a frustrating mountain in a path, believers in Christ are never intimidated. We have learned from our Bible history that whenever there is a mountain God has mountain men and mountain women who are ready and willing to scale it, move it or drill a hole right through it.

In fact, in biblical times the presence of courageous believers, intent on achieving victory, despite mountains of difficulty was common. It was not unusual for men to leave their homes for days as they climbed mountains to herd sheep, pitch their tents, pray or fight their enemies.

Today, God still has a generation of warriors who believe that when they commit themselves to working to accomplish his will, that they can do anything; even move mountains.

For every mountain God has always had a set of mountain people. For every problem he has always had a solution. For every question God has always had an answer.

As Christians, we are not intimidated by the challenges that each new day presents to us.

The tasks that face us may be more than we expected, but the God we serve is more than we can imagine.

The mountain before us may be bigger than we are, but serve a God who is bigger than the mountain.

He is able to lead us, inspire and direct us. If we follow Him he will lead us to a great victory in his name.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he shared his belief that people committed to do God's will can accomplish God's purposes through Christ.

In its historical context, the passage finds Paul responding to the generosity of the Philippian believers after he had placed the need he had for the church before them. He was trying to carry out the will of God in establishing church ministries in many places. That required a united effort, a committed people and resources. It was a huge mountain in his path.

Yet, despite the enormity of the problem, Paul placed the challenge before the people and trusted God for its fulfillment.

Faced with such an enormous challenge, Paul remained amazingly content and unintimidated by the size of the task before him. He had learned the lesson of contentment. Changing circumstances did not affect the inner contentment he enjoyed. His contentment was rooted in a divinely bestowed feeling of sufficiency despite the circumstances.

Since he had learned to live in abundance and with meager means he had learned that in every circumstance God gave him the strength to accomplish God's purposes. He soon learned that if God wants it done, no matter how high the mountain, he would be able to scale its peaks. No matter how wide the sea, he would be able to cross safely to the other side.

Those committed to doing God's will, will be able to do any and everything, even the impossible, through the Power of God and his continual strength.

Thus, this mountain we face together, can be scaled or removed, with God's help and victory will be our result.

God had people for every mountain

Often believers consider the challenges we face in modern times and believe that they are insurmountable. Whether it's individuals struggling to save their homes from foreclosure or poor families trying to pay rapidly increasing fuel costs; it seems that the mountains get higher. Even churches, normally bastions of faith and strength, sometimes shudder at the sheer size of the tasks they face.

Yet, the biblical record serves to remind us that God has always had dedicated men and women in every generation who could tackle the mountains placed before them and accomplish his will.

Esther was a mountain woman. While she did not scale a physical mountain like many of the men of the bible, she never-the-less scaled the mountain of opposition, bigotry and sexism to save God's people from destruction. It was a formidable task to take a lowly girl of no imperial status and raise her up to be the Queen of Persia, but God proved through her that those who trust in the Lord can do all things.

Moses was a clear example of faith in the face of frustrating mountains. On Mount Sinai he talked to God and received instructions about challenging the physical and institutional slavery of the Jewish people. It was a challenge because Egypt was a great power of the world. Its military arsenals were packed and its mighty chariots, 600 in number, were used to destroy many armies. Moses went to free them from slavery and bring them to the Promised Land. That was a tall order for one stuttering man and his brother to accomplish. But despite the difficulty of this problem, God proved that those who trust in the Lord can do all things.

Noah faced a mountain of problems, too. After the flood Noah found that the ark he rode for almost a year had settled on Mount Ararat. With the flood waters gone along with the population of the earth, Noah found himself facing the task of reestablish order in the world and kept his family focused on God. He successfully acted on God's word, trusted in his promise and received God's security. It was a mountain of a task for a man to spend 100 years building an ark on dry land, but Noah's faith proved that those who trust in the Lord can do all things necessary to accomplish his will.

Elijah faced the mountains before him with great courage and strength. He was a tower of strength as he challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. His victory there was unquestioned and his influence was broad. Our challenge is to face the prophets of doom of this generation, who tell us that what God wants cannot be done with the same courage of Elijah. We are challenged to stand boldly, act courageously, and wait for God to rain down his blessings upon our efforts. By continuing in faith, we say to the world that those who trust in the Lord can do all things necessary to accomplish his will.

Strength for Calvary

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should note that Jesus was the ultimate example of how to tackle a mountain of frustration and obstacles and come out victorious.

When Jesus began his ministry he went in the wilderness for 40 days and nights and Satan carried him to the top of a high mountain.

That mountain posed a great temptation for him because it presented him with an opportunity to stray away from his mission.

On that wilderness mountain, Jesus was presented with Satan's plan of failure and God's plan of salvation for the lost.

On that wilderness mountain Jesus demonstrated what we should do when we are faced with the temptation to quit or be discouraged and he showed the world, his response, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God…get thee behind me Satan! "

As we march forward we should remember that when:

—The storms of opposition rise, we can do all things!

—The winds of frustration blow, we can do all things!

—The thunder of troubling times rolls, we can do all things!

If we fall upon misfortune God's promise remains true, "I will never leave thee!"

If we fall upon temporary disgrace or public scorn, his words still resonate, "I will never leave thee alone."

If there are mountains that stand in our way we should never forget that, "we can do all things."

That means the:

—IMPOSSIBLE can become possible; the IMPROBABLE can become probable!

—Mountains can be reduced to molehills!

—Rough places can be made plain, crooked places can be made straight!

One evening over 2,000 years ago Jesus tackled a mountain called Calvary!

He carried the sins of the world on his shoulder!

He died that evening. They buried him in a borrowed tomb..

But…early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with the victory, all Power, and

All things in his hand!

No. 9329-Anniv.-Pastor

The Gold is the Goal

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2008

SCRIPTURE: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job 23:10

Introduction

Every four years all eyes around the world are focused on the Olympic Games. At the Olympics, athletes from around the globe come together to compete to win a gold medal. But did you know that the gold medal they win is not really gold? It's actually a silver medal plated with five percent goal!

Very few medals that honor achievement in the world are pure gold. Most are gold plated or gold colored but not pure gold. Even though the highest medal in Olympics is the gold medal, it's not what the winners receive. Olympic medals all carry a similar design and size, but are never pure gold. Only two medals received by recipients are pure gold: The Congressional Gold Medal and the Nobel Prize winner's medal. All others have what looks like gold but it's not really gold.

The goal of every believer is, after being tried in the fire, to come through this life's experience as pure gold.

That's the goal of every pastor as well; to promote the kingdom of God in such a grand way that when the Lord comes to evaluate our stewardship he will find that we have achieved the ultimate goal, which is to achieve the gold!

The gold that God has for the effective and faithful pastor won't be gold plated like the medals of the Olympians, but it will be a crown of righteousness made of pure gold, tried in the fire of sacrifice, suffering and pain.

As Christians, we are proud to know that God has a reward in store for every believer that is pure and true. It is a crown of life. Achieving our crown of gold is every pastor's goal.

Exposition

This text focuses on Job as he looks forward to the outcome of his labor of faith, service and sacrifice.

Job had a very peculiar witness. He was selected to witness to the strength of all believers in impossible situations. The devil was given the privilege of trying to

detour Job from his faith by any means short of stealing Job's soul. After losing his wealth, health and children, Job still maintained a positive witness and ministry of faith for God.

In the text he continues a statement of faith he began with Eliphaz in chapter 22. He maintains that God knew of his works, faith and commitment. He resolved to serve faithfully with the full knowledge that when his testing ended he would come through as pure gold.

The difficulties that Job encountered in his ministry of faith were not designed for his hurt but it is for his honor. God allowed Job to be tested for the very purpose of honoring him with victory because he was confident he would evolve the victor. He was experiencing a trial of his faith.

Such trials, once ended, have two results the person being tried realizes the purity of their spirit and faith. Moreover, the person who is tried becomes precious in the eyes of the refiner. They emerge both approved and improved.

Thus, those who are plunged into a ministry of service for the Lord may find themselves tested by the difficulties and challenges of the service, but when they emerge they will fine their own motivations pure, strong and unadulterated. They will be viewed by God himself as precious in his sight.

Winning the Goal

The pastor's goal is to win the goal. Not the approval of cheering crowds in an Olympic stadium but the approval of a loving God. To come forth as pure gold the successful pastor must:

FIGHT A GOOD FIGHT: Today, more than ever, the people of God need pastors who are willing to fight what the Apostle Paul calls a "good fight." It is a fight against corruption, racism, poverty, homelessness, violence and crime. We need pastors to lead the people of God to speak out against and take action to improve the degenerating social conditions that are corrupting our communities. We need to join the growing crescendo of voices that cry out for pastors who are not afraid to stand for that which is right and fight a good fight. Those pastors who fight a good fight will win the gold, which is their goal.

CARRY OUT THE MISSION: Every pastor that God places in a congregation is given a mission, or a course to run. Some are just relay runners, expected to carry a congregation to a certain point as another receives the baton. Others are marathon pastors, given large assignments, and thus a long and challenging course with little to run with but faith and hope. Pastors must carry out the mission that Christ gave to his disciples in Matthew 28-19-20 when he challenged them to "Go ye therefore" into all the world. We must carry this mission beyond the Islands of the Bahamas and onto the main land. It must go as far as we can reach. Even when we have reached as far as our means will allow we should support the missionaries on foreign shores and reach further. When we have carried out the mission, we will win the goal, which is our goal.

PREACH THE WORD: More than anything else every pastor should preach the

word. He must remind the world that Jesus is alive and that God is still on the throne. It is through the preaching of the Gospel that the pastor is able to lift us and inspire Christian living.

There will not be a reward for those pastors who keep the faith, therefore pastors must preach the word until the last:

—Battle has been fought;

—Tear has been shed.

—Enemy has been conquered;

—Fear has been faced

—Hill has been climbed;

… and the last cross has been carried..

Then we can claim the victory. The race is not given to the swift or to the strong but unto those that endure to the end. Those who endure to the end get the gold, which is the goal.

Real Gold

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a reason why medals are not made of pure gold, that's because even pure gold is not strong enough to stand alone. In a similar sense, in our good intentions and lofty ideals and righteous living, we are still not good enough to claim victory on our own, we must be covered by the blood of Jesus.

The good pastor rises as gold, but he can only stand the test if his ministry is standing on the blood of Jesus.

When gold is mined and refined it is crushed, bathed in cyanide, smelted and fired at temperatures of 1064 degrees Celsius, and then molded. Only the real gold makes it through the process all other materials are left behind. Gold is measured in karats where 24 karats is pure gold. Rings and jewelry that bear the stamp 24k are pure gold. It's that 24k stamp that tells the real story.

The experience of every pastor is similar to the perfecting of Gold. Sometimes we are crushed by circumstances, relationships and events. Sometimes we can feel the cyanide poisons being poured over us. Sometimes the heat of the fire is hot and almost unbearable. Yet these trials of our faith are necessary because they bring out the best in us...pure gold.

The pastor who passes the test of service builds up his faith and comes through as pure gold

The pastor who passes the hard times test and refuses to give up hope even in the midst of trouble, builds up faith!

Such trials of faith produce a faith that "is more precious than gold!"

Although gold is tried in the fire and is a brilliant product, it will perish but faith in God will persevere until the Saint receives praise, honor and glory from God.

Every Saint should make obtaining that 24-karat kind of faith his goal.

In essence, the "gold is the goal."

The 24-Karat golden crown that every Christian will receive in glory will tell the real story!

It will tell the story of how we found:

—Joy in the midst of our sorrows!

—Happiness in the midst of our infirmities!

—Safety in the midst of dangerous situations!

—Comfort in the midst of loneliness!

—Encouragement in the midst of our failures!

—Strength in the midst of our weakness!

—A Song to sing in the midst of the night!

I heard the song writer declare, "I'm going to put on my robe and tell the story, how I made it over..."

When the question is asked, "Have you been tried in the fire?" I want to be able to say "I bore my burdens in the heat of the day but I held on because I knew the Lord would make a way!"

Come what may, I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord, who died for me on Calvary!

I will trust in the Lord, who arose Early on Sunday morning!

I will trust in the Lord until I die!

No. 9330-Revival

What in hell do you want, when heaven is much better?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 10, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Luke16:23-24.

Introduction

There are three subjects that are very unpopular these days; do you know them? We don't like to talk about them, discuss them or consider them. We definitely don't want to hear sermons about them or attend classes where they are the subject of instruction. What are these subjects? The subjects that trouble us the most and we want to hear about least are: Sin, death, and hell. While we don't like to think on these three, they are extremely important aspects of our faith:

Our faith is based on biblical teachings about two conditions and two places: Heaven and Hell. Heaven as a condition describes a state of paradise where all needs are met and conditions are more than satisfactory. As a place, it describes the homeland of the soul and the place of our eventual end. Hell when viewed as a condition is a state of misery, discontent, trouble and despair. As a place, hell describes a place of torment and destruction populated by the devil and the false prophets.

The Old Testament refers to hell as "Sheol" or the place of the dead. Old Testament scripture teaches us the following about "Sheol"1:) There is no remembrance in Sheol (Psalm 6:5). There is no knowledge, plotting or planning, work or wisdom in "Sheol" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). The New Testament uses the Greek word "Hades" and its meanings are the same as those in the Old Testament.

There is a second word in the New Testament that also refers to hell; that word is Gehenna. It means the place of whining and torment. Hell is described as a lake of fire and brimstone into which the ungodly shall be thrown to receive their eternal judgment. Romans 6:23 says that the "Wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life." Those who follow Satan, and false prophets will be thrown into this lake of fire (Rev 19:20) where they shall receive the punishment promised in Romans 6:23. Satan, and the false prophets will burn and be tortured without even receiving the

mercy of death. (Rev. 20:10).

Hell won't be a cool place. The temperature of boiling water is 100 degrees Celsius; molten lava is about 1,160 degrees Celsius. Hell will be hotter that volcanic lava.

That means there will be no ice cream in hell. Neither will there be air conditioning, cool dips in the pool, Icees, frozen margaritas, snow cones, window fans, or ice water.

If there is no cool aide, ice tea, frozen daiquiris, or snow; if there is no cool summer breeze or chilling winter wind; if there is no skiing, snowmen, ice skating or snow boarding; if there are no bully pops, push ups or Eskimo pies…What does hell have to offer that you want?

For believers the answer is simple, there is nothing in hell that we want, especially since heaven is so much better.

Satan offers non-believers a life bathed with Jalapeno peppers and sprinkled with hot sauce. He offers us both men and women that make us "hot." He offers us hot cars, and sells us hot CD's, hot purses, hot clothes and even hot pork chops and steaks. The late Marilyn Monroe guessed it right in her hit movie, "Some like it hot."

However, the word of God reminds us that the day is coming when those who like it hot, will get more than they ask for because hell is waiting for those who like the hot life.

Believers may eat spicy chicken and hot wings, but when it comes to living; we have no attraction to Satan's program. What is it in hell that we want? Nothing!

As Christians, we know about hell, but we focus on heaven. There is nothing in hell that we want, because heaven is so much better!

Exposition

This text focuses on a story Jesus told to illustrate the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the unrighteous.

At the time Jesus walked on earth the Jews believed that, at death, that all persons went "Hades/Sheol" or hell. They believed Hades was divided into two parts: a place of paradise, called Abraham's bosom and a place of torment for those who were evil.

The New Testament teaches that there are no believers, either past or present in the grave. All believers are in the presence of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 notes that when a believer dies he/she instantly joins all other saints in the presence of the Lord. All others, remain in their graves until judgment. When that judgment comes, many will come to Christ looking for mercy but Matthew 25:41 says Christ will say "Depart from me" and they will be thrown into a literal lake of fire that will burn forever. This is the place that is prepared for the devil and his followers. The followers will go to hell and be eternally separated from God after suffering a miserable torment. Satan, the false prophets will suffer eternally in this lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)

This text, shows Christ using the belief that Jews had at that time to illustrate the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the unrighteous. He gave them another parable or story to illustrate his point.

A certain poor man by the name of Lazarus was treated wrongly by a wealthy man. They both died and went to the place of the dead; because of his evil spirit, the rich

man went to the tormenting section and Lazarus went to the bosom of Abraham.

Being tormented in flames the rich man cried out for "Father Abraham" to let Lazarus dip his finger in cool water and cool his tongue. Abraham reminded him of his horrible life and reflected on the good life Lazarus led and the results of each. He noted that even if he wanted to do as he asked, that there is a gulf that separates them.

The rich man begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus back to tell his five brothers to straighten up or they will come to the place of torment, of fire, brimstone and misery. Abraham refused because they had ample opportunity through the teaching of Moses and all the sermons of the prophets, even if someone came from the dead to warn them, they still would not listen.

The parable emphasized one truth: The righteous will be rewarded in paradise. The ungodly will experience hell. No one in the place of the dead can warn those who are living: There is ample opportunity given through the preached and written word of God to know their future, but some will not hear.

The Ungodly want hell

There is no way a message can be sent back to warn those of us who are living about the dangers of hell, but that message is being declared to millions daily. Many hear the sermons and read the scriptures but ignore them because there is something about the hellish lifestyle that attracts them.

In 1971 a Motown group called the "Undisputed Truth" released a song called, "You make your own heaven and hell right here on earth." It didn't make it any further than #72 on the charts but its message is nonetheless true: We determine our own destination right here on this earth.

Living for Hell

In this life hell means: misery, torment, discomfort and trouble; there are many of us today who are living in hell and want what hell has to offer. They know there is a risk but they want what their living hell offers so badly that they are willing to risk death, imprisonment, disease and failure to go to hell.

Lazarus said,"Send word to my five brothers so they can avoid hell." Many don't want to hear. Many hear the warnings, but there is so much in hell that they want.

They want sex even though the threat of the living hell of AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhea is real.

They want drugs even though the living hell of drug addiction and death awaits them.

They want the thug life even though it promises, in most cases, early death and for the most part a living hell in a jail cell.

They want to drink alcohol even though life without working livers and poor health means living in a literal hell.

They want to be pedophiles even though they know they will be hunted down, charted, identified as molesters forever making their lives a literal hell.

They want more than they can afford so they steal, shoplift, rob, and embezzle to get it, even though the prospect of ruined lives and reputations will make their lives hell.

While all of us live in hellish conditions, from one degree to another, the ungodly person is tragic because not only does he live in hell here, but after he dies he goes to hell.

Heaven Offers More

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is nothing in hell that a real Christian wants, because heaven is so much better.

There was a time when believers were attracted to the world, but we have found a better way and a better place, that offers so much more.

Many reached what Tyrone Davis called, "A turning point" in our lives. That was the day we decided to make heaven our home.

That was the day we read 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

From the day we accepted Christ, there is nothing in hell that we want, because heaven is so much better!

In heaven, we will live our lives in the presence of God; that is so much better!

In heaven, we will never thirst or hunger or be in want; that is so much better!

In heaven, we will never grow old, get sick or die, that is so much better!

In heaven, we will never cry, feel pain or hurt; that is so much better!

In heaven, we will never experience the loss of a child, parent or sibling; that is so much better!

In heaven, we will never be poor or experience the lack of anything, that's so much better!

In heaven, we will never be discriminated against, hated on, cheated or robbed; that's so much better!

In heaven, we will never worry, wonder or doubt for all doubts will be settled; that's so much better!

1 Corinthians 2:9 makes it clear, "…Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

There is nothing in nothing in hell that we want! What we want is in heaven!

To get heaven, we must have Jesus!

But you can't have heaven and hell at the same time. You must turn loose one and grab hold to the other!

Jesus came and offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins, to give us a choice

He died on Calvary and early Sunday morning he arose.

Today, every believer declares, "You can all this world, give me Jesus!"

No. 9331-Anniv.-Church

A Focused Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2008

SCRIPTURE: And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:42-47

Introduction

In changing times, how does the church stay focused? The church has remained strong throughout the centuries because it is founded on faith in Jesus Christ. It has had one perpetual goal that is to evangelize the world, saving the lost and preserving the saints in the name of our Lord.

This church has been laboring to witness for Christ for many years. It has been a witness for Christ for generations, all thirsty to hear the word of God. It has been a voice for Christ for all who would hear the gospel message.

After successfully serving God as a witness and a being beacon of hope, the church remains positioned to bring a word of hope in the midst of changing times.

The challenges are the same as they were when this church was founded: we must focus on building the kingdom of God, adding to it, expanding it and preserving it through the power of God.

There are many changes in our world today that can easily distract the church; it must remain focused. There is a growing demand for the mission of the church to switch from Christ and him crucified, to prosperity; but the church must remain focused.

There is a desire to define the nature of our relationship with God from uniting with the church to serve God to uniting with the church for God to serve us; but the church must remained focused.

With advances in communications there are thousands of distractions such as: cell phones, text messaging, Instant messaging, Email, and the world wide web. For some these distractions have become so intense that they have begun to neglect the main mission of believers, which is to save and preserve the lost. That is all the more reason for the church to remain focused on building the kingdom of God.

To do that we can't remain in the past, using the techniques of methods that were

modern many years ago, but we must use what is available today to promote God's kingdom; but in all that we do we should never lose focus on the Kingdom of Christ.

As Christians, we must not be distracted or dissuaded away from the cause of Christ. We must continue in his word, pray and fellowship together, help those in need and lift Christ up continuously as we look forward to the day of his glorious return.

Exposition

This text gives us a clear picture of a focused church in changing times.

In Acts 2 the church was in its infant stages surrounded by a world that changed frequently as the Roman Empire expanded. The church was exposed to the influence of Greek literature, art and the Roman concept of government called a democratic republic. There were different races in Jerusalem from all over the world; it was a large bouquet of cultures creeds and religions.

It would have been easy for the church to lose its focus, but it employed four tools to stay focused on the kingdom of God all represented in Acts 2:42-47: They remained steadfast in their doctrine, fellowship frequently, helped each other and worshipped God passionately.

Using these four tools the church of Acts 2 remained focused and committed to the cause of Christ.

How to stay focused

We can use the example of the Church in Acts as our guide for staying focused today:

THEY REMAINED STEDFAST IN THEIR DOCTRINE: Even though there were many doctrines being taught all around them, they remained focused on the doctrine of Christ as revealed the apostles. The Jews had a doctrine based on Old Testament tradition, but they remained focused on Christ. The Romans had a doctrine that saw Ceasar as a god, but they remained focused on Christ. The Greeks had many gods and even statues to unknown gods, but they remained focused on the doctrines of Christ. They were steadfast in fixed truth; they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who changed their view with every popular notion. They were consistent to the words of the song write who wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweet frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

THEY WERE REGULAR IN THEIR FELLOWSHIP: They were stedfast in fellowship with each other. The one aspect of the New Testament Church that stood out over all others was their fellowship one with another. They associated with each other constantly, whether it was at their weekly communion dinners called "love feasts" or prayer meeting, it soon became very obvious that they loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of

God, and they did not give up the conversation. There are many people in the church today who do not fellowship with other members of the church. They come together to worship but they are not a part of the regular fellowship. They do not eat together, shop together and talk about life together, that is; life from a Christian perspective. To remain focused, the church today must tear a page from the Church of Acts and learn to love and fellowship with others in the faith.

THEY HELPED THOSE IN NEED: The church of Acts 2 was steadfast in its commitment to help those who were in need. The early church members were sensitive to personal needs of others and were quick to respond. They shared what they had with others in need. Today, the church should remain focused on this aspect of ministry. We must respond to the needs of those among us who are in need and we must also see the needs of those around us and respond accordingly. We should not lose focus of our purpose, which is to witness to those who have been discarded by society through the loving acts of kindness that are inspired by the very hand of God himself. Helping those in need is just as important today as it was in the beginning.

THEY WERE STEDFAST IN PRAYER: The church in Acts 2 remained steadfast in prayer. God cannot bless a church which does not pray, and churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. The church that prays maintains a connection with God. It is a church that speaks to God about the needs of the people but also hears from God in response to the needs of the people. No matter how busy the world becomes it should never get so busy that it cannot prayer, because prayer changes things.

Stay focused on Praising God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must never lose sight of the importance of praising God for all that he has done.

We praise God because he is good and his mercy endureth to all generations. The church should never lose focus on the importance showing gratitude to God for blessings shown.

We praise God because he blessed us by showing us his love.

It was a love that was:

—higher than the heavens
—deeper than the oceans
—lovelier than the sunsets
—sweeter than the honeycomb
—stronger than the wind
—fresher than the morning dew

It was a love that could not be:

—measured for it is immeasurable
—described for it is indescribable
—evaluated for it is invaluable
—comprehended for it is incomprehensible
—explained for it is unexplainable

There's no other love that can:

—bless and benefit

—penetrate and saturate

—glorify and magnify

—satisfy and beautify

—encourage the discouraged!

We should give praise and show love for God because he showed us the way. No wonder the songwriter declared, "Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me."

I said I wasn't going to tell anybody but I can't keep it to myself.

I've got to tell that we serve a God who turns:

—Darkness into light; failure into success;

—Weakness into strength; lost hope into fulfilled dreams;

—Who will tell the story of the goodness of the Lord?

Who will tell the world that those who trust in the Lord can:

-Face the unfaceable; conquer the unconquerable

-Bear the unbearable; suffer the insufferable

The Lord needs believers in this generation who are willing to use all available means to witness to this present age that God is still a good God!

Who will tell the story of how God take poor families from North Carolina, Louisiana and Mississippi and hundreds of places around the world and lift them up to high heights!

Who will tell the story told by our forefathers?

Whoever tells the story must decide to live the life and walk the walk, before they try to talk the talk!

If you are going to tell the story, you must know Jesus for yourself!

You can't tell your story until you can tell his story!

Tell them about Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Tell them about Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Tell them how he died on Calvary! Tell them how he arose after three days and nights!

Who will tell the story to this present age?

The church should say, "Here we are, Lord…send us!"

No. 9332-Missionary Duty

We've Got Work to Do!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 30, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction

Have you ever made a to-do list? A to do list is a list of all the things you need to do in a specific day. Often major jobs are subdivided into smaller lists of specific things that must be done; they are called tasks. One job may consist of five or six smaller tasks necessary to complete the job. Everyone has a to-do list of some sort whether they are kept posted on the refrigerator door at home, in a special file on their computers, or written on post it notes stuck all over the place. All of the reminders, post its and notes, serve one purpose and that is to remind us that we have "work to do."

It's pretty easy to make the to-do list. It's just a matter of writing down what needs to be done. It's harder to stay on task and work the list.

Everyone who succeeds in life knows the importance of working their individual task lists involving everything from personal career goals to spiritual development. People who do not succeed have one of two things in common: they either have no specific tasks mapped out for themselves or they have tasks but they do not complete them. Either way, it is prescription for failure.

The presence of unfinished tasks reminds us that we have work to do.

In 1972 The Isley Brothers released a song that made it to number 52 on the charts. It was entitled "I've got work to do." It was about a man who had little time to be with the woman that he loved because he had "work to do." He was extremely busy all of the time but none of his busi-ness had anything to do with her. He said she should understand that he had "work to do."

Is it possible that many of God's people could be like the man in the Isley Brother's song? We are extremely busy pursuing our tasks, but there is nothing on our task lists related to service in the kingdom of God. Is it possible that many believers love God and trust him fully, but have overbooked their lives to the point that he has been pushed completely out?

Jesus has given all of his disciples a great command. It is time consuming. It

requires tremendous commitment, but it also has great reward.

As Christians, we are reminded that our charge is to work in the kingdom for God. We have been assigned the job of reaching as many people as we possibly can, saving as many as we can, teaching as many as we can and baptizing as many as we can in the name of the Lord. That's the big job. It breaks out onto hundreds of small to-do lists. We have little time to waste; we have work to do.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus giving an assignment to the eleven remaining disciples; it was a challenge to home and world mission.

The events of the crucifixion had dispirited the disciples but the events of the resurrection encouraged them. They had seen the risen Christ and enjoyed fellowship with him. As Jesus prepared to return to heaven he left them with a mission that was humanly impossible without God's help. In previous missions Jesus had sent his disciples only to the Jews, their mission from here forward would be to go to all the nations.

Because they would be going where no disciple had gone before, into lands and areas they had not visited before; and because this commission was greater far more reaching in its scope, it is often called the Great Commission. The disciples had been trained well, and they had seen the risen Lord. They were ready to teach people all over the world to obey all the commands that Jesus had given.

The commission was to declare the gospel message to the entire world. The plan was for the eleven to reach and teach others and they, in turn, would reach and teach still more. Aided by the power of the Holy Ghost, it would not take long for the good news of God's way of life and his coming kingdom would be spread around the world.

That was a particularly challenging mission, especially since they were being challenged to go countries that spoke different languages. Yet, they were told to wait until they received the power. They waited, even though they did not quite know what they were waiting for. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, came upon them and they immediately understood by people of different races and nationalities. It was an amazing power they were given for their work.

They were divinely appointed and charged to work to build the kingdom.

As they watched Jesus ascend into heaven on a cloud, the Apostles arose and plunged into the mission. They had no time to waste..they had work to do.

What is the work?

Jesus talked to eleven men and charged them to begin the work. They, in turn, organized others and broke down the work into smaller to do lists, breaking it down to the individual believer's roll in the overall plan for kingdom building. Each congregation and every member has no room for "bench" membership because we all have work to do.

WE MUST SAVE THE LOST: The immediate mission of the church is to save the lost. Evangelism is the primary goal of every church congregation reaching out to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal savior. Jesus said that the church should go into the entire world. Today the church still has that mission to evangelize the world. Through outreach efforts at home and foreign mission efforts abroad the church reaches out in every nation of the world. Despite the advances in technology, there are still places in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus; and those within in our community who know nothing of the saving grace of God. There are thousands around us who know of the church building but do not know Jesus. There are thousands more who do not know him. We have the challenge of going into the bars, saloons, and wayward places to seek out the lost. We have the challenge using television, radio, and the internet to make salvation known, even in places where it is least expected. We cannot afford to sit idly resting upon what we have done in the past..We have work to do.

WE MUST MAKE DISCIPLES: Inherent in Jesus' command to "teach them" is the command to make disciples. Teaching the world to live the Christian life is more than a notion. It means showing people who believe how to live the Christian life in the world in which they live. It means showing families how a Christian dresses, acts, reacts, lives and breathes in the context of the world in which they live. Discipleship is more than just a new member's class it is hands on instruction in how to be a good husband, how to be a good wife, how to be a Christian in business, how to be Christian statesman rather than a politician; how to be a Christian youth. Discipleship is learning how to apply the principles of Christ into the very fabric of our lives. Although we have a program here and a program there, it is far too shallow an effort. There is much more to be done, so many lives to be taught and hearts to be touch. What we have done is miniscule when compared to the enormity of the task. We have little time to sit idly by...we got work to do.

WE RESPOND TO ALL THINGS AS AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST: When Christ told his disciples to help believers to observe "all things whatsoever I have command you" that was a huge assignment stuff into one little phrase. He commanded us to show mercy and benevolence to those in need. We are compelled to open our doors and hearts to help those in need and to show compassion to them that hunger and thirst. We are commanded to "feed the flock" with the essentials of spirituality necessary to sustain us in difficult. We are compelled to pray for one another and to be supportive in times of trial. We are commanded to hold each other accountable when we stray from the path while defending each other against the attacks. "All things" includes his command for us to speak against evil, regardless to whom it offends, as strive to advance the kingdom of God on earth. While we have responded in some form to many of these missions, we have not satisfactorily addressed any of them. "All things" is so big, so all encompassing that it would take all of us working in complete concert, to adequately address them. When we look at what has to be done, we can only conclude ...we've got work to do.

And Lo

Finally, brothers and sisters, while Jesus gave us this great work, he did not live us comfortless; he promised never to leave us alone.

He told his disciples then and still speaks to us today, "And lo, I'll be with you."

There is a lot of hope in that simple word "Lo" because we have heard it before.

We heard Isaiah used that word as he encouraged Israel in Isaiah 25:9 "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

And "Lo"-We heard Jeremiah lift the spirits of God's people in Jeremiah 30:10, "Lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return and shall be in rest and be quiet and none shall make him afraid."

And "Lo"-We heard Daniel use that term standing at the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:25, "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

And "Lo"-we heard Ezekiel use that word standing at the valley of Dry Bones. In Ezekiel 37:8 "And, lo, they are very dry."

In many instances when the "Lo" shows up, we have reached a point of exhaustion and depleted our own energy. That's when God steps in and we start serving on "Lo"

One truth that every saint who has stepped out on God's word has discovered is that if the Lord gives you a "Go" there is always a "Lo." For every "Go ye therefore" there's is always a "Lo, I'll be with alway."

We have work to do and it can't be limited by what we don't have, we have to go on lo.

Lo represents the promises of God!

Lo represents our faith that God will make a way!

The gospel must be preached, we have work to do, even if we have to go on lo!

The Poor among us must be helped, we have work to do, even if we have to go on lo!

The good news of the kingdom must be declare, we have work to do, even if we have to go on lo!

We know what it means to go on Lo!

When storms rise, "Lo" means he'll say peace be still.

When sickness comes, "Lo" means he'll be a doctor in your sickroom

In the middle of failure, "Lo" means he will give you victory.

In the middle of doubt, "Lo" means he'll give you assurance. No wonder the song writer declared, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine"

A traveler drove his automobile through the plains and the desert. When he came to the mountains, his passenger wondered how such an old car would make the high mountains. The traveler looked at his passenger and said, "When I travel the plains, I can make alright, but when I make it to the mountains, I put it in low and away I go"

I don't know about you, but I have found out that you can do amazing things when you remember the promises of God and count on lo!

A Widow woman who was down to her last barrel found she could eat on lo!

A woman sick with an issue of blood found she could be healed if she touched lo!

Peter found that as long as he kept his eyes on Christ he could walk on lo!

When your mountains get high, just remember Jesus said, "Lo" I'll be with you

When your burdens get heavy, just put it on Lo and remember Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that are burden and heavy laden and I will give you rest!"

If you get tired a along the way we have his promise!

Even though they put a cross on my shoulder..lo!

Even though they nail me to a borrowed cross..lo!

Even though they pierce me in my side...lo

Even though they bury me in a borrowed tomb..lo!

Keep on working, because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

We can still hear him say," Lo, I'll be with you, even until the end of the world!

No. 9333-Anniversary, homecoming

Happy to be Going Home

By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2008

SCRIPTURE: I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10-11

Introduction

Have you ever had a wonderful time in a distant place, but found yourself happy to be going home? No matter how beautiful our surroundings may be in a distant place, there is no place like home. Some have lived in fine hotels, slept on sleep number mattresses, enjoyed room and maid service and for a time have lived lavishly. However, at the end of the stay, despite all of the good times they enjoyed, they were happy to be going home.

In the movie "The Wizard of Oz" the character Dorothy learned that while she was fascinated living in the land of Oz, there was no place like home.
Home may not be as fancy as the place you visited, but for some reason we are always happy to go home.

There is no room service; and you have to wash your own dishes, but we are always happy to go home.

There is something about home that makes us want to shout, when we think about. Our brother has visited on this earth for 86 years. During that time he has lived through one world war, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. He has enjoyed the creation of new inventions from the television to the microwave. He saw the world around him change miraculously bringing comforts and great joy. Yet, despite all of his experiences, he always longed for home. Even when he thought about home, he shouted, at loud and didn't care who heard.

What he thought about was so grand and so glorious that he could not keep it to himself. He knew that soon he would be going home.

We are happy about going home, when we have a home to go to. There are many people in the world today who are all dressed up with no place to go. Those who have a home have something to be happy about. When you have a home you can sing that old song, "I've got a new home, over in glory and its mine, mine, mine."
Some have a home but it is not a happy home. To them, going home is not an appealing idea.

Consider the man who sat at the bar drinking one whiskey after another until it became obvious to the bar tender that he was about to hurt himself. The bartender asked, "What's the matter? Are you having troubles with your wife again?" The man nodded his head and began to cry. The bartender said, "Your wife should be ashamed of the way she belittles you, talks about you and hits on you in front of other men." The man heard that and started crying again. "What happened this time?" The bartender asked. "My wife told me she was leaving me for 30 days" the man said as he cried like a baby. "Well you should be glad" said the bartender, "As mean as your wife is to you, you should praise God for a joyful month of peace. Don't be sad, be happy, go home in peace!" At that the man started to cry even more. "What are you crying about?" The man answered "My wife left me for a month...and today is the last day!" For some, going thinking about home is not a happy experience.

Believers are pilgrims who are passing through this world on our way home. When we think about it, it's too much for us. It is so wonderful.

As Christians, we enjoy every day that God gives us on this earth, but when it's time to go, we are happy to be going home.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he anticipates the coming of the Messiah and the final journey home of believers.

The closing chapters of the book of Isaiah speaks to the people of Israel directly but they are also Messianic; they also look to the coming of the age of the church. Isaiah details the struggles of the people but he closes his book in its final chapters by looking to Jesus. It is Isaiah that tells us, thousands of years before it occurred, that he "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

At the point of this text, there are words of reassurance for Israel as Isaiah looks beyond the present and looks to the future. That's why he encouraged the people to "be joyful."

He looked beyond the present to the time which loomed on the horizon.

He went beyond the time of wars and second class citizenship. He went beyond the time of pushing hard and being pushed. He looked beyond the time of health then sickness, deprivation and loneliness. He even looked beyond Israel's brief period of physical restoration. He looked to the return of the Lord and the beginning of the Kingdom of heaven.

He showed them a picture of the kingdom of God that inspired the people and made them uncontrollably happy.

Reasons we are Happy

There are many who amazed when they saw our brother in worship. While they were accustomed to seeing people shout at the end of a great sermon, this brother was different. He could shout at the mere thought of God's goodness.

God has given every believer something to shout about, too.

WE SHOUT BECAUSE GOD PROVIDES OUR NEEDS: A great truth that ever believer knows about God is that he will provide for their needs.

In our prayers, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." That's a prayer that says we count on God everyday for what we need to survive and thrive in this world. It's a truth that we learn we are children, that God will make a way.

When his disciples had such concerns Jesus told them to look at the natural activity around them. In Matthew 6:25 he said, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Birds go out each day, not knowing what they will find but yet God arranges for them to fall upon what they need for that day. He challenges us to think, "If he will do that for the birds, then he'll do that for me. That's the truth imbedded in the song, "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come. Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

The fact that God watches over us, makes us happy and can bring on a shout.

WE SHOUT BECAUSE GOD HAS BLESSED US: Often we thank God for physical blessings, but we should also thank him for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind. This spirit of thanksgiving is supported in scripture. The verb ''to give thanks'' occurs thirty-eight times and the noun ''thanksgiving'' another fifteen times in the New Testament. The Word of God makes it clear that it is very important to give thanks.

We should also be thankful for any blessings we receive. Jesus gave thanks before a meal (Matt. 15:36). And when he healed ten men who had leprosy and only one came back to thank him, Jesus asked where the others were (Luke 17:15-18). He expected people to be thankful for good things.

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

When we think about the ways he has blessed us we feel like shouting.

WE SHOUT WHEN WE REMEMBER GOD'S MERCY TO US: There are times when we are overwhelmed at the goodness and mercy of the Lord. This often happens when we achieve a long sought after goal or receive a blessing that we desired but felt unworthy to receive. When David succeeded in the getting the Ark of the Covenant returned to Israel, he was so excited and happy that he stripped his clothes to his loin cloth and danced naked in the streets, leaping and jumping and shouting with joy.

That's the way we feel when God has really blessed us. We have to shout.

When the Lord blesses us financially in a way that we did not expect, it''s shouting time!

When a wayward child starts showing signs of hope, it's shouting time!

When a lost family member finds the Lord, it's shouting time.

As Jesus came into Jerusalem, his disciples wanted to quiet the crowd but Jesus said, "If these hold their peace the rocks would cry out!" -It's shouting time.

Going home at last

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that this brother shouted because he was going home at last.

There is a saying that, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." It means that when we are away from the people, places and things we love we yearn for them and grow and cherish them more.

The longer we are away, the more we yearn to be close to them.
On this earth, we are away from home. Every believer yearns to go home and gets happy just thinking about going home.

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's a whole lot of shouting going on.

Whenever you think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving going on!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole lot foot patting going!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a whole lot of hand clapping going on!

When Christ, the bridegroom, comes for the church he come to take us to our eternal home.

That will be the day that we'll walk the streets of gold and live eternally in his presence.

It's the reason that we are constantly filled with joy and happy to be going home! One of this brother's favorite song's was "Life is like Railroad." He loved to sing that song. He'd get happy all over again. When I think about that song I'm reminded of a man and his daughter as they stood at a train depot waiting to catch a train. A pretty shiny train pulled up, but it seemed to be filled with people who were gambling. The little girl said, "Let's ride this train daddy!" -But papa wouldn't get on board.

A while later another train appeared, it had people who seemed to be drinking and having a wild party on board. The little girl said, "Let's ride this train!" But papa still wouldn't get on board. Late in the evening when the sun was almost down, a single engine train pulled up and papa prepared to get on board. The little girl was surprised, "Papa, the other trains were pretty and filled with people and they were going that way. This train doesn't have many people on it and it's going in the opposite direction. Why this train?" Papa looked back at his daughter as he handed the conductor his ticket and said, "This train don't carry, no loafers, hobos and cigarette smokers. This train is bound for glory, and I'll shout and tell the story!"

Believers are happy to be going home because they have a story to tell. It's a story of rising and falling.

It's a story of battles fought and victories won. It's a story of family, friends and a song to sing!

That's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my savior all the day long!"

It's a story that says, "I've been tried in the fire" and I have come through as pure gold!

It's a story about Jesus who said I'm going to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be also!

It's a story of a place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

It's a story of a place where Joy will never end!

It's a story that began in a manger in Bethlehem, was interrupted on a cross outside of Jerusalem; accentuated by an empty tomb;

..and when he comes back we'll all go home together..

in the New Jerusalem!

I think I feel a shout coming on!

No. 9334-Anniv.-Pastor

A Pastor Who Walks by Faith

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2008

SCRIPTURE: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Introduction

Have you ever considered how far you have come, then wondered how you made it? It has been a long journey for all of us. We have endured considered hardship, sacrifice and suffering to reach our present plateau in life. It has not been easy, but thanks be to God we have succeeded in making the journey, not walking by sight, but by faith.

Those who have served in the ministry have had an even more difficult path to walk. Not only have they had to walk their personal path, they have also had to labor with those in need of spiritual care. For every preacher of the Gospel, this journey has been a faith walk with God; without him they would surely have failed.

This pastor has been walking this journey, living in the public eye for a long tim. After all these years in the pulpit, what can the preacher say that he has not said before? What text can he deliver that he has not addressed before? What theme can he developed that he has not developed before?

That is best answered by remembering the grandfather who made a practice of reading to his granddaughter every night before he put her to sleep. He tried to find many different stories to read to her each night, but as soon as he finished reading the new story, she would always ask him to read the old story again. He wondered she always wanted to hear the same story, and she said because "every time you read it, it gets gooder and gooder."

What can the preacher say after after all these years? He can tell the old story of Jesus, his death and resurrection; it gets gooder and gooder everytime!

As Christians we are sure that our journey has been a walk of faith. Over the years, we have made it, not by our own strength but we were sustained by the power of an almighty God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of faith for any believer.

New Testament believers are reminded that faith is essential to the Christian life. It's very nature is the unseen. It is belief without sufficient physical evidence to confirm.

Much of what believers know about God has been through our past experience. Based upon our past experience, combined with what we read in the word, we make a projection about the future. That projection is what is called faith. It is a hope rooted in the nature of God and our past experience with him. Without faith we cannot please God because we must accept that he is God and come to him first.

Without faith in God we cannot make this journey. That's why the anonymous writer of the Hebrews lists so many great men who achieved much for God's kingdom operating on faith alone. Collectively, the text demonstrates that those who live by faith succeed in making the journey.

Preachers Operate on Faith

Any pastor who succeeds in ministry is a walking example of faith. Dealing with our kind of people is not an easy task. Sometimes we can try the patience of the best pastors and bring them very close to the point of giving up.

Not only have pastors survived by faith, but so have thousands of believers in small churches and great cathedrals. They all have one thing in common: They have made it by faith alone.

There are three truths we should consider as we focus on this ministry that has obviously been strengthened by faith:

THROUGH FAITH WE MAKE THE JOURNEY: We who are trying to please God sometimes stumble. We are only able to make the journey because of our faith. Sometimes Christians forget the power of their faith.

When faith seems to falter, we need to remind ourselves that although it looks dark and defeat appears imminent God is still on the throne. Every child of God believes ina miraculous God. We constantly remind ourselves that no matter how frustrating the situation might seem it never reaches a point of complication beyond the miraculous power of God.

The songwriter said, "God is still on the throne, within you bosom you have the phone" Your miracle is just a prayer away, God is on the line.

Another songwriter said, "Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want, if you're sick and you want to get well, tell him what you want."

THROUGH FAITH WE NEVER GIVE UP: In effort to please God there are many who have made great personal sacrifices as they have worked to build the church. They worked in faith but never gave up. If we listen closely we can hear them say, "I've come this far by faith, I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but still they proclaim "I've come this far by faith, I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt

the pain, but still they proclaim, ""I've come this far by faith, I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans; others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all say, ""I've come this far by faith, I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

" We all say, "I've come too far to turn around."

THE BIGGER THE GOAL THE STRONGER THE FAITH: Those who acting on great visions that God has given them, must be reminded that the bigger your goal the stronger the faith that is needed to achieve the goal. It's what every Boy Scout knows. If you put up a big tent you need be stakes to hold it down. The bigger tent, the bigger the stakes.

If you have a big dream you can't keep it in place with a small peg of faith. Big faith is fed by regular worship and praise. To feed that faith our worship and bible study habits must change.

Big dreams require big faith experiences; and big preachers have big dreams can't be staked out if our dreams faith does not grow to fit our dream.

How do we build faith? First by hearing the word of God regularly. Romans 10:17 says,

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Today, we have seen this three attributes reflected in the ministry we salute with this special worship. What we have seen demonstrated before us is a life that has been walking by faith.

Living by faith is our goal

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must encourage the honoree to continue living by faith in the years to come, even though what lies ahead is unseen.

The very definition of faith tells the story in Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen."

To live by faith is to always believe that godly goals can be achieved even though, at present, there is no evidence to support the belief.

If doors are closed in your face, God will make a way!

If enemies surround you on every side, God will make a way!

If we fall down more than we stand up, God will make a way!

Living by faith, means we never doubt that the Lord will make a way somehow!

After many years of preaching pastors should not be discouraged but should continue to preach the word and plant the Gospel seed, God will do the watering.

After all these years, what shall I preach? The answer to the question is simple, Preach the word!

After all these years, tell them that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life!

After all these years, tell them that God is a good God who is a shelter in a time of storm and bridge over troubling water!

After all these years tell them that the God we serve can scale the highest mountain and span the widest valley. He can lift a bowed down head and can traverse the loneliest wilderness.

After all these years, tell them about Jesus!

Jesus, the lily of the valley and the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousands and a rock in the wilderness!

After all these years, tell them Jesus!

After all these years, tell them about Calvary!

After all these years, tell them that Early Sunday morning Jesus rose from the grave with all power in his hands!

After all these years, tell world that Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me"

Tell them about Jesus, and continue walking by faith!

No. 9335-Anniv.-Men

Men Who Walk With God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

September 2008

SCRIPTURE: In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. Proverbs 12:28

Introduction

What does it take for a man to walk uprightly before God? That is a question that requires us to know what God expects of a man. We know how the world measures a man; we see that everyday. The world measures a man by his possessions, his physical strength, handsomeness, virility and his power and influence. Yet, that measure is not how God measures a man.

God measures a man by the righteous life that he lives reflecting a saved soul dedicated to living out his purpose for his life. The bible sums it all up by saying that such a man has a "righteous way of life."

There are many today who are completely confused about what it takes to be a real man in God's sight. They think that all it takes is a pair of pants, a checkbook and the ability to father a child. There is one truth that we have all come to know: all males are not necessarily men. Further, all men are not necessarily righteous men who are walking in the paths of God.

A tall pine tree stood for many years in the great forest. Its branches spread in all directions. It loomed high over the other trees and its thick trunk suggested it had endured many years. At the foot of the pine there was a little pine cone that lay around on the ground. He boasted to the other seeds that lay around that he was a mighty pine and would someday grow strong and tall. Meanwhile, he simply lay around and enjoyed the shade from the father pine's strong branches. The father pine constantly talked to him to show him what life was all about. However, the cone was content to know that he could one day be a pine and he idled away his time.

One night, lightning struck the mighty pine and down it fell with a mighty thud. In the days that followed the pine cone stood in the same place where the mighty pine stood and tried to take his place. He stretched out his arms, but they were not huge branches. He gave off no shade and did not tower over the other trees as did the mighty pine. His heart dropped in frustration. Then he heard the voice of the mighty pine whistling through the wind, "within you is the potential for greatness, for you are the offspring of a pine. But to achieve your greatness, you cannot lay around. You must bury yourself in fertile soil, take root, sprout and grow with a made up mind.

Then you will be a tree my son, then you will be a pine."

For men to walk righteously before God three things must happen: They must know the Lord for themselves, walk with the right crowds, and pursue life with a made up mind. Many young men with great potential are lost because they do not know the Lord for themselves, run with the wrong crowds, and cannot discipline themselves to do what is necessary to achieve their life goals.

As Christians, we desire to know the Lord and to commit ourselves to walk in his paths. When we walk in God's path, blessings, rewards and life will follow.

Exposition

This text focuses on a truth that those who walk righteously before God will be blessed.

The teaching of this text reflects the general teaching of the bible about believers who live righteous lives: they will be blessed by God. David, in Psalms 1, notes that men who refuse to take the counsel of ungodly men and reject seats among the scornful shall be "blessed."

This text, written by Solomon by the inspiration of God, reflects the same theology: those who live righteous lives will receive temporal blessings or a better, blessed life, because of their commitment to God.

Even though this text seems to suggest that living righteously can earn salvation, a closer inspection reveals that the "life" referred to involves the temporal things in this life, not eternal life, which only comes as a gift from God that is not a result of our works.

The text indicates that living the righteous life is a pathway to favor with God who blesses our lives in such as way that there is not only life at the end, but life along the way; a life of spiritual comfort and peace that is pleasing to God.

In Proverbs 20:7 Solomon says, "The just man walketh in his integrity. Ezekiel says, He that "has walked in my statutes, and has kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live," (Ezek 18:9, 21; 23:15).

In all truth, the man who walks righteously shall be blessed.

Men who choose to walk righteously will find many blessings because there are certain fruits of righteousness

Righetousness delivers us from troubles (Proverbs 11:6); gives us better life (Proverbs 11:19);
keeps the upright (Proverbs 13:6); and gives us peace and quietness (Isaiah 32:17).

When men walk in righteousness, blessings from God are the immediate result.

Three Things Men Must Do

In light of the declining morality of our times, there are three things that men must do to walk righteously before God.

MEN MUST KNOW GOD FOR THEMSELVES. The inclination in modern times

is for men to become less spiritual. In the past, it was the men who lead the worships in our homes and churches; today it is our women. In many instances it is because some men believe showing a fear of the Lord diminishes their manhood. More than ever, we need men who are willing to stand up for the Lord. We have too many men who are living on the spiritual down low: They give lip service to Godliness on Sunday but have a secret relationship with the devil the rest of the week. We need men who will stand up for God, because they have tried him for themselves and are sure that he is a way maker in their lives.

MEN MUST WALK IN THE RIGHT CROWDS: Christian men must carry themselves as Christian men. It means that they must reflect the Christian life in three areas: the places they go, the people they associate with and the things they do. There is an old saying, "Birds of a feather, flock together." That applies to men as well. There are many men who attend worship on Sundays but they still hang out with all of the ungodly types as ungodly activities are being conducted, conversations are being held and plans are being made. The places we go, the things we do, and the people we hang out with, reflect the degree of our transformation. The man who walks righteously does not walk with those who steal, cheat, murder or condone violence. The man who walks righteously does not support ungodliness in any way. The word of God says the ungodly are like the "chaff which the wind driveth away." Since that is the case, the ungodly men should not attach themselves to those who are spiritual chaff, offer them no spiritual support and can only lead them to ruination before God.

MEN MUST HAVE A MADE UP MIND: The righteous man is mindful of the word of God that teaches him in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Too many men fail to receive all of the blessings that God has for them because they are double minded; and they are not completely committed. One day they are for the Lord and the next day they are for the devil. Men who walk righteously are those who go through life with a made up mind. These are the men who have been transformed by the spirit of God and are new creatures, "old things are passed away." We can't be a father and husband one day and then turn into a woman chaser on another day. We need to make up our minds. We can't be men who work hard all week, then the next week throw away our earnings on loose living that threatens the safety and security of our families. We need to make up our minds. We can't stand up for God one day and disown him among our friends on another day. We need to make up our minds. The best resolve for men is to tear a page from Joshua and say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The Reward of Walking Righteously Before God

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a reward for the man who walks righteously with God.

The man who lives righteously earns the favor of God and God's favors opens the windows of heaven and provides peace, comfort and opportunity for those who please him.

The man who walks righteously is a man who lives a good life before his children and his wife, but most importantly, he lives a good life before God.

The man who walks righteously is an example of trusting in God and holding to his word.

The man who walks righteously has a story to tell. He tells the story of mountains climbed and valleys traveled!

He tells the story of answered prayer. A man who knows the Lord knows that the Lord will answer prayer.

He tells the story of a man who bows down before God to worship and praise him!

The man who walks righteously tells the story of salvation and redemption.

The man who walks righteously is quick to testify that one day the savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground"

I heard the songwriter declare, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same"

This is the man that can declare, "He touched me!"

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

The man who walks righteously has to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

The man who walks righteously has to tell somebody that Lord is my light and my salvation, "Whom shall I fear?"

He's got to tell somebody!

No. 9336-Communion

He's got your ticket

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 21, 2008

SCRIPTURE:"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;" Philemon 1:18 "But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Introduction

Have you ever gone out to dinner, enjoyed a great meal, then had the pleasure of someone volunteering to pay for your meal? It doesn't happen often but those few times when we are subject of such a meal, courtesy of the good will of a friend, we leave with a pleasant feeling. Certainly we were able to pay for our own meal, but the gesture is humbling. Very seldom do we refuse.

Many people who learn that someone will pick up their tab, only regret that they didn't get more. It seems that the day someone decides to pick up our tab, is always the day when we purchased the least. It's always the day you had a soup a sandwich and not the day you really chose to pig out.

The idea of paying for someone else's lunch is a friendship blessing. It's a way of passing on a blessing that God has given you to someone else. In theory, those who have had their ticket paid by someone should repay the gesture by paying for the meal of two other people sometime in the near future. That way goodwill and friendship is spread around the world by something as simple as treating someone else to a lunch or dinner.

The blessing cycle operates the same way. We are blessed, so that we can bless. When we receive a blessing we should share the blessing with others; in that way the continuum is uninterrupted.

Unfortunately, there are many who have had their tickets paid by others, but they have never returned the favor as the tradition requires. The blessing chain stops with them as they became receivers of the blessing but failed to pass it on to others.

Did you know that Christ has picked up the Tab for our sins? Many of us have a full plate when it comes to sin. Sin carries a heavy price that is spelled out in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Yet Jesus, through his own goodwill, literally picked up the ticket for our sins and went ahead of us to the heaven's check-in counter; and there served notice that when we arrive that our ticket has already been paid.

When we stand before the judgment bar and hear that our sin bill has been paid,

it won't be because we have paid it ourselves, but it will be because, Christ paid it for us and put our charge on his account.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that Christ is the source of our salvation. We praise him because he paid the price for our salvation and with his stripes we are healed.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he offers to assume the debt of a fellow brother in Christ.

The words of Paul to Philemon were included in his personal appeal to Philemon to accept his returned runaway slave, Onesimus, as an equal in Christ. Onesimus had been converted to Christianity in Rome and Paul wrote his owner, a friend of his, and appealed for him to allow him to be a messenger for the Lord.

Paul said if anything was owed by the slave, that it should be charged to his personal account and he would make it good on his return. He was willing to take upon himself all indebtedness incurred by the slave and pay it himself.

Isaiah gave a prophetic picture of the suffering of Christ. In the 53rd chapter believers are given the picture of Christ being afflicted or wounded. In a sense each wound or bruise was being absorbed to pay for the sins and indiscretions of those who would follow him at a later time. It is because of Christ's suffering on Calvary that we have an opportunity to be healed. Through it he stores up enough credit in heaven to be able to pay the debt for our transgression, thus prompting the phrase, "and with his stripes we are healed."

Picks up the ticket

The goodwill and benevolence of our Lord has made it possible for us to have a chance for salvation. He has picked up our ticket in so many ways.

HE FORGAVE US: All of us have sinned, whether we are preachers in the pulpit or ushers at the front door, all have sinned. We are unworthy to eat at the table that Christ set before us because we have made so many mistakes in life. We are all guilty of some bad judgments, dumb acts, stupid deeds, and just plain sinful deeds. What Christ did for all of us is the same thing he did for the woman in John 8:11. There, a woman had been caught in the very act of adultery.

Her sins were undeniable because she had been caught and observed. Though she deserved to be stone Jesus said in John 8:11 "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin, no more." He gave that woman a second chance, just as he has given each of us a second, third and fourth chance. What mistakes have we made? What did they indicate about us? It showed that we are very human. Given the right set of circumstances, anyone of us could easily, commit adultery, steal, cheat, act foolishly with our spouses, or fail to act in loving ways. These human weaknesses within put us at odds with God. Christ forgives us and puts the punishment for our weakness

on his account, picks up our ticket and gives us another chance.

HE RAISED US: Despite our best efforts sometimes we are crippled in our efforts to pick ourselves up and walk on our own. Whether it's in our educational pursuits, struggles to build our families, keep our business afloat or just to survive the rigors of the school campus; we are often crippled. We are tempted to pity ourselves as we sit and say, "no one will help us." We look at our race or the side of the track in which we were born and start to make excuses for our inability to stand tall. Then, along comes Christ who inspires us to rise up and start again. In John 5 a cripple man sat by the pool of healing waters for 38 years trying to his chance but never found anyone to help him get to the healing waters first. Jesus came and asked him if he desired to be made whole and told him to take up his bed and walk. The man was healed. We are familiar with John 5:11 where Jesus tell him to "take thy bed and walk" but verse 14 doesn't get that much attention, it occurred a few days after the healing, Jesus told him "Behold thou art made whole, sin more, lest a worse thing happen." What has caused us to slip so much? Was it lack of determination, commitment or focus? What caused us to sit by idly? What the power of God does, if we will let him, is to put us back on our feet again. He raises up our hope, enthusiasm and drive to the point that we want to try again. Once given enough chance, he says to us point blank: I have forgiven you another chance, whatever it was that you did to get yourself in this fix, don't do it anymore! Through his blood he paid the price for our failures and will raise us up, if we will let him.

HE SAVED US: We are able to enjoy salvation today because Christ died for us. Isaiah noted he was wounded for our transgressions but our salvation is not in the torturous stripes placed on his back, as necessary as they were; but rather in his death on the cross. Romans 5:8 says, "..While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." When he died for us on Calvary, what he said to us in no uncertain terms was, "I am picking up your ticket." When you stand before the judgment you will find your bill already paid with a check drawn on the bank of heaven and endorsed by the blood of Calvary. He's got our ticket

Paul said to Philemon if you find that Onesimus owes you anything, put that on my account. If he has taken anything from you, put that on my account.

What Paul said to Philemon about his runaway slave is exactly what Jesus says to those who have been slaves to sin.

I hear Jesus in a sense saying, "If you've been burdened by the heavy weight of sin, bring me all your tickets."

"Come unto me that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Bring me the tickets that deal with weakness of your flesh, and I will give you rest!

Bring me the tickets that have destroyed your sense of personal worth, and I will give you rest!

Bring me the tickets that have wrecked your happy home and taken away your joy, and I will give you rest!

He can pick up our ticket because 2000 years ago Jesus:

—Our friend that never forsakes us!

—Our Shepherd that never overlooks us!

—Our Supplier that never quits!
—Our Joy that never subsides
—Our Hope that never fades
—Our rock in a weary land
Picked up an old rugged cross and died on Golgotha's hill!
But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his his!
"I got your ticket, in my hand!"

No. 9337-Deliverance

In the time of trouble who will bail me out?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 28, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD." Psalm 27:5-6

Introduction

As you watch the news do you get the idea that we are facing a time of trouble? There are troubles on the foreign front as our nation responds to threats from Iran and Afghanistan and tries to restore Iraq. There are troubles domestically as prices keep rising, jobs keep disappearing and our financial security gets threatened.

These are tough economic times. In September of 2008 we saw big financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch stumble. We heard other big company names including AIG and other huge conglomerates, facing trouble too.

For most of us, all of this is confusing because we can't figure out how it affects us.

In short, many of the big companies made loans to banks and other big companies in the billions of dollars. Most of the loans were secured by portfolios of loans made to purchase and build houses. Now, that many have defaulted on their mortgages, folks are losing their homes left and right. The banks and big financial companies now have loans that they can't repay and millions of dollars in foreclosed homes that they can't sell.

That means nobody wants to loan money to anybody, even one bank to another. New business can't open, new loans are hard to get, money is drying up, unemployment looms and times are getting tougher.

Experts say it will take $5 trillion to solve the problem; and they are guessing that $700 billion plug the hole for a while.

If all of that sounds frustrating, just remember that all of these tough times have been predicted in scripture. It is a sign of the last days.

Revelation 13:17 says, "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

That prediction means that as the last days of this life approach, it will get harder to buy, sell or conduct business; the beast will be in our business.

When we are face with these hard times how should we respond? Should we dig in or bail out?

The notion of bailouts makes those not privy the circles of high finance nervous because somehow we that while such talk is merciful and compassionate, it doesn't apply to me. Instead, it conjures up images of someone being saved at the considerable risk of loss to others. During World War II army air force rescue pilots carried "bail out" kits with them on every mission. The kits contained: a chocolate bar, chewing gum, fishing line, fish hooks, safety pins, matches, a saw blade, whetstone, a sling shot, bottle of mercurochrome, eye salve, sulpher tablets, eye salve, gauze and other items. The pilots were trained to save themselves and never went on a mission without a bailout kite design to make sure that they survive with a little damage as possible. Whenever large companies face collapse, many people suspect that the pilots of these big companies have bailout kits to save themselves, even if their planes go down and everyone else loses. That's what makes people nervous.

If we have ever faced a time a trouble, we are facing it now. People are losing their homes by hook or crook. Prices are soaring above our ability to pay and unemployment is rising. There are many who are tempted to "bail when life fails!" Today, the word of God reminds us that even in this time of trouble God is still in control.

As Christians, we are confident that whatever the crises; on land or sea, that our heavenly father watches over us. In a time of trouble he shall shelter us and protect us in his secret place and will ultimately lift us up.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains his confidence that God would readily be available to help him in a time of trouble.

David was familiar with troubling times. His entire life, at some point or another, seemed to be surrounded by a variety of troubles that ranged from attacks by animals, or giant sized villains.

As a child he attended the flocks of his father and was faced with troubling situations repeatedly. Wild animals such as lions and bears came to attack his sheep, David responded to each instance by staying calm and taking control. Even when he faced the giant Goliath, David knew what to do. His life was in imminent danger, yet he displayed confidence. As a musician for King Saul his life was often threatened as the King threw his spear at him in rages of jealousy. As a hunted outlaw he was repeatedly surrounded by the armies of King Saul and faced life-threatening circumstances in every circumstance. David remained calm, did what was necessary, and always called on God.

In the 27th Psalm David responded to trouble in two ways. The first aspect of his plan was to trust in God. His statement of trust was in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." That statement was an affirmation of his belief that God was

in control of every circumstance, every situation and every emergency. In Psalm 27:5 David maintains that he would seek protection and security in the presence of God. This was significant because in biblical times the temple was a place of sanctuary. Invaders, even soldiers respected it as holy ground. Those who found refuge in the house of the Lord found security and safety from their enemies. One of David's descendants, young King Joash found this to be true because he was hidden from enemies in the sanctuary for six years. (2 Kings 11:3)

In the temple or in the presence God David offered sacrifices, worship and an upright spirit. Regardless to what when on around him or how the world came against him, he found solace in the presence of God.

When trouble came David was prepared to respond. He was confident in God, knew what to do, and most importantly, that in his time of trouble, God was able to bail him out.

God's Bailout Plan

Whenever large financial institutions face crises there is always talk of bailing them out, protecting them or shoring up their operations. We hear the discussions on the news but have difficulty relating to bailout discussions because they never involve us personally. While everyone is concerned about bailing out the rich and affluent, is there anyone concerned the lowly retiree who may be forced to re-enter the job market in their golden years because of financial failures in other places. Who will bail him out? Who will bail out the couple who is struggling to keep their little business open but can't because of the rising cost of supplies? Who will bail out the struggling parent who doesn't live on Wall Street or main street, but in a back alley saddled with rising bills and very little income? Is there a bailout plan for the righteous, god fearing family that seeks to do God's will? Today, brothers and sisters, the word of God reassures us that in the time of trouble, if no one else will, God will bail you out!

CONSIDER DAVID'S CONFIDENCE: In times of trouble we must consider David's confidence. He surely trusted that God would not abandon the righteous. In difficult times it is this feeling of confidence that inspires the believer to say "all is well." Even when those around them are panicking believers are able to stand boldly, assured that God is still on the throne and still hears and answers prayers. Such confidence inspires believers to sing the words of the songwriter, "The Lord will make a way somehow.

Like David our confidence is rooted in the knowledge that God knows the troubles that we face and he will show up and act out his will. We can say that confidently because God has actually moved and acted in our lives. He has made ways for us. He has opened doors for us and made a way out of no way. Thus, in troubling times we act in confidence because we know that our God is able.

This spirit of confidence might be what the song writer had in mind when he penned the words: "Jesus knows all about our struggles, he will guide till the day is done; There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, no not one; no not one!"

DAVID TOOK CORRECTIVE ACTION: David took action to correct inequities within his power. In some instances, David was the instrument of forgiveness and compassion. In others, it was necessary to correct himself that he might be able to act quickly to resolve a national dilemma. That's what happened in the 51st Psalm when David declared, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." The principle is thus established: If you want God to bail you out, you must take corrective action. There are many upset with government bailouts because often the public loses. In 1971 we lost $19 billion bailing out Penn Central Railroad; in 1984 we lost $185 million bailing out Franklin National; we lost $1.8 billion bailing out Continental Illinois Bank. Just this year alone we have bailed out Bear Stearns, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, and AIG at a cost of $330 billion. Now there is consideration of a $700 billion bailout of assets from a grab bag of companies.

The biblical model requires corrective action and humility if we want to be bailed out. On a personal level, if we want God to bail us out, we too must take corrective actions. We can't expect God to bail us out if our people, places and things remain the same. We must humbly correct ourselves. 2 Chronicles 7:14 makes it plan, "If my people which are called by name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

DAVID NEVER STOPPED PRAISING GOD: David resolved to continue praising God even though times were troubling. In Psalm 27:6 he says, "And now shall my head be lifted up..I will sing praises unto the Lord." It's important for believers to lift up their heads in times of trouble. Believers are not defeated, although they may endure setbacks or difficulties. The defeated are those who have no God on their side. We raise our heads because we know that our God is working behind the scenes to help us correct our situation. We raise our head because we are sure that all things work to the good of those who love the Lord.

David emphasized the immediacy of his response by noting "And now.." That is a statement of faith in the time of trouble, not some undetermined date.

"And now.." is an assertion of a sure response. Believers should assume the same posture. "And now" in the midst of the crises, we will lift up our heads and praise the God of our salvation as we remember David's words in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." In response, we will lift his name up high for he is a good God and his mercy endureth forever."

God will bail you out

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should note that if you are willing to humble ourselves, correct our deficiencies and remain loyal to God, he will bail you out!

When trouble was all around him David called on the Lord. In Psalm 121 we hear him declare, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

That means, just stay prayed up and remember that God is still on the throne, he

is able to deliver us!

The Hebrews faced death in the fiery furnace but the Lord cooled the flames and bailed them out!

Daniel was lowered in the den of lions, but the Lord turned them into kittens and bailed him out!

A woman caught in the act of adultery was about to be stoned, but Lord challenged her self-righteous accusers to cast the first stone, and then he bailed her out!

The woman at the well told the whole city, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done." She was excited because the Lord had bailed her out!

When the Lord bails you out:

—IMPOSSIBLE can become possible; the IMPROBABLE becomes probable

—MOUNTAINS that stand in your way can be reduced to MOLEHILLS!

—ROUGH PLACES can be made plain, crooked places can be made straight!

Let us approach these difficult times with confidence that, come what may from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

If I fall down, he'll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!

If I stumble, he'll hold my hand!

If I can't find my way, he'll guide me! That's why I'll say, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty; hold me with thou powerful hand!"

With a little help from the Lord..the weary can be at rest!

With a little help from the Lord..the lonely can get comfort for their souls!

With a little help from the Lord..the weak can find new strength!

In tough times call on Jesus!

Call on Jesus because he can:

-Rebuild what Satan has destroyed

-Recover what Satan has stolen

-Clarify what Satan has confused

-Beautify what Satan has made ugly

-Release what Satan has bound

Before time began God had a bailout plan. But he didn't put it in the hands of Republicans or Democrats, bankers of financial analysts; he put it in the hands of his son!

And whosoever believeth on him shall be saved

He lived down here for 33 long years!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave

And he's ready to bail you out!

No. 9338-Revival

Living On the Downlow before an upright God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 12, 2008

SCRIPTURE: Romans: 7:3-5 " So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

Introduction

Do you know anyone who is living on the downlow? The downlow is a term that was popularized around 2001 to describe men who lived normal heterosexual lives but maintained secret lives just the opposite of their public persona. Their alternate lives, kept hidden, disguised their propensity for the gay life. Their traditional lives made it difficult to discover or even suspect them of embracing an alternative arrangement. The shocking reality split families and marriages when it became known that they were living on the DL.

In one life they are married men with beautiful wives and children. They are often professional men whose reputations in professional circles are impeccable. They are active in their churches and are considered stalwart examples of the traditional family. Yet, in their alternative life they have a fascination for men and frequent establishments, web sites and gatherings that facilitate easy encounters.

As an increasing number of monogamous black women, married and faithful to one man, started contracting the AIDS virus, the DL activity was revealed as a culprit. The stats prompted an investigation. Something was wrong when 2/3 of the women in the United States who discovered they had AIDS were black. The connection is easily made. The Center for disease control says 1 in 3 black men who have sex with another male partner contract AIDS. Those on the DL bring it home to their wives.

Living on the DL is the 21st century term for living in the closet, except it now applies to married men as well. There are literally millions of men in America who are living on the DL according to NY Times Magazine.

If that revelation is thought provoking, consider this question. Is it possible to

be a part of the family of God, but also have another entirely separate family that is not of God? Is it possible that there are millions of men and women who believe in God, attend church and may even be church leaders but they secretly live another life, in the world, outside of the prying eyes or knowledge of the church?

As Christians, we strive to remain faithful to Christ. He is our all and all and there is none other beside him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the Romans explaining that believers are now married to Christ and are dead to the world.

Jews who became Christians had to establish a new relationship with God. Prior to becoming Christians they adhered to the teachings of Moses, known as the law. The law consisted of the 10 commandments and about 600 more. They strictly ordered their lives to living the letter of the law. They were faithful to the law in every respect. For all practical purposes they were married to the law. Using that example, Paul told them that when Christ died on the cross that relationship with the law died. It was the same as a person who had been once married and their partner died. They are now free to marry another. Christians, said Paul are now married to Christ, not bound by the law.

Because Christians are married to Christ they are no longer married to sin. They have forsaken the world and committed themselves to living for Christ: for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, until death separates us.

Our relationship with the world responds to our flesh. However, in our new relationship with Christ we are spiritually monogamous.

Jesus remains the center of our joy.

Down Low Living

Living on the downlow is repugnant and offensive to those affective. Yet, living on the spiritual downlow is just as offensive to God.

There are two levels of living on the spiritual downlow:

THE CHRISTIAN WHO CHEATS ON CHRIST WITH THE WORLD: The first method of downlow living involves the Christian who is a part of the family of God, but secretly embraces the world. When we speak of the spiritual downlow, the subject can either be male or female. She is the one who loves the church and works in its ministries, but has an affair with the world every weekend. He is the one who devotes time and energy to worship, praise and personal growth, but also has an affair with drugs, alcohol and worldly pleasure. It's the worshipping college student that believes in God but also believes in the party life as well. It's the young person who aspires to the Christian life on Sunday but stays far away from it on Monday. When that happens we are on the spiritual downlow. We are married to Christ but we cheat on him with the world.

The Christian (not just Church member) who cheats on Christ usually finds it difficult to do in good conscience. He may convince himself that his actions for Christ in ministry give him a free pass to sin in his other life, but on the inside he knows God is not pleased. There is a war going on internally because a true believer can't sin in peace. The word of God says in Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." That means that when we are saved, God works on our spirit and conscience. He whips us until we repent.

Paul referred to this war in Romans 7:15-20, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

When we became Christians our old relationship with the world died. Our woman chasing; died. Our drinking and gambling; died. Our party life, died. Our lives of crime and deceit; died. That old marriage to the world was broken when it was nailed to the cross of Christ and we were buried with him in baptism. Romans 6:6 puts it this way, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." When the angels in heaven see us kissing up to the world their reaction is the same as the one we have when we see to men kissing…uggh! That's Nasty! Living on the spiritual downlow is repugnant to God.

THERE ARE SOME IN THE WORLD ON THE DOWNLOW: Just as there are many in the church who are cheating on God, there are many in the world who secretly believe in God, but don't want it really known. There are millions of people who are closet believers. Even though they are living a truly deviant life, something inside of them keeps pointing them to God. They read the bible. On occasion they slip away and go to a church service. They even help ministries of the church financially. In their private moments they abhor the life they live but seem as though they can't break free.

There are some who really want to break their ties with the devil but they are ashamed to let anyone know that they have been kissing up to the devil for so long. They are ashamed because their friends will laugh and ridicule them. They are ashamed to admit that they are not really as mean, tough, thuggish and worldly as everyone thinks. They are ashamed to admit that they need God to help them.

For this reason some are trying to live on the flip side of the spiritual downlow: They want to give the appearance of worldliness but get them a relationship with God at the same time. It's the relationship with God that they want to keep secret. Yet Christ made it plain that he expects those who follow him to let it be known to others. In Luke 9:26 he said, ""For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come into his own glory…" Christ told his disciples that those who are ashamed to own him before men, those who keep their true feelings about him locked up in the closet, that he would be ashamed to own them

before his father which is in heaven. Christ wants us to come out of the closet. He wants us to turn from our wicked ways and he will forgive and make a change in your life.

Before the most high God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember there is no blessing in living on the downlow, but in living faithfully before the most high God.

While Paul talked to the Romans about dying in Christ and turning loose the old worldly life, he also talked about being resurrected with Christ to a brand new life.

In Romans 6:5 he said, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

That means if we have died to the horrors of the old life, we have been resurrected to a new life that is lived faithfully in the presence of the most high God.

I don't know about you but I'd rather live a day in the presence of an upright God than a thousand years downlow.

I'd rather lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help, than to keep living in hell downlow.

I'd rather stand up and praise the most high God than celebrate certain death with the demons downlow.

There is a blessing to serving an upright God.

Because he is an upright God, if I have a:

—PROBLEM he has a solution: QUESTION he has an answer

—THIRST he has the living water; WORRY he has a consolation

—CRISES he has the miracle I need

You might choose to take the down road, but as for me and my house, we'll take the high road because that's where Jesus is.

Living on the downlow is to live in sin.

Living on the downlow is to take something that is good and turn it into something evil.

Living on the downlow is to take something that's holy and turn it into something vulgar.

Living on the downlow is to take something that's pure and turn it into something corrupt.

Living on the downlow is to take something that is precious and turn it into something worthless.

Some might choose to live on the downlow but I think I rather be blessed in the presence of the most high God.

His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

His name is Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning!

No. 9339-Inspiration

Which way are you running?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2008

SCRIPTURE: Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." -1 Kings 12:28; But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself constantly running? Have you made some serious decisions about the direction in which you are running. We are all running trying to get somewhere but it looks like we're going nowhere fast.

We are running to work, school, meeting, appointments, rehearsals, practices, and assignments. It seem that most of our lives are spent running.

We're busy running trying to move up in the world without ever really deciding which way is really up.

Is it possible that we could be running but not in the right direction? Consider the country boy who became fed up with backwoods life. In all his life, he'd been no further than the country store and he decided that it was time for him to move up. He packed his suitcase and bid his parents farewell. Before leaving his mother, aware that he'd never been anywhere before, advised him to "keep your eye on the Silver Eagle, #402 it passes here every day going straight to Chicago." The boy kept his mother's advice in mind. He never took his eye off the Silver Eagle. Even in the huge depot with scores of other Silver Eagles, he kept watching train number 402. He boarded the train and laid down in the sleeping car and fell fast asleep. When he awoke the next morning he expected to be near Chicago. However, instead of Chicago he learned that the train was pulling into New Orleans. Upset he ran to the conductor and said, "I kept my eye on the train just like mama said, #402. What I am doing here in New Orleans?" The conductor answered. In the mornings the 402 is South Bound on Track 2, in the evenings it's Southbound on Track 1. I'm sorrow to tell you young fellow, but it looks like you're on the right train, but you're on the wrong track!"

As Christians, when we consider all of the running we do, we should make sure that we are running toward God and not away from him..

Exposition

This text focuses on an ambitious young king who wanted desperately to move up in the world, but took the wrong road.

Jeroboam was a man of great talent an ambition. He rose to prominence as the chief foreman of Solomon's laborers as they worked to build the temple. He did such a great job that he was quickly promoted. He was everywhere, running hard to prove his superior administrative skills. He was promoted but he wanted to go even higher. He capitalized on the complaints and grumblings of the people and tried to organized them to revolt against the king but was discovered. He ran away to Egypt until after the death of Solomon. When 10 of the 12 tribes revolted against the rule of Solomon's son Rehoboam, they remembered Jeroboam and made him king.

Jeroboam was running fast. He had position, power and money but to maintain his position he went to serious extremes. First, he was aware of the loyalty that the people attached to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. The people loved to worship God so much that they walked for days and weeks just to sit within his presence at the temple. Even though most traveled down from the Northern Kingdom to worship at Jerusalem, they always referred to their journey as going "up" to Jerusalem. In nearly every scriptural passage in the bible that refers to journeying to Jerusalem, the journey is referred to as going "up." They referred to Jerusalem as "up" for two reasons. First, because the city sat squarely on two mountains: Mt. Moriah and Mt. Zion. Any person coming to Jerusalem would have to climb up. Secondly, the designation of "up" to Jerusalem indicates the high esteem that the people placed on the city as the place where they worshiped God.

This posed a problem for Jeroboam. If the people of the North held a spiritual tie to his rival in the South eventually, he felt, they would once again become a part of the Southern kingdom. His solution was to get them to run in a different direction.

To do that he changed the direction of 'up." The people would appear to be worshipping but they would actually never get to be in God's presence because they would be running in the wrong direction.

How did he do that?

He erected two golden calves for the people to worship. He placed one at Dan in the North and the other at Bethel in the South. These were to be the shrines of public worship for the people. Theologians differ as to whether he intended to introduce idol worship or to give his people a visible shrine before which to worship. No one doubts however, that he intended to dissuade Israel from going "up" to Jerusalem.

He devised a cute trick to keep the people running in what appeared to be worship but was actually a misguided devotion to an idol god. They were on the right train, but on the wrong track.

Isaiah 40:31 tells us a great truth. If we wait on the Lord we shall have renewed strength to soar like eagles and run without being weary. Even if we walk a great

distance we will not faint. Our challenge is to be sure that we are running and walking in the right direction.

Which way are you running?

Today there are many people who are similar to Jeroboam in that they are ambitious and desire to move up and they are running in many directions. The desire to move up was not Jeroboam's problem. There is no scriptural ban on prosperity, ambition and success. His problem was that he was willing to do just about anything to move up and then once up, would compromise himself to stay up. In that respect there are many today who are just like Jeroboam who concluded that the ends justify the means.

There should be no confusion on our part as to the direction of our run. Every Christian should know exactly where he or she is going in life. That implies that we should also know where we are NOT going as well. In our quest to move up we should be careful to avoid undertakings that might cause us to run in the wrong direction.

Career opportunities often place many young adults in awkward positions. Many take on great responsibilities to advance their careers, usually at the expense of their family life. If we move up on the job and make more money but lose our family, shouldn't it be time to stop and ask, in which direction am I running?

Sometimes our careers seriously disrupt our religious life. Families accustomed to worship, working in the church, bible study and other activities are placed in the cumbersome position of choosing between their careers and their religious life. If we are running ourselves into the ground trying to move up on the job but lose our relationship to God, it may be time for us to question the direction in which we are running.

We should resolve that we are not going run anywhere or any direction that will take us further away from God. We shouldn't stop running, but we should be sure that we are running in the right direction.

Run in the direction of God

Jeroboam's problem was complicated because the people saw Jerusalem as the place where they found God. Although he built statues and gave royal decrees he found that he could not successfully change the direction of "up" because going "up to Jerusalem" represented going to be with God.

In today's perplexing times many are really confused and do not know which way to go. They are asking themselves the question: "What shall I do? Which road should I take?" In essence they are asking the question "In which direction should I run?"

In answer to that question the answer comes: "Run to wherever God is?" If God is not in it, we are running in the wrong direction.

If we are running to make millions, but God is not in it, then we are running in the wrong direction.

If we are running to build a great house but God is not in it, then we are running the wrong direction.

If we get running to get a new car, and that car will take us away from God, then we are running in the wrong direction.

If we running to get married without the godly values of truth, honesty and love, then God's not in it, we're running in the wrong direction because it'll all fall apart.

We should run to wherever God is!"

If we move up without God then we are on our way down!

No wonder the song writer declares: "Without God, I could do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without God I would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

If you are going to run you have to put on your running shoes you can't run in:

BROGANS because they may cause you to walk on people.

TAP SHOES because all you will do is make a lot of noise

DRESS SHOES because you'll be to pretty to do Lord any good.

DANCE SHOES because you'll party your life away!

HIGH HEELS because you may get too high for lowly work

HOUSE SHOES because you'll never want to leave home

If you are going to run you must put on your running shoes.

Ephesians 6:15 says we should "shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

That means we've got to put our running shoes and run in the right direction!

Joshua, if asked the question, "Which way are running?" might have answered, I'm running to war family devotion to God. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Job, you are suffering a long period of difficulty, Which way are running? I can hear Job answer, ""All the days of my appointed time, I wait until my change comes."

David, which way are you running? Hear him declare, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord, which made the heaven and earth."

Ruth, Which way are running? She answers by saying running in the right direction is following God, "Your people shall be my people, your God shall be my God."

Isaiah, which way are running? I'm running to answer the call of service "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me."

Joshua was running to build a stronger family devotion.

For David running in the right direction was running toward a place of refuge;

For Ruth, running in the right direction was running toward a commitment to follow

For Isaiah, running in the right direction was to answer the call to service...but there is one other we must consider…

What about Jesus?

Jesus, which direction are you running? For Jesus there is only one direction to

run, it's the way to salvation for Acts 4:12, says "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

If you run on and take up your cross , I will lift you up.

For one of these days I'll be lifted up, but don't worry about it for "I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all me unto me."

You are running in the right direction if you feed the hungry and help the poor!

You are running in the right direction if you console the broken hearted and encourage those who have lost hope.

You are running in the right direction if you visit the sick and pray for the lost.

You are running in the right direction if you teach a child and reach soul for Jesus!

You are running in the right direction if you tell somebody about Jesus!

Tell them how he died! Tell them how he rose again!

I don't know about you but I believer I'll run on and see what the end will be!

No. 9340-Revival

Lazarus, Come Forth!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 26, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."—John 11:43, 44.

Introduction

Do you believe in Zombies? Most of us have seen movies at one time or another about these fabled lifeless creatures who walk the streets terrorizing and destroying everything they touch. During this time of the year there are many movies on television about vampires, zombies and the walking dead.

The idea of Zombies came from the Afro-Caribbean religious belief called Voo-Doo. Many refer to it is "Hoo-Doo." The Voo-Doo belief is that a dead person can be raised by a witch doctor called a Bokor. After being raised the witch doctor can control the actions of the Zombie.

Louisiana is rich with Voo-Doo culture but the rest of the world knows about it through books and movies. In 1968 a scary movie "The night of the Living Dead" really scared a whole generation of teenagers. The Zombies walked the streets with arms stretched out in a mindless cadence. They were hit with boards, shot with guns and set afire but they kept coming. Zombies and Vampires, at least in some of the movies, seemed to have an aversion to the sun. With a few exceptions, they preferred to be creatures of the night. At Halloween, many of the Zombie movies are resurrected and play repeatedly on television.

We laugh at the idea of Zombies, but is it possible for people to be spiritual zombies? Can a person be walking and talking among us and be spiritually dead?

The bible teaches that people who live without Christ are spiritually dead. They walk and they talk among us but they have no life. That's why Jesus came, to make their lives real and to offer them hope.

As Christians, we don't believe in Zombies or Voo-Doo. We put our trust in God and through him we live resurrected lives that are witnesses to his greatness.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus after the death of Lazarus.

In this text, we have an opportunity to see not one but two eternal truths

demonstrated in one incident. Lazarus died and had been in the grave for four days. Jesus had been called by the sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, but he arrived after the death and the funeral had ended.

The text highlights the resurrection of the dead. It gave Christ a chance to demonstrate his power over death and the grave. In old times, the resurrection was preached by the apostles and they were familiar with the idea in theory. Jesus used the death of Lazarus to give them a living example of what the resurrection would really mean.

Christ came to the grave site and told them to roll the stone away. He then called out for Lazarus to come forth and instantly Lazarus came forth still wearing his grave clothes. Jesus then commanded that they would loose him and let him go.

However, there is a greater truth. The resurrection of Lazarus is a type of the spiritual death of every believer and his resurrection to a new life at the command of God.

We are Lazarus

Many of us have much in common with Lazarus and with the response of Christ to his situation.

SOME ARE WALKING DEAD: Lazarus had been in the grave for four days and his physical state was deteriorating. When Jesus appeared at the gravesite, he came at the point when everyone around acknowledged that Lazarus was dead. Those who live in sin are dead to real living. Their hopes are dead, their dreams are dead, and their ambitions are dead. For all practical purposes those who live in sin are walking dead. It's the only explanation of why people drink alcohol excessively, although they know it's destroying their organs. It's the only reason why the drug addict would forsake family, and risk personal health to continue on a path that will lead to sudden death. There are millions today who are among the walking dead, virtual zombies, moving around each day without life, but spiritually lifeless. There are marriages that are dead; students who are dead; friendships that are dead; churches that are dead, and whole communities that are dead; and like Lazarus have been done for a long time.

THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY: When Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, he ordered the stone rolled away. John 11:41 says, "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid." The stone was erected in front of the tomb but it wasn't to keep Lazarus in, but to keep others out. For Lazarus to resume a new life, the stones had to be removed. The same is true for anyone that expects to get a new start: the stones must be rolled away. The stones that blocked tombs were huge, if they were moved at all they had to be moved from outside, anyone trapped within would be powerless to move them. It's the same way with a person who is trying to come from an old dead life and step into a new one, he or she needs help outside of themselves. Addictions, distractions, weaknesses and bad habits are huge stones that stand between a new life and the old life. Despite a man's best desires, the stones prove too heavy for a single effort. However, with God these stones can be rolled away. God can give the command on behalf and obstacles that block our path and

make life miserable for us can be removed.

THE DEAD WAS GIVEN NEW LIFE: Though Lazarus was dead, Jesus gave him new life. It's the spirit of God that gives us life. That's what Jesus came to bring to each of us. In John 10:10, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Without God's spirit we are spiritually dead, unmotivated, uninspired, moving through life aimlessly and without purpose. Without God we are powerless to respond to the issues of life with any amount of passion or purpose.

Without him we lack the means necessary to grow and achieve. There are many today who are attempting to live without God, but their best efforts repeatedly result in their joining the growing ranks of the walking dead. What can revive such a person? For Lazarus it was the presence of Christ. For those who are lost, the answer is the same.

WE MUST BE LOOSED: When Lazarus arose, he was alive but he stilled looked dead. The reason that he looked dead was because he still wore his grave clothes. The grave clothes gave him a confusing presence. It was obvious that he was alive but yet he was still tied wrap up and tied up as if he was dead. Jesus commanded that he be loosed. There are many today who have been given new spiritual life, but like Lazarus they are stilled wrapped up in their grave clothes. They still frequent people, places and things that were associated with their death. They are still tangled up in the same doubts and fears that troubled them before they met the Lord. They present a striking contrast. They are saved on one hand but are wrapped up, tied up and tangled up in grave clothes. To have a true witness for Christ we must be loosed from our grave clothes. To follow him freely we must cut loose anything that associates us with our dead life, so that we can have life and have it more abundantly.

A Miraculous Witness

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that once raise, Lazarus became a walking example of the miraculous power of God.

Christ had performed many miracles prior to raising Lazarus. An impotent man was given new strength. A blind man had his sight restored, but the raising of Lazarus was the last of the great miracles. Because Lazarus had been dead so long, it was undeniably a miraculous act that raised him.

Everywhere Lazarus went he became a billboard for the Lord, advertising his power to resurrect the dead and give new life. In a similar sense, we who were once among the walking dead, also become walking reminders of the miracle working power of God.

Those who know what we used to be are convinced of the power of God when they see our new life.

As the spirit of God begins to consume us it impacts us and changes our direction. People will begin to notice that our conversation changes, the places we go change, and the things we do change. They will whisper among themselves.

The devil is not happy when we live our new resurrected life. Crowds followed

Jesus because of Lazarus. John 12:9 says the crowd came to see Jesus but "That they might see Lazarus also."

Everyone won't be happy that you have stopped your old way of living and have turned to Christ. There will be some who will "hate" on you. John 12:10-11 says, "But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."

Lazarus had new life but they tried to kill him all over again because of what Christ had done for his life!

Those who have been raised and given new life have a testimony.
They can testify that God is able to take our
BURDENS and lighten our load!
PROBLEMS and help us find the answers!
DARKNESS and turn it into light!
WEAKNESSES and turn them into strengths!
SET BACKS and turn them into come backs!
STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!
He was able to raise me up and turn me around.
He was able to deliver me!
Who is this deliverer?
His name is Jesus!
The mighty God!
Jesus, The Rose of Sharon!
Who died out on Calvary!
But early Sunday morning arose from the grave!
His name is Jesus and because he lives, we have new life today!

No. 9341-Inspiration

Arise, Barak and set thy Captivity Captive!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2, 2008

SCRIPTURE: Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Judges 5:12

Introduction

Have you ever been so excited about something that you started the celebration early? That's the way it is sometimes in life. It's called anticipation.

Although history has warned us about the dangers of celebrating victories before they are won, there are times when the temptation to celebrate early is tempting. If we get too excited, we can lose focus and what should have been a victory could turn out to be a defeat. Many remember the infamous 1948 election for President of the United States in which Thomas Dewey was ahead in all polls against Harry S. Truman. In fact, the media announced that Dewey was so many points ahead that he was unbeatable. He had the money, the popularity, drew huge crowds and was a shoo-in. Dewey's campaign began celebrating early. They were so confident that the Chicago Tribune published a headline before the polls closed "Dewey Defeats Truman!"-but when it was over Dewey lost, big time.

Remembering history, we know that while it's tempting to celebrate before the victory is won, especially when the victory is obvious to so many, there is a need for caution.

Even with caution, the sheer thought of victory after years of defeat is titillating and exciting.

So whenever these situations exist in our lives we approach them with cautious anticipation and deliberate determination to become completely victorious.

This truth exists in all spears of life. We should never assume victories are imminent and lay down our shields and spears. We should, however, anticipate the victory but remain ever vigilant, watchful and ready to march at a minute's notice.

As Christians, we stand ready to fight this life's battles. We face each one with an anticipation of victory because we sense the hand of God moving. Even as we arise to sing the victory song, we must watch, fight and pray every step of the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on a song of praise for the victory of Deborah and Barak. Barak had routed Sisera, Jabin's captain, and all his hosts. With ten thousand men he had completely demoralized and destroyed his enemies, all that was left was the victory party. Here, Deborah, the great champion of the Judges and Barak the careful, insightful but formidable leader of a great army become the objects of the song of victory that the people sang, since most of the hard work had been done and very little was left to do but celebrate.

This song of victory admonishes Deborah to awake and Barak to rise and claim the victory that will set the captives completely free.

This text focuses on two characters: Deborah and Barak. Deborah was one of the few named women who were called to leadership in the Old Testament. She was a prophetess, a judge and a military leader. As a judge she decided the disputes between the people under "Deborah's tree". As a military leader she actually led men into battle and arose victorious. This text focuses on her role as a prophetess.

In an earlier chapter Deborah was commanded by God to speak to an obscure young man by the name of Barak and tell him that God would use him to assemble a large army of followers for what seemed to be the impossible task of lifting the people to victory against tremendous odds.

He was called to assemble this army from diverse tribes who often opposed each other.

Moreover he had to convince them that they could arise victorious after having suffered defeat for so long. When they complained that the enemy was too great Barak was called to inspire them to remember, "Yes, we can!"

Responding to Deborah's call, the weapons of war were collected and Barak prepared for battle, having little experience, but moving at God's command. Thousands rallied to him from two tribes that were of the same nationality but different interests. However, under Barak, they combined forces to form a mighty army.

Just before it was time to march in victory Deborah presents him with a new song.

This song is a song of victory! It is a song of celebration for the victory of Deborah and Barak specifically, but it is also a type of the song of victory our savior will have when he finally ascends the throne to his great victory over sin, the devil and the grave.

The phrase "set thy captivity captive" is not isolated; it has been used before in scripture. Most often it refers to Christ in his triumph. In Psalm 68:18 David, speaking of the millennial Christ, declares, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." He sees the triumphant day in which the Lord prepares to dwell among men as the ultimate victor. This is the same text referred to in Ephesians 4:8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, " in celebration. This phrase is a forceful expression of victory for our Lord who went into the captivity of death and the grave to arise the victor through his resurrection.

The song's theme "Arise Barak", was a call to rise up and claim the victory. It was also a call to the people to do what needed to be done to insure that the triumphant march succeeded in setting captivity captive.

We Have been held Captive

There are millions in this nation that have been held captive and we wait anxiously for God to make our captivity captive. We long for the day that Amos saw when he declared that "Justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." When the prospect of realizing Martin Luther King's dream seems closer than ever, there is a general excitement in those who have been distant from realizing the American Dream.

The cry "Arise Barak and set thy captivity captive" is a call to arms. It is similar to the call that the Children of Israel gave anytime they engaged in battle. They placed the ark of the covenant in front of them and chanted 'Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.'

While the cry of this text was to Deborah and Barak, we who live on the fumes of hope raise our cry of victory, not to Barak but unto the Lord. From the disenchanted today the cry goes out:

ARISE OH LORD, END OUR HUMILATION. When we as a people make this plea, we follow Israel's example, we put God in front of us and pray to march. We cry out for God to arise and lift the humiliation of our condition. We have been slaves and second class citizens for so long, but it is time for our humiliation to end. We have been the objects of blunted jokes, poison tinged slurs and lynching ropes for so long, Arise oh Lord and end this humiliation. Our prayer to God is that he would usher in a day when no person will be humiliated because of color or ethnicity. We look for the day when we will be judged by the content of our character and not by the color of our skin. This long night of hatred and prejudice has held us captive for so many years, but we get anxious when we can sense the break of day. Our prayer should be that God would rise up and through someone, lead us to a point where our humiliation would end. We look to God for he is the source, he will find the man or woman make this captivity captive.

ARISE OH LORD, END OUR SUFFERING: We make this plea to God because he alone knows what we have suffered. The old warriors sang, "Nobody knows the trouble I see, nobody knows but Jesus." That's why we lift our voices to him. He knows our suffering. He has seen the scars on the backs of our great grandfathers, shackled in slavery. He has seen the Native American locked away on a reservation, with both his land and his identity stolen from him. He has seen Asian American shuttled away into little towns of obscurity. He has seen the Hispanic American hated for his willingness to work and desire to be free. He has seen the Jews of this world tortured in ovens in the Holocaust and tortured by public opinion on these shores. He has seen the women of the world pushed to the back seat and treated and non-entities. We cry out to Christ in our prayers and in our songs. That was the cry when the song writer wrote, "Jesus knows all about our struggles He will guide till the day

is done There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus

No, not one! No, not one!" That's why we cry out, Arise oh Lord and end this suffering. We look to God to speak to our suffering. We rejoice, because we know God will find a man or woman to make this captivity captive and set us free.

ARISE O LORD, SET AN END TO OUR DESTRUCTION. We see our families falling down around us. Where can we go but to the Lord? The destruction is so intertwined into our system that it is bigger than we alone can fight and hope fades. Too many of our men are abandoning their families! Too many of our boys are being locked away or killed. Too many of our girls are becoming mothers before they finish being children. Too many of our families are dissolving leaving our children as orphans living in unhappy homes. Too many of our schools are graduating illiterates. Too many of our children are aspiring to live the thug's life and are satisfied to not only live in the ghetto but to have their ghetto in them; with sagging pants and even lower aspirations! We are watching the social order that has sustained us for generations crumbling around us. We have tried government programs, grants, and social initiatives, yet none seem to work. That's why we look to God and cry out, Arise oh Lord and end this destruction. Before the destruction can stop, hope must be restored, we must begin to believe in ourselves again. That's why we look to God, to inspire and motivate us to see that we can do better! We can rise higher! We can overcome. We look to god to speak to this destruction in his own way. We are singing Deborah's song with anticipation because we can sense that God will, in his own time and in his own way, find a man or woman to make this captivity captive and set us free.

Praise God for Victory!

Finally, brothers and sisters, Deborah's song was a call to victory and triumph.

The victory that Barak was being called to celebrate was not his own, but it was God's victory over the forces that held justice, mercy and compassion captive.

When the Children of Israel marched out of Egypt after 400 years of slavery they celebrated and sang a song of triumph, but it was their exodus they celebrated but God was the victor!

When David danced in the street to celebrate the return of the Ark, he rejoiced, but God was the victor!

When the psalmist declared in the 150th Psalm that we should let "everything that hath breath praise the Lord." He celebrated the goodness of God!

When we think about the goodness of God and what he has planned for those whom he loves we get excited. We have good reason because the scriptures have declared in 1 Corinthians 2:9 "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Arise Oh Lord, alter the paths of events in the world to make our captivity captive!

To insure the victory, the people of God must not become idle. We must fight until the victory is won.

Those who know the Lord must keep busy assured by our confidence that despite

the destruction we see, God is in control.

Arise people of God! We must be busy showing compassion to those who have become the casualties of sin!

Arise people of God! We must be busy praying for the will of God to be known and shown!

Arise people of God! We must be busy raising hope to a world that has been devastated.

Arise people of God we must lift up the cross of Christ! In the cross is a hope that is based on nothing less than the blood of Christ.

That's why the songwriter wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name."

Arise people of God and embrace the faith of Christ! In him the victory lies!

On Christ, the author and finisher of our faith!

On Christ, the one mediator between God and man!

On Christ, the Prince of Peace and Lord of Lords!

Who came and died for us!

On Christ, who arose early on Sunday morning!

On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

9342-Inspiration

The Faith of Barak

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2, 2008

SCRIPTURE:" Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves" Judges 5:1

Introduction

Isn't it amazing how God uses little things and little known people to accomplish his will? In course of our lives we have seen God move in many ways to set sequences of events in motion that resulted in his will being accomplished. Often he selected obscure people who appeared to have little hope of achieving anything significant then turned their lives into tremendous forces for good.

David had no idea that one day he would be King of Israel.

Jeremiah had no idea he would be a prophet and Saul certainly did not expect to be among the greatest missionaries in biblical history. They were all obscure persons who had one thing in common, faith in God and faith in themselves.

When we study the lives of great men and women of the bible it helps us see how their faith translated into action. We also see how God used them to accomplish his will.

In modern times, whether in politics, economics or in our families, men and women of faith can learn a few things from looking at the great heroes of the bible.

As Christians, our desire is to be used by God in the same way that the heroes of scripture were used. They stepped out on faith to tackle impossible odds, confident that if they pursuit was God's will, it could be accomplished.

Exposition

This text focuses on the leadership of Barak as one used by God to accomplish his will.

Who was Barak? He was a military leader of the Old Testament who has been listed among the heroes of faith of all times.

The Children of Israel were subjugated by the Canaanites. They were routed economically and politically and lived second class existences. God selected a woman, Deborah to be the judge or ruler at that time. Deborah, a dynamic personality in her own right, devised a plan to defeat the enemies of Israel and she went to Barak to get his support.

Barak was a charismatic personality. People followed him. He commanded an army of 10,000 men, which at the time was a huge force for Israel considering it subjugation. He lived in Kedesh-Naphtali and is thought to have been a member of the tribe of Issachar. The people of his area of the country had been afflicted the most by the Canaanites. Many had been taken into bondage and held prisoner. Some were killed.

Deborah's plan required a man of courage to execute it because this man would be moving against all odds. He was to move his 10,000 men of Naphtali and Zebulun in the direction of Mt. Tabor while she made moves to attract Sisera's army towards the same place. It was a brilliant plan on paper, but it would take tremendous courage to execute its details. Deborah promised that she would deliver Sisera into Barak's hands.

Barak was deliberative. He considered all of the variables and the danger of taking on such a large adversary as the Canaanites, alone. He told Deborah that he would fight the battle with Sisera but only as a part of troops following her command, as God's appointed leader.

Deborah assured Barak that the expedition would be victorious. He would arise the victor but a woman would actually get the credit for laying the groundwork for the victory.

In obedience, and operating in blind faith in God's anointed, Barak marched his men into battle. When he reached the point of the encounter he rushed his men down the side of a mountain and fought them there. Barak pursed them to Haroshet, determined to defeat this resourceful enemy.

As Barak sought out Sisera to capture him, Sisera was greeted by a woman, Jael who deceived him with kindness and a glass of milk. As he lay down in her tent to rest, the woman took a tent peg and nailed his head to the ground. When Barak arrived he found Sisera lying dead with a tent peg through his head. It was Barak's courage that forced the battle and defeated Sisera's army. It was his faith that caused Sisera to run eventually into the tent of Jael. However, it was a woman, Jael that received the final credit for killing Sisera. She got the credit for the death, but Barak went down in history as a man of faith. When the song of victory was sung in Judges 5:12 Barak's name was listed alongside that of Deborah the prophetess.

Attributes of Barak

There are three attributes of Barak's character that should be noted by every believer:

FAITH TO WORK WITH ALL PEOPLE: Barak is often misjudged. Some have accused him of being too deliberative and cautious because he refused to attack Sisera without Deborah in the lead. They saw it as a man trying to hide behind a woman. However, believers see Barak as a man who wanted to acknowledge and follow God's anointed leader. Barak was a soldier, Deborah was the leader. Barak was not a prophet, neither did he hear from God directly as did Deborah. His request for Deborah to lead was not a hesitation to lead or a desire to hide behind the skirt tails

of a woman. It was his desire to follow God's anointed for the moment, who happened to be a woman.

The ability to accept and work with persons of a different tribe or even a different sex was a unique quality of Barak. In fact, any person today who hopes to succeed cannot be blinded by the incidence of gender and nationality. Just a generation ago, women were considered the weaker sex, incapable of thinking and leading. They were thought of a followers and certainly not leaders. Any man that would take direction from a woman was considered a "wimp." Yet today, the wise leader recognizes the value and importance of women in every walk of life. Barak himself was from Issachar but lived in Naphtali. He as a man of two regions and pulled the best of both regions together to form the mighty army that would lead the nation to victory.

USED AS AN INSTRUMENT OF GOD: Both Deborah and Barak were instruments of God's plan. 1 Samuel 12:11 lists Barak as being among those that God used to deliver Israel "from the hands of your enemies on every side so you lived securely." The source of the victory was God, not Barak, he was only an instrument. Even today, God uses people, causes and even nations as instruments to accomplish his will. For Israel in Egypt, Moses was the instrument. For Israel facing the Promised Land, Joshua was the instrument. And today God uses people as instruments to accomplish his will. People of faith allow themselves to be used as an instrument in God's hands to lift the downtrodden and improve the quality of life of the masses. When the poor are fed by missionaries, God has responded using the volunteers in homeless shelters and disaster centers around the world as his instruments.

In our time, the nation is suffering economic devastation. There is a famine of trust and hope seems lost. In response to the prayers of millions, God, from time to time, has raised up men and women that he has used as instruments to address the concerns of the nation. Sometimes those leaders were unaware that they were instruments of God, but people of faith recognized their role immediately.

Barak was an instrument of God in this text. Even today, there are millions of Baraks that are allowing themselves to be used as instruments for God's will. These are the millions who are visiting the sick, feeding the poor, helping the homeless, visiting the jails and listening to wounded spirits. There are even a few that are being used to change governments and even nations as instruments in the hands of God. People of God can see God moving when we see these people arise on the scene. Like an excited Israel when Moses appeared, we too are excited because it means God is responding to our needs.

GOD WENT BEFORE HIM: At first, Barak was hesitant about taking on such a great campaign. Defeating Sisera would be a formidable task. Then Deborah asked a question in Judges 4:6-7. Hasn't God commanded you to respond? That's what she asked. Then she told him to take 10, 000 men and not worry about the victory. God spoke through her to Barak and said, "I will deliver them into your hand." Barak went forth but the victory was already guaranteed. God had already set the forces at work that would guarantee his win. God had arranged the tent for Sisera to sleep in. He had the tent peg in the right place and God had arranged the route that Sisera would flee and the woman that would bring him milk. All Barak had to do was act, the

victory was guaranteed.

It is the same today. When God commands believers to act, he goes before us to insure that his will is done. The necessary doors that need to be opened will be opened. Traps will be avoided. Plots will be circumscribed. When God commands, he goes ahead to insure that what he has promised comes to fruition. This is how God works. He raises up an instrument, commands, then goes ahead to insure that the instrument achieves its ultimate purpose. Whether it is a personal matter in our families or a national matter dealing with millions, when God goes before those whom he has decided to use as his instruments, victory is a certainty. Our God is a living God, who anticipates and goes before us. God has always been ahead of those he selected for a cause, whether it was Moses who was crossing the Dead Sea, whether it was the disciples who had to go with Jesus to face the cross and the Resurrection, whether it was Paul on his journeys or whether it was Deborah going into battle, God was always ahead, paving the way.

The Path to Victory

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God shows those he appoints the path to victory.

Deborah told Barak that God had gone ahead and guaranteed the victory and responded although he could not see how that would be achieved.

Have you not heard the story of the man who wanted to explore the jungles of Africa on a Safari. The region he wanted to explore had rarely been traveled and there was no map. When he went to a local village to hire a guide they pointed him to an old man who was known as the best guide in the bush. As they set out on the journey the old man, never picked up a map or consulted a drawing but he proceeded straight for the thickest part of the trail. The tourist whispered to one of the African helpers who carried their baggage, "Why is he going through the thickest part of the jungle instead of looking for a path that will take us through. There is nothing there but jungle." Then the young helper looked at him and said. "He is the best guide in the area because he is able to see what is not there. There was once a path but it no longer exists because the jungle has overgrown and taken it back. Only he seems able to see where the path was, and where it leads. You see, my friend, he IS the path. We must follow him."

When God gives the command he creates the path. Christ himself is our path. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man can get to the father except he come by me."

He is the path.

We may walk the path to victory, but it is God who has blazed the trail.

Barak was successful in finding the path to victory because he knew the trailblazer.

Despite our origins and backgrounds, we can find the path to eternal life, if we know the trailblazer.

Even if we come from an obscure background of poverty and despair, we can find

the path if we know the trailblazer!

We can overcome the barriers of race and class and educate ourselves and put others on the right path, if we know the trailblazer!

We can endure the agony of defeat and ecstasy of victory in politics, government and other paths of life, if we know the trailblazer!

We who know the Lord, are not mistaken. We do not place our hopes in the strength of Barak or the courage of Deborah, we place our hope only in the Lord.

While there are many who are path finders and know the right path, there is only one trailblazer. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, " For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus, every path finder knows him by name!

Jesus, follow his path and it will carry us to forgiveness, clean hearts and humble spirits!

Jesus, follow his path and it carry us to repentance and praise of God!

Jesus, follow his path and it will show us the way to salvation!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose after three days, blazed a trail from Calvary to Glory!

He has blazed a trail now, we who have the faith of Barak must rise up and walk in that path!

No.9343-Faith

Yes, We Can!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 9, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

Introduction

Is there anything impossible for God? Is there any height so high that God cannot reach it? Is there any river so wide that God cannot cross it? Is there any valley so deep that God cannot descend to it? As believers, is there any goal beyond our reach, with God's help. Men and women of faith have known for years that the God we serve is an awesome God. We also know that as long as we stay on his side of any battle, there is nothing that we cannot achieve.

In January of 2008 Baraka Obama electrified the nation when he made a speech after winning the State of South Carolina and used three words that resonated around the nation, "Yes, we can."

Obama achieved an unprecedented victory that night and seemed to symbolize what millions in America wanted to believe. He said, "This election is about the past versus the future. It's about whether we settle for the same divisions and distractions and drama that [pass] for politics today, or whether we reach for a politics of common sense and innovation — a politics of shared sacrifice and shared prosperity," Obama said.

Many across the nation doubted that the jangling discords of national unity could ever been be rejoined but Obama offered hope and crystallized it in the structure of a simple saying that has been chanted around the world since. Millions chanted it for months in barbershops, beauty shops, street corners, and from pulpits. Eleven months later they chanted it in their hearts as they voted with their ballots and made Obama the first African-American President of the United States.

What Obama said was,

"Don't tell me we can't change. Yes, we can.

Yes, we can change. Yes, we can.

Yes, we can heal this nation.

Yes, we can seize our future.

And where we are met with cynicism and doubt and fear and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of the

American people in three simple words — yes, we can."

The three words Senator Obama used that night electrified the nation as millions watching by television chanted them along with him, "Yes we can!"

While Obama's statement was made in a political context, the same can be said outside of the political arena, especially for those who believe in God.

The idea of achieving the impossible seems illogical and improbable to those outside of the faith community. They see mountains and throw up their hands in defeat asking, why? People of faith see mountains and begin to climb them asking, why not? The difference is obviously in our faith in God. We believe that God is all powerful and that through Him we can achieve the impossible.

God didn't have a candidate in the 2008 campaign. God is neither Republican nor Democrat. God has a stake in raising the lost hopes of his people. He has a stake in the outcome of our lives. We're sure he wasn't wearing a campaign button or taking sides in any election, but he will definitely be on the side of a believer who is trying to accomplish his will.

As Christians, we continue to trust God to provide for our needs. We also trust Him to help us achieve in life, according to His purpose. With that knowledge we are able to stand and boldly say, "Yes we can!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he responded to a plea for help from a man whose son suffered from a severe illness. He seemed possessed by demons. The father had approached Christ's disciples but they were not successful in removing the demons.

When the man saw Jesus he approached him with his dilemma, but he approached with an attitude of doubt. The man said his son had experienced near-fatal convulsions from childhood. All attempts by others to heal him had failed. The failure of so many to heal him, even the failure of the disciples, had shaken his faith that anything could be done.

Jesus challenged the man by noting his use of the word "If" when he approached him. The "If "in this context should not have been addressed to God but rather to his own doubts.

The doubting man had three words: "If you can." There were only three of them but these words formed a barrier that delayed the response he should have received from heaven. Jesus took up the father's words of doubt, If You can, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible. Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: Everything is possible for him who believes.

This action brings to focus an essential component of our faith, that as long as God is the object of our faith, anything is possible.

Triggering Our Faith

OUR FAITH TRIGGERS ACTION: Our faith often triggers our action. Without faith we come to a complete standstill. Consider the man who sat on a park bench for 40 years and did absolutely nothing. One day a friend asked, "What has kept you on this bench these 40 years?" The man answered, "If." Asked to explain he said, "If I had gone to college, I might have graduated and bought a house. If the financial markets collapsed then I might have lost my home and become homeless. I walk because if I ride the bus the bus driver might have wreck. If I get hurt in the wreck I would have a major problem because I have no insurance, so I walk. I sit in the park because if I sit inside, the roof could fall in and that would mean plenty of trouble. So you see, if has kept me on this bench for 40 years." The friend then gave an insight trying to help him see the error of his thinking. "You obviously have faith in something," said the friend. "For 40 years you have sat on that bench but never doubted what would happen if it fell." The man thought about that an immediately stood up, and spent the last 20 years of his life standing in the park, afraid of what might happen if he sat down."

What hinders us from achieving any goal? Wondering about "what if" is usually the culprit. Many are so afraid of failure that they hardly try and even if they do they listen to the pundits and detractors who tell them how impossible their goal is to achieve. The Lord can do everything; but when He has a rule, that according to our faith so shall it be unto us, our unbelief ties the hands of His Omnipotence. Because we refuse to ring the doorbell of opportunity, he never answers.

OTHERS HAVE ACHIEVED, YOU CAN TOO: Often we read of the accomplishments of others with faith. Hebrews 11 is filled with long lists of believers who have successfully acted on faith. Sometimes, however we can find ourselves believing that God acted in the lives of others but doubt that he can act in our lives. We see what they did and rejoice in their achievement but we have trouble believing that we can do the same. We hear of and celebrate the exploits of others who have acted on faith; how they overcame; how they were strengthened in moments of weakness; how they were revived once dispirited; and how they endured despite great persecutions; but we say in our hearts, "That can't happen to me because I'm not a great saint, I'm a nobody. " In that instant we demonstrate our lack of faith and the door of opportunity shuts. In reality, there is nothing that one saint achieves, through Christ, that you cannot achieve. Spurgeon says, "There is no elevation of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no clearness of assurance, no post of duty, which is not open to you if you have but the power to believe." Believing in yourself and trusting in God is essential. To climb higher we must rise to the dignity of our true position through faith in God. One song writer said, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you." If others can, you can too.

IT MAY HAVE BEEN TRIED, TRY AGAIN: Many today fail to try because others before them tried and failed. The person who succeeds does not ignore the failures of the past but studies them and tries again avoiding the mistakes of the past. Frederick Douglass was the first African-American vice-presidential candidate.

Afterwards Shirley Chisholm ran for President followed by Julian Bond, who was too long, Jesse Jackson, and Alan Keys. They all failed, but that didn't mean it couldn't be done. Obama learned from each person's failure and rose quickly confident that it could be done. The father that approached Jesus had experienced failure repeatedly. He approached Christ with a great "if thou." Jesus flipped his words and made them apply to his own faith, Not "If God" but "if thou." In the same context, we should not approach our challenges thinking that they cannot be accomplished. In the past, the father went to everyone except Christ himself. Now standing in front of the savior it was time for doubts to be settled. Jesus' reply to him seems to say, "If thou canst lies not with me, but with thee. It is not if I can, but if thou canst." We receive according to our faith in our ability to achieve with God's help. "It may have been tried, never give up. Try again.

Yes, God Can

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we should never underestimate God's ability to respond to our needs. No matter what problems we have or how dark our nights may be, God can.

After the election of President Obama the news commentators spent days analyzing just how it was done. They presented large charts covered with red states and blue states; they analyzed campaign strategies and considered hundreds of reasons why Obama was successful. However, none of the television analysts put their finger on the right reason.

While they focused on the numbers and voting patterns they forgot to see the unseen hand of God moving in America. God moved to change America for the better. What many missed is the truth that regardless of the outcome of the election America was destined for change, it was a matter of degrees. It would either change slowly in a trickle down conservative approach or it would change abruptly with a more liberal approach. It would change from the top down or it would change from the bottom up. The election decided how it would change, but God decided that it would definitely change.

While some in the nation saw a man a chanted 'Yes, we can" other s saw a powerful God at work and shouted, "Yes, he can!"

As always, our faith is never in a man, but our faith is in God. We have hope that "we can" because we know that God can.

Our father which is in heaven can do anything.

We know we can do anything because we have a father who can:

We have a father who can take

—Sadness and turn it to gladness; Misery and turn it into delight!

—Failure and turn it into success; Loneliness and turn it into happiness!

—Poverty and turn it into riches; Defeat and turn it into victory!

No wonder the song writer wrote: I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece a clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

Anyone who asks the question,"Is God able?" is not acquainted with the Lord and his mighty works.

Is God Able? Ask Abraham and he will respond that when there was doubt that his wife could give him a son in his old age he found out there was nothing too hard for the LORD?

Is God able? Ask Moses who will testify that God can be a bridge over troubling water!

Is God able? Ask the widow woman who was down to a last cup of meal and cup of oil how God keep the barrel from running dry!

Is God able? Ask the three Hebrew Boys who were protected in the midst of the furnace by the cooling wings of the Son of God!

Is God able? Ask Ezekiel who will remind us that God can take dry bones and make them live again!

He has demonstrated his power over and over again, demonstrating that he is able.

Saints, you say "Yes God can" but just what can God do? What is able to do?

Eph 3:20 sys He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"

Philippians 3:21 He "is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

2 Timothy 1:12 "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"

Heb 2:18 He is "able to help them that are tempted."

Heb 7:25 He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God

Jude 1:24is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory

Is God Able?

He's able to take my darkness and turn it to light! Yes he can!

He's able to take my failure and turn it into success! Yes, he can!

He's able to despair and turn it into delight! Yes, he can

I know he's able, because one day, over 2000 years ago, he picked up an old rugged cross...

I know he's able because he died out on Calvary!

I know he's able because early Sunday morning he rose up from the grave!

He's able!

He's able!

He's able to make everything all right!

No. 9344-Inspiration

What's Left in the Ark? Nothing but the promises of God

A sermon by Roosevelt, Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 23, 2008

SCRIPTURE: Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 1 Kings 8:9

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt as though you lost everything? There are situations in which we feel as though all is lost. When they come they are devastating. Sometimes what is lost is tangible, such as possession. Sometimes it is intangible such as the loss of a friend or close relationship. When that happens we are devastated and if we are not careful can easily assume that all is lost.

The believer's attitude in face of loss is always to give God praise and thanks, because we know that as long as he is on the throne he will work our worst situations out to our advantage.

Recently the testimony of a Christian family was reported on national news. The family had suffered a total loss as their home burned in the wake of the California Forest fires. Thousands of acres of land had been destroyed as well as hundreds of homes. The news media questioned many of the survivors about their losses. Many of the survivors gave the same account of houses, automobiles and personal belongings lost. Many of them looked despondent and appeared to be beaten by the tragedy. However, when the news crews interviewed the Christian husband, they were pleasantly surprised. When the question was asked, "After this great fire, what do you have left" the man pulled his family close to him and said, "Our house has burned down to the promises of God, that's all we have left, but that's enough!!"

That answer says it all for believers. As long as we have the promises of God, we have enough.

As Christians, we, like all Americans, are facing difficult times all over the nation. Plants are closing, homes are being lost and savings accounts are being depleted. Some are feeling abandoned and lost, but the faithful see things differently. We don't see what we have lost, but what we have left. What we have left are the promises of God, and that's enough!

Exposition

This text focuses on Solomon as he celebrates the Ark's placement into the temple even though it was missing two of its components.

When Solomon finished the construction of the temple he ordered the Ark of the Covenant to be returned. It was carefully placed on long poles and carried on the shoulders of the priests to its position inside the temple.

The Ark was special to the people. It represented the presence of God. It inspired them and gave them confidence. There were three important items placed inside of the Ark: A pot of manna, which fed Israel in the wilderness for 40 years; Aaron's budding rod, which symbolized God's anointing and appointing of the Levites to provide for religious services and the tablets of stone upon which were written both the commandments and promises of god.

The text notes the pot of manna was not in the Ark. Some have speculated that it was secretly hidden in the mountains and caves by the priests who feared Israel's enemies might destroy it.

Not only was the pot of manna missing but Aaron's budding rod was missing too. Some believe that some of Israel's enemies such as the Philistines or others may have stolen the rod.

While the other two items were missing, the two stone tablets of the Law placed in the ark by Moses were still there. They served to remind the people of the promises of God.

Solomon didn't waste time lamenting what he did not have. He celebrated what was left; which was the promises of God, and that was enough!

God watches over us

In today's difficult times, it is easy for believers to get frustrated. The recent collapse of so many Wall Street financial institutions, the drop in the stock market, the closure of banks, the tightening of credit and the closure of plants and companies across the nation have caused many to become frustrated.

Many have looked at their savings accounts that have dwindled to pennies on the dollar. Many have lost their homes. Many have lost their retirement accounts. While this is happening still more are battling sickness, death and other personal tragedies.

Some have thrown up their hands as they watch their dreams disappear as vapors.

All that many have left are the promises of God, but that's enough!

God sees our daily needs. He scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive. Physiologically, we need food, clothing and shelter at the offset. Beyond that we need health care and emotional support. The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. A widow woman who struggled to provide for family saw God meet her need by giving her what she needed on a daily basis.

Whether our needs are financial, involving the payment of loans, meeting daily demands or just making ends meet; God sees our need. This should be a reason for hope for every believer because we know that our individual situation is not unnoticed by the savior. Therefore, the songwriter asks, "Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

We have seen God part impossible waters before, so when he promises to make a way for us, that's enough.

We have seen God stretch our meager resources beyond our wildest imagination, so when he tells us to fear not, that's enough.

We have seen God dry our weeping eyes in times of sadness, so when he says, "weeping endures but a night and joy comes in the morning, we say, that's enough.

1. God has promised His people eternal life. Those who believe in Christ and accept him as Savior shall be saved. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. John 10:27-28.

2. He has promised to supply every need we have. The Bible says: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". That's Philippians 4:19. God has obligated Himself only to the extent of our needs. That would include food, clothing, shelter, companionship, love, and salvation thru Jesus Christ. It would not include the multiplicity of luxuries that we have come to think of as needs.

3. God has promised that His grace is sufficient for us. The bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. "He has made provision for our salvation by His grace through faith.

4. God has promised that His children will not be overtaken with temptation. Instead, He assures us that a way of escape will be provided. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Jude wrote: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you're faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude v 24).

5. God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 No matter how frustrating a situation gets, it will work to the advantage of true believers.

God's Promises will see us through

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that as long as God is on the throne, we have more than we need to weather this storm.

We must consider how Solomon responded to the nation's loss of its most cherished national heirlooms. He did not get despondent over what was loss but rejoiced over what was left. He did not cry over the loss of the golden pot of manna or the lost rod but celebrated what he had left, the stone tablets representing the promises of God..that was enough.

What's left after any difficult time are God's promises.

It's God's promises that give:

STRENGTH to those who are weak; INSPIRATION to those who are frustrated and confused!

HOPE to the hopeless; RENEWAL to those who are in despair!

PICKS UP those who are let down; LIFTS UP those who have been let down!

SAVES those who are lost and gives NEW ENERGY to those who wait on him. For I hear the word declare that "they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!"

Has your experience proven God's promises to be enough?

Has God's promises proven to be enough?

Has his promise to supply your every need, proven to be enough?

Has his promise to be with you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, proven to be enough?

Has his promise to be with you alway, even to the end of the world, proven to be enough?

Has his promise to take every bad thing that happened to you and work it out to you advantage, proven to be enough?

I don't know about you, but I found out that God is a dependable God, if he promised it, I can count on it; and that's enough.

He promised to:

-Take my mountains and turn them into molehills and that's enough

-Take my sadness and turn it into gladness, and that's enough

-Take my agony and turn it into ecstasy, and that's enough

-Take my darkness and turn it into light, and that's enough

-Take my failure and turn it into success, and that's enough

I know that promise is good because he sealed by picking up an old rugged cross!

I know that promise is good because he carried that cross up Golgotha's Hill!

And he died!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave will all power in his hands, and that's enough for me!

No. 9345-Inspiration

Lift Him Up

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2008

SCRIPTURE:" "And I, If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." John 12:32

Introduction

Today, the world is facing a multitude of challenges, that are demanding a response, how shall we, as the body of Christ, respond? As the representa tives of Christ, we must be prepared to show them the answer that has been revealed to us in the written word of God.

The answer is Jesus.

If the question is what do we do about the growing homeless problem in America? The Answer is Jesus. Although he himself told his disciples, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of man hath no place to lay his head," he has commanded us to reach out to the homeless with an extended hand of love and provision.

If the question is what do we do about those struggling to survive the current financial crises; the answer is Jesus. We remember the words of the apostle who said, "Silver and Gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee." Thus, thus we have been commanded to maximize our resources to respond to those struggling to survive. We respond in Jesus' name.

If the question is what do we do about the hungry and destitute; again, Jesus is the answer. Jesus himself fed the hungry before he tried to preach to them. Using meager resources of fish and bread, God blessed his work so that if fed thousands. We have the same mission, feed the hungry in Jesus' name.

The mandate that we have as representatives of Christ is to lift him up. When we lift Jesus up, the power of his compassion, and deity will draw all men to his bleeding side.

Lifting him up does not mean just idle talk. It doesn't mean that we preach about him on Sundays. Lifting him up means that we will get busy showing the world through precept and example that Jesus is the answer. As the world watches us walk the walk as well as talk the talk, then it will be convinced that Jesus is the answer.

As Christians, we know that there is no power on earth greater than the power of God. If we lift up the name of Jesus high enough for the world to see, certainly we will reach the masses and evangelize the world.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he predicts his crucifixion and its aftermath. Jesus often told his disciples about his death. Normally, a Jew that would have been put to death would have been stoned, but Jesus, knowing what lay ahead made reference to being "lifted up" referring to the crucifixion on the cross.

He made it clear to his disciples that his crucifixion would lift up the kingdom of God for the world to see and once revealed, it would draw men of every persuasion, race, creed and color unto the father.

He pronounced the drawing power of his blood and the cross. His drawing power would not be based on his personality or special charisma, but on the incontestable fact that he died on an old rugged cross and rose from the dead for the remission of sins.

When that message and fact is presented to the world with a practical application for the lives of men and women everywhere, Jesus said "I'll draw all men unto me."

The challenge of the Church

Today, the church is challenged to do one thing..lift Jesus up!

It may be tempting to get involved in a myriad of sidebar activities, but our single function is to lift Jesus up!

The extent of our involvement in any project, venture or movement should be to better posture ourselves to lift Jesus up. We should do this because it is only through the preaching of the cross that the world can come to know Christ. It is only through knowing Christ that the world can find the peace of God needed for these turbulent times.

Where are some places that Jesus must be lifted up?

JESUS MUST BE LIFTED UP TO OUR FAMILIES: The Black family needs the church more than ever. The church must challenge the culture and forces that have hurt the black family and community, including those who "demean, degrade and belittle our mothers and daughters. To do this the church must partner with others to provide senior citizen housing, charter schools, mental health clinics, opportunities for first-time home-buyers, even restaurants to train people for work.

Such action puts the word of God into concrete forms that people can see and helps families survive and thrive. Jesus says, when he is lifted up, he'll draw all men unto himself.

JESUS MUST BE LIFTED UP TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST HOPE: There are many men and women today, who are throwing up their hands in defeat, resolved that they are in a lost cause. The defeated need the church. The defeated need to know that God is able to respond to their needs. When they feel that God does not know or care about their situation they lose hope.

Parents who have talked to and chastised wayward children with little or no visible

effect have dropped their heads and dismissed them as reluctant lost causes. They need the church.

Many marriages have ended in the divorce courts because husbands and wives, frustrated with the presence of uncomfortable symptoms, have thrown up their hands in defeat. They have dismissed their sacred vows as a lost cause.

Many men and women who have been living on the wrong side of the right track take a low opinion of themselves and think because they are not, did not, and could not, that they cannot, will not and should not ..be anything less than a failure and have dismissed themselves as lost causes.

That's why we need to lift Jesus up. When we lift Jesus up we let the world know that there is no reason to lose hope because God is still on the throne.

WE MUST REACH OUT TO LIFT JESUS UP: The church must go into the world and bring the message of God's grace in both precept and example.

There are many churches today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. In each case they are attempting to reach into the world in the name of Jesus.

Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes.

Outreach is essential to kingdom building. We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus. Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes. When we help others it must come from the heart.

The church must show and tell the world that God cares; thus, we are compelled to go into all the world.

He'll draw

Finally, brethren, we must not lose sight of the magnetic power of the cross.

We must not let the enthusiasm and passion that we have for ministry become stagnant.

We must keep our eyes on the cross and keep lifting Jesus up!

Our growth is directly related to how high we lift Jesus up!

The cross is magnetic. It is has the natural power to draw men to it because it's positive impact attracts and draws out the negatives of every person, re-arranges them and gives them a new charge!

People who have been trampled are drawn to the cross because it draws out those negative experiences and offers a chance for a new beginning. The world offers:

—Disturbance but the cross offers peace of mind

—Defilement but the cross offers purity of spirit

—Hate but the cross offers uncorrupted love

—Darkness but the cross offers light

—Weakness but the cross offers strength

The inscription on the statue of Liberty says: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, temptest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door." It is the expression of the American desire to draw the wretched of the earth to its shores.

But the cross has an even greater magnetic appeal for it speaks to the souls of men and women around the world. It's an inscription that echoes through the corridors of time and says, "Give me your tired, your poor and huddled masses yearning to breathe free and I will show them the way to:

—Patience in the midst of problems

—Contentment in the midst of criticisms

—Support in the midst of suffering

—Stability in the midst of strain

—Hope in the midst of hardship

—Long suffering in the midst of trial

The cross has drawing power because it offers the hope of Salvation.

The higher the cross is lifted the more men are drawn.

So let's lift Jesus up, so the world can receive the gospel message of hope.

We must lift Jesus up and the good news of salvation.

We must lift Jesus up with the gospel message of compassion and concern.

We must lift Jesus up knowing that if we lift him up he will draw all men to himself.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change lives.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change communities and nations!

I hear the words of the song writer who said, "How to reach the masses, men of every birth,

For an answer, Jesus gave the key: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto Me."

Lift Him up, lift Him up; Still He speaks from eternity: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto me."

We must lift him up because He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

We must lift him up because He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

We must lift him up because He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

They called him Jesus; he made a world of difference!

Before he left he told his disciples to stay ready because "I'm going to create another world! "That where I am ye may be also!"

In that world, every day will be Sunday and the Sabbath will have no end!

In that world, it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

In that world, hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the song writer declares, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory!”

In that world we’ll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

Until he comes back again..

Lift him up!

Lift him up!

Lift him up!

No. 9346-Funeral

If Thou Canst Believe

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 29, 2008

SCRIPTURE:"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9:23

Introduction

What is the secret to a long life? There are many who have been searching for the secret for many years and have compiled volumes of research to determine what to do to insure a long life. There are thousands today who are reading books and reviewing biographies of those who lived to be 100 years old or more, searching for nuggets of information that can guarantee a long life for all willing to follow the same regimen.

In the beginning, man was created to live indefinitely but because of the sin of Adam and Eve God set the human body clock to ticking backwards, declining from infinity. The oldest recorded life in the bible is that of Methuselah who lived 969 years. Adam, the first man lived 930 years. By the time of Moses, the human life span was much shorter. Moses was 120 years old when he died. Life expectancy, because of wars, disease and infant mortality declined to about 40 year.

In modern times, science and new knowledge about health and fitness has managed to increase the life expectancy of the average person from 47.3 years for someone born in 1900 to 77.3 years for someone born in 2002.

Even with these increases the world is still amazed when it encounters anyone who lives 100 or more years and searches for the secret.

When comedian George Burns made it to the century mark all of those who knew him asked,, how'd he do it? What brand of vitamins did he take? Did he eat a high-fiber diet? Did he pass on saturated fats? Were his doctors the best that money could buy? Did he eat from the four food groups every day? Whose exercise video did he work out to? According to George, his secret to a long life was simply this: "Love what you do, and get up and do it every day."

Depending on whom is asked the advice has one common strain: Don't smoke, gets lots of exercise and sleep, and eat a balanced diet, trust God and don't worry as you take life one day at a time.

Those who believe in God place heavy emphasis on the latter. Trusting in God and worrying less, adds years to our lives because they are free from the stress and

anxieties that often age us beyond our years.

As Christians, we believe in God. We believe that God will provide for us, open doors for us and help us in times of need. Those who believe that truth and act on it, have often lived happy, fulfilled lives whether they were long or short.

Exposition

This text focuses on a father whose son is possessed by a demonic spirit and Jesus' response.

In reply to Jesus' compassionate inquiry, the father said his son had experienced such pathetic and near-fatal convulsions from childhood. The lad's condition was long-standing and critical. The words, "If You can do anything" indicate that the disciples' inability to expel the demon had shaken the father's faith in Jesus' ability.

Jesus took up the father's words of doubt, If You can, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible. Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: Everything is possible for him who believes. Faith sets no limits on God's power and submits itself to His will.

The father's response was immediate. He declared his faith (I do believe), but also acknowledged its weakness: Help me overcome my unbelief!

Five Secrets of Every Believer

There are many today who have many prescriptions for long life health and strength. They even try to sell it to others and patent their prescriptions.

What is the secret to the happy, fulfilled Christian life? What is the secret to gaining God's favor?

If we ask many of the people Jesus healed they would say, that the secret is to be touched by God. These would claim that the real secret is in his touch, thus they leave singing, "He touched me, he touched me. Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole."

If we ask others they would say they have to be fed by Christ himself. These would claim that if Jesus takes just a two little fishes and five loaves he can feed thousands, so the secret to remaining full is to be fed by Jesus. They leave singing "Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more."

One man who was healed after bathing seven times in the river said the secret to living the fulfilled life is go down to the river and dip in the water. Such a man leaves singing, "Down by the Riverside"

Then there is the testimony of those who were changed by Jesus, but were never touched by him, never bathed in a river or ate food in the large crowds. These were the ones who were blessed based on their faith alone. These are the ones who leave singing, "Only Believe, all things are possible if you only believe."

There are many who hear that saying and reduce it to a cliché, doubting what can

happen if they believe.

What secrets have believers discovered that unbelievers have yet to learn? There are at least five life secrets that each can experience if they only believe:

1. If you believe, you can rise to achieve your potential. It doesn't matter whether you are born in a poor rural area to poor parents, if you believe, you can rise to your potential. Too many today fail to realize their potential because they do not believe it is possible. Like the prodigal son they waste their lives in riotous living. Yet there are believers who constantly sing the same tune,"Reach high, never give up! All things are possible if you only believe!"

2. If you believe, you can have peace in your life. There is something about the faith in God that gives a believer a sense of peace and security in hard times. It doesn't matter how strong the winds blow or how hard the winds assail, they sing mightily, "My Soul is anchored in the Lord." The older the get the more peaceful they seem, content that God is in control despite the encroaching years. If you want peace, they recommend trusting in the Lord and believing in his promises.

3. If you believe, you can have a fruitful life. Jesus told believers that he came that they might have life and have it more abundantly. Those who believe truly live abundant lives; they are fruitful, productive and meaningful well into their senior lives. Such faith in the promises of God helps those who down to have jolly spirits even in their infirmities and continue to guide and instruct despite their immobility. Even in their golden years, like Moses, their spiritual constitution remains strong even if their bodies fail, and they bear fruit. That can't happen when we doubt. It does happen if we believe and trust in the Lord.

4. If you believe, we can have long life. Generally, the bible says most of us who leave an ordinary life can expect to live about 70 years or three score and ten. Those who have an extraordinary strength of faith could see four score and beyond. A driving force that propels us beyond 70 is our faith in God. When we see 80 its called our reasonable strength. When we see 90 we reach the point of Sarah's laughter. When we reach 100 we have climbed the mount of Abraham's faith. It doesn't take much faith to race through the first 30 years of your life or to glide through the next 40. Those of great faith however have found it possible to meander the valleys and streams of sickness and declining health to reach the summit that Abraham realized feeling fresh and new as his young son Isaac was born. Reaching the summit of our potential cannot only be done if we believe.

5. If you believe, we can have eternal life. More than long life on earth, those who believe have God's great promise and that is eternal life. Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." That means that believing is the secret to Eternal Life as well. It's good to live to be 80, 90 or even 100 and beyond, but the great blessing is to know that even beyond this life that there is another in which we will live eternally with the Lord. Like all of the other blessings of believers, it is possible, if we can only believe!

Those who believe are rewarded

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who believe and trust in God on earth shall be rewarded in heaven.

Trust is the ultimate way that a Christian demonstrates his belief in God.

Trusting in the Lord is the secret to long life. That's what Enoch learned for the Word says Enoch walked with God until he "was not."

Those who trust in the Lord are confident that all things are possible if they only believe.

If we can only believe that God is able, anything is possible.

I don't know about you, but I believe that God is able to make a way.

If we can only believe God will take our:

— Failures and turn them into successes; Defeats and turn them into victories!

— Weaknesses and turn them into strengths; Despair and turn it into confidence!

— Sadness and turn into gladness; Sorrow and turn it into joy!

— Stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!; Candles and turn them into a floodlights!

If we can only believe, when we have reached the summit of our lives God will help us to mount up on wings as Eagle, run and not get weary, walk and not faint!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that If I can believe only believe, all things are possible because the Lord is always by my side!

In whom shall we believe?

His name is Jesus, the lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

If we can believe in Jesus' promise that beyond this world, we have a home beyond the sky!

If we can only believe in the power of God, we'll all be able to sing, "One glad morning when this life is over, "I'll fly away!"

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On Wednesday November 20, 2008 Mildred Mock Johnson went home to be with the Lord. She was 100 years old when she began the first day of her eternal life.

No. 9347-Blessings

Seasonal Showers

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Introduction

If you had to describe your blessings by associating them with the weather, how would you describe your blessings? There are many who describe their blessings as droughts. They see all that they do not have and spend their lives angry because others seem to have more.

There are many who describe their blessings as sunshine. They feel that blessing come on clear days but cannot come when there are clouds. Thus, they praise God for the sunshine but scorn him for the clouds.

There are many who describe their blessings as storms because they come with a rage and they are unable to handle the prosperity they leave behind.

Then there are those who describe their blessings as showers. They come regularly, not hard enough to cause a problem but just enough to fertilize, revive and refresh for as long as they need.

There are many ways that our blessings come, and because of that there are many who do not recognize that they have been blessed.

A man who owned a small estate wished to sell it. Sending for a real estate agent, he asked him to write an advertisement describing the house and land.

When the ad was ready, the agent took it to the owner and read it to him. "Read that again," said the owner.

The agent read the description of the estate once more. "I don't think I will sell after all," said the owner. "I have been looking for an estate like that all my life, and I did not know that I owned it!"

Count your blessings — yes, but start by asking God to open your eyes to see your possessions in Christ. Begin by recognizing all that you have in Christ. That will change your entire perspective and enable you to praise God for what you have.

As Christians, we see how God showers us with blessings and we are eternally grateful, for truly he is great and his mercy endureth forever.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Ezekiel as he foretells the coming of the church through which the world would be blessed.

Israel was in ruins. This once great nation, at the time of the text, was scattered all over the known world. Their homeland was destroyed and its the best minds co-opted. They were so scattered and broken in spirit that at one point the prophet Ezekiel saw them as dry bones in a valley. Yet, God constantly sent them a word of hope that they would be revived.

The bones could live again and great blessings were on the way.

This text is another of those places in which God told Israel they would be restored. Verses 11-16 speak of how the people were scattered because of ungodly leaders, who often posed as religious leaders and destroyed their heritage and their faith. (v. 2-6) Yet God says he himself would seek out his people and promised to intervene personally on Israel's behalf. Specific to Israel, God promised to restore Israel to her land and to pasture her like sheep in good grazing land.

Moreover, God indicates that the Jews, and Zion, God's hill are to be sources of blessing, not merely to themselves, but to the surrounding heathen. Matthew Henry says, God's promise is that they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness: They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land.

It is important to note in this text when and how God promises to bless his children. The text does not say, "I will send them drops," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! We want plenteous grace to keep us humble, to make us prayerful, to make us holy; plenteous grace to make us zealous, to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us in heaven. We cannot do without saturating showers of grace. Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will cause the shower to come down in his season."

The great promise that God made to Israel and to all believers is that the congregation of the broken hearted, dispirited, lost and hopeless will have a shepherd set over him them (v 23-24)and through him God would bless the people and resurrect their lost hope.

Through the great Shepherd, which would be Christ, believers or the church would be the recipients of showers of blessings as he worked to restore the people and bless them with peace and joy.

Five truths about showered blessings

The word of God is replete with reminders that God blesses those who are obedient and faithful to him. Deuteronomy 11:27 says, ""A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day …" We also learn that His blessing brings righteousness (Psa. 24:5), life (Psa. 133:3), prosperity

(2 Sam. 7:29), and salvation (Psa. 3:8). Some instances the "blessing" is portrayed as a rain or dew.

In a few cases, the Lord made people to be a "blessing" to others.

As we reflect on God's blessings its good for us to remember about the way God blesses us with showers of blessings.

The "Showers" are abundant. The great Creator does not give the rain stingily, but opens the windows of heaven, and pours down His blessings upon the dry and thirsty land. So, spiritual blessings come upon the thirsty and longing hearts of men. There is a slogan used by the Morton Salt Company that shows a girl walking holding an umbrella, the slogan underneath the picture says, "When it rains it pours." That's the way it is when God blesses, he really pours it on. Jesus speaking to his disciples said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." When God blesses us he is not stingy, he gives us the best of that he has and gives it in abundance.

The "Showers" are repetitious. When God blesses us once he often blesses us with the same blessing over and over again, year after year and season after season. That's the good thing about our God, what he does once, he can do it again. It's encouraging to know that God is not just a onetime God. He can bless us again and again. As the rains descend water the earth repeatedly with the latter rain, and by repeated showers the earth brings forth and buds, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So in the history of the Church, and of every individual believing soul, there has been given grace for grace, that there might be progress from strength to strength in the journey toward the heavenly land

The "Showers" are gratuitous. The blessings we receive come to us from the bounties of God. They come down freely from the clouds, without money and without price. There is nothing that we can do to buy them or pay for them because they come from the treasuries of heaven. There are many who think they can earn the blessings of God, but they cannot be earned because we are not good enough, nor will we ever be worthy enough to receive the blessings that God showers on us. We could not purchase them, for the silver and the gold belong to God, as well as the cattle upon a thousand hills. So all spiritual blessings are free; indeed, they are priceless, as well as peerless. That's why we love to sing "Amazing Grace" because it is God's grace causes us to receive salvation and showers of blessings.

The "Showers" are suitable. God knows exactly what each of us needs. He also knows what we need. There are times when we might believe that we need torrents of blessings or even floods of blessings, but he knows what we need. Just as the spring showers fall upon the earth and make it soft, and drop fatness into the soil, the blessings of God come to us in the same way. He does not send us more than we need, but always what we need, just when we need it most. The blessings that crown our lives are suitable to our needs and adapted to minister to our well-being and joy. Especially is this true of spiritual blessings.

The "Showers" are gentle. God's blessings come upon us gently, like the soft rains that pity pat on the leaves during a summer shower. Isn't it refreshing when it comes? It's just as refreshing as a blessing from God that eases upon us gently,

without notice or fanfare. It's that gentle blessing that helps us get the unexpected check in the mail or receive the unsolicited opportunity. It's pleasant when it comes. It comes softly and it is so refreshing and soothing. The blessings that refresh our spirits and revive our faith, they fall gently upon us while we pray and praise, and nestle upon our hearts while we engage in Christian work and worship.

We thank God for the showers

Finally, brothers and sisters, we note that God showers us with blessings and we should shower him with praise.

God has spared no pains when it comes to blessing us. Neither should we be stingy when it comes to praising him and thanking him for his goodness.

The word of God says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" So, if God has showered us with blessings we should be prepared to "say so."

We shall praise his name and say thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me despite the mess that I've made of my life!

Thank you Lord, for taking my weakness and turning it into strength!

Thank you Lord, for taking my doubts and giving me assurance!

Thank you Lord, for taking my failure and giving me victories!

Thank you Lord, for taking my discouragement and giving me hope!

Thank you Lord, for taking my test and giving me a testimony!

Thank you Lord, for looking beyond my faults and shortcomings and seeing my need!

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus came into a messed up world to make it a blessed up world!

In the middle of the world's mess, God sent his best!

In a shower of blessings he allowed them to convict him and sentence to death

In a shower of blessings he allowed them to put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!

In a shower of blessings he allowed them to nail his hands and feet!

In a shower of blessings he allowed them to stick a spear in his side!

And he died, out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

I'm not worthy for all these blessings but every day the showers keep on coming!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me one more!

No. 9348-Blessings

Lord, Send Down the Rain

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2008

SCRIPTURE:Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. " Leviticus 26:4

Introduction

If your experiences in life were compared to a weather condition, what would best describe your life? There are some who would say that the word "drought" would best describe their experience. No matter what they have tried to do they seemed to always come up dry.

Some would say "Storms" describe their experience because it seems that life's events always hit them with hurricane force winds that just blow them away.

Still others would say that "tornado" describes their lives because they have spent most of their time going around in circles and being tossed to and fro.

However, there are some that would describe their lives as blistering sunshines and cooling showers. It's the showers, they say, that make the rains feel so much better.

Almost everyone would rather have sunshine than showers. But just imagine what our world would be like if it never rained again.

An example of such a place is in Northern Chile. Franklin Elmer, Jr., described a region between the great Andes mountain range and the Pacific Ocean where rain never falls. He wrote, "Morning after morning the sun rises brilliantly over the tall mountains to the east; each noon it shines brightly down from overhead; evening brings a picturesque sunset. Although storms are often seen raging high in the mountains, and heavy fog banks are observed far out over the sea, the sun continues to shine on this favored and protected strip of land. One would imagine this area to be an earthly paradise; but it is not. Instead, it is a sterile and desolate desert! There are no streams of water, and nothing grows there."

Elmer then made this application: "Too often we long for total sunshine and joy in life. We have wished to be rid of burdensome responsibilities. But, like this sunny, unfertile part of Chile, life without its burdens and trials would not be creative, productive, or challenging. We need sunshine and showers."

God favors his creation with just the right amount of sunshine and just the right amount of rain. He knows what it takes to keep us in balance.

That's the way he blesses us too. He sends blessings in showers, not torrents

or floods, but in sprinkling showers just sufficient enough to supply all of our needs and many of our wants.

As Christians, we know that our blessings are showered upon us from heaven above. When we endure droughts, dust storms and hard times we fall on our knees and earnestly plead to God, saying "Lord, please send the rain" and he always answers at the appropriate time by sending us showers of blessings from the windows of heaven.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promises to rain blessings on Israel if they remained obedient to him.

This text is preceded by the word "if" nine times and it has to do with the conditions on which they would occupy the Promised Land and receive its blessings.

While God said "if" nine times, God says "I will" twenty-four times. God will act and react according to their responses to the "if". God gave them the land, but their occupancy of it is determined by their answer to the "if". Obedience is the grounds for blessing in the land. This chapter is not only the calendar of their history, but it serves as the barometer of their blessings. Their presence in the land, rainfall, and bountiful crops denote the favor of God. Their absence from the land, famine, and drought denote the judgment of God because of their disobedience.

Rain in this text represents the shower of God's blessing. It is significant because God placed them in a land where they would depend upon heaven for their sustenance, not in the land itself. The land they were given had no great rivers such as the Nile, to water it and make it fruitful, but it was a land which depended completely on the gracious rain of heaven. In the Promised Land the key to their prosperity was kept in God's own hand. If the people needed a blessing they were obliged to ask God to send the rain.

In due Season

When God promised Israel rain, he promised it "in due season." The word used for "In due Season" is the Hebrew word "et" which means, at the appropriate time. That brings to mind the blessings that God has in store for those who believe in him; that they shall come at the appropriate time. There are nuggets of truth for modern believers in both the rains and when God chooses to send them upon us.

The nuggets are suggested in the various ways that the word "et" is used in the bible.

GOD DECIDES WHEN THE RAINS COME: The first way the word "Et" is used indicates that God is the orderer of life's event. He sends the rains and harvest, the seasons of the year, orders the migration of the birds and announces the mating season. For believers it means that God orders the events of our lives. He controls when the showers of blessings come in our lives. He also controls how long they will

last and when they begin again. There is no other power or source that can send the rain that we need, so we pray to him, "Lord send the rain."

GOD DETERMINES THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR THE RAINS: "Et" is used to indicate recurring events such as the seasons, but "Et" is also used to indicate unrecurring incidents such as death. The bible's use of "ET" indicates that God controls birth, death and all of the events in between. He alone decides the appropriate time for us to receive blessings. Thus in the text the phrase, "In due season" indicates "When God deems it appropriate." Today, believers may request a variety of blessings from God but he grants or denies our prayer requests based solely on whether he feels it is the appropriate season. He is sovereign over the rain. This is the same God that told Job (Job 38:32) that he has control of the stars and the Psalmist recorded in Psalm 104:27 that he controls the seas and all that are in them. We learn from this that God sends the showers of blessings that we need at times that will suit his purpose; those times always seem to come just in time for what we need to both survive and thrive. No wonder the song writer declared, "He's an on time God, yes he is. He may not come when you want him, but he's always on time."

GOD HAS A FIXED TIME FOR THE RAINS: The word "Et" finally indicates a fixed or set time. That means that God not only considers the appropriate time, but he has a fixed time in which he intends to move and act in our lives. There are some things that are hidden from us. We will never know about these things because God controls them and never chooses to reveal them. We know that Jeremiah 8:12 talks about God's appointed time of judgment. We know that God has an appointed time for this world and will bring it to an end in what he calls the "fullness of time." Thus, believers today have learned to be patient with God because he moves at his own time and pace. "You can't Hurry God, no matter how hard you try," that's what the song writer says, and the words are true. God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform and we cannot hurry him.

Send The Rain!

Finally, brothers and sisters, since we now know that God controls our showers of blessings and sends them at the appropriate time; we are now convinced more than ever that God's mercy will shower us with blessing if he chooses to send down the rain!

We are living in difficult times and experiencing a great drought, Lord please send down the rain!

We are struggling to survive financially, and many are losing their homes and jobs, Lord, please send down the rain!

We are battling with social ills that are destroying our families and stealing our children; Lord, please send down the rain!

Saints of God, be of good cheer, because we serve a God who specializes in sending down the rain!

Jesus said, "I come that they might have life and have it more abundantly"

So, we plead to the Savior and say, "Send down the rain upon our:"

-Tragedy and turn it into triumph!
-Defeat and turn it into victory!
-Despair and turn it into hope!
-Sadness and turn it into joy!
-Failure and turn it into success!
-Weakness and turn it into strength!

A blind man, cursed with blindness from the day of his birth, found that Jesus can send down the rain and change the curse darkness into a marvelous light.

A lame man, who never made a step in his life, found that Jesus can send down the rain and of and give a crippled soul and brand new walk.

A woman standing at the well found that Jesus can send down the rain and take a soul lost in sin and save it and make it whole again.

Lazarus, who died and was buried in his grave found that Jesus can send down the rain and take the plague of death and give a brand new life.

In his own time, Jesus took the curse of the cross and changed it from a symbol of defeat to a sign of eternal triumph.

The cross says to the world that there is power in the name of Jesus!

No wonder the songwriter declares, "At the cross at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I'm happy all the day."

When Jesus rose on Sunday morning death lost its sting! The grave lost its victory!

When Jesus rose from the grave weakness vanished forever; for all eternity heard him declare:

"All power is in my hands!"
"All Power"
"All power is in my hands!"

Lord, you have all power, so please, send down the rain!

No. 9349-Christmas

Zachariah's Song

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 7, 2008

SCRIPTURE:Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, Luke 1:68

Introduction

When do you sing or hum the melody of your favorite song? When things are going well? What about when things are not going so well? Can you sing your midday songs at midnight? When the financial news is gloomy and job layoffs are possible do you still sing the same song or do you sing the blues? One of the unique qualities of the Christian life is that our song never changes. We lift up Christ in the morning and evening, during good times and bad because regardless of our situation we know he is still a good God.

The songs we sing reflect our experiences and expectations. The lyrics of our songs may change from moment to moment, since our lives are in constant transition. The most meaningful songs that we sing give us a snapshot of who we are, where we have been and where we are going. Each of us has a song that tells the story of our faith journey

Consider the man who sang a song as he drove along thinking of how blessed he was to have so many possessions. He sang "count your blessings." When he stopped and proceeded to get out of his BMW, suddenly a truck came along and hit the door, completely ripping it off. When the police arrived at the scene, the man was complaining bitterly and singing a different song. The people standing around were thanking God. It was a miracle that the man survived and they expected the man to be singing, "I never would have made it without you, Lord." It was just the opposite. The man stopped singing altogether. He looked at the door of his car lying in the middle of the street and complained about the damage to his precious BMW.

"Officer, look what they've done to my Beemer!" he whined.

The police officer, who was a devout Christian, said "You are the obvious recipient of a great blessing. A truck just tore of the door of your car, there is debris everywhere and all you can see is the damage to your precious BMW. You should be singing, " I won't complain" but you are so busy grumbling that you haven't even noticed that your left arm was ripped off!"

"Oh no!" replied the man, finally noticing the bloody left shoulder where his arm once was. "I've lost my Rolex, too."

As Christians, we sing to praise the Lord. This month, regardless of gloomy news we will hear on television or the forecasts we will hear from economists, we will continue to praise God because he is good and his mercy endureth forever and ever.

Exposition

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were an elderly couple who had worked faithfully in God's service all of their lives.

There were about 20,000 priests among the Levites, so many that only a small handful of them ever had a chance to actually enter the temple and perform a ceremonial service. There were so many priests that it was almost a given that if chosen, a man would only get one chance in his life to perform the ceremonial service. Zacharias considered his advancing age and thought his chance would never come, since those selected were chosen by lot. However, God ordered the lottery so that Zacharias could be selected, because there was a divine purpose in his selection. On his appointed day Zacharias followed the ritual followed by thousands of others for hundreds of years. The priests ascended the steps leading to the Holy Place. When they arrived at the top they spread coals on the golden altar, arranged the incense, and departed, leaving Zacharias alone before God. As the appointee for the ceremony, Zacharias was to offer his prayers of intercession for the people of Israel and then put incense on the coals of the altar as a powerful, beautiful symbol of the prayers of Israel rising to God.

While he did this, outside in the court of the temple, a great multitude of people waited laying face down on the floor in prayer, praying with the priest who represented them in the Holy Place.

While alone in the sanctuary an angel appeared to him inside the Temple. He was told that he and his wife would have a child who would be the forerunner of the Messiah; his job would be to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. Zacharias doubted that possibility, again looking at his old age, and was told that he would have a child but because of his doubt he would not be able to speak until it had come to pass.

For nine months Zacharias was unable to speak but when the child was born his speech was restored and the words that came from his mouth, bottled up for 270 days, burst forth to form a song of praise called the "Benedictus," because of the prophetic nature of the first Latin words of the passage.

What Zacharias saw was the fulfillment of all other prophecies of the Old Testament. They were coming true right before his eyes. It was prophetic because Zacharias was looking ahead, beyond the miracles that had just happened in his life to the greater miracle that was about to happen in the world. He was so confident that he spoke in the past tense, noting that the prophecy was a "done deal." His "benedictus" offered praise to God for his greatness, noting how God "has" visited his people and "redeemed" his people. Both of the prophecies would come to pass in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Then, beginning at Luke 1:76, he looks at his own child, focusing on his role in

the mighty plan of God. Zacharias said, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."

Zacharias was able to see the full picture of what God was unfolding for the people. He was happy over the role that God allowed him to play in unfolding the historic events. He was even happier that his son would play an even bigger role, as a forerunner of the Lord, introducing God's redemption.

He was so happy that he sang repeatedly, "Belssed by the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people."

Our Song

Today, there should be rejoicing in the land because it is evident, that despite the terrible times in which we leave that God is visiting us with an intent to redeem this land. When we read the lyrics of Zacharias' song, we too could share the same excitement.

BLESSED BE GOD: The phrase "Blessed by God" occurs frequently in the Old Testament such as Psalm 72:18-19, Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. We can say the same today. "Blessed be God" because he does so many wondrous things. We have seen him move across the landscape of time and shake the foundations of the world with his might. In the words of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; His truth is marching on!" We bless God for the same reasons of this text. Luke 1:71, we praise him because it so apparent that his mighty hand is moving to save us from those who hate us; Luke 1:72 we praise him because it is apparent that he is sending a new spirit across this land as he has promised great grandparents in the bowels of slavery. Luke 1:74, we praise him because it is apparent that he is slowly and meticulously changing history to free us from our captivity so that we can live as free and equal men and women.

As a people, we have seen God move in the land but we have also seen him move in our own families. We have seen him lift us up when we should have been down, and give us new direction when we should have been lost. We have seen him champion our causes, put food on our tables and forgive us when we strayed. If we had ten thousand tongues we could not praise him enough. If we had 10,000 hands we could clap loud enough or long enough to give him, so we sing, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

HE HAS VISITED: The Greek word used for visited in Luke 1:68, means to visit with a view toward help. When God visits his people he does not visit like the friends of Job who sat at his house for seven days without saying anything, then when they finally spoke they condemned him for some unknown sin. When God visits he evaluates and acts. God is said to have visited his people in bondage when he delivered them. Exodus 3:16 is an example, "…The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited

you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt." The same phrase is used to describe how God visited Israel in times of famine and gave them bread in Ruth 1:6. It seems clear that whenever God visits himself, he comes to help. The coming of the Christ child would mark a visit by a person of the God head, Christ himself, taking on the form of a child, staying long enough to become a man.

God has visited us, too. In the hour our bereavement, God visited us and consoled us. In the hour of our greatest need, he visited us and provided for our needs. In the hour of despair, he visited us and gave us hope. There is no time as joyous in our lives as the time when we realize that God is visiting. When God shows up, he definitely will show out. When God visits, whatever it is that we are worrying about disappears. When God shows up, the weight of the burdens that we are carrying gets lighter. When God shows up the trouble that plagued us is defeated. When God shows up, He will show out. So, lift our voices in praise, to a God who does more than pass by the neighborhood but stops by every house.

REDEEMED HIS PEOPLE: Israel was held captive in two respects. They were captive to the strict dictates of the Mosaic Law and they were captive to their own lost hopes. Jesus came to immediately address those conditions and to set in motion a third that would even release them from the captivity of the Roman Government. The Greek word for Redemption used in the text means the recovery of something and someone by payment of a ransom. That's what Jesus came to do. He came to pay the price for sin and release those who believe in him from the penalties of sin. Moreover, he came to save the people from their own defeatist thinking. His words to them were very simple, believe and trust God and seek the truth and the truth will make you free. He freed them from ceremony and ritual and set their minds thinking on a higher order. He's doing the same today. If we trust him, he is offering us salvation. If we trust him, he will change our thinking to a more positive, optimistic outlook. He has saved us from sin and equally important, he has saved us from our destructive ways of living that were leading us no-where fast. Today, the savior is showing us how to walk right, live right and think right. He's preparing us for the Kingdom by giving us a little piece of heaven on earth. There we should join Zacharias in singing "Bless be Lord!" for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

Because of Christ, we sing a new song

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we consider Zachariah's song, we should also consider our own song, because God has given us something sing about.
It is true the Zacharias is attributed with speaking the first Christmas Carol with his Benedictus, announcing the good things that God has done, but every child of God could very well write our own Christmas Carol.

Like David, we should sing unto the Lord a new song.

Our song has to be a new song because it's different from what the world sings.

You see the world sings about chestnuts roasting on an open fire, a frosted snowman and reindeer that fly.

When the world sings its song, it sings, over the river and through the woods

to grandmother's house we go, there we will sing about jingle bells and silver bells. Our song is a new song because it's more than just a happy holiday and a time to say Happy Kwanzaa.

Our song is a new song because the season is more than a time for colorful trees, glowing lights and shopping sprees.

Our song is a new song because the season is more than, get-to-gethers sing-a-longs and family dinners.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about the mercies of the Lord.

Our song is a new song because we are celebrating Jesus, coming down out of heaven entering the realms of earth.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about him leaving the celestial for terrestrial.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about his setting aside his glorified body and putting on a body of flesh.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about a savior who came down here and visited us for a while.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about a savior who did something for us that we could not do for ourselves, he saved our souls.

Our song is a new song because he came down here to quench our thirst and satisfy our hunger.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about Jesus.

We sing about him because although he was the creator, he became the created.

We sing about him because although he was the master he became the servant.

We sing about him because although he was the King of King of Kings he became a baby born in a manger.

We sing about him because although he was the good shepherd, he became the Lamb of God

When we sing our song we should thank him for the mountain tops and for the valleys as well.

When we sing our song we should thank him for the sunshine and thank him for the rain!

When we sing our song we should tell the story of how he picked us up turned us around!

It ought to tell the world how he planted our feet on solid ground!

It ought to tell the world how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

It ought to tell the world how he gave us a new song to sing!

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!"

Who died on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose up from the grave!

Bless the Lord, oh my soul for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!

No. 9350-Christmas

A Special Delivery

A Sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11

Introduction

Have you ever had the feeling that God has something special in store for you or your children? It's that feeling you get when you look into the eyes of a newborn and conclude that this child will be different from all of the others. He is special.

It's natural for parents to say that about their children. A woman with ten children looks at each of her children and concludes that they are all special. It is a mystery to us what the Lord has in store for every little child that is born. Those who have become mothers this year have joined millions of mothers before them wondering what God has in store for their sons and daughters.

When something is unique it is in a select category. However, to be special places it in a more exclusive category of uniqueness.

There were six unique births in scripture. Isaac and Jacob were the first two. They were uniquely born to parents in their old age. The third was the birth of Joseph, whose birth was granted after a special prayer request from his mother Rachel. The 4th was Samson, born a Nazarite with supernatural strength for a supernatural purpose. The 5th was Samuel who was the answer to Hannah's prayers but who was given up to the temple for the service of God. The 6th was John the Baptist, he too was born of old parents and was given a special mission.

While all of these were unique, the 7th and final unique birth, went beyond just being different, it was a special delivery. It was the birth of Jesus.

What is a special delivery? Between 1885 and 1997 the Postal Service offered a special service to postal customers. For an extra fee, letters could get special handling and faster delivery from the system. They called it "Special Delivery." When someone received a package marked "Special Delivery" they knew it contained something that was very important and "special."

When Christ was born the world witnessed a special delivery from heaven. It was a bundle of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes.

As Christians, we thank God for sending his son to this world. His birth was not

ordinary or just unique. His birth had a special purpose for a special people. He was a special delivery.

Exposition

This text focuses on the good news brought by the angel to shepherds watching their fields. It was news that would bring them "great joy." The announcement of Christ's birth was not an ordinary announcement. It was the announcement of special delivery.

It was highly unusual primarily because it was announced by Angels themselves. The angels told them not to fear because they were bringing news of "great joy." The Greek word for "great" is Megas, which means big, enormous, colossal. It's the word we get the English word "Mega." When mega precedes something it is going to be super big. The angel announced news that was going to bring "mega joy." It would be mega joy for of Israel. It would be mega joy for the shepherds. It would be mega joys for every believer; that means mega joys for us.

The good news, of course, was the birth of Christ. That is the same good news that lifts our spirits today. The reality that God is with us, should lift our spirits and give us reason to be hopeful, cheerful and excited about life and all it offers.

Why His Birth was Special

The birth of Christ was a special delivery for the inhabitants of this world. It was special for three specific reasons:

HIS BIRTH PLACE WAS SPECIAL: We have read and heard the accounts of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. That in itself is not unusual because hundreds of babies were born in Bethlehem each year. What is special is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the first place.. His father and mother were residents of Nazareth. They only came to Bethlehem to register for the special tax, but in so doing fulfilled the prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. What's special about all of this is that God ordered the events according to his will. He moved Caesar Augustus to call for the taxation and even the designation of where each person was to go enroll their families. Joseph, being of the tribe of David went to Bethlehem. In so doing, he highlighted the special nature of the Christ Child.

In the same sense, God orders events for his children today. We are special to him and he arranges events in ways that will always benefit us as long as we are operating in his will. In fact he says, "All things work to the good of them that Love the Lord." That means God is working it out for his children. No matter how difficult the problem or situation, God is working it out in special ways for some very special people; all believers. When that blessing comes just when we need it, it's a special delivery.

HIS PHYSICAL DELIVERY WAS SPECIAL: The baby Jesus was born in a manger, designed for animals in a stable because there was no room for him in the

inn. That was not an accident, it was by design. Jesus came into the world in the lowliest of conditions so that he could appeal to all men, especially those who were poor and without means. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. Obviously, he was not born in the best of physical conditions yet his delivery was special because it demonstrated that even though he was "God with us" he would also be accepted as "one of us" by the people with whom he would encounter over the course of the next 33 years.

God has blessed all of us in very special ways. The accident of our birth in one location or another has no bearing on our access to God. Whether we were born in a hospital, surrounded by nurses and attendants, or on a living room sofa we are special. Whether we had special doctors and midwives or whether we were born on the back seat of a taxi cab, we are all special in God's sight. In the eyesight of the savior all of his children are special. That's the significance of his being born in a stable. He is accessible to all. He was truly a special delivery.

THOSE WHO WITNESSED HIS BIRTH WERE SPECIAL: Luke introduces the people who first saw Jesus…and they were not the kind of guests most of us would have over for Sunday dinner. They were not the cream of the crop. They were not the kings, priests, scribes or others of the ruling classes that were gathered to witness this special event. Those who witnessed this birth were shepherds. Shepherds were looked down upon because of their work. It took very little skill to be a shepherd; it didn't rank high on the most desirable profession list. Kenneth Barker and John Kohlenberger III made note of this in their commentary where they wrote, "Among the occupations, shepherding had a lowly place. Shepherds were considered untrustworthy and their work made them ceremonially unclean." Despite the fact that they were considered socially lowly people they were selected by God to witness a special even. They were the first to see the Newborn King and they were thrilled to see Him! In Luke 2: 15 – 18, we see their excitement: "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." After seeing the Newborn King, the "lowly" shepherds became the first evangelists as they went and told everyone about whom they had seen…and what they said had an effect on others because they were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

That's important to believers today. It's important for us to know that we are not required to have a high station in life to be a witness to the goodness of the Lord. We don't need plenty of money or high positions in government to testify to his greatness. While an extended education is great, we don't need a PhD to tell the world about the goodness of the Lord. Even the most humble person can be a witness for the Lord. That's what makes our Lord's arrival a special delivery, because his mercy became available to everyone, regardless of race, creed or color! When God gets ready to shower down a blessing he sends through the hands of all who will make themselves available. When it comes it is a special delivery!

His arrival was special

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the birth of the Christ Child was a sign from the Lord that he was about to visit his mercy on us, and it wouldn't

be from a distance, but by special delivery.

A sign from the Lord is confirmed in the word, empowered by the Holy Spirit and instituted by the hand of God!

The prophecy had been given, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son! His name shall be called Immanuel, God with us.

This child would make his way through 42 generations to be born in Bethlehem. His birth would be a special delivery.

The delivery of this child was a sign to a world groping in despair that there is still hope!

This child was God sign to us:

—When darkness covers the land, that I am able to turn darkness into light!

—That although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and good will toward all men!

—That although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow!

This child is a special child, for Isaiah said in 9:6 for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be on his shoulder; his name shall be called:

—Wonderful. Counselor. The Mighty God. Everlasting father. Prince of Peace!

This delivery will be a sign of God's unending love. I heard John 3:16 say "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This delivery will be a sign that God will save us. I hear Romans 10:13 saying, "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

This delivery will be a sign that when it's all over down here I have a home on the other shore:

—Where the wicked will cease from troubling

—The weary will be at rest

—Every day will be Sunday

—Always howdy, never good bye!

This special delivery would be superseded only another miracle that happened 33 years later.

That's when the baby born in Bethlehem, took up an old rugged cross in Jerusalem!

He was delivered to a special cross and died a special death.

We know his death was special because we still hear the centurion soldier saying "surely he must be the Son of God."

He died a special death and was buried in a special tomb!

But Early Sunday morning he an angel of the Lord rolled the stone away and gave the world another special delivery!

He arose with all power in his hands!

And he's still delivering special blessings everyday!

No. 9351-Christmas

God With Us

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 17, 2008

SCRIPTURE: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

Introduction

Have you ever had anyone to tell you "I'm with you" only to discover that you were all by yourself? There are many people who begin projects thinking that they have the support of friends and family only to learn that once difficulties arise that they are often standing alone. It happens on the job, when co-workers put you up to speak to the boss about a problem, then you learn that you are all alone. It happens in the community when you are selected to lead a time consuming and expensive project only to hear those who pushed you up front give excuses for not giving you help. It most definitely happens in the political world. It even happens in the family. Just about everyone has experienced what it means to be alone when you thought you had a crowd with you.

Wouldn't it be nice if each of us were like the people in the Verizon cell phone commercial? In that commercial each time a subscriber picks up the phone there is a whole network of people standing behind him. The idea is that there is a small army of supporters backing up every call. It would be great if we had our own network of support, "with us" everywhere we went.

Sometimes we can have people with us, but their presence means nothing. A man complained to his wife that he wasn't going to play golf anymore because he couldn't see where the ball fell after long drives. His wife reminded him that he was 70 and his eyesight was not what it once was. She suggested that take her brother along with him. The husband laughed as questioned what good that would do since her brother was 85 years old. "Don't let his age fool you," said the wife. "He's 85 but he can see a fly blink his eyes at 100 yards. His eye sight is so good that he can read the license plate on a car four blocks away." Convinced, the husband took his brother in law, Jack, with him on his next golf game. When he teed off the ball soared into the air. "Can you see it, Jack?" asked the husband. "Sure can!" The husband felt good, but as they started to walk he asked Jack, "Where did the ball land?" Jack gave a blank stare and said, 'I can't remember." Then the wife blurted out, "oh I forgot to tell Jack's got perfect eyesight, but he can't remember a thing." Jack was with them that day, but his presence meant absolutely nothing.

One of the joys of the Christmas season is that it reminds us that we are not alone. The arrival of the Christ child jogs the memory of the whole world and gently reminds them that "God is with us."

As Christians we are happy to know that we are not alone. We are happy to know that despite the difficulties of the times that the God we serve empathizes with us every day of our lives. Even before we pray to him he knows our needs, because he is with us.

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy recited in Matthew that Christ would be born of a virgin mother and whose birth would come to signify that God had come to live among men.

This prophecy makes reference to a similar prophecy made in Isaiah 7:14. In Isaiah, King Ahaz had suffered considerable defeat at the hands of his enemies. In one day 120,000 people were killed and another 200,000 were taken prisoner. Much of Judah's riches were carried away as spoils. God sent Isaiah to him prepared to give him a sign that he would not be destroyed.. The King was so distraught that he would not ask for a sign. He had made a deal with Assyria to rescue him and felt he did not need God. So God gave him a sign anyway that a virgin would conceive and bare a son and his name would be called "Immanuel" –The strong God with us. In the time it would take for the child to be born and weaned to a point of being able to eat butter and milk the King's problem would be resolved.

Matthew drew the connection between the prophecy is Isaiah and the birth of Christ, noting that the prophecy given 740 years earlier also referred to the birth of the savior with noted differences: in Isaiah the virgin maiden who would give birth referred to an pure bride; however, in Matthew it referred to a miraculous, immaculate conception. The birth Matthew referred was that of the Son of God.

The birth was Christ was miraculous. Matthew 1:18 indicates that his birth was caused by the Spirit of God himself. The birth of Christ required a special explanation to all involved. Matthew 1:20 shows how an angel appeared to Joseph to explain that his bride would be used by God to introduce Christ into the world. Isaiah 7:14 indicates that the birth of Christ as the fulfillment of a prophecy seven centuries earlier.

Immanuel, means "God with us." It states that the baby Jesus was actually God being born into this world. As a human he would face the same milk and butter issues as any other human. Yet, the fact that he came to the world would be a source of hope. The text notes that they child would be called Immanuel. That would not be his name, but he would be referred to as "God with us," or God with us. The text does not indicate that "Immanuel" would be his official name, but only that "Immanuel" would describe his presence and work on earth.

Even deeper, Emmanuel does not mean just a close association, the Greek form of the word "with" used in this text is the strongest form of "with." It is not merely "in company with us "as another Greek word would signify, but "with," "together with," and "sharing with." It indicates a very close fellowship. God is peculiarly and

closely "with us." If God took on our nature and lived as we live, that's a close as "with" as one can get. It would be the same as a friend moving into your house and living "with" you every day of your life. That's "with" by any definition.

"With" means that God has taken upon our nature our: flesh, blood, bone, everything that made a body; mind, heart, soul, memory, imagination, judgment, everything that makes a rational person. It is a wonderful assurance to know that God is so close to us that he can hear us think breathes with us every moment of the day.

Significance of "God With Us"

There is a significance to the three words of this text "God with us." It should an encouragement to believers in difficult times. It should remind us that:

GOD IS WITH US IN OUR TROUBLES: Jesus was born into the world as a child so that he could respond to the feelings and troubles of his creations from the standpoint of having "been there." Were you ever a child living under parental authority? Jesus has been there. Did you grow up in a small town or a small section of town not known for producing anything of value? Jesus has been there too? Were you often talked about criticized and persecuted for no reason at all? Jesus has been there too. Have there ever been times when you were pretty close to living on the streets? Jesus has been there too. There is no situation that we can experience that he cannot in some way understand how we feel from being born out of wedlock to being crucified for crimes he didn't commit.

When look to the savior for support and strength we are looking to someone who has been there with us. He knows what it means to be in trouble. He also knows what it means to feel all alone. Being alone is an awkward feeling. Most of us feel better when we face a situation in the company of those who make them feel safe and secure. When we are alone, fear sets in and anxiety is heightened. When we are alone, we feel uncomfortable. We feel safer when we are not alone. That's why Jesus promised never to leave us alone.

GOD IS WITH US IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS: The beauty of the Christian family is that God lives in a Christian home. He is present in a Christian marriage and is the unseen chaperone when Christian singles date. When God is in a home we have the constant presence of a spiritual advisor that helps our families to grow stronger. In a marriage or a single relationship God's function is the same. That's the difference between a Christian Home and people who live together. Those who shack up, do it without God. Couples who date without God is their chaperone, usually end up physically attached but spiritually detached.

Even though God is present in every family, he doesn't act like a meddling in-law, butting in while saying "I'm not trying to tell you how to run your family, but." He doesn't butt -in his advice must be requested; and it should not be requested if it's not going to be followed. How do we get God to intervene? We pray and ask him to intercede. We pray and ask him to show us the way.

There are many marriages, relationships and families that have been rescued from the brink of destruction only because three words "God with us." If it had not been

for the Lord on our side, where would be?

GOD HAS BEEN WITH US WHEN WE WERE NOT WITH US: There have been times in our lives when we have given up on ourselves. That's the time when we considered our losses, failures and defeats and decided to throw in the chips. Like Samson, we lost our strength and were ready to accept a life of weakness and darkness. Like David, we lost our favor from God because of our sinfulness and lost the special connection we had with God. Like the woman at the well, we were so caught up in sin that we thought we were doomed to community scorn forever.

Yet, at the point when we all of these had given up on themselves they found that God had not forsaken them. Samson had his strength restored. David had the joy of his salvation restored, and the woman at the well ran through the city saying "come see a man told me all I've ever done." Even when they had abandoned themselves, God was still with them.

Even today, there are some who have given up on themselves. They look at the shambles they have made of their lives and believe that all is lost. They have forgotten that God is with us always. Sometimes he's with us shaking his head at our failure to use what he has made available to us.

A father watched his son striking to push a huge rock. Frustrated the boy started to cry, prompting his father to ask why. "I tried to push the rock but it won't move" said the boy. "Have you used everything available to you?" asked the father. "Yes, sir." said the boy. Then father took the boy's hands and placed them back on the rock and together they pushed it until it rolled. Then the father said, "You said you had used all that was available to you, but you never asked me."

Those who are frustrated and have given up on life should remember that God is with them. He's waiting for them to ask for his help. With his help, every stone can be rolled away.

In every situation, God is with us

The great satisfaction of every believer is that no matter how deep the valley or dark the alley, there is always hope.

It is tempting in difficult times to believe that we are all alone. As we read of massive layoffs in companies as large as General Motors and as small as the local corner store, we tend to get nervous and believe that we are alone in this struggle.

Yet, the word of God constantly reminds us that we are not alone. God is with us. With that kind of backup, we are better connected than Verizon, we have all of the resources of heaven working for us.

We have the promise of God that he is with us to support us, defend us, and protect us, according to his will.

I hear Jesus say "lo, I am with you!"

If you are worried about the economy and the downsizing of your income, just keep the faith and remember God is with us.

When God is with us

-It doesn't matter how dark the night, because he can take darkness and turn it

into light!

-It doesn't matter how much rain falls, because after every rain he makes the sun shine!

-It doesn't matter how many ditches your enemies dig for you, he can take your enemies and make them your footstools

-It doesn't matter if you don't have a dime in your pocket, if you take the Lord with you, David said, "I have been young, but now I'm old, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging for bread!"

When we wake up in the morning, God is with us.

At the noon day, God is with us

At the midnight hour, God is with us.

No matter how difficult the terrain or treacherous the path, as long as God is with us, there is always hope!

No matter how frustrating the moment or aggravating the circumstance, as long as God is with us, there is always hope!

No matter how challenging the obstacle or intimidating the foe, as long as God is with us, there is always hope!

That's why the songwriter declares, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!

We have hope that"

If we stumble and trust in the Lord, he'll help us to stand!

If we are discouraged but trust in the Lord, he'll give us new inspiration!

If we get weak and trust in the Lord, he'll make us strong!

If we get lost and trust in the Lord, he'll help us find our way!

If we find ourselves in the valleys and alleys of despair, he's able to deliver us!

I don't know how long it will be, nor what the future holds for me, but this I know...

If Jesus, who gave his blood for us on Calvary..

If Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb..

If Jesus, who arose after three days and nights

If Jesus is with me, through the storm and the rain!

If Jesus is with me, through heat of day and chill of the midnight hour!

If Jesus is with me, through trials and tribulations!

If Jesus is with me, everything will be alright!

No. 9352-Christmas

Is there any room?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 21, 2008

SCRIPTURE: And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

Introduction

Have you ever traveled and stopped for a hotel only to be told that there were no vacancies? That's one of the problems of those who travel, finding a room where you want to stay.

Today there are a plethora of places for a person to find lodging. The internet provides a wealth of opportunities that did not exist a decade ago. Now, a person can find a hotel online, get a list of all of the services that the hotel offers and even get a virtual tour of the hotel featuring photographs of the rooms, restaurant and pool areas. There are maps showing the distance of the hotel from shopping centers, major highways and other pertinent information.

Yet, with all of the technology available to us, it is still possible to get the same response that visitors have received for thousands of years, -There's no room in the inn.

That's a really frustrating feeling. It's complicated more when there is money in your pocket but you can't find a place to lay your head for the night.

No room! It's terminal.

No room! It's final.

There is a curious scene in Revelation 3:20. It shows Christ standing at the door of the church at Laodicea and asking to come in, making himself available. The text of the verse says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Today, that statement is being made to every believer. "Behold I stand at the door." Our challenge is to open up the door and make room for him in our lives.

As Christians, we know that the spirit of God desires to reside within us, but we must open the door to let him in. We must make room for him and invite him into our lives.

Exposition

This text considers the place where Jesus, the son of God, was born.

The known world was ordered to enroll for the Roman tax. Those who were descendants of David were ordered to travel to Bethlehem to register themselves and thereby Joseph and Mary came to travel with other pilgrims in obedience to the law.

Once in Bethlehem Joseph looked for lodging and found none. In each instance he was told there was no room because the city was filled with travelers looking for a place to stay.

There are two types of inns generally referred to in scripture.

One is what we might call a motel. Luke 10:34 tells of the Good Samaritan who found an injured man along the road and carried him to a nearby town and put him up in an inn. The verse says, "And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." The word used for inn in this text is "pandocheion" (Pan-do-kay-on) which means an all receptive lodging place.

The second type of inn is indicated in our text is a katalyma (Katalooma). It is a place to break up a journey, a small rest area or campground. More than likely a katalyma was just a stopover for caravans on their way through Jerusalem to Galilee or Egypt.

Such "inns" were simply crude stone walls encircling an area for the animals. The nicer of these inns would be two story structures where the overnight guests would sleep on the upper level while their animals rested underneath.

To one such katalyma, Joseph made his appeal for a room for himself and his wife, and heard the disappointing response: "There is no room at the inn."

Places to make room

Mary and Joseph went into Bethlehem and were given a secondary accommodation because the main places were occupied.

Often, Jesus knocks at our door but we are too busy to let him in. How does he knock? Does he appear in person and ring our doorbell or tap on the door? Usually he calls us gently to serve him through serving others, while many respond; there are others who have no room. Sometimes he calls us to commune with him in prayer, public worship and private prayer time. While many hear his knock and open to him there are others who respond, there is "no room, no time, no way possible to do what he wants because their schedules are filled." In this sense, there are many today that have no room for the savior and relegate him to second place on their agenda while desiring to be first place on his.

CROWDED LIVING ROOMS: There are many who have no living room space for Christ. The living room of a house suggests the place where the family gathers to fellowship, relax and enjoy each other. Many families today have little room for Christian living. Many have modified their living to include much that the world has to offer. Some have subscriptions to pornographic cable services and literature. Many have computers that have bookmarked sites that include music, videos and other materials not indicative of Christian living. If the living room of our lives is filled with so much worldliness that the spirit of God cannot dwell then we should consider

Ephesians 5:3, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" When it comes to Christian fellowship, there is little time or interest in the things of God. We should resolve to make room for Christ by clearing out all of the worldly distractions that have kept our focus away from. When he knocks, our living will be an invitation to his presence.

UNATTENDED WASHROOMS: Every house has a wash room or a place where dirty things are stored until they can be washed. The wash room, by its very nature is where the family goes to clean its clothes and linens. In the spiritual context, the washroom is the collection of sins and offenses for which we have not repented. When we sin and pile up the sins one on top of another and fail to address them they send up a stench in the nostrils of God. Before we invite God into our lives, pray to him for blessings or ask him for mercies, we must attend the washroom. We must take care of the dirty laundry, the outstanding sins, and present ourselves repentant to God. To repent is not simply to throw all of our sins in the washroom and close the door so that God won't see them, but to repent is to clean up. T

CLOSED BEDROOMS: There are many who would invite Christ into their lives, but they would have to close the bedroom door first. If there is a place where many believers have a weakness, it would relation to our love lives. There are still many who are active in their churches and believe passionately in Christ, but they shrivel up if he asks to see the bedroom of their lives. There are some who are still struggling with faithfulness in their marriages; they are still tipping around and cheating on their spouses. There are some singles who break their vows of abstinence regularly even while maintaining a hearty church life. Yet if Christ comes to visit, will he find the bedroom of our lives locked? Can we freely open this area of our lives up to godly inspection and say to him "And this is our bedroom" and not be ashamed. The church is the bride of Christ, we must present ourselves to him spotless and pure. If your bedroom door is not in order, let this become bed making time. Why? Because we are expecting a visit from the king and want him to be able to visit every room of our lives.

THE DINING ROOMS: The dining room is where the family eats and communes. Families usually commune together. That definition has changed in this generation. Dining room tables are only used for special occasions like Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. The remainder of the year many families eat, but they do not commune together. In a spiritual sense believers do not forsake opportunities to commune together. The Lord's supper is an occasion in which all of the saints of a congregation are in the same room and they all are on one accord with one purpose and that is to commemorate the life, death burial and resurrection of Christ. Yet, there are many times each year when some saints do not commune together. Just as they do at home, they skip the family meal and catch a little some some on the run. If that has been your situation during the year, why not resolve to make room for communion fellowship with your church family? It is a special day that should not be ignored, just as eating and fellowshipping with your family should not be ignored. Jesus said, "This do, in the remembrance of me."

THE PRAYER CLOSET: Every house has some type of closet where things are stored. It's a secluded room or place, even if it's behind a door, out of sight. In

Matthew 6:6 Jesus said, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Your closet is your prayer place. Christ was not suggesting that in order to pray that we have to go in a dark room and close the door just as he is not suggesting that we must always bend our knees to pray; but it does mean that our homes should be places of prayer and its members should pray regularly. Many homes have become houses. There is no room for prayer except for a quick grace at mealtime. Prayer is essential for families. We pray for God’s protection. We pray for healing. We pray for forgiveness. We pray for strength. The old adage is true, “Prayer is the key to kingdom and faith unlocks the door.” If your home has not been a praying home, why not make room?

Prepare him room

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that Christmas season celebrates the birth of the Christ child meaning that God is coming to be with us, as we celebrate we should make room.

A lyric from “Joy to the World” says, “Let every heart prepare him room” and that be our desire, to prepare room for Jesus this Christmas.

It is perfectly acceptable to join in the festivities surrounding Christmas but be sure to make room for Jesus.

It is fine to have a beautiful Christmas tree that is decorated with pretty lights and candy cane, but we don’t want to have Christmas without Jesus!

It is exciting to have tables full of food and the best cakes and pies in the world, but we don’t want to have Christmas without Jesus!

It is an enriching experience to exchange gifts and expressions of love, but we don’t want to have Christmas without Jesus!

Christmas without Jesus is like a brand new car without gas!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cake made without sugar!

Christmas without Jesus is like a new toy but the batteries are not included!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cell phone with no minutes, a computer with no internet connection, and a copy machine with no paper!

Christmas without Jesus is like a coffeepot with no coffee, a bank account with nothing in it; and a magazine with empty pages!

Let every heart prepare him room because when he comes in he will

-Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties!

-Strengthen us in our weakness; encourage us in our trials!

He’s on his way!

On his way to our lives, he stopped down in Bethlehem and made a stop in Nazareth!

He stopped by a place called Calvary and spent three nights in a grave!

On his way to our lives, he died but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her king!

No. 9353-Inspiration

Why Nazareth?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 28, 2008

SCRIPTURE: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Matthew 2:23

Introduction

If you could pick a city in which to live where would it be? Many have toyed with that idea at one point in their lives, speculating on one city another.What makes a location ideal as much to do with with want to do in life

A person who wants to succeed in arts: music, dance and theater might favor living in New York or California.

A person who attracted to life on the seas might be attracted to areas bordering great bodies of water.

The painter might like the scenic grandeur of the mountainous areas.

Each generation of African Americans has seen America from a different perspective. There was a time when every Southern African-American wanted to go North, anywhere North, because that would mean freedom. Those who were up North dreamed of returning to Mother Africa.

Then there came a great migration of Blacks who saw New York City, Chicago and Detroit and the Mecca's of opportunity for Blacks created a new Renaisaance man in the Black community.

In the 1950's California was was seen as the place that provided the best opportunities for Blacks.

Today, many young Blacks are trying to get to Atlanta because it has the image of being a place where young upwardly mobible blacks can survive and thrive.

While that migration is happening among the young, the older adults who are living up North are making a full circle and return home to the South.

The ideal place to live depends on what you are trying to achieve in life.

What if you were the son of God shopping a town in which to live, in the whole world, what town would you choose?

Some are surprised to learn that Jesus picked a small town, Bethlehem in which to be born, and Nazereth, an even smaller town in which to grow and mature.

The fact that God would choose a small town to launch a world wide ministry says a lot about the nature of the savior and how important each person is to him.

As Christians, we should be proud to know that our God is a God of the big city,

but he is also the god of the village and hamlet. Wherever we are God can use us to do his work.

Exposition

This text focuses on the life of the baby Jesus after the birth in Bethelehem.

It is significant to note that while Jesus was born in Bethlehem he was not reared in Bethlehem. Because Herod sought find the child and kill him Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt for a while. The family returned to Nazereth.

This decision had been predicted by the prophets Matthew refers to what "was spoken by the prophets" that he should be called a Nazarene.

There is no single Old Testament passage that says Jesus would be called a Nazarene. The closest we get is Isaiah 11:1 in which the prophet refers to Christ as a branch of Jesse. The word for Branch is "Netzar" which means Nazarene. So what is the meaning of the phrase that suggests that prophets prophecied that he would be a called a Nazarene.

Nazarene is term that means to be despised. It's synoymous to be called "Trailer Trash","Hick","Ghetto" or "hillibilly" in modern times. To be called a Nazarene meant that you would be object of jokes, ridicule and scorn. It also mean that no one would ever take anything you did or said seriously. This was a fact that prompted Nathaniel to ask, "Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46, NIV).

Nazarene and Nazarite are two terms in the bible that are often confused. A Nazarite was a special, honored person who life was consecrated and set aside for the service of God.

A Nazarene was a person who was despised and looked down upon.

Jesus was not a Nazarite, but a Nazarene.

God chose the town of Nazereth with all of predispositions against progress and affinities with the world to rear his son, Jesus.

This choice in itself signified that not only was God "With us" but he was accessible to even the lowest and most despised among us.

Why Nazereth

What reason would God have for picking Nazereth.

TO FULFILL HIS DESTINY: The scriptures had prophesied the Christ would be a despised person. Psalm 22:6 noted that he would be considered a worm. In Psalm 69:19 the words reproach, and shame are used to describe him. Isaiah 53:3 used the terms despised and rejected to describe him. It became obvious that his life in Nazereth would fulfill this part of his destiny. Jesus was to be a man who would rise up from the lowest ranks of the people; it had been prophesied, so Nazereth was the place.

Today, each of us has a destiny, a purpose for which we were placed on this earth. The Prophet Isaiah tells us that the purpose of the Christ Child was to become the

Prince of Peace, the Almighty God and Counselor. With a clear purpose, Christ's spiritual life was easier to shape because his purpose was clear to him; he was to be the savior of his people. This fact was indicated even by his name, "Jesus", which meant he would save his people. The fact that he would be called a Nazarene indicated that he would not have an easy route ahead. Each of us should strive know God's plan for our lives and pursue it, despite the difficulties ahead.

MIRACLES WOULD BE MORE OBVIOUS: Since no one expected anything of importance to come from Nazereth, when any great person or thing out of Nazereth its importance was heightened. The fact that a great thinker would evolve from Athens, the home culture, literate and scholarship would not be considered great, but from Nazareth that would be a different case. The fact that a healer was attracting great crowds would not make the news in Rome, but if the person was from Nazereth, it would make it obvious that there was something great going on.

Sometimes we question why God placed me in this company, in this region and in this town. We wonder why we were not given stations in places that appear to have more opportunity. The principal dreams of leading the super school. The coach dreams of heading the championship team of super talented players. Those or the times that we question why we were given "Nazareth?"

When a coach takes a team of misfits and turns them into champions, his greatness is underscored. When he wins with a team of champions, winning is expected. A principal of a school of scholars is expected to do well, but the principal who turns arounds an under achieving school raises eyebrows.

Why Nazereth? It is the place that gives God the glory when you achieve because the world will know that it had to be God working with you to make it happen, because nothing good comes out of Nazereth.

HIS WORK PUT THE TOWN ON THE MAP: Very few people outside of the region had ever heard of Nazereth. Those that did, thought little of the town. However, the ministry of Christ put them on the map. The people even started referring to him as Jesus of Nazereth. Suddenly, Nazereth became a place to be from, especially after the church was established and Christianity spread around the world. Jesus put the town on the map.

Is it possible that God may be using you to put your town on the map. Are you the one who will cure cancer, if so you will put your town on the map. Are you the one that will reduce the poverty of the world? Are you the one that will save millions from dying sickness and disease? Any person who takes on a life tasks and succeeds will put his town of origin on the map of public respect.

In all of America, there was one littl college that turned out a stream of professional football players from nearly 40 years; that school was Grambling State. Despite the fact that it is located in one the poors areas of the country and state, the college put the town on the map.

What Jesus did, he did well. He did it with such excellence that the world took a second look at the town called Nazereth.

Circumstance Does not matter

Finally, brothers and sisters we must also note that by selecting Nazereth God sent us the message that with God's help even those from the smallest, morst remote corners of the world can achieve.

Each believer has a purpose and a destiny with respect to the kingdom of God. Wherever we are in life is not by chance, the God we serve as ordered events and circumstances to place us where we are. That means our circumstance does not matter; what does matter is our willingess to work with what God has given us to achieve his purpose.

Even though you may be from Nazereth, there is a reason for the blessings you are receiving. You are being blessed so that you can be a blessing to the kingdom.

When the Christ child grew up he recognized the he was being blessed for a purpose. Even at the tender age of 12 he said "It's time for me to be about my father's business."

Even though we may be from Nazereth the Grace of God smiles on what we do.

God smiles on us because of the children that we help along the way.

God smiles on us because of the elderly spirits that lift every day!

God smiles on us because of broken hearts we help to mend on our journey

Even though we may be from Nazereth,God's grace is upon us,is smiling on us and is guiding our footsteps.

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand!"

It's the powerful hand of him who was born in a manager in Bethlehem and reared in a little town called Nazareth; he made a world of difference!

He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

They called him Jesus; he made a world of difference!

Before he left he told his disciples to stay ready because "I'm going to create another world! "That where I am ye may be also!"

In that world, every day will be Sunday and the Sabbath will have no end!

In that world, it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

In that world, hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the song writer declares, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"

In that world we'll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning!

In that world we'll live eternally!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house there is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 9354-New Year

Forward March

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 6, 1980

SCRIPTURE: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" Exodus 14:15

Introduction

What do you think about when you are poised to begin a new experience? Often we are apprehensive, troubled or even fearful when faced with the prospect of the future. We know what has happened in the past but we do not know what the future holds. We are not afraid of the future, we are afraid of the unknown. That's all the more reason for us to trust heavily in what we do know. We do know that as long as God is in the future, he will control its outcome to the fulfillment of his will.

For that reason we march forward with the precision and determination of a soldier proceeding into the unknown.

Those familiar with the military know the meaning of the command to "forward march."On the command "forward march", the soldier smartly steps off straight ahead with the left foot, taking a 24-inch step and places his heel on the ground first. The hands will be cupped with the thumbs pointed down, and the arms will hang straight, but not stiff, and will swing naturally. The swing of the arms will measure 6 inches to the front and 3 inches to the rear.

There is an order to marching forward. It's on command and by the rules. It indicates a soldier about to move forward in unison with others in full faith in the commanding officer.

That's the way it is with believers. As we prepare to march forward we should be prepared to move at God's command in an orderly fashion, obedient to his commands. When we do that, we know that he will tell us when to halt, when to stand at ease, or even when it's time to do an about-face.

When considering the new year ahead there is no real reason for the people of God to be apprehensive or jittery. God is still on the throne. He will control the events of the New Year just as he has controlled the events of our past.

As Christians, we are confident that God does not change. While we may be weary

of what the future holds, we are encouraged however, because we know who holds the future. God is in control and that means everything will be all right.

Exposition

This text focuses on a command God gave Moses to tell Israel: to rise up and go forward.

Having left Egypt Moses was faced with a complaining people who were troubled because all they could see was trouble in front of them in the form of the Red Sea and trouble behind them in the form of Pharaoh's approaching army.

Moses boldly told the people to fear not but to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Soon after he made those bold statements to the people, Moses himself became dispirited. Then God issued him a spiritual wakeup call and told him in no uncertain terms: "Why are you crying out to me? Stop crying! Get up! Arise! Tell the people to go forward!" And Moses did.

It is a word of faith that is echoed throughout the scriptures as believers become weary or fearful of the days ahead.

Paul reminded the Galatians not to be weary but to keep doing good in the days ahead. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

The believers at Corinth were encouraged not to miss a beat but to be steadfast in their forward march. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Marching forward with boldness and courage is the command to every believer. It's the same command that was given to Moses and is given to every believer today.

Going forward

When God freed the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt they fled to the banks of the Red Sea. To the right and left they were bordered by high mountains and behind them was Pharaoh's army. In front of them was the Red Sea. They had no way to go that would not present a highly impossible circumstance.

However, listening to the dictates of God they decided to march forward in blind faith that God would open up a way for them.

As we enter the decade of the 1980's it is tempting for all of us to look behind us with a certain amount of nostalgia and to face the future with a degree of reluctance.

Man by his nature is a creature that harbors a fear of the unknown. Certainly the prospect that we may live to see a day that is vastly different from the present looms over each of us

All we know about the 80's is what we have heard and read. We have heard that the 80's will be a decade of challenge to us as a nation and individually. The prospect of radical changes in the status quo scares many of us. Miniature cars and homes,

$2.00 per gallon gasoline, test tube babies, and regular trips into space for the average citizen are but a few of the changes that are destined to come, not to mention the four day work week, a computer in every home and social order that will be highly socialized and controlled by inanimate technology.

The prospect of the 80's faces us, but where do we go from here is the question.

We most certainly cannot go backward although that is the road that is prescribed by right wing conservative elements of our nation. We can't simply stand still either because if we do we will be swallowed by the past or drowned in the tidal wave caused by the future.

The only way for us to go is forward.

We must enter into the 80's with an optimistic spirit that we will place the banner of Jesus in front of us and march forward in faith.

Affirming Life

Sigmund Freud in his book "The Ego and the Id" noted that every life operates on two psychological principles governed by the Eros and Thanatos or the libdo and mortido instincts. He theorized that we either have a life instinct or a death instinct. It is a part of human nature, he says.

The Eros is the reproductive or life instinct, the desire to drive forward and to live and seek life on whatever level we can find it. The thanatos seeks the instinct to return life back into its inanimate state or death.

Freud theorized that our actions are either life affirming or life denying.

To go backward is life denying. To go forward is life affirming.

In the 1970's we have seen many life affirming trends: There was a focus on the elderly in the 1970's as we discovered a new appreciation for our elders. There was also heightened acceptance of women as equals. Even though it has not come to full fruition it began immensely in the 70's. There was also the adoption of less imposing lifestyles in the 1970's. Living simpler became more acceptable that opulence, although opulence is still the main drawing card.

We also see some life denying trends when we look back at the 70's. We saw a revival of the death penalty in the nation. We also saw a quickened erosion of the family, as we have known it, since Adam and Eve. Adam and Steve is on the brink of becoming acceptable. There was a decline in the work ethic in the 70's, it began in the late 60's and continued through as more people wanted something for nothing and became comfortable living on the goodwill of others. We also saw the rise of social apathy in the 70's. An entire generation began to develop a very laid back attitude about the society in which we live without any feeling of responsibility.

With that look back, we must approach the 80's with a life affirming attitude about the issues of the day, our community and our personal lives.

We must assume what columnist Max Lerner calls the "attitude of the possibilist" and what Jesus referred to as faith. Faith is what makes us assume a life affirming stance and assume the role of possibility thinker saying, "With God all things are possible."

Go forward or die

Finally, brothers and sisters, as dark as the approaching years may seem, we have only one choice and that is go forward or to die. We must step out on faith for if we stand still we will be consumed by time which marches on.

Moses called Israel to "see the salvation of the Lord" and we too must stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, prepared to move at his command.

On the command forward march, the challenge of every Christian should be to answer, if the Lord needs somebody, here am I, send me.

As we proceed forward, we should be sure to keep our eyes on Jesus, the rock of our salvation.

In the days ahead there will be some scorching summers, but the Rock is a shade on your right hand, for the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night, so forward march!

Believers can expect to be attacked in the days ahead, but the Rock gives them a special vantage place, a higher ground, so forward march!

There are some dry days ahead, but there is also refreshment in the Rock, so do not be afraid; forward march!

No matter how bad things get just remember that no situation is terminal because "Our God is able!"

The world doesn't understand how we march forward with boldness although we don't have everything!

They don't understand how we can be so happy when:

—Our bank accounts are so low!

—We are not driving a Rolls Royce!

—We don't have expensive furniture in our homes!

—Our closets are not filled with brand-new clothes!

—Hard times seem to come our way so often

—Death just left our door

What they don't understand about us is that we serve a God who specializes in taking the obstacles in our paths and turning them into footstools.

I don't know about you but I've found out that God can take my:

--WEAKNESS and turn it into strength; DEFEATS and turn them into victories.

--DARKNESS and turn it into light, HUNGER and turn it into satisfaction.

--SADNESS and turn it into gladness; EMPTINESS and turn it into fullness!

--SORROW and turn it into joy; SIN and turn it into salvation!

It doesn't matter what the New Year brings, I found out that there is deliverance in the rock!

Rock of Ages, Cleft for me, let me hid myself in thee!

This Rock is Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

This Rock is Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock ….

No. 9355-Funeral

Faith for the Race

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

Introduction

What makes a person a true champion? A champion is a hero who defies the odds and arises victorious. A champion displays strength of character in the pursuit of high goals and objectives. Those who are champions are not the ones who begin a race, but those who run their race to its end and bring home the victory.

This summer when we watched the Olympics we saw men and women stand bold with gold medals around their necks representing their countries. The public saw the triumphant end of a journey for Olympians that carried them through years of preparation, disappointments and setbacks before they received the ultimate victory; the golden crown.

We watched the Olympics on television but every Christian actually runs a race for the kingdom of God. There is more at stake in the Christian race than in the Olympics. In the Olympics the winners receive the praise of the world a gold plated (not solid gold) medallion. However, runners in the Christian race, receive a crown of pure gold and the praise of the almighty God.

Our champion was a superior athlete with a tremendous heart, determination and character..

Despite an athlete's accomplishments in competition the greatest race is not on the track field but as a runner in the arena of Christian life.

In that respect athletes are like every believer who is striving to live the Christian life. We are running for Jesus. The strength and training regimen however, makes the comparisons clearer and easier to understand.

As Christians, we all are striving to live a life that pleases God. Like competitors on the track field we run the race that has been set before us. We are sure that when that race ends we shall receive a golden crowd.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Christian life as a race and each individual as a runner in a race in pursuit of a golden crown.

Hebrews 12 impressively follows Hebrews 11 which presents a long succession of faith runners, all described as running by faith. Among the listed were: Abraham, Moses and others, all described as great runners or people of faith who ran their leg of this great relay.

Hebrews 11 begins by describing those who ran before as a "great cloud of witnesses" who have run their part of the race and are now counting on each believer to run their leg of the race.

Athletic contests were common images in the Greco-Roman era in which this text was written. Races and competitions were common and so popular that many cities built their own stadiums to host the game. These contests were divided into two classes, the pancratium, consisting of boxing and wrestling, and the pentathlon, consisting of leaping, running, hurling the spear and wrestling.

To prepare for the race the competitors required a long and severe course of previous training during which a particular diet was enforced. The training often lasted for ten months, during the last of which they were conducted under the supervision of appointed officers. The contests took place in the presence of a vast multitude of spectators,

The winners of the contests were announced to cheering crowds and heralds of trumpets. In the original games the winners did not receive a medal but a wreath of victory to wear upon their heads. The crowds shouted their names and they took their places among the great cloud of previous winners.

The writer of Hebrews used the illustration of the games to extract certain truths about the life quest of believers and to underscore the fact that we are running a race for the cause of Christ.

The Quest

The life of the deceased mirrors this text in many ways. As we reflect on this life lived we see several truths extracted from its deeper meaning.

WE ALL HAVE A RACE TO RUN: Each believer has a race to run. While there are some exceptional athletes that excel in five or more areas, there has never been an athlete that has won all of the competitions: boxing, swimming, skiing, running, etc. That seems to suggest that each believer has a special area of life that has been set before them. It is a race that has been run by others before us and recorded in the word of God with examples of faithful servants, called a cloud of witnesses that have run the race successfully. When God sets us in a race, there is a course to be run, a time limit set for that race and a prize that awaits us at the end.

What is your race? Is it to be a grandmother or grandfather to exercise leadership over your family for many years? Then perhaps you are a marathon runner, destined

run many miles. You don't run fast you are a strong runner whose job is to endure, inspire and guide.

Are you the strong member of your family that shoulders the burdens of others and helps resolve problems? Then perhaps you have been set to be the power lifter in your family.

Are you the member of the family that is a problem solver who helps the family around the many obstacles that entangle many of its members? Then perhaps your race is that of the hurdler whose race is filled with obstacles but has proven to be skilled at leaping over obstacles with style and grace.

If you are the member of the family who acts quickly, decisively and wastes little time, then maybe you are the sprinter in the family that can move with laser like speed and reach the goal quickly.

Where does the deceased fit in? What was his race? In the spiritual arena, each of us is a relay runner. A relay runner catches the baton of the person before them and runs their part of the race with all of the energy and might that they can muster, then skillfully places the baton in the hand of another and joins the cloud of witnesses that cheers on the next runner.

RELAY RUNNERS HAVE TO PASS THE BATON: Since believers are like relay runners, there is a lot to learn from watching relay runners on the track field. The nature of a relay runner has an interesting comparison to the life she lived. In a relay race there are usually several runners, each with a specific race to run, but neither of them running the entire race.

Sometimes we are starters, with our fingers on the line, our heads back in line with our spines, and our eyes on the course ahead. As the starter our job is to run as quickly as we can, then pass the baton to another team mate.

If we receive the baton from other runners our job is to begin running with our hands extended behind us looking forward all of the time, then to run our race with all of our might and power.

If we are the the anchors in the race, we have to receive our batons then head for the finish line with all of the power and strength we can muster to claim the victory.

Essential in the relay race is the ability to pass the baton. Relay runners must pass the baton. Even if it's dropped it must be picked up, so besides running those in this race also practice passing the baton.

Isn't that what we all do? As parents we try to pass on what we know to our children because we know that one day they will have to run their leg of life's race. So we lecture, beg, plead, teach, and preach constantly to those who will follow us because we know that one day the baton must be passed and the victory depends heavily on a smooth transition.

RELAY RUNNERS DON'T HAVE TO WIN THE WHOLE RACE: A unique quality of relay runners is that they don't have to win the entire race, just their part of the race. So it is with each of us in a family. The family of the deceased is running a race, along with all of the other families that are here today. No individual member of the family can win the relay alone; each one must win their leg of the race.

The spouse has a leg to run. The spouse must run the race that is presented and

prepare to hand the baton to all offspring, who must, in time, run his part of the race, then pass the baton to his children.

No one in the family runs the entire race; neither does any member run at the same time or same pace.

However, if the family is to win its race, once the baton has been passed, the race must continue. It is important that each family member stays in the race.

That is the challenge of those who survive the death of a family member. The challenge is to pick up the baton and to run the family's race.

The deceased has completed one part of the race, now the baton is in the spouse's hand.

Looking to Jesus

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that to win our race, we must keep our eye on Jesus.

Verse two of this text notes that the runner should be "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

That's the beauty of the great relay race. It's beautiful to watch how the successful runners can receive the baton while looking forward and running at full speed.

Whoever is running the anchor, the last person in the race, is looking at the finish line. It inspires her, motivates her and gives her the energy to push harder.

In the Christian race the word of God tells us that we do the same. Once we receive the baton we should keep looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

We don't know how long our race will be. We might set a world record, we may not, but we know who will be waiting on us at the finish line!

So brothers and sisters, let us lay aside any weights, problems or frustrations that will slow us down.

Even in our grief, let's look to Jesus the source of our strength and get ready to run with patience the race that has been set before us. We will need patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way. We will need perseverance to resist all temptations to desist or turn aside.

Even in our grief, we should keep looking to Jesus, he is our example because he looked at the race that was set before him with joy even though that race included jeering crowds and an old rugged cross.

To those who mourn, we must hear the essence of the entire life testimony of our deceased friend echoing in our ears, "Stay in the race!"

Though you may stumble my son, never give up, look to Jesus and stay in the race!

Though you may get weary my husband, never lose hope, look to Jesus and stay in the race!

Though you may get tired my friends, never despair, look to Jesus and stay in the race!

I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course, but you must stay in the

race!

Stay in the race and keep your eye on the prize!

If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we will make it to the finish line and receive the prize.

The prize that every Christian will receive in glory will tell the real story of our race.

It will tell the story of how we found:

—Joy in the midst of our sorrows!

—Happiness in the midst of our infirmities!

—Safety in the midst of dangerous situations!

—Comfort in the midst of loneliness!

—Encouragement in the midst of our failures!

—Strength in the midst of our weakness!

—A Song to sing in the midst of the night!

Until your race ends keep on running!

Run and tell the world about Jesus!

Run and tell the lost that He is still saving souls!

Run and tell the blind that He is still giving sight!

Run and tell the infirmed that He is still healing the sick.

Run and tell the skeptics that He is still alive today

Run and tell the world that over 2000 years ago that they crucified him on an old rugged cross but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hand.

Cry, if you must..

Grieve if you must..

But stay in the race until he says, “Well done!”

No. 9356-New Year

Never would have made it

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 4, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "If God hadn't been there for me, I never would have made it." Psalm 94:17 (msg)

Introduction

Have you ever considered how you made through last year? Today, we are happy to celebrate another year, but at second glance, last year was an extremely difficult year that touched our lives in many ways.

We saw a near meltdown of the financial markets, including the collapse of some of the nation's largest financial institutions. We saw billion dollar companies coming to the government asking for welfare. Even auto dealers and big newspapers were asking for help.

We saw gas prices rise to astronomical heights and watched the news daily to hear reports of more plants closing; even some close to home.

We saw new enemies developing in foreign lands, more terrorist attacks planned and money getting tighter.

Despite all of that God saw fit to help us get through. There is very little we can do in any given year that does not require God's miraculous intervention for us to survive. Without God's help, we would not have made it through. Even those of us who were touched by some of the problems, still made it. God kept his word to us. He said that he will never forsake us or leave us.

The fact is that the grace of God surrounded and strengthened us last year. God's grace placed someone by our side in times of trouble and helped us. The grace of God caused a full plate to be placed on our table when we hungered and it was the grace of God that placed us in the hands of the right doctor, teacher, coach and mentor. It wasn't luck, it was the grace of God.

As Christians, we approach the New Year with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We are enthusiastic because when we look back we saw how God helped us. We know that since God helped us last year, he will do the same again in the months to come.

Exposition

The 94th Psalm is a unique Psalm which focuses on Israel praise to God during

their wilderness journey.

Generally, David is noted as the principal writer of the psalms, but not all of the Psalms were written by David. David wrote 73 of the 150 Psalms. There are 50 psalms that are anonymous. Moses wrote the 90th Psalm. The 72nd and 127th Psalm were written by Solomon. Some were written by Aspah and others by the sons of Korah.

Psalm 90-94 were written during Israel's 40 year wilderness journey. During this time they were attacked by enemies, which the Lord destroyed in the Red Sea.

Because of their unwillingness to follow God's directions given to them through Moses, they wandered around in circles in the desert for 40 years. Often they demonstrated a foolish nature by ignoring God's direction bringing trouble upon themselves.

Yet, God provided for them. When they were to the point of thirsting to death, God provided water for them from a rock. When they had no food, God provided bread from heaven that appeared on the ground every day for 40 years. When they had no meat, huge flocks of quail appeared every day. Their clothes did not wear out; they never had to change shoes.

The 94th psalm describes a period in Israel's national life when it had reached a point of giving up completely. They could not get it together. The land of promise was so close but they simply could not make themselves reach out and grab the promise. They constantly fell into faithlessness, sometimes idolatry and wickedness that caused them considerable trouble.

The psalm looks back over the distance traveled and realized that God chastised Israel for its wayward ways but never stopped loving them. Psalm 94:12 uses the word "chastenest" to describe their experience. To be chastised is to be taught a lesson or to be trained. The object of chastisement is that the student will arise, wiser and stronger having learned an important lesson.

In the wilderness, Israel was certainly chastised. They learned through their suffering that they should be obedient to God and trust in him wholly. They also learned that God will not allow those who wronged them to escape without punishment. Psalm 94:13 notes that a pit is being dug for the wicked who troubled God's people during their chastisement.

The psalm raises the question "Who stood up for me against the wicked? Who took my side against evil workers?"

The answer came in verse 17 "If God had not been there for me, I never would have made it."

Through their faith in him, Israel made it through the wilderness and marched into the Promised Land, stronger, wiser and better than they had been in the wilderness. When they looked back, they concluded, "We never could have made it, without the Lord."

Ways God Helped

Like Israel, now we stand on the threshold of a new experience, and we look back

we see what God has brought us through.

HE PROTECTED THEM AGAINST ENEMIES: When Israel began their journey they were attacked by Pharaoh who tried to reenslave them. God buried the entire army of Egypt in the Red Sea. When we look back we can see the many ways that God has protected us from those who would do us harm. Sometimes those who threatened us were outside of our families, but sometimes our worst enemies were family members. Last year, there were many who wrestled with problems that were caused by their enemies whether it was on the job, in relationships or in academic or professional pursuits. Despite the tricks plans and plots, of the devil you survived; not because of your own cunning, but because the Lord covered your back.

In Psalm 124:2-3 David said, "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us."-You survived because God has something better in store for you. There is a Promised Land awaiting you; it has been assured.

Looking back we are happy because we know that we did not have the strength to protect ourselves from the devil but God is able. In our time of trouble he was our help. Psalm 146:5 says, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God."

HE PROVIDED FOR US: In the wilderness Israel ate everyday and people are still trying to figure out where the food came from. They had clothes to wear and no cloth, and people are still trying to figure that out. In the same way, God has provided for us. Last year things were terrible. Gas prices went up, electric bills went, people were laid off their, some lost their houses, plants closed and yet God led you through the wilderness and kept food on your table and clothes on your back. People are still trying to figure that out. Even when sickness came in your family and financial troubles hit, God worked that out for you to. God blessed your plans and decisions and made them work for you. God opened up doors for you and prepared a table for you. That's what Psalm 23:5 means when it says "Thou preparest a table before me.." It means that God provides for our needs. Philippians 4:19 puts it this way, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." No matter what came up last year God provided just what we needed, when we needed it. No wonder the song writer declared, "We are our heavenly father's children ..and he knows, yes he knows, just how much we can bear." Last year God provided us what we needed and disallowed any burdens that we could not bear. If it were not for his provision we would not have made it.

HE SAVED US FROM OUR FOOLISHNESS: Israel made several foolish decisions in their wilderness journey. Once, they decided to abandon God altogether and build them a golden calf to worship. Yet despite their foolishness God saved from themselves. He's had to do the same for us today; save us from ourselves.

What is foolishness? Proverbs 19:3 "The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD." When do the opposite of what God wants while claiming to be his children, it is foolishness. We have done some foolish things. Some of us gambled heavily last year, knowing full well that it was not wise, but we were drawn in by the parlors and casinos that allow us to win a few. It was foolish

for us to get involved romantically in relationships that were going nowhere but we did it and caused ourselves great pain. It was foolish to squabble with our wives and husbands and threatened our marriages and families, but we plunged stubbornly ahead. Some of the business decisions we made were plain foolish, but we did them anyway. We know that it was foolish for us engage in worldly pursuits and to involve ourselves in criminal activities but we did it anyway and it caused us all kinds of problems. It was foolish for us to cheat on our spouses, but someone did it.

Yet, in all of our foolishness, God never abandoned us. He did not embrace our foolishness, he punished us good, but he never gave up hope on us. Last year, he saved many of us even though we acted very foolishly. Without his mercy and grace, we would not have made it through.

Made it by Grace

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we made it last year only by the grace of God and it is grace that will see us through the year ahead.

The grace of God looks down on us in our mess and continues to bless.

The grace of God showers opportunities upon us even though we do not deserve them.

God is not foolish; He is not naive. There is a reason for why He continues to bless sinful people like us.

His grace has a divine purpose.

We made it through the trouble and trials of last year because there is a divine plan at work.

Those who know the Lord have arisen from last year's struggles, stronger, wiser and better.

That might have been the divine plan in the first place.

We should have learned to trust God more and "lean not unto thine own understanding."

We should have learned to pray before we act and to seek God's will.

We should have learned that in our weakest hour that God can make us strong.

We made it last year but it was not luck, it was the hand of God gently nudging us in right direction.

Now, facing a new year we are stronger, wiser and better.

Now, having overcome the slippery slopes we came upon last year we are better prepared to serve God to the fullest in the year to come.

Now, facing a new year we should be encouraged to know that the same God who saw us through last year is still on the throne!

We made it, because God heard our prayers in the midnight hour!

We made it, because God raised up our bowed down heads!

We made it, because God lifted us up when we fell down!

We made it, because God gave us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens became heavy.

—ASSURANCE when everything seemed to go wrong.
—INSPIRATION when difficulties arose.
—COMFORT when disaster struck.
We made it because God's grace gave us the strength to:
—Keep on going, when our road gets rough.
—Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.
—Keep on working, even when our bodies get weary.
We made it because God smiled on us.
I don't know what the future holds, but I know that if God smiles on us, we'll have:
—Joy in spite of our sorrows: Peace in spite of our problems
—Contentment in spite of our burdens; assurance in spite of our frustrations
—Comfort in spite of our pain; Victory in spite of our defeats
No wonder the song write declared, "God has smiled on me. He has made me glad!"
I'm glad that He is a wonder working God!
I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!
I'm glad that He is a soul saving God!
I never would have made if he had not decided to pick up an old rugged cross!
I never would have made if he had not carried that cross to Golgotha's hill!
I'm glad that He died for me out on Calvary!
But I never would have made if not for the fact that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!
I never would have made it without the Lord.

No. 9357-New Year

Set your hearts on God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2009

SCRIPTURE: And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. Deuteronomy 32:46-47

Introduction

Is there a way to guarantee that we can please God, and possess the opportunities of the New Year? Most of us search for ways to do better in the New Year. If you are like most people you have already searched through last year's events and have found areas in which you were weak and other areas in which you were strong. We've reviewed our successes and our failures; our strengths and our weaknesses. We made some good moves last year, yet, despite our positives, we also see some glaring negatives. The negatives trouble us because it is those negatives that can keep us from fully possessing what God has in store for us this year.

One area in which many of us fell short last year was the purity of our relationship with God. Last year there were many times when we were less than holy in our thoughts and actions. There were also times when we disobeyed God's commands with the full knowledge that we were displeasing him. That's why we have pledged that we will do much better spiritually in the coming year.

This year, we want to be more holy.

This year, we want to have cleaner hearts and motives.

This year, we want to dedicate our lives to living by his words

This year, we want to make our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost, welcoming the presence of God.

We want a clean heart this year because that's the only way that God will bless us.

The place where a man expects to meet God first is within the narrow confines of his consciousness. The place where he should expect to commune with God is within the hallowed sanctuary of his heart.

The spirit of God dwells in his house (our hearts), and if we want an encounter with God this year, we must prepare to meet him at his house. If we want to show gratitude for what God has done, it begins with the attitude of our heart. We can't

meet God in a public demonstration unless we've first had a talk with him in a private situation. But God's spirit will not dwell in an unclean temple. If we want to make our hearts temples of the Holy Ghost, we must clean up act our acts.

David said, "Create in me oh Lord a clean heart". .."Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

A song writer penned these words, "I'm not asking for the riches of the land, I'm not asking for high men to know my name ...but give me Lord a clean heart...a clean heart, that I may follow thee."

This year, we should be more determined than ever to live a cleaner, closer life with God, thus guaranteeing that he will bless us in the New Year.

As Christians, we want to improve our relationship with God. The best way for us to do that is to present him with a mind and body that is dedicated totally to his service.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses telling Israel that their tenure in the new land counted heavily upon their obedience to the command of God.

In Deuteronomy, Moses gives Israel a review of what would be needed for success in the new land. They had come from slavery to freedom. They stood on the banks of a new experience. Now, Moses gave them a warning laced with a blessing. The warning in this chapter is that they should seek to obey God with all of their heart, mind and soul and to teach obedience to their children. In return, Moses said, God would prolong their stay in the new land and help them to possess it.

His immediate command was for Israel to "set your hearts on the words." It is one thing to hear the word but it is yet another thing to "set your heart on the words." When a person has his heart into a cause, his mind, body and soul follows. By challenging Israel to "set your hearts" God challenged the people to give him first place; to make Him their first priority.

The words of God were filled with both promises and curses. He promised to bless them, protect them and to expand their territory if they were faithful. Yet, the words also contained curses for those who failed to "set their hearts" on Him. God promised to remove His protection and provision from them. Without God's protection and provision their stay in the new land would be short and they would not be successful in their efforts to possess the new land.

To succeed the people would need hearts that were in tune with the will of God. That's what God expected from Israel and He promised rewards if they complied.

Three Considerations

The same considerations that were given to Israel in this text apply to believers today.

WE SHOULD SET OUR HEARTS ON GOD: In the year to come we should set our hearts on living a more spiritually defined life that is closer to God. In the year to come we should do more than just "go to church" we should put our hearts in it. We should not just put on a choir robe and sit in the choir stand; we should put our hearts in it. We should give it everything that we have.

Moreover, we should "cleanse ourselves" if we want to succeed in spiritual things in the coming year. This means we should make sure our motives and reasons for doing things are pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." When we do any work for the Lord it should be with one objective only, "that God be praised."

God expects us to keep clean hearts totally committed to him. Not only does he expect it, God commands it." Remember, it's one of the commandments "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:5). If we set our hearts on God we obey His command.

This year, we should resolve to approach God with a clean heart and motives so that our service will be accepted and blessed by Him.

WE MUST TEACH OUR CHILDREN: We teach our children by precept (talk) and example. God commands each parent to teach his words to their children both by the way we live in front of them and by the words we say to them. The word of God requires that children be disciplined in their obedience to God and in the development of their character. The three aspects of discipline are: self control, character and order. Every child should be taught self control. It begins at home when he or she learns to obey the rules of the home. That's when the child learns that there is a time and appropriate place for certain actions. Speaking out of turn, interrupting the conversation of others, and disrespect behavior are all signs of an undisciplined child. Controlling the impulses, selecting friends and deciding upon acceptable activity are other areas that indicate discipline. Character involves values. There are 13 important values that every child should be taught at home, at school and in every organization or group in which he or she participates: Honesty, loyalty, helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, thrift, courage, cleanliness, respect for God and a good education. These values develop the essentials of character.

Every parent is commanded to teach these values to their children. To expect success and blessing from God in our endeavors means that we must be faithful in this area to; if we fail, a generation will grow up before us that does not know the Lord and this generation of parents will bear the wrath of God for failing to carry out his command.

POSSESSION REQUIRES DISCIPLINE: When we move into a new opportunity we are promised that God will help us possess the new opportunity that presents itself, according to his will. However, the word teaches us that we must approach each new task with self control and respect of purpose. There is a discipline associated with possession. To possess and be blessed we must establish a personal discipline designed to possess that which God has in store for us and hold on to what he has given. For 40 years Israel was content with its life in the wilderness. Their routine was

rather mundane: Each morning they arose, went outside and gathered manna that had appeared overnight, drank water from the rock, took a few quick peeks at the pillar of cloud that hovered over the camp, did a few chores and their day ended. They made it through a day, but they did not come one step closer to possessing what God had in store for them. Possessing required something different. It required a new discipline and even a new way of thinking to possess what God had waiting for them on the other side of Jordan.

This new way of thinking requires that we focus our heart on God and his kingdom, first; then prepare to possess in light of his promises.

If we intend to do more than simply make it through this year, then we must switch from an *existence* mode to a *possession* mode. That means our whole approach to life shifts from "making it through" to possessing what God has for me. For Israel, that meant learning to do things differently. To possess the Promised Land they had to learn new skills. Farming was new to most of them who grew up in the wilderness. They had to learn the technology of the day and develop ways to maintain themselves. The land that they were destined to possess would be one that required them to do everything differently from the past.

In the same way we must be prepared to discipline ourselves to possess and hold on to the opportunities that God will make available in the coming months. Both the possession of opportunities and maintaining them will require a closer walk with God.

We Need Spiritual Strength

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who wish to move into the New Year with boldness must strengthen themselves spiritually and approach God with a clean heart.

To be prepared spiritually means we must acquire the power that is generated by the presence of God in our lives.

When Christ met with his disciples he talked with them constantly about the need for pure hearts. He often told them that "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Those who possessed pure hearts were commanded to host a memorial meal in which they reaffirmed their commitment to kingdom building and remembered his sacrifice. He said the bread would represent his body and the wine would represent his blood.

The two elements represent the sum total of a believer's commitment to serve and glorify God. When believers eat the memorial meal, they indicate that they are in full communion with God.

While the nutritionists say there are five food groups, the word of God only gives us two for the spiritual person and that is the body and blood!

Without the body and blood there would be no:

-Regeneration available for the ruined;

-Compassion available for the condemned;

-Deliverance for the depressed;
-Cleansing available for the corrupt
-Strength available for the weak;
-Rest available for the weak and tired!

Every now and then you get a little tired, but when you start to think about the body and the blood and the goodness of the Lord you start to sing the words of that old spiritual, "I don't feel no ways tired, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!"

The body and the blood represent the presence of the Lord. If we are going to make this journey we must do so in the presence of the Lord!

With a clean heart, take the Lord with you, and your greatest enemies can be conquered!

With a clean heart, take the Lord with you, and your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

With a clean heart, take the Lord with you, and your gravest doubts can be overcome!

With a clean heart, take the Lord with you, and your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

With a clean heart, take the Lord with you, and your highest mountains can be climbed!

The New Year is not an impossible journey as long as God is by your side.
If you want to make this journey, you got to walk with the King!
Storms may rise, but you got to walk!

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I want Jesus to walk with me!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

I want Jesus to walk with me

No. 9358-New Year

I know what you did last year

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2009

SCRIPTURE: For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. Psalm 90:9

Introduction

Did you see the movie, "I know what you did last summer?" Many who love to watch movies about blood and gore were fascinated by the movie. It was scary for some because in the movie several people who committed a wrong the summer before were terrified a year later when they started receiving strange notes that read, "I know what you did last summer." It was even more terrifying when some of the movie characters started dying.

That was in the movies, but suppose we all received anonymous letters that read, "I know what you did last year." Suppose the letters were signed..God?

For many such a letter would not pose a problem because we spent our year doing everything we should have done. We stayed on course, our lives were full of praise and we were obedient to God. Yet, there are others who would be completely terrified if God sent them a note, saying, "I know what you did last year." There would be many who would instantly start to think of everything they have done this year, some of which they are too embarrassed to even think about.

We may not get a mysterious note, but God does let us know. He has written it in his word. Psalms 139:2-3 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." It means God knows just how we spent the year because he has been with us every step of the way..

This year, some of us have charted a steady course. We began right and we have ended it just as we began. However, there are some of us who have wondered off course.

The times in our lives when we have been off course are those times when we strayed from the goal or mark that we set for ourselves. We started in the right direction then found ourselves sidetracked for one reason or another.

At the beginning of this year, many set goals for themselves, but somehow strayed. Was it a commitment you made to your family? Your church? Or was it simply

a commitment you made for self improvement that has been placed on the "back burner" of your life or now occupies the bottom rung of your priority list.

There are various reasons why we strayed but generally we strayed because we lost focus of the source of our strength, which is God.

There are some who did well in the work place and financially. There are some whose family lives stayed on target, but spiritually they strayed. We are spiritually off course when we start out to make the kingdom of God our first priority, but get side tracked by other priorities such as careers, money making opportunities, romance, politics, and social concerns. We can get so side tracked that spiritually we are only a shell of what we once were, going through the motions without substance or strength in any of our actions.

As Christians, we now sit on the threshold of a new year, evaluating what we have done and where we have been. The God we serve knows all that we have done. He also knows our weaknesses. To do better in the year ahead we need to return to the source of our strength. Those who were strong this year can testify that our strength is in Him. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. We dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the Solid Rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

Exposition

Our text first considers the relative shortness of the years of our lives.

The psalmist spells out that the standard years of a man, or the average life span is 70 years. Those who have a stronger relationship with God can expect 80 years or more.

Since life is relatively short then we should evaluate how we spend every year.

That we should be aware of the shortness of our lives and the brevity of our life experience is the essence of this text. Believers here are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible (v. 9): All our days are likely to be passed away in thy wrath, under the tokens of thy displeasure; and, though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told.

Thus, it behooves every believer to pause a moment or two and reflect on what we have done with the 365 days that have preceded. We may have lost track of what we have done, but God can account for every minute and second.

What did we do last year?

In the past, we did some things right, but there were a few things that we left undone or only partially addressed.

SOME PROCRASTINATED LAST YEAR: When we think about it, we know that we could have done better, but we never seemed to get started. That's what happened

to many of us last year we were crippled by procrastination, or putting things off. Now, next year's list is already filled because of this year's leftovers. Parents, students, and Christians have really procrastinated immensely, especially when it comes to improving their relationship with God. We said we would study our bibles more, but put it off. We said we would pray more but put that off too. We found it so hard to do what we said. Joshua 24:15 says, "..choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." In the year ahead let's throw away procrastination.

WE COMPLAINED SOME, BUT GOD WAS GOOD: We complained some last year. In fact, we complained too much. Despite our complaints, God was good to us. Though we may have complained about some of our food, whether our clothing was fashionable, or the size or location of our homes, most of us would have to agree that God was faithful in providing us with all three.

Just as Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years depending upon the faithfulness of God, we have done the same. In the wilderness the people of Israel found that God provided them food on time every day, even though they complained.

He fixed it such that the material that formed their tents held up for 40 years without need of repair. He arranged it so that they wore the same shoes and clothes for decades and they never wore out. The food came on time every day. There was water just when they needed it most.

God was faithful to Israel as he provided for them in ways no one could explain. He has been faithful to us in the same way. No matter how we look at it, when look at how we spent our year, we see ourselves sustained by the powerful hand of God who blessed us.

WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THE LITTLE THINGS: When we remember last year, it's tempting to recall the big moments of the year. Yet, for every big moment there were hundreds of little moments, little blessings that God sent our way. Don't underestimate the power of the little things.

Howard Thurman once wrote that "Little things make big differences."

A little thank you is big when someone feels unappreciated.

A little kindness can soften an angry response.

A little time can bring more lasting please than a lot of gifts without the giver.

Little things can make the difference.

That applies to our relationship with God, too.

There is a bible verse in Numbers 16:9 that says, "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD."When we look back and evaluate the big things we have experienced this year don't underestimate the little things.

SOME WERE A LITTLE STUBBORN: Last year many of us tried to live our lives according to God's will, but there were times when we were a little stubborn. There are two ways to approach life goals. One is the way popularized by a song written

by the late Frank Sinatra called “My Way.”

In that song Sinatra boasts that he lived his life, “My Way.”

He was not alone. There are many who are trying the “my way” approach: living, loving and dying according to their own rules. To do it “my way” is to do it alone without any divine assistance. It is also a formula for unhappiness and often failure. That’s what happened to many people last year.

Some used or sold drugs or became addicted to something or someone.

Some lived so wild that they slipped way off course.

Some never got started; they procrastinated

Some nearly died.

Things work out a little better on the God side of life. That’s when you decide to do it “God’s way.” The difference is that God’s way gets us godly support and favor for our efforts because what we do is according to his plan. The bible says in Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Last year we received confirmation of an eternal truth: “When we do it God’s way we may fall down..but he picks us up and we try again.”

Let’s do it again

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that we spent last year praising God with everything we had; let’s do it again this year!

What made our praise so important to God is that he knows what we went through last year.

He knows the struggles that we have dealt with and the problems we have faced.

He knows the enemies who set out to destroy us and the battles that we have fought.

God knows our experiences!

And because he knows what we did last year it makes our praise even sweeter in his ears.

We praised God last year, let’s do it again this year.

We praised him last year because he lifted us, carried us and breathed life into us.

Let’s do it again!

Last year we praised the Lord because His:

—Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant!

—Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

We should praise the Lord for the burden he’s going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he’s going to help us to climb!

We should praise the Lord for the bills he’s going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job he’s going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home he’s going to help us to buy!

We should praise the Lord for the old man who’s going finally to start acting like a husband!

We should praise the Lord for the old lady who will finally want to become a wife!

For everything that God is going to do, we ought to praise the Lord!

Even though the Lord blessed us last year, we ought to be glad that our sins didn't follow us over into the New Year, for they have been purged and made pure.

Last year we clapped our hands; let's do it again!

Last year we sang and shouted praises; let's do it again!

Last year we testified about his goodness; let's do it again!

Last year we witnessed to his mercy; let's do it again!

Last year we gave him all that we had; let's do it again!

Praise his for just being God!

Praise him for his blood that answers the question, "What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Jesus, the prized son of Palestine!

Jesus, the epitome of perfection!

Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace!

Jesus died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

We spent last year praising him, let's do it again!

No.9359-Black Heritage

Is this the Promised Land?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La

January 11, 2009

SCRIPTURE:"Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. This is the land that yet remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri, Joshua 13:1-2

Introduction

As we journey further into this New Year, we must now ask ourselves the question, "Have we arrived? Is this the Promised Land?" From 1621 to 1865 most of our people suffered as slaves, indentured servants and second class citizens. We dreamed of a day that we would be seen as equals in economic, social and political arenas. When that day came we believed that we would be in the Promised Land.

In 1865 we saw the end of slavery in America. Suddenly millions of former slaves were free from slavery but were held hostage to a general ignorance of the societal skills necessary to survive. Even as we walked away from farms and began lives as sharecroppers down south and laborers up north we had to ask the question, "Is this the Promised Land?"

The answer came "There is much more to be done."

We then plunged ourselves into social reconstruction. We learned to read, write, operate businesses and own land. We saw women like "Madam C.J. Walker" become millionaires and members of our race become stars in the movies. We even watched Hattie McDaniel win an Oscar for "Gone with the Wind." Buoyed by such accomplishments we asked, "Is this the Promised Land?"

The answer came "There is much more to be done."

We rolled up our sleeves in the civil rights movement and broke down the laws that kept us segregated, put a black man on the Supreme Court and listened to Martin Luther King announce to the world that he had a dream. We heard him say, "I have been to the mountain top and seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you but I have seen the Promised Land."

When we saw the civil rights and voting rights acts passed and watched as Negroes were elected to public office all over the nation, someone asked the question again, "Is this the Promised Land?"

The same answer came, "There is much more to be done."

When we saw Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice both serve as Secretary of State advising the President of United States on matters and state and watched as blacks rose to power in politics, business and world affairs, we walked away from the first eight years of the 21st century asking the question, "Is this the Promised Land?"

Now, as the nation celebrates its first predominately African-American mixed race president, some are asking the question we've been asking for more than a century, "Is this the Promised Land?"

Even as we ask the question the same answer floods our ears, "There is much more to be done."

God is moving to fulfill his promise to his people. We see him moving in so many ways, but there is still much more to be done before we can declare that the day Martin Luther King envisioned has arrived.

As Christians, we continue to hope, watch and pray that each of God's promises to us will come to fruition. One thing is certain, we may not completely possess all that God has in store for us, but the Promised Land is not far away!"

Exposition

This text focuses on God's reminder to Israel that the nation still had work to do.

The children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt for 430 years. God promised to deliver them and carry them to a land flowing with milk and honey. He led them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. He fed them food in the wilderness and water from a rock.

When they reached the new land he rolled back the waters of the River Jordan and caused them to walk across on dry Ground.

Joshua led the people into several battles to secure the land.

In this text, there was still a great deal of land to be conquered by Israel although Joshua had broken the back of the enemy, conquering all the major city-states throughout Canaan. By conquering the major city-states and fortresses of Canaan, he eliminated the possibility of any significant resistance being formed by the enemy against the people of God. Only small and weak cities, villages, and hamlets remained to be conquered. Conquering these smaller and weaker cities would be the responsibility of the individual tribes.

The text describes these territories in Joshua 13:2 as "This is the land that yet remaineth:"

Each of the tribes was perfectly capable of conquering any enemy that still remained in the territory the tribe was to inherit.
It would require many small battles.

What Remains

BIG BATTLES OPEN DOORS: Joshua achieved the major victory of breaking the back of the enemy. However, each tribe had to take care of its own little battles. In

the socio-political arena, in many ways the big social barriers have fallen but thousands of small barriers remain that must be won to secure the full impact of any victory. In 1954 the Supreme rule that school segregation is illegal. That was the big battle, but there were thousands of small battles in courts across the country for 30 years to put the law in place. In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights act but thousands of battles are still being fought across the nation.

It means the same in every respect, big battles are won but thousands of small battles must be won before we reach the Promised Land.

SPIRITUAL VICTORY IS WON BUT SMALL BATTLES CONTINUE: It is the same spiritually as well. The big battle against Satan is already won, but there are millions of small battles that must be won to secure the full promise.

After the South lost the Civil War, for years there were people who tried to continue as if nothing had changed. A hundred years later those battles are still being fought.

Satan does not get it, no matter what he throws against a believer, he loses. Romans 8:37 puts it this way, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

We have been given the victory. Christ secured it, but there are local, personal battles that must be won for us to achieve the full promise.

IT WON'T HAPPEN ALL AT ONCE: While Joshua laid claim to the Promised Land, the full promise did not happen all at once, even as the people celebrated. In fact, God never intended for the people to inherit the land all at once. Exodus 23:30 says "By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." It was part of the divine plan for each tribe to demonstrate its faith and ability to be obedient to God before God gave them an increase and full inheritance. Their test would be whether they could be obedient to God without mixing themselves with world. Look at Exodus 23:32-33 "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."

The same principle applies to individual believers today. God has brought us to the brink of the Promised Land but we must demonstrate our ability to step out on faith, remain obedient to him, and not engage ourselves with the world. We have possession of God's promise but it needs our constant faith; there must be no compromise with the enemy, no tolerance of his spirit, no cessation of our warfare. Only the God who brought us into the land can see us through.

WE MUST PERSEVERE TO CLAIM THE FULL PROMISE: If we, as believers, intend to secure the full promise that God has given us then we must persevere. We must fight the spiritual battles that loom in front of us. We cannot get tired or be lulled into thinking that the battle has been won, "I am now a member of the church." Satan doesn't stop bothering you because you belong to church. We must continue acquire the full promise. Galatians 6:9 reminds not to get tired:"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Yet, 1 Peter 5:8-9 goes further "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,

walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world".

To really hang tough and win the full promise we must be stedfast. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"

The Promised Land

Finally, brothers and sisters, until we have acquired the full promise, we must never stop trusting in God.

For Israel it meant a day of celebration when the walls came tumbling down, but for us it means years of continued trust in God in hundreds of local arenas to finally win the promised.

The journey to the Promised Land for Israel began with prayers in their distress. They expressed hope and faith that God would free them.

Their journey began trusting God and it ended trusting God.

Likewise, our journey must be rooted in our faith in God.

If we are to get there without wasting another generation in the American wilderness, we must put our trust in God and tackle the future.

Are you pursing your own Promised Land? If you are, remember the big battle to achieve it has been won but you must now do what needs to be done to secure it.

God has opened the door for you to get an education, but you must win the personal battle to claim it.

God has opened the door for you to advance in the workplace, but you must win the battle to train yourself to take advantage of the opportunities.

God has opened the door for you to improve your financial position but you must win the battle over wild spending and loose financial controls.

The big victory we need has been won already but there are still many battles we have to fight.

To fight these battles and win, we need to trust in the Lord.

God told Joshua, if you want to enter the Promised Land, put one foot in the water and step out on faith.

Trusting in God, Israel crossed the river Jordan!

Trusting in God, they fought and won the battle of Jericho!

Trusting in God, they won scores of battles as God locked the sun in the sky!

As we travel toward the Promised Land, we should tear a page from our history and keep trusting in God!

Despite the hardships of slavery, and poverty the old slaves kept calling out to God "It's me, it's me, it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer!"

We need prayer on the journey because prayer can:

—Muzzle the mouths of lions!

—Quench the flames of our enemies
—Conquer the strongholds of devils
—Penetrate the walls of the deceitful
—Still the raging storms of the scornful

That's why the old warriors still sing, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, I tried him for myself!"

Trust in the Lord, because he has won the victory for us!

He won the victory one evening when he picked up an old rugged cross!

He won the victory when he died on Golgotha's hill.

He won the victory when they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

He declared the victory, Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 9360-Reunion

When we all get together

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2009

SCRIPTURE:"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." Genesis 33:4

Introduction

Here we are again, has anything changed?

Reunions are grand celebrations that provide an opportunity for those who have been apart to rejoice in their longevity. When we get together we reflect on old times and give God thanks for helping us to make it through.

This assembly today is a classic picture of a great reunion. We are here, from different walks of life and different corners of the world, bound together by a common past and a common connection with the same Lord.

Since we have met last America has changed. Gas prices went up higher than we could pay then suddenly came down again before we knew it, in a virtual see-saw of risings and fallings.

Since we met last, we have elected the first mixed raced president who identifies himself as black.

Since we met, last the Iraq war is winding down and troubles between Israel and Gaza are starting up again.

Since we met last, there has been a financial failure on Wall Street and we have plunged into an economic recession.

Since we met last, the world has changed considerably, but there is one sure thing; God has not changed. He is still in control.

We have come together again to celebrate the power of God to raise His people triumphant in tough times.

More than anyone or any other group, we are symbolic of how God can make a difference in tough times.

We are together again to celebrate the basic truth that every life will experience tough times, but we also celebrate the fact that tough times don't last always.

Today, we are together again to pledge our loyalty to God to pursue the furtherance of his kingdom. To do that we also come together to pled our continued mutual love respect for each other today and in the years to come.

As Christians, we know that God is still on the throne. We come together to

celebrate his power to bridge gaps, heal wounds, and open doors of opportunity. This reunion today is a reunion of hope and faith in the wonder working power of our almighty God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the reunion of Jacob and Esau after a 20 year separation. The brothers had been estranged for two decades after the two parted ways because of differences over inheritance rights.

Earlier Esau traded his right to become the primary heir of the family to Jacob for a bowl of porridge. The subsequent rift between the two brothers resulted in Esau threatening to kill his brother the next time that he saw him.

Jacob fled and lived with his Uncle Laban for 20 years, accumulating great wealth, two wives and many children.

Upon his return home he wrestled with himself about how to approach his brother and worried whether Esau would make good on his threats to kill him on sight.

Just prior to his return, Jacob wrestled with an angel of the Lord over the matter and as a result was blessed and reassured of God's intervention.

When the brothers met, Esau arrived with 400 of his men. Unsure about Esau's intention, Jacob offered Esau a drove of 550 head of cattle as well as presents. He also humbled himself before Esau calling him "my Lord" while Esau referred to him as "my brother."

They left under awkwardness but the reunited in love and peace and God blessed the restored fellowship.

Reunions heal

There are several ways that a godly reunion benefits the participants:

WHEN WE ALL GET TOGETHER, RIFTS ARE HEALED: Often those who have been separated for many years harbor some ill feelings. This gets worse if one party felt injured by the other; such injuries are held for years.

Few people hold feelings against others as deeply and strongly as Esau did against Jacob. He was determined to kill his brother because Jacob had stolen the inheritance that was legally his. There was little, if any chance, that reconciliation could ever take place. But it did. A miracle happened, and each brother shared in the miracle and joy of the reconciliation.

Today's reunion is symbolic because it represents a reunion of love and reconciliation of any ill feelings that might have developed over the years, prompted by circumstance, race or past events.

God's spirit heals any rifts and becomes a strong motivation in the healing process. When God gets in the business healing begins and that does not apply just relationships as well. God heals rifts between husbands and wives, parents and to general reunions but to breaches involving children, bosses and employees,

neighbors, relatives and friends and even heals rifts between student and teacher, leader and follower.

Godly reunions are important because they demonstrate that God is concerned about healing differences. Since this is his purpose, God will lead and help us just as He did with Jacob.

WHEN WE ALL GET TOGETHER, WE DEMONSTRATE HUMILITY: Jacob demonstrated a spirit of humility when he approached his brother. He was a wealthy man and had a large entourage with him. He could have ordered his men to prepare to fight but he chose the humble path. He presented gifts, his family and a humbled spirit.

Today, true reunions also present a spirit of humility. When we look back over the years it is humbling to see how God has worked with us. Like Jacob, we wrestle with ourselves and with God over issues that we once thought were important but they were actually divisive.

Our reunion today marks the celebration of an unusual spirit of humility that was displayed many years ago between those who were differing parties many years ago. Today, a spirit of humility exists, fostered over the years nostalgia and by faith in God.

Those who truly desire to facilitate a godly reunion demonstrate a spirit of humility that puts aside old difference and offers the olive branch instead. The lesson we learn from Jacob and Esau is that we should always be ready for reconciliation even if that means humbling ourselves before those who were once our enemies. The spirit of Godliness within us makes it happen.

WHEN WE ALL GET TOGETHER, WE DEMONSTRATE BROTHERHOOD: What lies at the heart of any great reunion is the spirit of brotherly love. Consider the way Jacob and Esau addressed each other for a case in point. Genesis 33:8-9 gives us a powerful insight. In verse eight Jacob refers to Esau as "My Lord" indicating a spirit of humility before his aggrieved sibling. However, in verse 9 Esau refers to Jacob as "My brother" indicating that the spirit of brotherhood erases barriers and recognized that both of them were Isaac's children.

The word of God encourages all believers to "Let Brotherly Love Continue." (Hebrews 13:1) It would have been very easy for the reunion between Jacob and Esau to be a disaster, but it resulted in brother love because God was in the arrangement. It is the same with us, whenever God is in the mix, the ultimate goal of brotherly love will be achieved.

It is hoped that this reunion we celebrate today will result in continued brotherly love between our descendants in the decades to come. When they celebrate, our desire is for them to also pledge to "let brotherly love continue."

Reunions celebrate victory

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that reunions celebrate our victories.

Over the years, we have been separated by time and circumstance. We have

struggled along the way in separate quarters dealing with the issues of life.

Reunions mark a point in time when we can celebrate our victories.

Today, we celebrate a reunion of friends and our victory over division and separation.

Yet, there is a day coming that will be even greater. It will be a reunion of all of the saints.

When we get together again in that final reunion there will be neither black nor white, Jew of Gentile. A song writer tried to describe that moment and could only write "When we all get together at river, what a time, what a time, what a time."

When we get together again we will celebrate the fact that we have overcome.

Those who are the victims of race related troubles on the job, in school and in the community, can still sing, "We shall overcome!"

John asked the question, "Who is he that overcometh?

He that overcometh is the man who believes that the God I serve is bigger than the problems I have!

He that overcometh is the woman who believes that no matter how tough the road gets, the Lord will make a way somehow!

He that overcometh is the man who believes that you must stand for something in life or you'll fall for anything!

He that overcometh is the man who declares that God is able, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!

John said in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things!"

When we all get together for that last time, we'll celebrate the day when the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

When we get together again we'll celebrate the day when the mountains will be made low, rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight!

Storms may rise! But he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here!

Until we get together again we will keep telling the story!

We'll keep telling the world about Jesus and a place called Calvary!

Bye and Bye when the battle is over, we'll tell the story!

How He died on an old rugged cross!

We'll tell the story!

How He rose from the grave

When all of God's children get together..

What a time!

What a time!

What a time!

No. 9361-Inspiration

The Coronation of the King

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 18, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them. 1 Kings 1:39-40

Introduction

Have you ever witnessed the installation of a national leader? It is a sight to see. When the President of the United States is inaugurated the nation celebrates the moment with a series of events that mark both the joy and the importance of the moment. If an American President were a King he would have a coronation, a formal event in which he is crowned the Lord of the empire. Since Americans have no king, the inauguration is the closest thing to a coronation.

The inauguration itself is generally a simple ceremony in which the president places his hand on a bible and swears to uphold the constitution of the United States. After doing so he formally becomes the leader of the free world. However, an inauguration goes further. It becomes a celebration of the victors as a series of inaugural balls are held to celebrate his rise to power. Over the years there have been many official inaugural balls, plus as many as 50 balls held by each state. The President and the first lady attend all of the official balls and usually dance one dance before they dart out of the door to the next.

The crowds at inaugurations have grown in size from 600,000 fifty years ago to an expected three million for the inauguration of Barack Obama.

Inaugurations cost big money too; so supporters raise huge sums to insure that the inauguration has everything needed. When Harry Truman was inaugurated the cost was $229,000. The nation staggered when George H.W. Bush spent $23 million on his second inauguration only to be topped by Bill Clinton's $30 million party. When George W. Bush hosted his second inauguration the price tag was $42 million. Barack Obama's inauguration will have a $75 million price tag.

The pageantry, parades and formality of an inauguration is a grand affair designed to inform the world that the recipient of the honors has the full support of the United States.

Yet, with all of its formal trappings, parades and ceremonies, the inauguration of

the President cannot hold a candle to the Coronation that is coming for Jesus Christ. It will be attended by billions, and his worthiness will be heralded by angels.

All other ceremonies will be but faint memories compared to the great day when he is crowned Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

As Christians, we look forward to the day that the eternal Kingdom of God begins. We also wait anxiously for the day when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest. All this begins with the Coronation of the King.

Exposition

This text focuses on the coronation of David as the king of Israel.

The rise of David to the throne was meteoric. He arose from someone who was just a shepherd boy to a man who stole the people's hearts with his boldness and pleasantness. David arose at a time when the people were ready for change. They had suffered under the leadership of King Saul, whose battles had plunged them into unnecessary confrontations with their enemies, depleting the treasury and killing many of their young men. They had suffered under Saul's leadership because of his disobedience to God.

When Saul died, David was anointed King. The people were so overjoyed with David's coronation that they contributed lavishly to the celebration so that they could have a joyous worship and celebration of God's goodness.

The coronation of David was a grand affair but it was superseded by the coronation of his son, Solomon. Solomon's coronation was a high day of worship and praise to God. Many sacrifices were offered to God on his coronation day including: 1,000 bulls, 1000 rams, 1000 lambs, a host of drink offerings and many other sacrifices and offerings. There was plenty of fellowshipping, eating and drinking as the people celebrated with great joy in the presence of the LORD.

Immediately after his coronation Solomon set about the business of restoring prosperity to the land. He enjoyed the full political support of his officials, military commander and David's other sons.

Three Coronations

Today, the Christian world is waiting on the coronation of the King, but this coronation will be different from the coronation of kings in the world today.

In England, the queen is crowned in a lavish ceremony in West Minister Abby while she is anointed with oil by the Arch Bishop of the Church of England.

The Pope who chooses a coronation is crowned with a papal Tiara in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

In Thailand the king is given a nine tier umbrella as a symbol of his power. He vows to make the people happy and to please Buddha.

In Malaysia the new king is selected from nine royal rulers. At his coronation he kisses a copy of Quran and pledges his love for Islam.

In Japan the ruler becomes an Emperor. At his coronation, he is presented with a sword, a jewel and a mirror but not a crown. After his coronation the emperor will present the Sun Goddess a bowl of sacred boiled rice.

In Swaziland the king is installed on his 21st birthday and his wife receives a dowry of 100 or more heads of cattle from all of the Swazi chiefs.

The ways that men install their leaders will be no match for the wonder that will awe the world at the coronation of the King.

What makes the coronation of Christ so unique and awe inspiring is that his coronation involves three steps:

The Coronation of Palms

On Palm Sunday the people lined the road leading to Jerusalem when Jesus was to enter the city. The people gathered in crowds to watch him as he entered riding a new colt. The broken palm branches and along with pieces of the clothing waved them into the air and threw them in his path while crying out "Hosanna in the Highest." They were welcoming him as the promised King. Their shouts were so loud that he was asked to quiet down his disciples and he answered them by saying, "If these hold their peace that the rocks would cry out." In answer to the crowds who asked, "Who is this?" they boldly answered, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." His entry into Jerusalem was a coronation of the people. It was fickle and mortal in nature and would not last a week.

One of the paradoxes of the coronation of palms is that the same people who waved palm branches and shouted Hosanna on Sunday were shouting a different tune a few days later.

Instead of waving palm branches they were shouting crucify him!

Instead of crowning his glory with palms they humiliated him.

The coronation of palms showed that their praise was worthless to him who was precious.

The coronation of palms showed how pathetic was their praise for him who was perfect.

The coronation of palms showed how miserable was their adulation for him who was magnificent.

The coronation of palms showed how weak was their glorying for him who was so strong.

The coronation of palms reminds all believers not to be too overwhelmed by the praise of men because the same men who praise us one day will be in the crowd that will shout crucify him on the next.

The Coronation of Thorns

Christ, after a trial before Pontius Pilate in which he was found not-guilty, was never the less sentenced to be scourged and beaten by the Roman Guard. The soldiers

added to his humiliation by giving him a make believe king's robe, scepter and a make believe crown platted from fresh thorns and leaves.

The crown of thorns was intended as a gesture of humiliation, degradation, and the inability of Israel as represented by its announced king, to stand victorious before the forces of Rome.

But although they intended for the thorns to be a badge of shame, God had a different mean in mind. God was preparing to reverse the intrinsic meaning of the symbol of the crown of thorns.

Instead of a badge of humiliation, God transformed the crown of thorns into a symbol of pride.

Instead of a sign of dishonor, God reshaped the thorns into a symbol of glory.

Instead of representing the national condemnation, God made the thorns represent spiritual salvation.

Instead of representing the glory of the forces of evil, God made the thorns represent the triumph of the powers of heaven.

Instead of representing the defeat of a deranged martyr, God made the thorns represent the victory of the son of God.

Every child of God should remember that often Satan will give us a crown of thorns.

Satan will give us:

—Vinegar instead of sweet water

—Scorn instead of praise

—Push down instead of a lift up

—An epitaph of failure rather than a testimony of success

—Falling tears rather than rising cheers

The crown of thorns is the mark of victory for saint's because we are blessed when we are persecuted for His name sake. The thornier the crown, the greater our victory.

The Coronation of Crowns

Finally brothers and sisters the high point of the great coronation is the coronation of crowns.

This coronation is unique in that only those who have shared the utter despair and frustration that result from the coronation of Palms and the coronation of thorns can participate in the coronation of crowns.

Only those who know the agony of abandonment felt when the crowds that once called your name called for your death, can share in the coronation of crowns.

Only those who know what it means to suffer the slings and arrows of hate and trouble felt while wearing the thorny crown can share in the coronation of crowns.

The coronation of crowns is a grand picture of perfection painted for us by John while exiled on the Isle of Patmos who said, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day" and saw a revelation from Jesus Christ concerning the things to come.

In preparation for the coronation, John said he saw the 24 elders surrounding the

throne, saying "who is worthy" to open the book of life and unloose the seven seals. Standing in the midst of the elders, dressed in a long white robe, was the Lamb of God. John said he saw the Lord in all his glory and he had "many crowns" on his head.

In speaking of the crown that the Lamb of God will weare he used the word "diadema" which means a royal crown.

The "diadema" is a symbol of God's eternal authority, God's complete dominion over the earth, and power over the elements of the universe. He who wears the "diadema" is the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

The coronation of crowns is different from the coronation of kings on this earth, because when Jesus gets His crown, then He in turn will give all of those who stood with him a crown of victory.

We can't claim the victory until the coronation has been completed. We can't claim the final triumph until the inauguration ceremony has been performed. We can't claim our glorious reward until our Lord gets his royal crown.

That's why saints anxiously await the coronation of the king, because when He gets his crown, we get our crown!

Our crown will be a symbol of our triumph over sin.

Our crown will be our reward of victory over the trials and tribulations of this world.

Our crown will be our token of glory earned through a lifetime of suffering and sacrifice.

We shall wear a crown, but our crown won't outshine the Lord's crown

If our crown shines, the crown of the Lamb of God will shine a little brighter.

If our star sparkles, His star will sparkle a little brighter for his crown is the crown of ultimate authority.

Let the coronation begin!

Let the host of heaven declare, worthy is the Lamb of God!

I hear the song writer declaring, "All hail the power of Jesus name, let Angels prostrate fall, bring forth the royal diadem and Crown Him."

Crown Him, because when you crown him the battlements of hell will be shaken.

Crown Him, because when you crown him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord of Lords.

Crown Him, because when you crown him his first official act will be to give crowns of victory to warriors waiting and faithful.

Crown Him, because He bore his burdens in the heat of the day!

Crown Him, because He had to walk this lonesome valley all by himself!

Crown Him, because He had to die on an old rugged cross!

Crown Him, because He was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Crown Him, because Early Sunday morning He arose from the dead to claim the victory!

Crown Him, Lord of Lords,

King and Kings,

Crown him Lord of all.

No. 9362-Inspiration

Comebacks Can Change the Game

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 1, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me." Micah 7:8

Introduction

Have you ever made a comeback? Generally, we are said to make a comeback when we fall behind beyond the point of recovery then, miraculously, we start to recover, gain momentum and end up winners. That's when the underdogs are become the Top Dogs; when losers become winners.

Many who will watch Super Bowl XLIII that pits the Arizona Cardinals against the Pittsburgh Steelers know that the outcome of the game cannot be determined by early game scoreboard totals because both teams have a history of making last minute comebacks that have changed their games.

In fact, the ability to comeback is what separates champions from mere competitors. Every team falls behind at one time or another, but only the champions can come back and win.

Super Bowls are filled with comeback stories. In Super Bowl XXV the Giants trailed the Bills by nine points in the second quarter, 12-3. Although they trailed by more than a touchdown and they made a comeback to win the game.

In Super Bowl XXII, the Washington Redskins trailed the Denver Broncos 10-0 at the start of the second quarter. Washington then scored 35 points in the second quarter to set a Super Bowl record for points in a quarter. Washington won the game 42-10.

In Super Bowl XLII Eli Manning-led a scoring drive in the last moments of the game to come to victory. It was a reminder that even when you're favorite team is down by six touchdowns (or starts their season 0-2) winning is always a possibility. Comebacks are possible.

Teams make comebacks but so do individuals. Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kurt Warner has his own comeback story. Although he is the former NFL and Super Bowl Most Valuable Player for the St. Louis Rams he spent most of the past five seasons as a backup. He's making a Comeback.

Jennifer Hudson will be making a comeback from a family tragedy when she sings the national anthem.

Super Bowls prompt us to think about comebacks, but there are spiritual parallels.

If we have failed spiritually, can we make a comeback?

If we have been behind in life and seem to be losing, is it possible for us to regain our momentum and end up winners?

If we are fallen out of favor with God, can we come back?

The good news for believers is that the God we serve specializes in granting "assisted comebacks." He showers grace and mercy on all who will believe.

As Christians we praise God for his willingness to help us comeback from setbacks and experience life's victories.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Micah as he speaks to Israel about its national dilemma.

At the time of the text the people were suffering considerable hardship. They were in a depressed condition. All they heard was bad news about the nation's economy and security. The nation's enemies gloated and rejoiced at the relative helplessness of the Israelites to recover and get back in the game.

Micah painted a dreary picture for Israel that portrayed them trailing, losing ground, fumbling and making sinful errors that would cause them to fall out of favor. However, the prophet offered a word of hope. Though the situation was dark, Micah 7:8 says, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me."

Though down, the nation would recover said the prophet.

Though depressed, the nation would arise out of its depressed situation.

Though out of favor, the nation would recover as it comes back from its national scorn.

Micah made it plain that setbacks because of sin, mistakes, errors and fumbled plays can be expected. However, God's people should never lose hope because despite setbacks God would help them make a comeback that will baffle their enemies.

Personal comeback

The prophet Micah spoke to the nation of Israel but his words also show believers how to respond in difficult times.

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO FALL BEHIND: No team has ever played a football season without falling behind at some point in the game. Not just a season, very few games are played in which the winning team hasn't been behind at least once in points or yards on the ground. Falling behind at times is part of the game. Isn't life the same way? Look at Micah 7:8 again and you will see him say, "When I fall." It means that there is a reasonable expectation that each of us will fall behind in some area of life.

Sometimes we fall behind in many areas. No marriage is perfect; there are times when the best marriages get in trouble over one issue or another. There is no such thing as the perfect financial game because sometimes our best plans fail and we fall behind. We fall behind in career pursuits and other avenues of life, often because of our own neglect and stubbornness. We fall behind our enemies gloat; they rejoice because we seem defeated. They should heed Micah's warning at the beginning of Micah 7:8 "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy"- that means it ain't over until it's over. That's why we are reminded that though we may suffer setbacks we shall rise. Just as the scripture predicts that we shall fall, it also predicts that we shall recover and stand again.

DARK SITUATIONS ARE EXPECTED: There have been many teams that have looked at the scoreboard with desperation. Some have been two or three touchdowns behind with only minutes left to play but never lost hope. Veterans of Super Bowls know that dark situations are expected. That's what Micah tried to say to Israel: They should expect dark situations. He said, "When I sit in darkness." It's a prediction of times of confusion, trouble, despair, depression and fear. These feelings come to every believer. It's those dark periods of life when we can't seem to get motivated to do what's necessary. That's when our get up and go has got up and gone. When our inspiration to sing, teach, lead, or be a parent has just slipped away. When that happens we are facing a dark situation. Life does that to us sometimes. Yet, we have the word of God saying, "The Lord shall be a light unto me." We may find ourselves at the two minute warning, several touchdowns behind, but it's not over. In football, two minutes is a life time. In life, God comes in time to give us time to win our game. It's never too late.

WE MAY FALL BEHIND SEVERAL TIMES: Just like a football team can fall behind in a game several times, we should not focus on the fact that our team is behind at the moment but on its comeback potential. Solomon in the book of Proverbs notes in Proverbs 24:16 that a man or woman who is living according to God's rules falls. He did not say that there is a probability that the good people will fall or that that it his highly possible. He noted that the just fall not once but seven times. Winning teams are not expected to never have a fumble or turnover. Neither are they expected to stay ahead all through the game. They are expected to come back! In essence that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "We fall down, but we get up." If anyone judges you when you are down, they make a mistake, tell them they will find your final end behind the comma. Don't watch a saint get behind on the scoreboard, watch him comeback! Don't watch his mistakes and errors, watch him comeback!

With God's Help

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must see ourselves as the recipients of God's favor, thus despite what the scoreboard of life says, with his help we can make a comeback.

When Bill Clinton made his first run for the Presidency of the United States he

lost several key states, but they refused to count him out because he had a reputation for being the "comeback kid."

When Barack Obama lost a primary or two in his presidential bid, observers refused to count him out because he too was a comeback kid.

Today, there is good news for every believer; because of Christ every child of God can become a comeback kid.

Our challenge is to let the power of God use us in a way that we rise up and regain our momentum.

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a God that can help us to come back even in the fourth quarter of life, when we have failed miserably and fallen behind.

We serve a God who can take:

—Defeat and turn it into victory; failure and turn it into success

—Misfortune and turn it into good fortune; Tragedy and turn it into opportunity

—Blunders and turn them into wonders; Doubts and wipe them out!

They say Clinton and Obama are comeback kids, but I know another comeback kid.

He was born in the worse of circumstances and lived in the worst of towns, but he made a comeback!

He was put down by the people of his own home town and run down by the leaders of town, but he made a comeback!

He had no house or a place to call home, for I heard him say, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the son of man hath no place to lay his head." He had no home but, but he made a comeback!

He did good all of his life, but the people he helped put him down, but he still made a comeback!

He was lied on in court and falsely accused, but he still made a comeback!

He was stripped of his clothes and whipped all night long, but the game wasn't over, he made a comeback!

He nailed him to an old rugged cross and stuck a spear in his side, but even on the cross, it was not over, he made a comeback!

At Calvary, the world thought the Savior was defeated.

When they saw him placed in borrowed tomb and started to watch the clock count down.

All night on the first night!

All night on the second night!

All night on the third night!

But early, Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He was the God's son!

The King of Kings, Lord of Lords!

When he was down, but the world found out he was the comeback kid!

No. 9363-Anniv.-Women

Women at the Well

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 8, 2009

SCRIPTURE:The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? John 4:28-29

Introduction

What is the role of women in America today? Today, women are increasingly seen in a variety of arenas that have often been forbidden to them in the past. Whether it's in government, business, academia, or in entertainment, women have risen to great heights. Obviously, the role of women has changed considerably over the years. It wasn't too long ago that women were not allowed to go to school or to vote in America. The workplace was often closed to them and opportunities to succeed were limited. The glass ceilings in many areas began to fall with amendments to the constitution and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Now, more than ever, women are pursuing new roles in the greater society.

Despite the added roles that women have assumed, biblically there is one role she must also fulfill, even if she chooses not to pursue others. Women are theologically and biologically charged to bear and nurture children. God breathes life in the bodies of their children but women are primarily responsible for breathing life in their substance and being. The role of motherhood has not changed, cannot be delegated and has not diminished in its importance.

In 1972 Helen Reddy had a number one song which symbolized the quest of women to rise out of the shadows of life. Some of her words said:

"I am woman, hear me roar
In numbers too big to ignore
And I know too much to go back an' pretend
'cause I've heard it all before
And I've been down there on the floor
No one's ever gonna keep me down again"

Around the world the right of women to determine their own destinies are being promoted aggressively. In third world countries where women must still walk behind their men, never go to school or lead, eyes are opening. Even in this country, women

are still striving for parity in the work place, in government and in society as a whole. The never ending quest for equity is constant reality among most women.

What about Black women? Black women have a double dilemma in America; they are female and they are black. While Black women face twice the problems of white women in America, they are in union with all women; they want the same. Historically the Black woman has always wanted to love and be loved; to care and to be cared for; to protect and to be protected; to live respectfully and to be respected. At the center of her struggle for self determination, the Black woman still wants parity in the eyes of those who see her, work with her and embrace her.

Women of faith draw strength from the knowledge that our Lord and Savior was the first to begin breaking down barriers of sexism, when he talked to a forbidden woman at the well. At that well, he opened doors of expectation and opportunity that have never been closed since.

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that our savior loves all of his creation equally, because "both male and female made he them." We praise him for giving all of us the opportunity for happiness, fulfillment and salvation as children of the king.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus breaking an old taboo by speaking to a woman at a public well.

The passage notes an instance when the disciples were astonished to find Jesus talking to a woman in public. Jesus had broken two cultural taboos: (1) Jews did not speak with Samaritans, and (2) a male did not normally speak with a female stranger.

The role of women up to this point in biblical history was second class subservience. It was an accepted role and no Jewish man dared to break the traditional barriers that existed between men and women.

When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in this text he found her not only coming to the well seeking water for her family, but thirsty for living water, which he offered her. She was so excited about what was said to her, about her and for her that she left her water pot and ran through the city shouting, "come see a man" who revealed to her the secrets of life.

Women at the well

There are three important truths that today's women should draw from this text:

HE CHANGED THE WAY SHE SAW HERSELF. John 4:28 says "..the woman then left her water pot…" That is a significant insight into the change in her thinking at that moment. The fact that she left her water pot spoke to the woman's excited state of mind; her action of leaving her water pot beside the well as she went back to the village indicated her thirst for true life and satisfaction. The living water that Jesus spoke of could not be contained in water pots of social custom and sexist distinctions; he raised her expectations for herself and she left her water pot behind.

When women of faith go to the well of opportunity they must not be confined to "water pot" definitions of themselves. The world still sees women as the toys of men. The world still sees them as mindless objects to be possessed and displayed for the amusement and gratification of men. The water pot definition of womanhood is that women are somehow less than men in God's sight and therefore should find them in a place in the shadows and be comfortable. But the word of God does not see women as less than men. When it comes to grace, opportunity and blessings, the scriptures teach just the opposite. Acts 10:34-35 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Romans 10:12 says, ""For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12). Then, Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"

Clearly, women at the well of opportunity today should leave the water pot definitions of themselves behind and leave excited that the God they serve sees them as equal in his sight without reservation.

HE OFFERED HER OPPORTUNITY: What excited the woman at the well most was the opportunity Jesus offered. She had been engaged in a worldly profession but he offered her hope. The idea that life could be better; that doors could be opened was exciting. African-American women, more so than Black men, have been given limited opportunity in a historical perspective. Black women worked as domestics when Black men couldn't get a job. Black women worked as house slaves when their men were relegated to the fields. The quest for opportunity extended to a variety of areas but has seldom come without a struggle.

When believers come to Jesus they too want "opportunity." It's what happened when a woman came to Jesus with an Alabaster Box filled with fine oils. When she proceeded to serve him by anointing his feet with oil, Judas complained that she was wasteful. He said the woman was using her resources unwisely because, if sold it could be used to feed the hungry. What the woman wanted was an opportunity to serve Christ by giving the best she had to him. Jesus rebuked Judas, and allowed the woman to serve. The opportunity to serve as a member of the family of God is not restricted, but is open to all. If women want opportunity, then Christ offers it to all.

HE OFFERED HER RESPECT: What really excited this woman is the fact that Jesus offered her the opportunity regain her respect. He knew her domestic situation. He knew she had several failed attempts in relationships but still presented her with the chance to get living water. That was an exciting prospect. In 1967 there was a popular song by Aretha Franklin that sold millions of copies and is still sung today, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Despite her strength, beauty and intrinsic power, Black women have found it difficult to get respect. Zora Hurston in her book "Their eyes were watching God" painted a picture of grandmother who wanted her granddaughter to achieve what she called "high ground" reaching a level of living that would bring her respect. She kept her granddaughter away from men who would not respect her or

would lead her away from the high ground. The "high ground" has been elusive for Black women. Even today, Black women endure the stinging insult of a generation of men who think it's humorous to refer to them as garden tools or female dogs . Despite her best efforts, the Black woman still craves just a little of what Aretha Franklin sang about, "Respect!"

While Aretha sang about what women want from the world, the Staple Singers had another song, that had an equally important message, "Respect yourself." It is a word of warning especially to young women who want respect. If you want someone to respect you, you must first respect yourself. That means if you dress like a garden tool, talk like a garden tool, and act like a garden tool, don't get upset when you are treated like a garden tool. You must first respect yourself to get respect.

A woman was brought to Christ who had been caught in the very act of adultery. He told her to go and clean up her act. He gave her another chance when the world condemned her, but the key is that she had to start respecting herself first.

What Christ offers women is a chance for restoration and respect, not more discrimination and disrespect. That excited that women and it still excites women today.

The well of salvation

Finally, brothers and sisters, the woman was excited after talking to Christ because she found salvation at the well.

At the well, the woman heard Jesus speaking to her about the abundant life and living water.

The thought of abundant life was intoxicating to her and she became thirsty for salvation.

No doubt the well became an important landmark for this woman because it was there that she met the Lord.

Each woman that comes to the well of opportunity finds God in a different way.

When Hagar came to the well, she was feeling low and despondent but she heard the voice of God that gave her a new revelation.

When Zipporah came to the well, she was attacked by men who tried to steal the water, but she found protection in the hand of Moses.

When Rachel came to the well, she found romance and happiness ordained by God.

When the Samaritan woman came to the well she met a man whose father was rich in houses and land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hand."

She met a man who owns all the cattle on a thousand hills.

She met a man who holds title to the mountains and valleys, rivers and seas, for the scriptures say "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"

She met a man who was not only willing to respect her but was willing to die for her. For Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man would lay down his life for his friends."

She met a man who changed the way she looked at herself and she ran through the city saying, “Come see a man” who told me all about myself!

Somebody here has met the man at the well!

Somebody here can testify that he gave me a well of salvation that runs freely in my soul.

Somebody here can testify that I met the man and “I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad”

Somebody here can say, “I tried the man and the man is all right!”

Somebody here, like the woman at the well has decided to tell the world “come see a man”

—who is a bridge over troubling water

—lawyer in my courtroom

—doctor in my sickroom

—counselor in my time of troubles

—who picked up an old rugged cross

—who was crucified for my iniquities

—who died for my sins

But come see man who, early Sunday morning

Rose up from the Grave!

Come see a man!

No. 9364-Anniv.-Men

A Strong Man in the House

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 15, 2009

SCRIPTURE:Matthew "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." Matthew 12:29

Introduction

Who is the world's strongest man? For centuries there have been great contests to decide that question as men from around the world competed to demonstrate their power to lift weights, break stones, and show other feats of physical power and strength. Each year someone earns the title the "The world's strongest man."

Historically, there has always been a quest for a strong man in the African-American community. The presence of strong men helped our families survive slavery, the great depression and the civil rights era. However, that presence has always been under attack by social and political forces designed to weaken the strong men of our homes. Despite the attacks, the strong man still exists, supported and by an invisible power that seems to help him to stand despite efforts to bring him down.

Our community has a vested interest in developing families headed by strong men. We must invest our energies and time to help salvage boys and young men who seem to stray and help build them into the strong men that our community needs. Athletes are the greatest symbols of strength to young men. They are seen as men of strength. Entertainers are next positioned to influence the masses of our youth. Professionals in a thousand venues exercise a great influence, as well. The millions of working fathers who are not athletes, entertainers or professionals but love their wives, protect their families and mentor their children, are the immediate front line of this quest.

There is no role model more influential than that of a strong man in your house.

When Barack Obama was campaigning for President, we saw him risk angering the media when he lashed out at people who became overly critical of his wife; or after being elected stood with his wife in demanding that his children not be commercialized with dolls bearing their names. It was an example of a strong man in action, not as President, but as the leader and protector of his family.

The quest is for every wife, or child to say, "The strongest man I know, is my daddy or my husband."

For years there has been an effort afoot to destroy the strong black man, yet he continues to rise. Black men are still graduating from universities, championing causes, creating new products, succeeding in business and excelling in sports, despite efforts to denigrate us and to minimize our influence.

Despite attempts to destroy all black men, still we rise.

How is this so? How is it that many black men are targeted for special education by the 4th grade, encounter a police officer by age of 12, begin failing in school by the 7th grade, drop out by the 10th grade and see the inside of a jail or get killed before they are thirty years old? How is it that with so much negative happening to us, that some are making it through?

Despite the attempts to destroy us, we rise by the grace of God alone.

As Christians, we count on the grace of God to build our strength and sustain us through the most difficult of times. With his help, we will continue to have strong men, empowered by God in our homes.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he describes what it would take to defeat a strong person.

The immediate context of this passage came in response to criticism that Jesus was actually the devil in disguise, casting out devils from people. Jesus, facing his critics said "a housed divided against itself cannot stand." He characterized the devil as a strong presence and anyone who planned to displace him had to find a way to strip him of his power to do so.

He used this illustration to note that since he was speaking against Satan and casting out devils, he was so far from being in league with Satan. To the contrary he was openly opposed to him.

In making this case, Jesus described the nature of anyone that is strong. The Greek Word is "ischurou" which means strong or mighty. The literal translation of "ischurou" is "strong one." How can one enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, and carry them away, except he first bind the strong man? And then he may do what he pleases with his goods.

He compared Satan's power over the world to the same influence that a strong man has over his household. As the Messiah, he came to strip Satan of his influence and take possession of the people and things he control, in the name of God.

As he explained the nature of his mission, that is to defeat Satan," Christ also describe the nature of any person who is a strong one and what would be necessary to destroy that person.

To destroy a strong man, it would be necessary to find a way to tie his hands and render him powerless. Once the strong man is made powerless whatever he posses can be taken away or spoiled.

Christ encouraged all believers to hope that, whatever power Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, that Christ by his grace could break it. In this way

some of the worst of sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints. They became strong one, unmovable and unshakeable, sanctified by the power of God.

Measure the man

The text shows a strong man. In the context of the world in which we live, how do we define a strong man? What is the measure of his strength? It cannot be physical strength because there many who are physically strong but weak in every other way.

Measure a man by his strength of character. If the chips are down, can he think straight and keep his family on a steady course? When he himself faces life threatening sickness, failure or defeat, can he weather the storm? Can he resist the temptation to succeed by evil devices or triumph at the expense of others? These are questions that form the basis for an analysis of strength. A man of strength displays character when it is needed most. It is an inner strength that is hidden from the naked eye but is displayed in moments of crises. In 2006 Will Smith starred in a movie titled "The pursuit of happyness." In it we saw a strong man of extraordinary character, who despite hard times, living in a homeless shelter and enduring an endless stream of conflicts remained faithful to his son and his dream. When times are tough, the strong man shows his character.

Measure a man by the strength of his integrity. There are many men who have come up short with respect to commitment. A real man has a commitment to his wife and children. Measure him by his faithfulness to his wife. Measure him by his willingness to stand by her in sickness and health, for better or worse, and to protect and provide for her with every ounce of his being. Measure him by his willingness to forsake all others and put her first. Also measure him by his sense of commitment to his children, to provide for them and to care for and protect them. There are many men who have weak commitments to their wives and some have even weaker commitments to their children. A strong man assumes the responsibility for the care and protection of his family, despite circumstances.

Measure a man by the strength of his faith. Faith, is acting on the unseen in hope that God will take over and make a way. Strong men are good planners, providers and sober thinkers. However, strong men are also men of faith. They are men who know and acknowledge that there are some things they cannot control that God must provide. These are men who learn to lean on the Lord. These are men who join with the songwriter and declare, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. And I found out that if I trust him he will provide."

Strong Men Must Be aware

Our community must be aware that our battle for complete freedom is not over. Obama slipped through, but the plans to destroy the strong men of millions of families are still in operation. The are so subtle that often we do not see what is happening.

The word of God says we can't come into the family of a strong man until you can find a way to tie his hands. There has been a continuous attempt to tie our hands for many years; the wise have seen the plan and worked to avoid its grip on our families.

Strong men are destroyed if we can kill their capacity succeed.

If they fail in school, drop out, then their hands are tied; they will never be President, Governor, judges or great business leaders.

If they smoke dope, participate in gang activity, or get involved in crimes; they will never work for the government, become an FBI agent, head an agency or work in areas sensitive to our community's growth but are background sensitive. Their hands are tied.

If they walk around with sagging pants and dragging minds, refusing to read or apply themselves their hands will be tied.

If they ever stop dreaming their are destroyed!

If our men forsake the leadership of their and families become "baby daddies" instead of fathers, our hands are tied.

If we are present at basketball and football games, but absent from circles of leadership, our hands are tied.

To remain strong a man must put himself under the power and control of an almighty God.

When an ordinary man is in God's hands he becomes a strong man.

Strong Men know the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that a strong man knows and fears the Lord.

The man who fears the Lord is a man who lives a good life before his children and his wife, but most importantly, he lives a good life before God.

The man who fears the Lord is an example of trusting in God and holding to his word.

When the young men of a congregation see men tell the story! They tell the story of mountains climbed and valleys traveled!

They tell the story of a young man who came to himself in a pigpen and decided that "in my father's house" there is plenty of what I need.

I heard somebody testify, "I met God one morning, my soul feeling sad, heart heavy laden, with a bowed down head. He lift my burdens and made me so glad all that I know is there is something within."

They tell the story of answered prayer. A man who knows the Lord knows that the Lord will answer prayer.

You don't have to be an old man to talk to the Lord!

You don't have to be a rich man to talk to the Lord!

You don't have to be an educated man to talk to the Lord

All you need is a clean heart and contrite spirit and you can tell him what you what!

Men who fear the Lord tell the story of salvation and redemption.

Men who fear the Lord are quick to testify that one day the savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground"

I heard the songwriter declare, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same"

He touched me!

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

A man who fears the Lord has to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

A strong man who fears the Lord, testifies that "Lord is my light and my salvation, "Whom shall I fear?"

No. 9365-Ordination

Anointed to Serve

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2009

SCRIPTURE: And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:6-7

Introduction

Did you know that there is a difference between the appointed servant and the anointed servant? Unfortunately there are many people who have not learned the difference and their service has been marked by diminished performance as a result. The appointed servant, especially the self appointed servant, serves for the pleasure of himself or others. The anointed leader serves AT God's pleasure and FOR God's pleasure. His aim is to please God and not to please man.

When men appoint us to serve they usually have an agenda that they expect us to follow and a purpose that they want us to help them achieve. Sometimes that purpose is far from godliness. It gets even worse when we appoint ourselves, without a higher calling, just a personal desire.

Consider the monkey who always wanted to be king of the jungle. The monkey watched the lion every day. He watched how the lion walked proudly through the jungle, smiling and nodding his head, roaring and basking in the glory that comes with being king. Atop his head sat a giant golden crown and the Lion wore it with pride. The monkey wished that he could be a great king, just like the lion.

On the occasion of his birthday several of his chimpanzee friends decided to give the monkey a present and appoint him king. In the quiet of night they stole the crown from the king's head, wrapped it in a package and brought it back to give to the monkey. When the monkey saw the crown he was thrilled. Finally, he would get to be king. He placed the crown on his head and walked proudly like the lion. The same day when all of the animals assembled for their monthly meeting, the monkey walked in with the crown on his head and all the animals laughed at him.

When the lion entered the room, the animals bowed in respect. That amazed the monkey, because the lion had no crown. The old owl tried to explain: "The crown doesn't make him the king, but because he is the king, he wears the crown." The monkey still looked confused, so he went further. "If the chimpanzees placed a crown

on your head then you are just a monkey wearing a crown. However, if the creatures of the forest bow before you, you are the king, with or without the crown." With that the monkey understood, returned the crown to the king and joined the rest of theanimals who bowed in humble respect.

The greatest servants are those who don't just wear the title but understand that the authority of the position comes through the anointing of God.

As Christians, our desire is to enter anointed service in the kingdom of God. The mere appointment of men won't do because we need the power of God to succeed.

Exposition

This text focuses on the anointing of David to serve as the second King of Israel. Israel had a failed experience with King Saul, its first king. According to 1 Samuel 9:2, Saul was a good looking man on the outside. In terms of physical appearance, he was head and shoulders above the rest. He had all the outward appearances of attractiveness and charisma that pleased the crowds. The people were happy. Soon however, they discovered that what Saul had on the outside did not match what he had on the inside. First, they found that despite his manly physique, that he was a coward before the dreaded Goliath. Later, they found that he possessed a jealous spirit, a vengeful and violent personality and an uncontrollable anger. The flaw that seems to stand out most was his lack of humility before God and unwillingness to repent. This made him undesirable before God.

This text introduces the next king, David, who was selected not because of the strength of his physical appearance but because of his strength of character. Samuel went to the home of Jesse and without announcing his purpose reviewed all of his sons. First to come before him was Eliab who appealed to Samuel because of his stunning physical presence (1 Samuel 16:7). God warned Samuel not to concern himself with the outer looks, but to be guided by the character. Other sons came: Abinadab, Shammah and four others. One son did not come because he did not have the look of a king. He was a shepherd boy who loved to play the harp, write psalms and sing. When Samuel saw him, bright eyed, with sun tanned rough skin (v12) the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is the one." David was selected to serve as king of Israel because of his character rather than his outward appearance.

David succeeded as King, not because of his perfection; he was far from that, but because he was anointed by the power of God.

The Anointed Heart

There is power in the servant whose service is anointed. The power is not in the appointment but in the anointing of God. There are strong parallels between the anointing of David and the ordination of servants in the church today. From these comparisons we can learn much about the power needed to succeed in the Christian ministry.

SAMUEL'S CHOICE WAS NOT GOD'S CHOICE: (1 Samuel 16:6-7). When Jesse and his sons first arrived at the worship service, Samuel's attention was immediately drawn to the oldest son, Eliab. The young man was tall and attractive, with a charismatic personality (1 Samuel 16:7). Samuel thought that surely this was God's choice. But immediately the Lord rebuked Samuel. He was not to consider the young man's appearance nor height, for the Lord had not chosen Eliab to be king.

That is often the case in the church today. Our choice for a pastor or deacon or other servant of the church is usually based on what appears to be the obvious characteristics: accomplishment, financial support, charisma, knowledge, and faithfulness. We look at those among us who seem to have the best combination of these. Yet, God looks deeper. He looks at the heart of the person. Often what he sees is betrayed by the outer appearance. Like David, the best person is not always the smartest person or the one with the most money or experience; God knows the best person because he knows his heart.

THE BASIC QUALIFICATION IS IN THE HEART: God's direction to Samuel causes us to focus on the basic qualification of God for any service: it is not physical appearance but the heart that matters most to the Lord. Man usually looks at the outward things, but the Lord looks at the heart of a person. The Lord judges a person by his heart and his heart alone.

Someone once asked General Colin Powell to run for President of United States. He had the knowledge, wisdom, experience and popularity. Men thought he would be the obvious choice for America. Yet Powell declined the invitation of party leaders because being president was not in his heart. In obscurity, God selected a little known man, with a strange sounding name and quicker than anyone could imagine, he became president of the United States…Barack Obama. His rapid unexplained rise to power can only be attributed to a divine anointing for "such a time as this."

The basic qualification for the Christian service is a pure heart. It is such acherished commodity in spiritual circles that Jesus himself would say, "blessed are the pure in heart for the shall see God." Those who want to qualify themselves to receive the anointing of God must have a pure heart as well as the usually credentials of eligibility.

THE LAST CONSIDERED WAS MOST QUALIFIED: David was selected to serve but he was not the first choice of Samuel or of his father. Jesse brought each of his seven sons before Samuel and had them to stand in descending order by age and pass in front of Samuel. After the oldest son Eliab had been rejected, Jesse presented Abinadab to Samuel. But Abinadab was rejected. Then Jesse had Shammah pass before Samuel, but he too was rejected. One by one in descending order, Jesse had his sons pass before Samuel. But in each case, Samuel pronounced the fateful words, each was rejected. Had it been left to Samuel and Jesse, one of these seven would have been chosen to be the future king of Israel. But God knew the hearts, and the heart that He was after was not present.

In the church today, we have developed elaborate strategies for the selection of leaders. We have search committees, pulpit committees, personnel committees, and committees to oversee the committees. We have interviews, background checks, and

a variety of other methods to consider persons we recommend. Our goal is similar to that of Jesse, we want to rank the best possible persons for the position and line them up one after the other. Yet, in all of our searching, we ask for God's spirit because his spirit will lead us through our own choices to the person who will serve "after God's own heart." Sometimes that person is the most qualified but least obvious of the group. When we find that person we have found a gem.

WITH THE ANOINTING DAVID WAS EMPOWERED: Samuel asked Jesse if these seven were all the sons he had. Jesse replied that he did have a younger son who had been left behind to tend the sheep. Hearing this, Samuel immediately sent for David. When David arrived, note the favorable impression he made upon Samuel, and keep in mind that he was just a young boy. He was "ruddy" which means that he had a healthy bronze complexion. And he was good looking with piercing, bright eyes. As soon as young David walked into Samuel's presence, the Lord immediately identified David as His choice to be king. But keep in mind why he was God's choice: not because of his striking physical features, but because of his heart.

1 Samuel 16:12 notes Samuel saying, "this is he." He was anointed with oil, which in Old Testament times was a symbol of the Holy Ghost or God's presence. Verse 13 says that spirit of God was with David, "from that day forward."

Empowered by God, David defeated the enemies of the nation and forged it into a great nation with a multitude of resources.

The servant today who is anointed by God will have that same power. With God's help he can turn dreams into reality and visions into practical programs that will lift and empower the people of God. The empowerment does not come from simply wearing the title, but it comes from the presence of God's spirit on a life, leading and guiding every step of the way.

Guided by God's hand

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the servant who has been anointed is guided by God's hand not his own plan.

When David became King he had no campaign promises to fulfill, no political platform or even a written plan for Israel. He was simply an anointed man in God's hand.

The wise servant today seeks first to put his life in God's hand before he develops a plan for the church, because God already has a master plan, he just anoints a man to work his plan.

The most powerful person on earth is an anointed man in God's hands.

I'm reminded of the church deacon who was always so confident that the Lord would make a way. The young men of the church asked him one day, "Tell us why you are so confident." The old man said, "When I was a boy, my father taught me to ride my bicycle and he ran beside me. I could feel his hand holding me as I paddled along. One day, I rode a long distance. When I stopped I realized that daddy wasn't beside me. I asked daddy, how was it that he was not there but I still felt his hand.

He told me that he gave out of breath but he knew the Lord was beside me. I didn't see his presence, but I felt his hand. Ever since that day, I've learned that if God's hand is in the plan, everything is gon' be all right!"

The anointed servant recognizes God's hand in the plan.

If you have made advancements in education, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have made career advancements, it was God's hand in the plan.

If you have made achieved family goals, it was God's hand in the plan.

The anointed servant must always remember that when God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

As this ministry begins the anointed servant should always keep his hand in God's hand because the power of the ministry is when the servant hands are in God's hands.

When God's hand is in the plan the impossible becomes possible!

When God's hand is in the plan, the improbable become probable!

When God's hand is in the plan, the unthinkable become thinkable!

It's the same hand that touched a blind man's eye and made him see!

It's the same hand that touched a small lunch and made it feed five thousand

It's the same hand that saved Peter from drowning in the sea.

It's the same hand that carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day.

It's the same hand that three days later was raised to the world with all power

Anointed servant…keep your hands in God's hands and everything will be all right.

No. 9366-Anniv.-Church

Celebrating work done, work to do!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2009

Scripture: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." Nehemiah 4:6

Introduction

What is a church anniversary? Every year churches around the world celebrate their anniversaries with a variety of programs and activities, noting another year of service.

A Church anniversary is a commemoration of the service of others. There are many warriors who have gone to their reward carrying the promise for this church in their hearts. They never realized the promise of a day the church would have a modern building, various ministries and technology, but it was promised.

Today, we stand on promised ground. Anniversaries remind every believer that God does not back down on anything he has promised. No wonder the song writer records, "Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!"

A church anniversary is also a call for the mobilization of its present members for work yet to be done. During anniversaries we see what has been done by others, but we also see what remains to be done by those in the present generation.

Today, the church mobilizes itself to continue the great work that is ahead. We must roll up our sleeves and prepare to work in the vineyard of the Lord: feeding the hungry, tending the sick, nurturing families and saving souls. It is a great work that can only be done when church is organized and motivated to pursue this worthy goal.

Moreover, a Church anniversary is a celebration of God's grace toward us as instruments of his will. The church is not a building, but an assembly of baptized believers in Christ, doing his will. Occasionally, along the way, we stop to celebrate Him for his grace.

We have celebrated by lifting our voices to God in empty barns without sawdust floors.

We have celebrated by praising him in the stormy season even with shutters over

our windows.

We have celebrated him in blistering summers, without air conditioning, in the humid and scorching heat of a thousand summers.

We celebrate him because God has used our feeble assembly, worship and praise experiences to bring forth glory to his name.

Through the church God has delivered us from the Egypt of harsh times to the borders of the Promised Land.

Through the church, God has sustained us through lynchings, murders, discrimination, depressions and unbelievable hardships.

Without a doubt, the church has been the instrument God has used to save us when we were lost, lift us when we were fallen, and restore us when we were rejected by the world.

No wonder the song writer thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

As Christians, we pause to see where we have been, but also to rededicate ourselves to the work ahead and give God the glory, for He is a good God worthy of our praise and celebration.

Exposition

This text focuses on the people of Israel whose commitment to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem resulted in it being done because they had a mind to work.

Almost 100 years after the Jews had returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, the walls around the city and the gates had remained in ruins. The people were disillusioned, in debt and intimidated by the awesome commitment that rebuilding the walls would require.

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he was shocked at what he saw. They had a variety of excuses they gave for why the walls had not been rebuilt. Anything he suggested, they said it would not work. Every new idea he presented, they said, "we've tried that before."

Nehemiah was an unusual person. He was strong yet persuasive. He was humble enough to be a cupbearer to the king but he was strong enough to push the project to the end. He was a man of action; he got things done. He knew he could reason with the people but he also knew how to use the power of his office.

Nehemiah presented the challenge and the people responded to the challenge with the common consensus "let us rise up." It was a testament of faith for a people that had sat idle for so long. The work began.

Nehemiah refused to accept their excuses. Despite the danger, he inspected the walls at night (2:15). He then called an assembly and convinced the people of the need for a building program. He was an excellent leader who demonstrated engineering knowledge and brilliant organizing ability (ch. 3). He encouraged them while reminding them that they would have to watch, fight and pray. The work began.

The people had a mind to work and the massive task of rebuilding the walls was continued. It was a massive work requiring thousands of workers spread out over miles of landscape. Even as the people worked, enemies both within and without, kept a steady stream of delaying tactics flowing.

Mobilizing for Service

As the church reflects in this moment of celebration, each person should know that the part they play in helping the church reach its milestone is important. The janitor that cleans the floors, the widow that gives a folded dollar, the lay member that prepares food in the kitchen or the person that is seen out front on a program; each does a great work. The work is not measured by the volume of its notoriety, but by the appreciation of the one person that matters...God!

Equally important is the task that remains. To accomplish its full goal the church should mobilize itself in three ways:

MOBILIZE ITS MIND: To do a great work the church must develop a mind to work; it must resolve that the task can be done and we will achieve it for the Lord. When we develop a mind to work we are not held back by negative thinking or even the lack of resources. There are some people who fail to do anything because they consider themselves too small. They feel that anything they do would be a waste because they don't have the size or resources of others. They see others who participate have cars, education, jobs and other resources. From their perspective what they have to offer is too small to measure. Their potential is minimized because they have a "grasshopper complex" they see the task as being so huge that they are grasshoppers in comparison. When the church gets it's "mind" right, each member will himself as an important instrument in the hand of God. A focused, mobilized, mind can do wonders to promote God's kingdom. Motivation is the key to growth because it will take dedication. We can fulfill great goals if we have a mind to work.

MOBILIZE ITS HANDS: The church with a mind to work, organizes its hands for the work that God has given it to do. Often churches complain that they don't have the money to do great works for God. They reach that conclusion before they inventory what is actually available in the congregation. How many typists, artists, musicians, decorators, planners, bookkeepers, bricklayers, mechanics, cooks, etc. are there in the local congregation? Most churches would be surprised to learn the hidden abilities of individual members.

The question that God asked Moses in Exodus 4:2 when he spoke of his lack of resources, is still important, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses only had a rod but God said use what you have! What you have may seem small, but in the right hands it is big enough. When the church mobilizes the resources it has available to work, it can make a world of difference!

MOBILIZE ITS HEART: When a church has a mind to work it plunges into worship and service for the express purpose of building the kingdom of God. The task of church leaders is the same as that of Nehemiah's, to get the people accept God's

program in their hearts. We must open their eyes so they can see the need for the church's ministries, then work to get their heart to accept the challenge to serve. Many who hear the sermons and presentations know the need that has been ignored because of an unwillingness to "see" with the eye of faith, what could be done. Yet, the challenge must be met.

When their eyes are opened they will "see" their situation with eyes of faith and commit to it in their hearts.

Like Israel, those who are mobilized with a heart for the work will succeed, because they have a mind to work together.

Despite opposition, we must put our heart into it because we have a mind to work.

Despite grumbling, we must put our heart into it because we have a mind to work.

We must "Strengthen our hands" and their hearts and do what is needed to be done in the name of the Lord.

Celebrating the challenge

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must celebrate the challenge of building the kingdom of God.

This anniversary today, looks back over the years and considers the importance of our struggle while at the same time celebrating the challenge that lies ahead.

The savior challenges us to build the kingdom of God.

We are challenged to establish reasonable and attainable goals

We are challenged to develop a sense of mission.

We are challenged to act with confidence when obstacles arise.

We are challenged to stand tall in the faith, ready to execute the will of God.

To meet the challenge, leaders must stay focused on the mission.

The church should not be dissuaded from its mission and should rise to meet the challenge.

To meet this challenge we need the power of God. We can't meet this challenge on our own.

There are some things we cannot do by ourselves. We need the Lord, he's like American Express; we don't leave home without him.

We must mobilize our lives so that we can receive his blessing, because we can't bless ourselves. No matter how hard we work, we cannot bless ourselves.

While it is true that we can be a blessing to someone else we can't bless ourselves. If we need a blessing, we have to call on the Lord.

Our work will need answered prayers, but We can't answer our own prayers. No matter how clean and moral we live our lives, we do not have the capacity to answer our own prayers. Getting an answer to a prayer requires us to call on the Lord.

Our work will require save souls, but we can't save our own souls. Salvation is the act of cleaning the slate and restoring a good relationship with God. We can't save ourselves, because there is only one name under the heavens whereby we must be saved. It's not our name, but the name of Jesus!

While we take on the challenges, we must always remember to celebrate the victory of the cross.

Come and go with me out to Calvary and celebrate the victory of the cross!

Hanging out on the cross, a great work was criticized and despised!

I hear the critics at the cross saying your great work seems to be:

A battle lost; A horrible defeat; A pathetic end to a glorious beginning

It didn't seem like much, sitting out on a hill, but they did not know that the great work of salvation was already underway!

We celebrate the cross because it represented the greatest of all victories.

We celebrate the cross because it was highest of all accomplishments!

We celebrate the cross because it was the finest of all hours!

We celebrate the cross because it was noblest of all events!

We celebrate the cross because of the man on it, who would not come down.

I heard somebody say to him, "If you are who you say you are, why don't you come down?"

He didn't come down, but Early Sunday morning, he got up!

He got up, with determination in his heart!

He got up, with vision in his eyes!

He got up, with salvation in his blood!

He got up, with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that he got up with the power to mobilize my mind!

I'm so glad that he got up with the power to mobilize my hand!

I'm so glad that he got up with the power to mobilize my heart!

I'm glad!

I'm glad!

So Glad...

No. 9367-Black Heritage

The First Feet in the Water

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 2009

SCRIPTURE:"And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap" Joshua 3:13

Introduction

Have you ever been the first to accomplish a feat? There is a certain amount of courage needed to be the first to attempt something. It is courageous because those who attempt to do so do not have the advantage of history for assurance or the support of others who have shared the same experience. Those who are first in any area are heroic in the least because they accomplish what others before them have failed to do.

African-Americans celebrate the "firsts" as heroes of our race. They are members of the armies of the valiant who dared risking the unknown to achieve their personal goals and to open the doors of opportunity for others that followed them in subsequent years.

Across the nation, we study and celebrate the "firsts" among us. In 1853 when William Wells Brown wrote "The President's Daughter" he became the first black man in America to write a novel, it opened opportunities for others that would follow. When Oscar Dunn was elected Lt. Governor of Louisiana, he became the first of our race to hold such a position. The nation watched his every move, which made it possible for another to follow who became the state's first Black Governor, P.B.S. Pinchback in 1872.

In 1901 Negroes were excited that a black man, Booker T. Washington, was the first of our race allowed to eat in the White House at the invitation of the President.

In 1908 two great firsts broke down barriers for our people: Jack Johnson became the first black heavyweight champion of the World and John Traylor became the first African-American to win a gold medal in the Olympics. In 1940 Hattie McDaniel was the first African-American to win An Oscar for her role in "Gone with the Wind." In 1947 the world celebrated the great Jackie Robinson who became the first African-American to play Major League baseball.

After 1950 the list of firsts began to increase as walls came tumbling down: Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie won the first Grammies, Marion Anderson sang at the

Metropolitan Opera. Many knew walls were tumbling down when Jennifer Jackson became the first black centerfold in Playboy Magazine.

Thurgood Marshall became a Supreme Court Justice, a fiery young black woman named Shirley Chisholm challenged the system by becoming the first black woman to run for President in 1968. In 1983 singer Vanessa Williams was named Miss America, opening the doors for others to follow.

In the 21st century barriers are still falling. Colin Powell became Secretary of State and Condoleezza Rice became the first Black national security advisor to the President. That same year Beyonce' Knowles became the first Black to win the ASCAP songwriter of the year award.

As walls continued to tumble down, in 2008 Barack Hussein Obama was elected the first African-American president of the United States and his wife Michelle, became the first Black first lady in history.

As long as barriers exists there will continue to be "firsts." These are those who step into an arena before others and perform in an honorable way that makes it easier for others to follow. These certainly would be the trailblazers of our history. There are millions of "first blacks" in every community across the nation around nation. Often their names are never called but they were the first whose feet touched the troubling waters. We move toward the Promised Land because of their faith, strength and courage.

As Christians, we praise God for opening doors for us and rolling back the waters. We also praise the men and women of our heritage who stepped forth in faith to claim the inheritance were denied in so many arenas, over so many years.

Exposition

This text first considers Israel as it stands at the bank of the River Jordan entering into new and uncharted territory. Without the use of boats, floats or ferries they were about to walk across the River Jordan during the season of high water.

On the other side of Jordan lay the fulfillment of the great promises of God. On the other side was the Promised Land, described as flowing with milk and honey. The dream of prosperity, security and independence was only a stone's throw away.

But, before they could enter the new land, they had to first cross the Jordan!

Crossing Jordan was a formidable task. Flowing from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea the Jordan had no less than 27 great rapids and cascades with many smaller rapids that averaged four to five miles per hour in low tide with even faster currents in high water.

Crossing Jordan in a boat would have been difficult. Swimming across Jordan would have been impractical. Walking across Jordan, during high water, was impossible.

Despite the impossibility of the problem, God commanded Moses to tell the priests to go three football fields in front of the people and proceed forward carrying the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders.

Nearly a million people stood behind the first men. If they failed in courage or strength, no doubt the others would have also faltered. Yet there is no record where any of the men who carried the covenant flinched in any way. They walk forward in faith, confident that the promise of God would quiet the waters and roll them back.

God promised that when the first foot touched the water that it would roll back in a heap and the people would be able to cross on dry land.

The priests moved out on faith alone. They faced uncertainty, danger and possibly death. True to his word, when their feet touched the water, it rolled backwards and heaped up, allowing Israel to cross over to the Promised Land.

If it were not for the faith of those first men, the day of their crossing Jordan might never have come.

Their names are not recorded, but their actions paved the way for others to enter into the blessings of the Lord.

Three Characteristics of the First Feet

There are at least three characteristics of the first twelve men to cross the Jordan that should strike our attention:

THEY WERE NOT INTIMIDATED: The men selected to bear the ark were priests of the tribe of Levi. There were hundreds, even thousands of priests, but these men were chosen to bear the ark. They traveled 1000 yards ahead of the others into the face of danger, yet they were not intimidated. In a similar way those who broke barriers in our history marched forward into a thousand arenas undeterred by certain danger. Nine children faced angry mobs, threats and guns to open school doors in Little Rock. James Meredith faced similar obstacles when he integrated Ole Miss. In a thousand communities across the nation, people faced the same threats as they dared to apply for jobs at banks, sit in white waiting rooms, drink out of white water fountains, or sit at lunch counters. People of God should not fear when we are on God's side of history. We remember that the word says in Psalm 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

THEY CARRIED THEIR FAITH IN GOD WITH THEM: The priests carried the ark of the covenant on their shoulders. It was not a good luck charm; it was the symbol of the presence of God. They moved boldly because they were sure God was with them. The historical accounts of the organized attempts to break racial barriers in this nation are filled with accounts of community prayer meetings and rallies that preceded the actions of those selected. Privately, those who ventured to go forth offered prayers to God for his grace and protection as they moved into the unknown. They moved in obedience to the command of God and walked by faith alone. Even today, we must not venture to do anything unless we first go to God in prayer. If we take the Lord with us, we are assured that he has the power to take us through the Jordan and to the other side.

THEY WERE CONFIDENT THAT GOD WOULD MAKE A WAY: The priests who carried the ark were sure that God would fulfill his promises. What he promised

to do had never been done in their lifetime. They had heard the stories of the wonderful way God opened up the Red Sea for their grandparents, but they had never seen it for themselves. Despite not having seen that miracle they had seen others in the wilderness, they knew God could make a way. Those who stepped forward to integrate schools, universities, bus terminals and other areas forbidden to our race were a part of a mighty movement across the nation. The hand of God was moving, shaking the very walls of racism and prejudice; they plowed forth with the full knowledge that the "Lord will make a way somehow."

Wonders Tomorrow

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that those, whose feet first touched the waters, were touching water but they were standing on the promises of God.

They had a reason to be bold and confident because they had the promise of God. In Joshua 3:5 we read, "And Joshua said unto the people, sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

For Israel those words brought them confidence, "..for tomorrow, the Lord will do wonders among you." They marched forward and God did a wonderful thing. He rolled back the waters of the Jordan but he didn't stop there.

In scores of tomorrows he continued to do wonders. He brought down the walls of Jericho. He made the sun stand still in the sky and gave an unttrained and unwarlike people victory in a land filled with milk and honey.

Today, God is still making good on that promise, not just to Israel but to all believers everywhere "Sanctify yourselves" and get ready for God is going to do wonders tomorrow.

When tomorrow comes, ghettos will be a forgotten nightmare, racial profiling will no longer exist and the "Nigger" will no longer be spoken by blacks or whites.

When tomorrow comes, there will be black women on the Supreme Court and women in the white house, because the barriers or sexism will have fallen.

When tomorrow comes, Black history month will be joined by Hispanic History month, Asian History Month, Jewish History Month, Italian History and every culture will be celebrated because we will see the beauty in every race.

When tomorrow comes, opportunities for employment will be extended to every person based on their ability without considerations of their race, age or sex.

When tomorrow comes, racism will be a faint memory only recalled by the aging historians.

I'm confident that there will be wonders tomorrow because we serve a wonder working God who can take our fears about tomorrow and give us confidence today.

We serve a God who can take:

—Tomorrow's uncertainty and turn it into today's assurance!

—Tomorrow's fears and make them today's courage!

—Tomorrow's doubts and make them today's hope!

A blind man met him one day, and he gave him new sights to see! He's a wonder

working God!

A lame man met him one day, and he gave him a new walk to walk! He's a wonder working God!

Lazarus, dead in the tomb for four long days, found out that he gave him another life to live! He's a wonder working Lord!

He worked a wonder at the Red Sea!

He worked a wonder at the Jordan River!

But two 2,000 years ago he worked another wonder. He carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill and died out on Calvary.

The women cried for three days and three nights, but on the last night there must have been a whisper in heaven that repeated that old promise, get ready for a wonder tomorrow.

Early Sunday morning….

No. 9368-Inspiration

Touched by an Angel

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 8, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. 1 Kings 19:5-8

Introduction

Have you ever been helped by someone you did not know? Did that person respond to you in your hour of need by chance? Most of us have been assisted in some task, goal or endeavor by someone we did not know at the time. It gives us an eerie feeling when that mysterious person appears out of nowhere to lend a hand, say an encouraging word, perform a task or otherwise help us. Sometimes the person disappears and is never seen again. There are other times when we see that same person helping someone else. There are times when that person seems to linger around us, with no ulterior motive, encouraging, helping and assisting us in so many ways.

Without thinking, we often say, "Thanks, you're an angel." On other occasions, we sometimes say, "The Lord must have sent you. You are certainly an angel." The words rolled out of our mouths easily, but we probably had no idea how close those words were to the actual truth.

Angels are God's messengers. He uses them to protect, push us and position us to accomplish his will. Sometimes we see them but fail to recognize them. Often we don't see them at all, but we know they have touched our lives in ways that only God can do.

There is a legend about a woman who walked the streets begging for many years. She lived in the graveyard and wore burlap sack clothing and old ragged clothes. They called her Honey Babe. She had been a school teacher in another life whose husband and six children died in a great fire. She never recovered from that trauma and spent the rest of her life mourning her children and begging. For nearly 30 years she begged but never spent a single dime of the money she received, instead she buried the money in glass jars all over the town. People followed her to find where she buried the money but no one could find it. They knew the money existed because

each time a mother needed money to save a child a jar stuffed with money would mysteriously appear on their porch. It would always be just enough to pay for a child's treatment. When they saw the muddy jars and the soiled coins they knew it must have been part of Honey Babe's treasure. She was an unlikely angel of the most high God.

As Christians, we believe that God still has angels. We believe he uses them to accomplish his will for us. He works through them to make his will apparent in the world. We feel safe and secure in the knowledge that all night and all day, angels are watching over us!

Exposition

This text focuses on the help that God dispatched to the prophet Elijah when he experienced a low point in his life.

The text comes in the aftermath of a great contest on Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah completely humiliated the prophets of Baal. He challenged the false prophets to get their God to answer them by answering from heaven with a fire that would consume an animal sacrifice. Despite the dancing, wailing and pleading of the Baal prophets, there was no answer. When his turn came, Elijah quietly called on God and he immediately answered with fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice as requested.

Afterwards, Elijah became a hunted man. He won a great victory on Mt. Carmel, but he was also a defeated man. He was tired of running and was fatigued. He laid himself by a Juniper tree and simply hid from Jezebel. He cried as he hid under the Juniper bush, "Lord, I have had enough. It was bad enough facing four hundred priests of Baal but when this one woman gets after me, that is too much." She was threatening his life. "Lord, I have had enough - take my life,"

For a while a raven brought him food and he quenched his thirst from water in a brook. Yet, while he retreated God sent an angel to bring him food to eat and water to drink. He was awakened when he was touched by an angel who said, "Arise and Eat." On a second occasion, the angel provided him with food to eat again. This time the angel noted that Elijah should eat because the journey ahead of him was great.

The word used for angel in this text is Malak (Mal-awk). It is a word which means "dispatched" from God. It indicates that an angel is a being who has been sent by God. An angel is a messenger, an ambassador, a representative, an emissary of God. In the New Testament the word angel is "Angelos" (ang-el-os) which means messenger from God. John was given a message or revelation for the angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor. Each of the pastors of the seven churches was referred to as angels. In Revelation 2:1 he says, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; …" In Revelation 2:12 he says, "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write…" Angels are spirit beings and have no form of their own. They have been recorded in scripture as appearing in some instances as winged creatures, known as Cherubim (four wings, Ezekiel 1:4-15) and Seraphim (six wings, Isaiah 6:2-4). This accounts for the numerous paintings we have seen over the centuries of

angels with wings

In other instances they have been recorded in both the old and new Testaments as men. In Genesis 18:1-4 angels appeared to Abraham as normal men. Luke 24:3-5 shows angels appearing to the apostles in the normal form of men.

Thus, when the text notes that an angel touched Elijah it could have been a Seraphim with six wings or a person dispatched from God to minister to him in his time of need. In either instance, the result is the same; Elijah was touched by someone or something that was dispatched from God himself.

The Angel's touch

Elijah lost faith for a while and lingered under a Juniper tree. Three actions of the angel should catch our attention.

THE ANGEL AWAKENED HIM: Elijah had become comfortable in his retreat, hiding under a Juniper tree while being fed by a raven. God sent an angel to him and the angel's first act was to wake him up. The angel touched him. How often we can slip off into a dream world that won't allow us to face the realities around us. Like Elijah, we can retreat from problems and try to keep from facing them, then God sends an angel to wake us up. Many believers have received a wakeup call at one time or another. That's when we were forced to face the realities of this world. When misfortunes come, there are many who lull us to sleep by telling us it will be alright. We often wallow in self pity until that special someone comes along and gives us the wake up call and shocks us back into reality. It was the angel that touched Elijah but it was God that sent him the wake up call. Likewise, God sends us wake up calls, in strange ways. The angel could be the voice of a parent or spouse. It could be the warning of a teacher or coach. Then sometimes God may use circumstances in ways that get our attention when everything else fails.

A giant fish brought Jonah his wake up call. Blinded eyes brought Samson his wake up call. It's what they were tellingShug Avery in "The Color Purple"-"God is trying to tell you something." The near fatal accident, the unusual outpouring of bad news, the string of near misses..may have all been wake up calls in which God sends us messages that it is time for us to wake up from our slumber and take action. When we are shackled by the burdens of this world, God also sends angels to set us free. Acts 12:7 tells us that even when Peter thought his situation was at its worse that God sent an angel who touched him on his side and to him to get up quickly, and in obedience he responded. When he did his chains dropped from him. Has God sent an angel to talk to you? Has that angel's words shocked you, angered you and prodded you to take action? If so, why not do as Peter did, arise and watch God work!

THE ANGEL PROVIDED FOR HIM: The next thing the angel did for Elijah was to prepare him a meal to sustain him. The text notes that Elijah ate the food, drank the water and went back to bed. Even today God has sent his angels to provide for and protect us, but there are many who receive the blessing and take it for granted.

There are many who take for granted the way God keeps food on our tables. Even

in hard times, God continues to make a way for us. Yet there are many of us that take that for granted. When the raven brought food every day, Elijah took that for granted. When the Angel prepared food for him daily, he took that for granted, too and went back to sleep.

Many act as if the world owes us something. We take for granted the kindness of neighbors, the goodwill of parents and unsolicited help of those who help us. These are done for us out of love, but they are not owed to us. The philosopher Ayd Rand put it this way, "A person who has the absurd notion that anyone, particularly "the world" owes him anything is destined not only for a lifetime of failure, but tremendous bitterness and frustration as well. Until such a person gets such a presumptuous notion out of his head, he'll never get out of the starting gate, much less succeed."

Elijah rolled over and went back to bed, waiting on the next meal. It would be a tragedy for those who are recipients of God's goodwill to do the same; to just roll over and do nothing, as if God owed us success, blessings and our next meal. God puts the food on the table for us but we should never take it for granted.

THE ANGEL SUSTAINED HIM: 1 Kings 19:7 notes that the angel touched him a second time, but this time he was motivated to move on. Elijah was prepared for a long journey ahead and given the strength to endure. The last meal he received lasted 40 days.

The angel touched him once to wake him up, spoke to him twice to feed him and touched him a last time to get him moving. Sooner or later every one of us must move at God's command. There is one certainty in life, "When God gets ready you've got to move."

God did not abandon Elijah he sustained him miraculously. He sustained him by making what he had be enough. Believers have learned this to be a truth, that God has often shown us his power by taking what we have a making it enough!

He sent an angel in our kitchens to show us dozens of ways to stretch what we have. We took light bread and raisins and stretched it into bread pudding. We took old cornbread and stretched it into dressing, then took the dressing and poured browned flour and grease over it and called it dressing and gravy. We took hog guts and called them chitterlings, and even found ways to etch out a meal from the hog's feet, ears, tail, tongue and brains. God took what should have killed us and made it sustain us for nearly three centuries.

When God touches us he sustains us.

He keeps his arms around us.

Finally, brothers and sisters we cannot ignore the fact that whether he sends a family member, neighbor or a winged cherubim from heaven; every child of God can always say, God always has an angel watching over me.

There is never a time when we are left alone when God does not dispatch an angel to respond to our need.

In the middle of challenging financial times when jobs are disappearing and unemployment is rising, the child of God says I will not be discouraged, for I know an order has been dispatched from the battlements of heaven, to provide for me, I've got an angel watching over me!

In these troubling times, when home values are dropping and foreclosures are increasing children of the king are dispirited, the child of God says, I will not be dispirited, for I know that my equity has been considered in the bank of heaven and help is on the way because I've got an angel watching over me!

In these meddlesome times when my stack of bills is higher than my paycheck, I will not be disenchanted because my father is rich in houses and land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hands, I've got an angel watching over me!

No wonder the old warriors use to sing with voices lifted up to heaven, "All night and all day, Angels watching over me my Lord. All night and all day, angels watching over me."

When your life has been touched by an angel bad things are turned around and you start to see the light of day.

When you've been touched by an angel, your sadness is reversed and you begin to see a reason for gladness.

When you've been touched by an angel. your bitterness is reversed and you begin to taste life's sweetness one more time.

When you've been touched by an angel, the sting of failure is reversed and you begin to see how God will take your failure and make it the stepping stone to success.

When you've been touched by an angel, the deadly pangs of divorce is reversed and you begin to realize that there is life after marital death.

When you've been touched by an angel, the gnawing criticisms of haters is reversed and you begin to realize that the more people talk about you more you are blessed!

When you've been touched by an angel you say with confidence, the *Lord will make a way*.

That's when you can sing the words of old hymn *"Be not dismayed what ere' betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you."*

Through every day!

Over all the way!

God will take care you…yes he will!

I don't know about you but I've got an angel watching over me..

His name is not Gabriel because all he can do is blow his horn!

His name is not Michael because all he can do is carry out commands!

I've got an angel and his name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that I've been touched by the hand of God!

No. 9369-Anniv.-Pastor

A Focused Faith For a Focused Pastor

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2009

SCRIPTURE: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Introduction

Do you ever find it hard to stay focused? Many of us have seen clear paths for our lives and started journeys toward them. However, somewhere along the line we lost our focus and redirected our energies in other areas. That suggests the initial problem that we all share. We are share the need to see what God wants us to do, then remain focus on that task until it has been completed. That's easier said than done because we are surrounded by so many distractions.

How many believers begin each year with a promise to improve their bible study habits, only to get distracted by family problems that cause us to focus on something else instead?

How many of us have promised to improve our service to the Kingdom of God by working more diligently with the church, only to find ourselves sidetracked along the way?

Each time we are sidetracked, the original goal is delayed at best, and forgotten at worse.

If losing focus is a problem for those leading families, imagine how difficult it must be for a pastor who leads an entire congregation, to remain focused. He is a man who has been given a vision for the local congregation and has committed himself to promote the vision with all of his strength and ability. However, no sooner than he can get started he is distracted.

There is trouble in the choir and he has to deal with that.

Then, there is trouble on the Usher Board and he has to take care of that.

Then, there is trouble on the deacon board and he has to take care of that.

Then, there is trouble with the youth, the mission and the Sunday school, and he has to take care of those.

In fact, often the pastor spends so much time dealing with various issues in the church that he hardly has the time or the energy to push the vision the Lord has given

him. Of course that is the devil's plan in the first place; to keep the church in disarray and confusion and off-task. In disunity, trouble or confusion the devil prospers and the work of the church falls behind. That's why it's important for pastors to remain focused on the task that God has given them.

In a way, he should study the way pigeon's operate to learn a little wisdom. Pigeons have a strange way of walking. Their heads seem to stretch forward, then they take a few steps, then their heads stretch backward. There is reason for the strange walk. Pigeons focus on where they are going, take a few steps, then pull their heads back and refocus. As they walk it becomes automatic: Focus, walk, refocus, repeatedly. What the church needs is a pastor who can do the same: Focus on what God has given him to do; take a few steps, then step back and refocus on the original task.

To remain focused the pastor will need a focused faith.

As Christians, we should constantly pray that our pastors remain focused on the vision that God has given them for the local congregation. To carry out God's will successfully requires a focused faith from a focused pastor; with that all things are possible.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of faith for any believer. It reminds us that faith is the "substance" of everything we hope for, but it is the essence of all that we want but cannot see.

No believer can successfully live the Christian life without keeping a sharp focus on their faith.

New Testament believers are reminded that faith is essential to the Christian life.

Its very nature is the unseen. It is belief without sufficient physical evidence to confirm.

Much of what believers know about God has been through our past experience. Based upon our past experience, combined with what we read in the word, we make a projection about the future. That projection is what is called faith.

It is a hope rooted in the nature of God and our past experience with him. Without faith we cannot please God because we must accept that he is God and come to him first.

Without faith, Godly men, who are leading the Lord's people, will lose their way and become lost in a maze of activity of this world. Maintaining a focused faith guarantees that even when times get difficult and distractions are numerous that the leader of the congregation will never lose sight of the direction the congregation should follow.

With a sharply focused faith he can lead the people of God through the endangered paths of this world to the destinations God has provided for his people.
Keeping Focus

It is important for the pastor to remain focused on his mission despite life's

challenges.

What does it mean to focus? It means to concentrate all of our energies on one objective or goal. It is the intense pursuit of a single aspiration by directing our time, talents, and resources toward achieving its end. When life's goal is clear and the direction of our energies is sure, we are said to be in focus.

Those who have tried to take pictures with a camera know that an image in the lens can be sharp and clear but if the subject comes closer or moves away, adjustments have to be made to keep the image in focus. Likewise, in life it is easy to focus on a goal while standing still, but as the constant ebb and flow of life impacts us as various points, adjustments have to be made to stay in focus.

AVOID BLURS. If we lose sight of our objective, our energies and activities are spread out over a variety of patterns that are blurred and unclear. Moreover, even if we keep our objective in sight but fail to concentrate our energies, our lives still become a blur.

There are three conditions that the good pastor must avoid to remain focused:

NEAR SIGHTED: There are many members in the congregation who are near sighted. The near sighted can't see their goal because they can only see things that are close to them. They live for today.

Therefore their energies are not concentrated on achieving a goal because all they can see is today. They follow the general creed that they should eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow may never come.

The pastor must stay in focus and keep his eye on the mark of the high calling which is Jesus Christ.

FAR SIGHTED: There are other members of the church that are just the opposite; they are far sighted. These are members who are able to see the goal but can't see how to manage the daily flow of time, talents and resources to achieve the goal. They see their goal but can't discipline themselves to make it happen.

The focused pastor must keep his eye on the goal but not lose sight of the small details needed to insure the goal. He must insure that members remember the importance of worship, service, and giving in the present, while they look forward to goal of the future.

ASTIGMATISM: A third set of people also have a focus problem, those who have astigmatism. These are those who can't see the goal and neither can they influence the energies of their lives. They wander aimlessly in a blurred existence. The pastor must remain focused so that he is never leading the congregation a blur. In a blur, he sees something but he's not sure what he sees, it simply can't make it out. The people are counting on him to remain focused and to see clearly the path that the Lord has provided for the congregation.

Faith Keeps Focus

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when the man of God is in focus, he keeps the congregation focused; and when God sees our faith and sees our

sacrifice, he will provide for our needs.

A focused faith inspires and motivates the pastor to push the people of God to higher heights of faith and hope.

A focused faith helps the pastor fulfill the Biblical mandate to make disciples.

A focused faith will result in dramatic, even radical transformation of lives, families, and ministries.

A focused faith will result in the world around you being impacted for Christ.

When the Pastor is in focus, he is not distracted by life's sideshows because he knows that God is bigger than any difficulty we might encounter.

That's what faith is all about; knowing that God will make a way.

Faith reminds us that whatever we need, God will supply.

When we go to God with medical needs, he says, we call him JEHOVAH-RAPHA because that means 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

When we go to God for peace amidst terrible storms, we call him JEHOVAH-SHALOM because that means that God is our peace. In this troubled world we must experience God as our peace.

When we go to God for victory over adversity, we call him JEHOVAH-NISSI because that means the Lord is our banner of victory. He is the lord of hosts and commands the vast heavenly army. He will fight the battle for us and give us the victory.

When we want our needs met, we call him JEHOVAH-JIREH because he both sees our needs and provides.

We walk by faith, we step out each day, confident that God sees what we are going through and he will make a way. That's why the song writer wrote, "We are our heavenly father's children, and he knows just how much we can bear!

God sees our tears in the midnight hour!

God sees our concern for our families and loved ones!

God sees our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

I know he'll make a way because he loves us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

Stay focused and every day faithfully work to please him!

Stay focused and every day faithfully work to glorify him!

Stay focused and every day faithfully work to lift him up!

Stay focused on the King of Kings!

Stay focused on the Lord of Lords!

Stay focused on the Alpha and Omega!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning He arose from the dead!

Stay focused on Jesus and He will direct thy path!

No.9370-Communion

The Rewards of Drinking from the Right Cup

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 15, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 1 Corinthians 10:21

Introduction

Have you ever watched someone prepare a cup of coffee? No two people are alike, especially when they are preparing their coffee. They can use the same Styrofoam cup, but what goes in the cup varies. One person has black coffee while another has black coffee with a varying amount of sugar: one, two, three maybe even five or six packets of sugar are needed for some. Others need a little cream. There are those who use cream but no sugar, sugar with no cream and then there are those who drink black coffee but water it down to make it weak. For some their coffee must be so strong that hairs stand up on their heads, while there are others who drink warm cream water because of its dilution. Each cup on the outside looks the same but the contents differ greatly.

Leading a happy, fulfilled life deals with choices, much like deciding what to put in our coffee. Each person brings to their life a set of choices that reflects their tastes, ambitions, values and goals. No one has exactly the same life plan as another. What one favors the other frowns upon, just as those who must have sugar raise an eyebrow at those who drink their coffee black.

Theologically, God gives each of us the free will to choose the direction of our lives. Scripture generally refers to our particular life set as a "cup." God has a cup for every believer and Satan has a cup for his followers, too. How far we climb in life and the direction which we travel depends heavily on which cup we choose.

Whether or not you enjoy a good cup of coffee depends heavily upon what's in the cup. The same is true of life in general. Whether we enjoy the trials, struggles and rewards of life depends heavily upon whether or not we are sipping from the right cup.

As Christians we acknowledge that Christ has prepared a cup for us that is filled with all the spiritual condiments needed for an abundant life. The cup he has prepared for us is the cup of salvation and blessing based on our faith in him. Like Maxwell

House, “It’s good to the last drop.”

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the Corinthians about the nature of the Lord’s Table.

Paul notes that those who participate in the Lord’s Supper drink from the cup of blessing. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 he says, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” He notes that those who drink from God’s cup indicate that they are the recipients of God’s blessing, favor and protection. They also indicate they are in step with his will for their lives.

However, the text notes that there is a problem if a person attempts to drink from the Cup of God’s blessing while at the same time drinking from the devil’s cup. There is a certain incongruity and inconsistency between a person being the guest and friend of Christ, and the guest and friend of evil spirits at the same time. It is as impossible as thinking that the same man can be wicked and holy at the same time.

In Corinth there were many believers who had abandoned the communion service to eat food that had been offered to idols. Regardless of their motives, these Christians were opening the whole movement to criticism from unbelievers. It was charged that Christians had a dual allegiance—that they were hypocrites.

A Christian says by his presence at communion, “I am in fellowship with Christ.” If a man is really in fellowship with Christ, he cannot be in fellowship with demons. If a man has really been to the table of the Lord Jesus, there are also some things on the tables of the world he does not touch.

Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:22 that those who try to drink from both cups anger God so he says, “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?”

The idea Paul noted is that communion represents those who are a part of one Lord, one faith and one baptism. In 1 Corinthians 10:17 he says, “For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

Thus, the text notes that there is a blessing for those who drink from the right cup. Those who drink from the wrong cup provoke God’s anger.

What’s in the cup?

Look at the two cups from which we must choose:

THE DEVILS CUP: The devil’s cup offers us the illusion of happiness and joy. He offers us a spiritually decaffeinated life. He offers condiments that are marked sweet or creamy but turn out to be filled with defeat and sadness. Many fooled, by the devil’s cup, pursue lives of crime to get riches quickly only to end up in sadness. The devil’s cup is filled with many attitudes that destroy us such as fear, failure, defeat and low self esteem. There is no way for us to climb life’s ladder if we get up each morning and consume several cups of defeatist self talk filled with “I can’t” and “I’m

Afraids."

Defeatist thinking is what the devil desires and he offers you a fresh cup every morning and all through the day. When Jesus was tested in the wilderness, that's the cup that the devil offered him, but he refused saying, "Get the behind me Satan. It is written that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Those who drink from the devil's cup wake up thinking about who they can cheat, whose husband they can take, what woman's will can they break, how much money they can make illegally, and many other things that are foreign to the will of God.

GOD's CUP: God's cup is filled with everything we need for the abundant life. It is the right cup and it is filled with godly things such as salvation, and forgiveness. It is also filled with a multiplicity of positives that are reflected in Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The Folgers Coffee Company has a slogan that says, "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup." A Christian could easily modify that slogan to say, "The best part of waking up is looking up to the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

DRINKING FROM BOTH CUPS: Life can be frustrating if you try to drink from both cups at the same time, especially for believers because it stops us from tasting the goodness of the Lord. Psalm 34:8 says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. But that is complicated if we are also trying to taste the devils cup too.

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:23 "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. " In essence, I could sip out of the other cup but it would not edify me or build up my life in Christ, so I stick with Christ.

Although another cup is offered believers should be mindful of the frustrations and problems that come with sipping from both cups.

If we try to drink out of both cups one has a tendency to cancel out of the other and we are in a miserable state.

If a believer is handed the cup of optimism that the day ahead is going to be great; then sips out of the cup of doubt that things could go very wrong. One cancels out the other.

If a believer is handed the cup of trust that God will make a way; then also sips from the cup of skepticism and fear. One cancels the other out.

If a believer is handed the cup of hope that despite bad times God is able; then sips from the cup of despair and defeat. One cancels the other.

If we are going to trust in the Lord then resist the temptation to sip from the wrong cup after tasting the goodness of the Lord.

The Cup of Salvation

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that the cup that Christ offers us is the cup of salvation and blessings.

The communion cup is a reminder of the sacrifice made by Christ on Calvary. It is also a reminder that those who drink from this cup draw upon the power of God to assist them in their daily walk.

Therefore, believers should let this cup remind you that God is able.

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to open up a way out of no way!

Let this cup remind you that our God is able, to be a shelter in a time of storm!

Let this cup remind you that no matter what you may have gotten yourself into, God can bring you out!

Let this cup remind you that every day of your life God knows what to put in your cup.

There are times when life gets, bitter but the Lord knows just how much sugar to add to make it alright.

Only people who know you well can fix your coffee. They know how much cream you want or whether you want cream at all.

When things get dark he knows how much lighter things need to be. That's why David declared, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"

When days get a little bitter he knows how much sweetness to add. The song writer said, "He's sweet I know. He's sweet I know. Dark clouds my rise and storms may blow but he's sweet I know!"

Whatever cup God prepares, we must obey his will.

I see Jesus in the garden talking to his father!

Father you have given me a strong cup that is black. I don't like it black.

If I take it black, they are going to persecute me!

If I take it black, they are going to beat me and persecute me!

If I take it black, they are going to whip me all night long!

If I take it black, they are going to spit in my face!

If I take it black, they are going to nail me to an old rugged cross!

I don't like it black, but nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done!

He drank his bitter cup and died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hand!

Just when you think life is slipping away from you, Wake up and smell the coffee..God is still on the throne!

No. 9371-Anniv-Church

A Rich Past, An Exciting Present and a Glorious Future

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2009

SCRIPTURE: Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death. Psalm 48:12-14

Introduction

Take a look at you life; has God been good to you? Most of us will agree that God has been better to us than we have been to ourselves. When we consider all that we have experienced in life we can only say "Hallelujah" and "Praise God" for giving us a rich past, an exciting present and a glorious future.

Think about it. Some in this room were here when the first man walked on the moon. Some were here when cell phones were first used or even microwaves. Some experienced the sting of racial segregation and others saw the first of our race make strides in many areas including the election of the first person who looks like us as the President of the United States.

Certainly we can all say God has been good to us. Our paths have brought us through a myriad of experiences that have included successes and failures. Along the way, we have witnessed many changes and have learned to take them in stride. Our joy is to know that despite the road that we have traveled that there has been one constant in life that has never changed; that is the love of God. It never changes.

The most senior among us have seen the most miles, tallest of mountains and the deepest of life's valleys. The younger among us have traveled a journey too. It is just as real to them as the distances traveled by those who walked before them.

As Christians, we give praise to God for bringing us through our troublesome past. We also give him praise for the exciting life that he is giving us today and high praise for the glorious future that lies ahead of us.

Exposition

This text celebrates the greatness of Jerusalem for its past, present and future glory.

The central focus of the text is Jerusalem. It was the center of the worship and focus of God's people at the time of this text. It symbolizes the blessing and anointing of God and as such, it reminded Israel constantly of the presence of God in the Promised Land.

Yet, here Jerusalem is also a type of the church and all true believers of God. What is said about Jerusalem is the same that can be said about the church and individual believers.

This text says three things to the church collectively and individually: Review where you have been and see what God has done, consider the palaces or the great blessings that God has given you in the present and consider all of the great blessings that God has in store for the future.

Walk Around Zion

If we take a good look at our journey we will see what God has done for us. That's why Psalm 48:12 encourages us to Walk about Zion. To consider the beauty and magnificence of the temple, count the towers by which it is fortified. In essence, see the rich past God has given you.

Today, every saint who takes a walk about Zion can see the many ways that God has enriched their lives both materially and spiritually.

Like Noah, we have survived floods of trouble. We have remained afloat even though at times it appeared that we would sink.

Like Abraham, we have seen difficult times when our faith has been tested and the very lives of those we loved the most have been threatened. It was moments such as those that strengthened us when we learned that God truly does have a ram in the bush.

Like the Israelites crossing the River Jordan into a new land, we have seen the hand of God bring down the walls of Jericho and perform miracles on our behalf.

Walk around Zion and see the wonderful works of God as he blessed us immensely in our past.

Consider His Present Protection

Even today, God is still providing for us and protecting us. That's what the Psalmist referred to in Psalm 48:13 when he notes that we should "Mark ye well her bulwarks" or see the many ways that Jerusalem is defended. The city was protected from invaders and enemies by a series of moats and protective works called bulwarks. Just as the Psalmist challenge Israel then to see how God protected Jerusalem with bulwarks, today we should see how God is providing for us and protecting us.

God is providing for us and protecting us right now. Despite his provision some are complaining but he provides us with an ample supply of food, clothing and shelter. Even those who complain must agree that God has been faithful in providing us with all three. Just as Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years depending upon the

faithfulness of God, we have done the same. In the wilderness Israel found that God provided them food, on time every day; even though they complained about it. He fixed it such that the material that formed their tents held up for 40 years without need of repair. He arranged it so that they wore the same shoes and clothes for decades and they never wore out. The food came on time every day. There was water just when they needed it most. God was faithful to Israel as he provided for them in ways no one could explain.

God is doing the same today.

Every saint should face each new day with exciting expectation, with the full knowledge that "This is the day that the Lord hath made; I will rejoice and be glad in it."

No matter how we look at it, we are being blessed, right now, by the powerful hand of God.

Believers have the reassurance that any good thing that true believers desire will not be withheld from them. Good things are those things which are according to God's will. If what we want is in God's will it is a good thing and it will never be withheld. That's a promise that is reaffirmed in Psalm 84:11 which says, "No good thing will He withhold from them that work uprightly"

Consider your palaces

The text urges us to "Consider your palaces." A palace is not just a home but that which goes beyond the basics into the extraordinary.

As we consider the goodness of the Lord we should consider our "Palaces" the extra favor that he gives us every day.

Look around. Do you sleep in a comfortable bed at night? Consider your palace!

Do you eat reasonably well? Consider your palace!

Is your home reasonably safe and secure? Consider your palace?

Are you able to keep food on your table most of the time? Consider your palace!

Your palace is what God has given you above and beyond the mere basics.

Yesterday, the psalmist told Israel to walk around Zion and consider your palaces.

Today, believers are reminded to just take a look around and see what God has done and consider your palace.

God will bless us in the future too!

Finally, brothers and sisters we are celebrating today not only because we have a rich past and an exciting present but also because we have a glorious future ahead. .Our rich past is a great testimony to our God.

Our rich past has provided us with evidence that God can make a way. In the richness of our past we have experienced:

—Suffering, but the Lord has given us support in the middle of suffering.

—Strain, but the Lord has given us stability.

—Hardships, but the Lord has brought us hope.

—Trials, but the Lord has brought us longsuffering.

—Tragedy of the midnight, but the Lord has given us a song in the middle of the night.

James Weldon Johnson said, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered. We have come treading our path in the blood of the slaughtered. Out from the gloomy past till now we stand at last where the white gleam of our bright star is cast."

But, when I think about how far we've come, I hear the words of James Cleveland ringing in my ears.

"I don't feel no ways tired. I've come too far from where I've started from. Nobody told me that the road would be easy."

I don't believe...

I don't believe He brought me this far, just to leave me.

That's the beauty of verse 14 when it records, "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death"

It means that God has been our God in the past. He is our God today, but he will continue to be our God into the future, forever and ever.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past.

I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side!

If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass! He is our hope for tomorrow.

There is a glorious future ahead of us but we must hold firm to our faith in Jesus, He is our only hope!

I heard the song writer declare "The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion is great in the world today. Persecutions my come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows Him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

He has given us a rich past, an exciting present and offers us a glorious future!

No. 9372-Inspiration

The Recipe for An Abundant Life

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2009

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

Introduction

There are recipes for just about everything: cakes, pies, desserts, and assorted dishes, but is there a recipe for life? Is there a special recipe that we can follow that would guarantee an abundant life that is filled with joy, peace, love, longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness?

A recipe is a special list of ingredients and procedures used to achieve a desired result. It is usually detailed enough so that those who follow it to the letter will get the predefined result. We remember recipes with fondness because there are a few in every family: Grandma's pound cake recipe. Uncle Joe's secret bar-be-que sauce. Aunt Mary's potato salad. Mother's special giblet gravy. Granny's Christmas fruitcake. They were all made from special recipes.

Those who have a special way of cooking or preparing an item that produces their unique result usually guard their recipes. Coca Cola has a special mixture of ingredients that produces its unique taste. It has kept that recipe secret nearly a century. Kentucky Fried Chicken keeps its special blend of herbs and spices used to produce its "finger licking good" taste under lock and key. Even the franchise owners in local communities are not told the recipe. It's a trade secret.

There are some secrets that can't be reproduced, even with the best recipe. Consider the grandchild who had always been impressed with the way grandma made pound cakes. Now a newly married microwave bride, the grand child decided to make a pound cake, just like grandma made. She went up and down the isle at the grocery store getting ingredients that she remembered sitting on the counter at grandma's house. When she came to the spices, she stood there for a long time reading every box and bottle, searching for something. An elderly woman stood nearby and watched, seemed frustrated at her inability to find what she was looking for. Finally, the woman approached the young woman and asked if she could help. The frustrated grandchild turned quickly and said, "I'm trying to find something grandma use to put

in her cakes, but I can't find it!" Puzzled, the woman asked what it was, only to hear the woman respond: "She called it scratch!" The old woman responded: That's love and patience baby, you won't find it on a shelf, it came from her heart.

Today, friends there is good news. God has a recipe for living abundantly that is available for everyone. Such a recipe would be worth millions, but believers have found it and it is free.

It's not on a shelf and it's not in a box. It's from his heart. It is not a secret. In fact we have been commanded to go into all of the world and tell everyone about the recipe, then show them how to blend its ingredients to produce the abundant spirit filled life.

Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. The bible is a detailed recipe for believers to follow to achieve the spirit filled life. It begins with one simple idea "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you."

As Christians, we strive to live according to God's plan. He has given us the recipe for spirit filled living. If we obey his word and follow the result will be a life that is both fulfilled for and pleasing in his sight.

Exposition

This text focuses on a father whose son is possessed by a demonic spirit and Jesus' response.

In reply to Jesus' compassionate inquiry, the father said his son had experienced such pathetic and near-fatal convulsions from childhood. The lad's condition was long-standing and critical. The words, "If You can do anything" indicate that the disciples' inability to expel the demon had shaken the father's faith in Jesus' ability.

Jesus took up the father's words of doubt, *If You can*, to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God who can do what is humanly impossible. Jesus then challenged the father not to doubt: Everything is possible for him who believes. Faith sets no limits on God's power and submits itself to His will.

The father's response was immediate. He declared his faith (I do believe), but also acknowledged his weakness: Help me overcome my unbelief!

Herein lies the key to living the abundant life. The main ingredient that was missing from this father's experience was faith. We need faith to achieve our life's purpose. Everything is possible for the person who believes.

Life Receipe

Across America today many congregations are searching for the recipe for the abundant life that Christ promised. The number of recipes that churches have tried is astounding. There are churches that promote Yoga classes, health spas, recreation, business development, mystical living and even acupuncture. Despite all of their efforts they always seem to miss something. In grandma's pound cake it's called

"scratch." In building a spirit filled life it's called faith in God's promises.

Churches that grow in prayer, worship and faith based action, latch on to the essentials necessary for helping members living the spirit filled life.

In a way, the recipe for a spirit filled church is similar to the recipe for baking bread.

What's the recipe?

FLOUR: Flour is associated with our spiritual life. Flour is the product of all of God's creation: the sun, wind, earth, and rain. From the depths of the earth God gives the life sustaining presence of wheat for bread and corn for meal. In a similar sense God's graces work together to provide the essentials of life for every believer. Without the flour there is no bread; it is the essential element. For the believer, Christ is the essential ingredient for a spirit filled life. He is what makes life meaningful, joyful and fruitful. Without Christ there is no Christian marriage. There may be a house, but there is no home. There may be a few things, but unless Christ is the main thing, all of the thing will have little importance to us. Faith in Christ, is finely ground in the crucible of life's experience and is essential to all of the breads that we know.

WATER: Water is associated with spiritual health. Water is used in the baking of bread. Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her living water. In essence, his spirit would be the essence of real living. There are many today whose hearts are beating but they are not living. They move around each day but they are not living. They have a few things but they may as well have nothing because they are not really living. To really live we need the constant stream of spiritual support that only comes from God. Jesus is the living water that constantly flows. Anything that tries to live dies soon, without water. Marriages, careers, even relationships. Nothing else will substitute; it must be water. There are many today who are spiritually dehydrated. They are trying to live without drinking spiritual water. Professionals report that we need eight glasses of water a day to keep our systems functioning. Often we substitute coffee, cold drinks, alcohol and other wet substances for water and get by; but soon we learn that nothing takes the place of water. Likewise, many are substituting many things for Christ. They all serve their purpose but can't take the place of water. To have a healthy spiritual life we need worship, bible study, prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He brings the living water.

SALT: Is associated with nourishment. Jesus told believers "Ye are the salt of the earth." Bread is made with a small amount of salt. Salt preserves, freshens and flavors. Before there were refrigerators, salt was used to preserve meat and other foods. In rural areas salt was even used to brush teeth and combined with soda was used as a deodorant. Salt also flavors. When Jesus said that believers are the salt of the earth he meant we should be all three: a source of preservation, sanitation and inspiration. Jesus said he was the bread of life and that he was the living water. Without the salt, the people of God, the world lacks what it needs to sustain itself.

YEAST: Yeast is associated with abundant living. In bread, yeast works like magic. The yeast causes the bread to rise. Without yeast, it stays flat. Yeast is composed of living elements that grow quickly, producing a pan of bread much larger than was first made. Jesus said, "I have come that ye may have life and have it more

abundantly." What is abundant living? Is it the accumulation of possessions, money and power? Persons who seek Christ for that purpose usually interpret his words for that end. But does the Christ who urges us to live humbly, despise showy displays, and rid ourselves of as many possessions as possible, really mean by abundant living, that we should seek "living large" as a lifestyle. The abundance that he speaks about involves those variables associated with the kingdom of God. These are an abundance of love, peace, joy and overall happiness and contentment. The abundant life is not measured by how much we have, but how we are able to enjoy what we have. If we have boats but never enjoy them, what good are they? If we have families but never experience the love of family members, what good is the home? If we have money constantly accumulating but we have no peace because of it, are we really living? The abundant life is a Christ centered life that gets great joy out of every blessing it receives no matter how great or small. The abundant life that Christ speaks about has nothing to do with cars and houses; stocks bonds and investments. The abundant life is the life that is filled with as much gratitude for a pork chop as it is for an 18 ounce steak. We know we have it when we are able to "count it all joy."

Put it in the mix

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that while every recipe tells us the ingredients, that list alone is not the whole story. Under the list of ingredients there are some instructions that tell us what to do.

The instructions tell us when to stir, whip, garnish, and grease the pan.

The instructions tell us that we might have to beat something or chop something into small pieces.

All of the ingredients might be on the table but the best recipe tells us what to do with them.

That's the way God's word works. God shows us in his word, not only what ingredients to assemble but then he shows us how to mix them together and what to expect.

He show us how to break yokes, for he says, "take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

He shows us how to prepare for the heat, by reminding us that, "blessed are ye when shall persecute and say all manner of evil against thee for my name's sake."

If you want the recipe for a spirit filled church start with a spoonful of faith.

Soak faith in your soul for few minutes then add a touch of hope, because, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness."

Now throw in a spoonful of confidence that will help you say, "The Lord will make a way somehow."

You need a dash of optimism because when things look bad you remember, "All things work to the good of them that love Lord!"

You need a pinch of forgiveness because Jesus said we should say, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

You need a few drops of patience because, “They that wait on the Lord, shall mount up on wings as Eagles. They shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.”

Now sprinkle it over with two dashes of assurance; it’s what the song writer meant when he said, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what foretaste of glory divine.”

Get two stalks of righteousness and blend them together with a faithful walk. That’s why the old warriors sang, “I want Jesus to walk with me. While I’m on this tedious journey. Lord I want Jesus to walk with me.”

The recipe is not complete without a tablespoon of praise. Praise Him in the morning. Praise him in the noonday. Praise him in the midnight hour. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

But what is the main ingredient in this recipe?
What makes this recipe work is the blood. It’s the blood of Jesus!
I know it was the blood!
I know it was the blood that saved me!
To make this recipe work and to save my soul
One day when I was lost, He died upon a cross!
I know it was the blood that saved me!
He died! Yes he died!
But Early Sunday morning, he arose like self rising bread!
I know it was the blood that saved me!
It’s the main ingredient in my recipe for a spirit filled life.

No. 9373-Youth

Living godly in an ungodly world

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 22, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8

Introduction

Have you ever tried to do right but everybody around you seemed to be doing wrong? It's hard to do right when the world is doing wrong, but that's exactly what every Christian is compelled to do. It is extremely difficult for youth to walk the straight and narrow path of godliness when all of their friends seem to find it acceptable to do just the opposite. Conformity with the crowd is a high priority with youth and many find it difficult to resist the pressures placed upon them to conform by adjusting their values and tastes music, clothing, and lifestyle nuances to fit the expectations of the crowd. It's even harder for Christian youth who strive to please God, but also want to be accepted by their friends as well.

Whether you are young or old it is not easy to resist the temptation to go along with the crowd.

Sometimes, walking right is harder for the elderly than it is for the young. Consider what happened when the church committee decided to honor Uncle Willie, its oldest member on his 106th birthday. They figured being a man of 106 years he would have a powerful story to tell the young people about resisting the temptations of the world and walking the straight and narrow. When they came to his house they saw a rather young looking man sitting on the porch. The found out that he was Willie III. He pointed them to his father was standing by the barn, but looked about the same age as his son. Willie Jr. told them the Willie that they were looking for was taking a naked bath in the river. The committee became concerned that a 106 year old man was taking a bath alone in the river. The son answered, "Well he's got to take a bath, even if the river is freezing because he's getting married today." –The committee was astonished, then the son added, "He wouldn't listen, we told him to leave that young woman alone, now he got to get married!"

The bible warns believers to beware of following the crowd, especially if the crowd

is ungodly. At the same time, Jesus warned his disciples that the road to destruction is wide, but straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to the kingdom of God. The masses seldom follow the narrow path but take the super highway approach to life. Believers are encouraged to take the narrow road, even if they have to walk by themselves.

As believers, we praise God for showing us the right path. We praise him for giving us the strength to resist temptation and live for him constantly; because it's not easy to live the godly life in an ungodly world.

Exposition

Our text first considers Daniel, as a young man, before the court of the King of Babylon. Judah had been conquered by invading Babylonian armies and the best minds and talents of the Jewish people were brought to Babylon for re-education to the Babylonian mindset. Among the hundreds of captives were four, who history remembers as: Meshack, Shadrack, Abednego and Daniel.

Those who were being groomed were educated by the king's scholars, housed in quarters provided by the king, and fed with food from the king's table.

The Babylonians had great interest in what Daniel had to offer, since he was noted for possessing a scientific mind. Science, as we know it, began in Egypt and Babylon with the birth of mathematics, anatomy, metallurgy and astronomy.

The three Hebrew boys offered the best potential of their race. Young men, they were being groomed for a life associated with Babylon's highly intellectual but less godly lifestyle. It is a lifestyle that they rejected because they had a higher purpose.

Verse 8 reveals that Daniel had a purpose and that purpose was to obey the will of God. Because he had a purpose, he knew that whatever circumstance he encountered he would prevail if he obeyed the will of God. Even verse nine points out that despite the condition of Daniel's slavery, "God had brought Daniel into favor."

Factors in Godly Living

LIVING GODLY BRINGS GOD'S FAVOR: Those who choose to live by godly principles earn the "favor" of God. Daniel 1:9 says, "Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."The Hebrew words for "favor' in this text refer to "loving kindness" and "mercy." In essence they received many courtesies and specialties because of God's loving kindness and mercy (called favor). These young men had great potential. Daniel 1:4 says, "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." It was obvious that God had blessed them with brains, looks and skills. They were favored. Youth who are tempted to run with the crowd should remember that they

are the recipients of God's loving kindness and mercy. If the crowd is about to engage in unlawful, immoral or disrespectful activity, then they risk losing God's favor. God's favor is the source of the blessings, opportunities, and goodwill that they have received. God favors those who choose to live for Him.

LIVING GODLY MEANS REJECTING UNGODLINESS: The Hebrew Boys quickly learned that living Godly often means rejecting what the world has to offer. Youth today must exhibit the ability to discern that which is good from that which is bad and reject anything that will have a deleterious effect on their spiritual lives as saints or will have a negative impact on their future. What affect will an invitation to smoke marijuana, steal, skip school, cheat or to engage in sex outside of marriage have on one's spiritual relationship with God or on one's long term goals? Note that the Hebrew Boys did not reject everything the king had available. They refused the meat sacrificed to idols and the wine but they drank his water and ate his pulse or vegetables. (Verse 12). In a similar sense youth must think before taking action and only engage in those activities that will not put them in disfavor with God and jeopardize their future. Living Godly does not mean that you do not participate in anything, but it does require you to reject anything that will cause you to lose favor with God.

GOD WILL SUSTAIN THE GODLY: Youth who make godly choices even though the world around them is living ungodly will be sustained by God. He will not abandon them but help them to grow even stronger because of their choices. Daniel 1:15 says, "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." It means that even though they refused to participate in ungodly activities they lost nothing that was essential to their being. It also says to youth today, that those who choose to live for God won't lose anything that is important. Everything essential to your future happiness and success, God will provide. The Hebrews looked better, felt better and fared better than all of the others in the long run, and so will young believers who trust God. God will reward you for refusing to do ungodly things, even if you are the only one who chooses to do right.

The result of Godly living

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the result of living godly is the unlimited blessing of God upon our lives.

The Hebrew Boys chose to live for God and he protected them, nurtured them and elevated them to high positions.

Daniel 1:17 says, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

God gave them knowledge, skills, learning and wisdom: all of the ingredients necessary for their success. They went to be listed among the greatest of their generation.

Young believers who trust in God have the same promise if they choose to live

for God in this ungodly world.

When the world issues its invitation Christian youth should remember Psalm 1:1 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

How will God bless you for living Godly although your friends are doing wrong? Psalms 1:3 says, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

It means that youth who choose to make Godly choices should not hear the laughter of their so called friends because they resist evil or immoral activity, they should hear the promises of God.

These words should ring in your ears, "his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

In the classroom, football field, basketball court, cheerleader squad, flag team, track team, or on the hallways of your school, let the promise of God ring in your ears, "and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Lift God up and he won't let you down!

Praise God through you living and he will raise you in the eyesight of your peers!

Your friends may laugh and snicker because you live for God and give him praise but praise God anyhow!

Just remember, whatever it is that we need, God's grace is sufficient and he will supply it, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be forgiven, God's mercy is sufficient to forgive us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need comfort, God's peace is sufficient to comfort us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be satisfied, God's storehouse is sufficient to satisfy us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need healing, God's touch is sufficient to heal us so we praise God anyhow

If we need to be strong, God's power is sufficient to strengthen us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be challenged, God's work is sufficient to challenge us, so we praise God anyhow!

If we need to be refreshed, God's fountain is sufficient to refresh us, so we praise God anyhow!

Praise Him on the school campus!

Praise Him in the classroom!

Praise Him on the school bus!

Because He is great and his mercy endureth forever and ever!

The God you serve loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son.

His name is Jesus, we ought to praise him!

He died on an old rugged cross, we ought to praise Him!

But early Sunday morning He arose from the grave…

No. 9374-Easter

Ride on King Jesus

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 5, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen: Luke 19:37

Introduction

Have you ever started a task, only to leave it unfinished because of an interruption? Life is filled with interruptions that make it difficult for us to complete tasks, objectives and goals. It may be as simple as a homework assignment at school or an unfilled grocery list. It could be a list of household chores or special business matters that need attention. There are times when we begin with the best of intentions but find ourselves delayed because of interruptions.

Staying on task is one aspect of time management that many are still learning. Staying focused, avoiding distractions and pursuing a task to its natural end is a quality that is admirable.

Sometimes we try to stay on task but people won't let us. That was the case when the old farmer sued a trucking company for injuries incurred in an accident. On the witness stand the farmer tried to tell His story but was constantly interrupted by the defense lawyer.

"Didn't you say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?" said the lawyer.

The farmer said, "Well I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favorite mule Bessie into the...."

"I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question." "Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'!"

The farmer said, "Well I had just got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road...."

Each time he tried to tell about Old Bessie the lawyer interrupted. Finally the judge let the family speak without interruptions.

"Well as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie, my favorite mule, into the trailer and was driving her down the highway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible

shape just by her groans. Shortly after the accident a State Trooper came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her, he took out His gun and shot her between the eyes. Then the Patrolman came across the road with His gun in His hand and looked at me. He said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her. How are you feeling?"—The truth came out without the interruptions.

When God gets ready to bless us, can anyone or anything hinder Him? Will He be sidetracked as He journeys toward us with forgiveness, mercy, and salvation?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the crowds praised Him because He was coming to bring them a victory. However, in the course of a few days there would be many interruptions, discouragements, false accusations and distractions designed to get Him off task and to lose focus. Despite those obstacles He rode on with His eyes on Calvary and the victory over death and the grave.

As Christians, we are thankful that Christ rode into Jerusalem prepared to die for our sides. He was not distracted then, and neither will he be distracted from responding to our needs. Thus, we say, Ride on King Jesus, no man can-a-hinder thee!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey focused on Calvary.

After purposefully staying out of the limelight during most of His ministry, Jesus deliberately comes into Jerusalem in a fashion that would strengthen the people's conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Book of Zechariah says, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Zech 9:9

By coming into Jerusalem Jesus was in effect proclaiming that He was the one they have been waiting for; the one who was righteous and was bringing salvation. The people cheered for Jesus using the words of Psalm 118. This Psalm was commonly used to greet pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for Passover. But this greeting seemed different. The people knew that the King of kings upon whom they had waited for hundreds of years was now riding into the city of Jerusalem.

As Jesus rode into the city the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for Passover took off their coats and put them on the ground for the donkey to walk upon. They took Palm branches and waved them and also threw them on the ground in front of Him. And they cried "Hosanna" which in Aramaic means "Lord Save Us" or "Lord, help us."

The palm branches were equivalent to rolling out the red carpet today.

The journey into Jerusalem on the donkey was largely symbolic, but the task ahead of Him was full of substance.

Between the entrance of Jerusalem and Calvary there would be many distractions

and attempts to alter His course, but he forged ahead to complete a mission.

He came riding in to Jerusalem to complete the salvation of the lost.

He came riding into Jerusalem to seal a new covenant between God and man

He came riding into Jerusalem to bring hope to all believers that God's promises would be fulfilled and that His power can never be diminished.

Ride On

There is an Old Negro Spiritual that focuses on Jesus riding into Jerusalem. The words are simple: "Ride on King Jesus, no man can-a-hinder thee. No man can-a-hinder thee."

Those words had significance to the slaves, especially towards the end of the Civil War when hundreds of thousands of Union Troops were marching across the South bringing freedom into every town they entered.

Ride on King Jesus was a spiritual about hope that our God would "trample out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." Glory, Glory Hallelujah, His truth is marching on!

Even today when we see Jesus ride in to the face of certain death to bring us hope and salvation we too say, "Ride on King Jesus!"

RIDE ON, BECAUSE HE BRINGS VICTORY: When the king rode into the city, it was a sign of victory. The bands played, the people cheered and the king marched into the city signaling that the victory had been won. As Jesus marched into Jerusalem, He was claiming the victory in advance. He would arise the victor over death and the grave and He would not be distracted from that charge.

Even today, if we invite Him he brings us the prospect of victory.

Ride on King Jesus, because he brings us the victory over fear and failure.

Ride on King Jesus, because he brings us the victory over Satan and His attempts to defeat us.

Ride on King Jesus, because he brings us the victory over the frustrations that this life presents. We hear Him declare in no uncertain terms, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

Ride on King Jesus, let no man hinder thee.

RIDE ON, BECAUSE HE BRINGS SALVATION: The main reason that Jesus came to Jerusalem was to offer salvation to the lost. Those who had been separated from God by sin could be restored and redeemed through His sacrifice on Calvary. His blood brought redemption in Jerusalem, but His blood also brings redemption today. That's why we say:

Ride on King Jesus, because you bring forgiveness of sins to those of us who have fallen along the way.

Ride on King Jesus, because you bring a chance for new life to those who thought they were beyond saving.

Ride on King Jesus, because you are not coming to accuse us but to forgive and give us a brand new start.

Ride on King Jesus, let no man hinder thee!

RIDE ON, BECAUSE HE BRINGS US HOPE: In Jerusalem the people had lost all hope. They felt God had abandoned them and they were left to the mercy of the Roman government and their own wits. Yet, when Christ came riding through the city, they saw hope restored and a new enthusiasm in their lives.

Even today, there are many who have given up.

But just when we thought all hope was lost, in rides Jesus!

Ride on King Jesus, because you bring us hope when all others have failed.

Ride on King Jesus, because you lift our spirits when we are down and out!

Ride on King Jesus, because when life brings us nothing but bitter tears, you remind us that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

Ride on King Jesus, let no man hinder thee.

Lord help us

Finally, we must consider that the people cried out Hosanna to Jesus as he rode in because he was riding to bring them help from God.

They lifted their hands and cried out, "Hosanna, Lord Help us!"

We too are looking forward to the coming of the King and we are say, Lord help us!

We too, lift our hands into the air and say, "Hosanna, "Lord, help us."

When the King comes, we shall be satisfied, for I heard David declare, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!

When the King comes, we shall lift up our heads, for I heard the psalmist declare, "Lift up your heads oh ye gates and the king of glory shall come in. Who is the king of glory? Lord strong and mighty!"

When the King comes, he shall bring light to our darkness; for I heard David declare, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid.

When the King comes, we'll bow in His presence, for the word declares that at the name of Jesus, "Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord of Lords!"

They tried to stop the king from coming and interrupt His journey to Calvary, but no man could hinder Him.

He prayed in the garden and they came to Him with swords in hand; that arresting Him in the garden could not stop Him, Ride on King Jesus!

They tried Him before witness who lied on Him, but that did not stop Him; Ride on King Jesus!

They brought before Herod and ridiculed Him, but that did not hinder His journey, Ride on King Jesus!

He tried before Pilate but the crowd cried crucify, Ride on King Jesus!

They whipped and beat Him, but would not turn around! Ride on King Jesus!

They put a purple robe on His shoulder and crown of thorns on His head, but even

that did not interrupt Him, Ride on King Jesus.
He carried an old rugged cross up Golgotha's Hill.
They drove nails into in His hands!
They stuck a spear in His side!
And he died! Yes He died!
They buried Him in a borrow tomb, but early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!
Ride on King Jesus!
Ride on down to our poor city!
Ride on down to my little old house!
Ride on down to my little lost soul!
Ride on King Jesus, No man can-a-hinder thee!

No. 9375-Easter

Living a resurrected life in a crucified world

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? Luke 24:5

Introduction

Have you found it a challenge to live your new life in Christ while surrounded by so many who live your old life? One of the great challenges of Christians, especially new Christians, is to live the new Christ inspired life in the midst of friends and acquaintances who are still in bondage to their old way of life.

There is a marked contrast to the Christian life and that of the world. The Christian life is a life that has risen from the ashes, like a phoenix, triumphant over difficulties and adversities. It is a life that is buoyed by faith, encouraged by hope and motivated by a desire to please God.

The old life they left behind is one that is filled with fear. It is marked by symbols rather than substance; quests for external happiness rather than joy and material possession rather than spiritual treasures.

These two types of lives are best typified by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He rose to offer a new resurrected life to all believers; while those who reject him continue to live in the pessimism and hopelessness of a life without Christ.

Believers remember the crucifixion of Christ with all of its harsh realities, horrors, and condemnations; just as they remember when they were in the world, miserable, estranged and unhappy. While we remember the crucifixion, we do not celebrate the crucifixion, we celebrate the resurrection because it marks the new life we are trying to live in Christ.

We celebrate our new resurrected lives, but the majority of our neighbors and friends still live in a crucified world; they don't know the joy of Christ and neither do they have the same reason to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.

As Christians, our challenge is to live for Christ boldly and joyfully every day of our lives, even though we are surrounded by those who are still in spiritual bondage, living in a crucified world.

Exposition

This text considers the events that took place immediately after the crucifixion of Christ. Three days and three nights earlier Christ had been crucified and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph, a friend of the cause. The women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the Mother of James (Luke 24:10), prepared spices to anoint his body and waited until both the Sabbath involving the Feast of the Passover and the Weekly Sabbath had past then came to the tomb to complete their task "very early" in the morning on the first day of the week. They found that the stone had been rolled away and that the body of Jesus was missing.

The women were perplexed. They fully expected to find a body in the tomb because they came prepared to anoint it. When they found no body, the women were disturbed. John's record of this same event (John 20:13) shows Mary Magdalene telling the angel that the body of Jesus had been removed and they did not know where it had been taken. It never dawned on her that Jesus had risen from the dead. She wept because she could not find the body. Mary wept and the others were afraid. In their fear, two angels appeared, and told them not to be afraid. Then they were asked the probing question: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The tomb was the place of the dead. The angel's question and explanation prompted them to remember the words of Jesus. Had they believed them when he spoke them they would not have come expecting to find a body, but an empty tomb. However, they came to the place of the dead, looking for the dead.

The angel told them, "He is not here, but is risen." The angel explained how Jesus predicted his resurrection and how its fulfillment resulted in the empty tomb. When the women remembered his words, they returned to the disciples excited an inspired as they told what they had seen. They had come to the place of the dead seeking a dead leader and they left knowing that they were serving a living God.

The Differences in views

There is a difference between those who live the resurrected life and those whose lives reflect the pessimism of the crucified world.

THE CRUCIFIED WORLD IS FILLED WITH FEAR: Just as the women who came to the tomb were afraid, there are many today whose lives are filled with fear. It is a mark of those whose courage as been crucified, slaughtered, destroyed and vilified. Fears have a tendency to creep up in our lives as the world seems to close in on us on every side. Fears begin to mount up and anxieties begin to build as we worry about first one thing then another. But the story of the resurrection morning should serve to remind us that the God we serve is still alive and there is no reason to fear. Yet, even though fear is all around us, those who live the resurrected life keep hearing the angels voice, "fear not." That means if disappointment comes your way; fear not, God is able.

It means that when turbulent winds seem to toss your life, fear not, God is still in

control. When the forces of evil knock constantly at your door, fear not, God is still on the throne!

THE CRUCIFIED WORLD IS PESSIMISTIC: Those who came to the tomb on Easter morning were pessimistic; they did not expect to find the tomb empty though Christ had promised his resurrection. They came expecting the worst. In a similar sense there are many who people approach life the same way. They apply for a job, without expecting to be hired. They begin a venture, preparing for failure. They begin a marriage expecting a divorce. They start a new job, expecting to be fired and laid off. Yet those who are among the resurrected are hopeful. Instead of tears they shout with joy. Even in tough times, they shout. It's easy to shout when we are being blessed. It's harder to shout in our troubles and tribulations; but the resurrected can do that. The resurrected are always optimistic because they know that tribulations lead to patience and patience leads us to experience and our experience leads to hope and renewed joy in Christ. What the experience of the faith teaches us is that even in the midst of our problems, God is still good. If there is nothing in your refrigerator but ice cubes, the optimist says, God is still good; they get excited about the fact that they still have a working refrigerator and utilities and they start shouting over the ice cubes. If you lose your job and are forced to walk the street looking for a job, the optimist shouts over the fact that you still have two feet! Those who live in the resurrected world are truly optimistic because they know that "all things work to the good of them that love the Lord."

THE CRUCIFIED WORLD IS FILLED WITH LOSERS: The crucifixion is associated with condemnation and death. From the Roman point of view those crucified were the losers. In a greater sense even today, the world accepts a certain amount of defeat. We are defeated whenever we give up; lose our initiative and will to succeed. The world today is filled with those who are presently wallowing in pity parties, feeling sorry for themselves and wandering aimlessly from gloom to despair. This view is the exact contraposition of those who live resurrected lives. Instead of wallowing in self pity the saints get back up and try again. Their theme seems to be "We fall down, but we get up." That's the whole idea of the resurrected life, though threatened by the failures of the world, those who are resurrected refuse to stay down, but they continue to rise again. We do not accept defeat as an ultimate end, unless God himself declares it; even then we know He will take what seems to be for our bad and turn it around for our good. If the crucified world knocks us down, we stand up. If it pushes us down, we snap back; if it moves us backward then we snap forward. The resurrected refuse to accept the devil's handiwork as our destiny, not as long as God sits high and looks low and holds the earth in the palm of his hand.

A Resurrected Life

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we rejoice and celebrate the resurrection because through it God reaffirms his promise never to leave us alone.

The angels on Easter Sunday morning asked the question, "Why seek ye the

living among the dead?" Today, that same question reverberates into our social order. There are too many who are looking for believers among the spiritually dead of this world.

If you want to find people who are happy with themselves, striving to get closer to God, why are you looking among those who are committing suicide? Why seek ye the living among the dead?

The resurrected life is not shackled by the doom and gloom of the crucified life. It is free and filled with praise for the Almighty God.

It was nothing but a living God that

—Encouraged Daniel though thrown into the Lion's den.

—Protected the three Hebrew Boys while in the fiery furnace.

—Kept a widow's woman's barrel from running dry.

The crucified world focuses on:

DEFEAT but the resurrected life celebrates VICTORY! That's why Revelation 21:8 says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

FALLING DOWN but the resurrected life celebrates being LIFTED UP. John 12:32 says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

DARKNESS but the resurrected life celebrates LIGHT Psalm 27:1 says, " The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

The resurrected testify to the power of the cross and blood of Jesus.

The resurrected testify to the power of the living God.

Only a living God can:

—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops.

—Take midnight's and turn them into noon days.

—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers.

—Defeats and turn them into victories.

—Take our losses and turn make them work for our gain.

Even though we live in a crucified world, Sunday morning reminds us that we are serving a living God!

Because there was a resurrection morning we have the assurance that the God we serve is not just another relic of religious history, but a living presence with us every day.

It is no wonder then that the songwriter would say, "Because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know, he holds the future and life is worth the living because he lives."

Today, we celebrate the victory of life over death and joy over sadness.

Today, we celebrate because we know the God we serve is alive and well!

I serve a risen savior; he's in the world today. I know that he is living no matter what men may say. I see his hand of mercy. I hear his voice of cheer. And just the time I need him, he's always near. He lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today. sk me how I know he lives, he lives within my heart!

No. 9376-Easter

When Sunday Comes

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 2009

SCRIPTURE: In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Matthew 28:1;6

Introduction

If you were to describe your life as a day of the week, which day would you choose? There are some who are Monday people. These are the ones who can't wait to begin a new work week, filled with new challenges and goals. On Monday, they arrive early and come full of energy ready to tackle the week ahead.

There are some who are Tuesday people. It takes them a little longer to get started, organized and really moving. By Tuesday they have a better hold of their time and are running at full speed.

Wednesday people are like those who have paced themselves to reach a milestone, a rest stop. They call Wednesday their hump day, the middle of the week with just a few more days to go.

Thursday people are survivors. They manage to get through most of the week without incident and try to do what they can to finish out the week.

Friday people wake up excited saying, "Thank goodness it's Friday." For many, Friday marks the end of the week, when they can finally start to live their own lives instead of daily existences dictated by someone else.

Saturday is a day of recreation. Some take the day for shopping, entertaining and family fellowship. Others see Saturday as the party day. They embodied the spirit of what the Ojay's called, "Living for the weekend."

Then there are the Sunday people, these are people who relish a day of faith, worship and family. It is the first day of their week, not the last; and for many, it is the most fulfilling and satisfying day of the week.

There is a marked difference between Sunday people and all of the rest. They seem to handle all of the other days differently because there is something different about them. Generally, Sunday people are God's people. What they do on Sunday bubbles over to all of the other days of the week and each day becomes a great day. They resolve in the words of Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

As Christians, we are excited about the prospect of living our Sunday life, every day of the week. When Sunday comes we celebrate the resurrected Christ and the renewal of his blessings and promises for our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the women who came to visit the tomb of Jesus on Sunday morning, the first day of the week.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are two important events in the lives of every Christian. The entire faith is built upon these foundation truths.

The crucifixion of Christ was the sacrifice that allowed each believer to have the forgiveness of sins and the hope of new life. The resurrection marked Christ's triumph over the grave and the hope of all believers in the promises of God.

Many evangelical denominations celebrate the resurrection of Christ every Sunday. All place special emphasis on the resurrection on Easter Sunday morning.

The text marks the only place in scripture where the day of the week of the resurrection is clearly spelled out. Luke makes sure that all readers know that it was Sunday: "Upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning." Jesus arose before dawn, before the sun arose on Sunday morning.

It is significant for Christians to note Sunday, because on Sunday morning Jesus arose from the grave. He had been in the grave for three days just as He had said. His resurrection from the dead was a triumph, a conquest over death. He was in the grave on the Sabbath, unable to observe the laws governing the great season of the Passover and the Sabbath. He was dead; therefore, the law and its observances had no authority over Him. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, God identifies the man with Christ, in particular with the death of Christ. God counts the man as having died with Christ. Very simply, in Christ's death believers become dead to the law. When Jesus arose from the dead we identify with that, too. We are alive with Him.

These truths were significant to the early Christian believers, so significant that they broke away from the common day for worship which was the Sabbath or Saturday. They began to worship on Sunday, the day of the resurrection of their Lord.

Christians today meet on the first day of the week to celebrate. The celebration of the new resurrected lives of Christians prompt them to live holy and sanctified lives every day of the week, including the Sabbath, which is Saturday. Christians meet, however, on Sunday to celebrate the glories of the resurrection.

What We Expect on Sunday

There are at least three things that those who are Sunday people expect when Sunday comes:

THEY CAME LOOKING FOR THE LORD: The women came to the tomb, looking for Jesus. They fully expected to find his body that's why they brought oils and fragrances. That's the way it is with believers as Sunday gets close; they want to see

Jesus and be in his presence. We have discovered that our lives require a constant connection with the faith. Unlike weekday people who can disconnect themselves from God's presence and feel no loss; those who know the Lord, get a sense of connection.

When Sunday comes, they wake up singing, "I woke up this morning with my mind, staid on Jesus!" These are the saints who walk in the door of the sanctuary ready to clap their hands, stomp their feet and otherwise praise the Lord. They come looking for Jesus. They want to find Jesus because they have discovered that when Jesus shows up he also shows out.

THEY CAME IN FAITH: The women came to the tomb with the full knowledge that there was a huge stone standing in front of the tomb; yet they came despite the obstacles. Those who are believers are not dissuaded by the obstacles; they act on faith. There are many in the world today who never achieve their goals because they encounter an obstacle or a frustration along the way. The women came to the tomb on Easter morning confident that somehow they would be able to embalm the body of Jesus. In the same way Sunday people face the frustrations of life, confident that the Lord will make a way somehow. That's why they love the Sunday celebration because it reminds them that no matter how difficult their trail in life, God will make a way. Just as the stone was rolled away for the women on Easter Sunday morning, believers today know that God is still rolling stones away.

When Sunday comes, faith is renewed. Just about the time we are about to succumb to the apparent impossibility of circumstances that surround us and we conclude that it cannot be done. That's when Sunday comes.

When Sunday comes, we remind ourselves that although it looks dark and defeat appears, imminent God is still on the throne.

When Sunday comes, we remind ourselves that no matter how frustrating the situation might seem it never reaches a point of complication beyond the miraculous power of God.

THEY RECEIVED THE GOOD NEWS: When the women came to the tomb they received the good news. They were the first to hear the gospel, "He is not here; for he is risen as he said, come see the place where the Lord lay." That's what really inspires and motivates Sunday people today.

The true saint declares, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord!"

When Sunday comes saints hear the good news one more time!

When Sunday comes every believer gets a chance to praise the Lord because he has purged us of our sins.

When Sunday comes we are reminded that he was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities……with his stripes we are healed."

When Sunday comes, we tell the world: "I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God, because of Jesus, I'm not what I was."

When Sunday comes saints hear the good news that no matter what happens from day to day as long as God is in control, everything will be alright.

Rejoicing

Finally, we need to consider that after the women received the Good News, they began rejoicing and spreading the word that He lives.

That explains the excitement that believers have when Sunday comes.

When Sunday comes we hear the word preached and we are reminded of the power of God over all the troubles that plague us.

When Sunday comes the word helps us:

—stay CALM in midst of crises.

—have PEACE in the midst of problems.

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow.

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—PRESS ON in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

When Sunday comes, we think of the resurrection! We are reminded that God raised his Son from the dead as He promised! We get excited because what God has promised us, He will do as well!

I'm reminded of the man whose wife took him to the doctor and explained that he had come down with a sickness that she could not explain. She said, "Doctor his knees bend frequently, and his hand keeps extending. His head keeps bowing and he seems to have developed a bleeding heart, and this thing gets worse, the closer it gets to Sunday."

The doctor asked the man what was his problem and the man responded that he had recently gone to a revival and had accepted Christ and it looked like right after that his strange behavior began:

—A STRANGE CASE OF THE BENDED KNEE: Because every time he faced a difficult moment he found himself on his knees talking to the Lord.

—AN UNEXPLAINED CASE OF THE HELPING HAND: Whenever someone needed help he was quick to respond. He found himself humming, "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain."

—UNPREDICTABLE SPASMS OF THE BOWING HEAD: Whatever happened in life he bowed to the will of God, saying, "Not my will, but thy will be done."

—UNCONTROLLED INSTANCES OF THE SWOLLEN HEART: He has learned to love people that he could not stand before; and he's learned to forgive and to forget.

The man said he's alright on Monday and Tuesday, but the closer it got to Sunday, he found himself anxious to make it to the house of God. The doctor said there is nothing wrong with you because when Sunday comes, you'll be alright!

There is somebody here today wants to become a Sunday person!

There is somebody here today who wants to celebrated the joy of the Lord everyday of the week!

There is somebody here who wants to tell the good news!

They want to tell somebody that He died!

They want to tell somebody that He was buried in borrowed tomb!

They want to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning, that He arose from the grave!

When Sunday comes, I'll sing my song!

When Sunday comes, I'll clap my hands!

When Sunday comes, I'll tell the world that He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

When Sunday comes, I'll declare to the world that I know He lives, because He lives within my heart!

No. 9377-Inspiration

Something Within

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 19, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27

Introduction

Have you ever been told that you resemble someone else? There are many who have the physical characteristics of someone who is well known in the community or a famous personality. Some have resemblances that are so striking that they make careers acting as doubles or impersonators. There are thousands of Elvis Pressley impersonators. There is a George Bush impersonator and a Barack Obama impersonator, too. Impersonators study the speech, mannerisms, and appearance of those they impersonate to imitate them.

Impersonation is the hallmark of identity thieves. They try to steal everything that officially identifies a person, usually to get access to their financial information. To become you in the financial world a person does not need to look like you; only to have your personal information. Since it's illegal to have more than one Social Security number, a person who has possession of your Social Security number has one of the most valuable keys to your identity. Add your name, address, mother's maiden name and your birthday and in many areas your identity is sufficiently stolen.

With your identity a person can acquire a credit card, buy a house, take out subscriptions, get access to online information, get a background check, and set up a variety of accounts on the internet and in local stores; all without you knowing anything about it.

Despite identity thieves, impersonators, and imitators, there is something unique about each person that cannot be imitated. Even identical twins who have the same facial features, height, weight, voice and eyes are different and unique. Ask anyone who has dated identical twins and they can tell you that twins may look the same, but they are not the same. Parents can tell. Friends can tell. Teachers can tell. They are biological twins but they are not the same.

There is something within each of us that makes us different. It's not visible. It's part of our makeup. It's not our hair, voice or eye coloring. It's not anything that can be seen; it cannot be duplicated, imitated or impersonated. It's the secret to what makes us what we are and who we are.

Each of us has been created by processes designed by God himself. As such He certifies that each of us, though outwardly similar is individually unique. The scientists call it Deoxyribonucleic acid (De-Oxy-ribo-nu-cle-ic acid) otherwise known as DNA. Your DNA is the blueprint to your identity and contains the instructions from the creator to make you the person you are.

Yet even a DNA identification is not a sure match. DNA can narrow down the identity choices to 1 in 1.1 million but there is always that remote possibility of error.

That means we need to look at identity from a theological perspective. While the creator gave each person a DNA that is traceable by modern science there is another DNA component that cannot be tracked by science, microscopes, and instruments. We can call it our "Deistic Natural Asset" or our spiritual DNA. It's God's special stamp, that we are hand made by the creator himself. This is so amazing that Psalm 139:14 says, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

As Christians, we know we are the wonderful creations of God himself. We praise him for making each of us unique and imbedding a piece of himself within us. We can't quite tell what it is, all that we know is that there is something within.

Exposition

This text shows how God made man in his image and likeness.

Genesis gives a description of God's creation of the world by singular spoken phrases such as, "Let there be light," and "Let there be a firmament," and "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth."

However, in Genesis 1:26 when God decided to make man it switched from a singular act into a word of consultation, "Let us make man." The creation of man was a collaborative effort between the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, indicated by the phrase, "let us."

Let us make man so he can have dominion over the rest of creation.

Let us make man and ally him with the elements, from the dust, but full of life; of the animals but far superior, but just lower than the angels.

Let us make man in our image. In the image of the fatherly God. In the image of the obedient son. In the image of the empowering, forceful and inspirational Holy Ghost.

The Hebrew word for image in this text means "fashion" or "resemblance." Likewise, the word "likeness" means "similitude, or manner." It does not mean that we look like God or that we are Jr. gods. It means that there are unique qualities within us that are similar in nature to that of the creator. We are similar to God in many ways, but we are by no means God.

Each creation has built within them the capacity to do good, forgive wrongs, accomplish, to act and react as God would in the same circumstance. It's stamped in our spiritual make up, unseen and undiscovered by modern science.

What's In Us

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We are wonderful handmade products of God. As such, there is much more to us than meets the eye. We are more than our biological makeup.

We are more than just a mass conglomeration of bone and tissue.

Each of us has 206 bones (That includes 28 skull bones, 26 vertebrae, 24 ribs and 120 arm and leg bones), but we are more than just bones.

We each have 600 muscles and 970 miles of blood vessels.

We have 400 cups on our tongues for taste, 20,000 hairs in our ears to tune into sound, 40 pounds of jaw pressure, 10 million nerves and branches in our bodies; but we are more than that.

There are 600 million air cells that breathe in our lungs and each heart beats 4,200 times an hour and pumps 12 tons of blood every day; but we are more than that.

There is something within us that cannot be measured as tissue, bone or fluids.

We have the attributes of God himself within us; often lying dormant, unused untapped, waiting to be released.

WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DO GOOD: Within every believer is the capacity to do good. The worst crook, the most notorious gangster, even murderers have the capacity to do good. It's within them. There is no person that is completely bad through and through, even though it may appear that way. When we see people who are doing evil, we are looking at people who have allowed an evil presence into their lives, burying the good in them. Those who are successful counselors, mentors and teachers are the ones who can not only see the bad that has worked its way in but they can also see the good trying to work its way out. Goodness is an attribute of God. He is always good. We are made in his image. We are not always good, but we have goodness at our core.

WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CHANGE: While God is unchanging in his nature and attributes, he often changes his direction, methods and tactics when dealing with mortal men. God sent Jonah to destroy Ninevah but when the people changed, Jonah 3:10 says, God "repented" and decided not to destroy them. God changes directions and gave us the capacity to do the same. No matter how notorious our past, we can change; its in us to do so. No matter how we have failed in the past, we can start again. We have the capacity to be better; to repent and change course. We have the capacity to turn from a life, relationship, or experience that strangles us and go a different direction. It's a part of our nature. We can change.

WE CAN SUCCEED: God is a God of excellence. He does not half do anything. Anything he does, he does with precision and perfection. He is so good that Psalms 8:9 says, "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" He is a God of excellence. He has put within us the capacity for excellence. We don't know why but we aspire to excellence. We want to bake the perfect cake, sing the perfect song, play the perfect game, we want to barbeque the perfect ribs, and cook the perfect pot of mustard greens. We have within us the capacity for excellence. There is a straight A report card in every bright student. There is a successful business in every entrepreneur. There is a perfect union in every relationship, because the capacity for

excellence is built in our spiritual DNA.

We are guided from within

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that every Saint is guided by something within.

Many new cars on the market come complete with a global positioning system, called GPS, that can give a driver specific direction. Yet, God gives believers something better, we can call it a Godly Positioning System.

Old folks called it "something." They said "Something told them not to do this or something told them to do that." If you love the lord, you have that something.

It's the same something that tells the ducks when its time to fly South for the winter.

It's the same something that tells the flower that it's time to bloom.

It's the same something that can guide a lost dog or cat back to your front door!

It's the same something that warns a mother in the middle of the night that a child is in danger.

If you have that something you able to see what others can't see.

If you have that something, you can hear what others can't hear.

The Reverend James Cleveland wrote a song that said:

"I've got a feeling and I feel so strange; everything about seems to have changed.

Step by step, I got a brand new walk;

Something's got a hold on me!

An old blind lady was trapped in a burning apartment building and firefighters couldn't find her. They shouted directions to her from below but she could not hear them. Miraculously she made it to a window and dived out and landed on the inflated shoot below. When asked how she was able to make it through the fire and dive directly in the right spot the woman said, "I don't have I eyes so I could not see. I could not hear for the roaring of the flames. But in church on Sunday I sang, "Guide me oh I thy great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. And in that fire something within me told me to turn to the left. Something within me told to jump and trust in the Lord."

I don't know about you but every now and then there is something within me that makes me cry when I don't want to cry!

Something within me that makes shout when I don't want to shout!

The old folks called it something, but we all know what they were talking about. It wasn't nothing but the Lord!

You might call it something but it's Jesus!

Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

and Early Sunday morning…

No. 9378-Mother's Day

The Joy of the Obama Mama

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 10, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. Proverbs 23:22-25

Introduction

How much of what you are and what you have become is attributable to your mother? No matter where we go, what we do, or what we become, a large part of the credit or the blame goes to our mothers. They leave an indelible imprint upon us when they are present and even a genetic trail if they have been absent. We cannot escape the impact that our mothers have on our own development.

The world has been fixed on the life of President Barack Obama. However, there has been little attention focused on his mother; except to note that she was white, raised him alone and died in 1995 of cancer. Yet, the man who stands before the world is the product of her life, just as the sons and daughters of every mother reflect the degree of the nurture, care and concern she showered upon them.

Obama's mother, Ann Sutoro, spent a great deal of her life helping people. According to Eric Stone, she was in charge of a microfinance program in Indonesia that made small loans to poor people to help lift them out of poverty. She was not poor but lived among the poor and worked desperately to help them. She helped villagers get refrigerators for their huts, stock medicine to help cure blindness and administered small donations that helped them plant and harvest food for their families.

She returned repeatedly to help villagers in Indonesia. She was as smart as a whip, believed in helping people and was never intimidated by the odds. She had a sense of humor, was extremely decent, and dedicated her life to making the world better. The only part of the world she touched directly with her compassion were the poor villages of Indonesia.

Her arms were too short to reach around the world, so she touched the world she saw.

One day her little boy who studied for five years in the schools of Indonesia, listened to her frustrations, saw her efforts and felt her desire to change the world. He emulated her sense of humor, feel for people and desire to change the conditions

for the poor.

He grew up to be the most powerful man in the world, whose reach, unlike the short arm span of his mother, could touch every village in the world.

Through him Obama's mama touched the world.

Just as President Obama's humble beginnings at the feet of his mother influenced his life, so does the life and teaching of every mother promise the same today.

Every woman who strives to be a good mother looks at her child and hopes his arms can touch the things that are out of her reach. She hopes he stands taller than she did in the crowd and speaks to life with a voice that that can be heard louder than her own. Every mother can feel the joy of seeing the signs in her children that with the proper training, opportunity and favor from God could help them reach higher plateaus in life than they even dreamed.

Like Obama's mama, there are some who see the potential in their children even though they know they may not live to see the final result. They will rest in peace knowing that standing on their shoulders that they can see above the frustrated masses of civilization and see the bright sky of hope for tomorrow.

That's the unique character trait of every Obama Mama: they never give up hope. They believe and trust and move forward to do their part to lift, preserve and advance the causes into which they plunge themselves. Behind every child that sleeps soundly in the cradle there should be a mama who could be nurturing another Obama. Those who neglect them, forsake them and reject the little bundles in the cradles could easily be thrusting upon the world an Osama instead of an Obama and that would be a tragedy.

So we praise women of God who, like Hannah, place their children in God's hand and pray that God will use them to his glory.

As Christians, we salute our mothers who have passed on to us a spirit of faith, hope and love that is sustained by a powerful trust in the Lord. We salute the women of faith who have nurtured us and loved us because whatever we shall become, or have achieved is a testament to her life, love and legacy.

Exposition

This text notes that children who seek the truth and follow it honor their parents and give their mothers reason to rejoice.

In Proverbs, being wise does not mean the simple accumulation of knowledge and experience. Godliness is equated with being righteous and godly and therefore the source of wisdom. Fathers and mothers are encouraged to teach the virtues of godliness to their children with the promise that those who follow after their parent's instructions about wise living will be reason for fathers to be proud and mothers to rejoice in their old age.

The text implies that wise, godly living, in obedience to parental discipline, not only benefits the child; it also benefits the parents.

Thus, a mother who teaches her children the attributes of godliness through

precept and example pleases God. Her reward will be the knowledge that long after she is gone her children will enjoy the favor of the Lord. That knowledge brings her joy beyond measure.

Truths about Mama

Good mothers anywhere in the world seem to share four unique truth traits. It doesn't matter whether she is located in the chill and cold of Alaska, the sweltering heat of a village in Africa or a cotton field in Mississippi, good mothers have a few things in common. Proverbs 31:25-26 touches on all four: "Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." These truths are taught by every good mother in the world and absorbed by her children.

MAMA IS STRONG: Good mothers teach their children to be strong. Strength, in this sense, is not a physical measure. It is a measure of will and fortitude. It is the capacity to continue when it appears impossible or improbable that success will result. This is the spirit of Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Strong mothers persevere and inspire strength in their children who have witnessed her strength in difficult times. It is a strength drawn from the wells of God's power.

MAMA IS WISE: Good mothers teach their children to act wisely and do so themselves. When they know what to do they act. When they don't know what to do they ask so that they can make prudent decisions that are in the best interest of the family. Wisdom is not a measure of her intellect or her scholarship, but her ability to weigh available options and act responsibly. Acting wisely is a truth that touches many areas of life: If in love, act wise. In money matters, act wisely. In business affairs, act wisely. In life pursuits, act wisely. Much of mother's wisdom comes from learning from her own mistakes over the years, some she learned from her mother, and some is part of what the old timers call "mother wit" something that God gives every godly woman.

MAMA IS HONORABLE: "Stand for something or you will fall for anything." That's a truth taught by millions of mama's all over the world as they encourage their children to live their lives in ways that demonstrate integrity, dignity and respect. The godly mother is one who has a sense of honor and impeccable integrity. It is her quest to do the right thing and to carry and present herself in an honorable fashion. Many children have heard their mothers say, "Take pride in the way you look; you may be poor but you don't have to be dirty." She promotes the dignity of giving an honest day's labor for an honest day's pay; and refusing charity unless it was unavoidable.

MAMA IS KIND: "Do unto others as you would have the do unto you." That's the golden rule a godly truth that good mothers follow. It is a call to compassion. Godly mothers are compassionate toward others and they demonstrate their kindness to their children through their acts and deeds. Many children have fond memories of their mothers visiting hospitals, preparing food for shut-ins, or giving to help the less

fortunate. Good mothers literally define the word kindness: "She is considerate of the feelings of others." Somehow mothers can feel the pain of others, both inside and outside of her family. She can sympathize and empathize with the losses and frustrations of others and is always ready to listen, help and support. This sense of kindness heightens her appeal to her children and her neighbors.

She rejoices

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember a final truth that is taught by every godly mother, that our lives are controlled by an unseen hand.

The most powerful truth that good mothers teach their children is to place their lives in the hand of the Lord and hold to God's unchanging hand.

In his hands, mama endured difficult times but refused to steal, accept illegal items or survive on ill gotten gains.

In his hands, they made it known that they would rather endure difficult times than be known as less than godly women.

Not only have mothers placed their own lives in God's hands, there are many who have also placed the lives of their children in God's hands. When Jocebed realized that her son could bedrowned she made him a straw basket and placed the baby Moses in it. When she let that basket float on the water, she was placing little Moses in God's hands. When Hannah carried young Samuel to the priests to be trained as a priest, she placed him in God's hands. Even while many mothers carried us in their wombs they were whispering silent prayers to God, placing us in his hands. Sometimes mothers have been overheard praying, "Lord, please take care of my child."

Somebody here today has been raised from a mortifying deadly life, because a momma somewhere took your case to the Lord in prayer.

Somebody here has been literally pulled from the gaping jaws of riotous living; because of a mama put it all in the hands of the Lord.

Somebody here has been snatched back from the chilly grips of alcoholism, drug abuse, and criminal activity, because a mama, unseen by human eyes, placed a petition before the Lord.

Some mama somewhere fell down on her knees and cried, "Lord you didn't give me much, but I've tried to do the best I could. I didn't have a lot of money, but I gave you my all, if it be your will, Lord, save my son!"

The bible says a good mother rejoices when she sees a son or daughter stand up after having fallen down!

A good mother rejoices when she sees her children reaching higher, showing compassion and embracing life to its fullest.

A good mother is happy when she sees her children placing their hands in Gods hand.

She's happy because it's the same hand she held as she reared them.

It's the same hand she held as she tried to put clothes on their back!

It’s the same hand she held as she tried to put food on their table!
It’s the same hand she held as she tried to make their lives happy!
It’s the same hand she held as she tried to hold on!
It’s the same hand that sustained her and gave her strength in troubling times. It was nothing but the hand of Jesus.
So the godly mother keeps teaching the greatest truth, Keep your hand in the Lord’s hand and he will direct your path.
Never forget the name of Jesus!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose Early Sunday Morning
Hold my hand Lord, Hold my hand!

No. 9379-Faith

Hope is Enough

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 3, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." Psalm 130:7

Introduction

What do you really need to make it through tough times? There are many experts who are offering loads of advice about how to survive the difficult times we are facing today. Financial experts are giving tips about investments and management. Health experts are giving check lists for citizens to follow to protect themselves from the Swine Flu. Security experts are warning that crime might increase so gun sales are increasing and everything that offers protection is in demand. Employment experts are showing the thousands of laid off workers how to retrain themselves for the workplace after layoffs. Everyone seems to know what we need to survive and prosper in times like these. Yet, the bible's answer is very simple: we should take all of the precautions that we can but never lose hope, because all we really need is God's grace; that will be enough.

Sometimes we don't hope in the Lord, we take matters into our own hands. That's what happened when the local cleaners found itself short on business. To boost business he started a new promotion. Every person who came to his business with a child during the hot days of summer would get free ice cream cones with three scoops. The owner's friends were skeptical that such a promotion would help the laundry business. They were critical of his high hopes, to which the businessman replied, "High hopes has nothing to do with it because it's a proven fact that little children will waste chocolate ice cream over everyone's clothes, all I need is for the sun to keep shining and free ice cream and that's enough."

All of our precautions are wise and advisable but in reality all we ever need in any situation is God's Grace. Israel was being attacked by a huge army of enemies and it tried to amass an army big enough to meet the coming attack. Gideon first assembled thousands of warriors, and then finally reduced them to 300. He soon found that his 300 soldiers were too many because God took action and in the middle of the night the entire army of the enemy had run away. He had 300 men but needed none of them. He had the power of the Lord on his side, and that was enough.

Hope is often defined as believing in a positive outcome related to situations in

one's life. Hope is the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best In Greek mythology Pandora had had a special box that contained all of the dangers and calamities that a humans could face. Once opened, Pandora would release all of the misfortunes upon a person but hold back hope. Just as humanity struggled dealing with every malady that had come from her box, Pandora then let out hope and the society survived.

Our hope as believers is often reflected in our songs. In 1956 Gospel Singer Dorothy Love Coates released a song that was immediately popular. Its simple words echoed a great faith that our Lord was sufficient to help us through any storm. Her song said

"Well all the mean things you said don't make me feel bad
I can't miss a friend, Lord that I never had
I've got Jesus, Jesus and that's enough.
You may scorn me and turn your back on me
I've got God's arms wrapped all around me
I've got Jesus, Lord and that's enough"

In 1968 Roberta Martin recorded a song that is still popular among African-Americans around the world. It' lyrics say, "I have hope, when trouble comes my way
I have hope, since Jesus has come to stay
I have hope, oh yeah, when things are not well with me
I have hope, it's a beautiful hope that sets me free"

Hope is one of the 12 qualities of the Christian described in Galatians 5:22 as the fruit of the spirit. It is based upon our faith that no matter how difficult our times, God is able to deliver us.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus knows all about our troubles and that when the time is right, he will respond to our need. That is our hope. It's a beautiful hope that sets us free.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he considers the distress that surrounds him and places his hope in the Lord.

David has been characterized as a man after God's own heart but one whose life mirrors that of the average man; filled with flaws. In this text he is deeply distressed and laments the troubles of the nation. He offers hope to Israel by pointing to his own personal iniquities and troubles and testifying as to how God delivered him from them.

In Psalm 130:1 he says, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee" noting his personal troubled history and adding how he placed his hope in the Lord.

Additionally, he shares his experience that he waited or hoped or trusted in the Lord, even as those around him trusted in their own devices. So, at Psalm 130:5-6 we read, "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. "

His conclusion is that when we are surrounded with trouble, we should place our hope in the Lord. That's the meaning of Psalm 130:7 "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. " Hoping and trusting in the Lord has two results, mercy and plenteous redemption.

It is better to place our hope in the Lord rather than the devices of men.

How to Hope

When times are tough the Word of God teaches us not to misplace our hope and trust but to place it solely on God. There are three considerations in this respect:

HOPE IN THE LORD: Believers are given direction about where to place our hopes. Psalm 130:7 says, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." It means that we place the focus of our belief and faith in the hands of God. It does not mean that you do not till the soil and plant the seeds; it means that your hope is not in the soil or the seeds but that God would provide the increase one way or another. That's the secret to overcoming difficult times and achieving perfect peace when all around you are in a panic. Those who hope in the Lord focus on the fact that God is the deliverer and provider. Focusing on God is not naivety; it is not irrational, it simply recognizes that there is a power beyond anything in this world. So rather than fear what you will do if your job plays out, focus on the fact that even if it does play out God can make a way, has made a way, and will make a way.

Rather than fear what may happen if you get a bad diagnosis from your doctor, focus on the fact that even if the news is bad, that God is able!

In every situation, no matter how bad it is God keeps saying, "Keep your eyes on me." That's why David declared, in Psalm 121:1-2 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

WITH HIM COMES MERCY: When times are difficult each of us pleads for mercy. "Lord, Have Mercy!" is a common saying among believers. "Have mercy" alone is insufficient because we are reminded that "With him" we have mercy. Mercy is relief from our troubles even though we might have brought them on ourselves. Mercy is the granting of favor that we do not deserve. Mercy is receiving another blessing in a time of need although we have squandered all other blessings we have received. Lamentations 3:22-23 is a passage that addresses this subject. The profit Jeremiah lamented over the condition of Israel but at the same time recognized that every day God was actually giving them a new blessing and a new act of mercy. It reads, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." This is the idea of the song writer who wrote, "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

WITH HIM COMES PLENTIOUS REDEMPTION: When we hope in God he promises of restoration and redemption. Psalm 130:7 uses an adjective "Plentious"

to describe the nature of our restoration. Young's translation uses the word "abundant." The living bible describes "Plentious" as armloads. It has in its range of meanings great growth in grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality, and perfect preparedness for heave. It all means that by placing our hope in God we will be restore in a whole lot of ways both spiritual and physical. Underscores the reason believers have hope in difficult times.

He has promised us plenteous redemption. That means those who have hope can:

—stay CALM in midst of crises!

—have PEACE in the midst of problems!

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

Because of this beautiful hope believers are able to sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

Keep hoping in the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, believers should resolve that no matter how tough conditions become we will continue to trust in the Lord.

We will trust in the Lord because God is our refuge; our strong place to hide in storms.

In times past, God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm.

He is the same God we have served in the past and his power has not diminished.

Come what may, it's a good idea to keep trusting in the Lord.

We trust in the Lord because history has shown us that those who trust in the Lord face the unknown without fear.

We trust in the Lord because saints who have trusted him have been rewarded with answered prayers, a few earthly pleasures and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves:

—Noah trusted the Lord and he brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and he showed him the Lamb in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and he protected him in the Lion's Den

—Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord. I hear him across

the centuries declaring, “Yea though he slay me, yet
will I trust him.”

We will continue to place our hope in the Lord because when we are:

—Sad, the Lord will be our fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be our stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be our pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be our pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be our crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be our light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be our friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be our help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

I heard the song writer declare, “ I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

I trust in God, I know he cares for me. Upon the land or on the raging sea, Though billows roll, he keeps my soul! My heavenly father watches over me!

I’m reminded of a family in the hill country that often walked a path over the hills and through the valley to visit relatives. One night the father walked with his wife and children along that beaten path, but a sudden fog appeared. No one could see anything because of the thick fog but the father kept moving at the same pace. The son called out to his mother, “Mother shouldn’t we slow down. We can’t see where we’re going.” The mother said, “I can’t see how to put one foot in front of the other myself. But your father has walked this trail since he was a boy. When he walked backed and forth to grandma’s, he walked this trail. When he carried wood for Aunt Carrie, he walked this trail. When he came home late at night from working in the fields, he walked this trail. No, son, I can’t see anything, but your father knows the way, we’ll just hold his hand!

You may not be able to see how to put one foot in front of the other, but your father in heaven knows the way!

Hold to his hand! God’s unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross! Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand, the Lord knows the way!

No. 9380-Funeral

No More Tears

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 7, 2009

SCRIPTURE: " They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:16-17; "and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. " Revelation 21:4.

Introduction

Can you imagine a world without tears? We spend considerable time shedding tears over one thing or another; some warranted and others unwarranted. Every second there is someone crying about something somewhere. Sometimes there are tears of joy, but most often our tears represent our frustration over the presence of so much pain, suffering, grief, hurt, injustice and abuse, sickness, death, and disappointments. Tragedies, accidents, doctor's reports, family strife, poverty, tensions, failures, and spiritual struggles are also the source of many tears.

We sing about tears and crying. In the 1920's Ella Fitzgerald produced a song called "Cry me a river" that was used in a movie. In the 1960's Bobby "Blues Boy" Bland released "Cry,Cry,Cry" in which he said, "I want you to cry me a river, then cry me a sea. Somebody hurt you, just like you hurt me." Ray Charles posted a best seller when he produced, "It's Crying Time again."

Even when we read the Bible there are tears being shed. Shedding of tears seems to be a part of the realities of life. While tears are a reality, David in Psalm 56:8 asked God to take his tears and put them in a bottle and take note of every one.

One of the times when we cry most is when we watch a loved one suffer. We cry when we watch them in pain and seem to wither in front of our eyes. Then suddenly there are no more tears. If you ever bathe young children, then you quite likely think of Johnson's Baby Shampoo when you hear these words. After all, "NO MORE TEARS" has long been this product's slogan. Johnson's baby shampoo says those who use "No more Tears" will find that it is gentle and mild and does not hurt the skin or eyes in normal use. When we see the commercial it must call to mind God's promise to all believers that He will wipe the tears from our eyes and there shall be no more crying or pain or hurt.

As Christians, we are sustained by the promise of God. He promises us a day when crying days will be over. We look forward to that day with great hope.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' revelation to John about the future state of the church and the relationship of all believers to God.

John painted a picture of the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. This is the beautiful home of the saints, the final destination of the church and millions of believers. They will be in the presence of God.

A voice will announce some very important words, "Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God." It is a statement of finality. It suggests the end of a long struggle to achieve oneness!

John lists several conditions that could be described as painful: death, sorrow, and crying, all products of painful experiences.

John reminds us in this prophecy that a time is coming quickly when these painful conditions will no longer exist.

In Revelation 7 John points to the saints who will suffer during the last days. Their tears and pain will be wiped away with the final reward of Christ. The promise is that "God shall wipe away every tear from their eye."

In Revelation 21 John shows us a picture of the world after Christ returns to establish his kingdom. Here the varied promises of Christ are fulfilled including the promise that he will eliminate tears, death, pain and agony. All of these are considered part of the "former things" and they will pass away into oblivion.

Three Types of tears

Our father created us to live on this earth and thereby equipped us for life on this planet. One of the physical attributes of humans is the capacity to generate and shed emotional tears. Tears have three purposes:

TEARS KEEP OUR EYES WORKING: There are always tears in our eyes. These tears are called "Basal tears" they are the wet tears that keep our eyes from drying out. Our bodies produce 5 to 10 ounces of basal tears every day. Without them our eyes would stop working. It's sad to observe a person who has dried out. They can't see the beauty in the flowers or the worth of a single rose. When we dry out we don't see anything worthwhile in anybody. Such people can't see the forest for the trees and can't see anything beyond the present. Our quest as believers is for the spirit of God to water our eyes so that we can see His wonderful works. In Psalm 119:18 David said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things out of thy law." When that happens we see the world the way we should. We even see death with a clear eye because we know the progression of life moves from this world back

to God.

TEARS PROTECT YOUR EYES: Tears protect your eyes when they are irritated by smoke, onions, strong dusty winds and other irritants. What happens is that your brain senses there is a problem and sends a signal for your eyes to produced tears to get rid of the irritating substance. These tears are called "Reflex Tears." They help protect us from those things that trouble us. In this life there are many things that irritate us. The song writer is correct; life gets tough when "Smoke gets in your eyes." When we are faced with troubles, heartaches and sicknesses they trouble our spirit. When we see injustices we weep, just as Job did in Job 30:25-26 when he said, "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness." We see faithless people and it troubles us just as it did Jesus in John 11:35 which records and "Jesus Wept." Sometimes we cry when we see friends and loved ones suffering. We cry for the same reason that Jesus wept and for the same reason that Job mourned and then declared, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve Him;" and Jesus "nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done." When trouble comes we cry and hide ourselves in the Lord because is the Lord is our strength in times of sorrow and a very present help in our time of need.

TEARS REGISTER OUR EMOTION: The third type of tears is emotional tears. We cry when we are overwhelmed by an emotion. Sometimes we cry when we are sad; sometimes we cry because we are happy. That's the kind of feeling that David had when he wrote, "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." When we cry emotional tears, our cup runs over. Sometimes when we have experienced a loss, a hurt or a sorrow it's therapeutic to "have a good cry." Some doctors say it's good for us to cry, to release and to let go. Psalm 86:3 says, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily." Once we've had a good cry, we should do like David when he cried day and night for his sick son. When the son died, David stopped crying and put on his robes. The time for crying had passed, God had decided. Just as our tears register our sadness, they also register our gladness. After crying tears of loss at the death of a loved one, one day, in the sweet bye and bye we shall cry tears of joy when we are all united again. It will be the last time we cry about anything good or bad, because after that crying days will be over.

No More Tears

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when it's all over down here, God has prepared a place for all true believers in the land of "No More."

That's the best way to describe the heavenly placed that God has prepared for all believers. It is a perfect place that will be void of all things that trouble us in this life.

It's the place that Abraham traveled all of his life looking for; it's the city not made with hands!

One of the great features of the land of "No more" is that there will be no more

tears.

There will be no more basal tears because our spirits will never dry out but be freshly watered by the spirit of God.

There will be no more Reflex tears to protect us from trouble, because there will be no more trouble.

There will be no more emotional tears because there will be no more sadness, and pain; every day will be Sunday ; it will always be howdy and never goodbye.

There will be "No more tears in the land of No more"-but that's not all. When we get there we will all be happy throughout all eternity in the land of No More.

Methuselah walked with God and walked right into it.

Elijah caught a fiery chariot and step right into it.

It's the place called heaven, but it is better described to those who mourn as the land of "No more."

In that land there will be no more:

-WARS because there is only peace, in the land of no more!

-HATRED, because there is only love in the land of no more!

-WEAKNESS, because there is only strength in the land of no more!

-DEATH, because there is only life in the land of no more!

I know there is such a place because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

It is the place the song writer described as a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

It will have perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

It will have perfect lighting, because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

It will have perfect medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go to the land of "No More!"

A long time ago our friend prepared for the journey from the land of too much suffering to the land of no more crying.

She expressed a belief in Jesus the Son of God.

He lived in the land of too much pain.

He died on a cross of too much agony.

He was buried in a tomb of too much defeat!

But He arose early Sunday morning with all power in His hands inviting every believer to come with him to the land of "No More." If you believe He lived a perfect life and died a perfect death

Come and go with me, to my father's house!

No more dying there, in my father's house!

No more crying there, in my father's house

There is peace, peace, peace!

—

On May 1, 2009 Sister Lorene Edwards went home to be with God. We cried a lot for her here, but now she is in the land where there are "No More Tears."

No. 9381-Communion

Bread for Today

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 17, 2009

Scripture: "Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

Introduction

What if God gave us all of our blessings in advance, would we be happy? Think about it; would it be a blessing or a curse? If we received everything that God has in store for us at one time, at first would seem to be a happy time, but on second thought we would end up miserable. We would surely waste it and not have what we needed when we the time really came.

Would your life be better if you received your entire year's paycheck on the first day of the year? If you received all of your Social Security checks, tax refunds, rents due, allowances, retirement funds, dividends, capital gains, loans repaid and even the $200 for passing "go," would you be happier?

If you received five or six get out of trouble cards, a get out of jail free, card and two of three healing cards, along with a few bonus cards that contained 12 generic blessings that you could use at any time, would that make you happy?

What if after receiving your advanced blessing you also received instruction that you should live the Christian life of worship, praise and service as you normally do, but with the full knowledge that you have already received everything you are going to get? Would there be some Sunday's you would miss worship? Would there be some nights that you neglect to pray? Would your bible study slip? Would you serve as diligently?

Most of us would be seriously challenged if we received all of our blessings at once, especially if we received them in advance. What if you paid your lawn service a year in advance? Your doctor, the grocer, the utility company or other providers, would their diligence be challenged?

God knows our weaknesses and our strengths, that's probably the reason that he doesn't give us everything we ask for at the same time; many of us would mismanage it so badly that would be beggars in an instant. What child that is given his entire week's allowance on the first day would not be tempted to spend it all on the first day? How many of us have taken a vacation and rather than spend our money proportionately over the course of the vacation chose to blow huge amounts on fancy meals, entertainment, clothing items or long wanted toys? We are all too weak

to handle that much of a blessing at one time.

When Israel traveled in the wilderness God supplied them with bread and meat, one day at a time. With the exception of the Sabbath, in which allowed them to gather enough for two days, God provided what they needed one day at a time. They did not have warehouses for manna or stockpiled inventories of meat and bread ready to moved from the desert warehouse; God issued it to them as they needed them, one day at a time.

Today, God does the same for us. Knowing our weaknesses, he rations our blessings to us according to our ability to manage, one day at a time. He blesses us daily because we would use up our healing blessings on every small scratch. We'd spend our finance blessings on every new sale item. We would squander our emergency blessings on situations that we could easily handle ourselves. God sends us new blessings every day; just enough for that day. Lamentations 3:23 says, "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

We don't want tomorrow's blessing today; that would be demanding and unappreciative. We are grateful for today's blessing and thank God for every crumb.

As Christians, our quest should be to approach each day with an attitude of gratitude. In the morning we give him thanks for what is coming. In the evening we give him thanks for the bread we have received today.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' teaching his disciples when to pray and what to pray for.

The disciples often asked Christ to teach them to pray. In this context Jesus gave them a model prayer, showing them the elements that should be in a prayer.

Included in that prayer is the short phrase, "Give us this day our daily bread." In the Greek the phrase literally means "Give us our needful subsistence daily," or "Give of what we need to subsist each day."

The term "bread" in this context involves more than just food, but everything it takes to survive. When we say, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are asking God for the necessary supports and comforts we need for this present life. We ask for this support to strengthen us as we work to build his kingdom on earth.

Bread for today

The purpose of our request for any blessing from God should be to build the kingdom of God. We never ask God for blessings so that we can look good to our neighbors, win a completion for glory and fame, or bring praise and accolades on ourselves. The purpose of any request for a blessing is that it will benefit the kingdom of God. The key is in Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." So, it is in this context that we ask God for bread. This short verse contains a wealth of meaning if we look

at all of the words.

GIVE US BREAD: We ask God for bread, that which is necessary for our subsistence as we work to build his kingdom. It is a vanity to ask God for dainties for our own gratification. We ask God for what we need; he favors us with some of things we want. We ask God for a dress, not a gorgeous gown that will make them all eat their hearts out with envy. We ask God for a meal, not a gourmet ten course meal with all of the trimmings. We ask God for bread, He gives us desserts as well out of His favor. We ask God for what we need to be of assistance in building His kingdom. We do not ask for superfluities but only those things which will strengthen us in kingdom work.

OUR BREAD: We ask God for the portion of blessing that he has reserved for us; we do not ask for bread that must come out of someone else's mouth. We don't ask him to help us with scams and plots to cheat others out of their bread. We don't ask him to help us successfully burglarize the homes of our neighbors so we can steal their bread. We ask only for the blessings that have our name written on them. Because blessings are individualized, we know that our blessings are intended to sustain us as we work to build God's kingdom on earth.

THIS DAY, DAILY BREAD: We ask God for what we need for today. We consider tomorrow but we don't worry about it because we know that God provides for us on a daily basis. Abraham began a strange day in his life, following God totally. He had been told to sacrifice his son and he was moving do just that. But on the mountain God provided him with a ram in the bush. He learned that God provides each day the ram in the bush. Jesus taught his disciples not to spend large amounts of time worrying about tomorrow, but to look to consider the lilies of the field and remember how he clothes them. Consider Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. "- Don't ask for tomorrow's blessing today, deal with what you need today.

GIVE US, OUR BREAD: Our prayer to God is to be blessed, but we also pray that God would bless others as well. Note the emphasis on give "us" and "our" daily bread. We are connected to each other, we pray that God will bless us collectively. A family member prays that God will bless his family, not just one member of the family. A football player prays just before the game that God will bless the entire team, not just one player. Yet, we are blessed to be a blessing so we share our blessing with the less fortunate, the poor, and the hungry. We can't pray that God would bless us with food but not pray that God will help others to eat as well.

Daily Blessings

Finally, brothers and sisters, we rejoice that God continues to bless us one day at a time.

There are times when we doubt that we will be able to make it through, that's when we should remember that God is still in the blessing business.

In fact, whatever we need God has promised to supply. Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Today, our supply of food may be running low, it is good to know that the Lord will provide for us one day at a time.

Today, our money is low and provisions have nearly disappeared, it is good to know that no matter how low it gets, God will continue to provide, one day at a time.

Today, there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to know that God can bring peace in the midst of confusion, one day at a time.

Most importantly we should rmember that our daily bread is the daily presence of the spirit of God in our lives. Jesus reminded the Jews that the Israelites had manna in the wilderness but he is the bread from heaven that refreshes every believer.

When Jesus broke the bread and blessed the cup he reminded them that they symbolized the new covenant, that every day he would be our bread and the power of His blood would forgive our sins.

John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

As our daily bread he would be a lawyer for us in our courtroom!

As our daily bread he would be a doctor for us in our sick room!

As our daily bread he would be the enabling presence that would put food on our table!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

I'm glad that keeps blessing me one day at a time because every day I have a

—Cross that I need him to help me to bear!

—Mountain that I need him to help me to climb!

—Doubt that I need him to help me to remove!

—Burden that I need him to help me to carry!

—Battle that I need him to help me to fight!

—Trial that I need him to help me to get through!

—Test that I need him to help me to pass!

Today, I need the Lord to be Jehovah-Rapha, my healer in times of sickness.

Today, I need the Lord to be Jehovah-Shalom, my peace in times of confusion.

Today, I need the Lord to be Jehovah-Nissi, my victory in the over life's battles.

Today, I need the Lord to be Jehovah-jireh, my overseer and my provider!

Everyday we should praise the Lord!

Praise him for being such a wonderful God!

Praise him for blessing us!

Praise him for saving our souls!

Praise him for picking up an old rugged cross and dying for our sins!

Praise him for staying in the grave for three days and nights!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead as the supplier of our daily bread!

Praise the Lord!

No. 9382-Father's Day

That Baby Don't Look Like Me

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2009

SCRIPTURE: Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" John 14:9

Introduction

How much do you resemble your father? Do you have his eyes? Hair? Skin color? What about some of his character traits? It is unavoidable; every child will bear some resemblance to his/her father, if not physically then certainly through other traits.

A father will certainly bear children that resemble him. Initially, we look for the physical comparisons. First we look for skin color. If daddy is high yellow and mama is high yellow and the baby is shoe black, there will be a flurry of denials about the identity of the father of the baby. If the mother has kinky hair and the father has kinky hair; and they are both tar black but the baby is light skinned with wavy hair, it's no doubt that there will be instant denials forthcoming and tons of explanations. Newborns usually bear some resemblance to their parents, sometimes one is more dominant than the other, but there is a trace of physical resemblance of both parents.

As the child matures, the child will also begin to demonstrate some personality traits of both father and mother. If one of the parents has a high aptitude, it is likely that it may be reflected in the child. If one parent, say the father, is inclined to be athletic, there is a chance that a son or daughter might be athletically oriented as well. Generally, a man's sons or daughters reflect his physical traits and often some of his talents or flaws.

Character traits are not visible. You can't look at a baby's eyes, ears or nose and conclude that a baby will be honest, brave or gentle. Those traits show up later. However, it due time, those who know both the father and the mother will be able to quickly identify the source of the personality resemblance.

Much has been said about children who bear no resemblance to their fathers, especially when legal paternity is at issue. In fact that was the essence of a humorous song released by rapper "Lil John" a while back. The song was entitled, "That baby don't look like me." In it, Lil John said:

"That baby ain't mine

I ain't buyin no carseat
And I ain't finna take care of no freak
Not me (not me) You ain't gettin no trust up outta my check
But I will pay for that DNA test
I ain't buyin no huggies, don't dress him like me that ain't my lil buddy
Dem ain't my lips and them ain't my eyes you can
keep them big pitchas and the wallet size.

The accompanying video on YouTube was widely popular. It seemed to be what many men were saying as they tried to deny paternity and the eventual child support that would follow.

We are children of God. He is our father, do we resemble him? Can the world look at us and conclude from the way we walk, talk and respond to the world that we are children of God.

When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove and said, "This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased." Can our heavenly father say the same about us today, or will he be forced to respond, "That baby don't look like me."

As Christians, our goal is to emulate our father in heaven in every way possible. We do so because we are a reflection of Him at all times. Jesus told his disciples, when you have seen me, you have seen the father. Let it be the same with us.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains the nature of his relationship to His father in heaven.

Jesus explained that while he is not the same person as God the Father, He does have the same nature as His father. In that respect he demonstrates the nature, character, substance and perfection of God.

This is the theme that Christ repeatedly tells his disciples. "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent me" (John 12:45). He expressed the same truth again in John 14:7 "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him."

By representing God as Father Jesus indicates that he operates the same as a godly earthly father. He is: loving, just, helpful, good, responsible, directing and caring.

The concept is simple: Jesus and God are one. When you see one you see the other. When you call on one it is the same as calling on the other.

We should look like our father

With regard to our character and spirituality, we should look like our Heavenly Father. When God looks at us He should see men and women who obedient to His word and walking in his footsteps. There are three ways that we should look like our

father:

GODLY MEN REPRESENT GOD IN THEIR HOMES: Each family is a microcosm of the church. The wife and children represent the body of Christ and the husband is the high priest of the family, feebly trying to the best of his ability to represent Christ. Every man should strive to represent Christ in his family by loving his wife, caring for his children and protecting his household. 1 Peter 2:9 reminds us that each of us is a priest. We can be easily recognized because we are a Royal Priesthood. The priest of Old Testament times was a special person because he spoke to God on behalf of the people. The priest was easy to recognize. He was always close to the house of prayer and was always talking to God. We can recognize a Godly man because he is close to God and regularly talks to God on behalf of himself and his family. Jesus prayed to God regularly and talked with him constantly. Men today have that same responsibility.

A man who does not pray does not reflect the spirit of godliness that God intends.

A man who stays away from worship or study of the bible does not look like the godly man he was created to be.

If men are distant from God, but claim to be children of God, our Father in heaven could easily say, "That baby don't look like me."

GODLY MEN ARE AVAILABLE TO THEIR FAMILIES. In Matthew 28, Jesus told his disciples, "And lo, I will be with you always." It is a reminder that God never leaves us alone. Godly men are available to their wives and children; they never leave them alone. Today, there are thousands of men who are estranged from their wives or divorced but they remain close to their children and friends with the mothers of their children. They are always available, just as God is always available to us. Today, our society is mourning the absent and emotionally distant fathers. They are not necessarily doing anything bad, they are simply disconnected. However, the lack of connection is taking its toll upon the African-American family. Moreover, there are many who present in the homes but are irrelevant. They are so "out of it" that they may as well not be there. According to the Family Research Council, the average father spends just under eight minutes a day in direct conversation with his children.

Our Heavenly father is always available to us. He is definitely relevant in our lives. We should be able to sing that old hymn, "And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

If men do not have a relevant presence in the lives of their wives and children, but claim to be children of God; our Father in heaven could easily say, "That baby don't look like me."

GODLY MEN ARE HOLY MEN: Every godly man is a holy man, just like his heavenly father. In a perfect world, a wife or a child should be able to look at the spiritual life of the father in the family and see godliness and holiness. To be holy means to set apart or sanctified for the service of God. There were certain places Israel could not go because it was special! There were certain drinks it could not drink because it was special. There were certain acts it could not perform because it was a holy nation, dedicated to serving God. They were easy to recognize as Children of

God because of their actions and also because of their inaction. Today, we can recognize a holy man by what he does and also what he refuses to do. There are some places that holy men do not frequent. There are some drinks that holy men don't drink. There are some things that holy men refuse to do. Holy men are often seen praising God, serving others, edifying their families, and building a better community in clean and uplifting ways. Today, men of God have the challenge to reflect the holiness of God in the way they live their lives in the community. Drinking, gambling, using and selling drunks and running after the opposite sex (and the same sex) is not what a man of God does. If we follow the way of the world, but continue to say we are children of God, God will be prompted to look down on us and say, "That baby don't look like me."

Resembling God

Finally, brothers and sisters, We should strive to resemble God so much in our actions and deeds that the world instantly recognizes us as children of God.

Our father in heaven is a merciful God who has purchased our salvation with his own blood. I hear Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "..And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price!"

Because he bought us with his own blood, we joyfully reshape ourselves to fit his image.

We are children of the most high God because we are:

—Purchased with a great price!

—Touched by the hand of God!

—Pardoned from all guilt and sin!

How do you recognize a child of God? It's not by looking at his eyes, hair color, fingers and body shape, but by whether he has been washed in the blood of the lamb.

The old warriors still sing, "I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow."

You can recognize a child of God because he's always saying good things about Jesus.

He says Jesus is:

—A TABLE that can never be bare!

—A FOUNTAIN that can never run dry!

—A ROCK that can never be moved!

—A SHIELD that can never be broken!

—A WAY out of no way!

—WATER when you are thirsty!

—BREAD When you are hungry!

We don't have to worry about our Father saying, "That baby don't look like me" because every day of our lives, we are walking with the king.

Everyday day of our lives, we are talking with King!

We are testifying to the world through the life we live that God is real!

We are telling the world that we serve a savior who loved us so much that He came

down to this old wretched world and gave His life for the pardoning of our sins!

We'll tell everybody that one evening He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to a place called Golgotha.

We'll tell the world that He died out on Calvary, but Early…

Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave, with all power in His hands!

Every man should strive live his life where God does not disown him but says, this is my beloved child…in whom I'm well pleased!

No. 9383-Funeral

A Soror's Legacy

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 27, 2009

Scripture:"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Mark 3:35

Introduction

What does it mean to be a soror? We hear the word most often when it refers to a woman who is a member of a sorority. Those outside of the world of Greek life may not be aware that to be called a soror is a great honor because it means a person is more than just a member of an organization but that person shares a lifelong bond with others of the same persuasion.

Soror is a Latin word that means sister. Those who are referred to as sorors are among those who have shared a common experience and lived by certain codes of conduct and rules of order. Those who are sorors are part of something that is bigger than any single person but predicated upon the intrinsic worth and importance of the individual.

Generally, a person is called sister in one of three situations: in a family, in a fraternal order and in the kingdom of God. In the family, one becomes a sister through birth or adoption and is sometimes our best friend, worse critic, fiercest competitor and biggest supporter. In a sorority, one becomes a sister by pledging loyalty to a fraternal order that espouses scholarship, high ideals and standards of life and service. In the kingdom of God a person becomes a sister by professing faith in Jesus Christ and living a life devoted to building the kingdom and service to others.

There are several sisters of note in the Bible. Joanna, Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Martha who were united by a common bond; they knew Jesus. Phoebe, Priscilla and Junia all shared in the work of Kingdom Building. Some of them had been lifted from failed experiences. Some of them had access to great resources. All of them worked to promote the kingdom of God. Throughout the ministry of Jesus these women were present as He healed the sick, fed the hungry and raised the dead. In so doing they developed a fraternal bond that was unbreakable. In scripture, they are routinely referred to as sisters.

As Christians, we are all united in a fraternal effort to build the kingdom of God. In our struggles and victories, successes and failures, we share a common bond that makes us all sisters and brothers with God as our heavenly father.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he answers the question "Who is my mother, my brother or my sister?" The question was posed on the occasion that Mary, Jesus' brothers and at least one sister came to a place where he was teaching and wanted to see him. A message was sent into the meeting room and given to him. It indicated that his mother, brothers and at least one sister, were waiting for him outside. Jesus used the occasion to teach a lesson to his followers about the nature of brotherhood, sisterhood, and parenthood. In his familiar way, He answered a question with a question.

The obvious answer to many that heard Christ was simply that a sister or brother is simply a person that shares an incident of physical birth. A mother is one who gives birth to a child! Sisters and brothers are those who shared that same experience, but Jesus went further.

His answer had nothing to do with natural ties. In fact, His answer ignored natural ties altogether. He wanted them to see a greater truth so he expanded upon a known concept with an unknown response. When Jesus explained his definition of brother and sister, he connected it to another binding factor: "shared experience." Those who share the common desire to obey God and do his will, develop a spiritual bond and become sisters and brothers. Those who work together to achieve the common goal of realizing the will of God become sisters and brothers.

The idea of "shared experience" rather than simply incidence of birth as a definition for brotherhood, sisterhood and parenthood, made it plain that persons who are not our biological kindred could very well share a spiritual bond because of shared experiences. Those who share the experience of Christ and His love easily refer to themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is that "shared experience" that makes those who profess Christ brothers and sisters, despite not having shared the same biological history.

Three attributes of a Soror

Those who are sisters in any endeavor share three common attributes:

A Soror demonstrates dignity and professionalism. Sorors share mutual respect for themselves and others and carry themselves with a level of professionalism that separates them from others. If you find a soror, you will also find a woman who is constantly striving for those things that strengthen the community; raising the cultural level of her husband, family and acquaintances. This is the spirit of dignity and refinement that brings honor to her name. The way she selects her involvements and the professionalism she brings to each involvement are indicative of what Proverbs 31:25 means when it says, " Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." In this spirit, sorors often sing, "By merit and culture we strive and we do."

A Soror demonstrates service to others. One of the more salient attributes of sorors is their service to others. Whether the service is working to help girls discover the route to finer womanhood or plunging into efforts to help the poor, educate the masses, cure diseases or to respond in times of disaster; true sorors are always involved in one level of community service or another. Somehow they are not content to sit on the sidelines and bemoan; there is something within a true sister that pushes her to roll up her sleeve and be a part of the solution rather than the problem. Those who spend their lives in such endeavors are usually remembered as the "greatest" sorors because of their service. Indeed, this is what Jesus had in mind when he said in, Matthew 20:27 " And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." It's the spirit of helping others that prompts sorors to sing, "Armed with a smiled, we help each other for we know no other." It is this spirit that makes a true soror great.

A Soror demonstrates faith in God. The history of most great sisters is marked by the fact that they demonstrated a strong faith in God. Whether they are Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Gentile, the greatest of the sorors have discovered that only those who trust in the power of God can weather the storms of this life. It is only their trust in God that empowers them to strive against all odds to accomplish the impossible. It is this trust that prompts them to rise up when they have fallen, rebound when they have failed, recover when they have been wounded, and stand tall when they are being knocked down. Sometimes we think we know, but godly sisters remember the word of God which teaches in Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." It's what prompts them to serve in their churches, sing in choirs, work in mission fields, and pray fervorently. Those who trust in God understand the meaning of the song that says, "I trust in God, wherever I may be, upon the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me." Those who trust in God work for His honor and His glory. They stand on His word and constantly reach upwards. When godly sorors join hands the words of their solemn hymn have meaning when they say, "for thy honor and glory today." They trust Him in all that they do.

A Soror's Legacy

Finally, brothers and sisters, when a soror's work is done she leaves behind a legacy of sisterhood and service for others to follow.

The greatest women among us left legacies worthy to be followed by coming generations. Women such as Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King stand tall in our memory, but the work of lesser known virtuous women lingers in the hearts of all who knew them because they also lived with dignity, served others with compassion and believed in God with a deep rooted faith.

It is the legacy of dignity, service and faith that we celebrate today.

It is what Proverbs 31:30-31 refers to when it says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

This is the legacy of a woman who carries herself with dignity and honor and works to help others do the same.

This is the legacy of the woman who gives of herself to help others in a flood of deeds that flows from her typewriter, word processor, immense energy, and the depths of her meager resources.

This is the legacy of a woman who spends her entire life singing, serving, helping and ministering to others in the service of the Lord.

This is the legacy of a woman who knows what it means to be a soror, but more than that, she knows what it means to be a sister in Christ.

Such a woman may be a citizen of two sisterhoods, one known as the Alpha Kappa Alpha but the other, more important one, is headed by the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

This is the kind of woman who knows that prayer changes things!

When we think about it, there is nothing like being a sister who knows the Lord!

A sister who knows the Lord, knows that whatever discouragements life brings, God is still on the throne.

A sister who knows the Lord can sing with cheer, "be not dismayed what ere' betide, God will take care of you!"

Such a sister can stand firm in the midst of dark times because she knows that "weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

A sister who knows the Lord, can brave difficulties because she knows, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

A sister who knows the Lord can stand in the face of death and declare, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

A sister who knows the Lord, looks up with eternal hope because she knows "one glad morning when this life is over I'll fly away!"

A sister who knows the Lord, confesses with her life that she serves a savior who is worthy of praise and glory.

A savior who died on an old rugged cross but Early Sunday morning arose with the victory in his hands; who is now sitting at the right hand of God welcoming, one by one every sister as she arrives.

The life and legacy we salute today seems to shout across the abyss between time and eternity to say, "If you miss me serving down here, come on up to bright glory, I'll be serving up there!"

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On Friday, June 19, 2009, Doris Jean Smith Welch took her last breath. She was a soror who left a legacy of faith, sisterhood and service.

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No.9384-Inspiration

A Recipe for A Spirit Filled Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2009

SCRIPTURE: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

Introduction

What is required for a church to be filled with the spirit of God? Is there is a universal formula, a magic potion or a special incantation that can be employed that will result in a church that is filled with the spirit of God. When we examine the word of God we find that the ingredients are spelled out in scripture, the problem is that we often don't know what they are, or we try to achieve godly perfection leaving out one ingredient or another. If we fail to follow God's instructions, we will never realize a truly spirit filled church.

Many years ago there was a common bread that was made by wives at home. For lack of a better word the bread was called Daily Bread. It was a simple bread, made without any additives, chemicals or other embellishments. Those who followed the simple recipe usually ended up with a tasty bread that was nourishing, and filling. It was so simple that it could be made quickly every day, producing the exact same results.

The secret to making daily bread was its simple recipe. Those who tried to add to it made it complicated and hard to execute. It wasn't supposed to be difficult. The recipe called for it to be extremely simple but filled with great taste and nourishment.

Daily Bread only has four ingredients: water, salt, flour and yeast. Nothing more, nothing less.

Every ingredient was essential to the final product, but equally essential were the steps spelled out in the recipe. When made according to the recipe the bread was extremely tasty and almost heavenly to the pallet.

Every church should be filled with born again believers whose lives feast on the bread of heaven. Christ explained to his disciples that He was the bread of heaven that would feed and fill them until their souls were satisfied. It would appear therefore,

if we are to achieve a spirit filled church, we must keep our focus upon Christ. Those who are filled with his loving spirit will show it in their worship, fellowship and service one to another.

The church often strays away from its main focus. Often our emphasis is on subjects that are fashionable and pleasing to the pews. We often spend considerable time preaching and teaching about financial prosperity and expanding our territories. We discuss programs, budgets, conventions, politics and current events often more than we discuss Christ and the mission of the church. Sometimes our sermons barely mention Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection. A new theology now teaches new preachers that sermons need not necessarily point to the cross as long as they are biblical. Yet, it is the preaching of the cross that pricks are conscious, stirs our souls and motivates us to live closer to God's ideal. We feed on the knowledge that Christ is alive and moving in our lives every day.

If the church is to remain spirit filled we must lift up Jesus. It's a simple recipe. We may have fancy rituals and liturgies, songs and orations, but when it is all said and done, the secret to maintaining a spirit filled church is to lift up Jesus. He said, "And I, If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

As believers, we must make Jesus the main thing. Then we must make the main thing, the main thing. We must first seek Christ and his kingdom and all of the other things will be added in the course of time.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he encourages his disciples to zealously work for the building of the kingdom.

The text follows Christ's discourse to his disciples concerning worry. He told them to focus on the work of kingdom building and pleasing God and not so much on worrying about what they would wear or eat. If their focus remained firm on the kingdom all other essentials would be supplied to them.

Serving in the kingdom, lifting up Christ is the focus of every believer. This is what Christ told his disciples. If we keep the cross foremost and lift him up, the kingdom of God would be realized on earth. When that happens, all other things will be added, including, bread, water and other essentials of life.

Building the kingdom of God is fulfilling to a believer. We are never as filled as we are when we are trusting and acknowledging God while doing kingdom work; putting our hands to the plow and plowing; working and not looking back. We are never as filled as we are when we are working and trusting the results to God. God says He will see to it that such a trusting person will always have the necessities of life.

The recipe for a joyous and happy church that is filled with the spirit of God seems to revolve around our active service in kingdom building, the intensity of our faith, and our dependence upon him for our daily bread.

When we are working for the kingdom the spirit fills us.

When we are praising God, the spirit lifts us!
When we are glorifying God, the spirit strengthens us!
We are filled to serve and we serve to please God in every way that we can.

Recipe for a Spirit Filled Church

To build the kingdom of God and to thrive spiritually, the church needs to follow the biblical recipe. That recipe calls for four ingredients:

FLOUR: Flour is associated with our spiritual life. Flour is the product of all of God's creation: the sun, wind, earth, and rain. From the depths of the earth God gives the life sustaining presence of wheat for bread and corn for meal. In a similar sense God's graces work together to provide the essentials of life for every believer. Without the flour there is no bread; it is the essential element. For the believer, Christ is the essential ingredient for a spirit filled life. He is what makes life meaningful, joyful and fruitful. Without Christ there is no Christian marriage. There may be a house, but there is no home. There may be a few things, but unless Christ is the main thing, all other things will have little importance to us. Faith in Christ, is finely ground in the crucible of life's experience and is essential to the spirit filled life. A spirit filled church must be a church of faith.

WATER: Water is associated with spiritual health. Water is used in the baking of bread. Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her living water. In essence, his spirit would be the essence of real living. There are many today whose hearts are beating but they are not living. They move around each day but they are not living. They have a few things but they may as well have nothing because they are not really living. To really live we need the constant stream of spiritual support that only comes from God. Jesus is the living water that constantly flows. Anything that tries to live dies soon, without water that would include: marriages, careers, and even relationships. Nothing else will substitute; it must be water. There are many today who are spiritually dehydrated. They are trying to live without drinking spiritual water. Professionals report that we need eight glasses of water a day to keep our systems functioning. Often we substitute coffee, cold drinks, alcohol and other wet substances for water and get by; but soon we learn that nothing takes the place of water. Likewise, many are substituting many things for Christ. They all serve their purpose but can't take the place of water. To have a healthy spiritual life we need worship, bible study, prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. A spirit filled church cannot exist without the Holy Spirit.

SALT: Is associated with nourishment. Jesus told believers, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Bread is made with a small amount of salt. Salt preserves, freshens and flavors. Before there were refrigerators, salt was used to preserve meat and other foods. In rural areas salt was even used to brush teeth and combined with soda, was used as a deodorant. Salt also flavors. When Jesus said that believers are the salt of the earth he meant we should be all three: a source of preservation, sanitation and inspiration. Jesus said he was the bread of life and that he was the living water. However, he

charged believers to be the "salt" of the earth. He said "Ye are" the salt of the earth. We have the responsibility of bringing the bread of life to a starving mal-nourished land. We must be the ones to inspire the world to bring the love of Christ to every challenging situation. We must help the poor and needy. We must champion the cause of the downtrodden. We must stand up for justice. At the same time, we must bring new hope and inspiration to a world that has lost hope. We cannot afford to lose our savor and become stuck in the shaker because it's damp in the world. A spirit filled church is a church that is taking action in the name of our Lord.

YEAST: Yeast is associated with abundant living. In bread, yeast works like magic. The yeast causes the bread to rise. Without yeast, it stays flat. Yeast is composed of living elements that grow quickly, producing a pan of bread much larger than was first made. Jesus said, "I have come that ye may have life and have it more abundantly." What is abundant living? Is it the accumulation of possessions, money and power? Persons who seek Christ for that purpose usually interpret his words for that end. But does the Christ who urges us to live humbly, despise showy displays, and rid ourselves of as many possessions as possible, really mean by abundant living, that we should seek "living large" as a lifestyle. The abundance that he speaks about involves those variables associated with the kingdom of God. These are a plethora of love, peace, joy and overall happiness and contentment. The abundant life is not measured by how much we have, but how we are able to enjoy what we have. If we have boats but never enjoy them, what good are they? If we have families but never experience the love of family members, what good is the home? If we have money constantly accumulating but we have no peace because of it, are we really living? The abundant life is a Christ centered life that gets great joy out of every blessing it receives no matter how great or small. The abundant life that Christ speaks about has nothing to do with cars and houses, stocks, bonds and investments. The abundant life is the life that is filled with as much gratitude for a pork chop as it is for an 18 ounce steak. We know we have it when we are able to "count it all joy."

Follow the Directions

Finally, brothers and sisters, the recipe for a spirit filled church requires us to not only assemble the ingredients but we must mix them according to the directions.

There are many who try to bake bread, cakes and pies, without following the directions and end up with bread that doesn't rise, crust that is burned or a product that so hardened that it cut not be cut with a chain saw.

Many churches seeking spirit filled experiences are doing the same thing.

Many have plenty of music and praise, but no service.

Many have plenty of formality and instruction but without spirit filled lives to go with all of the instruction.

Many have plenty of shouts, but have nothing to shout about!

But there is one thing that all spirit filled churches have in common, it is essential to the power of their spirit filled ministry…it works just like making daily bread.

When bread is made, a small portion of the flour, water, and yeast is mixed together and pulled to the side. It is separated from the rest for several hours. This allows time for the powerful acids to form. Once mixed in with the rest of the mix they cause the loaf to rise high.

Why do they rise? Because they have been filled by that small portion of fermented dough! It was just a little leaven but it leaveneth the whole loaf.

That's what happens when the pastor and leaders of a church go down in prayer. Away from the rest of the church they pray for power themselves. They pray for God's spirit. Sometimes they pray for hours. Sometimes they pray for days, but when they return they are on fire.

And their fire and spirit is contagious, the whole church is on fire!

I don't know about you but I've found out that there is nothing more powerful than a spirit filled, prayed up church!

When the church is prayed up and filled with the spirit, it is able to climb the highest of mountains!

When the church is prayed up and filled with the spirit, it is strong even though surrounded by weakness!

When the church is prayed up and filled with the spirit, it is able to stand when the world is trying to knock it down!

A praying church is a powerful church!

Prayer can open up doors that have been closed in your face!

Prayer can create opportunities where none exist!

Prayer can chisel victories out of mountains of defeat!

If you want the recipe for a spirit filled church, keep your eyes focused on Jesus!

Seek first the kingdom of God, and keep on praying!

Keep on praying in Jesus' name!

Do you know him today?

His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

His name is Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

His name is Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, who died on Calvary and early Sunday morning, arose from the grave!

His is the power of the church!

Jesus, He is the savior of our souls!

Jesus, He is our Lord!

He is the whole recipe by Himself!

His name is Jesus!

No. 9385-Miracles

God's Health Care Plan

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 26, 2009

SCRIPTURE: In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:2

Introduction

Do you have a health Care plan for your family? A health Care plan is a strategy that family will use to receive medical care in event of emotional, psycho logical or physical sickness. It also includes preventive actions designed to help us prevent or detect life threatening conditions. A health Care Plan usually involves selecting a doctor, a medical service provider and providing a way to pay for services if the need should arise. Health Care is one of the awesome responsibilities of families that has existed from the first illnesses of the ancients unto this day.

There is an ongoing debate in the nation today about providing health care to the nation. As African-Americans, we are intently interested in that debate since health concerns plague our community disproportionately. The statistical record illustrates this fact, 63,500 African Americans will die from cancer next year. Approximately eleven percent of all African Americans have diabetes. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among African American women, exceeded only by lung cancer. African American men have far higher death rates from prostate cancer than any other racial or ethnic group. Each year 130,800 new African American cancer cases are expected to be diagnosed.

Many of our people have little or no health insurance. The Kaiser Foundation reports that there are nearly 46 million Americans without insurance and 15.1 percent of all African-Americans have no health insurance plans at all.

President Barack Obama is pushing to provide health insurance for everyone by devising a Medicare type system for everyone, not just the elderly. Everyone would have to pay something, premiums or deductibles or be fined and ultimately one payer, the government, would pay the bills. There is opposition to that plan because it will shut down nearly all insurance companies, put the government in control of who lives and dies, and astronomically drive up taxes. Even if it passes Mr. Obama's plan will still leave about 15 million people with no insurance when it begins in 2013.

For models of what a universal Health Care Plan looks like we are told to look at

Australia, France or Canada, but there is another health care plan that is available to believers, one that is not of this world. It's a plan devised by God himself.

Today, we are talking about health insurance, but God has a health care plan.

Today, we are talking about affordable health insurance, but God has a plan that insures good health for all.

Today, we are talking about Medicaid and Medicare, but God has a plan that provides heavenly care for all.

As Christians, we know that God has been a healing force in our lives. We trust his word and his power to heal our wounded souls and mend our bodies. Even as the nation debates health insurance, we still trust God because he is the only one with a health care plan.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's vision of the kingdom of heaven while he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos.

While on Patmos, John was shown a vision of the world to come. It was a symbolic vision, not detailed in specifics, but enough for those who read the account to get an idea of what is in store for believers who enter God's kingdom.

Chapters 21-22 of the Revelation are of particular interest to believers because of the picture of the life we hope to share. It is here that we see the beautiful New Jerusalem descending down from heaven and establishing itself on earth (Revelation 21:2).

In the midst of the city, the tree of life will once again be placed among men. Its presence symbolizes God's plan to provide an abundant health life for his people. All of the symbols associated with the vision of the tree of life suggest an abundance of everything and an eternity of good health.

It was God's intention from the beginning that there would be no sickness or scarcity of resources for his people. When he created man he placed him in the Garden of Eden, which was located in a vast terrain between Kenya on the continent of Africa and what is now modern day Iraq. In that garden he placed this same tree of life. In Genesis 2:9 it is noted that the tree of life was among the various trees God caused to grow in the garden. In Genesis 3:3 a warning was given that it was not to be touched. It was a tree with fruit that was not designed to be eaten. It symbolized the life, provision and health that God promised.

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit, they broke God's command and the tree of life was removed from the earth. Immediately the Garden of Eden disappeared and was turned into a parched desert land. Immediately, the promise of life, health and provision also vanished. Man had to till the ground to survive, his health began to fail and for the first time death came into the world.

The perfect health that God initially promised was breached by sin. As a result a multitude of sicknesses began to result that ranged from failing hearts, kidneys, and thyroids, to brain tumors, strokes and thousands of others.

However, throughout scripture the hope of restored health has been given to God's people. This hope has always been tied to the elimination of sin. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God told Israel If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The Prophet Ezekiel said God would bring back the tree of life, if the people repented. In Ezekiel 47:12 he prophesied that God would bring back the health and provision he began in the garden. Ezekiel said, "it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat [food], and the leaf thereof for medicine."

Now in Revelation, John is shown that same tree again. It appears in the New Jerusalem where there will be no sin or even the thought of evil. It will bear twelve manner of fruit on a regular basis, with leaves that will be filled with medicine. It will never be touched or used because its presence only symbolizes the presence of God's plan to provide for the health and security of his people eternally.

God's Health Plan

It is clear from the opening chapters of the Bible that God intended for his people to live forever with perfect health. However, because of our own weaknesses, mankind has touched the forbidden fruit of this world and has reduced our life expectancy and contributed to the demise of our health.

While His perfect health plan is not in place, yet; God is still in the healing business. In response to the prayers of the Saints:

HE HEALS IN RESPONSE TO FAITH: God has responded to the faith of millions who have trusted Him. These are those who believe and trust in their hearts that if they could get a prayer through, He would respond. A woman with an issue of blood had this faith and pushed her way through a crowd believing that if she could just touch the hem of His garment she could be made whole. Today, there are millions who have placed their faith in God and have drawn near to Him and he has heard their request. His perfect healthcare plan is not in place yet, but He is still in the healing business.

HE HEALS WHEN DOCTORS CANNOT: Although doctors and physicians are able to perform intricate operations, when the procedures are finished they must step back and wait for God to work. Doctors know medicines and procedures they do not have the power to command wounds to heal, tumors to disappear or hearts to revive themselves, despite all of our technology. Even in scripture there were instances when people went to the disciples seeking healing but found that they were unable to heal them. In Matthew 17:16 a man carried his son to the disciples only to learn that despite having studied under Jesus they were not able to help; he turned to Jesus and the son was healed. Today, there are millions who trust their doctors, but they trust God more. They believe in modern medicine, but they trust the intervening power of God more. So they pray to God for healing and ask God to use the doctors,

hospitals and medicines or whatever way he chooses to heal them. Even though his perfect health plan is not in place, when we see miracles happen every day, we know God is still in the healing business.

HE HEALS BROKEN LIVES, TOO: All sicknesses are not physical. Some are mental and others are related to moral issues. There are millions of people today who suffer from a plethora of mental problems from depression to schizophrenia. Drug addictions, alcoholism and ADHD are just a few that plague our community. These maladies have broken and shattered lives, yet even here God has proven to be a healer. When a man with mental disorder ran through the cemetery naked, he found sanity at the foot of Jesus. When a man was possessed with legions of demons, he found healing relief when Jesus cast out the demons. When a woman accused of immoral living was about to be stoned, Jesus forgave her sin and told her to go and sin no more. He restored her broken life in a way that made her so happy she ran and shouted, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done." No matter how broken our lives seem, God can put them back together again. No matter how complicated our mental or moral situation may seem, God can work it out. While his perfect healthcare plan is not in place, yet; we've seen enough to know He's still in the business of putting lives back together again.

Cover Every Situation

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God's life and health plan will cover every situation.

He has shown us how it will work in his written word, but more importantly, he has shown what he can do every day of our lives.

When the prophet saw all of the sickness in the world he asked in Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

New Testament saints can answer from our own experience, "There is a balm in Gilead..His name is Jesus!"

The same Jesus, who cleansed the lepers of their leprosy!

The same Jesus, who unstopped the ears of the deaf!

The same Jesus, who revived paralyzed arms and legs!

The same Jesus, who stopped an issue of blood!

The same Jesus, who delivered the demon possessed!

The same Jesus, who brought the dead back to life!

The same Jesus hears and answers prayers today. His in the medical intervention business!

If there is anything that saints should remember it's that when you are sick and in pain, that God says I am Jehovah-Rapha, "I am the Lord that healeth thee!"

That means that God is in the healing business.

It doesn't matter, what you may be facing in your life!

It doesn't matter, what has been troubling you night and day!

It doesn't matter, what agony and misery you've been dealing with!

It doesn't matter, what the doctors may have informed you of!

Don't give up because the Lord is still in healing business!

You don't have to pay a premium because it's already been paid. All you have to do is fall on your knees and say "Lord, I have not done all I am suppose to do but look beyond my faults and see my need."

God can touch your life and turn things around and you won't get a bill because Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

On Calvary, Jesus paid the premium with nails in his hands, a crown of thorns on his head and a spear in his side!

He died on an old rugged cross but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad He's still in the healing business today!

No. 9386-Christmas

Only When the Time was Right

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1976

SCRIPTURE: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" Galatians 4:4

Introduction

Have you ever tried to rush an important event? Most of us can remember a time that we tried to rush important events, especially those that we have anticipated for long periods of time. When we are anxious about an event it seems that it will never come even though we want to rush it.

If left to most of us, some special days would come early, much earlier than the calendar shows. We have a tendency to rush things. That was the case when a man rushed his wife to a hospital many days before she was due to deliver their first child. The man was really impatient. The man was a little upset that the doctor was not in a rush to help him speed up the process. Despite his impatience that man waited patiently in the waiting room. After a few minutes, the doctor came out and asked the assistant for a wrench; that really concerned the husband. Then, after a couple more moments, the doctor re-entered the room this time he asked for a screwdriver. The man grew worried and began to pace in circles. Then, a little later, the doctor burst through the doors screaming for a hammer. At that, the husband, in a state of frenzied terror, ran up to the physician and asked, "Doctor, what the heck is wrong with my wife?" "I don't know," replied the doctor, "But I don't know what's wrong with my lunch box, I can't get it open."

You just can't rush things, everything must happen in its own time.

You can't hurry God either. He has his own time schedule and he operates by heavens time table, not our time table.

That's what happened when God prepared to respond to the need for a savior on earth. He picked the time, place and method that his son would come. It was the right time and the right place.

As Christians, we know that God always responds to our prayers and request. We

are confident that he will always answer us, but only when the time is right.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia explaining the method God used to bring salvation to the world.

Paul underscored that the coming of Christ into the world was not by chance. He came according to the timing that was set prearranged by God. His coming was not one day before or behind the appointed time.

That time was important because it acknowledged that God was in control of the salvation process. A child who is placed under the control of guardians is under their control until "the date fixed by his father." God and God alone decided the fullness of time for the coming of Christ.

Christ was born of a particular person, at a particular time, in a particular way under a particular system.

Until It's Time

When we consider the advent of Christ there are several thoughts we should observe:

JESUS WOULD NOT COME UNTIL THERE WAS PEACE: Christ made his appearance in the world at its most peaceful time. Rome dominated the world and its strong control brought the world into a relatively peaceful stance. Wars had persisted for many years with many dominating powers including the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians and the Greeks. Now, with Rome at the helm there was relative peace. In a time of Peace Christ came into the world and often those who seek Him today must seek Him in an atmosphere of peace. God is not the author of confusion, whether that confusion is in the church, home or within individual lives. If we want God's presence we must seek Him at a peaceful time, and in a peaceful place.

WHEN THE TIME COMES CHRIST WILL COME: When Christ made His arrival God had set the stage where his arrival would be anticipated, welcome and facilitated. World conditions had changed such that the Greek Language dominated the world seen. It was almost a common language. To arrive at this time would make communication easier. John the Baptist had come preaching in the wilderness of Judea announcing that a savior was coming, raising the anticipation of the people. In addition there was a general conviction among the people. They were searching for the true God and a source of universal salvation. When Christ came the social, intellectual and political landscape was right. The circumstances of his birth gave indication of his destiny and in such challenging times.

The circumstances of Christ's parentage and birth gave an indication of his destiny. While Mary and Joseph knew the nature of his being, they were not sure, at His birth, the nature of his final destination.

Jesus was born in a small town, to poor parents, in very restricted and impover-

ished circumstances. His destiny, in these circumstances was not clear it had to be discovered. By the age of twelve it appears he had learned his destiny because after being found in the temple with the scholars He said, 'It's time for me to be about my father's business."

When the time comes, Christ will come into each of our lives and he will take care of the business. However, He won't come before the entire landscape is set and in place. There are adjustments we must make to invite Him to move into our lives. When the time and condition was right, He came. We the time and condition is right He will respond to us as well.

THERE IS A TIME FOR THE LOST TO BE SAVED: Jesus was constantly asked when God would intervene in world affairs and address many of the wrongs that afflicted God's people. Jesus constantly told those who heard Him that God would take action in His time. Once he told them that wheat and tares often grow up together and the tares choke the wheat. He said in God's on time, the tares would be separated from the wheat, but not before.

Everything has a time and nothing happens before its time. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time and a season for everything, but nothing happens before its time. In youth, we are impatient and want the privileges of adult life without the maturity to handle the responsibilities. This was the case with the prodigal son, who could not wait for his inheritance. He wanted it quickly and instantly. He wanted it long before he was ready to handle what he would receive

Adults often hurry God. We can't wait for Him to move. We pray and ask Him for a blessing but then take matters into our own hand when God doesn't move fast enough for us. We ask Him for a mate, then grab the first pretty looking thing that comes along, before God has a chance to move. Sera found this to be true. God promised she and her husband Abraham that they would have a child. Years passed and she was well passed the normal child bearing age. She tried to arrange for her husband to have a child by a surrogate because it appeared that God moved too slow. Then she heard the words, "Is there anything too hard for God to do?"

Galatians 4:4 tells us that when, " the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." In essence, when the time was right, God made hHs move.

In our lives today, we must remember that when God is ready, he will act!

When the days are accomplished, the prayer that we have prayed will receive an answer!

When the days are accomplished, the answer we seek will be delivered!

When the days are accomplished, the opportunity we seek will present itself!

God has a reason for Waiting

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that God has a reason for waiting; usually he spends more time on the inside than he does outside.

There is an interesting passage in Job 9:25 (NCV) That reads this way, “”My days go by faster than a runner. They fly away without my seeing joy.”

That can easily describe many of us. We can get so busy trying to do so many things that we don’t have time for the joy of each day to really soak in. We can be so busy cooking, shopping, attending programs and activity after activity that we simply become too tired to enjoy it all. Unlike us, God knows how to do things decently and in order and He will not be hurried.

God won’t be hurried because He spends more time working on our contents than he does on our package.

God won’t be hurried because He spends more time working on success rather than rushing through our failures.

God won’t be hurried because He spends more time working on our climb to the level above rather than our fall to the level below.

God won’t be hurried because He spends more time trying to dry our tears than He does watching us crying our own rivers.

When the time was right, Jesus came as God’s gift to the world. John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!”

When the time was right God sent Jesus into the world not like a king, with armies all around him and trumpets blowing, but as a little, tiny baby.

When the time was right Jesus came, born in a stable and laid in a manger.

When the time was right Jesus came as a small child born in poverty appeared to be marked who tagged as an “Article of no value.”

When the time was right the world found out that He gave us:

—Courage in the face of trial. Now they boldly say, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

—Satisfaction in times of want. “The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1

—Guiding Hand in times of darkness. “Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through the barren land!”

When the time was right, He carried old rugged cross!

When the time was right He was crucified on Calvary!

When the time was right He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

He did not get up on any of the three days and night He was in the grave but..

But Sunday morning the world discovered that the time was right and He arose from the dead with all power in his hands.!

Just as He waited until the time was right, we too must wait patiently for his imminent return, where He will tell each believer..”Servant, thou has been faithful over a few things, come on up and let me make you master of many!”

No. 9387-Inspiration

My Father's Will

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:40

Introduction

Have you ever been mentioned in someone's will. How would it make you feel if you learned that a distant relative whom you had never seen had included you in his will? Suppose that relative left you a great inheritance but he placed conditions upon you receiving it? Would you still be interested? Most of us have read books or seen movies about people who suddenly learned about large inheritances due them by virtue of being named in someone's will; secretly some of us have dreamed how our lives would be different if we could get our hands on something more than what we have thanks a benefactor that made it possible for us.

A will is a written expression of a person's wishes concerning their property and assets. It gives instructions as to whom and when the property is to be given and it sometimes states conditions that must be made for the beneficiaries to receive the bequest.

We've heard of some famous wills in recent years.

Michael Jackson's will named his mother as guardian of his children, and gave three lawyers the power to handle his affairs of his almost $1 billion estate.

James Brown left his fortune to his six grown children and nothing to his five year old son, James Brown, Jr. or his mother.

Napoleon Bonaparte left his son his books, a saddle and a few items and left millions of dollars to a long list of friends and associates.

Walt Disney left the greater portion of his vast fortune to his wife and children.

Singer Isaac Hayes, left a good part of his fortune to the Isaac Hayes Foundation which will promote literacy, music, and nutrition.

Marilyn Monroe left a sum of $10,000 each to seven people, and $100,000 in a trust fund among other things.

Elvis Presley left his children as the beneficiaries of his fortune.

It's important to have a written will because often survivors make claims that the deceased wanted them to have the car, boat, television set, jewelry, money and other assets but no one heard those claims. Unless it's in writing no one knows for sure,

just what the last will of a person may be; it may have been the will of a person at one time but it's the last will and testament that counts.

Did you know God has a written will he has written will in which he names his beneficiaries, spells out their inheritance and tells the conditions that must be met to claim their inheritance? In addition, God's will has intentionally left out some people; not everyone is included. Yet, there are some who will not claim what he has in store for them, because, they don't show up for the reading of the will, and don't meet the conditions he prescribed.

God's will is spelled out in a 66 book document called the bible. He has not only a will and testament, he has two testaments, an old and a new. A testament is an agreement. It's a promise of what God will do for his heirs, if they meet certain conditions.

As Christians, we should be especially concerned about executing God's will. He has offered us eternal life and blessings of paradise, but there are a few things we must do to be eligible to collect. It starts with faith and it ends with obedience. It's all in God's last will and testament.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ explaining that any person who believes on Him will be saved because it is the will of God.

Verses 39-40 of this passage give a clear picture of God's will for all of mankind. His will is that we might be saved. Through every temptation, trial, trouble, setback or tragedy it is God's will that none would be lost. Jesus' words in John 6:39 are that "I should lose nothing." That means God desires that anyone who places himself in God's hands will not be abandoned or lost, regardless of circumstance.

God wills a most wonderful thing: Jesus shall save every true believer through all, even up until the final hour of the very last day—the day of the resurrection. The Lord's salvation is complete, ultimate, and final. No matter the trials, the heartaches, the hurts, the attacks of the enemy and the evil persecutors, Christ will save true believers and He will raise them up at the last day. God wills that His Son lose no one—saved right up to the point of being raised up at the last day.

Verse 40 also concerns God's will, but it differs from the former point in that it centers upon those who see and believe on Jesus. In the former verse the stress is upon God choosing those who come to Christ, whereas in this verse, the stress is upon man choosing Christ. If we choose to follow Him we are assured that we shall have eternal life.

Christ, carrying out his father's will, begins to detail to every follower what we must do to remain in his father's will. His words have been recorded and explained in the last will and testament given on earth, the New Testament. It contains, directions and instructions for believers about how to seek, find and walk in the will of God.

Our guarantee is that as long as we, in good faith, continue to trust God and live

according to the parameters of His last will and testament, Christ will raise us up on the last day and present us heirs to the kingdom of God.

The will of God

FAITH GETS US IN THE WILL: There may be many people in a family and hundreds of close friends, but everyone is not named in a will. How do we get in God's will? Our faith gets us in the will. Everyone does not believe in God or that his Son Jesus died and was raised from the dead. The inheritance that God promises is not for everyone, only those who put their trust in Him. Faith alone, gets us named in the will. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John 3:16. Through our faith we become children of God and God names all of his children in his will. Because we are children of God we can expect to be heirs. Romans 8:17 says, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

WE CAN'T WRITE OUR OWN BEQUEST: We can't tell God what to put in the will for us. We can't write our own bequest. God's has a job for each of us today and a reward, but often we try to tell God what his will for us should be. A young man came to church alone and he wrote a note to God. The note said, "I would like to have success in career and finances. I would like to have perfect health, a beautiful wife, loving children and a life with few, If any problems. In return, I will worship and praise you, study your word, serve others in your name, give liberally to support kingdom work and living according to your direction." The young man left the paper under a bible on the altar where it could not be seen and went home. He prayed that God would reveal to him whether or not his requests and promises were acceptable. A week later, the young man was awakened in his sleep and told to return to the church and retrieved the paper. To his amazement the entire paper was blank. As he stared at the paper he seemed to hear the voice of God speak to him and say, "This is not the way. If you want to find my will for your life, just sign your name and leave the entire paper blank for me to fill in." Often we go to God, with a prepackaged will, waiting on him to sign off on it. We want success, riches, fame and many other things and we are asking him to endorse it. However, the humble saint does just the opposite. He comes to God with a blank agenda, saying show me the way you want me to go, and I'll do it for you. Spell it out in the will Lord, and I will obey your will.

OBEDIENCE KEEPS US IN THE WILL: Once we are saved by our faith in Christ, our next job is to live saved. Living a saved life means to live our lives according to the father's last will and testament, the bible. To stay in the will, we must love each other and treat each other with dignity and respect. Moreover, we cannot live immorally expect to remain in God's will. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortion-

ers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." We cannot live any way we choose and expect to remain in the will. If we shall not inherit the kingdom of God it means that we have removed ourselves from the will because we don't meet the conditions. Christ has the job of keeping us in the will and to deliver us on the last day. That means that He may have to discipline us to keep us in the will. Hebrews 12:6 says, " For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

OUR PRAYERS ACKNOWLEDGE HIS WILL: Those who live by the will of God are always ware that God's will is what is important, not our will. Our will is always subservient to God's will. Phillip Brooks reminds us that every prayer has both a foreground and a background. "The foreground of prayer is the intense, immediate desire for a certain blessing which seems to be absolutely necessary for the soul to have; the background of prayer is the quiet, earnest desire that the will of God, whatever it may be, should be done." In the foreground we ask for a job, a promotion of special blessing, but in the background we also want the will of God to be executed regardless.

When God wills

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that unlike other wills that don't take effect until after you die, God's will is a living will.

The will of God makes promises to believers after this life is over, but the will of God, starts to act in the lives of believers on this side of heaven as well.

Those who live in God's will find that He often makes things happen that are not supposed to happen and open doors that would have ordinarily been closed.

When God wills, even empty cabinets can be filled again. That's what a widow woman learned when she was down to her last cup of meal and her last Cruz of oil. She found out that when it's the will of God that the barrel will never run dry.

When God wills, that which is lost can be found.

When God wills, those who are weak can find their strength again.

When God wills, those who are discouraged can find new inspiration.

When God wills, those who have fallen get up and start all over again.

When God wills, those who are confused find clarity and meaning.

When God wills, those who are separate and apart can be brought together again.

When God wills, those who have been the victims of life's tragedies will find restoration and joy.

Every believer should strive to stay in the will of God. If it is not God's will we don't want it. If it is God's will the world can't stop us from getting it, "Thy kingdom, that will be done."

Not only that what we watched him in the Garden of Gethsemane and heard Him to tell his father, "not my will but thy will be done."

It was God's will that He would carry an old rugged cross. It was God's will that he would die out on Calvary.

It was God's will that He would be buried in a borrowed tomb.

But it was also God's will that early Sunday morning that He who was buried in weakness would rise in strength!

It was God's will that He who was crucified in shame would be raised in everlasting glory!

And it's God will that He will come back again and be raised us up on the last day!

I don't know about you, but I want keep my life in God's will!

No. 9388-Family

When a man Loves a Woman

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 9, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. Ephesians 5:25-33

Introduction

What happens when you love someone? There are millions of books, movies, stage plays and songs that all attempt to describe what happens when people love each other. It has been romanticized, politicized and fantasized, but still, after thousands of years of the debate the world seems no closer to defining in clear, succinct terms, what actually happens when we love someone.

Our natural curiosity regarding this subject draws our interest to anything that tries to answer the question. In 1966 Percy Sledge released a simple tune entitled, "When a man loves a woman." It became an immediate number one seller in the Billboard Top 100 and around the world people sang his tune. It seemed that every big star wanted their own version of the song including: Bette Midler, Esther Phillips, Kenny Rogers and even the legendary "Mae West." In 1991 Michael Bolton released it and won a Grammy Award.

What did the song say that makes it so popular more than 40 years after its release? What's the magic? Some of the lyrics of Sledge's song say:

When a man loves a woman
Can't keep his mind on nothing else
He'll trade the world
For the good thing he's found
If she's bad he can't see it

She can do no wrong
Turn his back on his best friend
If he put her down

When a man loves a woman
Spend his very last dime
Tryin' to hold on to what he needs
He'd give up all his comfort
Sleep out in the rain
If she said that's the way it ought to be

Today, there is still a natural curiosity about what it means to really love someone. There are understandably different kinds of love. The first that comes to mind is romantic love (Eros) that happens between people of the opposite sex. There is the kind of love that develops in friendship or brotherly love (Philia). There is biological love between sisters and brothers, parents and children (Sturge). Then there is unconditional love that that exists even if it is mistreated, wronged or not returned. It's called "Agape" or Godly love.

The world has searched for centuries to discover what happens when we are truly loved, but the answer has been in front of us, in the written word of God for centuries. God has given us the clearest definition of real love that we can see and the best example to follow.

When we are really loved, we are loved as God loves, unconditionally in ways that are indefatigable, inexhaustible, limitless and boundless.

As Christians we know that God has given us an example of real love. He gave his only begotten son that we should have everlasting life. Christ went the way of the cross so that we could have eternal life. It was an example of what it means to really be loved.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he compares the way Christ loves the church to the way a man loves a woman.

The church is often referred to as a Bride of Christ. As such, Christ loves her and demonstrates His love for her through his words and deeds.

The entire passage spells out the manner that a man will show his love for a woman and conversely how a woman will show her love for a man.

Men in a relationship are told to style the way they love their wives after the way Christ demonstrated his love for the Church. Men are commanded to love their wives as they love themselves.

Since a Christian man represents Christ in his home, the way he responds, reacts, provides for and protects his wife is an example of the way that Christ does the same for the church.

The text says clearly, when a man loves a woman, he loves her with the same passion that Christ showed for the church which was to stand at very gates of death to deliver her and raise her up.

How does a man love a woman?

Today, there are many men who simply do not know what is expected of them as Christian husbands. To some their role is to be a roommate, pay half the bills, and be served. Others have learned that being a Christian husband is an awesome responsibility because they represent the way Christ would respond to his wife, which is the church. There are millions of Christian men are doing it right; some are still struggling to learn just how a Christian man loves a woman.

In that respect, Christian men could very well present every woman with a four point check list for their relationship. A single Christian man should remember that if he is dating a Christian woman she is double checking this list in the back of her mind.

THE CHRISTIAN MAN WHO LOVES A WOMAN DESIRES TO LIVE A CHRIST CENTERED LIFE. The first and most important of the six items on the how to love a woman for the Christian man is his desire to live a Christ centered life. A Christ centered life is a life that is rooted in the principles of faith, honesty, integrity, strength, loyalty, industry, respect, service, and worship. If he does not desire to live a life that represents these virtues then the prospect of having a successful Christian marriage is doomed from the start. The bible warns against striking up relationships with women who do not know Christ. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" Being a Christian means more than just going to church occasionally, it means that you embrace the Christian lifestyle and have a personal relationship with Christ.

A Christian man is looking for a woman to love like Christ loves the Church, but she too must desire to fellowship with Christ and let herself be loved by a real godly man.

WHEN A CHRISTIAN MAN LOVES A WOMAN SHE HAS NOTHING TO FEAR: A man who loves a woman insures that she feels safe in his presence. The feeling of safety involves both the internal and external. External safety involves those outside of their home that may injure her. A man who loves a woman protects her reputation, and to the best of his ability protects her from hurt harm and danger. Internally, his wife feels safe to share her fears and doubts with him. Her true feelings about life and the world are safe with him. She feels that her secrets are secure with him and will not be trampled upon or ridiculed. She also feels physically safe with him knowing that he will not abuse her or misuse her, cheat her, short change or belittle her character or reputation in the eyes of her children. When a man loves a woman in this way he builds the relationship to perfection. 1 John 4:17-18 says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because

as he is, so are 'we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment."

WHEN A CHRISTIAN MAN LOVES A WOMAN HE IS WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIS LIFE AND EVEN HIS CAREER FOR HER. When Ephesians 5:25 says "and gave himself for it" it spells out the spirit of sacrifice that exists when a man loves a woman. The Greek word used for "gave" means to willingingly surrender or deliver. Since the text is intentionally meant to compare the Christian man to Christ then it means that the Christian man who loves a woman is willing to deliver or surrender his life, career or personal pursuit to help his wife survive and thrive. There have been many men who have not received their full education because they worked two and three jobs so that their wives could reach higher. There are many who have backed away from power to stand by their wives. Recently, a United States Congressman resigned because the responsibilities of the job were keeping him away from his duties to his wife and family, political critics chuckled at that as an excuse, but in reality there are many men who refuse to take jobs in other cities, accept promotions on the job, or back away from power because it would diminish their ability to be friend, lover and supporter of their wives. A man who loves a woman like Christ loves the church, puts her interests first, and makes sure that she knows it. He will stand by her when life gets tough, when she is afraid or weak. He will support her when she is vulnerable. He will sacrifice his own pleasure to insure that she has what is needed to be happy, safe and secure.

WHEN A CHRISTIAN MAN LOVES A WOMAN HE SANCTIFIES HER: Fidelity is a key part of any relationship. A man who loves a woman does not dishonor her by soiling their relationship. Ephesians 5:26-27 spells it out using the word "sanctify" which means to set apart as special. A man who loves a woman in the context of this text does not soil his marriage with impurities that blemish, wrinkle or otherwise spoil a marriage. He does not run around on her, cheat or defile the marriage bed. The married Christian man loves his wife both emotionally and physically and satisfies her needs. He sets himself aside for her and her alone. A single man who dates a woman keeps her in high honor until they are married. Since the way he acts as a single man is a rehearsal for the marriage to come, he does not cheat or play the field in his dating relationship either. We are encouraged to love our wives as we love ourselves. Ephesians 5:28 " So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

It's not too late

Finally, brothers and sisters every man should know that if he does not know how love a woman like Christ loves the church, it's not too late to learn.

If a man has fallen short is it too late? If he has been married for many years but his wife still gives him a failing grade on this four point check list, what can he do?

Then he might take a page from a song Barbara Mason recorded in 1965 entitled, "Yes, I'm Ready." The lyrics said:

I don't even know how to love you
Just the way you want me to
But I'm ready [ready] to learn (to learn)
Yes, I'm ready [ready] to learn (to learn)
To fall in love, to fall in love, to fall in love with you

When a man loves a woman like Christ loved the church he first gets to know God for himself. He can't love a woman unless he knows God because God is love.

When a man knows God, the way he loves starts to change.

The love of God differs from the love of men. The love of a man who does not know God is often superficial and shallow and is hinged upon performance.

Love of this kind is marked by the word "Because.."

—Because you are there when I need you; I love you.

—Because you buy me gifts on special occasions, I love you.

—Because you're always by my side, I love you.

—Because you work so hard to make me comfortable, I love you.

There is a danger in this kind of love because it says if you ever stop cleaning up, buying me gifts or standing by my side, I won't love you any more.

When a man loves a woman, he doesn't use the word "because" that has limitations, but he uses the word "although" which is unconditional.

When a man loves a woman he says, "Although."

—Either of us is perfect, I love you anyway!

—Sometimes we don't see eye to eye, I Love you anyway!

—We don't have all of things we'd like to have, I love you anyway!

—We don't look the way we did a few years ago, we love each other anyway!

It's a good thing to love a woman, but it's an even better thing to love a woman like Christ loved the Church. It's a good thing because his wife is no longer alone.

When a man loves a woman he says:

—If trials come our way, we'll go through it together!

—If there are burdens to bear, we'll bear them together!

—If there are disappointments to face, we'll face them together!

—If there are joyous moments to be shared, we will share them together!

Now, Jesus showed us one last thing. Jesus said in John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for His friends. "

Yes, Jesus loves me! Because the bible tells me that one day He picked up an old rugged cross and died for me out on Calvary's hill!

..But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave loving me every day, every step of the way!

No. 9389-Family

When a Woman Loves a Man

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 16, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Ephesians 5:21-24

Introduction

What is it like to really be loved? Can you answer that question? There are millions today who speak of relationships, dates, boyfriends, girlfriends, romances, and one night stands. They know about instant gratification, good feeling and emotional highs, but only a few of them have ever known the joy and satisfaction that comes from being truly loved.

True love is patient, kind, gentle, and enduring. True love is hard shelled against adversity and soft shelled, forgiving and merciful in the face of weakness. Many are blessed with semblances, look-a-likes and clones of love, but those who have experienced the real thing probably embraced the words of Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell when they sang, "Ain't nothing like the real thing."

A man who enjoys the love of a woman is blessed. If he makes a godly woman his wife the bible says in Proverbs 18:22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." He finds favor because a Christian woman knows how to love a man in ways that elevate him, strengthen him and glorify him before the Lord. In fact there are millions today who maintain that a man is not a real Christian man until is the recipient of the love of a Christian woman.

James Brown said, "This is a man's world, but it wouldn't be nothing without a woman or a girl."

There is no denial that a man is full and complete when he knows the love of a real Christian woman; because she knows God and God is love.

When a woman loves a man she loves him as God loves, unconditionally and in ways that are indefatigable, inexhaustible, limitless and boundless. She loves him as the Church loves Christ, fully, totally and undefiled.

A single woman reads scripture to learn how to love as God loves. A married Christian woman steps closer to the ideal of godly love every day with perfection as her goal.

It is not easy loving a man like the Church loves Christ, but when a woman loves a man with all the passion and inspiration that the spirit of God can stir; she will take his breath away.

As Christians we know that God has given us an example of real love. He gave his only begotten son that we should have everlasting life. Christ went the way of the cross so that we could have eternal life. It was an example of what it means to really be loved.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he encourages partners in a relationship to subject themselves to one another with obedience to Christ as the main focus.

The 5th chapter of Ephesians addresses the relationship of men and women to each in marriage. For those who are single, it gives a standard of expectation by which potential partners can be measured.

The chapter points to men as types of Christ in a relationship and women as types of the Church. Men are to relate to their wives as Christ relates to his bride which is the church: Provide for her, protect her, sanctify her, and to sacrifice for her. Wives are to relate to their husbands as the Church would to Christ.

A greater appreciation of this text is gained if we back up to verse 17 first. Beginning at verse 17 the atmosphere and attitude of a Christian household is described.

Ephesians 5:17 says, “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” It means that in a Christian household both Husband and wife wisely seek the will of the Lord for their family and relationship. This also applies to Christian singles; both partners seek the will of their lord for the dating relationship.

Ephesians 5:18 encourages both parties of the relationship to sober in mind and body, not intoxicated with drink, drugs or other hallucinogens. A Christian relationship is filled with the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 5:19 describes the atmosphere in a Christian relationship, it is one filled with singing and praise and positive words where each builds up the other in the glory of the Lord. Thanking God continuously for all that he has done and will do.

A key element to the Christian relationship is verse 21. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” It means that each one makes themselves accountable to the other to insure both operate in the will of God, to insure that neither of them strays.

Verses 17-22 paint a picture of a marriage or relationship that is sober in mind and body, in which both partners seek to build up each other in words of praise and song, thanking God for his blessing and seeking his will. In addition, it is the picture of a relationship in which partners count on each other for correction if they begin to stray. In the context of verses 17-21, we note Ephesians 5:22, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

When a woman loves such a man, he feels strong, empowered and lifted.

When a Christian woman loves a Christian man, he feels the earth shake in his soul. He is committed to her, body and soul because there is no joy he'll ever know greater than that he'll experience when a Christian woman loves her man.

How does a woman love her man?

Today, there are many women who simply do not know what is expected of them as Christian wives. To some their role is to be a roommate, pay half the bills, and serve. Others have learned that being a Christian wife is much more because they represent the way the Church would respond to her husband, which is the Christ. There are millions of Christian women are doing it right and some are still struggling to learn just how a Christian woman loves a man.

In that respect, Christian women could very well present every man with a four point check list for their relationship. A single Christian woman should remember that if she is dating a man, she should be double checking this list in the back of her mind.

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN WHO LOVES A MAN DESIRES TO LIVE A CHRIST CENTERED LIFE. The first and most important of the four items on the "how to love a man list" for the Christian woman is her desire to live a Christ centered life. A Christ centered life is a life that is rooted in the principles of faith, honesty, integrity, strength, loyalty, industry, respect, service, and worship. A Christian wife desires to represent the role of the Church in her marriage and sees her husband as representing Christ. If, for any reason, she does not see herself as the kind of woman who can represent the role of baptized believers before God then she will find it literally impossible to love a man as the Church loves Christ. If she is a Christian woman she will find it almost impossible to assume her biblical role if the man she marries or shares her relationship with does not live a Christ centered life. She can love him if he's not a Christian but it will be a difficult task because he does not see himself as a type of Christ. Although he may respect her religious views he does not see her as a type of the church in the relationship. A Christian woman is looking for a man she can love and relate to freely, like the Church does to Christ. A man who finds such a woman truly finds a "good thing."

WHEN A CHRISTIAN WOMAN LOVES A MAN SHE WILL SHARE HIS INTERESTS: A woman who loves a man shares his dreams, goals and interests. She uses every skill in her repertoire to help him achieve his dreams, attain his goals and pursue his interests. She becomes his life partner in every respect. His dream becomes her dream. His goal becomes her goal and whatever he's interested in whether its football, racing cars, weight lifting or planting flowers; whatever attracts his interest becomes her interest as well.

When a woman loves a man she learns his language and communicates with him in a language he understands. Gary Chapman in his book, "The Five Love Languages" suggests that couples grow stronger when they communicate in a language they both understand: The five he listed are: 1)Words of admiration. Some men respond well to truthful compliments and words of support. 2) Quality time. There

are some men who are at their best when they are doing what they like to do, they talk, laugh and are open. Women who know how to love men learn quickly that for some men, this is when they communicate best, the walls are down and talk comes freely. 3) Visual Symbols. Some men need visual symbols. When a woman loves a man she may often give him symbols of love such as a gift, but more often she gives herself to him; she's there for him when he's low, hurting or alone and there for him when he is celebrating and victorious. Her presence is a language he understands. 4) Acts of love. A woman who loves a man finds ways to demonstrate her love through acts of service he appreciates. This is not servitude because it is not forced or demanded but done out of love. When it is done it opens a door of communication that will never close. 5) Physical touch. A woman who loves a man knows how and when her man needs to be touched. She knows when he needs a hug, a touch, a kiss or intimacy and freely shares. Many marriages have died because one partner or the other refused or underestimated the value of the physical touch.

WHEN A CHRISTIAN WOMAN LOVES A MAN SHE IS WILLING TO LET HIM LEAD. When Ephesians 5:22 says "submit yourselves to your own husbands" it spells out the spirit of followship of the Christian woman. In household where husband and wife routinely hold follow each other in areas of their expertise, it is not difficult for a Christian woman to follow the leadership of a man who is prayed up, trying to follow God's will and loves her like Christ loves the Church. In fact, there are millions of Christian women who even encourage their husbands to lead by refusing to make decisions unless he makes the final call. When a woman loves a man she pays no attention to what the feminist say; that she should exercise her sense of authority and not be relegated to a secondary role. The Christian woman does not see following her husband's lead as demeaning, but as enhancement of her role in the marriage to represent the church in the relationship. The Church follows Christ. It may pray and ask for one direction or another, but in the end, the church says, "Where is leads, I'll follow. I'll go with him, with him all the way."

WHEN A CHRISTIAN WOMAN LOVES A MAN SHE LOVES HIM ONLY: Fidelity is a key part of any relationship. A woman who loves a man does not dishonor him by soiling their relationship. She does not cheat on him or otherwise defile the marriage bed. The married Christian woman loves her husband and has no desire to share what she gives to him with others or to advertise or flirt with others in ways that may infringe on something that is his and his alone. Ephesians 5:22 and 24 both contain the phrase "own husband." Verse 24 ends with "in everything." It means that everything about him is for him and him only. Her desire is to please him only. She dresses for him, and not for others. She parades herself before him and not before others. She reveals herself to him and not before others.

You must Love The Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters every woman should know that it will be difficult to love and follow her husband if she has not learned to love and follow the Lord.

There are many marriages and relationships today that are "on the rocks" instead of standing on the rock.

Many relationships are breaking up today because either the husband has not been assuming the role of Christ in the family or the wife has not been responding to her husband like Church would to Christ.

A woman who loves the Lord wants a man who will love her like Christ loves the church.

A woman who loves the Lord is above all others:

Adam had eve; Abraham had Sarah; Isaac had Rebekah;

Jacob had Rachel; Boaz had Ruth

But Christ had the church!

Church shows every woman how to love a man by showing us how to love the Lord!

When we really love the Lord, he responds to us.

When we love the Lord, In times of:

—CRISES he becomes our comfort: WEAKNESS he becomes our strength;

—ANXIETY he becomes our assurance; DANGER he becomes our refuge;

—ADVERSITY he becomes our shelter; FEAR he becomes our courage;

—LONELINESS he becomes our friend; SICKNESS he becomes our doctor;

—DIFFICULTY he becomes our inspiration; SORROW he becomes our joy

When a woman knows the Lord, it's easy to love man who acts like him.

When a woman loves a man who loves her like Christ loves the church she'll stand by him: In sickness and in health, for better or for worse, if he doesn't have a dime in his pocket, she'll stay right there, with the help of the Lord.

A woman who loves a man says the same thing to her godly husband that she says to the Lord:

"I love you in the morning!

"I love you in the noon day!

"I love you in the midnight"

We love the Lord because one day he picked up an old rugged cross and died for me out on Calvary's hill!

I love him because early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me!

No. 9390-Family

When Singles Love Each Other

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 23, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4:11

Introduction

We have an idea how married couples love each other, but how do singles love? That's a question that troubles many Christian singles as they try to sort out what it means to be Christian, single and free.

Christian singles covers a large category of individuals that ranges from high schoolers, to college students, young adults, widows and widowers and even senior citizens. There are millions of single Christians who read the rules in the bible about marriage and family but struggle to decipher what the bible says about the single Christian life.

There is a considerable amount of misinformation given to Christian singles that has caused confusion among many and has prompted others to fall away from the faith. This has happened primarily because of what we have seen in the movies, read in books and witnessed in music videos. Singles are portrayed as wild and loose, ready to get drunk and dive into bed with the first person they see of the opposite sex. Their are millions of others who make marriage promises to each other and start playing house before they walk down the isle. That's the Hollywood picture. However, there are millions of Christian singles who are being led by the Holy Spirit in their relationships as they attempt to present themselves as holy vessels of God.

There are two kinds of singles: Christian singles and worldly singles. A worldly single is a person who defines love biologically and responds physically. A Christian single is a person whose life is dedicated to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

A worldly single thinks about "self" and seldom considers the other person. A Christian single thinks about "the other person" and whether or not God would be satisfied with any action taken. Put another way: A worldly single gets in a fast car with a friend and drives 120 miles an hour on a straightway just to see how fast he can go. A Christian single considers what could happen to others if there is a crash and is always aware that there is a speed cop on the highway watching for speeders. One doesn't care but just wants to please himself. The other is concerned about how others will be affected and what God thinks.

Singles search the scripture to learn how to love as God loves. A single man wants

God to be pleased with his actions. A single woman wants to please God first, by demonstrating her ability deny herself for him.

As Christians, we know that God showed us how to love. It is an all encompassing love that never lets go. Singles try their best to emulate that love in their lives leaving it up to Him to guide their steps day by day.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he encourages individuals to love God and one another.

All believers are encouraged to love God and to obey Him. The idea of the text is that those who love God will desire to carry out His commandments and to help others to do the same.

The text lays out the principle that those who have been saved by the blood of Jesus love differently than others. They try to love is God loves and therefore relate to one another as a mirror of that love

God loves the world with an unconditional love that prompted sacrifice. Those who follow His example love each other the same way.

The ideal relationship state of a Christian is to be a single person who is free to love others they way God loves, in word and deed. In 1 Corinthians 7:32 Paul says that the single believer is free to spread the love of God and serve the kingdom without responsibilities that come with marriage. Those who marry, said Paul, have "worldly troubles" or increased responsibilities. These responsibilities decrease one's ability and availability to respond to the outreach and evangelistic needs of the church.

Single living makes it easier to put the love of the kingdom and service to others at the top of our priority lists.

John and Paul both underscore the importance of singles loving one another. However, the love that is spoken of is not an erotic love but one that shows concern, compassion, friendship and empathy with others to the extent of personal sacrifice.

Paul notes that when that love goes beyond the areas of: service, compassion, friendship and empathy and becomes erotic in nature, it's time to get married. If, in the process of sharing, friendships singles become erotically inclined 1 Corinthians 7:9 says they should marry. "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

How do singles love each other?

Today, there are millions of singles who interact with each other in loving ways. They listen to each other, help each other, defend each other and sacrificially serve each other. That's the way God loves. So, how do singles love each other? Consider that:

THE CHRISTIAN SINGLE HAS A CHRIST CENTERED APPROACH TO ROMANCE. Christian singles are those who have turned their lives over to Christ

and as a result their entire approach to love has changed. Because Christian singles place their lives in God's hands they have a different view of love, purity, and the freedoms associated with being single. Before becoming Christians, singles concerned themselves with what felt good for themselves and they were consumed with thoughts of passion and romance. A saved single brings a different attitude into a relationship that is not so much about "having a good time" as it is an opportunity to love another person as God loves: from the soul rather than from the body.

CHRISTIAN SINGLES SEEK FRIENDS NOT LOVERS: Those who are Christians should seek friendship not romantic encounters. The way the world sees relationships is for a woman to see a fine hunk of a man and desire to strike up a romantic relationship with him. A man sees what the Ohio Players once called a "Brick House" and starts fantasying about romance. The Christian single is different. The Christian single seeks friendship and fellowship; romantic encounters are not a consideration. Friends talk, share, support, and engage each other intellectually and communicate frequently. Friends share secrets, faith and weaknesses. Friends work together for a common cause and enjoy each other's company. It's possible for a person to be a lover without being a friend. Friends can love each other with a godly love without being lovers, if friendship is the real purpose of the relationship.

Christian singles protect themselves against the weakness of the flesh, because it is possible and highly likely that friendships can lean to erotic attractions. To guard against passionate weaknesses Joshua Harris, in his book "I kissed dating goodbye" warns that Christian singles should avoid romantic dates because they present too many opportunities for temptation. He asks, "How many times can you lick a Tootsie Roll before you get to the crunch?" If you keep licking sooner or later it will be crunch time.

So singles should: 1) Avoid Premature intimacy. Avoid situations that will encourage intimacy outside of marriage. Associate with friends of the opposite sex in "social units" of three or more sharing people. 2) Serve others with others. Friends share through service to others. They feed the homeless, help the poor, stand for a cause with others. In the sharing, friendships often develop but the presence of others keeps the line clear. Moreover, sharing in social units with a godly purpose helps singles to honor and respect each other. Romans 12:10 says we should "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." Our friendships should honor God and they should honor the persons with whom we share them. Seek friends not lovers.

CHRISTIAN SINGLES MUST GUARD THEIR HEARTS: A Christian single loves God with all of his/her heart, body and soul. For that reason singles must protect themselves from falling away from the love of God. They must guard their hearts. 1 John 2:15-16 reminds us that we should love God and avoid loving like the world loves. Look at 1 John 2:16. It describes how the world loves, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." To guard against lust of eyes and ears Christian singles must avoid things and situations that open this door. Watching lusty videos and music

that arouses your erotic passions stirs passions that can get out of control. Listening to erotic and sexually suggestive music has the same effect. It opens the door to the heart. Once opened it is hard to close. Just as lust can open the door to our hearts, many singles have plunged into relationships out of feelings of loneliness. They see their friends with mates that seem to be happy and start feeling worse off. Soon, they jump into the first relationship they see and start taking the wrapper off the Tootsie-Roll.

It is difficult to guard your heart; often the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. That's why Christian singles pray regularly and associate with other Christian singles who are sharing the same experience. If we are not careful to stay prayed up our hearts can condemn us. 1 John 3:20 says God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything. The best way to guard your heart is to stay prayed up.

WHEN SINGLES SENSE EROTIC ATTRACTIONS THEY PREPARE TO MARRY OR BREAK OFF: When friendship moves from agape relationships into erotic relationships, it is then time for singles to plan their marriage or break off. When the partner starts to arouse romantic interest that's when the Christian single pulls out the check list to see if the person to whom they are attracted is a desirable mate. Prayerfully evaluate the person on the issues of life that are lasting; not those that appeal to life eye or passion. Josh Harris suggests that we should: 1) Evaluate a person's character not their looks or body. Looks change but character is enduring. A good rule of thumb is ask yourself can you love the way the person will look 30 years from now. For a glimpse, look at their parents, they will one day look just like them. 2) Evaluate Person's relationship to God. 2 Corinthians 6:14 warns us not to be unequally yoked. A person who does not share your love of God will pain you in the years ahead. 3) Evaluate how he/she deals with other people. If the person has trouble respecting authority, is argumentative and domineering he/she may have difficulty holding a job or even submitting to God's will 4) Evaluate his/her friends. Your prospective will be influence by the actions of his/her friends. How they act and what they value and how they have fun will influence him/her 5) evaluate his/her personal discipline. Watch how he/her uses money, spends time and whether or not they are preoccupied with what others think. 6) Evaluate Attitude. Assess the person's attitude about following God's will, humility, work and contentment.

If you are attracted to a person but cannot see yourself marrying the person, then break it off. Don't waste time in a relationship that is going nowhere. Whatever you do, don't unwrap the Tootsie Roll.

You must Love The Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that the ultimate goal of any relationship is to love like God loves.

Because God loves us unconditionally, He is a forgiving God.

Because God is a forgiving God we may have messed up in our past, but he gives us another chance.

There are many singles who became intimate too early and made mistakes. Thank God for grace; because of grace God gave us all a second chance.

Our goal today should be to love more like God loves and less like ourselves.

If we loved like God loves we would have:

-A little more peace and little less confusion;

-A little more gratitude and little less ungratefulness;

-A little more prayer and little less lip service;

-A little more compassion and a little less heartlessness;

-A little more real Christian love and little less imitation;

-A little more "do as I do" and little less "do as I say"

-A little more "bended knee" and little less "crooked hearts"

Every day we should demonstrate the love of God through our willingness to honor our partner and not cause him/her to sin.

We should wait before we become intimate because the bible says, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

We should demonstrate love through our acts and deeds but not consummate love until we have made the ultimate commitment before God.

That's what God did for us. He demonstrated love through acts and deeds, and then Christ came and made the ultimate sacrifice.

God showed his love:

-When he opened the Red Sea for Israel to cross on dry land.

-When he rained down bread from heaven for them in the wilderness.

-When he made the sun stand still for Joshua in the Canaan land.

-When he woke me up this morning, and clothed me in my right mind!

-When he showed compassion on me and put food on my table!

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son..."

One evening on a hill called Calvary God showed His love!

But early Sunday morning, we saw the life giving power of his grace!

When He got up that Sunday morning He gave us all a new song to sing, "Love lifted me!"Love lifted me! When nothing else could help love lifted me!

No. 9391-Youth

What's in your Back Pack?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

A Parable Sermon

August 30, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. "Matthew 11:28-30

Introduction

Have you ever carried a heavy load? Have you ever wished that there was a way that you could lighten your load or at least get a little help carrying it? Each person carries a load of burdens. The burdens are associated with what we call life and the things we think we need to survive.

Each of us carries a back pack, much like the back pack that children carry to school. Just like those back packs, our back backs are often filled with things that make us uncomfortable. The pack itself is not heavy, it's what's in the back packs that make them so heavy.

As Christians we should consider giving our what's in our back packs to Jesus. He has promised to make them lighter.

Exposition

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus tried to explain to believers that faith in Him lightens our load and gives even greater satisfaction. He told them to take his yoke upon them because His burden is light. The people knew what Jesus referred to because they were farmers. They knew that yokes were used by animals to pull wagons. Sometimes people placed yokes on their shoulders to help them carry large loads. The yokes often became heavy. Jesus applied the heavy yokes idea to people who tried to be happy by obeying the hundreds of items in the law without really knowing God. The bible also refers to sin as a great yoke upon us too.

In both cases Jesus asks every believer to let him give them a lighter load, but of course it would mean they would have to take a chance on him, and let go of the world.

The Parable

Two strangers met three men and gave them the opportunity to be completely happy. Each one was given a back pack that was to contain their future. They were warned that their happiness would be determined by whether they held on or let go. Each of them smiled as the back packs were filled one at a time with bricks that they could exchange for happiness when they reached the end of the journey. Each was given a large brick for riches, fame, success, partying, possessions, popularity, and power. They were all excited because they had in the packs everything that could guarantee them full happiness. As they began the journey the weight of the packs became a problem. At first they noticed it but did not worry about it because they were strong. After a while the weight the weight of the packs began to bother them a little. The straps began to cut into their shoulders. They leaned forward to try to distribute the weight, but still they walked on. The more they walked the heavier the backpacks became. When they sat down the packs made them uncomfortable, they squirmed in their seats often and could never quite settle in because the back packs took up so much space.

Noticing that they were struggling with the packs the second stranger offered to take their packs from them and store them away. Instantly, they remembered their warning that their happiness would be determined by whether they held on or let go. Each of them refused to let go of their packs. Their faces began to weary as each step they made seemed to become harder and harder. It was not the steps, it was the weight of their load.

As they walked they were given a chance to remove some of the items. They opened their bags and looked and considered the contents. What should they remove? Riches weighed the most but they could not imagine happiness without lots of money. Neither could there be happiness without partying, lots of possessions and popularity. As they pondered what to remove they remembered the warning again that their happiness would be determined by whether they held on or let go.

As the days passed they slumped in their walk, and seldom smiled. The back packs had became a heavy burden that constantly troubled them. They were supposed to bring happiness at some point but they were causing so many problems. Everywhere they went the backpacks got in the way.

The second stranger came one last time and spoke to each of them one at a time. “Give me your back pack and you take mine; then your journey will be easier,” said the stranger. “No,” responded the first , if I let go I’ll lose my happiness.” When he approached the second he received a similar response, “No, I know it’s heavy but I’m willing to bear it all to get happiness.”

The stranger said, “The pack you have is very heavy because it represents a life without God. It promises happiness but without God happiness can never be achieved. You may never know who your real friends are, you will never know real peace and joy. The pack is so heavy that you will never really know God. This pack represents all of your sins.”

However, the third man felt the weight of the load. Like the others he wanted happiness but the load was heavy. He decided to swap back packs with the stranger. Instantly he noticed that the new pack looked like the old one but it was lighter, much lighter.

The man asked, "Is there anything in this pack? Am I losing my chance at happiness?"

The stranger said, "This is a 6:33 lite pack."

"I've never heard of a 6:33 lite pack. What's that?"

"It's from Matthew 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of the these things will be added unto you."

The man thought: this pack is too light is there anything in it?" The stranger told the man to look in the pack. He found several pieces of fruit. He held them up one at a time as he said, "This 6:33 lite pack is loaded with 5:22's."

"What's 5:22's," asked the man

"It's from Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, and temperance.

The stranger said, "You seek happiness, but the pursuit of happiness requires you to carry a very heavy load. The pack that I present you offers you joy instead. Joy in the little things, peace of mind, the ability to endure tough times with a spirit of compassion and humility. I present you the wisdom to be temperate to know when to hold on and when to let go. I present you faith in God; with that faith you can achieve the impossible."

The stranger then took the man's heavy pack and placed it on his back. When the other two men noticed this they wanted lite packs too. They gave the stranger their packs too. And he carried them away over his shoulder and on his back.

Somewhere up the road they heard the crowds shouting "Crucify him!" The three men looked through the crowd and saw the second stranger carrying an old rugged cross. They were whipping him and pushing him and he often fell down. That cross was heavy, but it was even heavier because the stranger carried on his shoulder three back packs that contained all of their sins! He could have taken them off but he didn't.

The men were sad when they learned that he died but Sunday morning, they were excited. Early Sunday morning they learned that he had risen from dead, ready to show millions of others how to lighten their load.

They saw him standing before them with outstretched hands but he didn't have their back packs? What happened to their backpacks?

Then they looked at the cross on the hills and saw them nailed to that cross.

He took their heavy load and nailed it to the cross!

He took their sins and nailed them to the cross!

And now he announces to the word "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

No.9392-Family

The Gift of Godly Grandparents

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 13, 2009

SCRIPTURE: For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. Psalm 61:5 "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them." Numbers 27:7

Introduction

Each of us has four grandparents; have we ever stopped to think how differently our lives would be today, if none of them knew the Lord? It's possible for one or two of our grandparents not to know God, but the fact that at least one of the four knew God has made a great impact on our lives. It was our grandparents who, in many instances, influenced our parents to know, fear and worship the Lord. Our parents in turn had a strong influence on our lives. If all four of our grandparents lived outside of the faith, there is no doubt we would be different people today.

There are some of us who were not reared in the presence of our biological grandparents, but we fell under the influence of those godly men and women who acted as god-parents, for our sake. These were men and women who were not our blood relatives but for all practical purposes were our grandparents because they brought us before God and kept us under his protection and favor.

What would have been our direction without them? If your grandparents had not tried to teach godly values in their homes, what are the odds that your parents would have learned them own their own? If at least one of your parents had not known the power of God and insisted on family members worshipping together and living godly lives, where would you be today?

When we think about it, God has blessed us tremendously by giving us at least one godly parent or grandparent. Those who have had four godly grandparents, and even more when great-grandparents are counted in the number, should rejoice today because it is obvious that God started laying the ground work for blessing us long before we were born and He is doing it today through the godly heritage that we have inherited.

Grandparents have been the source of strength of every godly family because they are seen as the unmovable models of godliness in the family circle. It has not been easy for them to accomplish this goal because preserving the family has cost many of them their good health, fortune and the best years of their lives. Godly grandparents are the living gift to their children and grandchildren that seems to keep on giving.

All of that giving leaves its mark. Consider the little girl who watched her mother ironing clothes. For nearly 15 minutes she stared strangely at her mother but never said a word. Suddenly she notice that her mother has several strands of white hair in her head. There were only about four or five of them but yet they were there. The girl then asked her mother, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mama?" Her mother replied,

"Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white. Remember, when you took that dollar bill out of my purse and said you didn't do it? One of my hairs turn white after that. Remember when you and your brother were fighting and you almost blinded him? Another one of my hairs turned white after that. It looks like every time you made me cry or worry another white hair appeared on my head." The little girl thought about that for a minute, then she ran into the next room and stared at her grandmother's head. She quickly ran back and said, "Wow, mama; I just looked at grandma's head and all the hairs on her head are white. You must have been something else!"

Actually, the bible says in Proverbs 16:31 " The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." A head full of white hair is not a sign that someone has made someone cry, but it is a sign of a wise and godly centered life; especially if the person who wears it has the age an experience that accompanies such a prize.

As Christians, we recognize that among the many ways that God has blessed us is that he placed us in a family that has been influenced by one or more godly grandparents. Thanks to that rich godly heritage we now know the Lord ourselves and prepare to face each day with the boldness that comes from possessing a godly heritage.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he pledges perpetual service to God in response to the godly heritage he was given.

In a moment of solitude David reflected on all the good deeds God performed for him in his life: protecting him and providing for him. He noted in Psalm 61:2 that God has been a high rock for his inspiration. In Psalm 61:3 he noted that God had been a shelter and a strong tower of protection against his enemies.

In the text, David pledges to keep his vow because God gave him a godly heritage that has protected him, nurtured him and supported him through all his days. He was the offspring of Abraham, a godly grandfather, generations removed. His entire

family had remained faithful to God over the years and this combined influence, which David called a godly heritage, has been a source of his strength.

The influence of a godly heritage opens doors. That's what happened in Numbers 27:1. Here, five women who were daughters of a godly family which had no sons found that the reputation of their family, through their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents was of such that they received the inheritance on the basis of a respect and credibility created generations before them by their grandparents.

The reputations of their parent and grandparents were spelled out. The women were the great grandchildren of Joseph whose godly and moral character was unquestioned in Israel. Because of his godly character, his son Manasseh lived a godly life; and because Manasseh lived a godly life, his son Makir lived a godly life. Because Makir lived a godly life, his son Gilead lived a godly life; and because Gilead lived a godly life, his son Hepher lived a godly life. And because Hepher lived a godly life, Zelophehad lived a godly life. As Zelophehad was the father of these five godly daughters, the godly heritage was carried through the entire line of Manasseh, who had a godly father, Joseph himself.

David referred to the heritage of godliness given to him by his grandparents as a source of his strength.

The five daughters of Zelophehad learned that a door that would have ordinarily been closed to them was opened because they were blessed to have been given "The gift of Godly grandparents."

Grandparents are a gift

Today, every grandchild should look at your family and see how God has blessed you. Of your four biological grandparents at least one of them knew the Lord; if not God saw to it that you fell in the hands of a godly aunt, uncle or friend of the family who pushed you in a godly direction. It's an unseen gift that often we don't recognize because it is intangible. It cannot be readily seen or recognized until we step back and see the whole picture; how God has really blessed us through giving us a godly heritage.

GRANDPARENTS GIVE US A SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE: Godly grandparents give us a spiritual inheritance. They show us through their example what it means to live a spirit filled life. What makes it work so well is that we also know that they are not perfect, sometimes lose their tempeers and can get a bit rough when they have to, but beneath it all there is a layer of faith in God that guides them. Children see that faith layer and try to emulate it in their lives; to a large extend their parents received it from their grandparents. Faith is not automatic it comes with time and from constantly hearing about the power of God. In fact, Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Where does a child first hear about trusting God? Not at church, but at home! Where does a child see faith and trust in God in action? He or she sees it in the example of his mother and father. Godly grandparents have a repetitious litany of sayings that have been burned into the ears

and hearts of their grandchildren: "Trust in the Lord, child, and he will provide;" "The Lord will make a way somehow;" "I know the Lord will answer prayer." They all seem like empty phrases until you watch your grandparents step out on their faith and stand tall, even in the face of danger, sickness and death. If you are a man or woman of faith today, know where it came from, and give God the praise.

GRANDPARENTS KEEP UP WITH THE ACTS OF THEIR GENERATIONS: The word of God encourages grandparents to teach their grandchildren the way of the Lord. Why grandparents? Often grandparents have more influence about godly matters than parents because they are perceived as seasoned, experienced and wiser. So, it behooves grandparents to keep up with their grandchildren, especially those who have tendencies to run wild. In times past, grandchildren came to visit grandparents often and stayed long; the entire family lived on the same farm or just up the road. Today, there is a different dynamic; grandchildren are often in other cities and communicate differently. Just as grandparents of the past had to learn to use a telephone, those of this generation must learn 21st century communication. If granny had a good cell phone she could keep up with her grandchildren through voice or text messages. Grandpa could see their pictures and keep up with their social lives on Facebook, Myspace and Twitter. In fact, many grandchildren would tone down their online activities considerably if they knew their grandparents were reading their posts. Wouldn't it be something if Grannies started posting little spiritual reminders to their grandchildren on their Facebook pages? Grandparents must keep up with their grandchildren because they are commanded to do so by God. Deuteronomy 6:7 says "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

GRANDPARENTS PASS TO US THE FAMILY LEGACY: Families have legacies that did not begin with the present generation but began with great grandparents. In 1957 Alex and Mary Chandler a poor family spent all they could earn chopping cotton and stripping corn to send all nine of their children to college. They all graduated and now the third generation of their family passes on that heritage of academic excellence, all of their grand children are now college graduates and the great grands are planning to do the same. They were featured on CBS news nationally as an example of a family legacy passed on from one generation to the next. So grandparents, even more than parents, keep reminding the family of its legacy. "You are a Johnson, and Johnson's don't take charity." "You are a Jones, and Joneses don't drop out of school." "You are a Jackson and Jacksons don't steal." Grandparents pass on the family legacy of prayer, faith in God and strength to each succeeding generation and rarely pass up a moment to tell the story. A grandparent's family speech might be their way of passing on the legacy and doing what Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." That training does not end with children but it extends to every generation.

Grandparents greatest gift is Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the greatest gift that God gives us is a grandparent who introduces us to Jesus.

Without knowing the Lord, our lives would constantly be filled with hopelessness and helpless frustration, that's why grandpa recommends the family to Jesus.

Can't you hear a godly grandparent saying, "Sometimes difficulties can cause anxiety attacks, severe indigestion, sleepless night, atrocious attitudes, and swings in your mood, but when that happens, I recommend Jesus!"

Can't you hear grandpa saying, "Troubles in life are never convenient; they are inconvenient, they always come at the wrong time. Troubles are never pleasant, they are unpleasant. Troubles are never comfortable, they make us uncomfortable, but when trouble comes, I recommend Jesus!

Godly grandparents are gifts to us because they show us what it means to have faith in the Lord.

A godly grandfather teaches his grandsons how to work for a living, love his wife and trust God to keep food on the table.

Grandpa didn't have much education but he knew enough to know that you should treat people the way you want to be treated. He constantly teaches his grandchildren to never give up on a godly dream, because the Lord will make a way somehow!

Godly grandmothers spent much of their time praying for their children and grandchildren.

Only God knows the number of nights that grandma spent on her knees praying for her children.

Some of us are surviving today, because we are still living on grandma's prayers.

Those who have weathered the storm know the power of God.

Ask any godly grandparent and they'll tell you...God is able!

Ask grandma and she'll tell you that God is able to take our:

—BURDENS and make them light; DISAPPOINTMENTS and give us renewed hope!

—FRUSTRATIONS and give us encouragement; DOUBTS and give us confidence!

—WEAKNESSES and give us strength; FEARS and give us courage!

As I close, I'm reminded of the granddaughter who came to her grandmother one day and said, "Grandma, I need to know your secret. You always seem to be in control. When the winds came and took the roof off of your house, you never complained. That year when the flood ruined our house you came over smiling and helped us dry things out. That year daddy was worried about paying the bills you came over and prayed for him and soon after, things improved. What's your secret? What do you know that I need to know?" The grandmother answered, "Well chile, It's not what I know but who I know. It's not WHAT you know but WHO you need to know. When winds blow, I know a man who can speak to the winds and say peace be still. When

waters rise, I know a man who can roll back the waters and make a path on dry land. When money runs out, I know a man who makes a way out of no way. It's not what I know, but who I know and His name is Jesus.

"I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I tried Him for myself!"

Grandparents you are God's gift to your family telling the story!

Tell them about the beauties of heaven and horrors of hell

Tell them that they must know the Lord for themselves!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them how early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Tell them in the morning!

Tell them in the evening!

Tell them in the midnight hour!

Tell them no matter what comes their way...God is able!

No. 9393-Anniv. Pastor

The Call and The Answer

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 2009

SCRIPTURE: Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isaiah 6:8

Introduction

Have you ever known people who accept a challenge only to give it up later? There are many people who quickly announce that they will accept an assignment, task, or duty but abandon it if the task proves to be difficult.

Often when a person accepts a task all of the possible difficulties and frustrations associated with it are not considered. Those who do not consider the cost of their commitment are often frustrated along the way, especially when the task proves to be cumbersome or loaded with frustrating moments.

Some approach their commitments like the man who had a secret girlfriend on the side; one that he had committed to care for with an apartment, money and attention. Soon the woman demanded more and he regretted his committment because she made his life extremely difficult. After a few years of the torture and frustration over her constant threats to tell his wife about their relationship the woman suddenly died, much to his sadness but also to his relief. The man attended her funeral and sat in the rear. At the end of the service the pall-bearers accidentally bumped into a wall, jarring the casket. The church was shocked to hear a faint moan from within the casket. They quickly opened the casket and found that the woman was actually still alive. In fact, she lived for ten more years giving the man even more frustration. Then she died again. The man attended the second funeral, held at the same church. Again he hid himself in the crowd. At the end of the ceremony, the pall bearers began carrying out the casket. As they walked, the man jumped up from his corner in the crowd and yelled, "WATCH OUT FOR THAT WALL!" -That was one commitment he wanted to break.

Commitment is a character trait that is unique among God's great prophets. To accept a ministerial calling requires a great sense of humility, awe and respect for God. That's often the reason God selects certain men to champion his call. Many pastors are humbled to consider that God could have chosen anyone to do what we do. Yet he chose us. We ask, "Why me?"

We are not alone in the query, many others before us have also asked the same

question. David said in Psalm 8:3-4, " What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? " Job asked in Job 7:17, "What is man that thou should magnify him?" Psalm 144:3 asks, "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him?"

The humble pastor charged to shepherd a congregation asks, "Why me?

The humble pastor who has been lifted to lead large assemblies, associations and conventions, often asks, "Why me?"

The very fact that a man is humbled before God points to the reason God has selected him. Psalm 89:19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Everything that happens has a reason and purpose, according to God's divine plan. When a man or woman of God is given a gavel or pulpit, it is not a coincidence of nature. God is in the plan. When that pulpit is accepted, it should be done with a sense of dedication and commitment to building the kingdom of God regardless to the frustrations that lay ahead.

As Christians, we know that God looks for the humble and dedicated servant to lead his people. He considers those who often consider themselves worthy and elevates them to his service. Blessed is the man who accepts God's calling by responding, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me."

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's call and acceptance into the ministry as a prophet of God.

The 6th chapter sets the time of Isaiah's calling as the year that King Uzziah died. Uzziah had been a dominating figure in Jewish history and in many respects the people placed him before God. Many could not see God's hand in their national affairs because of the overpowering presence of King Uzziah. Yet, when Uzziah died many were able to see that he was just a shadow of the awesome power of God. They could not see God because Uzziah, to many, became the person upon which they depended. In that context, Isaiah says, "In the year King Uzziah died I also saw the Lord."

Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision that showed him standing in the presence of God who was high and lifted up, surrounded by cherubim with six wings and a host of angels. In this vision, Isaiah heard God ask for an ambassador, spokesman and prophet to speak for him among the people. Isaiah's first response was to note that he was unworthy for the calling that God wanted because he had unclean lips; but that excuse was resolved when an angel appeared in the vision and purged his lips with a burning hot coal.

With his reservation resolved, Isaiah answered "Here am I, send me."

Isaiah accepted the call on faith in God alone because what God wanted him to do was spelled out after Isaiah accepted, which was unique. Isaiah accepted first then was told what he was to do.

In comparison to others Isaiah accepted his call quickly: Seven others were slow

to accept their calls to ministry including Moses who had many excuses; Barak who was hesitant, Gideon who wanted signs; Jeremiah who claimed inexperience; Jonah who did not agree; Balaam who at first refused over money issues; and Peter who claimed himself unworthy. Unlike, these Isaiah accepted his calling immediately and remained true to it throughout his life.

Isaiah's sense of commitment to his call demonstrated the commitment that every minister of God must have to carry God's word to the furthermost parts of the earth, under the worst circumstances and in the face of clear and present danger. That commitment is what God expects from those He elevates; it is also the commitment that He will reward in the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is the Pastor's Call?

PASTORS MUST KNOW THEIR CALLING: Today, many respond to God's call and plunge themselves into the ministry. They quickly say, "Here am I, send me" without listening for the rest of the call. Isaiah came forth first and accepted then call then listened to his assignment. There are many today who have listened to the rest of their call and have plunged themselves into arenas for which they are not equipped.

The call to ministry may not always be a call to Pastor a church. It may not even be a call to be a great orator. A man who has trouble managing his own house, despite his best attempts is obviously not called to manage the house of God. A man who does not possess oratorical skills is not called to be a great preacher. Yet, there is a call; a call to do what?

Some are called to teach others and not pastor. Some are called to counsel the wounded and build up those who are dispirited. Some are called to minister through music, song and dance. Some are called to show compassion to the poor and needy and to respond to the human needs of those who are in distress.

So, the believer who responds to the call of God by saying, "Here am I, send me" must be sure that he or she is aware of the nature of the call. Whether it's the pulpit or the pew, the front room or the back room, front lines or background. there must be a serious committment.

PASTORS MUST APPROACH THEIR CALLING WITH A GODLY SPIRIT: This pastor we salute today is one of millions around the world who approaches his call to ministry in the manner that Isaiah responded. Isaiah accepted his calling with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. He completely surrendered himself to his calling.

Today, the committed pastor must have a similar approach being totally committed to their calling, forsaking all other pursuits to concentrate totally on perfecting the ministry.

Every pastor should have a spirit of readiness that demonstrates but a desire to minister for the Lord and a willingness to serve. There are many who desire to follow God in their hearts but they are unwilling to make the total commitment. We must have both a desire and a commitment to be true to the call.

In addition to desire and willingness a pastor must also approach his calling with

determination. Determination is that aspect of his character that is often called *resolve*. It's the ability to go forth despite difficulties and frustrations. It is spiritual tenacity. It is the ability to go forth against the winds of public opinion and raise high the standard of God.

The pastor must also trust the Lord. There can be no commitment to the call unless the pastor trusts the Lord for the outcome. The success of a venture that has been inspired by God is guaranteed even if that success is not immediately seen. The pastor who knows this, trusts God to make a way for the ministry to succeed through his miraculous power.

Therefore, a committed pastor is one who is determined to carry God's word, despite problems, with the full knowledge that if he plants the seed, God will do the watering.

PASTORS MUST BE WILLING TO GO ANYWHERE: The Pastor who is committed to the call must be prepared to go anywhere and do anything to lift up the cause of Christ. There are many preachers today who want to pick and choose their fields of ministry, even though God's spirit leads them in a different direction than they want to go. There must be no limit to the places will go or things we will do to help spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must be willing to go to the jails and minister. Those who are incarcerated are hungry for the word of God. They seek knowledge about him and want to hear from the Lord. However, many preachers won't go to the jails to carry the word because that is beneath them. We must be willing to go there.

Likewise, we must be willing to minister to the homeless, drug addicts, the poor and destitute and those who are not able to make large contributions to our church but may require help and assistance. We cannot cast them aside along the highway of life.

Those who are committed to this call tell the Lord, "Here am I, send me to the worst neighborhoods and poorest sections of town and I'll witness for you!"

Here Am I, send me among the powerful and influential and I will not be afraid to speak a word of truth.

Here Am I, send me among the tired, beaten and trampled upon masses and I will lift you up in their eyes.

Here Am I, send me in the crowded housing projects or in suburban neighborhoods. Send me to towering condominiums or to the squalor of those condemned to live in cardboard boxes, and I will bring your word of hope.

Here am I Lord, send me!

Praise Pastors for their Christian Walk

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should praise pastors who are committed to their call. We should never fail to lift them up before God.

Pastors who have walked the walk as well as talked the talk, deserve our praise and prayerful support.

Our praise and acts of gratitude encourage weary pastors to continue walking the walk themselves as they also show us how to walk.

Isaiah had a powerful message to bring to the people that was direct from the throne of God. Often his message was thankless but it was direct from the throne of grace.

When members of a congregation notice that the pastor is committed to the call they draw inspiration from each of his steps.

Committed pastors, especially those who have risen from the ranks of the smallest of God's congregations know what it means to respond to the call; for them the words, "If the Lord needs somebody," takes on a new meaning.

When the committed pastor answers *Here am I send me* he joins the ranks of the watchmen who have done everything from lifting their voices as members of choirs, to watching dishes and mopping floors.

The committed pastor preaches the gospel but if it will help reach a lost soul, some have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain but in all of their doing they resolve, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

The committed pastor has gone to great lengths to answer his call. Some have preached the gospel on Sunday morning and emptied the church's trash cans on Sunday evening. Some have taught bible classes on Wednesday then washed the church van on Thursday. In all of their doing they don't complain they just remember their response to God's call and said, 'If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me."

So we are here to salute the pastor but we are also here to salute his commitment to the call.

We salute the pastor because he has taught us to walk in faith.

We salute him because he has taught us how to call on the name of the Lord!

We salute him because he has taught us that when our strength is failing that the Lord is El-Shaddai, the almighty God.

We salute him because he has taught us that when we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, that the Lord is, Jehova-Rohi, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want.

We salute him because he has taught us that when we are feeling like we're making this journey alone that the Lord is "Emmanuel" the everlasting God.

We salute our pastors because they continually remind us that, there is a name we need to hear; it's the sweetest name on earth.

It is the name the songwriter wrote about when he declared, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

The pastor who is committed to the call never lets us forget that there is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

The committed pastor constantly reminds us that there is a name.

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends our weakness and brings us strength.

What is that name? That's what the world wants to know.

The committed pastor says if the Lord needs somebody to lift up that name, "Here am I, send me!"

Send me to tell the world that there is no other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved except by that name!

Send me and I'll tell the world that the name they need to be saved from sin, is the name of Jesus!

Send me and I'll tell the world that the answer to the world's confusion is in the name of Jesus!

Send me and I'll tell the world that provision that the world needs and the salvation is seeks is in the name of Jesus

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh How I love Jesus. Because He first loved me."

He loved me so much that He hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!

No. 9394-Communion

Sopping Your Plate

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 20, 2009

SCRIPTURE:"He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night." John 13:30

Introduction

Have you ever tasted a meal that was so tasty that you wanted to get it all, even the crumbs and the juice? If so, then you were probably among those who threw the etiquette book out of the window, grabbed a slice of bread and sopped it all up?

There many who can remember when plate sopping was routine in African-American family life. It seemed that some food was made to be sopped.

What's your favorite sopping dish? Chicken and dumplings was a favorite of some. It was just understood that the biscuit on the table was made for the purpose of sopping up the dumpling broth on the plate. Ever used your pancake to sop up the syrup left on your plate?

Cornbread sops gravy, oh so well.

It seems that corn bread and biscuits could sop anything.

Some can remember when family members not only sopped up the remnants on their plates with their bread but they also ate with their fingers. Remember the old warriors sitting on the porch with a "mess" of mustard greens in a bowl? Remember how they took that cornbread and mashed it into the greens then ate the whole bowl with their fingers. Long before Colonel Sanders started Kentucky Fried, folks who sopped their food with their fingers were saying "It's finger licking good!"

Sopping our plates or eating with our fingers is not common anymore, but there are still thousands in our community, who still sop up the gravy and lick their fingers when no one is looking.

That's the way it is when God blesses us. Sometimes we get a bowl of happiness and plate full of answered prayers and we enjoy those times so much that we want them to last. We savor those moments and sop our plate.

It's in those moments that we remember Psalms 34:8 *O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*. Those are times when we say things the way that Forrest Gump would say it, "Life is like a big plate of biscuits and gravy, sometimes you got to sop it up!"

As Christians, we are thankful to God for every blessing we have receive. We don't intend to waste and single one. In fact, we intend to sop our plates clean.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus at his last meal before He went to Calvary.

At this meal He announced that one of them would betray him. Immediately the disciples looked among themselves asking, "Lord is it I?"

Jesus answered the person who betrays him will be the one who is recipient of the sop that He will give him.

A sop was a morsel of food dipped in a sauce and eaten with the hand. At a meal such as the Passover it was traditional for one common meal to be prepared in what we would call a stew and would be set in front of the guests. It would have been lamb briskets, bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Eating utensils such as spoons and forks were rare, most dinner guests would have eaten with their hands. Each person would take his bread and dip it in the sauce or stew and feed himself.

The first sop would have been the bread and the bitter sauce, an appetizer. Later the sop would have included the bread, lamb briskets and a cup of wine.

Jesus prepared the sop and gave it to Judas. It was a mark of respect for the host of a meal to present a sop to a guest. In the East, even today, hosts in many areas greet guests and honor them as they host dip a choice piece of meat or bread into the sauce with his finger and thumb and serve it to the guests, often putting it directly in their mouths.

It was considered an honor and blessing to be the recipient.

When Jesus gave Judas his sop He said something to him that was not said to the others. After receiving the sop John 13:27 says these words: "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, that thou doest, do quickly." Verse 28 says they had no idea what Jesus meant. They knew that Judas "had the bag" or kept the money and suspected that Judas was being instructed to make a special arrangement of some kind.

John provides a detail about the Lord's supper that Matthew does not tell. Matthew 26:25 mentions that Judas asks Lord is it I? then in Matthew 25:26-28 he notes, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Matthew doesn't tell it. Mark doesn't tell about it in Mark 14, but John says when Judas received his sop he left the table and was not there to get the blessing that was given over the main course of the sop. He took the little sop he had been given and the devil got him and he destroyed himself.

John 13:31 begins with *Therefore when he was gone out*, indicating the rest of the supper table conversation Jesus said to his disciples. Matthew tells of the blessing of the elements John does not.

Jesus blessed the bread and the wine and told them to drink ye all of it, don't leave anything. Drain your cup, clean your plate, and fulfill your destiny.

Thus, believer are likewise challenged to receive the blessing that God has given them and to use every minute of every day, every opportunity that presents itself and every chance that avails itself, to advance the kingdom.

In essence, whatever life has put on our plates and put in our cups we should carry our mission until the end.

Everything on Your Plate is Good

Life does not always serve us what we desire, but whatever is on our plate we should work with it.

Each life has a God ordained purpose that may or may not be appealing; we should strive to achieve our purpose. The Center on a football team is rarely seen and usually ends up on the bottom of the pile, but he has a valuable purpose. In a similar sense, God has placed our destinies on our plate; we should not push it aside but clean the plate.

The Passover meal was not the best meal that Israelites ate, yet everything in the meal was ordered by God and had a reason, even the not so tasty herbs instead of the fine seasoning were ordered by God. He wanted them to remember the bitterness of their slave experience. The bread and all of the food was unleavened and all of the food was served in a sop, soaked in bitter herbs. Yet, the disciples were sopping it up.

At age 80 Caleb was served a mountain when all others received rich pasture land but he sopped it up and said, "give me this mountain."

Esther was forced to serve as wife and queen to a foreign king but she sopped it up and ultimately saved her people from destruction.

Noah was ordered to build a boat in the middle of nowhere and was laughed at for 100 years but he sopped it up and found safety and protection in the ark.

Joshua was ordered to conquer the promised land with an army that had no weapons, but he sopped it up and found that God made the walls fall down.

Life may have given you a bowl of lemons, if that is the case then learn to make lemonade.

Everything on your plate in life may not be exactly what you desire, but everything has a purpose, sop it all up!

When your plate is full

What if you are dealing with what's on your plate but it is full and never seems to empty?

That's the way we often feel when we are dealing with many issues in our lives. Just when we thought we were clearing our plates something else happens to keep us faced with full plates.

That's when we start to feel like Job. Within the scope of a few days his plate was filled quickly. On one day they told him that all of his cattle had been stolen. On another day they told him that his children had been killed. Before he could finish dealing with that then he broken out in sores. His plate was full, but he sopped it all up and said, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

No matter how full your plate gets we must remember that God will not put more on your plate than you can handle. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Even with a full plate the believer prays and asks God for strength. The faithful believer tackles the full plate in front of him with determination.

To be determined means no matter how difficult the situation, there will be no turning back.

To be determined means no matter how exhausting the work, there will be no quitting.

To be determined means no matter how frustrating the circumstances are, we are going through.

This is the determination that the song writer wrote about when he said, "I determined to walk with Jesus, yes I am. Through hard trials, tribulations, persecutions, I'm determined to walk with Jesus, yes I am."

Let the Lord bless your plate

It doesn't matter what life puts on our plate, if God blesses it, it will turn out for His glory; therefore, we must not ever stop seeking his blessing.

The main course of the Passover meal was served last. After Judas left the blessing was given to the others.

There are too many who think they have been served the wrong plate, don't like what's on it and storm out into life and destroy themselves. Then there are others, like the remaining eleven disciples who allow the Lord to bless what's on their plate. After that, they sop it all up.

When God blesses your circumstance, it's bound to work out for your good. It may appear that you are about to be crucified, but that too will work to your advantage, when God blesses it.

One reason we bless our food is to ask God to allow what we eat to be good for the nourishment of our bodies and to strengthen and build up our health. We may not like milk or spinach or okra, but our prayer is that God will take these undesirable things on our plate and flip it so that they help us.

There are many marriages that have grown stronger after having suffered problems first. There are many ministers and bold witnesses that have arisen from prison experiences. There are many great souls in the church who were former drug dealers, alcoholics, prostitutes and adulterers, but God worked out all of that tragedy

and used it for their good when they allowed him to do so.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

That means whatever is on our plate in life will be good FOR us, even if at the moment it is not good TO us.

Get the right plate

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should make sure that our plates are big enough to handle what God puts on it!

There are many in life that approach God with the wrong plate. He’s passing out blessings, but they look like something we don’t like, so we approach God with saucers instead of plates.

At some social events the hosts only serve finger foods and the only dishes that are available are saucers, not plates. That’s because the guests were not being fed the main course. Saucers are provided at such events because guests are not encouraged to get full but to taste and nibble.

But when God sets our table he doesn’t fill it with saucers and tea cups and tell us to nibble and sip; when you sit at his table be prepared to drink it all up and eat it all up.

We know that God prepares our table with the expectation of blessing our faith because Psalms 23:5 says, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

God’s table in life is prepared from his heavenly cabinet that is filled with any kind of plate we want. How far we can go is only limited by our faith and our plate.

What kind of plate are you? There are some who are:

PAPER PLATES: They run through life quickly and are destined for the garbage pile.

VANITY PLATES: They serve no purposed but to remind others where they’ve been and what use to be.

PLASTIC PLATE: They are too good to be thrown away but not good enough to be used constantly.

CHINA PLATES: Only serve on special occasions and even then have to be handled with care.

DINNER PLATES: Are meant to serve, with stoneware faith, are meant to be washed and used but don’t break easily.

It doesn’t matter what kind of plate life has given us, we are expected to serve not to sit on the shelf.

Whether our plates are round or square, plain or decorated, single or part of a set, when God gets ready to bless us we need to be ready to sop it all up!

When you sit at God’s table get ready to be blessed!

God’s table is never bare!

God’s fountain is never dry!

When it looks like it’s all gone, He keeps coming with more pots!

Just when you thought you had all that you could get, God started giving you more!

Just when you thought you had all the children you could get, God gave you some more!

Just when you thought you had all the clothes you needed, God gave you some more!

Just when you thought you had all the money you needed, God gave you some more!

The only thing that stands in the way of you and your blessing is the size of your plate!

The only thing that stood between believers and eternal salvation was an old rugged cross.

Jesus had been given a full plate and a bitter cup. I can hear him in the Garden saying Father, I don't like what's on this plate or the pain and agony that's in this cup, but never-the-less, not my will but thy will be done! He decided to sop his plate and drink his cup!

When He carried that cross up Golgotha's hill, he was still sopping the plate!

When they drove nails into His hands, he was still sopping the plate!

When they stuck a spear in his side, He was still sopping the plate!

But out about the 9th hour I heard him cry out "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?..It is finished!"

They buried him in a borrowed tomb and he stayed in the grave for three days and nights, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He drank the bitter cup!

He sopped the bitter plate clean!

No.9395-Youth

Good Children, In God's hands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 26, 2009

SCRIPTURE:And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. Exodus 2:2-4

Introduction

Have you paid attention to the increasing number of assaults on children that are happening around our nation? There seems to be an epidemic of massive proportions that is making the quietest neighborhoods, unsafe places for our children.

Everyday it appears that we read of someone who has abducted a child for some sordid purpose causing grief to parents.

The news is filled with accounts of sexual abuse, beatings, burnings, and rapes of children as young as three and four years old. The accounts weary us. We try to tune them out by changing the channel on our television sets but the same accounts appear on every station and newscast and they are the substance of many newspaper headlines.

Such news is especially discomforting to those with children and grandchildren because they can empathize with the parents they see on their television screens or read about in the papers. The assaults get personal and they cut deep. For many parents the wound is so deep it takes years for it to heal.

New laws now show us the names and pictures of pedophiles that live in our neighborhoods. Amber alerts put us on guard when children have been abducted and television programs such as *Nancy Grace*, inform us of every minute detail of the horrors children face.

No community is immune from abuses to children. There is no safe place on this planet; our children are happy and growing to be fine men and women, but they are at risk.

In a world so focused on self destruction, is there any hope for a Christian parent? Is there any word from the Lord?

There *is* a word from the Lord. The word is that parents should exercise due

vigilance themselves and then trust God for the rest.

As Christians, we must do all that we can to provide nurture and protection for our children; they are God's gift to us. When we have done all we know how to do, then we must put their future and destinies in God's hands.

Exposition

This text focuses on how Moses' mother protected him and placed him in God's hands.

Israel had been in bondage in Egypt for over 400 years. For four centuries they had prayed for a deliverer, a leader, that would help them break the shackles of their bondage and return them to the "Promised Land." When Pharaoh, heard that the slaves expected the birth of a deliverer he decided to protect the future of Egypt by ordering that all boys would be drowned in the river. Exodus 1:22 says, " And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."

Moses' mother, Jocebed, looked at him and concluded that he was "goodly" or that he was an especially good child with a divine purpose. She sought every way possible to conceal the fact that she had a son from the soldiers who went from house to house looking for boys to destroy. After three months she could no longer hide him she decided to make him a small boat, called an ark, made of straw and pitched it with slim and place the ark in the water near the place where Pharaoh's daughter came to wash from time to time. She did not know what would happen but there was a chance, if God willed, that she too might see the child as a special child with a divine purpose.

The little baby was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and named Moses because he was "drawn out" of the river. Moses' sister appeared and suggested that a Hebrew woman might make a great nanny for the child. God arranged it so Moses was reared in another woman's house, but in his own mother's arms.

Moses lived to achieve his destiny because his mother did what she could to protect him then placed him in the care of God.

Keeping them safe

Today parents should look closely at Jocebed's method and apply it to our present circumstance. We should consider that:

THE CHILD WAS NOT SAFE: Pharaoh heard that the Jews expected a deliverer to be born and ordered all the boys killed to prevent him from rising to overthrow Egypt. Today, like in biblical times, children are at risk from forces outside of the family. What is the risk? Children are the targets of predators that want to molest them, sexually abuse them, enslave them, and otherwise manipulate them for their own purposes. With the explosion of the internet, the market for child pornography has expanded. To make movies children are being stolen from play grounds, supermar-

kets and even their own yards. Increasingly, children are becoming the victims of violence and abuse as well as parents and guardians who are brutalizing them in horrible ways. Not a day passes without another account of a child who has been drowned, locked in a cellar for years, kept chained like a pet or even abused by misbehaving guardians. In Moses' time the fear was that soldiers would destroy the children; today the fear goes far beyond the fear of government but extends itself to a network of threats that if left unaddressed could lead to a child's destruction. The devil never sleeps. In fact he is constantly going to and fro looking for someone to devour. Parents today must be vigilant, cautious and mindful that there is no neighborhood, school, church, or community that is completely safe. In fact, the devil is more successful in safe areas because there, parents let their guards down. Parents today, cannot let their guards down, the risk is too great.

SHE SHELTERED WHEN AS MUCH AS SHE COULD: Moses' mother protected him as much as she could for three months. Today, parents should try to protect their children from predators. Today, many mothers want to make their daughters little beauty queens and dress them up like grown women when they are five years old and sometimes earlier. Sometimes they enter them in beauty pageants at age five, wearing lipstick and rouge. Each one is like a magnet attracting attention. Old school mothers saw to it that girls dressed modestly, not revealing their sensuality, but today even the smallest children are wearing revealing attire that attracts stares from would be predators. Even inside our homes we must be cautious; sometimes the predators are guardians and relatives. Youth are often not aware of the dangers that threaten them, so it is incumbent upon parents to protect their children to the best of their ability. Parents should scrutinize those who care for their children, teach them in school, mentor them in extra-curricular activities, and otherwise influence them. A parent who wants to know the background of a child's friends, takes seriously the ratings of movies and music, and insists upon adult supervision at all activities, is not being overprotective; that parent is doing what is expected of a parent. Jocebed protected Moses despite the fact that she was a slave who worked all day every day. She managed it for as long as she could; it was her duty.

SHE PUT HIM IN GOD'S HANDS: Moses' mother put him in the ark, and put his life in God's hands. There is just so much that any parent can do. All of the precautions in the world will not guarantee that children will be completely safe, there comes a time when we must put them in God's hands. The ark was not a completely safe place. It was a straw basket floating down a river filled with hungry crocodiles; so it was obvious that Jocebed was placing Moses in God's hands. Every parent must see to it that their children are placed in God's hands, the earlier the better. 1) Parents must pray constantly for God's protective grace. 2) Parents should take steps to insure that their children are spiritually strong by bringing them to church and religiously educating them at home. Jocebed took every precaution, she daubed the ark with slime to help it float, but she knew it would not float forever, but long enough for it to reach God's destination. 3) Parents should completely trust God. Jocebed put

Moses in the ark and left. His sister stayed behind, just to see what would happen. Parents should never stop trusting God for their children's protection.

In God's Hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, Jocebed's faith and parenting had a positive result because in God's hands, Moses' life was guided to its final destination.

Pharaoh's daughter reared Moses, gave him the best possible education and trained him in personal discipline. When the training was complete, he was ready to achieve the next part of his preparation.

God guided the ark, touched Pharaoh's daughter, and provided his growth and maturity through the hands that touched his life.

Children should be aware that their lives are in God's hands. It is He who guides and protects them. It is His spirit that is placing them in the hand of the right parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, scout leaders, big sisters and brothers, Sunday School teachers and youth leaders, whom He uses to shape their destinies.

Therefore it behooves us all to stay in God's hands.

In God's hands, our lives may seem to drift on the rivers of life but God will see to it that we fall into the right port.

In God's hands, we are directed through the reeds and brush of the river bank, into the hands of those who will hear our voice when we cry.

In God's hands, we will be safe and our destinies will be secure.

Parents, worried about their children's future should do all that they can, then trust them put them in God's hands, then step back and watch him work.

God's hands are the same hands that hollowed out the valleys and bulged the mountains up.

God's hands are the same hands that clap and make the thunder roll; that wave and cause the rain to trickle down from the clouds.

God's hands are the same hands that heal us when we are sick, lift us up when we are down and push us to move when we have come to a complete stop.

God's hands are the same hands that wake us in the morning and tuck us in at night.

It's these hands that David wrote about when he said, *In thee oh Lord do I put my trust.*

These are the hands that we reach up to when we sing, *Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go.*

These are the same hands that wrapped themselves around an old rugged cross one day and were stretched out wide in victory!

These are the same hands that were pierced with nails and bruised for our iniquities.

These are the same hands that rolled the stone and away to arise, lifted and glorified, Early one Sunday morning.

It is into these hands we place our trust!

No. 9396-Inspiration

Glad to be in the service

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2009

SCRIPTURE: And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Acts 2:46

Introduction

Have you ever seen people who look excited to be in worship? There is a look of enthusiasm about them and excitement seems to envelope them. When we are excited we are motivated to do more than we would normally do, go further than we would normally go and withstand more than we would normally withstand.

There is an old song we like to sing that says, "Glad to be in his service, Glad to be in his service one more time. He didn't have to let me live; he didn't have to let me live. Glad to be in his service one more time."

The thought of those simple words describe the joy of all believers when they render another service in the kingdom of God.

Anticipation contributes to our gladness as well. Consider the man who was rolled into the church in a wheelchair for an entire year because he didn't have strength to walk. They called him Clapping Charlie. All week long Clapping Charlie barely had enough strength to raise his hand but he insisted on worshipping every Sunday. From the moment they rolled him in the door Clapping Charlie started clapping his hands. He clapped when the choir sang. He clapped after the announcements were read. He clapped during the altar call and even during the sermon. After a while someone asked him, "Charlie, why do you clap so much when you are so sick." Charlie looked at the man and said, "I'm celebrating." The man was puzzled, "Celebrating what Charlie, you are in a wheel chair, we are praying for your healing but it hasn't come yet, what are you celebrating?" At the thought of healing Charlie started clapping again, "I know the Lord's going to help me win this battle, so I can't wait until the battle is over, I'm clapping and celebrating now!"

When God has done something for us, we are glad.

When God is doing something for us, we are glad!

When we are expecting God to do something for us, we are also glad.

When the Church gathers for worship, praise and prayer every saint comes before the throne, together with friends and family in a spirit of joy and happiness. Together,

we lift holy hands, lift our voices in song and proclaim the joy of the Lord.

As Christians, we enjoy kingdom service. We enjoy serving others, worshipping with others and praying with others. Each time we gather we say the words of the old song, "Glad to be in his service one more time."

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke as he describes the gladness and singleness of heart of the early church fellowship.

Luke notes that the early believers were enthusiastic about worship; it was not considered a chore, burden or obligation. They came together as one body "with gladness and singleness of heart." In doing so they prayed for the sick and constantly praised God. The power of their praise, according to verse 47, attracted others to the fellowship and many were added to the church on a regular basis.

This constant praise, prayer, fellowship and communing from house to house was generally called the communion of the saints.

The church joined in the regular praise of God and partook in the ordinance of breaking of bread celebrating the memorial of Christ's death.

They enjoyed praising God. They lifted his name with fervor and passion because they were excited about the prospect of eternal life.

Thus, the text indicates an important ingredient for unity in the body of Christ is regular praise and worship because it strengthens faith and builds the bond of Christ tightly together under one Lord, one faith and one Baptism.

What it means to be glad.

When there is true fellowship, a spirit of gladness is the result.

To be glad is to have a feeling of joy and exhilaration that bubbles and illuminates.

Gladness is hard to conceal. It is obvious and visible. It emanates from a feeling of security and warmth that is generated from a loving relationship.

Gladness is a cousin to joy, which comes from the inside. Described in Galatians 5 as a "fruit of the spirit" Joy is not conditional and is an endearing part of the Christian life experience. A Christian is joyful regardless of his circumstance or condition. If a Christian is bathed in riches he is joyful. At the same time, the word teaches us that the Christian is also joyful even in abject poverty. Whether he enjoys the best of health or is lying in a sick bed, the Christian is always joyful.

WE ARE GLAD BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED: Blessings from God make us exceedingly glad. That's one of the rewards of the Christian fellowship, the blessings. Whether the blessings we receive involve finance, health, peace of mind or happy homes, we celebrate when we have been blessed. Every person feels a sense of gladness after receiving a blessing. What person is not glad when they are blessed with a new house, car or long sought after appliance? When we see the hand of God blessing us with a few of the things we desire, there is "gladness." That's why we

are glad to be in his service because he rewards us with blessings.

WE ARE GLAD BECAUSE HE GIVES US ANOTHER DAY. Every day we get from the Lord is a blessing. Each day we open our eyes we are glad that we have one more day to serve and praise him. No matter if it's raining or the sun is shining we are glad. We view each day with wonder, respect and amazement. That's when we remember Psalm 118:24, *This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.* This is the type of gladness that comes after one has considered the universe and how God controls it. Gladness in this context is to feel protected because of the knowledge that we are the children of an all powerful God. When we say we are glad to see another day it brings to mind the little song the Mighty Clouds of Joy had in mind when they sang, *It's another day's journey and I'm glad about it. He gave me health and strength and I'm glad about it.* No matter what the day brings, it is a day created by an all powerful God and "I will be glad in it!" We are glad to be in his service every day he allows us to see.

WE ARE GLAD BECAUSE WE HAVE SOMETHING TO BE GLAD ABOUT: Someone asked why a mother, tired from working all day still finds time to come to choir rehearsal or an usher practice. Why is it that a man beaten by a hard day's labor still meets with the brethren of his church or gathers to perform a personal service for the church. The really wonder how these and others are able to serve with they are tired and weary and noticeably fatigued, but with smiles on their faces. They are glad because they have something to be glad about. That's what David had in mind in Psalm 126:3 when he wrote, *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad* the word used was *sameach* which means to show gladness.

It's O.K. to feel gladness but when the church is unified and on one accord, it shows its gladness

Every child of God ought to show a little gladness sometimes.
We can show our gladness through the smiles on our faces!
We can show our gladness when we clap our hands!
We can show our gladness by paying our vows to God!
Showing gladness should not be difficult if we have something to be glad about!

Praising God

Finally, brothers and sisters if you pay close attention you will notice that verse 46 ends with a comma. The comma suggests that after the worship in the temple; after the house to house ministry to each, and enjoying the spirit of gladness in their hearts, there was something else.

After the comma, verse 47 picks up with, *Praising God and having favor with the people*.

There is a reason why we are glad to be in his service, because we have been blessed ourselves and we want to bless others. Those who have no testimony have had no test that they have passed because there is no testimony without a test.

Consider the case of Sad Sally who came to church frequently but rarely moved her lips whenever the congregation sang. She sat politely and stared at the choir and other members, but never sang a word herself. She continued this practice for many years and it disturbed some members who entertained bad thoughts about her because she would never sing. One Sunday however, the entire church was pleasantly surprised when they saw Sad Sally singing. Her face lit up and she was beaming with enthusiasm. After the service several members surrounded her and asked why she seemed so jubilant. Sally told her friends that she had been fishing the day before and was caught out in the middle of the lake when a storm suddenly came up from nowhere. It blew the waters and top sized her little boat. She prayed to God for mercy because she knew she was seeing her last day. Just as quick as the storm started it stopped and soon she could see the sun again. When she was plucked from the water and brought to shore she thanked the Lord.

"This morning I had to sing along when I heard the choir say 'When the Storms of life are raging..stand by me.' I've heard it many times but somehow I understood it when we sang, 'I was sinking deep in sin far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I.'

I almost shouted when I heard the words "Love Lifted me!"When you saw me grinning, it was because the choir was singing, "There's a bright side somewhere. My lips couldn't be still when I heard the choir say "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was lost but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

At that point the church members knew why Sally was singing so much in the service ....She had found something to sing about. She was glad to be in his service!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to be in his service!
I'm glad to lift my hands in praise!
I'm glad to bow down in prayer!
I'm glad to help somebody as I pass along!
I'm glad to tell somebody about the savior!
Do you know him today?
His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!
Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!
Jesus, the bright and morning star!
Jesus, my bridge over troubling water!
Jesus, my lawyer in the courtroom
Jesus, my doctor in my sickroom!
Jesus, who picked up an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary!
But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave, with all power in His hands!
I don't know about you, but I'm glad to be in His service!
I'm glad that He picked me up and turned me around!
I'm glad that He planted my feet on solid ground!
I'm glad! Glad to be in His service, one more time!

No. 9397-Revival

House to House Faith

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2009

SCRIPTURE: And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Act 2:46

Introduction

There is a children's song entitled, "The more we get together." In it the children sing "The more we get together the happier we'll be. For your friends are my friends and my friends are your friends, the more we get together the happier we'll be." Another verse also sung in some quarters, "For your house is my house and my house is your house, the more we get together the happier we'll be."

One of the great joys of the Christian faith is the fellowship of men and women who are committed to living the Christian life. Those who share the same common purpose enjoy hanging out with each other. They support each other and entertain each other and thereby increase their faith and strength as they strive to live for Christ.

Not too long ago in our history there was a feeling of "Your house is my house and my house is your house." That was a time when most of your neighbors were Christians and they cared about each other, visited often and shared each other's burdens. Many of our ancestors have told us about the days when one neighbor looked after the house of the other. Those were the times when one neighbor was concerned if the other fell on hard times and experienced difficulty. Have you not heard of the spirit of fellowship that existed in some areas to the point that if there was death in the family that the entire neighborhood brought food for the family, men volunteered to help with domestic chores and women volunteered to help with cleaning and cooking long after the funeral passed.

Those same neighbors met on Sunday to worship and praise God together. They were among friends who frequently fellowshipped, sang, prayed and rejoiced from house to house, and person to person.

That's what God expects of every believer. He expects each of us to demonstrate a spirit of friendship and kindness that fosters a desire and appreciation for Christian fellowship.

As Christians, we enjoy each other's company. We enjoy the company of those who know the joy of the Lord. It is a blessed fellowship that is based on faith and runs from heart to heart and house to house.

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke as he describes how the early disciples strengthened their faith, one house at a time.

The text notes that they were continually "breaking bread from house to house." They maintained this communion among themselves, meeting in the homes of other believers. Even as the church grew to over 5,000 believers they continued meeting, teaching, encouraging and supporting each other.

This constant fellowship was called the *communion of the saints.*

The church joined in the ordinance of breaking of bread and celebrating the memorial of Christ's death. They were not ashamed to own Christ or to acknowledge him as their crucified Lord. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice because it was commanded by Christ who told them to "do this in remembrance of me." They broke bread from house to house; they administered that ordinance in private houses and they went from one to another turning these houses into little churches where they worshipped God.

The breaking of bread regularly built their faith. Breaking bread with others in the faith, from house to house, made it even stronger.

Thus, the text indicates that the two main ingredients for unity in the body of Christ is regular observance of the Lord's Supper because it strengthens faith and bonds the body of Christ together as one unit before God.

Rewards of Fellowship

When the church began it grew rapidly because there was great fellowship among the members. Even today those who are the strongest and most dedicated to the church are connected to its fellowship activities in some way. Those who are disconnected keep themselves out of the loop of faith.

FELLOWSHIP HELPS FAITH TO GROW: The church community survives and thrives on Faith, Fellowship, Fraternity. Any church that involves its members in these three components develops a Christian life that is strong and meaningful.

Romans 10:17 reminds us that *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.* When believers share with others from house to house, they hear of the faith activities of different families, it helps them to grow as well. Yet, many members of local congregations have very little contact with others. As soon as worship activity ends, they rush to their cars avoiding interaction with others. Interaction and the sharing of joys, accomplishments and failures, helps us to grow and it builds faith.

There are so many believers who do not participate in the fellowship activities of the church. When children have an enjoyable interaction with other children they call it fun. When adults do the same it is called "fellowship." Fellowship activities are occasions when the church family shares fun moments with each other. Fellowships are not always held at the church facility but they do involve believers. They include

everything from baby and wedding showers, birthday parties, shopping trips, Super Bowl parties, teas, and other celebrations.

FELLOWSHIP FOSTERS FRIENDSHIPS: Through fellowship, we develop a circle of Christian friends who can appreciate our accomplishments and can understand the weight of our losses. The mark of true friends is that they are aware of what is precious to us. They know how we have striven to achieve a goal so they help us celebrate the achievement of that goal. They know how important a certain occasion is to us so they make it a point to help us mark that moment. They know the burdens that we bear, and they try to help us share those burdens. That's the spirit of Galatians 6:2 which encourages us to *bear one another's burdens.* When there is a strong fellowship, you'll find that when you celebrate or hurt, you will never be alone because these moments will be shared with you by a cloud of friends in the faith. Those who choose not to fellowship with the church, generally cut themselves off and decide to operate alone. Even then, true friends in the faith become a nagging presence that will not let us comfortably stand alone; they insist on helping us and allowing others in the faith to do the same. There is no substitute for that kind of personal house to house faith.

FELLOWHIP ELICITS SUPPORT: No matter how strong we are there will come a time when we need support either physically or spiritually. We need the presence of another strong believer who can encourage us when we are down, set us straight when we are wrong and give us sound advice. We may not want to admit it but we actually depend upon each other to keep our Christian light shining.. Outside of the body of Christ it is easy to get distracted and get our lives off track. We depend upon each other to stay on track.

We depend upon that phone call from another believer who questions our sustained absence. We depend upon words of encouragement and even the words of chastisement we receive from our teachers and ministers to help keep us in the faith. We depend upon the support of friends of the faith who are strong enough to help us and strengthen us.

One of the rewards of great fellowship is that we have a tendency to gravitate to that handful of believers that will help us in our Christian walk.

When we are sad, they cheer us!

When we are angry, they calm us!

When we are disappointed, they give us reason to rejoice!

They can do this because they keep helping us restore our faith.

When our faith gets weak, it's good to have someone close to us, whose life is in tune who can help us tune in to the life we should be living; to get in tune with God.

The greatest fellowship

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that while there is a reward in possessing house to house fellowship and faith, there is a greater fellowship coming that is better than any joy we have ever known.

We enjoy fellowshipping with each other down here, but can you imagine the joy we'll share when we get to the kingdom of heaven?

When worship is over sometimes we stand on the parking lot and talk with each other and share the joys of the Lord, long after the worship has passed, but can you imagine what it's going to be like when we get to the kingdom and have a chance to talk with the elders, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

We would be remiss if we did not peek into the future and take a glance at the great fellowship that God is planning for us.

One of these days, in the sweet bye and bye, God's going to bring us into the greatest fellowship we've ever known. That's the day we come into the presence of Jesus.

In that day there will be neither white nor black, Jew or Gentile, slave or lower class!

In that day, there will be no rich people or poor people, Southside and North side, Eastside or Westside.

In that day, we will all live on the same side of the track!

In that day, we're going to have a good time!

In that day, we'll all get together. The lambs will lay down with the wolves, soldiers will beat their swords into ploughshares.

When we all get together, we'll sing and shout as, "My soul looks back and wonders how I got over!"

When we all get together, we'll tell the story of how we struggled together cried together and overcame together!

When we all get together, we'll tell the story of the savior, who gave his life for our sins!

We will tell the story of how he died out on Calvary!

We will tell the story of how early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

When we are together again, at the foot of our savior, that's going to be a powerful meeting day.

I don't know about you, but I want to be at that meeting!

I want to be at the meeting!

I want to be there when they declare Him King of kings!

I want to be there when they crown hHm Lord of Lords!

I don't know about you, but I want to be at the meeting!

I want to be there when the saints go marching in!

When we all get together, what a time!

"What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms!

Every day, we'll be leaning! What a time!

Every day will be Sunday! What at time!

It'll always be howdy and never goodbye! What a time!

What a time!

What a time!

What a time!

No. 9398-Revival

An Indivisible Church

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2009

SCRIPTURE: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," Acts 2:46

Introduction

Remember when you learned the pledge of allegiance to the flag? If you are like most you probably did well until you came upon that word "Indivisible." Many of us called it "Invisible." We had no idea what it meant; we just knew that we had to learn to recite it or face failing grades.

Later we learned that it meant our country announced to the world that we were one nation, under God, that could not be divided-That's what indivisible means. We cannot be divided against each other.

Even as the original words were written in 1892 the nation was divided but not divisible. It had endured a civil war and many internal conflicts. Yet, children stood every morning and said we were indivisible.

In 1954 the pledge was changed for the fourth time and the words "under God" were added. Since then the nation has been greatly divided with court suits being filed to have it removed.

Even though President Barack Obama's election sent a bold statement to the world that our nation was growing beyond is divisions, in an important joint session of Congress, an unknown congressman, Joe Wilson, called him a liar in front of the whole nation. The outburst meant the nation was still not on one accord; our divisions are healing but they are still deep.

Is the church as we know it today indivisible? Are we on one accord?

While we all agree that there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism the church itself remains divided.

There are over 38,000 known Christian Denominations, and there is even a new denomination that calls itself non-denominational. Each of the 38,000 denominations claims to be correct and the other 37,999 are incorrect. Some work together for the common good but there has never been an instance in which all 38,000 worked together on any single undertaking. Even local church communities seem divided. There seems to be a church on every corner. Churches form, split, then later on the split splits.

Internally, many local churches find that even among its membership there are often differences that divide the church. Some won't sing in the choir because they can't stand another person. Some won't usher for the same reason. Some leave and join other churches because they can't stand to work with, worship with, or even look at another member of the same church.

To a large degree there are many churches that are everything but "indivisible."

Is God pleased with all of this division among us? Can the work that needs to be done evangelizing the world, saving the lost and lifting up Christ be done when the church is divided?

Psalm 133 notes that is sweet when brethren dwell together in unity. When that happens, God's spirit can move and his power can be felt.

As Christians, we are convinced that if we work together on one accord, we can change the world as we know it. To do so the church must put its trust in one God and trust him only; then we will be indivisible.

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke as he describes the unity and fellowship of the early church.

When Jews accepted Christ as savior, at first they continued to worship in the temple and synagogues along with other Jews. Here they learned the Torah and received other instructions that were unique to life as a Jew.

However, they also maintained a fellowship among themselves, meeting in the homes of other believers. As the church grew there were over 5,000 believers, all meeting quietly in various homes, teaching, encouraging and supporting each other.

This constant fellowship was called the "communion of the saints."

The strength and unity of this new fellowship was totally dependent on constant interaction between believers as they supported each other in the faith.

The text indicates that worship and fellowship was regular, whenever there was an opportunity. The more often it is done publicly the better. In addition to regular gatherings the text also notes that they were with one accord; not just the lack of discord and strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their public services.

Thus, the text indicates that two main ingredients for unity in the body of Christ are regular worship and fellowship.

The result of this constant fellowship and worship was the development of a spiritual bond that tied them to each other as sisters and brothers in Christ.

When the church is united

When the church is united in worship, prayer, service and praise it creates an atmosphere of unity and peace that is unparalleled. Old quarrels and differences are settled and a sense of re-union, redemption and forgiveness exists.

IN AN INDIVISIBLE CHURCH, DIFFERENCES ARE PUT ASIDE: Often those who have been separated for many years harbor some ill feelings. This gets worse if one party felt injured by the other; such injuries are held for years.

The one common denominator that each church member possesses is Christ. The fact that he died for the remission of all sins is the common bond that church members possess. We are all sinners, flawed, broken and frail. We are the recipients of his grace. Reconciliation happens by the power of God.

When the church is united there is a reunion of love and reconciliation of any ill feelings that might have developed over the years, prompted by circumstance, or past events.

God's spirit heals any rifts and becomes a strong motivation in the healing process. When God gets in the business, healing begins and that is not restricted to only physical problems but relationships as well. God heals rifts between husbands and wives, parents and to general reunions but to breaches involving children, bosses and employees, neighbors, relatives and friends and even heals rifts between student and teacher, leader and follower.

When God's spirit moves, the church is truly indivisible.

IN AN INDIVISIBLE CHURCH, KINGDOM SERVICE IS A PRIORITY: Whenever the church is united, service to the kingdom of God is a priority. What is kingdom service? It is feeding the poor, educating children, building Christian families, standing against immorality and promoting Christian lifestyles in the community. When the church is united, it stands as one person against all of the forces of darkness and evil in the community.

The concerted action that the church needs to take cannot be done if it is at war with itself. When pastors and deacons are fighting, members are backbiting against church leaders, and leaders themselves are planning plots against other leaders. Where there are disputes over money, ministry turf wars, power grabs, and personality clashes, kingdom service is not a priority. Yet, we are mandated to *"Go ye therefore into all the world."* We are mandated to reach, teach, baptize and evangelize our neighborhoods, communities, cities, states, nation and the world. That mission requires an indivisible church.

To serve our fellowman with the kingdom message, the church must become and remain indivisible.

IN AN INDIVISIBLE CHURCH, A SPIRIT OF HUMILITY EXISTS: The church is indivisible when we realize that each of us is a sinner saved by grace. We work better together when we respect the journey that each of us has traveled. When we look back over the years it is humbling to see how God has worked with us. The things that we have differed over, in retrospect, seem small when compared to the enormity of the challenge ahead of us.

Those who truly desire to facilitate the indivisible spirit of the Christian church demonstrate a spirit of humility that puts aside old differences and offers the olive branch instead. The lesson we have learned from listening to the journeys of each member should humble us and help us to be ready for reconciliation even if that means

humbling ourselves before those who were once our enemies. The spirit of Godliness within us makes it happen.

That journey could begin if there are times when each member gets a chance to tell his/her story to the whole church, perhaps in a worship service or testimonial period. As we listen to each other, one by one, we start to learn that we are not that much different, we share a mutual history, a common hope and common need for a savior.

When the church can collectively say, "I need thee." It becomes indivisible.

IN AN INDIVISIBLE CHURCH, A SPIRIT OF FRATERNITY EXISTS: When the church is divided there is a fraternal spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that does not exist. There are many churches today in which members do not feel like brothers and sisters. They do not feel that anyone is there that will help them when they are in trouble, listen to them when they need a sounding board, encourage them when they are despondent and share their moments of triumph and joy. If that feeling does not exist, it is easy for the church to become divided as each goes his separate way.

If the truth be told, there are many believers who have two sets of friends: A church set of friends and those outside of the church. When a person is celebrating an important moment, many invite one group of friends or the other, rarely both. The church is indivisible when a member does not even consider an important moment that does not include his church family in good times or bad. Until that happens, the church is existing on a fragile arrangement.

The word of God encourages all believers to "Let Brotherly Love Continue" (Hebrews 13:1) Whenever God is in the mix, the ultimate goal of brotherly love will be achieved.

Focus on the Cross

Finally, brother and sisters, if the church wants to become and remain indivisible it must focus on the cross.

The church is only divided when it forgets that the enemy is on the outside, not on the inside. As long as the church keeps its eye on the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ it can never be divided.

The indivisible church will not be dissuaded from its mission, because its eyes are focused on the cross!

The indivisible church shows sympathy to the homeless and the helpless, because its eyes are focused on the cross!

The indivisible church teaches and reaches the masses with the word of God, because its eyes are focused on the cross!

The indivisible church feels the pain of the poor and wounded and responds with love, because its eyes are focused on the cross!

The indivisible church embraces children and the elderly through programs that promote and protect them, because its eyes are focused on the cross!

All of the Patriarchs before us have done great works, like them we should keep

our eyes focused on the Lord!

If we remain focused on the great work that is before us souls will be saved and lives will be turned around!

If we remain indivisible and strong in the word and power of God, Christ will be lifted up.

When Christ is lifted up, He said, "I'll draw all men unto me."

Helping the poor and the needy is work we have to do!

Offering prayer for the sick and shut in, is work we have to do!

Fighting injustice and comforting the lonely, is work we have to do!

But there was another great work that we need to tell you about.

It was a great work that did not seem like a great work at all, but more of a disgrace.

Come and go with me out to Calvary and see a great work in progress!

Hanging out on the cross, a great work was being criticized and despised!

I hear the critics at the cross saying your great work seems to be:

A battle lost; a horrible defeat; a pathetic end to a glorious beginning

It didn't seem like much, sitting out on a hill, but the great work of redemption was underway!

The cross was a great work because it was the greatest of all victories!

The cross was a great work because it was highest of all accomplishments!

The cross was a great work because it was the finest of all hours!

The cross was a great work because it was noblest of all events!

I heard somebody say to Jesus, "If you are who you say you are, why don't you come down?"

They wanted to divide Him against His great work. But our Lord and his father were indivisible! He had work to do!

Jesus didn't say a word; He allowed them to drive nails in His hands! They drove nails into to his feet and He would not come down!

He cried out to his father, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!" but he would not come down!

I heard him cry out "It is finished!" but He would not come down!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, He got up!

With all power in His hands!

We must remain indivisible today, because we have great work to do!

No. 9399-Revival

Obtaining Godly Swagger

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 4, 2009

SCRIPTURE: " Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Introduction

What is swagger? Well according to the Hip Hop dictionary a person's swagger refers to his/her style. It often refers to a smooth and unique overall presence. It is personified in a man's walk, talk, and dress. A man's swagger is: convinced, authentic, kind-hearted, classy and sexy. A woman's swagger is: stylish, smooth, dignified and sensuous.

What is called swagger depends on the situation. What one group calls swagger another group hates. What one group holds up as a standard, another group laughs at as ridiculous.

Swagger usually falls into three groups: Let's look at the first two. 1) Thug Swagger, it's the man or woman that is identified with a thug walk that looks like he's about to wrestle a 600 pound gorilla. It's a ghetto fabulous look of flash, glitz and bling that calls attention to her expensive tastes and exquisite body. It's a smooth talk, fresh pick up lines and an ability to disarm a girl with just the right words. Thug swagger is arrogant, cocky, confident and sometimes boisterous. To some thug swagger is even sexy. 2) Buppie Swagger, it's the style of the black upwardly mobile professional called Buppies. The Buppie swagger is the man who walks into a room standing tall and walking with a gait that says he owns the world. It's just enough flash to show a touch a class and the designer labels on her dress. It's his witty conversation, laced with humor, insight and charm. It's the way she wears her hair, loose enough to run her fingers through and soft enough to feel like feathers. Many find Buppie swagger appealing. Buppie Swagger is bold and confident, sometimes bodacious, speaks and listens just enough to appear interested but confident that everyone is really aspiring to emulate them.

That's the definition that the world gives for swagger. Immediately we see images of Kayne West, Pditty, and Chris Brown in one and Barack, Michelle, Ophrah and Denzel in the other. Neither of those caricatures adequately describe Godly Swagger, as appropriate as they may be for their admirers. Each of these categories leaves us missing a few things that would be present in the Christian man or woman with

swagger.

If swagger refers to our personal style, conversation, attitude, words and feeling about others, then believers definitely have swagger. How does Christian swagger differ from the first two? Godly Swagger is the man or woman who enters a room with the knowledge that the king of the world empowers him/her but they remains humble enough to keep the common touch. They don't attack the room like the gorilla or appear to condescend to the level of mere mortals but they float into a room in a way that attracts attention rather than commands it. It's the man or woman that makes himself interesting by listening attentively to others, speaking little of himself and heaping praise on others, with just the right words, phrases and pauses to make those around them want more. Spiritual swagger dresses for the occasion, with taste and restraint, not too much here or showing so much there. Godly swagger is confident, yet humble; it is sensitive to the feelings of others, polite and mannerable. Many find spiritual swagger as refreshing, attractive, charismatic and even Godlike.

As Christians we want to walk the Christian walk, talk the Christian talk and do everything we can to reflect a lifestyle that is confident, humble, spiritual and godly. Those who are able to exhibit these characteristics have Christian swagger and favor with God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the nature of the new life in Christ.

Jewish believers were often confused about the relationship of their new Christian life to their Jewish upbringing. Many viewed Christianity as simply an important addition to their Jewish faith. They believed they could continue their devotion to ritual and Mosaic Law and simply add a few Christian components that would make their lives complete.

Paul echoed the teachings of Christ when he told them that the Christian life was a completely new experience, not an addition to their former faith. The old faith, the old allegiance to ritual was no longer meaningful.

In addition, he challenges the old way of life that is based upon appearances rather than true faith. It was a matter of turning from superficial living or doing that which appeared real but was actually not real. The emphasis, he noted, should be from the heart, which is the way of the new believer.

Thus, he concludes that any person who is truly a believer of Jesus is a *"New creation"*- a believer from the inside out rather than the outside in. His walk, talk and attitude about life experiences are completely different.

Elements of Godly Swagger

There are several aspects to a person with Godly swagger that makes him/her appealing to others and to God:

SWAGGER IN TALK: What does a man or woman with Godly swagger talk

about? Before they became Christians their conversation did not always reflect godly principles. There are some who cursed frequently, were argumentative with others, gossiped incessantly, and were constantly trying to build themselves up while low rating others. They loved to talk themselves up and talk others down. However, when they obtained godly swagger their conversation noticeably changed. They spoke encouraging words more often, criticized less frequently and chose their words more carefully. They talked very little about themselves and more about what they could do for others. They also began to talk about the goodness of God; not so much that they became a bore to others but their happiness and new life was reflected in their new conversation: less about sex and more about love; less about getting and more about opportunities to serve; less about receiving the attention and more about paying attention to the needs of others. Those who obtain Godly swagger have a completely new conversation because their lives now reflect faith in God which also changes the way they talk.

SWAGGER IN WALK: A person with Godly swagger carries himself in a different way. Your walk in life involves the people, places and things that surround you. The worldly walk carries us to places that do not reflect the spirit of Christ. Often this includes bars, saloons, dance halls, houses of pleasure, and some places that are dark and smoke filled. Our intent has no godly purpose. We are surrounded with people who enjoy ungodly lifestyles; who sometimes plan and execute ungodly activities. Our walk in the worldly context, also carries us to things that we use for ungodly purposes. These things are often innocent in themselves but because of our worldly intent, they become tools of the devil. However, when we develop a godly walk, people, places and things change. We may still have associates who are in the world, but they no longer influence us or define where we go or how we entertain ourselves. The godly walk changes the places that we go. We are no longer regulars at the local clubs, gambling halls, and pleasure spots. We are frequently present where God's work is being performed and God's people assemble. The things that we do change as well. Instead of planning ungodly activities we now plan activities that will strengthen, build and glorify the kingdom of God. When we have Godly swagger people instantly notice that there is something different about us in an attractive way because the spirit of God is reflected in all that we do, every place we go and the people with whom we choose to associate.

SWAGGER IN THOUGHT: Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." There is a difference between the way a person with Godly swagger thinks and all others. The person with godly swagger has a different attitude and approach about life and its various circumstances. Instead of being a pessimist Godly swagger prompts believers to be optimists and approach the world with the confidence that God is in control and is guiding their footsteps. Godly swagger has a lot to do with what we think about, plans we are making, and goals that we are pursuing. A person with Godly swagger is always planning something great and pleasing to God; always seeking ways to improve, encourage and build. He/she reflects the meaning of Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are

honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In contrast, the person without Godly swagger constantly complains, is depressing, defeated and generally not an attractive person. Godly swagger comes from the faith that believers have in Jesus Christ it lifts their thoughts to a higher plane.

How to obtain Godly Swagger

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that it is impossible to obtain Godly swagger without accepting Christ in your life.

Godly swagger deals with the spirit and the soul not in the superficial. It deals with what comes from the inside and is reflected on the outside.

It's possible to imitate the walk of Denzel Washington or President Obama. It's possible to copy the smile of Michelle or the words of Ophrah Winfrey, but it won't give you Godly swagger, just a walk like a movie star or a President.

Those who want Godly Swagger must have God in their lives and attempt to let the confidence, boldness and assurance that he gives us change the way we walk, talk and think.

To obtain Godly swagger you must be willing to change your life, straighten up and fly right.

The bible makes it clear in Ephesians 4:22-24, " That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

To obtain Godly swagger we must hear God. He who lies, should start speaking the truth. (Ephesians 4:25)

He who is angry should not let the sun go down on his wrath. (Ephesians 4:26)

He who listens to the devil should not give him place. (Ephesians 4:27)

He who steals should steal no more. (Ephesians 4:28)

He who curses and talks dirty should let no corrupt communication come out of his mouth. (Ephesians 4:29)

If you want Godly swagger it cannot be obtained from a book, or by copying what you see others do; it has to come from knowing the Lord for yourself.

Godly swagger is a character trait and trademark of all who are a part of God's kingdom. Jesus made it clear in John 3:3 ".. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

To obtain Godly swagger you must be, you got to be, born again.

To be born again means that you no longer trust in the world, but you trust in God.

To be born again means that you no longer doubt yourself but you put your faith in the power of God.

To be born again means that you that no longer see the world through defeated eyes, but you now see the world through the eyes of God.

To be born again means that the old swaggerless you has died and the new man or woman in Christ is alive.

When you've been born again you'll have that fire and a Holy Ghost that the song writer said makes you move, makes you shout and makes you cry within!

Folks who have been born again can sing with new meaning, "been to the river, been baptized, been converted and I feel alright, I've been born again!"

When you've been born again, you have a new way of carrying yourself that makes people ask, what's happened to you? It's then that you can answer:

"I got a new walk, over in glory and it's mine, mine, mine. I've got a new talk!, over in glory and it's mine!"

When you've been born again, you've got a new story to tell.

Every now and then we have to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

We have to tell somebody how he picked us up and turned us around and planted our feet on solid ground!

We have to tell somebody how he died out on Calvary and stayed in the grave for three days and nights but Early Sunday morning he came walking out of that grave with a swagger that would put Pdiddy, Denzel and Barack to shame because he had all power in his hands!

No. 9400-Revival

Giving the devil hell

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 11, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1 Peter 5:8; Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

Introduction

Have you ever wished you could take all of your problems, tie them up in a bag and dump them? We are often inundated with problems, frustrations and troubles that make our lives miserable. We can't help but wish, if only occasionally, that we could rid ourselves of so many troubles.

When there are clothes that don't fit anymore, many people give them away.

When there is an appliance that doesn't work and can't be repaired, we throw it away.

Generally, when something is bothering us, causing us a problem we either fix it or get rid of it.

If that's our attitude about clothes that don't fit or appliances that don't work, why is it that we try to hang on to things that trouble us, frustrate us and cause us a world a problems? Why don't we simply get rid of them?

Consider the drunk man who was bothered by a self righteous lady on the bus. The drunk had been drinking constantly for a day and his clothes reeked with alcohol. Yet, he was courteous to everyone he met on the bus speaking to each person as he passed saying, "Good Morning Madam," and "Please excuse my appearance, I hope I don't make you too uncomfortable." Everyone on the bus accommodated the drunk, especially since he was so apologetic; everyone except one woman who stood as he sat comfortably. She looked at his clothes and humped up her nose. He was a drunk and was sitting and she was a fine upstanding woman who had to stand. She frowned at him in disgust and thought it a shame that a drunk would sit next to decent people. Finally, the woman pointed her finger at the man and said, "You are going straight to hell!" When he heard that, the drunk instantly pulled the chord to stop the bus. He looked at the woman and said, "I'm sorry madam, I didn't know this bus was going to hell, I have to get off; but you can have my seat!"-She was giving him hell, but he gave it back to her.

That's what we have to do in life sometimes. When the devil sends us a day full

of hell, we have to send it back to him, marked "Returned to Sender." Give it back to him. Don't begin a day his way. Don't start a week his way. Give it back to him unopened. When the devil threatens to invade your home, church or school, don't accept it; give it back to him, unopened.

As Christians, there is nothing that the devil has to give us that we want. What he offers we refuse, what he gives we return. We are determined to live for Jesus and give him the best that we have.

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter as he instructed Christians who were enduring persecution in the early church.

He warned them to be strong in the faith because persecution was rampart. Peter encourages believers to pray and trust God's love in the present with the full knowledge that the forces of evil will not rest without finding ways to meddle in our lives.

In the Old Testament evil was represented as Satan the accuser; Peter refers to him as the "adversary," The "devil" is literally the "slanderer," carrying the same connotation as the adversarial accuser. Jewish teachers recognized that, as in the book of Job where he "went about" over the face of the earth Satan sought in this present age to turn people to apostasy from the truth, although his power was limited because he ultimately had to answer to God.

Thus, believers are urged to constantly be on Guard because the devil will cause them to fall from the faith or get frustrated along the way.

Fully aware that the devil is trying to destroy us we should prepare ourselves to resist the devil when he attempts to attack and he will flee.

Three things to give the devil

Today, Christians are encouraged to respond to attacks by the devil in three ways: Being sober or serious in our responses to life situations, vigilant in our readiness, and constantly resisting the devils attempts to make inroads into our Christian life and attitude. We should give the devil hell when he tries to:

STEAL YOUR JOY: The devil works daily to steal your joy. When that happens you gradually become bitter, remorseful and reclusive. Life loses its excitement, challenge or inspiration and everything becomes boring at the most, or not worth the effort at the least. How does the devil do that? He does it by painting every situation with dark colors. In times of celebration, the devil will remind us of what you lost instead of what we have gained: lost loved ones, lost fortunes, lost dreams, lost opportunities. So, instead of celebrating the moment we dwell upon the past. There is a Latin phrase "Carpo Tripudium" that means "seize the joy." Certainly there have been sad moments in our past, but must leave them behind. That's the spirit of Philippians 3:13 "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing

I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," When an opportunity to celebrate a happy moment with your family, friends or church comes, we should not let Satan steal the joy of the moment but we should "seize the joy" and relish the blessings that God has given.

LEAD YOU ASTRAY: The devil's job is to lead you astray. He has many tricks and devices to lead us away from God. In fact, scripture reminds us not to be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11.) This is not an idle truth because even in the church there are some who are being led astray, this very day. What are his devices? 1)He uses anger, envy and jealousy to turn us against each other 2)He uses music, literature, movies and television to change our spiritual tastes 3)He uses sexual attractions, infatuations and other strong emotions such as love and hate to lead us away. When Satan attacks us with these he is often successful in causing many believers to stray. In fact, 1 Timothy 5:15 says, "For some are already turned aside after Satan." When it happens their kingdom service slackens, and their Christian walk meanders off the path. So, we are encouraged to be vigilant and resist Satan's invitations to stray just as Jesus did when he said, in Luke 4:8 "Get thee behind me Satan." –Resist the devil when he tries to lead you astray and he will flee.

STEAL YOUR FAITH: The Devil fights a continuous battle to steal our faith. His goal is to get us to doubt God, lose our hope and walk away from our the source of our deliverance. How does he do that? He raises questions in our mind. Why is God allowing this problem in my family? That's the issue of Mary and Martha when they blamed Jesus for not coming when they called him at the death of Lazarus. Why is God allowing this tragedy to befall my family? That's the issue that Job dealt with after the loss of his health, family and fortune. Why is my marriage suffering so badly? That is the issue that Hosea dealt with after his wife left him repeatedly for other men. In circumstances like these, it is easy for the devil to steal your faith in God if you do not resist. When death came, Mary and Martha were reminded of the power of the resurrection. Job resolved to stay firm and hold on rather than give up his faith. And even in a marital crises Hosea never abandoned the Lord. When you lose a job or experience a loss that's when Satan gets busy raising doubts in your mind. That's why we are encouraged to be vigilant, resist him and resolve like Job in Job 13:15 "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." Paul summed it up this way, Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Give It to the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters if you really want to give the devil hell, put your trust in the Lord.

Satan cannot endure the presence of God, soon he will have to let you alone.

When Jesus stood before a man infested with devils, they cried out, "let us alone."

Soon after they had to go.

That's the way it is when believers who are tempted by the devil begin to call on God, he will leave you alone. However, if he can get a foot in the door he will set up house.

That's why the song writer declared, "Don't let the devil ride, if you let him ride he'll want to drive, don't let him ride."

When the devil comes you must resist him because if you don't he will:

—rob us of our joy, peace, and contentment.

—destroy our marriages, our families and church fellowship.

—destroy our courage and make us afraid of "what could happen.

—deceive us and blind our eyes from the truth.

To resist the devil we must be powered up. However, we can't be powered up with an up and down faith. Here one Sunday and miss the next. Prayed up one day and down the next. We have to "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the word."

To resist the devil we need the power of God.

It is the power of God that enables us to withstand storms and overcome powerful obstacles.

It is the power of God that enables us to bear our burdens and to survive terrible tragedies.

It is the power of God that enables us to win difficult victories and to fulfill awesome responsibilities.

When we have the power of God we can:

—Fight spiritual battles and reach spiritual goals.

—Become faithful servants and defeat vicious enemies.

—Solve stubborn problems and conquer worldly habits.

—Uphold biblical principles and live by Godly standards.

We should resist the devil with confidence that there is nothing the devil can do to destroy us if we keep our faith in the Lord. God promises that, "No weapon formed against thee will prosper."

When saints put their trust in the Lord, all of the devils weapons lose their power.

The devil shoots bullets of hate but they bounce off a wall of love!

The devil sets booby traps of failure but saints keep finding success!

The devil tries to break our defenses but we keep seizing the offensive!

The devil tries to knock us down, but we keep getting back up because we keep hearing God say, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper.

If he tries to call us everything but a child of God, it will not prosper!

If he tries to stop us from claiming blessings God has for us, it will not prosper!

That's the lesson that the devil still has not learned.

It was taught to him when he tampered with David, "and David said, restore unto me joy of my salvation."

It was taught to him when tampered with Job, but Job said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

It was taught to him when he tempted a blind man who said, “I was once blind, but now I see.”

It was taught to him in a way that he should have learned but he still didn’t get it.

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross. He tried to take that cross and give the Savior hell, but instead he gave it right back!

They falsely accused Him, They physically abused him, but he gave it right back!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, it humiliated him, but He gave it right back!

They ridiculed him and belittled Him, but he gave it right back

I heard him give it back when he said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do!”

He died out on Calvary,

But early Sunday morning, He arose as a living testimony that if the devil gives you hell, you can rise again if you give it right back!

No. 9401-Aniv.-Church

Unforgettable

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 18, 2009

SCRIPTURE: Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. Isaiah 44:21 ;And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24

Introduction

Have you ever forgotten anything? If you are like most people you have forgotten something in your life. It may have been something as simple as forgetting your keys or an appointment or something more serious. It's frustrating when we forget and try our best to remember, but it just slips away.

If it's frustrating to forget what you want to remember its equally frustrating to keep remembering something that you have been trying to forget. It would be great if we could forget painful experiences but sometimes they flashback in the night or creep into our dreams. Sometimes we want to forget events or experiences; there are even times when we want to forget some people and wipe them out of our memories but they keep coming back.

Then there are those experiences that we never want to forget. The perfect honeymoon, a great family dinner, the look in the eye of the perfect mate, a touch, the aroma of a rose petal, the championship game, and the day of the ultimate victory are experiences that we never want to forget.

The late Nat King Cole wrote a song that became a hit in his day. It was rerecorded with his daughter Natalie digitally mixed to sing the song as a duet with her famous father. The song was entitled "Unforgettable." The lyrics spoke of a man who had found a woman who made such an impression on him that he could never forget her. Remember the lyrics?

Unforgettable, that's what you are
Unforgettable though near or far
Like a song of love that clings to me
How the thought of you does things to me
Never before has someone been more Unforgettable in every way
And forever more,

that's how you'll stay
That why, darling, it's incredible
That someone so unforgettable
Thinks that I am unforgettable too.

The song became an instant hit probably because everyone can recall at least one person that made such an impression on them that they will never be forgotten. No one ever forgets their first boy friend or first girl friend, even though the years have passed.

You never forget the turning points in your life either: Your first driver's license, your high school graduation, your marriage, your first child, your first car. All of these are unforgettable moments.

For believers, there is another unforgettable moment: the day they accepted Christ as their savior. It was such an important moment that many remember the exact date. Some don't remember the date but they remember the experience it is engraved in our memories and in our hearts.

The day we accepted Christ is the day we realized that God never forgets about us. They day of our salvation is the day that he became unforgettable to us as well.

As Christians, we only think of God on two occasions: both day and night. He is never out of mind and words of praise for him are constantly falling from our lips. He is truly unforgettable.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he explained that God will never forget His people.

Prior to this text Isaiah explained how there had been many times that the people of God had proved themselves unfaithful to God by worshipping idols. In their infatuation with idols they had forgotten God, but he had not forgotten them.

So in this passage God gives the people of Israel two charges: They should remember that they are servants of God there he will not forget them. Conversely, they should never forget him as well.

The fact that neither of them will forget the other is given in Isaiah 44:23 as a reason for rejoicing and celebrating.

In this chapter Isaiah addresses Jacob and Israel, representing the people of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms, both of whom would endure hardships in the years to come but were being reminded in advance that despite anything that happens the people should remember that God will never forget them, and neither should the people forget him.

We should not forget each other

Today, the people of God should remember each other. Isaiah referred to Israel and Jacob, symbolically, speaking to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms,

separated for years over political divisions that pitted them against each other.

Together, they were the recipients of God's protection in slavery, deliverance to the Promised Land and their rise to prominence in the community of nations.

In their journey there were many who were unforgettable. Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, Solomon, were all giants who help them achieve great heights with God's help.

Even today the church has many saints whose lives and contributions were unforgettable. Those who built the buildings, established the traditions, and maintained the faith for decades cannot and should not ever be forgotten. They are the silent army of warriors whose marching feet ploughed paths through the uncharted waters of time.

Those who worked to bring us thus far are unforgettable!

Those whose sacrifices of time, talent and resources made it possible for this generation to reach this milestone in the journey are unforgettable!

Those who gave their lives in service as preachers, teachers, and ministry leaders and workers dedicated to nurture each succeeding generation are truly unforgettable.

Just as we remember the patriarchs of the church: Peter, Paul, Timothy, Titus, John and the others, we also remember the works of thousands of unsung heroes of the faith who have given of themselves to help us reach this day. They are unforgettable.

God will not forget us

There are times when we believe that God has forgotten us, especially when we experience difficulties. Yet, we have the promise of God in this text that regardless of circumstances He will not forget us.

In response to this feeling Isaiah talked to Israel then and to us today when he said in Isaiah 49:14 " But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." That's the feeling that Israel had when difficulties beset them but in the very next verse Isaiah answered by saying, in Isaiah 49:15 "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

No matter how far we travel, God will not forget us.
No matter how distant we are from him at times, God will not forget us.
No matter how far our lives get off course, God will not forget us.

Just as a mother cannot forget a child she is nursing, the God who birthed us and breathed into us the breath of life, will never forget us.

That's why Job declared in his adversity, "Yea thou He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

That's why David declared in Psalm 121:1, *"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from when cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth…He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber or sleep."*

We should not forget God

Finally, brothers and sisters we should keep it mind that while it is good that God will not forget us, it is even more important for us to remember not to forget God.

On many occasions Israel forgot about God. He became distant and out of their minds.

When they were in Egypt they thought about God all the time, but as soon as they entered the Promised Land they forgot about him.

When they wandered in the wilderness, they never forgot his commandments, but once they entered the Promised Land they followed after strange Gods.

When they built the great temple under Solomon, they kept God in their thoughts, but in their prosperity, they divided themselves and worshipped golden statutes.

Today, brothers and sisters we should not forget about the Lord, because He never forgets about us.

We have good reason to keep the Lord on our minds; what he has done for us has been unforgettable.

He brought us through some tough times!

He has sustained us in the midst of our difficulties.

He's so unforgettable that when we wake up in the morning we are thinking about Him. That's why the song writer wrote, "I woke up this morning with my mind, staid on Jesus."

"Walking and talking with my mind, staid on Jesus"

"Singing and Praying with my mind, staid on Jesus"

It's hard to forget about the Lord because everyday he's blessing us in a new way.

That's why the song writer declared, *"Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided, great is thy faithfulness Lord unto to me!"*- He's unforgettable.

Yet in our prosperity, we must not only hear that God will not forget us, we must not forget Him!.

It's easy to forget him, if we put our bibles down and don't read them.

It's easy to forget him, if we fail to worship regularly.

It's easy to forget him, if we start our days without talking to him.

It's easy to forget him, if we don't commune with him.

That's why the song writer sad, *"Lest, I forget, Gethsemane. Lest, I forget he died for me, lead me to Calvary."*

When we think of Calvary we see Jesus, taking bread and blessing it saying, *"Take eat, this is my body."*

When we think of Calvary we see Jesus saying, *"This is my blood which is shed for the remission of sin, do this in remembrance of me."*

Lest I forget, lead me to Calvary!

Lest I forget, show me the crown of thorns that was placed on hHs head!

Lest I forget, show me the purple robe that was placed on His shoulders!

Lest I forget, show me the cross that He carried up Golgotha's hill!

Lest I forget, show me the nails that were driven in his hands!

Lest I forget, show me the blood and water that streamed from His side!

Lest I forget, show me the grave where the buried Him and the stone that blocked the tomb!

Lest I forget, I forget tell me how Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

He's alive today. I can't forget Him because He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own.

..And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

No. 9402-Revival

Genuine Knockoffs

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 25, 2009

SCRIPTURE:"By their fruits ye shall know them, do men gather grapes of thorns of figs of thistles?" Matthew 7:16

Introduction

Have you ever bought something thinking it was authentic only to learn that it was a cheap fake? It bore a trade mark that was strikingly familiar to what we were accustomed, yet it was not real.

What is a knockoff? A knockoff is a version of a design that is not as valuable as the original; it's not always a fake, but it is most certainly a cheaper version of something more expensive.

Today there is a battle underway in the clothing design industry. An American clothes maker by the name of Seema Anand is making millions by legally creating knockoff versions of famous clothing designs. It appears that there is no copyright on clothing designs, so Ms. Anand has set up a computer outfitted factory in India. Once she sees a new design on an American website, she emails the image to her factory and in two weeks the 2,000 workers in her plant can turn out finished items, ship them back to America and sell them for $250 instead of the $750 designer price before the originals hit the street.

What Ms. Anand sells is genuine, but it's a genuine knockoff.

She is not alone; an entire industry has been developed around selling knockoffs: A $10,000 Rolex watch was once a catch, but the knockoff version sells on the internet for $49. Offshore companies now sell genuine knockoff auto parts. A $100 genuine part is only $25 if you get the knockoff version. No brand escapes knockoffs: Prada, Coach, Christian Dior, Louis Vuittton, Ray Ban. An original Prada handbag can cost as must as $1,000 or more but the knock off version is just $189.50 anywhere on the internet.

Why are there so many knockoffs? Aren't the items copyrighted? They are, but there is a loophole. You can copyright a new fabric you create, but it's hard to copyright the way you drape it, cut it and shape it. So, knockoffs often avoid the copyrighted fabric; they don't use real leather, they use lizard skin for example. They use computers to copy the way it is shaped and cut and whammo! –A knockoff is born. What they market is a genuine knockoff!

The phrase a “Genuine Knockoff” is an Oxymoron. An Oxymoron uses two contradictory terms such as: “Same Difference” or “extremely average”,”organized mess”, or “open secret.” In each instance one word contradicts the other.

What if some church goers could be described with Oxymorons such as: “Doubting believer”, “Devilish Saint,” “Shacking Christian,” or “The Living Dead?” What if there were genuine Christian knockoffs who look like Christians but on close inspection we learn that that they are not made out of the same fabric although they may have a similar cut and flow to their lives as real believers.

It’s possible that there may be some knockoffs among us: Knock-off preachers, Knockoff choir members, knockoff deacons, ushers, trustees and members in the pews. Everyone who belongs to a church is not genuine. There is a large number of people who are genuine knockoffs.

As Christians, we must strive to make our relationship with Christ one that is real and meaningful; not one that is artificial. While our family and friends may not know the difference, God who knows both our down sitting and our uprising knows the difference between what is genuine and a knockoff.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he warns believers not to be deceived by those who pass themselves off as the Messiah.

As Jesus taught his disciples, he warned them that there were many people who were representing themselves to be ambassadors of the kingdom but were actually false prophets. While they appeared genuine they were not completely truthful about the nature of their role in the kingdom.

He warned that they would come disguised as sheep, or children of the kingdom, but they were actually wolves on the inside. He warned that believers should look beyond just the surface into the character of a person to determine truth or a lie.

Be warned, Jesus said, everyone who claims to be of the kingdom is not an ambassador of the kingdom.

Jesus gave his disciples one surefire way to determine whether or not such imposters were real; “Ye shall know them by their fruits.”

The fruits

Today, we should be able to determine that which is genuine from knockoffs by looking at them closely.

KNOCKOFFS AND GENUINES ARE NOT MADE FROM THE SAME MATERIAL: Often a person buys an expensive watch that appears to be gold at first glance, only to discover that it has a Swiss gold back. Too often we discover these truths about friends and acquaintances. Are those who call you their friends, genuine or knockoffs? Friends are the real deal, but there are often a large number of others who are not friends but they appear to be until the chips are down, then we realize that

they are knockoffs. When is a friend, really a friend? When the chips are down; that's also when the knockoffs disappear. Is your relationship genuine or a knockoff? Does he really love you? Is she really as crazy about you as she says? The test comes when one of you asks for a commitment, then you discover whether it's genuine or a knockoff. Is your relationship with God genuine or a knockoff? When things go wrong do you doubt him or does your faith remain intact? When the pendulum of events swings against you do you deny him and back away? If so, then it's not a genuine faith but something made from a different material.

A real relationship with God is based on your belief that God is in control of every situation, no matter how bad it seems. A knockoff looks real until things go sour; like fake gold turns green after a while, the same is true of a knockoff godly relationship.

Genuine faith is developed over time. Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" That means genuine faith comes from hearing, studying, worship and prayer. It comes from watching God work over the years. Knockoff faith is a quick "*show my face*" once a twice a month that will change colors the first time we wear it in life's rain. Those who trust Christ, have the real deal! He's genuine, not a knockoff.

KNOCKOFFS HAVE A SIMILAR LOOK BUT DON'T FEEL THE SAME: Ever bought that item that resembled leather only to discover that it didn't feel like leather? Ever bought that knockoff dress and realized that while it looked the same on the rack, you could feel the difference once you put it on? There are many people who attempt to duplicate the Christian life by doing what they see Christians do, but even as they do, it does not feel the same. There are many who believe that we are happy people because we worship with the Church family; so they dress like we dress sit where we sit and sing the same songs, but it doesn't feel the same; nothing happens for them. In fact, there are many who are absolutely bored in church. They are so bored that they pull out their cell phones and text friends or play games. Yet, they feel somehow there is a blessing in sitting where Christians sit and appearing to do what they do.

What those outside of the faith do not know is that the true believer does not attend a Sunday worship to become happy, he or she participates because they are already happy. They get up on Sunday morning ready to worship and praise God because they realize he has blessed them and protected them. They stand with the other saints and praise him because they are happy about what he's going to do for them in the future! They clap their hands, wave their hands, nod their heads and say amen because they leave home confident that no matter what comes; if they stay on God's side they will be victorious.

That feeling cannot be duplicated. Knockoffs can wear what we wear, sit where we sit and sing what we sing, but they won't be able to truly say, "I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

KNOCKOFFS DON'T HAVE GOD'S TRADE MARK: In many ways knockoffs replicate genuine articles closely. Yet, when it comes to the trademarks, knockoffs are usually altered in some way that keeps them out of court. They leave out a letter of a name, add a letter or alter a logo in some way that is hardly noticeable. When a

person becomes a Christian, God places his trademark on him; it is clearly visible and impossible to hide.

Even though two people may attend the same church and worship together, if one places more emphasis on things of the world than he or she does about God, it's not hard to see that the trademark is a knock off.

The Christian youth wears God's trademark. It's in the way they walk, talk, and conduct themselves.

The Christian husband has God's trademark written all over the way he handles and relates to his wife and children.

When we become Christians, it's hard to hide the fact that we love the Lord!

When his trademark is on us people will notice that we smile even when we are burdened down; we rise when we are knocked down and laugh when everyone else is crying! Why? It's because he's got His hands on us.

Those who have a knockoff faith crumble under pressure, fall apart when attacked, and completely dissolve when their backs are against the wall.

If our faith is genuine, it can take a licking and keep on ticking!

When It's Genuine

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must all admit that when you have had the best, you don't want the rest; when you've had the genuine, knockoffs won't do.

While there are some who happy to have knockoffs, those who have had a genuine experience won't settle for anything less.

Those who have worn real pearls, always find something lacking about paste filled knockoffs.

Those who have owned even a small diamond, always find something short with a cubic zirconium knockoff.

Those who have worn a good pair all leather shoes, feel something different when they wear a pair off knockoffs with plastic soles.

Those who have experienced the joy of real love instantly know that a one night stand is just a knockoff.

The same is true about those who have had a genuine relationship with the Lord.

Those who have experienced the love of God up close will never settle with knowing him from a distance, because that's a knockoff relationship that will not work.

Those who know the Lord have a story to tell because he has left his mark on them.

When your relationship with God is genuine and not a knockoff, the Lord is real to you and you begin to see things differently.

When your love of God is genuine and not a knockoff the:

—SKIES seem to be bluer; SUN seem to shine brighter;

—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter; FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller;

—AIR seems more refreshing; STARS seem to have more luster;

—BURDENS seem lighter; FAITH seems stronger;

—HEAVEN seems closer!
Because God is genuine not a knockoff, he can:
—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops;
—Take our midnights and turn them into noon days;
—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers;
—Take our defeats and turn them into victories;
—Take our losses and make them work for our gain!
Somebody asks, “How do you know He’s genuine and not a knockoff?”
Don’t you hear the answer?
“I know the Lord is genuine because I can feel Him in my hands!
I can feel Him in my feet!
I can feel Him in my heart!
I can feel Him all over me!
He’s so genuine that He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!
He’s so genuine that He died for all of my sins!
But Early Sunday morning He arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

No. 9403-Revival

Sleeping With the Enemy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 1, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. Judges 16:19

Introduction

Has anyone ever flirted with you? Have you ever flirted with anyone? Have you ever toyed with the idea of doing something that you shouldn't? If so, you are not alone just about everyone has flirted with someone or something that was dangerous to their well being. It may have been a romantic flirtation, but it could just as easily have been an opportunity to gain by becoming involved in questionable opportunities.

Temptation is all around us. It is not limited to one specific type of experience. We are tempted when we have the opportunity and ability to do that which may be good to us even though it may not be good for us. As a general rule, we are only tempted to do things that will be good to us.

Sometimes we can't even worship without being tempted. One Sunday a pastor told his congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whomever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns. After the offering plates were passed, the pastor glanced down and noticed that someone had placed three $100 bills in the offering. He was so excited that he immediately shared his joy with his congregation and said he'd like to personally thank the person who placed the money in the plate. All the way in the back Rosie shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and in thanksgiving asked her to pick out three hymns. Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to the three most handsome men in the building and said, "I'll take him and him and him!" -There are many who worship but they are really looking for hims!

The bible describes the world and its evil influences as "the enemy" of God. Those who become too friendly with the world are described as being like people who commit adultery, flirting with the enemies of God. James 4:4 puts it this way, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity

with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

We must deal with the world because of the nature of our secular relationships, as well as our professional and social networks, but we are encouraged to not be part of what the world does or conform ourselves to worldly activity. We were commanded to think on a higher level in Romans 12:2 that says, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

As Christians, we must not flirt with the enemy of the cross; if so we make the sacrifice of our Lord of no use and expose ourselves to greater temptations than necessary.

Exposition

This text focuses on Samson, a young man whose purpose in life was cut short because he allowed himself flirt with the devil.

Samson is heralded as the strongest man that ever lived. His feats of strength were unparallel. He picked up the gates of a city and carried them away. He caught 300 foxes and tied torches in their tails and loosed them in the fields of his enemies. He killed a lion with his bare hands. He killed thousands of Philistines, including one instance when he killed over a thousand using the jawbone of a donkey as his weapon.

He was born a Nazirite. The Nazirite's vow had two forms. One was based on a vow by the individual for a specific period; the other was a lifelong devotion prompted by God, making special revelations to the parents before the child is born. No special strength or power came from being a Nazirite. Any special gifts they exercised came because of God being with them.

According to Easton, Delilah was a Philistine woman who was bribed by the "Lords of the Philistines" to obtain from Samson the secret of his strength and the means of overcoming it (Jdg 16:4-18). She tried on three occasions to obtain from him this secret in vain. On the fourth occasion she wrung it from him. She made him sleep upon her knees, and then called the man who was waiting to help her; who "cut off the seven locks of his head," and so his "strength went from him."

The source of all strength

Today as believers review Samson's experience with and without God we should glean the following truths:

THE SECRET OF OUR STRENGTH IS GOD: The Philistines wanted to know the secret of Samson's strength. Although he had a massive physical frame, he was able to do perform his powerful acts of strength because God worked through him. That is also the secret of every believer's strength. Our faith in God makes us who we are. It is the reason that we are able to stand when all around us are falling. It is why we are able weather the storms of life that seem to sink all others. It is why we are able to smile when others are crying. When we seem to do superhuman feats, it

is because God empowers us. He sings through us, helps through us and creates through us. He it is he who stands tall in such moments. Psalms 62:7 says, "In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. In the time of trouble we find that God is our refuge; he helps us to recover from the onslaughts of the world and to thrive when others are just trying to survive. This faith we have is strengthened through regular prayer, worship, and bible reading. It is the faith that the songwriter wrote about when he said *"Without God I could do nothing. Without him I'd surely fail. Without him my life would be drifting; like a ship without a sail."*

THE ENEMY SEEKS TO AFFLICT AND DESTROY: The enemy sought not only to find the secret of Samson's strength; they also wanted to know how to afflict him and destroy him. That's what Delilah sought; she needed to know how to weaken him. Today, there is a similitude between ourselves and Samson. Each of us has an enemy or two who constantly look for our sources of strength and search for ways to weaken or destroy us. Is it an adversary who looks to defeat you? Is it a subordinate that seeks to get you fired? Is it a competitor that seeks advantage? Enemies seek out your trade secrets in business or attempt to compromise your professional relationships in the workplace. The enemy of every Christian is the devil who seeks every opportunity to kill and destroy us. 1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Satan has found that the best way to destroy a believer is to disconnect them from their source of power. Look around you: An unplugged iron, refrigerator, light bulb, television or computer network is powerless. Satan is able to destroy us if he can separate us from our relationship with God. We should the Apostle Paul's resolve in Romans 8:38-39 *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

IF WE SLEEP WITH THE ENEMY WE WAKE UP WITHOUT GOD: Samson flirted with Delilah often, thinking that he would be strong enough when the enemy came; but he woke up one morning and God had left him. Today, there are many who involve themselves with the world on so many levels that they are in danger of losing their faith. We are sleeping with the enemy if we engage in worldly activities that would not please God. We are sleeping with the enemy if spend more time focusing on our worldly pursuits than we spend on God. When our job, professional pursuit, or ambition comes before God's will for our lives, then we are sleeping with the enemy. Ephesians 4:27 warns us to "Neither give place to the devil." We should not give the devil one inch of space in our lives. If we give an inch, he'll take a yard, then a mile. In our folk culture the old timers watched young men flirt with trashy women, or saw families patronizing criminal types, or witnessed youngsters involving themselves with the wild and loose types; they gave a stern warning that said, "If you play with dogs, you will surely get fleas."

Without God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should recognize that *without* God we are powerless, but *with* God all things are possible.

When Samson rose he "wist not" that God had left him. It is a frightening thing for anyone whose talents or skill has been blessed by the power of God and then discovers that "something is missing!"

Samson knew instantly what was missing; God had left him!

Brothers and Sisters, terrible things happen in your life if God leaves you!

If God leaves you, your:

—Happiness turns into sadness; Joy turns into sorrow!

—Victories become defeats; Strength turns into weakness!

—Home becomes a house; Husband is reduced to just another man!

—Upward climb becomes a downward fall!

When God is in your life, beyond just rituals and symbolic religion, things are different.

When God was with Saul he conquered enemies and rose to fame, but when God left him, he fell on his own sword!

When God was with David he became a man after God's own heart, but when God left him, he lost the joy of his salvation!

When God is really in your life he takes your:

—Despair and turns it into delight; Failure and turns it into success

—Loneliness and turns it into friendship; Hatred and turns it into love!

—Shame and turns it into glory; sin and turns it into salvation!

Jesus is a mighty powerful God!

Jesus is a very present help in a time of trouble!

Jesus is like American Express you should "never leave home without him!"

No wonder the song writer declares " "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord!...I can't even wave my hand, without the Lord!"

Everyday of my life I've got to tell the story!

Tell the world about Jesus!

Tell the world about Calvary!

I've got to tell somebody that he died; and he lives today!

No. 9404-Communion

The Last Biscuit

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 2009

SCRIPTURE: She said, "I swear, as surely as your God lives, I don't have so much as a biscuit. I have a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a bottle; you found me scratching together just enough firewood to make a last meal for my son and me. After we eat it, we'll die." Elijah said to her, "Don't worry about a thing. Go ahead and do what you've said. But first make a small biscuit for me and bring it back here. Then go ahead and make a meal from what's left for you and your son. This is the word of the God of Israel: 'The jar of flour will not run out and the bottle of oil will not become empty before God sends rain on the land and ends this drought.' " 1 King 17:12-14 (MSG)

Introduction

Have you ever scrambled to get the last biscuit on the plate? There are many who grew up in large families and understand what it means to have a large plate of biscuits placed on the breakfast table, normally enough for everyone until your siblings decide to eat your share. There is an uneasiness that comes over us when we are eating those tasty morsels, then find that there is only one biscuit left on the plate. Everyone chomps hard on their plate of grits, eggs and bacon but keeps a sharp eye out for that last biscuit. Suddenly, without hesitation, every hand at the table reaches for the last biscuit at the same time; holding on to it as if it were a treasure.

There is something about the last biscuit; it seems that it goes further and tastes better.

Whenever we are enjoying something, we seem to savor it more when we get to the last portions. The last drops of juice in the cup, the last piece of chicken in the box, the last ear of corn, the last slice of pie, the last day of a vacation, the last kiss, the last game of a winning season, or the last French Fry; all seem to linger with us; we want them to last forever.

There are some who are literally living on their last blessing. They are driving the last blessing, sleeping on their last blessing, wearing their last blessing, living in their last blessing, and being supported by their last blessing. Some are losing faith because it's been a long time since they've had a new blessing ; they don't know when or if the next one will come and they are literally struggling to hold on to the last biscuit.

Today, we should remember that the same source that provided the last blessing will be the source of the next. Our God never runs out of blessings, but we often run

out of faith that He will make a way.

As Christians, we should remember that no matter how difficult times become that our God is able to sustain us and keep us from falling. He never runs out of blessings, we may be down to the last biscuit, but our plate is never empty.

Exposition

This text focuses on a widow woman who trusted God even though she was down to her last biscuit.

Elijah was a great prophet who had been commanded by God to speak out against the evils of his time. He challenged King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel for their evil ways. Idolatry was prevalent in the land. There was a general disrespect for God. Elijah told the king that there would be no water in the land until he adjusted his ways. The prediction angered the king and a death warrant was issued for Elijah.

God took care of Elijah while he was in hiding. In one instance God arranged for a raven, considered an unclean animal, to feed him every day while he was by a brook until it was time for him to move on.

Then God sent Elijah into the land of the Gentiles where He commanded a gentile woman to provide for Elijah. She was an unlikely source of resources for a hungry, thirsty and tired traveler.

She was impoverished. She had only a little flour, a little oil and two sticks with which to make a fire. It was enough flour and oil to make a small biscuit. She and her son would share the same biscuit, then surely die.

Yet, Elijah commands the woman to take her last flour and oil and make him a biscuit, then make a smaller one for herself out of what remained. God, speaking through Elijah, promised that she had no reason to fear because each time she made it to her last biscuit there would be another one, provided by the hand of God himself.

The woman acted on the prophet's words, in faith. Just as He promised, God kept providing her daily sustenance, one day at a time. 1 Kings 17:15 says "and she, and he and her house did eat for many days" without scrambling over the last biscuit.

Biscuit Theology

True believers can learn much about faith actions from just a little biscuit theology.

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO MAKE BISCUITS: The woman had only flour and oil to make her little cake. In Eastern cultures the biscuits or cakes were flat. There was no need for leaven or yeast. She had what she needed to make a little biscuit; it would have been nice to have more but she had what she needed. Today, there are many who are similarly situated. We have what we really need to live happily. It would be nice to have more, but if we could keep getting more of the same; we'd be happy. We have a roof over our heads, a place to sleep, and a reasonable portion of health and strength. When we consider life fully, we soon learn that we are short of our wants but not our needs. While it doesn't take much to make biscuits, the core ingredient

is flour; without it there is no biscuit. Jesus said in John 6:48, "I am the bread of life." He is to happiness and joy what flour is to a biscuit, He is the core ingredient; He is love.

It doesn't take much to have a happy family, but it takes a whole lot of love. Your family could be homeless, living in a shotgun house or a rundown apartment complex and still be happy, if there is love. It doesn't take much to have a happy marriage, but it takes a whole lot of love. You could be struggling for dear life but still remain closer than ever, if there is love. No, it doesn't take much to make biscuits, but we must have the essence of what makes life worth living and that is the love of God.

A LITTLE DOUGH CAN GO A LONG WAY: The woman had only enough material to make one biscuit, but she soon found out that a little dough can go a long way. Have you ever watched a cook make homemade biscuits. After they roll out the dough they cut it into little circles and place it in a baking pan. Then they take the leftovers and re-roll them and make even more biscuits. It's call biscuit economics: Don't throw away anything. Today, we eat grits and throw away what's left in the pot, but great grandma re-served those grits later with a little giblet gravy poured over the top. Today, we eat a few bites of bread and throw away the rest, but granny saved all that light bread and made bread pudding and the cornbread came back to us as dressing. At Thanksgiving some throw away the turkey scraps but smart grannies had turkey sandwiches, and turkey salads for days. The key is that God often puts in our hands what we need, but too often we squander what he gives us. Often we look at our W-2 forms at the end of the year and marvel at how much we made, then ask, "Where did it all go?" Much of it was squandered, literally thrown away. It's not that God didn't give it, but that we didn't master biscuit economics: make a little dough go a long way.

SHARED BISCUITS ARE BLESSED BISCUITS: The woman was told to share what little she had with Elijah. What she shared was blessed. There are many today who have learned this truth, we are blessed when we share what little we have with others. There are many who are struggling themselves but are sharing what little they have with others. Whether it's food on the table or meager resources, there are many who are willing to share their last biscuit with someone in need. Shared biscuits are blessed biscuits, the person who shares receives an even greater blessing from the Lord. Jacob shared a meal with his brother Esau but because there was a bad spirit in the sharing, the meal turned out to be a curse between the two of them. However, Abraham shared a meal with the angels on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah and because of his sharing spirit Lot and his family were saved. A little boy shared his lunch of two fishes and five loaves of bread and found that he had a blessed lunch. Those who share their last biscuit with others will come to learn that a shared biscuit is a blessed biscuit.

In God's Hand

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that in God's hands, the only

biscuit you have left is never your last biscuit.

It may appear at times that you are running out, but we're here today to tell you that you may be down to all you have left, *but what you have left is not all you are going to get!*

Why don't you rewind the tape and listen to the woman talking to Elijah? She said there is a famine in the land and times are tight. It's hard to keep food on the table or even to get fuel with which to cook. This little flour and oil is all I have left. It's just enough to make one more biscuit.

Can't you hear Elijah saying, right now you have enough to make one more biscuit, but if you trust in the Lord the biscuit you make won't be your last biscuit.

Our biscuits might be our obligations and resources in life.

Our monthly rent and house note is due, and there's somebody worried that they only have enough to make one more biscuit, but if you put your faith in God and obey his will, the one biscuit you have left won't be your last biscuit.

Our car note and insurance is due, but there's somebody worried that they only have enough for one more biscuit , but if you put your faith in God and obey his will, the one biscuit you have left won't be your last biscuit.

You light bill is due and the gas is too, but there is just enough for one more biscuit, but if you put your faith in God and obey his will, the one biscuit you have left won't be your last biscuit.

Medical bills are piling up high and the cost of some prescriptions are more than you can pay. If you buy your medicine, you may not have any food, you seem to be down to nothing but flour and oil, but if you have faith in God, what you have left won't be your last biscuit.

That widow woman took God at his word and stepped out on faith. When she went to the barrel it was enough in the barrel for her to share with Elijah, enough for her to make biscuits for her son and enough to make biscuits for herself.

If you you're feeling depressed because what you have now is all that you have left, be of good cheer, what you have may truly be all that you have *now*, but if you put your faith in God, it won't be your last biscuit.

You serve a God who can:

—Bring light when the night is dark and grim.

—Bring comfort when our burdens are too heavy to bear.

—Help us to stand tall, when the clouds of failure hang low.

—Smooth out the rough places when the going gets tough.

—Help us to cross when the valleys are deep and wide.

Don't ever give up on God, He'll make a way.

"Be not dismayed what ere' betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you."

He started taking care of you from the beginning of time.

When He created the earth in the palm of his hand, he was getting ready to take care of you.

When He spat out the seven seas and spangled the night with the moon and stars,

he was getting ready to take care of you!

When He clapped his hands and made the thunder roll or batted his eyes and made the lightning flash, he was getting ready to take care of you!

When He came down through 42 generations of time and eternity, He was on his way to take care of you.

He stopped by Bethlehem and grew up in a little town called Nazareth, but He was on his way to take care of you!

He stopped by to tell the world in John 6:36 "*I am the bread of life, He that cometh to me shall never hunger. and he that believe on me shall never thirst.*"

Moses brought the first bread in the wilderness, it rain down from heaven and covered the ground every day. But here in the upper room was the last bread, it wasn't on the table, but it stood before them.

That's why Jesus said, *this bread is my body, and this is my blood which is shed for the remission of sin.*

No wonder Dr. Watts said:

Bread of heaven, who carried his cross up Calvary's hill!
Bread of heaven, who let them drive nails into His hand!
Bread of heaven, who let them stick a spear into His side!
Bread of heaven, who dropped His head and died!
Bread of heaven, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!
Bread of heaven, who arose early Sunday morning!
Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!

No. 9405-Revival

To Seek and Save The Lost

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2009

SCRIPTURE:" For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

Introduction

Have you ever been lost? Some will answer 'Yes" but there are many that will answer 'No." Among those who answer 'No' are some who are actually lost right now; they just don't know it.

It is easy to help a person who is lost find his way home. It is harder to help a person who is lost and does not know that he is lost.

How can a person be lost and not know that he or she is lost? Can you hear him speaking?

"Don't tell me that I am lost. I live around the corner in the big white house. Don't tell me that I'm lost I can show you my house on Google-Earth. My GPS system has my location pinpointed; I know exactly where I am. Even if I thought I was lost, I can call "On Star" and they will tell me where I am. I know I'm not lost."

If you are not lost then why is it that sometimes you cry when you are alone? Why is it that sometimes you throw up your hands in despair? Why is it that sometimes you feel all of your efforts are in vain? Why is it that sometimes you can't hear from God?

You may know your address exactly. You may be able to find location on a GPS system, but there are times when even the best of us get lost, disoriented and can't find our way. That's what happens when we get spiritually lost. In the physical world we know where we are but spiritually we are trying to get back.

That's when we know we have lost something.

Losing things can be frustrating. Perhaps some of the most frustrating moments in life are those when we can't find something we have lost. Generally, we remain frustrated until we find our way back.

Usually losing things causes more worry for the owner than for the lost object because that which is lost usually doesn't know that it is lost. The sheep that wandered away from the fold did not know it was lost, but the shepherd did. The coin that was lost in the house did not know it was lost, but the woman did. The prodigal son did not know what he had lost until he came to himself, but his father knew all the time. Sometimes those who are lost don't know it, while others all around them

see it sharp and clear.

Personally have we lost anything? Has there ever been a time when we felt spiritually stronger? Has there ever been a time when we read our bible more, attended Sunday school, sang in the choir, or served in a special position of service with intensity and vigor? Has there ever been a time when you actually enjoyed serving the Lord, looked forward to meetings with other brothers and sisters in the faith and were excited about the fellowship?

There are millions of church members who are lost in the house. They have not wandered into the highways and byways nor roamed into the world; they are lost in the house!

When we are lost in this way, we are like David who lost his joy. It was a long time before David realized that he had lost something, but once he came to himself he cried out to the Lord: "*Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.*" (Psalm. 51:10-12).

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that we are close to God daily, but if we lose our way, that our savior will come looking for us to bring us safely home again.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he helps a man who thought he had it all to find himself.

This text is drawn from an incident in which Jesus came through a crowded street and was seen by a wealthy and influential man by the name of Zacchaeus. Despite his influence Zacchaeus was not able to see Jesus because of the crowd that surrounded him, so he ran ahead of him, climbed into a sycamore tree and waited for a chance to see him. Jesus saw him and instructed him to come down immediately for Jesus wanted to stay at his house. This was more than Zacchaeus had hoped for, so he welcomed Him gladly.

At the meal it is supposed that Zacchaeus heard the gospel message and realized that in his present state that he would not be a part of the kingdom of God. In the presence of Christ he found himself and voluntarily announced that he would give half of what he owned to the poor and repay fourfold all he had wronged. He publicly wanted the people to know that his time with Jesus had changed his life.

Zacchaeus, a son of Abraham by birth, had a right to enter the kingdom because he found himself in Jesus. That was Jesus' mission—to seek and to save those who are lost.

Just as it was Jesus' mission then to seek and save the lost, so is the mission of the church to do the same.

Ways to be lost

There are several ways for people to get lost today:

SOME ARE LOST TO THE SERVICE OF GOD: There are some in the world today who have chosen to live outside of the saving Grace of our Lord. These are those whose choices have been to live their lives by their own rules, and accept the consequences. Too often such choices have ended in moral decadence and spiritual decay. Although they have disassociated themselves from God, God has not divorced himself from them. The message that the gospel brings is one of forgiveness and compassion. His message is reconciliation. His forgiveness ignores our past failures and shortcoming and peers beyond our present miserable estate. God only cares that those who are lost are his children and he is willing to come the first mile to offer another chance to those who know him not.

SOME HAVE LOST THEIR TRUST IN GOD: There are many who have stopped trusting God and placed all of their trust in their own abilities and in other people. In March of 2009 Financier Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty to 11 criminal complaints and confessed to cheating thousands of people out of billions of dollars. In court documents, prosecutors put the amount of the fraud at $64.8 billion. Thousands of people put their trust in him and lost billions of dollars.

Madoff's victims included individuals, trusts, pension funds, hedge funds and nonprofit organizations. The scheme wiped out people's life savings, ruined charities and foundations, and apparently pushed at least two investors to commit suicide.

What he offered his victims was impossible to achieve: profits and protection. They trusted him and lost.

Unfortunately there were many believers who placed all of their hopes in man and not in God.

But all is not lost. God is still on the throne. Today, He's still looking for the lost to show them that the way to real spiritual wealth and prosperity is through faith and trust in Him.

God is seeking the lost who have trusted their investments rather than Him!

God is seeking the lost who have trusted their education rather than Him!

God is actively looking for those who want more than a motto on a dollar bill. They want more than "In God we trust." The want to sing again, "I will trust in the Lord until I die."

SOME HAVE LOST THEIR FAITH IN GOD: In difficult times such as these when jobs are disappearing, homes are being lost and finances are disappearing, there are many who have lost their faith in God. They somehow believed that they would be immune to any of the problems of the world once they accepted Christ and are shell shocked now that they see that Christians endure problems and troubles just as the rest of the world does. The difference is that we never lose our faith in God.

When faith seems to falter, we need to remind ourselves that although it looks dark and defeat appears imminent God is still on the throne. Every child of God believes in miraculous God. We constantly remind ourselves that no matter how

frustrating the situation might seem it never reaches a point of complication beyond the miraculous power of God.

The songwriter said "God is still on the throne, within your bosom you have the phone" Your miracle is just a prayer away, God is on the line. Another songwriter said, "Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want, if you're sick and you want to get well, tell him what you want."

If you are lost, Jesus is the key!

Finally, brothers and sisters, if you lost we want to let you know that Jesus is the key to your restoration.

No matter how bad your situation looks at the moment, Jesus is the key!

No matter how terrible your sins look to you, Jesus is the key!

No matter how many doors are shut in your face, Jesus is the key!

No matter how many failures you have endured, Jesus is the key!

Jesus is the Key...

—to turning defeat into victor!

—to turning briny tears into broad smile!

—to turning hard times into happy days!

—to turning bowed heads into lifted hearts!

—to turning raging storms into sunny days!

The best way to find Jesus, if you have found yourself lost, is to backtrack over your life. If you'll start coming back to him you'll find that he's already started coming toward you with his arms wide open.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem and they lost him in the crowd, but after a while they missed him and began to backtrack until they found him.

If it has been some time since you've opened up to God, do like the song writer and say, "Lord take me back, take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received thee, take me back, take me back dear Lord to where I first believed."

Somebody will find him in a bible verse, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."*

Somebody will find their lost key in a children's verse, *"Yes Jesus loves me, because the Bible tells me so."*

When you backtrack far enough you find Jesus on a special day in a special way.

Jesus is looking for the lost, to save them from their sins!

Jesus is looking for the confused, to give them direction!

Jesus is looking for sinners, to cover them with his blood!

He carried an old rugged cross, looking for the lost!

He was wounded for our transgressions, because He was looking for the lost!

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb, and he stayed their three days and nights!

But Early Sunday morning, He arose from the dead, and today, He's still looking for souls who want to be washed in the blood!

No. 9406-Anniv.-Pastor

Double Duty Service and Double Duty Honor

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2009

SCRIPTURE: Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Introduction

Have you ever had a double portion of anything?To have a double portion of something is to have twice as much as others would have. Those who have the salaries doubled get twice what they were earning. Those who buy trailer homes that are twice the normal size buy "double wides." Chewing gum that has twice the amount of mint than using is called "Double Mint." Those who jump rope two ropes instead of one do what is called "Double Dutch." When two couples go on at date together it's called a "Double Date."

When the prophet Elijah prepared to return to heaven on the fiery chariot his young student desired to have a double portion of his Elijah's gift.
It's good to get a double portion of something that is good, it's bad to get a double portion of anything that is bad.

The idea of a double portion is what God had in mind when it comes to dealing with Pastor and Elders of the church. God says these leaders deserve a double honor because of their walk and their teaching responsibility.

The Christian life is one that is challenging and rewarding. Those who live that life receive one honor, but those who lead that walk are deserving of a double portion. During anniversaries and other milestones we pause to give honor to those who have been leading us in the journey.

As Christians, let us also salute the pastor the Lord has given us to guide us along the way, for truly he is a servant worthy of a double honor.

Exposition

This text finds Paul instructing the church on how it should respond to those who are in leadership.

This text finds Paul instructing the church on how it should respond to those who are in leadership.

In his instruction to Timothy, Paul gave numerous instructions as he prepared to assume the role of ministry leader in Paul's absence. The entire book of Timothy is filled with instruction about pastoral care of the flock, administration of the ministries and dealing with internal conflicts.

In this passage Paul gives instructions about the proper respect due to elders of the church. When Paul uses the term "elder" many scholars agree that the term includes the preaching elders and the support elders or deacons. They both comprise the leadership circle of the church.

The passage of scripture urged young Timothy in two matters: How to handle complaints against an elder and how to respond to the honorable work of an elder.

The passage actually begins at verse "Rebuke not an elder" (v1) and continues with instructions until verse 20 by saying "Rebuke an elder who sins before all."

In between the instructions on how to correct an elder are the rules about honoring elders both for their age and position and for their service to the church.

Every older person in the church is due honor by virtue of their age and experience.

However, an elder who also leads in the ministries of the church is worthy of "double honor."

Servants of the church are its elders and there worthy all courtesies and respect due to them by virtue of the age and position. The church be careful in the way it rebukes them or criticizes them while at the same time remembering its obligation to show concern, respect and honor for its leaders who teach and preach the word.

Whether in discipline or praise and respect the church is instructed to treat its elders, and its deacons with the appropriate honor that is due their position.

The first honor

Every member of the church who labors to build the kingdom of God through their service is considered worthy of honor and respect. In fact Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:23-24 that the church should take extra care to show respect and honor to everyone, regardless to their status. In verse 25 of that same passage he said, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

The work that deserves the first honor is the work of kingdom building. Those members who visit the sick, help the poor, attend the affairs of the widows, comfort the lonely, provide family nurture and who evangelize on domestic and foreign shores are all deserving of the first honor.

They are honored with words of praise, prayer, moral support and assistance if needed. This first honor is one of the greatest rewards that can come for an average member of a congregation.

The second honor

While every member of the church who labors is worthy of honor those who preach and teach the word and who exercise leadership by the word are worthy of double honor. The preaching and teaching elders are of special note here because they labor in the word exclusively. The congregation depends on their knowledge and discernment for their guidance and nurture.

These elders deserve double honor because that have been appointed by God and given authority associated with their office. In addition, it is God that gives them the strength and grace to carry out their duties.

The double honor that they deserve is not conditioned on the way that we feel about our elders. They are not honored because we always agree with them, approve of what they do or because they are rich and influential; they are honored because of the double portion of the work that they perform for Kingdom of God.

How do we honor them?

Churches around the world honor their elders in a number of ways.
Some read, 1 Tim. 5:18 "For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain, and, The laborer is worthy of his reward."

While some take this passage to mean that the pastor's salary should be double or that he should earn double that of other church staff members, it really means that as the pastor sacrifices his own family's needs to build the ministries of the church, the church respond in proportion to its ability, to the needs of its spiritual leader, as an act of love rather than a specific command.

Although it is not commanded many share the increase of the ministry with the elders. This double honor is reflected in the way the church responds to the needs of its elders, all given out of love and concern. For some this is observed through financial gifts and fiscal observances. For others, the care of the elder's medical needs, insurances and other concerns is a honor extended.

Yet there are other ways that double honor can be given as well:

—We show double honor when we are obedient to the pastor and obey his instructions!.

—We show double honor when we refuse entertain gossip and evil talk about the pastor!

—We show double honor when we consider the needs of his family and children!

—We show double honor when we call the pastor's name personally in our family and public prayers!

Honoring the pastor is just a small way that believers show their love and appreciation for a servant who is truly worthy of double honor.

Honor Pastors for their Christian Walk

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should honor our pastors because they have walked the walk as well as talked the talk; they deserve our praise and prayerful support.

They deserve double honor for living the life of Christian themselves then showing us how to do the same.

They deserve double honor because they have weathered the storms of difficult times themselves and then have helped us to stay afloat.

They deserve double honor because they have often neglected their own good while trying to help us achieve our highest potential.

Our praise and acts of gratitude encourages weary pastors to continue walking the walk themselves as they also show us how to walk.

We honor them because we watch the walk of the pastor and draw inspiration from each step. They resolve that no matter how long they have been on the battlefield they will continue.

We honor them because often our pastor has assume double duties.

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and even mopped floors.

Some have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but encouraged by their pastors they resolve.

They have performed double duty so it's only logical that they receive double the honor.

Some have emptied trash cans, others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all watch the pastor's walk and say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

Why do we salute our pastors? Because they have taught us to walk in faith.

Why do we honor them with special days? Because they have taught us how to call on the name of the Lord!

When our strength is failing, we may not remember to call on El-Shaddai, the almighty God..but there is a name!

When we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we may not remember, Jehova-Rohi, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"..but there is a name!

When we are feeling like we're making this journey alone, we may not remember "Emmanuel" the everlasting God, but there is a name!

We give double honor to our pastors because they continually remind us that, there is a name.

It is the name songwriter wrote about when he declared, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me

I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It's the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved!

It's the name of Jesus!

It's the name that the angels will declare "Worthy is the Lamb!"

Jesus is worthy of all praise and glory, because he loved us.

He loved me so much that he hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

"Worthy is the Lamb!

No. 9407-Gratitude

Consider the Source

A sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

November 22, 2009

SCRIPTURE:" As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee." Psalm 87:7

Introduction

Have you ever looked at all the ways you have been blessed? Just count your blessings and you will discover that you are the recipient of many blessings. Whether you calculate your blessings in physical things or those things intangible, most of us can truthfully say that we have been blessed immensely.

Have you ever stopped to consider the source of those blessings? Sometimes, we take that source for granted. In 1965 Douglas Turner Ward wrote a play entitled "A Happy Ending." In the play a young man is upset because his mother works as a made for a white couple and comes home worried about their affairs daily. He chides her for her slave mentality mourning and complaining about whites, until the mother reminded him that their fate is tied to the white couple. If they divorced then there would be no more steaks, closets full of designer clothes. When the son considered the source of his prosperity he too started being concerned about the white couple and joined his mother in tears.

Often children forget the source of their designer clothes, cell phones and vast opportunities when they demonstrate spirits of ingratitude.

Considering the source is what led to the founding of this great nation. In 1623, three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth Rock, the Governor of Massachusetts proclaimed that all Pilgrims must assemble in their churches, listen to their preachers and give thanks to God for providing them with an abundant harvest, sparing them from sickness and disease and giving them freedom to worship. In 1941 Thanksgiving became a law.

Yet, thanksgiving to God cannot be legislated; it must come as revelation from the heart. True Thanksgiving comes when we can say in the words of Ruben Studdard:

Jesus You're the center of my joy
All that's good and perfect
Comes from You
You're the heart of my contentment

Hope for all I do

Jesus You're the center of my joy

When we consider that Jesus is the source of our joy, contentment, provision and salvation, then everyday becomes a day of Thanksgiving.

As Christians, we give thanks to God for His goodness and for His mercies. Unlike the Pilgrims who waited three years until they experienced good times and then assembled only after being ordered, we thank Him for everything, the good and the bad. Because we have not forgotten the source, we celebrate and give God thanks.

Exposition

This text is a vision of Zion as the source of all of Israel's blessings.

The text paints a picture of the greatness of the people, citing great accomplishments of great men over time, all pointing to one Zion Mt. Zion or the inspiration of God. The rejoicing and celebration that is recorded in this chapter show a triumphant procession of people playing a variety of musical instruments with one single purpose that is to praise God as the source of their success and blessing.

The singers and players will be reveling in the joy that comes from knowing that God has been their strong tower and their hope. In this passage there is a spirit of Thanksgiving as Psalmists and pipers, unite their efforts and make a joyful procession to the temple, inspired by the downpours they have received from the source of all good, of which they each one sing

It is significant to note the last phrase of the chapter "All my springs are in thee."

Springs are the sources of fresh water and from them come a constant flow of help and love.

All my springs are in thee notes David saying God is the source of all of his inspiration, comfort, strength, joy and life. It expresses the believers home that "the springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord.

Without that spring believers would be like a dry well.

Those David looks at the life he has before him, but recognizes that God is the spring from whence it has all come.

Source of Life

Believers count "blessings" and refer to the favor when we have received; none believers usually refer to their great luck or fate. When we count our blessings rather than our luck we automatically indicate that we acknowledge the source of growth as being from God. If we say we are lucky then we refuse to acknowledge the real source of our good fortune.

HE IS THE SOURCE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENT: God is the source of our achievements. No matter what kinds of achievements we have to our credit, God is the

ultimate source. Is it academic, secular, political, or business oriented? No matter what it is, God is the source.

Marian Anderson was a famous Black contralto. She was described by music critics as having a voice that only came along every 100 years. Though her voice was awe inspiring she was often refused opportunities to sing because of her race. The daughters of the American Revolution would not let her sing in Constitution Hall in 1939, but 75,000 people gathered to hear her at the Lincoln Memorial because of the refusal. At the age of 53, she became the first Black soloist to sing with the Metropolitan opera. As the crowds came to her backstage door, Marian appeared still in her concert gown. She stood silent and motionless as thousands cheered her. Her response to the audience was to look up to heaven and then say, "thank you, for letting me sing." It was her way of recognizing the source.

HE IS THE SOURCE O OUR PROVISION: God is the source of all our provisions whether it food, clothing or shelter. What we have may come through a variety of streams but we must know that at the head of each of those streams is the well spring of God's grace. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 6:28-30 "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" We give thanks to God for providing for us. We have a house, a car, a little money, small bits and pieces of property and few possessions, all flow from the spring of God's grace, He is our source.

HE IS THE SOURCE OF OUR SALVATION: Most believers readily admit that they are stronger today than they were a few years ago. Yet, the strength that we have to weather the storms of life does not come within ourselves, we must consider the source, with is God himself. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Hebrews 12:2 says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." God is the source of all our blessings although they may have traveled a great distance and rounded many meandered corners to make their arrival within our grasp. He may have had to bend us in many strange was to get us to where we are today but the source, the author of our salvation, is Christ Jesus. We are saved not by our good works, education, skills or connections, but only by the grace of God. Every time we think of his goodness despite our unworthiness, we must acknowledge, "If it had not been for the Lord on my side." I would have been drifting and lost on the sea of life.

When we consider the source

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we consider the source of our blessing, all we can do is praise the Lord.

In many ways, God has blessed us since the last Thanksgiving season.

Since the last Thanksgiving, there are some who would have given up, if it had not been for the Lord

Since the last Thanksgiving, there are some who would have been overwhelmed by despair, if it had not been for the Lord.

Since the last Thanksgiving, there are some who would have suffered intense despair, if it had not been for the Lord.

Since the last Thanksgiving, there are some who would have been destroyed by their own weaknesses, if it had not been for the Lord.

Since the last Thanksgiving, there are some who would have abandoned their marriages and relationships, if it had not been for the Lord.

We give thanks to God because we know we didn't work it by ourselves, it was nothing but the Grace of God.

In the midst of disparity he has provided a continuous stream of blessings for us.

In Psalm 105:1, David said, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord..make known His deeds upon the people."

Every child of God has a similar testimony and stands on the premise that the Lord has been good to us, in fact He has been better to us than we have been to ourselves.

In the midst of my:

—Burdens, He's shown me His benefits

—Hardships, He's given me His helping hand

—Midnights, He's given men a song to sing

—Challenges, He's given me confidence to go on

—Infirmities, He's given me inspiration

—Sorrow, He's given me comfort

—Dangers, He's given me the safety of His everlasting arms.

The Gospel of Luke gives the account of 10 lepers who asked the Lord for a healing. After receiving their healing all of them turned to walk away, but one of them thought about the source of that blessed and returned and told the Lord, "Thank you" for the blessing of healing.

Every true child of God is like that grateful leper. We don't need a holiday! We don't need a presidential proclamation! We don't need to wait until the last Thursday in November, but every day of our lives we tell the Savior: Thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord, for waking me up every day!

Thank you Lord, for closing me in my right mind!

Thank you Lord, for mountains and thank you for my valleys!

No wonder the song writer would declare "Thank you Lord, Thank you Lord, I just want to thank you Lord! You've been so good ..I just want to thank you Lord."

I want to thank you for picking up an old rugged crosses and dying for me out on Calvary!

Thank you rising up in my soul!

Thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord!

I just want to thank you Lord!

No. 9408-Funeral

A Patriarch's Legacy

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 30, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people." Genesis 25:7-8

Introduction

Have you ever listened to the advice of the senior member of your family?Those who have lived long lives have much to share with a family as they try to tell the family's story, it's legends, journey and destiny. Each responds to a silent command to tell the story to the next generation.

The Patriarch of the family is the oldest man. He is the one who tries to give directions to the coming generations who often won't hear him at the least or dismiss him as an anachronism .

Our elders seek to teach us, direct us and to keep us on the path; often we don't hear them until it's too late.

Consider the grandpa who tried to show his very arrogant grandson how to ride the family's special breed of horses. He said, "Son, this family has raised these horses for over 100 years. Our horses only understand two words: Thank God and Amen. If you want the horse to go forward you say, "Thank God." However, if you want the horse to stop you must say, "Amen." But you need to sit down and let me tell you when. The young boy was not about to get hooked into another one of the old Patriarch's lectures. He quickly said, 'I got it grandpa. Thank God to go forward and Amen to Stop. It's a piece of cake." The boy mounted the horse and yelled, "Thank God" and the horse riled up and went forward. He yelled, "Thank God," repeatedly and the horse raced toward the edge of a cliff. In the excitement, the boy forgot what to say to make the horse stop but just as the horse made it to edge of the cliff he remembered and yelled "Amen" and the horse came to a screeching halt, but was leaning over the edge. The Boy looked back at his grandpa and with a cocky but confident smile, wiped the sweat off his brow and said, "Thank God." - he was never seen again!

The Patriarch's of our families try to talk to us, but often we are not willing to listen, even though they are the depositories of our family's heritage, traditions and beliefs. In life, they try to direct us. In death they leave us a legacy of memories, examples and

goodwill that will carry us the rest of our lives.

As Christians, we embrace the legacy of our families, but even more we embrace the legacy of Jesus Christ, the great head of the church. We strive to emulate him in every way, holding to the standards that he set for us in his written word.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the death of Abraham the patriarch of one nation and three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Abraham was the patriarch of a sprawling and highly productive family of Jews whose influence changed the direction of thousands for years to come.

He was born in the land of Ur and spent most of his life living in tents and traveling from place to place. God showed Abraham that one his family would be great and that he would own Great amounts of land. In promises that began in Genesis chapter 12 God promised Abraham that he would be the patriarch of a large family whose impact would be felt for generations.

Abraham spent most of his life directing and guiding his family toward the promised future that God had presented to him. Though they encountered a variety of secular beliefs that ranged from polytheism to atheism Abraham guided his family to believe in one God and to trust him fully. He ruled his family with a sure but stern hand, guiding each generation to achieve its best and to stay focused.

Abraham lived a relatively long life for his generation. Although Methuselah lived to be 969 years old, by Abraham's time a man who lived more than 150 years was considered to be one who was relatively seasoned. When he died he was 175 years old. He was 140 years old when Isaac and Rebekah were married. He was 160 years old at the birth of his grandsons Jacob and Esau. He then lived another 15 years, long enough to pass the baton to his son Isaac with whom he lived quietly until his death. He lived long enough to secure a burial place, make his own final arrangements, and to give instructions and provision to his heirs to secure their posterity.

In this text he is described as a man who was full of years. To be full of years is to be satisfied, satiated, full of blessings, and nourished by God.

As patriarch of the family, Abraham set the standard for what was expected of his descendents. As Abraham's children, his family was expected to continue their belief in the one true God. They were expected to be industrious, productive, and always willing to make sacrifices to accomplish God's will.

As each succeeding generation passed, the legacy of Abraham continued through Isaac and Jacob and Jacob's twelve sons who became known as the Children of Israel.

The family's story did not begin with Abraham, but he was the one who received the promise from God and it is through him that God showered blessings upon each succeeding generation.

What was Abraham's legacy?

Abraham was a family man: Abraham spent a great part of his life nurturing his family relationships. When there was dissension in the ranks such as that between Lott and his herdsmen Abraham was a peacemaker. When trouble threatened members of the family he labored to protect as many members of the family as he could even those who live in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He provided for his children and for his wives. He used every resource at his disposal to both provide for and protect his family. Abraham's example is worthy of emulation today. Every family leader should strive to be a peacemaker, provider, and protector. Until his dying day, Abraham gave advice and instruction to the family about its legacy and its duty to be stewards of that which God has given. The importance of the family, its support and security is the central focus of a patriarch and it is a key element of his legacy.

Abraham was a God fearing man: While Abraham was not a perfect man it was obvious to members of his family that he was one who was willing to both fear God and trust him fully. The family knew he believed in God when they saw him take sacrificial steps that seem to threaten them but were dictated by God such as sacrificing Isaac on the altar or traveling from place to place in unfriendly lands. His willingness to follow his faith endeared him to many members of the family because they knew he was a God fearing man. Today, those who are heading households have the responsibility of leading their families in the fear of the Lord. In times of danger, distress and peril the family must know that there is one at the helm who has his eye on the promised land and is ready to move at God's command. This spirit of godliness and obedience to God's command is an important part of the patriarch's legacy.

Abraham was both a politician and businessman: Abraham received his inheritance from his father Terah and through shrewd dealings and political contacts translated it into a sizable fortune at his death. Sometimes Abraham was called upon to negotiate for his people with foreign Kings and on other occasions he had to strike business deals to purchase lands or right of ways. Throughout his life Abraham used his political skills and business acumen for the safety, security, and prosperity of his people. Today, family leaders should apprise themselves of the issues of the day that will affect their family. Whether those issues involve education, economic development, racial equality, or healthcare is the responsibility of every family leader to study and influence the course of events that may improve conditions for family members in the present or in the years to come. In addition, each family leader has the responsibility to be sober in his handling of the business affairs of the family, making wise investments and assurances that will contribute to the safety and security of the family. This aptitude for wise management and civic awareness is also an important part of the patriarchs legacy; it will be duplicated in some form but each succeeding generation.

He was looking for a city

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while Abraham was a successful businessman, politician, and family man, he was still a man who traveled from place to place looking for a city.

Despite all of Abraham's accomplishments he was a man who lived every day of his life with the full understanding that he was just living in a tent on insecure ground.

Despite the fact that Abraham had land and financial resources to spare, he was still just a man who spent the entirety of his life looking for a city.

Despite the fact that Abraham helped thousands in his life's journey, he was still just a man who walked mile after mile looking for a city.

He was not just looking for any city, he was looking for a city with foundations. He was looking for a city built by the hands of God.

Many people only saw Abraham the businessman, who could buy land or make investments, they didn't see Abraham the praying man who would set up an altar and offer sacrifices to God everywhere he stopped.

Many people saw Abraham the politician negotiating with leaders of the land and important people in the community; they didn't see Abraham the worshiping man who often called on God in the wee hours of the night and heard him speak to his soul.

Many people saw Abraham the wealthy man who had considerable resources and land; they did not see Abraham the giving man who took the first fruits of his crops, cattle and increase and presented them to the Lord.

Just as Abraham moved from place to place, living here then there, every Patriarch today is also looking for city.

We are looking for a city that cannot be bordered by the Beouf River, Bayou Macon or the Ouachita.

We are looking for a city that cannot be reached by driving a few miles up the interstate or its well worn back roads.

When our eyes begin to dim and our steps slow, we will find our way to an altar to give praise to God for securing our place in that city.

When our hearts begin to fail, strokes pin us to our bed, and our voices become inaudible whispers, our failing heart still sings with words lifted to cosmic proportions, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, glory hallelujah!"

And when the Lord comes, he'll come with the city!

John said, he said, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth...and I saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

In that city the wicked will cease from troubling and weary will be at rest!

In that city every day will be Sunday, always howdy and never goodbye!

In that city the patriarchs of every family will gather: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The big names and the little names, both the majors and the minors, will be in that city!

What is this city? It's the place the song writer wrote about when he said, "I have

heard of a land on a far away strand, it's the beautiful home of the soul. Built by Jesus on high, where we never shall die, it's land where we'll never grow old."

It's a city not made by the hands of men!

It's a city with 12 foundations!

It's a city with 12 gates!

It's a city that measures 1500 miles square with 300 foot walls

It's a city that houses the tree of life whose leaves will be good for the healing of the nations!

It's a city called heaven!

When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!

This patriarch has gone one before us, but every descendant must follow the trail of the cross to secure his place in the city!

Follow that trail to love of family!

Follow that trail to lifting the lives of the lost!

Follow that trail to the altar in a God centered life

Follow that trail to Bethlehem!

Follow that trail to Jerusalem!

Follow that trail to an old rugged cross!

Follow that trail to an empty tomb!

He's not there because early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There is joy! Joy! Joy!

On Wednesday, November 26, 2009 Claude Minor, Sr., "breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people."

No. 9409-Inspiration

A Blessing worth waiting for

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Matthew 1:16-17

Introduction

Have you ever waited a long time to receive a gift? When you received it, was it worth the wait? There is one thing common to this season: long lines. No matter how we try to avoid them, long waiting lines are a staple of the Yuletide season. Some are frustrated with all of the waits from the ATM machine to the Checkout line. Others have accepted waits as part of the process; they are neither frustrated nor intimidated by the process.

There are some things that are worth the wait. Some would argue that fifteen minute oatmeal and thirty minute grits are worth the wait. Some say homemade hamburgers, pound cakes made from scratch, or tomatoes grown in your own garden are worth the wait. Still others say the bargains they received on black Friday were worth standing in line at 3 AM in the morning and fighting the crowds to get to them. Still others would argue that hot footage that covers the entire ice cream sundae is worth the wait.

The romantic will tell you that finally embracing your true love is worth the wait.

The investor will tell you that the profit gained from buying low and selling high is worth the wait.

The educator will tell you that the rewards of a full college education are ultimately worth the wait.

The football fan will tell you that standing in long lines to get box seats at the Super Bowl is definitely worth the wait.

Most people will agree that they don't mind waiting as long as they can be assured that what they are waiting for is worth the wait. No one wants to waste their time.

Yet, there are many who believe that they are wasting their time in one endeavor or another because they believe that what they will finally receive won't be worth the wait. That's why some drop out of school because they believe the jobs that they will

ultimately receive, if any, won't be worth the sacrifice of time and energy required to complete their education. Others abandon once special projects because they have lost faith in the ultimate reward they expected to receive.

Does that apply it to our faith, too? Is all that we do a waste of time? Will the reward that we receive at the end be worth the sacrifice that we are making in this life? There are some who are asking these real-life questions and have concluded that the life of faith won't be worth the ultimate reward. They count the number of hours they will spend in worship, Bible study, rehearsals and practices, and in service to others and they ask will all of these hours be worth it? They count the amount of money that they contribute to ministries and the donated talents that they loan to kingdom building and they ask the question, "Will all of my service pay off in the long run?"

The true believer has one response and it comes from the word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The Reverend Jasper Williams puts it this way, "Serving the Lord will pay off after while."

Just as a long awaited birthday present brings us great joy, or a much anticipated Christmas present fills us with excitement, those who labor in the service of the Lord, keep the faith, and never stop trusting Him will discover sooner than they think that what God has planned for them is a blessing that worth the wait.

As Christians, we wait patiently upon the fulfillment of God's promises. We know that He has never made a promise to us that he has not kept. At times, we became frustrated because he didn't show up by our time schedule. However, our experience has taught us that God may not show up when we want him, but He's always on time.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the genealogy of Jesus Christ through his earthly father Joseph.

The text shows us the long journey through which the Messiah came to reach Earth and to fulfill the promise of God.

The text and its preceding verses is a genealogy of Joseph's family. A second account in another of the Gospels presents a genealogy of Mary's family.

This genealogy shows how Jesus appeared in the family of Joseph after 42 generations of descent. These texts present the descendents of Abraham in three groups of 14 generations of each.

Matthew records the names beginning with the oldest and moves to the most recent.

The long list of names included in the genealogy indicates how God systematically brought into the ancestry of Joseph and Mary varied instances of intermarriage between races, nationalities and cultures pointing to the fact that once the Savior made his arrival upon this earth he would be a Jew by his biology but he would be a child of every nation based upon his diverse ethnic background.

The Savior's arrival was promised by God, but this 42 generation journey seemed an unbearable length of time to some. During these 42 generations the people waited for God to answer their prayer, and to give them the promised Savior. When the Savior was finally born he was a blessing to the entire world. History has proven that it was a blessing worth waiting for.

God's Blessing

Has God made you a promise that He seems slow answering? Are you becoming frustrated because the job you seek, the opportunity you chase or the open door you're trying to find seems to always elude you? In the meantime are all the hassles you are enduring trying to wait on God complicating things for you? Are you tempted to take matters in your own hands because you see yourself going down rapidly? If so then you should consider these three truths:

TIME PASSES QUICKLY WHEN YOU ARE BUSY WITH HIS WORK: If we sit around our homes everyday waiting for God to get that job, solve that problem or open that door, it will seem like an eternity. We know that God is moving because He has promised us that before we even ask that our help is on the way; however, it's frustrating if we are running to the window checking on every car that passes, jumping each time the telephone rings and spotting the mailman a half mile down the street trying to shake the blessing out of his bag. There is an old saying "Watch pot, never boil." It means if you spend all of your time watching the pot it will seem like the water will never boil. It's the same way with God. Since God has promised us a blessing let's get busy doing something else other than just waiting on your "shrimp boat" to come in. When we are helping others, assisting the sick, encouraging the lonely or otherwise helping to build the kingdom, the time seems to pass quickly. Busy yourself serving and praising God and watch that blessing come. God is working it out, so busy yourself praising him and working for him. Psalm 52:9 says "I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints." Pray, Praise and serve and before you know, God has worked it out!

EVEN WHILE YOU WAITING, GOD'S GOT YOUR BACK: If we are in a jam and we're waiting on the Lord to bless us with a solution, it gets frustrating if we forget that even while we are waiting, that God's got our back. This happens when we have prayed to God and asked for deliverance and the blessing that He promised seems so slow coming. It makes us anxious when our notes are due, the utilities are about to be disconnected and our jobs are on line. It gets really frustrating because in our weakness we start to look at the clock that brings our eventual demise closer and closer. For some these are shaky moments because we are waiting, but we doubt that what we are waiting for will be sufficient to handle the magnitude of the problem or enormity of our depressed situation. That's when we should remember Psalm 33:20 that says "Our soul waited for the LORD: He is our help and our shield." It may appear that enemies are surrounding us on every hand but God's has your situation under control. Don't worry if the enemy is at your front door and the back door and crawling through the keyhole,

just remember that the Lord is your shield and in his own time He will deal with them and in the meantime he's got you covered behind his shield.

IF YOU RUN OUT OF STRENGTH, HANG ON A LITTLE WHILE LONGER: There are many who have been waiting on God for what seems to be an eternity but he has not yet answered with the blessing they need. Some are handling household matters, holding families together by threads, tending frail marriages, treating wounds and diseases, and trying to revive failing finances with little success. Some are actually down to their last ounce of strength, and still it seems that God is taking so long. Doesn't He know that we are running out of strength? We have reached the point where we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. We have waited so long that we have worn out wait. We know very well what Psalm 130:6 says, "My soul waited for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say, more that they that watch for the morning." Remember, God knows just how much you can bear, and if you hold on, he'll make it worth your while. In fact, Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!" When that blessing comes we'll conclude that it was certainly worth the wait! When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hold on; help is on the way.

When you wait

Finally, brothers and sisters we must not focus on how long it's taking the blessing to come, but what is going to happen when it comes!

We must constantly remind ourselves not to hurry God, because when the time is right God will shake things up and make them happen on our behalf!

If we can wait on everything else we should be able to wait on the Lord.

If we can wait for the coffee to brew and the toast to brown, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can wait for water to boil, popcorn to pop, and for all the commercials to pass before we can watch a rented DVD, then we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can wait for the train to pass, the cake to bake and the washer to go through three spin cycles, we out to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can we wait in lines at stores or wait for another batch of fries at Mickey D's, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can call someone on the phone and wait while they put us on hold because they have call waiting, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord

If you wait on the Lord, the blessing you will receive will be worth the wait.

If you wait on the Lord burdens get lifted.

If you wait on the Lord your heavy loads get shared.

When you wait on the Lord, bowed down heads get lifted.

When you wait on the Lord eyes wet with tears get wiped dry.

When you wait on the Lord, ways get made out of no way, storms seem to subside, bright skies return, bad habits are broken, addictions cease, and yokes are broken.

The world cried out and said, Father we're lost down here, we need a redeemer!

Lord, send us a blessing that will give us a brand new start.

While they were still praying, they didn't know that their blessing was already on the way.

What they didn't know was that 42 generations ago:

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Judas begat Phares and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

Salmon begat Booz; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

Down in Israel the people were getting impatience but what they didn't see was that God was already working because:

Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, and down and Bethlehem a child was born!

Somebody said, "What shall we call him?" and the answer came "Emanuel" God with us!

He's the blessing that we've been waiting for, and He's well worth the wait.

He is a prayer answering God, He's well worth the wait!

He is a body healing God; He's well worth the wait!

He is a soul saving God; He's well worth the wait!

Wait on the Lord; He'll make it worth your while!

Wait on the Lord because one evening a picked up an old rugged cross!

Wait on the Lord because He died out on Calvary!

Wait on the Lord because early Sunday morning, He arose from the Grave with all power in His hands!

Wait on the Lord; He'll make it all worth your while!

No. 9410-King Day

E Pluribus Unum

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2009

SCRIPTURE: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

Introduction

Have you ever wondered about that Latin phrase that's written on all of our currency? If you'll look close, you'll see that it says, "E. Pluribus Unum." Those unfamiliar with Latin probably thought it meant "In God we trust," but what it really means is "Out of many comes one." It's a statement that our nation is the product of many different races, cultures, religions and heritages that are bound together in a common purpose that has made us one.

It's not quite "one" yet, but the push to diversify and to accept differences is at an all time high.

Wouldn't it be great if there was a world in which color, national origin, or ethnicity were celebrated, appreciated, and embraced? In such a world it would not matter about the color of a person's skin, the country from which they came, or their cultural differences. The only thing that would matter would be the content of their character, their ability to contribute, and their personal effectiveness.

That is the world that Martin Luther King Junior envisioned when he said he dreamed of a day when "men will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Those words were spoken over 40 years ago by Dr. King but are slowly being embraced in the American workplace, as well as they social and religious communities. The fact that it would take 40 years for the process to incorporate itself into the fabric of American society intimates the challenge that diversity presents as well as the reward that it offers.

Diversity is more than simple nondiscrimination. It is even more than equal opportunity. It transcends the legal requirements of the law and challenges each person, institution, and community to focus on the differences and similarities that people bring into the arena of life beyond the mere letter of the law. The challenge of diversity is to be inclusive of everyone. It mirrors the nondiscrimination compli-

ance components of the law but caricatures the ideal relationships between people of varied races and cultures. Diversity is about learning from others who are not the same, about dignity and respect for all, and about creating environments and practices encourage learning from diverse perspectives of others.

Dr. King's words were very simple but their implications were dramatic. His call for a diverse society challenged the entire nation to review how it perceives itself and then to examine how it perceives others. Our perception of others impacts the way we interact with people who differ from us racially, culturally, or sexually. The demand for diverse involvement in the social community prompts us to recognize the need to accept our differences and embrace our commonalities.

The call for diversity did not originate with Dr. King, he only reflected the teachings of our Lord who was often criticized for recognizing the value of individuals and ignoring the differences. He often fraternized with sinners and publicans, was seen publicly with Samaritans and often talked to women in public. He challenged the social standards of his time by assembling a diverse array of disciples who were businessmen and even government tax collectors. What Christ called for then is what we as a nation are trying to accomplish now: true diversity that begins with changes in our personal attitudes and reflects itself in our relationships with others in the workplace and the general community.

The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is a major tenet of the Christian faith. The love of God assumes the acceptance and the love of all people as children of God and that would include even those who differ with us by virtue of their race, color, or ethnic origin. God loves diversity. One writer put it this way, "God must love variety. Even plants of the same species are different—some tall, some leafy, others with a profusion of flowers. He is not the God of an assembly line creation, but One who loves and appreciates the differences."

As Christians, we recognize and embrace all people as children of the King. When we all get to heaven there will be a beautiful bouquet of races, cultures, and nationalities all bound by one unique characteristic; they have been saved by the blood of Christ. When we all get to heaven there will truly be a celebration of "E Pluribus Unum."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that despite the diverse makeup of the church, it is one body in Christ.

Christ foretold that if believers would lift him up that "all men" would be drawn to him. That prophecy literally fulfilled itself as people from all races, cultures and creeds joined the church. As it grew, however the Jews among them adopted an attitude of superiority over others, thinking themselves more worthy because Christ was a Jew and Jews were God's chosen people. Paul addresses this misconceived attitude and makes it clear that the diverse nature of the church does not lend itself to superiority of any specific group or race.

The church is a diverse body of believers who come from all walks of life. No

preconditioned status confers rank in the church, all our equal. Likewise, there is no single member or group of members that are spiritually superior over others, that is, a believing Jew is not more privileged before God than a believing Gentile; a believing slave does not rank higher than a believing free person; a believing man is not superior to a believing woman.

This was important to note because some Jewish men prayed, "I thank God that Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." Paul made it clear that such distinctions do not exist in the body of Christ so far as spiritual privilege and position are concerned.

While the first part of the text removes discriminatory barriers, the second part is where unity is established. If all believers are being made like Christ, if all believers have professed faith and joined the body of Christ, then this unity sets aside all other superficial distinctions. Although the body of Christ is diverse, Paul holds to the claim that unity must be exalted. He says, we are one in Christ Jesus. All difference become secondary.

The barriers broken down in this passage set the stage for a social revolution that would ultimately change the way the world viewed diversity. It may not seem so radical to our day, but they were astounding in ancient Roman culture. This made Christianity unique and attractive-it valued each individual, yet it provided a unified body. All believers are one in Christ Jesus. All are equally valuable to God. Differences arise in gifts, in function, in abilities, but all are one in Christ (Ephesians 2:15).

The call for the church to be "one out of many" is what gives it the ability to morph itself into every culture around the world. The idea is to accept the differences among members then pledge to work together as one team to achieve a common goal, building the kingdom of God.

Diversity breeds Growth

When Paul urged the church to accept he set in place a principle that has been copied by people around the world in a large array of arenas, even the workplace. It's plain and simple: diversity is good for the church, but it's also good for the community and for business.

WHEN WE ARE DIVERSE WE ADAPT EASILY. Every company has learned the Pauline principle. As the church grew it adapted its methods to reach diverse cultures and nations. That required utilizing people with gifts of languages, and the ability to interpret the meaning of the church's message to every nation. In the secular community the principle remains the same. When a community or business embraces the talents of those of diverse backgrounds a whole new array of individual talents and experiences are focused on meeting the needs of an ever changing community. Isolation breeds stagnation, but those who open their arms to "whosoever will"

usually discover a wealth of ways to get their message out to the world. The black church must learn this lesson, many white churches have already worked to diversify their membership base, but black churches, for the most part are still isolated. Yet, the believing community of today is a reflection of the greater integrated community from which it evolves. It is not a reflection of the racism of the 60s. As long as the church remains a segregated institution and refuses to seek diversity, it will be doomed to be a relic of the past that is irrelevant to a more diverse community looking for a savior who embraces all.

DIVERSTY BROADENS THE AREAS OF SERVICE: Recently a funeral service in Texas involved a Hispanic woman who had married a Black man. The congregation was half black but the other half was Hispanic, many of whom spoke no English. The church was prepared. Hispanic interpreters read scripture in English and Spanish, so were the songs. The bulletins were multi-language and reflected color schemes that were familiar to both cultures. The result was a pleasing experience for all and Christ was praised. When churches, communities and businesses diversify they too become relevant to a larger ministry area. When a company, for example, diversifies it broadens its ability to communicate through languages and cultural understanding. It allows the community, a business or a church to reach out to those who would not ordinarily be a part of its contact base. It reaches out in different ways, but there is only one message; that's the impact of diversity.

DIVERSITY ENCOURAGES CREATIVE EXECUTION: The church at its beginning thought it would stay in the realm of Jerusalem and Antioch. But as it began to expand into different nations the word of God had to be translated into new tongues and it needed ideas. Those ideas came from the Greeks, Africans, Romans and others that made up its membership. From them, the church gleaned ideas and methods that helped it to grow in large numbers. Ever wonder why on some occasions the church grew by thousands on a single day? It's because it reached out to everyone who would respond. Businesses that grow solicit patronage from every race and culture. Marketing campaigns reflect strategies drawn from the input of its diverse workforce. They know the needs of their diverse customer base and respond to it effectively. It becomes obvious that if the simple Pauline principle of diversification worked for the church that it can work for a company, a community or for a nation. The goal of diversification is to build one message and one mission from a diverse membership. That is the essence of E. Pluribus Unum.

Out of many, one

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that we may have traveled different paths to get to this point but thanks to Christ we are all walking the road to glory.

While the church is diverse in it's makeup, it speaks to the world with a single heart.

Though it reflected a variety of classes and cultures, it was united in it's commitment

to tell the world about the risen Lord.

Though there were Africans and Greeks , Jews and Gentiles in the number whose backgrounds and homelands were far apart, they were united in their quest to make heaven their home.

Out of our diversity we have risen together as one plurality that believes in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.

Out of our differences we have learned that when it comes to our faith in God, we are one and the same. We are all leaning and depending on the mercy of God.

If the beautiful bouquet that God has created is to be fully appreciated then the cause of reaching out to the church must be expanded as we open our arms to every creed and nation.

A great song by the late Michael Jackson, raised the consciousness of the world about the need to include all of God's children, it was called "We are the world."

The lyrics are these:

There comes a time when we heed a certain call
When the world must come together as one
There are people dying
and its time to lend a hand to life
There greatest gift of all

We can't go on pretending day by day
That someone, somewhere will soon make a change
We are all a part of Gods great big family
And the truth, you know,
love is all we need;
We are the world, we are the children.
We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving."

Jackson said in the 20th century what Jesus said on a mountainside in Judea, "we are all a part of God's big family."

It's not a matter of Jew or Greek, Black or White, Christian or Hindu, it's a matter that we are all intertwined together.

Jesus carried that message to all who would listen.

He preached it in the valleys and on the mountainsides!

He preached it in private homes and in the synagogues!

He preached it in season and out of season!

What did he preach? That God loves the world and every creature in it.

And Christ himself loved us so much that he died on Calvary without ever denying the truths upon which he stood.

And every Christian testifies to this day that Early Sunday morning that he arose and is alive today.

He's pushing us to love each other, include each other, respect each other and work together.

Dr. King said, when that happens it will speed up the day when Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, protestants and Catholics will be able to sing in the words of the Old Negro Spiritual, "Free at Last, Free at Last, thank God almighty, I'm free at last!"

No. 9411-Christmas

Who gets the most Toys?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, Louisiana

December 20, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:11

Introduction

Have you ever noticed how children evaluate the quality of their Christmas experience? Despite the fact that you took your good time to wrap the presents under your tree, on Christmas morning the children usually run to the tree and instantly start to tear paper from a variety of boxes. The general procedure is to tear open the box, glance at the contents, then look for the next box. After all the boxes have been opened then they start to count the number of gifts they have received. They measure the size of the gifts and older ones equate the quality of the gift with its actual costs. It appears that the number of gifts under the tree and the size of the boxes determines whether or not there has been a successful Christmas. After playing with their toys for few minutes many will run to the phone to tell their friends how many toys they received and how big they were. Who received the most toys, and what kind, is the nature of the entire conversation. Somehow we assist them in relating the number of toys they receive to the happiness of their Christmas; we know we shouldn't but we do it anyway.

When parents can't buy a large number of toys they feel as if their children will not have a Merry Christmas primarily because we have inadvertently taught them that their happiness is tied to the number of things under the tree.

Just a generation or two ago the valuation of Christmas was a little different in the African-American community. There are some who can remember the joy of getting fresh fruit for Christmas, apples and oranges, a piece of peppermint, and maybe a dress or a pair of shoes. The idea of getting a large number of items, including clothing, toys and other items was not even a consideration. The joy of Christmas was in the family fellowship, decorating the tree, preparing foods, and entertaining family friends who often came from a distance to share the Fellowship. If someone received more than one gift it was a rare occasion. The emphasis was placed upon the Christ

child and family Fellowship. Obviously, that time has faded into memory. Today, a child would probably cry for a week if all they received for Christmas were apples and oranges with only one gift under the tree.

The advent of television and mass marketing has all but eliminated the old family traditions. Children's television shows are filled with advertisements for electronic games, gadgets, and fun machines that all promise immediate happiness if they appear under the tree at the same time. After each advertisement children's wish lists stretch longer and longer. With so much advertising there is no way possible for children to be satisfied with just one gift under the tree in these commercialized times.

The emphasis of modern times is not upon giving gifts but upon receiving them; and that mentality is not limited to children alone. There are many adults who also measure their Christmas by the number of gifts they receive and the cost of each. There is an old saying that says, "the only difference between men and boys is the size of their toys." If that is true then there are millions of adults who are looking for toys for Christmas too; except instead of play cars they want real cars, real cell phones, and real fur coats. Just like their children, there are many adults who also count their toys to determine their joys.

What is the real joy of Christmas? Is it about the number of toys under the tree? Even though trees are pretty, festive, and decorative, are they the real reason for the season? Do we sing Joy to the world only if there is a large number of presents under our tree? Will a large number of electronic games and new toys bring peace on earth? I think not; some will agree that they won't even bring peace in the house on Christmas day. So, there has to be something more than just counting the number of toys; whether it's big boy toys or little boy toys. Our joy simply cannot be predicated on the number of boxes wrapped with bright colored paper that we open on Christmas morning. Those who know the Lord, have found that there is more to it than just wrappings and paper. They have learned that families that focus upon the Lord celebrate their joys and not their toys.

As Christians, we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the hope that the Christ child brings to a world that is filled with pessimism and negativity. We celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace and the King of King's, the number of toys we receive, if any at all, is incidental.

Exposition

This text focuses on several wise men from the east who came to worship Jesus bearing gifts.

The birth of Christ had been foretold in prophecies that noted the birth would be accompanied by a great star that would shine in the heavens and point the way to His location. In the east astrologers familiar with the prophecy followed the star to Judea where they worshipped the growing Christ child sometime after his birth.

The entourage was laden with gifts that represented the wealth of their respective countries. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts were their

tribute to one they believed to be a king, worthy of adoration and respect.

These three gifts were timely for Joseph and Mary; primarily because they were poor, working class people who had lived in Exile for two years in Egypt, barely making ends meet. The gifts from the Magi must have been a great relief. Over the years, some scholars have studied the symbolism of the gifts in that they offered Him gold, as a king; frankincense, as God, for they honored God with the smoke of incense; and myrrh, as a man that should die, for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies. Probably, at the time, Joseph and Mary didn't see any symbolism, they just received the gifts as an immediate answer to their temporal needs.

The Magi's act of giving, not the gifts themselves, is the point of significance to us. True worship is giving, it is not receiving. Like the Magi when we come to see Christ we should never do so without giving him our

The gifts

Who gets the most out of Christmas? When we were children we focused on the gifts we would receive at Christmas time. The more gifts we receive the merrier the Christmas. As we mature in the faith however, we soon learn that the joys are not in the toys. So who gets the most joys at Christmas time? Those who experienced the most at Christmas time are those who look beyond the number of toys, whether those toys are for adults or children, and revel in the joys of the season. What are those joys?

THE JOYS OF LIFE LIVED AND NEW LIFE. One of the joys of Christmas time is the celebration of life, both past and present. Some families have experienced new births during the year that are a reason for celebration. There is no joy greater than the excitement prompted by a family that celebrates a child's first Christmas. It is indescribable. It is a moment that is memorable. Some have overcome obstacles, serious illnesses, and professional setbacks that should have robbed them of their lives, hope and happiness, but they are still standing. That is a cause for celebration. Even those who have lost loved ones find reason to celebrate the joy of Christmas time because they celebrate the lives that were lived with them as they cherish the memories and continue the traditions that have brought them happiness over the years. If we have not learned to celebrate the gift of life and to embrace its many forms then no number of toys will bring us the joys that we seek.

THE CELEBRATION OF MERCIES RECEIVED. As we celebrate the birth of the Christ child we also celebrate the fact that God has showered each of our families with new mercies just this year alone. He has allowed us to overcome obstacles that have been placed in our way as well as stumbling blocks that were meant to deter us. The family celebrates new mercies that he has showered upon each family member despite our own inadequacies. Like the wise men, we bow humbly before our God and present him with the gifts of our spirit. In our humility we say like the psalmist "if it had not been for the Lord on our side" where would we be? As the family gathers and rejoices and reminisces about old times it will also reflect upon the mercy and goodness that

God has shown toward each individual family member. If we have not learned to give thanks to God for all of his mercies then no number of toys will bring us the joys that we seek.

THE JOYS OF ANTICIPATED GOOD TIMES: The birth of the Christ child was important because it symbolized a brighter future for all believers. The very name of the Christ child "Jesus" means he shall save his people. That was the word of hope to those who were lost, defeated, and trapped. The wise men came because this child represented the glorious future that God had in store for Israel. Similarly, that's what Christmas should mean to every believer; that God has great plans for those who believe and trust in him. Just as we look at any babe and see unlimited possibilities, so should we see our futures when they entrusted to the hand of God. Christmas is a celebration of Hope. It's a celebration of renewed faith that we can rise beyond the difficulties of the moment and achieve our greatest potential. It's a celebration of a revived trust that no matter how dark or dreary it seems that God will keep every promise that he has made to us; Central among those promises is that he would never leave us alone. The reminder of this Christ child known as Emmanuel, God with us, is that God is always by our side. If we can't see the bright future that God has in store for us, then no number of toys will bring the joys we seek.

The Joy of the Savior

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that Christmas is not about the number of toys and gifts we get, but it's about the joy of salvation that we receive.

When the wise men came to celebrate the arrival of the Christ child they did not come expecting to receive anything, they came prepared to give. They understood the importance of this child's birth and the reason for the season.

The wise among us are still following their example even to this day.

The wise men made the long an arduous journey to Judea despite the darkness of the times because they believed a child had been born that could turn night into day.

The wise men traveled from the East searching for a child who would bring joy to the world, but today men are searching the world looking for toys that can heighten their joys.

In the search for joy, 38.2 million live Christmas trees have been erected in our homes this year.

In the search for joy, we've spent more than $17 billion decorating our homes with ribbons, poinsettias, Christmas tree ornaments and shining lights.

In the search for joy, the average household will spend a thousand dollars or more on toys for big and little boys, and make believe doll like worlds for big and little girls.

In the search for joy, the lines in stores will grow long as shopping carts are filled with video games, Playstation 3's, xbox360s, Tickle Me Elmos and Dora the Explorers.

In the search for joy, finance companies are making millions of short term loans at rates of 30 percent or more, while credit cards are being maxed out and household bills have been put on hold, so that everyone in the house can have one day of happiness.

There is a mad scramble in the land to see who gets the most toys. Grown folks will call each other and list off what they received: bracelets and necklaces, big screen TV's and brand new cars.

However, there is somebody here today who can testify that the quest is not to sit around on Christmas day and count our toys, but rather, our quest should be to sit down and take a family inventory and count our joys.

If the Lord has brought your family over hills and valleys, count it is a joy!

If the Lord has brought you strength in the middle of your weakness, count is as another joy!

If the Lord has brought you comfort in the middle of your confusing situation, count is as another joy!

If the Lord has picked you up after you fallen flat on your face, count is as another joy!

If the Lord has given you health and strength, count it as another joy!

When the angelic choir prepared to sing on that silent Christmas night. They were not counting the number of gifts that the wise men would later bring!

They were looking down at a baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laying in a manger.

They sang in words we still hear today "Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her king."

Joy to the new born king, who will take:

—The ugliness of this world and make it beautiful again!

—Our sadness and turn it into gladness

—Our difficulties and make them easier to bear!

—Our lost souls and give us brand new life

Joy to the new born king who will spend 33 years living among men, pointing the way to paradise!

Joy to the baby in the manger who would grow up to be the man who carries old rugged cross up Calvary's hill!

We have joy because Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Joy to the world, let earth receive her king!

No. 9413-Inspiration

Promise Made, Promise Kept

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 27, 2009

SCRIPTURE: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Matthew 2:23

Introduction

Has anyone ever made you a promise? Did they keep it? Did they even try? Most of us have had a mixed bag of experiences when it comes promises; very few can claim that they have never had a promise broken.

When a promise is made a cycle of events is triggered that is dependent upon the fulfillment of the promise. Consider the day the chickens promised to deliver the cook dozens of eggs each day. Based on that promise the cook advertised that he woulf have hash browns and eggs for sale every morning. Anticipating a large number of sales, the cafe owner ordered more bread coffee and sugar. The delivery man needed a new truck to deliver all of the supplies to the cafe so he mortgaged his home to get the banker to lend him the money to get a new truck. The gas station owner ordered more gas and hired another employee because of the new truck and it's fill up needs. Life seemed to be going great until the chickens decided that delivering so many eggs became a problem. Despite their promise, they refused to lay anymore eggs. "Get over it," the chickens said, "You don't have to lay all of these eggs, we do." Without the eggs, the cafe stopped it's breakfast sale and extra orders for coffee and sugar stopped. The delivery man could not make the notes on his new truck and lost both his house and his truck. Without the truck the gas station fired its new employee and the gas truck brought no more gas. When told how their broken promise caused so much trouble. The yard birds commented, "What's the big deal? You knew we were not brave from the start. You should not have counted on a bunch of chickens." The next day a sign in Cafe window read "One day only, chicken and dumplings, all you can eat."

There are many people who make promises loosely without considering that when they fail to do their part they create a wave of problems for others far greater than they can imagine.

Our society has come to doubt any promises it hears because so many have not been kept from elected officials all the way down to the local weather man. We've seen it all.

The one bright spot that we have is that our God has never made us a promise He

did not keep. No matter what He promised to those who trusted him, He delivered just as He said He would.

As Christians, we are confident that God is not slack in the fulfillment of his commitments to us, even if that promise meant presenting His son to the world as a precious gift for the remission of sin.

Exposition

This text focuses on the return of Mary and Joseph to Nazareth thus fulfilling the last of the prophecies concerning the birth of Christ.

When wise men in the East saw the prophetic star in the sky they journeyed to toward the location of the birth of the Christ Child. It was a long journey for the Magi but when they arrived in Judea they inquired of the child's whereabouts from King Herod. The king pretended to be interested in worshipping the king but secretly wanted to kill. He asked the Magi to notify him of the child's location. When the Magi didn't return the King became angry and ordered the deaths of all of the children under the age of two years old so that that was considerable weeping in the city.

Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt and he followed without hesitation.

After Herod died he returned to Nazareth and raised the Christ child in the city.

The entire passage is filled with the fulfilled promises of God. The first occurs at Matthew 2:15 "And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." this refers to God's promise that he would call his son home from Egypt, which was accomplished once Herod died.

The second fulfillment is noted in Matthew 2:17-18 "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." This refers to the escape of the Christ child to Egypt and the slaughter of the Innocents and the crying of the mothers in the street.

The third fulfillment is noted in this text Matthew 2:23 "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. " It was fulfilled when Jesus returned to Nazareth and was henceforth referred to as a Nazarene or a resident of Nazareth.

The passages illustrate that all of God prophetic promises whether they involve the pleasant or the unpleasant will be fulfilled.

If God makes a promise it will be dutifully kept.

Five Great Promises to Believers

GOD HAS PROMISED SALVATION: God has promised that those who believe in Jesus and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins will be saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" Mark 16:16.

GOD HAS PROMISED TO SUPPLY OUR NEEDS: He has promised to supply every need we have. The Bible says: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". That's Philippians 4:19. God has obligated Himself only to the extent of our needs. That would include food, clothing, shelter, companionship, love, and salvation thru Jesus Christ. It would not include the multiplicity of luxuries that we have come to think of as needs.

GOD HAS PROMISED SUFFICIENT GRACE: God has promised that His grace is sufficient for us. The bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. "He has made provision for our salvation by His grace through faith.

GOD HAS PROMISED HE WON'T TEMPT YOU BEYOND YOUR ABILITY: God has promised that His children will not be overtaken with temptation. Instead, He assures us that a way of escape will be provided. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Jude wrote: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you're faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude v 24).

GOD HAS PROMISED TO WORK IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE: God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 No matter how frustrating a situation gets, it will work to the advantage of true believers.

Stand on his promise

Finally, brothers and sisters, even though it appears a long time coming; stand on the promises of God.

When God made his prophetic promises about the birth of Christ they seemed farfetched and unrealistic but millions of believers stood on his promises.

When Isaiah announce the promise of God that "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel"

The government shall be on his shoulders! They shall call him Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting father, Prince of Peace!

It seemed impossible but believers stood on the promises of God.

Today our testimony should be same, no matter what comes our way, we will stand on the promises of God.

There is somebody here today who can testify that God promises to them have been faithful.

Has His promise to supply your every need, proven to be true?

Has His promise to be with you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, proven to be true?

Has His promise to be with you alway, even to the end of the world, proven to be true!

Has his promise to take every bad thing that happened to you and work it out to your advantage, proven to be true?

God does not make idle promises. If He makes us a promise it will be kept.

If it seems as if it is taking a long time for those promises to get to you, just keep standing on his word.

When things get rough for you, stand on the promises of the Lord!

When mountains get too high, he promises that every mountain shall be made low!

When valleys get too deep, he promises that every valley shall be exalted!

When rough places get too rough, he promises that rough places shall be made plain!

As I close, I am reminded of an old man who heard the voice of God one night in sleep. God told him to invest in a house that stood on the corner of 3rd and Main. God told him to take the contents of the house and throw it away and he would be blessed. Sight unseen the man took all of his savings and bought the house. When his children found that their father had bought an old run down house that had been abandoned for years. They became concerned. Every day he moved out a piece of furniture and stood on the porch. The trash pile became increasingly larger as he emptied the house and stood on the porch. The last thing he took from the house was an old picture that was hanging on the wall.

As he threw the picture on the trash pile, an art dealer had stopped at the red light. He recognized the picture, jumped from his car and took the old man to the gallery. Within a week, the picture was determined to be a collector's item and the man was paid several million dollars. The art dealer asked, "Why were you just standing on the porch every day! When you had a fortune on the wall!" The old man answered, "I didn't know what was in this old house. You thought I was standing on the porch, but I was standing on the promises of God!"

I don't know about you, but I've decided to stand on the promises of God!

Storms may rise!

Winds may blow but I'm standing on the promises of God!

I don't know what tomorrow will bring but I'm standing on the promises of God.

I know He'll keep his promise even though they crucified him on an old rugged cross!

I know He'll keep his promise even though they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

I know He'll keep that promise because Early Sunday Morning he arose from the day just as He promised!

I don't know but I believe I stand on the promises of God.

No. 9413-New Year

On Your Mark

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2009

SCRIPTURE: "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many." 2 Corinthians 9:2

Introduction

Have you ever conceived of an idea but had to wait to put it into action?We often have brilliant ideas but for a variety of reasons find we have to wait until the appropriate time. There is nothing more frustrating than to have an idea that is not accepted. Yet, on the other hand there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has arrived.

Those who conceive of ideas, plans and direction are thought to be the forward part of a movement. Forwardness is the act of being part of the leading element. To be forward is to be out front. To be forward is to lead in the direction of progress.

The person who is forward is different from others who are wishful thinkers. Consider the old teacher who wanted to teach her students a lesson about procrastination. She walked into the class one day and posed a question, "If seven toad frogs sat on a log and one took a notion to jump off, how many would be left?" All hands in the class instantly went into the air as all of the children performed the instant calculations. They anxiously yelled at the same time, "six!" -The teacher shook her head and said they were all wrong. The students were puzzled. If there were seven and one took a notion to jump off, one from seven left six. The teacher then looked at the students and said, "The answer is seven." One student asked, "How's that?"- The teacher answered, 'One frog took a notion to jump, but he never got around to it." -He was a procrastinating frog!

Those who are forward minded are not procrastinators in life or when it comes to matters of faith and kingdom building.

It was the forward mindedness of men like Martin Luther, Calvin and John Wesley that gave us the freedom to worship God without the tyranny of the pope. It was the forwardness of great leaders like Patrick Henry, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson that led to the founding of the United States. It was the forwardness of men like Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King that opened the door of freedom for Blacks in America.

It is our bold faith in God that prompts us to prepare ourselves for kingdom building work. All we wait for is God's command. Like a runner in a track meet we are on our mark, anxiously awaiting the command to move forward.

As Christians, we don't focus on that which is behind us but rather we look to the future and its great promise. We are not procrastinators; we are ready to march forward into the unknown valleys of the future whenever our savior gives the word. Right now, we are on our mark, ready to move at God's command.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's effort to gather support for poor churches by gathering offerings from others.

Paul's appeal to the churches pointed to the churches of Metropolitan Corinth as examples of enthusiasm and readiness to serve.

A year earlier the church in Achaia had encouraged Paul to take an offering to help the poorer congregations. They pledged to give first and to lead the fundraising effort. They were excited, like a runner on his mark, but were told to wait until the right time. While they waited Paul moved among the churches drumming up support by pointing to Achaia's example.

In This text Paul notes their excitement but asks them not to back down on their pledge or their enthusiasm.

"Your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action" (v. 2, niv) Paul said. He paid special attention to their forward attitude. They were excited, ready to serve and unusually eager to do what they had promised to do.

The special offering they were going to give was described as "bounty" or blessing. He wanted them to look upon it as an opportunity to both be a blessing and get a blessing.

The emphasis of the text is upon giving with a spirit of bounty, but that same spirit also applies to every aspect of our faith walk. When believers are forward in any aspect of their service they approach it with a bountiful spirit that is both a blessing to the believer and to the recipient.

Forward Minded Service

As believers approach the future, we should do so with a true spirit of forwardness that will result in our work being a blessing to others. At the same time our service itself will be rewarded as bounty or blessing in our own lives.

BE FORWARD IN PRAYER. The church at Corinth was forward in its willingness to assist others; that forwardness also included their prayers. When it comes to praying for the sick or those in distress believers should be ready to respond. There is power in prayer. Prayer opens the door to blessings and ushers us before the throne of grace. We have survived this year because of prayer. Even when we were too mean to pray for ourselves, some forward minded believer prayed for us. That's what the

song writer had in mind when he wrote, “Somebody prayed for me, had me on their mind; took the time to pray for me. I’m so glad they prayed. I’m so glad they prayed, I’m so glad they prayed for me.”

BE FORWARD IN SERVICE. The offerings Paul collected were designed to sustain the ministry and expand its work. Just as they were forward in their attitude about the work of the church, we should be equally excited. In the year ahead there is much to be done. The poor must be fed and sheltered, the lost must be shown the way, and those who are distressed must be reassured that God is still in control of their situation. We should have a forward spirit when it comes to our ministry of service. We should reflect the spirit of the song that says, “If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain. If I can cheer somebody with a word or song then my living shall not be in vain.”

BE FORWARD IN YOUR GIVING. The Christians were excited about giving. They were first to pledge financial help to assist Paul’s ministry. They gave and received a bounty. In a similar sense every believer should be a forward minded bountiful giver. Even before Paul asked, they were ready to give. Likewise, believers today should assume the attitude that they have been blessed so that they can be a blessing. When we give we’ll prove the words of the songwriter to be true, “You can’t beat God giving, no matter how you try. The more you give, the more he gives to you.” In days ahead let us resolve to be forward minded in our giving.

On your mark

Finally, brothers and sisters as we prepare to begin another leg of this great race, let us approach tomorrow with that forward spirit and prayer and faith that we will need to succeed.

Like the runner patiently waiting, let’s get on the mark.

We seek the mark of the high calling of Christ. The call to get on our mark is a call to let the world know about Jesus.

On your mark, means to take your place and prepare to run your race.

On your mark, means pick up your cross and prepare to run the race that is set before you.

On your mark, means forgetting those things which or past.

Get set, means to get your mind focused and ready.

To get set is to focus on the finish line.

To get set is to watch your lane.

But then you must hear the command to go! Go where?

Go ye therefore...

With a forward mind go to fallen and tell them God will help them rise again!

Go to the lonely and bring them a word of hope!

Go to confused and show them a better way!

Go to the sick and bring a spirit of healing!

With a forward mind say, “If the lord needs somebody here am I send me.”

Tell somebody about the savior.
Tell somebody about Jesus!
Tell them how he died on an old rugged cross!
With a forward mind tell them that early Sunday morning he arose from the dead.
On your mark, get set...
Go!

No. 9414-New Year

If God waited until tomorrow

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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December 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" Proverbs. 27:1

Introduction

Have you ever put off doing something that was important until another day? If so you are probably like most people in the world; most of us are chronic procrastinators who routinely place distasteful tasks just beyond the reach of the day.

The farmer enjoys harvesting the crops, but plowing under the field is something he'd rather do tomorrow.

The fisherman enjoys making a fine catch, but cleaning his catch is something that can wait until tomorrow.

Painting the house, scrubbing the floors, paying bills or visiting the dentist are all tasks that always appear to be better suited for tomorrow.

One day the mice were running around the farmyard until they were suddenly caught by a mean and hungry cat that planned to eat them for supper. "Stop" yelled one of the mice as he made a last minute pitch for his life. "What good what it do you to eat us today when tomorrow we'll be twice as ready to eat because we will simmer over night?" The cat thought about the little mouse said and decided to wait until tomorrow to have his dinner. At dinnertime the next day the cat came for his evening meal but once again the mouse made his appeal. "If you wait until tomorrow there will be more of us and your meal will be even better," said the smart little mouse. The thought of having more mice for his supper intrigued the cat, so he decided to wait until tomorrow. On the third day the little mouse convinced the cat that the mice would be even tastier if he would fatten them up. So for several days the cat brought the mice slices of cheese, bread and other foods. Each day the mice convinced the cat to wait until tomorrow. While the mice were getting fatter the cat was getting thin for almost 2 months he had nothing to eat while he waited for his dinner to fatten and prepare itself. Soon the cat was sick and weak, unable to lift a paw. As the mice walked past the ailing cat, the smart little mouse look back and said, "Your meal is walking away because you put off your dinner for another day, our joy is your sorrow; we're walking away because you kept waiting

for tomorrow."

There is a Spanish proverb that says, "The road of by-and-by leads to the house of never.'' Usually when one says, "I'll get around to it tomorrow," it really means, "Never.'' It is not that there is no intention of doing the thing in question. It is just that we put it off. We have another proverb that puts it very bluntly. "The way to hell is paved with good intentions.''

It is the tendency of man to put things off until tomorrow. It seems to be a part of our nature. There are many of us who simply cannot force ourselves to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. We are perpetual procrastinators.

There are many people who made wonderful pledges at the beginning of the year, but now looking back, they still have not done what they said they would; even worse, many have not even made the first step.

Is there something that you know you should be doing but you are not doing it?

For some there are moves they need to make in their relationships, but as of yet, nothing really has been done. Why not? What's taking you so long?

There are others who have important business decisions that are constantly being put off. They need to be made for betterment of the business, but they have not been done. Why not? What's taking you so long?

Suppose God was a procrastinator; the world would never have been created because he would've put it off until tomorrow. In fact, there would be no tomorrow because he never would have gotten around to creating a day. In fact, if God was a procrastinator the universe as we know it today would not exist; we would still be waiting for God to make up his mind about the placement of the galaxies and constellations. Thankfully, God is not a procrastinator. He moves in a timely way and responds to the needs of his creation. He hears and answers prayers and supplies blessings, direction, and correction just in the nick of time. He never puts off anything for tomorrow because He is bigger than time. He's never late and always provides our blessings just when we need them. The old saying is true; "He may not come when you want him, but he's always on time."

As Christians, we often put off until tomorrow those things that need to be done today. However, our God never sleeps or slumbers; He is always protecting and providing for us in the present rather than waiting until tomorrow. If God waited until tomorrow to give us a blessings that we need today, our lives would be miserable. Thank God, our Savior provides what we need one day at a time and never waits until tomorrow.

Exposition

This text focuses upon a wise word of advice given by Solomon to those who may put off until tomorrow what they should be doing today.

The text looks closely at the fallacy of boasting and procrastination. Those who boast brag about their own abilities. They take credit for their accomplishments and attribute their successes to their own abilities. So, while they live today they make several self anointed prophecies about tomorrow; prophecies that they do not have

the power to fulfill. Boasting in itself is a flawed character trait that suggests one operates without God or the need of God.

The text makes it clear that we cannot boast about or anticipate anything that we will do tomorrow because we do not know what the future holds and neither can we control its outcome. We have no idea what troubles await us all what good fortune lies around each corner. There is no crystal ball that will allow us to peer into the future, we have to live our lives one day at a time.

Since we don't know what the future holds then we should not put off until tomorrow those things that should be done today; especially those things related to our faith and relationship with God.

The Scriptures teach us that we know not the day or the hour when the master will call for us. Genesis 27:2 reminds us that we know not the day of our death. Second Timothy 4:6 reminds us that we don't know the day of our departure. James 4:13 years as that we should not boast of a year's continuance because we don't know what will come from one day to the next.

This text underscores the importance and urgency of now as opposed to waiting and boasting about what we will do in the future.

We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future. We don't know what tomorrow will bring but we know what we can do today that will give us something to bring into tomorrow. It is better to praise God today, and live each day as if there would be no tomorrow and when tomorrow comes we will praise God just the same.

God Has been On Time

As we reflect upon the year that has passed, we recognize immediately that God has not procrastinated in any area of our lives. He has provided everything we have needed and he provided it right on time.

HE DIDN'T WAIT TO FEED US: Look back over the last year. Did God wait until next year to put food on your table? Did he wait to clothe you? Just as Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years depending upon the faithfulness of God, we have found that God has not hesitated to feed our bodies and spirits either. God arranged it so that Israel wore the same shoes and clothes for decades and they never wore out. Their food came on time every day. There was water just when they needed it most. God has a storehouse that is not on earth. It stores our blessings and He does not hesitate to deliver them to us on a daily schedule. Each day when we rise, it shouldn't take us long to recognize that God is blessing us today; not tomorrow. One day at a time God is feeding us from His storehouse and he is always on time. He did that last year, He's doing it today and we are confident that he will the same in the year to come.

HE DIDN'T WAIT TO OPEN DOORS FOR US: Think about it! God opened doors for you in the recent past that he did not have to do. He could have waited until tomorrow. Do you remember Jabez? Jabez went to God and asked that he would expand his coasts and boundaries. God heard Jabez and made good on his promise, giving him

exactly what he prayed for. He didn't wait until some distant time, he began moving as soon as the request came and he decided to respond favorably to it. We should rejoice that God opened the door of opportunity for us this year! For some it was financial. For others it was a career opportunity. Still others found that God was truly a blessing in the nick of time and they praise him for not waiting until tomorrow.

HE WON'T WAIT, SO DON'T RUSH HIM: Some hear this message today and they are confused because they feel that God is waiting until tomorrow to bless them, because they have not received what they need, yet. God doesn't wait until tomorrow to bless us, but he does wait to bless when the blessing will do us the most good. We may bless a child with ice cream at dinner, but good parents know that it is wiser to give the ice cream after the meal rather than before the meal. God responds to us the same wait. If we pray today and don't get our answer today it doesn't mean God is procrastinating, it means that God has heard us, but his response will not come before its time.

Nothing happens before its time. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time and a season for everything, but nothing happens before its time. We often try to hurry God. We can't wait for him to move. We pray and ask him for a blessing but then take matters into our own hand when God doesn't move fast enough for us. We ask him for a mate, then grab the first pretty looking thing that comes along, before God has a chance to move. Galatians 4:4 tells us that when, " the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." In essence, when the time was right, God made his move.

In our lives today, we must remember that when God is ready, He will act!

When the days are accomplished, the prayer that we have prayed will receive an answer!

When the days are accomplished, the answer we seek will be delivered!

When the days are accomplished, the opportunity we seek will present itself!

We must increase our faith in God

Finally, brothers and sisters, if this is to be the year of our increase then it must be the year we learn to patiently wait for God to move in His own time.

When we look back on the year that has past we should happily praise God for his presence in our lives; providing our daily bread.

I don't know what you think about it, but I'm glad that in the days ahead, I can count on God to be a "nick of time" God rather than "tomorrow" God.

When I'm down and out I'm glad to know that God won't wait until tomorrow to lift me up!

When my body is racked with pain and I need relief, I'm glad to know that God won't wait until tomorrow to soothe my aching body

When I'm sick, I'm glad that God won't wait until tomorrow to restore my health.

I'm glad God won't wait until tomorrow to hear and answer my prayer!

I'm glad God won't wait until tomorrow to build me up where I'm torn down!

Last year we were weak, but God didn't wait He turning our weakness into strength.

Last year we were defeated, but God didn't wait, He started turning our defeats to victory.

Last year we were discouraged, but God didn't wait, He started turning our discouragement to hope.

Last year we were lonely, but God didn't wait, He started turning our loneliness into comfort

Last year we were troubled, but God didn't wait, He started turning our troubles into peace of mind.

In the year ahead we have the confidence of know that the God we serve won't let us down. He'll do what needs to be done and he'll do it on time.

He won't wait until tomorrow, but in the fullness of time, what He has for us will find its way to us.

If we increase our faith this year we can do the impossible!

If we increase our faith we can reach the unreachable!

If we increase our faith we can achieve the impossible!

This faith we need for the year has been secured for you by a God who loves you.

I know it's true because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This faith has been assured to you by a savior who said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This is the faith that has been declared to you by a savior who promised us that no weapon formed against you shall prosper as long as you stay in the will of God.

This is the faith that was proven to you on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!

This is the faith that was proven with nail scarred hands, a wounded side and a bowed down head!

This is the faith that was proven Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave!

I'm so glad that God won't wait until tomorrow, but every day in the New Year my blessings will be right on time.

No. 9415-New Year

Trusting the God who goes before and behind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2009

SCRIPTURE:" And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: " Exodus 14:19

Introduction

What stands between you and your future? There are many who approach the last day of the year with anxiety as they review days gone by and anticipate the days ahead. As the year ends, there never seems to be enough time to complete unfinished work or to explain the unexplained. When the year ends, the work ends for that year and shifts into the year ahead. What obstacles did we encounter? What vicious attacks did we survive? How did we arrive at this point? When we look at the days most recently passed it doesn't take us long to realize that we trusted God to keep our enemies at bay and make ways for us when there seemed to be no way.

Despite the massive recession that the nation has faced in which millions of people have suffered economic losses, we have managed to survive with our faith unsinged by the embers of despair. Although some encountered some difficulties and setbacks, we have been kept on our feet by an unseen hand, and buoyed by an unfaltering faith that will not allow us to lose hope. The dogs of despair and defeat have been barking at our heels but have not been able to snare us; their mouths were tightly shut by the muzzling power of God's grace. We've had some bad times in the past, but God has seen us through.

As Christians, we make one recurring resolution and that is to continue trusting the God of the year behind us as we approach the year ahead of us.

Exposition

This text focuses on how God protected Israel on its journey to the Promised Land

by leading them in their forefront and protecting them from behind.

Israel had endured slavery and harsh treatment at the hand of the Egyptians but they prayed to God constantly that he would deliver them from their depravity. God heard their prayers and sent Moses as his spokesman to demand that Pharaoh let his people go.

After ten national plagues that brought both death and natural disaster to Israel Pharaoh decided to release the people, all 2 million of them, to return to their homeland. However, as they left Pharaoh had a change of heart and decided to return the people to Egypt.

When pharaoh pursued them he learned that God had sent an angel to protect them from his armies and to lead them to their destination.

When the waters of the Red Sea came crashing down, it became obvious that the God of Israel was a God who was both before them and behind them in their journey.

Before and Behind

As we reflect upon the year that has passed, we recognize immediately that God has been a wall of protection to us, holding back the enemies that sought to destroy us. The pillar of fire kept the Egyptians in darkness, but at the same time it provided light for Israel. When we look back we see that God has responded to us in the same manner. While holding back our enemies in the last year He has:

PROVIDED OUR ESSENTIALS: Though we may have complained about some of our food, whether or not our clothing was fashionable, or the size or location of our homes; most of us would have to agree that God has been faithful in providing us with all three. Even while God held back the demons of hell that were seeking to destroy us, He kept providing our essentials at the same time. Yet, even as God held back the Egyptians, Israel complained about the Red Sea in front of them, we too have been tempted to complain about the difficulties that lie ahead. Yet, even in their faithless moments God continued to bless them. He has been faithful to us in the same way. No matter how we look at it, we have been blessed by the powerful hand of God.

HE OPENED DOORS: From behind, while holding back the enemies of our progress, God has faithfully opened doors for us and to make opportunities for the abundant life available to true believers. Look back over the year. Some of us have done more than just survived; we have actually improved our spirituality, financial condition and family relations. Some expanded their boundaries last year by taking advantage of every opportunity God made available to grow both spiritually and materially. There are many who have experienced stronger family relationships this year, in addition to other quality of life measures that cannot be ignored. God has been faithful to provide us with a window of opportunity, even while He held back our enemies.

PROVIDED OUR SPIRITUAL SUPPORT: When Israel saw the approaching armies of Egypt their spirits dropped low. They believed that all was lost and that there

was no hope. Yet, while God stood between them and destruction he provided strong support for them as they wondered how they would make it. It was Moses who ultimately declared, "Stand Still and see the salvation of the Lord." He has given us emotional support as well. This has been an extremely difficult year for some of us. There are some families that have encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that have experienced strained relationships. Most believers who will quickly testify that if it had not been for the Lord on their side, they would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments. Despite the enemy behind us and Red Sea in front of us we have been sustained by the eternal presence of God in our life situations this year. When difficult times were upon us, God was there like a wall of fire to protect us. Someone can recall how the Lord lifted a burden from their shoulder and gave them renewed strength in the midst of weakness. When Jesus told his disciples, "Lo I'll be with you alway" that meant exactly what it said, He planned to be with us continually protecting our back.

God will bless us in the future too!

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that God did more than just keep our enemies at bay in the past year, he has also breathed upon the troubles that are ahead of us and has already made a way out of no way. We rejoice today because the God who goes behind us also goes before us!

As Israel worried all night long, God was moving all night long.

While Israel wondered how they would escape the problems they faced, God was stirring the waters getting ready to move them to another level.

While Israel moaned in frustration, God was working out their deliverance.

Today, brothers and sisters we need to remind ourselves that the same God who kept back the destructive forces that sought to destroy us during the past year; that same God is working ahead of us in the year ahead.

If there is a Red Sea in front of us blocking our way, he'll find us away around it, or he may just plough a path straight through the middle of our troubles and create dry ground.

Whatever we might expect to face in the coming year, we should be encouraged to know that God is already in front us, scouting out our future.

I don't know what the tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now! I also know that He's already ahead of me, making a way for true believers.

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!"

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as we are on the Lord's side! If we are on the Lord's side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is our bridge of troubled water!

The Lord protects us from our enemies from behind, but he opens doors ahead!

The Lord holds back the hell hounds of defeat, but he makes new possibilities for victory every day!

The Lord holds back the demons of destruction, but he unlocks new constructive opportunities along our way

The Lord is the foundation of our hope for the future.

I heard the song writer declare "The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion is great in the world today. Persecution my come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

We don't worry about the future because the God we serve is already ahead of us, it is him that we put our hope.

That's why the song writer declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9416-New Year

Behold I will make all things new

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 3, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." Revelation 21:5

Introduction

Have you ever had a virus on your computer? Over time even the best computers pick up so many viruses, Trojans, bugs, spyware and other miscellaneous debris that we can hardly use them. When that happens, ordinarily fast computers move very slow. Sometimes they lock up and despite several restarts they can't get going again. At the repair shop the technician says, what we need is a "wipe and reload." -That means they will wipe out everything on the computer, including what makes it operate, and restore everything to factory condition.

When there is a wipe and re-load, all of your old programs have been removed. It's like brand new. It moves quickly again, accesses the internet and retrieves information at lightning speeds again. Many of us like the old programs we had, so we reload them on our restored computer. We have certain sites that we preferred so we returned to the same ones. We also had bad habits such as forwarding emails that unloaded viruses on our computers in the background; we resumed that habit too. Soon our computers are moving slow again, locking up and standing still. We learned expensive lessons from all of this: If we clean our computers, we can't reload the same stuff that caused the problem in the first place.

Sometimes our lives are like that. In the course of a year we go to places that we should not go; we pick up viruses, bugs and Trojans that start to eat away at the efficiency of our lives. Slowly but surely our lives grind to a halt. As the year ends we come to the conclusion that we need to do something because our lives are not moving anymore. Nothing is working. So, during the first week of the new year we wipe and reload. Some attend a church worship, and make a few other changes in the

first few days of the new year. Because our slate is clean we feel better and our spiritual energy is high.

We create a problem for ourselves if we start reloading the same virus infected programs back into our daily routine.

For God to use us to our maximum potential we need to, wipe and reload, avoid infective people, places and things, and get us a virus protector to watch out and alert us to any viruses that are trying to destroy us. Even then, we must constantly update the virus protector so that we can be protected from any new threats. God is our virus protector, but we must stay upgraded, in touch and connected to get the full benefit of his protection.

In the year ahead, if we plan to truly make all things new, we should prepare to wipe out the old and begin a brand new operation. God is getting ready to do a new thing in our lives, to usher in a season of spiritual strength and renewal in every aspect of our lives from our finances to our relationships, from our health to our personal development.

As Christians, we thank God for uncharted season that lies ahead. We know be good for us and we are excited because he has promised to make all things new.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' revelation to John about the new life and world God will be creating for all believers.

John painted a picture of the most glorious of the end time events, the coming of the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. This is the beautiful home of the saints, the final destination of the church and millions of believers. They will be in the presence of God.

The emphasis of verse five is that everything in the new order will be new. New implies that it will be unused, untarnished, untouched and pure. The new order that God promises will be wonderful because it will be a place where believers will be in the presence of God.

Throughout the Book of Revelation God is depicted as sitting quietly on his throne as the end time events occur. However, in verse five we hear one of the few times, if not the only time, that God speaks in the Revelation. His words recorded by John have meaning even today. "Behold, I make all things new."

The newness of life followed closely the destruction of the world order as we know it. Following the final judgment the devil, anti-Christ and the False Prophet will be thrown in the lake of fire and the old system of things is totally destroyed by fire. With that destruction will be all suffering, pain, death, agony, tears, and trouble.

God speaks it Himself so that there will be no confusion, "Behold I will make all things new."

John saw a picture of what will be in the last days. Today, believers hear the same words as we prepare to live in his presence in that city. We are preparing new lives that will be ready to live in the presence of God throughout eternity.

Steps to becoming new

God has promised to make all things new both in the present and the future. There are a few steps we must take to prepare for the new season that God has in store for of us.

YOUR NEW SEASON REQUIRES A NEW YOU. There are many who want God to give them a new experience without first making some fundamental spiritual changes in their lives. Becoming a new you is not as easy as getting a fresh hair cut, a toupee, implants or a hair weave. That's a new look but it's the same old you. To get what God has in store for you requires an extreme makeover. It's so extreme you can't do it yourself; God has to do it for you. John 3:3 says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That means our old selves must be wipe completely out and we must let God make us over again. It won't be the old you dressed up in church clothes, it will be a brand new you. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." When God looks for a "new you" he's not looking for a new hairdo on you, but a new spirit in you. He's not looking for a Nutri-system, Jenny Craig Bo-Flex version of you, He's looking for a new spirit in you. If you truly want a new season, you must be willing to let God make you over again.

TO APPRECIATE YOUR NEW SEASON YOU'LL NEED A NEW SPIRIT: You won't appreciate the value of the new season that God has in store for you unless your old sinful spirit man dies.

We won't fully appreciate what God does for us unless we have a new spirit. In the Movie "Precious" Monique played an abusive mother with a spirit of ungratefulness. Precious prepared her a full plate of soul food after laboring in the kitchen. The mother's response was to be angry because there were no collard greens and refused to eat it. Without a godly spirit we won't be able to appreciate what God brings us in our new seasons. Our cold stony hearts will want more and blame God for not blessing us with the collard greens, too. So Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Many spent all of last year praying for a new season and it happened all around them and they didn't recognize it. They had money to ride the city bus every day to work or school and complained because God didn't give them a limousine. Many had a roof over their heads every night and were angry that God didn't give them a 15 bedroom mansion. When we get a new spirit we can see God moving in everything; we can see the season when it arrives. We get happy over the little things. We get happy watching T.V., driving the car, riding the bus and when we think about how God is helping us get through college, no matter how many complaints we have, we just start smiling in the middle of the professor's lecture. When we have a new humble and grateful spirit, then God is ready to give us a new season.

PREPARE NOW FOR A SEASON OF HARVEST: God has promised a season of harvest for every believer. The harvest is the time when the trees are filled with fruit, the fields are filled with melons, corn, cotton, peas, greens and wheat. The harvest is the end result. However, before there is a season of harvest, there must be a season of tilling and planting. Ecclesiastes 3:2 says, "there is a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;" To pluck up is to harvest, but before the harvest there is planting time. What is planting time? Completing your education, that's planting. Sharpening your job skills, that's planting. Investing your money wisely, that's planting. Choosing Godly friends and associates, that's planting. Increasing your knowledge of God's word, that's planting. Carefully selecting the people you hang out with, the places you go and the things you do, that's planting. A farmer who plants is not intimidated by the fact that at planting time he's field is empty. He's not intimidated that it looks barren day after day. He knows that in due season, the fields will be ripe for the harvest and he keeps that picture in his head. So keep your picture in your head: Visualize your season. Visualize a happy marriage. Visualize a successful career! Visualize a successful ministry. Visualize graduation! Visualize a happy God centered family! Visualize your season and keep it in your mind as you live for God each and every day.

New Season

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that the new season we seek cannot be created by our own ingenuity, because God said "Behold, I will make all things new."

We can strive to get the best education possible, but that's just tilling the soil; the harvest we seek is in God's hand because He said, "I will make all things new."

We can start a business and try our best to make it work, but the successful business we seek is not in our hands, because God said, "I will make all things new."

We can strive to overcome adversity and arise triumphant and bold, but the victory we seek is not in our hands, because God said, "I will make all things new."

Man is able to closely forecast the weather but he can't control the seasons. There is a season of spring and a season of summer. There is a season of autumn and a season of winter and they all come in God's appointed time.

John on the Isle of Patmos saw a new season of creation. A new heaven and a new earth, all of the old things are passed away.

To claim your new season, you must have faith in the power of God. You must believe that you serve an awesome God who can open doors you can't see.

In closing, I'm reminded of an old lady who lived in an old house in an area that was being purchased by a casino. The old lady refused to sell her old house so the casino pulled strings and had her house condemned. The demolition officials told the old lady she had thirty days to fix the old house or it would be torn down. The old lady just sat on the porch and read her bible. While she read, her friends became concerned because the old lady wouldn't move. She had helped so many people that no one wanted to see

her hurt. They put their heads together. At the end of the month the casino owners came to serve her eviction papers but to their surprise the neighbors had built a fine, brick house that could not be demolished. The old lady looked at the casino owner and said, "You thought you were going to build a new casino, but the God I serve said, "I will make all things new. Mr. Casino owner, behold the work of an almighty God."

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a God who can make all things new.

As we move into this new year, we need to keep hearing God's words, "Behold, I will make all things new."

Last year, we have stumbled along the way, but we keep hearing the Lord say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

Last year, we may have may have been troubled by doubt and confusion, but we should keep hearing the Lord say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

Last year, we have may have been plagued by financial troubles, but we should keep hearing the Lord say, "Behold I will make all things new."

Last year, we may have been troubled sickness and bad health, but we should keep hearing the Lord say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

Last year, misfortune seemed to follow us on every turn, but in the year ahead, just keep hearing the Lord, say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

In the year ahead, if I fall down, He'll pick me up again and say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

If I fail, He'll give me another chance and say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

If I suffer, he'll give me his encouragement spirit and say, "Behold, I'll make all things new."

If I shed briny tears in the middle of the night, God shall wipe away my tears and say, "Behold, I'll make all things new."

I'm so glad that God can take my weakness and give me strength!

I'm so glad that God can take my confusion and give me direction!

I'm so glad that God can take my desperation and give me determination!

To make our new season possible, the Lord took it upon himself to bear the iniquities and sins of the world!

To make our new season possible, the Lord took the punishment for our sins. For the word says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity and the chastisement of our peace is upon him!"

To make our new season possible he died out on Calvary, on an old rugged cross!

For three days he endured the season of darkness and death, but Early ....

Early Sunday morning, He arose from grave with all power in His hands!

Even today, we can still hear Him say, "Behold, I will make all things new!"

No. 9417-Anniv.-Church

Moving Forward with a Unified Vision

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2010

Scripture: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6-7

Introduction

When the church steps out on the word of God, is there any limit to its possibilities? When those who believe in the power of God ban together as one solid unit that is rooted in Him, sustained by Him and directed by Him, there is no limit to its potential.

When the church is on one accord it can move mountains of frustration and achieve what others think is impossible.

A praying church can do more than anyone suspects. Consider the church that conducted a two month prayer vigil in which each member was asked to pray without ceasing for two months for something they really wanted in God's will. A little boy in the church decided to pray that he would have a baby brother. When he told his dad, his father took his cue from the church's prayer vigil and said, "Son, if you pray every day for two months, I guarantee God will give you a baby brother." Excited, the boy began his prayer vigil, asking God for a baby brother. After a month had passed he heard other boys talking and learned that no one has ever been able to get a baby brother in two months. So, with only a few days left in his two month prayer vigil the boy stopped praying. On the last day of the second month the boy's mother was rushed to the hospital. When the father and son entered her hospital room the mother was in bed with a bundle lying next to her. When the boy pulled back the blanket he found not one little boy but three boys! The father looked at his son and said, "Aren't glad you prayed?" But looked the babies and counted them, then said,"Yeah, but aren't you glad that I stopped praying when I did?"

Wonderful things happen when the church decides to prayerfully move forward in unity with vision of Christ beaming in the horizon.

We must hold on just as our fore parents held on. We must march forward in unity,

just as those before us marched. If we feel weak along the way we must remember that "help is on the way."

The world asks a penetrating question about this little community that has been witnessing for this many years. It asks the same question asked in the biblical record, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

We answer by saying that for all these years this church has brought forth God fearing men and women who have made a difference.

This is the community from whose womb many great minds have come forth. As we celebrate the history of this church, in a greater sense we also celebrate the victory of every believer around the world.

As Christians, we are determined to walk in love and in unity of purpose. The God we serve will never forsake us and we will never forsake Him as we boldly move into each new horizon of ministry.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians at Colossae to continue their unified walk in Christ.

The church at Colossae was one that reflected many of the struggles of the Gentile believers. The gentile world was surrounded by many philosophical ideas that kept them meandering in and out of the faith. In one instance the church dealt with mystery cults and in another it was mysticism. From Gnosticism to Qumran style Judaism, the church at Colossae found itself debating how all of these beliefs related to its own experience.

Paul wrote to the Colossians as the elder statesman of the church, but he had never visited them or seen them personally. His word of encouragement to them was simple: keep focused on the main reason you became Christians, faith in Christ. He urged them to walk in Christ, remain rooted and built up in Him and to maintain the faith.

Paul constantly presented them with the vision of Christ and he challenged the Colossians to know Christ. Knowing God would promote unity of spirit. In Colossians 2:2-3 Paul wrote, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The phrase being knit together in love emphasized the need for unity and oneness as they sought to live Christ centered lives.

Moreover, Paul encouraged believers to continue their faith walk with the same commitment and determination they showed when they first came to Christ. Colossians 2:6 says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:" Simply put Paul encouraged the Colossians not to turn away from Christ, or to dream of going beyond him." Their power and effectiveness would come from keeping a clear vision of Christ in front of them.

Moving Forward

As we consider what Paul said to the Church at Colossae, today believers should apply the same principles to our current circumstance. We should move forward in Christ in three areas:

MOVE FORWARD IN THE WISDOM OF CHRIST: The church must remain unified in its knowledge and understanding of Christ. The vision of the church unified and glorified must be crystal clear in the mind of each member as the church marches forward. It is that vision that helps us march forward in confidence. We don't know the way but we constantly have God to show us the way.

Every now and then we ask the Lord....show me the way. Doctor Watts put it this way "Guide me o thou great Jehovah, pilgrim in this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand."

The church is the instrument that God has used to bring forth "HIS" blessing to God's people.

The church is not a building, but an assembly of baptized believers in Christ. Yet, God has used the assembly of believers in ways that have brought forth his favor.

Our people have been blessed because of the church, the Old Ship of Zion.

We have worshipped under brush arbors and abandoned saw mills.

We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors.

We have praised Him in the chill of winter with logs burning in huge heated stoves.

We have sweltered, without air conditioning, in the humid and scorching heat of a thousand summers.

Yet, God has used our feeble assembly, worship and praise experiences to bring forth His "water" in a thirsty land.

Through the church God has shown us the wisdom of Christ and that wisdom has deepened our trust and faith in Him.

Through the church, God has raised our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits.

No wonder the song writer thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

MOVE FORWARD IN THE WORK OF CHRIST: The church must move forward in unity as it pursues the work of Christ which is saving souls and reaching out to the world with a hand of compassion. We seek to save souls because we ourselves have been saved. Today, many believers are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent church personalities. That has not always been the case. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you:, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." That's a result of the forgiveness of Christ. Even more have been touched by the mercy and compassion of Christ as the church reaches out to help the less fortunate and to respond with love and compassion to the needs of people.

MOVE FORWARD IN THE WORSHIP OF CHRIST: We must resist all tempta-

tions to detour to other paths and remain firm in our worship of Christ. When we worship we ring a bell that resonates throughout the community and declares that our God is king. When we worship we testify to the importance of God in our lives. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that sits on a hill that cannot be hidden." When we worship we let our lights shine. When we worship God we agree with Johann Neethling and, "declare the truth about God's worth, God's honor, God's greatness, and God's love. We declare it to Him, we declare it to host of heaven, and we declare it to all creation."

When we assemble on Sundays each believer says to the world, God is a good God and we believe it!

As we move, tell the story

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead, we must prepare to move forward telling the story of our journey as we go.

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of our march through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

The church at Colossae was encouraged to stay unified in the wisdom of Christ, to walk together as one unit to perform the work of Christ and to maintain its worship of Christ.

Today, the church must do the same. We must go forward committed to tell the world about our risen savior.

We must tell the world of our determination to go forward into the unknown.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past.

I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as we are on the Lord's side! If we move forward on the Lord's side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

As we move forward we should keep the vision of the He who has saved clear in our mind.

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Move forward in unity and never lose hope. Sing together the words of the old hymn,

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9418-Inspiration

Don't Just sit there, do something

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 10, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?" 2 Kings 7:3

Introduction

Have you ever failed at anything in your life? If you are like most people, you have probably failed several times in your lifetime. It may have been a test in school or on a job performance examination. It could have been a military examination or the loss of an athletic competition. Most of us have failed at one time or another. There are many sociologists who think that everyone should experience a little failure in their lives because it prepares them to better approach the realities of a world in which they do not always win, come out on top or get their way.

Peter Bergman in a recent issue of the Harvard Business Review wrote an article entitled, "Why you need to fail." In it Bergman notes that there are some who can get comfortable doing the same thing and will only live up to their potential when pushed to do more. Without an occasional failure many will not climb higher.

It's safe to never fail; to achieve that many stay within a comfort zone that quickly becomes comfortable; its a life game they understand and always win. It's like slam dunking a basketball in a two foot high goal; it's safe but not rewarding. A slam dunk is only noteworthy when made in a regulation sized goal which may require a few misses before it's perfected. It's like buying a jigsaw puzzle with 100 pieces and successfully completing it quickly. Those who are afraid of failing always buy the same size puzzle and will stay away from the 500 piece puzzle and won't even think about a 1000 piece puzzle. It's only in the attempt to reach a little higher do we move to the next level.

Those who succeed in life are not the ones who never fail, but the ones who succeed after failing many times. These are the people who look at every failure as a stepping stone to success and not an end in itself. Michael Jordan, arguably the world's best basketball player, has a growth mindset. Most successful people do. In high school he was cut from the basketball team but that obviously didn't discourage him: "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career, I've lost almost 300

games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

In 1984, Anita Whittaker became the first African-American woman to win the Miss Louisiana Pageant, but before finally winning Miss Whittaker, lost five times. She failed, learned from each failure and kept coming back until she won.

In a speech in 1910 President Theodore Roosevelt said, "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

It all means that it is not a problem to fail; the problem is letting life count you out without ever trying to go another round. That's why America loves the movie character "Rocky," because he refused to stay down but though battered and torn kept coming back until he won.

Those who place their faith in God should be among those who keep coming back.

We will have our share of failures in life, but we who are men and women of faith must always rise to the occasion to keep trying without ever giving up.

As Christians, we praise God for lifting us up when we have fallen. He has helped us to overcome obstacles and often to rise victorious. He is the source of our strength and our motivation to do something rather than to simply accept defeat. When we are about his business, we will ultimately claim the victory because we know that all things will work together for our good according to God's purpose

Exposition

This text focuses on four lepers who had to make a decision about their future in the face of a pending crisis.

The people of Samaria were surrounded by a powerful enemy known as the Syrians. They protected themselves from invaders by hiding behind great walls that stood between them and immediate death. The Syrian army decided to surround the city and prevent the delivery of any new provisions. The siege, once begun, did not allow anyone to go into the city or to leave. Soon starvation began to take its toll on the inhabitants. Food was so scarce that some elements of the citizenry even resorted to cannibalism. Those inside the city were surely doomed to die.

Outside of the city there was a camp of lepers. Lepers were individuals who had one of several varieties of skin diseases. Today we would call some of the disorders attributed to leprosy by different names including: Psoriasis, eczema, favus and seborrheic dermatitis. Lepers were not allowed to live in the regular community but were banned to live outside of the gates. Their food was normally brought to them from a distance but since there was starvation inside the gates, there was no food to bring to the lepers. The lepers were trapped in the middle with the Syrians on one side and a

starving city on the other. Either way it became obvious that if they took no actions at all death would be their final outcome.

Inside the city God spoke to the prophet Elisha and told him to tell the people that by the next day there would be plenty of food for them to eat and that it would be bought very cheap. The lepers outside of the gate were unaware of the prophecy that had been given on the inside but only considered their present situation. Four of the lepers looked at their options and decided that it did not profit them to sit idly and die of starvation because they reasoned that if they went back into the city they would die and if they sat idly they would also die. So, they decided to take their chances by going to the enemy camp and asking for help, food and shelter.

When they arrived at the Syrian camp they were surprised to learn that the Syrians had fled in the night. God had caused them to hear what sounded like the noise of thousands of chariots rumbling across the Earth. They suspected that other nations were coming to assist the people of Samaria so they fled for their lives before they were slaughtered in the night. When the four lepers reached their camp they discovered that the Syrians left their tents, clothing, food supplies, and other resources as they hastily exited. The lepers stuffed their bellies with food and began to cart away much of the gold and silver they found. Then one of the lepers thought about their good fortune and surmised that it was not right for them to enjoy the food and money that was available to them without telling others of the great blessings that God made available to them.

They returned to the city and told the people what good things the Lord provided and what a mighty work he had performed. There was a celebration among the Samaritans because God had defeated enemy and given them the spoils of war.

Had not been for lepers decided to get up and step out on faith they would've died of starvation without even knowing that God had already paved the way for them.

Deciding to choose God

The decision of the four lepers should be important to every believer today. As we look at the way God dealt with them we can get an idea of how God deals with us when we are in similar situations. When we look at the lepers we see these concerns:

SOMETIMES THERE IS NO PLACE TO TURN. The lepers were between a rock and a hard place. They were hated by the Israelites, abhorred as lepers, and would not be welcomed by the Syrians. Their options were simple either act now or die a slow death. Today there are many people who face a similar dilemma. There are many who find themselves between a rock and a hard place. They are darned if they do and darned if they don't. Many are deciding whether to jump in the skillet or whether to dive into the frying pan. When situations like that occur some throw up their hands and give up. Some wallow in self pity and asked the question, "why me?" Then there are others who look at their options and boldly decide to do what's necessary to respond to the present crisis. It could mean getting a new job. It could mean selling

an item of value. It could mean breaking a relationship or making a final commitment on a relationship. It could mean a career move such as quitting a job or taking a new position. When caught between a rock and a hard place believers have only one place to look and that's where David looked. In Psalm 121 David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the Earth." When we get between a rock and a hard place we should look up to the source of our help.

GOD WORKS EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE HIM. Inside the gates the prophet Elisha had already prophesied that God was going to solve their problem by the next day, the lepers were not aware that God was already on the move. Even today there are those who miss great opportunities because they believe that speaking there would be fruitless. Many do not receive the blessings they need because they don't ask. The word of God teaches, "you have not because you ask not." Someone here today is worried about a problem without knowing that God is already on the move. Just as the lepers did not know that God was moving to address this situation, today many of us are not aware of the doors that God is opening for us unseen to our eyes. God is already confusing the enemy that wants to stop you. God is already providing the food that you would need to eat. And even while you are sleeping God is answering your prayer. If the lepers had not decided to get up and take action they would have never known the great work that God had already done on their behalf. If we sit idly by and fail to do what needs to be done we will never realize the great blessings that God has in store for us.

IF WE FALL, WE SHOULD GET UP AGAIN. The lepers had so many strikes against them. They were outcasts, starving, and lepers. It seemed that the whole world was against them. They were knocked down because of their leprosy, knocked down because of their lack of food, and knocked down because of their race. Yet, despite having been knocked down so many times these four lepers decided not just to sit there, but to do something. They are many today who are frustrated because they have failed so many times in life. Some have already begun to characterize themselves as useless. Today we need to note that the failure is not in being knocked down, we only fail if we refuse to get back up. Proverbs 24:16 says, " For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." That makes it abundantly clear that even good people will fail, slip, make mistakes, or make wrong turns in life. The fact that you have fallen does not mean that you are "bad people" it means that you are human. When we fall that's when we dig deep into our spiritual reservoir and muster the courage necessary to stand one more time. If we choose to throw in the towel then life will definitely count us out.

Bless God

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when God has blessed us we must tell somebody else the good news!

The lepers tried to keep their good fortunes to themselves, but they had to return

to the city and tell others about what they discovered.

They had to tell others how God ran away their enemies!

They had to tell others how God gave provided more gold, silver and food than they could handle.

Today, there are many believers who have a story to tell. There are many who can testify that like these four lepers there was a time when they were between a rock and hard place, but they decided to step out on faith.

Are dark clouds forming over your horizon? If so, why are you sitting there instead of heading to the rock of our salvation

Is trouble brewing on all sides? If so, why are you just sitting there instead of putting your hands in God's hand?

Are enemies attacking you from every possible angle? If so, why are you just sitting there instead of letting God build a fence all around you.

Have your detractors and haters pointed their weapons at your life? If so, why are just sitting instead of reminding yourself that God says, 'No weapon formed against me shall prosper."

Don't just sit there, do something. Don't just do anything, step out on faith.

By faith, we believe that no matter how tough our times get, God is still in control!

By faith, we are strengthened when we remember that our God is a God whose:

-Power never weakens; Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes; Joy never ends

-Foundation never shakes;Truth never changes

-Supply never shrinks; Blessings never stop coming!

And when God picks you up, you ought to tell somebody

Tell them that God is able! Yes, he's able!

He's able to see our tears in the midnight hour!

He's able to see our concern for our families and loved ones!

He's able to feel our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

We ought to tell somebody that 2000 years ago when the world was in trouble that he didn't just sit there, but did something about it.

Tell somebody that he picked up an old rugged cross!

Tell somebody that he died out on Calvary!

Tell somebody that Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave

I don't know about you but I've got to tell somebody...

About the goodness of the Lord!

No. 9419-King Day

The Impossible Dream?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 17, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18:27

Introduction

Has anyone ever laughed at your dream and told you it was impossible? When our dreams are in their formative stages there are many who are amused at the extent of our dreams and our willingness to believe that they can be achieved.

Barack Obama, in his book "The Audacity of Hope" often refers to the defeatist attitude that some have about life that keeps them chained to their present level of achievement. It's only when someone dares to break out of normal expectations and even "hope" of moving to another level that changes become real.

When Martin Luther King gave his historic "I have a dream " speech in 1963, he had the audacity to dream that America, which was saturated with race hatred and division, could ever rise above its division. He had the audacity to dream that the nation could overcome its deep seated history of bias and class struggle and function as one nation under God.

When Dr. King dreamed of a nation where his four little children would be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin, many thought that was impossible. Even today there are still many who believe that unless a Black man is light skinned or speaks with no Negro dialect he won't be accepted. Yet, all around us we see more signs that color is being seen more for its beauty and diversity than as a barrier.

When Dr. King dreamed of a day when black boys and girls would join hands with whites as sisters and brothers. That seemed impossible at the time because the Klan burned crosses, bombed churches and killed freedom riders on buses all over America. Yet, today all over America we not only see blacks and whites walking together as brothers and sisters but as husbands and wives, friends, co-workers, and equals in many spheres of American life. It is not fully embraced, but the spirit of oneness is growing with each generation.

When Martin Luther King spoke he echoed the teachings of the bible about the

fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He boldly stated what many had forgotten about the God we serve; that there is nothing our God can't do.

That even applies to individuals. Our godly inspired dreams are not impossible; God can make them happen, if we trust him and keep our hands in his hands.

As Christians, let us strive to keep our hope and faith intact. Our history has shown that there is nothing that is impossible; if we can believe it, with God's help it can be achieved.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he reminds believers that what seems impossible to men is possible with God.

The affirmation of God's power came as Jesus ended an exchange in which he told his disciples that the self-sufficient can only gain entry into the kingdom by humbling themselves before God. In mortal terms, he said this is an impossibility, but not in terms of God's unlimited power.

The disciples were under the mistaken impression, like the Pharisees, that persons who were wealthy and self-sufficient were the recipients of God's Grace and blessings. They were surprised when they heard Jesus say that those who were secure in their wealth or their own abilities would find it hard to get into the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom requires men women of humble spirit. The kingdom requires those who will submit themselves to the leadership of God and the Lordship of Christ. The symbols of their own self-sufficiency must become second place to the will of God. That seemed to be an impossibility. Jesus said in the realm of human understanding such humility is an impossibility but in the sphere of God's understanding it is not only possible but very likely. All things are possible for those who put their lives, their destinies, and their dreams in the hands of the Almighty God.

There is no height that is too high for God to reach. There's no depth so low that God cannot go beneath it. And there is no valley so wide that God cannot expand it. Lives in God's hands can do the impossible, reach the unreachable, cross the uncrossable as they reach heights never imagined. There is nothing that believers cannot achieve when God is paving their way.

Impossible dreams

There are many today who are pursuing their personal dreams. Their dreams may not be as grand as those of Martin Luther King but they are dreams that are important to their own life experience. The truth that Christ told his disciples should fuel the aspirations of believers who have set their sights on high and lofty goals. There are several thoughts that believers should submit for their consideration:

NOTHING TOO HARD FOR GOD: The first truth is that there is nothing too hard for God to do. God can do anything but fail. Even things that appear ridiculous to

others can be accomplished through the power of God.When God informed Abraham that his wife who was nearly 100 years old would have a child it seemed like a cruel joke. In fact, Sarah herself started to laugh only to learn that a promise from God should not be a laughing matter. Genesis 18:14 records the angel of the Lord asking, "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." In that moment they learned not to laugh when God ordained something to be. Ben Carson was the subject of considerable ridicule in his childhood because he was a failing student. The thought of such a student becoming a world-renowned surgeon was a laughing matter to many. Yet, his young life, placed in God's hand ultimately raised him to become one of the world's greatest and most renowned surgeons. Today those who have dreams must not be frustrated by the unbelief of their detractors and haters. It may seem improbable that someone like you can achieve your dream but we must remember the words of Luke 1:37 "For with God nothing shall be impossible. "

GOD CONTROLS THE POSSIBILITY YOU CONTROL THE PROBABILITY: There are two things that control whether you achieve your deams in life, one of them depends on God, the other depends on you. God makes the way for your dream to happen but the probability of achieving it is in our hands. Probability has to do with the chances that someone like you can make it to the top. If success lies at the top of a giant stairway with a door at each level, possibility comes into play when God moves ahead of you and unlocks each door just before you get there. Probability comes into play when you decide to make the climb.

God can make a college education possible, but we control the probabilities through hard work and determination. Probability looks at the factors that work against you, but the believer keeps focusing on the possibility which is that God is working for you. If he has opened the doors at each level we must work to get there and beat the odds. What were the odds of a single baby boy escaping Egyptian soldiers in a basket and growing up to be a prince of Egypt. What were the odds that the three Hebrew boys could survive the fiery furnace? They knew one thing, God was able and they were prepared and ready for any challenge they faced. As we work to defy the odds we must remember the words of Jeremiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"

EVERY DREAM IS NOT GOD'S WILL: Believers must be sure that your dream is God's will for your life. There is a temptation to ask God to endorse our dream instead of prayerfully asking God what is his will for our lives. Our dream should be to work the work of the Lord and live out our purpose. In return for doing that, God has promised that the happiness and fulfillment that we seek will follow. Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you."

Sometimes God has a purpose for our lives that is totally different from the direction we want to go. We want fame, money and popularity but he may intend for us to be a teacher because there's one child that will come in your path in a few years that he wants you to inspire to become the next doctor, lawyer, mayor or president. Some may reject

God's will and go after their own, but that dream may turn out to be a nightmare. When faced with the same decision Jesus told God in the garden that he did not really want to go to the cross and he asked God to take this cup away, but he humbly submitted his life to God's will. In that prayer he said, in Mark 14:36. "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. " He knew God had all power, even the power to move the cup of the cross, but he chose to go forward with his destiny even if it did not square with his personal desire. We have been promised, however, that when our dream and God's dream for us are the same, that he will stop at nothing to see to it that our dreams become realities." Godly dreams are not impossible because they are really God's plan for your life. Whatever we need to make such dreams happen God says all we need to do is ask he'll make it happen, "John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The God We Serve

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must also consider that those who laugh at the possibility that someone like you could live the life you live today, obviously don't know the God you serve.

The rich young ruler had an opportunity to achieve the impossible, but he was not willing to put his hands in God's hand.

Had he chose to humble himself before God, and trust Him at his word He would have soon discovered that the impossible can become possible.

Who would have thought that a lowly shepherd boy could defeat a mighty giant and grow up to become king of Israel. Yet, David put his trust in the Lord and rose to become a man "after God's own heart."

Who would have thought that a woman by the name of Esther could ever rise to become the queen of Persia. She put her trust in God and he made the impossible possible.

Who would have thought that Abraham who dreamed a great family would ever father a child at 100 years old, but he wholly leaned on the word of God and impossible became possible.

Who would have thought that Moses who was found drifting in a basket could ever lead an entire nation to the Promised Land, but God took the impossible and made it possible.

We don't have to go way back there, we can pose that same question to our own situation.

Who would have thought that someone who comes from your neck of the woods, would ever have chance to do what you are trying to do.

Who would have thought that anyone who came from your background could ever hope to achieve anything in life.

Who would have thought that anyone who is dealing with all that you are dealing with could really hope to be anything in life.

Who gave you the audacity to believe that you could succeed and rise high in the sight of God and man?

Who gave you the stubborn determination to believe that you could climb the mountains of obstacles that face you every day?

Who gave you brash self assurance to believe that if your mind could conceive it and your heart could believe it, that you could achieve it?

Who gave the idea that you somebody like you who knows very little, hasn't been many places, doesn't have much and doesn't know many people in high places can expect to do anything in this life.

I may not know a lot of things about life, but I know that the word of God says in Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

If it's going to help me do my master's will and will strengthen me, I can do all things.

If it's going to put me in a position to help somebody along the way, I can do all things.

If it's going to help me to realize the will of God for my life, I can do all things.

Dreams die when we stop believing.

When we stop believing that I can learn, then we drop out of school.

When we stop believing in our marriage, then we start thinking about divorce.

When we stop believing in God's healing power, we lose hope of being healed!

When we stop believing in future, then we give up and stop trying.

But I heard a song writer declare, "Only believe, Only believe, all things are possible, if you only believe!"

If you believe and hold to God's unchanging hand, God will take your:

—Hunger and give you a satisfied soul!

—Darkness and bring you into the marvelous light!

—Defeat and show the way to victory!

—Frustrations and give you new determination!

—Sadness and give you unspeakable joy!

I know he can do the impossible because down in Bethlehem an impossible thing happened. A child was born of a virgin and wrapped in swaddling clothes.

For 33 long years he did impossible things.

The blind were able to see because He did the impossible.

The lame were able to walk because He did the impossible.

Peter walked on water because he did the impossible

Five thousand people were fed with two fishes and five loaves of bread, because He did the impossible!

He told his disciples that he would do some impossible things.

When he said that if the temple would be destroyed he'd raise it up in three days, it sounded impossible.

When he said "If I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all me unto me." -that sounded impossible.

When they crucified Him on an old rugged cross, He died out on Calvary

But early Sunday morning, an impossible thing happened. The stone was rolled

away and he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

That same God is doing impossible things today, if you can believe in him!
That same God is lifting up bowed down heads, if you can believe in him!
That same God is mending wounded hearts, if you can believe!
All things are possible, if you only believe.

No.9420-Youth

Life's not served on silver platters, but Grace is

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 24, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them, of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt and serve the Lord." Joshua 24:13-14 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24

Introduction

Have you ever had opportunities made available to you that you did not earn? Generally, whenever we receive something without have labored to attain it is said that we have received it on a silver platter.We know about silver platters. Our platters are those things we enjoy that we did not work to provide. Many adults have resources today that were provided by parents: land, finances or standing. Many children today have plenty of opportunities available to them, thanks to the good will of their parents.

Lest any child should become too self assured he or she should consider that they grow up in homes where they do not pay the rent or house not. They enjoy color television, inside bathrooms, showers, cell phones, clothes and often computers that they did not buy. All these things were handed to them on silver platters.

Life does not serve us opportunities on silver platters. Anything we have is the result of the grace and good will of someone.

Students study in college but much of their educational maintenance comes from the grace and good will of scholarship donors, grant providers, student work opportunities and loving parents.

Very few people today can claim that they earned everything they have today without help from anyone. Most of us began our adult lives on the strength of someone else's signature as our co-signers, riding in someone else's car and even borrowing clothes and food from someone else's panty and closet.

God's goodness to us opens the door of opportunity for us. It's all the more reason

we should praise him. He is given us more than we deserve.

As Christians, we should be eternally grateful that God loves us and gives us his grace. Through his grace we are enjoying life. We should freely return that favor by praising God in every way that we can.

Exposition

The text focuses on Joshua as encourages Israel to remember the goodness of God and never to stray away from him.

The occasion of the text involves Joshua speaking to the young men and women who would follow him. Now, in the closing days of his life, Joshua told Israel the many ways in which they had been blessed by God.

From verse 2-13 Joshua explains how God has blessed them in Egypt and through their many journeys.

In the Promised Land, the wars had been fought, the victories had been won and this generation now enjoyed the fruit of prosperity for which they personally made no investment. When their fathers came to the Promised Land they marched around the walls of Jericho, fought off the Canaanites and even battled so hard that God held the sunlight long enough for them win. With their victories they were able to move into cities that were built through someone's hard work, and lived in houses constructed by others.

When Israel stepped into the Promised Land they lived a life that was easier than it would have been had they had to do it all themselves.

So, now in his last days Joshua reminds the people that it was God who caused them to enjoy the Promised Land. It was given to them on a silver platter. At the least, said Joshua in verse 14, we can serve God with sincerity and purity of heart.

He encouraged them not to make the mistake that some have made and that is to ignore their allegiance to God and serve pagan idols.

Normally, what Israel received would have been impossible, but the grace of God came into play. Normally, it would have been impossible but the grace of God made it possible.

Romans 3:24 notes that while life doesn't give us anything that we as believers in Jesus Christ have been freely given opportunities for salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Life doesn't give us anything, but there is one that that is given to every person on a silver platter and that is salvation.

Nothing in life comes free, but grace does.

No Silver Platter

Today, believers must focus on one understanding; life itself offers nothing on a silver platter except by the grace of God.

THOSE WHO ACHIEVE MUST WALK BY FAITH AND TRY: Joshua's generation left a great legacy for the young men and women who followed. Forty years before

they marched into the Promised Land spies gave a report that the land was flowing with milk and honey, but it was filled too many challenges, of which was the presence of giant sized men that made the Israelites appear as grasshoppers. They saw the opportunities that were available to them but chose to wander for 40 years. They learned a lesson, "You can't achieve a victory if you are afraid of losing the battle." A running back will never score touchdowns if he's afraid of being hit. A race car driver never will a race if he's afraid he might turn over. A businessman will never achieve success unless he ventures into the unknown. We cannot be afraid to step out on faith. So, what's stopping you from achieve that goal? What's holding you back? It's usually our lack of faith. Israel learned that those who refuse to step out on God's word usually end up wandering around aimlessly. Don't wait for your future to be served to you on a silver platter. Don't refuse to pluck a rose because it is surrounded by thorns, try and let God do the rest. If Israel had done that they would have saved themselves 40 years of wandering.

WALK THE RIGHT PATH: Success requires each individual to walk the right path. Our parents, with God's help, fashioned programs to discipline our children, educate our people, train our boys, groom our girls and protect our homes. Yet, despite a history of blessing there are many who have chosen to walk the same path of the Israelites in biblical times, the path to least resistance. Israel became distracted several times in their journey the worshipped idols that angered God. What are the false gods of our times? They are not statues before which we bow prostrate and humble. They are more than likely ideals and lifestyles that cause us to abandon the values of our people. Among false gods that are eating away at our community from the inside are: drugs, alcohol and crime. There are only two paths in life: our path and God's path; but too often we are easily distracted from the godly path because of the lure of the world. We must resistance temptation and follow the path to glory.

NOTHING COMES EASY: The world gives up nothing without a struggle. Anything worth having is worth is worth sacrificing to get it. Today, there are many who desperately want to succeed in life but they want it given to them on a silver platter. Some want the short paths. They have the ability to be a doctor but it's easier to be a nurse's aide. They have the capacity to be a teacher but they settle for being an aide. They have the skill to be a lead singer but they settle for being a backup because it's easier. History has shown us that those who have achieved high heights in life are those who were willing to struggle to achieve their goal. That's the difference between the C student and the A student, both may have the same capacity but one is willing to do the work necessary and the other is satisfied to just get by. More than any other nation, Israel should have known what God can do. Their national history was filled with struggle from the meanderings of Abraham to their struggles and slaves in Egypt. Life gave them nothing, they worked hard for everything. Even today some believe that life owes them something. Some believe teachers should give them grades they have not earned and employers should pay them work not performed. As we mature in the faith we soon learn that there is a connection between our faith and our works, because James said, "Faith without works is dead." We should expect to struggle just as a farmer expects to till the soil; the earth will yield but only after the ground is thoroughly tilled.

Then there is grace.

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must recognize that while Life is not served to us on a silver platter, the grace of God is ours for the asking.

When Paul wrote to the Romans he made it clear that we have salvation, not because of our own ability but that it is freely given to us. The grace of God is the one thing in life that is given to us on a silver platter.

Life won't give up anything but thank God for Grace, because through His grace we are able to see our way.

Life gives us a litany of hard times, but God's Grace gives us hope and inspiration.

Life gives us frustration, but the grace of God, give us the determination to say, "I believe I'll run on and see what the end's going to be."

Life gives us a platter full of failure but the Grace of God gives us a second chance.

Life gives us a platter full of defeat but the Grace of God offers us the complete victory! That's why the saint sings, "Victory is mine. Victory is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind, victory today is mine."

Life gives us a platter filled with moans and groans, but the Grace of God offers us happiness and joy.

When Israel made great accomplishments they sang a song of praise unto the Lord. That's what Joshua told Israel to do.

Joshua reminds us today. We have many things that we didn't really work for, but they came by the grace of God so we should continually praise God and sing unto him a new song.

Joshua told Israel to look back over its journey and told them to see the many ways God has blessed them.

When you sing to the Lord, don't just praise him for one experience, but we praise him for the entire experience.

Don't just thank him for the mountain top experiences, but sing a new song that thanks him for the valleys as well.

Sing a new song that thanks him for the sunshine and thanks him for the rain!

Sing a new song that thanks him for the good times and thanks him for the bad times too!

Sing a new song that thanks him for accomplishments we've made but also sing a song that thanks him for the lesson learned from failures and setbacks!

Our new song should tell our story.

It ought to tell how he picked us up and turned us around!

It ought to tell how he planted our feet on solid ground!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new song to sing!

We sing because life never offered us a chance at salvation, but thank God for the blood of Jesus!

We sing because life never offered us a chance start over again, but the Blood

of Jesus purges our sin and gives us a new song to sing.

”I’ve been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!”

We ought to sing about Jesus, Mary’s baby!

Who died on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose up from the grave!

Life knocked me down, but I’m so glad that Jesus lifted me and has given me salvation on a silver platter.

No. 9421-Black Heritage

Cords of old Rotten Rags

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2010

Scripture: "And Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison." Jeremiah 38:12-13

Introduction

Have you ever considered how God has saved us by using the very things that should have killed us to help us survive?We are amazed today at the growing number of deaths and sicknesses that are being attributed to causes unheard of in our history. It seems that if we breathe we get a cancer; if we eat processed food there is cancer in the can, if we eat fresh food there is cancer in the herbicides. If our children play with toys there is a possibility of lead poisoning. If we eat pork chops we get high blood pressure, if we drink water from the tap we get a thousand germs, if we shake the wrong hand we could contract the Swine Flu. We have reached a point when it seems that just about everything that is supposed to be good for us is actually killing us.

It hasn't always been that way, even though there have been dangers. We as a people have survived mainly because God has manipulated the adverse situations, troubles and hardships of our past and turned them to our advantage. In many instances he used the symbols of our low estate to lift us and in so doing to lift the nation as well.

As Christians, we are grateful that God has used our ragged and troubled experience as a tool to help us raise ourselves to our present state.

Exposition

This text focuses on how a black man used old cords and rags to save the prophet Jeremiah from his enemies.

The prophet Jeremiah was not popular among many of his countrymen. His message of condemnation for the nation's sins did not resonate with the rich and powerful; many wanted him killed. Jeremiah's prophecies that the kingdom of Judah would be destroyed by the Babylonians was not good news. Many were concerned

with the impact that such prophecies on the morale of the armed forces and the people in general. Apparently, without the knowledge of the king Jeremiah was imprisoned to silence him.

Although Jeremiah was the most prominent prophet of his day, no official in the government would intercede on his behalf. Ebed-Melech who was a Cushite from the area of upper Egypt; a black man. He was serving as an official in the royal palace. His exact position in the palace was not described, but he had access to the king. Ebed-Melech went to the Benjamin Gate where the king was supervising Jerusalem's defenses against the siege. His urgent message to the king was that the other officials had acted wickedly by throwing Jeremiah... into a cistern where he would starve to death. Evidently King Zedekiah had not known about the plan to kill Jeremiah or else he had not believed that they would carry it out. However, it became obvious that Jeremiah's death was imminent.

The king ordered Ebed-Melech to take thirty men who were probably on duty at the gate and lift Jeremiah from the cistern before he died. Thirty men would be needed to pull Jeremiah out of the mud and to stand guard against the officials who might oppose the rescue attempt. Ebed-Melech led the soldiers to a room under the treasury in the palace where the opening to the cistern was located. Old rags and worn-out clothes were passed down to Jeremiah to place under his arms to pad the ropes. Jeremiah was then pulled... up with the ropes and freed from the cistern. He was again put in the courtyard of the guard.

Through this courageous act Ebed-Melech save the prophet of God from death and saved Judah from what would have been the terrible wrath of God.

Ebed-melech's acts demonstrated faith

The acts of this courageous black should serve as a guide to believers today. We should note at least three things about this courage act:

EBED-MELECH SHOWED COURAGE IN THE FACE OF DANGER. It was dangerous for him to speak out when he saw an injustice but Ebed-melech did so anyway. This has been the legacy of thousands in our History who chose to speak out against the injustices that inflicted on our people. Whether it was Frederick Douglass in his newspaper or Booker Washington from the halls of Tuskegee or Rosa Parks from the back of the bus, our history is filled with men and women who have risked their own lives and security to sound the trumpet and raise the banner of freedom for all. We cannot afford to pass up opportunities to correct a wrong if we blindly walk past each situation and ignore it because of the risk. Justice gives nothing without a demand. Even today there are thousands of men and women who are illegally or wrongfully imprisoned, we must not forget them or ignore their status out of self interest. The courage to stand up comes from God. The men and women of our past who have spoken to our slave experience lifted us from our enslavement by their courageous acts and we should do no less.

EBED-MELECH SHOWED INGENUITY IN THE FACE OF DEPRAVITY. When

Ebed-melech reached Jeremiah's dungeon site there was no easy stairway available to lift him out. He made a way to rescue him by using the ingenious idea of lifting him out using cords of old rotten rags. We are an ingenious people. It seems to be a gift that God bestowed on us and others similarly situated. We have been able to use our knack for ingenuity to lift ourselves from the outhouse to the White House. We took scraps of old bread and turned them into dressing. We took discarded hog parts and turned them into plantation gourmets with fancy names such as "Chitterlings, tripe, and mountain oysters." When we look back we realize that it was food that should have killed us, but for the grace of God. We have shown our ability to improvise, invent and create in every aspect of our existence. We have written books, designed cities, commanded armies, and perfected inventions. We have shown a unique ability to adapt and overcome. We have taken the cords and old rotten rags of this life and lifted ourselves to new levels of living. Using the simple salves and potions of the old people we have treated our sick. It was the simple economy of saving for a rainy day that brought many financial security. It was ingenious the way our mothers made our clothes from old cotton sacks or curled our hair using strips of paper bags, but it was this type of ingenuity that helped us survive with the help of the Lord.

EBED-MELECH LIFTED UP THE MAN OF GOD. Ebed-Melech recognized Jeremiah as a prophet of God whose voice was been muffled and life threatened because he spoke the word of the Lord. His actions lifted Jeremiah up from the pit so that the word could continue to be declared. Our people have been inspired in our journey by legions of men of God who have stood firm on their faith like Moses and declared to Pharaoh that God says, "Let my people go." We have lifted up these giants who ranged from Nat Turner to Sojourner Truth to Martin Luther King because they boldly declared the word of God to the adversaries of equality. In lifting up these men we also lifted up our faith in God. Just as Moses' hands were held up on the mountain side, we have held up the arms of our pastors and prophets who have prophesied to the powers of this land that God would no longer tolerate injustices and indignities being showered on his people. We lifted them up so that our people could hear the challenging and inspiring words of God. It is only the power of God that ultimately freed us from our physical enslavement, and it will be the word of God that ultimately frees us from the new chains that bind us today. We still give ear to God's word because in his word there is a message of hope and deliverance. In his word there is assurance that "trouble don't last always."

Cords and old rags

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that while it is true that Ebed-Melech used old cords and rags to lift up Jeremiah, it wasn't really the rags or the cords that lifted him but the power of God.

God has used many people and situations to help us over the years, but we should never lose sight of the fight that it wasn't our wit, ingenuity or imagination that has brought us thus far, but the power of the almighty God.

Our faith in God has helped us to withstand the troubles of our of our history.

Our heritage is one that is filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because

God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself.

It is no wonder then why the song writer would say, "If it had not been for the Lord on our side, tell me where would I be. Where would I be?"

God has both lifted us a people and used us to lift up the world. Ebed-Melech lifted Jeremiah and in the same way we have lifted America.

By the thousands we have served as nannies and cooks, mentoring a tutoring generations of men and women who became the leaders of this country.

By the thousands we have worked by the sweat of our brows, tilling the fields, building the roads and fighting the battles for this nation's freedom!

By the thousands we have written the songs that have touched the heart of the nation and inspired it to move forward.

And yes, by the thousands we have given our blood.

We have shed so much blood that James Weldon Johnson wrote, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered."

Yet, we stand today to sing gallantly "I know the Lord will make a way!"

Now, we must march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past.

I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!"

We must stand on faith that when there seems to be no way out, our God is a God who can even use cords and old rags and do miracles!

We must stand on our faith that God will turn our:

—Backward steps into forward motions; Failing health into growing strength!

—Losses and defeats into gains and victories; Hard times and bad times, into easy days and good times.

When we stand on the rock we are on secure ground. No wonder the song writer wrote: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!”

On Christ, Mary’s baby and the lion of Judah!

On Christ, Ezekiel’s wheel in the middle of the wheel!

On Christ, My bridge over troubling water!

On Christ, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary’s hill!

On Christ, Who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights!

And early Sunday morning arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground……

All other ground!

All other ground is sinking sand!

No. 9422-Inspiration

When the saints go marching in

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 7, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Revelation 7:9-10

Introduction

Are you a saint? All across America the question is being asked "Who Dat?" It's in reference to the New Orleans Saints football team, uniquely named saints because the team is located in a predominately Catholic city where there are patron saints for just about everything. In fact there are over 10,000 Roman Catholic saints. In the Catholic faith, believers pray to the saints to intercede for them in certain circumstances. For example, those who travel pray to St. Christopher to protect them on their journey or when they are traveling in storms. Some never travel without wearing a St. Christopher medallion around their necks. There is Saint Peter Claver, the patron saint of Negro Missions, highly respected among Black Catholics as a symbol of God's concern for the Black man. If you have lost something you pray to St. Anthony for help finding it. If you are trying to sell your home many Catholics bury a statue of St. Joseph to guarantee a quick sale. There is even a saint of the Internet. The Vatican has recently declared St. Isadore of Seville as the patron saint of computer users who will protect believers from spam, identity theft and other mischief on the world wide web.

It appears that every denomination has its interpretation of just what it takes to be a saint with equally divergent definitions of what saints do. Lutherans believe that saints are special holy people who have received special grace from God. They believe the saints pray to God for the good of the church but they don't pray to the Saints. Jehovah's witnesses don't use the term saints but "Holy Ones" and they believe there will be 144,000 holy ones who will rule with Christ in the new Kingdom. Methodists believe that all Christians are saints, they admire the biblical saints and use the term "saint" only in reference to them, but not to each other.

If you are Baptist, Pentecostal or generally evangelical, the term "saint" means that

you are a born again believer in Jesus Christ who has been set aside to live a holy and spirit filled life with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are all saints, we pray with each other and for each other but not to each other. We pray to God, in Jesus' name.

Those who are saints proudly wear the saints symbol. The New Orleans Saints football team's logo is designed after a French Catholic symbol called the "fleur de lis" which is supposed to symbolize the wings of the angels hovering over the Ark of the Covenant. There has been controversy over the football teams logo because it seems that the National Football League is claiming ownership.

The saints logo is not the symbol of the Christian saint. The original symbol of the Christian faith was the fish, because Christians promoted themselves as "fishers of men." About 600 years after the crucifixion Christians started using the cross as the symbol of our faith.

The cross, not the fish or the fleur de lis is the symbol of the saints of God. On the cross Christ paid for our salvation and through the cross we have an entry into the kingdom of God.

As Christians, we are proud to be saints. We are proud to display the cross as the symbol of our faith. Today, we are preparing ourselves for the kingdom that will come. In that day, we shall boldly march into the new Jerusalem, as victors over sin and death. It will be a great day when the true saints of God go marching in.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's vision of the last days in which the saints who come out of the great tribulation are sealed and given white robes.

The Revelation tells the events which will take place in the last days. It describes two specific periods of time which are yet to come. One is a seven year period that is called the great tribulation. At the end of this period the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. The second is a 1000 period in during which Christ rules on earth and Satan is bound. Before the heavenly kingdom begins there are many who will come to know Christ in the last days who will be persecuted because of their faith; these will be rewarded.

Revelation 7:4-8 describes the selection of 144,000 Jews who accept Christ and become saints after observing the events of the tribulation.

Verses 9-10 focuses on another number of saints who will come out of the tribulation. It was more than 144,000. In fact, Revelation 7:9 describes it as "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."

In Revelation 7:14 the question is asked, "What are these?" or who are these people? The answer came, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These are the saints of God.

These saints were important by virtue of their presence and attire; both are

prophetic and symbolic. Their presence is prophetic in that it shows us what will happen in the last days. It is symbolic in that it represents the triumph of every believer over the plots and plans of Satan for their lives.These saints represented in the vision came through great tribulation, imprisonment, loss of property and goods and even the loss of life itself. Their victory shout that is released at the end of the tribulation period equals the victory shout of every believer who has suffered, sacrificed and endured loss for the sake of the kingdom.Of special interest is that each of them is wearing a white robe that has been washed in the blood of the lamb. The fact that their robes will be washed indicates that at one time they had been stained, but cleansed through the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. The robes were made white by power of the blood of Christ. Thus, they will stand before the throne of God as victors. Their once stained robes will symbolize their triumph over the impact of evil in their lives.

The image shown in this passage shows believers today a grand picture of what we can expect when all of the saints go marching in. These will come from the tribulation period. Other saints will come from the Old Testament times and be joined by the raptured saints. It will be a grand time when the saints go marching in!

Truth about Saints

When we consider the saints of God there are three truths that we must recognize.

ALL BELIEVERS ARE SAINTS: The saints of God are those who believe in Jesus Christ, have repented of their sins and are living their lives by the Godly standard. Those who live by this rule follow biblical teachings and are described as saints. We call each other saints because in Romans 1:7, Paul addressed the Roman letter to "all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." In I Corinthians 1:2, we read these words "the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." True saints are not fans, we are believers who are worshippers and followers of Christ. Saints are those who have faith in God and exercise that faith on a daily basis. No one has a patent on us, there is no copyright, we are children of the king!

SAINTS DON'T GIVE UP EASILY: Many who follow football teams are taking heart because the New Orleans saints did not give up. They believe their destiny is in the numbers. Numerology tells the story for them. They point to the fact that Barack Obama is the 44th President, and that there are 44 days from Christmas to the Super bowl, the Saints Franchise is 44 years old, that on Super bowl Sunday it will four years and four months since Hurricane Katrina; that the Saints won their way into the Super Bowl in four minutes and 44 seconds of overtime and against Bret Favre who had just turned 40 wearing number four. Those who believe in numerology say it's in the numbers but the saints of God don't go by the numbers we go by the word of God. We don't give up because like the three Hebrew Boys we know "our God is able to deliver us." Even in the face of adversity and insurmountable odds, we stand firm like Job and declare "yea thou he slay me, yet will I serve him." We've been on our journey a long time, but we still declare, "I don't believe he brought be me this far to leave me."

SAINTS WILL BE REWARDED. There are many saints who have remained faithful to the cause because they have been standing on the promises of God. He has promised to reward our faith. The word of God tells us in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 2:26 says "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:" We may not know when it's coming, but we know what the end shall be!

Rev 3:5 says He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

We don't give up, even though the road may be rough sometimes, because the God we serve has promised us everlasting life!

In that day

Finally, brothers and sisters, we looking for to the day when the saints go marching in.

John's vision did not stop with the sealing of the 144,000 or the giving of white robes to the great multitudes. His vision painted a glorious picture of the great day when the saints of God will march into the New Jerusalem.

The excitement that the saints will share will be greater than watching a Super Bowl game. It will be the day we see the new Jerusalem.

When the saints go marching into the New Jerusalem life will be heavenly.

When the saints go marching into the New Jerusalem

—Worship will be wonderful!

—Mercy will be magnified!

—Grace will be glorified!

—Love will be everlasting!

The New Jerusalem is a place where:

—Satan never deceives and sin never tempts

—Love never fails and glory never fades

—Joy never ends and peace never parts

—Shackles never bind and storms never threaten

—Rusts never corrupts and thieves never steal

—Death never happens and night never comes!

Over in glory there will be a new life for every Saint. When the saints go marching in there will be:

—Rest from our earthly toils!

—Relief from our earthly burdens!

When the saints go marching in, we'll:

—Praise the Lord for our mighty deliverance

—Enjoy the absence of worries and cares!

—Celebrate the end of all our troubles

—Shout the victory over misery and death

I heard a song writer declare, 'Lord I want to be in the number when the Saints go marching in."

I can see them lining up alphabetical order and I can see them answer the roll one by one:

Somebody said:

A—Abraham and Aaron moved to the front the line.

B—Boaz and Bartholemew " "

C—Centurion Soldier saved at the foot of the cross, step forward

D—Daniel, fresh from the Lion's den, and David, a man after God's own heart, stepped to the front of the Line.

E—Ezekiel and Elijah, who flew away on a chariot of God...

F—Five bridesmaids who kept the lamps trimmed

G—Gideon, who won great battles with only 300 men

H—Hosea and Hannah who gave her son Samuel to be a priest for the Lord

I—Isaiah and Isaac, whom the Lord saved by providing a lamb in the bush.

J—I saw Judas try to slip to the front of the Line but an Angel said get back Judas, because you betrayed our Lord with a kiss on the cheek.

K—Lot but he didn't see his wife, for she turned to salt at Sodom and Gomorrah.

M—Moses and Malachi still asking "will a man rob God?"

N—Noah and Nehemiah, still rebuilding the walls.

O—Obadiah

P—Paul and Peter, who showed us the power of a midnight prayer.

Q—Queens and Kings of the Earth who humbled themselves before God

R—Rebekah, Ruth and Rachel

S—Samuel, and Stephen who was stoned to death for his faith

T—Thomas and Timothy who was commanded to "preach the word"

U—Uriah because David had you killed and stole your wife. But I also saw you, from choir stands and the pews.

W—I heard them say Woman at the well for you told the world to come see a man!

X—Xerxes because you raised up Esther and made her queen

Z-Zechariah because you saw the vision of the Red Horse Pawing in the valley!

I wasn't there when they put an old rugged cross on his shoulders!

I wasn't there when they drove nails into his hands!

I wasn't there when they stretched him out wide!

I wasn't there when he died out on Calvary!

I wasn't there when he arose the grave early Sunday morning!

But I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in!

I want to be there when they crown him Lord of Lords!

I want to be there when they call him King of Kings!

I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in!

No. 9423-Inspiration

Dry Ground

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 14, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. " Exodus 14:21-22

Introduction

Have you been through many storms in your life?Many of us have experienced a wide array of storms, floods and misfortunes in the course of our lives. The question is not so much whether we have seen or experienced storms in our lives but whether we successfully meandered the slippery slopes that separated success and failure. We have experienced our hard times and we have experienced deliverance. In hindsight, we now know that our deliverance came as a result of the hand of God moving to assist us in so many ways.

As a people we have seen our share of difficulties. We have endured the dehumanizing effects of slavery. We have stumbled through the nations attempt to reconstruct itself while patronizing our existence. We have fought long and hard to demand our rights under the Constitution. In that process we have been reduced to a caricature of citizenship which has been the object of ridicule and subjective review. We have been lynched from trees, our houses have been burned and some of our most vocal leaders have been assassinated, incarcerated or persecuted. Through it all we have maintained a steadfast hope that God would make a way somehow. We have seen the waters rolled back as we marched through depressions, wars and racial intimidation in our quest to reach the promised land.

Surely God has sustained us as a people, while keeping our enemies at bay. Surely God has held back the economic waters and the social injustices that should have destroyed us while blazing a trail for us to see our way through. We can only give him thanks and praise for helping us to reach dry ground.

As Christians, we give God thanks for making a way for us out of no way; for bringing us through. It is through his mercy and grace that we have been able to come thus far on our journey.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it passed through the Red Sea walking on dry ground.

For over 400 years the children of Israel lived in the land of Egypt, first as guests then as slaves. God delivered them from their enslavement and pointed them toward a land that would be flowing with milk and honey. The land of Palestine became known as the promised land and became the quest of all Jews even to this day. Israel encountered a problem despite being freed from their slavery; the Red Sea was in front of them and the armies of Egypt was behind them. They faced an impossible dilemma for which there seemed to be no answer.

God gave them a command to move toward the promised land even though it appeared that it was an impossible task. The word of God records how He began to move through the natural elements to make a way for his people. God prepared to perform a great miracle for his people. What he prepared to do was scientifically impossible, and philosophically illogical. God planned to split the Red Sea in half and to allow his people, along with their flocks and herds to walk through on dry ground. This would not be a small trail but a wide chasm large enough to accommodate the passage of two million people.

What God was going to perform was an obvious miracle. He intended to use a strong wind to blow back the waters and to hold them back until the children had passed through. Some would think that that was no big miracle because strong winds in this area were not unusual. A strong south wind blows from October to May, raising the sea level several feet; but it is correspondingly lowered between May and October when the wind blows from the north. However, God chose to use neither the north wind or the south wind but the caused a strong east wind to blow all night long, indicating that what was being done was in no way the usual blowing of the wind.

When the time came the waters rolled up like a scroll on the left-hand side and the right creating a path through which Israel traveled to safety. It was not an anomaly; it was an act of God. That's what the Egyptians found when they attempted to follow them through the Red Sea. The walls that held back the waters of the sea collapse upon the Egyptians and they were drowned as the entire nation of Israel stood on dry ground.

The word for wall that is used in the text is used in many places in Scripture to signify fortification and protection is "Homa". This text is the first of about 120 instances in the Hebrew Bible that this word is used to indicate God's protective presence." It is that presence that helped Israel to survive its 40 year journey in the wilderness and to ultimately cross over into the promised land to stand proudly on dry ground.

He has been our Protection

As a people we can relate to the children of Israel. Their national history is similar to our own and God's dealings with them is seen as a type of his dealings with all believers. From observing them modern believers extract truths about our own circumstances:

HE GIVES US A WALL OF PROTECTION: God protected Israel by acting as a shield, barrier, or guard that kept them sheltered from the attacks of their enemies. When Egypt attacked He stood between them as a pillar of fire. When the waters of the Red Sea would have consumed them God held them back and then used the same waters to destroy their enemies. He was the Homa. When we reflect on our own personal history we too can see the many ways that God has protected us from our enemies. There are many families that have been the subject of attacks, plots and tricks bu our families survived each attempt at their destruction thanks to the grace of God. That's why, Psalms 124:2-4 says, " If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:" It is the Homa" of God that has kept us safe throughout our history, not our own power of the acts of men. God and God alone has been our protector.

WHILE HE HOLDS BACK ENEMIES HE WORKS THROUGH THE NIGHT: Egyptian armies were held at bay by the Pillar of fire but the sea seemed unmoved to many, but God was working it out. The emphasis of the text is that God "caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night." When they looked at the sea all they saw was another storm raging over the sea, they didn't know that God had begun to move on their behalf. Often we don't understand how God moves to help us. At times, it looks like his acts create more storms, yet just as he did for Israel, God has caused an unusual wind to blow that is working to create a wall of protection for us. Many saw Martin Luther King marching in the streets and the subsequent jailings and beatings as just another storm; they did not see God moving in the mass movements of people of all races to bring down the walls of segregation and racism in the country; yet God was moving on the hearts of congressmen and senators and that stong east wind gave birth to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It rolled back the waters and allowed thousands of communities to march forth on legal dry ground, protected by non-other than the constitution itself. It's the same way in our personal lives. We can't see how another strong wind or storm is paving the way, but we should be confident that God has a reason for everything and all things will work to our good if we love the Lord and try to do right by him.

IT TAKES FAITH TO WALK THROUGH A MIRACLE: When the waters rolled back, it took a tremendous amount of faith for Israel to walk through, even though they could see the other side. The prospect of death and failure was imminent; there were some among them that wanted to turn back. Wasn't that the case in our history? There were many who lost heart even in the face of their deliverance. That's why Harriet Tubman carried a shotgun; it wasn't for the enemy, it was to force the faint hearted runaways to keep going forward. Their deliverance was a miracle in itself, but it took a leap of faith to claim their miracle. Today, we ask God for miracles but we must have the faith to walk through our miracle. Whether that miracle is sickness, death, financial trouble or dysfunctional relationships it takes faith to walk through your miracle. What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When God is preparing to do a miracle for you it may be a scary experience; you may even get nervous. That's when you draw upon your faith and take that examination or undergo that surgery or invest in that opportunity. The miracle might look scary but we should proceed with confidence that God will bring us through on dry ground. Hebrews 11:29 says, "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." It's faith that no matter scary it looks that the same God who rolled back the waters and made the opportunity available can insure that you make it through to dry ground.

God will make a way

Finally brothers and sisters, we should be confident that no matter how difficult our road may seem, God will make a way; we don't know how, but we know he will.

For Israel, God made a way for them to escape the treacheries of Egyptian bondage and move toward freedom. He made a way for them to cross the Red Sea and he made a way for them to survive for 40 years in the wilderness. Without a shadow of a doubt he proved that he would make a way for them to achieve their purpose.

From the depths of the Red Sea with water stacked up on both sides of them, Israel had only one goal in mind; to reach dry ground.

Dry Ground is that which is within the protective care of the Lord.

Dry Ground is Holy Ground, anointed by God himself for the nurture and strengthening of heavenly pilgrims.

The quest of every believer today is to escape the Red Seas that threaten to swallow them in this life and reach, sanctified dry ground.

There are many today who are walking on everything except dry ground.

Some are walking on SOGGY GROUND. Soggy ground is messy, sloppy and leaves an ugly trail that shows where you've been.

Some are walking on MUDDY GROUND. Muddy ground, slips under your feet and makes it hard to get traction and hold on.

Some are walking on SANDY GROUND. Sandy ground is not stable and your feet sink with each step. It's hard to run on Sandy ground; when you walk you have to slow your pace.

Some are walking on WET GROUND. Wet ground is slippery making it hard to stand up. Those who walk on wet ground fall a lot, because life is slippery when its wet.

Those who trust in the Lord try to avoid the low ground and they constantly reach for "higher ground."

That's why the song writer wrote, "Lord lift me up and let me stand by faith on heaven's table land. A high plane than I have found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

When we reach high ground we walk above the soggy, muddy mess that traps everyone else because we are walking in the favor of the Lord.

Those who reached the high ground are now standing on the rock.

When we stand on the rock of our salvation we are standing on dry ground.

Standing on dry ground we can hear the voices of the old warriors reminding us that no matter how tough it gets, "The Lord will make a way!"

When we stand on the rock, God will turn our:

-Backward steps into forward motions; Failing health into growing strength!

-Losses and defeats into gains and victories; Hard times and bad times, into easy days and good times.

When we stand on the rock not only are we standing on dry ground, we standing on are on secure ground.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

On Christ, Mary's baby and the lion of Judah!

On Christ, Ezekiel's wheel in the middle of the wheel!

On Christ, My bridge over troubling water!

On Christ, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary's hill!

On Christ, Who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights!

And early Sunday morning arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground..

All other ground!

All other ground is sinking sand!

No. 9424-Anniv.-Men

When God Makes a Man

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 21, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Genesis 1:26; "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

Introduction

If you could make the perfect man what he be like?If given the assignment to make the perfect man how tall would he be? What color would you make his eyes. How old would he be? Would he have six pack abs, bulging biceps, and a barrel size chest? Would he have dazzling bedroom eyes, luscious lips and a deep, romantic voice?What about his personality? If he had all of the above but had no money would he be acceptable? Desirable? Loveable?

Obviously, all of us would have a hard time creating the perfect man just as many have spent years searching for him but have always come up short. It seems that every man has something missing from the list. If he looks good, he doesn't have a job. If he has a job and looks good, he doesn't have a body. If he has a body, job, youth, looks and dazzling eyes, he's not romantic. If he's romantic, he's too short. If he's tall, he can't dance. If he has the perfect package of looks, body, job, attitude, and romance, you might find out that he's gay. There will always be something too long or too short in our search for the perfect man.

The Marine Corps advertises that it is looking for a few good men. What does that mean?

Experience has taught that the measure of a man is not by his shoe size, shirt size and the width of his belt. Neither is it determined by the depth of his wallet or the muscles in his arms. There are characteristics about a real man that often do not appeal to the eye but are evident in his character.

Real men are strong, courageous, loving, sound thinking and god fearing. All of the other attributes are extras that make him even more appealing.

God made man in his own image. He made him in such a wonderful way that the psalmist asked the question, "What is man that thou are mindful of him?" Man and his

kind are the wonderful creations of God himself. The body is the outer shell, but because a godly man is made by God himself, the qualities went in before for the name went on.

As Christians, we know that God is responsible for all creation. We are all wonderfully made in his likeness. We glorify him for creating mankind and we revel in the fact that his creation was perfect in every respect, because when God makes a man, the man he makes is shaped by the hand of God himself.

Exposition

This text shows how God made man in his image and likeness.

Genesis gives a description of God's creation of the world by singular spoken phrases such as, "Let there be light," and "Let there be a firmament," and "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth."

However, in Genesis 1:26 when God decided to make man it switched from a singular act into a word of consultation, "Let us make man." The creation of man was a collaborative effort between the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, indicated by the phrase, "let us."

Let us make man so he can have dominion over the rest of creation.

Let us make man and ally him with the elements, from the dust, but full of life; of the animals but far superior, but just lower than the angels.

Let us make man in our image. In the image of the fatherly God. In the image of the obedient son. In the image of the empowering, forceful and inspirational Holy Ghost.

The Hebrew word for image in this text means "fashion" or "resemblance." Likewise, the word "Likeness" means "similitude, or manner." It does not mean that we look like God or that we are Jr. gods. It means that there are unique qualities within us that are similar in nature to that of the creator. We are similar to God in many ways, but we are by no means God.

Qualities of Godly men

When a man's life is shaped in God's hand, he is molded in many ways to reflect the character of God. He's not a perfect man, but in many respects he demonstrates godly attributes. There are four attributes of a godly man that can be drawn from 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

GOD MAKES COURAGEOUS MEN: There is a courageous spirit that flows from the heart of every godly man; it is the calling card of every man whose life is shaped by close encounters with the Lord. Courage does not mean that men are never afraid, it means that they have the strength to do what must be done in the face of danger, ridicule or failure. Courage should not be confused with thoughtless actions, knee jerk responses, and foolish acts of bravado. Courageous men know what is right and

after considering the costs decide to do what needs to be done to right a wrong, protect against evil or to bring about a rightful conclusion to a situation. The courageous spirit is something that comes from God. All men are not born with courageous spirits, they develop courage as God works with them. Peter was one the boldest of the apostles, but he didn't start out bold; in fact he showed cowardice when he denied Christ. Christian men become courageous as their faith and love increases. We are afraid whenever our faith decreases. When we love completely we get bold. 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Men who have put their lives in God's hands develop a strong faith and capacity to love the way God loves. God remakes him into a man of courage.

GOD MAKES STRONG MEN: God makes strong men, not necessary physically strong like Samson. Strength in this sense is not about muscles but about the ability to be firm, decisive and resolute. The strength of a man is not measured by his education, financial status or physique. There are many men who are well educated, financially secure and muscular but are weak. They have no backbone, stand for nothing and fall for everything. 2 Timothy 1:2 points to another attribute that God give believing men, strength or power. Jesus had 12 disciples, all 12 of whom were weak at the beginning; one was so weak he betrayed Christ and hung himself. Even when Christ agonized about his future there were so who couldn't even stay awake to protect him. Matthew 26:40-41 says, "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Yet, eleven of these men ultimately put their lives in God's hands and they grew in strength by studying the words of Christ, close fellowship with each other leaning heavily on their faith in God. Paul, writing to the Ephesians encouraged them to build their strength. Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He encouraged every believing man to put on the who armor of God to protect against the wiles of the devil. Moreover, men are urged to get a real relationship with Christ because it's through him that they find strength. In John 15:5 he said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. That's what Samson learned and every believing man after him. Without God, every man is weak. With God every man is strong.

GOD MAKES LOVING MEN: When God makes a man he gives him a piece of himself. The Word tells us that God is love. Real men have the capacity to love. Love is an "action" word. Love is spoken with the mouth but more than anything else love is demonstrated through action. Love is demonstrated when men interact with each other and men also demonstrate love when they interact with others and respond to each other in ways that will build up rather than tear down. It takes time for men to learn because it is a man's nature to want to outdo others or "win" the most accolades. Even among the Disciples James and John earned the title of the "Sons of Thunder" and sought seats of importance over the other brethren. Yet, in the course of their ministry they became men of love and compassion so much so John was referred to in 1 John

4:7 as the apostle of love. When God makes a man he gives him a sense of compassion, a driving desire to do something to help those who are desperately in need and help those who are lost. It is an agape love that drives them to act even if the love is not returned. When God makes a man he makes him a loving man.

GOD MAKES A SOUND THINKING MAN: Not every man is sound in his thinking. Until God remakes them, many men are selfish in their thoughts and seek to do things that build themselves up often at the expense of others. Without sound thinking men make hasty decisions or react out of impulse that drives them to destruction in the years to come. The Greek word in the 2 Timothy 1:7 that is used for sound mind refers to moderation and self-control. It denotes a man of prudence, discretion and balance. When God makes a man he has to add balance to his life and stabilize him because too often some men make knee jerk decisions without praying about them. A sound mind is a praying mind that is disciplined in the art of listening to God. Men are not born with sound minds but as they mature in the faith, God remakes and reshapes their thinking to the point that they no longer act brashly or on impulse without thinking through their decisions. A sober thinking man comes when men focus on pleasing God in all of their actions. When the world sees a sound thinking man it sees a man who has given both his thoughts and his actions over to the Lord.

When God Makes a man

Finally, brothers and sisters we cannot ignore the fact that there is nothing greater than a good man in God's hands.

In the Garden, the father, Son and the Holy Ghost said, "Let us make man." In the garden it was a call to create out of the dust of the earth the first of mankind. Today, they are making men from the dust of crumbled lives and reshaping them into what they should be.

There are many men who can testify that their lives changed when they were placed in God's hands.

Elijah was a good man. By any standard, he was a real man. He was strong, independent and courageous. But what made Elijah more appealing is the same quality that made many of the strong men of the bible great; they were real men in godly hands.

Abraham was a good man, but when he put his trust in God and moved at his command, he became a good man in Godly hands.

Jacob was a good man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he became a better man, because he was a good man in godly hands!

David was a good. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." -He became even greater because he was a good man in Godly

hands.

When God makes a man, he is a powerful man because God uses him!

When God makes a man, he is an influential man because God controls him!

When God makes a man, he is an effective man because God directs him!

He's a good man because he's as courageous as Moses who stood before Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go."

He's a good man because he's as strong as Joshua who declared "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

He's a good man because like Hosea he could love even though he was not being loved in return

He's a good man because like David he could stand and say without a doubt, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall I not want."

When God makes a man, he gives him and job to do but never leaves him alone.

Every man whose life has been shaped by the hand of God should remember to always take the Lord with you!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed!

If you want to make this journey, you've got to stand on the Lord' side; you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you got to walk!

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Who died out on Calvary!

Who arose Early Sunday morning!

I've got to walk with the king!

No. 9425-Anniv.-Women

Wake up Sleeping Beauty

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church Bapist Church
Monroe, La.

February 28, 2009

SCRIPTURE: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:14-17

Introduction

Is it possible for people to live in a dream world, literally sleeping with their eyes open as the world passes them by? Across the nation there are millions of women who are victims of what has been called the "Sleeping Beauty Syndrome." This is the sociopolitical idea that while millions of women are active in the social order, most are unaware of or unconcerned about social and economic factors that impact their lives. Many have accepted discriminatory practices as inevitable and still more have not claimed the opportunities that are available to them. Like the fictional sleeping beauty, many are alive but they are insensitive to the struggles all around them.

What happened to sleeping beauty? There are several versions of Sleeping Beauty but the story told to school children most often is that recorded by the Brothers Grimm. They told of a beautiful princess who was cursed by an evil fairy to fall into a deep sleep for 100 years. When the princess pricked her finger on a spinning wheel all those around her fell asleep as well. During the course of her long sleep she was aware but unable to respond to attempts to revive her. At the end of the 100 years a handsome prince climbed through the briars and weeds that locked her into the castle and rescued her. Once awakened, the sleeping beauty awakened to become the bride of the prince and both lived happily ever after.

Regardless of the version you have heard, the one told in the 1959 Disney movie is the one that seems to linger today. Every year millions of people attend one of the Disney theme parks and view the legendary castle of sleeping beauty. Unlike all of the other attractions of Disney World the castle of Sleeping Beauty is a hollow shell that offers very little for tourists to see with the exception of a few novelty shops.

It's really ironic that Sleeping Beauty's castle would be empty today because the

story itself presents the picture of a woman who lived a hundred years in a trancelike sleep waiting for prince charming. It is a sad epitaph; a sullen footnote to a life spent waiting for good fortune to climb the walls, fight back the weeds and vines and wish her away into the happy ever after.

That's why America loves Disney. Disney fills us with wonder and anticipation as we fantasize in the land of fairies, where the good guys always win, the frogs turn into princes and little girls who wait long enough can live happily ever after.

Unfortunately there are many women today who are the best and most beautiful part of God's creation who are living in fairytale world where they are waiting to be whisked off their feet by a handsome prince while failing to use the gifts that God has given them to use to their advantage.

Like the empty castle of Sleeping Beauty their lives have become empty shells of existence: surfing the internet, attending parties, buying clothes and dreaming. Many are just waiting for success to arrive and knock on their door. Many are waiting for prince charming and are upset that all they get are frogs. So, they sleep with their eyes open and dream as the years pass by.

This idea of sleeping while the world passes you by was the subject of a 1979 book by Madonna Kolbenschlag entitled "Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good Bye. She writes that many women imagine themselves in a state of readiness, of expectancy, of waiting for life and for their real existence to begin. In fact, it has already begun — it is passing them by; they are sleeping beauties who may never wake up."

In the fairy tale, the good fairies gave the little child several gifts and a bad fairy gave her a curse. We don't believe in fairies but we do believe that God has given every believer special gifts, talents and skills associated with their life's purpose. We also believe that while there are no fairies there is a devil and at some point in life he tries to lull believers to sleep or put them in trances to let the years pass until they forfeit unclaimed dreams.

That's from time to time God sends everyone a wakeup call. It sounds off loudly and awakens us to the real world around us.

As Christians, we are aware that God has given us special gifts and abilities. We are challenged to awaken from our slumber and use those gifts to the glory of his kingdom.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's words to the church in Ephesus as he encouraged them to arise and live bold lives of faith.

Like many Jews who accepted Christianity there were some among the Ephesians who believed in the false notion that they could hang on to Judaism and be faithful to Christ at the same time.

In addition, there were many unbelievers who were dead in their sins, lulled to sleep

by a notion that they could eat, drink and be merry without concern for their sins. They lived as if God did not notice or care what they did or how they lived.

Believers too, while not being caught up in the sins of unbelievers had become comfortable with a "different strokes for different folks, live and let live attitude."

They began to live in a fantasy world in which they could serve God, be blessed and make it to heaven without ever addressing the evil around them.

That's why Paul challenges both the unbelievers and the church to awake from their sleep and prepare to live the life of faithful service that has been set before them.

Three truths

Today, there is a great challenge to women of God; that challenge is to rise to the potential that God has given each for the purpose of advancing his kingdom.

AWAKE AND RISE: Ephesians 5:14 says, "Awake thou that sleepest and rise from the dead." There is a divine call for every woman to rise from the death of failed experiences. Women are struggling with many frustrating experiences that threaten their own existences. Many are being literally buried alive by unjust rules and practices associated with a male dominated society. Women are literally losing their jobs, families and careers as they struggle to survive the game of life because too often the rules of the game favor men. Women are struggling to survive abusive relationships in which someone chooses to beat them like punching bags or otherwise torture their souls. Women have been beat down so long that it seems like every day there is another shovel full of hard times and frustrations thrown and their faces.

Yet, the word of God says, you are not dead! Wake up and rise to the occasion!

Don't let the tragedy of your circumstance lull you into a hundred year sleep. Awake, woman of God and seize the day. How? It is too dark to see our way out? That's why the text says, "And Christ shall give thee light." Plunge yourself into the word of God. You will find strength in God's promises, power in his word, and renewed enthusiasm to face the challenges set before you. Whatever your situation, you can't deal with it by simply waiting for it to go away, you must awake and seize the day!

USE YOUR TIME WISELY: Ephesians 5:15-16 warns believers to act wisely and not waste time because evil is all around us. No woman has time to idle watching one television program after another waiting on your fairy godmother to send a carriage to your door and put glass slippers on your feet. In the movie "Precious" Precious kept fantasizing about a successful life but it wasn't until she decided to do something about it until things began to change. Women who plan to succeed must not waste time idling with those who do nothing but idle themselves. Careers don't drop out of the air, you must make them happen. Happy homes are not made in fairytale land and delivered to you by flying fairies. The godly man you are looking for may be on his way right now but you won't know him if you have not made yourself a godly woman that will recognize him when he shows up. The scriptures teach us to "redeem

the time" and to live, talk and walk wisely. The great women of history were not slackers, busy bodies or gossips; they were women of courage and industry who prepared themselves to stand up against the evil that this world offers. This world will make it difficult for a black woman; so be prepared to stand on your faith in God as the evils of the world come at you from every side. You cannot afford to sleep, awake, use your time wisely as you prepare to tackle your dream.

MOVE IN THE WILL OF THE LORD: Look at Ephesians 5:17. It encourages each of us to understand the will of the Lord. Each of us has been given gifts from God to achieve a specific purpose without lives. When we work in the will of the Lord we understand fully what we are about and why we do what we do. There are many however, who have dozed off when it comes to the will of God. They began their lives seeking the will of God then they started nodding often waking up to find themselves in the wrong lane of life and quickly stir themselves back on the right side of the dividing line. There are some who have fallen asleep at the wheel and if they don't wake up they are set for a crash! When we wake up that's when you start to ask, "What am I doing? Where am I going? What is this all about anyway?" When we stop to think about our actions, many find that we have strayed away from the will of God for our lives, living in a fantasy land in which we hear the accolades of our peers giving us awards, plaques, trophies and headlines. We relish that dream of personal glory, triumph and success. It consumes us and it becomes a lullaby that puts us to sleep. Yet, God has a purpose for us and from time to time he shakes us. Sometimes he shakes but we are so sound asleep that we can't hear him. So he shakes our checkbook. He shakes our happy home. He shakes our health. He shakes our career or business. It's the only thing he can do to get our attention; to get us to ask, 'Lord what do you want me to do? Whatever it is, I'll do it for you." Wake up sleeping beauty, God has work for you to do.

Stir up the gift

Finally, brothers and sisters, to awaken from our sleep we must stir up the gift that is within us.

Paul, writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:6 said, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift that is within thee."

That is a call for all true believers to awaken from their slumber and rise to their true potential.

When God evaluate our lives he won't look at what we have, but what we could have had with what he gave us to work with.

He won't look at where we've been but at where we could have gone with the abilities that he bestowed on us.

He won't look at the education we received but at the education we could have received with all of the opportunities he made available to us.

When Moses was ordered to go down and tell old Pharaoh to let my people go,

Moses thought he made a mistake. However, it wasn't a mistake because God knew what was in him, Moses had to stir up the gift!

When God selected Gideon to stand before the armies of the Midianites, Gideon wanted a whole lot of signs, but God knew the man on the inside, Moses had to stir up the gift.

When Esther was pushed into the beauty contest to become queen of Persia she didn't think she had a chance, but God had prepared her for "such a time as this," all she had to do was to stir up the gift.

That's the challenge of women and all believers today; we must stir up the gifts that God has given us and step out on his word.

You may have been sleeping on your potential but it is time to rise and shine!

Walt Disney and the Brothers Grimm told us about a beautiful girl who was awakened from her sleep by kiss of a handsome prince, but the word tells it better.

Luke 8:51-56 tells the story of the real sleeping beauty.

In this passage there is a young girl who came to symbolize all of the misplaced trust and faith of the people around her. All of her neighbors said she was dead and would never rise again. Jesus told her father Jarius in Luke 8:51 that your daughter is not dead, she is just sleeping. The Christ spoke to her and said "Maid, arise" and her spirit came again.

I don't know about you but I believe that God is speaking to somebody's spirit today saying, "Wake up sleeping beauty, it's time for you stand on your feet again!"

Wake up sleeping beauty! The power of God awaits you!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no night so dark that you cannot endure it!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no fear too great for you to face!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no enemy too mighty for you to conquer!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no crisis too critical for you to confront!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no burden too heaven for you to bear!

Wake up sleeping beauty; there is no doubt too strong to weigh you down!

Wake up sleeping beauty, for Isaiah 6o:1 saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee."

Wake up sleeping beauty, for I hear Jesus saying, "With God all things are possible!"

Wake up sleeping beauty tell the world that you were shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame, but then the hand of Jesus touched me!

He touched me, the man who picked up and old rugged cross and carried to Calvary's hill!

He touched me, the man who let them drive nails into his hands!

He touched me, the man who dropped his head into the locks of his shoulders!

He touched me, the man who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He touched me, the man who stayed in the grave for three days and nights but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He touched me and made me whole!

No. 9426-Black Heritage

A King Who Knew Not Joseph

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church

March 7, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Exodus 1:8

Introduction

What happens if a generation grows up among us that does not know the source of its blessing? There are many families that have been helped because of an ancestor who was favored. Some were given land, money, and opportunities because of the favor that was earned by a grand parent or great grand parent. In many small towns, a person's good works lives on after them and courtesies are extended to family members because of the memory of an ancestor. However, sooner or later, a generation will arrive that is not familiar with that ancestor and feels know allegiance to continue granting us favors. That's when the favors run out.

In a similar way, it is possible for a new generation to appear that does not remember or consider the benevolence of its benefactors. Neither will it appreciate its journey toward freedom.

African-Americans have endured a long journey to reach our present level of achievement. The way has not been easy; in fact the road to our success is littered with the bodies of our martyrs. We have arrived where we are today because of the sacrifices of thousands, both white and black, to help us overcome racism and its destructive influences.

What role did God play in all of this? If we are not careful to pass on the knowledge of our journey, we may focus on the names of our history, Douglass, Washington, King and Obama and forget that it was God was behind the names, moving to orchestrate our deliverance. It would be a tragedy if a generation grows up among us that does not know the Lord.

So, we preserve our history and teach each new generation about the goodness of the Lord. As long as we do that we insure that our blessings will continue.

As Christians, we know the source of our blessings is the grace of God. We must now insure that our children and grandchildren know the same.

Exposition

This text focuses on a new king who rose to power in Egypt who did not acknowledge Israel as favored friends.

Joseph came to Egypt as the nation was threatening a national famine. He wisely advised the pharaoh to take steps to weather the approaching hard by storing grains in good years to avoid starvation during the famine. The pharaoh followed his advice and Egypt avoided a disaster of national proportions. In gratitude for his wise leadership pharaoh showered favors on Israel that continued long after his death. Each succeeding king continued the favors in respect for Joseph.

When Joseph and his family moved to Egypt, there were only about 70 people involved in the move. At the time of the text there were over 500,000 Jews living in Egypt as farmers, craftsmen and laborers. As the years passed their numbers grew so did their potential power. They posed a possible military threat because of their sheer numbers and their penchant for rapid reproduction. As long as Egypt remembered Joseph this possibility was never considered a probability.

While Israel enjoyed the comfort of it's favored status living in Goshen an area outside Egypt a foreign element began moving into lower Egypt; the group was called Hyksos. Like Israel they were Semites and foreigners. As the years passed the Hyksos grew in number and eventually they took over the leadership of Israel and displaced the reigning dynasty in Egypt.

The Hyksos were hated by the Egyptians. They were foreigners who had taken over their country. Since they looked like Jews their hatred also extended itself to Jews as well. In 1570 b.c. Ahmose I defeated the Hyksos and restored Egypt to it's traditional leadership under a new king.

The new king was was aware of Egypt's historic obligation to respect the descendants of Joseph. However, what he saw was a large tribe of people whose population was growing rapidly as the Hyksos had grown. Instead of being viewed as friendly descendants of Joseph, the Jews were viewed as national threats who could possibly join with Hyksos and overthrow them once again. Once the Egyptian dynasty was restored there was a wave of Egyptian nationalism which included a hatred of the Hyksos and all Semites, including the Israelites; they were all viewed with suspicion. The text notes that Pharaoh voiced two reasons for his concern: the alarming increase in the number of the Israelites and the fear of their aligning politically with a foe in time of war. He planned to stop their population increase and exploit their labor at the same time.

In the aftermath of this action the Israelites became slaves and were held in bondage building the Egyptian cities as second class citizens.

The bondage began when a new king ascended the throne. He was a king who knew not Joseph.

Know your Journey

We need to know the road we've traveled: Anyone who is attempting to move forward in life should be aware of the ground that has already been covered. There are many people who move through life like the person who sleeps through a long journey and awakens upon arrival. They know where they came from but have no idea what terrain they traveled. Each generation of any race should seek to learn about it's journey and to leverage that information in ways that help the present learn from the past. If we do not know the mistakes of the past we may be doomed to repeat them. Also, if we don't know the successes of the past, if we repeat them we think we are breaking new ground.

We need to know the challenges we face: When the new king took control of Egypt it posed new challenges to the Israelites. The government of Egypt targeted it's infant birth rate and systematically began to change their legal status. The changes posed as a challenge that proved insurmountable until God himself interceded. Today, there are challenges that are before our people that are just as challenging. Our homes are being destroyed from the inside. Our moral character is being attacked on the outside. We are being surrounded by economic and political challenges that threaten to enslave us all over again. Whether it is the threat of drugs, increased crime and violence, or declining character of our youth, we are faced with a multiplicity of frustrating challenges. Israel overcame its bondage because God raised up a leader among them who revived the faith of the people and struck fear in Pharaoh's heart. Today, the answe for this generation is the same as it was for Israel; we need God's power. This cannot be a generation that does not know God. We can't meet the challenges without Him. We need to know who helped us over

If this generation knows not God

This generation must not be one that wears the label, "A generation that knew not God." Yet, that seems to be the goal of the enemy. There are signs that this generation is becoming less aware of its history, heritage and connection with God as it focuses on activities of the moment and instant prosperity. The result is staggering for our people.

Recent studies have revealed that by the age of 16 the average child will watches 200,000 acts of violence on television; in addition to 33,000 murder, 20,000 sex acts, 35,000 naked bodies and will hear 150,000 songs that will urge him to have sex, drink alcohol, shoot someone, or get high. Even among those who worship, there is alarming number in this generation that can't focus on God without reaching for their cell phones to receive or send a text.

In addition, this generation is developing a taste for things that are vulgar, violent,

and sexy and many have dismissed the faith of the parents and grandparents as old school and unnecessary.

If this becomes a generation that knows not God, with the same or greater passion and faith as their parents and grandparents, then trouble looms.

That's why millions of young people of this generation are reaching back and dusting off the old time religion and singing "It was good for my old mother. It was good for my old father; it's good enough for me."

That why millions of young adults are flocking to bible studies, worships, praise services and on spiritual online chats, so that they hang on to the faith that has brought us over.

They want to join the chorus of the faithful who now recognize the importance of the last verse of Lift every voice and sings, "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who brought us thus far along the way. Thou who has by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray."

We should never forget the God who saved us

Finally brothers and sisters, we must never forget the God who saved us.

The African-American family has a heritage of rich, emotional and heart felt expression of our faith in God.

Through nearly two centuries of slavery, our families maintained a faith in God.

In our weary years, we have wallowed in the spit of American racism, sustained only by the faith that one day God would lift us from the bottom rail and bring us to the top.

When we were not allowed to talk to God about the problems in our lives, entire families would steal away to brush arbors and bow as grandpa or grandma put their heads under tubs to muffle their voices and cried, "Lord, I'm out here on your word!"

When somebody says we should stop singing the Dr. Watts Hymns, the preacher should stop whooping, the deacons should stop moaning and the choir should stop rocking and we should show some intelligence; we should be intelligent, but not so intelligent that we forget the bridge that brought us over!

We are a people whose heritage reflects the fact that that we have been sustained by an unfaltering trust in God.

When Israel moved into the Promised Land there were many who felt they no longer needed the God that brought them over.

They forgot how they wore the same clothes for 40 years but they never wore out.

They forgot how they were protected from their enemies despite their own ability to defend themselves.

They forgot how they were provided water out of nowhere despite a drought situations. God bless them, but they could not see.

There many in our community who believe we have arrived in the Promised Land

and we don't need that old stuff anymore.

Some say we have an African-American president now, we've made it to the promised land

Some say, we attend integrated schools, and can buy homes in formerly all white neighborhood, we have made it to the Promised Land.

Some say, we can sit at the lunch counter now and ride in the front of the bus; we have made it to the Promised Land.

Now that we have a good job, access to an equal education and equal rights, we don't that old time stuff anymore.

But I heard the final words of James Weldon Johnson ringing in my ear, "Lest our feet, stray for the places our God where we met thee, Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee. Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land.

We must hold to God's unchanging hand always that we are still in the wilderness and not the Promised Land..

In this wilderness, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In this wilderness, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In this wilderness, God has been our way out of no way.

In this wilderness, God has been out of bridge over troubling waters; even if we could

In this wilderness we must never stop calling on the name of the Lord because in our despair he shows us the joy that will come in the morning.

There are so many people today who don't know the Lord, they laugh at us and call us old timey. All we can say is, "You don't know what the Lord has done for me. You don't know you wasn't there, you don't know when and you don't know where. You don't what the Lord has done for me."

I heard an old warrior say, "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord. When I look around and see what the Lord has done for me. I don't know what I'd do without the Lord."

I can't even wave my hand without the Lord. When I look around and see what the Lord has done for me, I don't know what I'd do without the Lord.

It was the glory of the Lord that gave us

-WATER in the wilderness

-FOOD when you were hungry,

-CLOTHES on your back

Hang on brothers and sisters, bye and bye, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

No wonder the songwriter said, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the faithful lightning of his terrible swift sword, his truth is marching on!"

Glory, Glory Hallelujah, his truth is marching on!

It started marching over 2000 years ago!

It started marching to a hill called Calvary!

Jesus died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

In the morning, we shall see his glory!
Glory!
Glory!

No.9427-Inspiration

Shake well before using

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

March 14, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts." Haggai 2:6-9

Introduction

Have you ever seen people in their comfort zones? Our comfort zone is that area of our lives in which we feel safe, secure and comfortable. It may involve our daily routines at home or work or our expectations in our leisure or even in the church. Once we settle into our comfort zone it is difficult to get us to make changes, especially if the changes threaten our present circumstance.

We have become comfortable with many things. We rarely change our hairstyles because we are comfortable with our present style. The decor of our houses change when wear and tear demands it but rarely before then. Our diet is relatively the same, our friends are the same, and most everything else about us usually remains the same.

When we get things the way we like them, we resist any effort to change them.

For many that also applies to their relationship with God. Many are comfortable in their present state even if they are far away from what God expects of them. Some have reached a point where they are happy that they have improved their situation but have no desire to uproot themselves or make any major changes. They have settled into their comfort Zone and have decided to let the status quo stand.

If we have settled on a level beneath that which God desires for us, then there is only one course of action available that will position us to improve our relationship with him; he has to shake us up, turn us around then replant our feet on solid ground.

We rarely embrace change, so in order to help us God has to shake up our whole situation so that we can be used by him.

As Christians, we know God has great things in store for us. We know that at times we get too comfortable in our zones and become slack in our faith and service. Every

now and then God has to shake us before he can use us, then and only then are we fit for service in the kingdom.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Haggai as he tells Israel that it has become too comfortable with its laid back attitude about the house of God.

The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by invading armies and Israel's finest citizens were carried away into captivity. When they returned, they saw the deplorable shape of their homeland and bemoaned its decline. Yet, despite their frustration they took no action to rebuild God's house. Instead they focused on restoring their own properties. They were content to pass the site of the once glorious temple and just shake their heads.

Haggai was specifically raised up by God to encourage the exiles returning from Babylon that they might take fresh hope and build. He spoke to their present building effort but also pointed to a day in the future when the glory of the new temple will be provided by the Messiah. The people obeyed the command because they recognized that God spoke through Haggai. However, less than a month after they began the people lost hope and God had to renew his promise to shake things up to rekindle their zeal and encouraged their flagging spirits.

The passage spoke to their present circumstance but it spoke mostly of the coming of the Lord. According to Matthew Henry, the phrase, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land" refers to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, God will once again do for his church as he did when he brought them out of Egypt; he shook the heavens and earth at Mount Sinai, with thunder, and lightnings, and earthquakes; he shook the sea and the dry land when lanes were made through the sea and streams fetched out of the rock. This shall be done again

Before Israel entered the land of promise they were shaken and prepared. In the crucible of suffering. In a larger sense all believers must be shaken well to ready themselves for use by God while God at the same time shakes the world around them to secure their blessings.

Shaking things up

Why would anyone need shaking before they can be used in the service of God?

There are at least three good reasons why God shakes us up.

He shakes us up to unsettle us: When medicine sits in a bottle for a while many of the elements essential to the cure have settled to the bottom. Shaking the bottle unsettles those loose components and makes them ready to use. We get that way sometimes. We settle into our comfort zones and become lax. In our spiritual lives,

we become comfortable with our present level or spirituality. That's when we fail to maintain regular bible reading, prayer or become irregular in our worship. We settle into a routine that becomes mundane, dry and spiritually dead. All of our gifts and talents sink to the bottom. We have them, but they are useless to God because they are on the bottom. That's why God has to shake us and shake us well before using us in his service. If he does not shake us the service and worship we give will be half hearted at best.

God shakes to motivate us. It's very easy to lose our motivation, especially if our reason for ministry was not God centered in the first place. There are many who serve to please others, gain public praise or out of obligation. This type of service rationale is easily discouraged and is maintained as long as what we do pleases people. However, those who serve to please God are generally highly motivated even if they are frustrated along the way. When our motivation wanes, God has to shake us to help us to refocus our attention on Him. When we see the homeless we are reminded of why we started ministering to the poor. When we see lost souls wandering aimlessly then we are reminded why we launched into evangelism. When we feel the pain of families that have experienced loss, then our commitment to healing broken hearts is renewed. We regain our motivation when we regain our commitment to serve the kingdom through our ministry to others.

Shakes us up to save us. Jesus came to the earth to shake up the present order of things and to save those who lost. He said in Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.." In John 10:10 he reminds us that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. To do that, He would have to save us from the influences of the devil and from ourselves. Often we are like the non-swimmer who is fighting the person trying to save him. The only way that the non-swimmer can be saved is to punch him. The same is true with people who panic and get hysterical; often a good shake brings us back to reality. It even works that way with our own lives; God often has to shake us to save us from ourselves. There are many who can truthfully say that God literally saved them by allowing them to be arrested. Jail or prison saved them. A day in traffic court saved them. A loss of a job made them aware of the money they wasted and they changed their management styles; it saved them. If an experience taught us to look to Jesus to author and finisher of our faith, then we, like others, were literal shaken up so that we could be saved. That's when we came running to ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

All Shook up

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we can do more for the Lord once when he gets through shaking us up.

The late Elvis Presley once wrote a song that said, My hands are shaky and my knees are weak I can't seem to stand on my own two feet Who do you thank when you have

such luck? I'm in love I'm all shook up!

Elis was all shook up because he was in love, but any saint can tell a better story.

They can tell How God touched their lives and shook them all up.

Jonah was told to go to Nineveh and preach the Gospel, but he chose to go the opposite direction and do his own thing, until one day he swallowed by a fish, Three days later he came forh saying "I'm all shook up."

Saul was on the road to Damascus doing just the opposite of what God wanted him to do, but one day on the Damascus Road met the Lord. He arose after three days ready to do God's will, he was all shook up.

Isaiah said he wasn't worthy to preach the Gospel but God pressed a hot burning coal to lips and charged him to declare the word to all nation. Isaiah answered, "If there

Lord needs somebody, here am I send me." -He was all shook up.

When God shakes us up, he gives us:

—Courage to stand in the face of opposition!

—Resolve to stay with a task until it is completed!

—Assurance to keep us calm in the midst of a storm!

—Strength to shoulder heavy responsibilities!

—Determination to continue despite disappointment!

You may feel that you're not ready to do whatever it is that God wants you to do, but I can tell you one thing, "When God gets ready, you've got to move!"

The scribes and Pharisees were not ready for him, because he called the hypocrites and imposters! They were all shook up!

The money changers in the temple were not ready for him because he turned over their tables saying, "My father's house is house of prayer but ye have turned into a den of thieves" They were all shook up!

The Sanhedrin Council was not ready for him because turning organized religion upside down. They were all shook up.

They didn't what to do about the man from Galilee who could turn water into wine and raise the dead, they were all shook up.

Pilate didn't know what to do with him and couldn't sleep at night, he was all shook up!

He washed hands and ordered him crucified.

They whipped him all night long, but he never said a mumbling word; and they were all shook up!

They nailed him to an old rugged cross and he died between two thieves.

When he died, the sun refused to shine.

When he died, the moon seemed to hide its face!

When he died, the thunder began to roll and the lightning began to flash.

A soldier at the foot of cross declared, "Surely, he must be the son of God"—He was all shook up.

They buried him in a borrowed tomb where he stayed for three days and nights, but Early Sunday morning..

The ground began to shake, the stone was rolled away and arose from the grave.

When the women arrived they were all shook up!

When the apostles heard about it, they were all shook up"

Because they were all shook up, they were then ready to "go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel!

Because they were all shook up, they were now ready to declare the year of the Lord!

Because they were all shook up, they were willing to say the words of the old him "And I promised him that I would serve him till I die, I'm on the battle field for the Lord!

No. 9428-Communion

Transformed by the blood

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 21, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of placesâ€" firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again. Isaiah 58:10-12; "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11

Introduction

Do you sometimes look around in your community and see the wretched state of affairs and ask is there any hope? Is there any way that conditions can be improved? Is there any way that changes can be instituted? If you have asked these questions then you are not alone damn millions of people just like you will also wondering is there anyway that we can make things better?

For centuries great leaders have tried to change conditions through the might of their armies and the power of the sword. Whether it was the 400 year crusades of the middle ages or the rise of communism under Stalin and Lenin, the efforts of man to transform society into the Utopian state that Plato envisioned have been futile.

The list of would be transformers grows with every generation. Huey Long promised to make every man a king. Franklin Roosevelt promised a new deal when he started Social Security. Lyndon Johnson envisioned a great society when he started the welfare program, and Barack Obama sees a better, healthier, greener world as strives to implement his agenda.

Even in our own families we have been frustrated in our attempts to transform that wayward son, misguided nephew, or deviant sister-in-law. We have lectured, preached, threatened, ranted and raved tirelessly but all of our expostulations seem to fall on deaf ears. This is especially true when see conditions worsen instead of improving.

History has shown us that real change happens when the eyes of the people seek God's face and are guided by his hand.

Real change happens when God gets in the picture. Without his presence and power things may change but they also remain the same.

As Christians, we are committed to transforming the communities in which we live through the power of the blood of Christ.

Exposition

This text focuses upon what happens when the people of God refocus their attention upon godly principles.

The book of Isaiah is in many ways similar to the entire Bible in its makeup. The first 39 chapters of the book are filled with doom and gloom. However, the remaining 27 chapters beginning with chapter 40 give words of inspiration and hope. The text, coming from the 58th chapter of Isaiah, points to the deplorable conditions of the nation but at the same time it gives the people a reason for hope.

The people had immersed themselves in a plethora of activities that were intended to demonstrate their spirituality. Included among the various activities in which they plunged themselves were fasting and increased religious fervor. Isaiah, in this text, noted that it was better for them to live out the principles of their faith rather than to simply internalize their faith in acts that had personal meaning but had no practical impact on the problems that existed around them.

Isaiah basically told the people that God would prefer their hearts to be bowed to him rather than just their heads. Their words of praise were appreciated but their service and obedience to His will were more important. Therefore verses six through eight of the text indicate that God would prefer that the people look around them and put the power of his word into action as they respond to the needs of the community rather than spending all that time in acts that were symbolic and meaningful but empty with respect to the power of God to transform people and conditions.

In verses 8 to 12 God promises people, through the lips of Isaiah that if they demonstrated their inner righteousness through their outward acts then He would bless them with light in the midst of darkness, healing in times of sickness, and He would allow them the satisfaction of enjoying future generations as they grow stronger as a result of their work.

Those who act on the power within them to transform conditions will be blessed because they become the living embodiment of the blood of Christ in Action.

In the Revelation, John saw a striking scene. He's saw the Saints of God who were battling the effects of Satan during the tribulation period. He saw the damage that Satan had done to the world but he also them arise victorious. He noted that they were able to rise victorious against the forces of Satan because of the power of the blood of Christ and their great testimony among the people.

Whether in the Old Testament or the new, the scriptures say one thing: we must believe in God and then act on our faith to transform the community around us.

Three transformations

The transforming power of the blood of Christ affects us personally and it affects our community. It changes lives and it changes the quality of life for those around us today and in the life to come. The blood of Christ affect us in at least three ways:

The blood of Christ takes away your sin: The first thing that the blood of Christ does for us is that it takes away our sins. Christ's death on Calvary became the eternal sacrifice that was made on our behalf giving us a chance to the tree of life. That's why John would write in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Before anyone can think of transforming the world, the community or his own family; first the person must avail himself to the blood of Christ in his or her own life. The text from Revelation noted that the Saints were victorious against by the power of the blood and by the strength if their own testimony. We must have a story to tell. Trying to transform others without first transforming ourselves is futile. We must know the Lord as our savior and testify to our transformed lives before we can hope to transform our neighbors, friends and family members. Our lives should be the best testimony about the power of God to completely remake and rebuild lost lives.

The blood of Christ sensitizes our conscience. Believers are under a mandate from Christ to spread the gospel and the love of Jesus throughout of the world. It's known as the great commission. We are charged to reach and teach everyone we can with God's message of salvation and compassion. Once saved by the blood, believers become extremely sensitive to the demands of our mission. We are troubled when we see the homeless sleeping on the street. We are disturbed when we see the increasing number of children who are dropping out of school and into prisons and welfare lines. We are disturbed when we watch our home disintegrate right in front of us. Those who are saved find it extremely difficult to look the other way; we are compelled to roll up our sleeves and do something that will help transform and our communities into something better than what we see. The blood of Christ turns us all into Good Samaritans, helping the fallen, the wounded and those in need. Each time we help someone we are sustained by the power of the blood. Each transforming act helps the world to better see Jesus as source of all blessings and transformations.

The blood of Christ gives us access to the throne of Grace. If the blood of Jesus does anything, it gives believers access God. Having access to God gives us a reasonable expectation that God will at least hear us when we need him. Hebrews 4:16 says, Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." To act boldly means that we ask God expecting a response in at least two situations: 1)When we've messed up and know that we've messed up. In that case the blood of Christ convicts us, humbles and forgives us. Once humbled we have an opportunity for mercy. This is the time when

we are desperately in need and want a little help. There are times when we must sing the song that says, “Where can I go but to the Lord?” It’s the time when we say like David, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.” The blood of Christ insures that we have access to grace and mercy, without which we cannot make it through our daily trials.

It was the blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, every chance we get we must testify to the world that we ourselves have been transformed from what we used to be; it was nothing but the blood.

There is transforming power in the blood of Christ.

Only the blood can transform a nobody into a somebody!

Ask Matthew and he will tell you that only the blood can transform a tax collector into a Missionary!

Ask Peter and he will tell you that Only the blood can take a man off the fish pond and make him a fisher of men!

Ask Paul and he will tell you that only the blood can persecutor of the church and transform him into a perpetuator of the kingdom of God!

Ask the woman and the well and she will tell you that only the blood can transform a life so much that should would run through the streets saying “come see man who told me all I’ve ever done!”

Ask Esther and she will tell that only the blood of the lamb can take a lowly Jewish girl and make her the queen of Persia!

The power of the blood transforms our despair into a never dying hope. That’s why the song writer declared, “My hope Is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Some may say it was my education that gave me chance in life, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

Some may think their hard work has brought them thus far, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

Some may envision themselves as the source of their own good fortune, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

There are some things in this world that we cannot attain without the blood.

There is a fountain from which you cannot drink, but the power of the blood brings you to that fountain!

There is a promise that you cannot claim, but the power of the blood allows you to claim that promise!

There is a hope that you cannot enjoy, but the power of the blood allows you to

enjoy that hope!

The song write asked the question, “What can wash away my sins?” Then he answered what every born again Christian already knows, its “Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you’ve been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, “I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me.”

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and transformed it into love!

I know it was the blood that took my despair and transformed it into hope!

I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and transformed it into honor!

I know it was the blood that took my enemies and transformed it into friends!

I know it was the blood that took my worries and transformed it into confidence!

One day when I was lost, he died!

He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that saved me!

He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!

He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!

But early Sunday morning arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 9429-Cross

Double Crossed

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 27, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." John 12:12-13; "But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more,"Crucify Him!" Mark 15:14

Introduction

Have you ever been double crossed? You have been double crossed when those you thought were with you actually turned out to be against you. It's a frustrating feeling of betrayal and abandonment that is difficult to shake in the short term and leaves a lingering distrust for many years.To successfully execute a double cross a person must spend an enormous amount of time as a double agent. A double agent works for both sides initially, then changes sides at the end, betraying one in favor of the other.

We read about double agents and are fascinated when we read about Benedict Arnold in American History or see them operate in James Bond movies. We even see Professor Severus Snape in the Harry Potter series who works for three sides and triple crosses them all.

Candidates for political office are constantly on the lookout for moles and double agents, who work as volunteer in the campaigns of their opponents to gather information for the other side. Although they cheer at rallies and praise their opponent's publicly, they are secretly gathering information that is designed to destroy them.

There are some who are not double agents who play both sides, or moles or gather information, they are simply turn-coats; they are loyal to one side today and change their loyalties tomorrow.

Is it possible that there are people who are turn coats, moles and double agents in the church? Is it possible that sitting on the pew beside you is a person who is a double agent for the devil, praising God on Sunday but turning coat back to the devil on Monday?

Just as there are thousands of double agents, spies and moles; there are even more who pretend to be Christians, join in the crowd, but are really loyal to the devil.

Those who know the Lord are loyal to God alone. Their words of praise are the same when times are great as they are when times are not so favorable. They are not turn-coats but have vowed to praise Him and give him their best regardless to what the world think.

As Christians, we have no intention of double crossing our Lord. We will stand with Him because He stands with us. We live for Him because he died for us. Come rain or shine, we will praise the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he made his triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem.

The arrival of the Messiah had been predicted by the prophet Zechariah many years before. The people of Jerusalem expected a champion to come into the city and establish himself as the one person who would lift their domination by the Romans. In Zechariah 9:9 the prophet wrote, " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass"

Intoxicated with the idea of liberation the people met Jesus outside of the city singing and shouting "Hosanna (save now)." The expected Jesus to announce a rebellion against the Romans. They expected to see the Roman legions running in fear of the power of Israel. So they sang, "Hosanna" -Not just "save us" but save us "now!"

They shouted Hosanna because they wanted a blessing and success.

They shouted Hosanna because they wanted their special interest taken care of immediately.

They shouted Hosanna and showered praises on Jesus because he was seen as the one that would bring them what they expected.

Later, in the same week, Mark 15:14 notes that many in the same crowd that shouted "Hosanna" were still shouting, but they were shouting "crucify him" when it turned out that Jesus would not meet their expectations.

They cried crucify him when he spoke of being persecuted and making sacrifices! They cried crucify him when he refused to take up the sword even in his own defense, saying he that lives by the sword will die by the sword.

Their shouts of praise turned to shouts of death, once Jesus failed to meet their expectations.

Their demand for his crucifixion was the ultimate double cross.

Christ was victim of the Double Cross

Jesus dealt with the spirit of the double cross on many fronts; it caused Him considerable problems. As Christ assembled His disciples he often spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and a new world order. Two of the disciples, James and John,

secretly desired to have positions of power in that kingdom. Mark 10:37 says, “They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.” Jesus had to reprimand them but the other disciples were angry; they felt they had been double crossed by James and John who sought secretly to trick them out of their posts. At the Lord’s supper Jesus said someone sitting at the table would double cross Him and betray Him. The secret agent at the table looked around at the others, then later that night in the garden Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss. Peter stood with Christ and declared that he would never betray Him, but before the rooster crowed the next morning he had betrayed Christ, not once, but three times. So when the crowds cried out “Crucify Him” Christ had been double crossing for a while. No believer is immune from the double cross. There will be many who claim they support you but will betray you. There will be many who will hug your neck and tell you they are behind you all the way but will abandon you when the chips are down. There will be many who will approach you in friendship so they can gather information about you to gossip to others. Therefore we should not put our trust in men but place our trust in Lord. He will not betray you or double cross. He will never let your down.

He bore a double cross

Jesus came to a double crossing, godless world and was condemned to die on a double cross. Jesus was put to death in the Roman tradition; crucifixion on a cross or a stake. Some artists depictions of Roman crucifixions showed victims tied, lashed or nailed to a single stake. Thus, in some places in scripture the cross is referred to as a stake, pole or a tree such as in Acts 5:30 “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.” While there was a single pole in the ground many of those who were condemned were required to carry a cross beam upon which they were tied or tied and the cross beam would be lifted up. The cross beam or the horizontal cross was then attached to the Vertical cross, making a T- or a double cross.

The fact that Christ who was doubled crossed was crucified on a double cross should mean a lot to Christians.

It just looks like he bore one cross for the world and one for me.

One cross for the sinful nature of mankind and one cross for my personal misgivings.

One cross for the shortsightedness of the world, and one cross for personal near sightedness.

One cross for the wayward heart of the world, and one cross for my own hard and callused heart.

He who was double crossed by the crowd, was also crucified by people like us who praise Him on Sunday but betray Him.

Yet, while we double crossed Him, he bore a double cross for us.

Perhaps that’s what prompted Dr. Watts to ask, “Was it for crimes that I had done,

He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity! grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

He was raised on a double cross

Finally, brothers and sisters, we cannot ignore the fact that while Jesus was condemned by a double cross, and nailed to a double cross, he was also lifted up on a double cross, for salvation of the world.

The cross was intended to be a sign of shame. It was intended to be a sign of disgrace.

When Satan led the Romans to give Jesus a double cross it was intended to humiliate him; but the double cross itself became a double cross..

Instead of representing shame and humiliation, the cross became a symbol of pride.

Instead of representing defeat and failure, the cross became a sign of victory.

The world has doubled crossed many people, giving them empty promises, destroying many dreams.

Many people stepped out believing what the devil told them but he brought them pain and despair.

I'm so glad that I serve God who can uncross the double cross, with the power of the Old Rugged Cross.

Your enemies might try to destroy you by digging ditches in your path, but the God I serve can undo the double cross and make you enemies your footstool.

Your enemies might try to persecute and call you everything but a child of God, but the God we serve can undo the double cross and bless you when men persecute and say all matter of things about you for his name sake.

Your enemies might be forming weapons and planning your downfall, but the God we serve can undo the double cross by reminding you that no weapon formed against you shall prosper.

The crowds cried crucified him and lift him up high! It was the cry of a double crossing crowd!

But I hear Jesus saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me."

The power of the cross can give us the victory by undoing the devil's double cross.

The old rugged cross undoes the double cross that causes broken hearts. Jesus says in Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is
upon me...he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted and to preach deliverance to the captives.."

The old rugged cross undoes the double cross that runs people from the father house. Jesus says in John 14:2-3 "In my father's
house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you ...that where I am ye may be also."

When you have the power of the cross you

—are able to endure things you thought unendurable!

—are able to move things you thought unmovable!

—love things you though unlovable!
—forgive things you thought unforgiveable!
—bear things you thought unbearable
—face things you thought unfaceable!

No wonder the song writer wrote “The consecrated cross I bear till death shall set me free, and then go on my crown to wear, for there’s a crown for me!”

On a double cross, stretched out wide, he died for you me!

They buried him in an borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with power of the cross in his hands

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away, It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!

No. 9430-Easter

Not Finished Yet

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 4, 2010

Scripture: Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. John 20:6-9

Introduction

Have you ever dined at a restaurant where the waiter took your plate before you were finished? It's supposed to be a courtesy, but it's really more of an irritation at times. As you enjoy your meal, you may taste from several different dishes, leaving morsels here and there. However, only a few minutes after you begin the waiter returns and asks to take your plate and leave you the dirty fork? For those accustomed to saving the best for last, such a practice is irritating because although we may appear to be finished, we're definitely not through.

There are some who enjoy eating the crispy tails of a whole catfish..don't take my plate!

There are some who enjoy stripping all of the meat off a T-Bone steak...don't take my plate.

There are a few people left who still sop the gravy off the plate with their biscuit...don't take my plate!

Maybe there should be a universal signal that we are finished; maybe a sign or a little card that a server can recognize as a true signal that we are finished. That would solve a lot of problems.

Life has a tendency to respond to us that way. There are many who want to count us out because we appear to be finished, when in fact there is plenty left on our plate; it only appears that we are finished. In fact, we are a long ways from being finished.

Didn't do well in school? Don't take my plate, I'm not finished!

Your business idea has fizzled? Don't take my plate, I'm not finished!

Your relationship looks totally consumed? Don't take my plate, we're not finished yet!

Has your life taken some bad turns onto dirt roads? Don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet.

The wonderful truth about our God is that he is a wonderworking God. He is so powerful that he can work miracles in lives that seem to be fractured, broken and beyond repair. When the world counts us out, our God can give us another chance to rise again. It may appear that life has picked us to the bones and there is nothing left, but faith teaches us to say, "I'm not finished yet"

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that we are a work in progress. Just as the angry crowd thought it had defeated Christ on the day of Crucifixion but learned different on Resurrection Sunday; so shall we rise from the table of despair, victorious and redeemed. Don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet!

Exposition

This text focuses on what the disciples found when they arrived at the tomb on Resurrection morning.

Jesus had been in the grave for three days and three nights and in the dawn of the first day of the week several
women came to the grave site to complete his burial dressings. They had hurriedly wrapped him in a shroud with sweet smelling spices and placed a traditional napkin over his face because the special, middle of the week, Sabbath
was approaching.

When they arrived at the tomb they found it empty and ran to tell the disciples that his body had been stolen. Hearing what the women said, two of his disciples, Peter and John, ran to the tomb. Upon their arrival they found an empty tomb and folded clothes. Although the two men saw the same
thing, they had contrasting opinions about what they meant.

Luke 24:12 says Peter's reaction involved six steps he: arose, ran, stooped, saw, departed, and wondered. Peter's immediate reaction at the tomb was not one of excited faith, but of doubt. He wondered.

He saw an empty tomb and folded clothes and was not sure about the resurrection. The empty tomb could have been caused by robbers, but the folded clothes were another matter. If the Scribes and Pharisees had stolen Jesus' body to prevent his disciples from claiming his resurrection, it would have been callous of them to strip the body naked and fold up the clothes and leave a suggestion that he left on his own power.

The folded napkin has been the subject of considerable research since two whole verses focus on the fact the folded napkin was neatly folded but separate from the remainder of the grave clothes.

The first body of thought is that that the folded napkin represented the work yet undone, since towels and napkins were closely associated with humble service.

The Second body of thought is that the folded napkin represented work undone that would be completed on Christ's return.

This view pointed to what has been said was a mealtime tradition in homes. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, but he made sure that he did not touch that table, until the master was finished. If the master was done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. The wadded napkin meant, "I'm done". But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because the servant knew that the folded napkin meant, "I'm not finished yet." The folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back!"

Both views indicate that he arose. Both views indicate his body was not stolen and they both point to the fact what happened on the day of the crucifixion was not over, but only just begun.

Three parts

The redemption story has three parts, when taken together reveal how mankind will be reconciled back to God.

The Crucifixion was not all. We are a wicked people. Our sins have caused God to turn his back on us many times over the years. In Noah's time the entire world was destroyed with a flood. In the days of Abraham the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of sex sin. The military war machine of Egypt was drowned in the Red Sea. In his anger with our sinfulness God has declared that "The Soul that sinneth, it shall die." Yet, God implemented a plan to restore us to the family of God and yet be true to his pledge of death to all sinners. His son chose pay the death penalty for us. The cruel punishment of Calvary was actually Christ making himself a sacrifice for us. The crown of thorns were for us. The 39 lashes across his back were for us. The nails in hands and feet were for us. When he gave up the ghost he completed phase one of the godly redemption plan. When he gave up the ghost on the cross he had seven last sayings; one of them was, it is finished. The crucifixion finished phase one but there was more to come. Salvation had been secured, but there was more to come. The price of redemption had been paid but there was more to come.

The resurrection was not all. On Sunday morning the women came to the tomb to embalm Jesus' body and found that the stone had been rolled away. They found the tomb empty. The disciples found his burial clothes and folded napkin. He had risen from the grave as he promised. As miraculous as was his resurrection, even that was not all. He had a few appointments to keep. He showed up in a meeting with disciples that evening and ate fish and bread. They saw him and Thomas almost touched him, even that was not all, he was not finished yet. He walked down the road Emmaus with two men who did not know who was and open their eyes, but even that

was not all, he was not finished yet. He met with his disciples on the side of mountain and told them to go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel and baptize them in the name of the Holy Ghost. Even that was not all, he was not finished yet.

The resurrection was the completion of phase two of the divine plain. It demonstrated his control over the forces of nature and all of the created world. Yet even this divine demonstration was the ultimate end, there was more to come.

The Holy Spirit was not all. When Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into of the world he gave them the Holy Ghost, the indwelling presence of God that would guide them. It was the Holy Ghost that would give them ability to cast out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead and to perform miracles as proof of their divine mission. It was the Holy Ghost who would make them bold enough to stand tall against enemies and look the devil in the eye. It was the Holy Ghost who gave them the knowledge to teach and wisdom to discern the spirits. Yet, as phenomenal as it was, even the Holy Ghost, was not all. He was not finished yet!

Coming back again

Finally, brothers and sisters we must note that while salvation was secured on Calvary, hope was restored on resurrection morning and power was visited upon us at Pentecost, that's not how the story ends, his work won't be finished until he comes back again.

I know he's not finished because Acts 1:11 says, " Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

I know he's not finished because he said in John 14:2-3 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Christ died on Calvary but he's coming back again.

He's coming back to complete an unfinished agenda and to usher in the day of the Lord.

When you think about that resurrection morning, let the folded clothes remind you that he's not finished yet.

He sees somebody that wrestling with a spirit

Defeat and he has to turn that defeat into victory. He's not finished yet.

Failure and he has to turn that failure into success. He's not finished yet!

Misfortune and has to turn that misfortune into good fortune. He's not finished yet.

Tragedy and he has to turn that tragedy it into an opportunity to heal. He's not finished yet.

Pain from a broken heart, he has to mend that broken hear. He's not finished yet.

Blunders and turn those blunders into wonders; He's not finished yet

Doubts and he has to take those doubts and wipe them out. He's not finished.

Every time I think that folded napkin I think about how the world tries to count us out and take our plate.

Sometimes I try and fall flat on my face, but don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet!

Sometimes I run and get a little weary, but don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet!

Sometimes I get lost and can't find my way, but don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet!

Sometimes I get frustrated and feel all alone, but don't take my plate, I'm not finished yet!

Sometimes I feel defeated because I've lost so many rounds, but don't take my plate, I'm not finished.

I heard a songwriter declare, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me yet. When God gets through with me, I shall come forth as pure gold."

I'm reminded of Uncle Doug's hound dog. Every morning that hound dog would greet Uncle Doug as he walked out of the front gate. All day long he chased away strangers, protected the yard and kept a watch out for varmints that would slip up on the farm. Long about sun down every day that old hound dog would lift his lazy eyes. His tail would begin to wag. His ears would stick up straight. Anybody who was visiting would always ask, "Why is that old hound dog suddenly barking and pacing back and forth on the porch?" Aunt Jenny would answer, "Every morning that hound dog sees Uncle Doug leave. But on the way home from the mill Uncle Doug stops by the local cafe, and gets a fresh bag of scraps for that old dog. That dog is excited because he knows he's going to get a reward when his master comes home!"

I don't know about you but I know there is going to be a reward, when the master comes home!

When he comes back again the bottom rail will come to the top!

When he comes back again those who are last shall be first!

When he comes back again the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

When they heard the crowd say, "crucify him" they thought it was over, but he wasn't finished yet!

When they saw the nails pierced into his hands and feet, they thought it was over, but he wasn't finished yet!

When they buried him in a borrowed tomb, they thought it was over, but he wasn't finished yet!

Bur early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

But that's not how the story ends, because one of these days he's coming back again...

I want to hear him say, "Servant! Servant! Well done!"

No. 9431-Inspiration

Marked for Life

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 11, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Galatians 6:17

Introduction

Have you noticed the increasing number of people who are displaying body tattoos?Two generations ago tattoos were frown upon by society in general. Those who wore them were cast as deviants and malcontents. Since the 1990's however, tattoos have become a hot property. It's so popular that the American Society of dermatology reported in 2005 that one in every four of all Americans between 18-50 years old has a tattoo somewhere. The tattoo industry is growing. There are an estimated 20,000+ parlors operating in the United States, according to a U.S. News & World Report article, which said, on the average, an establishment is being added in the country every day. It is one of the fastest growing industries in America.

Times have really changed. Once only men wore tattoos; now it's fashionable for women to have tattoos. It's becoming so fashionable that employers have relaxed the rules in some work places. A bank teller, sales representative or anyone that meets the public may be frowned upon by their employers, while the dishwasher, cook or warehouse worker may be ignored. As a general rule, the higher you plan to go in life, the less visible the tattoo. If you're not planning to move up, then the general opinion is tattoo up.

Speaking of going up. Consider the man who attended church occasionally but died unexpectedly. Instantly he appeared at the gates of heaven but was stopped at the gate because he had a tattoo. "You can't get inside because you have a tattoo" said the Angel. "I know I have a tattoo" answered the man but it's O.K. I I love the Lord and I tattooed his name right there on my arm." Curious the angel looked at the Tattoo and said, "That's not God's name, that says 'Andy" The man said, "That's right. That's God's name." The angel laughed, "If you had said Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-Nissi, or even Wonderful, or Counselor you might have gotten through, Andy is not God's name." Just as the angel was about the shut the gate the man insisted, "I know his name is Andy! I know it!" 'What makes you think his name is Andy?' the angel asked. "I know it because at church we use to sing his name in a song that said, 'Andy walks with me,

Andy talks with me, Andy tells me I am his own!"

-The angel could only laugh and said, "Thank God for grace, come on in!"

Why are tattoos frowned on in religious circles? It's because there is a command that God gave Israel in Leviticus 19:28: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD."

It appears that views about tattoos are different today as many people dismiss traditional bible teachings and remove the taboo from the tattoo.

While there may never be 100 percent agreement on whether there should be tattoos are not, believers all agree that we all bear the mark of Christ on our lives. We show it in a variety of ways. Some people mark their cars with fish bumper stickers or wear "Got Jesus" t-shirts. Some wear WWJD bracelets, or cross necklaces, or crosses inscribed on their book bags and t-shirts. It's a way of saying that we're marked; we are followers of Christ.

We bear the mark of Christ not by what we have tattooed in our skin or the jewelry we wear around our necks. We show that we are Christians by the way we live and relate others as ambassadors of Christ.

As Christians, we live for Christ. In fact we are marked and we boldly identify with that faith through our words and deeds. We bear the marks of suffering in our spirit and we respond in gratitude with a life of service to the kingdom. That mark says to the world, "I was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he testifies that his life is a testimony to his faithfulness to God.

Paul wrote that the Marks of a true Christian are not on our bodies, on our clothes, or even in our loud professions of faith.

For Paul, the cross of Christ was what he chiefly gloried in it was the mark of his high calling. The false teachers were afraid of persecution, and this was the great reason why they were zealous for circumcision to show a sign to the crowd that they were a part of the "club."

Paul said he needed no sign at all. His life was a living testimony to his faith in God. If others needed to see a mark he noted that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the scars of those wounds which he had sustained from persecuting enemies, for his steady adherence to him, and that doctrine of the gospel which he had received from him.

I need no mark except the life I live, was Paul's testimony. It's there for the world to see.

Marked

Every one of his has been marked one way or another, the trick is to find out who

has marked whom.

Who marked you?

MARKS ON OUR LIVES TELL OUR PAST: There are many of us who have been through storms in our lives and we have the marks to show it. The world has marked us in one way or another and many have either been helped or hurt by what has been left behind. An abused child is marked for life and will always wrestle with the mark left on his troubled memory. A struggling student is marked often fatally when a teacher calls him dumb or a misfit. When we have failed, our taste for relationships is marked in a dark way. There are very few people who enter adulthood without bring a few marks with them. Our marks tell our story. That's why there are some believers in the church now who have tattoos on their bodies; many of which they acquired at a time in their lives when they did not know better or were wondering. It tells a story of how they felt at that time; it may not represent the way they feel now, but they have a mark that will not be removed. What is the mark? The name of an old boyfriend? A lost love? A reminder of a time when you were a little more worldly than you are now? Our marks tell our story. For many those marks tell of a time before they found the Lord; these are marks of anger, frustration and loose living. These are the marks that remind us of 1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

MARKS TELL OUR PRESENT: There are marks that tell our past but there are marks on our lives that tell our present. They tell what God is doing to us and for us right now. This week someone has contemplated going to a parlor and getting a mark placed on their body somewhere. What will the mark say? Will it reflect your faith in God and your obedience to him? Right now the bible says Satan wants you to do something for him. The Book of Revelation says that in the last days that Satan will attempt get men to trust their lives and destinies to his hands. In Rev. 13:16-17 Satan will cause his name to be written in the right hands of those who follow him. As we watch the tattoo phenomenon grow it gets scary it means that we are living in the last days. Satan writes HIS name on your body so you won't forget about the pain, trouble, hardship and trouble he has caused you. Satan does just the opposite of what God does. Look at Isaiah 49:16. It says, "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." God writes YOUR name in HIS hand so he won't forget YOU. Right now, God has all of our names marked in the palm of his hands! He won't forget us and he won't leave us alone.

MARKS ARE PAINFUL TO REMOVE: Those who specialize in putting tattoos on us remind us that they can be removed but the process is both expensive and painful. Most people who want them removed simply try to cover them up with more art that resembles their skin. That is what happens to many people today. The world has put so many marks on their lives that they are too painful to remove; so they try to cover them up; but the pain and the marks are still there. What Christ does for each of us is to help us deal with what he have now? Does that mean that if you want to be a Christian

that you have to run out and try to get your marks removed to be saved?

No it doesn't mean that. That's been done. It'll be your story as long as you are in this life. Neither does Christ offer to remove your physical marks. What he does offer is the opportunity to remove the pain and the penalty associated with your marks and to replace with peace and perfection that can only come from God. This is what comes with a life that is born again in Christ.

Marks show where we met the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, the day we met the Lord is the day that we were marked for life.

The day you met the Lord you did not go to a tattoo parlor but you were marked for life!

You didn't look for a rose to put on your leg or an Eagle to put on your arm, but you were marked for life!

You didn't look for a lover's name to place on your thigh or along your neck, but you were marked for life!

The day you met the Lord is the day he changed your life forever.

Moses climbed to the top of a mountain and stayed 40 days and nights and there came into the presence of God. When he came down
from the mountain, his hair had turned white and his face shined brilliantly; he was marked for life!

At one time or another every Christian has met the Lord. He remembers the day and the hour because since that time he has never been the same.

When you meet the Lord he leaves his mark on you and you begin to see things different. When you meet the Lord the:

—SKIES seems to be bluer
—SUN seems to shine brighter
—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter
—FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller
—AIR seems more refreshing
—STARS seem to have more luster
—BURDENS seem lighter
—FAITH seems stronger
—HEAVEN seems closer

No wonder the song writer declared "I met God one morning, my soul was feeling sad, heart heavy laden with a bowed down head. He lift my burden and made me so glad, all that I know there was something within."

Jacob wrestled with Lord all night long and as the morning sun began to rise he refused to let go until he was blessed by God. The Lord blessed him and touched him

with his finger and left a reminder in the lameness of his thigh.

When you have been touched by the Lord, it leaves a mark and you're never the same again. When you've been touched by the Lord:

—Sadness turns into gladness

—Fear turns into courage

—Defeat turns into victory

—Problems turn into opportunities

—Failures turn into successes

—Despair turns into hope

—Discouragement turns into inspiration

No wonder the song writer declared: "He touched me, he touched me, and oh the joy that floods my soul, something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole!"

When he carried the cross for me he touched me and marked me for life!

When he died out on Calvary for me, he touched me and marked me for life!

And when he arose early Sunday morning he touched me, and now I am no longer the same.

No. 9432-Inspiration

Don't Start Nothing and there won't be Nothing

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 17, 2010

SCRIPTURE: I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Luke 19:40

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you said you were not going to get involved in a situation but you got involved anyway?It happens on many fronts and in many arenas: You want to be quiet but they draw you in. Your first words were "I said I wasn't gon' say nothing but..." or "I hadn't planned to get in this but you just had to keep on pushing me."

In the language of the streets there is a phrase that says, "Don't start nothing and there won't be nothing." That means that I'm trying to walk away from this without taking it to another level. If we stop now, it will end right here.

We now use that phrase to describe a variety of situations.

A husband and wife are about to argue: Don't start nothing and there won't be nothing.

Two youth are about to fight: Don't start nothing and there won't be nothing.

It also applies to excitement as well. On the Campaign Trail Barack Obama rallied a crowd with the chant "Yes, we can." At his next stop it took nearly 15 minutes to quiet the crowd and to hold back its excitement. He was advised by his staff not to use the phrase at this stop because he would stir up the crowd all over again and he'd never get to his speech. His staffers in effect said, "Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing."

It's that way whenever we start talking about the Lord, too. Once we get started it hard to stop. He's done so much for so many. Talking about the Lord in the presence of a person who has been blessed just opens a flood gate that cannot be closed.

That's what happened whenever Sanctified Sally came to join a church. Sanctified Sally was the only person in Froggy Bottom who had been put out of every church in the bottoms. First it was the Catholics; then the Lutheran and Episcopal church turned her out. The Methodist Church, including AME's, AME's and UME's turned her out too. It seemed that Sanctified Sally just could not keep silent in church. She

had to praise the Lord and she had to do it loudly. The last church in town was a large church on the hill where all the quiet people in town went to worship. She sat next to a judge who became a bit disturbed that the new member stood on her feet, waved her hands and shouted AMEN every time she heard the name of Jesus. For weeks the church leaders wondered what they could do about this new member who disturbed others with her shouting, but the couldn't think of any way. One day got a speeding ticket for going one of the limit and she was hauled in the front the judge she sat next to in church. The Judge told Sally she could avoid a $500 fine and 30 jail sentence if she could go church Sunday and not say a word. So, on probation Sally sat quietly as a visiting preacher from the country came to the church. He talk about the goodness of the Lord and Sally began to squirm in her seat. He piled it on: God is forgiving, merciful and kind. Sally squirmed more and more until the preacher said, "God can do anything but fail!" At that Sally jumped and shouted, I'm sorry judge you gpn' have to put me in jail, but I serve a God who can make my bail. If you don't start nothing it won't be nothing."

As Christians, we are always ready to testify about the goodness of the Lord. Sometimes, when we get started we don't know when to stop. We praise him for his wonderful works and for his mercy and grace. If you don't want to hear it then don't start nothing. If you don't start nothing there won't be nothing!

Exposition

Our text first considers Jesus as he focused on the sheer impossibility of a saint holding back praise in the presence of their king.

The Sanhedrin Council worked feverously to keep down excitement about Christ. It seemed that each time they had quelled one bit of excitement news of another healing, or other miraculous act starting the people buzzing about him all over again.

They wanted the crowds silenced because Jesus was troubling the status quo. The healing of an impotent man on the Sabbath (John 5), A blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:16) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead had attracted many people to Jesus who viewed him as the one person who could unite them in battle against the Romans and restore the kingdom. The Sanhedrin plotted to kill Lazarus so that he would not be walking proof of Jesus' power and they plotted to have Jesus himself crucified.

When he entered the city, the scribes and Pharisees saw the crowds and were visibly upset that his followers were shouting and praising him for his Lordship. They warned Jesus to tell his disciples to be quiet.

That's when Jesus declared to them that if they were to be silent the very rocks would cry out to him.

Trying to hold back the excitement of that day was impossible task.

Worship is from the heart

In one simple act Jesus gave us a lesson on worship by precept and example.

WORSHIP IS EXCITING: When the crowds praised Jesus they were excited. They were excited about what they expected him to do. In other places he had healed the sick and raised the dead. In other places the blind were given the sight and even those caught in sin were forgiven. When the people worshipped him they were excited about what he had done and what they expected him to do in Jerusalem. Believers are the same way. We are excited about what Christ has done for us in the past and what he's going to do for us in the days ahead. We're excited about the healings that could be coming! We're excited about the job that we've been trying to land. We're excited about the renewed spirit of growth we share today. We can't help it but all of that good news makes us wave our hands, stand on our feet at times, smile at others and for the most part we give God praise for being a just God.

WORSHIP IS FROM THE HEART: True worship is from the heart. It is spontaneous. It cannot be orchestrated. When Jesus entered the city there was no one outside the gate who ran in to tell the crowd that it was time to shout, on call or to wave the palm branches in the air all at the same time in the same direction. It was from the heart. In a similar sense today, worship is from the heart. We clap when we are moved to clap, not because we are told. We stand on our feet, wave our hand or even do our dance when we are moved to do so; when our hearts demand we respond. There are many who orchestrate praise. In some choirs the singers clap when they are told to clap, jump when they are told to jump and lift their hands in praise on cue. Yet, true worship is spontaneous, it has not particular order, it comes as the spirit gives utterance. Some may cry. Some may shout. Some may sit still and soak in the atmosphere. Others may dance the holy dance. No matter what method is used, true worship is from the heart.

TRUE WORSHIP CANNOT BE HINDERED: The scribes and Pharisees soon learned that true worship cannot be contained. Jesus did not make any effort to restrain his followers or tell them to stop praising his name; yet the scribes continued. That's when Jesus pointed them to the impossibility of muzzling a person who has been blessed and one who expects to be blessed.

When Jesus healed a man whose lives were plagued with demons he told them man not to tell anyone, but the man couldn't keep it to himself. The woman at the well couldn't keep it to herself she had to run all over the city saying "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."

There was somebody in the crowd, named Lazarus, who had been dead for several days but given new life, when he saw Jesus riding into the city, he just couldn't hold his peace.

There was somebody in the crowd, that had been blind, but the hand of Jesus touched him and made him whole, and he just couldn't hold it, he had to tell somebody.

There was somebody in the crowd, whose life had been made whole because Jesus passed by, and they couldn't hold their peace.

When Jesus has touched you and made a change in your life, it's hard to hear his named called and not respond with praise.

The Rocks

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that if we don't praise him that the rocks will tell his story!

It would be a tragedy if the silence of the lambs caused the trees, the wind and earth rise up and testify. That would be a tragedy because whenever the Lord has blessed us we should be willing to testify.

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's a whole lot of shouting going on.

Whenever you think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving going on!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole lot foot patting going!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a whole lot of hand clapping going on!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

We're shouting because of what he has done.

We're shouting because of what we expect him to do.

We're shouting because he's been good to us and we just can't keep it to ourselves.

Jesus said if you don't want to praise him that the rocks will cry out.

What could inanimate objects with no mouths his praise testify too?

What could lifeless chunks of granite, limestone and clay say that we could not say?

What could be the testimony of the rocks?

What could immobile specimens of creation with no hands to clap or tongues to speak his name have to say that would could not say?

In my imagination I hear the rocks saying don't call on us because we have a lot to say, Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing!

The grains of sands were ready to testify. "I heard Jesus say, any man who heard his words and refused to do them would be like a man who built his house upon sinking sand." Then he turned around and said in Psalm 139 that his thoughts about the saints are greater than the number of the sands. Psalms 139:18 "If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee." If you don't want to praise let us tell his story!

When the grains of sand take their seats the pebbles rise to speak. The pebbles said, "Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing" because if you want to know about the Lord, I can tell you how David stood in front of Goliath without a sword or shield. All he had in his hand was slingshot and five little pebbles; but the those pebbles in God's hands felled a mighty giant. Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing.

When the pebbles sat down the stones stood up and said, "Don't y'all start talking about Jesus. If don't start nothing it won't be nothing, because we can tell

you how the scribes and Pharisees caught a woman in adultery and were about to stone, but Jesus said "He without sin, let him cast the first stone." and the never threw the first stone.

If you want to about Jesus, and his power to forgive

If you want to talk about Jesus and his saving grace

If you want to talk about Jesus and his soul saving love...don't start nothing and we won't be nothing because we could talk all day.

When stones sat down the rocks then stood up saying, "Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing, because we'll have tell you that David said, "He's my rock, my sword and shield." The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. I heard him tell Peter "Upon this rock I'll build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

No wonder the old timers said, "He's my rock, my sword and shield. He's my wheel in the middle of the wheel." He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock and covers me there with his hands!

All of the stones sat down as the mountain filled up the room. Don't start nothing and it won't be nothing because I heard Jesus tell his disciples that if they had the faith of a mustard see they could speak to the mountains and they move out of their way.

I don't know about you but I've had my share of my mountains and hills to climb!

But the God we serve can take mountains and turn them into molehills. Don't start nothing and there won't be nothing.

When the Lord has: (You ought to feel a shout coming on!)

—Saved you through his grace

—Forgiven you through his mercy

—lifted you through his love

—comforted you through his assurance

—strengthened you through his power

—encouraged you through his promise

—revived you through his glory

We ought to be glad to tell somebody how he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity.

We ought to tell somebody how they whipped him all night long and put a crown of thorns on his head.

We ought to tell somebody how they nailed him to an old rugged cross and he died out on Calvary

We ought tell somebody that Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands.

If you start talking about Jesus, I won't be able to keep my peace!

Don't start nothing and there won't be nothing!

No. 9433-Inspiration

Born to serve the most high God

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 21, 2010

***SCRIPTURE:** Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: Numbers 4:2-4*

Introduction

Have you ever notice that there are some families that seem as if they all do the same types of things?There are families of school teachers, doctors, athletes, musicians and singers. It seems that certain gifts run in families. Daddy does it, his daddy did it and his daddy before him.

It seems that certain children were born with a special mission in mind. Those who were born to be teachers seem as if they were born with certain intellect. The child that's born to be an inventor starts tinkering with things apart and investigating before he can even walk. Those destined to be singers were singing even when they were children. They were born to do what they do.

There are people in the church who represent another generation of choir members, preachers, teachers and ushers. Their parents were ushers and so were their great aunts and uncles. It just seems that they were born to be on the usher board; they work in many areas of the church but they are most comfortable on the usher board.

Consider the Tater Family that lived down by the creek. Every member of their family had been in the service of the Lord for nearly 50 years except Uncle Potater. One Sunday, to nearly everyone's surprise Uncle Potater showed up at church. It was a big surprise. At the end of the service the preacher shook hands with the members of the Tater family, all wearing their usher uniforms. When Uncle Potater shook hands the preacher said, "All the members of the Tater family have been faithful ushers for nearly 50 years. Why don't you do like the other members of your family and join the army of the Lord?"

"I'm Already in the Army of the Lord," answered Uncle Potater.

"What do you mean?" said the preacher, "If you are already in the Army of the Lord, how come we don't see you except mostly on Easter and Christmas. We don't never see you." At that Uncle Potater leaned over to the preacher and whispered, "Don't tell anybody, but I'm in the Secret Service."

There are probably many people like Uncle Potater born to serve but are serving in

the Secret Service.

As Christians, we are happy to serve in the army of the Lord. We're not in the secret service, we are in the regular service, "we've got to fight although we have to cry. We have to hold up the blood stained banner. We have to hold it up until we die."

Exposition

This text focuses on the book of Numbers as it details the particulars of the selection of families of Levites who would serve the Tabernacle.

Before Solomon built the Temple of the Lord, Israel had a tent as the dwelling place of the Lord. It was called the Tabernacle. In it was the Ark of the Covenant wherein God's presence was manifested.

The care for the Tabernacle, worship and offerings was delegated to 212 families, each with a specific duty regarding the temple. This duty was carried out from one generation to the next in the same family.

Some were Priests, others were temple guards, and some were responsible for maintaining the sacrificial fire.

The job of breaking down the Tabernacle, packing it and moving it was assigned to one family of what we would call ushers known as the Kohathites. They were responsible for caring for and moving the ark, table, lamp stand, altars, vessels of the sanctuary, and the screen (Num. 3:29-31). The Kohathites could not touch these objects and could move them only after they had been properly prepared by Aaron and his sons. The result of attempting to move these objects without their first being fit with poles for carrying was death .

According to Holman, when David was King, he appointed 120 Kohathites under the leadership of Uriel to bring the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:5). When the Israelites returned from the Exile, some of the Kohathites were placed in charge of preparing the show bread every Sabbath (1 Chron. 9:32).

Born for Service

There are many areas of service in the church, but those who are best fitted to serve are those who are born to serve. Many boards have experienced problems over the years because although the group had a large membership that serve, there were many in the group who were church members but who were not born again. To be an effective usher, a member must be born again. A Christian is guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to him
of God. The inward power of Christian living that causes a Christian to live as he lives, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

An usher who is not born again is not born to serve.

Those who have been born again see themselves as soldiers in the army of the Lord.

Tested for Service

Only those who have been born to serve can serve as ushers. It is one of the most challenging and demanding areas of service in the church.

They are important because they are usually the first persons that worshippers meet when the enter into the house of the Lord.

Doorkeepers are important, so important that the Wal-Mart Stores have hired special doormen to greet their customers as they enter and to say goodbye to them as they leave. Schools have been established, across the nation, to teach butlers and valet the fineries of personal service.

In the secular community good doorkeepers are in demand and are a valuable asset to the community.

Can a church, looking for a warm personality to greet worshippers, go out and hire a people to be friendly to its visitors?

Can a congregation take someone, distant from the faith, run him through a class, stick him in a uniform, and place him at the doorway of God's house to greet the faithful as they come to worship the Lord?

Only those who are born to serve can past the test of service: 1)Will you serve when you don't feel like serving? Will you serve when they don't want you to serve them? Will you serve when you don't have to?

If your answer is no to any of these three then there is a possibility that you were not born to serve.

A doorkeeper in God's House is not an imported professional smiler, trained in appearing friendly but is a born again Christian who serves by choice to usher believers into the presence of the Lord.

Reward for Service

Finally, brothers and sisters there is a reward for those who are born to serve and choose not to be in the secret service.

Those who are born to serve are born to serve are among those who sing, "I am on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I would serve him till I die. I'm on the battlefield for my Lord."

Those who answer the call of service as doorkeepers don't get a paycheck, but they are showered with Godly rewards.

The rewards they receive reflect the level of trust they have in God.

Those who are born to serve have God's presence that he will be with them wherever they may be.

If they take the wings of Eagles and fly in the sky, behold God is there!

If they go to the depths of the sea, God is there!

He'll wipe tears from their eyes; he'll encourage them when they are low. "He's always right there by their side."

Those who have been born to serve have the assurance that God will supply your daily needs.

Philippians 4:19 declares “My God shall supply all your needs”

Those who are born to serve hear the words of the savior in Luke 12:28 “If then God so clothes the grass, how much more will he clothe you”

I heard John 14:2 declare “In my father’s house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you.”

I heard a song writer declare “Come and go with me to my father’s house” there is Joy, Joy, Joy!

If you have been born to serve in the house of God:

— Don’t let your service get limited to mortar and bricks!

— Be determined by the color and style of the uniform!

— Don’t be selective about which places you will serve!

— Don’t worry about whether you can hold an office

— Don’t restrict your service to things made by man!

I heard Dr. Watts declare, “To serve this present age my calling to fulfill, oh may all my powers engage to do my master’s will!”

I don’t know about you but I’ve found out that good things happen when you serve the Lord.

Serve the Lord who can take darkness and turn it into light!

Serve the Lord who can take defeat and turn it into victory!

Serve the Lord who can take sadness and turn it into gladness!

Serve him as an usher, but also serve him as you teach in the Sunday school

Serve him as an usher but also serve him as you minister to the needy

Serve him as an usher but also do the work of an evangelist and tell a dying world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!

No. 9434-Inspiration

When You Put It In His Hands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; Psalm 31:5-7

Introduction

Has anyone ever taken anything out of your hands?When a circumstance is in your hands you have control of the outcome. You determine the nature of the situation and to a large extent, its planning and execution.

Henry David Thoreau in his treatise "Self Reliance" maintained that every man is the captain of his own soul and charts his own destiny independent of any forces outside of his own will. However, we have come to learn that Thoreau was obviously in error, we do not control our own destinies; our fate lies in the hands of a power much higher, stronger and more controlling than ourselves.

We have come to learn that God is always watching us and directing us. He constantly urges us to follow the divine path and corrects us when we error. The wise among us have learned that it is best to put our lives in his hand from start to finish.

When our lives are in God's hands we let him pilot us. We don't even try to co-pilot; we just let him give the orders and we execute them. We constantly pray that He will give us wisdom and common sense to navigate the meandering channels of life.And when life gets tough? Well, when life gets tough we do the exact same thing; we put it all in his hands.As Christians, our faith allows us to trust God completely with our lives on this earth and our secured place in the kingdom to come. As each new day begins, we joyfully say, "It's in your hands."

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he places his circumstance in God's hand.

Many will recognize the words of the text as one the last sayings of Jesus on the cross.

As God, He remained omnipotent. He had the power to deal with his circumstance from the resources of heaven as the embodiment of the word among men. However, as

a man he was dealing with a situation that was completely out of his control.

As a man, he had been nailed to the cross.

As a man, he had been humiliated, beaten, and falsely accused.

At his lowest, weakest point, Jesus called upon God by quoting David in Psalm 31:5 when he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." In Psalm 31:7 David acknowledged that he knew God was aware of his trouble and his situation, but he trusted God to handle it according to His will. It is worthy to note that while David rejoiced in the knowledge that God was aware of his situation his rejoicing did not assume that because God knew, that the remedy David sought would be received. Regardless to what action God took regarding his situation he resolved that God would work it out to his good, therefore he rejoiced with just the knowledge that God "considered" his trouble.

As a man, he limited himself to only those responses available to believers who would follow after Him. It is this carnal response that gets our attention because it is in this circumstance that we find ourselves most often.

Though facing pain, rejection and death he continued to trust in God, setting an example for all believers to follow.

What to put in his hands

Today, believers should consider putting three things in God's hands.

OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD'S HANDS: We are living in dangerous times that that seem to defy all logic and good sense. These are confusing times in which Men are marrying men, women are loving women and children are growing up with two mothers and no father. These are times when nickel and dime pushers on the Southside are arrested for selling drugs to Hummer driving junkies in three piece suits from the North side own by stuffy white shirts from the west side and flirty little skirts from the east side and every day it seems somebody gets shot, stabbed or dies. These are times when nearly every home has a battery of dead bolt locks, iron bars and burglar alarm systems to protect their homes when their gone and their lives when they are home. These are dangerous times; yet in all of that despair there is still hope. It is not beyond God's ability to deal with the situation; he can handle it, if we do not become spiritual vigilantes and try to handle it all by ourselves. It's obvious that our times are growing more complex at rate that only God can handle it. We must do what we can do to resolve matters then put the rest in God's hand. Our times are in the hands of God.

OUR BURDENS ARE IN GOD'S HANDS: Many of us are handling a number of burdens at the same time. Sometimes, those burdens get frustrating. There are some who trying to relationship issues with education issues that get complicated because finance issues and health issues get introduced into the mix. Add to that all of the problems that seem to pile one on top of the other and soon we get a picture of a believer who feels the need to scream. When our hands are full we get frustrated and sometimes in the quiet of it all we start to feel sorry for ourselves. Yet, David in Psalm

31:7 says that even with his hands full he found a reason to be glad because he knew God knew about his troubles. He also knew that if God was aware of his trouble that God would respond in his own way, so instead of having a pity party, David said he decided to rejoice. Roberta Martin put it this way, "We are our heavenly father's children and we all know he loves us one and all, just ask for strength and keep on toiling, though the tear drops fall. We have the joy of this assurance that our heavenly father, he hears and answers prayer, and he knows, yes he knows, just how much you can bear."

OUR HANDS ARE IN GOD'S HANDS. In all of David's troubles he constantly trusted in God. He was confident that God would eventually work his situation out to his advantage because he knew that God is "for me." Likewise, when we as Christians face similar trials, we should remember that God will work it out to our advantage. Cliff Jones in his book, "Winning Through
Integrity" tells of his frustration in trusting God by noting that once, while in Vietnam, he sought very hard to make it to an air pick up spot and prayed to God that he would help him get there on time. When he arrived the plane was just leaving. Jones was frustrated and angry because he had to take a boat, unshielded from the sun, in a day long trip that could have been taken in 30 minutes on the plane. In his solitude he chided God for not delivering for him. When he made it to his destination he learned that the plane he missed was shot down by enemy fire and everyone on board was killed. God worked it out his dilemma to his advantage.

Romans 8:28 puts it this way, "..All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." It simply means in times of trouble, trust God to work it out to your advantage. Trust God to twist the events in such a way that you are better off by them. Trust God to manage the affairs of the world in a way that will benefit his children the most.

It is often difficult to understand the perplexities of the moment and know that God has a purpose for everything. Perhaps that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "Farther along we'll know all about it, farther along we'll understand why, cheer up my brother, live in the
sunshine, we'll understand it all by and by."

In God's Hands

Finally, brothers and sisters there is a Latin phrase "In Deus Manus" which means in God's hands; that's where we should put it all, in His hands.

In Deus Manus has a simple meaning to believers; it means that situations change when they are in God's hand.

In Deus Manus means we who have fallen can get back up again, when we put our fallen condition in God's hands.

In Deus Manus means we who have lost our way can find it again, when our missing location is placed in God's hands.

In God's hands, the impossible becomes possible and the unreachable becomes

attainable!

In God's hands, waning strength can be restored. I know it's true because I heard the word say, "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint."

In God's hands, what appears to be lost causes can be changed to acts of restoration.

As I close, I'm reminded of a story that was told of a mother who worked hard to send her son through college.

Upon his graduation he sent for her and notice that all through the visit that she wore gloves on her hands and held them close to her side.

Finally he asked her about it and she took off the gloves and showed him a pair of hands that were scarred and wrinkled and as she held out her hand it began to tremble and shake.

The son wanted to know how her hands were injured so and she said "I got these scars on my knuckles from washing clothes on rub board to pay for your first year's tuition." "The chemicals and detergents in my mop water dried out my hands as I worked to pay for your second and third year's tuition."

"My hands started trembling and shaking, as I worried all through your last year, of how I would make it through". "But had a little talk with the Lord and I told him that I tried the best that I know how, but it's in your hands now! Lord, take my hand, lead me along the way." Her favorite song became "Precious Lord, Take my hand!"

I don't know about you but I think I'll put in the hands of the Lord!

Every believer should say: "Lord, I'm putting it in your hand because your..:

—GLORY is much greater than mine; POWER is much stronger than mine

—METHODS are much wiser than mine; UNDERSTANDING is much broader than mine!

—WAYS are much safe than mine; HEART is much bigger than mine;

—BURDEN is lighter than mine; and LOVE is much deeper than mine!

The hands of Jesus were scarred hands!

The hands of Jesus were bruised hands!

These hands had touched a blind man's eyes and made him see!

These hands had touched a lame man's legs and made them walk!

These hands were raised against the winds that obeyed his will!

These hands fed 5,000 with two fishes and five loaves of bread!

These hands were nailed to an old rugged cross!

I'm putting it in God's hands because, like the savior's example, I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds my hand!

On day out on Calvary I heard him cry out:

Father, Father, into thy hands, I commit my spirit!

But early, one Sunday morning he rose up from the grave and declared to the world that "all power" is in these hands!

"All power!"

"All power!"

No. 9435-Mother's Day

Muhdear's Blessing

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. " John 19:27

Introduction

There are many children who know their mothers by a number of names before they really know their real names; do you remember the names you once used to describe mother?If you are like most people the first name you called your mother was probably associated with your infant verbal skills. Scholars tell us that at about four months old, babies can understand all the basic sounds that make up the native language. Between this time and six months of age, babies develop the ability to make some vocal sounds, which means mothers may hear the words they've been dreaming about, namely "ma-ma." While child development experts say it's too early for your baby to connect those sounds with the actual persons associated with the words, mothers are nevertheless still excited.

It will be a few more months before children start to associate the words "mama" to the person they will later know as mother.

Once the association is made, many continue to refer to their mothers as "mama."

Others will adopt other terms of endearment that refer to her. One of the terms is mother but to millions that term is "Muhdear" or even shorter "Muh."

Muhdear is the term for mother that sticks among those who associate the woman who nurtures them with a name.

Many children can't use the term "Muhdear" or any other term because they do not really know their mothers.

There are many who live in the same house with the mother in their families and do not know them. Of course, we know their names and their vital statistics: birthday, maiden name, education and other information available on any resume"; yet with all of that knowledge can we answer the question, "who is my mother?" There are many children who live under the same roof with their mothers and do not know them yet? They are familiar with her but we don't really know the woman we call mother.

Motherhood is not always a matter of biology but it is a matter of relationships.

Those who are fortunate had not just one Muhdear but scores of supportive relationships that make it necessary to thank God for my birth, but also for those who

gave me nurture after birth. There was a neighborhood of mothers, but only one Muhdear.

As Christians, we give God thanks for our mothers. We celebrate who they were, who they are, and they have helped us to be. Whether we call them mama, Muhdear or mother, we praise God for them every day.

Exposition

This text give us striking snapshots of Mary, the mother of Jesus as she stands by her son at the foot of the cross and as she stands with other women waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

John shows us Mary at the cross. No one but a mother can understand how she must have felt standing at the foot of the cross watching the child she carried in her womb fastened to a Roman cross by both hand and foot. John records the words of Jesus from the cross as he looked down at his mother and commended her care into John's hands. His words, "behold thy mother" were an invitation to John to embrace Mary as his own mother and for Mary to embrace John as her own son. His words to Mary were, "Woman behold thy son."

The Act of the Apostles shows Mary for the last time. She is gathered with other women who were praying for the power or of the Holy Spirit which had been promised by Christ in his last days. Even though she was the mother of Jesus, she did not neglect joining the other women in prayer and supplication. No one knows what happened to Mary after that. She is never mentioned again in the New Testament. The Bible does not say what she did, where she lived, or where she died.

What we know about Mary is that she spent most of her adult life being a mother to her son; through miraculous good times and tragic bad times, she was always by his side.

Jesus referred to her as mother. She was the kind of mother that we call "Muhdear."

Who is Muhdear?

The first thought that comes to mind when many think of Muhdear is the loud, vociferous, and comical character in the Tyler Perry movies. Perry's Muhdear curses, carries a pistol doesn't think much of church. She's the stereotype of the absurd, but certainly not typical of all of those known as Muhdear in millions God fearing homes around the world.

Who is the woman many call Muhdear?

Consider the little girl who became separated from her mother in a busy train station. The little girl began to cry and was afraid. A new worker at the information desk found the little girl and tried to console her. She was Polish and not familiar with the way things work in the African-American community. She asked the girl, "What's your mother's name?" The little girl responded, "Muh-dear!"

Armed with a name the Polish attendant, announced over the intercom, would the

African-American woman who answers to the name “Muh-Dear” please come to the information desk. In a few seconds there were 40 Black women standing in front of the counting saying, “You asked for me? I’m Muh-Dear.” As the mother came forth, glad to see her daughter, the attendant looked at all the other women standing at the counter and said, “Do all of you have the same name?” The grateful mother said, “Ma’am, in our neck of the woods, every mother is named “Muh-dear.”

Muhdear is there

One of the Perry movies is entitled, “Muhdear Goes to Jail.” It was hilariously funny, but when you think about there is not a place that a real Muhdear wouldn’t go for her children.

Good Muhdear are “there” for their children.

Today, there are millions of mothers who are making personal sacrifices to be “there” for their children. In today’s time that is much more demanding than in biblical times, but yet good mother’s today are finding ways to “be there” for their children. They are attending school events, participating in school PTA, selling cookies for the Girl Scouts, cheering their children on the athletic fields and traveling countless miles to watch their children perform with school teams. .

If a movie was made with a title depicting all the places that real Muhdears have to go for their kids the movie trailers would read, “Come and see Muhdear as she makes uniforms for the band, it’s Muhdear goes to band practice!” Another commercial might say, “Muhdear meets her match as she takes on the referee, see Muhdear goes to the game.” Muhdear goes to the Principal’s office. Muhdear goes to dance school. Muhdear goes to piano lessons!

We all have fond memories of one of those scenes or another. What happened then, could have easily been made into a movie.

In reality, there is not a place that a real mother won’t go for her children, including jail. Moreover, there is nothing that a real mother won’t do to support, protect and advance her children who are involved in honorable pursuits. She will go to jail if necessary or even stand in food lines, and work multiple jobs.

Muhdear is more than just a term of endearment; it is a badge of honor.

Muhdear shares her children’s life

Beyond the demands of biological motherhood, being a Muhdear also means being a mother who shares the experiences of her children.

There are some who subscribe to a show your face relationship with their children. In such a relationship the mother gives symbolic support to a child but does not give her all. Real Muhdears are “there” for their children in every respect. Being “there” is more than showing up occasionally, it means being a part of a child’s life experiences, which can be very traumatic at times.

Being “there” sometimes means listening when children talk, paying attention to

their doodlings and drawings and praising them.

Being there means teaching life skills necessary for success and providing quality time for relationship building. Just as Mary was "there" for Jesus to hold his hand and support him, that spirit of "being there" is what is celebrated by children who know instantly that in every respect, good mothers have done their best to "be there" for them.

Muhdear in God's hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, Muhdear makes sure that her children are securely placed in the hands of God.

Not only does Muhdear go to football practice, piano lessons, band rehearsals and PTA meetings, Muhdear also goes to church. Muhdear knows how to talk to God.

Muhdear insures that her children know the Lord.

In many ways Muhdear is like Hannah. Hannah told the Lord that she would put her child in God's hands if she were blessed to give birth. No sooner than the boy Samuel was old enough, his mother brought him to the place of worship and put him in God's hands.

In God's hands, Samuel became a great scholar!

In God's hands, her son became a great prophet!

In God's hands, her son became spiritual leader of the nation!

Jesus said made it clear that in the Kingdom of Heaven believers may have many Muhdears, those who are doing the will of God.

We are certainly blessed to have had somebody named Muhdear in our lives.

These were the women who saw to it that you came to church and saw to it that you acted correctly once you got there!

It was Muhdear who taught us to say your prayers and to sing, "Yes, Jesus Love me."

Who is my Muhdear? She is the one who is concerned about who am I am in the world and who I am before God.

Who is my Muhdear? She is the one who insures that her child has:

—Food to eat here, but she is also concerned that her child be fed the Word of God, for she has heard the scripture say "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

—Clothes on his back, but she is also concerned that he wears the breastplate of righteousness and that his feet are shod with the Gospel of the preparation of peace, that he wears the helmet of Salvation and carries the shield of faith.

—Has a place to call home, but she also worries about whether he'll have a home in the kingdom of heaven.

—Birth and delivery in this world, but she also is concerned that he is born again into the kingdom of God.

Who is my Muhdear? She is the one that will teach her children to trust in the Lord.

Somebody here can remember a time when the family was in a tough spot and mother mumbled, “We’ll just have to put our trust in the Lord.”

Every Christian mother knows there is wisdom in trusting the Lord.

If I trust in the Lord I will:

—Overcome strong temptations

—bear heavy burdens

—withstand mighty persecutions

—cross the loneliest of valleys

—endure the saddest of sorrows

—live through darkest of nights

—sail through the roughest storms

—climb the tallest of mountains

Who is my Muhdear? She’s the one who knows how to call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, Who arose after three days and nights!

Who is my Muhdear?

She’s a woman who knows how to call His name!

Jesus!

Jesus!

Jesus!

No. 9436-Revival

Ain't no sense in going Son, Jody's got the people and gone

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Youth Minister of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1971

SCRIPTURE: "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord." Hosea 1:2-9

Introduction

Many have been unfaithful to God and it grieves Him. Do you know someone who has been unfaithful? Often we watch what appears to be the smartest, wisest people become involved in entanglements that seem beneath their intellect, experience and character. Like a disease, unfaithfulness infects every strata of our community. The businessman, farmer, laborer, educator, auto mechanic, athlete and the preacher all seem vulnerable to its contagious venom. Unfaithfulness is destructive to say the least.

Unfaithfulness is immediately associated with marriage and romance. However, unfaithfulness pokes its ugly head into a variety of arenas. The military is constantly plagued by those who would sell national secrets to the enemy. Political candidates are plagued by unfaithful staffers who defect to the other side. Millions of "kiss and tell" books have been written by those who betrayed the confidences of the rich, powerful and influential.

In a greater sense any person is unfaithful whenever that person comprises the principles by which he or she lives. The pacifist who goes to war; the vegetarian who eats meat; The dodger fan who yells for the Yankees. There are many ways to be unfaithful.

There are many who are unfaithful to their own dreams, goals and aspirations.

Others are unfaithful to promises made to themselves or others.

There are also those who are unfaithful to God.

How can we be unfaithful to God? When we commit our lives and souls to God and Him alone, then turn away from what we promised; then we are unfaithful t

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Hosea who was told by God to preach to the people of Israel.

The immediate command that Hosea was given was to tell the people that they were an evil and adulterous generation and that they were living in whoredom.

Hosea was commanded to illustrate this whoredom by marrying a woman of whoredom. Her deviant actions although married to a loving husband would illustrate Israel's relationship with God.

This must have been a troubling relationship but Hosea obeyed God's command. His wife, Gomer, signified corruption, defilement, contamination and pollution. It was a demoralizing relationship in which her determinations were captured by her lusts.

As Gomer bore children for Hosea he gave them names that demonstrated the ruin of the people. He named the first Jezereel which means scattered people. It suggested the destruction of the royal family of God as His creations scattered away from Him. The second child was named Lo-Ruhamah, which means "not beloved." It showed how Israel had abused its relationship with God and its refusal to reform itself to God's will. It also indicated that God would not always bear the burden of dealing with an unfaithful people.

A Look at Jody

WE BECOME JODIES TO GOD: Johnnie Taylor's hit song, "Ain't no use in going home, Jody's got your girl and gone" depicted a man who worked hard all week to provide a living and a life for his woman. He remained faithful to her and provided for her every need. Yet, while he was away working she cheated on him with another man that Taylor described as "Jody." A Jody is a person who takes advantage of an ideal situation such as a loving but absent husband and a willing wife. Jody cares nothing about breaking up a happy marriage or soiling the marriage bed of another. Jody has but one goal and that is to get all he can, while he can at any cost. In a greater sense many of us have become the unfaithful wife in our relationships with God. He is faithful to us and prepares for us but we have flirted with the devil, our Jody, and cheated on God. The fervor of our faith has diminished because of our affair with Jody. Many of us have become politically stagnant, refusing to involve ourselves in movements that will help our community. We have socially isolated ourselves from any and everything that benefits the kingdom, and we have become religiously eccentric and economic misers. Jody has stolen our hearts away from God who still loves us mightily.

WE SEEK THE PERCEPTION OF HAPPINESS: We often allow our determination to be captured by our lusts rather than our needs. As a result we often meander into a make believe world to achieve our perception of happiness.

In this pursuit we seem to follow every bright light that flashes and lures away from out faithful path. For some the lure is the opposite sex, for still others it's the same sex.

There are some who are lured into unfaithfulness by the specter of accumulating large amounts of money. Some fall into the chilly and deathly hands of drugs, dope use and sales, and other forms of immorality. Moreover, there are others who see their life's work as the quest for social status, so important that it excels over their commitment to the God they serve.

These intense determinations envelope us and as a result become the vultures of our own dreams that feed upon us while we are yet living, robbing us of everything of value.

WE SEEK TO GRAB ALL THE GUSTO WE CAN: There is a popular television for Budweiser Beer that uses the slogan "You only go through life once, so grab all of the gusto you can." It encourages the public to abandon any rules that restrict their quest for fulfillment because they will only have one chance to enjoy what life offers. Based on that concept, there are many who have chosen to abandon their spiritual foundations in favor of instant gratification.

What is abandoned? Lost is the abandonment of godly ideals is the quest for brotherly love, community concern, political awareness, moral restraint and forgiving hearts. These are all abandoned as we chase after our own determinations. While we philander, God who is the father of these principles, sheds a tear for our wantonness, as we travel throughout the world looking for personal satisfaction. While we run around, our God who loves us so much that He gave His only son for us is left holding the bag.

We, like an unfaithful wife, have drifted into an adulterous world while our God, the lover of our souls, works day and night to provide us with the necessities for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We can return

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that even if we have flirted with Jody, God is still welcoming us home.

Hosea continued his love for his wife even though she cheated on him and ran around with Jody. Despite her estrangement, he actively sought and welcomed her return.

In that same sense, God seeks to restore those who have strayed from Him. The words of the old song are clear and appropriate, "I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home. To long the path of sin I've trod, Lord I'm coming home. Coming Home, Coming Home, never more to roam. Open wide thine arms of love. Lord, I'm coming home!"

It's good to know that we serve a God who forgives our transgressions and opens his arms to receive us.

Many of us found out that the Jodies of this world have not meant us any good.

Jody used us and abused us until we couldn't see our way.

Jody told us we would be HAPPY but all we received was SADNESS;

Jody told us we would be RICH but when we got a little everybody tried sponge

off of us;

Jody told us we could be popular if we acted STUPID but when we did everybody laughed at us;

Jody told us not to work and to be LAZY, but all we got in return were handouts instead of handups;

Jody told us not to STUDY or train, but all we got were turn downs for every opportunity we sought;

Jody told us we could get DOPED UP, but when we did we were so high we didn't know where we were.

Jody told us we could drink alcohol, but when we did we got all bent out of shape.

Jody told us we could GOSSIP and talk bad about people, but what we got was talked about ourselves.

Jody told us we could get all we could get, but in the process we started losing everything we had;

Jody told us we could make it right by going to church, but all we became was well dress .

We turned our backs on God and ran after Jody and Jody only gave us heartbreak.

But I'm so glad that God is a forgiving God, because in our mess, God decided to still bless.

Today, God is standing with His stretched wide willing to give us second chance.

His appeal is that we would come home!

Come home, and He'll wipe the tears from your eyes!

Come home, and He'll open doors that have been closed in our face!

Come home, and He'll heal wounds that have hemorrhaged in your life!

Come home, and He will save your soul and give you a brand new start!

You don't need any more money because your debt has been paid!

Jesus paid it all!

Out on Calvary, Jesus paid it all!

With an old rugged cross on his shoulder, Jesus paid it all!

With nails driven in His hands, Jesus paid it all!

With a crown of thorns on His head, Jesus paid it all!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

Come home, because Jody is gone, but God is still on the throne!

No. 9437-Inspiration

The Rope Holds

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 16, 2010

Scripture: GOD takes the side of the helpless; when I was at the end of my rope, he saved me. Psalms 116:6 (MSG)

Introduction

Have you ever been at the end of your rope?Being at the end of the rope is a term used to suggest we have reached the extent of our endurance. Even though certain failure will result if we let go there comes a time when we feel that letting go is our only option.

Consider the woman who fell from a cliff and yelled for someone to rescue her. For hours no one came to save her; then suddenly a rope was thrown over the side and it dangled in front of her. A voice yelled out, "Grab the rope and hold on." The woman grabbed the rope and dangled over the edge with her legs kicking in the air. The longer she dangled the more fatigued she became. The woman yelled more until a second rope with a large loop in it dangled just in front of her. A rescuer from above shouted, "Put your free hand through the loop and hold on." After doing so the woman dangled a few more minutes until finally she was completely exhausted. She closed her eyes, thought of her children, whispered a prayer and let go. Minutes later when she opened her eyes; she saw people standing all around her. When she asked what happened the teachers said, "You couldn't hold on so you let go, but the loop in the second rope closed tight around your wrist, you couldn't hold on to the rope but the rope held on to you. It's a good thing that your hand was in the loop."

When we can't hold on, that's when God holds on to you.

God is sure; He will not let you go.

There's a line in C.S. Lewis's book A Grief Observed on the death of his wife, that is salient: "You never know how much you believe in the strength of the rope until you're hanging by it over a cliff."

One of the pleasant aftermaths of enduring a hardship that dangled us over the edge is to discover that the rope holds. The rope that keeps us from falling is God.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge God will never fail us; he is able to keep us even when we lose hope and let go.

Exposition

This Psalm of David offers hope to those who are afflicted from one who has experienced the deliverance of God.

In the course of his life, David experienced many moments that were life threatening. On more than one occasion his life was threatened either by wild animals as a boy, or as a fugitive under King Saul. In each instance he saw the power of God at work saving him from danger and allowing him to skirt capture by his enemies.

This psalm sings of David's thankfulness to God for: Pulling him back from the brink of despair. In Psalm 116:5 he characterized God as considering his situation and then being merciful to him. Realizing God's mercy, David came to himself and God literally snatched him back from the brink of despair. In the purest sense the text in the Message version says, "GOD is gracious—it is he who makes things right, our most compassionate God. GOD takes the side of the helpless; when I was at the end of my rope, he saved me."

Thus, David pens a psalm of thanksgiving To God for saving him from himself; for showing him that even when we think there is no reason to go on, the Love and power of God prevails.

The Ropes

Big Burdens need strong ropes: There are many who approach their life's burdens without the benefit of a strong faith. Burdens are heavy and they weigh us down. That's why Jesus constantly challenged believers to give him their burdens. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yet, despite Jesus' invitation many try to handle their own problems instead of giving them to God. Instead of a rope, many tie a thread around their problems then find that the thread does not hold. Threads have their purpose, but they are not able to handle God sized problems because God sized problems need a God sized solution. When your family is trouble would you want to trust your knowledge and understanding? What about all of your business skill and knowledge? What about your horoscope? They are just threads that will surely break under the load. The word of God says in Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Faith in God, that is the rope that holds.

The right rope must be secured with the right knot. There are many who know God but they are secure in the faith. They are loosely connected with him. Many of our associations with God are connected by slip knots and half hitches. A slip knot and a half hitch will lose their connection under any type of pressure. Yet, there are many in the world who have a slip knot relationship with God. They are loosely connected to their church, worship, bible study, giving and service. They know God but they are loosely connected. David in Psalms 31:1 said, "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness." In verse four David said, "Pull me out" of the net that has been set by others. Tie the right knot, hold on and God will

pull you out.

God will untangle the knots: There are many who are so tangled up that they can hardly make any sense out of their lives. They spend most of their lives trying to straighten things out. Often, the more we try to straighten things out, the more we mess them up. A rope that is all knotted up is hard to untangle, just as a life that has been wrapped up and tangled up in the world. You can't untangle it yourself, trying to make yourself good enough to earn God's grace and favor. You will never be able to straighten out the mess you have made, but God can straighten it out and will keep you from falling again. What are the knots? Moral issues? Matters of faulty relationships? Do we have histories that haunt us? Let God straighten it out. He will take hold of it. Let him straighten it out, then hold on.

Your Rope will hold

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should approach every difficulty with the confidence that as long as we hold to God's hand he won't let us go.

God's grace is the rope that holds our hand. Despite the fact that grace is available to every believer there are still many who fail to hold to God's hand because they don't know how.

To hold God's hand successfully, we must not try to hold on to his hand, as much as we ask him to hold our hand.

When God holds our hand he guides us.

When we allow God to guide us, we allow him to take control of our lives and guide us along the way. That's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Lead me. Guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray."

When God holds our hand, he holds us because we might be tempted to let go.

When life gets difficult and tiresome, our hands tend to sweat and to tire and we may start to slip in our faith, church attendance, giving and general spirituality.

When God holds our hands, even if we slip a little, he still holds on!

No wonder the old warriors sang, "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to take care of my family, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to deal with the raging storms in my life, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to make sense of the madness that surrounds me;

I don't want to run this race alone!

We should let God hold our hand because we can be sure that if he holds our hand that he won't let go.

I'm reminded of the old lady who became lost in a snow storm. The guide gave her a rope before the storm began and told her to hold on to the rope in case she couldn't see her way. "No matter what you do," said the guide, "hold on to the rope, it guide you to us or help us find you." In the storm a sudden blizzard seperated the

party. The old lady reached out her hand but she couldn't find the rope. As the snow began to build higher over her, the townspeople began to worry. They decided to search for the rope and follow it back along the trail. The old lady was too weak to move under the snow that was covering her, but the townspeople kept searching for the rope. Just before daybreak a townsman spotted the loose end of the rope and began to dig through the snow. They found old lady with her hand curled closed as if she had been holding something.

After they dug her from the snow and warmed her by a fire, the rescuer said, "We never would have found you if you had not been holding the rope. How did you hold on so long? The old woman said, she searched in the dark but could not find the rope. I lifted up my hand and said, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know."

I wasn't holding on to the rope I was holding on to the grace of God."

Every saint should hold on to the grace of God

The Grace of God can make the weak strong and give rest to the weary!

The Grace of God can lift the fallen and raise up a bowed down head!

The Grace of God can bring victory to the defeated and joy to those who are sad.

The Grace of God comes through the blood of the crucified lamb.

The Grace of God is from Jesus, the son of the living God, who died out on Calvary!

He stayed in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave all power in his hands!

No. 9438-Youth

Life looks better when you color inside the lines

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 23, 2010

SCRIPTURE: The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Psalm 37:23

Introduction

Have you ever watched a small child color a picture? Have you noticed that sometimes they color outside of the lines? As children we are taught to color inside the lines. For some that is difficult. Not only can we not color inside of the lines, we also have difficulty choosing the right colors to use. As we mature we not only learn how to stay inside the line but to choose tones and colors wisely.

One of the basic things that we teach children is color distinctions. While that may appear simple, in reality there are many children who do not know the difference between their colors; some call red blue, orange blue and yellow blue. Everything is blue. They can't tell the difference.

Teaching colors, along with language skills, and other intangibles is one of the primary teaching tasks of parents and educators.

First, we teach them to differentiate between colors, because at an early age recognizing colors is a difficult task.

Those who teach preschoolers have developed a variety of techniques to show children how to distinguish one color from another. However, despite the technique used, it is often shown that the ability to make the distinctions is usually associated with a child's maturity level and age.

Not only do we teach children to recognize colors but also teach them the proper application of colors, tone and most importantly, how to put the right color in the right place. This is the time when we show them that grass is not black and the moon is not green. This is when they learn about keeping their colors in the proper place and order.

Sometimes children color beautiful pictures but use the wrong color and color outside of the lines.

How important is it to color inside the lines? It's important because it makes the picture look better. Any picture could be drawn outside the lines; in fact there are

many artist called impressionist who follow none of the established rules or patterns at all, they simply paint colors and lines as they see them. The shapes are sometimes contorted, meshed or fractured in so many strange ways that many of us don't perceive of them as works of art alone. If presented with the art of Michelangelo and that of Monet most of us would choose Michelangelo every time. He seems to color inside the lines.

There is a sense of order when the lines are clear and we keep whatever colors we choose to use inside the lines.

What about God? He has given each of us a life to live and to beautify. He's also given us an outline of what the Godly life is supposed to resemble. He allows us to use our imaginations to determine the color; all He asks is that we stay inside the lines.

As Christians, our desire is to live a life that is pleasing to God, ordered by his rules but free enough to express ourselves in a variety of ways.

Exposition

This passage paints a picture of a godly life that is ordered in the word of God.

David had many experiences in the course of his life from which he drew wisdom. He learned that God blessed believers with a happy life if they lived their lives within his rules. That's the truth he unraveled in Psalm 1 when he said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night." David could make this observation because there was a point in his life when he crossed the line and walked a crooked path. He took another man's wife and killed her husband in an attempt to hide his sin. He was depressed, sick in his soul and afflicted with venereal disease in punishment for his deeds and his soul cried out "create in me oh Lord a clean heart and renew in me a right spirit." In reflection he concludes that his life was better, clearer and happier when he stayed within God's law.

In Psalm 37:23-24 he notes that when we order our lives according to his will, he protects us and establishes us. In Psalm 37:25-26 we are promised that he will provide food for those who obey him. In verse 27-29 he promises security for the righteous.

It all seems to say that there is a great blessing in store for us when live by God's law. That's why he adds in verse 25, "I have been young and now I'm old, but yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread."

Applying the Colors

KNOW YOUR COLORS: With our eyes we see only three basic colors: red, yellow and blue. Everything else is a mixture of the three. In print, as many who have color printers have learned it takes four colors of ink for you to see color on paper, Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and black. All of the other colors are formed when they are mixed together. Just as a child learns his/her colors so should we. It is said that colors represent our mood, that why some who are depressed say they have the blues, those who are envious are said to be green with envy, and those who are happy are said to be tinkled

pink. As we grow in our relationships we should be aware of the moods of our friends and life partners. There are days when we are happy and days when we are said and they impact our mood. When we start shifting from one mood to the other on a regular basis, the therapists call us bi-polar. There many bi-polar church members: We love the Lord one day, but don't love him much at offering time. We sing God praises when we get a new tire, then curse when we get a flat tire. Even worse, there are some who work hard for the Lord's kingdom and tear it down by their lifestyle, language and dress. An ordered life is one where all of the moods are in check. We are not spiritual ADHD cases, unpredictable, explosive or uncontrollable. The ordered spiritual life that has periods of happiness, mourning, and achievement but it never shifts into disbelief, distrust, and hate. When we rise angry, distrustful and filled with vengeance, we have selected the color for the day, we have ordered up a day. Those who wake up thinking, "This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it," color that day with hope and optimism. That day will be a day in which your steps are ordered by the Lord. Color that day blessed.

RIGHT COLOR WRONG TONE: There are many today who wear the right colors but the wrong tones. Our lives our out of order when can can't get control of the tones. When we have the wrong tone, we may say the right words but the tone suggests the opposite of what we want. Tone is the difference between wearing a splash of red here and there and wearing blood red shoes, shirt, hat, socks, and tie. Tone is knowing how far to take it. Tone is knowing what to say and when to say it; what to wear and when to wear it; what to do and when to do it; who to call and when to call them; what to eat and when to eat it; Tone indicates levels of degrees. Tone and balance is one of the things that we learn as we mature. We don't want to be wild and crazy, but neither do we want to be dull and sad. With maturity, we learn to balance the tones in our lives. That's why Psalm 39:1 encourages us to bridle our mouths and tones, so that we don't say the wrong thing, or say the right thing but at the wrong time. Learning to order our lives means that we learn to discipline ourselves so that we live according to the word of God. When David spoke of ordered steps, it included controlling the tone of our relationships with each other so that they give God the greatest glory.

STAY INSIDE THE LINES: There are many who want to paint a pretty picture for themselves but they have difficulty staying inside the lines. What are the lines? The lines are the moral laws of God. We get an ugly picture when we color our lives outside of the lines, no matter how pretty the colors. Two people who live together without being married paint their relationship with the bright color of love, but shacking is outside of the line. The person who furnishes a beautiful home with stolen merchandise paints his home with the color of success, but receiving stolen goods is outside of the line. Selling food stamps is outside of the line? Selling your children's social security number for cash is outside of the line; dealing drugs, shoplifting and buying bootleg DVD's on the street corner is outside of the line. It's easy to get outside of the line, especially when we color real close to the line; unlike the little child that can't tell the difference, we know how to stay inside the line but we flirt with the line and

sometimes cross it. Is that not what happened to David and Bathsheba? Every day, he watched her from his window and finally he crossed the line. That was also the case with Samson and Delilah. Some want avoid God, the church or any people who might show them the lines. Like the impressionist artists, they want to live life as they feel it without restrictions or rules and if God wants them he'll have to take them just as they are by their take it or leave it rules. Yet God's lines are not erasable. Like the lines in a coloring book you can't change them. If you color outside of them you mess up your life's picture. That's what the devil wants us to do but we should resist that temptation. That's why James 4:7 directs us to "Resist the devil" and he will flee from you. David concluded that the person who orders his life according to the will of God lives a blessed life that is pleasing to the almighty.

Ordered lives look good

Finally, brothers and sisters, it is important that we consider that when we color our lives inside of the will of God we are blessed.

David said the steps of a good man are ordered. These are the ordered strides of a man who is confident that no matter what life brings, God will make a way.

The true believer's life is colored with measured steps. They are colored in confidence that each step made in the spirit of truth will draw closer the goal.

Believers who color their lives are not in a hurry, but are willing to wait for God to provide the opportunity at the right moment and at the right time.

The believer who colors his life with faith also colors his life with prayer and devotion to God. Through prayer he can:

—Reach out for the intangible; look up for the invisible

—Listen for the inaudible; Long for the incomparable

—Believe in the incredible; Wait for the inevitable

A believer whose life is colored with the Crayon of faith is one who has learned to:

—Follow where God leads; and to Listen when God speak;

—Claim what God promises; and to receive what God gives.

A believer knows his colors and won't get the mixed up.

Blue represents peace, tranquility, and confidence. David must have been wearing blue when he said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Black is the absence of light and represents power, sexuality, sophistication, formality, and elegance, in some occasion it also associated with mourning. The psalmist might have been wearing black when he wrote, "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil."

Green represents nature, environment, health, good fortune, renewal, and youth.

David might have been wearing green when he said, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth."

Yellow represents joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, imagination, hope, caution and sunshine. David might have been wearing yellow when he wrote in Psalm 111:1, "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart."

White is what we see when all colors come together in perfect balance. It represents reverence, purity, simplicity, cleanliness, peace, and sterility. Saints will be wearing white when the question is asked, "Who are these who are dressed in white robes?" These are they who have come out of great tribulation. These are they who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb!

Red is associated with love, danger, desire, speed, strength, violence, anger and the blood. The song writer must have been wearing red when he declared "The blood shall never lose its power. It reaches to the highest mountain. It reaches to the lowest valley. The blood that gives me strength from day to day, it shall never lose its power.

It must have been a bright yellow day when Jesus rode in Jerusalem because the crowds called out Hosanna in the highest.

But it must have been a dark brown when they arrested him in the garden.

It must have been hazy gray when they put a purple robe on his back.

It must have been a dark gray day when they put an old rugged cross on his shoulder

It must have been dark day when he called out to his father, "Forgive them for they know not what they do."

It must have been black night, when they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But Early, Sunday morning he arose from the grave wearing the color of victory!

Victory over death!

Victory over pain!

Victory over despair!

No. 9439-Graduation

Great Expectations

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 30, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," Ephesians 3:20

Introduction

Is it logical to expect Great things from God? When God says we can expect beyond our imagination does that sound possible?We often hear that passage from Philippians, you know the one that says we can do all things through Christ which strengthens us, but do we really believe what it says? Does that sound too good to be true. We remember Grandpa's steady advice: "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is."

Are God's promises like the infomercials we see on television: Lose 30 pounds in 30 days while eating all the pizza, ice cream, nachos you want? This knife cuts nails like it cuts warm butter! Infomercials often raise our expectations higher than they can deliver.

At worship we often hear words of inspiration that tell us that with God we can do anything or that we can be all that we want to be if we put our mind to it. However, even as some hear those words and say "Amen" in agreement, there are many who simply cannot see themselves doing any more in life than they are presently doing.

At graduation, the speakers are inspiring. Graduates are told that there is no mountain too high for them to climb and no goal they cannot achieve. The words were like ear candy but how many of the graduates actually believed what they heard?

Soren Kierkegaard tells a parable about a community of ducks, waddling off to duck church to hear the duck preacher. The duck preacher spoke eloquently about how God had given the ducks wings with which to fly and with these wings there was nowhere that the ducks could not go. There was no God given task that the ducks couldn't accomplish. With those wings they could even soar into the presence of God himself and the duck congregation quacked, "Amen." And at the conclusion of the service the ducks left commenting on what a wonderful message they had heard. And waddled all the way home. Not a single one lifted a wing and tried to fly.

How many of this graduating class actually believe they can become doctors, nurses, school teachers, bankers or other professionals? If they really believed in that

possibility why have so many already made up in their minds that higher education is not for them? Not necessarily college, but academic training beyond high school in the field of their choice. If we believe it's possible why have so many in every graduating class given up so easily?

Many are probably victims of low expectations. Today, Holy Spirit reminds each believer that there is nothing impossible for them to accomplish but we must believe to achieve. We must believe in God and believe in ourselves.

Let's not be satisfied with merely walking across the stage of life, but let's develop a hunger to do a great work; something bigger than anyone ever expected, more important than anyone ever dreamed and more lasting than anyone would have ever imagined.

Having said that listen to the words of the text again, "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish exceedingly abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (v. 20).

The text makes it clear that without God working in us the greatness we desire will be elusive. We need him to show us how to work our program.

As Christians, let us be willing to step out on faith and do a great work for God. Let us prepare to dream big, and imagine big as the world becomes our mission field in the name of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he closes his letter to the Ephesians with a doxology of hope and encouragement. Paul was trying to accomplish the impossible in Ephesus. He wanted Jews and Gentiles to work together in Christ and to love each other in the Lord. To those who said such a feat was impossible and unheard of he responded that God is able to do all things, even those things we have not even imagined.

Paul told the Ephesians that there is a power working within every believer that, when unleashed can do much more than we ever imagined. In verse 18 he noted that this power within us prepares us so that we "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" It is the hidden power of God that will help us to understand and interpret the events we will face and to know the limits of our own ability while trusting the limitless grace of God.

What we expect

GOD IS ABLE: Every believer will face a number of difficulties in the years ahead; those years must be faced with the confidence that regardless to what happens, God is able to help us handle every situation. The future looms in front of us like a wide valley, gorge or expanse. We don't know how we will cross each hurdle, what we do know is that God is able.

We are not quite sure how we will handle the next phase of our lives, semi-

independent from our parents. When that doubt comes we should remember, God is able.

We are not sure about our financial situation, whether we will be able to have enough resources to see us through. When that worry comes, we should remember, God is able.

We are not sure whether we are really ready to be a young adult with all of the freedoms that come with this period of our lives. When that feeling of insecurity comes, remember, God is able.

We are not sure whether we can keep it together and do all of the things that are expected of us by others as well as our own personal expectations. When that feeling peeks its head into your life, remember God is able.

That's what the three Hebrew Boys said when they faced the fiery furnace; three young men whose futures and very lives could have been ended by the flames. They responded that, God is able to deliver them.

When the difficult years come and feel that there is no way out, remember God is able.

TO DO EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY ABOVE WHAT WE ASK: How much is God able to do to help believers achieve their purpose? How far is he willing to go to make it happen? To answer those questions Verse 20 uses two adverbs back to back to give us an idea of how much God is able to do. An adverb modifies any words other than nouns. It usually answers a question. The statement is made that God is able to do above all that we ask. How much is God willing to do? Exceedingly, abundantly! In what way will God do these great things for us? Exceedingly, abundantly! To what extent will do these things for us? Exceedingly, abundantly! There are not enough words to express what God is willing to do for those who trust him, so two adverbs and stacked together to say that what God is willing and able to do: Exceptional, extraordinary, unusual, intense to the point of excessive, inordinate, uncommon, liberal, substantial, profuse, generous, exuberant, bountiful, plentiful, enormous, excessive, remarkable, striking, inspiring, superior, superlative, awesome and humongously great. That's why the two adverbs are side by side. They summarize all that believers can expect God to do to help us achieve our purpose in furthering his kingdom. A song writer looked at this text and penned the words:

God has provided for me every day
And if I need more, He'll just make a way
I may not have everything, still I lack nothing
It's hard to believe it, so I'll just receive it
Exceedingly, wondrously, marvelously, gloriously
All needs supplied, He is right by my side
I may not have everything, still I'm abundantly.....
Blessed.

A POWER WORKING IN US: Every believer has the power of God working on the inside. The power of God directs us when we can't find our way and it restrains us when we are going a little too fast. This same power motivates us when we are slow to start and stimulates us when we need a little more just to keep going. Paul said the power

of God works within us.

We have the power of God in us so we should not hesitate to work the power. What's wrong with dreaming big? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first woman president? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first scientist to find the cure for the common cold? What's wrong with dreaming being the best parent that the world has ever seen? A better preacher than your pastor? A better musician than the world's best? What wrong with dreaming of changing the world and bringing out peace? One thing the power of God does for us is releases us to dream and imagine. One of the problems with old people is that we dream dreams of yesteryear but we have trouble dreaming visions of years to come. The man or woman who keeps dreaming visions is forever young. Work the power!

To that dream happen, work the power. Enroll in school, work the power!

Resist the temptation to stop your studies just because you graduated from high school. Work the power!

Even if you have a child out of wedlock, have to work two jobs and find yourself struggling, work the power; don't stop dreaming!

Even if you have to double your efforts and wear out your knees in prayer, don't give up, work the power!

You have within you the power to achieve whatever you can imagine; whatever you can dream, so don't waste the power on little dreams.

Two men dream of owning cars and they prayed that God would answer their prayers. A few years later a box was delivered to each of their doors. When they opened the box each found a single item. One man found a model car that completed his set. He was happy that he received his dream. The other man had a key. It was the key to an auto dealership through when he owned not one car but hundreds of cars. Both men received an answer to their prayers the difference is that one dared to dream big!

Dreaming big is the difference between being a football player and owning the team!

Dreaming big is the difference between being a movie star or the producer who owns both the studio and the star.

Dreaming big is the difference between being a teacher who changes the lives of a hundred children or the U.S. Education Secretary who changes the lives of millions.

Dream big, and shoot for the stars, if you miss at least you'll hit moon.

Work the power within.

It's that something within us that prompted the songwriter to sing, "Something within me that holdeth the reins. Something within me that banishes pain. Something within me, I cannot explain, all that I know, there is something within."

God expects Great things from us

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that while we expect great things from God along our journey, God expect great things from us as well.

There is an old saying, "To whom much is given, much is required." That applies to young believers as well.

God expects a few things from us.

God expects us to keep the faith and never let go of our passion and love for Him.

God expects us to resist the temptation to flirt with world as soon as we are out of mother's sight!

God expects us to get up after we stumble and try again!

God expects us to continue to worship Him and give him praise!

God expects us to get up if we fall, fail or experience defeat!

God expects us to keep trying, never stop striving and always move forward!

God expects us not to doubt Him. As long as God is still on the throne, God expects you to remember that if you are:

—Praying for Rain, you need to get your umbrella ready!

—Praying for bread, you need to grease the pan!

—Praying for a job, you need to get your resume ready!

Why? Because God is able!

Don't stop expecting God to bless you!

Don't stop expecting God to make a way for you!

Don't stop expecting God to open doors for you!

There is only one door. I heard him say in John 10:14, " I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"

The Lord expects for you to remember to call His name!

His name is Jesus!

He came and died to raise our expectations and give us new hope!

He died on an old rugged cross to give us hope!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave offer us great expectations!

No wonder the songwriter declares, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name!

On Christ the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand!

No. 9440-Inspiration

All up in my business

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 6, 2010

SCRIPTURE: " And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. Mark 1:23-25

Introduction

Does it irritate you when someone meddles in your business?Most people prefer to handle their affairs privately without interference from others. In an ideal world each of us would be able to conduct our affairs the way we want without others jumping in uninvited.

You know the feeling because you have had it to happen to you.

Buy a new car and your friends are all up in your business: how much did it cost?

Who signed for it? What was your interest rate? How were you able to get it that cheap when no one could?

Get a new friend? Who is he? Where is from? Does he have any money?

Get a new job. Who are you working for? How much do you make? How did you find out about it?

Get a raise. Why did he give you a raise and not me? How much was it?

Have a family dispute? What were you fighting about? Who hit whom? Did you call the police? Are you planning a divorce? Who's going to get the house?

Unless you are a public figure, you have a right to expect to be left alone. Even so, your friends will get in your business, so will your parents and your co-workers and the neighbors across the street. People are so nosy that when they come to your home they read your mail left on the table, try peek at your computer screen and inspect everything they see. They can't stay out of your business.

When you were young, your parents stayed in your business; they were always asking questions. They made you take your medicine, eat your food and they wouldn't let you drive because you were not old enough. They wouldn't let you date because you were too young.

Now they are old, and you're all up in their business telling them what to eat, when to take their medicine, snatching their car keys because they are too old and not approving their special friends and dates because you think they are too old.

Everybody is up in everybody else's business.

There are times when we just want to be left alone. Those are the times that we want to reach in our pockets and give that nosy person a dime and tell them to buy themselves some business and leave ours alone.

What do you do when God decides to get up in your business? You can't shut Him out or ignore Him. You can't raise your hand and give Him the brick wall. Unlike your neighbors, when God gets in your business He can straighten it out and work it out.

As Christians, we invite the Lord into our lives. He is always welcomed in our business because He will always lead us in the right way and help us do the right thing.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus bringing his ministry to Capernaum after having experienced the rejection of his hometown of Nazareth. Now in Galilee he went to the synagogue for the Saturday morning service and spoke and taught as one with authority.

And in the synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit and he spoke out with the voice of the devil saying "Let us alone."

This occasion did not occur in a house of ill repute, tavern, or in location of disrespect, but in the synagogue.

The man spoke on the behalf of others similarly situated for he said "Let Us Alone" in the first part of the verse and spoke for himself in the latter part of the verse when he said "I know thee who thou art?"

Whether the evil spirits were spread among many people or all concentrated is not known in this instance. But on Mark 5:9 Jesus spoke to a graveyard wild man and the devils in him identified themselves as "Legion" because they were many and all in one man.

The cry of the bedeviled man was the cry that comes from all those entrenched in devilish activities, "Let us Alone."

Leave me alone

SAINTS WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE: We often desire to be left alone. The reasons vary. Some want to be alone to be creative. Those who are blessed with creative talents and abilities often find themselves unable to function creatively without a block of time in which they can think and reflect. As schedules become busier and quality time diminishes they are only able to produce spurts of creativity every now and then.

There are others who need to be alone to think and study. Students need quality time to think, study and reflect on their lessons and on their own self-development. Professionals whose jobs require expertise and concentrated thought often need time

alone to do the best work.

There are some who need to be alone to weep, to emotionally unload, and re-gather themselves after a personal loss, failure, death or serious illness.

This need to be left alone is often misinterpreted by those close to us who think we are rejecting them, but a retreat is often necessary to regroup, restore and start again.

There are others who still find they must be alone to talk to God. They need quality time when the radio is not blaring, phone not ringing, and children are not crying; a quiet time to talk to God.

Our Savior often sought such times to talk to God. He began his ministry with a 40 day retreat into the wilderness to talk with God. When the crowds pressed he often retreated to a boat or to the other side of the lake to be alone and talk to God.

That's why the song writer wrote, "I come to the garden alone, while they dew is still on the roses, and the voice I hear falling on mine ear the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am His own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, no other has ever known."

SINNERS WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE: We are rebuffed the most by those who are irritated because people are all up in their business. Sinners are disturbed that church folks are always questioning their drinking habits, why they party; why they are shacking; why they never save their money, why they fight or cuss. You see the man with the bad spirit was at the synagogue; he was a worship with an evil spirit that did not want God in his business.

It would be more comfortable for sinners if Christian folks would stay out of their business. Hasn't an angry son told his parents, "why you up in my business?" Hasn't a daughter told her mother, "I wish you would let me alone?" Sinners can't be comfortable in the presence of righteousness. The evil spirits that possessed the man in the text were extremely uncomfortable in the presence of Jesus. They would not be able to operate successfully in his presence and although Christ had not said a word to them, they blurted out in one voice "Let us alone!" In the same way the demons inside of us respond when a friend, a parent or co-worker gets in our business in ways that threaten our fun or question our unrestrained sinful acts. We, too scream, "Why don't you let me alone."

GOD WON'T LET THE RIGHTEOUS ALONE: Just as a child, even a grown child, gets a call from mother regularly offering help, advice and listening ear, God does the same for the righteous. He often intervenes, especially when we are misdirected, disturbed, confused and losing hope and strength. God is always there.

Unlike, the bedeviled man, we want Jesus to get in our business because we know he can speak to the evil situations in our lives. He can speak to the pains in our bodies. He can speak to the trouble in our homes. He can speak to evil influences that have troubled us on so many levels.

When a sinful word attacks us we don't want to be left alone. We want God to intervene because He's a God that can speak to our situation and evil will flee. Isaiah 31:2 (MSG) "Still, he must be reckoned with, a most wise God who knows what he's

doing. He can call down catastrophe. He's a God who does what he says. He intervenes in the work of those who do wrong, stands up against interfering evildoers."

We may enjoy occasional moments when are alone with ourselves, but we glad to know that God won't let us alone.

God will intervene when he has to; if His intervention will save us.

God won't let us alone to sulk in pity after a great loss.

God won't let us alone to wallow in defeat.

God won't leave us alone to deal with the problems of our careers and families.

God won't leave us alone to shoulder the responsibilities that we have assumed singularly.

When we need Him but are too often stubborn to ask him, God will get all up in our business.

King Ahaz worried about his nation's situation and God told him to ask for a a sign, but the King wouldn't ask. That's when God decided to get up in his business and give him the sign anyway, " Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Sometimes God has to get in our business and remind us that in his Son, there is victory.

God won't leave us alone

Finally, we should rejoice in the knowledge that not only will God not let us alone, neither will he leave us alone.

The great joy of the Christian life is knowing that God will never leave us alone.

No matter what situation confronts us we will never be totally alone.

As Jesus prepared to return to heaven he assembled his disciples and told them that he would not leave them alone saying: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:18. His final charge to his disciples was to remind them that he would be with them constantly. "..and lo; I will be with you alway, even until the end of the world." Matthew 28:20.

Christ's reminder to his followers is still the same, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." His words of faith and confidence now become the watch words of his followers: "..yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." (John 16:32)

I'm reminded of three elderly ladies who had to stay at home alone. One of the women grew confident and bragged that she had a .357 magnum to protect her if anyone came to bother her. The second lady said she had a .44 and knew how to use it. The third lady said she had 1-44 and a 27:1 and she was ready no matter what came her way. That night burglars came to all three homes and the women met the next day o talk about their experience. The first woman said "I tried to use my .357 but I forgot to load it and the burglar took all my belongings. The second woman said she fired her .44 but it knocked her through the door and the burglar got away. The third woman said "Nothing happened at my house, nobody came in." The two ladies wanted to know her secret and she replied: "While you carried a .44 I carried Psalm 144:1-2 which says 'Blessed

be the Lord my strength...my goodness, my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield, in whom I trust.." To her friend she said "You carried a .357, but I carried Psalm 27:1 ' The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?' When you went home you were alone, but I've got somebody who will never leave me alone!"

I don't know about you but I'm glad that God won't let me alone!

I'm glad that He won' leave me alone!

No wonder the song writer declared, "I've seen the lightning flashing and heard the thunder roll. I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which tried to conquer my soul. I've heard the voice of my savior he bid me still fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

No never alone!

He promised never to leave me ..never to leave me alone!

They put an old rugged cross on his shoulder, but He promised never to leave me alone!

They drove nails into his hands, but He promised never to leave me alone!

He died out on Calvary, but He promised never to leave me!

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb, but He promised never to leave me alone!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in His hands because He promised never to leave me alone!

No. 9441-Father's Day

The Definitive Father

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. Mark 14:36

Introduction

What is your definition of a real father? The answer to that question varies depending on the respondent because the definition is in constant transition. When we think of fatherhood in the modern setting the images are not the same as those evoked a generation ago. Many make distinctions between real fathers and those who are just "Baby Daddies" or sperm donors. To many children being a father only means being a man who pays child support.

Yet, the real father is much more than just a title or a tongue and cheek "baby daddy" or a name on a check. A real father is a man who loves, protects and provides for his children. Prerequisite to being a real father is being a male who can do the right thing when all others around him are doing wrong and is willing to shoulder responsibility for the care of himself and those in his charge. Those who have mastered this truth have also learned the secret to real fatherhood.

As Christians, godly men have learned through generations of trial and error that those who have the courage to love and protect their wives, nurture their children and stand for what is right are real fathers in the sight of God.

Exposition

Peculiar to this text is the idea of God as He is perceived in the New Testament context and in the hearts of believers.

The text notes the words "Abba" and "Father" being used together. The latter is translated into English while the former is not translated at all, but remains in its Greek form. A key to a greater understanding of biblical teachings about father and God's role as father is indicated by the two words.

Abba is Greek word which means father. In fact, it is closer to "daddy" than father,

because of its personal implications. Abba is used in the New Testament because it is written in Greek. The Old Testament which is written in Hebrew only has one word that comes close in meaning and that is "Ab" which refers to "father."

Abba is the Aramaic word for Papa, a term of great intimacy and affectionate respect. It was normally the first word a child would utter, but adults could use it for their fathers as well; students sometimes used it of their teachers. Perhaps because it implied such intimacy, Jewish people never used it of God (though they did call him a heavenly father) except in an occasional parable by a charismatic teacher.

The Old Testament idea of father differs from that of the New Testament. In the Old Testament the father was Lord and Master of his home, closer to what modern times would describe as a dictator. He was a provider, decision maker and ruler. It was permissible, in the Old Testament context for a father to have many wives. So Abraham, Jacob, and many other patriarchs had several wives, as their resources allowed. Fathers were also given permission to destroy their children if they sinned, pick their marriage partners or to sacrifice them to God. Such authority is why Abraham could take young Isaac, bind him hand and foot and place him on the altar of sacrifice without thinking of any legal retribution. The father's right to sacrifice was understood.

The image of father in the Old Testament was one of respect, but rarely of love and compassion. "Ab" usually refers to a human father in the Old Testament. While there are only a few occasions in which "Ab" is used to refer to God in the old testament, they serve to paint a picture of God as a mean spirited, vindictive personality that is willing to punish generations of the innocent for the sins of a few.

The New Testament's idea of God's intimate relationship to humanity is a distinct feature of Jesus' teaching. God relates to believers as a father relates to his child.

In the New Testament context father is perceived differently. They are perceived as one wife husbands, loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Instead of being head and masters of their homes, they are perceived as an equal partner in the family, who assume the leadership role by common agreement as both husband and wife try to symbolize the relationship between Christ and the church. Instead of being a terror to his children, empowered to kill them if necessary, fathers are urged to provoke not their children to wrath. They are perceived as personal, friendly and concerned about the wives and children.

It is in this context that Jesus began a litany of different teachings referring to God as "Our father." His was a different view of father. It was a compassionate, concerned father who was strong, yet willing to do whatever is necessary to promote, protect and provide for his children.

When Jesus used the term Abba He referred to a personal God. He was talking to daddy! Father characterized God has a man of compassion and love for the entire family of God.

Paul, writing to the Romans used the term "Abba" to remind believers that they had been adopted into the family of God by their faith. Because of their belief in Christ and their willingness to accept him as their Lord and Savior they could claim

membership in the family of God with all rights and privileges.

Jesus redefined the meaning of father. We recognize God as our father and humbly submit to him as the stern but loving commanding presence in our lives.

The Black Father's image

The black father has been defined by nearly every entity other than himself. He has been told who he is, where he is now, and how far he can go. Even his image of fatherhood is shaped outside of his own experience. Once perceived as the provider and protector of the home, father in the context of the African-American experience, has been reduced to a mere caricature. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, author of "The Assassination of the Black Male Image" writes that the image of Black men in America has been carefully shaped by the national media which has pounded, twisted, and slanted Black male stereotypes into sensational headlines and T.V. sound bites whose combined message is that Black men are non-achievers, brutes, shiftless, lazy and criminal.

Even more than the national media, the music industry, mostly owned and controlled by groups outside of our community has played a pivotal role in shaping the definition of black manhood. The only images that America projects forcefully of the Black man is that he is either the ignorant Sambo or the hate filled Savage. When Hollywood wants to make a movie about Black life that shows Black men, the men in the movies will reflect one extreme or the other, the ridiculous antics of Step-in-fetch-it or the sheer rage of "Boyz in the Hood."

The black father should redefine himself in light of the word of God, not by images created of him in the media. The word of God teaches that every man is made in the image of God. Like every man he is charged with the responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth. He must be obedient like Abraham, faithful like Job and as sure as Joshua who declared "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord!"

Godly fathers are men of integrity

Godly fathers have a sense of integrity that is rooted in Godly principles.

Some have the notion that a man should do anything to feed himself and his family.

This is true, if by anything it is meant any "moral and just" thing. On the contrary, it is the real man who trusts God to strengthen him to be a provider as he uses every legal and moral channel available to secure his household.

The godly road is the high road; it is the path that men of integrity travel. The high road is not an easy path, in fact it is often difficult and treacherous path. Unfortunately, there are many men who have taken the road to least resistance. Too many are selling drugs, bootlegging movies, compact discs, and stolen merchandise, while involving themselves in a variety of unlawful activities all under the guise of feeding themselves and their families. They brush off the illegality of their actions by saying, "A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do."

Despite hard times our history shows that we have lived through wars, slavery, floods and depressions, but, for the most part, the men of our families refused to steal or involve themselves in wrongdoing in the name of "doing what we gotta do."

The three Hebrew Boys are prime examples of integrity in action. They were presented with many opportunities to promote themselves professionally and to survive the threat of death, yet they refused to eat from the King's table or bow to political demands that impugned their relationship with God. Their refusal took moral courage, but they stood on their principles.

Great fathers make tough choices to prepare themselves for leadership of their homes and the community in general. This important because real men complete the training they need to be competitive in the economic market. A young boy who claims he's a man but can't force himself to study or complete his education, may wear a man's pants, but he's still not a man. The man who throws his money away gambling, drinking and living large, may have fun, but he's living loosely like a boy, and is a far cry from the man he wants to be.

These attributes of manhood are taught by fathers around the world; they form the foundation upon which strong families are built.

Our character is refined like gold in the fire

Finally, brothers and sisters a Christian father is defined by his ability to withstand the fiery flames of the world with his character intact. Trial by experience is the best judge of our character because those who come through this experience are refined in the faith and closer to the ideal.

Whenever gold or other precious metal is extracted it has to be refined. The process is to heat the ore to such temperatures that the gold separates itself from rock, mud and other minerals in which it may be surrounded. Biblically, it is called being "tried in the fire." The trial by fire is when a father proves himself to his wife and children by passing the tests that life puts before him. The nature of the tests vary from health issues to finances, relationships, career challenges or career difficulties. These challenges have a tendency to reveal

Those who have weathered such storms know what it means to be tried in the fire. When we come through, like pure gold that is refined, all of the raw ore seems to float away leaving behind a purer spirit, a more sensitive nature, and a closeness to God. We went into our situation crudely but we arose more refined and able to stand whatever life throws at us. The Holy Spirit is the refining agent.

The Holy Spirit separates and then polishes us as we prepare for greater service.

Anyone who has been to God's refinery has no trouble praising God.

My father doesn't reside in Monroe or New York or Kansas City, but He sits high and looks low and He's with me wherever I go!

Whether you say, Abba or father, we are reassured that the God we serve us loves with an Agape love.

Some call Him Abba, others call Him father, but it all means one thing: we are His

children and He will work it out for us.

The definitive father is one who can stand tall but can reach low!

The definitive father is one who is defined not by the size of his wallet but by the depth of his heart.

The definitive father is one who is defined not by the physical strength of his body but by the moral fiber or his soul

The finest definition of father is that when we need him he is there; when nobody else can; he can.

I have a father who can take:

—Sadness and turn it to gladness; Misery and turn it into delight!

—Failure and turn it into success; Loneliness and turn it into happiness!

—Poverty and turn it into riches; Defeat and turn it into victory!

No wonder the song writer wrote: "I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece a clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

I am reminded of the little girl who had nightmares when she was young and was always afraid in the night. In the middle of the morning when her fears got the best of her she'd cry out, "Papa, it's dark, hold my hand!" No matter how many times she called him papa would get up and hold her hand every night. That picture of her papa sitting by her bed holding her hand, never left her mind, even after he died. Many years later she came to God. When the troubles of the world surrounded her she cried out "Lord, it's dark outside! Hold my hand!"

No wonder the song writer declared, "Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race.

I don't want to run this race alone!"

I don't know about you but I want Jesus to walk with me! He walked with my father, but I want Him to walk with me!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose after three days!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 9442-Inspiration

Owning God, Disclaiming the devil

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 13, 2010

SCRIPTURE: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 10:33; "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

Introduction

Have you ever seen the disclaimers on various products? They are rather humorous especially when they go to extremes to disclaim some of what they claim.

A disclaimer is an oral or written statement that details expectations, clarifies risks and limits liabilities between parties in a relationship.

In some instances a disclaimer says whose responsible if the rules are not followed. "If the sign says that there is no life guard on duty, swim at your own risk it means your family's ability to sue if you drown is limited or eliminated all together.

Whenever there is a disclaimer, someone is distancing themselves from any blame or leaving themselves a way out with a minimum of loss.

Have you seen the disclaimers in television ads? The web site howstuffworks.com says "Sometimes the disclaimer is in tiny fine print stuffed at the bottom of the screen for a handful of seconds. Other times it's actually spoken by a voice-over artist. Beer advertisers encourage Americans to "please drink responsibly." Extreme auto spots show cars tearing through empty streets and either tell audiences, "Please do not attempt," or assure them that the driver is on a "closed course." Drug manufacturers apply an odd disclaimer to erectile dysfunction drugs — "If it lasts for more than four hours, please consult a physician."

Some who are church members but not Christians have disclaimers on their lives that make excuses for their unwillingness to follow Christ fully. In fact every believer is a walking commercial for the Christian community. Sometimes we remember the disclaimers more than the testimony they give. Their commercial says, "I am a Church

member. I believe in God. I am a follower of Christ."

Then the disclaimer comes: "The faith I talk about on Sunday may not be reflected in my everyday living so any recordings or videos of what I say and do cannot be made without my written permission. Be advised that my actions are subject to change without notice. If any of my actions resemble actual Christians, living or dead, it is purely unintentional.

I can be washed in the blood but hand washed only in water warmed to my pleasing. Handle me with care and do not expose me to any situations that may bend me, fold me or otherwise get on my last nerve.

I am a Christian but this claim is void where it is prohibited or unpopular. You must accept me on an "as is basis" without any warranties expressed or implied.

Be on guard when you hear me speak because some of you may find my language objectionable with explicit lyrics, so parental guidance is advised.

I am able to show love in limited quantities on a one time per day per family basis, but I don't always come with a pleasant attitude, some assembly is required.

I'm a church member but I don't do much, you see, action figures are sold separately. I don't pray much so I don't have much power and batteries are not included.

If your dealings with me result in rash behavior, irritating conversation or swelling develops discontinue your dealings with me for a while. I must not be placed in stressful or flammable situations because I blow easily; I must not be punctured, cracked on or laughed at or I could be hazardous to your health.

I'm saved but don't deal with me if you see that my safety seal has been broken or tampered with by the devil. Sometimes I might make you sick to your stomach, if so, do not induce vomiting and if my behavior persists remember me in your prayers.

If I promise you anything allow four to six weeks for delivery but don't expect me to help in case of flood, hurricanes, lighting, volcanic eruption, tsunami, earthquakes, oil spills or acts of God unless you pay me.

I tend to get settled in my ways so shake well before using me in any service. Being a church member is easy but being a Christian could be a challenge. If you see me acting as a Christian I am dysfunctional; if this condition exists for more than four hours, something is seriously wrong consult a physician at once.

The real Christian needs no disclaimers; he or she trusts in God without reservation and his praise is on their lips continuously.

As Christians, we gladly acknowledge God's presence in our lives. We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. We tell of His goodness where ever we go.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul asserting to the Romans that he was not ashamed of Christ in any way.

For Paul, there was a great deal at stake. He was one who lived completely opposite from what the gospel taught. Instead of lifting the church he persecuted the church with a passion that identified him as a zealot of the destruction of all Christians. Now, after

encountering God himself, Paul boldly tells those who will hear him that he is not ashamed of Christ or his message of salvation and deliverance.

He was not ashamed to announce that he believed that Jesus was a man and God.

He was not ashamed to testify that he believed that a man who was crucified on a cross and buried in a grave actually arose from the dead three days later. Neither was he ashamed to admit that that he himself came face to face with God on the Damascus Road. Moreover, Paul made it known that he was not ashamed to announce that he lived by faith in Christ on a daily basis.

In verse 17 Paul speaks of the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God cuts off all pretenses. The righteousness of man is based upon situations and can be taken on or off like a coat or a jacket in response to the situation. Therefore, the self righteous can sound holy on Sunday and sound totally different on Monday. Their righteousness is not based on God but on self preservation and self elevation. In other words they are righteous if it protects them or elevates them in life. If it will threaten either of these then God, the people of God and the teachings of God are disclaimed. Paul made it known that there were no disclaimers that professed and attested to the righteousness of God 24/7. It is a righteousness of which he was not ashamed.

The phrase "faith to faith" points to progressive nature of our relationship with Christ. We accepted him on faith alone but we grow from one level of faith to another. Our baptismal faith is our root; it is our beginning. Our ceremonial faith is our worship, prayer and spiritual development and ministerial faith demonstrates itself in our willingness to serve others: to help the poor, the aged, infirmed and the disenfranchised, without thought of pay or commercial advantage. To some that is foolishness. Paul says, he's not ashamed to move from faith to faith and to live by that faith from day to day. He boldly announced that the just shall live by faith.

Paul's willingness to own Christ and his teachings in the face of a hostile world reflected the faith that Christ requires of each of us. Jesus told his disciples that those who disclaim him through their actions or words will also be disclaimed when they stand in judgment. His words ring in our ears: "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Dealing with Claims

Claiming God means to claim what he teaches and receiving what he offers. It also means denying the devil and his works. To do this there must be:

ANNOUNCING YOUR CLAIM: One visible attribute of the true believer is his willingness to acknowledge God. There is never an instant in which believers fail to see God's providential hand in their lives, so they proclaim His greatness. We glorify God by acknowledging Him as the source of every good thing we do.1 Corinthians 10:31 reminds us to acknowledge God in everything, including the seemingly small and mundane things such as eating and drinking. In essence we reflect the biblical teaching that "whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God." This is not conditional

or seasonal It never ends. In good times or bad we proclaim Him as our king. There is never an occasion when we deny Him or disclaim Him. Our testimony is sure, "God is good all the time; all the time God is good."

STAKING YOUR CLAIM: Believers have been promised that any good thing that true believers desire will not be withheld from them. Good things are those things which are according to God's will and plan for our lives. If what we want is in God's will it is a good thing and it will never be withheld. That's a promise that is reaffirmed in Psalm 84:11 which says, "No good thing will He withhold from them that work uprightly." Even though God has promised us His favor, many have not staked their claim. Paul writing to the Romans challenged them to move from "faith to faith." That means to step out on faith and stake your claim in life. Those who are planning to do big things for God should step forth on the belief that God has inspired their actions and stake their claims. When this nation spread West the government gave away lands in Nebraska and other areas. Those who wanted acres of free land had only to line up in a great race, reach the parcel of land they wanted and drive a flag in the ground and stake their claim! If you have not achieved your potential don't blame it on God, the promise has been made, but you must move from faith to faith to stake your claim. don't say God let you down. Don't disclaim him, go out and stake your claim!

RECLAIMING A DENIED CLAIM: There are many who have denied Christ and are reluctant to reclaim Him. Somehow they don't want to turn loose the world; they want one more party, one more weekend; one more wild fling, one more drunken orgy, one more plunge. The real Christian life requires complete dedication, with no disclaimers and some find that difficult. Consider the Pedestrian when he was suddenly hit by a car. As he flew through the air he felt instantly that he was breathing his last breath and wouldn't make it. As he lay on the sidewalk a minister ran to him and after calling for help, talked to him. The minister starting asking him to make his peace with God and renounce the devil and all his deeds. The man said, "Lord, forgive me for all my sins!" The minister said, "that's good but you need to renounce the devil and all of his deeds!" The man lay on the sidewalk quietly, then whispered, "Lord, forgive me for all my sins, I believe!" Again the minister said, "You must also tell the devil that you renounce him and all his deeds!" The man looked up at the preacher and said, "Until I know where I'm going, I don't think it would be a good idea to aggravate anybody!" Even at the point of death there are some that don't know which direction they are going! The prodigal son showed us the way. After coming to himself he said, "I will arise and go to my father and say father I have sinned against God and against thee, make me one of your hired servants." The father welcomed him home.

Own Up to Him

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should not disclaim the Lord we should own up to Him to an unbelieving world.

When the world looks at us funny it's easy for some to disclaim the Lord. That's what Peter did when Jesus was being tried in an unjust court, Peter denied Him three

times.

However, we can't show love for someone if we claim them when things are going well, but dump them when they are not.

Sometimes we disclaim family members. We require of them a level of perfection before we will love them.

That's our sister over there, but we don't claim her because she likes to drink and party.

That's our brother over there, but we don't claim him because he dropped out of school and hangs out on the corners.

That's our uncle over there, but we don't claim him because he curses and cheats on his wife. That's my auntie over there, but we don't claim her because she's a constant flirt and likes to steal other women's husbands.

That's our stepfather over there, but we don't claim him because he smokes and gambles all of his money away.

Yet, there's always somebody in the family that says, my brother may be in Jail, but he's still my brother and I love him anyway

My sister may be on crack and wasting her life away, but she's still my sister and I love her anyway.

True love doesn't require perfection; neither does it require us to endorse loose living and wrong doing; but true love looks beyond our faults and sees our need.

I'm glad that Jesus has laid claim to each of us. He said in John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me."

There may be a few black sheep in the fold, but he loves them one and all.

Christ doesn't claim us because we are perfect and have done nothing wrong, instead he claims us despite our imperfections.

The only thing that will make him disclaim us is that we won't claim Him.

If we deny him he will deny us!

I don't know about you but we should be glad to claim Christ as our savior and to praise His name!

We should claim the Lord and praise Him because His:

Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant.

Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure.

When God has done something good for us, we should be willing tell everybody and the God we serve.

We should tell it on our jobs! Tell it in the songs we sing! We should tell it in the joy that bubbles in our soul! We should never back down from a chance to say to the world, "I just want to thank God for being so good to me!"

Don't be ashamed to tell the world that it was God's grace that turned my:

—Bitterness and turning it to sweetness; Sadness and giving me joy!

—Loneliness and give me companionship; Emptiness and giving me fulfillment!

—Failure and showing me the victory; Discouragement and giving me encouragement!

More than that, tell the world that one day he saved my soul.

I don't know about you, but every now and then, I want to tell somebody that I serve a good God!

I want to tell somebody that he carried an old cross for me!

I want to tell somebody that he died out on Calvary!

I want to tell somebody that early Sunday morning that he arose from the dead!

Thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord!

...for you've been so good to me!

No. 9443-Inspiration

Who's afraid of the Boogie Man?

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 27, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41:10

Introduction

Have you ever been afraid of things that creep in the night My father's home was next to the cemetery. I slept in the back room only about 15 feet from a row of tombstones that were harmless in the day but struck fear in my heart at night.

In my room, the wallpaper was loose and hung from the wall in places. However, at night the room was dark. I was alone and it seemed that someone from the graveyard was looking in the window. The hanging paper seemed to breathe. I was terrified because I was told that when I did wrong that the Boogie Man would get me. I remembered I was supposed to feed the chickens that day and didn't. I was terrified that the Boogie Man would get me. I hid my head under the covers and would not move. I was too afraid to go to the bathroom or run for help. I believed that the Boogie Man would get me.

The next day I looked out the window only to learn that the graves had not opened.

The wall paper still hung and that there was no one lurking in the bushes. The boogie man didn't get me.

For many years my actions were controlled by the threat that the "Boogie Man" would get me if I strayed.

Many children today are still afraid of the Boogie Man; but did you know that many adults are afraid of the Boogie Man, too?

The Boogie Man" is the composite of everything that we fear. He's the unseen character that lurks behind every bush, corner and turn, looking for a chance to prey on us.

The fear of the Boogie Man, ghosts or monsters has been something that has been used to control the unsuspecting for generations. The Klan tried to frighten thousands of blacks during reconstruction by wearing sheets and burning crosses.

George Bush frighten the whole nation into a war in Iraq by making Saddam

Hussein into a Boogie Man who had weapons of mass destruction aimed at America.

Consider the little boy who was deathly afraid of the Boogie Man because his big brother always threatened him that the Boogie Man would eat him up. One day the big brother came into the room with a big bag of candy that he would not share with his little brother. There was no place he could hide the candy so he conjured up the bright idea of hiding it in the closet. He told his little brother that the bag of candy was the Boogie Man's and the Boogie Man was in the closet guarding the candy. For days the little boy wouldn't go near the closet, afraid of the Boogie Man. Then one day the bag fell over a piece of candy rolled on the floor and the little boy ate it and nothing happened. When his brother returned his little brother was holding the empty bag in his hand. "How did you get that bag? Didn't I tell you that if you go in the closest that the Boogie Man would get you?" The little boy answered, "At first I was afraid, but then I got me a bigger Boogie Man and he beat up your Boogie Man." The older brother asked, "What happened to the candy. When my boogie man was beating up you boogie man he got hungry and ate up your boogie man and the candy too and left me this bag!"—When he overcame his fear, the little boy couldn't be frightened by the Boogie Man anymore.

What's your Boogie Man?

It's the fear of the unseen and the unknown. Those who are afraid of their Boogie Man live in a constant state of fear, apprehension and doubt, always afraid could happen.

Some fear losing what they have and dread the thought of a day when they will have nothing. They become miserly and support few, if any charities. The prospect of insecurity is their boogie man. Some are paranoid; they feel everyone is out to get them. Everyone is a boogie man to them, and no one can be trusted.

Some fear sickness or death. Others fear failure or loss of public acclaim or social standing. In every instance, that which they fear most is always close by to haunt them, like the boogie man.

If the unknown is frightening you, then you need someone who controls the unknown on your side. You need someone bigger than the Boogie Man in your corner.

Men and women of faith look to Jesus as the their provider and protector. With him there is no fear of the unknown.

As believers we trust God every step of the way. He has promised to protect us and deliver us from all evil there is no reason to fear anything in this life, even the Boogie Man.

Exposition

Our text considers the Prophet Isaiah as he shares an inspirational prophecy with Judah. Judah had fallen to the Babylonians who took the brightest and best talents of the land back to Babylonia. The nation was destroyed and spiritually

decimated (destroyed).

However, Isaiah issued a prophecy that told of future events that would disturb the world when they happened, but would finally result in Israel being set free. He closed the 40th chapter encouraging Judah to be patient and wait on the Lord. His words to them were simple, "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount on wings as eagles, they shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint."

In the 41st Chapter he projects the rise of the Persian Empire, 150 years before it actually happened. In 44:28 he even names the King that will first move to set Israel free, by name, King Cyrus.

In a nutshell, Isaiah says to Judah, do not fear when you see these things come because they are necessary for the will of God to manifest itself.

Then comes our text words in verse 10, which say simply that no matter what others may do, people of God should "fear not." Why? "For I am with thee."

Be Not Dismayed

The bible reminds believers who may be disturbed about the events they see unfolding on the daily with one phrase, "Be not dismayed." What is dismayed? What does it mean? To be dismayed means to lose courage or faith.

Those words ring out in our ears.

Be not dissuaded.

Be not horrified.

Be not apprehensive.

Be not appalled.

Be not disheartened

Be not disillusioned

Be not destroyed

The reason that we should not be dismayed is because God is still God and he is still in control. When Israel stood at the Red Sea, Pharaoh's army approached them from the rear and the Red Sea loomed in front of them they were afraid of the unknown, but they received one command from Moses, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

In difficult times believers should heed that same admonition, "Stand Still and see the salvation of the Lord.

God will help us

Today, there are many people who see the rapid deterioration of our social order and have become overly afraid, yet we should hear God's words, "I will help thee."

If God has promised to help us why should we be afraid of the unknown.

Certainly there is reason for concern. Crime is rising, while interest in the things of God seems to be falling.

Jail cells are filling, murderers are killing, and our young people are dropping out of life "illn" and "chilling."

Too many people have smut in the brains, dope in their veins, and can't get along without heartaches and pains.

Many people look around them and even nature strikes fear in their lives.

Summers are getting hotter and winters are getting shorter. Leaves are falling early, hail drops out of nowhere on a sun shiny day, and cities are collapsing as earthquakes rumble.

Isaiah told Judah, not to be overly concerned because God has promised to help us.

Romans 8:31 seems to sum up the matter when it declares, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Others around you who do not understand the plan of God may get themselves overly upset about what they see, we hear God saying, "I will help thee."

Others may seek soothsayers, palm readers, witch doctors, quacks, hacks, voodoo, hoodoo, and try to go with the "mojo", but we know we can depend on the promise of God, "I will help thee."

God will Uphold the Righteous

There are many who are concerned that the unrighteous seemed to dominating our society, supported by the courts and a shift in governmental ethics.

The bible warns believers not to be overly concerned about evil doers; they are false Boogie Men who seem to be gaining today, but their fall is imminent.

Psalm 37:1-2 " Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Don't get too excited about the rise in homosexuality now endorsed by the President of the United States because it's been predicted that in the latter days, men would become lovers of themselves. Before.

We can claim what God has in store for us, these things must be.

Don't get too perturbed about increasing absentees in the churches over all the land. Jesus said in the final years before his coming, there would be a great falling away. These things must be!

I don't know what you think about it, but I've decided that David was right when he declared "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

When I hear about atrocities at home and abroad, I don't get too disturbed because I know that "all things work to the good of them that love the Lord, according to his purpose."

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote, "I do not know how long it twill be or what the future has for me. But this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday."

No reason for fear

Finally, brothers and sisters, we who know God should not be overly frustrated or dismayed because God is still on the throne.

Those who are dismayed are at the verge of giving up. Dismay implies disillusionment.

When you are dismayed, you lack the courage that it takes to go on!

When you are dismayed, you lack the vision that it takes to see your way clear!

When you are dismayed, you lack the hope that it takes to believe that no matter how bad it gets, the Lord will make a way!

When you are dismayed, your spirit gets low and you hang your head in defeat!

When you are dismayed, your smiling face is replaced by frowns and doubt.

But I heard the Lord say, "Be not dismayed, for I"-The all powerful God:

For I:

—Who rounded the earth in the palm of my hand

—Spangled the night with the moon and stars

—Batted my eyes and made the lightning flash

—Clapped my hands and made the thunder roll

—hollowed the valleys and bulged the mountains up!

"I am thy God..and I will strengthen thee!"

Oh brothers and sisters, these are perilous times in which we live but we should not despair or be dismayed.

Satan may be in the saddle for a while, but remember God is still on the throne!

Hatred might be all around us, but Jesus is still trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored!

Sin may be on a rampage, but Jesus is still Lord of Lords!

The world may be extremely wicked, but remember Jesus is still king of Kings!

If you think the world is getting out of hand, just remember what the little children say: "He's got the whole world, whole world in his hands!"

If the storms rise, be not dismayed

If the winds blow, be not dismayed

If your mountains get hard to climb, be not dismayed

If burdens seem too heavy to bear, be not dismayed

No wonder the song writer declared, "Be not dismayed what ere betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you!

He started taking care of you in the beginning of time when He said, let us make man!

He kept on taking care of you when made ways for us out of no way!

He kept on taking care of you when he put food on your table and answered your prayers.

He was taking care of you when he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Golgotha's Hill.

He was taking care of you when died out on Calvary!

No. 9444-Annv.-Homecoming.

Dancing in the Desert

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For The Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 4, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Then shall the lame[man] leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.;"and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. "Isaiah 35;6, 10

Introduction

Have there ever been times in your experience when you felt like dancing with joy? When great moments comes most of us make some type of expression of joy whether it's clapping our hands, stomping our feet or shouting with joy.

There are times when we dance. After a long and grueling campaign for the White House, Barack and Michelle Obama took to the floor at an Inaugural ball, with Beyonce Knowles singing at tune by Etta James. We watched as they danced to "At Last."

When the New Orleans Saints won their first Super Bowl the people of Louisiana danced down Bourbon Street and main street in hundreds of cities to the sound of "When the Saints go marching in."

When David successfully returned the Ark of the covenant to it's proper place in Israel, he was so happy the he began to dance up and down the main street. He didn't stop there, the scripture says he stripped off his clothes down to his under wear and unashamedly started leaping, jumping and dancing as the entire city watched. His wife was embarrassed, but he did not care he celebrated his joy.

We know the feeling. Not only do politicians and football teams dance after victories, but we dance after weddings, graduations, and birthdays. Solomon, in his great wisdom, said in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that there is a time to mourn and a time to dance. This dance is a holy dance, one that is dedicated to God and responds to his goodness.

This is probably what song writer Fred Hammond had in mind when he wrote, "When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon my heart, I will dance like David danced. I will dance. I will dance. I will dance like David danced."

As Christians, we get excited when we think about the goodness of the Lord. It's those grand moments when we are filled with joy an anticipation we feel like dancing, not dirty dancing, but dancing to the glory of the Lord

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy of Isaiah that told them of a great day when Israel, after having been exiled, would return home with much shouting, singing and dancing.

The events of this section of Isaiah, which cover several chapters, are important to Jewish history. These particular events are recorded three times in Scripture — 2Kings 18-19, 2Chronicles 29-30, and here in Isaiah. The fact that they are recited repeatedly emphasize their importance.

Here, God promises a deliverance of Israel and an eventual restoration. Three specific miracles are performed to give them reason for eventual joy.

—The death angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians (Isa. 37:36-38).

—The sun retreated ten degrees on the sundial of Ahaz (Isa. 38:7-8).

—God healed and extended Hezekiah's life fifteen years (Isa. 38:1-5).

The highlight of this passage is the prophecy that speaks about Israel's homecoming. Isaiah projects that there will be great excitement when Israel returns to Zion. The excitement will be so great that the lame will leap with joy, the mute will sing and dry springs will bring forth water in the desert.

When the righteous return to Zion there will be singing, shouting and dancing in the desert. Their rejoicing will reach to glory, praising God for his mercy and his goodness.

Reasons to celebrate

There are many reasons that we celebrate, some are public while others are personal. Each is a testament of our joy as recipients of the goodness of the Lord.

WE CELEBRATE WITH REUNIONS: Isaiah said Israel would celebrate when the people return home. The same is true with believers today. Many return home for class and family reunions. It is a time of renewal, reflection and celebration. There is plenty of laughter and nostalgic reflection on the struggles of the past.

When reunions are celebrated each person know that God has helped them to see their way through each that has passed. Each may have changed in their appearance but the God that brought each person through has not changed. He is still God and He is still blessing them today.

There is excitement in the voice of each person who tells how God healed them and brought them back to life.

Many voices are raised and eyes are widened as we are told how God touched lives and changed them.

Those who were failing but now stand on the pinnacles of success tell of their epiphanies and life changing experiences.

It all makes each person desire to testify to the goodness and greatness of God.

They get excited

Kirk Franklin in his classic song said, "I can't explain it, I can't obtain it, Jesus your love is so amazing, it gets me high up in the sky and when I think about your goodness it makes me wanna stomp, it makes me clap my hands, makes me wanna dance and stomp."

When we think of how God has been better to us than we have been to ourselves, we all feel like dancing in the desert.

WE CELEBRATE OUR VICTORIES: When we reflect on the road we have traveled we see our difficulties and frustrations but we also see our victories, thousands of them, over the frustrations that life has given us. Through it all, it has been God who has helped us withstand all of these troubles.

Our journey is one that has been filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself.

When our world was turned upside down by tragic events God's grace kept us from becoming cynical and disillusioned with life.

When we witnessed how evil some people can be, His love helped us to keep loving others despite the fact that there are some who are hard to love.

When failure was all around us, God's constant encouragement pushed us to "run and see what the end would be."

We celebrate because we know that God will never forsake us or leave us alone,.

We celebrate because God has shown us His great faithfulness. No wonder the song writer declared: "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

WE CELEBRATE WHAT WE HAVE BECOME: More than anything, those who have found the Lord get excited each time they think about what they have become in the Lord. Who would have thought that the hottest girl in the senior class would be the coolest mother of the church. Who would have thought that Mr. Hot lips would ever open his mouth to witness for God? Who would have thought that the class failure would actually turn out to be one of the most successful members of his class? Individuals should also look back over the journey they have traveled. Today, many are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent civic personalities. When we think back were remember the way we were and recognize that this has not always been the case.. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you:, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The King's Highway

Finally, brothers and sisters, we celebrate great accomplishments on this side of

heaven, but when we get home, there will be dancing in the streets of heaven.

The path we have chosen is taking us to heaven. In the wilderness of our experience, God has created a literal "highway of holiness" that is referred to in Isaiah 35:8. It is the path that God is opening to lead us to the fulfillment of our individual destinies. Those who know the Lord can see how he has blazed a trail for us through this wilderness experience, showing us the way around and through difficult times on our way to the Promised Land.

On this side of heaven, the Promised Land is different for each person, but collectively we are all on our way to paradise.

The song writer has declared, that there is a "highway to heaven. None can walk up there but the pure in heart. There's a highway to heaven. I am walking up the king's highway."

Everyday we are walking up the king's highway.

When we get there we will return home with songs of joy and praise for our deliverance.

When we get there we will return home rejoicing because of our triumphs over adversity.

When we get there we will return home singing and shouting "How I got over, How I got over. My soul looks back and wonders, How I got over."

When we get there we might sing with Mary, Mary, "I just wanna dance, dance, dance" because he took the "shackles off my feet."

A generation ago the Staples Singers angered many people because they had a song that made people so happy, they wanted to dance. For many it was the beat, but for others it was excitement generated when Mavis Staples said, "I'll take you there."

Like Mavis, I know a place where "ain't nobody crying, ain't nobody worried, ain't no smiling faces lying to the races."

I don't know about you but I know a place where:

-There are no wars because there is only peace;

-There is no hatred, because there is only love;

-There is no sadness, because there is only gladness;

-There is no weakness, because there is only strength;

-There is no death, because there is only life;

I know there is such a place because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

This place is a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

I know a place that will have perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

I know a place that will have perfect lighting, because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

I know a place that will have perfect medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go to the place called heaven. I want to be at the meeting!

I want to be at the meeting around the throne!
After, separating, from the right and the wrong
I want to be in the number, When the saints go marching home
Trouble will be over, sorrows will be gone
Then we'll have a meeting around the throne
Somebody will be dancing but they won't be jigalating!
Somebody will be dancing but they won't be Walking the Dog!
Somebody will be dancing but they won't be doing the Stanky Leg!
They will be leaping and jumping for joy, singing "I never would have made it without you Lord!
If you want to get there, come and go with me!
Come and go with me to an old rugged cross on a hill called Calvary!
Come and go with me to see His nail scarred hands!
Come and go with me to see His empty tomb!
Come and go with me and I'll show you the place where the disciples must have been dancing in streets, because Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
In my father's house there is joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 9445-Inspiration

Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 18, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3:17-18

Introduction

When do you find it easiest to praise the Lord? If you are like most people, it is easiest to praise the Lord after you have received a great blessing. During those times you are filled with excitement and joy and the urge to testify is intense. There are other times however, that some find it hard to praise the Lord. These are the times when events did not unfold as well as we expected. These are the times that we lost the game, flunked the test, failed an evaluation or missed the mark in some way. During times such as those many find it difficult to praise the Lord.

On a good day we are really in the mood for praise. On these days we stand on our feet, clap our hands and let the joy of the Lord be known and shared. We call it a good day when we everything goes as planned. When our ideas are accepted and we are rewarded. When our enemies are eluded and victory becomes our partner we know we are having a good.

What about bad days? Which days are those? Well, you know you are having a bad day when you call 911 and they put you on hold! You know you having a bad day when your twin brother forgets your birthday! You're having a real bad day when your birthday cake collapses because of the weight of the number of candles. When you read the obituary column of the paper and you see your name and picture; you're having a bad day. What do you do on a bad day? We should still praise the Lord.

We praise the Lord in ways associated with our personalities. Everyone doesn't stand and clap, so we shouldn't misinterpret the body language. Neither should we assume that everyone who claps their hands is having a good day. Consider the minister who was full of energy and enthusiasm for the Lord. One day he went to the hospital to visit one of his parishioners who was critically ill. The minister entered the room and saw the man lying in bed with a whole host of tubes and wires attached

to his body. Without any delay, the minister strode to his bedside and began to exhort him to be of good cheer. Soon the man became agitated and started to wave his arms. This encouraged the minister, and so he exhorted him more and more enthusiastically. Finally, the minister ended with a rather lengthy prayer. At the final "Amen" the minister opened his eyes just in time to see the man reach for a pad of paper and a pencil. Quickly he wrote something and handed it to the minister. Then he looked at the pad and read these words: "You are standing on my oxygen tube!"

As Christians we have come to recognize that God is good all the time, and all the time God is good. Since He is good all of the time then we should praise Him all the time; not just when someone is standing on our tube.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Habakkuk as he encourages the people of God to have faith despite difficult times.

The prophet Habakkuk had the difficult task of preaching to God's people as their country was threatened with distant prospect of war and trouble.

God speaks to Habakkuk personally and shows him how he is working in the events that will unfold to work out His will, even to the point of using what is obviously evil to accomplish an eventual good. Tough times were on the way, tougher than the nation had ever experienced. This prophecy showed both the trouble ahead and that which would linger afterwards.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 are displays of resignation and confidence. God showed Habakkuk an unavoidable evil that was forthcoming, yet he announced his trust in God's promise to raise Israel up as a great nation. His declaration to trust God displayed his unshaken confidence.

Habakkuk announced that the world is in God's control and not controlled by those who worship idols, wreak violence or seem to be victorious in their evil ways. He proclaimed that God is still in control and is still the master of the universe.

Thus, Habakkuk concludes that although there are difficult times ahead and troubles all around, the just should not give up the faith.

Living by faith has implications. Its implications are spelled out in verses 17 and 18. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The fig tree, the vine, the olive, the fields, and the cattle were symbols of success and prosperity. Even without the symbols, Habakkuk noted that he found a reason to rejoice; the rejoicing is in God himself. If God is still on the throne then there is a reason for hope tinged with joy, because in the end he and those who follow him will be victorious.

Tough times are threatening and trouble is all around, the just and believers must resolve like Habakkuk, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord."

The Theology of "Yet"

There is great power in the word yet. It implies that despite present circumstances there is something else remaining.

Yet implies that there's still something else to be considered.

The theology of yet is what motivates believers today to continue steadfastly in our faith in God.

Yet, implies a faith in the goodness of God and his ability to deliver him from his circumstance. That's why Job considered that while his personal and financial affairs were crumbling around him, he still held firm to his belief in God and announced, "Yea though he slay, yet will I trust him."

It is the theology of yet that prompted a widow woman to take her last cruse of oil and meal and act on faith that her barrel would not run dry.

It was the theology of yet that prompted a woman who had an issue of blood to push our way through a crowd to touch the hem of his garment even though the prospects for success were dim.

It is that same theology of yet that gives us inspiration to continue, even today.

An oil spill has caused tremendous damage to the environment and to economic life of the people in the Gulf regions of our nation, yet we will rejoice in the Lord.

Unemployment is high, forcing hundreds of thousands across the nation to worry on a daily basis about the mere essentials for survival, yet we will rejoice in the Lord.

We are confronting enemies on foreign shore and defending ourselves against enemies trying to attack us on our own land. The threat of terrorism is rising and trouble is in the air, yet we will rejoice in the Lord.

The theology of yet, transcends the frustrations of the moment and looks with a hopeful eye into the glorious realities of the future.

Yet, helps us to look beyond our present difficult situations to the time when God will work it out. That's when we are able to look beyond our tight financial situations, frustrating personal dilemmas, and career setbacks and realize that if we can just hold on, God will bring us through according to His will.

It's that hope that keeps us saying with Habakkuk "Yet, will I rejoice in him."

The theology of the "I"

Just as there was considerable theology involved with the word "yet" there is an equal amount of theology in the "I" of this text.

Although Habakkuk addressed his announcements about the doom and gloom to the entire nation of Israel, his response in this text was not a direction for what they should do, but he narrowed it down to what he would.

Thus, he speaks in the first person, "I will rejoice in the Lord."

It's the theology of the "I" that catches our attention.

It's the theology of the "I" that prompted Joshua to look at how other families were deserting God and choosing a different paths. It was this "I" theology that inspired

him to conclude that regardless to how others responded, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The same theology of the “I” prompted David to consider what he should do when surrounded by tough and difficult times. David said in Psalm 121:1, “I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.”

It doesn’t matter whether everyone else gives up in tough times, “I will look to the Lord.”

It’s the theology of the “I” that prompts believers to stand firm in their faith regardless of the darkness of the hour and sing, “I will trust in the Lord until I die.”

That same theology declares “I am on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I would serve him till I die. I’m on the battlefield for my Lord.”

The theology of “rejoice”

The word rejoice is used in the text differentiating it from the word “joy” which is used in the same verse.

The “pre” prefix usually means that something is about to be done again.

To repeat is to do the same thing again.

To remix is to take the same elements, shuffle them, and do them again.

To recite is to give an oral account again.

To remember is to call up stored information for current use.

To reenter is to enter again.

To “Re” anything means we are going to do it one more time.

So, when Habakkuk said he would rejoice it means that he will have the same amount of joy in the present that he once had at some point in the past.

In Habakkuk 3:18 he says he will rejoice and joy in the Lord. This is the theology of rejoicing. It’s the idea of celebrating and praising in hard times just as much as we do or more than we did when situations were better.

The difference between the two in this context is a reflection of the circumstance and the hope.

To rejoice in this context, Habakkuk takes into account all of the troubles that Israel faces and uses the word “rejoice” to indicate joy in the midst of tough times, with the same level of intensity and faith that was shown in better times. The latter phrase “I will joy in the God of my salvation” speaks to the present moment.

We can rejoice when we remember how God has blessed us in the past as He brought us to the present.

We can rejoice when see what God has done and is still doing today.

If God has blessed us before, He will bless us again, so we rejoice.

If God has healed us before, He can heal us again, so we rejoice.

If God has lifted us before, He can lift us again, so we rejoice.

We rejoice in the middle of hard times, even before we are delivered.

We don’t have to wait until the battle is over, we can shout now.

Yet, I will rejoice

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that since we have been promised that God will be with us, we should take joy in knowing that it will be alright after while.

We are tempted to experience depression and the blues when things don't go well, but we should find a reason to rejoice, even when it doesn't go so well.

We should rejoice as long as the Lord is with us.

When the Lord is with you, it won't matter how rocky the road or how high the mountain. When the Lord is with you there is:

-Peace in the midst of your Problems

-Calm in the midst of your crises

-Gladness in the midst of your sorrows

-Assurance in the midst of your affliction

I don't know about you but I have decided that I will rejoice and lift up the name of Jesus because. If the Lord stands by me, he'll give me a:

-light to shine in my darkness

-Straight path to walk, when I can't find my way

-Lift up when I've fallen down

-Strong hand to hold, when I'm feeling weak

Don't be discouraged if it appears that you surrounded by misfortune and trouble is always on your heel, rejoice in your spirit because you know what the world doesn't know. God is working it out.

There may be sorrow all around me, yet I will rejoice in him, because he brings us joy!

There is conflict all around me, yet I will rejoice in him, because he brings me courage!

There danger all around me, yet I will rejoice in him because he brings me safety!

There is weakness all around me, yet I will rejoice in him because he bring me strength!

There is a spirit of defeat all around me, yet I will rejoice in him, because he brings me the victory!

There are storm clouds gathering in my sky, yet I will rejoice in him, because he speaks to the wind and waves!

I will rejoice because God sent his Son to die for us on Calvary and wash away our sins!

I will rejoice because our God looks down on us every day and showers us with blessings from heaven!

I will rejoice because the Lord is blessing me right now!

I will rejoice because He woke me up this morning and started me on my way!

Rejoice because the Lord is blessing you right now!

No. 9446-Inspiration

A bargain with the devil, A promise from God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 26, 2010

SCRIPTURE: Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. Matthew 26:14-16; And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Luke 4:8; But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33

Introduction

Do you have a price? Can you be bought? Is there something that you can be offered that will prompt you to compromise your basic principles and beliefs?In the safety and security of a worship service many believers immediately respond that they cannot be bought and would never compromise their principles for anything in the world.

In 1734 an old Maxim attributed to Wyndham began to circulate. It said, "Every man has his price, if you can but come up to it." That saying acknowledges what some believe to be a moral weakness in most people and that is that if given the right incentive there are many who are willing to do just about anything.

Unfortunately, we have seen this principle played out before our own eyes.

We have seen businesses that were willing to endanger the lives of millions by reducing the quality of thousands of products from baby cribs to toothpaste, to reach or maintain a certain level of profit.

We have seen workers exposed to killer toys from China painted with lead and low cost FEMA trailers lined with asbestos.

We have seen men and women become spies for the nation's enemies in return for envelopes stuffed with cash.

We have seen politicians vote to relax dangerous rules that endanger thousands to continue received donations from wealthy donors.

There are men who literally sell their souls to the devil to achieve fame and wealth. They begin with lofty ideals until they are offered enough zeros behind a single digit

number of their choice.

Have we not seen young women who exchanged their chastity for rent money, clothing, or fifty cent bags? Haven't we seen men become gigolos and strippers for the same reason?

We have seen students trade their integrity and buy answers to tests or risk prison to download music and videos from the internet without paying for them.

A person can only be bribed if that person has a price. A person who offers a bribe assumes that each person has a price, it must be discovered then offered.

In a fit of self righteousness, many of us claim that we have no price but if the opportunity presented itself many of us learn something about ourselves.

If suddenly someone walked in the backdoor the church and offered $10 for the first person who will stand on their feet and announce God has not blessed me today, then walk out of the worship service there may be no takers. What if the offer was raised to a $100 bill? What if was raised to ten $100 bills? A hundred $100 bills? For $10,000 someone would be easing out of their seats. When you answer the question in your mind how much would the offer need to be for you to move, you have named your price.

Two movies illustrate the point. In 1993 Robert Redford and Demi Moore starred in a movie entitled "Indecent Proposal." Moore and her husband were struggling financially and were about to lose all they owned when wealthy man played by Redford made Moore's husband a tempting proposal. "Would you take $1 Million for one night with your wife?" The offer came with no strings, no threat of disease, discovery and would never be repeated. The question plagued the entire nation for an entire year as talk shows around the country tried to get answers. In 2009 Cameron Diaz starred in movie entitled "The Box." In this movie Diaz, who was facing financial trouble was given the option to push a button on a black box that was delivered to her door anonymously. She was later told that if she pushed the button that she would receive a briefcase stuffed with $1 million in cash, however somewhere in the world someone that she did not know and would never know would die. She had to make a choice.

If given that choice would we push the button? Would we trade the fidelity of our marriage for one night for a $1 million check?

If that seems a moral challenge then we should realize that there are people who are making this decision on a daily basis, but on a smaller scale. Shall I trade a strong relationship with my family for my financially profitable career? Shall I risk my future by selling drugs or robbing a corner store?

Let's bring it closer to home. If it came to your salvation what could separate you from the love of God? How much would it take to get you to stop going to worship, reading your bible or assembling with the saints? If you were offered a large check that would increase each week on the condition that you do not attend a worship service, read a bible or acknowledge God in any way, would you accept the offer?

There was once a play entitled, "The Devil and Daniel Webster" in which a man made a deal with the devil. He offered his soul for seven years of prosperity. The devil

did better, he gave him ten years, but soon after the devil came to collect.

The devil always comes to collect, that's why believers have resolved to stay close to God and never trade anything for our faith in Him.

As Christians we have resolved to make make no bargains with the devil that will separate us from the Lord. Like Paul, we stand firm on the words of Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Exposition

This text focuses on Judas as he strikes a bargain with Christ's enemies to betray Him

Judas was a member of a revolutionary group that wanted to fight against the Romans and return Israel to a free and independent state. Many scholars believe that Judas was frustrated that Jesus would not take advantage of his immense popularity to mobilize the people into an army that could defeat the nation's enemies and establish the kingdom of heaven at the same time. He was even more frustrated, they believe, when he heard Jesus speak about turning the other cheek and loving your enemies.

There are generally two schools of thought when it comes to Judas' motivations. Some scholars believe Judas went to the religious leaders hoping that Christ's arrest would push Jesus into action and motivate the people to revolt. It was not a matter of money with Judas, because the 30 pieces of silver were worth only about $15.00; he betrayed Christ for what he believed to be a higher cause, the freedom of the people.

Another group of scholars believes that Judas was simply greedy. They say he saw an opportunity to profit personally from Jesus' arrest and he seized it. This was the same Judas who complained when a woman took oil from an alabaster box and an anointed Jesus' feet; he thought that was a waste of good oil that could have been sold. Judas was the keeper of the disciples funds and had a mercenary interpretation of nearly everything.

In either instance Judas did not expect Christ to be crucified; he expected Him to use His divine powers to free himself and liberate the people. When Jesus didn't do that, Judas gave back the money but found that he would not be excused from his bargain; he hung himself.

When Jesus began his ministry just the opposite of Judas' situation happened. While Jesus fasted and prayed the devil appeared to him and offered not one but three bargains. Each of the bargains sought to tap what the devil thought would be human vulnerabilities, but Christ turned down each one choosing to depend on the promise of God for the salvation of mankind.

Some are chasing the devil to make a bargain

One of the unique things about this text is that the religious leaders did not come to Judas, he came to them.

There are many today who are doing the exact same thing. The devil, in some cases, probably did not have us in his radar, until we went to him, trying to make a deal.

When two people commit adultery, it is not likely that both of them approached each other at the same time. One made the first move, and the other accepted.

There are many today who are not being chased down by the devil, they are chasing the devil down trying to make a quick dollar.

Street corner drug dealers just stand on the corner with the merchandise, people come to the devil and make a deal.

The man who sells hot videos and CD's he just walks around with a bag full of ripped CD's and the people are chasing him down waving their money in the air.

If this text shows us anything, it should reveal to us that when you run to the devil, he won't turn you down.

Judas struck a bargain with Christ's enemies, and they did not turn him down.

Devil Makes a Deal

Judas made one deal with the religious but the devil presented Jesus with three deals 1) To turn stones into bread and satisfy his human needs and desires 2) To worship the devil and free himself from being plagued by the devilish plots and tricks that would follow him all through his ministry and 3) Throw himself off the side of mountain in the full view of thousands of people below who would witness when God sent angels to catch him before he hit the ground.

All three of the temptations would have jump started Jesus' career with popularity, fame and certain world power. There would be no doubt that he would be the one true Messiah because he would be the one man who could turn stones into bread and be rescued by angels dispatched from heaven.

He could change the world from such a position. He could order governments to follow his rule. He could outlaw hypocrisy and open the floodgates of opportunity for thousands.

He was presented with a quick opportunity to do many things, but it would not do the one thing he came to do, obey God and carry out his will.

Jesus recognized Satan's three offers for what they were: temptations. He refused them and went the long way around. It was a way of sacrifice and pain, but it provided.

The devil wants to make a bargain with each believer today. He's trying his best to get us give him our souls, but we should not fall prey to his enticements.

Promise

Finally, brothers and sisters, while some are running to the devil and others are being

propositioned by the devil himself, we need to maintain our trust in the promises of God.

Bargains with the devil are fruitless because they usually end with our destruction in some way or form. But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength and mount up on wings as Eagles. They shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

God has proven time and time again that if we seek him first that he will make a way for us.

The same promise that God made in biblical times still applies today because God is still the same.

When the devil tries to make a bargain, we should tell him to get thee behind because we have decided to keep trusting in the Lord!

We trust in the Lord because history has shown us that those who trust in the Lord face the unknown without fear.

We trust in the Lord because saints who have trusted him have been rewarded with answered prayers, a few earthly pleasures and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves:

—Noah trusted the Lord and he brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and he showed him the Lamb in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and he protected him in the Lion's Den

—Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

I don't need a bargain with the devil because, If am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!"

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross! Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand!

No. 9447-Anniv.-Homecoming

As Soon as I get home

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 25, 2010

SCRIPTURE: For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Hebrews 13:14

Introduction

Have you ever been away from home and made lists of all the things you planned to do once you return?Those who have been away for any length of time may have a long list of acquaintances to renew and landmarks to revisit. Those who have been away a short while may have a shorter list that may include chores, business items and personal privileges. Regardless of the time we have been away, most of us have a to-do list that awaits us when we get home.

Sometimes our thoughts about home become concerns. Thinking about home a Mormon was riding an airplane back to Utah. When the pilot announced that the plane would be landing shortly, a woman sitting next to the man said, "They told me that in this state some men have nine wives, is that true?" The man answered, "Yes ma'am you are correct. In fact, I have nine wives myself." The woman said, "That's disgusting, you should be hung!" The man said, "I've been gone for two weeks, lost all of my money and don't have a single gift for any of my wives, You may just get your wish, I most certainly will be hung by one of them."

When we are at home we are in familiar territory. Consider the man that amazed his friends every time he went home. One day he went fishing back home with a friend and he excused himself saying he had to use the restroom. He promptly stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water all the way to the bank. The next day, with two friends watching, he did the same thing again. Both of them were thoroughly amazed. They were equally amazed that he never walked on water when he was upstate, only when he was home. Finally, one of the men asked him, "How is that you never walk on water when we are upstate, but you always walk on water at home." To that, the man said, "When I step out of the boat at home, I don't worry because at home, I know where the rocks are." - When we are at home, we know our way around. In fact, we know it so well we almost seem to walk on water.

God has promised believers eternal life, free of troubles and filled with joy. He has promised us an eternal life in his presence that will continuously reflect his love and radiate his presence. That promise is every believer's hope.

As Christians, we cling to the hope of heaven. It is the central purpose of our life.

We look forward to all of the joy we will share as "soon as we get home."

Exposition

This text focuses on the concluding thoughts of the Book of Hebrews which is for believers to dedicate themselves to seeking their heavenly home.

The writer of Hebrews spent considerable time trying to explain the nature of the Christian life. More than anything else he explained that it was a faith walk that did not require the rituals and symbols of Judaism.

After rehearsing all of the principles of faith listed in chapter 11, the writer closes by reminding each believer that Christ himself became the sin offering of the people and symbolically moved it outside of the gate just as the bodies of sacrificed animals were taken outside of the gate.

Believers were reminded to stay outside of the old ways of Judaism because they were on their way to a different destination. The text describes it as having "no continuing city but we seek one to come."

Until they get to that city they were encouraged to: live sacrificially and give thanks to God. (Hebrews 13:15) Do good works. (v16); Obey them that have rule over them. (v17) Pray and live honestly. (v18).

In verse 23 he seems to close with a phrase familiar to our ears, "I'll see you."

Start saving for your heavenly home

The home the believers seek has a different set of values than we experience in this life. In this life, we often value a life by how many dollars a person accumulates. We value a job by how much money it pays. We value a prospective husband by the amount of money he can make. We are not supposed to do it but sometimes we even value members of the church by how much they can give. However, the home to which we are traveling values men and women by their character their money won't mean anything.

What's valuable in this life won't have any value when we get home. When a person leaves one country and enters another his currency must be exchanged for the currency used in his destination country. The value of currency varies from nation to nation. A man may leave France with 7 francs but they are only worth 1 U.S. Dollar. He may leave Italy with 2,191 Lire but when he gets to America he'll only have $1. He may leave Korea with 1,280 "Won" but he'll only have $1 when he gets to the U.S. He could leave Tanzania with 886 Shillings but would only have $1 when he made it to the shores of the U.S. He could leave Vietnam with 14,953 "Dong" and still have just $1 when he made it to America. That same man could leave America with $100 and be a millionaire in Vietnam because his $100 American dollars would exchange to $1.5 million "Dong"

We are challenged to build up treasures in heaven where they will not rust and corrode. These treasures maintain their value because they are guaranteed by the

glory of God.

When we get home, money won't matter at all because even the streets will be paved with gold. What will matter will be the love of God that runs from heart to heart.

Choose your home now

Some people have difficulty choosing between God and idols. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on the mountaintop as a demonstration of the power of God. He said "Choose ye this day, whom you will serve." It was the same situation with Joshua as he challenged Israel to either side with God or leave. He said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Likewise we have to choose whether we want to go heaven or hell. You can't go to both.

The story is told of the day that the pimp, known for his generosity in the neighborhood, was hit by a bus and he died. There was a mix-up and his soul arrived in heaven where he was met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter himself.

"Welcome to Heaven," said St. Peter. "Before you get settled in though, it seems we have a problem. You see, strangely enough, we've never once had a pimp make it this far and we're not really sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," said the pimp. "Well, I'd like to," replied St. Peter, "but I have higher orders. What we're going to do is let you have a day in Hell and a day in Heaven and then you can choose whichever one you want to spend an eternity in."

"Actually, I think I've made up my mind, I prefer to stay in Heaven," said the pimp.

"Sorry, we have rules..." And with that St. Peter put the pimp in an elevator and it went down-down-down to hell. The doors opened and he found himself stepping out onto fine green carpet. There was plenty of food, ribs, chicken and some of the finest women he had ever seen. Some of the women who were once in his stable were there; they cheered for him. They ran up and kissed him dead on the mouth and they talked about old times. They danced a little and drank a little. The pimp met the Devil who was actually a really nice guy who dressed very well in designer threads. He had a great time telling jokes and dancing. He was having such a good time that before he knew it, it was time to leave. Everybody shook his hand and waved good-bye as he got on the elevator. The elevator went up-up-up and opened back up at the Pearly Gates and he found St. Peter waiting for him.

"Now it's time to spend a day in heaven," he said. So he spent the next 24 hours lounging around on clouds and playing the harp and singing. He had a great time and before he knew it his 24 hours were up and St. Peter came and got him. "So, you've spent a day in hell and you've spent a day in heaven.

Now you must choose your eternity," he said. The pimp paused for a second and then replied, "Well, I never thought I'd say this, I mean, Heaven has been really great and all, but I think I had a better time in Hell." So St. Peter escorted him to the elevator and again he went down-down-down back to Hell.

When the doors of the elevator opened he found himself standing in a desolate wasteland covered in garbage and filth. Old watermelon rinds were everywhere.

There were flies, chicken bones and garbage for miles. He saw some of his friends who were dressed in rags and were picking up the garbage and putting it in sacks. The Devil came up to him and put his arm around him.

"I don't understand," stammered the pimp, "yesterday I was here and there was green grass, pretty women, parties and fun. Now all there is, is a wasteland of garbage and all my friends look miserable."

The Devil looked at him and said, "Face it my brother, Yesterday we were recruiting you, today you are an employee. Welcome to hell."

Nothing compares to heaven

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that we may travel to many places in this life, but there is no place we have been that can compare to place the saints will call home.

We have traveled many miles in this life searching for the perfect place, only to learn that no car can drive us there, and no plane can fly us there, but there is a highway to heaven that meanders through a place called. Calvary.

Abraham took a journey in faith "looking for a city with foundations."

Moses, led Israel but Hebrews 11 says, "for he was looking to the reward"

Paul labored to witness for Christ in spite personal peril. He expected to receive, "a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."(2 Corinthians 5:1)

Believers who make sacrifices to glorify God will be rewarded. Colossians 1:5 says there is, "hope laid up for you in Heaven"

It does not matter how extensively you have traveled, after a few days, we start thinking about home and what we'll do when we get there.

You may travel to New York City and see the Statue of Liberty, the United Nations and historic Harlem but after a while you find yourself saying, "As soon as I get home."

You may travel to St. Louis and see the famous Gateway Arch but after you have seen arch and toured its historic streets, you find your self think about home and musing out loud, "As soon as I get home."

You may travel to New Orleans and see Superdome, but after you have seen it and witnessed the pageantry of Mardi Gras, your soul starts crying out, "As soon as I get home."

You may travel to Atlanta and see the tomb of Martin Luther King, peep inside of CNN or peer into Atlanta Underground, but after awhile something starts yanking at you and you start thinking all of the things you are going to do "As soon as I get home."

You may travel to Hawaii and stick your feet in the cool beach waters of Wai Ki Kie and enjoy the romance of an evening luau, but after awhile, your heart gets in a hurry and you speak out loud about "Soon as I get home."

You may travel to The Alamo of San Antonio and shout out “Remember the Alamo” but after you see where the last shot was fired and visit the last memorial then you start think, “As soon as I get home.”

Whether its Stone Mountain of Georgia or Lookout Mountain in Tennessee; whether its the rumbling waters of Niagara Falls, bustling streets of Hollywood, no matter how fancy the city you visit you still cry out “As soon as I get home.”

You may sleep in fine hotels that offer bouquets of flowers, chocolates on your pillow and morning paper under your door, but no matter how great the service or soft the beds, after a while you are ready to pack your bags because there is no place like home.

That’s what the believer says today, there is no place like my heavenly home

As soon as I get home I’m going to put on my robe and tell the story of how I made it over!

As soon as I get home, I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

As soon as I get home, I want to see the streets paved with gold!

As soon as I get home, I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates!

As soon as I get home, I want to see the city where hearse wheels won’t roll!

As soon as I get home, I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it’ll always be howdy and never be goodbye

I don’t know about you, but as soon as I get home, I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father’s house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my father’s house!

There’ll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9448-Anniversary, Church

I the Lord will hold thy hand

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2010

SCRIPTURE: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; Isaiah 42:6

Introduction

What do you do when the task ahead of you is formidable and beyond your abilities? If you are a person who believes in the power of God, you forge forward confident that through His strength you will be able to succeed.

What lies before believers is a vast array of challenges that will require us to use every ounce of our ingenuity to succeed. Over the years we have accomplished much, but there is so much to be done and so many lives to be touched.

Spreading the gospel message is not an easy task, even in our modern era, yet we must stand firm on the promise of our savior that He will be with us always, even until the end of the earth. God has promised us His help and that is no small matter.

Sometimes we trivialize God's promise to help us and to hold our hand. Consider the little boy who lived in the country in backwoods of South Carolina. It gets dark in the woods at night, so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face. This little boy was afraid of the dark. One night his mother told him to go out to the back porch and bring her the broom. The little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mama, I don't want to go out there. It's dark." The mother smiled reassuringly at her son. "You don't have to be afraid of the dark," she explained. "Jesus is out there. He'll look after you and protect you." The little boy looked at his mother real hard and asked, "Are you sure he's out there?" "Yes, I'm sure. He is everywhere, and he is always ready to help you when you need him," she said. The little boy thought about that for a minute and then went to the back door and cracked it a little. Peering out into the darkness, he called, "Jesus? If you're out there, would you please hand me the broom?"—

God has promised to help us, but not to bring us the broom, help us win lotteries, or wash the dishes for us. His promise to help us and hold our hand extends to any good work that will ultimately help bring the Kingdom of God into reality.

As Christians, we must continue to do good work, help the poor, reach the lost and lift up the name of Jesus, depending on God to hold our hand every step of the way.

Exposition

Our text first considers God speaking to Israel, through Isaiah, encouraging them to be strong in the face of doubts about their future as a nation. The 40th through 66th chapters of Isaiah are dedicated to the subject of helping Israel to look beyond its coming captivity, to the day when God would restore it as a nation. Isaiah's constant reminder to Israel was that the nation should not be discouraged or disenchanted for God was both willing and able to deliver them from their ensuing circumstance.

In this text God speaks to Isaiah about the coming Messiah but in ways that were also applicable to Israel's immediate situation. In these "Servant Songs" Isaiah the prophet could peer into the future while Isaiah the visionary could see God speaking to the servants of his time. Speaking both of the Messiah and the present moment God assured the Messiah that He had been called to perform the will of God and in so doing would demonstrate a sense of responsibility to be obedient to God's command.

God told Israel that he would take the Servant's hand and the Messiah would have the power to carry out God's will. God also promised that the Messiah would be a light unto the world, including the Gentiles. As a result of God's strengthening hand the glorious kingdom of God would be the end result.

The prophecy had practical applications to Isaiah, just as it does for believers of all generations: Those who are laboring to bring about the kingdom of God and his righteousness will be sustained and strengthened by the hand of God, if they continue to labor and hold to his hand.

The mission

Today the church has both a mission and a promise. We have the mission to reach out in the name of Jesus. We have the promise that God will strengthen us in the work.

THE MISSION: Just as the Messiah's mission was to reconcile men back to God, the church's mission is similar. We must speak a prophetic word to our times. Look around. We have fighting a war in Afghanistan that has been longer than world War II and the Korean conflict combined and daily young men and women are dying on the battlefield with no end in sight. Despite billions of dollars in government bailouts our national economy is in shambles, unemployment remains high and millions are surviving on shoe string aide provided by unemployment benefits. Homosexuality is on the rise as our standard of godliness declines. In the midst of all of this God has given us a word of hope. Our hope is in God. Just as God predicted difficult times for Israel but eventual restoration, the church must also point to Jesus who will guide us through these tough times. It is our mission to lift Jesus up so that the world might be reassured that as long as God is on the throne, "Weeping may endure for a night but joy will come in the morning."

THE WORK: We know the commission, but what is the practical work we must do to carry out the mission? For Israel, the restoration came when Cyrus set the nation free to rebuild and restore its home land. When Christ came He announced that the spirit of the Lord was moving Him to set the captives free and promote freedom and liberty to those bound by custom, rituals and tradition. The church must speak to the social dilemmas of our times. We must reach out to an entire generation of our men who are locked away in prisons. We must speak to the plethora of social ills that are destroying our families, under-educating our children, and eating away at the souls of our community. We must lift up the cross and the gospel of salvation through Christ, rather than a gospel of prosperity that misleads and ignores the great commission of God. Whether individually or in association with others, the work must be done.

THE PROMISE: The mission before us does not come without a promise. The promise to the coming Messiah was that God would hold his hand, he did. The promise to the church is the same; He's doing that right now. God promises to stand by us and strengthen us in our mission, to hold our hand so that it does not shake and we do not fail. God has call the church into action and given us a mission: Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands. With God holding our hands we will be victorious. That's why we sing, "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone."

I the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember who has called us into battle and for whose cause we serve, "I the Lord."

No matter how difficult the struggle that we may face we have the continued assurance of our savior that "I the Lord will hold thy hand."

That should be a reassuring thought for us as we reach to a merciless and critical world in the name of our savior. It is reassuring because it means that our God will stand with us and hold our hand.

As we move forward let us keep the words of God ringing in our ears, "I the Lord will hold thy hand!"

We can march forward knowing that "I the Lord" will give me:

—Serenity in the midst of our storms;

—Assurance in the midst of our afflictions;

—Courage in the midst of our challenges;

—Boldness in the midst of our battles;

—Encouragement in the time of our difficulties;

—Composure in the midst of our calamities;

—Support in the midst of our suffering

Storms may rise, winds may blow, but I'm glad that the God we serve isbetter than "Allstate" for when you're with Jesus "You're in good hands!"

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Safe in the arms of Jesus. Safe on his gentle

breast. There by his loved over shadowed, sweetly my soul shall rest. I'm safe in the arms of God."

When the church marches forward with the banner of Jesus before us the walls of sin will fall and the devil will flee. We do not march forward under our own power but we are sustained by He who holds our hand.

Hold my hand Lord, for there's no:

—Power that rises that you cannot conquer

—Fear that frightens that you cannot calm

—Door that's closed that you cannot open

—Prayer that's prayed that you cannot answer

—Problem plaguing us, that you cannot solve!

God has promised that He will keep us, direct us and guide us.

I don't know about you but I've found out that the church accomplishes miracles when we let God hold our hand.

When God holds our hand:

—CIRCUMSTANCES can be changed;

—DOORS can be opened;

—ENEMIES can be defeated;

—PROBLEMS can be solved;

—DOUBTS can be dissolved;

—FEARS can be conquered;

—FRIENDSHIPS can be restored;

—MARRIAGES can be salvaged

—SOULS can be converted;

—LOST lives can be saved;

Gospel warriors, keep the faith and keep telling the story!

We must tell the world about He who came down through 42 generations!

We must tell the world about the man who was born of the Virgin Mary and Baptized in the Jordan river.

We must tell the world about the man who healed the sick and raised the dead!

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, the bright and morning star!

Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

Jesus, the sweet Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

Tell the world about Jesus, who still proclaims, "I the Lord will hold thine hand!"

No. 9449-Inspiration

Living in your Empowerment Zone

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 1, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8

Introduction

Have you ever felt powerless? There are many situations that we encounter that are beyond our personal abilities. We cannot change them or alter them because they are outside of our range of talents and skills. times such as these frustrate because we feel helpless and don't know what to do. These are the times that we recite the old proverb of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Which says, "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

The business world defines empowerment in terms of motivating people to succeed in their work, or motivating people to be strong leaders. Empowerment is usually associated with advocacy groups that seek to help "individuals and communities achieve self actualization and full citizenship.

There have been many attempts by government leaders to pass laws or make changes in the social order that would empower the masses but most of them fell short of the mark. Each effort seemed fruitless and impotent. President Franklin Roosevelt tried to lift the burden of the poor with his new deal. President Johnson tried it with his "War on Poverty."

When the smoke cleared we still had poverty and very little empowerment.

In 1994 President Bill Clinton instituted a nationwide competition to empower six urban communities and 65 enterprise communities with $100 million and $3 million respectively to jumpstart the local community's effort to build a strategy to create jobs and opportunities. The theory is that the prize money will jump start the planning and even if a community didn't get the money they would have developed a plan.

It turned out that the government can create all of the zones it desires, but true empowerment comes from the Lord who changes the hearts, minds and attitudes of men.

We may not understand all the government plans but the old folks said, "You can

take a horse to water but you can't make him drink."

True empowerment comes when men and women are inspired to step out, trusting the power of God, and lift themselves while they hold to God's unchanging hand.

As Christians, we recognize that we can't do anything without the power of the Holy Spirit to direct and strengthen us. In his presence we receive the power, then leave his promise to use the power he has given to change the world in His name.

Exposition

This text focuses on the disciples as they received empowerment to carry out a mission to carry the gospel to the entire world.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gave his disciples a great mission. He charged them to "go ye therefore and teach all nations" the gospel message. This was a challenging charge to Galilean commoners who were not schooled in languages other than their native tongue and the Aramaic, which was the language of commerce and diplomacy. Since the confusion of the languages at Babel in Genesis 11:9 people of different nations were not able to communicate. To bridge the gap, persons who moved from country to country were able to vaguely communicate with each other by speaking Aramaic which was the closest to a universal language, but was still crude and useful only in the basic sense. Jesus himself often spoke Aramaic when he moved to different regions. He used the terms: Abba (father) (Mark 14:36), talitha, qumi (maiden, arise) (Mark 5:41), lama sabachthani (why hast thou forsaken me?) (Mark 15:34) all of which were Aramaic phrases.

Despite the absence of an ability to command foreign tongues, Jesus commissioned his followers to go to their immediate neighbors and then spread out around the world and preach the gospel. Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) until they had received the power to carry out this mission. In obedience they waited faithfully until, on the day of Pentecost, the power came! They were given the extraordinary gift of communication! They were able to speak in such a way that people of every nation under the heaven (Acts 2:5) understood what they were saying.

Once empowered by God it was now their task to take the word of God and go out and change the world.

Keys to empowerment

If we are to learn the keys to receiving the power of God in our lives we need to look closely at the Matthew 28 and the first chapter of Acts to get more clarity.

PURPOSE OF THE POWER: Why do you want God's power in your life? Why do you want more money? Why do you want to win an election? Why do you want that position you seek? Before we seek the power of God in our lives we should look again at the purpose the apostles received their power in Acts 1. They received it for the purpose of advancing the kingdom of God, not to advance themselves. Their

prayer was not that they could use their gifts to get jobs as interpreters for the government, or high paid consultants. There was a purpose for the power. Similarly, we should be sure that the power we seek from God is not selfish. We do not ask for more money so we can be rich. We don't ask to win an election so we can be a big shot. We don't seek the position so that we can have dominion over others. Whatever we seek, our ultimate purpose is to use it to advance the kingdom of the savior. If what we do is according to his purpose he will order events to give you the power you need. Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

PLACE OF THE POWER: Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait to receive the power. Their first inclination was to go home. The excitement had died, the crucifixion was over, the resurrection was history. It would have been tempting for the disciples to go home. Yet, Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem, that's where the power would come. That should say to believers that we need to be in the place that God directs us to receive the power. God has created an empowerment zone for believers to power up before they go out to change the world. Before we serve on boards and committees in the community! Before we run for elective office! Before we go into the classroom to teach, we must make sure we are powered up. We worship God in a worship zone. In it is here that we come face to face with God and receive his inspiration and direction. You must be prayed up before you can face the angry faces you will see every Monday morning. The full tank comes for those who are in the worship zone.

SPIRITUALITY FOR THE POWER: The power of God exists in a spiritual zone as well. True empowerment cannot come from the outside, it has to come from the inside. We can force a man to take a class and train himself, dress him in the right clothes and send him out the door, but his condition does not change until he there has been a change of attitude on his part. This change is more spiritual than educational. Once there is has been a spiritual and attitudinal change then we rise up to take control of our decisions and take responsibility for our own actions. This ability is heightened by the power of God. For many, there will be no empowerment until they have turned their lives around and become new in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." To achieve the power we seek we must create a zone of spiritual nurture in which we study, learn and grow in the faith. In this zone we feed ourselves positive spiritual self talk and seek guidance and correction. Outside of the zone, all we get is the same old same old.

Pentecost is about Empowerment

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must realize that the whole Pentecost experience is about empowerment for kingdom building.

Look at it. A handful of farmers, fishermen, tax-collectors and housewives became so empowered that they turned the Roman empire upside down. They did it through the power of God.

In 1965 the Florida Gators football team was mediocre at best. Struggling in the heat and humidity of the deep south, the players were fighting a tougher opponent within themselves than they had ever fought on the gridiron – they had great difficulty finishing the game in champion-like form because they were dehydrated. So a team of University doctors developed a carbohydrate-electrolyte beverage that kept the team properly nourished throughout the game. Before the eyes of thousands of fans, the team's second half performance improved and in 1967 won the Orange Bowl. Today, this beverage is on every sideline around the globe keeping athletes performing at their best. Of course, this beverage is known as Gatorade.

Today, Gatorade has a slogan in its commercials that asks a question, "Is it in you?"

What if we asked that same question to believers today? The answer might be the key to personal empowerment, "Is the power of God in you?"

When the power of God is in you, you are in your power zone.

When I'm in my power zone:

I may stumble, but He'll help me to stand!

I may be discouraged, but He'll give me new inspiration!

I may get weak, but He'll make me strong!

I may get lost, but He'll help me find my way!

I may find myself in the valley of despair, but he'll carry to the mountain top.

When you live in the power zone, you can…

…live in the promise, power and protection of God

…walk by faith and not by sight

…count it all joy when you enter into diverse temptations

…know that my God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus

…lay hands on the sick and they shall recover

…walk in to the enemy's camp and take back some things that rightfully belong to you

…take claim over your household and declare, "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord"

…know that the evil one, the devil, cannot touch you

…tear down strongholds that have had a grip on your life

…cause all hell to tremble with every step you take

… be pressed but not crushed, persecuted, but not abandoned struck down but not destroyed

… walk on serpents and scorpions and overcome all the power of the devil

… have doors open for you that were once shut

When you live in the power zone you tap into the power of the most high God!

There is power, power, wonder working power in the blood of the lamb!

This is the same power that created the earth out of nothing!

The same power that spat out the seven seas and spangled the night with the moon and the stars!

No. 9450-Anniv.-Church

A Church Interceding On Behalf of the People

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2010

SCRIPTURE: " And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. "Genesis 18:22; "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Romans 8:26

Introduction

What is the church's primary function? Its function is to tell the world about Jesus, save the lost and to preserve the saints through instruction, example, and intercessory prayer.

The founder of the Church is Jesus Christ. We share a common faith in Him and follow his example of compassion for the masses and empathy for the concerns of each individual.

Today, we share similar struggles, fears and frustrations despite the passing of years. As God-fearing men and women, we must hold on to the faith and vigorously promote the kingdom of God with all of its energy.

We must hold on, just as our fore parents held on. We must intercede and pray just as our forefathers prayed. If we feel weak along the way, we must remember that "help is on the way."

Today we celebrate Christ, the founder of the church. We also celebrate the legacy of the Christian response to personal needs.

We celebrate because this is the church community from whose womb many great minds will come forth to give witness to the power of God.

As Christians, we are glad that Christ came to give us an opportunity for salvation. We are also glad that He has become our mediator before the throne of grace. We resolve to keep lifting up His name among the saints as we lift up the concerns of his people through constant prayer and supplication.

Exposition

These two texts gives us two examples of intercessory prayer as a guide for the church

today.

In Genesis, Abraham pleads with angels on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy both cities because of the immoral ways their inhabitants. Abraham, who has relatives in the city, pleaded with the God, who appeared in the form of three men (Some say they represented the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). Abraham repeatedly pleaded with God not to destroy the city if just a handful of God-fearing people could be found. Abraham at first begged for mercy if fifty good men could have been found, but kept pleading until he received a promise that the city would be saved if there were just ten good men.

This text shows one man pleading on behalf of many before God, and God hearing his intercession.

In Romans 8:26-29 we don't see one person interceding but the entire church. The text lays out four truths about intercessory prayer. 1)The Holy Spirit helps us to know what and how to pray (verse 26). 2.The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf (verse 26) 3. God hears our hearts more than the words in prayer (verse 27). 4. Prayer is always answered (verses 28-29), though not always according to our agenda.

Romans shows Paul urging the church to do what is expected of all believers and that is to intercede or go to God on behalf of others. 1 Timothy 2:1-3 teaches that intercessory prayer is expected of all believers, especially on behalf of the sick

Holman reminds us that the Bible reveals that intercession is performed by the Holy Spirit, Christ, and Christians. Romans 8:26-27 shows that the Holy Spirit works to sustain the burdened believer to intercede to carry even inexpressible prayers called "groanings" to God.

History has proven that when the church makes intercession that doors open; burdens are lifted and the power of God is unleashed.

Intercede for the Needy

The church intercedes for those who are needy.

There are many people who stand in dire need every day. Their needs vary from financial needs to health concerns. Some have family issues, relationship, and marital issues. The church goes to God through intercessory prayer to keep their condition before the altar of mercy.

When the church intercedes in this way, it is in keeping with the Word of God that urges us to constantly pray for Saints who are in need. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Who needs the church's intercession?

The pastor needs the church to pray for him because through his strength the congregation is made strong.

The choir director needs the church to pray for him because through his spirit the congregation is inspired to sing.

The deacons need the church to pray for them because out of the strength and

solidarity of their homes the congregation can be helped.

Each believer needs other saints to pray for them because each of us needs to know that there are friends rooting for us, praying for us and asking God's favor on us. We pray for those who are in need and need us, God will hear us when we pray.

Intercede for those who don't know any better

There are many people who do not pray or will not pray for themselves or others.

Sometimes it is stubbornness, but in other times it is because these friends of ours do not know any better. They don't know how to pray. That's why it's important to pray for those who don't know any better.

The church must intercede for those who do not know better or who know better and choose not to do better.

Just as Abraham pleaded on the part of the people of Sodom, we must do the same for thousands of wayward souls that either do not know God or know Him, but choose to ignore Him.

The church must intercede for the husband and wife whose relationship has deteriorated to a litany of curse words, threats, and violence. They have done everything to each other, but neither has prayed for the other. They don't know any better.

We must intercede for those who still get a thrill out of the party life of night clubs and bars as the years of their lives pass right by them. They won't pray until tragedy strikes, we must pray that God will open their eyes without the need of a tragedy to bring them to their senses.

We must intercede for the young who may race through life without thinking and all the while making a world of mistakes.

We must intercede for our friends who know how to do many things but do not know how to pray. We must lift our co-workers and friends up before God in prayer; many of who do not know any better.

When we pray for those who do not know any better, God hears us when we pray.

Intercede for favor for the faithful

The church must seek God's favor on the faithful.

The church should ask because those who are obedient to God and live according to his will are in a position to ask for favor.

Job 33:26 says, "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness."

In Psalm 106:4 David is shown asking for favor. "Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." Those who live and give by God's rules are expected and encouraged to ask him for favors.

Sometimes the church asks God to show favor to others on its behalf. There are millions of people today who are enjoying some aspect of life as a result of a favor

request of congregations of praying saints.

While Israel complained and grumbled in the wilderness, Moses prayed to God and asked a favor for them.

In Numbers 11:15 Moses said, “If I have found favor in thy sight..” bless them with meat to eat.

In a similar sense, many today have meat to eat, not because of their goodness, but because God is showing them favor in response to the intercessory prayers of the church.

Intercession Availeth Much

Finally, we are reminded that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous, availeth much.

To say that intercessory prayer “availeth much” is another way of saying what our grandparents put another way...prayer changes things.

The church, more than any other organization, institution or conglomeration of people, knows the power of prayer.

When the church prays powerful things begin to happen; heaven takes note and the kingdom of God responds.

When the church prays the wicked get worried and the devil gets on the run!

When the church prays the world prepares to be turned upside down.

I don’t know about you but I’ve learned that there is power in prayer.

Prayer can turn situations around and make the darkness light.

When there is something that seems beyond reach, prayer can reach the unreachable!

When someone has gotten out of touch, prayer can touch the untouchable!

When there is a circumstance that resists efforts to change it, prayer can change the unchangeable!

When there is a stumbling block that will not move, prayer can move the unmovable!

When there is a problem that cannot be solved, prayer can solve the unsolvable!

The old folks were right, prayer can change things!

If there is hatred, prayer can turn hatred into love!

If there is confusion, prayer can turn confusion into harmony!

If there is disappointment, prayer can inspire hope!

If there is fear, prayer can turn fear into courage!

Within your bosom you have the phone, call up the Lord, he’s still on the throne!

Call Him in the morning!

Call Him in the noonday!

Call Him in the midnight hour!

He died that He might be able to intercede for us before the Father!

He died that He could talk to His Father on our behalf!

He died so that he could be our mediator!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

When the church needs to get a prayer through, all we have to do is call Him!

No wonder the songwriter declares, “Jesus is on the mainline, tell Him what you want!”

Call Him!

No. 9451-Communion

Oil spills, but blessings overflow

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 8, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head." Mark 14:3; "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." Psalm 23:5

Introduction

What do you do when oil spills? The nation has been inundated with dismay after the tragic reports of the loss of eleven lives, considerable resources and damages to the environment that has been caused by an oil well in the Gulf of Mexico, owned by the British Petroleum Company, known as BP.

Oil Spills such as the BP spill are not without precedent. While the BP oil spill dumped an estimated 207 million gallons of oil in the Gulf, over the years the world has grimaced and frowned as it saw one oil spill after another. In 1979 there was 140 million gallons of oil spilled in the gulf in a blown well that took a year to cap. In1991 the Iraqi forces released 380 gallons of oil into the Persian Gulf that created a 4inch thick slick that covered 4000 square miles. The Exxon Valdez struck a reef in Prince William Sound, AK on March 24, 1989, spilling 10 million gallons of crude. The slick spread over 2,600 square miles.

Spilling oil has a devastating impact on the environment, destroying natural habitats and endangering the lives of millions of aquarian species. Oil spills are destructive to say the least.

God has oil, but it never spills. God's empowering oil fills but never spills. Psalm 23:5 says, "thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." God's oils runs over but it never spills.

As Christians, we are grateful that God has never capped the well from which our blessings flow. He never spills a single blessing, and no blessing flowing from heaven ever spills.

Exposition

This text focuses on Mark as he shows a woman pouring oil on the head of Jesus to anoint Him.

Jesus often shared meals with the rich and powerful as well as the common people. In this text He was being honored with a meal at the home of Simon the Leper. It is supposed that this was the man whose cleansing from leprosy was noted in Mark 1:40. In the course of the dinner a woman, identified in John 12:3 as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, came to the dinner with an alabaster box or a stone flask with a long neck and sealed with wax. The box contained enough perfume or expensive oil to net about 40 pieces of silver on the market place. Despite its market value, the woman broke the seal and poured out the contents upon Jesus' head.

It was not uncommon for a guest at a festival or banquet to be anointed in this way, but it had special significance to Jesus because he perceived it as the anointing of his body for the crucifixion and death that was to come. However, there were many who saw the broken box, and watched the oil drip from Christ's head and spill to the floor and decried such acts as waste.

As they watched Mary stoop and dry Jesus' feet with her hair, they maintain that oil spilled and wasted in such a way was negligent. It was worth about 40 dollars and could have easily been sold to help the poor.

Jesus said the oil was neither spilled or wasted but served as an anointing in anticipation of greater things to come.

In Psalm 23, David spoke of the special way that God had blessed him, literally pouring out blessing on him. David said the blessings were so abundant that "my cup runneth over." The over flow was not a waste or a spill but a sign of the abundant opportunity that God had given him. It is the same abundant life that Christ referred to when he said, "I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly."

When it is poured from God it is an anointed blessing. When it is frivolously lost by the recklessness of man it is a spill. God never spills he only anoints, and blesses those who he touches.

Oil is sign of special anointing

In biblical times, oil was often associated with godly blessings and confirmation.

When Jacob saw the ladder extending from in a vision a Bethel, he awakened the next day and poured oil on the stone that had been his pillow and consecrated the place to God.

When a person made a spiritual recovery his eyes were often anointed to indicate the opening of his eyes to new spiritual truths.

There are many who have a special calling on their lives, for which they have been given unusual gifts and talents. Martin Luther King had a calling on his life and he was anointed with the gifts of knowledge, courage and personal charisma to carry out his purpose. The same is true for Billy Graham, Sojourner Truth, Harriett Tubman,

Barack Obama and many others. Each seem to have a special anointing that has made possible for them to succeed.

What about you? Have you ever felt a calling to pursue any particular avenue of life? Do feel an urge to teach or reach people? Are you a consoler, builder, communicator, leader, or advisor. Everyone has a life purpose. Our gifts indicate our purpose.

God won't send us on a mission without giving us what it will take to accomplish our task. He sends the anointing of his Holy Spirit to empower and direct us.

Wasted oil

The disciples felt Mary wasted valuable oils on Jesus. They felt the oil could have been sold to help build the kingdom, but instead it was been poured onto Jesus' head.

When is something wasted? When is there an oil spill?

Waste is unwanted or unusable materials. When something is wasted it means that it has been allowed to become unusable and unwanted.

A spill occurs when either by accident, negligence or an unintentional act, something of value nears the point of being wasted or lost.

What we call waste depends upon our perspective. What one man throws away as unusable another man collects as valuable. One man throws away an empty can while another man picks it up and prepares it for sale. One woman throws away an old sofa and another woman puts the sofa in her living room. The old saying is true, "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

In the Gulf Coast there was an oil spill but it wasn't all wasted, there were tankers on hand to scoop up as much oil as possible and prepare it for refinement. That led us to understand that while everything can spill, everything that spills is not completely wasted.

There are many who are wasting their blessings. Some of the waste is intentional, some is the result of societal influences but it is wasted never-at-the-less. Some are wasting away in idle per suit of pleasure without a job, a dream or a game plan. Some are wasting away in jail for crimes they have committed. Some are wasting time in relationships that are going nowhere and haven't been anywhere in quite some time. Still others are wasting away listening to the radio and watching TV all day.

Too many are like the Prodigal son who wasted his substance in riotous living. He wasted his money, wasted his time, and wasted all of his resources on so called friends who used him until they used him up. Then one day he came to himself and realized how much oil he had spilled. He realized how much money he had squandered and he repented and went home to his father.

While it is true that many have spilled the blessings that God has sent them it is not too late; much has been spilled but the well can be capped and spillage can be captured and put to good use.

We may have experienced a spill in life, but because of our faith in God what we

spilled won't go to waste.

Blessings flow

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that oil may spill in this world and be capped, but no power on earth can cap the flow of God's blessing to his anointed.

When Samuel anointed David to serve as the King of Israel he knew David was the right choice because when he tried to pour oil on the other brothers, the oil would not flow, but flowed freely when he came to David. Throughout David's life the oil of God's anointing continued to flow.

Even when David sinned with Bathsheba and spilled the cup, the oil continued to flow.

Even when David fell so low that he placed Uriah in the front of the battle to die, and spilled even more, the oil continued to flow.

When he had spilled what appeared to be the last drop of blessing and dropped to his lowest state, David cried out in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart oh God a renew a right spirit within me."

In His never ending love God uncapped the well of his favor and pour out a blessing on David.

David was blessed so much that he prayed out of his soul, "Thou hast anointed my head with oil, my cup runneth over, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all of the days of my life."

When God has begun a flow of blessings for those who are living after His own heart, we may foolishly spill and waste what He gives us sometimes, but if our hearts are right and we turn back to God nothing can cap the flow."

When the oil of God's anointing flows, our cups run over; the overflow is not a spill, it's evidence of God's favor.

When Abraham discovered the ram in the bush, that was an evidence of God's favor and the blessings kept flowing!

When Moses led the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, that was an evidence of God's favor, and the blessings kept flowing.

When Esther rose to become Queen of Persia and saved her people, it was an evidence of God's favor and blessings kept flowing!

When the Three Hebrew Boys were protected from the burning flames in the fiery furnace, that was an evidence of God's favor, and the blessings kept flowing!

When Daniel was protected from hungry lions in the lion's den, that was an evidence of God's favor and the blessings kept flowing!

On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down like cloves of fire, that was an evidence of God's anointing, and the blessings have been flowing every since.

I don't know what you think about it, but I'm glad that God is still in the blessing business.

Companies like BP may spill their oil and lose millions of gallons, but my blessings

don't come from BP but from JC, Who never has a spill and whose fountain can never be capped.

There's a blessing flowing from the fountain on the mountain.

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vein; and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain."

It's a fountain filled with the blood of Christ.

It's blood that will never lose its power!

They lifted Him high on an old rugged cross!

They drove nails into His hands!

They stuck a spear in His side!

And he died... But Early Sunday morning He arose with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that the well of God's blessings has not been capped and

Blessings are still flowing!

No.9452- Inspiration

If God be with us

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 15, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Judges 6:12-13; "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:31-32

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you questioned whether God was on your side?There are many times in our lives when we are besieged by difficulties and multitudes of troubles. They all seem to suggest that we are fighting our battles alone. Yet, each time we read the Bible or hear a sermon we are reminded that God will not forsake us and that He will never leave us alone.

In moments of weakness, we start to doubt. We ask, "If God is on my side, then why is He allowing all of these problems to trouble me? If He's on my side, why doesn't He protect me from all of these lugubrious circumstances?"

You are not alone. Mary and Martha questioned why Christ did not come to aide Lazarus when he was ill. They chided him saying, "If you would have been here, my brother would not have died." In a way they questioned the advantage of personally knowing the Savior, but could not benefit from the relationship.

Even Christ himself questioned his father when He was hanging on the cross. He cried out, "Father, why has thou forsaken me."

Oddly, our humanity only questions God when we are hurting. It never questions God when He is blessing us. We rarely ask God, "Why are you blessing me like this? Why are you answering my prayers?"

The answer to our frustration is that God is always with us. The issue is not whether He is on our side, but whether we are on His side. He does not join us to help our will to be done, but we join him to help His will be done.

As Christians, our goal should be to be on the Lord's side. When we are on his side, we submit ourselves to His will and face life and mighty men and women of valor.

Exposition

The passage focuses on Israel's lost faith and God's restoration.

In the period of the judges, Israel had no king. They experienced a succession of dangerous times each related to the degree of their faith in God. They constantly fell on hard times as they attempted to emulate the Canaanite tribes around them, including worshipping their god, Baal.

For seven years, they were being raided and attacked by the Midianites. Whenever the Israelites had accumulated ample harvests to provide for themselves the Midianites accompanied by the Amalekites would raid them, seized their harvests and animals and leave them without resources to survive the hard winters.

Israel complained to God, but they had not made the connection between their acceptance of Baal and the hard times they were experiencing. In Judges 6:10 they were soberly reminded that "Ye have not obeyed my voice." It was then that they began to "connect the dots."

Gideon was personally tapped to raise Israel from its condition. In Judges 6:12, an angel said, "The Lord is with thee," but first the people would need to return to the old path. It would be necessary to turn from Baal worship and return to the worship of the true God of their forefathers.

Gideon considered their present condition and questioned the campfire stories of the old-timers who told them of the great works of God in the past. So, in Judges 6:13 he asks the question, "If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?" He questioned the relevance of those accounts, considering their present situation. What happened to the miracles the old timers talked about? That's when Gideon learned that the same God of the past was ready to do again what He had done before, if the people were willing to change their way.

When the people repented, Gideon, with an army of just 300 men defeated the entire 30,000 plus army of the Midianites, without lifting a sword or the loss of a single life.

Paul, writing to the Romans reminded believers that the struggle to attain the Christian life would not be easy. He often referred to the forces of evil that would assemble against the cross. By way of encouragement, he reminded them that God loved them so much that he gave His son for them so they could ultimately triumph and have victory over sin and this world. If God gave so much for us, we should be confident that no matter how formidable the enemy assembled against us, that He will be the victor. If we are with Him, then our victory is assured. In Romans 8:31 he asked the question, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

So we have this assurance, that God will always be the victor in any confrontation with evil. If we are with Him, then our victory is assured as well.

Is God always for us?

Is there ever a time when God is not for us? Gideon, in the text, noticed that for forty years God allowed Israel to wander in the wilderness because of the lack of faith.

Then for 40 years he allowed them to prosper in the Promised Land as they obeyed Him. However, for seven years God seemed to be distant. Everything went wrong! Then they were told that for seven years they had gradually slipped away from God. When they slipped away from God, their troubles began.

God always loves us, but He is not always pleased with what we do. He is determined to save us and often orchestrates events that are designed to "send us a message" that will bring us to our senses.

God is always for us, but we are not always with Him. It is in those times that we suffer. In this text, Israel endured loss of food, income, and security. In our private endeavors, the results could also be the same. One solution might be for us to repent of any fault or shortcoming we have and come back to God's side of the battle. If we keep doing what we are doing on the wrong side of the fight, the outcome will ultimately be defeat.

Those who are on God's side should be encouraged because although we may feel defeated by life's circumstances, we must remember that that in the end, God wins. When God wins, the people of God win. Satan will have no power over those who are living daily in God's will and in continual communion with Him.

Are your financial problems mounting? Are family difficulties getting more complex? Are you detractors and haters increasing? Listen to Romans 8:31 again, "What can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us?."

Advantages of being on God's Side

There are advantages to being on God's side.

In times of trouble and despair those who know God best have certain assurances that should be comfort us.

God strengthens and encourages those who are on His side. When the weight of the world gets heavy, God lifts our spirits and we find strength that we did not know we possessed. Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

God will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Though it is tempting to do so, those who remain faithful to God will find that God is always them. As David wrote in Psalm 46:7, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We can say the same.

God gives us courage to face the angry faces of our critics and haters? When the words and actions of those who want to destroy us begin to take their toll, believers who are on God's side remember the words of Psalm 56:4, "In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." They will also remember, Psalm 56:11, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

God will protect those who are on his side from ultimate destruction. There will most definitely be setbacks and a few battles lost, but in the end, God will be the victor and we will arise victoriously. Are your enemies plotting against you at this very moment? Are they sharpening their knives and swords ready to attack? Has that caused you to

lose sleep? Those who are on the Lord's side remember the words of Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Truly there are great advantages to being on God's side. He is our fortress, comforter and protector in every avenue of life.

On God's Side

Finally, brothers and sisters we don't how God will do it, but when the battle is over the people of God will be the victors.

God often moves in strange ways to accomplish His will; ways that seem so strange that to some they are unbelievable.

Gideon questioned how God could give the victory to Israel when he only had 300 men against 30,000. All he could see was the prospect of failure because there were so many planning his defeat.

Gideon was on God's side and when was ready He would fight the battle.

There have been many great battles fought in biblical history, but none of them as memorable as those God Himself fights for those who are on His side.

When God fights the battle, often those on His side have little to do, but to stand still and watch Him work.

God fights for us in ways that leave our enemies scratching their heads unable to figure out just how God was able to save us.

When God does His thing, He seems to do it in the strangest of ways that are nothing short of miracles.

Moses faced the armies of Pharaoh and God drowned them in the Red Sea.

Joshua marched around the walls of Jericho until the walls came tumbling down. God used the waters of the sea.

Samson killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. God used an old bone.

Jehoshaphat defeated his enemies with an army of singing soldiers, God used their songs.

But when God delivered Gideon and his men he didn't use a sword, a chariot or singing soldiers, he used only a dream about a round loaf of bread rolling down a hill.

In the middle of the night, one Midianite soldier dreamed he saw a giant loaf of bread rolling down the hill destroying their camp. The dream spread through their camp like wildfire, by the time Gideon blew his trumpet all 30,000 of his enemies had fled in the night, chased away by a dream and a loaf of bread.

It was significant that bread came out of nowhere to save the people because today we too are counting on God's bread for our salvation.

Just as Israel was saved by a dream about a loaf of bread believers must put our trust in the power of the bread of heaven.

In John 6:35, Jesus said, “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. “

He is the bread that Dr. Watts sang about when he said, “Bread of heaven feed me till I want no more.”

This is the bread of communion that God shares with those who are on his side.

This is the bread that that promises eternal life to all who feast upon Him.

This is the same bread that has made a way out of no way, and is still making a way today!

Gideon asked the question, “Where be all his miracles?” And the answer is that God is still performing miracles today.

He’s the same God that opened up the Red Sea, He can open doors today!

He’s the same God that rained down bread from heaven in the wilderness and He can put food on our tables!

He’s the same God that brought down the walls of Jericho and He can bring down the walls of trouble and difficulty in our lives.

The God we serve has never lost a battle; we ought to keep our hand in His hand!

This hand is the hand of the Almighty God!

If we put our hand in the hand of the man from Galilee, He’ll make a way for us!

His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary..

But early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

He is God all by himself,

If God be for us, who can be against us?

No. 9453-Youth

Death in the pot, but life in the cross

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 22, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof. " 2 Kings 4:40; "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. "John 10:10

Introduction

Is it possible for good children to be influenced by people, places and things that could mean death for them?It has been long accepted that children often reflect the world in which they live. The famous Psychologist Jean Piaget is the author of many of the psychological principles upon which modern education operates. He taught that a child comes into the world with a blank slate that is shaped by the people, places, and experiences it encounters.

Piaget's theories are the basis of many of the teaching methods in modern education. Some of his ideas are challenging. For example, he claims that children get their ideas about morality from their parents or institutions like the church, but their practical ideas about morality are learned from their peers. So, the church may teach that it is wrong to steal, but if a youth's peer group steals, the youth may or may not steal himself, but he won't think too harshly about those who do or even condemn the acts. The offshoot of that is for parents to exercise care over the groups that influence their children.

In addition, Piaget taught that that adults usually want youth to be clones of themselves rather encourage them to involve into better, different people. Educators who use the standard idea usually teach children memorize information and repeat it back to them on a test, the same way it was given. He said, "Education, for most people, means trying to lead the child to resemble the typical adult of his society . . . but for me and no one else, education means making creators. .You have to make inventors, innovators—not conformists." The idea is to inspire youth not to simply clone the generation before them but to go beyond into realms where no man or

woman has gone before.

We don't have to be world famous psychologist to know what they teach in the psychology books. Dr. Grandma could have written her own book. She said, "Birds of a feather, flock together." Dr. Grandpa said, "If you play with a dog you'll also get his fleas." Everybody has a favorite Uncle somewhere who reminded the youngsters that "you can't run with hounds and sleep with the rabbits."

There are deadly influences in this world that can destroy the motivation, aspiration, and inclination of youth to succeed; we must protect them to the best of our ability.

We must remember Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." That also would imply that we should inspire a child to go to heights he has never been and when he is old he will have made it there.

As Christians, we strive to live the believer's life in word and deed. Our responsibility is to teach them, inspire them and mentor them, so that the ideals of the savior can take root in their hearts.

Exposition

This text focuses on a group of young people who were inadvertently poisoned by a innocent looking herb that was put in their food.

Israel underwent a lengthy period of famine in which food and water were in short supply. During this time the prophet Elisha visited the school of prophets at Gilgal. These were young men who studied the word of God and trained themselves for the ministry. When Elisha visited he noticed that the students were hungry. He instructed one of his young assistants to prepare a large pot of stew. While searching for ingredients, he ran across a wild vine from which he picked some gourds and sliced the gourds into the stew. He was not aware that he had picked a dangerous gourd to put in the meatless stew, it's thickness would serve to substitute for the lack of meat. As the students tasted the stew they immediately knew it was poisonous and informed Elisha. Trusting the provision of the Lord, Elisha calmly instructed them to add some flour or meal to the stew and then re-serve it. Miraculously, the Lord purified the poisonous stew and the students were able to eat it.

The vulnerability of the young

The fact that the young students were unable to provide for themselves revealed their vulnerability.

As as a general rule youth are not aware of the dangers that threaten both their and welfare. They taste whatever is in the pot.

Youth believe themselves impervious to death, addiction or debilitating conditions. They will try just about anything despite warnings to the contrary.

That's why millions of youth smoke cigarettes despite the warning on the side

of each package. Many drink alcohol, use drugs and experiment with illegal drugs with the full knowledge that problems could follow them.

Youth are vulnerable to the lure of living fast.

Living fast is a way of saying that we are racing through life at a pace that is so dangerous that we threaten to collide with something somewhere. It is not unusual in modern times to see pre-teens wearing stockings and lipstick. It's not unusual for 13 year olds to go out on dates and for teenagers to drink alcohol, have sex and to have babies. The world invites them to live fast and die hard and young.

The young years are vulnerable years when teens trust that what's in the pot won't hurt them because of their youth.

Solomon, in his senior years warned youth of their vulnerability and urged them to stay close to God. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 he said, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth." He later added at 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Adults must be careful what goes in the pot

The prophet Elisha sent his servant to collect ingredients that would go in the pot.

A careless servant almost killed the entire group of youth by not taking care of what he selected to put in the pot. It indicates the importance of the role of persons and institutions that influence youth.

Too often youth are left to rear themselves, but actually rearing children is a full time job. There is a difference between rearing children and raising children. On the farm, it's possible to raise chickens and raise hogs, but the farmer had to rear his children. To raise chickens all that was necessary was to throw them corn seeds and protect them from predators. To raise a hog you simply fed them some slop and let them grow fat. Rearing children is more than just putting food on the table. Rearing them requires a careful management of all the things that influence their lives from the company they keep, the music they listen to, the movies they watch and the quality of educational and growth opportunities.

To make a long story short, parents have a responsibility to watch what goes on in the pot.

Hillary Clinton in her book, "It takes a village," said she learned what our fore parents already knew; everyone around a child influences and contributes to his growth and development. The church must adopt the village approach to youth. We must involve ourselves in the entire lives of the youth as we care for and nurture their faith.

We must teach, through hands on activities in real time.

We must utilize proven tools to reach and teach. Organizations such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have proven to be useful tools used by churches around the world to reach youth with a spiritual message while they have fun. We must use scouting in a greater way.

We must involve ourselves in the secular and Christian education of our youth.

Churches must become concerned about the academic performance of their youth as well as their Christian education. Programs for after school tutoring, ACT Prep and other academic based project will help them in school. At the same time Sunday School, bible study and youth Christian Education will help them grow spiritually.

We must increase our involvement in both arenas of youth education.

At the same time, parents should exercise considerable care about who teaches, influences and mentors their children. Parents are responsible for asking the right questions: How many chaperones will attend an activity, who are they? What is the background of those hired as youth mentors and advisors? If my child spends the night at your house, will there be a responsible adult present at all times? Too many parents are laid back when it comes to their parenting responsibilities. Parents have a responsibility to watch what goes in the pot.

God's power is the antidote

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that the devil may try to put death in the pot, but there is always power in the cross.

When Elisha heard that there was death in the power, told him to take ordinary flour and put it in the brew. By itself the flour should not have made a difference, but it was the flour, it was the power of God that turned death into another chance at life.

That's helps us to understand the grace of God.

It also helps us to understand why Jesus would say that the devil comes to steal and rob the very essence of life from us, but he has come to give us life, and life more abundantly. It is through the power of the blood and the cross that we obtain the grace needed to survive the poisonous efforts of the Lord.

When life has put death in the pot, the grace of God gives us one more chance!

When life has written us off as failures and closes every opportunity, the grace of God opens up another door!

We know that God's grace has a divine purpose. Those young prophets were to declare of the word of God to an unbelieving generation, their lives had a purpose.

Today, God has a plan in mind for young believers of this generation. He has placed them in loving hands, pledged to protect the pot and nurture them to maturity.

That's because God has a divine purpose for sharing his grace.

When the grace of God is upon us, the wise will recognize that is not luck, but the hand of god gently nudging us in right direction.

That's when we should know that it's time to stop playing around with our lives; it's time to begin to live out our purpose.

When grace is upon us we are about our father's business.

When god's grace is upon us, it means God is smiling on us and is guiding our footsteps.

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand!"

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God has smiled on me.
When God smiles on us, he gives us:
—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.
—ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.
—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.
—COMFORT when disaster strikes.
Because of God's grace we are able to:
—Keep on going, when our road gets rough.
—Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.
—Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.
Because God smiles on us, we have:
—Joy in spite of our sorrows: Peace in spite of our problems
—Contentment in spite of our burdens; assurance in spite of our frustrations
—Comfort in spite of our pain; Victory in spite of our defeats
No wonder the song writer declared, "God has smiled on me. He has made me glad!"
I'm glad that He is a wonder working God!
I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!
I'm glad that He is a soul saving God!
I'm glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!
I'm glad that He carried it to Golgotha's hill!
I'm glad that He died for me out on Calvary!
But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9454-Grandparents

Much land to be Possessed

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 12, 2010

Scripture: Now Joshua was old[and] stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old[and] stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. Joshua 13:1 Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto[this] generation,[and] thy power to everyone[that] is to come. Psalms 71:18

Introduction

How much have you benefitted from the life and legacy of your grandparents? Many of us have been the recipients of a wealth of wisdom, guidance, and love from our grandparents. Some have even benefitted from resources provided from them through inheritances left for them by grandparents who cared.

The challenge for every grandparent today is to make sure that their grandchildren will never be able to say, "I never knew my grandparents."

How much they know about your life, beliefs, hopes and dreams may shape their futures.

In 1996 Erma Bombeck, an American humorist wrote about the images that many grandparents have left for their grandchildren to remember. Bombeck said:

Grandparents can always be counted upon to buy anything you're selling from all-purpose greeting cards to peanut brittle, from flower seeds to cookies, from transparent tape to ten chances on a pony.

A grandparent buys you gifts your mother says you don't need.

A grandparent pretends he does not know who you are on Halloween.

A grandparent will put a sweater on you when she is cold, feed you when she is hungry and put you to bed when she is tired.

A grandparent is the only baby-sitter your parents didn't have to pay.

A grandparent will believe you can read even when you have the book upside down.

These are the images that many have of their grandparents, but there is so much more to be told and so much more to be learned. The character of grandchildren often depends on what grandparents put in their hearts today. The challenge to pass from one generation to the next the legacy of God, family and country represents the sum total of every grandparent's charge which is to leave an inspiring legacy that will live in the hearts of your grandchildren.

Grandparents should not consider their work done until they are satisfied that their grandchildren are on the right track or at least know their way to the right track. Until that happens there is still much work to be done.

As Christians, our goal is to possess every blessing that God has for us. We give God praise for Godly grandparents because they show us the way and help us to claim our legacy. As each new grandchild is born, grandparents know they do not have the leisure of a rocking chair existence. There is much land to possess.

Exposition

This text focuses on a command God gave to Joshua to secure the inheritance of coming generations, despite his old age.

The children of Israel had moved into the Promised Land and secured most of it as an inheritance. Before his death, Moses had begun the process of dividing the lands of Canaan to the various tribes of Israel. Once on the other side of Jordan, Joshua spent the remainder of his life securing the lands Moses had assigned to each tribe.

This text notes that Joshua was very old. When he moved into the Promised Land he stood as Moses' right hand, he was 80 years old. Now, much older, he was still charged with an additional responsibility. He was charged to secure the remainder of the lands for the next generation.

"There is very much land to be possessed," was the command that was given to him. Possession of the remainder of the land secured a legacy for the next generation of Israelites. Like many seniors, Joshua concluded that he had done his part. He stood beside Moses in the journey across the wilderness for 40 years. He risked his life spying out the new land, and even in his senior years led the nation in continuous battles to win the land, beginning at Jericho and all of the other cities that he encountered. He concluded that he had done his part and was content to let the years pass.

Yet, the command of God was clear, "there is much land to be possessed." Even in his senior years, there was a challenge remaining: secure an inheritance for coming generations.

David, in Psalm 71:18 accepted the challenge. In fact, he asked God not to abandon him in his old age but to give him to strength to show this generation the power of God and to prepare even the coming generation to know of God's greatness.

The two text seem to make it clear that the elders of every generation have no time to lay back and wait their end, but they are challenged to teach their children and grandchildren about the goodness of God.

What is the land to be possessed?

What do grandchildren learn from godly grandparents? They learn to be patient, wise, benevolent and grateful, because that's the nature of godly grandparents.

Seniors whose children and grandchildren have not mastered these values still have work to do. Like Joshua, today's grandparents are reminded that there is still much land to possess.

A part of a grandparent's task is to share his/her own life experiences with their grandchildren. Although we live in the multicultural age of Obama where technology has changed the way we communicate, and cultural diversity has changed the way we relate; the contrast of the experiences of grandparents with those of their grandchildren are meaningful and important.

In sharing their experiences some grandchildren might be surprised to learn that granny and cramps were once young. They were not born then suddenly became grandparents.

Many grandchildren are surprised to learn that grandma and grandpa are not old fixtures from the past stuck in a corner, but they seem to be so much fun, why? Because they have learned how to live, after spending a lifetime learning how to make a living.

Sometimes that revelation is amazing. Consider the nine year old that sat in the swing with her grandmother and looked at a copy of her driver's license. "That's not a very good picture of you," said the granddaughter, it makes you look old. The daughter looked further and said, "Oh grandmother, they have your weight on here, you are too heavy." She said, "You've been living at the same address for a long time."

Then the granddaughter looked down a little further and she said, "Grandmother you are going to have to improve. You made an "F" in sex."

The land that must be possessed is to teach each new generation of grands and great grands how to traverse the virtual maze of frustrations that accompany youth; and also to understand the facts of life.

How much is to be possessed?

Today, grandparents are more important to families than ever.

Grandparents are the reservoirs of heritage and tradition in the family. They insist that every generation know the family's journey from there "there" to "here."

It has been a long journey, but a much longer journey for the family lies ahead.

In many of our households today, grandparents are the primary caregivers to several grandchildren as well as great grandchildren, increasing their importance.

For grandchildren, it often seems that grandmother or grandfather "sees" more than their parents. She or he seems to "see" what lies ahead.

Consider the two boys who were talking about having to wear glasses to help their vision. "Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time?" asked a small boy of his playmate. "No-o-o," the other boy answered slowly, "not if I had the kind grandma wears. She sees how to fix a lot of things, and she sees lots of nice things to do on rainy days, and she sees when folks are tired and sorry, and what will make them feel better, and she always sees what you meant to do even if you haven't got things just right.

I asked her one day how she could see that way all the time, and she said it was

the way she learned to look at things as she grew older. So it must be her glasses. I want some glasses just like hers." Godly grandparents help their grandchildren to acquire the wisdom to see their way through this life; to see the pitfalls and the opportunities that lie around every turn. They help them to see what life offers them and to see their own potential.

It is becomes the duty of every grandparent to show each generation all that life has to offer them and point to the route to acquire what God has provided.

A full education, an opportunistic spirit, a vibrant work ethic, a strong sense of family and a love of God are the tools needed to possess what God has in store for the next generation. More than any other members of the family, grandparents can point to what must be possessed, even though life and its limitations may have prevented them from actually attaining all of their own potential.

Love of God must be possessed

One of the first truths that children are taught is that we should fear and respect God.In this respect, there is much land to be possessed. It appears that each successive generation gets smarter but slips further away from God. Homes that once prayed together are beginning to fade into spiritual mediocrity.

Many seniors are watching whole generations of children being reared without a knowledge of God. Then some recall the words of scripture: "The harvest is great but the laborers are few."

David prayed to God that he would be allowed to live long enough to teach a few more lessons to the next generation about God and his strength. The love of God is a character trait that must be possessed.

Grandparents had strange ways of teaching this respect and love of God. They did it by insisting on their "Our fathers" before bedtime or odd things like sitting still when it stormed and rained.

More than anything else, grandparents show faith in God by example.

Acquiring that faith is a land that must be possessed.

At age 80, Daniel's faith had reached a level of maturity in which he was unmoved by anything that happened around him. Today, there are grandparents among us that share a similar resolve. They have seen wars, depressions, several presidents, good times and bad times. They have seen droughts, floods, hot summers and cold winters. In all that they have seen, they have learned that God is still in control.

That's why David, reflecting would write, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed, begging for bread."

Keep trusting in the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, grandparents themselves must hold on and keep trusting in the Lord.

While grandparents show their families the strength and power of God, they

themselves must keep trusting in God.

As physical health fails from time to time, eye sights dim and steps slow; they must continue to trust in God and remember that God is our refuge and our strong place to hide in storms.

God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm.

The times may have changed but God is still on the throne.

We trust in the Lord because those who trust him are rewarded with answered prayers, and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves. Biblical grandparents trusted in the Lord.

—Noah trusted the Lord and He brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and He showed him the Lamb in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and He protected him in the Lion's Den

—Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord.

I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Iwill trust in the Lord because if I am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!"

I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross! Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand, the Lord knows the way!

No. 9455-Anniv.-Pastor

A Pastor Unlocking the Door

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2010

SCRIPTURE: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

Introduction

Have you ever heard a knock at your door?Whenever someone knocks on your door it means that they desire to get your attention. More often than not they want to enter for one reason or another. Sometimes we may not want to answer the door and we try to ignore the knocks. That's the way some people do when a bill collector knocks at the front door or rings the doorbell. Some who don't have the money to pay their bill try to pretend that they are not home, but the bill collector continues to knock. That happened to one lady who told her young son to answer the door but say, "She's not here." The little boy tried to follow his mother's instructions to the letter. The boy opened the door boldly and looked the bill collector in the face.

"Is your mother home?" asked the collector.

Then boldly the boy answered, "She say, she not here."

That was the wrong way to answer the door.

Jesus said in, John 10:7-9 "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

Pastors are God's instruments to show sinners and believers the way to paradise. He characterized Himself as the door and each pastor's job is to show those under His care the way to the door.

An old Negro spiritual focused on that door and the knocking with these words, "Somebody's knocking on your door, Oh sinner, why don't you answer, somebody's knocking on your door."

If pastors have one great task it is to help sinners and believers to hear the Holy Spirit knocking at their door. When we are lost the knock is a call to repentance, when we are saved, the knock is a call to action. For this reason pastors are sanctified and set aside to bring each believer to a point in his life experience when he can answer the call of God who is knocking on their door.

As Christians, we know God is knocking on our doors. We must listen to the preached word and prayerfully listen for God to speak in every avenue of life. Through His preacher, written word and revelation we are able to answer and respond to His call.

Exposition

This text focuses on a message given to the pastor of the Church at Laodicea; that it must be reminded that Christ is knocking on their door.

The angel of the church at Laodicea had an enviable yet daunting task; he served as pastor of a congregation that had become comfortable with its position in the Kingdom of God. It was enviable because the congregation had experienced a period of prosperity and growth. It's material possessions had apparently grown to the point that they enjoyed a reputation in the community as being more than simply affluent, but rich.

For those congregation struggling to survive, this church was in an enviable position. They were not in want and, for all practical purposes, had achieved much in the sight of their peers in the faith and even in the their own eyes.

However, the pastor of the congregation called, the angel, had the daunting task of motivating the congregation to move from its comfortable position and meet the challenge of expanding the gospel to all persons.

As far as its mission was concerned the church had settled into a comfortable routine that was neither ambitious or nonplussed. It was not on fire with desire to expand the kingdom but neither did it turn a cold shoulder to the challenges it met. This spirit angered God to the point that he said He would spit them out of his mouth.

The angel of this church was challenged to alert believers of the challenges of the cross, while at the same time reminding them that Christ the savior is on the outside knocking and waiting for an opportunity join them in a dynamic effort to bring the mercy and love of God to all generations.

The sanctified pastor

The angel at the church in Laodicea had a great challenge before him. So does every pastor. To meet the commands and expectations of the savior the sanctified pastor must:

REALIZE HIS PURPOSE: Each pastor is placed with a congregation for a specific purpose and for a specific length of time. The goal is to achieve God's purpose. Understanding the mysterious ways of God has been a puzzle to many over the centuries. We are no exception. We often wonder why God selected us, out of all of his creation, and placed us in the unique spot that we occupy in the world today. It is humbling when we consider that God could have chosen anyone, but He did not choose just anyone He chose this pastor for this work. God knew the kind of people she would encounter and selected her because of her special qualities, then

put it on the hearts of the people to accept His chosen one .

The pastor who has been sanctified by God in this way is humbled and probably asks, “Why me?

To those who pose this troubling question to themselves find the answer in Psalm 89:19, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.”

Unseen by the hand of man, God has exalted Godly leaders to a station and position that would promote the building of his kingdom and provide spiritual help for those who follow him.

Often we cannot see God’s hand, but there is no doubt that God’s hand is in the plan.

Everything that happens has a reason and purpose, according to God’s divine plan. When a Godly leader sanctified, selected and placed in a position, it is not accidental. God is in the plan.

When a man or woman of God is given a gavel or pulpit, it is not a coincidence of nature. God is in the plan.

THE PASTOR EQUIPS THE SAINTS: In Laodicea, the congregation was established but not equipped to serve; that presented a challenge to the angel of that congregation. He had to fully equip the members to serve the kingdom rather than sit comfortably and be served by the kingdom.

Likewise, the sanctified pastor of any congregation is challenged to reemphasize the importance of preparation, training and kingdom building. Simply sitting comfortably, neither hot nor cold, does not please God.

This training should equip every member to at least have basic bible skills. To know that Genesis is in the front o the Bible and not the back!

This training should orient every member to know the history, heritage and program of the church and how the church program is reflected in the Word of God.

This training should prepare every leader, through attitude and aptitude, to serve in his chosen area of church work.

But more than that, this training gives each leader a greater appreciation and understanding of his faith. Training helps him to appreciate the songs of the choir, the sermons of the pastor, and sacredness of the worship.

The sanctified pastor’s task is to help members, see Jesus in every walk of life, and to know that he stands at the door of the future waiting for an opportunity to enter.

THE PASTOR MUST ENCOURAGE FAITH TO OVERCOME: The angel at Laodicea was challenged to lead the people to overcome the world. To do so he would need to inspire them to reach beyond their comfort zones and take action for Christ. The goal is not simply to reach a point of financial and social success and get comfortable but to overcome Satan and Sin.

The sanctified pastor has the task of inspiring the congregation to trust. It is in this way that the sanctified pastor reminds believers that those who trust God always overcome.

When we trust God, He:
—feeds me when I am hungry!
—comforts me when I am lonely!
—corrects me when I am wrong
—refreshes me when I am tired!
—satisfies me when I am thirsty!
—lifts me when I am low!
—challenges me when I am indifferent!
—sustains me when I am afraid!
—directs me when I am confused!
—motivates me when I am discouraged!
—soothes me when I am dying!

We hear the words of John in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. "

The pastor has a reward

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that the sanctified pastor has a reward coming; it's a crown of life.

Every now and then it is good for believers to remember that serving the Lord does pay off after awhile. The same is true for those who lead in the church. The reward is great because their task is greater than the ordinary believer.

Therefore the sanctified pastor should remember the lyrics of the song writer who penned the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done.

There is no reward for being lukewarm.

There is no reward for being content.

There is no reward for being satisfied with the status quo.

There is no reward for those who sit on the stool of good intentions singing, "I shall not be moved" but only for those who use their God given abilities to advance the kingdom of the savior

Pastors must continue to preach the word and tell the world that He is truly King of Kings!

That's why we love our pastors. We love them because they continually remind us that, there is a name that we can call on in the middle of the night or in the heat of the day.

It is the name the songwriter wrote about when in a sanctified moment, alone with God, he declared, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!
There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.
There is a name that:
—Blesses me when I'm burdened
—Cheers me when I'm sad
—Strengthens me when I'm weak
—Calms me when I'm troubled
—Revives me when I'm weary!
It's the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved!
It's the name of Jesus!

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh How I love Jesus. Because He first loved me."

He loved me so much that He hung out on Calvary!
He loved me so much that He died for my sins!
But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power!
All power in his hands!

No. 9456-Revival

The Devil in the Closet

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 3, 2010

SCRIPTURE: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Romans 7:22-24

Introduction

Is there a side of you that you keep hidden from most people; even from yourself? Most people have a public face and a private face. Ideally, both faces should be the same, but most often they are not. There are many who struggle to hide or even deny their dark sides because they know it would not be acceptable to others and would diminish their chances at self promotion.

Like the Hulk, some say, "You wouldn't like me when I'm angry." So, like Bruce Wayne we hide ourselves in Bat Caves or like Spiderman we hide our identities behind a mask. There is a little bit of Darth Vader in all of us, listening to the siren calls of the dark side of the force.

What doesn't appeal to us we hide in the closet. We don't throw it away, however because somehow it fascinates us and we want the opportunity to privately enter our closet and become what we like to be. In the closet our dark side takes over appealing to our prurient interests our most base desires and fantasies. In our closet world there are voices that convince ourselves that the life we have in the closest is the way it was meant to be; for us anyway.

There is a devil in the closet of every person's soul placing them at war with the creator, battling for control.

Whether it's one president who speaks about the importance of good health in one breath then slips into the closet to chain smoke cigarettes or another who expresses love for his wife in one moment and slips into the closet for hanky panky with a girl young enough to be his daughter.

There is a devil in everyone's closet. Sometimes it involves money, hidden identities, or sexual practices that are distasteful. Despite our best intentions and efforts to keep it hidden, the closet door opens and it all comes out.

What should believers do when we come face to face with the reality that we have devils in our closets? What if their presence is revealed to others? For many, the first

response is denial. Immediately following that is justification and rationalization.

There are some who fall on their knees and appeal to God with the words of scripture, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Fortunately, we serve a God who has experience dealing with the devil in the closet. He is the one who can deliver us from the clutches of our own carnal impulses. "Jesus can help me, Jesus alone."

As Christians, we must trust the Lord to help us deal with our secret closet issues. He can help us to be true to our calling and our purpose.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explained that every believer faces a virtual warfare within them for control of their souls and secret passions.

Historically, Paul addressed the subject of the presence of a dark side, a compulsion to live outside of the will of God in each believer. Often this compulsion is not visible to the naked eye but can be felt on the inside, churning, turning and twisting believers as they fight to resist one temptation after another.

Many believers kept the presence of evil desires secret and never announced them to anyone. They were literally kept hidden in spiritual closets and locked away. The whole matter confused early believers because many thought they should instantly be free from worldly desires. They felt accepting Christ should destroy the devil in the closet. Instead, Paul explained that although we have the spirit of Grace through Salvation, there is a devil in every person's closet who does not leave, but is subdued, controlled and held at bay by the power of God himself.

The saint feels the presence of God within and agrees with His laws. There is something within every believer that tells them to do is right, and they want to do it. But also, he says, there is something else inside every believer that rises up and says "No!" It says, "Do not obey the law."

This is the devil in the closet.

These text verses point to the source of the problem. Paul tries to help us figure out what is wrong. He asks the question, "What's the matter with me? Why can't I do what is right? Why do I give way when I get into this situation? Why am I so weak?" Paul described this frustration in verse 24, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Paul concluded that the source of the problem is sin. Look at Romans 7:20, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

He showed us that there is a way out. Believers can leash the devils within them through the power of God.

He seemed to give believers a formula: Acknowledge our dark side, understand the nature f its presence, then call upon the power of God to control and leash our demons.

Personal acknowledgement of our weakness is just the first step. Turning the entire closet and its contents over to God is the important part. He will do the rest.

The nature of the devils

Modern believers have a plethora of devils in our closets. No Christian can stand in judgment of another because Romans 3:23 says, "… all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

There are no believers who have empty closets. There is a devil in every closet

DARK PASSIONS ARE IN EVERYONE'S CLOSET: Many believers have dark passions that are hidden from the public view. Some have sexual appetites that would displease their friends in the faith if they knew their secret desires. Others have desires for fame and popularity that are so compelling that they often are tempted to cross the line of morality to acquire them. Greed is a dark passion that constantly tempts believers to toy with the prospect of embezzlement, tax cheating, and theft. The list of dark passions include feelings of insecurity, fear, and doubt. For some they include a secret desire to do crazy things and to flirt with danger and the unknown. This is often reflected in our choices of reading material, videos and collectibles that in some cases may be hidden away in private closets, websites and safe deposit boxes, protected by pass codes, keys and life locks. Though locked away from public view, each of us has a closet and there is a devil in that closet, being held back by the power of God but waiting to take control.

SEXUALITY IS A CLOSET DEVIL: Sexual matters represent a particular challenge. For many the issue of homosexuality is a peculiarly sensitive devil in the closet. In reality, there are many believers: choir members, ushers, musicians, leaders, members and even pastors who have homosexual demons in their closets. The Black church has been reluctant to deal with the issue. It has adopted an unofficial and hypocritical position of, "Don't ask, don't tell" to deal with this devil. We have even gone one step further to add, "Even if you do tell, your presence can be tolerated as long as you confine your homosexual activities to other homosexuals." In many black churches, the presence of homosexuals in ministry is so prominent that if all homosexuals would be removed that choirs would stop singing, worships would have no music and many pulpits would be empty. We have simply turned a blind eye to the growing homosexual presence among us. In many cases homosexuals in the church are the subjects of jokes, comic imitations, and private jest. However, Black churches, for the most part draw the line when this closet devil begins to touch "my little boy, my son or my husband." Yet, the will be held responsible for its endorsement of closet activities over the years that have resulted in spiritual damage to believers themselves and the cross of Christ.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT BIBLICALLY SUPPORTED: The church must not alter the teachings of the bible regarding this subject. The preponderance of scripture does not encourage, support or endorse homosexuality either in the Old or New Testaments.

The Old Testament had no tolerance for homosexuality at all. Homosexuals, both male and female were put to death. Leviticus 18:22 says, "Thou shalt not lie with

mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man also lieth with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

In the New Testament it is equally condemned. Romans 1:26-27 says, "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting."

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 gives a stern warning: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET: The challenge for believers dealing with this demon is to follow Paul's example in this text: Acknowledge our demon and its source, then turn to God to subdue these devils and to defang the serpent. In recent years, believers have been undone by a seemingly endless array of pastors who are acknowledging sexual demons in their closets. As we see the details we are troubled because they crossed our self imposed line. We are even more troubled because instead of asking God to deal with this devil, many have tried to justify their actions and expect to be received by other believers while openly practicing what the bible describes as sin. Coming out of the closet should mean that a person is now dealing with a secret demon. It should acknowledge that the source of this demon is sin and the devil himself. It should include repentance. Finally, it should include a request for the saints to pray as this matter is turned over to God. Coming out of the closet should not simply be announcement that "I am gay" but "I am gay, being gay is inconsistent with scripture, pray for me as a I repent and turn this matter over to God."

God loves everyone

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the answer to Paul's question, "Who can deliver me from this body of death?" His answer was Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 7:25 "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord…

There is a lot of salvation in verse 25, "I thank God through Jesus.." Because it is through Jesus that I hope gain restoration.

I thank God through Jesus that I am no longer what I use to be.

I thank God through Jesus that I have conquered the devil in my closet and live each day in power of his anointing.

I thank God through Jesus that I came to know the love of God.

That's the great truth that the church must portray to the world, that God is a God of love. He hates our sins, but He never stops loving the sinner. He doesn't like what we do, but He never gives up on us.

He hates the fact that we steal, but he still loves the thief.

He hates the fact that we lie, but He still loves the liar.

He hates the fact that we break the law, but He still loves the lawbreaker.

He hates homosexual acts, but He never stops loving gays and lesbians as people.

While the church should not embrace homosexuality it must not become homophobic. We should not hate the people caught up in this great sin, but reflect the spirit of God's love in all of our dealings with them.

God's love is a powerful love that overcomes our weaknesses!

That weakness may be homosexuality, but it could also be drunkenness, gambling, fornication, adultery, wild living, drugs, criminal activity.

The good news is that there is no sin that God is not willing to forgive.

There is no mistake that he is not willing to forget and give us a new chance.

There is no orientation that he is not willing to redirect.

There is no life so broken that he cannot fix it.

There is no life so lost that he can't help you find it again!

There is no lifestyle so spiritually draining that he can't breathe new life into it!

That's why the song writer said, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin; Each vict'ry will help you some other to win; Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue; Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through."

I don't know about you but I've discovered that God is able!

God is able to take that which is bad and make it good!

God is able to take that which has been destroyed and rebuild it again!

God is able to take our setbacks and make them opportunities!

God's love is a soul saving love that reaches into our closet and puts a muzzle on our demons and gives us one more chance!

That's why Christ came to this earth, to give us another chance!

That's why he died on an old rugged cross!

But Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave!

He did it to save us and help us deal with the devil in our closet!

No. 9457-Anniv. Church

Solidarity with the Savior

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2010

SCRIPTURE: For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:9-11

Introduction

Is there any limit to what we can achieve if our goals are in sync with the savior? As we survey the challenges that lay ahead, the church should not be intimidated by the enormity of the task.

Believers are shouldering enormous burdens in the secular community. Unemployment is high and has impacted giving and limited ministries in some congregations as available resources decline. Many are struggling to make ends meet while balancing their family needs with those of the church. Crime is rising and our youth seemed more detached than ever from Godly way.

Despite our frustration, the church should not be discouraged. The challenges we face are not insurmountable. The church can survive the national dilemma and rise to the occasion because we serve a God who has proven that He can make a way out of no-way, open doors that have been shut and lift fallen hopes and dreams.

Alone, the task would be too much, but together with Christ we can do all things which strengthen us.

Alone, we cannot adequately speak to the poverty that exists in our neighborhoods, but together with Christ we can reach out to the poor in ways that are significant and meaningful .

Alone, we cannot provide food for the hungry masses of our neighborhoods, our church kitchens are not big enough; but we serve a savior who takes two little fishes and five loaves of bread and feeds thousands.

Alone, we can't curb the raging storm of violence that is sweeping our communities, but we serve a Savior who specializes in speaking to the wind and rain and commanding them to be still.

Together with the savior, we can become the foundation of hope in our communities. Our hope, built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness,

can inspire the dispirited around us, to know that help is on the way.

There is a distinct advantage to be in solidarity with anyone who can determine your destiny. That's what a famous surgeon found out when he died. The story goes that the surgeon led a wild and loose life but he was a great surgeon who saved many lives. In fact, he spent the last 20 years of his life building a hospital in honor of St. Luke the doctor of the New Testament. Others wanted to name the Hospital something else but he insisted that it be named after St. Luke. When the surgeon died he was met at the Pearly Gates by a tall angelic looking gatekeeper who advised him that it was his job to preapprove new heavenly arrivals. So the gatekeeper, with clipboard in hand asked, "Have you ever committed any unrepentant sins while you were on earth?" The surgeon thought about it and said, "Well, to tell the truth I messed up a whole lot. My list is pretty long. In fact, I even told a few lies to get a hospital named after St. Luke." The gatekeeper looked at the surgeon and smiled and said, "Well, that wasn't so bad. You may enter into eternity."

As the surgeon entered he was relieved. He shook the gatekeeper's hand and said, "Thank you very much St. Peter." The gatekeeper interrupted him and "I'm not St. Peter, he's on a lunch break. I'm St. Luke. Thanks for the building. I got your back."

We cannot do what needs to be done alone, but we have the assurance that if we work together with the Savior He will see us through.

As Christians, we are confident that there is no barrier that we cannot overcome, as long as we stay solidly in step with the Savior; He will see us through.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains what believers can achieve when they work together with Christ.

Every believer has a function and a gift to facilitate the advancement of the kingdom of God. Each believer is individually responsible for his or her work and each will be rewarded individually, according to their labors. Paul and the other preachers and teachers of the true gospel message worked together as partners with God. Their ministry belonged not to them, but to God.

Paul laid the foundation of the organized church in solidarity with Jesus Christ. Whoever builds on that foundation must be very careful.

Those who work hardest shall fare best. Those who are most faithful shall have the greatest reward. They work together with God, in promoting the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of precious souls; and He who knows their work, will take care they do not labor in vain. They are employed in his husbandry and building; and He will carefully look over them.

The work of the church is to build upon the foundation laid by Christ Himself to bring salvation to the masses. In solidarity with Him the church reached the masses of the unsaved with His message of hope and forgiveness.

The revised text gives us a clear picture of our spiritual proximity and solidarity with the savior. The revised version reads this way: "For we are God's fellow-workers." That

means fellow-laborers belonging to God. We belong to God in this struggle and work with Him to respond to the needs of our respective communities of faith.

Areas of Solidarity

Solidarity with the Savior should be more than just a slogan or a motto. The church should reflect its unity with Christ on every level.

Solidarity in prayer

Christ earnestly prayed for the church. If we are to reflect our union with Him then we should also pray fervently. We should pray for those who are in need. There are many people who stand in dire need of prayer every day. Their needs vary from financial to health concerns to economic issues. Some have family, relationship and marital issues. Others are struggling with a long line of personal woes that only the Almighty can successfully resolve. We should pray for those who are in need and keep them before the throne of grace.

If the church is anything it is the vehicle through which prayer is offered and answers are received. Therefore, the church should follow Christ's example and pray regularly and with power.

The Word of God urges us to constantly pray for Saints who are in need. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

We should pray for our pastors because through their strength congregations are strong.

As Christ prayed for those who fed His lambs let us follow his example and in solidarity, pray for every pastor in this district; pray that God would use our pastors in a mighty way while protecting them from unwarranted attacks and vicious temptations.

Solidarity with the savior will require sacrifice

Christ proved Himself willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our salvation. In solidarity with Him each of us should be ready to lay down our personal goals and ambitions to pursue the cross of Christ.

What does it mean to show solidarity through sacrifice?

What can this district do that will demonstrate sacrificial solidarity with Christ?

We can work together to advance the cause of Christ in a greater way.

It would be a sacrifice, but it would be a powerful statement if churches all over the community area worked together to work with groups such as Habitat for humanity to build homes for those without shelter.

It would be a sacrifice, but it would show the compassion of our Savior if in solidarity with Christ we joined together to fight the growing AIDS epidemic in our area.

It would be a sacrifice, but it would save thousands of families if all of our churches, in solidarity with Christ spoke loudly against the growing violence in our neighborhoods, then actually worked together to set up neighborhood watches, anti-crime programs, and similar community responses to take back our neighborhoods.

It would be a sacrifice, but if we pooled our resources, and supported the home and foreign mission efforts of our convention as one solid group, what a message of solidarity we would send to the world.

There is so much that can be done, but it will require the church to increase its united effort and place its church based agendas on the back burner.

Working individually we can accomplish great things in this world, however, working together, in solidarity in Christ, there is so much more that can be done.

It is a sacrificial service and cooperative effort that would be recognized and rewarded by the Savior.

In Solidarity, we the point the way to abundant living

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when we work together as one solid unit, we show an unbelieving world how to achieve the abundant life promised by the savior.

The abundant life that Christ spoke about when He said, 'I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly," has nothing to do with prosperity or accumulating "things" in this life. It does promise a happy, fulfilled and purposeful life that displays the love, mercy and favor of God in every respect.

When the church, through its Christian Education, laymen, women's auxiliaries, youth work and other ministries, begins to lay the foundations of faith hundreds, even thousands of lives will be touched.

In solidarity with the Savior, we must lift up the Cross and reach the masses with His word. He has reminded us that, "I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

In solidarity with the Savior we must encourage believers to make the sacrifices necessary to make the kingdom of God a reality.

The abundant, spirit-filled lives we all desire will require sacrifice. This powerful anointed life will require us to give up something.

Through our perfect union with Christ we demonstrate what it means to live sacrificially for Him.

In solidarity with Christ, we also demonstrate abundant living..

Together, we must point the way to the cross.

We must go to the cross because at the cross the:

—WICKED will cease from troubling and the WEARY will be at rest.

—WEAK will find strength and the LONELY will find comfort for their souls.

—HUNGRY will find sustenance and the THIRSTY will find water for their souls.

No wonder the song writer declared, "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith, I received my

sight and now I'm happy all the day."

In solidarity with Savior, let's show the world that the God we serve is a loving God who has promised us the abundant life!

In solidarity with Savior, let's show the lost that we have found a savior who is real in our lives!

I don't know about you, but I have decided to live my life in solidarity with the savior!

I have decided to tell the world that the Lord has brought me from a mighty long way.

We must tell the world about the savior!

We must tell the world that He came down through 42 generations to a cruel and unappreciative world!

We must tell the world that He lived for 33 years among us showing us the way to paradise.

We must tell the world that He healed the sick and raised the dead.

I don't know about you, but I've got to tell somebody that He is still healing the sick and raising dead lives today.

I've got to tell somebody about the Savior.

His name is Jesus!

The Lily of the Valley! The bright and morning!

His name is Jesus! Who picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill.

His name is Jesus, my rock, my sword my shield!

He died out on Calvary!

. ..but early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

In solidarity, tell the world that He lives!

In solidarity, tell the world that He heals!

In solidarity, tell the world that He cares!

In solidarity, let's show every doubting heart that our God is able!

Able!

Able!

Yes, He's able!

No. 9458-Revival

God is trying to tell you something

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 10, 2010

SCRIPTURE: Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul. Ezekiel 3:17-21

Introduction

Have you ever felt that God was trying to tell you something? It's no strange thing that God sends signs to each of us; signs that we often ignore. Sometimes God speaks to us in our dreams, sometimes He places a heavy thought on our hearts. On some occasions the name of one person is on your mind and you cannot rest until you have made contact. Sometimes you learn that you made contact just in the nick of time.

It is God's nature to warn us of impending danger. It's not unusual for the righteous to know what is being planned against them long before the plots are revealed. In a variety of ways God has shown us what we needed to know and directed us away from danger.

In the Movie "The Color Purple" Shug Avery strayed away from God. As she sang in a nightclub the church choir sang a song that echoed through the woods, "God is trying to tell you something."

That string of near misses and close calls that you experienced, were they just accidents? Was God trying to tell you something? The auto accident that you walked away from with just a few aches and pains; was it luck or was God trying to tell you something? When we flirted with a bad idea and it nearly destroyed us, was it a warning sign?

When God gives us warnings, how do we respond? Too often we ignore them. In His own unique way God has established a system for the universe that has built-in warning signs. Long before modern meteorologists learned to study the weather there were Almanacs that predict with precision the day of the first frost and seasons of unusual cold. If not that, there were always a few of the old timers who could tell the weather by special aches in their bones, long before they occurred.

It seems that God has designed the universe in a way that gives clear warnings when something is wrong. There is a reason why the summers are getting hotter and the world's ice cap is melting. Some say that it's global warming, others say its God speaking to the world in ways that get our attention, "God is trying to tell us something."

God even built warning systems into our bodies to alert us when something is wrong. Generally, the presence of pain is a warning light that flashes through our nervous system indicating that there is a problem somewhere. Often we take medicines like aspirin to kill the pain, but aspirin does not solve the problem that caused the pain, it just turns off the warning light. Doctors are trained to read the thousands of ways that our bodies send us signals that something is wrong. They give us prescriptions to cure us, but most often we only want to get rid of the pain.

Often we see God's warning signs but respond the way some do at railroad crossings: they see the lights flashing but dash across anyway. We see the traffic light turn yellow but instead of slowing down we speed right through. Sometimes we see the gas hand on our cars point to empty and we try to squeeze out another mile, the oil lights flash, the seat belt buzzes strange tones and warning lights are flashing everywhere but we ignore them all.

God speaks to us in many ways; we listen when God is trying to tell us something.

As Christians, we read in His word how God warned of danger and gave signs of salvation. We should heed his warnings and live in anticipation of his promise.

Exposition

This text focus on warnings that God gives his people and our responsibility to respond to them once acknowledged.

The prophet Ezekiel, in this text is described as the "son of man" and the position of watchman is ascribed to every preacher of the Gospel. The preacher's job is to both take notice and to give notice to the words of God. To take notice the preacher himself should hear what God says. To give notice, the preacher must deliver with passion and power God's notices to the people.

As a watchman the preacher stands on the wall watching for dangerous signs as well as signs of victory. His obligation is to warn the people of danger and to proclaim to them any victories that are forthcoming.

This passage makes it clear that through the preaching of the Gospel the unrighteous are warned of the wrath of God. Ezekiel 3:17 says that warning is not from the preacher but "a warning from me," –God says. An awesome responsibility is laid

on the preacher; he is charged to warn the people in ways that may unsettle them that God is not pleased with their sins.

The text notes that preachers will be held responsible for failing to denounce sin. However, the fact that the preacher didn't do his job won't be an excuse that will be acceptable. Ezekiel 3:18 says, that the unrepentant sinner will still die in his sins, but the preacher shall be held accountable for failing to do his job, "but his blood will I require at thy hand."

However, if the preacher warns a righteous man not to stray from the path and the righteous man heeds the warning then the preacher is commended for giving warnings that saved a lost soul. Ezekiel 3:21 says, "Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

Every preacher must give notice of the God's warnings. Each person will be held accountable for they do after they have received the warning. There is either salvation of damnation that follows and the warnings make the choices clear.

Warning Signs

GOD WARNS NATIONS ABOUT SIN: When Ezekiel is told to warn the "House of Israel" he was being told to speak the national leaders and warn them. God warns nations about sins, but often the messenger is extremely unpopular. In 2008 as Barack Obama was campaigning for president but the nation stunned when it learned that his pastor, The Reverend Jeremiah Wright, denounced the sins of America for neglecting its poor, causing wars on foreign shores and embracing an immoral alliance with sin. The world was shocked that Pastor Wright, with passion and power, warned that God would "damn" America for its unrepentant sins against the black man, Native Americans and other minorities who were force to build the nation but allow a seat at the table of brotherhood. Those who were disturbed apparently were not aware that God does promise to bring judgment upon nations that become ungodly. He has brought down whole countries and eliminated many from the face of the earth. True to form those prophets who gave the warnings were not very popular: Jeremiah was called a traitor to his country. Ezekiel was dismissed as a raging fool. Yet, the warnings they gave were to the nation as a whole. God speaks to the leaders of the world, whether they hear him or not will not be the responsibility of the preachers, but answer for themselves.

GOD WARNS INDIVIDUALS: God speaks to our personal situation. In the text verses Ezekiel speaks of individuals such as the "Wicked man" in verse 18 and the "righteous man" in verse 20. It means there are warnings that God has for each of us individually as well. Sometimes we can move through life effortlessly thinking that our deviant lifestyle is acceptable to God. People who live together without benefit of marriage, steal, buy stolen merchandise, cheat in the marriages, backstab their friends, and forsake their families for one reason or the other often believe that they continue without any problem until God starts sending them messages.

At first they may little small signs and warnings, when they are ignored others come;

then finally God has do something to get our attention. Sometimes it's a straight forward dramatic challenge. That's what happened when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. He asked "How long halt ye between two opinions. If Baal be God, then follow him, but if God be God, then follow him.' Joshua challenged the families of Israel to choose God's side by saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Saul, on the road to Damascus, found that God had to knock him down, and blind him before he came to his senses.

God warns us in sermons on Sunday, in lectures from our parents, and in a thousand other ways; our responsibility is hear Him when He speaks.

DON'T IGNORE THE SIGNS: When we ignore the warning signs we invite our own damnation. If we are saved and begin to walk a wayward path, the text says we will rejoice in our own salvation. If the righteous ignore the warnings of God, they will be held accountable. The children of God get a spanking when they ignore what He says, in the same way that Big Mama got upset when we tried to ignore her when she talked. Don't give God the stone wall.

In his book, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, Commentator Paul Harvey tells about an announcement that came across the intercom of a passenger jet. "There's a warning light for the thermal expander valve on the number two engine," said the pilot, "and I will not fly until it is replaced. Please return to the terminal waiting room."

The passengers were off the plane only ten minutes when they were told to get back on again.

A passenger from Hartland, Minnesota, asked a flight attendant, "Did they get a new thermal expander valve already?"

The attendant said, "My land, no! There's not one of those things within a thousand miles. They got us a new pilot."

There are warning lights flashing in our spirit when something is wrong, we can't ignore them. Just as lump in the breast, blood in the stool, or a sore that won't heal need immediate attention, so do spiritual problems they affect relations: Marriage partners that don't talk anymore, children that do not seem happy, and the general dissatisfaction with your life, your church, your family and yourself; all are signs that our relationship with God, who controls these things, is deteriorating.

In your car you can rig it so that the buzzers and lights don't operate, but the problem still exists. In your life you can try to avoid the warning lights by skipping worship, bible study, and personal devotions. If you do, then God will find a way to get your attention; He always does.

Not everything is bad

Finally brothers and sisters, we need to remember that not everything God is trying to tell us is bad news. Sometimes there are warnings, and then sometimes God has news of restoration and renewal.

This same Ezekiel who God used to warn Israel about their sins and was used taken into a valley of dry bones and asked, "Son of Man can these bones live?" He gave

Israel a message of hope and inspiration.

God has a word for each of us every day. Sometimes it is word of warning. At other times it is a word of hope and inspiration.

In the middle of these troubling times, God is trying to tell us something.

In the middle of challenging financial times when jobs are disappearing and unemployment is at an all time high, God is trying to tell us something!

"Be not dismayed whatever betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you!

In these times when we go to bed at night and listen to the echoes of sirens and fire engines n busy street, God is still trying to tell us something, "All night and all day, angels are watching over me."

In these troubling times, when home values are dropping and foreclosures are increasing God is trying to tell us what he told David, "God is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in a time of trouble."

God is trying to tell us that our bad things can be turned around and we can start to see the light of day.

God is trying to tell somebody that your sadness can be reversed and you can begin to see a reason for gladness.

God is trying to tell somebody that He can take your bitterness and help you to taste life's sweetness one more time.

God is trying to tell somebody that the sting of failure is coming to an end and He's about to take your failure and turn it into the stepping stone to success.

God is trying to tell somebody that troubles you've endured, dealing with the stressful pangs of divorce and that soon you will realize new life and renewed happiness.

God is trying to tell somebody that you may feel lost but there is still a way out. You may have sinned but forgiveness is available.

God is trying to tell you don't have to give up because "On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross"-On that cross was the source of your salvation!

On that cross was Jesus, the Son of the living God!

On that cross was the Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

He died out on Calvary's Hill, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hand.

God is trying to tell you something!

No. 9459-Anniversary, Church

I'm Pressing On

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 17, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14 (KJV)

Introduction

How do you measure progress? We can measure our progress by looking back over the road we have traveled. The distance traveled in the right direction is a measure of the progress we have made.

It is said that when Harriet Tubman made her journeys into the South to carry another band of slaves to freedom that she carried with her a shotgun and an old tattered bible. Years after her journeys into the forbidden South she was often asked why she carried these two articles on every trip. She said often some of the slaves would give up and think of turning back. She said she would point the shotgun in their faces and say, "If you turn back I'll shoot you dead on the spot, then take this bible and pray that the good Lord forgives me. Now, press on!"

With those words she urged the runaways to keep going forward and to abandon even the thought of turning back.

Pressing on is an old colloquialism that simply means to keep moving forward without turning back. Pressing on does not indicate how big the strides must be; it only indicates the direction; it must be forward.

In football, a runner who carries the ball is allowed to continue, even if he is dragging several defenders and is pounder on all sides as long as he is moves forward. The referee does not call the ball dead until forward progress has stopped. So, even as the runners are going down, some are seen scrambling for inches of turf trying to keep moving forward, inch by inch.

That's the goal of the church, to keep pressing on. The words of the old song are definitely true: "I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day. Still praying as I onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

As Christians, we should not be dissuaded by the journey behind us, but be inspired by the challenge ahead and press on.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi. While imprisoned in Rome he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

Paul remained humble, throughout his life. Obviously, God had endowed him with great talents and gifts but he always received them with an attitude of humility. Although Paul was a learned scholar who spoke many languages fluently, and was well versed in the scholarship of his day, he told the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended" that is to note that while he had learned much in life, he was keenly aware that he did not know everything. He counted heavily on the Holy Spirit to reveal many things to him and to call others to his remembrance. Knowing that God spoke and moved through him, Paul was always humble to know that he had not accomplished anything alone, but it was always God working through him.

Secondly, Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. Whatever was done in the past remains as history, he chose, even in a moment of crises to always look to the future.

Lastly, Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37,"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as witness to the power of God and there would be no turning back.

A humble past

When we consider the history of any church, there is a sense of humility. Many black churches have a history of struggle against the odds and forward progress prompted by an intense faith in God.

When we hear the stories of the elders of the church, sometimes we smile. Especially when we hear accounts of 50 cent church dues, out houses, and buildings without fans or air conditioners. We listen with wonder as we hear of the vigorous worships, the intense prayers and powerful preaching of the deacons and pastors of our past.

Such a past is humbling, because it helps us to appreciate the nature of our present struggle.

When we had little, we did much to help the poor and the needy.

When we struggled to learn to read and write ourselves, we took our Sunday Schools and turned them into places where we taught God's word but also the essentials of English grammar.

When all we had were homemade dresses, hand me down pants, and hand knitted shawls around our shoulders, we still found a way to share with our neighbors who had even less than our meager fare.

Our history is humbling.

At anniversaries, we have a tendency to look back with a nostalgic eye over the road we have come; not with an eye to return to the "good old days," but rather to make the present an example of what should be as we create memories for this generation. For the youth who are here today, this present time is their "good old days." They will tell their children about today's celebration and refer to it as the "good old days."

This sense of humility is what Paul wrote about in his letter to the church at Philippi.

He took a glance back at where they had been, but didn't focus on it too long; just long enough to appreciate the present. Then he decided to press on.

The old warriors from our past looked back and said, "I believe I'll run on, and see what the end's goon' be."

It was their way of saying, "I'm pressing on."

Intensely Focused

If an anniversary has one purpose, it would be to inspire the church to remain focused on its goal. There is one vision that remains for the church, it is the day when evil will be defeated, justice and mercy will prevail and the kingdom of heaven will be a reality.

That's the vision that motivates believers!

It is the vision that our preachers preach about.

It is the vision that our teachers teach about!

It is the vision that our choirs sing about!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Sing the wondrous love of Jesus. Sing his mercy and his grace. In the mansions bright and blessed he'll prepare for us a place. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory."

To implement the vision pastors must hear the voice of God and respond to his voice with boldness. This may require pastors to move out of their safety zones and strive for higher heights in the faith.

In addition, churches must be prepared to walk new paths. The vision that God gives may present challenges that represent changes of direction for some congre-

gations.

It may mean giving more to the education of our youth through the support of public education both mainstream and chartered.

It may mean giving more to support to positive activities that will help them develop into stronger Christian men and women.

It may mean devising programs that will strengthen the home, promote finer womanhood and build manhood.

It may mean working to reduce the prison population by working to deter those who seem committed to hell bound paths.

It may mean showing more concern for our elderly by increasing our elder care ministries.

It may mean expanding our revival efforts beyond three or five nights or preaching in the church facility and take our efforts into the highways and byways through non-traditional ways.

It may mean expanding the ministries of our churches to respond to new challenges with the changeless Gospel of Christ.

Our methods may change, but the intensity of our focus should not be.

Every chance we get, we must work together to make this heavenly vision a reality.

Pressing toward a true goal

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we celebrate we should keep in mind that we are pressing on toward a sure goal, that has been promised by God himself.

Any man who runs a race needs to be sure that there is a victory cup at the end of the race.

We have been given this assurance, that if we run this race, with our faith in tact that God will give us the victory.

Like the old warriors, we too must declare, “I’m pressing on.”

I’m pressing on because, I want to enter that land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul...and land where we’ll never grow old.”

I’m pressing on because, I want to be in the place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

I’m pressing on because, I want to see that day when the mountains shall be made low and the valleys will be hollowed out.

I’m pressing on because, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

I’m pressing on because, I want to put on my robe and walk with elders and see every inch of heaven from pillar to post.

I’m pressing on because, I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

I’m pressing on because, I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I’m pressing on because, I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates made from solid pearls!

I’m pressing on because, I want to see the city where hearse wheels won’t roll!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my Father's house!

There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9460-Funeral

Blind for His glory

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 28, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. John 9:3

Introduction

Have you ever asked why God chose to make you the way you are and place you where you are? There are many who often question God's wisdom when they consider the world around them.

Why was he born so tall? Why is she so short? Why is one man born into riches while another man is born into poverty? Why are some born healthy and others born sickly? Why do some seem to be blessed and others lack blessings?

We wrestle with those questions regularly and the answers that we find usually point us to our purpose in life.

Each of us has a purpose that is unique and often different from that of others.

Even if we have been born physically challenged in some way, our lives still have purpose. Our task is to find that purpose and live for God's glory.

Science tells us that God has so ordered the human body that whenever a person is lacking in one of the five senses the others seem to intensify. The person who cannot hear often has an unusually keen sense of feeling and smell. The one who cannot see can often hear, feel and sense things better than others.

The lack of one sense is not a barrier to achievement, but for some, it actually becomes a motivating factor. History records that there have been many great men and women who have achieved their life's purpose despite blindness.

Louis Braille, Ray Charles, Helen Keller, John Milton, and Stevie Wonder were all great men and women whose accomplishments in science, art, music and service were considerable and long lasting. They were great despite being blind for all or most of their lives.

Like the legendary Keller who was not only blind but deaf, many have risen above their challenged physical condition to bring strength and inspiration to generations.

Such individuals find their purpose and live their lives to the fullest.

As Christians, we don't know why God chose to make us the way we are, but we do know that we are challenged to make the best of what we have been given. Whatever we do, we do it for His glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as He responds to questions about the reason and purpose of a blind man's life and condition.

As Christ passed by He encountered a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples posed a question to the savior that they hoped would shed light on the origins of the man's condition. The rationale for their proposition was rooted in the belief that people had disabilities as a result of sin. In the Jewish world of the first century it was not uncommon to teach that it was possible for God to impose judgment for the parents' iniquity upon their children or grandchildren. It was the belief of some Jewish teachers that life was a system of rewards and punishments; merits or demerits; for good deeds and bad deeds that could be passed from one generation to the next.

If the man was blind, they thought, someone sinned; either he or his parents. Jesus responded to their questions by noting that the man's ultimate purpose was to be example of God's healing power. The man's healing would be accepted because all knew him to be one who had been blind all of his life, thus blindness in this instance was necessary to achieve God's purpose.

The noted theologian John Phillips put it this way, "This man's blindness was the touch of God in his life—not punitive, nor arbitrary. It was part of a plan unknown to anyone but God and his Christ, a plan intended to bring Christ into this man's life and ultimate praise and glory to God."

As a result the man's entire life was a preparation for his purpose, which was achieved when he met the Lord.

Life with a purpose

Every life has a purpose. Our quest is to learn our purpose and seek to fulfill it all the days of our lives. The man's blindness in the text was timed by God to coincide with the Lord's earthly ministry. God has ways of placing people in certain places to accomplish His will; always at the right time and the right place. Even what we call a handicap may be all a part of His divine plan.

THE BLIND SAINT IS BLESSED BY GOD: Can a blind saint do a great work for God? History has given us this answer. Everyone, even the blind, can carry out their life's purpose and enjoy God's favor at the same time. We have read the biblical accounts of those who have been touched by the hand of God and given their sight. On a few occasions we have seen the actions of those who were able to enjoy the immense blessings of God once their sight was restored. When we see God we see Him with an eye of faith, not with the carnal eye. The same faith of the widow woman in the Old Testament whose barrel never ran out of meal because of her faith based action. She was an example of a person being blessed because of divine purpose. The prophet Elijah was being used by God for a divine purpose. When the woman sought to help him, she found that her barrel never ran dry.

When a person who is legally blind reaches into the barrel of her own meager

resources to share them with others, there is a blessing coming.

When that same blind person breaks bread with strangers, entertains the saints and shelters children who are not her own, there is a blessing coming.

Blind saints can do great works for God because they are able to see with their hearts and not with their eyes. They see what the carnal eye misses.

When the world sees their wonderful work, it marvels in astonishment.

Even in their blindness, God gets the glory as they manifest his goodness in small ways that seem insignificant, but are yet important to God's purpose.

BLIND SAINTS ARE GUIDED BY GOD: More than those who can see, blind saint are aware that each of their steps must be guided by the Lord. They hold to his hand as they make each step. These saints are instruments in his hands. Often they are oblivious to their handicap; in fact they operate just as if everything was in perfect working order. The story is told of a certain blind man who arose in the middle of the night to get a glass of water. The house was pitch black, but since he was blind, it just didn't matter. A few minutes later the owner of the house heard some noise in the darkness and slowly walked around the house to see where the noise was coming from. As he rounded the corner, he ran, nose to nose, into the blind man. He turned to run in fear, tripped over a table, knocked down the lamp, fell over the sofa and then ran into a wall and bounced off onto the floor. Finally he found the light switch and turned it on. "Why were you walking around in the dark like that", he asked his friend. "I didn't know the lights were off," came the answer.

This saint didn't know she wasn't suppose to go to college, she didn't know the lights were off.

She didn't know she wasn't suppose to get two college degrees and open a business.

She didn't know she was not suppose to make history doing the impossible.

She didn't know the lights were off! She was guided by the hand of God, she could see very clearly because He guided her footsteps and the footsteps of every saint who will sing the words of the old song, "Where He leads me I will follow. I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way."

BLIND SAINTS ARE INSTRUMENTS 0F GOD: God has used blind saints to manifest His glory all through the ages. Helen Keller's miraculous triumph over her blindness became a testimony to the glory of God. She was a powerful instrument in His hands and she grew in favor with God. To grow in favor with God means to live in such a way that God chooses us to be the main instruments of His will.

When He needed someone to show compassion for the poor, the lonely and the disadvantaged, He chose a woman whose very being ached to reach out and open her doors, it didn't matter that she was blind; her blindness would manifest His glory.

As instruments in His hands we are provided all the things necessary for us to achieve our purpose. With such favor we are protected, directed, and provided for through His grace.

Even in our declining years, God gives His grace to His saints; it is a favor that never fades or loses its significance.

For His Glory

Finally, Brothers and sisters, we must consider that in the end, even those with no sight will be able to see the savior, face to face.

The blind cannot see you but they can feel your face and touch your soul. More than others they see with their hearts. However, the day is coming, when they will see Him in all of His glory.

Until then, every saint lives every day for His glory.

We witness to the lost, but we witness for His glory.

We serve the less fortunate, but we serve for His glory!

We lift up the despondent, but we lift them for His glory!

We have learned that when we live for His glory and not our own, God showers us with His favor. Because we glorify Him in our words and deeds, when nobody else

—Cares, the Lord is concerned about me.

—Forgives me, the Lord is willing to forget.

—Accepts me, the Lord receives me with arms wide open.

—Wants me, the Lord accepts me as a child of the king.

While we live for His glory we are sustained by His grace.

When grace is upon us, despite our blindness, we will be busy doing good in his name.

When grace is upon us, despite our blindness, we know that God smiles on what we do.

God has smiled on the life being memorialized today.

God has smiled because of the children that have been helped along the way.

God has smiled because of the positive spirit and attitude that is shown every day!

God has smiled because of the broken hearts that have been helped to mend.

There is an old hymn that is a favorite of many saints, but especially to the blind.

It was a song written by the late Fanny Crosby, who was blind at six weeks old, but she was never bitter about her blindness. She chose to live her life for the glory of God. She wrote over 8,000 songs and lifted up God every where she went.

With confidence Cosby wrote, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!?Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!?Heir of salvation, purchase of God.?Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

It's assurance that He will give us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

—CONFIDENCE when everything seems to go wrong.

—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

—COMFORT when disaster strikes.

It's assurance that even in old age when we are shuffled from our home to a nursing home that God will never leave us alone!

It's assurance that even after this life, eternity remains!

It's assurance guaranteed by a God who loved us so much that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life!

It’s an assurance paid for on an old rugged cross.

It’s an assurance secured by three days and nights in a borrowed tomb!

It’s an assurance confirmed when Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands.

This is my story, this is my song,?Praising my Savior all the day long.

—

On Friday, October 22, 2010 Lottie Mae Johnson closed her eyes and went to sleep. She was legally blind, but she lived for His glory.

9461-Revival

Bewitched, and then saved

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 31, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." Acts 8:9-13

Introduction

What do you do when you've tried everything, but nothing seems to work? Frustration has a way of tempting us to try just about anything to heal a sickness, solve a financial problem, mend a broken heart, or get piece of mind. When we reach the point of desperation we become vulnerable to those who would prey on our weaknesses for their own personal profit.

Whether it's the snake oil salesman who sells a bottle of sweet water as a miracle cure or the traveling faith healer who heals every sickness from cancer to the common cold for a generous offering, there are many who would take advantage of the vulnerability of the frustrated masses.

There are millions, especially in the South, who, in their frustration, turn to voodoo doctors, witchcraft, and palm readers. They spend tons of money consulting their psychic connections. No one likes to admit it, but there are millions of African-Americans who are influenced by South Louisiana Voodoo even though we sit in churches on Sunday.

Millions, seeking to rid themselves of enemies or to resolve complicated personal situations turn to Voodoo spells, even though they call on the Lord on Sunday.

For centuries Voodoo witchdoctors have cast their spells on Black America and any others who listened. These witch doctors concocted a brand of religion unique to Louisiana called Hoodoo, which involved incantations, voodoo dolls and the blood of animals. Even today, tourists find voodoo dolls and chicken bones being sold in novelty shops all over Acadiana.

The Hoodoo, espouses a belief in God, but it teaches that God disconnects himself from the daily affairs of people. Instead there are spirits that can be called on to do godly

type work if we call on them with the proper chant and seek atonement or demonstrate humility by shedding the blood of an animal.

Thousands of Hoodoo proverbs are repeated in African-American homes just as if there were biblical:

— If you lay a broom across the doorway at night, a witch can't come in and hurt you.

---If a woman is your first visitor on Monday mornings it is bad luck for the rest of the week.

—Don't borrow or lend salt because that is bad luck.

—If you sweep trash out of the house after dark you will sweep away your luck.

—If a woman sprinkles some salt from her house to yours, it will give you bad luck until you clean the salt away and put pepper over your door sill.

—If a woman wants her husband to stay away from other woman, she can do so by putting a little of her blood in his coffee, and he will never quit her.

—You can give someone a headache by taking and turning their picture upside down.

—You can harm a person in whatever way you want to by getting a lock of his hair and burning some and throwing the rest away.

It may seem hard to believe but there are millions who believe Hoodoo teachings although they sit in Christians churches every Sunday. At church they pray to God but they have horseshoes over their doors for good luck, believe a broken mirror will give them seven years bad luck, and think a rabbit's foot brings them good luck.

They have been bewitched.

The bible warns us to be careful regarding bewitching individuals, ungodly practices and unfaithfulness. We are warned repeatedly to trust in the Lord and lean not to our own understandings.

When it comes to troubling times it is best to remember the words of David in Psalm 71:1 "In thee O Lord do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion."

As Christians, we should always be vigilant that we trust only in God and not in the army of false prophets and ideas that will bewitch us and pull us away from our faith.

Exposition

This text focuses on Philip as he ministers to the people of Samaria, but finds that they are bewitched.

During the time of the persecution of the church many believers were scattered across the land. Among them was Philip who came into the regions of Samaria and began to preach about Jesus. He found that the people of Samaria had three conditions: They were diseased, possessed and deluded. His remedy for their problem was to give them Jesus.

While he healed the sick and cast out demons, a well known sorcerer or what we would call a witchdoctor lived in the region, his name was Simon. He had a reputation as a magician, healer, and miracle worker in Samaria who so much success that the

people universally accepted his claim to be "some great one," and accounted him "that power of God which is called great."

When Simon saw Philip performing miracles he sought to know their secret. He felt there was a trick that he had not learned and wanted to know more. The only response he received from Philip was to hear him preach to him about Jesus. Ultimately, Simon himself believed on Christ and was baptized. He followed Philip for quite some time, still amazed at what he saw. On one occasion when he saw the Holy Ghost move among people he offered Peter money to learn how to possess the power of the Holy Ghost. Even though he was a Christian, he still hung on to many of his bewitching beliefs.

The people themselves were healed the diseases, possessions and delusions, when they heard the preaching of Gospel and turned to God for their answers.

Conditions of the people

When Philip entered Samaria he found three conditions that are similar to our circumstance. Our response should be similar to his response:

HE OFFERED JESUS FOR THEIR DISEASES: Philip healed the sick in the name of Jesus. Today, our community is diseased in astronomical ways; we share a common situation with the people of Samaria. We are a people at high risk for some diseases such as AIDS, where are 45 percent of all new AIDS patients although we are just 13 percent of the population; ASTHMA, ranks high among our diseases, along with Hispanics because poverty produces many of the conditions promote its growth; HEART DISEASE is killing us because of our diet of pork, fried and greasy foods we have a high rate of obesity an heart attacks; DIABETES, that effects 2.6 million blacks and results in other problems such as blindness, kidney failure and amputations. We have others but these are peculiar to our people. The church is responding, in the name of Jesus, by raising our awareness of the causes of these diseases, helping families to change their diets, discipline their sexual experiences, and pay more attention to their health. The power of faith in God has helped cancer victims to survive and overcome and God has literally saved millions from these diseases through prevention and direct healing. Like Philip, we offer Jesus. He is the source of all healing and cures. He is the source. Like the song writer we declare, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

HE OFFERED JESUS TO ADDRESS THEIR POSSESSIONS: Not only did Philip find the people diseased, he found them possessed. They were literally taken over by the bewitching influences of Simon the magician. Historically, our people have fallen prey to just about anyone who seemed to offer a solution. Whether it was Marcus Garvey selling us steamships to return to Africa, Rev. Ike selling us a religion based on Cadillacs and diamond rings, or Jim Jones convincing hundreds to drink poison laced cool aid, we seem vulnerable to every cult belief that comes along.

We have become so possessed that sometimes it's even comical. Remember the song of Alvin and Chipmunks? "I told the witch doctor I was in love with you and the witch doctor told me what to do. He said,

Ooo eee,ooo ah ah ting tang
Walla walla, bing bang
Ooo eee ooo ah ah ting tang
Walla walla bing bang...
Ooo eee ,ooo ah ah ting tang
Walla walla ,bing bang
Ooo eee ooo ah ah ting tang
Walla walla bing bang

We are out there bad when we even sing about the witchdoctor in our cartoons.

Currently, millions of believers have been swept away by the prosperity gospel being preached by charismatic men and women who teach that following them will result in praises going up and blessings coming down in the form of money, jobs, big cars and houses. Blindly, thousands are possessed by the notion that religion is like a good luck charm that will guarantee them fame and fortune. We have been bewitched and possessed to the point that many have given up their service and obedience to God in return for a continuous string of worships that they hope will make them prosperous. Life is hard when you are possessed. You can't think right. You can't pray right. You act illogically, talk foolishly, and live recklessly. Yet, Philip offered the people Samaria on solution, Jesus. Through Jesus we learn that true joy is not in our possessions but is in being possessed by Him. It is this mind that prompts to sing, "Use me Lord, in thy service. I'll do anything that you want me to do." It is Jesus who frees us from the grip of Satan and gives us the truth. He said, "Ye shall know the truth and truth shall make you free."

HE OFFERED JESUS FOR THEIR DELUSIONS: The people of Samaria were deluded; they believed Simon was their answer and held tightly to their beliefs. Philip offered them Jesus. Even today it is difficult to move people who are deluded. It is difficult to deal with people who are deluded: The mother who believes her son who robs, murders and steals is a good boy; the woman who believes the man who beats her repeatedly doesn't really mean it; it's the person who comes from a family history riddled with cancer but believes the disease will pass them by; the politician who believes that if we elect a black face that all of our problems will disappear; or the youngster who believes that wearing a pair of shoes endorsed by a superstar will make just as famous…these are all delusions. It is hard deal with a deluded people. There are no fingers dainty enough to take hold of a delusion and pull it out of the nest of the mind because they have no shape, no form, no hiding-place that we can access with our mortal minds. Dealing with delusions is a matter for the Holy Ghost. That's why Philip offered the people Jesus! He offered them faith in God and reached into the darkness of their souls and brought them to the light. Faith is no delusion. It is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Faith deals with delusions and displaces them with the power of God. Prayer is the key to kingdom, but it is faith that unlocks the door.

Jesus is the answer

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that if the world gives us questions, Jesus is the answer.

All over Samaria people came to Philip with a large array of questions about their health, wealth and their state of the souls. He gave them one remedy, Jesus is the answer.

To those who have been bewitched by voodoo and witchcraft and caught in the sticky snares of possession and delusion, like Philip we say, Jesus is the answer.

It's not a psychic connection, palm reader or metaphysical quack that can resolve our dilemma, Jesus is the answer.

Philip preached Jesus because powerful things happen when you call upon the name of the Lord!

When you call upon the name of the Lord:

—The wicked will cease their troubling!

—The weary will be at rest!

—Mountains can become molehills and valleys can be exalted!

—Enemies can become friends!

—Hatred can be turned into love!

—Setbacks can become starting points!

Simon eventually believed and was baptized. He learned what we already know. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Jesus is the answer.

That's why we don't go to witch doctors, soothsayers, and false prophets; we take it to the Lord in prayer.

I don't know about you, but I've learned that prayer changes things.

Prayer can:

—Turn deviant children into obedient siblings

—Turn wayward husbands into loving fathers

—Turn the hard hearted into the tender hearted

—Turn upside down lives right side up again!!

Jesus is the answer!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose after three days and nights!

Try Jesus!

He'll make everything alright!

No. 9462-Revival

Lord, Have Mercy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 7, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt." Psalm 123:3

Introduction

Have you ever asked for mercy? Have Mercy is an appeal for leniency in consideration of the circumstances of a particular offense. It is a plea to lighten a load, reduce a sentence or minimize a misery.

It differs from other appeals because it assumes that the condition being suffered is in some way deserved, justified or warranted but the execution of the condition is more than we can bear.

Sometimes a plea for mercy is just a request for a little consideration because of past actions. Consider the judge who came to court after a night of arguments with his wife. She was merciless in her criticism of him. She threw pots at him, belittled him and showered him a barrage of disbarring words that made him regret ever marrying her. When he arrived in court he was feeling extremely bad and was tremendously upset. His first trial for the day was a man he knew. The man, charged with his third offense of stealing chickens was relieved when he saw his old friend the judge. He knew the judge would give him a break. A big smile broke out on his face. When the judge asked man was he guilty of stealing chickens, the man walked up to judge's bench. Your honor I stole them chickens, but me and you we go way back, I need you to cut me so some slack. After all, I was the one who introduced you to your wife! The judge looked up sharply and said, "Wrong answer! Ten years in jail!"- His past actions didn't warrant him any help.

Today, we use the term "Lord, Have mercy, very lightly." Someone can tell us a ridiculously funny story and we respond while laughing, "Lord, Have mercy!" We can see a child playing in a humorous way and we might respond, "Lord, have mercy!" In fact, we use the phrase so much that it's real meaning is lost becoming synonymous with a laughing matter.

However, "Lord, have mercy!" is not a laughing matter. It's one of those phrases that we reserve for times of special need and trouble.

When we are being unfairly attacked, we plead for mercy!

When our burdens get difficult, we plead for mercy!

When times are hard, we plead for mercy!

When those times come, mercy is no laughing matter.

God hears our pleas and considers all of our requests. Therefore, saints are careful not to cry wolf, unless there is really a wolf coming. When we say, "Lord, have mercy" we should be in a situation that requires not justice but mercy.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that our God is merciful. The word says His mercy endureth forever and ever! That's why we love Him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as the nation pleaded to God for relief from conditions placed upon them by people filled with contempt and hate.

Scholars think this passage was written while the Jews were held captive in Babylon. There, they were treated as second class citizens, despised, misused and discriminated against. Anywhere they went they felt the contempt of their captors who either mocked or humiliate them publicly or submitted them to unjust punishments before the Babylonian courts.

Life became difficult for them. They were miserable.

In this short psalm, which was set to music, the Jews pleaded with God to consider their situation.

Psalm 123:1 notes that they lift their eyes to heaven daily looking for some sign of God's mercy.

Psalm 123:2 compares the Jews waiting on God to a servant who has made a request of mercy from her master and waited for some sign that the request would be granted. So the phrase, "So our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that He have mercy upon us."

Psalm 123:3 cries out to God twice, using the phrase "Have Mercy." They seem to be pleading, "Have mercy on us, Oh Lord, Have mercy on us." He seems to be expressing with emphasis the clearness of their perception of what they needed, the earnestness of their desire, and their expectation that their need would be supplied.

Although the term mercy is used three times in this short passage, it not used lightly, or any kind of humorous way. It is not a mere colloquialism or figure of speech, it is a clear appeal to God for relief from a situation with a clear expectation that God would respond to their appeal.

Asking for Mercy

Believers often call on God in times of trouble. In the New Testament there are three words that are used to describe how God responds to us when we make appeals for undeserved action: Favor, Grace and Mercy. Favor refers blessings or special little bonuses that we receive out of the goodness of God's heart. Like favor, Grace also is God's unmerited action toward us. Mercy implies God's goodness shown to us, even though it is not required and may not be deserved.

THE RIGHTEOUS CAN ASK BOLDLY: Those who have tried to obey God's command can ask boldly for mercy. Lord, Have mercy coming from the lips of a believer who lives by faith and walks in the Godly path means much. The faithful are not be presumptuous when they ask God for mercy, they are acting according to the word of God. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It indicates that the time to say, "Lord have mercy" is in a time of need. It's a serious request that when spoken from the lips of a believer gets heaven's attention. In a time of need the faithful come humbly before God as did the psalmist in Psalm 27:7, "Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me." When a believer boldly, asks God to have mercy, that believer gets heaven's attention.

GOD CAN AND WILL SHOW MERCY: We ask God for mercy because we know from experience that he has shown mercy in the past and will show mercy in the present. If God had a reputation for never changing His mind or altering a decision that He made, then it would useless to appeal to Him. Yet, we remember Hezekiah having received notice from God that to set his house in order and prepare to die, but after hearing a plea for mercy from Hezekiah, was granted 15 more years. We know God shows mercy. In Psalm 89:28, God says, "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." Psalm 103:8 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." That means that God is not stingy with His mercy, that there is plenty enough for everyone who asks. Yet, there is a condition for God's mercy and it is that we respect, fear and obey God. When we do that he shows mercy not only to us but even to our grandchildren on our behalf. Psalm 103:17 says, "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." Therefore, we know that God has shown mercy in the past and promises to show mercy in the present and the future for those who believe and trust in Him. When we call upon Him for mercy, we are speaking to the one who is able to grant our request.

MERCY REQUIRES REPENTANCE: Is there ever an occasion when the mercy of God is not available to us? The only time we cannot receive the forgiveness, grace and favor of God is when we refuse it through our actions or disbelief. There are many who doubt God's existence, or they believe that if He exists, that he does not care about them. These are the ones who feel no need to worship, pray, read scripture or conform to God's law. They do not live in fear of the Lord. If a person who is living an ungodly life wants the mercy of God they must: repent from their sins, believe of Jesus Christ as their savior and then boldly ask God for mercy. Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The sinner's first request of God is have mercy on MY SOUL. Forgive me. Then mercy for other conditions can be sought. That's the meaning of Psalm 51:1 "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." After we get ourselves straight with God then we ask God for mercy regarding our finances,

relationships, health, family matters and other concerns. Luke 11:9 says, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

God is merciful

Finally, brothers and sisters it is good for us to remember, that when a saint cries out "Lord, have mercy" he should expect God to answer out of the abundance of His love.

God sees our daily needs and He hears our prayers.

God also sees the burdens that we are bearing and He hears our cries for mercy.

He scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive.

He sees our need for food, clothing and shelter health care and emotional support and then has mercy on us.

The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. In Matthew 6:28 Jesus told his disciples to consider the lilies of the field how God feeds and clothes them. He said if God pays attention to the lilies he would also care for their needs.

When you say, "Lord, have mercy" and you mean it from your soul, your words touch the heart of God.

Psalmist said, Lord I'm down here in Babylon and times are hard. People are talking about me every day and I'm unfairly criticized by those with contempt for me.

Lord, have mercy on us!

Down here in Babylon, we're so far from home that we have hung our harps on the willows and we have refused to sing. How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land?

Lord, Have mercy on us.

The Jews called on God as a nation, but we don't have to go that far because the same thing happens when you call on God for yourself.

When you touched the heart of God and asked Him for mercy, He brought you out of some tough times! He sustained you in the midst of your mental exile and your emotional banishment!

When you touched the heart of God and asked Him for mercy, He lifted up your bowed down head and gave you a new song to sing.

It was the mercy of the Lord that kept us from throwing up our hands and giving up the fight!

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped us to recover after a staggering loss!

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped healed our broken hearts and mended our wounded faith.

The psalmist said every morning he looked to the heavens for a sign of God's mercy!

The good thing about being a child of God is that when we lift up our eyes to the heavens, we can see that God's mercy is all around.

You don't have to talk about the Jews in Babylon you can give your own testimony!

Every morning God has new mercies in store for us!

Every morning when I rise I see another burden God's going to lift off my shoulder!

Every morning when I rise I see another hill God's going to help me to climb!

Every morning when I rise I see another bill God's going to help me to pay!

Every morning when I rise I see another job God's going to help me to find!

Every morning when I rise I see another investment he's going to help me to make!

Every morning when I rise I see another test God is going to help me to pass!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

He was so faithful at that over 2000 years ago he sent his only begotten Son to live among men!

Somebody knows Him. His name is Jesus!

He was so faithful that he died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning....

No. 9463-Anniversary, Church

A Transforming Church

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2010

SCRIPTURE: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:31

Introduction

What is the ultimate goal of the church? Ask that question to ten different Christians and ten different answers will come. Some believe the job of the church is to promote worship, others believe it is to help the poor and the needy, still others believe that the church should teach the masses and preach. While all of these are contained in the mission of the church, it's ultimate goal is to transform lives in the name of Jesus. Transformations that come as a result of the preaching of the Gospel and the presentation of Christ are real and lasting. These personal transformations usually result in changes in a community.

A church that transforms achieves its goal by touching the lives of its members in ways that make noticeable changes in the way they live, think and behave.

Consider the man who was approaching mid-life, physically he was a mess. Not only was he going bald, but years of office work had given him a large pot belly. The last straw came when he asked a woman co-worker out on a date, and she all but laughed at him. That does it, he decided. I'm going to start a whole new regimen. He began attending aerobics classes. He started working out with weights. He changed his diet. And he got an expensive hair transplant. In six months, he was a different man. Again, he asked his female co-worker out, and this time she accepted. There he was, all dressed up for the date, looking better than he ever had. He stood poised to ring the woman's doorbell, when a bolt of lightning struck him and knocked him off his feet. As he lay there dying, he saw the angel of death and cried out, "Why, are you coming after me, why now? After all I've been through, how could you do this to me?" The angel looked at him and said, "Sorry. you changed so much, I didn't recognize you. That lightning bolt was a mistake, live on!"

When a church transforms lives they are not the same. They don't talk the same, walk the same or think the same thoughts. They are transformed by the power of God. As Christians we must continue to build the kingdom of God. We must continue to transform lives, lifting Jesus up. If we lift Jesus up, He has said, "I'll draw all men unto me."

Exposition

This text focuses on lives that were transformed when touched by the power of God.

Paul and Silas had been jailed for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While imprisoned they maintained a very prayerful and positive spirit, singing praises to God and glorifying in Him. It was an unusual sight because jails were dark, isolated and dehumanizing at their best, but yet they chose to sing and pray.

At about midnight the Lord responded to their prayers, caused a great earthquake and the jail doors were opened.

The jailer feared for his life because the prisoners would surely escape, but he heard the voice of Paul reassuring him that there was no reason to kill himself, they had no plans to escape.

There, in the night, illuminated only by the glow of the candle, the jailer accept Jesus and pledged to witness to his entire family and bring them into the faith.

The jailer acted under conviction, impressed with the witness of Pal and Silas and their response to the earthquake and their imprisonment. He saw with his own eyes how God worked in lives of two believers and their confident faith in His power.
It was a brief moment but it was powerful, beautiful and lasting. It was a moment when the jailer and subsequently his entire household accepted Christ and were completely transformed from that day forward.

The transformation resulted from the hearty, cheerful testimony of Paul and Silas. Their songs of praise in the midnight were enlightening.

The transformation also came as a result of their fervent prayers which were heard by the jailer. They prayed for deliverance of their captors and not so much for their own deliverance. They prayed fervently and with power.
The transformation came as a result of the godly actions. With the jail doors opened Paul and Silas could have allowed the jailer to kill himself then walk out of the jail free men. They chose the high ground and worked to bring about the salvation of their captor. That selfless act itself convinced the jailer that there was more to being a Christian than just a name, but a divine anointing and empowerment.
The results of the witness of Paul and Silas was lives changed for Christ. Even in prison, the power of God was displayed and proven to be a transforming force in the lives of the people affected.

How the church transforms

Paul and Silas gave us a clear example of how to transform lives. Taken separately, we can see what the church must do to follow their example.

TRANSFORM LIVES THROUGH WORSHIP: The very first thing that must have caught the attention of the jailer might have been the spirit of victory shown by Paul and Silas in the jail. They were not broken men, scourged to the dungeon,

but gallant victors confident that their God would be victorious. They sang songs of praise, lifting Jesus up and extolling the greatness of God. Unfamiliar with Jesus, the jailer listened to the excitement in the voices of the prisoners as they sang.

Today, the excitement of believers about worship, the sincerity of the songs and praise attracts non-believers, who want to know how to change their lives to feel the same excitement. True believers sing God's praise and thanks for everything, even our adversities. When the unsaved see the church thanking God for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind, he is drawn to the faith by an invisible attraction that tugs at his soul. It's a powerful picture: humble believers like ourselves thanking God and singing His praises for the seen and the unseen.

We should sing his praises for everything.

We should praise Him for the greens and butter beans, but we also sing his praises for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We should sing his praises for chicken and dressing and we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We should sing his praises for a little rice and a little gravy, but we should also praise Him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We should sing his praises for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also praise Him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

When the lost see the attitude of praise and thanks displayed by the church in its worship, they are drawn to the cross by worship testimonies of those who are part of the body of Christ.

Since its inception this church has been a church that transforms, lifts Christ up in worship and praises with all of its being. As we celebrate this anniversary, let us pledge to continue lifting up the name of Jesus for all that He has done.

TRANSFORM THROUGH PRAYER: The jailer noticed that Paul and Silas prayed and was inspired. When we pray we take our personal issues to God and humble ourselves before Him. When the church prays, it collectively takes the concerns of a congregation of believers before God. When the whole church prays about a lost life, a troubled soul or a rebellious spirit, it gets God's attention.

Not only should the church pray but it should pray fervently and with consistency. If you've ever had a child to ask you for something, you know that they can get on your last nerve, asking you repeatedly for the same thing. They never give up. Yet, that is the spirit that the church should have when it prays.

Since we know that our father in heaven can do what we want, we should never tire of asking. Jesus told the parable of the importuning neighbor who beat on his neighbor's door at midnight, even though his neighbor was asleep. He kept beating so long that the neighbor finally opened the door to let him in. Jesus called that importunity or persistency.

Just as children never give up, the church should never give up when it prays. Pray persistently, even when it doesn't look like it will do any good we should pray.

The church should P.U.S.H. (Pray until something happens). God may have already made up his mind but persistent prayer can change things and transform lives. This church has been a praying church throughout its history. It should continue to be a knee bowing church that transforms the lives of men and women through fervent prayer.

TRANSFORMS THROUGH GODLY ACTIONS: The jailer saw Paul and Silas' faith in action when they refused to escape. Their action saved his life and ultimately his soul. In the same way, the actions of the church transforms lives and entire communities. It is the actions of the church's outreach ministry that provides help for the needy and helps to respond to community concerns beyond the four walls of the evidence. These actions convince non-believers that the church is truly the body of Christ in motion. Each member of the church is called upon to take action using one of the gifts detailed in 1 Corinthians 12. These gifts include: knowledge, faith, healing, wisdom, insight, arts, communication skills, and language skills. We are challenged to put these gifts into action to change the lives we touch. We are challenge to transform lives through serving others.

Serving others is time consuming. Helping the poor, the needy, the old and feeble, the young and helpless requires time, energy and money on a regular basis. Despite its time consuming nature, when the church takes action to assist in these areas lives are transformed and souls are ultimately saved. That's what happened to the jailer; the actions of Paul and Silas, ultimately transformed the life of the jailer. Those who give a cup of water to a stranger in the name of Jesus, help the homeless, and the infirmed, visit the sick, feed the hungry, heal the hurts of families, and respond to personal needs and crises actually work to transform lives.

For as long as anyone can remember, this church has worked to take action to transform the lives it has touched. Now, at this milestone, the church should not stop doing what God has commanded. It should continue loving, helping, restoring and reaching out in faith, in the name of Jesus!

Church in God' hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church must stay connected to God to have the power to transform lives.

The effectiveness of Paul and Silas is that they were sincere in their faith, demonstrated it under considerable pressure and always reached out to bring Christ to the lost.

As the church celebrates its anniversary today it also should recommit itself to the goal of transforming the lives that it touches in the name of Jesus.

The church is the instrument that God has used to bring forth "HIS" blessing to God's people.

Our people have been blessed because of the church, the old ship of Zion.

We have worshipped under brush arbors and abandoned saw mills.

We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors.

We have praised him in the chill of winter with logs burning in huge heated stoves.

Yet God has used our feeble assembly, worship and praise experiences to bring us forth as His "water" in a thirsty land.

Through the church God has delivered us as a people from the Egypt of slavery to the borders of the Promised Land.

Through the church, God has sustained us through lynchings, murders, discrimination, depressions and unbelievable hardships.

Through the church, God has raised up our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits.

Through the church, God has brought forth leaders to champion our causes and speak to our troubled souls.

No wonder the song writer thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

Sometimes in our weakness we forget that God is able to transform.

He's able to deliver us from the pit and miry clay!

He's able to transform confusion and discord into unity and love!

He's able to transform no bodies and turn them into some bodies.

He's able to transform beggars into kings!

He's able to transform lazy men into working men!

He's able to transform losers into winners!

He's done it before and He will do it again!

Long before we came to our present circumstance, God has been transforming lives!

I'm glad to know God is still a transforming God!

I'm glad to know that if I'm sick, He can heal me again!

I'm glad to know that if I'm down, He can pick me up again!

I'm glad to know that if I've failed, He can make me succeed again!

I'm glad to know that if I've lost, He can give me the victory again!

That's why I've got to tell somebody! That I serve a God who has:

-Taken the bad and transformed it into good!

-Taken the hate I've encountered and transformed it into love!

-Taken the proud and mighty and transformed them into humble servants.

It's this transforming goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!"

It is this transforming nature that helps us to experience the Joy of the Lord!

The church that transforms reaches out to the lost with the redemptive joy of the Lord!

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but

God is still on the throne!

That's why the song writer declared, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years ago Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

Early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as He arose from the grave with all power in His hand.

Stay on the battlefield church, God is still transforming lives everyday!

No. 9464-Inspiration

A Basket Case

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 14, 2010

SCRIPTURE:"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. 2 Corinthians 11:24-33

Introduction

Do you ever reach a point in which you really feel you are about to lose it? You reach this point when you have tried everything, but nothing seems to work. These are the days when so many things happen that they start to drive you batty. The car breaks down, the food burns, the children get sick, a fuse blows, the telephone keeps ringing, the newspaper gets wet, a pot boils over, the roof leaks, your checks bounce, your prescription runs out, you lose your cell phone, your computer crashes, your purse gets stolen, your favorite TV show is interrupted, your bath water is cold, the vacuum cleaner won't work, baby won't stop crying, your spouse won't stop whining, you get laid off your job, and to top all of that off, last week you used your whole paycheck to bet on the Dallas Cowboys!

These are days when you are at your wits end. These are the days when your head begins to pound, your patience gets short and you like running around the block and screaming but you can't your shoes!

Anybody who sees you on one of these days knows that something is terribly wrong. You are acting really nutty.

When you really start to nut up, someone will whisper, "You are a basket case today!"

There are days when all of us feel as if we are basket cases; out there all alone, with everything going wrong and no one to help.

What does it mean to be a basket case? A basket case is a term that historian say began in World War I to describe quadruple amputees in the world. The soldiers had been shot up so badly that their arms legs were amputated and carried away in baskets.

Anyone that was shot up that bad was considered a “basket case.” Of course the army denies that this ever happened, but the term stuck regardless of what the army said.

Today, we say a person whose actions border mental instability is a basket case.

A family member of a friend, who does odd things for no apparent reason, is called a “basket case” even by their own relatives.

Some think their bosses and supervisors are basket cases, making unreasonable demands that can never be met.

On days when we are really pressured, really down, we even call ourselves basket cases.

For those who are came today feeling like basket cases, be of good cheer; God is still on the throne and takes on all kinds of cases, even basket cases.

As Christians, we know that our lives will not be easy; temptation and trouble are hiding behind every corner. However, we won’t lose hope, because when it looks like the devil is about to put our head in a basket, God shows up makes everything alright!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he listed all of the troubles he experienced.

For the benefit of those who were frustrated Paul told his story to those who listened. If anyone had a reason to be frustrated, burned out or to just throw his hands up and quit it would have been Paul.

Look at his list of troubles: He was given 39 lashes five times by the Jews, that in itself was enough to break the spirit of an ordinary person.

Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. Three times he was shipwrecked. Once he spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. He traveled many weary miles, faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers and danger from his own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. He faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. He faced danger from men who claimed to be Christians, and lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. He was often hungry and thirsty and went without food. He often shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep him warm.

On top of all that he carried the daily burden of all the churches.

Once he was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch him, but he was lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall, and that’s how he got away!

He was a bona-fide basket case. Yet, in all of these sufferings, God strengthened him.

Each time he faced ultimate defeat, he became a basket case, but God swept him away to safety and victory!

Dealing with frustrations and troubles

When trouble pokes its ugly head into our lives, often frustration is the result. When trouble comes it rarely comes in ones, it often comes in large numbers, enough to turn us completely around if we are not careful. Thus, believers should:

CALL UP YOUR SPIRITUAL RESERVES: When trouble comes every believer should be prepared to tap your spiritual reserves that were stored up for just such occasions. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. This is when we open our bible and read God's word intensely, we listen to Gospel preach attentively and we pray fervently. From our storehouse of prayer and power we emerge with renewed confidence that despite sickness in the family, financial crises, someway or somehow we will rise to the occasion with God's help.

The faithful don't give up or lose their focus; instead they draw upon resources of spirit and strength that normally go unused. They exhibit a faith that has been sitting on the shelf. They demonstrate courage that is rarely displayed. They reveal an element of self control others were not unaware of.

We reach down into ourselves, that's when God comes up to show us how to draw upon energies, knowledge, wisdom and assets that have been untapped for so long.

Just when life starts to drive us crazy, God shows up to give us help and direction.

CALL ON THE LORD: When trouble comes, there are many who irritate themselves and everyone around them. They worry everyone they know: friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers and everyone else. Their cell phone records show calls made to everyone they can think of. However, too few take the time to call on the Lord when they feel themselves becoming a basket case. Some think calling on the Lord is a spiritual activity, while the problems they face require a physical and practical solution. These are the ones who busily respond to troubles brought upon them by bills, family problems, school, parents, children, bosses, losses, gains and pains. They tell themselves that when they get through dealing with troubles then they will have time to call on the Lord.

Instead of waiting until our troubles are over, the bible says when trouble comes that's the time to call on the Lord, not afterwards. Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." Don't wait until trouble is over to get yourself together because you need to be together to deal with the trouble. Before life makes you a basket case, steal away to your quiet place and have a talk with Jesus. The song writer said, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

DON'T PANIC: Many people make themselves basket cases because they are deathly afraid of the unknown. They think of all the things that could go wrong and keep asking, "But what if?" Fear causes panic and pandemonium. Fear of financial failure can turn you into a basket case as you ask, "How am I going to pay my rent? What about my car note? What about my light bill? What am I going to do If...? Those who worry about the other side of the "If" can easily become basket cases. If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith...we are likely to become basket cases.

That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard a ship and a storm developed. The shipped rocked and turned and many on board envisioned themselves as dead men. There was no escape. The winds were too strong and they were too far away from the bank to swim. Death appeared imminent. The disciples were about to lose it and go really crazy until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. Awakening Him they asked, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus came to the deck, unmoved by the storm and said, "Peace be Still!"

Like the disciples we should not panic as long as Jesus is on board; He can speak to our storms and command them to be still.

A basket case

Finally, brothers and sisters, while one definition of a basket case points to a person who may be on the verge of losing control, there is another definition that points to a person who is about to be touched by the strong hand of God.

In the early days of the Greek theater the characters wore masks on stage to represent tragedy and comedy. Whenever something bad was about to happen to a character on stage the play writer always had another character above the stage wear the mask of God. When the character could not find a way out of his problem the stage hands knew that this was a case for the god in the basket and they rolled him down. Once on stage, the god in the basket would save the characters from impending tragedy.

Every now and then, life's trouble's get to where you can can't handle them all by yourself, that's a basket case.

Down in Egypt Pharaoh had given a command that all of the little boys would be killed. A Hebrew mother didn't know what to do. She was powerless to stand against the Egyptian soldiers. Can you see her saying, "Lord, I have a song named Moses and he's about to be slain. I don't know what to do; I'm almost out of my mind. "

When God heard from heaven it seems like somebody said, "That's a basket case." He inspired her to make a basket and put it on the Nile River. Don't worry about the current. Don't worry about the crocodiles. Don't worry about the possibility of turbulence; I'll hold that little baby in my hands.

Some mother today is worried about her children. When you've done all you know how to do, put your children in God's hands and he'll take care of the rest.

Paul said he was attacked on every side and he just didn't know what to do. He was beaten by the Jews five different times. He was beaten with rods three different times. He was stoned and run out of town. One time they placed guards on the wall to trap him, but that's when heaven decided that his situation was a basket case. While his enemies were waiting for him, his friends lowered him down in a basket and he made his escape.

Somebody here today is being attacked by enemies on every side. When you've taken all you can take and you just can't take any more, that's when God steps in and deals with your basket case.

Five thousand people were trying to get food to eat. The disciples were panicking, thinking they would not be able to feed the crowd. Then a little boy showed up with a little basket containing two little fishes and five loaves of bread, Jesus took the little basket and blessed and the five thousand were fed.

When you don't know how you're going to feed your family; when it seems like there is no way, that's a basket case and the Lord steps in.

When you feel like you have a basket case, remember Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

We serve a God who specializes in basket cases:

He specializes in mending broken hearts!

He specializes in building up what has been torn down!

He specializes in restoring what has been thrown away!

He specializes in renewing what has been worn out!

He specializes in drying eyes that have been wet with tears!

He specializes in saving souls that have been lost.

No wonder the song writer declares: Whether in a mansion made of stone or in a shanty all alone, God cares about you. He'll come down from the sky and wipe the tears from your eye because God cares about you."

He cared enough to come into this sinful world and to bear an old rugged cross!

He cared enough to allow nails to be driven in His hands!

He cared enough to allow a spear to be stuck in His side!

He cared enough to let them put a crown of thorns on His head!

He cared enough to die for the sins of the world!

But, Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave, ready to deal with you baskets

Take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!

No. 9465-Singles

Get a Boaz not a Bozo

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 2010

SCRIPTURE: So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. Ruth 4:13 (KJV)

Introduction

How do you know a good man when you see one? There are many women today who are frustrated in their search for a good man. When they get one who appeals to their eye, he doesn't seem to appeal to their heart. When he appeals to their heart quite often he does not appeal to their soul. It has become so frustrating for some women that millions are settling for less; simply holding their noses and picking someone. Some have chosen to remain single and still others have unfortunately turned their eyes to other women.

The landscape is literally covered with the horror stories of Christian women who married ungodly men hoping they would change into their dream man by an act of God or through their own persuasive powers. Somehow they believed that the frog would magically turn into the handsome, loving, and lovable prince and they would live happily forever after. The frog turns into a prince only in fairy tales and those who believe they can change a man's character by their own charm, charisma, and persuasive abilities are seriously mistaken.

Godly women must exercise care in the selection of their life mate to insure that the men with whom they begin relationships have the capacity and desire to represent Christ in their family and have the willingness to learn to love them like Christ loves the church. That's a tall order but it's a must for every Christian woman.

After high school, every relationship that a woman begins is a test run for a life mate. While there are a few women who only seek a platonic friend to exchange intellectual thoughts, it's safe to say that most would like to have a permanent arrangement with a good man who will love her totally and completely.

The cycle begins with a relationship, which is a loose connection, with no permanent ties. In cycle one, they couple are friends, they talk, and they enjoy each other's company. The next level involves intimacies such as hugging and petting; it's a dangerous ground because body chemistry takes over and self control, logic and spirituality often take the back seat to raw passion. The next level involves a shared life arrangement that is still loosely connected. In this arrangement the couple

expects friendship, raw passion, and a part time life partner who shares part of the bills.

In this scenario the woman finds a man who looks good, is a fun type of guy, makes her feel wonderful, and pays his part of the bills and some of hers, too. Soon, however, she learns that despite the initial charm, flash and fun they experienced, what she really has is a shell of a man who does not know how to love her. He's funny and happy go lucky, but he's afraid to make a commitment to her.

Rather than a real man she's begun a relationship with Bozo the Clown. Irresponsive, irresponsible, and impossible to live and love.

Today, there are millions of women who been wounded, hurt and abused because they began relationships with Bozo's who did not have the capacity to love and care. The hit stage drama "For Colored Girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enough" paints a tragic picture of women struggling to survive relationships in which they were abandoned, raped, abused, cheated on, and mentally tortured because of the Bozo's they allowed to enter into their lives.

What does God have to say about all of this? Are women doomed to endure a succession of "Bozo's" all of their lives. Can women of faith find any solace?

The word of God provides a guide to believing women, that if followed, will provide the road map to happy fulfilled lives. It begins with the woman preparing herself spiritually, allowing herself to be guided by godly principles, and exercising emotional restraint as she gleans the fields.

As Christians, our desire should be to please God in all that we do. Even in our selection of life mates, pleasing God should be our emphasis. When God is unhappy with our arrangements, then ultimately we will be unhappy. However, when God is happy we are happy, therefore our happiness is dependent upon our willingness to please God.

Exposition

The Book of Ruth gives us an example of God's grace in the Old Testament.

Ruth was a Moabitess who had come to Israel with her Mother in Law Naomi after the death of both of their husbands. To support herself she worked in the fields of the region as a gleaner.

As a gleaner, Ruth probably expected to gather just enough to make a meal at the end of the day. In her gleaning she came across Boaz who recognized her as a widowed relative.

In 2:11 Boaz tells Ruth that they had informed him that she was a widow and they had noted her family connection. In verse 12 Boaz says: "The LORD recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

In essence he said, the Lord has recognized your work in the fields and will reward you because you have labored while trusting in Him.

After she left his presence Boaz ordered his supervisors to "let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose." The supervisors were told to order their men to drop large

amounts of corn near her and leave them on purpose so that she could glean them. If she happened to glean near the sheaves that were still on the stalk, they were ordered not to stop her.

Ruth returned to her gleanings. Much to her surprise the workers seemed unusually sloppy. There were more corn ears than ever in her path. She quietly gathered them without causing attention and returned home.

When she returned she showed her gleanings and overwhelmed Naomi. Each day when she returned her gleanings were bountiful.

Before he married her, Boaz demonstrated a benevolent spirit, a caring heart and a sense of dignity.

The text says Boaz eventually married Ruth. Their union produced descendants that would ultimately bring the Christ child into the world.

Because Ruth sought a godly man, she was blessed by God for trusting in him. Her relationship and marriage was blessed and her entire fine line benefited from her choice of a Godly man.

Boaz and Bozo

Many women are working hard to get a man, any man. Instead of getting a Boaz some are getting a Bozo instead.

NOT JUST ANY MAN: Naomi guided Ruth in seeking a Kinsman-Redeemer. She needed a man who could help her retain her husband's property legacy. She didn't need just any man, she needed the right man. Many women today will settle for just any man, as long as he has pants. Settling for just any man has resulted in a plethora of problems, troubles and difficulties that range from physical brutality to abandonment. Settling for just any man can result in loneliness because, instead of having a life partner the woman gets a person she has to serve for life in a slave like relationship. In the same vein, a woman should not settle for the first man who comes along because the first man may not be the right man with whom to share her life. The clock was ticking on Ruth. The feeling of desperation was nearing as he looked for a kinsman-redeemer. Yet, Naomi guided her to the right man, despite Ruth's feeling of desperation. Women who share the same sense of desperation should not be tempted to begin relationships with just any man because the result will be everything but a kinsman-redeemer, but most certainly will result in Bozos sitting on their couches every night.

A MAN WITH CHARACTER: Naomi guided Ruth to Boaz who proved to be a man of character. She didn't find that out as an after fact, he was known in the community as a man of great character. There are 12 character traits and two assets that are essential for women who want to follow Ruth's example: Can you trust him? Will he stick by you? Will he help you achieve your dream? Is he a friendly person or is he mean? Does he consider your feelings? Does he obey the law or does he engage in illegal acts no matter how small? Does he have a spirit of optimism when the going gets tough? How does he handle his money? Does he waste time on useless

idle pursuits? Is he physically and mentally clean? Does he believe in God, even so will he compete with your religious beliefs of help them grow? What about his education? Does he have any marketable skill that will lead to employment or professional opportunity? Is he morally straight or is he gay? Too often women ignore the obvious in their hot pursuit of a man they feel a fire for with the full knowledge that they are falling in love with someone who may have so many character and asset deficiencies that they only thing he can become is a bozo and certainly not a Boaz.

QUALITIES OF A BOZO: Ruth develop a relationship with Boaz with the intent of marriage. In the same sense women today should remember that every adult relationship should assume that marriage may be the outcome. If it turns out that the man is a Bozo, then it would be best to end the relationship and move on. How does a woman recognize Bozo? There are tale-tell signs:

Boaz was single, he did not have a wife or a woman on the side. He had no relationship baggage. If your man has a wife or a girlfriend already. Bozo!

Boaz inquired about Ruth and sought after her. He made the first move. A Boaz will recognize who you are and come to you and honor you with his favor. If you have to chase him down and lay down to get him...Bozo!

Boaz didn't treat Ruth like just another woman, she was special. He recognized her self worth and made her feel special. If your man disrespects you, curses you, hits you and doesn't make you feel special, or different from the rest of the women he knows, if you are just another name in his cell phone contact list...Bozo!

Boaz brought benefits to Ruth's life. She was able to glean in his fields. He was someone she could admire. If your man brings nothing to the relationship and has few traits that you really admire. If he decreases you mentally, spiritually and emotionally to the point that the relationship is draining you, it may be a clear sign. If he doesn't dazzle you with his essential goodness and willingness to make you happy and love you like Christ loved the church then there is a good chance you may have a ...Bozo!

Boaz was interested in Ruth's reputation, integrity and standing before God, sex was secondary. Even though Ruth was available he treated her with the utmost respect and refused any action that would reduce her standing before God or shame her. If your man is all too willing to jump on your bones and "hit that" without marrying you and doesn't worry about how God will see the act, not to mention possible pregnancies or STD's then there is a chance that the man in your relationship could very well be a ..Bozo!

Boaz had something going for him. He didn't need anything from Ruth; neither did he depend on her to take care of him. Women should seriously rethink relationships in which the man has nothing going for him. A man with no dream, no plan, and no ambition. He needs her more than she needs him. When she has to pay his cell phone bill, put gas in his car, buy his clothes, and keep money in his pocket then that's a good sign that her man is a ...Bozo!

Boaz was one hundred percent man, through and through. If your man treats you nicely, respects you and provides for you, but he also does the same for other men, then you have a real problem because you have a downlow-Bozo!

Boaz was a Godly man

Finally, brothers and sisters, every Christian woman needs to remember that while Boaz had resources, reputation, self discipline and a career, Boaz's strongest asset was that he was a God fearing man.

If there was ever a time when God fearing men are needed, that time is now.

These are times when:

—Respect for the church is at an all time low!

—Morality and values are in a rapid decline!

—When men are becoming lovers of themselves and abuses of themselves with mankind.

—When the sexes are changing places, women are becoming men and men are becoming women.

—Men are creating babies but refusing to be fathers.

—Fathers support their habits by mail order and the children by court order.

God needs:

— Men like, Joshua who declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

— Men with the courage of Abraham who obeyed the command of God first and found that God always provides a lamb in the bush.

—Men and women who will tell the world that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life!

In times like these it's good to have a man who knows how to lean and depend on the Lord.

When you have a man who follows the Lord you have somebody who can help you:

-carry your burdens;

-face your future;

-fulfill your responsibilities;

-fight your battles;

-solve your problems;

-overcome your temptations;

In times like these it's good to have a man who knows how to lean and depend on the Lord.

The song writer had it right when he said, "In times like these, you need an anchor in times like these you need a savior, be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock."

It's a good thing that Ruth landed her a Boaz because:

Boaz and Ruth had a little boy and they named him Obed!

Obed had a little boy and they named him Jesse!

Jesse had a little boy and they named him David, a man after God's own heart!

Down in Bethlehem, Joseph one of the great grandsons of Boaz, married a woman named Mary.

Down in a stable in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to a little boy named Jesus!
Jesus, do you know Him?
Somebody called Him the sweet Rose of Sharon!
Somebody called Him their rock in a weary land!
Somebody called Him their wheel in the middle of the wheel!
He suffered before Pontius Pilate!
He was crucified for crimes He did not commit!
He was buried in a borrowed tomb!
But, early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!
If you get yourself a Boaz and follow him, both of you will follow the Lord!

No. 9466-Singles

Looking For A Brick House

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 16, 2010

Scripture: "And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Genesis 24:64-67; "Whoso a wife findeth a good[thing], and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Proverbs 18:22

Introduction

In 1971 The Chi-Lites produced a hit song that caught the imagination of millions. It asked a single question, "Have you seen her?" It featured a man looking for what he believed was the perfect woman. He said, "I see her face everywhere I go, in the street and even in the picture show, have you seen her? Tell me have you seen her?" While the song talked about one man looking for that one special woman, there are millions of men who are looking for that perfect woman. They too are asking, "Have you seen her?"

Just as many women are lamenting their frustrations about finding a good man, there are millions of men who are equally frustrated. While there are men who are abusive, irresponsible and non-committal, there is an equal number of women who have similar characteristics.

There are many men who are searching for perfection. Perfection is variable in nature; it depends on whose writing the definition. One man's imperfection is another man's perfection.

There are many men who see women only with their eyes and not with their spirit, that's the spirit of the Commodores hit song of 1977, "She's a Brick House." In this song, men are looking for a woman with the perfect blend of body and sexuality. It's lyrics look mostly at the woman's body.

The lyrics say:

She's a brick house
She's the one, the only one,
who's built like a Amazon
We're together everybody knows,

and here's how the story goes.

The clothes she wears, the sexy ways,
make an old man wish for younger days
She knows she's built and knows how to please
Sure enough to knock a man to his knees

What makes a real brick house? A woman who would be a real brick house would be solid through and through, inside and out, from top to bottom. She will not be perfect but she will be solid.

A real brick house is defined more by what is on the inside than what is on the outside. Strength of character seems to be the defining element of a real brick house. It does not fade with age, while outward beauty definitely changes.

What appeals to one man is rejected by another but many men are in agreement about what they don't want:

Men are not looking for women who are: Selfish, Gold Diggers, Argumentative, Wants to wear the pants (always has to be right and has to get the final word), Bitter from previous bad relationships, sleep arounds, Lesbian or Bi- Sexual women, so independent that they constantly remind men that they are not needed, Ghetto and Crazy.

Men must look for the characteristics of a Godly woman, a spiritual brick house, who like himself is not perfect but very close to the Godly ideal.

Does she exist, if so, have you seen her?

There are millions of spiritual Brick Houses in the world: They are solid in their thinking, solid in their lifestyles, solid in their temperament, and solid in their faith and service to God.

As Christians, we are committed to living Christian lives ourselves. We should ask God to lead us to the ideal mate, solid in mind and spirit, who can help us become complete.

Exposition

The text focuses on Abraham's search for a wife for his son Isaac.

In biblical times it was assumed that a man who finds a good woman expects to marry her. The purpose of all dating and relationships was assumed to lead toward marriage.

In many areas of Eastern culture neither sons or daughters sought their own mates, they were arranged by the fathers who considered many factors in selecting mates, but love was rarely high on the list.

Abraham became concerned that his son Isaac had no wife. Abraham had left his homeland and was troubled at what he perceived as a lack of strength and character among the women of Canaan. He felt the really strong women, who stood on the word of God and could make good wives were back home.

Since it was customary for fathers to arrange for the marriages of their children, Abraham sent his trusted servant to look for a wife for his son. The servant traveled to a distant village. He did not know how to pick a bride for his employer's son so he turned the matter over to God.

At verse 42 he asks God to show him the right woman. The servant told God that he would say "Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink" and the girl, if she's the right girl, should respond "Both drink thou, and I will also draw for they camels."

As it happened the servant looked around and a beautiful young woman came to the well to get water. He asked his coded question and to his surprise the woman answered the exact words that he had chosen as a confirmation of his blessing.

At verse 58 Rebekah was called in and asked whether or not she would go, sight unseen, to marry the stranger and she said, "I will go."

At verse 63 Rebekah saw him and instantly got off the camel. When she was told who he was she veiled her face as was the custom. When Isaac looked at her he married her on the spot and loved her, provided for her, protected her and honored her. She became the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Isaac found a strong wife who would respect, love him and bear his children.

Proverbs 18:22 describes such a woman as a "good thing."

Rebekah was beautiful, fine, godly, delivered by a servant but and handpicked by God. She was a Brick House.

Measurements of a Brick House

What are the measurements of a brick house? On the surface it is easy to cite the measurements of a woman considered to be a brick house: 36-23-36 or somewhere thereabouts. However, how do you measure a woman who is a spiritual brick house?

HEIGHT OF HER RESPECT FOR GOD: Rebekah did not know Isaac. Neither did she know anything of his father Abraham. She was being asked not only to marry a man she had not seen but to live with him in another country. However, once she was told that it was God's will that was confirmed at the well, she bowed in respect to the will of God. A man who finds a woman who is willing to bow to the will of God has found a wonderful treasure. This is a prayerful woman who will follow her husband from sea to sea if God commands that it be done.

Therefore, the first measure of a good woman should not be her looks. Attractiveness has a purpose; it draws us close enough to see the inner woman. The inner woman must have a spiritual core that desires to do the will of God. The man who finds a woman so committed that she always puts him first, has found a good thing. She's a Brick House.

WIDTH OF HER COMPASSION: Rebekah knew she would have to go a long ways from home to please her man. However, she was willing to go as far as necessary to be by his side. A man who finds a woman who is willing to share his dream as he shares hers, has found a tremendous blessing from God. This is the woman who is

willing to go any distance, endure any hardship, and face any obstacle as she stands by her man. This willingness to go to any distance for the man in her life is the second measure of a good woman, which has nothing to do with her body or shape, but with her willingness to pray, hope, and aspire for the same things that her husband has in his heart. The man who finds such a woman, finds a good thing. She is a brick house.

DEPTH OF HER LOVE: Rebekah loved Isaac all of the days of her life and was loyal to him only. Proverbs 31: 11 and 12 say: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." A woman who loves her husband is loyal to him, and does not betray his trust through infidelity or otherwise compromising his safety, security or peace of mind. This is the third measure of a good woman, which has nothing to do with her sex appeal, or attractiveness. a man who has a woman that loves her so much that he can "safely trust her," has a good thing. Moreover, her loyalty to him is not conditional, but is permanent, encompassing the full range of life's experiences: prosperity and hard times, sickness and health, good times and bad times. Her loyalty to her husband is "all the days of her life," until death separates them. This type of relationship cannot be bought, bartered or sold it is a genuine gift from god. The woman who loves a man that much, is a good thing. She's a Brick House.

She knows the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, men who are looking for a brick house must keep their eyes on the woman who knows the Lord.

Men, looking for a brick house, should follow her trail and not her tail!

Men should not make the mistake of following the way a woman walks instead of where she walks and how she walks.

Following the trail of a good woman is not hard because her trail is long and clear.

If we follow the trail of Hannah it will find her telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts.

If we follow the trail of Ruth, we'll hear her say, "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God."

If we follow the trail of the woman at the well, we'll hear her say, "Come see a man" who told me all I've ever done.

If we follow the trail of a good woman we'll discover the:

-spirit of Mary of Bethany

-power and strength of Deborah

-grateful and humble heart of Mary Magdalene

-faith of Ruth and the enduring hope of Rahab

If we follow the trail of a spiritual brick house it will lead us to the Lord.

A spiritual brick is strong in her faith, grounded in her commitment, and sure about her destination.

A spiritual brick house is a strange phenomenon. You can be looking at a brick house and not see her because only men who know the Lord themselves are able to know a

brick house when they see one.

The physical eye can see shapes, curves and the rump in the trunk!

The physical eye can see the hair on the head, the sparkle in her eye and the glint of her teeth.

However, only a man who knows the Lord will recognize the qualities of a spiritual brick house because that which is flesh is flesh and that which is spirit is spirit. The carnal eye cannot see or appreciate spiritual things.

A man who has found a brick house, has found a good thing because a brick house is different from all of the other others.

Not every woman is a brick house, even though they are appealing to the eye.

There some women who are TEEPEES. Teepees are not expected to remain stable they are mobile and move from place to place. Some women can't stay with one man they must pack up their teepees and move on.

There are some women who are IGLOOS: Igloos are made of blocks of ice and melt in the presence of warmth and heat. Some women are cold natured. If men try to warm up to them they simply melt and go away.

There are some women who are MOTEL rooms. Motel rooms are used for short stays and layovers but nothing permanent. Some women do not want relationships, just one night layovers in cheap motels.

There are some women who are STORAGE BUILDINGS: A storage building keeps old stuff that is not being used and probably should be thrown away but we can't let it go. There are some women who carry stored up baggagge from past relationships, that should be thrown away.

There are some women who are MANSIONS: A mansion is an expensive showpiece designed to impress others at a great expense. There are some women who are expensive, with high maintenance costs whose purpose is to impress others and keep their men folk paying the bills.

There are some women who are TRAILER HOUSES: A Trailer house looks beautiful but it is a dangerous place to be when a storm comes, it is too easily blown away. Some women are not grounded when the storms of trouble begin to rise, they are gone with the wind.

There are some women who are APARTMENTS: Apartments are pretty but they are never yours. You pay for the pleasure of being there from month to month. Some women are pretty but they never marry they just charge rent to their men from month to month for the pleasure of being there.

But a man who finds a woman who knows the Lord, finds a good thing. She's a brick house

A man who has a brick house can say with his woman:

—There is no battle we can face that will stop us!

—There is no mountain that will be too hard for us to climb!

—There is no valley too deep for us traverse!

—There is no night too dark for us to make it through!

—There is no crisis that we cannot control!

—There is no storm so strong that we cannot weather it!

—There is no enemy so frightening that we cannot defeat it!

When you find a brick house you find a woman who knows the Lord.

When you know the Lord you have found the secret to your happiness, because God will not let you down.

If you find a brick house, when you've failed, she'll tell you 'that's alright baby, God can turn your failure into success!

If you find a brick house, when you get weak, she'll tell you 'that's alright baby, God can turn your weakness into strength!

If you find a brick house, when you have questions, she'll tell you 'that's alright baby, God will provide the answers!

If you find a brick house, when doors are closed in your face, she'll tell you 'that's alright baby, the Lord will make a way somehow!

If you find a brick house, every time that you fall on your face, she'll help you up to your knees, and bring you back to the Lord!

If you have a brick house, you ought to thank the Lord and tell the world about His goodness and his grace!

Don't keep it to yourself but tell somebody! That we tell the world of the goodness of the Lord!

I've got to tell somebody how He touched my life one day, picked me up and turned me around.

I must tell them how He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill!

I must tell them that He died for me..

But early Sunday morning ... He arose with all power in his hands!

No. 9467-Family

The Adam Family

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 17, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." Genesis 5:2; "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Introduction

Is it possible to have a family that really works? Today, many are receiving their instructions about family operation from television and other sources. Unfortunately, these sources often give us images of dysfunctional family, because families that don't work are the ones that people want to see. A generation ago, television was just the opposite. Programs such as Father Knows Best, Leave it to Beaver, The Brady Bunch, and the Andy Griffin Show, showed different types of families encountering real life issues in a positive way. Other programs such as the Walton's and Little House on the Prairie showed families with strong moral values even in tough times. Audiences drew their ideas about how a family is supposed to work from programs such as these.

Unfortunately, generations have been presented with: The Bunker Family, of All in the Family; a family headed by Archie Bunker, a racist, sexist and domineering. The Jefferson Family of the Jefferson T.V. show. It too is a racist family, bent on using people and climbing up at others expense to their big apartment on the Eastside. The Bundy Family, of Married with Children. They never have any money all of them seemed obsessed with sex; The Conners Family on Roseanne, is depicted as lower a class blue collar family that is often abusive and excessive. The Simpson, The Boon Docks, and Family Guy are all cartoon families that show children cursing their parents, cartoon sex and just about any other dysfunction you can think of.

Television teaches things, whether they are bad or good, about black families. Black families on television live well. The Huxtables of the Cosby's live extremely well. Riley and Granddad in the Boondocks live in a comfortable home in the suburbs. The Paynes of the House of Payne, live quite well for a single incomed public servant. The Jefferson's lived in a Deluxe apartment in the sky. In reality all families don't live comfortably, there are many that are struggling, with some sleeping on floors, couches and in chairs.

One of the most dysfunctional shows on television is the Addams Family. It is

strange family that is not evil but celebrates dark themes, one member sleeps in a casket, there's a Frankenstein like member called "Lurch" and a hand that walks around by itself named "thing." The Addams family can't seem to understand why a family that dresses up like vampires, lives in a castle next to a swamp, and drinks blood for an afternoon treat shouldn't be considered normal.

There are even gay families on television in which there are two moms or two dads! Wow!

With all of this on television and in the movies, it's no wonder that the definition of family is confusing.

It's confusing until we consider what the word of God has to say about marriage and the family, it's purpose and it's operation.

It all started with the first family, The Adam Family, not the T.V. version but the Garden of Eden version. That family and God's instruction thereafter gives us the prototype of what a real family should be: not dysfunctional, but one that works together for His praise and glory.

As Christians, we must labor to keep God's example before us. He is our model, His word, not television should be our guide.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's creation of the first family of human beings.

Genesis chapter one and two gives us an overview, then a detailed, slow motion, view of the creation of the first family. In Genesis the Father, the son and Holy Ghost discussed the creation of man in Genesis 1:26. They said, "Let us make man."

In Genesis 1:27 it reads, " So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Chapter 2 starts to rewind the tape a little and shows us how God created "them" by giving us a step by step version of how the man was placed in a deep sleep and woman was formed from a rib from his side. In Genesis 2:23 it is written, "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

The institution of marriage was spoken into place when God said in Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. "

Genesis 5:2 called both the male and the female "Adam" with the woman being commonly referred to as Eve but both of them being the progenitors of the Adam Family. The remainder of Chapter 5 tells how the Adam family grew and expanded as the years passed.

The Adam family, before sin entered the world was perfect in every respect. There was no death in the family, no sickness, no jealousy, no unemployment, no strive, no arguments, no competition, no disagreements and no fear of AIDS, or STD's. The Adams family was the perfect family cradled in the perfect place in a perfect world.

Genesis Chapter 3 details how the perfect family started having problems when the devil interfered in the relations of the perfect family. First he appealed to Eve's vanity

and convinced her to disobey God and ignore her husband's leadership concerning the forbidden fruit. That decision brought death to the perfect family. Their two sons who had been living perfectly together, developed problems and one killed the other. The remaining son had to leave out on his own and the entire family had to move out of the garden into less that luxurious conditions.

The creation story gives clear evidence of what happens when the devil gets mixed up in a family's business.

Keep the Devil out of the family

Marriage is honorable and is to be protected since it is the very foundation of society. Therefore, marriage is to be respected, held in the highest esteem and protected from the influences of the devil. In any marriage the devil looks for weak areas. Among African-Americans the weakest areas usually deal with money or sex related issues. All others are secondary. That's why the devil chooses those two areas first.

DEVIL CAN DESTROY A FAMILY IF HE CAN DESTROY ITS TRUST: Whether the issue is money or sex, trust is the one ingredient that makes relations between husbands and wives strong. Once trust has been weakened the bond between a man and a woman trust is fractured. Mark 10:9 says, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Even though the bible warns against anyone sowing the seeds of discontent between a man and a woman, the devil will try anyway. It starts to happen when partners hide money from the other, keep secrets, and have secret lovers on the side. These all indicate the lack of trust.

Sometimes what looks like trust is not trust at all. Consider the man and wife who won the praises of their friends because they appeared to be so romantic even after 40 years of marriage. A friend spoke to the husband to try to discover his secret. He said, "I notice you and your wife the other day in the mall. You went into a dress store and you were holding hands. You went into a shoe store and you were holding hands. You went into a jewelry store and you were still holding hands. It's amazing and so romantic. Can you tell me the secret to such romance?" The man said, "It's not so much romance. But after 40 years of marriage I've learned that whenever we go into the dress store, shoe store or jewelry store, I can't trust her to just look, if I don't hold her hand...she'll buy everything in the store!"

Trust is important to the perfect family.

DEVIL CAN DESTROY A FAMILY'S FINANCES: Every year thousands of marriages feel the strain of an increased debt load. Husbands and wives, dealing with the frustration of escalating debt, often become enemies as one blames the other for creating the debt or inability to manage it properly. That's what happens when the devil gets in your checkbook. Debts are incurred to impress the neighbors or associates, make the kids happy for a day, or to satisfy a variety of itches and impulses. When the bills in the home begin to escalate, marriages are strained to the limit. If marriages are to thrive, each partner must view themselves as stewards of

God's resources, carefully managing every dime to his glory in accordance with his will.

DEVIL CAN DESTROY FAMILY LEADERSHIP: The devil can really destroy the family when the leadership of the family is questioned. When the devil succeeded in getting Eve to ignore her husband and listen to another's voice. Trouble occurred. The bible teaches: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." (Ephes. 5:22). This submission does not mean the wife is less important than her husband but that she willing agrees to follow his leadership, even though she has the smarts to do it all by herself if she wanted to. Submission does not mean dominance by the man, it means followship on the behalf the wife. Whenever the devil can successfully manipulate the leadership of a marriage then he succeeds. If he can get a couple to arguing over who calls the shots over the check book or the color of the curtains on the wall, if the devil can find a way in, he will do just that. The old song writer said, "Don't let the devil ride. If you let him ride he'll want to drive, don't let him ride."

DEVIL CAN DESTROY A COUPLES LOVE FOR EACH OTHER: The devil can get into a family's business so much that they can stop loving each other. Yet, it is love that makes a the male in the marriage a husband and not just an "old man." It is love that makes the woman a "wife" not just an "Old Lady." The bible says in Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." That's a tall order. It goes beyond romance. Love goes to the point of providing for her, honoring her, believing in her, trusting her, praising her, respecting and caring for her. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephes. 5:28). If the devil can have his way, he will interrupt that love relationship between husbands and wives. If there is no love the marriage falls apart.

DEVIL CAN DESTROY SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS: Even children can get out of hand when the devil gets into the affairs of the perfect family. In the perfect family children both obey and respect their parents. There is a element of godliness in this respect because it is ordained by God himself. Ephesians 6:1-2 (KJV) Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise." That's why it's important that children not be allowed to get the devilish ideas to talk back to their parents, disobey them and to do anything that will dishonor them. How does the devil get into a child's mind? Generally, the devil gets in a child's mind through television broadcasts of situation comedies and cartoons that show other children not only disrespecting their parents but also disrespecting their siblings, teachers and other adult figures. We must be on guard that the devil does not find a way to destroy our children and pit them against the parents and against each other

A Loving Family

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the Adam Family started off perfectly but fell into perfection, the only way for anyone to rejoin the perfect family of God is through the perfecting blood of Jesus Christ.

The word teaches that because of the sin of Adam and his wife in garden that sin

was introduced into the world.

Romans 5:12 says, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Because of the imperfection of the Adam Family, there is more hate in the world than there is love.

Because of the imperfection of the Adam Family, there is more war in the world than there is peace!

Because of the imperfection of the Adam Family, there is more depression in the world than there is hope!

But Romans 5:16 reminds that sin may have come in the world by the Adam Family but the grace of God has created a new family, the family of God.

The Adam family is imperfect by nature but Jesus, the Son of God, has extended His love to invite all who will to the family of God.

The Family of the Lord is a family based upon love.

The love of God is a powerful sweetener that helps bind broken hearts.

The love of God heals all wounds.

The love of God restores lost joy.

The Adam Family is marked by imperfection but the family of God is guided by the hand of God Himself.

When the hand of God is on your family:

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

When you are a part of the family of God the impossible becomes possible!

When you are a part of the family of God, the improbable becomes probable!

When you are a part of the family of God, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

When you are a part of the family of God, you better get ready to have a hallelujah good time!

The families on television try to imitate it, but they can't come close.

T.V. families even have theme songs.

The Bunkers sang, "Boy the way Glenn Miller played, songs that made the hit parade, guys like us had it made, those were the days."

JJ and his family on Goodtimes sang, "Temporary, laid off, goodtimes. Easy credit ripoff, Goodtimes. Ain't we lucky we got em', Good times!"

The Jefferson family got a chance to move on up to the East Side!

They were so happy that they sang, "Fish don't fry in the kitchen, beans don't burn on the grill, took a whole lot trying, just to get up that hill!.

We're moving on up!

Oh, but one of the these old days, the family of God will have more than the Jeffersons, we're not going to the east Side but we're on our way to the other side!

We're moving on up to the other side, where every day is Sunday and it's always howdy and never goodbye!

We're moving on up, to the other side, where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

We're moving on up, to the other side, Where hearse wheels don't roll and death bells don't toll

I don't know about you but I've got to tell somebody!

I got to tell somebody about Jesus!

I got to tell somebody that He died out on Calvary!

I got to tell somebody that He was buried in a borrowed tomb!

I got to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave, with all power in His hands!

Come and go with me, to my father's house! There is Joy! Joy! Joy!

No. 9468-Inspiration

He may not come when you want him

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 5, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Luke 2:1

Introduction

Were you ever promised something but it took a long time to receive it; so long that you thought it was not going to come? We have been promised many things by many people and those promises seem, at times, as distant as the stars. We wait for them but they never seem to come.

There are some who give up hope. There are others who hang on to their faith and never give up hope. Some remember the lyrics to that old Sam Cooke song:

"It's been too hard living but I'm afraid to die
Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will."

Like Cooke, we don't know the time schedule up there beyond the sky, but we believe a change is gonna come.

We were able to endure slavery and the difficulties of reconstruction because we knew that a change was going to come.

We were able to withstand the savage venom of racism and segregation because we knew a change was gonna come.

We were able stand the frustrations of second class citizenship and powerlessness because we knew a change was going to come.

Often the blessing we seek seems to take forever getting to us, but we have remained confident that if we keep the faith and never lose hope that God will bring about the changes we need, in his own time and in his own way.

When we think of advent, we think about God's response to the world's needs. His response was to love the world so much that he would give his only begotten so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

When the world needed Him most, Christ came bringing hope and salvation to all who would receive Him.

As Christians, we rejoice in the Lord always because we know that He may not come when we want Him, but He's always on time.

Exposition

This text uses a familiar scriptural phrase to introduce the coming of Christ, "…it came to pass."

The phrase itself is used to indicate the passage of time from the presentation of one thought to the conclusion of another.

There are at least 86 instances in the scripture of the phrase "it came to pass," and each of them seems to suggest a transition from one phase into another. It's the ending of one situation and the beginning of another; the sunset of one experience and the dawn of another.

God told Noah to build an ark and to fill it with pairs of clean and unclean animals because a flood was coming. For 100 years the rain did not come, there was no flood, but Noah went forward anyway, collected the animals and the door to the ark was shut. Genesis 7:10 says after seven more days of waiting, "it came to pass" and the rains came.

When Hannah prayed long and waited for God to give her a son, it seemed like a long time coming but 1 Samuel 19:20 notes that "It came to pass" and Hannah conceived.

When Eliezar looked for a wife for Isaac he knew he would need help from the Lord to find her because the man who finds a wife finds a good thing. He prayed and he asked God to lead him. It took a long time, but Genesis 24:14 says, "It came to pass" that he found the woman that God had selected.

Therefore, the phrase "It came to pass" came to confirm that God's promises were delivered, what was sought was found, and what was suffered transitioned into better times.

In each instance, it showed that those who sought God were able to get a response.

It was not always immediate by the man's measure of time, but it was answered in the span of time needed for an ample response.

Surely these instances and others prove that "He may not come when you want, but He's always on time."

At the time of this text, the fourth dynasty of Rome was underway. It was a time when Rome covered entire known world. It was a time when Roman roads made traveling easy and its literary talents were excelling. It was a time of peace. In this time, God chose to answer the prayers of the people for a savior. He picked the time. He picked the place. He picked the circumstance.

Thus, Luke 2:1 begins, "And it came to pass."

One situation leads to another

Today, many of us are dealing with situations that seem to have no end in sight.

Problems in our families and personal lives seem to get more complicated with no light apparent at the end of the tunnel. We have prayed, but it appears that our prayers are not answered. We read in scripture where the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much, but we get frustrated when we don't get instant response to our prayers. We ask, "What is taking God so long?" In answer to that question we should consider:

GOD IS NOT LIMITED BY TIME: When it appears to us that God is slow to respond to our needs, we should remember that God is not subject to the limitations of time. God simply doesn't calculate time the way we do. We figure time in ways that we can understand. We calculate the years by the seasons, the months by the moons, the days by the rising and setting of the sun. To God all of these are inconsequential. Psalm 90 tells us that a thousand years to us is but a few hours to Him, or a watch in the night. Therefore, we should not feel God has neglected us in any way because He appears not to have responded to our situation. He is not dragging his feet. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. "

Thousands of years in the sight of humankind are but passing days or even seconds with God. It was two thousand years before God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through his family. This occurred with the birth of Christ. It was several hundred years before the children of Israel took possession of the Promised Land as promised (And they still do not have it all). Obviously, God does not reckon time in the same manner as man.

Whatever our condition is, God is aware of it. It is not in file 13, tucked away out of his sight. When the time is right, He will respond. He may not come when we want Him, but when He comes; it is assured that He will be right on time.

ADVERSE CONDITIONS WILL PASS: One significant truth about any situation is that "it will pass." There are times when we feel extremely low. We actually hurt in our spirit and it seems that it last forever. When we are children go astray, we hurt. When our dreams are being shattered, we hurt. When our marriage is troubled, we hurt. When our finances are threatened, we hurt. When our health begins to fail, we hurt. When our business succumbs to factors beyond our control, we hurt. When hurt comes, it seems that it will never. In Ecclesiastes 3:1 Solomon said, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven," A time to be born and a time to die. A time laugh and a time to cry. A time to plant and a time to harvest. However, while everything has a season, nothing lasts forever, except the love of God. Those who may be enduring a difficult season at the moment must rest assured that "this too shall pass." Heartaches? This too shall pass! Discomfort? This too shall pass! Sleepless nights? This too shall pass!

The old Negro spiritual put it this way, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always." That means that one day, in God's own time, we shall hear the scripture speak to our situation, "And it came to pass." That's when we will say, "I was on my bed of affliction..and it came to pass!" "I tried my best to find a way out of my dilemma and

it seemed there was not end, and it came to pass!" "I gave my problems to the Lord, …and it came to pass!"

GOD IS NEVER TOO LATE: When we are tempted to believe that God is too late, that's when we must remember that regardless to what we think God is never too late. At the tomb of Lazarus, Mary and Martha were upset with Jesus. They had sent word for Him to come and respond to Lazarus' sickness. When Jesus did not come at the time they wanted Him to come and Lazarus ultimately died, they were upset and accused him saying, "If you had come when we called you, my brother would not have died." That's when they learned that Jesus can't be late. He responded to them by raising Lazarus from the dead. The same applies to our situations as well, God can't be late. If he didn't stop you from losing your job, it could well be that He has something else in mind that is even greater. If He didn't respond to the prayer request that you submitted when you wanted, where you wanted and how you wanted, then it could very well be that He has another way of responding that will be much better for you.

In such circumstances, we must trust God to work it out for us and not demand that he respond as some do in their prayers "Right now, God, right now!" Rather than saying "right now!" we should say, "According to thy will." The danger of insisting upon right now is illustrated by the man who was caught in the flood upon a log moving down the river at a high speed. He prayed that God would rescue him. God heard his prayer and inspired rescuers to go ahead of him with a device that would scoop him from the waters as he approach the pass in the river. The man panicked as he slipped and slid on the log and demanded that God get him off the log, "right now!" In a short span, a large house floated in the flood waters and the man jumped from the log onto the roof top. However, when the house made it to the pass, it was too large to make it through and crushed against the rocks. As the man drowned, he saw the log upon which he was riding turn the pass and the rescuers waiting to pull him out. When "it came to pass" he was not there because he demanded "right now" instead of waiting for God to move. God is never late. He may not come, when we want Him, but He's always on time.

God is Always on Time

Finally, we must consider that we serve a God who is bigger than time, more precise than time and is therefore always on time.

United Parcel Service promotes the fact that it can place a package in the hands of the receiver in 24 hours. Yet there are times when UPS can't find the right address or can't make a delivery because no one is home.

Federal Express prides itself for being able to deliver a package by 10 a.m. the next morning. However, there are times when they just can't make it. They refunded the charge but they still didn't make it on time.

E-mail deliverers promote the fact that they can deliver a message in seconds! But regardless to how fast E-Mail can be delivered, the message can't get through if the server is overloaded.

We serve a God who is more dependable than the Federal Express, more reliable than

U.S. mail and faster than the internet. He may not come when we want Him, but He's always on time!

I hear Abraham testifying, "I stood on a mountain with my son on an altar. I had the knife of sacrifice drawn and I couldn't see any other way, that's when I found out that God always has a ram in the bush! There on the mountaintop I learned that He may not come when you want, but he's always on time."

I hear the three Hebrew boys "We stood in front of the fiery furnace. The fires were seven times hotter than usual. It seemed like we were about to reach a tragic end when they tied us up and threw us in the fire. That's when we looked up and saw a fourth man in the fire wrapping his wings around us, just before the flames could touch us. In the midst of our fire, that's when we learned, "He may not come when you want, but He's always on time."

I hear Daniel saying, "I was in the lion's den face with an instant death. There was no way out and no one to hear my cry. I can see the hungry teeth of the enemy. I could hear the terrible roar. That's when God stepped in and quieted down lions and turned them into kittens. That's when I learned, that He may not come when you want, him but he's always on time."

When the world cried out for a savior, the answer was already on the way! God prepared to send his Son to earth to begin the redemption process.

The phrase "and it came to pass" indicates that the time of social pregnancy that was ready for delivery.

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates, that the prayers that had been prayed, were about to be answered!

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates, that their 400 years without the word of God was about to end!

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates that their spiritual drought was about to be watered by the living word of God!

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates that God was ready to move; and every believer knows that when God gets ready, you got to move!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, that God rearranged the biological processes of a woman named Mary!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, God made a hole in the ordered processes of nature!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, God sent the Word to dwell among men!

At the right time, and on time, he revealed himself to the world!

At the right time, and on time, he began a three-year ministry!

At the right time, and on time, he took up an old rugged cross!

At the right time, and on time, he died out on Calvary!

After the three days and nights, at the right time, an on time

He arose from the grave!

With all power in his hands!

No. 9469- Christmas

What made them wise, Makes us wise

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

December 12, 2010

SCRIPTURE: Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. Isaiah 60:1-6 "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." Matthew 2:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever stood in awe of the wisdom of certain members of your family? Have you noticed that they seem to know and understand more about life? Their warnings seem prophetic. Their advice is always sound. Their insight is always revealing. Without a doubt these wise sages in the family seem to have a grip on life, and a clear understanding that is enviable.

What is the source of this wisdom? Can it be purchased in a store, learned in a class or inherited? If such wisdom is great, how can it be acquired? In our search for wisdom we have learned that knowledge alone does not make a man wise. Neither does an understanding alone make a woman wise. Wisdom seems to be the ability to review life's events, read its signs then apply that knowledge and understanding to the real circumstances we face every day.

Wisdom is not automatic. Great men are not always wise and neither are old men automatically wise. Positions do not confer wisdom upon those who fill them and neither does one suddenly acquire wisdom by attaining a certain age.

The youngest child can be wise if he can apply what little knowledge and understanding he has acquired to his daily life.

Job puts it this way in Job 28:28 "The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."

The great truths that the ancients of our families have found should be the objects of our searches as well. The wisdom of grandma and grandpa or Uncle Willie or any

of the aunts, uncles and grands in our family circles can be discerned if we try to see what they have seen and seek after that which they seek.

As Christians, we see the wise men in the bible seeking the Christ child. They were wise to seek Him. Today, we should do the same because what made them wise, also makes us wise. It is a good thing to find the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophesy of Isaiah as he points to the coming of the Christ child.

Isaiah is one of the major prophets whose book, like the bible has 66 chapters, whereas the bible has 66 books. Also like the bible, Isaiah is divided into two parts: The first 39 books speak to the conditions of Isaiah's day, just the Old Testament spoke of the conditions of Israel in times past. The remaining 27 chapters of Isaiah are prophetic, speaking of a time thousands of years from Isaiah's day. It's prophecies are Messianic in that they foretell the event surrounding the birth and death of the Messiah.

This text is from chapter 60. It foretells, more than a thousand years in advance, how wise men would see the light of the Lord and would follow it to find the Christ child. These men would be considered wise because they would see the light of God and follow it. Following that light would lead them to God's promise.

As we study scripture we learn of two groups who saw lights or heard voices leading them to the Christ Child. In the biblical narrative, we learn of the shepherds and Matthew tells us about the wise men who studied the stars, who came from the East to Jerusalem and asked King Herod, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the East, and we have come to worship him" We don't know where these visitors were from or even how many there were! In fact, we don't even know when they arrived in Bethlehem. Neither are we sure about the number. Many have concluded that there were three because of the three gifts brought but the bible does not say. There is no accurate record of the number.

In Biblical times, astrologers were people who believed that the stars were signs or reflections of special events on earth. These people studied the stars in a quest for knowledge. They were considered wise because they acted upon what they learned in their studies and sought to see for themselves.

Thus, when the wise men observed the appearance of the unusual star pattern, it set off a study as to what the configuration meant. When they noticed Sirius, they knew that its name meant "birth of a prince." Their consultations with learned people, among whom would have been Jewish rabbis, revealed that a special birth had been foretold. But where? They were led to the manger in Bethlehem by a light from heaven.

What made them wise is that they saw the light from heaven and followed until they found Christ.

Today, we would be wise to do the same.

What they learned

We can learn clear truths from the wise men.

They studied the stars and scriptures: The wise men studied the stars. They watched for changes and movements in the heavens. Then they compared what they saw to what they knew in the written word of God. That made them wise. We would be wise to do the same. We should study the events we see around us and watch for the movement of heaven or the hand of God in each event. Then we should compare what we see to what has been prophesied in the written word of God. For example, we see more earthquakes, strange weather patterns today that we have ever seen before. It would be wise if we compare what we see with what is written in the word, that in the last days there would be strange weather patterns. Even the rise in homosexuality and other forms of immorality have been predicted as signs that we living in the last days. If we study the events around us in light of God's word, we would be wise.

They were led by the light from heaven. The wise men saw the star in the East and followed its light. It wasn't on paper. There was no guarantee that they would find success in their quest to find the new born king. They just felt it in their souls. Even today, those who are led by the spirit seem to be closer to God than those who have only the academics. Academics helps us to understand the operations of society and gain a sense of perspective. But there is one thing that learning cannot do, and that it makes us wise. Some with great book learning are humbled by the simple wisdom of those who have been touched by the Lord. The story is told of two men who were called upon to read the 23rd Psalm. One was a seminary student and the other was an old man who spent his whole life on a farm and could neither read nor write. The seminary student read carefully, pronouncing every word carefully and demonstrating his training. The old man stood and started reciting the scripture from memory but punctuated his recitation with a witness about what the Lord had done for him: Providing a table for him in the presence of his enemies, blessing him so much that he had overflow as well as standing with him in times of death and sickness. His words were broken and his enunciation was poor but he brought the audience to its feet. The seminary student rose and commented afterwards. "Friends I know the 23rd Psalms, but this man knows the Shepherd."

It is wise to know not just the words, but to know God for yourself.

They were wise because they would not be distracted: Herod tried to get the wise men to stray from their purpose and report to him about the child's whereabouts. They would not be distracted. They knew their purpose and refused to stray. Even today, we should not take our eyes off our ultimate purpose in life, which is to please God. It is good to have high school diplomas and college degrees but it is even better if we know the Lord in addition to all of our book learning.

Unless we know the Lord, our learning is in vain.

It's good to know:

—Mathematics, how to multiply and divide. But it's wise to know Jesus because only Jesus can multiply by dividing. He took two little fish and five loaves of bread and

multiplied them by dividing them among the people.

—Geology, the origins and nature of the earth. It's wise to know Jesus because "the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

—Astronomy, the nature of the stars. It's wise to know Jesus, because He's the bright and morning star!

—Botany, the study of the flowers and lilies of the field. It's wise to know Jesus because He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley!

—Geography, and know the people of neighboring places. It's wise to know Jesus because a song writer said "He's got the whole world, in his hands, He's got the whole wide world in His hands.!"

Wise Because they sought the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that what really made them wise is their willingness to seek the Lord.

There are many today who have not found this wisdom. They are content to seek their own way and to live according to their own purpose.

What made the wise men wise is their ability to look around them and see the works of the Lord in the heavens then see how the light from those great works pointed to his hand in our lives every day.

When we are able to see the light of the Lord and seek after it, we are wise.

The education of the wise men taught them that there was a great thing happening in the world and that God's will was unveiling itself somewhere in the West.

They did not know where, but they knew that if they followed the light from heaven they would find the Lord.

It's a wise man who recognizes that when he is lost he should seek the Lord. Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. "

It's a wise who wants a blessing and seeks the Lord to get what he needs. Psalm 119:2 says, How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with their whole heart."

It's a wise man who searches for the riches of heaven and doesn't stop until he finds them. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

What made the wise men wise was that despite the:

—SKEPTICISMS of their times, they tried to find the Lord! What made them wise should make us wise!

—DIFFICULTIES of their times, they tried to find the Lord! What made them wise should make us wise!

What makes a believer wise today, is not his degree from an institution of higher learning, but the willingness to apply what they know and follow the Lord!

The wise men were wise because they were looking for the Lord, today, those who want to be wise should also look for the Lord.

Look for Him when you are in the valley of despair, because He has promised that one day ”every valley shall be exalted!”

Look for Him when evil and crooked devices entangle you because He has promised that the “crooked place shall be made straight.”

Look for Him when sin and corruption make you sick to your soul, because ‘He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity, the chastisement of our peace is upon him and with his stripes we are healed.”

Look for Him when your body is racked with pain, like the woman with an issue blood who sought just touch the hem of His garment!

Look for Him like the widow woman that was down to her last barrel of meal and cruise of oil, because He has promised to make a way out of no way!

Look for Him because he can take the

—Impossible and make it possible

—Crushed and make them strong again!

—Discontent and give them a new joy!

—Ruined and give them a brand new start!

—Uncertain and give them new confidence!

Look for Him because when nobody else cared about us, He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Golgotha’s Hill.

Look for Him because when the world had forsaken us he died for our sins!

Look for Him because when the world was kicking us down He was buried for us in a borrowed tomb!

Look for Him because when the world thought we had been defeated, He arose for us with all power in His hand!

The wise men had to go to Bethlehem to call on Him! They were wise to call on Him. We too must call Him and tell Him what you want!

No. 9470-Christmas

A Sign even a Blind Man can see

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 19, 2010

SCRIPTURE "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

Introduction

Have you ever taken a wrong turn because you didn't see a sign? Most of us have missed a turn or two in life because we didn't see signs that were clearly posted for us to see, but somehow we missed it. The reasons were numerous: we were distracted; it was hidden, or were looking in the wrong direction. There are few times when we made bad turns even though we saw not just one sign but many of them but we ignored them.

There were several day when we realized that we were feeling unusually dizzy and often faint but we dismissed them. We should not have been surprised when we received a less than favorable medical report because there were signs.

For several weeks we received bad reports in school because we failed to turn in assignments, failed tests and performed purely. We should not have been surprised when we received poor reports at the end of the period because there were signs.

When everyone else on the job received raises, commendations and promotions but we were constantly written up for being late, showing poor performance and less than admirable work habits, we should have seen it coming. Our firing should not have been a surprise. There were signs.

Are you surprised that you are constantly broke? Why? There were signs that they day would have more bills than money in the bank. We saw them but we kept spending.

When you saw what you thought were little flying ants in your house last spring, you ignored them. So why were you surprised to know that that you now need major repairs because your house has termites? There were signs.

There are signs in the weather that should prepare us for the changing of the seasons, but often we ignore them.

There are signs that show us when there only one way and warn us when we are

going the wrong way. So we shouldn't be surprised when we are faced with oncoming traffic in life. There were signs.

Last year CNN news carried the news article about the woman who had trouble with her son who was developing criminal habits. She made the boy a giant sign and made him stand on a busy intersection of the city and hold it high for an entire week, "I want to go prison and ruin by life just like my daddy," – It was her way of sending him a message that he would never forget.

What would God need to do to send the world a sign of his love? He created a garden and filled it with great fruits and easy living but didn't get that sign. He opened a walkway through the sea for Israel and fed them for 40 years in the wilderness, but they didn't get that sign. Even when He blessed them with miracles: made the sun stand still, brought down the walls of Jericho or raised the dead, they still didn't get the sign.

Is it possible that God can leave so many signs and we not get the point? Consider the woman who filed for a divorce after 20 years of marriage on the grounds that her husband never showed her any sign that he loved her. She felt lucky because her case was heard by a female judge she knew was having problems with her husband too. The judge listened as the woman complained that all her husband ever did for 20 years was clutter up the house but never showed any sign that he loved her. The judge asked the woman to explain the clutter he leaves. The wife said, "Every day for twenty years he takes my lipstick and draws my name and kisses on the bathroom mirror. When I go in the refrigerator, he has notes taped to the door with my name and little hearts on it. He clutters up my mail sending me little cards with a little man shooting an arrow at my heart. Every night for 20 years he puts these notes on my pillow that I'll be dreaming of you. Your honor, I'm tired of him cluttering up the house he bought me, the huge jewelry case he bought me, the car he bought me and the three closets of clothes he bought with all this clutter. Any fool can see this man doesn't love me he just wants someone to pick up his clutter. The judge said, honey, the only kind of clutter my husband leaves me is empty beer cans, I'll take your husband any time!" -The woman couldn't read the signs all around her.

God decided to send the world a sign so big and so obvious that it could not be ignored. He announced that his sign would be the birth of a little child and placed in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

As Christians, we recognize that the Christmas reminds us more than any other time that God is with us in our personal dilemmas. He sends us sign we cannot ignore. It's a sign that even Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles could read without Braille. It's a sign that God loves us enough to give the world His only son. That's a sign that even a blind man can see.

Exposition

This text considers how God gave the world the sign that could not be ignored; it's the birth of the Christ child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Mary and Joseph had been told of the birth of Christ by an angel. They knew his

birth was special. More than simply special his birth would be God's gift to a troubled world. It was his way of reconciling a distant world to a loving father.

The gift of the Christ Child was a sign from God that he still loved the world enough to allow a part of himself to assume human form and absorb the punishment for their sins.

John declared in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." –That birth was a sign to world that God's saving grace will be available to everyone.

The sign that God gave the world on Christmas day was a clear indicator of His intention to be with His people in the triumphs, joys and setbacks.

God gives believers signs that indicate His will. Our desire should be to live a life of such spiritual noteworthiness that we can recognize the sign and then have the faith to act upon what we have seen.

Just as he did in a stable in Bethlehem, God is still giving signs of his love to us.

They are signs that even a blind man can see.

What the signs mean

There are many who are struggling with various situations, but God sends them signs just as obvious as the sign of the Christ child should have been to the Israel and the birth of Christ.

SIGNS ARE SIGNALS OF GOD'S GOODWILL: God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through his family. Isaiah built upon that promise by noting that the kingdom of God would be built on the shoulders of one known as Emmanuel. To confirm it, God would give them a sign. Signs indicate God's goodwill toward us. He often sends us signs, little hints that help is on the way, that better times are coming, solutions are forthcoming or even warning signs of danger. Whatever the signs, we will never know what they mean unless we share the mindset of God. If we can't understand the language that God speaks or remain unfamiliar with the many ways that speaks to us it is possible for us to miss the signs.

Sometimes we receive God's signs privately. No one knows the sign we receive and neither will they ever understand. It is through God's goodwill and grace that we receive such private signs; but we should know the source.

Sometimes the signs are evidenced in the goodwill that knocks on our door with a bag of food, a business opportunity, an offer of help, an encouraging word, an inspiring Face Book post, a blessed text and an especially helpful sermon. All of these, like the birth of the child in the stable, should be so obvious to us that even a blind man can see them.

DON'T CONFUSE THE SIGNS: When the shepherds were told about the child being born they wanted to be sure they had the right sign. There were obviously many babies in Bethlehem; they had to know they were worshipping the right one. The same was case for the wise men. They could not confuse the signs. God gave them a sign

that would be hard to confuse. There were many babies but only one lying in a manger.

We should be equally careful not to confuse the signs we see. If we pray to the Lord for help on our light bill and then a cashier in the local super market gives us $20 too much change, on the surface it appears like a sign from the Lord! But Satan has tempted us, when we were at our lowest point, by appearing to be an answered prayer.

There are plenty of signs Negro Folklore, but they are not signs from God. Negro Folklore says when your:

— Right eye jumps, it's a sign that good news is coming!
— Left eye jumps, it's a sign that someone is mad with you!
— Left hand itches; it's a sign that some money is coming your way!
— Right hand itches; it's a sign that you will lose some money!
— Left Ear burns, it's a sign that somebody is talking bad about you!
— Right ear burns, it's a sign that somebody is talking good about you!
— Nose itches; it's a sign that somebody's coming your way
— Bottom of your feet itches, it means you'll soon be walking on strange ground!

The old timers in our history may have found these signs to have a level of consistency, but they are hardly the kinds of signs that God would give to confirm his goodwill toward us.

When God sends us a sign it will be unique and undeniable. It will be the kind of sign Moses displayed with his rod or that Gideon received just before going to war. When Joshua fought his battles in the Promised Land, God made the sun stand still to give him the victory. When God makes the sun stand still for you, that's a sign that even a blind man can see.

These may sometimes be true but they are not signs from the Lord!

God has given you many signs that he has not abandoned you. Is it possible that you are feeling bad because although the signs are all around you cannot see them?

God is sending us all different signs. When we pray for his revelation, then we will see that the signs are so big that even a blind man can see them..

SIGNS POINT THE WAY: if we travel the highways, we depend upon signs to give us direction. Signs tell us when to exit and what to expect when we exit. The sign of the Christ child gave directions to those who sought him. The signs pointed the way for the shepherds and the wise men. It was a sign written in scripture in Isaiah 7:14 and "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" Luke 2:12.

If you have been asking, "What do I do now, where do I go from here?" Why not read the signs. The signs are everywhere, but we must at least glance in their direction. We should not speed through life so fast that the signs that tell us which exit to take zip by so fast that we miss them. It might be necessary to stop and study the signs and study them. God speaks to our situation but often we miss the sign because we fail to worship and hear the word. God gives us the solution, but we have schedules that are so busy that the signs are buried beneath our unopened email, and full agendas.

God responds to our needs but just before he does he usually gives us a sign, a hint that there is something coming our way. We should look for the signs. Look for them like highway signs. When God answers, He gives us signs that even a blind man can

see.

It's all in God's hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, the little baby in the manager was a sign that despite the way the world appears the world is still in God's hands.

God told Isaiah to prophesy that in the fullness of time that He would give the world a sign that would be so obvious that even skeptics would have to take note; a virgin shall conceive and bear a son!

The birth of this child will be a sign to a world groping in despair that there is still hope!

The reason the world celebrates the birth of the Christ child is because this child is a sign of renewed hope that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning."

The birth of this child gives us new reason to sing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

The sign will be more memorable than any signs we have seen.

Geico advertises insurance using a little green Gecko with an Australian accent.

It's a memorable advertisement, but the babe in the manger would be a sign that even a blind man can see.

The Good Year Blimp often posts advertisements on its side while hovering above public events. It's a big sign, but the babe in the manger would be a sign that even a blind man can see.

Marketing companies are putting signs on city buses, park benches, on television screens above urinals in bathrooms, but the babe in the manger would be a sign that even a blind man can see.

The M and M candy company now allows customers to put their faces on each specially designed M and M candy bites, but the babe in the manger would be a sign that even a blind man can see.

The babe in the manger was a sign that:

—When darkness covers the land, that I am able to turn darkness into light!

—That although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and good will toward all men!

—That although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow!

This child is a sign of God's unending love.

It was demonstrated in Bethlehem but it was proven on Calvary!

One evening out on Calvary, the world saw the sign of God's abiding love.

For he died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Early Sunday morning an Angel declared, He is not here He has risen, come see the place where the Lord lay. It's a sign that even a blind man could see!

No. 9471-Christmas

The Day After

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 26, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke 2:20

Introduction

What do you do, now that Christmas is over? There is a Tremendous buildup to the Christmas holiday that is so overwhelming that the day after for many is like coming down from the mountaintop.

The day a team wins the super bowl there are parades and parties that linger into the night.

The day after Mardi GRAS the entire city of New Orleans shuts down for Ash Wednesday celebrations.

The day after graduation thousands of graduates scratch their heads and ask, "What do we do now?"

The day after the assassination of Martin Luther King there were race riots all over the nation.

The day after a wedding, the honey moon begins.

The day after a person wins the lottery he discovers friends and family he never knew had.

The day after the birth of his first son and new dads starts passing out cigars.

They even have a pill for those who did something the day before that's making the worry the day after!

We know what to do the after big events in our lives, but do we do the day after the Son of God is born a laid in a manger?

We can't throw a ticker tape parade; neither can we party until the wee hours of the morning. The day after we celebrate the birth of Christ should be the day that we decide to celebrate his work, carry out his mission and praise his name.

As Christians, we know what to do after the Christmas celebration: we should continue to praise His name.

Exposition

This text focuses on the events immediately following the birth of Jesus that

describe the shepherd's response to what saw and heard in Bethlehem.

Matthew described the visit of the Magi, the wise men from the East. He told how they came bearing gifts of Gold Frankincense and Myrrh. Although instructed by the king to return to the palace with information about the child they refused. Matthew only said that they returned by another direction. The Visit of the Magi was different from that of the Shepherds if the text because their visit occurred long after the actual birth. Some scholars have noted that their visit may have been as many as two years later.

However, the shepherds did not travel a great distance. They were grazing their flocks in the fields, so their arrival and return were coincident with the birth of Jesus.

The text details what the shepherds did immediately after they left the stable. They told what they saw and what they heard and praise God all along the way.

They heard the angel's proclamation and praised God.

They saw the Lord for themselves and they praised God.

They witnessed a miraculous event and for that, they praised God.

The day after Christmas those who knew the full implications of the virgin birth were excited. They told all that they knew about the glories of the Lord. It was a joy that did not end on Christmas morning but was continued the day after and for the centuries that followed.

Day after activities

We know that the shepherds glorified God the day after Christmas. That should serve as an example of what each believer should do after the Christmas celebration ends.

THE DAY AFTER WE SHOULD GLORIFY GOD: The shepherds saw the fulfillment of God's promises and they testified to all that would hear them. They were told that something great was to happen in Bethlehem and God did not disappoint them. That's an example for believers today. When God has kept His promises to us, we should be willing to testify about his greatness. Romans 4:20 encourages every believer not to"stagger" when it comes to trusting in God. Neither should we hesitate to glorify Him; when we do we show others that God keeps His word. On the day after Christmas and every day, we should be witnesses for our Lord.

THE DAY AFTER WE SHOULD ELEVATE OUR PRAISE. Before the shepherds went to Bethlehem they were were content to mind their sheep. The day after, they elevated their praise. They had a sense of excitement about them keeping the spirit of 1 Corinthians 10:31 that reminds us to acknowledge God in everything, including the seemingly small and mundane things. After Christmas, we acknowledge God for every gift we received, remembering that some of our best gifts were not under a tree. This glory and praise that we give to God for His perpetual blessing is not a seasonal occurrence; it never ends. We should praise the Lord 365 days out of every year and glorify him continuously.

THE DAY AFTER WE SHOULD HAVE RENEWED FAITH. There is nothing like

experiencing God for yourself. When that happens we should be better prepared to live for God in the days ahead. There is never a year that passes when the faith of God's children is not tested. By the time Christmas comes we will have endured a year of trouble, frustration and sweat. In the run of every year our faith gets tested. It is almost as if each of us were one of the three Hebrew Boys being thrown into the fiery furnace. They encountered God in their fire and praised Him afterwards. When we have survived sickness, defeat, and setbacks thanks to God's help we should close out the year without obtaining a renewed faith in God. After Christmas we should have a renewed faith that because of our encounter with the Lord we can endure any hardship or troubling situation because this year our God has proven Himself able. It's not a Christmas day thing; it's an everyday thing that begins the day after Christmas.

Keep the gift

Finally brothers and sisters as we close out the Christmas season we can throw out the wrappings but we should not throw away the gift.

After Christmas there will be many who leave their lights and decorations hanging for a few days. Soon, however, there will be Christmas trees on the roadside. The beautiful strings of lights will be packed away and the ornaments will be stored in boxes to gather dust until next year.

While we will be packing away the trappings and throwing away the wrappings, we should be careful not to throw away the baby in the manger.

Those who are taking down decorations and packing them away, have a story to tell. It is more than a story of beautifully decorated homes, bright colors and festive spirits. It is a story of how the love of God brought joy and hope into the hearts of every family member.

The spirit of Christmas does not end on Christmas but it should continue the day after. At the manger the world sang "Joy to the world" but it doesn't end there because the day after we still have that same joy; we sing this joy I have the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!

As we celebrated the birth there were lights everywhere, but it doesn't stop with Christmas day because every day of our lives we sing, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."

At the manger we sang "Hark the herald angels sing," but the day after our hearts should still be singing with angelic voices, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down."

At the manger we celebrated with great fellowship and food, but the day after the food may be gone but are still singing "Bread of Heaven feed me till I want no more."

The day after should begin our renewed effort to build the kingdom of God.

The day after should be the first day of our renewed faith in the promises of God.

The day after should be the first of the new story that we have to tell. It is a story of how God loved the world so much that he gave the greatest gift.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever

believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Every Saint has the same story to tell!

It is the story of that began in Bethlehem and ended in Jerusalem.

After Christmas angelic voices are no longer singing but our song should be "Go tell it on the mountain"

The day after and every day we should tell somebody how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind.

We still have a story to tell!

We still have to tell somebody that he was born in Bethlehem!

We still have to tell somebody that he died on Calvary!

We still have to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave wit

No. 9472-New Year

The first day on dry ground

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first[month], the first[day] of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry." Genesis 8:13

Introduction

Have you ever been anxious about the beginning of something new? Most people have butterflies when they begin a new venture; no matter how prepared they seem to be. Whether it's beginning a new marriage, starting fresh in a new city or starting a new year most have a special blend of curiosity, anxiousness, and uneasiness as they face the unknown.

As each New Year begins most of us are at least a little curious about the year ahead. Past experience has shown that very few years work out the way we plan them, and every year always brings the unexpected. What seems to be strong and solid in one minute proves to be inadequate in another. Life often deludes us with deceptive appearances and shallow relationships that frustrate us increasingly as we move throughout the year. Thing are seldom what they appear.

What we have learned is that we can make plans but the will of God supersedes our most thought out courses of action. Whatever happens in the year to come depends on God's will for our lives because He holds our future in his hand.

So, as the New Year begins our faith experience has taught us to fast, pray and seek God's guidance before we make a single step in any direction.

As Christians, we should not be too anxious or fearful. The same God who brought us through last year is still in control. We will trust in Him. He will guide our steps in the days ahead.

Exposition

This text focuses on Noah as he takes his first steps on dry ground after surviving the flood.

The biblical record explains how God became angry with the world because of its sin and decided to destroy it all with a flood. Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives were the lone human survivors of the flood along with one pair of every unclean

animal and seven pairs of every clean animal.

The rains pounded the land for forty days and nights and produced a flood that destroyed the known world of the period. It wasn't the longest rain ever known because in 1994 Oahu, Hawaii recorded 247 days of rain, but the 40 days and nights were sufficient to flood the world of that time.

After the flood ended Noah and his family remained on the ark for a year and 12 days before they stepped forward to begin new lives for themselves.

This text indicates that on the first day of the first month of the year that Noah saw dry ground. When he saw the ground himself he was no doubt encouraged, but he approached his new beginning with careful, obedient, and faithful patience.

He saw the dry ground but he did move hastily. He sent out a raven, and waited. He sent out a dove twice and waited after each return. Then he waited nearly another month before he finally stepped forth from the ark.

To Noah's eye the ground appeared dry enough to move, but he decided to wait until God gave him the command to step forth, assured that whenever he was ordered to step forth, he would step forth on dry ground.

Types of Ground

There is a message for each of us as we face a new year. That message is that we should proceed into the unknown only when we are sure that our path has been directed by God and our steps are ordered to comply with His will.

LET GOD TEST THE GROUND: Noah saw the ground with his eye, but he chose to let God test it and confirm it, before he acted. That should speak volumes to our actions in the year to come, proceed with patience. Patience is very difficult to acquire in a society that is geared toward instant gratification, yet the word of God teaches us to be patient, weigh our options, and proceed only as directed by God. Luke 21:19 says, In your patience possess ye your souls.

Patience does not mean that you do nothing; just as Noah continued to seek signs, we should continue to pray and prepare for God's command. God will test the ground ahead and will signal when it's time to move. The promise of God is that those who follow his will benefit from his favor. Hebrews 10:36 says, For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Whatever plans we have for our personal and family pursuits, let's put them in God's hands and He will signal when it's time to move.

AVOID SLIPPERY GROUND: There is a reason Noah waited on God, even though the ground appeared dry, because soggy ground can appear dry on the surface but it's slippery and muddy underneath. The year ahead will promise some opportunities to advance quickly, with little effort. It will be the chance to get rich quick, make A's on tests without study, get tax refunds we are not eligible for, or acquire items by hustle. These all represent slippery ground and those who plan to venture into slippery ground, run the high risk of being discovered while drawing the absolute disfavor of God. Reaching too high too fast is slippery ground.

Slippery ground can force us to lose our balance. A limousine encountered a red traffic light and was waiting for it to change when a small Hooptie also drove up. It looked to be just a beat up Volkswagen. The brother in the Limo rolled down the window and started bragging that his car was the best car that money could buy. "It has ABS, airbags for all passengers, automatic climate control, onboard computer control system, photo chromatic glass, mini bar, a television with satellite dish and hydraulic shocks."

At this point the Hooptie owner rolled down his window and pointed, "But do you have live streaming video in there?"

The brother in the Limo had been dissed. He immediately bought live streaming video for his limo.

A few days passed by, and again the limo was at a traffic light when the limo brother spotted the Volkswagen again. He bragged about his limo and showed his rollaway king-sized bed.

"But does it have voice activated GPS?" asked the Volkswagen owner as he drove off. Upset the limo owner hurriedly had a Voice activated GPS system installed. He laughed a few days later when he saw the little Volkswagen pulled to the side of the road with its windows all steamed up. Steam was even coming from the windows and water was dripping on the ground.

The limo brother knocked on the window and said, "I got a GPS system now!"

The Volkswagen owner said, "You got me out of my morning shower to tell me that?"

There are many who have no balance in their lives. They are constantly trying to get more and keep up with their neighbors or outdo someone else.

That quest is slippery ground. It consumes our time, eliminates our spiritual life, diminishes our family life and robs of the joy of really knowing the Lord. Remember Matthew 6:33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you. Avoid slippery ground.

SEEK FERTILE GROUND: Not all ground is good ground. That's another reason for us to trust God to show us fertile ground. Fertile ground is ground that will feed our hopes and dreams and help us to grow. A man passed along a road side and noticed a beautiful flower. He pulled it up from the ground, placed it in a vase and placed it high on a mantel in his home. The flower remained beautiful for a few days, but soon he noticed that it started to wither; it later died. It was only beautiful as long as it remained in fertile ground. In the year ahead, seek fertile ground. Seek opportunities that will provide you with nurture and security in the Lord.

What has made you unique? Your relationship to God, your strong faith, attention to godly matters, family and personal discipline has served as your fertile ground in the past. In the New Year, don't cut yourself off from those things that made you fertile in the first place; the results is that you will begin to wither before the year ends. The good news is that those who have experienced infertile ground last year can repot themselves and like David in Psalm 51:10-12 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Step forward on Dry Ground

Finally, brothers and sisters when God gives the command we must be prepared to step forward and claim his promised while standing on dry ground.

When we look back on the year that has passed we see a way that has been watered with floods of trouble, sickness and distress, but now we must prepare to move forward at God's command to possess our promise while standing on dry ground.

Last year we stood on slippery ground, but now we stand ready to move forward on dry ground.

Last year some of us wallowed in the mud of life's lost opportunities and failed experiences, but this year, we are ready to move forward, standing on dry ground.

Last year we were nearly drowned by heart breaking, career wrecking experiences, failed relationships and lost opportunities, but this year we are standing on "dry ground."

James Weldon Johnson penned it so eloquently when he said in the second verse of Lift Every Voice and Sing, "Stony the road we've trod, bitter the chastening rod, felt in the days when hope unborn had died; Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast. "

As this New Year begins it is time for God's people to come forth from the ark and step out on dry ground.

On dry ground we remember the promise of Psalm 34:22, "The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

On dry ground we remember the promise of Psalm 37:5 "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass"

On dry ground we echo the words of Solomon in Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

If we stand on the word of God and put our faith in Him in the year to come we'll be standing on dry ground.

This dry ground is rooted in our faith in Christ who gives us a solid foundation upon which to stand.

Not only is our faith in God dry ground, but it is PROVEN ground. For thousands of years before us the old warriors decided to stand on the promises of God because He never failed them.

I can hear them singing in the midst of slavery, depression, persecution and racism, "I know the Lord will make a way!"

I can hear the old warriors affirming their faith in God's promise sometimes with a shout but then with an old chant, "If I can't say a word I'll just wave my hand!"

When we stand on dry ground, God will turn our:

—Backward steps into forward motions; Failing health into growing strength!

—Losses and defeats into gains and victories; Hard times and bad times, into easy

days and good times.

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as we are standing on the dry ground of God's promise.

As long as you are standing that dry ground there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is the justification for my faith!

The Lord is the chief corner stone of my hope!

When we stand on dry ground we are standing on the rock.

This rock is Jesus. When we are standing on this rock we are on secure ground.

No wonder the song writer wrote: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9473-Inspiration

Give me my life back

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 9, 2011

SCRIPTURE: " Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Psalm 51:12-13

Introduction

Have you ever felt your life getting out of control? That's the time when had everything just right and then on its own, it just shifted into another gear and took off in another direction? Remember the dream of having the perfect future meeting prince charming and marrying the beautiful princess and living happily ever after? Somewhere along the line something happen and our fairytale life took a wrong turn and like Alice in Wonderland we fell through a hole and found ourselves pursued by the unexpected, chased, distracted and frustrated at the least, and discouraged at the most.

When life gets out of control we ultimately end up in a situation that is frustrating and sometimes dangerous. It's what happens when we drive an automobile; it goes along fine until we lose control. Sometimes we end up in the wrong lane, in a ditch or worse.

It would be nice if we could always control the steering wheel of destiny ourselves, but forces beyond us often seem to grab the wheel and stir us in directions we do not want to go. When that happens it takes a tremendous amount of effort, prayer and will power to regain control of our lives.

Regaining control of your life could mean regaining control of your family life, finances, career goals, dreams, health, and a plethora of other particulars.

Remember the movie "It's a wonderful life?" George Bailey was given a chance to see what the world would have been like without him and he realized how much he really mattered. He cried out, "Give me my life back!" In a similar sense, many of us have seen a time when our lives were going in the right direction, at the right speed, with the right purpose. Some of us have known the sense of enjoyment that we felt when everything was going right. However, when things start to slip away from the norm like George Bailey, we start to shout, "Give me my life back!"

When we silently scream our frustration in the corridors of our mind, God hears

us. We know He hears what we think because Psalm 139:2 says, “Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.” He sees our frustration and has prepared a response to our plea.

God wants not only to give us our lives back, but to give us a new and improved version, upgraded to meeting specifications of today’s operating system. He wants to give us a chance to wipe and reload our lives leaving out all of viruses, bugs, and hacks that have taken complete control of our spirit.

However, to get the upgrade we must “Click Here” here to begin download the upgrade. The “Click Here”, we must accept Christ, if we want our lives back.

As Christians, we know that God can restore our lost lives, hopes and dreams. He can give us renewed joy, enthusiasm and happiness; all we need to do is ask.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he asks God to give him his life back after losing control himself in a way that cost one man his life and brought shame on the nation.

This psalm is the result of an instance in David’s life which he made a major error despite being given a golden opportunity.

David was on his palace roof one day when the army had gone out to battle and he saw a beautiful woman bathing herself. He entered into an adulterous relationship with her for she was a married woman. Her husband, Uriah, was a soldier in the king’s army. He was away from home fighting for his nation.

A love child was conceived in the relationship and David panicked and tried to cover it up David ordered Uriah to be put in the forefront of the battle where he would most certainly be killed. When news of Uriah’s death reached the king he felt he had safely covered his sin. In Psalm 32 David records how he felt during that terrible time when he was trying to cover up his sin. “When I kept silence,” he says, “my bones grew old through my groaning all day long. For a year he tried to live with a bad conscience. But, as the story records, God sent the prophet Nathan to David.

Nathan approached David in a way that he could not deny and singled him out as the man responsible for both adultery and murder. In a prophetic moment the prophet Nathan pointed a finger at the king and said, “Thou art the man!” David knew then that his sin was uncovered.

At this point David came to grips with the fact that despite the way it appeared to others, his life had actually gone out of control. He had caused a man’s death, stolen his wife, and disgraced the nation. All of the problems that resulted afterward were his own making. He felt his life slipping away.

He fell on his face before God and out of his remorse came the fifty-first Psalm. He asked God for forgiveness. He wanted his joy back! He wanted the saving grace of God back! He wanted his life back.

God heard his prayer and restored him. Once restored David went on to become the greatest King in Israel’s history. His past discretions were never forgotten by his history, but his new life was so awesome that it completely overshadowed that one dark

period in his life when he lost control.

New Start

If life has snatched our lives away, and literally gained control of us, steering us in ways we don't want to go, what can we do take get our lives back?

GET OUT OF MY LIFE: The enemy (Satan) tries to take the wheel of your life every day. He grabs our steering wheel every day. We shout at him when his actions almost kill us and he releases us for a moment or two. It won't be long however before he tries again. Matthew 12:43 tells how the devil left a man, but soon returned when he realized that his life was still unoccupied and brought with him seven other bad spirits. Matthew 12:45 says, instead of getting a new life the man was worse than he started. What he did wrong is what we must recognize: It's not enough to tell the devil to "get your hands off my wheel" If we do that he'll leave us alone for a while but he'll come back and bring with him more bad spirits. We must tell him to get out of our lives completely. If we want our lives back we must look at every weakness we have incurred on this wrong turn then change the people we run with, places we go and the things we do. If the devil sees that you simply made a resolution to do better your life is still headed in the same direction. Like The Terminator he says it loud and clear "I'll be back!" -Get your life back by putting the devil out of your mind and our life, completely.

GET BACK TO GOD: The life we want is available for the asking, but we have to get back to the basics of truly living: God, family must take priority over all other things to get control of our lives. Only God give us our lives back. Through worship, prayer, and service we invite God into our lives. However we must follow David's example first: He admitted his own role in his problem, asked forgiveness then asked God to give him his life back. The life we once knew can be restored. The pride you once had can be rejuvenated. The drive we once demonstrated can once again be seen. Dr. Robert Schuller has a book entitled, "Tough times never last, tough people do." It is a basic truth that every life will experience bad turns and tough times that get us completely off track. It is also a basic truth that for people who turn to God, tough times don't last always. If we truly want to get our lives back then we should pay more attention to the most important qualities of the good life: God and family. Is it possible to improve our spiritual lives and get closer to God? Is it possible to rebuild our families so that we are closer together? If you have gone through a tough time because life has taken control of the wheel of your destiny, get back to God, get back to your family, and begin the first steps of getting your life back!

GET GOD'S ASSURANCE: God assures us that if come to him that we can get our lives back and more. The enemy comes to take your life and all that is important to you, but Christ comes to give it back and give it back better than it was before the enemy took it. John 10:10 says, " The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The devil may have stolen our joy, happiness, marriage, finances,

career, but God promises us that He can give it back and give it back in a way that was better than we had before. Isn't that what happened to Job. The enemy stolen his money, took the lives of many of his family members, destroyed his healed and caused his friends to turn on him, but God restored it all and restored it in a way that was better than he had at first. We have God's assurance that if we trust Him we can get our lives back! No matter how difficult the times or how badly we have errerd the blood of Christ has assured us the ultimate victory. This assurance is revealed to his in the many ways that he carefully provides for us. It is revealed in the way that he protects us through difficulties. Moreover, this assurance is revealed to us in his written word in Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon formed against us shall prosper!" -We have God's assurance that we can get our lives back! No wonder the song writer declares, "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, Oh what a foretaste of Glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of his spirit, washed in His blood."

Getting it back

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that if we put our lives in God's hands, the devil can't snatch it back!

Herein lies the danger of simply making a resolution. A resolution to modify a few things here and there doesn't change much because everything about us is still vulnerable to the enemy who is seeking to kill and destroy.

If we intend to get our lives back we must put our lives back in God's hands. We must once again, put our trust in the Lord.

Trusting in the Lord is not a trite saying, an empty colloquialism that tickles the ear but lacks substance and power!

Trusting in the Lord is not a failed experiment, or the testimony of the weak and faint hearted.

Trusting in the Lord is a statement of faith that affirms that the life we live has been placed in God's hand. He is the pilot; we sit in the second chair and wait his instructions.

Trusting in the Lord is an affirmation of faith that better than all state, we are in good hands when we are in His hands.

Trusting in the Lord is a belief that greater than State Farm, better than a good neighbor, God is always there!

To get our lives back we must trust in the Lord.

When we put our trust in the Lord he makes our:

-RACE worth running and our BATTLE worth fighting!

-COURSE worth finishing and our FAITH worth keeping!

-DIFFICULTIES worth facing and our BURDENS worth bearing!

-ANXIETIES worth enduring and our TEARS worth shedding!

When we trust in the Lord, we turn dark days into sun shiny days; MIDNIGHTS into noontimes and hard times into good times!

If the world begins to "hate" on you, you need to tell them to "get you a life" because I have a new life in the Lord.

Because I have my life, I'm going to praise the Lord.

We should praise the Lord because his:

Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant

Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

We should praise the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he's going to help us to climb!

We should praise the Lord for the bills he's going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job he's going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home he's going to help us to buy!

I'm praising the Lord because He gave me my life back.

I'm praising Him because he plucked us from the very mouth of despair and gave me a second chance!

I'm praising Him because He lifted my life out of the miry clay and placed my feet on solid ground! for me and gave it to me as a free gift.

I'm praising Him he purchased my salvation!

I couldn't buy for myself because it couldn't be bought with dollars, but only by the ultimate sacrifice.

The song writer said, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain but he washed it white as snow"

Jesus came and died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, guaranteeing my new season!

No. 9474-King Day

If King had sneezed

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 16, 2011

SCRIPTURE: If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; Psalm 124:1

Introduction

Are you aware of the many ways that God protects you every day? Probably not. Yet, God surrounds us with his mercy and protective grace for a special reason. He has a purpose in mind for each of our lives and he provides shelter, protection and escape whenever life circumstances threaten our existence.

Historically, we have praised those who have succeeded in escaping injustice and wrongful acts.

We have a great romance with the Harry Houdinis and David Copperfields of history, men who seemed to magically escape confinement although wrapped in chains, strait jackets, and handcuffs. Our theaters and literature reflect our attraction, pander to our imaginations and feed our desire to see the righteous escape the pitfalls prepared by Satan.

When Martin Luther King set out on a journey to tear down the walls of racism in America the devil immediately planned ways to stop him. Yet, even while the plans were being made against him, God was moving to protect him, moving him ever closer to his ultimate goal.

Among the writings of Dr. King is this description of an episode in his life in which he felt protected by the hand of God. He said:

"Several years ago, I was in New York City autographing the first book that I had written. And while sitting there autographing books, a demented black woman came up. The only question I heard from her was, "Are you Martin Luther King?" And I was looking down writing, and I said yes. And the next minute I felt something beating on my chest. Before I knew it I had been stabbed by this demented woman. I was rushed to Harlem Hospital. It was a dark Saturday afternoon. And that blade had gone through, and the X-rays revealed that the tip of the blade was on the edge of my aorta, the main artery. And once that's punctured, you drown in your own blood, that's the end of you. It came out in The New York Times the next morning, that if I had sneezed, I would have died."

A little girl later wrote Dr. King a letter that said, "I'm glad that you did not sneeze."

Today, all of us are glad that Dr. King did not sneeze because that sneeze would have aborted his ultimate purpose.

If he had sneeze there would have been no "I have a dream speech."

If he had sneezed the probability of passing the 1964 Civil Rights Act would have been diminished.

If he had sneezed there probably would not have been a 1965 Voting Rights Act.

If he had sneezed the union of races to achieve the common good would not come as far as it has today.

Like the little girl, we are glad that Dr. King didn't sneeze. Yet, we are even more thankful to God, because we know if it had not been for the hand of God he would have died before he achieved His purpose.

It is reassuring to every believer that God is still in control, guiding each of us to our ultimate purpose.

As Christians, we celebrate the life of Dr. King, but we celebrate even more the God whom Dr. King served. The God whose steady hand guides our footsteps and keeps us from that "sneeze" that could divert us from our destiny.

Exposition

This text focuses on David writing about His miraculous escapes from enemies by the power of God.

The text is the fifth in a series that seem to describe God intervention into the affairs of men with one word, all beginning with a "P." Psalm 120 has "prevarication" as its theme as it speaks of God sheltering us from lying tongues. Psalm 121 has "Preservation" as a theme as it speaks of God neither slumbering nor sleeping in his efforts to preserve us. Psalm 122 has "Piety" as a theme is focuses on His delight in worshiping in the House of God. Psalm 123. Has prayer in mind as it speaks of seeking help from God in heaven.

Psalm 124 notes David referring to the power of God to protect Israel. Had it not been for that power the nation would not have been able to accomplish its purpose.

In this text, David gives thanks to God for delivering him dangers seen and unseen that would have prohibited him from fulfilling his purpose as King of Israel.

David praised God for saving him from physical enemies in the land of Canaan. They sought him but were always unable to snare him. His enemies ranged from Saul to the Philistine giant Goliath.

David therefore gave thanks to God for deliverance from adversity. If it had not been for the Lord the nations in their anger would have destroyed them (vv. 3-5). The raging waters of arrogance would have overwhelmed them and the nation's ultimate goal of independence and sovereignty would have been thwarted. (Ps. 123:4)

Truly, if it had not been for the Lord, David would not have achieved his great accomplishments and raised Israel to its highest heights.

God will not abandon us

Each person has a destined purpose. When that purpose is to fulfill the will of God we are assured that his protecting hand will always shield us from dangers seen and unseen. That's what the lone survivor of tragedy feels, "God is protecting me for a purpose." There is something else that must be done with this life before it ends.

This is the great confidence that believers bring into every circumstance. It is this knowledge that has sustained men like Martin Luther King as they stepped forth to fight against injustice. Without this assurance none of the great men of our history would have ever stepped forward to champion the cause of Christ. These are the same assurances that every believer has today.

God speaks to us like he did to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

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We walk daily with the threat of violence

Martin Luther King, like every person who steps out of the shadows to participate in a great work, lived with the threat of violence. He was beaten, jailed and threatened by people inside and outside of his own race. Yet, he boldly marched on confident that he would accomplish his goal of sensitizing our nation to the needs of the poor, and foolishness of war, all while extending the brotherhood to all who would accept it.

Every year the nation mourns those who threaten our peace, attack our leaders, and even kill our children. In Tucson, Arizona, a man killed a federal judge, shot a Congresswoman, and others were killed and wounded including a nine year old girl. We have seen threats against Presidents, principals of schools and even children bullying and threatening other children in school yards or over the internet.

In the face of these actions we must continue to pick up our wounded, console those who are hurt and move forward. Dr. King evidenced that resolve after being stabbed with a letter opener and threatened on so many occasions. There is a journey we must all take even if there are those who would prevent us from fulfilling our course.

Our national experience has been a journey through the fire. The courage of men like Dr. King continued to remind us that God was with us and we found the courage to march forward until "Justice runs down like water and righteousness like a might stream."

In all of our struggles we can clearly see that it was only the grace of God that brought us through.

A poor family lived in a shack on the outskirts of town. There was great alarm in the city when the fire bells began to ring and the volunteer fire department made a mad dash to put out the flame. By the time the flame was finally extinguished, there was nothing left but a pile of charred rubble.

The husband pulled his wife and children together and hugged them and as he

looked at the smoldering remains of his little shack he said, "Thank you Jesus." The son was puzzled. "Daddy, what are you happy about? Our house is gone. Our clothes are gone. Everything we have is gone! I can't see anything to be happy about."

The father looked at the son and said, "All you can see in the pile is what we lost. I look at that same pile and praise God that what could have been in the pile, is not there and that is us!"

If it had not been for the Lord on our side, we would have been consumed by the fire.

Faith stands firm even in face of the fires of life

The success of the Civil Rights movement was achieved through faith in God. If it had not been for the grace of God, Dr. King's dream would have been a fantasy rather than an achievable goal.

Today, the challenges we face are just as formidable. We still live in a nation that is racially divided. While many thought the election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president signaled the end of racism, we soon found that racism is still alive in the nation and will be around for decades to come. The quest for equal treatment under the law continues as old laws that barred us from full participation are slowly repealed. The struggle for economic parity is the next battleground and the enemy is oblivious to color, sex or creed.

It was the faith of God that brought us to the present plateau in our journey, and faith will see us through.

Those who have a strong and abiding faith in God are not intimidated by the fire.

Faith stands firm even though your fraternity or sorority may blackball you!

Faith stands firm though your political career may be jeopardized!

Faith stands firm though your financial future may be threatened!

We walk by faith because our journey has proven that "If it had not been for the Lord on our side, we would not have survived."

The grace of God guides us to a divine purpose

There is a divine purpose in the gradual but sure rise of African-Americans from the obscurity of the slave house to the power and the prestige of the White House. When we consider that we were a people who were constitutionally only three-fifths of a human being but were viewed as fully important to the heart of God, then we recognize that God must have been at the heart of our deliverance and elevation.

If it had not been for the grace of God where would we be? There is no doubt that our people would not have come as far as we have without the hand of God delivering and protecting us along the way.

When the grace of God is upon us it is for a divine purpose.

Dr. H.W. Beecher relates the story of the traveler who came upon a bridge in a

storm.

Despite the howling winds he rode across the bridge to find lodging in an inn. The next morning he was asked how he was able to cross the bridge. The man answered he just rode across. The inn keeper took him to the bridge site and showed him that the bridge washed out days earlier. Only a strip of plank lay across the raging river and he managed to cross it in the middle of a storm, without missing a step.

The traveler nearly fainted when he saw the 100 foot drop that could have been his fate. Then the innkeeper asked, "Where are you going?"He answered, "I'm delivering a vaccine to the hospital across the valley; without it hundreds will die." –The innkeeper then answered, "Now you know why you were able to do the impossible, grace carried you across the bridge because you are an answer to someone's prayers."

In the same sense, God's grace is upon us because we may be the answer to someone's prayers. We were saved from the fire for a reason. We survived the hardships of our past for a reason.

If it had not been for the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we think about the journey that we have traveled, we cannot ignore the fact that we have made it thus far, only by the goodness of the Lord.

If not for the intervention of the Lord, something as small as a letter opener could have stalled the civil rights movement. We dare to think about what the world would have become if Dr. King had sneezed. Would there have been a Black president? Would there a Hispanic on the Supreme Court?

If King had sneezed the pendulum of fairness would have halted in it's inevitable swing toward the day the prophet Amos declared that, "Justice would run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

If King had sneezed, the steady march toward a color sensitive, but yet color blind society would have skipped a beat and slowed its pace.

If King had sneezed the trumpeting sound of hope that echoed in the ears of those accustomed only to the sound of their own sighs of despair would have been silenced.

Yet, for every book store in New York where the letter openers of the devil miss their mark, there is a corresponding Memphis, where destiny meets it's final call.

In Memphis, Dr. King declared that "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will."

In Memphis, Dr. King went to the mountain top and glimpsed the Promised Land but down in Bethlehem, a baby was born who would begin a journey that start in Galilee and end in Jerusalem.

If he had been aborted by a teenaged unwed mother, what would have been our hope?

If he had succumbed to the temptations of the devil who challenged Him to turn stones into bread, we would not be able to sing "Bread of Heaven feed me till I want

no more."

If he had been successfully tricked by scribes and Pharisees who sought to abruptly end his mission of mercy, he would not be able to tell, "Lo, I am with you always."

Even when they nailed Him to an old rugged cross, if He had come down from that cross, he would not have been able to declare, "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

If had not risen from the dead after three days and nights we would have no hope!

But I'm so glad that Early Sunday morning that He arose from the grave, renewing our faith, securing God's promise to us all.

If it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would we be?

Thanks to His saving grace we can declare, "Mine have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; His truth is marching on!

No. 9475-Inspiration

Foot Dragging

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 2011

Scripture: And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long[are] ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you? Joshua 18:3

Introduction

Waiting for tomorrow; are you guilty? There are far too many of us who are procrastinating about what essentially needs to be done today, putting it off until another day. We make lofty plans and fill our daybooks with dates, times and places only to schedule them out as we put them off until tomorrow.

What was that Shakespeare said about tomorrow? "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day,To the last syllable of recorded time; And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death." He may have been correct. Those things that we put off until tomorrow do have a way of suddenly creeping up on us. Before we know it tomorrow is today.

Delay and uncertainty are the main villains of progress. They are deadly. They prompt us to make wonderful pledges at the beginning of a thing but by the end of a thing still not have done what they said they would at the beginning; even worse, many have not even made the first step.

The colloquial term for this type of delay is foot dragging. Whether the foot dragging is intentional or not is not important because the end result is the same: the thing that needs to be done is not done but is put off until another day.

If there is something that we should be doing, but are failing to do, what's taking us so long? If we are constantly putting it off, why are we dragging our feet?

When it comes to improving our relationship with God, are we foot dragging here, too? Do we constantly promise ourselves to do better, but delay in doing so? Is there a reason? Whatever the reason, there is certainly a consequence.

As Christians, we must not delay as we carry out our mission and purpose in kingdom building. The time to act on our faith in God is now; there is no time for foot dragging.

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he rebukes Israel for being slow to take advantage of the opportunity to enter the Promised Land.

It had been a long journey through the desert; forty years of wandering. Israel had moved into the Promised Land but seven of the 12 tribes had not taken any steps to claim their inheritance in the new land. For one reason or another they were satisfied with having an inheritance without actually laying claim to one.

In the initial conquest they had collected spoils from several cities and they were enjoying the moment. They postponed the day when they would need to move out and claim their inheritance which could mean more trouble and sacrifice. The land they inherited was occupied by the Canaanites. Taking their inheritance meant rebuilding cities, driving flocks great distances and carrying their wives and children to strange places.

They simply had no desire to move forward so they dragged their feet. They enjoyed living in the moment.

Thus, Joshua was prompted to ask, "How long will you slack?"

Causes of Foot Dragging

DOUBTS CAUSE MANY TO DRAG THEIR FEET: Doubt means that there is distrust. It means that we believe in God but we don't trust him completely.

There are many who live by the old maxim: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. That was Israel's dilemma in the new land, they knew what they had in hand, but they were uncertain about the outcome of future enterprises, therefore they delayed taking actions. Their uncertainty was rooted in their doubt.

When we are faced with the hard circumstances that life presents, doubts enter our minds. Those doubts keep us from doing what we should be doing. They detain us. They restrain us. They hold us back.

When we doubt it indicates that at least for a brief moment, we let our faith in God slip. These are the times that we trust only the known and put little trust in the unknown. God should not be an unknown entity to believers; we know His strength and power; we also know He delivers on all of His promises.

Moving forward we should sing the hymn, "I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die."

FOOT DRAGGING DELAYS PROMISED BLESSINGS: Foot dragging delays promised blessings: A by product of foot dragging is that blessings God has in store for us are unnecessarily delayed. Whatever the foot draggers of this text enjoyed, it could not compare to what God planned for them as part of their inheritance; procrastination only delayed their eventual blessing. The same is true today. The results of foot dragging are numerous: it's that business never gets started, the expansion that never happens, the relationship that never begins; or never ends the way we know it should. The actions we should take but delay, often force us to miss opportunities God has prepared for us. We should hear the word of God say in Isaiah 41:10 "... I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

What's taking you so long? The longer you wait, the longer it will take to claim

the great blessings that await you.

TOO MANY ISSUES CAN DELAY YOUR BLESSSINGS: The tribes that delayed claiming their inheritance began to deal with many issues that caused them to delay their promised blessings. Some began to immolate the habits of the Canaanites by worshipping the gods of their neighbors, intermarrying with Canaanite women. This resulted in a number of legal, personal and relationship issues that prompted them to delay moving forward to claim God's promise for them.

Even today, there are many who cannot move forward to claim their promise because they are dealing with so many issues that they never seem to get around to it.

You have seen it so many times. Before you can finish dealing with one issue there is another and another. In fact, on a daily basis you deal with so many issues that you have very little quality time for your family, the service you promised God or the spiritual life that you need.

These issues can become so cumbersome that instead of moving closer to God, the promise seems to move farther away. Sometimes, the issues that seem so important to us actually become dead weights that hold us back. Hebrews 12:1 suggests that we should turn aside from issues that are weighing us down. It says, Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

The foot dragging will end for us when we lay aside the weighty issues that are slowing us down and lay claim to God's promise.

When God gets ready

Finally, we must consider that God may allow us to drag, and delay for a while, but when God gets ready, "you got to move."

We may procrastinate, but the time will come when God will shake us into action. When He gets ready for us to move, we won't be able to resist Him we will move.

That's the lesson that Jonah learned, when God gets ready, you may run, but you won't be able to hide.

It's the lesson that pharaoh learned, when God gets ready, even the mighty armies of Egypt won't be able hold back His hand of deliverance.

It's the lesson that Saul learned on the Damascus Road, when God gets ready, even those with power and influence to hurt God's people, must change their direction.

When the world suffered from a lack of direction, sin stained lives, and moral corruption, God needed somebody who come down to the earth and make the eternal sacrifice.

In the fullness of time God scanned the roll of His saintly warriors and asked the question, "Whom shall I send?"

In the fullness of time somebody's coming from heaven to say, 'And God shall wipe all tears away' Whom shall I send?

In the fullness of time, somebody's coming that that will remind us that, 'Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want," Whom shall I send?

In the fullness of time God searched the staff files of heaven and looked for someone to send, but every man every name that popped up on the screen had a problem. Spiritually, they were dragging their feet:

-David had blood on his hands!

-Samson had a woman problem

-Hosea had a cheating wife

-Esau had a crooked brother who may cause a problem!

-Balaam had a pocket full of bribery money

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

He didn't drag His feet, but He said, 'Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

'Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

'Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted

'Send me and I'll do more than tell them, I'll show them how much God loves the world!

When the time was right, He didn't drag His feet, He came down through 42 generations.

When the time was right, He didn't drag His feet, He was born down in Bethlehem!

When the time was right, He didn't drag His feet, He healed the sick and raised the dead!

When the time was right, He didn't drag His feet; He fed thousands and made the blind see!

When the time was right, He didn't drag His feet, He picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill!

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

And right now, when you call, He won't drag His feet, He'll be there right on time!

No. 9476-Youth

Heaven's Right Above It

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 23, 2011

Scripture: Then you'll be free to enjoy GOD! Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all. I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob." Yes! GOD says so! Isaiah 58:14. (msg)

Introduction

How do you know you're at the top? When have you achieved? Many youth are striving to get to the top but their definitions of success are thwarted. Some buildings have wings that ascend to different heights. While one building may have 10 floors another wing may have fifteen or more. Elevators in the shorter building can't take riders to the top of the extended floor, only to the top of its building. Reaching the top floor in the first building doesn't get you to the maximum height available, to get to the highest level riders have to change elevators.

In that sense youth definitions of success seem dependent upon which elevator they are riding. Some can take them a portion of the way, others can take just so far; then they stop.

A 2010 song by Lil Wayne is entitled, Right above it. It features Wayne bragging about his success, his women and his fame. He brags that he knows he's at the top because he's reached a point where only heaven is above him. The main lyrical hook says,

"Now tell me how you love it, you know you at the top when only heaven's right above it."

He extolled his airplane flights filled with women and his "Bollywood flow." Yet, there is a touch of sadness as Wayne says, "My real friends never hear from me. My fake friends write the wrong answers on the mirror for me." He is popular and sought after but he said he doesn't run with different crews, he and some of those close to him walk the same path but "got on different shoes."

True believers don't focus on the life that Lil Wayne projects, but they are focused on the life that's right above it. It's life on a higher plane and higher ground. It's a life free of the clubs, and drugs, and fast living. It's a life not dependent on glitz and bling and shiny things.

Young believers may be walking the same social path by accident of social circumstance, but young believers should have different crews and be wearing

different shoes, the gospel shoes that destined toward the Canaan land.

As Christians, our quest is higher ground. We desire more than fake friends and empty relationships that the world offers. We desire the life above it, but that world only comes through Christ.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he tells Judah about the coming day in which they will ultimately rise above of their troubles and achieve their destiny.

Israel, exiled in Babylon, heard a word of encouragement from the Prophet Isaiah who projected a time of restored prosperity and happiness provided that the people obeyed God. The entire nation of Israel suffered exile and disenfranchisement as a result of their failure to obey the will of God. They had adopted many of the ways of their neighbors, serving false gods and abandoning the laws of Moses. Many had abandoned their private altars and no longer observed the Sabbath. This angered God and He allowed their ungodly neighbors to triumph over them, forcing them into exile away from their own homeland.

The text verse begins with the word "Then." That implies that there is something prior to the promises of verse fourteen that must be considered before focusing in on the text.

What are the prerequisites necessary for verse fourteen to be realized? Look at the conditions that begin in verse eight

In Isaiah 58:8 he promised to restore their good health, noting that "thine health shall spring forth speedily."

In Isaiah 58:9 He promised to hear their prayers when they called on Him and to answer them. He said "then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." Yet, that promise was predicated upon the condition that they would not get in involved in vainity.

In Isaiah 58:10 the people were told that if they once again showed compassion to the poor, fed the hungry and helped the afflicted, that God would help them to rise out of obscurity of their exile and turn their darkness as the noonday.

In Isaiah 58:11 Isaiah noted that God promised to guide them continuously and give them a spirit of satisfaction, completeness and wholeness that would sustain them in difficult times of drought and trouble. He would be like a perpetual spring to them whose waters would never run dry.

In Isaiah 58:12 God promised to raise Judah to high heights on a solid foundation of faith that would extend to their children and grandchildren. This promise is given provided each generation continues to walk in the restored path.

In Isaiah 58:13 God said his promises and blessings would come provided that the people not turn away from the Sabbath, and actually found enjoyment in worship, and found pleasure in doing those things that would please God.

The preceding thirteen verses explain why verse fourteen begins with "Then." The conditions spelled out in the preceding verses would be followed by God's

promise to lift them so high that they would achieve ultimate of success on earth, the only thing greater would be heaven itself. “Riding upon the high places of the earth” is the phrase that is used in verse fourteen to describe the circumstances that believers would experience who choose to obey God. Nothing on earth would be able to compare to these blessings because they will come from God Himself.

Keys to success

There are several considerations that youth should make as they plan their own success. We should set priorities in life that can withstand three levels of judgment.

EVALUATE OURSEVLES: The first step to success for any person is to evaluate the present situation. In Shakespeare play “Hamlet” Polonius speaks to his son about avoiding thing this that do not accurately reflect who is he is. In Act 1, Scene 3 Polonius says, “This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.” The man or woman who succeeds must do so without betraying himself. There are so many young people who have not heard the Shakespearian call, “to thine own self be true” and they daily betray, deny and distance themselves from who they really are as they strive to become what will make them popular.

Is this why the respected young lady takes on the dress and manner of the school hussie; so that she can be popular? Is this why the well groomed young man ignores the instructions of his parents and dresses and acts the part of the thug, so he can be popular. Is this why the Sunday Christian is the Monday devil? Self evaluation forces us to ask why we really want to do the things we do? Do we want success so that we can achieve a high purpose or because we want the fame and notoriety associated with success? Self evaluation is the test that each of us takes each morning as we stare into mirror. The humble person will think little of his accomplishment, apart from God. The proud man will think he is all of that and a bag of chips. Yet, Galatians 6:3-4 says, “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” The first key for success is to be true to yourself and to your calling as a child of God. Don’t be fake, make your life real and your faith real; and when you are among others, “Keep it real.”

MONEY AND SUCCESS ARE NOT THE SAME: There are many who believe money will put them on top of the world. Riches, they believe, are the answer to all of their problems. Obviously, money has its place, but it doesn’t guarantee you a place at the top, only a quick elevator ride up and a fast fall, if money is all that you are about. Money can guarantee that you have many people calling your name, knocking on your door and patronizing you every second. It cannot guarantee true friendship or love. Neither can it buy God’s favor, which is what everyone needs to truly succeed. Unfortunately, many are like Solomon, doing things for the sake of the money. Often what we do conflicts with the voice of our conscience. The pursuit of money and riches can push us to do many things that we normally consider against our better judgment

if we are not careful. As we set priorities, acquiring money should not be ruled out as admirable end but it should not be an end in itself. Many at the top have found that it provides temporary sensations of happiness. There millions with money who are committing suicide, filing for divorce, stealing, and living miserably. So, money can guarantee the symbols of success but not success itself.

George Washington Carver discovered over 300 ways to make products from the peanut. In his generation he was one of the most respected agri-scientists in the world. Based on his ideas products such as Miracle Grow, the system of crop rotation in farming and other innovations were discovered. He was no doubt a successful man who turned down offers to earn salaries valued at $1 million a year today. Early in his life he filed three patents then decided to give them all to humanity: peanut butter, shaving cream, wood stain nearly 1,000 others. He lived a comfortable life, died without great wealth, but was extremely successful. On his desk was a bible to which he pointed whenever asked about the source of his innovations. He gave God the glory and without money his life is one of the great American success stories.

PLEASING GOD BRINGS SUCCESS: Pleasing God is the epitome of success for a child of God. For a student the trick is to learn what kind of things can I do to please God. Is God pleased because our team won the game or that you made it to the playoffs? God is probably pleased if your team played fair, had fun and did its best. He has no interest in who wins a championship, only that those on each team exhibit the qualities of champions. What many say they are doing for God is really for themselves. We want men to salute us and give us credit. We want Oscars and Grammies, Tonies and Super Bowl Rings. We want the praises of men so badly that it becomes the full focal point of our lives. It seems that what we really want is the approval of the world; its endorsement and stamp of approval are vigorously sought. Yet, we have really achieved when we make God happy.

God told Isaiah what he sought from Israel. In return He promised to take them higher than they ever imagined. He promised them reasonably health, strength, peace and satisfaction.

To achieve godly success must please God. We must worship him and testify of his goodness to others.

We must live a life that is sanctified and devoted to him.

We must do whatever we have promised Him we would do.

When we keep those promises to him, he is pleased; when He is pleased we have become a success in the eyes of God.

Lift Him Up

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must aspire to more than what those like Lil Wayne have put in front of us; to be so high that only heaven is above; we must aspire to go to that place that is above, that place called heaven.

The ultimate success for every believer is to gain entry into the place called heaven.

To get into heaven, it is not required that we live high but rather that we live in a way that we can touch the most common man but walk humbly before God

To get into heaven, it is not required that we own a large house or ride in a stretch limousine, even though those might be admirable luxuries. What is required is that we seek a building not made by hands.

To get into heaven, it is not required that we have diamonds in our ears, gold in our teeth, and enough bling to blind the angels, but it is expected that when we've been tried in the fire that we come through as pure gold.

To get into heaven, we are not required be famous or have our names called on the nightly news, but it is expected that we should be ready to testify and tell the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

There is only way to achieve heavenly success, and that means we must be born again.

It is a guaranteed fact; those who are born again will be lifted up higher than they have ever been before

There is no doubt that every believer shares in this assurance, Our God will lift you up.

To be lifted up means to be raised up in honor and respect.

To be lifted up is to be picked up when you have been knocked down!

To be lifted up is to have doors opened when they have been closed in your face!

To be lifted up is to be set free when you have been a captive all of your life!

He's brought me from a mighty long way!

The Lord has promised in Matthew 6:33 that those who "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his "righteousness" shall all of the other things added unto them.

If I surrender all, when I've failed, some way or another, he will turn my failure into success!

If I surrender all, when I'm weak, some way or another, he will turn my weakness into strength!

If I surrender all, when I have questions, some way or another he will provide the answers!

If I surrender all, when I am frustrated, some way or another he will give me hope!

I surrender all!

I surrender all!

All to Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

All to Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning!

All to thee my precious savior, I surrender all!

No. 9477-Inspiration

In search of Paradise

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 2011

SCRIPTURE: ***"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." Genesis 2:8; "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43***

Introduction

What would you consider paradise? Generally paradise is a state in which we are surrounded with positive images, where everyone and everything works together for our good, and time is of no consequence. Paradise is illusive and has been sought after for generations. Politicians and social planners have tried to manufacture paradise or create the ideal "Utopian" society that would give us paradise, such as that depicted by the philosopher Plato.

What is paradise? The Native American calls it an eternal happy hunting ground. Egyptians call it Aaru, the reed-fields of ideal hunting and fishing grounds where the dead lived after judgment. The Celtics call it the Fortunate Isle. The classical Greeks called paradise the Elysian Fields, a land of plenty where the heroic and righteous dead hoped to spend eternity living in the fields of Ambrosia. The Vedic Indians believe that the physical body was destroyed by fire, but in the Third Heaven a state of bliss they call paradise it lives continuously. In the Zoroastrian Avesta, the "Best Existence" and the "House of Song" are places of the righteous dead; their version of paradise.

Most of us don't need to go that far in our thinking. For some, it would paradise if they had a week with no problems, headaches or hindrances. For others, paradise is soaking in a hot bath with bubbles up to their necks. Still others see paradise as a relaxing day on a beach without a care in the world. In these contexts paradise is the moment in time when everything seems perfect and working in sync for our pleasure, enjoyment and security.

The quest for paradise is universal. It has always eluded man's feeble attempts to achieve it totally. One of the greatest literary works in the English language is Paradise Lost by John Milton. In it he describes how mankind lost the gift of Eden in the garden and progresses through life trying to regain what was lost. In its ten thousand lines of free verse, Paradise Lost tells the story of the world's first paradise, Garden of Eden, how we lost it, and our journey to life to "get back to Eden."

Eden was a real paradise. It was inhabited by the highest form of God's creation: mankind, the male and female of which God named Adam and Eve. Eden, located in area bounded by Africa on the West and Saudi Arabia on the East, was described as a Garden planted by God himself. It was the place God intended his first creatures to live, without difficulty or aging, from time to eternity. Life was so simple; they did not even need shoes or clothes. It was the world's smallest city. There were no governments as we know it today. There were no mayors or governors or presidents, yet this small two person city was a real paradise. How long it existed is not known. Since time and aging was not a factor, Adam and Eve could have been in the garden for thousands of years.

Eventually, however, the garden paradise that was known as Eden fell. It fell because of the disobedience of its citizens. There has been a succession of efforts since Eden to restore the state of paradise enjoyed by Adam and Eve. All have been unsuccessful despite their best efforts.

A popular contemporary Gospel song by Donald Lawrence features these lyrics:

When God made man, He made a spirit
It was his plan that we live blessed.
The tempter came, we were distracted
the tempter came and we fell
We were deemed to live a life that's beautiful,
A life that's full, A life that's rich and plentiful
It is my goal to remind you of this principle
You're redeemed, A new born soul.....

Let's get back to Eden live on top of the word.

Getting back to Eden or recreating the paradise lost is the theme of the Old Testament. Yet, there is no reference at all to going back to Eden in the New Testament. The New Testament only looks forward to a state greater than Eden. It's the place the New Testament describes as paradise.

As Christians, our goal is to pursue the kingdom of heaven. It is the reality of our spiritual existence. Our forefathers sang, "I'm on my way to the Canaan Land." It is the land greater than Eden, is the homeland of the soul, a place called "heaven."

Exposition

These texts paint a portrait of two places, both blessed by God, whose occupants enjoy the experience of peace, love and security. One is in the past; the other is being prepared for us.

Genesis 2, points to the Garden of Eden. Although called a garden, it was not a garden as thought of in modern times; a small patch of ground in which fruits and vegetables grow. It was an expansive territory that spanned from Kenya in Africa to what some scholars say is modern day Iraq. In it God placed man in a state of luxury, peace, security and protection from all hurt, harm and danger. Yet, because of sin, this garden existed was destroyed and turned into a literal desert as it is today. The door was literally closed on Eden, never to be revisited again. Never on this earth would

mankind ever enjoy what was lost in Eden: Perfect Peace.

The New Testament doesn't look back, it continuously looks forward. Luke 23:43 focuses on Christ on the cross. As he died hoisted high between two thieves, one of the thieves belittled Christ and challenged him to save himself and the other cross victims as well. However, the second thief had a different respect. Luke records the exchange this way: Luke 23:40-43 "But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The idea of paradise, a place where life will be eternal, love unending and joy unimaginable is permeated throughout the New Testament. There is no talk of returning to Eden, but of moving to another level of existence, one that will be in the presence of God forever.

Searching for Paradise

Throughout our lives we have searched for paradise. Even today, the world is still searching for paradise. It seems that we are looking for the perfect place or the perfect city.

Is there any city in the world that we can call paradise? Even in biblical times the search was endless to find paradise. Abraham journeyed from place to place trying to find a perfect city, a literal paradise.

What is this city? Where is this paradise?

Is it Babylon?

Babylon was known for its hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the world. It was known for its tower that reached up to heaven. This was the city that housed the lion's den where Daniel met his test of faith and where the three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace. This was a city made by warlike Babylonia hands, it was not a city made by the hands of God.

Is it Bethel?

Bethel was a well constructed city important in biblical history. It was named by Jacob one night after he had a dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven. But Bethel was a place where Golden calves were built and idol worship flourished. It was not a city made by the hands of God.

Is it Bethlehem?

Bethlehem was certainly an important city. It was the birth place of David and the birth place of Christ. It was the home of Ruth and the place of anointing for the king of Israel. But Bethlehem was destroyed by the Roman army 200 years after Christ. It was a beautiful whose foundations have been destroyed. It was not a city made by the hands of God.

Is it Sodom and Gomorrah?

They were the twin cities of the plain. Known for their industry and commercial importance. But they were cesspools of immorality and homosexuality and were destroyed by God with fire that rained down from heaven. They were not cities made by the hands of God.

Is it Jericho?

It was a powerful city surrounded by large walls that defended it against enemies. But its walls were destroyed by Israel led by Joshua who marched around them 7 times and blew trumpets at the command of God. It was not a city built by the hand of God.

Where is the city?

Then John said "I saw a new heaven and a new earth...and I saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

It's a city not made by the hands of men!

It is painstakingly clear if we are trying to find paradise we can't find it with anything made by the hands of men.

God created Eden and outside of God, no one can really find paradise. God must create paradise.

God Has Prepared Paradise

Finally, brothers and sisters while it is impossible for mankind to get back to Eden, it is possible for all believers to get to paradise. It is a prepared place for a prepared people.

Paradise cannot be achieved through acts of governments, dictates of monarchs, or the philanthropy of the rich. It can only be achieved as millions respond to the Gospel of Christ.

The church's quest is to keep teaching and preaching the Gospel message until paradise is ultimately achieved.

The church must teach the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, that's what will exist in paradise!

The church must teach its young about the goodness of God. We must write it on the door posts and tell them in the morning, evening and at night. That's what we will have in paradise, the goodness of God.

The church must continue to remind the world that we serve an Omnipotent God, whose power is second to none. That's what we will know in paradise!

Abraham traveled all of his life, looking for paradise, it was a city not made with hands!

Elijah received a one way ticket to paradise!

Over yonder, in paradise, the wicked will cease from troubling!

Over yonder, in paradise, the weary will be at rest!

In paradise:

-There are no wars because there is only peace, in the place called paradise!

-There is no hatred, because there is only love, in the place called paradise!

-There is no sadness, because there is only gladness, in the place called paradise!

-There is no weakness, because there is only strength in the place called paradise!

-There is no death, because there is only life in the place called paradise!

I know paradise exists because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

Paradise is a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

In paradise, there will be perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

In paradise, there will be perfect lighting, because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

In paradise, there will be perfect medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go the place called paradise!

Paradise, a city that sits on 12 foundations!

Paradise, a city that has twelve gates. Three gates on the North. Three gates on the South. Three gates on the East and three gates on the West.

Paradise, a place where everyday will be Sunday and it's always howdy and never goodbye!

Paradise, a place where the undertakers will have no jobs and hospital beds will be empty!

Paradise, a place where judges will be unemployed and policemen will never make an arrest.

Paradise, a place where there will be no more tears because God shall wipe all tears away!

We must tell the story!

We must tell the story about paradise!

We must tell the world about Jesus!

Tell them how Jesus came and died on Calvary!

We must tell them how he rose after three days!

We must tell them about the promised paradise when he returns!

When all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When all see Jesus, we sing and shout the victory!

No. 9478-Inspiration

When you get more than you Request

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 30, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. He was was introduced to the power of God. He sat at the gate called beautiful. He was being introduced to a new temple, a new priest, a new sacrifice and a new access to the glory of God. So, he received much more than a healing; he received the Lamb of God himself. Acts 3:8-10

Introduction

Have you ever asked for something, then received more than requested? Occasionally all of us see something that we like and ask for it; sometimes we are surprised that we not only get what we requested but more.

You asked for a slice of cake, but you received ice cream, too.

You only wanted one piece of chicken and your plate was filled.

You asked for a $50 bonus but you received a $100.

You asked for a half way decent looking man and you got an absolute hunk.

All you wanted was a just a plain God fearing woman and you got a bombshell.

All you really asked for was a passing grade in your class but you received a much higher grade.

We all know the feeling of excitement we get when we get more than we ask for. It's exhilarating to say the least.

Whenever we get more than we ask for it means that we are enjoying God's favor. Favor is when God goes beyond our prayer request and gives us more than we request.

Yet, there is something that we must consider: God doesn't make mistakes. He does not confuse your prayer request with that of your neighbors. If He sent you two blessings when all you ask for was one blessing, He did not make a mistake.

A widow woman prayed to God for enough meal and oil to make a final cake for herself and her son. The prophet Elijah came to visit her shortly afterwards and told her to reach in her barrel and make the cake of bread. When she reached into the barrel she retrieved enough meal to make a cake for herself, but there was also enough for visitor as well.

Each day, she found that the barrel never ran dry. That was not a mistake. There was a reason her barrel never ran dry and why there was always just enough to make one more for the visitor. God blessed her so that she could bless the prophet who was spending a few days under her roof.

Is it possible that God blesses us with more than we need, so that we can help someone else?

We may have two coats so that we can share one with the man who has no coats.

We may have 20 pairs of shoes so that we can share some with the woman who walks in her bare feet.

We may have extra food in our pantry, so that we can provide a meal for someone in need.

That may explain the strange way that God seems to answer prayers. Sometimes we ask for one thing and He gives us something else; not even close to what we requested.

One author put it this way:

I asked for strength, God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.

I asked for riches and God gave me plenty of work to do I asked for courage and God gave dangers to overcome.

I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life, I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I received nothing I wanted, but everything I needed.

As Christians, we know that our savior has promised to hear our prayer and provide for all of our needs. When He goes beyond that and favors us immensely beyond what we actually need, He has another purpose in mind. Let's seek His purpose and follow His will.

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter and John as they encountered a lame man entering into the temple.

The lame man, according to the text, had been lame since birth and a very familiar site around the temple. Unable to support himself because of a physical impairment the man asked for alms at the door of the temple on a regular day. When Peter and John approached the man asked them for alms and expected either to receive a coin or two or a rejection.

Much to his surprise the text indicates that Peter spoke to him and said, "Silver and gold have I none but such as I have, give I thee in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

To the man's amazement strength returned to his legs and he was able to stand

and walk.

He asked for money but he received something more than money.

This biblical incident gives us a dramatic snapshot of God providing for the wants and needs of believers, according to His purpose. It suited God's purpose for the lame man to walk. He would be a witness to God's power. For that reason he received more than He asked for.

His jubilation, witness and testimony would help advance the kingdom, so gave Him more than he asked for.

The lame man did exactly as God wanted. He praised God openly and went into the temple to testify to the goodness of the Lord.

Reasons for Abundance

The Bible has provided numerous examples of how He provides abundance to some for specific reasons. These show us how God operates in the community of mankind. Joseph saw a dream of seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. The years of plenty were sent to Egyptians for a reason, so that they could prepare for the seven years of want. It was not chance. In that sense we should view any level of abundance that we have a season with a reason and seek to fulfill God's purpose.

OVERWHELMING FAVOR: When you have too much of a good thing, it is easy to be overwhelmed by it all. That's the way it is with God's favor. There are times when we are overwhelmed at the goodness and mercy of the Lord. This often happens when we achieve a long sought after goal or receive a blessing that we desired but felt unworthy to receive.

Overwhelming favor requires an overwhelming response. God does not intend for us to fill our barns when we have reaped a great harvest then tear them down and build even bigger barns. If you need one egg a day and God fixes it so that you have a half dozen every day, it may be time for you to start sharing your eggs with others who have none. If he has given you health and strength in abundance, then maybe it's time to do something for those who are a bit weaker.

For every action from God, there should be an equal action from us in response. If we are given more we should give more. If we have more we should do more. "To whom much is given, much is required."

OVERWHELMING EXCITEMENT: When God has given us more than we expected there should be an overwhelming excitement. The woman at the woman was given another chance and she was excited. She was so excited that she ran through the city telling all that she met, "Come see a man who told me all that I have ever done." The lame man in this text jumped and leaped for joy He was excited about the goodness of the Lord. In a similar sense, believers who have received more than they expected or requested from God should feel some level of excitement just thinking about the goodness of God.

When the Lord blesses us financially in ways that we did not expect, it's shouting time!

When a wayward child starts showing signs of hope, it's shouting time!

When a lost family member finds the Lord, it's shouting time.

OVERWHELMING WORSHIP: The lame man of this text sat outside the gate for many years, but never went in. He thought all he needed was money to make it every day. When he was healed, the first thing he did was to praise God then he immediately followed Peter and John into the temple.

In the sanctuary, we who have received the favors of God can lift him up in praise and thanks!

In the sanctuary, we who have been the recipients of His grace can tell the world that our God is an awesome God!

In the sanctuary, we who have been the beneficiaries of God's benevolence can tell the world that He will make a way out of no way.

In the sanctuary we can lift our voices in praise and give Him our testimony.

Because of Jesus, we should be shouting

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must know that God *gives* us a blessing to *make* us a blessing in the name of Jesus.

There is a blessing in sharing abundance with others. That's why often people who give gifts want you to open them in front of them so they can see the joy on your face when you see it. They get a blessing from giving, sharing and helping others.

We get a blessing whenever we bless someone the way God has blessed us.

I can't please God if I have 20 pairs of shoes in my closet and won't give a single pair of the good ones to someone who barely has one pair on his feet.

I can't please God if I have a freezer full of frozen foods that's been there for months, but I won't share a single pound of hamburger meat with struggling single mother down the street.

I can't please God if I have a new car or SUV, but won't use it to give a ride to a person walking the street in the rain.

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there ought to be a whole lot of sharing and shouting going on!

Whenever you think about how God has blessed us, there's a whole lot of hand waving going on!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, there's a whole lot foot patting going!

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, there's a whole lot of hand clapping going on!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's a whole lot of shouting going on!

We're shouting because of what He has done!

We're shouting because of what we expect Him to do!

We're shouting because he's been to us and we just can't keep it to ourselves.

Every time you think about the mountains you've climbed and the valleys in your

way, you ought to feel a shout coming!

He's been a lawyer in my courtroom! I think I feel a shout coming on!
He's been a doctor in my sick room! I think I feel a shout coming on!
He's been a bridge over troubling waters! I think I feel a shout coming on!
He picked up an old rugged cross and shouldered the burden of my sin!
Out on Calvary, He died, that I might live!
They buried Him in a borrowed tomb..
But, early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in His hands!
I think a feel a shout coming!
He's still blessing me with more than I need
I don't know about you, but I think I feel a shout coming on!

No. 9479-Anniv.-Men

The Mission of an Atoned Man

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2011

***SCRIPTURE:** Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. Mark 1:14-18*

Introduction

Have you ever thought about your life before Christ? What type of man were you? Did you drink, gamble, chase women, live ruthlessly, carelessly and without thought of God or heaven? If you did any of these then you can relate to the millions of men in the world who once traveled the meandering path that led to hell, but turned from that crooked, decrepit and sinful way.

The Black man in America and here in these hallowed Islands has strayed away from the path of our ancestry. We are men who have withstood the challenges of racial discrimination, disenfranchisement and second class citizenship, but something has happened to our sense of manhood to a point that there are many who abandoning our ancient roles as leaders, shaman, healers and warriors. We are fast becoming a generation of gangsters, dead beats and video game junkies.

Even in this context, the call is given for a new generation of men to rise up from the ashes of despair and become what God intends for them to be:

Men who reach other men.

Men who save other men.

Men who do what needs to be done for the salvation of their families and of our race.

How does an entire race of men repent? In 1995 one million black men marched on Washington D.C. to stand together and ask God to help give them atonement for their sins. It was a march, but it was a day of atonement in which black men came from across the nations, and even from these Islands to stand shoulder to shoulder with other men to say to God: We shall atone for our weaknesses as men.

Louis Farrakhan outlined eight principle steps in the atonement process. Simply stated, they are as follows: 1. Point out the wrong. 2. Acknowledge the wrong. 3.

Confess the Fault. 4. Repent. 5. Atone. 6. Forgive. 7. Reconcile and Restore. 8. Perfect Union with God. It was said in 1995 that when these principle were put into practice that a healing would take place in the nation as the sound of a new cultural revolution began.

The march was held. The speeches were given and the million men who were assembled returned home.

Much of the world they returned to remained the same. It became apparent that the march alone did not resolve the lingering problem of the inglorious presence of the black man in America.

The change black men needed could not be provided by Farrakhan and the Black Muslims. Neither could it be delivered by a political movement with a suitcase full of government programs, workshops and clinics. True repentance for the Black man can only come by the hand of God himself.

As Christians, we recognize the sovereignty and power of God. It is He who can turn lives around. It is he who can make a difference when he touches the lives of men. When men are touched by God, the world can only wonder at the glory of his accomplishment. It is then that the world marvels at the glories of the truly repentant man.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as He assembled his inner circle of disciples.

As Christ traveled He sounded a theme that had been introduced by John the Baptist just a few years prior to His ministry: Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

To build the kingdom of God Jesus needed men who were willing to turn from their personal pursuits and dedicate themselves to the cause of building God's kingdom on earth. As he traveled he met men of different walks, perspectives and expectations. He challenged each to follow Him and prepare to change the world.

Christ challenged these men to use all of their secular skills for the glory of God. The phrase "I will make you fishers of men" refers to the transformation of their former calling into a spiritual one. The targets of this particular invitation were fishermen by trade. They were asked to do what they knew how to do best, fish; but using the same basic principles Christ said he would show them how to become fishers of men.

Calling men in on walk of life and challenging them to use their skills in the business of kingdom building was the nature of Jesus' relationship with the disciples. His constant reminder to them was that they did not necessarily need the power to do what needed to be done, but that He would do it through them.

The emphasis therefore is on the "I will make you.." part of the text. For this work Jesus will qualify them, authorize them and give them the commission to fish for souls.

To become fishers of men the disciples had to follow Christ completely. They had to separate themselves and follow him as their Leader. That means they had to learn the nature of the new calling and how to retrain themselves for spiritual fishing.

The men that Christ recruited had one great job: reach out to others so that the Kingdom of heaven could be a reality.

Response of the Atoned Man

When Black men atone for several generations of neglect what will be the result? Will we see anything new in the approaching generation? Will we rise higher, live cleaner and enjoy the blessings of God more? Christ recruited 12 men that He challenged to change their own way of living and thinking then change the world. The efforts of those 12 have effectively changed the world. When black men truly atone the results will be similar in our community.

OUR FAMILIES WILL BE DIFFERENT: The atoned black man will resume his place as the head of the "household of faith" or the local family. Every black father or husband has an intrinsic responsibility to the family; we must serve the community, but we must take care of business in our own families. Those who serve on boards or who lead governments have an even more awesome task because beside their responsibility as community leaders, they also must function in their own families as husbands, fathers, uncles and grandfathers. They must avoid the danger of substituting one for the other.

The strength of our people has been in the solidarity of our families. Black families need strong men in every home. Three or more generations have matured with absentee dads and non-existent husbands. We have survived only by the grace of God himself. Yet, while there are millions of families that are still thriving, a great many of our families are showing signs of disintegration. As our families become more tolerant of deviant behavior and less homogeneous, the community feels the impact.

The public record chronicles why we need men in our families. The record shows that 23 percent of 20-29 year old Black men are either in jail or on probation at any given time. While there are more than 600,000 young Black men enrolled in college there are more than 800,000 under the control of the criminal justice system. The nation spends more than $3 billion a year to keep them locked up, making privately owned prisons the fastest growing new business in America.

The record shows that we are plagued with a dilemma of problems created by a generation of neglect.

Our families need strong, godly and repentant black men."

Our mothers need strong me as loving husbands and providers.

Our Children need strong men who are present and functioning in their lives.

OUR COMMUNITIES WILL BE DIFFERENT: The new black man, who has come to realize his role as a man called by God to rebuild the community, will work to make changes, starting with the way the community sees black men themselves. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, author of "The Assassination of the Black Male Image" writes that the image of Black men in America has been carefully shaped by the national media which forcefully projects the image of the Black man is that he is either the ignorant Sambo or the hate filled Savage. Sambo or Savage, that's the choice that African American women and children are given, when they consider the image of the Black man in America. The image of the black man must change.

Black men must reclaim our neighborhoods, help to make our streets safe and promote drug free, crime free neighborhoods. Across America, Black men, sensitive to the problems of our community, are organizing themselves. National fraternal organizations such as the Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi, Prince Hall Masons, The National Baptist Convention and others are energizing men to organize and take action.

Millions of Black men are forming organizations such as the 100 Black Men of America with units all over the nation. The aim of the push is to get Black men who are successful to do more than simply be successful, but to roll up their sleeves and plunge into the problem.

There is no comparison for what can be done if men of good character roll up their sleeves and do good work. Men who responding to this need should hear the words of Jesus speaking to them, "follow me." As we follow Christ, we bring the spirit of atonement to our communities as well.

OUR CHURCHES WILL BE DIFFERENT: When men atone and assume their rightful place in kingdom building our churches will be different. Over the last 50 years we have witnessed the leadership of our local churches become female dominated. This is not a putdown of women who lead, it is however a reflection of the deteriorating condition in many churches. The sad fact is that there are not many men to choose from: In their absence women are stepping up to the plate and becoming program leaders, superintendents, deacons, trustees, ministers and even pastors. This is not necessarily a bad thing but it does put an unnecessary burden on women who are acting in the absence of available men.

When black men atone and return, the church will be different. Through his church he can join shoulders with other men of faith and gain faith, fellowship and friendship as he praise God and attacks the evils that threaten the households of family that he loves.

The problem that God's men face is huge, however, with God it is not insurmountable.

God's men must search the scriptures to seek divine what needs to be done our communities and homes cannot be done without Him.

When men come to God, the church changes.

When men come to God, the community changes.

When men come to God, the world changes.

When men throw out the net of salvation, they become fishers of men who can reach others on the behalf of Christ. That is the mission of the church, it must be done if Christ is to be lifted up and the kingdom of God is to be established on earth.

The glory of the repentant man

Finally, brothers and sisters, the repentant man is a glory to himself, to his family and most of all he is a glory to God.

When men atone for our sin of neglecting God and family for so long, God will get

the glory.

If ever there was a time when Black men need to know God that time is now!

A black man in business for himself soon finds that he can't succeed in the business world unless God sends the customers!

A black man climbing the corporate ladder, soon finds that he can't maintain his upward climb without the Blessings of the Lord!

A black man striving to lead a family soon finds that his job is made much easier when he and the Lord are on good terms! It doesn't matter whether you are male or female, everyone needs a blessing every now and then!

The truly repentant and atoned Black man has a new resolve that is rooted in his faith in God. It is a resolve that is rooted in Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

With God's help, the atoned man is invested with a supernatural anointing to do God's work. He's not just any man; he become's God's man.

Have you heard of "Superman?" When he worked at the Daily Planet newspaper, he was just Clark Kent, a mild mannered reporter. But when he went into the phone booth and put on his blue and red suit with a big "S" on his chest he became "Superman." They called him superman because he was able to run faster than a speeding bullet! They called him superman because he was more powerful than a locomotive! They called him superman because he could leap tall buildings in a single bound! They called him superman because with his x-ray vision he could see through closed doors; with his strength he could bend steel bars like pretzels; and bullets bounced off his chest! Brothers and sisters, a man who knows the Lord is a superman!

A man who knows the Lord finds that Problems bounce off his chest like rubber bullets! A man who knows the Lord finds that he leaps tall difficulties with a single bound! A man who knows the Lord can grab hold to a tough situation and bend it like a pretzel! The only thing that hindered superman was Kryptonite. It made him weak! It took away his power! The only thing that hinders a believing man is losing his faith in God and losing faith in himself! As long as a man or woman trusts in God, nothing is impossible, because God will take our:

—Questions and give us Answers; Frustrations and give us confidence

—Weaknesses and give us strength; Failures and give us success!

No wonder the song writer wrote, "I will trust in the Lord! I will trust in the Lord till I die!" A man, who knows Jesus, cannot be hindered because he knows that the Lord has promised that "no weapon formed against thee shall prosper!"

A man, who knows Jesus, cannot be hinder because he knows that he is never alone, for Jesus has said, "And lo, I'll be with you always, even until the end of the earth!" Nothing should hinder men because Jesus, the man of God has paved the way!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with the victory in his hand!

No.9480-Anniv-Men

For they are Virgins

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2011

SCRIPTURE: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Revelation 14:4

Introduction

Is it possible that a person who has made a mistake can be redeemed? Can such a life be salvaged? Can men who have faltered along the way, ever be restored to a strong relationship with God? Can the purity of our spirit be restored?

Every person makes a mistake or two in life and deserves an opportunity for restoration, but society is unforgiving, merciless and with a few exceptions, punitive.

If ever there was a race that has felt the sting of society's rejection it is the Black American male. More than any race the Black male has felt the sting of social, political and economic disenfranchisement. We who have built the railroads, picked the cotton, and provided the creative genius that has helped this nation to become great, know that pain of falling into the worst conditions.

Some of our tragedy has fallen upon us because of the harshness of our masters and superiors and the military might of our adversaries. However, some of our plight has been at our own hands. We have contributed to our own demise is many ways. The jails across the nation are rapidly filling with people of our race, but are responsible for at least some of the crimes for which we are accused? Teenage pregnancy is soaring in our community and black fathers are disappearing in large numbers; are we at least partially the blame for leaving our children to survive on a child support check that we do not pay? If a generation of young men are growing into men with more concern for sagging pants than they are for tightening their belts and walking straight, who can we blame?

For a race in which men were the strong towers in the family, it is tragic to see how low we have fallen today. It's tragic to see black men beating women like punching bags, running away their children as if they had the plague and resorting to drugs and alcohol in such large numbers that entire communities are being devastated. Even more tragic is the loss of Adam and Eve in the place of Adam and Steve.

It is true that the Black man has fallen into impure state, but it is equally important to remember that the repentant man will rise again.

An understanding of the scripture helps us to know that Ethiopia will rise again. There will be a resurrection of the Black man in conjunction with the rise of the faithful, from all walks of life, who have chosen to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

When that resurrection comes God will find a truly repentant a dedicated man standing before him ready to serve and to help build the kingdom of God

As Christians, we are happy to know that the Black man is not doomed to failure, but on the contrary is destined for success and glory. This divinely appointed destiny can truly begin when all men everywhere, repent and turn to God. Once a man repents, there is no limit to his strength, energy and upward mobility because he is being led by the power of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on a passage of scripture that foretells a day in the tribulation period in which 144,000 Jews will come forth to praise God, having purified themselves before the Lord.

John, writing the Revelation, told of seven years of tribulation in which the world would endure a purging for its refusal to accept Christ. Between Revelation Chapter four and chapter 20 the picture of sinful man is portray and the various judgments that God will place upon the unrepentant to bring them back to God before the final judgment.

This text often raises eyebrows because it uses the word “virgin” to describe the purified state of those who come forth out of the tribulation. The Greek work “parthenoi” which is translated “virgin” in this text has been the subject of theological dispute for centuries. Some think that the bible is literal in its meaning that those who come will only be the virgin men, who have had no contact with women.

However, the greater body of scholars believe that the text does not refer to the atoned of chapter 14 as literal virgins but as men had not defiled their bodies in either a physical or spiritual sense. According to the Easy to Read Commentary “There is no irrefutable scriptural basis upon which these positions can be either proved or disproved, it is clear that the characteristics of these selected people were, though not perfect, purer than most. They were not faultless in either the eyes of God or the eyes of man, but they were certainly commended for their virtuous lives.”

The text points to the spiritual state of the redeemed among men: pure, untouched and chaste purified and ready to follow the Lamb.

We Must Purify Ourselves

Those who want to truly want to follow God must come to him in a spiritually chaste state of being.

For centuries, believers in every faith, denomination or religion have known that God cannot be approached or rightly followed unless those who would be his

disciples first purify themselves. Even Christ Himself, spent forty days and nights in the wilderness to purify himself for His ultimate purpose.

If men intend to do any great work ourselves, our families and our people then we must follow this example, we must "cleanse ourselves" to succeed in spiritual things. This means we should make sure our motives and reasons for doing things are pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

When we do any work for the Lord it should be with one objective only, "that God be praised."

Whatever men are doing, it cannot be achieved successfully without purification. If we sing so we can be praised, perform a service so we can be praised, or minister so we can be praised, then we need to check our motives. James 4:8 says, "Purify your hearts." To be successful in Christ, we must do whatever we do for the intent of glorifying God.

We must come before him in a virgin state, a state of purity, a state of celibacy to one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

We must be willing to follow

Men who will change the world for Christ must be willing to follow Him wherever He leads us. Throughout scripture, when Jesus called men, He called them to follow Him. He never found anyone who was already walking the path towards the Kingdom of Heaven, but they had to turn from a self directed path to follow Him.

Describing how the disciples forsook all, Mark 10:28 says, "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee."

Luke 5:27-28 says, "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him"

Christ Himself warns that those who purport that they are His disciples cannot do so unless they are willing to give up all. Luke 14:33 says, ""So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Today, the spirit of God is calling Black men to come forth to put the spirit of God in action in our local communities. Following Christ with a pure intent means rolling up our sleeves to tackle the problems that are before us. It means following His example of ministering to the poor, the imprisoned and showing compassion for the less fortunate. Following Him also means becoming fishers of men, reaching out, drawing, and sustaining those who need his Godly embrace.

Men who follow the Lamb do so because they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They follow Christ into eternity because they first met Him at Calvary and gave Him their lives.

Men who follow the Lamb do because it is he who keeps them saints. "He keepeth the feet of his saints."

If men are to reclaim our communities that have fallen, then that reclamation begins when men decide to follow Christ with pure motives, with no secret political or social

agenda. The power of God itself will begin the restoration.

Willing to witness

We must be willing to witness and willing let God give us the words to say.

Prior to the 1960's the black male assumed the role of leadership in His family, church and community. He was the living witness to the strength and power of God as he stood before angry racists, political systems and barking dogs to defend his family. However, today, we are increasingly depending on women to lead us.

While black men don't claim a gender bias, there is something unsettling about women fighting battles as men stand on the sideline and watch; we must assume our roles the symbols of strength and stability in the community.

Some rightly say, "I don't know what to say." They point to story of the barber who thought he should share his faith with his customers more than he had been doing lately. So the next morning when the sun came up and the barber got up out of bed he said, "Today I am going to witness to the first man that walks through my door. Soon after he opened his shop the first man came in and said, "I want a shave!" The barber said, "Sure, just sit in the seat and I'll be with you in a moment." The barber went in the back and prayed a quick desperate prayer saying, "God, the first customer came in and I'm going to witness to him. So give me the wisdom to know just the right thing to say to him. Amen."

Then quickly the barber came out with his razor knife in one hand and a Bible in the other while saying "Good morning sir. I have a question for you... Are you ready to die?"

He didn't know what to say and said the wrong thing. However, men who led by the spirit of God begin a witness with God speaking, acting and moving through them.

We don't know the words, but God does. He will show us the way, if we are willing to witness for Him.

Putting God first

Finally, brothers and sisters, if men are to place their virgin faith in practice we must stand ready to give God the first fruits of their time, talents, and resources.

John saw the vast number of men marching forth out of the tribulation, with the robes washed in the blood of the lamb. These men, with virgin faith, untarnished by doubt, fear, or frustration, came forth ready to present God their first fruits or their best.

These men will be virgin men in that they will have only one motive and that will be to please God.

These men will be virgin men in that they will have only one purpose, and that will be to build His kingdom.

These men will be virgin men in that they will have only one destination, to make to marriage feast of the Lamb.

Men who are going forth in the faith should seek to increase their witness and double their efforts to build the kingdom of God.

There can be no increase in wisdom, maturity, and favor with God and man unless there is a proportionate increase in our faith.

We need to increase our faith in our own abilities, assisted by the power of God.

We need to increase our willingness to step out on God's word although the waters and storms of life are raging.

The just shall live by faith. That means we walk with the Lord, not in the same old beaten path, but every year we climb higher.

Men who have atoned and presented themselves to God seek new levels of achieve for Him.

These are men who want to increase from weakness to strength.

These are men who want to increase from defeat to victory.

These are men who want to increase from discouragement to hope.

These are men who want to increase from loneliness to comfort

The man who fears the Lord is a man who lives a good life before his children and his wife, but most importantly, he lives a good life before God.

Like a virgin, He knows no other God; he knows no other woman, and he knows no other cause that he places before his God, his wife and his family.

Like a virgin, the man who fears the Lord clings to the Lord and to Him only.

The men of every generation must tell the story of their own atonement. They must tell the young men of their own Damascus Road experience. They must tell somebody how, like David, they cried out, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

When the young men of a congregation see men tell the story! They tell the story of mountains climbed and valleys traveled!

They tell the story of a young man who came to himself in a pigpen and decided that "in my father's house" there is plenty of what I need.

I heard somebody testify, "I met God one morning, my soul feeling sad, heart heavy laden, with a bowed down head. He lift my burdens and made me so glad all that I know is, there is something within."

They tell the story of answered prayer. A man who knows the Lord knows that the Lord will answer prayer.

They tell the story of men who bowed down before God to worship and praise him!

Tel the story of the prophet who said, "Here am I, send me!"

Men who fear the Lord tell the story of salvation and redemption.

Men who fear the Lord are quick to testify that one day the savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground"

I heard the songwriter declare, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same"

He touched me!

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

A man who fears the Lord has to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

The man who fears the Lord has to tell somebody that Lord is my light and my salvation, “Whom shall I fear?”

He’s got to tell somebody!

Tell somebody!

No. 9481-Family

Possessing Family Blessings

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2011

Scripture: And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. Genesis 48:4

Introduction

Did you know that God provides for the needs of every family? It may appear at times that God is distant, but in reality, God provides for every family; those who are obedient are the recipients of that benevolence.

If we listen closely to the stories of our ancestors we can track God's movements in our family circle. Listen closely to the stories of hardship, depravation, and frustration that your ancestors endured and you will also hear about the fortuitous intervention of the Lord. God knows what each family needs and how much it can bear; and He always provides.

Biblical record suggests that God considers each family's requests and measures them by two factors: His will for our lives and our history of faith and sacrifice. Combined, a true believer usually provides that God sees our need and provides for it every day of our lives.

As Christians, we are convinced that when God sees what we require and hears our pleas, he will provide for all of needs and many of our wishes because he is Jevovah-Jireh, our provider.

Today, God sees and He knows your situation. Because he loves us, He will respond today in the way that is in our best interest.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promise to Israel, a promise of prosperity, possession and peace.

Theologians differ on the specific application of the text. Some believe the text should be used in a limited sense, pointing to the many centuries during which the Jews were occupiers of the Holy Land. Others think the promise has a wider application, pointing to the restoration of the scattered tribes of Israel to their homeland as their

"everlasting possession."

God's word never returns void, so it is notable that God has reshaped history to accomplish his goals toward mankind.

Obtaining the promise made to Abraham became a quest of Abraham's descendants for generations. Through centuries of successes and failures, enslavement, achievement, exile and suffering they endured for the single purpose of obtaining the promised blessing of God.

On the strength of that promise they persevered while clinging to their faith that God would bless their family beyond measure.

Families Must Be United

To obtain the fullest blessings that God has provided, families must be united.

All too frequently we have observed dysfunctional families who appear more as enemies than blood relatives. Many harbor emotional wounds that have lingered for decades; wounds that have formed barriers that have separated them and crippled their efforts to succeed as a family.

When families are dysfunctional it is difficult for them to obtain the blessings of God. Cain and Abel competed for the favor of God by presenting sacrifices. Jealousy resulted and Cain killed Abel. Jacob and Esau were in constant competition for the birthright that was to be given by Isaac. Esau hated Jacob most of his life because he was cheated out of his inheritance. The prodigal son's brother was disturbed at the favor shown his brother when no such favors were bestowed upon him.

To achieve the fullest blessings of God families must seek the good for every family member. In prayer, public support and conversation, families must support each other. Even those who have strayed from the path must be included in the family's embrace. A wayward son or daughter, an estranged father, mother or "baby daddy" or "baby mama" must also be kept close. While some may achieve individual success outside of the family, the fullest blessings come when the entire family works together to possess the future God has prepared for those who trust Him.

God blessed Abraham's family through the generations. He continued His promise through his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob and to all of the Children of Israel. In similar sense, promises made to our ancestors are being prepared for every family, but possession of those promises can be acquired best within the confines of the family's embrace.

Achieving Purpose through the family

The long arms of the godly family help each family member to achieve God's ultimate purpose. Through the family, members receive sustenance, encouragement, direction and correction. Through the family, God begins the flow of his ancestral promise to each generation.

Many of those who have achieved success in life credit the support, encourage-

ment and discipline they received in their family for their success. For some it was the strong hand of parents, for others it was support of siblings. For still others, it was a favorite aunt or uncle that kept them on target. In a variety of ways believers have been touched by their families that have been used by God to strengthen their life experience.

The immediate way that God helps us is through the family. Those who are fortunate enough to have strong families, learn that God touches a mother and father in such a way that they are able to provide unique sustenance for their children, beyond mere food and drink.

For young believers, mothers and fathers are strong, like mountains and hills. They stand for strength and control. They protect us from enemies, teach us how to worship, help us to learn the meaning of sacrifice and provide a home life that gives us a sanctuary from the storms of life.

The family is the vehicle God has chosen to use to guide us to our promised possession. Through the family God will guide each family member safely to their individual Promised Land.

Ancestry shows family legacy

No family member exists independent of his or her family ancestry. Each generation is a continuation of the preceding generation's effort to live according to its blessings. However, family members must analyze their family history to see what God has called the family to be and what talents he has historically showered on its family members.

Each family member has a story and a legacy. There are families of educators. The gift of knowledge seems to run in the family. There are families of athletes; for generations these families have had men and women who were athletically inclined to one level or another. There are families of artists, builders, tinkerers, preachers, politicians, healers and craftsmen. It's in the family's genes. It is the way God organized the social order.

Family members need to know the history of its members. We need to know about our family successes and what we did when we succeeded. Those times when we failed, what did we do? When we suffered, how did we overcome? What mistakes have we made as a family? Does our family history show us that we could have done better if we had avoided certain paths? As a family, what have we learned from our mistakes?

When families explore their history and dissect their strengths and weaknesses, it brings great strength and a sense of purpose to young lives when they from whence they came.

Promise will not be void

Finally, brothers and sisters, God has given us the promise of a great possession, it is the dream of every family, it is dream will not die and a promise that will not return void.

The family that prays together, shares the same dream for each of its family members:

that each will achieve their destiny according to the will of God.

This was the dream that Abraham had for Isaac.

This was the dream that Isaac had for Jacob

This was the dream that Jacob had for all of the Children of Israel.

But even greater than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob there is Jesus, who went beyond merely believing in God's promise Jesus BECAME the promise.

Families that expect to climb higher and possess the promise of God must know that climbing to God without Jesus is impossible because there is one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus.

Jesus is the source of our salvation.

Jesus is the hope upon which our struggle depends.

Jesus is our dream of moving out of our:

-Hunger and acquiring a satisfied soul!

-Darkness and walking into the marvelous light

-Sinking sand experience and standing on the Solid Rock!

-Spiritual Slavery to complete spiritual freedom!

-Defeat into the glory of victory!

-Despair to unspeakable joy!

Jesus helps the family move from singing 'soon I will be done with the troubles of the world' to 'I'm so glad that trouble don't last always'

Jesus helps the family move from "Why has thou forsaken me" to "Lo I'll be with you always!"

Jesus helps the family sing, "I don't feel no ways tired. He brought too far to leave me."

Jesus was misunderstood, rejected and persecuted but He persevered because He had promise to fulfill.

He was prosecuted by the scribes and Pharisees, and they whipped Him mercilessly all night long and tried Him in hostile courts, but He will would not turn back because He had a promise to fulfill.

, They hung Him on a cross, stretched out between two thieves, but He would not give up because He had a promise to possess.

Though buried in a borrowed tomb and guarded by soldiers, He couldn't be held down because Early Sunday morning the Vision of Bethlehem, and the nightmare of Calvary became the resurrected promise to every family in the world!

Every family should revel in His promise.

He promised never to leave us..never to leave us alone.

No. 9482-Inspiration

4th Down and Inches

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 6, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8

Introduction

Have you ever attended a football game and watched some of the things that happen off the field? There is a lot of activity on the sidelines that often affects the outcome of the game. A very important part of every game is the measurement of forward progress. That measurement is kept by two people who carry two poles tied together with a chain on the sidelines. One man stands at the point a play begins, the other stands to mark how far the team has to progress to get for more tries at a touchdown. Each time a team progresses 10 yards, they get four more tries.

When a play ends, an on-field official estimates the new spot of the ball marks it with his foot and tosses the ball to another official to set for the next play. When the new spot is close to the first down end of the chain, that's when the "chain gang" trots out to "measure" whether or not the offense gets a new set of downs. When that happens, the whole game comes to a halt. It's dramatic, especially in an important game. It's a breathless moments in a football game. A length of a chain link often decides the difference.

Despite the availability of modern technology that can mark the position with GPS lasers, football teams still remain "old school" because they bring out the chain. At home, those watching by television see brightly colored lines of blue and yellow that indicate the progress, but the television screen doesn't count. What counts is the chain on the field.

Sometimes a team is just inches away from winning or losing a game, so that little chain gets to be mighty important. Even though whole careers depend on the accuracy of the referee's call, the standard for measuring first downs hasn't changed in over 100 years. Spalding's Official Foot Ball Guide of 1907 set down the rules that have lasted for more than 100 years: "To assist in measuring the progress of the ball, it is desirable to provide two light poles about six feet in length, connected at their lower ends with a stout cord or chain 10 yards in length." Thus, the "chain gang" was born.

Over a century has passed, but at every football game from pee wees to pros, a group of officials stands about six feet off the sideline holding blaze-orange "poles" with a

10-yard length of chain stretched between them.

There have been debates in athletic circles about using more modern techniques to measure what progress requirements, but the old "chain gain" survives.

The standard has not changed.

How far are we from what the Lord requires? Many us have made many first downs and are just inches away from victory. There are many fancy ways to measure our forward progress when it comes to God but there is one old fashioned way, like bringing in the chains at a football game, that tells our story. The ultimate test of progress in football is the chain, but in the Christian life it's the word of God which requires that we"act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God."

It's old fashioned, but then God does not change. He's the same yesterday, today and forever more.

As Christians, we strive to progress toward the ultimate victory of the Christian life, heaven. Our progress is measured not by the standards of men but by God himself. When we reach 4th down situations, he'll bring out the chain.

Exposition

The text considers the prophet Micah who spoke to Israel about the three essential elements needed for the nation to meet the approval of God. Micah prophesied while three kings were on the throne: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Of the three, Ahaz was a wicked king, which gave Micah the opportunity to experience life under a good king, watch its fall from goodness and see how it returned to goodness under Hezekiah. In the midst of its wickedness and apostasy Micah made the declaration that has become known as a standard by which the righteous are judged. With wickedness all around, Micah raised the question: "What doth the Lord require?" He answered it by noting that God requires from his people that they do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God. These three elements comprise the measure of the godly man.

To "do justly" means to do those things which "right" requires. According to Micah, God requires that his people strive to do the right thing in matters pertaining to family, business and inter-personal relations. For Israel these were principles that were becoming old fashioned as the nation abandoned its allegiance to God and adopted a "succeed at any cost" philosophy of life. Doing right was equated with doing the necessary, so the scales were weighted, the people cheated and the poor oppressed. Yet Micah called for men of conscience to adopt a godly lifestyle that would encourage them to "do the right thing."

If "do justly" means to do those things which right requires, then to "love mercy" a man must do those things which "love requires." The laws of Micah's time permitted certain injustices. It was legal to take the land of widows, or to leave children homeless and orphans. It was legal to suppress the oppressed and to subjugate the weak. It was right, by legal standards, but Micah called upon the people to do what love requires, show mercy and compassion to the poor, hungry and to all who stand in

the need of help. His call was for the people to rise above the legalisms that perpetuated poverty and despair and respond to a higher law that came from God. This law was the law of love that is dipped in mercy and compassion.

Micah's final call was that the men and women of Israel and Judah would return to a spirit of humility that they showed under King Jotham. His advice to them was to keep God foremost in their lives and humble themselves before his will and they would receive his blessings daily. His challenge was for every father to lead his family back to a humble walk before God. It was for every husband to lead his wife in walking the godly path. It was the final measure of righteousness that would decide whether the people would succeed in regaining the grace and protection of God.

Centuries have passed, but that measurement has not changed. It remains the biblical litmus test by which our spiritual progress is measured.

4th Down Situations

The skill and ability of a football team is often reflected when the team is facing a tough battle and fighting for literally inches of turf to stay in the game. In such situations, that's when the tough get going. In a 4th down situation a team has only two choices.

PUNT: A team punts the ball when it feels that the defense of the opposing team is too great, and the coach or quarterback lacks confidence in their own teams ability to overcome the opposition. When a team punts it has come to the conclusion that its progress has been stopped and the odds against succeeding are too great, it decides to punt the ball to the other team. There are many in the Christian life who face 4th down situations often, unfortunately there are many who come to the conclusion that they should punt rather than go for the touchdown. It's fourth down: Bills are due, money is short, and resources are poor. Some choose to punt, bankruptcy is the choice. It's fourth down: There are problems in the marriage, the fire seems to be gone. Some choose to punt, divorce is their choice. It's fourth down: School is getting to be a problem, grades are bad and getting worse. Some choose to punt, dropping out is their choice. We choose to punt only when we have decided that the opposing team is too great and we doubt our own abilities to resolve the situation. When you put you can't make a field goal, run the risk of getting your kicker injured and you give the enemy better position, but you do live to see another day.

How great are the odds against us in life? Is the enemy really able to overwhelm us and stop our forward progress? The bible says in 1 John 4:4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. " If we are trying to carry out God's purpose, before you decide to punt remember Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

GO FOR THE FIRST DOWN: The other alternative in a 4th down situation is to go for the first down. When a team is confident in its abilities and knows the weaknesses of its opponents it does not think twice about going for the first down. If the team is sure, it doesn't matter how far they are away from the line of scrimmage. In 2002 the

Houston Texans played Indianapolis. The Texans faced a fourth down situation with 35 yards to go. They decided to go for it. In November of 2010 LSU played Alabama and were trailing by one point with just over 9 minutes left in the game. On a fourth down, with one foot to go, the team lined up to kick and field goal but ran a reverse play instead and carried the ball to the three yard line. In life, punting is not always the only course; those who are confident in their abilities have chosen to go for it.

When you go for it, you choose not to give up. When you go for it you are not intimidated by the odds. Fourth down situations are generally described as "crunch" time. It's the time that we either walk by faith or fail in fear.

It's 4th down: a new opportunity presents itself, pray get God's advice, if He says so, go for it.

It's 4th down: A major family challenge is front of you; pray get God's advice, if He says so, go for it. If God says "Go for it" go forward, even if you every expert says it sounds crazy; whether its 4th down and 40 or 4th down and inches, go for it.

Bring out the chains

Finally brothers and sisters, when you have given it your best shot, and life's on screen camera shows that you have come up short in your 4th down try; when you are just inches away, that when it's time to bring in the chain.

Those who have lived the Christian life a while know from experience that there is only one standard in life that really counts, our God determines whether we have progress enough to keep going.

When you seem to come up short in your efforts, your neighbors may say you should give up and stop trying because you have fallen short, but what doth the Lord require?

When you have tried your best, will that be enough for God? If you have tried to love your God and your neighbors, in a life that is just and humble with Jesus Christ at its center, will you come up short in the eyes of God.

This is the point where God and football differ. When the referees bring in the chain to measure your progress, they don't cut you any slack, you either make it or you don't. However, when Christ comes in the picture to measure whether we get one more chance, He doesn't bring in the chain, but he brings in the cross.

Unlike the referee on the field, if we come up a few inches short, if He gives us another chance anyway because of His amazing grace.

That's why it's a mistake to count a believer out, because God always gives believers the benefit of the cross.

I don't know about you but I've seen my share of fourth down situations, but when the Lord brought in the cross, I was given a second chance.

In a fourth down situation we should remember that we serve a God who can take:

—Defeat and turn it into victory; failure and turn it into success
—Misfortune and turn it into good fortune; Tragedy and turn it into opportunity
—Blunders and turn them into wonders; Doubts and wipe them out!
When you face 4th down situations remember there is no:
—Battle the Lord cannot win;
—Burden the Lord cannot lift;
—Loneliness that the Lord cannot comfort;
—Promise the Lord cannot keep.
—Dark Cloud the Lord cannot brighten;
—Heartache that the Lord cannot soothe.
When you reach a 4th down situation have confidence in your team.
On your team is the father, who created the world in the palm of His hands.
On your team is the Son, who came through 42 generations to die for you.
On your team is the Holy Ghost, your comforter in times of trouble.
Heading your team is a man who can speak to the winds and they obey his will.
On your team is a quarterback who was born in Bethlehem, trained in the wilderness, promoted by John the Baptist, traded by Pontius Pilate, but who is so good that every blessing he has passed has been received.
He's so good that somebody called him bread in a starving land!
So good, that somebody called Him a bridge over troubling water!
So good, that somebody called Him a doctor in the sick room!
So good, that somebody called a lawyer in our courtroom!
At Calvary it was a 4th down situation. In the huddle he told his father, I'd rather punt than go to Calvary.
I'd rather punt than let them drive nails into my hand!
I'd rather punt than let them stick a spear into my side.
I'd rather punt than die on an old rugged cross.
Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done!
They crucified him!
They buried him! They assumed the game was over!
But Early Sunday morning I can hear in my sanctified imagination a cry going out "Bring out the chain!"
Early Sunday morning they discovered that it ain't over till it's over; you can't keep a good man down!
Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave, with all power in His hands!
All Power!
All Power!

No. 9483-Annv.-Women

Who does the dishes?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 13, 2011

SCRIPTURE:But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Luke 10:40-42

Introduction

Did you know that for every Rosa Parks or Coretta Scott King in our history there are thousands of others, just like them who help bring us to victory? When a great work is done, we see many familiar faces out front, but we seldom see the ones behind the scenes who minister anonymously to help achieve ministry goals.

We've read about the historic march on Washington where Martin Luther King gave his historic I have a dream speech, but cleaned up the debris left behind by 250,000 people? Who packaged the meals, delivered the water, manned the first aide stations, stapled the signs, and cared for the hundreds of children on hand? Who were these nameless warriors of our history, the unsung heroes whose selfless acts of dedication were so crucial to the success of the movement?

We've heard of Harriet Tubman's 300 trips into the forbidden south to help runaway slaves on the Under Ground Railroad, but we rarely hear about the hands that sewed their clothes or prepared the traveling meals that were eaten, or the rugged praying hands that clasped those of the fleeing wretched. Those hands were blended into the larger picture of a movement that sought to see that our people were treated fairly, equitably, and responsibly. They were hands that were never seen but were important to overall success of the cause.

History often ignores the unsung heroes of our past. There are no songs written about hundreds of women who walked to work in Montgomery while King and others protested the bus boycott. There are only a few references to the women who filled factories and worked like men while the males were off to war in the Pacific during World War II. We hear the big names associated with the victories, not the thousands of women who served in the WACS or served as medics, typists and clerks.

There is no part of American history that has realized victory without the unseen

help of Florence nightingales or the legions of former slaves who cooked meals for the conquering union troops. They are rarely mentioned, but without our victories would have been much more difficult.

In the struggle to build the kingdom of God, each person has a part to play that is integral to the success of the movement. Christ evidenced it and Paul referenced it when he made note that God is not a respecter of persons, each person has a role to play.

As Christians we are peculiarly aware that everyone has a role to play in the struggle. Yet, one life is no greater than another, someone must feed the masses, someone must do the dishes.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he spoke with his disciples regarding the roles that each believer plays in kingdom building.

The passage indicates that Jesus entered into a village and chose to dine at the home of two sisters named Mary and Martha. As the meal was being prepared Jesus talked with disciples concerning the kingdom of God and the nature of the sacrificial service that each disciple would be called upon to make.

Christ traveled in the company of His disciples, 12 men with hearty appetites, who came to Martha's home unexpectedly. It's enough to feed and entertain one guest, but suddenly there were 12 men in Martha's house; the rules of cordiality required that she make them comfortable and feed them.

While Martha busied herself with providing for the nourishment of her special guest, Mary sat and listened as Jesus spoke the word. Martha was upset because Mary sat at Jesus feet leaving her with all of the work. She almost asked, while you are sitting at the feet of the savior, who does the dishes? Who does the service and ministers while others are praising?

Jesus' response did not reprimand Mary for listening and not helping serve, but noted that by listening to the word of God and preparing for ministry Mary was attending to the spiritual aspects of the kingdom. She was not ordered to leave her part to join Mary, but neither was Mary told to stop her part.

Mary had chosen "that good part" while Martha had chosen another good part. Both roles are important to the building of the kingdom. One was a pietist and the other an activist, both of whom are needed for the advancement of the kingdom.

The Activist and the Pietist

Elton Trueblood in his book "The new man for our time" makes the claim that Mary and Martha represent two different schools of religious thought, the activist and the pietist. Many believe that Martha represents those who believe that faith should reflect itself in the social concerns that touch the lives of people. Her concern for the nourishment and comfort of the disciples is said to represent millions who believe that

true faith is best represented when it is put into action.

SCHOOL OF MARTHA: The Martha's among us are those who insist that the church should reach out to the poor, fight social injustices, and work to make the kingdom of God a reality now while waiting on the kingdom of heaven that is to come.

The school of Martha maintains that the church should actively fight against illegal laws, work to free the unjustly imprisoned, provide nurture for families, educate and protect the children, and provide for the welfare of the elderly and less fortunate.

The school of Martha says we should be in the kitchen preparing the meals instead of spending all available time listening to sermons, singing and praying. Martha was impatient with her sister and demanded that Jesus tell her to stop listening to lofty talk and start serving. She could start by helping with the dishes.

SCHOOL OF MARY: While many subscribe to Martha's belief, there are others who follow Mary's example. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to the Word. Martha was the activist, but Mary was the pietist.

The school of Mary maintains that prayer and fasting along with praise and worship are roles that believers should play. The pietist emphasizes intense and fervent prayer, emotionally fervent worship, focused study of the word, and regular worship and listening to the gospel.

The pietist sees social ills as problems that should be prayerfully brought before God and placed in His hands through intercessory prayer and intense worship. Mary ignored the pleas of her sister for help in the kitchen. "I don't do dishes seemed to be her response."

The school of Martha asks, "Who will do the dishes, feed the poor or respond to the human needs of the world?

The school of Mary asks, "Who will pray and give God the adoration He deserves? Who will fast and pray for revival? Who will sit at Jesus' feet and hear the word?

Trueblood concluded that the church needs both the activist and pietist, both the woman who prays intently and the woman who takes care of social concerns and sees that the dishes are cleaned.

In a perfect world there would be a little of Mary and Martha in all believers. We should study, pray, worship, fast and intercede for others like Mary. Then we should get up off our knees and tend to the wounded and reach out to a hurting world like Martha.

Ideally, each of us should pray and serve, but at the least the church needs both kinds of members: the activist and the pietist; they both have a good part to play.

Millions do both

Our history is replete with examples of women who were both activists and pietists, praying women who did what they had to do for their own families then reached out to do the same for others.

These are the women who prayed intently at night for the sick and the shut in then

rose from their knees to visit and comfort them the next day.

These are the women who listen to sermons, and sing in choirs, but when people are hungry, they see that they are fed. When people have no clothes or have worn holes in their socks, they help clothe them. When people are scared or lonely, they sit with them through a scary time no matter how long it takes.

These are the unsung heroes of our past and present who sang and prayed while they worked to make the community better.

These are bible scarred warriors who recited the 23rd psalm while they assumed anonymous places of service in unknown villages and towns always singing, I don't feel no ways tired, I've come too far from where I started from; nobody told me that the road would be easy; I don't believe He brought me this far to leave me.

They will be rewarded

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who pray, worship and wash the dishes, will be rewarded.

There is no significant victory in our history as a people that did not include that small army of people who give of themselves as teachers, bus drivers, guards, cooks, and unnamed record keepers. They are the unsung heroes who are rarely saluted in programs or held up for public acclaim.

Yet, their service does not go unnoticed. God sees what they do and He will reward both the praying saint and the dishwashing servant according to his mercies in heaven.

Follow the record of the unsung heroes it will show them following the Lord. Mary and Martha followed Christ, to Calvary and to the empty tomb, praying and serving.

If we follow the trail of other unsung heroes, their trails will carry us to God.

If we follow the trail of Hannah it will find her telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts.

If we follow the trail of Ruth, we'll hear her say, "You people shall be my people and my God shall be your God"

If we follow the trail of the woman at the well, we'll hear her say, "Come see a man" who told me all I've ever done.

Serving the Lord by serving others will be rewarded in heaven, but the servant is also rewarded in this life; they live their lives with an indescribable feeling of accomplishment that the word describes as the "Joy of the Lord."

The Joy of the Lord it is the satisfaction of knowing that their little part helps to build the kingdom of the God.

It's the satisfaction that a little boy felt when he saw his five loaves and two little fishes used to feed five thousand!

It's the satisfaction that the Good Samaritan felt when he watched the injured man walk away from a battered situation after weeks of love and care!

What is the joy of the Lord?

Those who live in the joy of the Lord are recipients of his goodness and are instruments of his compassion!

When you know the joy of the Lord you know the goodness of the Lord.

It is the goodness of the Lord that transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness

It's the goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!"

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The Joy of the Lord turns SADNESS into GLADNESS; WEAKNESS into strength; DEFEAT into victory!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

That's why the song writer declared, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill to secure our reward

He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as He arose from the grave with all power in his hand.

Can't you see the angels celebrating the victory chanting, "Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him! Crown him! Crown him Lord of all!"

No. 9485-Youth

Making a Name for yourself

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 27, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top[may reach] unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. -Genesis 11:4

Introduction

Do you want to make a name for yourself? Whether we want to or not we are making a name for ourselves in the circle of our friends. At birth our parents give us a name that identifies us. We spend the rest of our lives making that name mean something.

What's in a name? Webster says a name is a title by which one is known. Shakespeare in his play, Romeo and Juliet, said, ""What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet." The Bible says a "good name" is better than riches. (Prov. 22:1)

Our names tell our family's story. It tells our history, what we have done. It's our pedigree. In slavery, a slave's last name changed from plantation to plantation, depending on the name of his master. He had no identity of his own, but only that of his master. In the mid sixties the late Malcolm Little dropped his last name, saying it was a slave name and changed it to Malcolm X to represent the unknown family name of his origins. We can track our history through our last name; it can carry us back hundreds of years.

While our last name tells our family's story, our first name tells our story. It distinguishes us from the rest of the members of our family. For about 100 years after the Civil War Blacks commonly gave their children Bible names. Names such as Samuel, Joseph, David, Matthew, Thomas, Ruth, Mary and Martha were common. Parents hoped their children would grow to take on the characteristics of these great Bible characters. In the age of the Soap Opera, many named their children after characters on the afternoon soaps and children born during the Afro American Renaissance found themselves with names from Africa or at least an African sound.

What we do and how we do it, what we say and how we say it, the way we live and how we live it, what we achieve and how we achieve it, are the ingredients that make our name.

Consider the new teacher whose first day at school was a challenge. She did not

know a single child in the class and expected to get acquainted on her first day. Then she met an incorrigible kid named Dennis. He threw spit balls and she said politely, "Dennis, sit!" He pulled a little girl's hair and she quietly but forcefully said, "Dennis, please stop." Every five minutes or so her class presentation was interrupted by an ever ending chain of commands "Stop Dennis! Quit Dennis! Sit Down Dennis!" Finally at the end of the day her husband asked did she get to know her students she replied, "I'm sorry to say there were 30 children in my class, but I only got to know one name, "Dennis."

There are many who have made names for themselves already. When we hear their names images come to mind. We associate courage and strength to the names of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. We associate intelligence and achievement to the names of Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell.

There are others who have made a name for themselves, too. The images that come to mind when we hear their names are not always positive, inspiring or noteworthy.

Even today, youth are making names for themselves. Certain words are said in our family that associate us with how we are perceived: smart, mischievous, helpful, pain in the neck, arrogant, disrespectful, darling, perfect, and no-good are just some of the names that are being applied to us by others...what's important, is which of those names we will apply to ourselves.

In our quest to make a name for ourselves, God promises to give us a name that will be recognized in heaven, if we follow Him, believe in Him and trust Him. In fact, we have been promised that if we walk humbly, repent and honor His name that he will heal, bless and raise us to high heights. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. "

As Christians, we are making a name for ourselves. It is a name that brings glory to God and lifts up the name of the savior. If anybody asks you who I am, tell them I'm a child of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the quest of the people to make a name for themselves by defying God.

The central character is a man named Nimrod who is identified in Genesis 10:8 as a descendant of Ham through Cush. Cush is the area of the world on the African-Continent closely associated with Black people. Nimrod is remembered as a "mighty one in the earth." He rose as a powerful ruler over men. Three times in Genesis 10 and again in 1 Chronicles 1:10 the word "mighty" is applied to Nimrod. The verse in Chronicles is in perfect agreement with these in Genesis- "And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be mighty upon the earth." The Chaldean paraphrase of this verse says, "Cush begat Nimrod who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against Jehovah."

Genesis 10:10 tells us that the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel which, in the language of that time Babel meant "the gate of God" but afterwards, because of the judgments which God inflicted there, it came to mean "Confusion," and from here onwards this is its force or meaning. Nimrod demanded and received Divine honors; many scholars believe that it is at Babel that the world saw the introduction of idolatry.

As Nimrod led the people to build a mighty tower that would be the gateway to heaven, he told them that by doing so that would make a name for themselves. They would be remembered for building a building so tall that they could march right into the throne room of God.

The name they wanted to make for themselves and the tower itself did not please God. So, the father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, together decided to stop them. Genesis 11:7 says, ".. let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

What of the name itself? The place called Babel, which began as the "gate of God" was called "Confusion" and ultimately represented evil and ungodliness; it became known as Babylon.

Nimrod made a name for himself, but it was not a name that pleased God.

Making a name

What is your name, really? For youth it's their "rep." In defense of their "rep" many youth have fought, been suspended from school and even died. What's your rep? How do you build reputation? The bully builds his reputation by beating up on persons that he knows he can beat. The snitch, builds his reputation by telling all he knows. The scholar builds a reputation for constantly achieving high marks. Those who have a reputation for being ghetto build it by constantly associating with the lesser appealing side of our community life in speech, lifestyle and values. Your rep is your brand. When people think of you they think of your brand. The business community understands this principle well, studying their model will help us understand ourselves.

YOUR BRAND, ONCE BUILT, CAN NEVER BE TAKEN AWAY. Howard Kosgrove, a marketing expert for major U.S. companies says, " "A brand is the one thing that you can own that nobody can take away from you," Once a brand is locked in the mind of the public, people may copy the product, or try to defame it, but it will outlive them all. The brand says it all. When we think of tissues, we say "Kleenex" although there are hundreds of tissues. When we think of tape, we say "SCOTCH" tape although there are others. When a child thinks of Hamburgers they instantly think of "McDonald's" It doesn't matter how much bad news is reported about these names, the brand, once built, is forever locked in the mind of the public. Young people are building a brand name for themselves. Often they are branding themselves without even noticing it. On face book, it is not uncommon to see a person insert a long middle name for themselves that describes themselves to others. "Lady Killer" or "party hard" become their brand names. We should exercise care in the reputation we are trying to build, because once

built, we'll have to live with it for their rest of our lives.

YOUR BRAND MUST HAVE MEANING: Often young people think the reputation they are trying to build for themselves means the same thing to everyone. The bully thinks that when he beats up on little guys that he is being respected, when it fact he is being feared by some and rejected by most. It's possible for your brand to mean different things to different people. The Chevrolet Company produced a car that was popular in America called the "Chevy Nova" but it didn't do well in Latin America. They later learned that in that part of the world the name "Chevy Nova" means "It doesn't go." Reebok shoes produced a brand of women's shoe called the "Incubus" only to learn that women were not buying the shoe because it turns out that an incubus is an evil spirit that rapes women in the middle of the night. The name sounded good at the time, but it didn't have desired effect. Is your rep, having the desired effect? That's what Jesus wanted to know when he met with his disciples in Matthew 6:13 and asked, " ..Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? " He found out that many perceived him as a man from God, but not everyone saw Him as the Son of God. Youth who are building their own brands, should seek those virtues and qualities that associate them with success and godliness. These are the brand qualities that will last.

BRAND QUALITY IS DETERMINED BY ASSOCIATIONS: There is an old saying, "Birds of a feather, flock together." It simply means that we are known by the company we keep. Companies building brands associate their names with positive things. McDonald's sells hamburgers, but it's name is also associated with hundreds of Ronald McDonald Houses across the nation, giving living space to those helping sick children. NIKE spends millions to associate its name with people who succeed. It will spend millions on a television commercial that shows a person doing something great, then focus in on that person wearing their shoe. Youth can build their brands by carefully choosing the persons with whom they are frequently seen. Scholar who hangs out with thugs begins to take on the brand of being a smart-thug. The virgin who hangs out with the school sluts, takes on their brand despite her best efforts otherwise. So youth should strive to protect their name by choosing their associations well

If you really what a name

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who really want to make a name for themselves should that those who follow Christ all call on one name, the name of Jesus.

Christian youth should associate their names with things that please God.

In 1972 a cute baby was born by the name of Marshall Bruce Mathers III, but the cute baby made himself around the world as "Eminem"- the master rapper with 29 million likes on Face book.

Like Eminem there are thousands who have made a name for themselves by changing their names: Curtis Jackson became, 50 cent; Terrie Bolea became, Hulk Hogan; Norma Baker became, Marilyn Monroe; Annie Mae Bullock became, Tina

Turner; Caryn Johnson became, Whoopi Goldberg; Eldrick Woods became, Tiger Woods, Anna Bullock became Tina Turner; Chad Butler became, Pimp C.; Calvin Brodaus became, Snoop Dog; and Kenneth Edmonds became, Baby Face.

However, you have want to make a name for yourself in the eyes of the Lord, there is a name you must know....

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It's the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved! It's the name of Jesus!

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow!

At the name of Jesus, every tongue shall confess

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me."

He loved me so much that He hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power!

All power in His hands!

No. 9485-Inspiration

What you see is what you get

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

March 2011

Scripture:"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12

Introduction

How do you see yourself? When you look into the crystal ball which is your future do you see success or failure? Do you see the pharmacist or the street corner drug dealer. Do you see the business executive or the crime lord? Do you see the White House or the Jailhouse? What we become in life is determined by many factors, but one of the most important factors is our belief in our own ability to achieve.

Dana Andrus of New Orleans, La is often called on to make motivational presentations to youth around the nation. One of his presentations features an illustration showing self realization is important. On a table, he lays out a variety of items familiar to youth: a gun, football jersey, basketball, football, cap and gown, beer can, bible, golden chain, mini dress and a pair of Jordan tennis. Youth were asked to select an item from the table that best represented how they envisioned themselves in the future. In nearly every presentation youth selected every item except the cap and gown and bible. They could see themselves carrying a gun, but not a bible or wearing a pair of Jordans, but not a cap and gown. His point to educators and youth leaders is that youth need experiences that help them to visualize themselves in more positive ways than what they see on television.

Years ago, Rev. Jesse Jackson wrote a slogan for the PUSH for excellence program that has now become famous and is taught all across America: "If my mind can conceive it and my heart can be believe it, I can "achieve it."

Those words are true and they compose what Dr. Robert Schuller would call the essential components of possibility thinking..to become something, I must first visualize it in my mind, believe in my heart that it is possible and "go for it."

These concepts did not have their origin with men like Norman Vincent Peale, Schuller and Jackson...they originated from God and are recorded in his word.

To become a Christian in the fullest sense, we must be able to see ourselves

leading lives as Christians, believe that it can happen to us and "go for it."

Even further, to fully possess all the blessings God has promised us, we must be able to visualize them. We must see what God wants us to be!

As Christians, we strive to open our minds and hearts to the spirit of God so that He can show us what is in store for us. He has promised us that what you see is what you get.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promise to Abraham, a promise of land and expansive blessings for centuries to come.

The promise to Abraham was so vast that it may have been difficult to internalize what was being offered, so God says to Abraham, "now lift thou up thy eyes, and look, and see thy own." He wanted Abraham to see with his own eyes, the depth of the Promised Land. It was rich, fertile and would sustain all of his family for generations to come.

God showed Abraham something that was infinitely better and more desirable than anything that he could imagine.

Despite its vastness, God told Abraham, what he saw he would receive and his family would enjoy.

Abraham pursued the land that he saw for the remainder of his life; he saw it and believed it.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians made a similar comparison about Christians pursuing heaven. In 1 Corinthians 13 he noted that often believers are unable to see clearly all that God has in store for them, that's why we live by faith. However, he noted that a time would eventually come when every believer would be able to see clearly the truths of God's word. Diminished perspective is common, but those who come to know God fully get a new perspective. The new perspective gives them a new appreciation of what is truly important, lasting and most effective in the service of God. The carnal man sees life through a dark glass, without the ability to see the whole picture. Yet, when we see God face to face, we will understand it all.

Seeing is Believing

There is an old maxim that maintains that seeing is believing. It is easier to believe an idea if it can be pictured in the mind. While there are many illusionists such as David Copperfield who purport to have made the Statue of Liberty disappear on live television, for the most part we still subscribe to the idea that seeing is believing. At the very least, seeing assists the believing process. That's why, from time to time, God gives us glimpses of the Kingdom of Heaven. John's vision on the Isle of Patmos provided us with peek into homeland of the saints. He showed us a city whose streets are paved with gold, lighted by the glory of God. Propelled by that glimpse we are motivated to continue our journey to the Promised Land.

1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” It means, we can’t see the fullness of what God wants us to be now, but one day we’ll see it all.

Today, we see only a glimpse, but one day, we will see the full picture. The glimpse we see is enough to satisfy our souls that the journey is worthy of our sacrifice.

Mirage or Reality

We must always consider whether what see or think we see is real or whether it is just a mirage. By nature, a mirage reflects light in ways that present images. The images that are seen are interpreted differently, depending on the mindset of the beholder. The images that we see in life work the same way; how we see it depends upon who does the interpretation. Often the world presents us with views that are flattering and enticing, but are not always true. These images are lures and traps that are dangled before us to reel us into a life that may not be commendable.

One day while walking down the street a pimp who known for his generosity in the neighborhood was hit by a bus and he died. His soul arrived up in heaven where he was met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter himself. ”Welcome to Heaven,” said St. Peter. “Before you get settled in though, it seems we have a problem. You see, strangely enough, we’ve never once had a player like you make it this far and we’re not really sure what to do with you.” ”No problem, just let me in,” said the pimp. “Well, I’d like to,” replied St. Peter, “but I have higher orders. What we’re going to do is let you have a day in Hell and a day in Heaven and then you can choose whichever one you want to spend an eternity in.” ”Actually, I think I’ve made up my mind, I prefer to stay in Heaven,” said the player. ”Sorry, we have rules...” And with that St. Peter put the pimp in an elevator and it went down-down-down to hell. The doors opened and he found himself stepping out onto the fine green carpet. There was plenty of food, ribs, chicken and some of the finest women he had ever seen. Some of the women who were once in his stable were there; they cheered for him. They ran up and kissed him dead on the mouth and they talked about old times. They danced a little and drank a little.

The pimp met the Devil who was actually a really nice guy who dressed very well in designer threads. He had a great time telling jokes and dancing. He was having such a good time that before he knew it, it was time to leave. Everybody shook his hand and waved good-bye as he got on the elevator. The elevator went up-up-up and opened back up at the Pearly Gates and he found St. Peter waiting for him. ”Now it’s time to spend a day in heaven,” he said. So he spent the next 24 hours lounging around on clouds and playing the harp and singing. He had a great time and before he knew it his 24 hours were up and St. Peter came and got him. “So, you’ve spent a day in hell and you’ve spent a day in heaven. Now you must choose your eternity,” he said.

The pimp paused for a second and then replied, “Well, I never thought I’d say

this, I mean, Heaven has been really great and all, but I think I had a better time in Hell." So St. Peter escorted him to the elevator and again he went down-down-down back to Hell. When the doors of the elevator opened he found himself standing in a desolate wasteland covered in garbage and filth. Old watermelon rhines were everywhere. There were flies, chicken bones and garbage for miles. He saw some of his friends who were dressed in rags and were picking up the garbage and putting it in sacks. The Devil came up to him and put his arm around him. "I don't understand," stammered the pimp, "yesterday I was here and there was green grass, pretty women, parties and fun. Now all there is, is a wasteland of garbage and all my friends look miserable." The Devil looked at him and smiled. "Face it my brother, Yesterday we were recruiting you, today you're staff. Welcome to hell." The pimp was fooled by a mirage and was rudely introduced to the reality.

When you can't see it

There are times when it is difficult to visualize the promises of God because our present looks like a battlefield of unfulfilled aspirations and frustrations.

Even though God has promised victory, it is hard to visualize when we are surrounded by defeat.

We can't see ourselves rising if we focus on the number of times we have fallen.

We need to clear our thinking and refocus on the truth that anything that God promises he can deliver, despite the way things appear.

Keeping focused means believing God. We must not fall victim to the doubt that has placed a strangle hold on so many others.

Like Sarah, they find it amusing when God makes a promise that seems impossible in light of the circumstances.

Like Pharaoh, they believe that faith in God's promises are the folly of the ignorant and whatever signs we see are cheap magician's tricks.

Like King Saul, they believe that should follow their own mind because God's will should only be trusted when his will mirrors our will.

As long as we can believe in God's power and grace that which He has for us is not far away.

What you will see, you will get

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when it comes to heaven, what you see and visualize is what you get!

Unlike the heat soaked images seen in the heat of the desert, heaven is not a mirage.

Unlike the mythical pot of Gold that sits at the end of the rainbow, heaven is not an imaginary fantasy.

Unlike the farcical spin of a bedtime children's story, heaven is not a fairytale!

When it comes to heaven, what you see is what you get.

Heaven has been the hope of believers in all ages.

Abraham took a journey in faith 'looking for a city with foundations.

Moses led Israel but Hebrews 11 says, 'for he was looking to the reward.

Those who labor to witness for Christ in spite of personal peril expect to receive, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.?(2 Corinthians 5:1)

In heaven you'll see a city that sits on 12 foundations, what you see is what you get.

In heaven you'll see a city that is surrounded by 12 gates, each one made of pearl, what you see is what you get.

In heaven you'll see a city whose streets are paved with gold, what you see is what you get.

In heaven you'll see a city that will have no street lights because it be illuminated by the glory of God, what you see is what you get.

In heaven you'll see a city that will have no hospitals because in the midst of it will be tree that will bear 12 manners of fruit whose leaves will be good for the healing of the nations, what you see is what you get.

'What you will see will be beyond comparison to anything you have seen on earth.

I don't know about you but I want to do a little site seeing in heaven!

I'll be more than a tourist, because what I see I will get!

I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates!

I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there! No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

To my father's house!

No. 9486-Black Heritage

He brought us out, to bring us in

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 6, 2011

SCRIPTURE:"And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." Deuteronomy 6:23

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why God chose to favor you when so many others have fared much less? Think about it! God spared your life and rescued you from some circumstances that should have destroyed you; why? He healed you from a sickness that has crippled or killed others; why? He opened doors of opportunity for you that were closed to others; why? Since God has a reason and a purpose for everything He does, then there must be a good reason why He has delivered us so often. What is His purpose for us?

We have the biblical accounts of scores of patriarchs who were delivered from adverse situations, miraculously, by the power of God himself. However, each of them had an associated purpose connected with God's intervention. Noah was delivered from the belly of the fish for the purpose of preaching to the people of Nineveh. Samson's strength was restored in blindness for the purpose of bringing down the Philistines. Noah was rescued from the flood in an ark for the purpose raising up a new, more God fearing world. Saul was delivered from blindness for the purpose preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the larger scheme of God's divine plan He places us in certain positions and gives us special gifts for a special role that we will play in the unfolding drama called life. Psalm 89:19, says, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Unseen by the hand of man God has exalted or lifted those He has anointed to promote the building of His kingdom. This unseen hand guides and controls, tears down and builds up. It also heals, soothes and encourages. That unseen hand is called providence, the will of God working itself out among men.

As Christians we should remember that the power of God is working everyday to deliver us from adversity. He's bringing us out to save us so that we can be available

for His service.

Exposition

This text focuses on the final instructions of Moses to the Children of Israel before they entered into the Promised Land.

At 120 years old, Moses was aware that the people would make it to the land of promise, although he himself would not get there with them.

In the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28, which means "a second look", Moses looks back over where God has brought them from and peeps over into the future as well.

The remaining verses of the six chapter provide a rationale to the people that explains the reason God brought them out of bondage in Egypt, forged a path for them through the Red Sea, sustained them in the wilderness and brought to the edge of Jordan.

Deuteronomy 6:23 notes that"... He brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which He sware unto our fathers."

It was a promised that must be full of sentiment and power for Moses. As he stood atop Mt. Nebo, he must have remembered those who left Egypt with hope in their hearts, on their way to the Promised Land. Now as the children and grandchildren of those old warriors stood on the threshold of the promise, sigh of appreciation can still be heard across the centuries.

Today, the story must be told of the old warriors who worshipped by the light of lanterns and kept warm by wood burning stoves. The story must be told of the old warriors that kept the church doors open despite depressions, hard times and wars.

Like Moses when we look back, we must say to the world, 'He brought us out, to bring us into the land of promise.

We are placed in a position for a reason

GOD INTENDED TO SAVE THEM FROM IT: God's deliverance of Israel was intended to save them from destruction. It was a destiny that seemed inevitable especially since Israel had lost the political power to control its own direction and its will to resist further degradation.

When God made the announcement there were many who thought that was impossible. It was not impossible or improbable because God intended to raise them to a height they had never imagined. They felt it was too marvelous to be true.

God asked them the same question that he asks us to day, "Just because it is too marvelous for your imagination, does that mean it is too hard for God?"

God's answer to them is the same answer He has for us, don't think that it can't be done because you can't visualize it, believe that it can be done, if God wants it done. Nothing is too hard for God.

God has the power to save us, even from ourselves.

This was the hope that God restored to Israel and it is the same hope he brings today, that from East to West, he will bring things together again. He will lift us up. He will save us from our adversaries but we must roll up our sleeves and prepare to make it happen and receive it when it comes.

GOD PROTECTED THEM IN IT: Before God delivers us from it he protects us while we are still in it.

The process of our deliverance is rarely instantaneous; it happens over time. While the deliverance is taking shape God arranges to protect us until it is time to move.

Believers must remember that God is at work, delivering us even if we don't readily notice His hand in our affairs.

If we get a promotion on the job, God is working, but if we are not selected for promotion...God is working that situation too! Romans 8:28 reminds us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

The prophet Elijah sat by a brook and was fed daily by ravens and drank from a brook. When Elijah wouldn't move, God dried up the brook and called the ravens home. Elijah recognized the hand of God in his situation and moved on with his life.

The man who missed his flight, thought he was having a bad day until he read how those who caught the flight were stuck for days in the snow! He praised God for missing the flight.

The man who thought he was having a bad day because he had a flat tire but as he changed the tire he notice his gas tank had a slow leak that could have caused an explosion and killed him. He praised God for the flat tire!

God protected our people while we were in our bondage experience. He protected us in it before saving us from it.

WE CAN'T LOSE HOPE WE MUST WIN IT: Standing on the Jordan, we can't lose hope because the waters are raging. We have seen our leaders assassinated, persecuted, suspended and publically humiliated. We have suffered the bitter cup of difficult times to reach this; but we are too close to stop now.

Before we lose hope in it we should remember how God has done it before.

Often, like Israel, we forget how God has delivered us from similar situations. In the wilderness The children of Israel grumbled and could not see all the ways that God had blessed them as they met and overcame one obstacle after another with the Egyptians and the Red Sea.

Whether it was legal slavery, the separate but equal doctrine of Plessey versus Ferguson or the Brown versus the Topeka Kansas school board decision, or Jones vs. the United States it is obvious that each time we came before our Red Sea or faced destruction by the approaching armies of our enemies, God has stood in the gap on our behalf. Every battle we have fought, we have done so realizing the presence of God without whom any victory could have been won.

Today, we are facing a new Red Sea but we are serving the same wise God. While we are in this situation, we need to keep hope while we are in it because God will truly save us from it.

God will lift us from it

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God brought us out of it so that he could take us to places that we have never been.

When God delivered us He brought us out of a horrible past. He brought us from a hopeless past and a helpless position.

He brought us out by making us the beneficiaries of His divine favor.

We are standing on the banks of Jordan!

On the other side of Jordan lies a land filled with milk and honey

On the other side of Jordan is the promise of eternity, in a land where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

On the other side of Jordan we will realize the fullness of God's favor.

This the same favor that was showered on Samuel that caused him rise from obscurity to become a great prophet. 1 Samuel 2:26 says, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men."

It's the same favor that Job talked about in Job 10:12 when he said, "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

This is the same favor that the angel told Mary about in Luke 1:30 when he said, "...Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God."

It's the same favor that David enjoyed because Acts 7:46 says David was a man, "Who found favor before God.."

God favored us and brought us to a land where honey is plenteous!

God favored us and brought us into edge of victory!

God favored us by giving us a glimpse of heaven's provisions!

Because of His favor we have been able to come through our Egypt, cross our Red Sea and enter our Promised Land.

It is His favor that gives us:

-STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

-ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

-INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

-COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because of His favor we are able to:

-Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

-Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

-Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

I'm glad that He is a wonder working God!

I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!

I'm glad that He is a soul saving God!

I'm glad that one day He saw me in it and decided to save me from it!

I'm glad that He decided to protect me from it while He guided me through it.

I'm glad that He decided to lift me from it and elevate me above it.

I'm glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!

I'm glad that He carried it to Golgotha's hill!
They nailed His hands to it, but he didn't stay on it!
They buried him in a borrowed tomb,
But, early Sunday morning He was buried in it, stepped out from it with all power in His hands!

No. 9487-Inspiration

Why settle for Less?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 13, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." Genesis 11:31

Introduction

Has there ever been a time in your life when you started out chasing a big dream, but settled for something less? There are many people who have settled for a level of life that is far from their original dream and even further from the life that God has in store for them?

Remember your dream? What happened to it? Are you living in the power of your dream or did you get side tracked? The Army has a slogan that says, "Be all you can be" are we being all we can be or have we settled for whatever we can get? Have we given up on that big dream?

Consider the hungry wolf who dreamed of having chicken for dinner. So he watched the hen house carefully and saw all of the fat hens moving around. Finally, he chased after one big fat hen, but just as he was gaining on the hen a rabbit crossed his trail. It was the biggest rabbit that he'd ever seen. He instantly forgot about the Hen who was eluding him and started to chase after the rabbit that seemed bigger and closer. After a few twists and turns a squirrel appeared in the road. The squirrel was so close that he could touch it, so he changed course and went after the amber little animal. Just as he was about to catch the squirrel, it disappeared. He spotted a rat and chased it for a small distance until the rat ran into a hole. As the sun went down he found himself standing outside waiting for a rat to come out. He started out looking for chicken and dumplings and ended the day standing guard over a rat hole!

How many of us today are guarding rat holes when we should be doing much more? Even more, how many are satisfied just where they are all and no longer desire dumplings but are content with rat soup?

God has blessings waiting for every believer, but many have not claimed them because they have accepted less than what they should have and have become comfortable in their acceptance.

If God has promised more, why should anyone settle for less?

If God has promised a full meal why should the hungry settle for a snack of crumbs?

As Christians, our desire is to work to build the kingdom of God. We strive constantly to make that happen. We have been promised salvation and life eternal in heaven. Regardless to how difficult our journey, we won't settle for less.

Exposition

This text focuses on the decision of Terah to pursue the promise of God, but he stopped short in Haran and died there.

Terah was the head of a great family who received instructions from God that he and his family were to move up to another level. They were charged to move out and move into a land that would given to them by God. The land, located in Canaan, has become known as the Promised Land.

Terah departed out of Ur of the Chaldees, with his son Abraham and Lot, and the rest of his family, in obedience to the call of God. His journey carried them to Haran, or Charran, a place about mid-way between Ur and Canaan, where they dwelt till Terah's head was laid, probably because the old man was unable, through the infirmities of age, to proceed in his journey.

Haran was beautiful and comfortable, but it was not the level God had in store for the family. The journey was not complete; God had something more in store. Yet, for a variety of reasons, Terah went no further. The scripture concludes "and they came into Haran, and dwelt there."

Dealing with Settling ways

DON'T MEET GOD HALF WAY: Terah moved out to claim the promise of God, but stopped half way; content with the fact that he had moved from his old surroundings and was, at the least in a new place. There are many, like Terah who hear God's command to climb to the top level, but they become comfortable several levels below the promise. We try to meet God half way, but He has promised us a full victory, not a compromise.

Too many are happy with a better blessing, and settle for better when they could have best. Half-way is better than we were, but nowhere near where we should be. Half way, is an improvement, but it is not the ultimate achievement. If God commands us to be a doctor, will he be pleased that we settled for being a doctor's assistant? If God commands us to be a missionary, is it sufficient for us to be a Sunday School teacher? If God commands us to reach the world, wouldn't he be satisfied if we just reached the neighborhood? If God commands it and we only obey a part of the command, that is the same as full disobedience. We do not have the liberty to reach the level we please and settle in, especially if that is not the level God has in store for us. Don't meet God half way, but be prepared to go all the way with Him.

CUT TIES THAT HOLD YOU DOWN: Terah settled in Haran and stopping reaching for the Land of Promise. However, Abraham was told to prepare to move out and to cut ties with those that would impede his journey. Read Genesis 12:1,"Now the

LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:" He was told to cut ties with things familiar to him and even kinfolks that might get in the way. There are some friends and family members that have stopped the faithful from reaching the next level for years. Out of loyalty to the old crowd or to certain family members we let them hang on to us; yet there may come a time when we must cut ties. Abraham tried to move out to claim his promise and carried Lot with him. It was long before the herdsmen of the two families started fighting, they were hating on each other and all progress stopped. Abraham didn't move forward until he cut ties with Lot. Cutting those ties freed him to move forward.

What ties are holding you? Is it your old running buddies, do you hate to leave them behind? Will you miss them too much to climb higher? Will you miss the old stomping ground? Is there a relative that always gets you off track? If so, it might be time for you to loosen some of those ties that are holding you down. God has a blessing for you, but it's on another level. Look around! There's someone around that's pulling you down, cut ties before you lose your way!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DEVIL ON THE NEXT LEVEL: There were many among Abraham's entourage who worried intensely about the enemies they would face if they left Haran and moved to the Promised Land. They were not warriors, but the enemies they would meet would be formidable. Abraham was sure that if God commanded Him to make the journey he would provide for him during the journey. He did not receive a secret path that would not be filled with trials and tests, in fact Abraham was sure to meet adversity, but with one caveat; he had God's promise.

There are many today who have failed to move to the next level because they are afraid of the devil on the next level. How many could be supervisors, but they settle in where they are because their present position is safe. How many could be division heads or top bosses but the devils on that level could end careers abruptly. Is that settling for less?

If you have been commanded to move into a position that would better enable you to help the kingdom and you turn it down for fear of the devils you'll meet, is that settling for less? It is no doubt that the closer you get to what God has promised you, the more opposition you will encounter. Yet, you should look at the verses of Genesis 12:2-3 again for they contain a word of encouragement, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." God says, "I want to put you in a position where you will be a blessing to others in my name. I will bless anybody who helps you, but I will also curse anyone who tries to get in your way!" He told Abraham that through Him many would be blessed...take out Abraham's name, put in your own and what you have is God saying that he wants to bless you so you can be a blessing to others, but the blessing is on another level, go for it, He'll take care of the devils!

Don’t settle for the unsaved life

Finally, brothers and sisters, there are many who have improved their lives considerably over the years, but they should not settle for less; the Godly life in Christ is the best!

There are many people in the world today who have improved themselves over the years, but that improvement is not their best.

There are many who no longer drink, gamble, party hard or live wildly, but even that improvement, as important as it is, is not where God wants them to be.

The great life that God has in store for us, is not defined by what we do not do, but by those things that we actually accomplish and achieve; we must always reach higher.

The only thing that is higher than a life that is free from worldliness is world that is filled with Godliness.

Those who climbed half way to where God wants them to be must now be prepared to make the next step, get closer to God and to know him for themselves.

There is no success we can hope to achieve in this world without God’s help!

There is no peace we can hope to acquire in this world without God’s help!

There is no forgiveness we can hope to receive except it comes through the blood of the Lamb.

I’m reminded of the little girl who spent the summer with her grandmother in the country. She enjoyed helping grandma make her special pound cake recipe. She enjoyed watching grandma mix the flour, eggs, milk and other ingredients. She saw her when she reached for a stick of real butter and mixed it in the bowl. Her heart jumped when the cake was sliced and placed on her saucer. It was so soft that it seemed that it could be cut with a feather. It was so flavorful that it seemed to caress her taste buds. Once she returned home her mother tried to satisfy her fancy. She brought her basket full of Little Debbie, but the little girl wouldn’t eat them. She made her cake out of the box that was Betty Crocker’s best, but the little girl still turned her head. “What’s wrong with these?” asked the mother. The little girl turned and said, these cakes don’t have what grandma puts in hers, she has something in it called scratch. Scratch is the best. When you’ve had the best, you don’t want the rest!”

Is there anybody here who can say, “I’ve tried the best, and after you’ve tried the best, you won’t settle for less.

Is there anybody here who can testify that God is a healing God? I see a woman pushing her way through the crowd saying, “If I can just touch the hem of His garment I know I’ll be made whole.” -I’ve tried the best and I won’t settle for less!

Is there anybody here who has been surrounded by a judgmental crowd and you needed a lawyer to plead your case. I see woman being accused of living in sin and was about to be convicted and stone to death until Jesus stood to plead her case asking, “He without sin, let him cast the first stone.” -In my courtroom he is the best, I won’t settle for less!

Is there anybody here who can testify that when all doors were closed for you and everyone had given up hope, that the Lord made a way out of no way. I’ve tried the

best, I won't settle for less!

Is there anybody here who can truthfully say, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, because I've tried him for myself"

Is there anybody here who is still holding on because, you've tried the best and you won't settle for less?

Is there anybody here who refuses to stop hoping because they know how to sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name!"

I've tried the best and I won't settle for less!

Over 2000 years ago God went through heaven's inventory of able men looking for savior to redeem lost men.

He saw the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they were all good men, but they were not the best!

He saw the names of Daniel and the three Hebrew Boys, they were all good men, but they were not the best.

He saw Solomon in all of his wisdom and David, a man after God's own heart, they were both good men but they were not the best.

Then I heard a voice say, "If the Lord needs somebody, here am I send me!"

Down through 42 generations came the best that heaven had to offer. Born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth. Tested in a wilderness for 40 days and nights!

Down in Jerusalem God's best, picked up an old rugged cross and was crucified on Calvary's hill.

But Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I've tried Him for myself!

When you've tried the best, you won't settle for less!

No. 9488-Communion

What shall we eat today?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 20, 2011

SCRIPTURE: Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you: Matthew 6:31-33

Introduction

Have you ever asked the question, "What are we eating today?" Whether it is a child or a spouse opening their lunch box at school or work or the fatigued laborer returning home after a hard day's work the question in every generation is , "What are we eating today?"

A generation ago that question was a tantalizing mystery. A lunch box could be stuffed with sandwiches, chips fruit, a thermos of soup and a delicious drink. An evening meal could easily be fried chicken or pork chops, a plate of greens, rice and gravy, corn on the cob and a slice of corn bread. A generation ago, there was a sense of excitement when we asked the question, what are we eating, today?"

Today, we may get an answer, but it may not offer excitement. If there is a lunch box it will be chunked full of fast, microwavable foods or handy munchables. If there is anything on the table, in many cases it might be a sack full of McDonald's, a 15 piece chicken bucket, and a plastic bag filled with white Styrofoam contained chunked full of catfish filets and fries.

While many men and women in this generation enjoy cooking, it is unquestioned that the number of people is declining who are willing to come home from a hard day and stand in the kitchen for another two hours to prepare a meal that will be gobbled down in front of the TV set without even a thank you. Many wives serve notice on their husbands before they marry that they "don't do the cooking thing." So it's Junk Food or no food. It's either fast food or growling stomach. It's either McDonald's, Uncle Ben's or DiGiorno.

Consider the man who was not very happy with his wife's cooking, but tried to put a good face on it when he talked with his friends. In fact, his wife cooked so badly that he hated to come home and ask "What are we eating, today." However, whenever he was surrounded by his friends he often bragged on what a great wife he had. He bragged that she was a perfect manager, great mother, an excellent housewife, a true friend and

partner and treated him like a king. All of his friends were envious, but soon they noticed that in his list of excellent qualities that he attributed to his wife, he never mentioned her cooking. When asked, he thought for a moment then answered, "When I come home every day, I ask what are we eating today, and she makes me feel like a God!" The other men looked in amazement. "Wow! Man, how can just asking a question make you feel like a god?" The man then answered proudly, "When I sit down to the table I feel like a god, because every time I look at my plate there is always a burnt offering!"

On a spiritual note, we could ask a similar question of God, "What are you serving today?"

His answer will surely be, "I'm preparing a table for you in the presence of your enemies, I plan to fill your cup until it overflows!"

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that our God prepares a table for us that is never filled with junk food or munchables. What he has for us is filling, enjoyable and nourishing; food from heaven's table for those who will be dining with the King.

Exposition

In this text Jesus speaks to his disciples about their commitment to building the kingdom that should have been foremost on their collective mind.

Jesus preached to and taught his disciples for three years. During that time He showed them the mysteries of heaven to come and the kingdom of God on earth. He urged them to stay focused on their immediate mission and to place less attention on the things that attract the attention of the world.

He told them that they should not be totally consumed with what they would eat it and where or what they will wear and when. Their total focus should be the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The emphasis of the kingdom of heaven is not in asking the question "What shall we eat or what shall I be served, but rather what can I prepare for others and what can I serve that will help them. Assume that attitude, says Christ, and all of the other things shall be added unto you.

Meals and Service

There are many social scientists who believe that there are parallels between the way we approach meal times and the way we approach life in general. Even further, there are those that say our approach to meals often reflects the way we relate to God. Joy Overstreet posed a series of questions that can help us to draw the connections. She asks us to consider our last full meal and answer the following questions about it:

1) Who were you with at your last meal? Were you sitting at a table specifically set up for eating? Were you feeling relaxed?

2) Were you hungry when you began the meal? Did you pay attention to what was on the plate, the colors, the quantities? Did you focus on the meal at all or was your mind someplace else?

3) Did you eat your meal slowly or did you gobble it down? Did you really taste the food and savor it?

4) Did you feel grateful for the food and for the person or persons with whom you shared the meal. Did you feel satisfied? Would you like that eating experience again?

The social scientist say the way we approach meals may be the same way we approach life and…maybe even our service to God.

There are many today who are eating more but enjoying it less. They are eating, but never seem to get full. They are eating, but they didn't get to enjoy the experience.

When Jesus spoke to his disciples he told them to be focused on why they do what they do, not the deeds themselves. The businessman who focuses on why he's trying to make money and not the money itself, enjoys his money more. The deacon who focuses on why he visits the sick and encourages the broken hearted enjoys the service more. Singers who focus on why they sing enjoy it more.

When you enjoy the experience, you don't want to gobble it down. You approach it with a hunger to be fulfilled. You enjoy the company, you savor it and you taste it and after having completed the meal you are satisfied.

Jesus said seeking the kingdom of God and its righteousness is the first priority, that's what every disciple is charged to do. What we will eat or wear is only important as it relates to helping us achieve our top priority. When our top priority is addressed all of the other things, He said, will be added to you, but they will be secondary.

What are we eating? Bread!

What shall we eat today? In a spiritual context the answer is bread. Bread is good for both the body and the soul.

Nutritionists tell us that we need certain quantities of food from certain groups every day: milk and meat requires 2-3 servings a day; fruit and vegetables require 3-5 servings, but breads require 8-11 servings per day. In the mind of the nation's nutritionists, breads are needed most to nourish the human body and maintain health.

Each day we should ask ourselves, from a spiritual context, "What shall we eat today?" We will be sustained by the bread of life, Jesus himself. As we work as clerks, teachers, businesspersons, students, retired service and a plethora of other fields, approach them with the power of God's words that colors your whole attitude about what you do.

Jesus said in John 6:35, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. The presence of Christ in a believer's life is essential to satisfying life's hungers. He meets all needs and satisfies all desires.

In John 6:51 Jesus says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Lord's supper is a spiritual meal we share with good company. We enjoy the experience; we approach it with a hunger that needs to be satisfied. Our mind is here, not far away. We are enjoying every minute of the experience, without distractions. We don't want it rushed, we don't want to gobble it down.

What are you serving?

Sometimes our attitude about the meals we eat is set when we hear the answer to the question, "What are you serving today?" That can also apply to our service to God, when we ask, "Who am I serving, and what am I serving?"

We are serving a powerful and awesome God. We are serving a God who hears and answers our prayers, lifts our burdens, inspires us in moments of despair, and forgives us and cheers us and saves us from ourselves. Who are we serving? We are serving a God who is so high we can't go over Him, so low we can't go under him, so wide we can't go around him. We are serving a God who is an awesome God.

What are we serving?

Singers what are you serving? Is just any old warmed over song or is it a song that will help build up the body of Christ and communicate the word?

Ushers, what are you serving? Is it just a dry look and a folded program or a service of warm outreach that ushers in the spirit of God.

Ministry leaders, what are you serving? Is it just another thankless day of driving the van, preparing homeless meals, climbing on a ladder and changing the sign, repairing broken facilities, playing another hymn on the same old organ, dealing with the problems of youth, handling the finances; or is it another chance to touch a life, through my service, in the name of our Lord and savior.

If we lose focus on why we do what we do, the entire service becomes an interruption.

Choir rehearsal becomes an interruption from what's really important to you. Meetings and other gatherings with the church become less enjoyable. In fact, when do come we want to gobble it down and get it over with as quick as we can. If there is a drive through edition, maybe by television or podcast, then I could gobble it down even faster. If we lose focus on why we do what we do, the whole experience with Jesus is lost and we never understand why others seem to get so much from it, but when we leave all we think about it what it cost.

So, Jesus told his disciples, "Seek ye first the kingdom God," make serving God your primary goal and everything else will fall into place.

What are you serving? The love of God, to all who will hear and receive Him!

When you are hungry

Finally, brothers and sisters, the answer to the question, "What shall we eat today?" is especially important when you are hungry.

When we are hungry we desire to be fed.

When we are hungry we anxiously await the food that will be served.

There are many people who approach their worship and service the same way,

they walk in our doors hungry for worship, hungry to be in the presence of God.

If you understand that, then you understand what David meant when he said he satisfies my longing soul. He fills every empty cup. He provides bread for every hungry soul.

I heard him say, I am the bread of life. He that eateth of this bread shall never hunger!

Somebody here today knows what it's like when your soul gets hungry.

When your soul is hungry you only see the impossible, but after you are fed the —IMPOSSIBLE becomes possible.

When your soul is hungry you only see the improbable, but after you are fed the —IMPROBABLE becomes probable.

When your soul is hungry you only see the unbelievable, but after you are fed the —UNBELIEVABLE becomes believable.

When your soul is hungry you only see the unconquerable, but after you are fed the —UNCONQUERABLE mountains are made low.

After you are fed —IMPASSABLE valleys are exalted.

—UNDESIRABLE rough places are made plain.

—UNRELIABLE crooked places are made straight.

I hear the old warriors say, Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

Lord, I hold up my hunger for more faith, feed me till I want no more!

Lord, I hold up my hunger for strength, feed me till I want no more!

Lord, I hold up my hunger for obedience, feed me till I want no more!

Lord, I hold up my hunger for blessings, feed me till I want no more!

What shall we eat today? We shall eat the bread of life?

It is bread not hurriedly prepared in a back room kitchen, or popped from a can like a biscuit.

The bread we need cannot be found on the shelves of a store!

The bread we need came down here over 2000 years ago into a little place called Bethlehem,

The house of Bread. He died on an old rugged cross, between two thieves!

But Early Sunday morning! He arose, with all power in his hands!

What shall we eat today? The bread of life!

We shall eat at a table especially prepared, without distractions, in the company of good friends. And won't eat it in a hurry, but we will savor its meaning and enjoy the experience.

What makes it even better is that this meal is free…Jesus paid the bill!

No. 9489-Prayer

One Call Does It All

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle
Monroe, La.

March 2011

SCRIPTURE: I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints. —Psalm 85:8

Introduction

What if you tried to talk to God and could not get through? What if there was a busy signal each time you called? Or worse, suppose you reach an automated angelic voice that instructs you to dial one for prayer requests, two for confessions and three to report an emergency? To speak with the big man Himself please hold. Please note because of the high volume of calls that the big man receives your wait time may be several days. If you prefer, you can leave a message on his voice mail and He'll get back to you at his earliest convenience.

Such a heavenly call would be disappointing at the least; especially since we expect VIP service as a child of God.

We have come a long way since Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone. We have grown from scratchy voices that were nearly inaudible to crystal clear voices delivered by fiber optic cables on the ground and satellite signals in the air. Fiber optics, cellular and electronic communications have prompted many to both expect and demand access.

Gone are the days when a real person greets you on the other end of a phone call. It seems as though whenever we try to "reach out and touch someone," we are greeted with a computerized voice.

I'm glad this isn't true of our Father in heaven. He is always there. No voice-mail boxes, no "press 2 for more grace" and no "call waiting" interruptions. Thankfully, "Call to Me, and I will answer you" (Jer. 33:3) has not been replaced by, "All lines are now busy. Your call is important to Me. Please stay on the line."
Yet I wonder what kind of access He has to us?

We expect direct access to God whenever we call day or night.

Communication with God is a two-way street. He speaks to us through His Word when we come before Him in prayer. We feel his presence and hear His voice through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He paid a great price to keep the mainline open so that we can talk to him and he can talk to us.

As Christians, we are thankful to Christ for giving us access to God; now we can

call Him up tell what you want.

Exposition

This text finds David showing believers how to call on God and to wait for an answer.

In this psalm David uses the first seven verses as a tutorial based on his prior experience in talking to God. If we look closely we see an outline take shape:

Thank God for past favors and blessings; that's the tone of verses 1-3. It's a way of saying that our present problems should never cause us to lose sight of all that God has done for us in the past.

Then we are shown how to make our petition for our present situation. In this situation, David asked for the troubles of the people to be turned. Thus, in verse 4 we hear the petition to turn us or change our condition. He asked for relief.

Then, in verses 5-6, we are shown David appealing for revival, not just relief but full restoration of the favor and grace once known.

That's one side of the conversation, our side.

The text, beginning at verse eight now tells us what to do next, wait to hear God. We are reminded that if we wait to hear God, he will speak to our souls.

Calling on God connects us to his strength

For generations saints have learned that there are advantages to calling on God. Those advantages include:

Calling God connects us to His strength: Believer's call on God to benefit from his strength. There are times when the strongest believers experience weakness; it is a part of our nature. The spirit is often willing but the flesh is weak. These are the times that we draw strength from God.

In Psalms 19:14 David said, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." He acknowledged God as his strength. When our strength is rooted in our faith we are blessed and assisted in ways that could not happen otherwise. Psalms 84:5 says, "Blessed[is] the man whose strength[is] in thee; in whose heart[are] the ways[of them]."

For that reason we are encouraged to stay connected with God and to constantly look for opportunities to be in his presence. Psalms 105:4 encourages us to "Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore." Connecting with not only brings us strength but it sustains through difficult times.

Calling God connects us to restoration

Connecting gives us restoration. No one is perfect. Even the best person makes

mistakes. That's why pencils come with erasers and computers have spelling and grammar checkers. Mistakes are inevitable. Without the redemptive blood of Christ no believer has a chance to acquire eternal life. Connecting with God through faith in Christ gives us access to the restorative power of the blood. It is through this relationship that we have a hope of forgiveness. Our connection with Christ is our opportunity to begin again. Not only is it an opportunity, but starting over is almost a requirement. He said, "Except a man be born again" he cannot begin life in the kingdom of God. We are inspired by the truth that believers who are in Christ are "new creatures." Old things are passed away and all things become new.

The potential to begin again is exciting. It lifts the spirits and it provides us hope of a brighter future.

The birth of the Christ child inspires this hope because we know that as a man and as the son of God, he looks beyond our faults and sees our needs.

Calling on God gives us direction

Connecting with God gives us direction: One of the great advantages of connecting with God is that He is constantly with us, providing us with inspiration and direction. Because God lives in us, through the indwelling of His spirit, He directs and motivates us.

How does God direct us? To answer this question we can look at the way God has directed believers in the past. He spoke to Abraham directly and told him about the promised land. Based on his conversation with God, Abraham set out on a lifelong quest searching for a city. The prophet Elijah heard God's direction in a still small voice in the wilderness. Saul received his direction on the Damascus Road. Once they connected with God He spoke to them and gave direction to their lives.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us in similar ways. Sometimes we hear His voice as clear as crystal. At other times we feel Him nudging us gently. In moments when we found ourselves in a slump were impossible times; we came to a complete halt and it was only the Holy Spirit that prompted us to get going again.

The same is true when we were saved from big mistakes. Sometimes it was the stumbling block that frustrated us that saved us from the troubling situation. It has been the Holy Spirit; living in us who helped us passed our most troubling moments. We can't quite describe how God lives in us.

One song writer said, "Something within me that holdeth the reigns. Something within that banishes pain…all that I know there is something within."

It only takes one call

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when we call on God, one

call does it all.

The great thing about the Lord is that He is all in one. He is all knowing, all powerful and everywhere at the same time.

That means wherever we are we can call on Him.

Jonah called on Him from the belly of a whale and found out that all he needed was one call; after one call that whale spat him out to begin a new life mission.

Joseph called on Him from a dungeon in Egypt and God raised him from a prison cell to become prime minister of Egypt. Ask him and he will tell you that one call does it all. Daniel called on Him from the Lion's den and was rescued from the hungry claws of the lions. He will tell you that one call does it all Hezekiah called on Him while laying on his death bed and received an immediate answer of 15 more years of life. He will tell you that one call doe it all. When you call on God, all you need to get through is to call on the name of Jesus! You don't have to be perfect to call on God, but you do have to know Jesus! You don't have to be wealthy or smart to call on God, but you do have to be willing submit to His will in the name of Jesus. To make that one call to the trine of grace you need an obedient life, a desire to submit to His will, and request in Jesus' name! All you have to do is ask God to forgive you and it's done. David sinned so badly that God turned His back on His family and the whole nation. But David dropped to his knees and said, Create in me a clean heart oh God. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and renew a right spirit within me. When we get right with God we'll find that it's easy to get a prayer through. I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things! Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength! The good thing about it is that one call does it all!

In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!

In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

Call on Him, trust in His words, and ask what you will in Jesus' name and God will hear you when you pray.

One call does it all!

No. 9490-Inspiration

You didn't see me, but I saw you

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 27, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." John 1:48

Introduction

Have you ever been in a distant place, only to bump in to someone from home? Those who have traveled know this experience. These were the times when you were hundreds of miles away from home, but stumbled into a familiar face in a supermarket, in a shopping mall or while attending a public activity. Some learn that our neighbor saw us much earlier, from across a room or from a distance in the crowd, and had been watching us before speaking. It lets you know what a small world in which we live. There are very few places we can go in this world and not be seen.

The little children play hide and go seek in the house. Where can anyone hide in your house that they cannot be found? There are just so many places you can hide. They are usually always found even those who hide themselves in closets, cupboards, under beds and even in the dirty clothes hamper.

We all have our hiding places. Corrie Ten Boom wrote of her secret sanctuary from the Nazis in her book the "The Hiding Place." Ali Baba and the 40 thieves of the Arabian Nights hid themselves inside of a mountain whose door only opened with the words "Open Sesame." The prophet Elijah tried to hide from King Ahab under a Juniper Tree. We go to our hiding places because we don't want to be seen.

It's an eerie feeling to be watched in secret. In 2002 a Monroe woman, Susan Wilson, was the victim of a neighbor who installed video cameras all over her house, including her bedroom, and recorded everything. When discovered, prosecutors were frustrated because while there were laws about unlawful entry, and peeping toms, there were no laws about installing cameras in a neighbor's house. Wilson went on a campaign to get laws changed; nine states now have video voyeurism laws.

Very few people relish being watched in secret. So we install curtains, and blinds in homes, darkly tint the windows in our cars, protect our email passwords, and register in hotels under assumed names when we don't want to be discovered. But,

suppose I told you that despite our best efforts at remaining anonymous, that God knows who we are, where we are, how we got where we are and why?

It might be a surprise to some, but God knows all of our identities and hiding places and even our thoughts. He has written it in his word. Psalms 139:2-3 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." It means God knows and sees everything we do. He sees us, even though we can't see Him.

As Christians, we are aware that God knows all about us. He keeps his eye on us, not to spy on us, but to protect us, provide for us and direction. It should give us a sense of security to know that He sees us, even though we can't see Him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he assembled his disciples and called upon Nathaniel to follow Him.

Jesus had entered into Galilee and requested Philipp to become one of his disciples. The text says Phillip found Nathaniel and told him that the one prophesied by Moses had come. Phillip told Nathaniel that the promised savior was the son of Joseph from a small town called Nazareth. Phillip doubted that Jesus could be the Messiah because he was born in Nazareth. He asked the question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Phillip's only answer was, "come and see."

Soon Jesus met Nathaniel for the first time. Instantly he discerned that Phillip was a good man and addressed him as "an Israelite in whom is no guile."

Nathaniel wondered how Jesus could make such a statement when they had never met and neither knew anything about the other. Nathaniel asked, "when knowest thou me?" In other words he asked, "Have we met before? How do you know me?"

Jesus could have answered that he knew Nathaniel before he was born. He could have said that while he was yet just a heartbeat in his mother's womb he observed him. He could have said, before his existence was even a thought floating in the eons of time, he knew him. Such an answer would have been too confusing, so Jesus answered him by saying, in John 1:48 "..Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

That was enough to convince Nathaniel that Jesus was the Lord because he knew that only a man of great discernment, a man of God or God himself could have known that he had been under the fig tree.

J esus told him that he believed because He revealed that He saw him under the fig tree, but he promised him that "thou shalt see greater things than these."

From that day forward, Nathaniel became a believer.

What Jesus Saw

Jesus revealed great truths about Himself when he responded to Nathaniel. Those

truths allow us to get an insight into how God sees us as well.

HE SEES US AT WORSHIP: It was a common practice in the Eastern Culture to have a place of worship and prayer. It was not unusual for many to pray under trees. The text does not tell us exactly what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree, but if common practice is a guide, he probably prayed. In his quiet moment, whatever it was, Christ saw Him. Even today, the Lord sees us in our moment of worship. When no one else is looking, He sees us and hears us. He sees our devout and contrite spirit. He hears our prayers. If we look around in this room, we can't see Him, but He can definitely see us. For Nathaniel, that point of contact was a fig tree. For you, it might be your dining room table in a quiet time of the day. It might be special moments that you spend on the side of your bed as you begin and end your day. Your fig tree could be one of many places where you talk to God and you can feel His presence. Moses climbed to the top of a mountain, Abraham made sacrifice before an altar, and Jesus went into a garden. We know about the garden. It might be this same garden that the song writer spoke of when he said, "I come to the garden alone, while due is still on the roses. And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am His own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

HE SEES OUR WEAKNESSES: God knows everything about us, including our strengths and weaknesses. Often we try to hide our weaknesses and sins from others, but God knows. Adam and Eve faced discovered this truth in the Garden of Eden. They had broken God's law and eaten of the forbidden fruit and they hid their nakedness behind fig leaves and tried to hide themselves behind the trees. However, their fig leaves were transparent. They hid their nakedness from each other, but not from God. There is nothing about us that God does not see. If we cheat, steal, lie or misrepresent ourselves, we may successfully fool others, but God knows. David was able to deceive the people of Israel about His sins with Bathsheba and his state ordered assassination of her husband Uriah, but God knew.

Jesus said in Luke 12:2, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." The title of Tyler Perry's stage play said it all, "What's Done in the dark, will come to the light." It will come to light because God sees our weaknesses.

Unlike our enemies, while God sees our weaknesses, he loves us anyway. He does not condone our sins. He does not endorse our sins. He does not bless us in our sins, but he loves us. God hates sin, but he loves the sinner. Unlike our enemies he looks beyond our faults and weaknesses and sees our need. He forgives us, we repent. He gives us another chance because he sees us in our weakness.

HE SEES OUR NEED: God sees our daily needs. He scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive. Physiologically, we need food, clothing and shelter at the offset. Beyond that we need health care and emotional support. The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. A widow woman who struggled to provide for family saw God meet her need by giving her what she needed on a daily basis. Christ

saw the health care need of the man sitting by the pool for 38 years and provided it for him. The Apostles saw a lame man at the temple gate and answered his plea by saying, Silver and Gold have I none but such as I have, give I thee. Mary and Martha grieved over the loss of Lazarus and we see Jesus responding to their need in a unique way. The preponderance of scripture teaches that God sees the immediate need of every believer. Whether our needs are financial, involving the payment of loans, meeting daily demands or just making ends meet; God sees our need. This should be a reason for hope for every believer because we know that our individual situation is not unnoticed by the savior. Therefore, the songwriter asks, Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home. For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.

We cannot see it, but ..

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider there is much more waiting for those who trust in the Lord.

We cannot see God but he sees us. He doesn't see what we are today, but he sees our potential.

Sometimes we can only see our weakness, but even when we can't see Him, God sees our strength.

When we have failed all we can see is defeat, but even when sadness clouds our vision and we cannot see Him, God sees our ultimate victory.

When Jesus spoke to Nathaniel he revealed to him another mystery. Nathaniel was convinced because Christ saw him under a fig tree, but in verse 51 a greater truth was revealed both to Nathaniel and to every generation, "John 1:51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." It was a promise of greater revelations received from being in the presence of God.

If Nathaniel was excited about the fig tree, his faith would be doubled when he experienced fullness of the Lord. Jesus said, "Ye shall see"

Saints should be excited about the "Ye shall see" because it is a promise to take present blessings which we can see and expand upon them in the realm of the "Ye shall see." This is realm that the word speaks of when it says 1 Corinthians 2:9, "…Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be"

This place is in the land of the "Ye shall see!"

What God is preparing for us is:

—Better than good; richer than rich!

—Softer than soft; and sweeter than sweet!

In the land of "Ye shall see" the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

In the land of "Ye shall see" the crooked places will be made straight and the rough places will be made smooth.

In the land of "Ye shall see" you'll have a new house, because Jesus said, "In my father's house are many mansions"

Don't get too comfortable with your newly paved street of blacktop and asphalt, because in the land of "Ye shall see" the streets will be paved with gold!

Don't get too comfortable with your digitized alarm clock that wakes you up every morning, because in the land of "Ye shall see" time shall be no!

Don't get too comfortable with your new dress and shoes because in the land of "Ye shall see," every saint will put a new robe and slippers.

In the Land of the "Ye shall see"

—Those who have fallen will stand on their feet.

—Those who have cried tears of pain, will dry their eyes, because God will wipe all of their tears away!

—Those who are lost will find their way to the throne!

I don't know about you, but I'm on my way to the land of "Ye shall see"

Jesus, is preparing that place for us!

On his way to get everything ready he stopped by Bethlehem!

On his way to get everything ready he hung around Palestine for 33 years!

On his way to get everything ready he stopped by Calvary and died!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

We may not be able to see Him, but after while, bye and bye, we shall see Him face to face!

No. 9491-Inspiration

Sweet Water

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 3, 2011

SCRIPTURE:"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them," Exodus 15:25

Introduction

What do you do when you thirst for life's fresh experiences but all you seem to get is bitter water? Bitter experiences are those that are troubling, disturbing upsetting, unrewarding and disastrous. Most of us have had at least one bitter experience in the course of our lives. Those bitter moments are the ones that frustrated us and prompted us to throw up our hands saying, "What's the use!"

There are many people who have been wounded by so many bitter experiences that they themselves have become bitter and unbearable.

When we become bitter we quickly become one of many characters we associate with bitterness: Ebenezer Scrooge and The Grinch quickly come to mind but there are many more that we know who are closer to home. Their faces are curled up and they are always frowning, complaining and rarely have a kind word to say. Sometimes our bitterness can make us unbearable.

We should be encouraged to know that just as life can bring us to bitter water that our God can change bitter water into sweet water. The power of God can transform bitter situations to better situations. God can take bad and turn it into good, loss and turn it into gain. Therefore, we should not be overwhelmed by the bitter circumstances of this life because we are "more than conquerors" in Christ Jesus.

As Christians, our goal in life is to trust God to help us turn bitter experiences into sweet water through his power.

Exposition

The text focuses on Israel in the wilderness, and its thirst for water. Three days journey into their march toward the promise land, Israel encountered thirst that shattered their faith. Three days earlier they had sang great songs about how God

drowned pharaoh's army in the Red Sea and delivered them. They praised God and laughed at their enemies. Now, three days later they faced a new enemy and fear struck them again.

Their thirst in the wilderness was one of their fist tests. It was a trial by water. When they finally acquired water, they learned that it was bitter. Exodus 15:23 says that the name of the water they found was called Marah because it was bitter and unfit to drink. They complained about the bitter water and God showed Moses a tree that was thrown into the water and the water became sweet.

The tree symbolized the power of faith in God's gospel message, applied to bitter situations, turning them sweet. The tree was not a special creation; it was actually standing there at the time that Israel complained of thirst. Even Moses himself did not see it, it was revealed to him by God.

God took what was already at their disposal, but never considered and used it to turn bitter water into sweet water.

Bad Water

Life has a way of presenting us with situations that are not always what we plan or expect. What we get are:

DEFICIENCES: Israel traveled through the wilderness, excited about going to the Promised Land, but went three days with no water. Nearly a million people complained at the same time about the lack of water; that deficiency stood between the people and their dream. In a similar sense we have often begun pursuits only to learn that we can't get our hands on what we need. For some its money, for others its assistance of any kind, still others just want a little less interference. Too often it appears to us that we are always deficient in some way. We either don't have enough experience or too much experience. We're either too young or we are too old. We're not tall enough or we are too tall. Somehow we always seem to come up short. Fortunately, God doesn't operate with deficiencies when it comes to his people. We often come up short, but He makes up the difference every day with His Amazing Grace. We come up deficient every day but God still tells us the same thing that He told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My Grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness." When we are deficient, God is sufficient.

DEFILEMENTS: When Israel finally found water in the wilderness, it was defiled and bitter. They had it, but could not drink it; it was no-good. Sometimes what we want seems to elude us, then we get it, it causes us more problems that it's worth. It's the used car that we bought at a deal. We saved a bundle when we bought it for just $500, but we've spent $3,000 to keep it running. We have all experienced Marah. What we thought would be a sweet romance toward into a bitter experience. Our dream job turned into literal slavery. Our dream marriage turned into a nightmare. When it turns bitter, that's Marah. When we received our first credit card it was sweet, but our lack of discipline turned them into bitter water.

When we experience Marah or bitter water they it can sour our whole outlook on

life if we are not careful. Bitterness can seep into every aspect of our lives to that point that even when we try to pray we bring the ashes of past bitter experiences into the solitude of their prayer room. Some find difficulty praying for those who may have mistreated them, misused or abused them. Some can't pray for a former spouse and can't stand the baby's daddy.

Yet, Christ calls on us to move on with our lives. The spirit of our faith is that we should rise above bitter situations and strive for the sweetness that comes with the love and mercy of God.

Paul said, "..Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.(Philippians 3:13)

DECONTAMINATED: Israel complained to Moses and Moses complained to God. Then God sanctified something that had stood right by the water all of the time, a tree, that once thrown in the mix, bitter water became sweet water. It wasn't the tree, but it was God getting involved in the bitter situation that turned things around. That's what happens when people of God encounter bitter water. We go to God. We must go to God because bitter and troubling situations are too much for us to handle alone. We need help that reaches beyond ourselves; we need the help of God.

When sickness comes in the family, financial crises perplex us; we draw upon resources of spirit and strength that normally go unused. While bitter experiences are crippling, bothersome and time consuming, there is only one way to get help; God must intervene. He and He alone can make bitter experiences sweet, often by using what should have been obvious, but we never thought about it.

Who are the people who must let God make the water sweet? It is those of us who have reached a bitter experience, a loss, a failure and disappointment and asked God for an answer. This is cook who couldn't find a job and faced eviction until God showed her how to sell lunches every day. The man who was laid off at the landscaping company, leaned on his lawn mower, bitter over his loss until God showed him that he lived in a neighborhood where folks were often too busy to cut their own grass. It was there all of the time, but God took what should have been obvious and decontaminated their bitter water. Have bitter water experiences? Tell Jesus. The song writer says, "I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus. I cannot bear my burdens alone..Jesus can help me, Jesus alone."

Sweet Water

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that we serve a God who specializes in turning bitter water into sweet water.

In their midst of their wilderness complaints, Israel found that God was truly sufficient for all of their needs. He was able to give them sweet water.

When Egypt suffered from seven years of famine, God used Joseph to reveal a plan for them to experience sweet water.

After 400 years of the bitterness of slavery, Moses told Pharaoh to, "Let my people go." It was sweet water.

When Israel found itself between a rock and a hard place with Pharaoh's army behind them and the Red Sea in front of them, God stood between them and their enemies and made a path through the sea on dry land. That was sweet water.

The biblical record is filled with examples of how God takes bitter waters and makes them sweet!

Joseph was thrown into a prison and left for dead, but God took the bitterness of a lonely pit and prison and turn it into the sweetness of the palace!

Moses was exiled from Egypt as an outcast of Egyptian royalty, but God took the bitterness of a dry barren desert and turned it into the sweetness of victory that let the Israelites go free.

Naaman found that the bitterness of his leprosy could be sweetened by seven dips in waters touched by the hand of God.

Some, in the poverty of their youth, could not afford to buy soft drinks, or even a lemon to make lemonade. There are many who can remember, though how the children would take teaspoons of sugar and put in glasses of water, without any lemons or cool aide and drink it down like it was ambrosia from heaven. Back then they called it sweet water.

That's what God can do for us, even today. He can take the worse situation and make it sweet.

When our funds run low we are tasting bitter water, but the good news is that God can fill empty wallets and turn bitter water into sweet water.

When we give up hope for our big dream, we are tasting bitter water, but the good news is that God can renew lost hopes; he takes bitter water and turns it into sweet water.

When we become afraid of failing and our progress stops, we are tasting bitter water, but the good news is that God takes our fears and give us renewed courage, turning our bitter water into sweet water

Are your doubts multiplying? God can take our doubts and give us assurances!

No wonder the song writer wrote, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory divine! This is my story! This is my song! Praising my savior all the day Lord! When He changes our doubt into confidence that's "sweet water."

I don't know about you, but I have encountered many bitter water situations, but I serve a God who showed me how to take bitter water and make it sweet.

Maybe that's why the songwriter declared, He's sweet I know! He's sweet I know!

I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than blue berry jam!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than strawberry jelly!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than homemade peach preserves!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter the syrup and molasses!

His name is Jesus! He's sweeter than the icing on a chocolate cake

His name is Jesus! The Lily of the Valley! The Bright and Morning Star!

He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Dark clouds may rise! Strong winds may blow! But I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!

No. 9492-Blessings

Heavenly Faucets

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 10, 2011

Scripture:"And it shall come to pass in that day,[that] the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Joel 3:18

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to think about the source of your blessings? There are many who enjoy tremendous bounty from God each day without really thinking about the source. The source is the favor of God.

Some are like the pigs that held a meeting in the barn to discuss an important issue. It appears that there were many apples on the ground in the orchid and the pigs ate them freely. However, they were frustrated because there were so many trees in the orchid. The trees took up all of the space, dropped leaves on the ground and created so much shade that the apples were hard to find. The pigs concluded that the best way to solve the problem was to get together and cut down all of the trees so that they could get to the apples. So all of the pigs cut down the trees and cleared the fields and praised each other for all of the wisdom they learned at the University of Pigology. However, the next year the pigs were surprised when they went to their big, clear, field. There were no apples. While they complained about the trees being in the way, they never stopped to consider that the apples on the ground fell from the trees.

Life is often the same way. In the frailty of our humanity we often forget where our blessings come from. The child that disrespects a parent forgets the source of their blessing. An employee that disrespects an employer, forgets who writes the weekly paycheck. A citizen that talks down the nation in which he/she lives, forgets the source of their freedom to speak freely.

God is the source of all our provisions whether it's food, clothing or shelter. It's as if there is a great fountain in heaven and God just turns it on and lets it flow; not just to us but to all of God's creation. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 6:28-30, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Whether it is a house, a car, a little money, a few possessions

or the pillow under your head all flow from the fountains of God's favor and blessing. He is our source.

Hebrews 12:2 says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is His hand that is on the faucet in heaven. It is His hand that controls the flow of blessings that we receive.

Like the little pigs, we may be enjoying the apples, but the source, the author of our salvation, is Christ Jesus.

As Christians, we thank God for the fountains in heaven from whence our blessings flow. We give praise to our Lord for regulating that flow so that it always reaches us just in the nick of time.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Joel as he explains how God will supply blessings to the people of God in the latter days.

Joel often prophesized of improved conditions and blessings that will flow from heaven in what he called "the day our Lord." Many of his prophecies dealt with changing conditions that will exist when the fullness of God's glory reveals itself in the church age.

Many are familiar with his most quoted prophecy which is: Joel 2:28, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:"

In this text Joel spoke also of a time far in his own future, a day when the people of God would receive blessings from the fountains of heaven. The fact that he used the phrase "in that day" indicates that he looked far to the future. He used highly poetic language to describe the way the blessings would come. He said they would drop like new wine and flow like milk from the mountains.

The people themselves are represented by the place called the Valley of Shittim. It is a dry, desolate valley, seldom the beneficiary of great waters. Yet, Joel notes that the promise of God is the God will open up the faucets and fountains of heaven and water valley Shittim.

The direct recipient of this flow from the faucets of heaven would be the church, that would be infused with a great outflow of God's blessings. In the presence of its enemies, Joel noted that the church receive great and immense blessings when the fountains of heaven were released.

Thus, Joel gives an encouraging word to the body of Christ. In difficult and dry times, God will open the faucets of heaven to fill the cups of his people. He will fill them until they overflow.

Dealing with Faucets

There are fountains in heaven through which our blessings flow, but the faucets to the fountains that allow us to tap into the heavenly reservoir are close by. Consider certain truths about faucets:

THE MIRACLE IS NOT IN THE FAUCET: A man who lived in the desert all of his life was brought to the city for a week to visit. At the end of his visit, he was asked if there was anything he'd like to take back to the desert with him; the man pointed to the faucets. He thought they were miraculous: turn them and out comes water. He wanted to take them back to the desert. That day he learned that the miracle is not in the faucet but in water tanks, plumbling and water source behind the faucet. Behind every blessing we see today is a link to heaven. Your education is faucet, but that's not your source. Education alone does not guarantee blessings. Your job, talent, abilities or skills alone are not the miracle, they are the faucets. The miracle is what lies behind the faucet! The world watches the joy of a believer and is amazed! The miracle is not in the smile and the happiness, but what lies behind the smile. It's the assurance that God will provide and make a way for us. The song writer said, "This joy I have, the world didn't give and the world can't take it away."

FAUCETS ARE NOT SELF REGULATING: Faucets have handles or digital mechanisms to turn them on and off and to regulate the mix of hot and cold water. We either turn a knob, set a thermostat or otherwise adjust them to get water at the right temperature. Faucets, as great as they are, do not regulate themselves; they must be set, mixed and controlled. In any given day, God knows what we need. He knows when things are hot, so He sends the cooling waters. He knows when we are cold, so He sends the warming waters. He knows how to mix it to fit our situation. God regulates our blessings every day. The setting that He has for one person changes for another each person has a different need, but it is God's hand on the faucet that controls that mix, the faucets do not regulate themselves. God knows just the right mix of pain and joy to fulfill our lives. He knows just the right mix of success and failure. He also knows the burdens we bear and sends just the right mix of relief and assurance to help us through to better times.

FAUCETS FLOW UNTIL BLOCKED: Often the faucets in one room of the house seem to have less force that the faucets of another room. Plumbers say often there are sediments in the pipes or nozzle that retard or prevent the regular flow. When that happens you can turn all of the knobs wide open, but all that comes out is a small stream. Often, it's not the faucet, but something stopping up the line. Could that be the reason our blessings seem to come very slowly while everyone else gets more, faster? Are we doing something or failing to do something that is blocking our flow? Are we praying, worshipping, giving and serving as we should? Is it possible that my lack of attention to my spiritual life may be blocking my flow? If that is the case then perhaps we should say like David in Psalm 51 "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and renew a right spirit within me." We should change our ways and return to the life that made us flow in the beginning.

EVEN THE BEST FAUCETS MUST BE CONNECTED: When you turn both the knobs on your faucets and nothing comes out, it usually means that you have been disconnected from the reservoir. When your water is turned off it makes little sense to get a new faucet, a prettier faucet or a faucet of a different size. If there is a disconnect we should get it properly connected. There are many who have lost their connection, for one reason or another and their faucets don't work. For awhile, many try to survive off the connections of others, carrying buckets of water or tapping into their faucets. Some even have their own water keys and they keep the water flowing through illegal means. There is no substitute to having your own connection with God. That connection is maintained through the life we live, the way we worship and the way we give. There is nothing like knowing God for yourself.

WHEN FAUCETS DRIP, BLESSINGS ARE WASTED: Often faucets drip, despite our efforts to stop the flow. When faucets drip, we pay higher water bills at the end of the month. The water that is lost from drips is wasted and is a misuse of resources. This is often true in our lives as well, we are wasting our blessing. We are connected properly, but we waste so much water from drips that it gets harder to stay connected. Is it possible for that to happen to us in life as well? Is it possible that we fail to manage our money and time wisely? Is it possible that we have been blessed with the opportunity, but we won't take steps to further ourselves? Is it possible to be prayed up, connected with God and benefit from his blessings but waste them because of a lack of faith. Jesus often chastised the disciples because of their lack of faith. On a ship, they worried about stopping the wind, in a crowd they worried about how they would feed them, at tax time they worried how they would pay them. They were connected, but they repeatedly failed to act on their fact causing a steady drip. So, the dropout does not seek to get a diploma: drip, drip. The unemployed does not seek a job: drip, drip. The able bodied play video games all day: drip, drip. We can stop the drip by acting on our faith and believing God for divine direction. The Lord will make a way, but we must give Him control of our lives.

When it flows

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that what comes out of the faucet is dependent upon that quality of the water supply.

Israel often found themselves tempted to get blessings by tapping into bad water. When they entered the Promised Land, they began to emulate the Philistines around them and worship Baal, they tapped into bad water.

Samson was a man of God, but he loved and married among the women of the enemies of Israel, it proved to be bad water.

No matter how great our intention, we can't expect the faucet to deliver drinkable, potable water if we are tapped into a bad supply or have rusted or corroded lines.

When there is a bad supply of water, what comes out is not fit to drink because it is contaminated.

When there are corroded lines, what comes out may look like mud, have a awkward

color and will make you sick.

But brothers and Sisters there is good news. There is a fountain! It's a heavenly fountain!

This fountain is not a physical fountain. If it were then the world could have gone to the Pools of Solomon near Bethlehem, there was and still is a continuous flow of cool fresh water.

This fountain is not visible to the eye. If it were then the world could have gone to the Fountains at Jerusalem that were supplied by several underground sources. They were beautiful to the eye but they didn't last long.

If you don't believe there is a fountain, ask the woman at the well. She came to the well but ended up drinking from the fountain. Jesus told her in John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

No wonder then that the song writer would write, There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilty stains!

The fountain is the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a lowly grave!

Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Jesus, who calls out to the thirsty and searching hearts!

Come unto me!

Come unto me!

And I'll open up the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing!

No. 9493-Easter

The Last words of Jesus

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

April 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:7-8

Introduction

We usually remember the last words of people close to us; do you remember the last words of anyone close to you? Perhaps it was a parent or a close relative or a friend; it doesn't really matter whom it is, only that you remember what was said. Somehow those words are chiseled into our brain, carved in our heart and emblazoned in our consciousness. First and last words are so important that many businesses make it mandatory for employees to greet customers warmly when they enter and bid them a warm farewell when they leave. At Walmart, the local bank and most other successful businesses the importance of both the greetings and the salutation are emphasized. While the first impression is a lasting impression, the last impression lasts longer.

Ironically, we remember the last words of a person often more than any others; they often carry the weight of authority, almost divinity as we reflect on the life of the one who spoke them. When we visit we often remember our first impression and the last words spoken. Ushers in church often meet visitors and give them the both the first impression of a church, and their warm goodbyes are often the last words they hear as they leave. If those last words are memorable then the body of Christ is edifice, if they are not, they bring us shame.

Sometimes the lasts words of a person are brief and to the point. Sometimes they are long and rambling, like a man sentenced to death who tries to extend his life by babbling extensively. Sensing the shortness of time some mouth great truths repeatedly. When Moses was 120 years old he started saying his last words and they ended up being the entire Book of Deuteronomy. The last words we say are powerful.

Last words reverberate. They linger. We often remember those words forever.

That's why the last words of Jesus on the cross seem to ring in our ears. We remember the cross and the tragedy that turned into triumph. We remember what was said there and repeat them so much that we forget that these were not the last words of Jesus on

earth but merely the seven last words on the cross.

While hanging on the cross, amidst groaning, blood and death, these words ring out over the centuries because each of them presents a framework by which the Gospel and its declaration of inclusive love will be judged. Yet, beyond that, there are other words of Jesus, spoken beyond the cross that give us a renewed sense of faith and hope.

The last words of Jesus on the cross remind us of the humanity of Christ. However, His last words beyond the cross remind us of His divinity; they are filled with power, vision and hope.

As Christians, we remember the last sayings of Christ. More than that, we remember the last acts of Christ which included his death and his resurrection; all for our sins. His last acts and His actual words on earth lift or spirits and increase our faith.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' last words on earth before catching a cloud and returning to heaven.

While Jesus' last words on the cross were spoken out of His humanity, His last words spoken before the ascension were from his divinity. They contained both a commission and a promise; a directive and a word of hope.

In Matthew 28 Jesus commissioned all of his disciples to go into all of world and preach, teach and baptize. That was a tall order because the disciples were all unlettered men from Galilee. They wondered how they were to speak to all of the nations with their diverse languages and tongues. They wondered the cultural dynamics of such a challenge. Despite the apparent impossibility of the task they were given the charge anyway.

In connection with mission they were also given a promise. The promise was that god would give them the power to accomplish the mission through the Holy Ghost. It was a promise that God would empower their efforts to build the kingdom despite physical absence of Christ on earth.

These last words were remembered by the disciples and they served as a stimulus to encourage them in their mission. They were prophetic. They were empowering and filled with hope.

Even today, we are still empowered by these same last words of Jesus. In fact they are often the first words we think of in relation to the mission of believers. They were His last on earth but he Has spoken to us many times since. Each time he gives a new charge and new inspiration to spread the gospel throughout the world.

On the Cross

From the cross the last words of Jesus were definitively human. His utterances indicated both sympathy and empathy, the spiritual and the divine.

FATHER FORGIVE THEM: Forgiveness is a character trait that Christ talked about during His ministry. More pointedly, Christ urged His disciples to forgive their enemies. Now, as a man hanging on the cross, He showed us that even when we have been wronged the most forgiveness is still the order of the day. What Christ demonstrated through his plea for forgiveness for his enemies is God's love for every man even though He hated the sins committed, He still loved the sinner. He spoke to God for His enemies but His words speak to us today. He was speaking about us as well. He died for our sins, so we directly or indirectly are responsible for Jesus making that declaration. That should compel us to do the same. Though this saying was filled with compassion and meaning, it was not the last word!

WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON: In John 19:26, 27, Jesus said: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." These two sayings speak of Jesus' concern for His mother's well being after his demise. It should also speak to us about the importance of family, legacy and nurture. Even in His pain He thought not of himself, but for the welfare of those He loved. Yet, as notable as they are, these words were not His last words.

WITH ME IN PARADISE: in Luke 23:43, He says to the desperate and dying thief, "This day you will be with Me in Paradise" Both thieves on the cross were helpless sinners. The two of them represent all of us. We are murderers, robbers, and rebels. We've each rebelled, gone our own way. Yet they both needed to be saved. Only one asked for the kingdom, while both wanted to escape the cross. Only one of them repented while the other one was lost. Like the repentant thief, we should all resolve to be with Christ. If we are with Him, we will always be with us. That's when we will say with the songwriter, "I'll go with Him, with Him all the way." Even this invitation to the thief, as compassionate as it was, was not the last word of Jesus.

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? In Matthew 27:46. "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Translated it meant "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" He quoted the words of David in the Psalms. He cried out from the depths of His humanity when all of the world was against Him. It was not an outcry of despair it was an outburst of frustration. There are times when all of us feel the frustration of the moment; feel alone. Jesus, in his humanity spoke for us all, but in his divinity reminded us all that, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the earth. However, these words, as sympathetic as they are were not the last words of Jesus.

I THIRST: John 19:28 records Jesus saying, "I thirst!'" Jesus had dehydrated from His long trials and the loss of blood. He'd been whipped in the back and pounded in the face by the soldiers. They also shoved thorns on His head. His tongue was swollen with thirst. Instead of giving Him water for His thirst, they offered Him bitter wine. In His humanity Jesus suffered the bitterness of the cross. He tasted the dregs of this life, but promised those who believed in Him a life in which they themselves would never thirst. Yet, these words, as painful as they were, were not the last words of Jesus.

IT IS FINISHED: John 19:30, testifies to this. "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!" Christ's mission was a total success. He accomplished everything He came to do. His mission was to come to this earth and provide a way for sinful mankind to be reconciled to God. He became the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. This mission is reflected in the words of John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His death on the cross made it all possible; salvation is available and free. No wonder the song writer wrote, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow." It is true, that on the cross Jesus said, "It is finished," but those were not His last words!

INTO THY HANDS: The seventh and last statement of Jesus on the across is recorded in Luke 23:46, which says, "Father, into thy hands I commit My sprit.' In this statement Jesus affirmed what he had told disciple often that "No man takes my life" that he would freely lay it down. Before the Romans could come to break His legs. It was finished. Before the mockers would come to ridicule him groaning after several days on the cross. It was finished. When Jesus completed His life's work, he gave up the ghost, it was not taken from Him. The same is true for every believer. We should work until our day is done; only then can we say, "It is finished." As final as those words sound, and even though they were his last words on the cross, these were not the last words of Jesus.

The last words of Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we commemorate the last words of Jesus on the cross, it is last words that bring us renewed hope!

The seven last sayings of Jesus on the cross were more than the mere babblings of a dying man, they were words of dipped in humanity, suffering and pain. Those words on the cross were not the last words. We know they were not the last words because His first words after His resurrection were, "Woman, why are you weeping?' (John 20:15 NKJV).

He spoke many words after that. He commissioned the disciples to go to all the world.

He challenged them to teach, preach and baptize!

He also told them that a comforter would come.

His last words were, "But ye shall receive power.."

His last words contained a promise of empowerment when the Holy Ghost comes!

His last word is the last word!

God always has the last word!

We should remember the last words of Jesus:

—Who picked his own mother and was the same age as His father

—Who went to school, but taught His teachers

—Who hungered for bread but was the living bread

—Who said He was thirsty but at the same time was the living water

—Who could walk through doors, while telling the world he's was the only door!

We must remember his last words because when life's problems give us sadness, it helps us to remember that God's got the last word, because he can take your sadness and give you gladness!

If life has given you doubt, God's got the last word, he can take your doubt and give you assurance!

If your troubles have given you bondage, God's got the last word; he can take your bondage and give you freedom!

For every cross you bear, God's got the last word!

For every ditch someone digs for you, God's got the last word!

The world may declare, "Put him down!" But for every "put down" God's got the last word! They took the first word and nailed him to a cross. They heard him speak seven words and thought that was the last of the word.

On Calvary, Jesus dropped his head in the locks of his shoulder, but that wasn't the last word! They stuck a spear in His side, but that wasn't the last word! He cried out to his father, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." But that wasn't the last word!

Even though they buried him in a borrowed tomb and he stayed there for three days and nights; that wasn't the last word either, because Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

One of these old days he's coming back again. When he does I want to be in the number who hears his last words to saints, "Servant, well done!"

No. 9494-Missionary Service

Spiritual Perfection in Ministry

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

April 2011

SCRIPTURE: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: Ephesians 4:11-13.

Introduction

Are we doing all that we can to advance the Kingdom of God? Really? The ministries of the church are wide and vast, encompassing nearly every aspect of life, but are we reaching as far as we should? Are we teaching all who need to be taught? Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all of the world and teach, preach, and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. His command is called the great commission, but has the church returned with gloomy faces to report "mission impossible" or "mission accomplished." Are we on task or off task. Is the work of the church in high gear or low gear? Are we talking loud and saying nothing or speaking soft and carrying a big stick of service to God and our fellowman? The ministry challenge that Christ gave the Church is a great responsibility. Often those who shoulder the responsibility for carrying out the mission feel overwhelmed by the vast nature of the challenge.

No matter how successful we are at the moment, there is still much work to be done. In fact our present success is just a precursor to something greater. Each day we are perfecting our ministry, getting closer to God and preparing for the tough days ahead.

All of those who lead the people of God should have been tried in the fires of life's experiences and having shown a propensity toward spiritual understanding and guidance as well as a willingness to work hard to advance the kingdom of the Savior.

As Christians, we minister to the masses on the behalf of our God. We do so with the greatest joy because our service helps us bring the kingdom of God into a greater realization in the lives of those who are trust and believe in Him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that the gifts given to saints were designed to equip them for ministry. Paul noted that saints are equipped (perfected) for ministry in a variety of areas closely associated with their gifts. He listed evangelists, teachers, pastors, and prophets as examples of various areas of ministry for which believers should be equipped.

Equipping the saints helps create an orderly spiritual state among believers and then works to strengthen, confirm, and advance them in their proper place and function. Operating in this context, each believer contributes to the good of the whole. Proper preparation for ministry insures that the doctrines of the gospel are correctly interpreted and that believers successfully discharge the functions of their specific ministry

The purpose of equipping or perfecting the saints is the edifying of the body of Christ; that is, to build up the church, which is Christ's mystical body, by an increase of their graces, and an addition of new members.

Christ charged believers to go into the entire world and preach the gospel, baptizing, teaching and reaching in his name. He provided believers with certain gifts to equip them to do that task. These gifts, when amplified by the Holy Ghost and training, would equip the saints to do what he wanted them to do.

Equipping church leaders

Equipping church leaders has one essential prerequisite: Leaders must be servant believers. Being a servant believer means that every leader must perceive of himself/herself as a believer who is a servant of God, not one who is served BY God because he or she believes.

Jesus defined his ministry in terms of serving others. "This is how one should regard us," Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:1, "as servants of Christ and as stewards of the mystery of God." The word used over and over again for "servant" is hupertes, which originally meant an "under rower," someone who worked in the galleys, or the lower deck of a ship's crew. It eventually came to mean a servant or steward. Jesus' "upside-down thinking" defined leadership first in terms of followership. The best definition of a Christian leader is as a follower or a servant. A Christian leader is one who follows Christ, and in the name of Christ, serves the needs of the world.

Biblical Leadership is not from a book

Biblical leadership is not a skill or a technique that can be learned from a book, although training brings out leadership qualities. Biblical leaders have a calling. To be called by God to lead in some way is to have been chosen by God's Spirit regardless of whether you think you are able or not. Of course you are not able. None of us is. But we have a God who is able. In the words of Martin Luther, "God carves the rotten wood

and rides the lame horse." Or in the more recent words of former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden, "Don't worry about the horse being blind. Load up the wagon." God uses even the likes of you and me to show God's glory and to proclaim God's truth, beauty and goodness.

Five aspects of spiritual perfection

The best leaders who lead in the biblical tradition exemplify five qualities that help them to lead God's people. Those who lead best are those who demonstrate the aspects of spiritual perfection:

1. **DREAMS** — Don't be afraid to dream God-sized dreams. Keep alert. Be attuned to everything happening around you without getting sucked into any of it. Those who can clearly see the vision can stand on the rock of salvation and sing, "My faith is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

2. **SCHEMES** — Lead a disciplined life that your dreams may come true. Keep a clear head about your life and your life projects. Let both the invitations and the insults pass you by as you stay focused on God's plan and purpose for your life. When the schemes of men frustrate biblical leaders, they talk to Jesus and keeps them on the path. That's what the song writer meant when He wrote, "I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus. Jesus can help me. Jesus alone."

3. **TEAMS** — Humble yourself in the realization that you can't do it alone or "go it" alone. Admit your weakness in wanting to go through life solo, and rely on God's strength as well as network with others. That's when you sing, "I want Jesus to walk with me. All along this tedious journey, I want Jesus to walk with me."

4. **LEANS** — Cast your anxieties on God. Believe in God's care, trusting in God's love and lean on His everlasting arms! That's what the song writer meant when he wrote, "Leaning, Leaning, safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning, Leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

5. **BEAMS** — Constantly beam in on God's word for strength, steadfastness and confidence. Firmness in faithfulness, both individually and as a community, is a byproduct of marinating one's life in the Word of God.

Leaders lives should reflect a theme that resonates

Biblical leaders must have lives that are commiserate with the life they profess. There should be consistency. It gets ugly when we praise God on one day and get down and nasty on the dance floor on the next. The message is confusing when we drink communion wine on Sunday and Malt Liquor on other days. Such confusing signs indicate that we have a conflicting spiritual theme. Biblical leaders must adopt a life theme that is consistent with our professed faith in God.

We should also be consistent with personality traits and skills with which we have been gifted. That's why Paul would note that not everyone has the same gift.

Everyone can't be the pastor, somebody has to be in the pew. Many of us are leaders others are followers. Some are support team members and others are support team leaders. Some are soloists and some are members of the choir. We know our purpose and we have a consistent life theme that helps us achieve what we see as our life's purpose.

Even leadership styles differ while purposes are the same. Martin Luther King and Shirley Chisholm were confrontational; Andrew Young was a consensus builder. The Black Panthers were revolutionary and the NAACP is aggressively conservative. Each has the same general purpose but a different theme. Similarly, Samson used physical strength as his theme. Solomon used great wisdom and diplomacy. Elijah and Elisha were oratorical. John the Baptist was confrontational. Jesus assumed a humble and unassuming style about his life, from his humble birth in Bethlehem to his crucifixion on Calvary; he remained true to his theme throughout his life.

Church leaders must walk with the Lord

Those who want to lead must first show that they walk with Lord. Jesus told Nicodemus: You must be born of the spirit. No believer who assumes the role of a pastor, teacher, church deacon or trustee can expect to please God if that person does not know the Lord for himself. Thus, all of a believers past experiences come together to demonstrate a faith in God in matters of the spirit. That means those chosen to serve have proven themselves to be persons who can walk by faith.

They have proven it in their personal lives and in their relationship with the church. Most often, such a person will feel inadequate. The feeling of adequacy is natural because it admits human limitations and requires a dependence on God.

Such persons have learned that God is able to do what they cannot do alone so they plunge into life with a positive spirit. In the words of Martin Luther, God carves the rotten wood and rides the lame horse. Or in the more recent words of former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden, Don't worry about the horse being blind. Load up the wagon. Every believer must know the Lord for himself.

Faithful leaders will be rewarded

Finally, brothers and sisters those who are charged with the work of ministry must work faithfully with the full knowledge that he that overcometh will be rewarded.

The work of equipping the saints never ends, but is a constant struggle.

Perfecting the work of the ministry means deepening our spiritual insights!

Perfecting the work of the ministry means broadening the scope of our vision beyond our local circumstance.

Perfecting the work of the ministry means sharpening our administrative skills!

Perfecting the work of the ministry means learning more and understanding more about the Will of God!

Perfecting the work of the ministry means preparing ourselves to forge ahead, not

intimidated by obstacles but determined to overcome. Who is he that overcometh?

He that overcometh is the man who believes that God I serve is bigger than the problems I have! He that overcometh is the woman who believes that no matter how tough the road gets, the Lord will make a way somehow!

He that overcometh is the man who believes that you must stand for something in life or youll fall for anything! He that overcometh is the man who declares that God is able, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord! John said in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, He that overcometh, shall inherit all things!

He that overcometh will enjoy that day when the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest! He that overcometh shall enjoy that day when the mountains will be made low, rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight! Storms may rise! But he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here! He that overcometh will keep telling the story! He'll keep telling the world about Jesus and a place called Calvary! Bye and Bye when the battle is over, we'll tell the story!

We'll tell the story of how He died on an old rugged cross!

We'll tell the story of how He arose from the grave after three days and nights!

He that overcometh shall inherit all things!

No. 9495-Easter (Palm Sunday)

Shouting with the crowd

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 17, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Mark 11:8-9

Introduction

Have you ever received a shout out? A shout out is a way of sending best wishes, praise, thanks or hats off to someone to lift their spirits or to encourage them. Some radio broadcasts allow callers to send a shout out to a friend. On Face book there are apps for sending shout outs, birthday greetings or ways to poke your friends just to let them know that you are thinking about them! It's a lot of fun to receive shout outs, especially on our birthdays! There are some who get over a hundred shout outs, pokes and greetings on their birthdays. Does each shout out really mean that the sender is doing it because they thought about you, or is it because they saw others doing it, so they just jumped in. Did those who sent all of those birthday greetings really wake up that morning with you on their mind or did they see all of the other people praising, so they jumped in as well?

Sometimes we send shout outs out of general principle. It's like the crowd wave in a football stadium. You look across the stadium and you see all of the other people standing and waving their hands, so when the wave gets to you, you stand wave both of your hands and shout for no other reason than to keep it going. Your shout has nothing at all to do with the action on the football field.

Sometimes it is easy to misread people's actions. Not all arm-waving is an expression of exuberance. Not all laughter is the laughter of happiness. Not all tears are tears of sorrow. Not all shouting is the shouting of triumph and victory. And not everyone who says, Lord! Lord! will enter the kingdom of God.

There are many who sing, but they have no idea what the words they sing really mean? Some sing about Jehovah-Jireh and shout, but have no idea what that means? Others sing about the Lion of Judah and jump around in praise, but have no idea who the Lion of Judah is or what it means? Ask many why they were excited over the song and they respond that it sounded good and the soloist had a beautiful voice.

That's what happened the day Jesus came to Jerusalem. People, who had never seen Him started sending him shout outs! He came into the city riding on a donkey and they

cut down palm branches, waved them in the air, then took off some of their clothes and threw them in the street, shouting out “Hosanna!” They shouted it sometimes; they sang it sometimes, Hosanna! Hosanna!

Many of them sent Him shout outs because everyone else in the crowd was sending shout outs! They had an idea who he was. They knew who they hoped he would be. They were not sure, but they sent shout outs anyway.

A few days later he started saying things that stepped on their toes. He ran the money changers out of the temple and he insulted the scribes and Pharisees. A few days later, the same crowd, for varied reasons, that sent him Hosanna shout outs, cried out, “crucify Him!”

As believers we should praise God continuously, not because the crowd praises Him but because He is worthy to be praised. Not because we have been directed to do so, but because we are happy that He has touched our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the actions of the people as Jesus as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem. The arrival of the Messiah had been predicted by the prophet Zechariah many years before. The people of Jerusalem expected a champion to come into the city and establish himself as the one person who would lift their domination by the Romans. In Zechariah 9:9 the prophet wrote, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass”

Intoxicated with the idea of liberation the people met Jesus outside of the city singing and shouting “Hosanna (save now).” The expected Jesus to announce a rebellion against the Romans. They expected to see the Roman legions running in fear of the power of Israel. So they sang, “Hosanna” -Not just “save us” but save us “now!” The words of the Psalm 118 make it clear what the people wanted. They shouted Hosanna because they wanted a blessing and success. Later, in the same week,their shouts of praise turned to shouts of death, once Jesus failed to meet their expectations.

Reasons to shout

There are times in every person’s life when you feel liking shouting. Those are the times when God’s grace and favor seem to have showered themselves on you. The biblical record shows us how the crowds have shouted over the years.

SHOUT WHEN GOD LIGHTS YOUR FIRE: Leviticus 9:24 notes that the Jews shouted when God lit the altar fire for the first time. Fire came down from heaven and lit that altar and they were so excited that only did they shout, but they kept the fire going night and day many years. That’s the way it is with believers. When God’s spirit moves us we get excited. In fact, we get so excited that we emulate the woman at the well who ran through the city saying, “Come see a man.”

SHOUT WHEN GOD KEEPS HIS WORD: Numbers 23:21 Balaam testified that that "God is not a man who lies, what he has promise will come. When they heard that the people shouted like the King of the universe was in their midst. Even today, when we know that God does not lie and neither will his word return to Him void, that gives us something to shout about. When he promises to never leave us alone and guide us through the storms of life, that's when we have something to shout about.

SHOUT WHEN THE WALLS ARE HIGH: Joshua 6:20 shows a crowd of believers marching around the walls of Jericho. Seven times they marched around the high walls in absolute faith in God. Then they stopped, blew their trumpets and the walls fell down. Today, believers by the millions are following Israel's example. They shouted before the walls fell down! In obedience, they did exactly as God commanded and shouted. Sometimes our problems mount up as high as the walls around Jericho. Yet, if we act in obedience to God's word we should be prepared to shout before the walls fall down; then watch God work.

SHOUT WHEN THE DEVIL THINKS HE HAS WON: Judges 15:14 shows the Philistines thinking they had captured Samson because they had tied him with new ropes, so they shouted. They shouted thinking the strong man was finally bound, then God strengthen him and he whipped them all with the jawbone of a donkey. How many enemies of believers are shouting because often we appear defeated. How many of them think their hating and back biting has succeeded only to learn that God strengthens the weak and gives power to the faint. When the we rise victorious when the devil thinks he has won, that's something to shout about!

SHOUT WHEN WE HAVE BEEN SAVED: John 4:29 Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her the water of life. It was Jesus who told her that she had five husbands and the man with whom she was living was not her husband. Yet, he offered her the water of life and chance to be in the king. She was so excited that she did not wait on the crowd, she dropped her water pot and started running through the city saying, "Come see a man." When God has touched our lives and give us a new start, we have something to shout about. We then say with the song writer, "God gave me a song to sing that the angels cannot sing. I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb."

When our lives have been touched by the hand of God, we don't need the crowd, we can shout all by ourselves! When we see the ways that God has blessed us we don't need to wait for someone else when can the let the world know!

No Crowd needed

Finally, brothers and sisters while there were many people who shouted with the crowd, the man or woman who has been blessed by God, does not need the crowd to praise the Lord! When Jesus came into Jerusalem there were many who saw him coming and started shouting with the crowd! They waved palm branches over their heads and shouted with the crowd!

They threw their clothes into the streets and shouted Hosanna with the crowd! They hailed him as a conquering hero with the crowd! Their praise was dependent

upon the crowd! I believe that while there were many who shouted with the crowd, there were some in that crowd that didn't need the crowd!

I'm sure that Lazarus must have been in the crowd. He had been in the grave for four days, but was raised by the power of God. When he shouted, he wasn't shouting with the crowd, he was in the crowd, but he was shouting all by himself!

The woman with the issue of blood knew about crowds, for she found the power of the Lord, not by shouting with the crowd, but by pushing her way through the crowd! I can hear her say, if I can just touch the hem of his garment I'll be made whole!

Zaccheaus knew about crowds. He was a little short man who wanted to see Jesus, but couldn't because of the crowd, He had to climb up a sycamore tree, up above the crowd to see Jesus as He passed by. Zaccheaus was shouting, but not with the crowd, because that day Jesus said, Zaccheaus come down, I'm coming to your house for supper. He wasn't shouting with the crowd because he had his own personal invitation! Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, you don't need a crowd, you can shout all by yourself! Whenever you think about how God has blessed you, you don't need a crowd, you can shout all by yourself!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, we don't need a crowd we can shout all by ourselves. Whenever we think about how He provides food for us when we are hungry, we don't need a crowd, we can shout all by ourselves. When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere, we don't need a crowd, we can shout all by ourselves! We're shouting because of what He has done. We're shouting because of what we expect Him to do. We're shouting because when we were stained by a life a sin, He carried a cross for us up Calvary's Hill! We're shouting because He allowed Himself to be nailed to an old rugged cross on our behalf! We're shouting because He died out on Calvary! But early! Early, Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

We're shouting because He's still blessing us every day!

We're shouting because He's still healing us every day!

We don't need a crowd, we can shout all by ourselves!

No. 9496-Easter

Reopening a Cold Case

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 24, 2011

SCRIPTURE: Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Luke 24:12

Introduction

Have you seen or heard of a cold case? A cold case is one in which the investigation into an incident has been closed because of a lack of evidence, witnesses and public demand. Cases are generally closed when a suspect has been arrested. Sometimes cases are closed, but no one believes the report. So in the public perception the case grows cold.

We've heard of many cold cases: Jack the Ripper, Jimmy Hoffa, Jon Benet Ramsey, Chandra Levy, Natalie Holloway and dozens of others that have occupied our time and interest over the years. Cases get closed for a variety of reasons such as: previously available technology was not able to adequately analyze the evidence in order to form a conclusion; witnesses became hostile or uncooperative; various time constraints hindered the investigation; heavy workloads for law enforcement; or the most common, a lack of worthwhile leads stalled the case.

Sometimes cold cases involve deaths, robberies, unexplained events and missing persons. The number of cold cases seems to grow every year.

According to the FBI, there are over 6,000 new cold case files every year. The agency says there are over 200,000 cold case files that have accumulated over the last 50 years. Our community was excited in 2008 when we heard that about 100 cold cases involving Civil Rights atrocities were being reopened with the availability of new technology to get at the truth.

A cold case can be solved as long as there is evidence, witnesses and a public that has not given up completely.

On Easter Sunday in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago, Peter began an inspection of an empty tomb that reopened a cold case. There are witnesses, even today, there is plenty of evidence and there is plenty of public interest, but that's all the world is talking about.

As Christians, we are interested in this cold case. The truth we have learned about the resurrection of the savior has proven to be the foundation of our faith. By reopening

that cold case to learn that He lives, we also reopen our own cold cases, to learn that we can live again as well.

Exposition

This text focuses on an inspection made by Peter on the morning of the resurrection; an inspection of what he thought was a cold case, but ultimately left him wondering about what he saw.

Christ had been crucified and buried in a new tomb borrowed from a wealthy man of the area named Joseph. His body had been hastily removed from the cross so that it would not be hanging during the Passover Sabbath. On Sunday morning the women came to tomb and found his body gone.

Their report as dismissed because the case was closed. They had watched Christ die on the Christ. They watched Him removed and buried in the tomb. They watched the mighty stone placed in front of the tomb. The case was obviously closed.

However, the report of the women suggested that the case should be re-opened. Obviously, there must be evidence that would lead to a different conclusion if verified.

Realizing that there had been no close inspection of the cross, the tomb Peter ran to the tomb to investigate for himself. Once inside he saw nothing but the strips of linen cloth that were used to wrap the body for burial. The cloth strips were neatly folded and laid by themselves. He was extremely specific in his observations, taking note of every detail with his own eyes, not counting on the testimony of the women.

Peter left "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." He left no wiser than he came. Yet, it was enough to confirm that the cause of Christianity was not over; that the cross and the tomb had not quenched the divine fire. He left that morning convinced that there was sufficient evidence to re-open this cold case.

Reopening Cold Cases

There are many who believe that those who trust in God are borderline fanatics who are ignoring the facts of the case. They believe that the case of Jesus Christ ended on a hill called Golgotha about 2000 years ago. They say the facts of this case are that a man named Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross and He died. They point to the cross the nails, the crown of thorns and his own last words "it is finished" as evidence that Christ is dead.

In 1966 Time Magazine shocked the world by asking one question: "Is God dead?" They maintained that God was no longer necessary to explain the natural order of things. They also noted that God plays an honorary role in the lives of people rather than the obligatory role of Master. For all purposes they claim that God is dead, because there is no evidence that He lives. They say the matter is a cold case

Yet, today we who believe submit that God is NOT dead. We further submit that Jesus has been raised from the dead. To prove our case let us re-open this cold case.

CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE: There is evidence of His life. On Easter Sunday morning several women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the Mother of James came to the tomb and found that the body of Jesus was missing. An angel told them He is not here, but is risen. The disciples later saw the empty tomb, they saw the folded clothes, they spoke with Him on the road to Emmaus, they watched him eat fish and bread in front of them, and hundreds watched as he took a cloud and ascended back to heaven. The evidence is incontrovertible. To those who say Christ is dead, we say that is a cold case that needs to be reopened. Even today the evidence of God's movement in the lives of people is undeniable. Those who have faced impossible situations only by the help of God give evidence to His living presence.

Cancer victims who survived when doctors had give up hope, homes that were restored despite all of the predictions of the critics, the sick that that were healed, the lost that were found and those who picked themselves up from the curbs of life to stand on their own two feet, are clear evidences that God is alive and hears and answers prayers. We don't understand His ways. We don't understand why there are wars and famines. We don't understand why there is pestilence and trouble, but we see enough evidence in this world to know that when a prayer breaks through the clouds of confusion and frustration that cloak this world, God moves, saves, heals and answers prayer. We are His living evidence. The old warriors once sang, 'I know the Lord will answer prayer, cause I tried him for myself!"

CONSIDER THE WITNESSES: The Angel invited the Mary and the other Mary to bear witness to the reality of the resurrection. They were invited to see the empty blood stained winding sheet. They were invited to see the neatly folded napkin that lay across his face. They were invited to investigate the interior of the tomb and see for themselves. A witness does not repeat second hand information, but they know for themselves. Even today, there are millions of witnesses, who can testify about the Goodness of the Lord because they have tried Him for themselves. There is no witness like the witness who can say "I have seen it with my own eyes." That's why the angel invited the women to "come see the place where the Lord lay." The angel wanted them to be in a position to speak with authority. We who have been down to our last dime and facing tragedy and despair can best testify, that God is a good God. We who have stood at the brink of death only to be snatch out of the jaws of destruction, can best testify that God will be a shield around us every day. We who have weathered the hurricanes, strong winds and gales of life, are best able to testify, that God is a shelter in a time of storm. We who have been dismissed as dead and beyond help know the joy of resurrection morning. We can truly testify..."I know God lives for He woke me this morning with a touch of His finger. I have felt the warmth of His smile; I know he lives because he lit the sun and hung it in the sky. I know God lives, for I've tried Him for myself.

CONSIDER THE FAITH OF HIS FOLLOWERS: Even if the evidence is undeniable and the witnesses are available a cold case remains cold if there is no one interested in re-opening the case. On the days following the crucifixion there was very little interest among the Romans of re-opening this cold case. Scribes and Pharisees refused to talk

about it and had no interest in dealing with it. While they refused to talk about it, investigate it or explore its implications, there were thousands who refused to believe the official account. Their numbers grew by the thousands as they announced their faith in God and belief that He raised Jesus from the day. Today, brothers and sisters there are 1.2 billion Christians around the world who have an interest in re-opening this cold case. The faith of believers sustains us and is never diminshed. No matter how tough times get, faith helps us to believe that no matter what comes God is still God. He is still our God whose

-Power never weakens
-Grace never disappoints
-Love never leaves
-Promises never fail
-Glory never diminishes
-Joy never ends
-Foundation never shakes
-Truth never changes
-Supply never shrinks

People of faith around the world can testify that if the world thinks God is dead, they should reopen that cold case.

Solving My Case

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who reopened the cold case on Easter Sunday morning found the same truth that millions today share as well, that Christ lives and so does our hope for life everlasting.

The crucifixion and death of Christ was a cold case, but it was not a closed case. It was not closed because the unseen hand of God was moving to bring new life into a dead situation. The disciples witnessed the gory details of the crucifixion. To reopen this cold case would mean believing that the man they saw crucified and buried was indeed alive. Reopening this cold case was a circumstance of hope lost and found again. Reopening the cold case required a leap of faith. These 11 men were with Him in the garden when the temple guards came to seize him. They were close by when He was tried by the Sanhedrin Council and found guilty. They were close by when Herod mocked and ridiculed Him. They were in the crowd when Pilate handed him over to the soldiers for crucifixion. They watched as he carried a cross toward Golgotha. They watched as He was nailed to the cross and lifted up high. They were present when He gave up the ghost and died. They saw Him buried in a freshly hewn tomb. They saw the stone rolled in front of the tomb and guards placed in front of the tomb.

For the disciples there was considerable evidence of Christ's death. To reopen this cold case was testimony and evidence that he was truly alive. Today, there are millions of cold cases who face the prospect of failure, defeat and hopelessness. There world has given up on their cases and they have all been written off.

The message of the resurrection is that cold cases like ours can be reopened, hope is still alive, failure can be overcome, and the power of God has not been conquered.

When Joseph was thrown into a pit by his brothers and left to die, it looked like a cold case mystery when his father was brought a blood stained coat of many colors. However, God reopened that cold case and raised Joseph to be prime minister of Egypt.

When Lazarus lay in his tomb for four days, Mary and Martha dismissed it as a cold case. They chastised Jesus saying, "If you had been here, our brother wouldn't have died." Despite the sadness of the moment, The Lord reopened that cold case and gave him new life.

When the Hebrew Boys were thrown into the fiery furnace, there were many who saw the hot fire and thought it was a cold case, but God reopened that cold case and protected them in the fire.

Ezekiel was carried into a valley of dry bones, the ultimate cold case, and asked Son of Man can these bones live? The answer came that they can live if they will hear the word of the Lord! I hear Isaiah saying, "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity, the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his stripes we are healed! On Easter Sunday morning they reopened a cold case and found that Christ lives! Because He lives, He reopens my cold case and gives me another chance!

Because He lives, I can face each day standing on the promises of God
Because He lives, I can get up if I mess up and start all over again!
Because He lives, there is no mountain to high for me to climb!
Because He lives, there is no valley of frustration so wide that I cannot cross!
Because He lives, there is no defeat that I cannot turn into a victory
Because He lives, there is no failure that can conquer my soul and hold me down!
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
I'm glad that He came down here and lived for 33 years.
I'm glad that He died on an old rugged cross for me!
But I'm so glad that early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with..
All power in his hands!

No. 9497-Anniversary, Church

Great Praise for a Great God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2011

SCRIPTURE: For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all Gods. 1 Chronicles 16:25

Introduction

Have you ever felt undeserving for an award you received? Was the award a special plaque or a trophy? Perhaps it was a certificate or some other token of recognition. The purpose of the award was to recognize and to praise you because of a noteworthy accomplishment and contribution, but you felt unworthy to be praised.

The feeling of unworthiness increases with the size of the accolade. Sometimes presentations may get bigger than mere plaques or certificates. Sometimes there are busts and memorials and even rooms, windows and buildings that bear our names. One reason a true servant of God feels unworthy is because the true servant recognizes that the real praise for any accomplishment belongs to God.

Tributes usually follow significant accomplishments. We feel unworthy because we know that God was the underlying source of our success; He deserves the praise. God should be praise, not us; that's the way humble saints feel. We know how to recognize people for their accomplishments, but how do we recognize God when he has helped us? That was the question that puzzled David in Psalm 116:12 when he asked What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? David concluded that he would drink from the cup of salvation, pay his vows and continue to call upon his name. He decided that was the best way to give tribute to God.

As Christians, we recognize that every accomplishment we make is a reflection of God's handiwork. We cannot take credit for the work the church has done; God gets all of the glory. The trail of life that marks our journey is speckled with markers, large and small, that testify of the help we have received from God. Without Him, we can do nothing. If we have accomplished anything, the glory is His for He is God who is great and is greatly to be praised.

Exposition

This text focuses on a psalm of David that extols the greatness of God in midst

of the people. The occasion for the psalm is the public entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it. David had written many songs and hymns but this special psalm was placed in the hand of Asaph, for the use of the church. Its words spoke to the celebration of the moment, but they also spoke to believers of all generations as the tell of the greatness of the Lord. What does this psalm said about praising God? Beginning at verse eight it says we should glorify God in our praises; let his honor be the center of our faith and hope. We should glorify him by our thanksgivings, by our prayers (Call on his name, v. 8), by singing songs to Him and talk about all his wondrous works, v. 9. By the time we reach this text verse, David says we should glorify God as a great God, who is not only to be praised, but greatly to be praised (v. 25). He is to be praised as a supreme God who is above all of the false gods of the pagans; He is the sole God, for all others are idols, v. 26. Our joy and praise of God should be endless.

Any accomplishment that we make, any milestone reach, and achievement that we celebrate is an occasion to praise God for it is through Him that all blessings flow.

Why the Church Praises God

David made it clear in verse 25 that there three things that we should consider when it comes to the divine attributes of God with respect to his creation and His church:

GOD IS GREAT: God is great, much greater than anything we can imagine. Even as we celebrate anniversaries and pat each other on the back for our serious and dedicated labor, we must remember that our accomplishment does not shine a light to the greatness of God. In comparison to the greatness of God our small achievements are miniscule. Lest we think more of ourselves we should remember that while we, as creations of God, are wondrous works, the one who created us is greater. Man has 263 bones, 600 muscles, and 970 miles of blood vessels, but God is greater! Man has 400 cups on his tongue for taste, 20,000 minuscule hairs in his ears to tune into sound, 40 pounds of jaw pressure, 10 million nerves and branches, but God is greater! Man has 600,000,000 air cells that breathe in his lungs and his heart beats 4,200 times an hour, but God is greater because everything man has and is made by God. No wonder the song writer says, “Oh Lord My God, as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands hath made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunders thy power throughout the universe displayed...then sings my soul my savior God to thee, How great thou Art, How great thou art!”

GREATLY TO BE PRAISED: David said God should be praise “greatly.” That refers to the intensity of our praise. Not just a ceremony of lip service but a praise that reflects the power and majesty of the almighty God. The church should praise God intensely because Has blessed us intensely. Yet, there are some in the church who share in worships such as this who question the need for so much praise. They can’t see the need and believe we are wasting our time “greatly praising” God.

They are like a Church goer who wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

I’ve gone for 30 years now, he wrote, and in that time I have heard something like

3,000 sermons. In all of those years people were shouting praises to God that sounded like the ones before. I hear the sermons and the praises but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them.. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons and all of those words of praise.

This started a real controversy in the Letters to the Editor column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church and lifted God up in praise I would not have been spiritually nourished, I would be spiritually dead today! When you are DOWN to nothing.... God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible! God is great and He is greatly to be praised!

THE FEAR OF THE LORD: David said the fear of the Lord should be the Hallmark of every Christian life. The fear that David spoke of was not the feeling of endanger that a prey feels when stalked by a predator, but it is a feeling of awe, respect, and reverence one has toward a loving God who offers joy, peace, and eternal life. So, this idea of fear is not a matter of trembling and shaking. It is the fear that springs from recognizing that he is God, our Creator, and we are his creation. It is the fear that comes from recognizing that it is he who gives us the very next breath of life on this earth, and as a result we find our hearts filled with love for him and thankfulness to Him.

This is the kind of respect, reverence and dedication that prompts the church to ben instrument that God uses to bring forth HIS blessing to His people. It is this fear that transforms the church from a building to an assembly of baptized believers in Christ. In fear, our people have been blessed because of the church, the old ship of Zion. We have worshipped under brush arbors and on sandy and abandoned beaches We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors. We have praised Him in the chill of winter with only the crackling sound of logs burning as our music. We have sweltered, without air conditioning, in the humid and scorching heat of a thousand summers.

Yet, God has used this great church for 16 years of worship and praise experiences to bring forth His water in a thirsty land. Through the church God has delivered us as a people from the Egypt of second class citizenship to the borders of the Promised Land. Through the church, God has sustained us through, discrimination, depressions and unbelievable hardships. Through the church, God has raised up our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits. In fear and trembling we still sing the glory of God's church, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

As we go we should keep praising the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we look back over the journey we have traveled

over the years, we must give God the glory and the praise! That is the essence of all that David had to say on that great day that the Ark assumed its place. Yes, there were men who fought to bring it home. Yes, there were sacrifices made by women and children who labored in so many ways to sustain the hope! The people did their part, but when the Ark came home, the people gave God the glory and the praise!

As we celebrate this anniversary today, we should consider ourselves unworthy recipients of God's grace. We should greatly praise the Lord because it is He who has helped us. David's conclusion for Israel was that there is sufficient reason for Israel to praise God because of his wondrous works. Today, believers have sufficient reason to praise God. God is greatly to be praised because in our Egypt experience He fed and sustained us! God is greatly to be praised because he made a way for us out of no way!

God is greatly to be praised because even today, He is blessing us!

Every day, God is blessing us!

Every day, God is still opening doors!

Every day, God is still wiping weeping eyes!

Every day, God is still raising bowed down heads!

Every day, God is still putting food on our tables!

Every day, God is still making a way out of no way!

We should praise the Lord because His:

—Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant.

—Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure.

We should greatly praise the Lord for the burden He's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should greatly praise the Lord for the hill He's going to help us to climb!

We should greatly praise the Lord for the bills He's going to help us to pay!

We should greatly praise the Lord for the job He's going to help us to find!

We should greatly praise the Lord for the home He's going to help us to buy!

However, there is one more thing for which we should greatly praise the Lord; we should praise Him for saving our souls and washing us with the only solvent that can make our sins white as snow!

The song writer asked, "What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Jesus, the prized son of Palestine.

Jesus, the epitome of perfection.

Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He is great!

He is great!

And greatly to be praised!

No.9498-Inspiration

There arose a storm

A sermon By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 1, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Mark 4:37-39

Introduction

Has the increase in the frequency and intensity of storms caught your attention yet? Some were in the direct path of great storms; others were on the fringes but nevertheless felt the storms as they passed by? They commanded our attention!

Last year there were 19 tropical storms, 12 general hurricanes and five major hurricanes. Yet, something is happening this year that is touching hundreds of communities across the nation, storms and tornadoes. In the first three hours of this year there were seven tornadoes in Mississippi and nine more before the month ended. In March there were 59 tornadoes. In April there were 42 tornadoes and 1200 reports of tornado scale wind storms. Meteorologists report that there have been 1,028 tornadoes in the U.S. alone.

We have seen a massive storm system that has swept through the nation leaving a trail of destruction and pain in its wake, impacted the lives of thousands.

When storms come suddenly and with little or no advance notice, we are often caught unprepared, left devastated and drained. We mourn the loss of life. We shed tears over the loss of property and those who survive pick up the pieces and start again.

How can the faithful strip water soaked carpet from homes, cut away trees that have fallen through our roofs, or see so much that we thought was important in a pile on the side of a street, and still maintain faith in God? Those who do not believe see the faithful up to their knees in flood water or scavenging through piles of discards looking for mementoes, pictures and keepsakes; they see us and they ask, how can you still have faith in God?

We have faith because we believe the promise of God's word that all things work together for good to those who are the called. The phrase all things includes any storm

that may sweep through our lives. We say it because we believe it, God is good all the time, all the time God is good.

As Christians we maintain our faith in God. We echo the thoughts of the songwriter who said, “I trust in God where ever we may be; out on the land or on the raging sea; though billows roll, he keeps my soul, my heavenly father watches over me.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Jesus restored peace in the middle of a storm. Jesus and his disciples were riding in a boat to reach a place of peace and rest from the crowds that followed him. As His disciples, most of whom were able boatmen, handled the ship Jesus went below deck and went to sleep.

In Palestine, there were two rainy seasons: the early rains of October and the latter rains of March. Between autumn and spring the Jews expected the rain to fall in large quantities and prepared themselves for its coming. The winter rains often brought thunder and lightning, strong winds that toppled houses and caused destruction. On the sea these rains often came quickly and with little warning.

This is the context of this passage. Without warning, a great storm arose and the shipmen became afraid because of the severity of the storm.

As the wind and waves increased in intensity many feared for their lives until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. They went to him and found that he was asleep. One cried out “Master, the tempest is raging, carest thou not that we perish?” Jesus awoke, saw the tempest and quieted the storm with the simple words “Peace Be Still.” Immediately the storm ceased.

These things must be

There are many reasons believers are not shaken by the sudden increase in storms, tornadoes, earthquakes, famines and diverse kinds of pestilences. One of the main reasons is because Christ has warned in His word that if we are among the living when we approach the last days of this world, giving way for the heavenly kingdom to come, that we would experience the trembling signs in the earth, the ecosystem and in the atmosphere.

The signs that we will see will be unavoidable, undeniable and are a prerequisite to the establishment of the new kingdom on earth

Look at this passage: Matthew 24:6-8 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Verses six and eight say “see that ye be not troubled for all these thing must come to pass; they are the beginning of sorrows.

God is not punishing us; he is getting us ready for the return of Christ. When he returns all that we lost will be returned "more abundantly," including the lives of believing friends and family members that may have been claimed by one of life's storms.

There is a season for storms

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us that there is time and season for everything under the sun; that includes storms. In the bible there was a rainy or stormy season and we too have seasons. There are times when it will be hot and other seasons when it is cold. We know approximately when to expect the cold, and the summer heat, we have an idea about storm seasons. However, storms have a way of developing instantly and unpredictably.

When sudden storms come all of our preparation seems inadequate once the winds begin to blow.

Most families have already assembled essential documents in safe boxes, indicated an agreed up meeting place in case they are separated, and made provisions in case resources are limited.

The general idea is to get to safe ground with everyone safe.

In a stormy season we need to know the way to safe ground. When waters rise we need to know how to find higher ground.

In times of storms believers know how to find a refuge. The word of God says, God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble.

Believers know the way to God and constantly lean and trust him to take us to higher ground then give us the strength to pick up the pieces, rebuild and to stand. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he said, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land, no high ground I have not found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

God is aware of our storm

God is always aware of our storms. When storms break there are many who lose faith, throw up their hands and ask, why our community? Why our family? Why me? Is not God aware of our danger and our predicament? Is He asleep?

The disciples felt that way. In Mark 4:39 Jesus was asleep below deck on a ship when a storm arose. When they panicked He questioned their faith as he spoke to the winds and the waves saying, Peace Be Still.

There are many today who react to storms like the disciples who lost faith.

Even though they knew Jesus was on board in Mark, they screamed, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Somehow our faith seems to operate in degrees. Some storms don't bother us and we are confident that God will take care. When the rains come we don't worry. In fact, many people find it easy to sleep in the rains, snuggled comfortably away. Even when

winds blow many look out of their windows in awe at the bending of the trees, but never with much worry.

If we cant understand the confidence we have in a light rain and wind, then we can understand why Christ could have been asleep during the storm. His faith in the power of God was intact.

However, some of us who are confident when the rains come begin to tremble and fear when the thunder rolls or the lightning flashes.

We lose faith when a tornado is sited or hurricane force winds come. When the water rises, many forget that God is still God and wonder whether we will be able to weather this storm.

This storm may not be weather related.

This storm could be the loss of a job.

This storm could be the sickness of a breadwinner.

This storm could be a family difficulty. This storm could be a serious marital problem.

This storm could be a financial disaster.

When we worry about the storm, it may be that we have forgotten that we serve a God who can speak to the winds and they will obey his will, or just by his mere presence, storms will disappear.

That's why we love the song that says, When the storms of life are raging, stand by me.

It is well

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that even as we pick up after storms, it is well. Have you suffered any losses due to storms? Don't focus on what you have lost, count your blessings. Things can be replaced, injuries will heal. Even the fatalities among believers will one day be restored. That's God's promise. After the rain, the sun will shine again. The spirit of faith in God is our response to life's storms. A woman whose house and personal property was destroyed in Tuscaloosa, Alabama was shown on television. She held her two girls beside her as they looked at their home in shambles and all of their personal belongings buried under what seemed to be a mountain of debris. She looked and she cried then started to stroke a little silver cross that she wore around her neck. The news reporter saw her holding her daughters with one arm and stroking the cross with the other and asked how she felt. She looked at the fallen house and her scattered belongings, then looked at her daughters. While holding the cross in her fingertips she responded it is well.

The world wants to know, how can we say it is well when a storm has disturbed our peace? Because we know God is still on the throne. We know peace and order will be restored because Jesus is on board. Today storms still break out in our lives, but it's good to have Jesus on board.

When the storms of life are raging, we need to have Jesus on board to speak peace and blessings onto our pickup and restoration activities. When Jesus is on board no matter how fierce the storm, there is still hope.

When the storms of life are raging Jesus brings:

-Hope for the hopeless

-Light for our darkened paths

-Inspiration for dispirited hearts

-Encouragement for the discouraged.

As long as Jesus is on board, we can call on Him and He will speak to the winds and command them to be still!

When Jesus speaks to our storm He summons the eye of God to shine upon us.

When Jesus speaks to our storm He promises to make sense out of our difficulty.

When Jesus speaks to our storm, He promises to restore our sense of security.

Peace be still means that when the storms of life are raging, God is still in control.

Peace be still means that even though the rains come and the winds blow God has not stopped loving us!

Peace be still means that even though the lightning flashes, the thunder rolls and the rain pours ...after the rain, the sun will shine again.

When the storms of life are raging, we our plea is the same as that of the song writer who said, 'When the storms of life are raging, stand by me."

Stand by me and speak peace to my troubled situation

Stand by me and strengthen me to remember Romans 8:28 that all things work to the good for them that love God.

When the storms are raging help me to remember that My grace is sufficient for thee: When the storms of life are raging, stand by me Lord and help me to remember that no matter how rough the storm this too shall pass! When the storms of life are raging, stand by me Lord and help me to that weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning. After the storm, the SON will shine!

When the Son of God shines hope is renewed!

When the Son of God shines faith is revived!

When the Son of God shines Happiness is restored and joy will never end!

The world tried to hide his glory in a storm!

His enemies tried to destroy his majesty by nailing him to an old rugged cross!

His detractors tried to bury his omnipotence in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning, after storm....

The SON was shining again!

No. 9499-Mother's Day

Pleasing a Godly mother, also pleases God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, Galatians 1:10-15

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself doing things that would please your mother? Many spend their lives trying to please their mothers and bring a smile to their faces. What we learn about Christian mothers is that what pleases God pleases them. Doctors who deliver newborns often report that they are struck by the sight of a mother smiling when she hears a newborn baby cry out. That smile is not an ordinary smile but it's secretive, gentle, and ineffable. Many doctors report that they have become accustomed to the mother's smile after childbirth and they have never been disappointed. It didn't matter what the conditions that brought the child into the world, whether the baby was planned or not, whether it had married parents or not, whether it was from rich family or not, that unambiguous smile always seems to appear to transform the mother's face that was recently contorted in pain and agony into a beautiful moment of calm. From the moment of conception, a mother smiles.

At the moment that a child takes its first breath, it seems to cry out, yearn for and long for the touch, the voice and the smile of its mother. Many spend the rest of their lives trying to keep their mothers smiling. Think about the things that you do that please your mother. As a child your mother was pleased when you bowed your head and said grace over your bowl of cereal. She was pleased when you emptied the trash and made up your bed without being told to do so. She was pleased when you saved a dime out of your $1 allowance to put in the church offering tray. She was pleased when you broke one of her expensive what-nots but did not lie about your deed. She was pleased when you brought home a report card that reflected your best work, even though it wasn't

the highest grade possible.

She was really pleased when you crawled up on her lap, put your hands around her neck and told her that you loved her. When mothers are pleased they smile.

There is a connection between the kinds of things that bring a smile to a godly mother's face and those that please God. Often they are one and the same.
God smiles when he sees us being obedient. He smiles when we give him praise Him and bring our offering. He smiles when we demonstrate integrity in our dealings with others and do our absolute best in any work that we undertake.
God seems to be pleased with the same things that make mother smile.

As Christians, we work hard to please God through our words and deeds. Jesus gave His life for us and has nurtured us even while we were in the womb. We like it when He smiles on what we say and do.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains how his ministry pleases God. Paul spent a large portion of his life fighting the cause of Christ. Since his past was well known he often had to explain how he passionately defended the Christian cause.
His explanation to the Galatians, in this text, is that even while in his mother's womb he was ordained with a purpose, nurtured in the womb for a specific cause and birthed into the world to achieve a specific end.

His mother probably had no idea of his purpose. Unlike Mary or Elizabeth who both were given advance notice of the special nature of the children the carried, Paul's mother was not told his purpose. She received no divine hint. What did was rear him to the best of her ability. She insured that he was given the best education she could afford. That education prepared Paul to be a great speaker, and teacher. The fact that he learned at least seven languages attested to his early training. She did not know what he was to become, she reared him in the fear of God, and obedience to the Law of Moses. When he accepted his calling to witness for Christ another woman, the mother of Rufus who was a Christian, nurtured him in the faith to the point that Paul referred to her in Romans 16:13 as his mother. Though no details are given, it is apparent that Paul learned the fear of God from his mother, just as any other Jewish boy; but he was nurtured in his Christian faith by the mother of Rufus, the son Simon of Cyrene, the black man who helped Jesus carry his cross.

Thus, Paul writes that when it pleased God he was separated from mother and plunged into a ministry that would spread the gospel around the world. When he lived a godly life and gave respect to God he pleased his mother. When he spoke with passion about the cross of Christ, he pleased his other mother. When he pleased his mother and those who had a hand in mothering him, he also pleased God. Whenever anyone pleases a god fearing he also pleases God.

Mother is pleased when we live out our purpose

A mother is pleased when it becomes obvious that her children are fulfilling their life's purpose. Good mothers spend most of their time trying to help their children discover and achieve their personal destinies. When it is attained, mothers are pleased. Mary, mother of Jesus, was aware of his purpose before He was born. She knew he was to be a mighty man of God, but she did not know the details of His persecution and crucifixion.

Jesus was born in a small town, to poor parents, in very restricted and impoverished circumstances. By the age of 12 it appears he had learned his destiny because after being found in the temple with the scholars he said, 'It's time for me to be about my father's business." Mary knew his purpose and helped him achieve it.

A godly mother does what is necessary for to help her children achieve their life purpose. Some have been known to work to or three jobs, scrub floors and suffer humiliations to help their children achieve their purpose. When that happens, mothers are pleased.

Mothers are happiest when they see their children motivated to succeed, despite the circumstances of their birth or their parentage. Since a godly mother only wants to see her children fulfill the will of God, when mother is pleased, the child knows God must be pleased. It is certainly true to the converse, if God is pleased a godly mother is pleased as well.

Mother is pleased when we trust her words

A mother is pleased with her children when they trust her words and obey them. There are so many children today who disobeyed their parents and bring hardships and anguish on their mothers.

Mothers tell us to watch the crowds that we hang out with because birds of a feather flock together. She is pleased when we follow her advice.

Mothers tell us to exercise care so that we can avoid mishaps and trouble because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of court.

Mother are happy when we follow their advice and treat each person with kindness as we climb up, because the same people you trample on your way up you will meet them on your way down.

Mothers are happy when we follow her instructions even though we don't understand why she does what she does.

Consider the little rabbit that was fascinated with its newfound speed. The bunny loved to out run the creatures of the wood. He out ran the toad frog and Brer snake could never catch him. In fact, he took on ever creature of the woods to test his skill.

The little rabbit was disturbed however, because each time his folks let him go to the woods alone, mama rabbit would prick the bottom of his foot with a thorn. When they left, without explanation, the little rabbit limped around for hours in pain. When they returned they said nothing.

After a while, the little rabbit was concerned and asked mama rabbit the question, "Why do you stick my foot every time you leave me alone, it doesn't make sense and it seems cruel for you to do me this way."

Mama rabbit hopped over to her son and said, "There is a hound dog and hunter that love to chase little fast rabbits. Knowing you, you would give them a run. It may not make sense to you now, but it's better to be a living bunny with a sore foot than a dead rabbit with a fast reputation."

It did not make sense to him at the time, but that sore foot was keeping him alive.

Mama rabbit was pleased that he finally got the message.

When mother is not pleased

Life at home can be terrible if mama is not pleased. You can often tell when she is not pleased by the tone of her voice or the way she calls your name. When she calls your whole name, it usually means trouble.

Whenever we seem to stray away from the path, mother is not pleased and she has a tendency to get in our business.

Mothers and grandmothers are the voice of responsibility in most families. We pride ourselves in all the new things we purchased with a credit cards, but mother and grandmother wants to know our credit score, has it been raised or lowered as result of spending. They are the voices that keep warning us to spend more time at home and less with our friends, political connections, business partners and drinking buddies.

When mother is not pleased, she can and will get in your business. It doesn't matter whether you are grown and have your own, home, if mother is not happy, she'll get in a car or catch and airplane and show up at your front door. Mother is not pleased if a son is failing to care for his children. Mother is not pleased when a daughter is failing in her marriage commitment. Mother is not pleased if her children, even if they are grown, are drifting away from God and drifting aimlessly. When mother is not pleased, she won't keep it to herself she will let every child know his/her place. And when she gets angry, she may be heard to say, "I brought you into this world, I will take you out!"

Pleasing God is the highest order

Finally, we should remember that God gives us good mothers to guide and protect us, we want to please them, but more than that, we should strive to please God.

Godly mothers copy many of their traits from the Lord.

Like the Lord, God mothers are pleased when we do our best.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers are upset when we don't achieve.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers are happy when we follow their words.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers can get in your business when things are not right.

Paul told the Galatians that he walked his own walk for many years until he began

a new life in Christ that pleased God.

Our desire should be to please God, who is the source of our help.

Our help comes from a God who neither slumbers nor sleep.

Our help comes from a God who watches over us by day or by night.

When we show respect and honor for our mothers, we please God because he told us to honor our father and mother!

We thank God for mothers who provided us with a happy home!

We thank God for mothers who placed their lives on hold and invested their entire substance in us!

We thank God for mothers whose towering influence gave us a bold sense of family!

We thank God for mothers whose optimistic spirit showed us how to live long and happy lives!

We thank God for mothers who showed us the way to the hill!

Over 2000 years ago, when it pleased God, He sent his Son to that hill.

Not to a mountain peak or elevated blocks of land in a distant place but to a hill called Calvary!

We thank God that we had a mother who knew the man on the hill!

That man on the hill was Jesus who died on that old rugged cross.

It was a death that pleased God because he paid for our sins.

But when it pleased God, early Sunday morning, He rose again

Every day of my life I want to please God. When we please God we know our mothers will be pleased as well!

No. 9500-Mother's Day

When she could no longer hide him

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid[it] in the flags by the river's brink." Exodus 2:3

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you just didn't know what to do? Every mother can answer "yes" to that question because there have been so many times that they have tried everything they knew, but nothing seemed to work.

New mothers panic in the night when a baby won't stop crying, even though they may be miles away, they call home to ask their mothers what to do. Was it a rash? A few that that wouldn't break, a constant cough, a sore that wouldn't heal? No matter what the problem, every mother has had one point or another when they tried all that they knew how to do, only to be frustrated even more.

Young mothers often find that a call to an older mother can solve the problem, but there comes a time when even the advice of those more experienced doesn't seem to get the job done.

A child that wants to squander his/her talents and run wild with a loose crowd, frustrates a mother. A son who seems to be lawless and constantly breaks every rule and disrespects all forms of authority frustrates a mother who can only see a troubled future ahead. A daughter who ignores all motherly advice and flirts with activities that could lead to pregnancy, disease or death, troubles every mother.

After you have talk and talked until your face has changed colors and voice becomes hoarse, what do you do?

When that happens there is only one course to follow: put it in God's hands and trust Him to do what he does best: solve problems and turn lives around.

As Christians, we are grateful for having Godly mothers who struggled with us for so many years; when we frustrated them and they didn't know what to do, we're so glad that they put us in God's hands.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jocebed, the mother of Moses as she placed her son in a basket to hide him from danger.

Israel had been in bondage for over 400 years and in the process had increased in population from 70 when Joseph's family moved to Egypt to nearly a million people. The Pharaoh worried about the increase in the slave population and speculated that soon they would be able to overthrow their Egyptian rulers. In response, he ordered all of the male babies drowned to reduce the potential threat of an uprising.

As babies all over Egypt were taken by soldiers and drowned, one mother, Jocebed, hid her newborn in her house. She nurtured him with food, clothing and shelter for as long as she could, but eventually it became impossible to hide him. Too many people knew of his existence. The threat of discovery was too great.

She made a small basket and secured it so that it would be water tight and placed her son in the basket and with his sister as a guide placed the basket on the Nile river. She did not know what would become of the child. The Nile river was known for Crocodiles that could swallow the basket and the child with one fatal gulp. The prospect of drowning was on her mind as well as the chance that the soldiers might discover the little basket and drown the child despite her efforts. She resolved to put the child in God's hands and trust Him to guide the child to safety.

The basket drifted to an area where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. Once discovered, she decided to raise and educate the child as if it was her own. The child grew into a man and led the people of Israel out of slavery to the brink of the Promised Land.

Jocebed never gave up hope in her son, when she could no longer hide him, protect him and care for him; she put him in God's hand.

Mothers protect their children

Good mothers are protective of their children. The instinct to protect their offspring is intrinsic. In this respect every mother can empathize with Jocebed. They sense when danger is ahead and try to take actions to avoid anything that will have a negative impact on their children. Very few mothers can rest easy if they are aware that there is danger facing their children. Whether it is something as simple as a cry in the night or a broken leg, mothers will do their best to protect their children.

Often our mothers protect us from ourselves. Sometimes we really mess up our lives by dumb actions, stupid mistakes and insensitivity. Good mothers can see the danger coming and try to help us avoid many of life's pitfalls. One of Solomon's first decisions involved discovering the identity of the real mother when two women became embroiled in an argument over a newborn child. Since each woman claimed the child as her own Solomon proposed to cut the baby in half and give each woman half, instantly one woman rose to protect the child offering to give him to the other so that the child could live not be cut in two. He knew the unwritten truth: a real mother will always seek to protect her child.

Just as Jocebed listened for the sound of danger in the night and worried about the child's safety in the day, mothers today also seek to protect their children for all hurt harm and danger. That's why many pray constantly for the welfare of their children, asking God to be a shield around them by night and by today.

Today, I suspect that there are many who are enjoying a great life, because we living off the prayers of intercession offered by our mothers.

Godly mothers know when to let go

Jocebed held on as long as she could. Hiding her son became more difficult. He cried in the night. He gurgled in the day. It wouldn't be long before he would be discovered. Though she wanted to protect him with all of her being, she knew it was time to let go. All she could do was to trust in God.

There are some mothers who are over protective. An overprotective mother can do more damage than good. However, the Holy Spirit will speak to a godly mother and tell her when it's time to let go.

Godly mothers always ask God for the wisdom to know when to let go, and to know when they are loving their children too much. That's important because a child with an overprotective mother never fully matures, remains a baby, and is unable to think independently is always on the lookout for someone to depend on.

Over protective mothers cripple their children because they never learn to shoulder responsibility and are seldom held accountable for their actions. The children over protective mothers usually can't take criticism, even if it's positive and they expect to be pampered making them unable to succeed in relationships and to make necessary adjustments.

An over protective mother cannot accept the fact that her children make mistakes, do stupid things, and are capable of losing control. That may explain why their children only care about themselves and have difficulty caring about others.

Godly mothers know when to hold on and when to let go. That wisdom is not innate. It comes from God. Mary loved Jesus, but she knew when to let go. When he was 12 years old Jesus was separated from the family on a visit to Jerusalem. When Mary found him and asked why He had stayed behind, listening to the teachers in the synagogue, He answered, "It is time for me to be about my father's business." She knew when to let go. When Hannah had weaned her son, where he could be reared in the ways of the Lord by the priests, she took him and gave him to the priests. She knew when to let go.

Wise mothers know that there comes a time when they must let go. Even when their motherly instinct screams at them to intervene in the lives of their children, the spirit speaks to them and directs when to dip in and when to butt out.

Godly mothers are guided by the spirit of God and they move at His command.

Point children in the right direction

Jocebed spent considerable time preparing the little basket. In the night, away from the peeking eyes of the overseers she collected bulrushes and weeds, pitch and slim and made the little water tight basket. When she placed Moses in the basket, she placed the basket in the high weeds along the bank then pushed it in the direction of Pharaoh's daughter.

Many mothers, often more so than fathers, spend time trying to point their children in the right direction. That's why mothers are trying everything in their power to prepare their children for the future that is to come by placing them in the right hands. They seek out programs and activities that will help them to learn the essentials of living. They want their daughters to learn finer womanhood so they seek out groups to help them learn the rudiments of womanhood. They want their boys to learn to be men and they place them in the hands of men who add to the teaching they get at home. They look for schools, tutors, and extra-curricular activities that will help their children to be well rounded and ready for the world.

Most importantly, they see to it that their children have religious education. More than anyone else they know their children must know the Lord, be familiar with the word of God and know how to pray fervently and live a Christian life.

Jocebed pointed the little basket in the right direction, and let go, God took care of the rest. He saw to it that Pharaoh's daughter and not a crocodile found the basket. He saw to it that Pharaoh's daughter would raise the child and spare it from death.

Jocebed pointed the child in the right direction, God took care of the rest.

Thank God for good mothers

Finally, brothers and sisters we thank God for having given us godly mothers, through them He has blessed us. That's the lesson that Moses learned many years later. He had been reared in the great halls of the Egyptian court, but it was God who had blessed him through his mother. He had learn to read, write, build cities and lead people, but it was God who had blessed him through his mother. When she could no longer hide him, she put him in God's hands and God raised him up to be a leader of his people.

There are many mothers today who are worrying about the fate of their children. They have done all they know how to do; that's when you remember Jocebed, when you can no longer protect them, put them in God's hands.

When you put your children in God's hands, it doesn't matter which way the river of life flows, you will always float in the right direction.

When you've done all you know how to do, put your children in God's hands. It's safe in God's hands because we may:

—Grow WEAK but God is always strong!

—STUMBLE but God is always able to pick us up again!

—FAIL but God can do anything but fail!

Good mothers tell their children, to remember the words of Zechariah 4:6, "Not by

might, nor by power, but my spirit said the Lord of hosts!" Good mothers show their children how to live, by the way they live! Good mothers show their children how to walk by faith, by walking with God themselves! Good mothers show their children how to deal with frustrations, by throwing all of their trust on the Lord.

I'm reminded of the old mother who was always so confident that the Lord would make a way. The young women of the neighborhood asked her one day, "Tell us mother, why are you so confident?" The old lady said, "When I was a girl, my mother taught me to ride my bicycle and she ran beside me. I could feel her hand holding me as I paddled along. One day, I rode a long distance. When I stopped I realized that mama wasn't beside me. I asked mama, how was it that she was not there but I still felt her hand. She told me that she realized that as long as she ran beside me and held me up, that I'd never learn for myself. She said she stopped running that day and put me in the Lord's hand. She said the hand I felt that day, wasn't her hand, but it was God's hand guiding me. She had put me in God's hands."

Every Godly mother says, "I won't always be there with you child, but if you if feel like you're going to fall, let the Lord hold you up!"

—If you feel like you're going to cry, let the Lord wipe your tears away!

—If you feel like you need someone to talk to, take it to the Lord in prayer!

—The world may knocks you down, God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

Come what may, from day today, hold to God's unchanging hand!

The same hands that healed the sick and raised the dead!

The same hands that fed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread! The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

When you done all you know how to do...put it in God's hands, He will work it out!

No. 9501-Membership Improvement

Quit Lying to Yourself

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 2011

SCRIPTURE: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Psalm 51:4

Introduction

Have you ever lied to yourself? If we tell the truth most of us have lied to ourselves at least once. Lying to ourselves is what psychologists call being in a state of denial. It's refusing to accept reality while we pursue a course that is obviously different from what is in our best interest. We really can't improve until we accept the obvious.

People who smoke three packs of cigarettes a day, but claim they don't have a smoking habit are in denial. If you are ever going to kick the habit you must quit lying to yourself. The man who says he's trying to stop drinking, but drinks a fifth a day is in denial if he believes he is not an alcoholic. If you are ever going to kick the habit you must quit lying to yourself. The person who says he is serious about losing weight but can't stop over eating is in denial if he or she believes there is no eating disorder. If you are ever going to correct the problem you must quit lying to yourself. The man who says he loves his wife but beats her every time he gets angry is in denial when he says he doesn't mean to hurt her. If you are ever going to get over this domestic violence problem you must quit lying to yourself. There are millions of people who are lying to themselves.

Many know that there is a conflict between what they profess with their lips and their actions, but they do nothing to change; they keep lying to themselves. What is for certain, those who do not change anything will probably get no further than they have in the past. There is an old riddle that says, "Two toad frogs sat on a stump. One took a notion to jump off, how many are left? Two! One took a notion to jump, but that's all." Many of us have "Notion Motion." We take a notion to improve ourselves but more often than not, our notions never translate to motion."

Unfortunately, there are many who lie to themselves about their relationship with God; some are living under the flawed notion that their disobedience to God does not separate them from God. Some even profess Christianity, while involved in ungodly activities. They are lying to themselves. They take a notion to change, but make very few motions.

We will get closer to God when we accept our own weaknesses and prayerfully ask God for forgiveness. When we stop lying to ourselves things will change.

As Christians, we know our God is a God of empowerment and restoration. When we ask Him, He will forgive us and restore us." When we do, God has promised that His kindness will not depart from us.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he ends a long period denial and admits to God that he sinned when he broke God's law.

This psalm is the result of an instance in David's life which he made major errors in his life and finally seeks to reconcile himself with God.

David was on his palace roof one day when the army had gone out to battle and he saw a beautiful woman bathing herself. He entered into an adulterous relationship with her for she was a married woman. Her husband, Uriah, was a soldier in the king's army. He was away from home fighting for his nation.

A love child was conceived in the relationship and David panicked and tried to cover it up David ordered Uriah to be put in the forefront of the battle where he would most certainly be killed.

In the interim, David enjoyed the traditional protection afforded the king against prosecution or blame involving any action he took. He was invulnerable to prosecution and there was no court, tribunal or board that could hold him accountable. Under the law of the land the king could do no wrong.

Therefore David concluded that it was within his right to have an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. It was also within his power and imperial right to order her husband to the front line of battle. David convinced himself that he was justified in his actions.

In the midst of his state of denial God stepped in to indicate to him that there was an authority higher than the king.

The prophet Nathan approached David in a way that he could not deny and singled him out as the man responsible for both adultery and murder. In a prophetic moment the prophet Nathan pointed a finger at the king and said, "Thou art the man!" David knew then that his sin was uncovered.

When he quit lying to himself, David came to the conclusion that his actions against Uriah and Bathsheba were actually sins against God. He took actions against the two victims, but his real sin was against God. Sin by definition is transgression of God's law.

When he quit lying to himself he admitted that he had sinned against God the only authority able to hold him responsible for his actions.

When he quit lying to himself David admitted that despite the way it appeared to others, his life had actually gone out of control.

He had caused a man's death, stolen his wife, and disgraced the nation and sinned against God.

He prayed for God's forgiveness and he was restored.

His past discretions were never forgotten by his history, but his new life was so awesome that it completely overshadowed that one dark period in his life.

Some knowingly lie to themselves

There are many who are lying to themselves with the full knowledge that they are trying to lie to the one person who knows better; themselves.

These are the individuals who have seen the road map, know the route needed to get to their destination, but have traveled the opposite direction knowingly. Why would a person know the right thing to do but do the exact opposite? Some think they can defy God and hide from his presence.

This was Jonah's situation, he was doing wrong and knew he was doing wrong but convinced himself that he was right. Like Jonah, there are many today who have their own reasons for defying God's laws. They have provided themselves wealth reasons to support their actions.

Each reason they give seems justifiable and satisfactory to them. In Romans 7:20, Paul explained how a person can do wrong, knowing full well that it is wrong. He said, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." He said the presence of sin in any person's life pushes them to do wrong, with the full knowledge that it is wrong.

Paul said the only way such a person can redirect themselves is to allow Christ to come into their lives. He will make each person a new creature. That only happens when we quit lying to ourselves.

Some Procrastinate rather than reform

One element of denial is procrastination. Procrastination is a denial in the sense that we delay make necessary life decisions until a future date with the full knowledge that we have no intentions of making the change when that date comes.

Procrastinators lie to themselves frequently and often lie to themselves. To accommodate their indecisive nature, Procrastinators usually make up weak excuses that lie to their associates and to themselves.

Consider the pastor who tried to a get a man to come to church for many years. Each time he went to see the man his invitation was always refused. The man said, "Reverend, when I get straight, I'll promise you, I'll come to church."

The minister tried to persuade him to come to Jesus while he had time, but the man always refused saying, "I can't come the way I am. When I get straight I'll be there." Before the pastor could visit the man again he received news that the man died in his sleep. At his funeral, the pastor struggled to find a kind word to say about the man who never came to the church once in life.

The pastor finally said, "My friends, there is one thing that I can say about our friend. He kept his promise. He promised me he would come to church when he got straight.

Well, now he's straight and there he is."

Many have promised God that they would live for Him, but instead have given Him nothing but excuses and alibis. Each time we make a date with the Lord to reform our confused life without commitment that comes from the heart, we put off the Holy Ghost and deceive ourselves. To be truthful with God we need to quit lying to ourselves.

When we stop lying to ourselves, we repent

As long as David lied to himself and denied the sinfulness of his actions he never repented. However, was he felt the sting self condemnation and accept his sin against God, then he could start to get right with God.

Those who continue to live in denial never repent. They are like the first thief on the cross with Christ, he refused to accept responsibility for his crimes. He sought a way to escape his punishment not to make atonement for his sins. Even though he was hanging on a cross with death looming over him within just a few hours and pain and agony racking his body he was still stubborn. While hanging on the cross he made fun of and mocked Christ. He taunted Christ saying, "You say you are the Christ, then why don't you save yourself and me too." His unrepentant nature made him act foolishly, mocking one that could have saved him.

There are many in the world today who act similarly. There are some who have decided not to live by God's law but by man's law. They don't believe they deserve any punishment they receive and conclude that they are guiltless. They are lying to themselves.

There were some things about God that this thief and all like him didn't know. No one has to keep lying to themselves because God is a forgiving God; a compassionate God who doesn't care about the intricacies of our past, but only about the sincerity of the present. God will take shattered and broken lives and put them back together again. God will take the jangling discords of a dysfunctional life and weave them meticulously back together again. God will take the frightening roar of a midwinter storm and quieted it to the faint whisper of a warm spring breeze. God will take a shipwreck soul, stranded on the sea of life and "throw out the lifeline of hope and call out, "get on board, get on board."

That's what that second thief exemplified. He did not lie to himself; he said he deserved to be where he was but Jesus did not. He said to the other thief in essence: "We have been thieves all of our lives, we have transgressed the laws of God and the laws of the Romans, but this man has done no wrong." He recognized that the crucifixion of Christ represented the key to salvation, the door of spiritual blessing, the implementation of a divine plan.

When the blessings begin

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when we quit lying to

ourselves, that's when the blessings begin!

When we do as David did and fall on our knees in the presence of God and ask for forgiveness, God will restore us to the family of God and once again make us the recipients of his favor.

David asked the Lord to restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Once again he wanted to have a clean heart. He wanted to put his life back in God's hands.

If we want to be restored, we must put our lives back in God's hands. We must once again, put our trust in the Lord.

Trusting in the Lord is not a trite saying, an empty colloquialism that tickles the ear but lacks substance and power!

Trusting in the Lord is not a failed experiment, or the testimony of the weak and faint hearted.

Trusting in the Lord is a statement of faith that affirms that the life we live has been placed in God's hand. He is the pilot; we sit in the second chair and wait His instructions.

Trusting in the Lord is an affirmation of faith that is better than Allstate; we are in good hands when we are in His hands.

Trusting in the Lord is a belief that is greater than State Farm, better than a good neighbor, God is always there!

To return to the joy of our salvation we must quit lying to ourselves and once again put our trust in Him and Him alone.

God and God alone can make our:

-RACE worth running and our BATTLE worth fighting!

-COURSE worth finishing and our FAITH worth keeping!

-DIFFICULTIES worth facing and our BURDENS worth bearing!

-ANXIETIES worth enduring and our TEARS worth shedding!

When we trust in the Lord, we turn dark days into sun shiny days; MIDNIGHTS into noontimes and hard times into good times!

It is no lie; God is a good God whose mercy endureth forever!

It is no lie, God is worthy of praise because His:

—Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant

—Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

It is no lie; there is a burden He's going to lift off our shoulder!

It is no lie; there is a hill He's going to help us to climb!

It is no lie; there are bills He's going to help us to pay!

It is no lie there are jobs He's going to help us to find!

When we stopped lying to ourselves we turned to Jesus to get another chance.

Every since the day we accept Christ as our savior He's been restoring our souls.

I don't know about you but I'm praising Him for giving me one more chance!

I'm praising Him because He plucked me from the very mouth of despair and gave me a second chance!

I'm praising Him because He lifted my life out of the miry clay and placed my feet on solid ground!

I'm praising Him because He purchased my salvation!

The song writer said, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain but He washed it white as snow”

Jesus came and died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave, guaranteeing my salvation!

No. 9502-Communion

Sweet Bread

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 15, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Introduction

What is the best bread you've ever tasted? We've tasted many types of bread in our life time, we all have our favorites. There are some who fondly remember eating light bread sandwiches, filled with nothing but mayonnaise. There are others who can remember sitting on their garrets eating cornbread, dipped in a glass full of cold butter milk. Some prefer biscuits with the butter oozing from them. There are some who even prefer hot water corn bread.

There are breads to fit every fancy: White bread, wheat bread, or rye bread. Toast, biscuit and muffins are some favorites with a little butter or a few with raisins. Some like Leavened or un-leavened, flat bread, foccacia bread, fried bread, bread sticks, bread crumbs, sour dough bread. French bread, Italian bread, bread made in rolls, bread made in loaves, bread made on buns, bread for burgers, and bagels for breakfast.

Despite the fact that the whole world seems to be hooked on low carb diets that shun most of the best breads..the good news is bread is back! Bread is back with a vengeance. In fact, it' in such demand that it's cost has skyrocketed. In 1943 a loaf of bread cost 5 cents. Today, depending on brand and location a loaf could cost as much as $2.00 We love our bread: Bread for hotdogs. Bread to sop gravy with. Bread for Sandwiches. Bread to nibble on while we wait on our meal at restaurants. We love our bread!

There is a favorite type of bread for many in the South, it's a bread that many simply call "sweet bread."

What is sweet bread? It depends on the side of the track you favor! On one side of the track Sweet Bread refers to a delicacy made from the heart, stomach, pancreas, throat or the neck of a cow, lamb or and pig. They strip the membranes away, soak it salt water, poach it in milk, dry it, chill it, bread it and then fry it. When eaten it looks and tastes like a large hunk of bread that that has a sweet taste. On that side of the track they call that concoction sweet bread.

On the other side of the track sweet bread has a different meaning. It has a little flour, a pinch of salt, eggs, a little cooking oil, a little baking soda, sugar and a little milk.

Nobody knows why they call either version sweet bread. One is not bread at all and

only imitates being sweet but is not really sweet. The other is not bread at all, but is really a cake that does the same thing as bread, but makes it so much easier to eat and leaves a great taste in your mouth.

When Southern folks talk about sweetbread they usually mean a little small cake, sometimes cut in squares, presented on a sheet or in little paper container, they call it a cup cake instead of sweet bread with an icing.

Bread and cake have about the same nutritional value. The difference is that one is good for you and tastes great while the other is good for you, tastes great and is sweet, too!

Must of enjoy a good slice of bread, but for many, sweet bread is better! But there was another kind of bread. It's not corn bread, light bread, sourdough bread or sweet bread, it is from heaven. It's doesn't have an adjective to describe it like "Wonder" bread, although it is a wonder. We just refer to it as the bread from heaven.

It's the blessing of Christ in our lives every day helping us to grow stronger as it means our daily needs. It's the daily bread we pray for in our prayers. It's the bread that helps us deal with sour dough situations with the sweetness of God's word.

As Christians, we thank God for sending us bread from heaven. This bread is His son Jesus who feeds us daily. The song writer wrote, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more." -Fill me with, Sweet bread!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains how He is the bread from heaven which will feed believers in a way that their hunger will be satisfied.

The text was spoken after a crowd of several thousand people, detailed at verse nine, had gathered to hear Him and there was no food available to feed them. One lad in the group had brought along two fishes and five loaves of bread. Jesus had the men in the crowd to sit and he took the little fish and bread that was available, gave thanks for it, and began to distribute it to his disciples. As they distributed it among the crowd it never ran out until all had been filled; and even then there were leftovers.

The people were so excited about what they had seen that they immediately wanted to make Jesus their king because they envisioned feasts for everyone under his administration. They wanted more fish and more bread. Jesus rebuked the crowd for following their growling bellies, seeking food. He offered them food, but it was not of mere fish and bread. He told them that just as Moses gave them manna or the "bread from heaven" in the wilderness so had the father made it possible for them to have a greater bread.

He summed up this truth by telling them "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." What Christ told the crowds was simple: "If it's fish and bread you seek, keep looking; but if it's food for your soul that you want, I can satisfy your needs."

Thus, John 6:35 describes Christ as the Bread of life. However, 2 Corinthians 2:15 describes the "Sweet Savor" of Christ when it says, For we are unto God a sweet savor

of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:. Paul describes Christ as having a sweet savor for the saved. In 2 Corinthians 2:16 he says, “To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? “

To believers Christ is the sweet taste and savor of the abundant life, centered in Christ and acceptable to God. The non-believer’s rejection of Christ doesn’t have a great savor at all; it is the savor of death to them.

Christ is bread from heaven with a sweet savor. To plain folks that means just plain sweet bread.

What Bread Does for us!

When Christ described himself as the bread of life He gave us a comparison drawn from life that was so clear that we could fully understand what he means to our spiritual lives. When we walk down the aisle of a grocery store there are many kinds of bread on display, each claiming to be more than the other. There is the house brand of bread such as the Walmart “Great Value” or there is bread by Pepperidge Farms or Wonder Bread. They could all be placed in one plain wrapper that says “Bread” because they all do the same thing, except that some have raisins, or a designer touch. If we walked down the aisle of Heaven’s Grocery Store that would be only one brand on the shelf it would be “Bread of Heaven”- Because it does what bread is supposed to do.

BREAD RELEASES ENERGY: Bread is a source of protein in the body. It contains vitamins, iron and calcium. Most nutritionist agree that bread is a source of slow release energy. That’s good to know especially since Jesus said He is the bread of life. What does the presence of the Holy Spirit do in any life? He invigorates us like a vitamin, He strengthens us like iron and He gives us strong bones like Calcium, enabling us to stand. Then amazingly, the spiritual bread that is within us releases the power of God within us to do the work of God in a mighty way. It’s like a spiritual time release capsule; all through the day little bursts of energy just push us, just a little bit. When we feel dispirited, He lifts us. When we feel dejected, He raises us. When we feel tired, He energizes us. No wonder Jesus said, ‘I am the bread of life.”

BREAD HELPS US GET RID BAD STUFF: Certain kinds of bread, such as wheat bread contain fiber. What does fiber help us do? Get rid of the bad stuff. Nutritionists say, foods with fiber have a tendency to fill you up without making you fat. They help you to go longer without feeling hungry, help you to fight off disease and fiber helps you to sweep the kitchen. That means fiber foods help you to get rid of the bad stuff in your body quickly..It sweeps the kitchen. Jesus said those who have the bread of heaven “shall never hunger” for the things of this world, or thirst after the things of this world. This bread will help us get rid of the bad stuff in our lives. Maybe that’s why 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Old things such as sinful living, adultery, thievery, gambling, drugs, alcoholism...all passed away. Those who accept Christ find that His spirit starts working quickly. We don’t enjoy sinning as much

as we once did, we start thinking more about doing right by God..That's the Bread of Heaven at work; it's getting rid of the bad stuff so the new creature in Christ can live.

BREAD IS NOT EVERYTHING: While Bread has plenty of iron, calcium and some vitamins.. bread does not have everything we need. We do not exist on a diet of bread alone. We do not remain healthy by eating a couple of slices of bread three times a day. The fact is modern technology takes out about 30 essential vitamins when bread is processed. So, bread becomes a part of a system of essential foods that we need. Why would Jesus say that He is the bread of life if bread is not everything? Can't we just praise Jesus? Can't we just worship Jesus, isn't that enough? Can't we just raise holy hands of praise, isn't that enough? Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We need Jesus to serve as our mediator between us and God. We need Jesus because He alone can connect us to God, but it is God who answers our prayers, heals us and grants us pardon for our sins. 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We need Christ, but we must also obey God's commandments. We must have the bread of life.. but we also must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

He's sweet

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when Jesus offered his disciples the bread of life, He offered them the presence of God. By any measure, that's sweet bread.

The people were bombarded with the taste of Roman hatred, but this idea of loving your enemies was sweet bread.

Israel's relationship with its neighbors had soured, but Jesus said love your neighbor as yourself, that was sweet bread

Sweet Bread was greater than the show bread of the temple; greater than unleavened of the Passover

When the people ate manna in the wilderness they lived by the laws of Moses, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But Sweet Bread eaters lived by a different rule: if men smite you on one cheek turn the other, do not return evil for evil.

When they gathered Manna one day, the people were always hungry again the next day because Manna fed the body. However, Jesus said those who have the bread of life, Sweet Bread, would never hunger.

God's bread gives:

STRENGTH to those who are weak; INSPIRATION to those who are frustrated and confused! HOPE to the hopeless; RENEWAL to those who are in despair!

PICKS UP those who are let down; LIFTS UP those who have been let down!

SAVES those who are lost and gives NEW ENERGY to those who wait on him. For

I hear the word declare that they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!

God's bread is QUICKER that hoe cakes. While we are still praying, our help is on the way! LIGHTER than light bread. Those who wander in the dark will find that he is the light of the world! SWEETER than raisin bread. His goodness takes the bitterness of hard times and sweetens its taste. No wonder the song writer said, "I found a savior and He's sweet I know!" I heard Jesus say, I am the bread of life. I am the bread that came down from heaven!

Here is the Devine recipe:

I was prepared with from a special divine recipe!

-Three parts of the trinity, the father, Son and Holy Ghost

-A dash of compassion, and a cup full of love.

-Pour in a portion of understanding, and another portion of forgiveness.

-Shape it the cradle of mankind for 33 long years.

-Hang it out on a hill for all the world to see.

-Place in grave and let it sit for three days.

-But Early Sunday morning you'll see its self rising power!

No wonder the song writer declared, Bread of Heaven! Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

No. 9503-Graduation

At Last

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 22, 2011

SCRIPTURE: For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. Deuteronomy 11:10-12.

Introduction

What do you do when you have strived to complete a goal for many years and you finally succeed? Do you scream? Do you shout? Do you dance? The feeling is exhilarating and electrifying; it's the feeling that comes immediately after you have graduated from high school or college or achieved an elusive goal. It's an Oscar! It's a Grammy! It's a Tony! No matter what type of achievement it may be, the excitement of the moment is indescribable.

There is an old proverb that says, "Good things come to those who wait." When that special moment comes the excitement builds and it becomes difficult to sleep at night. Sometimes even in the day we dream about it. Is it an engagement? A Wedding? Is it the return of a loved one? A Birthday? Christmas? When that special day gets closer it seems as if the days get longer, the clock ticks slower and the pages on the calendar never turn. I can't wait is the phrase we use! We are bursting with excitement.

Most high school graduates of this class have been waiting 18 years! Eighteen years is 6,570 days. Eighteen years is 938 weeks Eighteen years is 157,680 hours. Eighteen years is 9,460,800 Minutes Eighteen years is 587,708,000 seconds

After Eighteen years, when the big day comes we breathe a sigh of relief and say, "At last." That's what happened when Barack Obama became President of the United States. On the night of the inaugural ball he took his beautiful wife Michelle in his arms and they danced to the tune of Etta James' song, sang by Beyonce Knowles, "At Last." The song spoke to the hearts of millions of people, at last we saw dawning on the horizon, the Promised Land. They danced to the tune "At Last," but their journey was just beginning.

So it is with every believer. When we reach a milestone such as a graduation of special achievement, we may say "At last," but it's really just the beginning of a long journey ahead.

Isaiah said that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint.

As Christians, we praise God for bringing us to a pivotal moment in life. We now look to Him who strengthens us to make the rest of the journey.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses' instruction to Israel when they reached Jordan, at last, after a 40 year journey. Since leaving Egypt, the people had one purpose: to reach the Promised Land. It was their overriding purpose. Moses guided them in their journey with a clear plan and a sense of direction. Now, having completed a journey that consumed most of their lives, Moses encouraged the people to continually walk in God's ways as they proceed into the next phase of the journey.

The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses' last message to Israel. Moses, at 120 years old saw many changes they had experienced to reach this point. He saw them change their life-style from slaves in Egypt to nomads. He saw them change their diets to accommodate the manna, or bread from heaven, that fell every day. He saw them move from a people who called on God faithfully and continually in Egypt, to one that complained incessantly. Moses saw children grow into adults and he watched God provide, food, water and clothing for the people in miraculous ways. He saw it all.

As they paused, just before going into the Promised Land, Moses wrote, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Book of Deuteronomy. The name means A Second look. In it, he reminds them where they had been and then points them to where they are going.

Israel had made it to the Promised Land at last, but their journey was just beginning. Moses told them that the journey ahead of them was different than their past. Things will change. In Egypt their houses were given to them by the Egyptians. In Egypt their food was provided for them by the Egyptians. In Egypt their clothing was provided for them by the Egyptians. In Egypt they had one purpose: Obey the Egyptians and do exactly as they were told. They built cities for the Pharaohs and prepared their graves.

Even in the wilderness God fed them with bread from heaven, he chastised them when they made mistakes, and kept guiding them to their purpose. They didn't have much, but what they had came from the bounties of God. Their clothes and shoes were all provided miraculously by God, for they wore the same clothes for 40 years and they didn't wear out.

Now that they had made it to Jordan at last, the purpose changed. It was no longer to make it to the Promised Land but they had to now possess it. That was easier said than done. In the Promised Land the free bread from heaven would stop. They would need to have their own houses. They would have to work and take care of themselves.

They had made it to Jordan at last, but they had much more to do. Moses warned the people that as things change and opportunities of the future avail themselves to remain faithful to God. He warned them not to forget where they had come from, and

how they made it, at last, to their present destination. The only way they could lose the benefit of God's blessings would be to turn to ungodly living. Change is going to come, Moses said, but the people should not change their belief and faith in God.

Now What?

Just as Israel stood on the banks of Jordan, having reached the Promised Land at last, today's graduates stand on the same plateau, facing the same dilemma: We've made it here at last.now what? The response should heed the instructions of Moses to Israel.

PURPOSE MUST BE CLEAR: Through 400 years of slavery and 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel had one purpose: Make it to the Promised Land. They never wavered from that purpose. Today, believers must be driven by a clear purpose. Those who have achieved much all seemed driven by purpose. Name the person who succeeded and you will find men and women driven by a purpose: Susan B. Anthony, Ford, Edison, Frederick Douglass, Obama, Winfrey; all seemed to be purpose driven. Graduates have made it last, now what? Some will say college or trade school, but even that must be toward a clear purpose, without it, your life will dwindle down to finding a job, going to work every day, paying bills and finally dying have done little more than exist for 75 years. Christians must ask God to show them their purpose, and then anoint them with a heavenly passion to pursue it, come hell or high water. Once the purpose is clear, the passion will follow.

POSSSESS THE PROMISE: Israel's dream was to reach the Promised Land, but they were totally unprepared to possess the land once they got there. They had the promise but the promise had to be possessed. Today, there are many believers who have faith in God's promise but they have no plan to possess it. Life plans include a variety of components: Educational needs, a financial plan, a faith anchor and a life ladder. Believers should acquire the education needed for their life goal. For some that may be college, trade school or career training, but every goal will require some post high school education.

In addition, believers should have a finance plan that will not require them to work themselves to death. It begins with opening both a savings and checking account, managing your money, learn your credit score, invest in small opportunities, and avoiding the temptation to spend so much that you have nothing left out of each pay check. Your life ladder is the route you plan to take to achieve your purpose. The life ladder must be clear in your mind because it will determine the kind of people you associate with, the types of establishments that you frequent; when, where and how you party, where you choose to live and places you go for entertainment and relaxation. The route you take also dictates the books you read, movies you watch, and the things you do. Each rung on your ladder is designed to help you possess your promise.

You need a faith anchor. To possess the promise of God you must live your life in accordance to God's will. You must worship regularly, live obediently, tithe

regularly, and praise God constantly. Moses warned Israel not to be so consumed with life that you forget that the key to abundant living is Jesus. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly."

PUT YOURSELF IN GOD'S HANDS: It is customary at Graduations to quote the English Poet William Henley who wrote a poem called "Invictus" the closing lines of which read, "It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." Henley's thought is that we alone control our destinies, but believers see that differently. For believers the last lines of Invictus should read, "God is the master of my fate, He and He alone is the captain of my soul." Moses told Israel that it was about to move into a new land; in it they could not depend on anything they knew, they would be totally in God's hands. In Egypt the land was flat and they knew how to shift the river water to irrigate the fields.

However, the land is filled with hills and mountains and the waters came from the rains that fall from heaven. Nothing they knew could help them because they were traveling in unchartered areas; they had to put themselves completely in God's hands. Even today, believers must do the same. That means as young men and women we trust God to lead us. We ask God about what school to attend, what person we should marry, how to rear our children. We ask God to show us, then we must follow where He leads us. That's when we sing with the song writer, "Where He leads me I will follow, I'll go with Him, With Him, all the way."

At Last

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when we reach the point of "at last" we are at the point where we must begin again. At the Jordan the Israelites breathed a breath of victory, saying at last! When they saw the cooling waters of the Jordan after seeing nothing but sand for 40 years they said, at last. When they realized that they would no longer be required to roam aimlessly in the wilderness, they said, at last.

Yet even as they spoke, the future stared them in the face and they realized that their "at last" was more of a benchmark than a life goal, there was much to be done.

Graduates are charged to possess the new land ahead and go forth, trusting in the Lord. When trust in the Lord, He creates the steps for us!

He opens the doors!

He makes the opportunities!

He baffles the critics who doubt our abilities.

He mystifies the skeptics who said, we were doomed to failure!

He intensifies our commitment and builds our strength

When we commit to live our lives according to His purpose, He breathes his Holy Spirit on us and promotes us higher and higher.

That's why the old warriors used to sing, We are climbing Jacob's ladder, We are climbing Jacob's ladder, Soldiers of the cross...every round goes higher higher! Soldiers of the cross!

Trusting in the Lord means asking God to hold my hand!
As I move from level to level, hold my hand!
As I take the next step in my life's journey, hold my hand!
I may be young but I know the meaning of the old song, Lord hold my hand, while I run the race, I don't want to run this race alone!
Trust in the Lord, He will never let you down!
Trust Jesus, who died for you out on Calvary!
Trust in the Lord, who arose after three days with all power in his hands!
Trust in the Lord because He holds your future in His hands!

No. 9504-Inspiration

A Memorial before God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 28, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Acts 10:4

Introduction

How should we remember the fallen among us? Should we remember them with a slab of barbecue over a pit of hot coals? Should we remember them with a fun day on the beach or shopping day in the mall? Are these the best ways to memorialize the fallen soldiers among us? Is that the way we remember?

Memorial Day was first observed on May 30, 1868. At first, it was a day to remember the Civil War dead. Hundreds of thousands died then protecting the sovereignty of the union and by doing so ended the plague of slavery in the United States. After World War I the nation began remembering the dead who fell in any war.

In 1971 the U.S. Congress changed the day of Memorial Day from May 30 to the last Monday in May, thus creating a three day weekend. The day of remembrance has been all but forgotten in many sectors of the country. It has been replaced by parties, mall sales and stock car racing.

Yet, Memorial day remains a day of reflection for the military dead and for the Christian Soldiers who have fallen over the years in our families. How should we remember the fallen heroes of our faith? One way is to pray for them. We should pray that the sacrifices they made and the goals they sought will continue as a lasting legacy before men and a memorial before God. The story is told of an elderly woman who had a tradition on Memorial Day of placing flags on the graves of the deceased soldiers, then sitting on the steps of neighbors and praying for them.

When asked to explain her unusual habit she said the flags symbolize her remembrance of the dead, the prayers is her way of remembering the living descendants of those whose lives have been blessed because of the flag draped coffins in their families.

What we do each day is a testament to our faith in God. Our kind acts, thoughtful words, and prayerful responses send up memorials before God that are not ignored.

These memorials are everlasting

.

As Christians, we should strive to build the kingdom of God everyday through our

words and deeds; they open doors for future generations who will remember our spiritual memorials placed as shrines of God's goodness at the throne of grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on Cornelius whose prayers and faith became a memorial before God. Jim May says Cornelius was an oddity. He was a Roman soldier, and not just a common soldier, but a Centurion. He was a man of rank among the enemies of the Jews and was a symbol of the power of Caesar that held Israel as a conquered people. He was despised by most of the Jews and feared by the men of his own band. He lived life on the edge of disaster all the time. As a commander in the Roman Army he knew that each day brought new dangers and new temptations to exercise his authority, and yet he was able to be a Christian in spite of it all.

Cornelius was very compassionate to the poor. He gave Roman coins to those in need and supported the causes of the faithful. Acts 10:2 says he gave "much alms" to the people, so much that it distinguished him as a compassionate man. He was also a man of prayer; not just routine prayer in the morning, but apparently throughout the day.

God used Cornelius' prayer life and compassion to open doors of faith for the rest of the non-Jewish world. In his prayers, God told him to that his life had come before God as exemplary. He was also told that he should seek out a Christian preacher named Peter and listen to him.

At the same time God spoke to Peter and showed him that the message of faith should be extended beyond his own race and that doors should be opened. He told him that three men would knock on his door and ask him to follow; he should obey.

True to form the events happened as told. Peter preached Jesus to Cornelius and he was saved. Cornelius became the first non-Jewish Christian and the gospel spread throughout the world to all generations from that day forward. Certainly Cornelius' life was a memorial before God.

Building Memorials

There are thousands of memorials across the nation. They are little reminders of the words and deeds of someone who touched our lives in a great way. These memorials tell our story:

MEMORIALS BEFORE THE NATION: In Washington, D.C. There are memorials of great men and women everywhere. The Lincoln Memorial, The Washington Memorial, The Vietnam War Memorial, and memorials of the great wars are everywhere. In Pearl Harbor the memorial of the bombing of the harbor is over the watery grave of hundreds of sailors. In Atlanta, the tombs of Martin Luther King and his wife Coretta stand isolated in a pond of remembrance. On Mount Rushmore the heads of four great presidents have been carved into the side of a mountain in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The people saluted lived lives that were dedicated to serving the

nation. Their contributions were memorials before the nation. As grand as they are, they cannot overshadow over 300,000 graves in Arlington National Cemetery. These mark the resting place of those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

MEMORIALS BEFORE OUR FAMILIES: In every family there are fallen heroes of the faith. They were Christian soldiers who may not have fought on great battlefields of the nation, but who waged war against Satan for the soul of our families. On the walls of our homes, tucked away in photo albums are memorials of them. Their stories are told to each new generation. Do you remember the grandfather in your family who worked to buy land or a home and taught each generation the importance owning your own land and being self sufficient. Do you remember the aunt in every family who was a prayer warrior in her family, bringing family issues before God and teaching others to take their concerns to him in prayer. We look at their pictures, touch a lock of their hair, or read some of their writings and reflect on the lives they lived before us. Their contributions to our family story serves as a memorial before our family that will live on through each generation.

MEMORIALS BEFORE GOD: More importantly than leaving a memorial before the nation and our families is the need to leave a memorial before God. Cornelius' prayer life and his alms caught God's eye. Acts 10:4 listed, "Thy prayers and thy alms" as key elements of the Christian memorial. When believers pray, they open themselves up to God and He speaks to them. Often believers pray for others: for their strength, deliverance, healing, prosperity and salvation. Those prayers are not unnoticed, the get God's attention. We usually call those who believe in the power of prayer, "Prayer warriors" –soldiers who fight on their knees, sending petitions for blessings before God. Lillie Blanche Holt was nearly 100 years old when she died. In Monroe, Louisiana she was known as the "prayer lady." She went to city hall and prayed for the mayor, elected officials. She prayed for children in school and was often seen praying for bus drivers, Sunday School teachers and others. It was not unusual for her to call important city leaders in early morning hours and pray for them over the phone.-Without a doubt her prayers were a memorial before God.

In addition, our alms, are a memorial before God. We give alms or financial assistance to the poor, the needy and those in distress. We support charities such as the March of Dimes, the Red Cross, send monies to those who suffering in disasters, and struggle. We give a tenth of what we earn to the church and even more. Our giving spirit, serves as a memorial before God. He sees what we do. It is not unnoticed. It gets his attention.

Remember God's Blessings

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember God's blessings upon our families and give him praise.

Memorials call attention to something that has been done. They help us to remember.

In Wilmington Delaware, there is a memorial to Harriet Tubman, it reminds those who visit that a great woman who saved the lives of many slaves passed this way.

In Battle Creek Michigan there is a larger than life memorial of Sojourner Truth that

reminds those who came that a great spoke out for justice and echoed across time.

In Washington D.C. there is a National Historic Site that revisits the legacy of Frederick Douglass and lifts him up to every generation as an example of strength and perseverance. In our own home time there are markers scattered all over the place that tell the story of our journey. The purpose of memorials is to tell the story to the children. Joshua ordered 12 stones to be erected as a memorial. Every succeeding generation would ask, What mean these stones? At that time Joshua said the people should tell the story of how God brought us over on dry land?

Our family memorial tells the story of how we were down and out, and God picked us up and turned us around! It's the story of how God healed our sick and open the blind eyes of lost family members! It's the story of how he planted our feet on solid ground. That's why every generation must pass by another memorial. It is not in Washington, D.C. or lying under an eternal flame, it's an empty tomb and a cross on a hill.

I've got to tell the story about Jesus!
How He died out on Calvary!
-How early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!
I've got to tell somebody!
I've got to tell somebody!

No. 9505-Inspiration

Thank God for the Morning Star

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 5, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Revelation 22:16

Introduction

Have you ever seen the morning star? Only those who rise early in the morning have seen it, although it is always there. It seems to hover just over the horizon and twinkle. It's a marvel.

A while ago a friend traveled with us in an early morning trip. As we talked and sipped coffee the friend looked out of the window and saw a light blinking in the horizon. She was mystified. She thought it was the warning lights of an airplane but it never moved. It was too high to be the safety light on a tower. As we traveled along, our passenger was glued to the window, looking at the light that seemed to form a little cross in the horizon. Everywhere we went, it was there. The sky was empty. All of the other stars had disappeared, but it was still there. We tried to explain that what she saw is often referred to as the morning star.

"I've never heard of that!" she exclaimed. She was over 60 years old, but had never seen the morning star or even heard of it. We laughed at what we thought had to be an exaggeration. However, when we saw the look of amazement on her face, we knew she was telling the truth.

As we drove along, the day began to break and the sky began to brighten. When we looked again, the morning star had disappeared. It was as if it was no longer needed, a new day had begun. What is this morning star? As children we were often told that the first star we see just before daybreak is the wishing star. The common legend is that all we need to do is see the wishing star, close our eyes, make a wish and the wish will come true. Pointing to the wishing star made the wish happen even faster.

In reality, the morning star is not a star at all. It's a planet, the planet Venus. In 8th grade science classes we learned about the planets, (there were nine of them then, now there are only eight). One we learned about was Venus. It was very close to the earth and had a very great luminosity; it shined brighter than a star. In fact, on a clear day,

Venus can be seen in the sky in broad daylight, but is seen best as it reflects the sun at its back. Venus is bright, but Venus is not a star.

In biblical times people didn't worry about the specifics, they focused on the truths. What they saw in the heavens may have actually been the planet Venus, but the truth was that what the night was the darkest, it always appeared. They may have seen the bright luminosity of the second planet closest to the sun, but the truth was that every day, right on time, it was there pointing the way.

As Christians, we may not have risen early enough in the morning to see the "morning star" but we know it's there. We take confidence in knowing that even though we cannot see Him; our God is there, showing us the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as He describes Himself as the "Bright and morning star." The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John while exiled on the Isle of Patmos contains many promises and many warnings. There are warnings against apostasy, following false prophets and disbelief. There are warnings about coming destruction, punishment for the wicked and the end of modern times. There is a warning about the coming Day of Judgment.

It also includes promises. There are promises of redemption of the faithful, salvation of the lost and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The closing verses of the Revelation seem to seal the promises. The clincher comes when Jesus reminded believers that He gave this Revelation to John, referred to as "mine angel" for the purpose of testifying to the generations. Hear his words in, Revelation 22:16 "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

For our purposes we note that "preachers or pastors" in the Revelation are referred to as angels. Jesus refers to himself as the promised savior who would be a descendant of David. Then He referred to himself as the "bright and morning star.

Jesus calls himself, "the bight morning star." This fulfilled an old Testament prophecy, by the prophet Balaam, who said, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel," (Numbers 24:17). It is interesting to note that Jesus did not refer to Himself as a star, but the "bright and morning star." He is not one of billions of stars of the universe that happens to twinkle around us, but He is the "bright and morning star" or that sign that we see in the heavens that reminds us constantly that He is there.

As the Revelation closed it gave us the picture of Christ looming over us, watching, protecting and concerned. Even though He is not seen with the eye, He is there. He is our bright and morning star.

The Star

This passage of scripture should provide hope to believer in three separate ways.

It reminds us that God:

SHOWS US THE WAY: For years mariners and travelers looked to stationary stars to give them a sense of direction in the night or day. In that sense Christ as our morning star is a constant presence to point the way for us. Our goal should be to make sure that what we are trying to do in life lines up with God's course. Will the activity with which I'm involved keep me on course with God's course? Or will it take me in a different direction? We should let the light that shines from heaven guide us every step of the way. All we need to do is follow the guiding light. This guiding light flows from the throne of Grace and is none other than the Son of God himself. For I heard Jesus declare in John 8:12 "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life."

If we follow the guiding light he'll show us the way to move:

—from death into life

—from gloom into glory

—from sin to salvation

—from misery to comfort

—from panic into peace

The light from heaven will show us the way.

SHOWS UP WHEN THINGS LOOK WORST AND BEST: In the course of our lives we reach a point when things look really bad for us. Isn't it amazing that when things look their worst that God shows up? That's why Christ described Himself as the bright and morning Star. After a long night of darkness, when you can hardly see your way, suddenly in the horizon, the morning star appears. Whenever you see the morning star you know that it won't be long before the night is ended.

It won't be long before the doubts are settled.

It won't be long before the suffering ends!

It won't be long before the flood waters subside!

It won't be long before the sickness heals!

When God shows up, He brings us hope. We should shout and give praise when He shows up because He inspires us, motivates us keeps us going. He doesn't just show up in the morning, but on a clear day, just like the day star that Peter spoke of in 2 Peter 1:19, He can be seen high above the clouds, sparkling, shining in His majesty. That's a reminder that He is responsible for our successes, our achievements and the wonderful life that we live. After every storm we see His rainbow. Above every cloud we see His light shining from heaven.

When He shows us, whether in good times or bad times…He brings us a renewed spirit and faith. He is our bright and morning star.

SHOWS US NEW PROMISES: In the American Classic novel "Gone with the wind." Scarlet O'Hara looks back over all of her losses and says, "I'll think of some way to get back, after all tomorrow is another day." Each morning when we rise the morning star gives us a twist on Scarlet's last words, by showing us that "today is a new day." In the Western skies the morning star appears around 4:00 am, soon after that the birds will begin to sing. Shortly after that, in the eastern sky, the sun will begin to rise. The

bright morning star represents the promise of a new day; it indicates that something better is coming. Believers rise and share a moment of devotion with the Lord. In that moment they feel God's assurance that no matter what comes in the day ahead, they won't be alone. Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Some have never seen the morning star, just as they have never realized the strength and assurance they get from every day by just having a moment of meditation, thought and prayer with God. It's then that you can see the "bright and morning star" of your situation. It doesn't matter whether it involves a personal problem, a family matter, business, or a matter weighing heavy on your heart. When the morning star appears, you have hope for the day.

The morning star

Finally, brothers and sisters, the morning star of our lives is not just a twinkling star, but the bright and morning star who is the key to our salvation. The stars twinkle brightly and wink at us from distant horizons, but it's not the stars which provide for the saving of our souls, but our salvation comes from the one who said, "I am the bright and morning star." The stars are awe inspiring, sprinkling the canopy of the midnight skies with a million beams of light, but it's not the twinkle of the stars that can save our souls, but our salvation comes from the one who said, "I am the bright and morning star."

The North Star points the way North, but it is not the North star that can show us the way to glory, but it's the bright and morning star.

It is no mystery why Christ chose to describe Himself with the characteristics of the planet Venus as the bright and morning star. It is because the more we know about Venus, the more we know about Him.

There are eight planets in our solar system, but Christ compares Himself to Venus.

Venus is not the closest planet to the sun, but it is the brightest. When it gets dark, it shines brightest in the heavens. When the stars have hidden their faces, Venus shines and points the way.

Of all eight of the planets, Venus is the hottest. That's good to know because when we face to cold realities of this life, our God can provide us with the warmth of His love.

While the other seven planets of the Universe rotate counter clockwise around the sun, Venus goes just the opposite direction. That's good to know because it means that our God can turn things around.

When everyone says we should fail because that's the way we seem to be going, our God can turn things around.

When we have given up, He can turn things around!

When we have dropped our heads in despair, He can turn things around!

When we have fallen along the way, He can turn things around!

There's one final thing we might note about the goodness of the Lord.

We know that early in the morning, for about an hour before the dawn we can see the morning star. We know that on a clear day, we can see the day star shining in the sky all day long. But, in the evening, when the sun is going down, for a just a few minutes between the day and the night, something happens in the heavens…the evening star appears and flashes a light to us for only a few minutes.

In the evening, when it appears that things are turning dark for us, there is a sign from heaven, called the evening star, that says, the night is coming, but don't worry, everything is going to be all right.

In the evening, when funds are running low and it appears that your family is headed for a dark night, the evening star flashes you a reminder: "Weeping may endure for a night, but Joy comes in the morning!

In the evening, when happy days seem to be filled with trouble, the evening star flashes a telegram from heaven, "Trouble won't last always!" What is this bright and morning star? What is this light in the heavens that the scientists call Venus, that some call the wishing star, that somebody else calls the day star, and others call the evening star? Who is this star and what is His name? Isaiah said he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed."

His name is Jesus, our hope in a weary land!

His name is Jesus, our bridge over troubling water!

He came to this earth to show us that He is the light of the world!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hand!

His name is Jesus, the fairest of ten thousand!

His name is Jesus, the bright and morning star!

No. 9506-Youth

No Child left behind

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 12, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him." Luke 2:44-45

Introduction

Are we losing a generation of children? Is there something missing in their education and upbringing that is making them strangers to their own families, community and culture? Across America those who live in minority or poverty stricken areas have watched as a generation of our children gets left behind by the nation's system of public education. The government's official program is called "No child left behind." It was signed into law in 2001 by President George W. Bush and has been both the source of praise and blame for the failure of millions of children.

Ideally, the program sets high standards of accountability for each school by giving students tests. If students do well schools are rewarded, if students perform poorly schools are publicly humiliated, and if no improvement is made funds are cut and students are given the option to leave and go to other schools. The process has been criticized because it places extremely high pressure on schools and students to score high on tests.

Since the tests measure performance in math, reading skills and science, schools have begun to teach the test to score high. Teaching the test and the test only leaves little room for art, music, sports, literature and the life skills usually associated with school. Many schools, for example, spend very little time teaching cursive writing beyond the very basics; memorization of poems, sonnets and classical quotations have also been abandoned since they are not a focus of the testing.

Many schools have been pressured to cheat. Teachers have been fired for giving student's answers, whole faculties have been found responsible for changing the scores of students in private. Since school performance also counts dropouts and suspensions against schools, many have resorted to creative tricks and play on words to change the reality; dropouts are called remediation candidates, and suspensions are called parent referrals to avoid being flagged by the law.

While all of this is happening, a generation of children is being left behind by a system that is so test conscious that it can't adjust to the millions of students who are passing the tests by circle C but can't read and understand the questions. No child left behind is leaving millions of children behind.

Suppose God had a No Child Left behind program, how would it work? Suppose God said he would reward or punish churches and their leaders if the members of their churches did not score well on a Ten Commandments test that would be given at the end of the year. Churches that score well, their leaders, preachers and Sunday school teachers would be highly favored. Churches that scored low would be placed in corrective action and in the interim its members would be given the choice to go to other churches. At the beginning of each year the church would immediately begin to teach, preach, and lecture about the Ten Commandments. There would be plays about the ten commandments, after work tutoring sessions on the ten commandments, Saturday instructions about the ten commandments, not to mention Ten Commandment teas, programs, rallies, bible studies and the annual big ten picnic. At the end of the year the church would take practice ten commandment tests, and a lot of instruction about how to guess on the big test if we still didn't know. When in doubt...circle C.

When the results are reported we will all celebrate that we are a church of excellence where everyone scored approaching basic to mastery of the Ten Commandments. In the process though only a few of us learned how to pray, serve, worship, or could even recite the Lord's Prayer or the 23rd Psalm. We didn't learn them because the big test only focuses on the 10 commandments. Those who didn't learn the other things on their own would be left behind. Thank goodness, God does not measure us by a standardized test; every one of us would flunk. No child of God is ruled unacceptable. No child of God gets a bad grade, because His grace is sufficient.

As Christians we have the assurance that our God, will never leave us alone. He will never leave us to struggle because we have fallen short. He promised never to leave us, never to leave us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which Mary and Joseph lost Jesus in the crowd. Joseph and Mary and Jesus made the three or four day trip to the Temple for Passover every year. At the Temple there were separate sections for the men and for the women. Normally children would be with their mothers, but when a boy was twelve, as Jesus was on this particular occasion, he could be with either his father or his mother. That is where the problem arose. Apparently Jesus wandered off and both parents thought Jesus was with the opposite parent. When they discovered he was missing, they searched for three days before they found him.

When Mary found Him she asked Jesus, "Why did you do this to us?" Jesus answered her simply as if to say: "Didn't you know I had to be about my Father's business?"

The text notes that Mary and Joseph stopped what they were doing and immediately went to find the child that was left behind.

What's left behind?

Today, childhood is endangered. If there was ever a time when parents should exercise due vigilance in the nurture and care of their children, that time is now; we can ill afford to leave our children behind.

CHILDREN MUST BE TRAINED TO LIVE: In biblical times children were taught what they needed to live; today they need the same training. Living involves more than just math, English and science. It is more than just test taking skills. Living involves instilling them with values, goals, discipline, direction and a sense of self worth. It's not an easy task, but it is essential.

Today, to a large extent many parents, as well as the school system are leaving their children behind.

The bible is clear about parental responsibility. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "And thou shalt teach them [commandments] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"

CHILDREN MUST BE TRAINED TO LIVE WITH OTHERS: Children must be trained to function as social beings; how to live with other people. Social development is hands-on, it is personal and it often requires touching, listening and interaction. Unfortunately, the social development of many of our children is being left behind; it has been delegated to the Cartoon Channel and Sesame Street. Too often children are hearing "Don't bother me right now, go watch T.V."

What's being left behind? The essentials of social living are not being taught for the most part. This includes how to be: Patient, giving, joyful, loving, kind, helpful, peaceful, loyal, caring, not bragging, arrogant, jealous or selfish.

It doesn't take a teacher but a few minutes to identify which students in a class room have been exposed to proper "home training." Those who have not been taught at home usually disrupt, disrespect, fight, curse and insist breaking the rules even if others are hurt or disturbed. The school rejects such behavior, by suspending or expelling the student. Parents in turn, curse at the child who cursed in school, beats the child who fought in school and ironically reinforces the same unacceptable behavior. Learning to live with others is essential. It starts at home, at play, and at school. It is not on a standardized test, but it is important.

The bible says in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Without this training a child is left behind.

CHILDREN MUST NOT WANT TO BE LEFT BEHIND: When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, he was in the temple speaking with the scholars; he'd been there three days. He was not left behind; he was trying to get ahead. This shows us a 12 year old who was thirsty to know, understand and learn from those who were experienced. In that day the great teachers taught in the temple including:

• Gamaliel, the great teacher of Paul or Saul of Tarsus.
• Hillel, one of the most revered liberal teachers with a large school of followers
• Simeon, who was to later succeed Hillel.
• Nicodemus, who was so revered by his peers that he was sent to interview Jesus alone.

In the presence of men of great experience, he listened and asked questions. He wanted to know "why?" He wanted to know "How?" and then took their answers and formed new conclusions that astonished them.

Every child should be striving to get ahead, and not be left behind. It means that at some point children must say to themselves, "It's time for me to be about my father's business."

There was a time when we spent every waking hour in front of a television set, video game or internet chat room. There was a time when all we wanted was to do silly things, sleep and goof off. There was a time when we refused to read, selected only easy classes in school and only wanted to listen to music and chill out.

However, as children mature they learn that while some these activities have their place in moderation; too much of them leaves them behind. As children mature they resolve in the words of 1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

God never leaves us behind

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that that we leave our children behind because God never leaves us behind.

The danger with leaving children behind is that we suggest to them that they are insignificant and do not matter. It is important to know that you won't be left alone.

This is why every soldier learns to trust his unit, not to leave him behind in the midst of enemy fire. Often if he falls in battle, the unit goes out of his way to rescue him and bring him hope.

Just as every soldier must that he matters to his unit, every child must know that he or she is important and they won't be left behind, passed along and shuffled away.

That's what every believer knows about God. That each believer matters. We won't be discarded, passed over or scuttled for a better model. God will never leave us alone.

We can't leave our children behind because God needs them to change the world

Jesus charged his young disciples to go into the world and make a difference, under the power of the Holy Ghost. He challenged them to go to the world and teach, preach, baptize and observe all things that he taught. We can't leave them behind because one believing youth can make a difference and change the world!

Today, young people must remember that while the school system may leave them behind; even friends and family may leave them behind, God will never leave them behind.

Joseph was a boy who angered his brothers because he had a coat of many colors.

They threw him in a pit and left him behind. They left him behind, but God didn't. Despite hardships and difficulties he arose to become prime minister of Egypt and saved a nation from starvation and changed the world!

Samuel was a baby that was left in the care of the temple. His mother left him, but she did not abandon him, she placed him in God's hands. As a child he came before God and learned his ways and his advice effected the direction of Kings and Queens.

David was shepherd boy who was left behind as his brothers went to fight in the war. They left him behind, but God didn't. God helped him slay a giant establish a kingdom that changed the entire face of the earth.

Down in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph left Jesus behind, but God took care of him. He was never alone.

Because He was never alone, He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

Because He was never alone, He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

Because He was never alone, He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

Because He was never alone, He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

Long before George Bush started talking about "No child left behind" God decided that "No child of God would be left behind."

If we call Him, He will answer; He will never leave us alone!

If we pray to Him, He will answer; He will never leave us alone!

If we fall, He will pick us up again; He will never leave us alone!

No, never alone! He promised never to leave me, Never leave me alone!

They arrested Him and tried him before unjust courts, but I still hear His promised, I'll never leave you alone!

They placed a crown of thorns on His head and whipped him all night long, but I still hear His promise, I'll never leave you alone!

They nailed Him to an old rugged cross, but l still Him say, I'll never leave you alone!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from he grave.. still saying, "I'll never leave you alone!

No never alone.

He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

No. 9507-Funeral

A Noble Woman

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 29, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Ruth 3:11

Introduction

The Christian walk is a long journey; how important is it to walk every step with dignity, honor and purpose? There was a time in our history when each child was taught to sit and walk as if you were a king, with your shoulder's squared, back straight and every limb in its proper place. The old teachers said, "When you enter a room, walk in like a king or queen."

Just as our walk leaves a trail of where we have been and places we have ventured, our lives also leave similar trails, summed up in epitaphs that define us in just a few words.

The Christian life is one that is challenging and rewarding. Those who live for Christ experience the entire gambit of life events from success to failure, sickness to health, as well as happiness and sadness. the question is not whether we will walk through a meandering valley of joys, sufferings and victories and defeats, but how will we make our walk.

The person who is rooted in faith approaches life and its various nuances with a pristine nobility that does not cower in the face of adversity or shirk from disappointment. They live their lives one day at a time and approach their graves with nobility.

This is what William Cullen Bryant had in mind when he wrote the closing lines of his famous poem "Thanatopsis,"

Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged by his dungeon; but, sustain'd and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams

She who lives a noble life, approaches eternity with the same sense of confidence, faith and nobility, not screaming and kicking, begging to hold on, but as one who lets

go of one hand to fall gracefully into another.

As Christians, we strive to walk tall in the Lord. It is not a prideful walk, but a humble walk that reflects the values by which we live. This is a calm, deliberate and prayerful walk that gives us the appearance of nobility; for we are children of the King. It is a noble walk that is tied to our confidence in our relationship with God; that we can walk into the unknown, confident that the God who held our hand on this side of Jordan will welcome over to the other side.

Exposition

This text focuses on the description of the character of Ruth, a woman who was respected in her community as a woman of integrity and honor.

Ruth was a widow who moved from Moab to Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi. In Moab, she was a faithful wife in every respect, loyal to her husband and to her family. When her husband died she continued to live the chaste, dignified life of a widow in a way that drew praise and attention from all who knew her.

When Naomi returned to Israel, Ruth returned with her declaring, "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God."

The community noticed how she carried herself. She worked dutifully everyday gleaning the fields of a rich man named Boaz. Her manner and quiet grace caught his attention as well.

It was obvious that she was not just any woman; there was something about her that identified her as a woman of quality and grace. He ordered that she should be provided for, protected and honored.

He described her as a woman of excellence, a woman of virtue; a noble woman.

The fact that she was a noble woman was the definitive hallmark of her character.

She has been described in various ways, but all conclude that she was a remarkable woman, with a solid reputation among those who knew her and before God.

The various translations of the bible seem to detail an outline of her personality and character. Look up Ruth 3:11 in comparative versions of the bible and her nature becomes clear.

The King James version says, "a virtuous woman."

The New International Version says, "A woman of noble character."

The American Standard Version says, "A worthy woman."

The Bible in Basic English says, "A woman of virtue."

The complete Jewish Bible says, "A woman of good character."

The New American Standard says, "A woman of excellence."

They all seem to echo one universal thought reflected in The International Readers Version which says she was a, "A noble woman."

Becoming A Noble Woman

How does one become a Noble woman? Certainly it's" not by decree or accident of birth as some think. Some think that moving in aristocratic circles confers nobility. Station in life has its place, but it does not confer automatic nobility. Jezebel had station and a the title of queen, but her evil ways ruled her out as a noble woman. Drusilla was a woman of position and power, but her incestuous relationship with Felix hardly made it possible for her to be called a noble woman. Sapphira was well known in the church, but she lied about her giving and was stricken dead in church. She had notoriety, but still could not be called a Nobel woman. Obviously there are other factors that determine whether a person is a noble woman.

A NOBLE WOMAN DEMONSTRATES CHARACTER: A woman's character is shaped and formed in the crucible of her upbringing, but is displayed when she responds to circumstances that life presents. Esther was a woman of simple means, taught by her family and reared to be godly, respectful and loyal to her people. What she was taught was demonstrated when she became queen; her character shined. Ruth was grounded in her faith and well schooled in the essentials of womanhood; it was tested when she came to Israel with Naomi. In a like manner, the lives we live reveal our inner strengths when we are tested and tried. It is easy to speak of love in friendly circles; it is also easy to speak peace when all is calm. However, a sign of character and strength is our ability to demonstrate our finer qualities when the going is tough. Those who are able to do this demonstrate qualities that exhibit their nobility in undeniable ways.

A NOBLE WOMAN IS RESPECTED BY HER FAMILY: There are some aspects of our lives that we can control through our words and deeds, but respect and admiration are not automatic; they are the products of our words and actions, reflecting how we have been received by others. What is it that we do that elicits respect? We respect the sister who put the love and care of her sibling before her own concerns. We respect the woman who always seems to see the best that we do, are discreetly notes our weaknesses in a gentle way. We respect the woman who lives by the personal creed that she talks about. We respect the woman who can remain positive even in difficult times.

A NOBLE WOMAN HAS A LOVING HEART: The truly noble woman has a loving heart. It is her mark of distinction. What is a loving heart? Psalm 73:1 notes that pure hearts draw the goodness of God. A loving heart desires to reflect the goodness of God and thinks on that constantly. This is the person who seems to live the words of Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight." A loving heart is a giving heart that reflects the spirit of 2 Corinthians 9:7, it gives freely and cheerfully to those purposes that would advance God's kingdom. A loving heart is a rejoicing heart. It is a heart that may spontaneously say "yes" to a truth in ways that reflect Acts 2:26, "my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad." It is her believing, obedient humble heart that separates the noble woman from the well intentioned; her goodness is not artificial, but flows from within, it is the wellspring of her nobility.

Knows the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, the noble woman's greatest attribute is that she knows the Lord for herself.

That is knowledge that is learned as a child and is carried throughout life.

It is the knowledge that regardless of what circumstances life brings, God will not forsake us or leave us alone.

Ruth proved herself a noble woman by the way she lived with her husband as a faithful wife. She proved herself a noble woman by the way she lived after his death. She proved herself a noble woman by the loving way she responded to her sister and to Naomi. She but she also proved herself a noble woman by her willingness to make Naomi's people her people and Naomi's God her God.

Today, believers need to be reminded that we are children of the King, the offspring of spiritual nobility who have access to the throne of grace.

A noble woman can live her life at peace with her family and friends!

A noble woman can face each day with a smile, even if slowed by age and sickness!

A noble woman can lift her voice in praise to God even from the confines of her home.

She can do so because she knows the Lord for herself.

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high.

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

When you know the Lord for yourself you can approach your grave with the blessed assurance that Jesus is mine, Oh what a foretaste of glory divine. This is my story this is my story, this is my song!

I'm a child of the king, and my walk is a noble walk!

I walk like I have wings on my shoulders!

I walk like there are golden streets under my feet!

I walk like I'm on my way to my mansion in the sky!!

It is a humble walk that is based on faith in Jesus!

Jesus, who lived on this Earth for 33 long years!

Jesus, who bore an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus , who arose from the grave Early Sunday morning with all power in His hands!

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On Thursday, June 23, 2011 Sister Ethel Lewis Noble, walked out of this life into the

No. 9508-Patriotism

Give me liberty or give me death

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 3, 2011

SCRIPURE: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. " Luke 4:18-19

Introduction

What does it mean to really be free? Americans celebrate freedom with annual displays of patriotism. We wave the flag, send fireworks into the air and enjoy a festive atmosphere that is rooted in our belief that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, including: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In the land of the free and the home of the brave, do we really enjoy unrestricted liberty? While we celebrate our national independence and exercise certain individual liberties, it doesn't take much for us to realize that we are not really free, even as we enjoy more liberties than others in the world.

Our liberty does have limits. We can vote, if we have a government issued ID. We can speak freely as long as that speech does not anger those in government. We have freedom of religion, as long as we don't exercise it in public, pray at school or have a religious view different from others. We have the right to bear arms if the government says we are approved. We have a right to march, parade and protest if the government gives us a permit. We can drive a car if the government gives us a license. We can hunt, fish or put our motorboat in the river and enjoy a relaxing day, if we have the appropriate government licenses and permits. We can marry whomever we please if the government gives us a license; we can break up the marriage if the government says it's OK. We can discipline our children, as long as we follow government rules.

When we think about it, we may have more liberties than other nations in the world, but we're not exactly free. There are limitations on our liberties.

In 1852 Frederick Douglass asked a pointed question, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him,

your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy- a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."

Douglass' comments then still resonate today as we consider that so many in our nation still do not enjoy the basic freedoms enjoyed by others. This nation still discriminates against women, minorities and other groups in systematic ways. There are still laws on the books in this nation that can take life, limit liberty and curtail the pursuit of happiness.

We celebrate our independence from England as a colonial state, but we can't yet celebrate our liberties until the last vestiges of bondage have been erased.

We should never relinquish the desire to be free; to obtain full and complete liberty.

When we think of liberty, we can't forget the words of the great patriot Patrick Henry who said:

"If we wish to be free we must fight!....I repeat it, sir we must fight! An appeal to arms, and to the God of hosts, is all that is left us. It is vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. The gentlemen may cry "Peace, peace!..."Our brethren are already on the field. Why stand we here idle?...Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Even today, we still hold Patrick Henry's words close to our hearts. Around the world we fight for liberty of nations and peoples everywhere.

Yet, while we cherish freedom under the law, many have chosen to remain slaves to sin, and accept this condition without resistance.

Today, many reject liberty and salvation, even though it was paid for with a very high price by Christ on Calvary.

Salvation is available without a charge, but spiritual freedom was not free, it was bought with a price, which was paid by Jesus Christ Himself.

As Christians, we celebrate our liberty as Americans, but more so as Children of the King. We enjoy the liberty and salvation we have found in Christ, but we remember it was bought with a price.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he selected a passage of text to read during a service at the synagogue. It has been described by theologians as Christ's inaugural address, or first sermon, in which he set the tone for his ministry. He read a passage from Isaiah and pronounced to the leading religious scholars of his day that the scripture was prophetic of himself and would be fulfilled in his ministry.

The overriding idea of this short announcement message was liberty or freedom.

Jesus said it was his mission to show those who are captives the way to freedom; to encourage those who had given up to continue the struggle, to give a renewed vision to those who were blinded by circumstance, and to announce the year of the jubilee. Liberty is what Jesus talked about and some in the audience immediately recognized the tenor of the message and immediately applied their own interpretation to his challenging announcement.

On this backdrop of social circumstances Jesus makes a public proclamation that he would bring good news to the poor, raise their spirits, liberate the captives and announce the acceptable year of the Lord, or the Jubilee when all captives are set free. He did not intend to jump into such a task because he wanted to make a name for himself, but because the Spirit of God was upon him. Paul wrote the Corinthians and explained that wherever the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom and liberty.

Liberty from sin, but not God

Believers celebrate our liberty from sin, however, we do not desire or celebrate any disconnection from God.

The Declaration of Independence cited the many wrongs that that King George placed upon the colonies from excessive taxes on tea and other imports to taxation without representation in parliament.

We have no desire to live independent from God. He has done us no wrong; in fact all God has done for us is to bless us, lift us and save us.

We don't want independence from God because more than anything we depend heavily upon Him for everything. The colonist concluded that they could exist without King George. He supplied them with nothing, but constantly took from them.

We can't say the same about Christ our King. He supplies us with everything. Many have discovered what the song writer found out when he wrote, Without God I could do nothing.

Without him, I'd surely fail. Without him, my life would be drifting. Like a ship without a sail.

Solomon made it clear when he said, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

A final song writer said, I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus.
I found out, if I trust him, he will provide.

Liberty requires change not restructure

Christ has given each believer liberty. He said he came to "set the captives free" and He did so in many ways.

The liberty that Christ has given us requires us to change our whole perspective on life, not simply to restructure it around an attitude change. 2 Corinthians 5:17 puts it this way, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In Christ our entire lives have been set free from the need to seek approval of this world. We no longer feel the need to get the endorsement of others for our thoughts,

actions, or dreams, as long as those actions are in line with the will of God. Because we are new creatures, we pledge our hearts to God and live freely His presence without worrying about keeping up with Joneses next door.

There are many today, who have joined a church, but they still have no real liberty; they have sought symbol over substance. Put another way they are mistaking the smell of chicken frying for the taste of taste of chicken fried. When you smell chicken frying you know it won't be long! But no matter how good it smells while it's frying, it's no substitute for chicken going down!

Real liberty is not that we don't go to clubs any longer; it's that we have no desire to go!

Real liberty is not that we don't get drunk any longer, it's that we have no desire to get drunk or get high!

Real liberty is not that we don't engage in sexual promiscuity, but it's in the fact that we now desire to love and commit like Christ loved and committ.

Real liberty requires us to change, not just to restructure our old lives with a new layer of activity called "going to church."

Full liberty must be pursued

Our nation has not granted full liberty to all of its citizens, neither has it opened its arms to all of those who are within its borders, but God has.

In America we still remember the prayer of the benediction offered by the Reverend Joseph Lowery at the inauguration of President Barack Obama. He said, " .... We go now to walk together, children, pledging that we won't get weary in the difficult days ahead. We know you will not leave us alone, with your hands of power and your heart of love. Help us then, now, Lord, to work for that day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, when tanks will be beaten into tractors, when every man and every woman shall sit under his or her own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid; when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."

God has given us spiritual liberty, but it must be used effectively.

1 Peter 2:16 says we should use our freedom to serve God.

Galatians 5:13 says we should use our liberty to serve God's people.

1 Corinthians 8:9 says we should use our freedom to strengthen God's people.

1 Corinthians 9:19 maintains that we should use our liberty.

God has given us liberty that has been secured by the blood of Christ. There is much work to be done to secure it for all of His people.

Our liberty will be secure, in that day

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while Americans died so that they we may have liberty, we serve a savior who died that we might have life.

There are perhaps just a few who know the full implication of Christ's sacrifice for us. He came to offer himself as a sacrifice so that we might live. Those who follow Him also die to this world so that we can enjoy the full liberty of salvation.

It does not matter whether we came to this nation on the Mayflower or on a slaveship, we should be able to look at our own family history or struggle and see how God has brought us from slavery to liberty.

Whether it's from the poverty of the barrios or the abject neglect of the ghetto, every child of God should be able say the love of God has given me liberty. Whether its from sleeping four to a bed on corn shuck mattresses or eating hog bacon for breakfast, pig ears for lunch and hog chit'lins for supper, every child of God ought to be able to say, God has brought me a mighty long way.

Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death," but I serve a man who was born in Bethlehem who said just the opposite. He said, "Give me death, so that they may have liberty."

He is the man who said, "No greater love can a man have than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends."

"I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly!"

"Give me their burdens so that they will have the liberty of living a life where the burdens are light."

Give me their weakness, so that they will have the liberty of finding strength

Give me their losses, so they will have the liberty of regaining a foothold in life!

Give me their failures, so they will have the liberty to try one more time.

Give me their confusions, so they will have the liberty of obtaining peace and understanding.

Give me their death, so that they will have a chance to live.

Can't you hear him saying, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God has given us many liberties, but the best is yet to come..

God has opened many doors for us but there is still something on the way God has given us:

-WATER in the wilderness, but in the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

-FOOD when we were hungry, but in the morning, ye shall se the glory of the Lord!

-CLOTHES on our backs, but in the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

Hang on brothers and sisters, there is a new day coming!

In that day, it won't matter whether you are black or white!

In that day, , it won't matter whether you are Hispanic, Asian or Native American

In that day, every mountain shall be made low!

In that day, every valley shall be exalted!

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

No wonder the songwriter said, Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the faithful lightning of his terrible swift sword, his truth is marching on!

Glory, Glory Hallelujah, His truth is marching on!
Liberty is on the way
It started marching over 2000 years ago!
It started marching to a hill called Calvary!
He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the dead!
In the morning, we shall receive the fullness of his victory! Glory! Glory! Glory!

No. 9509-Funeral

Supposing him to be a Gardener

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 6, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. " John 20:15

Introduction

Is it possible to be around a person all of your life, but not really know them? Many have lived across from their neighbors and have watched them come and go for years, but never knew them.

We sit next to people at worship and praise God with them, but don't really know their story. The same is true for many of our co-workers, team members and classmates. We know their names, and a few things about them, but we really do not know their story. We don't know what makes them who they are.

We see the neighbor that always washes his car on a given day, like clockwork. We see the mail carrier delivering the mail, the trash collector riding the back of a truck; we see the policeman, and the fireman regularly. We see our doctors and tell them all of our secret flaws, but do we really know them?

That gentle old fellow who works so faithfully in his garden, tilling, weeding, pruning and cultivating the most delicious vegetables; we see him, but do we know him? We see him with his hat and towel in the summer, and a warm coat in the winter, persistently and consistently tilling the ground; waving at those who pass by with a big smile, but studiously attending each row of produce. We see him, but do we know him?

We see the kind old gentleman on Sunday who seems to dress so precisely, always matching, always looking so well kept, with a touch professionalism that suggests that somewhere, long ago, he was more than a man who sat quietly in the church smiling and waving, being assisted to his seat on a regular basis. The young ladies hugged in a fatherly way, suspecting that in another time he must have been a dapper fellow. They saw him, they hugged him, but do we really know him.

We are acquainted with many people, but we don't know the full range of their story. We know their names and their present occupation, but, too often, we don't

really know them. That includes members of our own family. There are parents who don't really know their children; children who don't really know their parent's story, just bits and pieces here and there. There are husbands who are married to their wives for years and don't even know their favorite color, and wives who can't tell you their husband's greatest fear.

We often think we know people, but we really don't know them at all. Consider the little toad frog that defied the instructions of the bull frog and played daily with the crocodile. "Son, stay away from the crocodile, he is dangerous" said the old Bull frog who had been around for a long time. "Nonsense" replied the young toad who played with the crocodile daily. "That may have been true in your day, pop but this crocodile is different. He takes me for rides through the Bayou. I dance on his back and often using it for my diving board." The old bull frog kept warning him to stay away from that crocodile because he could be dangerous. The young toad felt safe with the crocodile. He knew he was strong and powerful but he wasn't afraid because the crocodile was so gentle when he was around. One day the toad frog came to play. The crocodile was in usually grumpy mood. He would not lay still and his stomach seemed to groan. Suddenly without notice the crocodile open his huge jaws and snapped at the frog who barely got away as he hopped home to his papa the big bull. "Pop, I don't know what got into the crocodile; he snapped at me and almost killed me." The old Bull frog looked at the little frog and said. "You thought you knew that old croc. You probably did. But what I know that you didn't know, is that when he gets hungry he'll eat little toads like you for an afternoon snack. You don't know a crocodile until you know what he eats for lunch!"

Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, Lorraine Hansberry, in her award winning drama "A Raisin in the Sun" had mama to say these words to Beneatha who criticized her brother. "When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right.. make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got wherever he is."

That's the way God judges every life. He knows where we have been and what we came through to reach our present point. Our neighbors see us as what we are now, but God not only sees us as we are now, but what we shall be in His kingdom.

As Christians, our desire is to live our lives in such as way that when we come before God that He will be pleased. We rejoice in the knowledge that when He sees us, He won't concern himself with the frailty of our physical form or the multiplicity of our errors and mistakes, but He will see our whole life and recognize us as children of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on how Mary saw Jesus in the garden on the morning of the resurrection and mistook him for the gardener.

Early Sunday morning the women came to the tomb to anoint his body with spices. They had hurriedly wrapped him without completing the process. When they left home they fully expected to find Jesus' body just as they had left it. The men arrived and

inspected the empty tomb and saw the folded clothes.

Mary stood outside of the tomb after the men left. She stood in the beautiful garden that surrounded the tomb. The disciples had met Jesus so many times in gardens, which were enclosed plots of ground filled with trees and security. Jesus often went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and to meet with his disciples. Gardeners were employed to attend large gardens. Their job was to sow seeds, prune, and water the gardens.

As Mary cried she stooped and looked inside of the tomb. She saw two angels inside, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the slab upon which Jesus was laid. Since angels often took on the appearance of men, it is possible that Mary did not recognize them as angels. They asked why she wept and she explained that that someone had stolen the body of Christ.

Suddenly, behind her, Mary heard another man ask the exact same question as the angels, "Woman why do you weep?" Mary answered without looking, assuming that the third voice she heard was that of the gardener or grounds attendant.

Then the man behind her called her name. At hearing her name she turned she looked at the man behind her and realized it was Jesus.

When she saw the master, her faith was restored. Despite the darkness of the moment she was encouraged, Jesus was indeed alive and well.

The Garden

Mary's experience that Sunday morning should be an encouragement to others who mourn the loss of loved ones. Consider:

JESUS WAS A GARDENER, BUT NOT JUST A GARDENER: When Mary supposed Jesus was the gardener she was both right and wrong at the same time. She was wrong in her assumption that the man who spoke to her was the gardener of the burial grounds. However, she was right without knowing it. Jesus often referred to believers as his garden and to Himself as the husbandman who waters, tends and prunes. There was more to the man who stood behind Mary than just a gardener; he was also the savior. In a similar sense, there is more to our lives than what meets the surface. We may see a man who works a garden and admire his green thumb. We may marvel at his ability to make things grow and protect seedlings from weeds and critters. Yet, there is more to that life than just a man who enjoyed being a gardener. Just as there is more to the life of a teacher than a person who stands in a classroom or a mechanic who is often soiled repairing engines. No, Jesus was not the man who attended the cemetery garden, but He was a gardener; a gardener of souls. Similarly, we have lives beyond our professions. We rear children, serve our community, fight for our nation's freedom, worship God, and revel in the love our family. There is more to any of us than people see when they drive by. Thankfully, God knows our whole story. He knows we are more than just gardeners.

SHE SUPPOSED HIM TO BE A GARDENER: The fact that Mary "supposed" the man who spoke behind her was a gardener worthy of note. She did not readily recognize Christ, but she was not alone. Luke 24:31 tells us of the men who walked the road to Emmaus. They talked with him for hours without recognizing him.

However, when He broke bread, "..their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." John 21:4 notes that the disciples saw Jesus standing on the shore did not recognize him. When Mary "supposed" Jesus to be the gardener, her doubts took over, but when she recognized Him, her faith was restored. In times of hardship it is often hard for us to recognize the hand of God touching us on the shoulder and comforting us. We shift into our "suppose to" mode. We feel God is "supposed to" to protect us from hardship, keep us from injury and shield us from pain. We suppose that He should make us prosperous. We suppose that He should keep us healthy. We suppose many things, when like Mary, our tears are flowing. However, when our eyes are opened and we see Him things changed. When Mary turned and she saw Jesus, she recognized that all was not lost. For us today, when we can see Jesus, we too look beyond what think is "supposed" to have happen and know that all is not lost because Jesus said, "He that believeth in me shall never die."

SHE HEARD HIM CALL HER NAME: What was the turning point of Mary's experience? It's when she heard Him call her name. She heard His voice asking, "Woman why weepest thou?" but it was when the savior called her name that she was turned from her sadness. Today, in a moment of sadness, each of us must recognize the voice of God calling out to us as we mourn. He calls our names one by one. He speaks to our souls in an instant and reminds us that all is well. That's why the song writer wrote, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other, has ever, known." He called her name and her sadness was turned to gladness.

More than Just a Gardner

Finally, brothers and sisters we must note that, at first, Mary thought Jesus was just a gardener, but she found out what we already, He's more than a gardener, He is our everything.

As Mary cried that morning she received a wakeup call. Christ is not dead, God is still in control.

At first she called him a gardener, but he has proven that supposition false a million times over.

Even the life we celebrate here today has proven to be more than just a gardener, a man who tills the soil on his hands and knees. No, the life celebrated here is more than just that of a gardener.

This is the life of one who labored honestly to care for others.

This is the life of one who dedicated himself to the service of his country.

This is the life of one who was a patriarch to his family!

This is the life of one who helped educate children.

This is the life of one who cheered others with a quick smile, an impish grin and warm spirit.

This is the life of one who knew the Lord and enjoyed being in His presence.

Mary reported to the disciples that she thought he was the gardener, but He is the

risen Lord.

John said when the disciples heard that they were glad!

Just like those disciples, every believer has something to be happy about!

Somebody is glad today; glad to be reminded that God is still able!

He's able to:

—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops

—Take midnights and turn them into noon days

—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers

—Defeats and turn them into victories

—Take our losses and turn make them work for our gain

Mary stopped crying about the tomb and starting talking about Jesus!

We should do the same; not talk about death, but talk about Jesus, the fountain of our joy!

Jesus, Our shelter in time of storm!

Jesus, Our wheel in the middle of the wheel!

Jesus, The answer to our prayer!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!

Tell the world about Jesus

On Wednesday, June 29, 2011 Cleophas Williams took his last breath. He was more than a gardener, He was a child of God.

No. 9510-Membership Improvement

The Blood Reverses Curses

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. Matthew 9:20-21

Introduction

When things are not going well for us, often in a moment of weakness, we briefly consider that we may be operating under a curse. Is there an evil Voo-doo priestess around somewhere casting a spell on us with a set of enchanted dolls? Is there a soothsayer forecasting gloom and doom on us? Is that the reason for all of the maladies that we are facing?

We earned a lot of money over the last ten years, what happened to it? It vanished as if it were cursed!

We accumulated many things that were supposed to bring us joy, but we had more problems instead, as if they were cursed!

At times our marriage seemed to be cursed; our children seemed to be living under a curse. Our whole family seemed cursed with one problem or another. Even our cars seemed to be cursed; there was always something wrong with them.

When all of this starts to happen we begin to feel that we are living under a curse.

We really feel that way when our blessings seem to be cursed.

A Blessing is only a blessing when it brings peace and joy. When either of these elements is missing, a blessing becomes less of a blessing and more of a curse. A new house is a blessing, but stops being a blessing if struggling to pay the monthly note becomes a source of confusion and pain in the home. A good job is a blessing, but it is less of a blessing if its demands rob you of peace of mind and an enjoyable spirit.

A good-looking husband or wife is a blessing, but despite how well they look, they become a daily migraine if neither ceases to bring peace and joy.

Many of the circumstances we call cursed are really of our own making. Either our actions, failure to act or abusive actions caused them.

The blood of Christ is given for our salvation. Yet, many have used their relationship with Christ for purposes that are ungodly and unholy. Those who worship, but only if they can worship to a handsome single man or beautiful single woman, distort the purpose of worship. Those who give, but only because they hope to gain more in return, distort the reason for giving. Those who serve, but only for

the purpose of notoriety, dishonor the service. When we distort the relationship we create an issue with our waywardness and the blood. In essence there is an issue in our blood relationship that won't be healed until we get close to God again.

As Christians, we search for Jesus in the crowded corridors of this life, knowing that if we find Him he can once again save us from ourselves and the issues we have that have turned our blessings into curses. If we can just touch the hem of his garment, everything will be alright.

Exposition

This text focuses on an incident in the life of Christ in which a woman with a curse in her blood was healed by exercising her faith.

The incident tells of a time in which Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people as he passed, only to be touched by a single woman who received a healing blessing as a result.

According to added insights into this incident provided in Luke 8:43-47, the woman had an "issue of blood." That's another way of saying she had a hemorrhage of some kind. Her condition had existed for 12 years despite the fact that she had consulted all of the best physicians of time. No one was able to cure her disease. Receiving a healing became quite an issue with her. The hemorrhaging complicated her life considerably and she sought a resolution. Adding to the complication was the fact that people who shared her illness were considered unclean under the Mosaic Law. Not only was she considered unclean because of her "issue," anyone she touched was considered unclean as well. The unclean were forbidden from public socialization and forbidden from participation in any part of Israel's public worship life.

The woman heard that a healer from God was in their midst. She made up her mind to deal with the issue of sickness by taking it to the Son of God. Defying all of the laws, she made her way through the crowd, no doubt touching many people as she forged through. She felt she probably wouldn't be able to get a personal interview with him, but concluded in her mind that if she could simply touch the hem of his garment that she would receive the same blessing. After all, God's healing power certainly would not be limited by such a small thing as a personal interview.

The woman's faith was not a perfect faith, based upon a great knowledge of Jesus, for she knew no more about him than what she heard. What had she heard? Perhaps it was accounts of his miraculous healings and cures! Perhaps it was testimonies of others who had seen him perform mighty acts. It became obvious from what she heard that Jesus was some type of man of God who was being used to do mighty acts. She heard about Jesus, she knew about God. Her faith was in the power of God, whom she knew much about. She knew that God had the power regardless of the man. Her faith in God was strong.

When the woman touched Jesus' garment, he immediately felt something. With hundreds of people around him, obviously pushing and shoving out of curiosity, he

was able to “feel” the prayerful touch of a woman who had been sick for many years. He felt power going out of him. He sensed that someone had just been healed.

When it became known that someone had been healed by the master, the woman told her story to the amazement of the crowd. Jesus responded to her by saying that her faith had made her whole.

The blood reverses curse

When the bible speaks of curses, it does not refer to the colloquial use of the term “cursing” as we use it today. In modern times we might say, “She cursed me out,” or “He cursed me.” These refer to the fact that someone used unacceptable or vulgar language. It’s not what cursing means in the bible. In the bible, a curse had nothing to do with vulgar language, but it had a lot to do with evoking, wishing or praying for evil to come upon a person.

Sometimes biblical curses were given by individuals such when Noah cursed the descendants of Ham because Ham saw him naked. Sometimes came from God Himself as when God cursed Eve in the garden or pronounced curses on those who stole from Him with their tithes and offerings in Malachi.

Cursing is referred to in the bible 199 times, almost exclusively in the old Testament. According Holman the Old Testament, speaks of “curse” (89), “cursed” (65), “curses” (18), and “cursing” (8). The New Testament uses “curse” only 8 times, “cursed” in 9 places, “curses” in a single verse, and “cursing” in one reference. Of the 199 biblical uses of the words, 180 are in the Old Testament and only 19 in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament curses usually stuck; without a way to absolve them. In the New Testament, persons living under curses whether real or imagined could fine absolution and forgiveness. That’s where the blood of Christ comes in. Whether it’s the crazy man that ran through the cemetery or the woman with the issue of blood for 12 years, the blood of Christ deals with curses and can reverse them.

Even today, those who have transgressed the laws of God are not totally lost, the curse of sin can be reversed. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” It means that the penalty of sin can be reversed, but it can only be reversed by the blood of Christ who paid the price on Calvary.

Is everything going wrong for you? Do you seem to be living under a curse? Check your sin-o-meter and see whether Romans 6:23a applies to you. If so, then let the (b) part of that verse apply by finding Jesus and touching the hem of His garment.

Curse of Affliction? The blood!

Sicknesses are physical and mental in nature. They plague us trouble us like curses. They seem to plague us for eternities. Physical afflictions, mental afflictions, and emotional afflictions can be extremely troublesome both for the persons who have them and for those who love them. A long-term illness is more than a difficulty, it is an

affliction. Yet, the word of God reminds us that these are not outside of the bounds of God's abilities and power.

The woman with the issue of blood found Jesus in a crowd and concluded that if she could just touch the hem of his garment that her affliction would be relieved. A man sitting by the pool waiting to be healed for 38 long years had an affliction that seemed beyond reach, until he met Jesus. These instances provide hope to those who deal with long term illnesses that they are not beyond God's power. They pronounce the word of faith that those who have been diagnosed as beyond recovery are not beyond God's power!

While afflictions can be reversed by God, there are times, when for God's own purposes he chooses not to reverse an affliction. Paul was one of God's greatest ambassadors who had an affliction that Paul called a thorn in his flesh. It crippled his efforts to work for the kingdom, slowed his pace and troubled him. Three times Paul prayed to God for relief from his affliction and his answer was always the same as he received in 2 Cor 12:9, My grace is sufficient for thee.

When you have prayed that same prayer and received that same answer, then take God's words to be true that his grace is sufficient. God says, My grace is sufficient.

Push your way through the crowd

Finally brothers and sisters, if you are dealing with what appears to be cursed situations in your life, we recommend that push your way through the crowd and give it to Jesus!

Don't say in your mind, "I am insignificant!" or "He doesn't know who I am!"

Don't say in your mind, "I haven't been as faithful as I should have been!"

Don't say in your mind, "I can't get to him because there are others closer to him!"

Push your way through the crowd and say, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole"

If you feel cursed because of:

FAILUR**E**, he can turn failure into success;

SADNESS, he can turn sadness into gladness;

SICKNESS, he can turn it into good health!

BURDENS, he can take your burdens and make them light!

DEFEAT, he can take your defeat and turn it into victory!

LOSSES, he can take your losses and turn them into gains!

HEARTACHES, I know a God who specializes in mending broken hearts!

TROUBLE MARRIAGE, I know a God who can turn your old lady into the first lady, who can turn your old man into the King of the Castle!

LOST GENERATION, I know a God who can take Gangsta Rap and turn it intoSaint's testimony!

Push your way through the crowd; reach out and touch the hem of his garment and his blood shall make you whole!

If you want to deal with the issue, push back your fear of embarrassment or

insignificance and give it to Jesus!

Jesus said, “I come that they might have life and have it more abundantly”

Jesus came to take the curse of our:

-Tragedy and turn it into triumph!

-Defeat and turn it into victory!

-Despair and turn it into hope!

-Sadness and turn it into joy!

-Failure and turn it into success!

-Weakness and turn it into strength!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

If there is a curse on your life issue, give it to Jesus and everything will be all right!

No. 9511-Inspiration

Laughing at the Power of God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 10, 2010

SCRIPTURE: "He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn." Matthew 9:24

Introduction

Have you ever watched a comedy on television and heard the sounds of laughter, but you were not laughing?One of the tricks of the trade of the television industry is to create audience moods with the power of suggestion. We see it best in television broadcasts and most movies. Movies tell us that we should be afraid by giving us fear music. Remember the music in the movie Jaws? Each time we heard those deep base violins, thumping and grinding we knew we were supposed to be afraid even if the only thing on the screen was water. We became anxious because the music told us to be anxious.

If you've ever watched a comedy often the characters say a series of one liners that are not very funny, so the producers inject what is known as a "laugh track." The laugh track is composed of pre-recorded laughter, injected at a certain point in the dialogue to let the audience know that it is supposed to laugh. Many of us are not familiar with laugh tracks. We think there is a live audience watching the show and they are laughing. We don't want to look stupid, so often we chuckle at home even when we fail to the see the humor of the joke.

Even when there is a live audience, the laughter and applaud is often orchestrated. A sign lights up with the words "applaud" and the audience applauds and cheers on command. Sometimes there is even an off camera staff person who urges the audience to clap and laugh on demand. In these instances, even the live audience is laughing on demand.

Laughter differs. When you are rejoicing and sharing the humor of a moment or thought the world laughs with you. When you are considered pitiful and miserable the laughter takes on a different form. Instead of laughing because you are sharing a joke, the world laughs at you because you ARE a joke. Unfortunately, there are many who do not know the difference.

Whenever you act on faith, do you know that the devil will play a laugh track. Although you said nothing funny everyone around you begins to begins to laugh at what they call the absurdity of the idea. They laugh at the idea that God speaks

to you. They laugh at the idea that you believe it. They laugh at the idea that you are changing your whole life to claim something that God promised to you. The laugh track plays, and the world laughs, but God's promises are not funny.

The world laughs because our dreams seem impossible and the fact that we say that we know God personally seems improbable. Yet, we do know God. He does speak to our hearts, fire our imaginations, motivate our spirit and give us inspiration. We know that, with Him, all things are possible, so we don't laugh.

As Christians, we take our relationship with God seriously. It's no laughing matter. When He promises us something we expect it. When He warns us we take note. Christ is our Lord, what He has done for us in the past and what He is doing for us right now is no laughing matter.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in the ministry of Christ when people laughed when he told them a dead child was actually sleep.

This incident happened just after a woman had pushed her way through the crowd and touched the hem of his garment. Then a messenger came to Jarius and notified him that his daughter had died. In Luke 8:50 Jesus told Jarius not to worry that his daughter was not dead but just sleeping.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' home, the flute players and the noisy crowd had already assembled to weep for the family. They believed the child was dead, for when Jesus said the girl was merely asleep... they laughed.

Not only did they laugh, but they laughed to scorn. The crowd of professional mourners laughed, but not Jarius. He had received a promise for Christ and He was serious. The crowd had other reasons for scorning Jesus. They did not want His words to be true. They were professional mourners. If the child was not dead, but only sleeping they would not be paid.

There are debates as to whether the child was dead or sleeping. Literally, she was apparently dead. Figuratively, she was sleeping. Jarius was told to have faith in Christ and He would be rewarded. Jarius maintained his faith, even while the crowd laughed.

These consoling words were the same words he used in John 11:11 "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

These two instances underscored an important truth, nothing is permanent, even death when Christ has decided otherwise. In both Jarius and Lazarus' case the skeptics were on edge. The crowd laughed at Jarius' house. They thought he was a little touched outside of the tomb of Lazarus. The resurrection of both proved that Christ is in control of everything, even death.

When People Laugh

There are times when people we know laugh. Often they laugh out of ignorance; sometimes out of scorn.

PEOPLE LAUGH AT WHAT THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND: When Jesus told

those around him to consider Jarius' daughter asleep because shortly she would be awakened, most people did not understand who He was and the nature of His relationship with God. Had they understood that, they would not have laughed. This is also true with believers. There are many people who do not understand us and our relationship to God. It probably looks peculiar to them to see us praying to a God we cannot see. Waving our hands, crying, saying "Amen" and living by a set of rules that keep us from participating in some of the darker aspects of life, but never-the-less exciting. They don't understand us, so they laugh at us when we read our bibles, attend Sunday worship and special programs and express a faith that God will make a way out of no way. We don't laugh because we understand who God is and what God can do. So, when God promises us something and it sounds unbelievable, we don't laugh because even though we don't fully understand we still say, "God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform." We remember that Romans 11:33 says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

STOP LISTENENING TO THE LAUGHTER: When Jesus entered Jarius' house the people were laughing him to scorn. They were laughing at Jarius,too. He was an educated man, a leader in the community, falling for superstition. When Jesus went inside he put all of those who wanted to laugh outside. Then he went to work. That's what believers must do. We must put those who are skeptics and doubters outside. We must shut them out. Those who believe you are doomed, shut them out. Those who believe you can never climb out of your present situation shut them out! Those who doubt the power of God, shut them out! The beauty of it all is that when we shut them out, Christ will come in. We may be socially, economically or morally disabled, but He is able to meet us at our point of need.

Inside, Christ "took her by the hand" and raised her out of her sleep. That's the faith that every believer takes into any situation. It's faith that when we are down, our God has the power to speak a word to our situation and raise us up. We don't have that power, but He does. He can speak a word to our poverty and it can be reversed. He can speak a word to our troubled and tangled life and bring clarity to our confusion. Jesus brought power into a 12 year old girl's life; He can do the same for us today if we stop listening to the laughter.

THE LAST LAUGH IS THE BEST LAUGH: When Jarius daughter walked out of the house, alive and well, the people inside were laughing and shouting and praising God in joy. The last laugh didn't come from those scorned, but from those who trusted God. In the same way God speaks to the faithful today. We should not be discouraged because of wicked people all around us, because if we remain faithful, we will get the last laugh. The people who seem to prosper without God laugh at us, but God will get the last laugh. The drug dealers, pimps and prostitutes, hustlers, gamblers and cheats who laugh at you because you work at a job and won't make that quick money; their day is coming. When it comes God will laugh at them. Psalm 37:12-13, "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming." Why does the Lord

laugh at them? He laughs because "their day is coming!"

Inside Jarius house there was laughter, too, but they were laughing and shouting over the power of God! It was a joyous laugh. A laugh of celebration. It's the laugh of Abraham who learned not to laugh at anything that God promises, no matter how ridiculous it may sound. When Isaac was born Abraham named him "Isaac" which means laughter. He was a constant reminder that God laughs at the wicked, scoffers, haters and detractors. He gets to laugh last. He who laughs last, laughs the loudest.

No laughing matter

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that while there are some things in life that are funny, faith in God is no laughing matter.

The world may laugh at us because we live a life of faith, but we don't laugh because we believe in a living God who can do anything except fail.

The skeptics around us urge us to accept our plight because it is afraid of the challenge. We are not intimidated by challenges; we are ready to act with the available knowledge we have. They laugh, but we trust God.

We don't laugh because we have been drenched in the word of God and we are dripping with faith. It is a faith that despite the obstacles before us that the Lord will make a way!

The world laughs at our report. It says, "The road is rough and going is tough and hills are hard to climb, but I started out a long time ago and there is no doubt in my mind, I've decided to make Jesus my choice!"

The world laughs at our report and our testimony. Even Isaiah 53:1 asks, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"

There world may be laughing, but our report is that no one should ever doubt the power of God.

Sarah laughed because she doubted that she could deliver a child at 99 years old, but a year later she set the world record for being the oldest woman to birth a baby.

Who have believed our report?

While scoffers are laughing at us, God is laughing at them.

God laughed at the fact that Pharaoh thought his 600 chariots and the Red Sea could keep Israel in bondage. God must have been laughing all the while he opened up the Red Sea and forged a path for the people on dry land.

God laughed at the fact the River Jordan stood between his people and the Promised Land. He must have been laughing when he rolled up the waters of the Jordan and ushered the people across to camp ground.

God laughed at the fact that something as feeble as the walls of Jericho were thought strong enough to protect the enemies of God from his wrath. He must have laughed at the looks on the faces of the people of Jericho when the walls came tumbling down!

God laughed at the fact that the people doubted that the dry bones of Israel could ever come together again! But I hear the Word of God declare, Son of Man, can these

bones live?

God laughs at the fact that people think you are in an impossible situation!

Your enemies laugh as you struggle to climb the walls that separate you from your dreams; let them laugh. Nothing is impossible for God; put it in God's hands and watch the walls come tumbling down!

Your enemies laugh because you have a Red Sea in front of you and enemies behind you; you seemed trapped with nowhere to go. Let them laugh because God still opens up ways out of no way. He's still making paths through the Red Sea!

Who hath believed our report?

The world laughed at Isaiah when he said, "He shall be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace is upon him!"

They laughed, but God gets the last laugh.

They laughed at Jesus when they whipped him all night long!

They laughed at Jesus when they put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!

They laughed at Him as he hung out on the cross saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself!"

They laughed at Him, when he died out on Calvary!

They laughed at Him, when they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

They laughed at Him, when they rolled the stone in front of His grave!

But Early Sunday morning, God got the last laugh!

He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9512-Inspiration

God will make it right

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 24, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "I don't just talk to myself or mumble under my breath. I never told Jacob, 'Seek me in emptiness, in dark nothingness.' I am GOD. I work out in the open, saying what's right, setting things right. (Msg) Isaiah 45:19; "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:11-12

Introduction

Have you ever messed up and tried to make it right? Most of us have made some bad turns in life that have offended or hurt others. Sometimes we have made bad decisions along the way that have injured others in the process. Once we have learned the error of our ways, we often try to make it right in some way.

Often those who have damaged the property of others are ordered by the courts to make restitution for losses. A person who has stolen something is usually told to make restitution to the victims. Persons who damaged property in some way have also been ordered to make restitution as a way of trying to make it right.

Making it right gets more difficult when the loss is not tangible.

How does a person who murders another person make it right? They can't give back the life they took. O. J. Simpson was found not-guilty for the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson in 1995. The family was not happy and pursued him until they obtained a $33 million judgment against him for wrongful death. Even his incarceration later on unrelated charges on a 33 year sentence didn't make it right.

If you have been molested, raped, mentally traumatized, lied on, mistreated or cheated out of opportunities, can anyone make it right? Is there any amount of money that can receive that even the score?

Consider the high school senior who was the victim of a jealous attack by three of her classmates. The young lady was an outstanding student and in her senior year was destined to become valedictorian. Her envious classmates devised a plot to stop her from achieving that goal by contriving a scheme that made it appear that she had stolen test keys and copied answers to get her perfect score. When questioned, the girl denied copying or cheating in any way. However, in light of the testimony of three witnesses the school had no other choice but to suspend her and prohibit her from becoming the valedictorian of the class. At home she was scolded by her parents

for her lack of integrity and ruining the family name. After many years, the young lady graduated from college and became a vice-president of a major company. The company advertised for 25 new jobs in its factory. Much to her amazement 22 of the jobs were filled immediately. There were only three left. At the close of the day three women appeared in her office. Push your way through the crowd; reach out and touch the hem of his garment and his blood shall make you whole!

If you want to deal with the issue, push back your fear of embarrassment or insignificance and give it to Jesus!

Jesus said, "I come that they might have life and have it more abundantly"

Jesus came to take the curse of our:

-Tragedy and turn it into triumph!

-Defeat and turn it into victory!

-Despair and turn it into hope!

-Sadness and turn it into joy!

-Failure and turn it into success!

-Weakness and turn it into strength!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

They immediately recognized each other.

"You are not going to hold that high school thing against us, are you? We really need these jobs," said one of three.

"I have no intention of holding anything against you. You see, after that incident, my parents moved me to another school where I landed a work scholarship with this company. After graduation, they hired me and here I am today," said the girl.

"So, we really did you a favor didn't we? Look at you now!"

The young lady said, "No, don't misunderstand me because I'm hiring you today. You did me wrong. It was very wrong. The only reason I'm not holding it against you today is because you did me wrong then and God made it right."

There are some things that happen to us in life, that only God can make right; and He will, if we trust Him each and every day.

As believers we trust God to right the wrongs that we have endured. We believe His words when He says we will receive a great reward for our suffering. He will make it right.

Exposition

These texts records two passages of Scripture one from the old and one from the new, both of which attest to the fact that those who have suffered a wrong will be restored through the power of God.

The prophet Isaiah made predictions concerning the status of Israel long before the actual events occurred. He foretold the nature of Israel's captivity in the first 39 books of his prophecy. In the remaining 27 books of his prophecy he foretold how Israel would be restored. In this text, he prophesied how God would take and enemy king who did

not know God and use this king to make right the wrong of captivity that had been placed upon Israel. The king of this text is King Cyrus of Persia. The Persians did not believe in the most high God. They had their own beliefs and they had their own gods, but yet the God of Israel would use this foreign king to make right an injustice that had been placed up on God's chosen people.

Verse 15 of this text makes it clear that God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. The text notes that God often hides himself or hides the way he does things, but he is working behind-the-scenes to make things right.

Verse 16 notes that when he completes his work that those who see what he has done will be both confused and ashamed when they see the powerful hand of God at work.

Verse 19 makes it clear that while God will work behind-the-scenes in mysterious ways, it is no secret that he will make right that which is been done wrong to His people. He will declare that all things will be right.
behind-the-scenes to correct the wrongs that have been done against us . Keep the faith, never give up hope. God will make it right.

OUR FAITH IS NOT IN VAIN: Believers have no reason to doubt God. Verse19 has a message of hope for today's believers. God spoke to Isaiah and said I am one who speaks in public, makes no secret about what I say, and would not have promised this seed of Jacob anything and let them believe in me in vain. That verse makes reference to the seed of Jacob. Jacob was one of the descendents of Abraham; one night he wrestled with an angel and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. The seed of Jacob are the descendents of Israel or the children of Israel, as we know them today. In the new testament the children of Israel was expanded to also include all believers in Jesus Christ, including gentiles. So, even today, this verse speaks to believers by saying God will not let your worship of him be in vain.

The chapter points out all of them mighty things God has done for Israel. Then God accentuates his history with Israel by saying that he would not have brought them from their Lowly estate to put them in a situation where their worship and faith in him would be in vain. That goes for us, too. God would not have brought you through all of the circumstances of your past just leave you as the victims of injustice with no hope of restoration. Your prayers are not in vain. Your faith in God is not in vain. Your worship of God is not in vain. Your giving to promote the kingdom of God is not in vain. Sometimes it might appear that God is moving awfully slow. That must've been the way that the children of Israel felt when they prayed to God about their enslavement in Egypt. They must've thought that God was not moving on their behalf. They didn't see the little baby being born and put in the arc. They didn't see Moses growing up in Pharaoh's court. They didn't know about the burning bush. They didn't know that God was taking care of the business for them. Today, we should continue our faith, confident that although we can't see how he's doing it, that God is working to make things right. Our worship is not in vain. Our decision to follow Christ is not a useless exercise. He will make it right.

GOD SPEAKS RIGHTEOUSNESS: As believers we should always remember that

when God says something it shall be done. The word of God reminds us that his word will not return void. In Isaiah He said I speak righteousness. That means when God says something and has made a promise to us we can be assured that whatever he has promised us will come to fruition.

What has God promised us? He has promised that if we are persecuted, if we are talked about or falsely condemned or experience losses unjustly because of his namesake, we will be rewarded. That's what Jesus meant when He told his disciples blessed are you, that means God will favor you, God will take up the slack. He will make it right when others have done you wrong.

God has also promised us that no matter what happens to us, including wrong things, that they will all work to our good in the end. Romans 8:28 says "All things work do the good of them that love the Lord, who are the called according to his purpose." It is a promise from God that believers who endure suffering and hardship as well as injustices for the cause of righteousness will be rewarded. He will orchestrate the events of their lives to ensure that it works out for their good. He will make it right.

When we have lost so much, how can God make it right? The answer to this question may lay in a review of what happened to Job. Remember, he lost money, property and family members. God restored the property and gave him a new joy in a greater, stronger family. God made right. If He made it right for him, He can make it right for us. He will make it right.

Make it right

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when it came to our salvation, Jesus decided to make it right.

Often believers feel like footballs, we are tossed around and kicked from one end of the field of life to the other. There are so many people that take advantage of our benevolent spirit that we wonder if we can ever find justice? Is there anyone that can bring a sense of balance and justice into our lives.

Money can't make it right!

Court ordered restitution can't make it right!

Only the power of God and the soul saving blood of Christ can make it right!

This world may do us wrong by:

—Parading our shame, but God will turn our shame into a testimony. He will make it right.

—Rejoicing in our failure, but God will forgive our failures and help us to succeed. He will make it right.

—Triumphing over our defeat, but God will pick us up and show us the victory! He will make it right.

He will make it right when He takes our:

— SORROW and turns it into joy;

—HATRED we received and turns it into Love!

—PIG PEN existence and turns it into paradise.

Jesus told his disciples about the Good Samaritan who picked up a wounded man along the road and took him to an inn and told the innkeeper to give him a place to rest, bind up his wounds; and "When I come back tomorrow, I'll make it right."

Today, brothers and Sisters, Jesus is saying the same words to His father.

Father, I see a traveler, who has been tattered and torn along the way, build them up where there have been torn down, whatever it cost, I'll make a right!

Father, I see a family struggling to make their ends meet, bless their home with mercies from above, whatever it cost, I'll make it right!

Father, I see a wounded soul crying over the loss of a loved one. Give that soul your comforting spirit; whatever it cost, I'll make it right!

Father, I see a lost soul whose sins are as red as scarlet, wash them and make them white as snow. Whatever it cost, I'll make it right.

In order to wash the stain of sin of way, someone would have to pay the price, because the wages of sin is death.

What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Trying to make it right, Jesus, picked up an old rugged cross and carried up Golgotha's Hill!

Trying to make it right, Jesus, let them put a crown of thorns on His head and nails in his hands!

Trying to make it right, Jesus died out on Calvary!

But Early, Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in His Hands!

Power!

Power to make it right!

No. 9513-Inspiration

What happened to the Raven?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 31, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Genesis 8:7

Introduction

What best describes your view of yourself? Are you a user or abuser? Are you a giver or a taker? Lorraine Hansberry in her classic play, A raisin in the sun, described two types of people in the world. After her main character Walter Lee lost all of his money to a friend who cheated him and disappeared Walter concluded that life was filled with either "takers or the tooken." He put himself in the class of those were the "tooken;" the used and the abused.

When you give your best in love and someone takes your heart and leaves, you feel "tooken."

When you open your soul and pour out your most intimate secrets on the shoulders of a friend, only to hear your confessions in the circles of hot gossip, you feel tooken.

When you try to help, but your benevolent spirit is trampled and rejected, you feel "tooken."

What about God? Does this idea of giving and taking apply to God's people? When it comes to our relationship with God are we givers or takers? Do we seek to get what we want from God and stay close to Him until we get what we seek? Are there people who ask God to save them, then once saved disappear never to be heard of again?

How does God feel when we disappear from His presence after He has answered our prayers, healed our bodies, and blessed us immensely? He probably feels "tooken." Jesus healed ten lepers one day and all ten immediately left him. However, one came back and said thanks. That's when Jesus asked, "What happened to the nine?"

A similar question is asked about a little bird in the story of Noah's ark. It's a story of a bird called a raven that was saved from the flood, was released after the flood, but once freed never came back. The question is asked, "What happened to the raven?" it was saved and released, but it never came back.

Some in life are like the raven on Noah's ark; once set free He was never seen again.

Others are like the dove who repeatedly returns bearing good news on their lips.

As Christians, we should be eternally grateful to God for his blessings and his mercy. We are not the "tooken" we are the blessed; every time we get a chance we come before God and give Him thanks for saving our souls and setting us free.

Exposition

This text focuses on Noah's Ark as a symbol of God's mercy and the raven and dove as symbols of the response of sinful man.

Most cultures have a version of the great flood in its history. From East Africa to Bolivia; from Egypt to Iceland, from Mexico to Vietnam it seems that most nations have one version of the flood story or another. One web source distilled the various accounts to 35 different versions. ALL 35 of them talk of humans being spared in the flood. Thirty-two of them include a boat. Twenty four include an account of animals being spared. At least six of them include references to a dove. One referred to a hawk and only one, the bible version referred to a raven.

So many accounts of the flood makes it obvious that something happened. The bible tells us what happened, why it happened and it seems to be the only source that tells us about the raven.

This text describes the events that happened at the end of the great flood in the days of Noah. In the flood, all perished with the exception of one man and his family who were saved by God's grace. That man was Noah.

The flood waters covered the earth for over a year. In the text the flood waters were receding. Soon Noah and family would be exiting the ark. The entire earth had flooded and every creature who breathed air was destroyed, except for those on the ark. Eventually this ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. Soon Noah could see the top of the mountains, and eventually sent out two birds to see if it was time to come out.

First he sent out the raven. This raven kept going to and from the ark. Eventually the raven did not return. Next, Noah sent out the dove. Unlike the raven, the dove did not find a resting place, and returned to the ark. Noah then waited another 7 days, and a second time sent out the dove. This time she returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her beak. Noah waited yet another 7 days, and sent out the dove a third and final time. This time she never returned.

The raven took wing and never returned. Since no other version of the flood story m entions this little bird, the raven itself must bear some significance for God to make note its presence and small role.

All the scripture noted is that the raven didn't come back. What does this mean? Theologians tell us that the ark is a symbol of the church as a vehicle through which God saves. The animals on board the ark represented the whole of mankind both the good and the bad. The raven, which is a scavenger is one of the thousands of unclean animals on board. The dove represented the hundreds of thousands of clean animals on board.

Both were given an opportunity to be saved from the flood. One returned to the

world at the first chance and was never seen or spoken of anymore. The other returned repeatedly bearing olive branches of hope; its act of gratitude, returning with an olive branch in its mouth, has been depicted as a sign of hope and faith for generations.

The Raven was saved from the flood

Although the raven was listed as an unclean animal it was saved from the flood. For a year, the raven changed its ways. It is a scavenger that feasts on dead things, but for a year it changed its diet because nothing on the ark died. The raven changed its habit but not its taste.

In a similar sense many people come to God in an hour of crises. They pray and ask God for special considerations after a major sickness, tragedy or failure. They make promises to God that are real at the moment. For a while they change their habits, they attend church, and seem to be different; yet, on the inside they are still the same people. A truly repentant person becomes a new person, not just a person who attends church. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." There is no substitute for being "In Christ." Those who join a church, but have no real relationship may attend a worship occasionally, but on the inside think and feel like a raven.

There are many who are unhappy in marriages because one partner still thinks like a raven. There are many who live in circumstances that limit their movements and access. They do what they are required to do, but they have ravenous feelings.

The raven took advantage of the safety of the ark and diet of fresh foods it offered for year, but at the first opportunity it intended to go back to its old ways.

The Raven left the ark at the first chance

After a year of safety, nourishment, and protection, the raven was sent forth from the ark. In a single day, a raven can fly as much as 40 miles. The waters were receding, there was an ample supply of dead things to feast upon, so the raven flew away, never to return.

There are many today who waiting anxiously for the door of opportunity to open so they can get away, promising never to come back.

What lured the prodigal son away from home? It was prospect of fun and good times without the limitations of his father's house. Once outside of his father's house the prodigal son acted foolishly, only extreme poverty pointed him back home.

God must feel played by those he blesses, protects and showers with blessings, only to see them leave him the first time the world presents them an opportunity.

When they had no job, they worshipped regularly, but after they landed one, they had no time for Him.

When they were in jail, they read their bibles daily, but once free, they seldom opened a page.

When they were sick, they prayed every hour on the day, When He healed them, they did not have time to pray any longer.

When we walk away from God after He has blessed us, we have essentially used him to achieve an immediate purpose with no intention of developing a long term relationship. We played Him. It's the same idea as a man who dates a woman on the rebound after being hurt in another relationship. He only needs the new woman to help him get over the loss of the other; they he disappears.

That's what Bill Withers calls "Using me, until you use me up."

When Noah sent the raven forth, he must have felt like Saul when he realized the stupidity of his acts against David and said in 1 Samuel 26:21 "I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly."

The Dove came back

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that the raven didn't come back the dove came back with a signs of God's goodness in its mouth.

The raven represents all of those who received the offer of salvation from God, but chose to fly away from God's presence.

The raven represents those who were blessed, but would not return.

We don't know what happened to the raven, but we know what happened when the dove was set free.

The dove returned two times to Noah and the last time he returned he had an olive twig in his mouth.

The image of the dove holding that olive twig in its mouth has outlived that of the raven.

That's what happens when the people of God put words of praise in their mouths; they bring glory to God!

Like the raven, the dove was lost, but was saved by the hand of God, but unlike the raven the dove not only came back to the ark but brought back a sign of hope for everyone on board.

That's what happens when a saint testifies about the goodness of the Lord, we bring back a sign of hope for those who are still on board.

Don't be like the raven that received a blessing, but wouldn't come back, but be like the dove that came back with a testimony on its lips.

If God has blessed you, you oughta tell somebody!

If we've made a mess but God has continued to bless, we oughta tell somebody!

If we've fallen down but God has picked us up again, we oughta tell somebody!

If we've turned down the wrong path but God gave us another chance, we oughta tell somebody.

We don't know what happened to the raven, but dove came back to ark!

We don't know what everyone else who has been blessed will do, but I heard Joshua say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

We're going to serve the Lord because, despite the mess that we've made of our lives, He gave us one more chance!

Every chance we get we're going to be in the presence of the Lord with words of praise on our lips to say:

Thank you Lord, for taking my weakness and turning it into strength!

Thank you Lord, for taking my doubts and giving me assurance!
Thank you Lord, for taking my failure and giving me victories!
Thank you Lord, for taking my discouragement and giving me hope!
Thank you Lord, for taking my test and giving me a testimony!
Thank you Lord, for looking beyond my faults and shortcomings and seeing my need!

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus came into a world that was sinking in sin to give it one more chance.

We don't know what happened to the raven, but when Jesus began His ministry and was baptized in the Jordan River, God sent a dove down from heaven and spoke through it from heaven saying, "this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased."

In middle of the worlds mess, God sent his best!
A sinful world put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!
A world of unbelievers and haters drove nails in his hands and feet!
A world of doubters and skeptics stuck a spear in his side!
And he died, out on Calvary!
But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!
I don't know what happened to the raven, but I want to be like that dove and say:
Thank you Lord, for blessing me one more time.

No. 9514-Inspiration

Facing Giants with nothing but stones

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La

August 2011
(First Delivered May, 1976)

SCRIPTURE: " And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:40

Introduction

Have you ever faced a giant? We are familiar with giants. We read about them in books, fantasize about them in fairytales and watch images of them in movies, videos and cartoons. We are familiar with giants

Children learn of giants when they read stories that describe Gulliver's Travels into the land of the Lilliputians or chilling sound of "fe fi fo fum" of the giant in "Jack and the Bean Stalk." There is even a giant on the cans of vegetables we purchase in stores called the Jolly Green Giant.

Giants are usually referred to as larger than ordinary individuals, and because of their size are fearsome and grotesque. In our lives we are often faced with giant sized problems that are fearsome and just as grotesque as any oversized giant. Sometimes it's a problem that dwarfs our abilities; other times it's obstacles opposition that shutters our will. Either way, these giant sized situations can make tremble in your boots.

The challenges we face everyday are real. They are giant sized, but they are not invincible. They can be overcome. If we are nervous, it is because we focus on all the things that can go wrong. We ponder our possible failure instead of bathing in the prospect of success. Those who are prepared for the challenge stand boldly, without fear of failure. They are confident that God is able to deliver them in any challenge.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that although we may face giants in our lives, God empowers us to overcome each and every one. Every day, we face the fearsome challenges of life with little more than a stone of hope, but God gives us faith for the fight.

Exposition

This text focuses on the shepherd boy David as he rose to fight the giant named Goliath, using nothing but a slingshot and five smooth stones.

Israel under King Saul constantly faced the challenge to their presence by Philistines, who were natives of Canaan.

The text reveals a forty day standoff between the armies of the two countries. The Philistines offered to settle the difference by a duel of the champions. In a duel of the champions each country would send its greatest fighter in a one on one contest, fighting for victory for his country. This method would save needless bloodshed.

A challenge had been issued to Israel by the Philistine champion, Goliath, to send their best man to fight him in a duel to the death.

The Israelites however, could not control their fears. They shook in their sandals and wondered who would be the one that would fight Goliath. King Saul, himself a great warrior, would not meet Goliath. His sons were great warriors but they would not fight either. They were all afraid of the size of Goliath. Their fears got the best of them.

However David, a little shepherd boy, took up the challenge. He refused to wear the king's armor or to use swords and shields. He chose only to carry his shepherd's bag and his sling shot.

Though he went forth there was certainly concern in his heart because of nature of his foe. That concern was reasonable because he faced a giant, fabled to be 13 feet tall. There was fear in his heart.

He faced an opponent who wore a coat of armor that weighed 194 pounds.

David was concerned but not intimidated.

David secured five smooth stones from a brook, and armed his slingshot, with which he killed the mighty Goliath with a single stone.

It Takes Courage

As we consider the giants in our own lives we should consider these three truths:

IT TAKES COURAGE TO FIGHT GIANTS: The giant Goliath presented a formidable challenge to Israel. He struck fear in the hearts of the men of Israel, so much fear that not even their most valiant warriors would come forth. Yet, when David heard the challenge he arose and courageously faced the giant. In life, we have the same challenge from Goliath sized problems; we must respond with courage like David.

David's giant was a man, but our giants may not have faces, but they are just as dangerous. Our giants are the things that we feel dwarf our abilities.

To face our giants we must arise. To arise means, get up from where we are. Life often knocks us down, but we are encouraged to arise.

Succeeding in life does not mean that you won't be knocked down, but real success comes when we muster the courage to rebound after being knocked down.

As believers, we must face our giants with David's courage. When we trust in God we receive a new perspective when we see every situation in light of God's promise to protect every step of the way.

GOD CAN HELP US TO OVERCOME OUR GIANTS: Goliath was one man who frightened an entire army of men, yet every man was afraid of him. Israel saw the giant of a man and trembled, thinking It doesn't take much to frightened a chicken. That's where the common use of the term chicken comes from. You can wave your hand and frighten a chicken.

They run from any perceived threat. Chickens can fly, but very few ever try to fly over the fence. They are afraid of getting their wings clipped if they caught on the other side. Fear of failure stops many people today from flying over the fence of their own poverty. Fear of rejection. Fear of fear itself has stopped so many.

The word of God reminds each of us that, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, in whom should I fear?"

As we face the giant sized obstacles thrown in front of us daily, we must remember, just as David did, that though we are frail in comparison to our inequities, God is stronger, bigger, and more powerful than any adversary. He has shown that to us in the past and he can continue to do repeatedly.

David was sure that he could overcome Goliath, not by his own might but by grace of God.

FIVE STONES, BUT ONLY ONE WAS NEEDED: David retrieved five stones from the brook, however he only needed one to achieve his goal. David's selection of the stones indicates both his faith and the practical application of his faith. He didn't know whether he would be successful on his first shot at the giant, but he felt sure that five would be enough.

What do we really need to accomplish our goals in life? An education, marketable abilities, personal discipline, and a deep-rooted faith in God would appear to be high on anyone's list. The goal, it would appear, is to acquire as many skills, experiences and abilities as possible, with the full knowledge that God can make our dreams using one of them, some of them or even none of them.

That knowledge helps us to go forward without intimidation. We know we have enough stones to slay the giant.

Our individual family histories are filled with accounts of how our ancestors overcame the giants of slavery, poverty, racism and ignorance to achieve excellence. The old timers always seemed armed with a multiplicity of "stones" but only needed one, the power of God.

Any person who expects to succeed should expect difficulty and live constantly armed with a plan "B,C,D, and E." Underlying everything is faith that God can make our dreams a reality using one of our plans.

Faith is the factor, our plans reflect our faith in action.

There is a way! If there is no way, God can create a way, if we trust Him.

Remember, God can do it

Finally brothers and sisters we must remember that God is bigger than any giant we may face.

David did not hesitate to use what was available to him because he had faith in the miraculous intervention of God.

He picked up five stones from the brook, but he carried with him, outside of the sight of any man, five other stones that were more powerful than the stones from the brook.

In his heart he carried the stone of courage, faith, hope, discipline and preparation. These five gave something that was bigger than Goliath himself; it gave him confidence.

David was confident because he knew the source of his victory. He knew where his blessings came from.

Today, we must remember where our blessings come from.

Before we burden ourselves with unnecessary worry about the giants that we face, we should remember that we serve an awesome God who reigns and can help us defeat any foe.

Believers should not worry today, because, like David, we remember what He did yesterday.

Somebody remembers that when they were:

-WEAK He provided them strength

- DOWN He picked them up!

- DEFEATED He gave them the victory

-DISCOURAGED He restored their hope!

-LONELY, He gave them comfort

-TROUBLED He gave them peace of mind

Somebody remembers how He came to a little town called Bethlehem

That He died on an old rugged cross!

Somebody remembers that Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave!

He's still blessing us today, just like He did yesterday!

No. 9515-Inspiration

Promises, Promises

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

August 2011

Scripture:"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4

Introduction

Promises, promises! We have all made promises, but do we keep them all? Think of all the promises, commitments, engagements, dates, appointments and engagements you have broken over the years! How many of those did you break? For no fault your own some of them you broke because of circumstances beyond your control. It's easier to make promises than it is to keep promises.

Suppose I told you that I know a person who keeps every promise he makes, would you believe me?

There are very few of us who actually know any individuals who are able to keep all of their promises. They may try hard, but it is not humanly possible to keep every promise.

We can't, but God can. In fact, If we look back we'll quickly see that despite all of its ups and downs, good days and bad days, God has delivered his promises to us, just as he said!

What has God promised us? He has promised strength for the mountains that we will face in life. He has promised to walk with us through life's dangerous trails and that He would deliver us and lead us away from temptation if we ask Him. Moreover, He promised to be with us always, in every situation and circumstance and to be only a prayer away.

As Christians, we may not be able to keep all of our promises, but we rejoice in the fact that God can and will keep all of His promises to us.

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter's characterization of God's promises as precious.

Peter's purpose for this epistle is to encourage the faithful that God would be faithful in his pledge of abundant living to believers. Believers sought an increase in grace and peace. Lest some would become anxious about the promises, Peter

reminded them that God's promise is central to our faith. The same glory and virtue are employed and evidenced in giving the promises of the gospel that are exercised in our lives of faith.

The promises God made with respect to the gospel and its message as well as the salvation of the saints, are the same promises upon which believers pin their hopes and aspirations.

His Promises

There are several thoughts we should consider concerning God's promises to us:

GOD's PROMISES ARE EXCEEDINGLY GREAT: The promise of salvation is the greatest of all of the promises to believers. Psalm 119:18 notes that it is a wonderful thing to be forgiven for the heinous sins we have committed before God. Salvation is an exceedingly great promise that God has given to each of us.

Just as salvation is a precious promise of God, so are all of God's promises; they are all sure and dependable even though at times, we cannot fully understand how He works. These are times when the old saying is true, "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform."

He has promised to ultimately deliver us from any evil aimed at us and to lead us away from temptation if we ask him.

He promised to be with us always, in every situation and circumstance and to be only a prayer away.

THE PROMISE OF THE SAVIOR IS PRECIOUS: It is good to know that God's promise of a savior is precious. In the Old Testament believers were promised that a savior would come through the seed of a woman. That promise has been realized through the birth of Christ and now through the presence of the Holy Ghost who is enlivening, enlightening, and sanctifying. God's presence has sustained us and brought us through some of the most difficult times of our lives. Those were the times that we knew we survived or arose victorious on nothing but the grace of God. Those were the times we were living totally on the precious promises of God.

The fact that we cling to the promises of God amuses some. They are amused only because they do not know the savior as we do.

Like Sarah, they find it amusing when God makes a promise that seems impossible in light of the circumstances.

Like Pharaoh, they believe that faith in God's promises are the folly of the ignorant and whatever signs we see are cheap magician's tricks.

Like King Saul, they believe they should follow their own mind because God's will should only be trusted when His will mirrors our will.

We have a friend who saves us and raises us, so we have learned how to lean and stand bon his promises because they are precious and true.

GOD'S PROMISES ARE REAL AND TRUE: Matthew Henry said those who receive the promises of the gospel partake of the divine nature. They are renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; their hearts are set for God and his service; they have a divine temper and

disposition of soul.

Those who follow the promise of the gospel usually find that God's promises are real and true.

Although we often make promises that we have neither the will or capacity to carry out that is not the case with God. The promises of God are real and sure despite the fact that there are many who are skeptical because they have seen the promises of so many others fall by the wayside. If God has spoken it, it shall come to pass. If God has forbidden it, it shall not be.We can depend on the precious promises of God.

Good has kept his promise to us

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should praise God continuously because of His promise to save us, bless us and usher us into eternity.

Despite the difficulty of the times, we have seen how God has bent, shaped and directed events and circumstances to ultimately keep His promises to us.
God's record of diligently seeking our good is why we praise Him. It's why we lift Him up in worship.

Can God do what He says? Can He keep His promises to us? The record bears testimony that God is able!

That makes His promises precious. He has promised to take our:

—Fears and turn them into faith; SADNESS and turn it into gladness!

—WEAKNESS and turn it into strength; RESERVATIONS and turn them into confirmations!

—FAILURES and turn them into successes; LOSSES and turn them into gains!

Those are precious promises!

We should keep our promises to God because it is our way of saying "thank you" for being so good to us!

We give thanks to God for:

—Muzzling the mouths of lions that came to devour us!

—Quenching the flames of fires that tried to destroy us!

—Conquering the enemies that came to destroy us!

—Penetrating the walls built to divide us!

—Unlocking the prisons designed to hold us down.

The Lord we serve is worthy to be praised and worthy because of the fulfillment of the promises that He make.

His worthy because He is Lord!

He is worthy because He healed the sick!

He is worthy because He raised the dead!

He is worthy because He answered our prayers!

He is worthy because He carried an old rugged cross for us, up Golgotha's Hill!

He is worthy because He died for our sins!

He is worthy because Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hand and a promise of redemption on His lips!

No. 9516-Inspiration

If loving God is wrong, I don't want to be right

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 7, 2011

Scripture: Luke 4:8: And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Introduction

Have you ever been criticized because you believe in God or because you say that you will trust God to lead and guide you?Two generations ago, the thought that a person could be ostracized for believing in God would have been unheard of in the United States. This is a Christian nation. Yet, each year millions of believers take stands of faith, like the Three Hebrew Boys, choosing to suffer the snickers and anti-religious venom of their detractors rather than abandon their faith in God.

In 1972 Luther Ingram sung about a man who was in love with a married woman. His love for her was so overwhelming that he was willing to risk losing all he had to have it. He knew it was wrong but he'd rather be wrong than to be right.

Ingram's lyrics contained these words:

If loving you is wrong I don't wanna be right
If right means being without you
I'd rather live wrong doing life

Ingram's lyrics described an illicit relationship between a man and someone else's wife, but what if we flipped that statement and said, "If loving God is wrong, I don't want to be right." That paints a position statement for every person who is claiming to be a Christian in modern society.

It is becoming a crime in America to publically express a love for God. Despite the fact that the nation itself was built upon godly principles, founded by men and women seeking religious freedom, and predicated on godly ideas, the nation has drifted away from open expressions of godliness.

There are those who want to remove "under god" from the pledge of allegiance. Others want "duty to God" removed from the boy scout oath. Still others, want "In God we trust" removed from American currency. There are great debates afoot in

hundreds of cities across America as to whether prayers can be said in schools or mumbled by those beginning a work or classroom day.

Those who openly express faith in God are called far right, religious fanatics and borderline nut cases. It is not politically correct these days to say "Merry Christmas" or to mention the fact that the first pilgrims offered thanks to God. The next step after being dubbed politically incorrect is for faith in God to be declared wrong as it has been outlawed in many nations of the world. Expressing a faith in God is becoming unfashionable at the least.

There are many who hear the words of scripture that remind us that we should love the Lord with all of our mind, body and soul. When that happens we sing the sanitized version of Luther Ingram's lyrics, "If loving God is wrong, then I don't want to be right."

As Christians, we openly express our love for God and for Jesus His son. We sing proudly, 'Oh How I love Jesus! Oh How I love Jesus!" Oh, how I love Jesus! Because he first loved me!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he makes a major decision about the direction of his life and chooses to love and obey God rather worship the devil.

Before Christ began his public ministry, he spent 40 days in the wilderness to pray for strength and direction. Those forty days must have been a wonderful experience. He had just come from the baptismal scene which had ended when God declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." So, in the beginning of his ministry, Jesus faced a crucial decision making period in which he had to decide whether to take the long way around or take the short cuts.

The passage shows the devil presenting Jesus with three temptations: 1) To turn stones into bread and satisfy his human needs and desires 2) To worship the devil and free himself from being plagued by the devilish plots and tricks that would follow him all through his ministry and 3) Throw himself off the side of mountain in the full view of thousands of people below who would witness when God sent angels to catch him before he hit the ground.

All three of the temptations would have jump started Jesus' career with popularity, fame and certain world power. There would be no doubt that he would be the one true Messiah because he would be the one man who could turn stones into bread and be rescued by angels dispatched from heaven.

He could change the world from such a position. He could order governments to follow his rule. He could outlaw hypocrisy and open the floodgates of opportunity for thousands.

There was only one big hitch: to do what the devil asked would require him disobey God, abandon his mission and begin a ministry that was based on wrong rather than right.

He refused them and chose to love God with His whole mind, body and soul.

Being faithful to God

Believers are often criticized for our faithfulness to God. They criticize us because we find a reason for joy in sad situations, do good to those we know will probably stab us in the back and believe that God will eventually work things out for us, according to His will.

Those outside of the faith say such loyalty to God is foolish. They say it is wrong.

If being faithful to God is wrong, then the we don't want to be right.

The devil's voice is just as loud and clear in your voice today as it was clear and succinct to Jesus. That voice tells that we are wrong to trust God so completely; that we should use common sense. Yet, trusting God often compels us to ignore common sense and wholly lean on our faith in the Lord

We are not alone. Many before us have chosen to walk by faith and not by sight

Noah lived a life according to the will of God. Although all of the people around him chose to ignore Gods warnings Noah sought direction from God, built an ark, and survived a flood. He chose to act on faith while others chose another course.

Enoch walked with God. He spent his entire life communicating with God and talking with him. Because he talked with God on a daily basis and walked with him constantly he did not see death. Even though all those around turned away, he remained faithful.

The three Hebrew boys were faithful to God even in the face of death. They desired to please him and when they were thrown into a fiery furnace, God protected them.

In each instance the great warriors of our past have chosen to trust in the Lord and to lean not unto their own understanding.

They sang the old song, "Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Like them we say, if being faithful to God is wrong, then we don't want to be right.

Being Obedient to God

Believers are also criticized for our obedience to God. The world criticizes us because we strictly follow the commands of God and approach Him with respect.

In Deuteronomy 13:4 God told Moses to tell the people, You will walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice and serve Him and cling to Him.

Obeying God's commandments keeps us from self destructing. Obviously, we have failed at making up our own rules. Without a higher command we would simply self destruct.

The commands of God set the standard by which we are to measure our action and provide the litmus test to gauge the quality of our reverence toward God.

His commands push us to be honest in dealings with others, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment. A businessman who obeys God's commands places limits on what he will do to make a dollar. It becomes a matter of integrity and obedience to God involved in every transaction. It also translates into our daily affairs.

Some laugh at us because we refuse to participate in shady activities that will bring us a profit, but will most certainly cross the line of acceptability with God. There legal activities that are sanctioned by society, but frowned upon by God. When given the choice believers remember Acts 5:29 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

If given the choice of doing what is socially sanctioned or being obedient to God, the believer chooses God even if it means suffering the ridicule of friends and associates.

If being obedient to God is wrong, then we don't want to be right.

Praising God is right

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider that it is never wrong to praise God!

When Jesus was confronted by the devil He had to choose to do right or wrong. He chose to follow His father and to turn His back on Satan.

Each believer has that same challenge, we too must tell the world to "get thee behind me Satan" and follow Jesus, even if the world laughs at us. That why many sing that old song, "I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back!"

There is something about believers that makes us forget about what is socially acceptable when we think about the goodness of the Lord. Even though the colleges and universities teach us that the right thing to do is to listen with intense interest and show little emotion; we find it difficult to do what is academically right.

Even though the rules of order forbid us from standing on our feet and blurting out words of praise, we find it restrictive to do what is socially right.

When we think about the goodness of the Lord it is hard to do what the world calls the right thing.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the people shouted praise to him all along the way. Somebody asked him to tell his followers to tone down their praise and Jesus said, in Luke 19:40 "And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Consider the old lady who moved in with her great grandchildren up north. They were wealthy professionals who attended a big city quiet church. Her grandchildren went to church regularly but they asked grandmother to remember that she wasn't down south. Up here it is not right to say Amen like they do down south. It's not to right to wave your hand in agreement. It's not right to stand on your feet and applaud a song. Don't embarrass us. Every Sunday the old lady went to worship and tried her best to keep quiet as the name of Jesus was glorified. Her grandchildren would give her the eye

and she would hold her peace. They didn't mind the funny looking red coat she wore. They didn't mind the flower that dangled from her hat. If she'd just sit quiet, they'd be happy. A guest preacher from down south was in the pulpit. He started talking about the goodness of the Lord. As he talked the flower started dangling on the old lady's hat as she moved from side to side. Her heels started clicking on the floor. Before she knew it she was standing on her feet shouting, praise the Lord. She looked at her granddaughters and said, "I'm sorry girls, if praising God is wrong, I don't want to be right!

I don't know about you, but I've decided that if:

—being faithful to God is wrong, I don't want to be right!

—being obedient to God is wrong, I don't want to be right!

— praising God is wrong, I don't want to be right!

If praising God for changing me from a sinner into a saint is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

If praising God for changing me from being corrupt to consecrated is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

If praising God for changing me from being miserable into a happy man is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

If praising God for changing me from being a victim into the victor is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

If praising God for changing me from being a slave and giving me freedom is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

Thank you Lord, for taking my:

—Bitterness and turning it to sweetness; Sadness and giving me joy!

—Loneliness and give me companionship; Emptiness and giving me fulfillment!

—Failure and showing me the victory; Discouragement and giving me encouragement!

More than that, I want to thank you Lord for saving me soul!

I don't know about you, but every now and then, I want to tell somebody that I serve a good God!

I want to tell somebody that he carried an old cross for me!

I want to tell somebody that he died out on Calvary!

I want to tell somebody that early Sunday morning that he arose from the dead!

If telling somebody about the goodness of the Lord is wrong, then I don't want to be right!

No. 9517-Revival

Gather up the fragments

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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August 14, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten." John 6:11-13

Introduction

Have you ever known people who collect what others throw away?One man's trash is another man's treasure. That's the idea that contributes to the success of garage and rummage sales. At a rummage sale a person sells items for which they no longer have use. The items can range from paperback novels to computers; from silverware to living room suites. Such sales have extended themselves to estate sales and auctions to listing on the Internet's Ebay or Craig's List.

You may not want that old fishing rod, but there is a man looking for an old fishing rod.

You may think that no one wants a copy of a book you bought in 1950, but there is a person who is looking for that book.

What makes such sales attractive is that the items being sold may be truly valuable; they have simply been unused or unwanted.

We throw away our trash, but there are people who collect our trash.

We scrap fragments of food from a hardy meal into the trash, but there are those who consider our discarded fragments a feast.

In a greater sense we also tend to view people as fragments. We often see the man sitting on the street corner begging for food and see him as a fragment. We see the man standing at the intersection holding a sign "I will work for food" as a fragment. Even the man who has failed in business, marriage and life is often seen as a fragment. There are even some who view the elderly as fragments.

The good news is what others see as fragments, God sees as a treasure. When we have failed and seem to have little purpose for our lives, God picks us up because he sees our purpose. Consider the drunk who searched the garbage for a taste of wine and found what he believed was an old fiddle. "It's nothing but an old fiddle" he thought and tossed it aside. A second scavenger came and found the old fiddle, he tried to play

it but he got was screeches and scratches and he threw it away because it had no value. A third scavenger sold the fiddle to an antique store whereupon a great violinist happened upon it. The violinist tuned its strings and gently rubbed the bow them. Out came the finest sound, much to the amazement of all. As the violinist bought the fiddle and walked out of the door, the owner remarked "it was just an old fiddle, until it was touched by the master's hand."

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that our God always sees our potential and never dismisses us as mere disposable fragments. If we fall, he picks us up and puts us to use again.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Christ in which he ordered fragments of food leftover from a meal to be gathered up for future use.

This passage occurred on an occasion when Jesus preached to a crowd of thousands who listened to him for hours. When the crowd began hungry his disciples worried about how such a crowd could be fed. A boy with his own lunch of two little fish and five barley loaves offered his little gift which was blessed and used by Jesus to feed 5,000

A miracle was performed that day when the 5,000 sitting in 100 groups of fifty were fed fish and bread.

A second miracle was to follow, but is often unnoticed. When all had been fed Christ ordered the disciples to pick up all of the remaining fragments. There were enough leftovers to fill twelve baskets. The fragments were collected so that they would not be lost, implying that they could be used on other occasions.

Jesus repeated the same miracle again. A crowd of four thousand was similarly fed in Mark15:36-38. In this instance the people had followed Jesus for three long days and had nothing to eat. At the close of the meal there were seven basketfuls of fragments. They were quickly collected also.

Fish spoils quickly, bread molds after just a short time. What possible use could leftover fish and bread have? We are never told what happened to the fragments; we surmised however, that the master had need of them for a future purpose.

Some scholars have theorized that He wanted us to be concerned with the leftovers, the pieces nobody else wanted. Society is full of fragments of people whose hearts are hurting and looking for compassion. They feel they're the leftovers or the parts no one else wants. The Greek woman told Jesus she was willing to settle for the fragments, or crumbs from the Master's table; she knew even in the fragments, there was life; every morsel invaluable!

In a greater sense, the entire ministry of Jesus was directed toward those who were life's fragments. He was once criticized for spending so much time with the outcasts of the community; he responded by saying that it was not the well who needed a physician, but the sick.

The order to gather the fragments is the same passion that Jesus showed for saving the lost and reviving the homeless.
He gave His life to gather up the fragments.

The fragments

Jesus ordered that the "fragments" be gathered. It is interesting he did not describe that which was to be gathered as "remains" because that would have implied that they were dead. If he had used the term "scraps" it would have implied unusefulness. The term leftovers would have implied "after thoughts." The term used was "fragment." Herein lies special truths for us to consider. A fragment, by definition is an incomplete piece of something. It is good but it is not whole; it needs something else to make it useful.

A FRAGMENT NEEDS A PURPOSE: A fragment does not have everything it needs to stand alone. In English, we are taught that a phrase that has no verb or action is a fragment. Herein in lies the first truth: our lives need activity based purpose. The phrase "the poor this year," is a fragment because it has no verb. It needs action. Today, there are many people whose lives are missing "verbs" there is no purpose driven action. Rick Warren in his book "The Purpose Driven Life" highlights the importance of individuals and family's having a purpose that drives their action.

A person who is passionate about fighting cancer, helping the poor, protecting battered wives, restoring lost souls or sheltering abandoned animals have a sense of purpose. That purpose is the power behind the life. When that purpose is a godly purpose it gets supercharged!

People who have no purpose in life, usually have an interest, but rarely do anything. They just talk. They sit in church groups and talk about the crime in the community, but do nothing. They talk about the effect of the heat or cold on the elderly and the homeless, but they do nothing. They are like the man who sat on the crowded bus and shook his head when he saw all of the women standing. "This world is going to the dogs. Look at all of the women standing on this bus. I hate to see it." His neighbor asked him, "What are you going to do about it? The man answered, "I'll just close my eyes!"

We often have good ideas and intentions, but they are only fragments unless we act upon them. Jesus gathered his disciples together in Matthew 28:19 and showered them with three verbs: Go, teach and baptize.

Are you leading a fragmented life that has no godly based action or purpose? Why not resolve to let God use your life to make a difference? When that is done you move closer to being more than just a fragment.

A FRAGMENT NEEDS A SUBJECT: In English a fragment not only needs a verb, but it also needs a subject in order to be complete. The phrase "feeds the poor this year," has a verb but still has no subject. The subject is the person, place or thing that is doing something. Today, there are many people whose lives have plenty of activity, but their lives seem to have no central subject. When you have defined what your life is all about it gives meaning to your actions. If partying and having a good time is the subject of

your life, then that explains your actions. If sex is the main subject of your life it will explain your actions. It determines how you spend your money, wear your clothes or the type of entertainment you seek. If power or politics is the subject of your life it explains many of your actions. If God is the subject of your life then that explains what you do on Sunday, the clothes you purchase, the books you read, etc. The subject of every believer's life is God. Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." God is the center of our lives. Song writer Richard Smallwood put it this way, "Jesus, you are the center of my joy. All that's good and perfect comes from you. You are the heart of my contentment. The hope for all I do. Jesus you are the center of my joy.

What is the subject of your life? Is God at the center of that subject? If He is, then it will determine the people with whom you associate, the places you go and the things you do. Making Jesus the subject of your life is the next step in living the complete life in Christ.

SUBJECT AND VERBS MUST AGREE: Fragments become complete sentences, when the phrase has both a subject and a verb. However, the sentence is only acceptable when the subject and verb agree. This is a complete, but incorrect sentence. "We is going to the store." It is complete because it is not a fragment, it has a subject and a verb, but it is incorrect because the subject and the verb do not agree. A plural subject requires a plural verb.

Many people today live just above fragmented lives, they have a subject, but their actions and their subject don't agree. The man who has God as the main subject of his life, but the things he does, places he goes and people he associates with are ungodly, has an agreement problem. That was Samson's problem. He was a man of God, but he was attracted to ungodly women; it became his downfall. David was a man after God's own heart, but he was an adulterer and murderer. He couldn't get it all together until both the subject of his life and the actions of life were in agreement.

Our lives must be in step with God. Psalm 37:23 says, The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. The idea is to keep our actions in line with the will of God, just as the members of the Godhead stay united. 1 John 5:7 says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

When the fragments have both a subject and actions that agreement they complete in the fulfillment of their purpose.

Gathering the Fragments

Finally, brothers and sisters when Jesus said, "gather the fragments" it was a call to preservation and restoration of that which others thought was useless.
God has a way of recycling the fragments to rejuvenate them and make them useful for his purpose.

Many people have computers in their homes and are frustrated because they seem to run slow, even though there are no viruses and everything else is running well.

That's when you learn that you may have a fragmentation problem. It seem that each time you save a picture, letter or a file your computer breaks it up in small pieces and puts into the first available empty space it can get. One photo could possibly be broken into 50 pieces and stores all over your hard drive in fragments. When you want to see your photo it takes a long time because the computer has to search all over the hard drive for all of the parts, and hook them together so you can see them. However, a wipe and reload with data capture, clears it all out and puts everything back in place without the fragments.

If a wipe and reload can remove the fragments and make the files contiguous and whole, maybe we need to think about getting a spiritual wipe and re-load.

That's what David had in mind when he said, "Psalm 51:10,12 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

When Jesus said, "Gather up the fragments" it was a call for restoration.

Today, we cannot afford to ignore the fragments, because the master can use them.

The alcoholic is seen as a fragment and is often ignored.

The drug addict is seen as a fragment and is often ignored

The prostitute is seen as a fragment and is often ignore

What can God do with fragments?:

Often we encounter fragments in life but we don't recognize them because God wipe and reloaded them and today are called by a different name.

Today, they call him preacher but there was a time they called him pimp.

Today, they call him deacon but there was a time they called him devil

Today, they call her mother and deaconess but there was a time they called her hot mama

Today, they call you a saint, but there was a time they called you a sinner!

If you don't understand why Jesus would say, "Gather up the fragments" then take a look in your own kitchen.

The other day the meat and potatoes you ate were recycled and served again, but this time it was called hash!

The leftover turkey from your family dinner was recycled and served again, but this time it's called turkey salad.

The left over corn bread was recycled and served with baked hen or turkey and called dressing!

The leftover light bread that was hard and observable was mixed with sugar raisins and eggs and served again, but this time it was called bread pudding.

The leftover peas, corn, and chicken pieces that cluttered the refrigerator were recycled and served again, but this time they called it chicken gumbo.

Every now and then when we look at our lives we should see a fragmented life recycled by the grace of God.

I heard Jesus declare, they are left over but they have some use.

Gather up the fragments and I'll come down to give them a chance to be wipe and reloaded and to get a brand new name!

Gather up the fragments and I'll become the subject of their lives.
Gather up the fragments and I'll give their hands a great work to do and add purpose to their lives.

Gather up the fragments and save their souls as they lose themselves in agreement with my will.

No wonder Paul declared, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Behold old things are passed away and all things become one.

Gather up the fragments, I'm coming to give them one more chance!

Jesus, died that I might have a second chance!

Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave that I might have a chance at eternal!

Every day He still calls out, "Gather up the fragments" -So they can be made whole again!

No. 9518-Inspiration

Lord Save me from me

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 21, 2011

SCRIPTURE: Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Psalm 116:4

Introduction

Have you had to rescue someone?We admire first responders, fire fighters and emergency medical responders who quickly arrive on the scene of an accident and offer assistance that often saves lives. We are relieved because we believe they know what to do to help us. We trust them and follow their instructions to the letter.

A conversation with a first responder can entertain you for hours as they unravel hair raising accounts of near death experiences for victims of fires, accidents and sickness. As we listen to them we are enthralled with their accounts and impressed with their knowledge, skill and bravery.

A firefighter who dashes into a burning house to save a victim or a first responder who responds to our emergencies with calmness and strength, are heroes in our eyes. We admire them because of their courage and their willingness to sacrifice themselves to provide assistance to others. That's what happens all too often. When storms rage, flood waters rise or other natural disasters strike our neighborhoods we expect them to be present, forgetting that they also have families. Many assist us in such times while thinking of their own loved ones at the same time.

One of the things that is probably disheartening to the first responder is when he or she is called upon so save a person repeatedly from the same tragic situation. The man who seems to call get drunk and smash his car repeatedly against trees and other objects, gets to be a regular. The boy that has to be pulled out of the pool once every week is a regular 9-1-1 near drowning victim. The couple that fights, cuts, shoots or abuses each other regularly get to be regular feature on the calls for help. Some want help at the moment, but they may not want to be saved because they constantly repeat incidents that tend to lead the same result.

When we call on God and ask him to save us, are we asking Him to save us or to restore us so that we can continue in the same path? We ask God to save us, but for many what they really mean is help us get out of this bit of trouble- until next time.

When Christ came into the world He came to save us from sin. To do that He has

to save us from ourselves.

As Christians, we give God praise for sending His son to save us from the penalty of sin. Even more, we are grateful that through the Grace of God we have been saved from ourselves.

Exposition

This Psalm shows David asking God to save him from his own self inflicted maladies.

In the course of his life, David experienced many moments that were life threatening. Most of these moments were caused by enemies or by animal predators. On more than one occasion his life was threatened either by wild animals as a boy, or as a fugitive under King Saul. In each instance he saw the power of God at work saving him from danger and allowing him to skirt capture by his enemies.

However, the most difficult of his challenges did not come from enemies; his most serious challenges were prompted by his own foolishness, and disregard for the laws of God. When David sinned with Bathsheba it was a situation that he created. His murder of Uriah was a sin devised in his own mind. The tragedy that followed, the shame he endured, the feeling of guilt could not be blamed on others; he caused it himself.

In this psalm David recounts the contributory nature of his situation. In verse three he notes that the "pains of hell gat hold upon me." That's when he asked God to deliver him from himself.

He called upon God to save him, once saved he never returned to those sins again. God pulled him back from the brink of despair. In Psalm 116:5 he characterized God as considering his situation and then being merciful to him. Realizing God's mercy, David came to himself and God literally snatched him back from the brink of despair.

Thus, David pens a psalm of thanksgiving To God for saving him from himself; for showing him that even when we think there is no reason to go on, the Love and power of God prevails.

Savior

WE NEED A SAVIOR: One of the undeniable realities of life is that we often need someone to save us from ourselves. That person has to be stronger than we are or at least as strong. Every wise leader has a team of advisors who have his best interest at heart; among those there is always one who is strong enough to challenge the leader if he appears to be going in the right direction. A loving spouse will not sit idly by while their mate makes a decision that leads to destruction. Parents often take corrective action to stir their children in the right direction. It's necessary because, despite our wisdom and experience.

George Washington was the father of our country, but he was often saved from himself by Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson.

Franklin Roosevelt was a great president but it was the compassion of his wife, Eleanor, that often saved him from himself.

General Colin Powell tried to save President George Bush from plunging the nation into the Iraqi war, but it seems Bush's desire to fulfill his father's unfilled agenda became his own undoing, cost us thousands of lives and plunged the nation in debt.

Whether on a national scale or personal level, we all need someone to save us from ourselves.

What is a savior?

A true savior would have to be one that is able to protect, deliver and bestow balance in our lives. Who can protect us better then the Lord?

The psalmist reminds us that the Lord is our fortress in a time of trouble and a shelter in a time of storm. David declared in Psalms 27 that the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His Tabernacle shall He hide me. v5.

When faced with the prospect of defeat, failure or disaster, every child of God knows that friends and neighbors are fine, but his real protection comes only from being safe in the arms of Jesus.

That's why the song writer penned our plea, "Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling. Do not pass me by!"

GOD LETS US FAIL TO SAVE US FROM US: Is it possible that we are on a path to destruction, that only a failure can correct? Sometimes nothing can save us better than a failure. A lost battle let's you know that it is possible to lose the entire war. Often small failures work to our advantage.

The family that makes good money but often spends recklessly on things that it wants but does not need, exceeding their budget is on a path to financial destruction. When the first financial problem occurs that family then prays to God to restore them to their former position. If God answered that prayer, then they would get the temporary problem solved and then return to their previous spendthrift package. However, sometimes God lets us fail up the road so we won't be destroyed down the road.

A football team with plenty of hotshots who think they know more than the coach. In their first scrimmage game, the coach said nothing. The hotshots ignored the plays sent in from the bench, but the coach said nothing. They were exhausted after playing just one quarter and played miserably, but the coach said nothing. When the team was defeated 50-0 in its first scrimmage game; surprisingly, the coach said nothing.
At the next practice however, the coach said, "You did not function as a team, you ignored instructions from the bench, you were not in shape and you failed. I let you fail because then and only then would you listen to me and get you ready to win." The team went on to become the state champions, but they had to fail in order to win.

The Reverend Richard Winn of Atlanta preached a sermon at the Ben Hill United Methodist Church in 2010 entitled, "What do you do when the problem is you?" Pastor Winn said often one family member accuses the other one thing or the other, but in reality the problem is "you." When that is the case, what do you do? That's what happened to David. God sent the prophet Nathan to say to him, "Thou art the man." The problem is you!

Only when we accept the fact that we may be our own worst enemy, can be saved.

That's when we reach the point of saying, "Lord, I'm a sinner." I can't help myself. Save me."

When we pray that prayer all the forces of heaven shift quickly to save us from us.

THERE MUST BE A NEW ME TO SAVE ME: The reality of salvation is that we are not saved if the same person emerges from the threatening situation. There must be a change of direction.

The person who avoided lung cancer is not saved if he still smokes two packs a day.

The criminal who avoided a lengthy jail term is not saved if he's still involved in criminal activity.

The man who avoided divorce because he cheated on his wife is not saved if he is still cheating.

To be saved is to turn away from our sins.

We are fooling ourselves if we claimed that we are saved, but we are still shacking, getting drunk, using drugs, stealing, fornicating, and lying. We are now IN our sins, we are saved FROM our sins. The unique nature of salvation is that many of us were saved from some of these things, but we were not SAVED so that we could continue them.

1 Corinthians 6:11 says, " And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The key word to note, is the word WERE. It points to the past, not the present.

When we are saved we begin a new life, turning our backs completely on the life God saved us from. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

We are powerless to save ourselves. We can try, but we will fail every time. There is something inside of us that is more powerful than we can control. Paul, writing to the Romans said, "Romans 7:18-20 " For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."Then in Romans 7:24 he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? "

David answered Paul's question before it was even asked; only God can deliver us.

The song writer wrote, "Saved by is power divine, Saved to new life sublime. Life is so sweet and my joy is complete because I'm saved, saved, saved!"

Deliverance

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that there is no one who can save

us from ourselves, but the Lord.

Is there a power anywhere in the world greater than the power of God?

There was once a young military the leader called Alexander the Great, the people called him the "Savior"

Alexander may have been great, but he was not the savior!

He was a deliverer, but he was not the savior!

He was great, but he was not the greatest!

He was strong, but he wasn't the strongest!

He had power, but he didn't have all power!

He was high, but he was not the highest!

He was victorious, but he didn't have the ultimate victory!

To conquer the beast within us we need a savior greater than Alexander, Julius Caesar, the Tsars or the Presidents.

There are some who say, I don't need a savior, I can save myself.

If you are your own savior then you have an impotent savior.

If you are your own savior you have a savior who cannot:

-Protect, you have a cup that can't hold water

-Deliver, you have a match that cannot strike

-Bless you, you have a light that cannot shine

-Direct you, you have a car that will not start.

-Inspire you, you have a cell phone with no minutes

-Correct you, you have a gas stove in an all electric home.

You are trying to save yourself if you do it every way, but God's way!

You are trying to save yourself if you never take yourself to the Lord!

Who can save us from us better than the Lord?

Our God is able to deliver us

The Three Hebrew boys are a glaring example of God's ability to deliver the faithful. Even though they stood glaring into the belching flames of the furnace they resolved that Our God is able to deliver us.

A song writer asks: Have you any rivers that seem uncrossable? Have you any mountains that you cannot climb? God specializes in doing the impossible, and He can do what no other power can do?

No matter what our dilemma or how wretched we may appear to ourselves, God is able to deliver us if we will but trust Him.

To save us from us, God sent his only Son to be raised up for our mess ups.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

Isaiah said he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed.

With these stripes, Jesus paid the price for our sins!

With these stripes Jesus, the lily of the valley, paid the price for our wrong doing!

With these stripes Jesus, the King of Kings, paid the penalty for our negligence.

With these stripes Jesus, the Lord of Lords, bore the agony of our irresponsibility.

He died on Calvary to save us from us!

But early Sunday morning he rose up from grave to raise us to a new life and a new hope in Jesus Christ!

No. 9519 Revival

Reaching the unreached

A sermon by A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:14-15 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. John 12:32

Introduction

What are we doing to actually reach the lost today? There are many who are embarked upon a multiplicity of activities designed to reach the lost but somehow fall short of their goal because their central pain has been misplaced.

Is it possible that our quest to reach the lost has been replaced by our desire to reach bankable membership numbers? Has our desire to build taller steeples and to fill more pews replaced our desire to save lost souls? These are questions that live at the heart of our understanding of the nature and function of the church.

It is the mission of the church to save the lost by lifting up Christ.

It is the mission of the church to expand the kingdom of God in preparation for the return of Christ.

Yet, there are many among us who have transformed that mission so much that it is hardly recognizable.

We all still preaching but what we are preaching has been reduced, in many areas, to mere entertainment. For many, the Gospel has been changed to a message of prosperity rather than a message of salvation. The appeal is not to come to Christ for the salvation of our souls, but to come to Christ so that he can bless us, enrich us and expand our territory.

In many parts of the country our revivals have been reduced to three night preaching expositions designed to inspire the saved and motivate those who are already in the service, but hardly lifting up Christ by calling for repentance and offering Christ for the pardoning of sins. Many seminaries now teach that it is not necessary to preach about Calvary and the resurrection of Christ as the source of salvation. They say going to the cross is old school.

They are right. The old school requires us to speak about the venomous snakes of sin, and Christ as the cure for sin. The new school only requires us to look to Christ to show us how to get to the promise land of prosperity meandering through a path filled

with the sinful venoms of worldliness.

We have a compelling reason to preach about sin, salvation, and Christ as the sacrifice for our sin! That compelling reason is that Christ Himself has commanded us to go into the entire world and preach the gospel, save and baptize the lost and to teach discipleship to the converts. It is a prerequisite. It is a "must."

Preaching about sin and salvation is not popular these days, but we must speak of the sin so that we can show Christ as the cure. Only in the presence of sin is there a need of savior. Without preaching Christ being lifted up for the forgiveness of sin all that is left is to preach Christ so that he can help us pay our car note or give us winning lottery numbers.

There is only one way to reach those who are sinking in the sea of life, we must throw them the life line of salvation offered through faith in Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we must lift up the cross. It is through the preaching of Christ as the sacrifice for our sins that the masses of this world will have a chance to everlasting life. They key to reaching the unreached is to preach, Christ and Him only.

Exposition

This text is Jesus' response to questions posed to him by Nicodemeus about the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus told Nicodemeus that He came into the world to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. When asked "How can these things be?" Christ compared himself to the brazen image that Moses raised in the wilderness. At the core of the comparison was the sin of the people and the method God used to allow them achieve forgiveness.

The brazen serpent referred to a time in Israel's history when the nation wandered in the wilderness. The people endured many frustrations that included hunger, thirst, and fear. Their problems were compounded because the King of Edom would not allow them to pass through his borders complicating their situation.

The people responded by murmuring and complaining first against Moses then against God. They complained that they had no bread. They complained that they had no water even though God provided them the best of both. When they railed against the man of God, they sinned, but when complained against God himself they committed the ultimate sin. "Would God we had died in the wilderness.

The sins of the people angered God to the point that he sent snakes in the midst of them to destroy them all. When they repented and went to Moses in a spirit of humility he went to God on their behalf. The method God chose to use save them was a type of the salvation that was to come in the age of the church. He raised up a brazen shaken on a pole and all who looked upon it were saved from death.

Speaking of his death by crucifixion Christ compared his being lifted up on the cross as a way to provide salvation for the sins of men.

In John 12 Jesus, knowing what lay ahead made reference to being "lifted up" referring to the crucifixion on the cross. He made it clear to his disciples that his

crucifixion would lift up the kingdom of God for the world to see and once revealed it would draw men of every persuasion, race, creed and color unto the father.

When that message and fact is presented to the world with a practical application for the lives of men and women everywhere, Jesus said "I'll draw all men unto me."

Sin, forgiveness and the cross therefore are the center pieces of church's mission. We must reach out to the masses with the cross of Jesus offering salvation to the world.

Reaching the Masses

Reaching the unreached is as much a problem today as it was in biblical times. In both cases the problem is how to get the attention of the masses. After Moses set up the brazen serpent he still had to get the people to look at it to be saved.

Today, how can we reach the unreached? We must confront sin and offer salvation in the places where the masses congregate and network. Increasingly those places are not the church itself but social networks that are on the Internet. Millions of the unsaved gather daily for hours at a time on Face book and other sites. Millions gather on twitter and similar connections as well. Yet, too few churches and even fewer pastors take advantage of these captive audiences to denounce sin and to lift Jesus up. Many churches have no websites and too many pastors have not embraced the newest and most effective ways to lift Jesus up.

The old moaner's bench approach to evangelism will not reach the masses; the church must use radio, television, the Internet, podcasts, video conferences, one call systems along with everything else that is available to lift Jesus.

All Moses was asked to do was to lift up the brazen serpent; God took care of the rest. Similarly, Christ only asks us to lift him up, He will do the drawing himself.
Dealing with the snakes

The snakes in the wilderness were venomous. They also cause problems for believers today. The presence of sin in our lives operates much like the snakes we often see.

BOA CONSTRICTORS: Survive by throwing themselves around a prey, squeezing the life out of them and then swallowing them whole. Likewise some sins are dangerous not because of their bite but by virtue of the way they throw themselves around us and, play up to us. Once they have us completely wrapped us up, they swallow us whole.

RATTLESNAKES: Are deadly and poisonous. They usually make a great noise before they strike. Each year that a rattler lives adds another rattle to its tail. The louder the rattle, the more cunning and dangerous is the rattler. Likewise, there are sins that openly attack us prompting actions filled with hate, envy and jealousy. They've been around a long time, they have
destroyed many. You should be careful because they will attack you whether you are leaving them or approaching them.

EXPECT A SNAKE TO ACT LIKE A SNAKE as long as it's a snake. We should

not expect the snake to act differently from its nature. A woman found a snake frozen in the cold and brought it in her home and warmed it and fed it until it returned to life. One day she held the snake to her bosom to caress it and the snake bit her. She asked him: "Why did you bite me after all I did for you?" and the snake replied, "You knew I was a snake when you took me in, so why are you upset because I do the things that snakes do."

If we embrace sin, no matter harmless it seems at the moment, it will eventually do what sin does: destroy and kill.

Has sin caused you to lose a little something? Have you drifted away from the faith? Have you lost confidence in yourself and taken a dim view of your fellow man? If so then you are suffering from snake bite. If you are already suffering from snake bite, MUST call the doctor!

I know a doctor who can:

— heal wounds caused by snake bites!

— remove poisonous venom and give new life!

— rebuild lives, shattered by the effects of sin!

— free us from the shackles of sin.

His name is Jesus and we must lift Him up!

Lifting Jesus up!

We say that we must lift Jesus up, but how? What the areas in which we need to lift up the principles of Christianity in hopes of saving lives and dying souls?

JESUS MUST BE LIFTED UP TO OUR FAMILIES: The Black family needs the church more than ever. The church must challenge the culture and forces that have hurt the black family and community, including those who "demean, degrade and belittle our mothers and daughters. To do this the church must partner with others to provide senior citizen housing, charter schools, mental health clinics, opportunities for first-time home-buyers, even restaurants to train people for work. Such action puts the word of God into concrete forms that people can see and helps families survive and thrive. Jesus says, when He is lifted up, He'll draw all men unto himself.

JESUS MUST BE LIFTED UP TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST HOPE: There are many men and women today, who are throwing up their hands in defeat, resolved that they are in a lost cause. The defeated need the church. The defeated need to know that God is able to respond to their needs. When they feel that God does not know or care about their situation they lose hope.

Parents who have talked to and chastised wayward children with little or no visible effect have dropped their heads and dismissed them as reluctant lost causes. They need the church.

Many marriages have ended in the divorce courts because husbands and wives, frustrated with the presence of uncomfortable symptoms, have thrown up their hands in defeat. They have dismissed their sacred vows as a lost cause.

Many men and women who have been living on the wrong side of the right track

take a low opinion of themselves and think because they are not, did not, and could not, that they cannot, will not and should not be anything less than a failure and have dismissed themselves as lost causes. That's why we need to lift Jesus up. When we lift Jesus up we let the world know that there is no reason to lose hope because God is still on the throne.

Reach out to lift Jesus up!

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church must go into the world and bring the message of God's grace in both precept and example. The emphasis here is on MUST. It is absolutely necessary for the church to lift Jesus up!

There are many churches today that are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. In each case they are attempting to reach into the world in the name of Jesus.

Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes.

Outreach is essential to kingdom building. We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus. Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes. When we help others it must come from the heart.

The church must show and tell the world that God cares; thus, we are compelled to go into the entire world.

Israel in the wilderness tried to live outside of God for a while and he punished them with a plague of snakes that bit them and they became deathly sick.

But Moses set up a brazen serpent, at the command of God, and any man that would look up at the brazen snake could be healed.

But I hear Jesus saying that just as Moses told Israel that it could be healed from snakebites by lifting up their eyes to look upon the brazen serpent, so can men today be saved from sin if they would look to Jesus.

I hear Jesus saying, "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The cross has drawing power because it offers the hope of Salvation.

The higher the cross is lifted the more men are drawn.

So, men women of God, assembled from across this great district, let's lift Jesus up, so the world can receive the gospel message of hope.

We must lift Jesus up and with Him the good news of salvation.

We must lift Jesus up with the gospel message of compassion and concern.

We must lift Jesus up knowing that if we lift Him up He will draw all men to Himself.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change lives.

We must go into the world so that it will know that the power of God can change communities and nations!

I hear the words of the song writer who said, "How to reach the masses, men of every birth, For an answer, Jesus gave the key: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto Me."

Lift Him up, lift Him up; Still He speaks from eternity: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto me."

We must lift Him up because He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

We must lift Him up because He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

We must lift him up because He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!
They called him Jesus; he made a world of difference!

Before he left he told his disciples to stay ready because "I'm going to create another world! "That where I am ye may be also!"

In that world, every day will be Sunday and the Sabbath will have no end!
In that world, it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

In that world, hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the song writer declares, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"
In that world we'll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning.

Until he comes back again..
Lift him up!
Lift him up!
Lift him up!

No. 9520- Youth

A Text that only love understands

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 27, 2011

SCRIPTURE: This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. John 8:6-8

Introduction

Have you ever tried to read a message but could not understand what was written? It's that way with some handwriting; only those familiar with the writer can figure it out. Penmanship was once a prerequisite in school and was looked upon as the mark of intelligent man or woman. Today, cursive writing isn't emphasized other than the basics since computers have become so predominate.

Even among computer users the emphasis has changed. There is very little emphasis on learning the keyboard on a typewriter to get speed and avoid mistakes because all computers allow for quick back spacing if a word is mistyped and instant identification of misspelled words. Many users, including children can input data very quickly without actually mastering the keyboard.

The emphasis today is on speed. Spelling is not as significant as getting the right thought across. That makes it possible for a whole new way of communicating to develop, called texting. The idea began in 1993. It was called SMS or Short Message Service. It didn't catch on until 2001-2004 with the mass use of cell phones.

A text message usually carries about 140 characters. It's short and to the point. A generation of youth latched onto the new communication method they could use on their cell phones and texting was born, complete with its own language. Since messages must be short, those who text have developed their own shortcuts to say longer phrases in as few characters as possible.

Today, text messaging is the way many people communicate. Yet it has a typology that is unique to those who understand it.

"Lol" means Laugh out loud.

"BC" means because.

"BRB" means "Be right back."

"OMG" means "Oh my God!"

It doesn't take much space to say, "I love you," ILU

When God was angry with the world he destroyed it with a flood. When He was angry with Sodom and Gomorrah for sexual sins, he destroyed it by fire. When God decided he would no longer destroy the world with floods, he sent a rainbow.

When God wanted to show His love for the world He sent a five letter text message to the world in the person of His son..Jesus.

Jesus was a living text message from heaven. His name said it all.

If world needed healing, Jesus!

If the world needed a mediator between God and man, Jesus!

If the world needed a savior and sacrificial lamb for its salvation, Jesus!

The international distress signal is S.O.S when the world is in trouble, but the international response is J.E.S.U.S.

Jesus was heaven's answer to man's problems. The answer could be summed up in one name "Jesus"

As Christians, we may not know all of the syntax of the modern SMS system, but we are excited to know the name of Jesus. It's the sweetest name we know!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he writes a message on the ground. It was a message that only love could understand.

His accusers sought an opportunity to trick him and brought before him a woman that was caught in adultery. What shall we do with her? That was the question. The Mosaic Law required death for a man and a woman caught in adultery and the religious leaders hoped to catch Jesus in a self incriminating circumstance. If He said she should be put to death He would be exercising an authority only given to the Roman government and would be turned in as treasonous. On the other hand if He said she should not be stoned He would contradict the laws of Moses. Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground and then responded "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." Convicted in their own minds they left one by one without throwing a single stone.

No one knows exactly what Jesus wrote on the ground. It has been the subject of many books, articles, and research papers. What He wrote has never been revealed, but that has not stopped the speculation about its content.

Among the many ideas is the one that says since Jesus was a rabbi that He may have written in a shorthand used by rabbis called Kesher. Kesher was a special shortcut that allowed the rabbis to write just a word or two that instantly referred to a passage of the law. It's what we would call texting. If that was the case then Jesus might have scribbled the reference to Deuteronomy 17 which required witnesses to a crime to cast the first stone to kill a person accused of a crime. Since his command that the persons without sin should cast the first stone referred to this passage there are many who believe what he wrote on the ground may have pointed to this passage.

No one understands the message that was written, but everyone understood the final result. The love of God was shown when Jesus told the sinful woman to go and send no more.

That was a message not written in the punishing tone of the Old Testament, it was a message that only love understands.

God's message

God sent his message to the world in many different ways. Sometimes He has sent prophets to speak his words before the people or before the leaders of the land. Once he left a message in the rainbow. When Balaam refused to see his angel he even had made a donkey talk. However, the method he used most frequently was his written word, the Holy Bible. Despite the fact that we know our bibles have a message from God often we don't read them or take them seriously; our cell phones are treated more importantly.

An anonymous internet post posed a series of questions about the priorities we place on our cell phones as compared to our bibles:

What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?

What if we flipped through it several times a day?

What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?

What if we used it to receive messages from the text?

What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?

What if we gave it to Kids as gifts?

What if we used it when we traveled?

What if we used it in case of emergency?

However, unlike our cell phone, we don't have to worry about our Bible being disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill.

Message of Love

While the world does not know what Jesus scribbled on the ground, it is sure that it must have meant love because the whole ministry of Jesus was about love. It is a recurring theme throughout the bible.

In Genesis we see God's love for the world restored after the flood with the rainbow in the sky.

After 400 years of slavery God showed his love for Israel by freeing them from slavery and carrying them to the Promised Land.

He showed His love through the example Hosea marrying a wife of whoredom to show the world what real love was about. Even though she cheated he was willing to restore her again.

The message about real love made it clear to us that:

Real love is not in the physical attraction but a product of a godliness.

Real love is the kind that the woman about to be stoned encountered. It is often

not understood.

Only a person who loves and has been loved understands the language of love. The woman was about to be stoned, not being a rabbi, probably could not read the writing on the ground, but she understood when the ordeal ended that she had been forgiven for her sins. She could not read the writing, but she knew it meant forgiveness and another chance.

This man named Jesus, wrote her a love note on the ground. Her eyes could not interpret the letters, but her heart knew what they meant; she had been given another chance.

God's love

Finally, brothers and sisters we should note that when God decided to send us His message of love He did not take a shortcut, He sent His son Jesus.

The decision to send the world a message that would be meaningful and sufficient has been lost on those who do not understand God's way. They failed to understand how one man dying could bring salvation to all; but love understands.

They fail to understand how one man's touch can heal the sick; but love understands.

We can only imagine what God must of have thought when He decided upon his ultimate message to the world that would demonstrate his love.

I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!

I could give them the moon, but after awhile, the moon would cease to shine!

I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for short and then comes the fall!

I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!

I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life! But there will come a time when storms will rise!

I want to give them a message that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

What did God decide to give? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!

Jesus was the Son of God in the flesh. John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

He gave the world His only son!

He was wounded for our transgressions

He was bruised for our iniquities!

They whipped Him and tried Him all night long

They put a crown of thorns on His head!

They hung him up high and stretched him out wide!

No. 9521-Men & Women's Day

You ain't the only one

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2011

SCRIPTURE: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. Matthew 9:21; "And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Matthew 14: 35-36

Introduction

Have you heard the old song, "It's me, it's me o' Lord, standing in the need of prayer?" It's an old song that has been stripped from the pages of our cultural experience expressing our need for God to respond to our special situation. The idea is that while mama and papa, sister and brother stand in the need of prayer; we do, too. They are not the only ones.

The old slave song made the point clearly: we all need the touch of God's divine hand in our lives. Those old songs had a way of underscoring great truths although the English language may have been massacred in the process. The heavy use of contractions and passive voice were unique to the old way.

"Ain't" is one those terms from our experience that seems to say whatever we need it to say. In once instance it means "do not have" such as "ain't got long to stay here." In another instance it means "Is not" as in the song, "Ain'ta that good news." It also means "am not" as in "I ain't gon' study war no more." It also means "are not" as in "You ain't the only one."

The hand of God is awesome and widespread. It touches everyone: rich and poor, black and white, male and female because everyone, even if they don't know it yet, needs a touch of God's goodness upon their lives.

As Christians, we all want to feel the power of God. While each of us has needs we do not have exclusive rights to God's grace, because "We ain't the only ones" who need to be touched by the hand of God.

Exposition

These two texts focus on two incidents in the ministry of Jesus in which He touched the lives a woman and then many who were brought to Him by men.

Matthew 9 focuses on an incident in the life of Christ in which a sick woman was healed by exercising her faith.The incident tells of a time in which Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people as He passed, only to be touched by a single woman who received a healing blessing as a result.

The woman had an "issue of blood." That's another way of saying she had a hemorrhage of some kind. Her condition had existed for 12 years despite the fact that she had consulted all of the best physicians of her time. No one was able to cure her disease. The woman heard that a healer from God was in their midst. She made up her mind to take her condition to the Son of God. Defying all of the laws, she made her way through the crowd, no doubt touching many people as she forged through. She felt she probably wouldn't be able to get a personal interview with Him, but concluded in her mind that if she could simply touch the hem of His garment that she would receive the same blessing. After all, God's healing power certainly would not be limited by such a small thing as a personal interview.

When the woman touched Jesus' garment, He immediately felt something. With hundreds of people around Him, obviously pushing and shoving out of curiosity, He was able to "feel" the prayerful touch of a woman who had been sick for many years. He felt power going out of Him. He sensed that someone had just been healed.

When it became known that someone had been healed by the master, the woman told her story to the amazement of the crowd. Jesus responded to her by saying that her faith had made her whole.

While Matthew 9 deals with one woman who need to touch Jesus, Matthew 14 tells what happened when the news that a woman was healed by touching the hem of His garment. The passage reveals that a group of men, when they came to the knowledge of Jesus, sought to bring as many people as they could to also touch the hem of His garment. True to form, all those who touched His garment in faith were healed as well.

The woman wasn't the only one, but men too learned that all are welcomed into the healing presence of the savior.

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The woman touched

The woman with the issue touched the hem of Jesus' garment. It wasn't the garment that provided her instant healing, but her faith.

There is something amazing that happens when our faith touches the soul of the savior; the power of God flows. This woman touched Jesus' garment and felt His power, but on the morning of the resurrection there were other women who had been touched by the power of God.

Several women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the Mother of James came to the tomb and found that the body of Jesus was missing. An angel told them He is not here, but is risen. When they realized that the savior had risen they had to run and tell the disciples.

He had touched their lives and they could not contained themselves.

The women gave a testimony of their experience..

Even today, those who have been touched by the hand of God perform a mighty work when they share what God has done in their lives with others.

The woman in Matthew had been healed. The women on the resurrection morning had been inspired.

They needed to touch and be touched!

Maybe that's what the Angelic Gospel Singers had in mind when they wrote their popular song, "Touch me Lord Jesus"

Touch, touch me Lord Jesus
With Thy hand of mercy
Make each throbbing heartbeat
Feel Thy power divine
Take my will forever
I will doubt Thee never
Oh, cleanse, cleanse me dear Saviour
Make me wholly Thine

The women needed to touch and be touched so they could benefit from God's power.

The women needed to touch and be touched so they glorify God in all of His majesty!

The women needed to touch and be touched so they be whole in the presence of God.

The men needed a touch too!

Matthew 14 makes special note that the men of the area acknowledged the woman's faith and when they came into the knowledge of God they brought others to Jesus.

The action of the men almost echoed the text subject, "You ain't the only one needing a touch." There were hundreds of others who needed a touch as well. Inspired by the action of the woman, the men brought others who had issues to Jesus.

The text notes that as many as touched were made whole. Whether they touched Jesus, his garment or whether he touched them, we don't know, but we are sure that as many as touched were made whole.

Just as the women wanted to be touched the men wanted to touch and be touched as well.

Everyone who is touched has a testimony to give, like the woman at the well who said, "Come see a man, who told me all I've ever done!"

But the woman at the well wasn't the only one who needed a touch, a blind man was asked to tell his story of how he was touched, all he said is "I was once blind, but now I see."

Women ain't the only one's with a testimony, men have a story to tell as well.

Each time we testify, we say like the songwriter, He touched me, he touched me.

And oh the joy that floods my soul.

Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole.

Everyone with an issue needs a touch

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that everyone who has an issue in life needs a touch.

The men brought people from all around. The types of problems that they had were not enumerated, but one thing is for certain; they all had one issue or another.

The good thing about this text is that it said, all who were touched were made whole.

Are you dealing with an issue in your life? Push your way through the crowd and give it to Jesus!

Don't say in your mind, "I am insignificant!" or "He doesn't know who I am!"

Don't say in your mind, "I haven't been as faithful as I should have been!"

Don't say in your mind, "I can't get to him because there are others closer to him!"

Push your way through the crowd and say, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole"

If you think you are all alone with your own personal issues, pleased be advised that you ain't the only one who needs a touch!

If you are dealing with:

FAILURE, you need a touch, and He can turn failure into success;

SADNESS, you need a touch, and He can turn sadness into gladness;

SICKNESS,you need a touch, and He can turn it into good health!

BURDENS, you need a touch, and He can take your burdens and make them light!

DEFEAT, you need a touch, and He can take your defeat and turn it into victory!

BLOSSES, you need a touch, and He can take your losses and turn them into gains!

HEARTACHES, you need a touch, I know a God who specializes in mending broken hearts!

TROUBLE MARRIAGE, you need a touch, I know a God who can turn your old lady into the first lady, who can turn your old man into the King of the Castle!

If you need a savior, you ain't the only one, millions have found Him and you can too!

Push your way through the crowd; reach out and touch the hem of His garment and His blood shall make you whole!

His name is Jesus

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

If you are standing in the need of a blessing, you won't be by yourself! You ain't the only one!

No. 9522-Inspiration

The Second Time Around

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 25, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. Matthew 12:43-45 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. 2 Thessalonians 1:10

Introduction

If you could live a portion of your life over again would things be different? If you could roll back the years and relive certain periods of your life would you do everything the same way? If you could go back in time and take what you know now with you, would you be a stronger, wiser, more fulfilled person than you are today? We often say," If I only knew then what I know now what a difference things would be." We probably would've studied more in school. We probably would not have quit that job. We might have turned down that night of romance. Things might have been tremendously different if we knew then what we know now.

We have read many books and seen many movies about people who attempted to go back in time and correct what they thought were major errors of the past. Books about time travel and movies such as back to the future titillate our fantasies as we wonder what could happen if one thing from our past could be adjusted just a little. If there were no Hitler or Mussolini or Saddam Hussein perhaps the world as we know it today would be different. If there had been no Osama bin Laden the world would not live on the edge of terror as it does today. Certainly the world would be different, but there is no guarantee that it would be better.

If given a second chance many of us would not make the same mistakes we made before. If given a second chance we would approach life differently and embrace all of its moments more sacredly than we did at the first. There are even some who agree with the late Luther Vandross when he said these words in his hit song, "The Second Time Around:

It's such a silly thing
For you to say
That you don't want love around

Don't you know that ...
Love will be better (Yeah), better than ever (Oooh Yeah)
The second time (Around), around
Ooo Yeah
Love will be better (Yeah), better than ever (Oooh Yeah)
The second time (Around)

If you leave the devil and go back, what do you think life would be like the second time around? If you begin a life in the church, start to study your Bible, begin to worship regularly, and begin the walk a life of faith; what would that life be if you suddenly stopped and returned to the life you left? Would the devil welcome you with arms wide open? Would all be forgiven? Would the misery you once knew be restored?

What about God? Is the life of a person who has returned to God better or worse because of the decision? Will God turn you around, or punish you for having left in the first place?

What we know about God has taught us that God is a merciful God who forgives our past transgressions and gives us a chance to a brand-new life more abundant than we have ever known before.

As Christians, we are the recipients of God's amazing grace. We are living new lives in Christ. We are living examples that, with Christ, life is truly better the second time around.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus as he explains what happens to those who reject God the second time around.

Throughout his ministry Jesus had been the subject of attack and ridicule by the scribes and Pharisees. They characterized his ministry as one that came from the devil himself. They questioned his claim to be the son of God. They sought to discredit him in the eyesight of the people by constantly asking him to give more details about the kingdom of God. In this passage they approach him again asking him to give them aside that would prove that he was truly the son of God.

Answering his critics Jesus said that he would only give them one sign and that would be the sign of the prophet Jonas. At verse 40 he begins to describe how Jonas was commissioned to go to the people of Nineveh and tell them to repent. Their chance at revival only came after Jonas went through three days and nights in the belly of the fish. After that, Jonas went to Nineveh and preached repentance to a rebellious nation. The people heard him and they turn from their wicked ways. Their lives were saved and they were given brand-new starts to help them to know God better the second time around.

In making this comparison Jesus compared Himself to Jonas in that like Jonas He would be in the grave three days and three nights and the resulting message of salvation that the people would hear would give them an opportunity for life more abundantly the second time around.

In contrast Jesus gave a second example. This time he told of a man who had been swept clear of a demon. He noted that when the evil spirit left he roam the land and desert places in a non-restful state. When he could find no place else to dwell the evil spirit decided to return to his old stomping ground. Upon his return he found the house to be swept and cleaned but unoccupied, so he decided to return and take up residence, but he did not return alone; he brought seven other spirits with him that were more evil than himself. Jesus said the state of this man the second time around was worse than his beginning.

Jesus used this illustration to point out to the scribes and Pharisees the fallacy of their thinking that their rituals and ceremonies led men to righteousness. The people appeared to be righteous for a while but they were not filled with anything; they had only emptiness, if they were not filled with the abundant life teachings of Christ. This emptiness would lead ultimately to a greater fall than the first.

Life without Jesus would be terrible the second time around.

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 gave of this the picture of life with Jesus when he returns to establish His kingdom on earth. The second time around He will triumph over Satan completely. The second time around He will be received by believers in glory. The second time around He will begin eternity, abolish death, pain and sickness. The second time around we will have life without Satan and it will truly be more abundant.

The First Time Around

The example that Jesus gave allowed us to see the second time around of the man whose life had been filled with demons. What about our lives? What did our lives look like the first time around?

WE WERE FILLED WITH SIN: Our lives before Christ were nothing to brag about. If we are truthful many of us could confess that our lives were filled with many unmentionables that are far from the lives we live today. There are some of us who were drunkards, drug addicts, thieves, prostitutes, and a plethora of other sinful types that are described in 1 Corinthians 6:11 when it says: “but such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, in the blood of the lamb.” Indicative of our lives was a virtual maze of bad choices, sinful living and rejection of God. In our youth we felt invulnerable to the power of God as we tasted the brew prepared for us by a sinful world. In our professional lives we absorbed ourselves in the pursuit of worldly gains mostly by sacrificing our worship and service to God. We found ourselves increasingly seeking the whole world but losing our souls. We became wretched creatures, spiritually tormented between what we knew we should be doing which was a stark contrast to what we were actually doing. Like David we reached a point in our lives when we said, “Create in me a clean heart O God and restore unto me a right spirit.”

WE REFORMED OURSELVES BUT WE DIDN’T REPENT: When we considered our position many of us decided that it was time for us to reform ourselves. We

made some very serious resolutions about our lives. We decided to stop some things. We decided to alter some of the things. And we also decided to go in a different direction. Like the man in Christ example we swept our houses clean. We swept out the whiskey bottles. We swept out the drugs. We swept out the promiscuous activity. We even changed directions when it came to our merciless pursuit of profit and gain. The demon of sin left us as we lived very clean lives. Yet despite our house cleaning there were still residues of what we once were. The old carnal man was still there. The residues of the street life, that urge for whore mongering, gambling and that mean and revengeful life was still present in one form or another. We swept away the actions, but the urges were still there.

The devils that once haunted us came back on occasion and peeked in our windows and they found that while we had reformed we had not repented. Our house was clean, but we had not filled it with the one thing that could keep the devils away and that was a life filled with the spirit of Almighty God.

We tried to kick the world cold Turkey. We revamped our selves, but we were not new creatures. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, all things are become new." There was no prayer life, Bible study regimen, regular worship or passionate service that took the place of what we swept away; the devil saw our empty state and returned with a vengeance the second time around.

SIN PAYS YOU BACK WHEN YOU COME BACK: There are many who can testify that once you leave the street life and then returned to it sin has a way of paying your back when you come back. It is like the person who stopped smoking for years and then finally took that for smoke; that's when the pack grab them back. It is like the alcoholic who takes that first drink after being off the wagon for such a long time. Jesus said when the demon saw that the house was empty that he returned and brought seven other demons with him making the man's final condition worse than his first.

Those who have attempted to change their lives must remember that the devil has never taken his eyes off of you. Scripture says that the devil goes to and fro like a roaring lion looking for an opportunity to devour you. Once you sample the forbidden fruit in the words of Al Green one more time, "for the good times," the devil latches on and will cause you considerable problems in payment for leaving him in the first place.

The only real solution is to keep your mind focused on the right track so that you never go back. That's when the words of the song become meaningful to you, "I have decided to follow Jesus no turning back, no turning back."

The Second Time

Finally brothers and sisters we must consider that while the devil pays you back when you come back, our Savior still offers you a crown the second time around.

If we tell the truth we will have to admit that God has not failed us, we have failed

God. We should take consolation in knowing that we serve a God who is forgiving by nature and will always offer the truly repentant a second chance.

We want a chance to make it right with God and if we could do it right this time things would be better the second time around.

We don't want to simply reform ourselves; we want to give ourselves totally and completely to the Lord and put ourselves in His hands.

We are not by ourselves when we confess that we didn't do it right the first time, but there is an army of believers that can testify that life was better the second time around.

The first time around, Jonah ignored the will of God and tried to go in another direction. However after spending three days and three nights in the belly of the whale he told the Lord if you'll give me another chance I'll do it right the second time around.

The first time around, Samson was hard headed and did not observe his Nazirite's vow. He flirted with ungodly women and costume both a strength and his sight. However in a Philistine dungeon he cried out to the Lord if you just give me one final chance I'll do it right the second time around.

The first time around, Hosea's wife cheated on him repeatedly even though he expressed love for her on every hand. Though she ridiculed him, left him and ran after other men, Hosea found her in her despair and brought her home proving that with true love it can be better the second time around.

The first time around we were not altogether faithful to God.

The first time around we came to church but the church was never in us.

The first time around we gave an offering but it was far from what it should have been.

The first time around we sang a song but we didn't live the life we sing about in the song.

The first time around we showed our face and worship but we never turned out face to the Lord.

Then one day we stop to think about and realized how much we have misplaced our priorities.

When we were in danger God protected us.

When we were weak God strengthened us.

When we were discouraged God inspired us.

When we were burdened God lightened our load.

When we would helpless God helped us to help ourselves.

That's when we say it lauded you give me another chance I'll do it better the second time around.

The second time around I'll praise you because:

You've given me an everlasting hope;

You lifted me out of the miry Clay;

You have comforted me in my sorrows;

You have healed me in my sickness;

You have protected me in times of danger;
You have corrected me when I strayed;
You have sanctified me through your blood!
The second time around, I'll lift you up everyday because
Out on Calvary you died for me!
I'm glad that it didn't end there because Early Sunday morning you arose from the grave!
And you are coming back again, to set things in order!
The second time around, the wicked will cease from troubling!
The second time around, the weary will be at rest!
I don't know about you but I want to be in that number when Jesus comes to rule this old world...
The second time around!

No. 9523-Revival

"Get Ur Done!"

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2, 2011

SCRIPTURE: Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."-Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Introduction

Have you ever planned to do something, then put it off until another date? When that day came did you put it off again? Are there several things on your to-do list that still remained undone? Are some of those things plans that have been lingering for quite a long time? If so then welcome to the world of procrastinators; those people who are very good planners, but find it difficult to actually do the things they plan to do.

By nature, a procrastinator is a person who always delays during the necessary until it is absolutely unavoidable. These are the last minute people, those who struggle to make deadlines, but often fail to get it done on time or at all. The procrastinator never gets around to fixing the leaking pipe, repairing the roof, filing the necessary paperwork, beginning the diet, getting the appointment, saving the money, or doing anything else that must be done.

There are many kinds of procrastinators. Preachers, deacons, choir members, the young and even the old make up the ranks of the procrastinators. Many have trouble making up their minds to do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, the way it needs to be done.

One of the famous punch lines of Larry the cable Guy a nationally popular self-proclaimed redneck comedian is "get ur Done." Of course the emphasis of this line of comedy is completing that which is started.

The sales manager of a large real estate firm was interviewing an applicant for a sales job. "Why have you chosen this career?" he asked.

"I dream of making a million dollars in real estate, like my father," the young man replied.

"Your father made a million dollars in real estate?" asked the impressed sales manager.

"No," replied the young man. "but he always dreamed of it."

Many are dreaming, but their dreams never take form because they never take

action. In the New Testament of the Bible there is a book that has a title that every procrastinator should observe: it is not called the dreams of the apostles or the plans of the apostles but the emphasis is the Acts of the Apostles. It records things that were done.

As Christians, it is important that we be about the business of kingdom building. Talk is cheap but when it comes to advancing the kingdom of the Savior it is incumbent upon all of us to "Get ur Done."

Exposition

This text focuses upon Solomon as he gives observations about life and our need to use each day for fruitful purposes.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a summary of the wisdom of King Solomon as he reviewed life and the men and women who meander through it each and every day. His conclusions were recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes as a guide to those who would come after him and profit from the wisdom of his evaluation.

In this chapter Solomon observed that there is a certain time frame in which things must be done. In chapter three he noted that there was a time for everything under the sun. He listed off various examples including: a time to be born and a time to die, a time for war and a time for peace and other observations. In this chapter he underscores the urgency of the moment noting that each person only has a certain allotted time for this life after which nothing can be done.

In the first ten verses of this chapter he observes that the limits of each person is defined by the length of time that God has given them on this Earth. Once that time has come nothing else can be done. Once our allotted time frame has expired there can be no accomplishments or enjoyments in this world. Since that is the case Solomon concludes that each person should do that which is divinely assigned to them, and do it quickly reported around time. He points to running out of time as approaching your grave.

This text encourages every believer too busy himself doing that which God has assigned him to do with enthusiasm, energy, and vigor. We all encourage to "Get ur Done."

What needs to be done?

Solomon spoke across the centuries and urge each individual to look around them and take a mental survey of what needs to be done then do it. Jesus speaking to his disciples encourage them to "work while it is day for when the night comes no man can work." Considering that we are urged to become activists rather than conversation-alists we might consider the following:

DO WHAT YOUR HANDS KNOW HOW TO DO: With respect to the work that is before you, we should answer the question about what to get done by beginning with those things that we already know how to do. We could engage in lengthy discussions about missionary work on foreign shores, feeding hungry children in Africa or assisting the distress in a faraway place, but that would be frustrating because our arms can't reach that far. At best, we can send contributions or missionary representatives, but

for the most part it is out of reach. However, there are some things we can do that are within our reach. We can fight poverty in our own neighborhoods, we can have a child find his way, we can server meal to a hungry person, we can speak for an injured person who cannot speak for himself. We can let God use us in our own neighborhoods touching the distressed, the lonely and the needy.

The text encourages us to do whatsoever our hands find to do. The implication is that we should do that which we know how to do. The cook can cook for others. The mechanic can provide mechanical services for others. The doctor can provide medical advice and assistance to those who otherwise would not receive it. The teacher can assist those struggling with course work. And those with the gift of healing hands can sit with the sick, visit the shut-ins, and touched the world around them every day. We are not called upon to go beyond our abilities, but we are required to do whatsoever our hands can do. We will be held accountable for our failure to give back to others as God has blessed us.

ATTACK THE REASONS THAT WE PROCRASTINATE: If we know that God has commanded us to help build the kingdom of God yet many of us are receiving but we have been to members in the kingdom we must analyze why we procrastinate. There are six reasons that we failed to "get ur Done."

-Things that look too big we put them off. Whether it's the church, the community or a professional assignment, we tend to put things off if they appear to be large, cumbersome, and time-consuming. Those who have succeeded in this area have learned to break large tasks into small tasks and attack the small ones one by one. Those who are unable to do this usually procrastinate.

-We procrastinate about doing unpleasant things. Those things which would require pain, discomfort or increased stress we tend to put off. Those who have succeeded have learned to give themselves small rewards when an unpleasant task has been done. Youth will spend a day cleaning debris from the streets if they reward themselves with a pizza party afterwards. Perhaps every unpleasant duty that has to be done should be followed by a more pleasant reward reducing the tendency toward procrastination.

-Those who cannot prioritize usually procrastinate. Priorities suggest putting first things first or making the main thing the main thing. Many people have difficulties listing what needs to be done and placing the most important things at the top of the list, therefore they usually run out of time when it comes to things that I important because they did less important things first. They committed to a service at a church which was a high priority, but the service contradicted with their favorite television program which was a low priority. The inability to do first things first causes many people to procrastinate and become distracted.

-Fear of failure causes many others to procrastinate. Many do not tackle a task because they're afraid if they do they may fail. When America faced the prospect of World War II president Roosevelt reminded the country that the only thing it had to fear was fear itself. Many fear the rejection of others if their actions fail. However, when God has given us a work to do we should plan it, and carry it out seeking only

his approval and not that of men.

WE SHOULD WORK WITH ALL OF OUR MIGHT: There are many people who begin a service for the Lord, but they do so with half their heart and not with all of their might. Solomon encouraged us to do what it is that we have to do with all of our might. There are many people today who have a show your face toward their service. They join the church and a handful of organizations whose activities, times and goals often conflict. Those individuals find themselves showing their faces in some circles but not serving with all of that might. All of your might implies all of your talent, all of your ability, all of your time, and all of your strength. When we give the Lord our service with all of our might the devil would not be able to stand the great work that we would be able to do. As it stands, many churches are filled with members who show their faces occasionally but have not committed themselves to serve the Lord with all of their might. Samson was a strong man who did a great work for the Lord but it wasn't until he served him with all of his might that he brought his greatest victory. Pastor, are you serving the Lord with all your might? Deacons are you serving the Lord with all your might with all the time and talent that you have available? Ushers, teaches, and members in the pew, is your present service the best that you could possibly do? Are you serving the Lord with all your might? Solomon reminded us that there's only a certain amount of time that each of us has, and during that available time we must "Get ur Done."

Salvation, Jesus got it done

Finally brothers and sisters, I'm glad to know that when the world needed salvation Jesus did not put it off, but he got it done.

When Solomon finished his analysis of the needs of the kingdom and the temptations that man can faced he summarized his findings by saying, "let us hear the conclusion of the matter, dear God and keep his Commandments for that is the whole duty of man."

Whatever God needs us to do we should be willing to do, making service to the kingdom our number one priority. We should do this remembering what he told us in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you."

Therefore we should keep the words of Galatians 6:9 in our hearts, "and let us not grow weary while doing good for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

When we look for an example of the kind of commitment necessary to build the kingdom we can't look to mortal man because he is flawed and will make errors. We can't look at the pastor, neither can we pattern after the deacons, Sunday school superintendent or members of the usher board. If we want to know how to get it done we have to watch the one who came down here from heaven to show us the way.

When the world suffered from a lack of direction, sin stained lives, and moral corruption, God needed somebody who would come to the earth and show men the way.

In the fullness of time God scanned the roll of His saintly warriors and asked the is there any among you who can get it done?

Is there anybody among the prophets willing to die for the sins of mankind? Who will get it done? Whom shall I send?

In the fullness of time God searched the staff files of heaven and looked for someone to get it done, but every man every name that popped up was in adequate because they had their own problems, distractions and woes

-David can you get it done? No I have blood on his hands!

-Samson, can you get it done? No have a woman problem!

-Hosea, can you get it done? No I have a cheating wife

-Esau, can you get it done? No I have a crooked brother who may cause a problem!

-Balaam, can you get it done? No I have a pocket full of bribery money

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Send me and I'll get it done!

Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

Send me and I'll tell them that 'blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.

Send me and I'll do more than tell them, I'll show them how much God loves the world!

He did not procrastinate, He came down through 42 generations.

When the time was right, He was born down in Bethlehem!

He healed the sick and raised the dead!

He fed thousands and made the blind see!

When the time was right, He picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill

Hanging on the cross I heard him tell His father, Father, It's done! It is finished! and he dropped His head and died

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

No. 9524-Anniv. - Pastor

Standing Upon My Watch

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2011

SCRIPTURE: Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Ephesians 6:11-12; "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Habakkuk 2:1

Introduction

How would you like to stand in front of a hostile and unappreciative audience and tell them things that they did not want to know? How would you like to speak against an evil that many found acceptable and rewarding? How would you like to face an enemy knowing that often you would be standing alone? None of us would like that situation. In fact, many of us would find that a very distasteful task. Yet, that is often the task of the local pastor as he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The pastor often has the responsibility to stand firm when he sees danger approaching and to sound the beacon of hope when the multitude is hiding in despair. It is often a lonely task because the crowds follow those who bring them the good news. Every prophet would love to have a message that is always optimistic and filled with promises of victory but the Lord doesn't always lead him that way. Sometimes there is a Goliath challenging all that which is good and he must stand alone with only his faith against the forces of evil.

There is an old saying that still remains true, "If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything." Despite the passing of years, this truth has not diminished. That is also why the pastor must stand on the word of God and bring the good news from heaven at every opportunity.

Every church should lift up the arms of its pastor and draw close to him so that he is better enabled to stand tall on the wall as he declares the word of God.

As each year passes the church celebrates the fact that God has given them a watchman who stands on the wall with courage and vision to protect them from their enemy, the devil, and to point them in the direction of heaven. It is a reason to celebrate! It is a reason to rejoice!

As Christians, we celebrate the man of God who stands on the wall. We lift him up before the Savior as an ambassador of goodwill from heaven. We ask God's blessings

for him and pray that he will have continued strength to stand his watch on the wall.

Exposition

These text shows us the importance of believers, especially ministers, standing firm with a watchful eye as the vision of God unfolds.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians encouraged them to remain committed to the struggle for Christ. In the Ephesians 6:10 he tells them to, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

Paul encouraged the Ephesians, and likewise Christians today, to put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (v.11). He warned them to remember that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual weakness in high places."

Ancient soldiers, during the crusades, often wore heavy metal armor that protected the vulnerable parts of the body. They carried heavy shields, wore blouses made of chain nail , and their hands were covered with heavy metallic gloves. Soldiers who fought without the whole armor could expect to be injured.

Paul encouraged the Ephesians to put on the whole armor of God that they may be able to stand against the devil.

The Ephesians were told to prepare themselves to withstand evil.

Stand, with their loins girded with truth.

Stand, with their feet shod with the Gospel of peace.

Stand, with the shield of faith in their hands.

Stand, with the helmet of salvation on their heads.

In a similar sense the prophet Habakkuk had a charge to stand and watch over the people of Judah.

The opening verse of Chapter 2 finds him saying "I will stand upon my watch."

As a watchman on the tower kept watch for the enemy Habakkuk said he stood his watch as well. From his vantage point he saw both trouble and salvation.

"I stand upon my watch," he declared as he mourned the trouble in the nation and waited for an answer from God.

"I stand upon my watch," he announced as he shared a glimpse into the future assuring the people that their afflictions would not be permanent.

Like Habakkuk every pastor also declares, "I stand upon my watch" to tell the people not to lose faith because would respond to their needs in the course of time, but always on time.

On My Watch

Each watchman has an enormous task that requires three essential elements:

HE MUST KNOW THE ENEMY: Every watchman must know the nature of the enemy that seeks to destroy God's people. In biblical times the enemy was always

a foreigner who was distinguishable by uniform and bodily features. Crafty enemies often found ways to drift among the people with clever disguises. The watchman must be alert for the presence of evil that is often disguised as godliness. He must work against bad feelings and troubling attitudes that slip into the congregation. He must know the enemy.

Consider two sheep dogs that were acquired to guard the sheep of a certain shepherd. The shepherd told the sheep dogs to guard the sheep with their lives because there were dangerous wolves in the hills that would destroy simple and powerless sheep. The sheep dogs went to work. One sheep dog prided himself in the fact that he could spot a wolf a mile away. He studied the ways and sounds of wolves. He felt qualified to stand guard over the sheep. The second sheep dog had heard about, but had never seen a wolf. He was new on the job and felt uneasy. While the first sheep dog laid back against the tree and watched for fanged teeth, pointed ears and cold deadly eyes, the second dog just watched the sheep. As days passed, the routine was the same; the first dog watched for wolves, the second never took his eyes off the sheep. One day the wolf decided to dress up in sheep skins and slip pass the sheep dogs. The first dog, looking for tell tale signs, missed the wolf. But the second dog immediately began to bark and growl and attacked the wolf and ran him away. Later the first dog asked: "How were you able to discover the wolf and you'd never seen one and I missed it?" The second dog answered: "You spent your time studying wolves; I spent my time studying sheep. I know how a sheep sounds, looks and moves from head to toe. I didn't know what a wolf looked like, but when I saw those big O' feet, I knew it wasn't a sheep!"

We must know the nature of the enemy, but the wise watchman can protect against invasion by specializing in knowing his sheep.

MUST STAND HIS WATCH: The prophet must conclude that if an enemy approaches he will not be welcomed on his watch. The watch is considered the period of time that a soldier is on duty. Today's pastor must conclude that sin will not be welcomed "On my watch."

Our history shows that we have lived through wars, hurricanes, tropical storms, depressions and hardships, but we have resisted the temptation to abandon our godly principles. Each time we have leaned in that direction we heard the voice of the watchman on the wall saying, "Not on my watch."

He says in words that echo across the centuries: We will not abandon the Lord, on my watch. We will not bow to cowardice and lose our faith in troubling times, not on my watch!

Standing on his watch the pastor must remind believers that that God has:

—Given us the sight for our eyes and breath for our lungs!

—Given us the sound for our ears and taste for our food!

—Given us the strength for our bodies and joy for our hearts!

—Given us forgiveness for our sins and Salvation for our souls!

He must stand firm when the enemy comes to conquer and say in the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

HE MUST PROVIDE HOPE: The watchman does not just warn when the enemy

approaches, he also sounds the alarm when the day breaks. He is among the first to see the bright and morning star and sends out a call that can be heard by everyone, "All is well."

This is important because there are many who have lost hope in themselves. They see themselves in the worst way. They feel as if they have failed miserably and are beyond repair. They have given up hope on themselves because they have wasted so many years.

The watchman reminds the people to take courage and keep their faith in God. His words of inspiration reflect those of the song writer who said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand."

Every watchman declares: "On my watch, we will never give up!"

—On my Watch, we will past the darkness of any moment and see the bright shining light!

—On my Watch, we will stand taller than our adversaries and rise victorious over our enemies!

—On my Watch, we will sing with new mean, "I have hope when trouble comes my way. I have hope since Jesus came to stay. I have hope, it's a beautiful hope that sets me free!"

Just Stand

The final admonition for the watchman when it is all said and done is to just stand.

That is the watchman's greatest challenge, to stand up for Jesus!

It may require a great sacrifice on his part but he must stand his watch!

To stand up against the devil requires an abundance of prayer and faith!

Just like the watchman must stand, every believer must take a stand for Jesus!

Each of our lives must have:

A little more Love and a little less hate!

A little more trust and a little less suspicion!

A little more faith add little less doubt!

A little more courage and a little less fear!

A little more action and a little less talk!

We must stand and we must stand together. For I hear Jesus say, a House divided against itself cannot stand.

We must stand, but we must stand with our fear. For I hear God speaking to Moses when armies of death approached from the rear and a watery grave stared them in the face..."Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord."

Though storms may rise, stand up for Jesus!

Though winds may blow, stand up for Jesus!

We must watch fight and pray. We must be ready because we don't know the day or the hour that the master will return. We, must watch because we want to be ready when he comes!

In closing, I'm reminded of the grandmother who kept a suitcase beside the front door. It didn't matter what time of year, the suitcase always sat by the door. One day her grandchildren, puzzled by the suitcase at the door which sat there year after year, asked why it always sat by the door. The grandmother pulled the children together and said "I got one daughter in California. I got a son in Chicago. I got another daughter in New York. On any given day, I expect to get a phone call that says mama I need you. When that call comes, whether its morning, noon or midnight, I going to be ready. Everything I need is in that bag; I'm going to be ready whenever the call comes!"

I don't know about you but I want to be ready when He comes!

I got my bags packed! I don't know the day or the hour, but I want to be ready!

Standing on my watch, I'll tell the story of how I got over!

Standing on my watch, I'll tell the story of forgiveness of sin!

Standing on my watch, I'll tell the story of a brand new life!

Standing on my watch, I'll tell the world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three days and nights!

I will tell them that early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hand!

As long as I'm standing on my watch, I will be ready when Jesus comes!

No. 9525-Anniv. Pastor

A Passionate Shepherd with a Clear Vision

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 2011

SCRIPTURE: For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. " Habakkuk 2:3

Introduction

Have you ever become frustrated on your journey only to be encouraged to see a road sign indicating that there are only a few miles to go? If so, then you should appreciate the role of the prophet, pastor or preacher who stands on the watch tower each Sunday as a spiritual road sign pointing the direction, and calculating how far we have go.

The passionate pastor who is anointed by God has a clear vision of the road ahead. It is a vision given to him by God.

Often when we start on a journey we prepare ourselves well. We pack sufficient clothing, provide for our meals and prepare for our lodging. We even use maps and GPS systems to precisely pinpoint our destinations; yet, there is nothing more reassuring than to see that road sign that confirms we headed right or shouts at us, "Wrong Way." The journey would be more difficult without the road sign.

The same is true for our pastors, they reassure that we are traveling in the right direction, and they also warn us when are going in the wrong direction. Without them our life journey would be more difficult and certainly less enjoyable.

As Christians, we are but pilgrims who are a long way from home. We thank God for the presence of pastors with vision who can shepherd us through this maze that we call life by the grace of God. He points us to the day when our journey's end will come and we will see our Lord, so let's thank God for the pastor and give God the praise every step along the way.loo

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Habakkuk as he shares a vision of hope with the Children of Israel."

Previously, the prophet had complained to God that the people of Judah were being punished at the hands of the Babylonians for their unfaithfulness. What disturbed him was that God punished Judah at the hands of a nation that was more evil than itself. He questioned why God allowed injustice to be inflicted upon his own people.

This passage begins as the prophet mourns the trouble in the nation and waits for an answer from God. In response God gave him a vision of things that would happen in the future, including punishment to the Babylonians.

Of special note in this text the prophet stands upon a watch post or lookout that is high above the city and is shown a vision of the future. On his watch post the watchman withdraws his soul from his body and focuses on heavenly revelations that will answer his questions of God.

The visions of the prophet provide a glimpse into the future and become an assurance that the afflictions that the people were enduring would not be permanent. The visions were God's way of speaking "unto me," speaking, not to the prophet's outward ear, but inwardly. When God speaks He does not speak to the prophet's ear, but to His heart.

The relief that the prophet spoke of was both for the age and it was Messianic. Truly, Judah would be relieved in that present age, if not that very moment, but even greater Judah would completely liberated with the coming of the Messiah. Habakkuk was told to believe the vision because it came from God.

Like every prophet, Habakkuk was urged to tell the people not to lose faith in the vision because it would be realized in His appointed time. Even though that time is unspecified; it will be fulfilled.

Visions are revealed to prophets

Historically, God has revealed His plans for his people through special revelations to pastors. The reasons for these revelations to the prophets instead of the people directly is that the prophets tend to hear God with their inner ear and see the vision with spiritual eye. The pew often views life with a carnal eye, but the pulpit sees it differently. From the perspective of the pew:

LIFE MAY BE A BLUR.: If we lose sight of our objective, our energies and activities are spread out over a variety of patterns that are blurred and unclear. The passionate pastor helps us to see vision clearly. Standing on the watch tower he helps us keep our objective in sight when we fail to concentrate our energies.

THE VISION MIGHT BE NEAR SIGHTED: Habakkuk stood on the tower so that he could put some distance between himself and vision. He didn't want to fall victim to spiritual near sightedness. The near sighted can't see their goal because they can only see things that are close to them. They live for today. Therefore their energies are not concentrated on achieving a goal because all they can see is today. They follow

the general creed that they should eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow may never come. The Holy Spirit inspires the pastor to help correct our nearsightedness as we focus clearly on those things that are present as well as in our distant future.

THE PASTOR IS SPIRITUALLY FAR SIGHTED: The far sighted person is just the opposite. He or she is able to see the goal, but can't see how to manage the daily flow of time, talents and resources to achieve the goal. They see their goal but can't discipline themselves to make it happen.

They see the NFL but can't focus on the high school and college education that comes before the NFL. God's spiritual glasses correct this flaw in our spiritual sight and help us to get control of our lives now in preparation for the future.

Unlike a physically farsighted person, the prophet is able to see the big picture and is able to focus on the details as well. The prophet not only sees the vision, but has the task helping those learn of the revelation to see and understand what God wants. This is often a challenge because the prophet is shown things from his watch post that others may not understand.

Passionate pastors look for ways to give us snapshots of what the vision will be. Without these images it is difficult for believers to follow it all.

Often the prophet becomes the example or the snapshot for the congregation to study. These are instances when he says, "follow me as I follow Christ."

The passionate preaching of pastors helps to start picturing ourselves differently.

We see ourselves as happy families.

We see ourselves as content and fulfilled.

Pastors don't see us the way we are, but continuously show us our potential. That's when we fully realize the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:12 that says, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." It means, we can't see the fullness of what God wants to be now, but one day we'll see it all.

When we start feeling bad about ourselves our pastors remind us of the song writer who said, "Please be patient with me, God is not through with me.

When God gets through with me, I shall come forth as pure gold.

Diligent pastors teach believers where not to walk.

The passionate pastor teaches believers through precept and example where "NOT" to walk.

We are repeatedly warned in scripture not to walk after the flesh, Rom. 8:4; not after the manner of men, 1 Cor. 3:3; not in craftiness, 2 Cor. 4:2; not by sight, 2 Cor. 5:7; not in the vanity of the mind, Eph. 4:17; not disorderly, 2 Thess. 3:6." Galatians 5:16-17 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

In every way imaginable, the pastor must help believers understand that they are never away from the sight of God.

He always sees us because he never slumbers or sleeps.

Remember, God can do it

Finally, brothers and sisters we must note that our pastors help us to remember the God of our salvation.

Habakkuk stood in his watch-post and reassured the nation that trouble won't last always.

He encouraged them not to give up the faith because help was on the way.

The pastor today has the same mission. He must stand on the wall and declare the word of the Lord with passion and power.

He must continuously remind us to remember where our blessings come from.

Before we burden ourselves worrying about Babylonians of our time we should remember that we serve an awesome God who reigns and blesses us in many ways.

It is the passionate pastor who encourages us to hang on and never forget the power of God. When we remember we are not amazed!

Only those who have forgotten how God healed their sicknesses and lifted them from their sick beds are amazed at His healing power!

Only those who have forgotten how they repeatedly failed in life but have been restored over and over again are amazed at His spirit of forgiveness.

Only those who have forgotten how they took the wrong paths in life, only to be placed on the right road again are amazed at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Passionate pastors remind believers not to worry today, because we remember what He did yesterday.

Somebody remembers that when they were:
WEAK He provided them strength
DOWN He picked them up!
DEFEATED He gave them the victory
DISCOURAGED He restored their hope!
LONELY, He gave them comfort
TROUBLED He gave them peace of mind
Somebody remembers how He came to a little town called Bethlehem
That He died on an old rugged cross!
Somebody remembers that Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave!
That's the good news that the pastor brings...
Jesus lives and He's still blessing us every day!

No. 9526-Revival

Supper for the worms

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 9, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. Acts 12:23

Introduction

Have you ever met a person who brags? A person who boasts is a person who enjoys flaunting their accomplishments in front of others in ways that suggest that they are superior while others are inferior. No one likes a person who brags because the ultimate intent of bragging is to belittle others.

Can we really brag about anything we have achieved or acquired? Was it all our doing? Christians don't brag about things because we know that none of what we have comes from own effort. We may wear fine clothes, but we never brag about them or belittles others whom cannot or chose not to do the same.

We don't brag about how much money we earn while belittling someone else's family. Neither do we brag about the quality of our neighborhood and berate those who have not been blessed in the same way. We can't brag because we know the source of our blessings. Our pond is filled with fresh water, but we know that it is fed constantly by a stream coming from the hills. That's why Psalm 121 says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

We can't take credit for what God does for us. Prometheus was a character in Greek mythology who stole fire from Zeus the main God of the Greek pantheon. Zeus became angry with Prometheus all a trick that was played upon him that challenged his omnipotence and omniscience. In retaliation, Zeus decided to withhold fire from moral men on earth. Without fire the mortal creatures would have a miserable life. Prometheus stole the fire that Zeus withheld and gave it to mortal men. This angered Zeus and he ordered Prometheus pinned to a rock so that an eagle could eat out his liver. Zeus caused the liver to grow back each day only to be eaten again forever as punishment to someone who would dare steal fire from the gods. Today a person who takes credit for something that someone else has done is usually accused of stealing that persons fire. Those who take credit for what God has done are seen as persons who are emulating Prometheus.

It is dangerous to steal fire from God. Moses learned this lesson in the wilderness.

God told Moses to satisfy the thirst of the people by going to a certain rock and speaking to the rock which would produce enough water to satisfy their thirst. In response to the constant complaining of the people Moses, in anger, struck the rock instead of speaking to it as instructed and gave the impression that it was he who was providing them with water instead of God. He took credit for God's miracle and his punishment was that he would not be able to enter into the promised land. In his last days he climbed to the top of Mount Moriah and viewed the promised land, but he never stepped foot into the land of promise because one day he took credit for God's miraculous work.

The braggart's conversation is filled with "I and My." The believer's conversation is filled "Thanks be to God."

As Christians, we have learned that we should give God praise for all He has done for us. We have done nothing on our own, but all has come as the result of the mercies and favor of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance when a King was praised as a god and was instantly struck down and became supper for the worms.

The background of this text indicates that King Herod, dressed in royal and regal gowns, gave a lengthy dissertation to the people of his kingdom concerning Royal matters. According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary, Tyre and Sidon were in Herod's dominion and for some reason had incurred his wrath. Because these cities depended on Galilee for grain, they desired to make peace with Herod Agrippa. The two countries would totally dependent upon Herod's favor without which they could not exist. They had no military power by which to bargain with him and the king owed them no favors and was not obligated to them in any way. The only hope of success they had was to ingratiate themselves before him and to shower him with praise and adulations. On the appointed day when Herod was delivering a speech, the people went out of their way to praise his words, extol his greatness and lift them up before men as a living God. This would not have been unusual for a Roman Emperor because Romans believed that the Emperor was God honored; so did Egyptians and many other pagan nations. However, Herod was not Roman, he was a Jewish king and Jews believed in only one God.

The ancient historian Josephus also recorded the events of that day. He notes that Herod came into the room wearing a dazzling robe made of fine materials that caught the sunlight and almost blinded the eyes of those who look upon him. To many, the glitter and the flash, the dazzle and the bling only served as proof of his divinity. When the people of Tyre and Sidon honored him as a god Herod was no doubt flattered. He did not call himself a God but he allowed them to attribute godly status to him. He allowed the people to refer to him and treat him as if he were God.

An Angel of the Lord intervened in this process and cast judgment upon Herod. He was struck down and was eaten up with worms because he tried to abrogate credit that belonged to the Lord.

This New Testament occurrence reflected similar occurrences in the Old Testament

where those who tried to take credit for things God had done were punished or those who refused to give God credit were equally punished.

It sends a New Testament signal to all believers under the new dispensation that is not a good idea to steal fire from the true and living God.

Stealing fire

There are at least three thoughts that we should derive from the demise of King Herod.

NO REASON TO BOAST: Herod's demise was a case of misplaced pride. While he did not boast aloud, he allowed others to give him more credit than he deserves. Believers have no reason to boast about anything because anything that we have comes directly from God. This makes us extremely humble. We do not consider ourselves great in our own eyes because we know that without Gods divine influence we would be nothing. So we are not quick to boast; we know we are empty without Him. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The Christian recognizes that he/she has been guided to this point in life, not by our own knowledge but by the wisdom and intervention of God himself. That knowledge should humble us to know that we are what we are only by his Grace.

THERE IS AN ANGEL WATCHING: when Herod accepted the praise that he did not deserve an angel of the Lord immediately smote him. We like to think of Angels as those beings that are standing close by to bless us. However, if we look at this passage just a few verses up to verse seven we will see the same angel smiting two people in different ways. In the first instance Peter was imprisoned and the Angel of the Lord smote him to wake him up and to free him from his imprisonment. This is the angel who opened the jail doors open the gate and blessed Peter with his freedom without having to post a bond. This angel demonstrated the delivering hand of God. It demonstrate the blessings hand of God. Yet by the time we get to verse 23 this same angel who smote Peter now smote Herod but the results was just opposite. We all have an angel looking over our shoulders, but unlike the television series angel who touches us is not always blessing, especially if we are living outside of the will of God.

It was angels of the Lord that brought down fire on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was also an angel of the warned Balaam when sought to prophecy for profit. The same angel that touched one man and blessed touched another man who displeased God and made him supper for the worms.

We need to be careful how we act when God blesses us, the same angel that blessed in GOD's name in one verse of your life is still around when you decide that you don't need to praise him, keep your promises or pay your vows.

We should resolve to praise God continuously for he is good and his mercy endureth forever.

WORMS ON THE INSIDE: When Herod was stricken by the angel it was

discovered that he had worms that were eating him up from the inside. He was smote by the angel of the Lord, but worms had been eating away at him for a long time, it just didn't show. It is the same thing that happens when we slice into a juicy red apple and discover that there is a worm inside. How did it get there? There is no hole on the outside! There is no bruise that obviously indicates something is wrong, but there is a worm inside. Somewhere before the apple made its way to your table, a fly using something we would call a stinger or shoot punched an almost invisible pin sized hole in that apple and deposited eggs in that apple that grew into worm that grew fat and slimy eating its insides. The outside look perfect but the inside was infested. In a spiritual sense, the same thing happens when we first begin to feel that we don't need to really worship, praise or serve God on a regular basis. It's like a little pin hole that leads to skipped worship, failure to read our bibles, short prayers, shorter prayers, then no prayers. Inside the little worm of self reliance grows bigger. We feel we can succeed in school, business, politics and life without God, at least not in heavy doses. Like Herod, we look the same on outside, but on the inside the worms are growing.

Yet there are certain fruits that have no worms. Oranges, tomatoes and lemons have no worms! Why? There is too much citric acid in them; worms can't live there.

We are the fruit of the sprit Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. When our lives are filled with righteous living, regular worship and praise and service to others, it puts together a citrus mix that so strong that the worms can't get in!

Glorifying God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that the reason for Herod's demise is that he gave not God the glory. If we want to continue to be blessed then we need to keep praising the Lord!

Herod was part of family of men, all named Herod who had a history of doing terrible things and thinking more of themselves than they should.

One Herod was so stuck on Himself that he called himself Herod the Great. He built the third temple, but when he found out that might be a new king born in Bethlehem that might be greater than himself, instead of praising God he ordered the murder of all the little boys in Bethlehem.

Another Herod called himself Herod Antipas was the one who conducted the trial of Jesus and put a purple robe on his shoulder and laughed at the Son of God.

Another Herod called himself Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa and great-grandson of Herod the Great. He was so bold that he made his sister his girlfriend.

When Herod Agrippa came along in this text, he was one in a long line of Herods who felt they really didn't need to recognize God or live by His rules.

There are many Herod's among us today!

Some, like Herod, are living lives by their own rules!

Some, like Herod, are view themselves as above the laws of God!

Some, like Herod, are violating God's laws about relationships and marriage!

Some, like Herod, are beautiful on the outside, but on the inside they supper for the

worms!

Anytime we begin to believe we can make it without publicly worshiping God, we are getting ready to be supper for the worms!

Anytime we begin to believe that regular praise and worship is not necessary, we are getting ready to be supper for the worms!

Anytime we being to believe that we can just keep asking for blessings without showing God some love in return, we're getting ready to be supper for the worms!

I don't know about you, but I have found out that when God has done something good for us, we should be willing to glorify him and show our gratitude.

We should tell it on our jobs! Tell it in the songs we sing! We should tell it in the joy that bubbles in our soul!

We should give God the glory for taking our:

—Bitterness and turning it to sweetness; Sadness and giving me joy!

—Loneliness and give me companionship; Emptiness and giving me fulfillment!

—Failure and showing me the victory; Discouragement and giving me encouragement!

More than that, we should give God glory for saving our souls

I don't know about you, but every now and then, I want to tell somebody that I serve a good God!

I want to tell somebody that He carried an old cross for me!

I want to tell somebody that He died out on Calvary!

I want to tell somebody that early Sunday morning that He arose from the dead!

I won't be supper for the worms because every chance I get, I'm going to praise the Lord.

No. 9427-Anniversary, Church

Glory for the story

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 16, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3 (KJV)

Introduction

Have you ever taken time to look back over your own journey? Have you counted the hills and valleys that you have come through? What about all of the tight squeezes that you survived, dangers you overcame and failures from which you rebounded? Whenever we start the count our tally goes into infinity because we have come a mighty long way.

Sol Rosenburg's biography, Sol's Story tells about his journey from the concentration camps of the Holocaust to a successful businessman in Monroe Louisiana. His book, written by Dr. Richard Chardkoff, describes the horrors of his youth and the tremendous hope that brought him to America and finally to Monroe to live a full life as an outstanding businessman and community leader.

Alex Haley told his family story in an epic novel called Roots. In his novel, Haley traces his family back to a tiny village in Africa and weaves a story of courage, persecution, strength and vigilance as his family took its place in the annals of historic families that have overcome wars, persecutions, hard times, and a plethora of maladies to achieve its dreams.

Barack Obama in his book Dreams of My Father details the story of life in Kenya, Indonesia, Hawaii, and Chicago; a journey that took a long meandering trail that finally ended at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue as a president of United States.

If there is a book written about your life's story would it be a bestseller? Bestsellers seem to have the perfect mix of drama, love, tragedy, triumph and victory despite adversity. Would it be a page turner that future generations wouldn't be able to put down, drawn into it by the power of your passions, the depth of your commitment, and your indefatigable spirit? Most of lives are filled with plenty of drama if nothing else. It seems like we seldom have a boring day. We've also known our share of love, tragedy, failure and triumph. Our story could easily top the New York Times bestsellers list. If we told all the details, it would probably be a page turner, too.

No one's life story is a soliloquy. No achievements or honors are attained by the singular acts of one person alone. Behind every world champion there is a small army

of coaches, assistants and advisers. For every Oscar-winning actor there are directors, screenwriters and coaches that have contributed. Every politician who wins an election stands on the shoulders of staff and volunteers who sacrificed to make it happen. Every woman who achieves a challenging goal is surrounded by a supporting family. Every man fortunate enough to have a good wife will see her signature at the end of every line of his epitaph. John Dunn had it right "No Man is an Island."

What role has God played in your story? Are there chapters in your life story where you detailed your accomplishments, noted your failures, but never mentioned the Lord? Were there times in your own life when you tried to live outside of God's will?

And when those great moments came and you embraced great success, did you recognize God's role in your story? Did you know that without the invisible hand of God working in the background and the power of his inspiration working in the foreground, you could not have achieved your dreams so far? Those who recognize that can relate to the words of Bette Midler when she said, "I could fly higher than an Eagle because you are the wind beneath my wings."

Your family story reaches back for generations. Your grandmother and grandfather and before them their grandmothers and grandfathers have left a rich legacy of achievement, struggle and hope. Today, we stand on the shoulders of their accomplishments. We reap the benefits of their sacrifices. There isn't a single moment in our lives in which the lifeblood of those who've gone before us is not evidenced in our words and deeds. Godly families gladly report that through it all God has helped them to achieve, to survive and thrive.

A generation ago Gladys Knight sang a hit song that Christians have changed around to be our testimony about God's involvement in our lives. The new version says, "If anyone would ever write my life story for whatever reason there might be you'll be there between each line of pain and glory, Jesus is the best thing that ever happened to me."

As Christians, we recognize that between every line of pain and glory of our story, God has been there to sustain us and give us hope. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah's vision about the decline of Israel and its ultimate glory under the risen Lord.

The 6th chapter sets the time of Isaiah's calling as the year that King Uzziah died. Uzziah had been a dominating figure in Jewish history and in many respects the people placed him before God. Many could not see God's hand in their national affairs because of the overpowering presence of King Uzziah, which hid the from their view the dazzling glory of God

When Uzziah died many were able to see that he was just a shadow of the awesome power of God. They could not see God because Uzziah, to many, became the person

upon which they depended. In that context, Isaiah says, “In the year King Uzziah died I also saw the Lord.”

Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision that showed him standing in the presence of God who was high and lifted up, surrounded by cherubim with six wings and a host of angels.

In this vision he saw the suffering of Israel, but he saw their eventual triumph as well. When it all ends, Isaiah said the hosts of heaven will give all of the glory to the Lord of Hosts.

Three Thens

There are three “thens” in verse five through eight. They seem to chime like time markers that show points in Isaiah’s life where he came to grips with himself, was touched by the hand of God and then made a decision about his life’s work. Each phase of his story seemed to be marked by the steady chiming of then, then, then.

Each of us knows the sound of the “thens” because our stories are similar. At first we felt inadequate for our service, then we arose from our fear and went to college, entered a profession, started a business or began a marriage or a gainful pursuit.

Like Isaiah every believer remembers the point where our lives were touched by God. For Isaiah, it was an angel pressing a hot coal to his lips. For Paul, it was a bright light on the Damascus Road. For Samuel it was a still voice calling in the middle of the night.

Some can remember the wild and reckless lives we once led. We can remember the loose way we talked, the mischievous way we walked, and the less than prurient ways we thought. We lived for the weekend and couldn’t wait to let our hair down at every given chance. But, then, like a bell tolling, we met the Lord!

It might have been in a silent moment of prayer. It might have been while we were sitting at the bed side of loved ones praying for their survival or special moment of decision. That’s when we remember the words of the old song, “Shackled by a heavy burden. Neath a load of guilt and stain, then the hand of Jesus touched me and now I am no longer the same.

We may even remember another then! That was the day we decided to go forth boldly to change the part of the world that we touch.

Then we decided to be an advocate for breast cancer victims!

Then we decided to mentor young people lost along the way!

Then we decided to champion the cause of the homeless and less fortunate!

Then we decided to seek a cure for diseases that take the lives of children.

In Isaiah 6:8 Isaiah wrote these words, “Then said I, Here am I, send me!”

It is good to know that God is a “but then” God.

We were down to our last dimes, but then!

We were laying on our sick beds, but then!

We were facing defeat and failure, but then!

We were lost and couldn’t find our way, but then!

We gave it our all and almost gave up hope, but then!

But then the power of the Lord, picked us up and turned us around and gave new

meaning to our lives!

I'm so glad that we serve a "but then" God!

Who gets the glory?

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead, we must ask who gets the glory for our story?

At the end of a journey toward a great prize the winners will assemble people for the victory photograph. There is always someone who did not contribute much to the victory who will try to get in the picture.

In the final analysis the devil will try to take credit for our successes, he'll try to Photoshop himself into picture, but who really gets the glory for our story?

Come here Joshua, who gets the glory for your story? I can hear him say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Come here Ruth, who gets the glory for your story? I can hear her say, "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God!"

Come here Three Hebrew Boys, who gets the glory for your story, I can him them say, "Our God is able!"

Come here angels standing around the throne, who is worthy? I can hear them say, "Worthy is the lamb!"

Our history declares that God is able, but will tell the story?

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Today, we celebrate the church anniversary, but Isaiah saw a day when not only the church dispensation, but all the hosts of heaven will celebrate and declare Him holy! Holy! Holy!

We are celebrating because after all these years, God is still on the throne. He's still King of Kings and Lord of Lords and I'm glad about it!

As long as God is still on the throne there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

What I'm glad about is that as I walk through this tedious journey, I don't have to walk it alone.

Why? Because I know a man!

I know a man, who had a lonesome journey that was 33 years on this earth!

I know a man, who healed the sick and raised the dead!

I know a man, who can cool scorching fever and heal aching pain!

His name is Jesus! It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

Moses saw the promised land from the top of Mt. Nebo, but I know a man, who saw the world from the top of Mt. Calvary.

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

He gets the glory for story!

No. 9528-Revival

Your Cheating Heart

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 23, 2011

Scripture:And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Hosea 2:4-5; And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. Hosea 2:19-20

Introduction

Has anyone ever cheated on you? When someone cheats on you it leaves a painful feeling that tugs at your heart and causes a thousand deaths that come only minutes apart.

We have seen it in all stages of life. In high school a boy and a girl pledge to go steady together, but one breaks the pledge and entertains another. In college a couple pledges loyalties to each other, but the relationship ends in tears when one breaches their promise. In marriage a couple pledge fidelity until death do them part, but one breaks the vow and secretly begins a relationship with another. When that happens the person who is left behind feels a striking pain in his/her heart that is worse than death.

Tears result.

Sleepless nights result.

Trust dissolves and the relationship shatter in the wake of the mates cheating heart.

In 1953 Hank Williams wrote a song whose core thought has survived for over a half century, "Your cheating heart will tell on you." It was the song of a man whose wife cheated on him and the sorrow and pain he felt as a result. One portion of the lyrics said:

"Your cheating heart will make you weep
You'll cry and try to sleep
but sleep won't come the whole night through
Your cheating heart will tell on you!
Your cheating heart will pine someday
And crave the love you threw away
The time will come when you'll be blue

Your cheating heart will tell on you.

Nearly everyone has had the experience of being cheated upon at one stage of their lives or another. Those who have never been cheated on are a rare breed and must rank high among those who have been blessed and highly favored. Most of the world knows what it's like to be the victim of a person with a cheating heart. They have hearts that have been shattered into a thousand pieces, but the proverbial "heartbreaker" seems to avoid ever becoming the victim.

Heartbreakers and broken hearts seem to be the story of many of our lives, with very little in between.

Since we know what it feels like when someone cheats on us, then we should have some idea how God feels when He has loved us, provided for us, blessed us, favored us, and gave his only begotten son for us only to learn that despite his faithfulness to us we cheat on Him.

God has made known that he is a jealous God. He is not happy when the people he loves fail to return his love.

As Christians, we have played down loyalty to God. We have promised to love Him with our entire mind, body, and soul. We will never approach our relationship with Him with a cheating heart.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Hosea who was told by God to preach to the people of Israel.

The immediate command that Hosea was given was to tell the people that they were an evil and adulterous generation and that they were living in whoredom.

Hosea was commanded to illustrate this whoredom by marrying a woman of whoredom. Her deviant actions although married to a loving husband would illustrate Israel's relationship with God.

This must have been a troubling relationship, but Hosea obeyed God's command. His wife, Gomer, signified corruption, defilement, contamination and pollution. It was a demoralizing relationship in which her determinations were captured by her lusts.

As Gomer bore children for Hosea he gave them names that demonstrated the ruin of the people. He named the first Jezereel which means scattered people. It suggested the destruction of the royal family of God as His creations scattered away from Him. The second child was named Lo-Ruhamah, which means "not beloved." It showed how Israel had abused its relationship with God and its refusal to reform itself to God's will. It also indicated that God would not always bear the burden of dealing with an unfaithful people. The third child was named Lo-Ammi which means "not my people." It mean that the people had become out of fellowship with God.

Hosea's marriage to Gomer had a reason. It was designed to demonstrate God's experience of being rejected by His covenant people Israel. In the first 24 verses of Hosea chapter two the Lord described this rejection in detail. He compared Israel to an unfaithful wife who chased after lovers. God announced his anger feeling of

rejection, but at the same time announced His first reaction, which was to bring down judgment upon the people. In Hosea 2:3 God became so angry that he pledge to strip her naked and leave her just like he found her.

However, by Hosea 2:19, God had decided His initial judgment would not be final, for God intended to draw Israel back and restore the broken covenantal relationship. God moves from judgment to Salvation. From condemnation to forgiveness.

The Cheating Heart

There are several aspects of the cheating heart that are worthy of our consideration:

THE CHEATING HEART IS DIVIDED: The cheating heart is a divided heart. One day it is loving and faithful and the next day it pants after another. David was king of Israel and was known as a man after God's own heart. He failed in his flesh, but he never turned against God. In fact, when David sinned he asked God to "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. On the other hand his son Solomon turned his heart away from God. 1 Kings 11:4 says "for it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." Hosea found this to be true in his relationship with Gomer. Her heart was turned to other men. There are many today whose love of God is being turned. For many, it is not a complete turn, but a half turn. We want to hang on to God for old time's sakes, but we just don't feel it anymore. These have fallen into the B.B. King syndrome: "The thrill is gone." Perhaps we should then ask ourselves when did the thrill of worship become a chilling experience? Solomon's wives turned his head, who has turned ours? What has drawn us away from God?

The first step toward developing a cheating heart is to have a turned head. In this first step we begin to flirt with the world and we call it innocent fun. Yet, God expects us to love him totally or not at all. He is not happy with the cheating heart.

A CHEATING HEART HAS OTHER INTERESTS: One sign of a cheating heart is when one partner loses interest in things that once excited them. Many come to Jesus singing the words of the old hymn, "I surrender all." They began a passionate love affair with the Lord. They worship regularly, study seriously, serve studiously and give freely. Then the second stage of a cheating heart develops: they developed other interests. Extracurricular activities, sports, civic and social responsibilities, political affairs, educational pursuits begin to take precedence over the things of God. We begin to notice it when we start to make excuses for our absences at Bible study, Sunday school, special worships, and Sunday worships. This is the second sign of a cheating heart. It's similar to Israel's relationship with God. They still loved him at heart, but they pursued allegiances with the gods of their neighbors in hopes of bettering their own social and economic circumstances. When this happens God is not a happy camper.

A CHEATING HEART TRIES TO CHEAT IN SECRET: Anyone who cheats,

by the very nature of cheating, attempts to deceive another party. Cheaters think their secret rendezvous will never be discovered. A man can tell when his wife is cheating; only a fool would miss the signs. A woman knows when her man is being unfaithful, she can feel it in her bones. Yet, cheaters believe in their hearts that no one will ever know. There are even individuals who believe they can cheat on God and He won't know it. God knows when we cheat on him. He knows if we are giving our best. He knows if our offering is what it should be. We can fool some of the people some of the time, but we can't fool God anytime. Numbers 32:23 says, "But if ye will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." May cheaters have learned this lesson the hard way. Sooner or later a mistake will be made or a comment uttered that will reveal that which is hidden making true the old adage that says, "What's done in the dark will come to the light." Ecclesiastes 12:14 goes even further. It says, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Achan tried to hide stolen merchandise from God, but it was discovered.

David tried to hide his adultery and murder from God, but it was discovered.

Samson tried to hide his passion for Philistine women from God, but that was discovered, too.

Cheaters try to cheat, but their sins scream out for detection.

A changed Heart

Finally, brothers and sisters, as much as a cheating heart pains God, He is willing to forgive us, if we have a change of heart.

At the offset Hosea was upset with Gomer because she betrayed him, but soon she discovered that all of her suitors had abandoned her and left her broken and alone. God appealed to her to have a change of heart. Not because of her abandonment, but because of the foolishness of actions.

The first step to changing a cheating heart back to a faithful heart, is to do a little soul searching. That's when we ask the question is my spouse the problem or am I the problem? David in the Psalm 139:23 said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

That's what Thomas Dorsey had in mind when he wrote the words to the song "Search me Lord." He said "Search me Lord, Search me Lord. Turn the light of heaven on my soul. If you find anything that shouldn't be, take it out and straighten me. I want to be right, I want to be saved, I want to be whole."

After we have searched ourselves, we must go back and make things right!

The prodigal son left his father's home and wasted his substance in riotous living. But, there in the pigpen he said, "I will arise and go to my father and say, I have sinned before God and before thee."

He demonstrated a repentant heart.

A repentant heart does not place blame on anyone else!

A repentant heart does not make excuses!

A repentant heart throws itself before the mercy God!

Hosea found his cheating wife standing on the auction of the auction block and said to her the same words that God says to backsliders today:

"If you are willing to quit this cheating business and come home with me, we can put this thing behind us!"

"If you are willing to love with me with your heart and not just with your lips, we can start all over again!"

"If you are willing turn your heart away from the men who have captured your time and passion and come back home, I will forgive you and make everything all right!"

"If you will come home with me "I'll restore our covenant relationship!"

The book of Hosea shows God making an appeal to Israel to come home, but there is no record of what happened to Gomer, only that God made the offer!

He opened wide the arms of love and held out the olive branch of reconciliation and he still making that same offer today!

My people, who have taken the beautiful lives I have given them and turned them into ashes!

My people, who have taken the blessings that have I showered upon them and turned them into gods!

My people, who have taken the peace that I have offered them and exchanged it for confusion.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. " 2 Chronicles 7:14

Come home, and I hear your prayers!

Come home, and I will forgive your sins!

Come home, and I will heal your land!

If we abandon our cheating hearts, God will give us a chance to do right!

I know He'll do because I hear John say, For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not prosper but have everlasting life!

I know He'll do it because one day on a Hill called Calvary, He showed His love for me!

I know He'll do it because when He died on an old rugged cross!

I know He'll do it because Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

Even today, we can still hear Him say, Come home, I'll make everything all right!

No. 9529-Fall Festival

The Taste of True Blood

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 30, 2011

SCRIPTURE: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:13

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the growing fascination the nation has with creatures of the night? Television and movies seem more focused on this fascination today than ever before.

Today, there are over 300 movies, television programs, novels and dramas that focus on this phenomenon. How many movies about Werewolves are there? American Werewolf in London, and Wolf easily comes to mind. There are scores of movies about the walking dead, and vampires. Of course this is not new. As long as there have been movies it seems there have always been vampires of the Boris Karloff, Vincent Price genre. However, today the world's fascination with vampires seems to have reached an all time high.

The most popular vampires stories today are embodied in the two theatrical productions: Twilight and the HBO series called "True Blood." Unlike the old vampire movies of the past that kept vampires confined to their caskets in the day and allowed them to roam the streets at night, today's vampires have found a way to co-exist, in broad day light with humans. Some exist on a synthetic blood manufactured by Japanese scientists and are able to "come out of the coffin" and integrate themselves into regular society. Despite the presence of their synthetic blood, called "Tru Blood" there is a narcotic attraction to real human blood that causes some to want to drain humans they meet of every ounce of what they have to offer.

Of course vampires, in the mythical sense, are not real. There are no creatures of the night that live eternally off the blood of others, but there are some real blood suckers among us who walk and breathe among us and who attached themselves to us in ways that drain us of that which is necessary for our survival.

Believers in Christ have something that the world wants.

We have a peace and security that only comes from knowing Christ.

We have an inheritance that is true and guaranteed to us by the Father.

There are many who have come out of their coffins and live among us living on the synthetic happiness that they convinced themselves is happiness. However, what

believers have is joy that supersedes happiness; the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away.

As Christians, we are sustained in our faith by the blood of Christ. It saves us, sustains us, and revives us. It is His blood that gives use hope and inspires our faith. It is the real "true blood."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains the way the blood of Christ has given all people the opportunity to everlasting life.

Christians, Jews and Gentiles existed together in Ephesus but there was tension between them. The Jews were critical of the Christians and the Gentiles were attracted to them. There was something different about them that seemed to attract people by the thousands.

They were loving, friendly, honest, charitable and intensely united. Beyond that they seemed connected by the fact that they all believed in Jesus Christ and were bound by his bloodshed on the cross.

The Christians talked strange talk. They talked about rising from the dead one day. They talked about living new lives by drinking what they called the blood of Christ and eating bread they called the bread of life. They talked about dying to the world so they could live in Christ. Nearly every phrase they spoke seemed to be filled with references to Christ's blood.

In fact, it was His blood that made them one.

It was his blood that made them whole.

It was His blood that gave them hope.

The gentiles saw them share in communion services where they drank wine and shared bread to remember His sacrifice and His blood and they desired this blood for themselves.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:11-12 that they were once aliens and strangers to the faith, but because of Christ's blood they were now one. They once far off without a saving knowledge of God, but now they are one. They were once alienated from the things of God, but now they were made whole through the blood of Christ that demolished old barriers erected by the Mosaic law and cultural taboos.

The blood of Christ connected all believers to the grace of God, which is the source of salvation even to this day.

Fangtasia

There are many in the world today who are easily compared to the vampires in the "Tru Blood" television series. From it, we should be able to see the premium that God has placed on our own saved lives.

SYNTHETIC BLOOD: The vampires in the T.V. series hang out in a club called "Fangtasia" but they exist on synthetic blood that allows them to move around in the world of humans and appear normal. There are many people today who exist on synthetic realities. They have synthetic happiness that is dependent upon their social status. They feel a need to be in a certain organization, club or society so that they can be somebody. They feel a need to have clothes with certain brands, houses

in certain neighborhoods and increasing amount of things surrounding them. These things bring them pleasure for a while, but soon they learn that they do not bring real joy. They have been infused with synthetics that they use to replace the real thing.

The beauty of the Christian life is that it is not synthetic. It is real. It is not dependent upon anything superficial for its existence. A Christian family may desire a big house, but would be just as happy in a cardboard box if they could all be together. They would love to drive a Lexus, but will be just as happy riding public transit or walking the city street if need be. They would love to eat steaks, but we feel great if all they had was pork chops and biscuits. Their existence may enjoy things, but does not depend on things. It is real and not synthetic. It is rooted in their faith in God.

When believers pray, it is not synthetic, it is real!

When believers worship, it is not synthetic, it is real!

When believers serve, it is not synthetic, it is real!

It is that realness that caused Paul's jailer's to watch him in his affliction, imprisonment and his deliverance and be so impressed that that he asked asked in Acts 16:30, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Because the blood of Christ is real and true, the world sees what we have and they too, want true blood.

WHAT'S IN TRUE BLOOD: The essence of who you are is in your blood. The blood is usually composed of red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and plasma. The red blood cells provide oxygen to the body. The white blood cells contain your DNA and special ingredients that help you fight off diseases. The platelets helps to clot your blood enough white cuts and bruises heal. Plasma delivers hormones and nutrients and picks up wastes and leftovers.

Everyone has blood but not the same blood type. Some people, for example are A-Negative and B-Negative. Spiritually, these describe clearly people who are outside of the faith.

Generally, "A-Negative" people think negative. B-Negative people act negatively. These are the kind of people who think and talk destructively. B-Negative people rarely act alone. They are miserable, angry, and frustrated and they want others to feel just as angry, miserable and frustrated as they are. They generally bring in as many people as they can to share their misery because "misery likes company." B-Negative people usually make phone calls and visits, encouraging others to make negative action. Negative actions indicate B-Negative blood.

There is another type called, "O." "O" people are on the sidelines. They could go either way. They rarely take an action for or against anything. They are not "O" positive or "O" negative; they are just on the sideline. They are what the bible describes as lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. "O" is not acceptable either because Revelation 3:16 says the Lord will spew the lukewarm out of his mouth.

The vampires who hang around us notice that believers seem to have A-Positive blood: A-positive viewpoint in life, A-Positive glimpse of the future, A-Positive view of yourself and others.

HOW TO GET TRUE BLOOD: The vampires that hang around believers try to get

what believers have by copying some of the things we do all the while missing the whole point.

The vampire who tries to suck your blood notices that even though he goes to church now and maybe even sings in the choir or serves on committees he still doesn't have what you have. Why? He has your blood? He does what you do?

The answer is in the nature of the blood. Our DNA (Divine Nature and Access to God) is non transferrable by transfusion just as DNA is not normally transferred through a transfusion. Even if my White blood cells are transferred there is a built in system that will kill off my DNA so that it won't live in you.

If those vampires want what you have, they must get their own. That requires a complete bone marrow transfusion. The old white blood cells must be completely destroyed and new cells are replaced, complete with a new DNA. The only way to get the true blood of Christ is not through imitation and emulation but through denying this world and accepting Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17 puts it this way, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. "

True Blood

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that when a man has true blood he becomes a child of God in that he now has a divinely inspired nature and total access to God.

The believer is a new creature, transformed by the blood of Christ.

It's that spiritual DNA, that divinely inspire nature that has access to God that makes our lives appealing to those who watch us from afar.

Those with true blood, can pray and wait patiently for God to act because they know that they wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength!

Those with true blood, are never helpless because they say like David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

Those with true blood, seem to be fearless, because they constantly say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

It's the presence of true blood that prompts us to sing, "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. For His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

There is a something I noticed in most of the old vampire movies. No matter how close the vampire became to sticking his fangs into a victim, whenever the sun came up, he turned and ran away.

There is something about the sun that makes the ungodly run away.

While there are no real vampires in the world, the devil is real and he doesn't like the SON either. When the SON rises in your life things start to happen.

When the son rises in your life, the devil will get away from you.

When the son rises in your life, the demons that try to possess you will depart.

I don't know about you, but I thank God for the SON and I thank God for the cross!

The cross of Calvary is a symbol of our salvation!

The song writer said, “There to my heart was the blood applied, Glory to His name!”

Thank God for the cross!

At the cross, true blood is applied and the power of sin is broken and the power of salvation is released!

At the cross, true blood is obtained and the spirit of bondage is shattered and a new spirit of freedom is unchained

At the cross, true blood is secured and those who have been disillusioned receive new hope!

At the cross, true blood is issued and those who have been discouraged find new inspiration!

No wonder the song writer wrote, “I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me. One day when I was lost, he died upon a cross. I know it was the blood that saved me.”

Young warriors, don’t worry about the creatures of the night, just keep walking in the light!

Don’t worry about the powers of darkness, just keep your hands in God’s hand and the devil will leave you alone!

There is power, power wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb!

Lift Jesus Up and stomp the devil down!

Jesus, my light in a world darkness!

Jesus, my defender against all enemies!

Jesus, my shield in the midst of battle!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

But, Early Sunday morning, He rose up from the grave!

I know it was the blood..true blood that saved me!

No. 9530-Revival

As Is

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 6, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever been interested in a certain product but then saw a tag or label that said "as is?" If you have you are not alone. Millions of shoppers around the world have seen the little tags that indicate that the merchandise that is being displayed is being offered without warranty or guarantee. It is a warning to the customer that the merchandise may or may not be functional, or may require some level of attention to become operable.

We have seen examples of this on used car lots, in damaged merchandise stores, rummage sales, estate sales, and even commercial establishments that have sections that specialize in offering seconds. The frugal shopper can often save money by purchasing items that need just a little touch up to be usable. Sometimes shoppers can save considerable amounts of money when they buy furniture or appliances that have small scratches or dents.

In recent years used cars have started to post warnings to customers in big letters that advised that a pre-owned vehicle is being sold with no warranty so the buyer should beware that the purchase price does not include a return, repair, or any other consideration; it is being sold as is.

As-is does not always mean that the product is bad but it does always mean that no warranty is attached to it. Anyone who purchases it does so with the full knowledge that once they get home there is a possibility that their purchase may disappoint them.

That doesn't disappoint a person who has a restoration in mind. The young man that buys an old car, that is dented, in operable, and ugly knows that he's probably buying a lemon, but he has a restoration in mind. He's planning to remove the dents, given a new paint job, give it some new wheels, spruce up the interior, and add a few hydraulics. He buys the old car as is, but he has something else in mind.

Is it possible that God had something of this nature in mind when he looked down on this world and saw its sad estate and decided to redeem it to himself. What he saw was a world filled with sin, hate and ungodliness. Yet he loved the world so much that

he gave his only begotten son who purchased our salvation with his own blood. What he purchased was a real wreck but what he had in mind was restoration.

As Christians, we should rejoice that our God looked down on our feeble estate and loved us enough to look beyond our immediate faults and flaws and see our needs. We came to him in a state of "as is" but when God gets through with us we shall come forth as pure gold.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the apostle Paul as he explains to the Christians at Corinth how their lives in Christ should progress from sinfulness to righteousness.

Paul explains how the former state of a Christian compares to the present state. Before Christ a Christian was a person who stood condemned before God, but after Christ is a new creature.

The believer has reached a point in life where he or she has evolved from the "unrighteous" state into the full knowledge of God as they live and walk in the spirit. Having once been a practicing sinner, the believer has moved to a higher level; that of knowing Christ fully. He or she has stepped forward and up to a better life. Thus Paul says, "And such were some of you!" He seemed to say you have been there! You have done that! You have the tee-shirt! But you have stepped out of darkness into the marvelous light!

Paul indicates the three fold state of every believer who is a part of the kingdom of God. He gives a list of the three states, which actually incur in the reverse order. 1) A person is justified, meaning that God's affirmative action program has made up for his short comings and mistakes. 2) A person is sanctified, that means they have changed their life's path and modified their list of concerns to include only those things which would be pleasing to God. They become special and set apart. 3) A person who is washed by the spirit of God is no longer of the world but is a new creature.

The believer's best testimony to a non-believer is that we have not always lived in an isolated world of bible classes, hymns and church services, but that the believer has experienced the world enough to know that God offers a better way.

He sees more than we see

The love of God for his creation is not unconditional. He loves what He sees, but He sees more than we see.

GOD SEES THE FLAWS: Everyone has flaws, but often they are not visible. Only those who have been around us a while learn our flaws. Stores such as TJ Max and Ross for Less often sell designer clothing at one fourth of the price because there is a small flaw in the garment somewhere. It's so small that it is hardly visible. That's the way it is with us. He would be perfect, but…" She would be perfect …but!" God's loves us with the full knowledge that we are flawed. He knows about our temper, our tendency to cheat, our wild ambition and our vices. He knows everything about us and chooses to love us anyway. In much the same way a couple chooses to love each other, despite

the flaws they find. God knows our flaws. In fact, Psalm 139:2 says, "Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." God sees the scratch, the bad stitching around the mouth that won't shut up, the zipper that won't stay up, the dress tail that won't stay down, the faded colors of our temper, but He chooses to love us anyway. Christ paid the price for our salvation on Calvary, with the full knowledge that some of the souls He purchased were really messed up, but His purchase gave them a chance.

GOD CAN FIX IT: When a person buys a flaw item it no longer belongs to store, it belongs to him. In the church world we call that "Justification." That's when God claims us as His own even though we are a little messed up. One reason that some people buy flawed merchandise is because they hope to fix it up. A wood worker sees a scratch on a piece of furniture and says, "I can fix that." An auto body mechanic intends to remove a dent in a car. A seamstress intends to fix the zipper that doesn't work. Christ saves us from our sins and brings us into the family of God, but the intent is to help us fix what is broken. In the church world we call fixing what is broken and flawed "sanctification." Every day God is working on the scratch, polishing our rough edges, restitching. It's a life long process. Some of us are in the first stages of God's "fix it" plan. Others are much further along, but we are all flawed. Church critics say that Christians are messed up; they are right. We are all spiritual rejects purchased at "Life for Less." The difference is that we've been purchased and God is fixing is up, and they are just as flawed, but they are still on the shelf.

The idea is that as God works with us we should progress in the faith.

We may have come to Jesus dressing sexually to draw attention to ourselves, but we have since learned better!

We may have come to Jesus requiring the choir to sing musician that had the sound and feel of the clubs, but we have since learned to listen salvation of the words than the sound or the beat.

We came to Jesus broken and looking for a quick fix, but we have since learned that what He offers are not quick fixes but extreme make-overs!

GOD SEES WHAT WE CAN BE: When we present ourselves to God we are in bad shape spiritually. The reason that He accepts us is because He sees what we can be. Just as your beautician sees the final design of your hair; the doctor sees your health after your surgery; the teacher sees your life after graduation; God sees what you can be when He gets through with you. If you've ever watched an auto body mechanic work, you'll notice that he is never intimidated by the condition of the wrecks that are brought to his shop. He gets a picture of what it will be in his mind then proceeds to tear it apart. Fenders, bumpers, hoods, windshields even seats are removed and seem to be scattered everywhere. Soon broken parts are repaired, dents are removed, it is reassembled, painted fresh and returned improved and ready for us.

In a similar sense God does us the same way. He sees what we can be, but to get us there He may find it necessary to take us apart, strip us down, so He can put us back together again. He told the prophet Jeremiah to go the Potter's House and watch the potter work. As the potter worked with the clay, when he found a flaw he tore down

the whole creation and started over again. God told Jeremiah that is what he has to do to His people sometimes: tear them down, to build them up again. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "….Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

God is working with us. We are not there yet. That's why the song writer wrote, "Please be patient with me. God is not through with me, yet. When God gets through, I shall come forth as pure gold."

Just As I am

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must remember that when Jesus purchased our salvation He paid a high price for damaged merchandise.

Whenever a person purchases an item, he expects a discount if the item has been used, broken, or damaged in some way. Very few people would pay the retail price for "as-is" merchandise.

Yet, when God looked down on the world He decided to redeem it for Himself but that redemption would not be discounted. His word remained unchanged Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

How does a sinful person like me, come before God? There is only one way to come, that's to come "As-is"

That's what Charlotte Elliott learned many years ago when she was visiting friends and met a preacher at a dinner who asked her if she was a Christian. She was offended by the question, but it would not go away. Weeks later she met the same preacher again and told him that his question troubled her, but she did not know how to find Him neither did she feel worthy. The preacher told her that God is always near by, "Just come to him as you are." She accepted Christ that day and later wrote a song that said, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me; and that thou bidst me come to thee, O lamb of God, I come, I come."

Those who come to Jesus come, Just as I am

Someone is crying out, Lord my life is a shambles, but I'm counting on you reassembled the pieces, Just as I am, I come!

Someone is praying, Lord I have a house, but I don't something is missing, I need your help to turn it into a home, Just as I am I come!

Someone is confessing, Lord I lived with the loved of my life for a long time, but we are not married. We need your power to move to the next step, Just as I am, I come!

Someone is witnessing, Lord I'm considering a profession or business venture, but my reasons are spiritual, you can help me see clearly for right now I'm blind, Just as I am, I come!

Isaiah approached God by saying, I'm not worthy, but I come before you Just as I am, and the Lord made him a great prophet.

Saul came before God a persecutor of the church, but in a little house on Straight Street he came to Jesus, "Just as I am" and the Lord made him the greatest evangelist of all time.

Every believer at one point or another meets God on the markdown shelf of life, after the world has rejected us as damaged goods.

It may have been in a jail cell, like the jailer in Philippi, but there we met the Lord!

It may have been while working in an unsavory job, like Matthew the tax collector, but there we met the Lord.

It may have been while we were just looking on like Zacchaeus, who met the Lord in a Sycamore tree!

That's the day when we found ourselves saying, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in Him a resting place and He has made me glad!"

I came to Jesus, just as I was and whenever I needed him, He's been there!

I don't mind telling the world, I know He's real!

I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried Him for myself!

For me, a flawed soul, He endured the pain of Calvary!

For me, damaged goods, He Died an unsavory death!

But early Sunday morning He arose with all power in His hands!

I came to Jesus "as is" and He claimed me as his own!

No. 9531-Harvest

Reaping the Fruits and binding the tares

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2011

SCRIPTURE: And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: 11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. Deuteronomy 26:10-11; Matthew 13:30 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Introduction

Have you ever heard the phrase, "You reap what you sow?"It has been accepted as general truth, but in actuality a person reaps what has been sown, regardless to whether or not he is the person who did the sowing. Sometimes we reap what others have sowed in our field, with or without our knowledge.

When we are reaping quality fruits from our own fields of labor there is cause for celebration. At harvest time the humble spirit offers thanks. It does not matter about a person's country or language, it is appropriate to offer thanks after reaping the harvest.

How many ways can you say thank you for the harvest?

If you were in Mexico you would say, Gra-ci-ous.

If you were in Germany you would say,Dan-Ka and Mercee is what the French would say.

Celebration is biblical. Especially celebration of the harvest. Whenever believers looked back upon what God did for them they celebrated.

When Abraham secured a wife for his son Isaac there was a celebration.

When Moses announced that after 400 years that Israel would finally leave Egypt; there was a celebration.

When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land which flowed with opportunity like milk and honey, there was a celebration.

When David finally secured the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Israel he was

so happy that he celebrated by dancing nearly naked in the street.

At harvest, when the reapers bring in the fruits of their labor they all expressed heartfelt emotions that looked at the sum total of the harvest with humility and gratitude.

As Christians, we have labored in the fields for the master. It is a time of celebration! Our greatest joy is to enjoy the fruits of our labor as the reaping begins. We have shed tears, but they become tears of joy as see the fruits of our labor. To God be the glory for the things He has done.

Exposition

This text focuses on the practice of reaping the harvest and offering the first fruits. When Israel had taken possession they were instructed what to do after the first harvest. They had been a nomadic people for 40 years and knew very little about agriculture. They planted seeds, but were unsure of the results. They planted and depended on God for the yield.

All year the people were unsure of crops. They saw the tender shoots rise above the ground, but they also saw tares grow in some areas. The stalks gave them hope, but were not a guarantee in themselves that their crops would be successful.

When the first ears of corn or other products were gathered there was great excitement. These first fruits, first baskets of the harvest, we're signs of the full harvest that was to follow. The Mosaic law required Israel to give God the praise for the harvest that was approaching. The first fruits celebration was a celebration of things to come.

The first ritual consisted of taking the first fruits to the priest at the central sanctuary to present evidence that God had been faithful in providing for them in the new land. Each family in the entire nation had the opportunity to come before God individually and confess his or her faith in God. The priest took the basket of first fruits, prayed over it, and gave it back to the worshipper. The worshipper presented the basket again, this time leaving it before the altar as an offering to God and a show of faithfulness and obedience to God.

When the ceremony ended there were acts of adoration and praise that were required to insure that the offering was accepted. Worshippers were expected to have humble, reverent, thankful hearts, without which no offering would be accepted.
Worshippers took comfort in these signs because the first fruit was an indicator of the bountifulness of the harvest to come; they were told to rejoice!

Matthew Henry says, "It is the will of God that we should be cheerful, not only in our attendance upon his holy ordinances, but in our enjoyments of the gifts of his providence. Whatever good thing God gives us, it is His will that we should make the most comfortable use we can of it, yet still tracing the streams to the fountain of all comfort and consolation."

In the New Testament, the initial work of the Holy Spirit is called the first fruits. The evidences of signs and wonders that were seen by thousands was not the whole

harvest, but just the first signs of the harvest to come. Yet, warnings were given by Jesus himself that there would be those who would attempt to sow bad seeds in the fields to frustrate the hope of the first fruits and the eventual yield of the harvest itself.

Jesus warned that there would be those who would sow doubt, dissension and mistrust among the believers, trying to destroy the eventual harvest. This dissent and doubt he described as "tares" which were not to be pulled up and destroy, but allowed to grow beside the "wheat." Seeking to destroy the tares only sidelined the harvest effort. They are to be allowed to continue with the knowledge that when the harvest truly comes, the tares would be destroyed in the fires of condemnation.

The Holy Spirit's work is producing the first fruits among believers, despite the presence of the tares. Believers should continue to rejoice for the work of God that we see now is only a fore-runner of things to come.

Bringing the first fruits

These texts indicate precisely how believers should approach the harvest and the presence of tares as the reapers begin their work.

REJOICE OVER THE FIRST FRUITS: Israel celebrated when the first ears of corn and other crops were reaped. They rejoiced and gave thank for the first fruits in expectation of greater things to come. Today believers have many signs in the individual and corporate life of the church that the harvest will be great. When the first fruits come, we should rejoice and give thanks. We should thank God and rejoice for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind. This spirit of thanksgiving for the first fruits is supported in scripture. The verb ''to give thanks'' occurs thirty-eight times and the noun ''thanksgiving'' another fifteen times in the New Testament. Paul gave thanks. Jesus gave thanks for everything. The disciples gave thanks to God for every sign and every wonder He gave as an evidence of His faithfulness to believers. The first fruits represent the full harvest which is yet, unseen; yet it was the object of thanks. So, believers today give thanks for both the seen and the unseen; both the blessing already received and the blessing expected.

ADORATION AND WORSHIP: When believers celebrate the harvest, we revive the Old Testament tradition of celebrating what God has done for us through worship and praise. That is important because there are some who cheat God by withholding worship and praise

One day those who refuse to worship or sit in worship services like statues refusing to say Amen or show any sign of gratitude for the blessings of the Lord will find themselves outside of the ark of safety and in their place, the rocks will cry out glory and honor! Israel worshipped by commandment, but today's believers celebrate out of gratitude and appreciation for what God has done for us.

When God has blessed us, we should be willing to praise him and lift him up in the sanctuary so that everyone can see the joy we share in the Lord. Instead, many whom God has blessed richly, choose to stay home regularly and refuse to praise him publicly,

or if they do worship, it is in a very unresponsive manner.

What we offer God today should be 24-karat adoration and praise that can withstand beatings, twisting, anger, confusion and any other malady that may come our way. The beauty of our praise is based on our relationship with God that is never diminished by time or circumstances.

BIND THE TARES: As the harvest approaches there will be many who will plant bad seeds hoping to destroy the harvest. We see this in operation today as many of the good works of the church are brought into question by skeptics and doubters. We see false religions and prosperity twists being applied to the works of the Holy Spirit all over the world. Yet, when the harvest comes, the reapers will be commanded to bind the tares and destroy them, just as the devil himself will be bound and cast into the everlasting fires of hell.

Church leaders should not be overly frustrated that there are tares in the field because the savior has given us specific instructions. Don't spend too much time trying to pull up tares lest we harm the harvest, but when the time is right the Savior Himself will do the separating. Our main focus should be the gathering of the "sheaves." When we bring in the sheaves we will sing the words of the old hymn, "Bringing in the sheaves! Bringing in the Sheaves! We shall coming rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves!"

Don't forget to give God thanks

Finally brothers and sisters, when we have seen the evidence of the first fruits let us not forget the importance of saying thanks to God for the harvest!

There are many who receive from God, but forget to say thanks, but we who are laborers in the vineyard must keep a spirit of perpetual gratitude.

We have the first fruits in our hands, but there is more to come if we can say thank you.

We have the first fruits of health and strength, but there is more to come if we can say thank you.

We have the first fruits of peace and tranquility, but there is more to come if we can say thank you.

We have the first fruits of joy and happiness, but there is more to come if we can say thank you.

Even the little children know how to say thank you:

Thank you for the world so sweet,

Thank you for the food we eat,

Thank you for the birds that sing,

Thank you, God, for everything.

It may sound too simple for the adult mind, but it does not take a Harvard scholar to understand that a simple Thank you can go a long ways in life.

When God has blessed us with the first fruits of the harvest we need to say thank you.

We should say thank you because we serve a God who is in the prayer answering business.

If the week is about to begin with financial troubles looming everywhere, take it to the Lord in prayer.

If there is a problem in your family that you can't solve take it to the Lord in prayer.

After you have prayed about it, step back and watch God work!

God can take bad situations and turn them around!

God can take unemployed hands and help them find work!

God can take empty purses and filled them with blessings!

God can take failures and turn them into successes!

There has never been a problem that God couldn't solve!

There has never been a valley too low for God to pull you out!

There has never been a mountain to high for God to climb!

There has never been a river so wide that God couldn't cross it!

Call on Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Call on Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

When He arose He was the first fruit of the kingdom, but when the harvest comes.....

No. 9531-Inspiration

All the people stood up

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 13, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up," Nehemiah 8:5

Introduction

What does it mean to stand up for the Lord? A new practice was introduced into the church just over two decades ago in many non-denominational churches. It is the practice of standing when the minister reads the initial text of the sermon. No matter how long the passage many are now being taught that they should stand whenever the word is read. This practice indicates that those standing have respect for the word of God. It is a ritual rather than a doctrine or creed, because worshippers only have to stand the first time the word is read, not all of the other times that the word is read in the course of the sermon.

It is a new practice because in the old church only the person who read the Scripture actually stood; and even then, standing was only required in formal situations. In the old church people would stop walking if someone was in the process of reading the Scripture. Conversely, if a person was reading the Scripture and someone continued to walk, the person reading would stop until that person was seated. It was an old-fashioned way of indicating the holiness of the word.

At best all of these practices are rituals and ceremonies that have little meaning to the Lord. It is doubtful that God is impressed with the fact that we stop walking when the word is read, if we continue walking in disobedience of what is being read. God is probably not impressed with any of our rituals whether it is standing when the Scripture is read, pausing and not walking, or making sure that no one stacks anything on the Bibles in our homes. Rituals are meaningless unless they are backed up by heartfelt and sincere actions.

While there is no harm in the practice believers must be aware that there is no saving grace in any of our rituals and customs, or practices. They are just that, practices that differ from worship center to worship center. In one worship center people stand and in another worship center people sit until asked to stand. It's all ritual and custom that has some basis in Scripture but is always secondary to the life we live and present to God.

Standing up for the Lord means more than simply standing when a Scripture is

read; it also means standing for Him even if we have to stand alone. Consider the boy who sat on the back row of his school classroom and watched as his teacher stood from behind his death and posed a challenge to the class: "If there is anyone in this class that considers himself stupid, will you please stand up!" There was a long silence. Not a student moved. The teacher bellowed his challenge again: "If there is anyone in this class that considers himself stupid, will you please stand up?" After a long silence the boy slowed rose from his back row seat and stood tall." Taken aback, the teacher asked the boy "Son do you consider yourself dumb?" The boy looked at the teacher and dropped his head in a half smirk and half smile then said, "No teacher, I just hate to see you standing all by yourself!"

Crazy Cassie Bell came to church every Sunday wearing the same funny hat, beat up jacket and torn dress. She never set down in the church service she always stood at the back door right next to one of the ushers. In her pocket she carried a small bottle of whiskey out of which she sipped all during the church service. She always had a brown paper bag which she placed on the floor and placed her right foot upon it. No one knew what was in that paper bag and not a soul in the church would dare ask. Finally, one day one of the children asked her, "Miss Cassie Bell what's in the paper bag?" She looked at the child with a frowning eye and pulled out a giant family Bible. She took a sip of whiskey and told the child, "I believes when you come to church you should stand on the word." With that she took another sip of whiskey and put her foot back on the Bible.

Standing up for the Lord has very little to do with ritual, but it has a lot to do with character, humility, faith, and obedience.

As Christians, we are committed to stand up for the Lord in real ways that demonstrate our faith and our trust in the power of God. Our ceremonies mean nothing if they do not reflect themselves in the way we live, breathe and have our being.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the reading of the Scripture by the prophet Ezra as the people stood to hear his words.

Ezra had been in Jerusalem for about 13 years trying to reestablish the worship and study of the Holy Scriptures. It had been many years since the people had heard the word of God read to them. They made a special request of the prophet Ezra to retrieve the sacred scrolls and to read to them the word of God as it was revealed to Moses. People came from near and far to hear the Scriptures read.

To accommodate the large crowd of people a special pulpit was made and raised high so that Ezra could be seen and heard by as many as possible. The old man was assisted by several men who stood by his side as he read to them for six hours. They were all ears. As he read the Scriptures to them the people stood and remained standing for half a day.

According to John Gill the people stood up so that they might better hear the law were read as well as out of reverence for the occasion.

The Jews say that from the times of Moses to Rabban Gamaliel, they learned the law only standing; but after his death they learned it sitting. Today it is the rule with them, that it is not necessary to stand at the reading of the law.

When Jesus came ceremonial rules such as these were debated among the scribes and Pharisees who split hairs over whether the fine points of the law and Jewish custom were being carried out. He emphasized the importance of character, love, and faithfulness to God over any of the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. He never issued a command to His disciples to stand up and read, but he did expect them to live so that their lives would stand for something.

All the people

The text notes that all the people stood up. They were hungry for the word of God and asked for the word to be read to them even if they had to stand six hours to hear it read. That is the kind of commitment that Christ looks for in believers today; willingness to stand for the word of God.

What if all the people today would stand up for the Lord? Would the world be different?

In Ephesians 6:13 Paul says all believer should put on the whole armor of God that they might be able to withstand the devil. He concluded that verse by saying, "Having done all, to stand."

It is the responsibility of every child of God to stand up for those things which are right and stand up against those things which are wrong.

But sometimes to stand up requires us to speak up. To be the lone voice in the wilderness that declares that the "kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Speak up to declare that the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life."

To stand also implies two other "ups." To stand up means that you will not back up and you will not give up.

I hear Paul saying "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me" form the love of God.

Storms may rise. But I won't back up!

Winds might blow. But I won't give up!

Grow Up

The text says all the people stood up. They walked many miles and sought to know more about God's word for themselves. This indicated that they had grown in their faith. Before anyone is able to stand up for the Lord, we too must be willing to grow up!

There are many in the world today who have failed to assume the responsibility that their age requires. To these we say, it's time to grow up.

Too many young people who are still depending on their parents to perform minor tasks for them such as making their beds, washing their dishes, and dirty clothes; it's

time to grow up.

Too many the adults who have achieved the maturity of years but still behave like teenagers; it's time to grow up.

To the marginal Christians who pray little, read nothing and are only held to the faith by good singing and hard preaching; it's time to grow up.

When I was a child, I thought like a child, but now that I have matured I shall put away childish things

Pray up

Text says all the people stood up. When Ezra spoke words of adoration to God they answered Amen. We too should be prayed up and ready to say Amen that indicates we are willing to follow the will of God.

James 5:16 says, "The reverent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." I Thessalonians 6:17 says, "Pray without ceasing". Every Christian is reminded of the need to "pray up."

Unfortunately there are many today who have not been convinced of the power of prayer.

They want to stand up and speak up, before they get themselves prayed up!

They reject the weekly prayer meeting as an exercise good for others but not good enough for themselves. They conveniently time their arrival at meeting, worships and rehearsals so they can make their entrance when they feel the prayer has ended.

The people of the text understood this biblical truth, that's why they answered "Amen" meaning so be it.

We are encouraged to pray without ceasing, because regardless to what the skeptics say, prayer changes things.

Prayer can move uncrossable mountains.

Prayer can lift us from the valley of despair.

Prayer can resolve difficulties and maintain the peace.

Prayer can change the direction of wayward lives.

Prayer is the key to the kingdom. Faith unlocks the door.

More Ups

All the people of the text stood up, but there are many people today who are doing everything except standing up.

There are some who are trying to store up and lay up treasures on this earth. In Matthew 6:20 said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves do not break through and steal, for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." Jesus is encouraging us to lay up treasures in heaven.

All the people in the text stood up, but many today can't stand up because they are too busy shacking up and racking up, slipping up and messing up.

Lifting Jesus Up

Finally, brothers and sisters, what would happen if all people stood up and lifted Jesus up?

If we shifted our focus from empty ceremony and meaningless ritual and actually ministered to those in prison, fed the poor and the hungry, comforted the lonely, and saved the lost we would stand up for God in such a powerful way that all of the heavens would take notice.

What would happen if all the people stood and told the world that we serve a risen savior who provides:

HOPE for the hopeless and STRENGTH for the weak.

DIRECTION for the lost and COMFORT for the lonely.

FREEDOM for the bound and BLESSING for the BURDENED

When the storms of life are raging, what would happen if all the people stood and said, our God is able to speak to any storm

POLITICAL storms, FINANCIAL storms, EMOTIONAL storms, MEDICAL storms, PHYSICAL storms;

What would happen if all the people stood and said, "Our God is able to speak to your storm and say, Peace be still?"

What would happen if all the people stood and said, "We serve a God who HAS:

—DELIVERED us from our sins!

—GIVEN Us unspeakable joy!

—COMFORTED in our time of sorrow!

—STRENGTENED us in our time of weakness!

—SATISFIED US with the bread of heaven

—QUENCHED OUR THIRST with the living water!

What would happen if all the people stood and lifted Jesus up, not by just standing up when someone reads, but in their words actions and deeds?

What would happen if all of the people told the world about the power of the Cross as the source of salvation?

What would happen if all the people stood and lifted Him up saying, "He's the Lily of the Valley?"

Lift Him up; He's the bright and morning star.

Lift Him up; He's the fairest of ten thousand.

Jesus said, " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

What if all people stood and said, "When I was lost in my sins, He picked up an old rugged cross and substituted Himself for me!

What if all people stood and said, "They crucified Him for me?" He died for me!"

...But Early Sunday morning!

Early Sunday Morning!

Let all people say Amen!

No. 9533-Deliverance

It's not how you got in, but how you get out!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 4, 2011

SCRIPTURE: And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. Genesis 15:13-14

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself in a world of trouble? If so, how did you get out? There have been many stories told about our brushes with trouble and how we found a way. We have heard a variety of hair raising recollections over the years. The accounts have included auto accidents, financial disaster, family tragedies, business failures, medical dilemmas and worlds of troubles that seem to seize us and squeeze the life out of us.

Those of us who hear these testimonials can relate to the causes of the various quagmires described. We can relate to symptoms ignored, leading to major illnesses or over spending our budgets resulting in financial problems. We know how weeds came into our gardens the problem is, "How do we get them out??

That's the joy of listening to a Christian testimony. We don't just tell our friends and neighbors the depth of our situation, but we offer bold testimony that describes how we resolved the problem.

The world doesn't expect believers to never face problems, what they wait for is the rest of the story; they want to see how we work it out. When the preacher and his wife are having problems that is not unusual; what people want to know is how they worked it out! The Sunday school teacher that has a personal issue is not unusual; we know how easy it is for personal issues to appear. What the world wants to know is how did the dilemma come out?

We are inspired by many of the characters of the bible because, like us, many of them found themselves in trouble, but found the way out. The widow woman who was down to her last cruise of oil placed her trust in God and worked that problem out! The same is true of the woman with issue of blood; she had a problem but she worked it out with the just a touch of the hem of His garment. That's why we like David who got himself

in trouble, but he worked it out by repenting.

As we study God's word we see many people just like ourselves who found themselves in a world of trouble, but somehow arose from their situation. When we watch what they did and try it ourselves, we find that we too can resolve our troubles the same way.

As Christians, we revel in the fact that God reaches down and touches the faithful, while they are in the midst of their troubles and shows them the way out. That's when we can testify that it is not important how we got ourselves into our troubles, but how we got out.

Exposition

This text focuses on God restating a promise that he made to Abraham concerning his family's future.

In Genesis 12 God told Abraham to leave his homeland and begin to travel from place to place until he reached a land that God would show him. That land became known as the Promised Land.

God promised Abraham that his family would possess and own all the land he could see and that his family would be so great that people would have a better chance counting the stars of the heaven than counting his offspring.

This chapter finds God repeating that promise to Abraham, but with a caveat.

At Genesis 15:13 God gives Abraham a warning that between the promise and the fulfillment of the promise many things would happen that would to be a lost cause and futile. He was told take heart.

He was told that "of a surety" his family would move around a lot, and would be strangers in distant lands that were not their own. The same verse notes that they would endure 400 years of hardships and affliction. God said he would judge the nation that enslaves them, but in the end he would bring Abraham's descendants out of their troubles more blessed than when they went in.

Four hundred years later this prophecy proved true. Joseph became a prominent official in Egypt and in a gesture of goodwill invited his family to move to Egypt. They served Egypt for many years. However, the death of Joseph a king arose who "knew not Joseph" and their troubles began. Their children were killed, the people were enslaved and endured unheard of afflictions.

At the end of the 400 years, as promised By God they marched out of Egypt as free men and women carrying with them both the wealth and knowledge of Egypt as they traveled to the promised land.

It did not matter how they came to be slaves in Egypt or how they suffered afflictions. What was important was how they came out. They came out with great substance, having been blessed by the hand of God.

Three ways out

We know how we got into our Egypt, but how do we get out? We have a pretty good idea what caused our problems, but the primary question is, "How do we get out?" We must do what can be done under our own power, but while we are doing what we know how to do, we must put our spiritual lives into high gear, if we intend to get out! There are three ways to arise and step out of our troubles:

PRAY YOUR WAY OUT: The first step to getting out of dire situations is to pray your way out.

When we want something from God the first step is to pray.

When we pray we talk to God and tell him the sincere desires of our heart. When we pray we pour out our souls to him. We empty our spirit and prostrate ourselves before Him.

When we pray God hears us and responds to our prayer request. The only requirement that God has of us is that we abide in him and that his words abide in us.

Before we start talking to God about our troubles we must humble ourselves before him and repent for our sins. We repent because we dare not ask God for blessings while we are practicing sinners. Second, we ask God to show us His and submit ourselves to Him. In humility, we pray, without ceasing, not that our troubles would end, but that His will should be done. Praying for the will of God to be done opens doors for us. When doors open we can find a way out.

It does not matter how we came to be in a situation, what matters is how we get out. The first step is to pray your way out.

PAY YOUR WAY OUT: When we are seeking God's help in a troubling situation, we must remember to pay our vows to Him, despite the circumstances that we face. In Psalm 116:14 David said, "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people." Our vows are the promises that we made to the Lord at one time or another. David writing the Psalms asked, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His mercies?" That's when he answered that one thing he would do is pay is vows.

Despite our troubles we must find a way to pay our vows to God.

There is a story told about a 300 lb. man who went to his preacher and said, "Pastor, I'm so depressed. I've tried to lose weight & I can't. I'm in trouble. I can't even get a date. Can you help me?"

The preacher said, "Well, I think I can. Go home & be ready at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning." The preacher warned him that even though he was showing him the way out of his problem, the day would come when he would have to pay it back. The man agreed.

The next morning his doorbell rang and the man opened the door expecting the preacher to be there. But instead, there stood a beautiful girl with the face of Halle Berry and a shape like Beyonce' who said, "The preacher says that if you can catch me I'm yours." Then she took off running. Well, this guy took off after her, huffing and puffing. Of course, he couldn't catch her. This continued for six months he lost 120 pounds. The next to last morning, he almost caught her. Well, he could hardly wait for the next day

to come because he knew that he would catch her that morning for sure.

The next morning the doorbell rang. He opened it eagerly, but there stood a 400 lb. woman. She said, "The preacher said that if I can catch you, I can have you." As he took out running, he remembered the preacher's warning…it was now payback time!

Somebody here today told the Lord:

—If you heal me I'll give you my service all the days of my life!

—If you get me a job I'll give a tenth of my earnings unto the Lord!

—If you save my child I'll give you the praise until I die!

No matter what we promised God, we must keep our promises to Him. Hannah told God if he would allow her to conceive a child she would dedicate the child to His service. Despite every motherly instinct in her, once the child was born, she took him to the priest and kept her vow.

Likewise, when we are facing difficult times we must continue to pay our vows to God.

That promise you made to read your bible more, pay it!

That promise you made to start praying and worshipping more, pay it!

That promise you made to start doing more in the service of the Lord, pay it!

Pay it even in trouble. Not only should you pay your vow, but it might be a good idea to shift it into high gear in troubling times!

It doesn't matter how you got in your situation, it's how you get out. One way out is to keep your promises to God!

PRAISE YOUR WAY OUT: When you find yourself in difficult situations we must continue praise and give thanks. That might sound odd to some, but believers have learned that we should praise God constantly, even when we are in trouble. Not only do we give God thanks for blessings, but we also give Him thanks for our troubles. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. The word everything includes our troubles and problems. We thank God for everything, because we remember Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This is the strange biblical principle in which God turns bad into good, poverty into riches, sickness into health, jail into freedom, and failure into success. Since believers know that the troubles we face will ultimately be for our good we praise and thank God in the middle of our troubles.

Thus, we thank Him for everything, even if it appears there is nothing for which to be thankful, thank Him anyway!

Thank God for the bill collector!

Thank God for your enemies and haters!

Thank God for the family problem!

That means wherever I go I will praise the Lord!

I may be flying in an airplane but I'll praise the Lord!

I may be sailing on board the rolling sea, but I'll praise the Lord!

I may be driving along the crowded highways, but I will praise the Lord!

Lift His name up in praise because you know that even though you cannot see how, God is using your situation to your good.

He allowed you to get in it, so that when you get out of it, you will be better off from having been in it!

To Get out, follow God's command

Finally, brothers and Sisters we must remember that to get out of trouble we must move at God's command.

God told Abraham that his family would see difficulties, but those difficulties would prepare them to come out with greater substance.

They went in a small family of 70 people; they came out a great nation of more than one million.

They went in without possessions, but they came out carrying the gold and riches of Egypt.

They went in and became wards of the state, slaves and second class servants; they came out as free men and women, first class citizens of the kingdom of God.

When it was time for Israel to come out they moved at God's command.

Even when it appeared that they faced more trouble at the Red Sea Moses told Israel to stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord!

If trouble erupts in your home, it doesn't matter how you got in, Stand still and talk to God about it; and he'll show you how to get out!

If there is an answer that seems to evade you, it doesn't matter who posed the question, stand still and talk to God about it and He will show you how to figure it out!

Have you reached a Red Sea? Are you faced with a River Jordan? Have you done all you know how to do? It doesn't matter how you made it to it, but stand still and talk to God about it and He'll you how to get out!

The voice of frustration speaks to you when you are in trouble, it says, "Look at the trouble you are in." Yet the word of God reminds us not to focus on how much trouble we are in, but how God will get us out! That's why Isaiah said in 40:31, But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

The voice of defeat tells you to look down, but the voice of God says, don't focus on the severity of the situation, but focus on how God will get you out! Don't give up! Just look up! Psalm 121 says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!"

When the storm rages, stand still, do your best and let God do the rest!

When trouble is all around you, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Lord...stand still!

When your worries overwhelm you, be not dismayed, God will take care of you!

Through every day over all the way, He will take care of you!

God will take care of you!

When trouble comes think about the goodness of the Lord!

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Think about how He died out on Calvary!

The joy that we have is not focusing on the events that put Him in the grave, but our joy comes when we remember how it got out of it!

Early Sunday morning! He arose with all power in his hands!

No. 9534-Inspiration

They could not know Him because they knew Him

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

December 11, 2011

SCRIPTURE: Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Matthew 13:55-58

Introduction

Is it possible that people who have known your family for as long as you can remember may not know you at all? There are many people in your neighborhood who profess to know your family, its history, and its origins. When the elders speak they detail events, circumstances, and peculiar actions of members of your family with such striking attention to detail that it becomes obvious that they are, at the very least, extremely familiar with your family circumstances. With such a large amount of knowledge available to them, is it possible that the same people may not know you as an individual? Is it possible to know the family but not know individual family members.

It is extremely difficult to compete with the neighborhood image of your family. It is often frustrating to many young people when they hear of the great accomplishments of members of their family in the past; they feel compelled to live up to the expectations of their neighbors. When another generation of students attends a school their family name conjures recollections of previous scholars in their family. Conversely, students who must follow in the paths of family members who have a less than honorable trail can also feel frustrated because they are expected to act according to the pattern set by those who preceded them. In any event, it is extremely difficult when you are not evaluated upon you own abilities, accomplishments, goal and mission, but are characterized by those of other people.

How many of the people who claim to know your family actually know you? They knew your dad or your mother, they were familiar with your cousins and your uncles, but how many of them know you? It may very well prove to be true that many people who know your family and are acquainted with your relatives may not know you at all. That's primarily true because you don't really know a person until you've had some

interaction with them. You won't know people until you have seen their response to the various issues of life.

How well does God know us? Is he our the neighbors? Is he familiar with our movements and what we do and say but is unfamiliar with the thoughts of our mind? God knows us very well. In fact, God knows us better than we know ourselves. The psalmist wrote "He knoweth my down sitting and mine uprising; he knoweth the thoughts of my mind before I think them." God knows our family and unlike the neighbors he knows all of the intricate details of the lives of every member of our household.

As Christians, we should be pleased to know that God knows who we are, where we are, and what we need. We know God and God knows us, that is the assurance that we take with us as we proceed to light each and every day.

Exposition

This text focuses on Matthew as he explains the difficulty that the residents of Nazareth had trying to accept the divinity of Christ.

As a boy, Christ was reared in the town of Nazareth. It was a small town with a population between 1600 and 2000 people. Small towns are clannish; everyone knows everybody.

In small towns, there are very few secrets.

In small towns it is very difficult to hide a specific gift, profession, or calling.

Someone in a small town knows nearly everything about everything.

For the first 30 years of Jesus' life He lived in a small town atmosphere with the neighbors were familiar with His father the carpenter. They knew His mother Mary and they knew His four brothers: Joses, James, Simon and Judas. They also knew his sisters. The neighbors were fully acquainted with all of the attributes of Joseph's household: their education, finances, abilities and disabilities. In fact, there was very little about this family that the neighbors did not know.

While the neighbors thought they were familiar with every aspect of Joseph's family there were a few things that were family secrets, things that were kept private until the appropriate time. For 30 years, Mary and Joseph did not tell a soul in Nazareth about the circumstances of Jesus' birth down in Bethlehem. Neither were they told about the visit of the shepherds, the songs of the Angels in the heavens, the star that shone brightly in the night, or the expensive gifts they received from travelers from the East who came to see the Christ child.

When Jesus began his public ministry he began it at home. He began preaching and teaching the word of God although he had no formal training. He noticeably taught as one who had authority and they begin to wonder among themselves. They saw Jesus as the boy down the street. They saw Jesus as a young man who assisted his father in the construction of chairs in the building of houses as a Carpenters apprentice. They saw Jesus as a regular man; they did not see him as a son of God because they saw him in his humanity rather than his divinity. It is Jesus operating

in his divinity that saves our souls. Is Jesus through his humanity that feels our pain. Believers see him both as a Savior and the personal God that he is.

POTENTIAL IS OFTEN BURIED: For 30 years the people of Nazareth did not notice the hidden potential in Joseph's son. They watched the way He carried himself, His self discipline, and his respect for the law. However, they did not see his hidden potential. They saw him every day but did not see the signs. When we are able to see the potential in a person it raises our expectations. Too often people around us expect very little from us because they cannot see the potential. We are often blind by what we see. This blindness keeps us from seeing the potential.

We see the bad boy in school; we can't see the police chief in him.

We see the person who sprays graffiti on the wall; we can't see the next Impressionists artist that is in him.

We see the kid who likes to crack jokes; we can't see the next Bob Hope, Jay Leno, or Cedric the entertainer.

When God sees us He does not see us as our neighbors see us; He sees our potential.

One reason God never gives up on us is that he sees what we can be. Often we do and say some crazy things, yet God never gives up on us. Somehow he looks beyond our faults, flaws and failures and sees our needs.

In the same sense there are many who have been familiar with God for many years but do not know him either. Because they do not know him their expectations are reduced to fit what they actually know. Jesus once showed his believers a little small mustard seed and told them if they had the faith of a mustard seed they could do the impossible. He showed them the potential of what they could release if they had faith in him. We have not done much for the Lord often because we have low expectations despite having high potential.

We expect little from a big God who is frustrated from our small expectations.

Our achievements are small although we know a big God who is frustrated because we won't ask for anything bigger.

When our potential is recognized we start to realize that we don't have to have small expectations. We can dream bigger! We can expect God to bless the work of our hands!

The advantage of knowing God is that he knows our potential, but most importantly we know his potential to make a difference in our lives.

Familiarity is Not Intimacy

The people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus as a neighbor, they did not know him intimately. If they had known him intimately they would not have been surprised by his teachings, and unique relationship with God as his Son. Today, there are many people who are familiar with us but they don't really know us. On your job there are coworkers who know your name and a few facts about you, but they don't really know you.

In a broader sense there are many people who walk with Christ without knowing him.

They are familiar with them but they don't know him. There are millions of people who have been associated with the church, work in its ministries, sing, pray and even attend its worships, but do not know him.

There are many who are church members but are not Christians.

They are members of a church but they are not a part of the body of Christ.

The men on the Emmaus Road walked with Christ and talked with him, but they did not know Him. God has been blessing us in our walk, but many still do not know Him. That's when we remember the 1972 Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes song title, If you don't know me by now, you will never, never, never know me!

The people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus but they did not know him. They could not sing the words of the song that says, "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses.... And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

When you know the Lord is more than familiarity it is intimacy.

When you know the Lord there is a closeness that exists between you and he that lifts you when you are down, inspires you when you are discouraged, and restores you when you are completely exhausted.

This is the intimacy that the old warriors sang about when they said, "I've tried the man and the man is all right."

No miracles at home

Since Jesus lived in Nazareth it would appear that his neighbors would have an inside track to receive the benefits of the wonder working power of his ministry. Yet, Matthew 13:58 speaks volumes about what the people of Nazareth actually received: not many mighty works. In all other areas around Nazareth Jesus was able to do many mighty works. Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cause the blind to see. However at home there was a sad note, "not many mighty works."

The same verse gives the reason the people did not believe him. At home those who did believe in him were blessed by him. Not many implies that there were some who did believe and were blessed. The large crowds that pressed to see Him in other towns were nonexistent in Nazareth.

In Nazareth, they could not know Him because they thought they knew him.

In response to his rejection by his own neighbors Jesus said prophets are always received r wherever they go, except in their own hometown. The same may be said of many great people who are acknowledged around the world, but when they come home their greatness is not recognized.

Just as the people of Nazareth did not take advantage of the power that was within their borders, today we often failed to capitalize on the power of God that is within our reach.

When we are sick often are healing is just a prayer away. Yet, some won't pray because they dismiss prayer as superstition.

When we are in trouble our deliverance is nearby. Yet, some are never delivered

because they don't believe God is able to address their situation.

When we have failed our restoration is forthcoming. Yet, some wallow in self-pity rather than rebound because they believe God has abandoned them.

Jesus was not able to do in a great work in Nazareth because the people had no faith in him. The only thing that stops the power of God from being released in our lives is our lack of faith. We have not because we ask not.

Those who know the Lord

Finally brothers and sisters, those who know the Lord know what to expect from him because they have tried Him for themselves.

The people of Nazareth were not blessed the way they could have been because they didn't know the Lord they only knew his family.

Since they did not know him they did not expect him to respond to them in a personal and intimate way.

However that is not the case among those who know the Lord for themselves. Those who know the Lord have a different set of expectations, but most importantly they what God expects of them:

God expects us to keep the faith and never let go of our passion and love for Him.

God expects us to resist the temptation to flirt with the world.

God expects us to get up after we stumble and try again!

God expects us to continue to worship Him and give him praise!

God expects us to get up if we fall, fail or experience defeat!

God expects us to keep trying, never stop striving and always move forward!

God expects us not to doubt Him. As long as God is still on the throne, God expects you to remember that if you are:

—Praying for Rain, you need to get your umbrella ready!

—Praying for bread, you need to grease the pan!

---Praying for a job, you need to get your resume ready!

Why? Because God is able!

Don't stop expecting God to bless you!

Don't stop expecting God to open doors for you!

There is only one door. I heard him say in John 10:14, " I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

The Lord expects for you to remember to call His name!

His name is Jesus!

He came and died to raise our expectations and give us new hope!

He died on an old rugged cross to give us hope!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave to help us sing the old song, 'I know the Lord will answer prayer, I' tried him for myself!"

No. 9535-Christmas

Don't judge the gift by the wrapping

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 18, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."Luke 2:7

Introduction

Have you ever received a gift that was beautifully wrapped? A beautifully wrapped gift has a tendency to raise our expectations as to the contents. On the contrary, gifts that are poorly wrapped seem to indicate that the contents will be of very little value. Although we've all been warned not to judge a book by its cover, many of us still fall prey to the practice of judging the gift by the quality of the wrapping.

Each year more than $2.6 billion is spent on gift wrapping in the United States alone. Gift wrapping has become a self contained industry. The industry focuses upon paper, packaging and bows which comprise the majority of its revenues each year. Most gift wrapping revenue is generated during the Christmas season when it is unthinkable to simply place an item under a tree without some type of packaging, ribbon or beautiful method of presentation.

For many families wrapping gifts is a part of the Christmas experience. There are many humorous memories tied to the tradition of wrapping the presents. Remember that little small gift that was placed in the giant box stuffed with newspaper? Remember the bottomless box that had the puppy on the inside, but looked strange as the box moved across the floor? Remember the diamond ring that was wrapped with $.25 wrapping paper to disguise its presence? Every family has a few gift wrapping stories that are hilarious.

Our fascination with outward beauty often causes us to look under the Christmas tree for the biggest, most beautifully wrapped, presents and reach for them first on Christmas morning. Without knowing it we judged the quality of the gift by the beauty of the wrapping. That is why the gift wrapping industry has become a $1 billion enterprise around the world: we often Judge what's on the inside by what we see on the outside.

When God decided to give the world the gift of His son He didn't spend much time worrying about how he would be wrapped or whether there was a blue bow or not. In fact, there was no ribbon or fancy packaging at all; not even a Hallmark card to announce His presence. He was born in a cattle shed, laid in a manger and wrapped in inexpensive baby clothes. Yet, despite the inexpensive, even poverty-stricken appearance of the babe in the manger, this gift was the greatest gift that God would give to the world. It was a great gift that could not be judged by the wrappings.

As Christians, we should be appreciative of the gift that God gave to the world; the gift of his only begotten son. We should not judge the quality of that gift based upon its outward appearance but rather we should appreciate that what God gave to the world was a gift that far superseded its wrappings; it was the gift of salvation and the opportunity for eternal life for all of those who believe.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Caesar Augustus issued a decree that all persons living in the province of Judea should return to their home cities to register for taxation. Mary and Joseph being descendents of David returned to Bethlehem, the city of David, to register.

The couple had been informed in advance that Mary had been selected to serve as a surrogate to bring the son of God into the world. Through her, the words of John 1:14 had a fulfilled meaning, "And Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.)" The couple found no room available in the town of Bethlehem because so many people came for the taxation. However, they did acquire space in a stable in the back of the inn. It was a difficult and uncomfortable situation, however the stable with its accompanying manger tucked away in a cave provided shelter for the night.

During the night Mary gave birth to Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God; he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

The swaddling clothes, the manger, and the Inn are all symbolic of the poverty of Jesus; it was a low estate, certainly not one that would be expected of the person who was being born into the world as the son of God. This was not an accident. Christ intentionally came into this world in a low estate so that he could show by the humbleness of his arrival that he would be accessible to even the poorest of God's creation. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The circumstances of Christ's birth did not raise any high expectations. Those who would've expected him to be born in a palace would have been disappointed. Those who expected his clothing to be anything but the swaddling cloth they found were also disappointed. Little did the world know that a mighty big God had delivered the source of its salvation using an unknown 13 year old girl, a little baby, a manger and a swaddling

cloth.

Three Kinds of wrappings

There are three kinds of wrappings that reflect special truths about life that we should consider:

WRINKLED WRAPPINGS: A certain woman had a practice of saving the wrapping paper from her gifts each year and using it again the next year. She'd wait until her grandkids opened their presents, insisting that they not tear the paper, collect the paper, fold it and tuck it away. Without looking, they knew each year that the present under the tree with the wrinkled wrapping was from grandma, but despite its wrinkled, used look, she went out of her way and spared no expense to make sure that inside of the wrinkled paper was a gift of love. John Bonkoff in his book "Wrinkled Wrappings" talked about the gift that seniors bring into the lives their families. Grandparents and elderly caregivers are God's great gift to every family. It's the cakes and pies in the oven, the warm hugs and all that other stuff that comes wrapped up in grandparents.

A certain boy whose parent's died had to choose between living with his fun loving, loose living uncle or his elderly grandparents. Both wanted to care for him and a judge was asked to decide. The judge gave the boy the final choice. The young couple promised him a great time and lots of fun. The elderly grandparents promised that they would protect him, provide for him and love him. The boy looked at the two and said, "Judge I have two gifts in front of me, but I think I'll take the one with wrinkled wrapping." Sometimes the best gifts we can get is the love of parents and grandparents. 1 Samuel 16:7 "..for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

BIG GIFTS COME IN LITTLE BOXES: Often we assume that a big box under the tree means there is a big gift inside. We are all familiar with the pranks that some people play at Christmas. They put a very small gift in an oversized box then stuff it with paper and other items to disguise its content. The size of the box doesn't always indicate the quality of the gift. Consider the mother who received gifts from her two sons, neither of whom she had seen for a long time. One was successful and wealthy. The other was a beggar who sold cans just to eat every day. At Christmas the mother received a gift from each son. One was beautifully wrapped in the finest paper and came in a huge box. The other was about the size of an envelope and wrapped with old newspaper. As she opened the big box she was surprised to receive a coffee cup. The price tag of $1.98 was still stuck to the bottom. The poorly wrapped gift contained two dollar bills. It contained a note that read, "You gave me your all, and I give you all I have!" Though shabbily wrapped with newspaper and stuff in an envelope the mother cherished the two dollar bills and tucked them away with joy. One son had much, but gave little. The other had only two dollars to his name and gave it all. Big gifts come in little boxes.

In Bethlehem the world received a big gift, but it was in a little manger. It proved that you can't judge a gift by the size of the box or quality of its wrappings.

WRAPPINGS ARE NOT THE GIFTS: We often spend considerable time selecting the perfect paper, the perfect ribbon and the perfect bows for our gifts. They sit under the trees and we stare at them as we pass by each day. We admire the wrappings, the colors and their appearance under the twinkling lights. On Christmas morning we get a reminder of what's important. The paper is torn away, the ribbons are tossed and the bows are thrown aside. It's not the wrappings that people want; they want what is inside. The same is true when we think of the gift of love that we give to God. We can strip away our titles, achievements, status when we come before him because these are just the wrappings. What we should say to God is "here I am Lord, I am wrapped in so many things, but today I humble myself before you and surrender all." In Bethlehem we learned that it is not the swaddling cloth or the manger that the shepherds came to worship, it was the gift of salvation; that's what the world wanted then and still wants today.

Best gifts in poorly wrapped packages

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that some of the greatest blessings we have ever received came in poorly wrapped packages.

We can all testify that some of the best gifts we have ever received were poorly wrapped and some were not wrapped at all.

God has blessed our people in great ways sending us blessings in packages that would ordinarily be cast aside as worthless and unusable.

At a time when we need inspiration because of slavery and direction once we became free people, God sent us blessings in the persons of Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglas. Both were former slaves whose poverty and ignorance was exceeded only by their willingness to achieve. They were big gifts to our people, but the circumstances of their births were poorly wrapped.

Jesse Jackson was reared in dirt poor poverty with newspaper on the walls for wall paper. Yet he rose to champion the cause of the poor and has helped millions. He was a big gift to our people, but the poverty of his background, suggested he was very poorly wrapped.

Barak Obama was reared in the poverty of Indonesia and picked on as a child for having big ears and big dreams that would never come true; a child of mixed marriage and troubled adolescence was presented to the world as a future president, but the world would have never known if it judged the gift by its wrappings.

Wilma Rudolph was a young girl who could not walk without braces. She appeared doomed to an invalid's life. But when she won gold medals in the Olympics in track the world knew that she had a gift that could not be judged by the wrappings

The baby Moses came poorly packaged by modern standards. He was found floating in a basket among the bushes. The package was not pretty, but that young boy grew to become a great leader of his people. You can't judge the gift by the wrapping.

David came poorly wrapped He was small in stature, in comparison to his bothers; he was ruddy in nature. Yet God took a young shepherd boy and made him a king whose

character was of such that he was described as “man after God’s own heart.” David proved that you can’t judge the gift by its wrapping.

John the Baptist came in wrappings that disguised his true value. He roamed the deserts dressed crudely and eating wild locusts. Yet despite his package his was “the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare Ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” You can’t judge the gift by looking at the wrappings!

But Brothers and Sisters there was another gift that the world received but didn’t know what it had. John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!”

There was no greater gift that God could give the world than to send His Son.

Instead of sending Jesus into the world like a king, with armies all around him and trumpets blowing, God sent Jesus into the world as a little, tiny baby. He came in a plainly wrapped package

He was born in a stable and laid in a manger.

His family was poor and surroundings suggest frugality rather than royalty.

On the outside the small child born in poverty appeared to be marked as an “Article of no value.”

The world soon found out that you can’t judge the gift by the wrapping!

Those who have tried him declare that what they found in the gift of salvation was:

—Courage in the face of trial. Now they boldly say, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1

—Satisfaction in times of want. “The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1

—Guiding Hand in times of darkness. “Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through the barren land!”

He was delivered in a plain package!

He lived a plain life!

He died on a plain cross!

He was buried in a plain tomb!

But Sunday morning the world discovered that the man:

—who was born in a stable and came poorly wrapped in Bethlehem;

—grew up in the plain town of Nazareth;

— walked around in plain shoes for 33 long years;

— was crucified between two plain thieves;

—who was wrapped in plain burial clothes.

—who was sealed in His tomb by a plain old rock

Early Sunday the world learned that you can’t judge a book by its cover because this plain because He had risen with…

All Power!

All Power in his hands!

No. 9536-Christmas

The Greatest Gift was not under the Tree

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 25, 2011

SCRIPTURE: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:9-11

Introduction

What is the greatest gift you ever received on Christmas Day? No doubt you have received many gifts today, but what was the best one? Was it the one in the big box? Was it the one with the pretty paper? Was it the one in the back of the tree hidden from all of the rest? Some were fortunate this Christmas because they received many gifts; so many in fact, that some will have a hard time trying to decide which of them was the best?

What determines the best? Cost? Usefulness? Desirability? If it has fulfilled a long term wish or need? Each person who receives a gift may measure its greatness differently. Consider the young man who announced to his family that he wanted no one to bring him any gifts for Christmas because he already had the greatest gift. He wanted all of his nieces and nephews to come to his house on Christmas morning and see it. His nieces and nephews rushed to his house on Christmas morning to see the great gift, but they were surprised to find nothing under the tree; not a single present. "Where's the great gift you said you have received, we want to see it?" said a nephew as he and all of the other children looked all over the living room for the gift, but found nothing. The young man said, "It's not under the tree, but it's the greatest gift in the world!" The eyes of the children were expanding. "Better than Power Rangers? Better than Spider Man? Better than Transformers? Better than an Xbox?" they asked. The young man told them that he spent his teenage years with the wrong crowds. He lived wildly, used drugs and was finally arrested and served several years in prison. He said one night he listened to a preacher tell him about Jesus and his grace. That night he accepted Christ as His savior, and Jesus gave him a new spirit. "He took away my wildness, calmed my spirit, and gave me eternal life. A few months later I was granted

a parole. The greatest gift I have is not under the tree, it's the love of God in my heart. There's nothing anyone can give me that can top that!"

The bible tells us that God loved the world so much that he sent his only begotten son to offer salvation. In the past he sent Moses, Elijah, Samuel and many other great prophets, all with a message of reconciliation. When he ran out of remedies to resolve the issues of the world, as a last resort, he sent his Son to the world to bring the gift of eternal life.

As Christians we are eternally thankful to God for the gift of his Son. The wise men brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, but he brought the world the opportunity for eternal live; that's the greatest gift of all; it's too big to fit under the tree.

Exposition

This text focuses on the gifts brought by the Magi to the Christ Child. Much ado has been made about these men from the East who came to worship the Christ Child.

Officially, the wise men are known as Magi or astrological wise men. They studied the stars and claimed to be experts in interpreting dreams and other magical arts. The wise men in this text saw the star in heaven that indicated the birthplace of Christ. They chose to follow it although the journey would take them outside of their own land. Most theologians believe that the wise men in this text were from Babylon, Persia or the Arabian Desert. They were not Jewish by religion or nationality. Popular folklore claims that there were three wise men, but the text does not cite a number. Many believe the number of three came as a result of the three gifts that the wise men brought to the Christ child.

The wise men brought the Christ child gifts of Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Since these items were of immense value and were brought such a long way, they suggest the importance that the wise men placed upon the Christ child; who was even recognized by the great leaders of other lands as well. The fact that they came to see Jesus and that they brought him gifts as well, attests to the importance they placed on the deity of Christ. They gave the gifts and departed, asking nothing of him but returning filled with the joy of having seen the Lord for themselves.

The came from afar to bring Him gifts, but John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave His only Begotten son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

That Christmas morning was perhaps the world's first gift exchange. The wise man gave gifts to the Lord and God gave the world His son. That's was the greatest gift of all.

The wise men gave great gifts

The gifts given by the wise men represented the most treasured products of their nation. Gold frankincense and myrrh represented the gifts being present to one they presumed to be a great King, although he was only an infant at the time. What they

gave was the greatest gifts they had available. Believers today, give God the greatest gifts that we have available. Our gifts are our time, talents, and financial resources. Whenever anyone gives one of these to anyone it is considered a great gift. Many of us are stingy without time; we only share with those home we feel are important and we dole it out in proportion to the importance of the recipient. Likewise, we share our talents the same way reserving the right to place a charge on the use of our talents if need be. We are extremely careful about money that we give away even though we may not be as careful with monies that we throw away. When we give a gift more than a dollar, we often feel have done a great thing.

Believers give God all three of these gifts for the furtherance of the kingdom. Yet, despite how we feel about our gifts to God and no matter how great we think they are, our little gifts are hardly measurable when compared to what God gives to the world. If we had all the time in the world and all the money in the world and could focus all of the talents in the world upon lifting God up in praise and expanding his kingdom it could not compare with what God has done for us. What we do and what we give is certainly great but it is not the greatest gift of all.

Sometimes great gifts are not appreciated

God has given us great gifts both large and small, but often the gifts he has given us have going on used. First Corinthians 12 lets us know that God has given a variety of gifts to believers for the purpose of furthering his kingdom, yet many have not used those gifts; they remain unopened. To some he gave the gift of knowledge, others received the gift of wisdom, faith, healing, miracles, or languages, but too often these gifts have gone unused. They are like packages on the tree there were meant to bless us but have sat idle for many years. What you do when you put a gift under the tree and it goes unopened for years?

Consider the man who had an in-law that really irritated him every Christmas. The woman was a real pest, badgering him repeatedly about getting her a gift. As Christmas approached, with one shopping day left he couldn't find anything she didn't have. She called nearly every hour to remind him not to forget her present. In frustration, he called up his friend at the funeral home and arranged to buy her a funeral plot. On Christmas morning the in-law opened the envelope and saw the gift certificate for a funeral plot. She was pleased because it was a valuable gift. She hugged her relative with a big hug. However, the next year at Christmas she started doing the same thing. Every day she called reminding him about her gift. On Christmas morning however, she did not get a gift from him. Angry she called him and wanted to know why she didn't get a gift. The man said, Why should I get you a new gift this year, you haven't used the one I gave you last year!

All the talents that God has given us all available and come with batteries included, that the the power to make them work is included. All we really have to do is use them, but yet each year we ask God for more gifts and he is probably asking why should I give you more than you have and used the ones I have given you?

The greatest Gift

John 3:16 tells us about the gift that is not under the tree. It is God's greatest gift. Look at John 3:16 closer and see seven reasons why.

IT REVEALS THE GREATEST GIVER: God! Yes! God is the giver of the gift. He must be the greatest giver of all time, for He existed before time began. In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth - but that is not the gift. Then He created the water and the clouds, the fishes and the birds, the trees and all plant life, the animals and the angels and the crown of all his creation, mankind; GOD is "the greatest giver.'

THE GIFT WAS GIVEN FOR THE GREATEST REASON. There are many reasons why we do things including: greed, jealousy, hate, compassion, and kindness and But the greatest is true love, which springs from within and gives just to bring joy.

THIS GIFT WAS GIVEN TO THE GREATEST NUMBER. God's love is so all encompassing that have this this gift to every man, woman and child without discrimination: red, yellow, black, or white are all just shades of brown. No place or people is exempt. This is the greatest give because it is given to everyone

THIS GIFT WAS THE GREATEST BECAUSE GOD GAVE A PIECE OF HIMSELF-His son. The only gift that really satisfies is the gift of one person to another. To give of ourselves is a great gift, but when the greatest giver gives of Himself it is the greatest gift.

THIS GIFT HAS THE GREATEST INVITATION: God has offered this give to WHOSOEVER, that means anyone in the world who receives it and acts on it; opens it up and uses it can benefit from it without giving an RSVP.

THIS GIFT HAS GREATEST CONDITION. God makes this gift offer to everyone, but he must be opened and acted upon. It's a check on the bank of heaven, but it will never be cashed unless we believe that it is good. So the condition is that we believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that He lived and then died for the sins of the world, and that He rose from the dead on the third day having victory over sin and death and the devil.

THIS GIFT HAS GREATEST GUARANTEE: This gift promises all who believe that they will not perish, but will have everlasting life. This guarantee is not like the average warranty that comes with a gift from the store. That warranty runs out, only covers parts and labor or factory defects. If the products breaks after the warranty wears out too bad, but this gift has a life time warranty. Whenever our lives break down, He will fix it. And when it finally breaks down, he guarantees the owner eternal life....

Exchanging Gifts

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must look at the nature of the gift exchange

demonstrated by these two texts: What we give to God and what He gives to us. Neither of the gifts can be put under a tree.

On Christmas morning God gave us love.

The song writer said, Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me.

It would be wonderful if we would give him our trust and devotion.

This Christmas the Lord would certainly be pleased if we gave Him a little more attention and a little less neglect.

It would be great if we gave the Lord a little more love and little less hate;

-A little more peace and little less confusion;

-A little more gratitude and little less ungratefulness;

-A little more prayer and little less lip service;

-A little more compassion and a little less heartlessness;

-A little more real Christian love and little less imitation;

-A little more do as I do and little less do as I say

-A little more bended knee and little less crooked hearts

Can't you imagine God trying to make a decision about what to give us!

I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!

I could give them the moon, but after awhile, the moon would cease to shine!

I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for short and then comes the fall! I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!

I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life! But there will come a time when storms will rise!

I want to give them a gift that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

I want to give them a gift that will give them:

STRENGTH when they are feeling a little weak; COMFORT when they are feeling all alone!

VICTORY after they have suffered a defeat; HOPE when all hope is gone!

LIFTED HEAD when they are bowed down low; SIGHT when they can't see their way!

He decided to give us the gift that keeps on giving!

He was born in a manger, but He kept on giving!

He was wounded for our transgressions, but He kept on giving!

He was bruised for our iniquities, but He kept on giving!

They whipped him and tried him all night long, but He kept on giving!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, but He kept on giving!

They hung him up high and stretched him out wide, but He kept on giving!

He died but even in death, He kept on giving!

Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

The greatest gift is not under the tree..it is the gift of Salvation...

No. 9537-New Year

The year of God's favor

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 1, 2012

SCRIPTURE:To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. Isaiah 61:2-3

Introduction

January 1st is an especially important day for African-Americans, do you know why? It's the first day of the year of Jubilee. Our history tells us that on June 19, 1862 Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, announcing that all slaves in states still in rebellion against the United States would be free on January 1, 1863. The declaration was made on June 19th, called Juneteeth, but the big freedom day is January 1st.

Like the Children of Israel in the bible we waited on the last night in what we called "Watch meetings;" we waited for Jubilee.

Also like Israel we began a memorial meal to remember our journey. On January 1st we pledged to eat the food of slavery to remember the bitterness of our struggle: Black eyed peas, ham hocks, hog maws, chitterlings, and pig ears were the delicacies of the day. It was said that if we didn't remember our past with at least one of these items that we would have bad luck and would be returned to slavery.

All across Black America, at the very least, there will be black eyed peas on Jubilee Day.

The idea of Jubilee came from the bible. It was commanded by God that every 50 years that God's favor would be shown on all people. In the 50th year all debts were canceled including mortgages, loans, and personal guarantees. It also meant that all slaves were free to return to their homes. It was the year of Jubilee, the year of God's favor.

In the Old Testament they only celebrated Jubilee, or the year of God's favor every 50 years; that changed in the New Testament. Jesus set a new standard, He proclaimed that those who heard His voice and obeyed his commandments could make every year an acceptable year of the Lord, where sins were forgiven and the lost could be restored.

As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that each New Year we have a chance to settle

our debts with God and get a chance to start over enjoying His grace and favor. As we prepare to step into the New Year, we have joy and our hearts because He has promised that we about to step into the acceptable year of the Lord, full of mercy and grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophecy of Isaiah as he explains what is known as the acceptable year of the Lord.

Isaiah told Israel that God's spirit had directed him to bring good news to believers. It was a word of hope to those who were in prison, broken hearted, and otherwise dispirited by the difficulties of that present moment. The prophecy looked ahead to a day in which God himself would usher in an outpouring of divine actions that would lift the downtrodden and avenge wrongs done to the godly.

Isaiah's words were prophetic in that they looked forward to the coming of the savior who would fulfill them. When Jesus began his ministry he went to the synagogue, stood and read from Isaiah 61:1-2, but he stopped at the words to "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." -After reading it He sat down. His abrupt closure of the reading of Isaiah's prophecy focused considerable attention to the phrase "accepta
ble year of the Lord." What does it mean?

The Hebrew word for acceptable is râtsôn (raw-tsone') which means to be shown: favor, delight, and godly pleasure. When Jesus accentuated this part of Isaiah's prophecy he indicated His mission on earth: to save, lift, raise, inspire, motivate, comfort, and strengthen and to bring God's favor to believers.

The second part of Isaiah's prophecy would come later, but it is coming. Attached to the "acceptable year" was "and the vengeance of our God." The word "and" is a conjunction. Its use implies that the year of favor will also bring with it, in due season, the vengeance of our God. As it relates to Christ's mission, His first advent was to bring the good news and to lift the broken hearted. His second return will be to bring vengeance upon the enemies of God.

In between Christ's first and second coming believer's cling to the hope that each new year will be a year of God's favor and assurance that the enemies of the godly will be addressed.

It is a promise given to Isaiah for Israel and by Christ himself for the church. Keep the faith; a year of God's favor is on the way.

A year of favor

When we think of favor we think of extra kindnesses over and beyond the ordinary. If the coming year is to be a year of God's favor we should look closely at what Isaiah prophesied would happen in a year filled with God's favor.

COMFORT TO MOURNERS: Isaiah 61:2b-3 notes that God promises to bring comfort to those who lament over the conditions of the world around them. In Isaiah's time the threat of war troubled the people and saddenened them; they yearned for

peaceful times. Today, many people are mourning the loss of peaceful times. In recent years we have seen wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have seen its cost in human life and watched our nation stumble into debt, costing us jobs and threatening our security. Yet, in this mournful time, Isaiah brings a word of comfort "unto them that mourn in Zion." God is still in control. No matter how bad things look on the national horizon, be of good cheer. Even on the personal level when physical losses of life or comforts touch believers, the words of the text remind us that the acceptable year of the Lord is coming; don't give up, God is still on the throne.

RESTORATION OF LOSSES: When the acceptable year of the Lord comes there will be restoration of losses. Isaiah 61:3 notes that beauty or crowns will be exchanged for ashes, joy for mourning and praise will be exchanged for depressed spirits. What does that mean? It means that we should not focus so much on what we have lost, but rest assured that whatever our losses may be God will sift through the ashes and pull out a beautiful jewel. This year we saw images on television of communities totally destroyed by fires, floods and tornadoes. Our hearts dropped when we saw thousands of homes leveled and others buried beneath the ashes. We also saw heavy hearted families sifting through the ashes looking for a photo, an heirloom or some other sign of restoration; often a single photo, doll or keepsake. No picture was more touching than that of the mother lifting her charred bible from the ashes and holding it close to her heart; it was a clear sign of hope. The Greeks believed in a bird called the Phoenix. It lived a thousand years, but just before its death it was consumed in fire and reduced to ashes; then suddenly it was reborn and rose from the ashes. That's mythology, but the God we serve as promised to sift through ashes of our failed experiences and find beauty, and joy. He will give us something to sing about. It is this hope of restoration that gives us the incentive to look forward the acceptable year of the Lord.

MIGHTY MEN AND WOMEN OF GOD: In the year of God's favor, those who were weak and timid in the past will become stronger. Isaiah 61:3 says they shall become trees of righteousness. The Hebrew word for trees in the text is "ayil" which means strong, unmovable like a post or oak. It also means a mighty man or woman. Under God's favor the weak will become stronger and bolder. They will be so different from their past that people will notice that they are not falling victim to the same weaknesses that followed them in the past. Their sense of spiritual responsibility will increase, and their lives will become focused and enriched. It will be obvious that they are the "planting of the Lord" or that God is working in their lives. The mighty men and women of favor shall be like the trees of Psalm 1:3. Trees that are planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth fruit in season, whose leaves do not wither, and in under God's favor "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Trees put down deep roots. Trees stand tall and raise their arms to God in praise. In the year of God's favor we have the promise of renewal if we stand firm in the promises of God.

Glory In the New Year

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider the reason that God will shine favor

on the faithful in the New Year, because He will be glorified.

The last phrase of Isaiah 61:3 says, "that he might be glorified." It gives the reason that He will comfort, restore and strengthen us; because others will see what He has done in us and through us and He will be glorified.

This year when people see your renewed spirit, they will ask, What came over you; you are not the same. Your answer will be, "to God be the glory!"
This year when people see your cheerful spirit, they will, ask, "How did you come about this very positive attitude?" Your answer will be, "To God be the glory!"

Just because we expect this year to be the year of God's favor, it doesn't mean that you won't fall, but it does mean that you will get up again. Proverbs 24:16 says, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.."

Just because this will be the year of God's favor, it doesn't mean that you won't face any high water or troubling times, but it does mean that God will see you through to dry ground. I heard Isaiah 43:2 says, "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the river, they shall not overflow thee."

Just because the New Year is promising to be favorable, it doesn't mean that you won't have some frustrating moments, but it does mean that God will work it out. Romans 8:28 says, "..all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Just because the new year will be the acceptable year of God's favor, that does not mean that people are going to stop lying on you and saying bad things about you, but it does mean that God will take every evil word and fix it so that it blesses you. Matthew 5:11 says, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

I don't know about you, but I have a good feeling about 2012. There is something full and complete about the number 12 that makes you feel this is a miraculous number because it's used all over the bible.

God created the world in six days, but when he rested on the 7th day he had created 12 things.

God spangled the midnight skies with a canopy of stars that have been group into 12 astrological signs with strange names like Aries, Capricorn, and Sagittarius, twelve signs of the Zodiac.

There were 12 tribes of Israel and Jesus was surrounded by 12 apostles.

When Jesus said, "It's time for me to be about my father's business, he was 12 years old.

A woman came to Jesus with an issue of blood that she'd been dealing with for 12 years.

Jesus fed five thousand, but when it was over, there were 12 baskets of leftovers!

When Israel crossed over Jordan, the select 12 stones and placed in the middle of the water

The new Jerusalem will have 12 gates, each one made out of a pearl.

The city will sit on 12 foundations.

In that city there will be a tree that will bear 12 manner of fruit whose leaves will be

good for the healing of the nations.

I don't know about you, but I've got a feeling good about 12.

I got a feeling that God is going to open up the windows of heaven and pour out his favor!

The source of that favor won't be luck or good fortune. Only one name will get the glory His name is Jesus!

He carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill.

The hung Him up high. His feet were positioned on six. One hand was on three and another on nine, but with His head on 12 He called out to Father! Father! Forgive them for they know not what they do!

He died, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9538-New Year

Congealed by the Power of God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La

January 8, 2012

SCRIPTURE: And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. Exodus 15:8

Introduction

How did you make it to the New Year? Was it the black eye peas and hog maws you ate on New Year's Day? The black eyed peas were ceremonial, but they had nothing to do with you making it through all of adversity you faced last year. Neither was it the rabbit's foot, you medallion you wear around your neck or the horseshoe nailed over your door. You faced a lot of stuff last year and it was nothing but the grace of God that saw you through.

Think about it. Crime was high, employment reached 9 percent, the housing market plummeted, your 401K lost value, plants shutdown, sickness hit your family, and you were hit from all sides, yet you survived. How?

It's was not luck or good fortune, it was the Grace of God.

Last year, it was the as if the grace of God surrounded, protected and strengthened us.

The circumstances that you faced would have swallowed the average person, but yet you survived. God Himself stepped in and took the situations that should have destroyed us and held them back long enough for us to escape.

As Christians, we give thanks to God for making a way for us through dangers seen and unseen. His presence was with us in times of trouble to help us. In the year ahead, we are counting on that same Grace to carry us through.

Exposition

This text focuses on a song of praise Israel sang after passed through the Red Sea walking on dry ground.

This passage described their celebration after they made it to the other side. It shows them looking back and recalling that it was God, not good fortune, that delivered them.

For over 400 years the children of Israel lived in the land of Egypt, first as guests then as slaves. God delivered them from their enslavement and pointed them toward a land that would be flowing with milk and honey.

The word of God records how He began to rewrite the laws of nature and reorder scientific principles He established at the creation so that he could make a way for His people.

God prepared to perform a great miracle for his people. What He prepared to do was scientifically impossible, and philosophically illogical. God planned to split the Red Sea in half and to allow his people, along with their flocks and herds to walk through on dry ground. This would not be a small trail but a wide chasm large enough to accommodate the passage of two million people.

What God performed was an obvious miracle. He used a strong wind to blow back the waters and to hold them back until all of the Israelites passed through.

There would be no doubt that this was a miracle. The people were accustomed to strong winds blowing from North to South, because of the location of the sea and the surrounding topography. However, God chose to use neither the north wind nor the south wind but He caused a strong east wind to blow all night long, indicating that what was being done was in no way the usual blowing of the wind.

When the time came the waters rolled up like a scroll on the left-hand side and the right hand side creating a path through which Israel traveled to safety.

Exodus 14:22 says these waters formed a "Wall" on both sides. The word for wall that is used in the text is used in many places in Scripture to signify fortification and protection is "Homa" or God's protective presence.

To make that wall happen Exodus 15:8 says God "Congealed" (kaw-faw) or he froze them in place. It is the presence of the Homa and the Kaw-faw, the wall and the congealing presence that helped Israel to survive its 40 year journey in the wilderness and to ultimately cross over into the Promised Land to stand proudly on dry ground.

It is the same presence that helps believers today. God builds a wall around us and He often congeals that which is supposed to destroy us, long enough for us to escape.

When Israel thought about what the Lord did for them, they could only sing His praises even more.

What we learn about God

Israel's journey to the Promised Land was made possible by the presence of God with them. God was present as the:

HOMA OF GOD'S PROTECTIVE PRESENCE: Israel was shelter by the Homa of God, His protective presence. Look at Exodus 14:20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. The cloud and the fire were curious in that God made it dark on the side of the enemies, but always kept it light on the side of His people. He stood as a wall between them. In the same way, God has protected believers today. Even as we slept, God protected us from burglars, thieves and murderers. He protected us from rapists, con artists and a plethora of other enemies that wanted to destroy us. Even when we were thrown into the Lion's Den of affliction and persecution, God's Homa shut the mouths of the

lions.

When we reflect we can now see that there were situations where it was only the Lord that helped is out because were situations that were beyond our control, yet God stood between us and destruction. These are times when only the power of the Lord can help us.

When God acts He stands between us and despair and mystifying critics and puzzling all of those who expected our demise.

That's why the old warrior's sang, "If it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would I be."

KAW FAW OF GOD'S CONGEALING PRESENCE: When Israel passed through the sea he not only rolled the waters back, but he held them back and dried the ground as well. Holding water back is one thing, but God congealed the depths of the waters; he dried the ground as well. We experienced some of that last year as well. We saw how God not only held back our enemies, but how he also made a clear, solid path for our deliverance. It's obvious to any believer when they see God at work. Last year there were some families that encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that have experienced strained relationships, financial loss and suffered attacks on our reputations, but God not only held back the enemies, but He congealed the situation, he dried the ground, opened up doors and helped you march into a new year on dry ground.

We have been sustained by the eternal presence of God in our lives in the past year. When difficult times were upon us God was there. He was only a prayer away.

He lifted our burdens and renewed our strength in the midst of our weaknesses. His congealing presence led us through.

Now we look forward to that same congealing presence in the year to come. We know He will be there because he said in Matthew 28 "Lo I'll be with you always." That was not an empty promise, it meant exactly what it said; He will be with us continually.

A REASON TO PRAISE GOD: When Moses reviewed what God did for Israel he could only lead the people in praise. In Exodus 15:1 he said, "I will sing unto the Lord gloriously…" He pointed the people to God's past accomplishments and told them they had plenty of reason to continue trusting Him in the journey ahead.

What Moses taught Israel is the same truth expressed in Psalm 31:1 that says, "In thee oh Lord do I put my trust."

It means that we depend on God. It means we count on God.

It means we put our confidence in God that He will protect us, guide us and bring us into his perfect will.

We are taught to do the best that we can in any situation, and then afterwards, trust God to do the rest.

That's why we sing the song, "I will trust in the Lord, until I die."

He has protected us from our enemies and congealed forces that should have destroyed us; we will serve Him until we die

God will protect us

Finally, brothers and sisters, this text suggests that God will make a way for believers, even in the face of trouble. Israel's journey from slavery to freedom was possible only because God stood between them and their enemies, opening doors of escape and paving pathways in the wilderness and highways across seas and bulging rivers. The good news is that God is still watching out for believers by protecting them providing for them and insuring their survival and growth from generation to generation.

Today, we should move forward with renewed hope when we think about God's protective presence and His congealing presence going with us. It's faith that despite the dangers ahead God is watching over us.

Because God is watching over us we can sleep in the midst of the storms of life.

In the midst of slavery our forefathers could sing, All day, All night angels watching over me my Lord.

Because God is watching over us, we don't get overly concerned when things get tough because His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches over me.

Because God is watching over us, we don't wallow in self pity when we slip, because we fall down, but we get up!

Because God is watching over us, we don't wither and shrink in the face of trouble, because we know trouble don't last always!

Because God is watching over us, we can have joy in the midst of sorrow!

Because God is watching over us, we can have peace in the middle of confusion!

Because God is watching over us, we can have faith in the middle of doubt!

Because God is watching over us, we can have love although we are surrounded by hate!

Because God is watching over us, we can have happiness although all around us is only sadness!

Because God is watching over us, we can have hope in the middle of panic because We are our heavenly fathers children and he knows how much we can bear!

He knows, yes He knows!

He knows, when we have come to the end of our rope!

He knows, when our faith is challenged and our hope is waning!

He knows, when our names have been put on the highway and we have been called everything but a child of God!

He knows, yes He knows, just how much we can bear!

I don't know about you but I've decided to stay on the battlefield!

I've decided to keep telling the story of Jesus and His love!

I've decided to keep telling the world how He came to this wicked earth!

I've decided to keep telling the world how He died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave…

With all power in His hands!

No. 9539-King Day/Heritage

A stone of hope

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 15, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Daniel 2:45

Introduction

Have you paid close attention to Dr. Martin Luther King's famous words of Dr. King delivered in 1963? Certainly, most remember the words, "Free at Last, Free at Last," but there were countless metaphors and hyperboles that spoke to the heart of America's troubles. One phrase, when expanded upon, gives a clearer vision of his meaning.

A 30 foot statue of Martin Luther King, Jr. now stands in Washington D.C. as a memorial to the man and his dream of a united America. The inscription on the memorial which shows Dr. King standing with arms folded as if projected in 3D from the side of a mountain says, "Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope."

The inscription was extracted from Dr. King's "I have a dream speech," which was delivered on the Washington Mall in the summer of 1963.

In that speech he mentioned "Stone Mountain of Georgia." Stone Mountain, to those who remember it, was a symbol of racism and the old South. In 1915 the Second Ku Klux Klan was reborn on Stone Mountain. A permanent memorial to the confederacy was carved in the side of a Stone Mountain by the famed sculptor Gutzon Borglum.

When King spoke about Stone Mountain in 1963 it had become a symbol of racism, segregation, and hatred. It represented everything that brought despair to the poor, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Immigrants and all of groups that were the target of America's hatred. When Blacks saw Stone Mountain, it brought them hard memories of despair and stirred ill feelings.

After Dr. King's death something started to happen in Georgia as it did across the land. The State of Georgia now runs Stone Mountain. The figures of the Confederate Leaders are still carved into the side of the mountain and thousands of people come to see it every year. However, now they don't come only to see the symbols of racism carved in the mountain as they once did, many come to see the light show every night. During that light show the images of racism are flashed on the side of the mountain under

giant lights, but the show ends with an image of Martin Luther King superimposed over the Confederacy. As the music plays and the flags wave, the cold stone of the mountain seems to shout, "out of the mountain of despair, comes a stone of hope."

Martin Luther King was not God; he was a messenger from God. His message to the down trodden and the lost is that when it appears that injustice rises unanswered and conquers all challenges, there is still hope. That was the message that Dr. King brought America.

As Christians, we cherish that hope. It's a beautiful hope that sets us free.

Exposition

This text focuses on Daniel's interpretation of the dream of a king who dreamed he saw a great statue but fell because it had clay feet.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and his heart was troubled. What made it worse was the fact that he could remember what the dream was and this troubled him ever the more. He determined to force his soothsayers and wise men to ease his troubled heart. He commanded them to tell him what he saw in his nightmare. The second command was that they give him the right interpretation of what he had seen in that dream. If they failed they and their families would be killed.

The wise men could tell or interpret the dream. However, after considerable prayer, Daniel came before the king with the answer he sought.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream involved a statue with a Head of Gold, Breast and Arms of Silver, Belly and Thighs of Brass, Legs of Iron, and Feet and Toes of Iron and Clay mixed together.

It was interpreted as being a dream that depicted all of the history of man from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (head of Gold) and the Babylonian Empire, through the rise of the Medio-Persian Empire (chest and arms of silver), then the rise of the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great (bronze stomach and thighs), then the rise of the Roman Empire under the great Caesars (Legs of iron). Then the Roman Empire would split into the two divisions shown by the legs and the Iron. The final earthly kingdom would be represented by the feet and toes of mixed iron and potter's clay to show just that while there is strength and power in this final kingdom, there is also much weakness and impurity.

The text notes Daniel explaining to the king that images of the dream represented the rise of evil powers in the world that would dominate for a time forming a mountain of despair for those who are crushed under their power. However, out of that mountain would come a single stone of hope that would bring about the era of peace and love; so much so that justice would run down as waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

The last world kingdom will be crushed by the stone is Jesus Christ. The stone will come forth out of the despair and will become a mountain that fills the whole earth. His kingdom will never end.

For Nebuchadnezzar the dream was devastating. It meant that with all of the power,

knowledge and splendor he had been able to amass, he still had "clay feet."- his kingdom would be brought down.

Believers take heart in the prophecy because it notes that the "dream is certain" and its interpretation is sure.

The mountain of despair

What is the mountain of despair that America faces?

Just as Stone Mountain in Georgia ushered depressed images in the minds of African-Americans across the nation there are conditions in our nation, even today that, form a mountain of despair for us.

We are discouraged by much of what we see in America.

We are discouraged that our people are slowly drifting away from the desire to be self sufficient as millions have adopted an attitude that the government owes something. It begins when we believe that we are entitled to free lunch in school, while we save our money for the football game on Friday night. We feel we must pay for the game, but we are entitled to free lunch. We feel that we are entitled to money from the government for life if we have children out of wedlock; when we have more children we feel we are entitled to a raise and free housing, transportation and healthcare as well. Farmers feel entitled to subsidies, businesses feel entitled to bailouts and the whole nation seems to want someone to give them something for nothing. That is a mountain of despair.

We are discouraged when we see our schools once icons of achievement now failing. It is discouraging to see students coming to high school with third grade reading skills. Since the business community knows that the average prison inmate has just a 3rd grade reading ability, plans are being made across the nation to build new prisons directly proportionate to the number of teenagers who read on third grade level. It is discouraging to see so many students who have sentenced themselves to lives less than their potential, abandoning college or higher education in hopes of landing a job at McDonalds or the military. That is a mountain of despair.

We are discouraged when we see our moral values falling apart, to the point that many of our children will live together rather than marry, steal until they get caught, and see nothing wrong with buying hot merchandise from stolen television sets to pirated DVD's sold on the street corners. That is a mountain of despair.

Even some of those who seem to worship give reason for despair. There are thousands who have stopped reading the bibles and seeking salvation through the kingdom of God. Many only think of God as a person who can help them get money, material blessings and prosperity; if He can't do that they feel He is of little use to this generation. That is a mountain of despair.

The economic climate of our nation is despair. It is despairing to have the right to sit at lunch counter and not have enough money to buy a burger. It is despairing to have the right to sit at the front of the bus and then don't have bus fare. It's despairing not to have a job and even more despairing when there are no jobs to be found.

There is certainly a mountain of despair in America. On some days, if we are not careful the feeling of desperation that it creates can get into the fiber of our being and we can become pessimistic.

This was the atmosphere that Martin Luther King stepped into in 1954. It was a time when we our people had become sick and tired. That's when he told the nation in no uncertain terms that we should be "sick and tired of being sick and tired."

When we were tempted to wallow in self pity and wrap ourselves in the draperies of despair, we heard the words of a song by James Cleveland, "I don't feel no ways tired, I've come to far from where I started from. Nobody told that the way would be easy. I don't believe he brought this far, to leave me."

A stone of hope

Finally, brothers and sisters we much consider that in the midst of the despair of our times, there is a stone of hope.

Daniel painted a picture for Nebuchadnezzar of all the evil nations, oppositions and tragedies that would befall Israel. He showed how one subsequent government after another would work against the people themselves and even the efforts of the people themselves would topple as a giant with clay feel.

Out of all of this despair, Daniel saw a stone of hope. That hope represented the presence and power of God, rolling out of the mountain of despair to bring down the forces that bring misery into the world.

This stone came in the form of a dream. Daniel said the promise of the dream is certain..

The dream is for us to have one nation under God!

The dream is for us to boldly say what's written on our money, "In God we trust!

The dream is for us to hold to God's unchanging hand!

This dream did not begin with Martin Luther King, it is a dream given to the world by Christ himself.

It is a dream that one day, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary would be at rest!

It is a dream that one day, every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low!

I'm glad to know that for every mountain of despair that there is a stone of hope!

The true heroes of the faith are those who teach us how to keep our eyes focused on the stone of hope. For African Americans, the racism that surrounds us seems insurmountable. For Dr. King, the challenge is to find in these insecure times the real source of security and hope and "hew out of the mountain of despair the stone of hope."

The stone is our faith in Jesus Christ. This is the only hope that the song writer spoke of when he wrote, "The only hope we have is Jesus. Confusion is great in this world today. Persecution is great, with such a heavy load, but we have this hope and it is Jesus!"

This hope, is the only real hope that is in the world today. Every other hope is impermanent and untrustworthy.

This hope, was painstakingly hewn out of our troubles and presented to us as a dream of what can been when God has His way.

Even when we look at the despairing situations in our families, God always shows us a sign that things will be better; He gives a stone of hope.

Our children often seem to wander off is strange paths, but then we see a stone of hope! Our finances seem to dwindle to nothing, and then we see a stone of hope!

When we are lost and can't find our way and darkness is everywhere, then we see the stone of hope!

This is the hope that prompted the song writer to say, "I have hope when trouble comes my way. I have hope when Jesus comes to stay. I have hope when things are not well with me. It's a beautiful hope that sets me free."

Nebuchadnezzar had a great kingdom, but it had clay feet that would be broken by a stone. That was the hope of the people.

There are many who know this stone of hope.

When Israel faced the challenges of Goliath, a small boy brought him down with a slingshot and a single stone of hope!

A woman stood surrounded by accusers who were ready to stone her, but Jesus said, "He without sin, cast the first stone," When no one threw the first stone it became her stone of hope for one more chance!

Nebuchadnezzar saw his kingdom being replaced by a stone, but believers today are standing on a rock

What is this rock that is so strong that it can bring transform a mountain of despair?

What is this rock that is so influential that it could turn enemies into friends, bring down barriers of segregation and provide opportunities for justice for all?

This little rock superseded the empire of the Babylonians.

This little rock surpassed the empires of the Medes and Persians!

This little rock surpassed the glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome!

This little rock began in Bethlehem and continued to grow in Nazareth
This little rock grew larger as He fed thousands, healed the sick and raised the dead.

This rock is Jesus.

This rock is Jesus, yes he's the one!

He's the one who died on Calvary!

He's the one who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He's the one who arose, Early Sunday morning!

No wonder the song writer declares, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand."

No. 9540-Inspiration

A Long Sermon and a Deep Sleep

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 22, 2011

SCRIPTURE:"And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." Acts 20:9

Introduction

Have you ever fallen asleep in church? What about in class or in a meeting? What about in life?There are many people who fall asleep easily, in fact in any situation where they sit still too long they may doze off to sleep. You may see them sleep in their cars at red lights, slumped over books in the library; some fall soundly asleep in the movies and snore.

There are many people who fall asleep easily, in fact in any situation where they sit still too long they may doze off to sleep. You may see them sleep in their cars at red lights, slumped over books in the library; some fall soundly asleep in the movies and snore.

Students sleep in class. One man had what he thought was a hot date, but he went to sleep on the date. Another went to sleep on his wedding night. Did you hear about the graduate that was sound asleep when they called his name to receive his diploma?

The National Sleep Foundation says that all of us have what is known as basal sleep and sleep debt. Basal sleep is the amount of uninterrupted quality sleep your body needs to function properly. Sleep debt is the amount of sleep that is owed to your body. Whenever we rob our bodies of the sleep they need that amount is recorded in the sleep debt section of our brain. Every time we sit still or become idle for even a short period of time, sleep debt comes to collect; unfortunately it can come when you need to be alert most: when you are taking a test, need to think, driving a car or studying. You try hard to stay awake, but sleep debt must be paid and you nod off; even doze.

Sometimes people doze because medications make them sleepy, but usually its sleep debt collecting for all of those all night movies, long hours on the internet, late night parties, and double shift revolving door jobs.

The sleep debt man must be paid; he may come to collect when you are at worship in church!

Is it possible that some believers have gone to sleep on God? When it comes to serving God have we run out of steam? Have we dozed off? Are we in a deep sleep?

Fortunately, God doesn't sleep. Psalm 121:3-4, reminds us that God will not allow our feet to slip; he will not sleep on the job because, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." God doesn't sleep on the job when it comes to caring for the needs of believers. If its prayer that we need answered or help in times of trouble we have the assurance that our God is always by our side. The question still lingers: do we doze off on Him?

As Christians, we should rejoice in the fact that God is vigilant and alert and keeps His eye of protection on us every day of our lives. There will never be a day that we need Him, then find him in a deep sleep.

Exposition

This text focuses on a boy who went to sleep in church.

Paul was in the city for only a short period of time, about seven days. On his last day he had much to say and he probably reached the point of "as I close" several times. He preached well past midnight. There was a young man named Eutychus and he had been sitting on a window sill as the preacher St. Paul was trying to make an impression on the folks in Troas since he was leaving the next day. It proved to be more preaching than Eutychus could handle and so he nodded off. He fell from the third floor to the ground and died. Thankfully, it was the apostle Paul that was preaching. Paul stretched himself over the boy and brought him back to life again.

The act of new life is what everybody remembered from that night, not the long sermon. For hundreds of years both the written word of God and spoken word have made reference to the long sermon and the deep sleep.

Deep Sleep

There are many people today who have fallen into a deep sleep while life's opportunities and God's favor pass them by. There are several ways that we have fallen asleep:

SOME ARE SLEEP WALKING: A sleep walker is a person who walks in his sleep, totally unaware of what is going on around them. A sleep walker does things, but is not aware of anything that he does. Often he or she hears, but is not aware of what they hear. They just walk aimlessly. There are many who even come to church and participate, but they are totally unaware of why they do what they do. The just do it. Consider the case of Walking Willie. Walking Willie was a member of the church, but there was a time when he drank whiskey and wine with a vengeance. He joined the church during a great revival and came to church each communion Sunday. During each Sunday service Willie would doze off to sleep and begin to walk in his sleep. After a

while the members ignored him because it was not unusual to see him walk down the aisle sound asleep. Lately however, Walking Willie started talking and walking in his sleep. One Sunday the preacher was expounding on the evils of drinking. "We need to take all that whiskey and pour it in the river." The preacher shouted! "We need to take all the wine and pour it in the water, and the gin and vodka. We should pour it all in the river." At that point Walking Willie stood on his feet and started walking for the back door. Folks thought he was sleep walking again but had their doubts when he started singing, "I'm gonna Wade in the Water, wade in the water children.." Walking Willie woke up when he thought gin and whiskey were near! Some are sleep; have movement in their sleep, but only catch a small bit of what's going on around them and miss the whole point of life. Romans 13:11 says, " "And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed."

SOME ARE SLEEP TALKING: Sleep talking is called Somniloqy; it's a person who talks in his sleep and is totally unaware of what he is saying; and it often makes little sense. It usually occurs in children, but some grown folks talk in their sleep as well. A person who is not aware of the world around them is asleep and it's frustrating to hear them talk. You hear them pray that God would destroy their enemies. You hear them ask God to help them win the lottery. They tell the doctor they won't be treated because the devil is in the operating room. They are totally unaware of the nature of God, but they talk about Him all of the time. If you read their Facebook posts they talk about God in every posts, even while posting a new profile photo that shows them taking a picture of their rear end. They quote scripture, but do not live by them. Sleep talkers are those who talk a lot but do nothing. They talk about poverty, but do nothing to help the poor. They talk about crime in the neighborhood, but won't join the neighborhood watch. They talk about our wayward youth, but won't work with them. They talk about the growing number of homeless who need food, but they won't prepare a meal. They are asleep to the need for their personal involvement, but continue to talk in their sleep.

Sleep talkers rarely hear from God because they are always talking. They are praying, asking, claiming, but they rarely have a waking moment with God. A very talkative woman went to her husband's doctor and complained that he talks in his sleep. She said all day long he says nothing, but he just has a conversation. The doctor asked, "What do you do?" the wife answered "I just listen." The doctor said, "His problem is simple, he talks in his sleep because that's the only time you'll be quiet and listen!" -Sometimes God has trouble getting a word in, so He has to talk to us in our sleep.

WAKING UP FROM A DEEP SLEEP IS HARD: A person who is in a deep sleep is totally disconnected from everything around him. Babies are the best examples. Babies can sleep through hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes. You can shake them and speak to them, but they are oblivious to anything happening around them. There are many people today who are in a deep sleep and it is very difficult to wake them up.

Young people are dropping out of school, while more prisons are being built to receive them-Deep sleep!

The moral fiber of the nation is deteriorating, traditional families are changing and many don't notice-Deep sleep!

Technology is on the uptrend while many are still waiting on the mailman, a paper text book, and a rotary phone-Deep sleep!

Millions are trying to live their lives with a general belief in God but without worship or service to God—Deep sleep!

There are millions who believe that racism has died and is a thing of the past - Deep sleep!

It is hard to awaken anyone from a deep sleep. Only God can do that.

Despite our slumber, the word of God calls for us to wake up! 1 Thessalonians 5:6 says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." When we wake up we are watchful and observant.

What is more frustrating to the Lord is that those He expects to be watchful are dozing off. When Jesus went to the garden to pray He asked His disciples to watch. When he returned they were sound asleep. In Matthew 26:40-41 says, "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The church cannot afford to sleep when the Lord needs us to watch. We must awake from our deep sleep.

Time to wake up

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that when the little boy fell in his sleep, the power of God brought him back again!

For the boy, it was a long sermon, but the world around him was in a deep sleep. When God used Paul to bring him back again something else happened that many did not observe...the sermon didn't end. Acts 20:11 says the Paul talked with the believers until daybreak.

We may be asleep, but the word of God continues.

Once awakened there is no indication that Eutychus went back to sleep again. He had been awakened by the fall and restored by the power of God.

Brothers and Sisters, if ever there was a time when we need to wake up and see clearly the vision of the Lord, that time is now!

If ever there was a time when we need to become serious about battling the rise of crime, drugs, juvenile delinquency, family dissolution and many other problems, that time is now!

The church holds up the beacon of hope for the world to see.

If you have been in a deep sleep walking and wander aimlessly through life, it's time for you to wake up.

Wake up for the power of God awaits you!

Wake up and realize that there is no night so dark that you cannot endure it!

Wake up and realize that there is no fear too great for you to face!

Wake up and realize that there is no enemy too mighty for you to conquer!

Wake up and realize that there is no crisis too critical for you to confront!

Wake up and realize that there is no burden too heaven for you to bear!

Wake up and realize that there is no doubt too strong to weigh you down!

Wake up and tell the world that you were shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame, but then the hand of Jesus touched me!

He touched me, the man who picked up and old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary's hill!

He touched me, the man who let them drive nails into his hands!

He touched me, the man who dropped his head into the locks of his shoulders!

He touched me, the man who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He touched me, the man who stayed in the grave for three days and nights but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He touched me and made me whole!

No. 9541-Inspiration

Facing the Giants

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, LA

February 5, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Numbers 13:33

Introduction

Have you have ever faced giant sized problems while trying to patriotically remain loyal to God? If we are truthful there have been times in our lives when the giants won because they intimidated us. There have also been times when the patriots won, but only when they believed in themselves and acted in faith.

Today, we're probably thinking a lot about patriots and giants, but there have been face offs in the bible between the two that didn't always turn out as the experts predicted.

When Moses approached the Promised Land he sent over a 12 member special team whose job it was to investigate the prospects of possessing the land of promise.These 12 men were Patriots. Each was especially chosen by their individual tribes to explore the possibility of claiming God's promise.

Those selected were:

Shammua son of Zaccur, from the tribe of Reuben
Shaphat son of Hori, from the tribe of Simeon
Caleb son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah
Igal son of Joseph, from the tribe of Issachar
Hoshea (Joshua) son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim
Palti son of Raphu, from the tribe of Benjamin
Gaddiel son of Sodi, from the tribe of Zebulin
Gaddi son of Susi, from the tribe of Manassah
Ammiel son of Gemalli, from the tribe of Dan
Sethur son of Michael, from the tribe of Asher
Nahbi son of Vophsi, from the tribe of Naphtali
Geuel son of Maki, from the tribe of Gad

They were all heroes and champions in their own respect sent forth to spy out the new land.

Canaan itself was populated in many areas by a race of men who were the

offspring marriages between people and angels. Genesis 6:4 describes them as mighty men. The Hebrew language described Giants by a variety of names including Nephilim and Repha'im, but they all pointed to powerful men who were a force to be reckoned with.

Today, there are many who are thinking of football when they think of Giants; they are thinking about the New York Giants. When they think of Patriots, they are thinking of the New England Patriots.

When they think of Giants they think of a battle tested team that has faced awesome opponents led by Aaron Rodgers, and Drew Brees. Whoever came against the Giants in 2011 felt their power whether it was Vernon Davis of San Francisco, Jermichael Finley of Green Bay, or Tony Gonzalez of Atlanta.

In 2012 the super matchup brings the power of the giants against the Patriots who are not without their own power houses Rob Gronkowski, Aaron Hernandez and Tom Brady. Both are battle tested. Both are strong.

What happens when Patriots face Giants? Do giants always lose? King of Og biblical fame was a mighty warrior. Do Patriots always win? No because the bible records that while David defeated the Giant Goliath with a sling shot, but 2 Samuel 21:16 says when David faced Ishbibenob, the son of Goliath he fell he fell many years later.

So Giants do not always lose and neither do Patriots always win.

What makes the difference when anyone faces an intimidating force? Skill and ability have something to do with it, but faith has a lot to do with it as well.

As Christians, we are loyal patriots of the Kingdom of God, but even still as we face our giants every day, we do so with courage. We don't expect to win every battle, but we know who controls the ultimate victory; our God.

Exposition

This text considers the attitude of ten of the 12 spies sent to survey the Promised Land when they discovered the presence of giants.

Twelve spies had been sent to investigate the Promised Land, inhabited by strange looking wooly haired, broad featured, Black people, descendants of Ham.

The report of the spies, who returned after 40 days, showed that the land was all they had expected. They brought back numerous items of fruit, including figs, pomegranates and grapes.

The grapes they carried were so large that the bunches required two men to carry each bunch on poles.

The first part of the report was positive, it filled the people with hope, the land is so abundant; life would be filled with ease.

Two men among them rose and declared "Let us go up at once and possess it". God has given it to us and we should lay claim on our future.

However, the other ten were not confident; in fact they were afraid. The source of their fear was the presence of giants whose size intimidated them so much that they

felt like grasshoppers in their own eyes.

When they were forced to choose whether to proceed to the Promised Land or not, the ten influenced all others that the presence of the giants made conquering the new land impossible.

They wandered in the wilderness for forty years as a result.

Don't be a grasshopper

The men feared entering the Promised Land because they felt like grasshoppers in their own eyes. That's a fancy way of saying they were intimidated.

There should never be a time when the people of God are intimidated about life. Unlike the world we have knowledge of our potential if we receive the anointing of God. We are confident because we know that there is nothing too hard for God.

God is powerful.

Because He is powerful we hold to his hand to add stability to our own lives. This sense of security we derive from holding on to a powerful hand comes from the fact that God is a pillar of strength.

We are not grasshoppers because we know how strong God is.

Isaiah 40:15-30 attempts to describe the strength of God. Isaiah painted a picture of God being so big and powerful that all of the nations of the world form but a single drop in the bucket in comparison to his strength.

There is no strength greater than the strength of the Lord, therefore we should adopt grasshopper mentalities about life.

James Weldon Johnson the poet said, He batted his eyes and the lightning flashed.

He clapped his hands and the thunder rolled.

He waved his hands and the waters came down..his footsteps hollowed the valleys out and bulged the mountains up.

What does all of this say?

It says, Whatever problem I have, whether it is sickness or finance, love or social reform, God is big enough and strong enough to handle it!

Jeremiah 32:17 reminds us of God's greatness, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you."

There is nothing too hard for God.

No matter how big the problem set before him, He can handle it.

Isaiah 59:1 says, Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

There is no need for a grasshopper mode of thinking because even in difficult times we should wait for him and his deliverance.

Don't shrivel in the face of your giants, God can and will take care of it.

When Obstacles stand in the way

The future that awaits each of us uncertain, but rarely is it laid out plainly before us without a mountain of giant sized obstacles standing in the way. We should not focus on the size of the obstacle, but we should resolve a strategy to chisel it down to size.

We should resolve like Caleb, "let us go and possess it."

Caleb's mind was stayed on the Lord. He did not focus on the impossibilities but on the possibilities if he kept his mind on the Lord.

When Moses kept his mind focused on the Lord, the Red Sea opened and bread fell from heaven. Centuries later when Peter kept his mind focused on the Lord he defied gravity and nature and walked upon the water.

No wonder the song writer wrote "I woke up this morning with mind stayed on Jesus; I'm walking and talking with mind, stayed on Jesus!

While Caleb told the people that there were grapes in the new land and urged Israel to go and possess it, ten of the spies rose to say that while there were grapes of opportunity in the land, there were giants standing in the way of the grapes.

In one sense the report of the ten was good. It informed the people of the risks involved. Wise decisions are based on a careful evaluation of all the facts, the good and the bad. Jesus told his disciples that those who decide to follow him should count up the cost before making a decision.

The fact that there were obstacles to their goal did not mean that Israel would not get to the Promised Land, but only that they should find ways around them.

No easy journey

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that the journey to the Promised Land is not an easy one, but we must march forward in faith.

We have received the report of our future; the Promised Land is flowing with milk and honey.

The report we receive is that the future is indeed bright.

There are great opportunities that exist in the Promised Land.

It will be a land where opportunities exist for every person without regard to his color or creed.

It will be a land where the people will have worked vigorously to eliminate discrimination and will have taken affirmative steps to make up for past mistakes and place everyone on an even plain.

It will be land where the bottom rail has risen to the ranks of the top rail and those who have been among the last will be among the first.

Economically, socially and politically, it will be a land flowing with milk and honey.

However, there is a down side to the report.

The land is filled with conservative Jebusites, Amorites and Republicans.

They are entrenched and pose a formidable barrier.

There are a few giants among them who have built great walls to fortify themselves and keep us at a distance.

Once, the Lord gave Zachariah a word from the Lord when they faced challenging situations.

That word was simple. Walk in my ways and I will help you to walk in places you've never dreamed.

This promise is just as good today as it was then, face your giants with the faith of a Patriot and God and He will bring you into the land of your dreams.

Believers are encouraged to walk each day by faith.

To walk in God's way is to walk in faith.

Through faith we can achieve the unachievable.

Through faith we can accomplish the impossible.

Through faith we can reach the unreachable.

Those who trust God and step out to pursue their dreams must resolve that although there may be giants, can still succeed!

The giant standing in the way of our dream might be a:

-Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!

-Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!

-Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Those who trust in God:

-Think the unthinkable; Reach for the unreachable!

-Believe the unbelievable; Hope for the imaginable

-Live for the incredible; achieve the improbable!

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Maybe that's why the song writer wrote: I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

I don't know about you, but I've decided to trust in the Lord!

Storms may rise! Winds may blow!

I will trust in the Lord till I die!

When your giant falls, don't forget to tell the story.

Tell somebody about Jesus!

Tell somebody how he died!

Tell somebody how he arose after three days and nights!

Tell somebody that he is alive in your soul today!

No. 9542-Anniv.-Women

A Certain Woman

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 11, 2012

SCRIPTURE:"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. Mark 5:25-28

Introduction

Are there any special women that you know; those who really stand out? Most of us quickly point to our mothers and grandmothers, but there are thou sands more who have played integral parts in the development of our race and nation.

Many of the women of our history are unnamed; they remain a virtual sea of unsung heroes who have given of themselves to help our people rise to the demands of the moment.

It seems that God has always touched a few women in every generation to rise above the norm and speak, lead and champion the cause of their families specifically or our race in general.

We have heard their voices, even if we don't remember their names. Among those less remembered are those who served as nurses to the sick, wounded and ailing. We know a few names such as Harriet Tubman, who in addition to her role as a underground railroad conductor was also served in the U.S. Army as a nurse along with others such as Sallie King Taylor.

Today, there are over 350,00 minority nurses, practitioners and aides in America. They are the nameless angels who come to us when we are hurting and lift us with smiles and strength.

No generation has been without great women who have championed our causes. However, the greatest champions are not in the history books. We often don't remember their names. Perhaps these angelic personalities are like the nameless women of faith in the bible who are often referred to as "a certain woman." - The names were left blank for us to fill in the spaces.

Our history is filled with the accounts of women who seemed to have been equipped with the essentials necessary to address the circumstance we faced. Whether it was courage, scholarship or willingness to rise above depravation, God always seemed to use them in peculiar ways, as if they were born for such a time as

this.

As Christians, we salute the unsung heroines among African-American women, the nameless masses who have cared for us and given us strength through the favor of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on an incident in the life of Christ in which an unnamed woman was healed by exercising her faith.

The woman had an "issue of blood." That's another way of saying she had a hemorrhage of some kind. Her condition had existed for 12 years despite the fact that she had consulted all of the best physicians of time. No one was able to cure her disease. The hemorrhaging complicated her life considerably and she sought a resolution. Adding to the complication was the fact that people who shared her illness were considered unclean under the Mosaic Law.

The woman heard that a healer from God was in their midst. She made up her mind to deal with the issue of sickness by taking it to the Son of God. Defying all of the laws, she made her way through the crowd, no doubt touching many people as she forged through. She felt she probably wouldn't be able to get a personal interview with him, but concluded in her mind that if she could simply touch the hem of his garment that she would receive the same blessing. After all, God's healing power certainly would not be limited by such a small thing as a personal interview.

When the woman touched Jesus' garment, he immediately felt something. With hundreds of people around him, obviously pushing and shoving out of curiosity, he was able to "feel" the prayerful touch of a woman who had been sick for many years. He felt power going out of him. He sensed that someone had just been healed.

The presentation of an unnamed woman presents us with a generic example of what any believer can do when faced with the situation. If the woman had been named it might have implied that her healing with specific to her situation, but a "certain woman" indicates it could easily be any believer.

The healing of this "certain woman" demonstrated the concept of healing in the New Testament. Jesus did not come to this world primarily to be a physical healer; he came to be its savior or restorer. He came to bring forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Incidental to that role many were the beneficiaries of many miracles as he passed their way.

Challenges for women

While many people look at this text and see only the references to the certain woman there is also a wealth of knowledge to be gained from looking at the last phrase of verse Mark 5:28. It says I shall be whole. This idea of being whole is one that is expressed in the New Testament by the use of three words: iaomai, that refers to being in the presence of the healer; Therapeu, that refers to the relationship between the healer and the person being healed; and sozo that refers to a healing that involves both body and

soul. Viewed separately, believers get a clear understanding of what the certain woman wanted when she touched the hem of his garment.

IAOMAI-IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HEALER: Those who are injured must be in the presence of the healer. The term iaomai is often used to refer to those who have been brought into the presence of a healer for the purpose of physical healing. Generally anyone who is healed is immediately brought into the presence of the healer. A person who is injured in an accident may be assisted by individuals who administer first aid and temporary assistance, but as soon as possible that person is rushed to a hospital so that the victim can be in the presence of the person who knows what to do and has a capacity to heal. The word iaomai has particular reference to physical healing, but is not usually associated with anything beyond that. In Luke 17:15 Jesus healed 10 lepers. All 10 had been in the presence of the healer, but only one returned to say thanks. The other nine received their physical healing and what about their way. The word used to describe their healing was iaomai. In a similar sense many today, desire to be in the presence of the Lord seeking a physical remedy to a debilitating circumstance. Once they receive what they came looking for they leave and never return. It's possible therefore to receive a physical healing and have no connection with God whatsoever. The nine lepers who receive their physical healing left with their souls in the same condition; there was no healing. Just being in the presence of the Lord does not change our spirituality or grant us forgiveness of sins; what we receive is physical and that's all.

The challenge for women of this generation is to bring young women into the presence of the Lord. We must resist the temptation to ignore those who are on the fringe; we must reach out to those girls and young women who are need to know how to get in the presence of the healer so that they lives can be turned around.

THERAPEUO-A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEALER: The next step up from simply being in the presence of the healer is to develop a relationship with the healer. The word therapeuo is the same word from which we get our English word therapy. A therapist is a person who works with us to help us regain our strength. A physical therapists, for example, will help us to move our legs, stretch our fingers, or move other limbs in ways that will help to restore strength and mobility. The therapist usually has a warm smile, a pleasing personality, and a demeanor that sets us at ease. In time, we develop a trust relationship that helps strengthen the healing process. In Matthew 4:23-24 there is an account of thousands of people who were brought to Jesus for healing. The word used to describe the type of healing they sought was therapeuo. In many ways he touched them. In some cases he touched them physically. In other cases he spoke to them or gave them instructions. A relationship was developed with each person. Today there are many who expect blessings from God without developing a relationship with Him. The relationship needed requires us to allow God to touch our lives. When God touches our lives He changes us in ways that are for our betterment. When we have developed a relationship with God we pray frequently and we listened intently to what He has to say to us. We listen by reading His word and by listening to the preached word. This relationship is probably what the

songwriter had in mind when He wrote, "And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am his own and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known."

The challenge for women is strengthen their personal relationship with God. Plunge yourself into the word of God. You will find strength in God's promises, power in his word, and renewed enthusiasm to face the challenges set before you. Whatever your situation, take a page from the certain woman of this text and reach out to God. Know Him for yourself.

SOZO-HEALING BODY AND SOUL: The word that is used in all three of the synoptic Gospels is sozo. This term refers to healing of both the body and the soul. It refers to keeping the wounded person safe physically and spiritually. It refers to the healing of the body and the restoration of the relationship between sinful man and God. All three of the synoptic writers used this term when they referred to persons who may whole by Jesus. So when the certain woman believes she would be made whole she was not just seeking physical restoration, but she was also seeking spiritual restoration. For the word used for whole was sozo, meaning she sought to be fully restored. This woman wanted what many who were healed did not seek; she wanted and her soul. Of course this is what Jesus is often recorded doing many times. We have seen him tell the lame man your sins are forgiven take up your bed and walk. We have seen him tell the woman at the well to go and sin no more. In addressing the spiritual state of the person who needs healing Jesus uses what practitioners called the holistic approach. He deals with both the body and the soul. Today, believers would do well to take note of the certain woman in this text; she sought relief from her situation but she also sought restoration from God. Without that restoration her body might be healed, but are sold would be as sick as before.

The challenge for women today is to help bring those who need a complete healing into a relationship with God so that there is healing for both body and soul. The young girl whose only joy in life is to continue having children out of wedlock needs more than advice about motherhood. The girl who carries herself like a harlot, curses and like a sailor and fights like a man needs more than a probation officer. Jails, probation officers and government agencies deal with physical, but the problem is spiritual. Christian women must help a lost generation of girls and young women to find the Lord.

Who is this certain woman?

Finally, brothers and sisters, every woman must fill in the blanks, If the woman who sought the healing, was not named, then each woman could rightfully conclude, I might be that certain woman.

In search of that certain woman, we must follow the trail of the great women of the bible.

That trail will take us to a certain woman named Hannah telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts.

That trail will take us to a certain woman named Ruth; we'll hear her say, Your people

shall be my people and my God shall be your God

That trail will take us to a certain woman named at the well, we'll hear her say, Come see a man who told me all I've ever done.

That trail will take us to a certain woman named grandma who made it clear that we should keep following the Lord.

It was a certain woman named Auntee who said, if you follow the Lord you have somebody who can help you:

-carry your burdens
-face your future
-fulfill your responsibilities
-fight your battles
-solve your problems
-overcome your temptations

Because He's good God we worship him like:

-A certain woman named Mary of Bethany, who had spirit and truth
-A certain woman named Deborah, power and strength
-A certain woman named Mary Magdalene, who was grateful and humble of heart
-A certain woman named Rahab who had an enduring hope.

I see a woman pushing her way through the crowd, saying "I want to be whole"

I see a certain woman trying to touch the hem of his garment because His blood shall make you whole!

I see Jesus picking up an old rugged cross for a certain woman, who lives in our hometown.

I see Jesus allowing nails to be driven in his hands for a certain woman.

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

He died for a certain person, and that person is me!

No. 9543-Anniversary, men

When One Good Man is God's Custodian

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 19, 2012

SCRIPTURE: But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. Genesis 6:8

Introduction

Have you ever felt insignificant? There are many people in the world who work tirelessly, but are seldom considered important in the scheme of things. Among such people are those who work in the background to maintain the lives we have come to enjoy. They are our custodians.

In every aspect of American life there is someone who has to serve as the custodian. We enjoy a football game, but it wouldn't be too enjoyable if the stadium, its restrooms and grounds were not maintained. We enjoy the movies, but it would be as enjoyable if it was left unkept.

The importance of custodians has been highlighted all of America because it's a job that few people want, but no real enterprise succeeds without them. What do they do? Custodians my clean floors, shampoos floors, remove trash, fix leaky faucets, replenish bathroom supplies, monitor to air conditioning, vacuum, sweep, dust, make minor repairs, exterminate insects, wax and dry mop floors. Those who are employed at schools also discipline unruly students, wait for late parents, break up fights, monitor halls, and serve as role models for fatherless youth.

The school custodian is essential to a school's operation. He is one good man.

While it doesn't take a PhD to serve as a school custodian, it does require many other qualities, most important of which is trust. Often the custodian has the keys to the building; in many cases he is the first man in and the last man out.

It is not the kind of profession that can be taken lightly because the custodian knows more about the building than the principal and is often closer to many children than the teacher.

If you are a custodian of anything it requires you to care for it, tend to it, protect it and hold it until it is time to let it go. It requires a good man.

A good man is one who obviously has learned to live his life in a way that is favorable to God. Such a life finds grace in God's sight and earns him favor.

As Christians, we strive to live a life that will be pleasing to God. To the best of our ability we strive to obey His will and respond favorably to his call. When we do that, we become good men in His eyes.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's decision to spare Noah from the flood.

The world had become sinful to the point that God wanted to destroy his creation. It was reckless, wild and lost. Yet, when He considered all of his creation, Noah appeared a just man who obeyed God and respected Him. In addition, Noah was a man of faith.

Noah was selected to serve as the custodian of living things as God prepared to punish the wickedness of the world.

Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" . It took faith to prepare an ark on dry land when there was no sign of rain let alone a flood.

Noah was selected because of the qualities he had already displayed in his own family. He ruled well his own house and demonstrated faith and responsibility at home. He remained faithful to God and led his family to do the same; God saw it and that brought favor upon him.

God preserved Noah because he was one man who remained true to God up until he died. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). What does this mean? It means that Noah believed God's promise concerning the godly seed, the coming Savior. Noah believed that God was going to preserve a godly people and send the Savior through that people. Therefore, God showered His grace and His favor upon Noah. God had mercy upon Noah and chose Noah to be the person to be saved through the coming judgment. Noah's faith in the promise of God—his faith in the coming Savior—saved him.

Noah was a man of faith, obedience, strength and unfaltering trust in the power of God. He was one good man.

Source of a good man's Blessing

When we see a good man operating well in adverse circumstances, doing things others cannot or would not do; often we don't know where that ability comes from. What is the source of the inspiration and blessings of the good man?

Believers have come to know that such abilities are the result of God moving in our lives. God puts us into positions in life for a divine purpose.

For Noah, that divine purpose was to obey God. He became a custodian of God's creation as he built the ark and later populated it with samples of every living creature on the face of the earth.

A young lady once testified at a bible study that she prayed for a job and was given

a part time job at a fast food restaurant. One of her assignments was to clean the toilets. She said clean the toilets as if it was an assignment from heaven, with a smile on her face and singing in her heart. As far as she was concerned she was cleaning the bathrooms for Jesus. Later, management noticed her attitude and work and she was promoted to other positions.

Across the nation thousands of believers have similar testimonies; they began low in a sacred trust, but with God's help were made custodians of even higher trust as they retrained themselves and moved up the career ladder. When that happens they all recognized that God was the source of our glory.

It is God's involvement in our affairs that his resulted in our promotions, commendations and awards. It is his constant presence that has glorified us. It does not matter whether we are elected to a political office, appointed to an influential position of leadership or accomplish a great feat.

The believer knows that the source of his accomplishment is God himself is humbled by that fact and never takes credit for what God has done through him.

Source of a good man's salvation

There is no better man than a man who knows the Lord.

He may be a good looking man, but a good looking man who does not know the Lord is ugly.

He may be a man with a great body and strong physique, but a strong man who does not know the Lord is weak.

He may be a smart man, but a smart man who does not know the Lord, is not that smart at all.

A good man knows that he is the beneficiary of God's grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephes. 2:8-9).

Consider the ex-convict who found it impossible to get a job after his release from prison because of his record. In prison he repented of his sins and accepted Jesus as his savior. Outside he remained faithful, but was unsuccessful and landing a job. One night God spoke to him in a dream and told him to fill out his application, but to answer questions about his background with only one word. Obediently the young man did as he was instructed and applied for a custodial position with a local company. The owner was an elderly man who had no children. He had spent most of his life as a businessman and a young men's Sunday school teacher. When he read the young man's application he instantly hired him on the spot. When his manager question why he would hire a man with a one word response to his background, the old man said, what he wrote said more than what was written: For previous experience, he wrote, Jesus. "Have you ever been convicted of a crime," the young man wrote, Jesus. When asked to provide three references, the young man wrote, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. The old man said, "Anyone who knows the Lord that well, can't be all bad." Later, the young man worked

his way up to become the manager of the store. When the old man died, he left the entire store to the man who was once his custodian; and man who knew Jesus.

A good man is a saved man. A good man knows Jesus. Noah was a recipient of God's grace and therefore was spared from the judgment (in contrast with those who aspired to immortality).

A good man is the recipient of God's grace and favor. Acts 15:11 says, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

We recognize God's grace when doors are opened for us that should have been closed; when punishments we should have received are dismissed. We recognize God's favor when rewards and opportunities come our way that we do not deserve.

A good man is the recipient of both God's grace and favor.

Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all."

Good man does not lose hope.

Noah served as the custodian of life while he was on the ark for a year; despite the frustration of his situation, he never lost hope. Every day he heard the splashing of the waters against the hull of the ark and wondered, "How long?" but he never lost hope.

This is another mark of a good man, he is optimistic! He never loses hope.

There are many who have lost hope in themselves. They see themselves in the worst way. They feel as if they have failed miserably and are beyond repair. They have given up hope on themselves because they have wasted so many years.

That can happen if our hope is misplaced. If we have placed our hope in any person, place or thing, we have misplaced it. People can let us down. Places and things change. We can lose hope in ourselves because we change.

A good man is optimistic in difficult times because his life is rooted in faith. This hope and knowledge that because God is with us that our lives can be turned around; that conditions can change!

That's why the song writer says, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness." I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.

Never count a good man out

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is one aspect of a good man's life that cannot be overlooked, his ability to bounce back after being pushed back; never count a good man out.

The biblical record is filled with instances that indicate that its unwise dismiss a good man as a failure or a loser because God has a way of working with good men to bring out the best in them, especially when the game of life gets in a fourth down and goal situation.

Joseph's life was destined to greatness! He saw himself doing something great

for God. But his dream met head on with that of his brothers who were equally determined to stop him. They threw him in a pit. It appeared that it was over; his brothers left him thinking that his life was over. However, God raised him from the pit and placed him in the palaces of Egypt. It just proves that a just man falleth seven times, but riseth up again. Don't count a good man out.

Samson was a strong man who was brought down, chained and blinded. As he stood in chains without strength or sight it appeared that it was over, until we look at the rest of the story! He repented for his sins and slew thousands of Philistines in his last and final act!

Job was a pitiful sight. Once strong, wealthy and healthy he was broken to a poor man with ill health. Job's story looked to be one of defeat, until we see the rest of the story! He was blessed more after his trial than he had been before! All of these went to prove that we should never count a saint of God out just because he is down!

When the winds were blowing mightily the disciples thought their ship would sink, some believed it was all over! But the good part was not in the storm, it was in the rest of the story! Jesus rose to rebuke the wind saying peace be still!

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that we serve a God who doesn't count us out. When we have failed miserably and fallen behind.

We serve a God who can take:

—Defeat and turn it into victory; failure and turn it into success

—Misfortune and turn it into good fortune; Tragedy and turn it into opportunity

—Blunders and turn them into wonders; Doubts and wipe them out!

At Calvary the world thought the Savior was out, but they learned what we now know when it comes to people of God, a good man may be crushed down, but He will again!

They buried a good man after Calvary…

But Early Sunday morning He arose!

No. 9544-Youth

Living a life that counts

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 26, 2012

SCRIPTURE:"He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed." 2 Chronicles 21:20

Introduction

How important are you to the life of your family? Your church? Your community?Our importance is measured in relationship to the service that we render to others; if we are disconnected, live for ourselves and care little about the welfare of those around us, then our existence is of little importance to anyone. If we cease to connect only a few would notice; some would exclaim, "Is he still around; I thought she had moved out of town."

A man had a conversation with his friend and said that his oldest brother had died. His friend expressed surprise and apologized because he had not heard. The man said, "Don't be sorry. We didn't announce to anybody, nobody came to his funeral, nobody cared about him because he didn't care about anybody."

It's unsettling, but it is true; there are some who care little about others and others care less about them.

There are some who are missed when they are absent, but not fondly missed. The student in the class that disrupts it every day is missed when he's absent, but not fondly missed. The heckler in the crowd that follows a speaker from one appearance to another, is missed when he's absent, but not fondly missed. The church hell raiser who raises hell about everything is missed when he or she is absent from a business meeting, but not fondly missed. Gossips, backbiters and haters are missed when they are not around, but not fondly missed.

We are important to our families and extended community when our relationship renders a noticeable benefit that is recognized and acknowledged.

That's the key to being fondly missed: relate to others in such a way that your presence is deemed beneficial and necessary. It's the kind of service that elicits the words, "We sure do miss her" or "What are we going to do without him?"

What if God didn't show up for us one day this week? What would we do? Would he be missed? Would we miss his protection? Would we miss his blessing? Would we missed the inspiration we get from him?

What's the flip side? Do we praise God enough for him to miss us? Do we give

enough for Him to notice if we don't? Do we serve others in His name in a way that would noticeable if we stopped?

Our objective should be to live lives that matter to God, our families and the community around us. The crossing guard who smiles every morning and cheers the children, will be missed. The teacher who inspires children to learn more, will be missed. The church member who renders service in one ministry or another, will be missed. What we do for God and others does not have to be big, but it must be enough to matter to someone, to register on the goodwill meter.

As Christians, we know God knows everything about every one of us. He is aware of all that we do and say. Let's live in such a way that what we do and say is recorded in heaven and fondly missed whenever we can't serve any longer.

Exposition

This text focuses on a King of Judah whose life meant so little to the people around him that no one mourned him when he died.

The primary focus is on King Jehoram of Judah who was, by all definitions, a vicious man who killed his brothers when he became king. He was extremely cruel, insensitive, ruthless and murderous. He cared little for others but only about perpetuating himself. He is described as a king who walked in the way of the house of Ahab, that idolatrous bloody house; for his mother was Ahab's daughter he literally sucked in wickedness with his milk.

After he became king he was attacked by many of the nations surrounding him and because of a lack of coalitions and friendships in the community of nations, was regularly invaded and he lost much of possessions and territories. The resources of the nation were depleted frequently and the people quickly grew to dislike him.

2 Chronicles 21:6 gives Jehoram this short and tragic epitaph, "He did evil in the sight of the LORD." His reign was so evil, self serving and narcissistic that the prophet Elijah sent him a letter just before his assent to heaven in a chariot, denouncing him prophesying that God would punish him with a disease that would kill him.

The prophesy was fulfilled and king Jehoram died. No one missed him when he died. The text declared that he "departed without being desired." He was not even given a respectable king's burial.

Challenge to youth

When youth study history, they see and study the lives that have been lived by others; yet, their challenge is to live the life in front of them it in a way that counts. It would be a tragedy for a man or a woman to live his or her life in a way that saddened no one that they have left. It would be even worse if they celebrated at your demise. When Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was hung on December 30, 2006, the people of Iraq celebrated. In 2011 when terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden was killed by U.S. Navy Seals many in the free world celebrated his demise. Each time a false report about the

death of Cuban leader Fidel Castro was reported over the years there was virtual partying in the streets.

How can we live a life so that our absence is noted and mourned and not celebrated? There are many ways, but here are a few:

MAKE THE WORLD YOU TOUCH A BETTER PLACE: Those who count the most, touch the most in a positive way. Those who touch the least are never missed. Many spend their lives reaching out to touch as many people as they can as they move through the maze of life. We tend to mourn the loss of people who brought us hope such as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., we celebrate the demise of the Adolph Hitlers of the world. Those who reach out to provide food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes are those whose lives are significant, especially to those they have touched. When we reach out to the wounded and the lost of the world with a passion that comes from the heart, our lives have significance. Jesus told the sons of Zebedee who sought a high position in the Kingdom that true greatness would not be measured by sitting high, it would come through the quality of their service to others. He who would be greatest among you, let him be your servant. Those who desire to live a significant life should heed the words of Diana Ross' hit song Reach out and touch somebody's hand make this world a better place if you can.

LIVE SO THAT GOD FAVORS YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU: God smiles on us when we live and give righteously. In Acts 10:35, Peter said that believers who live in the fear of the Lord and live righteously are accepted. Those who are accepted by God are favored by Him. When you are blessed, bless others. When God gives you a bountiful blessing share that blessing with others. In Panther Burn, uncle Doug often killed hogs on the farm. When he finished processing all the ham, tripe, chitterlings and skins; he'd walk up and down the dusty road and share some of his kill with the neighbors. Years after he died he was missed because he shared with others. Even today there are many who give of their time, talents and resources to help others without a thought of personal profit. A popular hymn says, "Make me a blessing. Out of my life let Jesus Shine, make me a blessing to someone today."

We must live and give righteously. Living righteously implies doing God's will every day. Giving righteously implies sharing our financial gifts and spiritual gifts according to God's plan. To obtain a favor from God we must both live and give righteously

LIVE SO SOMEONE CAN FOLLOW YOU: Youth study the trails that have been walked by those before them, but their challenge is to blaze a trail that others who come after them can follow proudly. Those we study made history, those who are living today are making history. The question is: "What kind of history lesson are we writing?" Will it be a lesson of a young man or woman who chose to live an obedient life, walk humbly, serve unselfishly, and share freely? Or will it be another story, not so austere or disciplined. Youth often follow their grandparent's moreso than their parents for some reason. For that reason grandparents seem to have a lingering influence that reaches beyond their own lifetimes as grandchildren and great grandchildren learn of their

strengths and weaknesses and emulate them. Many years later a grandchild or a great grandchild remembers the life work of a grandparent and points its generation back to some level of sanity. Yet, each youth themselves must recognize that there are younger children that are following their steps already; they want to be just like them. Today little children admire Justin Bieber. Generations ago there were other child wonders: Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, just to name a few. Even in our city, there are youth who admire believing youth and want to follow in their step. Let us walk humbly before God so that those who "follow" us in life, will follow an admirable trail.

Live in the joy of the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, each believer should strive to live a life that displays the joy of knowing the Lord.

What is the joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is knowing that you are on the right track and that God is pleased with both your life and your goals.

Beyond the material rewards that believers receive for their service, it is the satisfaction of knowing that their little part helps to build the kingdom of the Lord. This satisfaction leads to a spiritual peace of mind that has been described as the joy of the Lord!

It's the satisfaction that a little boy felt when he saw his five loaves and two little fishes used to feed five thousand!

It's the satisfaction that the Good Samaritan felt when he watched the injured man walk away from a battered situation after weeks of love and care!

What is the joy of the Lord?

Those who live in the joy of the Lord are recipients of his goodness and are instruments of his compassion! When you know the joy of the Lord you know the goodness of the Lord.

It is the goodness of the Lord that transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness It's the goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The Joy of the Lord turns SADNESS into GLADNESS; WEAKNESS into strength;

DEFEAT into victory!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

That's why the song writer declared, Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!

This victory was won on a hill called Calvary!

This victory was won on an old rugged cross!

This victory was won after three days and three nights in a borrowed tomb!

This victory was won early Sunday morning when He arose from the grave with all power in His hand!

If you live victoriously, you will live a life that counts!

No. 9545-Black Heritage

I Will Do A New Thing

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 4, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19

Introduction

Have you ever listened to those who dwell on what we used to do? It seems that they have fixed on a point in the distant past and constantly relive that moment in their mind, especially if that moment was a great moment for them. The danger with nostalgia is that it tends to trap us in the past without allowing us to gaze into the future.

It is often said that people can tell their age by categorizing their conversation. A man who is young at heart and forward thinking constantly speaks about the future and what he plans to do. The old man always reflects back and speaks about what he "Use" to do. The more we talk about what we use to do, the older we are in our thinking.

There in lies the challenge of African-American History. We must reflect on where we have been; its absolutely essential, but at the same time we must spend more time charting where we are going. History has its purpose, but it also has its place. Our forward momentum as a people can become slowed and even stagnant if we dwell too much on past accomplishments while ignoring the challenge to chart new ways commensurate with the present challenge.

It's good to reflect on the accomplishments of the past and to chronicle the accomplishments of our heroes who arose victorious despite slavery and adversity, but we must spend more time thinking about our response to the challenges before us today.

In our past we survived on pidgin broken English and Ebonics, but in a global economy, will "What's happening, bro?", sagging pants, potato chip painted cars help us to be real players when corporations are looking for those who are multi-lingual and able to move easily from cultural level to another.

In our past we built our own schools in churches and old tin buildings; then we became dependent on the public and abandoned our teaching institutions, colleges and universities. The number of historically black colleges has declined over the decades, those that remain are struggling, yet very few black alumni send checks back to their old schools to help the future, they simply enjoy remembering the good old days.

As public education changes many are fighting desperately to hold on the same failed system we have become dependent upon that is generating proportionately too many of our young minds unprepared to compete. While remembering the past is great, yet in the world of education we should be bold enough to grasp a new thing and make it work to our benefit, just as our ancestors did nearly 200 years ago.

History has shown us that things have changed, but things are still the same. Our average income is still significantly lower than our white counterpart. We are still the last to be hired and the first to be fired in most cases. Our communities are still the major target of illegal drug distribution. We are still rejected for bank loans at an alarmingly high rate. Our children still make up the largest percentage of the incarcerated. Too many of us still live, week to week.

History has its place; we must look back with pride, but we must be prepared to do a new thing to face the challenges ahead.

What we have learned from our history is that God has always made a way for us when we boldly made what Martin Luther King called, strides toward freedom. We don't have to settle for memories of past glory we can confidently move in a new direction, secured by faith in the same old God.

As Christians, we should walk forward in confidence that as we learn from our past and proceed into our future, our God will help us do a new thing and make a way for us in the wilderness.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he reminds Israel of God's promise to be with them in return for their faithfulness.

To reassure them, Isaiah began to remind them of the great wonders God had done for them in the past. He reminded them how God had made a path for them that carried them through the red sea and across the desert. He urged them to look back at the victorious journey of their ancestry and take heart because that same God was still with them with undiminished power and ability.

After rehearsing how God's power had been displayed in times past and reminding them of how God broke the powers of mighty nations opposing them in the past (v17) God tells Israel at verse 18 not to dwell on the past, because he would do a new thing for the people. Just like he had blazed a path for their forefathers he was about to do a great thing in their lives as well. God promised ". I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." (v19)

These were references to his great work with their ancestors in providing food, clothing and protection for them while they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. During this time they completely depended upon God who provided the bread from heaven every day and meat. When they were thirsty God provided water for them that flowed from a rock like a mighty river. That is what he did in the past. The fact that he was talking to a new generation is evidenced by the phrase "I will." The wilderness experience was sure to come, but promised to sustain them regardless to the difficulty of the journey even to the point of providing for their food, clothing and

shelter in life's wilderness, and rivers of waters to satisfy their thirsts.

This 43rd chapter of Isaiah is important to believers because it reminds us that those who trust in him will find that God will make a way.

We need a new thing

When Israel marched out of slavery each generation was faced with new challenges. Many enough courage to march out of Egypt, but lost their faith when they made it to the Red Sea. Some crossed the Rea Sea, but lost their faith when they faced the drought conditions of the wilderness and a whole generation died before they moved forward.

Even as they decided to move into the Promised Land there even more challenges; some were intimidated by the giants on the other side and by the raging Jordan river. However, the biblical record shows us that at each important juncture of their journey, God intervened and helped them do a new thing.

As a people, we should be looking for the ways that God is helping us to do new things.

It's great to know that God has sheltered and protected us through difficult times, but it is frustrating, but we are looking for God help us do some new things.

We are reaching epidemic numbers of unwed mothers in our community, producing babies without fathers, and the number of shacking relationships is resulting in a high number of homes without husbands. We should be looking for God to help us do some new things. We must redouble our efforts to religiously educate our young and take back our families.

It's great to have a Black man in the Supreme Court; but justice is still unjust when the prisons are filled with "just us". Our criminal justice system must remain firm, but it must administer justice in ways that reclaim troubled lives rather than support the warehousing of an entire generation for profit.

It's great that the Constitution gives us the right to vote, but what good is that right if we don't vote or fail to educate ourselves to the issues. We need God to show give us a new thing and show us a better way. We must roll up our sleeves and educate our communities and join in the effort to mobilize the masses for voter participation.

How long will we sit back and accept the fact that many of our children are being taught in failing schools that were great in the past, but as standards constantly change, they are proving inadequate to adjust to today's needs. We can remember the past, the glory days, of what our schools once were, or we can seize the opportunities that are available and do a new thing, with God's help.

God will make a way

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that as we look back on our past, that our hope is in our future; in that quest we should remember that God will make a way.

For Israel the prospect of the wilderness was both a challenge and an opportunity. It was a challenge of their faith and an opportunity for God to reveal himself in their lives.

We must march forward remembering what God has said, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old." We must expect that God IS going to do a NEW THING.

God is not through with us yet. If He can make "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert", we know that He is able to move our present mountains out of our way.

If the Lord can cause a virgin to conceive a child, He can restore our families.

If the Lord can open the Red Sea, He can open doors of opportunity.

If the Lord can resurrect Lazarus, He can resurrect our ailing communities.

We must have faith that God is going to do a new thing!

When there seems to be no way, the Lord will create a way.

When there seems to be no present hope, the Lord will give us hope.

When there seems to be no present joy, in Christ we will discover new joy.

We must have faith that God is going to do a new thing!

The challenge is to remember that what God did for your mother or grandmother, he will do for you! What God did for your grandfather and your father, he will do for you! God has brought our families through the wilderness of oppression and hard times. He has brought us through slavery, depressions and world wars!

He's bought us from a nomadic life of moving from place to place and set our feet on solid ground. He's put food on our table and clothes on our backs.

But what God did for our parents, he will do for us! No wonder the song writer declared, "It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you. With arms wide open he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God will do."

As we move forward we should remember that the Lord will make a way!

In the wilderness of:

—Despair, I know the Lord will give you hope!

—Weakness, the Lord will give you strength!

—Danger, the Lord will guide you to the other side. No wonder the song writer declared, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land!"

—Sorrow, the Lord will bring you comfort! "Beneath his wings of Love abide God will take care of you!"

It doesn't matter whether you are in the wilderness or on the mountaintop.

It doesn't matter whether you are doing a new thing or the same old thing. If you call on the name of Jesus! He will make a way for you!

He will provide rivers of hope in the middle of your deserts!

Call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose from the grave in victory!

Call on Jesus...

He will make a way for you!

No. 9546-Member Improvement

Broad Phylacteries and Narrow faith

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 11, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; 11) "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Matthew

Introduction

Have you ever seen a Jack-in-the Box ? A Jack-in-the-Box is a children's toy that has been for scores of years. It consists of a little box that contains a clown puppet that sits on a spring. On the side of the box is a handle. When the handled is turned music plays and when the music gets to a special point the top of the box opens and out pops the Jack, bouncing around on the spring bringing laughter to little kids. Whenever the kids wanted another laugh they would turn the wheel again and the Jack would pop up again. When we tired of playing with Jack when closed the top down and pushed the box in a corner. However, whenever we needed a laugh or a giggle, we could easily pull out the box and Jack would pop out?

If Jacks in the boxes had feelings, that probably wouldn't appreciate being stuffed in a box and played with like a toy! Jack probably became tired of both the box and games people played with him.

Today, there are many people who have a Jack-in-the-Box attitude about God. We think of him as this magician who lives somewhere in space, who can make things happen for us if we learn the magic words; therefore many spend their lives trying to learn the magic words.

They learn words, without learning the WORD.

In pursuit of the magic words, the words themselves become objects of worship and faith becomes synonymous to believe in the power of good luck charms that are activated by the recitation the correct series of words. Many have reduced their spiritual lives to the recitation of a collection of verses from the bible quoted frequently to receive good luck or favor? Some have a verse they recite when we need money. Some have recitations for challenging situations. What about when we want to succeed? Many of us have completely worn out Philippians 4:13. Folks are reciting that verse frequently,

posting it on their Facebook pages. Evander Holyfield, heavyweight champion of the world, had it embroidered on his robe and recited it as he punched his opponents in the head. Tim Tebow, quarterback for the Denver Broncos recited it before and during every game. It became a national good luck charm as Tebow mania spread to millions across the nation. Millions started bowing and reciting good luck verses as well.

When our faith is limited to scraps of paper or verses we've memorized for good luck, it minimizes our God to a Jack-in-the-box who responds whenever an incantation or spell is recited. God begins to serve us instead of the contrary.

How does God feel being the Jack-in-the-Box of those who call on Him, but do not worship him, live by his laws, or support his kingdom? How does God feel being the God in the box who is supposed to pop up whenever a verse is recited by people who will not commit themselves to live for him every day?

The believer who lives the Christian life lives his faith each day. He worships God whom he cannot see and he serves his neighbor whom he can see. The believer does not live by phylacteries or quotations in a box; scripture tells us that the just shall walk by faith in God. In business, family, social or public encounters; the just live by faith not by quotations posted for the public to see.

As believers, we are reminded that God is with us always. We speak to Him out of the sincerity of our hearts; never for public display or show. He responds to us not because we recited a verse or posted it on a social networking page, but because we live by his teachings daily and walk faithfully in the community.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he denounces the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees who he said made a big show about their religious piety, but did not live the life themselves.

Jesus' words to them castigated them for ceremony and show. He in his discourse he referred to phylacteries, a word only used once in the bible.

Phylacteries were strips of vellum that were tied to their arms and foreheads. They contained boxes in which four passages of scripture were written. These four passages served three purposes: 1) They reminded them of the promises of God to Israel and the nature of their journey 2) They made the priests look holy in the presence of the people; and 3) They were thought to be good luck charms that would effectively keep demons away and fight off bad luck.

The priests took the phylacteries as serious business. Lengthy rules were established that described how they were to be worn, tied and stored. They were to be tied to their hands and frontlets on their eyes. The size and nature of the phylacteries themselves became an object of worship because some wore larger phylacteries than others making it possible for more scripture to be written upon them, inferring that the wearer was more religious than others.

The phylacteries allowed the priests to appear holy and righteous, to gain status among the people, yet their lives did not reflect the holiness that they depicted in their

ceremonial robes. They did not practice what they preached. They wanted position and the praise of men without earning that praise through their service to men. At best they were hypocrites because not only did they wear phylacteries, they made them bigger so people could see them.

They wore broad phylacteries, but their service to others and true loyalty to God was extremely narrow.

Jesus challenged their piety and outward shows of religious fervor, while noting that all of their fervor was self serving in that it was not to honor God, but to elicit the praise of men and to elevate themselves. He concluded in Matthew 23:11, "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant." His challenged to them was to live their faith rather than writing it on little strips of paper and strapping it to their heads and arms.

In the box

The four passages written down by the Jews and placed in the box represented four biblical truth from the writings of Moses that they kept before them to symbolize their remembrance of God's grace. Recitation of the passages from memory and carrying them in boxes tied to their foreheads and strapped to their arms became a ritual so intense that many thought that simply following the ritual brought them favor.

THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD BROUGHT YOU OUT: Exodus 13:3 notes that the strength of the Lord brought Israel out of bondage. It was among 10 verses in the passage which called upon Israel to dedicate their first fruits to God. Even today, there are many who give lip service to how God brought them out of difficult situations. They speak loudly about how He healed them, blessed them and opened doors for them, but they ignore the command to give Him the first fruits or the best of their time, talent, and resources. It is a lip service that Jesus dismisses as hypocritical. Just as the scribes and Pharisees spoke broad phylacteries and did little service, believers today are reminded that we are expected to demonstrate our gratitude for God's goodness not simply talk about it.

Those who walk by faith constantly demonstrate their remembrance of God's grace not by constantly saying it, but by demonstrating it. In recent, unseasonal hurricanes that have devastated parts of the nation volunteers came from across the nation to help families recollect their lives. One volunteer was asked why she came so many miles and she responded, "I have survived a tornado myself. I know what it's like. I couldn't just do nothing." Those who have been brought out by the Lord feel compelled to do more than talk and wear their gratitude in a box, but to respond with acts of faith.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE PROMISE REMEMBER THE LORD: Exodus 13:11-16 was copied by the Jews and place in their prayer box. The passage told them they would receive what was promised of God, but not to forget Him once they receive it. Today, there are many who receive promises from God, but forget him when he delivers. Yet, He expects us to do more than give Him lip service. We are blessed to be a blessing to others. It is a phylactery to constantly say the words, "I'm blessed and highly favored" with your lips, but do not tithe, worship regularly or help others in need. Those

who do so give God lip service, but not real service.

We are blessed for a reason. Louise White, at age 81, was concerned about the condition of her family and her generations. Every night she slept with her bible and prayed. Last week, it was announced that the lottery ticket she bought at the local Stop and Shop was worth $336 million dollars. She signed it and put it in her bible. She told the media that one of her family members wanted some rainbow sherbet ice cream. She went to the store and by chance bought the ticket. When she found she had won, she formed a legal trust called the "Rainbow Sherbert Trust" for her family and said, "I have am truly blessed. This will make my family happy." -When your receive your blessings, remember the Lord.

LOVE GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 was a command that was placed in the box. It was a command to love the Lord with all your heart. It included a command to teach the love of God to children and to teach it continuously. Today, there are many who love God, but not with all of their heart. It sounds good as the words roll off their lips, but they lose their appeal once that love requires a sacrifice of any kind. Too often, we love God if it is convenient to do so. Increasingly, many families are neglecting teaching the bible to their children. A recent 2008 study of American households showed 93 percent had a bible in them. Yet, only 37 percent read their bibles at least once a week and only 12 percent taught the bible regularly to their children. Jesus said the scribes and the Pharisees made a big show about loving God for the public to see, but their show was just broad phylacteries that evidenced very little real faith. If we have bibles in our homes, but never read them; is our display of the family bible in the living room a show? If we never teach our children the bible ourselves and see to it that they are formally taught in Sunday school and bible studies; are our professions of love of God phylacteries?

Believers love the Lord in precept and practice. We give God first place in our lives and we teach our children to follow our example. At home we discuss the bible, study our lessons and teach the same to our children. Psalm 119:105 reminds us, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."- They even add Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. " The desire of every Christian is embodied in the words of the old song that says, "Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart. In my heart, in my heart. Lord I want to be a Christian in my heart."

RAIN IN DUE SEASON: The last passage included in the box was God's promise contained in Deuteronomy 11:13-21. In these nine verses God promised to give Israel rain in due season if they loved God and kept his commandments. That promise was put in the box. Today, there are many who look forward to the shower of blessings promised by God when our "due season" comes. It is the promise that in His own time God will make things happen for us and shower us with the essentials necessary for us to flourish in our quest to build his kingdom. In our quest we focus on the rain and the season, but we forget that the promise is conditional. Deuteronomy 11:13 says, "If ye shall harken diligently unto my commandments..." The season comes when we have diligently obeyed God. We hear many today singing about their season of prosperity, but even as they sing, they neglect the poor, skip the offering plate, and

conduct themselves faithlessly. Jesus told the Pharisees and scribes that such expressions were hypocritical if they were not followed by acts of faith. He called them Broad phylacteries.

Believers who love the Lord trust in Him daily. We sing His praises in season and out of season, in good times and bad because the word tells us, "In everything give thanks." We pray for His will to be done; inclusive in that will is a season of health and a season of sickness. A season of prosperity and a season of famine. A season of joy and a season of pain. We make our wishes known to God privately, and he rewards us openly, in due season.

Out of the Box

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that if we let God out of the box, He will see our faith and our sacrifice, and He will provide our needs.

The ancient Jews reduced their faith to special verses hidden in boxes. When they prayed the scriptures in the box became the focal point of their faith. It was as if they kept God in the box.

Today, we must be careful not to reduce our faith to phylacteries, good luck charms and omens. We don't want to confine God to a box, dangle Him from the end of a rosy, or keep Him on the end of chain.

Our God is an awesome God when He is out of the box and off the chain!

In the box we ask God to hide Himself from our presence and only appear when we need Him. However, when we let God out of the box He becomes a constant presence in our lives every day.

When God is out of the box He walks with us and talks with us and becomes whatever we need even before we ask.

Out of the box God is free to be God.

Out of the box He becomes JEHOVAH-JIREH our God who sees and provides.

Out of the box He becomes JEHOVAH-RAPHA our God who heals us.

Out of the box He becomes JEHOVAH-SHALOM our God who brings us peace in the midst of trouble.

Out of the box He becomes JEHOVAH-NISSI our God who is the banner of victory.

When our supply of food is running low, it is good to know that the Lord will provide.

When our money is gone and provisions have nearly disappeared, it is good to know that God will continue to provide for us.

When there is disruption, or insecurity all around, it is good to know that God can bring peace in the midst of confusion..

No matter how tough times get, God is still God. He is still our God whose

-Power never weakens

-Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves

-Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes

-Joy never ends
-Foundation never shakes
-Truth never changes
-Supply never shrinks

If you think God does not see what you are going through, remember the words of the songwriter, “We are our heavenly father’s children, and he knows just how much we can bear!”

God sees our tears in the midnight hour!

God sees our concern for our families and loved ones!

God sees our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!

On the same hill where Isaac asked, “Where is the lamb?”

God made the eternal sacrifice of his only beloved son!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning arose from the dead!

No. 9547-Inspiration

A Call to Worship

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2012

SCRIPTURE: One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4

Introduction

How do you know when it is time to worship? When we think of a call to worship, we usually think of a point in a worship program when a speaker calls the audience together and notifies them by reading a scripture, or singing a song that is time for the church to begin its worship. It is the traditional way that churches formally begin worships. There are lines on church bulletins that include the words, "Call to worship."

Why would we need a call to worship? Generally, congregations gather before the beginning of a worship service and discuss life, exchange personal information and other trivialities. The call to worship is a call to set the cares of the world aside and begin the worship of the Lord.

In our history the church itself gave the call to worship by ringing its bell on Sunday mornings. Not many in this generation have heard a church bell ring, except in the movies. There are many who can recall a time when the bells of churches actually rang. It was a common occurrence. Nearly every church had a bell. The architecture of churches of the past required that a tower be erected to house a bell.

Among the various reasons that the church bell rang was a call to worship.

Yet, even today church bells remain silent. They are beautiful pieces of construction, but they never ring. It could mean too that the church has lost touch with its ability to call the community to worship.

Just as we assemble before a worship event not really focused on the purpose of the assembly and must be called to worship. God has a way of calling all of us to worship if we get so caught up in ourselves that we forget our purpose in life.

When sickness comes..we sing and pray!
When hard times come...we sing and pray!
In times of war...we sing and pray!
God knows how to call us to worship.

Consider Waving Wanda who rarely came into the church without waving her

hand. Often when Wanda came early she sat in her seat and just waved her hand. It was strange because in the moments before the beginning of the service the church had a rule that no one talked, each was required to sit quietly. Wanda obeyed the rule, but each Sunday she walked in the door waving her hand and then sat in her pew, waving her hand. When the call to worship was given she suddenly stopped waving her hand and started to singing and shouting. Confused by this practice a church deacon asked her, "Wanda why do you wave your hand until the call to worship then you start singing?" Wanda, with a joyous look on her face said, "When I woke in the morning I hear the voice of God calling me to live a new day for him and worship him. I start worshipping him before I walk out the door. When I get to church, I'm still worshipping him when I walk in the door, but I obey the rule and keep quiet. I wave my hand because I got my call to worship when I opened my eyes, but since I can't say a word at the beginning of church..I just wave my hand!"

The church should find a common need to worship God even without a formal call.

He has seen us through difficult times...that is a call to worship!

He has blessed us in so many ways...that is a call to worship!

He has touched, protected and saved us from dangers seen and unseen, that is a call to worship.

As Christians, we are called to worship God in season and out of season and to give thanks and praise regardless to the circumstance. In solidarity with the savior, we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expressed his desire to give pleasing worship and service to the Lord.

In Psalm 27 David made it clear that one of the major objectives of his life was to live in solidarity with God. Living in communion with God cannot be done without a humble and committed spirit. This spirit helps believers create a life work that is a masterpiece or a work of spiritual excellence.

David said his entire life was consumed with one desire. That desire was to live in the presence of God in a way that was pleasing to him. As a shepherd boy, a wanderer and as king, he wanted to please God and do those things that would meet God's approval.

David did just that, most of his life. He had a few flaws and made some mistakes along the way, but his life is described as enviable. He was described as a man after God's own heart.

His ultimate desire was to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Each circumstance of his life became his own personal call or reason to worship.

The Call to worship

We worship God because He is great and His mercy endureth forever. We worship

Him because of what He has done for us and what He is going to do for us in the future. When we consider our call to worship, we must consider the following:

WE MUST REMAIN FIRM IN OUR WORSHIP: We must resist all temptations to detour to other paths and remain firm in our worship of Christ. When we worship send out a call that resonates throughout the community and declares that our God is king. When we worship we testify to the importance of God in our lives. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that sits on a hill that cannot be hidden." When we worship we let our lights shine. When we worship God we agree with Johann Neethling and, "declare the truth about God's worth, God's honor, God's greatness, and God's love. We declare it to Him, we declare it to the hosts of heaven, and we declare it to all creation."

When we assemble on Sundays each believer says to the world, God is a good God and we believe it!

TRUE WORSHIP CANNOT BE HINDERED: Just as true believers do not need a call to worship, it is also true that it is difficult to stop a true a true believer from worshipping. The Scribes and Pharisees learned this truth when they tried to get Jesus to stop His followers from praising Him as He rode into Jerusalem. That's when Jesus pointed them to the impossibility of muzzling a person who has been blessed and one who expects to be blessed.

When Jesus healed a man whose lives were plagued with demons He told them man not to tell anyone, but the man couldn't keep it to himself. His healing was a call to worship!

The woman at the well couldn't keep it to herself she had to run all over the city saying "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."- Her restoration was a call to worship!

Lazarus, who had been dead for several days but given new life, when he saw Jesus it was a call to worship!

Even today, there is somebody in the crowd, whose life has been made whole and that fact alone is a call to worship.

When Jesus has touched you and made a change in your life, no one has to tell you, that fact alone is a call to worship.

TRUE WORSHIP NEEDS NO CALL: When the saints of God get together, those who really know the Lord, need no call to worship. True worship is from the heart. It is spontaneous. It cannot be orchestrated. We clap when we are moved to clap, not because we are told. We stand on our feet, wave our hand or even do our dance when we are moved to do so; when our hearts demand we respond. There are many who orchestrate praise. In some choirs the singers clap when they are told to clap, jump when they are told to jump and lift their hands in praise on cue. Yet, true worship is spontaneous, it has no particular order, it comes as the spirit gives utterance. Some may cry. Some may shout. Some may sit still and soak in the atmosphere. Others may dance the holy dance. No matter what method is used, true worship is from the heart, it does not need a call because believers assemble for the express purpose of worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness.

Our worship is Exciting

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when we know what God has done for us, our worship is exciting!

When Jesus entered a city the crowds met Him at the gates and praised Him.

They were excited about what they expected Him to do.

In other places he had healed the sick and raised the dead.

In other places the blind were given the sight and even those caught in sin were forgiven.

When the people worshipped Him they were excited about what he had done and what they expected him to do.

Even today, we are excited about what Christ has done for us in the past and what he's going to do for us in the days ahead.

We're excited about the healings that could be coming!

We're excited about the job that we've been trying to land.

We're excited about the renewed spirit of growth we share today.

We can't help it but all of that good news makes us wave our hands, stand on our feet at times, smile at others and for the most part we give God praise for being a just God.

Every believer should be ready to worship the Lord because long before we saw a need to give it up for the Lord he gave it up for us.

We know God gave us His love because the bible tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

When God showed us His love, it was a call for us to worship!

It was a love that was:
—higher than the heavens
—deeper than the oceans
—lovelier than the sunsets
—sweeter than the honeycomb
—stronger than the wind
—fresher than the morning dew

It was a love that could not be:
—measured for it is immeasurable
—described for it is indescribable
—evaluated for it is invaluable
—comprehended for it is incomprehensible
—explained for it is unexplainable

There's no other love that can:
—bless and benefit
—penetrate and saturate —glorify and magnify
—satisfy and beautify
—encourage the discouraged!

We should worship God because He first loved us. No wonder the songwriter declared, Oh How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me.

Somebody came to the worship service today sporting your DC degree. Day Care Center Certificate. It certifies that you know how to act! You were told in Day Care to sit politely and to be quiet in your seat. We may forget many things, but we remember what we learned in Day Care. Somebody came to the worship today, determined to keep their praise turned down low.

I said I wasn't going to tell anybody but I can't keep it to myself.

I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

I said I wasn't going to tell anybody but every time I think about Jesus; it's a call for me to praise His name!

No. 9548-Inspiration

Ice Tea and Skittles

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 25, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "...Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, for you know what they are going through. Hebrews:13:3; "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath" Ephesians 4:26

Introduction

Are there some things that challenge your sense of justice and fair play? Most of us get angry when we see someone cheated out of an opportunity or robbed of their liberty. When we watch the news and see men released from prison after serving decades on bogus charges, our sense of justice is disturbed. When people are prosecuted without reason and unreasonably persecuted we get angry.

Everyone has a breaking point. Even Jesus himself, usually soft spoken and philosophical in his demeanor, became angry when he saw the money changers in the temple. He turned over tables and shouted, "It is written that my father's house is the house of prayer, but ye have turned it into a den of thieves."- He was visibly angry.

There was never another occasion when he showed so much rage, but on that day the presence of so much sin, made him angry. Sin pushed his buttons.

Sometimes we are same way. We try to hold our peace on some subjects, but every now and then one subject or another really touches that last nerve. Consider the country boy who came to the city one Friday night in midst of the segregated South. He had been warned by the folks back home to keep his temper and not to be too upset by anything people did to him along the way. With a brand new pair of blue suede shoes on his feet he went into town and bumped into some ruffians who decided that this lone Negro was an easy target for some heckling and fun. They called him names. The young man stood silent. One slapped him on his head. He stood silent. He endured a list of personal harassments but he remembered his warning not to react to anything done to him. Finally, the ruffians saw his brand new blue suede shoes and decided to scoop mud and spread it all over the shoes. That was it. They young man responded as he started swinging left and right, "You can mess with me and give me the blues, don't mess with my blue suede shoes!"

Injustice has a way of challenging our sense of order. It stirs our anger and we

must struggle hard to remain in control.

This is the feeling that many have in the aftermath of the February 2012 slaying Trayvon Martin in Sanford Florida. Seventeen year old Martin was killed by George Zimmerman. Martin was black. Zimmerman is Hispanic who passes for White. Zimmerman was a volunteer neighborhood watchman in a gated community, armed with a semiautomatic handgun. Martin was armed with a can of ice tea and a package of Skittles. Zimmerman claims self-defense. What has enflamed this situation are of the facts that: Zimmerman is a hundred pounds bigger and ten years older. He had the gun, not Martin. He followed Martin in his truck and he called 911 and was told to stand down and wait for police, but he ignored the instruction and later gunned down the youth in what he claimed was "self defense." No arrests were immediately made because of Florida's "Stand your ground law" which seems to give the right to shoot to persons who feel threatened. Many in the nation appear to be frustrated that little effort was taken to discern if his self-defense claim is valid.

The incident is so frustrating that even the President of the United States noted that if he had a son, Trayvon Martin would look just like him. The implication was clear; if he had a son who had worn a hoodie and walked through that gated neighborhood, he might have been killed, too.

The national sense of fair play and justice has been assaulted and the cries of protest and outrage are coming from all sectors of the nation.

How should the Christian community respond? What does the word of God say about our response to injustice? Ephesians 4:6 says, ""Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath." Yet, there is another passage from Hebrews 13:3 " ... Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, for you know what they are going through."

God's word indicates that God is concerned about any injustice inflicted upon believers. It also says that we should be empathetic, toward the victims of any injustice while seeking justice for anyone suspected of infringements.

As Christians, we know that God demands justice because we read in Amos 5:24 the prophet Amos declare, ".. let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." From every corner of the nation that clarion call is being sounded. The voice of God's people echoing His word will be heard.

Exposition

This text focuses on scripture that instructs believers how they must respond to injustices.

The word anger in verse 26 is from the Greek word "Orgizo" which implies godly indignation against evil. Orgizo is slow in its rise but lasting in its nature. While "orgizo" suggests an emotional response it is always free of indignation, resentment and hate. This characterization is just the opposite of verse 31 which says, "let all..anger..be put away from you." One seems to say anger is acceptable while the other says it is not. The anger of verse 31 does not refer to godly indignation but emotional responses that

stem from a desire for revenge. It is characterized by the limiting adjectives that surround it: Bitterness, wrath, clamor and evil speaking.

Believers should be angry about injustice, but that anger should not result in a clamor for evil and revenge. It should lead to a call for justice.

Hebrews 13:3 reminds us that we should feel the pain of those who have suffered injustice and empathize with them because we have been there ourselves.

Through the believer's response we show the world that God cares.

What God expects

The mind and heart of God compels Christians who confront injustice to keep three important truths in mind. God expects us to respond to injustice with a Godly anger that defies evil while refusing to hate. This mindset is reflected in the first three verses of Hebrews 13.

LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE: Hebrews 13:1 encourages believers to promote brotherly love. To continue implies that brother love exists. There are many factors that promote brotherly love. When we understand each other, listen to each and appreciate each other's differences we create atmospheres where brotherly love can exist. Conversely, there are many factors that threaten brotherly love. In America, racial hatred had been one of the most divisive traits of our national history. It has caused us to imprison, enslave, kill and destroy each other mercilessly. Even as bigotry and hatred raised their bitter heads there were voices in the faceless masses that cried out, "Let brotherly love continue." In every struggle we saw that the real culprit that divides us is not color, but the presence of evil showing itself in the form of greed, envy, jealousy and hatred. Even in the aftermath of death, tragedy and injustice there have always been millions who refused to resort to hate, but worked even harder to heal wounds, seek justice for all, and to reach out to the hurting all over the world. This is the work of love that must continue, even in the face of injustice. It is not a call to ignore injustice, but it is rather an invitation to increase our efforts to "let brotherly love continue." It is tempting to let incidents like the tragic slaying of Trayvon Martin disrupt efforts to build bridges between the races and bury hatred. That should not happen. It should prompt us to speed up our efforts to change unjust laws and become more sensitive to the rights of others. While the nation is disturbed over the injustices we see around us, we are compelled to, "let brotherly love" continue.

BE CAREFUL HOW WE RESPOND TO STRANGERS: Hebrews 13:2 reminds us to "be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Our society often paints caricatures of people who are different. We use racially descriptive terms to describe people of other races and cultures. Often these descriptions are offensive and negative. Even worse, we tend to stereotype and lump everyone into categories. Thus, we believe everyone who lives in a housing project is a drug dealer and low achiever. Everyone who is of Hispanic origin is an illegal immigrant and only Native Americans act crazy when they get drunk. These stereotypes force us to assume that every black person who walks in a store in a mall is coming to steal and every black or Hispanic person walking the street wearing a hoodie is up to something bad and must be watched. Yet, we are compelled by scripture to be careful

how we respond to strangers or those who are different from us. We can't assume that every white man is a Klansman, that every Democrat is good and that all Republicans are evil. We can't assume anything about anyone, but must judge each person by their own actions. Thus, we must be careful how we entertain people who are different from ourselves; we must not allow our hidden prejudices to guide our actions. This is a lesson that Jesus taught by example. He made no judgments about the woman at the well and didn't buy into custom that He should avoid contact with Samaritans, publicans and sinners because all of them are suspicious and tainted people. While Jesus followed that principal the world did not respond to Him the same way. He was a stranger among many, but they didn't know they were entertaining the Son of God. The tragedy of the Trayvon Martin slaying was a clear example of what happens when our hidden prejudices and stereotypes cause us to respond out of fear rather than respect. He was an innocent youth, who appeared strange and out of place, and for that He died. It is an injustice that screams to the throne of God and surely heaven will respond.

SHARE THE SORROW OF VICTIMS: Hebrews 13:3 entreats believers to have a sympathetic heart to the victims of injustice. An injustice is an action that has defied all of the rules of fair play. An injustice leaves its victims wounded, troubled, and unsettled. Too often injustice leads to death. We have seen too much of death in this respect: Emmitt Till, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. are just a few who have been the victims of hatred and injustice. Too many times we have seen sorrowing mothers, crying sisters and brothers holding their hearts in their hands. The word of God says we who have walked in their footsteps and felt the sting of tragedy ourselves should be sympathetic to those who are the newest victims of injustice. That sympathy should go beyond mere sympathy must be galvanized into the energy necessary to make something good come out of an injustice. Laws that perpetuate or promote injustice should be repealed. Conditions that allow racism to flourish must be improved and there must be a resolve to work with all of our might to insure that never again will the innocents of our nation be lost to something as senseless as a boy wearing a hoodie looking for Ice Tea and Skittles. We who have felt the pain should help bear the pain of the victims of injustice everywhere. We should lift them up in prayer and call upon the God we serve to wipe their tears away. Make no mistake, God will wipe all of their tears away. God will take care of the victims in ways that only he can do. Let us continue to response to all victims of tragedy and injustice anywhere in a similar manner. Let's commend them to our God.

Respond with Love

Finally, brothers and sisters, we are compelled to respond to any injustice by putting it all in God's hands while we work to repair injuries to hearts and souls.

In all of our responses we must never lose the capacity to love. Martin Luther King reminded us that while we, as a people, are angry with the racism of the American system; we should not lose our capacity to love every American.

Our God has shown us the way, if we would just follow his example.

He was angry when Israel sinned and began to follow Baal but he continued to love her anyway. He told the Prophet Hosea to dramatize that love by marrying a wife of whoredom who cheated and was unfaithful. But Hosea's call to his wandering bride was "I don't like what you are doing to yourself, but I still love you!"

Today that call is still going out from the throne of God, "I am angry with sin, but I love the sinner!" I don't like what the world is doing but I still love the world.

In fact, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus the son of God loved us so much that one day he carried a cross to Calvary!

He loved us so much that he cried out "father forgive them for they know not what they do"

He loved us so much that he died on Calvary, but rose early on Sunday morning!

He loved us so much that today he still says all is forgiven, come on home!

No. 9549-Easter (Palm Sunday)

The Red Carpet Treatment

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 1, 2012

SCRIPTURE: " And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. Matthew 21:8-9

Introduction

Have you ever had anyone to greet you with enthusiasm? How did you feel? If you are like others, we are impressed when we given an enthusiastic welcome."Rolling out the red carpet" is an idiom of speech that refers to a lavish welcome that has all of the trappings of honor and royal hospitality. It is an idiom, it does not mean that there will always be a red carpet rolled on the floor, but it does mean that people are really going out of their way to make you welcome.

When soldiers come home from battle their hometowns greet them with parades and pageantry. When a team wins the World Series or the Super bowl thousands of people meet them at the airport waving signs and banners and the air is filled with music playing.

If a dignitary from another country visits there are lavish preparations that include bands, state dinners, soldiers on parade and the highest fashion. Nothing is spared, they are given the best of everything and treated with the highest honor.

We are probably most familiar with the "Red Carpet" when actors make their appearances at the Academy Awards, Emmy Awards or Grammy Awards. A long red carpet blazes a crimson trail from the arriving limousine to the entrance. On each side of the isle there are thousands of people shouting praises, "I love yous" and screams. Cameras flash, hands wave and thousands of fans swoon at the sight of their favorite star wearing expensive gowns, diamonds, rubies and $1,000 hairdos. The stars who walk the carpet themselves know that they have made it to stardom, they have a ticket and fans are screaming their names!

What do you think would happen if you heard that Jesus was coming to town? There would be a frenzy of activity, security would have to be arranged and his route well planned. The arrival of the Son of God would definitely be a Red Carpet event.

When Jesus enters our lives that should be cause for excitement. We should be prepare to roll out the red carpet, lift his name in praise and receive Him like the King He is.

As Christians, we should strive to roll out the red carpet for our Lord every day. Let's give Him our best praise and service for He is truly the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Exposition

This text focuses on the praise and acclamation that Jesus received when he made his entrance into the city of Jerusalem. It occurred shortly after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. On his way to Jerusalem he stopped again in Bethany to eat supper with Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 12:2). The word spread among the crowd of people which had grown to hundreds of thousands because of the upcoming Passover celebration. As he approached Jerusalem, the crowds praised him and took branches from the palm trees and went forth to meet him shouting "Hosanna!" and praising him.

They rejoiced greatly and took their cloaks and threw them into the street to welcome one they expected to save them and bring them prosperity.

As the people praised Him they were filled with new hope by His coming because He was the object of all their praise.

They rolled out the Red Carpet for Him in a grand way!

The Treatment

When Jesus came into Jerusalem he was given the Red Carpet treatment even though there was no carpet. The carpet is an idiom, figure of speech that refers to the fact that they were paving the way for Him to enter.

THEY THREW DOWN THEIR CLOTHES: What they took off became the carpet. If we want to invite Jesus into our lives maybe we should give Him the red carpet treatment and take off a few things that would make us better followers. For Israel, taking of the garments and throwing them before a triumphant king was an act of submission. It meant the people were submitting themselves and paving the way for his leadership.

What if we took off some of our weaker qualities and cast them down before Him to pave the way for him to come into our lives.

That Hat of Conceit. What if we took it off and threw in the way and shouted Hosanna?

That Coat of Bitterness; what if we took it off and threw it in front of Him and said "Come thou oh mighty king!

That Shoe of Living In Darkness; What if we took it off and stepped into the marvelous light?

There was no carpet, but the road was literally paved with the garments of people who took off something to welcome Him into their lives. We can roll out that same

red carpet by clearing the way for Him to live within us.

THEY HEARD HE WAS SOMEBODY: Those who stand outside at the awards shows do so because the believe those who walk the carpet are "somebody." Some come days ahead of time so that they can get a chance to get a good look at somebody. This is what happened to Zaccheus. He climbed to the top of a Sycamore tree to see Jesus. There is no record of anyone shouting for the disciples, although they walked among the strewn way with Jesus. Matthew 21:10 says someone in the crowd asked, "Who is this?" Is that Him? Is He the one? They had to ask because He was riding on a donkey. In today's way of thinking, he did not arrive in a chauffeured limousine, who is He?

When they learned who Jesus was they shouted! Jesus was praised because of His mighty acts among the people. They knew about his raising of Lazarus from the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding thousands with a handful of fishes and bread, and therefore they praised him and shouted Hosanna!

Today we should roll out the red carpet of praise for Him because we too know of his mighty acts in our own personal lives. We have seen him take the jangling discords of our lives and bind them into a bond of meaning and purpose.

We know about His mighty works. We know He is somebody and He is worthy to be praised!

THEY SHOUTED TO BE SAVED: There is a difference between those who stand outside of the Grammy's and shout to those on the carpet and those in Jerusalem. Outside the Grammy's they shout for a star to pose for them; they shout for an autograph. However, those who shouted in Jerusalem were shouting to be saved. That's why they said Hosanna, it means 'Lord save us!" We want Christ to enter our lives to save us, so we roll out the red carpet.

Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her the water of life. It was Jesus who told her that she had five husbands and the man with whom she was living was not her husband. Yet, He offered her the water of life and the chance to be in the kingdom. She was so excited that she did not wait on the crowd, she dropped her water pot and started running through the city saying, "Come see a man." She was shouting because she was saved! We too have something to shout about. We can say with the song writer, "God gave me a song to sing that the angels cannot sing. I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb."

When our lives have been touched by the hand of God, we don't need the crowd, we can shout all by ourselves!

When we see the ways that God has blessed us we don't need to wait for someone else we can the let the world know!

Reasons to Shout

Finally brothers and sisters, we must consider that when we roll out the red carpet for the Lord we are inviting the King of Glory to come into our lives.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem He came into the lives of the people of Jerusalem

in a way that changed the world forever.

I don't know about you, but I've found out that powerful things happen in the life of a church "when he comes in."

When he comes in:

—Sons and daughters start to prophesy; old men dream dreams; young men see new visions.

When he comes in, he will:

—Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties;

—Strengthen us in our weakness; Encourage us in our trials;

—Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties;

—Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles;

I heard David declare: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Who is the king of glory? The Lord Strong and Mighty!

Who is the king of glory? The Lord mighty in battle!

I'm going roll out the red carpet for the Lord and welcome Him, because when He comes in He will make things happen!

I'm going to roll out the red carpet because When he comes in:

- He'll give me Comfort in the middle of my sorrow;

—He'll give me Assurance in the middle of my doubts;

—He'll give me Strength in the middle of my weakness

—He'll give me Encouragement in the middle of my trial;

—He'll give me Direction in my moments of indecision;

—He'll give me Help in the middle of my helplessness

I'm going to roll out the red carpet for Him because He's coming in to prepare a place for me!

I'm shouting because He's preparing a place up there to welcome us!

The carpet won't be red, but the streets will be paved with gold!

I'm going to praise Him down here because, bye and bye, when the morning comes, I'm going to walk around heaven all day!

I may not walk in Marc Jacobs, but I'm surely walking in Peace.

I may not walk in Stacy Adams, but I'm surely walking in Truth.

I may not walk in Jimmy Choo, but I'm surely walking in Glory.

I may not walk in Kenneth Cole, but I'm walking in Victory.

I may not walk in a pointed toe or a high heel, but I'm pointed in the right direction high hopes and expectations

I may not walk with gold on the tip, but I've gone through the fire and come out as Pure Gold.

I may not walk with fancy straps, but I'm strapped in His presence and wrapped up in His love!

Whenever you think about how God has blessed you, that's when we know it's time to roll out the red carpet!

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, that's

when we know it's time to roll out the red carpet!

Whenever we think about how He provides food for us when we are hungry, that's when we know it's time to roll out the red carpet!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere, that's when we know it's time to roll out the red carpet!

We're rolling out the red carpet because of what He has done.

We're rolling out the red carpet because of what we expect Him to do.

Lift up your heads oh ye gates and the King of Glory shall come in!

We're rolling out the red carpet because when we were stained by a life a sin, He carried a cross for us up Calvary's Hill!

We are shouting Hosanna because He allowed Himself to be nailed to an old rugged cross on our behalf!

We're shouting because He died out on Calvary!

But early! Early, Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

We're shouting because He's still blessing us every day!

We're shouting because He's still healing us every day!

No. 9550-Inspiration

Eye Witness News

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 8, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." John 20:18

Introduction

What if there had been television news on Easter Sunday morning? Can you imagine the broadcast? "We interrupt this broadcast to give you this breaking news; a man crucified and buried three days ago has reportedly risen from the dead. For more on this breaking news story we take you to our Jerusalem correspondent John.

"Thank you Mark. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified three days ago on a hill outside of Jerusalem. His body was taken down and buried in Joseph's new tomb and guarded by soldiers. Miraculously, despite a huge stone and armed guards this morning the stone is rolled away and the body of the slain martyr is missing. I have here Mary Magdalene, who reports that she came to the tomb of Jesus early this morning and found the stone rolled away and the body missing and his clothes neatly folded."

"Mary what did you see?"

"I came to the tomb to anoint his body, because we didn't get a chance to do it after the crucifixion because of Passover Sabbath. Then after that was the weekly Sabbath I waited until Sunday when the Sabbath was over. When I got here I found that the stone was rolled away and that he had risen."

"How do you know that his body was not stolen?"

"Because I saw him. At first I thought he was the gardner then I heard him speak and call my name. I recognized him. I'm not telling you what I heard. I saw him with my own eyes!"

"There you have it friends. A strange thing at sunrise. Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead. You heard it first on Eye Witness News!"

If it had been reported on television the news would have traveled around the world at lightning speed. Yet, even without television the word spread quickly. Disciples were told, the Roman guards had to report, the Scribes and Pharisees learned about it, and soon hundreds knew about the amazing events of that Sunday

morning as they received reports from eyewitnesses who saw Him at the tomb. Eyewitnesses who saw him later that day. Eyewitnesses who talked to Him along the road to Emmaus. Eye witnesses who saw Him ascend to heaven on a cloud.

Eye witness testimony is convincing. In fact, in court there are two types of evidence that are hard to impeach: A high quality video or audio and the testimony of one or more eyewitnesses that are absolutely sure of what they saw.

Eyewitness reports what they saw, not what someone else saw.

Eyewitness reports from firsthand experience not hearsay or word of mouth.

As Christians, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord as eyewitnesss to His living presence in our lives. He lives, He Lives, salvation to impart, ask us how we know He lives; He lives within our hearts.

Exposition

This text focuses on how Mary saw Jesus in the garden on the morning of the resurrection and mistook him for the gardener.

Early Sunday morning the women came to the tomb to anoint His body with spices.

They had hurriedly wrapped him without completing the process. When they left home they fully expected to find Jesus' body just as they had left it. Instead the women arrived and inspected the empty tomb and saw the folded clothes and Jesus himself.

The crucifixion of Christ was a tremendous blow to his disciples. They had high hopes of establishing the kingdom of God on earth with Jesus as King and themselves as his royal court, some sitting on his left and others on his right. As the stone was sealed in front of the tomb, their hopes were also sealed away.

John's account tells how the women saw Christ himself risen and spoke to him. Other Gospel accounts tell more details.

In Matthew the women are told by the angels that Jesus had risen. They said, "Come see the place where the Lord lay."

In Luke 24 the women are told not to be afraid, but are asked, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Each Gospel account of the resurrection morning presented the facts as reported by eyewitnesses.

Types of Witnesses

If you are called to be a witness you will be one of three types:

Expert Witness

In a trial you may be called as an expert witness if you have knowledge about a situation that is outside of the ordinary knowledge of the judge and jury. You can be called as an expert because a court would not have knowledge in this area accept from your reliable testimony. If there were a trial of the facts, the guards at the tomb

would have been expert witnesses. They would have testified that they had stood watch on hundreds of nights and were experts on guard duty. They would have testified that the tomb was sealed and would have required the services of more than one man to open it from the outside and it would have been impossible from the inside. Their testimony is undeniable. Yet, even today believers can qualify as experts. We have knowledge about some situations that people who try to be our judges and juries do not know.

The old warriors once sang, "You don't know like I know, what the Lord has done for me."

We are experts at hard times because we have seen so many and we have also seen how the Lord has brought us through.

We are experts at sickness because we been on our sick beds so many times only to see the Lord, put us on our feet again.

Only an expert in these types of situations can say, "You don't know, you wasn't there. You don't know when and you don't know where. You don't know what the Lord has done for me."

Character Witness

If you are called as a character witness you will be asked to describe the character of the accused. Character witnesses usually help judges and juries see the positive aspects of a person's life. In criminal trials, character witnesses are often called after the verdict to determine the sentence. In civil trials, character witnesses are called during the trial if character is an issue in the case. At the three trials of Jesus there were no character witnesses called. There was no one to testify to his goodness. Sinners and publicans may have been called to testify to his willingness to eat with them and be seen with them when others would not.

A man who sat by the pool for 38 years may have been called to tell how He healed him when others would not help him.

A woman with an issue of blood could have been called because she touched the hem of His garment and made her whole.

There are millions of people today who can testify; therefore every child of God is invited to bear witness to the truth of the resurrection...that Christ is alive. We can testify to His goodness because He loved us when we did not love ourselves.

We can testify to His willingness to respond because we have called on him in the midnight hour and he has responded.

We can testify that our God is Omni-present because while he was blessing Miss Sally on the other side of town He was healing Aunt Jane down in Mississippi.

We can testify that our God is omniscient because when we are on our knees praying for something, often times the answer is already on the way.

We can testify that our God is omnipotent because there is no problem we have had that is too hard from Him to solve. There is no mountain He cannot climb and no river He can't cross.

We can testify that our God is an awesome God.

Eye Witness

An eye witness in a trial is called to give testimony about a situation that has been personally witnessed. Your testimony will be limited to what you actually saw, not what you heard or assumptions you made from what you saw.

On resurrection morning Mary gave eye witness testimony. She came to the tomb. She saw the stone rolled away. She saw the folded clothes. She saw Jesus and He spoke to her.

The disciples gave eye witness testimony. They were locked in a room and Jesus appeared. They saw Him with their own eyes. He spoke to them. They watched Him eat food. They saw the nail marks in his wrists and feet.

Today, believers are eyewitnesses, not to the resurrection morning, but to the way the Lord has risen in our lives.

We have witnessed with our own eyes, those who have been diagnosed with cancer later declared cancer free.

We have witnessed with our own eyes, those who have failed given chances to succeed.

We have witnessed marriages that have been torn apart restored by his power.

We have witnesses dwindling finances restored just in the nick of time.

Our testimony is not what we have heard, but what we have witnessed with our own eyes.

To those who claim that God is dead, millions of believers are eye witnesses that He is alive.

These eye witnesses can testify that He gave up the ghost in the agony of the Cross, but He reclaimed the spirit in the ecstasy of resurrection morning.

We who are eye witnesses can testify that, “I know God lives for I’ve tried Him for myself.”

Powerful witness

Finally, brothers and sisters, the best witness is when the expert witness, the character witness and the eye witness are all the same person.

That’s the beauty of the Christian witness; we are three witnesses in one.

We witness to his character. We are experts on His mysterious ways and we have seen Him operate with our own eyes.

There is no witness like the witness who can say “I have seen it with my own eyes.”

That’s why the angel invited the women to “come see the place where the Lord lay.”

The angel wanted them to be in a position to speak with authority.

We, who have been down to our last dime and facing tragedy and despair can best testify, that God is a good God.

We, who have stood at the brink of death only to be snatched out of the jaws of destruction, can best testify that God will be a shield around us every day.

We, who have weathered the hurricanes, strong winds and gales of life, are best able to testify, that God is a shelter in a time of storm.

We, who have been dismissed as dead and beyond help know the joy of resurrection morning. We can truly testify..."I know God lives for He woke me this morning with a touch of His finger. I have felt the warmth of His smile; I know he lives because he lit the sun and hung it in the sky. I know God lives, for I've tried Him for myself."

Skeptics might doubt His existence, but all evidence and testimony points to the fact that our God is alive.

I heard a song writer say, "If God is dead, what makes the flowers bloom...if God is dead what makes summer come in June..if God is dead who mends a broken heart...if God is dead who can show me where His body lies...I'm so glad I know He lives...He lives! in me!"

Today, there should be an eye witness in the house..

I see an eye witness coming forth; they called her the woman at the well. She had to run all over the city saying "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."

There is another eyewitness in the crowd, his name is Lazarus. He had been dead for several days but given new life, when he saw Jesus riding into the city, he just couldn't hold his peace.

There is an eyewitness in the crowd, that had been blind, but the hand of Jesus touched him and made him whole.

There is an eyewitness in the crowd, Zaccheus whose life had been made whole because Jesus had dinner at his house!

Who will be a witness for the Lord?

Who will tell the story of how He brought us a mighty long way?

Who will be a witness and testify that there has never been a:

—CROSS that He didn't help us to climb to bear; MOUNTAIN that didn't help us to climb!

—ENEMY that he didn't help us to defeat; BATTLE He didn't help us to fight!

—TRIAL that He didn't help us make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

Somebody today can testify...His name is Jesus!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. Ask me how I know he lives..

I'm a witness.. He lives within my heart!

No. 9551-Anniv. Ushers

Born to live, Live to Usher

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 18, 2012

SCRIPTURE: Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things:" Numbers 4:2-4

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why you chose to be an usher? There are many ushers who have an abundance of gifts, but they chose to be ushers. Why?There are ushers who can sing, decorate, cook, handle money, pray, teach, make repairs, play musical instruments as well as perform a number of other services, but they chose their main area of service to be ushering?

What is it about ushering that gets into their blood and compels them to serve in this capacity.

We don't know why God chose to make us the way we are and place us where we are. The answers seem beyond our wisdom.

They are just as profound as asking why was he born so tall? Why is she so short? Why is one man born into riches while another man is born into poverty? Why are some born healthy and others born sickly? Why do some seem to be blessed and others lack blessings?

We wrestle with those questions regularly and the answers that we find usually point us to our purpose in life.

Each of us has a purpose that is unique and often different from that of others.

There are many ushers who can testify that they became ushers because ushering or serving others is in their family history. They can point to parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts who found joy in serving others either from their homes or in the church.

Many can fondly remember their great grandparents starching and ironing white uniforms or storing small bottles of smelling salts in their pockets. They can remember great grandparents passing out fans, and distributing programs. Those who can remember even further can recall the ancient ones warming up the church before members arrived and insuring that there was a Sears and Roebuck catalog in the outhouse.

It seems that there are families of ushers just as there are families of preachers, teachers, deacons and singers. It's almost as if God blesses one family to teach and another family to prepare foods. He lets one family lead and another family prepare the way.

Ushering seems to be no different. It looks like ushers were born to the humble life of service; they are born to usher.

As Christians, we don't know why God has inspired us to be ushers, but we do know that we are challenged to live the life of service that ushering requires. Whatever we do, we do it for His glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Koathites, a family of Levites who were born to serve the tabernacle.

The Kohathites were the descendants of Kohath, the son of Levi. Kohath was the grandfather of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. His descendants were considered the most important of the three major Levitical families (that is, Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites).

The Kohathites were active throughout Israel's history. The Kohathites, along with the Gershonites and Merarites, were placed around the Tabernacle and were charged with caring for and moving it. The Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle and were responsible to care for and move the ark, table, lamp stand, altars, vessels of the sanctuary, and the screen. The Kohathites could not touch these objects and could move them only after they had been properly prepared by Aaron and his sons.

Any child born into a Kohathite family was expected to serve the Tabernacle just like grandpa Kohath and all other members of the family before them. There were 212 families that were assigned the task of serving the temple on a rotating basis. It was never left unattended, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If a child was born a Kohathite it was a foregone conclusion that he or she would be a doorkeeper, steward, ark bearer, vessel protector or some form of servant to the temple.

They were proud of their service and lived to carry out their purpose.

Koathites Today

Today, the modern board of ushers in churches is typical of the service of Koathites in the bible. They serve God in their assigned roles from youth to death, faithful unto the end.

YOUR STATION IS NOT A PASSPORT: The Koathites had various places of service, some were more visible, but none carried more importance than others. They understood that their glory was not in the specific station but was in their willingness to obey God's command and live out their purpose. There are some who believe that the passport into the kingdom of God is simply to join a church any find a place of

service in the church program. Ushering, for example, is a fine place of service. Ushers provide warm salutations for those who come to worship. They are the standard bearers of hospitality and the finest example of the true meaning of the word servant. But simply serving as an usher is not a "passport" to heaven. Some believe that their station guarantees them a position in the kingdom. Some argue over whether they will stand at the front door, in the middle isle or at the most visible door, as if the doors themselves give them rank or position in the kingdom. This is the situation of the sons of Zebedee who wanted a high position in the kingdom, both on the left and right of Jesus. That's when Jesus told them, "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant. Unfortunately there are some who are uniformed but are not transformed, by the renewing of their minds. Simply looking good and marching down the aisles is not a "passport" to heaven. There are too many who are good at marching on the right foot, but their feet don't always walk up the king's highway. Great ushers were born to live, but they live to usher any place where they are needed.

YOUR LIFE SHOULD REFLECT GOD'S WILL: The first ushers lived their lives according to the will of God. Although they could carry the ark of the covenant on poles they were not allowed to touch them unless properly prepared by the priests. They only moved when directed. They waited for God's command. Today, ushers have a similar charge to live their lives in the complete will of God. Ephesians 5:17 encourages each of us to understand the will of the Lord. When we work in the will of the Lord we understand fully what we are about and why we do what we do. There are many however, who have become slack in their service and insist upon their will rather than God's will. Ushers, like all Christians must be careful to become possessed by their positions on their boards. Will you serve if you are not the chief usher? Will you serve if you not the president? Will you serve if you can't choose your station or have the uniform style of your choice? Ushers have really learned to live when they have resolved that "I can be happy passing out programs, holding a door, serving as a follower or a leader. My job is to serve the Lord not a position." God has a purpose for us all and as believers we must strive to walk daily in his will.

YOUR PRESENCE INSPIRES OTHERS: When Israel returned from its exile the prophets looked for the Kohathites. It had been years since the temple service had been used following the Mosaic law, but yet they still called on the Kohathites. They were special. Their presence had meaning. Consider the little country church that only had three ushers: One for the front door, one for the back door and one to pass out programs. Anytime it rained the people of the congregation expected to see "Wet Willie" at the front door. In fact, they complained if "Wet Willie" wasn't at the front door. The other two ushers became a little jealous because folks seem to want "Wet Willie" at the door on rainy days, so one day they cornered a few of the members after church and asked them what was so special about "Wet Willie." They were surprised when one old lady said, "Miss Louise, you lives right behind the church. Miss Martha, you lives right up the road. When it rains, the weather don't bother you much; you be nice and dry. But Willie lives ten miles down the road by the creek. The road is muddy and wagons get stuck. It gets dark under all of the trees and the roads flood up the way. When Willie

gets to church on a rainy day, his hair is still wet and clothes are a little wet, too, but he comes out to our wagon and helps us in. You see, we had to come a long way, too and sometimes we barely gets to the front door. When we see Willie it's like the good Lord with nail prints in his hands saying, "I know what you been through, Just like you, I've been through the storm and the rain, but come on in it's gonna be alright." There is a reason God has inspired each usher to serve. Someone draws inspiration from each, especially those who have traveled the same road in life and made it to the other side.

We Must Serve the Lord

The first ushers perceived themselves as men and women who were chosen by God to serve the Tabernacle and that's all, but we must be men and women who do more than serve on the board, but every day of our lives we serve the Lord.

Our service should go beyond just service in the building but should extend to the bounds of the great commission to "Go ye therefore" and "teach, preach, and reach" men and women for the Lord.

The first temple they served was built by Solomon, but it was destroyed and the 212 families of Koath found themselves without a job.

The second temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel but it too was destroyed by invading armies and the doorkeepers had no doors to keep.

The third temple was built by Herod who restored it to much of its original beauty, but it too was destroyed leaving the Koathite ushers with nothing to do.

When these Koathite usher families found that there was no temple to serve they were in a bind.

But I hear Jesus declare in Matthew 12:6 as he talked to men and women married to the ritual of the temple "That in this place is one greater than the temple."

The temple that man builds is made of rocks and stones!

The temple that man builds is held together with mortar and clay.

Jesus reminded them that there will come a day when not a rock or stone of this man made temple will stand.

Jesus pointed them to himself as the temple that would be everlasting. In John 2:19 he said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Somebody answered, that it took 46 years to build this building, how can you raise it in three days?

Jesus wasn't talking about a building made from rocks stones, but he was talking about a building not made with the hands of men, but was touched by the hand of God.

If you've chosen to serve in the house of God:

— Don't let your service get limited to mortar and bricks!
— Be determined by the color and style of the uniform!
— Don't be selected about which places you will serve!
— Don't worry about whether you can hold an office
— Don't restrict your service to things made by man!

I heard Dr. Watts declare, “To serve this present age my calling to fulfill, oh may all my powers engage to do my master’s will!”

I don’t know about you but I’ve found out that good things happen when you serve the Lord.

Serve the Lord who can take darkness and turn it into light!

Serve the Lord who can take defeat and turn it into victory!

Serve the Lord who can take sadness and turn it into gladness!

Serve him as an usher, but also serve him as you teach in the Sunday school

Serve him as an usher but also serve him as you minister to the needy

Serve him as an usher but also do the work of an evangelist and tell a dying world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!

Tell them he’s alive today and forever more!

No.9552-Inspiration

When life throws you under the bus

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 29, 2012

SCRIPTURE: And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. Mark 6:25

Introduction

Have you ever been blamed for someone else's mistake? Was it at work? Home? School? It's bad feeling to have all the fingers pointing at you when something goes wrong, especially when you are not the blame.

When we are forced to take the blame for someone's errors that's when you know that you have been "thrown under the bus."

While there are a few exceptions, generally speaking, those who throw people under the bus are usually those who have a position of authority, placing the blame for a mistake or an embarrassing action upon a subordinate.

Recently, several members of the Secret Service have been in the news for hiring prostitutes. It has caused a national scandal. Immediately someone was fired, others resigned and some were placed on leave. When the scandal continued even more actions were pursued.

The GSA came under the news for promoting lavish conventions that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars at the taxpayer expense. When the news was revealed, low level officials were forced "thrown under the bus" before the former GSA head herself resigned. Now as congress investigates more midlevel executives will probably be thrown under the bus.

It happens on every level. If a school performs poorly on a state evaluation, there will be many below the level of superintendent to be thrown under the bus. If a cook in the kitchen is caught stealing leftover cornbread, the system will throw cafeteria manager and even the principal under the bus if there is a scandal.

If you are thrown under the bus, usually you are being unfairly sacrificed to save someone else.

That's when all fingers point to you.

When God frowned on Adam for eating of the forbidden fruit, he threw Eve under the bus. Eve threw the snake under the bus for persuading her.

Samson threw the Philistines under the bus for his destruction of their fields, when they killed his wife. David got Uriah's wife pregnant and tried to fix it so the blame point at her husband. He not only threw Uriah under the bus, but he put him in the front of the battle and had him killed. Pilate worried that the Jews would revolt against him and get him in trouble with the Caesar, so Pilate ordered the crucifixion of Jesus; he threw Jesus under the bus.

Family members are often battered and bruised because they often throw each other under the bus on a regular basis.

Harry S. Truman was famous for a small sign that was placed on his Presidential desk. The sign read simply "the buck stops here." It meant he would not throw anyone under the bus for his actions or inaction. He said he was ultimately responsibility for anything good
or bad that happened during his administration.

As Christians, we share an unusual paradox. Our savior, did took the blame for all of our sins and threw himself under the bus for us. Through his death, we are free of blame, because he bore our sins for us. The sign above the cross read "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" but what it meant was He threw himself under the bus for me.

-I-

The text considers how the life of John the Baptist was offered up to silence his preaching.

John the Baptist was a fiery preacher in the New Testament who tended t expose the wrongs of religious leaders and even the King. In the instance of this text, John had preached against an immoral relationship between Herod and his wife Herodias. It seemed that Herodias was an ambitious woman who had slept with many others to work herself to the top of the power chain, prompting Herod himself to divorce his former wife to marry her sparking a moral outrage among the faithful.

John condemned her publicly. It became a scandal. Herodias could care less about the scandal, but she wanted John punished. So she arranged for her daughter Salome to dance for king. She knew the king would offer her great rewards if he was pleased. She told her daughter what to request if asked.

Sure enough she danced and the king asked what she wanted in return, even if it was half his kingdom. It would have been an even bigger scandal for the king not to honor his word. Salome, on the instruction of her mother said she wanted the head of John the Baptist brought to her on a platter.

The king was upset. He like John the Baptist even though the old preacher kept making life hard for him. However, the scandal would be even worse if he did not deal grant her request. He ordered John killed and his head was delivered on a platter.

Herodias was happy. The public preaching about her relationships with powerful leaders would end, the people will be satisfied and the Herod's position would be

secured..all by throwing John the Baptist under the bus.

When you become the scapegoat

Before the term "thrown under the bus" became popular, there was another term which meant the same thing: being called a scapegoat.

What's a scapegoat?

On the Day of Atonement the people of Israel could get rid of their sins by transferring them to a goat.

It involved offering the blood of a bullock for mercy, and a sin offering for past sins and to take away the reproach of sin.

The entire ceremony required two goats. One was slain and its blood was sprinkled on the altar. Since the law required death for many sins, the goat was a symbol of the requirement of the law being met. In essence, the goat died in the place of thousands of sinners in the nation.

While one goat was slain, the other goat was kept alive. The priests were ordered to place their hands upon the head of the goat and transfer the blame for all of the shortcomings and sins of the people to the goat.

The goat, carrying the sins of all the people, was released in an open field. As the goat walked away, so did the sins of the people.

The scapegoat itself had done no wrong, but it took the blame for all of the sins of the people.

If people have to blame someone and the finger points wrongfully at you, you are the scapegoat. They put it all on you!

If everything that can go wrong has gone wrong and someone has to take the fall, the finger points toward you.

It is uncomfortable and frustrating to be the scapegoat, to take the blame for something you know you didn't do, but there are many who have become scapegoats not by their own choosing.

Often we feel just like the scapegoat in scripture because one of two things happens: A career dies or the blame for an action is transferred to us to save someone above us.

Yet, from time to time, we see someone who volunteers to become the scapegoat to achieve a greater goal.

Rick Santorum, a 2012 presidential candidate was critical of the No Child Left Behind program started by George Bush. Yet, Santorum voted for the program when he was a senator. When asked why he voted for something that he did not believe in he said, "Sometimes you have to take one for the team." –Politically, he threw himself under the bus for the entire Republican party.

It happens in many areas of life. A basketball player draws a foul to stop an opposing player from scoring a point, "takes one for the team." An organized crime soldier chooses to serve time rather that cooperate in the prosecution of his partner's in crime, "takes one for the team." A person who accepts blame for something they

did not do to save the career of someone else, “takes one for the team.”

That’s exactly when Jesus chose to do when God became angry with the world because of its sin. He chose to live on earth for 33 years and endure the difficulties of life as a human to absorb the penalty for mankind’s sin. He chose to “take one for the team.”

He became our scapegoat. He both died to satisfy the penalty and transferred the guilt for our sins to himself.

He took one for the team.

Looking for someone to throw under the bus

There are too many people today who are looking for somebody to throw under the bus.

When we have fouled up, often the first response is to blame it on someone else. Flip Wilson, the comedian, often excused all of his wrong acts by saying, “The devil made me do it.”

Many find it hard to accept responsibility themselves. However, often there is no one we can throw under the bus, because we are the blame and we know it.

Who could Jezebel blame for murdering hundreds of prophets of God and stealing Naboth’s vineyard? Nobody but herself.

Who could Absalom blame for rebelling against his father and losing his life while dangling from a tree? Nobody but himself?

Who could the rich young ruler blame for his failure to make it into the kingdom of heaven? Nobody but himself!

There was a time when children were held accountable for the sins of their fathers and grandfathers. They could blame their present circumstance on something their father did because God would visit his vengeance upon a man’s sons, even to the seventh generation. But that time doesn’t exist
anymore, for I hear the old timers remind us “every tub must sit on its own bottom.”

Every person today is responsible for his own sin and must stand before the judgment bar of God.

If I fail to serve the Lord like I promised, try as I might, there is nobody to blame but myself.

No wonder the song writer declared: “It’s me, it’s me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer, Not my brother, not my sister, but its me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

There is no bus

Finally brothers and Sisters, the Old Testament provided for the death of a goat for atonement for sins committed and a scapegoat, but Jesus became the universal sacrifice that both died and
took away the reproach of sin at the same time.

Today there is no scapegoat, only the lamb of God. There is no sin offering, only

the blood of the crucified lamb.

Whatever sins a man has committed, I hear Jesus saying take it off him and put it on me.'

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Brother if you are burdened down with guilt and stain, don't throw yourself under the bus, the guilt stops at Calvary

Sister if you are weighed down with the cares of the world, don't throw yourself under the bus, the weight is lifted at Calvary!

See that man walking in shame with a bowed down head, don't throw yourself under the bus, He was lifted up a Calvary to help raise your bowed down head.

Isaiah in his 53rd chapter looked over in time and gave us a description of this sacrificial lamb!

He is a man of sorrow; a lamb acquainted with grief. A lamb that was despised and we esteemed him not. A lamb, who bore our griefs and carried our sorrow. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his
stripes we are healed.

This is the lamb, who took all of our sins and turned our lives around!

This is the lamb who threw himself under the bust to lift us from the:

—Gutter unto the glorious!

—Miserable unto the Marvelous!

—Filthy unto the Fabulous!

—Wretched to the wonderful!

—Pathetic to the precious!

—Horrible to the heavenly!

—Dingy to the desirable!

—Immoral to the Immaculate!

—Pig pen to paradise!

This is the lamb that picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

This is the lamb that had so much love that that He would rather take one for the world than suffer one child to be lost.

Can't you hear him say? "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

This is the lamb that died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning….

No.9553-Inspiration

What God Sees fit

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 6, 2012

SCRIPTURE: " In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Judges 17:6

Introduction

How do you choose your direction in life? There are many who are traveling paths in life that reflect their own interests or those chosen for them by others. A generation ago a group of brothers known as the Isley Brothers coined a phrase, "It's your thing, do what you want to do." It epitomized what many people believed about choosing life directions; it's my life, I live it the way I choose. Another popular group Sly and the Family Stone reflected acceptance of this idea in their song, "Everyday People" in which they said, "Different strokes for different folks." Everybody can do their own thing.

The poet William Henley caught the spirit of individualism when he wrote his epic poem "Invictus" which said:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

There are others who go even further, they espouse the ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson in his treatise "Self Reliance" in which he taught that each individual should trust himself alone, chart his own course and answer to himself alone.

Following these lines of thought many have blazed life trails of their own making without ever once stopping to ask whether that path is the path that God has chosen for them. Sometimes, we sense it when we wake up to lives that are not happy, go to jobs that are not fulfilling, and pursue careers that do not speak to our souls.

In time we begin to notice that the road we are traveling is getting us nowhere. We get frustrated.

How do we correct such a flawed life choice? We do what we should have done in the first place; we pray and ask God for direction. We ask Him to show us His will for our lives. We have seen it when it happens. We have seen men change the entire

direction and focus of their lives and turn on a dime. We have seen the fallen rise. We have seen the failed regroup themselves. We have also seen the lost find themselves.

Doing what feels good to us at the moment may be a temporary fix, but it doesn't take long for us to learn that, "everything that feels good to you is not always good for you." Following God's directions is always good for us.

As Christians, we constantly ask God to give us direction and to guide our path. The steps of the righteous are ordered; so we move at his command.

Exposition

This text focuses on a dark period in Israel's history in which he did not seek or want direction from God.

It is an ironic text because it comes in the aftermath of evidence of God's power. In slavery, Israel called upon God and he delivered them and pointed them in the direction of Canaan. At the Red Sea he still pointed them in that direction and made a way for them through the waters. In the wilderness, he gave them the same direction, and fed them for 40 years. At the River Jordan, despite the fears of the military strength of their enemies, he gave the direction to cross over and he brought down the walls of Jericho and gave them victory.

Now, in the land the people divided into twelve sectors, each headed by a tribal leader. Without a central voice, each tribe seemed to go in its own direction. Only a few sought direction from God.

There was no king of Israel at that time, and the people turned from the mighty God who had brought them out of Egypt and from the laws that he had given them for their own good. They were stubborn and did what they thought was right rather than follow their Father's guidelines.

Both Judges 17:6 and Judges 21:25 repeat exactly the same words: "In those days Israel had no king. Each man did what he considered to be right" (NET). Or as the New American standard puts it, "Each man did what was right in his own eyes."

They found deliverance only when they listened to the word of God. It provided the light they needed as the stumbled in darkness. In the word they found God's will. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path." It shows us the path that is "fit" in the eyes of God. Once we are shown that path, the faithful will follow.

God provides the vision

One of the difficulties of living life as we see fit is that it requires us to provide our own vision. That sounds like a great idea at first, until we realize that vision is seeing the invisible and striving to make us other see it too. We often have a vision for our lives, but that is often within the possible. Seeing the possible falls just short of a vision. It is possible to dream of building yourself a house. It is a vision to dream

of building houses on the moon. It is possible to dream of owning a car. It is a vision to dream of a day when cars won't be necessary. It is possible to dream of being a doctor to treat diseases. It is a vision to dream of day when there are no diseases.

Visions come from the beyond us. They are bigger than we can imagine and often cannot be seen or understood by others for years.

What God sees fit for us, he also fits us for it. He prepares us to walk a different path.

The vision that God gives may present challenges that represent changes of direction.

It may mean giving more to the education of our youth through the support of public education both mainstream and chartered.

It may mean giving more to support to positive activities that will help them develop into stronger Christian men and women.

It may mean devising programs that will strengthen the home, promote finer womanhood and build manhood.

It may mean working to reduce the prison population by working to deter those who seem committed to hell bound paths.

It may mean showing more concern for our elderly by increasing our elder care ministries.

Every chance we get, we must work together to make this heavenly vision a reality.

God provides the way

If God gives us a vision, He will also provide a way for the vision to be accomplished, as foolish as it might seem. That's what Israel should have learned when repeatedly God pointed them to a place that was impossible for them to reach by the route he suggested. He provided them a way through the Red Sea. He provided them a way through the wilderness and then provided them a way in the Promised Land. It should have been obvious to them and even to us today, that if God provides us with a vision for our lives He will also provide a way.

The road that God chooses for us to get where he wants us to be may not be an easy road, but it will get us. The student who locks himself away and works hard to learn takes the hard road, especially when all of his friends seem to have so much fun doing something else, but that's the road to excellence. The family that chooses to save because they have a vision of home ownership and financial security may make many sacrifices to accumulate the resources necessary, but' that is the road they must take. The path to making visions realities are not always easy paths, but they are sure paths.

Consider the old man who took his grandson on a trip to what grandpa called home.

The little boy was fascinated with the fine highway. He loved to count the lines in the highway and see the pretty cars as the raced by. After a few hours however, his grandpa turned on an old dirt road. Gone were the hard pavement, brisk traffic and brightly colored lines. The road was bumpy. It wound through trees and went over hills. At some points it was filled with pot holes. The little boy asked his grandfather, why did we have to take this ugly road with all of these mud holes. Nobody is on this road?

Why couldn't we stay on the pretty road with all of the cars. The grandpa looked over at his grandson and said, Look up on the top of that hill, that's where we're going. There's only one road up to that old house and it goes straight up that hill. The highway is pretty, but it won't take me where I'm trying to go and that's up that hill!

The song writer says, "There's a highway to heaven. None can walk up there, but the pure in heart. There's highway to heaven, I'm walking up the king's highway."

God provides the favor

One of the drawbacks of living life is as we see fit is that if does not earn the favor of God. Favor is the accumulated extra blessings that come from God because He sees we are trying to do things as he sees fit. To do what God sees fit is to act wisely. Whenever we act wisely we earn the favor of God. Proverbs 8:35, For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD."

When we act wisely and respond to life situations by asking the question, 'What would God have me do? Then God is pleased. He smiles on us and gives us favor. When we choose a Godly wife or husband, it shows wisdom and God shows favor on the relationship. When we choose to show mercy and to forgive, it shows wisdom and God smiles and shows us favor. When we have a thirst for truth rather than lies, God smiles on us and shows us favor. When we demonstrate that we can patiently wait for God to move in any life situation, God smiles on us and shows us favor. Follow God's direction

God will not fail

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that if we follow a God blazen trail we will not fail.

The simplest definition of doing what God sees fit is to follow a path in life that has been blazed by God himself.

This is the quest of every believer to walk the path that God sees fit for us.

To do whatever God sees fit.

To go wherever God sees fit!

To say whatever God sees fit!

Lord lead me. Like you lead the children of Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night!

Lead me...through the wilderness of hard times that looms on my horizon.

Lead me...through the dark shrouded midnights that will darken my days.

Lead me...through shadow laden valleys of difficulty.

Lead me...through and meandering streams of uncertainty!

Lead me, guide me along the way, Lord, if you lead me I cannot stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord lead me.

When we live the way God sees fit, we have the assurance that He will never leave

us alone.

When we live the way God sees fit, He will be with us wherever we may be.

If we take the wings of Eagles and fly in the sky, behold God is there!

If we fall to the depths of the sea, God is there!

When we live the way God sees fit, He'll wipe tears from our eyes; He'll encourage them when we are low. "He's always right there by our side."

When we live the way God sees fit we have the assurance of Philippians 4:19 that declares "My God shall supply all your needs"

When we live the way God sees fit, He'll take our darkness and turn it into light!

When we live the way God sees fit, He'll take our defeat and turn it into victory!

When we live the way God sees fit, He'll take our sadness and turn it into gladness!

When we live the way God sees fit we won't miss a chance to tell a dying world about Jesus!

Jesus, who died on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose on Sunday morning!

Tell them He's alive today and forever more!

No. 9554-Mothers

For this child I prayed

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 2012

SCRIPTURE: For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there. 1 Samuel 1:27-28

Introduction

What did you think when you first heard the news that you were pregnant? When you heard your wife was pregnant what was your response? Whether expected, planned or surprised, believers know that every child is possibility package from God. One that can make the difference for millions.

There are many women who give birth; not all of them can be called "Mother."

Those who nurture the possibilities of their pregnancy through birth and maturity are those who earn the title "mother."

Believing mothers know that every child, regardless to the circumstance creating its presence, is a possibility. Like Hannah, that possibility may reflect the salvation of the nation in a Son like Samuel. It could be a daughter like Deborah or a voice in the wilderness like John. Whatever the case, believing mothers are aware of the fact that their children are pregnant with the seeds of possibility so they assume the responsibility of nurturing them to maturity.

When a mother accepts the fact that they are nurturing someone that God intends to do a great work, they do two things: they observe prenatal care and they take pains to observe postal natal care.

In prenatal care mothers protect their children by watching their own diets knowing that "What I eat, my baby eats." Therefore, pregnant women are advised to eat vegetables and fruits and calcium rich foods that are low in fats. In addition, pre-natal care involves avoiding alcohol and drugs because what mama smokes, drinks or snorts, the baby drinks and consumes as well.

Mothers exercise prenatal care, but there is also post-natal care. Post natal-care is similar to pre-natal care, but the emphasis is on showing mothers how to feed and care for a newborn while at the same time helping the mother get back on her feet.

A mother who assumes that her child is destined for a great purpose assumes a postnatalistic attitude that will extend for 20 years and beyond. She assumes that the child she has birthed is destined to do something great so she continues to watch

what the child eats, drinks, hears and is exposed to insure that the child is able to achieve its ultimate purpose.

When a Christian mother learns that she is pregnant, she starts praying for her child. She asks that God would allow her the strength to bear the burden of childbirth. She also asks that she would have the strength to bear the lifetime burden of nurturing her offspring until it can achieve its purpose.

Praying mothers such as these are seldom deterred by chance or circumstance. Even if born into non-achieving environments where very few are expected to exceed, believing mothers ignore sociologists, doubters, skeptics and even friends who question the prospects of greatness for their children.

When God has blessed, nothing but greatness can result. Parents such as these invest in the potential of their sons and daughters. They struggle against the jokes of their friends to help their children achieve. They seek out organizations that help instill character. They seek out activities that will instill discipline and scholarship.
They look for churches that help mold and shape their spirituality.

No matter what the world says, they believe in their children's potential and tell them so repeatedly.

As Christians, we recognize that every life has a purpose. Christian mothers pray for strength and favor to guide their children to their destinies.

Exposition

This text focuses on Hannah's placing her son Samuel in the hands of God for a life of service.

Hannah was barren, considered a shame among women, but she prayed that God would give her a son to love and nurture. In her prayer she said in 1 Samuel 1:11"…if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

She promised God that she would give her son to His service for the rest of his life. God heard her prayer and she conceived and birthed a male child.

After the child was weaned she brought him to Eli the prophet. In biblical times, weaning could be as long as three years, so the prophets were able to nurture the child to adulthood and teach him the way of the priesthood. The term "Lent" him to the Lord is used. This term is based on the Hebrew word "Sha'al" which means to "lay in the charge." It is the irrevocable placing of something in the hands of another.

The boy Samuel was reared as a Nazarite. He did not drink wine or cut his hair, but lived a life devoted to the service of God.

Her son was born for this purpose and his mother placed the child for which she prayed in God's hands.

Mother's three prayers

Hannah gives us a snapshot of motherhood before, during and after childbirth.

SHE PRAYS FOR GRACE: Hannah prayed to God before her child was born. She prayed for the grace of God upon her life (v18). None of us can expect to get far in life without the grace of God. Christian women pray that God would grace their lives with peace and happiness. The burdens of the world are enormous but after Hannah prayed for God's grace she approached her life with a different attitude. The scripture records that she was "no more sad." Mothers pray for the grace of God because it is only God's grace that helps them endure. The grace of God surrounds and strengthens us. God's grace is beside us in times of trouble and the grace of God causes a full plate to be placed on our table when we hunger. The grace of God puts us in the hands of the right doctor, teacher, coach and mentor and advisor. Wise mothers know it's nothing, but God's Amazing Grace that works out the intricacies of their daily existences. Hannah was "no more sad" because she found that when she prayed God smiled on her and it changed her whole attitude about her circumstance. We feel that same way sometimes. That's why we sing the song, "God has smiled on me, He has made me glad. God has smiled on me; He's been good to me."

SHE PRAYS FOR HIS PURPOSE: Hannah knew her child had a special purpose and she planned for him to live out his purpose. In verse 27 she said, "..that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever." The life of a Nazarite was his purpose and she directed him in that way. Today, godly mothers see the possibilities of their children and try to place them in the hands of those who will help them perfect their possibilities. Many run themselves thin attending dance and music lessons, teaching them to sing, perform or excel higher in their studies. Most godly mothers recognize that their children are pregnant with possibilities and they work themselves to the bone to help them achieve their purposes and to protect them from evil and negative influences that might detract them. In the bible we saw mothers such as Jocebed, the mother of Moses who put him in the hands of Pharaoh's daughter to save him. We have seen the good mother who stood before Solomon willing to give her child alive to a lying neighbor than to have it half dead. We have seen the sacrifices of good mothers who want to help their children achieve their purposes, even at their own expense. We have also seen the mother who knows that for a child to achieve a godly purpose, He or she must be placed in the hand of the Lord "and there abide forever." That's why she insists that her child has a religious education and experiences that will stand firm, all of the days of his/her life. With this foundation, mother knows that when the storms of life are raging a child who knows the Lord will know how to call on the name of the Lord!

SHE GUIDED HIS DESTINY: Hannah prayed for the child, placed him in the hands of God and he responded by spending his life in the service of the Lord. Verse 28 ends with the phrase, "And he worshipped the Lord there." Today, nothing makes a mother happier than to know that her children are living out their life's

purposes. Every purpose is not to be a preacher or Sunday school teacher, but each child has a different purpose and destiny. When mothers place their children in God's hands their prayer is for God to guide their destiny. For little Samuel, that destiny was to be a prophet. However, the little ones of our individual households the destinies might be in science, sports, academics, entertainment, education or a thousand different arenas. Samuel found his place and grew to fill its requirements. That is every mother's dream: to see their children step into their destiny and walk well in the path that has been charted for them.

She prayed and rejoiced

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that Hannah prayed one more prayer; she prayed a prayer of thanks.

1 Samuel 2:1 says, "And Hannah prayed and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord…" It becomes obvious from reading the next 10 verses how happy this mother was because her prayer had been and answered.

She said my heart rejoices because I've been exalted before the Lord!

In verse two she said, my heart rejoices because there is no rock like our God!

In verse three she said, my heart rejoices because the lord is a God of knowledge!

In verse six she said, my heart rejoices because the Lord brings up new life to that which is dead.

In verse eight she said, my heart rejoices because he lifts up the poor out of dust of this life and sets them among princes.

In verse nine she said, my heart rejoices that God has shown that he will keep the feet of the saints

In verse ten she said, my heart rejoices because God will exalt the horn of his anointed.

For this child Hannah prayed, and God gave her a reason to be glad!

When a mother sees her child take say her first word or take his first step, she speaks the words of Hannah, "For this child have I prayed, my heart rejoices in the Lord."

When a mother sees her child marching in the band, playing in the band or performing in a school play, I can hear her say, "For this child I have prayed and my soul rejoices in the Lord!

When a mother sees her child graduate and begin a life of service that is true to his calling in the fulfillment of his destiny, can't you hear her say, "For this child I have prayed and my soul rejoices in the Lord!"

When a mother sees her child stand in marriage and have a child of their own, her soul cries out, "For this child have I prayed and my soul rejoices in the Lord!"

When we are really glad, we should show our gladness.

Like mothers, every child of God should rejoice in the Lord!

Rejoice and replace sadness with gladness!

Rejoice and replace tears with cheers!

Rejoice and replace bowed down heads with uplifted spirits!

Rejoice with smiles on our faces!

Rejoice because He clothed me in my right mind!

Rejoice because He put food on my table!

Rejoice because He saved my soul!

Rejoice because one day, over 2000 years ago, that he picked up an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary!

Rejoice because early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

Rejoice in the Lord for He has made us glad!

No. 9555-Communion

Thank God for the Middle Man

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 20, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 1 Timothy 2:5"

Introduction

Have you had to deal with a middle man? The middle man is usually the one inserted into an arrangement making it possible for two incompatible ends to touch and agree. Middle men are seldom called "middle men," so many don' recognize them as such.

In the legal world the middle man is called an "arbitrator" or someone tries to referee between two opposing sides.

The corporate world there is a layer of assistants the stand between the consumers and the corporate leaders; they solve problems, hear complaints and field suggestions.

In the marketing community there are ad agencies, advisors and consultants who tweak what the customer's demand with company's price.

Often middle men irritate us because they seem to drive up the price. You can get a better deal if you purchase a used car from the owner rather than a car salesman because the car has been marked up in price to cover the salesman's commission. The same is true for a new car, if you can rule out the middle man; you can save hundreds of dollars.

The Middle man performs a necessary service. Very little business can be transacted without the army of agents, brokers, salesmen, arbitrators, negotiators, consultants, ambassadors and advisors necessary for the successful negotiation of a plethora of transactions.

Sometimes we try to avoid the middle man and go straight to the top only find that the person at the top sends us to a middle man who works out the details. It is not unheard of for two company executives who agree in principle on the terms of a deal to say, "Have your man to contact my man to work out the details." In this way they place the whole matter in the hands of middle men to make their deal happen.

We often try to avoid the middle man, but suppose the middle man is the only way to get to the woman at the top. Suppose the middle woman is the doorway to the top man? Suppose dealing with the chief of staff is the only way to get an appointment with the President? Can the middle man be avoided?

If a believer wants to speak to God about matters of health, family, or personal choice, can we bypass the middle man and go straight to God ourselves? We can try, but the

likelihood of success is minimal if scripture is correct. We pray to God, but we need the middle man. John 14:14 says, “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” John 16:23-24 puts it this way in the Message paraphrase, “You’ll no longer be so full of questions.”This is what Iwant you to do: Ask the Father for whatever is in keeping with the things I’ve revealed to you. Ask in my name, according to my will, and he’ll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!”

We pray to God, but our prayers go through a spiritual mediator to make them happen. Knowing this truth many believers tag their prayers, “In Jesus name.” The old warriors had a way of mumbling under their breath when they heard a beautiful prayer than ended with a simple “Amen,” but not in “in Jesus’ Name.” They said, “That prayer didn’t go anywhere, it’s just bouncing around on the ceiling.”

When it comes to matters of the spirit, we can’t avoid middle man. In fact, the middle man is essential to our salvation and to our relationship with God.

As Christians, we thank God for Jesus, who presented himself to the world as one person who can mediate between God and feeble mankind. He is the man in the middle who guarantees our connection to God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul’s reminder to Timothy that Christ is the mediator between God and man.

The Roman and Greek world was familiar with many gods to whom they gave credit for the creation of the world and the control of its events. Paul told Timothy to be reminded that despite the learned opinions of the Romans and others there is but one God and that Jesus Christ is mediator between earth and heaven.

The Greek word for mediator means literally, a middle person, one whose office it is to reconcile two parties at odds with each other. When mankind sinned in the Gardeof Eden, God was offended; and he banished Adam and Eve from the garden and often cruelly punished men for disobedience and disloyalty. To restore them to his peace, Jesus Christ was incarnated; and being God and man, both God and men met in and were reconciled by him. But this reconciliation required a sacrifice on the part of the peace-maker or mediator, thus Calvary became necessary.

Without the middle man there would be no salvation to believers today.

Been in the Middle

Jesus is able to be the middle man between God and man because He has been both God and man. He is a member of the Godhead, but during his 33 years old earth also lived as a man. Therefore, because he’s been in the middle of our problems, He can be in the middle of our solutions. He has been:

IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR TROUBLES: When Israel left Egypt God went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, but when Pharaoh’s army came to attack them, the presence of God stood between them day and night. In the

same way Jesus has been in the middle of our troubles keeping enemies at bay and hellhounds off our track. How many times has he had to shelter us like the priests did David or sustain us like Hagar in the wilderness or hide us like Jocebed did Moses? In our time of trouble the Lord has been in the middle of our situations. We almost find ourselves singing with David, "If it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would Israel be." The fact that He has been in our troubles what qualifies Him to take our troubling situation to God. The good news is that while God is deciding what He will do, like the cloud between Israel and the army of Egypt the Lord is standing in between, until the Lord makes a way.

IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR FIRE: Daniel 3 records how three Hebrew youth were thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow to the political pressure of the King. As their persecutors threw them into the fire, they were astonished to see that in the middle of the fire, a fourth man appeared who was none other than the presence of the Lord. Today, we know what it is like to be persecuted and assailed. We know what it is like to face the fiery furnace. Yet, in the middle of our fiery furnace experience, we have seen what happens when Jesus shows up. When we were literally broken in spirit by all of the cruel things said and done by our enemies, the Lord showed up! When we were falsely accused on every side, literally crushing us to the ground, the Lord showed up! When we tasted bitter and briny tears after verbal assaults, attacks and threats, the Lord showed up. Nearly every believer has endured a furnace situation and sang that old song, "Have you been tried in the fire? Yes! Did you come forth as pure gold?" The fact that Christ Himself suffered the fires of persecution and felt the affect of backstabbing friends, false accusations, and abandonment by those close to him qualified him to take our burdens to God. He could truthfully say, "I know what it's like to be in the fire."The good news is that even while the fire is still raging, there is a fourth man in the fire protecting us from hurt harm and danger.

IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR STORMS: When the disciples were sailing and were accosted by a sudden storm they became afraid that their little boat would sink; until someone remembered that Jesus was onboard. Awakened, He rebuked them for having failing faith and spoke to the winds and said "Peace be still." Today, like those weary disciples, many of us have faced our storms that appeared suddenly and without notice. Sometimes there were hurricanes of sickness or tornadoes of family trouble. For some there have been tsunamis of financial disaster. We felt like the lame man who sat by the pool for 38 years or the widow woman who reached the bottom of her barrel. Yet, millions of believers can testify that in the middle of their storms, Jesus spoke to the winds and the waves and commanded them to be still. That was the command that restored health in the middle of sickness. That was the command that opened new job opportunities when other doors were closed. That was the command to rise up after being knocked down! Jesus faced the storms of life himself and on many occasions found his own life rocking and reeling only to be steadied by the strong hand of God. That's what uniquely qualifies him to bring us into the presence of God. It is also what gives us the face to sing, "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me. When the hosts of hell assail, and my life begins to fail, thou who has never lost a battle, stand by me."

In the Middle

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that that in the middle of our sins Christ came to bring us back to God.

We are a sinful people and that sin separates us from God. When we are separated from God we are disconnected. Some are finding that when they try to connect back to God on their own, it just doesn't work.

Most of the new power cords have a three prong plug on the end. It is designed to be plugged into a three pronged receptacle. Every now and then we run upon a situation where the old two prong plug meets up with a new three pronged receptacle. When that happens the two won't fit.

The three pronged end reminds me of the fullness of the spirit of the father, son and the Holy Ghost.

The two pronged end reminds me of frail humanity the flesh and the blood.

The problems come when my old two prong sinful self tries to plug into the three prong power of God.

My two prongs is flesh and blood!

My two prongs are greed and gluttony!

My two prongs are lust and adultery!

My two prongs are pride and arrogance!

My two prongs can't receive the power of God, because it requires three prongs.

To connect, a mediator that is God on one side (three prongs) and flesh and blood on the other is needed.

Electricians call that third prong a grounder. Jesus is the only spiritual grounder we know. person who was both God and man because John 1: 14 says the Word became flesh and dwelled among men. I

I was on the ground with them. I was in the middle of their storms. I was in the middle of the troubles. I was in the middle of their fires. Jesus was the only one able to mediate between God and man.

With the Jesus as the mediator, we have the hookup! Thank God for the middleman!

Whatever we are in the middle of, the Lord will connect us to the power!

He'll show up in the middle of our sickness!

He'll show up in the middle of our weakness! He'll show up in the middle of our pain!

He'll show up in the middle of our sleepless nights!

Thank God for the middle man, because in the middle of our sins, He showed up to save us from our sins!

On a hill called Calvary there were three crosses. On one side there was a thief who was unrepentant even unto death. On the other side there was another thief who said, "Remember me when you enter into my kingdom."

In the middle was the savior of the world! Thank God for the middle man!

In the middle was the man who:

-Lifts us above the shadows; Plants our Feet on solid ground;

-Brightens our day and blesses our soul!
-Blesses our thoughts and guides our feet!
-Makes life worth living; Makes the Bible worth reading!
-Makes church worth attending; Makes Prayers worth praying!

From the middle of that old cross, I hear Him saying, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!”

He lived in the middle of a sinful world!
He died in the middle of sinful men!
The buried him in the middle of a beautiful garden!
Early, Sunday morning He arose from the grave to stand in the middle of our lives!
Thank God for the middle man!

No. 9556-Graduation

Earning your Wing

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 3, 2012

SCRIPTURE: " Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Isaiah 6:2 ; But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

Introduction

How did you feel once they placed your diploma in your hands? Did you feel a sense of accomplishment? Were you excited? Did you feel as though you could just fly?

Graduation is a rite of passage that signals the completion of one set of goals as we begin another. It also signals the beginning of a journey toward personal maturity and chronological majority. The diploma is one of the big three of high school achievement. Depending on who we ask, it is in competition for first place with a driver's license and a cell phone ranks pretty high.

It is only a sheepskin with a name on it, but represents a level of accomplishment that has been pursued for 18 years. It marks a proud moment for both the recipient and for the family supporting a graduate standing in the shadows.

When an individual joins the United States Air Force he/she learns the basics of navigation through a rigorous training and study in a boot camp format. Those who will fly airplanes go even further. They learn the basics of air navigation in a simulator. They learn how to take orders from the tower. They also learn how to take off and land. When they have learned these essentials then they are given their wings.

That process is similar to what each graduate is doing. Completion of high school is similar to completing basic training, instead of 13 to 15 weeks, it has been 18 years. Just as new military recruits complete basic training with a ceremony, but must continue their training to get their wings, so must every graduate.

For nearly two decades graduates have lived in a simulated world. Their school challenges and rewards have simulated challenges and rewards they will receive in life. There have been simulated successes such as athletic victories and simulated failures that seemed important at the moment, but really serve to show us how to be gracious in victory and resilient in defeat. In the real world there will be many defeats

so the simulated teaches students how to handle them. There were simulated assignments that tested whether they could follow through. The stress imposed by the term papers, book reports and science projects was real, but it was only preparatory for the stress sure to come as they climb the ladder in real life. Simulated rewards called trophies and ribbons were important at the moment. The trophy in the showcase or sitting on a dresser in a student's room simulates the rewards of victory such as financial gain, influence and power that offered in the real world. There was even simulated imprisonment and punishments to show what happens in the real world if laws are broken. In the simulator their terms are short and names are protected. In the real world the punishments are visible for a lifetime and are never private.

High school is a life simulator because although the situations feel real to students, most of them have a real world support group somewhere that picks them up when they fall, supports them if they fail; constantly inspiring, motivating and encouraging and disciplining. Many feel that if the simulator experience ends, their families will sustain them.

Everything we need to know about life can't be learned in a simulator. At some point we must get behind the wheel and sit in life's cockpit with real controls in our hands knowing that if we crash or fail it won't be simulated; it will be reality.

The basic training for these young men and women has ended. They have lived a simulated life, with someone to catch them completely if they fall; or even if they refuse to try. Outside the simulator life gets real.

The prospect of poverty is real, it is not simulated. The prospects of homelessness, hunger, imprisonment, and career failure are real; they are not simulated. Likewise, the prospect of living a happy life, success, achievement and a meaningful existence are real as well.

During this process Christian families have tried to also simulate the kind of spiritual life that must be lead outside of the simulator. They have brought graduates to church, bible studies, Sunday School Vacation Bible Schools, musicals, revivals and exposed them to nearly 2000 sermons with only one thought in mind that is to teach them that if they want to fly in life they must learn that they must trust someone in the tower to direct them onto the runway and let them know when it is safe to take off, how high to fly and if they get in trouble while they are flying high; there is someone in the tower that can talk them down again.

The man in the tower is God. Parents have been telling graduates about this unseen person who sits high and looks low for years. In the simulator, we learned that he is up there. In the real world we learned to always check in with the man in the tower or face sudden destruction.

In the simulator you have heard words about the man in the tower that you must follow in the real world: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5

As Christians, we have learned that real world offers us many challenges, but if we learn our simulated lessons well, the man in the tower will clear our runway, and help

us to fly having learned our lessons and earned our wings.

Exposition

This text shows the prophet Isaiah using the image of wings to illustrate the believer's life.

The 6th chapter of Isaiah sets the time of Isaiah's calling as the year that King Uzziah died. Uzziah had been a dominating figure in Jewish history. When Uzziah died Isaiah says, "In the year King Uzziah died I also saw the Lord."

Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision that showed him standing in the presence of God who was high and lifted up, surrounded by cherubim with six wings and a host of angels.

In this vision saw the suffering of Israel, but he saw their eventual triumph as well. When it all ends, Isaiah said the hosts of heaven will give all of the glory to the Lord of Hosts.

Isaiah said he saw a vision of seraphims or messengers from God. Daniel 7:10 suggests there were thousands of seraphims coming forth like a mighty army toward the throne of God. His description of them was dreamlike because they had six wings: Two over the face to suggest that they saw only what God wanted them to see. They were his eyes. They turned toward what he wanted them to see. They also had two over their feet, suggesting that they went where God wanted them to go. Two to fly away. They executed what God commanded them to do. Godly believers, like these seraphims, begin service in whatever field the Lord gives them. They patiently wait for his instructions and even when all around them fail and lose their strength him, when he moves they mount up on wings.

Having done this the seraphim has two more wings, that he will use after having completed his mission; he will have two wings to fly away.

Flying Lessons

It takes humans longer to learn our life lessons than the creatures of the earth. Yet, there are certain parallels that are especially important for those who intend to fly. All we need do is consider the little bird whose mind and body seems destined to fly. God in his infinite wisdom, constructed them in a way that would guarantee they could fly. If we want to fly we should study their model.

BIRDS ARE CENTERED: A birds body is so designed by the creator that it has a perfectly centered gravity point. Its center of gravity is the balance point between its wings and its head and its tail. It stays centered. Young people moving forth through life must stay balanced or centered. What has destroyed millions of young adults beginning their journey is the tendency to move off center as they indulge in too much of the left or the right. In the center are your core beliefs about God and country. In the center is your commitment to live according to God's will and to follow his command. It's that center in your life that keeps you balanced, never losing sight

of what is really important in life.

BIRDS HAVE SMALL HEADS: Seldom will you find a flying bird with a big head. A big head would bring a small bird crashing to the ground. The same is true about life. Those with big heads won't take instruction or correction. The man with the big head thinks he knows it all and seemed destined to ignore all advice, especially for the parents, grandparents or those who urge them to take a safer more reasonable path. Big, hard heads have been the fall of many strong men. Samson is a clear example of a big man with a big head. He ignored the advice of everyone and married Philistine women. They proved to be his downfall despite his strength. Those who want to fly need to remember birds have small heads.

BIRDS CARRY NO DEAD WEIGHT: Birds travel light and live light. They avoid anything that will prevent them from flying. Birds have small lungs, careful to take in only what is necessary. They have no bladders either; they hold no waste. They are selective about what they eat choosing those things that can be consumed quickly, will give them energy, but will not weigh them down. Youth must do the same, striving especially hard to avoid those things that will weigh them down. Likewise, youth should avoid any associations with people, places or things that will weigh them down. Alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and foreign substances that will blur their vision should be avoided. Friends and acquaintances whose habits and influence will prove burdensome should also be avoided. Any such influences should be considered dead weight, destined to lead to a crash.

One wing birds don't fly

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that the seraphims that Isaiah saw had two wings which reminds us that one winged birds don't fly.

The high school graduation marks the attainment of only one wing.

Yet, Isaiah said he saw a seraphim with two wings: two wings over his feet. Two wings over his eyes and two wings with which to fly.

Graduation gives us one wing:

Learning the circumference of a circle or figuring the hypotenuse of triangle is one wing.

Learning to read books, operate computers and acquire job skills is one wing.

Learning Greek mythology, writing term papers, essays and completing home assignments is just one wing.

Learning the geography of the world and topography of the land is just one wing.

Learning the sociology of the people and anthropology of origins is just one wing.

Learning the biology of animals and botanical essence of its plants is just one wing.

Learning interest rates, economics, world and American history, is just one wing.

Isaiah said the seraphim had two wings to cover his eyes. Two wings to cover his feet and two wings to fly away.

Birds with one wing don't fly!

A high school graduate can earn one wing by finishing courses and passing test, but one wing is not enough!

A believer knows that flapping a high school diploma in the wind won't make him fly because it takes two wings!

Where is the second wing?

Psalm 36:7 says, How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Psalm 63:7 "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

The grace of God is the second second wing.

Every child of God knows that he can't make it in this world without the Lord and he has found out that Jesus is the wind beneath his wings.

You may soar to great heights in the world of business and become the president of a million dollar corporation, but you should never forget that it takes two wings to fly; Jesus is the wind beneath your wings.

You may fly high in politics and become the mayor, governor of our state or president of our nation, but on your way and when you get there you should never forget that it takes two wings to fly; Jesus is wind beneath your wings.

Because we have two wings we have:

—Encouragement in times of despair

—Strength in times of weakness

—Comfort in times of sorrow

—Inspiration in times of difficulty

—Guidance in times of danger

—Shelter in times of storm

—Help in times of trouble

Because we have two wings we know that if the going gets tough and the road gets rough that if we wait on the Lord he will keep us soaring because his word has promised that "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles, the shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint."

You can earn your first wing by your own hard work and perseverance, but you can't earn the second wing, because it is the gift of God.

It doesn't cost you anything, but it was bought with a price.

Jesus paid it all!

On Calvary, He died and three days later He arose from the grave!

His victory speaks to our soul, "If I can't soar to the edge of the sky, I'll just lift one wing and try!"

He will catch me if I fall and help me to soar!

His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me!

No. 9557-Fathers

Just like my daddy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of his father Asa." 1 Kings 22:43

Introduction

How many of your father's traits do you have? Do you recognize the good ones? What about the bad ones? There are millions of men who are great fathers in the eyes of theie wives or significant partners or in the eyes of their children. They are seen as good fathers because they are more than just "Baby Daddies" or sperm donors. They are also more than the man who does or does not pay the monthly child support on time. There are millions of men who are real fathers, men who love, protect and provide for their children. These are men who seem to do the right thing when all others around him are doing wrong and are willing to shoulder responsibility for the care of themselves and those in their charge.

Many of these character traits were not learned in school or taught by their elders; these traits were inborn, inherited from their fathers and nurtured in a positive home environment until they reached maturity.

Whether we admit it or not, every man has many of his father's traits, good or bad. Whether its intellectual or physical, practical or impractical, impulsiveness or carefulness, loving and crude; much of these tendencies are inherited from fathers, sometimes grandfathers. Unfortunately we often inherited some undesirables such as: gullibility, tendencies toward addictive behavior, abusiveness, even an irresponsible spirit. Science has shown us that many of our traits are inherited from our gene pool; we notice it when they start to exhibit themselves without any prompting on our part. Older members of the family spot it quickly and note, "he's acting just like his daddy" or "his grandpa use to act just like that."

We often inherit special things from the dominant gene contributor: whether or not we have freckles, high blood pressure, pointed ears, hair texture, and skin color which often are contributed by our fathers.

Usually, when we hear the phrase, "Just like your daddy!" it is used to depict a negative idea; seldom is it used to describe the kind of dad shown in Tyler Perry's movie "Daddy's Little Girls" or depicted by the charter played by Will Smith in the "Pursuit of Happyness." These dads were loving black men who did everything possible to love,

protect and care for their children. These were the kind of men that any child could proudly say, “I want to be just like my daddy.”

The ultimate depiction of a father’s love is this:

”For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

When dad loves like God loves, we want to be like him.

As Christians, we have learned that we are the sum total of everything that our fathers are or were; both the good and the bad. We are also the sum total of our heavenly father as well. While it’s hard for us to see Him because He is God, it is easy for us to know Him because He is love. In that respect we all say, “I want to be just like my daddy.”

Exposition

This text focuses on a man who rose to serve as king, but he served in righteousness just like his father.

In 872 BC, Jehoshaphat became co-regent with his father, Asa , as king of Judah. Following Asa’s death in 869 BC, Jehoshaphat reigned. During his reign, Jehoshaphat strengthened Judah’s military position by placing garrisons of troops throughout the tiny nation. He broke with previous practice by entering into a parity treaty with King Ahab of Israel and arranged for Ahab’s daughter Athaliah to marry his son Jehoram.

Jehoshaphat followed the godly example of his father. He did away with heathen worship (1 Kings 22:43, 46) and sent out traveling teachers of the law of Moses (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). He reorganized Judah’s system of justice, placing judges in key cities and a court of appeals in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 19:4-11).

His father was a godly, man and he proved to be godly man himself, just like his father.

Traits to Admire

Children should emulate the better traits of their fathers and learn from their weaknesses.

INSPIRATION TO SUCCEED: Great fathers inspire their children to succeed. They may not say the words, but their children watch their example.

Whenever major league baseball player Curt Schilling pitched, he wrotes his dad’s name on the free-ticket list for that game. It’s a practice he started in 1988, and continued as long as he played the game.

This wouldn’t be all that unusual, except that a few months before Curt’s major league debut his dad died of cancer. Putting his father’s name on that list is an ongoing tribute to the man who for 22 years provided guidance, instruction, encouragement, and inspiration.

Just as Curt Schilling’s dad gave him the incentive to succeed in baseball, so we need to instill in our children the knowledge, desire and wisdom to succeed in the

arena of faith. Nothing is more important than to spend time building into our children the skills to do right in God's eyes.

King Asa in the text was loyal to God and he must have imparted that quality to his son, because Jehoshaphat "walked in all the ways of his father Asa" (1 Kings 22:43).

We should inspire our children to successfully follow the will of God.

Children have complete faith in their parents.

INSPIRATION TO TRUST GOD: A great godly father is a man of faith who trusts God. When he moves before his children they see him trusting God in everything from the way the house works to great life decisions. He trusts that no matter what the problem, that God will take care of the matter.

Children see their father's steadfast faith in God and never doubt for a second that He has the ability to secure what they need. When a child prays to his heavenly father, He prays with the same faith and inspiration shown by his father. Like daddy, they have no doubt that God can answer their prayers, too. We must believe that no matter what our concern is that God can handle it and has the power to deal with it in the way that we ask.

Great fathers display a faith so strong that their children, say, "I will trust that God will make a way, just like my daddy did!"

INSPIRATION FOR INTEGRITY: A godly father inspires his children to live with integrity. Godly fathers have a sense of integrity that is rooted in Godly principles. Some have the notion that a man should do anything to feed himself and his family. This is true, if by anything it is meant any "moral and just" thing. On the contrary, it is the real man who trusts God to strengthen him to be a provider as he uses every legal and moral channel available to secure his household.

The godly road is the high road; it is the path that men of integrity travel. The high road is not an easy path, in fact it is often a difficult and treacherous path. Unfortunately, there are many men who have taken the road to least resistance. Too many are selling drugs, bootlegging movies, compact discs, and stolen merchandise, while involving themselves in a variety of unlawful activities all under the guise of feeding themselves and their families. They brush off the illegality of their actions by saying, "A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do."

Despite hard times our history shows that we have lived through wars, slavery, floods and depressions, but, for the most part, the men of our families refused to steal or involve themselves in wrongdoing in the name of "doing what we gotta do."

Great fathers make tough choices to prepare themselves for leadership of their homes and the community in general.

Just like my daddy

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that one reason that we want to be like our godly fathers is that a godly father is not just a good man, but he's a good man in God's hands.

We have seen many good men and we have seen what they were able to do when

their lives were in God's hand.

That's why every child who has known a good father says, "I want to be just like my daddy!

I want to be like my daddy because my daddy was like Elijah. Elijah was a real man. He was strong, independent and courageous; he was a real man in godly hands.

I want to be just like my daddy because my daddy was just like Abraham. Abraham was a good man who put his trust in God and moved at his command.

I want to be just like my daddy because my daddy was just like Jacob. Jacob was a good man who prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let Him go. My daddy was like Jacob because he was a good man in godly hands!

I want to be just like my daddy because my daddy was just like David. David was a good man. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit."

I want to be just like my daddy because he is a powerful man and because God uses him!

I want to be just like my daddy because he is an influential man because God controls him!

I want to be just like my daddy because he is an effective man because God directs him!

I want to be just like my daddy because he's as courageous as Moses who stood before Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go."

I want to be just like my daddy because he's as strong as Joshua who declared "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I want to be just like my daddy because like Hosea he could love even though he was not being loved in return

I want to be just like my daddy because like David he could stand and say without a doubt, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

Every good father who keeps his hand in the hand of God should remember to always take the Lord with you!

Daddy said, If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered; I want to be just like my daddy!

Daddy said, If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome; I want to be just like my daddy!

Daddy said, If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome; I want to be just like my daddy!

Daddy said, If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted; I want to be just like my daddy!

Daddy said, If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be climbed; I want to be just like my daddy!

Storms arose, But daddy held on, I want to be just like my daddy!

Winds blew, but daddy held on, I want to be just like my daddy!

But while I was watching my daddy, I found out something that I had not notice; that daddy was watching the Lord!

I had my eye on him, but he had his eye on Jesus

Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But Early, Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

As long as daddy keeps his eye on Jesus, I want to be just like my daddy!

No. 9558-Reunion

It's hard to stumble, when you are on your knees

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2012

SCRIPTURE: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Acts 16:31-34

Introduction

Have you ever considered all of the struggles of this family? Think about it. It has survived hard times, financial difficulties, wars, depressions, racial dis crimination and death, yet it is still standing strong.When was this family the strongest? As we listen to the old warriors in the Klan we learn that we have been strongest when we came to together and prayerfully asked God to guide us. We have been our weakest when we were separate, disconnected and unconcerned about achieving our purpose or seeking God's will.

As we celebrate this reunion we are standing in memorial to the great family warriors gone before us. Just as those who visit great battlefields of our nation realize a sense of awe as they appreciate the fact that they are standing where brave men and women gave their lives for the cause of freedom, we also know that we are standing on hallowed ground. We are standing on a family history that is filled with victories, a few defeats, both triumph and tragedy. We are standing on a family history that acknowledges one truth: as long as we humble ourselves before God, we thrive; when we try to stand on our own we fail.

As we celebrate this family we must inevitably announce the roll call fathers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles who paved the way for our next generation to have a better opportunity while clinging to an unwavering faith that God will make a way.

As Christians, we believe that we are blessed when we humble ourselves as a family before God; humbled before him, on our knees, makes it difficult to fail because it is hard to stumble when you are on your knees.

Exposition

This text focuses on a family whose members heard the gospel preached and humbled themselves before God.

Paul and Silas preached a powerful message of repentance and faith as they traveled from city to city. Often their sermons were not accepted. Just prior to this passage the two had been jailed for their preaching and during the midnight hour they prayed and sang with fervor. God heard them and sent an angel to open the jail doors. The jailer himself was prepared to die, but came to know the Lord.

He invited Paul and Silas to his home where the two preached to the whole family. They told the family about the love of God and his compassion and mercy. They told of his power to forgive and restore lost lives and to deliver them from the grasp of Satan.

In that night the jailer and his hold family believed in God and humbled themselves before him. They were baptized and began new lives as Christians.

The family needs God

This family has endured many difficulties over the years. The family burial ground is filled with the tombstones of the faithful who left us one legacy to remember, "nothing can knock us down if we stay close to God."

Many families are stumbling today because they are not humbling themselves before God as families. As difficulties comes we seek help from many sources, but a growing number of families have failed to ask God for help. To ask God is to admit that we need the help of someone greater than ourselves. Yet, we have not because we ask not.

Roy Buck tells the story of a little boy who was tugging at a big rock and doing his best to lift it. He was grunting and pulling at it but it didn't budge. His father came along and asked him if he was having any trouble.

He said, Yes, I am trying and trying and can't move the rock. The father said to him, Well, son, are you using all available energy? The boy replied, "Yes, Father, I think I am."

Then the dad looked at him and said, "No, son, I don't think you are, for you haven't asked for my help."

What this family has learned is that on our knees we can talk to God.

On our knees we can say to God, "I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee!"

On our knees we can make our requests known to God!

When we are on our knees we have great confidence because we know that it is hard to stumble when you are on your knees.

Don't Forget the Source

When families gather there are many who are concerned that each generation of the family knows the source of its strength. With so many forces influencing the family, there is concern that each generation should appreciate the secret to the family's longevity and power to persevere.

Today, many of our seniors look at the generations of their children and grandchildren and mourn at what appears to have sprung forth from them. Many are disheartened to see so many of the young who are growing away from the fear of God or even a respect for God. They see so many who have begun lifestyles that have rejected the faith of their fathers as they pursue the interests of a new generation. Some are saddened as they ask "are these the children of our wombs?" Although they are blood of our blood and bone of our bone, it appears that the very heritage of faith that has brought them and taught them has been intertwined with a strange presence that prevents them from knowing the God of their past.

Yet, while there are some in the family who have distanced themselves from its roots of faith, there are others who are learning the truths and embracing them as their own.

The old warriors when they hear the children sing, "Yes, Jesus Loves me!"

The old warriors are encouraged when they see the young fathers in the family holding hands with their wives and leading the family in prayer.

The old warriors are excited when they see the bible being read and families seeking the will of God.

These are the family members who have not forgotten the lessons of history. They remember the hard days of syrup buckets and cane fields. They remember drawing water from the well, feeding the chickens and chopping wood. They remember Sunday morning church preparation, straightening combs, and papa's Sunday suit.

They also remember how the family prayed when somebody was sick and how fevers were broken. They remember how the family prayed and worries over threatening weather and worsening conditions were calmed.

They also remember when the family prayed for a wayward brother and asked God to deliver an uncle from his philandering ways. We remember the prayers and we remember the answered prayers.

What we learned from all of that is that as long as the family humbled itself before God, it rarely stumbled. It rarely faltered, despite encountering difficult times, because it is hard to stumble when you are on your knees.

Family Knee Problem

The world has infiltrated the family and in a general sense has given it a knee problem. Many members of the family have knee injuries. They have forgotten how to pray. A knee injury may be the result of a strain, a quick turn, a hit or a fall. When the knee is injured ligaments and tissues are inflamed and they can cause pain and discomfort.

When the family begins to embrace the world, worldliness creeps into the family to a point that many families are leaning away from God.

Male promiscuity and irresponsibility in previous generations was tolerated but it was never viewed as an expected behavior. Too many families have accepted the fact that marriage is a trial and run experience. Husbands and now even wives are expected to cheat; it is considered a part of the marriage experience. When marriages are filled with cheating there is no real praying. The family gets a knee injury.

Children outside of wedlock is not new for the family, but laying up having babies to get increases in welfare and food stamps is a new thing. When this occurs repeatedly, it gets hard to pray earnestly and the family gets another knee injury.

Homosexually has come out of the family closet. There has always been someone in the family that walked this path, but today there are many who are claiming that their sexual taste is God's fault. They don't pray for transformation, but they pray for acceptance and endorsement; that's when we know there is a knee injury.

There is a generation growing among us that has only a superficial appreciation of God. These are the ones who select a Sunday worship to attend by the entertainment factor, avoid Sunday School completely, and calls on God only in times of peril. These are signs of a spiritual knee injury.

Over the years this family has learned this family has learned how to deal with knee injuries. Some of our family members have experienced straining situations or have experience trouble from quick emotional falls, unexpected financial hits. Some are in pain because of scar tissue left over from previous marriages and relationships. Some are trying to deal with the pain by taking pain killers, drinking or drugs; these only take away the pain for a while, but the injury is still there.

What we need is knee surgery!

When we have knee surgery, we get the problem fixed!

Knee surgery allows us to get back to the business of helping our families!

Knee surgery allows us to get back to the practice of praying and trusting God!

Knee surgery allows us to get back to the habit of taking our burdens to the Lord in prayer!

Praying family

Finally, brothers and sisters, this text suggests that there is rejoicing when family acknowledges God and humbles itself before Him.

God will uphold, bless and protect the Godly family.

Charles Finney reminds us that a man may know all human knowledge, but if he hasn't learn to pray what can he do?

The family that does not pray cannot touch the hearts of its individual members nor communicate with the heart of God.

The family that does not pray cannot know its purpose or achieve its Godly goals because knowing the purpose of God requires an open-faced communion with God.

The family that does not pray may have many talents, acquire much knowledge, but

won't be able to stand in times of trouble because knowledge and material success can't help us when what we really need is a blessing from the Lord.

The family needs to reach back and learn from great grandpa and great grandma and get back on its knees because it's hard to stumble when you are on your knees!

We should get renewed hope when we think about how God is watching over our families.

Because God is watching over our families we can sleep in the midst of the storms of life.

In the midst of slavery our forefathers could sing, All day, All night angels watching over me my Lord.

Because God is watching over us, we don't get overly concerned when things get tough because his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me.

Because God is watching over us, we don't wallow in self pity when we slip, because we fall down, but we get up!

Because God is watching over us, we don't wither and shrink in the face of trouble, because we know trouble don't last always!

Because God is watching over us, we can have joy in the midst of sorrow!

Because God is watching over us, we can have peace in the middle of confusion!

Because God is watching over us, we can have faith in the middle of doubt!

Because God is watching over us, we can have love although we are surrounded by hate!

Because God is watching over us, we can have happiness although all around us is only sadness!

Children of this generation, listen to the old warriors. It is hard to stumble when you are on your knees!

If Samson would have been on his knees he would not have stumbled and fell into the hands of the Philistines.

If David had been on his knees he would not have stumbled into the bed of Bathsheba.

If the men of Sodom and Gomorrah had been on their knees they would not have stumbled into each other's arms.

If Goliath had been on his knees he would not have stumbled before David's sling shot

If Absalom had been on his knees he would not have died hanging by his hair

If Saul had been on his knees he would not have fallen on his own sword

If Cain had been on his knees he would not have killed Able in the garden

If Judas had been on his knees he would not have been selling the savior for 30 pieces of silver

If Jezebel had been on her knees she would not have been such an evil woman.

When the family gets on its knees, it talks to God!

Because God is listening when we pray, we can have hope in the middle of troubles because "We are our heavenly fathers children and he knows how much we can bear!"

He knows, yes he knows!

He knows, when we have come to the end of our rope!
He knows, when our faith is challenged and our hope is waning!
He knows, when our names have been put on the highway and we have been called everything but a child of God!
He knows, yes He knows, just how much we can bear!
I don't know about you but I've decided to stay on the battlefield!
I've decided to keep telling the story of Jesus and His love!
I've decided to keep telling the world how He came to this wicked earth!
I've decided to keep telling the world how He died out on Calvary!
But Early Sunday morning, arose from the grave
With all power in His hands!

No. 9559-Tragedy, Murder

A Dark Night and A Morning Prayer

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 22, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." Psalm 88:12-13.

Introduction

Have you been disturbed by the increase of senseless mass murders we have witnessed in the last few years? The frequency and morbidity of the rash of murders, killings and shootings has placed a dark cloud over the sense of comfort and security we have come to expect in this nation.This week the nation watched in horror as the media detailed the murder of a dozen people and wounding of about 60 others by a man who acted out a scene strikingly familiar to a batman comic strip in which a man walks into a crowded theater and begins to shoot people. The shootings in Aurora, Colorado were not comic book musings, neither were they scenes from a movie; they were the chilling actions of a gunman who entered a crowded theater during the midnight screening of the new movie "The Dark Knight Rises," tossed a canister of gas and then opened fire on the moviegoers.

We have seen such horror scenes frequently. In January of 2011, Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others were shot in by crazed gunman. In November of 2009 thirteen soldiers and civilians were killed and more than a dozen were wounded on an army base in Fort Hood, Texas. There were 13 killed and 32 injured. In March of 2009 Michael McLendon killed 10 people, including his mother, four relatives and the wife and child of a sheriff deputy in Alabama. In 1999 two students killed 12 classmates and a teacher and wounded 26 at Columbine High in Colorado. In 1991 a man opened fire at a Luby's Restaurant in Texas and killed 23, wounded 20 and then killed himself.

We know of similar tragedies in small towns across the nation. The rapidity of the occurrences troubles and consumes us in a shroud of darkness that tests our faith and strains our hope. Ironically, our national horror begins to resemble the plight of the people of Gotham City in the movie. They were being threatened by the presence of an evil character who was beyond their power to defeat. Batman hadn't been seen or

heard from in eight years; they looked for a hero to defeat evil. This villain, however, was so evil that even Batman had his hands full.

The Dark Knight is a movie about a hero who saves the people from evil. It seems that any well made movie that presents audiences with a super hero can pack theaters. Look at the short list: Superman, Spiderman, Thor, The Avengers, Cat woman, the Fantastic Four, X-Men, the Hulk, Spawn, Blade, The Phantom and dozens more. All of these movies have one common theme; they present heroes with extraordinary power who can save the world from the darkness of evil.

Our world is under a dark cloud of evil; it is everywhere. We see so much evil that it causes us to lock our doors, bar our windows and peep out of our windows. We are experiencing a dark night when children are molested in parks, women routinely raped and young people are dying by the dozens every hour in the nation. In the middle of our trouble we send out a distress signal to the only power we know that can respond to evil. In our distress we sing, "Hear our prayer oh Lord. Incline thine ear to us and grant us thy peace."

In the darkness of our night, God heard us and has sent his answer. His name is Jesus.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he struggled to come to grips with events impacting his life that brought him to a low point. It gives us the believer's response to dark night situations caused by the presence of evil.

The 88th Psalm of David is a dark psalm, but it has a glimmer of hope. While most of the Psalms are inspirational in nature, the 88th Psalm is solemn. It was written at a time when David was at a spiritual low. He had suffered emotionally and possibly physically. He felt besieged by evil all around him.

This psalm presents David as the believer who is struggling to make it through the night, but has lost hope in the midst of the darkness, that God would deliver him. It is filled with expressions of difficulty for the troubles he faced. In verse 12 he asks the question, "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?"

He gives a continuous litany of dismay and hopelessness that recites his afflictions and difficulty. The 88th psalm is a striking contrast to the other Psalms. They express hope, joy and faith that God responds in a time of trouble. The other 149 psalms always strike great chords of hope, but only a single verse of this psalm remembers that despite the darkness, God is able.

This psalm represents those occasional moments, when even strong believers find themselves distracted from the faith and questioning why God would allow evil to exist.

It is described as the saddest of the psalms because it presents a picture of a strong believer who is down in the dumps and can't see beyond the darkness of the night. It represents those times when events and circumstances are so horrific that normally strong believers become weak. It is a time when a believer is overcome by the

melancholy of a dark night.

However, if we focus on verse 13 we see the ray of hope that gives us a solution. The first 12 verses paint the picture of the night, however verse 13 begins with "but." It is a declaration of faith that despite the darkness, there is still a final recourse. David resolved to tell God about it and "in the morning my prayer shall prevent thee." The word prevent, in this context means "be before thee." In this simple phrase, believers are pointed to their next step when suffering in the night. Tell God about, He can help us. Keep our prayers before Him and he will answer.

In the dark

In the dark it is difficult for see the hand of God. It is a time when believers should remain firm in their faith that God is aware of the presence of evil. When we consider the dark times in which we live we should remember that:

VILLAINS SHOULD NOT DESTROY HOPE: We have seen the villains of history; they are intertwined into fact and fiction. Whether it's Cain killing Able or Jezebel and Ahab stealing the fields of the innocent, we have seen evil. We have seen entire races enslaved by the powerful and read with horror of the acts of Kings like Herod who ordered the slaughter of the innocents. We have seen the Hitlers, Mussolinis, Saddam Husseins, and Osama Bin Ladens of history; we have felt the impact of their atrocities. The Bible says evil is the work of the Devil who constantly seeks ways to destroy. In fact 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The works Devil works his mischief through natural forces such as storms, droughts and Tsunamis. He also works through people who become the very personification of evil itself. The presence of such unbridled evil is unsettling and sometimes causes people to question God. Yet, we have the assurance that Satan's attacks on the innocent will be avenged; God is not mocked. In the meantime, 1 Peter 5:10 says, " But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." In the dark of night be strong in the Lord because even in our suffering he will put us together again, strengthen us and settle us. That's why believers sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Blood and righteousness...on Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand."

BAD THINGS CAN HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE: Whenever a tragedy injures someone, takes a life or troubles a family the question "why" immediately comes to mind. Some mistakenly accuse God of endorsing evil acts. When George Zimmerman the Florida security guard explained his recent shooting of Trayvon Martin, he said he did not set out to kill the youth, he said it was apparently God's will. Was it God's will that a teenager would die? Was it God's will for the victims of mass shootings to be killed or injured? I think not. God's permissive will gives mankind a rope to hold on to, but it's man's choice if he uses the rope to hang himself or others. God puts free will within the grasp of every individual; some use that free will in ungodly ways causing bad things to happen to good people. That's the meaning of a tragedy: when bad things

happen to undeserving people. On the other hand, Satan, the master of evil things causes bad things to happen out of mischief and often good people suffer. God is not the author of evil. God is good all the time, all the time God is good. When evil shows its ugly head people of faith should resolve like Job, "All the days of my appointed time, I'll wait until my change come."

GOD DOES WONDERS IN THE DARK: David asked in the 88th Psalm, "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?" To that, every believer can answer that even in the dark of night God still does wonderful things. We hear the reports of those who died in mass shooting, but we cannot ignore the fact that there was a "wonder in the dark" for those who managed to escape even though bullets were flying all around them. The survivors of tragedies will be among the first to testify that God does wonders in the darkest of nights. Believers have experienced some dark nights of their own. We may not have been in a mass shooting experience, but we have faced the possibility of death, sickness or financial ruin only to watch the God we serve harness the powers of nature and man to perform wonders in the dark. When schemers like Bernard Madoff stole the dreams of millions with his Ponzi schemes, God worked wonders in the dark to save millions more and is still lifting millions more from the ruins. In 1982 we labored under a cloud of darkness when people started dying because of poisoned Tylenol capsules, but God worked wonders that saved millions from instant death and today every pill bottle has a plastic seal and a tamper proof top. Evil may cause us to weep for a while, but we remember that "weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

A hero from heaven

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that when evil seems to triumph God always sends an answer from heaven.

Moviegoers went to theaters and observed people waiting, hoping and looking for a dark knight to appear and save them from the impact of evil. In the movie it was a man wearing a black suit and a bat like cape, but the God we serve does better than that!

In Egypt, Israel waited for 400 years for God to send them a deliverer, a hero who would carry them to the Promised Land. God sent them Moses.

When the Old Testament closed the bible says Israel became a subjugated people. For another four hundred years they waited for another deliver to free them from Roman domination.

In their darkest hour, God prepared to send them a word from heaven, a hero greater than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A hero greater than Moses, Joshua, Samuel or Elijah.

In their darkest hour, God prepared to send them a hero. He would not be a comic character, but He would be a superman.

David said in the darkness of night I will send up a prayer and in the morning, God will hear!

In our darkest hour God visits us and brings joy in the morning.

In our darkest hour, when we don't know which way to go, God visits our souls!

In our darkest hour, when it appears that all is lost, God shows us the light of day!

Out of the dark night, God rises!

When God rises up we can see the glory of his light.

When God rises up there is no fear of the howling winds!

When God rises up there is no frustration over the meddling of the devil!

When God rises up there is no wonder about what tomorrow will bring!

I don't know about you but I've found out that in the darkest hour, God always seems to show up and rise up!

When God rises up my burdens seem lighter! Maybe that's why he said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Over 2000 years ago God sent His only son, in the darkness of the night to bring hope to a world in despair.

In the dark, somebody called him the bright and morning star!

In the dark, somebody called him the sweet rose of Sharon!

His name is Jesus!

They nailed Him to an old rugged cross and He died!

When He died it was the ultimate tragedy, because a good man had died for evil world!

The sky became dark as the sun hid its face!

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb. It was dark night for three nights…

But early Sunday morning, He who was buried in the dark night was lifted up from the grave with all power in his hands!

…Even in the dark of night, there is hope in the morning!

No. 9560-Marriage

Partners for life

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 29, 2012

Scripture:"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:23-24

Introduction

Do you have a life partner? Is the partner temporary of permanent? Is your partner relationship civil or spiritual? There are many types of relationships. Some relationships are civil in nature others are both civil and spiritual. There are others that are neither civil nor spiritual.Despite the differences in the types of relationships, nearly everyone engaged in a relationship falls in one category of another.Some people prefer to live single with no emotional relationship to any person. Millions of people in the world live happy lives as singles without the need of another to fulfill themselves. Such singles have friends with whom they share important moments, successes and failures. Their relationships are purely platonic with without intimacy or commitment of any kind. Such arrangements are actually encouraged in the bible, especially for those involved in ministry.

Beyond the godly single life, there is growing list of other types of relationships including:

A Spuggie is a single person who wants no relationship, but just needs someone for the moment for a quick fix. Spuggies specialize in one-night stands, hookups and late night calls with people with they may not even know.

Sponsor. A sponsor has no feeling in the relationship at all. It is strictly commercial. A sponsor pays bills, provides resources and doles out money. A sponsor is the gold miner, the person with money; the other partner is the gold digger, whose role is to get as much gold as possible before the strike runs out. The gold digger has no concern about the mine or the miner.

There are some who have relationships that only be described as Friends with benefits. This is a relationship in which two friends share space and meet each mother's physical needs without any expectation of commitment.

An intimate roommate is a partner that shares the same bed and some responsibili-

ties, but keeps separate agendas, finances and secrets. An intimate roommate describes their partner as a "significant other" or a very important person at the moment, but that could change.

Some partners share civil unions. They love each and remain loyal to each other through good times and bad. Civil Union partners are usually of the same sex. Some states recognize same sex unions. Most organized religious bodies in the world reject them because they are inconsistent with the word of God.

Shackers live together, care for each other, and share lives together. However, at least one of the parties will not promise to be faithful to the arrangement if it becomes uncomfortable, troublesome or is hit with sickness, or financial distress. Often shackers are called "common law" couples that are considered married by common practice, but there is no paper work to seal the deal.

While there are many types of partners in the world, the only partnership that God recognizes is the institution of marriage. The term marriage itself refers to a spiritual relationship endorsed by God. A marriage has three ultimate purposes: It provides a companion for life, sanctioned intimacy and procreation, and an example of the relationship of the covenant relationship of Christ to the church. All three comprise a Christian marriage. Christians are highly offended when anyone tries to apply the term ?marriage? to any relationship other than one ordained by God.

As Christians, we enjoy a covenant relationship with the savior because we are part of the bride of Christ. He has made promises to the church, His bride and we have made promises to Him. When we enter into a marriage partnership we demonstrate each day our spiritual relationship with Christ based on love, trust and faith. We have fallen in love with our mate in the same way that we have fallen spiritually in love with Jesus. We can call all truthfully say, "Falling in love with Jesus was the best thing that ever happened to me."

Exposition

This text focuses upon God's establishment of the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden.

Scripture records that God created man from the elements of the earth, summarily called dust, and blew into him the breath of life. Initially, man was the only creature in scripture created singly. All other creatures were made in complementing pairs indicated by the words, "male and female" created he them.

Man was created single and through a special arrangement God took a rib from the side of Adam and formed a second man, but this man would have a womb. Because of the presence of the womb and other organs designed for procreation, the second man was called wo-man or man with a womb.

The human pair differed from all others of the creation. They were uniquely made with a divine purpose: to jointly manage all of creation and to mate and reproduce after their own kind. God approved their union with respect to its purpose, holiness and service to plan of God.

In the aftermath of the first marriage as recorded in this text, a married man's primary allegiance is not to his father or mother, but to his wife. The same is true of a woman, she cleaves to her husband and they become one flesh, one mind, and one purpose, with one destiny.

The marriage partnership of Adam and Eve did not have a ceremony. There was no ritual to follow or paper work to make it legal. What was important was the fact that God joined them together.

In later years ceremonies were developed. Early Jewish weddings involved the bride wearing a new gown in the presence of the groom and his best friend, known as the best man. The priest read the contract agreement between the two; they would taste a sip of wine, exchange rings and break the glasses after the ceremony.

In the first marriages love was not a major consideration, perpetuating and protecting the family was the major concern. A man was expected to protect and provide for the woman he married, but he also had the obligation to protect others in the family circle. If his brother died, he had the responsibility of marrying his wife to keep his family alive. Some wealthy men often married poor women in the family to protect them and provide an inheritance for them. This is what happened between Boaz and Ruth. When a wife proved barren, biblical men often married an additional wife for the purpose of child bearing such as the case of Abraham, Sarai and his concubine, Hagar. Because of this practice it was not unusual for a man to have several wives or concubines the first one being close to his heart and the others out of a sense of duty or need to perpetuate the family. Solomon had 300 wives and 700 concubines, most of who whom were political marriages arranged to avoid wars with foreign nations.

In the Christian era marriage was no longer seen as a duty but a godly relationship that recognizes the holiness of God and the perfection of his creation. In the Old Testament a man was frowned upon if he was unfaithful to any of his wives. In the New Testament both are commanded to be faithful in a relationship with one wife and one husband. In the New Testament, a marriage represents the covenant that Christ has with the church. The bride represents the church and the groom represents Christ himself. Since Christ does not have a second or third wife and the church does not have a second or third savior, there is only one wife and one husband for Christians. It is a holy arrangement that is filled with symbolisms of the future.

The bible says in Proverbs 18:22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Relationships that fall short of marriage are not considered "good" in the sight of God and the parties involved cannot expect to receive God's favor, according to the bible.

The purposes of marriage

Unlike other kinds of partnerships, marriage has three god-centered purposes.

COMPANIONSHIP: The first purpose of marriage is to provide companionship. When God created Adam in the garden He said Adam needed a companion to assist him in carrying out his purpose. These partners share everything. One helps the other

in many ways: physical, psychological, emotional and spiritually. Genesis 2:24 notes that when a man or woman marries their spouse becomes their companion, not their parents or circle of buddies. Many marriages today are troubled because one partner or the other is still hanging on to someone other than their spouse as their "companion" or running buddies. Many marriages have been ruined because husbands hang out with the boys, without their wives or wives spend more time with the girls than they do their husbands. Many are troubled because husbands cling to their mothers more than their wives and wives cling to their fathers more than their husbands.

Marriage provides a companion for life who shares every part of life with the other. Marriage companionship is friendly, fun, spiritual, enjoyable, truthful, and supportive. In this companion relationship the husband leads with input from his wife. They enjoy each other's company. Rarely is one seen without the other, they are inseparable.

INTIMACY and PROCREATION: Marriage is the framework through which God promotes the building the families. Building families, rearing children and establishing a godly heritage is one of the goals of marriage. It is expected that married couples should be intimate. 1 Corinthians 7:5 teaches that couples that refuse intimacy to each other put their marriage on shaky grounds. Child rearing in the fear and admonition of God is also essential to marriage. Those partners able to conceive are urge to do so and make it a high priority over career or professional opportunity. Those unable to conceive have turned to adoption to compensate, but the nurture of a Christian family is one of the core reasons for marriage. Husbands and wives lead their children by godly examples of virtue, love, trust, obedience and faith in God in Christian homes. Other relationship have intimacy and even procreation, but the Christian model of obedience to God and placing his will first is lost on ungodly relationships.

PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH: A Christian marriage is a pattern of the covenant relationship between Christ and his church. One reason God favors marriage and not Spuggies, shacking, civil unions and friends with benefits is that marriage glorifies God and the others do not. Our relationship with God is forever and is based on unconditional love. Unconditional love means partners love each other despite their weaknesses, faults and mess ups, not because they are perfect. That's the way God loves us. He will not dump us or divorce us. We may leave him, but he won't leave us. Marriage, unless defiled is forever, just as God's love is forever. Marriage is also patterned after Christ's relationship with the church. The couple makes a promise and Christ makes us a promise. That covenant relationship is represented in marriage. Carrying out that covenant, the Christian husband to the best of his ability tries to do what Christ would do by his family and children. Likewise the wife tries her best to function in the fellowship role of the church as it follows Christ's lead, so she follows her husband as he follows Christ. None of the partnerships that are popular among non believers commit themselves to following Christ's example in this way. This is why God blesses and favors marriage above all other relationships.

For Life

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that those who marry in Christ are expected to be partners for life.

Adam and Eve were partners for over 900 years. In that time they endured the shame of banishment of from the garden, endured the pain of dealing with the murder of their son. They built a home and served as a head of large family of children and grandchildren that spanned many generations. They were partners for life.

Abraham and Sarai were partners for life.

Isaac and Rebecca were partners for life.

Boaz and Ruth were partners for life.

Even among our friends and neighbors we have seen couples that seem to represent the godly model. Like Adam and Eve they have weathered many storms, struggles and have shared them together for 20 years, 30 years and even 60 years. We have seen their happy lives and we see the love of God moving in their lives.

We desire to be partners for life so we can rehearse for the days when we will spend eternity with our Lord.

That day will begin when Christ returns and we hear the shout "The bride groom cometh."

When the bridegroom cometh it will begin the day when those who are a part of the Kingdom of God will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

When the Bridegroom comes, there won't be tears in our eyes, but there will be joy in ours heart, for God shall wipe away all tears!

When the Bridegroom comes, there won't be any fear of sickness or death, for the former things shall be passed away!

When the Bridegroom comes, he will be waiting at the end of the isle, with arms wide open in love and compassion!

When the shout goes up, the bridegroom cometh, the Holy City will come down!

It will sit on 12 foundations, with streets paved with gold!

When the Bridegroom comes, every saint will have a new song to sing!

When the Bridegroom comes it will be too:

TREMENDOUS to talk about; THRILLING to think about

DELIGHTFUL to dream about; SATISFYING to sing about

PRACTICAL to preach about; GLORIFYING to gloat about

Here comes the Bride will be a triumphant shout, but the best is yet to come!

I don't know about you but the best part of the ceremony will be when we, the Bride of Christ get to see Jesus, face to face!

I want to see Him. See Him face to face!

Tell him about my journey, trying to run this race!

Jesus, the Bridegroom of the church!

Jesus, the lover of my soul!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary! Jesus, who arose from the dead!

I want to be there when the bridegroom comes!

No. 9561-Inspiration

I saw Satan fall from Heaven

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 5, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10:17-18

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you succeeded at something despite the odds? How did you feel? We've watched competitions of various kinds and cheered for those who seemed to succeed despite the odds against them. In the Olympics we saw many such stories, such as the struggling story of young Gabby Douglas who fought the odds and naysayers to become an Olympic Champion or the success of thousands of people around the nation who excelled despite what the critics, analysts and naysayers thought.It's a really exciting when the devil sets out to destroy your dream and you defy him on every hand.We are often attracted to the underdogs! These are the people who are not given any chance at success, but their do it anyway. The pages of History are filled with underdogs who beat the odds. Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordon, Barack Obama, Wilma Rudolph, Booker T. Washington and Condoleezza Rice are just a few who seemed to defy the skeptics and achieve success in their various fields, despite the odds. It's as if the world threw every possible obstacle in their way but they succeeded anyway.

When we read the bible, it appears that the underdogs have usually tried to be on God's side of life. David was an underdog. Samson was one man against thousands. Gideon only had 300 men and the chances of Esther becoming queen of Persia and saving her people were a million to one. Under dogs have often chosen God's side and God has rewarded them.

Even in our own lives we have experienced many moments when we defied the odds. We landed the job they said we couldn't get. We received the honor that seemed beyond our reach. We gained entry into programs that were thought impossible. We won awards no one thought possible. Those were "Wow" moments. We were so excited because we achieved what everyone said could not be done.

Today, many of us can count the weapons that have been used against us in our

journey. Some have been verbally attacked by family members, criticized by co-workers, demonized by enemies and fallen victim to numerous plots and tricks; yet somehow we seem to always escape destruction and succeed much to the anger of our enemies. Whether we know it or not God often places a protective shield around believers who are attempting to live according to His law.

The Olympics and other contests inspire us because we see people like ourselves rise to the top as a result of their hard work and faith in themselves. We listen to their stories and we are inspired to achieve ourselves.

The same holds true of those who work to build the kingdom of God. There are many who trying against all odds to build Christian homes and lead Christian lives. In our smallest efforts, evil seems to stalk us in an attempt to prevent us from achieving what the Lord desires. However, we are not alone. God sends us into the world as sheep among wolves, but he gives us His promise never to leave us alone. This does not mean that believers are invulnerable to attack but it does mean that the agents of Satan who attack the children of God usually find that their efforts do not achieve the desired result. They do not prosper. They do not succeed. Despite the weapons in Satan's arsenal no a single one of them will prosper against us as long as we stay in the will of God.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that while Satan may often frustrate us he will not succeed in thwarting the will of God. We know that if we remain faithful, the day will come when we will see all of the efforts of the devil to defeat his people fall like lightening from the sky. We know we will be victorious if we remain in the will of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on the excitement of 70 disciples who reported great success in their godly mission despite the devil's presence.

Jesus had twelve disciples in his inner circle. This text notes that he also selected 70 others and commissioned them to go into the surrounding towns and bring the good news of the kingdom to all who would hear. Their job was to serve as advance men to prepare the cities for his coming. They were told not to be concerned about money or how they would live because God would provide. They were also told not to worry if they were not received, but to shake off the dust off their shoes on any town that rejected them.

When the 70 returned they came back with glowing reports of success despite the odds. The scripture does not detail the success, but notes that it appeared that even the forces of Satan himself could not prevent them from accomplishing their God.

Jesus heard their reports and said, "I saw Satan like lightning, fall from heaven." For the 70 it was an inspirational phrase, but for Jesus it was a statement of historical fact. In Isaiah 14 there is an account of Lucifer, the devil, falling from heaven to the earth. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! Isaiah 14:12. Jesus quotes Isaiah as he describes the fall of the King of Babylon whose rise was like that of the day star in heaven and whose demise was like that of Satan's banishment from heaven. He didn't really

need to quote Isaiah because he was present when Lucifer fell and became known from that time forward as "Satan" or "Devil."

Lucifer was one of the archangels, yet he put himself before the will of God and even desired to become God himself. Isaiah 14:13-14 says, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." When he thrust himself against the sovereignty of God he caused his own fall; he fell like lightning from the sky.

Over the years many others fell, even though at the time they seemed invincible; Nebuchadnezzar, Ahab, Jezebel, Herod and even the glory that was Greece and the Grandeur of Rome, all fell like lightning from the sky.

For the 70 disciples Jesus' words were prophetic. It meant as they went forth to complete their mission in His name the forces of Satan would ultimately fall and despite the odds against them the kingdom of God would be victorious. This promise is not for undertaken for their own success to make a name for themselves, but those that are done "through thy name."

As believers we must accept certain truths:

SATAN IS REAL: There are many who doubt the presence of Satan in the world because they have never seen him with their eyes. We have not seen the wind either, but we know it exists because we see and feel its effects. In a similar sense, we have not seen Satan, but we have seen the effects of his presence. The bible notes his presence in more than one instance and he is referred to by a variety of names: Serpent: (Genesis 3:1) Lucifer: (Isaiah 14:12) Crooked Serpent: (Isaiah 27:1) Piercing Serpent: (Isaiah 27:1) Tempter: (John 8:44) Father of Lies: (John 8:44) Devil: (John 8:44) Murderer: (John 8:44) Prince of This World: (John 14:30) God of This World: (2 Cor. 4:4) Roaring Lion: (1 Peter 5:8) Great Dragon: (Rev. 12:9) Old Serpent: (Rev. 12:9). The fact that the bible gives so much attention to him, let's us know that Satan is real. Of course, we don't need a PhD to know when evil is at work. We've seen what happens when members of our families get possessed by the devil; they act in devilish and evil ways. We've seen the devil in our social order promoting evil, death and destruction.

Jeff Chacon in his book "Dare to Dream Again" says, Satan is your worst nightmare. He is more cunning than a serial killer, more dangerous than a terrorist, and more powerful than all the armies of the world, combined. He is sneaky, underhanded and covert. He is very good at what he does, in fact, he's the best. He's a killer, a liar and a thief - but most people never even know they've been taken by him. He's stolen your self-esteem, damaged your relationships, and crippled your walk with God. He's been in your house, in your car, in your bedroom, and in your heart. He fights dirty, hits below the belt, and doesn't play by the rules. He has one goal in life: to destroy you and everything you love and hold dear. And he won't stop - until he sees you burn in hell with him.

SATAN IS NO MATCH FOR GOD: Isaiah 14:13-14 notes that Satan was in heaven

but sought to compete with God. He learned that Satan is no match for God. Believers today have learned the same thing. Sometimes we are tempted to worry over the apparent success of evil, but Psalm 37:1-2; reminds to "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. " Satan is no match for God. A believer, empowered by the Holy Spirit is impossible for Satan to defeat. His best strategy is removed God out of a believer's life. If Satan remove his worship, his bible study, his service, his worship and his giving, then Satan can impact his living. Look at those who show the most evil and often you will find them very distant from those things that draw them closer to God. Anytime Satan has to face the God in you, he falls. Anytime he tries to speak to you, but all you hear is the word of God; he falls. Each time he tries to get you to join than world and you desire to do the will of God; he falls. Every time you feed the hungry; he falls; Every time you visit a hospital or a nursing home or give assistance to someone in trouble, he falls. Satan is no match for a man or woman who is anointed by the spirit because "No weapon formed against" such a person will prosper. Without a way to destroy us; He falls. We need to turn up the volume on our praise, service and giving. When do that, we drown out Satan and he falls, because he's no match for God.

WALK BY FAITH AND WATCH SATAN FALL: Believers who want to achieve what Satan says is impossible should walk by faith; then watch Satan fall. When the 70 disciples went forward they did so with power of God working within them. They did not know what they would face, but they were surprised at what happened when they let the power within work. Every believer has the power of God working on the inside. The power of God directs us when we can't find our way and this same power motivates us when we are slow to start and stimulates us when we need a little more just to keep going. Don't let Satan stand between you and your godly dream. What's wrong with dreaming big? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first woman president? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first scientist to find the cure for the common cold? What's wrong with dreaming being the best parent that the world has ever seen? A better preacher? A better musician? What wrong with dreaming of changing the world? One thing the power of God does for us is releases us to dream and then go forth and unleash the power of God! Work the power! Follow your dream! Satan wants to stop you, discourage you and slow you down, resist that temptation and go forth to change the world!

Victories to Shout About

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that those who go out in Jesus' name will have something to shout about when they return!

The seventy disciples went out in faith, not knowing what was ahead for them, but they were turned with something to shout about!

They were shouting because God had given them victory!

As they gave their reports their voices were filled with joy, that even Satan himself

could not stop children of God powered by the anointing of the Savior!

They were celebrating the joy of the Lord.

What is the joy of the Lord?

Those who live in the joy of the Lord are recipients of his goodness and are instruments of his compassion!

When you know the joy of the Lord, Satan may invade your home, but he won't steal your joy with the worries of the world because, "This joy I have the world didn't give and the world can't take it away!"

When you know the joy of the Lord, Satan may try to give you the blues, but the Love of God gives you a brand new song, "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

When you know the joy of the Lord you know the goodness of the Lord, you know what it means to say, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven when he tried to give me:

—BURDENS, but God turned them into blessings;
—CARES, but God turned them into comforts
—DEFEATS, but God turned them into delights;
—HEARTACHES, but God turned them into hallelujahs!
—PROBLEMS, but God turned them into praises
—SORROWS, but God turned them into songs;
—SADNESS, but God turned it into gladness

Every time I see Satan fall, I remember that David said, "Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

Every time I see Satan fall I understand what they songwriter meant when he wrote, Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill to secure our reward

He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven as He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9592-Membership Improvement

A Plumbline in the Hand of God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:" Amos 7:7-8

Introduction

Do you know what it means when something is out of plumb? The first time I heard that phrase was many years ago when a carpenter I knew looked at something I thought was well constructed and said, "It's a little out of plumb!" Those in the building profession or Brothers in the Masonic order are familiar with the phrase, but it refers to things being lined up properly so that buildings stand firm and do not collapse because of poor construction. Consider the world in which we live, are things a little out of plumb? Are the values of our nation lined up properly? It appears that the nation is growing further away from our founding principles of God, family and country. It is relaxing its guard against evil and has embraced ideas, trends and practices that have brought us shame and threaten to bring down the wrath of God upon us. This has frustrated believers in every sector, many who are shaking their heads in despair. Immorality is on the rise and the powerful have neglected the poor altogether. Many are struggling to make ends meet while balancing their family needs with those of the church. Crime is rising and our youth seemed more detached than ever from the Godly way.

Despite our frustration, the church should not be discouraged. The challenges we face are not insurmountable. God is still on the throne. He is still in control.

We, the faithful must continue to remind those who hear us that God is measuring us with a plumbline, but there is no reason for us to give up; we should strive to straighten up so we can measure up when He judges our witness in the land of the ungodly.

If the bible record holds true today then God's love and wrath is visited upon the

earth in a visible ways. When he is pleased the world enjoys rainbow experiences of fertile crops, mild winters, abundant foods. When he is angry there are floods, earthquakes, famines, and destruction in diverse places. Today, it feels that the world is a little off plumb in ways that have angered heaven. It could very well be that the raging fires in the west, hurricanes in the heartland and melting snow caps in the arctic are signs that we have measured and been found wanting.

There is a plumbline in the hand of God and the church must sound the alarm that God is not pleased, but all is not lost; He will show mercy to the faithful. We can rise to the occasion because we serve a God who has proven that He can make a way out of no-way, open doors that have been shut and lift fallen hopes and dreams.

Alone, the task of measuring up would be too much, but together with Christ we can do all things which strengthen us. Measured against God's plumbline we see the hurt that sin has brought into this world; we must respond, but we can't do it alone.

Alone, we cannot adequately speak to the poverty that exists in our neighborhoods, but together with Christ we can reach out to the poor in ways that are significant and meaningful.

Alone, we cannot provide food for the hungry masses of our neighborhoods, our church kitchens are not big enough; but we serve a savior who takes two little fishes and five loaves of bread and feeds thousands.

Alone, we can't curb the raging storm of violence that is sweeping our communities, but we serve a Savior who specializes in speaking to the wind and rain and commanding them to be still.

As Christians, we know that just as God has a plumbline in His hand, He also has mercy and forgiveness in His hand. With Him, we can become the foundation of hope in our communities. Our hope, built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, can inspire the dispirited around us, to know that help is on the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Amos as he foretells God's coming judgment against Israel.

In the first six chapters of this prophecy their indictment was spelled out. The people were guilty of legal injustice, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy, luxurious indulgence, and boastful complacency. All of these infractions of the moral law applied to the people as a nation even though there were many righteous people in every province who remained faithful and obedient to God. Because of these covenant violations "the LORD God Almighty," the great suzerain Warrior at the head of His armies, would crush His rebellious vassal.

This text shows God evaluating the people using a plumbline which is a contractor's tool to determine whether a building is constructed properly. In its simplest form, a plumb line is a piece of lead tied to the end of a string. When dangled the force of gravity will pull against the lead weight and form a straight line. Builders can determine whether the foundation of a building is perpendicular with respect to gravity, but they can also

determine whether the building is reaching out horizontally in ways that will form perfect right angles on each end. By using the image of a plumbline Amos told the people that they had been measured and have been determined to be out of line with the perfect will of God.

God's judgment would be brought upon the people for the reasons cited in the first six chapters. However, individuals who repented might yet be spared, but the nation as a whole was irrevocably doomed.

The Plumbline Challenge

The fact that there is a plumbline in the hand of God presents a challenge to the churches of America. Our challenge is to urge believers to atone for our lackadaisical attitudes and be about the business of building the kingdom.

Our men have been challenged: When judged by the plumbline of God's judgment, men are coming up short when it comes to kingdom building. Over the last 50 years we have witnessed the leadership of our local churches become female dominated. This is not a putdown of women who lead, it is however a reflection of the deteriorating condition in many of our churches. The sad fact is that there are not many men to choose from: In their absence women are stepping up to the plate and becoming program leaders, superintendents, deacons, trustees, ministers and even pastors. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does put an unnecessary burden on women who are acting in the absence of available men.

Male participation is being measured by the plumbline in God's hand. We can atone.

God's men should arise because when men come to God, the church changes.

When men come to God, the community changes.

When men come to God, the world changes.

When men throw out the net of salvation, they become fishers of men who can reach others on the behalf of Christ.

Our families have been challenged: When judged by the plumbline in God's hands the black family is proving to be a little out of plumb. Just as Amos sent the warning to Israel we too must send out the warning. The church has a responsibility to respond to the issues that plague Black families. It begins when the church translate its Sunday rhetoric into real action. In St. Louis in June 2007 Reverend R.B. Holmes, then president of the National Congress of Christian Education urged black churches to set goals for reducing by 25 percent the rate of black divorce, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, murder and HIV infection by 2012, and increasing the adoption of black foster children. He said it was time for black clergy to lead a movement, not unlike the fight for civil rights 40 years ago.

The Black family needs the church more than ever.

The church must challenge the culture and forces that have hurt the black family and community, including those who "demean, degrade and belittle our mothers and daughters. To do this the church must partner with others to provide senior citizen housing, charter schools, open mental health clinics, create opportunities for first-time

home-buyers, even open restaurants to train people for work and to provide business opportunities.

Such action puts the word of God into concrete forms that people can see and helps families survive and thrive.

When the family comes back to God its members will be in line with the will of God.

There is a plumbline in the hand of God, that demands every believing family to say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Individual believers are challenged: When judged by the plumbline in God's hand, even some individual members are coming up short. Too many believers are giving God half hearted service in the pulpit, choir, usher board, Sunday School and other ministries of the church. Yet, we are being challenged to give God our best.

This lack of attention to our personal service is best demonstrated by the story told by an old preacher by the name of J. Wallace Hampton.

It seems that there was a very wealthy man who owned a construction company who was fond of his foreman. He left on a long journey but entrusted the foreman with a large sum of money, a set of plans and instructions to spare no pains or expenses in building this fine luxury home. Whatever it cost in money or time was to be dedicated to this building.

The foreman was irritated at the amount of time that this project would take because some of the materials needed would have to be imported from other places. The foreman proceeded to build the house.

He used materials that were less than specification.

Molding, trimming and finishings were quickly thrown together.

Instead of imported gold he used imitations.

In many areas he used quick to attain inferior materials that helped him save time but was less than acceptable quality.

When the owner returned he looked at the house with great pride.

Without inspecting it, he called all of his workers together and presented the foreman with the keys to the house.

You have been so faithful to me, that I wanted to reward you with a house built solid, secure and lacking nothing. I give you the keys. The house you built is yours.

The foreman could have had a lavish mansion; instead he had a house made of shortcuts.

We should rise above mediocrity in our service and give God our best. He is holding a plumbline and measuring us.

Our work should edify the body of Christ. He never calls us to an insignificant or unimportant work; no matter what others think. It is always a great work. We must work with all of our ability and live out the spirit of the song that says, 'I'm going to work until my day is done. I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I going to work until my day is done."

Press Toward A True Goal

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should keep in mind that while God's plumbline brings judgment to the ungodly, it also brings a reward to those who measure up.

Just what does God require of any man? The prophet Micah answered this question in Micah 6:8 when he said, "What doeth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

God has a plumbline in his hand and he will be rewarding the righteous who run their race with patience and endures to the end.

John said, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

God has a plumbline in His hand ready to reward the man or woman who runs this race in pursuit of the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ.

God has a plumbline in His hand that assures us that if we press on and run this race, with our faith in tact, that God will give us the victory.

Like the old warriors, we too must declare, "I'm pressing on."

I'm pressing on because, I want to enter that land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul...a land where we'll never grow old."

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in the place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

I'm pressing on because, I want to see that day when the mountains shall be made low and the valleys will be hollowed out.

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

I'm pressing on because, I want to put on my robe and walk with the elders and see every inch of heaven from pillar to post.

I'm pressing on because, I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates made from solid pearls!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my Father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my Father's house!

There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9562-Inspiration

Living well with the Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 12, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "....I am GOD, your God, who teaches you how to live right and well. I show you what to do, where to go." Isaiah 48:17

Introduction

What is your idea of the good life? Each person has his own idea about what it means to live the good life. In the 1880's James Whitcomb Riley wrote a series of poems about the ideal life. He described it as a life that is humble, safe, care-free and filled with hope. Riley's poems depicted a life where dreams were created, promoted and supported; where the home is happy, problems are few and comforts are freely available even without riches. The life depicted in these poems became known as the "Life of Riley." Living the "Life of Riley" became a popular phrase for living the good life. There was even a popular 1950's television show about it called, "The Life of Riley." Pinning down the meaning of the good life is slippery, but living "The life of Riley" gets pretty close to definition used by many people.

Living the life of Riley for some means living a life where they are not required to do much, get more and are protected from loss by various means that may border on the illegal if necessary. Maintaining such a good life becomes their goal and consumes all of their energy, time and focus. It determines their friends, activities, politics and sometimes, even their religion.

For some, living the good life means to escape poverty and live a few levels above their present situation. That was the theme of the television series, "The Jefferson's." Its theme song defined the good life for many of the nation's poor,

Well we're movin on up,
To the east side.
To a deluxe apartment in the sky.
Movin on up,
To the east side.
We finally got a piece of the pie.

Even though the family only had an apartment, it was located in a prominent Neighborhood where "fish don't fry in the kitchen and beans don't burn on the grill."- George Jefferson and his family, were living the good life.

For others living the good life means "Living Large." A person who is living large splurges and is able to afford expensive and frequent vacations to the hot spots, expensive homes in exclusive neighborhoods, lavish parties, big cars, maids and servants.

Our picture of the good life usually doesn't include: Taxes, unemployment, sickness, divorce, law suits, layoffs, thefts, discrimination, plant closures, failing stocks, false imprisonment and disease. Neither does it include living daily with the threat of having our utilities disconnected, being evicted, visits to probation officers or having being investigated by child protection workers. Every picture we can image of the good life, excludes –problems!

In America, our ability to live "The Life of Riley" is often described by our class. Paul Fussell in his book "Class:A Guide through the American Status System" describes the constant struggle of America's poorest to live the life of its richest. Fussell notes that the super rich have no idea what it is to be very poor and the very poor don't have the faintest idea of what it means to be really rich. Fussell said only the very poor live in houses that can be seen from the street, near railroad tracks, with plastic on their furniture, pictures of the relatives on the walls and carpet on their floors. Only the middle class wears Brooks Brothers Suits, wears clothing with a designer's name written them, flies first class, or works in high paying jobs as professionals or business owners. The poor or the middle class, according to Fussell, can't even imagine living in the world of the super rich where no one works, drives their own car, has art on his wall that cost less than $1 million, flies in anything other than his own jet, watches weekly television programs or carries cash money in his pockets. These worlds, according to Fussell are far apart and those who try to move from one life to the other would become virtual "Beverly Hillbillies."- out of place and uncomfortable.

What does God have to say about all of this? What constitutes the good life for a believer? Obviously, living well has nothing to do with money. It's possible to live a bad life, one that is not pleasing to God, while living in the "Deluxe Apartment in the sky." Living well may have a lot do with living a life that pleases God and is according to his purpose. Sometimes that life comes attached with money, sometimes it does not; but no one lives well before God who lives outside of his will.

As believers, our goal in life is to not just to live well, but to live well before God. We want to do His will and to live our life's purpose. Then and only then can we say we are "living well."

Exposition

In this text the prophet Isaiah reminds Israel that God has been its teacher, leader, provider and protector; if they follow him He will show them how to live well.

Despite the fact that God brought Israel so far on its journey the nation often strayed

away from Him. They experienced many periods of trouble, war, and loss when they moved away from Him. In this text God, speaking through Isaiah, reminds them that He has been their life teacher throughout all times and that if they follow what He instructs they will live well.

The King James Version uses the phrase, "thy God which teacheth thee to profit." Many have taken that phrase and others like it to mean that God places an emphasis on making money, earning a profit and gaining physical prosperity. A closer look however, shows that the phrase actually means to "Live well" or to live profitably for His purpose.

God promised Israel not only to teach them the principles of living well, but that He would "lead thee by the way thou shouldest go." The Message paraphrase of this same text says, "....I am GOD, your God, who teaches you how to live right and well. I show you what to do, where to go."

The thought is clear: If God's people listen to Him and follow his direction He will, as Matthew Henry declares, "Open their eyes and direct their steps. By his grace He will lead us in the way duty and by his providence he will lead us in the way of deliverance.

To live well before God is to be obedient to Him. In verse 19, He notes that if the people had been obedient their lives would have been peaceful, happy, and productive like peaceful river, with joys rebounding frequently like the waves on a sea.

To live well before God is to love Him, praise Him and acknowledge Him. That's why the word says in Proverbs 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct thy paths."

The path to living large is obtaining money, but the path to truly living well is to live a life rooted in the word of God.

Guide to Living Well

God teaches us how to live well in a variety of ways, and he will show us if we allow him to direct us:

LET GOD LEAD YOU: Each day we should strive to let God lead us. Johnny Knight says there are four steps we need to take to let God lead us daily: 1) Pray over the day ahead and pray that God will lead you through it 2) Read a passage of scripture everyday and ask God to reveal how you should think during the day 3)Pay attention to what you feel most consistently as you pray, because that's the way God talks to you. 4)Give God a blank sheet of paper in your mind and tell him to fill the day's events and your respond with obedience." In Isaiah, God told Israel if the people would allow Him to instruct them, their joys would abound and they would live well. Even here we will live well if we let God lead us.

LIVING LARGE AND LIVING WELL ARE NOT THE SAME: Many focus on "living large" instead of focusing on living well. If our focus is on "living large" it means that are goal in everything we do is to make big money, swing big deals, and collect the Benjamins. There are many who are so focused on prosperity that when they read the

bible they are only interested in the things about seasons of prosperity. The only verses in the bible that they know are verses that seem to promise prosperity, such as, "My God shall supply all my needs." Our conversation and songs are about living large and contain lyrics about "enlarge my territory" or getting increase. Living well is not about how many "Benjamins" we can collect. Living well is not about quantity in life, but about quality of life. Not a single apostle died rich or even middle class, but they all lived well. Peter preached Jesus to the multitude and thousands came forth and sold their land and possessions and decided to live well than live large. Do what you do for the kingdom without thought of being paid; you are only paid once. If man pays you, God owes you nothing. Those who receive the Godly reward reap the benefits of truly living well.

THE FAITHFUL PROFIT EVEN FROM LOSSES: God told Israel that He would teach them how to profit from every situation. That was not a business plan or profitability model that was sure proof, but it was a promise that those who are faithful have learned that God has always kept. He has promised to insure that we will gain by every experience that we encounter, even those that appear to be a loss at the time. God says if we listen to Him he will alter the course of every situation we face and make it turn out to be for your good. Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Those who live well don't nut up over losses, even though we may be disappointed, because we know God's going to work that loss to our advantage. This is the way you feel when you someone with great insurance smashes your car and there are no injuries. You feel bad at the moment, but you know up their road you're going to feel much better, especially when the settlement check comes. Well there's good news for believers; God has you covered with a special insurance plan that will see to it that you benefit from every one of life's fender benders. Living well means having the assurance that Romans 4:11, offers to those who learn to be content. Paul said he'd been poor and he'd also enjoyed abundance, but it either situation he learned that he can live well, through Christ that strengthens Him.

It will be all right

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that living well before the Lord means keeping the faith that no matter what life brings God's got your back!

Israel tried living large under King Solomon who built the temple, a palace and enjoyed a thousand women, but he didn't live well.

Adam and Eve lived a life of luxury in the garden without need of anything, but didn't live well and were expelled from the garden.

King Belshazzar lived large drinking from the golden cups of the temple until he saw the handwriting on the wall, he lived large, but he didn't live well.

The Rich Young Ruler obeyed the commandments of Moses, but turned down heaven because it required it require him to give up living large and live well.

It's all right to have a little money in your pocket and a nice place to live, but that's not living well.

It's all right to have a closet full of clothes and shoes and color television in several rooms, but that's not living well.

We are living well only if are living in obedience to God's command and according to his purpose.

Somebody here has learned that living well means to live a life of faith.

It's a faith that proclaims that if I please God with my life, come what may, He will work it out.

Faith in God takes an ugly situation and makes it beautiful.

Faith in God finds strength in the middle of weakness; success in the midst of failure; peace in the midst of confusion; joy in the midst of sadness; comfort in the midst of loneliness.

In closing, I'm reminded of the true story of Horatio Spafford, who was a successful businessman who suffered extreme financial failure. His son died and the world seemed to topple around him. To take a rest he sent his wife and four children overseas on a boat to later join them. But the ship had a wreck and his four children died along with others. As he joined his grieving wife, Spafford read his bible and considered all that had happened to him and looked at the waters that had buried his children. His whole world had been destroyed, but yet he sat down and wrote these words, "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul!"

I don't know about you but I have learned how to say, "It is well!"

Storms may rise, but it is well!

Winds may blow, but it is well!

It is well because Jesus, my fortress in the storm is on board!

It is well because he died, and rose for my salvation!

It is well! It is well, with my soul!

No. 9564-Communion

An Expensive Free Meal

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 18, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, my cup runneth over." Psalm 23:5; And he took bread , and gave thanks , and brake it, and gave unto them , saying , This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me . Likewise also the cup after supper , saying , This cup is the new testament in my blood , which is shed for you. Luke 22:19-20

Introduction

What is the most you have ever paid for a single meal? $25, $50? What about $100? What we pay for meals often depends upon what's being ordered and where it is being served. There are many places in the world where a diner can sit at a beautifully decorated table and dine in an elaborate atmosphere, but that table and atmosphere are far from cheap; they dig deep in your pockets. There are many tables in fine restaurants that are reserved only for those who can really afford them. In fact, such places don't even have prices on the menus because those who sit at those tables are not concerned about price they are concerned about atmosphere and service.

Some meals at such places can be expensive:

At Fleur's Burgers in Las Vegas the famous Fleurburger sells for $5,000. It contains a Kobe beef patty with a cube of seared foie gras, shaved black truffles and truffle-spiked "special sauce" and all buttery brioche buns. And as a bonus, it comes with a bottle of 1990 Chateau Petrus wine.

The Restuarant in New York's Parker Meridian Hotel features a breakfast egg dish that contains six eggs, Lobster tail from Main and 10 grams of caviar. The cost of the breakfast dish without the orange juice is $1,000

While you are in New York you can walk a few blocks from the breakfast bar and go to a place called Serendipity 3. There you can purchase a Sundae. Not your regular Sundae, but one that features Madagascar vanilla beans flavored ice cream with cocoa chunks from the Venezualan coast. Toppings on your sundae will include candy from Paris-based Fauchon and a trio of infused caviars: passion fruit, orange, Armagnac served with 23K gold decorative leaves and a golden spoon. Price for your Sundae,

$1,000.

In Manhattan there is a place called Nino's Bellisimi that specializes in luxury pizzas. It features chunks of lobster tail, crème fraîche and four types of caviar. It costs $33 a bite or $1,000. If that's too rich for your blood there is a resort Hotel in Las Vegas that specializes in a $500 pot pie that contains yellow tail, crab and Bluee Fin tuna served in a custom made pot. For an extra $95 you can also get one scoop of white tuffle ice cream for dessert.

There is no guarantee that these expensive items will appeal to your taste or that the $1,000 pizza will taste any better than your $7.00 pepperoni delivered to your door, but there are some who think paying more for something always means that it is better. It may be exotic, different, tasty, but not necessarily better.

There are some who are the recipient of free meals courtesy of a friend who decides to provide a treat. The meal may have been free to you, but someone paid the price. In Psalm 23 David said, He prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. That meal has been served to us many times, but it was not free.

What if God charged us for the bounty we receive, how much would it cost? Could we afford it? Suppose we had to pay for blessings? What if heaven placed a price on answered prayer would there ever be specials or buy one get one free offers? Would we need a lay-a-way plan? The good news is that the table that God prepares before us every day is available to us without charge, but it does have a price, but the price has already been paid.

As believers, we are happy to know that the savior has made the bounties of heaven available to us without charge, including the opportunity for eternal life. It's free to us, but it was not cheap. Thankfully, Jesus paid it all.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Lord's last supper with his disciples.

When Jesus and his disciples met in the upper room, they thought they were meeting to keep the 1500 year tradition of celebrating the Passover. The traditional meal and its accompanying ceremony had been passed down through the generations since Moses.

Jews were told to prepare a memorial meal that was to commemorate their deliverance from slavery.

The meal was simple, but elaborate in its preparations.

In general, here is the procedure: Lambs were roasted on a wooden pit, with pomegranate wood so there would be no sap. No bone was allowed to be broken and the meat was not to come in contact with any foreign substance, if so that portion must be cut away. Unleavened cakes of bread were prepared along with bitter herbs and four cups of wine per person. The meal was not eaten until midnight.

The Passover meal in practical terms probably costs less than $50 for all 13 of the participants.

If it was only the Passover that was being celebrated the meal's cost could be

measured in dollars, but Jesus carried the Passover further. The meal was no longer to commemorate their exodus from slavery, but the bread was to represent his body and the wine would represent his blood, both of which will be given in sacrifice by Christ to insure salvation.

The fact that the elements on the table represented the body and blood of Christ placed a higher value on them than just $50, it was expensive because it required the life of the son of God. Yet, despite the cost, Jesus paid the price and offered Salvation to humankind free of charge.

Life's Tables

God sets many tables before us and many of them resemble tables set for other believers.

MIRACLE TABLES: When Jesus preached to 5,000 people there was no way to feed so many. That's when a boy with two fishes and five loaves presented them to the disciples; in Jesus' hands they fed everyone with food left over. It may not have been two fishes and five loaves, but we have all experienced the miracle of God's provision. We have seen him show us how to take a little and stretch it further than we ever imagined. Who would have thought that without food stamps or government assistance in any way that black families could have survived slavery, reconstruction, the depression, two world wars, and life threatening situations with the little that we owned. It's those miracle meals that great grandma prepared cooking stuff that was not supposed to be eaten and storing stuff in jars that would have gone to waste. It's those miracle meals in which she recreated something new out of old corn bread and left over turkey trimmings. God prepared a table before us in hard times and seemed to always have a way to keep food on our tables. Today, God is still showing us how to take a little and make it go further.

JOB'S TABLE: Job was a righteous man who lived according to God's will. Yet, there came a tie when Job's faith was tested and Satan was allowed to dabble in his life. One day while eating, Job received one piece of bad news after the other: His children had been killed, his cattle was stolen, and finally his health began to deteriorate. Job's plate that once overflowed with provision and opportunity, now seemed filled with misfortune. Yet, even then he declared, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him." There will come a time when each of us will be served something that is distasteful. No one likes death, sickness, hardship, frustration or difficulty, but it is served in every life. It comes with living. Job's plate shows us that even good people can suffer misfortune. The key is to remain faithful that God will change the menu. He did that for Job He will do it for us as well.

BELSHAZZAR'S TABLE: When Belshazzar conquered Jerusalem he ordered a great feast in celebration. To highlight his own power and to accentuate his arrogance he insisted on adorning his table with the golden vessels from the temple of God. These vessels were dedicated to the worship of the most high. As he sat at his table he saw the handwriting on the wall that warned him that his days were numbered. Even today,

many have been shown the handwriting on the wall, but they have ignored it. Some have chosen to live outside of God's will and are presently enjoying themselves, feasting on the best that this life has to offer, but the handwriting is on the wall. The table that is set before them, is a table of warning. Belshazzar met his fall that very night; for us the time may be approaching; the wise will atone.

WILDERNESS TABLE: While Israel wandered in the wilderness, God provided for their survival in a miraculous way: There was manna and quail meat for them each and every day; they didn't know how, but God always made it happen. God does the same today. He prepares a wilderness table for each of us. As we move through our wilderness journey, God takes care of the faithful. He opens doors that we cannot see and makes a way out of no way. Some of us have been blessed with opportunities beyond imagination and every day we get blessings we do not expect. We sing that song freely, "Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness, oh Lord unto me." In our wilderness experience, God provides all we need, proving that He is surely a "Way Maker."

An Affordable Table

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is one more table that has been set before us and that is the table of Salvation, it's an expensive table, but it comes without cost.

While it is true that the Passover meal may have served 13 for less than $50, that cannot be said of the Lord's Supper. This meal is the table of Salvation, it came with a high price, but Jesus paid it all.

The table of Salvation is different from the table set before Adam and Eve in the garden; it offered the knowledge of good and evil, but there was no salvation.

The table of Salvation is different from the table set before Isaac by his deceptive son Jacob; that table was filled with venison and lies, but there was no salvation.

The table of Salvation is different from the table set before the Three Hebrew Boys with all of the best food of the king's table, they refused that table because it was filled with fine meats, but there was no salvation.

On the table of Salvation is the bread of heaven. It's the same bread that Jesus promised would satisfy our hunger.

Since the table of salvation requires bread, the old warriors declared, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more."

On the table of Salvation is the blood of Jesus. It's the same blood that Jesus would shed for the remission of sin.

This the blood that the old warriors sang about when they said, "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing, but blood of Jesus"

There someone thinking that the table of Salvation is so high that it is beyond reach.

Though the table of Salvation is expensive, the price tag for entrance into the kingdom of heaven is absolutely free because Jesus paid it all.

Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow.
He paid it all, by picking up an old rugged cross and going to Calvary!
He paid it all, by dying for my sins and your sins!
He paid it all, when Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!
Salvation came at a great cost, but Jesus paid it all!

No. 9565-Grandparents

When an old man applied for a young man's job

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 9, 2012

SCRIPTURE: As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war both to go out , and to come in . Now therefore give me this mountain , whereof the LORD spake in that day ; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced : if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out , as the LORD said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Joshua 14:11-13

Introduction

How do you know when it's time to retire? In the work place the answer to that question is rather simple; the calender will give the answer. For many, retirement is dictated by time. After 20 years in the military many call it quits and retire with full benefits including the GI Bill guarantees and medical benefits. Many union based jobs say employees can retire after 25 years, 30 at the most. Some politicians can retire in 12 years, professional athletes in 10 years and some judges at age 75.

Even when they reach these magical thresholds there are millions who quit one job only to begin another. There are millions who work ten or twenty years beyond their official retirement. It's as if no one told them that they were expected to retire permanently. One reasons that it is difficult for retirees to completely exit the workforce is the escalating cost of living, which is forcing many to return to work. In addition, the market place has discovered that older, more mature workers are more reliable, extremely loyal, have fewer absentees and less expensive to maintain; there are often no pension expectations because older workers are already retired.

It is not unusual to find seniors flipping hamburgers at McDonald's or delivering orders at sonic (without the roller skates of course.) Neither is it unusual to see a 50 year old flight attendant or 65 year old crossing guards. John Glen and George H. W. Bush were skydiving well into their 80's and there are teachers still working everyday 20 years after they retired. According to the Christian Science Monitor, the largest employer of

seniors 55 years and above is Walmart. A full 22 percent of its 1.1 million employees in 2012 were seniors. Seniors are greeters, cashiers, stockers and managers. Employers like Walmart have discovered that it is good business to rehire those who retire.

While there are some that consult calendars to discover a retirement age there are others who have decided that they would rather wear out than rust away.

That applies to kingdom building, too. Seniors, most of whom are grandparents, are the backbone of most church operations. Many seniors work vigorously in the church doing everything from serving meals, operating computers, to preparing lessons. Just as the workplace has discovered seniors to be an invaluable asset, the church too knows that without the direction of and guidance of its senior membership the church, in many areas, would come to a screeching halt.

As Christians, we believe we must work until our day is done. We are not satisfied until we give our best and God is glorified. If any group understands this truth it is grandparents; men and women who have pledged to give of their best to God and family until their day is done.

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Exposition

This text considers 85 year old Caleb, asking for an inheritance that was considered tough, even for younger men.

Caleb was one of the two spies who had once encouraged Israel to move forward and take the Promised Land even though it was occupied by giant sized men. The spies reported to Moses that the land could be conquered but the people failed to move for 40 years. Now, 45 years later, at the age of 85, Caleb stood before Joshua as the spoils of the Promised Land were being divided and requested "this mountain."

His request for "this mountain" was unique because a man of his age, notoriety and respect could have asked for a much easier task and received it. He had his choice of any of the lands available. There were fertile farm lands, rich valleys and acres upon acres of land fed by a never ending network of rivers and streams.

With all of this available, Caleb chose, "This Mountain."

Caleb said he was as strong as he was 45 years ago, "as my strength was then, so it is now." While some think that Caleb referred to his physical ability, others have concluded that what made Caleb strong was his great faith in God. In verse 12 he expressed it again, "If the Lord be with me" as he told of his confidence that with God all things are possible.

Why would an 85 year old great grandfather choose to settle an area much more suited for a younger man? The mountain region he selected was important to his heritage.

This was the mountain upon which Abraham settled when he separated from Lot.

This is the mountain where Abraham purchased a plot and buried his wife Sarah.

This is the mountain that 10 spies reported 45 years earlier was too tough to tackle because it was occupied by giants, the sons of Anak.

Not only was this the mountain of Caleb's past, it would be the legacy for future

generations of his family.

This is the mountain where David would eventually live during the seven years that he ruled as King of Judah only.

The historical record reports that Caleb received the mountains and went on to conquer his inheritance, and defeated the mighty giants and their leaders. (Judges 1:20).

He was an old man, who demonstrated the strength of his faith in God in a way that would provide a history of faith to all of his grandchildren.

He was a grandfather of 85 years, but he had the strength of a young man in his heart. He applied that faith and set an example for all of his grandchildren who would follow for generations

Legacy of seniors

Seniors set an example for the young in many ways, all which were demonstrated by Caleb.

CONSISTENCY AND PERSEVERANCE PAYS: Caleb's optimistic spirit and drive was consistent throughout all of Israel's journeys. When Israel left Egypt he was just 40 years old, but he proved consistent in his determination to reach the promised land. There is something to be learned about consistency and dependability; it's something that many grandchildren learn from their grandparents. Consider the old man who applied for a job on the farm baling hay. When told that baling hay was a young man's job, the old timer looked at a strong young man carrying bales on his shoulder and told the farmer to let him work for a week. He promised to meet the quota of 50 bales a week. He said if he did not equal or better the work of the strongest man on the farm then he'd work for free. The farmer took the deal, thinking he'd surely get a free week's work out of the old timer. The young man was unaware of the old man's bet, but was amused that a man old enough to be his grandfather was taking on a job that was obviously for a younger man.

On the first day the young man lifted each bale on his shoulder and climbed a ladder and tossed it in the barn's loft; he completed 15 bales that day. Instead of lifting his bale the old man rolled his to the barn, hitched up a pulley and lifted the bale to the loft. It was slow work. At the end of the day he had only competed 10. On the second day the young man came to work late and finished 12 bales. the old man did 10. On the third day the young man was energetic. By noon he had bailed 8, but he knocked off early, to get ready for a party; the old man did 10. On the fourth day the young man reported sick and didn't show up; he had a hangover. The old man did 10. On the last day the young man showed up 30 minutes late and took a long lunch break, but not before completing 12 bales; the old man never missed a day, and baled 11 on the last day. At the end the week, the old man baled 51 bales and the stronger, younger man only baled 47. It continued that way for several weeks until eventually the young man was replaced by an older man whose experience had taught him that its better to do a good job every day than it is to do a great some days, but come up short at the end of the week.

FAITH DOES NOT DIMINISH WITH AGE: Caleb demonstrated that though his

body showed the obvious signs of aging, he still had the same faith and confidence he had 45 years earlier. He believed that God would make a way just as much at 85 as he did at age 40. He had experienced the hard wilderness journey and watched younger men fall. He saw how God fed and clothed Israel in miraculous ways. The fact that he aged made him more confident. He was just as bold at 85 as he was at 40. His experience in the wilderness strengthened him to the point that at age 85 he could say like many today, "Age ain't nothing but a number." instead of working against him his advancing years provided him with a wealth of experience.

A certain amount of wisdom often comes with the years. That's why a 16 year can drive a car, but can't own one or a person under 14 can't work without a permit. A high school freshman will find herself in a world of trouble when her parents find out about her college freshman boyfriend.

A young man can start a company and become a billionaire before he's 30, but he still can't be president of the United States before he's 35. You can go to prison at age 17, sign a contract when you are 18, but you are not fully grown until you are 21. At age 50 you have lived a half century but you are still too young to get a senior citizen's discount.

Obviously, age is more than just a number; there is something to be attibuted to the experience factor. Our grandparents have seen enough of life to give wise advice to their children and grandchildren.

Those gray hairs and wrinkled brows usually indicate that a person has graduated from the school of hard knots and may have some valuable advice to give.

Very few seniors want to fight the first person that calls them a name; they've learned that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt.

Very few grandparents will walk off the job without giving notice, because they've learned not to burn the bridge that brought them over.

Very few grandparents will squander food, accumulate large debts or live above their means because they have learned that a fool and his money are easily separated.

When it comes to faith, age is not a delimiter. On the other hand faith is intensified by the years. Those who who weathered the storms of life are assured that God will work it.

This is the faith that an aging grandmother brings to a wayward grandson when everyone else has given up on him.

This is the faith that a believing grandfather brings to a family crises that calms fears and reassures the anxious.

It is a faith that has grown stronger as the years have passed.

HISTORY AND LEGACY ARE GRANDPARENT'S ROLES: Caleb wanted the mountain region of Hebron because of its history.Important events in the family happened there, Sarah, revered as the matriarch of the 12 tribes was buried there. In addition, its legacy became the capital for David's first reign. That indicates two roles for grandparents in every family: Keepers of the family history and protectors of the family legacy. A part of a grandparent's task is to share his/her own life experiences with their grandchildren. They must provide the comparison and contrast of the

experiences of the family with those of their grandchildren in ways that are meaningful and important. They must know the names of the ancestors, their accomplishments and the mistakes. They must cherish that which is important to the family's history.

As grandparents tell the family stories, some grandchildren might be surprised to learn that granny and gramps, big mama, big papa and paw-paw, were once young. They were not born then suddenly became grandparents.

Like Caleb, grandparents must leave their grandchildren a legacy, an example, that points them to work, industry and and godliness.

It can be done by parents, but often parents are too young to teach what they have not fully learned themselves. There is no better instruction about life and its expectations than that which comes from someone who has walked the path.

No Retirement

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that serving the Lord has no retirement date.

Caleb began his walk of faith as a boy in Egypt. He was one of the 12 spies sent into report on the Promised Land at age 40. He took on the challenge of conquering Hebron at age 85. Yet, there is no record of his retirement or even his death. He simply served until the Lord called him home.

Today grandparents must do the same. Grandparents must bring to the family the ageless faith that never diminishes.

It must be a faith that is just as strong today as it was when they first believed.

It is a faith that no matter what problem comes in life, God will make a way.

It is a faith that no matter how hard the wind blows, that God can speak to the winds and waves!

It is a faith that no matter how dry the wilderness, that God can provide a way out of no way.

It is a faith that never grows old.

It is a faith believes in the goodness of the Lord.

It is the goodness of the Lord that transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness

It doesn't matter how old you are, you never get to old to know the joy of the Lord.

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor! The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The Joy of the Lord turns SADNESS into GLADNESS; WEAKNESS into strength; DEFEAT into victory!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that no matter what problems each day brings, it will be alright because God is still on the throne!

The old warriors must tell the young to never lose their sense of eagerness to serve in the kingdom.

The old warriors must tell the young to never lose their sense of enthusiasm and excitement about praising the Lord!

Telling the old story, is not a young man's job. It's not an old woman's job, but it's every believer's job.

We must tell them about Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Tell them about Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Tell them how He died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning.....

No. 9566-Communion

What a Fellowship

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, Louisiana

September 16, 2012

SCRIPTURE: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Introduction

Since accepting Christ have you grown in faith and fellowship with the saints? There are many believers who have accepted Christ and trust Him completely with their lives and eternal future, but they have very little connection with others who share the same experience.There is a sense of comradeship that develops between people who have a shared experience. We often see it among veterans of wars. In 2009, Romualdas Prenskas passed in 2009, he was veteran who served in the military in 1967-68, but his body remained in an Arkansas mortuary for three years because no one, even family, remembered his death or came forward to bury him. However, in July of 2012 a group of army veterans from across the nation, traveling on motorcycles gave him a military funeral and he was buried in a national cemetery as the law provides. One of the soldiers said, "As soldiers we go through a lot together and this relationship stays on for our whole life."

That's the sense of identification that also develops between storm victims. Many who have survived storms travel thousands of miles to help others. There are others such as cancer survivors or those who have overcome certain traumas that respond in similar ways. They have a special bond because they went through similar things together.

When we accept Christ we should grow in our faith, but we should also grow in our fellowship with other saints as we learn that they, like us, have shared a common life story; they have been forgiven for something and given a new chance.

Ours should be a happy fellowship of those who are surviving and thriving in life with God's help. Others who have been there, share that feeling and connect with others who are similarly situated. We bond when we fight the same battle, protect ourselves against the same enemy, overcome the same obstacles and share the same passions.

This is the fellowship that pushes us to go beyond just attending a worship event

and sitting on the same pew, but to share each other's burdens and victories.

Many have reached that level, but there are others who still have a ways to go. They feel no connection with other saints outside of their social circle.

The saint who has matured in the faith feels a bond with every other saint and does whatever is necessary to contribute to the growth of others. A fully mature Christian gets joy out of invitations and opportunities to serve and fellowship with other Christians and will give time, energy and resources to improve the quality of the experience.

This connection with one another is described as a "communion" or bond between brothers and sisters in Christ that is celebrated and renewed each time they gather to celebrate the Lord's supper. It is a renewal of our faith in Christ and our commitment to each other at the same time.

As Christians, our goal is to be in communion with Christ through faith and with each other through renewed fellowship and friendship.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul writing to the Corinthians about the relationship that should exist between those who participate in the Lord's supper.

After the crucifixion of Christ the disciples continued to meet regularly to observe the Lord's supper as Christ commanded. The gatherings became a social event in which they brought not only the bread and wine that was to commemorate the death of Christ but other food stuffs as well. They became love feasts. Some had plenty, others had only a little and eating became the central point of the gathering.

Paul's letter emphasized the importance of the fellowship of the saints who remember the sacrifices of Christ. He used the word "communion" from the Greek word Koinonia which means friendship, fellowship and commonality.

Believers often used the two terms interchangeably: Lord's Supper and Communion, but Paul distinguished that the Lord's supper represents the body and blood of Christ, but there can be no communion unless there is a spirit of commonality, friendship and fellowship among the saints.

Essentials of Fellowship

There are three Essentials to Christian fellowship; all of which show us what it means to be in communion with God and man.

FELLOWSHIP IS BEST AMONG THOSE WHO ENDURE AND SACRIFICE: Paul explained that the Lord's supper is the symbol of the fellowship of those who have endured difficulty, struggle and sacrifice together. The supper marked a fellowship between those who had all been saved by the sacrifice of Calvary. In 1 Corinthians 19:16 he makes it clear that we all have the body of Christ in common. Wherever there are believers there are men and women who have been saved from lost lives and given new chances. These are the once hopeless and the helpless who

have one thing in common; we have been saved by the blood of Christ. For the saved the Lord's supper is more than the mere sharing of bread, but it is renewal of a pledge of loyalty to the body of Christ. It started as a full meal, but soon lost its meaning as some believers lost focus on the sacrifice and focused more on eating. Today, the portions are small so that we focus on the sacrifice and the fellowship rather than the meal itself. Among friends, the Lord's table means much more than crackers and wine; it marks the day and the way that God gave us another chance, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

FELLOWSHIP IS TO SHARE WITH OTHERS: The New Testament teaches that there can be no real fellowship among believers unless we are willing to share with other believers. In his writings about sharing Paul used the word Koinonia to describe sharing among believers. He believed that those who had received the word should share it with others. In Galatians 6:6 Believers were urged to "communicate" or teach what they have learned about the word of God to others. Paul actually used the word Koinonia in some translations to describe financial support to those in need. That's why He collected contributions from one congregation to help other congregations in need. Even today, there can be no real fellowship among believers if we are not willing to share with those who are in need. To claim fellowship with a brother or sister in the faith we must share his/her pain and loss and help to restore their strength. The old song said it clearly, "If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain."

THE FELLOWSHIP EXTENDS TO ALL: When Paul spoke of fellowship it was not restrictive to one class, race or culture. The bond of Christian love extends beyond any boundaries that are created by man-man differences that separate and divide. For Paul, the fellowship of the faithful was inclusive of everyone. In Galatians 2:9 Paul showed how the pillars of the church had accepted he and Barnabas and commissioned him to reach out to people of all races. In the next verse Galatians 2:10 he was told not to forget to extend the hand of fellowship to the poor. Koinonia for Paul meant to share the grace of God without regard to meaningless barriers. Even today, the fellowship of Christ cannot be restricted to one race, one culture or even one gender. The communion of Christ does not discriminate. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Yet, today many Christians remain clannish with our fellowship. We open our arms to those in our class and reject others even while we are praising the savior for extending His grace to wretches like ourselves. Yet, there can be no communion if it's only a communion among men. There can be no common if it is race specific. There can be no real fellowship if it excludes the less fortunate. The sweet communion of the Holy Spirit binds us all.

The cross is common to all

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that regardless of our experiences, there is one thing that is common to all believers everywhere, the cross of Jesus Christ.

Mathematicians tell us that if there are several fractions that one way to turn them

into whole numbers is to look for something called the least common denominator. Among the thousands of Christian believers what whole entity divides all of the denominators equally. What one thing do they all have in common?

When we ferret out the distinctions between us we learn very quickly that despite our difference there is one common denominator between all Christians, it is the cross.

The Baptist believer doesn't have a bishop or a pope, like the Catholic believer, but the common denominator between the two is the cross.

The Jehovah's witness may not celebrate birthdays and the Mormons may have an additional Testament in their bible, but the common denominator between us all is the cross.

The Assembly of God and full Gospels may worship in tongues and the Primitive Baptists may wash feet, but the one common denominator between us all is the cross.

The Presbyterian may worship with formality and the Church and God in Christ may dance the holy dance, but the one common denominator between us all is the cross.

The store front church may have 10 members meeting in back room and the Mega Church may have thousands, but the one common denominator between us all is the cross.

A white congregation may gather in the North side, an Asian congregation may bow on the Southside, Vietnamese believers may huddle on the East side and blacks on the West side, but the one common denominator between us all is the cross.

The cross stands as the symbol of our hope in Christ.

When all of our rituals, structures and debates about who is right and who is wrong are ended the cross stands central, not debatable and is undeniable proof of the love of God for His people.

When every symbol that man makes crumble to the dust, rising like a Phoenix from the rubble with the hopes of every believer clinging to it is the cross of Jesus!

When the sun is hidden from view and soot and clouds form a blanket around us, the cross of Jesus beams through the darkness and brings hope!

The cross stands because it is a symbol of:

-Strength in the midst of weakness; victory in the midst of defeat

-Comfort in the midst of despair; hope in the midst of hopelessness!

No wonder the song writer declared, at the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

Over 2000 years ago, on an old rugged cross Christ died for our sins

But Early Sunday morning the tragedy of the cross was turned into a victory!

Those who have been saved by the power of the blood and the cross, who have come through the storm sing with new meaning, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms! What a blessedness what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms!"

No. 9567-Inspiration

When Hell Hounds pull you to pieces

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.
September 23, 2012

SCRIPTURE:"And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. Acts 23:10-11.

Introduction

Have you ever had so many problems that they seemed to tear you apart? It's those times when everything that can go wrong does. Things break, a check bounces, car won't start, air conditioning goes out, blood pressure goes up, money goes down, truck is out of gas, credit card won't work, milk spoiled, biscuits burned, cable out, toilet overflows, hot water tank bursts, student loan didn't come in, got fired, got a ticket, rent due, car repossessed, husband cheating, wife creeping, children acting up in school, neighbors hating and the dog ate up your favorite shoes. — When it happens it really gets on our last nerve and when it happens one after another it is something that makes you want to scream!

When it seems like an evil presence is just following you around everyday bringing one type of misfortune or another, that's when you start to think about Hell Hounds. In mythology a hellhound is a supernatural dog that hunts down souls. Different cultures have a variety of references to hell hounds. Some have them guarding cemeteries, others have them chasing down the souls of the lost. They are said to have sharp teeth and are vicious with supernatural powers to tear their victims apart. Hell Hounds are not real of course, but when conditions begin to tear us apart we think about hell hounds.

In the 1930's the term "hell hounds" became a part of the African-American folklore when the famous Mississippi Bluesman Robert Johnson recorded a hit song entitled, "Hell Hounds on my trail." Earlier Sylvester Weaver had written, the lyrics "Hellhounds start to chase me man, I was a running fool, my ankles caught on fire, couldn't keep my puppies cool." As the years passed "hellhounds" began to refer

to trouble, evil, difficulties, or storms, in the common vernacular. Whenever the hellhounds chase someone it means that trouble or enemies are always close by.

We are familiar with hell hounds, especially if it means trouble and difficulties. These are the times when we feel just like Job. As soon as we seem to get a grip on one problem another occurs. They happen so rapidly that we find ourselves saying, "If it ain't one thing it's another."

What do you do when the hell hounds tear you to pieces? What do you do when the storms keep coming? What do you do when trouble keeps knocking on your door day after day? That's when you remember Job who didn't do anything wrong to cause all of his problems, but felt frustrated because of all of the problems he faced. He concluded, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I trust him." The Apostle Paul was chased by enemies in every town he visited and was troubled by an ailment that he called a thorn in his flesh. God told him "My grace is sufficient."

The bible record shows that the hell hounds will track down and attack even the best believer. Our response should be the same as the men and women of faith we study in the word of God: we should be as cool as the Hebrew Boys in front of the fiery furnace and resolve that "our God is able to deliver us."

As Christians, when we are attacked by life's hell hounds, we should speak words of faith to our situation with confidence that God will step in at the right time and lift us from our misfortunate circumstance.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he appears before religious leaders and is almost killed by their angry response to preaching about Jesus.

The Apostle Paul made three missionary journeys to preach about Jesus. His greatest opposition usually came from the Jews who often sought to kill him because of his views. This text records one such incident in which Paul stood before the religious leaders on trial for preaching about Jesus.

The panel that judged him was unanimous in their disdain for his preaching about Jesus, but they were divided among themselves on their beliefs. One group called Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, angels or any of the more spiritual aspects of the faith. The other group, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, and an afterlife.

The differences between the two groups were deep. They were seriously divided. When Paul stood before them the only thing they agreed on is that Paul's preaching about Jesus was disruptive to traditional Jewish beliefs.

The Holy Spirit led Paul to admit before the group that he was a Pharisee and believed in the resurrection of the dead. Instantly, the Pharisees began to defend him and the Sadducees begin to attack the Pharisees instead of Paul.

The dispute became heated to the point that Paul himself was physically in danger. The Pharisees were willing to hug him to death and the Sadducees were willing to smother him to death just to spite the Pharisees. He was about to be torn to pieces as

one side showed spite for the other.

The captain of the guard removed Paul from the courtroom and kept him in the Tower of Antonio for safety, otherwise the hell hounds' dissent would have torn him to pieces.

That night, in his jail cell, the Lord appeared to Paul and reminded him that he would never stand alone. The hell hounds would not go away, but each time they growled He would be present. Even as God spoke to him the hell hounds were regrouping, 40 strong, who vowed neither to eat or drink until Paul was dead.

For years the hell hounds stayed on Paul's trail, but were never able to destroy him. God protected him until his mission on earth was finished; prompting Paul to write at the end "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course."

Hell Hounds

As we read of Paul standing before his accusers, we see how God moved to rescue him this time and so many times after. We should consider:

WHEN HELL HOUNDS CAUSE STORMS, GOD KNOWS: Even as the hell hounds howled Acts 23:11 says God told Paul to "be of good cheer." It sounded like an odd statement. Everything was going wrong. His enemies were plotting to destroy him, trouble followed him on every hand, but God told him to "be of good cheer." What does that mean? The attitude of a Christian when hell hounds are attacking is always a spirit of confidence that God will take care of the situation. The idea of being cheerful does not mean that we are happy about losses, troubles or problems, but it indicates an attitude. A cheerful attitude is one that looks on the bright side. The first bright side we should consider is that God is always aware of the storms these hell hounds are creating in our lives. If God is aware of it and permits it, then he has a purpose in mind. If the hell hounds continue to bark and the strong winds continue to blow and God permits it, he has a purpose in mind. Hellhounds, storms, droughts and other problems may come in many forms; the loss of a job. the sickness of a breadwinner, a family difficulty. a serious marital problem or a financial disaster. The bright side is that no matter what form the hell hounds take God knows. Secondly, if God knows about and permits it, then he has a purpose in mind that will work for my good in the long run. So when the hell hounds are barking and the storms of life are raging we should be confident that God will not allow anything person or thing to prevent us from achieving our purpose in life. When the hell hounds bark and the storms rage, hold the faith because God knows.

WHEN HELL HOUNDS GROWL, GOD STANDS BY HIS OWN: Acts 23:11 has five words that should be of importance to every believer, "the Lord stood by him." As Paul was being castigated by his accusers, "The Lord Stood by him." When he was jailed, attacked and persecuted, "the Lord stood by him." The Lord even gave him the words to say at precisely the right moment that would confuse his enemies. These five words should inspire confidence in every believer who is confronting hell hounds. If we are trying to live the godly life and have submitted ourselves to the

will of God, God will stand by us when the hell hounds create storms in our lives. The fact God can and will stand by us should be an encouragement. If God stands by us, no weapon formed against us shall prosper. Weapons will be formed, but they shall not succeed. Bills won't be able to break you, persecution won't drown you, malicious talk won't bury you because God stands by his own. When the hell hounds growl, speak words of faith and confidence to yourself and remember that as long as God stands by you, you can weather any storm. Never forget that we serve a God who can muzzle hell hounds and speak to the winds and they will obey his will. That's why the old warriors sang, "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me. When the hosts of hell assail and my health begins to fail, though who never lost a battle stand by me."

WHEN WE CAN'T SEE THE HELL HOUNDS, GOD DOES: Acts 23:10 has a phrase that brings a word of hope, " should have been pulled in pieces of them.." The Lord moved through the captain of God and gave him the insight to see what Paul himself or anyone else in the room did not see, that he would literally be pulled to pieces by the situation. Resultantly, Paul was removed to safety. That happens to believers on a daily basis; often we are not aware of it until after the fact. We see some hell hounds and hear them growl, but there are others even more vicious that we were not aware of that have never attacked us because God has protected us from unseen danger. Unseen danger is the worn tire-rod end on your car that was about the break, so you had a flat and while repairing it discovered the danger. There were 40 people plotting to kill Paul. He didn't even know it. God knew and was already on the case. If a list is prepared of all of the unseen dangers that God has saved us from this week, every believer would be shouting, "Hallelujah!" We HAVE SEEN what God has been doing for us. We celebrate his goodness because we have seen how much he has blessed us and how far he has brought us. God has been our rock in a weary land; our shelter in the time of storm; our way out of no way and our bridge over troubling waters. When hell hounds are planning and plotting, God is in control.

Heaven responds

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that when heaven responds when the hell hounds are on your trail.

In 1937 Robert Johnson got the blues when the hell hounds followed his trail, but today believers, there is no need for the blues because there is good news.. heaven is got a muzzle for the hell hounds on your trail.

When the hell hounds were on Paul's trail God stepped in.
He was imprisoned repeatedly, but God stepped in.
He was Flogged an uncounted number of times, but each time God stepped in.
Faced death over and over, but God stepped in.
Received 39 lashes from the Jews 5 times, but God stepped in.
Beaten with rods 3 times, but God stepped in.
Stoned one time, but God stepped in.
Shipwrecked 3 times, but God stepped in.

Spent a day and night in the sea, but God stepped in.

And was in continual danger from rivers, robbers, but God stepped in.

He was often hungry and thirsty, cold and naked, but God stepped in.

When the hell hounds get on your trail heaven gets busy because God hears and answers prayers.

The hell hounds are disturbing your peace and disrupting your sleep.

The hell hounds are interfering with the tranquility of your family life.

The hell hounds are trifling with your personal finances.

When the hell hounds are on your trail, be of good cheer, heaven is already responding. You can't see it now, but help is on the way!

The hell hounds could care less about the burdens we bear, but in the fullness of time God will send an answer that will let the world know that he cares.

The ambassador from heaven will be one that would say, "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest!

The hell hounds could care less about the tears you shed, but in the fullness of time somebody's coming from heaven to say, "And God shall wipe all tears away!"

The hell hounds could care less about your cares and wants, but in the fullness of somebody's coming from heaven who will remind us that, "the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want!"

Can't you hear the cry echo through hallways of in heaven, "the hell hounds are on my servant, I need somebody to step in and build a shield around them."

All the old warriors had their own hell hounds to deal with:

—David had blood on his hands, but I hear the voice saying, "I need somebody."

—Samson had a woman problem, but I hear the voice saying, "I need somebody."

—Hosea had a cheating wife, but I hear the voice saying, "I need somebody."

—Esau had a crooked brother who may cause him a problem, but I hear the voice saying, "I need somebody."

—Balaam had a pocket full of bribery money, but I hear the voice saying, "I need somebody."

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Send me and I'll tell them that blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Send me and I'll lift up their bowed down heads!

Send me and I'll remind them that weeping shall endure but a night, but joy comes in the morning!

Send me and I'll show their hell hounds the way back home!

He was born down in Bethlehem!

He healed the sick and raised the dead!"

He fed thousands and made the blind see!

And when the hell hounds were troubling the world the most, He picked up an old rugged cross and carried to Golgotha's hill!

They buried Him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

When your hell hounds are on the loose, call Jesus he’s got a short leash and long chain for every hell hound you can name!

No. 9568-Funeral

Life Ends, but Love Continues

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 29, 2012

SCRIPTURE: Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why at death some people grieve and some do not? Why is it that some feel a loss and others are unmoved? Why is it that the hearts of some ache and others feel no pain? When a loved one leaves this life we grieve the loss of the relationship, the support, affection and endearment that we have shared over the years. The longer and closer the relationship, the greater our loss. What draws most people to a memorial service such is one level of grief or another. The more lives we touch with friendship, affection, compassion and understanding the more who sense a loss when our lives end. What we are grieving today is the loss of a person who has loved and whom we loved.

To love one deeply is admirable and desirable, but the consequence of love is grief. The writer, Hilary Stanton Zunin observes that "The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief." Today, this family and these friends mourn the loss of a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, and a relative. Some are mourning the loss of a classmate or friend. There are some who are mourning not only their loss, but the family's loss because the family means much to them in many ways.

We are grieving today because we chose to love. The risk of love is loss and the price of loss is grief. The only way to avoid the agony and pain associated with loss is to never have known real love at all. The more we love and have been the object of love, the more we grieve. A hermit can detach himself from others and live alone. In the course of his life he touches no one, helps no one, befriends no one, cares for no one, loves no one. When he dies no one grieves his departure.

Yet, grief is lifted somewhat when we consider that while the life we memorialize has ended, the love that brought us together continues. The same love that drew us to a

bedside for months, through long hard nights in hospital rooms and a hospice home; that love didn't end the other day. All of the years of memories and good times, struggles, victories and defeats didn't end that day; the life among us has ceased, but the love continues.

That's the hope that our Lord brings each of us; that those who believe in Him may cease to live on this side of heaven, but the love they created will never die; it continues.

As Christians, we are saddened whenever a loved one goes to be with the Lord, but at the same time we are encouraged when we embrace the love that lingers after them and the hope of reunion that Christ has promised us on the other side.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he makes it known that love is the most essential ingredient in any relationship.

The 13th chapter of 1Corinthians is the second of three chapters in which Paul addressed the importance and use of spiritual gifts. In Chapter 12 he noted that each believer has special gifts, according to God's purpose. He warned believers not to become overly occupied with the quantity and type of gifts because all gifts come from God. In chapter 13 Paul notes that the most essential element to any believer is love. Without love, which is translated charity, the unique nature of a believer cannot reveal itself.

Love is demonstrated more than it is felt. It reflects itself in the words and deeds of an individual and is closely associated with actions.

Paul noted that all the gifts and important they are less important than love itself. Beginning at verse four Paul begins to describe the attributes of love that are demonstrated by actions and responses to the needs of others.

When we leave this life what is often remembered is our faith in God, our hope for our children and descendants and the love we have shown others.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

When the almighty removes us from this earth, the greatest thing we leave behind is the love we have shared and the lives we've touch; that love never ends.

What we leave behind

When a loved one is called home often family members will cling to certain keepsakes such as articles of clothing, a bible, a piece of jewelry, a pictures, and other memorabilia that are important. These items are not important in themselves, in fact they may have little or no meaning to others because the items bring to our memory the salient qualities of our loved one. When a life ends we should cling to that which remind us of their character and spirit, that's what continues. Paul said three things abide: Faith, Hope and Love.

FAITH IS REMEMBERED AND PASSED ON: A person is remembered for his/her

level of faith. That is important because there are many who have no faith or belief in God. People of faith know the importance of trusting God in times of indecision, weakness and distress. People of faith know what it means to trust that God will make a way out of no way and has the power to accomplish anything in His will. Faith is trusting in the unseen and relying on the power of God alone. Faith is also trusting that even if things don't go the way we want or prayers are not answered to our specifications that God is still ordering all things to our good. When a person is reared in a household of faith and has been surrounded by siblings and parents who have shown faith, living a life of faith is easier; it helps us to bear difficulties, sicknesses and hard times. Even when our journey here has ended those who speak our name, will recall our faith, especially in difficult time. When Paul wrote young Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:5 he said, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Faith is remembered by our children who often pass it on to our grandchildren, who will remember the legacy of faith we leave behind.

HOPES LEFT BEHIND ARE EMBRACED: We are remembered in part because of our hopes and dreams. These hopes and dreams are often embraced by those who love us and they are carried out in our names. Every mother knows the meaning of hope because she has hope that her children will grow strong, know the Lord and achieve their purpose in life. This is a hope that is rooted in our belief that every life has a divine purpose ordained by God himself. Like a farmer who ploughs a barren field in hope that one day a full harvest will come, every believer lives her/her life with a hope of providing an opportunity for those they love to live better, climb higher and come closer to achieving the goal that God has appointed for their lives. A believer's hope is based on our faith in God alone. That's why we like that old hymn that says, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand." When we leave this life we leave behind a few trinkets; some of them remind those who mourn for us of our hope for the future. As we embrace them we pledge to make our loved one's hope become our reality.

THE LOVE WE HAVE SHOWN IS REMEMBERED MOST: Paul said faith and hope linger, but what abides more than anything else is our legacy of love. To make sure we understand, he told us how love is demonstrated. Long after we have physically left this earth our ability to bear all things including the challenges of moving away from home, marriage, child rearing, career pursuits and accepting the good with the bad will be remembered.

We will be remembered for our ability to love the members of our family despite their flaws and short comings, seeing the good in that family member who got on everyone else's last nerve.

We will be remembered for our loyalty to our spouse and the fidelity of our union.

We will be remembered for sharing the burdens of sickness, poverty, and misfortune of those around us, even beyond our family, always looking for the best, expecting the best and encouraging them when others have abandoned them.

That's what Paul called real love. It's the kind of "Agape" love that is unconditional and universal. It is the kind of love that once shown to others makes them travel miles to sit at your bedside and hold your hand and race to the telephone to hear your voice one last time.

When we have loved in that way, those left behind grieve when we leave this life. Of all the things we leave behind, Paul suggests that "the greatest of these is love."

Jesus gave the example

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that Jesus gave the best example of what happens when life ends because when His life ended on this earth his love was resurrected and continued by those who loved Him.

For 33 years, Christ lived on this earth demonstrating love and compassion and inspiring hope.

We saw Him happy and laughing at the marriage celebration.

We saw Him lamenting the death of Lazarus.

We saw Him crying outside of Jerusalem and praying in the garden.

We saw Him healing the sick, raising the dead and feeding thousands.

His was a life of love.

The life before us was a life of love as well.

We saw her dancing and laughing with friends on the high school team.

We saw her happy and laughing at her own wedding and standing arm in arm at the wedding of her daughter.

We saw her grieving at the illness and death of family members.

We saw her showing love to friends and family that were ailing and hurting

We saw her praying in quiet moments, even in her last hours, we shared the whispered prayers together.

Those who live a life of love best are those who know the Lord the most. These are the ones whose lives seem to have

-A little more peace!

-A little more gratitude!

-A little more prayer!

-A little more compassion!

-A little more real Christian love!

Those who love the Lord really know how to sing, "Oh How I love Jesus.. because He first loved me."

Oh How I love Jesus because he gives me STRENGTH when I am feeling a little weak;

Oh, How I love Jesus because He gives me COMFORT when I am feeling all alone!

Oh, How I love Jesus because He gives me VICTORY when I have suffered defeat;

Oh, How I love Jesus because He give me HOPE when all hope is gone!

Oh, How I love Jesus because He LIFTED MY HEAD when it was bowed down low;

Oh, How I love Jesus because he gave me the spiritual SIGHT to see that He is preparing a place for me when this life of doctors and hospital rooms and hospice houses is over!

Oh, How I love Jesus because “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!”
On Calvary Jesus showed us love with nails in His hands and feet!
On Calvary Jesus showed us love with a crown of thorns on His head and spear in His side.
But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands.
His life on earth ended, but even now His love continues.

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On September 19, 2012 Jean Leonard Hawkins’ life as a daughter, wife, mother, sister and friend ended…but the love continues.

No. 9569-Revival

Chicken Wings

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, Louisiana

October 7, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37

Introduction

What's your favorite part of the chicken? Is it the drumstick or the short drum? Those who are from the country remember necks, backs and butts; that's when you cut up your own chicken instead of buying them from the store. For many, the favorite part of the chicken is the chicken wing and its subcomponent the Buffalo wing.

Our fascination with chicken wings has spawned an entire industry. No matter where you travel in the country you will probably find businesses selling chicken wings under one name or another: Wing Stop, Wings and Things, Hot Wing Paradise, House of Wings.

There is a pair of wing eateries that cater to Christians called " His Wings" and "Two Wings." Obviously, the nation hasa fascination with chicken wings: barbecue wings, hot and spicy wings, country fried wings, buffalo wings, baked wings and broasted wings.

We love chicken wings!

We love chicken wings even though they don't have much meat on them! We just love bathing them in a sauce and leaving a stack of bones. They don't even have a bone worth hanging on to. A breast will leave us with a wish bone. A leg will leave us with a drumstick, but all we get with a wing is little bones.

Science teachers try to tell us that the big bone we like to tear apart is the Humerous. When it is separated from the radius and Ulna we get Buffalo wings. They try to tell us about the metacarpal and finger bones that we usually leave on the plate, but we usually not listening. We're just thinking about the muscle we like to eat after it's bathed in a bowl of hot sauce with some ranch dip on the side.

We love chicken wings!

Those who have lived in the rural are familiar with chickens and baby chicks. Those

who are familiar with the little creatures know that there are some similarities between the nature of chicks and thoughtless people. There is also a similarity between the hens and protective parents.

In a way we are like little chicks in a barnyard. Jesus acts similar to a mother hen, too.

In fact, Jesus compared himself to a hen who tries to save her little chicks from destruction. He often lamented that the little chickens he came to save would not heed his call. It's almost as if he said, "I'm trying to keep you save, but you are determined to grow up and become a nugget."

As Christians, we rejoice at the knowledge that the savior is reaching out to us to place us under this protective care. With him we are safe from all hurt harm and danger. We are assured because we know that "beneath his wings of love abide" -God will take care of us all.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Christ as He considers the wayward ways of the people of Jerusalem and His love for them.

As the final days of His life approached Christ lamented over the people of Jerusalem. This text finds Him outside of the city, looking upon it and brooding over its tendency to act counter to what God wants. Just a few days earlier he had cried over Jerusalem and now He looks at them again.

His lament is prefaced with "Oh Jerusalem"; not the buildings, but the people. This was the city whose heart was so hard that its inhabitants stoned the very prophets of God.

Jesus said he would like the people of Jerusalem to be like humble chicks that respond to the gentle clucking of the mother hen and run to her for shelter and succor. This desire to gather in the lost to himself has always been an attribute of Christ's person. To gather the poor, disenfranchised and lonely to himself, much like a mother hen does her chicks.

The idea that there is shelter in God is what Christ wanted the people to know. It is the essence of Psalm 91:4 which says, "..He shall cover thee with his feathers."

Under His wing He would provide Shelter, comfort and healing if only the people would repent and heed His words.

Chicken Wings

There are many similarities between ourselves and little chicks especially when you consider that chickens are birds, but they can't really fly.

CHICKENS CAN'T FLY BECAUSE THEIR WINGS ARE TOO HEAVY. It's in their wings. Chicken wings are popular because there is lots of meat on those little bones, but that's one of the reasons that it can't fly. Most birds have hollow bones in their wings, but chicken bones are not hollow, the extra weight holds it back despite the fact that it has feathers. With considerable effort a chicken can flap its wings and come up off the ground a few, but soon comes back down. Aren't we children of the

king? Shouldn't we be soaring in the sky like eagles? Why aren't we? It could be that we are carrying a lot of extra weight that is holding us back. On good days when we are really at our best we can get a few feet off the ground and we seem like we are soaring, only to come back down. We spend our days scratching for worms, trying to climb the ladder of success and never really fly! No wonder Jesus would want to cuddle us and hold us close and show us the way to real joy in life which is not in the accumulation of things, status or power, but doing the will of God. As we wonder aimlessly we should hear Him say, "Oh Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem, How I often I would love to gather you to me and show you the way, but you would not." If we would just consider Him, how different our lives would be.

CHICKS CAN'T REGULATE THEIR OWN TEMPERATURE: A baby chick like a human baby is not able to regulate their body temperature well. A chick in the first days of life simply does not know how to keep itself warm or to cool down. Some think it doesn't even know. While it is feathering and maturing the mother hen takes the chicks under her wing and keeps that constant 95 degrees necessary to protect the chick from the elements. Soon the chicks in a coop will know how to huddle together close to heat to keep warm and how to keep cool, but until then, they are safe under the hen's wings. When Jesus compared us to chicks could it mean that we often have difficulty regulating ourselves, knowing what we should do, but finding ourselves unable to do right. Romans 7:18-19 (Msg) says, "I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway." Jesus knows our hearts and the struggle that we have within us and reaches out to us through the voices of our parents and friends. "Son, I'm trying to show you the way, why don't you let me help you? Daughter, you need to change your life, before it's too late, Why don't come and let me show you?" Oh Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem, How Often I would gather you to me and show you the way, but you would not!" He wants to take us under his wing, but many will not come.

CHICKENS WILL POOP IN THEIR OWN FOOD: Little chicks have to be cared for because in their excitement about life they don't pay attention and often poop in their own food. It's a strange thing, but you can throw chicken feed on the ground and a few vegetable bits to feed little chicks and they will step on them, stomp on them and even poop in their own food. Some feed chicks out of feeders to protect them from themselves. Is it possible that there are people in our families who trying to help us, but we step on them, curse them, fight them and disrespect them? Sometimes in our ignorance we poop in our own food when we bite the hand that feeds us. We have to be protected from ourselves because many of us have talked ourselves out of own homes because we tried to walk on good people who were trying to help us but we decided to trample them. Jesus sat on the side of a mountain and cried. John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept" because he already knew before hand that the people would betray him and spit on him, when all he wanted to do was save them. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, How often I would gather you to me and show you the way, but you would not." - If we but let him take us under his wing he can show us a better way.

CHICKS PECK EACH OTHER, BUT NOT UNDER THE WING: The mother hen

watches over her chicks in a way that only the observant person notices. Little chicks peck each other as they argue over food and position. Soon a dominant chick appears in the group and the "Pecking order" is established, the dominant chick gets his first and the others fall in line. However, under the hen's wings there is no pecking; they all are warmed the same. Even in our lives we are frustrated trying to find our places in the pecking order. Our lives our filled with winning and losing, getting ahead and falling behind, climbing up and falling down.

We are overly absorbed with the need to keep up with our neighbors and to have a designer purse, bigger car, a more expensive suit. We fight to be the president, captain, pastor, chairman, or top dog or the HNIC. The pecking order in Christ is established through your service to others and faith in Him. Under His wing there is no pecking, struggling and rivalries. He cries out to the world, even today, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, How often I would gather you to me and show you the way, but you would not." -If we would just follow him we would understand the way to peace on earth.

Under his wings

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when they are threatened, the little chicks run to the mother hen and are covered by her wings.

Jesus said, "Oh Jerusalem, how I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."

Anyone who has ever lived on a farm can tell you that you can get in some serious trouble if you try to mess with the little chicks when the hen's around.

When a mother hen is sitting on her eggs to incubate them, you have a problem if you try to mess with those eggs.

After the eggs hatch and the little chicks are on the ground, you have a problem if you try to tamper with them when the mother hen is around.

She's just a hen, but the barn yard dog knows to leave her alone if something is threatening her chicks.

A smart dog will keep his eye on the chicken wing, because it will start to raise up in the shoulder and flap a time a time or two!

To protect her young that mother hen will flap her wing, cackle, and peck anything that gets in the way.

I don't know about you but I'm glad to know that there is safety under the wings of God. Even though a hen is a chicken, she forgets she's a chicken when something starts to threaten her chicks.

The mother hen gets defensive when you threaten her chicks!

The mother hen is dangerous when the safety of her little ones is in peril!

The mother hen is protective when the little ones come to her for cover!

That's the way God is.

He offers shelter in a time of storm!

He is a rock in a weary land!

He is a bridge over troubling waters!

He is a strong deliverer in times of peril.

No wonder David said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Under the wings of God, storms may rise and winds may blow, but I’m safe in the arms of Jesus

Under the wings of God, the thunder my roll and I may feel waves breaking against my soul, but all is well because he promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the weasels!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the barking of the dogs!

Under the wings of God, we don’t worry about the coons!

That’s why the song writer said, “I’m leaning on the everlasting arms. Safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning on the everlasting arms!”

I’m safe in the arms of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who stayed in a grave three days and nights!.but Early Sunday morning, he arose in my soul!

I’m safe in the arms of Jesus!

No. 9570- Revival

Breaking The Sin Cycle

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 14, 2012

SCRIPTURE: 'Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.' Judges 2:18-19

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that many things in life happen in cycles? There seems to be a certain pattern about everything that is tied together by a cause and an effect. The longer a person lives the easier it becomes to spot the patterns and to project the cause and the effect of an action based on our historical knowledge.There are cycles in every sphere of life. In science there are cycles in physics, biology, and astronomy. In psychology there are cycles in our emotions, brain activity, and various behaviors. In history there are cycles in wars and politics there are cycles. In economics there are cycles that determine business success, personal wealth and national security.

Even the human body has cycles called "chronobiology" or biorhythms or "biological clocks;" we see evidence of cycles everywhere.

We see evidence of cycles in nearly every aspect of life. If you look at the rings around trees they will give evidence of cycles. Strange things are determined by the cycles of the moon that cause the tides to rise and babies to be born and nearly anything that flows seems to flow faster.

There are geological cycles that determine earthquakes, volcanoes, and sediment deposits.

The solar system has cycles in the planet's path around the sun and how the planets rotate on their own day and night.

Even the seasons have a cycle. If there is a spring there will be a summer, a fall and definitely a winter. Everything seems to come in cycles.

This idea of cycles is referred to in the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon said there is

a time for everything under the sun. That means everything follows a pattern or some type of cycle.

If we study the biblical sin cycle we can understand what causes sin and what can lead to our salvation.

As Christians, we have observed that God blesses us regularly, but the blessings are routinely interrupted by cycles of sin. Our desire should be to learn how to atone for our weaknesses and once again enjoy the salvation of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on the seven cycles of sin and punishment that Israel inflicted upon themselves after the death of Joshua.

Joshua carried on the traditions and teachings of Moses for a generation. At the age of 110, Joshua died having successfully brought Israel into the Promised Land. However, once in the Promised Land their actions changed tremendously. They began to assimilate the habits and practices of the Canaanites and sin in the sight of God

The book of Judges records the sad record of a generation of once God fearing people who went through a series of cycles of faith followed by apostasy and righteousness followed by ungodliness. It was a vicious cycle of sin, bondage, repentance, devotion, followed by sin and bondage again. Israel would follow the Lord when there was a leader who reminded them of the ways in which they should walk, but with his death they again wandered off following other gods and their own desires. God would then allow an enemy of Israel to conquer the people so that, through desperation (unfortunately) they would again look to Him.

The cycle begins in chapter three. Israel sins and God allows Mesopotamia to put them in bondage for eight years. The people cried out and God sent Othniel to lead them out and they enjoyed 40 years of peace.

The people sinned again and God used the Moabites (Ch 3) to make their lives miserable for 18 years. The people cried out and God sent Ehud to lead them out and they enjoyed 80 years of peace.

The people sinned again and God used the Canaanites (Ch 4) to punish them for 20 years. The people cried out and God sent Deborah to lead them out and they enjoyed 40 years of peace.

The people sinned again and God used Midian (Ch 6) to punish them for seven years. The people cried out and God sent Gideon to lead them out and they enjoyed 40 years of peace.

The people sinned again and God used the Ammonites (Ch 10) to punish them for 18 years. The people cried out and God used Jephthah to lead them out and they enjoyed six years of peace.

The people sinned again and God used the Philistines (Ch 13) to punish them for 40 years. The people cried out and God sent Samson to bring them out and they had 20 years of peace.

It was a recurring cycle that repeated itself only when Israel stepped outside of the

will of God.

It showed how God operated on the life cycle of a nation, but it indicates how God operates in the spiritual life cycle of every believer.

The Cycle

The book of Judges has great meaning to believers especially if we substitute the word "Israel" for our own names. Then we can see that there is a cycle of faith and faithlessness in our own lives that triggers unique events and circumstances each time we step outside of the word God. Here is the cycle:

BLESSINGS: There is first a season of blessing, peace and happiness that we all enjoy. The word of God has promised believers extended seasons of relative peace and happiness if we abide in His will. The promise began in Deuteronomy 7: 12 -Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. Even in the New Testament the promise is continued in text such as Luke 11:28 that says, " But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." The conclusion is that peace and happiness follows obedience to God's commands and living inside His will.

DISOBEDIENCE: When we step outside of the will of God we disrupt the era of peace and happiness. For Israel it was often 40 years as a nation. Many of us enjoy as many as five years of unbroken peace and happiness and then somehow we step outside of the will of God. This disobedience may take the form of obvious sins such as adultery or theft or murder. Often it takes more subtle forms such as taking your life in a different direction than God intended. Jonah, for example stepped outside of the will of God and refused to go where God told him; he went in the opposite direction. While he did not commit any obvious sin, he stepped outside of God's will and the sin cycle began. Likewise, we trigger the sin cycle when we take our lives in a direction that is outside of God's will. When the sin cycle begins it draws the wrath of God. Ephesians 5:6 says, Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

DISCIPLINE: Once we step outside of the will of God it triggers the next spiritual phase, which is discipline. It begins like the agitator in a washing machine; peace is disturbed and the world begins to pull at us, twisting us left and right. In Israel's case God let their enemies have fun with them, their haters increased, they were constantly troubled for years, even decades. It happens to us similarly. Why? God disciplines us because He loves us and wants to bring us back into His will. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For

whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." We cannot return to our period of blessing by abruptly yelling, "I'm not going to do it anymore" no more than we can stop the cycle on a washing machine and start it over in mid cycle. To return to blessings and peace we must take the next step.

CONFESS OUR SINS: When we have felt the sting of God's discipline long enough, there are some who reach a point when they say to themselves. "I've got to make a change." "I can't keep going in this direction." This is the point in the cycle that we accept responsibility for our mistakes and confess them to God. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Our confession triggers another process, similar to a wash cycle, He drains out all of the dirt and grime out of our lives and begins a spin cycle or movement toward godliness. We are not ready to get back to blessings yet because even though the dirty wash water has been drained, some of the world is still in us. However, our confession triggers the next process.

REPENTANCE: When we repent we go further than just confessing. When we repent we look back over our mistakes and conclude that we are "sorry" for our mistakes and sorry that we disappointed and disobeyed God. When we repent we close the door on those actions and resolve not to return. To get back to peace and blessings in our lives requires us to complete the cycle. The result of repentance is repeated throughout the bible, but is best reflected in 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." The New Testament says the same truth in a different way in Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. – Those who repent say, to God "Wash me, whiter than snow!" Wash me in the blood of the Lamb!

Deliverance

Finally, Brothers and sisters, the good news is that just as we can begin the cycle of sin, we can end the cycle of sin. We can get back to the peace and the joy of the Lord.

After we have been disobedient and stepped outside of the will of God..

After we have been disciplined by the hand of God..

After we have confessed our sins before the throne of God…

After we have repented and turned from our wicked ways..

The deliverance comes.

If you want to know how it works, just watch your washing machine! After it has washed the dirt from your clothes and drained away the dirt and grime..it's not over because there is still a little dirt left.

You used Tide and Cheer, but there is still a little dirt left.

You used Clorox and Purex, but there is still a little dirt left because it was in the wash water itself.

Somebody here can testify that after you have been through the discipline and have

confessed, there still a little dirt left.
After we have started going to church and singing church songs, there still a little dirt left that makes you want to sing a little Hip Hop and the blues.

After we have started taking the Lord's supper, there is still a little taste for a Johnny Walker Red.

There is still a little dog in us that makes us want to chase the cat!
There is still a little taste in us that makes us continue to look for Mr. Goodbar!
But keep your eye on the last cycle of that washing machine. It will sit still for a while, but then the tub begins to fill with something that has no Purex or Clorox. It fills with something that has no Tide, Cheer or Oxydol.
It gets in all of the clothes that are stuck against the wall. Anything that is left by the wash is caught in the rinse.
When we truly repent we are washed in the blood of the lamb and filled with the Holy Ghost.

He gets in your hands! He gets in your feet!

The Holy Ghost picks you up and turns your around and puts you in a spin cycle! When He turns you loose you say, "I looked at my hands and I had brand new hands!

I looked at my feet and I had brand new feet!

I looked at my walk and I had a brand new walk!

A change has come into my life!

There is only one way to break the cycle of sin and that is to be washed in the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who stayed in the grave for three long days!

But, Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

What can wash away my sin? Nothing, but the blood of Jesus!

No. 9571-Anniversary, Church

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 21, 2012

***SCRIPTURE:** But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Matthew 13:16-17*

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to think about all that you have seen and experienced in your life? Over the years our eyes have seen scanned millions of sights, pictures, faces, land marks, documents and events. Our ears have heard the sounds of crickets, birds chirping, babies crying, crowds cheering, screams, yells. Our hearts have felt the full pendulum of joy and sadness, anger, love, excitement and disappointment. If we could climb to high place and paint the canopies of heaven with all that we have seen and heard, we could produce a masterpiece that would shame Davinci or Michelangelo.

One of the benefits of maturity is the ability to compare what it is now with what has been and project what can be. It's the ability to see a grandchild and see her mother's eyes her grandmother's smile and project what the woman of the future may be. It's the perspective of looking at the now through the prism of the past and getting an idea of the future.

That's what anniversaries do. Whether it's a wedding anniversary, birthday or a church celebration, it provides a moment to pause and reflect on what is now compared to what was then, with an eye toward what will be in the not so distant future. It's a chance to see the forest after being so busy looking at the trees.When we consider what our eyes have seen over the course of our journey, we are awed. From this mountaintop today, we look across the valley of time and survey the road we have traveled. We have seen wars and depressions. We have seen battles for civil rights and the deaths of the martyrs.

We have seen the towers tumble and watched as they rose again from the ashes

like the Phoenix. We have seen babies grow to world leaders and dreams become realities.

When we see the vastness of God's creation and how he molds and shapes events like putty in the palms of his hands. That views prompts us to share with the song writer who said, "Oh Lord, my God, as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands hath made. I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder. And marvel at the universe displayed. Then sings my soul my savior God to thee. How great thou art. How great thou art!"

The view from the mountaintop breathes hope for those who have perhaps concluded that it is all fruitless and non-productive.

As Christians, we thank God for anniversary moments that give us a chance to look back at the long journey and see from whence He has brought us. In this moment we also look to the future, to the great promise that lies ahead. Today, we celebrate because our eyes have seen the majesty of God's creation. We have seen the sick healed, the lost found and the wicked confused and confounded. What a mighty God we serve!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' response to a question by his disciples about his reason for using parables.

As a general rule, Jesus had two modes of conversation when among the scholars he quoted scripture because they had access to the Torah and the biblical writings. When He was among the common people he often spoken in parables to help them understand.

The parable of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and the wheat and the tares, were some of the more memorable of his stories.

His disciples began to notice this pattern and questioned Him about the reason. Jesus said in verse 13 that the people "see, but they don't see. Hear but don't really hear and don't understand anything." He quoted Isaiah 6:9-13 noting that the people often see and hear the glories of the Lord, but really don't see them.

The people did not see or understand what he taught about the Kingdom of God, they only saw the miracles. They did not understand about being saved from sin; they only saw the fish and the bread.

However, Christ said his disciples were believers. They saw more than just miracles. They saw more than just healings. They saw the glory of God moving in their midst, an eternal presence preparing them for a kingdom that would be everlasting. It was something that the ancients wanted to see, but did not. It was something that scholars search for but never found.

In this respect, Jesus said those who believe see more because they can see what others can not see. They see more than mere events, but in each they see the glory of the Lord being revealed.

We see and we hear

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Believers today are celebrating because we see more than a mere church anniversary. We see the hand of God at work. We see more than the litany of names and faces of the past recited for our hearing, we see God moving through them to achieve His purpose. More than others, we are celebrating because our eyes have seen the glory of the Lord.

WE SEE WHAT GOD HAS DONE: In our personal journeys we have seen how God has provided for us, often when we were too foolish to provide for ourselves. There are some who are like the Israelites in the wilderness who grumbled and complained that God had abandoned them in the desert of Zin. Their eyes could not see that God had been with them every step of the way. Can't you hear the old warriors saying, "Our eyes have seen God roll back the Red Sea?" We have seen how He fed more than a million people in the wilderness for 40 years. We have seen how He protected us from our enemies. We have seen how He brought to borders of the Promised Land." Even today, we have seen how God has provided for our families and this community over the years. We have seen storms tear the roofs from our houses and flood waters float away our memories. We have also watched as God restored and helped us rise again. We have seen the tears fall as we wept at gravesides of our loved ones and we have also seen how God restored us and strengthened us to go on. Today, the faithful celebrate because unlike Israel, we HAVE SEEN what God has been doing for us. We are celebrating because we have seen how much he has blessed us, and how far he has brought us.

We have seen how God has been our rock in a weary land.

We have seen how God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

We have seen how He has been our way out of no way.

Our eyes have seen the glory of the Lord!

WE SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING: Jesus told his disciples that many of the prophets and the righteous have desired to see the wonderful works that they saw in their lifetimes, but did not see them. He told them it was their desire to see the progress and hope that was unfolded in front of their eyes or to hear the words that they hear, but they were unable to hear them. In 2008 the eyes of millions around the world were filled with tears of joy at the election of an African-American President of the United States. They saw more than a single event; they saw the hand of God moving to bring us closer to the Promised. The striking picture of the Reverend Jesse Jackson watching that moment with his eyes filled with tears seemed to say, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord."

Today, our eyes are beholding the gradual unfolding of the millennial kingdom where there will be peace on earth. What we see today is not what it shall be, but it is a step toward what will be. The lines that divide the rich and the poor still exist, but our sensitivity has been heightened and that line is blurring. There are still whites who hate blacks, Democrats who hate all Republicans and Republicans who think little of all Democrats, but more than we have ever seen before, whites and blacks are working together, worshipping together and even putting aside partisan views for the common

good. We have seen the sons of former slave masters working along side the great grandsons of slaves to build Habitat homes, race for a cure for cancer, comfort the families of military bereaved, and sit down at the same table for the common good without burning crosses, Rebel Flags or clinched fists. It is not what it should be, but we have seen what our grandparents thought would never happen in a million years. In our life time, we are beginning to see the wisdom of judging men by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin.

Who gets the glory for these changes in our national character? Henry David Thoreau? Thomas Jefferson? Who first put this idea in print? Who gets the glory? Is it Martin Luther King who articulated these ideas in his lifetime? No, If it is God who gets the glory!

We have seen him trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored!

We have seen him transforming hearts and minds!

His truth is marching on!

WE SEE WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO: The bible reminds us that "Eyes have not seen, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things God has in store for those who trust Him." We don't know exactly what God has in store for us as believers, but we know it will be better than what we have now. The old warriors, whose legacy we celebrate here today had dreams for the future. They kept the faith because they had dreams of a better day.

Great grandma didn't know exactly what it would be, but as she scrubbed floors through the Great Depression and washed the dirty laundry of millionaires for pennies, she dreamed of a better day!

Aunt Betty did not know exactly what the future held, but sat on the back of the bus for years as her beautiful face became rubbery and dark and her cold black hair turned silver and grey, she dreamed of a better day.

Great grandpa didn't know exactly what it would be, but as he pushed a plow behind an old mule and bowed under the weight of cotton sacks on his back he could see in his mind's eye, a better day ahead. Our ancestors endured singing, "The Lord will make a way somehow."

On his last night on earth Dr. Martin Luther King told a crowd of frustrated followers, thirsty for a word of hope. "I may not get there with you, but I've been to the mountain top… mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord."

Every now and then God shows us a glimpse into the future He is preparing for the faithful of all races, creeds and colors.

Lift up your heads and behold the day when there will neither be first nor last, rich or poor, white or black, but only children of the most high God!

Lift up your heads and behold the day when we will beat our swords into plough shares, the lions will share space with the lambs and we will study war no more!

Lift up your heads and behold the day when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

Lift up your heads and cast your eyes on the day when justice shall run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

I know it is coming because, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord!

Blessed Eyes

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the very first phrase of this text, “Blessed are your eyes for they see” for what we see is none other than the hand of God.

I’m reminded of an old blind man who attended church every Sunday for 70 years and never missed a chance to shout Amen when the preacher described the beauties of heaven. He shouted “Amen” when the preacher said, “Ye shall see the golden streets!” He shouted when the man of God said, “Ye shall see the cloudless blue skies of the glory land!” He cried with joy as the word painted a picture for his darkened eyes, saying “Ye shall see the green grasses of peaceful valleys and the sparkling jewels of the twelve pearly gates.” On speaking meeting day the old man stood to tell his determination. He said, “Church I can’t see the beauty of a sunset, the glow of the moon at night or the smile on a baby’s face, but I want the church to know that I keep hearing the preacher talk about it and I’m on my way to the land of the “We shall see.”
Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be”
This place is in the land of the “Ye shall see!”
In the land of the ‘”We shall see God is preparing something for us that is:

—Better than good; richer than rich!

—Softer than soft; and sweeter than sweet!

In the land of “Ye shall see” the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

In the land of “Ye shall see” the crooked places will be made straight and the rough places will be made smooth.

In the land of “Ye shall see” you’ll have a new house, because Jesus said, “In my father’s house are many mansions!”

Don’t get too comfortable with your newly paved street of blacktop and asphalt, because in the land of “Ye shall see” the streets will be paved with gold!

Don’t get too comfortable with your digitized alarm clock that wakes you up every morning, because in the land of “Ye shall see” time shall be no!

Don’t get too comfortable with your new dress and shoes because in the land of “Ye shall see,” every saint will put a new robe and slippers.

In the Land of the “Ye shall see”

—Those who have fallen will stand on their feet.

—Those who have cried tears of pain, will dry their eyes, because God will wipe all of their tears away!

—Those who are lost will find their way to the throne!

I don’t know about you, but I’m on my way to the land of “Ye shall see”

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord!

Jesus, is preparing that place for us!

On his way to get everything ready He stopped by Bethlehem!

On his way to get everything ready He hung around Palestine for 33 years!
On his way to get everything ready He stopped by Calvary and died!
But early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!
Glory Hallelujah!
Glory Hallelujah!

No. 9572-Anniversary, Pastor

We remember your Labor of Love

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2012

SCRIPTURE: Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (2-10)

Introduction

How do you say thanks for someone who has shown you love? Over the years we have tried many methods to show our appreciation for acts of love that have been showered upon us. Some try to buy gifts but find it is difficult to buy gifts that express real love. Some try to write poems but find it difficult to find the right words. This search has spawned an entire industry that presents prewritten greetings cards with just the right words. Yet, even the best Hallmark card often comes up short when it tries to express the love we feel. Sometimes we try to do things like the little child that prepares breakfast for mom on Mother's Day or the husband who plays Mr. mom for a day to give his wife a day of appreciation.

We pause to show love because sometimes those who show us the most love become frustrated and believe they are wasting their time on fruitless and thankless efforts. It happens in nearly every walk of life. Teachers feel that way sometimes. They give their best energy and time to prepare lessons that seemed to go in one ear and come out the other. Parents feel that way, too. Those who work in the criminal justice system often see so many cases of misplaced values parading before them that they wonder whether there is an end to the revolving door that seems to have trapped some in an endless spiral. Those who help the poor, the elderly or the homeless reach the same point. In frustration, many good people often wonder whether they should continue their good work.

It is certain that pastors feel that way because they carry the load of the entire congregation on their backs. They show much love, but often that love does not come back; or so it seems. Some may wonder if anyone remembers the hundreds of hours spent counseling, helping assisting, listening and helping others.

That's why many search for ways to let those who preach the gospel know that we care and we remember. Andre Crouch asked the same questions in his song, "My Tribute." Crouch asked,

"How can I say thanks
for the things you have done for me?
Things so underserved,
yet you gave to prove your love for me;
the voices of a million angels
could not express my gratitude
all that I am and ever hope to be
I owe it all to thee.
To God is the glory!
To God be the glory!
For the things He has done!

As Christians, know the value a labor of love. That's why we thank both the laborer and the God we serve. Today, we remember one who has labored in love in faith and in hope. He has helped us to live this Christian life in a better. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he reminded the Christians in Thessalonica that he remembers their dedication to building the kingdom of God.

The believers in Thessalonica were zealous in the their kingdom building work. Paul was impressed with the sacrificial nature of their service. He characterized their ministry as a "labor of love." Labor of Love is phrase used to describe service that is given without thought of pay, that usually goes beyond normal expectations. Those who labor in love usually don't even consider their service a labor at all, but an honor and a privilege.Paul used three terms to describe the nature of the Thessalonian service that details the three characteristics of a labor of love.

First, verse 9 notes that they had performed an important work produced by faith in Christ. They had turned to the true God from idols. Faith in Christ had produced true repentance.

Second, they performed labor prompted by love for Christ. This consisted of their serving the living and true God in the midst of persecution.

Third, they had endurance or the ability to bear up patiently under a heavy load" that inspired by hope in Christ.

These three are essential to any service that is characterized as a labor of love—faith, love, and hope.

The Thessalonians had exercised saving faith in Christ in the past when they had believed the gospel, they were loving Christ in the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future. Their lives were certainly focused on Jesus Christ.

The work of any believer who does the same can be described as a "Labor of love."

We labor because Christ labor

In the local church the pastor is representative of Christ among believers. He represents Christ, but he is not God. He represents Christ in the nature of his faith, hope and love. In that respect we should remember the pastor who labors in love:

HE LABORS IN THE WORD: The pastor labors in word. No believer can be saved if he/she does not know what the word of God says about life and salvation. People must hear the gospel. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" That is the natural part of the process. But that doesn't end it, because the Word of God is a supernatural book. Without the Holy Spirit the gospel is merely words. With the Holy Spirit it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. As we consider the labor of this pastor who has devoted countless hours to study and preparation of the word of God so that he can not only preach the gospel, but answer questions about God and life eternal. We hear the pastor on Sunday morning, but we don't see the hours of preparation. We don't see him in the early morning hours in study or late at night in prayer. This pastor labors in the Word so that he can bring us a message from heaven. We remember him to day for this labor of love.

HE LABORS TO BRING RESTORATION TO US: The believers in Thessalonica turned away from idols and turned to the true God. Those responsible for helping others to make that change had performed a labor of love. The pastor of the congregation labors to restore weak members to the full grace of God. He prays for the Holy Spirit to change lives. He labors on our behalf because he knows that the Grace of God can wipe the slate clean.

Isaiah 53 reminds us that he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities with his stripes we are healed.

Whenever we consider what we once were, we testify that, I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I'm going to be, but thank God, because of Jesus, I'm not what I was.

We praise the pastor today because he has labored with us to bring us back to the cross when we have strayed. We remember him today for this labor of love.

HE LABORS TO KEEP OUR HOPE ALIVE: When the Thessalonians were frustrated because of heavy loads, there were many among them who encouraged others and kept hope alive. Paul remembered their spirit of hope and ability to endure. In a similar sense, that is also a reason that we pause to remember the pastor today. There have been times when we were fatigued and frustrated and threw up our hands along the way, but he fanned the smoldering embers of our enthusiasm and kept our hope alive. He constantly reminds us that when we work for the Lord our work will never prove to be empty or void. He gives us a labor of love and inspires us to remember God's work is done every time we pray for another person; when we call someone on the phone or send a note of encouragement. It's the labor of love when we teach a child, teen, or

other adults; when we paint the wall in a Sunday School room, change a light bulb in the hallway, manage the sound system, play an instrument or sing, work on a committee, or care for the offerings that are brought. When we feel like quitting he lifts Christ up before us. In John 12:32 Jesus says, "And I, If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." When he lifts Christ up and we are invigorated, inspired and renewed.

He should be remembered

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember the pastor's labor of love because we know that serving the Lord does have its rewards.

Just as Paul remembered the work of the believers in Thessalonica, we know that God will remember the work of every believer.

He will remember our sacrifices and the pain. He will remember our difficult times and stormy seasons!

He will remember every good deed. He will remember and give each believer something that money can't buy; he will give us the "joy of the Lord."

What is the joy of the Lord?

The Joy of the Lord is the satisfaction of knowing that our little part helps to build the kingdom of the Lord. This satisfaction leads to a spiritual peace of mind that has been described as the joy of the Lord!

It's the satisfaction that a little boy felt when he saw his five loaves and two little fishes used to feed five thousand!

It's the satisfaction that the Good Samaritan felt when he watched the injured man walk away from a battered situation after weeks of laboring in love!

Those who live in the joy of the Lord are recipients of his goodness and are instruments of his compassion!

When God remembers our works He will provide us with his grace and favor!

When God remembers our labor of love He transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes;

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness.

Because we labor in love we go into battle knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

Because we labor in love we are assured that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victors!

Because we labor in love we are not stopped by the tears we encounter because we know weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

When we labor in love the Lord turns our:

—SADNESS into GLADNESS;

—WEAKNESS into strength;

—DEFEAT into victory!

We encourage this preacher today to continue preaching the word, in season and

out of season.

Preach, because the lonely need to hear words of comfort!

Preach, because the lost need to be found!

Preach, because the fallen need to rise again!

Preach, because the world needs the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

Keep telling the world about the best labor of love the world has ever seen!

Tell them about a man who loved us so much that He carried our burdens on an old rugged cross!

Tell them how He labored from the sixth to the ninth hour!

Tell them how He cried out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do!”

Tell them how He died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But, Early Sunday morning He arose with all power in his hand!

Remember His labor of love! Remember His sacrifice!

To God be the glory.. for the things He has done!

No. 9573-Revival

Dealing with Crazy People

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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October 28, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me." Matthew 17:15-17

Introduction

Have you ever had to deal with crazy people? Generally, we describe things that don't make sense as "crazy." When a person talks in a way that does not make sense, we say that person is "talking crazy." When a person acts in a way that does not make sense, we say the person is "acting crazy." The same would apply to persons who drive crazy, write crazy or otherwise perform out of the norm in a variety of ways.

Usually we are quick to call others crazy. Very few people actually think of themselves as crazy. We use nicer terms to describe ourselves: "Individualistic", "idiocentric", "eccentric" or a plethora of other terms. They all mean that we viewed as a little crazy by others.

What seems crazy to others often makes perfect sense to us. The man who wears a raincoat on a sunshiny day does not consider himself crazy, just cautious because whether could change instantly. The late Howard Hughes kept himself shut away in a dark room without clothing afraid of germs; people said he was a billionaire, but he was crazy; he said he was being cautious about contracting and spreading diseases. People who do crazy things rarely consider them crazy. In fact most feel that others are crazy for not following their example.

This is a crazy world. Our nation spends $100 billion or more to bomb a country and destroy its infrastructure then spends $150 billion to rebuild what it tore down! That's crazy.

A poor child stands in a lunch line in school wearing a $200 pair of shoes, $100 pair of pants, a $400 gold chain around his neck, diamonds in both ears, and a thousand dollars worth of gold in his teeth. What makes it crazy is this expensively dressed youth is eating lunch free because his parents said they were too poor to pay. That's crazy.

When churches need armed guards; schools need metal detectors and law enforcement profiles anyone who wears a turban as a possible terrorist, we know we are living in dangerously crazy times.

Such times really challenge our mental stability. Believers struggle hard daily to overcome our fixation on these crazy situations, because we see so much craziness all around us. Consider the two men who stood in the park every day at the same time acting very strange. One man seemed to lean and push against something huge and strained himself to move it. The other man always stood a few feet away from him and waved his arms. They were a sight to see, one pushing and the other waving every day. Finally, a curious passerby stopped and asked the man who was pushing a question, "What are you doing? He asked. "Every day I come to the park somebody keeps putting this big stone in the middle of the road." The passerby was curious because it was obvious that there was no stone, but the man was convinced and continued straining trying to move it. "If I don't move this stone, there is no telling what can happen." The man said as he strained and pushed. The passerby asked the man who was waving, what he was doing. Without missing a single wave, he told the passerby, "See that man over there. He's crazy. Every day he comes to the park and thinks he ís rolling a stone. He's really crazy!" The passerby then asked the man, "What are you doing? The man answered, "He rolls that stone in the middle of the street, I'm directing the traffic so no one will hit it!"

We can do some crazy things sometimes. It's crazy to get mad at your husband or wife and smash up all the dishes, tear pictures off the wall and destroy each other's property then spend the next year trying to save enough money to put them back. It's crazy for two women to fight over a man who doesn't want either one of them. Its crazy for a man to walk down the street with his pants below his behind and then try to run from the police.

The more we continue the more it seems each of us starts to fit into the crazy category. It's crazy to believe that I can never give, worship, read my bible and continue to live in sin and still be blessed! It's crazy to think that by slipping away to a hotel in another city for my rendezvous, God won't see me.

How does anyone deal with crazy people like us? How do you deal with a crazy world?

The only person who is capable of dealing with the craziness of this world is God. In fact, the Lord is the only one who really understands crazy folks like us, even when everyone has written us off.

As Christians, we are thankful that our God knows how to deal with us. His constant love, despite the crazy things we do, gives us a sense of balance, spiritual strength and mental stability that exceeds human understanding. The way God deals with crazy folks like us, gives us a good idea how we should deal with other crazy people; love them, anyhow.

Exposition

This text focuses on a man who brought his lunatic son for healing and it shows Jesus' response.

In biblical times many of the diseases that we know to today by a variety of names were characterized as either being of the devil or lunatic. This was the case when a man came to Jesus asking mercy for his son who was often stricken with a spell that forced him to fall on the ground and sometimes fall into fire. The father described his son as "lunatic."

The word lunar describes something associated with moon. The word lunatic comes from a Greek word "Sele-lia-zo-mai" which means struck by the moon, or "moonstruck." It was believed that a mental disease that is caused by the moon afflicted this young man. They noticed that his attacks usually came whenever the moon was high, and rarely otherwise. They quickly assumed that it was the moon, that was causing his problem and dubbed him "lunatic"

The disciples tried to cure the boy without success. Each time the moon rose the boy's fits returned and he fell into the fire.

Thus, the father approached Jesus with the problem. He wanted Jesus to "stop the moon from attacking his son."

Jesus' answer to the father was simple, "Bring him hither to me."

Jesus rebuked the devils and they left the man, never to return.

Dealing with Lunatics

The way the man sought to deal with his son should give us some insight into the nature of dealing with a crazy people like ourselves.

BLAMING THE MOON WON'T HELP: The father blamed his son's actions on the moon. Certainly if the disciples could make the moon stop affecting him the son would be healed. Jesus didn't speak to the moon he spoke to the spirit inside him. Even today we blame some of our deviant on sources that obscure the real problem. Can a homosexual or lesbian really blame God giving them same sex tastes? Can we adulterous spouse blame the moon for his cheating heart? Can the thief blame society or poverty for his decision to steal from stores or burglarize homes? Can we really blame our sins on the moon? In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar Cassius says, "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves,…." In that momentous line Shakespeare wrote a truth. We can't blame our sinful ways on an astrological sign, the position of the moon or an accident of birth. in reality we are responsible for every crazy thing we do. The father and everyone around this young man readily blamed his actions on the moon. Today many of us regularly blame some of our cultural ills on society. Yet, despite our impoverished history, we have not embraced thievery, lawlessness, and charity as a way of life. We have always been poor people, but grandma would say, "We may be poor, but we don't steal." When we act crazy, we can't blame our crazy actions on anyone but ourselves. We are responsible.

THEY COULDN'T DEAL WITH IT: The disciples, the father or those standing around the boy were not able to deal with the situation. Evangelist Paula White in her book "Deal with it" has a chapter called "Dealing with my own issues." White said she came to a point in her life where she did not want to keep going around in circles, but picked up her bible and asked God to help her face her issues head on! To deal with the many issues in our lives we too must learn to deal with it! To deal with an issue does not mean to "accept it" or brush it off to the side. To deal with it is spiritually wrestle with it with an eye toward victory. Don't accept addiction, deal with it! Don't accept a diagnosis from your doctor as the last word, Deal with it! Don't accept your handicap as life crippling. Deal with it! Don't brush off your anger and attitude issues. Deal with them! The only way to deal with the one really crazy person that you know, which yourself, is to get a hold on yourself and deal with it! Jacob, returning home had to wrestle with an angel. He had an issue, he was afraid of being killed by his brother Esau. So he wrestled with an angel and refused to let go until he was blessed. He had to deal with it. He went home a better man. Are life's concerns prompting you to act really crazy? Get a grip with God's help and deal with it!

BRING HIM HITHER TO ME: The father tried all everything, but Jesus said "Bring him hither to me." In the presence of Jesus the man's good mind was restored. That's the solution to dealing with the crazy woman or man you see in the mirror everyday. Jesus says, "Come to me." Jesus can do the one thing that doctors, analysts, and counselors can't do, he can forgive sin. The presence of evil caused the boy to act crazy, Jesus went to the root of the problem. Today, Jesus offers that same invitation to those dealing with similar issues that are driving them crazy. He says, "Come unto me all ye that burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest. For my burden is easy and yoke is light." Is there a life troubled by personal issues? Bring him hither to me! Is there a life that seems so out of control that it is acting really crazy? Bring him hither to me!

Keep your eyes on Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, the only way to deal with a crazy world that is filled with crazy people doing crazy things is to keep our eyes on Jesus.

We live in a crazy world where on one side people strap bombs around themselves for a cause and on another side they dose themselves with lighter fluid for no cause.

We live in a crazy world that prays for peace and prepares for war even while it is praying.

We live in a crazy world that praises the beauty of every color, but lives in black and white.

The only way to deal with a crazy world is to have what others may call a crazy faith that makes a whole lot of sense.

David dance nearly naked, it was crazy, but considering the blessing he enjoyed, to him it made a whole lot of sense!

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended, folks thought believers were crazy and drunk. However, they were not crazy; they were in the presence of God

and that made a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when you're sick, but since God is able to heal the sick, it's not crazy, it makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when you don't have any money in your pocket, but since the word of God declares that, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof then praising God makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy to praise God when a loved one has died, but since Jesus has promised us life after death with him in heaven, then praising God makes a whole lot of sense!

It may seem crazy but believers are able to smile in the midst of troubles and stand firm in the midst of strong winds, because God is still on the throne. It may seem crazy but it makes a whole lot of sense.

It may seem crazy, but faith in God takes an ugly situation and makes it beautiful

Faith in God finds

—Strength in the middle of weakness; success in the midst of failure; peace in the midst of confusion; joy in the midst of sadness; comfort in the midst of loneliness.

When this father found that an evil spirit had overtaken his son, he set out on a journey to find Jesus!

He had tried the disciples and no doubt the philosophers, doctors and counselors had failed too, but he came up with a crazy idea, "If I can just find Jesus, everything will be alright!"

Some people call it crazy, but we have found out that when everything seems at its worse, there is always hope, if you can just find Jesus!

The woman with an issue of blood for 12 long years had the crazy idea that if she could just touch the hem of his garment she could be made whole. It wasn't crazy, because knew the power that could come if she could just find Jesus.

The disciples were riding in a boat out on the raging sea. When the storms began to rage, somebody had the crazy idea of calling on Jesus.

Shaking him one disciple asked, "Master, the tempest is raging. carest thou not that we perish" Jesus spoke to the wind and waves and said "Peace be still"

If there are storms raging in your life, just find Jesus!

When you find Jesus, he'll take your misery and turn it into delight!

When you find Jesus, he'll take your sadness and turn it into joy!

When you find Jesus, he'll take your pain and turn it into gain!

When you find Jesus, he'll take your cross and replace it with a crown!

Others may call you crazy, but call on Jesus

He'll pick you up and turn you around!

He'll plant your feet on solid ground!

Call on Jesus! The lily of the valley!

Call on Jesus! The bright and morning star!

Call on Jesus! Who died out on Calvary!

Call on Jesus! Who arose early Sunday morning!

Call on Jesus! ..He'll make everything all right!

No. 9574-Revival

It is what it is

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
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November 4, 2012

Scripture: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; Numbers 13:18

Introduction

Have you ever heard the phrase it is what it is? It is one of those silly redundancies that we hear from time to time that makes a profound statement in a rather simple way. It is a phrase that sums up a situation without any frills or embellishments by simply stating reality.It's popular within the circles of coaches, business execs, and those of us who just want to say "It's happened. 'I'm going to forget about it. I'm going to move on. There is nothing that can be done about it."

"When NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson, finished second in the Nextel Cup championship he said, We showed up and gave 100%, and it is what it is."

Sometimes situations are too difficult to explain; in fact, they defy explanation! Consider two women who were discussing the problem one was having with her man friend: "So what's the deal with you and Bobby? I thought you guys were together, but then someone said you broke up, and then somebody else told me you were broken up but 'friends with benefits, so what's the true relationship status? Girlfriend: it is what it is.

There is a dark side to this simple phrase as well. Those who respond, "It is what it is" are generally frustrated with the difficulties life has presented them to the point of resignation. It is what it is becomes a statement of acceptance of a circumstance as inevitable and therefore unchangeable.

Thankfully God does not operate on the dark side of life. He is the God of the second chance, the extreme makeover and the second time around. He is the God that helps us change the "What is" into the "What can be."

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we serve a God who can take the "is" and make it better. We are not doomed to defeat or a failed life that we must accept; we can turn to Jesus and He will lead us every step of the way.

Exposition

This text considers the report of ten of the 12 spies sent to survey the Promised Land. Israel had been in bondage for over 400 years, crossed the wilderness and stood on the banks of the Jordan just a few miles away from the land of promise. Moses assembled twelve spies to perform a military reconnaissance inclusive of an objective report of the land inhabited by the strange looking wooly haired, broad featured, dark people who were descendants of Ham. His instructions are detailed in Numbers 13:18-20 "...see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not

The report of the spies gave a factual summary of the land and its people. The land was all they had expected and they brought back numerous items of fruit, including figs, pomegranates and grapes.

The charge to the spies was specific.

The first part of the report was positive, it filled the people with hope, the land is so abundant; life would be filled with ease.

Despite the positive nature of the report there was a dark side. Conquest of the land would be a challenge that militarily speaking Israel could not overcome.

Like it or not the spies reported on what is**:**

The land has abundance, but a warlike people occupy it. It is what it is.

The inhabitants have walled cities and plenty of military weapons, we have neither. It is what it is.

Though the land is flowing with abundance we don't have what it takes to take possession. It is what it is.

The report of the ten fulfilled their charge from Moses. It was the majority report.

Two men among them arose and declared, "Let us go up at once and possess it". God has given it to us and we should lay claim on our future.

However, the other ten were not confident; in fact they were afraid. They convinced the people that facts are facts, realities are realities, that they should accept the fact that conquering the land was not an option.

It is what it is.

They wandered in the wilderness for forty years as a result.

Dealing with What is

Much of the way we receive life's ups and downs, pitfalls and challenges is centered on the way we view the world. Whether we see it for what it is or for it what it could be. The way the spies looked at their situation provides insight into our own view of life.

THEY ACCEPTED WHAT IS: The spies reported on reality. They accepted as inevitable that they would be a wandering tribe without roots and that the dream of the Promised Land was just that; a dream. They basically told Moses, "Wake up and smell

the coffee, there are some things you would like to do, but you just can't. It is what it is." Today, there are many who have a similar view about challenges and obstacles. Whenever there is a crisis, they survey the prospects and the realities and often conclude that it is useless to struggle. It is what it is.

When bills are stacked high and income is low, some conclude that there is no way out and give up in frustration. They say, it is what it is.

When relationships are in trouble or families are threatened some don't even see resolutions, they only see the extent of the problem and say, "It is what it is." Many have doomed themselves with an attitude about life that accepts defeat and failure and resolves to simply walk away.

"It is what it is" is an acceptable idea in the aftermath of a situation. A lost contest is what it is. A lost financial resource is what it is. A divorce is what it is. In this context the phrase simply describes the present circumstance. However, it should not be acceptable if it means that the situation is irreversible.

A man may be a drunk and a deadbeat at the moment, it is what it is. He will be a drunk as long as he accepts his drunkenness as his lot in life. He will stop being a drunk when he refuses to accept what "is" as inevitable.

Our fear sees the worse of a situation and responds, "it is what it is."

Our faith sees what can come out of a situation and says "what it is does not have to be."

Our frustration sees the downside of a situation and responds "it is what it is."

Our faith sees the opportunity in a troubling situation and responds "It is, but it won't be long."

QUE SERA SERA: In 1956 Doris Day produced a hit song called "Que Sera Sera"- Whatever will be will be. It was popular because it spoke a truth that is at the heart of the Christian faith. Whatever God has for us, it will be, despite what is at the moment. That was the essential truth that the 10 spies overlooked in their report. They reported on the "Is" but they did not report on the "can be."

No one should ignore what "is," that would irresponsible. However, we don't have to accept "is." The great benefit of the faith life is to change what "is" into "was." It's for a whole family to stop saying that's just the way we "are" and start saying that's the way we "were." That's the principle behind 1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God

We don't know what the future holds for us, but it certainly holds more than what it is.

We don't know what we will ultimately become, but thanks to Jesus, we are not doomed to "what it is."

We look forward with hope and say, "Que sera sera" Whatever will be, will be. That offers much more hope than "It is what it is."

I AM THAT I AM: The spies gave up when they saw the challenge and said "it is what it is." Had they shared the same experience of old man Moses before the burning bush they would not have given up so quickly. Standing before God Moses was

commanded to tell pharaoh to let Israel go free. Moses looked at the reality of what God challenged him to do and gave excuses, literally laying out the facts. He was told to trust in God whose name is "I am that I am." That is the same challenge that believers have today when we are faced with the realities of life. We can either focus on "what it is" or what can be if we are back up by the great "I am." In fact, that is how we have survived so many trials in the past. The "I AM" over powered "what it is" and turned things around for us.

We have learned this truth as we encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that have experienced strained relationships. These are the believers who will quickly testify that things changed when the "I AM" God stepped in and spoke to "What it is."

If the "I AM" God had not stepped in we would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of those tough moments.

Financial trouble is what it is. We need help. God says, "I am" that answer!

Sickness is what it is. We need healing. God says, "I am" that healing!

Confusion and frustration is what it is. We need direction. God says, "I am" the way the truth and the light!

Give your "what it is situation" to the God of "I am" and watch how your life changes!

More than what is

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that the promise of the savior goes further than what it is.

Our God is a God of the past, and of the moment. However, He is also a God of the future. That's why we as believers should not be dismayed by the frustrations of the moment. We are living in the "what it is," but God is operating in the "What will be."

The spies only saw what was at the moment, however Joshua and Caleb saw what could happen when God moved.

The spies saw the walls of Jericho, but the faithful saw the walls of Jericho tumbling down!

The spies saw the shortness of fighting days, but the faithful saw the Sun standing still in the sky!

The spies saw the giants, but the faithful saw giants falling!

It is what is –is a statement of fact, but believers don't accept it as inevitable!

Don't be afraid to move to the next level of your life because that level has devils. It is what it is, but what it is won't be the same when God gets through!

Don't be afraid to step out and try something new because of the prospect of failure. It is what it is, but what it is won't be the same when God turns failure into success.

The closer you get to your promise, the more enemies you'll attract, it is what it is, but what it is won't be what it will be once God turns your enemies into your footstools.

Believers should keep the faith even in the face of tough times.

Yes, there is a Red Sea in front of you, it is what it is, but God can part the waters of your sea!

Yes, you are wandering in the wilderness going around in circles, it is what it is, but God can lead you out if you will just hold his hand!

Yes, you are having a tough time making ends meet, it is what it is, but if I can just trust Him, God can make a way out of no way!

The story is told of the church that allowed its members to complain about what they didn't like. One member said the choir sings the same old songs. Another member said the deacons pray the same old prayers. Somebody else said the preacher preaches the same old sermons.

After everyone finished there was an old mother who sat on the front seat. They asked her for her complaint.

She said, I don't complain about the choirs singing, it is what it is, but God gave me a song to sing, that angels can't sing because I've been washed in the blood!

I don't complain about the way the deacons pray it is what it is, but I know that prayer changes things!

I don't worry about the preacher talking about the same God every Sunday, it is what it is, but I know who God is. He's the same God who brought me over the mountain and I know He'll carry me through the valley!

I don't know about you, but I've decided that while some in frustration and unbelief will focus on "it is what it is" I will focus on what "God is."

You may say it is what it is, but I have found that God is:

—MY HELP in a time of trouble; MY BRIDGE over troubling water.

—MY STRENGTH in a time of weakness; MY VICTORY in a time of battle

God is the source of my inspiration!

God is the object of my determination!

God is the sum total of my revelation!

I won't complain about the frustrations of this life because I know God is still on the throne!

He sits high and looks low!

Our God is a loving God. He loves us so much that He gave His only begotten son!

Jesus came and shed his blood so that we don't have to accept a life a sin as "What it Is"

He died that we might have a chance to live again!

He died that we might have a right to the tree of life!

He died so that we could change "what it is" to what "God wants us to be"

They nailed Him to an old rugged cross and he died a horrible death.

Somebody must have said, "He lived and he died. it is what it is"

But early Sunday morning, God took the "what it is" and turned it into thy will be done!

Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands….

No. 9475-Revival

With One Finger

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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November 11, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." John 8:6

Introduction

Has anyone ever pointed a finger at you? What were they doing? People point for variety of reasons. Sometimes we point to identify people, places and things. We point at planes in the sky, a squirrel climbing a tree or a curious sight.Our parents tell us not to stare or to point fingers at those who may be disfigured of physically challenged.One Voodoo teaching that is still followed by many in Louisiana and other Southern states is that if you point a finger at a grave yard you have to bite your finger or it will fall off.

Fewer people are learning the typewriter keyboard today because most are typing with one finger on each hand, formally called hunt and peck.

If you've ever witnessed a trial, the witness on the stand is often asked to point out the suspect in the courtroom…and with one finger the suspect is thus accused.

If you put your finger in someone's face, you throw down the gauntlet; it's tantamount to declaring war. It has the same effect of raising your third finger to someone in anger. Tempers flare immediately.

In January of 2012 Arizona Governor Jan Brewer was photographed pointing her finger in the face of President Barack Obama. He wanted to talk to her about Amnesty for illegal aliens and she wanted to talk about securing the boards; the photographers captured her pointing her finger in his face.

Yet, one of the most serene images is among the paintings of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel is one scene showing the finger of God bringing man to life.

The phrase the "finger of God" is used four times. In Exodus 8:19 Pharaoh's Magicians tried to duplicate the plague of lice and concluded that it was the finger of God. In Exodus 31:18 It is noted that the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone by the finger of God. This truth is repeated again in Deuteronomy 9:10. Then in Luke 11:20 Jesus describes some of healings as being none other than the finger of God.

Obviously, there is something going to happen when the finger of God points our way.

As Christians, we are grateful that the finger of God has touched our lives. With just one finger God guides us, protects and provides for us in ways that only he can.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance when Jesus wrote an unknown message on the ground with his finger.

Jesus sat down to teach his disciples but his session was interrupted when the Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman before him who had been caught in the very act of adultery. They wanted to trick him into speaking against the laws of Moses. Their charge was to be validated by witnesses who were ready to execute the penalty of stoning.

The Mosaic laws were male dominant and protected men in marriage and in social relationships. Although the woman was caught in the very act, no death sentence was brought against the man. Jesus had been defying many of the Mosaic customs, forgiving sins, fraternizing with women in public and speaking unheard of ideas that God was gender neutral.

They expected Jesus deny his own teachings or those of Moses, either which would have archived their purpose. Instead Jesus ignored them and began to write on the ground. What he wrote is unknown, but he wrote a second time as they pressed Jesus for an answer.

His answer was baffling to them because He could not be condemned by His word. “Ye without sin let cast the first stone.”

The woman left and was given second chance to start anew.

No one knows what Jesus wrote, but for that woman on that day, whatever he wrote with one finger turned out to be her pardon.

Finger of God

The symbolic phrase the finger of God usually refers to mysterious experiences we have shared wherein the only source could have been God himself. The Finger of God has touched our lives in many ways.

FINGER OF POINTS OUR WAY: Most people have had defining moments in their lives. It’s the time when a decision is to be made that impacts the rest of our lives. For the woman caught in adultery, her moment was when she came face to face with death and the Son of God. There she made a decision that changed her life.

What was your defining moment?

It’s the moment you decide that I must do something about my future.

It’s the moment you decide I can’t go on like this, something must change!

It’s the moment you see that my present course is leading me toward disaster.

It’s that one moment in time when everything that you have learned, seen and heard

merge precisely and you have an epiphany. You sense the finger of God pointing you in one direction or another.

The woman in this text was told which way to go and what to do by none other than God himself.

When God points the way, he will provide the opportunities necessary to achieve his purpose.

FINGER OF GOD HAS SAVED SOULS: Most believers will testify that they once lived another life outside of Christ, but at some point the finger of God touched their lives. When the adulterous woman appeared in Jesus presence she had no idea that her life was about to be touched by the hand of God. The woman at the well drew water, but went running through the city declaring come see a man, when her life was touched by the finger of God. Today, there are millions like these who have been condemned by the world as lost causes. These are the ones who are throwing up their hands in defeat. Yet, God chooses to touch them with His finger of love and lives turn around.

Parents who have talked to and chastised wayward children with little or no visible effect notice instant change when their children are touched by the finger of God.

Many marriages are troubled and leading toward divorce, those that survived ware those touched by the finger of God.

FINGER OF GOD PROVIDES FAVOR: A life that is touched by the finger of God enjoys God's favors. Not only are we favored, but also we are overwhelmingly favored. Since favor is that extra help or blessing we need, beyond what's expected, believers know instantly when God's finger has touched a situation in their lives.

When we think about the many ways that the finger of God has touched us we would be overwhelmed. How many times has God made a way out of no way?

How many prayers has he answered for us? How many rivers has he helped us to cross? How many battles has he helped us to win?

If we count them we can only conclude that God has favored us. Psalm 40:5 says, " Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

With One Finger

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must note that with just one finger, God can lift up that which has been torn down and bring new hope.

We can touch images on a screen with one finger and operate an I Pad or phone,

We can place one finger over a cell and gain entry into secret places.

All that we can do with just one finger cannot match what our God can do with just one finger!

Those who have touched by the hand of God share the same testimony.

With just one finger God stopped Jonah as he fled from his mission.

With just one finger God drowned Pharaohs army as he pursued Israel across the Red Sea.

With just one finger God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and turned Lot's wife to salt.

With just one finger God ended Job's suffering caused by the devil!

With just one finger God provided for a widow woman to keep her barrel from running dry

With Just one finger God bestows blessings!

With Just one finger God provides His anointing.

With Just one finger God opens doors that have been closed in our faces.

With Just one finger God rebuilds broken lives!

Maybe that's why the old warriors sang, "Hold to his hand, to God's unchanging hand!"

God's hand is his soul saving hand!

God's hand is a wonder working hand!

Every Christian warrior today declares:

With one finger he signed my pardon

With one finger he pointed my way

With one finger he touched me and turned my life around

That's why like the woman at the well I've got to tell the world, come see a man!

Come see a man who with one finger grace made the lame and gave sight to the blind!

Come see a man who with one finger of mercy raised Lazarus from the dead!

Come see a man who with one finger of compassion forgave sinners!

Come see a man who carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill!

Come see a man who died on an old rugged cross!

But Early Sunday morning….

No. 9577-Inspiration

Infallible Proofs

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 18, 2012

SCRIPTURE: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: Acts 1:3

Introduction

How do we know that God is as good as we claim? Are our claims of His goodness exaggerated? Is He really in the blessing, healing and restoration business? For believers, all three of those questions are moot issues. We have seen God do so much and have experienced his presence so many times until there is no question in our mind whether God is good or whether or not He is able to respond to our needs.

There is an old colloquialism that says, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." It means that the one true test of any claim is whether or not it actually does what it claims. Believers say with confidence that God is a mighty God by simply observing His works in their own experiences. The proof, as far as believers are concerned, is in the answered prayers, healed bodies, and revived spirits they have encountered along the way.

Actually, what believers call proof is actually evidence. We consider the evidence, though not empirical and scientific and validate it as the proof we need. It's called faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." We cannot prove anything about God in a way that complies with the scientific method, but we do see the evidence.

Consider the old man who tried his best to convince his grandson that God is real. The grandson had studied in college and came to the conclusion that God is not real, but a figment of the imagination. All of the grandfather's reasoning seemed to fail; it appeared hopeless. Months later the grandson was involved in an auto accident and was visited in the hospital by the grandfather. "How do you feel, son?" asked the grandfather. "I'm hurting everywhere grandfather?" The grandfather looked at the grandson and realized that he had a teachable moment, then he asked, "How do you know that the hurt you feel is real; how do you know that it is not just a figment of your imagination?" The boy looked at his grandfather and said, "Why do you ask such a silly question grandfather, I know I'm hurting because I can feel it!" The grandfather

smiled and said, “Ah, now you know how I know that there is a God, because I can feeeeel him in my soul.” - After that the boy no longer questioned his grandfather’s belief, but learned to know God for himself.

As Christians, we know that there are some things about God that cannot be proven. What we can do is testify to the realness of God in our own lives. We know He lives because we can feel him in our souls.

Exposition

This text focuses on Luke as he explains how Christ talked with His disciples for 40 days after the resurrection, explaining to them what things are to come. The resurrection itself proved to be an “infallible” proof of his divinity.

An infallible proof is a proof that cannot be denied. It is publicly verifiable and is not subject to opinion or subjective conclusions. While Christ talked to His disciples about the things that are coming, He began by demonstrating to them that He was truly resurrected by showing them both his hands and feet. They were infallible proof that He was resurrected. Even Thomas who doubted the testimony of the women and other disciples had to accept the proofs that Christ presented. They were undeniable.

Christ gave many convincing proofs of this. The word “proofs” (tekm?riois) occurs only here in the New Testament and looks at demonstrable evidence in contrast with evidence provided by witnesses. In other words, the Resurrection was proven by touch, sight, and feel as evidence in Luke 24:39-40.

The disciples and all of those who encountered Him from the resurrection to His eventual ascension were impressed that what they had seen and heard were infallible evidences that He was truly the Son of God.

Proving the faith

A believer confirms his faith in God through many ways, included among those ways are:

KNOWING GOD PERSONALLY: The best test of God’s existence is personal experience. There are many who have accumulated immense Biblical knowledge about God, but their daily lives suggest that they really don’t know Him. There are no proofs that they acknowledge in their own lives that give infallible evidence that God is real to them. In theory:

They know that God is powerful.

They know that He is all knowing.

They know He is everywhere at the same time.

They know that He is beyond comprehension and they know all that is written about Him, but they don’t know Him for themselves.

Knowledge is great, but the best proof of God’s power is our own experience. Our live show how God helped us overcome the worst situations and lifted us to safe

ground.

Our lives testify that He is able to hear and answer prayer. Those who know him for themselves need no further evidence than to see how He moves in our lives and that's enough.

SEEING HIS HANDIWORK: Those who need proof that God exists need only to look at the universe itself. If they would only peer into the stratosphere they will see celestial evidence of God's greatness. Those who look up will be captivated by the beauty and immensity of the stars of the universe. Consider Mars, the angry red planet with its 55 million square miles, the mysterious rings of Saturn and its 19 billion square miles of landscape or Alpha Centura, thousands of light years away and suddenly we come face to face with the majestic power of God.

When we see his handiwork in the stars we are encouraged because when trouble is all around us the word of God declares: "God is our refuge and our strength, ..a shelter in a time of storm."

All around us we see God's handiwork and we know that there must be a God somewhere. We know God exists and is not a dead God, but is alive. That's why we agree with the lyrics of the song writer who said, "If God is dead, tell me what makes the flowers bloom. If God is dead what makes summer come in June. I'm glad I know He lives, He lives in me."

KNOWING HOW GOD OPERATES: Believers know when God has acted because they know from what they have learned in the word and from their own personal experiences how God operates. They know that God moves mysteriously to achieve His purposes and only those who really know Him are able to recognize his presence and actions.

Those who know God must focus on Him and His ways and not the world. Consider the class offered by the smart mouse about knowing the ways of cats. The smart mouse read constantly and often led debates about the virtues of living the life of a mouse. One day, since he had such great knowledge, he decided to conduct a class for the other mice. The class would teach them all he knew about Cats. He posted signs everywhere announcing his class.

The young mice were excited, because this was one of the smartest mice around. If anyone could help them learn about cats, he could.

On the day of the first class, the room was filled with little mice. However, there were no old mice present. Just the little ones. There was a big guy who came too. He sat in the back of the room. The mouse proceeded to lecture the little mice about cats. The cat has nine lives. The cat has fur and great claws. The cat purrs and meows. The cat has peculiar looking eyes. He went on for many minutes. Suddenly the guy in the back of the room stood and showed his teeth and started chasing all of the little mice.

The young mouse ran outside the room and barely escaped being clawed. Several days later the little mouse met a group of old mice and he asked them a question.

"Why didn't you attend my class on cats the other day?", he asked. One old mouse responded, "You know what the book says about cats, but you had never seen a cat yourself. We didn't come to your class because we have seen cats and we know what

cats eat for lunch!"

Those who know God, didn't get it from a book, they have tried him for themselves. That is an infallible proof.

The women gave a testimony

Finally, brothers and sisters, we are encouraged because one Sunday morning the world saw one infallible proof of the divinity of Christ: the empty tomb.

There were many who doubted the divinity of Christ when He walked the earth and although he healed the sick and even raised the dead, they demanded proof.

He touched a blind man's eyes with spittle and he was able to see, but yet they demanded proof!

He walked on water across an angry sea, but yet they demanded proof!

He fed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread, but yet they demanded proof.

Three days after the crucifixion the women came to the tomb looking for the body of Jesus. They found that the body of Jesus was missing.

They did not know it then, but that was the first infallible proof of the resurrection, the empty tomb.

An angel told them"He is not here, but is risen." The angel explained how Jesus predicted his resurrection and how its fulfillment resulted in the empty tomb.

The testimony of the angel was the second proof; because angels are emissaries of God and do not lie, an angel's word that Christ had risen was infallible proof.

The women gave a testimony of their experience. They told what they had seen and heard. That was the third proof,

There is nothing more encouraging to a person who faces the prospect of fighting cancer than to hear the testimony of a cancer survivor. The words of a person who has failed in business and found success after failing multiple times is encouraging. The encouraging words of persons who have overcome adversity serve as evidence that we too can do the same.

The fact that they themselves overcame adversity was infallible proof.

That's why it is important for every believer to share the benefit of their experiences in life with others.

Their testimonies become undeniable proofs that God is still in the miracle business.

I don't know about you, but I don't need to see Jesus walk on the water to know He is God, because I've seen how He has caused me to do the impossible in my own life!

I don't need to see Him heal the sick to know that He is God, because when I was on my own sickbed He touched my body.

I don't need to see Him run the demons out of a man in the tombs because one day he saved my soul and chased my demons away!

I am living proof that God can pick you up and turn you around!

I am living proof that God can take a broken life and put it back together again!

I am living proof that God can breathe new life into spirits smothered in despair!

We are living proof of God's goodness.

Every time we testify about God's greatness,

Every time we testify about God's power

Every time we testify about God's strength, we provide enough proof that no matter how dark it gets, there is always a bright light in heaven.

Every saint can say, I know he lives because "He touched me, he touched me. And oh the joy that floods my soul. Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole."

They may have put a crown of thorns on His head, but I have infallible proof that He lives!

They may have whipped Him all night long, but I have infallible proof that He lives!

They may have nailed Him to an old rugged cross, but I have infallible proof that He lives!

They may have buried Him in a borrowed tomb, but I have infallible proof that He lives!

I know He lives because Early Sunday morning, the earth shook, the stone was rolled away and an Angel declared "He is not here!"

I know He lives because "I met God one morning soul feeling sad. Heart heavy laden with a bowed down head. He lift my burdens and made me so glad!"

He lives! He lives!

I'm living proof that He lives because He lives in me!

No. 9578-Inspiration

You don't hear that much anymore

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Hebrews 13:8

Introduction

Have you ever noticed how quickly things change? What's in style today is out of style tomorrow. A new technology today is forgotten tomorrow. In fact things change so fast that our traditional references and names are fading away. In fact, sometimes we date ourselves just by the fact that we can remember some things that you don't hear anymore.

Do you remember when received a call from someone in another city and someone told you "hurry up, its long distance!" -You don't hear that anymore!

Do you remember when 45 rpm records had scratches in them and repeated? Then someone would say, "You sound like a broken record" - You don't hear that much anymore!

When is the last time you heard someone say, "Get up and change the channel!" or "Does your new car have electric windows?" -You don't hear that anymore!

Times are really changing only a few people can remember the saying "If you don't know, look up in the encyclopedia. In a day when everyone has a cell phone, when is the last time you heard someone ask, "Does anyone have a camera?"

Somebody here remembers a time when the fastest way to send a message was to "send it it Western Union" and the fastest way to mail a letter was to send it air mail. -You don't hear that anymore.

Just a few years ago somebody said, "I saw it on Myspace" and someone else said, "Facebook is for kids"- You don't hear that anymore!

If a person couldn't find a job a generation ago, folks once said, "You can always get a job at the post office," but you don't hear that anymore!

If you want to know how outdate you are try saying, "A woman's place is in the

home!" or "A black man doesn't have enough sense to be an NFL quarterback and certainly not the President of the United States." -You don't hear that anymore!

Remember when folks say, "I ain't using no devilish microwave, they'll give you cancer." -You don't hear that anymore, just as you don't hear anyone saying, "hang out the clothes on the line," or I have to "wash and fold my baby's diapers."

IBM typewriters? What's a typewriter? When is the last time you heard someone say, "Is there any film in the camera?" or "Rewind the cassette tape?"

When is the last time someone said, "I'm going to B.T.U." or "They are showing a double feature at the movies"- You don't that much anymore!

There are some things you don't hear much anymore, but it should be refreshing to know what we hear about God is still the same as what we heard years ago.

If we look back we'll quickly see that despite all of its all of the changes and innovations of the past including its ups and downs, good days and bad days, God has delivered has been faithful. What we said about God then is the same thing we say about Him today.

Every day he provides new mercies, blessings and favors in the same old way. He hasn't changed!

We like it that way!

As Christians, we praise God for his faithfulness to us and give him praise for his constancy and dependability. . He has been faithful toward us in the past and we expect him to do the same in the days ahead. The world may change, but it's encouraging to know that our God is same yesterday, today and forever more.

Exposition

This text focuses on the constancy of Christ and underscores the assurance that believers can expect from his "sameness."

It is a simple statement of fact. Jesus Christ, the son of God, is the same today as He was yesterday and will be the same forever.

The bible is replete with references to the immutability of God. In Malachi 3: 6 God says, "I Yahweh do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." God made it known in times past that He does not change with respect to his power, compassion and faithfulness to his creation.

In reality God is not affected by anything outside himself. He does not age. He does not deteriorate, wither or diminish in any weather. He is not influenced by the earth, wind or fire. He does not rust or wither. He has no weaknesses, no Achilles heel or vulnerabilities.

God is not subject to politics. He cannot be overthrown from power, voted out of office or changed by a referendum. Unlike people who change who can their mind because of unforeseen circumstances or weak resolution, Dr. Piper says, God foresees all circumstances and has no weaknesses. Nothing in all creation takes him off guard and backs him into a corner where he might have to act out of character or compromise his integrity.

James 1:17 says, “With him there is no variation or shadow due to change.” He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Whatever was said about Him in the past is still the same today.

If they said he healed the sick, He does the same today!

If they said he answered prayer. He does the same today!

If they said He saved the lost, He does the same today!

Unlike the world which changes quickly; what you heard yesterday, you don’t hear anymore today, God never changes. What we heard yesterday about Him, we still hear the same today!

What do we hear about God?

Because God does not change, what we hear about him is the same year after year.

WE STILL HEAR THAT GOD FAITHFULLY PROVIDES: We often hear that God provides for the faithful. We’ve heard that God provides food clothing and shelter for those who trust him. We’ve heard how he showered food on Israel in the wilderness for 40 years and never missed a day. We even heard our grandparents say God helped them put food on the table. The good news is even though they said that about God in the past, believers around the world are still saying that same thing today. Like he did in the past, he’s still putting food on the table, he’s still providing a shelter over our heads. We heard he blessed others every day, but we can testify that he is doing the same thing faithfully today. No matter how we look at it; the powerful hand of God has blessed us.

WE STILL HEAR THAT GOD PROVIDES INCREASE: We often hear that the faithful have talked to God and he provided them an increase in spiritual and material territory. We heard that Jabez went to God and asked that he would expand his coasts and boundaries. God heard Jabez and made good on His promise, giving him exactly what he prayed for. We heard our grandparents say that God opened doors of opportunity for them that had been closed in their faces. We heard them testify that opened their eyes and increased their spiritual awareness. Today, the good news is God is still providing increase. It has not gone out of style and His ability and willingness to do so has not diminished. While we don’t hear much about some things of the past, today we still hear believers saying “God is a way maker” and a provider. We have seen God increase our families, increase faith, increase our spirituality, and expand our hopes and dreams. He did it in the past, but He’s still doing it today!

WE STILL HEAR THAT GOD STANDS BY US: We often hear how God stood with the faithful in difficult times. We have hear how God stood with David as he fought off bears and lions attacking his father’s sheep. We have heard how he stood with the Three Hebrew Boys in the fiery furnace. We have even heard our grandparents speak of God standing with them through difficult times of crises in the family. The good news is that today, we still hear believers saying the same thing. God has not changed. This has been an extremely difficult year for some us. There are some families that have encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that have experienced

strained relationships. Yet, the faithful among these struggling families are still saying, " if it had not been for the Lord on their side," they would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments. During
not hear much any more there are some things that we said then that are still saying today.

Because God doesn't change his love for us never changes.

Because God doesn't change his compassion for us never changes.

There are some things that grandmother said that we are still saying today.

Can you remember hearing Grandmother say, "Lord Have Mercy!"

She said "Lord have mercy" because she knew that God is a merciful God.

Today we still say the same thing, "Lord have mercy," because:

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped us to recover after a staggering loss!

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped healed our broken hearts and mended our wounded faith.

You still hear me saying "Lord have mercy" because:

Every morning when I rise I see another burden God's going to lift off my shoulder!

Every morning when I rise I see another hill God's going to help me to climb!

Every morning when I rise I see another job God's going to help me to find!

Every morning when I rise I see another investment he's going to help me to make!

Every morning when I rise I see another test God is going to help me to pass!

We heard Israel say it in the wilderness, we heard grandpa say it on the steps, and today we are still saying the same thing, "Thank you Lord!"

The old warriors said thank you because they knew God had blessed them!

Today we are still saying the same thing because God is still blessings us!

If you come around the faithful you'll hear them say, "Thank you Lord for the food we eat!"

Thank you Lord for waking us up this morning!

Thank you Lord for clothing us in our right mind.

Thanks you Lord for blessing me more than I deserve!

Thank you Lord for raising me to heights I have never seen!

Thank you Lord for inspiring me when my head hangs low!

Thank you Lord for saving my soul!

Thank you for picking up an old rugged cross and carrying it to Calvary!

Thank you purchasing my pardon with your own dying blood!

Thank you for the cross and the borrowed tomb!

They buried Him and put a watch around His tomb!

They said He was dead and would never live again!

Those who said he would never rise are keeping silent, what they said then, you don't hear that much anymore!

What you do hear is that our God is able! Able! Able!

No. 9579-Christmas

Wrapping for Christmas

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 16, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

Introduction

Have you started wrapping your presents yet? There are many who are still shopping for Christmas and have begun the task of wrapping presents one by one. Wrapping presents for many families is part of the holiday fun, along with decorating trees, cooking and shopping. It's a time of cheer that gives us a hint of what life will be without the troubles that make life so difficult.

A part of this seasonal spirit is the idea of wrapping presents. To some it is just a waste of time; they simply hand their gifts to someone unwrapped. The idea behind wrapping a present is to conceal the contents until the right time. When the right moment comes there is an outburst of joy we share when we discover what has been hidden behind the beautiful paper.

Did you know that God conceals a few things from us for the same reason. He doesn't tell us what's in his bag of goodies for us in the future. It's as if he intentionally hides a few things until the right time. In fact, 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, " For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." It's as if all of life is a great present given to us by God that we unwrap one by one, each day.

Just as each gift we receive was picked out and wrapped ahead of time, God has a few goodies for us, too that he plans to give us when the time is right. Some we have already received; there are still many to go.

On the first Christmas morning there was no Christmas. The air was cold, the ground was hard and accommodations for a young man and his wife were limited. Yet, in a little town called Bethlehem, a mother by the name of Mary presented to the world a gift that had been wrapped by God himself before the beginning of time.

As Christians, we join the millions who will prepare gifts of love for family and friends. However, none of the gifts we prepare can compare with the gift that God gave the world on the first Christmas morning.

Exposition

This text focuses on Isaiah as he describes the one who heralds the coming kingdom of God as a "voice in the wilderness."

For Israel, his words indicated a return from Babylonian exile. But they also point to the coming of the Church era, when John the Baptist proclaimed the approach of Christ.

When eastern princes marched through desert countries, ways were prepared for them, and hindrances removed. Isaiah's words seem to reach into a future time and point to one that would come to prepare the hearts of the people for the kingdom of God.

Isaiah noted that the voice of the preparer or forerunner would come at a time when Israel, and in a greater sense the people of God, were experiencing "wilderness" type conditions.

When John the Baptist appears in the Gospels, Isaiah's prophecy becomes clearer in its fulfillment. John's voice echoes through, telling those who would listen to, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized and God will forgive your sins." John was a strange looking man, dressed in animal hair, his breath heavy with locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed that someone was coming; someone so spectacular that it was not good enough to simply wait around for him to arrive. It was time to get ready, to prepare the way, to make hearts and lives right for the coming of the one "whose sandals he is not worthy to untie."

The voice of the prophet served the purpose of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord. He announced the glad tidings Nothing but the Grace of God can account for our survival in these perilous times.

Nothing but the Grace of God can account for the milestones we have made along the way.

Each year God wraps up another bundle of grace and favor and puts it, not under a tree, but within the grasp of our faith.

It's a gift that has been prepared for us, by the master himself.

Personalized

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must consider that while it is great to wrap gifts for Christmas, there is one final step, we must put a name on it.

Some trees will have one or two gifts under them, tucked away in boxes and wrapped in an assortment of papers.

While we are excited about the growing number of presents under the tree, we are peculiarly interested in the one that has our name on it.

When my name is on it, it means that it is prepared especially for me.

When my name is on it, it means that the giver had me in mind

When my name is on it, it means that it is meant to address my personal need. Maybe

that's what the Miami Mass Choir meant when the wrote the lyrics that said, "I know without a doubt that he will bring me out, what God has for me it's for me."

The gifts that we expect to receive on Christmas Day are being prepared a few days ahead of time, but the gifts that God has for the world is not something that began a few days before Christmas.

When Isaiah wrote about preparing the way in Isaiah 40, it was about 700 years before Christmas morning. But the Preparation began before that.

When Abraham was preparing for a large family and was given the promise that a child would be born in his family that would bless the world that was about 2,000 years before Christmas morning.

When Adam and Eve were enjoying the garden, but brought sin into the world, God made a way for sin purchased by one man to be paid for by another, that was about 4000 years before Christmas morning. But the preparation began before that.

Long before the dinosaurs, and the T-Rex, the Cro-Magnon and the Neanderthal.

Long before the oceans, rivers and seas or birds split the air with their wings.

Long before the details of the creation unfolded I can hear God say," the world we are going to create is going to produce some good and some bad; but we need to prepare a way for the good to get back to us."

We need to prepare a way for man to find hope when he threatens to give up!

We need to prepare a way for man to find forgiveness when He has lost his way!

We need to prepare a way for man to receive grace and favor in the midst of his journey!

I can hear the Lord say, "If you need somebody, here am I send me!"

Prepare me a body and I'll go down and restore their hope!

The hope that I will give them will remind them that no matter how bad things get, that God is still in control

The hope that I will give them will remind them that despite opposition that we are more than conquerors and the victory is ours!

Prepare me a body and I'll go down and forgive their sins.

The forgiveness I'll give them will take their sins and wash them white as snow!

The forgiveness I'll give them will wipe their slate clean and give them a second chance!

Prepare me a body and I'll go down and grant them grace and favor!

The grace I give them will be sufficient for all of their needs!

The favor I give them will give them life and give it more abundantly!

In the fullness of time it was all wrapped up and the word became flesh!

Down in Bethlehem, the world received a gift that was conceived and wrapped up before the beginning of time!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born

Down in Bethlehem a Son was given and the government was on his shoulder, his name was called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of Peace!

Thirty three years later, a gift that was delivered on Christmas morning, was fulfilled on Calvary!

He lived a prepared life!
He died on a prepared cross!
He was buried in a prepared tomb!
And Early Sunday morning....

No. 9580-New Year

Wrapping Things Up for the New Year

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 30, 2012

SCRIPTURE: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Luke 2:20; "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return unto Herod they departed into their own country another way." Matthew 2:12

Introduction

Are you ready for the new year yet? After all of the excitement of the Christmas season the final days of the new year prompts each one of us to reflect upon the year that has passed weighing both our strengths and our weaknesses. Just as we gathered the wrappings from Christmas Day and sorted them out saving bows and wrapping papers that could be reused and throwing away others, we also evaluate ourselves in light of the events of the year. There were Some good moments in the year that has passed and there were some moments that we would prefer to forget.

As we wrap up the Year that has passed we now have to look forward to the future with an eye toward holding on to those things which helped us while tossing away those things that have hurt us.

At the end of the year we usually focus on our personal goals and desires and if only for a moment resolve that we will take steps to improve ourselves in the future.

Some have made so many resolutions that have been filed away in drawer 13 That they have made one final resolution; They have resolved not to make any more resolutions, Because file 13 is full.

So, without making any resolutions let's simply look back over the year and make two stacks out of all we've done this year. In one stack let's place the things we did right. In the other stack let's place the things that need improvement. If you are like most people one of those stacks is higher than the other.

Among the things we may have done right could be our employment, our education, our relationships, our finances, our health, our faith and our service to others. For good measure you may want to add our weight and your beauty. All of these could be some

of the great things that happened to you this year in a positive way. Conversely, we could take the same list and many of the items on that list could also be those things that highlight our weaknesses.

As we analyze our own performance we must judge ourselves objectively. Have there been opportunities we missed because we procrastinated? Could we have done better? Are there areas in which we failed and can blame no one but ourselves? No one can really answer those questions but us. As we wrap up this year, we must remember the words of the sage: "To thine own self be true."

As we wrap up after Christmas we have to also ask ourselves all important questions: Did we improve this year in our relationship with God? Did we pray more or less this year? Did we worship more or less this year? In proportion to the way we were blessed did we give more or less this year?

Since drawer 13 is filled and there's no more room for unfulfilled resolutions it seems that it's now necessary for us to act upon at least a few more resolutions especially those that refer to God.

As Christians, perhaps we shouldn't say we are not going to make any resolutions, but maybe we should say that we are going to keep the resolutions we make in the new year. Holding onto our faith let us resolve to walk into the next year, stronger, bolder and more rooted in our faith than we have ever been before.

Exposition

This text focuses on what the wise men did after they saw the Christ child.

The wise men of this text traveled from the east following the great star they saw in the heavens.

Such stars had always been thought to herald the coming of great leaders such as Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar. This star, even greater than those they had seen before, brought them to Palestine.

Meeting with King Herod, they told of the wonders they had observed in the heavens and the King faked a devotion to the Christ child. He told the wise men that he wanted them to report to him so that he could come and "worship him also." His desire was not to worship Christ, but to destroy Him because he feared he might grow to become the next King of Israel as predicted in the scriptures.

The wise men proved themselves to be "wise." They did not return to Herod and give a report, but returned home by a different route.

Wrapping it all up

As we wrap up this year we should look closely at the acts of these travelers then extract from it our own life lesson

THE WISE MEN WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO FIND JESUS: The wise men traveled a great distance to get to Jesus. No one knows for sure, but some have theorized that they traveled hundreds if not thousands of miles to see the Christ Child. It was obvious that they went out of their way to worship Him. Today, as we think about

the year ahead, we should be prepare to go out of our way to be close to God and the people of God in the year to come. That's a tall order because there are so many things on our schedules that we often find very little time for God, although we really want to. We reduce our relationship to posting a few quotes on Facebook and saying a quick praise the Lord when we get a blessing. Yet, God and the kingdom of God require your active presence. The wise men could have sent their gifts by servants with a note that they had meetings and career related engagements, but could not worship Him. They made no excuses, they went out of their way to find Him. If we want to see Jesus, we should go out of our way. A certain church member prayed for a job, but the job required her to work on Sunday. She was so committed to her worship that she arranged to have a two hour lunch break on Sunday and worked an extra hour to make it up. She worshipped on her lunch break; she said it was the source of her blessings and she could not risk breaking the tie. She went out of her way and found a way to make it to her personal altar. We should do the same.

THE WISE MEN WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO RETURN: The wise men did not return the same way they came. They listened to the voice of God and returned by a different direction. What we need to do to improve make take us a long way from our normal routine, but it may be necessary to get back to God. To enter the new year another way try the following: 1)Make sure the reason you want to do something is strong enough to make you change. You want to lose weight for health reasons; you want to save money because of your children. You want to worship frequently and give regularly to please God. 2) Write your goals down and tackle your list one item at a time. Don't try to be a totally new person in the first month of the year. Your goal may be the end of the year and your objectives are conquered one month at a time. 3) Surround yourself with supporters who know what you are trying to do and encourage you, but also hold you accountable. Why does a person hire a personal trainer? The trainer encourages, but he also holds them accountable for every breach in the regimen; he knows your goal and is committed to help you get there. Your church is your support system. Among your church family members you find encouragement, but that same family will also hold you accountable when you are tempted. 4) Reward yourself for small miracles. Encourage yourself with positive self talk in which you constantly repeat for your own hearing your commitment to your goal. 5.) Expect it to happen. Start making plans for the celebration you will have at year's end when you achieve your goal. Plan the family dinner you will have when announce the completion of your goal. Plan the day at church when you will announce that you and the Lord achieved your goal. Expect it, plan for it and immediately step into it!

THE WISE MEN GLORIFIED GOD IN ANOTHER WAY: The Wise Men were not Jewish. They were astrologers likely from Persia and other portions of the non-Jewish world, but after they saw the Lord for themselves they left praising God and glorifying Him in another way. That gives us a clue of what we should do as we wrap up after Christmas, we should prepare to praise God more intensely, sincerely and regularly than we have ever done before. If we whispered our Amen in the years past, we should say it a little louder next year! If we sang once or twice last year we should sing more in the

year ahead. The wise men didn't know God at first, but when they met Him for themselves they had a new song to sing. That should be our resolution.

Wrapping it up

Finally, brothers and sisters we should wrap up this Christmas season, with praise on our lips and thanksgiving in our hearts.

Thanksgiving is how the wise men wrapped it up and that should be our resolution as well.

Somebody will ask why should I wrap up the year with praise, when all I had this year was trouble?

Somebody will ask why should I wrap up the year with praise, when I had a death in my family?

Somebody will ask why should I wrap up the year with praise, when my father, mother, sister or brother had a setback this year?

Somebody else will ask, what do I have to praise about, my finances fell through this year, and I had to make unplanned moves?

We should end the year in praise because we serve a God who did not abandon us in our trouble.

We should end the year in praise because we serve a God who did not leave us alone when death knocked on our door!

We should have praise on our lips because despite the setbacks of our family members, God showed up on time!

Despite the unplanned moves, God helped us have a safe journey!

We should end the year in praise because He is a merciful God.

We should praise him because with His mercy He:

—Opens the windows of heaven!

—He answers our midnight prayers!

—He supplies all of our needs!

—He blesses us with daily benefits!

We should praise Him because we know that in the new year, He will renew our strength day by day!

We are not going to praise Him like we did before, but we are going to take our praise to another level as we praise Him in another Way!

We are going to clap our hands a little louder!

We are going to sing a little bit longer!

We are going to preach a little stronger!

Why are we praising Him now and the new year hasn't begun?

Because we know when tough times comes He's going to help us in our difficulties!

Because we know that when the road gets tough He's going to hold us in the hollow of His hand!

We're going to praise him now because we know if we praise him now, he's going to pick us up if we fall down!

We don’t have to wait until Midnight on New Year’s Eve!
We don’t have to wait until the clock strikes 12!
We don’t have to wait until the ball drops in Times Square!
We don’t have to wait until the battle is over, we can shout now!
We can shout now because we know the man who who saw:
—THE SICK and made the well!
—THE WEAK and gave them strength.
—THE LONELY and gave them comfort
He saw a world drifting in sin and picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!
He died, but they couldn’t keep Him down because early Sunday morning....
You don’t have to wait until the new year comes...shout now!

No. 9581-New Year

I am With Thee

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La.

January 6, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Genesis 28:15

Introduction

Do you like traveling to an unknown place alone? If you are like most Christians you prefer to have a little company to help you venture into the unknown.We have no idea what this year will bring, just as we had no idea about the past year. For some it began in marriage and ended in divorce. For others it began with hope and ended with a ring. Some started out broke and found financial windfalls. Others started out with full pockets, but before the year ended had their pockets picked. Some started out wearing one size and ended up wearing another, for better or worse. We have no idea what lies on the road ahead.

In our Christian experience we have learned that it is always best not to travel the roadways of life alone; we need to travel with the Lord by our side. He will help us to enter into the strait gate and to avoid the road the leads to destruction.

As Christians, we don't expect the road we walk to be filled with crowds of people, but we do know that we can't travel the road ahead without God by our side. David said even if the road carries us through the valley of the shadow of death, he was comforted in knowing that "thou art with me."

The songwriter summed it up by saying, I want Jesus, to walk with me. All along this tedious journey. I want Jesus to walk with me.

Exposition

This text focuses on a promise God made to Jacob as he began his journey into the unknown.

In Genesis 28, Jacob was leaving home after a dispute between he and his brother Esau over Esau's birthright which Jacob acquired through a crafty bargain. In anger, Esau pledged to kill Jacob if he ever saw him again.

As Jacob prepared to leave he worried about how he would be received by his angry

brother and about what life would be like with his Uncle Laban. One night he made himself a ground bed with a stone for a pillow. While sleeping, Jacob dreamed of a ladder, or staircase, ascending in ramp-like fashion. And on this ramp, in this dream vision, God's angels are seen going up and down.

Verse 13 records God standing at the top of the ladder renewing the promise he made to Abraham to give him all the land of Palestine including the very ground upon which he slept.

In addition, at verse 15, he promised to be with Jacob in his journey and to bring him safely through.

The Unknown

As we face the future we know that we are moving into unknown territory, but there should be several thoughts that we carry with us on our journey.

GOD HAS GIVEN US HIS PROMISE: What Jacob had going into the immediate future was God's promise. It was personal and clear. "I am with you." That's important for every believer to remember because there many who stepping forth into the new year with nothing, but a plan and the promises of God. Depending on His promises some of made changes in our career paths, business plans, relationships, family ties, educational pursuits and commitments to our church. Like Jacob, we have wrestled with the decisions that we have made and concluded that we will step out on faith trusting what God has said to believers like us so many times in the past, "I am with you." In Isaiah 41:10 He said "fear you not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yea; I will help you; yea; I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." That's a big promise, but we have seen what happens when God's hand gets in the plan. In a way we are just like Abraham whose faith did not falter once he was fully persuaded to trust God. Hebrews 11:17 says, "By Faith Abraham, when he was tried offered up Isaac.." So we too shall walk into the new year "By faith" that the same God that was with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be with us as well. Moses stood before Pharaoh, but he did not stand alone. When he was faced with the Red Sea he did not stand alone. By faith Joshua crossed over the Jordan, based solely on the promises of God. Therefore, we as believers should go forth confident that our God will not abandon us when the going gets tough as the months roll by.

GOD WILL HOLD US WHEN WE ARE WEAK: God told Jacob "I will keep thee." The phrase "Keep thee" implied that God will protect, nurture and preserve us. Jacob's movement toward Laban was a part of God's plan for Jacob. As long as Jacob moved within the will of God he had an assurance that God would "keep" him "In all places thou goest." That is a references to his physical journey to Laban but it is also a reference to all circumstances that he will encounter on the journey.

In times of trouble and despair those who know God best have certain assurances that should be a comfort to us.

God strengthens and encourages those who are on His side. When the weight of the world gets heavy, God lifts our spirits and we find strength that we did not know we possessed. Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

God will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Though it is tempting to do so, those who remain faithful to God will find that God is always with them. As David wrote in Psalm 46:7, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We can say the same.

God gives us courage to face the angry faces of our critics and haters? When the words and actions of those who want to destroy us begin to take their toll they will remember, Psalm 56:11, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

God will protect those who are on his side from ultimate destruction. Isaiah 54:17 makes another promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

GOD WILL BE THERE UNTIL WE MAKE IT THROUGH: God told Jacob that he would be with him until everything he had promised had been done. The exact words of the text are: "Until I have done that I have spoken to thee." His statement to Jacob seems to answer the questions that we have. How long will you be with me Lord? How far will you go with me?" How long will you hold me up?" That was the question the little girl asked her father who was trying to teach her to ride her new bike. "I'm scared daddy," she said. "I might fall." The father assured the girl that he would run beside her and never let her go until she could ride by herself." For several days the father ran beside his daughter as she slowly found her balance. One day she looked back and he was not running beside her but was standing waving proudly at her. When she returned she said, "You said you would always run with me, but you let me go." The father said, I promised to run with until you could ride by yourself.- You were never alone. Today, God promises to run with us. There are times when we find our balance and do quite well, we can feel him cheering us on. If we falter, he's always close by. He never takes his eyes off us. Psalm 121 says "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." In Psalm (Psalms 34:15,17-19), it says "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. 17-19 The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit. many are
the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all".

Courage for the future

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that as we move into the remainder of this year, we should approach it with attitude of courage.

Just as Jacob moved toward his destiny with a certainty that God's promises would be fulfilled, we should be prepared to do exactly the same.

Today, brothers and sisters we, need to remind ourselves that the same God who kept back the destructive forces that sought to destroy us during the past year; that same God is working ahead of us in the year ahead.
If there is a Red Sea blocking your way, remember he says, “I am with thee.”
Whatever comes at us in the days ahead, we should never forget God’s eternal words, “I am with thee.”.

I don’t know what the tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

“I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!”

If I can just leave here today remembering these simple words, “I am with thee,” it won’t matter what comes in the days ahead.
Because I remember “I am with thee.”

—There won’t be a CROSS that I won’t be able to bear;
—There won’t be a MOUNTAIN that I won’t be able to climb!
—There won’t be an ENEMY that I won’t be able to defeat;
—There won’t be a BATTLE I won’t be able to endure!
—There won’t be a DARKNESS that keep me from seeing the light!
—There won’t be a trial that I can’t make it through;
—There won’t be a TEST that I won’t be able to pass!

If we fall into sickness or despair, the echo of his words fills our ears, I will never leave thee!

If our friends forsake us and family turns on us, the sound of his words is loud and clear, I will never leave thee!

This promise from God overrides the material!
This promise from God plunges us into the supernatural.
This promise from God cancels the logical and pushes us into the realm of faith.
This promise of God padlocks fear and unlocks hope and optimism.

Do you have any reservations about what this new year will bring? Remember Gods words, I will never leave thee or forsake thee!

If you take the Lord with you during the new year the:
—IMPOSSIBLE can become possible;
—IMPROBABLE becomes probable
—MOUNTAINS that standing your way can be reduced to molehills
If I fall down, he’ll pick me up!
If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!
If I stumble, he’ll hold my hand!

If I can’t find my way, I can say, Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!

The same hand that touched a blind man’s eyes!
The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death..
But the same hand that was raised in victory early Sunday morning!
That same hand will be with you all of the way!

No. 9582-New Year

Going without Knowing?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church?
Monroe, La.
January 13, 2013

SCRIPTURE:And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do. And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. Acts 22:10-11

Introduction

Have you ever thought what it really means to step out on faith? Many people use the term loosely to mean that they are not quiet sure about what they are doing, but they are doing it. Others take the phrase to mean that they are undertaking a venture with an unknown outcome. While each of these circumstances clearly points to evidence of stepping out on faith, they do not mean that one is stepping out on faith in God.?

To step out on faith in God means that we are taking a direction in life that has been inspired or revealed to us by God himself. It is not something of our choosing, but rather it is something of God's choosing. If God reveals a path for us to take, especially one that will carry us through uncharted waters, we are stepping out on faith when we move in that direction. However, if the path we take is our own conjecture, we may be stepping out, hoping that God will bless something that is our will, but may not be His will.

The move you are planning to make, was it revealed by God? The new career you are began was it your choice or a door opened by God and he pushed you through it? The business plan you developed, is it God inspired or profit based? Is it for the advancement of the kingdom or for the improvement of your bottom line?

When God points us into unchartered waters we are stepping out on faith. When we are placed in difficult circumstances as a result of acts of God, we respond by stepping out on faith. The essential element to 'faith stepping" is that our direction should be the result of prayer and revelation. Once we are convinced that our new direction is Godly inspired, then we step out on faith.

Consider the elderly woman who had a neighbor who criticized her for stepping out on faith. Every morning she stepped out on her porch and shouted, "Thank you Lord for blessing me today." The neighbor laughed at the old lady because the old woman obviously had very little, but she was thanking God everyday. One cold winter the Lord

spoke to the old lady and she gave up her food money to a young couple who had no heat in the winter. She had no idea how she would eat herself, but she obeyed the voice of God. Though days passed without food she still stood on the porch and shouted, "Thank you Lord for blessing me today!" The neighbor thought the old woman was a bit nutty for giving away her food money, but he went to the store and brought her a month's supply of food and put it on her steps!" When the woman stepped out on her porch, she saw all of the food and raised her hands and said, "Thank you Lord for blessing me today!" -The neighbor shouted out, "The Lord didn't have anything to do with it, I bought you that food!" The old woman smiled and lifted her hands again and said, "Thank you you Lord. You not only blessed me with this food, but you made the devil bring it!"

When we step out on faith in God, He will move heaven and earth to provide for us; even if he has to use the devil to get it done.?Ê When God speaks we must be prepared to move and respond in faith.ÊWhen God speaks to our hearts, we sense it immediately. Then we look and listen for confirmations as God repeats the message to us by sending us other signs and indicators. His Holy Spirit directs us through inspiration. We can test what we sense against the Word of God itself. When it is time to make your move, you will know it; that's when you step out on faith.

As Christians, we trust God in many ways and we move at his command. We may not know all about where we are going, but we have learned that we can never go wrong by following God's command.

Exposition

The text focuses on the aftermath of Saul being struck blind on the road to Damascus and his subsequent instructions to witness for Christ.?

Saul was a religious leader who spent much of his time persecuting Christians. He believed that the new sect was dangerous because he challenged the teaching of Moses. He used every opportunity available to him to persecute Christians. He developed a reputation as one of the most vocal opponents of Christianity.

Having obtaining warrants, he journeyed to Damascus to arrest more Christians, but met Jesus on the Damascus Road. A blinding light knocked him from his animal and the voice of Christ spoke to him on the road and asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He was stricken blind.

The voice of the Lord ordered him to rise up and go into the city and wait for his instructions. He was led by the hand by those who were with him into the city of Damascus and for three days he could not see.

There in the darkness, God spoke to Saul and gave him instructions to help build the kingdom of God. He had seen Christ himself on the Damascus Road and was to go around the world, into places he had never traveled and tell all who would listen about Jesus.

At the end of the three days, his blindness was lifted. He arose, prepared to go, without fully knowing what lay ahead.

He changed his name from Saul to Paul and became the greatest ambassador for Christ the world has ever known.

Being Led by the spirit

When God has a direction for our lives he speaks to us. In the family he speaks to its head first, then to family members. In the church he speaks to the pastor and then to the congregation. Individually, he speaks to us directly, then sends us confirmations. Consider what it means to step out on faith:?

TO STEP OUT WE MUST BE LED BY THE SPIRIT: God's spirit directs believers. When we are making serious direction changes in our lives we must pray that God will reveal his will "through the spirit." Galatians 5:5 says, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Thinking about marriage, a career change, or a major decision in life? We should not do so without fasting and prayer. This is a time we have carved out for God to speak to us "through the spirit." This is what Jesus did before he began his ministry. He was led by the spirit into the wilderness to commune with God. By fasting and prayer we acknowledge that we are not depending on our own strength, but the strength of God. God will speak to you directly just as He spoke to Abraham directly and told him about the Promised Land. Based on his conversation with God, Abraham set out on a lifelong quest searching for a city. The prophet Elijah heard God's direction in a still small voice in the wilderness. Saul received his direction on the Damascus Road. When the Holy Spirit gives the direction, we can be assured that He will also provide the sustenance, protection and encouragement needed as well. That's when we step out on faith, not fully knowing how it will work out, but God has placed us on this path.?

GOD HOLDS THE HAND OF BELIEVERS: Saul was led by the hand after his Damascus Road experience. He could not see his way. In a similar sense, when we step out on faith, we really don't know what's ahead. We are blind. Yet, we have the assurance that God will hold our hand. God will hold our hand when we can't see, when we are afraid, when we are unsure. He holds are hand to reassure us that we are not alone.?

Stepping out on faith in this context means to be led by the hand of God. It's what Galatians 5:16 describes as walking in the spirit. What does walking in the spirit mean? Often a pilot flies a plane high above the clouds or even into clouds and storms. When he looks out of his window he often sees no visible landmarks, only clouds and sky. Yet, the pilot makes it through because he is guided by the various instruments in front of him that tell him when to turn left or right or go up and down. Those who are walking in the spirit are being guided not by what they can see, but by the instructions of the Holy Spirit every step of the way.

The journey into the unknownÊwill challenge our faith, shake our confidence, weaken our spirit, and dash our hopes. Yet, we know that when we can't see our way the Holy Spirit shows us the way.?

IT WON'T BE EASY, BUT IT'S SAFE: Those who choose to step out on faith need

to know that the journey will not be "a piece of cake." There will be some scary moments ahead. Israel reached the Red Sea and the waters rolled back. Led by the spirit of God they walked into the waters rolled back like a scroll, but it took a tremendous amount of faith to walk through to claim their blessing.The prospect of death and failure was imminent; there were some among them that wanted to turn back. It is the same with us today.

We see how God has opened up opportunities for us, but the risk involved is so great it scares us. We see the healing on the other side. We see the opportunity on the other side. We see the victory on the other side, but even though the waters are rolled back, it takes faith to walk through!?

When God is preparing to do a miracle for you it may be a scary experience; you may even get nervous. That's when you draw upon your faith and take that examination or undergo that surgery or invest in that opportunity. The miracle might look scary but we should proceed with confidence that God will bring us through on dry ground. Hebrews 11:29 says, "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."

Claiming your blessing won't be easy, but it's safe! We have God's assurance.

We don't know everything about the direction that God is sending us, but we are going anyway..by faith that God will see us through!

Abraham acted in faith. He was led completely by the hand of God. He did not know where he was going, but God saw him through!

Saul began a ministry that would carry him to angry mobs and unfriendly places, but God saw him through!

We don't know what lies ahead, but we are going without knowing, trusting in the Word of God.

Going without Knowing

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember there is a blessing for those who "go" leaning and depending on the Lord!?

For Saul, God's command to "go" called on him to completely change his direction and take up a new cause.Saul did so being led by the hand of God.

Every believer today should know that if God's hand is guiding us, we have a good chance of being blessed and living to your fullest potential.

The hand of God is a guiding hand! Those who let God's hand lead them cannot go wrong. That's why the songwriter says, Lead me Guide me along the way, Lord if you lead me I cannot stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee, Lead me oh Lord, Lead me!

If the Lord leads us, we'll be able to climb the highest of mountains

If the Lord leads us, well be strong even though surrounded by weakness

If the Lord leads us, we'll be able to stand when the world is trying to knock us down!

If the Lord leads us, we'll be able to walk when the world around us is stumbling!

However, there is one truth that every saint who has stepped out on God's word has discovered is that if the Lord gives you a "Go" there is always a "Lo."

For every "Go ye therefore" there's always a "Lo, be with you alway."?

Lo represents the promises of God When storms rise, "Lo" means he'll say peace be still.

When sickness comes, "Lo" means he'll be a doctor in your sickroom.

In the middle of failure, "Lo" means he will give you victory.

In the middle of doubt, "Lo" means he'll give you assurance. No wonder the song writer declared, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine oh what a foretaste of glory divine"?

When you reach a mountain and you don't know how you'll make it to the top, that's when you do like the man who drove an old stick shift car through the hills. Whenever he came to the hills, he pushed down on the clutch and pulled down on the stick and shifted into "lo." When he shifted into low the old car could go!

I don't know about you, but every now and then we have to shift into "Lo!

When doors are closed in your face, that's the time to shift into lo!?

When you tried everything and nothing seems to work, shift into lo!

When you are down to last and your barrel is empty, shift into lo!

Prayer can chisel victories out of mountains of defeat!

Keeping on praising and praying in Jesus' name!

Jesus, the Son of God!

Jesus, the Rose of Sharon!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who died on Calvary and early Sunday morning, arose from the grave!

Keep praying in the name of Jesus and "Lo" he'll be with you always!

No. 9583-King Day

What shall become of his dreams?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 20, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. Genesis 37:19-20

Introduction

Have you dreamed of a better life for yourself and your family? What about your dreams of improving yourself in all respects? What became of your dreams? In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in front of over 200,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. He spoke of his personal dream; it was so broad and sweeping in its appeal that any of the millions of Negro Americans that watched him on television could have easily associated themselves with his words and chanted with him, "I have a dream!"

Dr. King dreamed of a world that closely resembled the kingdom of God.

As the world grimaced at the hopelessness of the Vietnam conflict where a half million Americans eventually died in frustration, Dr. dreamed of a world where the lion and the lamb would live together in peace.

As the world lumped whole races into descriptive categories that prejudged them by conflicting social standards, Dr. King dreamed of an America where all people and all genders would be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin or even their age or sexual orientation.

As the world wrestled with a growing populous of have-nots in a nation of haves, Dr. King waged a war on poverty and dreamed of a world where compassion would flow from every heart for the least of these.

As the nation denied basic rights to many for a variety of foreign reasons, Dr. King spoke of a day when justice would run down like waters and righteousness like mighty streams.

As the world grappled with the growing propensity for violence, assassination, and retribution, Dr. King dreamed of a non-violent world where differences were resolved at the table of brotherhood.

As the world began to question the very existence of God and the front pages of

prominent magazines declared 'God is dead," Dr. King dreamed of world that not only acknowledged God, but the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

On April 4, 1968 after being stalked, wiretapped, spied on and threatened, conspirators that some believe included the U.S. government itself pulled a trigger on a rifle and killed him. The world felt the hollow, haunting chant "Come let us see what will become of his dreams."

Today we are standing on the threshold that separates the present and the past. We now must ask what has happened to his dreams? Are we closer to fulfilling those dreams or do we still have a way to go?

We commemorate his dream and his legacy, but we should also rededicate the founding ideas of his dream as they touch all aspects of our lives.

As Christians, we thank God for sending us larger than life prophets who bring larger than life visions of what is to be. We pray for the strength to measure up to divine expectations as we work to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Exposition

This text focuses on a description of Joseph by his brothers, as the dreamer.

Joseph was the favorite son of his father, Jacob. That favorite son status often drew the envy of his brothers who were jealous of his position. Joseph's position became dangerously imperiled when he shared his dreams with them. The dreams exacerbated the problem because they depicted the brothers in a subordinate role to Joseph, bowing down to him and treating him as their Lord. Joseph's brothers were bothered by his dream, not that the brothers believed they would ever happen, but because Joseph believed in them. They threw him into a pit and reported his unfortunate Semites to his father. Throwing him into what they believed as eternal silence they quipped, "And we shall see what will become his dreams."

Years passed before they saw Joseph again, but in the interim many things happened to Joseph, which seem to threaten the dream, but actually positioned him to realize the dream to its fullest extent. Eventually, the brothers saw Joseph again. They also saw what became of his dreams.

What has happened?

It has been 50 years since Dr. King delivered his historic "I have a dream" speech at the March on Washington. What has become of his dream?

WARS CONTINUE: While Dr. King dreamed of an end of war, it still continues. The nation is no longer involved in the war with Iraq, but hundreds are dying each year in Afghanistan and the threat of war is developing with Iran. U.S. drone planes are pinpointing attacks that are resulting in the deaths of thousands of non-combatant women and children in foreign places. So, what has become of Dr. King's dream? While our nation has not completely adopted an isolationist view that we will only fight if attacked, it has reduced its military presence and is calling some of its

troops in Afghanistan and other places home. Wars and rumors of wars continue; the dream of a world without war still lingers on the distant horizon.

RACIAL BARRIERS FALLING: The dream of a "rainbow" of colors and persuasions accepted and appreciated by all is closer to fruition that it was 50 years ago. Legal barriers that perpetuated race, age and sex discrimination no longer exist. Social barriers that separate the races and genders are falling. And the nation is even wrestling with the heart-wrenching idea of recognizing that all Americans have the right to live outside of the mainstream and choose life partners that may not fit biblical definitions. The election of a bi-racial president by a cross section of America society also speaks to the progress the nation has made. The barriers are falling, but racism and sexism still exist. We still think women as the weaker sex and we still think this is a "man's world." We don't openly say the "N" word, but we reverently call ourselves "niggers" and claim its some kind of family privilege to do so. So, what has become of the dream? We are closer now than we have ever been, but it seems there are still many more rivers to cross.

VIOLENCE IS INCREASING: The dream of a non-violent nation was at the heart of King's vision. What has become of that dream? We have seen fewer instances of public lynchings, church bombings and the mass, violent resistance to change over the last 50 years, but violence has taken another form. We have developed a taste for violence that is reflected in our reading material, movies, and television programs. Even cartoon characters fight and kill each other. The most popular video games destroy or blow up something. We are becoming so violent that we think a movie dull if no one dies violently with blood spurting everywhere. The culture of violence is resulting in unpredictable behavior: Over 60 mass shootings in schools, malls, parking lots and public venues have occurred in the last 30 years alone. Children are shooting up schools and writing poems about killing their parents and teachers. Churches have armed guards and gun sales are at an all-time high as the public responds to the chilling epitaph of the National Rifle Association, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun." So what has become of the dream? The violent world Dr. King lived in has changed course. In many ways, we are more violent now than ever, a violence that has even reached its fingers into abusive relationships, battered wives and bullied children. We are obviously, much farther from the realizing this portion of the dream, but we are still trying to make the dream a reality.

We shall see

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while of Dr. King's dream has not been fully realized, we are marching to a steady beat toward the day of full completion.

Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit and said, "We shall see what will become of his dreams."

Before the brothers saw what became of the dreams, many things happened that they "did not see." They did not see Joseph being sold into slavery or becoming the chief steward a Potiphar's house. They did not see him being thrown into prison and

his interpretation of the king's dream. They did not see him wisely advise the king about preparing for the famine after interpreting the dream of the seven fat and skinny cows.

They did not see God's hand in all of these events that brought them to Egypt so that their eyes could see what became of the dream!

The nation takes hope today, because the hand of God is at work arranging events and circumstances to bring about the world order that King dreamed out.

It won't all happen in this sphere, but that world is coming!

It won't be accomplished by a president or a world leader!

It won't be the result of electing officials or acts of Congress!

What we shall see, can only be accomplished by the power of God himself who will establish his millennial kingdom!

When we get to that land we shall see what became of the dreams of our forefathers!

We shall see, a land where swords will be beaten into plowshares and we will study war no more!

We shall see, a land where our streets will be safe, our children will laugh and joys will never end!

We shall see, a land where there will be no rich or poor, but all of God's children will share in the bounties of heaven together!

When we get there, we shall see what became of the dreams of our forefathers.

We shall see, what became of Frederick Douglass' dream of freedom from slavery.

We shall see, what became of Booker T. Washington' dream of skilled and educated Negro workforce!

We shall see, what became of W.E.B. Dubois dream of a thinking and intelligent race of African-Americans.

We shall see, what became of Marcus Garvey's dream of a race that would be proud of its blackness!

We shall see, what became of A. Phillip Randolph's dream of a day when the laborers, cooks, janitors and porters would get their fair share!

We shall see, what became of Malcolm X's dream of people who desire and thirst for freedom by any means necessary.

We shall see, what became of Shirley Chisholm's dream about a day when our leaders will be boss, black and unsought!

We shall see, what became of Jesse Jackson's dream of former slaves moving from the outhouse to the Whitehouse!

We shall see, what became of Thurgood Marshall's dream of a day when the Supreme Court will let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

We shall see, what became of Rosa Parks' dream of being able to choose a front seat and sit down

We shall see, what became of General Colin Powell's dream of a day when we shall study war no more.

In the land of "We shall see" the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

In the land of “We shall see” there will be hope for the hopeless and homes for homeless!

What we shall see is beyond our comprehension for “eyes have not seen nor has it entered into the heart of man” the great things that God has in store for us!

If you want to see what shall become of the dream, come and go with me!

Come and go with me to my father’s house!

In my father’s house, there is peace!

In my father’s house, there is joy!

In my father’s house, there is redemption, paid for in the blood of Christ!

Somebody said, let’s put a crown of thorns on His head and we shall see!

Let’s nail his hands to an old cross, and we shall see!

Let’s bury him in a borrowed tomb and seal it with a stone, and we shall see!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

Today He sits on the right hand of God and one of these days; we shall see what became of the kingdom of God as it is welcomed into the heavenly realm!

No. 9584-Inspiration

As thou hast believed

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 27, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed,[so] be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." Matthew 8:13

Introduction

Is it possible to achieve any work, whether it is large or small, without a belief that it can be done?When venturing into the unknown or experimenting with the unprecedented, there must be an element of belief present somewhere. Benjamin Franklin labored over the idea of electricity, the others on his team may not have believed in the idea, but at least he believed. The same could be said of Bell's telephone, Whitney's cotton gin, Edison's light bulb, someone believed even if everyone did not believe.

It has often been said that we must believe in order to accomplish a task.

Many students succeeded in a profession because a teacher or coach believed in them. Many who had given up on their dreams reclaimed them because someone else believed in them.

It appears that the more people who believe the more likely are the results expected. Conversely, the fewer who believe, the harder it is to work faith based miracles.

It's good to believe. It's even better to be surrounded by others who believe as well. It seems God responds to the presence of belief; the more the better.

As Christians, we have faith in God. We believe that through Christ, we can accomplish anything that is in His will for us. As we believe, we receive.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he demonstrated His authority over life and death.

When Jesus entered Capernaum a Roman Centurion came to him asking for help for a servant. He believed that Jesus had authority over diseases or at the least could command miracles into existence. The servant's condition required miraculous attention because Luke 7:2 indicates that he was paralyzed and suffering intensely.

In response, Jesus prepared to go to the servant, but He was interrupted by the Centurion and told that His personal visit was not necessary. As a man who was accustomed to giving orders, he understood the principle of authority. One with authority does not need to be present to accomplish a task. Orders may be carried out by others even at a distance. Jesus marveled at the centurion's great faith for this was the kind of faith He was vainly looking for in Israel.

This text is a demonstration of Jesus' authority over health and sickness and it is also a demonstration of great faith.

The servant was going to being healed by Christ, but he was healed at a distance because the Centurion believed that He had that power and would do it.

"As thou hast believed" is an endorsement of great faith that has been exhibited by the believer. Not only did the servant receive what was requested, but just as he requested by virtue of his great faith spoken without doubt, but in confidence that with Christ all things are possible.

How faith works

WE RECEIVE IN PROPORTION TO OUR FAITH: A repeated theme in God's word is that believers receive in proportion to the extent of their faith, even while facing the illogical. Naaman wanted to be healed and was told to wash himself seven times in muddy water. That must have been a humiliating experience, but he accomplished it successfully because his faith was equal to the promise. If we expect big promises from God then we must have faith that God can and will do what he promised. What's unique about this truth is that your faith does not have to be equal to the promise but equal in proportion. Faith the size of a mustard seed, said Jesus, can move mountains. We don't need faith the size of a mountain, but we need the faith required for the job; in this case it's mustard seed sized faith. God doesn't require you to have giant sized faith, but David proved that Giants fall if we have faith for the fight. When friends and relatives have needs or we ourselves face needs, that's when we demonstrate our faith. Faith in God is tied to trusting God. When we trust God, we are willing to go out on a limb, fully trusting that God will see us through. Even when storms come, we are often like the disciples on the ship, shaking in our boots. Jesus chided them just as he chides us today, 'O ye of little faith." If we believe, all things are possible.

FAITH NEEDS TO BE PRESENT: Scripture teaches wherever faith is present God's work can be done. When the centurion spoke to Jesus, the text shows that he had faith in Jesus, but there is no indication that the servant receiving the healing had any faith at all. However, faith was present in the centurion himself. One third of the healing accounts in the Gospels involve the person being healed having faith. Yet there are instances where it was not the faith of the person receiving the healing, but the faith of others. Mark 2:5 notes that the friends of a paralytic man had faith so great that they tore the roof off the building and lowered him down. Verse 5 says, "When Jesus saw their faith." There must be a spirit of faith present for God to act. When there is no spirit of faith present, God closes up shop and goes somewhere else. The best example of

this is the town of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown. They had no faith in the town and an entire town could not be blessed. Mark 6:5-6 says, "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief." If we want God to do a mighty work in our lives, faith needs to be present. Today, many of us are the recipient's of blessings because of the faith of our forefathers, who like the centurion soldier asked a blessing upon their children and grandchildren in faith that God would make good on his promise despite the passage of time. We may not have great faith, but faith needs to be present.

FAITH PROMPTS AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: When a believer exercises faith in God it gets attention in heaven. The text says, "And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." For the servant, faith required action in the same hour. There are other instances when the response to faith was best exercised when it was needed most. When Daniel prayed to God daily in faith, nothing seemed to happen daily even though he received an immediate response from heaven. However, when he was thrown into the Lion's den, the response to his faith was acted upon when it was needed most. The same could be said of the Three Hebrew Boys. The faith of Jesus prompted an immediate response from heaven, but not in the way men expected. It was exercised most when he arose on Sunday morning. The same can be said for each of us. Faith responds immediately, but swings into action when we need it most. Faith triggers when we need it most, perhaps not when we are knocked down, but certainly when we need to get up. It's like those time release capsules that we take for an illness. They are immediately taken into our system, but they are time triggered every two hours, for several hours at a time. When it seems that God is not aware of our situation, he is working. Keep the faith. It is by faith that he opens doors for us and allows us to step through.

If we believe, nothing is impossible

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should go forth in the year confident that as long as we trust in the Lord, nothing is impossible for us to achieve.

The centurion believed in the power of God to move beyond the moment and extend himself to where his servant lay.

We should have that level of faith as well.

There can be no increase in wisdom, maturity, and favor with God and man unless there is a proportionate increase in our faith.

We need to increase our faith in our own abilities, assisted by the power of God.

We need to increase our willingness to step out on God's word although the waters and storms of life are raging.

The just shall live by faith. That means we walk with the Lord, not in the same old beaten path, but every year we climb higher.

As we have believed we increase from weakness to strength.

As we have believed we increase from defeat to victory.

As we have believed we increase from discouragement to hope.

As we have believed we increase from loneliness to comfort.

As we have believed we increase from trouble to peace of mind.

If we increase our faith this year we can do the impossible!

If we increase our faith we can reach the unreachable!

If we increase our faith we can achieve the impossible!

In the midst of fearful times, there is a reason for joy, it's a strange combination, only enjoyed by those who have uninterrupted faith in the Lord.

Those who have faith can:

—stay CALM in midst of crises

—have PEACE in the midst of problems

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

This faith we need for the year has been secured for you by a God who loves you. I know it's true because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This faith has been assured to you by a savior who said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This is the faith that has been declared to you by a savior who promised us that no weapon formed against you shall prosper as long as you stay in the will of God.

This is the faith that was proven to you on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!

This is the faith that was proven with nail scarred hands, a wounded side and a bowed down head!

This is the faith that was proven Early Sunday morning when He arose from the grave!

No. 9585-Inspiration

Punt Decisions can change your game

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."-Numbers 13:30

Introduction

Have you ever tried to move forward with your life, but burned out along the way? If so, you are not alone. There are millions who have tried to tackle a problem with all of the energy and spirit they possessed, but ended up in the same position or did not advance enough to warrant more effort. That's when many people give up and walk away. They say, "Take this life and shove it." They have the same attitude about their marriage, education, career and spiritual development.

There are others who have found such situations challenging, but they refuse to give up. They did the unthinkable, they went forward, with a new life plan that left their critics scratching their heads.

In football, these are called punt situations. A team is given four tries to show at least 10 yards of progress. If they can't they give up the ball. The problem with giving up the ball is that usually it will put your opponent closer to scoring. So, if a team fails three times, it will kick the ball to its opponent on the last try. The idea is to give up the ball, but to kick it so far back that the opponent is not close to the goal.

It's almost understood; a fourth down will mean a punt. At this point the team will bring in the kicker. There is also the option of trying that last run and hoping for the best.

In life the decision we make in our 4th down situation could be a game changer. We've tried several times, but failed. We can try again using the same methods, but we would probably fail again. If you've been earning the same money for the last 10 years, earning more will require you to acquire more skills or assume more responsibility. We have to either change our plan or punt. No progress in your marriage? It's fourth down; punt or go for it!

Football teams know there will be punt situations so they spend $300 million a year

to hire men to kick the ball. According to Sports Illustrated, kickers earn an average of $868,000 a year. Punting is serious business in the NFL. Super Bowl Historians note that decisions to punt can be game changers so most teams recruit super punters. The Most punts in a career record is held by Mike Eischeid with 17. When the New York Giants played Baltimore in Super Bowl 35 Kyle Richardson punted 10 times and in the same game Brad Maynard punted 11 times. In Super Bowl 23 Lee Johnson punted 63 yards.

What if a team decides not to punt at all; even in 4th down situations? What if a coach says, "We're not going to punt because punting gives the advantage to the other side, but we can't try the plays we've tried before either?" What if we try a different play on the 4th down?

It's never been done in the NFL, but there is a team in Pulaski Arkansas that has won multiple titles and championships since 2009 without punting the ball more than three times in three years; even then it was just to give the punter some practice when the team was far ahead.

The coach of the team, Kelvin Kelly says punting is giving up. So he turned punting situations into winning situations. He kicked the ball, but kicked it to his receivers or used on side kicks. He refused to kick the ball to his opponents and give them an advantage.

That probably won't happen in the NFL, but it works for Pulaski Academy.

It can work in life, too. If our punt situations become offenses rather than defensive plays of frustration and defeat, we'll get a different outcome.

The difference between the winners and losers in life is not decided by who can run fastest or who is the swiftest in the crowd. It is often decided by those show they can make game changing decisions. Among those decisions is the decision to go forth in marriages, relationships, business endeavors, educational pursuits, political campaigns and any other pursuit in life. Often the decision to punt or not to punt can change the game.

As Christians, we know what it means to rely on the strength of God. Those who are inspired by the passion and courage of the savior, know that it is never a good idea to count a good man out. Don't expect him to punt and give up on life. When knocked down, he may do the unthinkable and rise again.

Exposition

This text focuses on the response of Caleb after the report of the 12 spies that had been sent to investigate the prospects of the promised land.

Israel's journey to the promised land was historic. They spent 430 years in slavery in Egypt. Though their fighting age men were nearly 600,000 in number, they were untrained militarily and unskilled at self management. Yet they moved in a wave of hope and expectation, toward the promised land.

Once there, Moses selected 12 spies, one from each tribe, to go into the land and confirm God's promise.

The spies discovered that the land was truly fertile and rich with all the resources to support the people. However, 10 of the 12 spies also gave the down side of their report. The land was fertile but there were too many obstacles preventing a successful invasion.

Because of God's promise, Joshua and Caleb felt confident enough to say "we are able to possess it." Not by their own strength, but because they would be supported by the power of the almighty God.

Despite the promising report the people listened to the majority. In Chapter 14 verse 1, they began to complain and weep about the difficulty of their situation. Their final conclusion was to give up the struggle. They wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years, until the entire generation of adults that participated in the faithless decision died. In their old age, Joshua and Caleb still gave the same report: "Let us go up at once, and possess it!"

Their decision not to "go for it" was a game changing decision that set them back 40 years.

What to do at 4th Down

ANTICIPATE 4TH DOWN SITUATIONS: Good coaches know that there will never be a game in which there is not a 4th down situation. Because they are inevitable, teams spend considerable time preparing for 4th down situations: What to do if its 4th down and its goal to goal; what about 4th and long or 4th and one yard to go? In life we must prepare for the inevitable. It is logical to assume that sooner or later we will face financial trouble, sickness, death or setbacks. It is wise to prepare for these. We prepare fiscally, but we also prepare spiritually. Believers attend bible study, Sunday School and worship to build up strength and knowledge for 4th down situations. The coach who does not anticipate 4th down situations is a sorry coach. The family leader must anticipate the logical and foreseeable and plan a spiritual response that draws on the power of God's word.

CONSIDER GOING FOR IT: Anticipating 4th downs does not mean you only need to know how to punt, but perhaps it can also mean to have a way to victory despite the setback. There are many believers who decide to "go for it." Going for it may require a special play to succeed. One football play is called the "Statue of Liberty." In this play the quarterback fakes a pass to a receiver, but his free hand hands off to a running back who sweeps around behind him as he stands like the Statue of Libery and gains ground. It was a special play designed for a special situation. To go for it may require us to retrain ourselves. It may mean having alternatives prepared to confuse the enemy and achieve the victory. The decision made in this situation is often a game changer. It is certain however, if you have not been able to gain ground with your regular plays, it's a no brainer that "going for it" with the same plays may not be the best route to take.

IF YOU MUST PUNT, PUT YOUR FOOT IN IT: There may come a time when you feel you must punt. Even the Pulaski Arkansas team punted three times. If you must punt, put your foot in it. When Samson was blinded and captured by the Philistines he asked God for strength to perform one more feat of strength. He placed his arm around the pillars of the temple and brought down the entire structure killing thousands of Philistines. He had to let go, but when he went he took down plenty with him. If you find yourself in a situation where you must punt then be prepared to "put your foot in it." There are punters who can punt the ball over 60 yards; when they are brought into the game they are expected to "put a foot" on the ball. Punting does not mean that you

get a pistol and shoot up everybody. It means you may face a set back, but you give up the ball in a way that will give you the best long term advantage. If you lose a job, don't cuss out the boss when you walk out the door; you need the reference.Iif you divorce don't depart as enemies; if you lose a contest, shake hands with your opponents, so he'll shake yours when you defeat him next time. If we lose control of our finances, then we must try to get long term advantage from the situation by retraining ourselves financially. The same applies for relationships, business and spiritual development. Put your foot in efforts to gain the most advantage in the long term.

Crown of Victory

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that every player in a Super bowl wants to get a super bowl ring to wear on his finger, but every Saint is trying to get a golden crown.

When a team comes out of a locker room and runs onto the field it has one thing on its mind; winning.

So it is with every believer. Each day we step forward into the super bowl of life, we should do so with a positive attitude that is reflected in Philippians 4:13, I can do anything that strengthens me, through Christ.

Even if we have faced punt situations and have fumbled, with God's help we have a chance to turn a losing situation into a winning situation!

Even though we've had to punt, God gives us another chance to turn:
—defeat into victory!
—Shame into respect!
—Disgrace into honor!
—Fear into Faith!
—Desperation into hope!
—Sorrow into Joy!
—Eternal Death into Eternal Life!

If a team makes it to the Super Bowl, it does not matter whether it wins or loses; the team members get a Super Bowl Ring; it is the symbol of their success.

To get that ring each player is willing to endure pain and punishment as they struggle for inches and yards of turf to make touchdowns.

To get that ring they take hits, fall down and get back up again!

To get that ring they give everything they have with all of their hearts/1"

But there is a reward for believers that is greater than a Super bowl ring.

It's what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

When we wear our crown, we'll sing a new song!

Victory is mine, Victory is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind Victory today is mine!

To guarantee that crown, Jesus was crucified on an old rugged cross!

There were not crowds cheering or bands playing!
There was no half time show or million dollar commercials
When Jesus died out on Calvary, there was no two minute warning!
They buried him in a borrowed tomb..
But early Sunday morning…..

No.9586-Anniv.–Women

Whence Camest Thou? and Whither Wilt Thou go?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 10, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai." Genesis 16:8

Introduction

Do you remember the song, "Nobody knows the trouble I see?" The old Negro spiritual spoke of the loneliness of the journey for the African-American slave. Nobody knows, but Jesus. The African-American woman could sing that same song with equal passion. Nobody really knows her struggles and frustrations, nobody knows, but Jesus.

It's been 147 years since slavery ended in America, but the black woman is still singing, "Nobody the trouble I see." No family among us has survived with a "Muh-Dear", "Granny", "Aunt-tee" who seemed able to do the miraculous, stand against the odds, and exercise the strongest faith in the world.

It seems that God has always touched women in every generation to rise above the norm and speak, lead and champion the cause of their families specifically or our race in general.

We know the names of history: Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Park and Phyllis Wheatley. They are the champions we study about in school as they fought against slavery, prejudice and the right of our people to be free.

Yet, while we know much about the women of national history, too often we know very little about the women in our own families. We don't know the troubles she has seen in her life or the trouble that she faces each day. Very few know what she thinks about or what troubles her heart. Very few know what frustration she has endured to provide for her family. In the play "Happy Ending" by Douglas Turner Ward, a son is upset that his mother who is a maid for a rich family, accepts such a lowly a degrading position. He belittles her for scrubbing floors and bowing and scratching. When she came home crying because the family she worked for broke up, the boy was upset that she was crying over white folks problems. Then he learned that they ate steaks

everyday out of the boss' freezer. The fine suits he wore were from the boss' closet. If the boss and his wife broke up, they wouldn't need a maid and the steaks and suits would stop. With that knowledge, the son began to cry, too. He didn't know.

Nobody knows, but Jesus.

Nobody knows how our mothers and grandmothers became our first beauticians using straightening combs and twirlers. Nobody knows how she could endure the scent of all that singhed hair. Nobody knows how made up for what she didn't have by using paper bag strips to roll and tomato paste cans to roll and curl hair. Nobody knows how she was able to find so many uses for lard, including greasing the legs of the girls before they went to church.

Nobody knows how she stood beside her man in difficult times, endured his frustration when he failed then held things together in the family without ever making him feel that he was less of a man or a failure.

Nobody knows, but Jesus.

Our history is that of great women who seemed to have been equipped with the essentials necessary to address the circumstance of the family. In the time in which they lived, they had what it took to get the family through. Whether it was courage, scholarship or willingness to rise above depravation, God always seemed to use them in peculiar ways, as if they were born for such a time as this.

As Christians, we salute the African-American woman because God has used her beauty, courage and strength throughout the generation to help lift our race. Very few know from whence she has come. In fact, it seems that nobody knows, but Jesus.

Exposition

The text focuses on Hagar, a black woman, who was troubled in the house of Abraham until she was met by an Angel.

Abraham was frustrated in his marriage to Sarai because his wife did not bear him any children. God made him a promise of a great family, but he and his wife were aging without any offspring. Sarai decided to allow her young maid to bear a child for her husband. The woman's name was Hagar, an African woman. At age 86, it was announced that Abraham would be a father.

There was joy in the tent, but bad feelings developed between the young fertile Hagar and the old and infertile Sarai, especially after Sarai seemed to flaunt her pregnancy before Sarai. Verse 5 says Sarai felt contempt in Hagar's manner.

Eventually, Hagar fled from the household, unable to bear the criticisms and envy of Sarai who seemed to punish her for doing her job. She did what she was asked to do and was humiliated afterwards.

An angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness and asked her "Whence camest thou, and whiter wilt thou go?" It was a challenging question because it prompted Hagar

to consider her past journey, her present and to look at her future. The angel told Hagar not to run from her circumstance, but to return to Abraham's house and continue her service.

The angel went even further. He told her of her present condition: that she was pregnant. She told her that she would bear a son and what type of person he would be. He also told her about her future: that she would be the mother of a great nation.

She knew the angel spoke for God. In verse 13 it recorded, "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me."

She returned and did what she had to do, confident that God had seen from whence she had come, knew her present situation, and prepared a great blessing for her in the future.

Abraham and Sarai didn't know her troubles, but there, in the wilderness, God showed that he not only knew what she has been through, but that he offers her a bright future.

What God Sees

The fact that God saw Hagar's condition and felt her sorrow should be a message to other women of African descent as well.

GOD SEES WHERE WOMEN HAVE BEEN: Just as Hagar was found in the wilderness and told about her journey away from Abraham, God also knows the tough journey women have endured today. For the most part the quest of Black women has been the desire for respect. That was the theme of a popular song by Aretha Franklin that sold millions of copies a generation ago, and is still sung today, R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Despite her strength, beauty and intrinsic power, Black women have found it difficult to get respect. White men have used her, black men have abused her and her self esteem has been trampled. In the present it is even more frustrating to older black women to see young black women refer to themselves as "B's" and "H's." That's why the Staple Singers produced a song entitled "Respect yourself." Mavis Staples said, "If you don't respect yourself ain't nobody gonna give a hoot," about you. Zora Hurston in her book Their eyes were watching God painted a picture of a grandmother who wanted her granddaughter to achieve what she called high ground that would bring her respect. Nobody knows what it's like to have done so much for the family or the race then, not receive the respect deserved. Nobody knows, but Jesus.

GOD SEES WHERE WOMEN ARE TODAY: The angel told Hagar how to respond to her present situation; He told her to do what she had to do. In that same sense women today are doing just as Hagar did, they are "doing what they gotta do." Though most women would like the privilege of being a stay home mom with a working husband, that is often not the case; she does what she has to do to keep the lights on and food on the table. She does what she has to do to provide for the health and welfare of her family. God sees women struggling to overcome sex discrimination in the workplace, abuse in the home and loneliness of single parent, but heaven smiles when grab hold to the ring

of faith and woman-up! To woman-up is to play the game of life with dignity and grace. A woman may live in a shanty house with wooden floors or in a high rise apartment, but those floors and that apartment will be kept clean and spotless. She may not have a new dress for every occasion, but what she wears is always neat and clean. God sees today's woman striving to be a woman of integrity, true to her husband, respecting her vows and remaining a woman a faith. Nobody knows her troubles, but in the wilderness of her struggle God sees her and responds. Nobody, knows but Jesus!

GOD SEES WHERE WOMEN ARE GOING: The angel told Hagar about her future. He told her that God had a blessing for her because of her troubles. Today, God paints a bright future for women on the canopy of time. Women are rising to take their place in the world. Gone are the days when women were kept ignorant, doomed to lives filled with dish pans and wash pots. Women are rising to heads of corporations, positions of leadership on local and world scene. To prepare women must continue to prepare themselves for the destiny that is sure to come. Black women must achieve the highest education possible, polish their talents and learn the art of 21st century networking to achieve their dreams. Women must become literate: today that means you send and receive email, read blogs and newsletters, know how to prepare a resume'; and have skills other than talking on the phone and shopping. To prepare for the future ahead our girls need mentors who will teach them how to walk, talk, and carry themselves as they prepare for their upward climb. Nobody knows what God has in store for women, because eye hath not seen nor hath it entered the heart of man to even imagine of the great things God has in store for those who trust Him!

Whither wilt thou go?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider not only where women have been, but where women are going who follow the Lord.

We know that Hagar in this text went back to Abraham following the command of God and she was blessed.

Where does the woman of faith today, go? What does she do?

If we want to know where women are going then we should follow the trail of women of God from the past and go in the same direction.

If we follow the trail of Hannah it will find her telling the Lord to take her child and raise him in his courts.

If we follow the trail of Ruth, we'll hear her say, "Your people shall be my people and my your God shall be my God."

If we follow the trail of the woman at the well, we'll hear her say, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done."

There may be many women who are frustrated because nobody seems to know or care about their circumstance. However, there is another crowd that likes the second part of that phrase, Nobody knows, but Jesus.

The fact that Jesus knows and cares has lifted the spirits of the faithful over the generations and made following the Lord is a rewarding experience.

Because the Lord knows from whence we have come and whither we are going, we worship Him with the:

-spirit of Mary of Bethany

-power and strength of Deborah

-grateful and humble heart of Mary Magdalene

-faith of Ruth and the enduring hope of Rahab

Whither is the woman of faith going? She can only answer that question with a question, ‘“Where can I go, but to the Lord?

In my time of trouble, where can I go but to the Lord?

In my time of confusion, where can I go but to the Lord?

In my time of frustration, where can I go, but to the Lord?

The song writer said, “I must tell Jesus, all of my troubles, Jesus can help me Jesus alone.”

Like every woman of faith of our past, today’s believing women must continue to tell the world of the goodness of the Lord!

I must tell them how He touched my life one day, picked me up and turned me around.

I must tell them how He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha’s hill!

I must tell them that He died for me..

But early Sunday morning ...

He arose with all power in His hands!

No. 9588-Youth

Shall We Look for Another?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

February 24, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Matthew 11:3

Introduction

Do have a special person that you admire and want to emulate? Most of us have focused on someone in our lives! That's the person we admired so much that we said, ''I'm going to be just like him when I grow up!"We study the people we admire. We read books about them, study their life styles, and copy their unique skills. Millions of young athletes practiced Kareem's sky hook, Arthur Ashe' s serve or Michael JordanÕs gazelle like float through the air. How many youth have tried to Camel Walk like James Brown or moonwalk like Michael Jackson? Whether itÕs the giant fro of Angela Davis or the dreds of Whoopi Goldberg, we are often impressed with the lifestyles of others. There are millions who wear their hair like one star, dress like another star, and live like another. If the life we dream about living is a puzzle then the lives of those we admire are the box tops we study to achieve perfection.

It's always amazing that when a great person moves off the scene his generation always says there will never be another. Yet, there always seems to be another conceived in the mind of God to respond to the needs of each generation. After Frederick Douglass there was Booker T. Washington, Douglass spoke to the problem of slavery, Washington spoke to problem of life after slavery; After William Dubois there was Marcus Garvey. Dubois spoke to our need to intellect and scholarship, but Garvey spoke to our need for self-respect and pride. After A. Phillip Randolph there was Martin Luther King. Randolph addressed our need organization respect before the law but King spoke to our need for justice and basic civil rights. After Jesse Jackson there is Barack Obama. Jackson spoke of our need for political strength and spiritual hope, but Obama speaks to our need for fairness and opportunity to all.

In every generation of youth God has another. Another King, Another Obama. Another Beyonce. Another Rosa Parks. Is that you or should we look for someone else?

There are many who waste years looking for the Next talented leader in various areas

of pursuit, often the person we seek is right in front of our eyes, but we never notice them.

Where is the next one? We tend to look for greatness in some place other than our own hometown. Even our friends often doubt our capacity to do great things because they think they know us. When tell them about our dreams to become lawyers, doctors, educators, scientists or other lofty areas of profession requiring skill or special training, they often listen to us but are privately but our ability to achieve our dream.

Is there anything to hard for God to do? Can He use someone from our town to open the doors of invention, discovery or opportunity?

As Christians, we know that God is able touch the humblest life and use it for His service. As Christian youth look at their own lives, they should never doubt their own ability because with God all things are possible.

Exposition

The Old Testament closed with Israel waiting for the coming of a deliverer or savior who was often referred to as Elijah. They had seen the works of the great prophets of old Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. They had heard the oracles of Jeremiah, Amos and Isaiah. Yet, as the nation struggled to restore itself they looked forward with hope for the coming of the next Elijah or the next Joshua; someone who would lead them back to the days of their glory.

When Jesus began his ministry He went to be baptized by John. On that day a voice from heaven was heard and a dove hovered over his head and said,This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased It was obvious to all present that He was the chosen one of God.

From his prison cell John sent two of his disciples to ask Christ a question, that should have been obvious: Art thou he that should come, or shall we look for another.Scholars think John knew the answer to the question, but sent his disciples to confirm their belief. He wanted them to know with the same certainty he possessed that Jesus was the one sent from heaven. What was Jesus answer? It came in Matthew 11:5The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

His works were his best evidence.

Anointed to Serve

God anoints persons in every generation to receive the baton in the next leg of the circle of life. Since that is true we should consider that:

O**UR POTENTIAL GREATNESS REVEALS ITSELF EARLY:** Potential reveals itself early in life. A child destined to be a great teacher starts showing that ability as a child. When children play she is always the teacher, the scholar or learner. The inventor begins to imagine things as a child and search for new answers to old questions. The gifts are not hidden because we live in small towns or were born into races not known for the role we are destined to play. Jesus was born in a small town,

to poor parents, in very restricted and impoverished circumstances.

His destiny, in these circumstances was not clear it had to be discovered.

By the age of 12 it appears he had learned his destiny because after being found in the temple with the scholars he said, Its time for me to be about my fathers business.

Those in Nazareth saw the signs of his greatness revealed to them, even though they dismissed what they saw.

The challenge for todays youth is to clarify who you are and what you are about. Often others who observe you, know you better than you know yourself.

Once you discover your gifts, dont be ashamed of them. If you are great in a science class, but horrible on a football field, dont be embarrassed; embrace your gift.

Our potential shows itself early, seize upon it, polish it and use It for the glory of the Lord!

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT: Those who want to improve upon what exists or change the direction we currently travel, will, by necessity be different. Basketball players were often content to shoot the ball and score 2 points. Then Bob Kurland came along in 1945 a caused stir with something he called dunk shot. In 1967, a 7 foot tall Kareem Abdul-Jabbar routinely began what became known as the slam dunk, it was so powerful that in 1967 the NCAA passed a rule banning slam dunks! Kareem dared to be different.

In this generation are those who dare to be different. Being different might mean challenging established ways of doing things. The believer often searches for a way to accomplish a goal and is not afraid to try a different approach. Dare to be different! That is easier said than done, because being different usually carries with it the stigma of nonconformity. Yet, one of the most salient features of the lives of great men and women is the fact that they had the courage to be different from the rest of the crowd marching toward mediocrity.

POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITLESS: Youth who will be a part of the next generation of scientists, inventor and great imaginative minds should remember that those before them have proven what can be done, this generation must go one step further. Our great astronomers and mathematicians such as Benjamin Banneker and our great chemist and agricultural scientists such as George Washington Carver have underscored the fact that the possibilities for each generation are limitless. If Percy Julian could invent Cortisone and Madam C.J. Walker could invent the curling iron, certainly this generation can go even further.

There are two things that control whether you achieve your dreams in life, one of them depends on God,Êthe other depends on you. God makes the way for your dream to happen but the probability of achieving it is in your hands. Probability has to do with the chances that someone like you can make it to the top. If success lies at the top of a giant stairway with a door at each level, possibility comes into play when God moves ahead of you and unlocks each door just before you get there. Probability comes into play when you decide to make the climb.

God can make a college education possible, but we control the probabilities through hard work and determination. Probability looks at the factors that work against you, but

the believer keeps focusing on the possibility which is that God is working for you. As you work to defy the odds remember the words ofÊ Jeremiah 32:27 “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?”

Youth can change the world and destiny

Finally, brothers and sisters, when John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one, Jesus showed them his works and pointed to the challenges ahead.

Johns disciples were mostly young men and women who were being charged to go into the world and make a difference, under the power of the Holy Ghost.

The previous generation was content to meet and discuss the Torah and biblical truths, but the next generation was challenged to go to the world and teach, preach, baptize and observe.

One believing youth can make a difference and change the world!
Are you the one, or shall we look for another?

This is the question that every anointed teacher asks students with potential, are you the one? You have the gifts, skills, and abilities; will you use them to their greatest potential or will you squander them foolishly and throw your life away? Are you the one, or shall we look for another?

Are you the one who God has anointed to rear an abandoned child, or shall we look for another?

Are you the one that God has appointed to mend a breach in your family or shall we look for another?

Are you the one that God has ordained to speak to the problems of your generation, or shall we look for another?

John baptized many people in the river Jordan and while he was locked in prison he sent word to the master to ask “are you the one?”

“I know you are from a town called Nazareth, but are you the one?!

“I know your stepfather was a poor carpenter and your mother was poor too, but are you the one?

Jesus did not answer John directly, he only showed his disciples his works. Today when the question is asked whose is the one sent from God, every believer can answer His name is Jesus! There is no other!

Jesus is the one.

He was born in a manager in Bethlehem and reared in a little town called Nazareth; he made a world of difference!

He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message of victory!

He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

When nobody else cares, he cares because he is the one!
When nobody else knows, he knows, because he is the one!
When nobody else can, he can, because he is the one!
When we need assurance, he is the one!
When we need inspiration, he is the one!
There is no other because the word says,"for there is none other name under heaven given among men, where by we must be saved."
It's the name of Jesus, because he is the one!
Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!
Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

No. 9589-Heritage

Remember our Chains

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 3, 2013

SCRIPTURE: The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen. Colossians 4:18

Introduction

African-Americans are progressing, but despite our progress do you sense that in many respects we are going backwards rather than forward? Today, African-Americans are integrated into the social, economic and political fabric of American society more than ever before, but it is becoming apparent that as many move forward they are becoming increasingly insensitive to the struggles of millions of others who are still trapped in the mud and mire of poverty, ignorance and racial discrimination.

When we forget the story of our journey, the chains, and the lessons learned, it is difficult to move forward with a sense of community because the drive for individual success overpowers our sense of community.

We live in better houses today, but have we forgotten those who do not? The government tells us that there is an increase in the number of African-Americans who own homes compared to 50 years ago, but there are still millions who have no homes of their own and live from month to month at the mercy and benevolence of a landlord. As we move forward, we should not forget the houseless and the homeless who are still in chains.

We earn more money today, but have we forgotten about those who still struggle to make ends meet? We are earning more than we did 50 years ago, but we are still behind what the average American earns. According to Blackdemographics.com an African-American male who gets a good job will probably earn about $37,000 a year; if he marries a woman who has skills she may earn another $32,000 a year. Between them, they may earn about $60,000 a year. That's not ideal, but it's far more than many in our community who only earn about $17,000 a year or less, with three or more children to support. As we climb the economic ladder, we should not forget those who are struggling to get by with very little and are barely holding on.

We are better educated than we have ever been. The latest statistics show that as late as 2011 there were 1.6 million African-Americans with advance degrees: Doctor-

ates, Masters, and legal degrees. There were 3.9 million African-Americans enrolled in college and 18% of blacks under 25 have bachelor's degrees. Yet, as we progress we must not forget the millions who still cannot read, who are dropping out of school and have not connected the dots enough to know that there is a relationship between the amount of education they receive and their personal success.

As we progress we must not forget that we are disproportionately represented in the jails, alternative schools, juvenile facilities and unemployment lines of America.

We must remember those who are in still in chains. Even in our own families we have been frustrated in our attempts to transform that wayward son, misguided nephew, or deviant sister-in-law. The temptation is to move on and leave them behind. We have lectured, preached, threatened, ranted and raved tirelessly, but all of our expostulations seem to fall on deaf ears. Yet, we cannot rest comfortable, knowing that there bwmight something we can do to help them. We must remember their chains.

Our History has shown us that real change happens when the eyes of the people seek God's face and are guided by His hand. Real change happens when God gets in the picture. Without his presence and power things may change but they also remain the same.

As Christians, we are committed to marching forward, with a spirit of remembrance of our own struggles. As we climb up our goal is to transform our communities and families through the power of the blood of Christ. We go forward empowered by God's grace, but we must remember our chains.

Exposition

This text focuses on the closing words of Paul in his letter to the Colossians in which he prayed Gods blessing on them as they moved forward, but asked them not to forget his chains.

Paul was under house arrest in Rome at the time of his letter to the Colossians. Scholars note that his words word probably dictated to Tychicus and Onesimus who wrote the four chapters for him. However, as was customary, Paul signed the documents with his own hand and included his customary benediction.

He asked a blessing for believers as they moved forth to establish the church throughout the world, but he also asked that they not forget his imprisonment. In verse three of the same chapter he asked believers to pray that God would open a door of opportunity for the word of God to be declared. He reminded them that preaching the gospel of Jesus is the cause of his imprisonment. He encouraged those who were going forward to do so with wisdom (4:5) and with words "seasoned with salt." Grace for the journey and remembrance of the sacrifice of those like himself is the theme of his benediction: "Remember my chains. Grace be with you."

My Chains

Paul encouraged believers to go forward, but not to forget his chains. Today, African-American believers have the same challenge to go forward, but not to forget the challenges that still chain many of our people to empty existences. What are our chains?

OUR FAMILIES ARE CHAINED: Individually, many are succeeding in the corporate and social communities, but the family remains chained to a growing trend that is tearing at the heart of our community. We are seeing a rapid increase in female headed households and a diminished presence of the black men in our families. Too many of our families are being headed by parents who are still children. Before they learned the nuances of family: the importance of education, creating a supportive home environment, budgeting, etiquette, career planning, religious instruction, family management, tending relationships, problem solving, health care, insurance, investments, saving, and home ownership.. before they finished learning most of these things, they became parents themselves. Now many are teaching their children the parts they did learn: how to pay bills, fuss, beat children when they misbehave and put food on the table. Those who are succeeding must partner with at least one struggling family and help unlock the chains. If each family can reach another family with a word of hope, wisdom and instruction, we help break the chains. Those who have learned, teach it to others. Those who need the help, must also allow their chains to be broken and be receptive to assistance. The alternative is to smh shake my head and do nothing. Paul told the Colossians, go forward, but remember my chains. Todays struggling families are speaking the same words.

MANY ARE CHAINED TO A POVERTY MINDSET: The 13th amendment to the Constitution outlawed slavery in America, but 148 years later, most of our community is still in chains. These are not shackles on our feet, but they are the social conditions that hold us back. There is a 25% poverty rate among us, but of equal concern, too many of us have adjusted and accepted poverty as our destiny. While many are working desperately to break their chains others have embrace a lifestyle that is depended on a handout from others. We dont even think of paying for our own lunch in school, living in a house thats not government subsidize, eating without food stamps, or surviving without some kind of assistance from one program or another. Assistances are not supposed to be lifestyles. When your back is against the wall you do what is necessary, temporarily, but emergency assistance for too many has become a lifestyle. There are many who refused to accept poverty as their lot in life. These are the mothers who are surrounded by abject poverty, but refuse to let it in come in their front doors, creep into the minds of their children or become their way of life. These are the ones who are saving, scraping and praying to break this cycle of poverty. Paul told the Colossians, go forward in kingdom building, but remember my chains. Those who have escaped the ghetto mindset must remember the chains of those who still left behind.

HOW TO BREAK THE CHAINS: In the movie Django Unchained, Jamie Foxx played an ex-slave who went back and killed the people who treated he and his wife

unfairly. His response was to kill everybody: men, women, old, young, black or white. Samuel L. Jackson played a house Negro who lived in the big house and thought he was unchained. His House Negro status depended on his ability to keep the others in line. We can learn an important lesson from this movie: 1) We cant respond to our condition by killing off or lashing out at everyone who has chained us. 2) We who have made it to the big house must work to unchain the others, without become masters ourselves.

To unchain the millions of our people who are still in shackles a conscience effort is needed by the institutions of influence in our community: the church, school and fraternal organizations. Through these three we must teach our girls the intricacies of finer womanhood and show our boys how to be men. Principals of our schools are more than educators who teach the three Rs, but they also must become chain breakers. Our masonic groups, fraternities and sororities must commit themselves to becoming chain breakers. Churches must take the gospel of Christ to the streets and work to break the chains of poverty, ignorance and moral decay. This cannot be done with one-day photo events. A struggling family needs our time. A child in school who acts out may be crying out for long term help that cant be provided by just volunteering one weekend. Some are very good at staging one day events, but breaking the chains requires long term commitment. Paul told the Colossians, remember my chains. Everyday of our lives we should hear the silent cries of our people, Remember our chains!

When chains are broken

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that the mission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is to break the chains that tie us to godless lives.

While Paul told the Colossians to Remember my chains, our God hears the cries of the people and responds.

In bondage, Israel cried out to God to remember their oppression and he sent them Moses.

In subjugation, they cried out to God to remember their captivity and he sent them judges like Samson, Deborah and Samuel

In Exile, they cried out to God to remember their isolation and he sent them words of hope and restoration from Daniel and Ezekiel.

In Hopelessness, they cried out to God and God sent them Jesus.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus announced his calling, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

We are encouraged to know that we serve a savior who came to break our chains!

Like Paul, we must pray that the grace of God be with our people as we go forward, but we must continue the work of the savior: to break the chains that bind us to lives of sin and despair.

Though locked in a Roman jail cell, I can hear Paul declare, We can’t give up now!

We must roll up our sleeves and reach out to those who are lost and dont even know they are lost,We cant give up now!

The task ahead will be frustrating and challenging, but we must remain committed to the journey of faith, We cant give up now!

Like Paul, I can hear them say, “I wouldn’t take nothing for my journey now!

We have to continue. Principals must lead their faculties to do more than pass tests, but to go the extra mile it takes to break the chains! We cant give up now!

Teachers cant get weary. Churches cant get tired! Leaders must not get weary, We cant give up now!

If we learn anything from studying the bible it is that though the apostles were jailed and persecuted and chained, everyone of them seemed to say,I wouldnt take nothing for my journey now!

Today every believer must continue playing your part to help break the chains.

If you sing encouraging words in the choir, keep singing!

If you wash pots, mop floors and lick stamps, keep giving your service!

If you volunteer with you, work with the elderly or mentor youth, keep your hand tied to the winding chain!

Keep on walking! Keep on Talking! You cant stop now!

We must join the chorus of the faithful who now recognize the importance of the last verse of Lift every voice and sings, “God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who brought us thus far along the way. Thou who has by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray.

Our cry is,Lord, remember our chains!

I hear God saying, In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

Hang on brothers and sisters, there is a new day coming!

In the morning, it won’t matter whether you are black or white!

In the morning, it won’t matter whether you are Hispanic, Asian or Native American.

In the morning, every mountain shall be made low!

In the morning, every valley shall be exalted! And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

In the morning, every chain will be broken

No wonder the songwriter said, Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord! Hes coming to break our chains!

He started breaking the chains over 2000 years ago!

On a hill called Calvary! He died, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

In the morning, we shall see His glory! Glory! Glory!

No. 9590-Inspiration

The Last Words Of Jesus On Earth

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, LA

March 24, 2013

SCRIPTURE: ***And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times of the seasons, which the father hath put in His own power, but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1:7-8***

Introduction

Last words linger on after us. If they are profound, they are quoted. If they are desperate, they are mourned. If they are challenging, the inspire.The late Huey P. Long was known as a powerful politician who did much to help the poor. When he was assassinated and lay dying, his last words were Not now, Iove got so much to do.

Suppose the last words you said just a few minutes ago were your last words? When you argued with a spouse, parent or enemy, suppose those were your last words? We never know. What we do know is that our last words are often repeated.

While hanging on the cross, amidst groaning, blood and death, these words ring out over the centuries because each of them presents a framework by which the Gospel and its declaration of inclusive love will be judged. Yet, beyond that, there are other words of Jesus, spoken beyond the cross that give us a renewed sense off faith and hope.

The last words of Jesus on the cross remind us of the humanity of Christ. However, His last words beyond the cross remind us of His divinity; they are filled power, vision and hope.

As Christians, we remember the last sayings of Christ. More than that, we remember the last acts of Christ that included his death and his resurrection; all for our sins. His last acts and His actual words on earth lift or spirits and increase our faith.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus last words on earth before ascending back to heaven.

While Jesus 'last words on the cross were spoken out of His humanity, His last words spoken before the ascension were from his divinity. They contained both a commission and a promise; a directive and a word of hope.

In Matthew 28 Jesus commissioned all of his disciples to go into the entire world and preach, teach and baptize. That was a tall order because the disciples were all unlettered men from Galilee. They wondered how they were to speak to all of the nations with their diverse languages and tongues. They wondered about the cultural dynamics of such a challenge. Despite the apparent impossibility of the task they were given the charge any way.

In connection with the mission they were also given a promise. The promise was that God would give them the power to accomplish the mission through the Holy Ghost. It was a promise that God would empower their efforts to build the kingdom despite the physical absence of Christ on earth.

The disciples remembered these last words and they served as a stimulus to encourage them in their mission. They were prophetic. They were empowering and filled with hope.

Even today, we are still empowered by these same last words of Jesus. In fact they are often the first words we think of in relation to the mission of believers. They were his last on earth but he has spoken to us many times since. Each time he gives a new charge and new inspiration to spread the gospel throughout the world.

On the Cross

From the cross the last words of Jesus were definitively human. His utterances indicated sympathy and empathy, the spiritual and the divine.

FATHER FORGIVE THEM: Forgiveness is a character trait that Christ talked about during His ministry. More pointedly, Christ urged His disciples to forgive their enemies. Now, as a man hanging on the cross, He showed us that even when we have been wronged the most forgiveness is still the order of the day. What Christ demonstrated through His plea for forgiveness for his enemies is God's love for every man even though He hated the sins committed, He still loved the sinner.

WOMAN BEHOLD THEY SON: In John 19:26-27, Jesus uttered what is probably His second statement from the cross. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

In one sense, Jesus was simply setting His house in order. Yet, how should you feel if you were on the cross as your mother watched? You would probably be preoccupied with your own suffering. But here, Jesus becomes concerned with the suffering of others. He considers her anguish and also her earthly welfare. And He tenderly makes provision by directing her care to His disciple. What an incredible display of selfless-

ness.

TODAY, YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE: JesusÕ third statement comes in Luke 23:43. He says to the desperate and dying thief, Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in paradise. The two thieves crucified with Christ represent all of us. We are murderers, robbers, liars, cheats; sinners all. We are helpless sinners. One thief refused to accept Christ; the other asked to be remembered by the savior. The second thief turned to God for His salvation and He was saved. The day that we do so, we too shall be given a seat in paradise.

WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?: The fourth statement is found in Matthew 27:46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli,Eli, lama sabachthani?Those words mean, What hast thou forsaken me? Some people wondered if Jesus if Jesus lost faith, thinking God had left Him. Yet, it was not a loss of faith, but a connection with the humanity of all believers who in times of pain feel abandoned. It is human at some point to cry out, but it is divine not to give up faith in God.

I THIRST: John 19:28 records Jesus fifth statement. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. On the cross, Jesus was dehydrated from His long trial and loss of blood. There was a crown of thorns on His head. His tongue was swollen with thirst. Instead of water, He was offered sour wine. The world responds to believers often in the same way, instead of responding to our desperate thirst for help and salvation, we are given sour wine. In His humanity on the cross, Jesus understood, but we remember Him saying if any man thirst that He would give that man the waters of life.

IT IS FINISHED: John19:30, says, So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished! Christ's mission was a total success; thats wonderful news! He accomplished everything He came to do. And why did He come? For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life(John3:16) When Christ died on the cross that prerequisites of that promise were complete..

He didnt make a down payment; He said it is canceled, paid in full. Thats good news.

INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT: The seventh and last statement of Jesus on the cross is recorded in Luke 23:46, And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.And having said this, He breathed His last. He put his entire life in Gods hands. Now, even at the river that separates life from eternity, He still places his destiny in Gods hands. Every believer should do the same. We should place our lives and destinies in Gods hands and watch Him work. His last words seemed to say

"Father, I trust you." Thats a perfect example for us.

Not His last words

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that our hope is no in the last sayings on the cross, but in the last words said after he arose from the grave.

Our last words are just that, our last words. Yet, scripture tells us that after the letter

of love was completed on Calvary there was a P.S. When there is a P.S. that means there is a Post Script, it means there is more.

We know the words spoken by Christ on the cross were not His last words because His first words after the resurrection are recorded in John 20:15, Woman, why are you weeping?

We know the last words on the cross were not his last words because he walked with the men on the road to Emmaus and talked with them and they said, Didnt our hearts burn within as he talked with us along the way?

Just before taking a cloud and ascending back to heaven as hundreds watched, Jesus spoke His last words on earth.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

His words were a promise and a commission. His last words were promised us that when we have reached the end of our rope, hold on, ye shall receive power.

His last words were a promise to not to feel faint in the face of impossible odds trying to do a Godly task, hold on because ye shall receive power.

His last words were a promise to not become impatient because help seems so long coming, hold on ye shall receive power.

His last words were a commission to keep on teaching, preaching and saving souls!

His last words reminded us that although He would not physically be with us that the Holy Spirit would be our guide.

I dont know about you, but Ive found out that the last words on the cross were not His last words because He talks to me every day.

I hear the song writer say, I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses and the voice I hear, falling on my hear the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and He talks me and He tells me I am His own.

I'm talking about Jesus, do you know Him?

I'm talking about Jesus who picked his own mother and was the same age as His father!

Jesus who was both human and divine; who hungered for bread, but was the bread of life.

Jesus, who was thirsty on the cross, although He was the living water.

Jesus, who walked through doors, but was the door to salvation.

When we think about Jesus on the cross some focus on the last words, but we focus on the fact that He is the last word.

If we have failed, we dont give up because He is the last word!

If we are weak, we dont stop praying for strength because He is the last word!

If we have fallen, we dont stop trying to get up because He is the last word!

If your experience has brought you a bowed down head, God's got the last word, for I heard the word declare, "Lift up your heads oh ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in!

If lifes problems have given you sadness, God's got the last word; he can take your

sadness and give you gladness!

If life has given you doubt, God's got the last word, He can take your doubt and give you assurance!

If your troubles have given you bondage, God's got the last word; he can take your bondage and give you freedom!

They crucified Christ on Calvary, but that wasnt the last word!

He cried out seven times on the cross, but those were not His last words!

They stuck a spear in His side, but that was the last word!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but that wasnt the last word, because Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands.

Even that wasnt the last words, because just before he left He said ye shall receive power!

But there are three more words Im still waiting to hear him say, these will be the last words to every believer, Servant, well done!

No. 9591-Inspiration

He's not dead

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

March 31, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Luke 24:5

Introduction

Have you ever felt that there is someone out there somewhere who is waiting to write your obituary? They have seen life throw you a few wicked punches and they are ready to count you out. What did they do when they learned that despite losing a job, or failing in a marriage or filing bankruptcy or a thousand other situations that you are not dead as they suspected, but are alive and well? Life knocked you down, but you wouldn't stay down. You were hit with a deadly blow, but you refused to die.

Life hits hard, often with a deadly punch. When we have been hit with life's strongest blows and still climb back to our feet, that's when our critics wonder what keeps us going. They marvel at our ability to bounce back after so many set backs.

Look at the people who refused to accept defeat. Colonel Sanders tried his best to sell his chicken idea. They pronounced the idea dead. When he tried again at age 65 and the idea became Kentucky Fried Chicken people realized "He's not dead." Henry Ford tried to start two car companies and fell flat on his face. When one became known as Ford Motor Company and the other Cadillac; they realized that even after failing, "He's not dead." Ray Kroc came up with the crazy idea of selling burgers fast. He was over 50 years old when his idea took off and became "McDonald's." Those who thought he was out for good had to say, "He's not dead."

If the resurrection of Christ says anything to us, it reaffirms the truth that our hope of resurrected dreams and new life is not dead. Just as Christ rose from the dead, we too can rise again. This does not simply apply to the afterlife, but it also applies in this life. Because He is not dead, neither are my chances of living in His power dead! He lives and so do we!

As Christians, we celebrate the resurrection because it brings us hope. We are overjoyed because Christ overcame every obstacle put in His way and arose triumphant

over death. He is not dead and neither are we.

Exposition

This text considers what the women who came to the Jesus' grave were told when they arrived.

Three days and three nights earlier Christ had been crucified and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph, a friend of the cause. The women prepared spices to anoint his body and waited until both the Sabbath involving the Feast of the Passover and the Weekly Sabbath had past then came to the tomb to complete their task "very early" in the morning on the First Day of the week. They found that the stone had been rolled away and that the body of Jesus was missing.

The women were perplexed. They fully expected to find a body in the tomb because they came prepared to anoint it. When they found no body, the women were disturbed. Mary Magdalene and the other women wept because she could not find the body. Mary wept and the others were afraid. In their fear, two angels appeared, and told them not to be afraid. Then they were asked the probing question: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The tomb was the place of the dead. They did not believe Jesus' promise fully so a body is what they fully expected to find. They came to the place of the dead, looking for the dead.

The angel told them "he is not here, but is risen." The angel explained how Jesus predicted his resurrection and how its fulfillment resulted in the empty tomb. They had come to the place of the dead seeking a dead leader and they left knowing that they were serving a living God.

Not Dead

The idea behind the crucifixion was to kill the growth of Christianity by trampling the hope and faith of its followers. Enemies of the cross learned after burying the hopes of believers in a tomb, they are not dead! No matter how life kicks us we are never dead.

We should consider:

DON'T GIVE UP ON YOURSELF: The faithful followers of Christ left the crucifixion site defeated, thinking the kingdom of God was dead and it could never be revived. They had effectively lost hope in the promises of God and in their own strength and ability with God's help. They quickly disassociated themselves from the cross! They counted themselves out! They had to be reminded of the words of Christ when he told them that he would be crucified but would rise again after three days and nights. They had to be reminded because they forgot.

It would be tragic if believers lose faith in our own dreams. We who know God and the word of God and believe in the power of God would effectively announce our own defeat if we give up on ourselves. Giving up is easy to do when life hits hard. However, believers should expect to be hit by the experiences of life. On occasion, we expect to

be knocked down. But each time we are knocked down we get back up! Just as the believers at the cross had to be reminded of the promises of Christ, we too, must remind ourselves of God's promises. Romans 8:37 says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Don't give up on yourself! You will be hit with intimidations, pressured by principalities, powers, present frustration, a bad past and everything except the kitchen sink; but we should resolve that nothing, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 1 John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." One songwriter said, "Don't give up on God and He won't give up on you!" He's not dead! He's able!

IF YOUR PRINCIPLES DIE, YOU DIE: You are what you believe. If an enemy wants to destroy you he first attacks your belief system. During the Vietnam conflict, American soldiers were attacked with leaflets and loud speakers. The leaflets were designed to question the principles of America's involvement. Some leaflets targeted black soldiers reminding them that they were fighting for a country that treated them as second class. The idea is to crumble their principles.

Our principles are the beliefs that guide us every day. A godly man or woman is guided by a set of beliefs about God. Even when a believer is knocked down, his principles do not change. Christ gave us a glaring example of this when he was persecuted and tormented. He believed in the principle of love, even for enemies. Even when he was spit upon, tortured and crucified by Roman soldiers he remained true to the principle by which he lived. As believers, we believe that no matter what we go through in life God will lead us through it. Whenever, when we lay down our principle take the first step toward spiritual death.

It is our principles that keep us from becoming prostitutes to pay the rent.

It is our principles that keep us from stealing to keep the lights on!

It is our principles that keep us away from immoral activity.

Even when we are down, we should take a page from the life of Job and say, "Yea thou he slay me, yet will I trust him."

DON'T JOIN THE WALKING DEAD: On the day of the crucifixion the believers of Christ joined the Walking Dead. They were alive, but they were defeated. The men locked themselves in a room and trembled. It wasn't until resurrection morning that they were reenergized.

If you ever lose your passion you join the walking dead. Your passion is the energy, enthusiasm and excitement that you bring to your life's work. Your passion is what makes you rise early and stay up late doing what you enjoy doing.

The religious leaders had difficulty dealing with Christ because no matter what they did to Him he never lost His passion. He walked among men and talked freely of forgiveness and mercy and hanging on the cross; even there, he never lost that passion to bring people to God. In one breath he invited a thief to join him in paradise. In another breath, he asked his father to forgive them for they didn't know what they were doing. Even on the cross they could not steal his passion!

Yet, there are some who have lost their passion for life. They just don't care

anymore. They don't care about school, work, their families or even themselves. An ugly husband and an ugly wife who are passionately in love can weather any storm. However, a beautiful woman and a handsome man won't last a week in the sunshine without passion!

When the devil wants to bury a believer he goes after his faith in himself, his principles, then works on his passion. Once these three are taken, we're down for the count. If you want to get up, never lose faith in God, keep your principles and never lose your passion.

Not Dead

Finally, brothers and sisters we remember that the resurrection of Christ restores our hope and faith in a living God.

Unlike the women who were at first discouraged by the empty tomb, we are encouraged by its emptiness. It reminds us that we serve a risen Lord who has not been held down by the powers of death and the grave. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:10 "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

The empty tomb announced to the world, "He's not dead!"

The good news is that if He's not dead, then I'm not dead!

The Scribes and Pharisees thought that the crucifixion and burial of Christ ended it all, but Sunday morning they were astonished to learn, "He's not dead!"

The Roman soldiers placed guards around the tomb and sealed it with a seal, but when the stone was rolled away, they had to declare, "He's not dead."

Has the world pronounced your death?

The world saw you when you lost your job and your income was sliced, but today you are miraculously still around, all they can say is "He's not dead!"

Your critics saw you fail in business several times, but yet you are still trying with yet another venture, all they can do is say, "We thought she was gone, but she's not dead!"

Your haters saw you struggle in school and fall down once or twice afterwards, but yet you keep getting up for another round at life, all they can say is "He's not dead!"

They are baffled because they do not know the source of our passion, faith and hope. It's what the songwriter referred to when he wrote, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand!"

The world can't keep you down because you serve a living Lord.

The world can't keep you down because there is no:

—Battle the Lord cannot win;

—Burden the Lord cannot lift;

—Loneliness that the Lord cannot comfort;

—Promise the Lord cannot keep.

—Dark Cloud the Lord cannot brighten;

—Heartache that the Lord cannot soothe.

Are you looking for us in the valley, wallowing in pity parties, why seek ye the living among the dead? Our God can take our valleys and raise them to mountaintops

Are you looking for us to stumble in our midnight of despair, why seek ye the living among the dead? Our God can take our midnights and turn them into noondays

Are you looking for us to drown in a river of tears? Why seek ye the living among the dead? Our God can take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers

Are you looking for us to be buried six feet under in defeat? Why seek ye the living among the dead. Our God can take defeats and turn them into victories

Are you looking for us to give up because we have suffered a loss? Why seek ye the living among the dead? Our God can take our losses and make them work for our gain.

The message of the resurrection is that Christ is alive. Because He lives, I have hope!

He's not dead, He is alive!

He's not dead; I know it because He is still blessing me!

He's not dead, I know it because He is still raising my bowed down head!

He's not dead, I know it because He is still picking me up and turning me around!

Somebody called him bread in a starving land!

Somebody called him a bridge over troubling water!

Somebody called him a doctor in a sick room!

Somebody called him a lawyer in our courtroom!

His name is Jesus!

He picked up an old rugged cross and they crucified Him on Calvary!

Death said, "He's dead! Let's put him in a tomb!" but life kept shaking his head!

Death said "He's dead, let's put a rock in front of his tomb to make sure he stays dead," but life kept shaking His head!

The scribes said, put a seal on the rock, so they won't claim he's not dead! –but life kept shaking his head!

The Romans put soldiers to watch the seal on the rock in front of The Rock, - but life kept shaking his head

But early Sunday morning, life rolled the stone away and the world found out that He is not dead!

Early Sunday morning he arose, with all power in His hands!

He lives! He lives! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives salvation to impart!

Ask me how I know He lives…He lives within my heart!

No.9592-Inspiration

Ain't nobody got time for that

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 7, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain. Psalm 89:47

Introduction

Has anyone ever wasted your time? Have you ever participated in an event and concluded when it was over that it was a waste of time? Have you ever been invited to a meaningless activity that had not purpose that threatened to consume a large block of your time? What was your response?

If you are like millions of Americans you probably responded like the woman named "Sweet Brown" whose apartment was destroyed in an Oklahoma City blaze in 2012. When interviewed Sweet Brown said. "Well, I woke up to get me a cold pop and then I thought somebody was barbecuing. I said, 'Oh Lord Jesus, it's a fire.' Then I ran out, I didn't grab shoes or nothing. I ran for my life and then the smoke got me, I got bronchitis! Ain't nobody got time for that."

That last phrase, "Ain't nobody got time for that" was made into scores of videos and broadcast on national television and viewed by millions. Instantly, "Sweet Brown" became a celebrity. Sweet Brown, a poor woman, is now a television icon. She makes real estate commercials, has her own website selling "Ain't nobody got time for that"-memorabilia, endorses products, appears on national television and has landed a part in an upcoming Tyler Perry movie "Madeas' Christmas."

What made the phrase so popular is probably fact that many people agree with it in principle, they simply don't say it aloud.

We are frustrated over wasted time. We are also frustrated over things and people that waste our time. Social scientists tell us that in minutes: We spend two years of our lives trying to return phone calls to people who are never at home when we call back-Ain't nobody got time for that!

We spend six months of our lives waiting for the traffic light to turn green. "Ain't nobody got time for that!"

We spend eight months of our lives reading junk mail, "Ain't nobody got time for that!"

We seem to lose a lot of time doing a lot of useless things such as waiting in line, being held on hold, and waiting for water to boil. There is so much time loss that many feel like Sweet Brown and say, “Ain’t nobody got time for that!”

Is it possible that there are some who say the same things about God, the church and Christian living?

Someone says we should say a prayer before we eat our food, then someone answers, “My lunch break is only 30 minutes, “Ain’t nobody got time for that!” Someone else says, we should attend worship regularly and attend bible study regularly and someone answers, “Ain’t nobody got time for that!” Is it possible that when God says wait until you are married to have sex, that someone answers, ”Ain’t nobody got time for that?”

While Sweet Brown’s colloquialism is popular it is an indicator of growing feeling among many people who have little time for anything that does benefit themselves.

We should be grateful that heaven doesn’t subscribe to Sweet Brown’s website. If so, when we called on God to tell him our problems we might get the answer, “”Ain’t nobody got time for that!”

As Christians, we are grateful that God is never too busy to hear us and answer our call. We have decided to use all of our time living for him and expanding his kingdom.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

A maskil is a skillfully written poem aimed at imparting wisdom in song. “They spoke of reality. This is a reality where murder, violence, hatred and suffering were the constant inescapable burden of the author. A reality where only the unfailing love and unending forgiveness of a perfect God could give wings like a dove to fly away and be at rest.

One reality that is mention in this Mischil is the shortness of time. It is letter truth, set to music, that emphasis that we have but a short time on this earth and therefore we must live each day well.

That there is little time to waste on matters that will not carry to our ultimate destination is certain, so the psalmist advises that each should “Remember how short my time is.”

Some things we should have time for:

There are some things we should have time for including:

LOVE REQUIRES TIME: Love requires time. Quality time. Love and the word instant are incompatible because love deals with two things: feelings and action. Love is a succession of feelings that are nurtured through time spent together. A minute here and a moment there is instant love, but it is also frustrating love.

You may not have a lot of time, but a love that last takes time. If we don’t have time to listen, share, think, laugh, feel and grow together love will die.

FAMILY BUILDING REQUIRES TIME: The strength of the family is directly

related to several elements: Quality time, understanding, support, and love. Too many families underestimate the importance of quality time. Quality time is time dedicated to the interest of other family members, with nothing else on the agenda. It's the family gatherings, the in-house talent show, and the animated funny moments when everyone feels free enough to let their guards down and laugh and relax.

We should never reach the point when it comes to family that we say, "Ain't nobody got time for that."

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: We can't get so busy that we don't have time for God.

Things that are godly often take up tremendous amounts of time. Bible study is not quick, it takes time.

A real prayer life is not instant, but it takes time. True worship is not instant, it takes time.

A person who never has time considers the amount of time set aside for worship, prayer, bible study and spiritual growth as an encroachment upon his schedule.

Such a person looks for the quick version that can give a quick fix. Is there an instant way to tell God thanks for His blessings? Is there quick way to praise him for His goodness?

Some things we should not have time for any more

There are sometimes that we should tag with a "Sweet Brown stamp, including:

WASTING TIME IN JAIL: There are many who regular visitors to the courts and have seen jail cells so often that they have a reserved space. Count the years spent in court, hearings, jail and in in police custody and someone should be say, "Ain't nobody got time for that."

WASTING TIME ON POINTLESS RELATIONSHIPS; There are millions of people who are wasting time in relationships that are going nowhere. He won't marry you or you are not interested in marrying him. Months and years go by without any intention of marrying or making the relationship permanent. "Ain't nobody got time for that."

WASTING TIME IN LAZINESS: There are millions who spend most of their day at home watching television or sleeping without exercising any effort to find a job or involved in some worthy pursuit. Playing video games, watching T.V. and talking on the phone is their occupation. It produces no fruit and upsets the family. "Ain't nobody got time for that."

WASTING TIME IN RIOTOUS LIVING: Too many are like the Prodigal son who wasted his substance in riotous living. He wasted his money, wasted his time, and wasted all of his resources on so called friends who used him until they used him up. Then one day he came to himself and realized how much time and money he wasted and repented. He must have said, "Ain't nobody got time for that.

All of our time

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Finally, brothers and sisters, we should be so busy working in the kingdom that we don't have time for the foolishness of the world.

The world will make demands on our time, but saint's often find themselves saying, "I'm sorry, but I don't have time for that!"

We turn down invitations to party and drink with old wild friends, because we now have a new walk in Christ. They ask, but we say, "Ain't nobody got time for that!"

We turn away from offers to smoke dope with our hommies, because we are now walking in the light of the word of God. They ask, but we say, "Ain't nobody got time for that."

We are no longer attracted to run the clubs looking for one night stands, because we have fallen in love with Jesus and "Ain't nobody got time for that!"

We don't have time for that because we are giving our best to God who is on time when we need a blessing.

We don't have time for that because we are giving our best to God who is on time when we need a healing.

We don't have time for that because we are giving our best to God who is on time when we need forgiveness for our sins.

We need to be busy building the kingdom, giving Him all of our time.

—I don't have time to see what time you came in because I'm trying to make it in!

—I don't have time to see who you were with, because everyday I'm walking with the king!

—I don't have time to speculate how much you have in the bank, because my father is rich in houses and land and he holds the wealth of the world in his hand

—I don't have time to worry about what kind of shoes you are wearing, because when I get to heaven I'm going to put on my shoes and walk!

I don't have time for the foolishness of the world because it takes all of my time to praise God for His mercy!

It takes all of my time to thank him for anointing my life with the Holy Spirit!

It takes all of my time to praise him for picking me up and turning me around

It takes all of my time to praise God who sent his only begotten Son to be a living sacrifice!

He took His time, coming through 42 generations.

But in the fullness of time, he picked up an old rugged cross!

In the fullness of time He died on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, right on time; He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9593-Inspiration

What are you waiting for?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.
April 14, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." Psalm 39:7

Introduction

Are you guilty of waiting for your shrimp boat to land? If a shrimper is lucky he may get a single load of shrimp that could bring thousands of dollars at once. Seeing that, many South Louisianans dream of what they will do when their shrimp boat finally comes in. Shrimpers don't sit around and wait on the boat to come in, however, they go out every day and drop their nets. Sometimes they come back with nothing, but they keep trying. They never wait on the boat to fill itself with Shrimp, they work at it every day.

There are far too many of us who are procrastinating about what essentially needs to be done today, putting it off until another day. We make lofty plans and fill our daybooks with dates, times and places only to schedule them out as we put them off until tomorrow. What was that Shakespeare said about tomorrow? "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time; And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death." He may have been correct. Those things that we put off until tomorrow do have a way of suddenly creeping up on us. Before we know it tomorrow is today.

There are many today are waiting on their future instead of making their future happen through their actions today. Today, is the first day of the future you talked about yesterday.

Many of us are waiting on our Shrimp Boat to come in, but we are not casting a net.

When it comes to improving our relationship with God, what are we waiting on? Do we constantly promise ourselves to do better, but delay in doing so? Is there a reason? If we know we need to give God first place in our lives and reprioritize ourselves, what are we waiting for?

As Christians, we must not delay as we carry out our mission and purpose in kingdom building. The time to act on our faith in God is now; there is no time for procrastination.

Exposition

This text focuses on the fact that believers place their trust in God and wait for His direction.

David was a man after God's own heart, but he often sinned and sometimes failed to act on the faith within. Though God loved him, David was punished for his transgressions for both his deviant actions and his inaction.

In this text, written in the midst of David's affliction, he raised a question, "What wait I for?" which is still being asked today. The answer depends on the circumstance that prompts the question.

Some are waiting for truth. Psalm 25:5 says, "Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long." The truth, said Jesus, will make us free.

When surrounded by evil, some wait for someone to show integrity. Psalm 25:21 says, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."

Others wait for God to shield them. Psalm 33:20 says, " Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield."

Like David, if believers delay; it is to receive a sign from the Lord. However, once that sign is received, we are then prepared to move.

Waiting

What does it mean to wait on the Lord. There are many concocted definitions.

WAITING ON GOD DOES NOT MEAN IDLENESS: Some confuse waiting on the Lord with foolish idleness. The utility bill is due but the misinformed believer watches television, waiting on the Lord. The car is out of gas but the misinformed believer keeps driving, waiting on the Lord. To wait on the Lord does not mean that a person should sit around and wait for their dreams to fall out of the sky fully developed. To wait on the Lord means to have confidence WHILE we are working with the knowledge that God will provide the strength persevere and the outcome according to His will.

Those who know they should retrain themselves for jobs in the future, but have not begun, are foolish if they are waiting for God to drop the training out of the sky. That new room you plan for your house, the new skill you plan to learn, they new direction you plan to make with your life; what are you waiting for? If we trust God we should not remain idle, but actively seek its end. The beauty of such activity is we get to watch clear a path for us even as we take steps into the unknown.

SOME ARE WAITING FOR COURAGE: There are many who have not claimed their blessings in life because they don't have the courage. They have doubts. Doubt means that there is distrust. It means that we believe in God but we don't trust Him to handle our situation. That often happens when we leave the mountaintop experience of worship and move into the valley of reality. When we are faced with the hard

circumstances that life presents, doubts enter our minds.

A tire company can attest to the durability of its products in the laboratory and factory. It can brag of its safety under heat and pressure. It can say it a thousand times, but the real test comes when the rubber meets the road. For many people when the rubber meets the road they don't have the courage to make their move. That's when precept meets practicality. If there is doubt it will keep us from doing what we should be doing. Doubts detain us. They restrain us. They hold us back. Our response should be the same as the Three Hebrew Boys Our God is able to deliver us... It should be the same as Daniel, faced with a tenacious and horrible death in the lion's den, but he entered it confident that God would make a way.

SOME ARE WATING FOR GOD TO HURRY UP: There are many who have set a "right now" time for God and are frustrated when God doesn't show up on their time schedule. A great truth we learn about God is that if He has promised something, it will happen, we just don't know when. However, if he gives us a time expect it. When he told Israel to prepare to leave Egypt in the morning, they packed and waited and the morning they left. Usually, however he gives no specific time. Even when Christ came Believers who place a date and time when they expect God to act frustrate themselves because God does not move by our time. The wait seems longer because we have placed a time limitation on God's action. We cannot hurry God. When the time is right God will move. The saying is, "He may not come when you want him, but He's always on time."

Worth Waiting For

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that the blessings of God are worth waiting for.

There are many who are idle and have not moved; they have no idea what they are waiting for.

There are many who have come to a complete standstill and scratch their heads when someone asks, "What are you waiting for?"

People are waiting for a variety of things.

The defeated are waiting for the final victory. Jesus has promised that victory. He told John, "He that over cometh shall inherit all things."

The weak are waiting for more strength! The faint in strength are waiting for God's promise to Isaiah that their strength would be renewed.

The discouraged are waiting for encouragement. In his discouragement David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

The confused are waiting for answers! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understandings. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths."

The lonely are waiting for comfort. Jesus said, "And lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the earth."

I don’t know about you, but I’ve decided to wait on the Lord!
Wait on the Lord, and mountains will be made low!
Wait on the Lord, and valleys shall be exalted!
Wait on the Lord, and crooked places shall be made straight!
Wait on the Lord, and rough places shall be made plain!
Hold to his hand, hold to God’s unchanging hand!
While you are waiting, keep your faith turned up high and hold to his hand!
While you are waiting, keep watching and praying!
While you are waiting, keep telling the story!
Tell everybody about the goodness of the Lord!
Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!
Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!
Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don’t stop there..tell them how Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.
Wait on the Lord ...and everything will be alright!

No. 9594-Inspiration

Let's Have Church

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2013

SCRIPTURE: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Philippians 3:3

Introduction

Have you ever heard the phrase, "We had church today?" It is a common phrase heard among African-American churchgoers that indicates that all of the elements for God to be present were in place and they were bathed with the spiritual power of God.

In the African-American mindset we "have church" when a worship is really touching, powerful, relevant, and meaningful. What makes such services valuable is the fact that through a combination of rhythmic, powerful preaching and litany of songs and rituals that we praise in God in such a way that we conclude that, "We had church today."

In our history as a people, "Having Church" meant following a prescribed ritual, that no matter how meaningless or disconnected it was from the life we lived; it was stilled perceived as real worship. Having church included a costume for the preacher, usually a penguin tailed coat called a preaching coat, a white dress for the mothers, black suits for deacons, members dressed in "church' clothes.

"Having church" requires us to stand, sit, stand, sit and then sing certain songs, talk back to the preacher and even includes a few shouts.

When all of that happens at the same time, there are many who say, "Chile we show had church."

Worship was connected with participation in the ritual. Even today, there are many of us who associate the rituals of our slave ancestry with true worship. "Having Church" allows us to give the appearance of worship even while we participate in ungodly activities, which in themselves indicate that we are not in solidarity with the savior, but simply participating in a ritual that feels good, but offers no connectivity with the savior.

There is no harm with "having church" as long as it is not a substitute for real union with Christ.

Ain't no harm in clapping our hands, as long as our hands are busy doing God's work.

Ain't no harm with stomping our feet, as long as our feet are carrying us in the right direction.

Ain't no harm in shouting every now and then, as long as we are shouting from within and not from without.

I suspect that among the old warriors that there were many who were on fire for God when they walked in the front door. They were prayed up before they left home. They were in communed as stood on the church grounds. They were "Having church" before the big worship even started.

Real worship is in the heart and doesn't need a single ritual to make it happen.

As Christians, we worship God in spirit and in truth. It is not about organs, choir robes, pews and singing "Amazing Grace;" it's about being connected with Christ in our spirit in a way that makes our worship true.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that real worship does not depend on rituals, but on being in the spirit or in solidarity with Christ.

The Jews had reduced worship to a series of meaningless rituals that substituted themselves for worship. These rituals included special hand washing ceremonies, special songs that were ordered, a variety of clothing that was specified or even special foods that were to be eaten –or not eaten.

Chief among the rituals was that of circumcision. Men who were circumcised were considered in union with God. All adult males among Jews were required to show their allegiance and solidarity with God through circumcision. It was an outward ceremony that gradually became unique to the Jews.

Circumcision was gender specific. It only applied to men because it was men who were intended to bring the sacrifices and participate in the ceremonies that indicated true worship. There was no similar requirement for women, indicating that worship was for men only.

Paul address the ritual of circumcision by noting that true believers worship God not through rituals such as circumcision, but worship God in the Spirit— The oldest manuscripts read, "worship by the Spirit of God"; our religious service is rendered by the Spirit (John 4: 23, 24).

Depending on rituals and meaningless phrases is legalism and it is outward, but is not considered worship because it only consists of outward acts, restricted to certain times and places.

Christian worship is spiritual, flowing from the inworkings of the Holy Spirit, not relating to certain isolated acts, but embracing the whole life.

Circumcision represented a trust in human methods and tradition, but those who worship in spirit, don't emphasize glorifying God in the flesh, but rather they promote glorifying Christ in the spirit.

To truly worship we must be in union with Christ. It is inclusive of both men and women who are, Insolido, or connected with Him in all matters of truth. That truth will lead us to spiritual freedom, a truth that Jesus says, "will make you free."

Impact of true worship

True worship makes an impact on believers and non-believers as well. The world takes notice when the church, in solidarity of Christ worships him by precept, example, song and prayer. Here's what happens:

TRUE WORSHIP ATTRACTS : If our worship is meaningful and not just an empty ritual it will get the attention of non-believers. When believers are excited about worship, the sincerity of their songs and praise attract non-believers, who want to know how to change their lives to feel the same excitement. True believers sing God's praise and thank Him for everything, even our adversities. When the unsaved see the church thanking God for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise and peace of mind, they are drawn to the faith by an invisible attraction that tugs at his soul. It's a powerful picture: humble believers like ourselves thanking God and singing His praises for the seen and the unseen.

So solidarity with Christ, we should sing God's praises for everything.

In solidarity with Christ, we should praise Him for the greens and butter beans our little car and house and everything! That true worship attracts the lost to Christ.

TRUE WORSHIP IS SPONTANEOUS: Those who have learned how to live their lives connected with God worship him spontaneously. There is no set time for them to lift Him up. There is no set place either; they can praise in sitting in their automobile parked at the red light. They can praise him in the shower, too. When the saints of God get together, those who really know the Lord don't even need a call to worship because true worship is from the heart. It is spontaneous. It cannot be orchestrated. We clap when we are moved to clap, not because we are told. We stand on our feet, wave our hand or even do our dance when we are moved to do so; when our hearts demand we respond. It has no particular order; it comes as the spirit gives utterance. Some may cry. Some may shout. Some may sit still and soak in the atmosphere. Others may dance the holy dance. No matter what method is used, true worship is from the heart. It is a spontaneity that comes when believers are in solidarity with Christ.

TRUE WORSHIP NEVER GETS OLD: Those who worship God from their spirit never get tired of praising Him. They lift Him up with joy continuously, day after day because they love him. A person who really didn't love the Lord criticized his neighbor, who was a true believer, for constantly praising God saying the same words over and over. So one day that believer left a note in his neighbor's mailbox that read: "I've gone for 30 years now and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. I don't remember the points of all of them, but combined that helped me to see God better. I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals.

But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to

do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today.

Likewise, if I had not gone to church to hear the gospel preached or to hear the same songs I would have died for lack of nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today! It never gets old because when I'm down to nothing, God is up to something! It never gets old with me because through singing, what you call the same old songs, my faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!"

I'm glad I live in solidarity with the savior. He keeps on blessing me every day!

True Praise Can't be contained

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that true praise cannot be contained. When true believers think about God's grace and mercy we have to worship him all over again.

We try our best to be civilized and to how back our feelings, but when we think about all that God has done for us, it's hard to hold our peace; we must worship Him in spirit and truth.

It's hard to hold your peace when we think about the grace of God.

Consider the old lady who moved in with her great grandchildren up north. They were wealthy professionals who attended a big city quiet church. Her grandchildren went to church regularly but they asked grandmother to remember that she wasn't down south.

Folks up here don't say Amen and stuff like they do down south. Don't embarrass us. Every Sunday the old lady went to worship and tried her best to keep quiet as the name of Jesus was glorified. Her grandchildren would give her the eye and she would hold her peace. They didn't mind the funny looking red coat she wore. They didn't mind the flower that dangled from her hat. If she'd just sit quiet, they'd be happy. A guest preacher from down south was in the pulpit. He started talking about the goodness of the Lord. As he talked the flower started dangling on the old lady's hat as she moved from side to side. Her heels started clicking on the floor. Before she knew it she was standing on her feet shouting, praise the Lord. As her embarrassed grandchildren stared at her along with the whole church, she put her hands on her mouth and said, "I'm sorry ya'll, but I just got to praise the Lord!"

I don't know about you but there are times when we just can't keep it to ourselves, we've got to tell somebody!

Tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

I've got to tell somebody about a savior who picked me up and turned me around!

I've got to tell somebody about a risen savior who tells me I am his own for he walks with me and talks with me!

His name is Jesus!

He died out on Calvary!

Early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave!

He saved my soul! I said I wasn't going tell nobody, but I couldn't keep it to myself!

No. 9595-Inspiration

And they watched Him there

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 5, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And sitting down they watched him there. Matthew 27:36

Introduction

Have you ever struggled with a problem unsuccessfully, then concluded, "The only thing I can do is put it in God's hand?" If so, then you know what it means to wait on the Lord and to watch His will unfold. In such instances, the circumstances are out of our control; all we can do is wait and watch how God works it out.

In 1937, Zora Neale Hurston wrote a novel entitled "Their eyes were watching God." It was a picture of the African-American community of Eatonville, Florida who who eat, laugh, love work and kill all while watching God. It was not a religious work; it was a work of fiction that painted a picture of African-American in the real world as we hope for something better from God.

To a large extent there are many today whose eyes are watching God, waiting for Him to step in and make things better.

The woman who is being abused by an abusive husband, her eyes are watching God.

The man who is turned down for an opportunity, his eyes are watching God.

The family that is wallowing in poverty struggling to make ends meet, its eyes are watching God.

The community that is reeling for the effects of merciless acts of terror, bombings and threat, the eyes of all of its citizens are watching God.

Our eyes are watching God because he is the source of our hope. We have been able to endure storms, floods and misfortunes. We have successfully meandered the slippery slopes of life only because our eyes were fixed on God. We have been lynched from trees, our houses have been burned and some of our most vocal leaders have been assassinated, incarcerated or persecuted. Through it all we have continued to look toward heaven with a hope that God would make a way somehow.

Our eyes have been focused on God.

In hospital rooms, when all hope has dwindled to a flicker, our eyes are watching God.

When we are looming over a stack of unpaid bills wondering what to do next, our eyes are watching God.

We watch God because we have seen him keep our enemies at bay.

We watch God because we have seen him hold back the economic waters and the social injustices that should have destroyed us.

We watch God because we have seen him make a way out of no way.

As Christians, we are not discouraged by the terror we see in the media or witness with our own eyes because "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." While others stumble in dismay, our eyes will be focused on the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on those who watched the crucifixion of Jesus.

Crucifixions were public spectacles that drew large crowds of people who for some strange reason wanted to watch convicted men die. Many traveled for miles to see a crucifixion.

The crucifixion of Jesus drew an exceptional array of observers who watched him for a variety of reasons. Among those who watched him were: A Roman Centurion and those who were with him; his mother and the disciples, his critics and naysayers and hundreds of curiosity seekers. They all watched him there.

It is important to note that while there were three men crucified they watched Him. There were three men groaning in agony
but they watched Him. There were three men stripped of their garments and exposed to public humiliation, but they watched Him.

While watching Him and the events that followed, some of those who observed were convinced that He was truly the Son of God and they left the scene better individuals after watching God work.

Who watched Him?

Those who came to the cross that day came for a variety of reasons that are strikingly similar to those many watch Him today.

SOME WATCHED OUT OF ADORATION: Many watched at the crossed out of adoration for Christ. These are the ones who remembered how he fed the hungry, raised the dead and brought them hope. They adored Him for His wonderful works performed before their eyes. Today, our eyes are watching God because, "He has done great things for us." We assemble ourselves each week to adore Him for His goodness and His mercy towards us. To adore someone is to show an affection for them in word or deed. We adore Him for the way He has moved in our lives, a movement that has restored us and brought us new life.

SOME WATCHED IN CONDEMNATION: There were many at the cross who came to condemn him and ridicule Him. These are the ones who challenged him to save himself and come down from the cross. They ridiculed His mission, his faith and His purpose

on earth. They watched Him and condemned Him. In a similar sense, believers today are watched in condemnation. Often it is co-workers, neighbors and friends who watch as we struggle with the issues of life and they rejoice in our frustrated efforts to get it right. They condemn us if there is trouble in in home, if we stumble in the handling of our finances or we are caught up in a sin that threatens us. They watch us with smirks on their faces and belittle our faith in God. While they are watching us with laughter in their hearts, what they don't know is that our eyes are watching God! "I will lift up mine eyes to the hiss from whence comets my help. My help cometh from The Lord which made the heaven and the earth."

SOME WATCHED WITH EXPECTATION: There were some at the cross who watched him with expectation. Most notable of all the watchers was the thief on the right hand side. He told told "Remember me when you enter into your kingdom." That was a statement of expectation despite and bad looking situation. He expected Christ to enter into the kingdom of heaven and he wanted to share that moment. Today, believers keep their eyes on God because we are expecting great things. We are not expecting to avoid troubles, but we are expecting God to remember in our trouble and delver us from evil. We don't expect to avoid the rain and storms, but we expect him to guide us through the storms of life. It is our expectation of heaven that motivates us to keep living the Christian life. It is our expectation of glory divine the drives us and pushes us to sacrifice, serve and sing His praise. Our eyes are watching God because we expect him to move in mighty way to perform his divine way.

They watched him

Finally, brothers and sisters we must note that although there were others hanging on the cross on Calvary, those who came had their eyes on him.

The two thieves, no doubt had family and friends who were concerned about them, but the record only records that they "they watched him there."

It is is interesting to note the last two words of the passage "him there," because they prompt us to ask, "Why was he there?'

He was there because he assumed the sins of the world upon himself and was crucified in our place.

"Him there." Why was He there? He was there because his death would bring an end to the ceremonial law and open the door to the opportunity of grace.

"Him there." Why was He there? He was there because the scripture had predicted that he would be, "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for iniquity and the chastisement of our peace is upon and him and with his stripes we are healed."

"Him there." Why was He there? He was there to echo the truth of John 3:16 that God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son so that whosever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

They watched Him there, but those who watched him became witnesses for Him.

The centurion and all his soldiers watched him there, but after they saw the sky turn darks and felt the ground shake. After they saw the tombs of the saints open the

centurion declare, “Surely he must be the Son of God.”

Even today, the same is true; those who watch God work leave as his best witnesses!

The woman at the well watch him and left telling everyone, come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done!

The man who had his sight restored, told the world, “I was blind, but now I see!”

If we watch God we will see him give new life to dead dreams!

If we watch God we will see him paint pictures of hope on the bland canopies of despair!

If we watch God we will see him give hope to the hopeless and help to the helpless!

Believers are not overly frustrated by what they watch on T.V. because their eyes are watching God.

They watching the same God who blessed them yesterday by rolling back their Red Sea waters and bringing down their walls of Jericho

Our eyes are watching God because when we were

WEAK he provided us with strength

DOWN he picked us up!

DEFEATED he gave us the victory

DISCOURAGED he restored our hope!

LONELY, he gave us comfort

TROUBLED he gave us peace of mind

Our eyes are watching God both day and night. In the morning we sing, “I woke this morning with my mine staid on Jesus.” At night we, “I may not have done all that I wanted to do, but Lord it’s been a mighty good day.”

We are watching Him, when we at our lowest He picked up and old cross and carried to Calvary!

He died that day, and they watched him there!

They buried him and they watched him there, all night long!

But early Sunday morning, He arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

Take your burdens to the Lord…and watch God work!

No. 9596-Mothers

Mama told me there would be days like this

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 12, 2013

SCRIPTURE: My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head and chains about thy neck- Proverbs 1:8-9

Introduction

Did your mother ever give you advice, that later proved to be true? Do you still hear her words today, although sometimes you ignored them when they were spoken? If so then you are like millions over the years who have heard their mothers instructions about life, love, godliness and happiness, but ignored those parts that conflicted with our own ideals. You are also among millions who stumbled upon lifes realities years later, and had to say, Mama told there would be days like this.

In the 1960s the Shirtless was the first womens group to top the Billboard 100. They sang songs about innocent girls who were tempted to fall in love for the wrong reason. Many remember them for songs such as Soldier Boy And will you love me tomorrow? One of their hits was a song about advice that mother gave a young girl, it was called Mama Said there would be days like this.

The song became an instant hit because nearly everyone can relate to ignoring the words of their mothers, strong advice about life, love and happiness until one day what they were told unfolded in front of their eyes and they remember mamas words clearly. Then they find themselves saying, Mama said their would be days like this.

There are two factors that contribute to mothers ability to give sound advice. Generally, the more distance in years that a mother has from her child, she is able to pass on advice from her life experience. A mother that is 25 years older than her child has more life experience to pass on than a mother who is only 15 years older than her child. Having lived Two decades or more, mother usually has a wealth of experiences in life, love and happiness to share with those following behind. The second factor has to do with spirituality. Mothers, regardless to age, who are closer to God, seem to have more wisdom in their advice. This wisdom is not from their lifes experience, but from

their relationship with God who reveals lifes secrets to her in ways that seem mysterious.

Its dangerous to ignore a godly mothers advice, because the advice is often the result of prayer and revelation directly from the throne of God. A praying mother finds it difficult to sleep when her children are struggling to find their way in life. There, in the solitude of the night, God speaks words of wisdom to inquiring mothers and gives them insights to share. Often this wisdom, that comes from God himself and is profound, providing revelation on lifes mysteries. Sometimes it is prophetic, pointing to outcomes if certain paths are chosen.

The bible teaches us the importance of listening to a godly mothers advice, heeding it as if it came from God himself.

As Christians, we thank God for giving us godly mothers who tried to guide us and keep us in the path of righteousness. Let us keep their words close to our heart, because the day will come when we shall realize the truth and power of her words on our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on the wisdom of Solomon as he advises the young to remember the instructions of their fathers and the teachings of their mothers. In the biblical context it was the responsibility of parents to provide instruction and law to children. Each parent had the responsibility to learn and follow the laws of God themselves, and then both teach and enforce them in their homes.

Verse 8 uses the term instruction and associates it with the role of fathers. The responsibility of fathers was to teach the laws of God to the family with the authority to command that they be followed.

Verse 9 uses the term law or teachings and associates it with the role of mothers. Their responsibility was to explain why the laws of God must be followed. In a greater sense, it became mothers duty to explain the ways of the world to her children, examining life from the perspective of Gods will and His divine purpose.

Mothers teachings, usually became a mixture of repeating the instruction of the father, quoting the scripture, and a litany of wise sayings designed to guide the young matters of life, love, happiness and godliness. Children are reminded to remember what their mothers have said to them throughout all of their lives. When what mother says reflects the laws of God, it will fill the lives of children with the grace and mercy of God and serve as a source of strength and distinction (ornament) when followed in the years that follow.

What did mama say?

Many people remember the teachings and the sayings of their mothers throughout their lives. They may remember her words as she tried to prepare them for life. In addition, godly mothers not only gave wisdom from their own experience, but also regularly pointed their children to what God would have them do.

MAMA TOLD ME ABOUT LIFE: Mothers try to help us understand life. Their

teaching are usually reduced to hundreds of proverbs or wise sayings such as:Never talk to strangers, If It aint broke dont fix it, Dont get the big head, You cant eat your cake and have it, too, Dont start it, if you cant finish it and hundreds more. As the years roll by, if we cataloged all of the things mother said about every subject, we could actually read a book because she had something to say about everything. Mama sayings were filled with promise and warnings. When things are going well because we followed the laws of God and the teachings of our mothers, we enjoy the good times mama told us would come. When we fall under the pressures of life or suffer betrayal the hands of friends, or experience difficulties in life, we also remember that mama said there would be days like this. Somewhere in all of that remember her saying talk to God about it. In days like this, remember Proverbs 3:6, In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

MAMA TOLD ME ABOUT LOVE: Some remember clearly remember Gods instructions about matters of love, romance, relationships and marriage. We remember how she warned us to choose our mates wisely, love passionately, build relationships honestly and marry for life. We also remember her telling us that there would be days when love, romance and marriage would bring both smiles and tears. When relationships are strained, romance dwindles to a flicker, and despite our best efforts marriage crumbles, we can hear mothers prophecy as we mumble,Mama told me there would be days like this.Whether walking happily hand in hand on a beach or sitting alone in the pain of rejection, we remember, Mama told me there would be days like this.

Mama said there would be days when we feel that nobody cares, and then she reminded us that God cares. His eye is on the sparrow and he also watches us.

Mama said there would be days when we dont have the strength to love and we feel drained. Then she reminded us of 2 Corinthians 12:9 My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..

Mama said there would be days in when love and relationships will be filled with confusion and trouble. Then she reminded us of John 14:27, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

MAMA TOLD ME ABOUT JOY AND HAPPINESS: Godly mothers try to explain lifes issues to their children in ways that we lead them around the pitfalls and potholes of life. Many feel obligated to help their children avoid the potholes that cause them to stumble. Mothers try to point their children to lifestyles that will bring them joy and happiness.

Mama said there would be days when we succeed and joy abounds. She said we should remember Psalm 9:2, I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, thou most High.Give God the praise.

Mama said there would be days when we find it difficult to achieve our dreams. She said we should remember Psalm 37:4, Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.True happiness comes when we do Gods will.

Mama said there would be days when we we feel that happiness is taking too long. Thats when she told us to remember Isaiah 40:31, But they that wait upon the Lord shall

renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Dont get too impatient your good days are right around the corner.

Mama said there would be days when we stray and lose our joy. That when she told us to remember, Psalm 51:12 ÒRestore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Dont give up on life; whatever you lose God can help you find it again.

Mama said there would be days when money is short and we cant see our way. She said we should remember Psalm 37:25, I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread

MAMA TOLD ME ABOUT GODLINESS: Godly mothers try to explain to their children the importance of living Godly lives that are guided by principles of morality rooted in Gods word.

Mama said there would be days when we would be tempted to stray away from the godly path. Thats when she told us to remember Matthew 2 6: ..lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Ask God for deliverance out of sinful situations.

Mama said there would be days when when we will be tempted to copy the ways of wicked people around us just to succeed. She reminded us that Psalm 37:1-2 says, Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Dont copy the ways of the ungodly.

Mama said there would be days when we will tempted to cheat to get ahead. She said we should remember, Micah 6:8, What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. Do the right thing.

Mama told me that there would be days when I would not be able to see my way, thats when she said reminded me that the Lord will make a way somehow.

Mama told me to trust God

Finally, brothers and sister we need to remember the one thing that every Christian mother tells her children: Trust God and hold to His hand.

What makes a godly mothers advice important is because her children know that she is god fearing and tries to follow God. There are some who get their wisdom from textbooks, philosophers or from the internet, but a godly mother gets hers from God.

Since we know that mama gets hers from God, we listen intently when she tells us and we remember her words.

As we have traveled through life we have learned that what mama told us about God has proven to be true

Mama told us that if we should do what we can in life, then put things in Gods hands and He will work it out!

Mama told us that if we have fallen down, God would pick us up again!

Mama told us that if we fail in life God will give us a second chance!

Mama told us that if we become weak that God will renew our strength!

Mama told us if there is trouble in your home, go somewhere and get quiet “Be still and let God work it out!

If you let God work it out mountains will be made low!

If you let God work it out valleys shall be exalted!

If you let God work it out crooked places shall be made straight!

Mama said one of the days, I wont be with you, but you remember what Im telling you!

One of these days, I wont be able to hold your hand, but when that day comes, put your hands in Gods hands.

When we are in Gods hands hes always by your side

When we are in Gods hands hes with you in the midst of blessings or despair

As the years go by, and you are walking in the sunshine, remember mama told me, if I walked by faith, there would be days like this!

When you are standing tall in walking in the winners circle with a victory reef on your head, remember, Mama told me that if I trusted in the Lord, there would be days like this!

When you are have basking in light of victory after so many failure, remember mama said, if you never give up and keep the faith, there would be days like this!

Mama said never be ashamed to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!

Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don’t stop there.. tell them how

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Mama told me if I gave my life to Jesus there would be a day when I would be able to say, I came to Jesus just as I was weary, wounded and sad. I found in Him a resting place and he has made me glad!

No. 9597-Missionary Service

Bread on the Waters

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 19, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." Ecclesiastes 11:1

Introduction

Have you ever faced a hopeless situation that seemed to be a lost cause? That's the point where we feel that all of our efforts are in vain, serve no purpose and are a waste of time. It's the feeling of the teacher who pours her heart into her profession, but sees little or no results. It's the anxiety of the reformer who makes an effort to fix a broken system, but keeps hitting the stone wall of opposition. It's the parent who keeps spending money on special lessons, schools and tutors, but gets little success or appreciation. It's the activist that keeps trying to help the poor, but the demand for help never diminishes and efforts appear useless. Those who plunge themselves into a cause bigger than themselves, are often frustrated, but should not give up hope, because their efforts are not in vain.

Our community has faced a long history of challenges over the years. Whether it was the elimination of slavery, forging an education in reconstruction, building colleges and universities at the turn of the century, pushing for civil rights in the 60's or pushing for economic parity at the present, there have always been dedicated men and women who give of themselves to tackle the issues of our times. In 1905 a group of men led by W.E.B. Dubois met in Niagara Falls to begin a movement that resulted in what we know as the NAACP. In 1913 Twenty-Two women met to form what we know as Delta Sigma Theta, and others followed, all pledging to pour themselves into a cause bigger than than their own existence: the advancement of an entire race.

That journey has not been easy. Each successive generation of activist, leaders sorors, frat brothers, Masonics and others have met repeating waves of frustration that often appeared that their efforts were useless. The more they worked, the worse situations came. They fought crime, and crime increased. They tried to help children, and delinquency doubled. They tried to educate, and found a generation without a thirst for learning. When we look back over decades of service, some conclude that we have made little progress proportionate to our efforts. They conclude that we are

pouring money into a bottomless pit, burning up energy and casting bread on waters that will never return.

Despite the hopelessness that some feel, there are others who forge forward, confident that their efforts are not in vain. They believe the energy spent reaching a lost child, will produce results. They believe their efforts to change government to be more sensitive to the concerns of the poor and disenfranchised will take root as government leaders change.

We don't accept that cause as lost because we believe in the power of God. With that faith we forge forward, confident that through His strength our service will not be in vain.

What lies before believers is a vast array of challenges that will require us to use every ounce of our ingenuity to succeed. Over the years we have accomplished much, but there is so much to be done and so many lives to be touched.

As Christians, we must continue to do good work, help the poor, reach the lost and lift up the name of Jesus, with the full knowledge that "serving the Lord will pay off after while."

Exposition

This text focuses on a passage of scripture in which Solomon challenges believers to share what they have with others, expecting it to return.

The passage uses two words that, in today's understanding, might give a confusing image to a believer. When the modern believer reads this passage it seems to conjure an image of a person tossing a loaf of bread into a river or stream and days later the loaf of bread comes back, perhaps very soggy. That was not quite the image.

Most biblical believers had agrarian roots. They understood farm talk. This passage is bathed in farm talk.

On the farm then, as it is still today, most bread was made from corn. We are familiar with corn bread or light bread, most of which is made of ground corn. However, after the harvest there was "bread-corn" and "seed-corn." Bread-corn was the nubs of the harvest that were saved to feed the farm animals that provided meat and the cows that provided milk. The seed-corn was saved to plant again so that there would be more corn next season.

A neighbor whose animals was starving after a drought or storm wasn't given corn bread, but bread-corn. A neighbor whose crops had been completely lost was not given a pan or corn bread, but seed-corn to start again.

Look at two words in the passage: "bread" and "waters." Bread in this context referred to the bread-corn and seed-corn of the farm. The term "waters," in scripture, often refers to unseen multitudes, not actual liquids in a river or sea.

To cast seed-corn or bread upon the waters meant to help others indiscriminately, not knowing how it help, but confident that it was serving a good purpose. The passage added that such action would return after after many days.

The idea of casting bread upon the waters goes even deeper. The Egyptian practice of sowing seeds upon the river Nile while it overflowed it banks. When the waters

subsided the seeds would take root somewhere along the Nile bank system and would grow into fine stalks of corn. The sower would cast the seed but had no idea whether it would take root in the immediate vicinity or take root in another place. However, the sower knew properly sown they would take root somewhere. Just as he sowed in one place and expected his seed to probably grow up in another, there were other sowers in other places along the river's edge that were also sowing. The seed would probably be that which finally took root in his area. In any event, the sowers cast seed upon the waters in this way, not knowing what the final outcome would be while trusting the gods to provide for them.

Casting the Bread

Casting bread upon the waters is the mission of every believer. In that context we should consider that:

WE CAST BREAD BECAUSE WE ARE CONNECTED: There is a connection between one man and other. We cast our bread upon the waters because we sense that connection. We help because we have been helped. We teach because we have been taught. We give to others because someone has given to us. We are constantly paying forward some seed that was cast. We believe in the fatherhood of God, therefore we believe in the brotherhood of man. There are many who try to live at a distance from the needs, and tragedies of others, but that is impossible. The poet John Donne made this poem clear when he wrote "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main…because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee." All around us we see the connections. We plant a seed in Louisiana, but that seed ends up in California. You are suffering a drought in your neck of the woods, then a seed sown in Chicago moves into your town. Therefore, when you do good works, don't expect that exact person to repay you one day; but it will be repaid. The child you are raising, the elderly person you are helping will reap a blessing upon you; not necessarily from the person you are helping, but from a seed that will float your way, sown in another place destined to reach you in the nick of time.

WE CAST SEED-BREAD FOR LASTING RESULTS: There is an old saying that says, "Give a man a fish and he has food for a day, teach him to fish and he has food for a lifetime." That is the nature of casting seed-bread on the waters or multitudes of our people. We need to offer our assistance with a hand up not a handout. Too many of our people have become dependent upon handouts, which may be necessary in the short term, but are crippling in the long term. So the challenge is for believers to give seed-corn to young families: Stage workshops to show young families how to manage their money; and to get their money to work for them through investments in real estate, stocks, bonds and business opportunities. Show the millions of boys who are lost the road to manhood, and point young girls to the road of finer womanhood. Every believer is challenged to gear up to sow seed bread in five areas: economic development, educational development, awareness of world concerns, political awareness and

involvement in the physical and mental health of our people. When we sow seed-bread we get lasting results that will benefit our whole community in name of the savior.

WE MUST CAST OUR BREAD NOW: When should we begin casting our bread? When should begin to pursue our purpose? There is a Latin phrase Carpe Diem which means seize the day or seize the moment. The time is now. There is a bug familiar to the South called the Mayfly. It's a strange little bug because it only lives about 24 hours. In 24 hours it hatches, zooms through the wonders of youth, mates, lays eggs and soon they fade away. The Mayfly doesn't have tie to waste, it has to seize the moment. In that context we must do something significant with our lives. We can't afford to remain distant, aloof, keeping our options open. The result of that path is that at the end of the day we don't achieve anything of significance, anything of meaning. We have a mission that is challenging us to act now! Our schools are failing; we must act now! Prisons are filling with our young men; we must act now! The ghettos are expanding; we must act now! Drug use and the incidences of HIV-Aids or increasing, we must act, now! The old warriors sang the song then, and we must sing it now, "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify. O may all my powers engage to do my master's will."

After many Days

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that this text gives us a mission, but it also gives us a promise. We are told to cast our bread upon the waters, but we are also told after many days we will find it.

We are given the challenge to speak to the social dilemmas of our times, but we are given the promise that "after many days" there shall be a return.

We are given the mission to speak to the plethora of social ills that are destroying our families, under-educating our children, and eating away at the souls of our community, but we are also given the promise that "after many days" we won't regret our service.

How long is "Many days?" 1 Kings 17:15 uses the term "many days" when it described a widow woman who prepared her last cruise of oil and meal in a feast for a strange prophet. For this woman "many days" meant as it was necessary.

We serve a God who keeps refilling the barrel of those who cast their bread upon the water, for many days, as long as it is necessary.

In Ezekiel, 12:27 the phrase "many days" meant many generations into the future.

Those who cast their bread upon the water don't know how it will come back to them, it could be next week, but it could be many years into the future, but it will come back for a long as necessary, to sustain the faithful who serve the Lord.

Casting our bread on the water has its social and economic implications, but it also has spiritual implications. Jesus told his disciples in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life and he that cometh to me shall never hunger." Then, in Matthew 28:19 he said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In essence, he challenged believers to throughout the world and tell the world about the bread of life. It may seem that all of your sermons, Sunday School lessons, Vacation Bible Schools and Bible Studies are not doing any good, but after many days….

It may seem that all of your prayers, testimonies and witnessing are not producing results, but we need to remember the promise ..after many days!

Who will march forward ready to cast their bread on the water and tell the story?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of our march through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will tell the world that if you cast your bread on the waters of faith there will never be a

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!
—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!
—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!
—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

As we move forward we should should cast our eyes upon Him who will never let us down!

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Cast your hope on Jesus! Sing together the words of the old hymn,

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9598-Graduation

Pennies from Heaven

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 26, 2013

SCRIPTURE: He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents:behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things:enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Matthew 25:22-23

Introduction

Have you ever considered the value of little blessings? We often spend our lives seeking after the big blessings without considering that big accomplishments begin as small opportunities. We see the mighty oaks in the forest, but we fail to see the hundreds of seedlings in the valleys. We throw away the scraps without recognizing the value of recycled scrap. We pray for sunshine without realizing that the blessing we sought was actually in the rain.

The ability to see the potential in life's little things is important; the ability to capitalize on that potential is even more important.

We often pray for the big things in life and God gives us the little things.

Consider the man whose family had fallen on hard times. Laid off from his job and several months behind on his $50,000 mortgage, he was about to lose it all after working so hard to pay it down to a mere $50,000. He went to an empty field neighboring the house he built and sat by a tree and prayed. An old miser once had a house there, but it was blown away in a storm. He asked God for $50,000. He prayed fervently and sincerely. When he opened his eyes he saw a shiny penny laying on the ground. He picked it up and pocketed it. The next day he prayed again and found two pennies before he left. Every day the number of pennies he found in that vacant lot doubled: 2 pennies, 4, 16, 32, 64,128,256, 512, 1024, 2048. By the end of the month the man had his family searching the entire field. At the end of the month they had collected $56,587.08. These pennies were from the fortune of the old miser who had collected a million dollars in pennies and stored them in sacks in his basement. The storm scattered them everywhere. From time to time, neighbors saw a few, but had no clue that there was a fortune underneath the dirt of the field. For the man under the tree, it all started with a prayer for something big, resulting in God's answer of showing him asingle penny; the rest was up to him.

Sometimes we look for greatness, success and achievement in big packages, but overlook the obvious. We see the little boy who is mischievous at school leading other boys in pranks and shake our heads. We don't see that boy capitalizing on his leadership ability and becoming a civic or government leader. We see a physically challenged person and overlook their capacity to write books, win competitions, paint, or create music with their physical challenge as the main selling point. We see the child born into poverty, but gifted with brain and an industrious spirit, does not allow his poverty to prevent his success. We don't see them excelling because of the poor background and succeeding in ways no one ever dreamed.

God shows everyone at least one penny, the question is what we choose to do with it. Should we ignore it as valueless because it is dirty or found in an unsanitary place? Should we capitalize upon it and double it? It is not always a copper penny, but it is often a talent, gift or chance opportunity.

Sometimes it is a diploma; a single sheet of paper that in itself has little value, but is filled with potential if the recipient seeks to double its value in the years ahead, adding training, experience and advanced training to that single piece of paper, can open up so many avenues for a successful life.

As Christians, we have learned never to doubt our potential once we put our lives in God's hands. He may give us a only a diploma and a penny to work with, but we know there is no limit to what we can do with them, if we put our trust in God and let him help us work with them.

Exposition

This text focuses on a parable Christ told to emphasize the importance of maximizing the gifts that we have been given.

The immediate context focused on service to the kingdom, and the value of that service to the master.

In this parable the roles in the kingdom are symbolized by the master and his servants. The master represents God who is the Lord of the Kingdom. The servants represent the members of the kingdom of heaven.

The theme of the parable is that God gives each person a measure of possessions for which he will one day be held accountable. One servant is given five measures of money called talents. A second is given two. The last is given one. The first two invest their money and return the master a profit. The last buried his talent and did not use it. There is no reason given to explain why the man with one talent did not even try to work with his gift. Perhaps he thought it too small; or insignificant. It is known that he feared that he might fail, having only one, so he buried it.

It angered the Master and resulted in the loss of favor with the master.

The message to believers becomes obvious. If we use what God has given us he will be pleased. If we do not, we make him angry and he could withdraw his favor.

What do I do now?

Now that graduates have diplomas in their hands, the question is what do they do now? For the last 13 years they have worked to get a small piece of paper in their hands; now they have it, what's next? God has opened a door, the next step is up to each individual graduate. The diploma graduates have earned represents their chance, their penny. It's now time to prepare for the next step when opportunity knocks. Education, discipline and faith are three essentials to seizing these opportunities when they come.

DON'T BE A BAD PENNY: There are some graduates who will blow their opportunities with recklessness. A bad penny is one that has been damaged, disfigured or counterfeited. It is reckless living that has caused many in the previous class to lose opportunities they should have gained, so this class must be keenly sensitive to the the influences that will pull them away from their goals. Illegal activities, riotous living and generally undisciplined living have contributed to the downfall of many young people, who started out with great potential, but ended up bad pennies. The circles of success usually reject those who are a bad influence, the old saying is, "In a pocket full of silver, a bad penny always shows up."

PRETTY PENNIES: When something is a "pretty penny" it is expensive. The old saying is, "That dress is made out of fine material; it must have cost a pretty penny." The education you have received has cost someone in your family a pretty penny. A recent national study reports that the average high school diploma costs over $100,000 over 12 years. The senior year alone including: proms, graduation fees, cap and gown, photos, class fees, invitations and other expenses. Your family has invested heavily in your education. it has cost them a pretty penny. The challenge is to use your $100,000 education well. If you go to college expect to spend another $50,000 or more on tuition, transportation, books, meals. Having paid such a price, we are challenged not to waste the opportunities ahead of us. Your education has cost your family a pretty penny, make them proud.

PENNY WORTHY THOUGHTS: There is a an old saying, "A penny for your thoughts." It usually refers to a person who wants to know what's on your mind. Now that you have graduated from high school, your thoughts should graduate to another level. It is often said that great minds discuss: ideas such as world hunger, global warming, and world peace. The average mind discusses events such as: football and basketball games, plays, movies, openings, closings and other activities. People with small minds usually discuss other people: what they wore, who they are sleeping with, how much they have, what they are doing. Your thoughts should graduate to a higher level, focus on deeper subjects and expand. They should be worth something. Philippians 4:8 sums it up this way, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."-They'll be worth more than a penny.

PENNY-WISE AND DOLLAR FOOLISH: There are many graduates who learned everything in school except how to handle their money. They are penny wise, but dollar foolish. We have seen them. It's the person who buys groceries at six different stores shopping specials and saves $4.00, but spends $10 in gas to get there. The challenge for young graduates is to avoid being penny wise and dollar foolish, to learn to handle your money well. The first temptation is to live above your means to impress your friends, securing apartments, automobiles and expenses that depend on the generosity of others. That's a temptation that should be avoided. Learning to manage money, credit, and personal budgets is a challenge for every graduate about to step into the world of adult living for the first time. Being dollar-foolish has destroyed many. Being penny wise to the point of establishing saving habits, supporting their church and other charities and disciplined financial dealings has helped many youth to survive their first forays into adulthood.

Little blessings are from Heaven

Finally, brothers and sisters, all young believers should remember that every little blessing they receive comes from heaven.

We should not be like the last servant who thought he only received a small blessing so it should be buried, but we should realize that any blessing we receive from heaven is a starting point from which we are expected to build and grow.

In 1936 the late Bing Cosby starred in a movie entitled "Pennies from Heaven." It was about people in the depression era of our national history who never lost hope because they received every opportunity as a penny from heaven, with which they turned rain into sunshine.

There is an old saying that as we travel through life that often we worry about one thing or another and God sends an angel to walk before us; we know it when we find a penny on the ground.

I don't know whether it is true or not, it is certainly not in scripture, but there is something to consider that we often find pennies when we are also looking for answers.

He may not leave a penny, but our God is always around.

He has promised never to leave us alone.

If we fall upon misfortune his words remain true, I will never leave thee! There may not be a penny on the ground, but he's always around!

If we fall upon temporary disgrace or public scorn, His words still resonate, I will never leave thee!

If we fall into sickness or despair, the echo of his words fills our ears, I will never leave thee! We may not find a penny on the ground, but he's always around!

If our friends forsake us and family turns on us, even without a penny on the ground, He's always around!

This promise of God overrides present reality and plunges us into the supernatural. It cancels the logical and pushes us into the realm of faith. It padlocks fear and unlocks hope and optimism.

Christian graduates should go forward pledging to use their talents in ways that God will be pleased!

Use them to help promote the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man!

Use them to reach out to the lost and touch those who are in distress!

Use them to glorify God!

Use them with the full knowledge that he will not allow you to miss the mark if you are aiming in His name.

If I fall down, He'll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, He will forgive me!

If I stumble, He will whole my hand!

If I cant find my way, He will guide me! Thats why Ill say, Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!

The same hand that touched a blind man's eyes!

The same hand that healed a lame man and made him walk!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death..

But the same hand that were raised in victory early Sunday morning!

I want that same hand to guide me every day!

No. 9599-Inspiration

Living the Photo shopped life

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 23, 2013

SCRIPTURE: But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

Introduction

Have you ever seen a glamor photo of a person? A glamor photo is a special photograph that accentuates your positives and eliminates all of your negatives to the point that the subject appears glamorous. The extent of the glamor shot demands on how much you are willing to pay. Sometimes your hair is touched up, make up is applied and a glamorous looking costume is used for your attire. The lighting in a glamor photo is adjusted perfectly. The subject is posed in a way that their best impression is visible. Then click. When the final photo is taken, every blemished, scar, bruise or discoloration is removed with a computer program called Photoshop. The results is an image of the subject that appears spectacular. Although the subject has probably never appeared that way in real life.

A glamor photo shows the way we would appear in the perfect circumstance with: perfect lighting, perfect hair, from the perfect perspective and under perfect conditions. If Photoshop tools are used, the subject can have unwanted features removed or desired features added with the stroke of a computer mouse.

We prefer to pose for pictures because that allows people to see us as we want to be seen. In many ways our poses assume an attitude, posture or character with the intent to deceive.

Since 1988 the world has been exposed to Photoshop. Photoshop is an amazing product that can change a person's appearance in a photograph. In Photoshop a big man can be smaller and a small man can be bigger. It can make a bald man have a full head of hair, give a toothless woman a full set of teeth, or even allow you to change heads with someone else.

Photoshop is unique in that it does not change the original picture, instead it adds layers on top of the original and brightens, darkens or adjust it many ways. Using Photoshop you can be inserted into scenes in which you never participated or

removed.

With Photoshop, what you see with the eye is rarely real. It's the image that has been prepared for others to see.

When a photograph looks suspect, Photoshop experts are hired to analyze it. Frauds are instantly detected.

Sometimes churchgoers strike a pose for the Lord. We present him our best side while hiding the other. If there are flaws we hide them or put a layer of good behavior on top of them.

God is not fooled by our Photo shopped lives. He can spot a fake a mile away because he never looks at the layers on the outside, but only looks at the original.

As believers, we are pleased to know that our God knows who we really are and loves us flaws and all. He is working to help us to improve the original rather than hide what we don't like under layers of disguises.

Exposition

This text focuses on young David as he was being selected by the Prophet Samuel to succeed Saul as King of Israel. Saul had been a great leader but God wanted a man after his own heart.

As Samuel reviewed the sons of Jesse he came to Eliab (v6) and thought to himself that surely this would be the son that God would select, but God told him that although Eliab was tall and towering in his presence that his heart was not right for the job that had to be done.

David, the shepherd boy, was called. He was shorter than his brothers, and he was also good looking. Verse 12 notes that David was ruddy, with a beautiful countenance, and was good to look upon. However, not only did he look good on the outside, but he also looked good on the inside.

The truth the passage reveals is that God is not impressed with what appeals to the eye, but rather he is touched by that which is within the hearts of individuals.

The Photo shopped life

There are many parallels to our real lives and the lives we want others to see, the Photo shopped lives:

THE PHOTOSHOPPED LIFE APPEARS TO HAVE MORE: It is possible to take an image of yourself standing in front of a run-down shotgun house and transpose that image in such a way that you appear to be standing in front of a mansion. Those who see it think you own a mansion or have at least visited one. There are many who live Photo shopped lives that give the appearance that they have more than they really do. They live in houses they cannot afford and drive vehicles that impress others, but are far beyond their financial means. They project an image of prosperity that is far from the truth. These are the ones who return to the class reunion in a rented expensive vehicle to impress their classmates or boast about their accomplishments in life

complete with Photo shopped accounts of the years since graduation. What's exciting about our God is that He does not require us to impress him with how much money we have or the size of our house or bank account. In fact, he loves the mansion and the shot-gun house resident both the same. God is no respecter of person, we don't have to Photoshop our lives to impress him.

THE PHOTO SHOPPED LIFE IS A MASK: Photoshop uses what is called a layered mask to place over the original picture so that it can be changed. There are many people who are familiar with masks; we wear them regularly. One great truth of life is that we never really know people until we catch them without their masks; without their game face, without their public personality. Sometimes we don't like the man or woman behind the mask. Sometimes it frustrates us and makes us angry. The beauty of our relationship with God is that he loves the man or woman behind the mask. He knows our inner spirit. Despite what he knows about us, he has chosen to love us anyway. Despite what he sees when our masks come off, he still loves us. We love him because he looks beyond our faulty masks, disguises and false faces and sees someone worthy of loving. No wonder the song writer wrote, Oh How I love Jesus, because he first loved me.

THE PHOTO SHOPPED LIFE IMPROVES APPEARANCES: Photoshop can miraculously improve appearances. It can make us young again. It can remove, wrinkles, blemishes, spots and gray hair. An appearance is the way we are seen by others, a Photo shopped life is good at working on appearances. For appearance sake many marriages, relationships, and personalities have had the blemishes removed and they have been carefully edited to create a public image. If we were selected to become the stars of our own, unedited reality show: "Lifestyles of the Saved and Sanctified" would we need to present the world a Photo shopped image with all of our blemishes removed or would they get a glimpse of how a Christian home operates on a daily basis. The beauty of our faith is that God is not impressed with how we appear to others; He is only impressed with the real people underneath the masks. We don't have to hide our scars, wrinkles and imperfections from Him; he knows they are there and loves us as we deal with them day by day.

The blood changes the original

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember, that Photoshop touches up the original, but the blood of Christ completely changes the original.

Samuel said God sees the heart and in the heart lies the true nature of any individual. Outward processes can change our appearance, but never change the heart.

In Photoshop there is one final process that must be considered; it's the undo button.

After masks are applied and hair color has been changed there is an undo button, that will return it to its original color.

After hair has been added to a bald head there is an undo button that will remove all of the hair.

After wrinkles have been removed from an aging face, there is an undo button that

shows a face unchanged.

Photoshop has many good qualities, but it has one central weakness; it can alter the appearance with layers of disguises, but when all of the undo buttons are clicked all we have is what we began with.

Those who live the photo shopped life never change, they only appear to change. Underneath the layers everything is the same.

If you are tired of living the photo shop life are our God is waiting to exchange your touch up to a make over. He'll take your glamor photo that makes you look good to others and give you a divine pose that will make you look good to Him.

While Photoshop can take us back to original, God has a redo button that lets us change the original into something new.

God doesn't not Photoshop our lives He gives us a complete spiritual remake. Not a touch up. Not a highlighter, but a make-over.

What we need can only be done by God he is the divine Surgeon who can do what we need.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

God does not Photoshop our lives by adding a false layer, but he clicks the redo button that involves taking out a few things and putting in others.

We'll take out hatred, fear, anxiety, bad attitudes, hatred, impatience, grumpiness, rudeness, bad language, uncontrollable desires, and immorality.

What will we put in? Galatians 5:22-23, says he'll put in "… love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law"

When we get a make-over, we become new creatures in Christ. New from the inside out! Not made up, but made over in his image.

As new creatures we begin to trust in the Lord!

When we put our trust in the Lord he makes our:

-RACE worth running and our BATTLE worth fighting!

-COURSE worth finishing and our FAITH worth keeping!

-DIFFICULTIES worth facing and our BURDENS worth bearing!

- ANXIETIES worth enduring and our TEARS worth shedding!

When we trust in the Lord, he clicks the spiritual redo button and turns dark days into sun shiny days; MIDNIGHTS into noontimes and hard times into good times!

We should praise the Lord because his:

Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant

Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure!

We should praise the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill He's going to help us to climb! We should praise the Lord for the bills He's going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job He's going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home He's going to help us to buy!

Photoshop when obtained legally is an expensive program.

Likewise living a Photo shopped life can be expensive and stressful.

Those who get a divine retouch get their whole lives changed, without paying a dime because Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow.

He died on an old rugged cross!

But early Sunday morning….

No. 9600-Inspiration

He made the stars also

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

June 30, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also." Genesis 1:16

Introduction

Have you ever looked at the stars and wondered about them? Even as little children we have been fascinated with the stars. We recited the children's poem, "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are, up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky, twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are." At some point, we've all be fascinated with the stars.

We see them as little speckles in the heavens, winking, and blinking. Yet they are huge in size and some are millions of miles away. They are so close, but yet so far away. They are so small that we can touch them in our gaze with the tip of our finger but so large in reality that some can even dwarf the entire planet.

Our enchantment has grown to the point that we study their movements and predict our life patterns by them. We call ourselves Capricorns, and Libras and a variety of other names based on our belief in the movement of the stars and their impact on us.

Our movie heroes, are "stars" to us because they are bigger than life, lingering in front of us, just close enough for us to admire them, but far enough away to keep us in awe. In Hollywood there is a famous walk of the stars, children who perform well in school get stars by their names on charts. Truly, we are fascinated with stars.

There are myths about stars too. Some believe that seeing a falling star will bring luck, just as seeing the first star can grant a wish.

Despite their vastness, beauty and awesomeness, the stars are just part of God's creation. A very small part, yet he is aware of everyone of them

Just as God made every star and set the physics and science in motion that causes them to twinkle and shine, God also knows each person he created as well. In all of the vastness and beauty of his creation of stars, suns, moons and galaxies, God is mindful of every person that He has created. David in Psalm 8:4 asks, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" It was a question asked in awe of God's power and his concern for each of us.

God made the stars and is mindful of them. God made us as well, he's mindful of us and visits us as well.

As Christians, let us rejoice in the majesty of our God. Let us also rejoice in the knowledge that although God has the whole world in his hands, he is still mindful of the concerns, hopes and dreams of everyone of his children.

Exposition

The text considers God's creation of the stars, planets and galaxies.

The general description of the creation of the world is given in summary in scripture. Science tells us the minute details and the Word of God tells us in summary that all that has been created, including the sun, moon and the stars are God's handiwork.

Generally God made the sun as greater light. The moon has no light of its own, but reflects the light of the sun. The sun is the greatest of the earth related creations. It is more than a million times greater than the earth has proved to be the most useful of the lights in heaven. The moon is lesser, but has its significance only in relation to its place near the sun.

At the end of the text is what seems to be an after thought. He made the stars "also." The stars refer to the remainder of the universe inclusive of galaxies, milky ways, black holes, and planets. All of which are but a twinkle in proximity, not significant in their own right. The symbolism of the text is that like the sun is the primary source of heat and light and the others are subservient to the sun, so should believers be humble before God. The moon and the stars rule by night, but they are subject to the sun. Mankind rules the earth, but likewise, we are subject to the rules of God.

Imbedded in one word, "also" is the entirety of the rest of the heavens, of which reflects the glory and majesty of God.

He gives life, but He gives provision in life, also.

He gives opportunities, but He gives favorable direction also.

There is a blessing in the "alsos" of life because they point to all of the other ways that God causes our lives to shine and twinkle reflecting his glory and power.

No Small Matter

Our fixation with the stars is important, but we should note that God's attention to the stars is no small matter. The stars also. Seems here to be an after thought but the stars are no small matter.

STARS IN HOLLYWOOD ARE LIMITED: Stars have no light of their own, but reflect light from the sun. In a similar way those who fix their hopes on the Stars of Hollywood and the music industry are fixing their focus on human beings who have no real light of their own, but only reflect the praise of men. A Hollywood star is a star only because the general public that is curious about them and admires them praises that person. A Hollywood stars light shines only as long as the person is favored in public opinion. Public opinion however is fickle. People love you one day and hate on

another. Those who base their own worth on public opinion will always find themselves unstable being forced to redefine themselves frequently to keep up with changes in public opinion. Believers would do better to reflect the praise of God than man. God created us and He also creates the circumstances that catapult us into the public eye. It is God who made the Eiensteins, Freuds and other greater thinkers and tinkers of the world. It is God who made us, too. We are a part of His creation. We are his handiwork. Just as God and God alone created the sun, moon and the stars. It is God and God alone who can exalt anyone to the kind of stardom that would be recognized in heaven. Jesus gave the clue: "He that would be great among you, let him be your servant." It is nice to be a Hollywood Star, made by the appreciation of the public. However, it is better to be a godly star, fashioned by the hand of God.

MANY STARS BUT EACH ONE COUNTS: There are billions of stars, but God knows each of them. Even the earth that is believed to have 2 trillion inhabitants is small when compared to God's entire universe. In fact, scientist say The earth is so small a part of the already known universe that if we could cut open the sun we could, pour into it 1,200,000 earths like ours and still there would be room enough left for them to rattle around in it. Even the sun itself is very, very small in comparison with Arcturus and some of the other stars whose diameters have been recently measured, and there are now known to be more than 225,000,000 of these great worlds we call stars in this universe of ours.

Despite the vastness of God's creation, he is still mindful of every single star, and the needs of every single person. God is not so big or busy that He can't hear our prayers or respond to our needs. We are not afterthoughts of his creation, but we always on His divine mind. Millions of people pray, but God sorts through them all and hears each one individually. Millions of people need healings, blessings and restoration and God responds to them all.

WE CAN'T BLAME OUR FAULTS OR FAILURES ON THE STARS: Today many that are consulting their horoscopes and the stars but they are not consulting God. Too many are giving the stars credit for the blessings and the blame for their failures.

When something goes wrong in their family, they are looking to the stars.

When they have doubts about their future, they look to the stars.

When they have lost hope, they look to the stars!

Too many people blame their failures in life on their destiny and the stars. Shakespeare dismissed this excuse when he wrote in Julius Ceasar, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

If I don't make it, I can't blame it on the eight planets of the universe.

If I fail, I can't blame it on the rotation of the earth around the Sun.

If I don't make it, I can't blame it on the new moon, or the full moon.

If I don't make it to glory I can't blame it on the rain, I can blame it on the stars that shine at night, but no amount of blaming will make it alright!

There are too many today who are living by every word of their horoscopes and the stars. But I hear Jesus declaring "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

When trouble is all around, it is not the stars, but the word of God that declares: "God is our refuge and our strength, ..a shelter in a time of storm."

When finances get low and you can't see your way, it's not the stars but the word of God which reminds us that, "My God shall supply all your needs, according to His purpose."

GOD IS CLOSER THAN THE STARS: When we see a star twinkle in heaven, we are seeing light that is reflected from millions of miles away. David said Jesus is "The lily of the Valley and John answered in the Revelation, He is "The bright and morning star." Some have supposed that this star was Alpha Centurial, the closest star to the planet earth. Even though the morning star is the closest star to us it is 4.3 light years over 25 trillion miles away. The good news is that the God we serve is not that far removed for I heard the song writer declare "He's only a prayer away."

God is so close that he can hear a baby cry at night.

He is so close that he knows when we are feeling depressed and sad.

God is close that he knows the thoughts of our minds before we think them. Psalm 139:2 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

God is closer than the stars because when we are low He picks us up. When we are defeated He brings us a spirit of victory.

The stripes not the stars

Finally, brothers and sisters, the stars are beautiful and mysterious but it is not the stars which hold the key to our salvation.

The stars twinkle brightly and wink at us from distant horizons, but its not the stars which provide for the saving of our souls.

The stars are awe inspiring, sprinkling the canopy of the midnight skies with a million beams of light, but it's not the twinkle of the stars that can save our souls.

The North Star points the way North, but it is not the North star that can show us the way to glory, but it's the bright and morning star.

Who is this star?

Isaiah said he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed."

With these stripes, Jesus paid the price for our sins!

With these stripes Jesus, the lily of the valley, paid the price for our wrong doing!

With these stripes Jesus, the King of Kings, paid the penalty for our Negligence.

With these stripes Jesus, the Lord of Lords, bore the agony of our irresponsibility.

It's not the stars, but its the stripes!

Bearing these stripes, Jesus was crucified on an old rugged cross!

He died on Calvary for all of our sins!

When He died, somebody looked to the stars, but they couldn't be found!

When He died, somebody looked for the sun, but it itself from view!
When He died, somebody looked to the moon, but the moon hid its face!
He died!
He Died!
But early Sunday morning he rose up from grave with all power in his hands!
The universe acknowledge his victory and shouted Amen.
And so did the stars…also!

No. 9601-Inspiration

Ask, Seek, Knock

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

July 14, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: Matthew 7:7

Introduction

Have you ever asked God for anything? Were you prepared to receive what He gave?One of the great truths about the faith experience is that God will respond to our requests in relation to the building of the kingdom.Our request list is often long and detailed, but God seems to browse through our list and pick certain items to fulfill while sending us a "not at this time notice" on others. Requests that we make that are in line with God's will are generally acted upon expeditiously. Those that are not according to His will will usually get the "Not at this time" treatment.

Paul asked God to remove the thorn from his side and he received a "My grace is sufficient notice." Abraham prayed for a son by his wife Sarai, and he received a "Not at this time notice." Jesus prayed for the cup to pass him, but he received a 'Not in the plan" response. In each of these cases the person who sought something from God received a response, even though it was not what they desired.

When we ask God for something, we must be prepared to receive what he gives us in response.

One author put it this way:

I asked for strength, God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.

I asked for riches and God gave me plenty of work to do I asked for courage and God gave dangers to overcome.

I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy the life I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I received nothing I wanted, but everything I needed.

As Christians, we know that we have been promised the ability, ask, seek and knock and God will respond to our request. We have learned in our journey that Kingdom specific requests have high priority with God, thus if we ask, seek and knock according to His will, we will always be pleased with the outcome.

Exposition

This text focuses upon Jesus as he taught his disciples the nature of their relationship to the kingdom of God.

One of the core attributes of Christ's teaching is the idea of faith in God. Through faith, Christ taught that anything is possible as it relates to improving, expanding, and building the kingdom of God. Nothing that a believer wants or desires can be kept from him. In other conversations, Jesus told his disciples that as long as they remained true to the purpose of building the kingdom of God that whatever they asked God would provide.

Verse 11 of the same passage notes that our God delights in giving good gifts. James 1:17 adds that "Every good gift comes from above."

In this context, Jesus lays out a dramatic picture of God providing for the wants and needs of believers, according to his purpose, if they would only ask, seek, or knock.

1 John 5:15 says it this way, "If we ask anything according to His will he hears and if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have requests we ask for of him."

Whatever was required to build the kingdom would be available to them. Whatever would be needed to advance the cause of Christ and the kingdom of God on this earth would be opened to them. Nothing would be kept from them if they asked in faith, and believed they would receive.

In essence, what Christ said was if you're one of my children, ask me for it, and if it will be good for you toward the accomplishing your life purpose, it will be done.

What does it mean to ask, seek, knock?

The three words that attract our attention in this text serve to show us what Christ had in mind when he used these words to describe the response of believers to needs.

ASK: Jesus said, "Ask it will be given unto you." "Ask" implies requesting assistance for a conscious need. It also suggests humility, for the Greek word used in this text was commonly used by one approaching a superior. The centurion who approached Christ about the healing of his servant responded that he understood protocol that Christ could speak and it would be done. We too should ask, knowing that the God we petition has the power to answer our prayer. The scriptures teach that we should go before God boldly (Hebrews 4:16) it means we should approach God confident that he will be merciful, forgiving and benevolent. When we ask God for blessings and approach His throne, let us remember that He owes us nothing and that we owe Him everything. The works that we sometimes feel make us worthy to approach

Him, may be the very acts that condemn us.

Jabez said in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed. Jabez asked not only for a blessing but a blessing indeed. What Jabez wanted was a real blessing. A blessing indeed is a blessing that is received and appreciated.

Therefore we should approach God always in humility, but with confidence that he will hear and answer the fervent prayers of the righteous.

SEEK: Jesus said, "Seek and you shall find." The word "Seek" involves asking, but takes the process up another level. The idea is not just to express need, but also to get up and look around for help. It is a misnomer for anyone to believe that they should simply ask God for their needs, but do nothing else. A woman with an issue of blood for 12 years had a serious problem. She prayed about the problem humbly before God, and then she began to look for solutions. When Jesus came to her town she pushed her way through the crowd and touched the hem of His garment and was healed. What does it mean to seek? It means to take steps of your own, asking God to show you the way.

The unemployed pray for jobs, and then take steps to solve the problem relying on God to point them in the right direction.

The marriage that is in trouble is presented to God in prayer, and then the marriage partners seek counseling with God directing them to the right source.

Those with financial dilemmas present them to God, and then take steps to correct deficiencies.

To seek is to do more than just pray; it is to take positive actions. That also involves our spiritual lives as well. We cannot just pray for a more spiritual life; we must take actions to make that happen with God's help. The words of the bible won't be clearer to us if we never read them. We won't ever know God better unless we spend time with Him. We won't ever come closer to God if we are frequently absent from his presence. To seek to Lord, is to search for Him and we will find Him and be blessed.

KNOCK: Jesus said, "Knock" and doors shall be opened unto you." "Knock" includes asking, plus seeking, plus persevering. The stacking of these verbs is powerful. Jesus' words actually read: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; Seek, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it shall be opened to you." The "Knock" phase implies "Importunity." Importunity means persistence.

If a person knocks on the door of a neighbor, he rarely knocks once. Usually one knock has at least four taps. Knocking implies repetition. In Luke 11:5- Jesus tells the parable of a man who knocked on his neighbors door at midnight asking for three loaves of bread to feed his family. Despite the lateness of the hour he kept knocking until the man finally answered. Luke 11:8 says "Because of his importunity" that man's request was granted. Jesus recommended importunity to others. Never give up.

We should keep knocking until we get an answer. We should keep trying until heaven says "no."

We can always go to God

Finally brothers and sisters, if we learn anything from this text is should be that we can always approach the throne of God and seek His blessing.

When we ask God for a blessing, we are looking for mercy and grace!

When we seek we are asking God for direction.

When we knock we are repeatedly bringing our petition before Him.

The beauty of it all is that we have the ability to go to God and expect an answer.

We should ask, seek and knock because the God we serve is able to answer our prayer.

We should pray because when we pray divine mercy is extended on earthly troubles.

We should pray because when we pray we asked for the Grace of God for we who are the most undeserving.

We come before God seeking his grace although we don't deserve it. We come in confidence that God will look beyond our faults and see our needs.

I heard the Lord tell Paul in 1 Cor. 12:9, My Grace is sufficient for thee.

We are asking, seeking and knocking for His grace because His is sufficient for:
—The poor, no matter how pathetic their poverty.
—The tired, no matter how feeble their steps.
—The burdened, no matter how exhausted their body.
—The lonely, no matter how pitiful their situation.
—The wretched, no matter how despairing their circumstance.
—The sick, no matter how painful their diseases.

We ask for and seek his Grace, because Grace can:

—Take heavy burdens and make them bearable.
—Take high mountains and make them climbable.
—Take deep valleys and make them crossable.
—Take lonely nights and make them livable.
—Take lost souls and make the savable.

I heard a songwriter say, wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus, deeper than the mighty rolling sea! Higher than the mountains, sparkling like a fountain all sufficient grace for even me!

I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things! Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!

Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping-stones!

Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!

Daniel will tell you that prayer is good for the Lion's den!

The Three Hebrew Boys will tell you that prayer, is good for the fiery furnace!

I know what prayer can do! I've tried it for myself!

I have found out that there is something about asking, seeking and asking in Jesus' name.

In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!

In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!

In Jesus' name, wounds have been healed!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary! Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

No. 9605-Inspiration

Getting Away with Murder

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; 2 Samuel 12:7; " For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." 2 Samuel 12:12

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt justice miscarried? If so, you are like millions of Americans who were outraged at what appeared to be a gross miscarriage of justice when the jury in the Trayvon Martin case returned a not guilty verdict for George Zimmerman.In February of 2012 Trayvon Martin of Sanford Florida, was killed by George Zimmerman. The seventeen year old Martin was killed in a scuffle that started because the young man was black, in a predominately white neighborhood, wearing a hoodie. Zimmerman is Hispanic who passes for White. Zimmerman was a volunteer neighborhood watchman in a gated community, armed with a semiautomatic handgun. Martin was armed with a can of ice tea and a package of Skittles. Zimmerman claimed self-defense. What has enflamed this situation are factors that include: Zimmerman was a hundred pounds heavier and ten years older than the victim. He had the gun, not Martin. He followed Martin in his truck and he called 911 and was told to stand down and wait for police, but he ignored the instruction and later gunned down the youth in what he claimed was "self defense." No arrests were immediately made because of Florida's "Stand your ground law" which seems to give the right to shoot to persons who feel threatened.

After the not guilty verdict, many in the nation have vented their frustrations with marches, protests, petitions and many other acts, including sporadic violence amid calls for peace that came from the White House, chambers of leadership and pulpits across the nation.

There is no doubt in the minds of millions that George Zimmerman is "Getting away with murder."

The Bible teaches, "Thou shalt not kill." In the Hebrew translation that "Kill" means unjustified taking of a life.

What's justified? Generally, it is considered justifiable to kill in times of war, when

executing capital punishment authorized by the society, when protecting oneself from violence and threats of injury, when acting as police or armed defenders of the lives of others. There are some states such as Florida which have "Stand your ground" laws that give citizens the right to shoot if they feel threatened. Louisiana has a "shoot the burglar law" and a "Shoot the Carjacker law" which allows citizens to shoot if they feel threatened.

The jury in the George Zimmerman murder case felt he was afraid for his life and killed Martin in self defense, which is, in their mind, justifiable.

For many, this case was the perfect example of justice miscarried. It was tinged with all of the factors that push our buttons: the young man was poor, black and was wearing a hoodie. People who fit that profile in America are often the victims of injustice, police profiling and trouble. That's what has sparked the outrage across the nation.

God's word indicates that God is concerned about any injustice inflicted upon believers. He is not mocked. The blood of the righteous will be avenged in God's way and in God's own time.

As Christians, we know that God demands justice because we read in Amos 5:24 the prophet Amos declare, ".. Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." At the moment it might seem that there are those who are "getting away with murder," but "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." He will respond in a meaningful way.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Nathan's pronouncement of judgment on King David after the death of Uriah.

Uriah was married to a beautiful woman named Bathsheba who became involved in an adulterous relationship with King David. The relationship resulted in a pregnancy that David wanted to hide from the people to avoid scandal and retribution by his enemies. So David concocted a scheme to murder Bathsheba's husband under his authority as king and leader of the military.

David commended Uriah for his military valor and placed him at the front of the battle with the enemy. He then gave orders that the entire army was to withdraw in the thick of battle and leave Uriah alone, insuring that he would be killed.

In death, the public would normally assume that his wife's newborn child was the last heir to the fallen soldier and David's adultery would be hidden.

For a while it appeared that the King was "getting away with murder." No one brought an accusation against him, even though many knew or suspected that his order to put Uriah at the front of the battle was tantamount to murdering him.

When the prophet Nathan came to the court, emboldened by the spirit of God he pointed out that David was a murderer using the phrase, "thou art the man." He announced God's judgment on his family and his peace of mind for the rest of his life and for generations to come.

David had hidden his murder from the people and escaped punishment, but not

God's judgment. In matters of faith, there is no such thing as "getting away with murder."

It seems unfair for some to get away

When we see the innocent treated unfairly our first response is to voice our disgust at the unfairness of it all. Sometimes we feel like shouting, Life is not fair! What we've been thinking about is only half true..Life isn't fair. The other half is that while life is not fair God is good.

Uriah was a decorated soldier in David's army. It wasn't fair that his wife and his life were both required of him. Yet, we have this account where the King, protected by the laws of the land that gave him authority, acted unfairly toward him.

In an ideal world, everything would be perfect. Good would always be rewarded and bad would always be punished. In an ideal world, those who work hard would be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Farmers who till the soil and plant crops would be able to expect great harvests. Investors who wisely invest in myriad of opportunities would be able to reap a handsome profit. Those who are careful about their diet and manage their health according to all of the rules would be able to enjoy a life free of sickness and disease. In the ideal world, only criminals would go to jail; those who would not work would not prosper and those who showed little industry would not be able to be the recipients of great reward.

Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world where everything is fair. Our world is far from the ideal. In our world, the best teams do not always win the game; the best man does not always get the girl and it often rains on our well-planned parades. It angers us sometimes that the hardest worker does not get the raise and the bad guys actually get away.

Sometimes the bad guys slip through the wheels of justice.

In reality, life is not fair; and because life is not fair we don't always want fairness from God? If we don't want fairness from God, what do we want? We want God's goodness. We want his mercy. We want him to give consideration to our weakness and tilt the scale to our advantage. That's something He couldn't do if He was always fair. He can show mercy upon us because mercy is a part of the goodness of his divine nature.

We can deal with the unfairness of life, as long as we remember that God is still good.

Our sins will find us out

If we do wrong, our sins will be discovered and justice will prevail, if not in the court of justice, certainly before the divine court.

David hid is sin successfully from the legal processes of his time. It was not illegal for him to order Uriah to the front of the battle. Neither was it illegal for him to put him in the front guard, in the line of fire and order him to provide cover for retreating men. It wasn't illegal, but his motives had not military objectives. It was covered well, but Nathan's pronouncement pulled the cover off the entire scenario.

There are times when we do wrong and think we have succeeded in hiding our wrong doing. Did we really get away? Will our sin really be discovered? We may hide the sin

for years, but sooner or later, our sins will find us out.

A few years ago, in Jackson Mississippi, a reputed Ku Klux Klansman was granted immunity to testify in the upcoming trial of his cousin, James Ford Seale, who is charged with kidnapping and conspiracy in the 1964 murders of two black teenagers. Charles Marcus Edwards admitted in 1964 that he and Seale abducted and beat the two teens, but he denied having a part in their deaths, according to FBI documents from the time. Authorities allege that Seale and other reputed Klansmen abducted the teens near the southwest Mississippi town of Roxie and beat them before the two were weighted down and thrown into the Mississippi River.

Seale, 71, was arrested on two counts of kidnapping and one count of conspiracy. Edwards was not charged.

His sins found him out:Numbers 32:23 says, Be sure your, sins will find you out. This verse says that your sin will find you out. There will come that time when the chickens come home to roost. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap Gal. 6:7.

It does not matter who you are, or where you are, how you are, or when you are, your sins will find you out.

There will be a day of reckoning for every sin. No matter how skillful our attorney or slick we are as perpetrators….our sins will find us out.

When Justice seems out of balance

There are times when Justice seems only for some and not for others. These are times when the powerless feel that they only the weakened preys of the powerful. For those who surrounded the throne room, it appeared that there would be no justice for Uriah. His comrades in battle and friends all felt he had received an injustice, but no seemed to have the resources needed to prick the hearts of those in control.

The same feeling exists today in the aftermath of the Zimmerman verdict. Justice seems out of balance for African-Americans.

In 2007 Hillary Clinton told the NAACP that when it comes to justice in America the poor and disenfranchised rarely receive justice. She said the scales of justice are seriously out of balance for black Americans. Too many people, many of them black, are invisible in America, she added.

Clinton's sentiments then are just as real today. The system is completely out of balance for African- Americans.

The good news is that our God is in the balancing business. He has made it his business to tip the scales in ways that bring equity to the poor and disenfranchised. When Nathan confronted David and said, "Thou art the man," he tipped the scales.

Living justly is a requirement of our God. We know this because Micah 6:8 says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Jesus will bring our final justice

Finally, brothers and sisters, in the midst of our frustration over the injustices we see, we must continue to look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

It may appear at the moment that those who have done an injustice are escaping punishment, but our God will "trample out the vintage" where the grapes of injustice are stored.

Our God will correct the wrongs that have been leveled against us!

Our God will restore the balance lost by the capsizing of this ship of circumstances.

Our God will lift up the broken hearted and bring peace to those who are confused.

Those who keep their faith in Him in their hearts will be rewarded.

Those who labor in the kingdom faithfully will be rewarded.

Though frustrated we must continue the good work of building the kingdom of God.

Though the tears run from our eyes we must work to bring about that day when justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Every now and then it is good for believers to remember that serving the Lord does pay off after while.

We have to work while it is day because when the night comes, no man can work. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he penned the words, "I'm going to work until my day is done." I'm going to work until the setting of the sun. I'll cease from sorrow. There'll be no tomorrow. I'm going to work until my day is done.

Warriors, keep on embracing the faith and love of God!

Warriors, keep standing behind the shield of faith

Warriors, keep on telling the story!

Tell them about Jesus! Tell them how He died on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

Tell them about Jesus!

No. 9603-Homecoming

As it is in Heaven

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 21, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

Introduction

We are all on a journey to return home, to a place called heaven, but have you ever wondered what heaven is like? We are journeying to a place called home that no one we know has ever seen and we have only a few ideas of what life there will be.

When Israel left four centuries of slavery in Egypt they pointed their eyes to the Promised Land. None of them had been there, but their imaginations were fed bits and pieces they gleaned from Egyptian travelers who described it the presence of Jewish servants. In the wilderness, just miles away, twelve spies were sent forth, they returned describing the land as being filled with milk and honey.

We are Christian travelers, passing through earth, on our way to heaven. Each of us has a vision we have created to describe our heavenly destination that is unique. Some see a big city the size of New York with people flying around in white sheets. Others see a picturesque farm scene with thousands of people in rocking chairs sitting by the river of life, sipping fresh milk followed by spoonfuls of honey. Still others see golden streets and large mansions with diamond-studded doorknobs and movie size television screens in every room. Everybody has a picture in the mind.

In the bible the word heaven refers to one of three realms. The first is most frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the inner space or sky or the firmament. This is the heaven that contains clouds, the area that birds fly through. The second heaven is outer space, which is the abode of the stars, planets, and other celestial objects. The third heaven, the location of which is not revealed, is the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised to prepare a place for true Christians in heaven in John 14:2. Heaven is also the destination of believers who trusted God in the Old Testament or accepted Christ as their Redeemer in the New Testament.

Generally, our images of heaven focus on the place. We visualize a place filled with costly stones made of jasper and diamonds. We think of the place with twelve pearly gates, and twelve foundations. We think of a place restored to the paradise existence

of Eden with a river of the water flowing freely and the tree of life yielding fruit monthly with leaves that heal the nations. When we think of heaven we run out of ideas. Thats why 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Beyond the physical place called heaven, however, is the heavenly existence. While the physical description is occupied with what IS there, the abstract description of heaven associated with the heavenly existence is best described by what is NOT there. If fact, its whats not there that makes the entire experience heavenly. Heaven can best be described as the land of No More. There will be no more tears, no more pain, jails, police, discrimination, wild forest fires, serial killers, rapists, murderers, raging hurricanes, floods, epidemic diseases, infant deaths, starvation, cheating, stealing, hating, backbiting, and no more sorrow. There will be no more death, for death will be conquered.

Heaven is a place created by the hand of God and an existence that is ordered by the will of God. In heaven, everything is done according to Gods will. Everyone lives according to Gods will; and everything works out according to Gods will. If everything on earth would unfold according to Gods will, earth would be heaven.

As Christians, our goal is to make heaven our home. While heaven has many attributes the best thing about it will be the presence of our Lord and Savior. We will be face to face with the savior who loved us and sacrificed Himself to give us a chance to everlasting life. Thats the way it will be when we get home.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus instruction to believers to pray for Gods will on earth as it is in heaven.

Christ instructed believers how to pray and what to pray for in their prayers. In verse ten he said believers should pray that Gods will would be followed in earth as Gods will is followed in heaven.

He used the phrase, as it is in heaven, to inform believers that in heaven, everything follows the will of God and not a single angel, cherubim or other creation of God desires to live in any way that is outside of His will.

What makes heaven a heavenly place is not its beauty, but its adherence to the divine order. What is prayed for in this text is thy will be done. Our prayer is, Lord Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace that is necessary to know thy will, and the humility to obey your will. We pray that earth becomes more like heaven by the observance of God's will and that saints may be made more like the holy angels in their devotion and obedience.

The prayer is that during our journey on earth, on our way home, we will help create an atmosphere where we can all experience a little of heaven on earth as a precursor to glory divine.

As It is in heaven

When the saints of God get to their heavenly home, there will be certain experiences we can look forward to that are exciting and inspiring.

GOD WILL DWELL IN HEAVEN: We may not admit it, but the value of a home has a lot to do with your neighbors. You can fix up your house and make it beautiful, but if its in the wrong neighborhood it will never have value. Who lives in the neighborhood affects the price of your house. You could get millions for your house if it was next door to Beyonce and Jay-Z. Suppose LeBron James or the Obamas lived down the street? One great thing about heaven is that God will live there. Revelation 2:3 says, And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. In heaven, God will dwell with us. Our prayer today should be that we can get our lives ready to live every day as if God lived next door, or even closer, as if God lives in us every moment of the day. On earth, we are guided by Gods presence, inspired and helped by Gods presence and strengthened by Gods presence. On earth we acknowledge His presence and glorify his presence. On earth, as it is in heaven.

His presence will affect everything.

THE SAINTS WILL FELLOWSHIP IN HEAVEN: In heaven there will be great fellowship among the saints. We look forward to fellowshipping with the personalities that we have read and studied about during our journey in this life. The saint's will be in heaven clothed in incorruptible bodies (1Corinthians 15:51-4) able to enjoy each others presence for eternity.

From time to time we get glimpses of how heaven must be. Those who have ever participated in a church raising sponsored by the Church in a Day ministry of the Pentecostals get a glimpse of what heaven must be. Hundreds of people converge on a site at sunup and raise a church facility by midnight, complete with air conditioning, pews and decorations. All of the time there is singing, laughing, talking and fellowship without regard to race, sex or class. Somebody said, thats the way heaven must be. A few years ago one million black men marched on Washington to atone for their neglect of leadership in the community. The sight of one million men, holding their children, working together without incident, was awesome. Somebody said, this is the way heaven must be. Even when our families gather with the elders and children in the same place enjoying food, family and fun without incident. Somebody says, This is the way heaven must be.

THE SAINTS WILL WORSHIP IN HEAVEN: In heaven there will be continuous worship and praise of God. In the Old Testament the tribe of Levi was responsible for maintenance of the worship. The families of singers were responsible for 24 hours of singing every day of the year. They didnt sing for an audience, but they sang to God. Nobody else heard them. In the same sense, in heaven there will be constant praising of God, singing about Him, talking about him and worshipping. Thats what going on right now. Johns Revelation in 4:1-4 paints a picture of angels, elders and beasts by countless millions praising God. In Revelation 4:10 he showed the 24 elders falling down

on their faces to worship and praise Him.

Now, on our way home, we should practice our praise so that when we get to heaven we can turn our praise on big time! Praise is glorying in His presence! Praise is lifting up the most high.

There are some who dont favor praising God openly. In fact they feel it is an unnecessary show of emotion.

Consider Sad Face Susie who died and stopped at the front gate of heaven to check in. The angel said, we noticed that you didnt like to worship and praise much on earth, in fact you often missed worship. We think it best to let you see both heaven and hell and let you decide. They took her to hell first. When the elevator open the people were dancing and yelling and singing together Partee!as they waved their hands. They were drinking hot totties, eating devils food cake and dancing the Hell fire slide. She joined in and had a great time. Then she was carried to heaven. There the people were smiling and singing, eating angel food cake and praising him. When the choir sang the Hallelujah chorus she joined in. It was cool. However, when given the choice of the two places she chose to go to hell. The angel put her on the elevator and took her down. When the doors opened there was no dancing, everyone was screaming in pain and begging for a cool drops of water. When she was snatched from the elevator by two rotting corpses she screamed, Hey, what happened to the people shouting Parter and the Hot totties and the Hellfire Slide? The Zombies said, Oh that was our welcoming crew. We were recruiting you then, you are one of us now. Aint no praising here. Welcome to hell.

As it is in heaven, saints praise God down here, getting ready for heaven.

Heaven will be a place to see

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that while there are many great destinations on earth, there are none that are even close those in heaven.

Heaven has been the hope of believers of all ages.

Nothing man can create on earth can match what God is preparing for believers in heaven. Although we marvel at the works of man they are only a shadow of Gods creations in heaven.

Thats why Abraham took a journey in faith “looking for a city with foundations.”

Moses, led Israel, but Hebrews 11 says, “For he was looking to the reward”

Paul labored to witness for Christ in spite personal peril. He expected to receive, “a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.(2 Corinthians 5:1)

Believers who make sacrifices to glorify God will be rewarded. Colossians 1:4-5 says there is, “hope laid up for you in Heaven”

What is there about Heaven that generates such enthusiasm that men and women would dedicate their whole lives just to see it!

New York City is a great city with many sights to see. But after you have seen the 104 stories of the New World Trade Center, Statue of Liberty, the United Nations and historic Harlem, despite their beauty, they cannot come close to the grandeur of the

place called heaven.

St. Louis is a beautiful metropolis which is home of the famous Gateway Arch. But after you have seen the engineering miracle of St. Louis, the sight to see and the place to be, is the place called heaven!

New Orleans attracts thousand to what some have called the 8th wonder of the world, The Mercedes Superdome, but after you have marveled at the awesome spaceship sized superdome and witnessed the pageantry of Mardi Gras, the sight to see and the place to be is still the place called heaven!

Atlanta attracts millions to see the tomb of Martin Luther King, but after you have seen Dr. King's tomb and visited Atlanta underground, the sight to see and the place to be, is still the place called heaven!

The Alamo of San Antonio draws millions to reflect on the battle cry, "Remember the Alamo" but the sight to see and the place to be is the place called heaven!

You can journey to San Francisco and cross the Golden Gate Bridge, dash over to New York and cross Niagara Falls and spend the night in Grand Canyons of Arizona, but and nothing you will see or experience will come close to the wonders as it is in heaven.

Whether its the beautiful homes of the stars in Hollywood, the beautiful view of Lookout Mountain in Tennessee or the rumbling engines of the Daytona speedway, the sight to see and the place to be, is the place called heaven!

I don't know about you but I want to do a little sightseeing in heaven!

I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates!

I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9604-Inspiration

Blessed and ain't nothing you can do about it

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 28, 2013

SCRIPTURE: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. Numbers 23: 19-20.

Introduction

Do you have any haters? Haters are those who are envious of the way God has blessed and favored you. Look back over your life and consider the wonderful blessings that God has bestowed on you. Despite the difficulties of our past, and obstacles that have been placed in our way, God has blessed us in wondrous way. We have made the treacherous climb out of despair and forded the streams of frustration. We have survived the bitterness of rejection and the despair of personal loss. Despite these and other difficulties, we can truthfully say, God has blessed us wonderfully.

Many hate the faithful only because they have been blessed. The main reason Joseph's brothers hated him was because he was favored by their father and given a coat of many colors. He was blessed with a great future and that made his brothers envious of him. They tried to put him in a pit and he was sold into slavery. In Egypt, he was put into prison and even there God blessed him and he arose to be great in the kingdom. God blessed everything he did; and because of that he was hated because he was blessed. Why did Cain kill Abel? Abel did nothing besides work every day and offer praise to God. However, when his brother saw how God favored his sacrifice above and beyond his own, he killed him.

The Jews have been a race of people who have obviously been blessed by God throughout history. They work hard, live righteously and please God and for that as a people they have been ostracized, criticized, and estranged from their own land. During World War II Hitler tried to murder the entire race and burned six million people in ovens. What did they do wrong? They were blessed by God.

In a similar sense the world has seen the wondrous works that have resulted from the mind and soul of people of African ancestry. The bible often points to the great accomplishments of the African Diaspora, but the descendants of African ancestry have been hated, enslaved and treated unfairly, only because they have been blessed.

We cannot help but reflect upon the wonderful blessings that God has given us. Neither should we be intimidated by the way others are critical of the faith of believers. Our God continues to shower us with wondrous works, timely intervention, and the uninterrupted flow of blessings that fall upon us from the throne of heaven.

It's obvious that believers are blessed in so many ways.

As Christians, we should never be intimidated by those who are envious of the blessing and favor god has showered on us. We live to please him. We live to lift him up. As a result we are blessed and there is nothing anyone can do about it.

Exposition

This text focuses on the attempt of Israel's enemies to get a prophet to curse the people after God had blessed them.

Israel marched through Moab and their sheer numbers intimidated Balak the king. In this chapter Balak sought one of the prophets of God named Balaam and offered to pay him to get God to curse Israel so that they would not be successful. At first Balaam, attracted to the money, quickly took the offer, but God placed an angel of the Lord in the way and his donkey refused to go forward. Finally, Balaam hit the donkey with his staff. That's when God opened the mouth of the donkey and it talked. Numbers 22:28 says, "And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?" Then Balaam saw the angel and heard the warning that he was only to say what God tells him to say.

Moses and the leaders of Israel were unaware of the plots going on against them. They were not in any capacity to break the plot and escape the plan that was being laid for them. It would be God, who keeps Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, who would mess up their plan without Israel having to do anything.

The first attempt to curse Israel involved an empty worship. There were seven altars established and seven bulls were sacrificed. Yet, instead of asking God to curse Israel, Balaam blessed them. The King was upset. What he designed as a trap was turning into a blessing.

The second attempt was made from a different vantage point. Balaam was asked to curse them another way. This new vantage point would not completely destroy all of Israel, but the curse would at least be on some of them. That worked out the same way. The curse was reversed.

A third attempt to curse them failed as well. Balak became angry and fired Balaam for not bringing down a curse on the people. Balaam said in Numbers 24:13 "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that

will I speak?"

Balak learned that the people of God were on their way to Promised Land. They were blessed in their crossing of the Red Sea. They were blessed in the journeys and there were blessed in their march and there was absolutely nothing he could do about it.

How we have been blessed

FAVOR ATTRACTS ATTACKS: Israel was moving through Moab as recipients of God's favor. They were unaware that they were being observed from a distance. What Balak saw was a successful people obviously blessed by their God. It was that favor from God that invited the plots against them. Whenever we act wisely, making life choices that embrace the will of God, we earn the favor of God. Wise actions, according to the will of God please Him. He smiles on us and gives us favor. He favors our marriages, relationships, and business efforts because we walk a blessed path. However, it is that very favor that causes many people to attack us. It is your confidence in God that causes some of your co-workers to hate on you. It is your refusal to lower yourself to gutter levels of speech and conduct that prompts others to say that you think you are better than others. It is your sense order that causes those who are disorganized to envy. It is your ability to dress like a queen on the income of common laborer that has your friends scratching their heads. The very positive nature of your speech, your optimism and your confidence attracts attacks. It is our tendency to show mercy and to forgive, to stand for truth rather than lies and promote "righteousness" over "ungodliness" that draws God's favor. Those who are upset because of the favor God has given us should know should give up their fight and accept the fact that we are blessed there ain't nothing they can do about it!

FALSE WORSHIP WON'T UNDO YOUR BLESSING: Seven altars were established in the mountains to offer sacrifice to God to get him to curse Israel, yet God was not impressed and would not reverse himself. The Israelite ritual of animal sacrifice to God was duplicated, but it did not have any effect because there is no power in empty worship. Today, there are many people who praying for the people of God to fail! Do you think that your enemies are actually praying that you succeed? Are they praying that you get the promotion, job or opportunity they also want? Balaam set up the same ritual, but it had no effect. How much effect does an empty worship have on God? If we come to church, sing, pray and offer praise to God without obedience and personal sacrifice, is God impressed? The goal of every believer is to promote the will of God. We do it for that purpose and that purpose alone. If your enemies are praying against you, don't worry, such prayers have no affect on those who have blessed and favored. If your enemies are invoking God's name and speaking against you, don't worry, God does not hear. Only the "fervent effectual prayer of the righteous" avails much. Those who are praying that the faithful fail may as well accept the fact that we are blessed and ain't nothing they can do about it.

THOSE INVOLVED IN A DIVINE PURPOSE ARE BLESSED: Israel moved through Moab not because they were on a sightseeing journey, but they moved

according to divine order. Every obstacle they encountered was removed by divine order. They were blessed so that they could achieve a divine purpose. Even today that remains true: Everyone who helps accomplish a divine purpose is blessed. We frequently refer to the widow woman in the Old Testament whose barrel never ran out of meal because of faith action. She was an example of a person being blessed because of divine purpose.

The prophet Elijah was being used by God for a divine purpose. When the woman sought to help him, she found that her barrel never ran dry. She was blessed because she tried to help a man on a divine mission. Rahab hid the Jewish spies in the Promised Land; she was later blessed because she helped them.

Today, there are many people who are the recipients of residual grace, because they are helping the divine purpose in many different ways. Those who rang the Salvation Army bells, served food to the homeless, helped the less fortunate, visited the sick, cared for wayward children or gave a helping hand in many small ways are people who helped achieve a divine purpose. That's why they are blessed and favored.

Those who are envious of the blessed should spend more time watching what they do to earn favor than trying to stop the favored from receiving God's blessing.

The more involved we are with divine purpose the more we are blessed. Those who don't like that may as well accept it because we are blessed and there ain't nothing they can do about it.

God is giving us new blessings

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that God is blessing us so that he can take us to places that we have never been.

When God delivered Israel he brought them out of a horrible past. He brought them from a hopeless and a helpless position.

He brought them out by making them the beneficiaries of His divine favor.

God has decided to bless those who are pure in heart, and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

God has decided to bless those who are merciful and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

God has decided to bless those who mourn and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

Like Israel, we are traveling through an unknown land, walking in the favor of God!

This the same favor that was showered on Samuel that caused him rise from obscurity to become a great prophet. 1 Samuel 2:26 says, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men."

It's the same favor that Job talked about in Job 10:12 when he said, "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

This is the same favor that the angel told Mary about in Luke 1:30 when he said, "...Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God."

It's the same favor that David enjoyed because Acts 7:46 says David was a man,

"Who found favor before God.."

If God has forgiven you for your sins, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has brought comfort to your heart, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has healed you when you were sick, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has inspired you when you were facing a challenge, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has lifted a burden from your shoulders, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has given you genuine peace of mind, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

If God has enriched your life with unspeakable joy, you have been blessed and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

Because of His favor we have been able to come through our Egypt, cross our Red Sea and enter our Promised Land.

It is His favor that gives us:

-STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.
-ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.
-INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.
-COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because of His favor we are able to:

-Keep on going, when our road gets rough.
-Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.
-Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

I'm glad that He is a wonder working God!

I'm glad that He is a soul saving God!

I'm glad that one day He saw me in it and decided to save me from it!

I'm glad that He decided to protect me from it while He guided me through it.

I'm glad that He decided to lift me from it and elevate me above it.

I'm glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!

I'm glad that He carried it to Golgotha's hill!

They nailed His hands to it, but he didn't stay on it! They buried him in a borrowed tomb,

But, early Sunday morning arose from the grave…and ain't nothing anybody can do about it!

No. 9605-Inspiration

All that and a bag of chips

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 4, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12

Introduction

Have you ever met a really cocky person? That's the person that believes that he is "all of that and a bag of chips!" He likes to brag about what he has, who she knows, and what big things he is doing? That person is an extremely boring person because he believes that he is the only one who has attained anything in life; the accomplishments of others pale in comparison to his own. If you listen to such a person talk, they will probably say "I, Me and My" more often than they say, "We, us and Our,"

The phrase "all that and a bag of chips" is a term from 1990's. It has a two fold meaning. When someone else describes you, it is flattery and recognition of accomplishment. "She's something else. She's smart. She's good looking. She's friendly. She dresses well. She's all that and a bag of chips." However, when you start to believe that you are superior to others and act that way towards them, it that's when the phrase turns sour, "He thinks he's all that and a bag of chips. He ain't nothing!" (expletive deleted).

No one really likes the cocky person. The man who thinks he's all of that and a bag of chips, walks up to a woman and says, "I'm sorry, does it bother you that I'm standing next to you?" The woman asks, "What should that bother me?" "I thought it might bother you because I'm such a sexy person that everybody is watching no one is watching you." The woman who thinks she's all that and a bag of chips constantly brags about herself and enjoys putting others down. She's the one that says, "How do you like my solid gold earrings? I see yours. I didn't know Toys R Us sold ear rings!"

Being humble is what we learn from Jesus. When we think that we're all that and a bag of chips, when we think we're the man, what we're really doing is expressing our sense of value, and dignity, self-worth. In the same sense we are expressing our belief that we are solely responsible for our success. What we learn from Jesus is that humility

is the ability to only take half a bow and give the rest to God. The boastful person takes the whole bow and pats himself on the back.

Jesus suffered humiliation on the cross because God sent him for a purpose which was greater than himself. He recognized himself as the instrument. The cocky man believes that he himself is the purpose and all the people who surround are his instruments, and tools to be used for his/her own success. The person who recognizes God's role in whatever he/she does always feels unworthy of accolades and praise. The feeling of unworthiness increases with the size of the accolade. Sometimes presentations may get bigger than mere plaques or certificates. Sometimes there are busts and memorials and even rooms, windows and buildings that bear our names.

One reason a true servant of God feels unworthy is because the true servant recognizes that the real praise for any accomplishment belongs to God.

Tributes usually follow significant accomplishments. We feel unworthy because we know that God was the underlying source of our success; He deserves the praise.

George Washington Carver was a famous agricultural scientist known for his peanut research. After his death every African-American community in America named something after George Washington Carver. In fact he and Booker T. Washington were only two Negroes who faces have ever been placed on 50 cent pieces. Carver never wanted anything named after him. He was humble. What he wanted was for his work to continue. So he took all of his worldly goods and set up the George Washington Carver Foundation at Tuskegee to fund the work of young people following him for years to come. Today, many communities fight and argue over the naming of a building after a person, most of those being honored were probably humble people who, like Carver would probably, much rather than that their work would continue and give God the praise.

God should be praised, not us; that's the way humble saints feel.

As Christians, we recognize that every accomplishment we make is a reflection of God's handiwork. Without Him, we can do nothing. If we have accomplished anything, the glory is His for He is God who is great and is greatly to be praised.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as He explained the humble nature of the Christian calling.

Paul's life was filled with great accomplishments, but he always played down his personal accomplishments choosing to point followers to the higher calling which was always before him. The higher calling he sought was to step out of the dead life of the Mosaic Law and to step into the full power of the resurrected life in Christ.

In Philippians 3:10 he said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." He wanted to believer's to understand that despite all of his accomplishments that he still considered himself to be one striving for perfection, struggling to do God's will, whatever the cost.

Paul's interpretation gives us a clear example of how to explain humility.

He focused on what he was not instead of what he was.

He focused on how far he had to go rather than how far he has already traveled.

He pointed to how small he was in comparison to God's greatness, rather than how big he was compared to the limited accomplishments of his fellowman.

Therefore in the text, Paul says, in Philippians 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained.." or "Don't get the impression that I know it all or have done anything great." -It's not me, it's the Lord.

He was a man who was obviously educated, but he said he had not attained.

He was a man with many powerful friends, but he said he had not attained.

He was a man who spoke several languages, but he said he had not attained.

He was a man who traveled the known world, but he said he had not attained.

He was a man who had access to money and resources, but he said he had not attained.

He carries this idea even further in verses 13-14 when he says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Attaining the prize or doing the will of God was what Paul considered His purpose. He lost himself in the purpose and considered whatever he did in life to small and insignificant in comparison.

Despite his achievements, he never thought of himself as "all that and a bag of chips."

Without God

MANY BELIEVE THEIR OWN HYPE: Paul told the Philippians that he wasn't fooling himself. He knew he had not come close to the personal goal of knowing Christ as she should. He laid it out plain: "I have not attained. I count not myself to have apprehended.." He had a diploma, but he didn't let the diploma impress him. He had money, but that did not impress him. He had connections, but that did not impress him. He didn't believe his own hype.

There are many today who rely totally upon their own intelligence, imagination and intuition to achieve what they call success. These are the individuals who believe that with a good education and a little luck, success is just a matter of being in the right place at the right time. They believe it is their skill and knowledge alone that accounts for their climb. They attribute everything else to sheer luck. Obviously, education is an important factor in any person's development. Imagination, intuition and skill are all essential to personal development. Yet these do not supersede the need to have God in our lives.

In our smartness, we should never revel in the fact that we have graduated from Grambling, Southern, Morehouse, Dillard or some other fine institution of learning. The sheepskin diploma that hangs on our wall attests to what's in our head, but we count on the power of God to take what's in our head and put it in our hands and feet in a productive and spiritual fulfilling way.

If we are not careful we can begin to believe we are better than others. Sometimes it slips out when we make fun of someone's hair, looks, poverty, speech, dress or living conditions. That's when we pull out the chip bag of pride. We may not say the words, but our actions at that point indicate that we feel that we are all that and a bag of chips.

Anyone who thinks he succeed by his own efforts is mistaken. We are what we are because of God and God alone.

WHAT ARE WE COMPARED TO GOD'S GREATNESS?: What are we when we compare ourselves to God's greatness? We are single grains of sand on the beach, mere drops of water in the ocean. There are many people in the world who believe that because they are well connected in society, business and politics and they are big wheels among men, that this earthly prominence should demand special favors for the Lord. God owes us nothing, we owe Him.

We should remember that God is no respecter of persons.

The little that we have ranks so small against the mighty works of God. I hear the Psalmist ask the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

Man has 263 bones, 600 muscles, and 970 miles of blood vessels.

He has 400 cups on his tongue for taste, 20,000 minuscule hairs in his ears to tune into sound, 40 pounds of jaw pressure, 10 million nerves and branches.

He has 600,000,000 air cells that breathe in his lungs.

His heart beats 4,200 times an hour and pumps 12 tons of blood everyday. ....everything man has and is....was made by God.

I hear the song writer say, Oh Lord My God, as I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands hath made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunders thy power throughout the universe displayed...then sings my soul my savior God to thee, How great thou Art, How great thou art!

Whatever we are, we cannot brag because without God we are nothing.

THOSE WHO SURRENDER GIVE UP THE BAG AND THE CHIPS: Paul said he had not attained anything that he counted Spiritual humility in its purest form is to say to God, "What do you want me to do?" We don't have the option of the catcher in a baseball game that can tell the pitcher what type of pitch to make with barely visible move of his finger. If God's says go left we don't have the option of shaking our head and going right. We ask him which way to go.

A key to success is to surrender ourselves to God. What does that mean?
To surrender is to say to God, "I'm not all that and a bag of chips. Here, God you can have the bag and the chips!" First we have to surrender our sense of personal confidence. This is the notion that we can accomplish anything, alone.

When we surrender to God we change our attitude to one that says, "I can't do anything without God."
I can't succeed in business, school or my profession without God's blessings. Once that is done then kingdom building becomes the highest priority.

Surrendering is not easy because everything in us wants independence.

Everything in us says, Seek your own, do for yourself, and reach your own goals.

Surrendering requires us to put our own goals on the back burner and to put those

of Christ on the front burner.

Those who are able to surrender themselves can say with the songwriter, 'All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give.

I will ever love and trust him; in his presence daily live.

I surrender all.

I surrender all.

All to thee my blessed savior; I surrender all.

When we come before God's throne

Finally brothers and sisters, we see that we have been the beneficiaries of blessings that have flowed from the throne of God. It has not been us, but it has been God.

The fool says in his heart that he is what he is because he is a great football player!

Only those totally ignorant to the workings of the almighty believe they have achieved because they great scholars themselves

Everything that we have comes from the Lord. We can't take credit for anything, because without him we could do nothing.

The humble man/woman says "I am nothing without God."

There was an illustration once used by renowned educator Fannie Everfield who held up a sign with the word "Christian" written on it. Then she took a pair of scissors and cut off the letters "Christ" leaving only IAN. She said with Christ I ain't nothing.!

We are nothing without Christ because he is the one who says:

I am the way, the truth and the life!

I am the bread of life!

I am the lily of the valley and the bright and morning star!

If we just have to brag on someone who has done good things. Let's brag on the Lord because his grace is sufficient.

His grace is sufficient for:

—The poor, no matter how pathetic their poverty.
—The tired, no matter how feeble their steps.
—The burdened, no matter how exhausted their body.
—The lonely, no matter how pitiful their situation.
—The wretched, no matter how despairing their circumstance.
—The sick, no matter how painful their diseases.

Grace can:

—Take heavy burdens and make them bearable.
—Take high mountains and make them climbable.
—Take deep valleys and make them crossable.

If we have to brag on somebody, brag on Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Brag on Jesus who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

Brag on Jesus who arose early Sunday morning!

Brag on Jesus, "He's all that and a bag of chips!"

No. 9606- Anniversary, Church

When God starts it, He finishes it

By Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2013

SCRIPTURE: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6

Introduction

Have you ever awakened in the morning and, just for a few moments, thought about how far you have come?Many years ago, God began a good work in you. At the beginning it was rough, crude and cumbersome, but all of the ingredients were there. It probably began when you were a child, learning the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalms. It continued in Sunday School and even further as you began to learn the rudiments of walking in faith.

Laying there, staring at the ceiling, have you ever thought about the rough years of your life when you faced difficulties that threatened your safety and existence?

Did you think about your children? Your spouse? Your siblings?

After a few moments of reflection, you probably gave God thanks for the journey and arose to face the new day with a positive spirit. You are grateful because in all of your experiences you learned that God never leaves you alone and will start whatever he finishes.

This church is celebrating a long journey. For decades it has traveled together for the most part with the same block of families. Many years ago God began that great work and will not stop working with us until He finishes what he started. Look around this room. It has changed over the years, but there are times when we can literally feel the presence of the old warriors: mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles and aunts guiding us. Sometimes we can even see them sitting on their favorite pew. God began a good work in them and He is continuing that work in this generation. He will not stop guiding us, protecting and leading us, until we all reach the Promised Land.

On days such as this we sing the words of that old song by the Mighty Clouds of Joy, "It's been another day's journey and I'm glad about it."

When churches celebrate anniversaries we are at a high point in our history. We

have the advantage of hindsight. Through hindsight we can see the long meandering path we have traveled to get here.

We see the mountains and valleys of challenges and disappointments.

We see those deserts that were so dry and desolate that we thought we'd never make it through.

We also see the rivers and the streams. We see the streams of tears and rivers of despair that we have crossed. When you are able to see things from a high place, they seem differently. When we climb higher, we get a panoramic view of things that allows us to see a wider, broader picture of life, rather than a narrow perspective.

This church is like ancient Israel marching toward the Promised Land with old man Moses leading the same congregation. Like Israel there have been times when we were faithful and followed in step. There have been other times when we were hard to deal with and God caused us to wander through periods of progress following by periods when we literally stood still. Israel followed this cycle for 40 years until the people reached the shores of the Promised Land. God was with them when they began their journey and He would be with them all the way to the end. If God starts something He will finish it.

As Christians, we thank God for our journey. We consider all that we have endured we understand that it has all work to our good. Anniversaries such as the one celebrated today gives us a chance to look back at the long journey, and to look forward to the great land of promise that lies ahead.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he reassures believers that God begins a work of perfection in each believer and will work with us until that perfection is achieved.

In this passage Paul makes clear a great truth about the working of the Holy Spirit in each individual life. If the Holy Spirit begins a work in us, He will finish the same work. That principle helps every believer or congregation of believers, know that God will not leave His work undone. He will bring it to full completion.

Generally, we understand God by knowing that He has a plan to bring us to the land of promise. He prepares every believer, every believing family, and every believing church for the journey from now to what will be in the future.

God is not fickle in the implementation of His plan for us. He begins and great work and each step along the way is part of an intricate design.

From time to time God reveals it to us and we can see how He is guiding us toward our destination.

The passage says, "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ."

The Day of Jesus Christ is the day that Christ returns and sets up His kingdom.

We rejoice that God has begun a good work in us and will not stop this great work until we enter the Promised Land.

The Good Work Began with a Promise

The good work God started with this church, began with a promise. Decades ago God touched the hearts of a few and set their hearts on fire with the idea of doing a great work, building a church.

Those old warriors stepped out on God's promise. Today we recognize that God has been good to them and has answered their prayers. In the 66th Psalm David looked back over his journey and God's promises and he decided to keep His promises to God out of gratitude for the mighty blessings God has showered upon him. Today, brothers and sisters we keep our promises to God because it is our way of saying thank you for being so good to us!

We give thanks to God for beginning the good work and:
—Muzzling the mouths of lions that came to devour us!
—Quenching the flames of fires that tried to destroy us!
—Conquering the enemies that came to destroy us!
—Penetrating the walls built to divide us!
—Unlocking the prisons designed to hold us down!

I don't know about you brothers and sisters but God has been doing a great work in my life and I'm not tired yet!

God has shown us mercy on the journey

This church's journey has not been an easy work. There have been times along the way when we knew that it was nothing but the Lord that helped us to make it through. Nothing but the Lord! He was merciful and kind to us and because of his benevolence we have made it this far.

That's why we celebrate our journey and give thanks to God for his mercy.

The Israelite's celebrated their journey by the giving of special offerings and renewing their pledges of faithfulness to God.

They celebrated their journey by giving thanks.

Should we do less for this great work that God has begun in us and continues even today?

Every believer's celebration should be filled with thanksgiving!

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for

coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

When we consider our journey we can't help but give thanks for the help the Lord has given us. He has begun a great work in us and he's showing us new mercies everyday!

It has been a wonderful journey

When Paul spoke to the Philippians about the great work that was once begun he spoke from the vantage point of years past and which offered him perspective. When we look back we can see what God has done for us.

There are many who look back with a touch of nostalgia. There are some who have shared most of those years and a small group who have shared the entire journey. They say collectively, "It's been a wonderful journey."

Like Paul, there are many believers who have worked to help build the church.

Like Paul, I can hear them say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but still they proclaim –"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have preached and others have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs.

Some have given their last dollar and others have given until they felt the pain, but still they proclaim, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans; others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common.

They all say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now." We all say, "I''ve come too far to turn around."

Many years ago there was no John P. Kee or Kurt Franklin. There was no Donnie McClurkin, either. There were no CD players, IPods and internet. It was a time when people would lift their voices and shout, "I love the Lord he heard my cry. Long as I live while trouble rise, I'll hasten to his throne."

Yes, we've come a long ways on this journey; and thanks to God it's been a wonderful journey.

Who will tell our story?

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead, the question is asked, who will tell the story?

We have seen the great work that God began in the old warriors. We have also seen them called home one by one. Who will continue the work if one warrior falls?

Who will testify like the warriors of old that God provides for our survival in the wilderness of life!

Who will tell this generation that when times are hard that God will prepare a table for them in the presence of their enemies?

Who will tell those who are despondent along the way that God takes care of the faithful.

Who will testify that He opens doors that we cannot see and makes a way out of no way.

Who will testify that God provides all we need and is truly a "Way Maker."

We have withstood tremendous difficulties over many, many years, but God is still doing a great work!

Our young men have seen war in Afghanistan and Iraq and our daughters have faced new challenges to their womanhood, but God is still doing a great work!

We have seen great leaders fall and new leaders rise, but God is still doing a great work!

In these precious years as the world changed, this church has remained stable, trusting in a God who is the same yesterday as he is today and will be tomorrow.

We have kept our hands in the winding chain.

Who will tell the story?

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side!

Today we celebrate our anniversary, but that's not what I'm glad about!

I'm glad that our God doesn't start what He can't finish!

I'm glad that God started the work of salvation a long time ago!

I'm glad that God started a work that began in Bethlehem and ended on Calvary!

I'm glad that Jesus took an old rugged cross and carried it up Golgotha's hill!

I'm glad that He died out on Calvary!

But He didn't stop there!

I'm glad that early Sunday morning He arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

No. 9607-Inspiration

An Open and Shut Case

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 18, 2013

Scripture: "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it for thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name. Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sip with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:8, 20

Introduction

Have you ever locked your keys in your car? Have you ever been locked out of your house? What about locked out of your computer?When those instances happen we usually call someone who can access it for us. That's when we learn that there are rules of engagement regarding the circumstances that doors can be opened.If you call technical support when you are locked out of your computer there are rules that must be followed before they will give you any information: Your mother's maiden name, last four digits of your Social Security Number and a variety of other instances.

If your keys are locked in your automobile a professional lock company or a policeman is invited to jimmy the locks on the doors to get them open. They will usually ask for some type of ID to prove you should have access.

Locksmiths can make keys to your house, office, and your safe. But there are laws that govern when and under what circumstances he can open such doors, even though he possesses the skill to open them at any given time.

Hotels, motels, schools and many institutions have master keys that can open any room, locker, or office, but there are rules that say when and how the master key can be used.

Often life seems to close many doors in our faces; doors which were once freely open to us. How do we get them open again? There are rules of engagement there, too. God opens and closes doors, but we should be able to identify ourselves as children of the kingdom when we call on Him.

When opportunities seem to pass us by, that's when we know that we have an open and shut case. This is a case that only God can open or a door of misfortune that only God can close. The first rule of engagement is to know God for yourself. The second

is to try your best to live the God centered, spirit filled life, and the third rule is to trust in the Lord with all your heart.

As Christians, we often experience open and shut cases. When we do, we have learned that the best way to deal with them is to call on the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's letter to one of the seven churches of Asia Minor encouraging their great faith.

Chapter 2 and 3 of Revelation contain Christ's special messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Verse 8 is an excerpt from Christ's message to the Church at Philadelphia. In verse 7 he pronounced that he had the "Key" or power and authority to open and close doors.

In verse 8 he tells them that he has opened a great opportunity for them that cannot be taken away. The symbol of that opportunity is the open door.

Verse 7 and 8 let us know that Christ has the power and authority to open doors for us.

In verse 20 we see the savior knocking on the door the heart of believers asking for admission. He asks to be admitted so he can bring salvation, hope and new life.

The Opening and closing of doors

GOD HAS OPENED DOORS: God has opened many doors for believers. Doors are opportunities. Sometimes they are opportunities to advance. At other times they are opportunities to escape a bad situation. Often the doors God opens allow us to take a detour and avoid the mass confusion facing others.

We should rejoice that God has opened the door of opportunity for us this year! At first it may appear to be a misfortune and then you actually realized that it was an opportunity. A lost job for some became an opportunity for a new career. A failed marriage became an opportunity to start again. A bankruptcy provided an opportunity to get a grip on finances.

Still others found that God runs ahead of us and held doors opened for us, holding back our enemies and pushing us toward progress.

Look back over the year. Some of us have done more than just survived; we have actually improved our spirituality, financial condition and family relations. Some have expanded their boundaries by taking advantage of every opportunity God made available to grow both spiritually and materially. There are many who are experiencing stronger family relationships in addition to other quality of life measures that cannot be ignored.

God has been faithful to provide us with a door of opportunity, even while He held back our enemies.

BE READY WHEN THE DOOR OPENS: While it is true that once God opens a door for us, no man can force it shut; it is also true that doors God opens are not guaranteed

to stay open forever, we must be prepared to move at His command. When Israel left Egypt to go to the Promised Land they faced a closed door: the Red Sea. God opened a door for them to travel across the Red Sea on dry land, but that door did not stay open long. They had to move quickly because soon after the door closed, drowning all of Pharaoh's army. The door to Noah's ark stayed open for months as he gathered samples of every creeping thing on earth, but the door didn't stay open forever. Once it closed, those on the outside begged for admittance, but it was too late.

We should be ready when God opens doors. We should be trained and prepared for the career opportunity we seek so that once the career we seek is open that we are ready to step in. We pray for financial blessings, but are we really ready to handle a flood of financial opportunities? If we became multi-millionaires tomorrow would we be broke in five years, because we have not learned how to handle money or how to obediently give back to God from what we already have? Are we ready for the perfect mate or are we still looking for one night stands, cheap thrills?

We don't know the day or the hour that our opportunity will open. We should be ready when it comes.

GOD CLOSES DOORS: Often we desire to go a direction in life that is the direct opposite than the direction God wants; that's when God closes doors. For the believer, this can get a little confusing when we see non-believers walking through the same doors. Our prayer to God is "Thy will be done one earth as it is in heaven." In essence we pray that God's will for our lives will be accomplished. In effect, we time God to close any door that will not take me in the direction you want me to go. That's why your friend makes plenty of sideline money selling hot merchandise and gets away with it for a while; but you get caught. God closed that door. It's why you applied for a position that has no promotion possibilities and God has plans for you to go higher; so He closed that door. It all means that there are times when God closes a door to push us in the right direction.

Then there are times when God closes a door because we abused a trust. Isn't that what happened to Adam and Eve. They lived the good live in the Garden of Eden, but they became disobedient. As a result evicted them from the garden and closed the door forever. Israel became a great nation under Solomon. He built a great nation with lavish riches and elaborate buildings. However, after his death the nation plunged into ungodliness and God closed the door to the national prosperity; it has remained closed ever since.

When God closes a door it remains closed until he decides to open it again.

One Door Left

Finally, brother and sisters, while there are many doors that God can open, there is one door that he will not open on his own; it's the door to your heart.

Yet, I hear the scripture say, "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

Have you ever heard a knock at your door?

Whenever someone knocks on your door it means that they desire to get your

attention. More often than not they want to enter for one reason or another.

Our savior wants to enter the door of our heart to bring us salvation.

An old Negro spiritual focused on that door and the knocking with these words, "Somebody's knocking on your door, Oh sinner, why don't you answer, somebody's knocking on your door."

If the church has one important function it is to help people to hear the Holy Spirit knocking at their door.

When we are lost the knock is a call to repentance.

When we are saved, the knock is a call to action.

I don't know about you, but I've the knock at my door.

When I answered, I found a savior who showed me the way!

If we will let Him in, he will:

-SHOW THE WEAK how to find new strength

-SHOW THE DISCOURAGED how to find new inspiration

-SHOW THE DISENCHANTED how to find new hope!

I invite you to open the door and let Him in and let him sup with you!

He opened the door for the woman at the well and she shouted to everyone, "Come see a man," who can:

-Comfort us in our sorrow; Assure us in our difficulties

-Strengthen us in our weakness; Encourage us in our trials

-Direct us in our decisions; Help us in our duties

-Anoint us in our ministries; defend us in our battles

I heard David declare: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the king of glory? The Lord Strong and Mighty!

Who is the king of glory? The Lord mighty in battle!

Who is he?

He's the same God that opened up the Red Sea, He can open doors today!

He's the same God that rained down bread from heaven in the wilderness and He could he can put food on our tables!

He's the same God that brought down the walls of Jericho and He can bring down the walls of trouble and difficulty in our lives.

The God we serve has never lost a battle; we ought to keep our hand in His hand!

His name is Jesus, the Lily of the Valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star!

Jesus, who they tried in an illegal court before, but they found out that it was an open and shut case.

Jesus, who they tried in front of Jewish Sanhedrin Council, but they found out it was an open and shut case!

Jesus, who they tried in front of Pontus Pilate, but they found out, it was an open and shut case!

The hung Him on an old rugged and thinking they had put an end to his ministry, but they found out that this too was an open and shut case.

But early Sunday morning God opened up the tomb, and He arose from the grave!

When people tell you that it's over and you don't have a chance, that's when you know that you know that you have an open and shut case!

God can make away!

No. 9608-Faith

Cracker Jack Faith

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 25, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

Introduction

Have you ever tasted cracker Jacks? The combination of caramel coated popcorn and peanuts has been attracting people for years. Cracker Jacks have been around since 1893 and very little about it has changed. It's still taste the same and still has the picture of the sailor boy on the front, but its main selling point is still there as well; in fact it's reason for product's success over years. Inside of every box there is a prize. The lure of the prize in the cardboard box sheltered between kernels of corn and peanuts is the big secret to Cracker Jacks' success. As a product Cracker Jacks is simply popcorn molasses and peanuts. However, when this simple mixture was sold at the Chicago world's fair in 1893 it caused considerable attention. It was not only tasty but it also had a prize in the box.

Like millions of others, when I was a child I was attracted to Cracker Jacks. The corn was tasty, but I was really attracted to the prize. The prizes were always mysteries the customer never knew what was inside. Very seldom were the prizes the same. The prizes ranged from temporary tattoos to decoder rings. Sometimes there were baseball cards and plastic spinning tops. There were times when we poured out the popcorn and peanuts just to get to the prize.

Whenever I had a choice of goodies, Cracker Jacks was always a favorite choice. In 2004 a baseball team tried to substitute another crunchy snack for Cracker Jacks and there was so much of an outcry from the public that it was quickly returned as the primary junk food of the league. In recent years Cracker Jacks has replaced the toys in the boxes with little pieces of paper with wise quotes written on them. Without the mysterious prizes, sales have hit a slump. It seems that people love the popcorn and the peanuts, but they also want the prize.

That's what Paul is encouraging believers to do in verse 14. Keep your eye on the prize. In our case the prize is the "high calling" or mission that Christ has given us as believers. The calling is to build the kingdom of God. Just as Millions were willing to pour out the popcorn and nuts of a Cracker Jack box to get to the prize, we should have the same attitude ourselves.

We have many "things" in life, that's our popcorn and peanuts, but they don't count as much as the prize of pleasing God.

As Christians, we have resolved to keep our purpose in life the main thing, everything else is popcorn and peanuts.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi.

While imprisoned in Rome he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

Paul remained humble, throughout his life. Obviously, God had endowed him with great talents and gifts but he always received them with an attitude of humility. Although Paul was a learned scholar who spoke many languages fluently, and was well versed in the scholarship of his day, he told the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended" that is to note that while he had learned much in life, he was keenly aware that he did not know everything. He counted heavily on the Holy Spirit to reveal many things to him and to call others to his remembrance. Knowing that God spoke and moved through him, Paul was always humble to know that he had not accomplished anything alone, but it was always God working through him.

Secondly, Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. Whatever was done in the past remains as history, he chose, even in a moment of crises to always look to the future.

Lastly, Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37,"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as witness to the power of God and there would be no turning back.

Popcorn and Peanuts

When compared to the glories that God offers, much of what this life offers is just popcorn and peanuts when compared to the prize offered by our God.

PROMISE OF FAME AND POWER: The world offers believers the promise of fame and power. It is certainly enticing to receive the prospect of power of fame right now, instead of in the future. That's what happened when Jesus began his ministry, the devil appeared to him after a long fast and offered him the possibility of fame, power and self satisfaction. All Jesus had to do was to worship Satan and He would have it all. Jesus rebuked him and told him get behind him. He chose to live for kingdom. The prize of salvation was more important to him.

Even today, believers receive similar temptations. We are often tempted with great opportunities that will yield fame and power, but will weaken our ability to serve the kingdom. Some turn down those opportunities to better position themselves for kingdom service. The fame and power that the world offers is fleeting. It lasts for a day and then disappears. Yet, those who give their lives in service to God find a lasting reward.

There is a song that says, "You may seek earthly power and fame, the world might be impressed by your great name, soon the glories of this life will all be past, but only what you do for Christ will last."

George Washington Carver was a famous scientist who sought only to please God. He discovered over 300 uses for peanuts, but gave all of his profits to the public. As for as he was considered, it was just peanuts, when compared to the great work he did making the world a little better.

PROMISE OF RICHES: The world offers believers the promise of riches and the good life. We see it everywhere! It becomes an overwhelming enticement. Yet, for believers, it is like the popcorn and peanuts in the Cracker Jack box, taste good and it is filling, but it is not our prize.

Jesus, speaking to believers in Matthew 6:20 said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal, for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." Jesus points to to the real prize in the box, not to the popcorn and peanuts. He encourages us to lay up treasures in heaven. There are too many people today who spend vast amounts of time and energy trying to store up treasures in the local bank and fail to make regular deposits in the First National Bank of Heaven.

Jesus spoke of a rich farmer who chose to tear down so he could build up. "My barns are filled with every sort of grain" so I'll build a bigger barn so I can lay up for my old age.

Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives because they chose to lay up for themselves rather than put up an investment in the kingdom of God.

Every child of God is encouraged to, "seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all the other things will be added."

Every good deed adds to your treasure in heaven.

Every kind word adds a star in your crown.

Every gift of time and finance adds another star to your crown.

Treasures in heave are the real prize, all of the rest that life has to offer is just popcorn and peanuts!

THE PRIZE IS WORTH THE SACRIFICE: Believers are encouraged to remember that no matter how difficult the present struggle may be, the prize that our God offers is worth the sacrifice. What makes an athlete push himself to the limit? He keeps the promise of the prize in front of himself and goes forward. So it is with believers, when we pour out the contents of the box of goodies that life has given us, it's not the popcorn and peanuts that we seek, it is the prize.

Unlike the prizes in the Cracker Jack boxes that have reduced in value over the years, the prize that our God offers remains the same. The word of God tells us in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 2:26 says "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:"

Rev 3:5 says He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

All of this says, that the prize is worth the sacrifice.

It says, what God offers us makes what the world have to offer, just popcorn and peanuts in comparison.

Press On

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider Paul's ultimate challenge: Move forward in faith, with your eyes on the prize.

Paul reminded believers that no matter what obstacles come their way they must keep their eyes on the prize.

He had accumulated great knowledge, but he counted it all peanuts when compared to the prize.

He had accumulated great power, but he was all popcorn to him.

What really mattered was the prize.

Today, brothers and sisters that should be the testimony of every believer: We like the peanuts and the popcorn that come in the box of life, but we're looking for the prize!

Where is the prize?

Where is the prize in accumulating wealth if it helps no one?

Where is the prize in becoming famous if we can't use that fame to build the kingdom?

Where is the prize in rising tall ourselves if we don't help someone else rise as well?

The prize of God is given to the believer who overcomes the temptations of the world and pours out his life in pursuit of the kingdom!

Prize is for those who overcome!

Who is the man or woman who overcomes?

He that overcometh is the man who believes that God I serve is bigger than the problems I have!

He that overcometh is the woman who believes that no matter how tough the road gets, the Lord will make a way somehow!

He that overcometh is the man who declares that God is able, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!

John said in the Revelation of Jesus Christ,

He that overcometh, shall inherit all things!

He that overcometh will enjoy that day when the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

He that overcometh shall enjoy that day when the mountains will be made low, rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight!

Storms may rise! But he that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here!

He that overcometh will keep telling the story!

He'll keep telling the world about Jesus and a place called Calvary!

Bye and Bye when the battle is over, well tell the story!

How he died on an old rugged cross!

Well tell the story! How he rose from the grave We shall overcome! Oh deep in my heart, I do believe..

We shall overcome someday!

No. 9609-Grandparents

A Grandparent's Legacy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 8, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. Psalm 78:2-4

Introduction

Have you ever thought about the many ways your grandparents influenced you? Many have fond memories of their grandparents, while others are still creating memorable moments with them. The images that flash through our mind of grandparents usually form the framework of the lasting impression we have of them; those memories are lasting legacies that will endure for generations.

Whenever a child is born, anywhere in the world, a grandparent is born at the exact same second. One is born an infant with much to learn and another is born an aged veteran with much to teach.

Godly grandparents and those who have acted as grandparents are unique. They are living examples of faith in action. Character studies of these men and women, if written, would reveal lives that are rooted in faith that God will make a way. Since 1978, the nation has paused to salute grandparent figures for their example and contribution to the development of family life in America.

Perhaps the saddest words in the entire world are, I never knew my grandparents.

Even better than simply knowing grandparents, is knowing God fearing grandparents! God fearing grandparents seem to believe that no matter how bad things get, God will work it out! Sometimes grandparents seem a little out of touch as they dismiss any crises with the words, I just put that in the hands of the Lord! They seem distant, but yet are so close because they trust God to resolve every difficulty of life. No matter how the winds blow! No matter how the lions roar the godly grandparent has learned and teaches us by example that God is still in control.

As Christians, we thank God for the legacy we have received from godly grandparents. They have taught us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and to lean not to our own understandings. When we face difficult times or great storms, we can hear their words of assurance, "God will work it out." – That assurance is a godly grandparent's legacy.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he expresses the obligation of the aged and wise to pass on their knowledge of God to succeeding generations.

In the text David calls the accumulated wisdom of a family's ancestors "dark sayings" not that they were morbid or mysterious, but that they were wise and deep.

In David's day, as is today, many of the elders spoke it what seemed to riddles and proverbs that had very little meaning at the time, but proved to be revelations of truth. Godly grandparents often uttered these "dark sayings" that appeared amusing at the time, but were based on a deep faith in God.

David's words in this text represent the overwhelming body of scripture that urges parents to diligently teach their children, not only the word of God, his laws and the meaning of his ordinances, but also His works and the methods of His providence.

Dt 6:7 — And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Ps 71:18 — Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

Dt 11:19 — And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Grandparents are to teach their children and grandchildren the way of the Lord and thereby leave a legacy that will be more lasting than anything else they receive.

What grandparents teach

Our grandchildren need to know that God can still do what He has always done and He is doing it in their generation as well. While it's good to tell your grandchildren stories of God's incredible deeds recorded in the Bible, we also need to tell them how God has worked in our lives They may be amazed at the Biblical account but they will be impacted when they see how their grandparents put faith in action!

Grandparents influence generations

Have you ever noticed that children sometimes cling to the influence of their grandparents rather than that of the parents? That's a good thing, if the grandparents are godly.

Pastor Glenn Pease notes that Hezekiah was one of the best kings God's people ever had, but his father was Ahaz, and he was one of the worst they ever had. But his grandfather was Jotham and he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Hezekiah took after his grandfather rather than his father, and the result was victory for the

kingdom of God.

The glory and the lingering influence of grandparents is that their lives reach beyond their own lifetimes and grandchildren and great grandchildren learn of their strengths and weaknesses and emulate them.

Each succeeding generation seems to grow weaker and more worldly, until a grandchild or a great grandchild remembers the life work of a grandparent and points its generation back to some level of sanity.

In this way, grandparents influence history, for generations to come.

The first 17 verses of the Book of Matthew records 42 generations of grandparents. Beginning with Abraham, every grandfather is listed leading up to the birth of Christ. It is literally the grandparents hall of fame. Each of the generations was blessed because of the life work of the grandparents.

Even when grandchildren seem to mess up things, God somehow seems to reward godly grandparents long after their life journey ends by blessing their grandchildren.

Children remember the influence of Grandparents

Today, one of the most vivid memories we have of our grandparents is their demonstrated faith in difficult times. However, the faith for their experience was not developed instantly, but over a course of years. For example, Daniel had faith for the lion's den, but it was a faith that began when he was a teenager and practiced at every stage of his life. Abraham had faith in his senior years, but it was a faith developed over a lifetime.

Every grandparent who shares that faith of their life's experience with the next generation leaves a legacy and imprint on the life of a grandchildren that will endure for generations.

The young are impressed with the wisdom of their grandparents and often seek guidance from them because they always seem to know what to say and do when faced with life's issues.

Many are like Daniel who at age 80 had reached a level of maturity in which he was unmoved by anything that happened around him having experience the Lion's den, exportation, isolation and even elevation in his life time. Today, there are many grandparents among us that share a similar resolve. They have seen wars, depressions, several presidents, good times and bad times. They have seen droughts, floods, hot summers and cold winters. In all that they have seen, they have learned that God is still under control. That's why David, reflecting would write, I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed, begging for bread.

Grandparents help us find a way to break through

The young are struggling to find their way in life. They often turn to their grandparents for advice about breaking through the entanglements that keep them away from success.

Grandchildren, suffering from hurt, rejection and failure often find inspiration when grandparents reach into their own experience and tell them that breakthroughs in life happen when:

When we hurt enough to be willing to change,

When we learn enough that we want to change,

When we receive enough to be able to change!

It's words of wisdom such as these that grandchildren will remember for years. They are "dark sayings" that will linger long after grandparents are no longer with us.

Each generation must tell the story

Finally, brothers and sisters, grandparents themselves must hold on, keep trusting in the Lord and tell the story of God's goodness to the next generation.

In the text David said he would not hide the goodness of the Lord from the next generation, but would praise God for His mighty works.

More than anyone else in the family, grandparents can tell of the wonderful works of the Lord because they have seen Him move in their own lives.

They can testify that in their lives, God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm.

The times may have changed but God is still on the throne.

It's a great legacy to leave your grandchildren an abiding faith that influences them to trust in the Lord.

We trust in the Lord because those who trust him are rewarded with answered prayers, and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves. Biblical grandparents trusted in the Lord.

—Noah trusted the Lord and He brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and He showed him the Lamb in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and He protected him in the Lion's Den

—Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord.

I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Iwill trust in the Lord because if I am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

That brings to mind the little girl who was very close to her grandmother. Grandmother always took time to come to her room, pull up the old rocking chair and read her stories from an old story book given to her by her mother. The stories were inspiring

Sometimes she read about Mother Goose, Little Red Riding Hood, and Alice in Wonderland. However, mostly she read about David and Goliath, Adam and Eve and Daniel in the Lion's Den. After reading grandmother would say, "They trusted God and I do too,"

Grandmother would sit in that old rocker and read one each night without fail.

After a while Grandmother took sick. Shortly after the little girl learned that grandma was gone to be with God.

Only one thought came to her mind. The question plagued her day and night. She knew that grandma was with God. She knew that Grandma was safe.

However, the question that bothered her was, Who will tell the story?

As she came home that night her mother came into her room and tucked her daughter in bed. Tired, she sat in the old rocking chair. Instantly the little girl sat up in her bed and displayed the biggest smile. Why are you smiling so? The mother asked.

The girl pointed to her mother sitting in grandma's chair! The little girl pulled out the old story book that had passed through three generations and put it in her mother's lap. You are sitting in grandma's chair. You must tell the story!

That question still lingers today..who will tell the story?

Who will tell the story of your family's faith walk?

Who will tell the story of the mountains the family has climbed and the valleys it has seen.

Who will testify, The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

Who will testify that, I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

Who will tell the story of how a man named Jesus was nailed to an old rugged cross!

Grandparents must tell their generation how he died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Tell the story of your faith journey, that is a grandparent's lasting legacy!

9610-Communion

He Riseth from Supper

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 15, 2013

SCRIPTURE: He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples 'feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. John 13:4-5

Introduction

When asked to describe God what is your response? We think of God in many ways: Majestic, Awesome and powerful. We rarely think of God as a mere servant. We often find it difficult to see Jesus in any way other than a powerful provider. In reality, He wanted to be seen as a servant.

We often revere those who lead us and champion our causes and place them on pedestals. The same was true of Christ, who rejected the pedestal in favor of the role of a lowly servant. This was also the case of the Reverend Vernon Johns, the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, from 1947-1952. He was often criticized for challenging injustice in Alabama. He challenged the people to let their faith in God rise up above Sunday morning songs. However, his congregation felt truly insulted over his demonstrations of humility when he dressed in overalls, threw a towel over his shoulder and sold watermelons in front of the church to symbolize the importance of labor and working with one's hands. His protests and embarrassing symbols caused the church to fire him and get a young pastor that would not be controversial. They hired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sometimes our towels have meanings. That's what happened to the little boy who heard his Sunday School teacher say Jesus took a towel and wrapped it around himself as he showed his disciples how to become a super person. The next day the little boy insisted that his mom pin a towel to his shirt to make a cape. He said the towel made him superman. He wore the towel everyday, jumping off chairs and waving his hands in the air as he pretended to fly. On the first day of school he appeared wearing his towel.

When the teacher asked his name the boy responded, "Superman." The teacher smiled and said, "I'm sorry Superman, but at school you have to use your real name." The boy looked at his mom and asked, "Do I have to?" and the mom nodded. "So what is your real name, the teacher asked?" The boy said, "Well, don't tell anybody. It's my secret. My real name is Clark Kent."

Jesus challenged every believer to pick up the towel of service and take on the

identity of a servant. What's your real name? "Servant."

The challenge of Christian service is a change to serve and to walk by faith. It is a challenge that is never ending.

As Christians, we should resolve to let Christ rise up in us so that all who know us will truly know the joy of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on what Jesus did after the last supper.

With all of his disciples surrounding Him Jesus made one final attempt to get his disciples to understand the meaning of service in the kingdom of God. Just a short while earlier two of his disciples came to him requesting to sit on his right hand and his left hand when the kingdom of God became a reality. The two, James and John, desired to have high positions in the new kingdom. They sought to ensure themselves a position of power and influence in the kingdom by securing a promise from Jesus that once the kingdom of God was in place that they would have the highest positions. Their desire was to be great. Jesus rebuked them by letting them know that greatness in the kingdom of God was not the same as greatness among men. His words to them were simple, "He that would be great among you let him be your servant."

When he dealt with James and John Jesus gave an example, but in this text instead of simply speaking an example Jesus decided to show his disciples an example of what he meant my greatness in the kingdom of God. As all the disciples were gathered for the last time, Jesus stripped himself of His garments took a towel and wrapped it around himself; took another towel, and a basin or water and began to wash the feet of his disciples.

The entire action was servile in nature: The son of God serving others. It was a demonstration of what Jesus said often.

In Luke 12:37 he said, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them."

In Luke 22:27 he said, "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

Philippians 2:6-8 "..Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

He rose after supper to demonstrate humility to his servants. It was a demonstration so powerful that it lasts even until this day.

When He Rises

This act of Christ gives us an example of what happens when Christ rises up in our lives.

WHEN CHRIST RISES UP LOVE IS DEMONSTRATED: After the last supper Christ rose to demonstrate his love for his disciples. When we were children our idea of demonstrating love was amusing. We sent each other little notes, like the one that read: Roses are red and violets are blue, sugar is sweet and I love you." It may have had little boxes to check if you like me or not In modern times, you may have received a silent text on your phone or an email expressing love.

God took it further, He sent Jesus. Jesus took it further when he demonstrated that any person who professes love for another should be willing to rise up and demonstrate that love with actions. When the spirit of the savior rises in any believer we see it demonstrated by loving actions. In our homes, love is demonstrated by actions. The same is true in our relationships, partnerships and church relations. Those who love demonstrate their love with their actions. When Christ rises up, love is easier to see and feel. When there is no Christ, there is tension, anger, distrust, arguments and no acts of service. It is best therefore that we let him rise up so love can abide.

WHEN CHRIST RISES UP PRIDE TAKES A BACK SEAT: The text shows Jesus demonstrating humility. He was the Son of God, yet He was willing to wash his followers feet. His pride took a back seat. When Christ rises up within us, a spirit of humility rises up in us as well. It's the spirit that says, "Whatever he wants me to do, I will do it." How many times have we lost blessings because we refuse to accept the way God chose to bless us. We prayed for a job, but didn't take the job offered because it wasn't what we wanted. We prayed for a car, but grumbled because the car we received wasn't big enough. We prayed for an end to the family feud, but were not willing to admit having made any mistakes ourselves. Pride often stands in the way of success for many people. It blocks the door to peace in our homes. However, when Christ rises up, humility comes to the forefront and pride takes a back seat.

WHEN CHRIST RISES UP WE SEE THE NEED FOR WASHING: In verses 6-11 Jesus tells Peter about the need for spiritual washing to be a part of the body of Christ. At first Peter refused then asked to be washed all over. When Christ rises up in us, we see the need to be cleansed, and forgiven. Children can play in the dirt all day and not realize that they are dirty. However, as soon as a loving parent sees the dirt, the cleansing begins. When Christ rises up in us we see our sins in a different light. We desire to be washed and cleansed. When Christ rises up in use we want to atone for sins and begin again. When Christ rises up in us we are convicted of sin and no longer enjoy doing anything that will not align itself with his will. At first, Peter did not see the need for washing, but Christ saw it. He saw him in the near future denying Him. That's why he said in verse 11 "Ye are clean, but not all." When Christ rises up we become aware that we are unworthy to approach the throne of Grace. That only through Jesus can we have hope to obtain eternal life.

The Ultimate Example

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that when Jesus rose after supper he was preparing to demonstrate his love by laying down His life for His friends.

It did not seem to be a great act, only a single man rising before a group of men and taking a towel to wash their feet.

It did not seem to be anything of importance that one who raised the dead and healed the sick would humble himself before those who followed Him.

Yet, Jesus, the son of God rose up to humble Himself so that those who follow Him can enter into the joy of the Lord.

When the spirit of Christ rises in us we begin to know the joy of the Lord!

It's a strange joy we feel when we give away things to help others instead of getting things.

It's a strange joy we have from placing a full plate in the hands of a hungry man.

When the Spirit of Christ rises up within us we begin to really know the Joy of the Lord!

What is the joy of the Lord?

It is the satisfaction of knowing that our little part helps to build the kingdom of the Lord.

It's the satisfaction that a little boy felt when he saw his five loaves and two little fishes used to feed five thousand!

It's the satisfaction that the Good Samaritan felt when he watched the injured man walk away from a battered situation after weeks of love and care!

When Christ rises up in us the goodness of the Lord is released and our:

—BURDENS are turned into blessings; CARES are turned into comforts

—DEFEATS are turned into delights; HEARTACHES are turned into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS are turned into praises; HOUSES are turned into homes

—SORROWS are turned into songs; SADNESS is turned into gladness I

When Christ rises up we humbly go into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

When Christ rises up we know that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

When Christ rises up we are reminded that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

When Christ riseth up we have the assurance of the Lord that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

When Christ rises up, Satan goes down!

When Christ rises up, fear begins to fall!

When Christ rises up, failure begins to tumble!

When Christ rises up, defeat is crushed underfoot.

Powerful things start to happen when Christ rises up. That's what the world found out over 2000 years ago on a hill call Calvary!

They crucified Him on an old rugged cross!
They drove nails in His hands!
They buried Him in a borrowed tomb!
But Early, Sunday morning He arose, with all power in His hands!
When Christ arises in your life, crying days will be over!
When Christ rises up, we'll have the victory!
When Christ rises up, we'll sing that old song, "I told Satan, get thee behind, victory today is mine!"

No. 9611-Inspiration

He shall preserve thy soul

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 23, 2013

SCRIPTURE: The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore. Psalm 121:7-8

Introduction

Have you ever watched the old timers make preserves? There was a time nearly everyone had at least one jar of preserves on a shelf somewhere in the house. In our past, the old timers seldom threw away anything and learned the art of "canning" or preserving foods for the future.

With very little formal training, the old timers developed canning into a precise science so exact that they could preserve any fruit or vegetable in a way that would last for years. The old way has been passed down through the generations; there are are still jars of peaches, pears, figs, plums and just about every other fruit or vegetable imaginable in refrigerators and cupboards across the country.

The old-timers had a philosophy that in a season of plenty we should save for a season of want. In the spring and summer, kitchens were filled with dozens of mason jars, tubs of water and vegetables and fruits laying on counters and tabletops everywhere. When canning time ended there were dozens of little jars sitting one inch apart on towels cooling down to later begin a shelf life that could last for years.

There was a lot of science and good sense involved in the methods used by the ancient ones. Their techniques have been copied by industry as the old country practice has now become industrialized into the canning and preservation business we know today. Today's methods are so sophisticated that the range of preserved items now includes products such as ice cream, hamburgers and French fries. There are a few differences however. Today's canning methods usually have a sell by date and a use by date stamped on the side of every can. Those dates prompt many consumers to throw out the canned items because they are no longer safe to consume. The canned items made by the old-timers had no "use by" date; everyone knew that it did not matter how long it sat on the shelf, it would still be good when opened.

God Promises to preserve our souls, but there is a process He uses that is strikingly similar to that used by the old-timers. It protects against all contaminants and preserves and seals us until the savior's return.

As Christians, we are excited to know that God promises to preserve our souls. The process He uses to accomplish His will is foolproof and will keep us until The Lord returns.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he relates his confidence that God will protect his people.

For Israel, the mountains and hills of Palestine afforded them protection against enemies and a certain sense of security. The Psalmist, pointing to the hills, was not implying that the assurance of every believer is in the literal mountains and hills around them, but in the power of the God who provides the protective environment in which they are able to sleep secure each night.

The God we serve protects us and keeps us continually. Our first line of reference is the hills themselves, but beyond that, it is God's hand, moving through the hills that brings our greatest assurances.

The driving idea of the text is that God will preserve his people; He will not allow them to suffer utter defeat. Verses six and seven use the word "Preserve" three times.

The Hebrew word "Samar" used in each instance means, "to build a thorny hedge around." This is truth that David wanted believers to know. God will build a thorny hedge around his people to preserve them. A thorny hedge will keep evil influences out, but the same thorns protect Israel from itself by keeping it "In."

God protects "our going out" and our "coming in" both day and night.

Preserves

How does God preserve us? How does He protect from evil within and without? How will God preserve our soul? Perhaps we should look to the canning process for clues.

PRESERVES MUST PREPARED: Preserves are not simply pulled from their vines, stalks and branches and placed in a jar, expecting to be preserved. They must be prepared. The item is wash thoroughly to remove all contaminants and cooked before it is preserved. There are many people who think they can become a Christian straight off the streets. Many believe that the only step necessary is to join a church, start reciting a few bible verses and they instantly have the anointing of God. However, salvation is acquired by accepting the blood of the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for sins. That requires that a person be washed in the blood of the lamb. There must be a confession of sin, repentance from sin and a decision never to live the life of sin again. The preparation begins as the world tempts you to return and tugs at you constantly. That's what a song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Have you been tried in the fire? Did you come through as pure gold?" Those who want to be preserved must be willing to be washed and prepared in the fires of temptation; and to come through as pure gold.

PRESERVES MUST BE STORED IN STERLIZED JARS: The old-timers used Mason Jars to store preserves. They boiled the jars in tubs of water to kill all germs and

once products were placed in them they used wooden stirrers to make sure no air bubbles were hidden underneath. Those who are coming to Christ are placing themselves into the hands of God's instrument for their preservation which is the church. The church itself cannot be a contaminating factor. It does not help people trying to change their lives if they come to the church and find the same sin it that they encountered in the world. If the church endorses immoral living and ungodliness of every kind, how can it expect to act as a preserving agent to those within? Yet, too many churches have turned a blind eye to sin within their ranks in favor of large crowds and larger offerings. When members of a congregation become involved in sinful acts the church has an obligation to help its members out of sinful situations without judgment. We must stir the jar and seal it to insure that evil is kept out and that the good is kept in.

CHECK THE SEAL: Those who experts in canning tell us that after the jar has been boiled it is allowed to cool. Once its completely cool it looks as if it is seal, but the lid must be check. Generally the preparer will press the center of the jar. If the lid stays pressed it has been properly sealed. If they lid goes down and then pops back up, it is not sealed. It won't last but a few weeks; then it will probably go bad. The same is true of a person in the church. It is possible for a person to be a member of the church and not be properly sealed. We know it because when pressed to serve they are always popping in and out. Here today, gone tomorrow. In a ministry this week, in a club the next week. Drinking communion one week and drinking wine, beer and whiskey the next. Those who are not sealed don't stay with the church long. We see them for a while, but soon they return to their worldly ways. They are not lost however, that which was sealed correctly can be resealed. The whole process can be repeated so that it is done right the second time around. Thank God for the second time around!

Sealed Until he comes

Finally, brothers and sisters we are encouraged to remember that when God preserves we are sealed until He comes.

Ephesians 1:13 says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" That means we have God's promise and His seal. "

We have been given God's promise that if we trust Him that he will provide a thorny hedge around us and protect us from ultimate defeat on the outside and preserve us on the inside.

The most important part of being preserved is to get a seal. The seal protects and keeps us fresh.

It is important that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise rather than man made seals!

There are many who have **LIGHT BREAD SEALS** that allow the user to remove the seal and put it back on again indefinitely. Even with the best of care, light bread becomes dry and stale if the loaf packaging is often opened and closed. Many church people

have a light bread seal instead of the Seal of Christ. They are in and out! They are in for a while and they are out for a long time. Their seal is opened and closed so much that they have grown stale in the faith. Is our allegiance to God and in and out affair? Is it desirable for us to meander in the faith so frequently? 1 Corinthians 15:58 answers these questions this way: "..Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain."

There are many who have **POP TOP SEALS** rather than seals from God. These seals are like soft drinks that are strong and powerful as long as their tops are never popped. They have plenty of power: If shaken it builds; if things get hot it builds even more, as long as they are sealed. If the seal is broken all of its power is lost in one flurry and fizzle.

Likewise many Christians have a great testimony to tell, song to sing, and prayer to pray. They appear to have plenty of power until something or somebody pops their top. It may be an angry response, or even a failure that pops their top but when it happens they lose all of their power and have as much spirit as a day old soda.

Those who are sealed by the hand of God are like food sealed in a can. Those who are sealed in Christ are protected by His seal. The tough seal that protects them allows the food items in them to remain untainted. Though they may be dropped, kicked, rolled around or tossed. They may have a dent or two but they are almost indestructible when they have been sealed in the faith nothing can separate you from the Love of God. In Romans 8:35 Paul asked the question: "Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" He answered his own question with our testimony: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the Love of God which is in Jesus Christ."

It's good to be sealed, but how long will it last? In the store, the food is sealed, but it only holds until a certain date.

Food must be taken off the shelf when the date runs out. How long will God's seal last?

It will last until He returns. Ephesians 4:30 says, "…we are sealed until the day of redemption."

In Revelation 7 John said he saw 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel all bearing the seal of the lamb. Beyond that he saw another crowd which no man could number, whose robes had been washed in the blood of the lamb.

Those who have been sealed by the blood don't have to worry, the seal of God will not break and if you are sealed by His power it lets the world know that you are on your way to the Canaan land.

I don't know about you but I'm preserved until I get to the place where:

—Graves never open and gates never close

—Hearts never break and dreams never fade

—Tears never fall and tempers never rise

—Hopes never diminish and Happiness never sorrows
—Friends never part, flowers never fade
—Doubts never rise, Joy never ends
He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave.
But, He's coming back again!
We are sealed until he welcomes us into the kingdom!
Oh don't you want to be in that number!
Crying days will be over!
Joy will never end!

No. 9612-Inspiration

God's Got Your Number

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 13, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Matthew 10:28-31

Introduction

Have you ever considered how we have been reduced to numbers in today's society? No sooner than anyone asks your name before the conversation ends, especially in the business world, someone wants to know your number.

Who's got your number? It is almost impossible to hide in America. You are identified by numbers that are stored in huge databases, scanned and programmed into computers and evaluated, searched and compared millions of times every day.

Why are we defined mostly by numbers rather than by our names? Often numbers are unique to us, unless stolen, whereas there could be hundreds of people who share the same name. We would like to believe that our names are unique, but with over 300 million people in the United States it's hard to find a name that is not in use now or is unique to us alone. I found it interesting that 2013 there are 72 people named Roosevelt Wright and five of them are married to a Joslyn Wright. It can get confusing when you think about the fact that there 429 people named Mildred James. There are 2,519 people named Debra Davis, but there is only one Debra Ratcliff. There are five people named LaWanda Ceasar, but since she is now a newlywed, there is only one LaWanda Kyles and her husband Osaro Kyles is the only one. There are 1,151 Brian Reed's and two with a daughter named Briannica Reed. There is utter confusion when you have a common name such as Robert Wright and have to share it with 8,148 people.

We are being identified by numbers to get more accurate identity checks. The daddy of all identity numbers is your Social Security number. There have been 420 million Social Security numbers issued since 1936, but there are over 100,000 people who have two or more numbers tied to their name, usually keyed in by mistake. That's frustrating because your Social Security number reveals where you were born, the approximate decade you were born and where you died. Two people with the same number could

be a headache, especially if one is dead and the other is alive.

Beyond our Social Security number, there are numbers everywhere. There is a driver's license number, landline phone number, cell phone number, and Employer Identification number. Your car has a VIN number that can be tracked by satellite and shutdown if you don't pay your bill. It's identified by a license tag number. You pay for gas with a credit or debit card number. Your house must have a number so you can be found in case a 911 number is called. If you go to jail you will be identified by a prisoner number. Your burial plot has your number. Your insurance policy has your number.

Your birth certificate has your number and when you die your death certificate will have your number.

If you are a deadbeat dad and move, your numbers will follow you. You can run, but you can't hide. If you are a cheating wife, sooner or later one of the hundreds of numbers that track your movements from your cell phone longitude or latitude numbers to the digital hotel key will reveal your secret.

The bible has made some predictions about the times we live in. It says in Revelation 13:16-18, that, "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

With all of the focus on numbers today, it is refreshing to know that although there are 2013 Donald Mitchell's in the country, God knows which one is which and will never confuse the one in California with the one on Tanglewood Drive. If all 2093 Eleanor Smith's in America called on God at the same time, he would know the difference between each one. Every Shepherd knows His sheep. (Howmanyofme.com)

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that with God we are more than just a number. Our Savior knows us individually and will respond to us personally, because he's got our number.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' instruction to the Apostles not to fear as they ministered in His name.

The great commission to each of the Apostles was to go into all of the world and to preach, teach and baptize. Jesus warned them however that he was sending them as lambs among wolves. There would be detractors and those who attack them, but they were told not to be afraid.

The greatest fear is not those who can kill the body, but those who can destroy the soul by destroying one's faith in himself and His God. So, Matthew 10:28 says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but the soul." He then gives an illustration of two sparrows that are very small in value, but God pays attention to its every detail even though men may not care whether one falls or not. Moreso, he makes the point that He is also concerned about each disciple down to the smallest detail, such as the numbers of hairs

on their heads.

He encouraged the disciples to go forth with confidence that come what may, he knows their situation and will come to their aid.

Message in the numbers

Often think of Biblical passages associated with numbers such as:

GOD'S GRACE: In 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 there is a passage that points to God's grace using the number three. Paul was afflicted with an ailment and prayed three times that it be removed. We should be encouraged by this passage, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul, one of God's greatest ambassadors was sustained by grace, but his thorn was not removed. These three prayers should remind every believer that God's response to our prayers may not be what we want or expect, but he will give us His grace, which will always be sufficient to see us through and is always better in final outcome than what we requested.

OUR STUBBORNESS: Jonah was ordered by God to preach to the people of Nineveh. Jonah hated the Ninevites and tried to go a different direction. God caused a great storm to come upon his ship and his crewmates, sensing that he was the problem, threw him overboard whereupon he was swallowed by a great fish. After three days he repented. Jonah was stubborn and refused to follow God, in many ways we do the same. His three days of darkness symbolize the self discovery we must do to come to grips with our mission in life. His resurrection after three days is also a sign of our savior's resurrection. Matthew 12:40 says, "As Jonas was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights so shall the son of man be in the earth." Just as Christ died and arose, we who believe in Him can arise from the depths of stubborn ways and enjoy a new life.

GOD'S BLESSING: Naaman was an important leader who was afflicted with leprosy. He asked the man of God for a healing and found it when he obediently bathed in the waters of the Jordan seven times. It took faith to repeatedly go to the Jordan and bathe in muddy water, just because God said so. It took faith, but that's what Naaman displayed and he was healed. How many times have we tried and failed? Five or six? Why haven't we tried the seventh time? Or the eighth? God has blessings for believers, but they do not always come without a trial or a series of setbacks first. Believers must continue to try and try again until God moves and acts upon His own divine will.

Faith by the numbers

Finally brothers, and sisters, we must remember that the biblical record is filled with acts of faith if we will follow them by the numbers.

Biblical numerology helps us to understand how God has moved with us and through us by the numbers.

If we take a casual look at the numbers, we'll see all the ways that God has shown

that he is intimately involved in the affairs of every aspect of His creation.

The number one is God's number Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Our God is number one.

Two is the number of division: The son of Man had two natures: The human and the divine. The bible has two Testaments the Old and the New. There are two types of people the Sheep and the Goat. A widow woman found favor when she was down to two sticks and a cruise of oil. There were two thieves crucified on Calvary and two who walked with him on the Emmaus Road saying, "Did not our hearts burn within?"

Three is the number of divine perfection. Three stands for the trinity: the father son and Holy Ghost. There are three qualities of the universe: time, space and matter. For three days Saul was blind until he saw the light. For three days Jonah stayed in the belly of the whale. For three days Jesus lay in a borrowed tomb.

Four is the number of creation. There are four seasons and four different directions: North, south, east and west. The Holy City of Jerusalem sits four square.

Five is the number of grace. David killed Goliath with five smooth stones. Israel marched out of Egypt in ranks of five. The anointing oil in the temple consisted of five parts. Jesus fed 5,000 with five loaves and two little fishes.

Six is the number of man. The world was created in six days and the number of the beast is 666. Ezekiel saw cherubim with six wings: two wings to cover its face. Two wings to cover its feet and two wings to fly away.

Seven is the number of completion. There are seven days in the week. God rested on the 7th day. Seven colors in the spectrum. Seven deadly sins and Jesus said seven last words on the cross, and Naaman bathed seven times in muddy water.

The number eight is the number of new beginning. A new babe was named on the 8th day. Eight people on Noah's ark were given a new start. Eight covenants were made with Abraham.

When we think of nine we think of nine lepers who walked away after being healed and did not return to say thanks. There are nine gifts of the spirit: Wisdom, Knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous power, prophecy, discerning spirits, language and ability to interpret language.

There were 10 plagues on Egypt, 10 commandments and Jesus used the phrase "I am" ten times. I am the bread of life. I am the living bread. I am the light of the world. I am the one that bears witness of myself. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way the truth and the life. I am the true vine. I am the door of the sheep I am the good shepherd.

After Judas committed suicide there were only eleven disciples until a replacement was finally named.

There were 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 apostles. We are on our way to a city that sits on 12 foundations, with 12 gates made out of 12 great pearls guarded by 12 angels.

John said he saw a vision of the last days. He saw a 144,000 coming forth out of great tribulation, with their robes washed in the blood of the lamb. Then he said he saw another number, that no man could number. Somebody said, 'I want to be in that number!"

But there is a greater number than that!

It's the day when the trumpet shall sound and the saint's will go marching in!

That's the day when the Lord himself shall return with shout and the Church, adorned like bride for her groom will meet him.

I want to be in that number!

When the saints go marching in, I want to be in that number!

Until that day I'm going to keep telling the world about one man who lived one life.

He lived 33 years.

He prayed in the wilderness for 40 days.

He preached for three years and had 12 disciples.

He was one man who was tried three times.

He was one man who was whipped with 39 stripes.

He was one man who was given one purple robe and one crown of thorns

He was one man who was crucified on one cross between two thieves

He was one man who was buried in one tomb for three days

But one Sunday morning, Jesus who was born down in Bethlehem

One Sunday morning, Jesus, who was known as Mary's baby!

One Sunday morning , Jesus, the Lily of the Valley and the Bright and Morning Star

One Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with not one or two powers, but with..

All power in His hand!

No. 9613-Faith

Faith in God is not Superstition

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 27, 2013

SCRIPTURE: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Acts 25:19

Introduction

Are you superstitious? There are many whose lives are controlled by superstitions, even though they say they are not superstitious. Many say they are not superstitious, but if the walk through a field of cloves they look for a four leaf clover, because they believe if they find one they will have good luck.

Many say they are not superstitious, but they bite their finger if they accidentally point at a grave yard. They also get nervous if a black cat crosses their trail. They are equally upset if the break a mirror because that will mean seven years of bad luck.

We say we are not superstitious, but we cross our fingers to keep away bad luck and to help wishes come true. We blow out all of the candles of a birthday cake to make wishes come true as well.

We say we are not superstitious, but we are deathly afraid of the number 13 to the point that eighty per cent of all high rise buildings have no "13th" floor. Hospitals and hotels regularly have no room number 13. And, there is no 13th row of seats on major airlines.

We feel doomed if our street address is 666, or we make a $6.66 purchase or come to a meeting with 666 people.

Some say they are not superstitious, but they wear special necklaces, rings and garments to give the good luck and believe that walking under a ladder is a bad luck. They will literally panic if someone sweeps their feet because it means someone is going to jail.

They say they are not superstitious, but they nail horse shoes over their doors, carry a rabbit's foot on their key chains and expect something bad to happen on Friday the 13th.

There is no time when superstition is more obvious than Halloween. In the United States it is a day when children dress up as witches, ghosts, goblins and other scary characters and move from house to house in search of candy and treats. Halloween actually began thousands of years ago in England, Scotland and Ireland and neighbor-

ing countries. November 1 was the beginning of the New Year and the first day of winter.

The people believed that there was a war between the cold and darkness of winter and the warmth and brightness of summer. On October 31 the people felt the army of darkness: ghosts, goblins and witches grew so strong that they overcame the army of summer and winter began on November 1. October 31 became a frightening time. Fires and lanterns were lit to scare away wicked creatures that would be out in full force.

Hundreds of years later Christianity came to these countries and November 1 was celebrated as "All Saint's Day." This was a day to honor all deceased saints; holy people. The night before became known as Hallowed Saint's eve or Halloween for short. While the Christians celebrated the memory of Saints most other people remembered that ghosts, goblins and witches were supposed to be powerful on October 31. They continued the old tradition of lighting fires, and putting on frightening costumes that might scare away the witches, goblins and ghosts.

Today, few people even know that November 1 is all Saint's Day. The Halloween tradition however has been elevated into a day when an entire country salutes evil, monsters, death, murderers, and the grotesque.

Halloween has become a time when our superstitions really take hold and are highlighted.

Critics of our faith rank it among the superstitions of the world. However, faith in God is not a superstition. It is real. When we pray, that is not superstition. When we praise God, that is not superstition it is open act of praise for our God who has proven himself to be a real presence in our lives. We agree with the song writer who said, "My God is real, for I can feel him down in my soul."

Exposition

The Text finds Festus speaking to Agrippa about Paul who had been tried for preaching about Jesus.

Agrippa and his wife Bernice were visiting Festus who had recently conducted a trial of accusations against Paul. Festus heard the matter and referred the case to Agrippa, having found no breach of Roman law.

Roman leaders were accustomed to handling disputes with local governments that were conjured by their legions. Their usual practice was not to interfere with local customs unless those customs, disputes and troubles troubled their power or conflicted seriously with Roman law.

In Acts 25:7 the Jews are recorded as being fully aware of the requirements needed to get Paul convicted by the Roman courts. They accused him of spreading sedition and speaking about a god greater than Caesar. It was a hypocritical charge since they themselves believed in a God greater than Caesar. Mainly they said Paul's constant preaching about Christ's rising from the dead made the people anxious and would soon cause riot.

In the text and surrounding verses, Festus said he had reviewed their complaints,

but found no laws actually broken. He expected a well prepared case, but instead found that he was asked to take a position in Jewish religious matters that he dismissed as superstitions.

The word translated "superstition" in the text is the word "deisidaimonesteros" (dice-ee-dahee-mon-es-ter-os) which is a compound word that means faithless religion. It refers to people who act out fear to something that is groundless to an obsession. For the Romans, Christianity was insignificant, even less so than Judaism. None of it mattered and was not considered worthy of their time.

What Paul preached about was Jesus being the son of God, being crucified and arisen from the dead.

For the Jews it was an accusation about Paul.

For Festus, it was considered a superstition.

For Paul and all believers, Jesus is not a superstition, but He is real.

Faith and Superstition

Festus believed Paul's faith in Jesus was superstition, but there is a difference between real faith and superstition:

FAITH REQUIRES A BELIEF IN GOD: A superstition does not require a person to believe in God. It does not require faith to believe that we should knock on wood if we say a statement that we don't want to turn into a prophecy. That's just following a tradition. Faith is associated with God. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen." Faith is developed over the years and is a combination of what we are taught and what we have experienced firsthand. A person who has prayed and received an answer to his prayer, one way or the other, learns quickly that faith is not a superstition, but it is real. A person who answers the call of God and walks into a situation blindly, is not walking by superstition, but walking on the command of God. Unlike a superstition, faith requires a belief in God. Paul was a man of faith who stood boldly to attest his loyalty to God, testifying of His Damascus Road experience. It was not superstition, but a reality.

FAITH REQUIRES SUBMISSION TO GOD: A superstition does not require submission. A person who punches holes in a dime and wears it around his ankle for luck and prosperity does not have to submit to the dime god. However, those who have faith in God also know that real faith also requires submission to God. Paul was able to talk of his submission to God after his Damascus Road experience. He was able to speak of how he yielded Himself to God's control. Believers submitted themselves to God's will. Following His command believers have walked into impossible situations, faced impossible dangers, and treaded unknown waters, armed only with the fact that God willed them to do so. The believer who uproots himself and moves to a different city at the command of God is not being superstitious, but is following the command of God, just as Abraham did in the biblical record. Paul was a man who had submitted

his life to Christ; although Festus dismissed his faith as a superstition; he knew he stood boldly on the word of God.

FAITH REQUIRES TRUST IN GOD: A superstition does not require trust; it is simply a ritual. There was a ritual that has become a superstition for many. The ancients believed that evil spirits lived outside of the door of a new house. If the new person coming to live in a house touched the threshold then the evil spirits would enter as well; a groom picks up his bride and carries her across the threshold to keep her from bringing inadvertently bringing bad spirits into the new family. That's a superstition. It does not require us to trust God. Trust in God is based on experience with God, not myths. David trusted God because God had rescued Him so many times. Paul trusted God because He protected and shielded him from death constantly. We trust in God for the same reasons. It is not a superstition to trust that "God will make a way somehow!" It is not a superstition to trust that God will move mountains and prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies. The old warriors had it right when they said, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, I tried him for myself." When you have tried God repeatedly, your faith is not a superstition, but a reality. That's why the song writer declared, "I trust in God, wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, My heavenly father watches over me!"

Conclusion

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who know the Lord can stand firmly and proclaim that God is real because they have tried Him for themselves.

There is no need for a lucky horseshoe when you know the Lord.

There is no need for need to put garlic over your doors when you know the Lord.

There is no need to be afraid of the dark or live fearful of the future when you know the Lord.

Those who know the Lord know that He is real because after they came to know Him He changed their lives.

When you know the Lord is real you begin to see things differently.

When the Lord is real to you

—SKIES seem to be bluer

—SUN seem to shine brighter

—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter

—FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller

—AIR seems more refreshing

—STARS seem to have more luster

—BURDENS seem lighter

—FAITH seems stronger

—HEAVEN seems closer

Just like Paul, every believer who knows that God is real has something to be happy about!

Because He's real, He can:
—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops
—Take our midnights and turn them into noon days
—Take our briny tears and turn them into mighty cheers
—Take our defeats and turn them into victories
—Take our losses and make them work for our gain
Somebody asks, "How do you know He is real?"
Don't you hear the answer?
"I know the Lord is real because I can feel Him in my hands!
I can feel Him in my feet!
I can feel Him in my heart!
I can feel Him all over me!
He's so real that he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!
He's so real that he died for all of my sins!
But Early Sunday morning He arose from the dead with all power in His hands!

No. 9614-Inspiration

Defining your life's Mission

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe,La

November 3, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20

Introduction

What is your mission in life? What are you all about? In the business world a company describes itself in what is known as a "Mission Statement." The mission statement is a short sentence that simply says what the company is all about. It is the same for communities, churches, families, and even individuals.

Generally, your mission statement has about eight words. It summarizes what you are about and defines what makes you tick. For example, when Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates a generation ago, the company's mission statement was "A computer on every desk in every home." That mission was stated when no one had a computer in their home, now that it is nearing fulfillment the company has changed its mission to: "Create devices and services for the world."

Just as the corporate world defines companies by their mission statements, churches also have mission statements that describe their inherent purpose which should be more than the standard corporate mission of : buying land, building buildings, and making money. The mission statement of the New Tabernacle Baptist Church is "A church community inspired to make a difference."- Eight words that explain why we are so involved in education, civic affairs, civil rights and the domestic affairs of the community.

The preamble to the constitution summarizes the national mission: "Provide for the defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty." The pledge of Allegiance summarizes it even further, "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

If corporations, the nation, communities and even churches have mission statements then it would also suggest that individuals should have mission statements that define what they are about?

A person who announces a calling on his life must focus that calling to a specific purpose. A preacher must answer the question: Called to do what? Preach, pastor,

teach, counsel, evangelize, missions? Your calling is your life's mission; it's what you are about. Some have a calling to teach and spend their entire lives trying to teach. Others have a calling to help the poor and needy. Still others have a calling to make their world around them better by correcting wrongs and opening doors of opportunity.

Without a personal mission in life it's difficult to understand what a person is all about. Sometimes companies have slogans or mottos that summarize their missions. When Burger King says, "Have it your way" it summarizes the company's philosophy of allowing customers to select burger ingredients. The national police motto is "To protect and to serve."

If each of us had to pick eight words or less to describe what we are about, what would they be? For some it would be "Survive from day to day." Others might say, "Reach and touch somebody's hand, the world a better place." Still others might say, "Let my light shine for those who are in darkness."

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all of the world and teach, preach, and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. His command is called the great commission. It defines the church's mission; what the church is about: teaching how to live by the rules of God. The ministry challenge that Christ gave the Church is a great responsibility. It defines the church's mission and the related mission of every believer.

As Christians, we minister to the masses on the behalf of our God. We do so with the greatest joy because our service helps us bring the kingdom of God into a greater realization in the lives of those who are trust and believe in Him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as He commissions his disciples to evangelize the known world.

This text is often called the Great Commission. It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the disciples giving them their final assignment.

This text is called the "Great Commission." It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the disciples giving them their final assignment. He told them to get the word out about salvation and redemption to the entire world; to baptize believers and then teach them the way of life prescribed for Christians.

The commission from Christ became the personal mission of every disciple. They devoted their lives to carrying out its challenge. It defined what they were all about.

In a few short years, this commission resulted in the expansion of the faith to Asia Minor, the Cities of Greece and to nearly the entire known world of their time. It appeared to be an impossible mission, given to penniless disciples who had nothing to move on but faith and the "Logo" of God.

Focusing Personal Mission

It is important that every believer has a personal mission in life. Often that mission is reflected in the way believers spend their time. It accounts for why they volunteer at hospitals and nursing homes, raise money for cancer research, tutor struggling students, sit with sick, assist the elderly, and do what they can to help the poor, needy and distressed. Each person is driven by a sense of personal mission.

Without a mission we simply settle into a meaningless routine that carries us around in circles until we finally disappear have accomplished nothing. Yet, Christ has given us a purpose as a body and as individuals: reach, teach and expand the kingdom of God.

OUR MISSION IS TO REACH AND TEACH: There are many today who are involved in various forms of outreach for a variety of reasons. Outreach may include providing food for the hungry, assistance to battered families, housing for the homeless, assistance to wayward youth, or promotion of benevolent causes.

Outreach is essential to kingdom building. We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus.

Yet, even our outreach must come from the heart. It must be pure in its intent, not a mere photo opportunity designed to promote other goals and causes.

When we help others it must come from the heart. It must be done out of love.

OUR MISSION SHOULD EDIFY THE BODY OF CHRIST: God calls every believer to undertake a great work. He never calls us to an insignificant or unimportant work; no matter what others think. It is always a great work. Our work may be to be the strength of our families. It may be to help the poor and the needy. It may be highly visible like public service or almost invisible, like that of a private home nurse. Regardless to our work it is important.

The end result of our work is to edify or "build up" the body of Christ. If your goal is the build the world's largest chain of prostitution houses, will that build up the body of Christ? If your goal is to become a gangsta rapper known around the world for less than admirable lyrics, would that edify the body of Christ?

On the contrary, if your goal is to find a cure for cancer, that would certainly be a credit to the faith. If you goal is to heal wounded hearts or to respond to needs in your community, that would certainly be a credit to the cross.

Personal mission that please God please God, edify him and glorify him among mankind; that is the mission of every believer.

OUR MISSION MUST HAVE THREE ATTRIBUTES: After we define our mission it should have three attributes:

1. DREAMS— Don't be afraid to dream God-sized dreams. Keep alert. Be attuned to everything happening around you without getting sucked into any of it. Those who can clearly see the vision can stand on the rock of salvation and sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

2. SCHEMES – We must have a personal plan while at the same time staying aware of the schemes of the other man. Lead a disciplined life that your dreams may come true. Keep a clear head about your life and your life projects. Let both the invitations and

the insults pass you by as you stay focused on God's plan and purpose for your life. When the schemes of men frustrate we must recall the words of the song writer meant when He wrote, "I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus. Jesus can help me. Jesus alone."

3. LEANS — Cast your anxieties on God. Believe in God's care, trusting in God's love and lean on His everlasting arms! That's what the song writer meant when he wrote, "Leaning, Leaning, safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

Jesus had something to live for and someone to die for

Finally, brothers and sisters, we remind you that we serve a Lord who gave us the example; He had a mission to save the lost and to die for the remission of their sins.

It was a mission that was clear and undeniable. It was ordained in heaven and carried out on earth.

In a similar sense every believer should have a personal mission statement that summarizes why you think God put you here and the mission you feel obligated to accomplish before you leave this earth. You may not know your mission but God has certainly ordained you and equipped you with the tools for your mission before you were born.

Your mission may be to the world, like Ghandi, Churchill or Martin Luther King

Your mission may be to the nation, like Washington, Lincoln or John F. Kennedy.

Your mission may be to the church like Charles Spurgeon or Billy Graham.

Your mission may be to the race like Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth or Booker T. Washington.

Your mission may be to family, like grandpa or grandma who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Your mission may have been to the local church like the old warriors who sang, "I'm on the battlefield for my Lord, and I promised Him that I would serve Him till I die. I'm on the battle field for my Lord.

If your mission is from God you'll find yourself singing, " If I can help somebody as I pass along ...if I can cheer somebody with a word or song then my living will not be in vain."

Down in Bethlehem a little child was born with a mission.

He came with a mission to Bring:

—Hope to the disillusioned and Salvation to the Lost.

—Life and provide it more abundantly.

—Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

—Comfort in the midst of calamities & Strength in weakness

—Assurance in the midst of agonies & Power in the midst of problems.

—Safety in times of trouble and Shelter in the time of storm!

Down in Bethlehem a child was born, his name was Jesus!

His purpose was to give us salvation.

Just before leaving this earth He gave us a mission to "Go ye therefore and teach

all nations."

Our mission is to tell the world that:

—Life might kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—Circumstances might strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—Critics might call you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—When enemies think you are weak, God will make you strong!

Our mission is to tell the world that:

When put our hand in God's hand the impossible becomes possible!

When put our hand in God's hand the improbable becomes probable!

When put our hand in God's hand the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

Our mission is to tell the world about Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

But early Sunday morning He arose from the dead!

Early Sunday morning, His defined mission was accomplished!

No. 9615-Inspiration

It's a wonderful life

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 1, 2013

SCRIPTURE: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21; "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:" Colossians 2:10

Introduction

Has anyone ever told you that you are missing something because you are a Christian? There are many friends of ours who do not share our faith and they often question how we can enjoy life without indulging and sampling all that the world has to offer. They are mystified that we choose not to drink or use drugs. They are equally puzzled that we do not frequent the popular nightspots or dabble in at least a little hanky panky. In fact, they cannot understand in the least how we find any fulfillment in not get high every once and a while.

They quickly dismiss our faith as one that is dull, unattractive and just plain boring. If we listen to them long enough they can make us feel as if we are missing something by living a life of devotion to Christ.

Is the Christian who is missing something in his/her life or is it the non-believer who has a big hole in his life that he is trying to fill with as much entertainment and distraction as possible?

Is it the Christian who is letting life pass by without tasting its forbidden fruits or is it the non-believer who has not tasted the fruit of the spirit of God?

There is a movie that airs quite frequently in the Christmas season called, "It's a Wonderful Life." The movie is about a man who is tempted to commit suicide at Christmas because he thought his life was without meaning and purpose. In the course of the story he shown what a great life he has lived helping people and bringing joy to so many. He had a wonderful life and didn't know it!

In Colossians 2:10 Paul had this same idea in mind when he told the people of Colossae that they were "complete" in Christ and were enjoying the completeness of the godly life without even knowing it. There was no need for circumcision or any other religious additives to be saved. In fact, their faith in Christ gave them the "completeness" that people of the world seek.

There are many who try to make us feel terrible because we are not absolutely perfect or don't follow their rituals. The Buddhists say we are missing our connection with our inner selves. The Muslims say we do not know the peace of Allah. The mystics say we

are not in tune with our life force. They skeptics say we are so in tune with our faith that the world is passing us by.

They don't get the point, we are not miserable creatures because we believe in God and trust in Him daily, we are at peace with ourselves. We are not sad, lonely people who do not know how to have fun. In reality we are enjoying this life!

We enjoy helping people!

We enjoy clean fellowship, shopping, socializing, worship and family fun!

What makes us even happier is the knowledge that every day when we come up short, Christ puts in enough love to make us OK with God. We are "complete in him." We don't need to pray holding our hands a certain way, speak a certain kind of language, or dance a special dance. Our faith and clean, spirit led, lifestyle is enough to keep us happy.

As Christians, we are similar to the man in the movie. Like the man in the movie, we are living a wonderful, complete, life in Christ. We are enjoying being Christians. Unlike the movie character, however, we know it's a wonderful life! To God be the glory.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's assertion that his highest life goal is to live for Christ and even to die for his cause.

Paul spent the remainder of his life, after the Damascus Road experience, lifting up the name of Christ. He endured hardships, difficulties and sacrifices all for the purpose of building the kingdom of God.

In a similar sense, every believer should strive to live as Christ lived. The glory of Christ ought to be the end of our lives, the grace of Christ should be the guiding the principle of our lives, and the word of Christ should be the ruler of our lives. Paul maintained that the whole essence of the Christian life is to achieve our purpose in him. He is the principle, rule, and end of our existence. Those who have this life purpose, like Paul, count it a great gain, even an everlasting gain to give their lives in his service or for his kingdom.

To the Colossians Paul added that the Christian life is the complete life that needs nothing added.

In Christ, the law is fulfilled. In Christ, the requirements of sacrifice are fulfilled.

In Christ, hope is generated and salvation is guaranteed. Living the Christian life, Paul asserts, is the ultimate end in itself. It is a life that is beyond compare. It is a life that will be rewarded richly with favor on earth and eternal life in heaven.

Three aspects of the good life

There are many reasons why Christians can say we are living a wonderful life. Combined, these reasons describe why millions of believers testify that they are happy, complete and satisfied with their lives in Christ.

OUR LIVES ATTRACT GODLY FAVOR: One of the distinguishing characteris-

tics of the wonderful life is that it is favored by God. To be favored is to be the beneficiary of God's goodness beyond what is expected or deserved. Yet, favor is a distinguishing quality of the wonderful life. To grow in favor with God means to live in such a way that God chooses us to be the main instruments of his will. Associated with that selection, comes all the things necessary for us to achieve our purpose. For example, Mary was a woman who found favor with God. She was humbled by the selection, because of that favor she found that she was protected, directed, and provided for through His grace.

WE SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY: We live the wonderful life because God's spirit allows to see life differently than others. We are able to do this because our old spirit-man died and we are enjoying a new life in Christ.

In the Movie "Precious" Monique played an abusive mother with a spirit of ungratefulness. Precious prepared her a full plate of soul
food after laboring in the kitchen. The mother's response was to be
angry because there were no collard greens and refused to eat it. She had a great meal, but didn't even know it!

Without a godly spirit we won't be able to appreciate the blessings we have. Soon we will feel terrible because of what we do not have. Our cold stony hearts will want more and blame God
for not blessing us with the collard greens, too. Ezekiel 36:26-27
says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put
within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments,
and do them."

WE LIVE DIFFERENTLY: We live a wonderful life because we strive to live according to God's law. We choose to stay within the lines of God's moral law. We have a stressful life outside of God's no matter how appealing it make look to others. Two people who live together without being married profess love, but shacking is outside of God's moral order. The person who furnishes a beautiful home with stolen merchandise paints a lovely picture to the world, but receiving stolen goods is outside of God's moral order. Selling food stamps crosses the line! Selling your children's social security number for cash is outside of the line; dealing drugs, shoplifting and buying bootleg DVD's on the street corner is outside of the line. We live differently because we ascribe to James 4:7 that directs us to "Resist the devil" and he will flee from you. David concluded that the person who orders his life according to the will of God lives a blessed life that is pleasing to the almighty.

WE LIVE WITH OVERWHELMING EXCITEMENT: The believer lives with an overwhelming sense of excitement because he/she knows that God showers new mercies on them each day. Morning by morning we see new mercies that God has showered on us. We share the excitement of the woman at the woman was given another chance and she was excited. She was so excited
that she ran through the city telling all that she met, "Come see a man who told me all that I have ever done." We share the excitement of the lame man who jumped for joy

when he was healed. He was excited about the goodness of the Lord. In a similar sense, believers who have received more than they expected or requested from get a level of excitement while just thinking about the goodness of the Lord

When the Lord blesses us financially in a way that we did not expect, it's shouting time!

When a wayward child starts showing signs of hope, it's shouting time!

When a lost family member finds the Lord, it's shouting time.

That's when we know we are living a wonderful life!

Our Wonderful life is powered by God's Spirit

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that no life can be wonderful to a believer unless it is powered by the spirit of God.

As people by products for Christmas many will notice three words on many electronic products: Batteries not included. Three more words also get our attention: Some Assembly Requires.

Once assembled with the batteries in place model airplanes, remote control cars and other can operate, but not without being assembled correctly and properly powered.

Usually the batteries required are AA cells, AAA cells, D cells and 9-volt batteries. Without the battery the pretty toys we buy are just expensive pieces of plastic and wood. No matter how well they are assembled many products need power to operate. But there are many toys on the market that operate well, but the batteries are not included.

The main reason that the believer lives a wonderful life is because it has been assembled with the help of the Holy Ghost. Our old lives did not work and God himself had to break us down and reassemble out thinking, walking, talking, goals and aspirations.

Not only did he reassemble our lives, but He has given us power also. This wonderful life we live is operated by a spiritual solar cell that is powered by the Son. The son who gives our power never goes down. David in Psalms 121:4-6 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. If the Holy Ghost has helped you to assemble a Godly life, God will give you the power.

Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." You can assemble the pieces, but it's the Holy Ghost who gives the power.

It's a wonderful life because his love turns our little house into a home!

It's a wonderful life because he turns our loving relationship into a marriage!

It's a wonderful life because he turns our profession into a ministry!

It's a wonderful life because even when we are sick, he becomes our doctor in our sickroom!

It's a wonderful life because when we are in trouble he becomes our lawyer in a courtroom!

It's a wonderful life because we walk in the light of his love every day.

No wonder the songwriter declared, We'll walk in the light. Beautiful light. Shine all around me by day and by night, Jesus the light of the world!

It's a wonderful life that God has given us. It began with a baby in a manger, but it was made complete on Calvary!

It's a wonderful life that began with swaddling clothes, but was made complete with a purple robe!

It's a wonderful life that began with a miracle birth and was made with a Sunday morning miracle.

I don't know about you, but I'm enjoying every day of the life God has give me because I once was lost but now I'm found, blind but now I see!

I see that that life being prepared in the garden!

I see that life being ordered on Calvary!

I see that life being sealed in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday, I see him rising to announce to the world, ''I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly!"

It's a wonderful life!

It's a wonderful life!

No. 9616-Christmas

A Green Christmas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 8, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Psalm 23:2

Introduction

In the fall, as the leaves drop from the trees, have you ever noticed that there are a few trees that remain green? The beauty of spring and summer seems to fade out of existence until we stumble upon a single tree or two in the midst of all the leafless trees in the woods, that seem to stand tall and green when everything around it is barren.

Trees that are green all year round are called Evergreens. There are different kinds of Evergreens including: Pine, Spruce, Fir and Cedar among others. They are beautiful in any season because it appears that they are about the same color in deep winter or in summer heat.

When the landscape is devoid of color, the Evergreen adds a touch of life.

When everything around is dry, barren and dead, the Evergreen tree stands as a symbol that all is not lost.

When the wind blows the Evergreens deflect winds. In the North, residents plant Evergreens on the Northsides of their homes to catch snow and decrease wind speeds.

It's no wonder then that green is one of the colors of Christmas. Christmas comes right in the midst of winter - when the sky is often gloomy, the trees are barren, and the grass is brown. Offsetting this dreariness and emptiness are the bright colors of Christmas including green!

Green is in the garlands and the wreathes … and of course, it's in the Christmas trees as well. It's a color that cheers you up and speaks of the promise of life and hope. Green, especially the Evergreens remind us of a time to come - a time called Spring when flowers bloom, trees blossom, and the grass becomes green again.

The greenery of Christmas says – new life is just around the corner.
And, at just the right time, life will replace the death and decay.

That's the hope that the Christ child brings into every life, that though others have lost hope that there is a better day coming! Though sickness, death or present difficulties exist, our faith in God, helps us to stand alone in the middle of the winter of our discontent as an Evergreen, filled with hope and unscathed by the elements around us.

As Christians, we stand strong in our faith that God is in control of our lives and conditions. Though others around us lose their hope, like the mighty Evergreens, we stand firm and testify to his goodness everyday of our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains how God provides peace and nourishment for the faithful in the midst of difficult times

David's life was one living example of all of the extremes of life. He enjoyed the comforts of being king of a united Judah and Israel. He also knew what it meant to be a hunted man, always struggling for existence and survival. The range of his struggles took him from being a mere boy who faced lions and bears in the field to challenging stand before the giant Goliath. Though surrounded by his enemies on all sides he was fed and sustained by the hand of God. He was as target for death repeatedly but survived it all.

In all of these situations God provided David with his needs, sometimes in ways that appeared strange to others.

When he faced the lions in the field or stood before Goliath, David may have wanted a sword and shield but God gave him what he needed; a slingshot.

When he was being hunted by King Saul and had nothing to eat, he may have wanted a steak dinner, but God gave him what he needed; bread from the priests table.

In all of his experiences, David concluded that what God gave him was more than enough to sustain him. This prompted him to write, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!"

David's words did not mean that he did not desire anything, but that he would not be left in want of those things essential to his well being, including green pastures, still waters, an anointed head and strength for the valley of the shadows of death.

The idea of green pastures is a reference to shepherds that lead sheep to areas that would sustain them. Green is descriptive of the nourishing pastureland which could sustain sheep. It also suggests sufficiency. Not just "He leadeth me to pastures," but to "green pastures."

As sheep follow the shepherd and find green pastures, those who follow the Lord, also find nourishment, fulfillment and still waters.

The essence of Psalm 23:2 is that God will provide what we need and what God provides will help us to stand by faith, when others around us have given up.

That green Tree

Nearly every home will have some sort of Christmas decoration this season. Many will have Christmas trees. There are many artificial trees on the market, but there are thousands who want real trees. Whether real or artificial, most of them will be green. There is one type of Evergreen tree that the church needs more of and that's the Cedar Tree.

CEDARS MAKE GREAT WALL STUDS: One of the ways Cedar trees are useful is that the small ones are used to make wall studs in buildings. The walls in any building would collapse without them and if anyone tries to hang anything on a wall and does not find a stud to hold it; it falls. The church is that way. There are a few members who are evergreen wall studs. They are rarely seen or heard, but whatever the church does successfully hangs on their support. If a program or project succeeds, look behind it and you will find a few evergreens, holding it up and supporting it without whom it would all collapse.

CEDARS ARE KNOT FREE: Evergreen Cedars are generally knot free and they are rot –resistant. Cut one down and you won't find knots and the wood can last for years without rotting like others. The church needs more folks who are NOT-FREE: 1)Not afraid to step out on faith 2) Not stingy 3)Not Mess makers 4)Not afraid to work 5) Not –rotten. Evergreen Christians stay strong even though they have been in the church for many years; their joyful personalities and commitment to the church remains the same. They personify 1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

HUMMING CEDARS SING IN THE WIND: When other trees have lost their leaves and the wind blows nothing happens, except when that one cedar in the group catches the wind and seems to sing. Its leaves wave with the wind. It seems to hum or whistle. In fact there is a type of Evergreen called the Humming Cedar that actually loves the wind. The more the wind blows the more the humming cedar hums. The humming has a quieting effect on those who troubled by strong winds. The church always needs members who can hum when the wind blows. They are people who help bring calm into chaotic circumstances. They remind us to focus on God's face and give ourselves over to him. They remind us of David's words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

CEDAR CATCHES FIRE QUICKLY: Cedar is the type of Evergreen that campers love because it is filled with sap, catches fire quickly and it takes a whole lot of water to put it out. When the burns it makes noise; it pops and crackles, too. Wouldn't it be great if the church was filled with this type of Evergreen members-those with lots of spirit that say "Amen" quickly and who are filled with pop and crackle! There are some who won't catch the fire even if we doused them with gasoline and blow torched them! But there are others who are Evergreens. They praise God in the morning and in the evening, in good times and bad times; no matter what the time; they will praise the Lord!

TALL EVERGREENS HAVE DEEP ROOTS: A unique thing about Cedar Evergreens is that they may grow as tall as 300 feet, but it's important also that we note that for every foot the Cedar grows high its tap root goes down the same amount. This Evergreen stands in the midst of storms and does not topple over because it has deep roots that hold on. Christians should follow this example and get rooted in the word of God. When the storms of life rage, our rooted faith will hold us in place. The song writer said, "In time like these you need an anchor, be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!"

Evergreens stand

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that when we see the Evergreen trees of the Christmas season we should be reminded that our savior has promised to be with us forever!

In Bethlehem, Jesus was born, but in Jerusalem, just before leaving this earth, He told His disciples, "And lo I will be with you always, even to the end of the world."

That is a promise that will last forever!

When we think of Green we should think about forever!

When I think about Green I remember that:

Psalms 30:12 says, "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."

Psalms 37:28 says, The Lord, "Forsaketh not his saints, they are preserved forever!

Psalms 52:8 "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever!

Psalm 61:4 "I will abide in the Tabernacle forever!"

Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!"

It is good to be an Evergreen because an Evergreen reminds us of God's provision "forever."

An evergreen seems to have a special anointing that allows it to stand in the cold or in the heat without losing its beauty!

It's that evergreen anointing that seems to prompt ever believer to how old a little while longer singing, "I will trust in the Lord until I die!"

It's the evergreen believer who can say, "I trust in God wherever I may be, out on the land or on the raging sea! Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!"

Storms may rise!

Winds may blow, but I am forever praising His name!

As I close, consider the little boy who watched his grandfather buy a chest at the antique store. The boy was surprise to see grandpa bring home a chest that had to be a hundred years old. "Why did you buy that chest?" the boy asked. "Well, you see it reminds me of the Lord!" Puzzled, the boy asked why? Grandpa answered, "Well that chest is made out of an Evergreen wood called Cedar. When you put your clothes in it and close the doors around them, the bugs and insects won't bother them. It's got a special something in it that protects the clothes from all harm. When I think of that I think about how God wraps his arms around me and His anointing keeps the bugs and moths and ticks out of my life!'

I don't know about you brothers and sisters, but that's enough to praise God forever

We should praise the Lord forever because his:

—Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant.

—Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure.

Whenever we see green we should start praising the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulder!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he's going to help us to climb!
We should praise the Lord for the bills he's going to help us to pay!
We should praise the Lord for the job he's going to help us to find!
We should praise the Lord for the home he's going to help us to buy!
We should praise him for saving our souls!
That's what He did when He went up to Calvary!
That's what He did when He died on an old rugged cross!
But early Sunday morning when he arose from the dead, he brought us all a chance to live with Him in a place where the pastures will always be green!
Forever!

9617-Christmas

A Red Christmas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 15, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.- Luke 2:10-11

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the colors of Christmas? There are many bright colors during the season and one of those colors is red. Red is the color of excitement and happiness. That's what Christmas brings to every family; a feeling of excitement and great joy.

We are attracted to the color red for many reasons that professionals have studied for years.

Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love.

Red is a very emotionally intense color. It enhances human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure. It has very high visibility, which is why stop signs, stoplights, and fire equipment are usually painted red. In heraldry, red is used to indicate courage. It is a color found in many national flags.

Red brings text and images to the foreground. Use it as an accent color to stimulate people to make quick decisions; it is a perfect color for 'Buy Now' or 'Click Here' buttons on Internet banners and websites. In advertising, red is often used to evoke erotic feelings (red lips, red nails, red-light districts, 'Lady in Red', etc).

Red is widely used to indicate danger (high voltage signs, traffic lights). This color is also commonly associated with energy, so you can use it when promoting energy drinks, games, cars, items related to sports and high physical activity.

Red is excitement! It is the color of joy!

During advent, Christians are especially joyful because it is the time we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Those who know the Lord rejoice in his goodness and at the same time are glad for the great blessings he has demonstrated.

As Christians, we face each new day with a spirit of joyfulness, but we are especially joyful at Christmas time. We know that whatever happens, our God is there for us. That

makes us glad. The red colors of Christmas reflect our joy!

Exposition

This text focuses on the good news brought by the angel to shepherds watching their fields. It was news that would bring them great joy.

The announcement of Christ's birth was not an ordinary announcement. It was highly unusual primarily because it was announced by Angels themselves. The angels told them not to fear because they were bringing news of great joy. The Greek word for great is Megas, which means: big, enormous, and colossal. It's the word from which we get the English word Mega. When mega precedes something it is going to be super big. The angel announced news that was going to bring mega joy.

It would be mega joy for of Israel. It would be mega joy for the shepherds. It would be mega joys for every believer; that means mega joys for us. The good news, of course, was the birth of Christ. That is the same good news that lifts our spirits today.

The reality that God is with us, should lift our spirits and give us reason to be hopeful, cheerful and excited about life and all it offers.

Coloring Christmas

If we had to select a color to represent Mega-happiness or Mega-Joy, what better color could we pick than red, which has many shades, each of which speaks to what our God means to us.

LIGHT RED IS LOVE: The very first emotion that red stirs is love. It is often symbolized by light red. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whosever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is what the light red of Christmas brings to our mind. The Christ child in the manger reminds us of God reaching down to love us and lift us up. When we are loved by someone we can feel them lifting us up. We feel loved when we can sense that those around us are trying to lift us and raise us. Even if a parent is chastising us, in a strange way, we still feel loved because we feel that the ultimate goal of the chastisement is to lift us up.

Despite our imperfections, Christ wants to lift us up in the eyes of God.

Despite our flaws and failures, Christ wants to help us achieve our maximum.

Despite our idiosyncrasies, Christ still wants us to succeed, according to his purpose.

He loves us unconditionally, practically and with only one purpose: to bring us to the altar as the spotless bride of Christ.

This is the kind of love that we sing about when we say, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

FADED RED OR PINK IS FRIENDSHIP: Pink is another shade of red. It suggests friendship and romance. When we see Pink it should remind us of the friendship of God and the fact that God will never leave us friendless or alone. That's why the song writer writes, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, what privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." When believers consider their walk with God,

they soon realize that he has shown himself to be our friend, even in difficult times. He has never left us alone.

He has shown himself a friend because he did not let us drown in our own sins, but he lifted us by his grace.

He has shown himself a friend because he did not allow the world to triumph over us when we failed in school, in business, in our marriage or in a life pursuit; instead he favored us with one more chance.

He has never left us!

He has never stopped blessing us!

He has never abandoned us.

He has never left us alone.

BRIGHT RED IS EXCITEMENT: The bright red color of Christmas stirs the excitement of the believer's spirit. We are excited when we peer beyond the dark and murky cloud that veils the glistening rays of a new day begun that we are able to resolve that despite the hard times I've seen and troubles I've endured, it's good to be here, Praise ye the Lord!

It's this excitement that prompts us to say, "I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me what little I have, Praise ye the Lord."

I may not be of the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise!

It's this feeling of excitement that prompts us to agree with the song writer who wrote, "I don't know what you came to do, but I came to praise the Lord."

Praise him for waking me up this morning!

Praise him for clothing me in my right mind!

Praise him for giving me health and strength!

The blood

Finally, brothers and sisters when we see the color red we think of the blood of Christ, shed to save us from our sins.

Today, when we see the color red all around us and we see a Red Christmas. There is an old song called, "The Holly and the Ivy" in which one verse says, "The holly bears a berry as red as any blood, and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to do poor sinners good."

The Red of the holly berry symbolizes Christ's blood, shed for us on the cross.

It's all around us, a red Christmas! It's on the trees, ornaments and hangs from ribbons and table decorations.

Just as the red of Christmas is all around us, so is the love and power of God shown through the blood of savior.

When we see red we think of the blood because there is no other source to which we attribute our hope.

The red of Christmas is not about a jolly old man wearing a red suit, but about the blood of Christ that brings us hope. This is the hope that the song writer referred to

when he wrote, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

There was a time when we saw red we thought of flamboyance, country ways and sin.

There was a time when we saw red we thought of bright lights and parties.

But one day when I was loss, he died upon a cross and the blood of Christ saved me.

Some may attribute their life’s journey to education, but I know it was the blood.

Some may think their hard work has brought them thus far, but I know it was the blood.

Some may envision themselves as the source of their own good fortune, but I know it was the blood.

There are some things in this world that we cannot attain without the blood.

There is a fountain from which you cannot drink, but the power of the blood brings you to that fountain!

There is a promise that you cannot claim, but the power of the blood allows you to claim that promise!

There is a hope that you cannot enjoy, but the power of the blood allows you to enjoy that hope!

The song writer asked the question, “What can wash away my sins?” Then he answered what every born again Christian already knows, its...

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you’ve been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me.

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and turned it into love!

I know it was the blood that took my despair and turned it into hope!

I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and turned it into honor!

I know it was the blood that took my enemies and turned them into friends!

I know it was the blood that took my worries and turned them into confidence!

One day when I was lost, he died!

He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that saved me!

He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!

He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!

But early Sunday morning arose, to guarantee my salvation!

9618-Christmas

A White Christmas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 22, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18

Introduction

Have you heard the song, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." If you have, you are probably among the millions of Americans who sing this song annually. It is perhaps one of the most popular songs of the Yuletide season.

On the surface it seems to be a song about snow and weather, but there is a greater significance to the song which accounts for its popularity and durability. The lyrics are pretty simple:

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten
And children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I am dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And me all
Your Christmases be white

Those lyrics are packed with some powerful imagery that goes far beyond just singing about snow and the weather. The attraction of the song has to do with the section of the lyrics that refer to being "merry and bright" - that's with people seek during the Christmas season, renewed hope.

This song was written by being Crosby in 1942, when Americans were watching their sons being shipped off to war not knowing whether they would come back home again. It was a dark time for both soldiers and their families back home. From foxholes in foreign lands shrouded by the darkness of the unknown, soldiers sent home Christmas cards packed with their desire to come home. In the midst of their darkness the thought of home brought them hope and inspiration and the dreams of a white

Christmas elicited memories of a time when things would be once again merry and bright. By 1947 Bing Crosby had to re-record the song because he had sold so many copies of it that the original Masters had worn out. Today, sixty six years later, the world is still singing and dreaming about a white Christmas where days will be merry and bright.

If you have ever experienced a winter night after a snowfall you will notice that even though the night is black and the ground is covered with snow there is a certain brightness that fills the area. Sometimes the snow can be so bright that you have to shield your eyes, yet all around it there is darkness.

Christmas in the middle of the darkness of our times is a source of hope and cheer. This desire for a white Christmas is not so much a desire for snow as it is a desire for days it will be merry and bright. That's why people in the east who may be digging from beneath 15 or 20 inches of snow saying I'm dreaming a white Christmas. It's also why people in west who rarely see a single drop of snow are singing, I'm dreaming of a White Christmas. It is not so much about the snow as it is about the hope of days that will be merry and bright.

In Bethlehem a child was born who's very birth would bring hope to the world. The birth of the Christ child brought hope, peace, renewal and restoration to a world lost in confusion and despair. This child brought the hope that the world would once again see days that would be merry and bright.

As Christians, we celebrate the hope that the Christ child brings during this season and every day of our lives. The hope that our days would be merry and bright is the hope that sustains us throughout our Christian journey.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Isaiah as he speaks to a world consumed with the prospects of war, and offers hope of a day when the nation could once again look forward to things being merry and bright.

In Isaiah 1 the prophet paints a dark picture of the Israeli world. It had become obsessed with power, greed and immoral living while at the same time claiming to be a holy nation under God. He said wars, trouble and confusion would plunge the nation into a dark period.

While Isaiah talked about the darkness of the times, he also pointed to a better time when the favored relationship Israel had with God could be restored. It is the hope that he projects in verse 18 when he says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow."

He looked forward, to a time in the not so distant future, when the world would seek the Lord and his salvation.

God showed Isaiah a vision of a beautiful time that was coming. Its beauty is shared in verse 4, as Isaiah notes that it would be a time when men would transform their weapons into implements to better the world, that's the meaning of "beat their swords into plowshares." Instead of spending their resources building weapons, they will be transformed into means of feeding the hungry and providing for the improved quality of life of all.

He saw a time when the people of the world would have a sensitivity to human need,

a spirit of brotherhood and a desire to live in accordance with the will of God.

He offered the hope that the day would come when things once again would be merry and bright.

The Prospect of Better Days

In the biblical context the people of Israel were not dreaming of a "White Christmas" but they were dreaming of days when their conditions would be merry and bright. And today, many of us may not literally dream of a white Christmas, but we rejoice in the Christmas season because of the sense of renewal that comes with it.

WE REJOICE ABOUT RENEWED HOPE: The world is filled with cynicism. We see so much of the "Ba Humbug" of the Ebenezer Scrooges of the world that it is easy for us to give up on the goodness of humanity. Yet, at Christmas time we see signs all round us that there are millions of people who generous, kind hearted and compassionate . What we see inspires new hope in us that better days are possible, days when everything can be merry and bright.

In Bethlehem Mary delivered the baby Jesus in a stable. She brought forth new hope into the world. The birth of the Christ through the newbirth or born again experience, inspires, motivates and pushes us to bring forth new dreams and hopes as well. There have been many people in life who have testified that they would have given up on their dreams and aspirations but the power of God within them encouraged them to bring forth. When Jesus comes into our lives he helps us to bring forth our potential. He brings forth the courage that we need to tackle tough situations and difficult times. Hebrews 13:6 says, So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. When Jesus comes into our lives, there is a spirit of boldness that envelops each of us until we begin to hope again.

OUR OPTIMISIM IS REKINDLED: It's not hard to be pessimistic when we see so much negativity around us. If we see failure, defeat, and trouble constantly we begin to expect trouble, suffering and pain from every experience. We can easily become pessimistic. Mary, was probably 13 or 14 years old when she was told she would go away to visit her sister, but when she returned three months later she would have to tell her prospective husband that she was three months pregnant. That prospect was not positive. She could see the trouble on the horizon, yet God went before her and spoke to Joseph and explained things in a way that made the days ahead bright instead of gloomy. Despite the stares from their neighbors and whispers Mary smiled and sang her song quietly to herself. She remained optimistic.

Today, there many who have learned how to be joyous, despite their difficulties. They say like Paul that they count it all joy to be in diverse circumstance that may include disappointment or suffering because they know that ultimately God's overwhelming purpose will prevail.

A White Christmas, in this context, is an optimistic Christmas. It is the belief that if there is darkness and suffering all around, the day will come when it will be merry and bright.

If there is sickness all around us, we can find a reason for joy.

It's optimism and faith that help us to sing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

WE LISTEN TO HEAR A WORD: Bing Crosby said a white Christmas is the time when "Children listen, to hear sleigh bells in the snow." However, believers listen at Christmas time, but it's not always for sleigh bells in the snow. Believers listen closely to hear a word of hope from the Lord. We see the wrappings, decorations and ornaments, but what is more important to believers is that their families and the world around them listen to hear a word from God.

When Jesus was born the believing world was waiting patiently for a message from heaven. It had been 490 years since they had prophets, divine encouragements or even condemnations. Between the Old Testament and the New Testament there was 490 years of silence.

But when Jesus was born, it was announced that Shiloh has come. Shiloh means message. Jesus was both the message and the messenger.

A White Christmas, in this context, meets that there is a word from God available to us. The birth of Christ reminds us that God is with us. This birth is the birth of Shiloh or the message.

As families make decisions about marriage, careers, children, business opportunities, morality and many other particulars, it is important that they seek the direction from God.

They want to hear a word because they know that When Shiloh comes; they will hear a word from God and have direction!

When Shiloh comes they can be sure about their decisions!

When Shiloh comes their doubts can be resolved!

When Shiloh comes God will move on the altar of the spirit and motivate them in a way that no other can!

It all happens when Shiloh comes!

A White Christmas

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that a white Christmas reminds us that though our sins be as scarlet, because of Jesus they can be as white as snow.

We are not dreaming of a "White Christmas" to get picturesque scenes painted on the canvass of our yards and on the rooftops of our neighborhoods.

We are not dreaming of a "White Christmas" so we can ride sleds, build snowmen or catch falling snowflakes because all of these can happen any time of the year.

We are dreaming of a Christmas where Christ is the center because it is his presence that is the source of our joy.

We are dreaming of world that wants to keep Christ in Christmas so that we have our emblem of faith and hope.

We can't celebrate Christmas without Christ because He is the reason for the season.

It is fine to have a beautiful Christmas tree that is decorated with pretty lights and candy cane, but we don't want to have Christmas if we can't have Jesus!

It is exciting to have tables full of food and the best cakes and pies in the world, but we don't want to have Christmas if we can't have Jesus!

It is an enriching experience to come home to give and exchange gifts and expressions of love, but we don't want to have Christmas if we can't have Jesus!

Christmas without Jesus is like a brand new car without gas!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cake made without sugar!

Christmas without Jesus is like a new toy, but the batteries are not included!

Christmas without Jesus is like a cell phone with no minutes, a computer with no internet connection, and a copy machine with no paper!

Christmas without Jesus is like a coffeepot with no coffee, a bank account with nothing in it; and a magazine with empty pages!

No wonder the prayer of every Christian is that the world will know Jesus because without Jesus there is no reason for the season!

When Jesus comes in your life, miraculous things start to happen.

We are dreaming about a Christmas that is merry and bright and filled with the Joy of the Lord!

When we have the joy of the Lord, He:

-Comforts us in our sorrow; Assures us in our difficulties!

-Strengthens us in our weakness; encourages us in our trials!

-Directs us in our decisions; Helps us in our duties!

-Anoints us in our ministries; defends us in our battles!

On his way to make our lives merry, bright, saved and sanctified, he stopped down in Bethlehem and made a stop in Nazareth!

He stopped by a place called Calvary and spent three nights in a grave!

On his way into our lives, he died on Golgotha's hill, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9619-Christmas

Coming Down from the Christmas High

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 29, 2013

SCRIPTURE: And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke 2:20

Introduction

Now that Christmas is over have you returned to your regular routine? It often takes considerable time to return to our regular routines because we spent so much time do what is not usual for us. To return to our regular routines we must bag up the trash we have collected and pack away the boxes of ribbons, bows, and lace. We must recycle our live trees and pack away our artificial trees and try to get back to our regular routines.

Have you stopped to consider what makes Christmas such an enjoyable season? A large part of it has to do with stepping out of our daily routines and spending time, energy and resources toward building relationships. More than any other time of year, at Christmas we renew and strengthen relationships with family, friends and with God.

On Christmas morning Facebook.com reported that it experienced three times the number of posts from users than usual. There were millions of photos posted. The highest among those photos posted were about family pictures, home cooked food and people enjoying relationships.

Many Christian homes spent a considerable amount of time focusing on Christ during the Christmas season. There are some homes that actually sang Christmas Carols, and read the story of the incarnation from the bible as a family. Many families attended special Christmas programs with the church and enjoyed a heightened sense of spirituality.

The Christmas season is a high that is refreshing and enjoyable.

However, as Christmas ends many people instantly begin to take down the decorations. The lights are removed from the houses. Christmas postcards are removed from the yards. Everything disappears. Even, the left over turkey is recycled into turkey salad, freezer bags are stuffed; and soon after Christmas, there is little sign that there was a Christmas celebration.

Coming down from the Christmas high usually means returning to our daily routine. For many people our daily routine excludes the things that bring us the most joy. When Christmas comes, it seems that we step out of the mundane and step into encouragement, family unity, high spirituality, giving, compassion, preparation and love. When Christmas ends, there are many that come down from that high and return to the ordinary.

What does returning to our usual routine mean if the ordinary lives that we live leave out the things that make us the happiest? What if our daily routines leave little time for family, friends, God, good food and fellowship? What happens if we return to that?

On the contrary, what if the spirit of Christmas continued all year? What if we visited family members all throughout the year? What if we cooked real food year round? What if we showed love to each other all through the year. What if the family gathered, prayed, sang, laughed and talked all the time?

If all that happened, then Christmas would never end! We would never come down from the Christmas high!

As the Christmas season ends and a New Year dawns, perhaps it might be a great idea to remove the decorations from our homes, but leave them up in our hearts.

Whatever it was that made Christmas so great to our families should continue all year. If that happens we will never come down from the Christmas high.

Exposition

This text focuses on the actions of the shepherds after they participated in the manger experience.

Shepherds, who were grazing their flocks, were interrupted to participate in the manger experience in Bethlehem. Their normal routine consisted of a rather dreary cycle of watching flocks by day and night. However, whenever the flocks were left unattended for long periods of time the possibility of losing some of their sheep always existed because either thieves or wolves were present. While they were inspired and strengthened by observing the manger experience in Bethlehem they returned to their fields still under the glow and charisma that came as a result of being in the presence of God.

Even though they went back to the fields, the excitement of what they experienced in Bethlehem never ended. It simply continued indefinitely. They returned, glorifying God. The Greek word for glorifying in this text is dox-ad-zo which means to cause the dignity and worth of a person or thing to be recognized or acknowledged. Thus, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to participate in the manger experience and they returned with an exciting testimony about what they had experienced themselves. Their testimony recognized and acknowledged God in such a way that his respect and reverence among the people was uplifted.

The joy of that night in front of the manger did not end in Bethlehem.

Their business as usual routine had been changed forever as their conversation and relationship was changed for their own betterment. Their return was not the end of the

manger experience but it was the beginning of a lifetime of praise and glorifying that would never end.

What to do now

The shepherds returned to their daily routine, but they returned with a sense of excitement that electrified the dreary task of watching sheep! What can we do to keep the Christmas high all during the coming year?

WE SHOULD RENEW OUR HOPE: Many families struggle to survive all year. Life seems to be a daily battle to pay the rent, put food on the table and stay happy. During the year many become frustrated as so many things happen outside of their control; those frustrations often mean lost hope. Yet, at Christmas time, somehow our hope is restored for a few days. We can remember that though we have troubles God is still on the throne and will help us. That renewed hope gives us a high. But does that hope end when Christmas ends? Do we have to return to worry, frustration and sadness? Certainly not! We can take the decorations down, but we keep hope hanging on a pedestal in our hearts because the God we serve is not seasonal. He does not bless us only one season at a time, he blesses us continually! We don't have to return to worry because our "hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. We dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus'' name."

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING SHOULD CONTINUE: At Christmas many people find joy because relationships are renewed. We heard from those that we had not heard from in years. On Christmas morning phone lines were over burdened and millions of text messages, twitter posts were sent. We were connecting, spreading cheer, showing pictures, catching up on family tidbits, seeing old friends and visiting family. Relationship building takes time. Often during our regular routine we little time for relationship building activities. We often have little time to fellowship with family and friends on their birthdays, anniversaries or important moments. There are many members of the family we don't speak to all year, except at Christmas and the relationship between family members thins. We seem to operate on the principle, "Anybody got time for that!"

Families that do things together stay strong. However, relationships require time to laugh, share, and support. It seems that we do plenty of that at Christmas, but should it end when the tree comes down? Should we routine to what we did without Christmas?

Relationships with God take time as well. At Christmas, we speak the name of Jesus freely in little phrases such as "Jesus is the reason for the season," and "Keep Christ in Christmas" and we boldly attest our faith in God. However, that should not be Christmas thing. It takes time to know God, just as it takes time to know family members. We should speak to him, about him and listen to him frequently, even when the Christmas season ends. When we that the Christmas high continues, long after the Christmas tree has been recycled to mush.

KEEP THE HIGH, GLORIFY GOD DAILY: When the Shepherds returned to their daily routine, it was obvious that they did not return to "business as usual." Certainly,

they led the sheep to green pastures, protected them wolves and thieves and watched over them, but they returned with a new spirit. What they did should serve as an example to us. They did not let the Christmas celebration end! There was no babe in the manager or angelic choir singing in the heavens, but they keep the spirit of that night in their hearts and injected it into their daily routines.

The shepherds saw the fulfillment of God's promises and they testified to all that would hear them. They were told that something great was to happen in Bethlehem and God did not disappoint them. That's an example for believers today. When God has kept His promises to us, we should be willing to testify about his greatness with the full knowledge that he will not disappoint us. Romans 4:20 encourages every believer not to "stagger" when it comes to trusting in God.

We are on a high at Christmas because our faith and hope in Christ are renewed with our doubt or staggering. Since Christmas has ended, let's keep the high and continue glorifying him, even in our daily routines.

Don't Stop Expecting Great things from God

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that although Christmas is over, we don't have stop expecting God to do great things for us.

During the Christmas season we rejoiced at the thought that "God is with us." We saw the Christ child as a symbol of God's divine love being shared with mankind.

Yet, the shepherds showed us that we don't have stop glorying God because we have left the manger scene. They came to the manger, tired and weary, but they went home glorifying God.

The wise men came to Jesus one way, but the scripture says they did not return the way the came; they returned another way.

If we were in doubt about how our families would make it in before Christmas, but our doubts disappeared during Christmas, we don't have to come down from that feeling because God is the same God after Christmas that he was during Christmas.

We praised God and sang carols about his goodness during Christmas, but we don't have to come down. We can expect great things from God all through the days ahead.

After Christmas we should continue the Christmas high because:

—God expects us to keep the faith and never let go of our passion and love for Him.

—God expects us to resist the temptation to flirt with world as soon as we are out of mother's sight!

— God expects us to get up after we stumble and try again!

—God expects us to continue to worship Him and give him praise!

—God expects us to get up if we fall, fail or experience defeat!

—God expects us to keep trying, never stop striving and always move forward!

—God expects us not to doubt Him. As long as God is still on the throne,

This high that we feel is like the shepherds joy, it glorifies God every day!

It is glory that is bathed in expectation!

We won’t come down from our expectation that God can lift us up!
Even though Christmas is over we will continue to keep our faith in God.
Even though Christmas is over God expects you to remember that if you:
—Pray for Rain, we will keep our umbrellas ready!
—Pray for bread, we will grease the pan!
—Pray for a job, get our resumes ready!
We can’t come down from the Christmas high because God is able!
Keep the Christmas spirit; don’t stop expecting God to bless you!
Keep the Christmas spirit; don’t stop expecting God to make a way for you!
Keep the Christmas spirit Don’t stop expecting God to open doors for you!
Let’s do like the shepherds, let’s leave the Christmas season, glorifying his name!
His name is Jesus!
He came and died to raise our expectations and give us new hope!
He died on an old rugged cross to give us hope!
Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave offering us his love!

No. 9620- New Year

A year ending or a year beginning

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 31, 2013

SCRIPTURE: Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Isaiah 54:2-3

Introduction

There are very few people who approach the end of any year and do not, at least for a few minutes, consider the road they have traveled. This is the time of our lives that we consider where we are and, like a runner in a race, measure how far we are from our goal and decide whether we should continue at the pace of previous laps or make a mad dash for the finish line.

How we see this point in our own history depends upon our attitude. We can view life as the pessimist and cheer the end of the year. The pessimist sees everything that did not go as planned. He sees the illnesses, deaths, disappointment, failures and shortcomings. The pessimist sees all of the frustrations, problems, defeats and bouts with loneliness and despair and greets the final fleeting moments of the year with welcomed, "Thank Goodness, this year is finally over."-The pessimist sees the clouds and thunderstorms and hears the thunder roll. The pessimists relives the weary nights of worry over finance and family, love lost and love gained. The pessimist can't wait for the year to end.

On the contrary the optimist, the man and woman who walks by faith, sees the year gone by from a different perspective. He sees how easy the impossible battle he fought this year, really was; and was not as impossible as everyone suspected. He sees the little victories and the major accomplishments. He sees the clouds, but he also sees the sun shining behind every cloud.

The man/woman of faith is not so foolish that he/she tries to ignore a few of the silly decisions we made this year or the wrong turns that we made along the way. He does not ignore the fact that he fell a few times, some by tripping others by shear foolishness on our part. The man of woman of faith, remembers all of this as well, but also sees the divine hand of God leading us every step of the way.

For the pessimist, the season of the year is Year's End. For the Optimist, this is the beginning of New Year; another chance to get it right, step in the right direction and correct mistakes of the previous. The optimist is not excited by the year's end, but is excited about the chance to begin again in a grander more fulfilling way.

As Christians, glance back at the past, but we gaze at the future that God has in store for us, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Exposition

This text focuses on God encouraging Israel to prepare for God's continued blessing in the time ahead.

In this passage, Israel was at a very low point. They had gone through a succession of wicked rulers who had led them astray from God. The Kingdom had been divided and weakened. First the northern, and then the southern kingdom had fallen to their enemies. The land had been laid waste, the walls torn down. Even the temple of God where they worshipped had been ransacked and destroyed by their enemies.

Most of Israel's problems were self-inflicted in that they resulted from their failure to remain true to God and God hid his face from them. In 54:2-3 Isaiah calls them to: Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

Even though the nation slipped in its loyalty, God still promised to bless them if they reorder themselves in the days ahead.

They were reminded that God has done great things for them in the past, but here Isaiah wants them to know that God is going to do even greater things for them in the near future. They could not see it then, but it was on its way.

The Prospects

At this point in the journey there is not time for pessimism. We must not dwell on the failures of the previous year. There are some families that have encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that have experienced strained relationships. These are not reasons to despair, but rather are reason to testify that if it had not been for the Lord on their side, they would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments.

We look back, but not with pessimism, but with nostalgic repentance. The late Nat King Cole wrote a hit song that said:

Looking ba-a-ack over my deeds
I can see signs a wise man heeds
And if I just ha-ad the chance
I'd never make that same mistake again

Once my cup was overflowing
But I gave nothing in retu-u-urn
Now I can't begin to te-ell you
What a lesson I have learned

Looking ba-a-ack over the slate
I can see love turned to hate
But I know, oh yes I know
I'd never make that same mistake again

When we look back we realize that have been sustained by the eternal presence of God in our life situations this year. When difficult times were upon us this year, God was there. He was only a prayer away. If we made the mistake of not praising God, we should never make the same mistake again.

Someone can recall how the Lord lifted a burden from their shoulder and gave them renewed strength in the midst of weakness.

When Jesus told his disciples, Lo I'll be with you alway that meant exactly what it said; he planned to be with us continually.

When we think about how God has been with us continually, this is not the year's end, but the beginning of another year of our Walk with the King.

Try it God's way this year

Did you try things your way last year? Did it work out or could you have done better? If you could have done it better then the New Year gives you an opportunity to try again, but differently,

There are two ways to approach life goals. One is the way popularized by a song written by the late Frank Sinatra called My Way. In that song Sinatra boasts that he lived his life, My Way.

He is not alone. There are many who are trying the my way approach: living, loving and dying according to their own rules. To do it my way is to do it alone without any divine assistance. It is also a formula for unhappiness and often failure.

That's what happened to many people last year.

Some used or sold drugs or became addicted to something or someone.

Some lived so wild that they slipped way off course.

Some never got started; they procrastinated

Some nearly died.

As we reach the juncture in our journey, we look back and see that the "My way" approach usually forces us to move under our own power with God's favor.

A new year gives us the chance to work it out on the God side of life. That's when you decide to do it God's way.

Doing it God's way, you may still stumble, but when we do it God's way we may fall down..but He picks us up and we try again.

The bible says in Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Many now know that this is not the end of the year, but the beginning of the year that I will try life God's way.

Be Prepared to see Life Differently

Whether it is sickness, death, finances or disappointments, every person should prepare to see life from a different perspective.

Have you experienced misfortune during the year, don't dwell on. When others look down on you with an eye of scorn, just assume the attitude of the young man who wanted a limo but he could get was a Hooptie. One day at a red light he encountered a giant limo at red traffic light. It looked to be just a beat up Volkswagen. The brother in the Limo rolled down the window and started bragging that his car was the best car that money could buy. "It has ABS, airbags for all passengers, automatic climate control, onboard computer control system, photo chromatic glass, mini bar, a television with satellite dish and hydraulic shocks."

At this point the Hooptie owner rolled down his window and pointed, "But do you have live streaming video in there?"

The brother in the Limo had been dissed. He immediately bought live streaming video for his limo.

A few days passed by, and again the limo was at a traffic light when the limo brother spotted the Volkswagen again. He bragged about his limo and showed his rollaway king-sized bed.

"But does it have voice activated GPS?" asked the Volkswagen owner as he drove off.

Upset the limo owner hurriedly had a Voice activated GPS system installed. He laughed a few days later when he saw the little Volkswagen pulled to the side of the road with its windows all steamed up. Steam was even coming from the windows and water was dripping on the ground.

The limo brother knocked on the window and said, "I got a GPS system," The Volkswagen owner said, "You got me out of my morning shower to tell me that?"

God's kindness and favor will follow believers

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should consider that those who look forward to the future can expect his kindness to be with them every step of the way.

Isaiah told Israel that it had endured difficult days, but God reminds them to prepare to receive the kindness of God in a way that will not be interrupted!

Like Israel we must prepare to expand our tents in the year ahead.

Looking back, we have not acted in faith as we should have, but we won't make that mistake again!

Looking back, we have not given as we should have, but we won't make that mistake again!

Looking back, we have not worshiped as we should have, but we won't make that mistake again!

When it comes to our halfhearted service it is the end-of-the-year

When it comes to our new commitment to go all the way with the Lord, it's the beginning of the year!

When it comes to our frequent lapses in faith it's the end-of-the-year.

When it comes to our new decision to walk by faith and not by sight it's the beginning of the year.

Even though we didn't have room for him in our little tents last year, God was kind us!

Even though we often pitched our tents in the wrong places, God was kind to us!

Even though we often failed stake our tents with proper amount of study and prayer, God was merciful to us.

He looked beyond our faults and saw our needs. I don't know about you, but I'm glad that the kindness of God remains the same.

Because Gods kindness will not depart from us,

—There is no battle we can face that will stop us!

—There is no mountain that will be too hard for us to climb!

—There is no valley too deep for us traverse! —There is no night too dark for us to make it through!

—There is no crisis that we cannot control!

—There is no storm so strong that we cannot weather it!

—There is no enemy so frightening that we cannot defeat it!

I'm glad to know that, when I've failed, he still turns failure into success!

I'm glad to know that, when I'm weak, he still turns weakness into strength!

I'm glad to know that, when I have questions, he still provides the answers!

I'm glad to know that, when I am frustrated, he still gives me hope!

It sure feels good to know that even if I mess up, his kindness shall not depart from us.

It was a kindness that began in a manger down in Bethlehem and ended on an old rugged cross!

It's a kindness that makes miraculous things possible,

If I call on the name of Jesus!

You know him Jesus, who carried an old rugged cross!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

No matter what comes this year, remember Gods kindness shall not depart from you!

No. 9621-New Year

Always

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 5, 2014

SCRIPTURE: A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. Deuteronomy 11:12

Introduction

Have you ever paid attention to the one word slogan that is posted outside of every Wal-Mart Store? In big giant letters the word Always is very visible everywhere. Wal-Mart's slogan is one simple word. Always. For many that's a commitment that means the company can be counted on for low prices always. Open for long hours and often 24 hours. Food? Medicine? Clothing? No matter what Wal-Mart seems to have it always.

God has a sign that hangs from heaven. It's as if it flashed in front of heaven...God-mart!

Whatever we will need this year God can provide it... Always

There is very little we can do in any given year that does not require the miraculous intervention of the divine. Whether its putting a safety net around our homes or creating opportunities for us on the job, God is busy 24 hours a day and seven days a week, making things happen for his people. Always.

That's what he did for us last year and will continue to do this year. He will never forsake us or leave us, even though sometimes we believe that what we have accomplished has been done without him.

As Christians, we approach the New Year with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We have the assurance that will be there for us. Always.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he reflects on Israel's journey and considers the road ahead.

Moses, at 120 years old, had a wealth of experience. He served 40 years as a prince of Egypt. He served another 40 years as a humble shepherd. He spent the last 40 years leading Israel out of Egypt toward the Promised Land. In the course of that time he saw many changes.

As they paused, just before going into the Promised Land, Moses wrote, through

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Book of Deuteronomy. The name means A Second look. In it, he reminds them where they had been and then points them to where they are going.

In this text he notes that where they are going is different from where they have been.

Moses warned the people that as things change and opportunities of the future avail themselves, to remain faithful to God. He warned them not to forget where they had come from, and how they made it to their present destination. The only way they could lose the benefit of God's blessings would be to turn to ungodly living. Change is going to come, Moses said, but the people should not change their belief and faith in God.

Things will change, but despite the difficulties of the unknown, there was one certainty; he would be with them, always.

He's always there!

In the year ahead there are certain truths about God that should be reassuring to us:

GOD ALWAYS HAS NEW BLESSINGS: What makes customers return to giant superstores like Wal-Mart? Generally, it's because they have what you need, and offer new items, always. Women like to shop stores like Wal-Mart just to see what's in the store. (Men seldom isle shop, they look for specific items only, as a general rule.) Regular customers want to see what new in the store. That's the way God is for every believer. Every morning God has new blessings in store for us! Every morning believes should awaken with anticipation, "What great blessing does God have in store for me today." The same is true for every New Year, "What great blessing does God have in store for me this year?" Mentally, we can shop the isles of "God-Mart" and look at all the wonderful blessings he has available for our health, comfort, care and leisure. We know God has something new because Lamentations 3:21 says, "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

God has a new healing in store for us, Always!

God has a new financial blessing in store for us, Always!

God has a new restoration in store for us, Always!

GOD ALWAYS FOCUSES ON US: What makes super stores like Wal-Mart successful is that they always focus on the needs of customers in the community where they operate. Each community is different and so are its needs. They sell snow shovels in Alaska and Mosquito spray in Louisiana, raincoats in Seattle and snowshoes in North Dakota. They focus on the needs of their customers. However, God-Mart has Wal-Mart topped. God does have to conduct a survey to ascertain our needs, because he knows our thoughts. Psalm 139:2-3 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."

Even more, we are always in His thoughts. God's thoughts about us go beyond just his ideas about us because God is constantly working his plan in our lives. He is working it, or thinking of us, even when we do not recognize his presence. In the year ahead,

God will do some thing for us, because we are always in his thoughts. That may include closing a door to direct us to a better open door. It may include allowing us to try things our way and mess up so that we will let him fix us up. It's all because we are in his thoughts and is always planning ways to guide us, direct us and nudge us in the right direction.

David thought about how God always thinks about us and wrote in Psalm 139:17 "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" We should gain confidence when we year God say, "You are always on my mind."

GOD ALWAYS HAS WHAT WE NEED: One of the unique qualities of a Wal-Mart super store is that usually has a wide assortment of merchandise to suit every need. You name it, Medicine, automotive, gardening, eye care, groceries, jewelry, electronics, fast food, even banking is available at Wal-Mart- Always! Yet, even the best Wal-Mart store can't compare with God-Mart. Wal-Mart has many things we need, our God has everything we need. God scrupulously separates our needs from our wants and knows exactly what we need to both survive and thrive. Physiologically, we need food, clothing and shelter at the offset. Beyond that we need health care and emotional support. The scriptures indicate that God sees the need of even the most ordinary person. A widow woman who struggled to provide for family saw God meet her need by giving her what she needed on a daily basis. Christ saw the health care need of the man sitting by the pool for 38 years and provided it for him. The Apostles saw a lame man at the temple gate and answered his plea by saying, Silver and Gold have I none but such as I have, give I thee. Mary and Martha grieved over the loss of Lazarus and we see Jesus responding to their need in a unique way. The preponderance of scripture teaches that God sees the immediate need of every believer. Whether our needs are financial, involving the payment of loans, meeting daily demands or just making ends meet; God always sees our need. In the New Year, this should be a reason for hope for every believer. Therefore, the songwriter asks, "Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Always with me

Finally, we must consider that when God says always, he means just what he says.

Moses told Israel that they were about to enter into a new future which was unknown to them, but God they should not be apprehensive because "the eyes of the Lord are always upon" them.

It is important to know when God says always, it is a clear distinction from when men say always.

When God says "Always" it is not a slogan, but a promise. When God says "Always" he has the power to back up that promise.

It is great when commercial outlets develop cute slogans that catch our imagination; they are great marketing plans, but nothing that man creates can actually be always.

A store may claim that it is always open, but it can't control storms, hurricanes and natural disasters.

A store may appear to have ample supplies of certain products, but there are an often time when its supply of our favorite items has been depleted, that's when always means a rain check until the next truck arrives.

Many super stores claim to always be open, but there are some that close on parts of special days such as Thanksgiving or Christmas.

That's why believers put their trust in God, because with him always means always.

Jesus told his disciples that "and lo I'll be with you alway even unto the end of the world," when he said always, he meant always."

The knowledge that our God never closes is reaffirmed in Psalm 121 when David wrote, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." He's always open, 24/7 and 365 days a year.

As we look at the New Year should assume a "no fear" attitude as we look at the prospects of the New Year, I will not fear! We know that no matter what comes, our God will always be by our side and has promised never to leave us alone!

That means, through any trouble or difficulty, the eyes of the Lord will always be upon us and he will not leave us alone!

If we fall upon misfortune, he will always be there and will never leave us.

If we fall upon temporary disgrace or public scorn, He will always be there when all others have abandoned us.

If we fall into sickness or despair, the eyes of the Lord will always be upon us and he will not leave us alone!

If our friends forsake us and family turns on us, the eyes of the Lord will always be upon us and he will not leave us alone!

This promise of God overrides the material and plunges us into the supernatural. It cancels the logical and pushes us into the realm of faith. It padlocks fear and unlocks hope and optimism.

As Israel prepared to march across the River Jordan they were filled with anxiety about approaching the unknown. They did not know what the future would hold, but they heard the word of God say, the eyes of the Lord will always be upon them.

Somebody today has crossed many rivers, but there is still one more river to cross!

You may not know what tomorrow will bring but you know who holds tomorrow. Listen to voice of God saying, I will never leave thee or forsake thee!

As we prepare to enter the first days of an unknown journey, we should remember that every step we take the eyes of the Lord are always upon us. Because God is always there:

— IMPOSSIBLE can become possible;

—IMPROBABLE becomes probable

—Mountains that stand in your way can be reduced to molehills!

—Rough places can be made plain, crooked places can be made straight!

Let us move into the new year with confidence that come what may from day to day! My heavenly father watches over me!

If I fall down, he'll pick me up! Always!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me! Always!

If I stumble, he'll whole my hand! Always!

If I can't find my way, he'll guide me! Always!

That's why I'll say, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thou powerful hand! "

Because the eyes of the Lord are always on us, he looked out for our salvation and picked up an old rugged cross!

Because the eyes of the Lord are always on us, He was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning!

No. 9622-Inspiration

Get on with it!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 12, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

Introduction

How do you plan to move in the New Year? Forward, standstill, or backwards? When President Obama launched his 2012 re-election campaign he had a one word theme "Forward." It was followed by a period. The period, says campaign analysts mean there was nothing else to be said; no looking back. President Obama believes that government drives national changes which stimulate progress. With that belief he has used the considerable influence of the Presidency to drive changes in the way the nation views health care and the way it views relationships between consenting adults. Historically, in the USA government has been the driving force that responded to social needs whether it was FDR's new deal that developed Social Security or LBJ's Great Society that introduced the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act and the welfare system as we know it today.

Government can be the driving force behind national changes, but it can only impact those things within its control. There are many areas in which we need to go forward, but no government policy or rule can make them happen. The government can order change that requires races to sit together in the same classroom, but it cannot make classmates love or even respect each other. The government can set up rules that force landlords to rent to all races, but it can't make the tenants neighbors. There are some changes that require divine intervention to make them happen.

On a personal level we have discovered that our personal progress has more to do with our own determination and the favor of God than it does with any other outside force.

If we go forward, it won't be the result of a political party or government initiative; it will be the result our faith in God and his favor being showered on us. Our faith is what helps us to spring back from errors and mistakes, as well as slips and falls. We are confident that the God we serve will not stop blessing us because we made a wrong turn or two. Neither will he abandon us because we strayed.

At this juncture, our resolve should be to reach forth and march to the beat of the

divine drum-major.

We can dwell on how many mistakes we've made in the past or what was done wrong forever, but at some point we must he listen to the words of this verse: "Forgetting those things which are behind."

As Christians, our faith is in God. There is a bright future in front of us therefore we should "get on with it" without fear, procrastination or hesitation. Our goal this year should be Forward-period.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi. While imprisoned in Rome he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus, and a sure goal.

Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past. Whatever was done in the past remains as history, he chose, even in a moment of crises to always look to the future.

Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37,"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as witness to the power of God and there would be no turning back.

Hindrances and Calls to Progress

There are many reasons that many of us have not claimed the promise that God has given us. It still remains waiting for our action.

FEAR OF FAILURE: Many do not claim the promises of God for their lives because they are afraid. Nothing worth having comes without risk, but many don't want to chance losing anything so they try to wait until there is no risk. Yet the cardinal rule of life remains, the greater the risk, the greater the return. The greater amount of faith that is needed the greater the reward.

Many have been putting off plans for college, career change, relationship improvements, personal health decisions and many other changes, because of fear that

mistakes may be made.

So that business never gets started. That expansion never happens; the medical procedure is never done; that relationship never begins; or never ends the way we know it should. Why? Because we are afraid. That fear often causes us to miss opportunities God presents to us.

We have God's promises and they should be enough to encourage us to move without fear. Isaiah 41:10 puts it this way, Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

God says the same thing to us that he said to Moses: don't be afraid, go down to Egypt, I am with you. Now get on with it!

God told Zacharias, Fear not and get on with it!

God told Joshua at the River Jordan, fear not and get on with it!

The woman at the tomb was told the same thing, Fear not, not get on with it!

Has God made us promises? Then we should seize the day and "Get on with it!"

DON'T DRAG UP THE PAST: There are many who are not going forward because they begin each New Year dragging the past with them. In many ways they are like the Israelites who began the march out of Egypt with bold faith, but dragged all of their history in Egypt with them. At every level of frustration they dreamed about the old days in Egypt when they had food and security. They kept dragging up the safety and security of the past and instead of going forward, they marched around in circles for 40 years. In fact, God let them wander until nearly every adult who had no faith died. When there was no one left to bring up the past, then they moved forward!

Today, there are millions who want to begin a new year but they keep dragging up Egypt. Family disputes, marital problems, financial difficulties, which caused problems in the past are dead weight if they are dragged into the future.

Paul put the subject in context when he said, ..Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14. In other words, stop delaying your blessings…get on with it!

PREPARE TO MOVE FORWARD: Paul encouraged believers to reach forth to the things which are before. That is a call to action. That call is marching orders for believers to prepare to move.

It means get up from where you are and get on with it!

Life often knocks us down, but we are encouraged to arise and get on with your life, not wallow in self pity.

A great scene from the Movie Rocky showed Rocky on the canvass and his corner man shouting Get up!

With everything hurting and though badly bruised Rocky stands and says, "I ain't going down no more."

Succeeding in life does not mean that you won't be knocked down, but real success comes when you know how to rebound after being knocked down, pick yourself up and "get on with the rest of your life!"

The command to rise is personal. Get on with it!

To arise is to gather new strength, just as Samson who lost his strength and his sight, found new strength to do a final great work for the Lord.

To arise is to see a new perspective, just as Saul wallowing in the dust of despair on the Damascus Road, arose with a new look on life.

As believers, we must embrace God's word and then arise and get on with it!

Pressing on

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should resolve that, come what may, we will press toward the mark of the high calling in Jesus Christ.

Paul said, despite the difficulties of his times, he planned to press toward the mark of the high calling.

Today's generation calls this steady march forward a call to, "get on with it," but the old warriors called it pressing on.

These are the words that Johnson Oatman, Jr. had in mind when he wrote old hymn:

I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's table land,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Like the old warriors, we too must declare, "I'm pressing on."

I'm pressing on because, I want to enter that land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul...and land where we'll never grow old."

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in the place where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest.

I'm pressing on because, I want to see that day when the mountains shall be made low and the valleys will be hollowed out.

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

I'm pressing on because, I want to put on my robe and walk with elders and see every inch of heaven from pillar to post.

I'm pressing on because, I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates made from solid pearls!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I'm pressing on because, I want to see the city where everyday will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
No more dying there!
No more crying there!
No more sickness and pain!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9623-Pastor Anniversary

The Tentmaker's Reward

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 2014

SCRIPTURE: Paul moved in with them, and they worked together at their common trade of tent making. But every Sabbath he was at the meeting place, doing his best to convince both Jews and Greeks about Jesus. Acts 18:3 (NIV)

Introduction

What should be the attitude of pastors toward their labor in the kingdom of God? Should they labor with the anticipation of being paid large salaries by the congregations they serve? Should they demand benefit packages, bonuses and perks as part of their salary packages?

The Gospel ministry is a calling of sacrifice, it's ministers plunge their bodies and souls into the building of the kingdom with God's pleasure as their only desire.

A general rule of thumb many successful pastors have followed over the years is: Ask for nothing, accepts anything given, and expect anything promised. With that as a foundation many pastors have proceeded to kingdom building, supporting themselves through secular employment or business pursuits, asking nothing of the ministry but obedience to God's word.

Not everyone agrees with that philosophy. Others see the minister as the proverbial ox that grinds the corn and therefore has a right on occasion to enjoy the fruits of his labor without a muzzling restraint. Hence, they believe in generous perks, trips, vacations, and enviable salary packages.

Very few African-American pastors can sustain themselves and their families out of the resources of the church alone, thus many of them are bi-vocational, working and pastoring at the same time. These pastors often work one or two full time jobs, spend the remainder of their time providing spiritual nurture for their congregations: Visiting the sick, attending church activities and meetings and providing counseling to those in distress.

Wise memberships recognize the bi-vocational nature of their pastor and do not place so many demands on him that he cannot maintain his own health and family, while ministering to them at the same time.

Yet, there are rewards for these dedicated men and women of God. Occasionally, churches double their efforts to help their pastors maintain their families in programs

such as this one today. It is a way to say to the pastor that the church acknowledges his sacrifices and is aware that he makes no demands. Despite his lack of demand the church, through its own volition, helps him balance is personal needs with those of the congregation.

What is the reward of those who labor for the Lord? God's blessing. That's the pastor's example. He does not seek earthly reward, but he will humbly accept it. What he seeks is God's favor on earth and his reward in heaven. This should be the same goal of every believer.

As Christians, we should favor our pastors with as much support as needed. We should constantly lift them up in prayer and help provide for their need. They are tent makers who deserve their rewards.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's practice of supporting himself rather than burdening the faithful with his support.

Spiritually, Paul was a laborer in the kingdom of God. He could easily be described as a church planter, a man who moved from city to city meeting in the homes of friends and establishing small churches that would promote the kingdom of God.

Despite his spiritual calling, Paul also had vocation; he was a tentmaker. Tent making was a skilled craft that was profitable in ancient times because everyone needed tents. When Paul visited a town, he found employment as a tentmaker to provide for his own needs. His vocation often kept him busy long hours as reflected in Acts 20:35. He often labored day and night. He notes that he accepted the hardship of providing for himself so that he would not be a burden on the believers who followed him. He told the Corinthians his reasons in 2 Corinthians 12:16. They were a wealthy congregation and some of the members wanted to sponsor him to give him time to help build the congregation. In Thessalonica he said he would not eat anyone's food without paying for it. (2 Thes. 3:8)

One of the primary reasons Paul decided to support himself is to remove any skepticism or doubts his motives for setting up the church. It would have been easier for him to accept the patronage of the believers, but it was better for the faith if he did not.

While Paul's choice was not a command to other ministers who would follow him over the years, it did establish an attitude about kingdom building that every pastor should adopt. The kingdom's work is always first; personal concerns are secondary.

His creed seemed to be: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you."

Tent Making Strengths

Paul's decision to serve as a tentmaker served as a model for servants of New Testament Churches. The theme can be summed up as, "Ask for nothing, accept what

is given, expect anything promised." Three aspects of Paul's decision illustrate these truths.

TENTMAKERS SET EXAMPLES: Tentmakers set an example. When Paul decided to work in Ephesus from dawn to mid evening, he demonstrated his own generosity and spirit of industry. By this he showed that he came to serve rather be served. His choice was an example of priorities and balance in ministry. He said, "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said, `It is more blessed to give than to receive' " (Acts 20:35). There is a danger for ministers to elevate themselves above common labor to the point that they become godlike to their congregations. Those who have helpers who carry their bibles for them, wipe the sweat from their foreheads or wait on them hand and foot under titles such as "Armour bearers" and "Shield Bearers" should consider the example such actions give to their congregation. Like Paul, who followed Christ's example, those in ministry come not to be ministered to but to serve, not to receive but to give. Paul believed that his tent making approach helped the weak in faith, who frequently imagine that their next step in discipleship is to be supported financially by other Christians. If we follow this path then it will logically be expected that every service to the church must require financial support: organist, percussionist, ministers, financial leaders, singers, sextons, and a plethora of other areas of service. These attitudes are usually set by example of the ministry leaders.

TENTMAKERS ARE DETERMINED NOT TO HINDER THE GOSPEL: There is a skepticism among the general public that those in ministry are con-men who prey on the religious believes of others to trick them out of their hard earned money. That belief actually hinders the spread of the Gospel. That mentality also existed in Paul's time. This is why Paul was determined not to do anything that hinders the spread of the Gospel by pandering to the suspicions of doubters. Paul was careful to note that those in ministry have a right to be supported and to receive double honor, but he chose not to exercise that right because the Gospel's sake.

The laity in many areas is offended if those in ministry do not accept their support, making the humble principle of tent making even more difficult. In biblical times ancient philosophers and missionaries who were supported by fees, patronage and begging as well as by working. The Corinthians were offended that Paul did not accept their patronage and thus questioned whether he was fit to be their apostle. Even worse was Paul's choice of a demeaning trade in a society that despised manual work. Paul's stance had to do with the nature of gospel ministry. The gospel is a free gift. Paul is not "free" to choose whether to proclaim this gospel. So he chooses to embody the essential nature of gospel ministry (as a free gift) by giving his own ministry "free of charge," thus ironically getting his pay by taking no pay (1 Cor. 9:18).

Those in ministry walk a fine line between tent making and accepting congregational support. Many have found it best to ask for nothing personally: raises, vacations, bonuses, while at the same time accepting anything offered and expecting anything promised. It's not quite what Paul did, but it is true to his role as a model of humility.

TENTMAKERS STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMON PEOPLE: As a tentmaker

Paul engaged in one of the lowest occupations. It was tedious work that was lucrative, but would never make him rich. It was shunned by the rich, but kept him in contact with the average person. Rolland Allen reminds us that "The hedge round the clergy is a very high and cultivated one . . . and consequently the restriction of ordination generally to men trained from youth within that hedge inevitably results in the clergy being more or less out of touch with the common experiences of common men. . . . The voluntary cleric carries the priesthood into the marketplace and the office." The bi-vocational minister understands the weariness of the workplace and the difficulties of labor. The tentmaker, in this area, is one who ministers among the people and is of the people, but he ministers for God.

Staying in touch with the common people is essential and it allows the minister to deal with real life issues rather than lofty ideas generated in their leisure. Tent making that views ministry as a gift is not only beautiful, but also expedient to reach this generation for Christ.

Closing

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that tentmakers don't expect to receive their reward from man, because those who serve well will get a crown of life.

Paul did not focus his efforts on achieving material success, but chose to focus fulfilling his mission.

As long as possible, wherever possible, he built his treasures in heaven where moth and rust could not corrupt them.

He knew whatever believer today knows: Serving the Lord pays off after awhile.

The same is true for those who are servants of the church today. The reward is great because their task is greater than the ordinary believer.

Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he penned the words, "I'm going too work until my day is done."

There is no reward for those who sit on the stool of good intentions singing, I shall not be moved but only for those who use their God given abilities spread the Gospel of Christ.

Tentmakers run for Jesus knowing that if they run for Jesus and God will give you his joy!

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into race and knowing that before the race begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victory!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The joy of the Lord is know that storms may rise and winds may blow, but we won't worry because God is still on the throne!

Those who know the joy of the Lord also have a testimony.
They want to tell the world about Jesus!
They want to tell the world that if there is problem, Jesus is the solution!
They want to tell the world that if there is a question, Jesus is the answer!
—If there is a disease, Jesus is the cure!
—If there is hunger, Jesus will feed them the bread of life!
—If you have thirst, there is living water!
—If you have a crisis, he has the needed miracle!
—If you have a thorn in your flesh, Jesus is the sufficient grace!
Tentmaker, tell the lost that He is still saving souls!
Tentmaker, tell the blind that He is still giving sight!
Tentmaker, tell the infirmed that He is still healing the sick.
Tentmaker, tell the skeptics that He is still alive today
Tell the world that over 2000 years ago that they crucified him on an old rugged cross.
Tell them that they buried him in Joseph's tomb, but Early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as he arose from the grave with all power in his hand.
Tell the world that he is alive and lives.
He walks with me and talks with me and tells me I am his own!
Tell the world!

No. 9624-King Day

This dream I have

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 19, 2013

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:" Genesis 37:6

Introduction

What is your dream? Have you ever shared it with anyone? What was their response? Do you have a dream? Our dreams represent the pictures we see of ourselves somewhere in the distant future. We dream of business success, professional achievement, family unity, peace, and spiritual power. We dream of victory! We dream of history making accomplishments. Often our dreams become the subject of mockery when we share them with others who doubt our capacity to achieve them or lack the capacity to clearly visualize them.

We've heard Martin Luther King's, "I have a dream" speech many times, yet when it was delivered repeatedly across the South, there were those who doubted that his words would ever come to past. Many could not envision an America where people were judged by the "content of the character" and not by the color of their skin. Many could not envision an America where racism would not be an acceptable norm or where war and violence would not be top tier responses to every situation.

In many ways, Dr. King was characterized as a misguided preacher who fought battles that he could not win with enemies that were the figments of his imaginations. To Southerners King misrepresented the culture of Dixie and painted a picture of segregation and the Southern culture that misrepresented reality.

In the Broadway musical Man of La Mancha, the character Don Quixote (From Cervantes' novel) is depicted as one who fought imaginary battles with windmills, thinking that they were giants who blades were actually great arms swinging to destroy him. The phrase "tilting windmills" usually refers to people who chase imaginary enemies or impossible dreams. A memorable song from the musical carried these lyrics:

To dream ... the impossible dream ...
To fight ..... the unbeatable foe ...
To bear ….. with unbearable sorrow ...
To run ……. where the brave dare not go ...
To right ….. the unrightable wrong ...

To love …. pure and chaste from afar ...
To try ….... when your arms are too weary ...
To reach ... the unreachable star ...

Those words characterize Dr. King's quest for America, but they also characterize the quest of others such as: Ghandi, Thoreau, Emerson and your great-grandpa. Your ancestors were not great men like Dr. King, but none-the-less, they had impossible dreams that were the subject of ridicule because they saw them as impossible dreams being dreamed by men who spent their lives in the fields "tilting windmills."

As Christians, we also dream. We didn't invent our dreams. Like Great Grandpa, our dreams are rooted in our faith in God. We believe that God will help us to achieve our dream if we continue to put him first. No one may understand this dream I have, but with God's help it will come to fruition.

Exposition

This text focuses on Joseph as he told his dream to his brothers.

He told of his dream that he and his brothers were binding sheaves of wheat in the field and suddenly his bundle stood up and all of those of his brothers bowed down to his bundle. In another dream he envision the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing to him. They correctly interpreted it to mean that Joseph dreamed of a day when his eleven brothers, father and mother would bow to him.

His dream irritated them. Yet, God kept giving him repeated dreams or flashes of his future.

In the biblical context dreams were personal and had implications. Individuals such as Joseph, the Butler and the Baker in prison had personal dreams. When told to others they seem impossible or improbable. A dream from an imprisoned butler who had lost favor with the king that he would one day be restored, was the subject of mockery. Joseph's dream of one day standing tall as his brothers bowed before him, was distant, too; especially since it came from a man locked away in a dungeon.

While individuals are given dreams about their futures others are given grander dreams that include whole nations. These visions were given to men such as Ezekiel who saw the people scattered like dry bones in a valley, but coming to life again after hearing the word of the Lord. John had a vision of the last days of the world and the coming of the Lord. They see pictures of entire nations and the world.

Such was the dream of Martin Luther King, it was dream bigger than himself and encompassed the entire nation in its scope.

He didn't give himself that dream. Like all others, in the biblical scheme of things, it came from God.

Christ's dream came from God. It involves the whole world and is powered by the spirit of God. As such, the dream of transforming the world by one carpenter and a rag tag collection of unlearned men from the most non-productive region of the nation could be realized. It could be realized, not because they wanted to make a name for

themselves, but because what they wanted was the same as what God wanted and he helped make it happen.

They laughed the dreams and criticized for "tilting windmills" of their own making, but their response seemed to be "this dream I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away."

What about our dreams?

YOUTH NEED DREAMS: There is a Joseph in every generation; these are boys and girls to whom God has hand picked for missions in the distant future. To even imagine the dreams, youth should be surrounded by mentors who will challenge them, feed their imaginations and help them to realize their potential. Think of the teachers who you learned to appreciate most. Included in the group were those who challenged you, pushed you beyond you own expectations and opened your mind. Youth need to dream. To do that they need to read, discuss, travel, study, experience different things and pray. In the course of these experiences, God will reveal to them his plan for their lives and give them a dream. Short of that they will only dream of being rappers or athletes to the exclusion of everything else. Every home should work to expand the mind of the children in its care: Turn off the TV, challenge youth to read, travel with them or see that they travel, experience and learn about the world around them. Bring them before the Lord constantly and speak favor over them. In time will open their mind and give them his dream, instead of the dream they saw on television.

SOME HAVE ABANDONED DREAMS: Instead of saying, "This dream I have, there are many who now say, 'this dream I had' because they have abandoned their dreams. God given dreams never go away, regardless of the circumstance. Joseph was thrown in a pit, sold into slavery, served as leader of Potiphar's house, locked up in prison and finally rose to prominence in Egypt, but the dream never went away, but the dream he had was not of his own making; it came from God.

There are many who have abandoned their dreams because the pursuit of the dream seemed too far reaching.

Is there anything too hard for God?

Is the possibility of failure so great that you believe that you and God cannot over come its threat?

Solomon Northup, in his book "12 years a slave" told of his refusal to give up on the dream of seeing his wife and children again, despite the horrors of slavery. He was beaten, sold away and abused, but he never stopped dream.

The rock group Fleetwood Mack, captured this idea in their song, "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow!"- Which became the theme song of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in 1992. Yesterday's gone, it'll be better, don't stop thinking about tomorrow!

If we carry our dreams to full term, despite our fear of failure and discovery, God will bless us for the act of faith even though he frowned on the weakness that prompted our failure in the first place.

DON'T LET SATAN STEAL YOUR DREAM: Despite the criticism of his brothers,

Joseph would not allow their disbelief to steal his dream. Neither would he allow their personal attacks and deep pits to dissuade him.

Too many among us have stopped dreaming. We have given up altogether.

We once dreamed of owning a business, graduating from college or breaking the ceiling in one area of another. We ran into a few road blocks and some gave up. We see thousands of people today who live like mindless zombies with no hope, ambition, or dream. The devil stole their dreams.

Barak Obama and Hillary Clinton electrified the nation when the campaigned for the presidency in 2008 because of one thing; they helped people to dream again.

African-Americans were once again dreaming about possibilities. Women were once again dreaming that barriers could be overcome. The devil stole our dreams from us. Someone closed a door in our faces because were black or a woman or handicapped and some gave up. The devil stole our dreams from us the year we failed to graduate from high school, had a child out of wedlock, or faced failure in business or careers. Some rose to their feet in the aftermath, but many are still down.

God dreams persist

Finally, brothers and sisters we must come to the point that we remember that every believer that God given dreams are God powered dreams.

Joseph challenged his brothers to listen to his God given dream, and they watched as God empowered the dream over the years.

Dr. King and countless others who have lifted their voices to tell the world about 'this dream I have."

We must hear Frederick Douglass dreaming of our eventual freedom from slavery.

We must hear Booker T. Washington dreaming of the skilled and trained Negro workforce.

We must hear W.E.B. Dubois dreaming of the day when our thinking and intelligence would be self evident.

We must hear Marcus Garvey dreaming of the day when we would be proud of our blackness.

We must hear A. Phillip Randolph dreaming of the day when the working man of color would get his fair share.

We must hear Malcolm X dreaming of a day that we will thirst for freedom by any means necessary.

We must hear Harriet Tubman dreaming of a day, when journeys into slave country would no longer be needed.

We must hear Shirley Chisholm dreaming about a day when our leaders will be boss, black and unbought.

We must hear Jesse Jackson dreaming of the day when we move from the outhouse to the White house.

We must hear Thurgood Marshall dreaming of the day when justice will run down like waters from the Supreme Court

We must hear Condoleeza Rice, dreaming of a day when black women can become advisors to presidents.

We must hear General Colin Powell dreaming of a day when we shall study war no more.

Every believer must not forget the dream and what it really means.

We must say in the words of James Weldon Johnson:

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears. Thou who has brought us thus far along the way.

Thou who has by the might, led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray.

Lest our feet, stray from the places our God where we met thee.

Lest our hearts, drunk of the world we forget thee.

Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand. True to our God; true to our native land!

Every believer must remember that Godly dreams are made possible by the grace of God!

It is a saving grace that was forged in the beginning and finalized on a hill call Calvary!

It is a saving grace that was forged in the crucible of disparaging words, a crown of thorns and an old rugged cross!

It is a saving grace that could not be killed by nails, spears or mocking crowds!

It is a saving grace that revealed itself Early Sunday morning and even today inspires every believer to say, “this dream I have, the world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.”

No. 9625-Inspiration

Living after God's own heart

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

January 26, 2014

SCRIPTURE:"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him[to be] captain over his people because thou has not kept that which the Lord commanded thee. 1 Samuel 13:14

Introduction

How well do you know your own heart? Most of us suppose that we know our own natures, but do we really? Until we are tested in the crucible of circum stance we don't really know our strength or weakness. Until our lofty precepts are tried in the fires of reality we only have a clinical view of ourselves. Only those who have been tested know whether their nature is steel or mush.

It is easy for the man who has never felt the churning pains of hunger in his belly to point a finger at the man who steals a loaf of bread. It's just as easy for the man who has never been the object of the flirtations of an extremely attractive woman to pass judgment on one who has fallen victim and cheats on his wife. Likewise, it is easy for those who have felt the lugubrious sting of failure, isolation, abandonment and despair to shake their heads in disbelief at those who take their own lives or that of others.

We don't really know ourselves until the very moment that the values we profess are tested. We claim honesty as a virtue, it is tested when we pay our taxes. We claim humility until our pride is attacked, our honor questioned or our valor is placed in doubt. We don't what we do when faced with an angry and condemning public until the first stone is cast. Then we learn who we really are and strength of our natures.

There are a few people who are close to us who know us. Often they know us better than we know ourselves. These are the ones who are deceived by our outer appearance but know our nature. Sometimes it's a mother, a sibling or a spouse; but always God knows.

It is true, God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our thoughts, motives, fears and aspirations. Psalm 139:2 says "Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off." God is not impressed with our exterior but he is concerned with our interior. God knows our hearts.

As Christians, we want to be more like Jesus. We want to be lost in His will and strong in our faithfulness of service. When we do that we truly be said be living after God's own heart.

Exposition

In this text David is described as man after God's own heart, despite his imperfections.

Saul had amassed a large Army to fight the Philistines. He sent for the Prophet Samuel to come and offer sacrifices to God to insure the victory. When, after seven days, Samuel had not arrived, Saul took it upon himself to offer the sacrifices. When Samuel arrived he learned what Saul had done and announced that God would punish Saul by ending his rule and would raise up a new leader, "A man after God's own heart."- A man willing to follow the will of God.

David did not have the physical attributes that appealed to the eye of men but he had a spirit that was inclined to do the will of God. It was that submissive spirit that made him a man after God's own heart. In contrast, Saul was strong willed and wanted to advance his own agenda

He was not perfect. He was flawed. He was an adulterer and a murderer.

Although David was obviously a lawbreaker there were three aspects of his life that made him a man after God's own heart:

—He paid strict attention to the law and worship of God.

— He admitted in the whole of his conduct, that God was King in Israel, and that he himself was but his servant.

—He was willing to carry out God's will despite his imperfections.

The phrase referred to his public conduct with respect to God, it is not an acceptance of his behavior as godly.

Living to please God

One of the Christian goals is to live lives that are pleasing to God.

THE GODLY ARE NOT PERFECT: If David's life is an example, it shows us that godly people are NOT perfect. There is a constant struggle among believers to walk the tightrope of faith. Temptations are everywhere. Like everyone else believers have demons that they fight to control. From time to time they pop up their ugly heads and the public sees them. Some have sexual appetites that would displease their friends in the faith if they knew their secret desires. Others have desires for fame and popularity that are so compelling that they often are tempted to cross the line of morality to acquire them. Greed is a dark passion that constantly tempts believers to toy with the prospect of embezzlement, tax cheating, and theft. The list of dark passions include feelings of insecurity, fear, and doubt. For some they include a secret desire to do crazy things and to flirt with danger and the unknown. This is often reflected in our choices of reading material, videos and collectibles that in some cases may be hidden away in private closets, websites and safe deposit boxes, protected by pass codes, keys and life locks.

To combat these secret demons Christians pray constantly for ourselves and for others whom we see are caught in the vicious circle. That's why we like to sing:

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;?Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;?Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;?Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

Ask the Savior to help you; Comfort, strengthen, and keep you; He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through.

THE GODLY TRY TO FOLLOW GOD'S WILL: David, despite his flaws, wanted to carry out the will of God for his life. He knew God had raised him to his position for a divine purpose and it troubled him that he did not reflect that purpose in his living; yet he never tried to excuse his flaws by trying to make them divinely acceptable.

Sometimes we can get twisted views of God's will. A woman stood in front of the judge and tried to explain her strange habits. "Your honor she began, the Lord told me to do it. Before I left home I told the Lord to show me what to do. I opened my bible and I pointed to a verse that said, 'my God shall supply all your needs.' When I saw them pork chops laying there and nobody was looking I knew Lord laid them out there for me." The judge listened as the woman continued. "About that ring. Just before I left home I opened my bible and pointed to a verse that said, The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. When I saw that ring I wanted it. It was so shiny. I took it because the bible told me I shall not want." The judge praised the woman for her belief in God. Then asked her to come to the bench where she kept her bible open to the Ten Commandments. The judge said, point right here. The woman touched the bible and the judge said, "God's got another message for you, you pointed to thou shalt not steal. You got two years in jail!"

The Godly don't try to justify their flawed actions. Like David, they admit their flaws and return to their pursuit of his righteousness.

THE GODLY PRAY FOR RESTORATION: David recognized his own flaw and rather than make excuses or blame others, he asked for restoration. God restores us in two ways.

When we have failed or have become frustrated, it is God's presence that lifts up our bowed down head. Sometimes our failure is caused by our own sin. When David sinned he cried out, Create in me a clean heart, Oh God! and God restored him.

Often our weaknesses have caused us considerable loss, yet God also restores us. Sometimes our faith tests have resulted in losses, much like Job who lost considerable possession and family members. God did not bring back what was loss but restored his possessions and rebuilt his family to a point that it exceeded what he had loss in the beginning.?

We should be encouraged that God restores that which is lost to a believer and does it in a way that will better prepare him to promote the kingdom of God; often bigger and grander than before.

David was considered a man after God's own heart because though he was a flawed man, he continued to pray for restoration.

Our prayer should reflect the lyrics of Margaret Douroux who wrote,"I'm not asking for the riches of this land, And I'm not asking for men in high places to know my name.?Please— give me, Lord, a clean heart that I may follow Thee.

Living after God's Heart

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that those who live "after God's own heart" have learned to walk with the Lord.

Despite his imperfections, David never stopped walking with the Lord. That's what made him a man after God's own heart.

Guiding his fathers flocks as a shepherd, he walked with the Lord.

Slaying Goliath with his slingshot, he walked with the Lord!

Even when caught in his sin, he acknowledge his sin, asked for forgiveness and continued walking with the Lord.

If we walk with the Lord, He will give us strength for the journey.

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet sorrow, but God will take sorrow and turn it into joy!

If we walk with the Lord, we may make mistakes, but He will forgive and give us new chances!

No wonder the song writer declared, "Walk with me Lord, walk with me! While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!"

I don't know about you, but I have decided to keep my hand in God's hands!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet defeat, but God will take defeat and turn it into victory!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet confusion, but God will take confusion and turn it into understanding!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet hard times, but God will take hard times and turn them into good times!

If we walk with the Lord, he'll lift us up when we stumble!

While I'm on this tedious journey, I've got to tell somebody...

I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!

I've got to tell them how He gave me brand new walk and a brand new talk!

I've got to tell somebody how He died out on Calvary!

I've got to tell somebody how He arose early Sunday morning!

His name is Jesus!

He walks with me and talks me!

If He walks with me..I shall not faint!

No. 9626-Men

My Father's Name

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

February 2014

SCRIPTURE: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. Exodus 6:3

Introduction

How old were you before you learned that your father had a name other than Daddy? There are many who didn't discover that diddly until they were six or seven years old. It just understood that mama's husband was called daddy.

Social scientists tell us that we get the name dad in a strange way: it most likely comes from the babbling on an infant who says "Da Da." Comics say that smart women tell their husbands that when the babu makes the sound "Da Da" that the child is calling for its father. When the mothers say the baby is calling for his dada, they always find that the father is not shy about saying that she is telling the truth. Dada seems to be the name for father in every language. In a Latin country daddy may be called Padre, but the baby still says dada. In America we may say, Father, but every infant says dada.

As we grow older dada becomes "Daddy" and finally, "Dad."

Dr. James Dobson once said that one the strongest memories he had was that of a child who said with his eyes, " Would you be a daddy to me?"

We have variety of names for father. Willam Buel Franklin says: If he's wealthy and prominent, and you stand in awe of him, call him "Father." If he sits in his shirt sleeves and suspenders at a ball game and picnic, call him "Pop." If he wheels the baby carriage and carries bundles meekly, call him "Papa" (with the accent on the first syllable). If he belongs to a literary circle and writes cultured papers, call him "Papa" (with the accent on the last syllable).

If, however, he makes a pal of you when you're good and is too wise to let you pull the wool over his loving eyes when you're not; if, moreover, you're quite sure no other fellow you know has quite so fine a father, you may call him "Dad."

There are many who don't celebrate Father's Day because their memories of father are not flattering. To some, father is just the name on a child support check, a blank line on a birth certificate, or a weekend visitor, but not a loving presence.

This thinking is reflected in many popular songs over the years. Lowell Folsum started it all with a song called Tramp in which he criticized his father severely but praised him for being a lover. Otis Redding and Carla Thomas later came out with their

version of Tramp with Redding saying he had no money, bragged much and had little but he too was a lover.

Joe Tex also sampled Lowell Folsum's song with a popular song called, Papa was too. In it Papa was projected as a man who was poor, wouldn't work and covered the holes of his shoes with the daily news. His redeeming factor? He was a lover.

That may be why some angry mothers say, You just like your daddy! They mean it as an insult not a compliment.

Ironically, the first words out of the mouth of a spiritual babe is not dada, God or our Father. When we speak the word Father, God or Jesus we are speaking into existence our faith and trust in The Lord of the universe.

He has one name, but we call him by many names. They all mean he is our heavenly father. Just as a babe says dada and it means God, when we speak the name of Jesus, we call upon God, our Heavenly Father.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that God is as close to us as a godly father is to his son. We don't call daddy or dada, but we call Jesus, the son of the living God.

Exposition

This text focuses on God speaking to Israel to Moses describing how he will relate to them in the immediate future.

The Israelites were unique in their faith and belief in one God. They were familiar with God, but that familiarity was largely as El-Shaddai, the one who provided for all their needs.

In this text God prepares to move their knowledge and experience with him up to another level. The word "known" goes beyond simple intellectual knowledge. It implies an interaction such as in Amos 3:2 which says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." The new way Israel was about to know God would be not as El-shadda, but as Jehovah.

Israel would now know God as a partner in a covenant relationship with Israle as the one who will deliver them from Egypt and redeem the nation from its sins.

Jehovah is God's name. He revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai when Moses asked him. God responded to the request with the words, "I am that I am." -Which means Yaweh or Jehovah.

The new God all along, but now they would know him in a more intimate way as the loving father committed to their deliverance.

Knowing father

It takes time for children to know their fathers; in that time they will become more than familiar with the various personality nuances that make their fathers so wonderful.

A KNOWING FATHER: It takes time for fathers to know their children and vice-versa. Absentee fathers reduce themselves to a name on a child support check or photograph on the wall. Too many have no relationships with their children. John

Ortberg, in his book The Life You Always Wanted, describes how we often feel when he writes:

I look in on my children as they sleep at night, and I think of the kind of father I want to be.

I want to create moments of magic; I want them to remember laughing until the tears flow.

I want to have slow, sweet talks with them as they're getting ready to close their eyes.

I want to chase fireflies with them, teach them to play tennis, have food fights, and hold them and pray for them in a way that makes them feel cherished.

I look in on them, he writes, and I remember how the day really went.

To know our heavenly father, Ortberg's idea still remains true, we must be willing to chase fireflies with him; that means to spend quality time with him where they only purpose is fellowship. This is done in worship, prayer and moments of meditation. It's what the song writer had in mind with the words, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses and the voice I hear falling on my ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other, has ever known."

A TRUSTED FATHER: Children must be able to know that their fathers can be trusted. It is the essential nature of fatherhood to be a protector and provider. When children are sure about their father's love they rest easy and grow up happy and secure in their feeling. A child that has complete faith in his father is blessed. Fathers who the recipients of such faith are blessed as well. They trust that no matter what the problem, that their father will take care of the matter.

They never doubt for a second that their father has the ability to secure what they need. When a child prays to his heavenly father, it is the same. He/she has no doubt that God can answer their prayer. Adult believers must approach God as children in this respect. We must believe that no matter what our concern God can handle it and has the power to deal with it in the way that we ask.

A FATHER WHO HELPS: Fathers are providers and helpers. Every child should have a memory of being helped by their father in life, love and future. Fatherhood in this respect is a good thing because children know that they ask their father for anything an expect, if its in his will, that he will respond favorably. Roy Buck tells the story of a little boy who was tugging at a big rock and doing his best to lift it. He was grunting and pulling at it but it didn't budge. His father came along and asked him if he was having any trouble. He said, Yes, I am trying and trying and can't move the rock. The father said to him, Well, son, are you using all available energy? The boy replied, Yes, Father, I think I am. Then the dad looked at him and said, No, son, I don't think you are, for you haven't asked for my help.An important life lesson is that asking for help is usually a good idea.

Asking God is even better.

A personal relationship

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that we may have a variety of names for fathers, but what is important is that we have a personal relationship with them, just as we have with the Lord.

When we have a personal relationship with the Lord we are able to call his name with confidence that he will respond.

It's good to be able to call his name because there is power in his name. Maybe that's why Jesus told us that when we pray we should say, "Our father, which art in heaven!"

Let me tell you what can happen when you call on our father.

Those who have called on our faber have:

—won more victories

— Accomplished more feats

— Solved more problems

and witnessed better results than anyone ever expected!

Our Father can:

—Make a difficult job a delight

—Make a bad marriage good!

—Make a feeble back strong!

—Turn a burden into a blessing

—Obstacle into an opportunity

If the world would just trust our father there is no telling what enemy can be turned into a friend or defeat that cannot be reversed…if we just call on the Lord!

That's why it's important for every believer to know that Lord for himself.

Every Man must know the Lord!

Every woman must know the Lord!

It's important to know many things in life, but when it comes to your soul salvation, you've got to know the Lord for yourself.

You might be able to explain that there are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the Old and 27 in the New, but you must know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible contains books of prophecy, literature, history and doctrine, but you must also know the Lord for yourself!

You may be able to explain that the Bible has 3,586,489 letters 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, and 1,189 chapters but you must also know the Lord.

You may know that the longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9, and the shortest in the English language is John 11:35 Jesus Wept but you must also know Lord for yourself!

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high. That's why the old

warriors cried out Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the song writer says, You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself! You got to know Jesus, you don't need nobody else!

Every saint should keep telling the world about the words of God, but we should also let the world know that we know Lord ourselves!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how He lived on this Earth for 33 long years!

Tell them how He bore an old rugged cross!

Tell them how He died out on Calvary!

But, don't forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9627-Inspiration

Put your game face on

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 2, 2014

SCRIPTURE: Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

Introduction

Have you ever faced a tough situation that was make or break, win or lose? Those are the times when you felt like David facing Goliath. Facing tough situations requires a degree of courage and faith far beyond the ordinary.

Often our faces reflect the intensity of our focus on a situation. The enemy knows how to read faces for signs of fear and doubt. Two boxers who stand in the ring look each other in the face and growl at each other with the purpose of intimidating the other. One walks away with greater fear or with a renewed sense of strength. Players in a Poker game constantly watch the faces of the players at the table for signs that could lead them to victory.

Football players assume an intense focus on the game ahead that is usually referred to as their "game face." Contrary to popular opinion, football and basketball players don't usually put on their game face at the game, but in the weeks prior to game. During the game itself there is a different face the world sees.

If you walked into a professional sports locker room an hour before the start of a big game, you'd be surprised by the number of athletes who are in an easygoing state — playing videogames, lost in their music headphones, or, quite often, unconscious in a chair, grabbing a quick snooze. It would probably surprise many not familiar with it because we have been led to believe that we should approach Big Moments such championships, recitals or important meetings — with a mindset of gritted, focused intensity that we know as "the game face."

The pros say that we have it all wrong. They say practice is the right time for intensity and scowls; performance is the time for lightness and ease. Practice is the place to stretch, to make mistakes and fix them. It's the time to reach and repeat, over and over, until you've built the reliable skill. It's the place to experience and embrace the effortful frustration that's part of the building process.

The game face is for the practice. It is your preparation for the big fight, game or challenge.

On the field what is important is not your game face, but your performance. In the

game you are not trying to prepare, you are trying to fight the fight. You are trying to be alert, and to react to all possibilities. The mindset for these situations is to be light, attentive and focused on the moment.

In the 1989 Super Bowl, Joe Montana, the 49ers quarterback who led 31 fourth-quarter comebacks in his career, in the fourth quarter with three minutes left and his team down by three points, he unexpectedly lifted his head from the huddle and stared into the stands — he'd spotted a familiar face from television. "Hey," Montana said, "Isn't that John Candy?" His teammates were in disbelief. But it makes perfect sense, because Montana had the right game face on: relaxed, attentive, and open. The 49ers went on to win the game in 20-16. The game has been listed as one of the top ten super bowl games of all times.

The pros put on their game face for their practices and preparation. Ironically, we often do it just the opposite, we treat the game as if it is the super bowl and often skip the practices or treat them lightly.

Facing the giants of life requires game face intensity and preparation. We prepare for challenges, difficulties, sickness, death, and family troubles prior to the actual occurrences. We prepare through prayer, bible study and worship. When the big moments come, it's time to execute.

Courage has many faces. It is the family that is dealing with terminal cancer. It's a spouse dealing with approaching Alzheimer's. It's the widow facing her last years without her husband. It's a child struggling to survive a bitter divorce. It's a family facing financial disaster as the bills come due, but the money runs out.

We prepare for these situations when we see them coming through intense preparation. That's when we put our game face on. When the moment actually arrives that's the time to remember our preparation, relax and let God do what He promised to do for us.

As Christians, we face each obstacle in front of us with the faith and knowledge that we have been prepared for battle and that our Lord will be with us every step of the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua as he is told by God to prepare for a great day; a great show of God's provision for his people

For Joshua, the time following the death of Moses was an extremely difficult time. For 40 years, Moses led the children of Israel. He made the big plays. It was Moses whom God used to bring down the 10 plagues of judgment on Egypt. It was Moses whom God used to stretch forth his rod over the Red Sea and cause the waters to roll back. It was Moses who prayed to God for the people to receive bread from heaven in the wilderness and delivered God's ten commandments. Now, Moses was dead and Joshua was the quarterback. God reassured Joshua that he would stand with him, just as he had stood with Moses. He was told to prepare for a victory; "This day will I magnify thee in the sight of all Israel."

Joshua went forth into the Promised Land with an intense focus on his instructions,

but knowing exactly what God would do. He prepared to work the game plan. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Joshua made many bold moves: The Jordan rolled back, the Walls of Jericho fell and it became obvious, day after day, that God seemed to work with Joshua to pull off mighty acts of faith, to the point that the people came to expect him to be a man used by God to make the big plays in their national life.

Joshua went forward with confidence and the look of courage on his face because God had promised to be with him where he went in life.

Game face situations

Christians have faced many challenging experiences in life, all of which have required them to put on their spiritual game face.

WE FACE DANGER WITH COURAGE: Prior to beginning his ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. There he prayed and prepared for the danger that was to come. He faced it with what appeared to be a calmness and remarkable self-control. In the wilderness he put his game face on. When he stepped forth, the world saw the face of courage. Joshua 1:6-7 says, "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go,"

When times get tough and you can't see your way, it's time to put our game face on!

When you look for help but only get hurt, it's time to put hour game face on!

When you seek satisfaction but only see sorrow ahead, it's time to put our game face on!

When you look for hope, but only get messages of despair, it's time to put your game face on!

Facing the fiery furnace, the three Hebrew Boys, put on their game faces and told the world our God is able to deliver us.

Facing a den of lions, Daniel put his game face on and remained confident that God could turn lions into kittens.

David met the cold hand of death many times, but he put on his game face and resolved, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. "

WE MUST FACE INTIMIDATION WITH FAITH: As defensive and offensive players face each other at the line of scrimmage in a football game, one side tries to intimidate the other with scowls, frowns and threats. In some cases there are threats of bodily injury and, at the least, pain. Intimidated players usually fail to do their best in such situations. Life does the same thing to believers, but we are encouraged to be unmoved by intimidating presences. Joshua 1:9 says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." If we are intimidated, we already defeated. "You

can't achieve a victory if you are afraid of losing the game." A running back will never score touchdowns if he's afraid of being hit. A race car driver will never win a race if he's afraid he might turn over. A businessman will never achieve success unless he ventures into the unknown. We cannot be afraid to step out on faith. So, what's stopping you from achieve that goal? What's holding you back? It's usually our lack of faith. Don't refuse to pluck a rose because it is surrounded by thorns, try and let God do the rest. Face intimidation with faith and go forth with confidence that God will make a way.

FACE THE IMPOSSIBLE WITH OPTIMISM: There are times when it seems that all is lost, but we should face those situations with optimism. In Super Bowl 44 The Saints were behind Indianapolis by a score of 10-0. It was an impossible situation, but the Saints went into the record books by winning 31-17. It demonstrated a never give up spirit. That's the same spirit that every believer should take into the game of life. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

There is a courageous spirit that flows from the heart of the godly. That courageous spirit doe not mean that believers are never afraid, it means that they have the strength to do what must be done in the face of danger, ridicule or failure. Courage should not be confused with thoughtless actions, knee jerk responses, and foolish acts of bravado.

The courageous know what is right and after considering the costs decide to do what needs to be done to right a wrong, protect against evil or to bring about a rightful conclusion to a situation. Though the odds are great, courageous believers put on a positive game face and step out to claim the victory. Believers who have put their lives in God's hands develop a strong faith and capacity to boldly try what has never been tried and to go where no man has gone before.

We don't face the future alone

Finally, we must consider that we must face the days ahead with confidence that victory is within reach because we are on God's side.

The word says, I will not fear what ever comes.

This should be the attitude of every believer as we look at the prospects of beginning new directions or charting new courses of action.

Believers take courage as we face the unknown because we know the Lord has promised never to leave us alone!

Are you facing trouble or difficulty, put your game face on, and remember God will never leave us!

Put your game face on because If we fall upon misfortune his words remain true, I will never leave thee!

Put your game face on because If we fall upon disgrace or public scorn because we stand for him, his word remains true, I will never leave thee!

Put your game face on because If we fall into sickness or despair his promise is still true, I will never leave thee!

Put you game face on because there are times coming when family and friends will turn on you, but faith still holds true, I will never leave thee!

In the crucible of hard times, I have learned never to give up hope.

We must keep hope alive because without hope:

—There is no light at the end of the tunnel

—There is no rainbow at the end of a storm!

—There is no rest at end of exhausting day!

Put your game face on because our God can make the

—IMPOSSIBLE become possible;

—IMPROBABLE become probable;

—Mountains that stand in your way be reduced to molehills!

—Rough places plain and the crooked places straight!

Put on your game face and step out with confidence that come what may from day to day! My heavenly father watches over me!

If I fall down, he'll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!

If I stumble, he'll hold my hand!

If I cant find my way, he'll guide me! That's why I'll say, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty; hold me with thou powerful hand! "

The same hand that touched a blind man's eyes!

The same hand that healed a lame man and made him walk!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death..

Were the same ones raised in victory early Sunday morning!

Put your game face on everyday, for now we see through a glass darkly, but one of the these days, we won't need a game face, because we will see him face to face!

No. 9628-Inspiration

Wonderful Blessings Direct from God's throne

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 8, 2014

SCRIPTURE: The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad Psalm 126:3

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to think how God has wonderfully blessed our people? Sometimes, in the midst of our complaining we actually forget how good God has been to us. Despite the difficulties of our past, and obstacles that have been placed in our way we have been blessed in a wondrous way. We who were once slaves have made the treacherous climb out of physical bondage, forded the streams of racism and survived the bitterness of genocide and economic depravation. We have come a mighty long way.

The world has seen wondrous works that have resulted from the mind and soul of people of African ancestry. Despite our past, our accomplishments have been many and our contribution to the American culture has been great.

In 1926 Carter G. Woodson began the observance of Negro History Week as a week of helping African-Americans to become aware of our contributions to America and emphasizing our potential. Without an Act of Congress or a Presidential decree, Negro History week became a national observance beginning on the second Sunday of February. Woodson pushed the small observance and noted, "If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated."

In 1976 President Gerald Ford urged the country to recognize Black History for an entire month and Negro History received its official government endorsement fifty years after it began. Now, for one month, it appears the nation tolerates African-American expression of race pride without tagging those expressions as "racism." Anything after that appears to be unacceptable.

When African-American Christians look back over our past, in the context of our racial struggle, we see clearly the accomplishments of our people in biblical times through the black people of Kenya, home of the Garden of Eden, or through Simon of Cyrene the Black man who carried the cross for Jesus. When we read God's word we

see the the record of the wondrous work that God gave the world through people of African descent.

We should never forget his wondrous works, timely intervention, and the uninterrupted flow of blessings that have fallen upon us from the throne of God.

As Christians, we remember God's compassion and benevolence. We see his hand and mercy and give him praise for he has done wondrous works for those whose journey began in the land of Ham!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he points to the sufficient reason that he has to be glad!

David had sufficient reason to be glad. His life was filled with outward signs of God's blessing hand.

From his rise from a mere shepherd boy to his powerful command of the armies of Israel, David had plenty to be glad about.

David pointed out in this text that the source of his gladness is the goodness of the Lord. This is the source of his great expressions of gladness which ranged from dancing in the street when he brought home the Ark of the Covenant or writing songs of praise. Gladness was a way of life with David. In this psalm David expresses gladness that God returned Israel from its captivity and brought laughter and joy to its lips instead of sorrow.

Even the enemies of the nation, described as the heathen took note of how God blessed them. David lifted God in praise for his how blessings and urged the nation to praise God because his actions toward them made them glad.

His journey from shepherd boy to king had been great; so was his praise because he had been wonderfully blessed.

Blessed Enough

We celebrate our heritage as a people because we recognize how far God has brought us and how much he has blessed us:

HE HAS BLESSED OUR JOURNEY: Despite the problems we face today God's hand is blessing our journey as a people. We relate to the children of Israel in the bible because they were once slaves and so were we. Likewise, they often failed to see how God perpetually blessed them despite their circumstance. They saw the obstacle of the Red Sea, but quickly forgot how God liberated a whole race from slavery. They saw Pharaoh's army attacking them, but they failed to remember how God prevented them from being attacked by placing a pillar of fire between them and the army.

At the Red Sea, they had reached a point of no return with their backs seemingly against the wall and God opened up a way out of no way.

Even today, we sometimes complain about the obstacles that are set before us without seeing the varied ways that God has caused the walls to tumbledown. Whether

it was legal slavery, the separate but equal doctrine of Plessey versus Ferguson or the Brown versus the Topeka Kansas school board decision, it is obvious that each time we came before our Red Sea experience or faced destruction by the approaching armies of our enemies, God has stood in the gap on our behalf.

Every battle we have fought, we have done so realizing the presence of God without whom no victory could have been won.

IN HIS TIME GOD INTERVENED: Our history has taught us as a people that God intervened at the time of his choosing and in the manner that his will prescribes. Often rather than making sweeping changes, God chose to deal with us one day at a time, according to his time schedule; not ours.

On the journey from what Dr. John Hope Franklin calls "..Slavery to Freedom" God's presence was noted. Some wonder why He simply did not rain down the blessings needed for our people all at once instead of the trickle we seemed to enjoy. On Israel's journey, He could have provided them with large reserves of food and water, but in the meantime they would have forgotten about him. So, He chose to provide their blessings one day at a time. In the morning He provided them Manna. In the evening He provided fresh quail meat every day without fail. On the Sabbath He gave them enough to sustain them for two days.

If God had blessed us all at once, today we would not be a people who are close to God even when we are sinning. In our worst historic characters, at the core, there was a sense of respect for God. As a people we have stayed close to God, even though each generation seems to threaten to cut the umbilical cord that connects us.

Today, believers should look at Israel and remember how God works. He provides exactly what every believer needs, one day at a time. There is a storehouse, but it is not on earth. He maintains the warehouse that stores our blessings and delivers them on a daily schedule. Each day when we rise, it shouldn't take us long to recognize that God is blessing us. Each day, believers live and walk by faith. Whether the blessing we receive each day is a dollar or a dime....they still come, one day at a time.

GOD'S HAND HAS GUIDED US: As a people Israel constantly retold the story of their journey. When crossing the Jordan Joshua placed 12 stones on the shore as a marker for generations to come so that everyone would know how God helped the people to march toward the Promised Land. Today, whether it is during Black History month or in the sweltering heat of July, we need to tell all who will listen about the road we've traveled. Anyone who is attempting to move forward in life should be aware of the ground that has already been covered. There are many people who move through life like the person who sleeps through a long journey and awakens upon arrival. They know where they came from but have no idea what terrain they traveled. Each generation of any race should seek to learn about it's journey and to leverage that information in ways that help the present learn from the past. If we do not know the mistakes of the past we may be doomed to repeat them. Also, if we don't know the successes of the past, if we repeat them we think we are breaking new ground.

More importantly, we should know that every step of our journey as a people has been guided by the hand of God.

Wonderfully blessed

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that our people have been the recipients of God's blessing for generations and those blessings continue today.

God has used many people and situations to help us over the years, but we should never lose sight of the fact that it wasn't our wit, ingenuity or imagination that has brought us thus far, but the power of the almighty God.

Our faith in God has helped us to withstand the troubles of our of our history.

Our heritage is one that is filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulties and even to escape death itself.

It is no wonder then why the song writer would say, "If it had not been for the Lord on our side, tell me where would I be. Where would I be?"

By the thousands we have served as nannies and cooks, mentoring and tutoring generations of men and women who became the leaders of this country.

By the thousands we have worked by the sweat of our brows, tilling the fields, building the roads and fighting the battles for this nation's freedom!

By the thousands we have written the songs that have touched the heart of the nation and inspired it to move forward.

And yes, by the thousands we have given our blood.

We have shed so much blood that James Weldon Johnson wrote, "We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered."

Yet, we stand today to sing gallantly, "I know the Lord will make a way!"

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of how we marched through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!"

God has blessed us to stand on the rock of faith and testify to his greatness.

When we stand on the rock we are on secure ground. No wonder the song writer

wrote: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name!”

On Christ, Mary’s baby and the lion of Judah!
On Christ, Ezekiel’s wheel in the middle of the wheel!
On Christ, My bridge over troubling water!
On Christ, who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary’s hill!
On Christ, Who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb for three days and nights!
And early Sunday morning arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!
On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground……
All other ground!
All other ground is sinking sand!

No.9629-Women

Blessed for Believing in God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 16, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." Luke 1:45

Introduction

Our community has been blessed by the presence of strong back women for generations; what is the secret of their strength? Samson was a strong man physically, but there was a secret to his strength. David stood before Goliath with only five stones a slingshot, but there was a secret to his strength as well. Esther stood boldly to champion the cause her people in a foreign court. What was the secret of her rise? Our history is replete with accounts of strong black women who withstood adversity, poverty and social annihilation to keep our families and communities together. While they appeared strong and fearless to the eye; they were just as vulnerable as the rest; yet they stood strong because they were held up by an unwavering belief in God.

No one saw her cry as she endured the sufferings of slavery, the pains of the great depression or humiliation of racial discrimination. No one saw the tears that dropped from her eyes as she scrubbed floors and waited tables and nursed the children of others. They saw a public face of strength, but secretly she leaned heavily on the Lord and believed that God would make a way.

Our community owes a debt of gratitude to black women because they are not only our mothers, but they are the network of first responders who help heal wounds in our community. In effect, every believing woman, regardless of race, is a social worker striving to respond to the needs of others, often to the neglect of their own.

We saw it first in the bible when Pharaoh gave a command to midwives to kill all the male Jewish babies. The women recognized that the order meant harm to the whole race and refused to do so. We saw it in Proverbs 31 as Solomon described the virtuous woman who rises early to not only take care of her family, but to care for others as well.

Women have been blessed for their sense of social responsibility that has led them to fight for change over the years. While the Civil War was being fought, Susie King Taylor and Harriet Tubman served as nurses. Thousands of others formed aide societies to help the poor and needy. Women such as Dorothy Height went beyond their own families and believed God for social change. Height led a national effort for

civil rights after World War II, pushing for school desegregation, and voting rights. President Barack Obama called her the "Godmother of the civil rights movement." The roll call is endless, but all of these socially conscious women seemed to have one common thread; they believed that God would use them to make a difference.

Unwittingly, many have adopted the creed of the National Association of Black Social workers that challenges all socially conscious believers to: accept the responsibility to protect that Black community from individuals, organizations and practices that will hurt our race and to consciously use their skills in a way that will bring about social change one family at a time.

It seems that God has always touched a few women in every generation to answer this calling. No generation has been without great women who have championed our causes. However, the greatest champions are not in the history books. They are in our own families. Each family that looks into its own history won't have to look too long before it finds a long line of women who seemed to have been born for such a time as this.

As Christians, we salute the African-American woman for her sense of family and her spirit of social awareness that made her sensitive to the needs of others in our community. She has been sustained by her faith, and blessed by God because of her work.

Exposition

The words of this text were spoken to Mary as she pondered her role as the mother of the savior.

Mary was about 14 years old at the time she learned she was pregnant with the Christ Child. She was awed and afraid at learning that God had selected her for a divine pregnancy. "How can this be?" She asked. He answered her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her so that the child's conception would be divine. And then he gave Mary the added confirmation that nothing is impossible with God by telling her that her kinswoman Elizabeth who was old and barren was also pregnant.

When she saw her kinswoman Elizabeth, her soul leaped with joy. It was a confirmation of what the angel had said. She immediately recognized that God was about to change the course of all human history; the most important three decades in all of time were about to begin.

She was awed that God would occupy Himself with two obscure, humble women- one old and barren, one young and virginal.

Elizabeth said Mary was blessed because she believed God for his promises. She was blessed because she acted on her faith that God would surely perform what he promised.

Believing God

Our history reveals that we have been blessed because of the presence of believing, socially conscious women.

WOMEN OF FAITH RESPOND TO SOCIAL NEEDS: Elizabeth told Mary, "Blessed is she that believed." For Mary that meant her life would be directed in ways that would fulfill her mission. For black women historically it has meant that she has been shown ways to survive and thrive in every generation. Only because she was blessed was the black woman of our history able to take the scraps and turn them into gourmets. It was only because she was blessed that she could take breadcrumbs and turn them into dressing or bake possums and coons in giant pans and make them palatable by surrounding them with candied yams. Even today, it's only because she is blessed that she is able to juggle two jobs, care for her children and find time to fight cancer, feed the hungry and work with the church at the same time. God has blessed women with the sensitivity and ability to respond to social needs of their own families and then to others around them. A believing woman opens up her near empty purse to share with a hungry family. She feels the pain of homeless man and embraces hurting families near her. She may or may not have a degree from a college, but she senses the social needs of the people around her and cringes when injustice smothers one neighbor and when poverty strangles another. The woman of faith believes God will make a difference and acts. She is blessed not only because believed, but also because she responded.

WOMEN RESPONDERS HAVE BEEN BLESSED: Women who believe God are blessed continuously. The blessings that believing women receive come one day at a time. As they care for their own families and reach out to others, God takes care of them by providing for their needs on a daily basis. This is important to social responders who give so much of themselves to others. These are the believers who ascribe to the African Proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." They go even further, "It takes a village to save a family, heal a fallen warrior or help the wounded recover." The fact that God responds to the needs of responders daily answers the question, "While I'm taking care of the village, who takes care of me?" God blesses the social responder in the manner Jesus taught in the model prayer. Give us this day our daily bread. That means he gives us whatever we need for sustenance: food, clothing, shelter, emotional support or opportunity; one day at a time. As we act on each blessing we maintain the faith that the same God who provided bread and opportunity for us yesterday, will do the same today.

Believing women have learned to walk by faith. We trust that God will provide us with what we need, no more and no less. Since he has never let us down, we have no doubt that he will provide for us if we continue to live...one day at a time.

BELIEVING WOMEN ARE RISING: The world was blessed because of Mary's faith and today our communities are better because of women of faith who respond to social needs around them. Even women themselves are rising to an equal status in the mainstream of American community life. This rise is not accidental. It is the hand of God

moving in the gender that is causing women to realize great success.

It is God's hand, moving in often unseen ways, that is putting the pieces of the puzzle together for women. God is lifting believing women into economic and social circles outside of their own community because they won't forget the huddled masses of their people who still need their help.

As they rise, believers who embrace God's law are shielded on all sides.

Believers who trust God have the assurance that God is protecting from all sides because God becomes a shield around those who trust him.

The knowledge that God is a shield about us helps us to feel secure in his hand. He is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

He can shield us on all sides because he can see the unseen dangers ahead; we cannot.

As women rise, they should not abandon the faith of the ages, that declares, "Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee."

That's why we rejoice in the knowledge God shields us on all sides.

Keep believing

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that women who reach out and touch others in faith must never lose sight that God is with them every day.

Every now and then women who help to heal the village, must share their testimonies with each other to encourage each other to continue their life's path

Those who have been touched by the hand of God perform a mighty work when they share what God has done in their lives with others.

There is nothing more encouraging to a person who faces the prospect of fighting cancer than to hear the testimony of a cancer survivor.

The encouraging words of persons who have overcome adversity serve as evidence that we too can do the same.

That's why it is important for every believer to share the benefit of their experiences in life with others.

Each time we testify about Gods greatness, power and strength, we provide a testimony that helps convince someone else that no matter how dark it gets, there is always a bright light in heaven.

Each time we testify, we say like the songwriter, He touched me, he touched me.

And oh the joy that floods my soul.

Something happened and now I know he touched me and made me whole.

As we look back on our history, we should consider ourselves unworthy recipients of God's grace. We should greatly praise the Lord because it is He who has helped us.

God is greatly to be praised because in our Egypt experience He fed and sustained us!

God is greatly to be praised because he made a way for us out of no way!

God is greatly to be praised because even today, He is blessing us!

Every day, God is blessing us!

Every day, God is still opening doors!
Every day, God is still wiping weeping eyes!
Every day, God is still raising bowed down heads!
Every day, God is still putting food on our tables!
Every day, God is still making a way out of no way!
We should praise the Lord because His:
—Grace is always sufficient; Love is always abundant.
—Mercy is everlasting and; promises are sure.
We should greatly praise the Lord for the burden He's going to lift off our shoulder!
We should greatly praise the Lord for the hill He's going to help us to climb!
We should greatly praise the Lord for the bills He's going to help us to pay!
We should greatly praise the Lord for the job He's going to help us to find!
We should greatly praise the Lord for the home He's going to help us to buy!

However, there is one more thing for which we should greatly praise the Lord; we should praise Him for saving our souls and washing us with the only solvent that can make our sins white as snow!

The songwriter asked, "What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Jesus, the prized son of Palestine.
Jesus, the epitome of perfection.
Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He is great!
He is great!
And greatly to be praised!

No. 9630-Men

Nethinim Man

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 23, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding." Nehemiah 10:28

Introduction

We often hear some women say, "I don't need to no man, and I can take care of my children myself?" Is that really true? Has the black man become obsolete? Has his role as husband, father and mentor been diminished in America?

Black men have problems like men of all other races, but their problems are not representative of the entire gender. The image of the Black man is under attack. Gone are images of the strong black father of yesteryear who took nothing, but grabbed a shotgun to protect his wife, children and land. Gone are the images of men so proud that they would rather die free than live as slaves. Gone are the images of the hard working, God fearing black man who believed in teaching his children about God, keeping his word and giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Gone are the images of the black father who understood the value of a dollar and saved to provide a future for his children.

Unfortunately, the image of the strong black man has been replaced with one of the angry, lazy, sloppily dressed, ghettocentric man walking the street with his pants below his butt wearing an old pair of underwear and a new pair of Jordans. This is the image, but there are still millions of strong Black men in America who are defending their wives, children and land. There are still millions of God fearing men who teach their children the importance of God and family and giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Even though it's not shown frequently, there are millions of black men who live and breathe in professional circles and have mastered the art of investment and providing secure futures for their families.

These millions are the unseen men who spend time with our youth teaching them, molding them and pointing them in the right direction, one child at a time. There work

is rarely reported, their deeds are rarely seen, but these men are the ones who remind our youth of the importance of keeping a clean record, striving hard and working to make something of themselves. It is these unsung heroes of our community that form the glue that help every African-American child remember, that no matter how far they go in life, or how well traveled or well spoken they become, the world never let them forget that they are black.

As Christians, Black men in America, like all of God's children must realize that they are part of the greater community of God. Color is not a factor with God, but failure to seize the moment under the favor and blessing of God is a condemnation that will follow any race of people. It is incumbent upon the men of each generation to mentor the youth of the generation that will follow them, one child at a time, to help them find their path to a greater community and to find God for themselves.

Exposition

This text focuses on a body of men selected to help rebuild the temple and restore the legacy of Israel as a people under God.

After living in exile for many years the Israelites returned to Jerusalem and began the tedious task of rebuilding their national life before God. The work was assigned to special groups of men who were given a holy charge and favor to perform their tasks.

For the worship the priests, Levites, porters and singers were selected.

For the greater work, another body of men was selected, called Nethinims. These were men assigned to the Levites to help carry out the mission. They performed the essential, but often unseen, tasks that needed to be done, often out of the sight of others. Their work was rarely noticed, but it was essential to the rebuilding of the walls and to the rebuilding of Israel as a God fearing race.

The Nethinims enjoyed a degree of favor even though there was no celebrity associated with their role. Ezra 7:24 says, "Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them." The Nethinims were included with the priests and Levites who were exempt from taxes, tributes or types of customary national impositions. The Nethinims performed a holy work that was on the level of importance that the priests and Levites shared.

These were the type men that Moses described who would be assigned to judge and handle the small matters in every community according to the law of God. Their character was described in Exodus 18:21 as, "Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain…."

The Nethinims were not seen, rarely noted in official writings, or cited publically for their service, but they functioned in many capacities that were essential. Most importantly they enjoyed the favor of God for their divinely appointed mission and service.

The challenge

The challenge for the black community is to raise up a generation of young men and women who are proud of their own race, without hating others, and who reach out to assume their roles in the greater community as workers in the Kingdom of God. To accomplish this end, the African-American community needs an army of Nethinim men who will:

CHALLENGE YOUTH TO DREAM: No child will achieve anything they cannot first conceive. That's why a generation ago the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. inspired a generation with the slogan, "If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, I can achieve it." Our community needs an army of men who will roll up their sleeves and help our children dream. Robert F. Kennedy said, as he ran for president in the 1960's, Some men see things as they are and ask why, I see things that never were and ask, why not?

That's what the Nethinim man must do. He must point a child to a high goal and ask, Why not?

Why not create a way to help young African-Americans to regroup and help themselves out of poverty? That's the question Dr. Leon Sullivan asked when he started OIC in America? He dared to ask, why not?

Why not become a great actor? So what if, as a youth, I stuttered and was very shy, why not? That's the question that James Earl Jones asked as he rose to become one of the nation's greatest actors. Why not?

Why not take boys and girls who sing on street corners and in school talent shows and make them millionaires? That's the question that Berry Gordy asked as he founded Motown Records and sailed into the history books and financial success.

This is what the Nethinims in the generations before us asked, "Why not invent a stop light? "

Why not pioneer open heart surgery?

Why not blaze new trails in science and technology?

Why not?

The man who mentors a youth helps that young person see his own possibilities. He opens an eye that will never close again when he helps a young person to ask, "Why not me?"

The Nethinim man will encourage youth to defy limitations and achieve greatness.

SERVE AS ROLE MODELS: The Nethinim men, as well as all other men who were asked to serve in a divine service were expected to be able, God fearing men who sought truth and justice. Today, the need for men to mentor young African-American men is even greater than before. Yet, there are millions of African-American men who spend little time with youth even though it is divinely ordered. Moses taught that the young were to be taught morning, noon and night. He taught that their instruction should never end.

This biblical mandate falls on the Nethinim man. He is not the bright star shining in the sky, but the ordinary man in every community. He is the coach, scout master,

teacher, counselor, Sunday School teacher, advisor, tutor and team leader that is closest to this generation. The Nethinim man is an essential part of the community fight to teach the next generation. The Nethinims are not required to be smart, rich, famous or powerful. The most important ingredient is that they are able, God fearing, men who want to do the right thing.

The African-American community needs more Nethinim men. Youth need to be surrounded by men who can help them achieve their dreams. They need men who obey the law, respect women, take care of their own children, spend little time in trivial pursuits, know how to handle money, have a marketable skill, are pursuing or have attained the education needed for their profession, who are morally straight, and who believe in God and try to live a God centered life. The Nethinim man makes the perfect father, the perfect husband and the perfect role model for youth.

NETHINIMS MUST BE ADVOCATES: Each Nethinim was assigned to a Levitical service. The Nethenims were extensions of the Levitical order with respect to the things of God. Men of their caliber were selected to be the judges, to speak out against injustice and advocate for God. In a similar respect, today's Nethinim man must also be an extension of the divine order in the community.

The Nethinim man leads groups of men to sponsor workshops and retreats for young men to show them how to be better husbands and fathers. In these retreats, young men would learn how to earn the respect of their wives and direct the paths of their children.

The Nethinim man becomes an active presence in the lives of boys to help shape their values and ignite their dreams while they still have a yearning for learning and direction.

The Nethinim man works actively in the youth program of his church, lodge or fraternal order to reach the next generation with the benefit of his experience.

The Nethinim man will speak to the issues that destroy our youth such as crime, drugs, delinquency, and illiteracy. They will associate themselves with causes, projects and movements that will promote a higher order of living among our youth.

The Nethinim man will have at least one youth in which he invests considerable time and resources to help that youth achieve the greatest potential possible.

The Nethinim man will make it his duty to show one youth the path to God and stick with that person as he/she becomes an adult and guide them all the way through.

The goal of the Nethinim man is to reach one for the Lord. If each one, reaches one, our generation will be prepared for the future.

Favor of God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the Nethinim man does not receive much publicity for what he does, but he is showered with divine favor!

In biblical times, his service was recognized by being exempt from taxes, fees, customary demands. It was a way of showing favor for his service.

Today, God still showers favors on those who serve him and prove that they are able to withstand the fiery flames of the world with his character intact.

The Nethinim man is a man whose character has character has been shape and refined in the fires of life.

He is the man who has been tried in the fire and has proven himself to his wife and children by passing the tests that life puts before him. The nature of the tests varies from health issues to finances, relationships, career challenges or career difficulties.

Those who have weathered such storms know what it means to be tried in the fire. When we come through, like pure gold that is refined, all of the raw ore seems to float away leaving behind a purer spirit, a more sensitive nature, and a closeness to God.

These are the men who can stand tall but can reach low!

These are the men who defined not by the size of their wallets but by the depth of their hearts.

These are the men who are defined not by the physical strength of their bodies but by the moral fiber or their soul.

The Nethinim man is a great man, but the best man is our heavenly father.

Our heavenly father provides us with the best definition of father: when we need him he is there; when nobody else can; he can.

I have a father who can take:

—Sadness and turn it to gladness; Misery and turn it into delight!

—Failure and turn it into success; Loneliness and turn it into happiness!

—Poverty and turn it into riches; Defeat and turn it into victory!

No wonder the song writer wrote: ”I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece a clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!”

I am reminded of the little girl who had nightmares when she was young and was always afraid in the night. In the middle of the morning when her fears got the best of her she’d cry out, “Papa, it’s dark, hold my hand!” No matter how many times she called him papa would get up and hold her hand every night. That picture of her papa sitting by her bed holding her hand, never left her mind, even after he died. Many years later she came to God. When the troubles of the world surrounded her she cried out “Lord, it’s dark outside! Hold my hand!”

No wonder the song writer declared, “Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race. I don’t want to run this race alone!”

I don’t know about you but I want Jesus to walk with me! He walked with my father, but I want Him to walk with me!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who rose after three days!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 9631-Heritage

We don't look like what we have been through

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 2, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." Deuteronomy 6:23

Introduction

Have you ever considered the road you have traveled to reach your present? As a nation we think of our struggles against England, taxation without representation, the Boston Tea Party, Valley Forge, the Civil War and Depression and the World Wars. As a people, we think of the middle passage, slave plantations, a master's whip, sad spirituals, Civic Rights marches, back seats and close doors. As Families, we think of hard times, struggling mothers, sleepless nights, constant worry. To look at us now, no one would believe what we have endured to reach this point in our lives.

Booker Washington, the gentle giant from Tuskegee, once said in his book, "Up from Slavery," that we should judge a man by where he is now, but we must consider the distance he has traveled to get there. When we look at that journey we instantly relate to the words of James Weldon Johnson in "Lift Every Voice and Sing," that say, "We have come over a road that has been paved with the blood of the slaughtered." We don't look like it now, with a president in the White House who looks like us, Black elected officials everywhere, integrated churches, an army of Black attorneys, interracial marriages. In fact, we don't look like we've ever been through anything.

Looks are deceiving because African-Americans have been on a long journey led by the spirit of God to overcome many obstacles that have lead us to our present state.

African-Americans have made great achievements over the years despite hindrances. We have watched as God changed the laws written on paper that enslaved us while he wrote the law of hope in the hearts of each succeeding generation.

For decades, those who spoke for us loudly were legions of abolitionists and white

attorneys who argued our cases before the courts of the land. Today, there are thousands of Black Lawyers who plead cases in the courts. Some have achieved notoriety: Thurgood Marshall, Johnny Cochran, Patricia Robert Harris, Barbara Jordan, Eric Holder, and Barack Obama. The challenges for Black attorneys still exist. Despite hearing 75 hours of testimony in 2013, the Supreme Court only heard 11 minutes from a black attorney. Those 11 minutes set marked a success, but it also highlighted a barrier that must be overcome.

Despite a history of legal deprivation, slavery, racism and denial of equal opportunity, God has changed the laws of this nation to lift our people. With a small army of banisters to speak for us the challenge is for this generation to "bring it" when it comes to delivering for our people.

Today, equal rights is the law of the land. The nation does not look as if there was ever a time when black woman could not hope to be a judge, or black man could hope to become attorney general. We don't look like what we've been through, but the historical record tells the story of our journey.

As Christians, we should praise God. We have not made it to the mountaintop yet, but from this plateau we can see that with His help we have come a mighty long way.

Exposition

This text focuses on the final instructions of Moses to the Children of Israel before they entered into the Promised Land.

At 120 years old, Moses was aware that the people would make it to the land of promise, although he himself would not get there with them.

In the first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28, which means "a second look", Moses looks back over where God has brought them from and peeps over into the future as well.

The remaining verses of the six chapters provide a rationale to the people that explains the reason God brought them out of bondage in Egypt, forged a path for them through the Red Sea, sustained them in the wilderness and brought to the edge of Jordan.

Deuteronomy 6:23 notes that"... He brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which He sware unto our fathers."

When Moses looked at the people, over a million strong, they did not look like the weary slaves whose hands built the pyramids of Egypt and whose backs bore the scars of Egyptian whips. When he saw them, they did not look they had endured 400 years of slavery and subjugation. Only, Moses, Caleb, Joshua and those who survived their 40 years in the wilderness knew their full story.

Today, the story must be told of the old warriors who worshipped by the light of lanterns and kept warm by wood burning stoves. The story must be told of the old warriors that kept the church doors open despite depressions, hard times and wars.

Like Moses when we look back, we must say to the world, "We may not look like it, but we have been through it; and it was the hand of God that brought us out!"

What We Have Been Through

One of the reasons Carter G. Woodson began what was known as Negro History Week in 1926 was to constantly remind our people of our journey and of the accomplishments of our people despite our difficulties. His hope was that each succeeding generation would remember the past and pick up the baton and carry its generation further.

Our people have come a long way despite hardships

When we consider the lifestyles of many of our people, it may be hard for those unfamiliar with our past to envision a day when these comforts were denied our people. It's hard for a young person to envision a time when Blacks drank out Colored water fountains, sat in the backs of buses and courtrooms, and were lynched for looking in the direction of white women.

Despite these hardships and the hand of God moved upon our people and we the peculiar institutions that enslaved us were methodically dismantled.

When Frederick Douglass stood and spoke eloquently before abolitionist groups, he did not look like he was a former slave. In fact, he spoke so well that some doubted that he had ever been a slave.

When Booker T. Washington challenged the notion that Blacks could not achieve, he dressed impeccably and spoke fluently and all who saw and heard him wondered how this man could have ever been a poor slave. He did not look like what he had been through.

When Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States, the whole world stared at him because while he represented a turning point in America history, he did not look like what the African-American people had been through.

When Moses spoke to Israel, the bible says his eye had not dimmed or nor had his strength of character waned. He did not look like a man who lived in Pharaoh's court for 40 years, in the wilderness of Midian for another 40 years and who had spent the last 40 years of his life wandering around in the desert. He did not look like what he had been through.

We may not look like what we have been through. Maybe that's why the old warrior's sang, "Nobody knows the trouble I see. Nobody knows, but Jesus."

Present appearances can distort reality. Moses spoke to Israel to remind them that although they stood on the banks of the Promised Land that they should not let their present appearance distort the reality that their successful journey was only accomplished by the hand of God. At a similar point in our history, the Reverend Joseph Lowery, one of the champions of the civil rights movement, offered the benediction at the inauguration of President Obama in 2009 and gave the nation a challenge just as Moses did in this text. He said, "We go now to walk together, children, pledging that we won't get weary in the difficult days ahead. We know you will not leave us alone, with your hands of power and your heart of love. Help us then, now, Lord, to work for that day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, when tanks will be beaten into tractors, when every man and every woman shall sit under his or her own vine and

fig tree, and none shall be afraid; when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream." Like Reverend Lowery, we acknowledge that we have come a long way, but we still look to the day when justice and equality will be freely given to every man.

We still have battles to fight. Moses challenged Israel because, despite the fact that they had come through the wilderness, they still had one more river to cross. They had many battles ahead. Even today as we celebrate the miles we have travel we must concentrate on the journey ahead. There are laws on the books that must be challenged and new laws that must be written and interpreted to relieve and reprieve our race. We still need prosecutors who pray hard over every plea bargain; we still need judges who offer creative rulings that respond to each circumstance. We still need attorneys who are willing to fight the good fight before a jury rather than settle away a client's right so that they can earn quick cash and their next American Express payment. We still need attorneys who are willing to challenge law that make class and race distinctions in crime and punishments.

We, who have come so far on our journey, still have many battles to fight!

We, who were once slaves are now advisors to the president, governors of states, mayors of cities, and leading communities in thousands of elected positions across the nation.

We, who were once slaves in the wilderness of America have been uniquely sheltered, protected, and nurtured by nothing other than the hand of God.

In the wilderness, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In the wilderness, God has been our shelter in the time of storm. In the wilderness, God has been our way out of no way.

In the wilderness, God has been out of bridge over troubling waters; we may not look like it, but we have been through the fire and have made it thus far only by the Grace of God.

The Report

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while it may not appear that we have endured a dark past, we are compelled to report that that we have come a long ways, trusting in the word of God.

Isaiah 53:1 asks the question, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

As Americans of African descent who have survived excruciating pain and torment in the crucible of the American social experience, we proudly stand to deliver the minority report.

Our report has been drenched in the word of God and is dripping with faith. It is a faith that despite the obstacles before us that the Lord has made a way!

Our report is that God has taken our leaders to the mountain top and has shown them the Promised Land!

Our report is that God has helped us fight our battles. Whether it was legal slavery,

the separate but equal doctrine of Plessey versus Ferguson or the Brown versus the Topeka Kansas school board decision, we have fought
every battle realizing the presence of God without whom no victory could have been won.

Our report is that the road has been rough and going has been tough and hills are hard to climb, but we started out a long time ago and there is no doubt in our mind, we've decided to make Jesus my choice!

Our report is that we have come through hills and valleys, we've come through slavery and discrimination and second class citizenship, but we still sing, "I don't feel no ways tired. I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!

The minority report is that we have been sustained by our faith in a savior who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace is upon him!

Our report is that he was crucified on an old rugged cross, but he early Sunday morning arose after three days and nights!

Our report is that He's coming back again!

When he comes back, justice will run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Every valley shall be exalted and mountain shall be made low!

Until he comes back I will trust in the Lord.

I will trust in the Lord!

I will trust in the Lord... Until I die!

No. 9632-Inspiration

When your joy can be heard for miles and miles

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 9, 2014

SCRIPTURE: Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. Nehemiah 12:43

Introduction

Has there ever been a time in your life when you were so excited that everyone around you knew it? When we have been blessed, especially after great sacrifices, we want the world to know about the blessing. In fact, we use every means possible to let someone know: we call others on the phone, post news feeds on Face book, send text messages, post tweets on Twitter as well as Instagram photos. When we have been blessed, we tell as many people as possible; we just can't tell it enough.

When do such moments come? Usually come when we have achieved something important after great. The greater the sacrifice associated with the accomplishment, the more joy we feel and the further our joy is heard.

Among the great joys of a family are the moments when a child graduates from high school, gets a college degree, gets married, buys the first house, signs a big contract or achieves a goal. When that accomplishment is associated with great sacrifice the joy is even more.

For African-Americans a great moment for a family involves a member of the family graduating from college. According to the journal of Blacks in Education, the college graduation rate for Blacks is at an all time high: 46% for women and 35% for men. Trade school rates for those graduating from career colleges and are even greater. All of these provide moments of joy for thousands of families who want to celebrate the accomplishment.

In 2010 Michelle Obama, went around the country telling every student who would listen about the sacrifice of her parents to help her become a college graduate. "What I can remember is my father getting up every day and going to work at the water filtration plant, even after he was diagnosed with MS, even after it got hard for him to button his shirt, and to get up and walk. See, I remember my parents sacrificing for us, pouring

everything they had into us, being there for us, encouraging us to reach for a life they never knew."

She tells the story of her families sacrifice for dream with great joy that can be heard for miles and miles.

The joy we share as a born again believer in Christ is contagious. We talk about it, write about it and share it with others. Those who hear us can hear the excitement and passion in our voices. Whether it's healings, answered prayer or blessings, when we start talking about the goodness of the Lord, our joy can be heard for miles and miles.

Ask someone who has been miraculously healed to tell their story and the joy starts to flow.

Ask someone who has lost battles continuously, but finally found success to tell their story and watch as joy start to flow.

Ask someone who has finally found love to talk about it.. and take your seat.

When we are excited we have to tell someone. That's what happened when Jesus touched the life of the woman at the well. She had to tell somebody, so she ran through the streets of the city and cried, "Come see a man, who told me all I've ever done."

As Christians, we recognize that God has blessed us. Our testimony and witness can be heard for miles and miles: God is great and his mercy endureth forever!

Exposition

This text focuses on the joy of Israel at the celebration of the completion of the walls by Nehemiah.

The walls of Jerusalem lay in ruins for many years and caused heart aches to the people. On God's command, Nehemiah led the reconstruction of the walls in an unbelievable feat that took only 52 days. When the job was complete the people were excited because they had made such a sacrifice to insure that the walls and gates were completed. The ceremony of consecrating the wall and gates of the city was an act of piety on the part of Nehemiah, not merely to thank God in a general way for having been enabled to bring the building to a happy completion, but especially because that city was the place which He had chosen. Jerusalem thereafter became known as the "the holy city," and by this public and solemn act of religious observance, after a long period of neglect and desecration, it was, as it were, restored to its rightful proprietor.

The enthusiasm and excitement of the people that day was so intense that it could be heard for heard for miles and miles.

Miles and Miles

The text illuminates one great truth: The more we have sacrificed to achieve a goal the greater our goal which means our testimony goes further.

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS: There is nothing more exciting than unexpected blessings! When you are recognized for achievement unexpectedly, a surprise birthday party, a welcomed, but unannounced visit; all of these are occasions for great joy.

Similarly, when we expect to have surgery only to find that the surgery is not necessary; we expect to lose and find that we actually gain; these are times that we are bubbling with joy. When God has given us more than we expected there is an overwhelming excitement. It's the kind of joy that the lame man healed by Christ felt when he was healed. He jumped and leaped with excitement about the goodness of the Lord.

In a similar sense, believers who have received more than they expected or requested from God should feel some level of excitement just thinking about the goodness of God.

When the Lord blesses us financially in a way that we did not expect, it's shouting time!

When a wayward child starts showing signs of hope, it's shouting time!

When a lost family member finds the Lord, it's shouting time and those who hear us can hear us for miles and miles.

WE CELEBRATE THE NEW US: We celebrate who we have become in the Lord More than anything, those who have found the Lord get excited each time they think about what they have become in the Lord. Who would have thought that the hottest girl in the senior class would be the coolest mother of the church? Who would have thought that Mr. Hot lips would ever open his mouth to witness for God? Who would have thought that the class failure would actually turn out to be one of the most successful members of his class? Individuals should also look back over the journey they have traveled. Today, many are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent civic personalities. When we think back we remember the way we were and recognize that this has not always been the case.. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

We celebrate our lives in Christ! We talk about our new lives with great joy! We are excited and those who hear us can feel the passion in our voice and feel our joy for miles and miles.

IT'S HARD TO KEEP QUIET: It's hard to keep quiet when we feel the joy of the Lord. When we think of the hard times we have endured in our life's journey, it's hard not to tell someone about the favor God has shown us. Sometimes we can get loud! Sometimes we wave our hands! Sometimes we say Amen! Sometimes we stand!

Collectively our joy can be heard for miles and miles. Those who think we are too loud have trouble silencing us.

The scribes and Pharisees soon learned that true worship cannot be contained. Jesus did not make any effort to restrain his followers or tell them to stop praising his name; yet the scribes continued. That's when Jesus pointed them to the impossibility of muzzling a person who has been blessed and one who expects to be blessed.
When Jesus healed a man whose lives were plagued with demons he told them man not to tell anyone, but the man couldn't keep it to himself. There was somebody in the crowd, named Lazarus, who had been dead for several days but given new life, when he saw Jesus riding into the city, he just couldn't hold his peace.

There was somebody in the crowd, that had been blind, but the hand of Jesus

touched him and made him whole, and he just couldn't hold it, he had to tell somebody.

There was somebody in the crowd, whose life had been made whole because Jesus passed by, and they couldn't hold their peace.

When Jesus has touched you and made a change in your life, it's hard to hear his named called and not respond with praise; the joy you share can be heard for miles and miles.

Let it be heard…

Finally, we must consider that when God has blessed us we are so grateful that our joy can be heard for miles and miles

A leper healed by the savior tried to keep his good fortunes to himself, but he had to come back and say thanks. His joy was heard for miles and miles.

The woman at the well found it was hard to contain her excitement. She ran through the streets of the city saying, Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!

When the Lord has picked you up and turned you around and place your feet on the right road, it's not hard to get excited.

Today, there are many believers who have a story to tell. There are many who can testify that they were between a rock and hard place, but they decided to step out on faith.

We must tell somebody that our God is a God whose:

-Power never weakens; GRACE never disappoints

-Love never leaves; PROMISES never fail

-Glory never diminishes; JOY never ends

-Foundation never shakes; TRUTH never changes

-Supply never shrinks; BLESSINGS never stop coming!

And when God picks you up, you ought to tell somebody.

Every child of God is encouraged to keep his hands wrapped in the winding chain and to walk the road to Glory.

There is only one road from here to glory, because I heard Jesus say, I am the way, the truth and the light!

We must tell the world that Jesus is the way!

We must tell them that God is able! Yes, he's able!

He's able to see our tears in the midnight hour!

He's able to see our concern for our families and loved ones!

He's able to feel our despair over our current situation and while we are still praying about it, help is on the way!

We must tell them that we have found that there may be wide roads and there may be side roads, but there's only one road between here and heaven.

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame!

To get to that cross you have to walk the road to Calvary!

We must tell the world that one day we walking the road to destruction, but we met

No. 9633-Communion

In the hand of the Lord, there is a cup

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 16, 2014

SCRIPTURE: For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. Psalms 75:8 (KJV)

Introduction

Have you ever considered that each of us has a purpose and destiny in life? In that context we can understand why God chose to make us the way we are and place us where we are in life.

There are many who often question God's wisdom when they consider the world around them.

Why was he born so tall? Why is she so short? Why is one man born into riches while another man is born into poverty? Why are some born healthy and others born sickly? Why do some seem to be blessed and others lack blessings?

We don't know the mind of God, but history has shown us that every life and every life situation is in the hand of God. He shapes events and circumstances to fit his divine will.

Every life is in the hand of God and each believer's life has a destiny or divinely ordered fate. In spiritual circles this destiny is called the Will of God. Our mission is described as our cup; its contents are the ingredients that test and demonstrate faith.

What is our fate? Mr. Webster says fate is the settlement of things ahead of time. Our fate is our lot in life, our fortune or misfortune our wealth or poverty.

What's in your cup? Each of has drawn a certain fate. Some were gifted to sing, dance, or to exercise unusual intellect. Some are tall some are short. Often we'd like to trade hands with someone else in the game. It appears the deal always favors them. They have the best hands and they always get the trump cards.

Those who have played the game of life a few years know that it's not what kind of hand you draw, but how you play your hand.

Whether fate deals us a full house or a strait flush, a hand full of trumps or no trumps at all, it is our obligation to play out our hand to the best of our ability.

All believers are in the hands of God. He has filled our cups and pointed us in the direction our lives should go to meet our destination

As Christians, we give God praise and glory for holding us in His hands and for filling our cups with His grace and love. We will praise Him for ever and ever.

Exposition

This text shows David explaining how mankind is held as a cup in the hand of God.

The text describes how God holds the world in his hand and how his dispensations of truth, mercy, justice and destiny are showered upon the earth.

The text shows the means by which His will is delivered on earth. The cup is the vessel or the conveyance in which our divine assignment and purpose is apportioned.

The cup contains a mixture. "The wine is red; it is full of mixture;" The fact that it is a full mixture means that the cup will contain that which brings happiness and joy and pleasant memories, but it will also contain intoxicants that could, if consumed disproportionately, throw our lives into a terrible mess.

The cup also contains the dregs, the parts of life that have no useful purpose but to destroy and leave bad taste.

God pours all of this into our cup at the same time: happiness, joy, pain, sorrow and the dregs of temptation and evil.

Believers strive to learn what are dregs and what is red wine and to avoid that which will destroy us, however, the evil relish the dregs and " wring them out" or seek after them.

The believer expects to find a degree of bitterness in his cup. Without any bitterness the believer might become drunk with the wine of the world and forget God. If every day is filled with sunshine, he may soon approach it with less appreciation. It is the presence of some bitterness that forces the believer to stay humble before our God.

The cup that believers receive is the mixture that God has apportioned for us; we should drink it, but leave dregs alone.

The Mixture

God has placed in each of our cups, a mixture that is unique to us. That mixture includes happiness, pain and temptation. As our lives unfold we sip from the cup and taste the nectar of our destiny.

THE CUP OF JOY: Every believer's cup contains joy. Joy, as a spiritual quality, is everlasting and helps believers throughout their lives. Joy is shown when a believer is in the best of health or is lying in a sick bed; the Christian is always joyful. Those who know the Lord rejoice in his goodness and at the same time are glad for the great blessings he has demonstrated.

This joy that believers share helps us to receive each day with an attitude that is different from that of the world. This is possible because we know that whatever happens, our God is able to deliver us. That makes us glad.

THE CUP OF PAIN: No believer moves through life without experiencing some element of pain. It may be physical or emotional, but some level of pain is everyone's cup. Struggle, suffering and adversity are commensurate to the life experience, inextricably bound to each breath. We are able to endure such situations because we know that God has promised two things: Never to leave us alone and to make every situation that comes our way, even the pain, work out to our good as it relates to the kingdom of God. We don't quite know how it works, but we know that there will be no life that does not experience some element of pain or sadness. It is in our cup. We can't sip around it and only consume the happiness. We are consoled, however, when we consider that if there is no pain, there is no gain. We are also consoled when we remember that after the pain passes, God will renew our strength and reward our patience, endurance and longsuffering with a satisfaction that will never end.

THE CUP OF TEMPTATION: It would be easy if our cups were only filled with joy and pain, but the mixture gets complicated when we include the dregs of temptation. Temptations are life's hot situations. These are those times when we face danger of a traumatic loss of life, liberty or the pursuit of those experiences that make life happy. Temptations occur whenever we are forced to make choices that will drastically impact the quality of our lives or that of someone close to us. Sometimes we create tempting situations. However, many tempting moments are not of our own choosing. Temptations are the testing ground upon which we discover the extent of our professed faith. There are many who have professed a faith in God that simply withers like an ice cube in the sun at the first sign of difficulty.

If nothing else, temptations can bring out the best or worse in us. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, lead us not into temptation. Temptations are the dregs in every cup. They are not good for us, but they are there. Our prayer is to avoid them.

The Cup of salvation

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, we must consider that Jesus himself drank from cup of salvation.

The biblical record is filled with accounts of the patriarchs, who also had cups.

Jonah tried to escape his cup. He ran when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh.

David said, "My cup runneth over" as he explained the great blessings he received in life.

Job complained about the amount of pain in his cup, but he resolve, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him."

Saul found his cup while he was a pilgrim on the Damascus road.

Every child of God should say to himself Lord, help me to accept my fate in life and the cup you have given me.

Some folks are dainty teacups; they've been born with the best of everything.

Some folks are thick mugs, the hallmark of the poor and struggling.

Some folks are paper cups; they run through their lives quickly and are destined for

the garbage pail.

Some folks are plastic cups, too good to throw away and not good enough for constant use.

It doesn't matter what kind of cup you have, what is important that your cup is in the hand of the Lord.

In the hands, of the Lord there is a cup, let it remind you that our God is able, to be a shelter in a time of storm!

In the hands, of the Lord there is a cup, let it remind you that no matter what you may have gotten yourself into, God can bring you out!

In the hands, of the Lord there is a cup, let it remind you that it doesn't matter what type of chains hold you in bondage God is able to set you free!

In the hands, of the Lord there is a cup, let it remind you that you don't have to suffer under bondage for something you did a long time ago! God will set you free!

In the hands, of the Lord there is a cup, let it remind you that God is still giving second chances to those who have walked in the wrong direction!

Like any other believer, Christ's cup contained the same mixture of happiness, pain and temptation.

He had great moments as a child sharing ideas and teachings with the teachers or attending a wedding celebration of a friend.

He had moments of pain and sadness when He was rejected by his own hometown or ridiculed by crowds.

There were even moments when He was tempted. In the wilderness for 40 days and nights the devil visited him three times to try to lead Him astray.

Jesus had a cup!

In the garden Jesus looked hard into His cup and what He saw was more pain than joy. What He saw was more agony than ecstasy. He saw in His cup, His upcoming trial and crucifixion.

He begged His father to avoid the agony of Calvary, but carefully noted, "Nevertheless, not MY will but thy will be done."

Upon leaving the garden He was accosted by the temple guards. Peter jumped to His rescue and cut off the ear of one of the guards.

Jesus told Peter that He had accepted His cup in life and did not need to be rescued from the will of God.

Jesus had earlier said, "The cup which my father giveth me, shall I not drink it?"

The cup Jesus spoke of represented His own preordained fate.

It was not the cup Jeremiah spoke of in Jer. 17:7. This was the cup of consolation that was shared with all those who mourn, filled with sorrow for the loss of loved ones.

It was not the cup that Solomon spoke of in Proverbs 33:6 for this was the cup that was given to condemned prisoners, destined to die for transgressions of the law.

It was not the cup that David spoke of in Psalm 116: 12-13 when he said "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."

It was not the cup spoke of in Psalm 11:6, for this was the cup of tribulation that only the unrighteous should share.

The cup Jesus referred to was His own destiny that had been pre-arranged from the beginning of time.

I hear Jesus saying to his followers, this may not be the end I desire but if it is the will of the father, and then His will be done.

This cup, holds the dregs of a painful death!

This cup, is the key element in the salvation of men!

This cup, is prerequisite to the forgiveness of sin!

This cup, is power of God unto salvation!

One evening on Calvary, Jesus drank the last dregs of the bitter cup and died! ... Died!

But Early Sunday morning..

No. 9634-Inspiration

Enjoy the ride

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 23, 2014

SCRIPTURE: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

Introduction

If you are on your way to heaven shouldn't you enjoy the ride? There are many who are living the Christian life, but do not enjoy the life they live. Some Christians believe that being a Christian should mean that their lives should be a constant act of penitence. In fact, the old warriors of the church often made being a Christian a 100% downer. It seemed that being a Christian meant a long list of uncomfortable or undesirable things. Do you remember the list? Christians were not allowed to play cards or dominoes, read romance novels, play ball (on Sunday) or go to the movies. Christians couldn't wear bright colors such as red or hot pink. Lipstick was sinful and so was makeup. Christians could not could not cook or listen to the radio on Sunday. Christians could not do anything on Sunday except attend church, which lasted from early morning until late night. Christians had to stop all movement in a thunderstorm because "God was doing his work."

The list of taboos was so long that many people tried to avoid being a Christian like a plague. It seemed that Christians never enjoyed life because they never laughed, had fun or wore any clothes that were not "church" clothes.

While their list of taboos was long, the old warriors did in fact enjoy the Christian life. They simply had fun inside what they believed to have been the boundaries that God set for them. They enjoyed themselves in the same way a child that is not permitted to walk the street alone, can have fun in the back yard.

They enjoyed life within the limits set for them.

The limits have changed a bit today, but there are still limits. Many Christians play cards, but they won't gamble. Most Christian women wear makeup, but not too heavy. Christians still frown on very bright colors on Sunday, going to clubs, drinking and smoking. Men wear suits that are not black and women wear dresses above the ankle even as high as the knee. Many Christians cook on Sunday, if they cook, and many more go out to eat. Church worship services are considerably shorter, and no one will stay from morning until late night anymore. We still frown on chewing gum in worship, tieless men or women showing cleavage.

Despite the limits, most Christians enjoy the believer's life. Today, we have learned that the Christian life is not one filled with a long list of "Don't Dos", but is a list of "How tos." The world sees the Christian life as one that spends all of its time saying "Don't walk on the grass." Yet, the Christian sees his life in Christ as a person learning "how to walk on the sidewalk."

The Christian life is filled learning about God, fellowship, prayer and loads of fun. Christians play ball, bowl, camp, shoot pool, play card games, swim, fish, enjoy sports, watch movies, read books, travel, date, get married, have children, own businesses. Christians wear pretty clothes, listen to music, paint pictures and live a happy, abundant God centered life.

This is the life that Jesus talked about when he said, "I am come that they have life and have it more abundantly!"

The big difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is that Christians live their lives within the rules that God has commanded for every believer, always giving him praise for everything.

Believers cannot be so busy trying to accomplish their dreams and goals that they do not enjoy the ride? If you have a pretty home, but you are never there, what's the point? If you have a beautiful family, but you have no time for them, what's the point? If you have a nice car, but only have time to drive it to and from work, what's the point?

If there are roses in your yard, but you never take time to enjoy their beauty or smell their fragrance, what's the point?

It is possible that God poured out his blessings on the early church because they kept glad and sincere hearts. God wants more believers who are enjoying life, staying lighthearted and having fun in the process. Not only does it please God, it attracts people!

As Christians, we are on a life long journey toward heaven. Along the way we should enjoy every day, have fun and praise God all the way!

Exposition

This text focused on the lifestyle of early Christians.

The text made it clear that they did three things frequently: They studied the word of God, they fellowshipped together, had frequent meals together, and they prayed.

Verses 42-47 paint a picture of the life of early believers. It was one that was guided by the word of God, but at the same time filled with fellowship, fun filled gatherings and persistent prayer.

The text notes that they 'continued steadfastly" in the apostles doctrine. That means that they listened to the instruction of their religious leaders and used it to build a set of principles by which they lived. In everything they did they made sure that Christ would approve of their actions.

They lived in the world, but found joy in fellowshipping with themselves. The word used for "fellowship" means "community." They did things together as a Christian

community, built houses, celebrated weddings, mourned deaths, and celebrated their individual accomplishments. Their fellowship was a God centered fellowship in which they strengthened and built up each other.

Included in that fellowship was the breaking of bread from house to house. This breaking of bread mentioned in this text was not a reference to Holy Communion, but to the receiving of their food; they went house to house. That too became a great fellowship and enjoyable time in which they came to know each other better

They continued in prayer knowing that they could only truly enjoy the Christian life if they were upheld by the power of God. They prayed together because they sought the grace of God upon each family and earnestly prayed for each other.

Verse 47 notes that they spent a considerable time praising God together. Their excitement and enjoyable life attracted others and they grew by the thousands.

Enjoy this life.

One way to understand life is to view it from the context of the fair. At every fair, there is usually an assortment of rides that attract your eye.

When we go to the fair the first question many children ask is, "What kind of rides do they have?" Others may ask, "What kind of food booths will be there?" Everyone goes to the fair for different reasons. However, for many, the joy of the fair is the rides. That's the way it is in life. Depending on our situation, we can define our lives by one ride or another.

SOME LIVES ARE LIKE CAROUSELS: The carousel has horses upon which a child mounts and rides. It goes up and down round and round. Life is like that because sometimes it seems that we are riding a carousel that goes round and round. It's a safe ride; it is filled with smiles and joy. There are even seats on the Carousel, so that the elderly can enjoy the ride with their grandchildren. The Christian life is like that carousel, it takes us around at a gentle pace, there are a few ups and downs, but its safe and the whole family can fellowship together.

SOME LIVES ARE LIKE FERRIS WHEEL RIDES: A Ferris Wheel is a giant wheel with baskets that takes riders high in the sky. A Ferris Wheel, like life, is cyclic. Life and Ferris Wheels turn in cycles and bring us to similar points again and again. At certain points in the ride of life, we go from feeling very secure to feeling very insecure. At the bottom of Ferris Wheel you feel pretty secure: there is a bar and a seat belt to secure you; but on the way up the seat rocks back and your feet dangle a little and you have a touch of worry. Sometimes the wheel stops at the top and your cage shakes and you feel insecure. Yet, at that high moment you can see further than you've seen before; its awe inspiring and a little scary,too. Many see lives as Ferris Wheels, they have been around many times; they have seen the highs and lows and felt the shakes, but they enjoy the ride!

SOME LIVES ARE LIKE TWISTERS: Every fair has at least one ride with names like "Dive Bomber, Loop de Loop, Hurricane and Twister." They are the ones that turn you upside down, fling you out in the air and snatch you back, while rolling you over

and over and from side to side. Those who ride these rides test their own limits to get that rush of excitement. They know the ride will twist them, in fact, they expect to be twisted, turned and scared half to death. They feel safe however, because of the restraints, bars, belts and lock mechanisms that hold them in place. In life, there are many who dare to follow their dreams. It looks like the path they have chosen is a twister, a dive bomber; one that is sure to turn them upside down financially and emotionally. Yet, the believer steps out on faith that if it is God's will, despite the twists and turns they will be safe. They buckle up and enjoy the ride!

SOME LIVES ARE LIKE BUMPER CARS: The bumper cars are fun. These little electric powered cars go around in circles and are bumped by others. Surely that's a ride that everyone has experienced. Life's bumps, crashes and hits. There is no life that doesn't experience some type of bump or crash along the way. In fact, those who ride bumper cars expect to be hit hard by others, because there are some who enjoy bumping everyone else. Because we expect the bumps, we are buckled in safely with an attendant standing close by. The cars are no fun if they sit still there must be bumps to enjoy the ride!

SOME LIVES ARE LIKE ROLLER COASTERS: One of the scariest rides at a theme park is the roller coaster, some as high as 400 feet. They take the riders up and then send them on a speedy path down that is filled with twists, turns and cliffhanger curves. Roller Coaster rides are not for the faint hearted. There are many who enjoy the roller coaster because of the unknowns behind every turn. Life is often like a roller coaster ride. It begins quietly and begins to rise slowly and then there are times when we are plunging, turning and screaming for life. There are so many ups and downs in life. Yet, those who choose this life, keep returning because the enjoy the ride!

Ride Safely

Finally, brothers and sisters, while life presents us with many scary rides, we can enjoy the ride when know we are safe in the hands of the Lord!

Those who are patrons of the rides at theme parks keep returning because they trust that although the rides are dangerous that they are safe.

As believers we know that the road is rough and the going gets tough and the hills are hard to climb, but we feel that we are safe in the hands of the Lord, so we step out on faith and enjoy the ride.

Everyone ride is not the same, but everyone enjoys the ride!

There are times when we are afraid to get on a ride, but we go only when a friend says, "I'll go with you." Encouraged by the presence of a friend, we strap ourselves in saying, "Don't you leave me."

When we begin the ride of our lives, that's what the Lord does. He says, "I will never leave you alone."

Strap yourself in and get ready for the ride. I will never leave you!

When the world twists you and turns you up side down, I won't let you fall!

When life's roller coaster seems to carry you over a cliff, I won't let you crash and

meet destruction!

When you've been crashed from the front and back and every side, I won't let the bumps stop you!

While you are on this ride our God won't leave you alone! That's why the old warriors sang, "I want Jesus, to walk with me!"

God won't let us alone to wallow in defeat.

God won't leave us alone to deal with the problems of our careers and families.

God won't leave us alone to shoulder the responsibilities without his strong hand!

Enjoy the ride, because the Lord is with us on every twist and turn we can:

—stay CALM in midst of crises

—have PEACE in the midst of problems

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine!

Enjoy the ride because it scary your next few years seem, there were will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

You can enjoy every ride that life gives you without worrying about the cos, because you're wearing a free armband that that has been paid for in advance.

Your ticket to the abundant life of studying God's word, fun filled fellowship, breaking bread and prayerful living has been paid for by a man from heaven!

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who gave himself as sacrifice for our salvation!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

No.9635-Inspiration

And he stretched it out

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 30, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." Mark 3:5

Introduction

Have you ever had a dream and watched it crumble in front of your eyes? Was it the dream of a career? Relationship? Job opportunity? Our dreams drive us, without them our lives come to a screeching halt and we join what Thoreau calls the mass of men who live lives of quiet desperation. We need our dreams to feed our aspirations and to keep us going, but what happens if our hopes and dreams wither?

The poet Langston Hughes asked that question in his poem "A Dream Deferred" when he wrote:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or Fester like a sore- And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over-like a syrupy sweet?'
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

Lorraine Hansberry wrote a play about withered dreams which won her a critical acclaim, it was called, "A raisin in the sun." The play focused on a family that dreamed of buying a house in a nice neighborhood, but the dream withered when the neighbors in the white neighborhood offered to pay them not to move into their new house. The dream withered, like a raisin in the sun.

Withered dreams, impact us in many ways. Hughes says they can stink like rotten meat and make us bitter and distasteful people. They can also explode and make us angry, violent and vengeful.

What withers our dreams? Sometimes it's the fear of failure. We are afraid that we might try and might fail in the process. So our dream withers. Sometimes it's forces outside of us that wither our dreams. These are our enemies and adversaries who spend most of their time planning and plotting ways to prevent us from succeeding.

Satan attacks us in many ways and attempts to stop us from achieving our dreams.

He likes for us to believe that dream is impossible. He likes for us to conclude that the obstacles all insurmountable. Many back away from their dreams thinking they are impossible.

When we give up on our dreams, we lose hope. When we lose hope, our dreams wither, dry up, stink or explode!

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that we serve a God who restore withered dreams if we bring them to help and do as he commands.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ healing a man on the Sabbath Day.

Jesus was critical of the established church because it focused heavily on rituals and customs associated with the law and failed to get the big picture: Israel was called to be a river of God to the nations of the earth. They had abandoned that calling in favor of simply focusing on customs and rituals.

In this passage, Christ was challenged by his critics for plucking corn on the Sabbath, which was forbidden under the Mosaic law. The law prohibited all work on the Sabbath, including healing. In an "in your face" type action, Christ decided to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the religious leaders by healing someone right in front of their eyes, on the Sabbath Day.

There was a man in the temple who had a withered hand. Mark only notes that the man had a withered hand, but Luke notes that he had a withered right hand. Jesus asked the man to step forth and to stretch out his hand. The text notes, "And he stretched it out," – the man was healed.

The text has both an historic and prophetic application. Historically, the text shows Jesus defying the religious leaders; the healed man in this context, was just an instrument used to make a point. However, prophetically, the healing had implications for believers across the generations.

By healing the man's right hand, the healing assumed additional importance. The right hand, in the biblical context, is often considered the blessed hand.

Our hands represent the things we do, the work we try to accomplish and the goals we try to grasp. The right hand seems to speak to our blessed work.

Isaiah 41:13, For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand,
saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

Psalms 18:35, Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

Ecclesiastes 10:2, A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

A withered hand meant a withered work. A withered right hand went even further; blessed work had withered.

When the man stretched out his hand to Jesus he was made whole again.

Withered Experiences

There are many today who have fallen victims to withered experiences. These withered experiences, for the most part have stolen the good life away from so many people. Instead of pursuing dreams they have relegated themselves to lives of monotonous routine, doing the same thing repeatedly, with no end in sight. This was the case of the man with the withered hand. There is no history given as to when his hand was withered, only that he came the synagogue on a regular basis and existed anonymously. It wasn't until his condition caught the attention of the savior, that things changed for him.

How can we get the attention of the savior? The most effective way is through fervent prayer. When we pray we get God's attention. He hears us and he responds when we pray. When we get God's attention he usually answers us in a way that directs us toward his will.

Believers who sense themselves withering in their spirit, hopes and aspirations should pray to God for his spirit to identify what has withered us and stolen the joyous life we once know. We can't really do that ourselves, we can analyze, but only the Holy Spirit can show us what to do if we've lost the vibrancy, enthusiasm and passion we once had for God and for life itself! If something has dried up on the inside it's time for us to stretch it out before God. Just as he did that Sabbath morning, he can make us whole again.

Dealing With Mess

Dealing with mess and messy people can wither our spirituality. Messy situations and messy people can get into the mind so deep that it can prohibit true worship, prayer, praise.

Mess, like ashes thrown on an open fire, prohibits excited praise and service because mess smothers fires. There are some who cannot experience the presence of God in their lives because they are dealing with so much mess. If they try to pray at home, there is mess. If they try to pray at work, there is mess. Many have found that messy people come to church, too.

They come before God with so much mess, stress, drama and trauma that they extinguish their own fire. We have seen the victims of mess come to worship so angry with a family member that they can't benefit from the worship experience.

Mess withers our dreams and hopes because it gets us off focus. It changes the subject of our thoughts. That's why the Psalm 37:1 reminds believers to "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

Mess will ruin your marriage, career, and even push you away from God as you conclude, "I ain't going up to that church, it's just too many messy people." Surprise, Surprise, those same messy people go footballs, bowl, shop and hangout out with you. Messy people are everywhere! You can't avoid them, even the devil comes to church!

Job 1:6 says all the angels came to praise God "And Satan came also." If Satan is bad enough to bust up into heaven, you know he can hitch ride to a local church.

Don't let messy people wither your dream by pushing you away from God or interrupting your communication with God. Without God, you cut yourself off from your lifeline and your hope withers and dies.

To stretch out, out we must be humble

The man with the withered hand was obedient. He needed a healing. When Christ told him to stretch out his hand, it did not matter that it would have been embarrassing for people to see his condition that he probably kept hidden as much as possible; he did as he was told. When Naaman wanted a healing from his leprosy, he was told to bathe seven times in muddy water. He protested that it was humiliating and ridiculous for a man of his station to be seen bathing in muddy water; when he finally did as was asked he was healed.

We must be willing to stretch out and step out on God's word if we want his blessing.

The man with the withered hand was not hindered by pride. Pride often stands in the way and blocks the door of success for far too many people. There are many who are unemployed, but rather than take a job below the level to which they are accustomed, many choose to remain unemployed. There are many who find themselves in tight spots and avoid seeking help from members of their own families out of pride.

There are some who have encountered financial crises and choose to face a loss of dignity in the community and commit suicide out of stubborn pride. The Christian way, however, is a humble way. It is a way of life that places the will of God before our own desires, and places obedience to God first in our lives. In humble obedience we struggle to live for God everyday.

If we want our withered situation to resolved, we must be willing to stretch out and step on faith.

Let God do the rest.

Results of Stretching

Finally, brothers and sisters were must remember that when we stretch it out, God works it out in our favor!

The man with the withered hand was told to stand and he stood. He was told to stretch out his hand and he stretched it

When he stretched it out, God spoke to his situation!

If there is one truth about God that every believer knows, it is that when God speaks a word, it shall be so.

When God stepped out on the blackness of creation he spoke a word and said let there be light and there was light.

When God told Noah to prepare for a flood his word did not return void for it rained 40 days and 40 nights proving that when God speaks it shall be so.

When God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the Red Sea and that the people would walk across on dry land, it happened just as he said proving once again that when God speaks it shall be so.

When God showed Ezekiel the valley of dry bones and told that these bones can live again it wasn't long before Israel became a nation once again proving that when God speaks it shall be so.

The man with the withered hand stretched it out and Jesus spoke. Nothing more was done. Immediately he was healed.

Whenever God speaks we don't have to worry about it, his word will not return void.

The same is true when God speaks to our withered life situations; whenever God speaks it shall be so.

When God speaks to our doubts he turns them into confidence!
When God speaks to our weaknesses he turns them into strength!
When God speaks to our failures he turns them into successes!
When God speaks to our insecurities he turns them into assurances!
When God speaks to our difficulties he turns them into opportunities!
When God speaks to our defeats he turns them into victories!
When God speaks to our enemies he turns them into lifelong friends!
He stretched it out, before the man from Galilee
He stretched it out, before the man who healed the sick and raised the dead!
He stretched it out, before the man who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary!
He stretched it out to the man who was stretched out and hung between two thieves!
He stretched it out to the man who was buried in a borrowed tomb!
But early Sunday morning….

No. 9636-Inspiration

Some Things God Can't Do

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 6, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." —Isaiah 40:28

Introduction

Is there anything too hard for God to do? In our weakness we tend to believe that some things are beyond hope. In hospitals, when we hear a dire prognosis from a physician and read the reports, we quickly accept that a condition is beyond hope. In competitions when the scoreboard reveals an insurmountable lead by an opponent, we accept the inevitability of defeat with minutes still left in the game. In politics when the polls show a candidate with virtually no support, his supporters often prepare to throw in the towel, dismissing their candidate as a lost cause. These and other situations, have often been accepted as cases beyond hope. Yet, despite the impossibility of the situation, we have seen so many last minute reversals in our lifetimes to know that all things are possible. We have seen games change in the last two minutes. We have seen candidates with virtually no chance win elections. We have also seen those who have been pronounced terminal, live on for many years.

We have learned not to second-guess the power of God.

The power of God is immense and awesome. It is a limitless. That's good to know because every believer has the power of God working on the inside. This power directs us when we can't find our way and it restrains us when we are going a little too fast. This same power motivates us when we are slow to start and stimulates us when we need a little more inspiration just to keep going.

We have the power of God in us so we should not hesitate to work the power. What's wrong with dreaming big? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first woman president? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first scientist to find the cure for the common cold? What's wrong with dreaming being the best parent that the world has ever seen? A better preacher than your pastor? A better musician than the world's best? What wrong with dreaming of changing the world and bringing out peace? One thing the power of God does for us is releases us to dream and imagine.

If there are limits on what God can do, those limits would be self imposed. Jesus could do very few miracles in his hometown, not because his power was restrained inside the

Nazareth city limits, but because the people there would not believe and allow him to release his power to help him. God is not man that he should fail, nor the Son of man that he should suffer defeat. Our God touches the hills and they tremble; he touches the mountains and they smoke. If ye believe in the littleness of God we will ask for little things and expect only little things. If we believe God is awesome, then we don't hesitate to ask for big dreams.

The question for believers is not whether God can perform a work, but whether we believe God can perform the work. People of faith are compelled to come before the throne of Grace with confidence that our God is omnipotent and has the power to help those who love and obey him.

There is no job God begins that he cannot finish. Neither is there a task too hard for him to complete. If this is true, then why are so many saints lacking? James 4:2 says, "….we have not because we ask not!"

As Christians, we know that all things are possible for our God. Yet, we also know that we cannot drink from the well of his power and favor unless we reach down our cup in faith. Until we act in faith, there will always be some things God can do that won't be done because of our lack of faith and action.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he challenges the people of Israel to have faith in the prophecies God has revealed.

Isaiah had given the people great prophesies of doom, but he also gave them great reasons for hope and restoration. He made prophetic announcements about the coming of the Lord, his suffering and resurrection. He foretold the coming of the church and its persecution.

However, at the same time he prophesied that God would remove every obstacle in the way of the prophecy in every sense.

The prophet concluded by noting that the power and unsearchable wisdom of God is focused on and is daily engaged in strengthening, comforting, and saving his people to accomplish his will.

Nothing can stand in the way of God's will being performed in the lives of his people.

Some limits on God

It is true that God can do all things. We know this is true because Jeremiah 32:17 says, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you." Yet, even with this knowledge we must admit that there are some things God can't do! Immediately, that seems to be a contradiction. How is it that God can do everything, but at the same time there are some things God can't do? Our God has laid out some rules for the giving of blessings and answering of prayers. There are rules he uses to determine who will be favored and who will not. And there are conditions he has placed on himself which limit

what he can and cannot do within the limits of his own rules.

If God is working in us there is nothing we can't do if we release the power.

GOD CAN'T LIVE IN AN UNCLEAN TEMPLE: Our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. He lives within us, but since God is holy he can't live in an unholy temple or situation. 1 Corinthians 3:15 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." God can't work from within us if we are engaging in unholy relationships, practices and actions. In fact, he promises to destroy those who ask him to live in an unclean spiritual environment. To release the power, believers should first clean up their temple.

GOD CAN'T SHOW PARTIALITY: Acts 10:34-35 says, "...In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him." Every believer should know that what God does for one believer he can do for others. He is not partial. Neither is God prejudiced. He does not grant blessings based on race, creed or color. God can't be prejudiced.

GOD CANNOT BREAK HIS PROMISE TO YOU: If God has promised to bless us, that blessing will come. He cannot break his promise. Psalm 89:34 says, "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips." It means if God speaks something it will happen. That not only applies to blessings, but it also applies to punishments. If God has spoken it; it will come to pass. Believers should step out on faith knowing that if God promises something, he will make it happen.

GOD CANNOT PUNISH US FOR SINS HE HAS FORGIVEN: There are many who fail to act in faith because they do not consider themselves worthy because of past sins. However, Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins." God will not withhold blessings from us because of past sins that he has forgiven. Believers should not let their past live restrict their present lives in Christ.

GOD CANNOT ABANDON YOU: There are many who fear stepping into the unknown because they believe they will be alone. However, believers should remember that if we are walking a path that is directed by God, he will not leave us alone. Deuteronomy 31:6 says, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, he is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

He just can't

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that there is one other thing about God that should encourage us and that is that God cannot stop loving us.

It is the nature of God to love his creation with an unconditional love that never ends, even though we often don't deserve to be recipients.

Jeremiah 31:3 says, "Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you."

An everlasting love continues for better or worse!

An everlasting love exists in sickness and health!

An everlasting love continues in wealth or poverty!

Because God loves us he cannot put a limit on what he will do for us!

Because God loves us he cannot put a boundary on how far he will go for us!

If necessary, our savior will give us a second or third chance to salvage the good in us.

God cannot turn a deaf ear to a sinner's plea to be forgiven!

Because God loves us, he will:

—Defend the orphans, support the widows and strengthen the weak!

—Comfort the dying and feed the hungry!

—Clothe the naked and visit the incarcerated!

We need to remember today that God cannot find a person so:

WEAK that cannot provide them strength

DOWN that he cannot pick them up!

DEFEATED that he cannot gave them the victory

DISCOURAGED that he cannot restore their hope!

LONELY, that he cannot gave them comfort!

TROUBLED, that he cannot give them peace of mind!

But there is one other thing we need to remember, and that is that God cannot find a soul so lost that he cannot save it.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever blieveth should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

He came to show us that God cannot find a life so broken that it cannot be repaired!

He came to show us that God cannot find a hope so lost that it cannot be restored!

He came to show us that God cannot find a failure so great that it cannot be overcome!

He came to restore our faith because the only thing God really can't do is fail!

When he went to Calvary, he showed us a love that:

—Harbored no jealousy and exhibited no deceit

—Craved no greed and required no recognition

It was love that cannot be broken by the threat of death or failure.

It was a love that allowed wicked men to drive nails into his hand!

It was a love that allowed the ungodly to put a crown of thorns on his head!

It was a love that cannot be destroyed!

He died on an old rugged cross..

But early Sunday morning….

No. 9637-Easter

Seven words, Seven challenges

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth." Psalm 31:5

Introduction

Is there a duty that we all have when we accept the challenge of the cross? On the cross Christ spoke seven last sayings that ring out across the centuries. Their mournful sound chimes out a challenge for all of believers today. These are challenges that have become duties in the fullest sense of the word.

When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, he said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they despitefully use us, and put us through terrible pain, be ready to pardon them. Be like the sandalwood tree, which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, and kindness, and love; and let this be our prayer, "Father, forgive them."

When he said to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" the need for repentance was underscored. It challenges us to ask the question, "Have we, like the thief on the cross, confessed our sins? Do we have his faith and his prayerfulness?" We have the duty of penitence and faith.

When he said, "Woman, behold thy son!" he taught us the duty to love our parents. No Christian must ever be short of love for his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships that God has appointed for us to observe. We see Christ on the cross showing love for his mother. It is our duty not to forget our mothers. She who bore us; should be bourn in her old age, and lovingly cherished even to her last breath.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God, and trusting in God: "My God, my God." See how, with both hands, he takes hold of him: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He cannot bear to be left of God; all else causes him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of his God. From this we must learn that we have a duty to God. To cling to him, because we cannot bear this world alone.

The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfillment of God's Word. We have a duty to thirst after the work of the cross and the fulfillment of God's will.

That sixth cry, “It is finished,” teaches us perfect obedience. When we hear these words we are reminded of our need to finish what we start in the Lord. We should leave out no command undone. We should keep on obeying until we can say, “It is finished.”

And that last word, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” teaches us resignation. Yield all things, yield up even thy spirit to God at his bidding. Stand still, and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be our watchword.

As Christians, we have heard the seven last sayings of Christ, but the blessing is not in hearing the words, but accepting them as our duty and actually carrying out the word of God in our lives.

Exposition

These texts are a reminder to believers of the attitudes and duties of every believer who chooses to take up his cross and follow Christ.

The seven last sayings of Christ on the cross, were not his last sayings on earth, for their were other words he spoke to people who saw him on the Emmaus road, to his disciples in lockdown and to thousands as he challenged them to “Go ye therefore.”

The cross sayings challenge every believer to step forward and assume the duty of living Christ every day!

What the saying mean to us

The seven last sayings on the cross send a message to believers in the form of encouragement because they come from a crucified savior who ultimately overcame and arose victorious.

OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF BEING LEFT ALONE: On the cross Christ spoke what many feel when they face adversity; that they are being left alone. For many that is a great fear. Jesus was forsaken for a brief moment and he asked, why?
“Why hast thou forsaken me?’’ It is not the why of impatience. It is not the why of despair; it is not the why of doubt. It is the human cry of intense suffering, aggravated by the anguish of His innocent and holy life. That awful and agonizing cry of the loneliness of His passion! He was alone. He was alone with the sins of the world upon Him. Yet, he overcame his fear of being left alone and carried out God’s will. In so doing he taught us to be fearless. The person who stands in awe of another force is defeated before he begins. Christ’s cry showed that he is like us when we hurt, but his decision to carry out God’s will showed us the true meaning of David’s words, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”

DON’T COUNT YOURSELF OUT: On the cross, many counted Christ out. Even his disciples watched from a distance. Not only had the critics counted the Christian cause out, but also they disassociated themselves from the cross! They counted themselves out! They had to be reminded of the words of Christ when he told them that he would be crucified but would rise again after three days and nights. They had to be

reminded because they forgot.

Knowing that the victory was at hand Christ held no grudges against those who crucified him or those who lost faith. In fact, he said, “Father, forgive them.”

He refused to be counted out. He knew that victory was around the corner, so he forgave even the religious leaders who watched him. Matthew 27:36 says, “And sitting down they watched him there.” ”Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do . . .’’ (Luke 23:34). He asked forgiveness for their sin.

It’s a good thing that he did because a centurion in charge of the execution was saved; and a whole company of Pharisees, and much later Saul of Tarsus, who probably was in crowd of unbelievers that followed months later, was also saved on the Damascus Road.

We should not count ourselves out when adversity comes. Neither should we lose the capacity to forgive our persecutors because in such forgiveness the Gospel spreads.

Even when the world puts us on a cross we must remember Romans 8:28"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Don’t count yourself out; a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:

WE HAVE A DUTY TO SHOW COMPASSION: On the cross, Christ showed that he both felt the pain of suffering himself and was concerned about others. In his own agony, he expressed, “I thirst.” Suffering from the pain of the cross he expressed that feeling of thirst for water, but also for mankind to know God and to know him fully. We see him place his own fate in God’s hands when he cries out “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Yet, while he is concerned about his own suffering he also shows compassion. Hanging in despair he cries out “Woman, Behold thy son.” In so doing he put his mother in the care of John. Then he responded to the repentant cry of the thief on his right and said, “This day shall you be with me in paradise.” Despite his own agony and suffering, he showed compassion for others.

The challenge for believers today is to do the same. To reach out to others and to feel their pain even while we feel our own.

Jesus bore two crosses in one. One for himself and one for the world.

One cross for the sinful nature of mankind and one cross for my personal misgivings.

One cross for the shortsightedness of the world, and one cross for personal near sightedness.

One cross for the wayward heart of the world, and one cross for my own hard and callused heart.

Perhaps that’s what prompted Dr. Watts to ask, “Was it for crimes that I had done, He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity! grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

It is done

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we commemorate the last words of Jesus on the

cross, we must remember his last saying, “It is finished.”

In a matter of hours what had begun in the beginning was coming to a close.

In a matter of hours, a journey that had come through 42 generations was reaching its end.

When we hear the seven last sayings we hear the final words on the cross side of salvation.

The first three words from the cross relate primarily to others, and Jesus spoke them between 9:00 a.m. and noon (Mark 15:25). First He asked forgiveness for those who were crucifying Him and promised to be with the penitent thief in paradise. He made provision for the care of His mother by John in his third saying.

The last four words refer to his personal suffering and were spoken between noon and 3:00 p.m. He uttered the cry of desolation, quoting Psalm 22:1 in the Aramaic language “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

He expressed His thirst, (John 19:28) and issued the cry of victory in his final w ords, “It is finished” and “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

When Jesus said, “It is finished,” it meant his cross work was done, but there was more to be said and done.

Those words on the cross were not the last words. We know they were not the last words because His first words after His resurrection were, “Woman, why are you weeping?’ (John 20:15 NKJV).

He spoke many words after that. He commissioned the disciples to go to all the world.

He challenged them to teach, preach and baptize!

He also told them that a comforter would come.

His last words were, “But ye shall receive power..”

His last words contained a promise of empowerment when the Holy Ghost comes!

His last word is the last word!

God always has the last word!

We should remember the last words of Jesus:

—Who picked his own mother and was the same age as His father

—Who went to school, but taught His teachers

—Who hungered for bread but was the living bread

—Who said He was thirsty but at the same time was the living water

—Who could walk through doors, while telling the world he’s was the only door!

We must remember his last words because when life’s problems give us sadness, it helps us to remember that God’s got the last word, because he can take your sadness and give you gladness!

If life has given you doubt, God’s got the last word, he can take your doubt and give you assurance!

If your troubles have given you bondage, God’s got the last word; he can take your bondage and give you freedom!

For every cross you bear, God’s got the last word!

For every ditch someone digs for you, God’s got the last word!

The world may declare, “Put him down!” But for every “put down” God’s got the last word!

They took the first word and nailed him to a cross. They heard him speak seven words and thought that was the last of the word.

On Calvary, Jesus dropped his head in the locks of his shoulder, but that wasn’t the last word!

They stuck a spear in His side, but that wasn’t the last word!

He cried out to his father, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.” But that wasn’t the last word!

Even though they buried him in a borrowed tomb and he stayed there for three days and nights; that wasn’t the last word either, because Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

One of these old days he’s coming back again. When he does I want to be in the number who hears his last words to saints, “Servant, well done!”

No. 9638-Inspiration

Rise and Shine

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 20, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." Isaiah 60:1-2

Introduction

Have you ever awakened at night and waited anxiously to see the sunrise? It also happens when you have spent a long fearful night in the dark and you can't wait to see the day break. If you have ever driven long hours in the night, you know what it means to look anxiously for the first signs of daybreak; because soon the sun will rise.

If we are not careful, life can create a black hole for each of us that will be so dark and bleak that we can never see the light of day. Do you remember what we were taught about black holes in space? Black holes are created by large stars that die by collapsing on themselves. As they die, they shrink smaller and smaller and become heavier and heavier. Their gravitational force becomes so strong that they pull nearby objects into themselves. A black hole, therefore, cannot rise and shine. Black holes pull other stars in and let nothing out-not even light. When we get in a black hole, we can't rise and we suck everyone around us down as well!

Have you been there? What's your black hole situation? Maybe it's when we keep working, but the bills keep getting higher and higher! Maybe it's when we make two steps forward and then make three steps backward! Maybe it's when we have been knocked down so much that we feel we can't get up! When that happens, we start to pull down everyone around us. Our energy and enthusiasm is zapped! Our hope is lost! We wish we could just go somewhere and sleep and then wake up and find out that this has all been a dream! Sometimes, when we are in this black hole, we get drunk or use drugs. Sometimes we just eat, eat and eat. Sometimes we shop and buy useless things. In the process, we pull everything and everyone down around us.

Those who have been there can testify that the only way they were able to get out of their own darkness and see the light of day, was to release the power of God in their lives and allow Jesus to shine upon them.

That's the strength of the resurrection message. The disciples came to the tomb at a point when their hopes were at their lowest and the fears were at their highest. They

were in a black hole! The women came to Jesus in the dark, but they soon found the light of a new day.

As Christians, we should remember that just as the disciples came to Jesus in the dark, but arose to a new powerful life in Christ believers today should do the same. That's why the old warriors sang, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Isaiah as he encourages believers to look toward the coming of Christ and arise with new hope.

The 60th chapter begins as a word of hope after the sad picture that was painted in chapter 59. Isaiah 59:9-11 describes Israel as walking in darkness, being in prison, groping along the walls, having no eyes, groaning in anguish, and, finally, dead.

This chapter begins with a glorious command: "Arise, shine, for your light has come!"

P.G. Mathew says, "Isaiah anticipated such a Redeemer, describing him in various places as the Messiah, a Davidic king, the Suffering Servant, Immanuel, the Son of God, the God/man. This Redeemer is not a black hole; he is the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing in his wings. He is high and exalted, the glorious One, the One who is thrice-holy, yet who also dwells with those who are contrite and brokenhearted. It is he who can give us life and light and enable us to rise and shine."

This power to help us shine is sprinkled throughout the book of Isaiah. Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," and Isaiah 59:20 promises, "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion,and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." Isaiah 58:8 says, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily:and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. It is accented by Isaiah 58:10 which says, "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear . . . then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." And here in Isaiah 60 we read, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you"

Our light has come! The Lord knows our terrible condition. It is time to rise and shine.

Light in darkness

Those who are trying to find their way out of their own black holes should not despair; there is hope. We should glean several truths for our daily living:

WE CANNOT RISE AND SHINE ON OUR OWN: It is virtually impossible for those

who have fallen into darkness to find the light dependent on their own power alone.

Most of us depend on an outside stimulus to help us wake up each morning: an alarm clock, blowing of a train horn, birds chirping, or someone telling us to rise and shine. Without it we would probably oversleep. We have wandered into the darkness and fallen into a black hole, we need help. If that black hole is finances, we need financial help. If it is marital trouble, we need counseling. If it is an addition, we need intervention.

We are commanded by God to "rise and shine for your light has come," but we can't get up alone. We are like the woman in the Life Alert commercial, who cries out, "Help I have fallen and I can't get up!" –Once she bought a Life-Alert device she could get help at the push of a button. The key to answering the command to rise is to ask God to help you. If want to climb out of the black hole we should allow the power of God to lift us and help us stand. Can those who are dead in their sins rise and shine? Can people who are absorbed in themselves rise above their narcissism? Can the thief rise above his kleptomania? Not alone! But there is a redeemer who is willing to help you climb out. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Ask the savior to help you, comfort strengthen and keep you. He is willing to aid you. He will carry you through."

WHEN WE LIVE AND ACT BY FAITH WE SHINE: When a person crawls out of a black hole and steps out on faith; he or she shines! He shines because Christ, the light of the world, shines through him. She shines because now everyone can see that it is obviously the power of God guiding her everyday. To shine means to arise out of an unholy situation, better, stronger, bolder and more confident. The believer who steps out of the debris of a failed relationship and continues marching forward, shine! The believer who is enduring an illness or physical handicap, but courageously plunges into the world anyway, shines! The person who steps out of an unholy lifestyle and begins a chaste, holy, restrained, and obedient life that is pleasing to God, really shines!

Galatians 5 gives us a picture of a life in the black hole, and what happens we we rise and shine. It's all in in four verses. Verses 19-21 describe life in the black hole: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The next two verses describe what happens when rise and shine. Galatians 5:22-23 read, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:against such there is no law.

To shine means that husbands will love their wives, that children will obey their parents, and wives will respect their husbands. To shine means we will walk in the light of the gospel and live by God's commandments. To shine means to separate ourselves from the corrupt lifestyles and cultures of the world.

To shine also means that we are crippled by those who believe we cannot succeed; who talk about us and belittle our dreams. We are living a faith filled, obedient life and

God. We will be victorious and God will be glorified because we intend to shine!

EXPECT HATERS WHEN YOU RISE: Believers who have failed and are making moves to rise again, should be aware that not everyone will be happy to see them rise! When Jesus raised Lazarus from his black hole, there were many who were happy, but John 12:10 says that there were plots to kill Lazarus again by those who did not want him to shine as an example of Christ's power. Think of that! They hated and plotted on him just because he arose and was a shining example of God's redeeming power! We should not expect the devil to be happy about the fact that you have risen from your pity party and have decided to let God show you how to manage your life! The devil won't be happy that you no longer accept failure as your lot in life! The devil and his imps will hate on you every single day of your life. Don't get upset! God is shining in your life and the world sees it.

People will say that you have changed! They are correct, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and all things become new!" Rise and Shine anyway! You

People who want to pull you back into that black hole, will say that you think you are more than they are! The are correct. They have accepted defeated you have decided that "Nothing shall separate me from the Love of God…in all these things we are more than conquerors!" Rise and Shine anyway!

Rise and shine and the glory of the Lord will come into your life. If haters don't like it; they have a problem!"

Looking for the Sonrise

Finally brothers and sisters, we must remember that those who have suffered through the long darkness of a spiritual night are strengthened when the SONrises!

The SON is the son of God and when he rises in any life, we rise and we shine!

Every child of God ought to be able to peer beyond the dark and murky cloud that veils the glistening rays of a new day begun and resolve in his mind despite the hard times I've seen and troubles I've endured, I will rise and shine and give God the glory!

I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me what little I have, I will rise and shine!

I may not be of the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another another day, I will rise and shine!

I will arise and allow the Son of God to rise in my life every day.

To a world that is lost in darkness Christ comes as a refreshing SONrise.

The disciples saw the crucifixion and saw only the sunset. They saw the sunset but they forgot about SONrise!

Today many have seen a failure or frustration and have been so carried away by their failure that they have forgotten about SONrise!

Somebody stumbled along the way, but be of good cheer, there is a SONrise so, rise

and shine!

Somebody has suffered along the way don't get discouraged, there is a SONrise; so, rise and shine!

Someone's family has been touched by the chilly fingers of death, hold up your head, there is a SONrise, so rise and shine!

At SONrise we learn that God can help us:

—Get up when we are down

—Keep going when we feel like stopping

—Live it up so we won't have to live it down

—Rebuild that which has fallen down

—Be happy in an unhappy world

—Be calm in the midst of the storm

—Do right when everything is going wron

At Calvary the disciples saw only the sunset, they could not see the SONrise!

They saw the old rugged cross, but they forgot that Jesus told them that if temple is destroyed he would build it again in three days. They saw the sunset but they forgot about the SONrise!

They saw Jesus lifted up between two thieves and they forgot that Jesus said "And I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." They saw the sunset but they forgot about the SONrise!

They saw the soldiers pierce him in the side and they forgot that Jesus said No man taketh my life, but I lay it down. No greater love than this than a man would lay down his life for his friends. They saw the sunset but they forgot about the SONrise!

They saw the darkness over spread the sky and they forgot that Jesus said I am the light of the world. In the light there can be no darkness. They saw the sun set but forgot about the SONrise.

They heard Jesus call out to his father: "Why hast thou forsaken me" and they forgot John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave is only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." They saw the sunset but they forgot about SONrise!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but they forgot about the Sonrise!

But early Sunday morning the women can to the tomb and found he was not there.

They ran to tell everybody its Sonrise!

Lift up your heads, the Son is shining again!

Jesus, the Lord of Lords, is shining again!

Jesus, the King of Kings, is shining again!

No. 9639-Funeral

Rejoice

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

April 26, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Rejoice in the Lord alway:and again I say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4

Introduction

It is easy to be joyful when a child is born, but is it easy to be joyful with a loved one has passed away? It is easy to take a bundle of joy in our arms and feel the joy of the moment. A baby has so much potential and such a bright future ahead. We are thrilled at that moment. Yet, we don't seem to share that same happiness at the death of a loved one, no matter how saintly or close to God they lived. The spirit of joy seems to slip past us and fades in the shadows of death.

The ability to be joyful in any situation is a distinctive quality that everyone does not have, but most seek in the course of their lives. The humanity in us responds to pleasing outcomes or bright prospects. Conversely, it is our nature to feel emptiness when there is a momentary loss or if it is projected into the future.

As a general rule, we are thrilled when we can see the bright side of a situation. Believers go one step further, expressing a joy that issues from a faith that says, Whatever makes God happy brings me joy regardless of the circumstance for me. This is a vibrant joy that exists every day and grows continuously stronger.

We can only remember the perspective of Job about life's ups and downs. Job received both the good and the hard to swallow from God, but after he had received the worst declared, The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

As Christians, have learned to have a spirit of joy regardless of our situation, because we humble ourselves before the will of God. We revel in the knowledge God still loves us, and his actions are according to his divine plan and timetable. Therefore, even in our sorrow, we rejoice!

Exposition

This text focuses on the Apostle Paul as he announces his joy to the Philippians.

In A.D. 61- 63, Paul was in prison in Rome, about 10 years after he had founded the church in Philippi and about three or four years after he had last visited there.

Apparently he had begun to wonder if they had forgotten him (Philippians 4:10). Then Epaphroditus arrived from faraway Philippi with an offering of money. Paul was deeply touched. Epaphroditus had almost lost his life on the journey. When he recovered Paul sent him to Philippi with this beautiful letter.

As we read it in the aftermath of his life, it seems like a letter from the grave as he listed off the people whom he thanked.

In the first three verses of the text, he thanked those who labored with him, especially the sainted women, who labored with him as a preached the gospel.

In verse four, he encouraged those who were concerned about him to rejoice always in the Lord. Even with his imprisonment, he instructed them to rejoice. He began the verse with rejoice, and he ended it with rejoice.

In verse ten, he thanked those who care for him at every given opportunity. Although he often refused their help; they helped him anyway.

At verse 14, he said, "Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction." He commended them for dealing with him in his suffering and troubles.

His words to the Philippians were inspirational. He encouraged them to think positively, even about the difficult and disturbing possibility of his imprisonment and death. He summed it up by encouraging them in verse eight to: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The words that lingered in their ears were: "Rejoice, Rejoice!"

What it means to rejoice

Paul used the word rejoice two times in the text. His deliberate redundancy calls attention to the word rejoice because inherent in its meaning are even greater truths:

INTENSE JOY IN THE LORD: Joyce or Joice is a Latin word that means the joy of The Lord. For generations mothers have named their daughters Joyce as a way of emphasizing their feeling that the little ones they brought into the world reflected the joy they shared as mothers as well their hopes of a life that would be lived in the joy of The Lord. For ordinary people, the joy of the Lord has a decidedly simplistic meaning. A life lived in the joy of the Lord is one that is lived in his presence and is dedicated to building his kingdom. It is a life that is lived in service to the church, building a godly family, and ministering to those who cannot help themselves.

Yet, when Paul wrote to the Philippians he did not tell them to joy in the Lord told him to rejoice. The significance of rejoice in this context is in the prefix "re" which has a double meaning and helps us to understand the subliminal suggestion Paul made this text.

Whenever the prefix "re" precedes a word it can have one of two meanings or both. First, "re" is an intensive prefix. It means that which follows is greatly intensified or operates on another level. A reborn man lives a fuller life. A restored kingdom is a greater

kingdom. A revived dream is more intense! To rejoice in the Lord is to intensely serve him with a passion. Perhaps this is the meaning of Psalm 48:1 which says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." To rejoice is not to just serve the Lord, but to serve him with a passion. It's living the Christian life and loving it!

THE JOY OF THE LORD-AGAIN! Secondly, the prefix "re" also means that something is about to be done again.

To repeat is to do the same thing again.

To remix is to use the same elements, shuffle them, and present them again.

To recite is to give an oral account again.

To remember is to call up stored information for current use.

To reenter is to enter again.

To "Re" anything means we are going to do it one more time.

So, when Paul urged the Philippians to rejoice he urged them revel in the joy of The Lord, again, but to do it more intensely than in the past!

To rejoice is the idea of celebrating and praising in hard times just as much or more than we did when situations were better.

The difference between the two in this context is a reflection of the circumstance and the promise.

LET THE LOVE CONTINUE: To rejoice in the context of this gathering today takes into account all of the troubles faced this Joyce has faced and indicates that the joy of the Lord must continue in the midst of good times or tough times, with an even greater level of intensity and faith.

We can rejoice when we remember how God has blessed us in the past as He brought us to the present. We feel happy all over again!

That's what this family will do. When they think of all the good times they have shared with this Joyce, they will feel happy all over again. They will rejoice!

They will get happy all over again when they hear her favorite song!

They will get happy all over again when her favorite television show is on the air!

They will get happy all over again when someone remembers a saying that she said so often!

This family has plenty of reasons to rejoice!

We can rejoice when see what God has done and is still doing today.

If God has blessed us before, He will bless us again, so we rejoice.

If God has healed us before, He can heal us again, so we rejoice.

If God has lifted us before, He can lift us again, so we rejoice.

We rejoice in the middle of hard times, even before we are delivered.

We don't have to wait until the battle is over, we can shout now.

Reason to ReJoice

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that since we have been promised that those who are absent from the body are present with the Lord, we should take comfort in that promise and rejoice!

We are tempted to experience depression and the blues and find it difficult to understand the joy of the Lord!

We should lift up our heads and realize that we are celebrating a tale of two Joyces today. One that lived among us, who cared for her mother, raised her children, served in the church and was a friend to the neighborhood.

This Joyce served and led a pious life until her body wore out and strength failed.

Yet, this is also the story of another Joyce, the born again Joyce who is absent from this earthly house, but present with the Lord. That's the Rejoice!

This Joyce had to cry sometimes, but in the Land of Rejoice, there shall be no more tears!

This Joyce had heartaches and bodily pains, but in the Land of Rejoice, there are no more pains!

This is not her fate alone; this happens to every believer who walks closely with the Lord!

We should rejoice as long as the Lord is with us.

When the Lord is with you, it won't matter how rocky the road or how high the mountain. When the Lord is with you there is:

-Peace in the midst of your Problems

-Calm in the midst of your crises

-Gladness in the midst of your sorrows

-Assurance in the midst of your affliction

I don't know about you, but I have decided that I will rejoice and lift up the name of Jesus because. If the Lord stands by me, he'll give me a:

-Light to shine in my darkness

-Straight path to walk, when I can't find my way

-Lift up when I've fallen down

-Strong hand to hold, when I'm feeling weak

Don't be discouraged!

There may be trouble all around us, yet we will rejoice in him because he brings us joy!

There may be confusion all around us, yet we will rejoice in him because he brings us direction!

There may be weakness all around us, yet we will rejoice in him because he brings me strength!

There is a spirit of defeat all around us, yet we will rejoice in him because he brings us the victory!

We will rejoice because God sent his Son to die for us on Calvary and wash away our sins!

We rejoice because early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hands!

We will rejoice because our God looks down on us every day and showers us with blessings from heaven!

We will rejoice because the Lord is blessing us right now!
We will rejoice because he will never leave us alone!

—

On Saturday, April 19, 2014 Joyce Ann Simmons, This Joyce, was visited in her agony by the angel of death and told it was time to…rejoice in the presence of the Lord!

No. 9640-Inspiration

When you are down, Jesus shows up

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 27, 2014

SCRIPTURE: And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Luke 24:36-39

Introduction

Have you ever questioned God, if only for a moment? If you are like most believers, there were a few times in your life when you doubted that the promises God has made to the faithful will actually happen. In fact, when we experience sickness, financial loss, problems or difficulties, not just one regretful thought comes into our hearts, but many.

After Easter, the disciples were down in the dumps. They questioned all the promises that were made and were extremely poor in spirit.

Then Jesus showed up! He appeared in the midst of them and immediately they were afraid and thought he was a ghost.

They panicked. They panicked because he was not there, and then they panicked when he showed up.

We panic when we can't figure a way out of a situation, and we envision the worst. In a crowded theatre, the word fire shouted loudly can trigger panic. As people look for exits in crowded isles, each person envisions himself suffocating and dying a horrible death. At that time, many lose control, climb over others, scream, cry, run, kick and struggle for survival. Many have lost their lives in panicky situations, not all of them were life threatening, but they appeared to be.

Even if an emergency responder shows up, they still panic.

Crises can cause anxiety. Loss of a job or source of income can also be a panic situation. A health crisis can promote fear. Whenever panic occurs rational thinking and faith based actions are difficult.

Generally, we panic out of fear. We see the worst that can happen actually occurring, and we attempt to avoid that situation. When we panic there is disorder, disunity,

mistrust and confusion. Even faith gets challenged when we panic.

For the disciples, the fact that Jesus died on Calvary was a panic situation. They were exposed to legal prosecution, loss of property and their families were exposed as well. Most of all, his crucifixion meant an end to their dreams of building the kingdom of God and freeing people from the shackles of bondage to the Roman empire. When Jesus showed up there was a different kind of panic. Their faith was shaken once again because they should not have been surprised. They should have expected him to appear as he said he would; their lack of faith caused them to panic again.

Is there a personal or family situation that is reaching the alarm stage in your life?

Are you about to lose it?

Before you push your panic button, why not try one last thing... stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.

As believers, we have learned that God has a tendency to show up at the right time. When he shows up, he usually shows out. Don't panic. God is in control!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ at the end of the resurrection day.

The crucifixion of Christ was a tremendous blow to his disciples. They had high hopes of establishing the kingdom of God on earth with Jesus as King and themselves as his royal court, some sitting on his left and others on his right. As the stone was sealed in front of the tomb, their hopes were also sealed, too.

Early Sunday morning the women came to the tomb to anoint his body with spices. They had hastily wrapped him without completing the process. When they left home, they fully expected to find Jesus' body just as they had left it. Instead, they found the stone rolled away.

The disciples enclosed themselves in a room and shut the doors. They were afraid for their lives. Since Jesus had been crucified, some concluded they would be next. It was a striking contrast to the boldness they had shown just a few days earlier. Peter was so strong that he cut off a man's ear at the garden and swore he would never reject the Lord. Now he was huddled with the others, shivering and afraid.

Their fear was equaled by their surprise when Christ appeared himself. He challenged them to look at his hands and his feet, to bring him something to eat and even invited them to inspect the nail prints in his hands and feet.

In verse 38, he asked the question, "Why are ye troubled? Why do thoughts arise?"

He asks the same question today.

Down in the Dumps

The disciples were at a low point. They felt the same sense of dread that Elijah felt after he had successfully challenged the prophets of Baal then found himself hiding under a Juniper tree. We appreciate their frustration but learn some essential truths from it all.

JESUS SHOWED UP WHEN THEY WERE AFRAID: To say the disciples were disappointed is an understatement. They were frustrated and frightened. Yet, when Christ showed up he reignited their faith and they were ready to stand boldly with him and for him.

In our own failures and let downs, our prayer is that God would show up in our spirit. When he does, he will inspire us to use resources that have been laying dormant for a long time.

When Jesus shows up, he inspires us to call upon energies and resources that have not been used in a long while. Someway or somehow we rise to the occasion with God's help.

Often we draw upon resources of spirit and strength that usually go unused.

God knows that sometimes we need a few frustrations to cause us to use what we have. In this context, our frustrations take on a new meaning.

While frustrations are crippling, in that they help us to draw upon our strengths, they are also healing.

While frustrations are retarding, in that they sometimes encourage the use of energies otherwise untapped, frustrations are also motivating.

While frustrations are bothersome because they enable us to improve present circumstances, frustrations are also helpful.

While frustrations are time consuming, in that the experience of learning from the momentary pause will save time in the future, frustrations serve a purpose.

The disciples arose from their hiding with a stronger faith, no longer held hostage to their own fears.

WHEN JESUS SHOWS UP, WE SEE THE BRIGHT SIDE: What makes being down in the dumps so disheartening is that we lose hope. That's what made the disciples locked behind closed doors such a pitiful sight. They lost hope. They saw Jesus crucified. They saw the tomb. They gave up. They saw no hope or redeeming spirit in their situation, until Jesus showed up. When Jesus showed up, they were able to see the bright side.

There is an old saying that behind every dark cloud, there is a silver lining.

The songwriter says, There is a bright side somewhere. In our disappointments, God always shows us his grace. In our sickness, tragedies and setbacks, God speaks plainly to our situation, and we find hope. That hope is in the promises of God.

The covenant that God makes with us is what keeps us going. We have his word that he will make a way for us out of no way and be a bridge for us over all of our troubling waters. Therefore, even if life gives us disappointments, we don't give up because God is still on the throne.

WHEN JESUS SHOWS UP WE ARE NOT ALONE: The disciples hid because they thought God had abandoned them. They felt they were all alone. They heard Christ on the cross call out to his father asking, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It was only when Jesus showed up that their faith was restored, and they remembered all of God's promises to believers. Like the disciples, there are times when we feel all alone and abandoned. We feel that we have been forsaken by everyone even our parents.

Those are the lonely times that we can only call on God. Psalm 27:9-10 says, “Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.”

The songwriter says, “What a friend we have in Jesus.” It is a testament to the fact that when all others fail God will be with us and strengthen us.

In Matthew 28, he said, “Lo, I’’ll be with you always, even until the end of the earth.”

When Jesus shows up, we have a friend.

Don’t lose hope

Finally, brothers and sisters, we who know God should not lose hope or be dismayed because God is still on the throne and he will show up on time.

The disciples locked away in their hiding place were at the brink of disaster. They had almost given up; yet in the middle of their dismay, Jesus showed up.

This should be a lesson to those who are dismayed and are on the verge of giving up. Be not dismayed. Dismay implies disillusionment.

When we are dismayed, we lack the courage that it takes to go on!

When we are dismayed, we lack the perception that it takes to see our way clear!

When we are dismayed, we lack the hope that it takes to believe that no matter how terrible it gets; the Lord will make a way!

When we are dismayed, our spirit gets low, and we hang our heads in defeat!

When we are dismayed, our smiling face is replaced by frowns and confusion.

But when Jesus shows up, he begins to turned things around.

We are inspired when Jesus shows up, because when nobody else:

—KNOWS, he knows; CARES, he cares.

—UNDERSTANDS, he understands; ABLE, he is able.

We know he is able because he is the same God who:

—Who rounded the earth in the palm of my hand

—Spangled the night with the moon and stars

—Batted my eyes and made the lightning flash

—Clapped my hands and made the thunder roll

—hollowed the valleys and bulged the mountains up!

Oh, brothers and sisters, these are perilous times in which we live, but we should not despair or be dismayed.

Satan may be in the saddle for a while, but remember God is still on the throne!

If you think the world is getting out of hand, just remember what the little children say: “He’s got the whole world, whole wide world in his hands!”

If the storms rise, be not dismayed

If the winds blow, be not dismayed

If your mountains get hard to climb, be not dismayed

If burdens seem too heavy to bear, be not dismayed

No wonder the songwriter declared, “Be not dismayed what ere betide, God will

take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you!

He showed up, at the beginning of time when He said, let us make man!

He showed up, when he made ways for us out of no way!

He showed up, when he put food on your tables and answered our prayers.

He really showed up, when he picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Golgotha's Hill.

He showed up, when he died out on Calvary!

Early Sunday morning, not only did he show up, but he showed out.

He arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Don't despair, God will take care of you!

No. 9641-Christian Education

Isms

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 4, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth." II Timothy 2:15

Introduction

Have you ever heard of an ism? It's an old saying in the African American subculture that refers to a teaching or belief that has no little or no proof, but seems to be right. Isms are so prevalent that every believer should consciously study the word of God with a hunger to avoid being misled.

There are two types of isms that believers should encounter most often. One type of ism deals practices and rituals among our people and the other deals with faith and religious issues.

There are many practices in the African-American church that are isms, but have little or no support in Scripture. One ism teaches that it is a sin for women to wear the color "red" to worship because red is the color of sin. This ism is supposedly based on Isaiah 1:18 which says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Today, red is still frown upon in many black congregations unless there are special occasions. It is an ism.

Another ism that is taught in black churches is "raising one finger" when someone leaves the building. It is a slavery era practice of excusing movement by indicating that the worshiper has to go to the restroom to do "Number 1." Supposedly, this is commanded by 1 Corinthians 14:40 which says, "let everything be done decently and in order." – There is no bible command to raise one finger, it's an ism.

An ism that is taken extremely serious in many African-American congregations is the supposed curse of death, sickness or bad luck that comes from touching the communion table. This is based on 2 Samuel 6:6 in which a man named Uzzah was helping carry the Ark of the Covenant when it began to fall. He touched it to keep it from falling and scripture says, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God."

The old-timers, having great respect for the Lord's Supper transposed this practice into the black church tradition. While believers should show great respect for holy things, there is no bible scripture that says a person who touches the communion table will die, become sick or have bad luck, - it's an ism.

Isms usually evolve from those who do not fully understand the bible. Some believe the bible is a series truths, each independent of the other and simply opening it and reading somewhere will bring truth. This is dangerous because out of context the there are passages that can misrepresent what God says. For example, those who support the death penalty quote Exodus 21:23-24 which says, "thou shalt give life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand." They do not read the words, of Jesus in Matthew 5:38 which say, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other."

Isms develop whenever practices, beliefs or rituals derive their origins from loose or disconnect interpretations of scripture or doctrine. Isms make sense to the untrained believer who wants to follow God's command. They make no sense at all to those who have armed themselves with a full knowledge of God's word.

Those who believe, but don't study the bible seriously fall victim to isms and cute sayings that may be true, but are not word of God. Phrases such as "if you make one step, God will help you make two" or "God don't like ugly" or "Cleanliness is next to godliness" all sound great to the ears, but they are not in the bible. Those who don't study the bible usually become the victims of those who victimize them by selling them false hope based on blessed oils, anointed candles, and sacred cloths. Those who don't study are easily deceived because they don't study the word for themselves.

As Christians, we study the word regularly and systematically, with instructors of sound doctrine who can help us understand the world in which we live and our own life experiences in the context of God's word. Those who study will never fall victim to isms because they rightly divide the word of truth.

Exposition

Paul in his letter to Timothy, admonished the young minister to study that he might show himself a workman grounded in the doctrine of his faith and motivated by a Christian zeal, but according to knowledge.

Although Paul's letter was directed originally to Timothy, it is generally directed at every man, woman and child that professes Christianity. The admonition to study applies just as much today as it did in Timothy's day.

The need to become fully equipped ambassador's for Christ applies just much today as it did in Timothy's day. The need for thorough training in the doctrine of our church is just as pressing today as it was at the time of this text.

Why we should study

Therefore, it is important for believers to know the Word of God, in context, so that they do not easily become victims of isms. We should:

STUDY TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD: Believers want to know the will of God, but the only way to know that is to study His word to know how he speaks. People have

used many ways to try to learn the will of God for their lives. Some are very humorous and others border on the superstitious. Those who are undecided about what they should do with their lives usually seek assurances opening the bible and pointing to a Scripture and take their directions from whatever scripture their finger finds. A woman stood in front of the judge and tried to explain her strange habits. Your honor she began, the Lord told me to do it. Before I left home, I told the Lord to show me what to do. I opened my bible and I pointed to a verse that said, ''My God shall supply all your needs.'' When I saw them pork chops lying there and nobody was looking I knew Lord laid them out there for me. The judge listened as the woman continued. "About that ring. Just before I left home I opened my bible and pointed to a verse that said, The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. When I saw that ring, I wanted it. It was so shiny. I took it because the bible told me "I shall not want." The judge praised the woman for her belief in God. Then asked her to come to the bench where she kept her bible open to the Ten Commandments. The judge said point right here. The woman touched the bible and the judge said, "God's got another message for you, you pointed to thou shalt not steal. You got 2 years in jail!"

Strange as it seems, people try to find the will of God by contacting mediums, palm readers or calling the Physic connections. There are those who read tea leaves and fortune cookies, while others won't move until they read their daily horoscope to see what the stars say about the day ahead. It seems that some people will go to any lengths to find the will of God except talk to God himself.

God speaks to you in your quiet moments, during or after you have read or meditated on his word. Those who really want to know his will should study his word.

STUDY TO RECOGNIZE FALSE DOCTRINES: There are literally thousands of doctrines, teachings and beliefs floating around the world. Followers want to be sure that what they believe is consistent with the written word of God. "Just because a church door is open, doesn't make its doctrines correct." Some say it doesn't matter what church I attend as long as they believe in God. –That's an ism. Churches are not the same.

Three churches can sit next to each other, but be drastically different. One uses a black new world translation of King James and they call themselves witnesses; their bible has 66 books, but the verses differ from other. The second one is called Baptist. They use a black King James translation and their bible has 66 books, there verses read the same as most. A third church uses a bible too, but it has 81 books and theirs is called Catholic.

We have to seriously study to keep from being confused. One way to avoid confusion is to examine what you believe critically and ask questions. Challenge your teachers to separate isms from doctrine.

Recently, in Atlanta several hundred people formed a new religion called the National Church of Bey. According to Christianity Today, the religion worships Beyoncé' as a living goddess walking among mankind sent by God himself to speak to people and bring hope. . (Beyoncé' has no part of this cult, and does not support its claims).

On Sunday, the believers sing Beyoncé' tunes and praise her. They claim she has saved flawed relationships by insisting that partners put a ring on it. "Drunk in love" is one of the favorite praise songs. They don't claim that Beyoncé' is God but that she is sent from God and has performed miracles of raising dead relationships, hopes and dreams. They quote bible scripture bible scripture, but the "Beyable" their official bible will be their holy word. They fact that hundreds and worship Beyoncé' as a goddess and quoting bible scriptures to support it is an extreme example of an ism.

STUDY TO BE SURE: 1 Timothy 2:15 makes it clear, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

To study the Word is to read it for understanding, compare it with other scriptures, visualize it with the help of historical background, and clarify it through repetitious analysis.

Most bible studies in the Baptist Church are done through the Sunday School and middle of the week bible studies. The church provides for each family, study materials, or books that give an explanation of the scriptures being studied to aid us in our private and family study. Each Sunday, teachers are present to answer questions and lead discussions on truths or points you have discovered in your study of the word.

Although bible study is essential to strengthening faith, there are too many Christians who neglect bible study. Even more unfortunate is the truth that there are many who lead in churches across the nation, whose witness is strong and powerful, but they neglect the church's bible study.

Those who don't study will be the likely victims of the newest ism. They are they prey of those who would victimize them using a mixture of their own ideas and bibles scripture, generally known as isms.

Study for Strength

Finally, brothers and sisters believers should study to build their spiritual strength and fortify their faith.

Paul encouraged youth Timothy to study so that he would have the courage to witness, the faith to endure trials, and the inspiration to deal with moments of desperation.

It has being the experience of most believers that The word of God:

—feeds me when I am hungry!
—Comforts me when I am lonely!
—Corrects me when I am wrong
—refreshes me when I am tired!
—Satisfies me when I am thirsty!
—Lifts me when I am low!
—Challenges me when I am indifferent!
—Sustains me when I am afraid!
—Directs me when I am confused!
—Motivates me when I am discouraged!

—Soothes me when I am dying!

No wonder the scriptures declare, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

No wonder the songwriter wrote, “Hide your word in my heart Oh God.”

If you hide me in your word, it will:

—Bless me when I’m burdened

—Cheer me when I’m sad

—Strengthen me when I’m weak

—Calm me when I’m troubled

—Revive me when I’m weary! Hide your word in my heart oh God!

I don’t know about you brothers and sisters, but I’ve found that the answer to many of our problems is right here in the Bible. The mysteries of the universe are revealed in the Bible!

Don’t waste time on frivolous superstitions; the answer is in the Bible!

Don’t waste time on voodoo doctors and witchcraft; the answer is in the Bible!

Don’t waste time on false practitioners; the answer is in the Bible!

If you are looking for a medicine to cure sickness, let your fingers walk over to Jeremiah 8:22 that reminds us that there is a Balm in Gilead that’s good for the healing of the soul!

If you are discouraged because you don’t seem to have enough to make ends meet, turn to Psalms 37:25 which says, I have been young and now I’m old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread!

If you are looking for courage in the face of adversity, turn to Psalms 27:1, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

If you are looking for a way to success, turn to Matthew 6:33, Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all of these shall be added unto you!

If you are looking for a way to be saved, turn to Romans 10:9, If thou shall confess with the mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved!

His name is Jesus!

Who died on Calvary!

Who arose after three days and nights!

That’s not an ism! It’s a bible-recorded fact!

Jesus is real and is alive today!

No.9642-Inspiration

When your dream gets kicked around

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And he said, the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18:27; "For the king knoweth of these thing, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." Acts 26:26

Introduction

Have you watched children play a game of kickball? It's fun to watch them chase after a ball and kick it from place to place. They laugh, scramble, reach the ball, then kick it, only so that it can repeatedly be kicked? The same is true of the game of soccer. The objective is to kick the ball, and handle the ball without hands until it can be kicked into the goal. When we are playing games, kicking the ball is the goal. However if the object of the game is our dreams, it is not a laughing matter. It isn't fun and certainly is not entertaining.

No one wants their dreams kicked around.

Has anyone ever kicked your dreams around?

Often young people get chuckles from their parents, and sometimes their teachers who are amused when they say they are dreaming about being brain surgeons, engineers, or math specialists. The adults who second-guess youth usually do so because they are peering carefully at their performance in the present without considering the potential of the young person that is speaking. If we have learned anything from history, it should be that we should ration the use of the word never. We should be careful when we way something can't be done. We shouldn't doubt the possibilities that exist for any person who sets his mind on a goal and decides to pursue it with everything he has within him.

Many of the people who set out to achieve a personal goal do so because they bring a controlled passion to their quest. It is a passion fueled by the spirit of God, controlled

by his hand, and protected by his divine power. Christians should turn deaf ears to those who tell them that they can never achieve their goals because they know what the word of God says. They know beyond the shadow of a doubt that if they seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness that all other things will be added unto them.

If God has spoken it; and God has empowered it; it shall be so.

As Christians, we know there will be scoffers who will ridicule our godly inspired dreams, but we are confident in our belief that if God has blessed our aspirations and has spoken it into being, his word will not return to him void.

Exposition

This text reflects on Paul as he stands before Festus and Agrippa telling how his quest to build the kingdom of God has been kicked around repeatedly.

Paul was often criticized for his unwavering faith in the kingdom of God. In this text he is granted a hearing before Festus and Agrippa to defend charges that his actions were seditious and deserved death.

Paul recited his life story as it relates to kingdom building. He told of his belief that Christians were spreading harmful beliefs about God and his attempts to jail them. He also told of his conversion on the Damascus Road. He told of attempts on his life, the accusations, and charges that were brought against him.

As he told his story Festus and Agrippa saw the dream of the kingdom, as described by Paul, being kicked around from town to town, community to community, and kicked around the religious leaders. Even Roman leaders were kicking around his faith as a new idea deserving of thought, but certainly not death.

As Festus listened to Paul, he said in verse 24, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.”

As Agrippa kicked around the idea of being saved by Christ and being raised from the dead he said in verse 28, “Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian.”

They kicked around the idea of Christianity, but neither man embraced it as his own.

The idea of the resurrection of the dead seemed impossible. They kicked it around as an impossible dream.

In Luke 18:27 Jesus address the core reason that some only kick around godly inspired dreams: Anything that issues from the mind of men may be impossible, but that which comes from the heart of God is not impossible.

This text focuses on Jesus as he reminds believers that what seems impossible to men is possible with God.

There is no height that is too high for God to reach. There’s no depth so low that God cannot go beneath it. And there is no valley so wide that God cannot expand it. Lives in God’s hands can do the impossible, reach the unreachable, cross the uncrossable as they reach heights never imagined.

There is nothing that believers cannot achieve when God is paving their way.

The world may kick a believer’s godly inspired dream around, but the word of God

remains true: all things are possible with God.

Kicked around

Believers learn to expect the devil to kick their dreams around. Believers should therefore consider the following:

WE MUST RESIST THE DEVIL: To succeed spiritually we must resist the devil.

The devil pushes us to promote ourselves in many ways. He promotes us to do things so that we can receive personal pleasure, credit, praise or power.

We are told that if we want to spiritually succeed we must resist these motivations.

We should ask the question, "Why am I doing? What I am doing?"

What is my motivation?

When it is over do I expect praise, credit or power?

If so, we are encouraged to resist devilish impulses.

The weapons we use to resist the devil are: faith and prayer.

The man or woman who operates on faith and prayer is able to resist the devil.

God will help us recognize whether an individual action is according to his will, when we pray before we act.

He will also help us to stand when the devil attacks.

To resist the devil we cannot afford to abandon our prayer lives.

If we went through this week without taking time to read our bible or share in a moment of personal prayer, our resistance was low.

Satan will find plenty of room to impose himself on our thoughts and actions.

He can't get a word in if we are constantly focused on the Lord and his kingdom.

Resisting the devil is the first-thing believers must do when the tries to kick your dreams around.

DON'T LET THE WORLD STEAL YOUR DREAM: Sometimes the world is envious of your dream and wants to take it from you. There are other times that the world around you desires to keep you in place by stealing your idea. They tell you that you don't really want that dream or how bad life will be for you if you actually achieve your dream. Don't let them steal your dream.

Consider the slave master who made a point of trampling on any dreams that his slaves would ever have of becoming free. Even when it came to the slaves dreams about heaven the master thought it important to trample those dreams too. One day the master called in his favorite house slave Tom. Tom said the master. I had a dream last night. The old slave who had a reputation for being quick-witted and wise, bowed his head, faked ignorance and said you did "Massa, let's hear bout yo dream!" The master said, "I dreamed that I died and there was some sort of mix up and I ended up in Nigra heaven. It was an awful looking place. There was Nigras everywhere. The streets were muddy. The buildings were falling down. Watermelon rinds and pig's feet were laying everywhere. It was a horrible looking place." The old slave was quick to answer, but he had to find a way to say it just right where the master, who wasn't too bright, would not feel insulted.

"Massa. I'se glad that you mention that, because it be a strange thang because I had a strange dream too. I dreamed I died and there was a mix up and I ended up in slave master's heaven.

It was a real pretty place. It had streets that were shiny and yellow like Gold. It had 12 pretty gates that were smooth and pearly white. They had rows and rows of big houses called mansions and they lined every street. There wasn't no trash laying around, no watermelon rinds and no hog pens. It was a real clean place.

There was just one thang that looked kinda strange ...there wasn't a single soul in the whole place!"

Don't let anyone kick your dream around by telling you that what God has inspired in your heart cannot become a reality.

MANY HAVE HAD DREAMS KICKED AROUND SO MUCH THAT THEY ABANDONED THEM: There are many who have great dreams for themselves, but circumstance has prompted them to cut that dream short. A student who dreamed of being a doctor aborted that dream when he stumbled upon the fact that certain anatomy and biology classes needed for his studies would be difficult. There are many who have dreamed great dreams but have abandoned them because the pursuit of their ideas seemed so far reaching.

Is there anything too hard for God?

Is the possibility of failure so great that you believe that you and God cannot overcome its threat?

If we carry our dreams to full term, despite our fear of failure and discovery, God will bless us for the act of faith even though he frowned on the weakness that prompted our failure in the first place.

God can make our dreams happen

Finally we must consider that the key to making our dreams happen, within his will, is prayer.

Prayer is the sincere desire of the heart and when that prayer reflects our desire to do the will of God we get God's attention quickly.

Those who are acting on grand visions that God has given them, must be reminded that the bigger your goal, the stronger the faith that is needed to achieve the goal. The world will try to kick your dream around

When the world prepares to kick your dreams around, you should prepare to meet its scorn with a giant sized faith.

Big faith is fed by regular worship and praise. To feed that faith our worship and bible study habits must change.

When the world tries to kick your dreams around, meet its opposition with prayer and faith.

I don't know about your experience, but I found out that prayer changes things!

Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!
Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!
Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!
Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!
Daniel will tell you that prayer is good for the Lion's den!
The Three Hebrew Boys will tell you that prayer is good for the fiery furnace!
I know what prayer can do! I've tried it for myself!
Don't let anyone kick your dreams around because:
In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!
In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!
In Jesus' name, wounds have been healed!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

No. 9643-Cross

The demands of the cross

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, Louisiana

May 18, 2014

SCRIPTURE::"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:23-24.

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to consider the demanding ways of the Christian life? Years ago, many responded to the command "Take up your cross and follow me" under the false pretense that living the Christian life would be easy, troubles would go away and blessings would instantly start to fall from heaven. In the intervening time we have learned that "bearing the cross" makes many demands on us.

The demands of the cross require us to approach life and its challenges with a godly attitude that is not overwhelmed or frustrated by the present moment.

For Christ, the cross demanded that he suffer humiliation, ridicule, physical pain and even life.

For believers today, the cross makes similar demands. It demands obedience to God rather than man, a focus on the will of God rather than prosperity, and the expectation of opposition and struggle.

The demands of the cross bleed into life situations. The cross demands that teachers endure the rudeness of students and parents as they strive to instill values of godliness, industry and excellence in minds that may not fully understand the nature of your effort.

The cross demands resilience from those who reach out to help others because often those who are helped most are the first criticize and discredit you. We continue to help others despite the prospect that our compassion may not yield the desired result in everyone.

The cross demands tolerance for those who have to put up with the antics of the ignorant and uncouth among us. We are challenged to try to reason with them through the power of God.

The cross demands that we do as Jesus commanded us to do with the spirit of love as our motivation; recognizing and expecting frustration. The cross demands that we show love anyway.

In 1989 the following thought appeared in Reader's Digest. It seems to illustrate the demands of the cross in our life situations:

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway.

If you do good people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest pride. Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for some underdogs anyway.

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight Build anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you've got anyway!

Cross demands that preachers do not become frustrated by disinterested masses who would rather watch a ball game than listen to the word. They must preach anyway

The cross demands that Choir directors not be overwhelmed with complaining singers who don't want to rehearse; direct anyway.

The cross demands that Sunday school teachers do not become apathetic about students who rarely study their lessons teach them anyway. It comes with the territory!

The cross demands that all believers expect a little rainfall and every so often a storm, but remember that behind every cloudy day a sunbeam is born!

As Christians, we accept the fact that cross makes demands on us every day. We take up our crosses daily, with the full knowledge that if there is no cross, there is no crown.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus in three circumstances: as he enquires what men think of him, as he considers his own suffering and death, and as he prompts his disciples to consider their sufferings for him.

In these three instances Christ painted a picture of the nature of the work, the manner of the testimony and attitude of the disciple. The nature of the Christian service will often be misunderstood as the public forms its own opinion of what a Christian is supposed to be, regardless of the facts. Christ healed many; fed crowds, and performed miracles and public opinion put him in every category other than the one he wanted. He was often frustrated by what people thought but was consoled to know that those close to him understood the true nature of His work.

He also told his disciples that if they were to share in the Kingdom it would require considerable self-denial on their part. The disciples took the challenge and went far beyond what Christ required and even gave their lives. The disciples and the Apostles, who followed him accepted the demands of the cross at face value.

The public had no idea, but Jesus knew demands of the cross and he wanted each of his disciples to know that bearing the cross could be costly, but there was no reward unless they were willing go all the way

Demands of the cross

Bearing the cross today makes demands on our time, talents and resources, yet believers do so willingly and cheerfully for the sake of building the kingdom of God.

THE CROSS DEMANDS SACRIFICE: Christ never painted a rosy picture to those who chose to follow him. He told them to expect to lose friends, money and prestige if they followed him. He also told them to expect to be persecuted by family, friends and the community in general. No one who followed Christ expected prosperity or riches in this life. They expected to help build the kingdom of God on earth and to eventually enter the kingdom of heaven. They were prepared for the sacrifices. Today, believers must also know that the cross requires sacrifice. It requires that believers give up some of their leisure time, redirect some of their talents and pour some of their money and properties into kingdom building. It will be a sacrifice, but it will be no greater than the sacrifices of Christ himself.

The cross demanded that he suffer for the sinful nature of mankind and for our personal misgivings.

The cross demanded that he suffer for the shortsightedness of the world, and for our personal nearsightedness.

The cross demanded that he suffer for the wayward hearts of the world, and for our own hard and calloused hearts.

The cross demanded that he die to for us.

Perhaps that's what prompted Dr. Watts to ask, "Was it for crimes that I had done, He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

THE CROSS DEMANDS COMMITMENT: Those who follow Christ must be committed. There is no room for the half-hearted. Unfortunately there are many who are not fully committed to the cross. These are those who respond in the perspective of the barnyard animals; the chicken, cow and the hog; that decided they would give of themselves to provide breakfast for the farmer. The chicken suggested that the farmer should be served a glass of milk a scrambled egg and bacon. At that suggested the Hog shouted, 'That's not a good idea. All the cow has to do is squirt some milk. All the chicken has to do is lay an egg, but for the farmer to have bacon, it will take the whole hog!" - In a similar sense the cross demands the whole hog! The bible describes the half-hearted as being "double minded." James 1:8 says, "The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

The cross demands a focused commitment with the full knowledge that whatever we experience along the way, Christ has already been there, too.

If we suffer and wonder why, we share that burden with our Lord, who also suffered and wondered why even though the royalty within him knew why.

On the cross, Christ asked his father, Why hast thou forsaken me?

If we wander into the wilderness in our own life experiences where we had to sort things out Jesus says, I've been there!

At the beginning of His experience He was tempted by the devil on three occasions, but He finally decided to follow the will of God.

Have you seen those around you lose hope in their ability to the impossible?

Jesus says, I've been there!

Peter walked on water, doing the impossible but lost hope and began to sink even though he was looking the master in the face.

When a storm arose on the sea, the passengers and crew began to worry and fret and lose hope even though Jesus was on board. Jesus even watched as Peter denied him repeatedly. He's been there.

The demands of the cross are frustrating, but we are not alone. We have a friend who has been there, but remained committed to the cross.

The joy of the Christian relationship is that it provides us an opportunity to share our experience with someone who has been there.

No wonder the songwriter says,

What a friend we have in Jesus.

All our sins and griefs to bear.

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

No cross, no cross

Finally, brothers and sisters we must note that while the cross makes demands on us, our reward is a crown.

While the cross makes demands on us, it is not without reward.

We have chronicled the long list of demands that the cross makes on us, but there is also a longer list of reward.

Crowns are the end result for those who suffer in the Lord!

Crowns are the final reward for Saints who are faithful in bearing the cross.

Gain is the final reward of those who forsook the world and chose to follow Jesus.

Pain is the agony of the cross, but gain is the ecstasy of the crown of life. But if there is no cross, there is no crown, if there is no pain there is no gain.

No warfare means no triumph!

No struggle means no success!

No tribulation means no jubilation

No fears mean no cheers

No devastation means no glorification

Those who meet the demands of the cross must also remember that their sacrifice demands a heavenly reward!

Revelation 2:7 "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Rev. 2:11 He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Rev 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Rev 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

There can be no cross without a crown!

The cross stands as a symbol of:

-Strength in the midst of weakness, but with that cross comes a crown of life

-Victory in the midst of defeat, but with that cross comes the wreath of victory

No wonder the songwriter declared, at the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!

Over 2000 years ago, the world saw a tragedy on a hill!

It was a tragedy because a good man was nailed to an old rugged cross!

It was a tragedy because a man who only tried to help people was persecuted by the forces of evil!

Salvation demanded that he die on an old rugged cross!

But Early Sunday morning victory demanded that tragedy be turned into victory!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No. 9644-Graduation

What is your Next Course?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 25, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 3:14

Introduction

Do you remember most of the coursework you have learned over the years? You learned your ABC's and then your 1-2-3's. The next course was to learn to form words and learn more of them; they called it vocabulary. Early you began to learn history so you could understand the world around you. Your science courses helped you to understand how the unwritten laws of the universe work in our daily lives.

Each course built upon the preceding course, all designed to reach a point that you attained a basic education of the mechanics of living in the modern world.

The courses we study in school run parallel to our life courses. We learn to speak, crawl, walk, write, think and to navigate the world in which live on a regular basis. Each phase of our lives introduces us to another course.

In our graduation we move from our childhood to our young adult years.

Our graduation is a mark of our maturity and ability to handle life on a different level. Some who graduate get a diploma, but are obviously not ready for the next course. They just have a diploma. That's what the residents of the town called "Not so bright." learned when they witnessed Eddie Joe's graduation. Eddie Joe had a hard time making it through high school as most of the people in the town did. When the role was called Eddie Joe found out that he did not make the cut. He would not graduate. At the graduation ceremony, he watched as members of his class received their diplomas. When the last class member marched across the stage, the class all stood and chanted, "Give Eddie Joe a chance!" The chant became louder and louder. Eddie Joe was called to the stage and given a one question test in front of the whole community, as his classmates chanted, "Give Eddie Joe a Chance." If he answered the question correctly he would graduate. They asked Eddie Joe the following question, "If you have five apples in one hand and five apples in the other hand, how many do you have?" Eddie Joe struggled for a moment then answered, "Ten." Instantly, the entire senior class shouted, "Give Eddie Joe another chance!" -Obviously graduation doesn't mean that

everyone is ready for the next course.

What's your next course? You have been in school now for 2160 days.

•You have spent 12,960 hours in classes.

•That translates into 777,600 minutes.

•So far you've lived approximately 18 years.

You've been around 216 months.

•You have been breathing 936 weeks.

•You've been going through the motions for 6,552 days

•You've been here 157,248 hours.

•You've been taking up space 9,434,880 minutes.

•You've slept 52,500 hours.

•You've watched T.V. 12,173 hours.

•You've spent 7,488 hours eating.

• If You live the average lifespan of 70 years, or as the Bible says 3-score and 10, You'll...

•SLEEP.....24 YEARS

•WORK.....14 YEARS

• PLAY ..... 8 YEARS

• EAT ..... 6 YEARS

•DRIVE.....5 YEARS

•TALK.....4 YEARS

• GO TO SCHOOL.. ....3 YEARS

•SICK.....3 YEARS

• STUDY & READ.....3 YEARS

What is your next course?

As Christians, we know the importance of any graduation. However, we also know that it is our maturity in Christ that will determine the quality of our Christian life. In that respect, our next course is to move from dependence on the world to a walk of faith that is guided by the power of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instruction to young Timothy to make the next logical step in his ministry, but stay close to the word.

Timothy was a young man about to begin the next phase of his own life as a teacher and builder of the kingdom of God.

Matthew Henry says, Paul directed " him to keep close to a good education, and particularly to what he had learned out of the holy scriptures (v. 14,15): Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned. Note, It is not enough to learn that which is good, but we must continue in it, and persevere in it unto the end."

The idea of continuing in what we have learned and to grow in the faith was the instruction given to Timothy.

Those who take their next steps in life, but remain faithful to the word of God will

not be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, or become the prey of every hustler who waits to deceive with strange doctrines

As each individual embarks on the next course in life, they should "stay the course" with respect to the word of God.

The text makes it clear that if Timothy and even present day believers would stick to the biblical truths they have been taught thus far, they will well armed as they begin the next course of their lives.

Courses

Graduates will soon learn that life is all about choices. Life choices determine our eventual outcome. Our choices are our courses. They fall in two categories.

REQUIRED COURSES: There are many required courses in life. In high school those might include: English, Math, Sciences, Social Studies and various forms of P.E. College requires everyone to take an orientation and certain courses that are pursuant to your degree path. Life has a few required courses as well. Like college orientation, high school graduation presents you with your first course opportunity: "The school of hard knocks." It's where you are introduced to independent living and decision making without the daily direction of your parents. It's a required course. If parents make your decisions for you during this stage of your life, you are crippled. This is the time that you make your own choices and live with the consequences. Beyond orientation there are courses in your chosen direction that must be undertaken. Life offers you required courses as well. You have no choice about them. You have no choice of who your parents will be, your race, or where you will be born. You also have no choice about death because we all must walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Neither do we have a choice about judgment, because after this life there is a judgment. We have no choice in this area of our lives, they are required.

What is required of every believer is that he hold fast to the faith as he enters each course of life, even the required, courses and lean upon God for their understanding.

WORKPLACE PREPARATION: When Paul told Timothy to study it was an admonition to prepare for the work ahead of him. He was training to be a minister and he was challenged to study. The challenge to prepare for the workforce is a course that many will take after graduation. Whether graduates intend to fly airplanes, teach school, or repair automobiles they must prepare. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul told Timothy to "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that rightly divides the word of truth." In that same sense, every graduate should assume that high school graduation marks the end of basic education, but the next course is more focused. It may require vocational training or higher education. An automobile designer may require a college degree. An automobile repair technician may require special vehicle training. A nurse may require a four-year degree, an aide may only require focused career training. The course depends on the career goal, but one thing remains true, every graduate should take the next course of workplace preparation.

ELECTIVE COURSE: Elective courses are not required, but may be useful toward

the completion of a goal. Graduates will face many electives in life, but should choose those that are related to their goals in life. Choosing electives in life is an important task because sometimes the things we choose to do can take us away from our goals. We elect to become a party hound and that choice could deter us from our goal. We elect to watch television all day and play video games, that choice will impact our life goals. We can also elect not to attend worship, bible study or prayer moments. Those choices will take us further away from God. We should choose electives that will bring us closer to our goals in this life as well as the life beyond.

RELIGIOUS PREPARATION: Graduation from high school does not mean graduation from God. There were many graduates who attended Sunday School, bible study and participated in church activities, until they graduated from high school. After graduation their bibles closed, their church attendance reduced to a threadbare existence and it all ended. Yet, religious preparation is a course that every graduate should not avoid because it is essential for their preparation for living in this world and in preparation for the next. In their school years graduates learned bible stories and select passages. In their graduate years they learned "Applied faith" as they studied "Life 101." Through study of the world graduates learn how God works in their lives and how to meet his expectations. It is a course that should not be avoided.

Final Word

Finally, brother and sisters, we must hear Paul's words again, "But continue thou in the things thou hast learned!" Go the distance…stay the course, fight a good fight, finish the course!

After Graduation, it is time to walk by faith.

When we walk by faith, we hear the voice of God!

When we walk by faith, we stand on the promises of God!

When we walk by faith, we move from high school to the Gospel College!

In the Gospel College

—My Principal is God the father.

—My tutor is the Holy Spirit.

—My counselor is Jesus.

In the Gospel College.

—Our textbook is the bible, for the word says, "These words shall I hide in my heart that I might not sin against God."

—Our field of study is the world, for Jesus said, "Go ye therefore…"

—Our College is not Grambling or Southern, Harvard, or Yale but our college is the Rock of Ages.

This rock is Jesus, Yes He is the one!

This rock is Jesus, the only one.

The song writer said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On

Christ the solid rock I stand."

While it is true that you must graduate from high school, it is also true that there is one more course you must take, you must know Jesus!

This course requires that you be born again!

To complete this course your high school diploma won't be sufficient; you must keep climbing to the next level because you must have a spiritual BA degree.

The song writer said, "You must be..

You gotta be…

Can't you see; you got to be born again.

Moving from one level to the next is easy when you know the man in charge.

At your university he or she is Doctor Somebody or another. But we know the man in charge as Dr. Jesus.

He transferred to this earth by coming down through 42 generations.

He was born in Bethlehem that was his first course.

One day in Jerusalem he told the teachers, "It's time for me to be about my Father's business"

That was the next course.

He preached for three years and picked disciples, that was His next course.

One evening he picked up an old rugged cross and decided to carry it to Calvary.

That was the next course.

He had no cap and gown! Instead of a cap He had a crown of thorns.

Instead of a gown He had a purple robe on His shoulders!

But He marched across the stage of Calvary!

Instead of a diploma, all He had in His hands were nails and scars.

It was a long graduation. It lasted three days and three nights.

But early Sunday morning, the heavens recognized Him!

The earth shook!

The thunder rolled!

When they came looking for Him, an angel announced.."He's not here!"

One of these days he's coming back again!

That will be last course!

Time will end and joy will begin!

The pursuit of that day is his course.

What is your next course?

No. 9645-Inspiration

It's in me, and it's God to come out

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 1, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." Colossians 4:4

Introduction

Is it possible that each of us has a given purpose in life that we discover at some point? We've heard teachers and preachers state this truth over the years, but many have yet to discover their purpose in life; it seems to them that they have no purpose, but to eat, sleep, get older and die. Shouldn't there be something in-between?

Each life has a purpose, and one of our functions is to collect the components that make up our identity then put them to work. There are many products that we buy today that must be assembled before they can be used. They come in a big box with a piece of paper and a picture. There is nothing more intimidating than looking at all of the random pieces laying on the floor staring you in the face. There is a desk, chair, table or bookshelf in that pile somewhere, but it can't come out until it is properly assembled and all of the pieces fall into the right place.

Each box usually comes with a list that inventories the components. The list will note that there are so many long screws, so many short ones. So many of this and so many of that. There are usually instructions for assembling things in the proper order. Finally, there is a picture that depicts how the product should look once assembled.

We are the same, we have all of the parts, but unless we have the divine image to show us and someone to help us, this life can be confusing.

That's the point of Bible Study, Sunday School, and listening to the word, to help us determine what this life is about and how we are suppose to use it for God's glory.

Our teachers, preachers and mentors try to help us figure out what we are supposed to be; ie. what gift talents and unique abilities came in our packages. A sharp wit, and a keen mind both have meanings. A sense of humor, a touch of stubbornness means something as well. An ear for music, the ability to dance or sing give hints. God gives each of us gifts according to the purpose we are to accomplish.

Lives do not come fully assembled. It's all in there, but someone has to help us break through and step into our purpose.

Yet, there still many today who have reached adulthood and still have not begun to assemble the pieces. We can't quite figure out what this thing is suppose to be. That carries us to the next step.

It's in is, but we don't know how to get it out!

Even Stevens wrote a hit song called, "I've got the music in me!" It was a cute little song about having a song in your heart that must be revealed. In a greater sense, everybody has a gift in them somewhere. At some point, it's going to come out. Singers have to sing. Dancers have to dancers; teachers have to teach; writers have to write, and preachers have to preach! They have to; it's in them.

We won't actually be happy until we do what we destined here to do; until we have fulfilled our purpose.

As Christians, our goal is to improve our gifts, then stir them up, so that they can be used to promote the kingdom of God.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul explaining his need to talk about Christ.

Paul spent his life preaching about Jesus and organizing churches in different parts of the known world. Though he was persecuted for his beliefs and teachings, he persisted. He explained to the Colossians that he had been shown the mystery of Christ, and it was shut up in his bones. His desire, on every occasion, was to "manifest" that which was shut up in him to others.

That word "manifest" in this context means to "let it be known." Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him, even though he was in prison so that what was in him would come out and be known; that Christ would be known. His desire was to make this mystery known to those who have not heard of it, and make it uncomplicated. He asked the church to pray for him so that he would not be discouraged and that God would open a door of utterance so that he might say what needed to be said and thus release the mystery within him.

What is in you?

Your purpose must come out: Each of us should strive to understand God's plan for our lives. There is an intersection between the skills and talents that have been brought together over hundreds of years of genetic refinement for one single aim. The skills and talents that you have, coincide with the quadrant of world history that you were born into, the needs that have arisen in the community you share as neighbors, and what God intends and wants for us. Samson had great bodily strength and was born at a time when it could be used to liberate Israel from Philistine domination. Esther had great beauty and a humble spirit and was placed as the queen of Persia for what the scripture describes as "such a time as this."

There comes a time when we must move into our purpose. Like Ruth, there comes

a time for every woman to step in her purpose. Like Christ, there comes a time when every man must say, “It’s time for me to be about my father’s business.”

The solution is in you: There is something sick in your community that you need to heal. This sickness may not be physical; it could be emotional or social. There are sick leaders and unhealthy situations. Is it possible that your talents have been given to remedy this situation?

There is something new needed in your community; something new that you need to start. You know what it is because you keep saying, “Why don’t they do this?” or “They should do it this way?” or “We don’t have this, why not?” It’s a sign that something new is needed. When you look at your gifts and talents to talk, convince, organize and make things happen; maybe this new thing is your purpose.

There is something boring that need livening up. You noticed that programs need a little life, bulletins need a little spice, activities need a little pep; even sermons need a little more creativity. When you look at your talents and skills, you know what it takes to make things more beautiful, enjoyable and exciting; maybe that’s your purpose.

There is a witness in you. There were some people that Jesus healed for the expressed purpose of providing evidence of his ministry. They were expected to testify about what God has done. One leper out of nine had to witness; he had to tell somebody about the man who treated him. The woman at the well felt compelled to tell everyone, “Come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done.” The blind man who was given his sight testified everywhere.

When God has moved in our lives, there is a witness within us that must come out! We can’t hold on to it, it must become manifest.

Every child of God ought to be able to peer beyond the dark and murky cloud that veils the glistening rays of a new day begun, and settle in his mind despite the hard times I’ve seen and troubles I’ve endured, it’s good to be her. That testimony is in me, and it must come out.

I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me what little I have; that testimony is in me, and it must come out.

I may not be of the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise! That testimony is in me, and it must come out.

I heard a songwriter say I don’t know what you came to do, but I came to praise the Lord.

I’ve got to praise him for waking me up this morning!

I’ve got to praise him for clothing me in my right mind!

I’ve got to praise him for giving me health and strength!

I’ve got a witness in me, and it’s got to come out!

It’s in him

Finally, brothers and sisters, if we have a testimony and a witness in us, we should not be afraid to let it come out!

Vol 24-5870

Those who have been blessed by God have a testimony in them that must come out.

When the Lord has: (It's hard to hold your peace)

—Saved you through his grace

—Forgiven you through his mercy

—lifted you through his love

—redeemed you through his blood

—accepted you through his sacrifice

—comforted you through his presence

—strengthened you through his power

—encouraged you through his promise

—revived you through his glory

Jesus told the Pharisee, if these, who once have been broken, infirmed, diseased, lost in sin, would not hold their peace..

The grains of sand would talk to the pebbles and the pebbles would speak to the stones, and the stones would talk to the rocks, and the rocks would talk to the boulders, and the boulders would talk to the mountains...

If these held their peace, the rocks would cry out..

It would be a tragedy if the silence of the lambs caused the trees, the wind and earth rise up and testify. That would be a tragedy because whenever the Lord has blessed us we should be willing to testify.

Whenever the Lord has done something good for you, there's something in you, that must come out!

Whenever you think about how God has blessed you, there's something in you, that must come out!

Whenever you think about how God has picked you up and turned you around, there's something in you, that must come out!

Whenever you think about how he provides food for you when you are hungry, there's something in you, that must come out!

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere. There's something in you that must come out!

I'm reminded of the man whose wife took him to the doctor and explained that there was something strange in her husband, and it has to come out! She told the doctor that whatever it is that is in him has him doing strange things. She said, "Doctor his knees frequently bend , and his hand keeps extending. His head keeps bowing and he seems to have developed a bleeding heart, and this thing gets worse, the closer it gets to Sunday." Whatever it is, it has to come out!

The doctor asked the man what his problem was, and the man responded that he had recently gone to a revival and had accepted Christ, and it looked like right after that his strange behavior began. He said he did not know what it was that got in him, but he could not help what was happening to him. He said he had a:

-A STRANGE CASE OF THE BENDED KNEE: Because every time he faced a difficult moment he found himself on his knees talking to the Lord.

-AN UNEXPLAINED CASE OF THE HELPING HAND: Whenever someone

needed help he was quick to respond. He found himself humming, “If I can help somebody as I pass along then my living shall not be in vain.”

-UNPREDICTABLE SPASMS OF THE BOWING HEAD: Whatever happened in life he bowed to the will of God, saying, “Not my will, but thy will be done.”

-UNCONTROLLED INSTANCES OF THE SWOLLEN HEART: He has learned to love people that he could not stand before; and he’s learned to forgive and to forget.

The man said he’s all right on Monday and Tuesday, but the closer it got to Sunday, he found himself anxious to make it to the house of God. The doctor said there is nothing wrong with you, because you’ve got the love of God in you and it’s got to come out!

There are people here today who have something in them that’s got to come out!

There is somebody here today who wants to celebrate the joy of the Lord and it’s got to come out!

There is somebody here who wants to tell the good news, and it its got to come out!

They want to tell somebody that He died!

They want to tell somebody that He was buried in borrowed tomb!

They want to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning, that He arose from the grave!

When it comes out, I’ll sing my song!

When it comes out, I’ll clap my hands!

When it comes out, I’ll tell the world what a mighty God we serve

No. 9646-Annv.-Men

You just like your daddy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2014

SCRIPTURE: Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. John 8:41

Introduction

Have you ever heard the phrase,"You just like your daddy!" It is usually said when the mother is angry at the action of a child. Whether it is true or not she intimates that a character trait of the child is being inherited from the father.

In the past, it would be considered an honor for someone to say, "You just like your daddy" because the image of daddy was drastically different than it is today, especially in the African-American community.

In the past, "Daddy" was a man who provided for his family. He made sure that there was food on the table, a roof over his family's head and enough resources for his family to survive.

In the past, "Daddy" was a man who could be counted on to protect the family from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

In the past, "Daddy" was perceived as a role model for his sons and doctors.

For many in the African-American community, the image of "Daddy" is no positive at all. In fact, the image of daddy is so far from that of the past that it has become a faint memory.

There is a growing number of men who are not providers for their families, protectors of their wives and children and role models.

For too many, "Daddy" is simply a name on a child support check, a signature on a divorce paper, or photo in a dusty album.

When many an angry or frustrated mother says, "You just like your daddy" she is usually pointing to the negative, not a positive.

However, there are many who are proud to say, "I'm just like my daddy." These are the children who saw their fathers manage and protect their families, give them advice and shared valuable time with them. These are the children who saw their fathers pray, help the poor, serve God and love their wives with a passion.

Those who have seen the positive side of "Daddy" are proud to say, "I'm just like my daddy!"

We are all children of God. As such, we should reflect his image in all that we say

and do. To be "Just like my daddy" is to reflect the "agape" love of the father.

As Christians, we should be proud to testify, "My father is the ruler of the universe and he loves me, and I want to be just like him."

Exposition

This text focuses on attempts of Jesus' enemies to claim that they were pure in the faith because they were Abraham's children.

Jesus' critics claimed that he was teaching a false religion, implying that they were not true to God. Jesus said they were the children of Abraham only by the flesh, but with respect to holiness, faith and actions, they were not like Abraham; they were the reverse.

They claimed they were like their father, Abraham, Jesus said their actions painted a different picture.

They pointed to their biological ties, but Jesus pointed to their spiritual ties. In that respect, they acted completely opposite of Abraham.

They believed that by virtue of their birth alone, they were like Abraham and also godly. However, Christ said, "If God were your father you would love me." Thus, he disputed their claim of likeness to Abraham. He said, "If ye had anything of His moral image as children have their father's likeness, ye would love Me, for I am immediately of Him and directly from Him."

In verse 44, Jesus went further and concluded that they were of the devil.

Their actions prompted Jesus to say, "You are not like Abraham, you are just like your daddy, the devil."

Image of Daddy

The image that the Jews had of themselves differed from reality, just as the images we have today of "daddy" differ. However, there are three images of "Daddy" that should make anyone proud for someone to say, "You just like your daddy."

IMAGE OF THE COURAGEOUS MAN: The image of "daddy" should be a man of courage. When a man's life is shaped in God's hand, he is molded in many ways to reflect the character of God. He's not a perfect man, but in many respects he demonstrates godly attributes. There are four attributes of a godly man that can be drawn from 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." There is a courageous spirit that flows from the heart of every godly man; it is the calling card of every man whose life is shaped by close encounters with the Lord. Courage does not mean that men are never afraid, it means that they have the strength to do what must be done in the face of danger, ridicule or failure.

Courage should not be confused with thoughtless actions, knee jerk responses, and foolish acts of bravado. Courageous men know what is right and after considering the costs decide to do what needs to be done to right a wrong, protect against evil or to bring about a rightful conclusion to a situation.

The courageous spirit is something that comes from God. All men are not born with courageous spirits, they develop courage as God works with them. Peter was one of the boldest of the apostles, but he didn't start out bold; in fact he showed cowardice when he denied Christ. Christian men become courageous as their faith! and love increases. We are afraid whenever our faith decreases. When we love completely, we get bold. 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Men who have put their lives in God's hands develop a strong faith and capacity to love the way God loves. God remakes him into a man of courage.

If "daddy" is a man of courage, then it should be an honor to have someone say, "You are just like your daddy."

IMAGE OF THE STRONG MAN: The image of "Daddy" should also be that of a strong man. God makes strong men, not necessary physically strong as Samson. Strength in this sense is not about muscles but about the ability to be firm, decisive and resolute. The strength of a man is not measured by his education, financial status or physique. There are many men who are well educated, financially secure and muscular, but are weak.

They have no backbone, stand for nothing and fall for everything. 2 Timothy 1:2 points to another attribute that God give believing men, strength or power. Jesus had 12 disciples, all 12 of whom were weak in the beginning; one was so weak he betrayed Christ and hung himself. Even as Christ agonized about his future, there were some who couldn't even stay awake to protect him. Matthew 26:40-41 says, "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Yet, eleven of these men ultimately put their lives in God's hands and they grew in strength by studying the words of Christ, close fellowship with each other leaning heavily on their faith in God. Paul, writing to the Ephesians encouraged them to build their strength. Ephesians 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He encouraged every believing man to put on the who armor of God to protect against the wiles of the devil. Moreover, men are urged to get a real relationship with Christ because it's through him that they find strength.

In John 15:5 he said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. That's what Samson learned and every believing man after him. Without God, every man is weak. With God, every man is strong.

If "Daddy" is a man of strong character, then it should be an honor for someone to say, "You just like your daddy."

IMAGE OF THE HONORABLE MAN: Thirdly, the image of "Daddy" should be an image of a man who always wants to do the right thing. Godly fathers have a sense of integrity that is rooted in Godly principles. Some have the notion that a man should do anything to feed himself and his family. This is true, if by anything it is meant any "moral and just" thing.

On the contrary, it is a real man who trusts God to strengthen him to be a provider as he uses every legal and moral channel available to secure his household. The godly road is the high road; it is the path that men of integrity travel. The high road is not an easy path, in fact, it is often difficult and treacherous path. Unfortunately, there are many men who have taken the road to least resistance. Too many are selling drugs, bootlegging movies, compact discs, and stolen merchandise while involving themselves in a variety of unlawful activities all under the guise of feeding themselves and their families. They brush off the illegality of their actions by saying, "A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do."

Despite hard times our history shows that we have lived through wars, slavery, floods and depressions, but, for the most part, the men of our families refused to steal or involve themselves in wrongdoing in the name of "doing what we gotta do."

The three Hebrew Boys are prime examples of integrity in action. They were presented with many opportunities to promote themselves professionally and to survive the threat of death, yet they refused to eat from the King's table or bow to political demands that impugned their relationship with God. Their refusal took moral courage, but they stood on their principles. Great fathers make tough choices to prepare themselves for leadership of their homes and the community in general. This important because real men complete the training they need to be competitive in the economic market.

A young boy who claims he's a man but can't force himself to study or complete his education may wear a man's pants, but he's still not a man. The man who throws his money away gambling, drinking and living large, may have fun, but he's living loosely as a boy and is a far cry from the man he wants to be. These attributes of manhood are taught by fathers around the world; they form the foundation upon which strong families are built.

If "Daddy" is a man of integrity, then it should be an honor to have someone say, "You just like your daddy."

The Image of God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that a real man is made in the image of God.

In Genesis 1:26 when God decided to make man he said, "Let us make man." The creation of man was a collaborative effort between the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, indicated by the phrase, "let us."

Let us make man so he can have dominion over the rest of creation.

Let us make man and ally him with the elements, from the dust, but full of life; of the animals but far superior, but just lower than the angels.

Let us make man in our image. In the image of the fatherly God. In the image of the obedient son.

In the image of the empowering, forceful and inspirational Holy Ghost. The Hebrew word for image in this text means "fashion" or "resemblance." Likewise, the word

"Likeness" means "similitude, or manner."

It does not mean that we look like God or that we are Jr. gods. It means that there are unique qualities within us that are similar in nature to that of the creator. We are similar to God in many ways, but we are by no means God.

A man who is made in the image of God is one who is courageous, strong, and honorable. He is also able to withstand the fiery flames of the world with his character intact.

Trial by experience is the best judge of our character because those who come through this experience are refined in the faith and closer to the ideal. Whenever gold or other precious metal is extracted, it has to be refined. The process is to heat the ore to such temperatures that the gold separates itself from rock, mud and other minerals in which it may be surrounded. Biblically, it is called being "tried in the fire."

The trial by fire is when a father proves himself to his wife and children by passing the tests that life puts before him. The nature of the tests varies from health issues to finances, relationships, career challenges or career difficulties. These challenges have a tendency to reveal Those who have weathered such storms know what it means to be tried in the fire.

When we come through, like pure gold that is refined, all of the raw ore seems to float away leaving behind a pure spirit, more sensitive nature, and a closeness to God. We went into our situation crudely, but we arose more refined and able to stand whatever life throws at us. The Holy Spirit is the refining agent.

The Holy Spirit separates and then polishes us as we prepare for greater service. Anyone who has been to God's refinery has no trouble praising God. My father doesn't reside in Monroe or New York or Kansas City, but He sits high and looks low and He's with me wherever I go!

Whether you say, Abba or father, we are reassured that the God we serve us loves with an Agape love. Some call Him Abba, others call Him father, but it all means one thing: we are His children and He will work it out for us.

The definitive father is one who can stand tall, but can reach low! The definitive father is one who is defined not by the size of his wallet, but by the depth of his heart. The definitive father is one who is defined not by the physical strength of his body, but by the moral fiber or his soul The finest definition of father is that when we need him he is there; when nobody else can; he can.

I have a father who can take:

—Sadness and turn it to gladness; Misery and turn it into a delight!

—Failure and turn it into success; Loneliness and turn it into happiness!

—Poverty and turn it into riches; Defeat and turn it into victory!

No wonder the songwriter wrote:"I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land. I cannot take a piece a clay and mold it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

I am reminded of the little girl who had nightmares when she was young and was always afraid in the night.In the middle of the morning when her fears got the best of her she''d cry out, "Papa, it's dark, hold my hand!" No matter how many times she called him papa would get up and hold her hand every night. That picture of her papa sitting

by her bed holding her hand,! Never left her mind, even after he died. Many years later she came to God. When the troubles of the world surrounded her she cried out "Lord, it's dark outside! Hold my hand!"

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race. I don't want to run this race alone!"

I don't know about you, but I want Jesus to walk with me! He walked with my father, but I want Him to walk with me!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose after three days!

I want Jesus to walk with me!

No. 9647-Inspiration

The Believer's Declaration of Independence

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 23, 2014

SCRIPTURE: I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare; Job 15:17; If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:36

Introduction

As the nation prepares to celebrate its independence, have you ever stopped to think what it means to make a declaration? A declaration is not a mere statement of fact, it is bold announcement. It's the line drawn in the sand that is irrevocable! Once spoken it is irreversible.

The 13 original colonies were dependent upon England for everything from its afternoon tea to its furniture, fashions and military protection. The price it paid for that dependence required high taxes, intrusion of troops into their homes, an unjust laws that reduced them to mere shadows of the free men the sought to be.

In the face of all the inequities that the colonials faced, one by one the colonials began to take stands against England at the risk of their lives and fortunes. We remember vividly the words of Patrick Henry, who stood and said, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

That was the course taken by Crispus Attucks, an African-American, who became the first man to die for America's independence. For him, "Give me Liberty or Give me Death" was a full commitment.

It was the same belief that caused men such as Frederick Douglass and John Brown and women such as Sojourner Truth and Harriett Tubman to declare that slavery of African-Americans was just as dastardly as being slaves of King George. Millions of African-American slaves also chanted "Give me liberty or give me death" as the jumped into open seas, drowned themselves and the babies and risked death to run for freedom.

The nation celebrates the Declaration of Independence which was signed on July 4, 1776. That declaration did not mean that Americans were instantly free. King George would not let go and it took seven years and 25,000 American deaths before the words of the Declaration were true to white Americans. Only when the Civil War was fought

over four years and 625,000 deaths did the declaration begin to mean something to African-Americans.

Declaring Independence is more than just words for the 4th of July. It is a stand to be loosed from the shackles that bind us.

What about your spiritual lives? Have you declared your independence from the devil yet? Are you still occupied colonies? Is the devil still placing taxing demands on your life that are unbearable? Is he still dipping in your business to the point that it is totally intolerable?

Christ came to break the chains that tie us to the devil. We declare our independence from him, that does not mean that he will instantly let us go without a fight!

As Christians, we declare that we will stand for God and give him our trust. The devil will try to defeat us, but we have declared our independence of him and loyalty to Cross of Jesus and we will not turn back.

Exposition

These two present a contrast of the condition of mortal man; one dependent and weak and the other, strong and free.

Job 15 presents Job surrounded by three of his friends who describe a depressing rationale for his current state of depravity. The speaker is Eliphaz. He contends that every man born of a woman is impure, weak and and full of vile and is as corrupt as sour milk.

Job claimed that he had not sinned, never abandoned God and continues to remain faithful, but Eliphaz made a declaration based on his own experience: "That which I have seen, I do declare." He said he seen that those who experience the kind of hardships Job endured were the results of their own torment. Not only does he declare it, says Eliphaz, but so do all of the ancients, philosophers and ordinary people.

The devil was fighting for Job's heart, trying to break his will, placing one torment after another upon him. He was using his friends to depress him.

In Job 13:15, he made his own declaration: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:but I will maintain mine own ways before him."

Job refused to be a slave of the devil. He chose to be free of him, even if it meant being loyal to his death.

In response to the notion that mortal man is doomed to be dependent upon the devil and his ways, Jesus in John 8:36 made a declaration: "If the Son shall make you free, then you shall be free indeed."

Real liberty comes when we have broken the chains that bind our thinking and actions.

These are the chains that limit our ambitions, circumscribe our journey and regulate our desire to rise above our circumstance.

When we are set free spiritually, we know God personally and are not intimidated by the threatening situations placed upon us by the devil.

We are also free from guilt because our past sins and mistakes have been forgiven.

Those who have accepted Christ, have declared their independence from the influences of the devil. They are enjoying the liberty of trusting God.

Declarations of faith

Eliphaz said, "What I have seen, I do declare," and today, believers say the same words, but with a greater confidence.

We have our own declarations to make and they are from our experience with God.

WE DECLARE THAT DESPITE TEMPTATIONS, THE DEVIL WILL NEVER BIND US: Believers declare that despite the temptations that the world places in front of us that we will not follow after false gods; that we will remain faithful. Certainly, there are those who challenge our faith and even ridicule us, but our faith in God will remain intact. We stand boldly like the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 18:21 and say, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.

We declare, what our eyes have seen! In the time of trouble, God has made a way for us!

We declare what we have experienced, God answers our prayers!

We declare what we know to be true, God is real.

Since God has shown himself to be a powerful presence in our lives, we declare our independence from the from false gods around us. Since God is God, then we will follow him.

WE DECLARE THAT OUR HOMES WILL BE GODLY: Believers declare that our homes will reflect our faith in God. We stand as Joshua stood in Joshua 24:1 and said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Today more than ever, there is a need for strong Christian families that resist society's ever-changing definitions of male-female responsibilities, and moral values. Today, those who believe in Christ should strive to keep the Christian family from diminishing to the point of becoming a thing of the past. That should be the resolve of every believer. To stand strong in faith that God will always stand with us when we are right.

To actively stand on the Lord's side is to bring our families to the cross.

To actively stand on the Lord's side is to witness for him in every way possible

To be on the Lord's side is to be willing to stand for him even in difficult times.

We declare our independence from the rest of the world and boldly announce that we will stand on the Lord's side.

WE DECLARE OUR FAITH GOD'S POWER: Just as Eliphaz said he has seen the evil of the world with his own eyes, believers declare that we have seen the power of God, with our own eyes. Our journey is one that has been filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life-threatening situations, we have seen God reach down and help us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself.

We declare our faith because we have seen his power!

When our world was turned upside down by tragic events God's grace kept us from becoming cynical and disillusioned with life.

When we witnessed how evil some people can be, His love helped us to keep loving others despite the fact that there are some who are hard to love.

When failure was all around us, God's constant encouragement pushed us to "run and see what the end would be."

We make our declaration of faith because we know that God will never forsake us or leave us alone,.

We boldly declare our loyalty because God has shown us His great faithfulness.

He has been faithful to us through all of our seasons.

No wonder the songwriter declared: "Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hands hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

The cross mark s our Declaration

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that while the Declaration of Independence remains as a symbol of American freedom from England, the cross stands tall as a symbol of our victory over the devil!

Those who look at the parchment that contains the Declaration see the American dream, but those who look to the little cross on the hill go a little further, they see a God who makes dreams possible.

The Declaration of Independence and American Freedom is symbolized by The statue of liberty offers freedom to all who come to American shores.

We see that promise in the inscription on its base in the words of the "New Collusus:"

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Christ offers liberty to all who come to the cross.

He says, "Come unto to me all ye who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The Declaration of Independence marks the moment where the quest for freedom officially began, but the cross marks the place where bondage ends.

The Cross reminds us of what has been replaced.

Hate has been replaced with love,
Sadness has been replaced with joy,
Confusion has been replaced with peace,
Impatience has been replaced with patience,
Insensitivity has been replaced with kindness,
Stinginess has been replaced with generosity,

Lack of faith has been replaced with faithfulness,

Rudeness has been replaced with gentleness.

The cross reminds us of a sin record that no longer exists.

The cross reminds us of a mistake that has been forgiven.

The cross reminds us of an error that has been erased.

But more than anything else the cross reminds us that we serve a living Lord.

The cross marks the place where we came in contact with the power of the Lord.

The cross marks the place where we stepped out of the darkness into the marvelous light.

The cross marks the place where we traded in our lives of sin for the hope of salvation.

That's why the song writer wrote, "At the cross at the cross where we first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I'm happy all the day."

The cross is more than a mere declaration!

The cross is that power that can change my darkness into light!

The cross is that power that can take my downs and turn them into ups

The cross is that power that can pick me up and turn me around again!

It's more than a statue!

It's where Jesus died over 2000 years ago!

The cross reminds that he died on Calvary!

But every time we see it, it also reminds us that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave, promising eternal life, with liberty and justice for all!

No.9648-Inspiration

The Hem of His garment

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 13, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Matthew 14:36

Introduction

Have you ever worn a garment that needed a hem? Hemming is a finishing touch on garment to prevent unraveling of the fabric. Hemming is also required whenever a garment is to be adjusted to fit the height or a wearer. It usually requires stitches of some kind that will form a straight line and reduce the length of the garment.

Hems vary. Some are smooth and even while others have jagged edges. Some are frazzled while others are pressed down and straight.

There is nothing magical about hems. Dresses, pants and even coat sleeves are routinely hemmed every day, and have been for thousands of years.

However, in early Jewish tradition, there was a religious importance placed on the hem of a man's prayer shawl. In fact, every man was required to use a special hem on his garment to remind him of God's law and the importance of his adherence to God's law. The special hem ornaments were called "Tzitzit" (see-seeth)

In Numbers 15:38, Moses commanded, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, that they shall make themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they shall put on the corner fringe a blue thread." The next verse, Numbers 15:39-40 (NKJV) says, And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God."

Wearing the tzitzit is also commanded in Deuteronomy 22:12: "You shall make yourself twisted threads, on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself." In ancient Israel, men wore four-cornered outer tunics with these tassels, or tzitzits, tied to the four corners. These tassels were to remind each Jewish man of his responsibility to fulfill God's commandments. In fact, these tassels are tied into 613 knots to constantly remind them of the 613 laws of Moses, of which there are 365 prohibitions (The "thou shalt not" laws), and 248 affirmations (the "thou shall" laws).

Because they were hanging on the four corners of your garment, in full view of everyone including yourself, they would be a constant reminder to walk according to God's Laws.

It is not uncommon, even today, to find Jewish men who use prayer shawls for prayer. They often place them over their heads to shut out the world and to be in the presence of God. Praying under the prayer shawl is the same as covering yourself with the presence of God.

A man's prayer shawl, therefore, represented the presence of God, and the hem with its 613 knots, reminded him to adhere to all of the Mosaic laws.

The shawl and the hem itself became a necessary prayer tool for many Jewish men. If they wanted to be close to God, they felt they must lay hold to the hem of the prayer shawl as well, because it meant they were obedient and deserving of consideration.

As Christians, we don't wear prayer shawls, but we do have private places where we talk to the Lord. It is there in those secret moments that we touch the hem of his garment that we speak to him and he responds to our need.

Exposition

This text focuses on people who were healed in Gennesaret after touching the hem of Jesus' garment

The land of Gennesaret was different from the land of the Gergasenes from which Jesus had recently visited. He was run out of town in that area after he healed a demonic man by placing the devils that troubled him in a herd of swine that killed themselves by diving over a cliff. On the other side of the Sea there were many people who had heard of Jesus' great works and were willing to believe and follow him.

Genneserat was a major fishing town and news of happenings around the region traveled fast as fishermen gave accounts of what they had seen and heard. Before Jesus arrived, the people were anxious to hear and receive a word from heaven. This is the land where Jesus fed 5,000 with two fishes and five loaves of bread, preached and healed many.

When word spread that Jesus was in Gennesaret, the news went out into every part of the region for the sick. They had a tremendous faith in his power and goodness. Their faith was so strong that those who touched the hem of his garment were made whole. They did not know that this would happen, it was not promised, but they believed God and received a surprising reward for their faith.

Matthew's account tells that there were many who touched the hem of Jesus' garment and were made whole. However, Luke describes this "touching the hem" in more detail, focusing on one woman's faith.Luke 8:43-44 says, "And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched.

She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped" (Luke 8:44).Word of Jesus' astounding acts of healing has spread

all over Galilee, even to the village where his woman lives (Mark 5:27). And she determines to find him and be healed. She has decided in her heart, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed" (Mark 5:28).

Jesus noticed her touch and responded, "Who touched me?" Luke 8:46, "And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Then Jesus added in Luke 8:48 "And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

The woman reached for the hem of his Garment, but it was not the garment, but her faith that got his attention and made her whole.

Hem Touching

Those who try receive blessings from God should note the following truths gleaned from these passages.

UNDER THE HEM THEY CAME CLOSE TO GOD: All Jewish men wore prayer shawls to get close to God and block out the world. They also wanted to obey God to the fullest. They placed the shawls over their heads and prayed. Today, true believers should seek every way possible to get close to God. Every believer should have a time and place where they connect with God. It is their own unique and private altar. For some, that place is a special chair, or place on the table. For others, it is in a special place at a special hour. This is the time when we strive to get close to God and to evaluate our own performance before him. Under the hem they came close to God.

Close to thee, close to thee,
close to thee, close to thee,
all along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with thee

THROUGH THE HEM THEY REMEMBERED TO OBEY GOD: The tassels in the hem reminded Jewish believers to obey the commands of God. They wore the tassels daily to remind themselves of God's law. Even today, believers are mindful of the word of God. Psalms 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Today, believers don't wear tassels, but God's word is hidden in our hearts. It remembers God's word that prompts sacrifice our time, give our tithes and offerings and live holy. When Jesus responds to needs he responds to both the body and soul. Since he is concerned about body and soul, he will offer forgiveness for sin as well as blessings; they go together. We should not come to God seeking blessings, healings and fruitful lives without remembering our followship requirements. We can't come to God for healings if we are unwilling to repent for our sins. We must be willing to accept him both as Lord and Savior. Lord means accepting him as our leader, and savior means accepting him as our spiritual savior and soul provider. They come together. When we come to God in prayer, we must come with a spirit of humility that is ready to follow wherever he leads and do whatever he wants to be done.

THROUGH HIM ALL BARRIERS TO BLESSINGS FALL: Traditional Jews placed considerable emphasis on the hem of the garment, but today, believers place our trust in the H-I-M not the H-E-M. There was a wall that separated the woman with the issue of blood from touching Christ. The Mosaic Law prohibited women from approaching men in public. Women who had any kind of blood issuance from monthly cycles or hemorrhaging, were considered unclean. Leviticus 15:19-23 " And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And if it be on her bed, or on anything whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even."

The Mosaic law set up a barrier between the woman and the blessing she needed, but Christ broke the barrier, not only did he speak to her in public, but gave her what she needed.

Today, there are many who believe they are not clean enough, good enough, sober enough or straight enough to come before God. Yet, those who willing to come before God with a contrite and repentive spirit can tap into the power of God by their faith alone.

There is no barrier that can stand between a believer and God.

If the woman had sought the hem, she would have been prohibited.

She heard about him

She heard how he healed the sick and made the blind see!

She sought him and the barriers fell.

Seek Jesus and regardless of our pasts, barriers will fall and he will respond to our needs according to his will!

Keep Pushing

Finally brothers and sisters, if you are dealing with a full slate of impossible issues in your life, we recommend that you push your way through the crowd and give it to Jesus!

Don't say in your mind, "I am insignificant!" or "He doesn't know who I am!"

Don't say in your mind, "I haven't been as faithful as I should have been!"

Don't say in your mind, "I can't get to him because there are others closer to him!"

Push your way through the crowd and say, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole"

If you have an issue that has caused:

FAILURE, he can turn failure into success;

SADNESS, he can turn sadness into gladness;

SICKNESS, he can turn it into good health!

BURDENS, he can take your burdens and make them light!

DEFEAT, he can take your defeat and turn it into victory!

LOSSES, he can take your losses and turn them into gains!

HEARTACHES, I know a God who specializes in mending broken hearts!

TROUBLED MARRIAGE, I know a God who can turn your old lady into the first lady, who can turn your old man into the King of the Castle!

LOST GENERATION, I know a God who can take Gangsta Rap and turn it into a Saint's testimony!

Push your way through the crowd; reach out and touch him in the spirit of humility and his blood shall make you whole!

If you want to deal with the issue, push back your fear of embarrassment or insignificance and give it to Jesus!

Jesus said, "I come that they might have life and have it more abundantly"

Jesus came to take the curse of our:

-Tragedy and turn it into triumph!

-Defeat and turn it into victory!

-Despair and turn it into hope!

-Sadness and turn it into joy!

-Failure and turn it into success!

-Weakness and turn it into strength!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who was buried in borrowed tomb!

Jesus, who arose early Sunday morning!

Give it to Jesus and everything will be all right!

No. 9649-Anniv.-Homecoming

Return and I will be with thee

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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July 20, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." Genesis 31:3

Introduction

There are thousands of men, women and children in America who are living on street corners by day and sleeping in alleyways and cardboard boxes at night. Have you ever wondered why they don't go back home or someone in their family won't say, "come home?"

"Homeless" is a term often used to describe social wayfarers, but that description is often inadequate. It is inadequate because there are some who live on the street who are not homeless, but are houseless.

What is the difference between a homeless person and a houseless person? A truly homeless person is totally disconnected from all sources of support and affection. By chance or design, a homeless person has no one who cares or does not want to receive the help of those who do care in his family. A houseless person, on the other hand, may have a home, but not have a house. In some cities, it is not unusual for entire families to live in cardboard boxes on city streets or in abandoned building. They have no house, but they have a home.

But an equal paradox exists. While there ere are thousands described as homeless because they have no place to lay their heads, there is an equal number of people who have a place to lay their heads, but are still homeless. They have a house, but they do not have a home.

In the drama, "Grandma's Bible" a grandmother spent considerable time trying to convince her grandson to pray and read his bible. She tried every way she could imagine to motivate him to love God and to read the word, but he refused to do so. At her death, she left a will that divided her insurance policy among her heirs. To each of his three sisters, grandmother left $100,000 each, but to the grandson, she only left her old bible. The grandson became bitter. He cursed the memory of his grandmother for showing such favoritism. He refused to company and love of his sisters. He moved away and soon fell into poverty. After many years of searching the sisters found him living on the street in a cardboard box. When he saw them, he was still filled with bitterness because he was envious that grandmother gave them a fine inheritance an left him with

only an old bible, which he kept over all the years. As he raised the bible and scorned grandmother's name, the bible opened to the page that contained the words, "My God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus." He flipped the next page and found a cashier's check for $100,000. He cried because he had become houseless, but was never about someone to love him. Even in death, all grandmother wanted was for him to read his bible and know the favor of God.

As Christians we strive to remain connected to a home that God has provided for us, through worship, service, and prayer. If we have strayed, we are encouraged to return home, knowing that God will be with us.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob as he decides to return home, responding to the command of God.

Jacob has been away from home for many years, living with his uncle Laban. There, he had made a living for himself and had become prosperous. However, God spoke to his soul and told him to go home.

By divine direction and under the convoy of a promise: The Lord to Jacob that if he returned home he would stand with him in the journey. In verse three he says, "Return, and I will be with thee, v. 3. It was a tempting command because Jacob was not being received well with his uncle who was jealous of him, suspicious of him and related to him in a master-servant role.

Though Jacob had met with very hard usage here, yet he would not quit his place unless God gave the order. He came by orders from Heaven, and there he would stay till he was ordered back. Jacob considered all of the elements of his decision. His brother Esau threatened to kill him if he ever returned. His uncle Laban threatened to take his two wives and his property if he left.

As he made his decision to return home, he listened to the voice of God and heard the powerful words, "I will be with thee."

Those same words apply to believers today.

Returning to God

What stops those who have strayed away from returning to "land of thy fathers?" What are the factors?

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING TO RETURN TO: Jacob's dilemma was whether to return to the "Land of thy fathers,"- There are many today who cannot share that dilemma, because their homes were not godly homes. The "land of thy fathers" was not a godly place. There are thousands of children today who are not being reared in godly homes. Even in the growing middle class, godliness is tolerated, but not promoted in our homes. In 2007, The Pew Research Foundation interviewed 36,000 Americans and released a startling report that revealed that a growing number of Americans consider

themselves godly, but are not attached to any particular belief or denomination. Among African-Americans, a growing number are identifying themselves as unaffiliated or non-denominational. They say religion is important, but not enough to compel and affiliation, regular worship or serious commitment time, talent or resources. In short, a growing number of Americans still believe in God, but don't feel it necessary to worship regularly, to study about their faith, or that their children have a strong religious education. If that is a growing trend in America, it means there will come a time when those who stray will have nothing to return to. Today, we think of the old landmark. We remember Sunday School, bible school, church worship, bible study, public prayer and family devotion. We stray, but we know the way back because of what was done at home. It underscores the importance of every family teaching their children the ways of the Lord. Moses told Israel in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

THE THREAT OF LOSS: Jacob considered returning home, and the first thought that came to his mind was the possibility of loss if he returned. There are many who do not return to a Godly life they were taught at home because of the threat of loss. In the quiet moments of their lives they say to themselves, "I should change this life and go back to God," but before they can finish the thought, other considerations pop up. Many think about what their friends will say. They could be ridiculed or even persecuted for changing the lifestyle with which their friends have become familiar. Many consider that returning to the way taught back home could mean giving up the bright lights and pleasures of their present life. It could also mean losing a promotion or business deal. It could mean losing money, business, property and political connection. Moreover, it could mean losing friends or lovers. We know what we were taught, but many of those ways, if followed in our present life, could mean trouble. The threat of loss makes many apprehensive. When Jacob, considered all that was before him, he probably said as David said in Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Believers are called upon to remember the promises of God in Genesis 28:15, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

THE BITTERNESS OF FAMILY REJECTION: As Jacob considered returning home, he was caught in the vice of family dissent. At home, Esau would surely confront him, angry because of the stolen birthright. With Laban, he would be confronted if he chose to leave. He had to deal with the various degrees of acceptance and rejection in his family. Jesus warned believers that those who choose to follow him can expect to be caught in a vice of family opinion. Some will doubt the sincerity of the believer's choice. Others will dismiss the decision to follow Christ as a phase that will be outgrown. Those who chose to return to the godly life in the beauty of holiness and devotion to God should expect some bitter things to be said, even in their family, but they should not be deterred. Jesus said, in Matthew 10:36-37, "And a man's foes [shall be] they of

his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

You can Always Come Home

Finally, we should consider it is never too late to return to the godly life you learned at home, even if we don't consider ourselves worthy.

Like Jacob, there are many who have been away from spiritual circles for so long they don't know what to expect when they return. But the love of God is so gracious that despite their estrangement, God will welcome them with open arms.

If we have been cut off from the family of God because of a life of sin, there is a healing spirit that awaits the saints when they come home. I hear 2 Chronicles 7:14 say " If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Isaiah 1:18 "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

Like the prodigal, there are many who feel they have erred in life and don't deserve to be in the family of God. But they soon find that the love of God forgives for Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Regardless to past mistakes, he forgives and restores the lost to positions and places of love and trust.

That means it doesn't matter whether I have made a mistake in life, if I come home; he'll welcome me!

Like the poor, maimed and the orphaned, many soon learn that the love of God is concerned about everyone regardless to their state of being or prominence. Regardless of our station in life, everyone is welcomed in the family of God.

I hear him say in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

That's why the songwriter declared, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad."

I know he'll welcome me because he loves me. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

He'll welcome me because Revelation 21:7 says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

I am reminded of a lost son who had been away from home for many years. He heard the old stories about tying a yellow ribbon around the oak tree, so he wrote his parents a letter that said "I'm coming home. Mama, if you welcome me put a white sheet on the clothes lie and a yellow ribbon on the old oak tree. Tell papa if he forgives me, to ring the old bell." As the train made its way to the old country house, it made one last stop and picked up a few passengers. The young man nervously kept his eyes on the window. As the train passed his family house, his heart dropped when he didn't see any sign of forgiveness.

He asked the conductor to stop the train. He looked at the empty tree and clothes

and listened for the old bell to ring, but heard nothing. As he sat down in his seat, he heard a familiar sound. Coming down the isle was his father with a cowbell in both hands ringing it like crazy. Behind him was his mother, who made herself a dress out of an old white sheet in her hair one yellow ribbon for every year her son had been gone. They both opened their arms and said "My son! My son! Welcome home!

That's the way the Lord welcomes us home!
Jesus, the lily of the valley; the bright and morning star.
Jesus, who died on Calvary and rose after three days..
Welcomes me Home!
"Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home!"
"Coming home! Coming Home, never more to roam!"
Open wide thine arms of love, Lord I'm coming home

No. 9650-Inspiration

The Alabaster Box

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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July 27, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head." Mark 14:3

What is the most valuable thing you own? Is it your house, automobile, jewelry, heirlooms? If you received notice that you have been selected to appear on the "Let's Make a Deal" television broadcast where you had the possibility of winning thousands of dollars in exchange for the most valuable thing you own, would you make the trade?

That valuable thing that you own, would you be willing to trade it? Would you trade your house for a mansion? How about your car for a fleet of limousines? Would you trade your grandmother's wedding rings for the winning jackpot lottery ticket? What is precious to you?

In 1993 Robert Redford and Demi Moore starred in a movie entitled "Indecent Proposal." In which a billionaire offered a loving couple who were in deep financial trouble one million dollars for one night with the struggling husband's wife, with no strings attached. The proposal became the national buzzword and people all over the world answered whether or not they were willing to trade the purity of their marriage relationship in exchange for $1 million.

Suppose God gave you a box full of gifts, talents and money making opportunities; would you be willing to trade them worldly success, even if it meant coming up short with God? The Reverend Milton Brunson answered that question with a song that said, 'I'll trade a lifetime for one day in paradise." Remember those lyrics?:

I'd sure love to see my mother, who gone on before,
shake hands with the elders twenty and four;
in that righteous place I know I'll see my Savior's face,
I'll trade a lifetime, (I'll trade a lifetime for just one day in paradise).

While many give lip service to putting God first in their lives, each day they make tradeoffs that make him not second place, but last. Many are not willing to trade a single

item in their gift box for any measure of time with God.

For them Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you" are wholesome words to speak, but they don't really believe them. When it comes to our own box, there are many who are holding on to it as tightly as possible.

However, there are millions who have trust God so much that they freely reach into their own little box and give him all they have. In return for their faith, he promises the abundant life and a place in the kingdom of God.

The faithful have found that they value God's favor more than what's in their box.

As Christians, we are pleased to know that God has gifts in store for all of us, but we must be willing to trust him completely to receive the fullness of his blessings. So, we give God what is precious to us in faith that he will bless us in his own way and when the blessings come they will flow like a mighty stream.

Exposition

This text focuses on Mark as he shows a woman pouring oil on the head of Jesus to anoint Him.

Jesus often shared meals with the rich and powerful as well as the common people. In this text He was being honored with a meal at the home of Simon the Leper. It is supposed that this was the man whose cleansing from leprosy was noted in Mark 1:40. In the course of the dinner a woman, identified in John 12:3 as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, came to the dinner with an alabaster box or a stone flask with a long neck and sealed with wax. She took a priceless oil which cost about 300 denarii per flask or bottle. It was the oil used by kings, and they used it only drop by drop. A denarii was the average pay for a day's work. Therefore, the bottle was worth about a whole year's wage. Despite its market value, the woman broke the seal and poured out the contents upon Jesus' head.

It was not uncommon for a guest at a festival or banquet to be anointed in this way, but it had special significance to Jesus because he perceived it as the anointing of his body for the crucifixion and death that was to come. However, there were many who saw the broken box, and watched the oil drip from Christ's head and spill to the floor and decried such acts as waste.

Mary anointed Jesus herself. A servant would ordinarily do the anointing; and Simon, owning a home large enough to entertain so many guests, would certainly have had servants. She took the most precious thing she had and gave it to Jesus in the most significant way, in an act of anointing. Mary's anointing of Jesus was a selfless act, a costly act, an act of love and faith in the Lord Jesus. Very simply put, Mary anointed Jesus to show Him how deeply she loved Him and believed Him to be the true Messiah, the anointed One of God. He was her Savior, Lord, and King. He had done so much for her and her family. She wanted Him to know how much she appreciated, loved, and believed Him.

As they watched Mary stoop and dry Jesus' feet with her hair, they maintained that

oil spilled and wasted in such a way was negligent. It was worth a year's wages and could have easily been sold to help the poor.

Jesus said the oil was neither spilled or wasted but served as an anointing in anticipation of greater things to come.

The Box

Mary's unselfish act was done in faith that Jesus was the son of God, whose kingdom would come. She traded one of most valuable possessions to demonstrate her love for him. This act also shows the following:

THE BOX REPRESENTED HER BEST: The contents of the Alabaster Box represented the best that she had to give; it was worth a year's wages. It was the type of oil and anointing that was reserved for the most special occasions, used sparingly to make it last. When she used it all on Jesus she gave him her all and she gave him her best. Believers today are compelled to do the same. In fact, the scripture record suggests that God doesn't really accept anything less than our best.

God is expecting us to present him with our best service. Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethern, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service."

God is expecting our best sacrifices. Some in the Old Testament were giving God the scraps and calling it sacrifice. They were bringing blind cows and lame goats for sacrifices so Malachi 1:8 we says, "And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?" Is it not just as evil today if give God the scraps: left over time, talent and offerings that are left over after we've taken care of everything else.?

When Mary poured out the oil it represented her giving her all. Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind." Likewise we should give God our best.

THE BOX WAS USELESS UNLESS OPENED: The alabaster box of ointment contained something that was very precious, but as long as it stayed in the container, it didn't benefit anyone. John says that when the perfume was poured out upon Jesus that its fragrance filled the house. Jesus called the act a good work, and the original Greek actually means "a beautiful thing." God has given each one of us a spiritual gift. It may be great faith, acts of service, hospitality, teaching, or some other gift. But if you keep that gift to yourself, it benefits no one. It is our responsibility as Christians to figure out what our gifts are, and then to use them for the glory of God and the benefit of those around you. What good is the gift of organizing if you never organize? What good is the gift of leadership if you never lead? What good is the gift of teaching if you never teach? If you have green thumb, but you never use it for the kingdom what good is it to God?

When Mary opened the box, the perfume filled the air. Everyone knew something special had been done. The same is true when we use our gifts. Our service causes others to sense Jesus all over the place. Look at Jesus teaching that class! Look at Jesus

working with those youth! Look at Jesus cooking that food!

When the church opens its Alabaster Box and lets the love of Jesus shine, the words of the song have new meaning, "There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and I know it must be the spirit of the Lord!"

SHE OPENED THE BOX BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DID FOR HER: Sitting in that room were people who had fully benefited from the grace of God. There was Simon the Leper, a man who was once an outcast with an incurable disease, but was healed by God. There was Lazarus, sitting at the table with Jesus. He was alive and well after being raised from the dead. This room was occupied by people who had been blessed by the hand of the Lord. In response to that Mary opened her Alabaster box and poured out her best for him. Whenever God has done something for us we should respond to him with our best. Simon was delivered from disease and public scorn. Lazarus was given a new life. If God has done the same for us we should be willing to open up our box and pour out to him everything we have in return.

When the Anointing Flows

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should note that Mary anointed Jesus with the best that she had because she expected Jesus to anoint her with best that he has!

The best Mary had was a box of expensive oil, but the best that the savior has is an anointing that flows from heaven and continues to flow every day!

When Samuel anointed David to serve as the King of Israel he anointed him with divinely blessed oil that flowed throughout David's life. When God should have struck him dead the oil continued to flow.

David was blessed so much that he prayed out of his soul, "Thou hast anointed my head with oil, my cup runneth over, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all of the days of my life."

When the oil of God's anointing flows, our cups run over as an evidence of God's favor.

When Abraham discovered the ram in the bush, that was an evidence of God's favor and the blessings kept flowing!

When Moses led the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, that was an evidence of God's favor, and the blessings kept flowing.

When Esther rose to become Queen of Persia and saved her people, it was an evidence of God's favor and blessings kept flowing!

When the Three Hebrew Boys were protected from the burning flames in the fiery furnace, that was an evidence of God's favor, and the blessings kept flowing!

When Daniel was protected from hungry lions in the lion's den, that was an evidence of God's favor and the blessings kept flowing!

On the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down like cloves of fire, that was an evidence of God's anointing, and the blessings have been flowing every since.

I don't know what you think about it, but I'm glad that God is still in the blessing

business.

There's a blessing flowing from the fountain on the mountain.

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vein; and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain."

It's a fountain filled with the blood of Christ.

It's blood that will never lose its power!

They lifted Him high on an old rugged cross!

They drove nails into His hands!

They stuck a spear in His side!

And he died... But Early Sunday morning He arose with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that the well of God's blessings has not been capped and

Blessings are still flowing!

No. 9651-Inspiration

Let the Haters talk

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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August 3, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him." Luke 6:7

Introduction

Does it bother you that you have so many haters? Whether we accept it or not everyone has a gallery of persons whose main occupation in life is to criticize. These are the proverbial back seat drivers of life who know the answers to all of the world's problems. Usually, they meet regularly with one objective, discussing the personalities, events and trends of the day often with highly opinionated and uniformed poisoned laced criticism. The purpose of the criticism is usually to show the flaws in one position or the other and to establish themselves as the ultimate source of disciplined analysis.

Officially, a criticism is a critique or analysis of a person, event or circumstance with the intent of determining its strengths and weaknesses. Critics operate on a variety of levels. There those who criticize organizations, movements, and trends. There are others who criticize food, movies, television broadcasts, even churches. There are also those who criticize other people. They begin with those who have the highest profiles such as the President of the United States, Governor, Mayor, Pastor or job supervisor.

Not all criticism is negative. There are two types: Constructive criticism and destructive criticism. The former is designed to build up and the latter is designed to tear down.

A constructive criticism looks for strengths and accomplishments, but does not overlook the weaknesses. The object of a constructive criticism is to help a person improve. A destructive criticism ignores the strengths and focuses on the weaknesses and flaws. The object is to show that the person is flawed, failing and on the path to destruction.

A constructive critic is one that attempts to be objective, considering all aspects of an issue. The destructive critic is usually highly opinionated, knows everything about everything, and feels his/her analysis is the only one that is correct in the world.

Generally, destructive critics are called "Haters." These those whose purpose for asking a question, making a statement or even participating in an event is to criticize

its failures and shortcomings.

As a general rule people who live in life's fishbowl attract the most haters. In the fishbowl, there is nothing hidden. People who choose public service or become involved in a public event voluntarily paints a large "X" on their lives because they attract haters who watch them like a goldfish in a bowl. They watch and criticize every move the little goldfish makes and there is no place to hide.

Everyone has an assumed right to privacy in America. We give up that right whenever we plunge ourselves into public life. Once we write a letter to the editor, open up a Facebook page, help with the school PTO, chair a committee, teach a class, land a public service job, open a business, play on a team, help a person in distress, preach a sermon, fall in love or dress fashionably.. we become targets of haters. The more visible you are, the more haters you will attract.

Haters don't stop hating on you in life, they continue after you die. They criticize your funeral: the flowers, the type of casket, the color of the clothes you wear, how long and how short. Long after you are gone the haters talk about you and analyze you. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. have been dead for years, but their haters continue. Shakespeare in Act 3 Scene 2 of Julius Caesar said, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones."

How can you tell whether you are an evaluator or a hater? An evaluator balances their analysis with a search for strengths as well as weakness. A hater has no balance.

It is not a sin to evaluate issues, persons or events. Jesus gave us a standard to follow to keep from being "haters." In Matthew 7:1-2 he said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." It means measure people by the same standards that you want to be judged." Those who desire to avoid being haters need only ask four questions before they comment: 1) Is my comment true 2)Is my comment necessary 3) Will my comment make things better

Generally, if all three of these points are not applied then we run the risk of becoming "haters."

Our God never "hates" on us. What he says to us in his word is always true, is absolutely necessary, and designed to make us better.

As Christians, we are aware that we subject to the criticisms of the world for our faith. We are not dissuaded, we will continue to do the works of him that sent us with the full knowledge that he will evaluate us fairly in the end and give us a crown of life.

Exposition

This text considers Jesus as he deals with his critics who followed him daily looking for ways to criticize him.

Jesus was not acceptable to the Jewish religious leaders. The constantly sought ways to legally bring him to judgment so that he could be eliminated as a threat. They often followed him and mingled with the crowds for the purpose of hearing a comment,

watching a deed or measuring crowd response. Their intentions were not honorable.

Christ was aware of their intentions, but continued his ministry despite their presence. In fact, the more he healed or performed miracles, the longer the reports were against him.

Christ was criticized for healing on the Sabbath, eating with publicans and sinners, and picking corn to eat on the Sabbath. He was often criticized for breaking the Mosaic traditions that had existed for over a thousand years. They criticized his disciples for not washing their hands before eating. (The religious leaders engaged in ceremonial cleansing like washing up to the elbow and baptizing the cups and plates before eating food in them)

Though he was constantly followed by critics, Jesus never stopped doing what he came to do. His ministry was not deterred.

He avoided confrontational settings and responded to most of their questions with a question. He remained focused.

The more they criticized, the more great works he continued to do.

In the end, it was the works themselves that brought his critics to shame, even though they continue to criticize him two thousand years after his death and resurrection.

Believers should follow his example, but expect no less than the same treatment from critics and haters.

How to deal with Haters

Believers who are frustrated with haters in their lives should study the way Jesus responded to haters as a guide to dealing with so many haters they encounter daily.

FOCUS ON THE WORK TO BE DONE: When Jesus was confronted with his haters his first response was to focus on the work to be done. The scribes and Pharisees interrupted him, but he continued to focus on the work. The sick were still healed. The blind still received their sight. Those who were hungry were still fed. Today, believers who are troubled by so many haters who criticize your good work should stay focused on the work and let the haters do what they do best which is talk! There will be many who will attempt to tear down your great work, but you should not be deterred. Paul, writing to the Philippians, said in Philippians 3:13-14, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let the haters talk! While they talk, get on with the business of kingdom building

IF YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING EXPECT TO BE CRITICIZED: Jesus was not criticized because he did nothing; he was criticized for what he did. He was criticized for healing the sick, eating with ordinary people and generally taking care of his business. Today, believers who are doing great work should expect to be criticized. The general rule of thumb is to remember the advise the old seasoned conductor gave the new orchestra leader, "If you want to conduct the orchestra son, you must turn your

back to the audience." It means you must continue to do great work despite what is being said behind your back. If the conductor constantly looked over his shoulder, he'd lose his place in the orchestrated selected. Stay focused and let the hater's talk!

DON'T RESPOND WHEN HATER'S HATE: What made it difficult for Jesus' critics was the fact that he seldom responded to them. The critics wanted a confrontation and he often refused to give them what they sought. They asked him a question and he in turn asked them a question. Often when he was accused one break or faith or another he did not respond at all. Believers should not respond to the hateful words of others. There are many who respond to negative Face book posts, news reports, and gossip by trying to track down the source or confront the source, only to create more buzz. We should not reward haters by responding to what they say. Remember, if several dogs are standing together and a rock is thrown into the group, only the hit dog will holler! If what your haters say is not true, then why are you hollering? Only the hit dog hollers. Don't respond, let the haters talk!

Give them something to talk about

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must do one final thing; when you get tired of hearing your haters talk about the same old stuff, give them something else to talk about!

There are many who constantly analyzing what you are doing, where you got it from and what you must have done to get it. What they don't talk about is the fact that you have spiritual hookup that keeps the blessings flowing.

Just about the time when they are tired of hating on one blessing you have received, our God blesses us again and gives them something else to talk about.

When it comes to the goodness of the Lord, all we can say is, let the hater's talk!

There are too many people today who are worried about what their haters say instead of trusting in the Lord!

When we trust in the Lord, we don't worry about what they say in the beauty shop and the barber shop, because we know that the Lord will make a way!

We are reaching for the brass ring of salvation, but every time we climb a little higher and God starts blessing us, the haters start their talk. Well, let the haters talk!

Let the haters talk because while they are talking God:

-Provides an Oasis in the wilderness!

-Prepares me a table in the presence of our enemies!

-God will help us to achieve the impossible dream!

Let the haters talk! They are talking because you

-Think about things that are unthinkable;

-Reach for things that are unreachable!

-Believe things that are unbelievable;

-Hope for things that are imaginable

Those who trust in God know that all things are possible!

Let the haters talk. They are just jealous because you serve a God whose:

-Power never weakens; Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; Promises never fail
-Glory never diminishes; Joy never ends
-Foundation never shakes; Truth never changes
-Supply never shrinks; Blessings never stop coming!
You serve a God who is able! Yes, he's able!
While your haters talk, you must continue to say "I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die!
I don't know about you, but I've decided that no matter what they haters say, I'm going to trust in the Lord!
Storms may rise! winds may blow!
I will trust in the Lord till! Let the haters talk you, but while they talk about you, you talk about Jesus!
Talk about his goodness and his mercy!
Talk about his undying love for the world!
Tell them how he died!
Tell somebody how he arose after three days and nights!
Tell somebody that he is alive in your soul today!

No. 9652-Inspiration

Obsessed with Fleas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

August 10, 2014

SCRIPTURE:"Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." 1 Samuel 26:20

Introduction

Have you ever been sidetracked dealing with scores of little things? These are the times when you delay doing what needs to be done because you became obsessed with focusing on a small matter that irritates you.

Obsessions refocus our energy and time. The Bush family had an obsession with killing the dictator of a small country called Iraq. George H.W. Bush nearly defeated him, but did not take the final step. When his son George W. Bush became president, he continued the family obsession with destroying Sadam Hussein. In the aftermath, 4,486 Americans died and a half million Iraqis. He was finally captured and hung, but not without plunging the nation into debt and costing the lives of thousands.

When we become obsessed, all reasonable behavior is lost. Obsessions over little things have caused marriages to end, friendships to end and churches to split. Obsessions are dangerous because they lead to reckless behavior.

Consider the soldier who was ordered to protect his side of the fort from invaders who were lay siege and waited for an opportunity to get inside the fort to destroy its occupants and steal its supplies. The fort was secure. It had strong gates and ample supplies. It could outlast any siege. At night, soldiers were posted on the walls to warn of enemies. One young soldier was assigned to watch the front gate for invading enemies. The soldier had at his disposal a giant cannon, a rifle and a pistol. As he watched through the night, he was constantly plagued by a single mosquito that seemed to swirl around his head making an irritating sound. For hours, the mosquito kept circling and buzzing until the soldier was completely frustrated. He swung at the mosquito and waved his hands. He laid down his rifle as he tried to smash the mosquito, but was never able to catch up to it. Finally, he saw the mosquito stop to rest on the front gate post. Enraged he turned the cannon at the mosquito and fired. He destroyed the mosquito that night, but he also blew down the only protection the fort had from its enemies who flooded the fort, took many lives and left. -All because one soldier became obsessed with a mosquito.

Are there persons irritating you like, mosquitoes and fleas? How much of your time and energy do you expend trying to deal with them every week? Are they really worth your time and energy?

We face many obstacles in life, but not every obstacle or enemy deserves to be the focus of our attention. We have to decide whether we want to shoot a cannon at a mosquito or a flea.Especially, if spending our time on fleas means we lose focus on the big picture.

There is no doubt that fleas are an irritation. They are tiny insects that feed on the blood of humans, dogs, cats, chickens, rabbits, squirrels and other warm-blooded vertebrates. They make little bites that irritate. If we are around fleas for only ten minutes, they can get in our hair on our bodies. The old folks warned youngsters constantly to beware of the company by saying, "If you lay down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas."

Fleas can get on us if we go where they reside, in the carpet, on the furniture or on animals.

Our frustrations in life range from life and death issues to a neighbor who keeps watching your house. One frustration is major while the other is an irritation. What if we allow ourselves to be sidetracked to the point that we focus all of our attention on the little irritations at the expense of life's major concerns.

Your husband loves you and your family with a passion, others who are trying unsuccessfully to get his attention are fleas. Are they worth your effort?

You are trying to get a job and to move up in life, but someone posts pesky comments about you on the internet; they are irritating; they are irritating like fleas. Should you respond to a flea?

Fleas are everywhere; its hard to avoid them. Everywhere Jesus went there were those around him trying to take a bite out of him. He often ignored them and when he did address them, spent little time or effort on them. They were never the focus of the day, week or life.

Why doesn't God remove the fleas? Why doesn't he simply protect believers from these pesky irritations? That's the same question that Paul asked three times about removing a "thorn" in his flesh. God's answer was not to remove the thorn, but to give him grace sufficient to deal with the issue.

As Christians, we strive to keep our lives focused on kingdom building. We are fully aware that we will face many distractions along the way, but we are confident that God will give us sufficient grace to succeed.

Exposition

This text focuses on Saul's attempt to use the resources of Israel to destroy David, a man after God's own heart.

Saul was a national Israeli hero. Prior to becoming king he led a daring raid to rescue the Tablets of the Ten Commandments from the Philistines, who had captured them along with the Ark. After he had become king, in his short two-and-a-half-year reign, he freed the Jewish people of all their enemies except the Philistines.

Saul was charismatic and physically gifted, as well as extremely tall and handsome (I Samuel 9:2).

He was charitable and selfless. Tradition records that he gave his fortune away to poor people. He specialized in helping pay for the needs of poor brides-to-be. When he went to war he paid the soldiers out of his personal treasury, not public funds

Despite his strength Saul had a weakness. It was insecurity and jealousy to the point of paranoia. He saw traitors everywhere. When David killed Goliath the crowds sang, "Saul hath killed his thousands, but David his ten thousands," this made him jealous. He threw spears at David and finally declared him an outlaw. David was his trusted aide, confidante and a loyal son-in-law, yet he listened to slander about him, assumed the worst of motives by him and made him his blood-enemy. No matter how many times David reconciled with him, Saul's insecurity and paranoia returned and gnawed at him.

Saul became obsessed not with the true enemies of the Jewish people, but with David.

Even after he was anointed, David had no intention of overthrowing Saul and taking the throne prematurely. To the contrary, he had opportunities and good reasons to kill Saul (e.g. I Samuel 24). However, he did not do so because he was no threat to Saul.

The man who sacrificed everything for the Jewish people, and was so selfless, let his insecurities get in the way to such an extent that it endangered the entire people.

Dealing with Fleas

EXPECT FLEAS: There are many who go through life thinking they can avoid its frustrations. In reality, life is filled with thousands of frustrations. There are so many that it prompted the poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar to write:

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And that is life!

The question is not whether there will be fleas, but how do we deal with them? If you are trying to do good work, there will be detractors, yet we must continue. Everyone who sees what you do will not be impressed, but impressions will be made. We should expect a pint of joy and a peck of trouble and depend on God's grace for strength.

FOCUS ON THE OBJECTIVE NOT THE FLEAS: When Israel moved into the promised land they became distracted by presence of Philistines and the agricultural success of the Canaanite people. They were delayed in receiving their own promise because they spent too much time dealing the with their perceived enemies or trying to emulate them. They had a promise from God, but they were intimidated. Even today, there are many who cannot move forward to claim their promise because they are dealing with so many fleas that they never seem to get to their main focus. Before you can finish dealing with one flea size problem, another one pops up. In fact, on a daily basis you

deal with so many issues that you have very little quality time for your family, the service you promised God or the spiritual life that you need.

These issues can become so cumbersome that instead of moving closer to God, the promise seems to move farther away. Sometimes, the issues that seem so important to us actually become dead weights that hold us back. Hebrews 12:1 suggests that we should turn aside from issues that are weighing us down. It says, Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

When we learn to focus on the main thing and keep it the main thing, then the presence of fleas may irritate us, but will not stop our forward progress.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE FLEAS: It is tempting to complain about the fleas in your life, but scripture teaches us that all things work to the good for us, even the fleas. When we are frustrated by life's fleas we are tempted to complain, but the Holy Spirit reminds us that it is all good.

In World War II the Germans persecuted Jews. Corrie Ten boom and her sister hid Jews in Holland and were caught by the Nazis. They were jailed in a concentration camp that was built for 400 but occupied by 1400. Corrie hid a bible in her barracks and read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 "In everything give thanks" almost daily. Her barracks was infested with thousands of fleas. It was almost unbearable. Yet, she thanked God for the fleas, the ever present symbol of her torment. Close to the end of the war she was released all of the other women were executed. Two miraculous things happened: She was released because of a clerical mistake and secondly she would have instantly been executed if her bible had been found, but guards refused to go in her cell because of...the fleas.

Don't spend time fighting the fleas, celebrate them! Thank God for them! Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Do your best

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must become obsessed with the fleas in your life, but become obsessed with doing your best and God will take care of the rest.

Life will not be an easy walk, so don't become obsessed at how tough it is.

Life will not be without its cloudy days, so don't become obsessed with how much rain falls.

Life won't give up anything but thank God for Grace, because through His grace we are able to see our way.

Life gives us a litany of hard times, but God's Grace gives us hope and inspiration.

Life gives us frustration, but the grace of God, give us the determination to say, "I believe I'll run on and see what the end's going to be."

Life gives us a platter full of failure, but the Grace of God gives us a second chance.

Life gives us a few helpings of defeat, but the Grace of God offers us a complete victory! That's why the saint sings, "Victory is mine. Victory is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind, victory today is mine."

Life hits us weekly with moans and groans, but the Grace of God offers us happiness and joy.

When you look around and see fleas in your life, don't become obsessed with them, praise God and step into his grace and favor

When you sing to the Lord, don't just praise him for one experience, but we praise him for the entire experience. Praise him for the fleas!

Don't just thank him for the mountain top experiences, but sing a new song that thanks him for the valleys as well.

Sing a new song that thanks him for the sunshine and thanks him for the rain!

Sing a new song that thanks him for the good times and thanks him for the bad times too!

Sing a new song that thanks him for the accomplishments we've made, but also sing a song that thanks him for the lesson learned from failures and setbacks!

Our new song should tell our story.

It ought to tell how he picked us up and turned us around!

It ought to tell how he planted our feet on solid ground!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

It ought to tell how he gave us a new song to sing!

We sing because life never offered us a chance at salvation, but thank God for the blood of Jesus!

We sing because life never offered us a chance start over again, but the Blood of Jesus purges our sin and gives us a new song to sing.

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb!"

We ought to sing about Jesus, Mary's baby!

Who died on Calvary but Early Sunday morning arose up from the grave!

Life knocked me down, but I'm so glad that Jesus lifted me and has given me salvation on a silver platter.

No. 9653-Inspiration

Your arms are too short to box with God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 17, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Acts 5:38-39

Introduction

Have you ever watched a short man try to fight a tall man? It's a humorous picture no doubt. The short man, even if he is strong and powerful has a difficult time if he is trying to fight a more powerful fighter who also happens to have a greater height and reach. The result in these situations is that the shorter man, usually, takes a great beating.

During the series of bouts between the late "Smoking" Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, Smoking Joe always came out bobbing and weaving. He was a powerful man with strong legs and arms. He could also take a punch. Ali was strong, skillful and tall with long powerful arms. During their fights, Ali often pounded away at Frazier's head and brutalized his face. In one of their three matches, Frazier won. He lost two, his arms were just too short to box with Ali, who seemed to "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee."

In the fight world there have been many short champions like Iron Mike Tyson, but they often suffered bruising defeats by tall opponents with long arms. When they won, it was because they had more power and strength and could muscle their way to victory.

If an all-powerful God has made a decision, who loses when we try to challenge his decisions? Who wins if we try to box with God? When something is of God, it is backed by the power of heaven. If you fight against heaven who loses in the end?

Robert Leroe noted this truth in the stage play, "Your Arms are Too Short to Box With God. " It contains a straightforward message that "God is God, and we are not."

God may permit what He hates, in our lives to build our faith, says Leroe. Faith is strengthened by hard times, not by times of comfort and ease.

As we struggle with life, we may even get angry with God, yet we realize how futile it is to wrestle with some of the inexplicable issues of life.

C.S. Lewis observed, "To argue with God is to argue with the very power that makes it possible to argue at all." We eventually stop boxing and accept…maybe even learn

from our pain…maybe even go on to comfort and encourage others. God's working on us—let's not fight Him. "No one can contend with one who is stronger than he."

As Christians, we should submit ourselves to the will of God, he is God and we are his servants. He leads, we follow. His will is our command.

Exposition

This text focuses on the words of Gamaliel as he urges members of Sanhedrin council not to fight against God.

The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jewish community. One of its great leaders was Gamaliel, who was regarded as a master teacher in the synagogue. When Peter and the Apostles began preaching about Jesus, there was considerable concern among the Sanhedrin members. Some members of the Sanhedrin believed that the Messiah would be sent from heaven to deliver the people; others did not. Peter and the Christians were claiming that Jesus was the one promised by God. His miracles among the people and his resurrection from the dead were proof, he said.

The Sanhedrin banned Peter from preaching about Jesus; the penalty would be death. Peter and the Apostles preached anyway and were hauled before the Sanhedrin court to face judgment.

Just before the sentence was passed Gamaliel rose to speak on behalf of the Christians. He urged the members of the Sanhedrin to be patient. They had witnessed other movements flareup only to fizzle later. He reminded them of religious revolts that were led by Theudas and Judas of Galilee. Both of them died quickly after the deaths of their leaders.

Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin was that they should "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Gamaliel's appeal made sense. If God is in the Christian movement, it will flourish. If God is not in it, it will flare up for a while, but it will die.

The Apostles were set free because not a single man on the Sanhedrin wanted to fight against God.

Struggling Against God

There are certain truths we must consider about struggling with God:

THOSE WHO OPPOSE GOD ALWAYS LOSE: When God has ordered a thing to be, those who resist spend their lives in futility. The Prophet Jonah was told to preach to the people of Ninevah; he chose to go in a different direction. All sorts of evil befell him until he complied with God's will. He was thrown overboard on a ship, swallowed by a whale and once in Nineveh saw his shade hut eaten by worms; only then did he understand that his arms were too short to box with God. Saul of Tarsus went to prosecute Christians, fighting against the church. On the Damascus Road he was confronted by Jesus himself. Acts 9:4 says, "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice

saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

If God has given believers a directive, mission or a command and we choose to ignore his command, we put ourselves in the position of fighting against him. We do not possess the power or sustained will to fight against someone who controls the winds and waves. Fighting against God is a losing battle; God always wins and the contenders always lose. In Jeremiah 2:29 God asks the question, "Why do you contend with me? You have all transgressed against me, declares the Lord."

Those who do not attend worship find fault in the pastor, deacons, members and the church itself. There are some who find fault in everyone and everything except themselves. Job 40:2 asks an important question and gives an answer, "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it."

If we choose to get into the ring with God, we may appear to win a round or two, but in the end we will lose.

WE SHOULD STRIVE TO PLEASE GOD: Rather than fight against God, we should strive to please him in every aspect of our lives. When God is not pleased with our actions, he withdraws his favor and power. This is what Gamaliel said to the Sanhedrin. If the power of God drives an idea, movement or decision he will push it into being. Ordinary men do not have God's power; it cannot happen without him. Personally, we can apply this to our own lives. What course have we taken recently? Is it in line with the will of God? If not, can we make it work without him? Is our marriage or relationship in line with God's will? Is our life direction on course?

When our actions fail to please God, he withdraws his favor and peace. The peace of God comes with his warm embrace. When we knowingly decide to contend with God, he removes his peace from us. Psalm 95:11 says, "Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." It means those who choose to get in the ring with God, anger him and they will have no peace because he will punch them out in every round by taking away their peace. Round 1: Peace at home. Round 2: Peace at school and workplace. Round 3. Peace in our personal lives. Round 4: Peace in finances. Round 5: Peace in our health.

It is futile to try to fight with God.

Every believer knows the futility of trying to succeed without God.

The songwriter put it this way, Without God I can do nothing. Without God, I'd surely fail. Without God, my life would be drifting. Like a ship without a sail.

RATHER THAN FIGHT GOD TRY OBEYING GOD: When Peter and the Apostles stood before the Sanhedrin they were challenged to stop preaching about Jesus. They faced two commands: One from the Sanhedrin Council and the other from God himself. When given the choice Acts 5:29 says, "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Their response gives direction to believers today. We must not fight against God, but simply follow his will for our lives.

That brings to mind the country boy who was told by his grandmother to walk up the road a piece and get her a box of Bitter Garrett Snuff, with two bits. It was a long walk to the country store and Grandma's box of snuff was running low. She gave the boy a stern warning, You get that snuff boy, you hear? Don't you come home empty

handed! The boy made the long walk to the country store but was filled with fear when the storekeeper told him that he had sold the last box a few minutes earlier. What am I going to do? He thought. Grandma would be furious. Remembering her words, Don't come home empty handed! He walked five miles to a country store down by the creek. However, they were out too. With nowhere else to go, the youth walked home trembling and shaking. Just before he reached his grandmother's porch at sundown, he walked over to the hedges and pulled a handful of hedge limbs and trimmed them. When he told his grandma there was no snuff, she was furious. Before she could say another word, he pulled out a handful of hedge limbs and gave it to her? What is this? She asked. Well, you told me not to come back empty handed and I could not find your snuff. So, before you tell me to go and get you a switch I bought you a hand full! The grandma was so tickled she said, I ain't gon' whip you this time, at least you didn't come back empty-handed!

God knows when we are trying our best to obey his will. He sees us every day and is pleased when we are putting our best foot forward; even if we come up short. Don't fight God, follow him and be blessed.

Stand Ready to Worship Him

Finally, brothers and sisters we must consider that while there are many who choose to box with God, we must stand ready to bow before him and obey his will.

The world has its own definition of God that shakes a fist in his face, but we who know him best know that he is not begging us for a fight, he wants to provide for us and love us every day. We don't argue with his plans for us, we get angry with ourselves for being so weak that we often drift away.

We cannot argue with those who want to box with God; they must stand in that ring all by themselves!

Today there are many who make proud claims against God, but we as believers choose to stand by the God who has shown himself to be real.

We cannot argue with those who believe faithfully in the teachings of the Buddha, we simply bow to the one who answers us when we pray.

We cannot argue with the dialogues of Socrates with probing questions about life, we will hang our hope on the one who came to give us life and give it more abundantly.

We cannot debate with the lofty teachings of Seneca and its moral proverbs and ethics, we will faithfully follow the one gave us gave us one powerful proverb to live by, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding."

We cannot stand toe to toe with those who claim God will make them prosperous and keep them healthy, we trust that the God we serve is able to keep us from falling and will shower favor on us for our faithfulness.

We cannot venture to argue with those who claim there is no God, We can only ask the questions:" If God is dead, what makes the flowers bloom, what makes summer come in June? If God is Dead who is it that mends a broken heart? If God is dead who keeps night and day apart"

There are many who say, I don't need to obey God.

There are many who say, I don't need to go to church or study my bible!

There are many who say, I don't need to pray or live a life by biblical rules!!

They say they built their own lives by their own labor and constructed it with their own tools!

Such men and women have set themselves in a contest with the almighty, testing their will against the powers of heaven.

All we can say to anyone who lives along these lines is, "Your arms are too short to box with God."

God has long arms, but he does not want to beat us down, he wants to reach out for us when we sinking low

That's what Peter learned when he was walking on the water and began to sink. He cried out, "Lord Save me" and Jesus reach out and took his hand and lifted him up. That's what the songwriter meant when he wrote, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters lifted me, now safe am I. Love Lifted me! Love Lifted me! When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

God has strong hands, but he does not want to deliver knockout punches, he wants to use his strength to show us mercy.

That's why Psalm 136:12 says, "With a strong hand and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth forever."

It's the strong hand of the Lord that:

—Defeats enemies who try to destroy us!

—Snatches us out of the chilling hands of sickness and restores our health!

—Keeps back the waters of destruction when all others are drowning in despair!

—Blazes trails for us through the wilderness of despair!

—Leads us out of temptation and delivers us from evil!

—That holds our hand as we face the difficulties of each day!

That's why the old warriors sang, "Lord hold my hand, while I run this race! I don't want to run this race alone!"

God doesn't want to put a choke hold on us and take away our breath, he wants to breathe into us: the spirit of faith; a spirit of hope and spirit of love!

That's why the songwriter wrote, "Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me. Spirit of the living God fall fresh on me. Make me, break me, mold me, fill me! Spirit of the living God fall fresh on me!"

My arms are too short to box with God!

Instead of raising my hand to fight with him, I'd raise holy hands to praise him!

Praise him for his grace supplies my:

-Soul with salvation

-Heart with joy

-Mind with peace

-Hands with tenderness

-Feet with Strength
-Eyes with compassion
I want to raise my hand and say, “Father I stretch my hand to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shalt I go!”
I want to lift up my hands not to box with him, but to thank him!
I want to thank him for saving my soul!
I want to thank him for lifting me up every time I fell down!
I want to thank him bearing an old rugged cross for me!
I don’t want to fight with God because he fought for me!
He died out on Calvary!
He was buried in a borrowed tomb, for me!
But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all Power in his hands!

No. 9654-Love

It's not Back Scratching; It's love!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 24, 2014

SCRIPTURE:"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16 "We love him, because he first loved us." 1John 4:19

Introduction

Have you ever heard the statement, "I scratch your back, you scratch mine?" It generally means I do you a favor, and you return the favor at some time in the future. Back scratching is a common practice in today's society. In fact, anyone who does something for someone expects them to return for what it's called the payback and feels obligated to return the favor because at some point earlier they had their back scratched.

Suppose you scratch, but the person whose back you scratch won't scratch back? Suppose you notice that they will never be able to scratch back? Will you still scratch their back?

What if the person whose back you scratch has no fingers or hands or any way to return the favor? Would you still be just as excited about scratching his back? Suppose the person flat out refuses to scratch your back?

In Luke 14:13-14, Jesus gives us an example of how God loves and how we should love. He told his disciples that when they had feasts or social gatherings,they selected guests that they believe would, in some way, benefit them in the future. This benefit would come either by a returned invitation or giving you a favor. He suggested that we should invite people because we love people: the poor, the needy, the crippled and even those with no political connections, social affiliations or ways to pay us back. He said they can't pay us back; for these invitations, but we will be rewarded in heaven. He put it this way in Luke 14:14, "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Jesus says we're blessed when we help people who cannot return the favor. The word used in the verse is recompense, but it means payback. It does not mean that you should not do things for people can pay back, but it does mean you get a greater blessing to happen those who cannot.

So if we loan money to those who can pay us back, there's a blessing, but there's a greater blessing for helping someone who we know possibly may not pay back the favor. It's a good thing to share a meal with someone who can invite you back to lunch, but it's an even greater blessing to share a meal with someone who has no meal to offer you in return.

The blessing that we get comes from God, who will pay us all in his own time and way.

The whole idea explains how God's love works. He does things for us, even though we can never pay him back. In fact, he does things for us even though there are times when we don't even try to pay him back.

God's love is AGAPE. It is unconditional love that goes beyond mere mutual respect and courtesy or returning his favor. When the world snubbed its nose at God and disobeyed his commandments and precepts, God's response was to love the world anyway. The world cursed God, and he made the sun rise every day anyway! The world ignored him, but he put food on their tables every day! The world rejected God, but he continued to shower blessings upon them daily! There is no doubt God was angry with the world. Once he became so angry that he flooded the earth with water. But his overall response to the world has been to love the world.

As Christians, our goal is to love God for who he is, not only for what he has done! We love him because of his majesty, excellence, power and compassion AND we love him because he also showed his love for us personally.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's explanation of love from his Gospel account and his first epistle; that combined explain the nature of God's love.

In John 3 John says God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. It was an explanation of the nature of the Agape Love of God that is unconditional and does not require reciprocity. In essence, God shows a love for the world that does not depend upon the world showing the same love to him. He scratched the world's back even if the world didn't or couldn't return the favor.

In his epistle John makes it clear the God displays perfect love. Perfect love is unconditional, all-inclusive and expensive. John lays out some specifics about loving God. The specifics include various reasons why we should love God. He encourages believers to love each other as God has loved us; that is without expectation of a recompense for our acts of love and charity.

In verse 17 John, encourages believers to love God with a perfect love that is unconditional. In verse 19, John expresses a reason we love God is because of his excellent character displayed when he decided to send His only begotten Son to die for our sins. Verse 19 seems to imply that the only reason that we should love God is because He first loved us. However, in its full context it implies that the perfect love of God shows his excellence and deserves our respect, but in no way are we loving him in proportion to the way he loves us.

The text points out that if we want to respond to the love God has shown us we cannot do it by scratching his back but we can do it by scratching our neighbors back without thought of getting a return. We can do nothing for God because he is all powerful and has everything. He needs nothing from us. However, we can show the love of God by extending charity to our neighbors.

He encourages us not to have an attitude of back scratching, even when it comes to loving him, but to do it because....

Because, Because, Because

John 14: 7-21 gives us a reason to love God and the way to show our love to God. Significant in that verse is the word "Because." It explains why we love God, but it is much more than just because he loved us.

In the movie, "The wonderful wizard of Oz" Dorothy, the Tin Man, Scarecrow and the Lion journey to see the wizard. Enroute they sing these words, "We're off to see the wizard, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz We hear he is a whiz of a wiz, if ever a wiz there was If ever, oh ever a wiz there was, The Wizard of Oz is one because Because, because, because, because, because; because of the wonderful things he does..."

Those who love Jesus love him because, because, because, because....

HE FIRST LOVED US: It is true that we love Jesus because he first loved us, but that is not the only reason. If that were the only reason, it would imply that we only love him in proportion to how he scratches our back. If, for some reason, we ever felt that he did not love us then, we would not love him. If we love God in a back scratching way; then we would stop loving him, if he does not answer our prayers exactly as we request them.

We love him because he gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

We love him because he has given us the hope of eternal life, but we also love him because, because, because...

HE IS OMNIPOTENT: We love him because he has all power in his hands, Yand he uses that power to fulfill his will in the world. Because he is all powerful, there is no problem we have that he is not able to solve. There is no burden we have that he cannot help us carry. There is no situation we might face that is byond his ability to handle. Just the knowledge that he is able gives us peace. We love him because, because, because, because...

HE IS OMNIPRESENT: We love Jesus because no matter where we go he can go with us. From coast to coast or even into outer space he is there. Psalm 139:7-10 says, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." We love him because he never leaves us alone. In our despair, he is there. In our failure, he is there. In our success, he is there. We love him because there is never a time that we need him that he is not near. We love him because, because, because, because....

HE IS OMNISCIENT: We love Jesus because no matter how troubling our problems he knows. He knows everything about us. That's why the old slaves sang, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus. Nobody knows that trouble I see, Glory Hallelujah!" We know that because Psalm 139: 1-2 says, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." We love Jesus because he knows our limits, and he knows just how much we can bear.

The wonderful Grace

Finally, we acknowledge that we love Jesus because, because, because, of the wonderful things he does.

It's not the wonderful things he does for us alone, but the wonderful things he does period. If we only loved him because of the wonderful things he does for us, that would be back scratching, but we love him with the same love that a loving parent has for a child, even if they don't love back.

We love him because of the wonderful things he does for the world

These are the wonderful things that the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me.
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame,
O magnify the precious Name of Jesus.
Praise His Name!

We love him because he has lifted us despite our unworthiness.

We love him because:

Despite our imperfections, he lifts us up in the eyes of God.

Despite our flaws and failures, he helps us achieve our maximum.

Despite our idiosyncrasies, he still blesses us, according to his purpose.

He loves us unconditionally and with only one purpose: to bring us to the altar as the spotless bride of Christ.

This is the kind of love that we sing about when we say, "Yes, Jesus loves me."

We love him because, because, because, because..

He has loved us with a love that is:

—higher than the heavens
—deeper than the oceans
—lovelier than the sunsets
—sweeter than the honeycomb
—stronger than the wind

—fresher than the morning dew
We love him because, because, because
He has loved us with a love that cannot be:
—measured for it is immeasurable
—described for it is indescribable
—evaluated for it is invaluable
—comprehended for it is incomprehensible
—explained for it is unexplainable
Because, because, because, because of the wonderful things he does:
—He gives us strength in our weakest hour!
—He gives us food when we are hungry
—He gives us healing when we are sick!
—He gives us hope when all is lost!
We love because, because, because, because
One day he went to Calvary and died for our sins!
We love him because, because, because, because...
Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9655-Grandparents

Bearing Fruit in old age

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 6, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon .Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ; To whew that the LORD is upright : he is my rock , and there is no unrighteousness in him. Psalm 92:12-15; "also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto[this] generation,[and] thy power to everyone[that] is to come. Psalms 71:18

Introduction

Did you know that there is a palm tree in Los Angeles, at the Exposition Center, that is over 150 years old and is still bearing fruit? Palm trees bear a wide variety of fruit, live and long time and still manage to bear fruit through it all.

It is no wonder then that the bible compares grandparents to palm trees. There are many similarities between the two.

In many ways our grandparents are like palm trees in our lives. The older they become the taller they become in our hearts because they are still bearing fruit.

Many of us have been the recipients of a wealth of wisdom, guidance, and love from our grandparents. Some have even benefitted from resources provided from them through inheritances left for them by grandparents who cared.

The challenge for every grandparent today is to make sure that their grandchildren will never be able to say, "I never knew my grandparents."

How much they know about your life, beliefs, hopes and dreams may shape their futures.

In 1996 Erma Bombeck, an American humorist wrote about the images that many grandparents have left for their grandchildren to remember. Bombeck said:

Grandparents can always be counted upon to buy anything you're selling from all-purpose greeting cards to peanut brittle, from flower seeds to cookies, from transparent tape to ten chances on a pony.

A grandparent buys you gifts your mother says you don't need.

A grandparent pretends he does not know who you are on Halloween.

A grandparent will put a sweater on you when she is cold, feed you when she is hungry and put you to bed when she is tired.

A grandparent is the only baby-sitter your parents didn't have to pay.

A grandparent will believe you can read even when you have the book upside down.

These are the images that many have of their grandparents. They are like tall palm trees that get taller as years go by and they still bear fruit.

The challenge to pass from one generation to the next the legacy of God, family and country represents the sum total of every grandparent's charge which is to leave an inspiring legacy that will live in the hearts of your grandchildren.

Grandparents should not consider their work done until they are satisfied that their grandchildren are on the right track or at least know their way to the right track. Until that happens there is still much work to be done.

As Christians, we should praise God for Godly grandparents because they stand tall in our lives and continue to bear fruit.

Exposition

This text focuses on glories of senior living and grand parenting.
David writes that saints in old age shall flourish and reap the benefits of a life well lived, but yet bear fruit.

He compares the senior life to that of a palm tree. In Psalm 1 he noted that the blessed man is the one who delights and meditates in Godâ•™s Word, and is like a tree planted by streams of water, always prospering spiritually. Now, even in old age, that principle remains true. The elderly saint grows to flourish like the palm tree and stand strong like a cedar tree of Lebanon, which is a picture of strength, majesty, and a pleasing aroma!

The faithful are promised that they will bear fruit in old age.

It will be the grandparents who will declare in Psalm 92:15, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.

Matthew Henry comments: "The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work is their best work.•

The Lord enables the senior saint to have spiritual stamina, even when their physical and mental stamina are declining.

Deuteronomy 34:7 says, "Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.

Psalm 71:18 "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.

David asked God not to abandon him in his old age but to give him to strength to show this generation the power of God and to prepare even the coming generation to know of God's greatness.

Thses texts make it clear that the elders of every generation have no time to lay back and wait their end, but they are challenged to teach their children and grandchildren about the goodness of God.

Their grandchildren are the fruit they bear in their old age.

Fruit Grandparents Must Bear

David said, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." It is an illustration similar to the one in Psalm 1 in which believers were compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth its fruit in its season. What are some of the characteristics of palm trees that are like our grandparents?

PALM TREES BEAR DIFFERENT FRUITS: Palm trees, unlike other trees bear different kinds of fruits. One palm tree bears coconuts, but another pine tree produces dates and still others produce fine oils. The same is true with grand parents. It seems at times that grandparents know everything, have done everything and been everywhere. Grandpa at times seems to be a Jack of all trades and is knowledgeable about all matters of life, especially those that deal with understanding people. This accumulated wisdom is used to insure that grandchildren grin to be palm trees themselves rather than weeds.

Weeds are not wanted while palms are prized and cared for. Palms are watered, regularly exposed to the sun and pruned. No one cares about weeds. No one waters them,they find their own sun. They are never pruned . They grow wild.

Like prized plants, every grandparent wants his/her children watered in the word exposed to the SON.

Grandparents want fruit not weeds.

PALM TREES BEND AND SELDOM BREAK: Although palm trees are located in tropical areas that are frequented by storms and hurricanes; they still remain after the storm is over. After hurricanes buildings are shattered and tall trees are broken like tooth picks, but the palms still stand, because they bend with the wind. Grandparents have learned how to submit themselves to the will of God. In difficult times they have also learned how to depend on him. They probably heard the words to the old song, "I learned how to lean and depend on Jesus; and I found out, he will provide." Those who trust in the Lord are seldom broken by storms.

PALM TREES BREAK BANDS: In the rural areas people often tied pieces of wire around trees to support a fence or other object. As time passed the tree grew and the band cut into the trunk. That does not happen with palm trees. Palms break the bands that bind them. Godly Grandparents seemed to have conquered the chains and bands the bind them. Fears, frustrations and troubles are chains and bands around our lives, but the faithful have learned that the power of God can "break every chain." It seems that grandparents have internalized the scripture that says, "Greater is he that is within us than he that is in the world." We are "more than conquerors" through Christ Jesus.

PALM TREES DON'T BRUISE EASILY : While most trees bruise easily if their bark is breached, the Palm Tree is just the opposite. The ordinary tree is vulnerable because a large part of its life force is on the outside, but the Palm Tree's life force if from the inside. How is it that our grandparents have been able to sustain so much abuse over the years, but still stand strong. It's because their power is from their strong spiritual life that is directed toward God. They feel the pain and agonies of life, but they are not deterred by them. That's why the old warriors sang, "I've been buked; I've been scorned. I've been talked about sure as you're born, but at the cross I'm going to bow

and going on to heaven, anyhow."

PALM TREES CAN'T BE GRAFTED: While other trees can be grated to produce something different, it's not so with palm trees. Horticulturists can take the root stock of many trees and mixed them with others and get something new. A nectarine is a cross between a peach and a plum. A tangelo is a cross between a tangerine and a grapefruit. Those who try to graft palms kill them. Grandparents are able to bear fruit because they are not easily drawn into the world. New trends that put distance between themselves and God are rejected. Grandparents know that when they bow to the world they invite sin and injure their capacity to produce fruit. They want to avoid the fires of hell and thereby adopt another trait of palm trees: Palm trees don't burn and are never used for firewood.

PALM TREES STAY GREEN AND PRODUCE FRUIT: Palm trees are evergreens; that means they stay green. Additionally, palm trees not only produce fruit, but the older the tree the sweeter the fruit. Is that not true with the godly grandparent? That's the promise of God "They shall produce fruit in old age." The fruit of grandparents is in their grandchildren, in many ways they will reflect their faith, teachings and faith. The fact that their faith stays in tact is related to the ability of the palm tree to stay green despite the season. Our grandparents have taught us to keep our hand in God's hand and he will provide.

Hold on and keep trusting God

Finally, brothers and sisters, grandparents themselves must hold on and keep trusting in the Lord.

While grandparents show their families the strength and power of God, they themselves must keep trusting in God.

As physical health fails from time to time, eye sights dim and steps slow; they must continue to trust in God and remember that God is our refuge and our strong place to hide in storms.

God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm.

The times may have changed but God is still on the throne.

We trust in the Lord because those who trust him are rewarded with answered prayers, and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves. Biblical grandparents trusted in the Lord.

—Noah trusted the Lord and He brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and He showed him the ram in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and He protected him in the Lion's Den

—Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord.

I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet

will I trust Him."

In closing, there were two boys talking about having to wear glasses to help their vision. Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time? asked a small boy of his playmate.

No-o-o, the other boy answered slowly, not if I had the kind grandma wears. She sees how to fix a lot of things, and she sees lots of nice things to do on rainy days, and she sees when folks are tired and sorry, and what will make them feel better, and she always sees what you meant to do even if you haven't got things just right.
I asked her one day how she could see that way all the time, and she said it was the way she learned to look at things as she grew older.

So it must be her glasses.

It wasn't the glasses. Grandma had learned to trust in the Lord

I will trust in the Lord because if I am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!

I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross! Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand, the Lord knows the way!

No. 9656-Inspiration

A Rock for all ages

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 14, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" Ephesians 2:7-8

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear a reference to "The Rock?" Today, when we hear the word Rock different images come to mind depending on our perspective. Some hear the term Rock and think of a very Samoan wrestler who has also become a movie star known as The Rock.

Others hear the term Rock and think of Sylvester Stallone's about an Italian boxer known as Rocky Balboa.

Some think of Elvis Pressley singing a hit song a half century ago entitled, Jail House Rock.

Still others will remember the notorious California Prison officially named Alcatraz, but infamously called, The Rock.

The term Rock means different things to different people; but what does it mean to believers? What do believers think of when we hear the term Rock?

A man who had been battered by a string of unfortunate events decided to walk and pray. He walked along the shoreline of a large lake. He noticed a small break between the rocks and observed that a tiny plant had taken root there. The plant appeared to be absorbing the right amount of sunlight and water, and it was also getting something else: protection. No downpour or windstorm would ruffle its tender leaves.

When the man saw the little plant snuggled safely between the powerful boulders, it reminded him of the old hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee."

–In his distress, the man found inspiration that he was surrounded by the power of our God, who is the "Rock of Ages."

These are the words we think about when we encounter people with evil intentions—people characterized by pride, cruelty, and a lack of regard for God. When we are the target of someone's wrongdoing, we can remember the testimony of the psalmist in Psalm 94:22, "The Lord has been my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge"

As our rock, God is dependable and strong. As our refuge, He can provide safety until problems pass. The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 91:4: "Under His wings you shall

take refuge." With God as our defender, we don't have to fear what others will do. We can trust that God will support us when trouble comes.

It is plain to every believer that the rock of our salvation is Jesus Christ our Lord.

As Christians, we know about the Rock but the Rock we know is not a television star. The Rock we know is the solid rock of Jesus Christ. We are confident and secure in our faith that he is a rock for all ages.

Exposition

In this text Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the generational reach of God's grace.

He notes that God loved the world so much that he gave us Jesus Christ. Through his kindness, Christ came and died for us and made us recipients of his grace. The word of hope in this text is that the grace he showed to the apostles or even to the Ephesians is not limited to their time, but extends to all those who would follow after. Ephesians 2:7 says, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

The phrase "in ages to come" refers specifically to the coming generations. The same grace that was shown in biblical times would be shown to all generations.

Christ is presented as one in whom believers can safely trust in any age from infancy to death, or in any period of time. It also reassures us that Christ may be trusted fully for every matter concerning this life or the next. Christ is able to sustain and support every person whether it be a little child or the mature man of business. Christ may be trusted in every situation, in every circumstance, and in any time of day or night.

This is the powerful hope that each believer shares that the same grace known by others before us will continue. The power of renewal when we have failed. The power of forgiveness when we have sinned. The power to start again when we have fallen flat on our faces and the power of the resurrection is promised to us as this life ends.

This grace comes through Jesus, who have proved himself to be a strong rock of security for all generations.

The Rock in our lives

The fact that Jesus is a rock for all ages is important. He is also a rock for all circumstances.

HE IS A ROCK FOR THE YOUNG: Often youth believe intense faith in God is something for their elders. They hear their parents pray and listen to their bible teachers tell them about God, but they don't believe that God actually listens to children. However, the word teaches us that Christ is extremely sensitive to the presence and concerns of children. In Matthew 19:14 he said, "…Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Children can talk to God for themselves and he will hear them. Roy Buck tells the story of a little boy who was tugging at a big rock and doing his best to lift it. He was grunting and pulling at it, but it didn't budge. His father came along and asked him if he was having any trouble. He

said, “Yes, I am trying and trying and can’t move the rock.” The father said to him, “Well, son, are you using all available energy?” The boy replied, “Yes, Father, I think I am.” Then the dad looked at him and said, No, son, I don’t think you are, for you haven’t asked for my help.” Children can talk to God in Jesus’ name because he is a rock for all ages.

HE IS A ROCK FOR EVERY SITUATION: Paul told the Ephesians that in times to come Christ would “show the exceeding riches of his grace and kindness.” It is this kindness of God that has shown itself in so many situations that continue to give us hope. It also helps restore our faith in ourselves, especially when we have begun to see ourselves in the worst way. Regardless of our situation, we are reminded that Jesus is a rock for every situation.

In our journey, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In our journey, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In our journey, God has been our way out of no way.

In our journey, God has been our of bridge over troubling waters.

That’s why the songwriter says, “Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a weary land, a weary land; a shelter in a time of storm. Has he ever made a way when you didn’t have a dime? Has he ever stepped in just right on time? Has he ever picked you up when you were down? Has he ever placed your feet on solid ground? Then you know he is a rock in a weary land

HE IS A STRONG PRESENCE IN OUR TROUBLES: In our time of trouble all of our help seems to vanish? Friends don’t answer the phone and social contacts avoid us like the plague. Where are they when you need them? Our God never abandons us and is present even in our time of trouble. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” The emphasis in this text is on the word “present.” That means “at the moment,” “right now.” The enemy troubles us in the present, but God assures us that if come to him the enemies power can be broken. The enemy comes to trouble your life and all that is important to you, but Christ comes to give it back and give it back better than it was before the enemy took it. John 10:10 says, “ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” In the present, the devil may be causing all kinds of trouble in your life impacting your: marriage, finances, and career, but God promises us that He can give it back and give it back in a way that was better than we had before. He has revealed this assurance to us in his written word in Isaiah 54:17 “No weapon formed against us shall prosper!”

We have troubles today, but because of Christ, we have hope that troubles won’t last always because he is present in our time of trouble. He is a rock for all ages and situations.

Standing on the rock

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that we have survived everything life has thrown at us only because we’ve been standing on the rock.

When believers stand on the rock, we supersede the mortal capacities of mere humans because we are being sustained by the power of God himself.

We have come this far by faith, standing on the rock. We have found that he his truly a rock for all ages.

When we were children we sang, "Yes Jesus loves me, for the bible tells me so." He answered our prayers and we learned that he is a rock for all ages.

When we left home and step into an unknown future, we cried, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know." When he held our hands, we understood that he is a rock for all generations.

When we face the storms of life and they rocked us to and fro we cried out, "Master the tempest is raging," and he answered "Peace be still." That's when we knew he was a rock for all ages.

When we journeyed year after year into an unknown future, we cried out, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand." When he responded, "I will never leave thee alone," we remembered that he is a rock for all ages.

Who is this rock? He is different things to different people.

To the astronomer He is the Sun of Righteousness.

To the baker He is the Living Bread.

To the banker He is the Hidden Treasure.

To the biologist He is the essence of Life.

To the carpenter He is the Sure Foundation.

To the doctor He is the Great Physician.

To the educator He is the Great Teacher.

To the farmer He is the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.

To the florist He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.

To the horticulturist He is the True Vine.

To the judge He is the Righteous Judge.

To the juror He is the True Witness.

To the jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.

To the toiler He is the Giver of Rest.

To the Sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

To the Christian, He is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer and Lord!

Who is this rock? One songwriter said, This rock is Jesus. Yes, he is the one. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the Solid rock.

The church is standing on the solid rock of faith.

The church is holding on to the solid rock of hope.

No wonder the Songwriter wrote, My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus, blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean of Jesus' name.

On Christ, who carried a cross for me up Calvary's hill.

On Christ, who let them drive nails into His hands.

On Christ, who died on Golgotha's hill.
On Christ, who arose after three days and nights.
On Christ, the solid rock I stand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

No. 9657-Inspiration

It ain't all about you

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 28, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Colossians 1:16-18

Introduction

Have you ever met a person who believes the entire world around revolves around him? This is the person who believes that everything in the world and everybody in it should serve his purpose because he/she is the center of concern.

Generally, a person who takes this position uses the words "I, my, me and mine" more than "we, us, and ours." The psychiatrists call this narcissism. The idea that everything revolves around me.

If a narcissist walks into a room and sees two people talking on the other side of the room, she believes they must be talking about her, because what other subject would be of interest to anyone? The worth of a person is only calibrated in proportion to that person's worth to you. The deceased may have been a great person, but he wasn't great at all if he wasn't great for you.

In a relationship, this is the person who insists on his/her way. It's his TV channel the family will watch, and his choice of food for dinner. It's his choice of vacation time, too.

That's when one partner has to say to the other, "Baby I love you, but it's not all about you."

The narcissistic child says, "But I don't want to do that." "I don't want to get braces on my teeth." "I don't want to do my homework."

That's when someone has to remind that child that, "We love you, but it's not all about you."

The narcissistic employees say, "I don't want to come to work at that time." "I don't want to work on rainy days!" "I don't want to work on holidays!" "I don't want to work on that project."

That's when someone has to remind that employee, "You're important, but it's not

all about you."

What about our relationship to God? Is it possible that there are believers that approach God with a narcissistic view?

These are the ones that tell God, "I want every day of my life to be filled with sunshine. I don't want any sickness or difficulties. When I pray, I want my prayers answered quickly and precisely. I want to keep all of the money I earn and donate a little as I am moved. I also want to be blessed continuously, even if I am negligent in my worship or service."

That's when God responds to us, "I love you, but it ain't all about you."

In reality, the world revolves around God. What we want in life as believers is only important as it relates to what God wants for us. Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being.."

We would like the world to revolve us, but it does not. This is the FUBU world-"For us, by us." Somehow we want things to be "all about us", even the clothes we wear.

The world and everything in it belong to God. It's all about him and "all things were made by Him for Him." That means God's work in our lives should always be lifted up.

If He heals us, we should exalt Him and praise Him.

If He blesses us, we should lift up and acknowledge His name.

If He answers our prayers, we should be a witness to others of His goodness.

It's not about us, it's about Him!

As Christians, we are happy to know that God loves us and cares for us. We respond to his goodness with a spirit of gratitude because we know he didn't have to do it for us, but he did, and for that we give him our adoration and praise

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul' explanation of Christ's relationship to all things created and our relationship to him.

The truth is that Christ as God is the creator and by Him all things were created. In fact, all things were created by Him because he is the first and final one that holds all things together.

In relation to the universe he created, Christ is the centripetal force that pulls matter toward himself and he is the centrifugal that pulls bodies away. He is the center of gravity that holds things together, keeps us grounded, and keeps us from falling apart.

Christ is not only the one through whom all things came to be, but also the One by whom they continue to exist.

The Son's creation includes "all" things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. These indicate the entire universe, both material and immaterial. The hierarchy of angelic beings— thrones or powers or rulers or authorities anywhere in the universe. Everything revolves around him.

Verse 18 says, "In all things he has pre-eminence." That means in every situation, "What God wants or directs takes precedent over any other concerns."

If the world says, "Go left" and God says, "Go right," God's direction has

preeminence!

If the world says, “It doesn’t matter” and God says, “It does matter,” What God says takes precedent!

What this text says plainly is that God is the creator and it’s what he wants that counts. We live to please him and serve him in every way. We are his offspring.

Three Signs

When human beings begin to view themselves as equal to God, they begin acting so by asserting their own will over His will and arrogating to themselves divine prerogatives. The importance of the individual truly has become the central organizing thread around which so much of the thinking and teaching of our time has clustered. There are three attitudes believers must avoid:

NOBODY TELLS ME WHAT TO DO: There are many in the world who believe that they live independent from God and do not need him for any purpose. They believe that they are capable of directing their own course without any interference, assistance or dictation from the almighty. The natural evolution of this view is that people in this context do not feel accountable to God for their actions. This is the attitude of the individual who considers himself supreme. In reality, everyone is accountable to something or someone. In the world of commerce, an employee is accountable to a supervisor. A supervisor is accountable to senior officials, and senior officials are accountable to the governing board. The governing board is accountable to the laws of the land. The laws of the land are accountable to the public. The person who says, “Nobody tells me what to do,” usually takes that same attitude about God. However, the bible shows us that all creation answers to God. By reason of creation, God has always had dominion over His creation. He directed Adam and Eve in their lives until they started to deviate. Whenever human beings have obeyed the Lord, whether as individuals or as nations, they have benefited greatly. On the other hand, disobedience to God has always brought troubles. The Christian belongs to God in a special sense, having been bought by Him at a price. We are obligated to live for God’s glory in both body and spirit. God does tell us what to do and we will be held accountable as to whether we do what he says or not.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT: There are many who approach God with a take it or leave it attitude. This is the attitude that God must accept me “Just as I am” and allow me to “stay as I am.” This view assumes that the most important person in the formula is me. If God wants me, he should be prepared to accept me as I am and don’t try to change me, just bless me when I need a blessing and leave me alone otherwise. It is true that God invites everyone to come “Just as I am,” but it is not his intention for us to stay the way we came. We came to him weakly, but he expects us to find strength. We came to him without faith, but he expects our faith to grow. We came to him wallowing in our sins, but expects us to put away sinful living. The changes we make align ourselves with His will, not our will. However, too many today assume the attitude that “God knew I like

to smoke a little weed every now and then. He also knew I like to chases women. He shouldn't be trying to change me. I got to keep it real!" Those who turn their lives over to Christ testify that it is not about "me" anymore; it's about Christ. He now lives in them and they desire to do the right things and go in the right direct directions. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ:nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The old warriors sang a song that says, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad, but I found him a resting place and he has made me glad!"

I CAN GET TO HEAVEN WITHOUT CHURCH: There are many who have dismissed worship, service and study of God's word as an infringement upon their time. They contend that all they need to do is obey the law, believe in God and treat people right and that will be their ticket into heaven. They want the Frank Sinatra way (My Way!) My way is not alway God's way. God has ordered the saints to assemble regularly to promote the faith, promote brother love, worship, and to help others who are not as strong to find their way through life's troubles as they approach. Hebrews 10:23-25 says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." We may not want to assemble, but it ain't about you, it's about what God has ordered and what God expects of each of us. We are saved by faith. Simply coming to church does not guarantee us a seat in the kingdom, but a saved life that is obedient to the will of God will be rewarded. The word tells us "he that overcometh shall inherit all things,"

All Around Us

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we know that this life is not all about us, we also know that when we follow God's will, his glory will be all around us!

The direction we take in life is not all about us, but when we take a step for the Lord, his glory will be all around us!

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he told them it's not about you, it's about the Lord!

Paul told the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do"

Likewise we can say, "We don't think it's all about us, but there is one thing we know. It may not be about us, but when we do God's will, his glory is all around us!"

When we witness to the lost, it's not all about us, but the glory of the Lord is all around us!

When we serve the less fortunate, it's not all about us, but the glory of the Lord is all around us!

When we lift up the despondent, it's not all about us, but the glory of the Lord is all around us!

We have learned that when we live for His glory and not our own, God showers us with His favor. Because we glorify Him, when nobody else

—Cares about us, the glory of the Lord surrounds us!

—Forgives us, the glory of the Lord erases all record of our failures.

—Accepts us, the glory of the Lord surrounds us and receives us with arms wide open.

—Wants us, the glory of the Lord surrounds us and accepts us as children of the king.

We are nothing without Christ because it is his glory that surrounds us.

It's not about us, but it is his glory that gives us the light to walk in the darkness of this world. Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he said, "We'll walk in the light, beautiful light, come where the dewdrops of mercy are bright. Shine all around me by day and by night, Jesus the light of the world!"

It's not about us, but is his hand that guides us through this wilderness we call life. That's why the old warrior said, "Guide me oh thy great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty; hold me with thou powerful hand!

It's not about us and our ability to sing, teach or preach, but it is his power that draws men to the cross. I hear him say, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all men unto me.!

It's not all about us, but it's about the one who says: I am the way, the truth and the life!

It's not all about us, but it's about the one who says: I am the bread of life!

It's not all about us, but it's about the one who says: I am the lily of the valley and the bright and morning star!

It's not all about us, but it's about a God who loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son!

It's not all about us, but it's about the one who died out on Calvary!

It's not all about us, but it's about the one who was buried in a borrowed tomb!

It's about the one who arose early Sunday morning!

It's not about us; it's about Jesus!

No. 9658-Revival

Living Saints among the Walking Dead

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 5, 2014

SCRIPTURE: And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. 46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. Leviticus 13:45-46; "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"Ephesians 2:1-2

Introduction

Are you getting what you should get out of life or is there a disconnect somewhere? Is it possible that we are doing more and enjoying less, getting more and having less fun, eating more and never getting satisfied, traveling more, but really getting nowhere?

If we believe the advertisements, we are supposed to be happy when we get an education, land a job, wear a certain brand of clothing, living in a certain neighborhood, and own certain types of vehicles and gadgets? Will all of the women really want you if you drive a Ford 150? Can all of life's problems be solved if we make a 15-minute call to Geico? Do blondes really have more fun?

There are many people who spend their lives reaching for the advertised myth of the abundant life, only to find that even though they grab hold of life's brass ring they still don't feel truly alive!

Instead of walking in abundance many are like the walking dead. Have you ever seen that TV show or one of the other zombie movies? The basic idea behind them all is that during the apocalypse at the end of the world, there is some kind of virus that reanimates dead bodies – the living dead – and causes them to walk around looking for human brains to eat. The show follows Deputy Sheriff Rick Grimes and a small band of survivors who are trying to stay alive and discover the cause of the plague.

The zombies have only one purpose and that's to find human brains for dinner. They won't achieve anything, do anything important or accomplish anything of significance.

They are truly the walking dead.

For some reason Zombies fascinate the public. The TV show is top rated and has developed a cult following. There is drama, love, sex and the relentless struggle to either eat or avoid being eaten.

For many people, that describes their lives in the real world. It has spawned books and studies such as the one by Harvard psychiatrist Steven Schlozman called, "Zombie autopsies." There are Zombie fashions, books, movies and theories because we are fascinated with what may reflect who many of us really are: the walking dead.

In contrast to the walking dead are those who live the abundant life promised by the savior. Knowing Christ and living for him is the difference between really living or being a part of the walking dead!

As Christians, we are thankful to the savior for giving us the opportunity to live again. We walk in the light of a world brightened by the spirit of grace and love that only comes through knowing Jesus Christ for ourselves.

Exposition

This text focuses on the life of exile of those who were diagnosed with leprosy in biblical times.

Leprosy was a disease which was feared in biblical times. Some forms were contagious and others were not, but most were treated the same way; the leper was exiled from the village.

A person who was declared affected with the leprosy and was sentenced to live in the camp of the lepers, outside and away from the city. In case someone encountered a leper they had to give fair warning by tearing the clothes in the prescribed way, shaving their heads or wearing a moustache, or otherwise covering the upper lip.

In exile, the leper had no purpose. They lived everyday, but there was no hope for them in the general community. They would not be priests, leaders in the synagogue, enjoy the festivals and holy Sabbaths or participate in the sacrifices with others. For all purposes, a leper was a dead man who was still walking around with no purpose, but to live until he died.

Those who somehow overcame their sickness were examined by a special priest who would give them a certificate verifying that they were clean, giving them a chance to rejoin the community and live again.

Paul writing to the Ephesians had described the condition of saints before they were given new life through Christ. In Ephesians 2:1 he said believers were once "dead in trespasses and sins." Yet, he notes that were quickened or given a new lease on life through the blood of Jesus Christ. He said in Ephesians 2:3 that we were people who lived after and sought after the flesh and it was all that was on our mind. "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." However, in Ephesians 2:5 he notes that even though we were among the walking dead God snapped us back to give as a new life, through His son, Jesus Christ.

The walking dead, through Christ, have a way to become living saints, born again

and ushered into the abundant life.

Really Living

Believers are unique because we have learned the art of living. What does that mean?

LIVING AND BREATHING ARE NOT SAME: What does it mean to really live? The simple answer is that to live is to breath; inhale and exhale. In the movie "Brave Heart" Mel Gibson's character, Wallace says, "Every man dies. Not every man really lives." That makes a difference between just breathing and living. God's original intent for mankind is that we might experience abundant living. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "I am come that ye may have life and have it abundantly." However, because of Adam and Eve's sin, we are all born with a sin nature that forces us to do what we don't want to and to do what know is wrong. Romans 7:16 says, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Does the alcoholic want to be an alcoholic? Does the molester or murder want to live that life? Do they wake up in the morning happy that they are molesters or murderers or child abuses or beat their wives? Probably not, but the continue because they are in bondage to sin chained to continue doing something they don't want to do.

Living a sinful life is not really living, despite how it appears. Those who live in a peaceful home that is filled with love are living, even though they don't have a house like that ones in the movies and commercials. Having a house and a home are not the same.

What the Christian life offers is the opportunity to really live. It's a chance to return from the exile of spiritual leprosy and begin to live life as God planned it from the beginning, according to his purpose. It's the chance to glean from every breath a meaningful exhale that brings fulfillment, peace and joy. That joy comes from knowing God for yourself.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD DON'T WALK THE SAME: Have you noticed in the zombie movies that the zombies and the living never walked the same. Those who want to leave the zombie life must somehow get a new walk. Those who were cured of leprosy had to find a priest authorized to evaluate their condition and be certified to live once again in the community. Afterwards, they dropped the dropped the signs that identified them as lepers and no longer lived among the lepers. Those who want to really begin living must do something similar. There is only one way to truly live an abundant life and that is through Christ. Outside of Christ is the kingdom of the walking dead, much like that Leper's village. Those who know how to live are those in the kingdom. The only way to return to God is to be regenerated. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To live an abundant life we must be willing to be born again. Just as the priest gave authorization for the leper to return, so does our life in Christ authorize us to begin a new life in the kingdom of God. It will also require

us to drop the symbols of the life of the time when we walked with the dead. For some, it might mean changing our clothing. For others, it might mean, changing the places where we go to hangout out or even some of the dead people, places and things we associated with in the past.

If we are to run with Jesus, we must come from among the walking dead!

If we are to reach for the abundant life, we must not surround ourselves with people who want to feed off others rather than really live!

If we are to live again, then our lives among the walking dead must come to an end.

THE WALKING DEAD CAN'T GIVE THEMSELVES NEW LIFE: Many of us know people who are among the walking dead. We have heard their conversations and we know that they do not fully enjoy the life they live. The walking dead fellowship with each other, but they are standing on fly paper. Waiting is the spider who knows they can't free themselves.

At some point, the walking dead begin to desire new life. At some point, they want to change, and some even try, but unsuccessfully. They stop clubbing for a while but soon go back. They stop drinking or using drugs, but often return. It's hard because of one simple rule: The walking dead cannot give themselves a new life. If we throw a life preserver to a body floating in the water, the body cannot reach for it. If we are dead in our sins, we can't save ourselves. Ephesians 2:5-6 says, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" We are saved by the grace of God who "quickens us" or lifts us from the "walking dead life" to a new life in Christ. Those who have been quickened must study and pray because they now have new life and new life is the target of the walking dead. The walking dead are always searching for someone who is not dead to suck the life out of them. That means those who are saved are not immune. The walking day following them daily, in the shadows. However, we have this assurance that though we may have trouble while we walk in the light, we will have peace. Though the zombies we left are still in the shadows, we can truly say, "Yea though I walk through the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me."

Living Saints

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we should rejoice because we are no longer among the walking dead, but are living saints walking on the king's highway!

There was a time in our lives when we dead to the church and lived in sin, but now we are dead to the world and alive in Christ.

We serve a living savior, a savior who was once dead, a savior that is now raised, a savior that lives forever more, we too will live in eternity with Him.

Paul told the Ephesians that God has quickened us and lifted us from among the dead and given us new life.

We who were once among the walking dead are now able to walk in the newness

of life, no longer walking in sin according to the desires of the flesh, but walking in the spirit.

There are three instances in the bible where Jesus restored life. In every instance he spoke to the situation

In Mark 51:41 he spoke to Jarius' daughter and said, "I say unto thee, arise!" and she immediately arose to new a new life!

John 11:43 he spoke to Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth" and he immediately arose despite the impossibility of his situation!

Luke tells us Luke 7:14 Jesus said to the widow's son. "Young man," he said, "I say unto thee arise" Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk!

The walking dead come alive when God speaks to their situation.

In our new life in Christ, we have found out that God often speaks to our situation.

When God speaks to our situation, he gives us:

-STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

-ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

-INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

-COMFORT when disaster strikes.

There was a time when we were walking dead that we filled the gambling casinos, bingo parlors and midnight crap shoots.

There was a time, when we were walking dead, that we engaged in countless secret encounters in cheap hotels, wrinkling sheets, kissing three frogs trying to find one prince.

There was a time when were among the walking dead that our best friends were not Matthew, Mark and Luke, but they had names like Jack Daniels, Seagrams and Johnny Walker Red.

But when the Lord spoke to our situation we were changed, and given a new life. We were washed in the blood of the lamb!

We once sang, Don't worry be happy. Now we sing, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away!

I've got a new life and it's no longer among the walking dead!

I've got a new walk and it's no longer among the walking dead!

Because God spoke to our situation and lifted us from the walking dead, we are able to:

-Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

-Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

-Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

I'm glad that He is a wonder working God!

I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!

I'm glad that He is a soul saving God!

I'm glad that one day He saw me in it and decided to save me from it!

I'm glad that He decided to protect me from it while He guided me through it.

I'm glad that He decided to lift me from it and elevate me above it.

I'm glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!

I'm glad that He carried it to Golgotha's hill!

They nailed His hands to it, but he didn't stay on it! They buried him in a borrowed tomb,

But, early Sunday morning He was buried in it, stepped out from it with all power in His hands!

No. 9659-Funeral

These were the years of her life

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 7, 2014

SCRIPTURE:"Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah:" Genesis 23:1

Introduction

Isn't it ironic how the community takes special pains to note the birth of a child and the death of a woman, but cares little about the life that is lived in between? Think about it. When we are born, the day, hour and even minute that we entered the world is recorded in a permanent record called a birth certificate. The laws of the land require close scrutiny of our birth and death, but do not require even a comment to describe the life lived in between our coming and leaving.

What happened in all the years between birth and death? Where did the time go? A life that spans 94 years covers 34,310 days, plus 23 leap year days. What happened between the beginning and the end? This is a life that saw 2,859 months and 11,436 weeks, there must be more than simply a time of birth and a time when life on this side of heaven ended. After all a person who lives that long has seen 823,440 hours, 49,406,400 minutes and 2.9 billion seconds, what happened between the birth date and the time and hour this life ended?

Those who know us well can testify of a life that saw its flowery youth, a happy marriage, a host of offspring and a legacy that will live longer than she walked the earth.

The essence of our lives is revealed not by our birth or the moment of our death, but by the years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds in between.

Only a few remain who could remember the young, spry woman in her 20's with a beaming smile and humble spirit rearing a family in hopes that God would use it one day in the mighty army of his kingdom.

Only a few remain who can remember her struggle to survive the depression, endure the great world war and the subsequent battles thereafter.

There are many who can testify to her devotion to the church and willingness to do whatever necessary to help build the kingdom of God.

All of her children will remember the family meals, the laughter, joy and love they shared together for decades as they grew into men and women and brought their children to her feet.

So there is more to the life before us than just a birth date and a homegoing date.

There are many years in between that tell her story, and it's those years that will live on for generations to come.

God has an even broader perspective. He not only sees the moment of our birth, the years in between and the moment of our departure, he also sees what happens afterward. We can tell the story of the years in between, but "Eyes have not seen, ears have not heard and neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God has in store for those who believe on him."

As Christians, we celebrate and mourn the homegoing of a loved one. We mourn the loss of the closeness we shared with them, but we celebrate the life they lived and the new life they have already begun.

Exposition

This text focuses on the death of Sarah, one of the most revered women in the bible.

While Sarah, by all accounts, is the matriarch of the Jewish nation, she said very little in the bible record and her actions rarely extended beyond her family. Yet, despite the fact that she was a mere "housewife" and mother who is only recorded saying eight lines of text in the bible, her genealogy, travels, struggles, aging and final death are all noted in scripture.

In between the time she was born and the time she died her story is told. We are familiar with her marriage to Abraham, her extraordinary beauty, her desire to bear children, her struggle with Hagar, her laughter when she learned of her maternity in her old age; and we read of her death at 127 years old.

The years of her life were filled with drama, love of family, humble submission to her husband, and childbearing. She followed her husband, taught her children and for the most part was invisible to all but those who knew her quiet way.

Despite the relative anonymity of her life, she received the extra honor of having her death, age, and burial mention in the sacred text.

Her 127 years were not as publicized or as eventful as others, but "her years" were filled with so many faith moments that they serve as a guide for all of those who would follow.

Her years

Sarah's life is characterized by the pivotal moments through the years that were impressive and memorable; so are the years of those that we love.

IN THESE YEARS SHE LEARNED TO LOVE: Between the beginning and the end of life, a saint learns to love and be loved. Just as Sarah learned to love Abraham and follow him in a lifetime of partnership and affection, the believing wife also learns what it means to know all of the phases of love: the philia love that treats all people as brothers and sisters; the storge' love that a mother shows for her children; erotic love that is shared with a spouse and the agape love that loves unconditionally, like God loves. In these years, in a quiet and unimposing way, the believing mother responds to the

needs of neighbors in distress, while loving her husband and children with a passion and zeal that is unequaled. These are the years that her family sees that strange, almost Godlike ability to keep forgiving her children despite their countless mistakes and loving them anyway.

The decades of her life were filled with secret memories of quite moments with the love of her life that were replayed silently like a scratched 45 rpm in the corridors of her mind.

In these same years she washed and folded diapers and hung them on the line, celebrated birthdays of sons and daughters, baked cakes, fried chicken and shared the love of family with feasts, fellowship and family fraternity.

In these years, she also learned what it means to be loved by children who sacrificed all to journey to her side in celebration of milestones or to stand by her bedside when she became old and feeble. In these fragile moments, she learned what it feels like to be surrounded by love every minute of the waking day even until her dying hour.

Oh, what a blessing it is to have loved and have received love all the years of her life. The years of love mark "the years of her life."

IN THESE YEARS SHE LEARNED HOW TO SERVE GOD: Between the beginning and the end of life, a saint learns to trust God. Just as Sarah was reared to respect and trust God, the believing mother also learns through a litany of faith tests and trials that trusting God is the best way. Sarah's faith was tested when Abraham planned to sacrifice the child of her old age; she learned then that God always has a ram in the bush for those who trust him.

Like Sarah, this believing mother learned to trust and serve God.

Like David, she learned that God prepares the table from which the events of our lives are served. She learned that, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

Like Ruth, she was determined to make heaven her home.

Like Timothy, she learned her faith from her mother and grandmother who taught her through example to lean and depend on Jesus.

In these years, she saw times of prosperity and growth, but there were some difficult years, too. Those were the years she felt like a ship that was tossed and driven out on the angry sea; the years when the needs of a house full of children seemed endless as the bills stacked higher by the month. These were the years her soul cried out, "I wonder what I have done that makes this race so hard to run." These were also the years when she heard the comforting voice of an angel saying, "Take courage, the Lord will make a way somehow."

In these years, she learned how to lean and depend on Jesus. She learned that if she trusted him, he would provide.

So as long as her health allowed she worshipped regularly, paid her church dues, sent her offerings, read her bible, and prayed that God would make a way for her children as he had for all others in the family.

Oh, what a wonderful blessing it is to have trusted God all of your life and in the process learn that he is faithful and his mercy endures forever. These years of faith in God and service to her church mark "the years of her life."

IN THESE YEARS SHE EXPERIENCED THE JOY OF THE LORD: Between the beginning and the end of life, a saint experiences the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord brings a freshness and newness of spirit that dwells in his heart each and every day.

It's a unique blessing that God gives to every saint that allows them to keep an optimistic spirit even during difficult times. In moments of sickness, the joy of the Lord is still evident. Even in melancholy of approaching death, a gentle, fresh and sweet spirit still radiates from a person who has experienced the joy of the Lord. It is this joy that was shared at graduations, baptisms and the birth of newborns. It's this joy, shared over the years, that has added a sweetness to this life that overpowers the bitter taste of aching bones, failing eyesight and the weakness of body and limb. It is this joy that brings a sweetness to this season of life. It's the sweetness which is found in Christ.

It is probably what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "There's a sweet, sweet, spirit in this place ...it must be the spirit of the Lord." The joy of the Lord is triumphant. It is the feeling of victory of a life well lived and ready to receive its reward. This joy is the anxious anticipation of a crown of life and a deserved reward.

Oh, what a blessing it is to have experience the joy of the Lord. This is the joy that allows us to "count it all joy"- The mountaintops and valleys, the chilly winters of discontent, the sweltering summers of discomfort and sweat, and even the rusty colored leaves of fall that indicated that life was approaching its winter..the ones who know the Lord in earnest can "count it all joy." These are years of optimism and cheer despite declining years and failing health mark "the years of her life."

Another Chapter

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that no matter how well we live, this chapter of our journey must end so that the next can begin.

Even if we live 94 years, our lives are but moments in time, passing vapors. We may try to stretch it but, our time is just a few days. With only a few exceptions, when the scripture refers to time as it relates to God the reference is to years. However, when the reference is made to man it is, usually, referred to in days. Thus, Job 10:5 says, Are thy days as the days of man? Are thy years as man's days? Then Exodus 20:12 says, Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The point is clear, when it comes to time, God has years that reach into infinity but when it comes to mankind, we only have a short period of time, measured in days. Our days are but moments. We don't have many of them so we must learn what God wants us to learn from them. Between the beginning and end of our days, we must work the work of him who sent us.

The prophet Elijah sensed that his time was drawing near. He began to walk toward the destination in which he would move from this life into the next. When the time came he moved instantly from this life into the next, aboard a mighty fiery chariot.

Enoch walked with God all of his life, sharing intimate thoughts and dreams. One day at the close of his life, his family looked for him and he was gone. The bible says

he was not because he walked with God.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:6-7, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”

I am ready! Between my birth and my end, I experienced the birth of my children and grand children!

I’m ready! Between my birth and my end, I have lived nearly a century, praising and loving and helping and serving!

I’m ready! Between my birth and my end, I have confessed my belief in Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior and tried to live that life in front of my family in my youth and in my golden years!

I am ready! Between my birth and my end, I have I have worshipped, served and praised you from the rising of my sun to its quiet and peaceful setting!

I am ready! I have testified to your goodness and everywhere I have glorified your name.

I am ready! Between my beginning and my end I have told the world that Jesus died on the cross, but he arose from the dead and is alive today!

I’m ready, I have done all I could between my beginning and my end. I’m ready to be delivered into the arms of my God!

—

On Wednesday October 1, 2014, Lillie Pierce Addison took her last breath. These were the years of her life.

No. 9660-Revival

You Mean you did that?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 12, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever heard someone testify about their lives before they met the Lord and said to yourself, "You mean he did that?" The testimony of some believers today seems unbelievable when we hear saints tell of lifestyles that grossly contrast the lifestyle they live today after having an encounter with the Lord!

Did you hear the elderly sainted woman who testified that in her youth she went to clubs and bars frequently, danced on the floor and "cut a rug?" That is hard to believe today since she seems to walk with a halo over her head with her angelic wings flapping in the air.

Did you hear the church deacon testifying about his life as a gambler before he met the Lord? What about the Sunday School teacher who was a street corner hustler or the choir member who sang the blues in a string of nightclubs from coast to coast?

When we hear their testimonies we drop our jaws and say, "You mean you did that?"

Their revelations are a testament to the saving power of God. They are the ones who came singing, "Just as I am without one plea." They came to God when they heard that he loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son who purchased our salvation with his own blood. What he purchased wrecked and restored them to brand new.

These are the believers who left singing, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary wounded and sad. I found in him a resting place and he has made me glad."

As Christians, we rejoice that the blood of Christ was shed to give us a chance to start again. He looked beyond our faults and saw our needs.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the apostle Paul as he explains to the Christians at Corinth how their lives in Christ should progress from sinfulness to righteousness.

Paul explains how the former state of a Christian compares to the present state. Before Christ, a Christian was a person who stood condemned before God, but after

Christ is a new creature.

The believer has reached a point in life where he or she has evolved from the "unrighteous" state into the full knowledge of God as he or she and walks in the spirit. Having once been a practicing sinner, the believer has moved to a higher level; that of knowing Christ fully. He or she has stepped forward and up to a better life. Thus, Paul says, "And such were some of you!" He seemed to say you have been there! You have done that! You have the tee-shirt! But you have stepped out of darkness into the marvelous light!

Paul indicates the threefold state of every believer who is a part of the kingdom of God. He gives a list of the three states, which actually incur in the reverse order. 1) A person is justified, meaning that God's affirmative action program has made up for his shortcomings and mistakes. 2) A person is sanctified, meaning they have changed their life's path and modified their list of concerns to include only those things which would be pleasing to God. They become special and set apart. 3) A person who is washed by the spirit of God is no longer of the world but is a new creature.

The believer's best testimony to a non-believer is that we have not always lived in an isolated world of bible classes, hymns and church services, but that the believer has experienced the world enough to know that God offers a better way.

Did what?

When we consider our situation in the world we must remember that many of God's best people were flawed.

HE CHASED PRETTY WOMEN: One of the strongest men of the bible, who stood tall in his faith was Samson. He was a judge or religious leader of the people who was also their champion in the battle against the Philistines. Samson was so strong that he once carried away the gates of the city of Gaza on his shoulders and killed a thousand men using the jawbone of a donkey for a weapon. Despite his strength, Samson had a strange taste for pretty, forbidden women; in fact he was eventually captured and blinded by his enemies because he fell victim to a pretty woman named Delilah.

There are many great men of faith who had the same problem then and today. Most believers would be surprised to know how many strong men and women of faith today once had a vigorous life wrinkling sheets. There are sainted ladies who have chased every person wearing pants. There are present day church leaders who once chased skirts for a hobby.

Yet, even in their weakness, God touched their lives and decided to use them for his kingdom. The blood of Christ erased their past and gave them a new start and new strength. –As for Samson, God restored his strength and destroyed more of his enemies in his end than he did in the beginning.

HE WAS A MURDERER: We know David as a young king who loved poetry, singing hymns and writing godly inspired psalms. We cherish his words, "The lord is my shepherd and I shall not want," or "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" In fact, David is described in scripture as a, "Man after God's own heart."

Most of what we admire about David ignores the fact that earlier in his life he was a murderer. The bible records that an outstanding soldier in his army named Uriah had a beautiful wife named Bathsheba. David had an adulterous relationship with her while her husband was off to war. When the woman became pregnant, David had Uriah placed at the front of the battle and called all of his soldiers to pull back, causing Uriah's death. It was a murder.

Yet, the David we see is one who stands strong for faith and godliness. Who would believe that he could have been a murderer? David was restored to God when he admitted his sin and pleaded, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and renew in my a right spirit." The same has been the case for thousands today. There are many today who were once murderers or otherwise convicted of violent crimes against women, children, neighbors and their own family members, but they too have been forgiven and restored, thanks to the power of God. Some of them today are the best evidence of God's saving grace. Their very lives show how God can use even the most flawed person to building his kingdom. –As for David, he never returned to his murderous ways, but remained a champion for the cause until his death.

SHE WAS GODLESS: We know Ruth as a woman of faith whose famous words are repeated by millions, "Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God." We know her because she faithfully followed Naomi from a pagan country back to Israel and became the wife of Boaz and prominent man in Israel. Yet, little is said about Ruth's life before she came to know Naomi's God. In fact, she was pagan. She was a godless woman who spent her life pursuing wooden dreams and hollow hopes. When her husband died and all of his kinsmen, she had no god or family. She did not belong.

Today, there are many who have spent many godless years, moving from one godless state to another. They did not belong to any church and subscribed to no particular religious belief. However, a Naomi character, appeared in their lives and led them to God. Ruth was destined to be the grandmother of great descendants; our lives were destined for some great purpose as well. Who would have thought that people as strong as the faithful are now were ever godless and disconnected.

HE WAS ASHAMED OF CHRIST: When we think of the Lord's twelve disciples, Peter is usually the one who first comes to mind. In Matthew 10:1-4 we have the names of the 12 apostles or disciples, but the name of Peter is always first in the list. When we read the four gospels, (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) Peter seems to stand out more than any of the other disciples. When something needed to be said, Peter was usually the one to speak up. When something did not need to be said, Peter was usually the first to speak up. He was not only the first to SPEAK UP, he was also the first to ACT UP. He was quick to act, even to take out his sword to defend the Lord. However, when Jesus was being tried by his enemies, Peter denied him, not once but three times. The same man that spoke boldly was afraid. Even today, there are many who gladly witness and testify about the goodness of the Lord. They are willing to tell of his goodness at the drop of a dime. It seems hard to believe that there was ever a time that we were not bold for the Lord, ashamed that our co-workers or friends might

think that we were too religious.

When the Lord has blessed us, it is difficult to remain silent. It is difficult not to testify to his goodness. Those who hear our testimonies today can hardly believe that there was a time that we kept silent about our God. As for Peter, he became the leading spokesman for the Lord and was so bold that he died rather than retract his faith. Such is the power of a regenerated life.

God sees value

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when God touches our lives he wipes out our past and gives us a new beginning.

When God looked down on the world he saw individuals who were flawed, but could be recipients of his love if they would accept. We were sinners and our sin could not be excused; the price had to be paid. His word remained unchanged Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

How does a sinful people like us, come before God? There is only one way to come; that's to come just as we are and accept God's grace.

That's what Charlotte Elliott learned many years ago when she was visiting friends and met a preacher at a dinner who asked her if she was a Christian. She was offended by the question, but it would not go away. Weeks later she met the same preacher again and told him that his question troubled her, but she did not know how to find Him neither did she feel worthy. The preacher told her that God is always nearby, "Just come to him as you are." She accepted Christ that day and later wrote a song that said, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me; and that thou bidst me come to thee, O lamb of God, I come, I come."

Those who come to Jesus come, Just as I am.

Someone is crying out, Lord my life is a shambles, but I'm counting on you reassembled the pieces, Just as I am, I come!

Someone is praying, Lord I have a house, but something is missing, I need your help to turn it into a home, Just as I am I come!

Someone is confessing, Lord I lived with the love of my life for a long time, but we are not married. We need your power to move to the next step, just as I am, I come!

Someone is witnessing, Lord I'm considering a profession or business venture, but my reasons are not spiritual, you can help me see clearly for right now I'm blind; just as I am, I come!

Isaiah approached God by saying, I'm not worthy, but I come before you Just as I am, and the Lord made him a great prophet.

Saul came before God a persecutor of the church, but in a little house on Straight Street he came to Jesus, "Just as I am," and the Lord made him the greatest evangelist of all time.

Every believer at one point or another meets God on the markdown shelf of life, after the world has rejected us as damaged goods.

It may have been in a jail cell, as the jailer in Philippi, but there we met the Lord!

It may have been while working in an unsavory job, like Matthew the tax collector, but there we met the Lord.

It may have been while we were just looking on like Zacchaeus, who met the Lord in a Sycamore tree, but there we met the Lord.

That's the day when we found ourselves saying, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found in Him a resting place and He has made me glad!"

I came to Jesus, just as I was and whenever I needed him, He's been there!
I don't mind telling the world, I know He's real!
I know the Lord will answer prayer for I tried Him for myself!
For me, a flawed soul, He endured the pain of Calvary!
For me, damaged goods, He Died an unsavory death!
But early Sunday morning He arose with all power in His hands!
I came to Jesus "as is" and He claimed me as his own!

No. 9661-Church Anniversary

The land of I can't remember

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 19, 2014

SCRIPTURE: For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:7

Introduction

Have you ever tried to tell someone about what once was and realized that they were too young to remember? Do you remember turning a knob to change the TV channel or rolling up the car window? Do you remember rotary phones with the dial on the front or Captain Kangaroo? Do you remember white and colored water fountains? Do you remember living without a single McDonalds, Burger King or Wendys anywhere? Do you remember beepers, mud pies or hanging clothes on a clothesline? Do you remember sticking a VHS tape into a VCR to watch a movie? Do you remember when hotel rooms had real keys instead of key cards? What about 15 minute oatmeal, washing clothes on a rub board? Do you remember rabbit ear TV antennas, black and white T.V. or cutting 25 pound blocks of ice for the ice box? Do you remember drive-in theaters or popping corn in a pot? Do you remember going outside to an outhouse or bathing in a #10 tub? Do you remember push lawn mowers, and cloth baby diapers? The old ones remember all of these, the young ones have heard of them, but do not remember them. They are fading from memory.

Suppose you were given the options to have selective memory; that's a memory pattern that allows you to select what you could remember and what you can forget. That's what Barbara Streisand sings about in her song, "The way we were." She says what's too painful to remember we choose to forget.

Are there a few things we have experienced that we choose to forget? We choose to forget painful experiences, mental scars, emotional traumas, and tragic losses. We try to put them out of our mind and forget them. We choose to forget people who have hurt us such as hurtful spouse, a betrayed friend, or a natural disaster. It is too stressful. The memories raise our blood pressure and heart rate. It makes us dizzy; so we block them out of mind.

While there are many things that choose to forget, there are other things that we do ever want to forget. We don't want to forget our experiences. We don't want to forget the people we love. We don't want to forget how to laugh, sing and enjoy life. We don't want to forget our faith in God. Completely forgetting everything is tragic.

Famed country singer Glenn Campbell released a song this year entitled, "I'm not gonna miss you." It is his last song because he is in the final states of Alzheimer's Disease. We know him for his songs such as, "A rhinestone cowboy" or "Wichita Lineman," but as the disease worsened his condition in 2013 he wrote this final song, while he could still remember. The song told of day that was a few days away when he would enter the mysterious realm of lost memory that had only one consolation, that he would not be able to miss those whom he loved because he would not be able to remember.

On this side of heaven, there are many things we want to remember because they help us to appreciate who we are or the rugged road we have traveled. However, on the other side of Jordan, is a new land that we have not seen before that will have one unique characteristic; it will be a land where we can't remember anything, but the joy of the Lord. On this side of heaven it takes memories to help us know our place, but on the other side; our joy will come from being in the presence of God and our identity will not need a historical frame of reference to have depth because Acts 17:28 says, "in him will we live, move and have our being." Over there, we won't need to remember to have our joy.

Over here we need to remember the rain, to enjoy the sunshine!

Over here we need to remember the sadness, to enjoy the gladness!

Over here we need to remember the losses, to appreciate the gains!

However, on the other side of Jordan we will experience sunshine, gladness, gain and happiness without ever remembering a time when they did not exist.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that our God is preparing a place for us in his kingdom. However, until that time comes, we shall never cease to remember his goodness and mercy toward us, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same. As long as we can remember what he had done for us, we will praise the Lord.

Exposition

The text paints a clear picture of life in the Millennial kingdom over which Christ will rule. Isaiah projects the future state of believers, pointing to a time in the not so distant future when believers will rule with Christ for 1000 years on earth in a prototype of the perfect kingdom that would finally come. This 1000 year reign of Christ is the time in which he and the saints will return to earth and will generally run its government for 1000 years free of Satanic influences because Satan will be bound. It is a time when the church's work on earth is done!

During this time certain changes in the way the world operates will take place. 1) Christ will be the ruler of the kingdom, assisted by the Saints who will return with him to lead the millennial kingdom. When Christ was born an angel told Mary "and the Lord God shall give unto Him the Throne of his Father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33) 2) All living creatures, including the animals will be at peace (65:25) in such a way that even the wolf and lamb will feed together. Those which are natural enemies will become

friends. 3) Life spans of people shall be like trees, living hundreds of years to the point that a man of 100 will be considered a mere youth and those who don't live to be a hundred will be accursed. (65:20) 4) People will enjoy the fruits of their labor, living in houses that they build and feasting on crops they produce (65:21-23) The millennial kingdom is what Christ referred to in the model prayer he taught his disciples when he said "thy kingdom come." 5) The people will not be in want for anything because before they ask for it God will have delivered it. Before they can even speak the request, he will have heard and responded.

The most unique aspect of the Millennial kingdom is the fact that God promises that there will be a new heaven and new earth and there will be no remembrance of the tragedy, misfortune and hardships of the life before. It is a land that those who have suffered will step into and forget the suffering from the past.

Aspects of Heaven

Isaiah prophesied about the coming kingdom and a new land whose nature was foreign to us.

MISTAKES CAN'T BE REMEMBERED IN THE LAND OF NO REMEMBRANCE: One of the great aspects of the heavenly kingdom is the fact that there will be no remembrance of any mistakes, bad judgments and errors we have made in this life. Every life is riddled with stupid decisions, flaws and fumbling acts. Thankfully, in the heavenly realm there will be no remembrance of our mistakes. Even though there is a record kept of our mistakes in heaven, those who have been forgiven by Christ will joyfully discover that[G45] their records have been expunged.

The bad tempers, ill feelings and hatreds that we know in this life will not exist in the land of "I can't remember" because it will be swallowed up by the love of God. Memories of tragedy and hard times will be overwhelmed by the power of God's love.

PAIN AND AGONY CAN'T BE REMEMBERED: There will be no more pain in the heavenly kingdom. We endure a tremendous amount of pain in this life whether it's[G46] physical or emotional. The presence of so much pain makes life unbearable. Yet, the savior promises us that in the land of I can't remember "God shall wipe away all tears." That is a great truth no pain shall exist. In fact this land could actually be called the land of "no more:" No more arthritis, No more bursitis, failing eyesight, back problems, kidney failure, high blood pressure, heart disease, breast cancer, prostate cancer. No more! The text puts all of these in the category of the "former things" and the former things ill be passed away.

POVERTY WILL NOT EXIST: In the heavenly realm poverty will not exist because there will be a truly communal society based on the love of God. Plato dreamed of such as world in his "Republic" and Lenin and Stalin and Chairman Mao tried to create such a world through the communist state, but in the land of "I can't remember" there will be no class distinctions where some will have mansions and others will live in shotgun houses or some will have food, but others will be hungry. Yet, we have the promise that in the heavenly realm there will be no remembrance of these divisive class differences. There will be no rich and no poor and everyone will share in the glory of the Lord equally. That's why the old slaves sang, "I got shoes, you got shoes all God's chillun got shoes.

When I get to heaven, gonna put on my shoes and walk all over God's heaven." The same could be said for homes, food, clothing and the essentials for a good life. There will never no remembrance of any time where some had and some had not.

In that land

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that when it's all over, God has prepared a place in the land of I can't remember for all of the people he has made perfect with his blood.

In this life, there are always people who remember our mistakes, bad times and misfortunes, but there is a place God is preparing when no one will remember our mistakes.

This land has been the object of the faithful for generations.

Abraham traveled all of his life, looking for the land of I can't remember, to him it was a city not made with hands!

Elijah received a one-way ticket to the land of I can't remember on board a fiery chariot. His departure prompted the old warriors to sing, "Swing low Sweet Chariot, coming forth to carry me home,"

In the land of I can't remember:

-There are no wars because there is only peace, in the land of I can't remember!

-There is no hatred, because there is only love, in the land of I can't remember!

-There is no death, because there is only life in the land of I can't remember!

I know there is such a land because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also!"

The land of I can't remember is a land, on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old.

In the land of I can't remember, the streets will be made of solid Gold!

In the land of I can't remember, there will be perfect lighting because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

In the land of I can't remember, there will be perfect medicine, because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go to the land "I can't remember!"

Come and go with me to this land!

If you believe there is a God in heaven, you can begin your journey!

If you believe that he gave his only begotten son to wipe out any memory of your past wrongs, you can begin your journey!

If you believe that he will stand for you in judgment and give passport into the heavenly realm then you can begin your journey!

If you believe that Jesus paid for the right to erase our horrible pass by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, early one Sunday morning!

You are on your way to the land of I can't remember!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

There is peace, joy and happiness! …in the land of I can't remember!

No. 9662-Revival

The ghost of the headless man

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 26, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he rises from the dead." Mark 6:16

Introduction

Is there a chapter of your life that you would rather avoid? Is there a dark secret in your past that haunts you? Is there a side of you that you keep hidden from most people; even from yourself, but it keeps coming up?

There are many people who have sordid pasts that they have avoided by moving to a new city or neighborhood, perhaps changing their names and assuming new lives. Often years pass before someone or something from their past brings them face to face with the past they so desperately fought to forget.

We often lock our pasts away in emotional closets and try to bury them under a ton of good deeds and philanthropy. It's that dark side that we hope to hide from public view. It's the ex-con who denies the fact he spent years in prison and tries to hide it from those who now know him. It's the socialite who denies the fact that she grew up poor. It's the pastor who was once a murderer and thief in another life, but changed his way over the years. It's the woman who was once a hooker, but now in another city, in another place, is a woman of class and dignity. If we can keep the past locked away, we could convince ourselves that they do not exist and were never a significant part of our life experiences.

Everyone has a past. There are some who have pasts that they would rather forget. Sometimes that past involves money, hidden identities, or sordid sexual practices that are now viewed as distasteful. Many have made it their life's pursuit to hide their pasts permanently.

What should believers do when our past catches up with us? What if our past becomes known? What if we have never told anyone about our past and suddenly those who know us one way find out that it has all been a lie?

For many, the first response is denial. Immediately following that is justification and rationalization. However, there are others who put it all on the altar. They fall on their knees and appeal to God with the words of scripture, *"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"*

Fortunately, we serve a God who knows what to do for us when the ghost of our

past catches up with us. He is the one who can deliver us from the clutches of our carnal impulses. The songwriter put it this way, *"Jesus can help me, Jesus alone."*

As Christians, we must trust the Lord to blot out our past sins and forgive us. When our past catches up to us, it will find a believer who has been redeemed and washed in the blood of the lamb.

Exposition

This text focuses on Herod's worry that the ghost of a man he wrongfully executed had come back to haunt him.

King Herod became worried about the reports he received about the ministry of Jesus. Large crowds were following him, and his disciples were excited about his message. Descriptions of Jesus' work and ministry were laid before the king. He immediately saw the similarities between this man they called Jesus and John the Baptist. John drew great crowds and talked about a kingdom that would come. John was fearless and critical of Jewish leaders. John was a prophet of immense popularity. Now, it appeared that Jesus and John were the same.

Herod immediately thought that Jesus was John arisen from the dead. He was the ghost of a man he wrongfully killed. John openly spoke against an adulterous relationship that the king had with his brother's wife. John preached about sin and Herod's sin in particular. He disturbed Herodias, his brother's wife, so much that she nagged the King until he had John arrested, put in chains and put into prison to silence him.

Herod would not kill John because he felt he was a holy man, even if he constantly condemned him publically. Herodias continued her hate for John; she wanted him dead. Shortly after, the King hosted a great birthday party attended by many of the leaders and important people of the land. Herodias' daughter was asked to dance for the guests. She danced so well that Herod made a foolish promise. He told her, in front of his guests, that he would reward her with anything she asked, even if it were half of his kingdom. The girl asked her mother for advice and Herodias told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

Herod was saddened, but he kept his word. He had John beheaded and delivered his head on a platter to the girl.

When Herod heard about Jesus drawing large crowds and performing miracles he assumed that John had risen from the dead. He assumed that Jesus was the ghost of the headless man that had come back to haunt him.

Afraid, but unrepentant, Herod lived his life haunted by the ghost of his evil deed. Jesus gave his life so that people like Herod, could be forgiven for their evil deeds and have a new life in him.

What happens?

There are several ideas we must consider when we look at what happens when the ghosts of our past catches up to us:

WE ARE OFTEN AFRAID: When our past catches up to us, we are often afraid of what may happen. There are many who are afraid of what will happen if their pasts are known, yet those who know the Lord, have no fear because God handles both their past and present. When Jacob left home he and his mother had cheated Esau out of his birthright. Esau threatened to kill him if he ever saw him again. After 20 years, Jacob decided to return home, but he was afraid to face his past. He was afraid that his evil deed might mean his death. However, God told him to return. He did as commanded, and he learned a lesson. The Jacob, who returned, had to face his fear. He wrestled with an angel and would not let go until the angel blessed him. He was not the same man who left. Today, the same is true for us. We have made many mistakes, but we are not the same people today that we were back then. We judge what we did then through the eyes of who we are now. However, we have matured in the Lord. We are wiser and stronger. Maya Angelou once said, "I *did* then what I *knew* how to do. Now that I *know better*, I do *better*." Jacob was afraid, but God dealt with the situation. His brother received him and embraced him in peace. Are there relatives in your family you don't speak to because of the past? Are you afraid to face the ghost of the headless man? Does it haunt you? Jacob wrestled with the issue and arose victoriously and so will all who ask God for deliverance.

WE ARE OFTEN ASHAMED: There are many who are ashamed when confronted with their pasts. It is not a shame to have had a difficult past. It is only a shame when we have denied and denounced that type of past, and then it is revealed that we are not what are purported to be. The shame is in the present lie; the sin was in the past mistake. It is possible to have a past mistake without having a present lie. David committed a sin with Bathsheba, and he covered it up. However, when it was revealed by the prophet Nathan, David was ashamed. He was ashamed because he went about his kingly duties everyday sentencing others for the crime he had committed: adultery and murder. He was ashamed because of the present lie he lived.

At some point, many of us do what David did: He tried to redeem what he had done in the past. He asked God for forgiveness and came clean with everyone else. There is more shame in being discovered than there is from true confession. The many who confesses opens up the door of his past and shamelessly pours it out for all to see. Once done there is no more shame. Over the years, you tried to deny it. You hid it under a long list of cover-ups and more mistakes. Like a shadow, the ghost of the headless man followed you, even when you tried to run away. It overwhelmed us when it finally caught up with us.

James 5:16 encourages believers not to live a lie as if we had not faults and shortcomings in our past or present. We are encouraged to confess our faults so that we can be healed of the wounds of the past and present failures. The verse says,

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

A poet wrote:
"If I could, I'd rewrite history
I'd choose differently; if I could I would
I'd leave out the part where I broke your heart
I'd fix the mess I made
If I could, I would

Confession replaces shame with remorse. Remorse leads to repentance. Repentance leads us to the blood of Christ, which removes sin and shame through his grace.

LIVE IN YOUR FUTURE: There's no better way to release the past than to refuse to dwell pessimism that it brings. Sooner or later our past will catch up to us, but when they do they should find us dwelling on our futures. The past represent what is gone and will never return. The future represents the present and where we are going in our present. We must dwell on the future "us" and not the past "us." And the best way to refrain from dwelling on the past is to keep your attention firmly focused on the present. The Apostle Paul had two names and two personalities. One of his names was Saul. As Saul, he persecuted the church and tried to stop its growth. However, on the Damascus Road he had an encounter with the Lord that changed his life. He changed his name to Paul. When he started promoting the church and preaching the Gospel, he met people who knew him as Saul. When Saul met Paul his past had caught up with him, but when his past caught up with him he was living in his future. He acknowledged his past and told about his miraculous change of direction. Everyone who saw him from his past saw him living in his future.

Today, we will no doubt encounter those who know our past. What's important is that when your past catches up with you that you are not still doing the same things. If you lived faithfully, you should be more faithful now. If you lived recklessly then you should be more constrained now. Your past should stare at a brand new person.

Your past should see that you don't live in yesterday, but are living in your future. What does that mean? To live in your future means that in the present you are maximizing your potential, taking advantage of opportunities and walking in faith toward your future. When those from your past see you living in the future, they see what your faith walk is going to mean for you in a few years.

Those who live in their future are not haunted by the ghost of their past or the ghost of the headless man. They see only the great work ahead, and the opportunity build God's kingdom hat lies before them.

Getting rid of Ghosts

Finally, brothers and sisters, we don't have to worry about what happens when our past catches up with us, because the saved have been washed in the blood of the lamb.

The faithful are not afraid of the ghost of the headless man because our past does not haunt us and trouble us at night. We are not what we used to be; we've been redeemed by the grace God.

We are not afraid or even ashamed of our past because we now live in Christ and any man who is in Christ is a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things have become new.

We are not afraid of the ghost of the headless man because the word of God promises that our past will not be held against us. Ezekiel 33:16 says, *"None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.*

We are not worried that one day we'll wake up and our past will be staring us in the face because we know that every day we are living by faith. Galatians 2:20 says, *"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

I'm not worried because the word says, *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*-2 Chronicles 7:14

I'm not worried about the ghost of the headless man because the sins of our past have been forgiven and nailed to the cross.

The cross stretches its arms out wide and says to the:

—Vulgar and the lost, all is forgiven

—Hopeless and guilty, your slate has been wiped clean!

—Condemned and the weary, you can get brand new start!

—Tormented and the Drunkard, you can be at ease!

—Addict and the immoral, there is a road to redemption!

The cross was an emblem of the shame of our past, but it is now a sign of our salvation!

The cross stretches out its arms and says you don't have to be afraid of the past, but you can begin your future today!

This is the cross that represents all our sin and shame!

This is the cross that Jesus carried to Calvary!

This is the cross the songwriter wrote about, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and burdens of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I'm happy all the day!

He died on the old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

We have no fear of the ghost of the headless man because we are secured by the power of the cross!

No. 9663-Revival

When life throws you back in

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 2, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him as he said unto you." Mark 16:7

Introduction

Have you ever been given a second chance? Was it State Farm Insurance that ran the commercial about the daughter who wrecked the car in an accident, but was trusted with the keys to the family's new car? Wasn't Michael Vick given a second chance a Major League Football after being found guilty of dog fighting? There have been many people that we have known in our life experience who have benefited from a second chance.

We are accustomed to second chances; we like to read about those who lost it, but found it again. That's probably why former heavyweight champion George Foreman is loved so much in America. When became champion he was an angry man, filled with rage. After losing his title to Muhammad Ali, he later became a follower of Christ, developed a humble spirit and started a church in Houston. Then in his old age, God gave him a second chance. Much to everyone's surprise he won the title back at the age of 50 and became rich and famous for his pleasing smile, business sense and willing to help others. Foreman is not alone.

St. Augustine lived a wild life for over 30 years, had a child out of wedlock. His mother prayed for him with tears in her eyes until one day he heard a voice that told him to read Romans 13:13-14, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."- At that moment he repented and became one of the greatest leaders of the Christian faith afterward.

Dismas was the name of the man crucified on the cross with Jesus. He was a thief who acknowledged Christ and was guaranteed a place in heaven on that day. Those who have led a life of thievery and shown his life as evidence that it is never too late to accept Christ. Among Catholics, Dismas is seen as the one who reminds that Christ stands up for us even when we have done wrong, but have repented.

St. Francis of Assisi was a drunk before he became a saint. Before he turned his life

around he lived wildly, partied hard and stayed drunk. One day years into his moral decay he met a leper. The leper, he felt, was the Lord in disguise. He hugged the leper and kissed him, and at that moment turned his back on his riotous living and spent the rest of his life living for the Lord.
St. Margaret of Cortona is known for giving her life caring for sickly and poor, but before that she ran away to become the mistress of a man for nine years, even bearing him a child. When her pardon was accepted, she repented and spent her life in service for the Lord.

Mary Magdalene is believed to be a woman who lived a life as a prostitute. The title "Magdalene" is always attached to her name some say to refer to the city of Magdala a large city known for its loose women. However, when she met Jesus seven Demons were run out of her and her life changed. She followed Jesus until the end of his earthly life and the end of her own.

John Newtown was a slave trader who profited from the misery of others. He not only sold slaves, but used the women for his own satisfaction. While on board he had an encounter with Christ and repented of his slave trading ways. He wrote a song that we still sing today, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

All of these men and women have one thing in common? They gave their lives to Christ; he gave them a second chance, and they lived for him the rest of their lives. As Christians, we are happy that God has given all of us a second chance. It is as if we were thrown out of the fight for the kingdom and somehow been thrown back in again. Like others who have the same testimony, we have pledged to give him our best for the rest of our days.

Exposition

This text focuses on the command given by an angel of the Lord to tell a failed disciple to return to service.

It takes place at the site of the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection. The women came to anoint the body of Jesus and found the tomb empty.

They were greeted by an Angel, who told them that Jesus had risen. A message from the Lord was left behind for the disciples about where to meet Him. Of all eleven of the disciples, Peter was singled out.

Peter had disgraced himself and did not consider himself worthy to be an Apostle. While Jesus was being tried before the high priests, Peter stood outside in the courtyard and warmed himself by the fire. Three times he denied knowing Jesus when asked. On the third denial, he swore and cursed and acted outrageous as he tried to convince people that he was not a follower of Christ. When he had completed his denials, a rooster crowed for the second time, reminding him of the words of Jesus that before the cock crowed two times he would deny him thrice. Although he was the man who leaped forward to cut off a soldier's ear in the garden, walked on water, and was called "the Rock" by Christ Himself, Peter was unsure of himself and no one knew about his

feelings. He felt his failure, at a time when Christ's life was on the line, was unforgivable. He sunk to an all time low and did not consider himself a disciple.
The Angel's message for the disciples "And Peter" was a special call to Peter to get back in the game. Christ is risen! Peter received the news and was the first disciple to make it to the tomb. He championed the cause of Christ and became the strongest leader of the early Church. He promoted the cause of Christ until his death in Rome. He never denied the Lord again even though it meant being crucified upside down on a Roman cross.

Peter was thrown back into the kingdom building program even though he failed. He used his second chance wisely and became stronger and wiser.

Three stages

There is a children's story entitled, "How the rainbow trout got its colors." In the story, all of the trout fish were swimming in nearby waters when a smaller one was attracted to what seemed to be a tasty meal. He opened his little mouth wide and clamped down only to feel the sting of a hook. Suddenly he was snatched out of the water and into the hands of a small boy who was excited at catching his first fish. With a spoon, the boy started to scrap away at both sides of the fish until all of its scales were off. Just as he reached for the knife, the boy's father said, "wait!" He was told the fish was too little and instructed to through it back in the water. Once in the pond, all of the other fish surrounded the little trout which was happy to be alive, but sad that he now looked so badly without his scales. To cheer him up, all of the fishes got together and made him a set of scales with beautiful colors. Now, wearing his beautiful colors the little fish felt very good about himself and he also learned that you don't have to bite everything that dangles in front of you.-That's how the rainbow trout got it's colors! (The children's version anyway).

Those who fish can relate to the idea of throwing fish back, but there is also a lesson for the rest of us.

WATCH OUT FOR THE BAIT: Those who catch fish usually have some type of bait or lure that attracts attention. There are some fish that are attracted to SHINY THINGS, just like some people. If it promises us things that shine or the life of glitz and fame, many are drawn off course and reach for the bait abandoning family, education, and the church. They are hurt when they learn that the shiny things they reached for were only baits. There are other fish and people who are attracted to things that wiggle in front of them. Everything that wiggles in front of you is not in your best interest. They are usually things that bait us into doing what we should not do. The Bible calls baits "temptation." Jesus told his disciples to ask God to "lead us not into temptation." He knew some would fall, so he added, "but deliver us from evil." One songwriter said, "Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you, some other to win. Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue. Look ever to Jesus, he will carry you through."

WATCH OUT FOR THE HOOK: Hidden inside of every bait is the hook. It is usually

unseen until it is too late. Fish hooks are usually barbed and designed to hold on once in place. It's hard for a fish that has been snared to get free from a craftily designed fishhook. That's a lesson that many people learn the hard way. There are many who have lost money, marriages, careers, and friendships after being snared by crafty hooks that hid themselves from us until it was too late. Some were able to get free, but not without leaving scars.

WATCH OUT FOR SNARES, NETS, AND TRAPS: Salmon trying to swim upstream are caught in traps that hold them, but let the water pass. Large nets catch many of the fish, and some are simply snared with poles and the quick response of bears and other animals. The object of a net is to trap many at the same time. So we must be away of traps set for whole generations. If we are not careful, the internet, television, and video games could trap an entire generation before they know it. The quick hands of predators can snatch away the unsuspecting and still others are lured into unsuspecting situations where they find themselves trapped. The Bible calls hooks "snares.' Believers are warned to stay clear of snares because they cause us to do foolish things once we are caught. Matthew 26:41 warns us to stay clear of the snare of desire for riches. It says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Another Chance

Finally, brothers and sisters, the great part about following Jesus is that even if we have fallen for the bait, found ourselves hooked or trapped, he gives us another chance to get back into life and start again.

This understanding gives believers an attitude of optimism that looks at every failed situation as a learning opportunity, not a defeat. This is what faith does for the believer; it reminds us that our Savior gives us a chance to start again and do better.

The Angel's message to Peter is addressed a man who had placed himself on the sideline. Today, the same call is made to Christians today to get back in the game and give life your best shot!

Believers cannot have a losing attitude about life. Believers are winners. Romans 8:37 says "We are more than conquerors through him that loves us." That means we are winners.

Consider the difference between a loser and the winner:

—A winner makes a mistake and says "it's my fault; I'll do better next time." A loser says, "It wasn't my fault."

—A winner never stops trying. A loser never stops giving excuses. (Abraham Lincoln was a failure in business, lost two elections to the State Legislature, was defeated for Congress twice, defeated in the Senate twice, had a nervous breakdown and his girlfriend died, but he never stop trying until he became President of the United

States."

—A winner says, "I'm good, but I can be better." A loser says, "At least I'm not as bad as other people."

—A winner learns from people who are superior to him. A loser tries to tear down those who better.

—Winners never quit. Quitters never win.

Have circumstances hooked you, snared and snatched you right out of life? The call of Christ is: "There is no need to feel sorry for yourself, have faith, I'll put you back in.'

For Peter, the angel's message meant that he was forgiven for his shortcomings and accepted into the full fellowship of the faith. It was a call to full Christian service. Some today feel that they are not worthy to be in the church. They consider some shortcoming that they know about, but others don't, and conclude that they cannot be good servants of the Lord. Like Peter, they have slowly drifted away from the church. While the angel's words were aimed at Peter, today the same invitation is given to every person who wants to get in the game but does not consider themselves worthy. Instead of "And Peter" it could easily be "And _____" (your name).

Christ died on Calvary that those who would believe on Him would have a chance to everlasting life. He died that we might have a chance to turn a losing situation into a winning situation! It's a chance to turn:

—Defeat into victory!

—Shame into respect!

—Disgrace into honor!

—Fear into Faith!

—Desperation into hope!

—Sorrow into Joy!

—Eternal Death into Eternal Life!

It's a call for the millions of Peters of the world who once walked on water, but found themselves sinking to sing with new meaning: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me now safe am I"

Love lifted me!

Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

No. 9664-Thanks

Thanks after the sacrifice

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 16, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." Psalm 50:23

Introduction

Is it possible to praise God and say we are thankful without making any real sacrifices? There are thousands of people who offer praise to God continuously. They praise him in song, dance and with music. They write lofty speeches about him, preach sermons about him and extol his greatness in a plethora of ways, yet their actual service to him is limited.

Can we praise God and express our thanks to him without sacrificial living and service? Can we truly give him thanks while refusing any service or involvement in kingdom-building activities?

Consider the man who claimed to love his wife and praised her constantly. On her birthday, he sent her cards and flowers. On their anniversary, he sent her a singing gram in which some singers appeared on her front porch and serenaded her. At Christmas, he was the first voice she heard expressing love for him. It was the same on Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving and family union day and all other important days. When friends heard the wife complaining about all the flowers, poems, and expressions of love she received they were puzzled. Why was she upset? She said, "I would trade all of the cards, flowers and songs for just one day as the most important person in his life." It appears that the husband always sent cards and flowers, but he was never present. He was always, busy doing something else.

Is it possible that all of our praises to God are empty? Is it possible that he is not honored at all by all of our words because we are absent in actual sacrificial service? It is very possible! In fact, there are millions who would be surprised to know that God is not happy with our praise.

Christopher Brinson and the Ensemble in 1997 produced a gospel that raised this question,

"What if God?" The question gets straight to the point:
What if God is unhappy with our praise?
What if He is not pleased with the words we say?
What if He takes away His love and His Spirit from above?

What if God is unhappy with our praise?
What if God is unhappy with the way we live?
What if He is not pleased with the way we give?
What if he takes away His love and His Spirit from above?

We must change the way we walk;
We must change the way we talk.
We must live a life that's pleasing to our King.
We must read God's holy word;
Let His praises be heard.
Lord, just be pleased with our praise.

As Christians, we should remember that God is honored by our sacrificial service to Him, not with our praise alone. We must send up the praise, but we must also send up our sacrificial offerings that are reflected in our lives.

Exposition

This psalm focuses on David's wise conclusion that the only real way to say thanks to God is by presenting him with evidence of sacrificial living.

The people of Israel were surrounded by people who showed their thanks to their gods in many different ways. There were some who offered human sacrifices. Usually, a woman or a child was involved. The sacrifices were laid on stone altars and slain to show gratitude to their gods. Many would make offerings of gold or of the substance of their fields; the better and more expensive the gift the more expensive it would prove to be.

The Israelites were told by their wise men and, in this instance, the King himself, that the only true way to show thanks to God is not by public displays of piety through plenty of songs and shouting, but by the way we live; with sacrificial living being the primary consideration.

Israel learned that God is glorified not by their chants, rituals, and ceremonies, but the spirituality of their walk every day among the people. He is glorified in their conversation, lifestyle and also in their worship.

Thus, sacrificial living becomes the key to understanding how to please God. Witnessing is great, but living what one talks about is a far greater than singing an empty song.

Towards and accepted sacrifice

Cain and Abel gave us a great lesson about making sacrificial offerings. No matter how great the sacrifice, it does us no good if it is not accepted by God. There are several thoughts we should consider in this respect.

GOD SEES OUR SACRIFICE: Our words of thanks and offerings to God have more

meaning when they come in the aftermath of great sacrifices. God sees how far we will go for him. He sees how much we will give up for him. He sees it as we show it every day.

The story is told of four church members: "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody." Each time the call for sacrificial service was given the response was always the same.

"Is there a person who is willing to stay late and help prepare for the service?" came the call. Everybody thought Somebody should be glad to do it, and Somebody felt assured that Anybody would come forward. Who responded? Nobody.

A second call was issued, "We need volunteers to share in the prayer and visitation of the sick?" Everybody said Anybody who is a Christian should be glad, and both of them expected Somebody to come forward. But who came forward? Nobody.

After a challenging Sunday School Lesson about the love of God toward man, the question was asked, "Which of us will be willing to lay down his life for a friend?" Anybody felt Somebody should be prepared, and both of them thought Everybody who claimed the Christian life should be willing to sacrifice himself. But who was willing to sacrifice? Nobody.

Of course, when it was time to go to heaven and receive the reward for sacrificial service Everybody was willing, and Somebody stood in line first, just in front of Anybody. But, who received a reward because of sacrificial service? Poor old Nobody."

God sees our sacrifices. He sees us give beyond a tenth of our earnings to support the work of his kingdom. He sees us give our time and talent to the point that it goes beyond being just liberal, but actually sacrificial. What is important to believers is not that our names appear in the newspaper or that we are given credit for our work.

If we truly want to give thanks to God in a way that will be accepted in heaven, then we must let our words of praise follow our acts of sacrificial service. That's the meaning of the text "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."

SACRIFICES NOT IN VAIN: Believers should be encouraged as they stand at this point in their journey to know that the sacrifices they have made have not been in vain. Anniversaries and celebrations are blessings. They meant all of our obedience and sacrifice have not been in vain.

Many believers have made great sacrifices to promote the kingdom of God. Many have served when they were sick.

Some served sacrificially unto their dying day.

Many have given their money and land until they could not give any more. Many have given their best years to the promotion of the church.

To these, the Lord will respond, "I know thy works." Sacrifices will not go unrewarded.

Sacrifices have been meaningful; so meaningful that the songwriter wrote, "I wouldn't give nothing for my journey now!" The church has reached this point because of the sacrifices of believing members and God will reward every sacrifice in a great way.

PRAISE GOD IN THE LANGUAGE HE UNDERSTANDS BEST: God understands every language, but the biblical seems to suggest that he responds best when spoken

to in the language of faith and sacrifice. Those who live by faith find that God understands their language. And God spoke to Abraham in the language of faith and Abraham responded in the language of faith. Had Abraham not been a man of faith he would not have understood what God meant when he said take your son and sacrifice them to me. After the command was given, there is very little record of any conversation between God and Abraham. Abraham's actions spoke about his faith. God responded to him in the language of faith and provided a ram for him in the bush.

Often God gives us instructions, but only people of faith understand God's language and they act upon what he says. Those who do not understand that language are often confused about the actions of fateful people. In addition, we should note that we should not ask for something that is against God's his will, we should ask in faith believing that he has the power to make what we ask happen.

James 1:6 that we should ask in faith with nothing wavering; that means ask without ever doubting that God can make it happen. When we ask in this way then, we are talking a language that God understands.

Sacrificial Praise

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that while praise without sacrifice is empty, praise accompanied by sacrifice gets heaven's attention.

When Israel left out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they took 12 stones from the riverbed and set up a marker on the altar side. They gave thanks to God for bringing them over the desert into the Promised Land! It was a great day of thanksgiving because God had brought through the wilderness to better and promising land!

When Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem, he offered thanksgiving to God. That is when he heard God respond: "If my people, which are called by name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." It was a great day of thanksgiving because God had promised to heal the land!

When Israel returned to Jerusalem from captivity, they offered thanksgiving to God. It was a great day of thanksgiving because family and friends who had been away for a long time had returned!

While these were the first Thanksgivings of record, the word indicates that we are to offer thanks to God every day!

1 Chronicles 16:18 says, "Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds upon the people!"

Psalm 92:1 says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto thy name!"

Psalm 106:1 says "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endured for ever!"

Psalm 140:13 says "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence."

When we wake up in the morning, give thanks! But Psalm 119:62 says even, "At

midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments!”

When we break bread, give thanks!

When we close out the day, give thanks!

We give the Lord thanks for giving us a:

—Peace that can never be troubled!

—Foundation that can never be moved!

—Promise that can never be broken!

—Refuge that can never be conquered

—River that can never run dry!

—Victory that can never be lost!

—Wealth that can never be stolen!

We offer thanks for Jesus who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

We look forward to the last Thanksgiving!

That will be the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord of Lords!

That will be the day the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

That will be the day when Christ shall enter his kingdom!

Until that day, saints should live sacrificially and in everything give thanks!

No. 9665--Christmas

The tax that saved the world

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 2014

Scripture: And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Luke 2:1; "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." Luke 2:4-6

Introduction

There is an ugly word that we whisper because we don't like the way it sounds. Do you know what it is? It's the "T" word, taxes. As the year begins to wind down, many families are starting to gather receipts, reconcile bank statements and try to reduce their tax liabilities as much as they can before the year ends.

There are so many taxes that there is hardly any way to escape them. Think about this short list of some of our taxes: The inheritance tax, Accounts Receivable Tax, Building Permit Tax, CDL license Tax, Cigarette Tax, Corporate Income Tax, Dog License Tax, Excise Taxes, Federal Income Tax, Federal Unemployment Tax, Fishing License Tax, Food License Tax, Fuel Permit Tax, Gasoline Tax ,Gross Receipts Tax, Hunting License Tax, Inventory Tax, IRS Interest Charges IRS Penalties (tax on top of tax),Liquor Tax, Luxury Taxes, Marriage License Tax, Medicare Tax, Personal Property Tax, Property Tax, Real Estate Tax, Service Charge Tax, Social Security Tax, Road Usage Tax, Recreational Vehicle Tax, Sales Tax, School Tax, State Income Tax, State Unemployment Tax Telephone Federal Excise Tax, Telephone Federal Universal Service Fee Tax Telephone Federal, State and Local Surcharge Taxes, Telephone Minimum Usage Surcharge Tax, Telephone Recurring and Nonrecurring Charges Tax Telephone State and Local Tax, Telephone Usage Charge Tax, Utility Taxes Vehicle License Registration Tax, Vehicle Sales Tax, Watercraft Registration Tax Well Permit Tax, Workers Compensation Tax…. These are just a few because they don't include child support, alimony, probation fees and an extensive list of others with different names, but they all are paid to the government, and that makes them taxes, too.

There are so many taxes that sometimes in frustration we scream what's the use? Those are days that you look at your paycheck and see the difference between how much you actually earned and how much you take home, and then throw up your hands. One humorist has said, "It would be nice if we could all pay our taxes with a smile, but,

unfortunately, the government won't accept smiles, "you gotta have cash."

Suppose there was a tax that would save the world, would you be willing to pay one more tax?

In the Bible, there are many forms of taxation recorded, but only one was part of God's plan to save the world. The Jews first had a human labor tax where men were forced to help with public projects. There agricultural taxes and tithes for the temple. There were mandatory temple offerings, too. However, none of these taxes came close to saving the world.

However, when the time was right an order was given for one more tax and this tax would be one that would start a chain of events that would cause the savior of the world to be born in Bethlehem and prophetic outpourings to begin. The people did not like it, but God allowed it, for the world's good and so it was done.

As Christians, we know all things work according to God's will, even taxes. In his own way, he reworks the undesirable and turns it to our favor.

Exposition

This text focuses on a decree that was issued by Augustus Caesar to prompt all of the subjects of the Roman Empire to be taxed.

It was unusual for an emperor to want a detailed accounting of the people in a conquered region by family and name. It was unusual for the same order to apply to every part of the kingdom. Usually, a conquering king required a tribute to be paid annually and it was the job of the local leaders to raise the tribute when the emperor's ambassadors came to collect. However, this was ordered for all of the known world and required a personal registration of each family.

It was a tax that would be imposed on the whole world. The Roman legions had expanded the Roman Empire to possess all of the known world and this would have been the first universal worldwide tax.

Mary and Joseph walked to Bethlehem to enroll for the tax. It was frustrating and difficult, but they complied.

Little did they know that the tax they were enrolling to pay would start a chain of event that unrolls fulfilled prophesies that would change the world!

God's hand in the Plan

There is always a reason for everything that happens to believers. Only the faithful can see God's hand in the plan. Look at the tax and you will see:

THE TAX WAS PART OF GOD'S PLAN: Often we do not understand why things happen, but this tax was part of God's plan. In Micah 5:2 the prophet spoke about what is about to occur in Bethlehem, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." God has a plan for saving us from our enemies and saving us from ourselves. Often it looks confusing to us

because we don't understand why things are happening. Why was this unusual tax decree given? Usually, men took care of such matters. It was the men who went to they the synagogue. It was the men who made the decisions. It was the men who took care of major decisions, but this tax required "all" to register in person to be taxed. It's the kind of thing that has God's fingerprints all over it; it never happens, but it is happening. It means that God is unfolding a part of his plan. Just as the tax was part of God's plan, there may be other ways go is moving in our own times to bring about justice. Sometimes it may require us to "look for the God in it" to understand it. When Rosa Parks was arrested we saw the injustice inflicted on one woman, but when we look for the "God in it" we see God unfolding a plan that ultimately tore down segregation walls forever. We see the injustices of police brutality in Fergurson, MO, and New York City and see the injustice of the moment. While God didn't cause the shooting or the police chokehold, in the aftermath it is not hard to see God moving to change the justice system and police response across the nation. In all of its atrocity, only the faithful can see the righteousness of God in the passion of the protests. Whatever situation perplexes us, either as people, nation or family, look for "the God in it " and you see him moving to make "all things for the good of them that love God."

THE TAX WAS IMPOSED AT THE PROPER TIME: Often we question why things happen at the time that they happen, but in hindsight we see that God answers prayers and sends deliverance when the time is right. The declaration of the tax is a case in point. According to Matthew Henry, this tax was decreed at the height of the fourth monarchy, in the days of Augustus Caesar. Had it been declared earlier it would not have gone all to all the civilized world and thus might not have included Mary and Joseph. Each monarchy prior to Augustus Caesar expanded its kingdom to reach further around the world. At the time of the tax the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called The empire of the whole earth, and here that empire is called all the world. When the time was right, the tax was declared.

In the same way, God acts in our lives. When the time is right, God acts; not by our schedule, but only when the conditions are perfect for the execution of His will. We pray and often expect an instant result, but the answer does not come instantly; sometimes it even appears delayed. Yet in God's own time we have found that he acted accordingly. What if God had acted immediately and given us that answer that we sought at the moment we asked for it? Many would have married the wrong spouse, bought the wrong car, supported the wrong cause or boarded the wrong flight. We are satisfied that God moves in his own time and way to respond to our needs. Whenever he acts is the right time. The old warriors had it right, "He may not come when you want him, but he always on time."

THE TAX CHANGED THE FAMILY'S PLAN: The tax changed Mary and Joseph's family plan to fit God's plan. Obviously, it was the family plan for this engaged teenager to stay at home and prepare to give birth. It definitely was not part of their family plan for them to walk 68 miles to Bethlehem with no guaranteed housing during the ninth

month of her pregnancy. However, the tax changed the family's plan because every person was required to registered in the city of the family's ancestry. It turns out that the abrupt change in the family's plan, as unsettling as it was, ordered by God himself. Families make great plans for their protection, recreation, and procreation. Sometimes things happen to change the plans, and some grumble and complain. However, before we complain, if the family is a Godly family, changes have a reason. Perhaps something that should happen in the plan will not; someone who is suppose to benefit from won't be there; or something that would hurt the family will occur if carried out the way it is planned. We may be disappointed when circumstances change our plans, but at the same time, we must know that behind the scenes God has his protective arms around a praying family; if the family plan didn't work out, there is a reason. For Mary and Joseph, the tax changed their family plan, for us, other circumstances and events may change our plans. We know, however, that whatever the plan change is, God is working it to our benefit, and we accept his will.

It saved the world

Finally, brothers and sisters, Augustus Caesar announced a tax for all the world, but it ended being a tax that triggered a birth that would save the world from its sins.

The emperor knew that his tax would impact the world, but he did not know that it would be a tax that would that ultimately start a chain of events that would save the world.

The emperor declared a tax, but it wasn't the tax itself that saved the world, but it was the son God who was born down in Bethlehem.

Because of the tax, Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem and the scripture was fulfilled. The scripture said in Bethlehem there would be a sign

In Bethlehem, a sign will be given, so Augustus you must declare the tax.

In Bethlehem, a child will be born that will give us a new reason to sing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't always last," so Augustus you must declare the tax.

Down in Bethlehem, God gave the world a sign.

This child shall be a sign that:

—When darkness covers the land, God is able to turn darkness into light!

—Although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and good will toward all men!

—That although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow!

Augustus, you must declare the tax because down in Bethlehem a special child must be born, for Isaiah said in Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be on his shoulder; his name shall be called:

—Wonderful. Counselor. The Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!"

Augustus, you must declare the tax because Bethlehem is the place where the sign of God's unending love will begin. I heard John 3:16 say, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Augustus, you must declare the tax because down in Bethlehem a child must be born that will be born who will usher in a brand new day.

We should praise God for the tax.

We ought to praise the Lord because even when things look to be against us, we turn around it's blessing us!

Every day, God is blessing us!

Every day, God is still opening doors!

Every day, God is still wiping weeping eyes!

Every day, God is still raising bowed down heads!

Every day, God is still putting food on our tables!

Every day, God is still making a way out of no way!

He has brought us out of darkness, into his marvelous light!

We should praise God because one day that child that was born down in Bethlehem grew to be the man who carried an old rugged cross to Calvary

We ought to tell somebody that our Good is a good God!

Out on Calvary, we saw the sign of God's abiding love.

For he died out on Calvary's hill, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

With all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9666-Christmas

All I want for Christmas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 13, 2014

SCRIPTURE: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:11-13

Introduction

Remember the children's song, "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth?" It was cute. It was a child's wish. Children wish for many things for Christmas and foremost on their lists are toys, games and "stuff." Ironically, the adult wish list also includes: "Toys" and "Stuff," just on a larger scale.

What do you want for Christmas? A house? A car? A big screen T.V.? Clothing? Games? Do you want your bills paid or better health? Those who are trying to get you something for Christmas would appreciate a hint so that their gift will be appreciated.

We know what we want from family and friends because many of us have been telling everyone for weeks, but what would like from God? Suppose you could ask God for one gift, and you were guaranteed to receive your request, what would be your request? Would you ask God for money, fame, power, success? What do you want from God?

God gives gifts all of the time. Whether his gifts are received as great gifts depends on our attitudes. A certain man had two sons who were just the opposite of each other. One son always looked on the bright side of everything. He always had hope and could never be disappointed. The other son always found something wrong with any gift he received; everything was a problem. One son loved horses the pessimistic son loved technology. The father decided to see how his sons would respond to gifts they received on Christmas morning. The pessimistic son was the hardest to please, so he was given an 80-inch flat screen T.V., a Xbox, a box full of video games, an Ipad, and two cell phones. The other son was given a large box filled with horse manure and nothing else. On Christmas morning, the father found his first son sitting in the middle of the floor crying and complaining. "Look at all of this stuff. My friends will be jealous. I'll have to read all of these instructions, my room is filled with clutter, all of my allowance will be used paying phone bills, this is miserable!" The father opened the door to the next room and saw his other son jumping up and down with joy throwing horse manure everywhere as he dug through the box. Asked why he was so happy, he said, "With all of this manure, there's got to be a pony around somewhere!"

Sometimes we say the same thing. With all of the troubles that life brings, there's got to be a blessing coming pretty soon!

What we want from God is not, "things" but his "grace." Grace is the heart of the Christmas message; it is unmerited grace and favor of God symbolized by the birth of Jesus. Grace, when shared by God, showers us with patience, forgiveness, and opportunity. When shared by our neighbors, it makes the world a better place in which to live. What better gift could any believer request of God than to have a never ending flow of his grace. With grace we can deal with all of life's boxes of bad situations and know, "there's a pony around somewhere!"

As Christians, we thank God for the Christ Child and for God's gift of grace and favor. It is a gift that keeps on giving long after day itself has passed.

Exposition

This text focuses on an explanation of grace to Titus.

Grace is explained as the free favor and goodwill of God that is given to men who have not earned it, but have received it freely from God.

Grace first appeared among men with the birth of Christ. For even his birth was an unmerited example of God's love and willingness to give to those who have not earned it, his favor, strength, and salvation.

The story of Christmas is, at its heart, the story of grace. The coming of Jesus Christ into our world 2,000 years ago is the affirmation of God's unmerited favor to us. When we hear the account of Christ's birth in the 2nd chapter of Luke coupled with this Epistle from Paul who writes, "For the GRACE of God has appeared...Jesus... bringing salvation to all..." It becomes clear that the essence of Christmas is the appearance of Grace in the world.

If grace is emulated by those who follow Christ in our neighborhoods, schools and work places, then there would be peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

Ways of Grace

If all we received for Christmas was grace, what would we have?

GRACE SUPPLIES US WITH THE ESSENTIALS FOR THE ABUNDANT LIFE: If all we receive for Christmas is the grace of God we would have everything necessary for the abundant life. It is a good thing to have the grace of God. God's grace supplies us with what we need to live life abundantly. 2 Cor. 9:8 says "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every
good work."

It is marvelous to experience the grace of God because his grace supplies the:

—Soul with salvation

—Heart with joy

—Mind with peace

—Hands with tenderness
—Feet with Strength
—Eyes with compassion

The sweetest song that was ever sung was about God's grace!

No wonder the songwriter declares: "Grace, God's grace! His grace is sufficient for me!" Another song writer put it this way: "Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it, where shall its praises begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free, for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me!"

GRACE COMPELS US TO GO FORWARD EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE MADE MISTAKES: Many have made mistakes in life, love, business and their personal affairs. Often these individuals give up on life and throw in the towel. However, the grace of God provides us with the knowledge that we can be forgiven for the blame of past wrongs. Most important, we can start again with one more chance.

There is no better gift to receive from God than his saving grace. With grace, the past is blotted out, and nothing remains, but our future. That's why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The forgiving grace of God is one of the greatest parts of the Christian life.

We are not worthy of being saved, but Grace gives us another chance!

We should be condemned, but grace opens up the arms of forgiveness!

We receive the gift of eternal life. Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Give me grace for Christmas and I will live forever!

GRACE HELPS US TO LOOK UP WHEN OTHERS LOOK DOWN: If we have God's grace, we also have his assurance that he will never leave us or stop providing for us. Whether it is food, clothing or shelter, we know that some way, somehow, God will see that we have what is necessary, and even more. What we have may come through a variety of streams, but we must know that at the head of each of those streams is the wellspring of God's grace. When we are tempted to worry we are reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew 6:28-30 "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" When others look down in hard times, we continue to look up because his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.

Grace is here

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the Grace of God first appeared in Bethlehem, but is among us now each and every day.

Paul told Titus in 2:11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared

to all men."

This appearance is what the shepherds saw on a silent night in Bethlehem!

This appearance is what the angels sang about when they declared, "Peace on earth and goodwill toward all men."

The Christ Child symbolized the availability of God's grace to every person on earth.

That's why the world gets excited at Christmas time because God's grace is here. If God's grace is here whatever we need, he will supply!

If we need to be forgiven, God's mercy is sufficient to forgive us!

If we need comfort, God's peace is sufficient to comfort us!

If we need to be satisfied, God's storehouse is sufficient to satisfy us!

If we need healing, God's touch is sufficient to heal!

If we need to be strong, God's power is sufficient to strengthen us!

If we need to be challenged, God's work is sufficient to challenge us!

If we need to be refreshed, God's fountain is sufficient to restore us!

What the shepherd's saw in the manger was a baby, but what the angels saw was grace, wrapped in swaddling clothes!

On that that first Christmas, the world received what it needed.

That's why somebody today is saying, "All I want for Christ is the grace of God."

If we have the Grace of God, we have more than enough!

If we have the Grace of God, our barrel is never empty!

If we have the Grace of God, we never walk in a courtroom without an able attorney!

If we have the Grace of God, we never enter a sickroom without a first class physician!

All I want for Christmas is the grace of God because:

It's the grace of God that keeps us!

It's the grace of God that secures us!

It's the grace of God that gives us one more chance!

This grace was paid for out on Calvary!

This grace was delivered through an empty tomb!

This grace keeps blessing us every day!

No.9667-Inspiration

And it came to pass

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 21, 2014

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. " Luke 2:15

Introduction

What's your favorite bible verse? Larry Moffett tells the story of a church congregation in which people were asking each other for favorite Bible phrase. Mr. Alvis said, "Jesus wept." Charles said, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." Ms. Maxine, who taught Sunday School, said, "We love because God first loved us." All eyes focused on Ms. Shaky Head who said with an intensity and a sparkle in her eye: " "And it came to pass"- Someone else whispered, "This too shall pass." Charles, age 20, said, "For real? That phrase doesn't mean anything." "Yes it does," she said firmly. "I know that when a heartache comes, it will not stay; it comes —to pass. It's not going to be around forever."

It comes to pass was the way Miss Shaky Head understood it. And after that others have looked at it much closer to reveal that it is an important phrase that speaks to promises, predictions and fulfillments.

There are many people who make promises loosely without considering that when they fail to do their part they create a wave of problems for others far greater than they can imagine.

Our society has come to doubt any promises it hears because so many have not been kept from elected officials all the way down to the local weather man. We've seen it all.

The one bright spot that we have is that our God has never made us a promise He did not keep. No matter what He promised to those who trusted him, He delivered just as He said He would.

As Christians, we are confident that God is not slack in the fulfillment of his commitments to us, even if that promise meant presenting His son to the world as a precious gift for the remission of sin.

Exposition

This text focuses on the shepherds as they go to Bethlehem to see Christ child that had been foretold in scripture and announced by the Angels.

The phrase “and it came to pass” is mentioned more than 86 times throughout the bible. It is used in two ways: 1) To indicate the passage of time and 2) To indicate the fulfillment of a promise.

In both the old and New Testament the phrase is often used to denote the culmination of an experience. Here are four examples.

Gen. 8:6: And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

Jos. 4:18: And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

Luke 24:1-4: The resurrection of Christ is declared by two angels to the women that were standing by the grave. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

These texts show the passage of time between the beginning and end of an experience. Whatever was promised did not happen instantly, but in its proper time, it came to pass.

A variation of the phrase, “come to pass” or “came to pass” shows the fulfillment of promises.

Luke 21:9, But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

John 13:19, Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

The text in Luke 2 contains both “And it came to pass” and “is come to pass,” indicating that after the passage of time what God promised came to fulfillment.

Therefore, the phrase “It came to pass” came to confirm that God’s promises were delivered, what was sought was found, and what was suffered transitioned into better times.

In each instance, God responded to something that mankind needed or wanted. His response was not always immediate by man’s measure of time, but it was answered in the span of time needed for an ample response.

Surely these instances and others prove that “He may not come when you want him, but He’s always on time.”

God promised that a child would be born in Bethlehem who would be called the Prince of Peace. The shepherds went to see the baby because it was a promise of God that had come to pass.

Five Great Promises to Believers

GOD HAS PROMISED TO SUPPLY OUR NEEDS; IT WILL COME TO PASS: He has promised to supply every need we have. The Bible says: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". That's Philippians 4:19. God has obligated Himself only to the extent of our needs. That would include food, clothing, shelter, companionship, love, and salvation thru Jesus Christ. It would not include the multiplicity of luxuries that we have come to think of as needs.

GOD'S PROMISE OF SUFFICIENT GRACE WILL COME TO PASS: God has promised that His grace will be sufficient for us. The bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. "He has made provision for our salvation by His grace through faith.

GOD HAS PROMISED NOT TO UNREASONABLY TEMPT US; IT WILL COME TO PASS: God has promised that His children will not be overtaken with temptation. Instead, He assures us that a way of escape will be provided. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Jude wrote: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude v 24).

GOD HAS PROMISED TO WORK IT TO OUR ADVANTAGE; IT WILL COME TO PASS: God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 No matter how frustrating a situation gets, it will work to the advantage of true believers.

It will come to pass

Finally, brothers and sisters, even though it appears a long time coming; stand on the promises of God because they will come to pass.

When God made his prophetic promises about the birth of Christ they seemed farfetched and unrealistic but millions of believers stood on his promises.

When Isaiah announced the promise of God that "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel;The government shall be on his shoulders; they shall call him Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! It seemed impossible but believers stood on the promises of God.

Today our testimony should be the same, no matter what comes our way, we will stand on the promises of God.

There is somebody here today who can testify that God's promises to them have been faithful.

Has His promise to supply your every need, proven to be true?

Has His promise to be with you, even through the valley of the shadow of death, proven to be true?

Has His promise to be with you alway, even to the end of the world, proven to be true?

Has his promise to take every bad thing that happened to you and work it out to your advantage, proven to be true?

God does not make idle promises. If He makes us a promise it will be kept.

If it seems as if it is taking a long time for those promises to get to you, just keep standing on his word.

When things get rough for you, stand on the promises of the Lord!

When mountains get too high, he promises that every mountain shall be made low!

When valleys get too deep, he promises that every valley shall be exalted!

When rough places get too rough, he promises that rough places shall be made plain!

As I close, I am reminded of an old man who heard the voice of God one night in his sleep. God told him to invest in a house that stood on the corner of 3rd and Main. God told him to take the contents of the house and throw it away and he would be blessed. Sight unseen the man took all of his savings and bought the house. When his children found that their father had bought an old run down house that had been abandoned for years they became concerned. Every day he moved out a piece of furniture and stood on the porch. The trash pile became increasingly larger as he emptied the house and stood on the porch. The last thing he took from the house was an old picture that was hanging on the wall.

As he threw the picture on the trash pile, an art dealer had stopped at the red light. He recognized the picture, jumped from his car and took the old man to the gallery. Within a week, the picture was determined to be a collector's item and the man was paid several million dollars. The art dealer asked, "Why were you just standing on the porch every day when you had a fortune on the wall!" The old man answered, "I didn't know what was in this old house. You thought I was standing on the porch, but I was standing on the promises of God!"

I don't know about you, but I've decided to stand on the promises of God!

Storms may rise!

Winds may blow but I'm standing on the promises of God!

When the world cried out for a savior, the answer was already on the way! God prepared to send his Son to earth to begin the redemption process.
The phrase "and it came to pass" indicates that the time of social pregnancy was ready for delivery.

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates, that the prayers that had been prayed, were about to be answered!

The phrase, "and it came to pass" indicates, that their 400 years without the word of God was about to end!

The phrase, “and it came to pass” indicates that their spiritual drought was about to be watered by the living word of God!

The phrase, “and it came to pass” indicates that God was ready to move; and every believer knows that when God gets ready, you got to move!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, that God rearranged the biological processes of a woman named Mary!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, God made a hole in the ordered processes of nature!

And it came to pass, in the fullness of time, God sent the Word to dwell among men!

At the right time, and on time, he revealed himself to the world!

At the right time, and on time, he began a three-year ministry!

At the right time, and on time, he took up an old rugged cross!

At the right time, and on time, he died out on Calvary!

After the three days and nights, at the right time, an on time

He arose from the grave!

With all power in his hands!

No. 9668-New Year

I will go before thee

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 4, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. Isaiah 45:2-3

Introduction

Did you notice that some places in the world celebrated the new year ahead of others? The giant ball in New York's Times Square dropped a full hour before the Fleur-de-lis dropped in New Orleans. It was two hours later before San Francisco saw the first minutes of the new year. When New York shouted happy New Year! It was already 4 p.m. the next day in parts of Australia. When any New Year begins, many parts of the world have already been in and are well into the next day.

No matter when the new year arrived, God was there first! That's comforting for believers because he has promised to go ahead of us and make things ready for those who are walking the path of righteousness.

In Western movies, every wagon train usually had a scout that went miles ahead of the wagon train to scout out trails, look out for danger and to plan detours if necessary. The scout was invaluable to the safety of the travelers because he helped chart both the direction and pace of their journey. In a similar way, God goes ahead of believers to do the same. While we waited for the new year to begin; he was already there making a way for us, blazing a trail and leaving trail signs for us to follow.

There were no cowboys in the Bible, but there were shepherds. It is said that a shepherd, before allowing his sheep to graze in a field, will first go into the field and prepare it for the sheep. Before the sheep arrive at pasture, the shepherd pulls up poison weeds and chases off harmful animals. When the field is rid of the dangers, the sheep are allowed to graze. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, works that way with us. He often goes ahead and spots trouble and prevents us from going in directions that will harm us. We have witnessed this truth as we have seen jobs in certain areas denied to us in one company but given in another. There may have been other obstacles unseen to us that our shepherd had to clear before allowing us to graze.

As we have grown in grace and witnessed the dawn of many new years, we have also learned to trust that our Saviour has gone before us. We have learned to wait until

he gives us the all clear sign before we buy that new house, new car, or change our direction. We wait because we know that our Shepherd has gone ahead of us to clear our path, and he will never lead us into harm's way.

As Christians, we rejoice at the beginning of the New Year. We are not hesitant because we are sure that our God has blazed a path for us that will lead us safely through whatever dangers lie ahead.

Exposition

This text demonstrates how God went before Israel and prepared for their return to their homeland in ways that were not understandable at the time.

The people of Israel were scattered everywhere. In the North, they were taken captive by the Assyrians. In the south, they were captured by the Babylonians. They longed to go home, but it was not possible, that is until God began to move.

Israel was not aware, but God leaped ahead two centuries and laid the groundwork for their return. He revealed a portion of his plan to the Prophet Isaiah who prophesied that a King of Persia named Cyrus would be used by God to bring his people home.

Over 200 years the Assyrians who captured Israel were defeated by the Babylonians, who also had captured Judah. A third and more powerful country, Persia, was headed by Cyrus, one of the greatest conquerors in world history. Cyrus wanted to become the leader of the entire world, but Babylon stood in the way. He decided to take on Babylon despite the fact that the city was fortified by high walls that were secured with gates of bronze and supported by huge irons bars. No enemy had ever broken through its gates.

God worked to free his people, and the prophet Isaiah predicted that God would use Cyrus to get the job done.

Why Cyrus? Unlike all other conquering leaders, Cyrus had a policy of releasing conquered people to return to their own countries. God planned to see to it that Cyrus defeated Babylon because he would allow the exiles to return home.

The prophecy was specific. God promised to break the gates of brass and crumble the bars of iron and expose all of the treasures of Babylon to him. Soon after it would be obvious that this was being done "that thou may knowest that I am the Lord."

In 539 B.C. Cyrus defeated Babylon. The gates of brass were broken, and the bars of brass were cut through like paper. Soon after, Israel was freed to return home, and less than a decade later, Cyrus himself died, but not before accomplishing God's will.

Israel returned home to rebuild the walls, the temple, and its worship. Their journey was safe, protected and without incident because God went before them to make all of the crooked places straight.

The message for us

The message for biblical Israel and Judah was that God went before them to make their crooked places straight. What God did for the faithful in the old days, he still does

for the faithful today. In the two verses of this text. There is a warning, a promise, and a plan.

THERE ARE CROOKED PLACES AHEAD: The prophecy that Isaiah gave contained a warning that there are crooked places ahead. The road will not be easy. Believers should not step into any new situation believing that it will be a piece of cake. God may have promised it, but he did not promise that it would be a sinch. Their escape from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the capturing of the Promised Land were promised, but they had to fight every step of the way to make them happen. Today, believers should know that the devil has no intention of giving up any ground without a fight. The opportunity that God makes available often rests in crooked places or in hard to reach crevices. The financial security we all seek, it's out there, but it will be a challenge to acquire! That family goal lingers on the horizon, but it dangles over dangerous cliffs of risk, indecision and lack of faith.

There is no year that will not have its share of trouble. That's a crooked place.

There will be some element of sickness and disappointment. They are crooked places.

The good news is that God has already gone ahead of us and is working on those crooked places, preparing the way for us. They won't disappear, but he is preparing the way for us to deal with them and come through on the other side. This is the good news of Isaiah 40:4-5, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

FOR EVERY CROOKED PLACE, THERE IS A PROMISE: The prophecy that Isaiah gave about Cyrus spelled out how God would deal with the major obstacle to Israel's return home, i.e., the walls and gates of Babylon. Those gates and walls would be removed, and God's will would be accomplished exposing the people of God to the hidden treasures that come from faith in God. One by one, every one of the obstacles occurred, and one by one, God dealt with each one. That's what believers today should expect. Obstacles will come in the new year, but one day at a time, God will go before us and help us deal with them. Sometimes he will warn us. At other times, he will give us detours and alternate routes and plans. There will also be times when he will tell us to walk straight through the trouble depending on him to be our shield on either side.

God has also promised to unlock the secrets to fulfillment and happiness that have evaded many over the years. Read the verse again, "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." The greatest treasure that we can ever realize is to know God for ourselves. His constant presence unleashes a hidden potential that we have had within us for years untapped. His spiritual guidance can help us to go to places we have never gone before, avoid pitfalls that have tripped others and guarantee us a better life in him. It is a hidden secret, but the faithful know, that eyes have not seen nor has it entered into the heart of man to even imagine the great life that God has in store for those who trust him. It's a promise from God; he's already working

on it, even though the year has only just begun.

GOD HAS A PLAN TO GUIDE US THROUGH: Just as God had a plan for Israel to return home that unfolded one decade at a time; God also has a plan for believers, too. It is rarely revealed instantly but is often unfolded one month, week or even one day at a time. God had a plan, Israel could not see it, but it worked to their advantage. Just as Israel could not see it, but walked by faith, believers today must also walk by faith. We don't know how God is going to clear the path for us. However, we trust him unconditionally. We know he always has a plan for our families, and he will not let us down. The fact that God has a plan is one of the reasons he goes before us, to make the way.

God has a plan for every believer that has our name on it. Isaiah 43:1 says, "O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Since we know that God has a personal plan for us, we must order our steps to follow the plan he has for us in the new year. If that plan calls for us to make more time for him, humble ourselves to his will, or follow him without question, then that should be our decision. Every believer should decide to wait on the Lord knowing that "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint!"

A great year is coming

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should move into the new year with confidence, that God has already checked it out, and everything is going to be alright!

When Israel heard Isaiah's words they had no idea what they meant, God was so far ahead of them that they could not see how he was working things for them.

There are at least seven blessings that God is already preparing for the faithful in 2015.

In Deuteronomy 4:39 he promises to be above us and to guard us against hurt harm and danger.

In Deuteronomy 33:23 he promises to go underneath us to support us to keep us from falling

In Isaiah 52:12 he promises to go behind us and provide us a reward for faithfulness.

In Isaiah 45:2 he promises to go ahead of us and to lead us safely through.

In Psalm 16:8 he promises to be at our right hand to protect us in times of danger.

In Psalm 125:2 he promises to be a shield all around us.

In Ezekiel 36:27 he promises to be within us as a companion and a comforter.

I don't know what the tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

If I can just leave here today remembering these simple words, "I will go before thee," it won't matter what comes in the days ahead.

Because I remember that God is going before me:

—There won't be a CROSS that I won't be able to bear;

—There won't be a MOUNTAIN that I won't be able to climb!

—There won't be an ENEMY that I won't be able to defeat;
—There won't be a BATTLE I won't be able to endure!
—There won't be a DARKNESS that keeps me from seeing the light!

I don't know about, but I have a good feeling about 2015.

In Bible numerology, the number15 is the year of rest. It follows 14 a year of deliverance from trouble.

On the 15th day of the first Hebrew month is the feast of the unleavened bread, a day of rest!

On the 15th day of the 7th month is the Feast of the Tabernacles, a day of rest!

On the 15th day of Nisan, Abraham was told that his children would be slaves

Many years later on the 15th day of the same month when the Passover meal was complete they marched out of Egypt as free men.

I've got a good feeling about 2015.

Hezekiah lay sick on his bed, but he turned his face to the wall and prayed and God gave him 15 more years!

The longest words in the Bible have 15 letters, words like bloodguiltiness, unrighteousness, and stumblingblocks all have 15 negative letters, but there are four words with 15 letters that can put them all to shame, "The power of Jesus."

I have a good feeling about 2015 because

In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar's reign John the Baptist began to declare to the world "Prepare ye the way."

I don't know about you, but I've got a good feeling about 15.

I got a feeling that God is going to open up the windows of heaven and pour out his favor!

Only one name will get the glory and that name is Jesus! He carried an old cross up Golgotha's hill. He hung on the cross from the 6th to 9th hour and the ninth hour is what we would call in military time 1500 hours.

He died out on Calvary and the buried him on the 15th day of the first month in Joseph's new tomb!

But Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

He's going ahead to prepare the way, that's why the old saints sang, "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!"

No. 9669-Inspiration

Leave Your Stuff Behind

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 11, 2015

SCRIPTURE:"And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. Genesis 45:18-20

Introduction

Have you ever had to worry about checking the weight of your baggage at an airport? Most airports have a 50 pound limit on checked bags, a detail usually overlooked by travelers in a hurry to reach their destinations. If a traveler's bag is too heavy, it must be lightened. It's sometimes humorous to see passengers at the airport with suitcases open taking out shoes, or other heavy items to trim down to the baggage weight limit. Sometimes, travelers take items from one suitcase and put it in another. However, there are times when they simply leave items in the airport as unnecessary. Strangely, the same passengers on the return trip try to pack all of their souvenirs in the same tightly packed suitcase and find themselves leaving even more behind on the return trip.

When it comes to our life's journey, each of us has a load limit that we carry successfully. If we are not careful, we can easily go over the limit. When the concerns of life accumulate, they become burdens. After we've carried them for a while, the burdens seem to get heavier. In actuality, the burdens don't get heavier; we get weaker. Accumulated concern makes it hard to enjoy life to its fullest.

Consider the young woman who had found herself a new apartment and was preparing to move. Her girlfriend had come to help her but found her sitting in the middle of packing boxes crying. When asked to explain her tears she said, she never realized how much "stuff" she had accumulated. "I'm not going to be able to take all of this to my new apartment" she moaned. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" There were whatnots and souvenirs, gifts, mementos, gadgets and plethora of others. She was a complete mess. "What am I going to do with all this stuff?" Her friend, who had faced the same dilemma once said: "Take only what you need to get where you're going!" With that, the young lady painfully decided to leave behind many things which tied her to the past and took only those things she needed to claim her future.

Are we sitting at the threshold of the future trying to take with us all of the old

baggage from the past? Are we finding that we have too much "stuff?" Maybe it's time for us to part with some of our "stuff" if it is not necessary for the journey. It might be wise to take only what we need to get where we are going!

As Christians, we have been charged to help build the kingdom of God. We are often frustrated on our journey because we have focused too heavily on hanging on to stuff. We have the promise of God, however, that we should move forward leaving our "stuff" behind, taking only what we need, and he'll take care of the rest!"

Exposition

This text focuses on a command of Pharaoh to the brothers of Joseph to return to Egypt, but not to worry about bringing all of their stuff.

Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery and reported him dead to the family. Years later, God raised up Joseph to be a high official in the land of Egypt. When a famine broke out in the land, the brothers were forced to come to Egypt to try to get grain to feed their families. Joseph recognized them although they did not recognize their brother.

The Pharaoh admired Joseph and extended a great hand of charity to them by sending them home to get other members of their families and bring them to Egypt. Pharaoh prepared a special place for them in a very fertile area of Egypt called "Goshen." There were about 70 family members, so Pharaoh went a step further, he sent wagons to bring back the family members and their essentials.

However, Pharaoh noted that they only needed to bring their essentials, there was no need for them to bring their "stuff."

The term "stuff" is used in the text to describe a wide variety of items not important enough to name. Stuff was not defined, but it implied that they would not need furniture, ornaments, whatnots, etc. He said all of these things would be provided for them at the king's expense once they reached the land of Goshen.

In other places in scripture "stuff" is used in a similar manner. In Exodus 22:7 a thief is ordered to pay double if he steals stuff that his victim has borrowed from someone else. In Joshua 7:11, the people were hiding forbidden things among their own "stuff." Luke 17:31 says that when the Lord returns he that is one the housetop won't have time to go to his house and get his stuff.

Stuff seems to be that which is meaningful to us, but not essential to the journey.

Since Pharaoh intended to provide everything that Israel needed, they had no real need of stuff that would simply weigh them down.

When Jesus commissioned his apostles in Matthew and in Luke, he commissioned them to heal, cast out devils and witness, but they couldn't take any stuff with them.

They were also told to not to worry about the usual concerns of living; God would provide. He sent his apostles and 70 others and charged to take no concern for the usual demands of life because God would provide.

In Luke 10:4 they were commanded not to carry a purse. That meant they were not to be overly concerned with money matters. God would provide. They were also told

not to carry scrip. Scrip is a pouch in which food is carried on a journey. If they carried no script, that means they carried no food with them. Neither were they to worry themselves with packing extra shoes or clothing items.

The first missionaries were told to make no provision for themselves beyond the essentials. Today, we are charged to take care of the essentials for our families. However, that we are encouraged to avoid the unnecessary, pursue the mission and leave the stuff behind.

Heavy Baggage Is A Burden

As we face new directions and the remaining months of a new year, we must consider whether we are carrying so much baggage that we can barely move along.

If you have traveled, you have perhaps seen two types of travelers. One is at the airport with large suitcases and is struggling to make it to a terminal. Another has an equal amount of baggage but has a small dolly upon which he or she rolls the suitcase. At first sight, it appears that the one whose suitcase is on wheels was the smarter traveler until you see a third traveler who only carries a clothes bag and briefcase or purse. One had a heavy suitcase on wheels, but it was still a heavy suitcase it was just handled easily by innovation. At some point, the wheels came off, and the suitcase became a heavy load again.

There are many of us who are carrying heavy suitcases into the new year. Granted some handle their loads with grace and style as if it were rolling along on wheels, but it is nevertheless a heavy load. At some point, we reach a stairway or find that the wheels don't help and feel the weight of the load.

What's in your suitcase? What kind of excess baggage are you carrying?

GUILT: Some carry guilt with them every day. They made a mistake a while back and they have never forgiven themselves. They blame themselves constantly. Even though they have prayed to God and he has forgiven them and washed away the guilt with his blood, they carry guilt around with them. It's a heavy load. Sometimes they are smiling and shaking hands and seem warm and carefree. That's because they have put their guilt on wheels, but they are still carrying it around.

We should travel lighter, leaving the guilt behind, especially in light of Hebrews 9:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Since Jesus has forgiven us for our mistakes, we should not make our load heavier!

FEARS: Some carry fear with them every day. They are afraid of failure. Afraid to take opportunities and to step out on faith. Fear consumes them every day. They cannot get away from it. From year to year, they live in fear of losing their jobs, getting demoted, or not being accepted. They constantly live in fear! However, when we are on God's side, we have nothing to fear from life. Psalm 118:6 says, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Psalm 27:1 puts it this way: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

WORRIES: Perhaps the heaviest piece of luggage to carry around is worry. Worry is more than concern; it is over concern. Those who worry invent scenarios that may never happen. They muse over projected tragedy, and they make a bad case even worse because of their intense worrying.

Many get bags under their eyes, lose sleep, suffer deteriorating health and stress attacks because they worry so much. They carry it around with them daily. Jesus, addressing this subject, made this response in Matthew 6:28-30, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

A songwriter worded it differently: "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? When Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Take It To The Lord

Finally, brothers and sister, if we are traveling to a God inspired destination, what should we do with burdens, guilt, fear, worry and the seemingly endless list of problems and troubles that are beyond our control? We should leave them behind.

We know this is true because the Word of God points us to Matthew 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Verse 30 adds the finishing touches: Mat 11:30 says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

What do we do with burdens and excess baggage? Give it to Jesus!

When Job found himself surrounded by burdens and troubles, he decided that it was best to give it to God! In Job 5:7-9 Job says, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number:" Job decided to take his burden to God!

When David found himself surrounded troubles and trials, he decided it was best to look up. Psalm 121 says, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!"

Leaving your stuff behind means traveling without unnecessary burdens!

Leaving your stuff behind means trusting God to carry the heavy end of the load!

Leaving your stuff behind means working on the middle and trusting God to make the ends meet!

What do you do with a suitcase full of burdens? Take it to the Lord!

That's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote: "If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word, how he feeds the little bird and take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!"

If you leave it there, he will take your:

-Loneliness and give you an everlasting comfort; Empty house and bless it to become a home

-Trial and give you strength to endure; Heartache and give you love that will heal

-Sorrow and turn it into gladness; Weakness and turn it into strength

-Bowed down head and raise it up in joy!

If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!

When we take our burdens to the Lord, we are taking them to somebody who knows about carrying heavy burdens! He knows about carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders! He knows about suffering for the sake of others!

Isaiah 53:5 says "..he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

He knows about carrying burdens for one day, nearly 2000 years ago, he carried a heavy burden on his shoulder up Golgotha's hill!

He knows about carrying burdens for he died out on Calvary!

But he also knows how to get rid of burdens, for Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his burden free hands!

If you want to leave your stuff behind! Trust in the Lord!

If you want to leave your stuff behind! Trust in the Lord!

He will make everything all right!

No. 9670-King Day

Yet another dream

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 18, 2015

SCRIPTURE: And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. Genesis 37:9

Introduction

Have you ever dreamed a dream that if you told it to others, it would anger them? Suppose you dreamed that you would be elected homecoming queen and told that to all the other girls seeking the same post? Suppose you dreamed of being the best teacher in the world and all who ever worked with you would have to bow before your greatness. Suppose you told her brothers and sisters that you dreamed that you were going to be a success in life and that they would fail and would come to you begging? What would be their response?

The dream may be true, but the reaction of those around us to our dream is predictable.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man to whom God had given a dream that one day American would live out the true meaning of its creed, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."

That was King's first dream. It irritated many people because the true meaning of the American creed granted each person the same rights and prevented others from trampling them for their own reasons. This dream irritated those who heard it, but it was tolerated; after all, it was rooted in the American Dream.

However, in the summer of 1963, the world saw Dr. King announce, "Yet, another dream." This dream went into more detail and included images that rattled the cages of his enemies and disturbed those it challenged.

As he announced, one after another, yet another dream, anger was the response of his enemies even while his friends cheered.

Can you hear the chorus specific dreams given one after another in a litany that agitated those who would be displaced by them?

He announced the first dream, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

There was, yet another dream, "I have a dream that one day even the state of

Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice." I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

There was yet, another dream, "I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

One after another, he kept alluding to a day when white would not always be seen as right, and the black would not always have to get back.

It was a seemingly impossible set of dreams, all embodied in one big dream.

In 1972, the Broadway show Man of LaMancha featured a song whose lyrics seemed to embody the quest of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go
To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star
This is my quest
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless
No matter how far
To fight for the right
Without question or pause
To be willing to march into Hell
For a heavenly cause
And I know if I'll only be true
To this glorious quest
That my heart will lie peaceful and calm
When I'm laid to my rest
And the world will be better for this
That one man, scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To reach the unreachable star

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an imperfect, flawed man, who was given one big dream that was followed by yet other dreams that infuriated his enemies, but were blessed by God.

That's the way God works; he gives each of us dreams for ourselves and our families. To others, he gives dreams for our people and our nation. They seem impossible when spoken, but they are not impossible when God blesses them.

As Christians, we know God speaks to the soul of every believer and paints a picture of the world that is to come. If we believe it, and act on it, he will make it happen.

Exposition

This text focuses on Joseph's revelation to his brethren about two dreams that he dreamed.

Joseph was the favorite son of his father, Jacob. That favorite son status often drew the envy of his brothers who were jealous of his position. Also, Genesis 37:1-2 indicated that Joseph gave an evil report to Jacob their activities and disrupted their good times. They were not pleased with their father's favorite son.

Joseph's position became dangerously imperiled when he announced one day that he had a dream of his success and their failure.

In his first dream, he saw he and his brothers binding wheat into bundles that lay on the ground. He said he then saw his bundle stand up straight, and their bundles bowed down before his. That wasn't received well because it intimated that the one they despised would one day be over them.

However, at verse 9 he has "Yet, another dream." This time, he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars all bowing before him. The brothers quickly surmised that Joseph meant that one day his father (the sun) and all of his wives (the moon) and the eleven stars (the brothers) would bow before him as well.

The dreams exacerbated the problem because they depicted the brothers in a subordinate role to Joseph, bowing down to him and treating him as their Lord.

Joseph's brothers were bothered by his dream, not that the brothers believed they would ever happen, but because Joseph believed in them. They threw him into a pit and reported his unfortunate demise to his father. Throwing him into what they believed was eternal silence they quipped, "And we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Years passed before they saw Joseph again, but in the interim many things happened to Joseph, which seemed to threaten the dream, but positioned him to realize the dream to its fullest extent. Eventually, the brothers saw Joseph again. They also saw what became of his dreams as they bowed before him as a powerful leader in Egypt.

Between Dreams and Reality

God gave Joseph a dream of what would eventually happen to him, but he did not reveal to him the struggle that would ensue between the day of the dream and its eventual fulfillment.

GOD DID NOT SHOW HIM THE PIT OR THE DUNGEON: While God revealed to Joseph that he would eventually become a great success, it is interesting that God did not show him the path to the fulfillment of his dream. Joseph was never shown how

his brothers would put him in a pit and leave him for dead. Neither was he shown how he would be thrown into prison on false testimony. All of these were necessary for the dream to come true, but Joseph saw the sun, the moon, stars and sheaves bowing, but he did not see the pit and the prison. The nation embraced Dr. King's dream, when he spoke in1963, however, they did not see the struggle ahead in places like Selma, Alabama or Bogalusa, Louisiana. They did not see the eventual assassination of the dreamer himself. This is often true with our personal dreams. We see the result, but we often overlook the struggle and sacrifice that must be paid before we achieve our goal. A boy dreams of being a football star but often forgets the years of study necessary to graduate from high school and college and the family sacrifices that will be made to make his dream happen. There is a long way from a young's lady dream of being a doctor and actually getting her medical license. Often God shows us the dream, but he does not show us the pits and dungeons along the way. Joseph interpreted many dreams, but he only had two, but both were so strong that opposition should have been expected. We should note that when opposition came, God made a way for the dreams he gave to be fulfilled.

VISIONS SELDOM DETAIL THE RISK: Joseph had a vision of the future it did not entail the risk. A vision of the end result differs from a dream of the end result. Usually, those who dream of achieving certain goals, have some idea what it will cost to achieve it, but visions only tell the end. Ezekiel saw the vision of the dry bones coming together again, without the details of the political moves, wars, and infighting that would be necessary for it to happen. A person with a dream does not claim to have a vision from heaven, but an aspiration. Those who aspire must anticipate the risks along the way, and those who have visions must know that there will be unseen risks they will take before the vision happens. The vision won't just happen.

Even though families may not know what the next 30 years will bring, many risk their financial futures when they sign a 30-year mortgage to buy a house. Risk is essential to the dream. A young man who dreams of becoming the MVP in the super bowl is willing to risk the prospect of breaking a leg, dislocating a shoulder or being paralyzed in quest of that dream. Those whose dreams are personal are only willing to risk that which is essential to accomplishing their personal dreams. Those whose dreams reach beyond that which is purely personal, risk more. Parents or grandparents that dip into their own retirement savings to sustain grandchildren place their own security at risk. They do so because their dream reaches beyond themselves and embraces their family. Those who promote dreams beyond the relative safety of personal pursuits assume greater risks. Thus, every person that strives to change the community or the world also assumes the risk of defamation, incarceration, or assassination in one of its many forms.

Martin Luther King once said each person must search for that one something that he is willing to die for. If there is nothing that we are willing to die for, then we are not "fit to live." What we are willing to die for indicates the extent of our dreams. Many will risk death to protect our television set from a burglar, but we would not risk jail to protest a civil injustice. Some would risk death to protect their children, but not the nameless children of others. Whether the dream is global or personal, risk is essential to its

fulfillment.

OUR OTHER DREAMS INFURIATES OTHERS: Joseph's brothers did not decide to him harm after the first dream, but when he added that second dream it was too much. When blacks in America dreamed of getting an education, that was tolerable, but we had yet another dream: of integrated schools and equal access to public school facilities. We dreamed of getting the right to vote, but shortly after that, we had yet another dream of running for office and becoming legislators, mayors, governors and the most fearful dream of all, that of being president of the United States.

We dreamed of being able to put our money in banks, but shortly after we had yet another dream of being on the boards of banks and major corporations.

We dreamed of playing professional baseball in the major leagues, not in the Negro Leagues, but shortly after we had yet another dream of actually owning the teams.

We are no threat as long as we want to ride the back of the truck and collect garbage. We become dangerous if we start dreaming about forming corporations to become minority contractors who can own the garbage company.

We are not dangerous if we are constantly making withdrawals from the bank, but we are dangerous when we start dreaming about owning our own banks and depositing our withdrawals in something that belongs to us.

We asked God to give us a chance to be free, and he answered us with yet another dream.

We gain strength

Finally, brothers and sisters, we who are among the faithful are strengthened by, yet another dream! This dream is not Joseph's dream or that of MLK, but it is the dream inspired by our Savior that those who are lost can be saved and that a better world is coming.

Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit because he had had, "yet another dream." The heard Joseph speaking of another dream, but they did not see the hand of God moving in all of these events that brought them to Egypt so that their eyes could see what became of the dream!

We have hope because every time it looks like our hope is about to fizzle out our God gives us yet another dream!

Because of our hope and faith in God, he has given us yet another dream. It is a dream of:

— a land where swords will be beaten into plowshares, and we will study war no more!

— a land where our streets will be safe, our children will laugh, and joys will never end, a land where there will be

— a land where there is no rich or poor, but all of God's children will share in the bounties of heaven together!

— a land where the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest

When Joseph's brothers put him in the pit, they said, "We shall see what will become

of his dreams."

What we shall see is beyond our comprehension for "eyes have not seen nor has it entered into the heart of man" the great things that God has in store for us!

If you want to see what shall become of the dream, come and go with me!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house, there is joy!

In my father's house, there is redemption, paid for in the blood of Christ!

Somebody said, let's put a crown of thorns on His head and we shall see!

Let's nail his hands to an old cross, and we shall see!

Let's bury him in a borrowed tomb and seal it with a stone, and we shall see!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

And we have yet another dream that one of these old days, he's coming back again, and the mountains shall be low; the rough places shall be made plain the crooked places will be made straight!

And when those who fight the dream God has given us rise, we will announce to the world.."I have yet, another dream!"

No. 9671-Inspiration

In Due Time

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 26, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Introduction

Have you heard the phrase, "The watched pot never boils?" It is a colloquialism that refers to impatience. There was a time when homemakers boiled water on a stove. Boiling the water was necessary for items such as 15-minute grits or 15-minute oatmeal. Hungry children watched the water in the pot anticipating it's small bubbles that indicated that the water was hot enough for the grits or oatmeal to boil. The children impatiently watched the pot for what seemed an endless duration: waiting for the water to boil so the grits could begin their slow cook. That's when a wise old grandparent would yell, "The watched pot never boils." We were told to occupy ourselves with something else and when we returned the water would be boiling. As long as we watched the pot, it would never seem to boil, but in its own time, it would come to a rolling boil.

We are often frustrated because God seems to move slowly rather than at the pace we expect. We are watching the pot; as long as we do, it will never seem to boil.

Some things cannot be rushed, so it's better not to rush. That was the lesson learned by the expectant father who rushed his wife to a hospital many days before she was due to deliver their first child. The man was really impatient. The man was a little upset that the doctor was not in a rush to help him speed up the process. Despite his impatience, that man waited patiently in the waiting room. After a few minutes, the doctor came out and asked the assistant for a wrench; that concerned the husband. Then, after a couple of moments more, the doctor re-entered the room, and this time, he asked for a screwdriver. The man grew worried and began to pace in circles. Then, a little later, the doctor burst through the doors screaming for a hammer. At that, the husband, in a state of frenzied terror, ran up to the physician and asked, "Doctor, what the heck is wrong with my wife?" "I don't know," replied the doctor, "But I don't know what's wrong with my lunch box, I can't get it open."

You just can't rush things; everything must happen in its own time.

You can't hurry God either. He has his own schedule and he operates by heavens timetable, not our timetable.

That's what happened when God prepared to respond to our need for a Savior on earth. He picked the time, place, and method that his son would come. When he eventually came, it was the right time and the right place.

As Christians, we know that God always responds to our prayers and requests. We are confident that he will always answer us, but only when the time is right.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's letter to Timothy expressing his desire that Timothy would pray for everyone, interceding through Christ, whose Lordship would be revealed in due time.

The phrase "in due time" refers to the fact that Christ came at an appointed time to act as a ransom for our sins, but also to be the mediator between the world and God himself.

The fact that God has an appointed time and way to interact with his people is reflected in scripture.

Galatians 4:4 says, But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Indicating that God a timetable for Jesus himself to be born.

Ephesians 1:10 lets us know that there is a time when God will gather all of the saints together and bring them to himself. It says, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:"

Titus 1:3 says that at appropriate times, God lets his will be known through the preached word. It says, "But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;"

The idea behind "in due time" is that God is in control of the processes of this world. He determines the year, month, day and our hour of our deliverance. He cannot be rushed he moves at his own pace and according to his own schedule.

Until It's Time

When we consider the advent of Christ there are several thoughts we should observe:

IN DUE TIME GOD WILL HANDLE HIS ENEMIES: There are many believers who are frustrated in their attempt to do good work by those who work against the cross. Believers wonder why God allows them to make their lives so difficult. However, Scripture teaches that "in due time" God will deal with the ungodly. Psalm 37:1-3 says, Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity., For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." The phrase "they shall soon" means God has a time to deal with our enemies. Deuteronomy 32:35 repeats the same idea, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recom-

pense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. " Those who worry that God is not aware of the persecution or undeserved ill-will that has been shown them by their enemies, be encouraged, "In due time" God will respond. In the meantime, "Trust in the Lord and continue to do good."

IN DUE TIME CHRIST PROVIDES STRENGTH: There are times when the strongest believer becomes weak as he or she deals with weakness, loss or doubt. The faithful pray, but sometimes it seems that our prayers have been lost in a maze or have been placed on a back burner. That's when we must remember, "in due time." When the time is right, God will respond and restore the faithful. Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Christ came and died for us in our weakness so that we might have strength." In due time he will restore in two ways: When we have failed or have become frustrated, in due time God's presence will lift up our bowed down heads. When we have experienced considerable loss, God also restores us, much like Job who lost considerable possessions and family members. God did not bring back what was lost, but restored his possessions and rebuilt his family to a point that it exceeded what he had lost in the beginning. We should be encouraged that God restores that which is lost to a believer and does it in a way that will better prepare him to promote the kingdom of God; often bigger and grander than before.

In due time, strength will be renewed, so we must be patient. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, run and not faint." In due time, he will renew our strength.

IN DUE TIME, BELIEVERS WILL BE PROMOTED: There are many believers who are frustrated that others who are less obedient than themselves seem to receive recognition, promotion, and rewards while they are often passed over. We have seen this many times over the years: on the job, in the community, in social circles, in school; nearly every place we turn. The less worthy seem to rise fast. However, we have also seen the fall of the less worthy. It took a little time, but they often fell faster than they rose. Still believers ask, "When we God remember me?" What should a believer do? 1 Peter 5:6 says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." In simple terms, we should do great work without demanding a promotion, but by commanding it. To demand exaltation is to insist on it by law, contract, seniority or privilege. To command exaltation is to work so well that your actions attract the attention of superiors and in "due time" the mighty hand of God will exalt you.

In due time, God will respond

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that that just as God responded to others in the past, in due time he will respond to the issues we face as well.

Jesus was constantly asked when God would intervene in world affairs and address many of the wrongs that afflicted God's people. Jesus constantly told those who heard

Him that God would take action in His time. Once, he told them that wheat and tares often grow up together, and the tares choke the wheat. He said in God's own time, the tares would be separated from the wheat, but not before.

Everything has a time, and nothing happens before its time. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us that there is a time and a season for everything, but nothing happens before its time.

We often try to hurry God. We can't wait for Him to move. When we can't wait:

—We pray and ask Him for a blessing but then take matters into our own hands when God doesn't move fast enough for us.

—We ask Him for a mate, then grab the first pretty looking thing that comes along, before God has a chance to move.

In our lives today, we must remember that when God is ready, he will act!

When the days are accomplished, the prayer that we have prayed will receive an answer!

When the days are accomplished, the answer we seek will be delivered!

When the days are accomplished, the opportunity we seek will present itself!|

Unlike us, God knows how to do things decently and in order, and He will not be hurried.

God won't be hurried, because He spends more time working on our contents than he does on our package.

God won't be hurried, because He spends more time working on our success rather than rushing through our failures.

God won't be hurried, because He spends more time working on our climb to the level above rather than our fall to the level below.

God won't be hurried, because He spends more time trying to dry our tears than He does watching us cry our own rivers.

When the time was right, Jesus came as God's gift to the world. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

When the time was right, the world found out that He gave us:

-Courage in the face of trial. Now they boldly say, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

-Satisfaction in times of want. "The Lord is my Shepherd, and I shall not want."

-Guiding Hand in times of darkness. "Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through the barren land!"

When the time was right, He carried an old rugged cross!

When the time was right, He was crucified on Calvary!

When the time was right, He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Somebody must have said, "He said he would rise from the dead, why hasn't he risen?" The answer came, "In due time!

The same question was asked on the second and third day. The same answer came, "In due time."

But early Sunday morning, when the time was right…

No. 9672-Inspiration

Playing for the ring

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 1, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

Introduction

Have you ever thought about the fact that on SuperBowl Sunday millions of people will sit in front of television sets and watch a group of men play a game to win a ring?

Well, it's a little more than a ring. In fact, it could mean many things to many people. For some, it's not about the game it's about winning the millions of dollars that follow the win!

Football players in the Super Bowl play hard to win a Super Bowl ring and the honor of being the world champions of football, but there is much more to getting that ring! The NFL buys 150 Super Bowl rings for the winning team; each ring costs $5,000. Years later, many have been sold as collectible items at auctions for as much as $250,000.

If you are in business, you pay heavily just to get your advertisement before people who are watching players go for the ring! Advertisers pay nearly $4 million for a 30 second commercial during the Super Bowl.

In addition to the ring for the individual players, the team gets The Vince Lombardi Trophy, which is made of seven pounds of sterling silver and cost $50,000.

Communities that host the game compete for the honor. Playing for the ring means big money for their local economy. In 2013, New Orleans took in $185 million as fans packed hotels, restaurants and spent money like crazy. There are expected to do the same for every community that hosts the game.

Betters in Las Vegas are expected to put $95 million on the outcome of the game including Who wins, who loses, and by how much. They also bet on whether there will be a mistake in the singing of the National Anthem or the halftime show and even who will win the coin flip.

Fast food restaurants that sell pizza or chicken wings rack up on Super Bowl Sunday: Dominoes, Wingstop and Pizza Hut are expected to sell thousands of chicken wings on Super Bowl Sunday.

It doesn't stop there because the stars of the game will earn millions from endorsements, in addition to their bonus pay. Stars who perform in the halftime, perform

for free, but will make millions from the sale of downloads of their super bowl performance and YouTube ad hits.

So, there are many reasons that people are glued to television sets on Super Bowl Sunday. They have their eyes on the prize.

Christians have their eye on a prize, too. It does not come with a ring, but there are many benefits to winning the ultimate prize which is eternal life.

As Christians, we continue to look forward to the day when we will join the victory circle of life. The savior won't give us a $5,000 ring. Instead, he will give us a golden crown as he says, "Well done."

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi. While imprisoned in Rome, he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life. These passages reflect three dominant themes that permeated Paul's ministry: Humility, intense focus and a sure goal.

Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus Road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and constantly reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than the past. Whatever was done in the past remained as history, he chose, even in his moments of crises to always look to the future.

Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37,"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as a witness to the power of God and there would be no turning back.

Three secrets to winning ring

There three secrets use by those who successfully play in life's Super Bowl.

DON'T FOCUS ON THE SIDESHOW: Paul said, "Forgetting those things in the past." That does not mean that we need to wipe out our memory of the past, but it does mean that we cannot afford to focus on past fumbles, interceptions, and turnovers. We should face life's challenges with confidence. Confidence is a faith-based virtue. Those who exhibit confidence know God's power. They are not intimidated by the odds

because
God + one equals a majority. In Super Bowl 49 The New England Patriots entered the game focusing on the ring, not a "deflategate" a sideline issue that accused them of cheating by deflating their balls in cold weather games to help them win. The team's leadership told players to ignore the side show and "move on." Those who approach life must not focus on life's side shows or those who want to bring up rumors or past mistakes. They must move on and face up to life's challenges with the confidence of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

BRING YOUR RECORD INTO THE GAME: Those who want to win the ring, must bring their spirit of accomplishment into the game. They are not intimidated by the opponents they face. They know their own record and the secret of their own successes. It is easy to be overwhelmed by a problem if we forget our capabilities. We can be restrained and detained for great periods of time if we can be tricked into forgetting our capabilities. Once, King Saul asked David why he felt comfortable going out to face the giant Goliath with only a slingshot. David began to recite his personal record. With God, he had defeated bears and lions that attacked the sheep under his care. God guided his hand then, and he counted on God to do the same with Goliath. In Super Bowl, 49 the Seahawks put their hopes their quarterback Russell Wilson's, eyes, feet, and legs. He was a super player that could run, throw and make a big play. The Patriots had a not-so-secret weapon, Tom Brady with brain, power, and skill. Each brought their records and their secrets into the game. In a similar sense, believers bring their secret weapon into every day's fight: the power of God. There is no mountain too high for God to climb! There is no river too wide for God to cross! God specializes in doing things that are impossible!

DON'T FOCUS ON THE ARENA AND FORGET ABOUT GOD: Super Bowl 49 was played in Phoenix, AZ. Just across the street from the 850,000 square foot stadium is a giant church that thousands of game participants passed, but did not stop in for a word of prayer during their visits to Phoenix. They were not interested in prayer but found its stained glass windows were similar to the colors of their favorite team. They had football on their minds and not God. On any given day, believers have the same choices. There are life's challenges facing us in a super bowl sized arena, and there is the call to pray and talk to God. We should never get too busy for personal prayer. That's the prayer you say before you step out of your house, turn the ignition in your car or catch a school bus. Don't pass up God on your way to the arena. When Elijah faced his challenge on Mt. Carmel he did what every believer on record has been known to do; he talked to God. He said, "..let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word." Before Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses prayed. When they face starvation and drought in the desert, they prayed. Name the challenge and watch believers go into prayer before they enter the arena. The believer's prayer is not for victory, but that God's will might be accomplished. The Hebrew Boys stood before the fiery furnace confident that God was able to deliver and committed to the point that they declared even if he did not deliver them they would not be defeated or intimidated. They wanted to accomplish God's will.

Before the battle, pray, because prayer changes things. Don't enter the arena without God!

Play for the ring

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is one thing we must all keep in mind, and that is, "claiming the prize before us", which is the high calling of Jesus Christ.

When a team comes out of a locker room and runs onto the field it has one thing on its mind; winning. That should be ever believer's attitude.

If a team is victorious in the Super Bowl, everyone gets a ring.; it is the symbol of their success.

To get that ring, each player is willing to endure pain and punishment as they struggle for inches and yards of turf to make touchdowns.

To get that ring, they take hits, fall down and get back up again!

To get that ring, they give everything they have with all of their hearts.

But there is a reward for believers that is greater than a Super Bowl ring. It's what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me…"

I don't know about you, but I'm not playing for the ring, but I'm serving for a crown because, I want to enter that land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul...a land where we'll never grow old."

I'm not playing for the ring; I'm serving for a crown

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to be in the place where the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at rest.

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see that day when the mountains shall be made low, and the valleys will be hollowed out.

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to put on my robe and walk with the elders and see every inch of heaven from pillar to post.

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates made from solid pearls!

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I'm serving for a crown because, I want to see the city where every day will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Every saint should be able to say, "Today is Super Bowl Sunday, but tomorrow will be super bowl Monday!" Every day that we come up against Satan, it is a super

contest.

However, we can say with assurance, “Our team will win!”

We know our team will win because of the lineup!

At left end, there is GENESIS at right end there is REVELATION.

At tackle and guard is Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at center is Malachi!

At half-back are faith and hope! At fullback there is prayer!

But my team always wins because my team has the best quarterback!

The quarterback of my team wears jersey number 1-1-1. One for the father, one for the Son and One for the Holy Ghost.

My quarterback knows how to play the game because he’s a super bowl veteran!

One day, over 2,000 years ago he met the forces of Satan out on Calvary and died on an old rugged cross!

But, just before the game was over, Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands! You don’t have to wait until the battle is over...shout now!

Your super bowl team has already won!

No. 9673-Anniv.-Women

A Succourer of Many

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 15, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you:for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." Romans 16:1-2

Introduction

Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but how much do we really love? Are there limits? Elizabeth Barrett Browning posed that question in Sonnet #43 when she said:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

Browning's vision of love is one that extends to the height, breadth and depth of life and touches the soul and spirit of every living being.

Love reaches the unreachable and spans the oceans of differences that separate us and touches home reaching what Browning calls, "every day's most quiet need."

We have known women in our time who have reached into the quiet need of others showing love, compassion, and assistance to others. Their names are legendary because they did not live for themselves only, but gave of themselves to help others and thereby left a legacy.

We know the names: Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Chisholm, Coretta King, Rosa Parks and the nameless woman in our neighborhood who went out of her way to help little children or the teacher who gave us hope.

We love these women because they loved us without even knowing us. They reached out to us even though they could not see our hand, searching for a hand-up.

Women like these have helped many, tutored many, directed many, saved many and opened doors for many in the course of their lives.

These women have loved us to the ends of our being and have demonstrated ideal grace.

Isn't that the way God loves us all? Doesn't he reach down to us and find our hand as we sink in the turbulent flood of life's issues and gives us a hand up? Doesn't he break down doors to help us seize opportunities forbidden to us? Doesn't he show us the way to grace?

Whose hand does he use? Perhaps it's through the hands of loving women who love us to the depth and breadth and height of our being as if God himself reached out to us through them.

As Christians, we are grateful that there have been women who have shown us the love of God through their personal ministries. They have opened doors for many and have earned the praise of our Savior.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to the Romans as he commends special saints for their service and ministry to others and the church.

Paul, concluding a ministry that spanned the known world three times, sent this letter to the Romans with various instructions but highlighted the services of many in the first verses.

For example in verses three and four he praises Priscilla and Aquila for exposing themselves to the possibility of death to protect him. In verse 6 he salutes Mary for her outstanding labor.

From verse 8 to 15 he names a variety of others, commending all of them for their unique contributions to the service.

He began his praises with a woman: Phoebe, who was saluted as a "succourer of many."

A person who succors is a person who assists, mentors, teaches, advises and opens doors for others. Pheobe is described as one who has helped many.

In a very brief description, Paul paints a beautiful portrait of this saintly servant of Christ. In this brief description, we learn a lot.

He described her as a servant of the church. The word used here for "servant" is the Greek word diakonos which is often translated as "deacon" or "minister." Phoebe was ministering to (serving) God's people. She demonstrated God's love to others by meeting their spiritual needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who said to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 27:40). Each time she reached out in love to others, she ministered to them. Christians need to minister to all kinds of needs: spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical. Jesus said that even a cup of cold water given in His name was considered a ministry and would not go unrewarded. The church is to "equip the saints for the service." (Eph. 4:12).

To be described as a succourer of many was a great honor, for it suggested that she not only experienced God for herself but shared the message of the kingdom with others in the course of her life.

The Many

The African-American woman has succored many. She has shown it in what Browning calls the depth, breadth and height of her being.

FROM THE DEPTH OF HER SOUL: The African-American Woman has succored many by reaching into the depth of her soul to find strength. In many ways, the African-American woman has carried us while carrying the cross of segregation, racism, and sexism, all at the same time. Frowned upon because of her color and shunned because of her sex, the African-American woman had to reach down into the depths of her soul to find the strength to overcome the obstacles that threatened her family and neighbors. Reaching down deep, tapping a spiritual source out of reach to others, she turned disasters into opportunities and mountains into molehills. When Black men could not find jobs because of racism, women were compelled to carry the cross of labor. By the millions, they put on uniforms and became domestic workers and nannies for pennies a day, sometimes walking miles to and from work only to come home and do the same work again. In recent years, white women have joined the workforce and recognized the hardship of working and raising a family at the same time hence the call for day care, family leave, and other family oriented work laws. Without external help, The African-American woman reached down deep to find the strength to be a succourer of many.

AS FAR AS SHE CAN REACH: The African-American woman has succored many by touching as many as she could reach. She began first in her own house, reaching out to her own children and grandchildren. As many Black men abandoned their families or pursued their own agendas, many women today are reaching for straws to keep their families afloat. More than half of all African-American homes are headed by females. In addition to their roles as mothers and home managers, many African-American women have been compelled to become the breadwinners of their families because the fathers of their children either could not or would not underwrite the expense of the nurture of the family. Many women are wearing themselves out trying to be fathers and mothers to their children. They are working jobs, managing homes, attending the P.T.A., assisting with school work, supporting their children in girl scouts, boy scouts, school programs and extra-curricular activities. After doing all that, they come home and are sometimes irritated when they hear someone complain that they have gained a little weight in the process. After reaching out to their families, many still reach out to others as Sunday School teachers, community activists, and volunteers. In this way, the Black woman becomes a succourer of many.

THE HEIGHT OF HER DREAMS: Women who help others to dream and realize their dreams are the epitome of what it means to be a succourer of many. God has given certain gifts (or talents) to each one of us. While these gifts are not all the same, we need to figure out what talents we have and use those talents to glorify God. Paul said that Phoebe “herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.” The word translated “helper” means “patroness” or “benefactor.” Sometimes our benefactor is just a person who listens to our dreams and points us in the right direction. Sometimes they do even more to help us climb higher.

Many successful people reflect on the influence of someone in their past who encouraged them to dream big and never give up. These are the people who helped us remember that every believer has the power of God working on the inside. They are the ones that keep asking us "What's wrong with dreaming big? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first woman president? What's wrong with dreaming of being the first scientist to find the cure for the common cold? What's wrong with dreaming of being the best parent that the world has ever seen? A better preacher? A better musician? What's wrong with dreaming of changing the world? We know of many such women who have crossed our paths. They have helped us to dream and believe in our abilities. They have loved us enough to help us dream and believe that with God's help, our dreams could come true. They have challenged us to go forth and unleash the power of God!

Showed many the way to the cross

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there are many women who have helped us find our way in the world, their most important contribution is that they have helped many find their way to the cross.

These women, like those before them, spend their lives leading the lost to the cross because
at the cross:

—Darkness turns into light; Burdens turn into blessings;

—Nobodies turn into somebodies; Sadness turns into gladness;

—Despair turns into delight, and defeat turns into victory!

No wonder the songwriter declared: "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith, I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!"

Those who spend their lives reaching out to the lost know they must also tell them how Jesus carried the cross for them. They have to know that for every burden we bear Christ has responded to that burden in the cross he carried.

Because Jesus carried the cross, every:

TROUBLED cross bearer can now have peace!

LONELY cross bearer can now have comfort!

SAD cross bearer can now have everlasting joy!

HOPELESS cross bearer can now have hope!

DEMON POSSESSED cross bearer can now be delivered!

AFFLICTED cross bearer can now be restored!

FINANCIALLY EMBARRASSED cross bearer can now enjoy the riches of heaven!

Those who succor many must challenge them to pick their cross and follow Jesus.

It's the same cross that the songwriter asked:

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free?" then answered,

“No there’s a cross for everyone and there’s a cross for me.”
I’m glad that Jesus carried the cross for me!
I’m glad that he died out on Calvary!
But I’m so glad that early Sunday morning that he arose from the grave with all power!
All power ..
All Power...In his hands!

No. 9674-Inspiration

Beauty's Only Skin Deep

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 1, 2015

SCRIPTURE:"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Introduction

Have you ever thought what really makes a person beautiful? Our first thought is that which we see with our eyes. On second thought, experience has taught that beauty goes deeper than what the eye can see. Ideally, the way we appear on the outside should suggest what's on the inside, but that is not always the case.

The world is rarely interested in inner beauty, only what it sees. Often the substance of Spirit is sacrificed for the symbolism of the superficial.

There are many songwriters that have written about beauty. We hum their melodies. For example, you may have heard the beautiful lyrics of Billy Preston as they were sung by Joe Cocker, "You are so beautiful."

You are so beautiful To me
You are so beautiful To me
Can't you see
You're everything I hoped for
You're everything I need
You are so beautiful
To me

Christian Aguilera had a hit song called "Beautiful" her lyrics spoke of a mental attitude about beauty regardless of the outside.

I am beautiful
No matter what they say
Words can't bring me down
I am beautiful
In every single way
Yes words can't bring me down
Oh no
So don't you bring me down today

Perhaps the most famous lyrics about beauty that we remember are those by the

Temptations where a man sings about the inner beauty of the woman he loves:

My friends ask, what do I see in you
But it goes deeper than the eye can view.
You have a pleasin' personality
And that's an ever lovin' rare quality.
Now show me a girl, a girl that's fine
And I'll choose the one with true lovin' every time
Because Beauty is only skin deep, yeah, yeah, yeah!

The care of the outer appearance is the profession of cosmetologists, plastic surgeons, fashion designers and others who specialize in making men and women look their best. However, even the best beauticians are powerless to change those qualities of character and personality that make us truly beautiful; that requires the master's touch.

As Christians, we praise God daily for helping us to appreciate the value of inner beauty that has come from being blessed spiritually with a saved soul and a loving heart.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's selection of David to serve as the second king of Israel. It illustrates graphically the idea that God judges the beauty of character, rather than the beauty of appearance.

Israel had a failed experience with King Saul, its first king. According to 1 Samuel 9:2, Saul was a good looking man on the outside. He was a "choice" man, suggesting that he was among the cream of the crop of the eligible men of his generation. Not only was he among the "choice" men, but he was also a "handsome" good looking man. He was easy to look upon. Thirdly, he was a young man full of strength, energy and stamina. He was the best-looking man in all of Israel. Regarding physical appearance, he was head and shoulders above the rest. The selection of Saul was not accidental. The people clamored for a king and rejected God's leadership through their religious leaders. They wanted a hero king that would lead them like other nations. God decided to give the people what they wanted. They were given a leader who had all the outward appearances of attractiveness and charisma that pleased the crowds. The people were happy. Soon, however, they discovered that what Saul had on the outside did not match what he had on the inside. First, they found that despite his manly physique, that he was a coward before the dreaded Goliath. As Goliath raged to fight just one Israelite and save the lives of others, Saul sent a young shepherd boy to fight, rather than go himself. Later, they found that he possessed a jealous spirit, a vengeful and violent personality and an uncontrollable anger. All of these combined to make Saul, despite his outward beauty, an ugly man in the sight of God, which resulted in his loss of the kingdom and fall from grace.

This text introduces the next king, David, who was selected, not because of the

strength of his physical appearance but because of his strength of Character. Samuel went to the home of Jesse and without announcing his purpose reviewed all of his sons. First to come before him was Eliab, who appealed to Samuel because of his stunning physical presence (1 Samuel 16:7). God warned Samuel not to concern himself with the outer looks, but to be guided by the character. Other sons came: Abinadab, Shammah, and four others. One son did not come because he did not have the look of a king. He was a shepherd boy who loved to play the harp, write psalms and sing. In the eyes of his family, he certainly couldn't rank as leadership tender. However, when Samuel saw him, bright-eyed, with suntanned rough skin (v12) the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is the one." While he was nice looking and healthy, David was selected to serve as king of Israel because of his character rather than his outward appearance. The beauty of his heart began to show itself soon. In the face of danger, he displayed courage and killed Goliath. When persecuted by Saul, he demonstrated a capacity to love his enemies. When he had fallen into sin, he demonstrated a repentant spirit. He was truly a beautiful person.

Beautiful People

In the 1970's there was a product that was popular in the Black Community called "Afro Sheen." Large afros sprayed with the oily Afro Sheen spray made perfectly rounded Afros glisten under the light. The company had an advertising campaign that used the Swahili phrase, "Watu nzuri use Afro Sheen." The phrase watu nzuri means beautiful people. That was an important statement in the 1970's, for Blacks, as a people, were coming of age in the acceptance of our beauty as a people.

Historically, we had difficulty defining ourselves. We have used a variety of terms over the years: Colored, Negro, Afro-American, Black and the present African-American. Colored was a step up from the racially degrading Nigger of the slavery and the reconstruction era. Negro was another step up, but it still rejected the legitimacy of our cultural beauty. Afro-American pointed us to our African roots, but the term "black" was revolutionary. It took a deep swallow for people who thought of themselves as ugly to accept the term black. It was difficult until James Brown made it easier with his hit song, "Say it loud, I'm black, and I'm proud." Today, "African-American" sets a new tone. The left side of the hyphen points to our culture not to our color, opening the door for people of other races to be officially associated with the African-American ancestry.

Historically, we have come to accept our beauty in its many shades, forms, and styles. To keep up with all of the definitions of beauty the Cosmetology profession has become big business in the African-American community.

Must Come from the Inside

The word cosmetology comes from the Greek Word "Kosmos" which means adorning or order. Cosmetologists are people who specialize in reordering appearances

to promote attractiveness. Generally, they focus on the skin, hair and nails. Their wares include conditioners, permanent waves, shampoos, sprays, strengtheners and cuts, makeup blushes, face powder, lipstick, rouge, eyeliners shadow, mascara, nail polish and a variety of other services. All designed to promote attractiveness. However, while the assistance of a good cosmetologist can help increase attractiveness, there is nothing your beautician can do after someone meets you and finds out that the pages of the book are not equal to the cover.

Beauty must come from the inside.

Absalom was a good looking man but was evil on the inside. Jezebel was a beautiful woman but is known as one of the world's ugliest women because of her evil ways.

What makes beautiful people? Galatians 5:22 holds the key. Beautiful people are those who demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." When you find a person who has these virtues all in the same package, regardless of what the outside looks like, you have a beautiful person.

Christian Beauticians, Barbers and others who specialize in making people physically attractive have a great opportunity to witness for the Lord in the most fertile evangelism field in the world: the barbershop and the beauty shop. People come to both expecting to listen to something. They usually hear the latest gossip, but wouldn't it be enriching if between the wash and the dry, Christian beauticians found ways to suggest peace, joy, self-control, and kindness, to their customers. What about the patrons? Wouldn't the beauty shop or barber shop be a good place to witness and help a person leave more attractive inside as well as the outside?

The Master's Touch

There are some beauticians and barbers who are so good at what they do, that when people leave their shops, they look like brand new people. When a cosmetologist can take a hard luck case and turn her into a beauty queen, it's obvious that he or she has that special touch that makes the difference. It's the master's touch.

Today friends, I want to introduce you to the world's greatest cosmetologist, who has the master's touch. He is a cosmetologist because the "Kosmos" is the world and setting the world and its people in order is his business. He specializes in hard luck cases. He specializes in taking that which is:

—Ugly and making it beautiful; Deplorable and making it adorable; Weak and making it strong; failing and make it victorious.

I want to introduce you to somebody who can:

—Wash you in his blood

—Set your feet on solid ground

—Give you a permanent, new walk, talk, and song to sing

—Straighten our Crooked lives

—Press out rough places

I want to introduce you to somebody who has shops in every, country, state, and

city. Not only does he have shops for you to come to him, but he also makes house calls, 24 hours a day. Call him in the morning. Call him in the evening. Call him in the midnight hour!

If you want to know how good he is, just talk to those who been touched by his hands!

Woman at the Well: He made me beautiful on the inside. Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!

By what authority does he operate? Where did he get his license? When did he pass the state board?

I hear him answer: Before Abraham was I am. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, The author and finisher of the faith, all power is in my hands!

What's the name of his shops? "Jes-Us" His name is Jesus, and he operates Just for Us!

Jesus, the lily of the valley

Jesus, the bright and morning star

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

I hear him declare: "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest!

No. 9675-Inspiration

All he had was a stick

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 8, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs." Exodus 4:17

Introduction

When will you start to move on that challenging idea God gave you? Why are you hesitating? There are many people who have been given a life challenge by the Lord, but they hesitate to act on it because they doubt themselves and fear failure. They question why the Lord would give them such a big idea and so few resources to make the idea happen. You've seen the situations: 1) You want to start a business, but don't have the money or credit to get started. 2. You want to pursue a profession, but are frustrated by the education and training requirements necessary. 3) You have a burning desire to accomplish to expand upon a Kingdom-building ministry, but hesitate because you don't have the resources. The reasons for hesitation are endless. The results are that we seldom accomplish what we set out to do.

Consider Tommy the Toad frog who sat on a log in the pond every day watching the flies flicker in front of him. Toad frogs love flies because they make nice dinners and snacks. However, Tommy had to settle for whatever he could get because although he loved flies they never came within his reach. They buzzed over his head, in front of his face and all around him, but he didn't have anything to swat them with, so daily he watched them in anguish wishing someone would invent a contraption that would help him capture flies. One day a big prosperous looking frog from the other side of the pond sat beside him on the log. They both watched the flies buzzing around them. Tommy started to complain about not having a way to reach them; he was too big and too slow. While he complained and gave excuses, a trio of flies flew overhead. Suddenly, he heard a swooshing sound and saw the frog next to him open his mouth and lick out his long tongue and in a second had caught all three frogs, swallowed them and blinked his eyes in satisfaction. As he hopped away the toad told Tommy, "You got a tongue in your mouth, you need to use it for more than just complaining." – Tommy had what he needed to catch flies, but he never put it to use.

There are many believers who fail to follow the vision that God has given them because they doubt that they have the ability, opportunity, or resources to make the vision that God has given them become a reality.

God rarely gives us a fully baked cake; he gives us the ingredients, we have to mix them. Dreams don't come ready for action, usually some assembly is required. Just as many items come with the necessary screws and tools to put it all together, God gives us all we need to make our life vision happen. If we follow his instructions, use the tools he has given us, it will all come together a little at a time.

As Christians, we thank God for giving us the opportunity to achieve our God-given dreams. If we trust him and follow him, he will help us use what we have to make a great contribution to the kingdom building program.

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he learned to step out in faith and use the stick in his hand.

At the burning bush, God told Moses to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage; Moses was an 80-year-old, former prince of Egypt who had been a shepherd for the last 40 years. Moses, looking at his situation, thought it was impossible so he began to give reasons why he could not succeed. He offered God four major excuses: 1) He said he was not important (3:11); 2) He lacked authorization (3:13); 3) He did not have the power (4:1); 4) He was not a good speaker (4:10). These four excuses formed the basis of Moses' attempt to convince himself that God needed to find someone else for this impossible task.

It was not unusual for an opposing army to send an emissary or messenger to deliver a message, but the emissary was usually backed by a great army. Moses was being asked to tell Pharaoh to "Let my people go." That was more than a notion. Releasing over a million slaves would devastate the Egyptian economy, commerce would come to a halt, work on the great cities being built would cease, commerce in wood, linens, tools, and stone would cease and the country would come to a complete standstill. Leaving, a million people would strip the land of necessary foods and supplies and leave Egypt without any resources. Moses would be required to demand that Pharoah release the slaves and at the same time destroy the Egyptian economy.

This text focuses on how God overcame Moses' complaint of a lack of talent, power and ability. When Moses complained he would not have the power to convince Pharaoh or the people that he was from the Lord, God answered by asking him a question, "What is that in thine hand?" What Moses carried was a simple shepherd's rod, hardly anything that could be considered a tool for the liberation of an enslaved people. In his hand, he already had all he needed; God would do the rest. Moses complained about what he did not have; God looked at what he had. Moses had 1)Forty years of training in the best schools of Egypt 2)Military Experience as the conquering prince of the Ethiopian conquest 3)The ability to lead men and 4) A Humble spirit that caused him to move at God's command. God wanted Moses to do great work. He did not call upon him to use anything he did not already have, but simply to use what he had at his disposal.

All he had was a stick, but that was enough.

Our Reasons

Often when faced with a challenge to pursue a task that appears beyond our reach we adopt one of the four excuses of Moses instead of moving at God's command.

WHO ME?(Exodus 3:11-12): Moses could not imagine himself taking on such a task and pointed to his weaknesses: he was not eloquent and persuasive. He didn't speak well at all. We often respond in the same way, pointing to everything that shows we do not possess the skill sets needed for the task. God challenged him to harness the talents of others. He pointed him to Aaron, his brother, to help him carry out the task. In a similar manner, we too may not have the special talents to do all that is necessary, but we can team with others to make great things happen.

NO BACKING (Exodus 3:13-15) Moses complained that he had no standing, no title, no position or official license to go before Pharaoh. "Who will I say sent me?" God answered, "I am that I am." That's when Moses learned that it wasn't about who he, Moses was, but it was about God. In essence, God says, "It's not about who you are or who you are not, it's about who I am." –I am that I am. When God gives a dream, we should go forth with confidence that no matter how insignificant we feel, that we have the backing of the Savior and that backing is all we need. He will make a way.

WHAT IF I FAIL: (Exodus: 4:1-9), Moses responded to his challenge with "What ifs." What if they don't believe me? What if they don't listen to me or laugh at me? He paid more attention to the prospects of failure than he did to the victory. God promised victory, but Moses responded with "buts." What ifs are victory killers, and zeal quenchers. Excuses will relegate us to second best. God asked Moses, "What's that in your hand?" "It's a stick." – Use it. God uses what we have, and has never demanded from us what we do not have. We will never know the full potential of what can be done until we are willing to offer it to God. God is not looking for excess ability; he is looking for availability.

I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES: (Exodus 4:10-12) Moses went through a list of reasons why he should be excused from the task, mainly he said he was inadequate and did not have what it takes. God said, "I will teach thee." God teaches those he selects for great tasks. He prepares them through instruction, trial, and example. Today, we may not have what it takes at the moment. We may not be prepared to stand before Pharaoh today, but believers must prepare themselves. Likewise, you may not have what it takes to be a supervisor or to own a company or to reach the next level, but you must prepare. When it comes to the ministries of the Kingdom, you may not know what it takes to be a Sunday School teacher, singer, or ministry leader, but God will prepare those who put aside their excuses and pick up their stick.

THE STICK YOU HAVE WILL BE BLESSED: (Exodus 4:17) God made Moses a powerful promise in verse 17: "And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs." It was a promise that God would take the sum total of his life experiences and a stick and use them to save a nation.

Every believer should note that after this, Moses did not make any more excuses. The

next verse shows him preparing to move as God commanded expecting God to use him in a miraculous way.

The blessing was not in the stick itself. It was not a magic wand. It wasn't the stick that turned the waters of the Nile red with blood. It wasn't the stick that transformed itself into a serpent and devoured the servants of Pharaoh's magicians. It was not the stick itself that rolled back the waters of the Red Sea; it was the power of God.

When you win the final victory in your God given mission, it won't be your power, talent, knowledge or training-that's only a stick; it will be God using your small talents, gifts, and skills to do mighty things.

There is nothing more powerful than a man or a woman who possesses a blessed gift from God. With it he can make the impossible happen.

Use what you have

Finally, brothers and sisters, every believer should resolve to use the ability he or she happens to have and let God do the rest.

It is natural for many to hesitate when faced with an enormous challenge, but each person should use what is available to them and step out on God's word.

God told Moses, "Certainly, I will be with thee." If God is with us in our quest, there is no mountain we cannot scale or gorge so wide it cannot be spanned.

When God is with you, you can do much more than you ever expected because he takes the simple things in life and uses them for his purpose. God often takes simple, insignificant, foolish and weak things and uses them in ways that make others scratch their heads. That's what the scripture means when it says, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

All you may have is a stick, but God can work with that stick and make it happen.

All Wally Amos had in life was poverty when he was born in 1936. To get by he and his aunt baked cookies and he learned to do it well. His stick was his ability to make cookies and he turned it into a multimillion dollar company called, "Famous Amos" he sold to Kellogg for millions of dollars. All he had was a stick.

What is that in thine hand? What is your stick? The world may laugh at the insignificance of what is in your hand, but consider what it can become when it's used for God:

A Pencil in the hands of Alex Haley became a tool for great writings which have shaken the world. It was only a pencil, but when touched by God it became the Autobiography of Malcolm X and Roots. All he had was a stick. What is that in thine hand?

A Child's Poem in the hands of Maya Angelou became an outlet for intense and

powerful ideas that have inspired our nation. It was only a poem but when touched by God it became "Still I Rise." All she had was the ability to write poems and stories. All she had was a stick. What is that in thine hand?

A will to run in the hands of Wilma Rudolph, became a quest to be a track champion. The desire to win the Olympics drove Gabby Douglas. Despite setbacks, disappoints and the doubts of skeptics these women rose to become Olympic champions. All they had was a stick. What is that in thy hand?

For Cuba Gooding Jr., it was a movie script. For Floyd Mayweather, Jr. it was a boxing glove. For Michael Jordan, it was a basketball. For Whitney Houston, it was a silky, sensuous voice. All they had was a stick. What is that in thine hand?

When what's in your hand has been blessed by God, there is no limit to what you can do and to how far you can go!

"..Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

Consider the drunk who searched the garbage for a taste of wine and found what he believed was an old fiddle. "It's nothing but an old fiddle," he thought and tossed it aside. A second scavenger came and found the old fiddle; he tried to play it but all he got was screeches and scratches, and he threw it away because it had no value. The third scavenger sold the fiddle to an antique store and after that a great violinist happened upon it. The violinist tuned its strings and gently rubbed the bow and then out came the finest sound, much to the amazement of all. As the violinist bought the fiddle and walked out of the door, the owner remarked "it was just an old fiddle, until it was touched by the master's hand."

Brothers and sisters, it is not important what you have in your hands. However it is important that what you have has been touched by the master's hand.

It does not matter that you only have a little with which to work. It does matter that you let God work with what you have for his service.

When you've been touched by the master's hand, nothing can stand in your way!

Feel free to dream the impossible dream! Fight the unbeatable foe!

I heard the songwriter declare: "He touched me! He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul. Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole!"

He touched me, the man who carried a cross for me up Calvary's hill!

He touched me, the man who let them stick a spear in his side and put a crown of thorns on his head!

He touched me, the man who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He touched me, the man who stayed in the grave for three days an nights and early Sunday morning arose from the grave

He touched me and turned my sadness turned to joy!

He touched me and turned my failure turned to success!

He touched me and turned my defeat turned into victory!

He touched me...

..and now I am no longer the same!

No. 9676-Communion

Living water doesn't come in a bottle

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 15, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. "John 4:10

Introduction

Did you ever think the day would come when we'd pay for a drink of water? Except in desert states, most of the nation has enjoyed access to free water. Rarely did anyone encounter someone unwilling to give a thirsty person a free drink of water.

Do you remember? At a service station, we paid for gas and oil, but air and water were always free. If a person had no money, he could usually sit in the refreshing atmosphere of a restaurant and order a cool drink of water.

People drank water from a variety of sources. Some drank from fountains, even though they were prohibited from drinking from some fountains if they were not the predominant race. It was free, but the source was restricted to use by race. Some cupped their hands and drank from hydrants. There are a few that remember drinking from water hoses and in the rural drinking straight from wells and streams.

Today, one of the fastest growing businesses in America is bottled water. Economists report that more than half of all Americans buy bottled water even though most water in the United States is some of the cleanest tap water in the world. In America, industry reports reveal that Americans spend about $4 billion a year on bottled water. We do this, even though, there's no guarantee that water in plastic bottles is any purer than what is available from your own kitchen sink - in some cases there is no difference. We would like to believe that the water in bottles has been drawn from a magic fountain of natural pure springs on some remote mountain, but while there may be a few exceptions, it generally is not.The hard truth is that Dasani, which is bottled by Coca-Cola, is simply purified tap water. In fact, most bottled water you might buy in the supermarket is purified faucet fluid, rather than "source" water. It probably didn't come from a spring.

In 2011 Living Waters for the World, a mission project of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), sent a mission team to a small barrio in Cuba to install a water purification system in one of its churches. "As soon as the system was installed, the people in the community said, "the church has living water!" The people lined up to fill jugs and bottles from two taps. They now distribute more than 2,500 gallons of purified water an hour. One resident said, "We never run out-Just like Jesus."

In that little church, the people came for water, but they also came for spiritual water. They sought Jesus because he never runs out.

As Christians, we seek the living waters. The waters we seek cannot be bottled or sold. They are tapped from the fountains of God's grace. When we drink from these waters, we will never thirst again.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he met with a woman at Jacob's well in Samaria.

Jesus came to Samaria and broke through several barriers to bring his message of salvation to the woman at the well. He broke racial barriers, but he also broke gender barriers. Jewish women were the subjects of many prohibitions that treated them as second class. They were subjugated, and their prohibitions were so strictly enforced that they were not even allowed to speak to a man in public places. Only in the privacy of their homes could they speak, and even there with extreme caution. Jesus engaged in discussion with the woman at the town's most visible meeting place, Jacob's Well, thus challenging long-standing taboos that were centuries old.

Moreover, Jesus broke the morality barrier as well. This woman was marked for her low morals. She had been married five times and was living with a sixth who was not her husband. By Jewish standards, she was a harlot. Priests and the devout of the city had no contact with her. She was considered an outcast. Jesus offered her the living water of salvation and an opportunity to everlasting life. The woman was so excited that she left her water pot and ran through the streets of the city proclaiming, "Come see a man that told me all the things I ever did, is this not the Christ?"

The fact that she left her waterpot spoke to the woman's excited state of mind. Her act of leaving her water-pot beside the well as she went back to the village indicated her thirst for things of the world had passed. She now accepted Jesus as the living water and that raised her expectations; she left her water pot behind never to thirst for life's abstracts again.

Causes of thirst

We thirst because there is a lack of water in our system. Those who receive the living water acquire a spiritual balance in their lives that brings them peace. The moment we receive these attributes marks an epiphany. It's an "I see it now moment." It's an "Oh' that's what you mean moment." Once we finally see it, like the woman at the well, we will drop our water pot and take a new exciting course in life.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MUST HAVE LIVING WATER: Jesus met the woman at the well and offered her living water. In essence, his spirit would be the key to really

living. There are many today whose hearts are beating, but they are not living. They move around each day, but they are not living.

They have a few things, but they may as well have nothing because they are not living. To live we need the constant stream of spiritual support that only comes from God. Jesus is the living water that constantly flows. Anything that tries to live dies soon, without water.

Marriages, careers, even relationships all need the living water. Nothing else will substitute; it must be water. There are many today who are spiritually dehydrated. They are trying to live without drinking spiritual water.

Professionals report that we need eight glasses of water a day to keep our systems functioning. Often we substitute coffee, cold drinks, alcohol and other wet substances for water and get by, but soon we learn that nothing takes the place of water.

Likewise, many are substituting many things for Christ. They all serve their purpose but can't take the place of water. To have a healthy spiritual life we need worship, Bible study, prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He brings the living water.

SEVEN COMPONENTS OF LIVING WATER: Former Louisiana State Center Charles Jones, in his book Seven Prayers, Seven Commands, details seven things that happen to people when they encounter God. According to Senator Jones, those who encounter God receive seven anointings that effectively displace the desires of the world: Wisdom, vision, insight, foresight, knowledge, discernment, and understanding. These seven commands form the basis of every believer's relationship with God after their moment of epiphany and provide evidence of Living Water in the Spirit-filled life.

It is generally accepted that a human can live without air for three minutes and probably have no internal damages. Scientists also say we can live three hours in extreme cold. We can survive three weeks without food, but only about three days without water.

In a similar sense, the spirit filled life won't last long without the living water, probably not a second.

LIVING WATER CANNOT BE PACKAGED: There are no shortcuts to living water. There are no quick bottles of living water that can be purchased in store and sipped quickly. The living water is the presence of God. There is no Ethos Water, Evian, Aquafina, Mountain Springs, Magic Mountain, Deep River Rock, Deer Park Spring Water, Crystal Clear, Eden Spring, or Nestle Pure Life that we can buy gulp them down and have instant salvation. None of these brand names are like the water Jesus was talking about in his conversation with a woman at a well. The living water comes only from Jesus.

The water represents our emptiness, and the living water shows us Jesus filling our emptiness.

The water represents our lack of spirit, and the living water shows us Jesus inspiring us to move on!

Finally, brothers and sisters, while there is nothing special about the water we buy, there is power in the blood.

Our need for water underscores our humanity, but the blood of Christ touches our humanity with the power of his divinity.

It was through the shedding of blood that sins are forgiven, justification secured and lost sinners are restored and reconciled to God.

It is through the blood of Christ that we are saved and brought before God spotless and worthy of the Kingdom.

The water gives us the witness, but it is the blood of Christ that does the saving.

That's what John meant in 1 John 5:6, when he said, "not by water only, but water and blood."

It means that you must have the living water or the Spirit of God in your life and the blood of Christ as well.

It seems that only those who have the living water can get to the blood.

The living water is pure water. Science says pure water has to have two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, called H20. In spiritual terms living water has two parts healthy spiritual living and healthy praise and giving and one part obedience.

Those who have living water are living right, praying right, praising right, giving right, and are obedient to the commands of God.

Anything short of that is contaminated water:

Whiskey has water in it, but its called fire water, it takes you away from God rather than brings you closer to him. Whiskey is not living water.

Fruit drink has water in it mixed with juices of some fruits, but although it tastes good, it is not the fruit of the spirit that comes from living water.

Five Hour Energy drink, has water in it that builds you up for five hours, and then lets you down with a crash, but the living water builds you up and never lets you down or leaves you alone. I heard the songwriter say, "He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."

There are some people who have been dipped in the water, but they still don't have the living water.

They have been dipped in the water, but Motel 6, still leaves a light on for them.

They have been dipped in the water, but the riverboats, casino and bingo houses know them by name!

They have been dipped in the water, but the only rock they know is sold by the gram and sold to all ages.

There is a new life that should accompany every person who has been dipped In the water. The new life comes only by the power of the blood.

From all over the world the cry goes out, "Is there a fountain?"

In the middle of the town square in Hot Springs, Arkansas there is a fountain. It is visited by thousands each day who hold jugs, water bottles and containers under a faucet to take home some of the fabled healing mineral waters of the Hot Springs underneath the town. Its waters are always 143 degrees, It always flows and the town

gives it away free to anyone who wants to take a few bottles home.

In St. Augustine, Florida there is a fountain. It is the famed fountain of youth sought after by the Spanish Explorer, Ponce De Leon. Daily, thousands take a sip from the fountain and then visit the gift shop to take home a bottle of the fabled youth giving water. They laugh when they buy it, but they look in the mirror when they go home to see if it really works.

On a hill called Calvary, there is a fountain. It is a fountain drawn from the blood of Jesus and offers new life that can only be given by the power of the blood.

There is a fountain for those who know the Lord and have shown it through accepting
his blood.

There is a fountain for those who accept the promise of God; it is the power of the blood that allows you to claim that promise!

There is a fountain that inspires hope; the power of the blood allows you to sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vain.
Sinners plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilted stain!"

After you have been washed in the blood, you have a new song to sing, "God gave me a song that the angels cannot sing. I've been washed in the blood, of the crucified lamb, I've been redeemed!"

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you've been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and turned it into love!
I know it was the blood that took my despair and turned it into hope!
I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and turned it into honor!
I know it was the blood that took my enemies and turned them into friends!
I know it was the blood that took my worries and turned them into confidence!
One day when I was lost, he died!
He died up on a cross! I know it was the blood that save me!
He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!
He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!
But early Sunday morning arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 9677-Inspiration

What evil has he done?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 29, 2015

SCRIPTURE: And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. Matthew 27:23

Introduction

Is there any person who is completely guiltless? From the pastor of the church to the President of the United States, can any person honestly say that He/she has not been a participant by action or inaction in an evil deed?

There are three monkeys that are often shown to depict innocence. The monkeys cover three different parts of their bodies and are labeled: "See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil." It's similar to the words of Job 27:4 "My lips shall speak no evil, my tongue shall speak no lies." (TLB)

In an ideal world, if everyone followed that rule the presence of evil would be reduced but would still exist. Why? Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

We are born with evil, selfish inclinations and we spend a lifetime trying to get hold of those inclinations; replacing them with the love of God. It is often described as the devil in us. Dr. Finney says "Show me a man that is always suspicious of the motives of others, and forever putting the worst construction on the words and actions of his fellow men, and I will show you one who has the devil in him, not the Holy Ghost. He has that in his own mind which makes him think evil of others. If an individual is honest and simple-hearted himself, he will be the last to think evil of others."

If we are quick to suspect people of stealing, it is generally because, given the same situation, we would steal.

If we quickly suspect others of cheating on their spouses, it is because given the same circumstances we would have cheated ourselves.

The idea of contriving evil in our hearts is what the man who told Jesus about his righteousness because he did not commit adultery. Jesus answered in Mathew 5:28 "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

If anyone takes a second look at any one of us, they will find a fault. Even the best patriarchs of the Bible had weaknesses. You name the great man or woman, and you'll find a person with a weakness. David was a man after God's own heart, but he had a

weakness for Bathsheba. Solomon was wise, but he had a weakness for pretty women. Absalom could have ascended to the throne of Israel, but he had a weakness for power. Judas was the treasurer of Jesus' inner circle, but he had a weakness for money. We all have weaknesses. It's our weaknesses that our critics see. The say, "he's a good man ..but" or "she's a good woman, but."

Unfortunately, it is the evil that we do that is most remembered. It is our mistakes, errors, foolishness that often live much longer than the good that we do in our lives. William Shakespeare, in his play, Julius Caesar, penned these immortal words, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones."

If someone were to ask the question of us, "What evil has he done?" There will be many from both our past and present who will step up to say, "Chile, let me tell you."

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he was the picture of perfection. He lived his entire life without committing an evil act, speaking an evil word, seeing the worst in people, or thinking an evil thought in his mind. The people cried out Hosanna! They praised him as the righteous king. Yet, despite his innocence, he would be charged with doing that which he spent his entire life avoiding.

As Christians, we are grateful that Jesus, who was sinless himself, paid the penalty for our sins. He stepped forward to accept the punishment for our sinful thoughts and actions. He did no evil himself, but died on Calvary so that we could have a chance at everlasting life.

Exposition

This text focuses on a question posed by Pilate to the crowd demanding the crucifixion of Jesus.

A few days earlier, Palm Sunday, Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem as a conquering hero. The crowd waved palm branches and shouted Hosanna! Now they stood outside of the imperial judgment seat and demanded his crucifixion.

The account of this incident is fully understood by the three accounts woven into the synoptic Gospels. Jesus was tried three times, but despite the fact that false witnesses testified against him, his last court of appeal, before Pontius Pilate found no fault in him.

Between the three gospel accounts, we learn that Jesus was interrogated by Pilate, who found that he had done nothing worthy of death. Matthew tells us that Pilate to release Jesus instead of Barabbas, a convicted thief, but the crowd asked for Barabbas to be released.

Mark tells us in 15:12 that Pilate asked "What shall I do with Jesus? All three of the Synoptics says the crowd answered, "Crucify him." Matthew 27:22 added, "they all say."

Matthew 27:23 finds Pilate asking the question, "What evil hath he done?" However, Luke 23:22 says he asked the same question three times.

Despite giving no report of evil works he had done, the crowd demanded his crucifixion.

Jesus was ordered to be whipped and crucified, even though no one could point to a single evil thing he had done.

Jesus is rejected today

JESUS IS REJECTED IN THE NATION, WHAT HAS HE DONE? When the first pilgrims came to America, it was Palm Sunday in the New World. Most of those who came to these shores came so that they could freely lift up the name of Jesus. Today that name is increasingly rejected. There are repercussions for mentioning the name of Jesus in public places. Those who pray in his name or speak his name in a godly sense are viewed as politically incorrect. His name is now being replaced by Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas and many areas no longer have an Easter Break for schools, it has become a Spring Break and is often placed after Easter rather than leading up to it. Why? What evil has Jesus done? Are his followers urged to destroy their enemies, blow up planes or become terrorists? Does his doctrine urge believers to do anything other than love their neighbors and do good? What evil has he done?

JESUS IS REJECTED BY MANY INDIVIDUALS, WHAT HAS HE DONE? Just as the nation has often rejected Jesus, there are many individuals who have the Palm Sunday syndrome: they acknowledge God in triumphant, but reject him otherwise. These are the ones in our community that will praise God if they survive a storm or accident or receive a sudden and unexpected gift but reject the idea of following Christ as Savior. Some even ridicule the church, its members and belittle the faith. They dismiss the Bible as just another book and trample upon the idea of giving offerings to God in obedience to his command. Why do they reject Christ? What evil has he done to them? There is no answer to that question because there is no evil that God has done. God is incapable of doing anything evil. By his very nature, God is good all of the time and all of the time, God is good.

JESUS IS REJECTED DESPITE THE GOOD HE HAS DONE: Jesus stood before the crowd having been mocked, whipped, ridiculed and humiliated. This is the same man who spent his entire public life helping the poor, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and giving hope to the masses. He stood with his hands bound, head bowed and listened as the people he came to save railed against him and called for his death. Despite all of the good that he did; he was rejected. We have seen that so much in the world around us. Despite all of the good the Lord has done for so many, he is constantly rejected by those who refuse to follow him and obey him. Either they stand in the crowd and shout "Crucify him" or they stand quietly and refuse to associate themselves with him saying, "If that's what they want to do, that's their business." Despite all that he has done, there are still millions that daily reject him.

He has done great things

Finally, brothers and sisters, we cannot answer the question, "What evil hath he

done?" That's because we can't think of any evil he hath done. However, we can testify to the great things he has done in our lives

Psalm 126:3 says, The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Anyone who has had experience with the Lord can testify that he has done great things in their lives.

The man who has been hungry but is now filled can testify that he has done great things for me!

The woman was thirsty, but found the living waters can testify that he has done great things for me!

The man who was destitute, jobless and homeless, but is now standing on solid ground can now testify; he has done great things for me!

The psalmist said he hath done great things "whereof we are glad."

Every child of God ought to show a little gladness sometimes.

We can show our gladness through the smiles on our faces!

We can show our gladness when we clap our hands!

We can show our gladness by paying our vows to God!

Showing gladness should not be difficult because we all have something to be glad about!

We're glad because he's done so many great things in our lives.

We're glad because he took our:

—heartaches and turned them into hallelujahs

—sorrows and turned them into joy

—deficiencies and turned them into sufficiencies

—frustrations turned them into faith

—Perplexities and turned them into peace

—miseries and turned them into miracles

Like David, we have a story to tell. He declared, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want!"

Like The lame man who had been sitting by the pool for 38 long years and then heard the Master say, "Take up thy bed and walk!" Every saint can say, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, but the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me, now safe am I!"

Like the woman at the well we are shouting, "Come see a man who told me all about myself!"

Come see a man who took my despair and gave me hope!

Come see a man who took my confusion and gave me direction!

Come see a man who failure and gave me a chance to start again!

He has done great things for me, but the greatest thing he did was take my sins and give me another chance at eternal life!

He suffered out on Calvary!

He died on an old rugged cross!

But, early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!
What great thing has he done?
I just can't tell it all!
When I'm hungry, he feeds me; I just can't tell it all!
When I'm lonely, he is my comfort; I just can't tell it all!
When I fall down, he picks me up and turns me around and plants my feet on solid ground!
I just can't tell it all!

No. 9678-Easter

We are Easter People and Allelujah is our song!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 5, 2015

SCRIPTURE: The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre; For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. John 20:1-4;9

Introduction

If you had to wear a color that described your mood on Easter Sunday what color would it be? It is said that the colors of Easter represent things associated with the death and resurrection of Christ. Purple is the color of royalty, but it also the color of suffering. At funerals, there are purple draperies in the church and purple flowers in the edifice.

There are many purple people at Easter time. They remember the death of a loved one, and they can't get beyond that thought. Their lives came to an abrupt halt at the graveside, and they have been stuck there ever since.

Red is an Easter color, too. Red is associated with the shedding of blood, sacrifice and agony. There are many red people at Easter time because they remember too well the humiliations of their past, as well as their own sufferings and trials. For many, it has made them hard boiled like an egg.

The color stays on Easter eggs after they have been boiled because they have been bathed in vinegar. There are so many people whose lives have experienced so much vinegar that they have become sour, bitter and heartless.

There are other colors of Easter. There are blues that represent peace, gold that represents celebration and white that represents purity.

Those who are among the saved remember the black colored days of their lives when they were filled with sin, depression, guilt and self-hatred. They remember the black days when they drank heavily, lived in the clubs, and squandered their time and money on wild living. Yes, they remember the black days!

At Easter, those who have been saved from the blackness and brought to the light, understand that white colors represent their forgiveness of sin or that blues bring them peace and yellows remind them of the hope of new life and fresh starts.

Easter people like to wear bright colors at Easter time because it reminds them that no matter how dark the night, "Joy comes in the morning!"

St. Augustine used a phrase that has resonated across the centuries and even repeated by Pope John Paul II. He said, "Do not abandon yourselves in despair; we are the Easter People and Alleluia is our song."

That was an important statement from both of these men who arose from lives of mediocrity to champion the cause of Christ and triumph over despair themselves.

Believers should be the people that Easter represents; people who are full of hope and sing new songs about tomorrow, hope and success!

We are Easter People, with or without the colors, eggs, bunny rabbits and other commercial trappings, because we know it is the love of God demonstrated on Calvary that gives us another chance to grab life's brass ring and try with all of our might to reach a level we have never attained before. Why do we believe we can be better, reach higher and overcome obstacles? Because we are Easter people, and that's what Easter people do!

As Christians, we bear witness to the resurrection of Christ in our lives. In spirit, we were there at his crucifixion. Likewise, we were there on Easter Sunday morning! Every day we approach the world with new hope because we are Easter people!

Exposition

This text focuses on several people who approached Christ different ways on that first resurrection. They were the first Easter People.

John says Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early Sunday morning. Matthew adds "the other Mary" to the list and the women told the disciples that they found the tomb empty. The disciples ran to the tomb, and when they arrived at the tomb, they too found it empty.

Jesus had been in the grave for three days and three nights and in the dawn of the first day of the week, several women came to the grave site to complete his burial dressings. When they arrived at the tomb, they found it empty and ran to tell the disciples that his body had been removed. Hearing what the women said, two of his disciples, Peter, and John, ran to the tomb. Upon their arrival, they found an empty tomb and folded clothes.

Before the day ended the disciples found themselves locked in a room, full of despair and bewilderment, despite the news they heard.

Jesus appeared to them and changed their lives forever.

From that moment forward they stopped painting themselves in the dreary colors of defeat, doubt, and fear. They became Easter People who were bold, strong and more than conquerors through him who saved them with his blood.

The People that day

Just as there were different types of people that day, there are different types of people today.

THERE ARE MANY WHO HAVE GIVEN UP: Between the crucifixion and Easter Sunday morning there were many types of people, most notably were those who had given up. The disciples were strong in the faith, but they were the first ones to give up.

They were close by when he was tried by the Sanhedrin Council and found guilty.

They were close by when Herod mocked and ridiculed him.

They were in the crowd when Pilate handed him over to the soldiers for crucifixion.

They watched as he carried a cross toward Golgotha.

They watched as he was nailed to the cross and lifted up high.

They were present when he gave up the ghost and died.

They saw him buried in a freshly hewn tomb.

They saw the stone rolled in front of the tomb and guards placed in front of the tomb.

After they saw so much, they accepted the inevitable. In a similar way, there are many today who should color themselves dark brown at Easter. They have seen so many failed dreams and frustrated attempts at success that they have given up. These are the ones who think happiness will always evade them and peace cannot be their lot. They have seen opportunities for joy trampled under their feet, and they have accepted that achievement will always escape them. However, the message of Easter is the same that the disciples received when Christ showed up in their midst; we should fear not, but go boldly into the world as people who have seen the Savior themselves.

THERE ARE MANY WHOSE LIVES ARE TESTIMONIES: When the women came to the cross, they instantly ran to tell the disciples the good news. They could not keep it to themselves; they had to let it be known! Shouldn't that be the case for everyone who has experienced the joy of the bright oranges of grace and the bright yellows of undeniable joy? On Easter morning, the women could not contain themselves; they had to tell the others. It's the same testimony that those who have met the Lord should have today. We must be busy doing the work of him that sent us. We are Easter People; we help the poor and needy! We are Easter People; we reach out to the less fortunate! We are Easter People; we reach out to help! We are Easter people, we serve! This is exactly what the disciples did. They went into all the world healing the sick and raising the dead! There were unstoppable! They were more than conquerors. They were Easter people!

Today, the faithful should be just as bold. We should run with the passion of the women on Easter morning! Run toward the dream that has been placed on the back burner! Run toward the success that has evaded! Never accept defeat! Why? Because you have a testimony to give. Our God is an awesome God! He reigns from heaven above! We shall not give up because we are Easter People. Color us victorious!

THEY NEVER GIVE UP HOPE: What was very unique about the women on Easter Sunday is that when all others refused to come to the tomb, they came. It's the spirit of hopefulness that identifies Easter People. They did not know what to expect; they

came anyway. They did not know if the body had been stolen; they came anyway. They did not know if they would be arrested, they came anyway. Easter People are those who are not dissuaded by what could happen, but do what they know must be done in faith that God will intercede, always hoping for the best.

A young seminary student read the ancient quote from St. Augustine, "Do not abandon yourselves to despair; we are Easter People and Alleluia is our song." She had the quote inscribed on a necklace that she wore around her neck daily. A year later she was diagnosed with cancer and given a short time to live. As she lost strength, those around her were amazed that she kept smiling and greeting them with cheer. In her last moments, she lost her battle with cancer; she whispered something so softly that no one could hear. As her life slipped away, her hand clutched the necklace, and she breathed one last word, "Hallelujah!" Those who mourned her read the words on the necklace with tears in their eyes. Like the words on her necklace, she died on Easter Sunday morning with Hallelujah on her lips!

Even in sickness, death and misfortune, Easter People never give up! We have learned to smile when the world is against us! We have learned to get up when we have been knocked down! We have learned to fight until the last second of the game! And even in defeat to look forward to the next round! Why? Because Romans 8:38 says, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" We are Easter People!

Hallelujah is our song

Finally, brothers and sisters, we note that not only are we Easter People, but Hallelujah is our song!

While there are many people who are like the disciples on Easter Sunday, locked away somewhere singing, "The Thrill is gone!" there are millions around the world, who have a new song to sing.

We are the 21st-century witnesses to the resurrection. We are not passive spectators, bystanders, and mere onlookers. We are living the promise of God each and every day!

We are Easter People who believe in the power of Almighty God

Because we are Easter people our:

—SKIES seems to be bluer
—SUN seems to shine brighter
—BIRDS seem to sing sweeter
—FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller
—AIR seems more refreshing
—STARS seem to have more luster
—BURDENS seem lighter
—FAITH seems stronger

—HEAVEN seems closer

Because we are Easter People Hallelujah is our song!

We shout Hallelujah because no matter how many times we fall down, God helps us to rise again!

We shout Hallelujah because no matter how many times we go the wrong way, he keeps turning us around!

Hallelujah is our song because Easter is more than a season for bright colored eggs, new clothes and goody-filled baskets.

Our song is a new song because the season is more than, get-to-gethers sing-a-longs and family dinners.

Hallelujah is our song because we are singing about the mercies of the Lord.

Hallelujah is our song because we are celebrating the resurrection of our Lord!

Hallelujah is our song because we are singing about him leaving the celestial for the terrestrial.

Hallelujah is our song because we are singing about his setting aside his glorified body and putting on a body of flesh.

Hallelujah is our song because we are praising a savior who came down here and visited us for a while.

Hallelujah is our song because we are singing about a savior who did something for us that we could not do for ourselves, he saved our souls.

Hallelujah is our song because he came down here to quench our thirst and satisfy our hunger.

Our song is a new song because we are singing about Jesus.

We sing about him because although he was the creator, he became the created.

We sing about him because although he was the master, he became the servant.

We sing about him because although he was the King of Kings he became a man of many sorrows and lived a sacrificial life.

We sing about him because although he was the good shepherd, he became the Lamb of God.

Hallelujah is our song because it is a song of thanks. We should thank him for the mountain tops and for the valleys as well.

When we sing our song, we ought to thank him for the sunshine and thank him for the rain! We are Easter People, but we don't wait until Easter Sunday to tell the story of how he picked us up and turned us around!

We are Easter People; we ought to tell the world how he planted our feet on solid ground!

We are Easter people; we ought to tell the world how he gave us a new walk and a new talk!

We are Easter people; we ought to tell the world how he gave us a new song to sing!

"I've been washed in the blood of the crucified Lamb…"

Who died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose up from the grave!

That's why we are Easter People!

No. 9679-Inspiration

Caught in another man's bed

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 12, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Esther 7:8-9; "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22.;Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it," Ephesians 5:25

Introduction

There are millions of husbands and wives who are unfaithful to each other each year, do you know a few? Nearly every adult knows someone who has or has had what the late Hank Williams called a "Cheating Heart." There are thousands who plunge into out-of-wedlock relationships just days or weeks after they are married. While these are not the majority, there enough out-of-wedlock experiences among married couples to cause concern.

Cheating knows no race, creed or color. Men cheat, and so do women. Regular people cheat, and even Presidents of the United States have had affairs while living in the White House. Thomas Jefferson was president for eight years but had five children by his slave, Sally Henning. Warren Harding had two affairs and a child while President when he was found dead, it was rumored but never proven that his wife poisoned him. Franklin Roosevelt was in a wheelchair but carried on a 30-year love affair with his wife's secretary. Dwight Eisenhower fell in love with his driver. JFK was a literal dog. He had affairs with Models, gangsters wives, White House staffers and even Marilyn Monroe, all while being protected by the Secret Service. Bill Clinton had an affair with an intern in the White House.

There was cheating in the Bible, too. The prophet Hosea was married to a prostitute who cheated on him publicly. King David stole a man's wife, got her pregnant and then killed her husband. Samson had an affair with a beautiful gold digger named Delilah, who cut his hair and took him for everything he had including his strength, his eyes, and his life.

The tendency to cheat does not recognize any boundaries. The1990 the Kinsey report revealed that nearly half of American couples had experienced some level of unfaithfulness from serious flirting to out-of-wedlock experiences. In 1997, Newsweek magazine reported that as many as 30 percent of all married Protestant ministers had

some type of out-of-wedlock experience, often with members of their churches. Other studies have shown that there are large numbers of people who attend worship services to scout for husbands to steal away from wives and wives to take away from their husbands.

Just because a person is a believer, does not mean he/she has immediate immunity to out-of-wedlock temptations. At this very moment, there are thousands of believers who have out-of-wedlock plans for tonight! Many are living together as if they are married while praising the Lord from soiled sheets!

Marriage is a holy arrangement. In a marriage, the woman represents the church or all of the believers in the world. The husband represents Christ, who is to love his wife like Christ loves the church. When spouses love, they show the love and compassion of God. However, when one cheats, it becomes a type of what happens when a believer cheats on God by having affairs with the world, The relationship has been soiled and should be cleaned up if at all possible; if not it should be abandoned.

As Christians, we praise God for giving us his son to keep his spirit alive in our homes. Without his spirit, the devil would make an entry into our homes and soiled the spiritual purity of our families. Every day we pray that he will build a fence around us to protect us from the evil one.

Exposition

The text focuses on Haman, who was caught on the bed with the king's wife and was hanged.

Haman had risen to great authority in the court of the king. Using broad authorities given to him, he sat out to persecute all of the Jews in the kingdom. Esther was the king's new wife. She was a Jewish girl who was reported to be the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. She was disturbed that Haman was planning to kill thousands of Jewish people beginning with their leader, Mordecai.

In a private moment, on her bed with the king, she told him of Haman's plans and begged him to give relief to her people. When the King heard about Haman's plan and how he had built gallows to publicly hang Mordecai he was enraged. He jumped up from his bed and went out on the balcony to cool his rage.

While he was gone, Haman attempted to beg the queen to the queen to spare his life. Some scholars say he reached for her feet to plead his case, but that is not written, but what is written is that he stumbled onto the bed with the queen, just as the angry king walked back into the room. What he saw was Haman, who planned to murder the Jews in his name, on the bed with his Jewish wife.

It was obvious that nothing had happened because there were guards in the room and the king was on the adjacent balcony, but it was enough for the king to order him hanged on the very gallows he built for Mordecai.

The outcome may have been different had Naman not be caught in the bed with another man's wife.

How can we stumble?

Naman stumbled onto Esther's bed and hung himself. There are ways that believers can stumble and ruin otherwise perfect marriages.

WE MUST AVOID SINNING AGAINST GOD: Believers should remember that any out-of-wedlock physical experience (sex) is a sin: 1) Against God 2) Against your spouse if you're married; and 3) Against your partner if you are not married. Those who cheat in the marriage, attack the very institution that God established to represent his moral order. We cannot commit adultery without sinning against God. Moreover, out-of-wedlock experiences wreck homes and turn the lives of children upset down, many of whom are scarred for life. God's law says it clearly in Exodus 20:14 "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Those who engage in out-wedlock experiences sin against the very God they want to bless them and shower them with favor. A man who sleeps with a woman who has slept with five men in her life and each of them has had out-of-wedlock experiences with ten women, comes home and exposes his wife to the health risks of 250 people in one night. It's a grave sin against his family.

WATCH FOR THE RED FLAGS: How do relationships fall apart? How can another person find a way into the life of your spouse? What are the red flags? The Bible says we should be on guard constantly because the devil is looking for a way to destroy us. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" We know that he has found a way into a marriage when one or more of the following red flags begin to happen:

1) Whenever intimate conversations begin with the opposite sex doors are opened that will lead to trouble. Don't cross the line. Talk about work, professional goals, but nothing intimate.

2) Whenever one partner perceives that his/her needs are superior to the other's needs, a problem begins. When my dream is important, and yours is not or when both don't feel that each sits on an equal pedestal, a problem will occur.

3) When one spouse tries to remake the other by preaching to them, lecturing or ridiculing their beliefs, intelligence or passions, doors of communication close and one spouse refuses to communicate with the other.

4) When outbursts of rage and anger happen, they lead to arguments, fights and abuse. They instantly close doors and signal that the time of the end is near.

5) Lack of affection often sends one spouse looking for it outside of wedlock

6) When partners live separate lives, relationships become shaky because partners spend very little quality recreational and fun time together creating shared experiences. They grow in opposite directions and find comfort in the presence of others sharing the same "life." Time is needed to share common experiences, adventures, and tasks. If this does not happen, couples will grow apart.

7) Emotional support is key to building a marriage. There are times when a partner experiences fear, loneliness, anger or frustration. An understanding partner who comforts and supports builds a bond that is unbreakable.

8) When there is constant conflict at home, one partner might seek peace somewhere

else. If the home atmosphere is constantly filled with blame, accusations, confrontations, suspicion and fighting, the home becomes a place to stay away from, and marriage becomes a prison.

9) When there is no trust, there is trouble. Trust is essential to building a strong marriage. Each partner should work to earn the trust of their partners. There should be no secret accounts, cell phones or activities. Distrust leads to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction sends one to another man or woman's bed.

10) Couples that discuss their finances, plan, and budget wisely usually have few problems. Disputes over spending, saving and management usually affect the relationships.

COMMON LAW MARRIAGES WITHOUT RINGS INSULT GOD: There are millions of couples in the nation who are married in the common law, but they have no rings. A marriage without a ring is a relationship where a man and a woman are enjoying the benefits of marriage but plan to leave if anything becomes a problem. Out-of-Wedlock, live-in arrangements defy God's purposes and reduce it to mere sex and convenience. Two people in ringless relationships are not one, they are two, enjoying the sex and the convenience without any lasting commitment otherwise. It's important that believers know that those who live together as husband and wife cross the line. Some have tried living in the same apartment, without being intimate; that didn't last long.

The word of God says anyone who is a whoremonger or unclean person cannot expect to be part of the kingdom of God. Shacking is an impure arrangement that causes them to lose their spiritual inheritance. Ephesians 5:5 "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." 1 Corinthians 6:18-19, " Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

Those who choose not to live together but to spend a night together without rings also insult and anger God. Here's the warning, it's in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

What to do

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should take courage in the knowledge that even if we have stumbled and ended up in the wrong bed, we can be forgiven.

Christians are not exempt from sexual sin. Believers who have fallen into fornication, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, or any other sexual deviation from the biblical norm can be restored to the graces of God.

Step one is to stop the sinful act.

Step two is to accept blame for your part in the sinful act, confess your sins to the Lord and break off your relationships that lead you or tempt you to further sin.

This may be hard to swallow, but it is necessary.

When David was caught in another man's bed, God brought down judgment upon the land and upon him personally. It steadily increased until one day David dropped to his knees and said, in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

When the right spirit is renewed within us, we tap into the joy of the Lord!

It's the joy of the Lord that makes the world look better and life more fulfilling!

When the joy of the Lord returns, we are excited once again!

I don't know about you, but the best part of our faith is that when we see Jesus face to face, he will forgive our sins and embrace us as sons and daughters.

I want to see Him and tell him I'm sorry.

I must tell Jesus!

Tell Jesus; Jesus can help me, Jesus alone!

Jesus, the Bridegroom of the church!

Jesus, the lover of my soul!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose from the dead!

Tell Jesus; Jesus can help you, Jesus alone!

No.9680-Inspiration

A Desperate Housewife

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 19, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost..' Luke 15:8-9

Introduction

Have you ever felt there was something missing in your life? How did you find it? Often people around us behave strangely because they are searching for something that is missing. An otherwise loyal husband starts to cheat on his wife with a younger woman, trying to reclaim a youth that has past. A wife who feels neglected searches for assurance of her womanhood in the arms of another. A man who feels caged in a career that is taking him no place abandons it midstream. A woman who changes her life completely, seeking something with substance and meaning. All of these are instances of people who, in desperation, reach out to grab for something they think will make them complete and fulfilled. Their search raises eyebrows but is certainly not unfamiliar to us.

There is a television series entitled, "Desperate Housewives" in which most of the characters live on a street called "Wisteria Lane." The residents on the street all appear to be persons who are frustrated with life and often find meaning through belittling each other, destroying each other's homes, or trying to outdo one another. They try to reach satisfaction even if it means taking a neighbor's husband, emotional stability or livelihood.

It is a widely popular show because it reveals a dark side of otherwise rather pristine lives. It unveils a sense of desperation in each family that is hidden by their outward smiles and shows of happiness. Even the name of the street on which they live, "Wisteria Lane," is revealing. Wisteria.is the name of a twisting vine with beautiful blossoms that climb high, yet unless it is kept under control it can become something that is both beautiful and destructive. Unless regularly pruned, this vine has the power to destroy brick walls, choke the life out of oak trees and ruin gardens.
Unless kept in check, wisteria will destroy anything that it clings to and all the while it is destroying and killing it will be blossoming as beautifully as ever. No uninformed passerby would even suspect that something so delightful could actually be so deadly.

On Wisteria Lane lives desperate housewives, husbands, children, and families. These are families that appear to have it all together on the outside but are desperately sucking the life out of themselves and others on the inside.

Henry David Thoreau once said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." It describes a hunger that many people have that is below the radar and not readily visible to others. It's a hunger that drives them to reach for something that seems to evade them, but they need to survive.

While Wisteria Lane on television focuses on desperate housewives, in our own experience we have heard the desperate cries of those who are distressed and felt the pangs of desperation pulling at our spirit as we faced sickness, death, and failure.

In passion, the Bible showed us Potiphar's wife chasing Joseph around a room; trying to force love. We saw Ruth sleeping at the feet of Boaz desperately trying to get a husband. We saw Hosea desperately trying to find his wayward wife. But in an even greater sense, we saw David, desperately trying to receive forgiveness from God, even pleading, "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me." We even saw the Good Shepherd leaving the 99 desperately looking for one lost sheep.

When we are desperate, it shows in our eyes, the trembling of our voices, the panic-stricken look on our faces and the uneasiness in our soul.

We could all live on Wisteria Lane because life often chokes us to the point of desperation. We don't often show it in public, but there are many times when we feel like Jesus hanging on the cross and cry out "Why hast thou forsaken me?" –In desperation, sometimes we show anger, frustration and sadness.

Fortunately, our God is a God of the desperate, the lonely, the angry and those with failed spirit. In his desperation, David said, "I will lift mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heavens and earth."

As Christians, we are happy that our God is present in our moments of despair and desperation. We are happy to know that he is our strength and a very present help in a time of trouble. We desperately seek more of his grace as we sing, "More, more about Jesus, More, more about Jesus. More of his saving fullness see. More of his love who died for me."

Exposition

The text focuses on a parable of Jesus as he explains the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

To explain the nature of his mission and the nature of man's relationship with God also, Jesus told three parables. One spoke of a shepherd who had 100 sheep and realized that he had lost one and went out to find it. Another spoke of a man who had two sons and one went into the far country and wasted his life in riotous living. Another, which is the focus of this text, involved a woman who had ten coins and lost one in her house. The woman desperately searched and swept her house until she found the lost coin and celebrated thereafter. The coin itself was called a "drachma" and was equal to about a day's wages for their times. It would be same today as if someone had $500

in $50.00 bills and had lost one somewhere in the house. The woman could not rest until she had searched everywhere in the house and brought light to every dark place as she searched.

We don't the exact circumstances, but we know that she was a housewife because she was styled as a widow. We also know that when she lost the coin, she became desperate to have it restored.

Her desperate search resulted in the coin being found, and her joy restored, to which she gave praise to the Lord.

Desperate Situations

There are many situations in life that push us to the point of desperation, yet believers find Jesus is each one.

WHEN STORMS RAGE: When the storms of life rage, we are pushed to desperation. The disciples were on a fishing boat once when a sudden storm arose that threatened to sink the ship. They feared for their lives, but suddenly remembered that Jesus was on board. Then someone asked, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus arose in the midst of the storm and commanded, "Peace be Still." –And the storm ceased. When storms rage in our lives we, like the disciples, often forget that Jesus is on board. He has the power to speak to the storm. Worry is a sign of desperation; it is not the same as a concern. Concern implies that a situation is not neglected and is being addressed. Worry implies that focus has shifted from concern to a thousand possible negative outcomes. We should not allow desperation to push us to forget that we are children of the King. Speak to your storm, in the name of Jesus, and watch the hand of God push back the clouds and show you a brighter path. Greg O'Quinn's song, "I told the storm" showed a believer's response to desperate situations when he wrote:

"Winds stop blowing!
Floods stop flowing!
Lightning stop flashing!
Breakers stop dashing!
Darkness go away!
Clouds move away!
That's what I told the storm!

Death can't shake me!
Job can't make me!
Bills can't break me!
Disease can't take me!
You can't drown me!
My God surrounds me!
That's what I told the storm!"

WHEN DEALING WITH ISSUES: The daily flow of issues can push us to desperation. Whether the issue is financial or medical, we can lose control if we don't find Jesus. When Jesus passed through a city, a certain woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years heard he was there. She had been dealing with the issue in her life for 12 years, but in a desperate move, she pushed through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment. She brought her issue to Jesus. For Hannah, the issue was infertility, and she brought it before God and promised if she had a child she would give him back to God for service. For the man sitting by the pool for 38 years, his issue was that no one would help him get into the healing waters; Jesus personally handled his issue and told him to rise up and walk. Life's issues don't wait patiently to come at a convenient season; they come like a flood. When they come, they often drive us to desperation. In desperation, the weak resort to ungodliness. Stealing, vengeance, cheating, and gambling are acts of desperation of the faithless. The faithful take a different direction and act in faith. These are the ones who plant seeds even when there is no rain and say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go?" – When faced with desperation issues, give them to Jesus, he will give you the answer you need.

IN DESPERATION, FIND JESUS: The woman with the lost coin realized that she had lost something of value. It was so important to her that she searched until she found it. She did not put it off or content herself to live without it; she diligently sought to find it. In a similar sense, there are many who are missing something in their lives and are trying to find it; often in the wrong places. Some like Potiphar's wife, have lost the intimacy in their lives and desperately chase every opportunity to find it. That's why she chased Joseph around the room. Some have lost their professional edge that made them great. Still others have lost the joy of living and are desperately trying to find it again. That's what Johnny Lee had in mind when he wrote these lyrics:

"I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places
Lookin' for love in too many faces
Searchin' their eyes, lookin' for traces
Of what I'm dreamin' of."

There are many who have misplaced their spiritual connection. In the absence of spiritual truth, they are lost and desperate for something. That's what David called, "The joy of thy salvation."

In desperation, we need to find the Lord. We lost him, and we need to seek him. Isaiah 55:5 says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Acts 17:27 puts it this way, "..Seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."

There are millions who are searching for the Lord in desperation. They want to feel his presence! They want to be showered with his favor! They want to be anointed with his power! They have tried alternatives, but they know what's missing, and they won't stop until they draw near to him. They sing, "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord to

the cross where thou hast died, draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

Joy replaces desperation

Finally, brothers and sisters, the woman in this text searched until she found what she lost and rejoiced because that which was lost had been found.

There are many who have searched the world over trying to find love, peace, happiness but found it only when the came to Jesus.

The woman at the well was a desperate housewife, who had five husbands, but didn't find peace in her spirit until she met Jesus at the well. She ran through the whole city saying, "Come see a man who told all I've ever done!"

The parents of a lunatic boy who was filled with demons sought help from every source possible in their desperation; they found their answer at the feet of Jesus.

There are many today who can say that in desperation, they searched high and lo0w, but they only found peace when they came to Jesus.

That's why some sing, "I came to Jesus as I was, weary, wounded and sad. I found him a resting place, and he has made me glad!"

When we came to Jesus, we swapped our desperation for the "joy of the Lord."

Those who live in the joy of the Lord, are recipients of his assurance in times of trouble. When tempted to become desperate they remember: "The Lord will make a way somehow."

When you know the joy of the Lord, you also know the goodness of the Lord. It is the goodness of the Lord that transforms our:

—DESPERATION into the confident assurance.

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness

It's the goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!"

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle without desperation, knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy there is no need for desperation because we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how dark the night, there is no need for desperation because joy comes in the morning!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise, and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

We are not desperate housewives, anxious husbands, and weary children!

We are children of the king who can sing, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind..victory today is mine!"

We have the victory because with blood and perspiration, Jesus took the sting out of desperation and picked up an old rugged cross!

He took our desperation and turned it into salvation when he died on Calvary's hill!

He took our desperation and turned it into exaltation when early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

Today we have no desperation or separation, victory today is ours!

No. 9681-Inspiration

Selfies with the Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 26, 2015

SCRIPTURE:"And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here:and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias:not knowing what he said. "Luke 9:33

Introduction

Have you ever taken a selfie? A selfie is a self-photo of oneself usually taken with a digital camera and posted on a social media site such as Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat. The idea is to do one of two things: Capture yourself in a flattering pose that you want the world to see or to show your friends and others and more jovial side of yourself. Sometimes Selfies are taken with others to capture a moment.

Selfies are a relatively new phenomenon because a decade ago they were not possible. The temptation to take a selfie is not limited to young people or just regular citizens, even heads of state take selfies.

Sometimes selfies can get you in real trouble.

In December of 2013, President Barack Obama made news headlines during Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa. While speakers were eulogizing Mandela, the president was taking selfies with Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt and British Prime Minister David Cameron. It made world news because in the middle of the funeral the President of the United States was taking selfies with a beautiful Danish leader and the leader of England. The decision to take the selfies was considered to be in poor taste and was considered "clowning around like muppets". Photographers snapped photos of First Lady Michelle Obama sitting next to them looking "furious and mortified" When the President began talking with the Danish leader, putting his hand on her shoulder, the First Lady became gave the two of them a dirty look and switched seats, keeping the two apart. - End of Selfie.

In February of 2015 President Obama wanted to get young people to know more about healthcare, so he posted selfies of himself sticking out his tongue and making funny faces. Those who clicked on the photos were taken to a website to convince them to sign up for Affordable health care.

Everyone has taken a photo with someone before but selfies center on the individual. It's not a picture of "you" that is wanted; it's a picture of "me" that I want.

You name the event whether it is a funeral or a rock concert someone will take a selfie.

Selfies are taken with movie stars. When a team scores a victory, there's a selfie! When we visit a historic site, there's a selfie. Sometimes we don't want anyone else in the photo - Just us; that's a selfie.

A generation ago there was the "Kodak Moment" - it was a snapshot of others laughing, playing, enjoying themselves or doing something special. It was a phrase associated with Kodak cameras that promoted the idea of preserving special moments to review later. These special moments were called "Kodak Moments" - Rarely was the person capturing the moment actually in the picture themselves, although the advent of self-timers started to change things.

The fascination with putting ourselves in the picture has grown to the point where we even put ourselves in the photos of others; it's called photobombing. Photobombs usually spoil someone else's Kodak moment with an amusing shot of ourselves.

0Can you imagine what the scene would have been in the villages and towns of Israel as Jesus spoke to large crowds? There would have been those insisting on taking a selfie with the Lord with a few baskets of the bread he used to feed thousands. That wine at the wedding would have caused many at the reception to want a selfie with the winemaker.

Can you hear someone shout: "Say, Master? Can you and Peter take a selfie with me?"

As Christians, we are among the millions who take selfies every day. However, when it comes to our faith in God our desire is: "Hide me behind your cross, Dear Lord, so that less of me and more of thee is seen and heard."

Exposition

This text focuses on a special moment on a mountainside in which they were shown the vision of the kingdom to come.

Jesus took Peter, James and John into a high mountain to show them a vision of the Kingdom of God and the things to come so that they could fully understand. As Jesus prayed for the vision, all three men went to sleep. While they were asleep, God rolled back the canopies of heaven and revealed the complete vision. Appearing in the vision were Elijah and Moses, who came to show the disciples the nature of their mission. Jesus' countenance changed. His clothes turned white and started to shine and glow. Moses and Elias appeared in the vision and talked with Jesus. At the end of the vision, the three woke up and saw the tail end of a vision planned for them. Excited, but half sleep, Peter wanted to build three Tabernacles and stay on the mountain. He was babbling aimlessly. Luke 9:33 noted that he was "not knowing what he said."

Peter missed the big picture but wanted to save the moment.

He did not see the vision of Jesus going to Jerusalem, his trial or his crucifixion. He did not see the vision of the glorious church that would come after his resurrection.

He woke up in time, just to see two famous people on the mountaintop and instantly wanted to do something that would save the moment. He wanted to build three markers that would let the world know what happened. It would also let the world know that he

was there.

He missed the big picture; what he wanted was something he could show someone else to prove he had been in the presence of someone great.

Selfie Moments

FAITH EXPERIENCES PROVIDE NO SELFIES: Faith experiences do not lend themselves to selfies. There are have been moments in lives of believers when God has opened doors and dried up Red Seas for us. However, those moments were not about "us" they were about the kingdom. Our faith history has taught that God opens doors for us in connection with the overall vision of the kingdom. If God needs a carpenter to build a wall in the kingdom, doors will open for certain people to learn carpentry. Their blessing was not about them; it was about the kingdom. That's why we can't point too heavily to ourselves in any faith experience. It's always about submitting to the will of God. When the disciples worried about paying their taxes, Jesus told them to go fishing. They caught a fish with a gold coin; enough to pay the taxes. The blessing wasn't about them; it was about providing for the kingdom. Even when believers are blessed today, our blessings come so that they can be used in part to build the kingdom. We are blessed so that we can bless the kingdom's work. Take self out of the picture. It's not about me, but it's about doing what I can to build the kingdom.

SELFIE IS NOT A SELF PORTRAIT: There is a difference between a selfie and a self-portrait. A selfie captures the moment, but it does not paint a picture of who we really are. When the President took a selfie of himself in the mirror sticking his tongue out; that may have shown a jovial side of himself, but it is not who he really is. A portrait captures the moods and feelings of an individual's persona as seen by an artist. A self-portrait captures that same persona as seen by oneself. Jesus asked his disciples how people saw him and received a variety of responses. But when he said he came "that you might have life and have it more abundantly, he painted a self-portrait. As believers, we are not interested in being seen doing the work of God; we are interested in getting the work done. If we feed the hungry, we don't need to be seen doing it, but we do need to get the work done. Our spiritual self-portrait should be of a man or woman like Paul, who had a Damascus Road experience. Like Peter, we had our moments of denial. Like Thomas, we had our moments of doubt, but like the eleven chose to live and die for the kingdom of God. The selfie fades, but the portrait remains as a picture of a man or woman who lives by their faith in God.

PHOTOBOMBS RUIN THE PICTURE: There are many who feel they must stick themselves in the picture to become the center of attention. They photobomb the best moments. The work of God is not about one person; it's about the kingdom of God. That's what Peter, James and John missed on the mountaintop. They did not see how they fit into the big picture of things. They only saw the moment that needed to be preserved so they could show it to others. There are many who want to photobomb the work of the Lord. If the choir sings, they want to be seen singing the solo. If the church ministers, they want to be seen out front. They insist that their name is written

in the program or that their face is included in the photos of the event. Our insistence on capturing the limelight and refocusing the attention to ourselves runs counter to the teachings of Christ. In Matthew 6:2 Jesus said the person who wants to photobomb the offering so he can be seen "has his reward." In Matthew 6:5 he said the person who wants to photobomb the prayer meeting so he can be praised, "has his reward." In Matthew 6:16 he said the person who wants to gain the attention for the church's fast "has his reward." In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." In essence, don't photobomb the work of the church; it's not about you, it's about the Lord. To God is the glory!

God and Me

Finally, brothers and sisters, while we try to remove "self" out of our kingdom service, God sees our unselfish acts and rewards us with precious moments that only we can share.

Kodak promoted the "Kodak moment" as a special moment worthy of preserving, but believers have special moments, too. We call these special moments our "God Moments."

These are the moments that cannot be photographed or posted on Facebook or Instagram. These are the moments when God stepped into our lives and worked a worked that could not be seen when it was happening, but we know he was there when it was over.

David had many God moments. When he faced wild animals that threatened his father's flocks, those were "God moments."

When he faced Goliath with only a slingshot and five smooth stones, that was a "God Moment."

When Saul chased him and treated as a criminal, those were God moments.

When faced with the tough decision about leading the people Moses climbed into the mountains to talk with God, and God spoke to him and showed him the way. That was a God moment!

Abraham, a man of great faith, took God at his word that his family would be blessed and would multiply and went up into God's will. The moment he accepted God's will was a God moment.

Daniel refused to be intimidated by the prospect of hungry lions and went into God's protection; that was a God moment.

The Hebrew Boys, faced with death in a fiery furnace or eternal shame before God, chose to go up into God's protective care; that was a God moment.

In a God moment, we are not trying to focus attention on ourselves or our situation, but only the will of God.

It's not about self, but it's all about God.

That's why the songwriter wrote, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of man discloses. And

he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

While it's not about self, it's good to know that God is concerned about us.

When nobody else:

—Cares, that the Lord is concerned about me

—Forgives me, that the Lord is willing to forget

—Accepts me, that the Lord receives me with arms wide open

—Wants me, that the Lord accepts me as a child of the King

It's not about self; that's when Jesus showed us when he went into the garden to pray! He said father; I have done all that you told me to do. I have established the ministry, fed the hungry, healed the sick and raised the dead. I know the whole plan is for me to go to Calvary, but if there is a way, please let this cup pass, but never-the-less, it's not about me, "not my will, but thy will be done!"

It was about self; it was about showing love for the world!

He died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

He did it all for me and not for himself!

No.9682-Inspiration

Tell John

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 3, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Luke 7:22

Introduction

If we were to ask other people their opinion of you, what would they say? The answers would be interesting. Public opinion is based on perceptions and often is not grounded in fact. People form opinions based on what they see and hear. Because of this an entire industry has evolved in America that specializes in shaping public opinion; it's called public relations and marketing.

A publicist earns a living by shaping the public's opinion of his client. Whether the client is a food product, shoe or a politician, the publicist learns what the public thinks of the client then shapes that opinion by carefully arranged media appearances, commercials, and photo opportunities.

A client can be acceptable if he is associated with successful and acceptable people. Many companies pay outstanding athletes millions of dollars to endorse their products so that the client can benefit from their image. Then there are others such as Mike Tyson and Floyd Mayweather, two championship boxers known for beating women that have no endorsements at all. Their images are terrible outside of the ring.

Those who have the most accurate opinions of us are those who have had some type of dealing with us. This is not a manufactured relationship, but one that is based on personal interactions. A personal testimony is invaluable because it's not based on opinion, but on one's actual experience. It is the most reliable kind of opinion.

In his relationship with his followers, Jesus quickly found that he had a perception problem. Public opinion concerning Jesus was all over the place. He seemed to be different things to different people.

In the opinion of the Zealots, he came to establish a new earthly kingdom. They believed he came to fight even though he constantly reminded them that "He that lives by the sword will die by the sword."

In the opinion of the Romans, who first thought he came to overthrow the Roman government, Jesus' kingdom building sermon were seditious. However, Jesus established early that his kingdom was not of this world.

In the opinion of the hungry Jesus was the a new source of food, even if they were

in crowds of 5,000 or more. They joyfully proclaimed “Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more.” They held this opinion even though they heard Jesus say, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

In the opinion of the sick, Jesus came to set up a medical practice. However, Jesus constantly reminded them that the cause of many of their sicknesses was their sin and he called them to repentance.

In the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees Jesus was a young upstart who wanted to overthrow the law, but Jesus declared, “I come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it.”

His disciples thought he came to be served, but Jesus reminded them that he came not to be ministered unto but to minister, not to be served but to serve.

They saw his actions and heard his words, but many still did not believe. They had only a confused opinion of the Savior.

As Christians, we don’t have a confused opinion of the master. We know who he is and we gladly testify to his Lordship, because of what we have seen with our own eyes and what he has done in our lives. When Jesus asked his disciples their opinion, they said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” We say they same.

Exposition

This text focuses on John The Baptist’s query of the nature of Jesus’ calling.

John had been jailed for preaching the Gospel of Christ. The king had him imprisoned and he was sentenced to death.

While waiting his execution, John sent word to Jesus, through one of his followers, to see if Jesus was the savior the world sought or whether they should wait for another. This was a valid question because the scriptures made reference to the coming of an anointed one who would establish his kingdom and extend the house of David.

John Baptized Jesus and even thought they were cousins, he was not sure of who he was or what his mission was on earth.

When the messenger reached Jesus with John’s question, “Are you the one?” Jesus’ only answer was for John to consider his works. He said, “Tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”

Jesus gave no further explanation. It was if he said, “May the work I’ve done, speak for me.”

The fact that the blind were able to see, the lame walked and the dead were raised should have been sufficient evidence.

Jesus’ response should also be the response of believers to an unbelieving world that does not know the Lord, “Tell them what he has done for you.” Don’t argue or debate. His actions in your life are sufficient.

What is Christ to you?

There are many who have their opinions about Christ and they question our faith. What should be our response? We should take note of the way Jesus responded to John's disiciple. He told him to look at the evidence and he chose to let the facts speak for themselves.

HE HAS SUPPLIED OUR NEEDS: When asked why we serve the Lord, our first response is that he supplies our needs. God has been faithful in providing us with food, clothing, and shelter. Whatever our needs, he has supplied it for us. Often we did not perceive the way he supplied it, but we soon recognized that God was in the plan. He has supplied our needs faithfully just as he supplied the needs of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness. He supplied their food, on time every day; even though they complained about it. He fixed it such that the material that formed their clothing and tents held up for 40 years without the need of repair. He arranged it so that they wore the same shoes and clothes for decades and they never wore out. There was water just when they needed it most. God was faithful to Israel and he has been faithful to us. No matter how we look at it, we have been blessed by the powerful hand of God. So the question is asked, "Are you a waymaker? Are you the one?" The answer might come, "Tell John" I have supplied the needs of the faithful. Tell John the hungry have been fed and needs have been met.

HE HAS OPENED DOORS: Another evidence of the goodness of the Lord is that he has faithfully kept his promise to open doors for us and to make opportunities for the abundant life available to true believers. When others turned their backs on us, our God was right by our side to open up opportunities for us to survive and thrive. As we reflect on his goodness, we see that God has kept his word and open doors that we did not even know existed. Many have recognized an increase in pay, completed new challenges, and have been promoted higher, as God working on the inside, helped us expand our territory. There are many who have experienced stronger family relationships and God has unlocked doors for us, allowing us to walk right in without a care. When the question is asked, "Is God real?" "Can he make a way?" We respond to the curious John's of the world, "Tell John that in my life, God has proven that he can make a way out of no way and open doors that I could not see."

HE HAS SAVED OUR SOULS: The most important testimony we can give to anyone who wants to know why we serve the Lord is that he saved our souls. He saved us from the punishment of sin and gave us a chance to make heaven our home. We know he did because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Not only has he saved our souls from hell's fire but he saves us and sustains us everyday through his spiritual presence in our lives. There is not a year that we do not encounter physical sickness, death, or strained relationships. We know that we would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments without the savior. Just as the Spirit of God saved, then lifted David as he regretted his own sin and mourned for his son, we have been saved in the same way. In our weakness,

he saved us by reminding us like he reminded Paul that "My grace is sufficient." Yes, we have been saved by just the knowledge that we can touch the hem of his garment and be made whole or that he's only a prayer away! When the doubters ask, "Is God all that people say he is?" We should gladly testify, God is real, for he saved our souls and made us whole, and every day his saving grace allows us to see new mercies!

Tell John

Finally, brothers and sisters, we can testify that God not only has God done great things for us in the past, but every morning he stands at the ready to bless us as we serve him.

To all the curious Johns in the world, who wonder why we serve the Lord, Tell John that every morning God has a new blessing waiting on me.

Tell John that God has seen me through some difficult times and has blessed me with his abundant mercy!

Is Christ the promised savior?

All I can say is "Tell John" when I was down in spirit and like Israel had hung my harp on the willow trees and said, "How can we sing Zion's songs in a strange land!?" He heard my cry and gave me a brand new song!

Tell John that since I met the Lord:

—THE SKIES seems to be bluer

—THE SUN seems to shine brighter

—THE BIRDS seem to sing sweeter

—THE FLOWERS seem to blossom fuller

—THE AIR seems more refreshing

—THE STARS seem to have more luster

—MY BURDENS seem to be lighter

—MY FAITH seems a little stronger

Believers don't be discouraged by the curious and skeptical Johns who wonder about the power of God, When ask in amusement

Tell John that we have found out that God is still able!

He's able to:

—Take our valleys and raise them to mountain tops

—Take midnight's and turn them into noondays

—Defeats and turn them into victories

—Take our losses and make them work for our gain

We've got to tell somebody about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell them that he loved us so much that he died out of Calvary!

But Early! Early, Sunday morning, arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

The songwriter said, "I don't know what I'd do without the Lord

I don't know what I'd do without the Lord

When I look around and see, what the Lord has done for me. I don't know what I'd do without the Lord!

No. 9683-Mother's Day

And the Mother of Jesus was there

By Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 10, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." John 19:25; "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there:" John 2:1

Introduction

Is there any circumstance that a child could experience that a good mother would not be willing to share? Whether we are celebrating our triumphs or enduring ordeals, good mothers are usually around somewhere.

When former LSU lineman La'el Collins was falsely connected with the murder of a Baton Rouge woman, he was instantly dropped from the NFL draft. Nearly everyone across the nation kept their distance from him, except his mother and family. She encouraged him; they prayed together, and a week later he was cleared and signed a three-year contract with the Cowboys. Sitting by his side at the news conference was his mother. She was there when he was falsely accused. She was also there when he signed a $1.6 million contract.

Sometimes mothers show up at places where we do not expect them. That's what a Baltimore son who was participating in a riot learned when his mother spotted him with a hood over his head about to participate in rioting and looting in Baltimore in 2015. When Toya Graham saw her son, she burst through the crowd and started slapping him and pulling him away from the rioting crowd. It was caught on video, and the mother of six became an instant example of the risk a good mother will take to protect her children; in this case, she was protecting him from himself.

We laugh when we see Tyler Perry's movie "Muhdear Goes to Jail," but when you think about it there is not a place that a real Muhdear wouldn't go for her children.

Today, there are millions of mothers who are making personal sacrifices to be "there" for their children.

If a movie were made with a title depicting all the places that real Muhdears have to go for their kids the movie trailers would read, "Come and see Muhdear as she makes uniforms for the band, it's Muhdear goes to band practice!" Another commercial might

say, “Muhdear meets her match as she takes on the referee, see Muhdear goes to the game.” Muhdear goes to the Principal’s office. Muhdear goes to dance school. Muhdear goes to piano lessons!

In reality, there is not a place that a real mother won’t go for her children, including jail. For one mother, this meant being there for her son as they crucified him and hung him on a cross. Even in his most vulnerable moment, the mother of Jesus was there.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that our mothers have “been there” for us through triumph and tribulation. We give God the praise and bless their memories throughout all generations.

Exposition

This text focuses on Mary as she stands at the cross, watching her son take his last breath.

Mary is often cited as the perfect example of motherhood. Many mothers of the Bible depict important truths about the believer’s life. The widow woman, whose barrel never ran dry, showed a mother who prayed as she worked and God kept her barrel from running dry. The woman with the issue of blood depicted a woman who overcame illness because of the power of God. Sara is shown as a woman who was blessed to be a mother despite advancing age. However, Mary’s life shows us many additional truths about God and the believers expectation.

Mary was a participant in the life and ministry of Christ from conception through his resurrection. For thirty years Mary raised Jesus, attended to his physical needs and stayed close by his side. There is only one recorded event of the 30 years she raised him as a ward of the house, that being his going up to Jerusalem when twelve years of age, and his being found among the doctors in the Temple Luke 2:41-52. We see Mary and Joseph when Jesus was lost in the crowd.

In John 2:1 Jesus had begun his public ministry. Having recruited several of his disciples in the preceding days, John begins with the “third day” at a wedding to which Jesus and the disciples were present. Little notice was taken, but there, in the crowd, with a careful eye on her son, was Mary. It was Mary who pulled Jesus to the side and asked him to provide for the thirsty wedding guests.

A year and a half after this we find her at Capernaum Matthew 12:46,48,49, where Christ uttered the memorable words, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

The next time we find her is at the cross along with her sister, Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and other women John 19:25.

Mary remained supportive of Jesus through his childhood, adult ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection. When he was praised, she was there. When he was nailed to the cross, she was there, through thick and thin.

Mothers are *There*

Godly mothers are celebrated for "being there." Every person living has a "Mama was there for me" story if they had a loving mother.

Being there, does not always mean an endorsement of an activity or a lifestyle, but it does mean that the love of a mother for her children extends into every circumstance and situation; popular or unpopular.

The great American writer Washington Irving once said, "A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials heavy and sudden fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends desert us; when trouble thickens around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts."

OUT OF NOWHERE, MOTHER WAS THERE: The young man in Baltimore was probably shocked to see his mother show up in the middle of the riot to beat some sense into his head, but that's not unusual because mothers have been known to show up at unexpected places. Like the mom who showed up at the strip club and pulled her 16 old daughter off the pole by her hair. Or the mom who showed up at school and had a come to Jesus meeting with her son when he disrupted class. Out of nowhere, mothers have a way of showing up.

There are many ways that mothers have "been there" for their children that were not so obvious. Those were the moments when mother prayed on her knees and then did what she had to do make ends meet.

Many mothers prayed for washing machines but while they waited, scrubbed clothes on rub boards, walked to washaterias and even rung out sheets on their hands and hung them on clothes lines to dry.

Many mothers prayed for new clothes for their children, but while they waited, sewed buttons on shirts, patched holes in pants and lined the bottoms of worn shoes with newspaper.

Many mothers prayed to God for a variety of food but while they waited, cooked grits and butter for breakfast, and grits and gravy for supper.

Many a mother learned a thousand ways to cook a potato by boiling it, mashing it, french frying it, meshing it into hash browns or one of the hundreds of other ways to stretch an inexpensive food item a long ways.

BEING THERE OFTEN MEANS SACRIFICE: When Mary followed Jesus, it was not easy. She had other children including James, Joses, Judas, Simon and sisters. (Matthew 13:55-56) On at least one occasion she followed him with all of the family in tow. It was a sacrifice to be there for him, but to also be "there" for the other children as well. There are millions of mothers today who are making personal sacrifices to be there for their children. When one child is honored, it is not unusual to see a mother bring her whole household along because it's the only way she can be there for one; yet it is done. Good mothers today are finding ways to be there for their children.

They are attending school events, participating in school PTA, selling cookies for the Girl Scouts, cheering their children on the athletic fields and traveling countless miles

to watch their children perform with school teams.

Being there is more than showing up occasionally, it means being a part of a child's life experiences, which can be very traumatic at times.

Being there sometimes means listening when children talk, paying attention to their doodlings and drawings and praising them.

Being there means teaching life skills necessary for success and providing quality time for relationship building.

Just as Mary was there for Jesus to hold his hand and support him, that spirit of being there is what is celebrated by children who know instantly that in every respect, good mothers have done their best to be there for them.

Like Mary, who was there for Jesus, good mothers are there for their children, even if it requires great sacrifice.

GOOD MOTHERS ARE THERE IN DIFFICULTY: Mary was with Jesus in his infancy, when he crawled on the floor and cut his first tooth. She was with him as he turned into a man and learned at the temple. She was there when he celebrated and laughed at the wedding. She was probably there when he came into Jerusalem during that final week. And she was there when they falsely accused him, tried him, whipped him and crucified him. That must have been a heart-wrenching moment. Similarly, mothers everywhere have shared heart-wrenching moments with their children: death, a divorce, a false accusation, a life-threatening sickness; loss of a career or a shattered dream. Mothers have been there, too.

Mothers share the heart-wrenching moments of difficulty, embarrassment and public scorn with their children.

Good mothers stand beside their children when everyone else has abandoned them.

Sometimes we mess up our lives by dumb actions, stupid mistakes, and insensitivity. Sometimes our actions prompt us to fail or otherwise suffer embarrassment. Despite their distaste for the stupidity of our decisions in life, good mothers never give up on their children. They stand with them publicly even if they find it necessary to bless them out privately.

When the crowds disappear, and our fame has turned to infamy; mothers are there for us.

When we are being nailed to the cross by enemies and tragic circumstances; mothers are there for us.

When we are stretched out on hospital beds unable to care for ourselves, mothers find a way to see that we are cared for, often personally doing it themselves.

She doesn't see a felon in a courtroom; she sees her son or daughter. She doesn't see a person wrongfully accused in the court of public opinion; she sees her child, and though he or she is hanging on the cross, a good mother often risks her own safety and security to be there for a child who has reached the lowest point in his or her life.

In difficulties, mother is always there for us.

Put us in God's Hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, our mothers makes sure that we are securely placed in the hands of God.

At the cross, Mary watched her son suffer and heard him say seven last sayings. One of those probably gave her encouragement, "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit."

She watched her son, put his life in God's hands.

Today, good mothers want to be sure that their children are safe in the hands of God.

She strives to insure that they know the Lord.

Hannah told the Lord that she would put her child in God's hands if she were blessed to give birth. No sooner than the boy Samuel was old enough, she mother brought him to the place of worship and put him in God's hands.

In God's hands, Samuel became a great scholar!

In God's hands, David became a great king!

In God's hands, Esther became the queen of Persia and saved her people!

Jesus made it clear that in the Kingdom of Heaven there will be many women who carry the spirit of godly mothers; those who are doing the will of God.

There are many today who have had biological mothers who have been there for them. There are millions whose mother was not their biological mother, but never-the-less was the woman who was there for them.

She was the one who saw to it that you came to church; and others who saw to it that you acted correctly once you got there!

She was the one who taught you to say your prayers and to sing, "Yes, Jesus Loves me."

Who is my mother? She is the one who is concerned who am I am in the world and who I am before God.

Who is my mother? She is the one who insures that her child has:

—Food to eat here, but she is also concerned that her child is fed the Word of God, for she has heard the scripture say Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

—Clothes on his back, but she is also concerned that he wears the breastplate of righteousness and that his feet are shod with the Gospel of the preparation of peace, that he wears the helmet of Salvation and carries the shield of faith.

—Has a place to call home, but she also worries about whether he'll have a home in the kingdom of heaven.

—Birth and delivery in this world, but she also is concerned that he is born again into the kingdom of God.

Who is my mother? She is the one that will teach her children to trust in the Lord.

Every Christian mother knows there is wisdom in trusting the Lord.

If I trust in the Lord I will:

—Overcome strong temptations

—bear heavy burdens

—withstand mighty persecutions

—cross the loneliest of valleys

—endure the saddest of sorrows

—live through darkest of nights
—sail through the roughest storms
—climb the tallest of mountains
Who is my mother? She's the one who knows how to call on the name of Jesus!
Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!
Who is my mother?
She's the one, through thick and thin, who was there for me!

No. 9684-Graduation

But Continue Thou…

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 25, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." 2 Timothy 3:14

Introduction

Have you ever started something, but didn't finish it? That which you started was a great pursuit, but before it was finished, you found yourself doing something else. There are many who can tell of the many things they started to do but did not continue. One started out pursuing a business career but did not continue. Another started out to become an athlete but did not continue. Still another had great dreams of being a research scientist, but along the way, gave up on the dream. You began reading a book, did you finish? You began saving for a house, did you finish? You began a relationship, what happened?

If we are frustrated because we seem to start so much that we can't finish, we might be encouraged to know that there are many others like us. Mark Twain is famous for his completed writings, but he left many more unfinished. Marilyn Monroe began filming "Something's got to give" in 1962, but never finished it. Bruce Lee began a movie called "Game of Death" but never finished it. Beethoven is famous for his nine symphonies, but he never completed number 10.

There are many reasons why we don't complete what we start, but the results are the same, regardless of the reason; the job doesn't get done.

The challenge for graduates who have begun a journey toward success is to continue their dream, without interruption. The Christian graduate has a two-fold challenge; to pursue personal goals while remaining faithful to their commitment to God, family, and the church. Most start off studying in school, participating in church and staying close to the family. Some, soon after graduation, fail to continue and lose their way.

The challenge in life is not to dream, but to continue in the dream until it is realized.

Continuing in the faith is important to Christian living. Graduation does not mean a release from God. It does not mean believers no longer work in the church, attend worship, or need God's protection. Graduation means believers are moving to another level where they will need to continue their relationship WITH and service TO God, but on another level.

We have the divine assurance that whatever God begins, he finishes. When we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior, he told us that he would be with us always. Even after we graduate that promise continues.

As Christians, we should continue in the faith as we work in faith, that God will continue to make a way for his will to be realized in our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on words of encouragement Paul gave to a young man beginning on a Godly mission.

Paul was a prisoner in a Roman dungeon when he wrote this, the last of his epistles, to Timothy. Not long afterward, according to tradition, the apostle was beheaded.

The purpose of 2 Timothy was to encourage Timothy in his ministry at Ephesus. His constant theme was to remember what he had been taught and to continue in the Godly life he began.

In 2 Timothy 3:14 he said, "Continue in the things you have learned.." in the next verse he says, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,
which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

His words were clear: Continue what was begun in you by your parents and your grandparents. Don't stray or be diverted from your goal in Christ.

Five Steps to continue what you start

There are many who do not complete their goals in life. There are five actions we can take to continue what you start until you finish.

DON'T START IT, IF ITS NOT IMPORTANT TO YOU: Many fail to complete goals because the goal they set was not important to them. Often the goals of young graduates are set by their parents but are not important to them. To succeed at any life goal, it must be important to you; otherwise, you will begin, but you will not continue. Thousands of students begin college each year because their parents insist, even more drop out each year, because it was not really important to them. Don't study to be a doctor if making people well is not important to you. Don't be a teacher if you don't have a passion for helping children discover themselves. Don't be an actor if you don't enjoy portraying others rather than being yourself. Don't set out to be a musician if you hate rehearsing. The road you take must be so important to you that you are willing to spend whatever time it takes to achieve your goal. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." What's first and most important is that you do the will of God for your life. It is the most important thing. Keep the main thing, the main thing.

DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT IT DO IT: There are many who spend a great deal of

time talking about their goals, but seldom match their walk with their talk. 2 Corinthians 8:11 says, "Now, therefore, perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have." The emphasis is on the performance rather than idle talk. Look at the verse again: "Do what you are talking about so that you achieve your goal." It is important to continue what you begin unto completion because the blessing is not in beginning a task, but in completing it. Ecclesiastes 7:8 says, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning." Eagerness and excited talk is not a substitute for accomplishment. Following through, continuing until you complete your goal is what matters most.

DON'T JUGGLE MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE: Many don't complete their goals in life because they try to juggle too much at the same time. We do well throwing up a single ball in the air and catching it. It gets more complicated when there are two, but it is still possible. What about three? Or Four? You can only have so many balls in the air at one time. The downside of being good at taking the initiative and starting is that you can spread yourself too thinly. The more you have going on, the less effective and invested you can be in any one of those areas. You can't be in everything. You can't go to every party, join every frat or sorority that invites you, participate in every function, serve on every committee, go to every meeting, run every race, fight every battle and succeed at the same time. The more balls you juggle, the greater your chance of dropping the ball and achieving none. If you take on a task, analyze the amount of time and money it will take and whether doing this task will successfully help you to achieve or fatally detract from your main goal. In Luke 14:28, Jesus emphasized the importance of counting the cost. Juggling many balls at the same time is wonderful until you drop one ball; others are sure to follow.

MAKE A PLAN AND WORK IT: When Jesus started out to build the church on earth, he began with a plan that required him to get 12 disciples. Next, the 12 would be taught what they needed to know. An additional 70 would be sent ahead of him to announce his coming. To redeem men of their sins his plan called for him to go to Calvary, die and rise after three days. He would return to heaven and leave the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire all who believe as he built the kingdom of God on earth. That was his plan. Today, believers must have a plan for their own lives. Not only must we make a plan, but we must commit ourselves to working the plan. We must stick to it.

When you have a plan, you must be willing to sacrifice to make it happen. Olympic athletes have a training regimen, a plan. They stick to their regimen because they have a goal. If believers succeed, they too must bring a sense of commitment to their personal plan and stick to it, no matter what the cost.

KEEP THE END VISION IN SIGHT: Some don't continue to pursue their dream because they lose sight of it, especially when they are bogged down with nitty-gritty tasks required to make it happen. It's easy to give up on being a doctor when you are bombarded with hundreds of pages of test material, assignments and projects. It's easy to give up on being a band director when you are still a student marching eight to five in practices in the heat of summer. It's easy to give up on your dream of building a dream house when the stack of bills gets high and money gets short. Unless you keep the

picture of your ultimate success in front of you, you will lose the excitement you need and your energy will fade, little by little.

To counter this problem, we should surround ourselves with things that remind us of our end goal, such as your vision board, pictures of others who have achieved the same goal, objects that represent the goal, etc. Paul encouraged believers to keep their "eyes on the prize" every time they felt frustrated in the faith. Each time they wanted to give up the Christian life he said, think about the crown of righteousness that is laid up in heaven.

Those who keep their eyes on the prize never lose sight of what they really want to do with their lives, and that is to serve and please God.

Keeping your eyes on the prize may mean getting closer to some things and moving away from others. It will mean avoiding ungodly activities of every kind. It may even mean backing away from some job opportunities because they will take you away from your main goal, which is to see Jesus.

To continue, stay focused

Finally, brothers and sisters, believers should remember that to continue toward the mark of the high calling, we must stay focused.

Staying in focus may mean getting closer to some things and moving away from others.

But staying focused may also mean that from time to time you need to get closer to keep yourself in focus with God. There will be times when the swiftness of the world takes you so fast that you lose sight of glory.

Believers need to continue walking close to God.

Walking close to God builds strength for troublesome times and answers troublesome questions. No wonder the songwriter says, "Just a closer walk with thee. Grant it, Jesus, if you please, Daily walking close to thee. Let it be, dear Lord, let it be!"

Daniel's life journey took him thousands of miles from home, but he continued looking toward Jerusalem and praying three times a day.

The Three Hebrew Boys' lives took them in and out of the fiery furnace, but they continued saying, "Our God is able!"

Paul was beaten, jailed and criticized, but he continued to declare, "Nothing shall separate me from the love of God."

Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, endured the hardships of life, temptations of Satan and the rejection of man, but he never lost his focus!

He was so focused that he died on Calvary for the sins of men and arose from the grave in victory!

Graduates, continue toward the victory!

Continue to Achieve high heights in life!

Dream the impossible dream, and beat the unbeatable foe!

Continue until you achieve.. and Give God the glory!

No. 9685-Inspiration

Jesus fills in the blanks

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 7, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of thy book which thou has written." Exodus 32:32

Introduction

Have you ever had to fill in the blanks? We first encountered fill-in-the-blanks in school on short tests. The test question will restate a fact, but leave out one word which we fill with the answer. The answer has to be exact or will be marked incorrect.

We encounter fill-in-the-blanks in a wide variety of applications. Those searching for jobs, scholarships, or information often encounter forms that require them to fill-in-the-blanks.

Often filling in the blanks can be redundant; we repeated enter the same information. Those seeking employment find themselves filling in the same blanks with the same information in scores of places. There is no master database from which to draw information in a turn-key operation; we must fill in the same blanks every time.

We have become so accustomed to filling in the blanks that an entire industry has been spawned that generates blanks for us, called templates. An apology template may read: "Dear Blank. It is has come to my attention that my recent action was blank. I never intended to blank you. I want you to understand that I was merely trying to blank, though I can see now that it may appear that I was blank. Moving forward, I will attempt to blank. Please accept my apology. Signed: Blank.

What about the marriage proposal blank? "Dear Blank. I think we are wonderful together. Because we blank so well together and we have all of the blank that each of us needs, I think it would be a great for us to marry as soon as we can blank. You have all of the blank that I need and I think we should move quickly before blank. I am writing you my thoughts because I have blanked you and want to blank you for the rest of my life. Your friend, Blank."

Templates are impersonal, but there is a blank space that is really personal. Have you ever been given a signed blank check? That's extremely personal. It is an enormous display of trust because, with an authorizing signature, a signed blank check has great power.

Suppose you were given a blank check on the bank of heaven. Suppose our God

looked down on our lowly estate and decided to say in Philippians 4:19, “My God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.” Would that be a blank check?

It may seem odd, but in reality believers have been given a blank check on the bank of heaven that can be redeemed for so many purposes. Believers who are shouldering enormous burdens involving unemployment, family issues, crime, loneliness, frustration or any one of a plethora of challenges, have the consolation of knowing that they possess a blank check on heaven through which God promises to provide what we need, when we need it, for as long as we need it.

Whatever we need from God, if we are true in our living, giving and service; we can faithfully him to fill in the blanks.

As Christians, we are thankful that we serve a God who knows our needs and will faithfully show us mercy and provision every day. Whatever we need - you name it- God’s got it!

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as he pleads for mercy for Israel after its sin in the wilderness.

While Moses was in the top communing with God and receiving the commandments, the people below became anxious and weary. They pressed Aaron to make them a gold calf which they could worship.

When Moses returned, he found the people engaged in idol worship and disobeying God. He caused the idol to be ground into dust and put into their drinking water. He then stood on the side of a mountain and asked all who were on God’s side to come to the mountain’s edge.

Seeking forgiveness for those who remained, Moses went before God and prayed for their redemption. He wanted to save them from the wrath of God.

In his prayer a strange thing happened. Moses pleaded for the people, but stopped in the middle of his sentence and left a blank space. It is the only blank space recorded in the Bible. Moses said, “Yet now, If thou wilt forgive their sin—; after the blank space the sentence continues with “and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou has written.”

Some interpreters believe the blank space was intentional to emphasize a truth. To redeem the people of their sins, Moses had no options. He could not redeem them from their sins because the redemption of mankind was above him. There was no trade that he could make that could equal or balance the sins of the people. Redemption required a greater sacrifice of a divine nature. After the semi-colon, Moses tacked on a trade that he could make. If heaven was not willing to fully forgiven the people, then he asked not to be allowed to enter Promised Land with them and that his name be blotted out of all official records, which he recorded; the first five books of the Bible.

What Moses could not do was redeem the people because redemption required the blood of a universal lamb; one anointed and accepted by God. He didn’t know the name

of that lamb. He did not know in what form that lamb would come, so it is believed that he simply left a blank space.

Believers now know what to put in the blank space that requires redemption by the Lamb of God, the name Jesus.

Moses could not do it, it took Jesus!

And today, Jesus is still filling in the blanks for believers, becoming what they need to respond to the issues of life each day.

Filling the Blanks

When it comes to filling in the blanks that we experience in life there are a few considerations:

FAITH LETS GOD FILL IN THE BLANKS: When life presents us with options, we are presented with occasions when we must fill in the blanks. Should I get a job or go to school? Should I get married or stay single? She I leave the city or should I stay? Should I take the promotion and risk termination if I fail or should I seize the opportunity? Should I cheat on my spouse with this adorable person or remain faithful? All of these questions and more are showered upon believers every day. When we must make this kind of choice we are exercising options, filling in the blanks. What we put in the blanks in answer to this life changing questions often determines the direction of our lives for years to come.

Men and women of faith pray to God for direction, wait until he responds, then they fill in the blanks. It is dangerous to fill in the blanks on the first things that pop into your mind. In anger, the words you use to fill in the blank may not be blessed. In frustration, the words may have sting or a sour taste. Before you push the send button on that email or post that Facebook comment to fill in the blank, ask: Will this comment reflect my faith in God?

Faith lets God fill in the blank! Daniel, faced with the threat of Lion's Den, What should he put in the blank, faith or fear? The Three Hebrew Boys faced with the prospect of being burned in the fiery furnace answered the question, "Will your God deliver you? by letting faith fill in the blank, "We don't know if our God will deliver, but what we do know is our God is able!"

God is able to protect us from all sides; let faith fill in the blanks!

God is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves; let faith fill in the blanks!

S**OMETIMES WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO PUT IN THE BLANK**: We don't know what to put in the blanks that life gives us. We see it most often when we take tests and can't remember what goes in the blank, even though we have studied. On applications it happens, too? If my mother is white and my father is black, what do I put in the blank that asks for my race? Should I fill in the address blank with my mailing address or my street address? Sometimes the blanks baffle us. We don't know what we are suppose to do or say. That was the dilemma Moses faced when God told him to tell Pharaoh to "Let my people go." God told Moses to tell Pharaoh "I am that I am" sent him. That was a fill in the blank answer. When Moses needed ten miracles to show

Pharaoh, God became "that" and the miracles occurred. When Moses needed a bridge through the Red Sea, God became "that" and parted the sea. No matter what answer the blank space called for, God became "that."

What should believers do when they don't know what to do? When we don't know what to put in the blank spaces that life presents us every day of our lives, we should do what David did. In Psalm 121:1 he said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth." The blank spaces may seem insurmountable, but we serve a God who specializes in filling in blanks spaces and has proven that He can make a way out of no way,

What to do about the declining condition of our communities is a blank space, but together with Christ we can do all things which strengthen us; he can fill in the blank space

What to do about the poverty in our neighborhoods, is a blank space, but together with Christ we can reach out to the poor in ways that are significant and meaningful, He can show us what to do and fill in the blank space

How to feed the growing number of hungry are blank spaces because our church kitchens are not big enough, but we serve a Savior who takes two little fishes and five loaves of bread and feeds thousands. He knows how to fill in the blanks!

How to quiet the storms that rage in our lives is a blank space, but our Savior can speak to the winds and the waves and they will obey his will. He knows how to fill in the blank!

DON'T PUT MORE IN THE BLANK THAN IS NEEDED: There are many who try to fill in the blank on a form and actually put in more information that is needed. The form asks for a one word reply and some enter phrases and sentences that run down the side of the paper. A short blank is expecting a short response. A longer blank is expecting a longer response, but not longer than the blank. Filling in the blank with more than is necessary happens when we attempt to take matters into our own hands instead of letting God's word command the day. God told Abraham and Sarai that she would have a child. He left a blank space. He did not say when, so when she reached her 80's and still had no child, she decided to fill in the space that God left blank. She arranged for her husband to have a child by her maid and then became jealous of the child. She put more in the blank space God left and caused herself a problem. Today, believers should leave some things that are unknown or unexplained to God; let him fill in the space. Don't you try to fill in the blanks because we walk by faith and not sight!

There are some things in life that have a short space, because there is only one word that goes in the space. For there is "None other name under the heavens whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus!"

God's Auto Fill

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while Moses could not fill in the blank for those who are need God, once the lost know Jesus, he automatically fills in the blanks.

Once you have been saved by the blood of Jesus, your name is recorded in the Book of Life.

It's like the login information on your email or cell phone, once it's saved on your computer, your name is recorded on the hard drive of the computer or the memory of your phone.

The computer will ask, "Do you want your name saved?" If you click yes, every time you get to a blank anywhere that asks for name, it automatically fills in the blank! It automatically fills in the blank, because your name is saved on its roll!

Amazon carries it one step further. When you order what you need from Amazon, they have a service call "One Click" –Once you put your name on their roll, all you need is one click to get what you need. You need to enter your name, or your address or mailing address, with just one click –what you need is already on the way!

The beauty of being saved is not only heaven, but we also have auto-fill.

If we have a blank space because of a medical need, one prayer calls up JEHOVAH-RAPHA because, "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

If we have a blank space because we need for peace, one prayer calls up JEHOVAH-SHALOM because God is our peace.

If we have a blank space because we desire to conquer an evil presence, one prayer calls up JEHOVAH-NISSI because the Lord is our banner of victory.

If we have a blank space because we have unseen needs, one prayer calls up JEHOVAH-JIREH because he both sees our needs and provides.

Moses did not know what to put in the blank, but today we know the answer.

Moses sought a way to wash away the sins of Israel, but he could not fill in the blank.

Today, we can answer Moses' question with the songwriters lyrics, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Jesus, whose

— Power never weakens; -Grace never disappoints

-Love never leaves; -Promises never fail

-Glory never diminishes; -Joy never ends

-Foundation never shakes; -Truth never changes

-Supply never shrinks; -Blessings never stop coming!

Jesus, who picked up an old rugged cross and carried up Golgotha's hill.

He died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning….

No.9686-Church

What Hinders the Church

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? " Galatians 5:7

Introduction

When the church steps out on the word of God, is there any limit to what the church can do and how far it can go? Is there any limit to its possibilities? When those who believe in the power of God ban together as one solid unit that is rooted in Him, sustained by Him and directed by Him, there is no limit to their potential.

When the church is on one accord, it can move mountains of frustration and achieve what others think is impossible.

Wonderful things happen when the church decides to move forward prayerfully in unity with the vision of Christ beaming in the horizon.

With access to such awesome potential, the church must not hesitate, linger or abandon its mission to advance the kingdom of God in this generation. We must not give up or give pause. We must hold on just as our fore parents held on. We must march forward in unity, just as those before us marched. If we feel weak along the way, we must remember that "help is on the way."

While the church marches forward, there are challenges that demand our attention that cannot be ignored.

What hinders the church from responding to the challenges of the world in front of us?

This is the world that embraces a former Olympic Champion who changes his sex from male to female, but frowns on a white woman who wants to be black and head the NAACP.

What hinders the church from responding?

This is the world where cell phone videos are capturing instances of police brutality, and teens looting liquor stores and growing hostilities. It's a harassment so intense that the public is crying out on the pages of social media, "I can't breathe!"

With homelessness increasing, domestic abuse getting out of control, and unemployment rising, now more than ever, the world needs to receive a response from the church?

What hinders the church from responding?

We are preaching, praying and praising God in our churches on Sunday, but what hinders us from feeding the homeless, building housing for our people and expanding our reach to everyone possible with the love of God.

What hinders the church and its organized bodies from making a collective response? Should we do more than simply meet, preach, eat, fellowship, sing, pray and go home?

What hinders the church?

As a people, we have been running this race for hundreds of years.

We have fought tremendous battles to reach our present place in the world. We have not fully attained all that we should have, but we are on our way.

Much has been placed on us, but God has worked it out for us. Despite all of the obstacles we have faced, nothing has hindered us more than our own lack of motivation and concern. When we act, things happen. When we fail to act, everything falls apart.

What hinders the church? Certainly it should not be a spirit of fear or apprehension because we know that the scriptures teach us that "All things" work for the good of those who are called to God's purpose. He will work it out to our advantage no matter how bad it seems. Fear should not be a hindrance.

In the past, nothing has stopped our forward march; not slavery, ignorance, poverty or lack of opportunity. These have been the main hindrances to the achievement of African-American Christians, yet, despite these obstacles, however, African-American men have excelled. God is working it out; so we should not give up the journey. Nothing should hinder us!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to believers in Galatia, urging them not to be stopped or hindered in their pursuit of Gospel truths.

The overall theme of the passage is that the church should not be hindered in its efforts to promote the truths of Jesus Christ. It is both a message to the corporate church, and it is a personal message to individual believers.

As a message to the corporate church, Paul warns the church not to be hindered by misinformation, confusions or untruths that would cause the church to break its steady pace toward establishing the kingdom of God. Specifically, there was misinformation about whether or not circumcision should be required for salvation. Paul reminded believers that even discussion of such issues served to hinder the church's work as its members lost focus.

The Galatians were active proponents of the faith. Their kingdom-building activities were vigorous. Their loyalty to the cross was unquestioned.

Paul wrote to the Galatians because their vigorous service had been interrupted by the presence of those who injected a hindering debate into their leadership circles. The issue was circumcision, and it proved to be both divisive and a hindrance. Paul wrote to them and encourage them not to be sidetracked by such diversions that the pace

of their kingdom-building activities would be affected.

There were thousands of souls that had to be saved as well as hungry masses to be fed with both spiritual nurture and physical food. In the past, the church at Galatia had been responding well to each kingdom mission. However, this new distraction proved to be a hindrance.

Speaking to the Galatians he said, "Ye did, run well, who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?"

Here Paul makes another of his famous athletic comparisons. Runners in the Olympiad often ran in lanes, but a competitor sometimes jumped lanes to cause his opponent to slow down or "hinder" their pace. Both runners continue running, but one loses his stride and falls behind because of the "hindrance."

That makes the message to the church is very clear, it should not be hindered by distractions, but should press on toward the prize in the name of Jesus.

Barriers that hinder

While the church at Galatia was hindered by the circumcision debate, the church is often hindered by other distractions and weakness, most of them of our own making. What can slow down the corporate building efforts of the church? Here are a few:

LONE RANGER CHURCHES: Many of the challenges of the church are global in nature, but there are still many churches that shun cooperation with other congregations and choose to be Lone Ranger congregations. In every community, there is one church that is feeding the hungry, challenging government leaders, promoting education, advocating for poor and distressed, promoting civil liberties and preaching the Gospel at the same time. The problems that communities face are often systemic and require a united effort by churches acting in unison. While many churches will support a city-wide revival, for example, there are not many that combine resources and build a senior citizens complex, charter a school, open a healthcare facility.

Churches working alone are limited in what they can accomplish, but working together they become a force that cannot be ignored. This was the strength of the first-century Christian church. In nearly every city, all Christians were attacking the same problem with an intensity that could not be ignored.

The challenge is for churches to seek more cooperative efforts to attack community problems with their combined faith and resources. They should resist the temptation to act alone, basking in the glory while leaving others behind.

UNWILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH HARD QUESTIONS: The growth of the church may be hindered by its unwillingness to ask itself hard questions because it already knows the answers. Growth comes with adapting to new methods to reach a new generation with the same message. Yet, the church is reluctant to ask itself the hard questions, especially when those questions involve our traditions. We come together annual in district and state meeting, why? Is the reason we give working? If not, what hinders us from changing? If you notice that fewer people are coming to Sunday School early on Sunday morning, why do you continue to have an early morning school when

your congregation is obviously a Sunday afternoon crowd? If most people in your congregation have bibles on their cell phones, why do we still insist that no cell phones be used in church services? When nearly every person in the congregation has a debit or credit card, why do so many churches only pass the offering plate with no other way to collect contributions?

These are hard questions that require the church to take a hard look at itself and if it is appropriate, to respond with measured change. Our growth, in this respect, is not hindered by outside forces, but from our own stubborn loyalty to traditions that long outlasted their usefulness.

PREACHING A COMPRISING GOSPEL: The gospel is the main weapon of the church. However, too many churches have compromised the Gospel message of our Lord to make it more marketable to the masses. While the Gospel teaches personal sacrifice to serve God and others, many churches have altered that message to mean personal sacrifice gains favor from God and even at the expense of others.

While the Gospel encourages us to come to Jesus in a "Just as I am" state and become a new creature in Christ, many have altered that message that God wants you to accept Christ just as you are and he will not judge you or expect you to change. To appeal to masses, fill pews and membership goals, many churches have adopted a "Prosperity" message in sermons and musical presentations.

The world is hungry for the living word of God. The church is hindered in its ministries in many respects because it no longer lifts up Jesus in an uncompromising way. Jesus said, "And I,if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

We must lift Jesus up, not the prospect of gaining riches by coming to church!

We must lift Jesus up, not the idea that we can stay the same as long as we give God is credit!

We must lift Jesus up, not the world's standard of morality and political correctness!

If the church is hindered in its ability to attract men and women to the cross, it is because we have failed to lift Jesus up!

A connected church cannot be hindered

Finally, brothers and sisters, the church must stay connected to God to have the power to transform lives. As long as the church is connected to the power of God, its work cannot be hindered!

The effectiveness of Paul and Silas is that they were sincere in their faith, demonstrated it under considerable pressure and always reached out to bring Christ to the lost.

As believers, we should recommit ourselves to the goal of transforming the lives that we touch in the name of Jesus.

We should resolve that we will not be hindered in our work because the church is the instrument that God has used to bring forth "HIS" blessing to God's people.

We should let nothing hinder us because our people have been blessed because of the church, the Old Ship of Zion.

We have worshiped under brush arbors and abandoned sawmills.

We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors.

We have praised him in the chill of winter with logs burning in huge heated stoves.

Yet, God has used our feeble assemblies, worships, and praise experiences to bring us forth as His "water" in a thirsty land.

Through the church, God has delivered us, as a people, from the Egypt of slavery to the borders of the Promised Land.

Through the church, God has sustained us through lynchings, murders, discrimination, depressions and unbelievable hardships.

Through the church, God has raised up our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits.

Through the church, God has brought forth leaders to champion our causes and speak to our troubled souls.

No wonder the songwriter thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

Sometimes, in our weakness, we forget that God is able to transform.

He's able to deliver us from the pit and miry clay!

He's able to transform confusion and discord into unity and love!

He's able to transform nobodies and turn them into somebodies.

He's able to transform beggars into kings!

He's able to transform lazy men into working men!

He's able to transform losers into winners!

He's done it before, and He will do it again!

Long before we came to our present circumstance, God has been transforming lives!

I'm glad to know God is still a transforming God!

I'm glad to know that if I'm sick, He can heal me again!

I'm glad to know that if I'm down, He can pick me up again!

I'm glad to know that if I've failed, He can make me succeed again!

I'm glad to know that if I've lost, He can give me the victory again!

That's why I've got to tell somebody! That I serve a God who has:

-Taken the bad and transformed it into good!

-Taken the hate I've encountered and transformed it into love!

-Taken the proud and mighty and transformed them into humble servants.

It's this transforming goodness of the Lord that prompted David to write in Psalm 106:1 "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endureth forever!" It is this transforming nature that helps us to experience the Joy of the Lord!

The church that transforms reaches out to the lost with the redemptive joy of the Lord!

What is the Joy of the Lord?

The joy of the Lord is going into battle and knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise, and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

That's why the songwriter declared, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years ago Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill!

Early Sunday morning the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away and heaven rejoiced as He arose from the grave with all power in His hand.

Stay on the battlefield church, let nothing hinder us in the service of our God!

No.9687-Inspiration

Ain't no stopping me now

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Galatians 5:7

Introduction

What hinders you from being the Christian that God wants you to be? Are you getting closer to the goal or is the devil trying to slow you down? There are many believers who are desperately trying to stay focused as they serve the Lord, but there forward movement has come to a screeching halt. Their pace has slowed, and they have been reduced to going around in circles, but getting nowhere.

The devil is busy, going to and fro, trying to stop individual believers from achieving the level of spirituality that comes with the saved life.

The challenge of believers is to break out of the cycle of defeat that Satan is trying to impose on us and reach for the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ.

To break out of the cycle of defeat, believers must commit themselves to do things differently; to break the patterns that have held us back.

Satan wants us to have a re-run of the negativity that he uses to cause us to stumble. If our lives were television shows, Satan would be trying to get us to live re-runs when what we really need is a new season. Our new season may have the same format but with a fresh new storyline, a few new character twists and other changes that would improve our show. However, if our study habits are the same and our relationships and personal performance is the same, then we already know how the show will end; it will end as it always does. No matter how many times you watch a re-run, it always ends the same way. You can stop the tape, play it backward, or fast forward, but it will end the same way.

If Satan can get us to continue to do the same things he will hinder our progress. Even if we do it faster, slower or play it backward, the end will be the same, a re-run.

Today, believers should focus on those things that will help us to break out of the routine and jump to the head of the race.

The truth is, "Our God will supply all of our needs through Christ Jesus!"

The truth is, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me!"

The truth is, "Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ!"

As Christians, we are challenged to continue serving the Lord with great faith. We

know that our God is able to deliver us and to make a way for us! We are on our way and there "Ain't no stopping us now!"

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to believers in Galatia, urging them not to be stopped or hindered in their pursuit of Gospel truths.

The overall theme of the passage is that the church should not be hindered in its efforts to promote the truths of Jesus Christ. It is both a message to the corporate church and it is a personal message to individual believers.

As a message to the corporate church, Paul warns the church not to be hindered by misinformation, confusions or untruths that would cause the church to break its steady pace toward establishing the kingdom of God. Specifically, there was misinformation about whether or not circumcision should be required for salvation. Paul reminded believers that even discussion of such issues served to hinder the church's work as members lose focus.

However, the message to the believers is personal: If you have been running for Jesus reasonably well, don't let anything stop you from continuing.

Speaking to the Galatians he said, "Ye did, run well, who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?"

Here Paul makes another of his famous athletic comparisons. Runners in the Olympiad often ran in lanes, but a competitor sometimes jumped lanes to cause his opponent to slow down or "hinder" their pace. Both runners continue running, but one loses his stride and falls behind because of the "hindrance."

That makes the message to believers very clear, don't be hindered by distractions, press on toward the prize in the name of Jesus.

What we must do!

From Paul's letter to the Galatians Christian can do at least three things to demonstrate that we will not be stopped:

DON'T BACKUP: Often we are hindered by the presence of so many issues in our lives that we give up and throw up our hands. We are dealing with so much stuff that we really cannot focus on the important things in your life. Before you could finish dealing with one issue, there was another and another. All progress stops!

Dealing with "stuff" has prevented that quality time we wanted with our families or that service we wanted to give to the church. All of the stuff that we deal with does not make us any happier; mostly it poses stumbling blocks for us.

Hebrews 12:1 suggests that we should turn aside from stuff that blocks our way. It says, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." To progress, we must not let "stuff" get in the way, make us afraid to face the future and back down.

We must be determined to say, "Stuff" will not stop me from achieving my Godly purpose. I'm on my way and there ain't no stopping me now!

DON'T BACK DOWN: We are often hindered out of fear; it has immobilized thousands and frozen the activities of millions. When life growls at us like Goliath, we must face life's challenges with courage and refuse to back down.

It takes courage to deal with sickness and disease!

It takes courage to deal with poverty and depression!

It takes courage to keep going forward when it would be much easier to lay down your sword and shield.

It takes courage to say no to wrongdoing and to speak up for what is right.

Joshua 1:9 says, "Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Maybe that's why the songwriter wrote, "Be not dismayed whatever betide; God will take care of you. God will take care of you. Through every day over all the way. He will take care of you!

DON'T BACK OUT: The first way to know that we are being hindered is when we start to neglect our service to the kingdom. Something in the word hinders us when we start to back out of duties to God. We back out of worship attendance. We back out of Bible Study. We back out of paying out tithes. We back out of effectual fervent prayer! When we back out, we have been hindered.

Paul asked the question, "Who doth hinder you?" The answer is Satan hinders us. He gets in our way, and our service to the Kingdom falters.

Even as Satan tries to put stumbling blocks in our way I hear what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58 "..Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord…"

Don't back down! Don't back up and don't back out!

Don't get weary of running the race that you have been running for Jesus. I hear the Reverend James Cleveland's words ringing across time, "I don't feel noways tired. I've come to far from where I started from. Nobody told me that the road would be easy. I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me."

It is time for all of us to move up

Finally, brothers and sisters, we as believers must resolve that we will not be sidetracked in our journey toward the Kingdom of God.

The question Paul asks still lingers, "What hinders you?" It is the same question that he angels asked the disciples on the day Jesus went back to heaven in Acts 1:11, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens? The same shall Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

With so much to do and so little time in which to get it done, we don't have time to be gazing into the heavens!

We must prepare to march forward with the glorified church, confident that the Lord

will make a way somehow!

We may not know exactly how we will get it done, but in our prayer every now and then we ask the Lord....show me thy way. Doctor Watts put it this way, "Guide me o thou great Jehovah, pilgrim in this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thou powerful hand."

Any man who runs a race needs to be sure that there is a victory cup at the end of the race.

We have been given this assurance, that if we run this race, with our faith intact that God will give us the victory.

That's why I say, "Ain't no stopping me now, I'm pressing on!"

I'm pressing on because, I want to enter that land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul...and a land where we'll never grow old."

Ain't no stopping me now!

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in the place where the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at rest.

I'm pressing on because, I want to see that day when the mountains shall be made low, and the valleys will be hollowed out.

Ain't no stopping me now!

I'm pressing on because, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in!

I'm pressing on because, I want to put on my robe and walk with the elders and see every inch of heaven from pillar to post.

Ain't no stopping me now because I'm on my way!

I want to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

I want to see the streets paved with gold!

I want to see the city that sits on twelve foundations with twelve gates made from solid pearls!

I want to see the city where hearse wheels won't roll!

I want to see the city where every day will be Sunday and it'll always be howdy and never good-bye!

I don't know about you, but I want to see Jesus!

Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith!

Jesus, who said I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but arose early Sunday morning!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!

No more sickness and pain!

Come and go with me to my Father's house!

There'll be joy, joy, joy!

No. 9688-Inspiration

When hell shows up in a heavenly place

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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June 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among, them. Job 1:6; "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye maybe able to stand Against the wiles of the devil. For we Wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Ephesians 6:1-13.

Introduction

How did you feel when you heard the news that there had been another mass murder in the nation? When the news broke, many people dropped their heads, and the entire nation felt a stabbing pain in its collective soul when we realized that yet another act of terror had occurred on our shores; this time inflicted upon African-American Christians. What made this murder so troubling to us is that it occurred in a church while believers were in prayer.

A young man, whose name is not worthy to be spoken, drove to Charleston, South Carolina and went into a historic Black church where a few of its members had gathered to pray. For an hour, he came into a heavenly place that was filled with love and compassion. During that hour, the dozen people there talked with him, shared their testimonies and prayed together. He was nearly overwhelmed with the peace, joy and fellowship of that night. Then suddenly, he arose and pulled out a pistol and began shooting the very people who welcomed him to a heavenly experience. As bullets pierced their bodies and their blood spilled onto the floor a cry must have gone up to heaven from the depths of their faith, "Father forgive him because he knows not what he is doing."

It was a horrible and terrifying moment, amplified in its tragedy because it took place in the basement of a building that had been dedicated to the worship of God.

The young man was reportedly angry because a segment of God's people was growing faster that he believed was permissible. So he took it upon himself to do something to inspire others like himself to take action. Like a roaring lion, he went to and fro until he found the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a 150-

year-old church that was a symbol of faith, heritage and God's overwhelming ability to raise his people though embattled and scarred. He chose this church, according to his confession, because he wanted to start a race war that would ultimately end with the destruction of blacks as complacent whites rallied to defend themselves.

However, a unique thing happened. Instead of people marching in the streets, burning stores, looting and fighting the police, hundreds of people came to the site, sang hymns and bowed in prayer. Republicans and Democrats, Jews and Gentiles, and people of every race bowed.

When the young man was finally captured and brought to court, the whole world heard the mother of one of the victims speak words of forgiveness through her pain. She forgave him and asked God to have mercy on his soul.

He had brought hell into a heavenly experience. However, while he hobbled away in chains under a suicide watch, God was already moving to heal the pain in the city and nation in a way that only he could do.

Very few watched this tragedy unfold asked "Why?" because the answer was given. Instead of asking why, those who trust in the Lord are on bended knee in churches around the world, asking for mercy, grace, and even forgiveness for the shooter, who did not know that he did more to bring a divided people together than he could have ever imagined.

He meant it for evil, but God took the sting and venom out of his poisonous act and is turning it into good that will be a testament to the nine people who lost their lives when Satan slipped quietly into a heavenly place and brought the spirit of hell.

As Christians, we should follow the example of that grieving mother and ask God's forgiveness on people like that shooter. At the same time, we should be ever vigilant and aware of the works of the devil as we work to build the kingdom of God on earth.

Exposition

These texts show us why evil is so prevalent in the land while advising believers what should be done when evil pops up its wicked head.

The book of Job serves a powerful purpose in the Bible. It helps explain why bad things happen to good people. A picture is painted of God and the angels in heaven enjoying peace and love, and out of nowhere the devil pops up. He said he had been going to and fro on the earth looking for lives to destroy. He sought Godly believers to snatch out the hand of God.

At this, God asked Satan to consider Job and asserted that no matter what happened to him in life, Job would not stray from his faith and would never stop trusting God.

The Devil said Job had reason to be faithful because God had created a heavenly existence for him. He had family, resources, health, wealth and position. Take those away, said the Devil, and "he'll turn against you." All hell will break loose.

Job lost all of his health and wealth. Ten people died on the same day at the hands of Satan. It was a vain attempt to start a war between Job and Lord.

The devil was a liar. Job did not turn on his faith but wailed in agony, "Yea Though he slays me, yet will I trust him."

Paul writing to the church at Ephesus encouraged its members and all believers to prepare themselves to withstand the works of evil that may come upon them. He constantly reminded all believers that the devil was on the prowl, like a roaring lion, seeking opportunities to devour believers.

In the early church, believers were persecuted for their faith in Christ. They were assaulted, killed for sport and, otherwise ostracized for their belief in Jesus. Each person was encouraged to be sure in the faith and arm themselves with the power of God to withstand the evil attempts of the devil to destroy them.

Paul wanted to be sure that the Ephesians knew the nature of the evil one and how easily he could plunge himself into their affairs. To ensure that they were not deceived, he reminded them that the evil one was not a flesh and blood person but was spiritual in nature. As such, he could influence individuals, powers, and the very governments that operate the nation; thus, constantly they were to be on guard.

They were encouraged to put on the whole armor of God and then be prepared to withstand the evil one's influence.

Combined, both texts help believers to see that the source of all evil deeds is Satan, working through people, philosophies, and governments. The believer's response is to stay vigilant and recognize the true enemy, Satan while continuing to trust God.

The believer's response

Whenever there is a crisis, there is a tendency to respond in fear or anger. Believers, however, must respond in ways that demonstrate our faith in the power of God>

WE SHOULD NOT PANIC: When we experience loss of life or property or even witness gross injustice, believers must remember who they are and whose they are in any situation. If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith, we are likely to panic. That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard a ship and a storm developed. The shipped rocked and turned, and many on board envisioned themselves as dead men. There was no escape. The winds were too strong, and they were too far away from the bank to swim. Death appeared imminent.

Then someone remembered that Jesus was on board.

Awakening him, they asked, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

Jesus came to the deck, unmoved by the storm and said, Peace be still.

Our fear sees the worse that can happen.

Our faith knows the best that can happen.

Our fear sees the downside of the situation.

Our faith sees every situation as an opportunity to stir the dormant power of God within us that speaks to the storm and says, Peace be still.

That's why believers pray fervently after a tragedy because we know that our God is able to silence the storm!

DON'T GIVE THE DEVIL HIS VICTORY: In Charleston, the shooter announced

that he wanted to start a race war. He wanted Blacks to become angry and march in the streets, burning, killing and looting, baiting whites to confront them. Although he succeeded in taking nine lives, believers have not given the devil the victory he sought. They expressed forgiveness and love even as they cried and wailed in pain.

The devil wants the victory in every believer's experience. He attempts to steal their happiness and their joy by presenting situations that force them to focus on their losses. Focusing on our losses can make life miserable and give the Devil his victory.

Instead, why not hear Paul say, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press forward toward the mark."

Focus on what we have now!

Focus on the legacy shared by those we lost and the continuation of the work ahead!

Concentrate on what you have now!

Concentrate on how God is blessing us now!

Concentrate on the goodness of God in all things, despite the hardships we have endured.

When we focus on what we have, we experience mega joy because we know that God is with us and has not abandoned us. The Devil is victorious if he can push believers to focus on our losses instead of our continued blessings.

In tragedy, believers should hang on to our faith as we fight back the tears because we know that God is with us, and he is good all the time; even in tragedy.

TRAGEDY PRESENTS A "YET" MOMENT: When Job experienced tremendous loss at the hands of Satan, Job 13:15 records him saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." There is power in his response. The word "Yet" described the agony, anger, and dismay he felt at that moment, but despite these feelings, there was a strong determination to be faithful. In his "yet" moment, he found strength.

In a "yet" moment, a widow woman took her last cruse of oil and meal and act on faith that her barrel would not run dry.

In a "yet" moment a woman who had an issue of blood to push our way through a crowd to touch the hem of his garment even though the prospects for success were dim.

In a "yet" moment the disciples decided to continue building the kingdom, despite the anger, fear and despondency they felt after the crucifixion.

Faith is stirred among believers in "yet" moments and gives us the inspiration to continue, even today.

Faith helps us to look beyond our present difficult situations to the time when God will work it out.

The church must continue to remind believers that a new world is coming; it will be a world here the racial injustice and tragedy will not exist.

While racism exists in this world, in the world ahead, color will not be a criterion. In the new world order, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, Africans, and a thousand other races will work side by side because all racism will be gone, Satan will not win!

Though Satan attempts to divide us, humiliate us and kill us, "Yet, we will trust God!"

We must focus on Glory!

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must not swelter in the despair of the moment. Instead, we must focus on Glory. When we focus on glory, we remember that when this old world is over, God has prepared a new world for all of the people he has made perfect with his blood.

There is a place God is preparing and that place is called heaven. It will be a place where hell won't show up, because Satan will have been defeated.

Our churches are places where we meet to pray and worship, but our church buildings are not safe havens from the Devil. He walks through our doors every Sunday and attends our Bible studies during the week.He stands in the lines at our shelters, and we hug him and shower him with love in our churches. We are not safe from the Devil in our church buildings; we actually open our doors and invite him in!

However, there is a place where the devil won't show up because he will be drowning in a lake of fire for all eternity.

This place is called heaven!

Abraham traveled all of his life, looking for this place, a city not made with hands!

Elijah received a one-way ticket to this new and eternal place, where:

-There are no wars because there is only peace in the place called heaven!

-There is no hatred because there is the only love in the place called heaven!

-There is no sadness because there is only gladness in the place called heaven!

-There is no weakness because there is only strength in the place called heaven!

-There is no death because there is only life in the place called heaven!

I know there is going to be a new world because I heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also!"

The place called heaven is a place on a far-a-away strand where we will never grow old!

The New Jerusalem will have perfect streets, made of solid Gold!

The New Jerusalem will have perfect lighting because it will be illuminated by the glory of God!

In the new and eternal world, there will be no medicine because there will be a tree in its midst that will be good for the healing of the nations!

I don't know about you, but I want to go the place called heaven.

I may be persecuted and stoned like Stephen!

I may be crucified upside down like Peter!

But nothing shall separate me from the love of God!

Satan can take his best shot, but I still believe that God sent his Son to save the world and although he died on an old rugged cross, that he arose early Sunday morning!

If you also believe in the power of love and forgiveness, mercy and faith, Come and go with me, to my father's house!

I'll take you there! Come and go with me!

Come and go with me to my Father's house!

No. 9689-Reunion

We find peace at home

By Roosevelt Wright Jr.
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July 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Hebrews 13:14

Introduction

How do you get peace and quiet in your life? Many who have left home are now returning because only at home can they find the peace for which their soul yearns. Some have never known a real peaceful life; their lives are filled with desperate activity.

Those who have known a time of peace and tranquility yearn for its return. It is invaluable to them. A wise old gentleman retired and purchased a modest home near a junior high school. He spent the first few weeks of his retirement in peace and contentment. Then a new school year began. The very next afternoon three young boys, full of youthful, after-school enthusiasm, came down his street, beating merrily on every trash can they encountered. The crashing percussion continued day after day until finally the wise old man decided it was time to take some action.

The next afternoon, he walked out to meet the young percussionists as they banged their way down the street. Stopping them, he said, "You kids are a lot of fun. I like to see you express your exuberance like that. In fact, I use to do the same thing when I was your age. Will you do me a favor? I'll give you each a dollar if you promise to come around every day and do your thing. The kids were elated and continued to do a bang-up job on the trashcans.

After a few days, the old-timer greeted the kids again, but this time, he had a sad smile on his face. This recession's really putting a big dent in my income, he told them. From now on, I'll only be able to pay you 50 cents to beat on the cans.

The noisemakers were obviously displeased, but they did accept his offer and continued their afternoon ruckus. A few days later, the wily retiree approached them again as they drummed their way down the street.

Look, he said, "I haven't received my Social Security check yet, so I'm not going to be able to give you more than 25 cents. Will that be okay?" "A lousy quarter" The drum leader exclaimed. "If you think we're going to waste our time, beating these cans around for a quarter, you're nuts! No way, mister. If you want somebody to beat on those cans for you, you do it yourself!!" And the old man enjoyed peace and serenity for the rest of his days.

As Christians, we won't need to resort to the old man's tricks, but we do yearn for the peace and tranquility that comes from knowing the Lord. It's a yearning for the peace they find at home in the Lord as we look to the kingdom ahead. It is coming soon, and we look forward to that day. We are coming home for reunions now, but soon we will all be a part of that great reunion when all the saints are gathering home. And we'll tell the story of how we overcome!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the concluding thoughts of the Book of Hebrews which is for believers to dedicate themselves to seeking their heavenly home.

The writer of Hebrews spent considerable time trying to explain the nature of the Christian life. More than anything else he explained that it was a faith walk that did not require the rituals and symbols of Judaism.

After rehearsing all of the principles of faith listed in chapter 11, the writer closes by reminding each believer that Christ himself became the sin offering for the people. Symbolically, he moved it outside of the gate just as the bodies of sacrificed animals were taken outside of the gate.

Believers were reminded to stay outside of the old ways of Judaism because they were on their way to a different destination. The text describes it as having "no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Until they get to that city, they were encouraged to: live sacrificially and give thanks to God. (Hebrews 13:15) Do good works. (v16); Obey them that have rule over them. (v17) Pray and live honestly. (v18).

In verse 23 he seems to close with a phrase familiar to our ears, "I'll see you."

What a Time!

Over the years, the church has helped believers withstand the troubles of our times. No matter where we travel or how far we have gone, we still remember the love of the church back home.

Our heritage is one that is filled with struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life-threatening situations, we have reason to celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself.

Because we know he will never leave us alone, we should celebrate!

When we come home, we remember the places where we first met the Lord and we celebrate!

When we come home, we give him praise for the journey!

We praise him because he has been with us as we walked through the valley of the shadow of death, that's why we are celebrating today!

We are different at every reunion Illustration

We have changed over the years. We don't look the same. We don't talk the same. For many of us, our lives are better than they were when we left. Barabara Johnson in her book, "I'm so glad you told me what I didn't wanna hear" notes that at your twenty-fifth class reunion you wear a name tag so your classmates will remember who you are. At your fiftieth reunion, you wear one so you will know who you are.

No, we don't look the same, but that's a good thing! Why? Because the scriptures say that any man who is in Christ is a "new creature, old things are passed and all things become new."

If you are looking at me at this reunion remember, I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I ought to be, but thank God I'm not what I used to be.

We Celebrate Our Heritage

There are many reasons that we come home, but the main reason is to celebrate our heritage. We celebrate the road we have traveled, and we remember the good times. Each memory is a testament to our joy as recipients of the goodness of the Lord.

Isaiah said Israel would celebrate when the people return home. He said there would be joy at Israel's grand reunion. The same is true for believers today. Many return home for class and family reunions. It is a time of renewal, reflection, and celebration. There is plenty of laughter and a nostalgic reflection on the struggles of the past.

When reunions are celebrated, celebrants know that God has helped them to see their way through each year that has passed. Each may have changed in their appearance, but the God that brought each person through has not changed. He is still God, and He is still blessing them today.

There is excitement in the voice of each person who tells how God healed them and brought them back to life.

Many voices are raised and eyes are widened as we are told how God touched lives and changed them.

Those who were failing but now stand on the pinnacles of success tell of their epiphanies and life-changing experiences.

It all makes each person desire to testify to the goodness and greatness of God.

They get excited.

Kirk Franklin in his classic song said, "I can't explain it, I can't obtain it, Jesus your love is so amazing, it gets me high up in the sky and when I think about your goodness it makes me wanna stomp, it makes me clap my hands, makes me wanna dance and stomp."

When we think of how God has been better to us than we have been to ourselves, we all feel like dancing in the desert.

Who would have thought?

When we return home, those who see what we have become they have become are amazed. Sometimes they are amazed at our change in physical statue, but more often than not, they are amazed at who we have become in the Lord.

Who would have thought that the hottest girl in the senior class would be the coolest mother of the church? Who would have thought that Mr. Hot lips would ever open his mouth to witness for God? Who would have thought that the class failure would actually turn out to be one of the most successful members of his class? Individuals should also look back over the journey they have traveled.

Today, many are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent civic personalities. When we think back, we remember the way we were and recognize that this has not always been the case.. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you:, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Better than ever

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider when we return home in the Lord, it will be better than it used to be! It will be better because there is peace in the Lord! Israel hoped to see the same walls rebuilt. It could not envision anything better than the sacred walls of Zion.

Israel's hope only extended to the restoration of what once was.
However, God planned to go much further than simply returning them to the old days because even the old days were not without their own unique problems and difficulties. God is planning for us, but what he is planning is better than it used to be! What he is planning will bring us peace and joy!

How can anything be better than the way it used to be? We can't imagine it, but eye hath not seen nor can we imagine the good things that God has in store for those who love him!

The way it used to be, folks had clothes that they wore to work during the week, then they had their Sunday clothes. Everybody had Sunday clothes and Sunday Shoes. God's got something better than the way it used to be, because, in the new Jerusalem, every day will be Sunday. It will always be howdy and never goodbye!

The way it used to be, whenever folks got sick, big mama always had a home remedy, Sassafras was the laxative, hot toddies when you had a cold. But God has something better than it used to be, because over yonder, in the New Jerusalem, God is going to plant a tree that will bear 12 manners of fruit, whose leaves will be good for the healing of the nation!

The way it used to be, children were told to come in before the sun goes down because it gets dangerous when it gets dark. God's got something better than it used to be, in the new Jerusalem it will never get dark because the light of the Lord will shine everywhere!

The way it used to be, when someone had a problem friends would gather around them and wipe their tears away. But God's got something better than the way it used to be because, in the new Jerusalem, God shall wipe their tears away!

Bye and Bye, when the morning comes, we'll see a day that will be better than it used to be!

Bye and Bye, when the morning comes, we'll enjoy life eternal, that will be better than it used to be!

Bye and bye, when the morning comes, no matter how good it was, we'll enjoy a life that will be better than it used to be!

Bye and Bye it will be better!

When the morning comes, when the saints of God are gathering home.

We'll tell the story of how we've overcome!

We'll tell the story!

We'll tell the world about Jesus..how he died on Calvary and early Sunday morning, arose from the Grave!

Bye and Bye, it will be better than it used to be!

No. 9690-Inspiration

Feeling God's Love

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

Have you ever felt God's Love? When did you first learn about it? If you are like most people, you first heard about God's love in a children's song. The song was "Yes, Jesus loves me." Do you remember the words? Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak, but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. For the Bible tells me so.

The song represents a personal belief that is reflected in the life they live and in the testimony they give. A child learns the words to the song and then looks to the teacher for life examples of what the song means.

As Christians, we rejoice in the fact that God loves us. His love transcends our weaknesses and shortcomings. We know this because the Bible tells us so.

Exposition

This text focuses on John explaining the nature of Christ's divine role in the salvation of mankind.

The text first identifies the source of the gift: "God." The Godhead consists of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. When the text notes that "God" gave it indicates a decision made by all three members of the Godhead. 1 John 5:7 indicates that the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit are "one." When the text says, "God" it means the all-powerful creator of the universe, in all of his capacities, made a decision.

The text used the word "Loved." The form of love used here is from the Greek "Agape" which refers to God's unconditional love. It is different from eros or romantic love or Storge, the family love or even Philia or brotherly love. This is the kind of love that does not require men to love back.

Look at the word "Gave." This implies that the sacrifice made by the Son will not be forced, but will be given. This is why Jesus said, "no greater love" can be shown

than that of a man who “lays down his life for his friends.”

The word “begotten” indicates a historical anomaly. When Mary gave birth to Jesus it was the first and only time that a member of the Godhead would come to earth in a bodily form. Mary was the first and only surrogate mother used to bring a member of the Godhead into this world. Because of his spiritual conception and immaculate birth circumstance, Jesus became God’s only “begotten” son.

Pay close attention to “Should not” perish. The phrase “should not” implies that an opportunity for salvation is being provided, but there is always the possibility that the intended recipient might not accept. There have been many over the years who have turned down the opportunity for eternal life and have lost heaven. Therefore, John said, “should not” perish to emphasize that God has made it possible, but it is the responsibility of mankind to accept.

Everlasting life is promised in the text. This is not a finite existence that is limited by this mortal body in which we reside. Everlasting is eternal. It is infinite. It has no end.

Thus, the text says from the beginning of time God loved the world so much that he prepared a way to save it from itself. The method would be to take their sins upon himself in the person of his “begotten” son who will offer eternal life in exchange for their faith and obedience.

Love Comes With A Price

God showed us his love, but love comes at a price. When we experience painful situations we are prompted to make sacrifices we would not normally make to achieve the greater good. Pain and sacrifice are integral parts of the Christian experience.

The promise of eternal life would not come without the pain of the cross. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Before the crown, there must be a cross. Before the sinful people of the world can receive salvation, there must be the agony of Calvary.

Before the sweet, easy life of heaven, every believer had to be prepared to go through a little hell on earth.

God painfully gave us his Son. With that in mind, believers have willingly responded to painful situations and made sacrifices of property and life to achieve the aims of the kingdom.

The words of the songwriter are clear, no cross, no crown.

God showed us real love

There have been many definitions given as the meaning of love, but this text shows us the greatest meaning of the word.

Some have the child’s estimate of love; that love is a feeling that you feel when you feel like you’ve never felt before, and you’ll never feel anymore.

Others have Tina Turner’s concept of love...that it is just a second-hand emotion; a physical thing between two people.

Some have the Philistine's concept of love. They said to Delilah, We want you to use the beauties of your body and go in and discover the secret of the strength of Samson. I can hear Delilah saying; I don't love Samson and the Philistine's response might have been What's love got to do with it? They viewed love as simply a means to achieve an end.

There are some who have the Solomonian concept of love. He viewed love as strictly a physical thing. He married 300 women and maintained 700 state-financed concubines. With 1000 women at his beck and call, to Solomon love was just a physical thing.

Today we should be reminded that real love is about God because God is love.

God's love is more than just words

What if we could really love someone the way God loved the world in this text? Wouldn't that be wonderful? It would be wonderful because what we would actually be saying when we say "I love you," is "I love you the way God loves me." How is that? 1 John 4:16 says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Since God is love the phrase "I love you" is "I God you." God loves us unconditionally and without a reason. Even when God is angry with us; he loves us. Even when we separate ourselves from him, he loves us. Even when we act stupidly, selfishly, or thoughtlessly, he continues to love us.

The love of God is indescribable. It's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote,

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me.
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame,
O magnify the precious Name of Jesus.
Praise His Name!

Another songwriter summed it up this way, "Oh how I love Jesus. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me."

God gave us his love

Finally, brothers and sisters, the text shows us how God loved the world, but our job is to try to love our neighbors and associates with the love he showed to us. It would be great if we could give the Lord what he gave us. He gave us love.

The songwriter said, Oh how I love Jesus, because he first loved me.

It would be wonderful if we would give him our trust and devotion.

God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son, but it would be

great if we gave the Lord:

-A little more love and a little less hate;

-A little more peace and a little less confusion;

-A little more gratitude and a little less ungratefulness;

-A little more prayer and a little less lip service;

-A little more compassion and a little less heartlessness;

-A little more real Christian love and a little less imitation;

-A little more do as I do and a little less do as I say

-A little more bended knee and little less crooked hearts

Can't you hear God in your imagination, trying to make a decision?

I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!

I could give them the moon, but after awhile, the moon would cease to shine!

I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for a short time and then comes the fall!

I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!

I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life, but there will come a time when storms will rise!

I want to give them a gift that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

I want to give them a gift that will give them:

STRENGTH when they are feeling a little weak; COMFORT when they are feeling all alone!

VICTORY after they have suffered a defeat; HOPE when all hope is gone!

LIFTED HEAD when they are bowed down low; SIGHT when they can't see their way!

What kind of Gift can God give? John gave us the decision: For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!

He gave the gift that keeps on giving!

He was born in a manger, and he kept on giving!

He was wounded for our transgressions, and he kept on giving!

He was bruised for our iniquities, and he kept on giving!

They whipped him and tried him all night long, but he did not stop there; he kept on giving!

They put a crown of thorns on his head, and he kept on giving!

They hung him up high and stretched him out wide, but he kept on giving!

He died out on Calvary, but even in death, he kept on giving!

Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I'm so glad that God gave his only begotten son!

He gave me a love that I can feel.

I know he lives because every now and then I can ….feel him!

No. 9691-Inspiration

And when they were come to Calvary

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 19, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." Luke 23:33

Introduction

What happens when we have a personal encounter with the Lord? Is there a difference in our countenance? Do we remain the same? There are very few who meet the Lord in his holy place who leave untouched.

Moses went atop a mountain and communed with God in a 40-day retreat, but when he returned he was a physically and emotionally different person.

Saul communed with God for three days but arose a changed man.

Those who have been to Calvary leave with a connection they will never lose. Consider Bragging Bennie, who refused to go to any church because if he ever needed anything, he personally knew every person of influence in the world. He bragged about it all of the time in the barber shop and laughed at all of the church folks saying, "You need to get you some come connections!" One day Peter challenged Bragging Bennie to put up or shut up. Bennie Bragged that he knew Denzel Washington and to prove it; they flew to California where Denzel greeted Bennie, and they exchanged jokes. Peter thought it was a fluke, so he asked about President Obama. "Sure, I know him personally." They flew to Washington where Bennie was greeted by the Secret Service and ushered right in to meet with Barack and Michelle. "Wow, that's something," said Peter impressed, especially when Bennie invited him to meet the Pope. The guards in Rome recognized him immediately and ushered him up to meet the Pope for Coffee just before he stepped out on the balcony to wave at the public! On the way home, Bennie fell to the floor at the airport. He apparently had a heart attack. Bennie panicked. Everyone around him screamed and shouted. While they screamed for help, Peter dropped to his knees and began to pray. "What are you doing?" asked Bennie. "I need help!" Peter opened his eyes and looked at Bennie, "You know Denzel, Barack, and the Pope. I don't know all of them fancy people, but there is a reason they call me Praying Peter. It's because I know the Lord and when I call him, he will answer." – Bennie had a hookup with many people, but he had no connection with the Lord!

The crosses of the malefactors at Calvary represent the state of the world then and today. On Calvary, one cross represented those who come face to face with God and reject him while the other cross represents those who accept the Savior and receive a promise that extends into paradise. When they came to Calvary, one received a reward; one completed a divine task, and another rejected an offer from God.

The three crosses on Calvary symbolized human defeat and spiritual victory. They symbolized penitence, stubbornness, and forgiveness.

As Christians, we gladly tell the world that we came to Jesus in a wretched state, but thanks to the blood of Christ we have been redeemed and given a second chance.

Exposition

This text focuses on the placed called "Calvary" where Jesus was crucified.

Calvary is perhaps one of the best-known sites in the Bible. It has been the subject of songs, movies, and testimonies detailing its mysteries. It is an important place to every Christian and the name is synonymous to Salvation to our ears.

To many, it is referred to as "Mt. Calvary." In reality, however, Calvary was not a mountain and the name "Mount Calvary" is not in the Bible at all. The single word Calvary is there. It means "place of the skull" in its Hebrew translation. In fact, except for the Mount of Olives, there is nothing near the vicinity of Jerusalem that even looks like a mountain. All of Jerusalem itself is a mountain, Mt. Zion, but there was no mountain in Jerusalem called Mt. Calvary.

The place called Calvary, according to archeologists, was more of a hill than a mountain. A mountain would have required a long and tedious climb and the likelihood of men carrying crosses up their ridges would have been slim.

Somehow, believers who think about Calvary think of the awesome events that took place there and feel that because of the agony endured and the blood shed, that it should have been a mountain.

Although Calvary is not a mountain, it does symbolize our victory over the forces of evil.

When believers think of Calvary, we think of Christ sacrificing himself for our sins.

When we think of Calvary, we think of the one place where the love of God was demonstrated to mankind.

And, when we think of Calvary in the abstract, we think of coming before God in a way that demonstrates our faithful submission to his will.

When we think of Calvary, we are serious about our relationship with God as we stand awed at the enormity of the sacrifice made for us.

We surrender when we come to Calvary

Those who come to Calvary surrender themselves to the Lord. The thief on the cross was the first to surrender, acknowledging that he deserved to be on the cross. He humbled himself before Christ, even though he was nailed to a cross.

While his contemporary laughed, this thief said, “Master remember me when you enter into your kingdom.”

Today, we have the same compelling need as that thief; to humble ourselves before God. We must surrender ourselves to God.

What does that mean?

It means that we must give up our entire way of seeing and measuring things and see the world through Kingdom glasses.

When we come to Calvary, we surrender our sense of personal confidence.

This is the notion that we can accomplish anything, alone.

When we surrender to God, we abandon the attitude that says, I don’t need God for anything.

When we come to Calvary we see our helpless estate and begin to say:

“I can’t succeed in business, school or my profession without God’s blessings.”

Once that is done then kingdom building becomes the highest priority.

Surrendering requires us to put our own goals on the back burner and to put those of Christ on the front burner.

Those who are able to surrender themselves can say with the songwriter, All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give. I will ever love and trust him; in his presence daily live.

I surrender all.

I surrender all.

All to thee my blessed Savior; I surrender all.

When we come to Calvary, we gain God’s mercy

Hanging from the Cross, Christ looked at his mother and had mercy on her. He told her to accept John as her son and charged John to to view her as his mother. It was a merciful act because Mary would need help. It is not clear whether Joseph was still alive or had abandoned the mission, but only Mary is mentioned at the crucifixion, leading scholars to believe that Mary would probably need to provide for herself. Placing her in the hands of John was an act of mercy.

Also, it was an act of mercy for Jesus to cry out to his father, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Today, those who come to Calvary come seeking mercy. Jesus knows our needs, our weaknesses, and strengths. He knows our financial situation, our family issues, and personal problems. When we come to Calvary, we come before him seeking mercy. We the seek same mercy he showed to Mary, to pay attention to her personal needs; and the same attention he showed even to his enemies, forgiving them for taking his life, he offers to anyone who comes to Calvary seeking mercy and grace.

We attract God’s favor when we come to Calvary

The repentant thief found favor in the eyesight of the Lord. Even though he was dying on the cross, Jesus said, “Today, you’ll be with me in paradise.”

Proverbs 8:35, says, “For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.”

Those who come to Calvary today, come seeking surrender, mercy and they seek God’s favor. In return for favor, we promise to put him first in our lives and seek to build his kingdom at every opportunity. When we come to Calvary with that attitude, God is pleased. He smiles on us and gives us favor. His favor may come in many forms. It may come as a long life. It may come through a large and happy family. It may come through health or speedy recoveries. His favor could be adequate finances or pleasant surroundings. When we come to Calvary, we come seeking to do his will. At Calvary, he meets us there and gives us his smile and shows us his favor.

Lives are transformed when we come to Calvary

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we come to Calvary our lives are transformed. Every chance we get, those who have been to Calvary must testify to the world that we have been transformed and by nothing other than the blood of Christ.

Only the blood can transform a nobody into a somebody!

Matthew came to Calvary, and he will tell you that only the blood can transform a tax collector into a Missionary!

Peter came to Calvary, and he will tell you that only the blood can take a man from the fish pond and make him a fisher of men!

Paul came to Calvary on the Damascus Road, and he will tell you that only the blood can take a persecutor of the church and transform him into a perpetuator of the kingdom of God!

Woman with five husbands and one old man came to Calvary at the well, and she will tell you that only the blood can transform a life so much that she would run through the streets saying, “Come see a man who told me all I’ve ever done!”

Esther came to Calvary in the throne room of a Persian King. She will tell us that only the blood of the lamb can take a lowly Jewish girl and make her the queen of a mighty nation!

The power of the blood transforms our despair into a never-dying hope. That’s why the songwriter declared, “My hope Is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Some may say it was my education that gave me a chance in life, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

Some may think their hard work has brought them thus far, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

Some may envision themselves as the source of their own good fortune, but I disagree because I know it was the blood.

There are some things in this world that we cannot attain without the blood.

There is a fountain from which you cannot drink unless you find your way to Calvary!

There is a promise that you cannot claim, unless you find your way to Calvary!

There is a hope that you cannot enjoy, unless you find your way to Calvary!

On Calvary, there is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's vision and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain.

The songwriter asked the question, "What can wash away my sins?" Then he answered what every born again Christian already knows, it's "Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

When you've been washed in the blood, you sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and transformed it into love!

I know it was the blood that took my despair and transformed it into hope!

I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and transformed it into honor!

I know it was the blood that took my enemies and transformed it into friends!

I know it was the blood that took my worries and transformed it into confidence!

One day when I was lost, he died!

On Calvary, He died upon a cross!

On Calvary, He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!

On Calvary, He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!

But early Sunday morning he arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 9692-Inspiration

Shoes of Champions

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 26, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," Ephesians 6:15

Introduction

Have you ever counted the shoes in your closet? How many pairs do you own, five? Ten? Fifteen? Higher? Imelda Marcos, the wife of former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, has made many accomplishments in her life, but she is best known around the world for her collection of shoes which ranges from 3,000 to 7,500 pairs and are housed in a museum for others to view in awe.

We may not be close to that number, but there are many who have closets filled with shoes and can't seem to resist them.

Over the years, we have spent thousands of dollars on shoes of every size, shape, and color. Shoes have gone beyond being a simple necessity; they are now fashion statements, indicators of social status and even athletic success. Shoe companies pay champions to wear their clothing, especially their shoes. Micheal Jordan was paid $100 million in the year 2013 by Nike; Lebron James gets $30 million a year and has grossed over $326 million so far. Chicago Bulls star Derrick Rose has a $260 million deal.

Why so much money? The companies know that if a champion wears their shoes, others will wear them, too because everyone wants to wear the shoes of champions.

Today, when young people think of shoes of the Champions, they think of the shoes worn by the champions of their generation. Before 1984, there was only one shoe that was thought to be the shoe of the champions and that was the "Converse Allstar." If a player was worth anything, he wore Allstars. In the last 30 years, the shoes of the champions have included: the 1984 Converse All Star Pro, the 1990 Reebok Pump, the 1997 Adidas EQT Elevation, the 2004 Air Jordan Nu Retro, the 2011 Nike Air Max Flyby, the 2014 Adidas Crazy 1. And today's champion, LeBron James wore the Nike Lebron 10 most of the 2015 season.

So, we know the shoes of our athletic champions, but what shoes should a Christian warrior wear? Not the physical shoes, but what spiritual should a believer wear? We wear Gospel shoes! These shoes help us tell the good news. We only need one pair, and we have a contract with the father who promises rewards if we wear them faithfully to the end.

As Christians, we should stay ready to promote the kingdom of God. Just as the public watches the shoes of champions, the public also watches the faith of a believer. We are conquerors, and our lives should show it every day!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains how Christians should be ready to advance the kingdom of the Savior.

The saint's attire is to consist of: Loincloth, breastplate, shoes, shield and helmet. These were the soldiers attire of his time. Each generation since has had its version of the elements, but the truth remains unchanged, "If you are on the battlefield for the Lord, you should be prepared."

When Paul referenced shoes, he said the feet of believers should be "shot with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The indication is that believer must be prepared walk into many areas in the kingdom-building effort. We must be prepared to walk on snakes, walk through sticker bushes, and tread rough terrains.

When we are walking for Jesus, we are walking without weariness and running without fainting.

Wearing the Gospel shoes a saint can say, "I can do all things when my soul is at peace with God. There are no sufferings that shall move my soul to pain, no terrors that will shake me; there are no wounds that shall compel me to an ignominious fear when my spirit is at peace with God. Wearing Godly shoes a little man becomes a giant. He becomes mightiest of the mighty. God makes him great because he wears shoes of a spiritual champion. He his walk reflects a person at war with sin, but at peace of God.

The word "preparation" refers to "being ready." Believers should be ready to march, to stand, to climb, to fight, or whatever else he may be called on to do.

When God saved us, He commanded us to tell others what He has done for us, and what He can do for them, This command is called the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

With Gospel shoes on our feet, we need to be ready to "Go."

Shoes we wear

There are many who are wearing shoes, but they may not be shoes of spiritual champions. Sometimes our feet are shod with everything other than the Gospel of Peace. Look at the spiritual shoes that some are trying to wear:

LOAFERS: There are many who wear loafers. It's a casual shoe. It requires no shoe laces, and it's generally loose fitting. There are many who are spiritual LOAFERS. Loafers are those who waste their time. Loafers will spend their time loafing and hanging out while others will apply themselves to industry. However, we don't have

time to loaf. We must be industrious, busying ourselves in the kingdom. No church member should be satisfied being just a bench member. Our challenge is to work until our day is done.

DANCE SHOES: There are many who wear dance shoes. Dance shoes are party shoes, club shoes, or a night on the town shoes. These are shoes of the party scene. Some think they can wear dance shoes and party their way through life. Among the first lessons believers learn, is that those who succeed as Christians avoid the "party trap." A constant stream of parties distracts attention from goals and attracts unsavory elements. It's hard to focus on the Christian life if you are thinking about the next party: what you will wear, who will be there. Very little thought is given to God and how you will build the kingdom. Dancing itself is not the problem; it is a form of recreation, however, when dancing consumes our thoughts and actions it interferes with the Christian life. Dance shoes are not the shoes of gospel champions.

STILETTOS: Are shoes with very high heels. Those who wear them appear taller than they actually are; they are rarely worn by truly tall people. There are many people who have a stiletto mindset. They appear tall in their substance and reach, but aren't really tall at all. It's not wise to wear stilettos on soggy ground, to walk on them on slippery surfaces or try to run in them. Yet, believers are called upon to walk in unfamiliar, dangerous and slippery places to build the kingdom. Stilettos may be good for fashion statements, but at the least, they are awkward and cumbersome with respect to kingdom-building activities. They are not the shoes of champions.

SLIPPERS: Slippers are lightweight shoes. There is nothing keeping the feet in or stopping them from getting out. Those who wear these shoes find that their feet can easily slip in and slip it. There are many people who are slippers because they try to get through life the slick way. They want to live the slick way, without really trying. Some may be legal, but impractical. Some will border on the illegal and immoral. Slippers are not the shoes of champions.

RUNNING SHOES: Some attempt to dash effortlessly through life spending as little time as they can on life's important matters. They run to do this and run to do that. They run here and there. If they stop to talk with a friend or even come to church, after a few minutes they look at their watches impatiently and soon say "I gotta run." Running shoes are worn by those who approach life with haste. Yet, I hear Isaiah saying, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint."

We should also be careful of:

BROGANS because they may cause you to walk on people.

TAP SHOES because all you will do is make a lot of noise.

DRESS SHOES because you may be too pretty to work.

HOUSE SHOES because you'll never want to leave home.

If you want to wear the shoes of champions, you must put on your running shoes.

Ephesians 6:15 says we should "shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

Put on the shoes

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must know that when our feet are shod with the Good news of the kingdom of God, we are wearing spiritual shoes, the shoes of champions!

The Gospel shoes are shoes that have been worn by millions of believers before us.

Joshua wore these shoes when he stood in front of Israel and declared, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”

Job wore these shoes when he declared, ‘Yea though he slay me, yet will I serve him.”

A little boy wore these shoes when Jesus took his lunch box of two fishes and five loaves of bread and fed five thousand.

Paul wore these shoes when he preached before Felix and Drusilla about temperance, justice and judgment to come!

These are the shoes of champions!

They are not made by Nike or Adidas!

These shoes are blessed shoes crafted in the workshops of heaven and blessed by the Lord!

Wearing these shoes, we are able to say, “I can do all things that strengthens me through Christ Jesus!”

Wearing these shoes, we can boldly go to the throne of grace and seek the mercy of God!

Those who wear these shoes of champions are those who feed the hungry in Jesus’ name!

When a new pair of Jordans is about to be released, people stand in long lines for hours to be the first one to get the new shoes. They want to be the first ones wearing the new shoe so they will have something to shout about!

We don’t have to stand in line to get the shoes of champions because we already have something to shout about!

We’re shouting because of what he has done for us!

We’re shouting because of what we expect him to do for us!

We’re shouting because of what he’s been to us, and we just can’t keep it to ourselves.

Every time we think about the mountains we’ve climbed and the valleys we have crossed, we feel a shout coming on!

He’s been a lawyer in my courtroom!

He’s been a doctor in my sick room!

He’s been a bridge over troubling waters!

He picked up an old rugged cross and shouldered the burden of my sin!

Out on Calvary, he died, that I might live!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb.!

But, early Sunday morning, arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9693-Inspiration

Back to the future

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the North Louisiana Old Line Association
Monroe, La.

July 28, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed!" Malachi 3:6

Introduction

What is the future of the church? If you are like many believers, there are times when you look at the current trends and direction of the church and shake your head in despair. It seems that in many ways, the church is plunging into the future like a runaway train with no brakes or like an airplane that has drifted off course. What we see when we ponder the future is both unsettling and encouraging. It is unsettling because we see a church that is spinning around aimlessly in confusion. It is encouraging because we see a God who is still in control.

In 1970, Alvin Toffler wrote a book that made some scary predictions; it was called, "Future Shock." In his book, he said that in the future, which is now, the idea of disposability will dominate the American culture: disposable napkins, lighters, ballpoint pens and even relationships. His idea of disposability says, "Expect nothing to last; when it runs out or down, get another." To put it another way, we use the words of that great poet Johnny Taylor who said, "It's cheaper to keep her," but disposability says, "Never intend to keep her, rent her, use her and dump her." Toffler says disposability will result in fewer marriages, more short-term relationships, one night stands, and dysfunction.

This idea of rapid change and disposability will come so fast and hard that those who cannot adjust will be hit with a wave of what Toffler calls, "Future Shock." Associated with disposability is Toffler's idea of transience. Transience refers to moving quickly from one thing to another, putting down no roots and avoiding anything that's permanent. Today, no one expects a single job to last 30 years, an employee to stay on a job more than five years, a young news reporter at a TV station to last more than 18 months, a pastor of a church to last more than ten years, or a person to keep the same cell phone number for more than two years.

It's unsettling, but it's encouraging because God is still in control.

The changes that Toffler talked about have affected the church, but often we have not noticed. Since fewer people want anything permanent, fewer people are joining traditional churches with set beliefs and practices. More people are becoming "non-

denominational" where doctrines can change to fit current trends, and even the name "church" has been exchanged for "worship center." I hear Jesus say, "Upon this rock I'll build my church," not my worship center.

Even Sunday has changed. It times past, Sunday was considered the Lord's Day. The world came to a screeching halt on Sunday: businesses closed, governments shut down, and only essential services were provided. No one mowed their lawns, washed clothes, cars, or performed domestic chores on Sunday. Sunday was God's Day. It was Sunday School, worship, BTU, and night worship. Today, Sunday Is considered a personal day for recreation and fun. It's a day for football, fishing, mowing the lawn and chilling. To accommodate this aspect of change, many businesses now open on Sunday and so are bars, casinos, and other distractions. The church feels the change because Sunday School attendance has declined, night services have almost disappeared, and BTU has gone with the wind. Those who attend Sunday worships want them shorter. If worships are long, many come late and leave before the benediction. Toffler predicted that in the 21st-century people will reject anything that takes a long time: from 15-minute grits to a long sermon, including this one.

It's unsettling, but it is encouraging because God is still in control.

The moral order has changed. Homosexual relationships have been recognized by the Supreme Court and are now protected by the law of the land. The future is upon us and is shocking. Churches that enjoy tax-exempt status will be forced to choose very soon because those who preach and teach against homosexuality and lesbianism as the Bible demands, may be accused of hate crimes and find their tax-exempt status snatched away. Without a tax exemption, churches will have to pay taxes on their buildings, rental property and bank accounts. Many would no longer be exempt from taxes on their purchases or offerings.

The moral order has changed. The definition of family now includes two fathers or two mothers. Some now have one father who is transgender; he used to be a mother. And others have a mother who is now a man. They will all come to church together. They will join our choirs, play our music, teach our classes and preach our sermons. What shall we preach?

It's unsettling, but it's encouraging because God is still in control.

As Christians, we must face the changing nature of the society we live with the full knowledge that change is inevitable. It is unsettling, but it is encouraging because God is still in control.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Malachi as God speaks through him to remind Israel that despite the nation's changing circumstance that he remains unchanged and would be their salvation.

The nation had a roller coaster experience. It was enslaved in its infancy; four hundred years in Egypt. It was the envy of the world in its highest moments under King Solomon. It was again at a low point when the people were exiles and refugees. In this

text, the people returned home, but to an existence that had changed so much from what they knew.

In their despondency, God sent them a consoling message. Despite your changing situation, I am still God, and I change not.

The idea that God does not change is what theologians call the "Immutability of God." It means that God does not change in his purposes, promises, plans, and his passion. Whatever God has promised will come to be. Whatever God has planned will work itself out, and he will passionately pursue his purpose in the lives of each person and every nation.

For Israel, the consolation comes in the last part of the verse, "Therefore ye are not consumed…" For Israel, that meant that although their circumstances had changed, they should not give up hope because the God they served, is unchanged in his purpose, passion, promise, and plan for them. They would not be swallowed up by their changing situation.

The changing times in which they lived may be unsettling, but the God of Jacob remained the same and was still in control.

Facing the Future

As the Church faces the future there are at least three things that should be remembered:

DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHANGE METHODS: While it is true that God does not change, it does not mean that our methods must not change. In Solidarity with the Savior, we must face the future without fear and anxiety. We must not be intimidated by the technology that is around us. The information age is here. Every church needs a website, a Facebook Group, and email. Churches must be prepared to receive donations by credit card and through online contributions. Churches must not be married to traditions that require stockings, heels, suits and ties for worships and activities; while God does not change, methods do change. We must not be afraid to experiment and try something different, especially if what we have is not achieving results.

While our methods change, the purpose behind the method must be as constant as the God we serve. We may change the way to collect an offering, but the reason for giving has not changed. We may change the way we dress for worship or what day that we study the Bible, but the reason behind our worship and study has not changed. The God we serve remains the same, even though we live in changing times.

DON'T BE STUCK IN THE PAST: As the church faces it future, it must not get stuck in the past. A young man became frustrated when his father fell victim to dementia. A tear came to his eye when he noticed that his father was fixed in the year 1965. He knew the president, talked by the Voting Rights Act and described each day vividly as if he lived in 1965. He spoke to people who died many years ago, but they were his friends in 1965. The only way the son could communicate with him was to pretend that he saw the people and that he also lived in 1965. He was completely unaware of the world around

him because he was stuck in 1965.

Today, there are millions of believers who are stuck in the past. A great measure of whether or not you are stuck in the past is to think about whether most of your conversation is about things you plan to do or things you once did. If you speak more about what you "use" to do rather than what you are planning to do, you know that you are in danger of being stuck in the past.

A 70-year-old woman doesn't need to spend all of her time reflecting on what was, she needs to be preparing the present generation for their future. Churches can reflect on the old days, but we must constantly prepare for the next generation. Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are past, I press forward, to the high calling…" We must come to grips with the fact that yesterday is gone. When I was a child people killed a hen, popped it into a pot of boiling water, pulled its feathers, gutted it and fried it for dinner. Times have changed, if we had to do that to eat today, most of us would starve to death. We can't get stuck in the past we must keep looking forward, with our eyes on the prize.

How to get to the future

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that sometimes it might be necessary to reach back to learn from our past, but we must know how to get back to the future.

Several years ago there was a movie starring Micheal J. Fox and Claudia Wells, the name of the movie was "Back to the Future." In that movie Fox found an old Delorean car and devised a system that would push the car to 88 miles an hour and warp into the past.war, Once in the past, the problem was how to get back to the future. The Fox and the old scientist said to get back to the future they needed enough power to warp them back. They hooked up a crude hook and wire and waited for a storm night. Then they cranked up the Delorean to 88 miles an hour just in time to catch a bolt of lighting that pushed them from the past, back to the future.

Malachi went back and told Israel about its illustrious past under David and Solomon and told them about their fall. However, the book of Malachi ends with God saying, "Behold I will send you Elijah" and he will come on that dreadful day and make everything all right!

When Elijah comes:

—There will not be a battle that we won't be able to endure!

—There will be no mountain that will be too hard for us to climb!

—There will be no valley too deep for us to traverse!

—There will be no night too dark for us to make it through!

—There will be no crisis that we cannot control!

—There will be no storm so strong that we can't make it through!

Today, the church asks the question, how can we face the future? Malachi says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah."

When Elijah comes, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

When Elijah comes, the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places

will be made plain!

When Elijah comes, he'll be a Bridge over troubling water

When Elijah comes, he'll lift up bowed down heads!

When Elijah comes, he will prepare the way of Salvation!

Behold I send you Elijah! Somebody called him the Prince of Peace!

Behold I send you Elijah! Somebody called him Emanuel!

Behold I send you Elijah! Somebody called him King of Kings!

Behold I send you Elijah who will pick up an old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha's hill!

Behold I send you Elijah who will be buried in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning…

No. 9694-Inspiration

Let us see

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 2, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him." Matthew 27:49

Introduction

Has there ever been a time when you felt that someone, somewhere is watching and waiting for you to slip or fail? That's when you feel like the second string quarterback behind a starter who is sensational. You want the team to win, but at the same time, you can't get in the game unless something happens to the starter. Most real believers have an army of haters and detractors who seem to be waiting to see if the lifestyle we profess is all that we say it is.

Over the years, we have learned to be patient because God is working things out. Our detractors and critics have no idea where we are going with our faith; they are just waiting to see what happens.

There are many who are even taking a wait and see attitude about God. We who know do not say let us see, for we have seen him at work.

Unlike our critics, we don't mind waiting on God.

Why not? We wait on everything else!

We wait for the coffee to brew.

We wait for the water to boil, popcorn to pop, and for all the commercials to pass before we can watch our rented DVD.

We wait for the train to pass. We wait for our tax refund check.

We wait in lines at stores. We go out to eat and wait in long lines.

We wait in line at the doctor's office, the first day of school and at the health clinic.

We finally get enough money for Cablevision then have to wait a week to get it installed.

While we have learned to be patient and wait for God to act, we must also be aware that there some people out there who are waiting, too! They are waiting to see if our faith is what we say it is.

As Christians, we know that our faith is on trial, but we are confident that God's word is true. If God has spoken it; and God has empowered it; it shall be so. For those who say, "Let's see what happens" as they study you. Tell them to keep watching, because they ain't seen nothing yet!

Exposition

This text focuses on those who ridiculed Jesus on the cross.

On the day of the crucifixion, there were many people who observed Jesus' agonizing last moments. Among them were the Roman soldiers charged with oversight of the execution. While on the cross, Jesus groaned in agony and cried out to his father in heaven. The soldiers heard him speak seven sayings from the cross, among them were: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani which means, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me," and "I thirst."

These two sayings are the focus of this text. The humiliation of the cross was the last instance of Jesus being ridiculed on earth. He had been mocked by soldiers after his trial. They ridiculed him and spat on him. They slapped him with the palms of their hands. Later, they made fun of his Lordship and stripped him of his own clothes and put a purple robe on him. They made a circle around him and yelled insults at him. They platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

Each act indicated the contempt they had for his claim to be the Son of God and the promised savior of Israel. They wanted to see what his response would be if he was pressed and humiliated enough. He did not give them the pleasure of a demonstration of his heavenly power or even a verbal response to their abuse.

On the cross, they heard him say, "Eli, Eli" and thought he was calling on Elijah. They heard him say "I thirst" and one brought him a sponge filled with sour wine or vinegar. They laughed at his anguish. Then one soldier yelled out, 'Let be" after he was given the sour vinegar, "Leave him alone and Let's see what happens." Let him alone, his case is desperate, neither heaven nor earth can help him; do nothing to either hasten his death or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, let's see what happens.

They watched him die on the cross. Had they hung around until Sunday morning, they would have had something to see.

They are waiting and Watching

Just as Jesus had his detractors, believers also have their detractors, believers today must deal with their detractors, critics, and cynics. We should do three things:

LET THEM SEE OUR FAITH: There are many who lose focus because they are distracted by the rude and often cruel actions of their enemies. They see your faith, sacrifice, and sincerity and privately laugh at you while you call on God while literally hanging on a financial or spiritual cross. Let them laugh because there are things about God that you know that they don't know:

What do we know about God?

We know that God strengthens and encourages those who are on His side. When the weight of the world gets heavy, God lifts our spirits, and we find the strength that we did not know we possessed. Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

We know that God will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Though it is tempting to do so, those who remain faithful to God will find that God is always them. As David wrote in Psalm 46:7, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We can say the same.

We also know that God will protect those who are on his side from ultimate destruction. There will most definitely be setbacks and a few battles lost, but in the end, God will be the victor and we will arise victoriously. Are your enemies plotting against you at this very moment? Are they sharpening their knives and swords ready to attack? Has that caused you to lose sleep? Those who are on the Lord's side remember the words of Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.

When our detractors sit back with their arms folded and say, "Let's see what happens."

- Stay Focused on the faith; God will work it out.

LET THEM SEE GOD'S FAVOR TOWARD US: Even in times of difficulty, the faithful must not lose hope. There are times when each of us can feel as if we are hanging on a cross being ridiculed. Christ remained focused on his mission. We too must remain focused first on our faith, but secondly, on the favor that that the Lord has showered upon us. When we think of the many ways that God has blessed us, we won't be able to count the ways. How many times has God made a way out of no way? How many prayers has he answered for us? How many rivers has he helped us to cross? How many battles has he helped us to win?

If we count them, we can only conclude that God has been good to us in a "great" way. Psalm 40:5 says, " Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

No wonder the songwriter would declare, count your many blessing and it may surprise you what the Lord has done.

Since we know our detractors are watching, let them see the many ways God has blessed our faithfulness with his favor.

LET THEM SEE YOU KEEP PACE WITH YOUR GRACE: Don't let friends and critics make you lose your spiritual pace. Keep pace with your grace. God has a time and place for everything and gives us the blessings we need when they are needed. Your friends want you to see something happen now; that's not always the way God works. Even on the Cross, the Salvation of the world wouldn't be completed on the cross, but three days later. They wanted it to happen right then!

It's like the world has a cell phone cocked and ready to record something and they yell at you "do something." To satisfy them, you yell to God, "Do something" and nothing happens.

Occasionally, we walk with someone who does not walk at our speed. They are either too fast for us or not fast enough. Either way, it irritates us.

God walks with each us of at the speed necessary for our stage of life. He does not walk with everyone at the same speed, but everyone who wants to walk with him must

walk at his speed because he sets our pace.

Responding to their expectations, we can outpace our grace: buy a bigger car or house than we can afford, live a lifestyle that is inconsistent with our income, or otherwise live outside of what God has provided for us.

We have nothing to prove to our neighbors! We have nothing to prove to our high school graduating class!

If your critics want to see something, let them see how you keep pace with your grace and walk in the will of God.

Keep Walking with the King

Finally, brothers and sisters we should remember that although there are many who are critical of your faith in God and think you are foolish, you must keep walking with the King.

On the cross, the soldiers laughed and made fun of Jesus. They gave him vinegar when he thirsted and threw dice over his clothes.In all this, there is no record that he ever responded to all of their ugly remarks, insults, and humiliating acts. What he did was talk to God.

Today, believers must not be discouraged by life's frustrations. It seems that the ungodly are untouched by trouble. They seem to glide through life without trouble, despite their ungodly ways and criticize our faithfulness. Psalm 37:1-2 says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Don't let your detractors interrupt your walk with the Lord!

If we walk with the Lord, he will give us strength for the journey.

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet sorrow, but God will take sorrow and turn it into joy!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet weakness, but God will take a weakness and turn it into strength!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet defeat, but God will take defeat and turn it into victory!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet confusion, but God will take the confusion and turn it into understanding!

If we walk with the Lord, we may meet hard times, but God will take hard times and turn them into good times!

If we walk with the Lord, he'll lift us up when we stumble!

If you walk with the Lord, he'll carry you when we can't make another step!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Walk with me Lord, walk with me! While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me!"

There are many who are watching to see what the Lord will do!

Tell them to keep watching because soon and very soon:

—The wicked will cease their troubling

—The weary will be at rest!
—Mountains will become molehills and valleys will be exalted!
—Enemies will become friends!
—Hatred will be turned into love!
—Setbacks will become starting points!
I don't know about you, but I have decided to keep my hand in God's hands!
I've got to tell somebody about Jesus!
I've got to tell them how he gave me a brand new walk and a brand new talk!
I've got to tell somebody how he died out on Calvary!
I've got to tell somebody how he arose early Sunday morning!
His name is Jesus!
He walks with me and talks with me!

The world may be waiting for something to see, but the word says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

No. 9595-Funeral

An Educator's Legacy

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 8, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Matthew 26:13

Introduction

Have you ever thought about the legacy you will leave behind? How will you be remembered, what mark are you leaving? There are many people who believe that they must do something grand in life to leave a legacy. If they are not the President or an Ambassador or a person of national renown they believe that they will never leave a legacy that will be remembered. In old age, they bury themselves in self-pity, feeling that their lives had no significance.

That will never be the case when a dedicated Christian teacher goes home to her reward. Dedicated teachers leave a legacy. Consider the aging teacher who had taught in a little country school for over 40 years. She saw children become parents and taught their children. It was her tradition to plant a seedling alongside the road that led to the school at the close of each year. As the years passed, she continued that practice, planting one seedling on each side of the road 20 feet apart. As her eyes dimmed and patience began to run short, she decided that she would not teach any longer. On her last day, with the help of a student, she planted her final seedling, looked back at the old school and seemed to drift away.

She didn't ever become a principal or a superintendent. She was never named the teacher of the year, but that old teacher left a legacy that was talked about decades after her death. They tore down the old school where she once taught. A new government building was built on the spot. However, along the lane that leads to the new building was 400 feet of beautiful oak trees providing shade to all that passed along the road. -And the Administrator of the building was a man taught by the old lady. He had helped her plant her last seedling. It grew into a mighty oak, and he grew to be a man of prominence and authority. The school was gone, and the teacher was no longer around, but her legacy lived each time the wind rustled through the trees.

Those who teach us plant seeds that often seem insignificant, but they grow and multiply as their branches spread out over the land.

As Christians, we celebrate the life of good teachers. We rejoice that God gave them to us. Long after their careers have ended their decades of service continues to bear fruit and their legacy is never diminished.

Exposition

This text focuses on a simple act of faith that proved to be her legacy.
As the time of his crucifixion drew near, Jesus met with his disciples to discuss the future of the kingdom ministry. While they talked, a woman came in their midst, opened an alabaster box, an anointed Jesus head with its very expensive oils.

Matthew does not identify the woman, but John 12:3 identifies her as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The box of oil she used to anoint Jesus cost about 300 denarii per flask or bottle. It was the oil used by kings, and they used it only drop by drop. A denarii was the average pay for a day's work. Therefore, the bottle was worth about a whole year's wages. Despite its market value, the woman broke the seal and poured out the contents upon Jesus's head.

When the disciples saw the broken box and watched the oil drip from Christ's head and spill to the floor, they thought it was a waste of resources. She took the most precious thing she had and gave it to Jesus. It was a selfless act, a costly act, and an act of love and faith in the Lord Jesus. Very simply put, Mary anointed Jesus to show Him how deeply she loved Him and believed Him to be the true
Messiah, the anointed One of God. He was her Savior, Lord, and King. He had done so much for her and her family. She wanted Him to know how much she appreciated, loved, and believed in Him.

Jesus said the oil was neither spilled or wasted but served as an anointing in anticipation of greater things to come.

He said the sacrificial act will be a memorial to her for all times to come. He seemed to combine all of the acts of her life in one simple phrase, "this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

What is the legacy?

SHE WAS ON A MISSION: Mary poured out the oil on Jesus' head because she was on a mission. It did not matter the cost or the enormity of her sacrifice; she was on a mission. There was a time that teaching was considered a godly mission for African-American women. The future of our race depended on our children learning the essentials that would qualify them to take their places in the world order. The ancient ones arose from slavery, reconstruction, the depression and civil rights era and walked into classrooms that they often funded from their own pockets. They were on a mission. They were part of an army of men and women who dedicated their lives to raising our race.

Their essence was more valuable than the oils of an Alabaster Box, but they poured out themselves selflessly to help children.

What a waste of time and talent some would say! Look at this woman, standing in a nameless classroom filled with children who may never remember her name, pouring out to them knowledge that cost her thousands of dollars and years of study to acquire! What a waste! They don't even listen to her! What a waste of time, even the parents are so disrespectful!

I'm reminded of an old teacher who was celebrated by the school system for finishing her entire teaching career without a single parental complaint. While other teachers suffered verbal abuse from parents who criticized them needlessly, not once in 30 years did a parent ever curse her or disrespect her. Asked about her secret the old teacher said, "I send a note to all parents on the first day of school. The note says: If you promise not to believe everything your child says happens at school, I'll promise not to believe everything your child says happens at your home." - It wasn't orthodox, but it worked for her.

Jesus said Mary did not waste her time or talent pouring out her gifts for a great cause, in fact, he said, "This that this woman does, will be told as a memorial to her." -It will be her legacy.

SHE LIVED HER OWN LIFE: Mary is remembered for her sacrificial service, but aside her service she had a life. She and her sister were hospitable to disciples when they met at her home. She cried when her brother Lazarus was stricken and mourned his death. She also rejoiced when he was raised from the dead. She wasn't just an anonymous woman who anointed Jesus' head; she lived a happy, successful life. Good teachers teach, but somewhere between the close of the school day and the first bell, they also live. Good teachers have husbands and wives. They have home lives to build. They have hopes and dreams and memories to share. The pictures on the walls of their homes attest to their humanity and the people who touch their hearts: their children, mothers, grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers.

We sometimes forget, but teachers have lives outside of the classroom. They laugh and talk, wash dishes, iron clothes, shop, read, and enjoy their families. Somewhere in a crowded day, they find the time, perhaps in the wee hours of the night, to pray and talk to God; he gives them strength for the journey and renewed inspiration.

The life we celebrate today is one that entailed all of the joys that a person could expect. In a quiet, unassuming way, this life was lived with dignity, purity sincerity and purpose. In between all of that, there was her love, gentleness and concern for others.

Jesus said, "This that this woman hath done, will be told for a memorial to her."- It will be her legacy.

SHE BELIEVED IN THE JESUS: Mary knew Jesus. In fact, when Lazarus was in the tomb, she threw herself at his feet in frustration saying, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." She professed faith in the resurrection of the dead and came to know that Jesus himself was her hope of life after death. He told her, "I am the resurrection." The greatest and most successful teachers are those who make it to the classroom on Monday, but also make it to the House of God on Sunday. They know that if they are to raise the hopes and aspirations of hundreds of little minds, they will touch, their lives must be touched by God's spirit. He is the source of all real life-

changing learning. He is the resurrection.

The spirit driven teacher knows that her ability to teach is rooted in part in what she learned in books but is successful because she knows Jesus for herself.

She knows that she may know:

—Mathematics, how to multiply and divide. But it's wise to know Jesus because only Jesus can multiply by dividing. He took two little fish and five loaves of bread and multiplied them by dividing them among the people.

—Geology, the origins and nature of the earth. It's wise to know Jesus because "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

—Astronomy, the nature of the stars. It's wise to know Jesus because He's the bright and morning star!

—Botany, the study of the flowers and lilies of the field. It's wise to know Jesus because He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley!

—Geography, and know the people of neighboring places. It's wise to know Jesus because a songwriter said, "He's got the whole world, in his hands, He's got the whole wide world in His hands!"

So, great teachers live lives of faith. They listen intently to the word. They absorb its teaching, builds their faith and strengthens their resolve. She is strengthened by repetition of the old songs, "I must tell Jesus, Jesus can help me and Jesus alone;"Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was lost, but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

Jesus said that a believer who lives a sacrificial life of faith will never be forgotten. "This that this woman does will be told as a memorial of her." It will be her legacy.

A legacy for his glory!

Finally, Brothers and sisters, we must consider that in the end, the life of every believer is lived for the glory of the Lord and that is their legacy!

We may live our lives in various areas of service, but only what we do for Christ and his glory will last!

When we witness to the lost, God gets the glory.

When we serve the less fortunate, God gets the glory!

When we help a lost child find his way, God gets the glory!

When we are loyal to our spouses and love them with all we have, God gets the glory!

We have learned that when we live for His glory and not our own, God showers us with His favor. Because we glorify Him in our words and deeds when nobody else:

—Cares, the Lord is concerned about me.

—Forgives me, the Lord is willing to forget.

—Accepts me, the Lord receives me with arms wide open.

—Wants me, the Lord accepts me as a child of the King.

While we live for His glory, we are sustained by His grace.

When grace is upon us, despite our declining health, we continue holding his hand!

When grace is upon us, despite the feebleness of old age, we know that God smiles on what we have done with our lives!

God has smiled on the life being memorialized today.

God has smiled because of the children that have been helped along the way.

God has smiled because of the positive spirit and attitude that is shown every day! God has smiled because of the broken hearts that have been helped to mend.

There is an old hymn that is a favorite of many saints, but especially those confined to nursing homes or who no longer able to care for themselves, " Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!¨Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

It's assurance that He will give us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

—CONFIDENCE when everything seems to go wrong.

—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

—COMFORT when disaster strikes. It's assurance that even in old age when we are shuffled from our home to a nursing home that God will never leave us alone!

It's assurance that even after this life, eternity remains!

It's assurance guaranteed by a God who loved us so much that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life!

It's an assurance paid for on an old rugged cross.

It's an assurance secured by three days and nights in a borrowed tomb!

It's an assurance confirmed when Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave with all power in His hands.

This is my story; this is my song,

Praising my Savior all the day long.

—

On Thursday, July 30, 2015, God called Mildred Lyons home to her eternal rest. She planted many seedlings of hope and inspiration in the minds of hundreds of students and in her family. This that this woman hath done will be told as a memorial to her. It is her legacy!

No. 9696-Inspiration

When Euroclydon Comes

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 9, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon." Acts 27:14

Introduction

Have you noticed the strange patterns in the weather in recent months? Living conditions are unpredictable in nearly every part of the world, as the world responds to one tragedy after another. Often the reports of major storms, fires, or shifts in weather patterns all come on the same day. How do we respond? Some take the Ostrich approach; they won't watch the news. If they don't know, it won't bother them. Others watch with despair and shake their heads. Most people are simply trying to make sense of it all because it is all happening so fast.

There have always been storms and weather-related tragedies, yet it appears that in recent years they are occurring more frequently. In May Tropical Storm Ana caused Havoc and two feet of snow fell in the Plains. Both happened at the same time and almost never happen in May. In March of this year, Four Tropical Cyclones hit at the same time. While this was happening, Antarctica, the coldest place on earth, reached temperatures of 63 degrees, melting ice caps causing oceanic problems around the world. For six months, the snowfall in Alaska came to a drizzle (only 25 inches) and in May temperatures reached 90 degrees. In May, the world's driest desert in Chile had a year's worth of rainfall in one day, causing massive floods.

It just keeps coming: Wildfires on the West Coast, rainstorms and flooding on the East Coast, scorching heat in the South; day after day. In August, places in the South accustomed to 90-degree weather were swamped with heat waves that reached 105 degrees. It's all happening at the same time.

Many see these changes as signs of Global Warming. The warming, says one group is caused because of the way using the earth's resources, punching holes in the earth's protective layers. This group wants us to use energy efficient cars, light bulbs, appliances and homes to stop the warming. Another group says they are happening because we approaching the end of another cycle of ages such as when the ice age ended and the present age begins. This second group believes we should learn to deal with it, but nothing can stop the coming of an age.

What do the faithful say? The faithful remember the words of Jesus, "And when

ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows."
As we approach the end times, Jesus said, "These things must be." They are signs that we are entering the last days.

Until Christ returns the faithful must learn to adapt to the rapidity of troubles, helping its victims and protecting our own, as we cling to our faith that God's will must be done. Yes, it's all coming at one time, one storm after another: Snowstorms, heat waves, floods, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, and cyclones, but we must keep the faith, "these things must be."

As Christians, we understand the underlying reason for so many troubles, so we gird ourselves to deal with each as they occur. In the end, we have faith that God will not abandon us. He will never leave us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul onboard a ship that was beset by a terrible storm called Euroclydon.

Paul was on board the ship, as a prisoner, along with 275 other people. He was being sent to Rome to appeal his case to Caesar. They began their journey sailing with a soft South Wind that was accommodating and peaceful. However, on the way, the ship was accosted by two weeks of violent storms that battered the 276 people on board. The wind was called a Euroclydon or an unusual North-East wind the came out of nowhere and encircled them. There were no compasses at this time; sailors navigated by the sun in the day and stars at night. However, for two weeks they could not see neither the sun or the stars.

If they could have seen their location in the dark, it would have been easier. If they could have plotted their position by the stars, they would have known where they were, but they couldn't see their location adding to the stress of the moment.
The sailors on board felt their efforts were useless. They had given their best and the ship still appeared to be aimlessly drifting to destruction. Even though God had revealed to Paul that they would make it to dry land without the loss of one, they were nevertheless disheartened. Paul kept saying, God has promised them that each would make their destination without the loss of life, but they were not listening.

Ultimately, the people on board all made it to shore, without the loss of one, just as God had promised.

The winds subsided. The turbulence of the sea quieted. God's word and prediction of safety for those who remained on the ship was proven true.

Dealing with Troubles

The foolish sailors on Paul's ship expected to make their journey safely and without

trouble, pushed along by a comfortable South wind. They expected no trouble and did not heed warnings they received. When Euroclydon came, they were not ready. Today, believers must expect Euroclydon; we must expect storms and be prepared to respond:

LIFE STORMS WILL COME: Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us that there is a time and season for everything under the sun; that includes troubles. There is no life that will not encounter trouble. It's like global warming, there are some things we may do to bring on trouble, but other troubles just come. Unlike the change of the season when we know approximately when to expect the winter cold and the summer heat, trouble has a way of developing instantly and unpredictably. When sudden troubles come, all of our preparation seems inadequate once the winds begin to blow. Life storms or troubles will come; they are a part of living. Things will break, accidents will happen, jobs will be lost, sicknesses will occur, and catastrophes will happen. They are easier to handle if they come one at a time, but there are times when Euroclydon comes. That's when they all come at the same time. When Euroclydon comes the general idea not to lose it. Don't panic as if God has abandoned you, keep the faith. In a season of trouble, we need to know the way to safe ground.

The sailors on Paul's ship panicked because they could not see their way to safe ground. Those who know God, know how to find him, even when Euroclydon comes. In times of trouble, believers know how to find a refuge. The word of God says God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble. Believers know the way to God and constantly lean and trust him to take us to higher ground then give us the strength to pick up the pieces, rebuild and to stand. Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he said, "Lord lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven's table land, no high ground I have not found, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

GOD IS AWARE OF OUR TROUBLES: When the storm arose, only Paul remained calm and confident, despite the threatening winds because he knew God was aware of the situation. In the same way, we should always remember that God is always aware of our troubles.

When Euroclydon comes, there are many who lose faith. They throw up their hands and ask, why our community? Why our family? Why me? Is not God aware of our danger and our predicament? This is the question that the disciples once asked Jesus when the winds and waves threatened their lives. While they worried, Jesus was aboard but Jesus was asleep below deck on a ship when a storm arose. When they panicked He questioned their faith as he spoke to the winds and the waves saying, "Peace Be Still."

There are many today who react to troubles like the disciples who lost faith.

Even though they knew Jesus was on board they screamed, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

Our ancestors held on by faith, with the assurance that God knew their situation. Can't you hear them singing, "Nobody knows the trouble I sees. Nobody knows but Jesus. Glory Hallelujah!"

Somehow our faith seems to operate in degrees. Some troubles don't bother us and we are confident that God will take care of us. When a few things go wrong in a single

week that doesn't bother us either. We even do well if we are hit with a few little things and one big one. Our faith in the power of God remains intact.

However, when Euroclydon comes, many lose faith. When everything starts to hit at the same time: two or three big things: A major sickness, a death, an accident followed by the lights getting turned off, a flat tire and a stopped up toilet.- It's too much! It's Euroclydon! In these times, many forget that God is still
God.

Even a Euroclydon situation, God is still on the throne. He is still our refuge and our strength. He still promises to turn every Euroclydon situation in a way that it will work to our good. He will stand with us, even in our losses. Our prayer, when Euroclydon comes is Lord, "Stand by me." That's why we love the song that says, When the storms of life are raging, stand by
me.

DESPITE EUROCLYDON, FAITH REMAINS: When the Euroclydon passed, the ship in which Paul sailed was wrecked. It's cargo and goods was lost, but not a man who stuck with the ship lost his life. That should be a word of hope for the faithful today. Many have seen many Euroclydon episodes in their lives and as each one ended the faith of believers remained unshaken. Our God is able. Our heritage is one that is filled with overcoming struggle and difficulty. Whether it has been our ethnic struggle as a people of color or as individuals striving to overcome our personal fights with life-threatening situations, our faith remains intact and we celebrate because God has helped us to survive our difficulty and even to escape death itself.

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 16:5 Thou maintainest my lot. That means when the storms of life come, we are assured that the will of God will work itself out. One songwriter said, "God will take care of you. Through every day, over all the way. He will take care of you!"

When our world is turned upside down by tragic events, it is easy to become disillusioned with life, but we must never give up on God!

When we witness evil and senseless acts coming in rapid succession, it is easy to become cynical, but we must never give up on God!

We should not lose hope because we know that God will never forsake us. Another songwriter said, "Don't give up God and he won't give up on you! He's able!"

Because we know he will never leave us alone, we should praise him!

Because he has been with us as we battled trouble after trouble, we should praise!

Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from heaven above!

Keep Trusting In The Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, since we know that troubles are a part of life and Euroclydon situations will come, we must continue to hold on and keep trusting in the Lord.

Despite the troubles must continue to trust in God and remember that God is our refuge and our strong place to hide in storms.

God proved himself to be a refuge or place of shelter in times of storm.

The times may be changing faster than we've every seen, but God is still on the throne.

We trust in the Lord because those who trust him are rewarded with answered prayers and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves. There are others who had troubles, but they trusted in the Lord.

—Noah trusted the Lord and He brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and He showed him the ram in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and He protected him in Lion's Den

—Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord. I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."

I will trust in the Lord because if I am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At fault, the Lord will be my stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble! No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!"

I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross!

Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead! Even when Euroclydon comes, Hold to his hand, the Lord will make a way!

No. 9697-Inspiration

Till He Come

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 16, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."1 Corinthians 11:26

Introduction

What do you do while you are waiting for something that seems to take a long time to come? We've all had to wait for something whether it was a package in the mail or standing in line at the grocery store. We don't mind waiting, but it just seems such a waste of time.

While we are waiting what do we do? We read magazines in the doctor's office or piddle on our smartphones. We stand in a long line and shift from one side to the other in nervous anxiety as our line seems to move slower than the one next to us. What do you do while you wait? We usually read the news magazines, look at the candy, watch people and wish the line would move faster.

Waiting is hard. However, we do have the joy of knowing that when the object of our wait finally comes, it will be well worth the wait.

Isaiah said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not faint."

In Homer's "Odessey" –Penelope waited for the return of her husband for 20 years, refusing all suitors. Her husband said, "Wait until I return" and she did just that. Since that day, the name "Penelope" means "To faithfully wait."

An old farmer had a special dog that he loved. Whenever he went away, he told the dog to wait on the porch until he returned. The old dog was obedient. He sat on the porch all day long. However, when the evening came he became anxious; he paced back and forth. Finally, when he saw the old farmer walking up the road, he began to howl and wag his tail. He jumped up and down with joy because he knew that day after day, the farmer came home with a bag full of scraps from the butcher's shop and that bag made his wait worthwhile.

As Christians, we are especially excited about the return of Christ. We wait anxiously for the day when his new kingdom will be established. While we wait, we remember his sacrifice and his promise and wait patiently until he comes.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he explains that believers participate in the Lord's Supper as a memorial to Christ's crucifixion until he returns.

The Lord's supper had two main elements: bread and wine. Each of the elements served to represent an important truth. The bread served to represent the body of Christ which was crucified for the sins of mankind. The wine served as a symbol of the blood he shed on Calvary for the remission of sin. In verse 24 Jesus is quoted saying, "This do in remembrance of me." In verse 26 Paul told believers that as often as they participated in the memorial meal that they would remember his death and sacrifice.

The last three words of the text "Till he come" are prophetic. They lay out an anticipation of things to come; the return of Christ to establish his kingdom.

Believers then, and those today, have no idea when he will return, but "until he come" we are to wait patiently and be about the work of building the kingdom.

What to do until he comes

There are believers today who are patiently waiting for the Lord's return. Waiting may be difficult, but we should:

WAIT LIKE PENELOPE: Penelope waited for Odysseus to return although others flirted with her. As believers, we should be faithful in our allegiance to the Savior. The devil will tempt us and will make overtures to get us to abandon our faith. He will point to how long it has been since Christ left this earth. He will also point to how long it might be before his return. The devil will tempt each of us to 'live life for today" because we don't know what tomorrow will bring. In response, millions of believers have remained faithful to the cause because they have been standing on the promises of God. He has promised to reward our faith. The word of God tells us in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 2:26 says "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:" We may not know when it's coming, but we know what the end shall be!

Rev. 3:5 says He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

We don't give up, even though the road may be rough sometimes, we have decided to wait "till he come."

WE MUST REMEMBER: The importance of communion must never be forgotten. Even though it is not popular today to preach and teach about sin and sacrifice, that's what the cross is all about: Our sins and Jesus' sacrifice. That must not be lost in the shuffle. If we fail to observe communion regularly, we soon forget about Calvary.

It's a bad thing when you can't remember. Joseph was freed from prison when he recalled a dream of a Pharaoh, who couldn't remember. Daniel rose to prominence when Nebuchadnezzar couldn't remember his dream of a mighty statue.

It's a bad thing not to remember because we have pushed something out of our minds.

Sometimes the value of good things are lost because we put them out of our minds and fail to use them.

Perhaps this is what Jesus had in mind when he asked his disciples to observe the memorial meal, by doing so they would keep the meaning of their fellowship forever on their minds.

Every child of God should remind themselves that if we neglect the ordinance of communion it is possible that:

—We can become so enthralled in the mechanics and rituals associated with the faith or the intricacies of church politics that we fail to remember that our mission is about holding up the Cross to the loss.

I hear the songwriter say "Lest I forget..lead me to Calvary."

We choose to say, "We will remember Calvary," –Till he come.

WAIT WITHOUT DOUBT: While we wait for Christ's return we should not doubt his word, his promises or his power. If we doubt him while we wait, the wait seems longer.

It's like choosing a checkout line at the store then worrying if you chose the right line when the other line starts to move and yours stands still.

We should never doubt that God will "show up" on time. Whatever he has promised, God will deliver; on time. Maybe not our time, but definitely, "On time." Sarah had an anxiety attack as she waited for the promise of a child. She saw others having children and herself getting older, and the wait seemed endless. She decided to change lines and hire a surrogate only to find that she was in the right line in the first place.

Is there an issue you need to be addressed, and you've asked God for an answer? "Wait till he come!"

Is there a river you have found uncrossable, but the tide is rising higher? "Wait till he come!"

When you choose to place a matter in God's hand, don't waste time worrying about your decision. If you are going to worry, then don't give it to God. If you give it to God then don't worry, he will work it out. Wait till he come!

Jesus is worth the wait

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that everybody is waiting on something, but waiting on the Lord is worth the wait.

If we perceive the value of an object to be great, then we will endure wait to achieve it. If we think a college education is essential, then we will plunge into the four or eight years needed because we value the outcome. We know it's worth the wait.

When the last version of Harry Potter was released, the lines formed a day before. Apple's new iPhone release had lines wrapped around buildings. People waited long periods of time because they wanted what was being offered. They thought it was worth the wait.

We wait on the Lord because what he offers us is worth the wait.

He offers us his blessings on our lives, and that's worth the wait. Believers are prepared to wait for him to bless us because they believe his blessing is important enough for the wait. Job said in Job 14:14, "All the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change comes."

Jesus has promised those who are defeated a final victory. He told John, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." To achieve that victory, I believe I'll wait till he comes.

Those who are faint of strength are waiting for God's promise to mount up on wings as eagles. To achieve the restoration of my strength, I believe I'll wait till he come.

The discouraged are waiting for encouragement. In his discouragement, David said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth." To get my help, I'll wait till he comes.

The confused are waiting for answers! While I'm waiting, I've decided to "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understandings. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths." I'll wait till he comes!

The lonely are waiting for comfort. Jesus said, "And lo, I'll be with you always, even unto the end of the earth." I believe I'll wait till the comforter comes.

I don't know about you, but I've decided to wait on the Lord!

I'll wait till he comes because when he comes mountains will be made low!

I'll wait till he comes because when he comes valleys shall be exalted!

I'll wait till he comes because when he comes, crooked places shall be made straight!

I'll wait till he comes because when he comes, rough places shall be made plain!

Hold to his hand, hold to God's unchanging hand!

While you are waiting, keep your faith turned up high and hold to his hand!

While you are waiting, keep watching and praying!

While you are waiting, keep telling the story!

Tell everybody about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell them how he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind!

Tell them how he walks with me and talks with me!

Tell them how he died out on Calvary! But don't stop there..tell them how Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

Wait on the Lord ...and everything will be alright!

No. 9698-Inspiration

The righteous are never forsaken

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 23, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Psalm 37:25

Introduction

If you are in serious trouble, are there three people in your life that you know, without a doubt, will come to your rescue? Of all of your friends and acquaintances, those you like to hang out with, how many of those are among the three people on your list??

The Muscular Dystrophy Association often stages a fundraiser in which prominent individuals are placed in a make believe jail cell and must call friends to bail them out of jail by making a $100 donation to help fight the disease. There have been some strange responses as people called folks that they thought were their friends with the words, "I'm in jail and I need you to bail me out!" Some instantly responded with offers of help. Others had long pauses before they learned that it was a fundraiser and felt relieved. Even though it is a fundraiser, many learn that had it been a real situation, there are some they thought were real friends who were willing to leave them in jail.?

Everyone likes to belong to a support circle. This is the group that will help first and ask questions later. No one wants to feel that they will be abandoned or left behind in times of trouble. Persons in the military subscribe to the soldier's creed which says in part:

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

The assurance that we won't be left alone to face life's struggles is one reason we put our trust in the Lord. Psalm 27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, Then Jehovah will take me up." He won't leave us behind.

Believers have the consolation of knowing that as long as we live that the Lord will never leave us alone!

There may be times when circumstances make us feel like the Lone Ranger, but we should never despair.We may stand alone fighting a cause, running a home, raising

a child, or just living every day, but we are not alone! The voice of the Savior, may not be heard with the ears; but the heart hears its echoes along the corridors of time..”I’ll be with you always, even the end of the world.”

If you feel a little down today, cheer up. You’re not alone!

If you feel a touch of loneliness, cheer up. You may be alone, but as long as the Lord lives there is no reason to be lonesome!

As Christians, we should remember that as long as long as there is time or eternity, the Lord will never forsake the righteous or leave them alone!

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the relationship of the believer with God.

The overall intent of this psalm is to reassure believers that their faith is safe in God’s hands. The greater context of this passage reminds believers not to be envious of the unrighteous because of apparent successes they see.

Believers are secure with God.

The righteous will never be abandoned. In the course of his entire life, he claims never to have seen the righteous forsaken or their seed begging for bread.

Who are the righteous? In the Old Testament context, the righteous are those who obey God’s commandments. In the New Testament the righteous are those who may have been sinners but have redeemed in spite of their sins and made perfect by the blood of the lamb. The righteous are the saved, the redeemed of the Lord.

The seeds of the righteous are their offspring and descendants. Generally, the Lord blesses as “righteous” family. This is the family that has learned to love and respect God, obey his commandments and to serve him faithfully in the community. From generation to generation, a righteous family has its ups and downs, but it usually stands on its on, supported by the hand of God. It is not a beggar family, but one that trusts God and provides for themselves.

The righteous are being held by and are holding on to the hand of God. Because the righteous are in the hand of God, they will never be utterly destroyed and kept down. Either they climb up with their faith as leverage or he picks them up by the power of his will.

Never forsaken

When a soldier goes into battle he/she knows there is a possibility of injury; yet he knows that regardless of the circumstances his comrades will never leave him behind. Believers approach each day with this same confidence because:

WE HAVE GOD’S PROMISE: God promises every believer that he will not leave them alone. Genesis 28:15 says, “I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” This promise was made to Jacob, but it also

speaks to every believer. It is personal and clear. “I am with you.” That’s important for every believer to remember because we step into each new day with nothing, but a plan and the promise of God. Depending on His promise some, in the days ahead, will make changes in their career paths, business plans, relationships, family ties, educational pursuits and commitments to the church. God has said to believers like us so many times in the past, “I am with you.” In Isaiah 41:10 He said “fear you not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yea; I will help you; yea; I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

That’s a big promise, but David said, I have been young, but now am old but I’ve never seen go back on his promise to be with a righteous family. The righteous family walks by faith that the same God that was with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be with us as well. Moses stood before Pharaoh, but he did not stand alone. When he was faced with the Red Sea, he did not stand alone. By faith Joshua crossed over the Jordan, based solely on the promise of God. Therefore, we as believers should go forth confident that our God will not abandon us when the going gets tough as the months roll by.

GOD PROVIDES FOR STRONG FAMILIES: David said in all of his life he had never seen the offspring of strong righteous families “begging bread.” On the surface, that appears to mean that the children of the righteous will never be in need. On the contrary, it means thatGodly families teach their family members a set of biblical ethics “Work, save, invest, trust and obey.” These principles are practiced in godly families and passed on from one generation to the next. To the extent that a family works, saves for the future, makes wise investments and trusts God for increase” that family will never beg bread. Children who practice these principles will never beg bread and neither will their children. We have seen the children of some godly parents begging but was it because God abandoned them or because they chose not to: work, save, invest, trust and obey God.” The family that lives by this principle will pass on to each succeeding generation a rule of faith that will ensure that, if followed, their seed will never beg for bread.

We believed that so much in our community that families resisted charity and would not allow their children to eat dinner at the home of a friend. When free school lunches began in public schools, many carried their lunches in lunch boxes and paper bags rather than a free lunch.

From generation to generation, the family that trusts God learns to trust him to make a way if they: “Work, save, invest, trust and obey.”

In times of trouble and despair, those who know God best have certain assurances that should be a comfort to us.

God will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Though it is tempting to do so, those who remain faithful to God will find that God is always with them. As David wrote in Psalm 46:7, “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE ON THE RIGHTEOUS: Psalm 121 says “He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps.” In Psalm (Psalms 34:15,17-19), it says “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. 17-19. The promise of God is that he will never leave or forsake the righteous. Like the soldier in

battle, he does not promise that bullets will not be fired our way or that there will be no landmines. He does not even promise that we will not be wounded. He promises never to let you go into battle alone; and if wounded, never to leave you alone.

Every believer is in a battle against evil every day. Satan attacks our finances, our health and even the peace and serenity of our homes. We have the assurance that we are not fighting this battle alone. That's why the songwriter said, "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of his Spirit and washed in his blood." Buoyed by this assurance the old warriors sang, "I am on the battlefield for my Lord. And I promised him that I, would serve him till I die."

The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers us out of all our troubles. If it appears that God has forsakened us, be of good cheer, the eyes of the Lord are upon us.

God is able

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember, the despite the difficulties of the moment, we can make it through if we hold to God's unchanging hand.

In the two verses preceding this text Psalm 37:23-24, the word says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."

In no uncertain terms that says, "I am with thee" and "I won't forsake thee" even when you fall upon hard times.

If you are like most believers, there are times when you find yourself slipping down the mountain of life and I have to cry out, "Lord, hold my hand, while I run this race. I don't want to run this race alone!"

Lord, hold my hand, when I can't see my way!

Lord, hold my hand, when I can't turn to the right or the left!

Lord, hold my hand, when I'm confused and don't know what to do!

Lord, hold my hand, when I'm weak and have run out of strength!

Lord, hold my hand, when I have fallen and can't get on my feet!

Lord, hold my hand because I'm crying out "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go."

Just when I'm about to give up, I hear the voice of the Savior say, "I will never leave you alone."

Because I'm never alone:

—There is no CROSS that I won't be able to bear;

—There is no MOUNTAIN that I won't be able to climb!

—There is no ENEMY that I won't be able to defeat;

—There is no BATTLE I won't be able to endure!

—There is no DARKNESS that can keep me from seeing the light!

I don't know about you, but I've seen many things in my life, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken!

I have seen Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction on National TV, but I've never see the righteous forsaken!

I have seen Dr. Dre rise Straight of Compton and become a millionaire, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken.

I've seen Michael Jordan glide through the air from the three Point Line, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken!

I've seen Michael Jackson do the Moonwalk and James Brown do the Camel Walk, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken!

I've seen Muhammad Ali knock out George Forman and watched Foreman knockout millions selling hamburger grills, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken!

I have seen Tiger Woods' career go down and climb right back up. I've seen Angela Bassett play Tina Turner better than Tina Turner, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken.

I have seen Mike Tyson bite Evander Holyfield's ear. I've seen Gabby Douglass win an Olympic Gold medal.

I've seen two women become Secretary of State and A black man become President of the United States, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken!

I've seen Bruce Jenner become Kaitlyn Jenner, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken.

It doesn't mean we will always win, but it does mean that we will never be alone!

…We may be beaten, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be oppressed, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be imprisoned, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be rejected, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be despised, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be hungry, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be poor, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be single, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be sick, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be hated, but we will never be forsaken!

…We may be having a hard time with our children, but we will never be forsaken!

Hanging on Calvary, Jesus, Mary's baby! Cried out "Why has thou forsaken me?" He received an immediate answer from heaven! The sky turned dark. The thunder began to roll! The lightning began to flash!

A centurion cried, "Surely, he must be the son of God."

The buried him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave with all power in his hand!"

"No never alone! He promised never to leave me! Never to leave me alone!

No.9699-Inspiration

But Simon's wife's Mother lay sick

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 30, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Mark 1:30-31

Introduction

We know God answers prayers, but does it ever seem that he takes too long? We live in an instant world that expects immediate responses. We push a button and something happens. We click a mouse and something happens. We swipe a card, and something happens. We press enter on a screen and something happens! It's no wonder then that when we pray to God for help and assistance we expect an immediate answer. It won't be long before we start asking God, "What's taking you so long?" Or When God when?

When God, When? When will there be relief for my situation? That's what we ask when we've wrestled with crises so long that all of our energy and drive has been zapped!

When God, when? When will my family enjoy some of the great blessings that I see others enjoy?

When God, when? When will I receive the justice and mercy and I deserve, and you have promised?

When God, when? When will the errors and mistakes of my past stop haunting me?

When God when? When will I ever know the truth although I'm surrounded by liars, backstabbers, and cheats.

When God, when?

We have learned that God cannot be hurried. He proceeds by his own timetable and responds in kind. However, we have his assurance that he will address our needs, and he will not be late. The words of Habbakuk 2:3 reassure us, "But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass.

Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!)

By his divine will, God responds to our need at exactly the right time! We don't know when, and really it's not our job is not to figure out when, but to make up your mind that we will live faithfully and wait patiently until he shows up. Every day we will trust God and keep our eyes focused on Him.

"When" is just one of the five things we don't know about God's response. They are the five W's of faith. We don't know "who" he will use to bless us. We don't know "what" situation he will twist to help us. We don't know "where" we will be at the time he chooses to respond. We don't know "when" God will respond. "We will never know "why" he chooses to respond to us using his own mysterious method and manner.

Since we study the Bible and understand these five things about God, we trust that he will put people and situations in our lives that will accomplish his will for us. When it happens, it happens! The old song still remains true, "He's an on time God, yes he is. He may not come when you want him, but he'll be there right on time."

As Christians, we should resolve to keep the faith because we know help is on the way. We don't know when and we don't know how, but we know that our God will make a way.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance where Jesus responds to the condition of sick women but seems to take his time doing so.

The text begins with the word, "But." English scholars debate as to whether it is proper to use the word "but" at the beginning of a sentence. Many teach that instead, "however" should be used. However, is usually used at the beginning of the sentence contrasting or emphasizing the preceding events to something else. Using "but" at the beginning of a sentence serves to connect rather than emphasize all that precedes to something that follows.

"But" is a conjunction. It connects something. Used at the beginning of this text it seems to be connecting all of the previous events cited to the one lone circumstance that follows.

This is emphasized even further when it is noted that except for verses 14,16 and 24 every verse beginning with verse nine (9) begins with a conjunction. It indicates that there is a connection between them.

Since the text begins with "But" Simon's wife's mother lay sick" if we backtrack to verse 9 the "but" seems to contrast each "and" with "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick."

9. And Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

13.And Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

14.And John was put in prison, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

17.And Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to be fishers of men, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

21.And he taught at the Synagogue in Capernaum, but Simon's wife's mother lay

sick.

26.And a demon came out of a possessed, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

29.And Jesus enters the house of Simon and Andrew, but Simon's wife lay sick.

The entire chapter seems to track the trail of God's movements leading from the beginning of his ministry to eventually reaching out to thousands of people who were in need of blessings, healings and restoration.

The Ands and the Buts of the chapter seem to indicate that one event was connected to the other.

All of the events served to promote the fulfillment of the will of God.

All things are connected

Jesus came to this world to promote the kingdom of God. For three years, he moved among the people teaching, touching and transforming people in ways designed to expand the kingdom of God. However, he did nothing before its time or out of order. Each act was carefully connected to another act that eventually fulfilled his purpose. With that knowledge we should consider:

HE KNOWS WHO AND WHERE WE ARE: Simon's wife's mother was not named, in this text; yet the progression of the passage shows that Jesus was making his way to her. He knew where she was and who she was although her name was not called. There are many people who encountered Jesus in the Bible who were nameless, most notably the "Woman at the Well" who ran shouting, "Come see a man." A woman with an issue of blood for 12 years touched the hem of his garment. A man who sat by the pool water to be healed for 38 years was nameless, too. All of these were nameless, but Jesus knew who they were and where they were.

Today, we should note that we don't need a "famous" name to get God's attention. We are never a nameless person in the crowd with no identity with God; he knows who we are and where we are. We don't need to be an important leader of the church or a "big wheel;" we are all important in his sight. We may live in the suburbs or in the city, in mansions or shacks; God knows who we are and where we are. He knows our condition and even while we are praying; help is on the way. He knows exactly what we need, and he knows where you are! He keeps his eye on you. No wonder the song writes: "We are our heavenly father's children and knows just how much we can bear. Just ask for strength and keep on toiling tho the teardrops fall. You have the joy of this assurance: the heavenly Father will always answer prayer, and he knows just how much you can bear!"

HE WON'T PASS YOU BY: Simon's wife's mother lay sick. The text gave no indication how long she had been sick, but while she was sick, she was impervious to what was going on around her. Jesus taught in the synagogues, healing the sick and curing hundreds of people, but she did not know about any of that. Her focus was on one thing; she was sick. When Jesus reached Simon's house, he did not pass her by. Today, our faith should speak loudly to our situation: "My God will not pass me by." He will respond to my need. When God stops by it means blessings are on the

way.

When the Lord passes by, we become more determined to:

—Bear our burdens, no matter how heavy they may become!

—Face our enemies, no matter how fierce they fight against us!

—Resist temptations, no matter how enticing they may be!

—Conquer our fears no matter how overwhelming they may become!

—Defeat our doubts no matter how stubborn they may be.

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Pass me not oh gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by!"

While on others you are showering blessings, do not pass me by!

While on others you are granting healings for sick bodies, do not pass me by!

Jesus healed many people and performed many miracles, but Simon's wife's mother lay sick, and he did not pass her by.

H**E LIFTED HER UP:** When Jesus visited Simon's house, he found Simon's wife's mother. Verse 31 says, And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. That must have been a joyous moment. She was bedridden with fever, and unable to serve, but the Savior lifted her up. If God lifted up a nameless woman and reversed her condition, that should reaffirm our faith that God can do the same for us as well. He lifted her up. He changed her situation. He put her back on her feet again. If we have learned anything about the Lord over the years, it is that he lifts us up, picks us up and turns us around. No matter how low we have fallen, he gives us another chance. The songwriter is correct when he says, "We fall down, but we get up!" We are able to do so because Christ lifts the fallen spirit within us and stands us up again.

When the demonic man fell at Jesus' feet after spending years wandering among the tombs, he was told to rise. When the lame man who had not walked for 38 years met the Lord beside the pool, he was told to rise, "Take thy bed and walk."

No matter how dark our situation may seem, the God we serve is able to lift us up, turn us around and plant our feet on Solid ground!

He's coming

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that while we labor with our situation, our help is on the way.

While Simon's wife's mother lay sick, she did not know it, but her help was on the way.

While Simon's wife's mother lay sick, those who attended her did all that they knew, but her help was on the way.

Jesus traveled from one place to another, but he was making his way to one special house because Simon's wife's mother lay sick.

Every believer should take courage in this text because it reaffirms our faith that our God is making his way to our situation.

Those who are frustrated because it appears that your blessing never seems to come, be assured that just as Jesus made his way to the house of Simon and lifted up

a nameless woman in faith, that he is able to do the same for you.

The record bears testimony that God is able!

He's able to take our:

—Fears and turn them into faith; SADNESS and turn it into gladness!

—WEAKNESS and turn it into strength; RESERVATIONS and turn them into confirmations!

—FAILURES and turn them into successes; LOSSES and turn them into gains!

Down in Bethlehem, he showed that he was able!

A baby was born in a manger!

Down in Galilee, he proved that he was able. The sick were healed, and the blind were given their sight.

Because he is able, he gives us:

-STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

-ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

-INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

-COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because he's able, he stops by every now and then and gives us his favor.

Because of His favor we are able to:

-Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

-Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

-Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

I'm glad that He is a wonder-working God!

I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!

I'm glad that He is a soul-saving God!

I'm glad that one day He saw my situation and stopped by!

One day, down in Jerusalem, he stopped by a place called Calvary and proved that he was able!

In Jerusalem, he paid the price for our salvation!

In Simon's house, he raised up Simon's wife's mother, but on Calvary he was raised up for our salvation!

In Simon's house, he stopped by because Simon's wife's mother cried out in pain, but on Calvary, he cried out, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me!"

In Simon's house, he stopped by and took Simon's wife's mother's hand in his hand, but on Calvary, he called out, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit."

On Calvary, Jesus, Mary's baby!

On Calvary, Jesus, the Lion of Judah!

On Calvary, he died on that old rugged cross,

But, early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

Hang on saints; your help is on the way!

9700-Inspiration

Too Pooped to Pop

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 6, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

Introduction

Do you ever feel as if your get up and go has got up and gone? When that happens, you are completely drained! Your energy is zapped! Your brain is tired! Your bones ache! Your eyes won't stay open, and your bed is screaming, "Come to me! Come to me!"

When that feeling came to you what kind of tired did you feel? A frustrated tired? An encouraged tired? A satisfied tired?

A frustrated tired is when you seem to be doing all that you can, but nothing is succeeding. Every door is closing, no one is helping, and no progress is being made. It's the frustration that one feels after spending a day, a week or a lifetime, trying to accomplish a task and getting no where. It's when we hear the phrase, "I'm just sick and tired of being sick and tired."

An encouraged tire is when you haven't completed your task, but received some encouraging signs. You didn't make a sale, but there were several callbacks with promise. You didn't land the job, but a few prospects showed an interest. You came home tired, exhausted and drained, but you were encouraged because it wasn't a completely lost day.

A satisfied tired is the kind of tired you feel when you are completely drained. Every bone in your body hurts, but you accomplished your goal. It's the kind of tired that a mom feels after planning a successful birthday party for a child: the house is a mess, the trash is over running, the dishes are piled high, but it was worth it all to see the joy on the child's face. It's the kind of tired that a football player feels after playing a great game, win or lose. He's completely exhausted, but he'd do it all over again! That's when you come home, sit in a tub of hot bubbles or stand in the shower and say the words to that old song, "I may not have done all that I wanted to do, but Lord it's been a mighty good day."

When you labor in the kingdom of God, what kind of tired do you feel? A frustrated tired because everything you do seems to be a waste? An encouraged tired because you seem to be improving? A satisfied tired because you know you are providing a labor

of love that God approves?

There are millions who labor in the kingdom every day. They pour themselves out to the point of exhaustion trying to build the kingdom. They reach out to those who are in need, minister to those in prisons, teach those who want to learn, encouraged the weak, pray for those who are lost and so much more. At the end of the day, they look back on their labor and say in their hearts, "I'm tired, but it was worth it all."

When you have poured yourself into the service of the kingdom as church workers: ushering, preparing, ministering, singing, visiting, helping, decorating, repairing, driving, assisting and organizing to the point that you are literally drained with nothing else to give; that's when you can say, "I'm too pooped to pop."

As Christians, we labor in the kingdom of God everyday. Sometimes what we do taxes our bodies and spirits. However, we get satisfaction from knowing that because God is pleased, our labor is not in vain.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul as he explained his desire that his life work glorify God.

At the close of his life, Paul reflects on his service to the kingdom with satisfaction. His work was an honorable one. He expanded the church to the known world, and established congregations all over the world in his three missionary journeys. His was an exhausting experience. He was often tired, frustrated, beaten, talked about, jailed and threatened; yet he says it was all worth while because God was glorified.

In Philippians 1:20 he said his goal is that "Christ should be magnified." In the text, he said the whole goal of his life was to glorify Christ through his words and deeds. His deeds were many, so were his challenges, but it was his conclusion that if he poured himself out for the glory of God, then he actually gained, despite his sacrifices.

He expanded the idea of laboring in the kingdom beyond just a day, but to a whole lifetime. He said that for him living meant exalting Christ, building the kingdom and draining himself in the process. By giving all he had to this cause he considers himself having gained.

In verse 22, he described the works of his body as the "fruit of his labor."

After the Damascus Road, he spent all of his life trying to build the kingdom. He literally worked himself to death. What was his response? For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. In other words, "I live to glorify Christ to build his kingdom, and if I give all I have and work myself to death trying to do it, then I have gained."

Paul said he worked until he was too pooped to pop, but it was all good.

The rewards of labor

There are millions who work in the kingdom. They work for three reasons:

IT IS GODLY TO LABOR: Saints in work in kingdom building because it is expected by God. The word of God commands believers to work in the church as well in the general

community. Those who don't work should not respect to share in any rewards. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." The word "labor" or kopos kop'-os is found 20 times in the New Testament and refers not so much to the hard work, but the weariness which accompanies it. In its most primitive form, it means trouble or intense labor united with trouble and toil. It is sacrificial service; working until there is nothing else you can do. Those who work to build the kingdom in this way are like Paul; they do what they do for the love of the kingdom. Their labor, sacrifice and toil is described in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 as a "Labor of Love." We should be willing to give our time and energy to the service of the Lord so that we can do a good job in his service.

We work in the church and volunteer our time and service to help the community because we know God expects us to work and help glorify him through our service.

THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE: We labor in the kingdom because there is much work to be done. Matthew 9:37 says, "The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few." The mission of the church is to save the lost, sustain the saved and to expand the kingdom of God. Every believer has a job to do, but everyone doesn't have the same job. If each believer actually performed his job, the kingdom would be closer to reality.

In January 2009 a bunch of birds caused a plane's engine to fail, forcing the pilot to land the plane into the Hudson river. All 155 people on board survived because the pilot did his job well President Barack Obama spoke with the California pilot, who told him, "Me and my crew, we were just doing our job."

"And it made me think, if everybody did their job whatever that job was as well as that pilot did his job, we'd be in pretty good shape, Obama said.

What if we all did our jobs for the kingdom of God to the best of our abilities? Wouldn't that be something?

What is the work that needs to be done? The church must speak to the social dilemmas of our times. We must reach out to an entire generation of our men who are locked away in prisons. We must speak to the plethora of social ills that are destroying our families, under-educating our children, and eating away at the souls of our community. We must lift up the cross and the gospel of salvation through Christ. Whether individually or in association with others, the work must be done.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Let's work while it is day because when night comes, no one can work.

LABORERS SHALL BE REWARDED: Every person's work will be inspected. Those who labor well will be rewarded. Every believer should have the joy of knowing that God is aware of our labor. He understands the burden that service in the kingdom brings and is sensitive to our needs.

There are many saints who have remained faithful to the cause because they have been standing on the promises of God. He has promised to reward our faith. The word of God tells us in Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will

be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 2:26 says "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:" We may not know when it's coming, but we know what the end shall be!

Rev 3:5 says He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

We don't give up, even though the road may be rough sometimes, because the God we serve has promised us everlasting life!

The words of a song by Rev. Willie Morganfield are true, "Serving the Lord will payoff after while. Just keep working every day. Whatever is right, God said he would pay. Serving the Lord does pay off after while."

When you are too pooped to pop, God remembers

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we have labored so much that we are too pooped to pop, God will remember us and give us strength.

Paul told the Philippians that he had emptied himself into the service of the kingdom for one purpose only, and that was to glorify God.

His words were an encouragement to those who might reach the end of a day and feel that their labor is in vain.

When we work for the Lord, our work is never in vain.

Even though at times it may appear meaningless, we are encouraged to know that even the smallest jobs in the church are important and valuable to kingdom building.

God's work is done every time we pray for another person; when we call someone on the phone or send a note of encouragement.

It's the labor of the Lord when we teach a child, teen, or other adults; when we paint the wall in a church building or change a light bulb in the hallway, or manage the sound system, play an instrument or sing, or work on a committee, or care for the offerings that are brought.

When we have served until we are too pooped to pop, God remembers.

If we throw ourselves into kingdom work of promoting God's kingdom, we gain; even if financially, socially, or physically, we are too pooped to pop!

God will remember the work of every believer.

When we are too pooped to pop, God will remember our sacrifices and the pain.

When we are too pooped to pop, he will remember our difficult times and stormy seasons.

When we are too pooped to pop, he will remember every good deed.

When God remembers our works, he will provide us with his grace and favor!

Despite the fact that we may be too pooped to pop, God remembers our labor of love and transforms our:

—BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

—DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

—PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes;

—SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness.

Because we labor in love, we go into battle knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won!

Because we labor in love, we are assured that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victors!

Because we labor in love, we are not stopped by the tears we encounter because we know weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

When we labor in love the Lord turns our:

—SADNESS into GLADNESS;

—WEAKNESS into strength;

—DEFEAT into victory!

When we are too pooped to pop, he will remember and give each believer something that money can't buy;

He will give us the "joy of the Lord."

What is the joy of the Lord?

The Joy of the Lord is the satisfaction of knowing that our little part helps to build the kingdom of the Lord.

We may be too pooped to pop, but we should continue working in the kingdom, despite our aching feet and tired bones!

We may be too pooped to pop, but we should work because the lonely need to hear words of comfort!

We may be too pooped to pop, but we should work because the lost need to be found!

We may be too pooped to pop, but we should work because the fallen need to rise again!

We may be too pooped to pop, but we should work because the world needs to see an army of people who believe that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

We may be too pooped to pop, but we need to keep telling the world about the best labor of love the world has ever seen!

Tell them about a man who loved us so much that He carried our burdens on an old rugged cross!

Tell them how he labored on the cross from the sixth to the ninth hour!

Tell them how he cried out, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

Tell them how he died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But, Early Sunday morning he arose with all power in his hand!

You may be too pooped to pop, but keep on serving because God knows, just how much you can bear!

No. 9701-Grandparents

Give your Granny a standing ovation

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 13, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God." Leviticus 19:32

Introduction

How do you show respect for special people? In our society respect is shown in various ways, some of which are becoming archaic. It is customary in Western civilization to stand when a person of esteem enters a room or in the presence of a symbol of national importance such as the flag. When the President of United States enters a room, he will be announced, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States." Everyone in the rooms stands to honor the position, even if they do not care about the policies of the man.

It is customary to stand when a bride enters the room during a marriage ceremony to show respect and honor for the institution of marriage. Oddly, no one stands when the groom walks in, only the bride.

When a visiting dignitary enters a room, we stand. Soldiers stand and snap to attention when a high ranking officer such as a general enters a room. It shows respect for his position.

We stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, and for public prayers.

Believe it or not, there was a time when men stood whenever a lady entered a room. If she sat at a table and rose to excuse herself every man in the room would stand as a show of respect for her gender as the mother of our children.

There was also a time when our elderly were held in high respect as well; whenever an elder of the family or community entered a room all stood in respect. Those who stood did so out of respect for their experience, service, and legacy. No one would dare sit until the elders took their seats.

Today, grandparents and the elderly are respected, but not to the point of standing when they enter a room. However, we are still cautious of our language in the presence of godly grandparents. We are just as careful about the types of things we discuss in their presence, out of respect. Out of respect, most still give the last word about a family

decision to the family elders, out of respect. Very few will disrespect a grandparent who has proven to be a man or woman of God.

The Bible tells us that we are to rise in the presence of the aged. We are to show respect. We've become much more informal in our relationships in modern times; perhaps we should revisit why our respect for our elders has diminished.

The challenge for every parent is to live in such a way that when you become a grandparent that your love, care, concern and wisdom commands rather than demands the respect of your family.

The late Erma Bombeck gave us many reasons we should respect our grandparents. She said:

—Grandparents can always be counted upon to buy anything you're selling from all-purpose greeting cards to peanut brittle, from flower seeds to cookies, from transparent tape to ten chances on a pony.

A grandparent buys you gifts your mother says you don't need.

A grandparent pretends he does not know who you are on Halloween.

A grandparent is the only babysitter your parents didn't have to pay.

A grandparent will believe you can read even when you have the book upside down.

As Christians, we are grateful to have elderly men and women among us who know the Lord and give him their best. Our hearts rise when we see them walk in a room. We listen intently to their words, and if we differ with them, we carefully choose our words. Our grandparents are our connection to our family and God, and for that, we owe them our respect.

Exposition

The text focuses on a biblical charge to everyone to honor the elders of the family, church, and community.

Leviticus is a book of Old Testament laws for the priests and the people. Many of these laws have already been stated earlier in Scripture. But their repetition simply emphasizes their importance. While some of these laws are obviously only for the Israelites in that particular dispensation, the principles in the laws are universal in their application, and we today can read and study these laws with much profit.

Laws for the People. Both the reason for the laws and the record of the laws is given here. •Reason for the laws. "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (19:2) states the reason. This reason is very important. Hence, it is stated some 17 times more throughout chapters 19 and 20 in the abbreviated form of "I am the Lord your God" or simply "I am the Lord."

The laws recorded in these two chapters cover many subjects. Included subjects are: respect for parents, keeping the Sabbath, idolatry, free will offerings, eating offerings, consideration for the poor in harvest, stealing, profanity, treatment of the handicapped, honest judgment and weights and measures, talebearing, loving others, forbidden mixtures, not eating blood, tattoos, prostitution, respect for elders, treat-

ment of strangers, witches, and a list of sex sins.

Matthew Henry notes that verse 32 is a charge to young people to show respect to the aged: Thou shall rise up before the hoary head, v. 32. Age is honorable, and he that is the Ancient of days requires that honor be paid to it. The hoary head is a crown of glory. Those whom God has honoured with the common blessing of long life we ought to honor with the distinguishing expressions of civility; and those who in age are wise and good are worthy of double honor: more respect is owing to such old men than merely to rise up before them; their credit and comfort must be carefully consulted, their experience and observations appreciated, and their counsels asked and hearkened to.

The text summarizes an important truth: We should give honor to those to whom honor is due. It is a sign of disrespect and disorder in the land when children misbehave proudly in the presence of the elderly.

The elderly are offered the front or preferred seats in any assembly and are often afforded liberties of speech in counsels. It is an honor. It becomes the elderly to receive these honors, and the younger to give them.

Why we should respect our Grandparents

There are many reasons we should respect our grandparents, among them are:

BECAUSE WE LEARN FROM THEM: What do grandchildren learn from godly grandparents? They learn to be patient, wise, benevolent and grateful because that's the nature of godly grandparents.

Seniors whose children and grandchildren have not mastered these values still have work to do. Like Joshua, today's grandparents are reminded that there is still much land to possess.

A part of a grandparent's task is to share his/her life experiences with their grandchildren. Although we live in the multicultural age of Obama where technology has changed the way we communicate, and cultural diversity has changed the way we relate; the contrast of the experiences of grandparents with those of their grandchildren are meaningful and important.

In sharing their experiences, some grandchildren might be surprised to learn that Granny and Gramps were once young. They were not born then suddenly became grandparents.

Many grandchildren are surprised to learn that grandma and grandpa are not old fixtures from the past stuck in a corner, but they seem to be so much fun, why? Because they have learned how to live, after spending a lifetime learning how to make a living.

Sometimes that revelation is amazing. Consider the nine-year-old that sat on the swing with her grandmother and looked at a copy of her driver's license. "That's not a very good picture of you," said the granddaughter, it makes you look old. The daughter looked further and said, "Oh grandmother, they have your weight on here, you are too heavy." She said, "You've been living at the same address for a long time." Then the granddaughter looked down a little further, and she said, "Grandmother you are going to have to improve. You made an "F" in sex."

BECAUSE THEY KEEP US FROM PANICKING: There are times when life hits us hard and feel that we are down for the count. That's when we panic. Panic situations may involve the disability of a loved one, fire, an automobile accident or death in the family. If our fear of the unknown is greater than our faith...we are likely to panic. We are less likely to panic when we remember that as long as God is with us, we will make it through.

That's the calming effect that godly grandparents have on their children and grandchildren; they seem to know that God will take care of things. Those who have experienced many winters, know that the snow on the ground won't last, that springtime will come. Likewise, those who have seen many summers fade into fall, also know to prepare for chilly days ahead. Grandparents keep us from panicking because they know that "this too shall pass."

Grandparents help us to keep calm in storms and not lose faith in God. That's what happened to the disciples when they were aboard a ship and a storm developed. They panicked until someone remembered that Jesus was on board. Jesus came to the deck, unmoved by the storm and said, "Peace be still."

Our fear sees the worse that can happen. However, our faith-filled grandparents know the best that can happen.

Our godly grandparents remind us that as long as God is with us, he will make a way.

BECAUSE THEY REMIND US TO WALK THE GODLY PATH: Our Grandparents help us to stay focused and true to our life mission.

Sometimes, more than others, our grandparents seem to revel in our success and support us. That unwavering support also forces us to listen when they warn us of the dangers of moving off the godly path. Often we listen respectfully and ignore their advice, but what they said to us lingers in our mind. Sometimes we are embarrassed and ashamed later that we did not heed their warnings or consider the wisdom of their thinking.

We respect our grandparents because they are our moral compasses. When we have gone too far, we know it know it when Grandpa doesn't bless it! When we have made a life choice that will not be pleasing to God we know it when grandma embraces us, but rejects our choice.

We respect our grandparents because they have shown us how to walk the godly path. They have fashioned programs to discipline us, educate us, train our boys, groom our girls and protect our homes. Their repeated maxim to us still resonates: There are only two paths in life: our path and God's path.

We respect our grandparents because they have devoted their lives to helping us walk the Godly path.

Because they are praying for us

Finally, brothers and sisters we should praise godly grandparents because, even when we can't see it, we know that they are praying for us and putting us in the hands of the Lord.

Moses commanded that we should rise in the presence of the elders and respect them. We should respect the godly elderly because they connect us with God.

Even today our hearts should rise up in the presence of the elderly.

We should respect them because even in their golden years they are still mothers and fathers instead of grandparents. Often it is the grandparent that is providing food, clothing and shelter. It is the grandparent that is providing the family guidance while some parents struggle to find their way. We should rise up before them because even though their steps are slowing, they are still giving their best for their families.

Our hearts should rise up out of respect for those who keep families together by sheer faith alone!

Our hearts should rise up out of reverence for those who never gave up hope for us, even though the road was rough, and the going was tough.

Our hearts should rise in prayer for those who never stopped praying for us, even when we were not praying for ourselves.

Rise up, O' Israel and hear the words of thy elders and heed them!

Rise up, O' Israel and sing the song of hope taught to you on your grandmother's knee: "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

Rise up, O' Israel and speak the words of encouragement you heard your grandmother say, "I have been young, and now I am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread!"

Rise up, O' Israel and walk the path of your elders who chanted "I want Jesus to walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me."

I'm reminded of the old mother who was always so confident that the Lord would make a way. The young women of the neighborhood asked her one day, "Tell us mother, why are you so confident?" The old lady said, "When I was a girl, my mother taught me to ride my bicycle, and she ran beside me. I could feel her hand holding me as I paddled along. One day, I rode a long distance. When I stopped, I realized that mama wasn't beside me. I asked mama, how was it that she was not there, but I still felt her hand. She told me that she realized that as long as she ran beside me and held me up, that I'd never learn for myself. She said she stopped running that day and put me in the Lord's hand. She said the hand I felt that day, wasn't her hand, but it was God's hand guiding me. She had put me in God's hands."

Every Godly grandparent says, "I won't always be there with you child, but if you feel like you're going to fall, let the Lord hold you up!"

—If you feel like you're going to cry, let the Lord wipe your tears away!

—If you feel like you need someone to talk to, take it to the Lord in prayer!

—The world may knock you down, God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

Come what may, from day today, hold to God's unchanging hand!

The same hands that healed the sick and raised the dead!

The same hands that fed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning He arose from the grave!

When you've done all you know how to do, put it in God's hands, He will work it out!

No. 9702-Anniversary

The Pastor's Faith Walk

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2015

SCRIPTURE: But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

Introduction

How important to the church is the walk of its pastor? Is it important that he walks the path toward Godliness, holiness and heaven? The answer is "Yes" it is important! It is important to his own salvation and to those who follow him.

For the church, it is important that the pastor can walk the walk, even more than he can talk the talk. When he walks the walk, he makes it easy for others to follow him. Consider the little boy who went hunting with his father in the woods. The boy felt comfortable and safe with his father and never once doubted and worried about the fact that each time they went hunting they went further into the woods; so far that all directions were often lost as one tree appeared to look like another. One day, the boy was separated from his father. His heart leaped in panic as he realized that he had strayed away and was obviously lost. Then it dawned on him to look for his father's footprint in the soft muddy terrain. He had no idea where he was, but he kept his eye on his father's footprint. One step at a time he followed the trail is father walked and soon he came within shouting distance and returned home safely. Asked how he found his way back, the boy said he knew his father knew the way home, "so I just followed the walk he walked."

That's the way many of us feel about the pilgrimage of this pastor. For all of these years, he has led this congregation by talking the talk in Bible lessons and sermons, but he has also effectively taught us by walking the faith walk. There is nothing more impressive than seeing a sermon preached in front of your lives every day in the walk of a man who lives by faith.

The Christian life is one that is challenging and rewarding. Those who live for Christ have reached the conclusion that there is nothing they would trade for the Christian life experience. Walking in the Spirit of God is inspirational. It is rejuvenating! The members of this congregation are rejuvenated when we see how our pastor, a man of meager means, reared his children and shepherded his family through its own storms and challenges while helping all of us at the same time.

For many in this congregation, he is the only pastor they have ever known. His words, deeds, and sayings are etched in their collective mind. His faith has infected the entire membership. They have all been inspired to live their lives according to the will of God, using him as their guide and the Word of God as their authority.

Anniversaries are milestones. They are points along the way where we pause to evaluate the journey.

They are also times when we think about the person who has been leading us in the journey, what has been taught and how well we have followed.

Anniversaries tell us how far we have come, and they help us measure how far we have to go.

This pastor has been walking this journey while living in the public eye for a long time.

When we celebrate the anniversary of the pastorate, we reflect upon our journey toward perfection under his leadership as the shepherd of the flock.

After traveling all of these years in this ministry and enjoying a fruitful life of faith and service, it's wonderful to hear him say in so many words, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

As Christians, let us remain firm in our belief that the Christian walk is the godly way. Let us also salute the pastor the Lord has given us to guide us along the way. Today, think about the years this pastor has served as your spiritual leader. Today we speak a word of praise over him and ask God to give him strength.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of faith for any believer.

New Testament believers are reminded that faith is essential to the Christian life.

Its very nature is the unseen. It is a belief with sufficient physical evidence to confirm.

Much of what believers know about God has been through our past experience. Based upon our past experiences combined with what we read in the word we make a projection about the future. That projection is what is called faith. It is a hope rooted in the nature of God and our past experience with him.

Without faith, we cannot please God because we must accept that he is God and come to him first. Matthew Henry says, we must believe that God is, and that he is what he is, what he has revealed himself to be in the Scripture, a being of infinite perfections, subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Observe, the practical belief of the existence of God, as revealed in the Word, would be a powerful awe-influence upon our souls, a bridle of restraint to keep us from sin, and a spur of constraint to put us upon all manner of gospel obedience. We cannot please a God we don't know.

To know Him fully, we must try Him for ourselves.

To begin to know him, we must follow the footsteps of those who have proven that they know him. Our pastors lead us in this way.

A Diligent pastor teaches believers where not to walk

The diligent pastor continues to teach believers through precept and example where NOT to walk.

We are repeatedly warned in scripture not to walk after the flesh, Rom. 8:4; not after the manner of men, 1 Cor. 3:3; not in craftiness, 2 Cor. 4:2; not by sight, 2 Cor. 5:7; not in the vanity of the mind, Eph. 4:17; not disorderly, 2 Thess. 3:6. Galatians 5:16-17 says, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

In every way imaginable, this pastor has helped the members of this congregation to understand that we are never away from the sight of God. He always sees us because he never slumbers or sleeps.

Through his example and his own faith walk this pastor has shown us where we should NOT walk and has gently warned us of the dangers of not trusting God.

For that, we give God the glory.

Pastors must show believers where and how to walk with God

The pastor of a congregation has the important but delicate job of teaching believers not only where not to walk, but also where to walk.

Galatians 5:16-20 emphasizes that believers should not walk in ungodly places. The godly pastor must be diligent enough to go one step further; he must show believers where to walk.

The Christian faith is not a long list of Thou Shall Nots. However, it is a simple list of How-tos.

The Christian faith does not say, Keep Off The Grass. It is a faith that says, Walk on the Sidewalk.

This pastor has shown believers that the Christian walk requires balance and rhythm. Every believer should have a regular routine or rhythm that promotes the Christian life walk.

What has he taught? He has taught that we should have Bible reading at a set time each day that establishes a rhythm, a pattern and a routine that regularly feeds the soul. Psalm 119:105 says, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

The pastor has taught that a believer who has no pattern of Bible reading runs the risk of walking in the dark. This pastor does not walk in the dark; he walks in the light.

To walk by faith, he has taught that we should Pray at a set time each day and more if need be because it helps strengthen our faith walk. The word teaches us to pray regularly and with fervor. James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Our pastor shows us he believes in prayer because he prays

himself. He is a pastor who talks about prayer, but then goes into his own prayer room and shuts the door.

Worship is a necessary part of the believers walk; that's what this pastor has taught year after year. Very few real Christians are comfortable when they are repeatedly absent from worship services. Hebrews 10:25 warns Christians not to forsake or skip public worship. Worship inspires Christian living. It motivates service.

This pastor's preaching in your worship motivates you because you know that he personally walks the path he wants you to follow.

Church leaders must walk with the Lord

Those who want to lead must first show that they walk with the Lord. Jesus told Nicodemus: You must be born of the spirit.

No believer who assumes the role of a church deacon or trustee can expect to please God if that person does not know the Lord for himself. Thus, all of the believers past experiences come together to demonstrate faith in God in matters of the spirit. That means those chosen to serve have proven themselves to be persons who can walk by faith.

They have proven it in their personal lives and in their relationship with the church. Most often, such a person will feel inadequate. The feeling of adequacy is natural because it admits human limitations and requires a dependence on God."

Such persons have learned that God is able to do what they cannot do alone, so they plunge into life with a positive spirit. In the words of Martin Luther, God carves the rotten wood and rides the lame horse. Or in the more recent words of former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden, "Don't worry about the horse being blind. Load up the wagon."

Those selected to serve in the highest levels of church leadership need God's Spirit to lead them.

This pastor has been chosen by God to lead you; he is a man who shows other church leaders how to walk with the Lord.

Praise the Pastor for his Christian Walk

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must praise this pastor today because Pastors who have walked the walk as well as talked the talk, deserve our praise and prayerful support.

Our praise and acts of gratitude encourage this pilgrim to continue walking the walk as he shows us how to walk.

You have watched the walk of this pastor and have drawn inspiration from each step. Like him, you should resolve that no matter how long you have been on the battlefield that you will continue. I can hear every faithful member of this church say; I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!

At this church, this pastor has been the shepherd of many who have served in many

ways, but none of them would turn back now!

Some have lifted their voices as members of choirs, others have washed dishes and mopped floors, but lead by a faith driven pastor they say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have licked stamps, folded envelopes and passed out programs. Some have given their last dollar, and others have given until they felt the pain, but encouraged by their pastors they resolve, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now!"

Some have emptied trash cans, others have stood behind television cameras, snapped pictures, worked with youth, or just been in the midst of the saints for moral support. All have one thing in common. They all watch the pastor's walk and say, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

Why do we salute this pastor? Because he has taught believers to walk in faith.

Why do we honor him with this special day? Because he has taught believers how to call on the name of the Lord!

When our strength is failing, we may not remember to call on El-Shaddai, the Almighty God..but there is a name!

When we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we may not remember, Jehova-Rohi, The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want!..but there is a name!

When we are feeling like were making this journey alone, we may not remember Emmanuel the everlasting God, but there is a name!

We love this pastor because he continually reminds all who know him that, there is a name..

It is the name the songwriter wrote about when he declared; I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear ringing in mine ear, the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It's the name of Jesus! There is none other name whereby we must be saved!

It's the name of Jesus!

No wonder the songwriter declared, There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me.

He loved me so much that he hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that he died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9703-Funeral

In My Father's House

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 19, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

Introduction

Can you remember living in your father's house? Perhaps one of the tragedies of today's trend toward single-parent families is that children will become adults without ever having experienced living under the leadership of a strong, godly father. For some, grandfather has become the substitute for fathers they hardly know, but even then many will miss out.

Those who do remember living your father's house probably have many stories to tell of life in your father's house. If your father happened to be a godly man, there is one set of memories. However, if your father was a rolling stone there was another; in that case, you lived in his house, but he was never there.

A family that has the blessing of a father and mother living in its midst for a considerable amount of time is most certainly blessed. If many members of that family spent a great part of their lives living in their father's house, in his presence, the blessing is even greater.

In the 1970's there was a television series called the Waltons. The patriarch of the clan was an old fellow called Grandpa Walton. Grandpa Walton lived to see his children grow up, get married and to see his grandchildren. The unique thing about the Walton Family is that for the most part, off and on, all of them stayed in the same house on Walton Mountain. They laughed, talked and worked together. The series showed them struggling with finance, dealing with sicknesses, praying for the salvation of family members and overcoming obstacles. Grandpa worked, enjoyed his family and often gave wise advice. Although he son didn't go to church, Grandpa Walton went to church, not for the preaching, but for the singing. He loved talking, and he could really unwind once he started telling stories of times gone by.

What was unique about the Waltons, all cuddled up together on Walton's Mountain is that they had a sense of morality despite their differences; they always wanted to do the right thing. One grandson loved music; another like to fly airplanes, and John-Boy

wanted to be a writer. There were conflicts about these dreams especially when it appeared that they might need to leave Walton's Mountain to make them happen. It was Grandpa Walton who encouraged each one to follow their individual life goal while keeping the spirit of Walton's Mountain within them wherever they went.

The Waltons series was successful because there were millions of families in America that admired the family's unity, stability, and integrity. Even if they didn't live on Walton's Mountain, they were attracted to the idea of family love and unity the program depicted. Millions more watched with envy, wishing that their family had the kind of leadership displayed by Grandpa Walton and his clan. They wanted the kind of family that was so close that when the day closed each would say to the other as they turned out the lights: Good night, Jason, Ben, Mary Ellen, Mama, Papa, Grandma, and Grandpa!

In the 6th Season of the show, Grandpa died. When the 7th season began, they were still mourning him. He was gone, but the Spirit of family, love, faith in God, attending church and following your dreams continued. It was a spirit they learned in their father's house.

Today there is a generation among us that has a negative image of fatherhood, marriage, and the home. This is a generation that thinks of a father as "Just my baby daddy" "Sperm donors" and names on a support check. A real father is a man who loves, protects and provides for his children. He is a man who can do the right thing when all others around him are doing wrong and is willing to shoulder responsibility for the care of himself and those in his charge. A godly father is even better because in his house the moral standards of God are followed, hope never dies, and faith continues.

As Christians, we thank God for godly fathers. Those who have experienced love, care, and strength while living under their roof should be doubly thankful. The lessons learned, the strength and support received will never be forgotten. There will never be a day when the great father is forgotten as his legacy is told to each coming generation; it's the story of life, "In my father's house."

Exposition

This Text considers Joshua as he makes his farewell statement to the children of Israel just before his death. He here challenges them to be loyal to the God that has brought them from Egypt's bondage and over the Red Sea.

There were debates within other families about whether or not they would follow the traditions of the people they found living in Canaan since they were in a new land. Many wanted to abandon their old allegiance to godliness, the sacrifices, the old fashioned way of being faithful to just one God. They were in a new land, and they felt they should adopt the practices of those who had succeeded before they arrived.

Joshua, now an old man, had kept his family together through the wilderness journey, brought them across the swelling Jordan and lived long enough to see them begin planting their roots in the land of promise.

When the question of what to do about the future was addressed, Joshua rose to

tell the young men who listened that God had brought his family safely from the wilderness to the Promised Land. He challenged everyone to choose whether they would abandon the faith that had brought them to the Promised Land or hold firm. Finally, he stood with great confidence and said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

His statement was profound and commanding. There is no record of his having held a family council meeting to gather a consensus. He was not a dictator who could force his decision on others. After all, he was 110 years old, what would give him the impression that he could ensure that his family would serve the Lord?

He was confident because his life before his family, the moral character the family exemplified, and the faith it displayed in times of plenty and peril, spoke for itself. He had shown them through his life an example of the way they should go, and he knew they would follow. He felt comfortable that as a whole, his family would walk the right path.

Therefore, he could boldly say with confidence, that even after he closed his eyes, that his family would serve the Lord.

In My Father's House

Today, only those fathers who can say that they have lived a life before their families that was flawed, but faithful, can venture to make Joshua's statement. Even if children move away and start their own families, they still remember the teachings and examples they learned, "In my father's house." These include:

GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU: In a godly family, the children learn that each of them has a personal promise from God. that he will take care of them. That's one thing we learn, "In my Father's House" that we never forget: "God's gon' take care of it." That's when we take our concerns about our sickness to him and know that "God's going to take care of it." That's when we take our financial worries, our marital problems and our career frustrations before him knowing that his response will be "I will comfort you."

Long after we have moved out of our father's house, we will remember what we learned there; especially when we are dismayed.

When you are dismayed, you lack the courage that it takes to go on!

When you are dismayed, you lack the vision that it takes to see your way clear!

When you are dismayed, you lack the hope that it takes to believe

When you are dismayed, your spirit gets low, and you hang your head in defeat!

When you are dismayed, your smiling face is replaced by frowns and doubt.

Then you remember what was always taught, "In my father's house," If you live right, God will take care of you.

That's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "Be not dismayed what ere betide. God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide. God will take care of you. God will take care of you, through every day, ore' all the way. He will take care of you. God will take care of you."

ACKNOWLEDGE GOD AND HE WILL DIRECT YOUR PATH: Proverbs chapter 3 refers to one of the great truths about life that are taught in every godly family, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path."

Acknowledging God means more than just saying Lord help me get my diploma.

It means in every thing you do, ask whether what you are doing is true to the will of God.

If you submit yourself to the will of God, it does not matter what anyone else says or thinks, he will direct your path.

In all thy ways, that means college and technical school!

In all thy ways, that means climbing the career ladder and pursuing a family!

In all thy ways, acknowledge him, and he shall direct your path.

DON'T GIVE UP ON GOD, AND HE WON'T GIVE UP ON YOU: A godly father, through his example, teaches his wife and children never to abandon God and to keep faithfully any vow you make to him. He is faithful to his wife; he never gives up on her, and she never gives up on him. He is faithful to his family members and never gives up them, even if some stray away a bit and seem lost in their, he never gives up on them. The godly father assumes that role because he represents Christ in his home. If your father gives up on you, it's like God giving up on you.

What we learn in our father's house is never to give up! Each time we are knocked down, we must get back up! We must remind ourselves of God's promises. Romans 8:37 says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Don't give up on yourself and don't give up on God." God will see that his children receive the ultimate victory, That's what you learn, "In my father's house."

Trust your family to God's care

Finally, brothers and sisters, while family members remember life in the house of their father when his life is over, the godly father looks forward to living, "In his father's house."

Jesus constantly talked about his father's house. It is the final destination of every believer.

"My Father's House" is a reference to the kingdom of heaven. It is a reference to the coming place where the saints of God will spend eternity.

In John 14 Jesus told his disciples that he is going to prepare a place for all believers in his father's house. In verse two he said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

Where is "My father's house?" The entire universe is my father's house!

It is too big to imagine or comprehend. Isaiah 66:1 says, ".. The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"

In "My Father's House" there are many "abiding places" that will provide a

homeland for the soul.

Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us. Why would he need to prepare a place for us? It's because he knew then what scientists now call the second law of thermodynamics; that this world is winding down! Time is coming to an end.

As we begin to hear of wars and rumors of wars, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

As we begin to hear of earthquakes, fires, floods, famines and pestilences in diverse places, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

When we go to the doctor, and he tells us that our time is limited, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you."

When we go in for a check-up but end up in intensive care, we hear Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you." Time is winding up!

Jesus said, In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you."

-Come and go with me to my father's house!
-Come and go with me and I'll show you a place:
-Where hearse wheels never roll
-Where tears never fall
-Where tempers never rise!
-Where doubts never appear!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
In my father's house, the wicked will cease from troubling!
In my father's house, the weary will be at rest!
In my father's house, every mountain will be made low!
In my father's house, the crooked places will be made straight!
In my father's house, every day will be Sunday. It's always howdy and never good Bye and bye when the morning comes, we'll tell the story of how we've overcome.
We'll tell the story about Jesus, and how he saved our souls!
We'll tell the story of how he died out on Calvary and arose from the grave!
Come and go with me to my father's house!
There is joy! Joy!
Joy!

—

A few days ago Willie Zimmerman left his house on S. 15th Street for the last time. When he closed his eyes at last, he found peace. His spirit speaks from beyond: Goodnight Geneva, Miki, Willie, Rhonda, Felicia and all of the family, "I'm in my father's house."

No. 9704-Communion

One Bread

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 20, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Corinthians 10:17

Introduction

Have you ever considered how many churches there are in America? Those who stay close to home would like to believe that nearly everyone in America shares the same basic belief in God. However, those who have ventured outside of their own neighborhood know that while we say America is "One nation under God," in fact, "Under God" means different things to different people.

It's hard to get "One anything" in America. There are two big groups of people who believe in some form of God: Christians and non-Christians. The largest groups of non-Christians include Jews, Muslims, Buddhist, and Hindus. Among these non-Christians, there are hundreds of smaller groups. Among Christians, there are two big groups: Protestants and Catholics. Among these groups, there are thousands of smaller groups.

Among Protestant Christians are divided into a few large groups and hundreds of smaller groups: There are evangelical Protestants who believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, pro-life, anti-gay and pro-family. This includes: Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God. This is the largest group of Protestants. The next largest group is the regular or mainline Protestants such as Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc. They are more conservative in their approach to religion, more ritualistic, traditional and less emotional. The third largest group of Protestants are Black Protestants who generally believe in a tradition views about a personal soul saving God, who hears prayers and grants favor. This includes Black Baptist, Church of God in Christ. Even among Blacks Christian groups there are hundreds of denominations including many who call themselves "non-denominational" which, despite claims otherwise, has become a virtual denomination.

It doesn't stop there: There are Catholics and its many versions, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and the list goes on.

Drive through any city and you will see a large variety of temples, worship centers, synagogues, mosques, reading rooms and churches.

Our Pledge of Allegiance says we are "one nation, under God, indivisible" when

in reality when it comes to God we are divided into believers and non-believers and among believers: Christian and Non-Christian; and among Christians we are either Orthodox, traditional, or new age.

How do we know which of the religions of the world is right? Each one will point to its Bible as its correct source. Evangelicals have the King James Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses have the New World Translation, Muslims have the Koran, Jews have the Torah, Mormons have the Book of Morman? Every religion has its own Holy Book.

There are also hundreds of cults that profit from the desire of others to be faithful. These cults promise prosperity, health and wealth in the name of Jesus. Some are just absurd such as The National Church of Beyonce' in Atlanta It has a bible called the "Bible." -It has thousands of followers who sing "Drunk on Love" at communion time and accept Beyonce' as their Lord and Savior.-Beyonce' didn't set it up, but she has become a Goddess to millions who worship her.

The faithful are not detracted because we know that there is only one Lord, one faith and one Baptism. We may differ about what we should wear, what we should sing, whether we have a prayer language or not, what day we should meet or whether we should lift holy hands or anoint with oil, but when it all boils down, there is only one Lord, One Faith and One Baptism.

We are one loaf of bread, sliced into thousands of slices, but when you put them all together, Christians have one thing in common we all believe in "One Lord, One Faith and One Baptism."

As Christians, all believe that Jesus is the bread of life. We believe his words, that if any man eats of his bread that he will not hunger for this world any longer. He died for the sins of the whole world, making him "One bread" for everyone.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul urging the Christians of Corinth to strive for unity in the community of faith.

The Christians at Corinth were surrounded by a wide array of ideas and lifestyles. They were a small body of people in the midst of a giant multicultural society created by the Roman Empire. They were surrounded by all kinds of religions and different faiths. They believed in one God, but there were many who believed in many gods. The Romans believed the Emperor was god. There those who believed in sacrificing children or women to please the gods. There were also those who believed in sacrificing animals to gods.

There were some in the church that did not want to be different. They wanted to blend in and adopt some of the practices of others. The problem in this text refers to whether Christians who do not believe in idols of animal sacrifices should eat meat from animals that were offered as pagan sacrifices.

Some in the congregation saw no problem, but Paul said that if you share in the practices of the pagans, if you let ungodly practices feed you, then you are placing yourself under the influence of the demonic. If you begin to blur the distinction between

yourself and your non-Christian neighbor by doing what he does and putting yourself in his frame of reference, then you are toying with something that will erode your relationship with Christ. Paul says, "What is sacrificed on pagan altars is offered to demons, not to God."

Paul said believers are "One bread" meaning that we are one body.

"One bread" was easy for believers to understand. Jewish bread was usually made the same way in every community. It was generally made of wheat and other grains if no wheat was available.

It was prepared by kneading it in wooden bowls.

The dough was mixed with leaven and made into thin cakes, round or oval, and then baked. The only difference in its bread was whether it had leaven on regular days or unleavened on Passover.

When he emphasized "one bread" he also reminded them that believers received their blessings through Christ and Christ alone, who is the bread of life.

He urged believers to remain constant in their faith, not to stray and recognize that we are different from others because we believe in "One Lord, One Faith and One Baptism."

Believers are One Bread

Paul told the Corinthians that we are "one bread" and they should not try to be like everyone else. Regardless of our race, creed or color when believers come to the communion table we are "one bread" because:

JESUS SAID HE IS THE BREAD OF LIFE: The largest part of any day's food consumption is represented by the base of the food pyramid which includes breads, cereals, rice, pastas, etc. While junk food is only sparingly recommended even discouraged and, milk and meat requires 2-3 servings a day, and fruit and vegetables require 3-5 servings; breads require 8-11 servings per day. In the mind of the nation's nutritionists, breads are needed most to nourish the human body and maintain health. Ironically, it is also bread that is needed to sustain the spiritual life of believers. That's why Jesus said in John 6:35, ".. I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The presence of Christ in a believer's life is essential to satisfying life's hunger. He meets all needs and satisfies all desires. In John 6:51 Jesus expands on this characterization by saying, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." There are many junk food religions, but Jesus is the bread of life.

SPECIALTY BREADS ARE TASTY BUT ONLY ONE BREAD SAVES: Unlike the Jews that generally had only one kind of bread, there are many types of bread around the world, each appeals to the tastes of its consumers: There is: The WONTON of China. The Mexican TORTILLA. The CHAPATI of India. The PITA from the Middle East. The CROISSANT of France. The PIZZA bread pie of Italy the BAGEL from Poland.

Not only are there breads around the world, but African-Americans also have our

own breads that are unique to our culture.

We know about cornbread and biscuits.

We know about hoecakes and Cush!

We know about hot water corn bread, shortening bread and even crackling bread.

As tasty as these breads are, none of them can save a lost soul!

As delightful as they are we can't serve pizza and cornbread for communion, because there is only one bread that saves. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

ONLY ONE BREAD CAN RELEASE THE POWER OF GOD WITHIN US: While there are many types of bread in the world, there is only one bread can release the power of God within us. In a grocery store, there are many kinds of bread that each claim to be more than the other: Wal-Mart has "Great Value" bread. There is bread by Pepperidge Farms, Sunbeam or Wonder Bread. Some have raisins, some are called light bread, but if we walked down the isle of Heaven's Grocery Store we would only find "One Bread" and it would be called the "Bread of Heaven." because it does what it's supposed to do. Bread is a protein source, and it slowly releases energy to the body. That's good to know especially since Jesus said He is the bread of life. The Spiritual bread that is within us releases the power of God within us to do the work of God in a mighty way. It's like a spiritual time release capsule; all through the day little bursts of energy just push us, just a little bit. When we feel dispirited, He lifts us. When we feel dejected, He raises us. When we feel tired, He energizes us. No wonder Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

Only One Bread Turns You Around

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is only "One Bread" that can turn us around and plant our feet on solid ground.

When Jesus said he is the "Bread of Life" he also meant he is the only way that a person can be forgiven of sins and can get a new start. Certain kinds of bread, such as wheat bread contain fiber. Fiber helps our bodies get rid of the bad stuff. Nutritionists say foods with fiber have a tendency to fill you up without making you fat. They help you to go longer without feeling hungry, help you to fight off disease and fiber helps you to sweep the kitchen. That means fiber foods help you to get rid of the bad stuff in your body quickly.

Jesus said those who have the bread of heaven "shall never hunger" for the things of this world or thirst after the things of this world. This bread will help us get rid of the bad stuff in our lives. Maybe that's why 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, " Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Old things such as sinful living, adultery, thievery, gambling, drugs, alcoholism...all passed away. Those who accept Christ find that His spirit starts working quickly. We don't enjoy sin as much as we once did, we start thinking more about doing right by God.That's the power of "One Bread" at work; it's turning us around and giving us a new life. live.

Today, we present to you the bread of life containing the essentials to sustain and motivate us to live abundantly, justly and courageously.

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. It's bread from heaven.

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. This bread satisfies. Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. This bread gives eternal life. In John 6:47-48 Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life."

It is bread, but it's not just any bread. It is given for the salvation of the world.

It is bread that has been kneaded in the crucible of the fickle attitudes of mankind.

It is bread that has been prepared through 33 years of life in a sinful world!

It is bread that has been prepared, kneaded and broken for us.

It is bread that was humiliated for our wickedness and chastised for our impurities.

It is bread that was judged for our crimes and condemned for our rebellion.

It is bread that was despised for our corruption and cursed for our perversion.

It is bread that was:

—wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities.

—pierced for our guilt.

—tortured for our shortcomings.

—beaten for our wrongs.

This is the bread of our faith. It is God's bread. It is bread that gives:

STRENGTH to those who are weak; INSPIRATION to those who are frustrated and confused!

HOPE to the hopeless; RENEWAL to those who are in despair!

PICKS UP those who are let down; LIFTS UP those who have been let down!

SAVES those who are lost and gives NEW ENERGY to those who wait on him. For I hear the word declare that "they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint!"

God's bread is:

QUICKER than hoe cakes. While we are still praying, our help is on the way!

LIGHTER than light bread. Those who wander in the dark will find that he is the light of the world!

SWEETER than raisin bread. His goodness takes the bitterness of hard times and sweetens its taste. No wonder the songwriter said, "I found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

MORE ASSORTED THAN CORNBREAD. Cornbread is good with greens, rice, and gravy, stew meat or chicken. If there is nothing else, corn bread goes well with just cornbread and gravy. But God's bread goes with every situation. In my days of happiness, God is there! In my moments of sadness, God is there too! When my soul is hungry, God is there! No matter what my situation, God is there!

No wonder the songwriter declared: "Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

When God saw the world hungry for the bread of life, he decided to share his only begotten son to feed them the power of salvation!

One evening, 2000 years ago, Jesus, the bread of heaven, took an old rugged cross and carried it to Calvary!

He died on that cross so that we might live!

But early Sunday morning, Quicker than instant biscuits in a hot stove!

Early Sunday morning, faster than light bread browns in a hot toaster!

Early Sunday morning, God's shared bread arose from the grave with....all power in his hands!

No. 9705-Blessing

Blessed in the middle of Mess

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 27, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other." Luke 6:10

Introduction

Have you ever been a customer or client who walked into an internal conflict been played out in front of your eyes? If you did, how did you feel? If you are like most people, you probably felt bewildered, dumbfounded and frustrated.

Have you ever heard a conversation similar to this? "She cut my hours and won't let me work but 25 hours a week. She says she has to cut back, and then she hired that new girl and gave her 15 hours a week. She cut me from 40 to 25 and then hired somebody else with my hours." Then the employee sees you standing in line and asks, "Can I take your order?" In a dry tone, slams your change on the counter and pushes your order to you while saying, "This ain't right. I know what she is trying to do. She trying to keep me from getting health care and retirement. Ain't nobody no fool." As you leave out the door, she says, "Thank you and, please come back."

In another instance, you walk in and two workers are talking about another. "I done told her to stop looking at my man. She keep that stuff up and I pull that cheap horse hair weave outta your head!" yells one worker. "Go ahead try it and see what happens!" another yells back. Then one looks up and sees you at the counter and asks, "What you want?"

"They ain't nothing but slave drivers up here. I worked last night then Eterious didn't show up this morning, and now they got me working up here on a Sunday. Don't they know its Sunday! That's a holiday! Now I got to be here till 3 p.m. This is messed up. I'm tired of this mess!" You are standing waiting for your order, and he says, "Yeah, what you want?"

Sometimes you apply for a job and become entangled in a political squabble. The boss hired you because his staff is all male and he needed a woman to prove that he does not discriminate, but to hire you he fired a well-liked man to create an opening. All you wanted was a job, but you walked into a mess.

It can be the same situation if you get a scholarship to go to a great college, even if you didn't have the greatest grades. When you arrive on campus people are

protesting against the school's affirmative action program that permits them to skip over white students with better grades to hire a minority to fill the school's racial quota. You get the scholarship, but you also stepped into a mess that is not of your own creation.

Then there are messy situations that we create ourselves, but somehow in spite of the mess, God continues to bless us anyway.

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that despite the messy situations that confront us, God still blesses us and grants us favor.

Exposition

This text focuses on a man with a withered hand who went to the synagogue to pray for relief and stepped into a mess.

Luke 6:8-10 details an instance where a man with a withered hand sat in the midst of many people who called themselves religious, but no one did anything to help him. In that time many believed that withered limbs, leprosy, and other abnormal conditions were caused by sin; the victims brought it on themselves. He was ignored.

The text is packaged between two passages of scripture that we could describe as "mess" that ignored his situation. Verses one through seven detail the dispute that existed between the religious leaders and Jesus about whether it was right to heal on the Sabbath Day. They argued that to do so would bring God's wrath because anyone who worked on the Sabbath broke the commandment to keep the Sabbath Day Holy.

The dispute went back and forth as the religious on different days. Each time Jesus appeared they argued. They made a point, and Jesus made a counterpoint.

On one Sabbath as they argued back and forth the man with the withered hand appeared and Jesus saw his condition and told the man to "rise up and stand forth in the midst." Right there in the middle of the mess that ignored his condition, his pain, and agony, Christ healed him.

After he had been healed, the messed started again. Verse 11 says, "And they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."

There was mess in the first seven verses and mess in the 11th verse, but in the middle of the mess there was a blessing!

Mess Created by Someone Else

Sometimes the mess we find ourselves in is not of our own creation. It was caused by someone or something else.

A person who works hard saves money and pays all of his bills on time can find himself in a mess if someone breaks into her home after she has cashed her check, steals her purse and leaves her broke. Now the rent is due, the light bill and water bill is due, and creditors are knocking on her door. She's in a mess, but she didn't create the mess; it was created by someone else!

The same thing happens when you drive safely, but someone else slams into you

and causes you to slam into someone else. You have injuries yourself, have caused injury to someone else, and it wasn't your fault. Someone else caused the mess.

Any given day believers find themselves in a plethora of mess caused by someone else!

What believers do when they are dealing with a mess caused by someone else is look to God for strength. Psalm 143:8 says, "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."

When forced to respond to a mess created by someone or something else, the believer prays this prayer, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." - In essence, "God, I'm in a mess. I didn't create this mess; show the way out!"

Every believer will have to respond to someone else's mess. In fact, many people spend most of their lives responding to mess created by others:

—You have children in your care because your son and daughter got in a mess.

—You owe your soul to friends because you borrowed to bail a child out of a mess!

—You're in debt because someone stole your identity and has ruined your credit and created a mess!

The list is endless, but the faithful have learned that even in the middle of dealing with a mess someone else caused, God still blesses!

He blesses with strength! He blesses with renewed optimism!

And sometimes when we are like Israel with Pharaoh's army behind us and the Red Sea in front of us, he just opens up a way out of no way! He creates a path and shows us the way.

That's why our prayer is "Cause me to know the way therein I should I walk!

If we walk in that way, we will be blessed in the middle of the mess.

Self-generated Mess

While some are dealing with mess created by someone else, there are times when we are dealing with mess we created for ourselves.

We are sinful people. It's our nature Because we are sinful, we will constantly be dealing with messes created by other people and messes we create for ourselves.

We drive a long stretch on the road and fight to keep our eyes open; we have to deal with our fatigue, but there is someone on the other side of the highway doing the same thing. We spend our lives trying to keep ourselves in the right lane or we dealing with people who fell asleep at the wheel.

Paul wrote the Romans and explained that sin keeps our lives in a mess. We want to do right but ultimately do wrong. We desire to do the right thing, but somehow we always end up doing the very things that we do not want to do.

In Romans 7:24 after looking at his miserable estate Paul said, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He concluded that it was Jesus who straightened out his mess and blessed him.

Like Paul, many today are in a terrible mess when it comes to many things. We can't

seem to get a grip on things. Every new year we resolve that we will do better, but just a few days later we are back in a mess.

We want to do right, but we can't get a grip on things, but we end up in a mess.

We want to be active in the church, but we are so disordered that it never happens; our worship attendance is a mess.

We plan to read our bibles more and to prayer with others more, but we end up doing other things; our Bible study and prayer life ends up in a mess.

We said we were going to spend more time with our family and to put a cap on our spending practices, but we ended up in a mess.

Yet, even in the middle of the mess we have made of our lives, God has been merciful to us. Often we have lost control, but he remained in control. He blessed us in the middle of our mess

We have failed to do our part, but he has always succeeded and has blessed us by doing his part.

We have come up short on our end, but God has blessed us anyhow!

Should we continue to create messy situations for ourselves, relying on God to bail us out? Or should I resolve that even though I have been blessed in the middle of the mess that I created that I won't push the envelope? I won't keep creating more mess in my life!

David looked at the mess he created in his life and said, "Create in me a clean heart O' God and renew a right spirit within me! Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!"

When we have created a mess, we should confess and repent, and let God do the rest!

In the mess, he continues to Bless

Finally, brothers and sisters, God is not blind to the mess we are dealing with; He blesses us despite the mess.

When the man with the withered hand came to the synagogue, he was dealing with an issue. He came to the place where he thought he could find God and relief for his situation.

He walked into a mess, but he walked away blessed!

He walked into a situation where he was ignored and little more than a second thought, but he walked away healed!

Therein lies the answer to our problem. When we find ourselves in the middle of a mess we can try to stir it, but that would make it stink, or we can keep looking to God and let him deal with the issue.

There is no record of the man with the withered hand doing anything other than coming before God, even though he was in the middle of a messy situation.

His situation caught the eye of Jesus, and he was blessed!

Today, we should remember that it does not matter how we got into our mess, what we should know is that if we come to our God, our situation will get his attention.

We know that is true because:

He has blessed us in the middle of a mess that others have created!

He has blessed us in the middle of the mess we created!

In spite of our mess, God has continued to bless.

He blesses us not because he endorses our mess but because he loves us more than he hates the mess we created.

He blesses us out of love, to give us one more chance!

David messed around and took another man's life and his wife. When he saw the mess he created, he asked for a clean heart, and God blessed him despite his mess.

The prodigal son was knee-deep in slop, in a terrible mess. He stopped to think how the servants in his father's house had food to eat, but he was hungry and feeding swine. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father I have sinned, before God and before thee." That father blessed him, despite the mess he had made of his life.While David and the Prodigal son strayed away and caused a mess, Job was in a mess because of his success. He had committed no sins. He had been faithful in every way, but his life was still a mess. Death had invaded his family. He lost all of his money. His health began to fail, all at the same time. Yet, Job said, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." –He blessed Job despite the mess Satan made in his life.

When we've been a mess..

When we've been IN a mess..

And when we have been hurt BY mess and God still blesses us, what shall we do?

We shall praise his name and say thank you Lord!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me despite the mess that I've made of my life!

Thank you Lord, for taking my weakness and turning it into strength!

Thank you Lord, for taking my failure and giving me victories!

Thank you Lord, for taking my discouragement and giving me hope!

Thank you Lord, for taking my test and giving me a testimony!

Thank you Lord, for looking beyond my faults and shortcomings and seeing my need!

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus came into a messed up world to make it a blessed up world!

He came among messy people, who called him Lord to his face and tried to get him killed behind his back.

He came among messy people, who shouted "Hosanna" on one day and "Crucify him" a few days later.

In the middle of the world's mess, God sent his best!

The world was messed up, but he came to be lifted up that all men might be saved!

A messed up world, put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!

On Calvary, Jesus was hung between two messed up men

A messed up world nailed his hands and feet!

A messed up world stuck a spear in his side!

And he died, out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

I'm not worthy of all these blessings because I'm messed up!

Thank you Lord, for blessing me one more!

No. 9706-Revival

Bring me my switch

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 5, 2015

SCRIPTURE: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Hebrews 12:6; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

Introduction

Have you ever been punished the old fashioned way? There are many who remember breaking a family rule about integrity, obedience or respect and feeling the result of that decision? For hundreds of years, families have used a variety of methods to instill discipline in their children.

In many cultures, discipline involved wooden rods applied to the back and bottom. In others, there were pieces of leather applied to the same areas. The African-American community has a unique history in this respect. There are many who remember: Leather belts, auto fan belts, razor straps, and paddles. Most remember the "switch."

A switch is a piece of strong, flexible wood that inflicts pain. Larger switches were formed from hickory or birchwood, and smaller switches formed from hedges or any small bush in a yard. The purpose of the switch was to inflict pain.

The question of corporal punishment has risen over the years as psychologist study the effects of "the switch" on children as they become adults. Some have traced violent behavior such as "spouse" abuse and bullying to a history of violence that began when offenders were young.

Use of the "switch" and corporal punishment as a whole is declining in America. Thirty-one states have banned its use in school and among the 19 that still allow corporal punishments there are extensive rules and record keeping in the process.

To spank or not to spank, that is the question? What does God say about all of this? Proverbs 23:13-14 "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

The purpose of any chastisement is not "Punishment" but "discipline." The idea is not to punish, but to guide and direct. The purpose of a switch is not to inflict pain for the sake of pain itself, but to correct and save. Many parents, after spanking their children, went secretly into their rooms and cried silent tears because the spanking hurt

them as well as their children, but it was necessary to correct them.

Just as parents have some form of discipline for their children whether it is a switch or loss of privilege, God also does the same for believers who stray away from the Word. God's disciplinary process is designed to strengthen us, correct us and to correct us. However, to save us, He sent his Son to take our punishment on himself to guarantee us peace.

As Christians, we know that God will correct us if we stray, but he loves us enough to go out of his way to save us from ourselves.

Exposition

This text focuses on the importance of discipline to development of the Christian life.

The unknown writer of the text, (Believed to be Paul) explained the importance of developing good discipline as Christians.

The text explains the nature of God's discipline of his children. Discipline implies two things: Instruction regimen or to be chastised and punished differently. Chastisement is correction and punishment is a penalty.

Proverbs 23 speaks of not withholding the rod as a tool of punishment. However, Psalms 23 says, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Since the Hebrew word for rod means "measure and direction" then the rod is seen in the same way the rod is seen in the hand of a shepherd, not to punish the sheep, but to gently tap them and point them in the direction they should go.

To be chastised is to be pointed in the way we should go. This instills discipline and requires a relationship between a person who
knows the way of life (discipline) and an apprentice who is trying to learn the way of life. The idea is for the experienced person to lead the learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner can imitate and live like or better than his teacher.

Each believer is a disciple or a learner of the Christian lifestyle. Our goal is to learn, through a gradual process, the Christian way until we can live it like the master lived it. To help us, God often chastises us, to help us develop discipline.

The chastisements of God have taken two forms: Physical and denial of privileges. When Israel sinned in the wilderness, God sent serpents among them to bite them with poisonous venom. That was physical punishment.

When Moses sinned in the wilderness by taking credit for God's act of providing water for the people, he was punished by being denied access to the promised land. That was denial. God has used both methods of punishment in dealing with his people, depending on the circumstance. It appeared when they had either a dream or a possession denial of either the dream or possession was used. When they had neither, physical punishment was given.

This text makes it clear that whenever God punishes us we should know that it is because he loves us and we should be happy because we know the outcome will be good. The preponderance of Biblical teaching follows this line:

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:" -Job 5:17

"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." — Proverbs 3:11-12

Those whom God loves can expect to be discipline, either physically or by denials to help them learn the Christian way of life.

We are chastised to bring out our best

The Gospel of Christ shows us the standard and motivates us to measure up in every way that we can, with the full knowledge that in the areas that we fail, that the Grace of Jesus Christ will make up the difference. Every waking minute of the day a believer is pushed by the Holy Spirit to reach higher, remove imperfections and strive to become better. Over and over again, we find ourselves messing up, saying, "Oops, I did it again!" That's when we feel the Holy Spirit working on us. Hebrews 12:6-8 gives this insight. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The work of the gospel picks up every time we say, "ooops I did it again." It whips us and torments us until we correct ourselves. Its goal is to help us "be all that we can be." When we have done all, the grace makes up for the rest.

We are chastised to make us stronger

Sometimes we are weak in faith, and God chastises us to make us stronger. A case in point is Israel's repeated lack of faith in the wilderness. Because of their unwillingness to follow God's directions given to them through Moses, they wandered around in circles in the desert for 40 years. Often they demonstrated a foolish nature by ignoring God's direction bringing trouble upon themselves. Yet, God provided for them.

When they were to the point of thirsting to death, God provided water for them from a rock. When they had no food, God provided bread from heaven that appeared on the ground every day for 40 years. When they had no meat, huge flocks of quail appeared every day. Their clothes did not wear out; they never had to change shoes. They reached the point of utter frustration. They could not get it together. The land of promise was so close, but they simply could not make themselves reach out and grab the promise. They constantly fell into faithlessness, sometimes idolatry and wickedness that caused them considerable trouble. Looking back they realized that God chastised Israel for its wayward ways, but he never stopped loving them.

Psalm 94:12 uses the word "chastenest" to describe their experience. The object of chastisement is that the student will arise, wiser and stronger having learned an important lesson. In the wilderness, Israel was certainly chastised. They learned

through their suffering that they should be obedient to God and trust in him wholly.

This is the lesson we learn today; we are chastised by God to make us stronger, not to punish us.

We are Chastised, but he took our Punishment

Finally, brothers and sisters we need to remember that God does not enjoy chastising us, that's why Christ took our punishment so we can know the fullness of God's love.

Parents get no great thrill out of punishing a son or daughter. In fact, they often feel more pain, internally, than the offending child.

Neither does God enjoy disciplining us. He gets no thrill when it comes time to correct us for our missteps, but because he loves us, he corrects us.

Consider the poor mother who learned that her son had stolen some merchandise from a local store. The mother screamed at the child. Her blood pressure rose. She was angry, disappointed, frustrated and afraid for the future of her child. After she screamed and cried until she could hardly talk she told her son to go outside and "get me my switch" "Don't get no little one either, get a big one."

The boy went to a bush outside and broke off a limb and pulled off its leaves. He fully expected what was coming. He decided he would be tough and take it, after all, it would only last for a few minutes. Trembling, the mother told her son to hold the switch. She turned her back to him and peeled back her blouse to reveal her bare back. She yelled to her son "Hit me." The boy was reluctant to hit his mother, but she demanded that he do so. As he struck her over and over, whelps and scratches formed on her back. Blood began to appear.

She turned to him with tears running from eyes and said: "Son, when you disobey me you hurt the dream I have for you. You may as well take a switch and whip me because I hurt inside. She turned her scarred back to him and tearfully said, "Look at the stripes on my back and remember this day." The boy left the room. For the first time, he understood what his mother meant when she said: "this hurts me, more than it hurts you." The mother never had to lift a hand to that son again. He spent the rest of his life trying to make sure that his mother would never feel that much pain again.

Today, we know that when we sin, we cause God great pain and Frustration. He chastised us to help us get better, but he took the punishment unto himself.

One day on an old rugged cross, Jesus told a sinful world "go and get me a switch." "Go and get me an old rugged cross."

It was a cross that should have been our punishment!

It was a cross that should have been our condemnation!

It was a cross that should have been our degradation!

Instead of condemning the world and punishing us, he took its punishment upon himself. He allowed himself to be stripped and beaten with 39 lashes. He allowed a crown of thorns to be placed upon his head ..nails to be driven in his hands and feet!

He bled and died and took our punishment upon himself looking forward to a glorious resurrection, restored hope, and a second chance! Isaiah put it this way: " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed!" Isaiah 53:5

And with his stripes, we are healed!

And with his stripes.. we are healed!

Healed because he was crucified for us!

Healed because he was buried for us!

Healed because he was raised for us!

After three days and nights, he arose from us…and with his stripes we are healed!

No. 9707-Anniversary

By the strength of his hand

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 18, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place." Exodus 13:3

Introduction

What do you attribute to your success? If you are Donald Trump, you'd probably say, "It's because I'm smart." If you are Hillary Clinton, you probably say, "The answer is in my email." If you are Barack Obama, you would probably say, "Because I married Michelle." – People attribute a variety of reasons for their success including education, opportunity, intellectual ability, connections, politics and hard work. There are some who attribute their journey to just plain luck.

Luck? Really?

Was it luck that you survived the storms of your life?

Was it luck that you overcame that family problem that plagued you?

Was it really luck that landed you the job that you sought?

The new housing opportunity that became available to you, was it by pure luck?

Some never realize the real source of their good fortune had nothing to do with luck, but rather they were beneficiaries of the strength, power and grace of God.

The grace of God surrounds and strengthens us.

God's grace places someone by our side in times of trouble to help us.

The grace of God causes a full plate to be placed on our table when we hunger.

The grace of God puts us in the hands of the right doctor, teacher, coach and mentor.

It's not luck, it's the grace of God. Today, don't count on luck, trust God; he'll work it out for you.

By the strength of God's hand and his grace, we have made this journey. Along the way, we have seen the world change, but yet we are still here.

We have seen many things come and go, but we are still here.

Drive in movies are gone, but we are still here.

Full-service gas stations are gone, but we are still here!

Remember 8 track tapes and 45 and 77 rpm records; they are gone, but we are still here!

Manual typewriter, push lawn mowers, doctor's house call, disco dancing, home milk delivery, The steel afro pick and Jeri curl and rabbit ear television antennas are all gone, but we are still here!

Through the strength of God's hand, we are still here!

As Christians, we are aware that wherever we are today, it's because we have benefited from the strong hand of God. It is his grace that has brought us this far, and his grace that will see us through.

Exposition

This text considers Israel as God reminds the people of the reason for their deliverance out of slavery and what they should do in response.

Israel spent 400 years in bondage in Israel. During this time, they constantly prayed that God would bring them out of the enslaved condition and deliver them to freedom.

Their desire was to return to the land that God had promised Abraham, a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

The 13th chapter of Exodus records God reminding Israel to remember the source of its deliverance and in response, to give him their best.

On the anniversary of their deliverance God commanded Israel to "Remember this day."

Almost as if to underscore the importance of the message, the nearly identical phrase is used four times in the same chapter.

In Exodus 13:3 God says, "For by the strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place."

In Exodus 13:9 God says, "For with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt."

In Exodus 13:14 God says, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage."

In Exodus 13:16 God says, "For by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Bondage."

The message was clear: Israel's deliverance did not come from its own strength, but it was God's hand that brought them out.

We are progressing, not by our own might, but by the strength of the hand of God leading us every step of the way.

Why We celebrate!

Believers today are celebrating because we see how God has blessed our families over the years.

We see the hand of God at work. When we come together to fellowship we see more than the litany of names and faces of the past recited for our hearing, we see God moving through them to achieve His purpose. More than others, we are celebrating because

we have benefited from the grace of God and the strength of his hand.

We have seen his strong hand

Moses reminded Israel four times that it was God that delivered them. He repeated it so many times because there were some who experience the strength of God's hand, but did not recognize his involvement There are some today who are like the Israelites in the wilderness who eyes could not see that God had been with them every step of the way. Can't you hear the old warriors saying, "Our eyes have seen God roll back the Red Sea?" We have seen how He fed more than a million people in the wilderness for 40 years. We have seen how He protected us from our
enemies. We have seen how He brought us to the borders of the Promised Land." Even today, we have seen how God has provided for our families and this community over the years. We have seen storms tear the roofs from our houses and flood waters float away our memories. We have also watched as God restored and helped us rise again. We have seen the tears fall as we wept at gravesites of our loved ones and we have also seen how God restored us and strengthened us to go on. Today, the faithful celebrate the strength of his hand.!

We are celebrating because we have seen how much he has blessed us, and how far he has brought us.

We have seen how God has been our rock in a weary land.

We have seen how God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

We have seen how He has been our way out of no way.

We have seen the strength of his hand in our lives.

We see the strength of his hand today

Not only have we see the works of the Lord in the past we see what he is doing right now. Racial and gender barriers are falling all around us. Just look at the news in the 2016 Presidential race there is a black Republican, a Latino, two women, and an Indian American running for President and race or gender is not the primary focus of attention. We see the hand of God moving to tear down walls and to build up the downtrodden. What we see makes the words of the songwriter even clearer when he writes, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Lord."

Today, our eyes are beholding the gradual unfolding of the millennial kingdom where there will be peace on earth. What we see today is not what it shall be, but it is a step toward what will be. The lines that divide the rich and the poor still exist, but our sensitivity has been heightened and that line is blurring.

There are still whites who hate blacks, Democrats who hate all Republicans and Republicans who think little of all Democrats, but more than we have ever seen before, whites and blacks are working together, worshipping together and even putting aside

partisan views for the common good. We have seen the sons of former slave masters working alongside the great grandsons of slaves to build Habitat homes, race for a cure for cancer, comfort the families of military bereaved, and sit down at the same table for the common good without burning crosses, Rebel Flags or clinched fists. It is not what it should be, but we have seen what our grandparents thought would never happen in a million years.

In our lifetime, we are beginning to see the wisdom of judging men by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin.

More than that we have seen the glory of the Lord in our own families. We have seen wayward sons and daughters come to better understandings. We have seen God's powerful hand reach down and literally grab hold of wayward lives and put them on the right path.

More than ever, we have seen the strength of the hand of God in our own lifetimes.

By the strength of his hand...

Finally, brothers and sisters we should consider that the strength of the Lord went before Israel and guided them the rest of their journey.

Four times Moses reminded Israel that they were being guided by the strength of the Lord's hand. He ended his message for them in Exodus 13:21 "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."

Israel moved forward after leaving Egypt, confident that God would make a way by the strength of his deity and power of his hand.

They had no idea where they were going because, excepting Moses, none of them had seen the Promised Land. Yet, the marched forward trusting in the power of God.

The Bible reminds us that "Eyes have not seen, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things God has in store for those who trust Him." We don't know exactly what God has in store for us as believers, but we know it will be better than what we have now.

The old warriors, whose legacy we celebrate here today had dreams for the future. They kept the faith because they had dreams of a better day.

Great-grandma didn't know exactly what it would be, but as she scrubbed floors through the Great Depression and washed the dirty laundry of millionaires for pennies, she dreamed of a better day!

Aunt Betty did not know exactly what the future held, but sat on the back of the bus for years as her beautiful face became rubbery and dark and her cold black hair turned silver and grey, she dreamed of a better day.

Great grandpa didn't know exactly what it would be, but as he pushed a plow behind an old mule and bowed under the weight of cotton sacks on his back he could see in his mind's eye, a better day ahead. Our ancestors endured singing, "The Lord will make a way somehow."

Every now and then God shows us a glimpse into the future He is preparing for the

faithful of all races, creeds and colors.

Lift up your heads and behold the day when there will neither be first nor last, rich or poor, white or black, but only children of the highest God!

Lift up your heads and behold the day when we will beat our swords into ploughshares, the Lions will share space with the lambs and we will study war no more!

Lift up your heads and behold the day when the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

Lift up your heads and cast your eyes on the day when justice shall run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Today, we are like Israel being reminded four times how we have been delivered four different ways.

By the strength of the Lord's hand, we were lifted when we fell down!

By the strength of the Lord's hand, we were consoled in our grief!

By the strength of the Lord's hand, we were able to overcome our enemies!

By the strength of the Lord's hand,, we are able to triumph over adversity!

I don't know about you, but I've decided that when God's hand is the plan, everything will be alright!

If we make advancements in education, God's hand will be in the plan.

If we achieve career advancements, God's hand will be in the plan.

If we achieve family goals, God's hand will be in the plan.

When God's hand is in the plan.

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "Hold to his hand, God's unchanging hand!"

It's the same hand that fed five thousand with two little fishes and five loaves of bread!

It's the same hand that touched a blind man's eyes and man him see!

It's the same hand that touched a lame man's leg and made him walk again!

It's the same hand the carried an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

It's the same nail scarred hand that was nailed to the cross of salvation!

He died out on Calvary!

The world intended it for bad, but God had a hand in the plan.. and early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No.9708-Revival

The Danger of Changing your Prescription

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 25, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. " 2 Chronicles 7:14

Introduction

Have you ever visited the doctor and walked away with a prescription? After a battery of tests, interviews, and physical checks, many people leave the doctor's office with a to-do list. Sometimes what the doctor gives is a referral to another doctor, an appointment for screening, and some sound advice. Many times patients leave the doctor's office with a prescription for special medicine that is to be taken at specific times and under specific conditions.

Some prescriptions are simple: they only require an over the counter medicine. Others require restricted medicines that cannot be purchased without a doctor's order; even then it can only be refilled according to the doctor's instructions.

What's on a prescription? It usually tells the name of the medicine that is being prescribed, how often it should be taken, and how many pills or spoonfuls should be taken with each dose and how each dose should be taken. The prescription also tells how much medicine should be given to you the first time and how many times you can refill it. The doctor will sign and date the prescription to verify that it has been prescribed by a professional.

The prescription a patient receives is associated with a diagnosis or a determination of the nature of an illness. It is also associated with a prognosis, or a course of action that will lead to an outcome.

It's important for patients to take medicine as it is prescribed and not try to change anything. A certain man left the doctor's office with a prescription physician to take one aspirin a day for his heart. The doctor said an aspirin a day would help prevent a heart attack. The patient thought he was very smart. In fact, he thought he was so smart that he figured – if one aspirin is good - two would be better. So, he changed his simple prescription made one of his own liking, and day after day my dad took two aspirin. He felt good about himself and had no problems until one day his nose began to bleed...

and it bled, and bled, and bled. He panicked and rushed to the ER. When they learned that he had been taking two aspirins a day they told him, "Your doctor prescribed one aspirin a day to thin your blood a little to prevent heart attacks. When you changed it to two tablets a day you made your blood so thin you almost killed yourself." Your doctor knows what's best for you?

Is it possible that God has given us a prescription for living the abundant life, but we have changed it a bit? Have we added a few ideas of our own or taken away a few. We trust the doctor, that's why we follow his orders. Some don't have family doctors they go to a clinic and get treatment from a doctor whose name they cannot pronounce, whose degrees they never took the time to verify. We leave his office with a piece of paper that we cannot read and give that to a pharmacist that we have never met. He gives us a chemical compound that we do not understand and we take it home and take every pill according to the instructions on the package. We trust the doctor and the pharmacist, but there are any many who know God, they have verified that he is mighty and powerful, they can read and understand his word, but when he gives us a prescription for abundant living, often we don't follow the instructions.

When we change the prescription, the results are unpredictable! We should follow God's directions, no more and no less; to do anything else could worsen our condition instead of making things better.

·We cannot add to God's Word - with advice of horoscopes and psychics

We can't add to God's teachings – the teachings of Discovery Channel or the History channel.

We can't mix the pure medicine of God with the advice of often ungodly psychologists, sociologists or teachers.

And we can't mix the commandments of God with the man-made doctrines of various preachers, priests, and prognosticators.

As Christians, God has given us a prescription to get our prayers answered our souls saved and spiritual healing that will lead to the abundant life. We should not try to change that prescription, but take our dosage, one day at a time.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's response to a prayerful request for the presence of God by the children of Israel.

Solomon constructed a great temple that was to become the literal house of God. Israel had meandered between godliness and idolatry for years, drawing the anger of God. The health of the nation was affected and their national pride and enthusiasm declined. The people hoped that building a new tabernacle would result in God's blessing and favor. They asked for forgiveness, healing, and salvation.

They received an answer from God when he spoke to Solomon telling them that the forgiveness, healing and salvation they sought would require them to repent and turn from their wicked ways and to continuously seek the mercy of God.

It was a clear prescription: God expects that his people, who are called by his name

if they have dishonored his name by their iniquity, should honor it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must humble themselves under his hand, and pray for the removal of the judgment, and seek the face and favor of God. The prescription added one final instruction: they must turn from their wicked ways and return to the God from whom they have revolted.

It was a tough prescription, but as years passed the people tried to add to the instruction. The repented from some of their wicked ways; they humbled themselves, but not completely and they often shared their allegiances with the ungodly nations around them while still serving God as well.

They changed the prescription. It resulted in the Northern Kingdom being conquered by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom being destroyed by the Babylonians. It proved that there is danger in changing God's prescription.

God's Prescription

God has a prescribed course for believers. It is one we should follow as the body of Christ and one we should follow as individuals. To achieve the life God wants for us we should:

LEARN TO READ YOUR PRESCRIPTION: Good patients learn to read a doctor's prescription. Often what looks like chicken scratch on handwritten prescriptions is a list abbreviations written in Latin; QD means every day; BID means two times a day and QID means four times a day. Sometimes special instructions are in Latin such as PC which means not on an empty stomach or AC, which means before meals. It helps to know how to read the prescription that your doctor gives and also that God gives. God's prescription for the abundant life is in the Bible. However, to many people the bible is like chicken scratch, a big book filled with hard to read words. Many have found it helpful to attend Bible studies to get a better understanding of God's word. In Bible study, we learn to understand our prescription, just what it is God wants us to do. That's why 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved a workman that needed not be ashamed, but rightly diving the word of truth."

DON'T SUBSTITUTE: Often a doctor will give a patient a prescription that requires a specific medicine. In this case, it is marked, "no substitution," yet many try to get a generic brand that does the same thing, but is cheaper. We change the prescription. Many do the same thing in our spiritual lives. God gives us specific instructions build a happy marriage: Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church; wives submit yourselves to your husbands. Many marriages run into trouble because some chose to change the prescription. God says specifically, "Thou shalt not steal," but we change it when we see something we want, but don't have the money for it. If God has told us to live within our means, use our money and time wisely and exercise frugality, we can mess up our financial lives when we change the prescription and buy things we can't afford or otherwise live above our means.

FOLLOW THE DOSAGE: If the doctor gives a dosage that tells when we are to receive our medicine and how much; we will run into difficulties if we change the

prescription and take any amount we see fit and any time that is convenient for us. In Hebrews 10:25 God says warns us not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves" or attend worship regularly. Some have changed that prescription to mean "I will come when it is convenient for me or when I get around to it." Malachi 3:10 says "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," but we have changed that prescription to "I will give on special occasions or if I have something left." Exodus 20:14 says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" but we have changed that to "Thou shalt not get caught." Just as changing the timing and the amount of a dosage causes problems with a prescription, the same is true when it comes to obedience to our God.

The Benefits of the Prescription

Finally, brothers and sisters, those who follow God's prescription have a healthy prognosis that will lead to eternity.

God told Solomon If the people who were called by his name would humble themselves and pray, and seek his and turn from their wicked ways that he would hear from heaven, forgive their sins and heal their land.

It was a prescription for humility, prayer, and repentance. If followed to the letter God promised a healthy prognosis that he would hear from heaven and heal their land.

The call to repentance is a prescription that cannot be substituted with a generic version of turning over a new leaf. When we repent we look back over our mistakes and conclude that we are "sorry" for our mistakes and sorry that we disappointed and disobeyed God. When we repent we close the door on those actions and resolve not to return. Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. – Those who repent say, to God "Wash me, whiter than snow!" Wash me in the blood of the Lamb!

There is one medicine that is on God's prescription and it cannot be substituted for a generic brand; it's the blood of Jesus

When we are sick in body, we can go to drug store and get prescriptions filled.

When there is a headache....Extra Strength Excedrin

When there is a stomach ache ...Pepto Bismal

When there is chronic pain and fever ... Advil or Tylenol

When there is irregularity. Ex-Lax

When you have aches and pains..24 hour Aleve

Our Lord has given this world a prescription that can only be filled at Calvary.

What this world needs is medicine strong enough to counter to the effects of sin, but it can only be found at one place; at the foot of the cross!

At Calvary, there is strong medicine! At Calvary the:

—WOUNDED CAN BE HEALED. Isaiah said, "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

—BAD IN ATTITUDE CAN BE CHANGED: A centurion soldier who had

heckled Jesus had an attitude change at Calvary, for he cried out "Surely, he must be the Son of God."

—GUILTY CAN FIND FORGIVENESS: For I heard Jesus cry out "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

—BURDENS OF THE WEAK CAN BE LIFTED: For Jesus said come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

—SINNER CAN FIND SALVATION: The songwriter declares "There is a fountain, filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilt and stain.

I don't know about you, but I've decided to follow the doctor's orders.

When I get over, I'm going to remember where my blessing came from.

Some people give credit to the doctor when they healed. Some thank the hospital.

But I heard a songwriter declare: "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me. One day when I was lost, he died upon on the cross. I know it was the blood that saved me.!"

It was Jesus who died out on Calvary!

It was Jesus who rose on Sunday Morning!

I know it was the blood that saved me!

No. 9709-Revival

God's Daylight Saving Time

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 1, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" Joshua 10:12 "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." Luke 23:44

Introduction

Did you enjoy the extra hour sleep you received last night? How did that happen? That was because Daylight Savings Time ended and things returned to normal.

This spring we gave up an hour of our mornings so that the warm, lazy days of summer could continue long into the night. By slicing off an hour, we enjoyed the sunshine, the warmth, a few more moments in the front yard, a little more time to play and enjoy.

We stole an hour from ourselves, but last night we had to give it back!

This whole idea of playing with time, tampering with the calendar and changing our days started a long time ago. In the year 325 AD Pope Gregory changed the world's calendar. He noticed that the Julian Calendar, forced on the world by Julius Ceasar, had 365.25 days in a year. That .25 days kept adding up and it made it hard to predict Easter. So the gave the world a new calendar that contains 364.25 days a year. To make it all come out to be an even 365 days a year, he invented something called a leap year and every fourth year he stuck in an extra day and called it February 29th. Since the Julian calendar, with its extra .25 days had added several days to the world's clock, Pope Gregory ordered ten days sliced off the calendar to straighten things out so that Easter would always fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon of Spring. So folks who went to bed on October 31 woke up on November 10th.

Then Benjamin Franklin came up with the idea of giving everyone just a little more time to enjoy pretty days without changing the calendar itself. He called it Daylight Savings time. The country played with the idea for a while and in the mid-1960's it was announced that any state that wanted to save more sunshine in the summer could spring forward in the Spring, but they would have to give it back in the fall.

Every state went for it except Indiana and Arizona. Indiana gave in 2006, but Arizona still refuses to mess with the clock. It says the state has more than enough sunshine in both the summer and winter.

Today, we have regained an hour we lost, but thanks to Pope Gregory we are still ten days behind.

The whole idea of losing time should be concern the faithful because we know that unlike Daylight Savings Time, we can't get back time we have lost. It's like those ten days Pope Gregory took, and we can't get them back.

We can try to hold back the clock with plastic surgeries, tummy tucks, and hair dye, but you won't wake up younger or reliving the years of your youth.

We can double our pace, but you can't get back time we have squandered. Pope Gregory took ten days, but alcoholism may have taken ten years. Many have squandered 20 years going around in circles. Some have squandered most of this year. They went to bed on December 31st and woke up on November 1st without accomplishing anything and getting any closer to God. It's like the devil sliced ten months, or ten years out of your life and you find yourself saying, "Where did the time go?" That's when we start singing that Tyrone Davis song, "If I could turn back the hands of time."

Today, there is good news! You can't spring forward or fall back or get back anytime you have lost, but our God will give us a little more daylight and keep the door open for us to give us just enough time to come to him and be saved.

God wants to save us from losing so much time wandering from one lost state to another.

God wants to save us from blundering in the dark, blindly stumbling over our mistakes.

God is holding back the sun, to save us from ourselves!

As Christians, we are happy to know that we serve a God, who is willing to hold the door of salvation open to us, to give us a little more time to be saved. It's God's version of Daylight Saving Time."

Exposition

This text focuses on Joshua confident command to the sun and moon based on his faith in God.

The Gibeonites asked Israel for help after being attacked by five kings of the land. In an all-night march, Joshua lead the huge army of Israel in a surprise attack on the five kings. One Israeli army fighting five kings was a huge task, but Joshua moved with confidence because he had the promise of God. In Joshua 10:8 God says to Joshua, "..Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee."

God started working his miracles. Despite facing the armies of five kings, Joshua totally confused his enemies. Pastor Steve Bilynskyj notes that the surprise attack caught the five kings off guard. They ran uphill then downhill trying to get away. Then God opened the windows of heaven and rained hailstones on all of their armies. The hailstones only fell on the armies of the five kings. This miracle wiped out most of their armies not leaving much for Joshua to do. Joshua 10:11 says, "they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Now after running up and down mountains for 20 miles and being slaughtered by hailstones from heaven, God does something unusual; he took a command from "human being," not a prayer request, but a command. Joshua 10:12 says, Joshua "Spake" to the Lord and commanded the sun and the moon to stand still. And God responded. It had never happened before, and it would never happen again, but Joshua pushed the envelope; he spoke, and God obeyed. Joshua 10:13 says, "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel." The Lord overlooked Joshua's impetuous act one time because he wanted Israel to success. Their victory was in his will; he had already declared them the victors.

When the sun stood still, Israel was given daylight it needed to achieve victory. Gibeon was saved by this extra time provided by God's Daylight Saving Time.

Great Miracles

GOD WANTED ISRAEL TO SUCCEED: One truth we learn from this passage is that God wanted Israel to succeed. He fought with them. For Israel, God rained down hailstones on their enemies and made the sun stand still because he wanted them to succeed. Today, God wants believers who are walking a Godly path to succeed. He goes ahead of us and creates a climate for our victory. For Israel, it was hailstones. Hailstones were not unusual, but it was unusual for them to fall only on the armies of the five kings! To top it off, he put the icing on the cake by giving Israel more time.

When we are trying to do God's will, God fights for us. He fights for our families! He fights for our God-inspired dreams! He fights to help us succeed. He's willing to do extraordinary things for us if we will live according to his will. God wants us to succeed.

ISRAEL REACHED OUT TO FOLKS WHO DIDN'T HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER: The miracles recorded in Joshua were given while Israel was reaching out to the Gibeonites, a people who didn't quite have it all together. The Gibeonites were a nation of liars, tricksters and deceivers. They had formed an alliance with Israel before Israel learned how bad they were. They proved to them that Israel served a mighty God and won them over by demonstrating before their eyes what God could do. The miracles were a blessing to Israel, but they happened because they were a being a blessing to Gibeon. Because the sun stood still and hailstones fell from heaven, Gibeon was saved. The daylight helped Israel, but it saved Gibeon. Gibeonites became followers of God. They helped rebuild the walls with Nehemiah. They served the Tabernacle and came to accept God as their own. Today, God is holding the sunshine of his love and grace for someone who does not have it all together. Someone in the congregation of the righteous has reached out to you, demonstrating his love through them. He has worked several small miracles for you already and right now he is holding the daylight for you to give you a chance to accept him for yourself. You may have lost time, wasted time, or allowed time to slip away, but like Motel 6, God's is leaving a light on just for you! You may not have it all together yet, but you act quickly and accept him because it is

Daylight Saving Time.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR DAYLIGHT; GOD's GOT IT: The Gibeonites sought to survive through hookups and connections with Israel and anyone who could help them, but the daylight and deliverance they needed came from God. The people who know God, who are working with you, are vessels he's using to help you. He's the who can give you the daylight you seek! Are you struggling to realize daylight in your spiritual life? Are going through a tough time, and you can't seem to see the light at the end of the tunnel? You don't need to be perfect; in fact you may not have it all together, but you can still find the daylight by accepting his love in your life and doing it while there is still time!

It's saving time!

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the sign that daylight is coming is when we see the bright and morning star!

The reality for every believer is that many of us have lost time. We have lost time by our recklessness. We have lost time because of our foolishness, and we have lost time because of forced downtime.

It was forced downtime that caused Job to lose his money, health, and family!

It was forced downtime that made a woman with a blood-related problem to lose 12 years of her life dealing with an issue.

It was forced downtime that made a lame man sit by the pool for 38 years waiting for a blessing.

Yet, despite all of what appeared to be lost time, when God showed up, what was lost time was turned good-time.

When Jesus shows up, we can see the light of day!

When Jesus shows up, it's Daylight Saving time!

When everyone says we should fail because you can't see the light, that's Daylight Saving time!

When we have given up, he shows up to give us hope.

When we have dropped our heads in despair, he shows up to give us courage!

When we have fallen along the way, he shows up to give us a hand up!

There's one final thing we might note about the goodness of the Lord. When the day comes when we have endured the hardships of the night, we have the joy of knowing that "weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning!"

In the morning for about an hour something happens in the sky, we can see the morning star! The morning star lets us know that daylight is one the way!

What is this morning star? Well, David said we might find the answer in one called the Rose of Sharon, but in Revelation 22:16 Jesus said, "I am the bright and morning star."

Isaiah said he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed."

His name is Jesus, our hope in a weary land!

His name is Jesus, our bridge over troubling water!

He came to this earth to show us that He is the light of the world!

Out on Calvary, he hung on an old rugged cross! From the 6th to the 9th hour he turned out the lights of heaven!

For Joshua, the sun stood still, but out on Calvary the sun refused to shine!

For Joshua, the moon stopped its orbit, but out on Calvary the moon refused to shine!

The thunder began to roll, and the lightning flashed, but it was saving time!

Father, it's saving time! Into thy hands, I commend my spirit

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

His name is Jesus and those who don't know him need to come to him because it's saving time!

No.9710-Revival

Not far from the kingdom

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 8, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question." Mark 12:34

Introduction

Have you ever seen a person who came very close to making a wise decision and then chose another direction? We've seen many people who know what they should do but simply do not do what is right for unexplainable reasons. When this happens the consequences are usually predictable: The man who put off repairing the breaks on his cars had an accident. The family that planned to set up a savings plan were devastated when hit by hard times. The man who had all the telltale signs of a serious sickness refused checkups for years, died of an illness that could have been treated. In each case, the parties involved accepted the wisdom of the right choice but refused to act on what they knew was the right thing to do. They came close but remained so far away.

The distance between doing what needs to be done and remaining stagnant can be measured by the number of excuses that we offer. Our excuses form an impassable barrier between where we are and where we need to be. Look at the case of Agrippa in Acts 26:19-29. He was "almost a Christian." Almost was all! Paul answered and said, "I would to God that thou wert not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Look at Felix in Acts 24:24-27—when Paul preached about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come—Felix trembled, but said, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." He was so close, but so far away.

There are people today who know they should be actively involved in church ministry, but they put off making the decision because of their excuses. The more excuses they give the further they get from the kingdom.

Suppose the reasons people give for not actively participating in a church were also given for not going to a football or basketball game, how would they sound?

"I would go to a football game, but every time I go, they ask for money?"

"I would go to a football game, but I'll have to sit next to people who aren't very friendly."

"I would go to a football game, but the seats are hard and uncomfortable."

“I would go to a football game, but the coach of the team never came to see me.”

“I would go to a football game, but I’ll be forced to sit with hypocrites who only come to see what others will be wearing.”

“I would go to a football game, but the game may go into overtime and I’ll have stay too long!”

“I would go to a football game, but my parents made me go to games when I was growing up and I swore that when I got grown I’d never go again.”

The distance between knowing God and becoming an active member of the kingdom of God is is measured by the number of excuses we give.

As Christians, our desire is to get closer to God every day. When he speaks we want to hear him, when he commands we want to respond. When we acknowledge him he’s only a prayer away.

Exposition

This text focused on a scribe who watched as other religious leaders questioned Jesus and left impressed with the Lord.

He watched as his companions grilled Jesus on a number of issues with the intent of tricking into speaking against God or the laws of Moses. The issues involved deciding whether or not sacrifices were needed, and which was the greatest commandment of Moses.

They even asked Jesus silly questions such as if seven brothers married the same woman after each brother died, whose wife would she be in the kingdom of heaven. As Jesus answered one question after another, evading their traps, the scribe watched with admiration.

Jewish rabbis had cataloged all the commandments in the Old Testament, and they said that the law of Moses could be reduced to 613 commandments. That is the way they looked at the Old Testament...613 commandments. For centuries, they had been arguing over which of those was the greatest commandment. Some of the Jewish rabbis believed that it had to be something to do with sacrifices, since there are so many commandments in the Old Testament about sacrifices. But they were mistaken. Other rabbis had various other opinions on this subject, and yet, here, finally, was a scribe who had the courage and the sincerity to go to Christ to ask Him this question.

The final question asked was asked in verse 28: Which is the first commandment. A commentary on the text in “The Working Preacher” says, “The question lead into Jesus’ reciting of the Shema (Hebrew: hear) which are the words that are still recited daily by persons of the Jewish faith. The text in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is expanded by Jesus to include “with all your mind” (12:30). Jesus adds to his response by citing a second that is like this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” from Leviticus 19:18.

The scribe agrees with Jesus’s interpretation of Moses’ law and makes it known. His response prompts Jesus to say “You are not far from the kingdom of God.’

He was not far from the kingdom because he accepted the teaching of Christ.

He was not far from the kingdom because he sought out Christ for answers.

He was not far from the kingdom because he was not ashamed to bear witness to the truth.

He was not far from the kingdom of God, but he was still a great distance away.

Signs that you are not far away

There are many who are not fully in the faith, but they are not far away. Their distance is measured only by the number of their excuses. What are the signs?

IF YOU BELIEVE GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS: If you believe God answers prayers, you are not far from the kingdom. There are many people who believe God exists, but they do not believe that he is personal. Some believe he is personal, but he needs a little help. A woman in South Louisiana made a Facebook post that she prayed to God to sell her house. She went into a hardware store that sold small statues of St. Joseph. She prayed to St. Joseph and asked him to say a word to God for her and then planted the statue in her front yard upside down. When her house was sold weeks later, she credited St. Joseph for the sale. Her understanding and faith in God was so close, but so far away because she had a room full of statues to which she prayed to give God help to answer her prayers. Today, if you believe you can speak to God directly and he will hear and answer you, you are on point. If you are not a member of a church actively serving him, how many excuses stand between you and the kingdom?

The faithful have learned that prayer changes things. They are not standing on sidelines waiting; they have jumped into kingdom building with both feet because they have seen what prayer to God, without the help of any statues, can do.

Prayer can take a seriously ill body and make it whole again!

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!

Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!

Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!

If you believe in the power of prayer, but you have not come forward to accept Christ, you are so close, but so far away!

I**F YOU BELIEVE GOD IS MERCIFUL AND FORGIVING:** If you believe God has mercy on those who are in distress and forgives those who have made mistakes, you are not far from the kingdom. God has a reputation for occasionally changing his mind and reversing decisions he has made concerning us. That's the essence of mercy, to receive a response from God that considers our extenuating circumstance. For example, Hezekiah received notice from God to set his house in order and prepare to die, but after hearing a plea for mercy from Hezekiah, he was granted 15 more years. We know God shows mercy. Psalm 103:8 says, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." If you believe God is merciful and will forgive your past mistakes, you are not far from the kingdom. What stands between you and you and the kingdom is your decision to make a change in your life. Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the

LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The faithful have learned that God is merciful. They know that:

It was the mercy of the Lord that kept us from throwing up our hands and giving up the fight!

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped us to recover after a staggering loss!

It was the mercy of the Lord that helped healed our broken hearts and mended our wounded faith.

If you believe that God is merciful and forgiving, but you have yet not come forward to receive his mercy, you not far from the kingdom! The distance is measured only by the number of excuses you make.

IF YOU BELIEVE GOD WILL MAKE A WAY: If you believe that God opens doors that are closed and will make a way out of no way for those who trust him, you are not far from the kingdom. The essence of faith in God is that is always thinking of our best and working situations to our advantage. One stanza in the song, "I won't complain" says, "He knows what's best for me, although my weary eyes cannot, so I just say thank you Lord, I won't complain." That's the essence of the faith experience, trust in the knowledge that God's got our future in his hand and he will not let us fail in our kingdom building efforts. The word of God indicates that those who live righteously will never be forsaken. God puts food on the table in miraculous ways. He has a way of opening doors, making opportunities available that did not exist. God will make a way for the faithful. That's why Psalm 37:25 says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

The faithful have learned that God is constantly working for us.

When doors are shut in our faces, he makes a way!

When mountains seem too high for us to climb, he makes a way!

When valleys seem too deep to cross, he makes a way!

If you believe, that God makes a way for those who trust him, but you have not come forth to acknowledge that belief to others, you are not far from the kingdom. The distance is measured only by the number of excuses you make!

If you believe

Finally, brothers and sisters, if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God sent to save us from our sins, you are not far from the kingdom!

The scribe in our text was a man who believed in God and who led a godly life. He respected for the law of Moses and had been taught the godly way. In all respects he was a good man, but he never made the final step and remained not far from the kingdom.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do to enter the kingdom. He obeyed all of the laws of Moses and lived righteously. When Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor, the young ruler walked away unsaved. He was not far from the kingdom.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus said, "You must be born again." Nicodemus left without making that final step and

remained not far from the kingdom.

If you believe in God, but just haven't acted on that belief you are not far from the kingdom.

If you believe that God opens doors for the faithful, but just haven't put your whole trust in him, you are not far from the kingdom.

If you believe that God is merciful and will pick up those who have fallen and give them another chance, you are not far from the kingdom!

The only step remaining is for to own God publicly and throw yourself into his service. Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

There is no blessing in being "not far from the kingdom;" the blessing is actually being a child of the King.

When you are a child of the King, you get immediate access to the throne of grace with an unlimited calling plan. You can call him in the morning, noonday or midnight hour!

When you are a child of the King, you get a red white and blue medical card, white for the spirit of healing, blue for the grace of God and red for the blood of Christ. When you are sick, call him, for "There is a balm in Gilead that is good for the sin-sick soul."

When you are a child of the King, you get a heavenly gold card that is recognized by the bank of heaven. It's gold because, "My Father is rich in houses and land and whole the wealth of the world in his hands."

When you are a child of the King, you get a passport into the land of "no more." In the land of "No more" there will be no more pain, heartaches and tears! In the land of "no more," there will be no weeping in the middle of the night!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to be a child of the king!

Who is this king? Who is the king of Glory? The Lord mighty in battle!

His name is Jesus!

He came and lived among men for 33 short years.

He healed the sick and raised the dead and welcomed all to the kingdom of God

He was nailed to an old rugged crows and died out on Calvary

Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave..

He's only a prayer a way!

You can call him in the morning! You can call him in the midnight hour!

Call him in the noonday. Call him at the midnight hour!

No wonder the songwriter said, "Jesus is on the mainline tell him what you want!

Call him up and tell him what you want!

Call Him!

Call Him!

...and tell him what you want!

No. 9711-Communion

He shall bless thy Bread!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 15, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Exodus 23:25

Introduction

Have you ever slept in a fine hotel, but couldn't wait to get home to sleep in your own bed? Have you ever wondered why? Why is it that in that hotel you had room service, maid service and many amenities, but couldn't wait to get home to a house that you would have to clean, without maid service or room service? It's because somehow, you have come to know that it has been given to you as a blessing from God. Even though it is not as luxurious as one room in a fine hotel, it is a blessed little house with a blessed bed, blessed pillow and linens.

There is something to be said when we receive something as a blessing! It has a greater meaning to us and we appreciate its use in ways that mystify others.

That's why before we eat our food we thank God for providing us with a bite of food to eat. It may not be an expensive delicacy, but it seems to taste better because we recognize it as a blessing from God.

Look at your life and count the ways that God has kept his promise to you. He promised that if you believed he would make things happen for you. That's what happened when the old man in family refused to sell anything in his house, despite offers from others to get him more modern versions. He drove the same old car and kept it in good shape for over 20 years. He sat in the same chair for 30 years. He had electric lights in his home, but he wouldn't throw away the candles. When asked why the old man said, "I can buy a new car now, thank the Lord, but that old was the answer to a prayer. I have electric lights, thank the Lord, but I remembered when I was so poor and I couldn't buy candles. When I got my first candle, it was blessing from the Lord." Finally, the old man said, "When you get something that you know has been blessed by the Lord, it's hard to turn it loose."

Through life, we have collected many mementoes that remind us of blessing we received or a blessed experience. It doesn't mean anything to others, but it means a lot to the person who has been the recipient of the promise of God.

While others complain about the menu in the cafeteria or mumble about what's for supper; the person who knows that every slice of bread is a blessing from God bows

his head and offers thanks; even if it is for a peanut butter sandwich.

As Christians, we are eternally grateful that God blesses every aspect of our lives. He is faithful. Every new morning he blesses us with new mercies and examples of his grace.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promise to provide blessed bread and water to his people during their wilderness journey.

In the Wilderness, Moses dealt with the passions of Israel as it struggled to survive. Speaking through him, God reminded Israel that if the people remained faithful to him, kept his commandments and followed him devoutly that he would bless their bread and water and would not scourge them with sickness.

During Israel's forty year journey, getting sufficient bread and water was always a priority. By some estimates, there were at least a million people wandering in the desert; bread and water came at a premium. Bread was impossible to make because the required elements: flour, meal or corn derivatives were not available. Nothing grew in the desert. There were no fields of wheat or corn to harvest. Yet, despite their agricultural poverty, the people still had bread.

God gave them blessed bread from heaven. It was called Manna or *"What is it?"* Exodus 16:31 indicates that it had many of physical attributes of Coriander seeds and the taste of honey. Ground Coriander seeds had a shelf life of one day. They had to be ground and consumed that because on the next day they were tasteless. God told Israel to gather these morsels of bread seed and prepare them one day at a time and not to take more than the family needed; he would take care of the next day's bread through his grace. Each day, the ground was covered with sufficient bread seed to ground a make pans of bread for the family. As each family ate, they blessed God for blessing them with bread.

God blessed Israel with water as well. To supply a million people with sufficient water for its daily nutrition as well as its health and hygiene needs was a physical miracle. After crossing the Red Sea, after three days the people became thirsty and the came upon a pool of "Bitter Water" that they could not drink. God responded in Exodus 15:25 by showing Moses how to make the waters sweet or palatable. When God blessed the water, it became sweet. Throughout their wilderness journey, God constantly created water sources out of rocks and other miraculous means. All of these miraculous provisions made it obvious that they were being provided blessed water by God himself.

Although God blessed Israel constantly with bread and water they did not see his provision as a blessing. Although they were being led by God they didn't like the path he chose for them (Numbers 21:4), they didn't like the manner and complained of no water, even though it always appeared when they needed it. God became angry and sent snakes among them causing sickness and death. It only ended when Moses raised a brass serpent on a pole and God took away the death.

If we are repentant, God promises us, just as he did Israel that *"I will take sickness away from the midst of thee."*

In the same way that God provided blessed bread and water for Israel in the wilderness, Jesus does the same for believers today.

Luke 24:31 Jesus took bread and blessed it. Bread is blessed when it is received as a gift from God to be broken and shared with others. When we bless the bread we receive, we recognize the giver of bread. When we acknowledge God and obey him, he keeps blessing our bread every day!

Communion Reminder

As we share in the Lord's Supper, we remind ourselves of the many ways that God has blessed us.

HE HAS BLESSED OUR BREAD: Jesus said *"I am the bread of life."* As believers, we have seen the many ways that he has blessed our lives. We have truly been the recipients of God's blessings because, like Israel, he has provided bread for us despite the fact that we have little or nothing to work with. He has blessed our little home, our little bed, and our little closet. He has blessed us with enough food to get fat and enough clothing to change when we get ready. He has blessed us through his grace. Each time we share in the Lord's supper, we don't see a cracker or wafer, we see God's blessed bread; we see bread from heaven. We see bread that satisfies. Matthew 5:6 says, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."* We see blessed bread that represents Christ's gift of eternal life. In John 6:47- 48 Jesus says, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life."* We see blessed bread that has been given for the salvation of the world. In John 6:51, Jesus says, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.."* No, we don't see just a little cracker or wafer; we see more because it reminds us of God's promise to bless our bread if we obey him.

HE HAS BLESSED OUR BITTER WATERS: Israel encountered bitter water on its journey. They were thirsty, but all they received was bitter water, but God changed that by blessing their water. There are many people who have been wounded by so many bitter experiences that they have become bitter and unbearable. When we become bitter we quickly become one of many characters we associate with bitterness: Ebenezer Scrooge and The Grinch quickly come to mind, but there are many more that we know who are closer to home. Their faces are curled up and they are always frowning, complaining and rarely have a kind word to say. Sometimes our bitterness can make us unbearable.

If the truth is told, there are many of us who can testify that we approached life with a degree of bitterness until our God blessed our bitter spirit with a new attitude. Those who have changed their attitude about life and their condition can testify how God can change bitter water into sweet water. The power of God can transform bitter situations to better situations. God can take bad and turn it into good, loss and turn it into gain.

Therefore, we should not be overwhelmed by the bitter circumstances of this life because we are "more than conquerors" in Christ Jesus. When we share in the Lord's supper, it is a reminder to us of all the bitter situations that God has sweetened for us. It should remind us of the hope he has given and showered upon us. It is this hope that we remember at Lord's table. This is when we remember his promise to bless our bread and make our water sweet if we obey him.

HE HAS SAVED OUR SOULS: Israel sinned in the wilderness and brought all manner of sickness and hardships on themselves and their families. When they repented and turned from their sins, God took away his punishments and healed their land. Today, we are reminded of God's promise to restore us, even if we have done wrong. In a sense, God builds a hedge or fence around believers to keep evil away. It is because of that blessed hedge that we have enjoyed many things. When we sin, we anger God and he removes that hedge. In Israel's case snakes that were already in the desert that were unable to pester them on their journey were allowed to do what snakes do. When the people repented, the pestilence was removed. There are times when we can feel that the hedge around us has come down; we know instantly it's because of our sin. The good news is that Christ was raised up on a cross like Moses raised his pole. Through the shedding of his blood Christ paid the price for our sins. His blood redeems us and gives us one more chance to enjoy his love and favor. His blood rebuilds the hedge around us that the devil wants removed! At the Lord's table, we see the little sip of wine or juice, but it reminds us of how God has saved our souls through his blood. It reminds of how he continues to be a hedge around us every day through the power of his blood.

Blessed Bread

Finally, brothers and sisters, we rejoice today because through his grace, the God we serve continues to bless our bread every day!

The promise God made to Israel was that he would bless their bread if they remained faithful to him.

Though they sojourned in the wilderness for forty years, he never stopped blessing their bread!

When they crossed the River Jordan and entered the Promised Land, the manna stopped, but he blessed their crops and their harvests. He never stopped blessing their bread!

If they were attacked by enemies, he gave them the victory!

If all those around them crushed to the ground, he held them up by the strength of his hand! He never stopped blessing their bread.

Today believers can rejoice because through the grace of God, he never stops blessing our bread!

In our wilderness of despair, God has been our rock in a weary land.

In our wilderness troublesome times, God has been our shelter in the time of storm.

In our wilderness of desperation, God has been our way out of no way.

In the wilderness of frustration, God has been out of bridge over troubling waters.

We have made it thus far only because of his grace; God has been blessing our bread!

When we share in the Lord's Supper, we reminded that while God has blessed the works of our hand and the bread that we eat, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by everyone word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Jesus said, "I am the bread the life!"

While many may enjoy cornbread, shortening bread, and light bread, Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life"-He is our "Life Bread!"

We cannot find it on the shelf in a store, but each new day brings us another slice of God's life bread.

It's not baked in an oven, but when we see the hand of God touch our finances, we know we seen another "life bread" blessing!

It's not flipped in a skillet, but when we have been healed from a sickness, we been served a slice of "Life Bread."

When we are blessed with spiritual renewal, that's a "Life Bread" blessing

As Saints eat from the Lord's Table, we are mindful of the fact that on this table represents God's "Life Bread," prepared in heaven and delivered in Bethlehem, which means the house of bread.

On this table is God's "Life Bread" which took 42 generations to prepare and 33 years to deliver.

To prepare the table, he had to suffer the humiliation of his critics!

To prepare the table, he had to pick up an old rugged cross and carry it to Golgotha's hill.

To prepare the table he had to die out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

I thank God that every day he keeps on blessing me with the "Bread of Life!'

No. 9712-Funeral

The Final Exam

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 18, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:7

Introduction

Do you remember taking exams in school? For some, test-time was a time of anxiety, stress and frustration because so much depended on the outcome. Most have had at least one teacher that gave difficult tests that were almost impossible to prepare for because they were unpredictable. Nothing compared to the elation felt when we passed a difficult test with a high grade.

Experienced teachers who know how to give tests. Veterans have prepared hundreds of tests and checked thousands of test papers, writing notes along the margins and posting grades in red announcing failures or passing grades.

There is an allegorical truth we learn about life when we think of tests, especially as they relate to individual believers and God. This truth is that our lives seem filled with a series of tests, prepared by God, to prepare us for the final exam that is coming. Our life tests are strikingly similar to the tests we take in school.

The longer we live, our lives become an essay on how to deal with struggles, family issues, rear children, serve others and please God.

Sometimes it seems that God gives us multiple choice tests, forcing us to make difficult life choices. Should I go to college? Should I marry? Should buy or rent? Should I save or enjoy life now? Should I have surgery or not? Along the way, we seem to take many multiple choice tests.

We are even challenged to make true or false decisions or face situations that require us to fill in the blanks.

We are often frustrated by open book exams. They seem easy because we can use our notes and books, but they actually require more of us because we must search more pages of text and notes. An open book test is difficult when God gives the test, we can't hide anything from him; because our lives are virtual open books to him. Psalms 139:2 says he knows our "Downsitting and our uprising and understands our thoughts afar off." Open book tests are tough when God is the teacher.

It's not unusual for God to test the faithful. Abraham passed his test and learned

that God has a ram in the bush. Daniel passed his test and learned that God is God even in the Lion's Den. The Three Hebrews Boys passed their test and learned that God is able to sustain those who trust him.

The life we celebrate today has been tested many times. She has faced the joys of matrimony and tragic loss. She has taught hundreds and watched young girls blossom into ladies. She has helped those tested in sickness and then had to take the same test herself. Her life has been an open book to God, where she came up short, certainly grace filled in the blanks.

As Christians, we strive to live in such a way that we meet each test that life gives us as we prepare for our final exam.

Exposition

This text focuses on John as he shares a prophecy of hope to believers that looks beyond the Day of Judgment into the victory of believers.

The Revelation paints a picture, in a graphic detail, of the last days of this world, the judgment of the ungodly and the reward of those who faithfully pass life's test, trusting and believing in Christ for their salvation.

According to John, those who are born into the kingdom of God by faith in Christ will face many trials, tribulations, and tests of faith, but those that endure and overcome, will be victorious.

In the Revelation, John saw the reward of the believers after all the tests are over. Jesus revealed to him the events of the last seven years of this world, called the tribulation. He also showed him the events of the Millennium, the thousand reign of Christ. Beyond that, however, John saw the eventual reward of all believers.

John saw the inevitable victory of the faithful. More than once he announced the victory to "he that overcometh." In this text he said those that over come will inherit all things. The word "things" is ambiguous. What does "all things" include? Paul writing in Philippians 4:8 described "things" suitable for Christians as: "...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." John saw believers in triumph sharing in every good thing in the kingdom of heaven. Since his vision was a vision of future events, the outcome has already been planned and prepared. It is simply waiting for believers to claim after their final exam.

Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"

It means that each person will die in this life and will stand before the judgment for a personal examination. Knowing this will happen, Christ went to Calvary to take the penalty for our shortcomings and stands with us at our final moment of examination. If we come up a few points short, he his blood, will take care of anything omitted or wrongfully committed.

For the believer, who does her best, grace guarantees a passing grade.

The Tests

The preponderance of Bible teaching seems to point to three big questions that will be on every person's final exam?

DID YOU PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE LIFE YOU WERE GIVEN? The idea of preparation is sprinkled all over the Bible. Paul's admonition to Timothy was to "study to show thyself approved." Jesus told a parable of ten virgins who waited for the wedding, some with lamps trimmed others who had no oil. In each instance, believers are encouraged to prepare and "Watch ye therefore for you not the day or hour." With the life we have been given, have we prepared ourselves? Did you learn to use the gifts God gave you to the maximum? Our friend finished high school and went on to college; attended Sunday School, and over the years studied some Bible classes to prepare herself. Each one of us has to do the same; each must maximize their God-given potential.

DID YOU SERVE OTHERS WITH YOUR LIFE?: The idea of service to others is paramount in the kingdom of God. Jesus constantly taught believers that we cannot serve God without serving others. Over the years, millions of believers have willingly given of themselves to help others. Working through churches, sororities, fraternities and civic groups, many have reached out and touched the helpless with an evangelistic zeal. Look at the Life of our friend. For 51 years, she has served as a mentor to young women teaching them finer womanhood and life skills. In and out of the classroom she has helped hundreds of girls starving for an embrace with arms opened wide enough to take in others while not neglecting her own three sons. Even in the final year of her life, she was still serving, thinking of others and making plans. We must all work while it is day, because when night comes, no man can work.

DID YOU PREPARE FOR THE NEXT LIFE? Many have made great life plans that do not include plans for the life to come. Consider the teenager who worked out her life plan. She planned to graduate high school and college. When asked "Then what?" she said she planned to pursue her career, marry, build a big house, and entertain friends. After that, she planned to retire, travel and see the world. After that, she planned to live to a ripe old age and die. Then came the final question, "Then what?" She had no answer because the next life was not in her plan.

Preparing for the next life is what Jesus wants us to do because he has already gone to prepare a place for us in the kingdom. Preparing means accepting Christ as savior. It means working to build the kingdom of God, studying, praying unceasingly, worshipping and giving unselfishly. It means obeying God's commands to the best of your ability and giving him the praise and glory for all you do. Our friend's life is a testament of a life prepared for the next life. She confessed Christ, worked to build the kingdom, gave her heart and soul and sought many ways to pray for others. Those who study, worship pray, obey and trust God are prepared for the next life.

The Final Grade

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Finally, brothers and sisters, we are aware that life gives us many pop quizzes and multiple choices along the way, but what matters most is the grade we receive on the final exam.

When we consider all things spiritual, this is the point where the comparison of the final exam in the educational community differs from that in the kingdom of God.

In the educational community, the final exam carries more weight but it is averaged in with all of the other grades. In the Kingdom of God, all of life's pop quizzes and tests are considered practice tests, it's the final exam the counts.

The final exam is comprehensive. It considers the totality of a person's life experience.

It considers all of the hills and mountains the believer has climbed!

It considers the years of service, praise worship, and sacrifice!

It considers a lifetime of faith and trust in God!

More than anything else, the final exam considers whether or not they have been born again, and tried in the fire!

When you've been tried in the fire, you know that days of tears and sadness may come but "weeping endures but a night and joy comes in the morning!"

When you've been tried in the fire, you know that despite the hopelessness of any situation "Our God is able to deliver us!"

When you've been tried in the fire, you never give up hope!

Though we endure many risings and fallings, we know that the God we serve is a good God! He will not abandon us or forsake!

John in Revelation 2:11 He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 3:5 says, He that overcometh.... shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Storms may rise! But she that overcometh shall inherit all things!

One of these days, by and bye, it'll all be over down here!

We who intend to overcome ourselves must keep telling the story!

Tell the world about Jesus, who died on Golgotha's hill, and rose after three days and nights, and is coming back again!

When this life is over what we want to hear the savior say is:

"Well Done!"

Well done!"

—

On Tuesday, November 10, 2015, Jerriedine Ford Hester Woods, took her final exam and passed from this life into glory!

9713-Thanks

Your seasons shall not cease

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 22, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1; "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Genesis 8:22

Introduction

Have you experience a year where everything went as planned? Has there ever been a week when everything in your life was great and absolutely nothing went wrong? If you have, you are one of the few people in the world who can truthfully say that everything in their life is just as they expected. The fact is, there are very few people, if any, who experience a level of constancy in their lives in which everything stays the same. What we learn as life progresses is that just as there are seasons of the year, there are also seasons in our lives. Nothing remains the same.

Believers don't live with the false hope that there will ever be a day, in this life, when everything will be perfect. Our perfect little car will break down. Our perfect little house will develop a problem. Our perfect little relationship will hit a snag. Our perfect financial situation is challenged. Our perfect children begin to act not-so-perfect. We don't expect perfection, so we learn to deal with life as it comes. What we have to sustain us is God's promise that regardless to our season, he will be with us.

If we look back, we'll quickly see that despite all of our ups and downs, good days and bad days, God has delivered on that promise. What has God promised us? He has promised us that despite the difficult times we encounter that he will stand by us and deliver us. He did not promise that there would be no mountains; he did promise strength for the mountains. He did not promise that we would not walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but he did promise to walk with us. He did not promise to immunize us from sickness or trouble, but he did promise that he would deliver us and lead us away from temptation if we ask him. He promised to be with us always, in every situation and circumstance and to be only a prayer away.

As Christians, we know our lives experience many seasons, but throughout every minute of pain or glory God faithfully stands with us. The seasons will come and go; they will not cease and neither will the grace of God. Just as our seasons will not cease, neither will our thanks to God cease because he never leaves us alone.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's promise to Noah after the great flood. It was a promise that the world would not be destroyed by water again and additionally that seasons once enjoyed would continue.

The book of Genesis gives us an account of God's anger with the sins of mankind. In anger, got destroyed the known world with a great flood that destroyed every living thing except Noah and his family. During the flood, all of the seasonal activities with which mankind had become accustomed came to an end. There was no harvest there was no season of planting. There was no summer and neither was there a winter. There was no hot and there was no cold. Because of the flood, the seasons had come to a halt. In the aftermath of the flood, God decided not to destroy the world again, but would allow to operate as usual. He placed his rainbow in the sky as a sign of the promise that you made.

As chapter 8 closes, God promises that the seasonal cycle would be restored. God promised that as long as the earth existed the seasons would not cease. Seasons included much more then spans of weather. They also included times in our lives when we were either successful or recovering from a failure; times when we were happy and times when we were sad. These are the times that Solomon described in Ecclesiastes chapter three when he said "to everything there is a season:" a time to be born and a time to die; a time of happiness and time to cry. Solomon described all of these phases of our lives simply as seasons.

This was prophetic for us because it was limited to man's journey on earth. The text says while on earth the seasons will continue, but in the kingdom of heaven there will be no seasons.

In the kingdom of heaven, there will be no summer or winter. Neither will there be planting seasons and times of harvest.

It will be a day described by the Old Warriors of the faith as a time when every day will be Sunday and it will always be howdy and never goodbye. Until that time, however, the seasons will not cease and neither will the promise of God to provide for those who must live in every season of life,

What are our seasons?

Life presents us with many seasons, some of which are listed in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. These are the seasons that every believer should expect:

SEASONS OF LIFE: There is a time for each person to be born and a time for each person to leave. It applies to all living things; there is an entry and exit date.

SEASONS CONFLICT: There will be a season of conflict between nations, municipalities and personalities. Conflicts are often wars of words, but sometimes they get physical. Seasons of conflict also involve times when we breaking down, tearing down or destroying.However, conflict doesn't last always; they are followed by a season of healing, rebuilding and restoration.

SEASONS OF GREAT FELLOWSHIP: There are seasons of happiness, reunion, rejoicing and celebration. In these seasons, there is much laughter, dancing, hugging, embracing, handshaking and baby kissing. However, they are often interrupted by periods of sadness, mourning and melancholy. Both seasons are a part of the package we call life.

SEASONS OF PROSPERITY: There are times when we get, keep, gather, store and enjoy an enormous amount of the good things in life. However, there are also seasons when we lose, discard, and castaway. We never get the opportunity to keep everything we find and to accumulate of the niceties we've seen over a lifetime without the loss of one.

SEASONS OF INVESTMENT AND DIVIDEND: There are also times in life when we plant seed or invest. We invest in our future with savings accounts, accumulation of assets and wisely using our money. There will come a time to "pluck up that which is planted" or reap the dividend of investment.

SEASONS TO SHOW LOVE AND TO HATE EVIL: There are times when we should show our love for our neighbors and friends through actively working to help them in times of need and trouble. Seasons such as these require us to take action and do what must be done. There are also seasons when we must take action to fight against evil and injustice. We are not always fighting evil, but there is a season or time when it must be done.

GOD IS WORKING IN EVERY SEASON: When we are faced with difficulties we can't see clearly, that's when our faith has to keep reminding us that, even when we cannot see him, God is making a way. When suffered through its season of despair in Egypt, they found it hard to see that God was still working for their freedom. At the Red Sea, they also found it hard to see. In the wilderness, they often suffered difficulties associated with the nomadic life. Water was always short and resources were few. They could not plant crops, or make new clothes. They were susceptible to disease and without military protection while they were in the wilderness.

Yet despite their dreadful season, God blessed them, even though they could not see.

BLESSINGS ARE SHOWERED, REGARDLESS OF THE SEASON: Just as the seasons of life will not cease, neither will the blessings of God that come regardless of the season cease. Ezekiel 34:26 says "I will cause the shower to come down in his season." Regardless to the season there will still be a shower of blessings. The remainder of verse 26 says, "There will be showers of blessings."

The seasons will not cease but, neither will the blessings. Just because it gets hot in the summer does not mean that the blessing stop in the summer. Just because it gets cold in the winter or there is snow on the ground, does not mean that blessings stop coming. It may be snow on the ground, but that doesn't stop the shower of blessings we have been promised by God. They will not cease.

In every season, God's grace will be poured out upon us.

When we have God's grace, we have more than enough!

When we have God's grace, the barrel is never empty!

When we have God's grace, we never walk in a courtroom with an able attorney!

When we have God's grace, we never enter a sickroom without a first class physician!
We have God's grace, regardless of the season; it will not cease!

Give Thanks in any season

Finally, brothers and sisters, regardless of the season you may be experiencing now, there is still a reason to give God thanks!

Some say global warming is affecting the seasons and causing climate change, but the seasons of your life are controlled by a God who does not change.

It does not matter whether we are plant and sowing in the springtime or enjoying harvest in the fall, God's blessings will not cease!

It doesn't matter whether we are sweltering in a season of heat in the summer or shivering in a season cold in the winter, God's blessings will not cease!

Every season will come in God's appointed time. Even if that season brings us difficulty, we shouldn't be too worried about because regardless of the season, God is still in the blessing business.

No matter what season you be experiencing, you must have faith in the power of God. You must believe that you serve an awesome God who can open doors you can't see.

In closing, I'm reminded of an old lady who lived in an old house in an area that was being purchased by a casino. The old lady refused to sell her old house so the casino pulled strings and had her house condemned. The demolition officials told the old lady she had thirty days to fix the old house or it would be torn down. The old lady just sat on the porch and read her Bible. While she read, her friends became concerned because the old lady wouldn't move. She had helped so many people that no one wanted to see her hurt. They put their heads together. At the end of the month the casino owners came to serve her eviction papers but to their surprise the neighbors had built a fine, brick house that could not be demolished. The old lady looked at the casino owner and said, "You told me that this old house had outlived its season, but the God I serve says regardless of seasons "There shall be showers of blessings."

I don't know about you, but I've decided that regardless of my season, I will thank the Lord.

I may have have been troubled by doubt in a season of confusion, but I will still say, "Thank you Lord!"

I may have been plagued by financial troubles in a season of economic downturns, but I will still say "Thank you Lord.",

I may have been troubled sickness in a season of declining health, but I will still say, Thank you Lord."

Thank you Lord for showing down on me the benefit of your grace. It was grace, paid for on hill call Calvary

It was grace paid for on an old rugged cross!

It was grace paid for when he was buried in a borrowed tomb!

But Early Sunday morning..

No.9714-Inspiration

When Will the Thanks End?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 6, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "The end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." Psalm 30:12

Introduction

Has anyone ever done a favor for you and you said, "I owe you one?" Later when that person asked a favor of you, did you ever feel compelled to help out of gratitude for what was done for you? What if that person constantly asked favors of you, based on the same kindness shown years before? Does your gratitude for kindness show that you have limits?

All believers, at some point, must ask ourselves, "What do we owe one another?" There is an unwritten contract between the recipient of favor and the donor; in it, the recipient says, "I will always remember the kindness you have shown to me."

When we say, "I owe you one," to a friend it's a way of saying "I am grateful for your kindness." Even though we said, "I owe you one," does gratitude have limits? Are you promising to return the favor one for one?

One for one favor is the lifeblood of politicians. Few people support candidates for purely altruistic purposes. Most people expect something in return for their support, whether its policy changes or personal privilege. When a politician delivers, he has paid his debt. He owes us nothing.

However, gratitude has no limits and is often shown repeatedly. There is an Aesop fable about the slave and the lion that illustrates this thought. The slave stumbled upon the lion hurting in the woods. The slave discovered that the lion had a thorn in its paw that caused the pain. The slave removed the thorn, and the lion licked his hand in gratitude. Later, the lion found the slave hungry and went to his cave brought back fresh meat for him to eat; then licked his paw. Sometime afterward both the lion and the slave were captured. The emperor announced that there would be a dual in the arena between unfortunates and a lion who had been intentionally starved to make him fight. In the arena, the lion roared and awaited its victim, but when he saw that his victim was to be the slave who helped him, the lion came to the slave and licked his hand. Impressed, the Emperor asked and was told the story of their friendship. He immediately released the lion back into the wild and set the slave free out of respect for the display of gratitude shown in the arena.

A simple thanks says, "I owe you one," but gratitude says "I owe you one -for life." It may explain why the man who was once fed in a shelter constantly donates to homeless causes. It may explain why the man who man was orphaned himself keeps adopting orphaned children; or why the man who never had a childhood Christmas gift becomes a secret Santa every year and gives thousands of dollars to needy people. At age six a man he did not know gave his family a Christmas tree, it was a gift he never forgot.

We have all been the beneficiaries of someone's love. The gratitude we show in response is timeless and limitless. It's a thanks that never ends.

The songwriter Andre Crouch said, "How can I say thanks for the things you have done for me; things so undeserved, yet you gave to prove your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude; All that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to thee."

As Christians, we enter the season of Advent, celebrating the gift of the Christ Child to fallen humanity. We remember that, in Christ, God gave us the gift that keeps on giving, deserving thanks that never ends.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he dedicates himself and his house to the praise of God forever.

The 30th Psalm is a composition designed for singing, accompanied with or without musical instruments.

Some suppose that the psalm was specifically written to praise God for the site selected for the temple he wanted to build for God. The temple was ultimately built by his son Solomon. Other scholars say that the use of the term "house" did not refer to a building, but to David's extended family. The scope and breadth of the psalm finds David meditating upon the many ways God has blessed his "house" or family.

In verses 1-5 he notes that the praise that his house has for God is unending. Even when the family endured difficulties, he said in verse five that God constantly replaced tears with smiles of joy. He said, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

In verses 6,7 he reflects on the times of his prosperity and success. The times when he enjoyed excellent health and victory in every battle. Even as he enjoyed his success, he also endured hard times. In verse seven he says, "I was troubled."

In verses 8-10 he notes how he prayed to God in his troubles, seeking relief. In verse 10 he said, "Lord, be thou my helper."

In verses 11-12, he rejoiced during the times when God "turned my mourning into dancing."

The concluding thought of verse 12 is, "I will give thanks unto thee forever." God never stops turning darkness into light, trouble into triumph or loss into gain, so our gratitude for what he constantly does for us, will never end.

Why they will never end

As believers, we are challenged to inject a level of gratitude in our relations with each other that reflects an appreciation for what has been done for us by God through others. During this season of the year, beginning at Thanksgiving through year's end, we express our gratitude in ways that will never end.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR BLESSINGS: While there are some people who constantly complain about life, there are others who feel that something is always too long or too short. They never see the blessings God has given them, all they see is the difficulty that remains. We thank God for blessing us despite the fact that we do not deserve such blessings. Our thanks goes beyond, "We owe you one" so we will show our face at a worship service to pay God back. Our thanks reflects genuine gratitude that says, "we owe you -one life."

There is no one thing that God does for us. His blessings are too numerous to count. We recognize some of the ways that we have been blessed immediately. We see material evidence such as homes, cars, and a reasonable portion of health and strength. We thank Him for those. However, there are blessings we have received that are unseen. We have been protected from unseen dangers and miraculously steered around them. We have no way of knowing all of the unseen dangers that we have been spared from, just this day alone. We are eternally grateful for his strong hand in our lives. He has done so much for us that the thanks will never end.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR OUR BURDENS: Not only do we give God thanks for blessings, but we also give Him thanks for our burdens. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. The word everything includes our burdens and problems. We thank God for everything because we know that all things work for our good, if we are in Christ Jesus. Thus, we thank Him for everything. We even thank him when it seems like life is burying us under a load of unnecessary dirt. Remember the story of the little bird that fell in the well and couldn't get out? Every day dirt was shoveled under him, and the little bird kept singing and put the dirt under its feet. The more dirt that came, the higher the mound rose until soon the little bird could fly away. - Thank God for the dirt that life throws at you because one day that dirt will help you rise higher!

Be grateful for everything!

Thank God for the bill collector!

Thank God for the dentist!

Thank God for your enemies!

In everything, give thanks!

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR HELP IN TIMES OF TROUBLE: God told David that in a time of trouble, call upon me. He told David then and tells us now, show your trust, confidence, and faith in me by calling me when you need help, not some other. David found that God was true to his word. So much so that he wrote in Psalm 27:5 For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall

He hide me; He shall set me upon a rock. There are many today who have discovered what David found out, which is that God is a very present help in a time of trouble. There is a slogan that some businesses have on their business cards that reads, "You've tried the rest now try the best!" Too many apply that to God. When they are in real trouble, they turn to quack doctors, voodoo, palm readers, special potions, magic candles, mystical oils and hoodoo. They try the rest, before coming to God.

However, David said we should turn that motto around, "There is no sense going to the rest, you already have the best!"

Whenever we need Him, all we need to do is just call Him. Call Him in the morning! Call Him in the noonday! Call Him in the midnight hour!

We should be grateful

Finally, brothers and sisters, since God is blessing us constantly, we should never let the thanks end.

God is the source of our good fortune and regardless of how things look at the moment, we should never let our thanks end.

Some never realize God as their source and give him credit for what he does. They are like Ungrateful Gary who never gave his wife any credit for the love she had shown him over the years; it made her sad, but she loved him anyway. One day Ungrateful Gary took sick and remained in a coma for several months. His loving wife stayed by his bedside every day. She read to him, cared for him and loved him back to life. One day he awakened and saw her sitting by the bed holding his hand and motioned for her to come near. He whispered, "While I was in my coma I finally figured something out. When I lost my job, you were there. When I filed bankruptcy and lost the house, you were there. When I was fired off my job, you were there. When I totaled the car and ended up in this coma, you were there.

"I have finally figured it out. The wife became so excited because it finally appeared that Ungrateful Gary saw how much she loved him. Then he said, "What I found out is that every time something bad happened to me, you were there. Now, I wake up out of this coma, and the first face I see is yours; if I could get rid of you, my luck would change."

We don't want to be like Ungrateful Gary, we need to show our gratitude every day!

We can show thanks to God by telling the world about his goodness!

What he has done is too good to keep to ourselves. In Psalm 105:1-3 he said: O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

When God has done something good for us, we should be willing to glorify him and show our gratitude.

We should tell it on our jobs!

Tell it in the songs we sing! We should tell it in the joy that bubbles in our soul!

We should never back down from a chance to say to the world, I just want to thank

God for being so good to me!

Thank you, Lord, for taking my:

—Bitterness and turning it into sweetness; Sadness and giving me joy!

—Loneliness and give me companionship; Emptiness and giving me fulfillment!

—Failure and showing me the victory; Discouragement and giving me encouragement!

More than that, I want to thank you, Lord, for saving my soul!

I don't know about you, but every now and then, I want to tell somebody that I serve a good God!

I want to tell somebody that down in Bethlehem a child was born, who came to bring good tidings of peace on earth and goodwill toward men!

I want to tell somebody that he carried an old cross for me!

I want to tell somebody that he died out on Calvary!

I want to tell somebody that early Sunday morning that he arose from the dead!

Thank you, Lord!

Thank you, Lord!

...for you've been so good to me!

No. 9715-Christmas

We Didn't Know Who You "Wuz"

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 19, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." John 1:10

Introduction

Is it possible to be aware of God, but not really know him? There are many people who accept the idea that God exists, but they do not really know him for themselves. The status of their relationship to God is like the question raised in the old song by Bill Withers, "Who is he and what is he to you?" Many are aware of God, but he means very little to them because they don't know him.

We know that is true because there are people who live in the same house and are members of the same family and do not know each other. Each day we interact with people at work, school or in the general community, but we don't really know them! Of course, we know their names. We may know a tidbit or two about their backgrounds. We may even know a few facts about their hobbies and the names of a few of their family members, but does that mean we know them?

There are many homes today in which family members do not know each other. Often children know more about their parents than their parents know about them. There are many children today who are growing up in families where neither parents or children really know each other. They live in the same house, but it may as well be a separate world because they close themselves in their rooms and shut out the rest of the family with the glare of the television set or the muffled sounds of stereo headphones. It's a rapidly growing phenomenon of the modern evolving family where each member becomes accustomed to living as "strangers in the house."

It becomes apparent that we do not know each other when a teenager learns that his mother can sing from someone else or when a parent learns from others of a talent a child possesses that was never known. Why does the mother yell so much? Is it true that grandmother was once a hot mama in her day?

If you were offered $1,000 to answer five questions about your spouse, mother or father, would you collect? What is their favorite color? What is the one thing they want

to do before they die? What is their jewelry preference? Who are their heroes? Do they cry and have you ever seen them cry? There are some who can answer all five of these questions and more because they know the members of their families. There are others who are still scratching their heads.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there were many people who were aware that a woman had taken shelter in a cave behind the inn. There were some who probably heard her screams in the night as she gave birth, but there is no record of anyone in the city coming to her assistance or attending her needs. Only the shepherds that were grazing their flocks came into the city to find the mother and child. They came because they had been told by angels that the Son of God was born among them and that they would find him laying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Much later, several wise men would come to their home and bring them gifts.

However, beyond these mentions, most of the people in Bethlehem and in Nazareth had no idea who was in their midst.

The words of the old Negro Spiritual speak to the ignorance of the world about the baby Jesus. In its simplicity, the song expresses the state of the world at the time, which has not changed much over the years.

"Sweet little Jesus Boy
born in a manguh
Sweet little Holy chil'
We Didn't know who You wus
Didn't know You'd come to save us Lawd
To take our sins away
Our eyes wus bline
We couldn't see
We didn't know who You wus.."

As Christians, we can proudly say that we know the Lord. We have seen him move faithfully in our lives. We can say with the old warriors, "I've tried the man, and the man is alright" or "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I've tried him for myself."

Exposition

The text focuses on John as he notes how Christ came into the world and was not recognized as the Son of God.

The condition of the world had reached a point where God himself had to come among men to show them the way to salvation. He did not come unannounced. It was prophesied by the prophets and the people waited for lifetimes for his arrival, but when he came, he was not received primarily because he was not recognized as the savior.

He left a world of bliss, holiness, and happiness and came to this world, and the world didn't know who he was and received him not.

He came from a world where Justice and Mercy flowed from the throne of God to

bring those same things to the world, but the world didn't know who he was, and did not receive him.

Even though his birth among the poor and dejected symbolized the concern of God for everyone, only the shepherds recognized him at his birth and all of his life most of those he encountered didn't recognize him as the Son of God and did not receive him.

They did not know him although he was the great maker, ruler and creator of the world and all that was in it. They did not know him because he did not make himself known in the way that they expected-in external glory and majesty. His kingdom he came to establish would be different than they imagined.

What they saw in the manger was just another baby, "And we didn't know who you wuz."

Who is this child?

The birth of Christ brought a message of hope to this world in three different ways:

HE CAME TO BE WITH US: Jesus was born into the world as a child so that he could respond to the feelings and troubles of his creations from the standpoint of having "been there." Among the various names he would be called is "Immanuel" or God is with us. That is important for us to know because it means our God can both empathize and sympathize with us.

Did you grow up in a small town or a small section of town not known for producing anything of value? Jesus has been there too! Were you often talked about criticized and persecuted for no reason at all? Jesus has been there too. Have there ever been times when you were pretty close to living on the streets? Jesus has been there too. There is no situation that we can experience that he cannot in some way understand how we feel from being born out of wedlock to being crucified for crimes he didn't commit.

When we look to the Savior for support and strength, we are looking to someone who has been there himself and will be there with us. He knows what it means to be in trouble. He also knows what it's like to feel all alone. Being alone is an awkward feeling. Most of us feel better when we face a situation in the company of those who make them feel safe and secure. When we are alone, fear sets in and anxiety is heightened. When we are alone, we feel uncomfortable. We feel safer when we are not alone. That's why Jesus promised never to leave us alone.

GOD WILL FLIP MY SITUATION: The mission of Christ on earth was to show the people of God that He intended to take a torn up world and flip it into a better world. The Kingdom of God would displace the Kingdoms of this world. On a personal basis, the faithful would also find that he would flip their situations as well. Romans 8:28 (KJV)
28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

That's a huge reminder for believers to keep in the back of their minds. No matter what the situation we face, God will flip it, twist it or work it out so that it will be to our benefit in the long run. That's the reminder that we get at Christmas time. Just as the

birth of the Christ-child announced to the world the presence of a mighty God among the people, it should also remind believers that God's power is in every home, every day.

God will take your:

—Hunger and give you a satisfied soul!

—Darkness and bring you into the marvelous light!

—Defeat and show you the way to victory!

—Frustrations and give you new determination!

—Sadness and give you unspeakable joy!

GOD WILL SAVE US: Matthew 1:21 says, "And she will have a Son, and you shall name him Jesus (meaning 'Savior'), for he will save his people from their sins." The baby Jesus is a constant reminder to all of us that regardless of our mistakes or errors in life, we can be forgiven. The very name "Jesus" itself means "he will save his people from their sins."

The birth of Christ is a sign to the world that:

—When darkness covers the land, that I am able to turn darkness into light!

—Although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and good will toward all men!

—Although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow!

This child is a special child, for Isaiah said in 9:6 "for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be on his shoulder; his name shall be called:

—Wonderful. Counselor. The Mighty God. Everlasting father. Prince of Peace!"

Most Importantly the Christ child is a sign of God's unending love. I heard John 3:16 say "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

We know that God will save us because Romans 10:13 says, "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Why We Celebrate

Finally, brothers and sisters, we want to do more than celebrate a holiday; we want to celebrate the birth of the savior because we know God for ourselves.

It is true that there will be many people who will celebrate Christmas for many reasons, but they do not know our God.

There will be many who will say "Merry Christmas" but they do not know the reason for the season.

There will be many who will sing "Silent Night: without knowing the child who was born that night.

In the words of that old spiritual, "The didn't know who you wuz"

Every believer can testify, you can't really celebrate Christmas unless you know God for yourself.

You have to know God for yourself.

You can buy gasoline for your car from Chevron or Texaco, but you don't have to know the president of the company. But if you want to get to heaven, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can be a member of Sam's Clubs and buy merchandise at Walmart without ever meeting a descendant of Sam Walton, but if you want to get to heaven you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can shop at Goldman Sachs without ever knowing Marcus Goldman or Samuel Sachs, but if you want to walk the streets of Gold, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!You can buy a Ford or a Lincoln automobile without ever knowing Henry Ford, III, but if you want to get to heaven, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can take a sip of Hennesy or a swig of Johnny Walker Red without ever knowing Richard Hennesy or meeting Johnny Walker face to face, but if you want to sip the sweet nectars from the fountain of life, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can buy Wendy's hamburgers, French fries, and drink without having known Dave Thomas, but if you want to get to heaven, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can wear the latest pair of Jordan's without ever knowing Micheal Jordan or seeing him play a game, but if you want to see the Promised Land, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

You can use an IPad or an Apple computer without having known Steve Jobs, but if you want to walk through the pearly gates, you got to know Jesus; you've got to know God for yourself!

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:
—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!
—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!
—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!
—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high. That's why the old warriors cried out "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!"

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

Every saint should keep telling the world about the words of God, but we should also let the world know that we know the Lord ourselves!

Tell them about Jesus!

Tell them how He lived on this Earth for 33 long years!

Tell them how He bore an old rugged cross!

Tell them how He died out on Calvary!

But, don't forget to tell them that, early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9716-Inspiration

Let us seek God's Favor Together

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2015

SCRIPTURE: "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Zechariah 8:21-23

Introduction

How can the world come to know the God that we trust? There are some who would say that we must advertise and market our faith so that it attracts the world's attention. There are others who believe we can force the world to know our God by government mandate. Still others believe that we can do so by eliminating all other gods. None of these, however, introduce the world to the God of the universe who knows us personally.

The story is told of two men who were called upon to read the 23rd Psalm. One was a seminary student and the other was an old man who spent his whole life on a farm and could neither read nor write. The seminary student read carefully, pronouncing every word correctly and demonstrated his training. The old man stood and started reciting the scripture from memory but punctuated his recitation with a witness about what the Lord had done for him: Providing a table for him in the presence of his enemies, blessing him so much that he had overflow as well as standing with him in times of death and sickness. His words were broken and his enunciation was weak, but he brought the audience to its feet. The seminary student rose and commented afterward. "Friends I know the 23rd Psalms, but this man knows the Shepherd." To attract the world to our God, we must show the world that "We know the shepherd."

There are thousands of faiths, beliefs and denominations around the world. What will draw them all together for a common purpose? What can we do to inspire them to share our faith in God and to "know the shepherd" as we know him? It appears that there should be a commonality of vision. There are so many faiths in the world because they all seem to have a different view that drives them. We are separate because we do not see God from the perspective of our neighboring faiths.

We cannot spend our lives trying to convince others to follow our faith; instead, we should simply walk by faith ourselves. The very walk itself will cause others to look twice. That may seem simplistic, but consider that if the world is freezing to death, but we are warm and always seem to have a constant fire, wouldn't it be a natural response for others to inquire about the source of our fire, how it is maintained and how they can acquire the same? Others are drawn to Christ by what we do more than what we say. That's why Jesus said, "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

When we all share the same vision, then God will prepare us all to work together to make it happen. It may mean that all faiths may need to walk at a different pace, using a different stride for the purpose of making the vision of God a reality.

The vision that God gives to this army of unified faiths may present challenges that represent changes of direction.

It may mean giving more to the education of our youth through the support of public education both mainstream and chartered.

It may mean giving more to support positive activities that will help them develop into stronger Christian men and women.

It may mean devising programs that will strengthen the home, promote finer womanhood and build manhood.

It may mean working to reduce the prison population by working to deter those who seem committed to hell bound paths. It may mean showing more concern for our elderly by increasing our elder care ministries.

Every chance we get, we must work together to make this heavenly vision a reality.

As Christians, we should commit ourselves to living as people who know God, following the vision of God and building the kingdom. When we do so, we hasten the day that others will follow singing the old hymn, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory."

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy of Zechariah that promised that all nations would help to rebuild Jerusalem.

The amazing prophecy notes that a day will come when people in one city will join with people of another city and come to Jerusalem to work together to make the vision of the prophecy of the Lord a reality. Working side by side with people of all faiths, the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

Even though Israel was in a state of physical disrepair as a result of military conflict, the faith of God's people remained strong. It attracted the attention of individuals from around the world who joined in the shared vision of rebuilding the nation. Dr. Warren Wiersbe notes, "Zechariah prophesied at a time when Jerusalem was still in ruins. In 586, the Babylonians had destroyed the city and had taken the people captive to Babylon. In 536, after the fall of Babylon, Cyrus permitted a remnant of the Jews to return to their land, and in 535, they laid the foundation for the temple. But the work stopped,

and it was not until 520 that the Jews again began to rebuild God's house. This was under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah. But Zechariah did not see a weak nation in a ruined city; he looked down the centuries and saw the future of the city and the coming of Jerusalem's King, the Messiah."

The prophecy looks beyond the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple, which was fulfilled, and looks to a time when people foreign to the Jewish faith will be drawn to the faith of these simple people whose idea of "one God" attracted people from around the world.

Though persecuted and thrown into exile, the faith of the Jewish people attracted people from around the world. These people, says Matthew Henry, were "proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote, who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem, which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed significantly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Savior's time, though now it was just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head."

Benefits of Working together

WE BOND IN THE FAITH: When people of different beliefs, races, and life experiences work together a peculiar relationship develops; all surrounding accomplishing a single goal. Those who share the common desire to obey God and do his will, develop a spiritual bond and become sisters and brothers. Those who work together to achieve the common goal of realizing the will of God also become sisters and brothers. The idea of "shared experience" rather than the simple incidence of birth as a definition of brotherhood, sisterhood, and parenthood, made it understandable that persons who were not your natural kindred could very well share a spiritual bond because of shared experiences.

Those who share the experience of Christ and his love, easily refer to themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is that "shared experience" that makes those who profess Christ brothers and sisters, despite not shared the same biological history. This is the bond that victims of floods, earthquakes and disasters feel that compels them to help others even though they do not share the same life experiences. However, they have shared one experience, as a result of a storm, that has brought them together. When we bond around our common experience of watching God work through people to respond to human need, we hasten the day that the kingdom of God will become a reality.

WE ACHIEVE MORE TOGETHER: When we work together, we can accomplish much more than we can working alone. The work goes faster and it is much harder to defeat us, if we are together. There is a Latin phrase that says: "Vis unita fortior" It means the force of God, added to my own force is powerful. Add that to the force of many other believers and it becomes an unstoppable force. Despite our combined

efforts, however, all faiths recognize one truth, that without God no undertaking can be successful. In a united way, we must put it all in his hands. Collectively, all believers should say: "Lord, we're putting it in your hand because your..:

—GLORY is much greater than ours; POWER is much stronger than ours

—METHODS are much wiser than ours; UNDERSTANDING is much broader than ours!

—WAYS are much safe than ours; HEART is much bigger than ours;

—BURDEN is lighter than ours, and LOVE is much deeper than ours!

It's in your hands because we don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds our hands!

THOSE WHO BOND BECOME FRIENDS: There is a residual effect of bonding for a common purpose; it is that friendships develop. Friendship is more than a mere acquaintance or association. Friendships develop because of a mutual trust. A friend sticks closer than a brother. Friends know all about us, including the dark secrets about our inner selves. Working together they share a common purpose and vision that those who do not know God as we do come to learn by watching us. In spite of what God knows about us, he still chooses to be our friend anyway.

When people decide to work together, there is a congealing of spirit and purpose that contributes to unity.

When people work together, there is a common cause and purpose that causes divisions and differences to blur and energy concentrates.

Let us work together for the sake of increased unity. As we collaborate in this mission, we will become a stronger band of brothers and sisters dedicated to one purpose. In the process, we become friends.

No wonder the songwriter would declare, "What a friend we have been Jesus." He alone has proven to be our only friend. As Christians, we rejoice in knowing that we have a friend in Jesus. He will always love us. He will always be with us. And he will never leave us alone.

As we trust God, we gain favor

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that as we work we learn to trust God together and win his favor.

The favor of the Lord is not owed, but it is bestowed upon those whom God chooses, in degrees of his own choosing.

Throughout God's written word we have seen examples of those of different races, nationalities, and sexes obtaining the favor of the Lord.

Job's life went through many ups and downs, but he survived every test because he enjoyed the favor of the Lord. In Job 10:12 he said, "Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

Mary was selected to be the surrogate mother for the Christ child because

she enjoyed the favor of the Lord. Luke 1:30 says, "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God."

David was the greatest King of Israel because he enjoyed the favor of the Lord. Acts 7:46 says David was a man, "Who found favor before God.."
God smiles on those who have his favor.

When we work together to build the vision, God smiles on us.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God has smiled on me.

When God smiles on us, he gives us:

—STRENGTH when our burdens become heavy.

—ASSURANCE when everything seems to go wrong.

—INSPIRATION when difficulties arise.

—COMFORT when disaster strikes.

Because God favors us we are able to:

—Keep on going, when our road gets rough.

—Keep on singing, even though our pain becomes intense.

—Keep on working, even when our body gets weary.

The church is more than an organization, it is a living organism of those who have been saved by grace, born again and work together because
we believe there is blessing and favor in this labor of love!

The church is a fellowship of those who are washed in the blood and sanctified for the service of the Lord.

The church is a band of believers who have come to learn that God is a mighty present help in a time of trouble!

I don't know about you, but I've found out that when God blesses and grants favor; it's a real blessing and it's real favor!

When God blesses the impossible becomes possible!

When God blesses the unreachable becomes reachable!

When God blesses the unattainable becomes attainable!

We don't know how he does it, but he does! All we know is that when we work to testify of his goodness, blessing and favor follow close behind.

Work together in faith and there is a blessing on the way!

It's a blessing that was paid for on an old rugged cross!

It's a blessing that was secured with a crown of thorns!

It's a blessing that was guaranteed when Jesus died out on Calvary!

But Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

He's still blessing…

He's still blessing today!

No. 9717-New Year

God's Blessing Has No Shelf Life Date

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 31, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." Psalm 136:1

Introduction

Have you ever checked the shelf life of items you buy in the store? Most consumable items in a grocery store have a date stamped on them to let us know when the item will be unfit for human consumption. Sometimes the shelf life date lets us know when it should come off the shelves of the store, and out of our pantries as well. Yet, it is not just food that has a shelf life. Cosmetics, beverages, medical devices, drugs, batteries and many other perishables have a shelf life date, too.

To help consumers check, items usually carry labels. The labels mean different things, depending on the product. Some have labels that read, "Best to use before" or "use by" and some packaged perishables will have a "freshness date" letting you know that after that date it's no longer fresh. In actuality, the USDA says the date on canned items is just a guide. It does not guarantee that food eaten before the date is safe, neither does it warn that something bad is going to happen after that date if it's sealed in a can.

Great-grandma didn't know anything about the USDA or the Food and Drug Administration, but she knew if she bought some Mason Jars and Blanched fruits and vegetables properly and then stored them in those air tight jars that those fig jellies and peach preserves would last for years. Many people still have jars of preserves on their shelves that have been there for years without a shelf life date.

It's just a guide. Unlike fresh foods, the shelf life date on batteries and pharmaceuticals refers to the potency and safety of the product. It does not mean you should throw away a set of batteries or a box of aspirin because the date has passed.

There are many people who approach a new threshold worried about next year. They are worried about whether God's power, goodness and mercy will be enough to see them into the next year.

Yet, the world tells us clearly that God is great and his mercy endureth forever. It means that there is no limitation on his power. There is no limitation on his capacity

to respond to human need and there is no expiration date on his mercy. Psalms 23 says, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" that means every day of my life God will provide, but even further because it also says, "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever" -Forever! It has no shelf life!

As Christians, we are thrilled when we remember that the power of the God we serve is everlasting. Psalm 121 says "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." God protected us this year, but there is no label that says his power expires on the last day of the year. What he has done for us in the past will continue forever and ever.

Exposition

This text focuses on a Psalm of David in which he underscores the fact that the goodness and mercy of God never runs out.

This Psalm is unique among the 150 psalms because it alone has a single redundancy or repetitive phrase.The latter half of each verse is the same, repeated throughout the psalm, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

There are 26 verses in the psalm and the phrase "For his mercy endureth for ever," is repeated 26 times. It is what the Old English would describe as "continuando" and English teachers might call an alliteration where the same truth is repeated with a repetitive rhythm and rhyme.

David lays out 26 different life scenarios and made it very clear that in every situation, God proved that his mercy endures forever.

For example in verse 11 he says, God brought Israel out of the Red Sea, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

Verse 13 notes that God divided the Red Sea, "For his mercy endureth for ever." At verse 16 he notes that he led the people through the wilderness, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

In verse 18, he says God slew the big named famous Kings that blocked Israel's way, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

In verse 23, he says God remembered those with a low estate, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

In verse 26, he says we should give thanks to God, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

In Twenty-six different verses, the word of God makes it clear that God's mercy has no time limitation, shelf life or loss of potency. He endures forever.

For the believer, the 136 Psalm is a reminder because we can easily substitute the situations of each verse with our own and say with surety that we have no need to worry because "his mercy endureth forever."

—God helped us to face our darkest days, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

—God lifted us when we fell down, "For his mercy endureth for ever." —God comforted us when we were in despair, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

As we approach any new experience, these words should reassure us that he will be by our side as face the unknown, and will never leave us alone.

The Blood: No Shelf Life

As we prepare to move into the future, we should remember that the blood of Christ has no shelf life or date stamp.

Jesus told his disciples that his blood was shed for the remission of sin. The sins of every generation are covered by blood. It never gets old or loses its power.

The same power that quieted the lions for Daniel in the Lion's Den is the same blood that quiets the angry lions that roar at us every day.

The same power that protected the three Hebrew Boys in the fiery furnace is the same power that protects us from the fiery flames of haters and backbiters who try to destroy us today.

The same power that that called Lazarus from his tomb after four days in the grave is the same power that lifts us when we have fallen into despair.

It's power that prompted one songwriter to say, "There's power, power, wonder-working power, in the blood of the lamb. There's power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the lamb."

It's the same power that another songwriter said, "reaches from the highest mountain and flows to the lowest valley. The blood that gives me strength from day to day, it will never lose its power!"

God's Goodness: No shelf life

Just as there is no expiration time stamp on the power of God, neither is there a dated shelf life on the goodness of God.

If you look for the shelf life of God's goodness in any situation all you will see is that "God is good, all of the time and all of the time, God is good."

Job's friends tried to convince him that God's goodness had run out on him. His health had failed, family was decimated and all his money was gone. His friends said, "Job, God has run out of goodness."

Job said, when God blessed me with a large family, I said God was good! When God blessed me with large herds of cattle and prosperous farmland, I said God was good. When God gave me health and strength, I said, God was good.

Now that I have had a few troubling days, I want you to know that God is still a good God, "All of the days of my appointed time, I'll wait until my change comes. Yea Thou he slay me, yet will I trust him."

God showed Job that there is no shelf life on his goodness. In the fulness of time, he restored Job with a larger family, made him richer than he'd ever been and fully restored his health.

God showed Job's friends that God's goodness does not expire with a day on the calendar for the end of the Book of Job says, Job's last days were better than his first days.

Your critics say, because you had a difficulty this year that God's goodness must have expired.

They say because you had a bout with sickness this year that God's healing power must have expired.

They say because you ran into financial hard times, that the bank of heaven must in default.

Do not be discouraged, you just had a Pop Eye moment. In the old cartoons Bluto would beat Popeye the sailor man into the ground and make him as flat as a pancake, but the music would play and Popeye would reach into his bosum and pull out a can of spinanch. When he ate that spinanch Popeye got new strength and he beat old Bluto into the ground.

This year may have beaten you to tjhe ground until you felt like Popeye. If so just reach into your bosom and you'll hear the word of God saying, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount on wings as Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, walk and not."

There is no time stamp on the goodness of the Lord.

Mercy of God: No shelf life

Just as the power of God never runs out and the Goodness of God never expires, Lamentations 3:22 says the mercies of God are continuous, and because they are continuous we are never consumed.

If God's mercy endureth forever that means that:

There will never be a time when God's mercy is EXPENDED, CONSUMATED OR EXHAUSTED.

There will never be a time when God's mercies are WASHED-OUT, WORN-OUT AND PHYSICALLY DRAINED.

There will never be a time when the mercies of God will REACH A DEAD END, CONCLUDE OR DISCONTINUE.

There will never be a time when the mercies of God will BREAK-OFF, BREAK-UP, AND BREAK-AWAY:

Don't worry about what the new year will bring, just remember that God's mercies have no time limitations. His power is still the same and there is no shelf life to his goodness.

The Songwriter says, Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed my hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness,Lord unto me."

Be not dismayed, whatever betide, God will take care of you!

Praise him in the new year

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we get ready to enter into the new year, we should be ready to praise the Lord because his Grace is always sufficient; his Love is always abundant, and his mercy endureth forever.

Because God's mercy has no expiration date, we can expect his power, goodness, and mercy to follow us into the new year.

We should praise the Lord for the burden he's going to lift off our shoulders!

We should praise the Lord for the hill he's going to help us to climb!

We should praise the Lord for the bills he's going to help us to pay!

We should praise the Lord for the job he's going to help us to find!

We should praise the Lord for the home he's going to help us to buy!

We should praise the Lord for the old man who's going to finally start acting like a husband!

We should praise the Lord for the old lady who will finally want to become a wife!

Even though the mercy of the Lord will follow us into the new year, we ought to be glad that our sins won' follow us. They won't follow us because they have a time stamp on them. They won't follow us over into the New Year, for they have been purged and made pure.

What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Jesus, the prized son of Palestine

Jesus, the epitome of perfection.

Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

His mercy endureth forever!

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No. 9718-New Year

He didn't bring me this far to leave me

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 3, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. Exodus 14:10-14

Introduction

How confident are you that God will be with you in the New Year? If you are a true believer, you should be like the woman that the late James Cleveland made famous in one of his songs. The Reverend Cleveland said an 82-year-old lady stood in of front the church and gave her testimony. She said, "I been running for Jesus some 50 odd years and I don't feel no ways tired. I've come too far from where I started from. Nobody told me that the road would be easy; I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me."

That seems appropriate to remember when we stop to consider just how far we have come to reach this point in our lives. Each of us has traveled a long and meandering road to reach this milestone on our life journey. Our paths have brought us through a myriad of experiences that have included successes and failures. Along the way, we have witnessed many changes and have learned to take them in stride. Our joy is knowing that in spite of the rugged road that we have traveled, that has been one constant; we've experienced the love of God.

We've come a long ways. The most senior among us have seen the most miles, tallest of mountains and the deepest of life's valleys. The younger among us have traveled a journey too. It is just as real to them as the distances traveled by those who walked before them.

We have lived through Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Elvis Presley, Marilyn

Monroe, James Brown, Luther Vandross and Michael Jackson. We've come a long ways.

We have lived to see Drive in Movies, 8 mm movies, VHS, Compact Disc and now live streaming. We have seen gasoline as cheap as 20 cents a gallon and as high as $4.00 a gallon and watched it fall again.

We have seen full-service gas stations and watched them decline to self-service and no service stations; 8 track tapes; 33,45 and 78 rpm records; Manual typewriters and word processors. We have seen push lawn mowers, sling blades, wide seat bicycles, Doctor's house calls; disco dancing, taps on shoes, returnable pop bottles; Home milk delivery; The Afro Pick, Afro Sheen, and the Jeri Curl. We have come a long way.

On our way to this point, we have learned about Adam and Eve, Adam and Steve, and Eve and Evette. We have seen plated hair, corn rows, processes, conks, Afros and weaves

Through it all we keep remembering the words of Psalm 37:25 that says... "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

As Christians, there are points along the journey that we tired and feel like giving up. However, as we begin a new year, we must remember the word's of James Cleveland's little old lady, "We've come too far from where we started from. Nobody told us that the road would be easy. I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me."

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel's despair and loss of faith as the people moved toward the next step in their journey toward freedom.

For 430 years, Israel suffered in bondage in Egypt. In the process, God blessed them to survive when they should have been destroyed by the conditions of their enslavement.

When they were finally freed from slavery, they marched out of Egypt over one million strong. However, when they reached the Red Sea, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his chariots to bring them back to slavery.

When the Israelites saw that the Red Sea was in front of them and Pharaoh's army was behind them, they became afraid and complained that Moses brought them out of the safety of Egypt and brought them to the Red Sea to perish.

They believed God brought them to the brink of their promised delivery and left them to die.

God spoke to Moses, who told the people to "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

The complaints didn't stop. On the other side, they complained that God had brought them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, just to allow them to starve in the desert. God made a way and supplied them food and water.

When they reached the Promised Land, their entrance was blocked by the Jordan

River. Again, they complained that he brought them across the Red Sea and the wilderness, just to leave them.

God rolled back the waters of the River and they marched into the Promised only to discover that it was defended by large cities with high walls. Again they complained that God brought them across the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the River Jordan just to leave them at the mercy of an enemy behind great walls; then God brought don't the walls of Jericho.

Repeatedly God showed them using one miracle after another that he did not bring them to the brink of his promise just to leave them.

Walk, but don't get weary

The last year was extremely difficult year for some of us. There are some families that encountered physical sickness and death. There are others that are experienced strained relationships. These are the believers who quickly testify that if it had not been for the Lord on their side, they would not have been able to stand the trials and difficulties of these tough moments.

When we are frustrated, we lash out! Crazy ideas get in our heads! We act up and do stupid stuff! That's when it's good to have friends who can ignore our frustrations and love us anyway. That's when someone reminds us, that God is still on the throne; he didn't bring us this far just to leave us alone.

That's when we remember that this is not a quick sprint, but a marathon. Israel didn't get to the Promised Land in a quick run, it was a steady walk with God providing the miracles they needed along the way. This walk we are making into the future is an endurance test. Unlike the sprinter who needs speed to win his race, the distance runner needs endurance. The great marathons such as the grueling 26 mile Boston marathon or the marathon of cycling, the Tour de France, all require endurance. Those who prove to be champions of these events have an uncanny endurance that separates them from the pack.

Every time we have come to the proverbial Red Sea, a financial drought, or were nearly buried in troubles, God was there; he was only a prayer away. He lifted burdens from our shoulders and gave us renewed strength in the midst of weakness. When Jesus told his disciples, Lo I'll be with you always," that meant exactly what it said, he planned to be with us continually.

When frustrations begin to pile up on us, it seems that there is no rest for the weary. But there is a way for us to catch our wind while we make our Sprint. The secret is to watch those who run great distances.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds our hand, so we must walk on!

Though waters of the big sea in front of us look wide, walk on!

Though the mountains we face look too hard to climb, walk on!

Although beset by the chains of slavery, our fore parents constantly sang that old

spiritual: “Walk together children,Don’ you get weary;,Walk together children, Don’t you get weary. Oh, talk together children, Don’t you get weary,There’s a great camp meeting in the promised land.”

God will keep his promises to you

God has kept his promises to us. He has not brought you through all that you have been through just to leave you without help. In Genesis 28:15 God says, “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” God won’t leave us at the Red Sea with no way to cross. The songwriter said, “Don’t give up on God because he won’t give up on you.”

Instead of fear about what’s coming up, we praise God more! We praise him for what he has done and what he is planning to do.

In the year ahead his going to:

—Muzzle the mouths of lions that will come to devour us!

—Quench the flames of fires that our haters are building trying to destroy us!

—Conquer the enemies that are planning to destroy us and confuse their plans!

—Penetrate the walls being built by Satan to divide us!

—Unlock the social and spiritual prisons designed to hold us down.

We will certainly face our Red Sea moments in the year ahead. We may even go through the wilderness, but we have God’s assurance that he will make a way; he didn’t bring us this close to the promise just to leave us alone.

I don’t know about you brothers and sisters but I promised the Lord that I would hold out until the morning comes!

When the morning comes, crying days will be over!

When the morning comes, lonely days will come to an end!

When the morning comes, the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest!

I heard a songwriter declare: I’m on the battlefield for my Lord, and I promised Him that I, would serve Him till I die!

I started in Jesus and I’m going through!

God will not leave you

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that no matter what comes our way, God will not leave us alone.

We have endured many difficult winters, summers, springs and autumns, nobody told us that that the road would be easy!

We have faced sickness in our families as well as, failure, frustration, and financial trouble. We have wrestled with wayward children, struggled to hold on to marriages and have worked fought against attempts to destroy the unity of family bond. We have

even faced the pain of death. Nobody told us that that the road would be easy.

I don't know about you, but I've decided to keep going because I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me.

We agree with the songwriter who said, I've had my good days, I've had many hills to climb. But all of my good days, outweigh my bad days. I won't complain.

We must remember no matter the trial or the situation we will face in the year ahead, we are not alone.

God is always with us; we must trust in the Lord!

-Noah trusted the Lord and he brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and he showed him the ram in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and he protected him in the Lion's Den

—Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

He has promised never to leave us repeatedly in his word

2 Kings 2:2 says, "As long as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will not leave you!"

1 Chronicles 28:20 says, "Do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord God, my God will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you…"

Isaiah 54:10 says, "The mountains may depart and the hills may disappear but my kindness shall not leave you."

John 14:8 says, "I will not leave you alone."

I don't feel no ways tired, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me because:

If am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be a stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross!

Hold to his hand!

He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand; he will see you through!

He didn't bring you this far to leave you!

No.9719-Inspiration

I Can't see him, but I know he is there

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 10, 2015

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:8-10

Introduction

Have you ever had an unexplained event to happen in your life that blessed you? It's one of those occasions where a blessing came your way without any effort on your part. It just came right when you needed it, and all you could say was, "Praise the Lord." There are some who have had unexplained reversals of medical conditions. The doctors said one thing, but later the condition was reversed, leaving doctors scratching their heads. You were not in line to receive the opportunity, but somehow an opportunity you never thought would happen, suddenly appeared- out of nowhere! You were involved in an accident that should have been fatal, but you survived with only scratches and bruises or no scratches at all; how did these things happen?

The faithful know that God works in the background of our lives to ensure that we accomplish our life's purpose. Those who have told God that they will follow his will to establish the kingdom have his assurance that he is working to open doors that are shut and to create doorways that don't even exist to help us achieve our divinely inspired purposes.

Often we won't see God operating, but yet he is there; behind us, in front of us and on our left hand and right. Those outside of the faith may not recognize his hand, but the faithful know how God works. God's unseen hand guides and controls, tears down and builds up. That unseen hand is called providence, the will of God working itself out among men. We know the power of God is working everyday, even though he cannot see his hand directly, his presence is felt.

Consider the pimp that drove his souped-up car straight through a red light and smashed into a car driven by a church deacon. The cars crashed head-on, air bags deployed and both cars were totally destroyed, but there was no way the deacon could

prove that the pimp caused the accident, both of them would probably get a ticket if they survived. After a few minutes, each of the men stepped out of their cars unharmed. The pimp and the deacon recognized each other from the hood, and both said it was amazing that both of them survived a head-on crash without a scratch. The pimp said, "This must be some kind of sign, there is a blessing in this somewhere ain't it deacon?" The deacon said, "Look at both of our cars, completely demolished, but we are unscratched that's a blessing in itself. In fact, everything about the car is torn up, but this bottle of communion wine I just bought didn't even get touched. Maybe that's a sign." The pimp said, "Maybe it means we should celebrate; let's have a drink!" The deacon passed the bottle to the pimp, who popped the top and drank half the bottle. When the pimp gave the bottle back to the deacon, he was surprised when the deacon put the cap back on the bottle. "Aren't you going to celebrate the goodness of the Lord?" he asked with slurred speech. The deacon said, "No, I think I'll wait for the police; then I'll celebrate." - In this case, the blessing was in the unopened wine bottle.

Even in our sickness and times of trial, the faithful know that God is still operating. That's why believers never lose hope even when misfortune comes because, we know that God is working the unfortunate circumstance in a way that will accomplish his purpose for our lives. That's a good thing. That's why the faithful are rarely among those who commit suicide, suffer sustained periods of depression or resort to alcohol or drug abuse when things go wrong. We endure the moment, knowing that God is working the situation, and we will arise as pure gold.

As Christians, we are assured that God will be there for us in any situation. He will tell us what to do and what not to do; he will open doors and shut them; he will make things happen or stop them from happening, but always to our advantage. We won't see him when it's done, but we will know after it is done that God made it happen.

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Exposition

This text focuses on Job's response to the unfortunate circumstances in his life, expressing faith that his situation would be reversed, and he would come through as pure gold.

Job was a righteous man who faithfully subscribed to the Mosaic law and lived by its principles every day. The Bible describes Job as a righteous man who never once broke God's law, but fell on hard times because of his obedience and faithfulness. His faithfulness was tested by God to show Satan that regardless to what misfortunes came his way, he would not forsake the faith and remain obedient to God.

Satan caused numerous difficulties in Job's life including the loss of his health, wealth and near destruction of his entire family. Despite this growing number of frustrating and debilitating circumstances, Job hung to his faith and maintained that he would not abandon his faith or drop to the level of cursing God or questioning his goodness.

In this text, Job told three friends who sat with him that he has looked left and right, high and low and cannot see God's hand in his situation, but he knew he was aware

of his condition and probably involved in it in some way. He said, “He knows the way that I take” or “He knows I am a good person, but when he finishes testing me, he’ll find that I will come through as pure gold.”

Job’s assurance that God is aware of his faith, lifestyle and commitment to his service, underscored the reason he felt assured that God would turn his situation.

In the end, God did just that. He turned his situation, and he came through as pure gold.

He did it, but we didn’t see him

There are many ways that God has moved on our behalf in the past and he will do the same in the months ahead.

HE PROVIDED FOR US: We did not see him do it, but we know it was God that provided for our essentials in the past year. Though we may have complained about some of our food, whether or not our clothing was fashionable, or the size or location of our homes; most of us would have to agree that God was faithful in providing us with all three. Even while God held back the demons of hell that were seeking to destroy us, he kept providing our essentials at the same time. Even in our faithless moments, it turns out that God was working, putting people and resources in our lives to help us respond to our problems. We don’t know how we stumbled upon the person who helped us, but we should have some idea. Was it by chance that you met the man, woman or group that responded to your need? Was it by chance that the opportunity you needed to keep from drowning in your troubles happened just as you needed it? Did the lifeline that kept you afloat throw itself or was there an unseen hand at the other end? If you look to the left or the right you may not see him, but no matter what the circumstance the faithful person encounters, God is in there somewhere, working it out to your advantage.

HE OPENED DOORS: We looked to the left and the right, we did not see him, but we know it was God who opened doors that had once been shut in our faces. Not only has God opened doors for us he has held them open long enough for us to get through and then closed them to keep our enemies from following. This is what he did for Israel crossing the Red Sea, he held back the waters long enough for them to get through and then closed it on those who were trying to destroy them. God has faithfully opened doors for us and given us opportunities for the abundant life. Look back over the last few years. Some of us have done more than just survived; we have improved our spirituality, financial condition, and family relations. Some expanded their boundaries last year by taking advantage of every opportunity God made available to grow both spiritually and materially. There are many who have experienced stronger family relationships in addition to other quality of life measures that cannot be ignored. We looked to the left and the right. We did not see him do it, but we know that God was in this thing, making it happen for us.

PROVIDED OUR SPIRITUAL SUPPORT: When our spiritual strength was at its lowest level, God lifted us. We did not see him, but we know he was in there somewhere

working things and talking to us directly in prayer and through people. We heard his voice in the sermons that were preached, the phone calls of friends, the scriptures we chose to read, and the songs that we heard. We didn't see God in the months after the death of a loved one, but we know he was there lifting us out of our depression and giving us new purpose. We didn't see God, when we suffered a setback and lost ground on our journey, but we know he was there, because he kept sending us so many messages to get up and try again. There are some families that have sunk to spiritual lows only to be renewed by the voice of God constantly speaking to them.

Isaiah said, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strenght, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, the shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint."

David said, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help,my help cometh from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth."

Maybe that's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other, has ever known."

He'll be there in the days ahead

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that just as we did not see God move on our behalf last year, but felt his actions, he will be there doing the same thing in the days ahead.

Whatever we might expect to face in the coming year, we should be encouraged to know that God is already in front of us, scouting out our future.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now! I also know that he's already ahead of me, making a way for true believers.

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!"

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as we are on the Lord's side! If we are on the Lord's side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is our bridge of troubled water!

The Lord protects us from our enemies from behind, but he opens doors ahead!

The Lord holds back the hell hounds of defeat, but he makes new possibilities for victory every day!

The Lord holds back the demons of destruction, but he unlocks new constructive opportunities along our way!

The Lord is the foundation of our hope for the future.

I heard the song writer declare, "The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion

is great in the world today. Persecutions may come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!"

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

We don't worry about the future because the God we serve is already ahead of us, it is to him that we say, "In thee oh Lord, do I put my trust."

That's why the song writer declared, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No.9720-King Day

When you have been to the Mountain Top

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 17, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan; 4. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. Deuteronomy 34:1;4

Introduction

What would happen if you were given a chance to get a peek into the future of your family? Suppose what you saw was encouraging and filled with hope? Such a vision would make all of your struggles and sacrifices worthwhile.

From time to time God pulls back the curtain of time and allows all of us to take a peek into the future; these glimpses provide a unique vantage point for us to see the ultimate end of our life work, much of which will be accomplished long after our lifetimes.

It's a mountaintop experience for a parent to see a child completing his/her professional or career training, launching a career, starting a family and standing unassisted. It is even more of a mountaintop experience for a grandparent to see the potential greatness in their grandchildren and great-grandchildren realized.

The higher the mountain view, the farther we see into the future. We also see the hills and valleys that lay between the Promised Land and the present. Atop the mountain, we see the challenging mountains of frustration and the valleys of despair that lie ahead for those that follow. However, the mountaintop view also gives us a chance to know that those whom we love will get there one day, even if we do not.

That's the nature and substance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last message to the world before being struck down by an assassin's bullet. He declared that he had been to the mountaintop and had seen the Promised Land.

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King addressed nearly 2000 people at a church in Memphis, Tennessee. These 2000 were like millions of others in America who were living through a storm of racial discrimination. They came to hear Dr. King speak despite a severe weather storm forecast for the area. They who were living through a storm, but came

in a storm, to learn whether the sun would shine for them after the storm!

As he concluded his address that night, Dr. King said,

"Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

The next day at 6:00 p.m., Dr. King was assassinated. According to the King family, and a subsequent civil trial in 1999, he was killed by agencies of the United States Government who pinned the killing on James Earl Ray.

The circumstances of his death are still debated even to this day, but his mountaintop view of the future was unquestioned and shared with every generation that has followed. His words echo across the decades, "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we as a people will get to the Promised Land."

As Christians, we can appreciate what it means to go to the mountaintop. We can also understand the power of knowing that despite the frustrations of the moment, "We as a people will get to the Promised Land."

Exposition

This text focuses on Moses as God shows him a view of the Promised Land from atop Mt. Nebo.

Mt. Nebo is part of a range of mountains of which Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Nebo are alternative names for the same location. God called Moses to the top Mt. Nebo and allow him to see the beauty of the land of promise.

From Mt. Nebo, Moses was able to see Gilead, Hermon, Tabor, Ebal, and Gerizim.

From Mt. Nebo, he could also see Jericho, the lower Jordan, and the Mt. of Olives.

From this panoramic view of the Promised Land Moses was reassured that the 40-year journey from Egypt to the River Jordan was not in vain. The land was truly as God had promised, flowing with opportunity, as freely as milk and honey.

Shortly, after Moses died, but the people marched on to enter the promised land and claim the promise of God.

Advantage of the view

There is a unique perspective that we gain when you have been to the mountaintop, it alters your behavior, changes, your views and inspires your hopes.

THE MOUNTAINTOP CAN CHANGE YOUR THINKING: Those who have been to the mountaintop have often changed their views, perspectives and life priorities. Some had had their views confirmed by what they experience. Abraham went to the

mountaintop and found out that God provides a ram in the bush. Elijah went to a mountain and challenged the prophets of Baal; there he learned that God is able to answer by fire. When Moses went to the mountaintop, he saw the fulfillment of God's promise.

The mountaintop can give such a clear perspective that it can change views. The most influential leader of Black Muslims in America was Malcolm X. He preached a doctrine of hate that characterized all whites as "blonde-haired blue-eyed devils." He believed that the problems of blacks in America could be solved if it were not for the blonde haired blue eyed devils. In 1964, he went on a trip to Mecca, the mountaintop experience for Muslims. There he saw Muslims of all races, hugging each other and referring to each other. He was astounded to see, brown Muslims from Idia, yellow Muslims from Asia, Black Muslims from Africa and from Europe there were blond haired-Blue eyed Muslims. This mountaintop view changed his opinion. He came back to American changed his name from Malcolm X to Shabazz and broke from the Nation of Islam. Soon after members of the Nation of Islam assassinated him. His mountaintop view however, was life changing.

When Malcolm returned, he called Martin Luther King so they could begin working together. He learned that our enemy is not determined by skin color, blonde hair or eye color. His assassination also showed that everyone black is not your friend. The assassinations of King and Malcolm X, both of whom had gone to the mountaintop, proved 1 Corinthians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Those who have been to the mountaintop see life from a different view.

THE VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN IS WORTH THE CLIMB. When Moses climbed to the top of Mt. Nebo, he was 120 years old; that had to be a tough climb for a 120-year-old man, climbing alone. It was nothing like the journey he had taken to reach the very brink of the Promised Land. He spent 40 years in Egypt as a ruler, another 40 years in the desert as a shepherd, and the last 40 years wandering in the wilderness with people who lost their faith. When he climbed Mt. Nebo for the final look, it was a monumental moment. Those of this generation who have peeked into the future from the mountaintop have traveled a long hard journey. Some are teachers, but they remembered teaching in all colored schools with second-hand books. Some are bus drivers, but they remember when we rode the back of those same buses. Some were being discriminated against and abused, as they climbed to the top of their own Mt. Nebo to see what God had in store for their families; they resolved that the view is worth the climb.

Despite the troubles and despair of their past and the fact that even today, there is trouble all around us, from the mountaintop, we can see a day coming when there will truly be peace on earth. There is hardship and difficulty now, but we can see the day coming when crying days will be over. The Word of God teaches us that, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Every believer should also say in his heart that God has great rewards in store for us. "Eye hath not seen nor has it entered into the hearts

of man" to even imagine the great things that lie ahead for us. The view from the mountaintop is worth the climb.

THE MOUNTAINTOP INSPIRES US TO GO FORWARD: The great advantage of the mountaintop experience is that it motivates us to go forward. In Matthew 17:1-9 Peter, James, and John were carried to a mountaintop where Jesus revealed himself to them. On the mountaintop, the text says his face was shining like the sun, and his clothes turned snow white. They saw Moses and Elijah there, too! It was an epiphany so great that they wanted to build altars on the mountaintop and stay there and worship. They were inspired to come down from the mountain and thrust their energy into kingdom building.

The same happened to every individual among us who has had an epiphany, a mountaintop moment, where God revealed himself to you. It's that moment when everything started to make sense, the dots connected and the jagged edges of life were made plain and smooth. When each of us felt the power of God moving in our lives, we were motivated to go forward, knowing that with God's help we could make it to our individual Promised Lands.

When Martin Luther King came down from the mountain, our people exploded with the enthusiasm of the dream and exploded with frustration after his assassination. Then the march toward the Promised Land resumed. We went to the ballot boxes across the nation and elected new faces to lead, broke the glass ceiling in corporate America, broke barriers in sports, education, and medicine, and in 2008 took another mountaintop look after electing an African-American president.

Even now, we still have not made it to the Promised Land. We are still impoverished and excluded from many areas of endeavor, but we are closer than we have ever been. The words of the old Negro Spiritual remain true because even though we have been to the mountaintop, there's still, "one more river to cross."

When Jesus went to the mountaintop

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that before grandmother and grandpa or even Martin Luther King went to the mountaintop, Jesus was there first, and he created a fountain on the mountain.

In the course of his short life on Earth, Jesus went to the mountaintop. When he was thirty years old, the devil carried him to a mountaintop and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and offered it to him, if he would just worship him. It was a unique perspective that allowed Jesus to say, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

In Matthew 5 Jesus preached on a mountain and blessed everyone who came to hear, proving that there is a blessing on the mountain.

In Matthew 28: Jesus gave the great commission on a mountain. That's where he told his disciples to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, son and Holy Ghost…"

However, Mark 15:22 tells us about another mountain. It says, They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Somebody called it Mt. Calvary.

On Calvary, Jesus created a fountain of blood that dripped from his wounded side. It was a fountain on the mountain.

This fountain was fed by the blood and water that ran from his pierced side as he hung on the cross.

The shedding of his blood was for the remission of our sin.

No wonder the songwriter wrote: "There is a fountain filled with blood that flows from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilty stains."

Those who have been to the mountaintop can witness to the fact that on the mountain, there is a fountain.

When you've been to the mountaintop, you know that, whatever you need, you can find it at the fountain of salvation.

This fountain can take the:

—WORST and turn it into the best

—LEAST and turn it into the most

—LOWEST and turn it into the highest

—MEANEST and turn it into the kindest

—POOREST and turn it into the richest

—SMALLEST and turn it into the biggest

Calvary is the name of this mountaintop

Calvary, it's a name we should never stop calling!

Calvary, it's a bell that should never stop tolling!

Calvary, it's an accomplishment that never needs repeating!

Calvary, it's an event that never must be forgotten!

Calvary, it's an altar that never rejects a lost soul!

This fountain on Calvary is the source of our salvation, without it, we cannot be saved.

Surely, they hung him out on an old rugged cross!

Surely, the blood flowed like a fountain on Calvary!

Surely, he died on Calvary!

But Early, Early Sunday morning

He rose up from the grave, with all power!

All power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9721- Inspiration

A little Cloud out of the Sea

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 24, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." 1 Kings 18:44

Introduction

Have you ever prayed for something, but it appeared that your prayer went unanswered? What was your response? Were you frustrated? Most of us don't like waiting; we have limited patience even though patience and faith go hand in hand. We especially frustrated if it seems that there is little or no activity.

The corporate world is aware of our impatience, so it tries to give us a sign that something is happening. If a company puts you on hold, they play music to entertain you until a response comes. If a call is taking an unusually long amount of time, there will probably be a recorded message that says, "All agents are helping other customers at the moment, we appreciate your call; our agent will be with you shortly." The idea is to give the customer some sign that the line is moving, and a response is on the way.

That works well for the corporate world, but suppose you are waiting on God? There are no recorded messages that an angel has been assigned our prayer request and will be with us shortly. No voice says you are believer number 11,236 and the estimated wait time is two years. It doesn't work that way when you are waiting on God!

The faithful know that the minute a prayer request is given, heaven begins to respond. We know this because Isaiah 65:24 says, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Any prayer that we pray is being answered before we finish speaking the words.

We should be patient continue to pray and look for small signs that prayers are being answered.

Believers who are frustrated with problems or heavy burdens should remember that God may seem slack or slow, but the answer to our prayer is already on the way. We cannot hurry him, but we should be patient. That's why Isaiah 40:31 says "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint."

Our quest in the faith is to learn to wait patiently, knowing that when we do, God will lead us in the right direction.

As Christians, we strive to become more patient by trusting God more and walking each day in faith. When we know God is working on our situation, we know that soon there will be a little cloud in the sky, and an abundance of blessings will follow!

Exposition

This Text focuses on the prophet Elijah as he demonstrates the power of faith in the midst of uncertain times.

King Ahab was villainous. He introduced the worship of Baal, a false God, into the land and drew the anger of God. Elijah warned him many times that God would punish the people for this sin.

The punishment came in the form of a drought. The heavens were shut up, and the land was scorched. There was no water, no crops or vegetation.

After confronting the false prophets with a mountaintop showdown, it became apparent to Ahab that the Prophets of Baal, all 400 of them, were no match for God. He repented and executed all of the false prophets. He asked God to forgive him and heal the land.

In response to Ahab's step toward repentance, Elijah prayed for rain. It was a short prayer, made in faith, probably repeated several times. Elijah had no doubt that it would be answered, in fact, the answer came the same day.

After Elijah had prayed, he told his servant to watch for a sign that a cloud had amassed. Five times the servant climbed to the top of the mountain and looked, but saw nothing. It appeared that God had not answered Elijah's prayer. Elijah continued praying and waiting. He never went to check for himself, because he knew God would respond, he simply sent his servant.

On the sixth trip up the mountain, the servant reported seeing a little cloud. It appeared no bigger than a man's hand.

Elijah told Ahab to return quickly and prepare for a downpour because the rain was coming. When he said this, all anyone saw in the sky was a little cloud.

Soon after the little cloud formed larger clouds. The winds blew, the thunder rolled, and the rain came in abundance, in answer to Elijah's prayer.

Faithful over Little Things

Believers should note that there is a blessing in patience, prayer, and faithfulness over little things.

PRAYER AND FAITH ARE INSEPARABLE: Elijah prayed for rain, but he did not do so in a void; he believed that God would respond to his prayer for rain because it had been promised that when Ahab repented the rain would return. Because God promised it, Elijah was comfortable that rain would come because rain was in his will. Today, when we pray for anything that is in the will of God, we can be assured it will be answered. Every pray we pray must seek the will of God to be done. If it's in God's will the response begins immediately; if it's not in God's will, but is selfish and will do

more harm to the kingdom than good; we can pray until we drop, but the selfish prayer gets nowhere. Jesus said when we pray we should say, "Thy will be done."

When we pray in the will of God, we have faith that our prayers will be answered in the way God is lining up the little clouds to give us rain. We should not demand a time, method or a specific response; only that God's will be done. God's answer may be right now, in a while or just plain no. He will respond. Our faith and our prayer should be inseparable because our God is a prayer answering God.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE LITTLE THINGS: When Elijah prayed, there was no immediate sign that his prayer was being answered. There was nothing that the eye could see. In spite of the absence of any sign, Elijah kept praying. Soon he saw a little sign. It's important to note that he did not underestimate the value of the little cloud; he acted on it. That's our lesson; don't fail to work on the little things because they are the precursors of things to come. There are hundreds of little moments, little blessings that God sends our way every week. They are signs. Don't underestimate the power of the little things. Howard Thurman once wrote that "Little things make big differences."

When you feel unappreciated, a little thank you from the right person is a sign of a change of heart.

When you have been the victim of anger and rudeness, a little kindness points to a softening spirit.

When you have been neglected, a little quality time with the one you love is a step in the right direction.

Little things can make the difference.

That applies to our relationship with God, too.

We should not ignore the little things because they may be God's first signs that help is on the way. Consider the man whose family had fallen on hard times. Laid off from his job and several months behind on his $50,000 mortgage, he was about to lose it all after working so hard to pay it down to a mere $50,000. He went to an empty field neighboring the house he built and sat by a tree and prayed. An old miser once had a house there, but it was blown away in a storm. He asked God for $50,000. He prayed fervently and sincerely.

When he opened his eyes, he saw a shiny penny laying on the ground. He picked it up and pocketed it. The next day he prayed again and found two pennies before he left. Every day the number of pennies he discovered in that vacant lot doubled: 2 pennies, 4, 16, 32, 64,128,256, 512, 1024, 2048. By the end of the month, the man and his family had searched the entire field. At the end of the month, they had collected $56,587.08. These pennies were from the fortune of the old miser who had collected a million dollars in pennies and stored them in sacks in his basement. The storm scattered them everywhere, but God showed him his answer by showing him a single penny.

The little things may be a sign from God; don't overlook them.

BELIEVE IN A BIG GOD AND EXPECT A BIG RESPONSE: Elijah's hope was not in the little cloud, he prayed for a thunderstorm. There many people who are jealous of believers because they prayed for something big and received their prayer request. We should not be envious of those who pray for thunderstorms of blessings when all

others can see is little clouds. We serve a big God. If we want to do big things in the kingdom, little clouds won't do, we need a down pouring of blessings.

God is not a man that he should fail, nor the Son of man that he should suffer defeat. Our God touches the hills, and they tremble; he touches the mountains and they smoke. If ye believe in the littleness of God, we will ask for little things and expect only little things. If we believe God is awesome, then we don't hesitate to ask for big dreams. The question for believers is not whether God can perform a work, but whether we believe God can do the job. People of faith are compelled to come before the throne of Grace with confidence that our God is omnipotent and has the power to help those who love and obey him.

There is no job God begins that he cannot finish. Neither is there a task too hard for him to complete. If this is true, then why are so many saints lacking? James 4:2 says, "….we have not because we ask not!"

All things are possible for our God. We also know that we cannot drink from the well of his power and favor unless we reach down our
cup in faith. Until we act in faith, there will always be some things God can do that won't be done because of our lack of faith and action.

Don't be discouraged because of little clouds

Finally, brothers and sisters, when we pray we should never give up hope because all we see is little clouds. The little clouds mean your help is on the way.

Our hope is not in the powers of this land. Our hope is not in the influence of government, the electoral system or the Congress of the United States.

Our hope is alive because we know the Lord is still on the throne.

This is hope and faith that we take into our prayer rooms. It is a hope that when we pray, God will answer and respond to our situation.

I heard a songwriter declare: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not
trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

"I have hope when trouble comes my way!"

Droughts may come, but I have hope!

Winds may blow, but I have hope! It's a beautiful hope that sets me free.

God expects for us to never give up hope.

As long as God is still on the throne, if you are:

—Praying for Rain, you need to get your umbrella ready!

—Praying for bread, you need to grease the pan!

—Praying for a job, you need to get your resume ready!

Why? Because God is able!

God is able to take our:

—TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs!

—MISFORTUNES and turn them into good fortunes!

—STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!

—DEFEATS and turn them into successes!

—SETBACKS and turn them into step ups!

We serve a God who is in the prayer answering business.

When Elijah sent his servant to the mountaintop he could not see anything, He did not see:

—A drop a moisture forming so little that it could not be noticed.

—On the second trip up, the drops of moisture had come together to form a small white dot, but it still could not be seen

—On the third trip up, the little dots had formed a small puff the size of a pencil, but it still could not be seen!

—On the fifth trip up, the little white puffs had come together to form something the size of a golf ball

—On the six trip up, the golf ball sized cloud puffs had come together to form white puffs the size of a man's hand

The multiplying was happening so fast that Elijah told Ahab, get ready, a for a shower of blessings!

If there is a problem in your family that you can't solve, take it to the Lord in prayer.

After you have prayed about it, step back and watch God work! Get ready for the blessings to come

God can take bad situations and turn them around!

God can take unemployed hands and help them find work!

God can take empty purses and filled them with blessings!

Call on Jesus!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Call on Jesus, who arose after three days and nights!

Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right!

No. 9722-Inspiration

Abounding in Hope

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 31, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Romans 15:13

Introduction

Are there times when you lose hope that what you desire will ever happen? These are the times that in spite of your best efforts you never seem to get closer to your goal. You are working hard each day, but your financial goal is still far away. Your child appears destined to miss the mark in spite of your best efforts. Your life seems to stray constantly off course although you are trying your best to take control? In times such as these, those who do not know God are tempted to throw up their hands and say, "What's the use?"

There are many faithful believers who have encountered these situations in their lives; how did they overcome them? How did they rebuild, regroup and start again? How did they keep going without throwing in the towel? How did they avoid drowning themselves in alcohol, using drugs, or losing themselves in a wasteful living? What's the secret?

Consider the grandmother who kept a little box tied with a pink ribbon under her bed for many years. Its contents were kept secret for nearly fifty years. When she died, the box was willed to her great granddaughter who opened it and found that it was filled with scores of small strips of paper with an event on one side and a Bible verse on the other. It was the story of her life struggles and how she overcame each by leaning on the word of God.

No one knew that after each of her painful experiences, she wrote a bible verse that brought her through that struggle and placed it in the box and retied the ribbon.

April 1, 1952-House burned; all lost. -2 Corinthians 4:8-9 "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

December 12, 1964-Plant closed lost job- Philippians 4:18, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

August 17, 1965-Funds out, savings gone. Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

June 10, 1975-Grandpa Died. Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from

their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The granddaughter's eyes filled with tears of joy and held the box close to her heart. Every time she ran into a struggle in her life she looked in Grandma's hope box and found a similar situation and a bible verse. Soon after, the granddaughter gave her life to Christ and began building her own hope box to remind her children and grandchildren, that in Christ, there is always hope.

What is hope? In the broadest sense, "hope" can have two definitions. In the secular context, hope refers to a feeling that "what we want to happen will happen." We are said to have "hope" as long as we have that feeling. Hope, in this context, is baseless because it offers no rational reason why something should occur other than the fact that we want it to happen. For some, this is unfounded optimism, a futile exercise that will yield nothing.

However, in the biblical context hope assumes a different character. To those who believe in the bible and trust in God, hope is confidence that what God has done for us in the past, guarantees that he can and will do similar acts in our future. Therefore, without God, hope is simply an empty feeling not supported by any evidence of probability. However, with God, hope is based on the confidence gained from past experiences.

As Christians, our hope is based on our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We know he will not ever leave us completely alone and even in our worst moments, he will make a way. The songwriter said it best, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's encouraging words to the Romans that they should expect improved situations in spite of difficult times.

Specifically writing to the Christians in Rome, but generally sending a message to all Christians, Paul said ,"The God of Hope" is urged to fill each person with joy and peace "in believing" or because they believe, to the point that they never lose hope, despite the adverse circumstances they endured.

That hope is sustained in every person through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The preponderance of scripture in both the old and the New Testaments suggests that clouds or adverse circumstances will come for the faithful, but while they may block the sun, they never stop the sun from shining.

We are encouraged to keep working in faith, with a positive spirit, because there is always a reason to keep going.

Three ways to abound

Today, three words should guide our thinking about hope: Abound, Unbound, and

Rebound. These three words help us to understand the full meaning of God's word for our life situation.

ABOUND: Paul told the Romans that peace and joy come from believing. People of faith "abound" in hope. When we think of abounding we think of bursting, overflowing, torrents, and plentiful. That means that regardless of the situation, we enter it bursting with hope that God will be God and take charge. No matter how troubling the news we receive, we receive it with an overflowing hope that God will handle the situation on our behalf. No matter how we scrap and save to make ends meet we do so with plenty of hope that God will respond to our crises. To abound in hope means to never run out of faith in God. It means to never stop trusting God. Those who continue to do good work and keep trusting God will abound. We should not be tempted in frustration to turn to criminal activity or sinful approaches. God will help the faithful to abound. Proverbs 28:20 says, "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." Those who abound never forget that God is able. 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." We never give up hope that God is able. There is no situation beyond his control outside of the reach of his power. As long as God is able, there is hope!

UNBOUND: Paul encouraged believers to abound in hope, but many cannot abound because they are not unbound from their faithless life before Christ. Before we came to Christ, we were dead to the life of faith and trust. We responded to every situation in survival mode: do whatever it takes to survive; right or wrong. We were wrapped up, tied up and tangled up in the world. Our new lives in Christ challenge us to have faith and to break every chain that binds us. This is what Tasha Cobb had in mind when she wrote the lyrics to her popular song, "There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain, break every chain!" To abound, we must break the chains that keep us from living the abundant life. When Lazarus arose, he was alive, but he stilled looked
dead. He was still tied wrap up and tied up as if he was dead. Jesus commanded that he be loosed or unbound. There are many today who have been given new spiritual life, but like Lazarus, they are stilled wrapped up in their grave clothes. They still frequent the people, places, and things that were associated with their dead faithless lives. They are still tangled up in the same doubts and fears that troubled them before they met the Lord. To abound, we must become unbound from our faithless life, so that we can have life and have it more abundantly.

R**EBOUND**: To rebound means to bounce back after hitting a hard surface. Paul said, bathe themselves in the hope that God will make a way out of no way. That means that even if we have fallen in life, we should not give up. Don't count yourself out; a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again: If We Fail We Should Get Up Again! There are many today who are frustrated because they have failed so many times in life. Some have already begun to characterize themselves as useless. Today we need to note that the failure is not in being knocked down, we only fail if we refuse to get

back up. Proverbs 24:16 says, " For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." That makes it abundantly clear that even good people will fall, slip, make mistakes, or make wrong turns in life. The fact that you have fallen does not mean that you are "bad people" it means that you are human. When we fall, that's when we dig deep into our spiritual reservoir and muster the courage necessary to stand up one more time. If we choose to throw in the towel, then life will count us out. We cannot abound unless we rebound.

Keep Holding on

We must remember no matter what the trial or the situation we should never lose hope because God is always with us.

There is no need for any believer to give up hope, so when we get to the end of our rope, we should just tie a knot and hold on.

Trusting in the Lord has proven to be the fuel that feeds our hope that despite the darkness of the moment, there's a bright side somewhere!

—Noah trusted the Lord, and he brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord, and he showed him the ram in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord, and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord, and he led Israel out of bondage!

—Daniel trusted the Lord, and he protected him in the Lion's Den!

—The Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord, and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

We should continue to place our hope in the Lord because when we are:

—Sad, the Lord will be our fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be our stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be our pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be our pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be our crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be our light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be our friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be our help.

I'm reminded of a family in the hill country that often walked a path over the hills and through the valley to visit relatives. One night the father walked with his wife and children along that beaten path, but a sudden fog appeared. No one could see anything because of the thick fog, but the father kept moving at the same pace. The son called out to his mother, "Mother shouldn't we slow down. We can't see where we're going." The mother said, "I can't see how to put one foot in front of the other myself. But your father has walked this trail since he was a boy. When he walked backed and forth to grandma's, he walked this path. When he carried wood for Aunt Carrie, he walked this trail. When he came home late at night from working in the fields, he walked this trail. No, son, I can't see anything, but your father knows the way, we'll just hold his hand!

You may not be able to see how to put one foot in front of the other, but your father

in heaven knows the way!

Hold to his hand! God's unchanging hand!

The same hand that was nailed to an old rugged cross!

Hold to his hand! He died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead!

Hold to his hand!

No. 9723-Inspiration

Living for the End Zone

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 7, 2016

SCRIPTURE: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14

Introduction

What's the goal of any game? The goal is to win! What determines whether a player or team wins depends on the nature of the game. The rules for hockey, Lacrosse, tennis and a plethora of other sports that differ on what it takes to win. In football, the goal is to get a ball into the end zone in ways that accumulate more points than the other player.

While millions of people will watch the Super Bowl, there are millions who still don't understand the game. The simplest description could be the one used by Pal Newell: Two teams, a ball, the end zone, get the ball to the end zone, and get it there more times than the other team."

There are lots of other things in between such as timeouts, penalties, plays, but they are secondary. The main things are two teams, one ball, and get to the end zone.

During the game, each team will make progress, suffer penalties, fumble and endure setbacks, but they keep going forward. The point is to gain as much yardage as possible and push towards the end zone.

As the game begins, there is a coin toss, and the referee shows each team their end zone. It's important to know your end zone because you don't want to score points for the other team. That can happen! In 1964 Jim Marshall, a defensive lineman of for the Minnesota Vikings picked up a fumbled ball and was turned around several times by the 49ers offense. Marshall, still dazzled, started running like Forest Gump. He ran 66 yards right into the other team's end zone. Today, Marshall is not remembered for playing 20 straight games. He's remembered for running to the wrong end zone.

In preparation for Super Bowl 50, the NFL groundskeepers made a mistake and painted the wrong end zone in Broncos colors instead of the Carolina Panthers. They had to repaint the end zones so that players wouldn't be confused.

Believers are in a contest as well; the prize is heaven. We must keep our eye on the right end zone and not use up all of our energy running, working, struggling, and reaching for the wrong end zone.

The Super Bowl is a game, but striving to get to heaven is a reality! It is not a game!

However, getting to our spiritual end zone has many similarities to getting to the end zone.

As Christians, we never take our eyes off the prize. The prize is to build the kingdom of God, live the Christian life, and make it to heaven one day. Every day we are Living for the End Zone.

Exposition

The text focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Church at Philippi. While imprisoned in Rome he wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi to tell them of the joy of serving the Lord and to encourage them to keep their minds focused on their purpose in life.

Paul's life was intensely focused on his goal. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments, which included his education and training, conversion on the Damascus road, three missionary journeys, and the conversions of countless numbers to the faith. It would have been very easy for him, especially considering his confinement and approaching death, to dwell on the past and continually reflect on his achievements. He chose to focus on the future rather than on the past.

Paul knew what he wanted and where he was going. His goal was the prize of the high calling of God. It did not lay in the praise of men, or the accumulation of worldly things. He concluded that he would not be dissuaded in his journey. In Romans 8:35 he asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he answered in verse 37,"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His goal in life was set, it was clear and in focus, he had decided to use his life as a witness to the power of God, and there would be no turning back.

Journey to the End Zone

Each believer is on a journey to the end zone. Each believer has his/her eye on the prize and should keep these three thoughts in mind.

THE DEVIL IS IN FRONT OF THE ENDZONE: The end zone of any football game is only 100 yards from end to end. That's only 300 feet. It would be easy to walk that far in a couple of minutes, with the exception that the devil stands between your team and the end zone. What should be an easy 100 yards becomes a virtual war! The journey to the end zone must be made yard by yard fighting your opposition every inch of the way. It's the same for believers who notice that every day the devil has a defense for every offensive play we execute. If we try to run straight up the middle and claim the victory, he tackles us. If we try to gain ground with ambitious passes or leaps of faith, he tries to intercept our hope. Even if we try handoffs and sneaks, Satan is there, too. We move forward but have to switch up our plays, change our strategy and keep our eyes on the end zone.

Satan is always busy devising ways to destroy or frustrate the people of God. We know this is true because the word of God in 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant;

because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

The devil is forming weapons against God's people even as we speak today. However, we have one assurance. It is the knowledge that no matter what plans, plots, schemes or weapons that Satan devises to use against us they cannot prevent the unfolding of the will of God. We are not intimidated by the devil in front of us; we are encouraged because we know that no weapon formed against us shall prosper! We are going for the end zone!

THE 12TH MAN OFTEN MAKES THE DIFFERENCE: In any football game there are only 11 people on a team, but teams such as the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos are noted for something unique; they both have the famous 12th man on the field, especially when they play at home. What is the 12th man? The home team fans are the 12th man. These fans will often create loud sounds or chant in hopes of distracting, demoralizing and confusing the opposing team while they have possession of the ball; or to persuade a referee to make a favorable decision. Noises are made by shouting, whistling, stomping and various other techniques by the 12th man.

Believers do the same thing! We support and encourage each other along the way! We see another saint moving toward the end zone, we cheer for them, praise them and make noise for them! When we see the enemy trying to defeat them, we make noise to defend them! That's the advantage of being part of a church fellowship! It's the 12th man experience! When you cry, you don't cry alone! When there is death, you don't go through it alone! When there is trouble, you don't go through your troubles alone. When you family achieves a victory, you don't celebrate alone! - Your church family becomes your 12th man!

But even greater than that, we know that we are never alone in our struggles. Even when we face the fires of life, God is there, too. When the Three Hebrew Boys were thrown into the fiery furnace, their enemies saw something miraculous! They were walking around in the fire, but there were not just three, but there were four. Daniel 3:25 says, "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

When we are moving toward our End Zone, it's great to have the 12 man composed of our friends in the faith, but when the going gets tough, we need the 4th man in the fire, who is the Son of God.

DANCING IN THE END ZONE: There's something exciting about making it to the end zone. It's so exciting that some who make it there perform little dances or show some other sign that they have achieved a goal. It's against the rules, but they do it anyway. They are relishing the victory! That's what believers do all the time! We live in the end zone! We live in our victory! Every day of our lives we are celebrating small victories; those moments when we know that the only way that we succeeded was because of the grace of God. It's what Barack and Michelle Obama felt when they danced at the Inaugural Ball. It's what Saints fans felt when they won the Super Bowl and danced down Bourbon Street. It's what David felt when he finally returned the Ark of the Covenant and danced nearly naked in the street.

Solomon, in his great wisdom, said in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that there is a time to mourn and a time to dance. This dance is a holy dance, one that is dedicated to God and responds to his goodness.

This is probably what songwriter Fred Hammond had in mind when he wrote, "When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon my heart, I will dance like David danced. "

The beauty of living in the end zone is that there is always a victory! There is always a reason to celebrate because we are "more than conquerors" through him who loves us!

The Prize

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must be aware that the goal of the Super Bowl is to win the ring, but the goal of spiritual end zone living is to receive the crown of life.

When the game is over, the winning team gets the right to pass out rings. Every player on the active staff gets a ring. The coaching staff, the entire front office, and the owners get rings. In many cases, the cheerleaders, the injured reserves, and even the water boys get a ring.

Who gets a ring is left to owners, but just about everybody who did anything for the team gets a ring.

Better than that, every believer has been promised a crown of righteousness.

It does not matter whether we are preachers in the pulpit or the person who drives the van.

It doesn't matter whether we:

—Taught a Sunday School Class, or worked with youth!

— Worked as an usher or cleaned the bathrooms!

— Sang songs of praise or swept the floors!

Every believer who keeps the faith will receive a crown of righteousness.

When a team comes out of a locker room and runs onto the field, it has one thing on its mind; making it to the end zone and winning the game.

So it is with every believer. Each day we step forward into the super bowl of life, we should do so with a positive attitude that is reflected in Philippians 4:13, I can do anything that strengthens me, through Christ.

We know that there is a possibility we may get hit or face difficulties, but we know that with God's help we can still make it to the end zone.

Every believer should suit up with the whole armor of God and remind himself: "On my way to the end zone I may:

— Get knocked down, but God will give me the strength to get up again!

— Fumble an opportunity, but God will still toss me another chance

On my way to the end zone, God will turn my:

—Disgrace into honor!

—Fear into Faith!

—Desperation into hope!

—Sorrow into Joy!

—Eternal Death into Eternal Life!

If a team makes it to the Super Bowl, it does not matter what position he played; the team members get a Super Bowl Ring; it is the symbol of their success.

To get that ring each player is willing to endure pain and punishment as they struggle
for inches and yards of turf to make touchdowns.

To get that ring they take hits, fall down and get back up again!

To get that ring they give everything they have with all of their hearts."

But there is a reward for end zone living that is greater than a Super Bowl ring.

It's what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

When we wear our crown, we'll sing a new song!

Victory is mine; Victory is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind Victory today is mine!

To guarantee that crown, Jesus was crucified on an old rugged cross!

There were no crowds cheering or bands playing!

There was no halftime show or million dollar commercials

When Jesus died out on Calvary, there was no two-minute warning!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb.

But early Sunday morning…..

No.9724-Love

Your Precious Love

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 14, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Introduction

Have you ever been in love? Have you ever been loved? Have you ever loved someone other than yourself? If you have then, you can appreciate the meaning of Valentine's Day. It is a day in which the world makes expressions of love in special ways. In 1958, Jerry Butler and the Impressions wrote a song that has lasted nearly half a century. It was entitled, "Your Precious Love" It's lyrics said, "Your precious love means more to me than any love could ever be…for as long as you are in love me, your love will grow wider, deeper than any sea." The simple words of the song were so thought provoking that it was recorded by Otis Redding.

Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell kept the title, but added their own twist: " To find a love like ours is rare these days 'Cause you've shown me happiness, yes, in so many ways I look in the mirror, and I'm glad to see Laughter in the eyes where tears used to be.

It is the essence of Romantic songs of the period because it spoke to the heart of the matter, "Your love means more to me than any love could ever be."

On Valentine's Day, the world celebrates love with a variety of expressions. There are millions of candy assortments sold on Valentine's Day. Roses and other assortments of flowers are in high demand. February 14th is actually a religious holiday in many Christians faiths, especially among Anglicans, Lutherans, and some Catholics. There were three St. Valentine's, including one Black one who was martyred in Africa. The one who's life seems to be replicated in legend was persecuted under the Roman Emperor Claudius. He was jailed for performing weddings for soldiers in love. While in prison he healed the jailer's daughter of blindness, and just before his death left her a note of kindness signed "Your Valentine." –People have been sending Valentine's ever since.

People have been giving Valentines for hundreds of years. Sometimes they are appeals to love and then there are appeals to makeup after breaking up. Consider the man who filed for a divorce against his wife. When he stormed out of the house, he said he would never come back again leaving his wife in tears. She had given him her all, and he broke her heart. Two weeks later, he was watching television, and he decided to write

her a message and send it to her email. He wrote her a very beautiful love letter that said, "Darling, I am so angry with myself. You have tried to love me, but I wouldn't love you back. You gave me your heart, and I broke it. You gave me your affections, and I trampled them. You gave me your love, and I squandered it. I now realize what a fool I have been. I can't sleep thinking about you. Being away from you is breaking my heart. I want to love you, like you have loved me and enjoy our life together as equal partners. Will you forgive me?" –With All my love, your husband. The wife was almost in tears until she read the last line. P.S. Congratulations on winning the $300 million lottery last week!-There's nothing like $300 million to make us feel like loving again.

Did you know that God has sent the world a Valentine? It's not in a red box; there are no hearts or "Roses are red and violets are blue" poem. As an expression of his love God sent the world his son and through him demonstrated his special love for us all.

As Christians, we should happily receive God's love and expressions of love. It is through Christ, God's Valentine to all of us that we have a chance for everlasting life.

Exposition

This text focuses on John's explanation of love from his Gospel account and his first epistle; that combined explain the nature of God's love.

In John 3 John says God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. It was an explanation of the nature of the Agape Love of God that is unconditional and does not require reciprocity.

In essence, God shows a love for the world that does not depend upon the world showing the same love to him. He scratched the world's back even if the world didn't or couldn't return the favor.

In his epistle, John makes it clear the God displays perfect love. Perfect love is unconditional, all-inclusive and expensive. John lays out some specifics about loving God. The specifics include various reasons why we should love God. He encourages believers to love each other as God has loved us; that is without expectation of a recompense for our acts of love and charity.

In verse 17 John encourages believers to love God with a perfect love that is unconditional. In verse 19, John expresses a reason we love God is because of his excellent character displayed when he decided to send His only begotten Son to die for our sins.

How God's love is Precious

There are three ways that God's love is precious to us:

FOUR DIMENSIONAL LOVE IS PRECIOUS: There are many people who love, but their love is one dimensional. We are often uncomfortable because we seek the other dimensions, but they are often missing, except when we feel the love of God. God's love has length. The length of God's love is infinite. It has no end. From the beginning of time to this very moment.

God has loved us every second and every hour. Our love is often limited. It usually wears out or runs out, but God's love never runs out.

God's love has breadth because he loves everybody everywhere. John declared that he loves the whole world, indicating that he loves everybody. Our love is often limited in this respect. There are some people we love, but others that we don't even want to love.

God's love has depth because he was willing to give up the glories of heaven to save the souls of a sinful world. We love, but sometimes our love has no depth. There are limits to how far we will go and what we will do for love. God's love has no limits.

God's love also has height. He wants to lift up those he loves. We often take out our frustrations on the ones we love and talk them down, but God wants to lift us up.

He came to lift us up!

He came to lift up a bowed down head!

He came to lift up a broken spirit!

He came to restore joy to a broken heart!

Four-dimensional love is truly, a precious love

LOVE IS PRECIOUS: God's love is unconditional. It goes beyond mere mutual respect and courtesy. When the world snubbed its nose at God and disobeyed his commandments and precepts, God's response was Love the world anyway. The world cursed God, and he made the sun rise everyday anyway! The world ignored him, but he put food on its tables every day! The world rejected God, but he continued to shower blessings upon it daily! There is no doubt God was angry with the world. Once, he became so angry that he flooded the earth with water. But his overall response to the world has been a "love." If we have someone who loves us unconditionally, that kind of love is precious.

LOVE WITH NO STRINGS IS PRECIOUS: Those who enter into a covenant relationship with God will find that he has no strings attached. All he wants from us is our obedience and faith. It's different than our secular relationships. If an offer seems to good to be true, it usually is just that-too good. So we take a wait and see attitude. We read the fine print and the details for the strings are often hidden in the small letters. But when God says, "I love" there are no strings attached! When the world invites us into a relationship, we proceed with caution, because invitations usually have hidden motives. But when the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." There are no strings attached.

God's words of love to us bold, but true. There is no need for us to take a wait and see attitude. When the Word says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"-There are no strings attached!

If there were strings attached to God's love, then most of us would never be blessed.

When God hangs out the sun each day, I'm glad there are no strings attached.

When God sends down the showers every month, I'm glad that it doesn't just rain on the worthy, because no one would receive any rain!

When God sends down blessings for mankind, I'm glad that he doesn't just bless those who deserve it, because none of us would receive anything!

When God says, "I love you!" there are no strings attached!

When Jesus healed the blind man, there were no strings attached!

When told the woman at the well all she had ever done, there were no strings attached!

When he raised Lazarus from the grave, there were no strings attached!

Love with no strings attached is a precious love!

Expressing Godly love

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must all recognizes that God loves us with a love that wider and deeper than the blue sea.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote "How do I love thee, let me count the ways. I love you to height, breadth and depth of my soul."

Maybe that's the way God loves us. What we know about God's love is that it is shown to us, even though we don't deserve it, every day of our lives. That's a precious love!

How does God love me love? Let me count the ways!

He loved me enough to wake me up this morning, and clothe me in my right mind!

He loved me enough to put food on my table!

He loved me enough to open doors that have been closed in my face!

He loved me enough to pick me up when I fell down!

On Valentine's Day those in love struggle to find ways to express their love that will be meaningful. Some give cards, candy, and gifts. Some make marriage proposals and compose sweet words on paper. Trying to find a way to demonstrate love gets to be a challenge.

We can only imagine what God must of have thought when He decided upon the ultimate way to demonstrate his love.

I could give them the stars, but soon the stars would stop twinkling!

I could give them the moon, but after a while, the moon would cease to shine!

I could give them the warmth of a summer day, but summers last only for short seasons and then comes the fall!

I could give them silver and gold, but there will come a time when they will lose their value!

I could set them afloat on the calm seas of life! But there will come a time when storms will rise!

I want to give them a message that will be with them always, even until the end of the world!

What did God decide to give? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life!

Jesus was the Son of God in the flesh. John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made

flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

He gave the world His only son!
He was wounded for our transgressions
He was bruised for our iniquities!
They whipped Him and tried Him all night long
They put a crown of thorns on His head!
They hung him up high and stretched him out wide!
He died out on Calvary, and they buried him in a borrowed tomb,
But early Sunday morning, he arose with all power in his hands!
He died to pay the price for our sins!
He arose to give us one more chance!
That's precious love!

No. 9725-Heritage

A Humble Woman in a Royal House

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 21, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house." Esther 5:1

Introduction

Have you ever fantasized about the life you'd live after you achieved the success you seek? Do you see a big house with a swimming pool? How many cars are in your future? Are there servants, vacations, travel? What about huge walk-in closets filled with the finest clothes, are they in that picture, too? Would your circle of friends change? Would you welcome your family to share in your success or would you avoid them?

As we get closer to our goals in life, the challenge is to maintain perspective.

There are many whose goal in life is to become a part of the upper crust. Upper crust is a kitchen terminology that refers to the fact that a great pie has a crust on the bottom and top. The lower crust keeps it all together and usually absorbs most of the heat. The upper crust is perfectly brown and is seen most often. Both are essential, but it's the top crust that gets all of the attention. If the whole concoction stays in the oven too long, it's the lower crust that gets burned, while the upper crust stays pretty. It's the bottom crust that's scraped and often lives a life that sticks to the pan, while the top crust, breaks away easily in flaky slices.

In life, the upper crust refers to those persons who get invitations to the fine parties, balls, and celebrations. These are the elite, aristocratic, the Illuminati, the crème' de la crème, royalty, and notables. The lower crust is the rest of us: The commoners, proletariats, working folks, and the have-nots.

Maintaining perspective means to remember no matter whether you are upper or lower, you are still just crust. The meat of the matter lies somewhere between the upper crust and the lower crust.

This was the lesson many slaves failed to learn. House slaves wore beautiful clothes and were treated well in many cases. Yard slaves worked close to the big house and could avoid the heat or cold in the comfort of shelters. The field slave worked in the fields

toiling in the sun. They had to keep their perspective, however, no matter how well the house slave dress; in one respect they were all the same, they were all slaves.

Our objective in life should be to get to the meat, not to be hung up on the crust. Keeping that perspective is what we often refer to as "Remembering where you come from."

Exposition

This text focuses on Esther, a humble Jewish woman who rose to become the queen of Persia and saved her people from destruction.

The story of Esther concerns a king called Ahasuerus, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great, who has married a young Jewish girl named Esther, a captive taken from the city of Jerusalem.

This text focuses on Esther as she is told that her rise to the throne of Persia was destined so that she could save her people from destruction.

Esther was a beautiful Jewish girl. She was bright, intelligent, and one of the most beautiful women of the land. However, she was a Jewess. She was part of a captured race that was a ward of the Persians. When Xerxes ordered a beauty pageant held from which he would select a wife, Esther entered, confident that despite her race, she could win and become queen of all Persia. She entered and won. In 476 B.C. she became queen of all Persia.

While on the throne she influenced the king to save the Jewish people from plots to destroy them. She arranged for another Jew, Mordecai, to move up and become the prime minister of the country. Their influence paved the way for the return of the Jews from exile. Hers is the story of a woman who never doubted that God could make things happen for her, despite her social circumstance. She achieved the impossible with her life but was not so absorbed with her success that she forgot her people.

She used her influence to raise others up and to help save her people from destruction.

Esther put on her royal apparel, stood in the king's presence and sat on the imperial throne, but she never forgot who she was or the plight of her people.

Raising a Generation

God is exalting an army of believers to respond to the cries of the masses. If we are rising, it is for a purpose. Job asked in Job 7:17, "What is man that thou should magnify him?" Psalm 144:3 asks, "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him?" Why am I being elevated on my job, in my family, and in the community? This is the reason that God magnifies the saints; so that we can reach back and help others.

GOD IS IN THE PLAN: The name of God is never mentioned in the Book of Esther, but every act of deed reflects his presence and influence. Esther's selection as the queen of Persia may have appeared to be by chance or luck, but God had a hand in that plan. Likewise, it may not seem that our advances are the result of God's influence; but

he has a hand in every decision that has been made to advance us. Unseen by the hand of man God has exalted many believers to positions that allow them to promote the building of his kingdom and provide spiritual help for those who follow him.

Often we cannot see God's hand, but there is no doubt that God's hand is in the plan.

Everything that happens has a reason and purpose, according to God's divine plan. A promotion, a raise in pay, an unexpected opportunity, does not come by chance; God has a hand in the plan. Just as Esther was not raised so she could wear beautiful clothes and sit on a throne and look good, neither are we raised just so that we can become "crust." God wants us to deal with the meat of our purpose.

God is doing things for us and to us for a reason!

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE CRUST: No one bakes a pie, just for the crust! The crust is an added touch, but it's the heart that matters. What mattered for Israel wasn't that Esther now lived in the palace and was able to wear fine clothes, what mattered is that she was now in a position to help them. What matters most to African-Americans is not so much that there is someone in the White House that looks like us, while that is great, it is important that someone is there who remembers that we don't have health care insurance or that crime is destroying our communities and is trying to do something about it! The photos of opulence, limousines, and fancy dinners is "crust!" We are concerned about getting to the heart of the problem. The meat of the matter is that 48 percent of nine million black families are headed by women, our fathers are disappearing, our homes are falling apart, and we have more black men in prison than we have in college.

If God lifts a single believer higher and puts them in a position as supervisor, teacher, owner, principal, pastor, foreman, elected official, head of household or public personality that is crust, but the challenge is to use the position to deal with the real problems that surround. Buying ourselves a bigger car, house, new suit, fishing boat or pole is crust. There's nothing wrong with a good crust, but everyone should take every opportunity they get to address the meat of the problem.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall was elevated to serve on the Supreme Court. He wasn't concerned with the crust of his achievement; he immediately worked to break down barriers for others of his race to achieve success as well. However, In 1991 Clarence Thomas, became the second black to be elevated to the Supreme Court. He became a lawyer thanks to affirmative action laws, but one of his first acts was to rule against affirmative action laws. In subsequent actions, he kicked away the ladder which helped him climb, making it harder for others to follow. His legacy will be that of a flaky crust while that of Marshall will be one of meat and substance for his people.

It's not about the crust it's about getting to the heart of the matter.

WHEN ITS WELL- DON'T FORGET: Queen Esther had the best opportunity a Jewish woman could expect, but she never forgot her heritage, she knew thousands needed her to remember. When the Butler was released from jail in Egypt, Joseph said to him in Genesis 40:14, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me

out of this house." It was only a plea from a desperate man! "Think on me when it shall be well with thee."

When you return to the King's palace...think on me!

When you wear clean changes of clothes...think on me!

When you eat well-prepared foods...think on me!

When you sleep on soft pillows at night...think on me!

When you rejoice with family and friends...think on me!

Today, "Joseph" is 46 percent of our employment age youth who can't find a job. I hear them say, "When it is well with thee, think on me."

Today,"Joseph" is 4 out of ten households headed by a woman in the absence of a father. I hear those struggling mothers say,"When it is well with thee, think on me."

"Joseph" is a growing percentage of children parenting children. I hear their newborn babies say, "When it is well with thee, think on me."

"Joseph" is thousands of poor families who keep warm by the sunlight in the day and nearly freeze at night. I hear their voices say, "When it is well with thee, think on me."

I'm so glad that I serve a God who will not forget me. Trials may come on every hand...but God will not forget me.

Tribulations may block my way...but God will not forget me!

Remember the Purpose

Finally, brothers and sisters, we have to bear in mind that our purpose on this earth is to build the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In bondage, Israel cried out to God to remember their oppression, and he sent them Moses.

In subjugation, they cried out to God to remember their captivity, and he sent them judges like Samson, Deborah, and Samuel.

In Exile, they cried out to God to remember their isolation, and he sent them words of hope and restoration from Daniel and Ezekiel.

In Hopelessness, we have cried out to God, and he has sent us Jesus.

Working through the daily affairs of mankind, Jesus is positioning believers all over the world to help bring the spirit of godliness into a pagan world.

We can't give up now!

We must roll up our sleeves and reach out to those who are lost, and don't even know they are lost; We can't give up now!

The task ahead will be frustrating and challenging, but we must remain committed to the journey of faith, We can't give up now!

Principals must lead their faculties to do more than help students pass standardized tests, but to go the extra mile it takes to break the chains! We can't give up now!

Teachers can't get weary. Churches can't get tired! Leaders must not get weary. We can't give up now!

Today every believer must remember that God is working through us to save a generation.

If you sing encouraging words in the choir, keep singing!

If you wash pots, mop floors and lick stamps, keep giving your service!

If you volunteer, work with the elderly or mentor youth, keep your hand tied to the winding chain!

Keep on walking! Keep on talking! You can't stop now!

Our cry is, Lord, remember me!

I hear God saying, In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

In the morning, ye shall see the glory of the Lord!

Hang on brothers and sisters, there is a new day coming!

In the morning, it won't matter whether you are black or white!

In the morning, it won't matter whether you are Hispanic, Asian or Native American.

In the morning, every mountain shall be made low.

In the morning, every valley shall be exalted! And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!

He started showing his grace over 2000 years ago!

On a hill called Calvary! He died, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the dead!

In the morning, we shall see His glory! Glory! Glory!

No. 9726-Inspiration

And God is Able

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 6, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:" 2 Corinthians 9:8

Introduction

Have you ever been faced with a difficulty that seemed impossible to conquer? If you are like most believers, you said a small prayer, took a deep breath and then said, "You can do this!"

The difficulties vary from person to person, but the response of the faithful is the same. What are some of the challenges?

For some, the challenge is to go back to school and complete the next level of their education. At this stage, it may mean trying to juggle a job and family concerns. They know it needs to be done, but years have passed making it a difficult task. There have been millions who have said a small prayer, took a deep breath and said, "I can do this!"

For others the challenge is to change careers; that requires learning a whole new set of skills. Changing jobs often means months of intense focus and sacrifice. It's a big challenge. However, there are millions who have said a small prayer, took a deep breath and then said, "I can do this!"

Still others face health challenges that will plunge them into the unknown but must be faced. The uncertainty of the unknown is unsettling, but dealing with it is something that they know must not be ignored. Like millions before them, they said a small prayer, took a deep breath and then said, "I can do this!'

Whether it's making one more step in physical therapy, improving a grade in school or taking the quality of a relationship to a higher level, believers all follow the route of faith: They go to God in prayer, take a deep breath, and then say to themselves, "I can do this."

What is that prayer? Is it a special rosary or select verse? For many people, it's a scripture prayer, such as Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want." For others it is Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth." For still others, it is Psalm 71:1, "In thee oh Lord do, I put my trust."

At the moment we face a difficult task we often forget about God's power. It's when

we have tried so many different ways to deal with our situation that nothing seems to work. It's then that we must pray that final prayer. What is it? It's only four words; that's why it's a short prayer. It's found in Mark 9. A Father had a son who was being torn apart by an evil spirit had come to his wit's end. He did not know what to do. His son tore his clothing, often went into fits, fell in the fire, and no one knew what to do. He asked Jesus for help, and Jesus responded in Mark 9:23: Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Having been reprimanded, in Mark 9:24 "The father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

At the moment that we doubt the power of God, that's when we say must that small prayer, "Help thou my unbelief," take a deep breath and say, "I can do this!"

When we have faith lapses, we forget for a moment that God is able to deal with every situation we face, no matter how it may seem at the time.

As Christians, we should constantly remind ourselves that nothing is impossible for our God. No matter how tall the mountain or deep the valley, God is able to make a way!

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he reminded the believers of Corinth that God is able to help them abound in every work.

The immediate circumstance of the text finds the apostle explaining the duty of the local church to respond to the needs of the poor. He pressed them in all earnestness to remember their duty to respond.

At the core of his response is his reminder to them not to be overly concerned about their inabilities, or to lose faith when it came to doing what needed to be done. He encouraged them to respond deliberately, bountifully, faithfully and boldly knowing that God's grace, which was the source of their strength would replenish them.

The verse begins with the word "And" which serves to connect the statement of faith in verse 8 with every situation that occurs.

There are three reminders in the text: All Grace, All-sufficiency and All things!"

The text addresses much more than the immediate circumstance of this specific passage but plants itself firmly into the circumstance of every believer at the same time.

In all situations, God is able to deal with it with all grace, and all sufficiency.

And God is Able Situations

Most of us face many uncertainties on a regular basis. These are "And God is able situations!" They are the points when we have tried our best, but concluded, and we need God to help us. When there is a crisis, trouble, despair or frustration, it's good for believers to remember the first four words of this text, "And God is able." - to handle this as well.

AND GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE A WAY: Often we can't see the way out of a problem,

but God can. We should remember that while we can't see a way; God makes a way for his own if we patiently wait for him to move. Consider the little girl who was taking her first train ride. Wide-eyed with fascination, she watched as telephone poles, cars, and farms whizzed by. When the train approached a river, she became frightened and cried out, "Mommy! The train is going into the river!" But a bridge carried it across to the other side. Later, as the train sped toward a mountain, the child again called out in fear, "Mommy, we are going to run into that mountain!" But a tunnel at its base let the speeding train pass through. "Oh," said the youngster, "someone must have gone ahead and made a way for us."

That's what God does for every believer. He runs ahead of us and makes a way. All we can see right now is the mountain, but he's cutting tunnels just high enough for us to get through.

When faced with a mountain, say a prayer, take a breath and say, "I can do this! God is able!"

AND GOD IS ABLE TO RESTORE LOST HOPE: There are many men and women today who are throwing up their hands in defeat, resolved that they are a lost cause. The defeated need the church. The defeated need to know that God is able to respond to their needs. When they feel that God does not know or care about their situation, they lose hope.

Parents who have talked to and chastised wayward children with little or no visible effect have dropped their heads and dismissed them as reluctant lost causes.

Many marriages have ended in the divorce courts because husbands and wives, frustrated with the presence of uncomfortable symptoms, have thrown up their hands in defeat. They have dismissed their sacred vows as a lost cause.

Many men and women who have been living on the wrong side of the right track take a low opinion of themselves and think because they are not, did not, and could not, that they cannot, will not and should not ..be anything less than a failure and have dismissed themselves as a lost cause.

Somebody within the sound of my voice thinks he or she is a lost cause. Somebody feels that his or her life is in such a shambles that they are beyond the reach of the mercies of God.

Today the word of God reminds us that there is no reason to lose hope because God is still on the throne.

As long as God is still on the throne, there is no reason to lose hope because there is no despair that God cannot console, no problem he can't solve and no depression he cannot relieve.

If you have lost hope that your efforts will ever change your situation, say a small prayer, take a breath, and then say, "I can do this, God is able!"

AND GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS: Paul told the Corinthians to trust God because his grace was all sufficient for all things. The key component is for us to continue to believe. In that respect we must remember:

1. If we believe, we can rise to achieve our potential. It doesn't matter whether you are born in a poor rural area to poor parents, if you believe, you can rise to your

potential. Too many today fail to realize their potential because they do not believe it is possible. Like the prodigal son, they waste their lives in riotous living. Yet, there are believers who constantly sing the same tune, ”Reach high, never give up! All things are possible if you only believe!”

2. If we believe, we can have peace in our lives. There is something about faith in God that gives a believer a sense of peace and security in hard times. No matter what obstacle they face; It doesn’t matter how strong the winds blow or how hard the winds assail, they sing mightily, “My Soul is anchored in the Lord.” Those who want peace must begin by trusting in the Lord in every situation. Whatever obstacle you face, say a little prayer, take a deep breath and say, “I got this, God is able!”

3. If we believe, we can have fruitful lives. Jesus told believers that he came that they might have life and have it more abundantly. Those who believe truly live abundant lives; they are fruitful, productive and meaningful well into their senior years. Such faith in the promises of God helps those who are down to have jolly spirits even in their infirmities and continue to rebound after being knocked down.

We can’t be fruitful, happy, and joyous if we constantly, doubt God. The key to the abundant life is to trust God and never doubt him. The songwriter said, “If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!”

He’s able

Finally, brothers and sisters, our families are able to stand with hope in times of trouble because we know God has demonstrated his power so many times that we know, beyond a doubt, that he is able.

Our families are able to withstand the storms of life because we know that we serve a God that is able to speak to the winds and say “peace be still.”

The Three Hebrew Boys remind us what to say and do when our faith is tested. A decree had been issued by the king that declared that anyone who would not bow down to the statue erected by the King would face certain death. But they remembered the law of God which said, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me, and neither shall you bow before graven images.” They believed that God would always provide.

The day of decision came, the music was played from on high and all of Babylon bowed low in a pledge of allegiance to the Babylonian empire. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego held firm and refused to bow.

Their punishment was already declared! The fiery furnace was prepared-seven times hotter than usual! It consumed even the caretakers and the soldiers who stood near by! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace.

They were asked, “Will your God deliver you?” In a bold statement of faith, they said, “We don’t know whether he will save us from the flames, but we know our God is able!”

After a while, the King looked in and was astonished and asked “Did not we cast three men bound into the fire” But Lo, I see four men walking, and the fourth looks like

the son of God!

A Christian's faith is that no matter what comes, God is able to deliver us and all things will work for the good of them that love the Lord.

A Christian's faith says "My God is able."

If social conditions degenerate around us ... my God is able!

If family conditions worsen ... my God is able!

If financial crises impend ... my God is able!

Those who know the Lord can testify that God is able to take our:

—BURDENS and lighten our load!

—PROBLEMS and help us find the answers!

—DARKNESS and turn it into light!

—WEAKNESSES and turn them into strengths!

—SET BACKS and turn them into come backs!

—STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!

He was able to pick me up and turn me around.

He was able to deliver me!

Who is this deliverer? Does anybody know his name?

His name is Jesus!

The mighty God!

Jesus, The Rose of Sharon!

Who died out on Calvary!

But early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

And he's able!

No.9727-Inspiration

What it takes to walk on water in the midst of a storm

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 13, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." Matthew 14:29-32

Introduction

Were you prepared for the storm? We heard the reports that a possible flood situation existed, but few people expected it to really happen. Some thought they were ready. They had the candles and flashlights prepared, batteries were checked, generators were in place, cell phones were charged, gas tanks were filled, sandbags were secured along with supplies of food and water. The wait began.

It began in drips and suddenly in downpours. No hurricane. No tornado. No 100 mph wind gales. Very few trees fell, or power poles snapped. It was rain that would not stop. It was ten inches, 12 inches, and up to 20 inches as drainage canals and basins filled and the waters began their slow creep into yards, driveways, and into living rooms and bedrooms, covering cars and flooding streets.

We knew it was something strange because the news reported that the Ouachita River at Sterlington was flowing backward for a time! In 2012 during Hurricane Isaac, the Mississippi River flowed backward for a day. In 2005, it did the same thing with Hurricane Katrina. However, this was not the Mississippi, and there was no hurricane or tornado. That's when the faithful realized that something happened in our community that had biblical implications because in Psalm 114:3,5 it says when God moved to free Israel from the sea opened and the Jordan River flowed backward. Verse 7 says, "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord…"

What do the faithful do? We do whatever God commands! It's like the neighbor in the old Bill Cosby routine about Noah's Ark. The neighbor asked Noah, "What's

that you building?" Noah answered, "An Ark." The neighbor asked, "What's it for?" Noah answered, "Can't tell you!" The neighbor asked, "Can't you give me a hint?" - Noah said, "How long can you tread water?"

We can't tread water long, but we serve a God who can walk on water, speak to the wind and waves and roll back rivers. When storms come, if we keep the faith he can help us to walk on water, too. He can walk us safely to the other side. Most of us didn't get flood insurance, but we have flood assurance. That's the assurance we received in his promise, that even in storms, he will never leave us alone.

As Christians, we face every storm that confronts us with the confidence that although we may be inconvenienced, we should hold on, because after the storm the sun will shine! God is good, all the time!

Exposition

There are three accounts of this miraculous event in the gospels. In Matthew, Mark, and John we are told that Jesus sent his disciples away while he stayed to meditate. He went into a mountain to pray. When he returned, he looked out in the middle of the sea and watched the disciples toiling against one of the storms that often developed suddenly in the area.

The disciples had toiled for nearly seven hours in the storm and had only made it midway through the waters. They were trying to follow Jesus' command to go to the other side, but the winds raged. Their boat, no doubt took on water. In a matter of seconds, Jesus came to them, walking on water. They saw him and, at first, thought he was a ghost.

Matthew adds a detail that the other two accounts omitted. As the winds raged and water began to fill the deck of their boat, Peter asked to meet Jesus on the water and was invited to step out and meet him. As the wind continued to rage and waters gurgled, Peter stepped from the boat intently staring at Jesus. He took a few steps and then began to sink. When Peter stepped from the boat he actually "walked on water." While the storm raged he walked, but at some point, his faith broke, and he sank. He called out to Jesus, "Lord Save me." Jesus lifted him up, and the two of them walked on water as the storm raged and entered the boat. Once they were safe, the winds ceased.

Amidst the Storm

Today as we consider the realities of life there are three things this text should bring to our consideration:

THERE WAS A STORM: The disciples set out to cross the Sea of Galilee with the full knowledge that a storm could break out at any time. Jesus told them to go to the other side, so they obeyed him in faith. Why would they cast sail in the black of night on a sea they knew was unpredictable? They did so in faith. Today, people who are unaffected by storms and natural disasters often question why people live in California knowing there could be earthquakes? Why build a house in Florida knowing strong

winds come nearly every year? Why live in the deserts of Nevada knowing that water will be a serious problem? Why live on a mountainside when there is never a year without an avalanche? Why live in an area known for floods or mudslides? People go where God opens the opportunities for them. They build their lives in faith, but they also live every day fully aware that a storm may come at any time.

Storms come with thunder, lightning, and rising water. They are intimidating and frightful, especially when they come with hurricane force. Sometimes it's water and the wind that touches our families, but some face other storms.

The storm they face could be the loss of jobs.

The storm they face could be the sickness of breadwinners.

The storm they face could be family difficulties.

The storm they face could be serious marital problems.

The storm they face could be financial disasters.

When the storm began to rage, even though it was a black night without the light of a single star to shed light, he saw his disciples toiling against the wind and the water of their personal storm, and he came to them.

When we have watched our possession aimlessly in flood waters and see our cherished mementos floating underneath murky waters, that's the time for us to sing that old song, "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me."

That's the time we say, "Lord give me strength."

THERE WAS A PRAYER: While most accounts of this miracle come from Matthew Mark 6 adds an interesting detail. There is a part of verse 48 describes how Jesus came to them between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. (4th watch) walking on the sea, but the last six words are often overlooked. It says, "and would have passed by them." Jesus came to be near them, but only intervened in their situation when they called out to him. For seven hours they tried to deal with the wind and waters themselves, but they didn't call out to him. He saw them and went to them, but he only reached out to them when they called out to him. Verse 49 says, "they supposed it had been a spirit and cried out!"

Nothing happened until they cried out to him.

When storms come, winds blow, and waters rise, we toil through the night to bring in the ship, but often we can get so busy that we forget to cry out to the one person who can help us!

We called FEMA and were put on hold. We called 911, family members and everyone else that we could think of, but many people forgot to put Jesus on the list.

When we are toiling with our storms, Jesus is always near, but we should pray and humble ourselves before him as we ask for his grace. We have not because we ask not.

No wonder the songwriter wrote, "Pass me not oh gentle Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thy art calling, do not pass me by. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by."

THERE WAS A WALK: As the disciples dealt with the storm, Jesus came to them walking on water. Two people walked on water that night: Jesus and Peter.

When Jesus walked on water, it was, by all interpretations, an impossible feat. It was equally impossible when Peter walked on water for a few moments. Despite

its impossibility, the Bible record tells us that it happened. They did the impossible!

Life often presents us with impossible situations. These are the times when the odds appear stacked against them, and there is no way to succeed. Sometimes the situations are economically based.

Money problems worry many people. Their debts are increasing, and income is decreasing. Some have lost jobs or experienced investment losses. Many people think their finances are such a shambles that it is impossible to repair.

If all of the other problems we have are not enough, then comes a flood. Waters rise, homes are ruined, work days are lost, repair bills will be costly. It's the kind of problem that requires us to walk literally on the water to survive.

While we worry about the impossibility of our situations, we forget that with Christ, we can walk on water. We can stay on top of the situation. It may seem impossible, but we can do the impossible with God's help. Even though Peter is known for sinking when he tried to walk on water alone, we often fail to remember that when Christ pulled him from the water, he walked on water, holding to Christ's hand until he returned to the ship. The storm was still raging! The winds were still blowing! The danger still existed, but he walked on water, with his hand in the Master's hand!

Let Jesus Walk you to the boat

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when storms rise, let Jesus walk us back to the boat.

We often remember that Peter started to walk on water, took a few steps and began to sink. However, what most people forget is that while Peter walked on water once and sank that he was able to walk one more time!

The text records that Peter cried out to Jesus "Lord Save Me!" In response to his plea for help, Jesus took him by the hand and pulled him from the water which was rising and together they walked back to the boat.

When Peter put his hand back in Jesus' hand, he was able to walk on water again! Those who are sinking in the sea of life should call on Jesus!

Great things begin to happen when we call upon the name of Jesus!

At the name of Jesus:

-The wicked will cease from troubling

-The weary will be at rest

-Every knee shall bow

-Every tongue shall confess

When we call on Jesus, it doesn't matter how deep the water!

When we call on Jesus, it doesn't matter how ferocious the storm!

Jesus is able to quiet the storm and save the perishing soul!

Are you trying to keep your head above water? Call on Jesus

Are you trying to tread through the ocean of problems that beset you? Call on Jesus!

Are you trying to swim to shore but are surrounded by swirling suck holes that pull

you down? Call on Jesus!

He can and will rescue those who trust in him!

Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote: "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more. But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me!

Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help, love lifted me!

When God holds our hand, he will never let go.

When God holds our hands, even if we slip a little, he still holds on!

No wonder the old warriors sang, "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Hold my hand, Lord, while I try to take care of my family, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand, Lord, while I try to deal with the raging storms in my life, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand, Lord, while I try to make sense of the madness that surrounds me, I don't want to run this race alone!

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find myself slipping down the mountain of life, and I have to cry out to Lord, "Take my hand! Hold me in your everlasting arms!"

Lord, take my hand when I can't see my way!

Lord, take my hand when I can't turn to the right or the left!

Lord, take my hand when I'm confused and don't know what to do!

Lord, take my hand, when I'm weak and give me strength!

Lord, take my hand when I have fallen and help me up again!

When you find yourself sinking, and you can't get up, call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, a strong hand that will not let you down!

Jesus, a mother to the motherless!

Jesus, a shelter in a time of storm!

Call on Jesus, who reaches out to us with nail scarred hands!

Call on Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

When the storms of life are raging, reach out with the saints of old and say, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shalt I go!

Build your hopes on things eternal!

Hold to God's unchanging hand!

No. 9728- Communion

Trading our Thorns for His Crown!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 20, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, " Mark 15:17

Introduction

Does it sometimes seem that in spite of your best efforts, everything appears to go wrong? Are there times when you feel as if your best endeavors are fruitless, producing nothing but trouble when peace and prosperity are your goals? These are times when you spend all of your energy planting roses, and all you get are thorns.

Consider two men who walked by a flower garden daily. They admired the beautiful roses as they blossomed. In the middle of the flower garden was a thorn bush, which annually was the home of a bird's nest. The little hatchlings were a joy to see. However, one of the men complained daily because he thought it was an injustice by God. "I don't see how God, in all of his wisdom, would allow a bird's nest to be placed among all of these thorns. There are plenty of flowers in the garden, why there?" He complained. He felt God had made a mistake. For years the second man only smiled but never said anything.

Each spring the comments were the same. Why was there a bird's nest among the thorns? Finally, the complaining friend watching the curious smile on his friend's face asked, "Why do you smile each time I ask this question?" His friend said, "You complain because you do not see God's purpose. The mama bird is small and can wiggle between the twigs to get to her nest, but large animals that would attack her young or disturb her nest are protected by thorns. The nest was placed in a thorny situation for its own good; without it, the little bird would be open to attack and death would be sure to come."

Believers know that everything has a purpose, even the thorns! That's why we have learned to accept the thorns, know that we serve a God who specializes in turning thorns into crowns.

The crown of thorns that Jesus wore at his crucifixion was a symbol of his suffering for us. It was a forerunner of the crown he will receive later as King of Kings. Those

who faithfully follow him also expect to wear crowns similar to his. We expect to share his suffering and pain. We also expect to wear crowns of victory in heaven.

As Christians, we should rejoice because we know every thorn that grows up around our little life-nest will one day work to our advantage. “But we do know that all things, (even thorns), work together for good for those that love God those who are called according to his purpose.”

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ after he had been judged blameless by Pontius Pilate.

The angry crowd wanted Christ to die. Pilate thought if Christ were whipped and brought back to the crowd they would be satisfied, so he ordered the soldiers to beat him.

The soldiers had no particular malice against Jesus, but the Roman military system made men hard of heart. The occasion gave these foreign legionaries a much-enjoyed opportunity to show their contempt for the Jews by mocking Jesus as their King. It is not known which one of the many thorny plants of Palestine was used to form the Lord’s crown. Neither is it known where they acquired the purple robe. The robe was designed to give Jesus a false appearance of royalty, and it was likely some cast-off military coat or state garment of Pilate’s.

They platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head. A crown of straw, or rushes, would have been humiliation enough; but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had deserved that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited.

When the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the palace, they stripped him, put a scarlet robe on him, placed a plaited crown of thorns on his head, and put a reed in his hand (Matthew 27:28-29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2). They then kneeled before him and mocked him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3). Then they spat upon him and hit him on his head with the reed from his hand (Matthew 27:30; Mark 15:19) and struck him with their hands (John 19:3). He was then stripped of the robe, his own clothes put back on him and led away to be crucified.

For Christ, the final victory will come when he returns from heaven surrounded by the hosts of heaven to defeat Satan and destroy this system as we know it today. Revelation 19:12 says when he returns he will be wearing, not one crown, but many crowns. After returning with his many crowns, believers who endure will be given a crown as well.

Necessity of Thorns

As believers we must come to grip with three truths as we understand our relationship with the Lord:

THE DEVIL PLAITS AND GOD UNTWISTS THE PLAIT: Mark 15:17 says, “And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head,” They took the thorns and twisted them with the intent of bringing pain to Christ.

However, they did not know that God was taking every thorn and twisting it to make a crown of righteousness for Christ and for every believer that follows him.

They "Platted" thorns, but God is taking our thorns and platting them into our victory. It shows us that despite the fact that there are evil people and circumstances in the world that will bring thorns into every life, God is twisting the thorns they bring and turning it into something for your good.

Sometimes your good work is twisted by haters and critics. Sometimes your words are twisted in a way that brings you misery. Sometimes everything and everyone seems to work together to "Plat" your crown of thorns.

Look how the Sanhedrin council, Pontius Pilate, Herod, a lying witness, and a friend who denied him, all worked together to plat the thorns on his head.

He made the blind man see, but they gave him, a crown of thorns!

He made the lame man walk again, but they gave him, a crown of thorns!

He called Lazarus from the grave, but they gave Him a crown of thorns!

He fed the hungry and forgave men of their sins, but they gave Him a crown of thorns!

For all of His work and sacrifice, all He received was a crown of thorns to wear and an old rugged cross to bear!

We should not be naïve to believe that the devil leaves us alone because we become a Christian. He is platting our crown of thorns. He searches for ways to destroy us and to make life miserable.

Believers should remember if there are no thorns, there are no crowns. If there is no pain, there is no gain. Each time we are pricked by the thorns of life, we must remember that for every thorn the world plats in its crown, God plats another jewel our crown of life.

THORNS PROTECT US FROM DANGER: Thorns often serve a purpose we can't see; they protect us.

The mama rabbit built a home for her family of little ones in the middle of the briar patch. She put sticker bushes and thorns over the top and both sides of her little den that was pressed against a rock. Every animal that tried to get to her little babies found themselves blocked by a wall of thorns. No matter how tempting, predators left them alone. However, whenever the little ones were tempted to move outside of the safety of the den, the same thorns that kept predators out, kept them within the wall of safety. That's how God often uses our thorns to preserve us: They keep something things away from us, but they also keep us away from some things. In Psalm 121 (pSALM 121)The driving idea of the text is that God will preserve his people; He will not allow them to suffer utter defeat. Verses seven and eight use the word "Preserve" three times. Psalm 121:7-8: The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

The Hebrew word "Samar" used in each instance means, "to build a thorny hedge around." This is the truth we should remember: God builds a thorny hedge around his people to preserve them. A thorny hedge will keep evil influences

out, but the same thorns protect Israel from itself by keeping it "In." God protects "our going out" and our "coming in" both day and night. Thank God for the thorns!

THORNY CROWNS AND GOLDEN CROWNS GO TOGETHER: Believers should not expect to receive a golden crown of righteousness without enduring a thorny crown in this life. They are like soup and sandwich; they go together. The soldier cannot expect victory without the rigors of boot camp. The athlete cannot expect the glory of being champion without the pain of training and discipline.

In that same sense, thorny crowns precede golden crowns. Every life must have a testimony, and there can be no testimony without a test. Our thorns are our test. That's what Paul discovered when he asked God to remove what he called a thorn in his side. In fact, he asked God three times to remove the thorn, but God would not do so.

God's response to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for thee." When God says, "My Grace is sufficient" he means that there may be thorns, but he will give us blessings and assistance in proportion to our daily need and in proportion to our ability to handle it.

If we are burdened by the presence of troubles that frustrate our Christian journey we should hear the voice of God speaking to us saying "My Grace is sufficient" for thee!

"My Grace" can take the worse and turn it into the best!

"My Grace" can take the least and turn it into the most!

"My Grace" can take the lowest and turn it into the highest!

"My Grace" can take a prison and turn it into a paradise!

"My Grace" can take a shadow and turn it into sunshine!

"My Grace" is sufficient for the thorn of loneliness, no matter how pitiful they may seem!

"My Grace" is sufficient for the thorn of weakness, no matter how feeble their steps!

"My Grace" is sufficient for the thorn of weariness, no matter how exhausted their body!

"My Grace" is sufficient for the thorn of a sinful soul, for it brings it to salvation

"My Grace" is sufficient for the thorn of a mournful heart for it fills it with Joy."

No wonder the songwriter declared "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

Thorns into Crowns

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must rejoice when we think about the fact God will take every one of our thorns and turn them into crowns!

The crown of thorns Jesus wore was designed to be an emblem of shame, but God turned it around and made it a badge of honor.

Somebody can testify that our God is a turnaround God. He can take a bad thing and turn it into a good thing.

We serve a God who can take a bad thing like:

FAILURE and turn it into success; DEFEAT and turn it into victory!

SADNESS and turn it into gladness; SORROW and turn it into joy!

HATRED and turn it into love; LOSSES and turn them into gains!

TROUBLES and turn them into triumphs; BROKEN HEARTS and turn them into happy souls!

The crown that we plan to wear will be given to us by God himself and not man. That's what happened to Jesus. The soldiers gave him a crown of thorns. It was a crown made by man.

When man gives you a crown, it usually turns out to be a thorny crown.

When man gives you a crown it often turns out to be a:

-BURDEN, and not a blessing

-CANCER, and not a cure

-HINDRANCE, and not a help

-SORROW, and not a joy

-LOSS, and not a gain

-PAIN, and not a pleasure

-CONDEMNATION, and not a pardon

-TORMENT and not a treasure

They took Jesus, with a crown of thorns on his head, and marched him toward Calvary!

With a crown of thorns on his head, he who was:

-JUST suffered for the unjust; HOLY suffered for the unholy

-BEST suffered for the worst; HIGHEST suffered for the lowest

-DOCTOR suffered for the sick; LAMB suffered for the wolves

-MASTER suffered for the servants; KING suffered for the beggars

-PRINCE suffered for the paupers;

When they nailed him to the cross, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

When they pierce him in his side, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

When he dropped his head and died, he was wearing a crown of thorns!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

That Sunday morning he traded in the cross..

He traded in the crown of thorns…

And paid for our salvation!

No wonder the songwriter declared, "So I'll cherish the old rugged cross. Till my trophies, at last, I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown!

Because he lives, we have hope for tomorrow!

Because he lives, one of these old days…

We shall wear a crown!

No. 9729-Easter

Show and Tell

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 27, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And he saith unto them, be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. Mark 16:6-7

Introduction

Do you remember show and tell in school? That's the time when you had to bring something to show the class and tell about what you brought? There were even times when you had to bring a parent and show them off and then let them tell what they do. If mom was a police officer, she had to wear her uniform. A doctor had to have a white coat. If dad played football, he had to bring a helmet or a ball. The idea was to show rather than just tell.

I'm reminded of the teacher at a private school who asked each student to bring something for show and tell how it is associated with their faith. One boy said, "I'm Jewish, and this is a Star of David." The second said, "I'm Catholic, and this is a Crucifix." A third student said, "I'm Islamic, and this is the crescent moon." The last little boy stood up with a covered dish and said, "I'm Baptist and this is a bowl of fried chicken. The preacher said, "he died that we might live" -That was probably a show and tell everyone remembered!

In a greater sense, there are many people who doubt our dream! They laugh, even today when we speak about what we hope to accomplish in life; nod their heads in agreement, but they really doubt that what we dream about can ever happen. That's when we look at what God has done for us and prepare to show and tell.

There are many people who believe that the quest for their dream dies when they fail. What they don't know is that very few people succeed at anything the first time; they often fail.

Micheal Jordan is recognized as one of the greatest basketball players of all time, but many don't know that he was cut from his high school basketball team because he was not good enough!-We know him for thousands of points he made on his way to the hall of fame, we don't talk about the 9,000 shots that he missed. His life became a real life show and tell.

Oprah Winfrey is known for her famous acting and television shows. She's the first

black woman billionaire of record, but what many don't know is that Ophrah was fired from her first job as a T.V. reporter because they said she was "unfit for T.V."

Harland Sanders is known around the world today, not by name, but by his brand. When he came up with the idea of selling chicken with a Southern flavor and taste around the world, people laughed, and he was turned down 1009 times. No one is laughing now because Kentucky Fried Chicken is now sold around the world and is still "Finger Licking Good."

There are hundreds of people who are less famous than these who have similar testimonies. They were resurrected when everyone thought they were dead! They have something to show and a story to tell. What about your story? Look at where you are now? There's a good chance you were not voted the most likely to succeed, but you have something to show and a story to tell!

The world knocked you down, buried you and walked away, but God has a different ending for your story. He's giving all of us something to show and a story to tell.

That's the beauty of the Christian faith! When we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, we are also celebrating the resurrection of our faith. It's a faith that proclaims that no matter how the world kicks us around, nails us to the cross or buries us and tries to leave us for dead, we will rise again!

As Christians, our faith in God grows daily. Every time we look around we see another instance when God turned things around for us and placed our feet on solid ground. Today, we are living witnesses to his grace and saving power. We have something to show and a story to tell.

Exposition

This text focuses on the action of the women and the disciples on the morning of Christ's resurrection.

Christ was crucified and buried in a newly hewn tomb owned by Joseph. It was guarded by soldiers at the request of the religious leaders who feared that Christ's disciples would come by night and steal his body. After three days and nights Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome came early Sunday morning to anoint his body with spices. When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. They were told by and Angel that Christ was not present, but had risen from the dead as he promised.

They were invited to do three things, Behold, go and tell. The angels said "Behold the place where they laid him. " and then challenged them to go and tell the disciples what they saw.

When Peter and John heard the news, they had to see for themselves. After they saw the empty tomb, they ran to tell others that Christ had risen from the dead.

The two of them ran to tell the others what they had seen. They were excited. They were revived because the master had done as he said he would. He had risen from the dead.

Their job was to show and tell everyone they saw that a life that had been taken

and buried had been resurrected by the power of God!

When we testify

TESTIFY ABOUT WHAT'S NOT THERE: The angel told Mary, that he knew what she was looking for, Jesus of Nazareth, but he was not there. He is risen. It is significant that the angel would say he "is" risen instead of he arose. This meant that he arose, and he remains risen. Look when he said, Look where they laid him, it meant look where he used to be. The angel showed her where he had been laid saying, "Behold" and then she charged her to tell what she had seen.

We have the same task today, to say to the world "behold" where we were, and now look at us. The challenge that the angel gave was not to look at what was there, but Mary was challenged to witness what was NOT there.

What was not there was a crown of thorns, nail scarred hands, a wounded body. The testimony we give today is not about what things we have, but what we don't have anymore.

What's not there is a pessimistic attitude, a failed spirit, a negative view of life, a feeling of hopelessness and being alone..all of those are not there. When we testify, we don't testify about what we have, because anything we have can be lost with the snap of a finger or with one fire or flood. It's what's not there!

One songwriter said: "Look where he brought me from...He brought me out of darkness into the marvelous light, look where he brought me from!"

He brought me out of:

-Guilt into his forgiveness!

Foolishness into his truth!

-Shame into glory!

-Sin into salvation!

-Disgrace into amazing grace!

Behold, look at the person I used to be, but he is risen in me, and now I'm no longer the same.

THERE IS A "WHY" BEHIND EVERY "WHAT": Mary ran to tell the disciples that the grave was empty. That was the what of the matter, but what she didn't tell them is the why because she did not fully understand what she saw. John 20:2 says, "...They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him." She understood that the body was gone, but she did not understand why the tomb was empty. She thought someone had taken his body. In a similar sense, there are many people today who can show you what has happened to them in life, but have not fully apprehended the why? We've felt events in our lives with earthquake intensity: a death, a sickness or family crises. We know what happened, but we have not figured out the why.

Sometimes, we suspect the why, even if we don't want to admit it. When we've been disobedient to God's word, slack in our worship, Bible study and giving; we suspect the reason, but we are not quite sure. Like Mary, we quickly attach another reason other

than the obvious. Mary concluded that the religious leaders had stolen Christ's body. She did not consider the possibility of his resurrection from the dead. So, she ran to tell others the "what" but she did not report the "why."

When we show others the achievements we've made, don't forget to tell them the whys. If you received a diploma, promotion, career goal or have moved closer to your dream, that is the "what." However, we should remember that there is a why behind every what. Telling both the why and the what gives us a story to tell!

THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL: Those who have had some experience with the Lord have the most to tell. Of all of those who went to the Tomb on the morning of the resurrection, Peter was the one who actually went inside and saw the place where Jesus was laid; he also saw the folded clothes. The others could say they came to the tomb. Still, others could say they talked to the angel, but Peter was the first one able to say, I went inside and saw the folded clothes. He had the most to show and tell.

Those who have experienced Christ for themselves have the most to tell.

Lazarus had more to tell about Christ's life reviving ability than anyone else because he experienced it himself.

The woman at the well could speak of his compassion and forgiving spirit because she experienced it herself.

The man who sat by the pool for 38 years could testify to Christ's healing ability because he experienced it himself.

That's the way it is with anyone who steps into the embrace of the Savior; he leaves with something to show and tell.

Believers who walk righteously have a story to tell. We tell the story of mountains climbed and valleys traveled!

Believers can tell the story of answered prayer.

The man who walks righteously tells the story of salvation and redemption.

The woman who walks righteously is quick to testify that one day the Savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground."

I heard the songwriter declare, "Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same."

When we have experienced the personal touch of God in our lives, we can declare, "He touched me!"

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

Show and Tell

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must note that anyone who has had an experience with the Lord has a story to tell.

We are called by God to witness where we can do the best good! The greater your experience with the Lord, the more compelling the need to tell your story.

Jonah had a story to tell. He didn't want to tell it to the people of Ninevah, but he

had to tell the story!

Ezekiel had a story to tell. He had to tell the people that although they were dried up like dry bones in the valley, God could give them life again! He had to tell it because it was like fire shut up in his bones!

David had a story to tell. He had risen to lofty royal heights and had fallen to depths of despair, yet he declared "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want!"

The lame man had a story to tell! He had been sitting by the pool for 38 long years but always missed his chance until one day Jesus told him to "take up thy bed and walk!"

The woman at the well had a story to tell! She met a man who peered beneath the thin veneer of public perception and saw her soul. She ran through the city shouting "Come see a man who told me all about myself!"

I'm reminded of three daughters who were raised by their grandmother. They had become successful in life, but they never went to church or took religion seriously. They decided to buy their grandmother a gift for her 75th birthday. When she opened the box, the grandmother saw a beautiful and expensive reading bible. Its pages were made of the finest onion skin. It had a ribbon of pure silk for a page marker. Her name was engraved on the cover in 14 karat gold. Its cover was made from the smoothest calfskin. It was an expensive Bible that came with a hard leather carrying case speckled with the name "Holy Bible" on the outside in scores of small diamonds. That grandmother thanked her daughters for the gift, but a few hours later they saw her sitting in her chair reading her old family bible. The girls asked, "Why are you still reading that old Bible?" Grandma said, "When you were young, we didn't have much, but I opened this old Bible and read, "The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want! When your mama died of the plague, I read in this old Bible, "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. When the flood came in 51 and destroyed everything we had but this old Bible, its pages were opened to these words, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Grandma said, "Your Bible is pretty, but this bible has a story to tell. Your bible can't tell my story!"

I've got to tell the story of how we were down and out, and God picked us up and turned us around!

I've got to tell the story of how God healed our sick and opened the blind eyes of lost family members!

I've got to tell the story of how he planted our feet on solid ground
I've got to tell the story of Jesus!

. How he died out on Calvary!

How early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

I've got to tell somebody!

I've got to tell somebody!

No. 9730-Funeral

An Unexpected Departure

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2, 2016

SCRIPTURE: Watch ye therefore, because ye have not known in what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 24:42

Introduction

Wouldn't it be nice if life was like a strategic game of chess in which we, the players, could anticipate every possible eventuality? Just how could it work out? It might be that the car breaks down, but that's OK because you have a plan for that! The sink may clog, but that's OK, you have a plan for that, too. Even if you get injured, you plan for that. If there is an emergency involving a family member, you have a plan for that as well. It would be great if we could plan for every possible situation that could occur in your life! It would take hundreds of plans: What to do if the iron doesn't work, a storm knocks out the lights, there is flood water in your home, or God forbid, we lose our cell phone! It would take hundreds of plans to cover every situation.

We make plans incessantly because we don't like the unexpected. The reason we dislike the unexpected is that the aftermath of the "unexpected" is one of three things: surprise, astonishment or shock; and sometimes all three. We view life as an event we can plan so we anticipate the unexpected. We know about Murphy's Law that says anything that can go wrong will go wrong- at the worst possible moment. So we plan every detail of the wedding including pinning the ring to the tiny ring bearers pillow. We rehearse dramas and dance recitals repeatedly to cross every "t" and dot every "I" because we don't like the unexpected. The choir rehearses a song repeatedly because we don't like the unexpected!

We don't want to deal with the aftermath of something happening that we did not have in the plan: We don't want to be surprised, astonished or shocked. We prefer to be ready for everything!

No one is comfortable with the unexpected; that's what makes us so uncomfortable about the idea of death: "It involves the unexpected." If that's the case, then we should prepare ourselves so that we can know what to expect. There were two 85-year-old grandfathers whose grandchildren carried them to a baseball game. As the two, Joe and Doug, watched the game, Joe said, "You know how we have both loved baseball all our lives. Doug, you have to do me one favor. If you go before me, somehow you've

got to find a way to get a message to me to tell me if there's baseball in heaven. I want to keep going to games with my grandchildren. I don't like the unexpected. " Doug agreed that would be a good idea and asked Joe to do the same. As fate would have it, Doug passed on first. At midnight a couple of nights later, Joe heard a voice in his sleep whispering "Joe, Joe!" Joe sat up straight in his bed and said, "Doug, is that you?" Doug answered, "Yes, I want you to know I'm trying to keep our deal. I've got some good news and some bad news for you. The good news is that there IS baseball in heaven." Then Joe asked, "O.K. What's the bad news?" Doug said, "The bad news is that you're up to pitch next Tuesday!" Nobody likes the unexpected.

Unfortunately, life doesn't work as a chess game! We can't plan for every eventuality, anticipate every headache, broken fingernail or broken heart! Life is not like a page-turning novel that you can skip a few chapters and get to the good part. We have to flip through the chapters of our life story, one page at a time. Forrest Gump had it right, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get!

So what do we do? We plan for what matters in life, what matters for life and what matters afterlife. Everything else we leave in the hand of God and live each day as if it will be your last day.

As Christians, we know that we must live life one day at a time; doing all we can while we can, with the full knowledge that when he calls, we will be ready to answer!

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ's response to those who wanted to know the day and the hour of his return.

The New Testament paints a clear picture of what believers should expect when it comes to the last day. Jesus constantly told his disciples that they should be watchful because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

As the last days approaches, Jesus warned of signs in the heavens, in the weather, and in geo-global politics. He said there would be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in divers places, and many other signs as the end time approaches. Verse 31 says he will send his messengers to begin gathering together the chosen ones from all parts of the earth. He warned believers to watch and be ready because none would know the hour they would be called by God's messenger as time begins to wind up.

There are two types of departures in Scripture: The unexpected departure and the expected departure.

The expected departure was what Paul had in mind when he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:6, "The time of my departure is at hand." When there is an expected departure, there is time to say goodbye. Paul wrote letters from prison and said goodbye to the Christians in Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi. He had time to say goodbye to Timothy and say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He could say that because his was an expected departure.

However, this passage warns believers to be ready for an unexpected departure if they are among the chosen selected in the last days. Being prepared for the unexpected

departure is all over the New Testament. Mark 13:35 says "Watch ye therefore for you know not when the master of the house cometh." Luke 21:36 says "Watch ye therefore and pray always."

What it takes to be ready

While we can't anticipate every circumstance that might occur in our lives, there are three things we must know to be ready:

WHAT MATTERS IN LIFE: One of the great truths we learn in Christian homes is to discern what matters in life. That's what Godly parents teach their children; how to distinguish between what really matters in life and the superficial. The world teaches that what matters is money, riches, fame, power and glory. Without direction, they become the top priority of young lives, but godly parents share the teaching of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Let us hear the conclusion of the matter, fear God and obey his commandments; that is the whole duty of man." What matters in life is that we learn the will of God for our lives and pursue it with a passion. What matters in life is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, and temperance.

To be ready is to have learned these truths and applied them to your life in every respect.

WHAT MATTERS FOR LIFE: The second great task is to pursue what matter for life. There are many things that are needed for the good life. To live successfully in the society of men we need to learn the value of faith and family. There is no treasure richer than the riches that a woman discovers when she digs deep into the treasure of God's word and its rich reservoir of hope and inspiration. Faith in God matters. That's how Godly families have survived difficult times and overcome obstacles; it was their faith in God.

Second to our faith is our love of family. There can be no substitute for our love of family. It is our connection to our past and the gateway to our future. Family matters. In moments of happiness and joy; family matters. In moments of sickness, failure, and death; family matters. That's what has been taught in this family as it sought to prepare each member for what really matters in life: God and Family.

WHAT MATTERS AFTER LIFE: The most important element of being ready is to learn what matters after life on this earth. To be ready for what happens after life, we must confess our faith in God and Jesus Christ as our Savior. We must prepare for life in the world to come. Was this sister ready? Let's go down the checklist: Did she believe in Jesus Christ? Was she baptized for the remission of her sins? Did she live the life of her confession every day, at work, at school or home? Did she religiously study the Bible, attend worship and support her church? Was she prayed up?

Anyone who is confessed up, studied up, lifted him up and remained prayed up is ready for whatever comes, day or night seven days a week.

Prepare for the Unexpected

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that each of us must prepare for the unexpected.

Preparing for the unexpected means that every day of our lives we live ready if the messenger of God taps us on the shoulder.

- Seek first God's kingdom in your life and in the world.
- Make the best plans that you can.
- Humbly submit yourself to the Heavenly Father, saying, 'Your will be done.'
- Live one day at a time.
- Trust God to take care of everything else

Anyone who does these things can live their lives every day, not worried about tomorrow because their lives are ready.

That might have been what Dottie Peoples had in mind when she wrote these lyrics:

Get your house in order
Ooooh do it today
Get your house in order
Ooohhh do it right away
For Jesus is coming
No man knows where or when
Get your house in order
For He's coming back again

When you are ready, you don't worry about the unexpected, God will take care of that,

When you are ready, you go to work every day with a smile on your face!

When you are ready, you become a strong shoulder for your co-workers to lean on!

When you are ready, you laugh with family members, remember old times and enjoy grandchildren!

When you are ready, you go to birthday parties and smile and celebrate!

When we are ready we don't even think about the unexpected, we focus on "Expectation!"

God will open doors for us! Expectation!

God will never leave us alone! Expectation!

God will never put more on us than we can bear! Expectation!

When you are ready, you can live every minute of your life in anticipation of the expected!

I'm reminded of the mother who kept a suitcase beside the front door. It didn't matter what time of year, the suitcase always sat by the door. One day her grandchildren, puzzled by the suitcase at the door which sat there year after year, asked why it always sat by the door. The grandmother pulled the children together and said "I got one daughter in California. I got a son in Chicago. I got another daughter in New York. On any given day, I expect to get a phone call that says "mama I need you." When that call comes, whether it's morning, noon or midnight, I'm gonna be ready.

Everything I need is in that bag; I'm gonna be ready whenever the call comes!"

I don't know about you, but I believe this sister had her bags packed. She did not know the day or the hour, but one day the Messenger from the Lord tapped her on the shoulder and said, "The master needs you!"

I'm sorry family and friends, I hate to leave you so soon, but I have an unexpected departure!

I ain't got time to say goodbye!
I ain't got time for a parting hug!
I ain't got time for one final grandmotherly kiss!
Jesus, the one who died for me,
Jesus, the one who was buried in a borrowed tomb for me,
Jesus, the one who arose after three days and nights, for me,
Said, "I need you on the other side!"
When he calls me, I will answer!
I'll be somewhere listening for my name!

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On Saturday, March 26, 2016, Remona Robinson, received a message from heaven; "You're wanted on the other side." Her bags were packed; it was an unexpected departure.

No. 9731-Inspiration

Hair

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 3, 2016

SCRIPTURE: But even the hairs of your head are all numbered" Matthew 10:30; 'But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls." Luke 21:18-19.

Introduction

Have you ever had a bad hair day? Only people with no hair can answer no, but even people with no hair can have a bad day. A day when it seems that everything is unmanageable is usually described as a bad hair day!

Consider the man who walked into a bar, ordered a drink and stared into space. While he sat there, a big gang banger sat next to him and drank his drink. Immediately the man started crying. The gang banger said, "Cool it, bro, I was just kidding you man, I'll buy you another drink." Then the man said, "I'm having a very bad day. Nothing is going right. First, I overslept and was late for an important meeting, and my boss got mad and fired me. I left the building to get in my car, and I found out that it was stolen. I then got a cab to return home, and after I paid the cab driver, I found that I left my wallet in the cab. I got home only to find my wife was having an affair with the cable guy. I left home depressed and came to this bar. And now, when I was thinking about putting an end to my life, and then you show up and drank the poison!" - That's a bad hair day!

Sometimes we all have bad hair days. Things don't work the way they are designed. You curl it, and it falls down! You want it to fall down, and it curls up. You try to comb it, and you break the teeth out of your comb!

We have about 100,000 hair follicles on our heads. Every day we lose about a hundred or so follicles, naturally, but we don't worry about it because each one of the 100,000 follicles will grow back about 20 times, so we will have two million follicles over a lifetime. What's the big deal if we lose a hundred a day.

God gave us a lot of hair, in the beginning anyway, and we spend a lot of time dealing with our 100,000 follicles and worrying when we see some spots on our heads have used up their 20 refills. After we brush it around so many times and try to comb over the dead spots so many times, we just get a razor and cut it all off and do the bald thing!

Hair has a purpose. For example, the hair above the eyes prevents dust, dirt or liquids from just rolling down into the eyes. Some people have chosen to correct God's plan, so they have completely shaved their eyebrows and used a crayon to mark the place where there once was hair.

The hair inside the nostrils is for keeping stuff out of the nose.

The hair above the mouth is important to block unwanted matter from the mouth.The hair under our arms acts as a sponge and absorbs much of the body's toxicants and odors into one place to keep the entire body from smelling toxic.

But for most people the most important hair is the hair on the head.

Whenever that hair begins to thin, shrink, to gray or to whiten people begin to look for ways to replace their hair because for many people hair is also for beauty and people spend lots of money and time doing their hair. We curl it, gel it, wave it, weave it, extend it, color it, relax it, frizz it, highlight it or twist it. Some communities have hair colors that strain the rainbow: blue, purple, gold, blonde, green, red and every kind of mix under the sun.

Dealing with natural hair is big business: To clip it, wash it, curl it, frizz it, shape it and manage it white Americans spend about $55 billion a year.

But economist say when it comes to African-Americans the picture changes. $55 billion is just a drop in the bucket. Why? The industry expects African-Americans to spend $761 million on just regular products by 2017, but then comes the daddy of them all! In additional to the $55 billion in regular products we have to add our own cultural twists: We need weaves, extensions, and styling tools and appliances that are unique to us. Old folks are still using curlers and hot combs, and young folks have found a new profession, without a license, and that's sewing extensions into hair in creative ways. In 2009, Chris Rock produced a documentary called "Good Hair" and showed this new industry that's generating not $55 billion a year, but $500 billion a year.

There is so much money being made with hair and extensions that a thief could make more money robbing a hair store than robbing a bank! Hair stores have burglar bars, cameras, guard dogs and shot guns! For some, there is more gold in a hair store than there is gold in Fort Knox!

Since we have such a fixation on hair: shaping it, cutting it, buying it, curling it, weaving it, extending it and removing it, it's understandable why God would try to give us a message of hope and assurance that we might think about the next time we look in the mirror. "But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls." That's something for us to say when we sit in the barber's chair or have our head under a dryer. That's a thought to think as we comb and pin our hair looking in the mirror, "If I can be patient, not a hair on my head will perish. I will survive!"

As Christians, we are thankful that God is concerned about us to the point that he watches even the smallest details of our lives. When we think we are having "bad hair days," God is working those bad days to our good.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he gives assurances to believers that God is concerned about them, even to the smallest detail.

The disciples were being criticized and ostracized for following Jesus. There was a growing hatred as well. Jesus reassured them in Matthew 10:22 that "Ye shall be hated

of all men for my name's sakes: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." As they began to spread the word about the kingdom of God they were told to have no fear. In Matthew 10:26 he said, "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

Jesus said there is not one sparrow that falls to the ground that God is not aware of its condition. Followers, worried about their safety and security were reassured with Matthew 10:30, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Indicating that he knows even the smallest detail about our lives, and is concerned.

Since there are thousands of hair follicles on a person's head, the fact that each is numbered or categorized in heaven indicates that there is no detail about us that is so small that it escapes God's knowledge. He knows us from the hair follicles on our head, even to the soles of our feet. - And he cares.

Hair Lessons

In the text, Jesus used "hair to illustrate his concern for our lives, but throughout the Bible, there have been other "hair" metaphors.

HAIR HAS SYMBOLIZED ARROGANCE: Absalom was the favorite son of King Solomon, and Absalom loved his father until he was punished by his father for killing his half brother. What was once loved turned into hate as Absalom led a rebellion against his father. Absalom grew his hair long. It flowed in the wind when he rode his horse. It was his sense of pride. However, as he rebelled against his father, his own pride resulted in his death because his flowing hair was caught in tree branches, leaving him dangling in the air. He was defenseless and killed by his adversaries. His long, pretty hair symbolized his arrogance and led to his death.

HEAD OF GRAY HAIR IS BLESSED: A head full of white hair is said to be a blessing. While there are a few young people with a head full of white hair, it usually comes with age and experience. The believer with a full head of white hair is especially blessed. Isaiah received promises from God that even in his old age that he would still be the same God. For his commitment to serve as a prophet for him, God promised him that he would carry him in his youth, bear him in his infirmity and be with him when the hairs on his head had turned white. God promised Isaiah peace in his old age. God promised this faithful Servant and all others that he would be with him constantly as a source of peace, hope, and joy throughout the course of his life. Isaiah 46:4 says, "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." The goal of every believer is to live a life of peace with God and reach senior years knowing that God will carry you, bear you and deliver you from all evil.

HAIR SYMBOLIZED HUMILITY BEFORE GOD: In Luke 7:37 we see how a woman used her hair to show gratitude and humility to Christ. There was a supper at the house of Simon the Leper, just days before Jesus was to be crucified. The disciples had assembled themselves with Jesus to eat and fellowship. As they ate, a woman called

"Mary of Bethany" came into the room with an alabaster box or jar filled with expensive oils and she began to anoint the head of Jesus as they talked. The disciples instantly recognized the value of the oils and were disturbed that the oils were "wasted" on anointing Jesus' head when they could have been sold and used to expand their work, helping the poor, and supporting their ministry. Jesus immediately rebuked them for troubling the woman. He characterized her act as a "good work" that was done "for him." Any such work was never a waste of time, resources or energy. Her willingness to dry Jesus' feet with her hair was a sign of both humility and gratitude. Even today, we should be grateful for all that God has done for us and show our gratitude in every way possible.

God's Presence

Finally, brothers and sisters, hair has been shown as a reminder of God's presence.

Jesus told his disciples that God is fully aware of everything we need to the point of knowing when a sparrow falls or the number of hairs on our head.

The reason he said those words to his disciples was to reassure them that God would never abandon them or leave them alone; that he would always make a way.?

That means we need to stay in the presence of the Lord because that is the source of our strength.

Samson is known as the strongest man who ever lived. He attributed his great strength to the special presence of God in his life, symbolized by his Nazirite' vow. The Nazirite's vow meant he was never to cut his hair, drink wine, and avoid contact with dead things. These were symbols of his devotion to God. Samson broke two of his vows routinely: he loved to drink, and he killed a lot of people and thereby touched dead things. For many years, however, he refused to cut his hair because he believed it to be the source of his strength. A woman named Delilah romanced him and talked him out of his secret. She then cut his hair and the power of God left him. He was blinded and put in a Philistine prison. He prayed to God for forgiveness and restoration. When he put his hands on his head, he could feel his hair growing back!?

That's the way saints who have been on the wrong path feel when they come back to God, they can say in their hearts, "I can feel my hair growing back! I can see him moving in my life again."

If God leaves you, your:

-Happiness turns into sadness; Joy turns into sorrow!

-Victories become defeats; Strength turns into weakness!

-Home becomes a house; Husband is reduced to just another man!

-Upward climb becomes a downward fall!?

However, when we return to God and get close to him again, we feel our hair growing back. We can say God is taking my:

—Despair and turning it into delight; Failure and turning it into success

—Loneliness and turning it into friendship; Hatred and turning it into love!

—Shame and turning it into glory; sin and turning it into salvation!

I can feel my hair growing back!?

I hear Jesus saying, “I know how many hairs are on your head.”?

I know when you are worried about making ends!?

I know when you are crying about a sickness in your body!?

I know when you are distressed over the condition of your family!?

I know when you are feeling discouraged. When that happens just look up at the little sparrow and see how I hold it in the air.

That’s why the songwriter says, “Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me!

Our help doesn’t come from our hair, fancy cuts, or extensions or weaves!

Our help does not come from our college degrees!

Our help does not come from our technical training!

Our help does not come from our intellect or mental capacity!

Our help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and the earth!

Our help comes from the Son of God. His name is Jesus!

Jesus, Mary’s baby!

Jesus, Ezekiel’s wheel!

Jesus, My rock in a weary land

Jesus, My bridge over troubling water

Jesus, My doctor in a courtroom!

Jesus, Who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, arose from the dead!

His eye is on the sparrow and the hairs of my head, and I know he watches over me!

No. 9732-Inspiration

The Divine Baggage Handler

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 10, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Introduction

Have you ever seen a person who prepares for a journey, but requires several suitcases to make the move? You have seen them, they pack the whole house for a short trip and need overnight kits, garment bags, big suitcases, small ones and even a few more items stuffed into backpacks. For some, making a move means carrying a large amount of baggage.

There is a difference between baggage and luggage even though we often use the two terms interchangeably. Luggage refers to containers that store our baggage. Luggage can be full or empty, depending upon the quantity of the contents. Baggage is what is stored in the luggage. Luggage is what we use to carry our baggage.

In life, we usually refer to "baggage" as the total of life's experiences that we bring from one relationship into another. For example, a person that has experienced a failed marriage brings the memory or the baggage of that relationship into the next life episode. It may be the reason the person never marries again or assumes protective attitudes in the next marriage. There is emotional baggage, of those who have been hurt; spiritual baggage of those who have lost hope, and even financial baggage of those who often fail in financial matters. -When it comes to life, we usually refer to "baggage" in the negative because they represent failed experiences that are often painful and frustrating to remember.

Everyone has some amount of baggage. If you have traveled, you have perhaps seen two types of travelers. One is in the airport with large suitcases and is struggling to make it to a terminal. Another has an equal amount of baggage but has a small dolly upon which he or she rolls the suitcase. At first sight, it appears that the one whose suitcase is on wheels was the smart traveler until you see a third traveler who only carries a clothes bag and briefcase or purse. One had a heavy suitcase on wheels, but it was still heavy; it was just moved on wheels. At some point, the wheels came off and the suitcase became a heavy load again. Many handle their loads with grace and style as if they were rolling along on wheels, but they are, nevertheless, heavy loads. At some point, we reach a stairway or a point where we try to move higher and find that wheels

don't help and feel the weight of the load.

At the point that we are trying to move higher, but feel weighted down by heavy life baggage, is where our faith steps into the picture. Jesus speaks to each believer's heart and says, "Let me handle your luggage." He promises to make our luggage lighter by removing the baggage and making life much easier for us to bear.

As Christians, we are happy that the savior is a divine baggage handler, who gladly checks our baggage and helps us board the plane of life for a safe journey to the promised land.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus as he explains to his disciples that their burdens would be lighter if they gave them to him.

He told them to take his yoke upon them because His burden is light. The people knew what Jesus referred to because they were farmers. They knew that yokes were used by animals to pull wagons. Sometimes people placed yokes on their shoulders to help them carry large loads. The yokes often became heavy. Jesus applied the heavy yokes idea to people who tried to be happy by obeying the hundreds of items in the law without really knowing God. The Bible also refers to sin as a great yoke upon us too.

In both cases, Jesus asks every believer to let him give them a lighter load, but of course, it would mean they would have to take a chance on him and let go of the world.

Baggage Handlers

Believers who travel can understand the idea of carrying our burdens to the Lord if we can think of Jesus as the Divine Baggage handler who shows us:

WHAT TO PACK: There are many who try to travel and pack everything but the kitchen sink into their suitcases. Much of what we pack we do not need. Jesus shows us what to pack. We need those things that will help us live a fruitful life as Christians. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." What we need to pack is an abundance of prayer, faith, and hope. Anything else that we pack is a hindrance.

HOW TO PACK: If you've ever stood at an airport, you've probably seen poorly pack pieces of luggage. It's not the luggage had too much, it's that it had no order. There was so much stuff into the luggage that it bulged at the seams, ripping zippers and sticking out in all of the wrong places. The Divine Baggage Handler shows us how to live our lives "decently and in order." David said in the Psalms that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. If we live ordered lives, then it will be easier for us to move from one destination to the other.

HOW MUCH TO PACK: There are many who try to board a plane with luggage that is too heavy. Most airports have a 50-pound limit for a piece of luggage. To stay within this limit, we must know how much to pack. Today, there are many who are

carrying too much baggage! Past relationship worries are baggage! Baby Daddy-Baby Mama issues are baggage! The demons of our past that haunt us are baggage! All of this is being stuffed in our luggage. It's no wonder that Jesus says, "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) The Divine Baggage Handler will show us three other things not to pack:

GUILT: Some carry guilt with them every day. They made a mistake a while back, and they have never forgiven themselves. They blame themselves constantly. Even though they have prayed to God and he has forgiven them and washed away the guilt with his blood, they carry guilt around with them. It's a heavy load. Sometimes they are smiling and shaking hands and seem warm and carefree. That's because they have put their guilt on wheels, but they are still carrying it around.

We should travel lighter, leaving the guilt behind, especially in light of Hebrews 9:14 " How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Since Jesus has forgiven us for our mistakes, we should not make our load heavier!

FEARS: Some carry fear with them every day. They are afraid of failure. Afraid to take opportunities and to step out on faith. Fear consumes them every day. They cannot get away from it. From year to year, they live in fear of losing their job, getting demoted, not being accepted. They constantly live in fear! However, when God is on our side, we have nothing to fear from life. Psalm 118:6 "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Psalm 27:1 puts it this way: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

WORRIES: Perhaps the heaviest piece of luggage to carry around is worry. Worry is more than concern; it is over concern. Those who worry invent scenarios that may never happen. They muse over projected tragedy and they make a bad case even worse because of their intense worry.

Many get bags under the eyes, lose sleep, suffer deteriorating health and suffer stress attacks because they worry so much. They carry it around with them daily. Jesus addressing this subject made this response in Matthew 6:28-30 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

A songwriter worded it differently: "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? When Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. For his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

Take It To The Lord

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, as we journey from one destination to another in this life, we must check our baggage at the gate and leave them there.

There are many who have not learned to check the baggage because they do not trust the baggage handlers. They try to move to their next destination with a carryon; a small piece of luggage stuff full with a lot of baggage. Their goal is to make a lot of baggage fit into a small space.

There is a great amount of confidence that comes with trusting your bags to the right ramp agent because if he knows what he's doing, he'll see that your luggage gets where you are going.

You don't want to be going to the city, but your luggage which has your prayer is in the country!

You don't want to be going over here, but your luggage which has your faith is over there!

You don't want to be landing, but your luggage which contains your faith is taking off!

We like to fly airlines that have proven that the ramp agents know what they are doing!

That's why the old warriors sing, "I will trust in the Lord, I will trust in the Lord until I die." That's also why David declared, "In thee oh Lord do I put my trust."

When you leave your baggage with the Divine Baggage Handler, you can be sure that he will take care of your need. Leave it there don't try to take it with you.

That's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote: "If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word, how he feeds the little bird and take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!"

If you leave it there, he will take your:

-Loneliness and give you an everlasting comfort; Empty House and bless it to become a home

-Trial and give you strength to endure; Heartache and give you a love that will heal

-Sorrow and turn it into gladness; Weakness and turn it into strength

-Bowed down head and raise it up in joy!

If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there!

One final thing. When you get to your destination, you will go to the baggage claim area to pick up your luggage. There will be dozens of suitcases that are coming toward you on a conveyer belt. Many of them look just like yours, but be careful; you came to pick up your divinely packed luggage not someone else's baggage.

Your luggage was packed by the Divine Baggage Handler. It may look like someone else's on the outside, but yours is different!

Your luggage is filled with love, because all of the hate has been removed!

Your luggage is filled with hope, because all of the despair has been removed!

Your luggage is filled with joy, because all of the sadness has been removed!

Your luggage is filled with salvation because the stain of sin has been removed!

Your luggage is light, because the Devine Baggage Handler is carrying your load!

Who is the Divine Baggage Handler?

Isaiah 53:5 says "..he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

He knows about carrying baggage because one day over 2000 years ago, he took the baggage of all of the world on his shoulder and carried it up Golgotha's hill!

He knows about handling baggage, for he nailed it to an old rugged cross and died out on Calvary!

But he also knows how to get rid of baggage, because Early Sunday morning he rose up from the grave with all power in his baggage free hands!

Put your life in the hands of the Divine Baggage Handler…

He'll make everything all right!

No.9733-Inspiration

This means War

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 17, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places". Ephesians 6:12

Introduction

Have you ever thought what it means to be at war? Whenever a war is declared, the parties involved pursue a course of destruction to achieve a sometimes elusive end. Wars have been declared over women; such as the Trojan wars of the Greeks over Helen of Troy. Wars have been fought because of racial hatred such as the War that Adolph Hitler fought against the whole world. Wars have been fought over ideologies such as the U.S. Civil War, which was fought to test whether any state could secede from the union and pursue its own interests. Wars are also fought to protect our people from foreign invaders, such as World War II.

There have only been five formally declared wars in U.S. History: The War of 1812 against Britain, The Mexican-American War, The Spanish-American War and World Wars I and II. There have been others, but they were never formally declared by Congress, but were authorized conflicts and policing actions. On December the 8, 1941 the Congress of the United States Declared War with Japan, Germany, and Italy all in the same day.

War is serious business, but wars don't begin on national levels, they begin with individuals. The first time we see war is when children decide to fight, cut, beat and hurt each other. We see neighborhood gangs beat and hurt each other. There are sections of the country where war can be declared if a person wears the wrong colors while walking down the street or moves into the wrong section of the city.

We have fought race wars, and wars are being fought over the issue of gay rights, even today.

Wars are fought in families, fathers against sons and mothers against daughters. There are wars between in-laws. There are wars in sororities, fraternities, churches, and communities. There is a war going on today in the Republican Party where its leaders have declared war against its most popular presidential candidate, Donald Trump. There are wars between the rich and poor, the Northside and the Southside. The possibility of war is everywhere.

Where does war come from? The Bible says wars begin when there is spiritual wickedness in high places and when the hearts of men are controlled by what it calls the "rulers of darkness." It was this evil presence that made two brothers Cain and Abel fight each other. It is this same presence that pits husband against wife, and children against parents. It is a destructive presence whose ultimate goal is to cheat, kill and destroy.

Believers are at war with the forces of evil in this world. These are the forces that are breaking up our homes, crippling our race and destroying our communities. These are the forces that are putting drug dealers on our streets, guns in the hands of youth and locking away generations of our posterity.

Heaven has declared war on Satan, and every saint needs to become a soldier in the army of the Lord, trained and ready at a minute's notice to take up spiritual arms to defeat Satan before he defeats our families and the cause of Christ.

As Christians, we must declare war on Satan and bar him from our lives and our homes. The day he invades our lives is a day of infamy. The day he is defeated will be our day of victory!

Exposition

This text finds Paul writing to the church at Ephesus encouraging its members to prepare themselves to withstand the works of evil that may come upon them.

In the early church, believers were persecuted for their faith in Christ. The members were assaulted, killed for sport and otherwise ostracized for their belief in Jesus. Each person was encouraged to be sure in the faith and arm themselves with the power of God to withstand the evil attempts of the devil to destroy them.

Paul wanted to be sure that the Ephesians knew the nature of the evil one and how easy he could plunge himself into their affairs. To insure that they were not deceived, Paul reminded them that the evil one was not a flesh and blood person, but was spiritual in nature. As such he could influence individuals, powers, and the very governments that operate the nation; thus they were to be constantly on guard.

They were encouraged to put on the whole armor of God and then be prepared to withstand the evil one's influence.

Battles and wars

WARS HAVE MANY BATTLES: When Satan declares war on a Christian family, don't expect the war to end with a single showdown, but expect many confrontations with the evil one. Satan declares war on us if we decide to do what is right or stand for God. He begins to wage dozens of small battles that start with an ill feeling, misunderstanding, confusion, and even serious trouble. What caused the war? You tried to help someone, and they turned on you. You gave your honest opinion, and it wasn't received well. You refused to participate in an ungodly activity. You fell into financial trouble by no fault of your own. These are small battles that besiege believers every

day.

The word of God reminds us that these daily battles will occur because Satan brings them against us. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:12-13. Believers who are being attacked because of their attempts to do the right thing should remember the words of Jesus In Matthew 5:11-12, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. When you are trying to do right and meet frustration, you are in a godly battle!

Don’t wave the white flag! Stay in the battle. That battle is not yours, it’s the Lord’s!

WARS ARE COSTLY: Every war has a price. The U.S. spent $4 Trillion on World War II. The Gulf wars have cost an estimated $4.4 trillion as well and still climbing. Anytime someone declares war there will be a cost for those on the offense and the defense. When Satan declares war on our families, he gets in our families and causes us to go to war with each other and others, there is a cost. When a family, loses that battle of self-discipline there is a cost. There are families that have spent literally thousands of dollars on lawyers, bail bondsmen, appeals, and other legal costs. Crime does not pay; it literally costs thousands in lost opportunities and freedom. Husband and wives who cheat pay expensive costs in divorces, custody battles, and intra-family disputes. If families could recoup all of the money spent on family wars, many would be very close to becoming wealthy.

Jesus warned every believer to “count the cost.” Standing as a soldier for the Lord will be a dangerous and expensive venture, no person should join God’s army who is not willing to pay the ultimate price for the kingdom of God.

WARS HAVE CASUALTIES: Anytime a war is declared, there will be casualties. There will be many who will die on the battlefield and many others who will survive but will have given the better part of their lives to the conflict. However, there are some intangible casualties of war:

-HOPE is lost. When we are not at war, we can see hope for our family and our children. This hope is a living hope that only perishes and fades away under the threat of war. When we are at war with each other, the enemy closes the eyes of all of its soldiers so that they lose hope in the future. If there is no hope, many use dope and hang themselves with a variety of rope. Without hope, we forget that with Jesus there is always a bright side.

-JOY is lost. When we are at war, it is difficult to rejoice. A home that is at war is not a happy place. It is not joyous: family members don’t speak to each other or if they do it is only brief ceremonial comments. They don’t celebrate or interact with each other. There is no feeling of excitement that can be smothered by hard times or difficulties but can be suppressed to the point of death when there is war. Philippians 4:4 says “Rejoice in the Lord, always”- because joy is supposed to be ours.

-PEACE is lost during war. A home that is at war is not a peaceful place. There are many hurtful things said, insults are exchanged, threats and sometimes physical altercations. It is terrible for a home to be at war because one of the most precious components of the family, which is peace, disappears. This loss of peace extends to many aspects of our lives including our ability to feel safe and secure and protected from all harms. Most importantly we lose the peace of God. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the PEACE of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:6,7

We don't have to lose

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that just because the devil has declared war on us; doesn't mean that we have to lose, war must be declared on Satan and in Jesus' name claim the victory!

When Japan declared war on the United States, on December 7, 1941, it only took one day for the United States to declare war on Japan, Germany, Italy and everybody else that got in our way.

President Roosevelt told the nation: "As commander-in-chief of the army and navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense…No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory…...With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounding determination of our people - we will gain the inevitable triumph - so help us God…."

That should be the stand of every believer. If Satan declares war on your life of faith, you should declare war on the devil and everything associated with him and with an unwavering determination to be victorious.

We should declare war on the devil because, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." 2 Tim 1:7

We should declare war on the devil because the victory is promised, "1 Corinthians 15:57-58 "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

If the devil has stolen your peace and joy, you should rise up, strap on your armor and say, "This means war!"

If the devil has declared war on your marriage, don't give up, rise up and announce that the devil is a liar, your marriage will survive, "This means war!"

If the devil has sent winds and water to into your house to take away your happiness and joy, stand up and declare, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it, and the world can't take it away," -Devil, this means war!

If the devil has attacked your faith and stolen your praise, then remember Romans 8:38-39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our

Lord." Devil if you want to attack my faith, bring it on, because this means war!

When it comes to our family, Satan may as well get ready for war!

When it comes to our faith, Satan may as well get ready for war!

We declare war on hopelessness, helplessness, doubt, deceit and despair

We declare war because we serve a God who transforms our:

-BURDENS into blessings; CARES into comforts

-DEFEATS into delights; HEARTACHES into hallelujahs!

-PROBLEMS into praises; HOUSES into homes

-SORROWS into songs; SADNESS into gladness

We declare war and go into battle knowing that before the battle begins the victory is won! We have the joy of the Lord!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that no matter how tough the enemy, we will be the victor!

The joy of the Lord is knowing that weeping might endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!

The Joy of the Lord turns SADNESS into GLADNESS; WEAKNESS into strength; DEFEAT into victory!

The joy of the Lord is the assurance that storms may rise and winds may blow, but God is still on the throne!

That's why the songwriter declared, "Victory is mine, victory is mine, victory today is mine. I told Satan to get thee behind; victory today is mine!"

Over 2000 years Jesus shouldered an old rugged cross up Golgotha's hill to secure our reward

He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning, the ground began to shake, the stone rolled away, and heaven rejoiced as He arose from the grave with all power in his hand.

No. 9734-Inspiration

That Night the King could not Sleep

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 24, 2016

SCRIPTURE: On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. Esther 6:1

Introduction

Have you ever had a sleepless night? There are many reasons that we can't sleep that include: worry, illness, excitement, and distractions. Sometimes we can't sleep because of noises, lights, or cell phone message tones pinging throughout the night. Sometimes it's a bad mattress, wrong pillow or a partner that snores.

Some other reasons include:

* Jet lag. Air travel across time zones often causes brief bouts of insomnia.

* Working the night shift or long shifts. Individuals who work at night and those who work long shifts may have trouble adjusting their sleep habits.

* Medications. Insomnia can be a side effect of various medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.

* Overuse of caffeine and alcohol. Caffeine most commonly disrupts sleep. While a drink or two before bed may help a person relax, more than that can lead to fragmented sleep and wakefulness a few hours later.

Dumb Danny went to his doctor complaining that he could not sleep. Danny tried everything, but nothing seemed to work. He tried counting sheep, but he was so dumb he couldn't count past ten, so that didn't help. They told him to wait on the sandman, and he would sleep and dream, so he put bags of sand in his eyes, but that didn't work. Finally, Dumb Danny moved to a different neighborhood, but that caused a problem because his neighbor was in a band and they practice all night long. So Danny goes to his doctor and says "I cannot sleep every night because my neighbor's band makes so much loud noise. He lets me get no sleep at all." The doctor says, "Oh, no problem! It's easy! I'll give you something, and you'll have a good sleep. The next day, Dumb Danny goes to see the doctor again and complains, "I have taken the pills but still cannot sleep. The doctor says, "Oh, my God, those were not pills they were earplugs for your ears!"

While there are many reasons why we can't sleep, there are times when God keeps us awake. These are the times when, for his own purposes, he influences people and events. Matthew 27:19 tells us that one night Pilate's wife could not sleep because of a terrible nightmare she had about Jesus. She begged her husband to wash his hands of blame for this death. Genesis 20:6 tells how Abimelech woke up from a dream in which God revealed to him that he was about to unknowingly have relations with Abraham's wife whom he thought was Abraham's sister. Joseph was called from prison because the king had dreams that kept him awake at night and he wanted Joseph to interpret them. King Saul was haunted by evil spirits, and that kept him awake and threw him into fits and rages, and he called for David to play the harp for him. Sometimes God reveals his will for us in our sleep, or by not letting us sleep at all.

God is always looking out for us. Psalm 121 says, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." -That's reassuring.

As Christians, we always want to be aware of the ways that God speaks to us. When he speaks, we should hear him and be prepared to do his will.

Exposition

This text provides an example of how God arranges circumstances to benefit his purpose.

Haman hated Mordecai and planned to have him hanged. His plans had been laid meticulously, and a set of gallows was being constructed upon which he hoped to hang Mordecai the next morning. While Haman's plans were being put into place, God was also putting his plans together. That night God caused the king to discover that Mordecai was not an enemy of the king as Haman had told him. That night God troubled the king so that he could not sleep. He called for the chronicles to be brought and read to him. The Chronicles were a written journal of the activities, decisions, and actions of the King and other national heroes. As the chronicles were read to him, he learned that two of his doorkeepers or guards had planned to kill him, but the plan was wrecked by Mordecai. The king then asked whether or not any reward had been provided to Mordecai. When he learned that none had been provided the King prepared to reward him. Later, Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai.

The text reveals that God's purpose was to save his people, and Haman was trying to do the opposite, so the one person who could change the situation had to be an influence.

That night the king had drunk plenty of wine at his banquet, but he could not sleep.

That night the king the exhausted from all of his festivities, but he could not sleep.

Despite his best efforts and desires, that night the king could not sleep.

The king commanded a great army and stood as Lord over 127 provinces, but he could not command his eyes to close and get even a few minutes sleep; that night the king could not sleep because God kept him awake.

He was not aware that God kept him awake and caused him to take action that would save the Jewish people and destroy its biggest enemy at the same time.

When the unexplained happens, believers look for God's fingerprints in the action.

It is unexplained, why the king could not sleep that night.

It is unexplained, why the king, like all Persian kings, did not call for musicians to play soft music to put him to sleep.

It is unexplained, why the King did not call for poets to read him lovely poems until he dozed off.

It is unexplained, why the King did not call for his doctors to give him a potion to force his sleep.

When the unexplained begins to happen, the breadcrumb trail often leads back to the hand of God.

Believers should take comfort in knowing that God's will unfolds in subtle forms and unfolds in ways unseen long before we see the effect.

Dealing with the spirits

There is a spirit of faith and hope and a spirit of darkness in every person. As the dark side of others attempts to interrupt his will, God begins a quiet, unseen movement to accomplish his will in ways that are usually unnoticed.

The spirit of Haman is destructive: In each of us, there is a bit of Haman. This is the spirit in us that pushes us to seek preservation above everything else. Haman sought glory and recognition for himself. He did not want to wait for it but chose to force it to happen. All of his actions epitomized the idea of "Watch out for number one" and "Look out for me." There is a bit of Haman in each of us that is unsettled at the seemingly slow pace with which God unfolds his providence and blessing. As we watch the bold and brash of the world seem to get ahead, there is a voice inside that sometimes tempts us to join the growing caravan of friends and acquaintances who seem to prosper without waiting for God to open doors; they open them by their own ways. It's the woman who seeks to climb the corporate ladder through the wink of an eye or the appeal of an unbuttoned blouse. It's the employee who betrays his employer's trust and brings home for his own use that which has not been given.

It's the Haman in us that wants to resort to dirty tricks to win, deceit to be rewarded, and underhanded tactics to get ahead. It is the Haman in us that causes us to dig ditches for others to fall. It is the Haman in us that prompts a school child to bully another or an adult to stereotype other adults and shower them with hateful language. There is little difference between the bully on the playground and the bully in the workplace; the result is the same.

God is not pleased with the Haman side of our nature. In the Star Wars films, this Haman side is called the "Dark Side of the Force." Shakespeare refers to it as "The evil that men do." The great philosopher Flip Wilson said it another way: "The devil made me do it." Trying to figure it out Paul describes it as the side of us that makes us do what we don't want to do, go where we don't want to go and say what should not be said. He concluded that sin forced him to do wrong and in Romans 7:24 said, "Oh Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

His answer is Jesus. And that is the answer for each of us. The saving Grace of Christ is the only power able to subdue the Haman side of us. We must submit to him and give him a chance to save us from ourselves.

The spirit of Mordecai is constructive: There is a bit of Mordecai and Esther in each of us as well. This is a spirit that constantly speaks to us and guides us to do the will of God. The spirit of Mordecai in his us prompts us to do right when others do wrong, knowing that in the end, God will reward us, even if others can't or won't acknowledge the good that we do.

It is the spirit of Mordecai in us that responds to the threat against our righteous deeds with faith that in his own way, God will open ways that will save and revive the people.

The spirit of Mordecai reflects itself in our patient faith that, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as Eagles they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

It is the spirit of Mordecai in us that rests in the assurance that God will manipulate every situation so that "All things work to the good of them that love the Lord and who are the called according to his purpose."

We don't know when and we don't know how, but we know that God will make a way.

It was more than a simple sleepless night. The fact that the king couldn't sleep that night was not just a triviality. There is a lot behind why. In a similar way, every believer should know that when it comes to the kingdom of God, very little happens by chance; God is operating in the affairs of men to accomplish his will. Sometimes we see it in mighty ways such as the opening of the Red Sea or the fall of the walls of Jericho. When the earth stops its rotation so that the sun stands still, we know that's an event influenced by God. However, it's hard to see how God moving in the less obvious things, such as the man who could not sleep one night. That one event started a chain of events that ended with a blessing for Mordecai, Esther and the people of Israel. He could not sleep, a trivial thing. He ordered the chronicles to be read, a trivial thing. However, the fact that the reader selected to read about Mordecai's bravery was another trivial thing because there were hundreds of other records. When Haman's evil plans were discovered he went in to see the queen who was laying on her bed, and he tripped over something, we don't know what it was, but it was trivial, and he fell onto the bed with the queen just as the king walked in. Hours later Haman was dead. Whatever it was that tripped him up, and hastened his death.

Before you were able to get the blessing you received, look at the countless "little things" that God put into place to make it happen for you. He caused the right person to be in the right place just in time to bless you. It wasn't the sleepless night, itself that prompted the blessing, but God chose that means to set up a domino effect that would achieve the end that he desired.

A winning player is often praised for making a touchdown in a game, but the wise player knows that it was a series of other plays including blocks, handoffs, and sacrifices that made the touchdown possible. It didn't just happen; there were many unseen, seemingly trivial things that created the opportunity.

That's what God does for us. He creates the opportunity! We should praise God for the big blessing, but don't forget about all of the little things he did before the big blessing arrived.

God is working things out

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should be reminded that no matter what situation we face, as long as we are trying to be faithful to God, he is working things in our favor.

What he does may be as small as putting your name on the mind of someone who has a blessing to give.

It may be small as causing someone to lose a night's sleep over your condition.

We don't know how God plans to work it out, but we are confident that he has already begun to work it out for us.

God was constantly working things to our advantage.

Israel could not see God working in Egypt or at the Red Sea; they also found it hard to see him working in the wilderness. All some could see was the difficulty of their journey.

On the journey, they were blessed but couldn't see it.

They could not see how they wore the same clothes for 40 years but they never wore out.

They could not see how they were protected from their enemies despite their own inability to defend themselves.

They could not see how they were provided water out of nowhere despite drought situations. God blessed them, but they could not see him at work.

Often we can't see what God is working out for us.

I'm reminded of the old man named George who lived in the guesthouse of a rich family. He had lived in the guest house for many years, but he never paid in rent or did any kind of work. After his father had died, the young son became the head of the family, and he went to the guest house and saw the old man who walked crooked with burns on his hands and back. He told him he would have to pay rent if he wanted to stay, otherwise, prepare to move out.

The old man didn't know what to do. He was nearly 100 years old with no place to go. He just dropped on his knees and talked to the Lord.

That night the young son, could not sleep! To pass the time, he rumbled through his father's old trunks, and he came upon a newspaper clipping. The article described a house fire and how young man ran into the house and pulled his father and mother from the blaze, saving them. When the young man learned that their infant son was still inside, he went inside the burning house a third time. The burning beams crashed all around them, so the young man threw himself over the little boy and protected him from the flames with his body. The article only referred to the young man as George. When the house was rebuilt, the family found George and gave him a place to stay and took care all of his needs for the rest of his life.

The young boy went to the guest house and looked Old George in the face!

I don't know why I couldn't sleep last night!

I don't know why I decided to look in Daddy's old trunk!

Nobody told me that you saved my life!

Nobody told me that you scarred your body to save mine!

I'm sorry! Please forgive me!

This is my father's house! In my father's house, there is always love!

You don't have to worry about anything, for the rest of your life!

Old George smiled and said, "You said you don't know why you couldn't sleep last night, but let me tell you something. The same God who told me to rescue you from the fire is the same God who wouldn't let you sleep last night!

The Lord will make a way!

He was wounded for our transgressions! Bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace is upon him!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No.9735-Inspiration

In all this, Job sinned Not

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 1, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Job 1:21-22

Introduction

What do you do, when everything you do, just won't do? What do you say, when everything you say, won't help? Where do you go when everywhere you go, takes you nowhere? The answer to all three of these questions seems to describe the dilemma of every person who has made it to the end his or her rope. This is the time when we try to make some sense out of our situation but, nothing makes sense. There is no logical explanation for why so much is happening to us so quickly, despite our efforts to fear God and seek shelter in the strength of his power.

It may not be logical, but there is an answer. There is an explanation for all of the storms that are raging in our lives right now. That explanation is contained in God's Word, and it is embodied in the book of Job. It is a unique book that has no time given and refers to a place that no one has been able to connect to any known country. Job has no ancestry connection to the Patriarchs of the Old Testament or any descendant connections to any New Testament disciples. It is not connected to any place or person, but it sits boldly in the center of the Bible.

Since God does nothing by chance, perhaps it's singular purpose is to connect with every believer and answer the question, why me? Why are the righteous having so many problems, sicknesses, financial losses, deaths, calamities, and frustrations?
A careful study of the Book of Job allows every believer to see Job as a type of the faithful Saint who attempts to obey the rules, live the righteous life, and worship God, but is constantly besieged by troubles and hardships. There are moments in each of our lives when we feel like Job, frustrated and alone.

What is encouraging is that while the Book of Job explains why things are happening, it also shows the end result for those who don't commit the unpardonable sin of giving up on God. It paints a dark picture of some problems we will face, but it also paints a brighter picture of the victory we will share when we overcome.

As Christians, we are encouraged to know that our God is able to keep us from falling and will deliver us from evil. Whatever life brings we are ready to walk boldly into our

future with God by our side.

Exposition

This text considers Job, a man who had reason to be impatient with life but chose to wait on God.

Job is described as a righteous man who lived in the land of Nod. He was the subject of a trial of faith. God allowed Satan to test the strength of his faith by removing all of the comforts that sustained Job's hope. Satan described these comforts as a "hedge" God built around him. The purpose of the test was to demonstrate that Job's faith in God was not artificial but was rooted in a belief that God would not forsake him, regardless of the circumstance. This would be a considerable challenge since Job 1:3 say Job substance included: seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yokes of oxen, and five hundred she-asses.

As Satan began to move, tragedy struck Job's family. Members of his family were killed. His vast fortune, invested in cattle and huge herds, was stolen by bandits. Almost overnight his entire financial situation changed to the point that he was no longer wealthy but bordered on poverty. Still, however, he refused to curse God or to forsake him.

When the first attack did not succeed, Satan went back to heaven to ask for permission to put more on Job. That account is given in Job 2:3 which reads, "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still, he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." Satan said the other attack involved things and other people, but if he were personally attacked, he would sin and blame God.

God was sure that Job would not compromise himself and gave Satan permission to wreck Job's health, but not to touch his soul.

In Satan's second attack he infected Job's body with boils. Job physically deteriorated to the point that his entire life was so painful that he wished himself dead. He cursed his mother's womb. He cursed the day on which he was born. He lashed out at his friends. His patience grew short with his friends, his wife and all who tried to comfort him. He was in pain and was terribly impatient with life. He wanted an end to his situation.

Throughout his various trials, the essence of verses 21-22 seems to apply: Things didn't matter, he came with nothing into the world and when he left the world he wouldn't take anything with him. In Job 13:15 he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."

Despite losses of physical possession, sickness in his family and personal health failings, Job refused to give up on God. Giving up on God is described as a sin. Job says,1:22 "In all this, Job sinned not."

He refused to believe that God had abandoned him and chose to trust him until the

day he died.

All This

Believers can better understand why evil seems to follow them if we consider that

JOB'S RIGHTEOUS LIFE ATTRACTED ATTACKS: It was Job's great righteous life that attracted his attack. Job 1:1 says that he was perfect and righteous. That righteousness caught the devil's attention. That reminds believers that they become targets of the devil whenever they attempt to live the Godly life. 1 Peter 5:8 says, the devil is like a hungry lion looking for someone to devour, destroy and annihilate. The fact that believers seem to have their lives ordered in the Lord draws attacks. Have you ever watched fruit flies? They are attracted to anything that's sugary or sweet such as fruit, candy, or cold drinks. They are opposite from the common flies which could care less about sweet things; they like dead things or things that are dying. Fruit flies specialize in buzzing around fruit. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Believers who are living by God's word are filled with the fruit of the spirit and are attacked because flies like fruit. You know you are not being attacked because of a sinful lifestyle, it has to be the fact that you are trying to live for God. If it had been just flies buzzing, it would not have been a problem, but Satan came after His children, wealth, then his health, all hit him at one time. Thus, believers should stay prayed up and on guard because the more we want to be Christians the more the devil tempts us otherwise.

IN ALL THIS IS A RELATIVE DESCRIPTION: The text says "In all this, Job sinned not." For Job, "all this" meant sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels and oxen, but "all this" for the modern believer, means the tangible things of worth that you possess. The Devil fights a continuous battle to attack our faith. When he attacks our faith he focuses on each person's "All this." For one person "All this" means financial problems. For another, "All this" means marriage problems. For another person "All this means housing complications, business difficulties or career challenges. Satan looks for he thinks will shake our faith. What shakes one person does not shake another. Sometimes he deals with us just like he did Job; he hits us with everything; all at once. - But in all this, Job sinned not.

Job resolved to stay firm and hold on rather than give up his faith. Paul summed it up this way, Romans 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When the devil throws everything at us but the kitchen sink, we should respond with faith that God will make it work out. We are able to endure such situations because we know that God has promised two things: Never to leave us alone and to make every situation that comes our way, even the pain, work out to our good as it relates to the

kingdom of God. We don't quite know how it works, but we know that there will be no life that does not experience some element of pain, sadness, frustration and loss. We will overcome.

We are consoled, however, when we remember that after the trial of our faith passes, God will renew our strength and reward our patience, endurance, and longsuffering with satisfaction that will never end.

WHAT TO DO IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS: In all this, Job taught every believer a lesson. He answered the questions about 'what to do when you don't know what to do, or where to go when there is no place else to go. Job drew on the inner reserves that he stored up for his time of testing. We have an advantage that Job did not have. We know that we will have several tests during our lifetime? We don't know the test date, but we know that they are coming so we can prepare in advance. When trouble comes, every believer should be prepared to tap your spiritual reserves that were stored up for just such occasions. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. This is when we open our Bible and read God's word intensely, we listen to the Gospel preach attentively, and we pray fervently. From our storehouse of prayer and power, we emerge with renewed confidence that despite sickness in the family, financial crises, someway or somehow we will rise to the occasion with God's help.

The faithful don't give up or lose their focus; instead, they draw upon resources of Spirit and strength that normally go unused. They exhibit a faith that has been sitting on the shelf. They demonstrate courage that is rarely displayed. They reveal an element of self-control others were not unaware of. We reach down into ourselves; that's when God comes up to show us how to draw upon energies, knowledge, wisdom and assets that have been untapped for so long.

Don't give up on God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remind ourselves that when Satan shoots every arrow in his quiver at us and does his best to destroy us, the same God that protected us in the past is still on the throne today.

Believers should hold fast to your faith. Resist the temptation to question God's ways and simply say in your mind, "God is good all the time, all the time God is good."

We need to watch what Job did in the middle of "all this.." Job 1:20 says that in the middle of "All this" that he rent his clothes, shaved his head and fell down on the ground and worshiped the Lord.

Since he is not connected to the Old Testament Patriarchs or to any of the New Testament Disciples that has to be a message to believers today who are in the middle of all this. That message is for us to remember that God has promised, never to leave us alone.

In the middle of "All this" we will still praise the Lord!

If there is a Red Sea blocking your way, "be not dismayed, God will take care of you."

As saints, we should never let anyone take away our testimony.

Job's friends turned their backs on him, but he didn't lose his testimony!

It may be hard to see your way, but don't lose your testimony, That;s when you sing, "I said to my soul, take courage Oh, the Lord will make a way somehow!"

You may feel abandoned, but don't lose your testimony, "Be not dismayed whatever betide, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you. Through every day, over all the way, he will take care of you!"

You may be troubled by your test, but don't lose your testimony!

In the midst of trouble, remind yourself that trouble don't last always!

In the midst of bad times and heartache, just remember that you had some good days, and you've had some bad days, but your good days outweigh your bad days, so "I won't complain."

Leave here today remembering that God will never leave you alone.

Because God will never leave you alone:

-There won't be a CROSS that I won't be able to bear;

-There won't be a MOUNTAIN that I won't be able to climb!

-There won't be an ENEMY that I won't be able to defeat;

-There won't be a BATTLE I won't be able to endure!

-There won't be a DARKNESS that keeps me from seeing the light!

-There won't be a trial that I can't make it through;

-There won't be a TEST that I won't be able to pass!

Whatever Satan throws at you know one thing:

If I fall down, he'll pick me up!

If I make a mistake, he will forgive me!

If I stumble, he'll hold my hand!

If I can't find my way, I can say, Guide me oh thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak, but thou art mighty hold me with thou powerful hand!

The same hand that touched a blind man's eyes!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross in death.

But the same hand that was raised in victory early Sunday morning!

That same hand will be with you all of the way!

No.9736-Mother's Day

A Mother's Influence

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 8, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. "2 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

Has anyone influenced your life more than your mother? Most people would like to believe that they are independent souls, invulnerable to the influence of other people and immune to circumstances. We like to believe that we make our own decisions and control our own actions. In reality, most of us are influenced by the people, places, and things that come in contact with our lives.

By definition, influence is the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something.

Is there anyone you can think of who has had a greater influence on your character, behavior or decisions than your mother? There are other words associated with influence that also describe the effect mothers have on their children: Guidance, impact, control, shape, govern, decide, alter, transform, direct, pressure and sway are just a few words that begin to describe the many ways that mothers have influenced us.

Certainly, good mothers guide us in the right direction; when we try to stray from it, they force us by sheer strength of personality to do what is right. In that same context, good mothers transform us from the insecurities of our childhood to our first days as adults. They listen to our dreams and sometimes alter them with wisdom about obstacles we do not anticipate. They pressure us and persuade us in ways that often change our paths for the good.

A mother's influence cannot be measured, but it is immense. President Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, influenced him to have a world view that was compassionate, controlled and deliberate. He said she gave him "a sense of unconditional love that was big enough that, with all the surface disturbances of our lives, it sustained me, entirely."

Unconditional love is the thread that runs through nearly every definition that anyone gives of great mothers. Regardless of what they do, how angry they get, what mistakes are made; mothers love their children anyway.

Mother's influence Presidents. President William McKinley had a close relationship

with his mother. He either visited her or sent a message to her every day. While he had many advisors surrounding him, he discussed weighty decisions with his mother. John Quincy Adams found his mother to be a towering influence on his decisions, she even stopped his first engagement and directed him to the love of his life. When President Roosevelt left home to attend Harvard University, his mother moved there with him to protect him from messing up. When he spoke his famous fireside chats as President, she said next to him. Rose Kennedy, influenced all of her children to become great patriots, one became President, and one died trying.

Mothers influence their children's life choices. Only a few become presidents, but thousands become athletes, teachers, dancers, singers, business leaders, scientists, ministers and a thousand other walks in life. Nearly everyone who has achieved a high mark in life can look back to the influence of a mother figure in their lives. If it was not their blood mother, it was an aunt, a grandmother or a friend of the family who gave them that unconditional love, direction, guidance, wisdom, and tempered pressure to walk straight and not the crooked path.

It doesn't matter how big you are, mama rocks the house. Eli Apple was drafted by the Giants in the 2016 NFL Draft. Companies wanted to give him Rolex watches and other expensive things to wear on draft day, but his mother Annie Apple butted in and told him, "Son you are an unemployed college drop out. You will not appear on television wearing a Rolex watch." She then took his phone and tweeted to all the women that suddenly wanted him, that they could wait because he wasn't about to lose it all chasing after them. - He might be a multi-million dollar athlete, but mama still runs the show.

Godly mothers are a blessing because every woman who gives birth to a child is not necessarily a mother. That's why the nation takes time out to praise Godly mothers; because their influence has shaped the direction of millions of lives in a productive way.

As Christians, we thank God for placing us in the hands of Godly mothers. We thank him for their strength and resilience. We praise them for their unconditional love that has sustained us over the years.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to Timothy in which he notes the influence of his Mother and grandmother on the young man's life.

It is likely that Timothy was the only child, and it appears that he had been brought up in the fear of God, and carefully instructed in the Jewish religion using the Holy Scriptures. Compare 2 Timothy 1:5 with 2 Timothy 3:15. It appears, also, that he had adopted the spirit of Paul's passion for expanding the church to all of the known world. His desire to serve God's will obviously reflected the influence of both his mother and his grandmother.

When the apostle came from Antioch, in Syria, the second time to Lystra, he found Timothy a member of the Church, and so highly reputed and warmly recommended by the Church in that place, that St. Paul took him to be his companion in his travels. Acts

16:1-3. From this place, we learn that although Timothy had been educated in the Jewish faith, he had not been circumcised, because his father, who was a Gentile, would not permit it. When the apostle had determined to take him with him, he found it necessary to have him circumcised, not from any supposition that circumcision was necessary to salvation, but because of the Jews, who would neither have heard him nor the apostle had not this been done: the Gospel testimony they would not have received from Timothy, because they saw him as a heathen; and they would have considered the apostle in the same light, because he associated with such.

For the Gospel's sake, Timothy did all that was necessary to prepare himself to follow after Paul.

His humility reflected the direct influence of his mother.

His compassion reflected the direct influence of his mother.

Influencing children is biblical

Among the many functions of a mother is to influence children to walk a Godly path. In biblical times, it was assumed that the father was responsible for the formal education of his sons. It was also assumed that mothers were responsible for teaching values, virtue, integrity and other truths to small children and girls.

There are scores of Bible passages that underscore the importance of mothers influencing their children to follow the Lord. In Deuteronomy 4:9 mothers are urged to diligently teach their children about the Lord, so they will know and not forget. It says, "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons."

In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 mothers are encouraged to get the word in their own hearts first and then teach what they have learned to their children. It says, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Proverbs 22:6 makes it clear that if a child is trained while young, he will keep what he has learned all of his life. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

The Bible makes it clear that God expects mothers to use their influence to direct their children in the Godly path.

A Mother's Loving Influence

Mothers influence their children; that's why it's important for mother's themselves to be influenced by God. Both Eunice and Lois were mothers who themselves had been influenced by the word of God. That is transferred to their children.

Mothers influence their children even when they don't try because children watch

their mothers. Even when their moms are not looking, children always seem to observe the various moves of their mothers. They watch how she walks. They watch how she talks. They know when she's feeling good. They also know when she's down in the dumps. Just as moms watch their children, children also spend time watching their mothers.

There are many examples of good mothers in the Bible. The most fascinating example, however, is that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the manger, in celebrations, in times of trouble, even hanging from the cross, Jesus kept his eye on his mother. She was never far away, from his cradle to his cross, to his grave; his mother was right by his side.

We have learned that the qualities of Godly love are displayed in both Godly fathers and mothers. If we want a description of Godly love, all we need to do is watch a godly mother, and we will see God's love in action. If you want to truly see what God's love is about, then all we need to do is look at mother.

A mother's love is precious and pleasing to God.

We want to please our mothers

Most of us want to do things that make our mothers proud of us.

We want to do everything they tell us, to the letter. A mother took her little boy to church. While in church the little boy said, "Mommy, I have to pee." The mother said to the little boy, "It's not appropriate to say the word 'pee' in church. So, from now on whenever you have to 'pee' just tell me that you have to 'whisper'." The following Sunday, the little boy went to church with his father and during the service said to his father, "Daddy, I have to whisper." The father looked at him and said, "Okay, just whisper in my ear."

Most of us want to do something with our lives that will please our mothers. When we made an "A" on a test the first person that we wanted to show the grade to was mother. We longed to hear her say, "I'm so proud of you." We should have been happy that we accomplished the goal, but instead, we wanted to hear mother say, "I'm proud of you." - That's influence. To study, obey and achieve just to hear those words. As adults, we want to show them a "good report card" for our lives. When we graduate from college, get a job or marry and start our own family we still want to hear mother say, "I'm proud of you."

Even after death we still want to please them. In our mind, we can hear them say, "I'm proud of you." This is true because it is the nature of every child who has had a loving mother to try to meet her expectations. No matter how high one climbs or how much is achieved; it never seems adequate until what we have done meets mother's approval. This began when we were children. We brought mother our drawings and waited for her approval. When we said speeches in school, we heard the crowd applaud, but we waited for mother's congratulations. When we graduated, the diploma meant much more because of mother's approval.

Just as we seek ways to meet mother's approval, shouldn't we also try to meet God's

approval? If we've lost something that would please God, shouldn't we be busy trying to find it? When God is pleased with us, we are assured of his continued blessings and helpful presence in our lives.

Influenced to follow God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that when we are influenced by a Godly
mother, we are influenced to follow God.

In a way, a mother's love is similar to Gods love for all of his children. He is protective, supportive, and corrective in his dealings with us. He supports us on a daily basis. He corrects us whenever we go astray, and he protects us from many dangers seen and unseen.

That could easily be the description of good mothers. They are ever protective of their children, always supporting them and often painfully correcting them. Because of the similarities, God may have given mothers a special blessing.

Godly mothers copy many of their traits from the Lord.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers are pleased when we do our best.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers are upset when we don't achieve.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers are happy when we follow their words.

Like the Lord, Godly mothers can get in your business when things are not right.

Our desire should be to please God, who is the source of our help.

Our help comes from God, who neither slumbers nor sleep.

Our help comes from God, who watches over us by day or by night.

When we show respect and honor for our mothers, we please God because he told us
to honor our father and mother!

We thank God for mothers who provided us with a happy home!

We thank God for mothers who placed their lives on hold and invested their entire substance in us!

We thank God for mothers whose towering influence gave us a bold sense of family!

We thank God for mothers whose optimistic spirit showed us how to live long and happy lives!

We thank God for mothers who showed us the way to the hill!

Over 2000 years ago, when it pleased God, He sent his Son to that hill.

Not to a mountain peak or elevated blocks of land in a distant place but to a hill called Calvary!

We thank God that we had a mother who knew the man on the hill!

That man on the hill was Jesus who died on that old rugged cross.

It was a death that pleased God because he paid for our sins.

But when it pleased God, early Sunday morning, He rose again!

Every day of my life I want to please God and thank him for guiding me and influencing me through blessing me with a mother's influence!

No. 9737-Inspiration

After I testify, laugh if you can

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 29, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on. Job 21:3

Introduction

Do you ever get the impression that there are people watching and waiting for you to fall flat on your face? They don't say anything, they just watch and silently chuckle as we climb life's ladder. For the Christian, life's ladder is a journey from time to eternity that must be scaled one rung at a time. There are many skeptics that are watching as Christians climb the ladder of life. Even the best of us can lean out a little too far, or stumble as we miss a rung. The world is waiting patiently for an opportunity to laugh at God's people when and if we falter.

There are many who laugh at Christians because it seems that we often get the little end of the lucky stick and pull the losing straw. Consider the case of Bertha Mae who was the prettiest girl in the neighborhood who married the ugliest man in the neighborhood. All the women laughed at Bertha Mae and said she had a paper sack husband; because he was so ugly that he needed to keep a paper sack over his head. They would often shake their heads and say "what a waste." After many years, Bertha started hearing about the marriages of some of her friends. One after another, they were breaking up, separating and divorcing. However, Bertha was still married to the ugliest man in town. After many years, one of her friends asked Bertha Mae why she married the ugliest man in the neighborhood. Bertha said "At first he turned me off. Then I learned that he was gentle. I liked that. In time, I learned that he worked hard, and saved his money. I liked that. I also learned that he lived clean, was honest and faithful and that he loves me. I liked that. While I have seen some good looking men in my time, none of them looked as good on the inside as he does. "The more I got to know him, the better he looked. You girls looked at the outside and married the ugliest men in town. I looked at the inside and got the best looking man in town. Look who's laughing now!"

People laugh when you try and fail, but we should not be discouraged. Babe Ruth was known as the Home run king in Baseball. What many don't know is that he struck out more than 99 percent of the players in the major league. People laughed when he struck out so many times, but nobody laughed when he hit home runs.

The real testimony comes after we recover from setbacks. Abraham Lincoln failed

twice in business, had a nervous breakdown, lost his sweetheart, and lost seven elections but kept coming back until he became president of the United States. Everyone laughed each time he lost, but no one laughed when he was sworn-in as President.

Those who are tempted to laugh at the faith of believers should not laugh too hastily. You saw our name in the police report. Don't laugh! You saw we filed bankruptcy. Don't laugh! You saw that we are having marital problems. Don't laugh! You saw one of our children going astray. Don't laugh. Wait until you hear the rest of the story! Wait until you learn what happened to us after God finished turning things around. After you hear my testimony, then laugh if you can!

As Christians, we climb each rung of life's ladder trusting in the Lord, if we slip along the way, we count on God to catch us if we fall. When we make it to the top; we'll have a story to tell. After we tell it, then our skeptics are free to laugh, if they can.

Exposition

This text considers Job, a man whose friends found a reason to criticize him during his time of difficulty while ignoring his full testimony of faith.

Job is described as a righteous man who lived in the land of Nod. He was the subject of a trial of faith. God allowed Satan to test the strength of his faith by removing all of the comforts that sustained Job's hope. Satan described these comforts as a "hedge" God built around him. The purpose of the test was to demonstrate that Job's faith in God was not artificial but was rooted in a belief that God would not forsake him, regardless of the circumstance.

As Satan began to move, tragedy struck Job's family. Members of his family were killed. His vast fortune, invested in cattle and huge herds, was stolen by bandits. Almost overnight his entire financial situation changed to the point that he was no longer wealthy but bordered on poverty. Still, however, he refused to curse God or to forsake him.

This text finds Job responding to the source of the laughter of his friends. They associated outward prosperity with righteousness. They believed that those who lived right would be immune from sickness, trouble or financial worry. They also believed that if a person loses his health, his prosperity or properties while claiming he was a faithful believer that it was a sign that he was actually living a lie that no one knew about or that the God he served was not real.

Job told his friends not to laugh at him until they have heard the end testimony of his trial. It is true that he had fallen on hard times, but he acknowledged that God had never forsaken him and that "all the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change come." He reaffirmed his faith by saying "Yea, thou he slay me yet will I trust him."

In the end, the Scripture says Job's health was restored, his wealth was restored and his family grew even larger than before. In fact, his end was greater than his

beginning.

After hearing his testimony at the end, Job's friends had nothing to laugh about God's will had been done.

People often Laugh

PEOPLE LAUGH WHEN THE RIGHTEOUS FALL: There are people who laugh at what appears to be a deteriorating position, but they should wait. What looks weak, may not be weak at all. Consider the old man who won a prize at the state fair for eating the largest watermelon. That year all of the country folk came to the fair to see who would win the $1000 prize for eating a 50-pound watermelon clean to the rind. Laughing Charlie was running the contest, and every contestant had to pay $100 to try. If they failed, laughing Charlie got the last laugh and pocketed their money. Several huge men entered the contest but changed their minds when they saw the size of that melon. Each day there were no takers. It seemed that the prize money would go unclaimed until an old man who had come to the fair on the last day, raised his hand. "I'd like to try to eat that melon," said the old man. Instantly the crowd laughed at the thought of this frail old man eating a 50-pound melon. "I'll try on the condition that you give me 10 minutes to think about it." The man was given 10 minutes. Ten minutes later the old man returned, sliced open the melon and ate it completely to the rind in four minutes. The crowd was amazed at the feat. The old man was brought on stage and presented with a blue ribbon and check for $1000. Laughing Charlie, who had stopped laughing, said, "Before I present you this prize, can you tell me why you needed ten minutes?" The old man said, "Well I knew I had a melon at home about this size. So I went home and ate it. I knew if I could eat that one, I could eat this one too." That day at the fair the old man got the ribbon, the check, and the last laugh!

PEOPLE LAUGH AT WHAT THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND: Those who laugh at Christians, find it easy because they don't understand matters of faith. When Jarius' daughter died, Jesus told those around him to consider the girl asleep because shortly she would be awakened, most people did not understand who He was and the nature of His relationship with God. Had they understood that, they would not have laughed. This is also true with believers. There are many people who do not understand us and our relationship to God. It probably looks peculiar to them to see us praying to a God we cannot see. Waving our hands, crying, saying "Amen" and living by a set of rules that keep us from participating in some of the darker aspects of life, but never-the-less exciting. They don't understand us, so they laugh at us when we read our Bibles, attend Sunday worship and special programs and express a faith that God will make a way out of no way. We don't laugh because we understand who God is and what God can do. So, when God promises us something, and it sounds unbelievable, we don't laugh because even though we don't fully understand we still say, "God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform." We remember that Romans 11:33 says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"

THE LAST LAUGH IS THE BEST LAUGH: When Job evolved from his test with much more than he started with, there was no laughter recorded by his friends. It was Job who had the last laugh. The last laugh didn't come from those who scorned, but from the one who trusted God. In the same way, God speaks to the faithful today. We should not be discouraged because of wicked people all around us because if we remain faithful, we will get the last laugh. The people who seem to prosper without God laugh at us, but God will get the last laugh. The drug dealers, pimps, and prostitutes, hustlers, gamblers and cheats who laugh at you because you work at a job and won't make that quick money; their day is coming. When it comes, God will laugh at them. Psalm 37:12-13, "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming." Why does the Lord laugh at them? He laughs because "their day is coming!"

When we give our testimony, we get the last laugh, but it is laughing and shouting over the power of God! It is a joyous laugh. A laugh of celebration. It's the laugh of Abraham who learned not to laugh at anything that God promises, no matter how ridiculous it may sound. When Isaac was born Abraham named him "Isaac" which means laughter. He was a constant reminder that God laughs at the wicked, scoffers, haters and detractors. He gets to laugh last. He who laughs last, laughs the loudest.

We Don't laugh

Finally, brothers ad sisters, those who do not know our God may laugh at our faith, but we don't laugh because we know what God can do!

There are those who laugh at our faith in an unseen God, but before you laugh let me tell you what God can do!

There are those who laugh at us because we make our weekly pilgrimage to worship and be in his presence, but before you laugh, let me tell you what God can do.

The world may laugh at us because we live a life of faith, but we don't laugh because we believe in a living God who can do anything except fail.

The skeptics around us urge us to accept our plight because it is afraid to trust God.

They laugh, but we trust God.

We don't laugh because we have been drenched in the word of God, and we are dripping with faith. It is a faith that despite the obstacles before us that the Lord will make a way!

The world laughs, but we say don't laugh until you hear our report. Our report says, "The road is rough and going is tough, and hills are hard to climb, but I started out a long time ago, and there is no doubt in
my mind, I've decided to make Jesus my choice!"

The world laughs, but we say don't laugh until you hear our report. Our report is that no one should ever doubt the
power of God.

Your enemies laugh because you have a Red Sea in front of you and enemies behind you; you seemed trapped with nowhere to go. Let them laugh because God still opens

up ways out of no way. He's still making paths through the Red Sea!

Who hath believed our report?

The world laughed at Isaiah when he said, "He shall be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace is upon him!"

They laughed, but God gets the last laugh.

They laughed at Jesus when they whipped him all night long!

They laughed at Jesus when they put an old rugged cross on his shoulder!

They laughed at Him as he hung out on the cross saying, "He saved others, but he can't save himself!"

They laughed at Him, when he died out on Calvary!

They laughed at Him, when they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

They laughed at Him, when they rolled the stone in front of His grave!

But Early Sunday morning, God got the last laugh!

He arose from the grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9738-Funeral

Going to see the King

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 4, 2016

SCRIPTURE: " ...and so will I go in unto the king which is not according to the law and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16

Introduction

Suppose you woke up one morning and decided that you wanted to see President Obama, what would be your chances of making it past the main gate? Probably none. The same would be true of meeting any person of importance. The Pope, A senator, the governor or any other person of importance, influence or station usually have established protocols for receiving visitors.

It's customary in the South for friends to drop by and "sit a spell" and talk. Even that custom is fading away as people get disturbed with someone coming to their homes unannounced. Many will speak to you through the screen with the door half cracked; if they open the door at all.

There is a protocol we are supposed to follow at all levels. A guest to your home calls first to find an acceptable time for a visit. Some important people require visitors to have an appointment. Some are so insulated that we must get an appointment to make an appointment. A visit to the Senate and U.S. House of Representatives usually requires an appointment. Even Senators who want to see the President must get an appointment through his chief of staff.

If the ordinary man wants a few minutes with the President, he'll find an appointment hard to secure, but it's easy to get in the White House if you get an invitation from the President himself. The protocol doesn't matter, security doesn't matter, even the guards on the door will snap to attention for you if the President himself gives the invitation.

If you receive an invitation from the President, it means he has an interest in you. It also means your presence is desired and would add meaning to an occasion.

Anyone who gets such an invitation feels happy because we know that we have a reserved place in the presence of the king. Consider the mother who was still floating on a spiritual high when she left church one Sunday. She was singing, "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the king." Her little girl was sitting on the back seat didn't hear all of the words, but whatever they were she knew it made her mother happy. After a few blocks, the mother noticed that the little girl was singing the same tune. She was

clapping her hands and singing loudly. The mother was excited that her daughter was so happy about going to see the king, until she listened to what the little girl was singing, "Soon and very soon, we are going to Bur-ger-King!"- She was happy about going to see the king, but it was the wrong king!

The great thing about being a believer is that we know that when we have spent our lives trying to do right most of the times, worked in the church, walked by faith and gave God our best, we have an open invitation from the King of the Universe to come before his throne.

As Christians, we live our lives the best we can in faith, knowing that God's grace forgives our weaknesses, and gives us an open invitation to join him in eternity.

Exposition

This text focuses on Queen Esther as she decides to break protocol and go in to see the king.

The people of Israel had become the wards of the king of Persia. All of the Israelites had been threatened with annihilation because of the actions of one of the Kings aides by the name of Haman. When Queen Esther learned of Haman's plan, she decided to go in and speak to the king and let him know that she and all of her people would soon be destroyed.

There was only one problem; no one is allowed to go before the king without an expressed invitation. The king's first wife Vashti had been expelled from the kingdom because she broke the protocols and defied the king. If Esther went before the king without an invitation she ran the risk of also being expelled from the kingdom. In the text, she said she knew it was against the law to go to see the king without an invitation, but if she perished for doing so then, she would simply have to perish. She said, "If I perish, I perish, but I'm going to see the king."

There was a reason for Esther's boldness. She felt that the king loved her and she knew that she had an open invitation, despite the laws and protocols, to come into his presence.

When she entered the Royal Courtroom, there must've been a hush of quiet because no one knew how the King would respond. Instead of condemning her he welcomed her before his presence and listened to her petition.

In the end, he heard what she had to say and saved the people from destruction. The people were saved because of one woman's determination to go and see the king.

Getting an invitation

How do you get an invitation to see the king? We know how it's done in the secular world but how does one get an invitation to see the King of Kings and to be in his heavenly presence? Consider these three ways:

It helps to be in the Kings family. Queen Esther knew she had an open invitation to

come before the king because she was the king's wife. She was in the King's family. She had the king's name. Even though protocol limited others, she felt that because she was in the King's family that she had a special place in the heart of the King. The same is true for believers today because we are children of the King, we are heirs to the kingdom. We become children of the King when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We become children of the King when we decide to make heaven our home. Those who are in the family of God those who labor daily to build the kingdom of heaven. The labor may take many forms. Some will sing in church choirs, and others will serve on Church Usher boards, help with men's ministries and many other areas of service. Those who are in the family of God are like sheep in the pasture and a good shepherd, says the Scripture, knows his sheep. If you are part of the family of the king, it's pretty easy to get an invitation to the throne of Grace.

It helps when the king knows your name. One of the best ways to get an invitation to the king is to be known by the king himself. When Jimmy Carter was running for president of the United States, he often slept in the homes of many people who opened their doors to him as he campaigned in their state. He promised to remember them when he became president and to invite them to spend a night in the White House. Once elected, he sent invitations to each of those persons, and one night at a time they spent a night in the White House. Over the years, believers have come to know that the Lord we serve knows our names and hears our prayers. We know the Lord knows us because he has answered our prayers on so many different occasions. Our friend has shown so many times that somebody in heaven knows his name. He's been in and out of the hospital, but nothing held him down; it's because his name is known by the king. When you know the King, you can say, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, I've tried him for myself."

When the King wants to show you favor. In Esther 8:5 she asks the king to indulge her, if she found favor in his eyes. She found favor in his sight by virtue of her integrity, strength of character and courage. What do we do that gains the favor of God? We gain God's favor when we are obedient to his commands. We also gain his favor when we work to build his kingdom. He showers us with favor if we act in faith and determination to follow his will. When we realize that we have been favored, that's when we can truly say, "He didn't have to do it, but he did."

He didn't have to bless me, but he did!

He didn't have to heal me, but he did!

He didn't have to save me, but he did!

Going to see the King

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should resolve that our life's journey should take us on a journey to see the King.

We have been given an open invitation to come and dine at his table throughout all eternity.

Our friend accepted Christ as his savior, worked diligently in the church, greeted the

saints at worship, studied the Bible and prayed for others. While he was doing all of that he was holding an invitation in his hand, that he received when he was a child. That invitation that said, "When this life is over, come up a little higher."

Every believer should remember that if God saves your soul and invites you to eternity, he never forgets.

Consider the poor boy who found the prince in the woods, hungry, hurt and lost. Together with his family they took the prince into their one room house, fed him and nursed him to health again, without knowing he was a prince. Upon leaving, the king gave the boy his medallion and thanked the family for making room for him in their home. "If you ever need anything, you have an open invitation to the throne; just show this medallion." Years later, the family fell upon hard times, and they faced starvation. The boy, now a young man, full of optimism, decided to go to the king and ask for help. His family members were amused because they felt the king was busy dealing with the affairs of state and had little time for the concerns of a peasant family. The boy said, "I don't care what you say, I'm going to see the king." Once inside the palace the boy noticed the long lines of dignitaries but started screaming and yelling "I'm going to see the king!" The king saw the boy and from a distance recognized the medallion hanging around his neck and remembered him. "This boy and his family made room for me in their one-room shanty. There is always room for him in the palaces of the kingdom." The king heard the boy's trouble and said to him. "Because you made room for me there's always room for you in my kingdom."

Brothers and sisters, those who have been washed in the blood of the lamb, have an open invitation into the kingdom of heaven.

As our friend, we should consider the shortness of our time and troubles of the world and say, "Soon and very soon, I'm going to see the king!"

No more operations, ICU beds, and rotating stays in hospitals, "I'm going to see the king!"

The king has invited me to a city not made by hands! I'm going to see the king!

He has invited me to a city that sits on 12 foundations with 12 pearly gates. Three gates to the North! Three gates to the South.
Three gates to the East. Three gates to the West. "I'm going to see the king!"

It's a city called heaven! Its streets are paved with gold! It's always howdy and never goodbye!

I'm going to see the king!

It's a city prepared by Jesus himself because he said, "I go to prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also. If it were not so, I would have told you. In my Father's house are many mansions!"

You have my invitation! It was paid for on an old rugged cross!

Your invitation is signed in the blood of the lamb!? He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Come and go with me to my father's house!

No more dying there!

No more crying there!
No more sickness and pain!
There'll be joy, joy, joy!

On Saturday, May 28, 2016, Carl King left the St. Joseph's nursing home. He had an invitation to see the King.

No. 9739-Graduation

New Beginnings start with God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 5, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1; "In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

Introduction

When you graduated from high school, did you think your graduation was the beginning or the end? Some saw graduation as the beginning of "No More"- No more studying. No more going to class. No more tests. No more staying up late at night to complete assignments. Many who have long passed their high school graduation date, have learned that it was just an introduction to "Much more" instead of "No more."

Graduations mark the end of one chapter of our lives and the beginning of others. Each of the preceding chapters of our lives has been accomplished with someone's help. No one made it this far completely unassisted. Our past achievements are the results of a combination of individual effort, family support and the help of people in the village who make dreams happen.

Consider the young man who bragged about what he had in life. He amused himself by putting down young friends who could not wear designer clothes or jewelry and those who did not have his level of popularity, smarts, and opportunity. One day as he played the dozens with some associates, an old man was sitting on the porch listening. The youth constantly bragged about his position at school, club memberships and belittled those around him. After the boy was alone, the old man questioned him about his tendency to brag. The boy responded, "The truth is the light!" The old man talked the boy into walking with him to a nearby wood.

All the way the boy continued to justify why he had a reason to brag. The old man said nothing but quietly walked forward until he came upon a turtle sitting on a tree stump. The old man pointed at the turtle and said, "That's you, boy! But if you see a turtle sitting high up on a stump, then you know he didn't get there by himself!" Every person who achieves anything does so with the help of someone else!

Gladys Knight had a popular song called, "You are the best thing that ever happened to me." One part of the lyrics says, "If anyone should ever write my life story for whatever reason there might be, you'll be there between each line of pain and glory 'Cause you're the best thing that ever happened to me."

Every believing youth knows that God is the source of all blessings, advancements, and accomplishment. He is the beginning and the end of it all. Between every line of pain and glory of our story, God is there.

As Christians, we know that Graduations have placed graduates on a stump, but it is God's unseen hand, working through scores of people that has made it happen. They didn't get there by themselves.

Exposition

These texts point us to the creation of the world, from the detailed context of the Old Testament and the summary context of the New Testament.

Both texts point to a single truth: that God is the originator of everything in the universe, and he is the first cause of everything. This truth is frequently repeated in scripture. For example, Ephesians 3:9 says God, "created all things by Jesus Christ." Colossians 16: goes further, it says, "All things were created by Him, and for Him," Romans 11:36 says "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."

Both Genesis and John underscore this truth. Everything starts with God, without him nothing would exist.

For believers, it is important because it reminds us that we who profess faith in the almighty have a knowledge of the order of the universe and our unity with all creation. This knowledge places us in a living connection with our Lord Jesus Christ.

We understand what Hebrews 11:3 says, "Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

The world and its operation starts from God. In the same sense, anything we start should start with God.

Graduates should consider

As graduates begin their next life chapter they should consider:

BEGIN YOUR LIFE WITH THE WORD: There are many who try to begin their lives based on their own plan. They have studied the lives of many superstars and decided a path they will take emulating them. However, we should begin our lives with the main thing, which is the word of God. After that, our goal is to keep "The main thing, the main thing." Eugene Patterson says it's not really hard to figure out what to do with our lives. In his article called "Run with the Horses" in Christianity Today he says, "Our lives are not puzzles to be figured out, rather we come to God who knows us and reveals to us the truth of our lives, the fundamental mistake is to begin with ourselves and not God. God is the center from which all life develops. If we use our ego as the center from which to plot the geometry of our lives, we will live eccentrically."

How do we begin our lives based on the word? We study what the word teaches and then we match up our intended direction with the world, for a start. If your goal is to start a successful house of prostitution, does that match up with God's word?

What about being a successful drug dealer, pimp or entertainer that promotes a decadent lifestyle for profit? If these don't measure up to what the word teaches, then dump them. If you have found a mate and your plan is to live with them without marriage, dump that idea; it will not be blessed because it's not according to God's will. If life opportunities take you away from what makes your family strong and your faith bold, dump that idea.

Remember after God directed each step of the creation of the world he said, "That's good." What we want from our new beginning is for God to say, "That's good."

GOD IS BEHIND EVERY GOOD START: Youth will have many choices to make in the years ahead. Many of the choices lined themselves up and presented themselves to you the moment you walked across the graduation stage. Now that graduation has ended, challenges begin. You'll decide whether to go to college or trade school. You may decide not to get any training at all and just enjoy the rest of your life living in your mother's house without any responsibilities of your own. You will make choices about your mate, parenting or a profession. High School and college graduation are just the starts. Between 18-25 years of age, you will decide your life choices, some of which might be radically different from your beginnings. Much of what you will become in life will be decided in these years.

At the core of this new beginning is God. Everything good comes from God. "In the beginning God." That's a verse that is related to Matthew 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." If doing God's will for your life is your goal, then you are almost guaranteed success. We know this is true because he has promised that those who put him first, will achieve his intended goal for them, with all of the other healthy, wholesome and honorable things added. Before every good start, therefore, believers should seek God's help.

BEGIN EVERY STEP WITH GOD: Both the old and New Testament make it clear that everything begins with God. "In the beginning was the word and the word was God." In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." -Everything begins with God. That also applies to believers as well. Every new step we take should begin with God.

We pray when we wake up in the morning; it's a new day, we need God's direction.

We pray before we begin a task, it's a new task that we want to accomplish successfully.

We even pray before we eat, because it's a new meal and we want it to perform its function.

Every new step we take in life should be the same. We should always pray that God will provide us with his annoiting. When you apply for your first job, pray then apply.

When you apply for scholarships, pray then apply. It doesn't guarantee you'll be selected, but it does guarantee that the results will reflect God's will.

When God made the world he did not step back and let it falter on its own; he remained in control. Each graduate must remember that from the beginning, God was in control of this world and even today, no matter how confusing things might become he is still in control. He never slumbers or sleeps.

As you start a new beginning, start with God, and he will direct your path.

Put it in God's hand

Finally, we should consider that people who are about to start a new journey in life, should put their futures in God's hands.

It should be clear to all believers that God is in control of the events of our lives and that our successes and promotions come from him. We are in his hands.

We have seen believers of all walks of life promoted from obscurity to the highest levels of success, when they place their lives and destinies in God's hands.

Joseph was raised from being a slave boy to the prime minister of Egypt, because his life was in God's hands.

Aaron was raised from being a mere slave in Egypt to being a high priest of Israel because his life was in God's hands!

The three Hebrew Boys were raised out of exile to become great leaders in the Chaldean kingdom because their lives were in God's hands.

Daniel was lifted from a lion's den to high esteem because his life was in God's hands!

When our lives are in God's hands, he creates the steps for us!

He opens the doors!

He makes the opportunities!

He baffles the critics who doubt our abilities.

He mystifies the skeptics who said, we were doomed to failure!

He intensifies our commitment and builds our strength.

When our lives are in God's hands, he breathes his Holy Spirit on us and promotes us higher and higher.

That's why the old warriors sang, "We are climbing Jacob's ladder, We are climbing Jacob's ladder, Soldiers of the Cross...every round goes higher higher! Soldiers of the cross!"

Somebody else sang, "Step by step, we'll make this journey, but the way seems hard, hard, hard. Step by step we'll make this journey, but we must put our trust In God!"

Trusting in the Lord means asking God to hold my hand!

As I make this new beginning, hold my hand!

As I take the next step in my life's journey, hold my hand!

I may be young, but I know the meaning of the old song, "Lord hold my hand, while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Trust in the Lord, he will never let you down!

Trust in the Lord, who died for you out on Calvary!

Trust in the Lord, who arose after three days with all power in his hands!

Trust in the Lord, because all new beginnings start with God!

No. 9740-Inspiration

Dealing with Your Moments

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 26, 2016

SCRIPTURE: What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? Job 7:15

Introduction

Have you ever experienced a moment? That's a point in time when a situation or circumstance presents you with a challenge, emotion, decision, or epiphany. All of us have our moments. We have had our memorable moments, and we have had moments we would like to forget. We have moments when we are happy, and the world seems to be a walk in the park. There are also moments when it seems that everything is falling around us. There are moments when we find ourselves at the crossroads and must make decisions. There are also moments when we finally understand something that has been eluding us all along. We all have our moments: Moments of brilliance, moments when our best side does not shine. Moments of failure.

Children have "Why moments." Those are the moments they seem to be flooded with "Why" questions. "Why is the sky blue?" "Why is water wet?" "Why is it called ice cream, but it has no ice in it?" Those are moments that drive parents crazy.

Adults have "Pull your hair out moments" when everything that can go wrong does go wrong, and "nail-biting moments" when you worry about how something will turn out. There are also "head scratching" moments when you just can't figure it out.

Seniors have moments, too.?Consider the old man who had a senior moment that caused him to cry. A passerby noticed him sitting on a park bench sobbing his eyes out. The passerby asked him why he was crying, and he said,? 'I have a 22-year-old wife at home. She rubs my back every morning and then gets up and makes me pancakes, sausage, fresh fruit and freshly ground coffee.'

'Well, then why are you crying?' He added, 'She makes me homemade soup for lunch and my favorite biscuits, cleans the house and then watches sports TV with me for the rest of the afternoon.'

'Well, why are you crying?'

He said, 'For dinner, she makes me a gourmet meal with wine and my favorite dessert, and then we cuddle until the small hours.'

'Well then, why in the world would you be crying?'

The old man said, 'I can't remember where I live.'-

That was a frustrating senior moment.

We all have our moments; the question is how do we deal with them when they come. Moments are not a matter of will they happen or not; they will happen. The question is whether we will deal with them in light of God's power in our lives.

The Holy Spirit helps us to live in the moment. The goal is to make the best out of each moment, regardless of what the situation happens to be. Doing your best will change with time. For a child, learning to walk the first three steps is a great moment. For an adult recovering from a crippling accident, three steps is a powerful moment. To the senior recluse, a few steps in the garden is also a powerful moment. God helps us to deal with difficult moments and relish and enjoy each moment of happiness and joy and store them away as pleasant memories.

There was a moment when God created the world with a snap of his finger. There was a moment when he became angry and destroyed the world by flood. There was also a moment when he loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son to save his creation. At that moment we saw the grace of God in the flesh.

As Christians, we know that we must cling to our faith and live for God in the moment. We must praise him in the moment, live for him in the moment and give him our best one moment at a time because whenever we need him most, at that moment, he will be there.

Exposition

This text finds Job focusing addressing the ways that God focuses on single individuals, trying them with various "moments" every day.

Job's life was filled with a variety of "moments." Moments of triumph and success and moments of failure and loss. He had moments of health and strength and moments of illness and pain. He had moments of grand family celebrations and moments of loss.

In this text, Job is heard complaining in a moment of despair.

David looked at special moments in life too. In Psalm 30:5 he said, "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life: ?weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Even moments of weeping will pass, he said, when joy comes in the morning.

In Isaiah 26:20 we are encouraged to get close to the Lord in difficult times until the moment is past. Isaiah said, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, ?and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment ?until the indignation be overpast."

In Isaiah 54:7-8 God tells Israel there were times when they disappointed him, and he simply stopped blessing them for a moment, but not forever. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee;
but with great mercies will I gather thee. ?In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, ?saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

The hope of every believer is to look forward to another moment when we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That's what 1 Corinthians 15:52 means, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Job said God presents us with different kinds of moments every day. These moments serve to try us, trouble us, inspire us, energize us and give us hope.

Moments that try us

There are many moments that try us. Among them are:

MOMENTS OF FRUSTRATION: When obstacles get in the way of a goal we often become frustrated. Frustration can be caused by almost anything: falling ill in the middle of a big project, knocking over something and breaking it, turning the right way on the wrong street. The types of frustrations are endless, but they all have one thing in common, they try our patience. David became frustrated when he saw the wicked achieving success even though they lived ungodly lives. He was tempted to become ungodly himself until he dealt with the moment and wrote, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious of the workers of iniquity because they will soon be cut down." Job was tremendously frustrated, but he dealt with his moment by saying "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him." That's what every believer must remember as well. We must always trust in the Lord. Our testament should be, "In thee oh Lord, do I put my trust."

MOMENTS OF FEAR: Nothing is more frustrating than our moment of fear. These are the moments when we are troubled about the possibility of loss of life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness. Fear is grounded in the uncertainty of an outcome. If we expect that a circumstance will cause us to lose our lives, we become afraid. If we expect that an action may cause us to be incarcerated, banned or ostracized, we also become afraid, or at the least, apprehensive. Whenever we are blocked from involving ourselves in that which makes us happy, we get frustrated. If we like to fish, but the price of a fishing license is increased, we are frustrated as well. When the women came to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, they met an angel whose first words to them were: "Fear not." The words summarize the way we should deal with our moments of fear, "fear not." We should be concerned, but not fear the outcome because God controls the outcome. That's why David said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid." He also said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." -When moments of fear come, remember you are not alone, God is still on the throne.

MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS: Each person experiences moments of weakness. These are the times when the normally strong find themselves unable to deal with a temptation, problem or issue. It doesn't matter who we are, there are times when we are not as strong as we should be. Though we are strong, the sight of an unusually handsome man or a beautiful woman who gives us the "eye" could make even the strong weak. When we are broke, and an opportunity to take something without being

discovered presents itself, many falter. That's what happened to Samson, in a moment of weakness he told Delilah the source of his strength, and it ultimately cost him his life. What should we do when we are dealing with issues and problems and become weak? The woman with an issue of blood was dealing with a medical issue. She took it to Jesus and said, "If I can just touch the hem of his garment." That's the key to dealing with weak moments, we should take the issue, the problem the temptation to Jesus. Jesus said we should pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The Lord is the strength of our lives, in moments of weakness, we should lean heavily on him.

Turn to God

, brothers and sisters, the best way to deal with our moments is to remember that all things work to the good of them that Love God.

Troubles come in many kinds of packages, but God knows how to unwrap them all. He knows how to deal with our issues.

When we must deal with unpleasant moments, that's when it's time to take it to the Lord in prayer. He is a God of every kind of moment in our lives.

When we go to God in prayer, that's when we ask our God to help us deal with the moment. The moment we decide to do that, that's when we begin another powerful instance, a "God moment."

We know about a moment of frustration, but what is a God moment?

We know about a moment of fear, but what is a God moment?

We know about a moment of weakness, but what is a God moment?

A God moment is the instant we decide to take a matter to God.

It's the time when we say, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth."

David had many God moments.

When he faced wild animals, and that threatened his father's flocks, those were "God moments."

When he faced Goliath with only a slingshot and five smooth stones that was a "God Moment."

When Saul chased him and treated him like a criminal, those were God moments.

When surrounded on all sides, he still decided it was best to "look up!"

When Moses was faced with the tough decision about leading the people, he dealt with that moment of decision by climbing into the mountains to talk with God, and God spoke to him and showed him the way. He dealt with his moment of indecision by turning it into a God moment.

Abraham, a man of great faith, took God at his word that his family would be blessed and would multiply and went up into God's will.

Daniel refused to be intimidated by the prospect of hungry lions and went up into God's protection.

The Hebrew Boys faced with death in a fiery furnace or eternal shame before God

chose to go up into God's perseverance.

All of these men faced their trying moments; they decided it was best to turn them into God moments

When we go up to God, he will show us the way!

When we go up to God, he will take our:

—Questions and give us answers!

—Problems and give us solutions!

—Indecisiveness and give us decisions!

—Rough places and make them plain!

—Mountains and turn them into molehills!

I don't know about you, but I am convinced that no matter what the problems, God has a solution!

No matter how challenging the battle, God has a victory!

No matter how wide the chasm, God can help us to cross it!

No matter how big the adversary, God can help us to defeat him!

We serve a God who takes hollows out of valleys and levels mountains!

We serve a Savior who walks on water, floats on clouds and sits on the right hand of God.

When in distress, just call him.

Remember, God is still on the throne!

However, the best demonstration of a God moment that we have ever seen is that provided by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, he had to decide whether to drink from the cup or to let it pass.

I heard him say, "Never-the-less, not my will but thy will be done!"

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the dead with all power in his hands!

No. 9741-Communion

All you can Eat

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 17, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." John 6:11

Introduction

Have you ever eaten at a buffet at an all you can eat restaurant? If you have, you have probably noticed that many people get much more than they can eat. There are also others who barely get a full serving on their plate. There are some who stack their plates so high that they have to walk slowly back to their seats, hoping not to be bumped by anyone. Even though they can come back to the buffet as often as they like, they seem to try to get everything on their plate the first time, because there may not be another time.

Those who order from the menu differ from those who use the buffet. Those who order from the menu expect to receive one serving of each item that they select. They order from the menu because they have a discriminating pallet; they want their order prepared with or without certain seasonings or cooked in a particular way. They also want their order freshly made for them individually. The buffet is not individually prepared and does not appeal to the discriminating taste bud. The food is all seasoned the same way. It may or may not be freshly prepared; sometimes it may have sat in a serving pan for hours without being touched or stirred. The appeal of the buffet is not it's individuality, but it's quantity and variety.

Those who operate buffet restaurants use the law of averages to their advantage; it's the only way they can turn a profit. It works this way: For every person that has the appetite of a hog, there are two others who have the appetite of mice. One person eats more than he should, and the other eats less than expected. It averages out to about one serving per person; give or take a serving. That delicate balance is broken when some patrons stuff their purses and pockets with extra portions of their favorite meat or dessert. It is also thrown out of balance when some patrons get more than they can eat rather than all that they can eat. In those cases, the restaurant owner loses because patrons filled their plates, but left their selections barely touched.

Unfortunately, there are many people who approach matters of faith with either a menu or buffet attitude. There are many people who read passages of Scripture such

as Philippians 4:13 and they conclude that they can order life's entre's and desserts from a divine menu with everything prepared according to their own specifications. They expect a certain type of house, job, car and level of living with an ample supply of life's desserts. They see God as a divine waiter who takes their order and prepares the lives according to their own discriminating tastes. They expect him to check on them regularly and supply them with refills from time to time. If they like his service, then they will come to a place of worship occasionally and leave a tip in the offering plate.

Others approach faith matters as if life were a buffet. They see the wealth of God's creation on one side and the devil's spicy temptations on the other and decide to sample as much of everything as they can, even if that means wasting time, talents and resources. That was the case with the prodigal son. He was not satisfied with the plate his father's house prepared for him; he wanted life's buffet. He went into a far country and wasted his substance in riotous living. That's when he decided to arise and return to his father and ask forgiveness.

As children of the most high God, we know we cannot tell God what life we want and watch him jump to provide whatever we ask in hopes of a tip. We also know that we are not free to sample every temptation the world offers. Because we are God's children, we don't get to pick what's on our plate; he puts what we need on our plates; with just enough to fill us; no more and no less. Psalm 23 says he prepares a table before us. We are his children, and like children, we don't get to order independently off the menu or even go to the buffet of life unless he goes with us. If he does not go with us, we may be tempted to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and I shall not want." And start grabbing things indiscriminately. He goes with us and brings his rod and staff to comfort us and direct our paths.

As Christians, we have learned that if God orders our steps and fills our plates, we shall have all that we want or need because his grace is sufficient.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Christ in which he provided food for thousands, but they got more than they could eat and left fragments.

This passage occurred on an occasion when Jesus preached to a crowd of thousands who listened to him for hours. When the crowd became hungry, his disciples worried about how such a crowd could be fed. A boy with his own lunch of two little fish and five barley loaves offered his small gift which was blessed and used by Jesus to feed 5,000. A miracle was performed that day when the 5,000 sitting in 100 groups of fifty were fed fish and bread. When all had been fed, it appeared that many in the crowd grabbed more than they could eat because there were fragments. Christ ordered the disciples to pick up all of the remaining pieces. There were enough leftovers to fill twelve baskets. Jesus repeated the same miracle again. A crowd of four thousand was similarly fed in Mark15:36-38. In this instance, the people had followed Jesus for three long days and had nothing to eat. When he provided food for them, they got more

than they needed leaving seven basketfuls of fragments.

In both instances, the Lord provided for their needs, but they were so absorbed in their wants that they created waste by grabbing more than they needed.

This miracle demonstrates God's daily provision for us. He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We don't worry about each day because we know that the Lord will provide for us through his grace, and his grace is sufficient.

About Enough

ENOUGH FOR THIS DAY: Note that people in the crowd were given enough food for that day, but all that was left over was collected. There were no doggie bags. God provides our daily bread; there is no way we can store an overflow of blessings so they can be used another day.

When Israel wandered in the wilderness, God provided enough manna to carry them throughout the day or until the Sabbath passed and the next mealtime approached. If they tried to gather too much, it spoiled. They were supplied their daily need.

Today we are reminded that God can and will provide all our needs.

He often told his disciples to consider the lilies of the field and the sparrows in the air. They both receive what they need without worrying about loss or depravity.

Whatever we need for this day, God assures us that his grace is sufficient.

KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE ENOUGH: The disciples moved among the people and distributed food to each individual, but to have fragments left over it meant that some grabbed more than they needed. They did not know when they had enough. There are many people today who are unhappy because they have been given a full plate, but they can't fill their plate because they change the size of the plate! They get a bigger Plate. Our plate of blessings is proportioned by God to each of us. What we need is given to us by God independent of the size of the container we try to put it in. We have food, clothing, and shelter; that's enough. Enough may mean two chicken wings. Enough does not change simply because we change the size of the plate; two chicken wings are still enough. If two bedrooms in your house satisfy your needs, then buying a house with six bedrooms won't change the fact that all you need is two. We may have five pairs of shoes now, but building a bigger closet won't change the fact that five is all you need.

In Luke 12:16-18 Jesus gave a parable about a rich man who had filled his barns to the point of overflow. Yet he decided to build himself a bigger barn thinking that enough changed with his overflow. He did not realize that God had provided him enough; he tried to build a bigger barn and redefine enough. In a similar sense, those who are succeeding at reaching higher levels should always remember that the salvation is not in "bigger" or "more," but in understanding that everything comes from God. We show great wisdom when we know when to say enough is enough.

GOD WILL MAKE IT ENOUGH: The little boy only had two little fishes and five loaves of bread, but it was not sufficient to feed 5,000. They learned that day that God can take a little and make it enough. The disciples doubted the crowd could be fed but forgot about the power of God.

The disciples thought the little boy's groceries weren't enough, but they forget

Jesus was capable of providing more than enough.

Moses told God he did not have enough resources to face Pharoah who had an army. God told him he had a stick, and that was enough.

That's how we are. We look at what we don't have, but we overlook what we do have.

If we have an abiding faith in God, it will be enough.

I may not drive the car of my dreams, but I'm reminded in Acts 17:28. In Him, I live and MOVE and have my being!

I may not live in my dream house, but I'm reminded in John 14:2. In my Father's House are many mansions, and Jesus said He's Preparing one for me!

God specializes in taking your little bit and making it just what you need!

He is good at taking your last dime and flipping it into more dimes!

He is good at taking your little joy and giving you more joy!

Ask Hezekiah won't God take your last year and give you more years!

He Is God, and He Is Good At Being In Control!

Ain't no sense in me worrying about what I don't have because God is in control.

Until we get enough

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that God won't stop blessing us until we get enough!

It's a strange thing about country folks; they would feed a guest until he couldn't eat anymore because they wanted to be sure he got enough. They kept putting fried chicken and greens on that plate until the guest got enough! They wouldn't stop piling it on until they got enough!

The text says Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks to God, and distributed them to the people. Afterward, he did the same with the fish. And they all ate as much as they wanted.

The Bible says in Verse 11 that Jesus gave them as much as they wanted. That means not only did He have enough to feed everyone, but he offered them Seconds and Thirds! Until they had enough.

We need to remember that God won't stop blessing until we get enough.

Your Last Blessing wasn't your last blessing; you can get seconds if that's not enough! Your Last Miracle wasn't your last miracle; you can get seconds if that's not enough!

Your Last Breakthrough wasn't your last breakthrough, you can get seconds if that wasn't enough!

Ephesians 3:20 reminds us: God Is ABLE TO DO EXCEEDINGLY MORE THAN WE IMAGINE!

Just when you think your Strength is about to go down; He is able to give you MORE Strength!

Just when you think your good season is coming to an end; By your Faith, He is ABLE to EXTEND THE GOOD SEASON!

The good thing about the Lord is that he never stops providing!
What makes Niagra Falls great is that it never stops flowing!
What makes Trees great is that they never stop growing!
What makes the Sun great is that it never stops shining!
What makes the Seasons great is they never stop Changing!
What makes God great is the fact that he never stops making a way!
He started making a way down in Bethlehem!
For 33 long years, he never stopped making a way!
One day on an old rugged cross he died for our sins!
But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!
I know he He hasn't stopped making a way because he's making away today!

No. 9742-Inspiration

Black Lives Matter, Too

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 24, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Psalm 8:4-5

Introduction

Have you been following the recent wave of violence between citizens and police across our nation? There is a growing sense of desperation in the African-American community because it seems that the criminal justice system devalues the lives of its Black Citizens. Whether that is real or not is the subject to one's perspective; however, from the viewpoint of African-Americans, there is something out of balance with respect to the way the criminal justice system in our nation responds to minorities in this country. We are especially vulnerable to violence, higher rates of incarceration and death in the legal system than any other race in the nation. To us, it seems that what happens to an African-American mother, father or child does not matter.

In 2013, George Zimmerman was acquitted in the death of Trayvon Martin. That sparked a national outcry on Social media using the hashtag #blacklivesmatter. A built-in rage that has been building over the years was unleashed. The first cracks in the wall that held back our frustration came in 1991 with the beating of Rodney King, caught on video. Since that time our community has learned to reach for a cell phone anytime they see a police officer because they expect trouble, especially if the officer is white. That is obviously not always the case, but that was the feeling.

Then came the 2014 death of Micheal Brown resulting in protests in Fergurson, MO, and Eric Garner in New York City. Since then even more on camera deaths and abuses of Blacks by police actions or while in the custody of police have occurred. The list of names gets longer: Jonathan Ferrell, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, Samuel Dubose and in Baton Rouge, Alton Sterling. One man Philando Castile was killed in Minnesota even though he told police he had a firearm with a permit when he was stopped. Charles Kinsey in Florida was shot while laying on his back with his hands in the air identifying himself as a therapist for an autistic patient who was sitting next to him. When the officer was asked why he shot the black man, he said: "I don't know."

While these episodes were caught on video, there were thousands that were not: including the 2002 police shooting of William Henderson in Monroe, La in which police shot the mentally ill man 17 times. Before officers reported back to work, they had a drunken party on the levee to celebrate and called pedestrians who saw them "faggots."- Neither the city's black mayor or its white police chief refused to apologize for the death or even attend his funeral. Incidents such as these have accumulated over the years and have resulted in the universal outcry "Black Lives Matter."

There are many who believe that Black Lives Matter is a racist statement because it seems to suggest that other lives don't matter. They say "All lives matter" should be the chant. However, President Barack Obama said, "All Lives Matter" shifts the focus away from the source of the outcry; that there is an injustice being doled out to African-Americans.

Perhaps critics of the Black Lives Matter movement could understand it better if the outcry was "Black Lives Matter, too!" -That changes that conversation. "Black Lives Matter, too!" suggests that we are all God's children, every life matters, but there is a disparity somewhere.

We are extremely upset that some, in anger, are targeting police officers and shooting them indiscriminately. We are upset, over the loss of the life of police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge and other places. We are upset when the lives of children are taken by Terrorists in France; the LGBTQ community is attacked in Florida, or the lives of tourists are taken in Munich; our heart aches for them, but we still say Black Lives Matter, too.

Why do the lives of all men matter? Because we are all God's children. We are the handiwork of his creation. God takes note of the life of every person. Psalm 144:3 "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him." Every life is considered precious in his sight. We know that because Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of one of his saints." That doesn't apply to just black people, but it applies to all people. He made all of us in his image, and every one of us matters. The lyrics of the children's song say it best: "

Jesus loves the little children
All the children of the world
Red& yellow,black & white
they're precious in his sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

We know God is mindful of the lives of all people because he created all of us. The words of the Declaration of Independence say that he endowed each of us with "certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." So when the cry for Justice goes out from one sector of the nation in a rage over the loss of life, those whose deaths and misfortunes are trivialized cry out, "Black Lives Matter, too!"

As Christians, we are glad to know that our God values the lives of every one of his

creation. Regardless of color, he gave his life so those who choose to believe could have a chance at eternal life; even those who are rejected and ill-treated; your lives matter, too!

Exposition

This text focuses on a passage of scripture reminds every believer that God is mindful of the value of every person, but he is the creator of all

Genesis gives a description of God's creation of the world by singular spoken phrases such as, "Let there be light," and "Let there be a firmament," and "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth." However, when God decided to make man it switched from a singular act into a word of consultation, "Let us make man." The creation of man was a collaborative effort between the Father, Son, and the Word, indicated by the phrase, "let us."

Man was created with an expressed purpose in mind, for which the rest of the world was created as a preliminary act. Now that the preliminaries were settled, God said, "Let us make man."

Let us make man so he can have dominion over the rest of creation.

Let us make man of flesh and spirit, earth, and heaven, and give him authority over creation.

Let us make man and ally him with the elements, from the dust, but full of life; of the animals but far superior, but just lower than the angels.

Let us make man in our image. In the image of the fatherly God. In the image obedient son. In the image of the empowering, forceful and inspirational Holy Ghost.

The life of every man and woman is important in the eyes of God; not to be trivialized or dehumanized.

An assertion of truth

There are at least three thoughts that should be considered in light of this concern:

BLACK LIVES MATTER, TOO IS AN ASSERTION OF WORTH AND DIGNITY. There is something troubling when a person feels worthless; that's why Jesus reassured his disciples that he was concerned about their needs and welfare. He pointed them to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air and reminded them that if he is concerned with every sparrow, then they should know that he is also concerned about them. This is the way our people felt for over 200 years as slaves. They sang, "Nobody knows the trouble I see, Nobody knows, but Jesus." It was their faith in Jesus that helped them to stand in the face of a world that diminished their worth as human beings.

Today, the collective feeling of worthlessness and indignity is intensified when we see people who look like us being shot by police officers, beaten, brutalized or otherwise mistreated by the courts and prosecutors. A silent rage begins to build. Now, every video, snapshot and substantiated account of mistreatment crescendos until we ask

the question with the poet Langston Hughes, "What happens to a dream deferred, does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or does it fester like a sore and run - or does it explode?"

As we march in the streets to vent our anger, however, we must not let it reach a point where we lose the very dignity that we hold dear. All whites have no wronged us! All policemen have not offended us. Every prosecutor has not treated us unfairly. And we never want to give the impression that while we want our lives to matter, that our lives are more valuable than the police officer slain in the street or the victim of terrorism. With dignity, we can affirm the worth of all people and still say, Black lives matter, too.

BLACK LIVES MATTER, TOO IS A PLEA FOR JUSTICE: Black Lives Matter, too is a plea for justice: At the heart of the Black Lives Matter is a cry for justice. This has been the plea of God's people through all generations. The prophet Amos cried out, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." However, today the Black man says, "We want justice, too!" A Recent Wall Street Journal report of the sentencing commission said that African-American males receive 19.5 percent longer sentences and were 25% less likely to get sentences below the minimum guidelines. The report cited the fact that white offenders who use powder cocaine get shorter sentences than black offenders who use crack cocaine. A University of Michigan study showed blacks receive 60% longer sentences for the same crime committed by whites. Blacks who kill blacks get light penalties and parole. Blacks who kill whites, get longer sentences often without parole. This dark picture helps explain why millions of Black Americans are crying out, "Black Lives Matter, too!" -We deserve just consideration in the criminal justice system.

We all Matter to God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that every person matters to God. Jesus was often criticized for wasting time associating with people who did not matter to the general society. He was criticized for associating with publicans and sinners because, in the scheme of God's plan for Israel, they did not matter. However, when he chose to have audiences with the rich and the powerful as well as sinners, he seemed to say, "sinners matter, too."

When he openly held a conversation with the woman at well, who had been dismissed by the community because she had trouble keeping husbands, he made a statement, "Divorcees matter, too."

When a woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of his garment he stopped and noticed her touch; she had nothing to offer him, but the fact that he acknowledged her touch said, people with issues matter, too.

When Zacchaeus, a short man, tried to see Jesus by climbing a Sycamore tree, he told him to come down and spent the evening with him; that too made a statement, people who are out on a limb matter, too.

When he hung on the cross and told the repentant thief, "Today, you will be with me in paradise" - He made it clear that even the lives of criminals and thieves matter, too!

Even Roman guards who beat him and took his life on the cross, mattered to him because he said in his dying breath, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," the lives of the soldiers who were policing the streets of Jerusalem mattered, too.

Each person who came in contact with the Savior left feeling that they mattered in the sight of God. Whether it was a leper who had been healed or a man who had been ignored at the pool for 38 years. They were all happy to know that despite their condition that they mattered to God.

The lives of the poor matter, too!

The lives of the weak and distressed, matter, too!

The lives of the underserved and overly ignored matter, too!

The lives of battered women, abused children and the homeless matter, too!

Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, Brown Lives Matter, Red Lives Matter; every life matters to God.

We don't really deserve God's attention and special concern; that's why David asked, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Despite our flaws and shortcomings, God sees the value and worth of every human being.

We matter to God even though when we should be:

GOING FORWARD, we are often going backward; STANDING UP we are often somewhere sitting down;

SPEAKING AND TESTIFYING we never say a word; QUIET AND SILENT we are somewhere running our mouths.

CLIMBING HIGHER we often falling down; GETTER BETTER most of the times we are getting worse;

SOBER AND CLEAR HEADED we are somewhere getting drunk; DOING RIGHT we are somewhere doing wrong!

We steal from each other, treat each other badly, trample each other's feelings, and take each other's lives, and even still, we matter to God. In the words of the songwriter, "He looked beyond my faults and saw our need."

He saw a world that needs the saving Grace of Christ. He saw a world that more love and understanding and less prejudice, anger and hate.

We mattered so much to God that he sent his only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth in him ago ould not perish, but have everlasting life.

So, over 2000 years ago on a hill called Calvary, Jesus took the pain and hatred of the world into himself and died for the sins of the world; everyone matters.

The good news is that early Sunday morning he arose with the redemption for every life in his hands, proving that even the lives of the least of these, matter…

Too!

No.9743- Inspiration

Shall we Dance?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 31, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way." Psalm 37:23; "And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. 2 Samuel 6:14;

Introduction

Can you dance? Can you really cut a rug? Was there a time when you and the dance floor were good friends? The African-American community is familiar with dancing. Rhythm and dance is a part of our heritage. Over the years some dances that originated in the Black community have been adopted by mainstream America. In 1891 a dance called the "Cakewalk" took over America until it was displaced by the Charleston in the 1920's, The Lindy Hop and the "Jitterbug" of the 1940's. Some of the dances were innocent such as the "Pony" or the "Swim." When Chubby Checker came up with the "Twist" it shocked America because people were gyrating and twisting. More shock was added in the 60's when "Walking the Dog," "The Jerk" and "The Bump" became popular. Every generation had its share of popular dances such as the "Cabbage Patch," "The Prep," "The Reebox" and the "Perculator" of the 90's. Some remember "Crank that Soulja Boy," "The Dab," "The Robot," "Robo Cop," The "Nay Nay" and the Quan still get attention. Some even do the "Stanky Leg, " and some have pushed the limits of decency with "Twerking."

The subject of dancing has been a taboo in many circles because some mistakenly believe that any type of dancing is a sin. All dancing was outlawed in many Southern and rural communities, and movies such as Patrick Swayze in "Dirty Dancing" touched a cord when they focused on the issue. Black churches for decades resisted "Liturgical dance and praise dancing" -married to the belief that all dancing, even dancing before the Lord was bad. Dancing in itself has no biblical prohibitions, but dancing that promotes or encourages salacious thoughts or activity crosses the line.

There is one type of dancing that has parallels to our text for today: Line Dancing. Line Dancing is the black version of country Square Dancing, and it involves a whole group of people moving with the flow, to the direction of the DJ. He may call out "Two steps to the left, Two steps to the right, now Cha-cha, now!" Popular among the line dances is the "Electric Slide" and the "Cha-Cha Slide." Those who line dance don't need a partner they simply jump in the follow directions. That's different from the Soul

Train Dance line where each person came down the line and "did their own thing." In Line Dancing, you don't need much skill, but you can mess things up if you can't follow directions. In line dancing, as long as a person can follow directions, he or she can keep the pace, because every step you need to know is told by the DJ. All you have to do is follow the directions.

Following Directions! That's the heartbeat of our spiritual growth; the ability to follow God's directions. If we follow God's directions, we move when he says move, turn when he says turn, jump when he says jump, and when he says it's time to sit down, we do that, too. Life is enjoyable at any age because the pace of the dance is scaled to your age. A seven-year-old and seventy year can do the same line dance if they can follow directions.

As Christians, we are pleased that God choreographs and directs our lives. We are reminded that if we acknowledge him in all our ways, he will direct our paths.

Exposition

This text focuses on the truth that God orders the steps of those who believe in him.

David said two important things in the 37th psalm and verse 23.

First, he said, "The steps of a good man are ordered." The reference to "man" is gender neutral in the sense that the phrase "man" can refer to both a man or a woman. The steps mentioned in the text refer to the usual, daily, and routine of those who strive to do that which is right in the eyesight of God. The steps refer to the incidents of our lives. These are the high moments and low moments. These are the days of excitement, thrills, and joys as well as the days of struggle and trial. The steps are not ordered by God in the sense that they are commanded by him. They are ordered by God in the sense that he arranges them for us in such a way that we can understand, appreciate and glean from each day its fullest meaning.

The second part of the verse says, "and he delighteth in his way. The emphasis of the text is on an individual who pleases God because he freely allows God to shape him in a way that pleases the Almighty. God delights in the correctly punctuated life. It has meaning, order and a sense of divine purpose that pleases him.

The believer who seeks the ordered life is the believer who says to God, "You lead, I'll follow," "I submit myself to your will."

The Dance

WALLFLOWERS MISS THE DANCE: There are many people who can remember going to a school to dance during their early years; afraid of the moment when they would have to ask someone to dance or be asked to dance. Some go to the dance or prom fully dressed, but have no intention of dancing; they want to sit on the sidelines and watch as others enjoy the evening. Their reasons are numerous and often include

not knowing how to dance, afraid they will be laughed at, or that they will get on the floor and make a fool out of themselves.

There are many people who are afraid to reach out and claim the gifts and rewards that God has in store for out of fear. To these, God says, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." - Shall we dance? It is not God's intent that we be afraid to live the abundant life that he has in store for us, building the kingdom and preparing for the great life ahead. However, there are many people who do trust him enough to take his hand and step out on faith. Those who are afraid to make a little side step or even make one step toward trusting God's promise, should hear David's words, in Psalm 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Is there a dream that you should be pursuing, but you are standing on the wall watching others? Is there a move you need to make, but you are afraid others will laugh, or you will fail? If you are among those who are hesitating to make your move, today the hand of God is extended to you and the question is asked, "Shall we dance?"

BOTH PARTNERS CAN'T LEAD, ONE MUST FOLLOW: It is extremely difficult to dance if both partners in dance are trying to lead. It's a formula for failure. This is a truth that applies to many avenues of life. In a marriage, there is nothing but trouble if both the husband and the wife are trying to lead the family, especially if one says "Let's go right, and the other says let's go left." -Nothing gets done. When a couple dances they usually decide before they begin, "You lead, and I'll follow, or you follow, and I'll lead." When a wife tells her husband that she will follow his lead, it doesn't mean that she doesn't have the ability to lead, it means she knows that both of them can't lead, and since he represents Christ in the family and she represents the church, she lets him lead.

In the dance through life, there can only be one person leading. Even though Frank Sinatra made millions with his song, "I did it my way," those who invite the Spirit of God into their lives have decided that it's best to let God's way be "my way." This journey through life is a relationship that grows as we learn followship. We go wherever God tells us to go and do whatever he tells us to do, without question. These are the ones who sing the song, "Where he leads me I will follow. I'll go with him, with him, all the way." - Those who are tired of trying to live this life alone, dealing with your challenges alone and you want a relationship with God that can help you through each day according to His will, there is a heavenly hand extended to you and the spirit of God asks, "If you are ready, I'll lead, you follow, shall we dance?"

THOSE WHO FOLLOW LEARN TO DANCE BACKWARD: Some of the best types of dances are done with a partner. If your partner is a great dancer and you are not; it's best to let your partner lead. The strong partner will lead you into the turns, back you up, pull you forward and move you in a way that makes you look like a pro. However, no matter how skilled your partner, there must be a level of trust. It's better when there is a relationship of trust because those who follow often dance backward; it's awkward, but it's possible if you are following the lead of a person who knows the steps.

The Christian life is a life that is spent trusting God. That's why David said, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." It's as if God says, "You may not know all the steps in this dance called life, just hold my hand and follow me step by step, you can do this." You know the dance, so he tells you when you need to back up or turn, you can feel him tugging at you. When he backs you up, you don't worry about it, because you know that on the right count, he's going to bring you forward at the right time.

Trusting God is saying in your heart that no matter what happens you will not lose faith in God. It's remembering the words of Psalm 18:2 "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.."

Those who are ready for a relationship with God, one in which you are ready to acknowledge him in all your ways and trust him to direct your paths should see the hand of God being extended to them. What God offers everyone who trusts him is the knowledge that wherever you go, whatever happens to you, whether you are going backward or forwards, he will never let you go, make you look bad or fail you. If you are ready for a life of trust, the question is asked, "Shall we dance?"

EVEN IF YOU HAVE TWO LEFT FEET, YOU CAN STILL JOIN THE DANCE: There are many people who have "two left feet." If they tried to dance, they would probably look silly and make a fool of themselves stumbling and falling. However, with a great partner, even a person with two left feet looks good. If life is a dance with time, it's good to have God has a partner. He will look out for us. Psalm 121 says, "The sun shall not smite thee by day or the moon by night." It's guaranteed that we are going to stumble in life. There is no one living that will make it through the whole dance without stepping on someone's toes, bumping into someone or otherwise messing up.

Naaman had a disease and wanted to be healed. The prophet told him that to be healed he had to bathe seven times in muddy water. He felt silly doing what the prophet said, but he followed anyway. When he arose after the 7th time, he was cleansed. He looked good. You may think you will look silly trusting God, stepping out on faith and doing things that you have never done before, but with God leading, you will look good. An old song says, "If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there!"

DANCING WITH THE DEVIL REALLY MESSES UP: If life is a dance, we must be aware that not everyone who asks you to the dance has the best intentions. Sometimes the devil can mess up your dance through life. The devil goes through this life looking for someone to dance through life with. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us about this; it says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Dancing with the devil can get you in deep trouble, because his purpose is to get you to clown yourself, degrade yourself and to belittle yourself for the enjoyment of others. He wants you to twerk it, pop it and shake it to the cheers and laughter of others. Cameras will record your actions and your devilish dance in life is posted on Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and a dozen other places for the world to comment on critique and laugh at your public display.

If life is a dance, we need to be aware that dancing with the devil can lead us to

fatherhood before we are ready, with 21 years of child support to look forward to. Dancing with the devil can lead to jail time and down time, lost opportunities and failures and a multitude of mess ups.

When that happens, that's when we know that it's time to change partners!

That's what happened to David. He recognized that he started out dancing to the "Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want," but ended up being an adulterer and murderer. So, in repentance, he said in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." - He changed partners and gave his heart back to God. When he repented, he found God to be forgiving and loving almost saying, "Shall we dance, again?"

Shall we Dance?

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must recognize that our God wants to lead us to a life of fulfillment and happiness and is asking us to let him lead us in the dance of life.

There is no need for anyone to go through life despondent, lonely, frustrated and beaten, the inspiring, ever-present hand of God is extended asking us, "Shall we dance? -I'll lead, you follow."

Revelation 3:20-21 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me..."

If you ready to step out of nowhere and starting going somewhere, shall we dance?

If you ready to stand up in Christ rather than falling down in sin, shall we dance?

If you are ready to live the abundant life of faith and hope with your eyes on Calvary, shall we dance?

With the Lord leading you through the dance of life, you'll sing with Fred Hammond, "When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon my heart, I will dance like David danced. I will dance. I will dance. I will dance like David danced."

David danced because he had finally brought home the Ark of the Covenant and the people could worship in the presence of the Lord.

David danced because God had answered his prayers!

David danced because God had given him a victory!

David danced, but it wasn't dirty dancing; he was dancing to the glory of the Lord!

When the Lord has been good to you, you may be dancing, but you won't be Jigalating!

When the Lord has restored what you have lost, you may be dancing, but you won't be Perculating!

When the Lord has healed your body and gives you new strength, you may be dancing, but you won't doing the Stanky leg!

When the Lord has picked you up and turned you around, you won't be "Walking the Dog."

You'll be jumping and shouting like David, "I never would have made it without you Lord!

If you ready for a spirit filled life, shall we dance?

Come and go with me to an old rugged cross on a hill called Calvary!

Come and go with me to see His nail scarred hands!

Come and go with me to see His empty tomb!

It's empty because early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Come and go with me, I'll take you to a place where they will be dancing in the streets and shouting "I'm so glad I done got over. Done got over at last!"

Come and go with me to my father's house!

In my father's house, there is Joy! Joy! Joy!

Shall we dance?

No. 9744-Inspiration

When God makes life click

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 7, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Colossians 1:17-18

Introduction

Have you ever bought a product and then couldn't get it to work? We've all been there! It's the big screen TV we bought, assembled it, but then couldn't get it to work! It's the new cell phone you purchased with all of the bells and whistles, but you can't get it to work! We all know the feeling, we've opened packages and found plastic containers filled with screws and bolts, but even though we looked at the pictures, we couldn't figure out where they fit or what they were supposed to do!

When do you know that things are not working? You know things are not working when you go to McDonald's and order a small fry but have to pay for it on the lay-a-away plan. You know things are not working right in your house when you light up a cigarette so you can stand over it to keep warm! You know things are not working for you when you are planning your wedding, and you cut out the rice to save money.

We get frustrated when things don't work, but there is a reason behind the madness. A cell phone, no matter how expensive, won't work without a sim card, minutes, data plan or Wifi. A car will not run without fuel. Air conditioners don't cool without freon. A bicycle won't roll without both wheels. You can't make a cheeseburger without cheese. If something doesn't work, there is usually something missing! As long as something is missing or out of place, it won't work!

Sometimes it takes us a while to get the fact that something is missing. Consider the city boy who inherited 500 acres of prime farm land which he was told was worth a fortune, but could not be sold. The city boy was excited that this land would make him rich. He drove his Lexus to the farm ready to collect. He asked a neighbor what he needed to claim his fortune. "What you need is a plow," said the neighbor and the city boy bought a shiny new plow and set it in the field. He watched if for several days and still nothing happened. He went back to the neighbor and said, "I bought the plow like you said, but nothing happened." The neighbor said "of course you'll need some mules

for the plow" so the city boy acquired mules, hitched them to the plow as he spread out his handkerchief on the ground and sat waiting to see his fortune appear, but nothing happened. The neighbor passed by and saw him sitting on the ground watching the plow and mule and laughed. "Son, you're going about this wrong, you have 500 acres of rich farm land that could make you rich one day, but it ain't worth a dime to you if you don't put your hands on the plow!" - What was missing was the young man's willingness to work.

Just as bread without yeast won't rise, a Godly man's effort to make his life plan work won't succeed unless God is in the plan. Matthew 6:33 says, "See ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you." If we want our best plans to work, we need to have those plans centered around God and his will. One songwriter said, "Without God, I could do nothing. Without him, I'd surely fail. Without God, my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail.

As Christians, we know that we need the power of God to make our lives be what he intends for them to be. Whenever we are having trouble making it work, then there is a great possibility that we are trying to make God fit into our plan rather than fitting ourselves into God's plan.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he reminds the Colossians that God should be the center of everything they do.

Matthew Henry says Paul had three reasons for writing to the Colossians: First, he sought to show the deity and supremacy of Christ in the face of the Colossian heresy. Second, he wanted to lead believers into spiritual maturity. Third, he wanted to inform them about his state of affairs and elicited their prayers on his behalf.

Paul raised up Christ as the source of a believer's life; we do nothing without him, and everything we do is centered around him in some way. This is similar to the message he gave in Acts 17:28 "For in him we live, and move, and have our being…"

In verse 17, look at the phrase: "By Him all things consist." It was Paul's way of telling the Colossians that God is at the center of everything; He makes things happen. At the end of the sentence is the word "consist." Consist means to include, incorporate, and contain. This is one of the few occasions when we see the word "consist" stand alone. Usually, it is followed by something such as "consist of" or "consist in" or "consist as." When it is followed by something, "consist" usually indicates parts that make a whole. When it stands alone the way Paul writes it in this text, it indicates that the parts exist because of the whole. Put another way, the little things only make sense when they are part of the big thing. (The steering wheel of a car makes sense only because we know it is part of a car. Without the car, the steering wheel alone makes little sense.)

Paul said it simply, when God is in the mix everything in life makes better sense because we can see how our lives and its associated incidents are a part of his divine plan.

Applied Consistency

When we make our plans, there are a few things we need to make them work; they all revolve around that word consist.

UNGODLY PLANS DON'T WORK FOR GODLY PEOPLE: There is a strange irony of the spiritual life, an ungodly person can make an ungodly plan, and it will work for a while. However, a godly person who tries to make an ungodly plan will fail every time. A thief can make a plan to steal money and get away with it for a while. A godly man who makes the same plan will find everything going wrong, even if he doesn't get caught stealing. The Godly man knows that his plan must have God's blessing and "consist" or incorporate the will of God. Godly people operate within the will of God. Our restaurant is a Godly restaurant. Our clothing store is a Godly store. Our home is a Godly Home. Our school is a Godly school. If God is not the center of our plan, it won't work for us. Being at the center is crucial. Many people will buy a new house and put a cross on the wall or a picture of Jesus on the mantel, but they drink, gamble and have adulterous affairs in the same house. They may have the house, but it will never become a home until Christ comes off the wall and mantel and becomes the guiding force of the family. For children of God, we begin with what is right and the build our lives around it.

OUR PLANS MUST HAVE A GODLY CONSISTENCY: Those who bake know that flour, eggs, liquid, leavened and seasonings are necessary. However, the "consistency" of what is mixed depends on upon whether you want the final product to be chewy, soft, or mealy like corn bread. Consistency when baking refers to how the mixture holds together. Consistency is its thickness, its firmness or its solidity. Paul told the Colossians that "By him" or by Christ our lives have consistency. He is the mixture that holds us together. He is what makes us firm. If you bake a cake and it doesn't come out tasty, the problem is usually not on the stove, but in the bowl; it's in the mixing. If you put a lot of sugar in, expect it to be sweet. If you put a lot of meal in it, expect it to be grainy. If we put a lot of God in our mix, expect a life that is full of the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." With plenty of the fruit of the Spirit, our lives have consistency. If we can't get things to work, check the bowl, not the stove!

WHEN OUR LIVES CONSIST, THAT MEANS THEY CLICK: Look at Colossians 1:17 again. It says "By him all things consist." Consist also means to fit or click. So if you read the verse again, it says, "By him, all things click" When things click they make sense, and we understand better. When things click, we are able to see the big picture. A key makes sense when I can see the big picture and know which door it opens. The numbers on the face of a watch make little sense until we understand that they are pointing to sixty minutes in an hour and sixty seconds in a minute. When things click, you are able to connect the dots and understand the relationship between what you learn in school and what you need for life. When things click, you understand the

mysteries. When things fit, they all come together at the right time in the right order. That's the beauty of the believer's life; God makes everything click for us at the right time. It's like opening a combination lock. There are a certain number of turns to the left and right, but at the right time, following God's direction we hear a click and that which was locked is unlocked.

Only Christ makes our lives have meaning and purpose. We can do many things, but nothing seems to really click until we see how they fit into the will of God. Without God, everything we do seems to be a wasteful exercise. When He anoints what we do, everything clicks, fits and comes together in the right way.

If we want our efforts to succeed, put God at their center and watch everything fall into place and begin to "click."

He Makes it click

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that Christ is the center of our being, he makes it click for us.

Paul not only told the Colossians that through Christ all things consist, but he also told them how God made that happen.

In Colossians 1:19 it says, "It pleased the Father" that Christ would come to the earth and show the world how to reconcile sin and salvation and make them click.

In verse 20 the text says Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross" and brought the jangling ends of condemnation and forgiveness and made them click.

In the same sense, those who trust in the Lord know that he takes the jangling discords of our lives and combines them with his mercy and grace and makes things click.

Things may break down, but when God gets in the picture, our efforts to fix them begin to click.

Things may go wrong, but when God gets in the picture, our efforts to make them right begin to click.

We may have fallen, but when God gets in the picture, our efforts to stand on our feet again begin to click.

When things begin to click, God opens once closed doors!

When things begin to click, He makes opportunities available to us!

When things begin to click, He baffles our critics who doubt our abilities!

When things begin to click, He mystifies our skeptics who thought we were doomed.

How can we put it together again? How can we make things work? Is it possible to make things click?

That was the same set of questions posed to Ezekiel when he placed him in a valley filled with dry bones. He asked the question, "Son of man, can these bones live?" God says, even the driest bones can live again if they hear the word of the Lord.

After a while, bye and bye, there was a little clicking and the

The toe bone found the foot bone; there was some clicking going on!

The foot bone found the ankle bone; there was some clicking going on!
The ankle bone found the leg bone; there was some clicking going on!
The leg bone found the knee bone; there was some clicking going on!
The knee bone found the thigh one; there was some clicking going on!
The thigh bone connected to the backbone, there was some clicking going on!
The back bone connected to the shoulder bone, there was some clicking going on!
The shoulder bone connected to the neck bone, there was some clicking going on!
The neck bone connected to the head bone, there was some clicking going on!
You can't make it click, but when God gets ready, he can make things happen!
He can take hate and turn it into love!
He can take pain and turn it into gain!
He can take defeat and turn it into victory
I hear God talking to his son, saying "My people are in trouble. They are trying to get forgiveness by slaughtering lambs and cattle, will you show them the way?"
He prepared himself a body and came down through 42 generations.
He died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!
Today, he's alive, and he's still making salvation click for you!
Today, he's alive, and he's still making life click for you!

No. 9745-Inspiration

To the Unknown God

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 14, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Acts 17:23

Introduction

Do you know someone who doesn't know the Lord? Despite our advanced technology, social media, and live streaming capabilities, there are millions of people in the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ; they have heard the name, but they do not know anything more. There are also millions who do not have a relationship with him.

Those who do not know God usually believe in something; they just don't know God. It's easy for people such as these to become superstitious and believe the source of their strength and fortune is the result of an inanimate object. They place horseshoes over their doorways to bring luck to anyone who enters. They search for and cherish four leaf clovers to bring themselves good fortune. They wear good luck charms and rabbit's feet for luck. They have a charm for every situation, and even go to church, but do not know God.

There are millions of people who are atheists. They do not believe in the existence of God or gods. They think that if God existed that he would make himself known and that evil in the world would not exist.

Many people are agnostics. They neither believe God exists or that he does not exist. They believe that if there is a God that no one can know him, understand him or claim a relationship with him.

There are others who are cynics. Cynics believe there is no God, only people who are being manipulated out of self-interest and individuals who want to believe for their self-interest. They think faith is an elaborate con-game of the weak minded.

A skeptic is a person who accepts the possibility of God's existence but doubts it. The skeptic thinks that people ascribe to God that which occurs in the natural order but is unknown. A skeptic is waiting to be convinced.

A deist is a person who believes there is a God but believes that he created everything and stepped back and allows it work on its own without interference. A deist believes in God but does not believe he wrote a holy book, sends preachers or interacts

with people.

A believer is a person who looks at the world and says that it was not self-created. The systems of the universe, the laws of gravity, the rotation of the earth, the coming and going of the seasons, did not invent themselves.

Whoever started the earth spinning on its axis, he is God.

Whoever makes the sun rise and set each day, he is God.

Whoever controls the winds, puts sweet in sugar, cold in ice, and hot in fire, he is God.

A believer is a person who believes that God is Omnipresent, every place at the same time; Omniscient, knows everything; and Omnipotent, has all power in his hands.

Christians go even further, we believe that God loved the world so much that he sent a piece of himself to live among humankind to show us the way to live this life and to return to him after this life is over.

A believer is a person who also knows that God is personal, hears and answers prayers.

How do they know? They have tried him for themselves.

That's why believers must be careful about the way we live and move among our friends and neighbors. Many of them do not know God, but they do know us. We are the only Bible they will ever read. They study us. The watch us and they become curious about God because they have seen how he works in our lives.

As Christians, we are happy to report that God is real. We know he is real. In the words of the songwriter, we say, "Yes God is real cause I can feel him down in my soul. Yes God is real because he has washed and made me whole."

Exposition

Paul was in Athens observing the worship and beliefs of the Greeks. He noticed that they had a statue erected to the "Unknown god" among the other gods that they worshiped. Paul took the opportunity to tell them about Jesus, the unknown God that they never knew.

The Greeks had many gods, many of which were altered to fit their circumstances. There was ZEUS who was the Lord of the earth and sky. He controlled the destinies of men and their political fortunes. ATHENA was second in command. She was the protector of the cities. Her statues usually depicted her in full battle armor. POSEIDON was the god or protector of the waters. The fishermen and mariners prayed to him for calm waters.

As the Greek Empire spread throughout the world, its mythology had a way of absorbing the gods of conquered people and giving them a subsidiary place among the Greek gods that had similar functions. It is said that before Paul arrived in Athens that the city had endured a series of violent storms, and the Greeks prayed first from one of their gods to another: from Zeus to Athena to Poseidon, but the storms did not cease. Thinking they may have missed a god that was important they erected a statue to the "unknown God," and the

storms ceased. The statue remained after that.

Paul took advantage of the occasion to help them to know the God they referred to as "the unknown God."

An Unknown God

MANY FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO TRUST AN UNKNOWN GOD: There are many today who fail to achieve what they should because they don't know how Big God is and what he can help them accomplish in their lives. Those who do not know him, usually hedge their bets and place their hopes on what they know they can do themselves. They expect little out of life and usually achieve just that.

When we know God and trust the big picture he shows us, we are prepared to make the small sacrifices he demands to test us. Abraham was given a big dream, that all of the land he could see would be his one day and that his descendants would be innumerable. That was a big dream, but to achieve it required trust. Abraham was tested when he was commanded to sacrifice his son. He trusted that God would provide, and God provided exactly what he needed at the right moment.

Today there are many people who won't trust their futures to God because they do not know him. Because they do not know him, their expectations are reduced to fit what they actually know. Barack Obama dreamed of being President when he was in Elementary School. Bill Clinton, had the same dream in high school. Ryan Murphy dreamed of winning an Olympic Gold medal when he was eight years old. Today many people fail to dream big because they don't trust God to help them achieve what their minds conceive

Because God's power is known to us, we trust him to bless the work of our hands!

MANY HAVE TROUBLE OBEYING AN UNKNOWN GOD: Those who do not know Christ have difficulty obeying him because he is unknown; he is a stranger. One of the few times that a child is allowed to disobey an adult is in the case of strangers. Children are told never to obey strangers. When God is unknown, he is perceived as a stranger, and they have difficulty obeying him. They do not know him. They have no experience with him.

They have found it better to be safe than sorry. Those who know the Lord, have no trouble obeying him. The elements of the universe know him and obey him. After Christ calmed the storm, the men on board asked, "What manner of man is this that the winds and the sea obey him?"

Mark 1:27 notes that even unclean spirits know him and because they know him they obey him. The wind, the waves, and even unclean spirits have no trouble obeying because they know him. To them, he is not an unknown God.

Even today, many saints are ridiculed by those with less faith because they obey God and put him first in their lives.

They obey him because they know him. He is not an unknown God. He is the God who wakes them up in the morning and clothes them in their right mind. He is the God

who strengthens them when they are weak and picks them up when they fall. He is not unknown, and because we know him to be one who loves us, we freely obey his will.

TO MANY IN THE CHURCH, HE IS AN UNKNOWN GOD: There are millions of people who have been associated with the church, work in its ministries, sing, pray and even attend its worships, but do not know him. There are many who are church members but are not Christians.

They are members of a church, but they are not a part of the body of Christ. Despite all of the answered prayers, healing, and blessings, to many people Jesus is still "The Unknown God."

That's when we remember the 1972 Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes song title, If you don't know me by now, you will never, never, never know me!

The people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus, but they did not know him. They could not sing the words of the song that says, "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses.... And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

When you know the Lord, it is more than familiarity it is intimacy.

When you know the Lord, there is a closeness that exists between you and he that lifts you when you are down, inspires you when you are discouraged, and restores you when you are completely exhausted.

This is the intimacy that the old warriors sang about when they said, "I've tried the man, and the man is all right."

Because we know him

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that because we know God, we are able to face the unknown with confidence that he will guide us every step of the way.

Paul told believers that even though there were many doctrines being taught all around them, that they should remain focused on the doctrine of Christ as revealed to the apostles.

The Jewish converts had a doctrine based on Old Testament tradition, but they were told to stay focused on Christ.

All around them there would be people who did not know God, but they were urged to know God for themselves.

The Romans had a doctrine that saw Caesar as a god, to them Jesus of Nazareth was an unknown God

The Greeks had many gods; they even had statues to unknown gods; they could not understand how Christians could remain faithful to just one God and nothing else.

The believers were consistently serving the Lord because they had tried him for themselves.

Like the early Christians, we walk the same walk and sing the same tune. We serve God because he has made himself known to us and has supplied us with a hope that never diminishes, regardless of our situation.

It is because we know him, that we can sing with the songwriter: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.”

The Lord is not UNKNOWN to us, in fact, he is just the opposite, we know the Lord for ourselves.

When you know the Lord for Yourself, you know that when you are:

-Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

-In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

-Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

-Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread from on high. That’s why the old warriors cried out, “Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!”

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the songwriter says, “You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself!”

You got to know Jesus; you don’t need nobody else!”

There was an old man who had farmed all of his life and never finished school. At the age of 75, he decided to go back to school to get his high school diploma. One day in his English class the teacher told him about punctuations marks: question marks, commas, periods and exclamation points. To help the old man understand she said, you write an exclamation point wherever there is something to shout about! She said the Exclamation point goes at the end of the sentence. She noticed that each time the old man started writing a sentence, it was filled with Exclamation points even before the sentence ended!

The old Man said, “You said I’m supposed to put an Exclamation point when I gets to something to shout about. I got plenty to shout about. I see the sun rising in the morning and going down in the evening; that’s something to shout about!

“I wrote about my dinner, you see I had a few neck bones in a bowl, a slice of piping hot corn bread with a mess of freshly picked greens and that gave me something to shout about!

“I wrote about riding in my car, you see When I turned the ignition of my brand new truck I started clapping my hands and praising God! It may not seem like a big thing to some people, but the man whose had nothing but old jalopies that never started gets excited when he finally gets a car that starts! It’s something to shout about!

“I knows I’m supposed to put the exclamation points at the end, but it don’t seem that the Lord ever stops blessing me, I ain’t gon’ ever finish a sentence, because the Lord don’t ever stop giving me something to shout about!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, “You don’t know like I know, what the Lord has done for me! You don’t know, you “wasn’t” there, you don’t know when and you

don’t know where. You don’t know what the Lord has done for me!

When Jesus came to the world, he gave everybody something to shout about!

When he healed the sick and raised the dead, he gave everybody something to shout about!

When he died out on Calvary and arose Early Sunday morning....He gave the world something to shout about!

No. 9746-Communion

They sit down to eat and rise up to play

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 21, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Exodus 32:6

Introduction

Suppose each of us could take a year long vacation from God? How would we fare? Suppose we simply removed ourselves from all forms of godliness, worship, prayer and or spirituality and did our own thing; how would that work? It would mean that on Sundays we would not attend worship. We wouldn't attend Bible studies, prayer meetings or classes on spirituality. It would mean that we would go to work, enjoy our families, live in comfortable houses and enjoy everything under the sun. We wouldn't read the Bible, read religious literature, listen to religious music or speakers. In its place, we would wash our cars, clean our homes, buy new clothes, go to concerts and movies, watch television, have parties, bar-b-ques and have lots of fun! How would that work out?

In the 1990's Douglas Coupland wrote a book entitled "Life without God." In his writings, Coupland paints a picture of a world in which everyone makes their own rules, does whatever pleases them, and the pursuit of individual happiness becomes each person's "god." In fact, when Coupland wrote his thoughts the world was just beginning to see a new "god" rising like a golden calf before the people, it was called "Individualism." Its overriding philosophy was rooted in the belief that life is too short to spend it worrying about pleasing a God that cannot be seen when there was so much of God's handiwork around us to be enjoyed. The world began to say "Carpe Diem" or seize the moment and have fun.

Songwriters like Isaac Hayes wrote these lyrics in his hit song "Do your thing." "If there's something you wanna say, and talkin' is the only way, Rap on, oh, rap on

Cause whatever you do, oh, you've got to do your thing

If you feel like you wanna scream cause that's your way of lettin' off Steam scream on, scream on

If you feel like you wanna sing cause singing is your thing sing on, sing on

Cause whatever you do, you got to do your thing.

The Isley Brothers followed up with "It's your thing, do what you wanna do."

The trend became so noticeable that in 1966 Time Magazine's front cover had only three words, "Is God dead?" In the years that followed a trend toward lifestyles that said, "If it feels good, do it." The Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company used a slogan for its malt liquor "You only go around once in life, so grab all the gusto you can."

In comparison to the Pilgrims and early settlers who came to America with lives centered on some belief in God, today there are millions who are experimenting with or have adopted a lifestyle that assumes that God as a driving force in their lives, is dead. They are effectively living a life without God.

Of course, this idea of living without God is not new; it's been tried before. King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 8:15 "A man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labor the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun." In his youth, Solomon thought there was nothing better to do in life than to eat, drink and be merry. Following this idea Solomon did not waste time on religion or forms of godliness, he jumped head first into chasing women. In fact, he had 300 wives and 700 concubines. He partied hard and had plenty of feasts. From time to time he mentioned God, but not religious devotion. In the end, Solomon found that without God life has no meaning, direction or purpose. He came to a conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13 that we should "Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

As Christians, we believe that it is impossible to live a morally purpose driven life without God. We believe the words of the songwriter who said "Without God, I could do nothing. Without God, I'd surely fail. Without God, my life would be drifting, like a ship without a sail."

Exposition

This text focuses on the children of Israel as they began to celebrate a new form of godliness in the absence of Moses.

Israel suffered over 400 years of slavery in Egypt and was delivered from bondage by a God they could not see, but they knew existed. He answered their prayer of deliverance and opened the waters of the Red Sea and allowed them to cross on dry ground. He also destroyed their national enemy, the Egyptians, by drowning them in that same sea.

Now at the foot of the Holy Mountain, Mt. Sinai, the people waited for Moses to return from his climb to the top and talk with God about the direction of their lives. Moses was an 80-year-old man climbing a very steep mountain. When he did not return after several weeks, many presumed that he died. Without Moses, there would be no word from God or punishments either.

Some decided that what they needed was a God of the present moment, not the God who brought them out of Egypt. They built a golden calf and celebrated the death of Moses and his God and exchanged if for a calf. That celebration would include eating

and drinking in feasts before the new God and then rising afterward to "Play" or have fun.

At verse six the people sat down to eat and drink and followed it with orgies, parties, and drunkenness. All of this is described as "and rose to play."

Eventually, Moses came down from the mountain and condemned them for playing with their faith in God. He destroyed the golden calf and ground its powders into their drinking water.

He went back to God and asked forgiveness for their sin, and it was given.

The people were challenged to stand with God. Those who did were forgiven, those who did not were slain on the spot.

The Golden Calf

There are several thoughts we should consider from this text:

THE PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO PAY TO PLAY: The people were willing to pay heavily to participate in worship before the idol. Exodus 32:3 says, "And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron." All of the gold they brought from Egypt was turned in for the sole purpose of gaining the right to play. God never requests everything, but this new God of fun, leisure, and individualism demanded more from the people, they gave their golden and even took the gold from their children. Today, it is interesting that many people are willing to pay for their play, but may frown upon giving to God. In fact, they often say they can't afford to give to God because of the rising cost of their play. Economists report that many households in America spend more than 20 percent of their income on leisurely pursuits or "playthings." A family that earns $1,000 per month spends about $200 or more on CD's, DVDs, CableTV, Netflix, Movies, Concerts, theme parks, and smartphones. It does not matter what it cost to play; we will find a way. Such a family might set aside: $100 for tithe, $300 for rent; $400 for utilities, transportation, insurance and basic landline phone. Play costs remain the same even though the family has bought no food, clothes or household maintenance items. Some will use their tithe and even borrow, but play costs will remain untouched. Malachi asked the question, "Will a man rob God?" and the answer for many is "Yes if it means losing my playthings." When Israel thought God was not a factor anymore, he was eliminated out of the equation, and they paid to play.

THE PEOPLE WANTED A GODLINESS THEY COULD SEE: The Israelites wanted a physical manifestation of God in front of them; one they could see, feel and touch. In Egypt they realized the benefit of God's presence, but they never saw him. They saw the Pillar of Cloud that guided them on their journey by day and the pillar of fire by night, but they did not see him. They saw the Red Sea rolled back, but they did not see him. When Moses stayed away for so long they lost focus. In Exodus 32:1 the people told Aaron, that they were not even sure that Moses was still alive, so they demanded that he would "make us gods that shall go before us." They wanted something they could see as proof that the gods were with them. Today, there is an

equal demand from many people who want to see tangible proof that God is alive. If they pray, they want their prayers answered to the letter. If they live the Christian life they expect to prosper and have a nice house, car, and perfect health. They expect a special protection from all hurt, harm, danger and suffering. In their mind, this is physical evidence of God's blessing that they can see. Yet, God blesses them in many ways that often are unseen. He revives spirits, creates atmospheres of love, heals wounds, and answers prayers; none of which are usually seen. He is the same God today as he was in the past. He blesses, strengthens and renews continuously. We feel his presence every day, although we don't actually see his hand. Neither do we measure his presence by the number of visible things we can touch. "God is a spirit, and those who worship him, worship him in spirit and in truth."

He arose to pray

Finally, Brothers and sisters, out of a spirit of lost faith the people sat down to eat and arose to play, but Jesus in his last meal sat down to eat and rose to pray.

The Israelites, anticipating their new journey with the one God, rose to make sacrifices to many gods. In verse four they said, "make us gods" and verse four Aaron said, "these be thy gods" meaning they had abandoned their faith in one God who brought them forth in the past.

They arose to make sacrifices and then to eat, drink and play.

Even in the foolishness of the world, God is ready to forgive us, because he loves each one of us.

Matthew 26 shows us a striking contrast to Exodus 32. In Matthew 26 Jesus assembles his disciples in the upper room to share in a final fellowship with them. They all sat down to eat with him.

When the Israelites sat down to eat, they anticipated playing on tomorrow!

When he sat down to eat he anticipated that on tomorrow, that the eternal sacrifice would be made.

The Israelites were thinking about playing, but Jesus was thinking about paying; he would pay the cost of salvation.

We should always remember that "Our salvation is a free gift, but it was not free." Someone had to pay

Someone had to pay for all of our drinking and gambling!

Someone had to pay for all of our adulterous acts!

Someone had to pay for our abuses and misuses!

Someone had to pay for our miscalculations and mistakes!

Unlike Israel when Jesus rose, he did not rise to play, but he arose to pay.

Maybe that's why songwriter wrote, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe!" Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!"

Jesus sat down to eat with his disciples and told them that the bread would represent his body and that the wine would represent his spilled blood. He told them that as often as they shared in this supper, they would remember him and his sacrifice.

After the meal, Matthew 26:30 says, "They sang a hymn and went to the Mt. Olives." They sat down to eat and Jesus arose to pray.

His prayer in the garden was that his father would receive the work of hands.

His prayer was that the pain and agony that awaited him could somehow pass him by.

His prayer was that "this cup" would pass, but he said, "Never-the-less, not my will, but thy will be done."

When we arise, we should arise not to play, but to pray. Father let thy will be done!

We arise to pray because powerful things start to happen when we pray.

Prayer can take your failures and turn them into victories!

Prayer can take your blunders and turn them into blessings!

Prayer can take your fears and turn them into confidences!

Prayer can take your stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones!

Prayer can take your weaknesses and turn them into strength!

In Jesus' name, burdens have been lifted!

In Jesus' name, finances have been restored!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, who arose early on Sunday morning!

Jesus didn't arise Sunday morning with "Play on his mind," but with Power in his hands!

No.9747-Inspiration

When a Bigot Meets the Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 28, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities;" Acts 26:9-11; "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Acts 26:14-15

Introduction

Have you ever met a bigot? If you haven't you probably didn't recognize him or her because there are some shades of bigotry that defy discovery while other forms are easy to see. When we recognize a bigot, we point him out, but we become defensive if someone points out that we demonstrate bigotry ourselves.

In recent weeks there has been considerable debate about the subject of bigotry. One Presidential candidate calls another candidate a bigot only to be answered by counter charges. The issue continues as both candidates try to slap a larger label of "bigot" on the other.

What is a bigot? A bigot is a person who is strongly intolerant of anyone who has a different point of view of the world and treats those who are different with disdain. Their intolerance is usually based on the assumption that their view is the right view and that the presence, view or lifestyle of those who are different is bad for everyone.

We have seen bigotry in its many forms, especially with respect to the American government. The founding fathers of this nation believed God gave America to white people and, until amended, the Constitution counted Blacks as only three-fifths of a man. The Declaration of Independence, written by white men described Native Americans as "Merciless Indian Savages" and ignored women altogether. It was Andrew Jackson who took Native American lands and forced them to move to Florida and then gave their lands to slave owners in the South. Woodrow Wilson was a champion of the Ku Klux Klan and showed Klan movies in the White House. Lyndon Johnson created the modern welfare system that he said would ultimately re-enslave blacks and "tie niggers to the Democratic party for 200 years."

In the 2016 presidential race, Donald Trump and Hilliary Clinton are calling each other bigots. Clinton says Trump is a bigot because he wants to build a wall to keep illegal immigrants out of America, wants Muslims checked before entry and is supported by the Ku Klux Klan that dislikes both blacks and Latinos. Trump says Clinton is a closet bigot who is not as blunt as he is but is a bigot just the same because she and her husband posted their Clinton-Gore Presidential campaign banners against the backdrop of the Confederate Flag in the Southern States, she called Black youth "Superpredators" and when running against Barack Obama in 2008 she floated pictures of Obama dressed in Muslim clothes and appealed to "White Americans" to support her election. Each seems to be a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

Yet, bigotry is not the sole province of others because we have often shown intolerance to others and have been bigots ourselves. As a community, we often make racially tinged jokes about whites, Jews, and Mexicans. We paint with broad strokes and refer to all whites as racists, rail against all rich people and despise any blacks that we think are trying to speak like, dress like or act like them. Our bigotry goes further, many of us ridicule and ostracize gays, speak against blacks who move out of the hood and call each other derogatory names based on shades of skin color. White people have no monopoly on bigotry; African-Americans have our fair share of bigotry.

Bigotry works its way down to the school yard. Children make fun of other children who dress differently, speak or look differently. Often overweight students or those who have physical challenges are the objects of bigoted jokes, stares, and ostracism.

If bigotry is widespread, what happens when a person who espouses bigoted views meets the Lord? Is it possible for such a person to see the light? The answer to that question is best reflected in the life of John Newton, an avowed and bigoted slave trader who spent most of his life persecuting Africans and enslaving them. During a storm, he became ill and prayed to God for deliverance. That deliverance opened his eyes to the error of his ways, and he spent the rest of his life telling the story of his life as a bigot, slave trader and confessing the error of his ways. He wrote a song about it that has become the anthem of The African-American church, "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, blind, but now I see."

As Christians, we have learned that when our bigotry and bias comes face to face with the Lord, the power of love will override our differences every time. We pray that God will open our eyes and those of the people who lead us, that we may see.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he testifies before King Agrippa about his life as a religious bigot and his conversion on the Damascus Road.

The Apostle Paul was perhaps the most famous Christian convert..

He was often jailed and persecuted for his belief in Christ. Ironically, while he was one of the most prominent proponents of the faith, there was a point in his life in which he was also one of its strongest enemies.

Chapters 25 and 26 of Acts give a picture of Paul standing before two important government leaders telling the story of his faith. In chapter 25 he stands before Festus. In Chapter 26 he is standing before Agrippa.

In the first 22 verses of the 26th chapter, he gives his personal testimony. In verses 4-11 he spelled how he was a Pharisee, a leader of the Jewish faith and dedicated to the destruction of the Christian movement, believing it to be a cult. He believed Christ was dead. He believed those who continued to speak and teach that he
was alive were a danger to the Jewish faith. As a young rabbi, he worked hard to persecute every Christian he came in contact with, jailing them and persecuting them.

However, in verse12-13 he points to a deciding moment in his life when he came face to face with the truth. This is where he "saw a light."

In verses 14-18 he notes that he heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him challenging him to change his direction in life. In verses 19-21 he told them how he decided to obey the voice of God.

Shades of Bigotry

Jesus spent most of his adult life trying to break down walls that divide and to announce the acceptable year of the Lord. To reflect the teachings of Christ:

WE MUST STOP STUMBLING IN THE DARK: The Jews believed in one God and faithfully followed him. They loved anyone who was a Jew or embraced the Jewish faith and viewed everyone else as a "Gentile" or a person to be ostracized, avoided and rejected. It didn't matter if the Gentile was a great citizen, helped the poor and needy, and lived honorably; he was considered a sinner by the very fact that he was a non-believer. They prohibited their daughters from marrying gentiles and avoided business relations with them. They even prayed for their destruction.

These were the dark ages of the faith. It was a time when bigotry was openly displayed by the people. It was a bigotry so great that when Jonah was commanded by God to go to Ninevah to preach repentance to the Ninevites, he refused to go because of his dislike of Ninevites. It was only after three nights in the belly of a whale or great fish that he saw the light. Yet, his bigotry is noted. It was a time when Jesus was criticized for talking to a Samaritan woman at the well because there were bigoted ideas against women and Samaritans at the time.

Wars were fought with the Amorites, Jebusites, and Philistines all because they were not perceived to be persons favored by God. Their religion was the right religion; all others were against God and should be destroyed.

Their bigotry reached a point that they considered themselves righteous, but anyone who was not righteous did not deserve to live. The crowds found a woman about to be stoned who was an adulterer caught in the very act. The crowd of bigots held stones in their hands and were about to kill her when Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."

Today, there are many who believe their way of life is the right way, and all others

are wrong. We may believe we are right, but we become bigots, stumbling in the dark, when we enforce our belief on others and treat them differently because they do not agree. We believe in the right to life, but we don't have the right to blow up abortion clinics or to persecute those who do not share our view. We believe that marriage is between a man or woman, but if we persecute those who do not share our view, we are stumbling in the dark. We believe that a family is composed of a mother, father, and children where possible, but we can't persecute those who do not share that view; if we do, that makes us bigots.

Stumbling in the dark, Paul persecuted Christians because he believed that they were an abomination to God. He worked to imprison them and to eliminate their teachings from the community. It was a period of darkness that did not change until he met the Lord.

WE MUST FIND COMMON GROUND: On the Damascus Road, Paul said he heard a voice and saw a light. Afterward, he submitted himself to the will of God, and his life was never the same. Bigotry will end in America when we reach a point in our lives when our eyes open to the fact that we are all God's children, and we need each other. The least known person is still important, despite his anonymity. The king needs the common man, and the common man needs the king. That is the driving point of the story of the Lion and the mouse. One day the mighty lion captured a little mouse who pleaded for his life and pledged to return the favor one day. The lion decided to humor the little mouse and let him go. Months later the lion was caught in a hunter's net and could not escape despite his power. Along came the little mouse who remembered the respect shown to him and he freed the lion by knawing away at the ropes until the Lion was free. The lion never suspected he would need the mouse one day.

Bigotry ends when we see each person as a child of God and that we need each other to survive. That's when Mr. Bigot learns after his hospital stay that his life was saved by both Native American and Black blood donors. That's when Miss Bigot learned that when her home was destroyed that the first people who helped her were the neighbors she called rednecks and peckerwoods. Bigotry ends when we can find common ground.

Common Ground is where we can look beyond our differences and focus on what we have in common. Bigotry thrives in segregation and separation. Bigotry grows with stereotypes and innuendoes. When we acknowledge the father of God and the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humankind, barriers begin to fall as we find common ground. When we hear a voice and see the light, it is easy for us to find common ground.

Meeting the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must recognize that viewpoints, opinions, and lives are changed when we meet the Lord.

Despite all of Saul's training and knowledge, he did not make a change, until he met the Lord.

Despite all of the political experience, contacts in the Jewish community and connections with Rome, his life did not change until he met the Lord.

On the Damascus Road, Saul saw the light and heard the voice of God for himself. He was never the same. It was his defining moment.

Defining moments come when everything he had learned, seen and heard merge at one time in a way that made everything crystal clear.

We know this feeling because we've had our own Damascus Road experiences. That was the point in life when you decided that "I must do something about my future."

It's the point when you decided "I can't go on like this, something must change!"

It's the point when your eyes open, and you see that "My present course is leading me toward disaster."

There on the Damascus Road, the Spirit of the Lord opens your eyes, and you experience the presence of God for yourself.

On the Damascus Road, the Lord gives you a new experience, a new song to sing, and a new testimony.

Travelers on the Damascus road sing, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, seeking to rise no more. But the master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I. Love lifted me."

When our problems, frustrations, and hang-ups meet the power of the cross, our entire lives change.

The power of the cross changes darkness into light!

The power of the cross takes my downs and turns them into ups

The power of the cross picks me up and turns me around again!

That's why the songwriter wrote, "At the cross at the cross where we first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I'm happy all the day."

It's where Jesus died over 2000 years ago!

The cross reminds that he died on Calvary!

But every time we see it, it also reminds us that early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

No. 9748-Inspiration

The Rewards of Positive God Talk

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 4, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:32

Introduction

Have you ever seen someone talking to themselves? What did you think? Have you ever talked to yourself? What did you think? It is not unusual to talk to yourself; in fact, psychiatrists have a term for it, "Intra-personal communication." Children and the elderly have a tendency to talk to themselves out loud. The rest of the world engages in self-talk, too, but usually, it is done privately or with inner voices.

There are various types of self-talk such as reciting a list of what you need to do or what you need to eat. Talking it out in our heads helps us to make decisions. If someone stumbles upon you while you are going over your list, you will respond, "I'm just thinking out loud" they think nothing of it and it passes. Secondly, we talk to ourselves when we are alone and talk out loud asking ourselves questions or laughing at our own jokes, especially when we did something stupid or silly. - No problem. A third way we talk to ourselves is when we are memorizing, like students who often walk to class reciting test information, formulas, and notes. Nobody cares. However, people get worried when they see you walking around talking to your imaginary best friend. We get especially worried when they imaginary person starts to talk back.

There are some people who talk to themselves because they are like the nutty professor who said he talked to himself because he had to talk to the only person in the world who knows what he's talking about!

While there are people who talk to themselves about all manner of things, there are others who have God talk. Those who engage in God talk usually talk about God, with God, and for God. They talk about God with great expectations; they talk with God with great humiliation and submission, and they talk about God with great passion and commitment. For the faithful, positive God talk has a remarkable effect on their ability to cope with the struggles of life and feel good about the eventual outcomes of life situations.

Other people see the scriptures that Christians recite and write them down as if they are magic verses that can be memorized and they will lead them to the same results as the faithful. That's when they learn that positive God talk only works for those who believe because all others won't recognize him when he talks back or shows up. It's like memorizing a shopping list of apples, bananas, and oranges and going to the store reciting the list repeatedly in your head. If you walk every isle in the store reciting the list precisely, you can return empty handed if you do not know apples, bananas, and oranges when you see them. You could be standing in front of them and not recognize them although you recited the list precisely. In the same sense, positive God talk only works for believers because they know how to recognize when God answers. They know what they are looking for.

In matters of faith, it's a good thing to talk to and engage in positive conversation with others about the greatness of God and how important He is to your life and family. It's talk about what God has done, how he has touched your life and opened your eyes to things that have always been there, but you have not seen. Privately, it is important to talk positive God talk to yourself to remind yourself of who you are to God and what is he to you. Positive God talk is contagious. As you talk about what God has done for you, your excitement sparks the interest of others who want the relationship you have found!

As Christians, we admit that we talk to ourselves about God all the time. We also admit that we talk to an invisible friend named Jesus and although it may seem crazy to others, he talks back. That's why we sing, "And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Exposition

This text focuses on two men who were engaging in negative talk until Jesus showed them the beauty of positive God talk.

This text happens immediately after the crucifixion of Christ. Believers were hiding in shuttered houses, catacombs, and wooded areas. They were afraid and sad because of the death of Christ. These two men walked along the road and were joined by Christ in their walk, but they did not recognize him. Their entire conversation focused on the wrongness of the crucifixion, and about Christ's innocence.

They talked about the different ways that Christ was persecuted, hunted and falsely accused by lying witnesses. They talked about how Pilate found him innocent but allowed him to be crucified anyway.

Their talk focused on everything that went wrong. They focused on the trial, the religious leaders, the borrowed cross, the soldiers, and the mocking crowds crying crucify him. They believed Jesus to be a mighty prophet who died too soon. As they walked, Jesus flipped the conversation. At verse 25-26 he said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Beginning at verse 27 he started to show the positive side of the crucifixion, first that he had to happen to fulfill the scriptures. Secondly, the details of the death were gory, but they were necessary for the glory of Christ and the coming Kingdom of God. Think of the blood spilled as representing his New Testament. Think of his body as representing the living sacrifice needed for the forgiveness of sin.

After saying these things, Christ broke bread with them, and suddenly they recognized him; just as sudden as they saw his glorified person, he disappeared.

That's when the text verse was spoken, "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

When Christ helped them see the situation in light of God's will, they understood things much better. They could see the big picture! They were excited. Their conversation changed. It was positive! It was constructive! It was believable!

Talking Positive

Believers who are working to build the kingdom of God should approach their labor with positive God talk. When that happens service in the kingdom is no longer seen as a tiresome, expensive task, but a spiritual adventure whose ultimate goal is the building of the kingdom of God. We all need to consider the following:

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT TO OTHERS FILTERS INTO OUR LIVES: What we say about our situations sets our focus and filters into our lives. No matter what happens to us, the way we talk about it determines how it will affect us. When your talk is positive, good things start to happen. If there is a storm and your home is destroyed, positive God talk praises God for life and asks for strength to pick up the pieces. When your talk is negative, you focus on your losses, the pain you feel, and the misery. Negative talk limits your recovery and limits your ability to rebound because you are making God wait until your pity party is over before he can help you. Jesus taught that you are to talk TO your problems and not ABOUT them.

It gets even worse when we talk about our problems with everyone. They join in your pity party and your problems take hold of your mind and take over the high ground. You go to sleep thinking about problems and wake up thinking about problems. Each time you talk ABOUT your problems they gain strength and you become weaker.

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus said, "..For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you." He wasn't speaking of a literal mountain, but he was speaking about mountains of concerns. If we speak to our mountains in positive God talk, we say, "You will not defeat me. You will not Conquer me. I will not give up without a fight; God will help me in my battle!" If we fail to speak positively and focus on the negatives, we give the devil power over our situation. Positive God talk filters itself right into your life. Believe God's will, pray for God's will, speak faith in God's will, Receive God's will.

WHAT WE SAY TO OURSELVES SETS OUR DIRECTION: What we talk about to others has a lot to do with what we say to ourselves. Our self-talk is a reflection of what we believe about our relationship with God and what we mean to him. What does the believer say to himself constantly to avoid the frustrations and fears that cause others to stumble? The believer constantly reminds himself that he is a vehicle that God intends to use to build his kingdom and that as long as he allows himself to be used for that purpose, God will break every chain that binds him and open every door closed in his face.

I must remember God is the source of all of my talents and abilities. My ability to work hard and achieve high goals came from God. God put the desire and power to achieve my goals in my heart. All that I am or ever will be comes from God for the purpose of building his kingdom. As long as I am committed to his kingdom, anything I need to achieve that goal will be made available to me, one way or another. God's storehouse of blessings is full, and he who made the world and everything in it has plenty of resources to supply my needs. All I need to do is live a life dedicated to accomplishing his will and leave the rest up to God.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." That means I must set my mind on God's kingdom before everything else, and all the rest will come to me."

Here's the self-talk: "If I do my part, God will do his part. I don't need to worry about the future. God knows what I need, has what I need, and is ready to fill my cup until it overflows.

Here' more self-talk: "When I get in agreement with God and live according to his excellent plan, He opens the windows of heaven, and his blessings fall all around."

POSITIVE SCRIPTURE TALK REINFORCES OUR FAITH: Believers can use positive self-talk and to talk to others with positive God talk because the basis of their belief is in the written word of God. They trust God's word and accept it as the guiding principle of their lives. Believers understand God and how he works and constantly remind themselves of how he works through remembering what they have learned about him and what he has promised to do for them if they live according to his will. When a believer quotes scripture, it is not a magic verse that is supposed to make things happen; it is a reminder of what he has promised and what they have promised him. There are many in the world that live outside of the will of God and quote scriptures expecting results. Believers quote scriptures, but we don't expect results that we prescribe, we expect God's will for us to to be done.

Scriptures from the Bible are short versions of what we have learned to trust about God. They remind us to do our part so that God can do his part and accomplish things we cannot do by ourselves.

When we face opposition trying to do God's work, there is positive Scripture talk: Romans 8:31 " .. If God be for us, who can be against us?"

When our chances of succeeding are small because so many are against us, therein is the need for positive scripture talk: 2 Chronicles 20:15 " ..Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."

When we get tired and weary after dealing with our situation for such a long time, there is positive scripture talk: Isaiah 40:31 "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Nothing but the Lord

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must be ready to lift God up and praise him, because when we talk God up, we talk Satan down!

The men on the Emmaus Road started out talking about how bad things were, but after they had a talk with the resurrected Lord they had nothing but positive God talk!

They did not focus on the crucifixion, but on the resurrection!

They did not focus on the negative words of the crowd, but on Christ saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

They did not focus on the crucifixion day, but talked about Sunday morning!

That's why good Baptists never leave a worship without reminding themselves about Sunday morning.

Every time we think about that Sunday morning, we are reminded that he lives. As long as Christ is alive, we know we can make it because he has all power in his hands.

When God has moved in your life, it's a good idea to fill your mind and heart with positive God talk.

Talk about the wonderful things he has done in your life.

We must talk about the confidence he inspires in us!

We must talk about the strength he renews in us

We must talk about the hope he stirs in us!

Even when life tests us, and things get a little rough, we still should have positive God talk and say, "I know the Lord will make a way somehow."

When the Lord has picked you up and turned you around, and planted your feet on solid ground, you got to tell somebody!

Tell them in the old fashioned way, "It wasn't nothing but the Lord, chile! It wasn't nothing but the Lord!"

It wasn't nothing but the Lord who snatched me out of the mouth of death and gave me a few more years!

It wasn't nothing but the Lord who lifted me from a life of sin and gave me another chance!"

It wasn't nothing but the Lord who heard my prayer in the middle of the night!

I don't have nothing bad to say about him because "One day when I was lost he died upon a cross!"

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

That's what I'm talking 'bout!

No. 9749-Grandparents

The Three R's of Grandparenting

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 11, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Ruth 4:16-17

Introduction

There was a time when all anyone had to learn in school were the three R's. Do you remember them? They were: Reading, Riting and Rithmetic. These were the essential things that anyone who lived on the farm or in the rural South needed to manage their affairs sufficiently. Three R's were considered the basics that any person needed to get by in the agricultural south; there were never any plans for life when more than the three R's were necessary.

Today, times are different. We need more than the Three R's. No one can function well in today's electronic era filled with smart phones, online banking, email, texting and online transfers. Life is so complicated that a high school education is now considered the Three R's, the "Raw Requirements for Regular living."- A high school education what is needed just to survive, whereas it was once considered an admirable termination point for many. The demands of the times have changed what we call basic.

Parenting is changing to meet today's fast-paced world. Time is a premium and quality is often sacrificed. Time to talk is a premium because of the demands of an extended workday and the competition with cell phones, television, and other electronics. Instant grits and oatmeal have replaced the 15-minute kind. Showers have replaced baths, microwaves are increasingly replacing stoves and day care centers are becoming the nannies of the next generation. As parenting changes, however, the basic expectations of grandparents have not changed. The Three R's of grandparenting remain the same: Roots, Relationships, and Reverence. There may be more, but these three are the Three R's, the very basics for all grandparents.

As Christians, we praise God for grandparents and for the gift of grandchildren. Our prayer is for long life, health and strength to continue living the three R's in their presence.

Exposition

This text focuses on the influence of a grandmother that changed the course of biblical history.

The central characters in the text are Naomi and Ruth.

Naomi married a Jewish man. The couple had two sons. When the land fell on hard times, the family moved into the land of Moab because it had been reported that there was plenty of food there. In the course of 10 years, both of Naomi's sons died leaving only their widows who were natives of the land and Naomi herself. One of her daughters in law, Ruth, refused to return to Moab. She stood by the older woman, pledging to stand with her, go with her and to learn from her. "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God."

Naomi was frustrated because both her sons died and left her with no grandchildren, and no heirs and Ruth with no husband.

The women of the community looked at Naomi with pity because she had no grandchildren, but Naomi arranged for Ruth to meet and marry Boaz. When Boaz and Ruth bore their first son, it legally became the grandson of Naomi.

The women of the community came out to celebrate the birth of the child.

The women did not celebrate the mother, Ruth; they celebrated the grandmother. Yet, they celebrated the fact that Naomi had an heir and was not a grandmother

Ruth and Boaz were quickly moved to the background and were never mentioned again. All through the book, their romance was the central theme of the book. However, after the marriage and the child was born the grandmother became the focus of attention. It was as if the people walked in smiled at Ruth, picked up the baby and hugged the grandmother leaving the mom and pop scratching their heads. In fact, after the child is born, Ruth is never mentioned again, only Naomi and the grandchild.

Look at the way the passage reads, "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became a nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Naomi's life work would be to serve as the great-grandmother to King David, the greatest king of Israel. The book of Ruth exists because it tells the story of the grandparents and great-grandparents of David, the great king of God's people.

Long after Naomi left the earth, a child would be born in Bethlehem, who would save his people.

As a grandmother, Naomi guided Ruth and used the Three R's to nurture her grandson to have the qualities that God could use for his purpose.

The Three R's

Naomi's role as a grandmother challenges us to revisit the Three R's of grandparenting for today's generation. They begin with:

Knowing Family Roots

The book of Ruth traces the roots of King David the King of Israel, and it does so by focusing on the lives of the grandparents. The first 17 verses of Matthew 1 cite a long history of grandparents, great grandparents and great-great grandparents whose life work paved the way for the coming of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Joseph's father was named Jacob; he acted like a grandfather for Jesus. Matthew 3:23 tells about the grandparents of Mary (Although Mary's name is not used, but her husband's). Her father was named "Heli." The two books make it clear that there was a grandparent presence in the life of Christ and should be in the life of every family.

Paul wrote two letters called I and II Timothy. He acknowledged that Timothy's Christian faith had its roots in his grandmother. Paul tells it clearly in II Tim. 1:5-" When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that is in thee also."

Christian grandparents give their grandchildren deep roots with the assumption that what they say to them today will plant seeds for the lives they will live tomorrow.

Consider the little boy who grew up in the only house in his subdivision that had trees. His family lived in the area for several generations and trees of all kinds surrounded his house. All of the other houses had small shrubs, pretty grass but they had no trees. In the summer, the boy enjoyed the shade of the big trees that were almost 75 years old and climbed high in their limbs. On his 13th birthday, the boy's father came home with a small seedling in his hand and took him by hand in the yard. When questioned his father said, "It is the family tradition for every child on his or her 13th birthday to plant a seedling in the yard.â•• How long will it take for this tree to get tall enough for me to climb?" asked the boy "About 50 years." Came the answer. "I'll be too old to climb it then," said the boy. "We have trees around this house because your great-grandparents came here on their 13th birthday and planted the first tree. The tree you are about to plant is not for you to climb, it's to provide shade for your great-grandchildren."

As parents, we are not always able to spot the qualities of previous generations in our children. However, as grandparents, we see a little of Grandpa in that smart but free spirited grandson. We see a lot of great grandma in the daughter who is highly industrious and proud. Grandparents can also see the flaws because they know the family roots and they earnestly work to prevent a reoccurrence of a grandfather's failure in a grandson, or a grandmother's weakness in a great-granddaughter.

The first "R" of grandparenting is important, it is by this means that grandchildren know their roots.

The Need for Relationships

Naomi built a relationship with Ruth. A relationship implies a back and forth or interaction between entities. Dale Evans-Rogers wrote a lot about her 16 grandchildren, and her advice is, if you want to establish a warm bond with your grandchildren have a few days when you are alone with your grandchildren without the parents.

According to Evans, the relationship of grandparents and grandchildren is like the period of courtship, whereas that of parents and children is more like that of marriage. The first is more dominated by fun, and the second by responsibility, and that is a major reason why there is a different psychology at work.

Grandparents are people too, but grandchildren will never know that unless there is a relationship between them. Believe it or not, grandparents were once young, but life didn't stop because you were born and they were suddenly grandparents. Relationships are needed to understand better and appreciate grandparents.

Grandchildren need private time with grandparents, without the parents around, so they can build relationships that teach them how to live as well. When relationships are built children learn that grandpa can tell the funniest stories. He learns that grandma can sing; that the two of them can dance, tell jokes, and laugh until they cry. They also learn that grandma and grandpa still go on dates and enjoy romance! Relationships help grandchildren to learn the one important truth they need to know about life; how to live a fruitful life.

Reverence

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is an "R" that we learn from godly grandparents, and that is reverence.

Whether grandparents know it or not, they have more influence on their grandchildren than their children. Grandchildren are drawn to their grandmothers and grandpas. One of the qualities they learn from them is reverence to God.

One granddaughter told her Sunday School teacher that her grandmother has a boyfriend she talks to on the side. Surprised the teacher listened for more. "They have a thing going on." Said the Little girl. I've never seen him, but I know he's there because I've heard her talking to him. One day she planted a garden, and she talked to him, and everything grew. She planned a Thanksgiving meal and invited him to come, I didn't see him, but he must have helped because she kept thanking him. She talked to him about my grades in school, and they changed." The teacher asked,

"What's this boyfriend's name?" The girl answered, "I don't know his first name, but I know it starts with D. his last name is Lord. Grandma kept saying D-Lord will provide.

D-Lord will make a way. D-Lord will bless. My grandma and D-Lord got a thing going on!"

Every Godly Grandparent has a thing going on with D-Lord!

This so because those who have experienced life in all of its shades and nuances, seem to know the Lord best. Often for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have weathered the storm know the power of the Lord. Often, for their sake, we are blessed.

Those who have soaked their pillows with tears, wrestling with the tragedies of life, have learned that "weeping endures but a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"

Often for their sake, we are blessed. Just as we are blessed because of our grandparents, we are also saved because of the Grace of God.

Grandparents know that it is nothing but the grace of God that saves us and raises us every day!

Ask any grandparent, and they'll tell you...God is able!

God is able to take our:

-BURDENS and make them light; DISAPPOINTMENTS and give us renewed hope!

-FRUSTRATIONS and give us encouragement; DOUBTS and give us confidence!

-WEAKNESSES and give us strength; FEARS and give us courage!

Those who have walked the Christian journey can testify that God is a prayer answering God. They sing with confidence the words of the old hymn, "I know the Lord will answer prayer, for I tried him for myself!"

Every godly grandparent needs to keep telling the story!

Tell your grandchildren about the goodness of the Lord!

Tell your grandchildren that they must know the Lord for themselves!

Tell them about Jesus, who died out on Calvary!

Tell them how early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

Tell them in the morning!

Tell them in the evening!

Tell them in the midnight hour!

Tell them no matter what comes their way...God is able!

No. 9750-Communion

And When I see the blood

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 18, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations." (Exodus 12:13-14)

Introduction

Have you ever seen a person put ketchup on everything? Ketchup is a universal condiment that seems to satisfy the taste buds of millions from one extreme to the other.

How do I love my ketchup, let me count the ways? Many love ketchup on French Fries and other fried foods such as chicken, fish or beef. However, there are many Southerners who put ketchup on rice, greens, grits and scrambled eggs. There are those who even apply a heaping squirt of ketchup onto corn flakes and oatmeal. It appears that many people have the attitude that if they put ketchup on everything thing, it makes it better.

Nearly every household has a bottle of ketchup in the cabinet, but there was a time when ketchup was toxic. The stuff was deadly because it contained, mixtures of beer, mushroom and salted fermented anchovies. They didn't use tomatoes because until 1834 it was thought that tomatoes were poisonous, but after that, tomatoes were added to the mix. A problem developed because the stuff they had in the bottles decomposed and had a putrid smell and taste. To solve the problem in the late 1800's they put preservatives in the bottles to keep the stuff from dying, but it turned yellow instead of red. To make it even worse, they added coal tar to the mix, but it caught fire in skillets and caused poisonous reactions.

By 1906 Henry J. Heinz perfected a way to preserve the ketchup, killed varmints in it, and keep the color red. To reassure the public that it wouldn't kill them he put his ketchup in clear bottles so the public could see that it was red and not yellow. Today his company sells over 650 million bottles of ketchup every year.

It seems that around the world everyone loves to put ketchup on it.

We want to put ketchup on it, so we wait until it pours, we shake it, turn it upsides down, squeeze and thump it. We want it because when you put ketchup on it, it makes things taste better.

However, Ketchup has its limits. Simply putting ketchup on everything won't solve every problem.

When it comes to covering our sins, strengthening our faith, and reinforcing our hope, ketchup won't do; we have to put the blood of Jesus on it! It's not in a bottle; it comes from the cross!

As Christians, we are pleased to know that our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus. We are also pleased to know that when life presents us with all of its tough situations that the faithful stand strong because we are covered by the blood of Christ.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's instruction to Israel that they should decorate the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb and be ready.

This text occurs on the eve of their deliverance from Egypt.

They were ordered to kill a lamb and to prepare it for eating with bitter herbs. They were also ordered to take the blood of the lamb and use it to paint the exterior doorposts of their homes. This would be a sign to God's death angel to spare anyone on the inside of that home from the death of the firstborn, which was the 10th and final plague against Egypt.

God told the people, "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations." (Exodus 12:13-14)

As promised, the death angel came. Each home that had the blood-stained exteriors were saved. Those without this peculiar application of blood on their door posts suffered the death of their firstborn, whether they were Israelites or not.

The blood indemnified those under its covering from the death angel. After the Egyptian experience, blood sacrifice became synonymous to forgiveness, deliverance, blessing and a God provided future.

When John the Baptist at the Baptism of Jesus announced in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Everyone understood the implication of his words, but the could not perceive Jesus as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Through the shedding of his blood, Christ would take away the sins of the world and would also address human failure and all forms of bondage.

In essence, whether it is a life of sin or a life of turmoil caused by repetitious and troubling events, the blood of Jesus is the remedy that saves the lost and raises those in spiritual bondage to new heights and plateaus.

Pleading the blood

There is a phrase used in religious circles called "Pleading the blood of Christ." It is a phrase we use to summarize our hope and faith that the blood of Christ will do for us

what it did for Israel at the first Passover. To plead the blood of Jesus means that we turn a matter that is beyond us over to God and cover it with the saving, raising and empowering blood of Jesus. We are strengthened by words of the text... "And when I see the blood" knowing that God will respond in his own way and time.

Saying the words "I plead the blood of Christ" is not a magic formula that calls down the angels of heaven to instantly solve a problem. To plead the blood of Christ, we must turn a situation over to a power greater than our own and remove ourselves from the solution. To plead the blood of Jesus is an act of faith we serve a Savior whose blood on Calvary was sufficient to save us from our sins, deliver us and deal with our various challenges. The blood of Jesus neutralized death by removing its sting and robbed the grave of its power. It also raised the hopes and spirits of the saints who had given up. For all practical purposes, the blood of Christ gives strength to those who have fallen because of the weakness of the flesh, and it stands guard over the souls of the faithful when tempted to fall into hellish activity.

It is not the words themselves that turn situations, but our willingness to put everything in God's hands. One songwriter said, "I put it all in his hands; I put it all in his hands. This and that, I put it all in his hands."

Plead the blood for Protection

The blood provided protection for the faithful. The Israelites were told to get a spotless lamb and to keep it in the house for four days. On the day of their deliverance, they were to kill the lamb, but take its blood and paint their doorposts. Their deliverance would require dealings with others. For the Egyptians, it would mean the death of their firstborn sons. This act was not an act of vengeance by God. It was necessary to bring two million people out of slavery. It was not to be celebrated but memorialized. Therefore the people were told to roast the lamb and season it with bitter herbs. They were told eat the entire lamb and leave nothing: its lung, heart, head, feet, ears. Exodus 12:9 says, "but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." The word purtenance refers to an animal's internal organs. Any scraps or bones were to be burned before morning.

Even today, as believers pray for God's protection, we must be willing to prepare ourselves for whatever acts he may cause to happen. We have no way to know how God will act or move in our daily lives, but if protecting us means defeating others, it should not be a cause for celebration. It is a bitter experience. Like Israel, we should prepare ourselves spiritually through fasting and prayer. We should also submit ourselves to his will and be prepared to do whatever is necessary in response to his will.

If we want to be covered by the blood of Jesus, we should accept his redemptive power, his saving power as well as his protective power. It's all or none.

Plead the blood for Deliverance

The Israelites sought the blood of the lamb to be delivered from their bondage. Pharaoh had them under a heavy burden that had stripped them of their humanity and enslaved them for over 400 years. In one night because of the power of God they were released. The power of God accomplished what military,might, diplomacy and negotiation could not do. The blood over their doorposts marked a, home preparing for deliverance.

Those who celebrate the Lord's Supper today, also celebrate an anticipated deliverance for situations that have kept us in bondage.

There are many today who can testify that only the power of God delivered them from drugs, drunkenness, lawlessness and wild and wasteful living. They tried step programs, patches, and group sessions, but nothing seemed to work until they put the blood of Jesus on their weakness. Maybe that's why the songwriter declared, "My hope Is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

We plead the blood of Jesus on wayward children who seem bent on destruction

We plead the blood of Jesus on a spirit of lawlessness that is causing death and destruction across our nation!

We plead the blood of Jesus on every act of Satan, "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the Solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Plead the Blood, Expect the Promise

When Israel placed the blood over the doorposts of their houses, they did so expecting God's promise to be real in their lives. In Exodus 12: 2 God said, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." In essence, you will get a chance to start fresh, free from the burdens that have held you down for years. The day after they placed the blood over their doors their lives changed. That next day became the day by which they measured all others.

In a similar sense, the day that a believer turns a situation over to God and decides to let him handle it a burden is lifted off his shoulder.

Like Israel, you may be right now at what seems to be the end of your hope and strength. But when you apply the blood or power of God to your circumstance, you receive a divine promise, just as it came to Israel so long ago: this will be the beginning of days to you. In addition to protection and deliverance, there's fresh hope in the Blood.

And When I see the blood

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must be aware that powerful things happen in our lives when God sees the blood.

When Israel painted the door posts of their houses, they announced to heaven that we have obeyed your command, we have prepared our hearts, and we are ready for the promise.

When we plead the blood of Jesus over a situation, we are painting the door posts of our hearts, and we are prepared to move at God's command.

We plead the blood of Jesus because we know that there is transforming power in the blood of Christ.

Only the blood can transform a nobody into a somebody!

Ask Matthew, and he will tell you that only the blood can transform a tax collector into a Missionary!

Ask Peter, and he will tell you that only the blood can take a man off the fish pond and make him a fisher of men!

Ask Paul, and he will tell you that only the blood can take a persecutor of the church and transform him into a perpetrator of the kingdom of God!

Ask the woman at the well, and she will tell you that only the blood can transform a life so much that she would run through the streets saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

God told Israel to prepare for deliverance. To prepare they were told what they needed to do and when that was done they were told to wait and see the salvation of the Lord.

Today, if we want to prepare to ask God for a blessing and want to cover a situation with the blood of Christ, we need to do a few things first.

We need to put a little ketchup on a few things.

We need to ketchup on the way we live, recognizing that any man who is in Christ is a new Creature, old things are passed away, and all things become new.

We need to ketchup on our daily walk, recognizing that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

We need to ketchup on our giving, recognizing that if we bring our tithes into the storehouse, God will open up the windows for us.

We need to ketchup on our praying because prayer is the key to the kingdom and faith unlocks the door.

We need to ketchup on our study of the word because we are commanded to study to show thyself approved a workman that needed not be ashamed!

We need to ketchup on our praise because God has been good to us and is worthy to be praised.

When all of our ketchups have caught up, get ready because God told Israel, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

When I see the blood, I'll take your unsettled spirit and give you comfort

When I see the blood, I'll take your defeat and give you the victory!

When I see the blood, I'll take your bowed down head and lift it up high!

When I see the blood, I'll take your spiritual blindness and help you see your way!

There are some things in this world that we cannot attain without the blood.

The songwriter asked the question, "What can wash away my sins?" Then he answered what every born again Christian already knows, its "Nothing but the blood of Jesus!" What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow, nothing but the blood of

Jesus!

When you've been washed in the blood, you can sing with new meaning, "I know it was the blood. I know it was the blood that saved me."

I know it was the blood that took my hatred and turned it into love!
I know it was the blood that took my despair and turned it into hope!
I know it was the blood that took my disgrace and turned it into honor!
I know it was the blood that took my enemies and turned them into friends!
I know it was the blood that took my worries and turned them into confidence!
One day when I was lost, he died!
He died upon a cross! I know it was the blood that saved me!
He died to give me a chance to turn my life around!
He died to give me a chance to get a clean start!
But early Sunday morning he arose, to guarantee my salvation!

No. 9751-Inspiration

Heavy Pots in Holy Hands

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 29, 2016

SCRIPTURE:"I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Psalm 81:6-10.

Introduction

Are you serious when you get in the kitchen? There are millions who are so serious about their kitchens that they approach their cooking areas with a sense of reverence. It's what Jacob Neusner calls "A religion of pots and pans." To these select people, every utensil in the kitchen has a special purpose and place. They seriously work to ensure that their cooking ideas are not stolen, their utensils are top grade and confidences are not betrayed.

The pots and the pans in the kitchen, to those dedicated to the culinary arts, are not just any pots, but they are instruments by which they blend the elements of creation in ways that help them reach the world with a touch of godly flavor. What they cook in the pots of their kitchens parallels what they feel in their hearts.

While most of us just grab a pot to boil water or brew up our favorite recipe, there are others who labor in stores to find the right pot, pan, or skillet to suit their purposes. We don't mind if we have burned the pot a little or have scorched it; but to the faithful who step into the realm of pots, pans, and boilers; a pot is not just a pot.

In many ways, pots are like people. Just as each person has a talent and a purpose so does every pot. In fact, if we studied pots closely there is a lot we can learn about human nature that is hidden in the pots.

PRESSURE COOKER: A pressure cooker builds up a head of steam quickly and can blow up in your face if there is no way for it to blow off steam. There are pressure cooker people who blow up on anyone near them when they are under pressure.

CROCK POT: A crock pot does not get very hot, but cooks food slowly over a long period of time. It never blows, is always certain to get the job done. Crock Pot people are deliberative. They are slow to take offense or blow up and usually think things through.

SAUCE PAN: A sauce pan is actually a pot with a long handle. It cooks things fast and is usually used to stir and pour from one container to another. Because it gets hot fast, it has a long handle. Sauce Pan people usually stir up stuff and then pour it out on you and about you. You must deal with saucepan people with a long handle, or they will scald you.

DUTCH OVEN: Is often a thick cast iron pot that is built to cook like a pot or bake like an oven. It redistributes whatever heat it receives to achieve its purpose. If you sit it on the fire, it fries, simmers or boils. If you put heat on its top, it will bake. It can handle the heat. Dutch oven people have thick skins, their feelings are not easy to hurt and can take the heat of any situation.

BOILER: A heats up its contents, like a saucepan, but it doesn't have much room for stirring things and its handle is not as long, but it gets hot fast. A double boiler is two boilers, but one keeps the other from cooking too fast. Double boiler people come in pairs. One keeps the other in check, but separate them, and one might scorch something.

Every pot in the kitchen has a purpose. The good chef knows when, where and how it should be used; just what it can do and how much fire it can take. That's the way the good Lord is with every believer. He knows us inside and out. Psalms 139:2 says, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

As Christians, we are encouraged to know us that our God knows us just like a good cook knows the strengths and weaknesses of every pot and pan in her kitchen. He knows how much we can bear.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he records a truth about God's ability to lift heavy loads.

As the people of Israel prepared to celebrate their liberation from Egypt, they were told to remember their burdens in Egypt and how God liberated them from those burdens. Psalm 81 is a Psalm of remembrance and encouragement.

The first five verses remind the people that they should sing and shout about God's intervention in their lives even back as far as the time of Joseph when he moved to bring them into Egypt.

At verse six he calls on the people to remember how he lifted burdens from their shoulders in Egypt and lightened their load. In Egypt, they carried heavy baskets, and pots filled with mud to make clay, Both the baskets and the pots were burdens that proved heavier as the years passed.

God said he lifted their "pots" or their burdens. This is a fact he wanted them to remember. In verse seven he reminded them how they called him when they were in trouble, and he answered them from heaven or the "secret place of thunder." At Meribah, the people complained that they had no water, and God provided for them.

God announced to the people that he has always responded to their needs and does

not want them to even consider the strange gods that will be presented to them in a tough situation. He said, all they needed to do was, "open thy mouth and I will fill it."

Burden Lifter

The 81st Psalm presents God as a burden lifter. Burdens are depicted as heavy pots that he has lifted before and will do again if we trust him. If burdens are like pots, if we look at them closely we can see what kind of effect they have on us.

HEAVY POTS HAVE TWO HANDLES: Most heavy pots have two handles; they demand our full attention. Whenever a person labors under a heavy burden, it demands their full attention. It is difficult to focus on anything else because burdens consume all of our energy and strength. Heavy burdens tie up our hands so much that we can do little else. What's in your pot? Financial problems? Health concerns? Family issues? Marriage or relationship? Burdens such as these often demand our full attention. They require both hands. Christ offers believers a solution. He invites us to come to the cross and bring your burdens to him, and he will free your mind and soul. The songwriter wrote: "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart roll away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day!"

HEAVY POTS ARE CARRIED IN FRONT: If you are moving a heavy pot, it is always moved in front of you never behind you. It is always visible, and you never let it out of your sight; not for a second. Heavy burdens consume your thoughts and even your dreams at night. Since we can't get them out of our collective mind, we constantly focus on them, until we discover that it is much easier to bear burdens if we take them to the Lord. Our God is a burden bearer and a heavy load lifter. No matter how heavy your pot he can help you deal with it. The songwriter said, "If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold; and you have to get along with meager fare. Just remember in his word how he feeds the little bird, take your burdens to the Lord and leave it there."

EVEN LIGHT POTS GET HEAVY OVER TIME: Some pots are heavy because they are big and filled with stock, but even a light pot can get heavy if we hold it long enough. If you took a small boiler and put a teaspoon of water it in and held it out from you; it would be light at first, but that teaspoon full of water would get heavy after a while. The longer you deal with even a small burden, the heavier it gets. It could be something as small as the remote control not working on the TV or the battery constantly failing in your car. They are small in the scheme of things, but they become a burden if you have to deal with it over time. The longer you deal with it; it becomes a heavier burden. The problem didn't get any bigger, but your ability to deal with it weakened. That's why Isaiah promised in Isaiah 40:31 that "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not get weary. Walk and not faint." Renewed strength is your ability to deal with the small things that burden you daily. Renewed strength is your ability to keep holding on when the small matters of life seem to reoccur so often that they frustrate you. Renewed Strength is what you get when you talk to God in prayer. The songwriter said, "I met God one morning. Soul feeling bad. Heart heaven laden with a bowed down head. He lift my

burdens and made me so glad. All that I know there was something within."

Heavy Pots, Holy Hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that even the heaviest pots get lighter when we put them in the hands of the Lord.

Israel faced many frustrating moments in their national journey, but their burdens became lighter each time they put them in the hands of the Lord.

It did not matter how big the problem, God took care of it. If they needed liberation from slavery in Egypt, God took care of it. He told them to simply open their mouths, and he would fill them.

While it may appear at times that God ignores us, we must remember that God knows about the heavy pot of burdens and concerns that we are carrying. God knows about our illnesses. He knows about our financial problems. He knows about the problems in our marriage that we have not shared with anyone. He knows about the spiritual war that is going on inside of us. He knows about the frustration that some feel about their jobs. He knows about the secret fears that some have about aging and facing the prospect of death. Though these fears have not been shared with a soul, God knows! Not only does God know, but he cares. Maybe that's what Roberta Martin had in mind when she wrote the words, "Though the load gets heavy you're never left alone to bear it all. Ask for strength and keep on toiling, though the tear drops fall. You have the joy of this assurance. The heavenly Father will always answer prayer, and he knows, yes he knows, just how much you can bear!"

In 2 Kings 4:1-6, a widow woman had lost her son to creditors to pay her late husband's debts. She had no means of support and had only one pot of oil. She had something, but it was not enough because her pot of oil was so small. She was then ordered to find as many pots as she could. She was encouraged to go to her neighbors and friends and borrow pots, pans, bowls and anything that could hold something. She was expressly told not to have just a few pots but to get as many as she could find. The woman had no idea what was happening. It was not explained why she was being asked to gather so many vessels, she simply did everything she was asked. She and her sons gathered vessels until there were no more. Elisha closed the door and ordered the pots filled with oil from the one pot the woman had. As they went from pot to pop the oil never stopped flowing. As long as there was an empty pot, the oil kept flowing. When there was nothing else to receive oil, then the miraculous flow of oil ceased.

That tells me that if you believe God can make a way, then put out your pot.

If you believe God can heal your sickness, put out your pot!

If you believe God can deal with your troubled relationship, put out your pot!

If you believe God can deal with your financial situation, put out your pot!

If you believe God can turn your life around and give you a second chance, put out your pot!

If you believe God can open doors of opportunity that have been closed in your

face, put out your pot!

If you have a heavy pot, then put it in Holy Hands!

If you have an empty pot, then put it in Holy Hands!

With Holy hands, God takes our darkness and turns it into light;

With Holy hands, God takes our burdens and turns them into blessings

With Holy hands, God takes our sorrows and turns them into joy;

With Holy hands, God takes our misery and turns it into glory;

With Holy hands, God takes our desperation and turns it into hope;

With Holy hands, God takes our defeat and turns it into victory!

With Holy hands, God takes our sadness and turns it into gladness!

The same hands that were nailed to an old rugged cross!

The same hands that were raised early Sunday morning as he arose with "All Power in his hands!"

No. 9752-Revival

The Danger of Living the Uncovered Life

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 9, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Psalm 91:4

Introduction

Have you ever been through a disaster in your life? Often we watch news accounts of various natural catastrophes, and we easily empathize with disaster victims because we've endured similar situations. When we watched news accounts of Hurricane Matthew on the East Coast or fires on the West Coast or flooding in middle America, we often pray for the safety of the residents, join relief organizations to provide help and pay close attention because we have been there. While we watch houses burn, homes flood and storms rip the roofs off tall buildings and carry them away, one question often comes to mind, "I wonder if they were covered!"

There are many who have survived storms, floods, and disasters with their lives intact and found it easier to recover because they had the forethought of full coverage insurance and flood insurance. Some had only partial coverage. Others had no coverage at all.

If we buy a new automobile, full insurance coverage is required. It provides a minimum amount to pay for people and things you may damage in an accident, and enough to cover damages to your vehicle up to its current value. There are many however who risk driving a vehicle with no coverage at all. It means they risk having their licenses suspended or worse that they injure someone or destroy the property of others without a way to pay for it. They risk court fines and flags in their driving record.

If we buy a home, the mortgage company will take out some form of homeowner's policy on your new home and include it in your mortgage payment. It will usually include enough to cover the cost of a mortgage in case of a loss. Many homeowners have homeowners insurance that covers injuries to others that if the accident happens on their property, including theft, and storm damage as well. Some even carry "Flood Insurance" that provides assistance in the aftermath of floods. There are many who no

longer have mortgages, but have no homeowners insurance and risk losing it all if trees fall on their homes, a fire destroys them, or some other disaster strikes. Some have full coverage. Some have partial coverage. Some have no coverage at all.

There are many who have insurance coverage that covers their health, and dental needs. This ensures that they have access to medical care beyond the emergency room that may be needed for members of their family. It also reduces the cost of medicines needed to sustain life and reduce pain. There are many, especially the young, who refuse medical insurance, assuming that only the elderly get sick. They feel the same about life insurance, so many young families refuse life insurance and risk leaving their families with nothing in case of death. Some have full coverage, some have partial coverage. Many have no coverage at all.

Often the reasons for failing to have coverage involves finance. Full coverage has a high cost that is not a one-time payment. It has to be paid every year. When the payment stops, the coverage stops.

What about our relationship with God? Our relationship with God, in many ways, is like an insurance policy. Our faith does not protect us from storms, but it does provide "assurance" that during and after storms our souls will remain connected with heaven and God's grace will help us to put our lives back together again if we face challenges. Those who have this kind of relationship with God are covered by His grace. There are some who are fully covered. There are others who are partially covered. There are many who are not covered at all.

As Christians, we thank God that our relationship with God is fully covered. We have his assurance that he will never leave us alone; that if we fall he will pick us up again. That's better than "insurance;" it's his assurance that anywhere we go, any time of the day or night we are never beyond his care.

Exposition

This text focuses on King David's assurances to Israel during a time of trouble in the land.

David was a warrior king who often faced enemies as he sought to create an atmosphere of peace. In the course of his reign, there were many threats, droughts, and pestilences that faced the people. This psalm is a psalm of assurance to the people that despite their difficulties God would be with them.

The psalm promises the faithful in David's time and the faithful today that "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high" or those who abide in the faith and confidence of God will be able to relate to him as a refuge and a fortress in times of trouble. That's why verse two says, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

Those who abide in his secret place shall be taken under the peculiar care of heaven. So in verse four, we get the phrase, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

Feathers and wings are figurative. They help us to see mother birds cuddling their

young to protect them, love them and nurture them. Any young chick, eaglet or foul that stays close to its mother will find solace, comfort, and protection. Therefore the image is given to us that as long as we stay close to God or "dwell in" his presence that we have the assurance of grace and mercy.

Today, this promise is continued through Christ who still assures all believers who place their trust in him that he will never leave them alone.

The idea of a Covering is an Old Testament concept which is fully revealed in words translated as "covering" in the biblical context.

The first Hebrew word is sakak which means to "cover or hedge, protect, join together, defend, set or to set up." This form of covering refers to ways that men can protect themselves by joining together, shutting themselves up or fortifying their positions, or hedging themselves in so that the enemy cannot see or reach them.

The Bible says the Lord is our covering in the sakak sense (and not a man). Psalm 91:3 says the Lord does the following things: "He rescues you from the snares of fowlers hoping to destroy you; he covers you with his feathers, and you find shelter underneath his wings."

The second Hebrew word is kasah which means, "to cover for clothing or secrecy or to conceal."

Proverbs 10:12 says that "love covers all offenses." Matthew Henry says that by love we will "overlook the offense that is given us, and cover it, and by this means strife is prevented." Thus, the sin is not removed, but merely concealed.

The third Hebrew word that we find is kaphar. The King James Bible translates this word as "to make atonement." kasah, means "to cover something over," but kaphar means to completely "wipe it out, annul it, and make it non-existent."

The word kaphar is used in context with the blood offering of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, when Christ becomes our covering he completely wipes out our sin record. It's over and covered by the blood of Jesus.

The Coverings

With respect to our relationship with God, there are three levels of covering that should claim our attention. Each level corresponds to the extent that we walk or live in the will of God.

OUTSIDE THE WILL OF GOD-NO COVERING: There are many people who intentionally choose to live outside of the will of God. They know the will of God, and they know right from wrong, they have simply chosen to ignore God's will and pursue their own course in life. Samson was a man of great strength, but he chose to live a life outside of the will of God. He had been warned about his loose living with Philistine women and ignored God's will and lived for himself. When he stepped outside of the will of God, he rebelled against God. When he stepped outside of God's will, he also stepped outside of his covering. It resulted in the loss of his sight and eventually his life. His long hair and his faith in God was his covering, without it he was vulnerable to the world.

Today there are many like Samson who know God's will, but they choose to risk their soul's salvation and live with no covering. They are in rebellion against God. Isaiah 30:1 says, "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin:"

Even though they ignore God, he still offers them an invitation to return home. Like Motel Six, in heaven, he leaves the light on for them.

LIVING IN HIS PERMISSIVE WILL-PARTIAL COVERING: There are many who know God, but they have a mixed up understanding of what it means to live in his will. They follow some portions of his will, but not all. For a time, they are partially covered by the grace of God but rarely receive his favor. Those who are partially covered are those who show up at a worship service every now and then but are not fully committed to worship. They give an offering occasionally, but it is nowhere near a tithe. They obey his commandments most of the time, but they break them if necessary excusing their actions by saying the "Lord knows my heart."

These are people who are partially covered by God's permissive will. That means God gives or permits grace and mercies to them as if they were fully covered giving them time to learn better or to mature. Many have not been instructed or learned the full meaning of faith. They are being given an extension. Many, especially the young, see that they are still covered and think it's forever. God's permissive will is not permanent. It doesn't last forever. It's like an extension of a policy. Extensions are not permanent.

LIVING IN THE WILL OF GOD-FULL COVERAGE: The beauty of the Christian life is that it is one that lives according to the will of God. This is the believer who seeks to know God's will and then follows it fully and completely. These are the people that David speaks of in the 91st Psalm, who dwell in the secret place of the most high. Not just the people who go to church or who help out in its ministries, but those who constantly seek to live in God's will and who abide in his word and truth. These are the people who David said would be fully covered by his "feathers" and taken under his wing of protection; these would be fully covered.

The fully covered can say it doesn't matter how the storms blow. It doesn't matter how the heathen rage, God's going to take care of me. I know it's true because Isaiah 41:10 says, "Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41:10

To be fully covered means that we know whether in life, death or persecution, God's has an assurance plan for us in this life and in the life beyond because we are fully covered.

Renewal

Finally, brothers and sisters while there are many who are not fully covered, the good news is that your relationship with God can be renewed.

There have been times when the insurance that we have on our lives and property has expired, and we realize that we are living in the grace period. Every insurance policy

has a grace period, in case you're late with a payment, so they give you a few days with full coverage to get renewed.

Before President Obama brought us the Affordable Heath Care Act called Obamacare, the law of the land allowed insurance companies to turn you down if you had a pre-existing condition.

If you discovered that you had cancer, you couldn't buy insurance to cover it, because you had a pre-existing condition.

If you had a heart problem, you couldn't get coverage for it because you had a pre-existing condition.

If you had nervous condition kidney malfunction, you couldn't get coverage because you had a pre-existing condition.

But thanks to Obamacare, it doesn't matter what your pre-existing condition may have been you must be given a chance to get yourself covered.

When I think about all of the circumstances of life, I realize that there many things that Obamacare can't help.

When the storms of life began to rage, the old timers would put their hands together and look up to heaven, and they would say,"Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go?"

When they prayed, they said "Oh Lordy" I need your help. There was no Obamacare what they looked for was Olordycare!

O Lord! I have a preexisting condition.

—I strayed away from the church for so long, can I be covered again?

—I lived in sin and ignored all of your commandments, can I be covered again?

—My sins are as red as scarlet, can you wash me and make me white as snow?

I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Somebody said, "I can't pay the premium because the cost is too high." They remember that Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death,"

But I hear a voice saying, you only remembered part of that verse, don't forget the other side. "The wages of sin is death, but the Gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

You don't have to worry about paying for your pre-existing condition because Jesus paid it all. All to him we owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow!

He paid it out on Calvary!

He paid it for three days and three nights in a borrowed tomb,

But Early Sunday morning…..

No. 9753-Inspiration

One Time Wonder

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 23, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:37

Introduction

Have you ever seen a one-time wonder? A one time wonder is a person who accomplishes a great feat one time but is never able to repeat it again. It's the person who plays golf and gets a hole-in-one shot, one time, but is never able to do it again. It's the little kid that amazingly shoots a three point shot from midcourt, but is never able to do it again. It's the baseball player that hits a home run with the bases loaded but is never able to do it again. Whenever we can do it once, but can't do it again, we are called a one time wonder.

Micheal Phelps is famous because he keeps returning to the Olympics to win gold medals. The fact that he has won 28 gold medals makes it clear that he is not a one time wonder. Floyd Mayweather is the Junior Middle Weight Boxing Champion, but he proved that he is not a one time wonder, by defeating 49 opponents and never losing a fight. Whenever someone does something miraculous people are curious as to whether or not the feat can be repeated. When Muhammad Ali knocked out Sonny Liston to become the heavyweight champion of the world, everyone said, "It was great, but can he do it again?" When Venus and Serena Williams won Wimbledon the first time, the world said it was great, "but can they do it again?" The Super Bowl champs last year won accolades around the world, but then the sportscaster ask the question, "Can they do it again?" It's one thing to get to the top, but it's even harder to stay there! Staying there requires the ability to maintain the power and strength exerted to get there over and over again.

We've seen one time Wonders. The New Orleans Saints had a record 13-0 season and won the Super Bowl, but they have never been able to do it again. In 1988 Bobby McFerrin rocked the world with a new song called, "Don't worry, be happy" but he's never had another hit since. In 1974 Carl Douglas released a song call "Kung Fu Fighting" that was the national craze, but it was a one-time wonder. In 2000 the Baha Men released "Who let the dogs out?" -but it too was a one-time wonder.

We have seen it in our families. Someone in the family amazes everyone by doing something that really surprises the family, but never does it again. It's great to have

a straight A report card, but it's greater if it's not a one-time wonder. It's great to clean up the house, wash the car and make everything spic and span, one time; but the big question is, whether you can do it again.

What about God? If he blessed us once, can he do it again? If he opened a door for us that seemed impossibly secured, can he do it again. If he healed us of a sickness in the past can he do it again? If he helped us overcome an obstacle once in our lives, is he able to do it again? Is God always an on time God is was he on time once, but he has not been able to do it again.?

In Malachi 3:6, God reminded the sons of Jacob that "I am the Lord and I change not!" What God did then he can do again! Not only can he do it again, but he can do it in a grander more miraculous way than he did in the beginning.

As Christians, we are confident that God's power does not dwindle like a drained battery. We believe his power is a never ending flow that ebbs from the battlements of heaven to the edges of every known universe. Whatever God has done before, he can do again. He is not a one time wonder.

Exposition

This text focuses on words of encouragement from the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome.

In the Roman Empire, Christians were hated by the people and persecuted by the government. For nearly 200 years Christians were systematically selected for persecution and prosecution by the state. Often, for sport, they were thrown into the arena to fight as weaponless gladiators, devoured by lions or a sliced to ribbons by opponents with swords for the entertainment of cheering crowds. In nearly every city in the Roman Empire, on a whim, Christians could be called out and executed just because of their faith.

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, in this context, encouraged them to hold to the faith and stand firm for God. One after another they showed that their faith in God was not a one-time occurrence, but it remained firm even in the face of persecution.

If they were threatened with beatings, the roar of the lions or death in the arena, repeatedly the Christians held firm in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Their faith was not a one- time occurrence that happened one day when they were feeling the spirit and then went away, it was recurring. They proved that just as God had stood Israel in its past, they could be counted on to repeatedly stand for him.

In the text, Paul notes that ultimately Christianity would be the victor. By showing over and over again that their faith could not be shaken, they became "more than conquerors."

He topped it off at verse 35 with these words of encouragement, " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

They had strength during the time of persecution and thhrough the growth of the church today around the world, has proven without a doubt, that Christianity and our God are not one time wonders.

The ER Effect.

There are many who labor in the church, but their labor is not consistent. They are one time wonders. They give, but their giving is not consistent. They pray and they sing, but their praying and singing is not consistent, they are one time wonders. Our Goal is to have the suffix "ER" attached to our faith, service and work for the kingdom. In English, the suffix ER when applied to a verb often changes it from a verb to an "agent" noun. A person may read a book, but if he frequently reads he is called a reader. A person may tell a joke occasionally, but if he frequently jokes or plays jokes he becomes a joker. It's possible to do-good one, but a person who does good frequently is often referred to as a "do-gooder." A person who loves one person "loves" but a person who loves many people and really gets around is called a "lover."

SURVIVE OR SURVIVOR: There are many people who survive a setback, illness, or catastrophe and live to tell about their experience. People who make it through storms, earthquakes, hurricanes or a life threatening situation are usually referred to as survivors. However, being a survivor is not the same as being a survivor. A survivor lived through one situation, -one time. A survivor is one who never gives up and faces every situation regardless of the odds against them. They say, "I can beat this thing, I will not give up." This is the person who repeats Paul's words in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.through Christ Jesus."

BELIEVE OR BELIEVER: There are many who believe in God sometimes, but not all of the time. These are people who believe in God when it is convenient, but doubt when it is inconvenient. When blessings are flowing and pouring down like rain, it is easy to believe. It's easy to believe God for the sunshine when the sun is shining. However, the test is whether we can believe God for the sunshine when it is raining. It is easy to believe God when things are going well, but there are many who believe in God even when doors are shut in their faces and opportunities are lost; they still believe God will make a way somehow. Because their faith is not a one-time wonder; they become believers. A believer is one who believes God's promise in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee." No matter what the situation, a believer continuously trusts in God.

WINNERS AND LOSERS: In life, there are many times when we win, but there are also times when we lose. There are very few people who win all the time; every now and then even the best person loses, However, there is a difference between a winner and a loser. A person can lose a battle and get knocked down without being a loser. A loser is one who is down and does not have what it takes to get up. He didn't just lose he is a loser. A winner may lose but will get up because winners lose, but they always come back. Anita Whittaker became the first Black Miss Louisiana in 1984, but

she lost seven times before she finally won. She lost, but she was not a loser because on the inside she was a winner and kept coming back.

People of faith may lose or get knocked down, but they repeatedly get back up again because they have a spiritual winning attitude that says, “Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.

No One-time Wonder

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that God is not a one-time wonder, what ever he has done before he can do it again.

George Foreman lost his championship to Muhammad Ali in the 1974 Rumble in the Jungle but came back at age 45 to regain the heavyweight title. He let everyone know that he was not a one-time wonder.

Micheal Jordan retired in 1993 and two years later came out of retirement and led the Chicago Bulls for the next three seasons as it MVP. He then retired again and came back with the Wizards and shocked the world as he scored 40 to 50 points. He let everyone know that he was not a one time wonder.

King David often reminded believers in the Psalms that what God has done before that he can do again.

In Psalm 106 he reminded Israel of all of the great things that God had done for them; these things were not one-time occurrences, but he had repeated similar acts over and over again.

David himself was known for facing down Goliath. But long before there was Goliath, there were bears and lions that threatened his father’s sheep. He had seen God act before and knew he would act again.

When the Hebrew Boys faced the threat of the fiery furnace they stood in boldness because they had seen God deliver his people before, and they knew he was able.

Sometimes in our weakness, we forget about what God has done for us and lose faith that he can do it again.

When we lose faith, we start to think that what God back then was a one time wonder that cannot be done again.

We should never lose hope. God is not a one time wonder. Our God is still able!

He’s able to deliver us from the pit and miry clay!

He’s able to transform confusion and discord into unity and love!

He’s able to make somebodies out of nobodies

He’s able to make kings out of beggars!

He’s able to make workers out of lazy men!

He’s able to make winners out of losers!

He’s done it before, and he will do it again!

Long before we came to our presence circumstance God has been blessing us!

Like Hezekiah, some of us had come to the end of our lives, but he gave us a few more years! I’m glad to know that he’s not a one -time wonder that he can still do it

again!

Like David, some of us have been surrounded by enemies, but he delivered us from destruction. I'm glad to know that he is not a one-time wonder, that he can still make a way out of no way!

Like Esther, some of us have been raised from poor backgrounds, just a little higher than before. I'm glad to know that he is not a one-time wonder, that he can still pick us up and turn us around and plant our feet on solid ground!

I'm glad to know that if I"m sick, he can heal me again!

I'm glad to know that if I'm down, he can pick me up again!

I'm glad to know that if I've failed, he can make me succeed again!

I'm glad to know that if I've lost, he can give me the victory again!

That's why I've got to tell somebody! That I serve a God who has:

-Taken the bad and made them good and he can do it again!

-Taken the hateful and made them loving and he can do it again!

-Taken the proud and made them humble and he can do it again!

-Taken broken families and put them back together again, and he can do it again!

I've God to tell somebody about Jesus!

-The Lily of the Valley!

-The Bright and Morning Star!

Who died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

He's not a one time wonder, he's still in the blessing business!

No. 9754-Revival

A tourist guide to heaven and hell

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 30, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. "Matthew 25:46

Introduction

Have you ever browsed a tourist guide? To attract tourists, many cities prepare a brochure that highlights the places of interests in their community. The brochures are colorful and professionally designed to capture your imagination and compel you to visit their locale.

A tourist guide focuses on the elements needed for sightseeing? It includes famous birth sites, memorials, museums or landmarks. Some travelers plan entire trips around available sites and places of interest, avoiding any town or city without a particular site or landmark. In addition to tourist guides, most cities have websites which promote every imaginable aspect of their culture. Maps, directions and other information are provided for anyone that wants to come to a location for sight seeing purposes.

Just as there are tourist guides designed to attract us to cities, there are also guides to show us places to avoid. Annually, the national news media ranks cities as the best and worst places to live. Cities on the "Worst City" list will probably have high crime, high unemployment, political unrest in its government, racial and gender discrimination, high poverty and general lack of opportunity. Corporations hoping to open a plant usually avoid such cities. Individuals looking to buy a home and raise a family usually avoid them, too. Often tourists avoid them as well because they are not considered safe.

What about believers, is there a tourist guide to the one place we want to go and the one place we want to avoid? Every believer expects to get to heaven one day. It is the ultimate end of every Christian's hope. We want to see the Holy City. Better than Atlanta, it will truly be the city of brotherly love. Better than St. Louis, it will be the gateway to paradise. Those who sing "Georgia on my mind." will sing a new song, "I've got heaven on my mind."

The church markets this great city to every potential resident. We encourage every person to prepare to live there. It is the right place, and it has the right price. There is

plenty of lodging because everyone will have a mansion. There will be good weather, for the storms of life will have ended. There will always be plenty to do that is good, wholesome and uplifting in a constant festival of fun, fellowship and praise. There will be no need for MasterCard, Visa, or American Express because everything in the city will be free of charge. There will be no bills, bill collectors or bankruptcies.

The church also has another tourist guide. It's about a place called "hell." It will be just the opposite of heaven. It won't be a paradise, offers no benefits and its main residents will be the devil and those who follow him.

Many people look at the two tourist guides and find themselves in the position of the good hearted pimp who was killed in an auto accident and instantly his soul arrived at the gates of heaven.Unlike saints who are absent from the body and present with the Lord, the pimp found an angel presenting him with two tourist guides.

The angel said, "We've never had a pimp make it this far, and we're not really sure what to do with you. On the one hand, you went to church with your women. On the other hand, you were a pimp after all. No one knows what to do with you, so you have tourist guides to both heaven and hell, and we'll let you make a choice after you spend a day in heaven and a day in hell." The angel put the pimp on an elevator and took him down to hell.

The doors opened, and he found himself stepping out onto fine green carpet. There was plenty of food, ribs, chicken and some of the finest women he had ever seen. Some of the women who were once in his stable were there; they cheered for him. They ran up and kissed him dead on the mouth, and they talked about old times. They danced a little and drank a little. The pimp met the Devil who was actually a really nice guy who dressed very well in designer threads. He had a great time telling jokes and dancing. He was having such a good time that before he knew it, it was time to leave.

He boarded the elevator, and it took him to heaven. He spent the next 24 hours lounging around on clouds, eating angel food cake, and meeting important people he didn't know like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The music was pretty, but he wasn't familiar with the words. The women were pretty, too, but they didn't treat him special. He danced the gospel slide, drank punch and met the big man JC himself. He had a great time and before he knew it his 24 hours were up.

The angel said, "You've seen everything in both tour guides, choose where you want to live."

The pimp paused for a second and then replied, Well, I never thought I'd say this, I mean, Heaven has been really great and all, but I think I had a better time in Hell.

"So be it," and instantly the elevator took him down-down-down to hell.

When the doors of the elevator opened, he found himself standing in a desolate wasteland covered in garbage and filth. Old watermelon rinds were everywhere. There were flies, chicken bones and garbage for miles. He saw some of his friends dressed in rags and were picking up the garbage and putting it in sacks.

The Devil came up to him and put his arm around him.

"I don't understand," stammered the pimp, "yesterday I was here, and there was green grass, pretty women, parties, and fun. Now all I see is a wasteland of garbage, and

all my friends look miserable."
The Devil looked at him and said, face it my brother; yesterday you were a tourist, we were recruiting you, today you are resident, Welcome to hell."

As Christians, we don't depend on the devil's tour guide, we count on the promises of Christ, that he's gone to prepare a place for us, that where he is, we will also be. Wherever, Jesus is, that will be heaven, and that's where we want to be.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he describes the day of judgment or the day of separation.

Jesus explained the nature of the kingdom of heaven in this and several passages before the text. The church promotes the teaching of Christ concerning judgments. He announced that he will do the separating when he returns. In this passage which begins at verse 31, Jesus said that when he returns, he will gather the nations before him and will separate those who will live in the kingdom of heaven from those who will be bundled with the devil and thrown into hell.

He characterized those who follow him as being like sheep and those who do not, as goats. In the day of separating, he will have the sheep on his right hand and goats on his left. Those who were bundled with goats will cry out and be told that they have refused to carry out the will of God through their kingdom building efforts: They neglected those in prison, ignored the needy and turned away the hungry. When asked, how they did this the Lord answered, "When you have done it to the least of these."

In the general day of judgment, which is detailed more in Revelation 20 the ungodly shall be judged according to their works. Revelation 20:12 says that death and hell (the place of the dead) will give up all those who have died so that they can stand before God's great white throne. As each person stands before God, their record will be read, and then the book of life will be opened. If a person's name is not recorded in the book of life, then they will be cast into the lake of fire.

In the text, Jesus said those on his right would be ushered into heaven, and those on his left would be thrown into everlasting punishment; banishment from the presence and grace of God in the battlements of hell.

Plain Talk about Heaven and Hell

There are many who would avoid hearing about hell. It is not a feel good subject. However, while Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom to come, prayer, faith, and endurance, he also spent considerable time teaching about heaven and hell:

THE TOURIST GUIDE TO HELL: The Bible tells us certain truths about hell. Let's get the terminology straight, so we are on the same page. There are three words in the Bible that refer to hell; they have two different meanings. Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek) usually refer to the place of the dead. Gehenna (Greek) usually refers to a place

of fire. When Jesus taught about casting Satan into hell, he referred to Gehenna-hell. Let's consider that: 1) Hell is a real place, not a condition. In Matthew 25:41 Jesus describes hell as a place of everlasting fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. 2) Hell is a place of torment. Luke 16:24 says, "I am tormented in this flame." Matthew 13:42 describes it as a "furnace of fire" and Revelation 14:10,11 says "there is no rest day or night." They won't be chilling out drinking pink lemonade by the poolside in hell. It won't be any fun. 3) Hell is prepared for certain types of beings and people. Revelation 19:20 says hell has been prepared for Satan, the beast, the false prophet and those that worship his image. Revelation 21:8 goes further and lists categories of people who have a place waiting for them in hell: the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Unbelievers are included in this list, but not believers, because believers have accepted Christ as their savior and he has removed their sin from the list and wrote their names in the book of life. 4) Too much will be missing from hell. There is no peace, no rest and no hope in hell. There is no love for anything or anyone in hell. Those who make hell their home will be beyond the reach of God.

Would a loving God prepare such a place for his people? Certainly not! God has not prepared hell for his people, but for those who choose not to be his people. He gives ample time and information to every person to choose and even gives them chances to change their ways, but in the end, hell is being prepared who have read the warnings in the tourist guide but want to go anyway.

THE TOURIST GUIDE TO HEAVEN: The Bible tells us certain truths about heaven: 1) Heaven is a real place. Revelation 21:1 says the New Jerusalem will descend out of the clouds and be situated on earth. The Kingdom of Heaven will be so big that the earth will need to be restructured to handle its grandeur. Even the capital city New Jerusalem will be 1500 miles (Rev 21:16 says 12,000 furlongs) in every direction. It will be a gated city, surrounded by 12 gates made of precious stones. Its streets will be paved with Gold, and fine jewels will be everywhere. 2) Heaven is being prepared for a prepared people. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." That means that he is preparing the heavenly place, not for everyone, but for those who have been washed in the blood of the lamb. Everyone talking about going to heaven will not be a resident. 3)There is a downside to heaven.

There is a downside to heaven. If you are a doctor, you will be unemployed because there will be no sickness in heaven. If you are a mortician, there will be no funerals in heaven. There will be no medicine in heaven, so pharmacists will be out of a job. Revelation 22:2 says there will be a tree sitting in the midst of the city that will bear 12 manners of fruit and the leaves will be good for the healing of the nations. There will be no more hot CD's to buy, dime bags of dope, No more fire trucks, ambulances, police officers or Social workers. 4)The upside of heaven is that there will be constant joy, happiness, and peace. In heaven, there will be reunions with family and friends. In heaven, the praise of God will be on our lips continuously.

In Heaven

Finally, brothers and sisters, we've talked a lot about a tourist guide to heaven and heaven, but I don't have a need for a tourist guide to heaven, I'm looking for a homeowner's guide.

A tourist is planning to look around for a while and leave, but a person who asks for a home owner's guide is planning to stay around.

A tourist might want to walk around heaven all day, but a homeowner is planning to live throughout all eternity. A homeowner sings the song, "I got a new home over in glory and its mine, mine, mine!"

The homeowner's guide will tell you what you need to look for in your new home. This new home will sit on 12 foundations and be a gated community twelve gates, each one made out of solid pearl.

You won't need to worry about the cost of living in this city because money will have no significance because the streets will be paved with gold.

Your home buyer's guide will tell you where your new home will be located. We've heard a lot about heaven, but we don't exactly know where it is, but we're on our way. Maybe that's why the old warriors sang, "I have heard of a land on a far-a-way strand, the beautiful home of the soul. Built by Jesus on high, where we never shall die, it's land where we'll never grow old."

The homeowner's guide will indicate that if you plan to live on that land, you will need to have a passport because you can't leave one country and go to another without a passport.

A passport bears the picture of the traveler and tells his identity. If you are a heavenly traveler, your passport identifies you as a child of the king.

Every child of God can say without a doubt, I know I am a child of God, although I move so slow.

I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb. I've been plunged beneath a fountain that flows from Immanuel's veins.

Not only does your passport tell who you are but it tells where you come from.

-We've come through the rocky hills and valleys of destitution.

-We've come through the meandering peaks of hard times and survived the sweltering deserts of hopelessness.

-We've come climbing Jacob's ladder singing our new song, I'm climbing up the rough side of the mountain, holding on to God's unchanging hand.

Not only does your homeowner's guide tell you the location of your new home, and where it will be located, but there is a section that explains something called "Closing costs."

If you are buying a house, your closing costs are added to the list price of your house. What are closing costs? Credit reports and inspection fees, attorney fees and appraisals, escrow deposits, title searches, insurance and recording fees,

The homeowner's guide warns us to be careful about closing costs because they

can keep your new house out of reach.

However, the spiritual homeowner's guide has a section called closing costs that can keep heaven out of reach. Sin and reckless living can make heaven impossible, they are closing costs that we cannot pay, but on the bottom line, written in blood are the letters JPIA -Jesus paid it all!

Down in Jerusalem, he picked up an old rugged cross; that was closing cost!

They drove nails into his hands, that was closing cost!

They stuck a spear in his side that was closing cost!

When he died on Calvary, that was closing costs!

But early Sunday Morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hand, with a title marked paid in full!

No. 9755-Inspiration

One Cure for all

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

November 6, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." Matthew 4:24

Introduction

What if there was one medicine that could cure any illness? Would you buy it? Is it possible, even with today's modern technology to devise a cure for every known disease and restore health and prevent disease? It's not possible yet, but for years there have been thousands of products and individuals who proposed to do just that: cure everything.

Whether it was the Voodoo enchantress or the tribal witch doctor, there always seemed to be someone who claimed to have the magic cure for anything.

In American History, there have always been a plethora of people who promoted the value of one snake oil over another. In the early 1900's this ad for Dr. Lowther's Powders and Drops promised to cure: Tremblings, Faintings, Swoonings, Sick Qualms, Reachings, Loathings, lost Appetites, bad Digestion, weak Nerves, Flutterings, Palpitations, Anxieties, confused Thoughts, Lethargies, dull melancholic Dispositions, Vapours, low Spirits, Restlessness, Weariness, Frightful Dreams, Pains in the Head and Stomach, Vertigo's, Swimings, Giddiness, Dizziness, Dimness, Flushings, the Cramp, Contractions, sudden Catchings, Obstructions, and disorders incident to the Fair Sex.

If that did not cure your ailment, you could have also purchased Dr. Perkins' Our Native Herbs and found a cure for Rheumatism., Dysenteria., Sick & Nerves. Headache, Nervousness, Constipation., Piles, Irregular Bowels, Diarrh., Catarrh, Fevers, Gal Debil., Sickn.-Stomach, Pain in the Side, Numbness-Limbs, Cold Feet-Hands, Bad Taste-Mouth, Yellow Skin, Loss-Appetite, Worms, Stagnation of the Blood, Failure to Perspire Freely, Bad Circulation, Tetter, Erysipelas, Old Sores, Dropsy, Liver, Kidney and Heart Disease, Fits, Female Complaints, Circles Under the Eyes, Bearing Down Syndrome., Pimples, Rough Skin, and Poison in the Blood.

People by the thousands bought the quack cures only to realize that all they bought in many cases was simply colored water, tea or watered down whiskey.

In 1906 the number of quack medicines began to decline when the Food and Drug administration began to crack down on quack cure-all medicines. Even with tough

enforcement, there are thousands that manage to get through the cracks in the law and rip off consumers through late night infomercials.

There is no man-made medicine that can cure everything.

But we, know someone who can cure all! His name is Jesus.

Jesus is is the master miracle worker. Miracles are described as that phenomenon for which there is no human explanation. Miracles attest to the power and the being of God Almighty. Belief in miracles is a belief in the miracle working power of God Almighty. The belief in the miracle working power of God is one of the strong foundations of our Christian faith...that the God whom we serve can and does work miracles in every situation.

As Christians, we are happy to report that there is a cure for sicknesses of heart, body, and soul, and the remedy is the power of God. The doctor is Jesus.

Exposition

This text focuses on the ministry of Jesus as he heals all manner of diseases.

In the three years of his public ministry, Jesus often gave his followers object lessons about the nature of the kingdom of God. The central message is that the Gospel is for everyone of all races and the grace of God is available to everyone regardless of condition.

Jesus presented himself as the "Panpharmacon" - Greek word which means "heals all." There were no diseases he could not heal. Likewise, there are no sins he cannot forgive or lives so shattered he cannot repair them

This text shows how Jesus was clearly the "Panpharmacon." He can cure all without exception. He healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease; even those diseases that are beyond the skills of physicians. He healed them all.

This was the source of his attraction to the masses; the fact that he healed all. Matthew Henry notes that, "A physician who was so easy of access, so sure of success, who cured immediately, without either a painful suspense and expectation, or such painful remedies as are worse than the disease; who cured gratis, and took no fees, could not but have abundance of patients."

In addition to curing all, he healed without a fee. That also must have been a source of general attraction.

The fact that all could come to him and receive what they needed without a fee was also a type of the kingdom of God. In God's kingdom, all would be welcome no matter what their past or malady. Each would receive from the fountain of Grace sufficient supplies for their individual need.

While the crowds seemed to accept Christ as a healer, many of those same ones rejected him as the savior and the son of God.

Yet, the rejected aspect of his nature was the greatest part. They saw him as a person who could heal all, but even greater he was the Son of God who could save all from their sins.

How God Heals

There are many people who want to be healed, but there are some people who don't want to be healed at all.

That was the situation when the faith healer ate lunch at a local cafe. There were people in the cafe who immediately recognized him and decided to treat him.

One man complimented him on his fine ministry and paid the waiter for his meal.

A short while later he was recognized by another customer who decided to leave the waiter a 20 tip on the faith healer's table.

The third man saw him and decided to pay for his meals for the entire week that the faith healer was in town. As the faith healer prepared to leave he shook the hand of the first man, and instantly power went from him, and the man screamed, Glory Hallelujah, the back troubles I've been having have suddenly gone away!

The faith healer went to the table of the second man and shook his hand, and another surge of power went from him, and the man cried out, "Glory to God, arthritis that has been troubling me all these years has gone away!"

Then the healer went to the last man and stuck out his hand for a shake. The third man got up and quickly backed away? The healer asked, Why are you backing away? The man said, You touched him, and his back was healed. You touched that man, and his arthritis was healed. I don't want you to touch me because I get $2000 a month disability. You touch me, and they will cut off my check!

Some don't want to be healed, but there are millions that do. For those that do, there are three things they should consider.

GOD HEALS MIRACULOUSLY: The faithful know God heals in ways that baffle modern science. There are generally three ways that God heals.

1) God Uses Natural Means by Divine Order: Often we are ill and ask God for healing, and his immediate response is through the natural order. He points us to natural remedies and methods to respond to our situation. Doctors, nurses and Dr. Granny often use natural means to heal, but it is God that points them to the right remedy and the right proportion. That's why we pray for doctors, nurses, and caregivers that God would show them our cure. King Hezekiah had a boil on his body that threatened his life. None of his surgeons with all of their knowledge knew what to do. He was told to prepare to die. However, Hezekiah prayed and asked God for more time. God heard his prayer and told him he would live 15 more years. What is often missed when this miracle is shared in 2 Kings 20:7, Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs." They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered. He was given a prescription to make a salve out of figs and apply it to the wound. God showed his attendants how to best use what was right in front of them all of the time. He used a natural means to heal Hezekiah by Divine order.

2) Direct Intervention. There are times when Christ heals directly and touches the situation with his powerful hand. In Matthew 9: 27-30 Jesus touched the eyes of not

one, but two blind men and they were able to see. Mark 7:32-37 A man that was dumb and with a problem speaking was brought to Jesus; Jesus touches his ears, spits, touches his tongue and speaks "Be opened " to heal him. These are the times when a person is cured of a sickness outside of any medical cure. Most believers have heard of at least one account in which a person was healed by the direct intervention of God himself. There are doctors, nurses, and medicines, but we must never forget that our God is a mighty healer all by himself.

3) Healing by Faith of the Receiver. There are times when a person's faith alone commands the attention of heaven. Everyone does not have the gift of great faith, but the biblical records details many people who had great faith and were healed in response. In Luke 8:43-48 a woman with an issue of blood was healed by touching His garment; Jesus said her faith made her whole, to go in peace, and to be healed of her problem. In Luke 18:35 43 Blind Bartimaeus was healed after Jesus commanded him to go his way and receive his sight because his faith made him whole. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." It means even when you can not see it, you still believe it. Faith is not knowing if God will act, but having the assurance that God can act within his Holy Will.

4) Healing by the faith of another. There are times when we are so sick that we have totally given up. We have tried so many doctors and so many procedures that we have given up. However, there have been many who have been healed by the faith of others. In Luke 5:18-25 Friends of a sick man had faith that Jesus could heal him, so they let the man down through the roof because of the crowd; Jesus commanded him to arise, and he did. He was healed by their faith. That's why believers assemble in homes, churches and various places and pray for each other. The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much.

In all of these ways, Christ miraculously heals those who are sick. It is his divine command.

GOD'S HEALING DEMONSTRATES HIS MERCY: Many miracle healings of the Old Testament were in the aftermath of some great sin and show the power of God when compared to the weakness of man. For example, when Israel sinned in the wilderness the people died from snake bites but were healed in the aftermath when a brazen serpent was set up in the wilderness. David involved himself in sinful living for a while and contracted a disease; he was healed in the aftermath to demonstrate God's power to restore in light of a repentant heart. However, in the New Testament, most of the miraculous cures of Jesus were not in the aftermath of a sin but were simply acts of mercy and grace. They were based on love and favor of God.

God's healing had no strings attached. He did not ask for a donation or require those he healed to become one of his followers. In many instances, he asked those who were healed not to tell anyone; his healing had no strings attached, no gimmicks or ulterior motive. His healings showed others that God cared. They also demonstrated the AGAPE love of God. Agape love is unconditional. He is merciful even if the recipient has not been showing much mercy himself. For us, it means that God's healing is not reserved only for the faithful, but to any upon whom he chooses to show mercy. Luke

17:13 records how ten lepers called out to Jesus to "have mercy on us." He healed them instantly without any question. He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. Nine of them went away happy, but one returned to say thanks. He did not require them to say thanks, but he was impressed with the one grateful spirit. It shows us that those whom Jesus heals mercifully may not deserve his attention, but he has compassion on all.

GOD'S HEALING WAYS ARE MYSTERIOUS: Jesus' healings were mysterious. They were never duplicated. They were not scientific. Even today, when God heals using us miraculously, there is often no scientific explanation for how it is done.

Just as his miracle healings are mysterious, so is our response. It is mysterious, we do not understand how it works, but the Bible gives us this response to illness. James 5:14 says, James 5:14-16 " Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

There are many who ask the church for prayer, but very few who confess their sins and ask to the church to pray for their forgiveness. If the prayer of faith is prayed and our condition persists, then it is obvious that our condition is not the result of sin, so our prayer shifts to patience to endure our test. Just as Paul did not have the thorn removed from his side, God's grace will prove sufficient as we deal with our hour of testing.

It is mysterious. We do not understand it, but the saying is true, "God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

God's Healing Power

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the healing power of God can cover every situation.

He has shown us how it will work in his written word, but more importantly, he has shown what he can do every day of our lives.

If we will call on the Lord, he will hear us. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, " If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Is there a miracle cure for the ills of the world? Is there one cure that can deal with it all?

That's what the prophet asked when he saw all of the sicknesses in the world and asked in Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

New Testament saints can answer from our own experience, "There is a balm in Gilead.His name is Jesus!"

The same Jesus, who cleansed the lepers of their leprosy!

The same Jesus, who unstopped the ears of the deaf!

The same Jesus, who revived paralyzed arms and legs!

The same Jesus, who stopped an issue of blood!

The same Jesus, who delivered the demon possessed!

The same Jesus, who brought the dead back to life!

The same Jesus hears and answers prayers today. His in the medical intervention business!

His name is Jehovah-Rapha, "I am the Lord that healeth thee!"

That means that God is in the healing business.

He died on an old rugged cross, but Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

I don't know about you, but I'm glad He's still in the healing business with one cure for all!

No. 9756-Inspiration

God Still holds our hand!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 13, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." Psalm 37:24

Introduction

Were you disappointed in the recent Presidential Elections? Across the nation, there are many who were disappointed in the results of the national elections. The disappointment is rooted in the fact that Donald Trump was elected president over Hilliary Clinton.

Some of the disappointment was rooted in the fact that Secretary Clinton won the popular vote by nearly three million votes, but was not elected President. Some think that's wrong, but that's the way the U.S. Constitution works; it's the electoral vote, not the popular vote that counts. It's only happened four times before and only once in the last 100 years, but it has happened. George W. Bush had 543, 816 votes less than Al Gore in the 2000 election, but he won the election based on the Electoral College. The same is true for Presidents: John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison, all lost the popular vote but still became president. There was an outcry after each of these elections, but the nation survived.

Since the election, there have been protests in the streets, looting, and gunfire in response to the election of Mr. Trump. Newspaper commentators, comedians, movie stars and many across the nation have announced their frustrations as well.

Many African-Americans are among those lamenting the Clinton loss. Although Secretary Clinton won the overwhelming majority of the African-American votes across the nation, she faltered because over 1 million blacks who voted in 2012 did not vote this time; enough to change the outcome in Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania and other states. Those who do not vote actually cast a ballot for the winner. Edmond Burke says, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." We are hurt by the defeat, but we will survive; life goes on.

Many are upset that a man with racist and sexist views will become President. We have seen that before too. George Washington wanted freedom for America but refused to free his slaves. Thomas Jefferson spoke for freedom, but loved and had several children by his slave Sally Henning. Andrew Jackson didn't care too much for women, blacks, or Native Americans. In fact, he took all of the lands of Southern Indians and

gave it to slave masters to expand slave plantations and put the Native Americans on reservations. He is honored by the nation with his face on the $20 bill. Nearly every president before 1920 opposed women's right to vote. President Roosevelt locked up all Japanese Americans in prison camps during World War II, just because they were Japanese. We were upset by these strange characters in the White House, but we survived.

We have even seen Presidents who had very little respect for their marriages and had affairs while they were President including Thomas Jefferson, Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton. All of these activities upset the nation, but we survived.

The fact that all believers should focus on in the aftermath of a national disappointment is that despite it all, God is still on the throne. Though we seemed to be broken and scattered like dry bones in the valley, we must hear the prophet Ezekiel ask, "Can these bones live?" Yes, if they will hear the word of the Lord.!

As Christians, we are hopeful because we know that no matter what happens in the world, God is still in control. Because his word is true, all things will work to the good of those who love the Lord and are the called according to his purpose.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he explains the nature of the relationship of the believer with God.

The overall intent of this psalm is to underscore the security of believers who are in God's hands. Believers are reminded not to be envious of the unrighteous or to let world events make them doubtful of their own security with God because of the apparent success of the unrighteous.

Believers are secure with God. The surety of our position is just as sure as the fragile nature of the unrighteous who will soon but cut down like that grass.

The righteous, claims David, will never be abandoned. In the course of his entire life, he claims never to have seen the righteous forsaken or their seed begging for bread.

The righteous are being held by and are holding on to the hand of God. Because of that fact, the Righteous are in the hand of God and they will never be utterly destroyed and kept down. Either they climb up with their faith as leverage, or he picks them up by the power of his will.

Those who worry about the outcome of events around them should remember the Psalmists words: "I have been young, and now am old, but I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging for bread."

The Blessing of Holding God's Hand

Those who are upset about the changing social and political landscape don't have to join the thousands who are marching in the streets, burning down buildings, looting and burning the American flag. Instead, they should hold tightly to God's hand and

let him lead us through the unseen future that lies ahead.

WE HOLD GOD'S HAND FOR DIFFERENT REASONS: We hold on to God's hand for the same reason we hold on to things in life.

An elderly couple sitting on the porch swing holding hands in the moonlight. That's commitment. We hold God's hand for commitment.

A nurse takes the face of a small boy who sees his mother rolled into an emergency room, and holds his face up to hers to keep him from seeing her pain. That's sensitivity. God is sensitive to our needs, that's why we hold his hand.

A construction worker holds a hammer as he builds a mighty building; that's strength. We hold God's hand because he gives us strength.

A preacher holds the hands of a member who has experienced a great loss; that's sympathy. We hold God's hand because he sympathizes with us.

Mom takes her son to the first day of school. As they approach the classroom, he reaches up and takes her hand. That's security. We reach for God's hand because we feel safe in his hands.

A teacher takes the hand of a student and helps him form his letters- that's instruction. We let God hold our hand to guide us and instruct us.

If there is strength in holding each other's hand, then there is even greater strength that comes from holding God's hand. That's when we sing the words of the song, "I trust in God, wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Tho' come what may, from day to day. My heavenly Father watches over me."

I**N CHANGING TIMES GOD IS THE SAME:** In a difficult world where everything seems to be changing for the worse, it is a blessing for believers to know that God's hand is unchanging and he brings us to our best. His way of dealing with us is constant and predictable. He won't be with us today, then forsake us tomorrow. The biblical record is filled with reassurances that God will be with us in a predictable manner. When Israel prepared to go into unknown territory Moses reminded them in Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." In the New Testament, this is repeated again for Christian believers. Hebrews 13:5, "..for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is a reassurance that whatever situation that may arise God will be there, holding our hand.

GOD'S HAND PROTECTS US: Another reason we hold to God's hand is because he protects us. Isaiah 41:10-13 puts it this way, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." That's security. It's security in the hand of God. Those who attempt to harm the anointed children of God take on the power of God himself who has promised to provide security for believers. It's a simple truth. You "mess with

a child of God and God will get you!"

Just hold on

Finally, brothers and sisters that no matter how dark the situation around us might seem just hold on God will make it right.

While the world around us is changing, we need to remember Psalm 121: He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps. He will not suffer the sun to smite thee by day or the moon by night." -Just hold to his hands.

Those who may be intimidated by promises to build a wall to separate people must remember that we serve a God who can make walls come tumbling down! Hold to his hand.

Those who are intimidated because it seems we may be on the verge of another world war must remind themselves that we serve a God who leads us to a day when we will beat our swords into plowshares and study war no more. Hold to his hand!

For those who are intimidated by words of racial prejudice that are being spoken from elected lips, we must remember that Acts 10:34 says, "God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted."-Hold to his hand.

When God holds our hand, he guides us.When we allow God to guide us, we allow him to take control of every situation and guide us along the way. That's what the songwriter had in mind when he said, "Lead me. Guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray."

No wonder the old warriors sang, "Lord hold my hand while I run this race, I don't want to run this race alone!"

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to take care of my family, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand, Lord, while I try to deal with the raging storms in my life, I don't want to run this race alone!

Hold my hand Lord, while I try to make sense of the madness that surrounds me, I don't want to run this race alone!

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find myself slipping down the mountain of life and I have to cry out to Lord, "Take my hand! Hold me in your everlasting arms!"

Lord, take my hand, when I can't see my way!

Lord, take my hand, when I can't turn to the right or the left!

Lord, take my hand, when I'm confused and don't know what to do!

Lord, take my hand, when I'm weak and give me strength!

Lord, take my hand, when I have fallen and help me up again!

When you find yourself falling, and you can't get up, call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, a strong hand that will not let you down!

Jesus, a mother to the motherless!

Jesus, a shelter in a time of storm!

Call on Jesus, who reaches out to us with nail scarred hands!

Call on Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

When the storms of life are raging, reach out with the saints of old and say, “Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shalt I go!

No 9757-Christmas

Is there Any Room For Jesus?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 11, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

Introduction

Have you found yourself pressed for space? That's when it appears that our lives are really being filled with clutter. Clutter is everywhere, and there never seems to be enough space.

A new house at first appears spacious, but after a few years of adding "stuff," there are only a few spaces left. Each year we squeeze in a new piece of furniture, another lamp, or another picture for the wall. Now we have so many pictures that we can't see the wall. We know we are running out of space when we start to bump into stuff that has spilled into the hallways, and things stuffed into cubby holes start falling on their own.

There is no space anywhere! Our closets are filled with so many clothes that the rods are bending. Every corner of every closet is filled with shoe boxes, hangers, clothes, shoes, and sometimes dirty clothes! We can't put anything under the beds because they ran out of space years ago. In the kitchen, we have pots inside of pots that sit inside of frying pans, all squeezed into every possible space in already stuffed cabinets. When we run out of cabinet space, we store the skillets in the stove! The refrigerator is full of leftovers, the doors are filled with bottles of jelly and jams that we rarely touch. Every drawer is filled with stuff we never seem to get around to using; that's when we dream about a bigger refrigerator!

Dresser drawers are often so full that stuff hangs out. Purses are so full that some are constantly looking for bigger purses. When houses get full, we fill up the garage, the front porch, the back porch, and the attic. The glove compartments in our cars are so cluttered that it takes several minutes to find registration papers for the police. We can't get to the spare tire in the trunk because it's full, too!

We are really pressed for space! We really see it when family members come home for the holidays, and our houses turn into dormitories: pallets are on the floors, sofas and chairs become beds. There are bodies everywhere!

Now that Christmas is coming there's going to be more stuff added to last year's clutter, stuffed into closets, and under beds and behind doors!

Every year we secretly dream about getting a bigger house, more closets, and more space. If we had more space, we say we would be happy, because right now, there isn't room for anything else. Our houses are full! Our schedules are full! We don't have any more room!

What about God? Are our lives so full of things that we think are important at the moment that we have little room for him? Is there space left for personal prayer and reflection? Has our God been squeezed between Facebook, Instagram, and the Flat Screen TV? Is there any room for real time relationships with him, service in the kingdom or study of the word?

As Christians, we have resolved to always make room for the presence of God in our lives. We make the time to take our time to give him first place in our lives. There should always be room for Jesus!

Exposition

This text focused on the day when Christ was born in a stable because there was no room for him in the Inn.

The known world was ordered to enroll for the Roman tax. Those who were descendants of David were ordered to travel to Bethlehem to register themselves and thereby Joseph and Mary came to travel with other pilgrims in obedience to the law.

Once in Bethlehem Joseph looked for lodging and found none. In each instance, he was told there was no room because the city was filled with travelers looking for a place to stay.

Bethlehem of biblical times was not a large city. There were only a few Inns, and they existed only to accommodate the caravans and the holiday travelers.

To one such inn, Joseph made his appeal for a room for himself and his wife, and heard the disappointing response: "There is no room at the holiday inn."

Joseph was not denied a room because he could not pay, for he had ample funds to pay his own way.

Joseph was not turned down because he was of the wrong class, for he was a respected businessman in his hometown of Nazareth.

He was turned down because there was no space reserved for him.

Instead, Joseph and his fiancé were escorted into a stable in the back, a cave of sorts, where she gave birth to the Christ Child and wrapped him in swaddling clothes.

He was born in a stable and laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn.

No Room for Jesus

Today there many who shake their heads and wonder how the innkeeper could force a pregnant woman to deliver her newborn in a stable, claiming there was no room. Yet, often the world has forced Christ out as it makes room for more important life issues.

NO ROOM FOR SPIRITUALITY: Today there are many who, in the course of their

Christmas celebration, have already posted their "No room in the Inn" sign. Their celebration consists of the exchanging of gifts, parties, Santa Claus, food and gross inebriation. In the course of these activities, there seems to be little room for the Christ Child born in a manger in a far away land over 2000 years ago.

Throughout the year, the pattern is the same. Families get busy with work, school and extracurricular activities that take up all of our available time, leaving very little quality time for the spiritual growth of the family. Fewer families today have home based prayer, bible study or even religious discussion of biblical truths. In fact, our schedules are so busy, that many families go entire weeks without praying together or telling children about Jesus. There is no time, no space and no room.

Family leaders must take the time to be taught before they can teach their families. Those who neglect their own study can easily be influenced by what their friends think or by fake posts in Social Media. If you are leading a family, you must make room to learn about Jesus and make room to teach your family about him.

When we make room for Jesus, he dwells in our homes. He guides, protects and strengthens each family to stand strong in the time of trouble. If we make room for the Spirit of God in our families, God's presence will help us weather the storms of life.

NO ROOM IN OUR SCHEDULE: The average life expectancy in the United States is 78.7 years. It has increased from 70 years in 1960. In Bible times the average person lived about 35 years with the exceptional person living to 70 and beyond. Today, although people are living longer, they still have less time for God. God gives us more time, but even with more years, we don't have enough time for him.

The word of God compels us to set our schedules in such a way that there is room for God. In Psalms 90:12 we are told to number or organize our lives wisely to please God. The text of the verse says: "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

In Psalms 46:10 we are told to "Be still and know that I am God." However, to "be still" as commanded, we must make room for him; that still time must be made available. Even Jesus had to retreat to isolated places to make time to communicate with God. Sometimes it was on a boat, at other times he went to mountainsides or olive groves, but he had to have uninterrupted God time to think, pray, and sort things out. We must make room to do the same.

When we make room for Jesus in our schedules, it's not a matter of penciling in the Lord, but it is a matter of blocking the world out. If we pencil God in, then expect him to move in a certain time, because something else, more important follows. If we block the world out, nothing is more important than your family's God time. Phone calls are blocked, texts are unanswered, Television is recorded, God gets our uninterrupted attention.

Colossians 4:5 says, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time." It encourages us to wisely use our time and not be heavily influenced by attractions outside of the faith.

THOSE WITH NO ROOM MISS OUT: There is an often overlooked aspect of this text which carries a great truth. When Christ was born, the shepherds came to greet him,

the angels sang about his birth, but there is no mention that the innkeeper or those in the inn ever knew what they missed. The Innkeeper missed out on Jesus.

It is the same for those who have no room for Jesus; they don't know what they miss.

Those who don't take the time to know God will party, eat food, and get drunk, but they will miss what Christmas is all about.

If you don't make the time to know the Lord, you'll hear the music, but you'll miss the meaning of every song you sing!

If you don't know the Lord, you'll hear the words, but you'll miss the message in every sermon you hear!

If you don't know the Lord, you'll read the Bible but miss the truths that are hidden in its pages!

—You'll pray many prayers, but miss the chance to get a single one through.

—You'll have a lot of associates, but miss the chance to have a real friend!

No Room

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that although there was no room in the inn with a cradle, the manger was all God needed to bring joy to the world.

There are only four inns mentioned in the
Bible and all of them but one had room.

Moses left Mt. Sinai and stopped at an inn to refresh himself before leaving to see Pharaoh (Ex 4:24). It was only a night, but there was room in the inn.

Joseph's brothers left Egypt and stopped at an inn and found their money had been returned and placed in their sacks (Gen 42:27). At the end of their journey, there was room in the inn.

The Good Samaritan took the injured stranger to an inn and paid for his lodging and his care (Luke 10:34). It's a good thing for the injured man that there was room in the inn.

Moses' inn gives us a picture of a resting place in the wilderness!

The Inn of Joseph's brothers gives us a picture of the forgiveness of God!

The Inn of the Good Samaritan gives us a picture of the charity and compassion of God!

But the inn which was in Bethlehem gives us a picture of the saving Grace of God!

It had no room, so it gave us a picture of He who was high becoming low!

It had no room, so it gave us a picture of He who was immortal putting on mortality!

It had no room, so it gave us a picture of He who was divine putting on humanity!

When I think about that inn in Bethlehem, I also think about what my imagination would like to call heaven's hotel!

Down in Bethlehem:

—THE SIGN READ NO ROOM-But in Heaven's Hotel Jesus announces:"In my father's house there are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you.."

—THERE WERE NO RESERVATIONS-It was first come, first serve: But I hear Jesus

declare: “I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.”

—THERE WERE MANY PATRONS AND THERE WAS A CROWD: But in heaven’s hotel there will be no crowd for I heard Jesus say, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it, but broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.”

—THE BEST ROOMS WERE SAVED FOR BIG FOLKS: But I heard Jesus say, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”

—THERE WAS NO ROOM SERVICE: But in heaven’s hotel, every saint will be served a life flowing with Milk and Honey

—THERE WAS NO ENTERTAINMENT: But in heaven’s hotel, the glory of God would consume every channel:

On Channel 5 there would be H.B.O.- for all day long we’ll see glimpses of (H)eavenly (B)eauty and God’ (O)mnipotence!

On Channel 24 the 24 elders would declare, “He’s worthy, he’s worthy, our God is worthy!”

On the heavenly TV, there won’t be CNN, but there would CNM -See No more!

—See No more trouble! See No more Pain! See no more heartbreak!

The angelic choir would ask to sing on channel three because three had a special meaning: one for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They sang all day long “Joy to The World, the Lord, is come, let earth receive her king.”

—THERE WAS A CHARGE TO STAY, even for the stable and the manager: But in heaven’s hotel saint’s will enjoy a free stay in eternity at no charge because down in Jerusalem, Jesus paid it all!

He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it to Golgotha’s Hill

They had no room for him in Bethlehem, but there is room at the cross for you!

They had no mercy on him in Bethlehem, but there is mercy at the cross for you!

They had no place for him in Bethlehem, but there is a place in glory for you!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands.

9758-Christmas

Worth the Wait

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 18, 2016

SCRIPTURE: And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Matthew 1:16-17

Introduction

Have you ever waited a long time to receive a gift? When you received it, was it worth the wait? There is one thing common to this season: long lines. No matter how we try to avoid them, long waiting lines are a staple of the Yuletide season. Some are frustrated with all of the waits from the ATM machine to the Checkout line. Others have accepted waits expected; they are neither frustrated nor intimidated by the process.

There are some things that are worth the wait to some, but not worth it to others. Some would argue that fifteen-minute oatmeal and thirty-minute grits are worth the wait. Some say homemade hamburgers, pound cakes made from scratch, or tomatoes grown in your own garden are worth the wait. Still, others say the bargains they received on Black Friday were worth standing in line at 3 AM in the morning and fighting the crowds to get to them. Still, others would argue that hot fudge that covers the entire ice cream sundae is worth the wait.

The shoe lover believes that the new JORDANS are worth the wait.

The romantic will tell you that finally embracing your true love is worth the wait.

The investor will tell you that the profit gained from buying low and selling high is worth the wait.

The educator will tell you that the rewards of a full college education are ultimately worth the wait.

The football fan will tell you that standing in long lines to get box seats at the Super Bowl is definitely worth the wait.

Most people will agree that they don't mind waiting as long as they can be assured that what they are waiting for is worth the wait. No one wants to waste their time.

Yet, there are many who believe that they are wasting their time in one endeavor or another because they believe that what they will finally receive won't be worth the wait. That's why some drop out of school because they believe the jobs that they will

ultimately receive, if any, won't be worth the sacrifice of time and energy required to complete their education. Others abandon once special projects because they have lost faith in the ultimate reward they expected to receive.

Does that apply it to our faith, too? Is all that we do a waste of time? Will the reward that we receive at the end be worth the sacrifice that we are making in this life? There are some who are asking these real-life questions and have concluded that the life of faith won't be worth the ultimate reward. They count the number of hours they will spend in worship, Bible study, rehearsals and practices, and in service to others and they ask will all of these hours be worth it? They count the amount of money that they contribute to ministries and the donated talents that they loan to kingdom building, and they ask the question, "Will all of my service pay off in the long run?"

The true believer has one response, and it comes from the word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The Reverend Jasper Williams put it this way, "Serving the Lord will pay off after while."

Just as a long awaited birthday present brings us great joy, or a much anticipated Christmas present fills us with excitement, those who labor in the service of the Lord, keep the faith, and never stop trusting Him will discover sooner than they think that what God has planned for them is a blessing that is worth the wait.

As Christians, we wait patiently upon the fulfillment of God's promises. We know that He has never made a promise to us that he has not kept. At times, we became frustrated because he didn't show up on our time schedule. However, our experience has taught us that God may not show up when we want him, but He's always on time.

Exposition

This text focuses upon the genealogy of Jesus Christ through his earthly father, Joseph.

The text shows us the long journey through which the Messiah came to reach Earth and to fulfill the promise of God.

The text and its preceding verses is a genealogy of Joseph's family. A second account in another of the Gospels presents a genealogy of Mary's family.

This genealogy shows how Jesus appeared in the family of Joseph after 42 generations of descent. These texts present the descendants of Abraham in three groups of 14 generations of each.

Matthew records the names beginning with the oldest and moves to the most recent.

The long list of names included in the genealogy indicates how God systematically brought into the ancestry of Joseph and Mary varied instances of intermarriage between races, nationalities, and cultures pointing to the fact that once the Savior made his arrival upon this earth he would be a Jew by his biology but he would be a child of every nation based upon his diverse ethnic background.

The Savior's arrival was promised by God, but this 42 generation journey seemed

an unbearable length of time to some. During these 42 generations the people waited for God to answer their prayers, and to give them the promised Savior. When the Savior was finally born, he was a blessing to the entire world. History has proven that it was a blessing worth waiting for.

God's Blessing

Has God made you a promise that He seems slow answering? Are you becoming frustrated because the job you seek, the opportunity you chase or the open door you're trying to find seems to always elude you? In the meantime are all the hassles you are enduring trying to wait on God complicating things for you? Are you tempted to take matters into your own hands because you see yourself going down rapidly? If so then you should consider these three truths:

TIME PASSES QUICKLY WHEN YOU ARE BUSY WITH HIS WORK: If we sit around our homes every day waiting for God to get that job, solve that problem or open that door, it will seem like an eternity. We know that God is moving because He has promised us that before we even ask that our help is on the way; however, it's frustrating if we are running to the window checking on every car that passes, jumping each time the telephone rings and spotting the mailman a half mile down the street trying to shake the blessing out of his bag. There is an old saying "Watch pot, never boil." It means if you spend all of your time watching the pot it will seem like the water will never boil. It's the same way with God. Since God has promised us a blessing, let's get busy doing something else other than just waiting on your "shrimp boat" to come in. When we are helping others, assisting the sick, encouraging the lonely or otherwise helping to build the kingdom, the time seems to pass quickly. Busy yourself serving and praising God and watch that blessing come. God is working it out, so busy yourself praising him and working for him. Psalm 52:9 says "I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints." Pray, Praise and serve and before you know it, God has worked it out!

EVEN WHILE YOU WAITING, GOD'S GOT YOUR BACK: If we are in a jam and we're waiting on the Lord to bless us with a solution, it gets frustrating if we forget that even while we are waiting, that God's got our back. This happens when we have prayed to God and asked for deliverance, and the blessing that He promised seems so slow coming. It makes us anxious when our notes are due, the utilities are about to be disconnected, and our jobs are on the line. It gets really frustrating because in our weakness we start to look at the clock that brings our eventual demise closer and closer. For some, these are shaky moments because we are waiting, but we doubt that what we are waiting for will be sufficient to handle the magnitude of the problem or enormity of our depressed situation. That's when we should remember Psalm 33:20 that says "Our soul waited for the LORD: He is our help and our shield." It may appear that enemies are surrounding us on every hand, but God's has your situation under control. Don't worry if the enemy is at your front door and the back door and crawling through the keyhole, just remember that the Lord is your shield and in his own time He will deal with

them and in the meantime, he's got you covered with his shield.

IF YOU RUN OUT OF STRENGTH, HANG ON A LITTLE WHILE LONGER: There are many who have been waiting on God for what seems to be an eternity, but he has not yet answered with the blessing they need. Some are handling household matters, holding families together by threads, tending frail marriages, treating wounds and diseases, and trying to revive failing finances with little success. Some are actually down to their last ounce of strength, and still, it seems that God is taking so long. Doesn't he know that we are running out of strength? We have reached the point where we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. We have waited so long that we have worn out wait. We know very well what Psalm 130:6 says, "My soul waited for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say, more that they that watch for the morning." Remember, God knows just how much you can bear, and if you hold on, he'll make it worth your while. In fact, Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!" When that blessing comes, we'll conclude that it was certainly worth the wait! When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hold on; help is on the way.

When you wait

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must not focus on how long it's taking the blessing to come, but what is going to happen when it comes!

We must constantly remind ourselves not to hurry God because when the time is right, God will shake things up and make them happen on our behalf!

If we can wait on everything else, we should be able to wait on the Lord.

If we can wait for the coffee to brew and the toast to brown, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can wait for water to boil, popcorn to pop, and for all the commercials to pass before we can watch a rented DVD, then we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can wait for the train to pass, the cake to bake and the washer to go through three spin cycles, we out to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can we wait in lines at stores or wait for another batch of fries at Mickey D's, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord!

If we can call someone on the phone and wait while they put us on hold because they have call waiting, we ought to be able to wait on the Lord,

If you wait on the Lord, the blessing you will receive will be worth the wait.

If you wait on the Lord burdens, get lifted.

If you wait on the Lord, your heavy loads get shared.

When you wait on the Lord, bowed down heads get lifted.

When you wait on the Lord, eyes wet with tears, get wiped dry.

When you wait on the Lord, ways get made out of no way, storms seem to subside, bright skies return, bad habits are broken, addictions cease, and yokes are broken.

The world cried out and said, Father we're lost down here, we need a redeemer!

Lord, send us a blessing that will give us a brand new start.

While they were still praying, they didn't know that their blessing was already on the way.

What they didn't know was that 42 generations ago:

Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Judas begat Phares and Phares begat Esrom, and Esrom begat Aram;

Aram begat Aminadab, and Aminadab begat Naasson, and Naasson begat Salmon;

Salmon begat Booz, and Booz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse;

Jesse begat David, the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

Down in Israel, the people were getting impatience but what they didn't see was that God was already working because:

Eliud begat Eleazar, and Eleazar begat Matthan, and Matthan begat Jacob;

Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, and down and Bethlehem a child was born!

Somebody said, "What shall we call him?" and the answer came "Emanuel" God with us!

He's the blessing that we've been waiting for, and He's well worth the wait.

He is a prayer answering God, He's well worth the wait!

He is a body healing God; He's well worth the wait!

He is a soul-saving God; He's well worth the wait!

Wait on the Lord; He'll make it worth your while!

Wait on the Lord because one evening he picked up an old rugged cross!

Wait on the Lord because He died out on Calvary!

Wait on the Lord because early Sunday morning, He arose from the Grave with all power in His hands!

No. 9759-Christmas

What did you get?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
for the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, Louisiana

December 25, 2016

SCRIPTURE: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

Introduction

What did you get for Christmas? No doubt there were many who were full of cheer on Christmas morning as they opened and exchanged gifts. If your Christmas morning was like millions in America, the children ran to the tree and instantly tore paper from a variety of boxes. In many instances they tore open a box, glanced at the contents, then looked for the next box. After all the boxes were opened then they counted the number of gifts received. It appears that the number of gifts under the tree and the size of the boxes determines whether or not there has been a successful Christmas.

After playing with their toys for a few minutes many made calls and Facebook posts to tell their friends how many toys they received and how big they were. Who received the most toys, and what kind, is the nature of the entire conversation.

So what did you get? What was it? A Toy? A Phone? An Xbox? A diamond? A car? Clothing? What did you get?

In the not so distant past, the joy of Christmas was the fellowship of family and friends. The emphasis was on the food, fun, friendship and sharing of gifts. In fact, the gift was the smallest part of the celebration. Most of the joy of Christmas was in the celebration; the cooking, decorating, caroling, Christmas plays, skits, and fellowship. Gifts were limited to items of clothing, a toy and fruit. Today, the emphasis has changed to the point that receiving gifts is the main emphasis rather than giving them.

There was one gift given to the world that was not under the tree. That is the gift that is celebrated by Christians around the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God gave us the gift of his son. It was a gift that never stops giving. There will be many that will not use his gift and leave it untouched.

What did you get? You received the gift hope, God's promise and his forgiveness.

If you left it unopened, why not embrace it today?

As Christians, we celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas time. He is God's gift to the world; the greatest gift of all.

Exposition

This text focuses on an episode in the life of Israel in which the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the Messiah.

In describing the birth of Christ, hundreds of years before his birth Isaiah makes it abundantly clear that the birth of Christ was not a chance occurrence, but part of God's divine order. The world, having known sin would be given a chance to know salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. The fact that Isaiah described all of the names by which Christ would be called using the word "shall" indicated that his coming would not be a chance happening but would be essential to the process of redeeming mankind.

The child that would be born would be wonderful and a mighty counselor. The child would be born with a destiny. That destiny was to show mankind the way back to God.

The birth of the child would be the best gift the world would receive.

The gifts

What did believers receive on Christmas morning? We received gifts that were not wrapped or under a tree, yet they brought joy to the world!

We received Joy. One of the joys of Christmas time is the celebration of life, both past and present. Some families have experienced new births during the year that are a reason for celebration. There is no joy greater than the excitement prompted by a family that celebrates a child's first Christmas. It is indescribable. It is a moment that is memorable. Some have overcome obstacles, serious illnesses, and professional setbacks that should have robbed them of their lives, hope and happiness, but they are still standing. That is a cause for celebration. Even those who have lost loved ones find reason to celebrate the joy of Christmas time because they celebrate the lives that were lived with them as they cherish the memories and continue the traditions that have brought them happiness over the years. If we have not learned to celebrate the gift of life and to embrace its many forms then no number of toys will bring us the joys that we seek.

We received renewed mercy. As we celebrate the birth of the Christ child we also celebrate the fact that God has showered each of our families with new mercies just this year alone. He has allowed us to overcome obstacles that have been placed in our way as well as stumbling blocks that were meant to deter us. The family celebrates new mercies that he has showered upon each family member despite our own inadequacies. Like the wise men, we bow humbly before our God and present him with the gifts of our spirit. In our humility we say like the psalmist "if it had not been for the Lord on our side" where would we be? As the family gathers and rejoices and reminisces about old times it will also reflect upon the mercy and goodness that God has shown toward

each individual family member. If we have not learned to give thanks to God for all of his mercies then no number of toys will bring us the joys that we seek.

We received the hope of continued good times: The birth of the Christ child was important because it symbolized a brighter future for all believers. The very name of the Christ child "Jesus" means he shall save his people. That was the word of hope to those who were lost, defeated, and trapped. The wise men came because this child represented the glorious future that God had in store for Israel. Similarly, that's what Christmas should mean to every believer; that God has great plans for those who believe and trust in him. Just as we look at any babe and see unlimited possibilities, so should we see our futures when they are entrusted to the hand of God. Christmas is a celebration of Hope. It's a celebration of renewed faith that we can rise beyond the difficulties of the moment and achieve our greatest potential. It's a celebration of a revived trust that no matter how dark or dreary it seems that God will keep every promise that he has made to us; Central among those promises is that he would never leave us alone. The reminder of this Christ child known as Emmanuel, God with us, is that God is always by our side. If we can't see the bright future that God has in store for us, then no number of toys will bring the joys we seek.

A reason to celebrate

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that Christmas is not about the number of toys and gifts we get, but it's about the joy of salvation that gives us a reason to celebrate.

Isaiah said a child is given to the world who would be called by many names, but he would be God's gift to the world; his son.

In search of that gift wise men traveled many miles not expecting to receive anything, they came prepared to give. They understood the importance of this child's birth and the reason for the season.

They came to celebrate the son

If God, through his son, has brought your family over hills and valleys, then celebrate!

If God, through his son, has brought you strength in the middle of your weakness, then celebrate!

If God, through his son, has brought you comfort in the middle of your confusing situation, then celebrate

If God, through his son, has picked you up after you fallen flat on your face, then celebrate!

If God, through his son, has given you health and strength, then celebrate!

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. One day the son died and the father was so grieved that in just a few months times… he also passed on.

There was to be a great auction of his paintings and a great many influential people

gathered, hoping for an opportunity to purchase one of the great masters for their collections.

The auction opened with a painting of the rich man's son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this picture of the man's son. Who will bid for this picture?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one."

But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? $100, $200? The son! The son! Who'll take the "SON?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give $10 for the painting." , "We have $10, who will bid $20?"

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for $10."

A man sitting on the second row shouted, "Now let's get on with the collection!"

The auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

So it is with salvation. Many will pass over the gift of the Christ child because something else looks more appealing… but they do so without realizing that in the end, it will only be those who took the Son that will get everything

Those who take the son will know the joy of the new born king who spent 33 years living among men, pointing the way to paradise!

Those who will take the son will know yoy to the baby in the manger grew up to be the man who carried old rugged cross up Calvary's hill!

Those who take the son celebrate both the birth of the Christ child in Bethlehem and the fact that Early one Sunday morning he arose from the dead.

What did you get for Christmas? The hope of life Eternal! It's the best gift of all!

No. 9760-New Year

The Things To Come, Are All Yours!

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 1, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's'; and Christ is God's." 1 Corinthians 3:22-23

Introduction

Each year as a new begins many people take deep breaths and prepare for what the new year will bring. What will it bring? We have hints. The political situation seems unstable. The rise of radical Islamic Extremists around the has made us question our safety as we travel around the world or across the country. The rise of gang violence has made some question their safety in shopping malls on the city streets. We don't know what the job markets will look like or even what the short term predictions are for food, clothing and shelter, we just don't know.

In 1996 Evangelist Billy Graham, after receiving the Congressional Gold Medal, said the world is a confusing place and often appears to be in the brink of destruction, but there is hope because Jesus lives.

There are many who have New Year's jitters. Some are afraid and some are excited. Those who face a judgment day such as a court date are nervous. Those who are excited about an approaching happy date are anxious. Each have the New Year's Jitters. That makes it hard for them to sleep, sit still or focus without thinking about the "things to come."

One of the things that we think about is all that we owe, and how will we get through and the things that tangle us and how will we get free.

In respect to these two things that we think about most at this time, New Year's has a special significance. When we think about the things that have enslaved us we must recall the children of Israel on the night before left out of Egypt to finally be free from slavery. The day before they sat with all of their movables packed and ready to move out. The next day would be first day of the rest of their lives. Our forefathers did the same thing. December 31, 1862 Negroes sat in churches all across the safe watching the clock because at midnight on January 1, 1863 all slaves in most places in the South were would be free. They called it watch meeting. Today, we still do the same thing.

More than that, January 1st is what is known as Jubilee Day. It's a day when all debts were settled and slaves were set free. They couldn't wait to see Jubilee day. What if you were told that on the first day of the new year that all of your debts would be paid in full; wouldn't that be a good feeling? Think about it, everything paid. Mortgage paid. Car note paid. Utilities paid. Credit cards paid. Student loans paid. What if even the amount you borrowed from a relative is also paid in full? Wouldn't that be great?

In addition, suppose you were also told after your debts were paid that for the rest of your life, no matter what comes your way, how it affects you is yours to determine the outcome. Sickness, death, new opportunities, new ventures, you name it. No matter what comes your way the outcome is entirely yours to decide! How would that make you feel?

If you have the new year's jitters, be at ease to know that our Lord has paid our sin debt and presented us with the canceled mortgage as a gift. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord."

However, we reminded that because we have been freed from guilt, shame, depression and feelings of despair, our God is has put the coming year in our hand! It is ours to decide. We can wallow in self pity and do the same thing next year that we did last year, or we can walk boldly into future with confidence because God has promised "It is yours!"

As Christians, we know that Jesus has freed us from the debt and burdens of sin. He has closed the chapter on our shortcomings and given us a new chance. As we enter a new year we thank him for canceling our debt and giving us an opportunity to start over again with all spiritual debts paid.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul sending a letter of encouragement to the believers in Corinth. They were encouraged to recognize that despite deteriorating world conditions, as long as they were Christ's and Christ is the Son of God, there was no need to worry.

The Corinthians, like many new Christians, were concerned about world situations because it seemed that any change is world conditions, especially as it related to Rome had an adverse affect on them. This made them uneasy as new leader was named or new era began.

Paul's words came as encouragement to them because a change of leaders could mean have meant life or death to them. A change in the politics of the world could make a difference for their present or future; they were uneasy. So he wrote, "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come;" All of it is yours as you are a child of the king.

For the believers it meant they had a reason for hope. No matter what happened it all be good because God was still on the throne.

It's In our Hands

The challenge of each new year is to deal with the approaching year with an attitude of faith. Like the Children of Israel who marched out of Egypt left the things that enslaved them behind, we too must step into the new year without the spirit of enslavement that shackled us. We must do so with the full knowledge that the "Things to Come" are ready, waiting for us to tackle them with courage or we can brush them aside as we hide in fear.

IT'S UP TO YOU: God has cleared a path for us by going before us and making a way. What we do in the coming year is "all yours" to decide.

Consider the little boy who went to fortune tellers at a carnival to find his future. One woman had a crystal ball and after she had collected his money proceeded to tell him that she saw "hands doing great things." The boy was puzzled but could get nothing else from her. He went to another and this one dealt him a set of cards. After moments of ceremony the fortune teller said "You have a great future in your hand." Still puzzled the boy went to yet another fortune teller who was a palm reader. She told him to look at the lines in his hand. "Each one tells the story of your life before it is lived. Your fate is written in your hands. Lines that extend across your palm mean long life. Lines that are crossed by another mean a loss. Lines that curve and do not go straight show times when you will stray from your mark." The boy was dazzled by what the fortune tellers told him. He thought about their words constantly. He could think of nothing else as walked around gazing at the lines in his hands. When he got home he decided to ask his grandma the same question that he had asked the fortune tellers: "What is in my future?" His grandma reached for an old tattered bible and told the boy to hold it as she said: "If you want to know about your future, it's in your hand."

The answers we seek are not written in crystal balls, tea leaves, four leaf clovers, magic cards and palm reader's lines. The answers we seek must come from God; for he alone knows our future. Whether we succeed or fail; it's in our hand.

The text says "all is yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." In essence, it's in your hands and if you put your hands in Christ's hands and his hand is in God's hands, you don't have to worry about the coming years!

It's in my hand Lord, but I'm putting my hand in your hand.

"Lord, I'm putting it in your hand because your..:

—GLORY is much greater than mine; POWER is much stronger than mine

—METHODS are much wiser than mine; UNDERSTANDING is much broader than mine!

—WAYS are much safe than mine; HEART is much bigger than mine;

—BURDEN is lighter than mine; and LOVE is much deeper than mine!

"It's in your hands because I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds my hand!"

LOOKING FOR THE THINGS TO COME: Paul told the Corinthians that the present and the things to come was theirs for asking.

Today, we are celebrating all that God has done for us this year, but as the New Year begins we are looking for God to help us do some new things; these are the things to

come and God says they are all yours!

In the days ahead we want to strive to have fewer unwed mothers, more fathers instead of baby daddies, more marriages and fewer shacking relationships. We are looking for God to help us do some new things; these are the things to come, and God says they are all yours!

In the days ahead we want justice for our people. We want justice that demonstrates that black lives matter, just as white lives, red lives, brown lives and blue lives matter. We are looking for less crime and homelessness in our streets. We are looking for God to help us do some new things these are things to come and God says they are all yours!

God is not through with us yet. If He can make "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert", we know that He is able to move our present mountains out of our way.

If the Lord can cause a virgin to conceive a child, He can restore our families.

If the Lord can open the Red Sea, He can open doors of opportunity.

If the Lord can resurrect Lazarus, He can resurrect our ailing communities.

We must have faith that God is going to do a new thing!

When there seems to be no way, the Lord will create a way.

When there seems to be no present hope, the Lord will give us hope.

When there seems to be no present joy, in Christ we will discover new joy.

The challenge is to remember that what God did for your mother or grandmother, he will do for you!

God has brought our families through the wilderness of oppression and hard times.

He has brought us through slavery, depressions and world wars!

He's bought us from a nomadic life of moving from place to place and set our feet on solid ground.

He's put food on our table and clothes on our backs.

This year, God has shown us what he can do. Because of what he has done in the past we are looking for the things to come!

"It is no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you. With arms wide open he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God will do."

No Jitters

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we begin our new year, let's go forth in confidence that God will make a way!

As we begin a new year, believers should resolve to keep a resolution we had last year, and that is to keep trusting in the Lord!

It does not matter whether it is a new year or an old year, but it's a good idea to keep trusting in the Lord.

We trust in the Lord because history has shown us that those who trust in the Lord face the unknown without fear.

We trust in the Lord because saints who have believed him have been rewarded with answered prayers, a few earthly pleasures and heavenly glory!

We are not by ourselves:

—Noah trusted the Lord and he brought him through the great flood!

—Abraham trusted the Lord and he showed him the Lamb in the bush!

—Ruth trusted the Lord and she found happiness while gleaning fields!

—Moses trusted the Lord and he lead Israel out of bondage

—Daniel trusted the Lord and he protected him in the Lion's Den

—Three Hebrew Boys trusted the Lord and he shielded them in the fiery furnace!

Job declared that though his health was slipping away, his children were gone and his wealth was lost that he would still trust the Lord. I hear him across the centuries declaring, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

There will be no fear this year because if I am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

The Lord is my refuge and my strength a very pleasant help in a time of trouble!

No wonder the songwriter declares! "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear!"

I trust in God wherever I may be. Out on the land or on the raging sea. Though come what may, from day to day, my heavenly father watches over me!

I trust in God, I know he cares for me. Upon the land or on the raging sea, Though billows roll, he keeps my soul! My heavenly father watches over me!

As we consider the things to come, we need make sure God is in our plan.

When God's hand is in the plan..

—The world may kick us down, but God will pick us up!

—The world may strike us out, but God will give us home runs!

—The world may think we are losers, but God will make us winners!

—The world may think we are weak, but God will make us strong!

This year we will need to keep trusting God because he has blessed us, raised us and saved us!

We need to trust the Lord because he "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity."

We need to get back to God because one day when I was lost, he died upon a cross!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9761-Inspiration

Going back to go forward

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 8, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." Genesis 31:3

Introduction

Have you ever tried to go forward, but it seemed that you were really going backward? There are times when many people are frustrated because it seems that things simply don't work out for them; they make two steps forward and then make three steps backward. They save money, then have to spend what has been saved for repairs. They lose ten pounds and gain 15 pounds. They get over one sickness only to be plagued by two more. The perpetual swing of life sometimes takes a confusing track that gives us what Paul Lawrence Dunbar called,

"A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And that is life!"

At the beginning of a year we strive to go forward, despite the frustrations, but yet we are plagued by this tendency to go backward, and that can be frustrating unless we consider that sometimes going backward is necessary to go forward. Has your car ever been stuck in the mud? Did you find that you had to back up enough to find solid ground to get out of the mudhole? Have you turned onto a street to discover that it was a dead end? To get off the dead end street, you had to turn around and go back.

In the past, we have certainly seen our share of mud holes and dead ends. When those times comes we have two options: stay in the mud hole or stare at the dead end or turn around and go backward.

In Jeremiah 18:2-3 God told Jeremiah "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." God wanted Israel to go forward, but something was wrong. So like a potter does a lump of clay that is flawed, he tore it down and then built it back up again without the flaw; he had to go back to go forward!

It is interesting to watch skaters in the rink. There are skaters of all ages on skates and roller blades flashing around the floor as the music plays. Every generation skates different music. Some skate to Beyonce' and Jay-Z others have skated to "Lookout Weekend" by Debbie Deb or "Let the Music Play" by Shannon or Planet Rock" by Afrika Bambata. At the skating rink friends would blaze past each other and sometimes form a line. There was also a time when skating skills were shown as everyone went under the limbo stick. No day at the skating rink was complete unless a few people really showed off their skill by skating backward. They were going in the same direction as everyone else but they were facing backward, and they did it effortlessly and without a thought! Skating backward, but still going forward!

Therein lies an important truth, "sometimes going forward, requires you to go backward, but you are still going in the right direction!"

When the train blocks the track, you back up turn around and find a new route! Even though you are backing up, you are still going in the right direction!

As Christians, our goal is to press forward with our eyes on the prize. On our journey, we may face some detours, but we will keep our eyes on Jesus because he will show us the way!

Exposition

This text focuses on Jacob's decision to return home after spending two decades living with his uncle.

He and his brother Esau had been on bad terms for over 20 years. Neither had seen or spoken to the other. Esau had sworn that he would kill his brother because he had stolen his birthright and cheated him out of his father's blessing. The family was in disarray. Mother tended to favor Jacob over Esau, and bad blood was everywhere.

While living with his uncle, Jacob accumulated a fortune. He had two wives and a tent full of children and what seemed to be the anointing because everything he undertook succeeded. He seemed to be climbing higher and higher. He reached a point however that God told him that to go forward he had to go back. He had to go back to his family, mend fences and resolve issues.

Jacob did not know what to expect. He was at a crossroads. He agonized over whether or not he should go home. He tossed and turned in his sleep. Just before making his decision, he wrestled with an Angel and evolved with a firm resolution that to go forward he would have to go back and take care of a few loose ends.

When he went back, he found his brother waiting for him, and he enjoyed even more happiness, prosperity, and fulfillment in the Lord. He went forward in victory, but first, he had to go back.

Back Tracking

Presently we are moving forward rapidly. Yet, it is possible that in our haste to make progress and succeed we may have lost a few essentials along the way. To go forward

successfully, we may need to go back in a few areas and recalculate.

IF WE LOST FAMILY VALUES, WE NEED THEM BACK: The modern family, although redefined because of the changing role of each parent, must still be based on love, respect and a sense of community. In their haste to succeed many families have relaxed their emphasis on family values. Family's value their love for each other, yet there is a growing number of families that do not love each other and are growing apart. Respect is taught in the family. Respect for one's self in language, dress, and deportment, as well as respect for the properties of others, and the dignity of our seniors. All of these are values that are taught in the home. Today, we are seeing signs that family values are emphasized less. We are seeing children that curse their parents and other adults. Many homes are becoming war zones filled with shouting, screaming, arguments and bad feeling. The obligation to help in the general community is also emphasized less today than it has been.

If the family is to go forward, it may need to go back and revisit some of the old values that have sustained it over the years. There is still value in teaching children to respect their elders, dress appropriately for an occasion and live with integrity.

If your family decides to revisit some of the old values such as "saving for a rainy day" and having respect and reverence for God, it may seem that you are going backward, but you are actually going forward. The idea family time with less technology and television more interaction between family members may seem old fashioned, but those who go back and reclaim this old value with find that they are going back, but they are actually going forward.

SUCCESS MAY REQUIRE RETOOLING. In a similar sense, there comes a time when we need to revisit our own life situations.

We want jobs, but are we ready for the new jobs on the horizon? Robots are making cars, sweeping floors and serving hamburgers. It won't be long before cars will drive themselves, schoolrooms will become virtual stations replacing teachers with holograms, all bibles will be digitized on ipads, and church music will be tracked. Those in the work place already see machines that sweep the streets, backhoes that dig graves, and automated traffic signals. What it all means is that going forward may require us to revisit what we know how to do and retrain ourselves.

You may still have a Television with rabbit ears, but it picks up no signal. You may still have 8 track tapes on your shelf, but there won't be any new ones. If you are planning to live a few more years, then we might need to revisit our thinking. You'll be waiting a long time to get a letter that's not a bill if you don't have email. Every home needs a computer, and internet connection, especially if that home has working parents or children.

Retooling may require going back to school, learning new ways and preparing for the future. You may be going back, but are still going ahead.

WE NEED TO GO BACK TO GOD: In our quest to go forward we often make the mistake of mistaking busy-ness for godliness. We feel if we are engaged in honest work and engaged in noteworthy service that these activities can substitute for God. We live a semblance of a godly life, but in our press for success things related to God often

become secondary. Our faith in God is sustained by our worship, prayer and Bible Study, yet there are many who cut themselves off from the nurturing experience in the pursuit of success. A flower looks great on the natural, but if it is cut from its source and placed in a jar of water, it won't be long before it begins to wither because it has been removed from that which sustains it. The water carries it along for a little while, but soon, without being fed it dies.

People of faith need a spirit of hope that is watered, fed and cultivated when they worship, pray, sing and study the Bible. In our press to go forward, many have left God behind. This is what happened to King David who was completely absorbed in his personal concerns and follies. When he was a youth, he prayed regularly and possessed faith so strong that he even challenged Goliath, the giant. As king, however, he became absorbed in the quest for power and lust. His faith weakened, his prayer life almost vanished. While he was riding high, David did not write many psalms. However, in the middle of his trouble when his kingdom suffered, and he personally developed a disease, he found his way back to God. Psalm 51:10 records his personal plea for restoration, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." He went back to God to go forward in faith. We should do the same.

Find God and Find the Future

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that when we find God, we also find our future.

Jacob had a lot going for him with his Uncle Laban, but on the way home he wrestled with God. That night as a wrestled with God's Holy Angel he said, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

He wrestled with his own misgivings!

He wrestled with his own personal fears!

He wrestled with his own anxiousness!

But he wouldn't let go until he was blessed!

If we are planning to go forward, and you notice that our faithfulness to the God's service has been slack, we need to first go back and find the Lord.

If we find the Lord he will give us:

—Serenity in the midst of our storms;

—Assurance in the midst of our afflictions;

—Courage in the midst of our challenges;

—Boldness in the midst of our battles;

—Encouragement in the time of our difficulties;

—Composure in the midst of our calamities;

—Support in the midst of our suffering

Once we get back to the Lord:

—CIRCUMSTANCES can be changed;

—DOORS can be opened;

—ENEMIES can be defeated;

—PROBLEMS can be solved;
—DOUBTS can be dissolved;
—FEARS can be conquered;
—FRIENDSHIPS can be restored;
—MARRIAGES can be salvaged
—SOULS can be converted;
—LOST lives can be saved;

Like David, we should say, "Take, me back to the point where I found joy in my relationship with God!

Take me back to the point when I was enthused about worship and studying my bible!

Take me back to the point when I was willing to give my life on the altar of sacrifice!

That's what the songwriter had in mind when he wrote, "Take me back! Take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received you. Take me back, take me back dear Lord, to where I first believed!"

Take me back to the cross!

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away! It was there by faith, I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day!

The future is tied to the cross!

He carried an old rugged cross!

He was nailed to that old cross!

He died on that cross!

But Early, Sunday morning....

No. 9762-Inspiration

When Dreams are Interrupted

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 15, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." Daniel 2:3

Introduction

Have you ever been awakened in the middle of a great dream? Did you try to get back to it, but found it impossible because the dream was gone? That is tremendously frustrating! Think about it! For months a young woman waited for the man of her dreams to propose to her. One night, in a dream, he came to her holding something behind his back. Just he opened his mouth to speak, the phone rang! She tried to go back to sleep and pick up the dream, but she never found out what he was about to say.

A few days ago my wife told me she dreamed she was cooking pork chops. The chops were in the skillet sizzling and the smell had filled the air, then suddenly she awakened. Unable to finish the dream, she arose and prepared a full course breakfast of pork chops, eggs, and pancakes that was so scrumptious that my sons got out of bed and drove to the house for breakfast.

There is no shortage of interrupted dreams. Were you on a cruise? Was it a family vacation? Did you see yourself winning the lottery in which you appeared to have all of the numbers, but you were awakened before the final numbers were announced?

Sometimes we were actually glad our dreams were interrupted. Some have dreamed of falling off mountains, drowning in rivers, or being smothered, only to mercifully awaken to discover that it was all just a dream.

Many people felt both types of dreams during the recent Presidential elections. Some were excited because they dreamed of seeing the first woman President of the United States. Millions were disturbed to learn that their dream was interrupted by an unforeseen defeat.They went to bed on election night sure that victory had been achieved but woke up the next morning to learn that the impossible had happened. It was so impossible that millions of Americans thought they were in a nightmare, a horribly distorted dream that would soon be interrupted. They waited for a knock at the door, the phone to ring, the smoke detector to sound, or something to happen to alert them that it was all a bad dream. It didn't happen! Their dream had been interrupted.

We are happy when bad dreams are interrupted, but what happens when our best

dreams are interrupted? How do we respond? Langston Hughes asked a similar question in his poem "The Dream Deferred." In the poem, he asked the question, "What happens to a dream deferred, does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or does it fester like a sore and run..or does it explode?" Dreams are the motivating forces within us that inspire to act. Without dreams, we are like broken winged birds living a crippled existence that limp along until they fade away.

If our dreams are interrupted, we can either get mad and dry up like a raisin in the sun or we can get up and make pancakes and fry pork chops!

Dr. Martin Luther King is often remembered for his historic 1963 speech entitled "I have a dream." Standing in front a national audience, he detailed the plight of the Negro in America. Then from behind him, Mahalia Jackson, shouted out, "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" At that moment he went off his prepared script and told the nation about the dream God gave him for America. His dream embodied the hopes and aspirations of an entire race. He promoted the idea of a nation where race and color would be recognized for their uniqueness but would not be discriminating factors. It was a dream of peace and brotherhood for everyone. It was also a dream that America would recognize and live up to the true meaning of its creed that "all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among the these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Five years after Dr. King's historic speech, he was assassinated. The dream was interrupted, for a period, but it continued as barriers began to fall across the nation and African-Americans became a growing political force in the nation. There was a see-saw period when the dream lived under Presidents Carter and Clinton and found itself interrupted by Reagan, and Bush father and son. In 2008 Barack Obama was elected president and it appeared the dream was on again. Many believe it has been interrupted again.

The dreams we see in our sleep vanish if interrupted. We can't get back to them, and we'll never know how they end, However, Godly dreams may be interrupted, but they will always be fulfilled. We can get back to them because even if we get off track or forget where we were, God will always revive us.

As Christians, we are frustrated that the dream of the kingdom of God has been interrupted, but we are confident that our God is able to insure that all that he has promised will be fulfilled.

Exposition

This text focuses on a king who had a dream that troubled him and God's response to his frustration through Daniel's interpretation of the dream.

The King in the text is Nebuchadnezzar. He had a dream that troubled him and became more complicated when he could not remember the dream. All he could remember is that it was important and it had something to do with his future.

He determined to force his soothsayers and wise men to ease his troubled heart. He commanded them to tell him what he saw in his nightmare. The second command was

that they give him the right interpretation of what he had seen in that dream. If they failed, they and their families would be killed.

The wise men could tell or interpret the dream. However, after considerable prayer, Daniel came before the king with the answer he sought.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream involved a statue with a Head of Gold, Breast and Arms of Silver, Belly and Thighs of Brass, Legs of Iron, and Feet and Toes of Iron and Clay mixed together.

It was a dream the foretold the fall of his kingdom and the rise of several other kingdoms: Medio-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Finally, all world kingdoms would come to an end.

The last world kingdom will be crushed by a rock that would cause the world kingdoms that stood on feet of clay to fall. This Rock would be Jesus Christ. The Rock will become a mountain that fills the whole earth. His kingdom will never end.

Despite all of his power and influence, and the power of the great men who would follow such as Alexander the Great, the Caesars of Rome, Napoleon and the great leaders of the future, God's promise for the world would ultimately be fulfilled.

It may be interrupted by the rise and fall of champions and villains, but what God promises will come to pass.

Interrupted Dreams

Very few dreams are fulfilled without some level of deferment or interruption; that challenges each of us to consider the following:

INTERRUPTED DREAMS CAN BE RESUMED: Many people have dreams that are interrupted by circumstances beyond their control, but the interruption does spell permanent defeat especially if the dream is God-centered. Joseph was a young man who dreamed that one day he would be in a position of leadership so high that even his older brothers would kneel before him. He had no idea what the dream meant or where the dream would carry him. Before the dream was fulfilled his brothers threw him into a pit, he was sold as a slave, worked as a house manager, and thrown into prison. It was a series of interruptions that would have destroyed an ordinary person's dream. However, it proved to be only an interruption. God raised him to a high position in Egypt, and many years later his family came and bowed before him.

There are many today who dreamed of obtaining a college education, owning a business, pursuing a career or other aspirations, but sidelined their dreams because of unforeseen circumstances. Illness, financial misfortune, lack of opportunity and a plethora of other situations often sidetrack the best of us. The interruption should not derail aspirations. There is still time to go to college, start that business or pursue that career. Perhaps you started a family earlier than you expected or you were forced to change jobs or locations; those are interruptions that defer your dreams, they are not permanent. Keep the faith, if God gave you the dream, it might be interrupted, but it will come full circle.

INTERRUPTED DREAMS SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN: If our dream is

interrupted, it should not be forgotten. We should never stop trying. When Daniel ask the king to tell him his dream, he said, "The thing is gone from me." He could not remember it. We should not forget God-given dreams. We should persevere. Consider that: In 1831, Abraham Lincoln failed in business. In 1832, Abraham Lincoln was defeated for state legislator.

In 1833, Abraham Lincoln tried a new business and failed. In 1835, Abraham Lincoln's fiancée died. In 1836, Abraham Lincoln had a nervous breakdown. In 1843, Abraham Lincoln ran for Congress and was defeated. In 1848, Lincoln ran again, and was defeated. Again. In 1855, Lincoln ran for the Senate and lost. In 1856, Lincoln ran for Vice President and lost. In 1859, Lincoln ran again for the Senate and lost. Then, in 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. What matters most is not how many times you fail, but that you never stop trying. Never forget your dream, even if it is interrupted.

Today, there many who have forgotten the essence of Dr. Martin Luther King's dream. Many have forgotten that he dreamed about an end to poverty in America. Many have also forgotten his call justice to run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty
stream." Many have forgotten his call for us to challenge unjust laws and denounce wars waged against impoverished people for profit and gain.

If the dream is forgotten, we will sit idly when we witness police brutality or injustice if speaking out will injure our political friends.

If we forget the dream, we will sit silently as racism rages and freedoms are diminished.

Today, even though we may feel our dream has been interrupted, we must not forget the quest and continue. We can't afford to dry up like a raisin in the sun or fester like a sore and run. We must march on till victory is won!

WE SHOULD PROTECT AGAINST CORRUPTED DREAMS: The overriding reasons that most of the Jews detested Samaritans was related to the fact that Samaritans had a corrupted view of their relationship with God. The Assyrian army conquered Israel and took a large number of the defeated Jews back to Assyria where they were re-educated and indoctrinated to Assyria life. Afterward, they returned them to Israel, but the people rejected them because they had been brainwashed or re-educated to the point that their thinking, customs, and beliefs about God had been corrupted. They looked like Jews, but the Godly dream had been corrupted. To protect against further corruption the Jews avoided them altogether to the point of not even talking to them in public.

Today, this generation must be on guard that Dr. King's dream is not corrupted. As the years pass, many now have their own ideas about the dream which have been substituted for the dream. Some have even ventured as far as to put words in his mouth saying, "If Dr. King were alive he would be for this idea and against this idea." His dream has been reduced to a message for the middle class and very few people today speak about the poor in America. In the recent Presidential election, there were 22 or more candidates. Each of them spoke about the middle class, none of the addressed the problems of the poor. Dr. King was concerned about both the poor and the middle

class, but the dream has been corrupted. There are some who have corrupted the dream to fuse the issue of gay marriage with civil rights even though it was never at the forefront of Dr. King's message when he lived.

Corrupted dreams don't fulfill themselves the way they should. They produce corrupted result.

We should protect against efforts to corrupt our faith as well. God is good, but he never promised us that life would always be good to us. Neither has he promised that we would be wealthy and healthy in this life. He told us to expect just the opposite, and seek only his kingdom above all. He promised us an answered prayer, never to leave us alone and eternal life when this life ends. Many have corrupted the faith with prosperity dreams that usually produce prosperity for those who teach it and false hope for those who receive the corrupted instruction.

Jesus is the Dream

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the dream that God has given the faithful cannot be deterred because instead of giving us a dream he gave us Jesus.

Abraham had a dream that one day his descendants would fill the earth and number more the stars in the sky.

Moses had a dream that Israel would be free from Egyptian bondage and would establish a great nation!

Martin Luther King had a dream of a nation where everyone would acknowledge the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

But when God answered the prayers of the faith he did not do it with a dream, he sent Jesus. Jesus is the dream.

Jesus is our dream of moving out of our:

—Hunger and acquiring a satisfied soul!

—Darkness and walking into the marvelous light

—Sinking sand experience and standing on the Solid Rock!

—Spiritual Slavery to complete spiritual freedom!

—Defeat into the glory of victory!

—Despair to unspeakable joy!

He is our dream of moving from "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world to 'I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

He is the dream that refused to go away, even though he was interrupted and disrupted, he refused to be corrupted.

He was rejected by the people in his own hometown, but he would not go away!

He was persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees, but he would not go away!

They whipped him mercilessly all night long and tried him in hostile courts, but the dream refused to die!

They hung him on a cross, stretched out between two thieves.

They interrupted the dream when he died on the cross.

They disrupted the dream when the buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave to pick up the life he laid down for his friends!

Our Savior lives!

The dream of salvation was interrupted but not totally disrupted!

He lives!

No. 9763-Inspiration

A Good God on a Bad Day

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, J.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 22, 2017

SCRIPTURE: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. Ecclesiastes 7:14

Introduction

Have you ever had a bad day? What's the worse one you can remember? The best believers have bad days; in fact, there is probably rarely a week that passes without experiencing at least one bad; a day when you thought it couldn't possibly get any worse.

Consider the wife who knew what started out to be a good day ended up being a bad day that became worse every minute. The wife bought her husband a motorcycle for his birthday. He wanted one but had never ridden one. As soon as he cranked it up it, he lost control, and it crashed through the patio window. She rushed to the phone and called for help, but realized her cell phone wasn't charged. She tried to jump in the car and drive to the nearest neighbor down the road, but her car wouldn't start, so she ran. She called for help from the neighbor's house, but the ambulance came to the neighbor's house, and she had to run back to give them directions. While the EMS prepared to rush her husband to the hospital, she noticed that the motorcycle had spilled gas all over the floor. She wiped it up with towels and put the rags in a bucket outside. They treated her husband for scratches and brought him home. He walked outside and look at the mess. He lit up a cigarette and threw the match in the bucket with the gas soaked rags and the blaze burned down the house. The entire house burned down except a single letter. It was from insurance company notifying the family that the homeowner's insurance policy was canceled last week.

Maybe your day wasn't that bad, but you've had some that were pretty close. You knew you were having a bad day when your twin forgot your birthday, you put both contacts in the same eye, and your husband walked in said, good morning Tisha when your name is Edna.-That's a sign that it's a really bad day.

How did you feel when your bad came? The first response is to be frustrated. That will probably be followed by anger, hurt, embarrassment and finally, the blues. Sometimes all of that happens at once. During the day you are grumpy, edgy, and short tempered. On such a day, it is very difficult to be productive. At work, very little will

be done. At home, nothing happens.

Sometimes nothing happened at all because you wake up in a bad mood. When that happens, everybody around has a bad day!

Even the most faithful have bad days. Mr. and Mrs. Job were in their home when news came that all of their cattle had been stolen. Before they could deal with that, news came that their children had been killed in an accident. Before they could deal with that, Job became sick and broke out in boils and sores. It was enough for Mrs. Job to throw up her hands and cry out "this is too much." She said it would be best for Job to just curse God and die. Yet, even on a bad day, Job said, "Yea though he slay me, yet will I trust him...the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

That indicates the response that every believer should have to bad days. Whether our day bright us good or bad, God is still good no matter what happens. Max Lucado in his book, "God will carry you through" says that on such days, God is working his will, even on our bad days, so we should remain faithful and let him finish his work. Letter the painter finish his masterpiece. Let the writer finish his novel. Let the creator finish his creation!

As Christians, we are encouraged to remember that our God is a good God and can do no wrong. He is a good all the time, and all the time he is good.

Exposition

This text considers David as he explains that not what happens in a given day, God is still good.

David's life was one that experienced the full gamut of happiness and sadness, defeat and victory, success and failure. He saw days of courage and strength and days when he fell into spiritual weakness. However, he concluded that every day that God provides is a good day because God is the master of that day.

Every day we get from the Lord is a blessing. Each day we open our eyes we are glad that we have one more day to serve and praise him. No matter if it's raining or the sun is shining we are glad. We view each day with wonder, respect, and amazement. That's when we remember the truth of Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

This is the type of gladness that comes after one has considered the universe and how God controls it. Gladness in this context is to feel protected because of the knowledge that we are the children of an all-powerful God. When we say we are glad to see another day it brings to mind the little song the Mighty Clouds of Joy had in mind when they sang, "It's another day's journey, and I'm glad about it. He gave me health and strength and I'm glad about it. No matter what the day brings, it is a day created by an all powerful God and "I will be glad in it!" We face each day confident that it will work out to his glory, so it's going to be a good day, regardless.

In Ecclesiastes 7:14 Solomon reminds us that the same God that we praise on our good days, is the same God on our bad days. He says, " In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the

other..” It may seem strange, but even on your worse day, God is still working it out!

What to do

What helps believers to make it through bad days is the knowledge that no matter what happens to us, God is working behind the scenes for our good. He is even to working to flip our bad into a blessed day.

KEEP AN ATTITUDE OF GRATEFULNESS: When things go wrong, it helps to remain grateful, even when we are trying to work ourselves out of a dilemma. We still find a reason to express gratefulness and thanks to God. In Psalm 105:1, “O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.” From experience, many of us can testify that God is a good God and regardless of what a kind of hand life deals us, we will make the best of it. There is a tee shirt slogan that seems to epitomize what every believer feels about what God has provided. The slogan says, “Too blessed to be stressed!”

The ungrateful man complains that his house is too small, the saint says, “Lord thank you for blessing me with a house!”

The ungrateful man complains that his job doesn’t pay him enough. The saint says, “Lord thank you for blessing me with a job when so many are unemployed!” The ungrateful woman complains about not having new shoes. The saint says, “Lord, thank you for blessing me to be able to walk in the same old shoes!

The ungrateful man complains about having a bad day! The saint says, “Lord, thank you for letting me see another day, good or bad!”

On our worst days, God is still good.

O**N ANY BAD DAY THERE IS MORE GOOD THAN BAD:** On any bad that we experience there is always more good happening to us and for us than is bad; the problem is that our focus shifts to the negatives. We see the losses and the misfortunes and lose sight of the blessings. If the car won’t start, that’s obviously a bad thing; but you still have a car, a house, and utilities. No accidents were reported, the food in the refrigerator didn’t spoil, and a tree limb from the recent storm didn’t fall through your roof. Even though the car won’t start, there is still considerable reason for us to be of good cheer, because such more is going well.

Consider the man who sang a song as he drove along thinking of how blessed he was to have so many possessions. He sang “Count your blessings.” When he stopped and proceeded to get out of his BMW, suddenly a truck came along and hit the door, completely ripping it off. When the police arrived at the scene, the man was complaining bitterly and singing a different song. The people standing around were
Thanking God. It was a miracle that the man survived and they expected the man to be singing, “I never would have made it without you, Lord.” It was just the opposite.

The man stopped singing altogether. He looked at the door of his car lying in the middle of the street and complained about the damage to his precious BMW. “Officer, look what they’ve done to my Beemer!” he whined. The police officer, who was a devout Christian, said “You are the obvious recipient of a great blessing. A truck just tore off

the door of your car, there is debris everywhere, and all you can see is the damage to your precious BMW. You should be singing, " I won't complain" but you are so busy grumbling that you haven't even noticed that your left arm was ripped off!"

"Oh no!" replied the man, finally noticing the bloody left shoulder where his arm once was. "I've lost my Rolex, too."- He could not see that his life had been spared, he could only see what he had lost.

A bad day gets worse if we can't see the good for looking at what went bad.

GOD'S GOODNESS IS NOT MEASURED BY PLEASURE: Some people measure God's goodness by the pleasure index. They believe God is good when they are receiving known blessings as they requested. Thus, when they are sick, and they ask God for a healing and receive it, then they respond, "God is good!" When they are hungry and pray for food, and it comes they respond, "God is good!" When they are in trouble, and God brings the help, they respond "God is good!" However, when the hot water heater bursts and water is everywhere, is God still good? When you were laid off your job without notice or prospect for finding another one soon, is God still good? When storms damage your property or thieves take away that which you value, is God still good? Your answer is like spinach and broccoli to the proud son. "It may not be good to me, but if it's served at mama's table, it's bound to be good for me.!" That's the Christian response. No matter what the circumstance, God is still good. Believers don't measure God's goodness by the pleasure index. We know that God is good all the time and all the time God is good. That's another way of saying, 'whatever is served at God's table, may not be good "to us" at the moment, but it's bound to be good "for us" in the long run!"

In all things give thank

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that regardless how each day begins in all, scripture reminds us "In all things, give thanks."

Every morning when we rise we are the recipients of his benevolent blessings. He blesses us with health and strength. That's why David declared in Psalm 5:3 "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

The love of God is not occasional, but it is always present. Even when we are not at our best God still loves us. When we are faring less than our potential God has showered us with love. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The mercy of God is not incidental. He does not show mercy today and refuse to show mercy tomorrow. Every day God is merciful, even when it appears that we are having a bad day.

The grace of God is not restricted to good days or bad day. There are no bad days in which we are outside of the Grace of God. God's grace is always available in sufficient quantity to satisfy our needs. That's why Paul declared in, 2 Corinthians 12:9 "My

grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

When everybody else in the world sees the bad that's going on, the believer is always able to see the goodness of the Lord.

I'm reminded of the church that held a special "complaint" Sunday where all members were told to march around and put their complaints about the church in a box, and they would be read out loud. On complaint Sunday hundreds of members marched around and posted their complaints which seemed to fall into three categories: The choir's singing wasn't good enough, the preacher's preaching didn't make them shout, and there were too many offerings. Every member marched around except an old sister on the mother's bench. When asked why she wouldn't make her complaint she said:"Brother Pastor, if the choir don't sing to my fancy, I remember that"God gave me a song that the angels can't sing, I've been washed in the blood of the crucified lamb. It doesn't matter whether the preacher's sermon pats me on the back or steps on my feet as long as he calls the name of Jesus, for at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. I'm not bothered by the offerings because every time I see that plate I ask "What shall I render unto God for all his mercies? I didn't come by the box because I don't have a complaint. The Lord has been good to me, and I won't complain!

I don't know about you, but I've decided that I won't complain! God has been good to me.

On a bad day, when I'm dipped in sorrow, I think of his goodness, and he brings me joy!

On a bad day, when I'm afraid of failing, I think of his goodness, and he brings me courage!

On a bad day, when I'm feeling very weak, I think of his goodness, and he brings me strength!

On a bad day, when I'm facing defeat, I think of his goodness, and he brings me the victory!

On a bad day, when I'm In the midst of the storm, God is good, because he speaks to the wind and waves!

It was a bad day when Jesus stood before Israel and heard them shout Crucify him!

It was a bad day when they put a purple robe on his shoulder and crown of thorns on his head!

It was a bad day when nailed him to an old rugged cross!

It was a bad day when he dropped his head and died!

But even on that bad day, God was still good!

I hear Jesus cry out "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!

I hear a soldier cry out "Surely, he must be the son of God!

They buried him in a borrowed tomb, but Early Sunday morning arose

That's why we declare, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!"

No. 9764-Inspiration

Playing Your Hand

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

January 29, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am,therewith to be content. both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound. and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:11-13

Introduction

Have you ever played cards? There are many who have become experts at these games because they have perfected the art playing well with whatever hand they have been dealt.

What's considered a good hand depends on the game. In Poker, the best hand is a royal flush: A,K,Q,J, 10 all in the same suit. With a hand like that, a player is almost guaranteed to win. Some don't get the royal flush they get the next best thing: a straight flush, five cards in sequence, all in the same suit. There are some who don't get either of these, and neither do they get "four of a kind", "the full house" or a flush; all they get is a pair. Yet, poker experts say even people who have only been dealt pairs can win, it's all in the strategy and thinking of the player.

Many people are familiar with bid whist. The players in the game make bids about how many books they will win after they look at their hands. They usually play with a partner against other partners. After the deal, some players get a mixed hand with some high cards and some low. Others get a downtown hand that is mostly low cards and other get an uptown hand, most high cards. It really doesn't matter what cards partners have been dealt, they can still win if they, "Play their cards right."

If you play Ono, your goal is get rid of all of your cards. If you play Gin Rummy, you never show your cards until the game is over.

In the children's game of "Old Maid," the object is to get rid of all of the cards in your hand without ending up with the "Old Maid." -No one wants to be dealt the "Old Maid" and players spend the entire game trying to get rid of the old lady.

Whether your favorite game is Tonk, Bid Whist, Poker, Gin Rummy, or Old Maid, there is one truth that runs like a ripple through each game; it doesn't matter what type of hand you are dealt; what matters is how you play the hand you have been dealt. There is a faith parallel to the way we play cards and the attitude we bring to life situations. We get our "hands" in a card game from the dealer, in life, God deals us our

hand. There is no good hand or bad hand, only faithful players or faithless players. Some people are born with the Royal Flush. They have everything going for them, money, health, and opportunity. Some only get a pair. They have very few opportunities but still have a chance to win. There are others who dealt the Old Maid, but they still can win the game.

The person who lives by faith is not intimidated or impressed by the hand they have been dealt. A faithless person can lose while holding a pat hand, while a person of faith can win although he or she never really received any cards to work with; all the believer had was strong faith and a plan.

That's where faith comes into play. It doesn't matter what hand we have been dealt in life if we trust in God we can rise to the top of our game.

As Christians, we have learned to trust God to help us play our hand. It doesn't matter what state we are in, we have learned to lean on our Savior because he will see us through.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instruction to New Testament Christians about complaining and grumbling.

The tone of his teaching was simple: God will always do that which is best for us, even when we don't understand or appreciate the circumstance. Therefore, we should labor with a spirit of gratitude for what we have while we strive to reach higher heights.

Whether we have been dealt a great hand that is filled with all of the most desirable cards that include an abundance of material things or whether we have been given the "Old Maid" and must we get along with meager fare for a while, we must thank the dealer and play our hand. The scripture teaches "everything give thanks!"

The attitude of perpetual thanks supersedes and overrides complaining because complaining by nature requires us to believe that God has wronged us; that somehow he has dealt us a bad hand from the bottom of the deck, intentionally and hurtful lay.

When we approach life with a grateful spirit, we play our hand with an attitude that God cannot and will not wrong us in any way because it is against his nature. Even though we have been dealt a difficult hand, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Look at your hand

Each believer has been given a life filled with Aces, spades, Kings and Jokers, how our lives turn out depends on how we play our hand.

WHAT TO DO WITH A WEAK HAND: The most desirable hand to have is the one with all of the right cards, but suppose your hand is a weak hand? Suppose God

doesn't give you anything but low cards and Jokers. Does that mean that you are doomed to lose? No, it means you must lay out a plan to use what others think is a weakness, to your advantage with God's help. That's what Moses had to learn when he was told to go to Egypt and free Israel. He complained that he did not have all of the essentials he needed: no army, resources or soldiers. God asked him, "What's that in thine hand?" Moses had only a rod in his hand, but God took the rod and blessed it in a way that when Moses used it, it did miraculous things.

What's in your hand? If you are Spud Web, you say that you were dealt a very short body, but a set of strong legs. When he played his hand, he became one of the slam dunk kings of basketball despite the fact that he was only 5'7" inches tall and weighed a measly 132 pounds. If you are Alex Haley, all God gave him was a pencil. He took that pencil and became an author of best sellers like "Roots" and the Autobiography of Malcolm X. What is that in thy hand? For Malcolm Jamal Warner it was a television script. For Sugar Ray Leonard it was a boxing glove. For Micheal Jordan, it was basketball. If you are Liz Murray you may have grown in a dysfunctional family no working shower, abusive parents and nothing but hard luck, but played your hand so successfully that you finish high school in two years and earn a scholarship to Harvard University. What do you do with a weak hand? Trust God, get a plan work move forward in faith.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE WORLD LAUGHS AT YOUR HAND: People are cruel. They make fun of what they do not understand and anything that is different. When the world laughs, it is easy to feel alone and hopeless. That's must have been how Moses felt, but God reassured him that "I will be with thee.." Today, we should hear the voice of Christ saying, "And lo, I will be with thee alway." When God is with you, you can do much more than you ever expected because he takes the simple things in life and uses them for his purpose. God often takes simple, insignificant, foolish and weak things and uses them for his purpose. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Corinthians 1:27-29. When the world laughs because your attempts to succeed seem foolish, keep telling yourself "I can do anything that will strengthen me, through Christ."

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR HAND COMES FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE DECK: There are many people who can handle life's disappointments or even the fact that they were not dealt a winning hand or given an even start, but they have serious difficulty whenever they discover or suspect that they have been dealt their hand from the bottom of the deck. That's when you have played a game and notice that although four aces have been played that someone else wins when a mysterious fifth ace shows up. It's when you have a royal flush with hearts, and someone else throws down a king or queen of hearts. That's when you know that someone is getting their cards from a crooked deal. We see this in life daily. When our friends and associates seem to succeed in life without following the rules. They sell drugs, cheat on their taxes, cheat

on their taxes, buy stolen merchandise, or otherwise get cards from the bottom of the deck.

Believers can live while working with their weak hand, but it is frustrating when others keep playing with the wrong hand or keep shooting craps with loaded dice. What does a believer do? David wrote in Psalm 37:1-2 that we should, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity for they shall soon be cut down as the grass and wither as the green herb." In essence, God will deal with the under handed, we are to remain faithful with the assurance that comes from Psalm 37:25 " I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

A blessed hand

Finally, brothers and sisters, when God deals you a hand, it is blessed hand, because your hand has come from God's hand.

Paul said he learned that whatever hand he had ben dealt he would deal with it. He said he had some good hands and some bad hands, but remained focused and at peace in each instance.

When what's in your hand has been blessed by God, there is no limit to what you can do and to how far you can go!

"..Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

Brothers and sisters, it is not important what you have in your hands. However it is important that what you have has been touched by the master's hand.

It does not matter that you only have a little with which to work. It does matter that you let God work with what you have for his service.

When you've been touched by the master's hand, nothing can stand in your way!

Feel free to dream the impossible dream! Fight the unbeatable foe!

I heard the songwriter declare: "He touched me! He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul. Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole!"

He touched me, the man who carried a cross for me up Calvary's hill!

He touched me, the man who let them stick a spear in his side and put a crown of thorns on his head!

He touched me, the man who died and was buried in a borrowed tomb!

He touched me, the man who stayed in the grave for three days an nights and early Sunday morning arose from the grave

He touched me and turned my sadness turned to joy!

He touched me and turned my failure turned to success!

He touched me and turned my defeat turned into victory!

He touched me...

..and now I am no longer the same!

No. 9765-Inspiration

He Protects our Blind Side

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 5, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thy soul. " Psalm 121:5-7

Introduction

Many people watch football games and focus their attention on one or two players because they have a favorite position they played or favor. What's your favorite position? Many will focus on the receivers because they catch passes and often run touchdowns. Others focus on the strength and power of running backs as they plow through virtual steel walls of protectors.Many eyes focus on the quarterback because he is the on-field general of the team. Great quarterbacks like Tom Brady of the Patriots, who has been to the Superbowl so many times he's running out of fingers to count and Matt Ryan of the Falcons, a virtual wizard of strategy and gameplay are the focus of millions. Each team depends on the quarterback to successfully throw touchdown passes and the receivers to catch them. There are other players that are crucial to the team, but one position that is extremely important, but is seldom the focus of the crowd is the Offensive Tackle.

What is the offensive tackle? The short definition is that he is the Quarterback's Blindside Protector. Whether a team has a chance to make it to the Super Bowl depends largely on the health of its quarterback. The player who is most responsible for keeping that golden arm on the field is the Superman on quarterback's blind side, the left tackle for a right-handed QB. He doesn't get much attention because he is Isolated at the end of the offensive line and often battles some of the best pass rushers in the game. His job is so crucial that if he makes one mistake, the quarterback could be injured permanently.,

Most experts agree that one of the most consistent and reliable left tackles in the game is Joe Thomas of the Browns. Some say he is the best in all of football, having played in over 144 games, participated in nine straight Pro Bowls and has protected 16 quarterbacks in his career. It's hard to get to the quarterback with Thomas on the offensive line.

In Super Bowl 51, two great Offensive Tackles took the field. The Patriots Quarterback Tom Brady was protected by Matt Light. Light has protected Brady in five Super Bowls allowing only 11 sacks in five Superbowl games. Jake Matthews of the

Falcons has played 1003 offensive snaps and allowed five sacks in the 2016 season. He's ranked 33 out of 74 among NFL Offensive Tackles.

No matter how great the quarterback, when he is trying to throw with his right arm, he turns away from his left for a moment. During that moment, when he is unaware of an approaching tackler, he can be injured at the most and sacked at the least. The left side, that he cannot see is referred to as his blind side. An Offensive Tackle is the player whose job it is to protect the quarterback from dangers seen and unseen on his blind side.

We may not play professional football, but each of us has a blind side. We all have that point of weakness, that dark area that when left unprotected can bring each of us down. It's good to know that our God will not suffer the sun to smite us by day or the moon by night. He's got our blind side.

As Christians, we praise God for protecting us, preserving us and both night and day. There are dangers every day, but it's a joy to know that he protects our blindside.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he relates his confidence that God will protect his people.

David was always confident that God would protect him. In confrontations with wild animals that attacked his father's flocks or as he stood before Goliath, he never doubted that God would protect him.

David said, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help." The driving idea of the text is that God will preserve his people; He will not allow them to suffer utter defeat. Verses six and seven use the word "Preserve" three times. The Hebrew word "Samar" used in each instance means, "to build a thorny hedge around."

This is the truth that David wanted believers to know. God will build a thorny hedge around his people to preserve them. A thorny hedge will keep evil influences out, but the same thorns protect Israel from itself by keeping it "In."

God protects "our going out" and our "coming in" both day and night.

He Protects

In many ways, we are the quarterbacks of our daily lives, executing plays given to us by the Lord, our coach. As we try to win each day's contest, the devil tries his best to get to us, but thanks be to God for protecting our blind side.

HE IS THE SHADE ON YOU RIGHT HAND: David said God is a "shade upon thy right hand." The right hand, for a right handed person, is the working hand. To provide shade for the right hand, God would be close enough to provide a shadow. In our everyday work, God is always close by watching and protecting us as we carry out our various duties. Moses found him to be a protection in the wilderness. The disciples found him to be a protective shield in the storm. Israel found him to be a protection

during their Egyptian bondage and Exodus from slavery. Unlike the Offensive Tackle in football, nothing gets by God that he does not want to get by for his own reasons. It is a consolation for us to know that he's got our back.

HE GIVES US HOPE: When the quarterback of a team knows that he has his blindside protected, his confidence is strengthened. He knows he will be safe from attacks with strong offensive linemen protecting him. That also applies to believers. Psalm 130:7 says, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." It means that you place the focus of your belief and faith in the hands of God. It does not mean that you never look to your left, but it means you can focus on your right without an overriding fear that your left is unprotected. Those who hope in the Lord focus on the fact that God is the deliverer and provider. Focusing on God is not naivety; it is not irrational, it simply recognizes that there is a power beyond anything in this world. So rather than fear what you will do
if someone breaks the tackle sweeps around the end and sacks you, focus on the fact that even if it does play out that way that, God can made a way, has made a way and will make a way.

Rather than fear what may happen and never throw your pass, find your receiver, focus on what must be done confident that God is able!

In every situation, no matter how bad it is God keeps saying, "I got your blindside, I'm the shade on right hand. Go forth." That's why David declared, in Psalm 121:1-2 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth."

HE PROTECTS US FROM UNSEEN DANGERS: Most of us can prepare for dangers we see coming our way. What troubles us are the dangers we do not see. The hits we take in life that we never saw coming. It's the disappointments, failures, and mess-ups that never gave us a sign that they were approaching. These unseen dangers are ones that are especially stressful, but they are also the ones that we lean on our faith to overcome. These dangers are our blindside. We don't know what each day holds for us. We may begin this journey and stumble along the way, or find new strength and climb even higher. Each day God protects us from and through the unseen dangers on our path. If we could have seen the unseen dangers that God has protected us from, just today, we could better understand the nature of our Journey because then we would know the many ways that God has already made our journey safer because we are under his protective care. He has our blindside.

Psalm 121:3-4, reminds us that God will not allow our feet to slip; he will not sleep on the job because, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." If it's a prayer that we need answered or help in times of trouble, we have the assurance that our God is always by our side.

Working the Blind Side

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that the devil never stops trying to sack us, but that God for Jesus who always protects our blindside.

David said the Lord "will preserve thy soul" and that he will preserve thy going out

and coming in forever more.

That's good to know because the Word tells us that the devil is always trying to sack the quarterback, especially when he tries to take advantage of our blind side.

Most believers have a good side and a bad side.

Our bad side often shows up when we least expect it. Our bad side comes when we are dealing with multiple problems, and our patience starts to grow short.

Our bad side shows when our money is funny and it's time to meet our obligations.

When our bad side tries to come out, that's when our protector goes into action because my bad side is blind side.

My blind side is the side that forgets that even if I can't see my way, the Lord will make a way somehow!

My blind side is the side that becomes impatient and forgets that the word says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint!"

My blind side is the side that gets afraid when things look dark and forgets that "weeping endureth, but a night but Joy comes in the morning."

Our God protects our blindside.

In our weakness, he brings us strength

In our doubts, he brings us confidence.

In our confusion, he brings us direction!

In our despair, he brings us hope!

So, brothers and sisters, we should suit up for the game, and don't worry about your blind side. You need a:

—A good HELMET protects the head from collisions that are sure to come when We butt heads with the enemy head on. Paul called it the helmet of salvation. Every Helmet comes equipped with a chin guard. The holy spirit is like a built in chin guard. When things are down, it reminds us to keep our chin up, everything will be all right.

Suit up and don't worry about your blind side, but you need a:

—A MOUTHPIECE is essential in the contest. For believers a mouthpiece keeps us from saying the wrong things or even saying the right thing but at the wrong time! This is what David meant in Psalm 39:1 when he said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Don't go into battle without a mouthpiece!

Suit up and don't worry about your blind side, but you need::

—SHOULDER PADS protect the shoulders of those who are receiving hits and delivering blocks in the contests.

Suit up and don't worry about your blind side, but you will need:

—CLEATS are special shoes that help competitors to grip the ground. Paul told the Ephesians to keep their "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Gospel shoes don't slip and slide as other shoes do, but they grab the turf and hold on! When life gets tough, they hold on!

If thunderstorms break out and the turf is wet, they hold on!

Every saint should be able to say, "Today is Super Bowl Sunday, but tomorrow

will be super bowl Monday!" Every day we come up against Satan is super contest.

However, we can say with assurance, "Our team will win!"

We know our team will win because of the lineup!

At left end there is GENESIS at right end, there is REVELATION.

At tackle and guard is Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at center is Malachi!

At half-back are faith and hope! At full back there is prayer!

But my team always wins because my team has the best quarterback!

The quarterback of my team wears jersey number 1-1-1. One for the father, one for the Son and One for the Holy Ghost.

My quarterback knows how to play the game because he's a super bowl veteran!

One day over 2,000 years ago he met the forces of Satan out on Calvary, died on an old rugged cross!

But just before the game was over, Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

You don't have to wait until the battle is over...shout now!

Your super bowl team has already won!

No.9766-Inspiration

The Ultimate Swag

A Sermon By The Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 12, 2017

SCRIPTURE: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20; But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.; "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:8-9.

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the body language of people who succeed and that of those who have no desire to succeed? A man or woman who succeeds or at least expects to succeed stands erect with shoulders back and head up, sits erect without slumping and walks with a gait that radiants confidence and purpose. The common word for those who have this characteristic is "Swag."

Officially, Swag is an urban that is derived from the Scottish slang "Swagger" which means to walk with a swaying motion. In common usage on our side of the track, it means to walk with an air of confidence and purpose or to be cool.

Among the top personalities in the nation said to have the most SWAG are Jay-Z, Rihanna, Rick Ross, Beyonce' Knowles, Kanye West, Christian Bale, P Diddy, and number one on everyone's list is President Barack Obama.

To have Swag may mean different things to different people. If you ask the thug, having swag might mean to walk into a room with a walk that says you are the toughest, meanest dude in the room. To the ghetto fabulous, to have swag might mean to wear flashy clothes, with lots of glitz and diamonds and fancy pick up lines for the women. There are those with a professional swag stand tall, walk with a gait as if they owned the world. In this view, the man or woman with swag is loaded with witty conversation, a designer label on a dress, and real hair soft enough to run fingers through.

There's thug swag and professional swag, but there is one more that would be Godly Swag. Godly Swagger is the man or woman who enters a room with the knowledge that the king of the world empowers him/her, but they remains humble enough to keep the common touch. They don't attack the room like the thug or depend on clothes or designer labels and witty conversation that like the professional swagger; they float into a room in a way that attracts attention rather than commands it. It's the man or woman that makes himself interesting by listening attentively to others, speaking little

of himself and heaping praise on others, with just the right words, phrases and pauses to make those around them want more. Spiritual swagger dresses for the occasion, with taste and restraint, not too much here or showing so much there. Godly swagger is confident, yet humble; it is sensitive to the feelings of others, polite and mannerable.

Godly swag is possessed by the man or woman whose walk in life has a purpose. It really has nothing to do with their walk, the clothes they wear or their wealth. Their purpose walks in the room before they do.

Their sense of purpose is what gives them Godly swag. This is the same sense of purpose that permeated the lives of Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and Booker T. Washington and other great leaders of our race? They were all ordinary people whose lives made a difference to millions. Their social circumstances, economic conditions, and opportunities were the same as millions of others just like themselves. What they had in common was the fact that they were ordinary people. While they were similar to millions because of their ordinary existence they were different because, unlike the others, they had an extraordinary purpose for being here. It was that purpose that gave them Swag.

It's SWAG that makes causes a room full of cursing men to get quiet when a saintly grandma wearing old clothes enters the room on her walker. It's SWAG that causes even the rich and powerful to stand in awe to poor man whose thoughts and leadership changed circumstances for everyone.

You don't have to be special to have the Ultimate Swag because anyone who has a godly walk in life has the Ultimate SWAG.

As Christians, we should remember that God gave a great mission to ordinary people. We know his purpose is clear and is just and those whose life walk reflects that mission have SWAG.

Exposition

This text is known as the great commission. It occurs after the resurrection as Jesus speaks to the disciples giving them their final assignment. He told them to get the word out about salvation and redemption to the entire world, to baptize believers and then teach them the way of life prescribed for Christians.

The believers who were assembled before Jesus as he gave this commission to go into the entire world were ordinary people. They were fishermen and laborers; some were publicans some had been labeled as "sinners" before the met Christ.

They were about as ordinary as could be. There were no leaders of the synagogue, wealthy or powerful people in the group. Neither were their emissaries of the king or representatives of the Roman Empire in this group.

These were simply ordinary people who were given an extraordinary job to do; to evangelize and disciple the known world!

In Genesis, Noah was given a similar mission which was to build an ark to save his family and the righteous from coming destruction by flood. He too was an ordinary man.However, there was something different about him that is marked in Genesis 6:8-9, he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and he walked with God.

Noah had SWAG, not because of the way he dressed or whether or not he was cool, but because he had walked in the grace and favor of the Lord.

Noah and Christians today, should exemplify the Ultimate SWAG by being known as individuals that walk with God.

Walking in the Purpose

IF OUR WALK HAS PURPOSE, WE HAVE SWAG: God calls every believer to undertake a great work. He never calls us to an insignificant or unimportant work; no matter what others think. It is always a great work. Our work may be to be the strength of our families. It may be to help the poor and the needy. It may be highly visible like public service or almost invisible, like that of a private home nurse. Regardless of our work, it is important.

To accomplish that mission he gives us grace and favor. A student who fails in school is not in tune with his mission and has no godly swag.. Regardless of how well dressed the student may be or how expensive their jewelry or other exterior qualities, they only have swag if they are living the purpose. The same applies to adults. No matter how big the house, fancy the car, or beautiful our clothing if we are not about the business of building up he body of Christ, we are walking but not according to our purpose. It's our purpose that gives us the ultimate SWAG.

Even Churches have SWAG. Some have large crowds, great worship and raise lots of money, but they don't have SWAG. They are not walking in our purpose. Our purpose is to reach into the hell holes of the world and extend the firm but forgiving hand of God to an uncaring world. To the extent that we reach, teach, help and save, we have SWAG.

We must reach out and touch the wounded and the lost of the world in the name of Jesus.

To save the lost, nurture the saved, and keep reaching out in love is not an ordinary mission, it is an extra-ordinary purpose and those who pursue that purpose have the Ultimate Swag.

THE ULTIMATE SWAG PORTRAYS A GODLY IMAGE: Just as everyone walks, but may not walk with swag, everyone also thinks, but may not think about their Godly purpose and how to accomplish their purpose. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." There is a difference between the way a person with Godly swagger thinks and all others. The person with godly swagger has a different attitude and approach to life and its various circumstances. Instead of being a pessimist Godly swagger prompts believers to be faith walkers who approach the world with the confidence that God is in control and is guiding their footsteps. Godly swagger has a lot to do with what we think about, plans we are making, and goals that we are pursuing. A person with Godly swagger is always planning something great and pleasing to God;

always seeking ways to improve, encourage and build. He/she reflects the meaning of Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In contrast, the person without Godly swag does just the opposite.

THE ULTIMATE SWAG BRINGS FULFILLMENT: People with swag walk as if the own the world and people who have the Ultimate Swag live happily, fulfilled lives because Swag brings balance into their lives. The nineteenth-century Polish poet Cyrrian Norwid wrote "To be what is called happy, one should have (1) something to live on, (2) something to live for, (3) something to die for. The lack of one results in drama. The lack of two results in tragedy." Martin Seligman, the eminent psychologist, notes that the lack of meaning in our society today has reached epidemic proportions. He emphasizes that finding meaning requires "an attachment to something larger than ourselves."

All of these smart men and women simply repeat in different words what Jesus tells every believer. "If you want to save your life, lose it. The man that loses his life saves it." That paraphrase explains Jesus' teaching that believers find meaning and purpose in life when we plunge ourselves into a calling and mission greater than ourselves. Those who have a sense of purpose are able to deal with life. Martin Luther King said, "Any man who has not found something for which he is willing to die, is not fit to live."

Those who live according to their purpose find fulfillment if they don't find riches and fame. It makes them enter a room and command attention because they have SWAG.

What Shall We Do Then?

Finally, brothers and sisters, if we could redefine SWAG for the believer it would be an anacronym for "Showered with Amazing Grace."

Godly swagger deals with the spirit and the soul not in the superficial. It deals with what comes from the inside and is reflected on the outside.

It's possible to imitate the walk of Denzel Washington or President Obama. It's possible to copy the smile of Michelle or the words of Ophrah Winfrey, but it won't give you Godly swagger, just a walk like a movie star or a President.

Those who want Godly Swagger must have God in their lives and attempt to let the confidence, boldness and assurance that he gives us change the way we walk, talk and think.

We walk with a walk that has been showered with Amazing Grace.

We live with a life that has been showered with Amazing Grace.

We pursue life with a passion that has been showered with Amazing Grace.

Noah had SWAG because he walked with God.

When we walk with God his hand gets in our plan.

Our Christian walk is a walk with God. It's a walk that makes us sing, "Just a closer walk with thee, grant it, Jesus, if you please."

Our walk with God is a daily walk in which we say, "And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own.."

Because of our Holy Ghost Swag:

—The world may kick you down, but God will pick you up!

—The world may strike you out, but God will give you a home run!

—The world may think you are a loser, but God will make you a winner!

—The world may think you are weak, but God will make you strong!

Because we are showered with God's Amazing Grace, the impossible becomes possible!

Because we are showered with God's Amazing Grace, the improbable becomes probable!

Because we are showered with God's Amazing Grace, the unthinkable becomes thinkable!

This is the grace that prompted Jesus to carry an old rugged cross to Calvary one day!

He died on the cross, but Sunday morning when he arose from the grave with all power!

All power in his hands!

No. 9767-Anniv. - Women

Hidden Figures

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

February 19, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid." Luke 23:55

Introduction

Have you ever felt insignificant? There are times when many of us feel that our contributions are not appreciated or recognized. It is a frustrating moment to say the least.

My wife once told me that for years she felt insignificant because she had no identity of her own; she was always Roosevelt's wife. It was as if she did not exist or have a life, purpose of significance independent of her husband. I came to understood that very clearly whenever I go to her hometown; there I'm referred to as Joslyn's husband whose importance and significance exists only because of the connection to the real important person, their neighbor, friend and family member.

For generations, women have been footnotes in history, those whose work was noted only in passing, but often overlooked in history. The adage "Behind every good man there is a good woman," usually meant that if a man succeeded there was a woman hidden behind him somewhere in the footnotes of his accomplishments.

The role of women in the shaping of our nation has been downplayed for centuries, requiring extensive research and effort to unearth accomplishments stamped with the names of men, but often only attainable because of the sacrifices of women.

The fact that women, especially African-American women, were a footnote to history, is the theme of the Academy Award nominated film "Hidden Figures" which depicts the lives of three African-American women who supplied the intricate mathematical formulas that calculated the trajectory of the John Glenn's spaceship in the early 1960's. The women, obviously brilliant scholars in their own right, had to accept a second class role just to participate in the process. They endured slights and humiliations that were typical for their gender as women, but also for their race. There was a women's bathroom at NASA, but these women had to walk great distances to get segregated toilets reserved for Negroes. Though their role in supplying needed brain power for the space mission was crucial, their contribution was marginalized and hidden in the dust covered annals of history, mentioned only as a footnote to achievement.

The shadowy zone could be described as the "also" zone, where women's roles and importance has been hidden.

In the aftermath of the NASA episodes, the March on Washington, the passage of the Civil Rights Act and other enlightened evolutions and thought and policy, the role of Black women in America has changed. Women, especially Black women, have been set free to dream dreams and to realize them in great ways.

Each passing year sees the emergence of more women as they step from the shadows and take their places as mothers, wives, thinkers, leaders, innovators and athletes. These are the women who have been "behind" the great men, but who are now standing beside great men as equal partners in quests.

When women began to dream, they entered the workforce. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that while 62 percent of Black women are now in the American workforce, most of the jobs are still technical, sales, and administrative support areas. In many instances, women train the men who supervise them and earn more. Despite this frustration, women are coming out of the shadows in the workplace.

In the world of business, women, especially Black women, are no longer "hidden figures." In 1987 there were 172,200 businesses owned by Black women. By 1996, there were 405,000. The number of black women-owned businesses has grown by a whopping 322 percent since 1997. In 2015, black women owned roughly 14 percent of all businesses in the country owned by women, which tallies to around 1.3 million businesses, according to the Huffington Post.

These same truths are evident in every sphere of our existence are no longer the afterthought, but considered integral to every social process.

Thankfully, the Lord Jesus did not have a set of hidden figures. He acknowledged women openly, even those of different races and cultures and lifestyles. He called them by name and responded to their needs. Scripture does not give any indication that they were afterthoughts or "hidden" in his eyes.

As Christians, we serve a Savior who values the service, purpose, and soul of every person. Every child of God has access to him and their none who are designated hidden status in his presence. The children's song says it clear, "Red, yellow, black or white, they are all precious in his sight."

Exposition

This text is one of several in scripture that indicate the role of women in the biblical context.

The Bible records the truths of God, written by inspired men. The truths the Bible dictates are irrefutable, but there are areas in which the social customs of the times are reflected in the way a truth is said, and not said.

The Bible shows women operating in a variety of contexts: Wives, Queens, Judges, Soldiers, cooks, advisors, and mothers. It seems that translators often struggle to choose words or terms that would not give women equal recognition with men even though their work and accomplishment was included with the greater record.

For example, the Greek Word "Diakonos" is a word that has three meanings: servant, minister or deacon. However, New Testament translators of the original Greek were careful to choose words that were accurate, but were socially acceptable when it came to women. So whenever the New Testament word "Diakonos" described a man they used the term "minister or deacon." When it referred to a woman, they chose "servant." Their choice implied that although women did the same work, they could not be considered on the same level as a man. Women were confined to serve among the "hidden figures" of the kingdom; doing the same work without the recognition.

In Genesis 14:16 the Bible described how Abraham recused his brother Lot who had been captured by enemies. It accurately described Abraham's raid and how he brought back all of those who had been captured. The text notes that he brought back his brother, his goods and the people. It's interesting that the women were not included among "the people" designated by the phrase but as an afterthought, the phrase "the women also" seems to be included, as if they were insignificant.

Luke detailed the life of Jesus and showed that Jesus was followed be a crowd of people. Luke 23:27 adds "and of women" making a footnote of women. Somehow the implication is the fact men followed Jesus was expected, but the followship of women was not particularly important but was worthy of a footnote.

Luke 23:55 describes how Jesus' body was discovered early on the resurrection morning. However, although the women were the first to arrive at the tomb and the first to know Jesus had risen, the text says, "the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid." In Luke 24:22 the phrase "and certain women also" described these first women at the tomb. The presence of "also" plunged did not alter the biblical truth, but it does serve to plunge women in the sphere of "hidden figures" whose role in important events are just mere footnotes or a singular "also."

What does the word say? The preponderance of Biblical teaching is summed up in two passages of scripture: Romans 2:11, "For there is no respect of persons with God." Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

With Christ, there are no hidden figures, everybody is somebody.

Stepping from the shadows

As women move from the shadows there a**re a few thoughts to consider:**

NO SUCCESSFUL MAN IS AN ISLAND: The poet John Donne said, "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." This is also true when it comes to the accomplishments of successful men. Very few men can say they achieved success alone, without the help of anyone other than themselves, especially not women. Usually, there is a woman in the picture somewhere: wife, mother, sister or aunt or even grandmother that is pushing, encouraging and helping. Paul was a single man, but on every one of his successful missionary journeys he was assisted by a woman. Moses was saved from the Nile by a woman. Even Jesus was ministered

to by his mother, Mary, Martha and other women. There is no man who succeeds without women; their role in that success should be acknowledged.

TO SUBMIT DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN OBEY: One way that women have been marginalized is that their thoughts and opinions have been reduced to insignificance under the claim that it is the husband's opinion that matters and that of the woman is not important. Often Ephesians 5:22 is the verse cited: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." The word submit has been use to browbeat women into the zone of mediocrity. However, Submit and Obey don't mean the same thing. Submit means to willingly follow, Obey means to forcefully follow. As each new generation of women take wedding vows many have refused to obey but are more than willing to submit. Coretta Scott King, in her biography "My Life with Martin" notes that in her wedding vows she refused to say she would obey Martin Luther King, but she spent her whole life willingly submitting to her own husband, making his mission her mission, and his dream her dream. To submit means to be your own woman and follow your husband as long as follows the Lord. To obey means to do what he says, even if that is not Christlike. Women who submit willingly share the leadership of their families with their husbands while maintaining their own sense of purpose in Christ at the same time.

THE CHURCH MUST NOT DISCRIMINATE: One of the places where women are discriminated against the most is in many churches. Catholics frown on women priests, evangelicals frown on women deacons, and National Baptist have virtually banned women from the pulpit. Men have appointed women to secondary roles in church ministries. They point to Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which he said women were commanded to be silent in the church as the basis for their positions. But serious Bible students now know that Paul addressed a specific problem that existed in the Corinthian church in which women who had the gift of language were so excited about their new gift that they were using it in church worships, speaking different languages all at the same time, causing confusion. His command required order, for one person to speak at a time, with the assistance of an interpreter if a speaker chose to speak in a different language. It is also required unruly women of the Corinthian congregation to be silent, to restore order in the assembly. It was not a mandate against all women.

There were simply too many women who were prophesying in the early church for anyone to believe that Paul wanted to relegate all women to second-class status. Phillip had four daughters, all of whom prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). Luke 2:36 describes Anna, a prophetess in the New Testament. Paul himself indicated that women can prophesy in 1 Corinthians 11:5 as long as their heads are covered. In the Old Testament, though steeped in tradition, Miriam was recognized as a prophetess (Exodus 15:20) Judges 4:4 indicates that Deborah was a prophetess, and 2:Kings 22:14 refers to Hulda the prophetess. Throughout the New Testament women served as ministers and deacons in the early church. Yet, even in the church today many women are humiliated told they can't be leaders or preachers, while every pastor knows that without the women, most church doors would close. There should be no respect or of persons in the church; no hidden figures.

Women dream, know the dream

Finally, brothers and sisters we must remember that as women step from the shadows to assume their rightful place, they must always remember, that no matter what comes in life we must continue to trust in the Lord.

The record has shown us quite clear that women have bowed down before God to worship and praise him!

The record is clear that women have strapped their children to their backs and worked fields and scrubbed floors, but they never stopped calling on the Lord.

There is a new liberalism today that is calling for the new independent woman who does not need any man, including Jesus.

The believing woman can't afford to join that crowd. Her song of praise should continue to be, "I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee!"

Women who have been hidden in shadows of history for centuries must step forth in greater bolder ways saying, "Use me Lord in your service."

I heard the songwriter declare "Have thine own way Lord. Have thine own way! Search me and try me, Master today. Whiter than snow Lord, wash me just now, as in thy presence, humbly I bow!"

These are the women who tell the story of salvation and redemption. These are women who tell the same story as Mary Magdalene who was beautiful on the outside but filled with evil spirits on the inside. But one day she met the Savior, and she's never been the same.

Women who know the Lord can testify one day the Savior "picked me up and turned me around and planted my feet on solid ground."

I heard the songwriter declare "Shackled by a heavy burden, neat a load of guilt and stain, but then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same"

He touched me!

He touched me! And oh the joy the floods my soul!

Something happened and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

Women who know the Lord, know Jesus!

Jesus who died out on Calvary!

Jesus who arose after three days and nights!

No. 9768-Family

Whatever happened to the old front porch?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 5, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Acts 5:12 (KJV)

Introduction

Do you remember when every house had a front porch? Today, modern house designers have decided that the front porch is not necessary and unless a new homebuilder insists, new homes will not have a working front porch.

When the first immigrants came to America in the 17th Century, the homes they built did not have front porches. There were simple doors that allowed entry from the outside to the inside. According to scholars, porches started showing up in America as one class of people borrowed the architecture of the Greeks and Romans, and another class of people borrowed house building practices of West Africa. In Biblical times the houses had no porches. However, the influences of the Greeks and Romans on Architecture began to be felt as Kings such as Solomon built large covered areas outside of their palaces for various purposes where people gathered instead coming inside. These were often called Verandas and Vestibules.

While the homes of New England had no porches, the homes of Slave Masters in the south copied the Greek architecture in building their homes, which usually included large columns in the front which huge porches As more African slaves were brought to American the idea of the West African Shotgun House appeared in American, especially among Blacks. The shotgun house was a house which had several rooms built in a straight row with no hallway. It was so straight that one could shoot a shotgun through the front room and the bullets would come out the back going through every room in the house. The West African Shotgun house always had a front porch.

Many of the memories of our people revolved around the front porch, which often had at least one chair or more reserved for the old folks and sometimes a swing. On the front porch, slave families would gather at the end of day and sing, talk and dream. The entire family gathered on the front porch. In the South the front porch was often used to avoid the heat inside; it was cooler on the front porch.

Southern traditions caught on quickly and by the 19th century nearly every house

in the south had a front porch and a swing. The rich entertained guests on the front porch, children played on the front porch; and only the honored guests came beyond the vestibule.

Today, there is less emphasis on family gathering and little time available for leisurely porch sitting. Houses are being built with imitation front porches, a small shed over the front door and a chair or two that captures the flavor of a lost generation in design, but probably will never be used.

A boy who came to court a girl sat on the front porch.

Friends who came by to visit sat on the front porch.

Children who learned Bible verses recited them and listen to Bible being read on the front porch.

When there were peas to be shelled or corn to be shucked, it was done on the front porch.

In the late 20th Century something began to happen in our society. Families stopped talking to each other. It was cooler to greet neighbors in the air conditioned living room rather than the front porch. Boys didn't come to court on the porch anymore they texted each other or courted over Social Media. Only a few families have times set aside for family reading and teaching the Bible. As our culture changed, the need for front porches mostly disappeared. Even today, many homes with porches use them only on rare occasions.

While the porch itself has disappeared, the spirit of the front porch is still needed today. Families still need to fellowship together and learn about God's amazing grace whether it's on the front porch or the family area of the house.

As Christians, we need to still tell those who don't know about the grace of Grace, whether it's on the front porch or in the streets. The porches may be gone, but the goodness of the Lord endures.

Exposition

The text focus on the importance of the area of Solomon's temple called "Solomon's Porch"

When Solomon constructed the temple, it was a lavishly designed building, trimmed in gold and the finest woods and jewels. Outside the temple, was a large area filled with colonnades, benches, and stools. There was a large pool there as well. Since only the priest could enter the temple, there were hundreds who gathered on Solomon's porch just to be close to the presence of God.

Scripture records that even larger crowds began to gather on Solomon's porch when they learned from time to time that angels troubled the waters and whoever was plunged into those waters would be healed of their sickness. When Peter and John healed a lame man, who had sat by the pool for 38 years trying to be healed a multitude of people flocked to Solomon's Porch seeking to be healed as well.

In Acts 3 Peter uses the curiosity of their crowds that followed to preach to them on Solomon's Porch. He preached to them about Jesus, his Lordship, his sojourn on

earth, his crucifixion and resurrection. On the porch he challenged them in the 3:19 saying, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the tie of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

There was healing on Solomon's porch, but there were also many lessons taught, spirits refreshed and hope restored on that porch.

There was so much power on the porch that the crowds spilled into the streets as the lame, sick and despondent were brought to the edge of curbs hoping that if Peter walked passed them his shadow might heal them.

Before Peter healed the lame man, the people focused on the porch itself and the water that troubled. After Peter arrived they did not watch the water any longer they focused on the Power of God through faith in Jesus Christ. They heard it on the porch, but they realized that it wasn't the porch but the Savior that saved and healed.

Lessons on the Porch

There are many lessons that we learned in the fellowship of the family, they are symbolized by the old front porch.

LESSONS LEARNED ON THE PORCH: On the front porch we have learned great truths about the way God has blessed the family and saw his blessings as we watched new generations wrestle and play on the porch.

Family values were taught on the porch. Grandpa and Grandma taught about what the family name meant. They taught the boys to be men and how the family expected the females to be Christian ladies rather than women of the world.

Family History was taught on the porch. It was there that young people learned of the long journey of the family from nowhere to somewhere. They learned of the family's struggle to gain its freedom, protect its property and rear and educate its children.

Respect for God was taught on the porch. Often the Bible was read as everyone listened. The family elders talked about their family's faith journey. There will lessons about those who maintained the faith and those who strayed. There will also be lessons about the rewards the family received for being faithful. On the porch, the family's history of healings, revival and salvation is told for glory of God and instruction of the young.

Shelter from showers was available on the front porch. We never knew when a shower came, but when it came, everyone in the family ran to the front porch to play and wait until the storm passed. In a greater sense, the family has always been available as a place of shelter for those who have drenched by the storms of life.

On the porch the family, listened, learned, laughed and fellowshipped.

The old front porch is gone from many of our houses, but many have found ways to keep the spirit of the front porch alive. Whether its kitchen table chatter or living room lessons. The history of the family must be told so that each generation knows how God has lifted the family and blessed them over the years.

CAN'T WAIT TO GET OFF THE PORCH: As each generation comes there is a tendency to want to get off the porch, or to get away from the old family way. Many

leave home and abandon the teachings and values of home; they leave them on the porch and begin new lives of their own. This is what happened to the Prodigal Son. He was raised on the teachings of his parents, reared in the knowledge of God and taught valuable life lessons in the family. However, the prodigal wanted to get off the porch. He wanted to get as far away from the front porch as he could get. He was like the son in the Country and Western song by Travis Tritt called "Where the corn don't grow." In the song, the son became uneasy with the life symbolized by the front porch. His father planted corn, fertilized corn and harvested corn year in and year out. He wanted to go somewhere where there was no corn. He asked, "Don't you dream of going somewhere where corn don't grow? The question makes his dad kind of sad. He says, You're young, and there's a lot that you don't know, but weeds are high where corn don't grow. In the song the son goes to the big city, goes where corn don't grow, and discovers that big city life isn't so grand because weeds are high where corn don't grow.

Those who get off the porch, or move away from the values they have been taught over the years, usually decided like the Prodigal Son in the Bible or the son in Travis Tritt's song, that the weeds grow high where the corn don't grow.

Today, there may not be a physical porch on your home, but the values taught in the home represent your front porch. Although they may never sit outside as the family once did, many homes insist on having something that looks like a porch; its says, "we may have moved away, but our hearts still remember the old front porch."

WISDOM OF THE ROCKERS AND SWINGS: Nearly every old front porch had either a rocking chair or a swing; sometimes both. The elders of the family sat in the rockers, and they gave life lessons that stretched out over the years. There were so much wisdom in the people who sat in those rockers.

The voices in the rockers would say one line proverbs that we remembered all of our lives., "Never lie son, because if you'll lie you'll steal.", "Be careful how you treat people on your way up, because you'll meet those same people on your way down." "Birds of a feather, flock together,"You don't miss your water until the well runs dry," "You will reap what you sow; if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind." "What's good for the goose is good for the gander," Don't bite the hand that feeds you," "Haste makes waste," "If you make your bed hard, you'll have to sleep in it," "If you lay down with dogs, you wake up with fleas."

We may not have rockers and swings on every porch as we did in the old days, but we should not dismiss what was taught in those swings and rockers as old and foggie.

We may not have a swing or a rocker on the porch, but what was said in them by the old warriors of the family, is just as true today as it was yesterday.

It may be old and foggie, but it is still true that the Lord:

—Will be a bridge over troubled water!

—Will be a doctor in the sickroom and a lawyer in the courtroom!

—Will take our darkness and turn it into light!

—Defeats and turn them into victories!

It may be old and foggie, but it's still true that the Lord will put food on your table and clothes on your back and make a way out of no way.

It's still good

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that although the front porch may be fading into history, the faith of the porch is still alive.

On the porch of grace, we come face to face with faith.

On this porch, I learned that, if I fall down, He'll pick me up again and say, "Behold, I will make all things new."

On the porch, I learned that If I fail, He'll give me another chance.

On the porch, I learned that if I suffer, he give me relief from my pain.

On the porch, I learned that I might shed briny tears in the middle of the night, but God shall wipe away my tears.

I'm reminded of Uncle Doug's hound dog who sat on the front porch all day long. Every morning that hound dog would greet Uncle Doug as he walked out of the front gate. All day long he chased away strangers, protected the yard and kept a watch out for varmints that would slip up on the farm. Long about sun down every day that old hound dog would lift his lazy eyes. His tail would begin to wag. His ears would stick up straight. Anybody who was visiting would always ask, "Why is that old hound dog suddenly barking and pacing back and forth on the porch?" Aunt Jenny would answer, "Every morning that hound dog sees Uncle Doug leave. But on the way home from the mill Uncle Doug stops by the local cafe and gets a fresh bag of scraps for that old dog. That dog is excited because he knows he's going to get a reward when his master comes home!"

I don't know about you, but I learned on the front porch that there is going to be a reward, when the master comes home!

On the front porch, the old warriors used to say, When the Lord comes back again, the bottom rail will come to the top!

On the front porch, the old warriors used to say, When the Lord comes back those who are last shall be first!

On the front porch, the old warriors declared that bye and bye, the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at rest.

On the front porch, they told us the story about Jesus! They told us how he died and they buried him in a borrowed tomb!

But early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

We may not sit on the front porch and swat mosquitoes with a rag, but we still testify our God is an awesome God, who still makes a way out of no way!

No. 9769-Inspiration

Heaven was on their doorstep

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 12, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Luke 10:11; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John 1:11

Introduction

Have you ever been rejected? There are millions of people who live in daily depression because they were rejected. Most of us have experienced rejection in one way or another.

Was it the job promotion you sought? That's the one that would have raised your salary and given you a chance to demonstrate your skills and ability on a higher level. You prepared and gave the interview your best shot, but were turned down.

Was it membership in a circle of associates that you sought? That's the application you submitted to join a certain fraternity, sorority or social club; you disciplined yourself to meet their stated requirements and met every specification in the guidelines, yet you were turned.

Was it a scholarship or an invitation to play on a specific team that you sought? That's the one where you met all of the criteria, practiced and studied for intensely and gave it your best shot, but still were turned down?

Was it a love relationship you sought? Was it a proposal of marriage or simple friendship you wanted, but despite your plans to love that person with all your mind and soul if accepted, they turned you down?

Whether it is an employment application, loan application, or an opportunity for love, rejection hurts. Sometimes it hurts so badly that many are depressed for years and never recover.

We have even experienced that feeling in our spiritual life. Some have offered our faith to others, but have seen it rejected. One of the more hurtful things to a senior is to rear a child in a faith walk that you believe is true and pleasing to God and then watch them become adults and reject that path and turn to another faith or no faith at all. Their rejection is received as a rejection of their own faith. Those who offer faith to co-workers, friends, and associates often feel the sting of rejection when their offer of salvation is turned down.

When rejection comes, we can either be depressed or we can respond like Susie Que.

Susie Que was a pretty girl who fell head over heels in love with a popular boy at college. She was not alone, many girls were attracted to him as well. Susie Q was the ideal kind of girl: she had a beautiful appearance, pleasing personality, great brain, an optimistic spirit, a humble attitude, was extremely friendly, energetic and willing to go to the ends of the earth with this young man if wanted. However, she had her limits. She wanted to save herself for marriage and refused to cross the line on dates. On the night she thought he was going to propose marriage to her, he gave her the bad news; that he was going in a different direction. She went home and cried on her grandmother's shoulder until she ran out of tears. She was encouraged when her grandmother said, "Hold your head up baby, don't let this get you down. He had heaven on his doorstep, but won't know it until he wakes up in hell." With that encouragement and a little prayer, Susie Que picked up her life and went on to marry a man who was not popular, but they enjoyed every experience of their lives together and never looked back.

Our Savior understands rejection because he was rejected by those that he loved. It was more than a simple rejection, he came to give his life for them and they not only rejected him, but they crucified him as well.

As Christians, we know what it means to experience rejection and to be thrown for a loop. However, we are never depressed for too long, because our faith inspires us to rise again. If we are rejected, we know we are still loved by our God. Those who rejected us were not aware that they had "heaven on their doorsteps."

Exposition

This text comes as a word of warning and encouragement to the faithful from Christ himself.

For three years Christ trained his disciples to go into the world and bring the Gospel message. However, he warned them that their work would not be accepted or appreciated by many. There would be places they would go as missionaries, spreading the gospel that would completely discourage them. While they would be accepted in some places, they would be rejected more than they would be accepted.

Matthew's account of this warning is in Matthew 10:14. Here, the Savior tells the disciples to prepare to go before him in groups of twos taking nothing with them, If they were not accepted in a house or a town they were to leave immediately and shake off the dust of that town from their shoes.

Many ancients believed that the even the dust of a forbidden or cursed experience could corrupt the future. So, as they moved forward, they were encouraged not to take any portion of the rejection with them, but to move forward, leaving every particle of the frustration, depression and hurt caused by the rejection behind them.

That's the way that the disciples responded even after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Paul and Barnabas found themselves rejected at Antioch in Pisidia when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel preached by them. The rejection was so great that the Jews persecuted them, and expelled them out of their coasts, (Acts 13:51).

Paul engaged in three missionary journeys. In many of them, he was rejected violently. He was stoned, mobbed and threatened with death repeatedly, but after each, he kept going forward with the gospel message shaking their dust off his feet.

In this text Christ gives the faithful the attitude they should assume when the Gospel message of salvation, peace, and love is rejected, "even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

The message is simple: Move on, they had heaven at their doorstep and didn't know it.

This was an important lesson to believers because it came from Christ who experienced the ultimate rejection himself: "He came to his own and his own received him not." He came to his own race, but it was the people outside of his race who flocked to him; his persecuted by his own. He went to scores of villages and towns that accepted him, but he couldn't perform any great miracles in Nazareth his own hometown because there his Messiahship was rejected.

Despite the rejection, Christ went forward and ministered to those who accepted him. In the end, he hung on a cross and asked God to forgive them because they had heaven at their doorstep and did not know it at the time.

Dealing with Depression

There are biblical examples for us to follow when we deal with rejection.

IT IS NORMAL TO BE HURT AFTER REJECTION: When Jesus taught and preached he was often rejected by the religious leaders. It was very hurtful to him, even though he was the son of God. Often he retreated to a mountainside to pray and regroup. After talking with God, he came down from his prayer retreat and resumed his mission. In a similar sense, we should remember that feeling hurt after a rejection is normal. There is nothing unusual about feeling disappointed, even hurt for a moment. Yet, if we follow our savior's example, we will go to our place of prayer and meditation and talk to God about it. After a rejection, there is nothing wrong with taking a little time off to regroup; take a walk, read the scriptures, get by yourself for a short time. When Jesus went away from the angry crowds he was not indulging in a pity party for himself, he was restoring himself and talking to God. We should do the same. Don't retreat too long, but just long enough get it straight with God. When we talk to God about any hurt or bad feeling that we have, we learn that the words of the songwriter are true, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right."

DEAL WITH IT AND MOVE ON: Jesus' instruction to his disciples was to face the rejection by dusting off their feet and moving on. Moving on should be the goal of everyone facing rejection. If you didn't get the job, shake the dust off your feet and move on. If you don't get accepted, shake the dust off your feet and move on. We should move on because God never shuts one door without opening another door. Other opportunities await us. We should remember the old adage, "There is more than one fish in the sea." The Christian takes heart in the knowledge that "all things work

to the good of them that love the Lord and are the called according to his purpose." - The key for believers is not to get bitter or dwell on the rejection, but move on with a little smile on our lips that says, "They just don't know, they had heaven at their doorstep."

DON'T TAKE REJECTION PERSONALLY: Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were persecuting him? Why is that he would ask God to forgive people who rejected him. The main reason is that he did not take it personally. Listen to his words, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do?" They rejected him because they did not know him. It did not mean that there was anything wrong with him as a person; they just did not see him as the Son of God. Many times we may be rejected for a variety of reasons, but we should not take all rejections personally. Many of the rejections we receive come from people who do not know us personally. Your rejected job application was not a statement that you are a worthless person. Your request to change a living arrangement or an approach may be rejected, but it is probably because your idea doesn't fit the picture they have for themselves or the project. It's rarely a rejection of you as a person. If the woman you are talking to turns you down for a relationship, it doesn't mean that you are worthless, it means for whatever her reason, you don't quite fit into her plans. Depression begins when we take the rejection to mean that we are worthless. Certainly, the rejection will throw us for a loop, but if we can walk away with our self-esteem intact, then it will be easier for us to say, "They just don't know, they had heaven at their doorstep.

They don't know

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that our Savior offered himself to the world and was rejected, but he never gave up on them even to the point of laying down his life for the world.

Christ came into the world as God's gift to humanity, but even after his death and resurrection, there are millions who are returning his gift as unwanted.

Many who reject the grace of God do not know what they are turning down. Like those who stand in line to return or exchange gifts after a holiday, there are many who do not want God's gifts.

They don't want grace, they would prefer money.

They don't want forgiveness, they would prefer popularity.

They don't want joy, they would prefer happiness.

Because they don't want to experience the presence of God, they turn down worship experiences.

Because they don't want the power of God, they turn down the faith walk of Christ.

They reject him because they do not know him.

But I hear the words of Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes saying, "If you don't know me by now, you never, never know me!

I hear Jesus echoing those same words to Philip "I've been with you all these years, and you still don't know me."

You don't know that when you:

—Failed, I turned your failure into success, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Were Afraid, I turned your fear into courage, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Cried in the middle of the night, I dried your weeping eyes, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Were Lonely, I gave you comfort when you were all by yourself, If you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

—Felt as though you did not have a friend in the world, I was your friend when you were friendless, mother when you were motherless, father when you were fatherless, if you don't know me by now, you'll never know me!

When you watching for one thing, you did not know that heaven was at your door.

At Bethesda, they were so busy watching the water they did not see Jesus! They didn't know that heaven was on their doorstep.

In the wilderness, they were so busy looking for the coming of Elijah, that they did not see the one who was greater than Elijah. They didn't know that heaven was on their doorstep.

The world was waiting for an angel to protect them every day, but they didn't see the one greater than the angels was before their eyes. They didn't know that heaven was on their doorstep.

They were so busy waiting for a blessing, they did not see the source of blessings was in their midst.

They were so busy waiting for their big chance, they missed the biggest opportunity of all.

They rejected him and cried crucify him!

He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities, but by the very stripes on his back, they would be healed.

They had heaven on their doorstep.

They nailed him to an old rugged cross and buried him in a borrowed tomb!

They were so close, but so far away! They had heaven at their doorstep!

But early Sunday morning....

No. 9770- Inspiration

Four Anchors for Stormy Seas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

March 26, 2017

SCRIPTURE: Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Acts 27:27-31.

Introduction

Have you ever been through a storm in your life? There are not many who can truthfully say they have never faced a turbulent life experience. Sometimes storms we create the storms ourselves, at other times storms just happen. They can't be predicted although we know that they are coming, often without notice.

There are financial storms, seasons when your money is obviously very funny or non-existent. There are health storms, when you are facing a major medical challenge. There are family and marital storms, in which the safety and security of the family is in question. There are career storms, during which our jobs and careers are in limbo. There are also spiritual storms, times when our faith is tested as problems swirl all around us. We have all experienced one type of storm or another.

Each day we rise we have no way of knowing whether a storm will break out before the day ends. The believer approaches each day confident that no matter what happens in the course of a day, God will work it out because he has promised that "all things work to the good" of those who are trying act according to his purpose. We assume the attitude of the songwriter who said, 'I do not know, how long it twill be, or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, shall get home someday."

Since we know that storms constantly rise in our lives, it is wise to prepare for them both physically and spiritually. It is important for us to be ready, anchored and ride out any storm that occurs in our marriage, family or life.

One way to do that is preparation in advance and positive self-talk and actions during a storm. We should take actions before storms to prepare for them. It is always interesting to watch people who live in areas frequented by storms to dash to stores to stock up on supplies when they hear the first storm warning. If storms come frequently, why not keep the cabinets stocked, plyboard for the windows, gasoline for the generations and supplies of bottled water; that's preparation. During the storm,

what we do and say matters as well because storms upset our nerves and shake our confidence. They can weaken our strength and try our patience.

Songwriter, Kirk Franklin says because storms upset us and turn us around we should speak to our storm and never let it destroy our faith in God. In one of his popular songs he wrote these lyrics:"

"Because of faith, I have a brand new day. The sun will shine, and I will be Okay. That's when I told the storm to pass. Storm you can't last, you got to go away!"

Speak to your storm, in the name of Jesus, and watch the hand of God as it pushes back the clouds of doubt and fear in your mind. Even while the storm rages, he will show you a brighter path. Greg O'Quinn's song, "I told the storm" took this idea even further because it showed a believer's response to desperate situations when he wrote what a believer might say when speaking to a storm:

"Winds stop blowing!
Floods stop flowing!
Lightning stop flashing!
Breakers stop dashing!
Darkness go away!
Clouds move away!
That's what I told the storm!

Death can't shake me!
Job can't make me!
Bills can't break me!
Disease can't take me!
You can't drown me!
My God surrounds me!
That's what I told the storm!"

It might be a good idea, to talk to your storm; because when you talk to the storm in your life, you are actually defying the devil. You are serving notice that you are prepared for the long haul and that while he rages, you intend to keep your eyes on the SON.

As Christians, we are aware that storms come and go, but we have resolved to remain anchored in the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul assurances to frightened sailors that despite the storm that they would not be lost.

The Apostle Paul had been persecuted many times for his preaching about Jesus and the kingdom of God. He appeared before several courts and after a hearing before Festus was ordered to appear before Caesar in Rome. Enroute to Rome, a great storm

broke out on the sea. The sailors on board fought fearlessly against the storm until it became obvious to them that they were fighting a losing battle. The storm threatened to capsize the ship, but they then discovered that it was pushing them toward rocky ground that would result in a crash. To save the ship and their lives, they cast four anchors into the sea to steady the ship, to stop it from drifting. The anchors proved ineffective against the storm, and the ship was ultimately lost.

All the sailors were worried about dying at sea; everyone was worried except Paul. In fact, Paul was so confident that he told the sailors who had begun to abandon ship that unless they stayed with the ship, they would perish. Paul was anchored in the midst of that storm, even though the ship wasn't!

The sailors threw four anchors into the sea in an attempt to steady that ship, but it did not help because the ship drifted anyway.

However, it appeared that Paul had four anchors as well; they steadied him during the storm. Even though the ship was shaken and battered, Paul was able to stand steady and strong.

Four Anchors

When we face the storms of our own lives, it is much easier if have Paul's four anchors.

ANCHORED BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD: When any storm rages, we can be steadfast if we are anchored by the presence of God. Even in the midst of that raging storm, Paul found that he was not alone and we should have the same confidence. In verse 23 Paul said, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve."

Those who have a relationship with God are confident in storms that God will always be with us. When Israel was being pursued by Pharaoh, it was the presence of God in the form a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night that led them toward the Promised Land. When fought against enemies on the other side of Jordan Moses stood on a mountain and raised his hands to symbolize the presence of God. Samson was strong against the Philistines as long as the presence of God was with him, but once God left he became weak.

David said, in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." Jesus told his disciples, "Lo, I'll be with you alway," which meant he will never leave us alone.

Believers should be reminded that we never face a storm in life on our own! Every step, every valley, every mountain will be graced by His presence! Even when we cannot see Him, He is still there: watching, leading, protecting, being God.

ANCHORED BY THE PROMISES OF GOD: Paul was confident in the storm because he remembered the promise of God. In Act 27:23 he said the angel stood with him and told him not to be afraid, but in verse 24 the angel promised him that he would make it to Rome and so would all of those on board the ship. He stood on the promise of God, and that was enough.

Whenever God promises something, we can be assured that he will do exactly what he says.

What has God promised? In Psalm 30:5 he promised us brighter days in storms of agony and pain saying, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. In Psalm 34: 19 he promised to deliver us from affliction saying, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." In Romans 28:28 he promised us that no matter what storms we encounter he will work it to our good. There he said, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

There are 7,487 promises that God has made to man recorded in the Bible. There is a promise in every book of the Bible except the book of Titus. If there is no promise, don't expect it, but seek it out of mercy.

We can be anchored in the storm of life if we remember his promises.

ANCHORED BECAUSE GOD ALWAYS HAS A PLAN: Paul was confident in the storm because he was confident that regardless of the storm God always has a plan for true believers. The idea is that any storm that threatens true believers is a part of the big picture that God is doing and any difficulties that we might encounter while he works out the big picture, he will fix it so that it works to our advantage. God is Sovereign! He is in absolute control of everything that happens in life!

As long as we know that God is on the throne, we are comfortable knowing that whatever happens to us in life, is for the best, although sometimes we have no idea how.

The story is told of the traveling evangelist who could not find a place to have his revival meeting. Finally, he announced that he would have his meeting in a pasture under a large Oak tree. There was no place to sit except a stump which was quickly ceased by an elderly gentleman. However, as the preacher prayed he looked up, and then looked down at the elderly gentleman and told him he had to move. The old man refused because he had a comfortable seat up front on a stump. When he refused the preacher asked several of the young men to move him; they did, despite his violent protest. He created a storm of confusion. Shortly after he was removed, a large dead branch of the tree fell on the very spot where the man sat. Had it not been for his removal he would he died.

We can't always see God's plan, but, we should be assured that he has one working for us. From every trial we learn a lesson, become stronger, and more confident for the next storm that rages.

ANCHORED BY OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S PAST PERFORMANCE: The ship itself was lost, broken up on the rocks, but true to his word all of those on board the ship were saved and eventually made it to their destination. In our personal history, we have seen God perform miraculously in our lives. That anchors us. The ship itself was wrecked, but we are still here!

We are anchored by our knowledge that God is able to work it out! He will get us through our storm and land us safely on the other side.

It may look this evening like the storm is too great. It may look like the storms of life are going to prevail. However, when the waves have all settled down, when the winds

have ceased their blowing, when the rains have abated, when the storm clouds have moved off to the horizon: you will see that God was in control all along! No storm in this life will be able to blow us off the course God has determined for our lives! He will secure us during the storm, and He will successfully deliver us to the safe harbor of His glory!

Corrie Ten Boom was a Christian who helped hide Jews from the Nazis. She was imprisoned and miraculously released a day before all of the people in her prison were sent to the gas chamber. In her book, the "Hiding place" are these encouraging words concerning God's ability to bring us safely through, "When Jesus takes your hand, He keeps you tight. When Jesus keeps you tight, He leads you through your whole life. When Jesus leads you through your life, He brings you safely home."

Heavy Anchors

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to always remember that the bigger your storm, the heavier you anchor!

Ships always come with an anchor in proportion to their size. An ocean liner wouldn't have an anchor designed for a fishing boat. A battleship can find little use for the anchor of a tugboat. Big ships need heavy anchors.

When we are going through the storms of our lives, we need to be sure that we have anchor big enough for the storm.

Unfortunately, too many believers depend upon lightweight anchors for heavy-weight situations.

A lightweight anchor is one that appears handy at the time.

A lightweight anchor easy to handle,

A lightweight anchor is not very heavy in size,

A lightweight anchor a holds well on a quiet day in the harbor.

But the lightweight anchor is no good in a big storm.

Some have an anchor, but it's a lightweight anchor.

Church attendance is an anchor, but it is a light weight anchor if you still don't know the Lord!

Doing good deeds and helping others is an anchor, but it's a lightweight anchor if you still don't know the Lord!

Having your bible on your cell phone is an anchor, but it's a lightweight anchor if you don't have the word of God in your heart!

When you are going through a storm, sometimes your neighbors try to give you're their anchor. They say, "When I go through a storm, I throw salt over my shoulder. I kiss a horseshoe and put it over my door. I find a four leaf clover and fold it up in my Bible." That's when you need to tell them, "I'm sorry, but your anchor won't fit my boat."

Your anchor won't fit my boat because my anchor must be able to:

—be changeless and eternal

—withstand the winds and the waves

—wipe tears from my eyes
—pick me up and turn me around
—lift up a bowed down head

In times like these, we need a savior, in times like these you need an anchor, be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

This rock is Jesus, my rock in a weary land!
This rock is Jesus, my bridge over troubled waters!
This rock is Jesus, who died out on Calvary!
This rock is Jesus, who arose Early Sunday morning

This rock is Jesus yes he's the one, this rock is Jesus the only one, be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

No. 9771-Inspiration

It's not Dejavu, It's God blessing me again

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 2, 2017

S CRIPTURE: "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Lamentation 3:1; It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. Lamentation 3:22-23.

Introduction

Have you ever done been somewhere and had a strange feeling that you have been there before? Perhaps you viewed a landscape and felt you had seen it before? Most certainly all of us have been in situations that are strikingly similar to ones we have experienced before. This feeling of having seen it, experienced it, or felt it before is often called Déjà vu. - I have been there before.

There are millions of people in the world who believe in the concept of Déjà vu. They believe they have actually had an experience in another life. They believe they knew Abraham Lincoln, had conversations with George Washington or actually participated in the building of the Eiffel Tower. They believe they were actually there, in another life.

Those who believe in Déjà vu also find it easy to also believe in reincarnation. Reincarnation, in its simplest form, means that the life of humans and animals continues in a cycle of birth and rebirth. They believe that each time a life ends, shortly after it begins again in a lesser or greater form, carrying the knowledge gained from one life into the next. It gets even more complicated because reincarnation also teaches that the more good a person does in one life puts him in a better existence in the next life and the evil a person does guarantees a lower estate in the next life.- It's called Karma (Reaping what you sow). Since animals are part of the cycle, it's possible that a person may be working off bad Karma from a past life by being a cow in this life. The safe bet is not to eat meat, because we may be eating Great Uncle Willie who's working out his bad Karma.

What do we as Christians believe? The subject of Déjà vu is all around. There is a 2006 movie by that name. Six Flags has a twisting ride that supposedly takes us back to where we started from again and again. There is a movie called "Ground Hog Day" in which a man wakes up every day on February 2nd. We read excerpts in books and see clips in movies in which someone says, "I feel like I've known you all of my life" or "I'm sure I have met you before.That's when you hear someone say, "In my next life,

I'm not going to make this mistake again." Beyonce' even has a video entitled "Déjà vu." All of these express the idea of Déjà vu and reincarnation in different ways.

The Bible does not mention the idea of Déjà vu, and it does not endorse the idea of reincarnation. In fact, the Bible does not mention it all. Some Jews erroneously thought Jesus was Elijah come back to life, but they did not believe that Jesus was Elijah in a past life. In Hebrews 9:27 the Bible teaches "..it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." 2 Corinthians 5:8 says we are "absent in the body and present with the Lord." -There is no déjà vu if the term is describing having done something in a past life. We don't subscribe to the idea that if I eat a Big Mac that I may be eating Great Aunt Susie who came back as a cow and somebody killed her and sold her to McDonald's. The Christian lives once and is immediately taken to be in the presence of the Lord. A non-Christian dies and goes to the grave to await judgment. He does not come back to work his way out of hell by going through hell in another life to make up fo the hell he caused others in the life before.

We do believe in a form of Karma, in that Karma teaches that good actions will produce equally good actions and the same with bad actions. Karma says a child who causes his parents pain, will be cursed to have children who do the same to them. Galatians 6:7 says this, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The good part is this: "While we don't believe that we have lived an experience before in another life, we do believe that we have been in similar situations in this life. The knowledge that we gained from our past experience is carried into each new life situation."

In this life, David says in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

In this life, we have seen the righteous fall but always rise again. That's what Solomon had in mind in Proverbs 24:16 "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again, but the wicked shall fall into mischief.'

As Christians, we have seen God move and bless, move and bless in an endless cycle until we have concluded that it's not déjà vu, it's just God getting ready to bless me again.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Jeremiah as he reflects on the condition of Israel and the way God responds.

The Book of Lamentations is the laments of Jeremiah over the condition and the causes of their problems. The Lamentations was written after the destruction of Israel by the Babylonians. The beautiful temple had been raided and torn down; so were the majestic walls that surrounded the city. Everything it took centuries to build had been torn down and trampled under foot.

Lamentations is Jeremiah's pity party over the loss of it all through the sinful actions of the people. He was sad, but the people had been in this situation before. In Egypt,

in the wilderness, under The Judges, Saul, and David, the people repeatedly broke God's rules and suffered great losses.

From past experiences, Jeremiah pointed the way back through: submission, repentance, faith, prayer and hope for God's mercy.

Just as Jeremiah lamented that he had seen a broken Israel many times, he said in this text that has also seen a merciful God who, despite their sinfulness, offered new mercies to them every day.

Jeremiah said that God was faithful in the past and he would continue to bless, punish, forgive and bless again. In verse 23 he says, "The mercies are new every morning."

Jeremiah said to Israel that their punishment is just, but after repentance, believers can expect to feel the shower of God's blessing again. It won't be déjà vu when it happens,it will just be God blessing us once again.

Repeating Ourselves

There are some things we should learn from repeat experiences. It has nothing to do with Deja vu, it's just biblical truth.

GOD REPEATS HIMSELF: Israel learned that God often repeats himself. When they sinned, he repeated himself and put them on their knees. When they repented, he repeated himself and showered them with blessings. In fact, he showered them with so many blessings that they questioned their own worthiness. Hebrews 2:6 asks, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Today we still wonder about God's amazing willingness to forgive us and keep blessing us, even though we do so many stupid and sinful things. It's like Deja Vu, we get a blessing and mess it up, and God punishes us. The amazing thing is that despite our weakness he continues to bless us after we repent. On Monday, there is a blessing. On Tuesday there is a blessing. It's not Deja vu, it's God blessing me again! It's encouraging to know that God is not just a onetime God. He can bless us again and again so that we can progress from strength to strength in the journey toward the heavenly land.

DON'T EXPECT TO REPEAT OUR BLESSING IF WE ALSO REPEAT OUR SINNING: Israel learned that while God was a blessing God, that he refused to bless them while they sinned. The route to repeated blessing began with repentance. If we want the blessings to repeat, then we must not repeat the same sinful decisions and actions. Between sin and blessings is one word, "repentance." We must take a different route. If we see a stack of unpaid bills and the stack never gets smaller, even though we are working every day; something is wrong. If I charge more than I can pay for, that's not Dejavu, it's bad decision making. If you are in another abusive relationship in which you are being, verbally or physically abused, it's not Deja Vu, but it is the result of bad relationship decisions. Each year, we vow to change directions to improve our situation. We pledge to start saving, change our course or do something different, but soon find ourselves in the same position again, because we return to old habits.

However, the old maxim is still true, if you go the same route, you get to the same destination. It has nothing to do with Deja vu. That's why John 3:3 says "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." We have to completely change who we are and how we do things. It also means changing why we do things. The blessings will come again, but only after we change course and chart a new direction.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE, REMEMBER WHAT GOD DID WHEN YOU WERE THERE BEFORE: If we find ourselves in testy situations it is good to remember, what put us in the situation and what God did for us when we were there. The Great Harry Houdini is recognized as the greatest magician and escape artist of all times. He repeatedly mystified audiences with his ability to escape almost magically from all kinds of safes, jails, and locks. A boy who watched him perform one of his tricks was amazed at how he was locked in handcuffs, tied with ropes, chained at the feet and then held upside down in full view of the public and then escaped. Thinking it was a freak chance, he walked up to Houdini after the demonstration and said: "I bet you can't do that again!" With the news media and hundreds of people watching, Houdini promptly had himself chained and did the
trick again. What he did once he could do again.

The frustration that you face at the moment, you've been in a similar situation. Now you are "here" again. What did God do when you were "there" before? Did he provide the consolation you needed? Did he strengthen you when your knees buckled under the load? Did he visit you in your hour of loneliness and give you courage? In some cases, he may have even healed you, gave you a financial blessing or opened a door of opportunity you did not expect.

When God does wonderful works for you, it's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing you again!

When you walk out of the hospital and recover from an injury, it's not Deja Vu, it's God blessing you again!

Jeremiah told Israel as it lamented it situation to keep hope alive because every morning God showered them with brand new blessings and mercies they had not seen!

The fact that he keeps blessing you is not Deja vu, it's just God blessing you again!

He Loves You

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember the reason God keeps blessing you again and again, has nothing to do with Deja vu, but it has a whole lot to do with the way he loves you!

Jeremiah lamented Israel's condition, but in all of his lamentations, he said God's mercy never ceased. Over and Over again, he brought them new mercies every day!

Those who question how believers continuously live blessed and highly favored lives think we must have had a lot of good Karma in a past life and are simply reapeaping its rewards.

That's when we tell a doubting world, that it has nothing to do with Deja vu, it's just God blessing me again!

We can't earn our salvation by having good Karma and doing good deeds. God showers us with blessings out of the abundance of his love for us.

Romans 6:23 says salvation is the gift of God, and we have learned that his favor comes from his love for us.

When we are able to stand when others around us are falling down, it's not because we have gained strength in another life, but because we have waited patiently on God and he has renewed our strength.

No, it's not Deja Vu, but it's God blessing us again!

We ought to be glad to tell somebody, that God is blessing us.

We ought to be glad to tell somebody, that it's not by our strength or because we are so good that we are able to be so happy, but it's because of the goodness of the Lord.

We ought to tell the world that God is blessing me in the morning. He's blessing me in the noonday. He's blessing me in the midnight hour.

Every day God keeps showering me with favor, but it's not deja vu, it's just God blessing me again.

-It seems like whenever I have a Cross that I need him to help me to bear; he's always there. It's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing me again

-Whenever I have a mountain that I need him to help me to climb; he gives me a helping hand. It's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing me again.

-Whenever I have a doubt that I need him to help me to remove, he gives me confidence; It's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing me again.

-Whenever I have a battle that I need him to help me to fight; he shows me the path to victory. It's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing me again.

-Whenever I have a trial that I need him to help me to get through, he makes a way out of no way. It's not Deja Vu, it's just God blessing me again.

It has nothing to do with Deja vu. He's just blessing me again because he is:

—Jehovah-Rapha, my healer in times of sickness.

—Jehovah-Shalom, my peace in times of confusion.

—Jehovah-Nissi, my victory over life's battles.

—Jehovah-jireh, my overseer, and my provider!

Every day we should praise the Lord!

Praise him for being such a wonderful God!

Praise him for blessing us!

Praise him for saving our souls!

Praise him for picking up an old rugged cross and dying for our sins!

Praise him for staying in the grave for three days and nights!

But early Sunday morning…..

No.. 9772-Palm Sunday

Something to Shout About

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 9, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Matthew 21:9

Introduction

When does a whole community have something to shout about? It's a time when everyone in the community is either proud of an accomplishment that brings them honor and pride or will begin actions will improve their lives in some way.

Recently, the people of Las Vegas, Nevada celebrated and shouted when it was announced that the Oakland Raiders would move from Oakland to Las Vegas. It gave them something to shout about.

The people of North Carolina had something to shout about when its team became the College Basketball Champions again.

The people of Cleveland, Ohio shouted when they heard that LeBron James, their basketball hero, was returning to play with the Cavaliers. They celebrated in the streets and praised the man they had booed when he decided to leave. His return gave them something to shout about as they shouted "King James" in the streets.

It was the same excitement shared by the people of Minneapolis when it was announced that it would host the 2018 Superbowl. Despite their frigid temperatures and inclimate weather, the Superbowl coming to town was something to shout about as they shouted: "History, History" in the streets.

We do the same on a personal level. We post pictures of our newborns, weddings, and graduations on social media and tell the world about our accomplishments. We celebrate our birthdays and anniversaries because we have something to shout about.

Although there was no social media or television, news about the deeds and accomplishments of Christ preceded him. People were excited and shouting his praise in every town.When they witnessed a mighty outpouring of his work with their own eyes, it gave them something to shout about!

When he came to Jerusalem, they had seen his mighty works and were praising him loudly and openly. He had given them a reason to praise him.

Even today as the Lord makes a triumphant entry into the lives of believers, we who

know him have something to shout about. We who have witnessed his power and mighty works close up know that he has done great things for us and in us. We have something to shout about!

The people of Jerusalem shouted because they had witnessed a mighty work of God for themselves. They shouted "Hosanna" also because they expected Jesus to do even more in Jerusalem. Similarly, we shout praises to God for what we have seen him do in the past, and because we expect him to do more in the future.

As Christians, we celebrate Christ's presence in our lives because he has saved us and blessed us. He has given us something to shout about.

Exposition

This text focuses on the praise and acclamation that Jesus received when he made his entrance into the city of Jerusalem. On his way to Jerusalem, he stopped again in Bethany to eat supper with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 12:2). The word spread among the crowd of people which had grown to hundreds of thousands because of the upcoming Passover celebration. As he approached Jerusalem, the crowds praised him and took branches from the palm trees and went forth to meet him shouting "Hosanna!" and praising him.

The term "Hosanna" is an Aramaic transliteration of the Hebrew word hoshi-ah-na which means save us. It appears a total of six times in the Gospels, and each is connected with Christ's entry into Jerusalem. It was a term used only during the feasts of the Tabernacle. During this time the people would bring the first fruits of their harvest to the temple in a great celebration. During the celebration the people would repeat Psalm 118:25 once each day for six days as they made a solemn processional around the sacrifice. Psalm 118:25 says: "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity." On the seventh day, it was repeated seven times. It was a solemn chant-like recitation that was given in hopes of salvation and prosperity to come. Their plea to God was that he would hoshi-ah-na or save them and bring them prosperity.

The people chanted solemnly, without spirit or enthusiasm. It was a ritual, and they spoke the words out of custom.

Even though the psalm referred to "save now" it was not a reference to salvation from sin or restoration of peace with God, it was spoken as if it was a magical chant that would somehow restore them from the shame of defeat, from the poverty of being an occupied nation, from the misery of being subjects to foreign power. There was more emphasis on "send us prosperity" than there was about "saving us."

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, the people sensed that Jesus was the promised one of Psalm 118. They quoted another part of the psalm in verse 26 that added: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

When they believed that Jesus would bring them prosperity, power, dominion and freedom of from oppression, they shouted it instead of chanting it in dry monotones. They rejoiced greatly and took their cloaks and threw them into the street to welcome

him. It was no longer a dry empty ritual but a living hope and therefore a reason for joy!

Soon they learned that Jesus had truly come to save them, but to save them from their sins. His message of love for enemies, not desiring the riches of this world, rejection of power and worldliness was not what they expected. He turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple and drew the scorn of the leaders.

The same people who shouted, "send us prosperity" with excitement soon became the people who shout with the same excitement: "Crucify him, his blood be on us and our children!"

Praise Him Because of His Mighty Acts

The people praised Jesus on Palm Sunday because he gave them something to shout about. Today, we praise him for the same reason, he gives us something to shout about.

WE SHOULD SHOUT BECAUSE GOD PROVIDES OUR NEEDS: A great truth that ever believer knows about God is that he will provide for their needs. In our prayers, we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." That's a prayer that says we count on God every day for what we need to survive and thrive in this world. It's a truth that we learn when we are children, that God will make a way. When his disciples had such concerns, Jesus told them to look at the natural activity around them. In Matthew 6:25 he said, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Birds go out each day, not knowing what they will find but yet God arranges for them to fall upon what they need for that day. He challenges us to think, "If he does that for the birds, then he'll do that for me. That's the truth embedded in the song, "Why should I be discouraged. Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me." The fact that God watches over us, makes us happy and can bring on a shout.

WE SHOULD SHOUT BECAUSE GOD HAS BLESSED US: Often we thank God for physical blessings, but we should also thank him for the unseen spiritual blessings of salvation, heavenly promise, and peace of mind. This spirit of thanksgiving is supported in scripture. The verb ''to give thanks" occurs thirty-eight times and the noun ''thanksgiving" another fifteen times in the New Testament. The Word of God makes it clear that it is very important to give thanks. We should also be thankful for any blessings we receive. Jesus gave thanks before a meal (Matt. 15:36). And when he healed ten men who had leprosy, and only one came back to thank him, Jesus asked where the others were (Luke 17:15-18). He expected people to be thankful for good things. We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

Shirley Ceasar said we should praise him because we have: "Greens, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, lambs, rams, hogs, dogs, chickens, turkeys, rabbits, you name it!"

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able

to sleep soundly at night. We thank him for fried chicken, rice, and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Truly he has given us something to shout about

WE SHOULD SHOUT BECAUSE HE SAVED US: What should make every believer very happy is that Christ has saved us from us. He has saved us from our sins. When we think of the mistakes, errors, destructive things we have said and done in our past, we are overwhelmed with joy that he does not hold all those things against us any longer. He nailed it all to the cross and marked it paid. That's the primary reason Jesus came to this world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He came to save us from our sins. That is an overwhelming thought! It's enough to make us want to shout and dance. When David succeeded in getting the Ark of the Covenant returned to Israel, he was so excited and happy that he stripped his clothes to his loin cloth and danced naked in the streets, leaping and jumping and shouting with joy.

That's the way we feel when God has really blessed us. We have to shout.

When the Lord blesses us financially in a way that we did not expect, it's shouting time!

Jesus is the reason to shout

Finally, brothers and sister, if the world is looking for salvation and a reason for hope, Jesus will give us all something to shout about!

Jesus came to this world so that he could save us and show us the way to abundant living.

Not only did Jesus come to save the lost but he also came to provide every believer with the power to live fruitful and happy lives. In John 10:10 he said: "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

When the New Testament saint cries out Hosanna, it is not a plea for God to save us, but it is a shout of joy because he has saved us! It is not a pitiful cry from a hopeless creature looking for happiness and peace, but the joyful exclamation of the exuberant and triumphant who already knows the joy of the Lord!

Matthew 21:10 says the people began to shout Hosanna and somebody in the crowd asked: "Who is this?" that the people are shouting about.

David answered it in Psalm 24:8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

When the king comes in, he'll give you something to shout about!

Whenever we think about how God has blessed us, we have something to shout about.

Whenever we think about how God has picked us up and turned us around, we have something to shout about.

Whenever we think about how he provides food for us when we are hungry, we have something to shout about.

When we think about how he brought us out of nowhere and carried us to somewhere, we have something to shout about.

A blind man declared that he is the light of the world because "I was once blind, but now I see." He had something to shout about!

A lame man answered, "He told me to take my bed and walk." He had something to shout about

Lazarus testified, "I was dead and in the grave and he gave me a brand new life." He had something to shout about!

Hosanna! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

The Jews rejoiced when Jesus came into their city, and they shouted Hosanna!. But every saint's testimony is that, "I'm so glad that one day Jesus came into my life."

Since that day I have found out that there has never been:

—A battle that he could not win! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

—A burden that he could not lift! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

—A heartache he could not feel! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

—A loneliness he could not comfort! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

—A Promise he could not keep! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

No wonder the songwriter declared: "What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought, since Jesus came into my heart."

He died for me on Calvary! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

He arose after three days!Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

He's alive today!

Hosanna! Hosanna! That's something to shout about!

No. 9773-Prayer

Passionate Prayers of the Faithful

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

April 30, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;" 1 Timothy 2:1

Introduction

Have you ever prayed for something or someone? Prayer is the sincere desire of the heart expressed to God in hopes of an answer. When we pray, we take a concern or problem that troubles us and place it in the hands of the only power that we know who can resolve it without question.

It is difficult to find a believer who does not believe in the power of prayer.

Show me a Christian woman, and I'll show you a woman who knows what prayer can do.

Show me a Christian man, and I'll show you a man who can testify that prayer can change things.

Moses learned that even when faced with the Red Sea that a small prayer can build a bridge over troubled water.

Joshua learned that even when the sun is about to set on your victory that prayer can make the sun stand still.

Hezekiah learned that as time dwindles and life fades away, that prayer can add years to your life.

Daniel prayed three times a day, and he learned that prayer can turn lions into kittens.

The Three Hebrew boys learned that even when faced with the fiery furnace that prayer can put a fourth man in the fire.

Jesus, instructing his disciples in Matthew 6, gave them a model prayer which showed each believer what every prayer should contain. However, it was in the garden that he showed them how to pray.

As we learn to pray and appreciate the power of prayer, we soon learn the five "W's" of prayer: Who to pray for, What to pray for, Where to pray, when to pray, and why we should pray.

As believers, we believe in the power of prayer. We have seen how God responds to the prayers of the righteous. Where prayer abounds faith is restored, and God's will is done.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's instruction to Timothy concerning the necessity of prayer.

There are three ways to pray that are included in the text; each of which is highlighted by a single word in the text: supplications, prayers, and intercessions. Each type of prayer points to a circumstance or situation. All prayers are needed, but certain types of prayers, like arrows in an archer's quiver, are best used for certain types of needs.

Young Timothy is charged to pray for all men while allowing the spirit of God to direct the type of prayer to use for each circumstance. The text indicates that believers should pray for everyone and prayers should not be limited. The verse says we should pray for everyone in need regardless of their race, creed, color or political party. That includes our enemies.

Matthew Henry says, "The design of the Christian religion is to promote prayer, and the disciples of Christ must be praying people. There must be prayers for ourselves in the first place; this is implied here. We must also pray for all men, for the world of mankind in general, for particular persons who need or desire our prayers.

When we pray, we must pray with passion and faith that our God hears and responds to our communications. We pray with a passion because the scripture teaches that the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous, availeth much."

Praying with Supplication

The text highlights three types of prayer. Each has a different purpose and focus. Together they show us what to pray for, whom to pray for and when.

The first type of prayer that Paul emphasized was "supplications." A supplication is a form of prayer that always contains a request. A supplication is a type of prayer with a targeted request. The word supplication was common before the 1800's but is not used much today. It comes from the Latin word Supplicare which means to make a plea for something in the humblest way possible. In the Old Testament whenever the word supplication is used it often meant humbling yourself to another person. However, in the New Testament, supplication is always associated with prayer: Humbling ourselves before God.

The word supplication is not used much, but its meaning has not changed. A supplication is when a person prostrates themselves in the humblest way they know; they beg for something. In the Movie "Roots" the Master was about to sell the young girl "Kizzy" when he learned she could read. Kunta Kinte's wife, Kizzy's mother, dropped to her knees and begged the master not to sell her daughter with tears running

from her eyes. That was supplication.

When we make a supplication to God, we tell him that we are willing to do whatever needs to be done even if it makes us look foolish to others. A supplication indicates a willingness to change course or live differently in return for an answer.

In Psalm 51 David prayed a prayer of supplication. As he prayed for conditions to change, he then humbled himself and said, "Create in me oh Lord a clean Heart, and renew a right spirit within me." He acknowledged his own weakness and asked God to change his heart.

When a loved one has been injured in an accident, the believer who prays for complete recovery is making a supplication if he humbles himself to the point of doing whatever God wants to be done in return.

When a suspect is about to receive a sentence for a crime committed, the mother who prays for a merciful sentence is making a supplication if she is saying, "I'll do whatever you want me to do," in response.

When an applicant prays to be selected for a new job opening, the applicant is making a supplication, if he is also saying he is willing to obey the will of God.

A supplication is a powerful prayer, but it is made in humility and acceptance of the will of God.

Intercession: When we pray for someone else

Another form of prayer is mentioned in the text: intercession. The word translated "intercession" in this text comes from the Greek Word "Enteuxus" which means to plead or petition on behalf other another person. Those who pray a prayer of intercession do not pray for themselves, but for themselves, but on behalf of others to help them come into agreement with God. An intercessory prayer is also prayed whenever there is a dispute.

This is the role that Christ assumes when sinful mankind wants access to God. He is our intercessor. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Christ intercedes on our behalf to God, pleading for mercy on us for our sinful ways.

Likewise, the church must intercede for those who do not know better or who know better and choose not to do better.

In the movie "War Room" a wife went into her prayer closet and prayed a prayer of intercession for her husband. She prayed that the devil would not be successful. She prayed for her husband to see the light." -She prayed for him; that was an intercessory prayer.

We must pray for those who are wrong and think they are right.

Just as Abraham pleaded on the part of the people of Sodom, we must do the same for thousands of wayward souls that either do not know God or know Him, but choose to ignore Him.

The church must intercede for the husband and wife whose relationship has deteriorated to a litany of curse words, threats, and violence. They have done

everything to each other, but neither has prayed for the other. They don't know any better.

We must intercede for those who still get a thrill out of the party life of night clubs and bars as the years of their lives pass right by them. They won't pray until tragedy strikes, we must pray that God will open their eyes without the need of a tragedy to bring them to their senses.

Praying and Giving Thanks

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must pray for ourselves and give thanks.

Paul told Timothy to pray for all people, but he also told him to pray general prayers that include his own needs and giving thanks to God.

Sometimes our personal prayer does not include a supplication, we are not asking him for anything.

Sometimes, our personal prayer does not include an intercession; we are not praying for someone else.

There are times we are asking God to bless our families, but then there are times when we are not asking him for anything, we are thanking him for being so good.

Paul said we should always pray a prayer of thanks.

When you pray a prayer of thanks, that's when you say:

"I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me what little I have, Praise ye the Lord."

"I may not be of the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise!"

That's when you say, "I want to thank you for waking me up this morning!

I want to thank you for clothing me in my right mind!

I want to thank you for giving me health and strength!

I don't know about you, but I have decided that I'm going to keep on praying because prayer changes things!

Prayer can take a defeated spirit and show it the victory!

Prayer can take sadness and turn it into a gladness!

Prayer can take sorrow and turn it into a joy!

Prayer can take a bowed down head and lift it up high!

When the church prays, powerful things begin to happen; heaven takes note and the kingdom of God responds.

When the church prays the wicked get worried, and the devil gets on the run!

When the church prays, the world prepares to be turned upside down.

If there is hatred, prayer can turn hatred into love!

If there is confusion, prayer can turn confusion into harmony!

If there is disappointment, prayer can inspire hope!

If there is fear, prayer can turn fear into courage!

Within your bosom you have the phone, call up the Lord, he's still on the throne!

Call Him in the morning!
Call Him in the noonday!
Call Him in the midnight hour!
He died on Calvary so that he could intercede for us before the Father!
He died that He could talk to His Father on our behalf!
He died so that he could be our mediator!
But early, Sunday morning....

No. 9774-Mother's Day

The Part of Mother that lives forever

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

May 14, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." 2 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

What do you remember most about your mother? Each person has a different memory. For some, the memory that lingers is her affection and love for family. For others, it is her ideas, attention to detail and ability to solve problems. Still, others relish her ability to create memorable moments, calm fears and make pains go away. Motherhood conjures many images in our mind, that range from loving and hugging to punishments, whippings, and long lectures. It all seems to fall in the package that we call "motherhood."

As the nation celebrates mothers, there ill be many who will wear red roses to honor living mothers. While the red rose pays respect to the living mother, the white rose is a sign of remembrance for mothers who have passed away. Dr. Jacquelyn Simmons has often preached that persons whose mothers have passed should wear both the red and white rose because as long as one of her descendants lives, she lives in and through them. There is a part of mother that lives forever, helping her to surpass Maya Angelo's "Phenomenal Woman" to become the "Immortal Mother."

The idea that a part of mother lives forever is an underlying theme of the recent movie "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks." The movie, in which Oprah Winfrey and an all-star cast brought to life on HBO, the remarkably true story of Henrietta Lacks who in her early 30s, had cancerous cells removed at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1951. When they removed the tissue from Mrs. Lacks, doctors noticed that her cells refused to die once outside of her body like other cells. The hospital immediately stored her cells and watched them regenerate. They named the cells HELA cells and sent them to hospitals around the world to treat patients. Today, there are billions of HELA cells used in research labs around the world. They have been used to cure polio, fight tuberculosis, cancer and many other diseases. They even sent HELA cells into space to see if being in space could kill them, but they continued to grow. Today the cells of Henrietta Lacks,

a poor black mother who only lived 31 years, still live and have caused others to live. The beauty of her story is only marred by the fact that John Hopkins Hospital now cells test tubes of her cells for $250 each, has made millions, but the family of Henrietta Lacks has never received a dime for her cells that refused to die.

Henrietta Lacks' story was told by her daughter Deborah with the help of an author who made it into a New York Times Best Seller and later into an HBO movie. Her daughter was enthralled by the strength of her mother's cells, and the importance of the work they've done and will continue doing.

There are millions of people who have survived breast cancer, polio and hundreds of diseases because Henrietta Lacks cells are in them and refuse to die. Until the Lord returns, it appears that there is a piece of Henrietta Lacks that will live forever.

Today, we are the embodiment of all the lifeblood of our mothers. She lives in us and through us and will continue to live in our children and grandchildren. You see something about her in yourself. You have the peculiarities, talents and "ways" of your great-grandmother and her mother before her. There is a part of mother that lives forever because she is the "Immortal Mom."

As Christians, we honor mothers who are still with us. We also remember the love and teachings of our mothers who have gone to be with the Lord. It is a comfort to all of us to know that, in spite of her human faults and shortcomings, there is a part of mother that lives forever in the lives of those she touches along the way.

Exposition

This text focuses on a letter written to Timothy, a young man beginning in the ministry, accentuating his belief that the young man's character and demeanor reflected the same traits that had been exhibited by his mother and even his grandmother.

Preparing Timothy for his ministry, Paul reminded Timothy of his spiritual roots. Timothy was walking in the footsteps of the faithful. One important line in Paul's lesson suggests that Timothy had great faith that had been handed down through the generations. "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am sure, lives in you." We do not know a great deal about those women, but in that sentence, we get a picture of two very special people.

No one knows where Lois and Eunice came from, but it is known that they eventually settled in Asia Minor, in the rural Roman town of Lystra. They had been born Jewish, but whether or not that meant too much in their home, we can only guess.

Something happened to Lois and Eunice. Somehow, some way, they heard about Jesus Christ. They came to realize their need of a Savior and accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives.

Scripture does not record exactly what Timothy heard, but it is relatively safe to assume that he heard and saw everything both his mother and his grandmother

heard. Between them, there was probably 40 years distance between himself. But there were years of faith, pass one to another that he was just trying for the first time. The faith of his mother was a living faith, but it was handed down to her. The faith of his grandmother was a great faith. She acquired it first and passed it down.

What Timothy received from his mother, he passed it on to thousands in sermons, lessons, and demonstrations of faith.

Both Lois and Eunice have passed off the scene, but a part of these Christian mothers lives forever.

What Parts Live

Lois and Eunice passed on a legacy of faith and service to Timothy, and he passed it on to others. Mothers make impressions on their young that will outlive them as generations follow.

MOTHERLY MOMENTS LIVE FOREVER: Great mothers are masters at creating motherly moments. These are memories that we carry throughout our lives and then pass them on to our children and grandchildren. Motherly moments are the points in our lives when we celebrate accomplishmenst, make major decisions or endure difficulties. Mothers are masters at creating moments we will always remember. They begin with little things and may evolve into major undertakings. Birthday parties don't just happen, often that significant moment is created by the efforts of our mothers. We see the balloons, cake, gifts and the smiling faces, all of that was arranged so that she could share a significant moment with us. It's important that every child has a chance to share a significant moment. When we formed our first letter with feeble shaky hands, mother shared that significant moment. She probably took a picture or two. When we played our first Pee-Wee League football game, she sat in the stands waving, watching and supporting. When we graduate, marry or make an achievement, mothers highlight those moments with special dinners, festive activities, and celebrations. If we fail or fall into trouble; mothers are there for those moments, too. There is rarely a time in our lives when a good mother is not present in body or spirit in the lives of her children. As the occasions came, she was there, creating a moment that would live forever.

MOTHERLY WISDOM LIVES FOREVER: Lois taught her daughter Eunice what her mother taught her about life; that wisdom continued through Timothy and all others he touched in his travels. Godly mothers demonstrate an enormous amount of Godly wisdom that does not diminish as time passes. In our homes we have seen our mothers demonstrate the wisdom of Solomon as she solved disputes, settled arguments, and brought peace into the home. We have watched our mothers demonstrate wisdom beyond their years. Even young Godly mothers reach into their chest of wise words and deeds and demonstrate a wisdom derived from sources greater than themselves.

Often mothers find themselves repeating phrases, Bible verses, and instructions that were taught to them by their mothers and a long succession of grandmothers before them. Such wisdom is invaluable and is not devalued because the generation

has changed.

Times may have changed, but mama's wisdom is still true: "If you make you bed, you'll have to sleep in it." Times may have changed but "What goes around, comes around," is still true. Times may have changed, but we should still "be careful how we treat people on the way up because we'll meet them on the way down."

Wisdom is not learned in a book or a classroom. As we watch our mothers, however, we know that their wisdom comes from a higher source.

Dr. Ava Pierce once defined wisdom knowing "When to say yes and when to say no, when to hold on and when to let go." Those who have had great mothers in their lives have seen this wisdom demonstrated. These spirit led mothers seem to instinctively choose the right directions, make the right choices and decisions.

The wisdom and teachings of our mothers live forever.

MOTHERLY FAITH LIVES FOREVER: The most salient attribute that Paul saw in Timothy was his faith. He said he saw it first in his grandmother, and then in his mother. It points to a truth: A godly mother's faith lives forever. Godly mothers try to explain to their children the importance of living Godly lives that are guided by principles of morality rooted in Gods word.

Godly mothers order their lives in the word of God. It helps to control their temper and guide their walk through life.

Faith is needed for the days when we will be tempted to stray away from the godly path. That's when we remember Matthew 6:2. ..lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. The Godly mother teaches her family to ask God for deliverance out of sinful situations.

It is faith that prompts mothers to say with assurance when all others have given up that "The Lord will make a way somehow."

It is faith that helps us to stand strong even when sinful living all around us seems to prosper. The faithful mothers remind us that Psalm 37:1-2 says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

It is faith that gives us the ability to patiently wait for God to act. Mother taught and believed, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They Shall mount up with wings as Eagles; they shall run and not get weary, walk and not faint."

It is faith that helps us to confidently face each day knowing that, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

Mother's faith, if passed on to her children will live forever.

The Part that lives forever

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that the part of our mother that lives forever, is the part that has been touched by the hands of God.

The cells of Henrietta Lacks were cancerous and diseased, but scientist learned when they watched her cells under a microscope that her cancerous cells did not regenerate. Only the good parts kept living, producing and regenerating.

That's important for us to remember because while our mothers had a lot of good qualities, there were some who had a few bad habits.

If we tell the truth, there were some moms that drank beer and emptied a fifth or two.

If we tell the truth, there were some moms that could pray so hard that the clouds would open and let her prayer through, but they could also cuss like sailors.

If we tell the truth, there were some moms that dipped snuff, chewed tobacco and smoked cigarettes.

That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

What's left after the washing, after the sanctifying and justifying, is touched by the hands of God and that's the part that lives forever.

That part that lives forever is the faith that says,

—if we have fallen, God will pick us up again!

—if we fail in life God will give us a second chance!

—if trouble comes our way, that God will make our mountains low, and our crooked places straight.

The part that lives forever is the faith of the woman who teaches her family to put their trust in the Lord because he will work it out.

Many have learned from our mothers that if we trust in the Lord, he will help us

—Overcome strong temptations

—Bear our heavy burdens

—Withstand mighty persecutions

—Cross the loneliest of valleys

—Endure the saddest of sorrows

—Live through the darkest of nights

—Sail through the roughest storms

—Climb the tallest of mountains

The part that lives forever is the part the teaches me to call on the name of Jesus!

Jesus, Who died out on Calvary!

Jesus, Who arose after three days and nights!

That part of mother that has been touched by the Lord will live forever

No.9775-Communion

The Last Supper

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 21, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." 30When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." Matthew 26:26-30.

Introduction

If you were about to have your last meal, what would you order? The answer to that question varies, but we would all probably have different orders on our plate. What would be the very last order that you would make? For some, it would be a Big Mac and Fries. For others, it would be a 26-ounce sirloin steak and a baked potato. Still, others would probably order a pot of collard greens, a slice of cornbread, fried chicken, rice and gravy and a dab of creamed corn. That would be a pretty good last meal!

Our nation pays close attention to a person's last meal, even if the individual is condemned to die. There is a strange anomaly in American culture with respect to a person's last will; we always want to comply with a person's last wishes even if we have ignored his wishes his entire life. We honor a person's last will and testament, and even if a person is condemned, we accept his request for a last meal.

Sometimes last meals can be ridiculous, such as the case of white supremacist Lawrence Russell as noted in Homiletics Magazine. Brewer, along with two other men, chained a black man, James Byrd Jr., to the back of his pickup and dragged him to his death down a bumpy road in Texas. For this despicable act, Brewer was executed by that state in September 2011. Just as he was about to be executed Brewer requested and received a last meal for the history books. He ordered: two chicken-fried steaks with gravy and sliced onions, a triple-patty bacon cheeseburger, a cheese omelet with ground beef, tomatoes, onions, bell peppers, jalapeños, a bowl of fried okra with ketchup, a pound of barbecued meat with half of a loaf of white bread, a portion of three fajitas, a meat lover's pizza (topped with pepperoni, ham, beef, bacon, and sausage), a pint of Blue Bell, a serving of ice cream, a slab of peanut-butter fudge with crushed peanuts, and a serving equivalent to three root beers.

As strange as it was, the state of Texas went out of its way to get him everything

he ordered. With everything he ordered in front of him, Brewer added insult to injury, by refusing to eat any of it.

After that, the Texas system eliminated the special meal request for the condemned. Now, in Texas, the condemned eat whatever is on the prison menu for that day!

For believers, the last supper has a different meaning. When we think of the last supper, we think of the memorial meal Christ shared with his disciples that symbolizes the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection. To us, it isn't that it is the last supper, but it is the Lord's Supper.

As Christians, the Lord's Supper is both a memorial and a celebration. It is a memorial of the death and crucifixion of Christ, but it is also a commemoration of his victory over death and the grave.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jesus' last meal with his disciples before his crucifixion.

Leonardo DaVinci painted a picture of Jesus sitting at a table with his disciples eating the meal before the crucifixion. The famous painting was entitled "The Last Supper." However, the title of the painting was misleading because it was not actually Christ's last meal on earth. It was actually the first "communion" or Lord's Supper of the church.

As he prepared for the eventual crucifixion that was coming, he shared the Passover meal with them and give it a new meaning. He told them to take the bread and wine and commemorate his life and legacy by sharing this supper as a memorial meal until he returns. We call this meal the "Lord's Supper." He elaborates on its meaning in Luke 22:20, "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." "After the same manner also he took the cup," we read in I Corinthians 11:25, "When he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood. What Jesus seemed to say was, "Disciples, the cup of the Supper represents all that I have done to purchase your salvation upon the cross, you must continue to drink it." I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

As he explained the elements, he said the bread would represent his body, and the wine would represent his blood which is shed for the remission of sins. He then gave them the cup and told them the words of this text "drink ye all of it."

The Lord's Supper was the last time Christ would fellowship with his disciples before the crucifixion. Some scholars believe that while he sat with his disciples that he didn't eat the meal with them. They point to verse 29 in which he said he would not drink with them until the Kingdom of Heaven was established on earth.

The last time that Jesus is actually recorded eating anything was after the crucifixion when he appeared to his disciples and ate fish and bread to prove that he was not a ghost.

In Matthew 24:39-42 Jesus said, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.When he had said

this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43and he took it and ate it in their presence.

The meal before the Crucifixion was the Lord's Supper, not the last supper.

At the Table

What should we do at the Lord's Supper? There are three things to consider:

GIVING THANKS: When Jesus talked at his last supper, he gave thanks. Yet, the thanks he offered was not for anything he had received in the past. He offered thanks for a crucifixion and death that was coming the next day. As he took the bread and broke it, he said it symbolized his body, he gave thanks for the bread and the sacrifice. At the Lord's table, we too should give thanks for everything. We should thank God for protecting us from dangers, but we should also give him thanks for difficulties that lie ahead. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." In every situation, we should give God thanks. Not only do we thank him for the new job, but we also thank him for getting fired. Why? Because Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." When Saints gather for the Lord's supper there is plenty of Thanksgiving, testifying and praising of God for his goodness and mercy are everlasting.

WE SHOULD EXAMINE OURSELVES: The Lord's Supper is a serene time when we hear not the Voices of others, but we hear "self-talk." It's the time when we examine and talk to ourselves about the life we live and our true intentions and motivations. Self-talk comes in our quiet times when we have removed all other considerations. Self-talk looks deep and asks many questions. Among the issues that a saint examining himself will ask are, "Am I involved in a sinful practice for which I have not repented?" "Am I doing my very best to be true to the Christian faith?" "Is my lifestyle at the present, at odds with what Christ expects?

Paul said, after self-examination a person should not partake of the Lord's supper if his own self-examination shows he is unworthy at the moment. Instead of the blessing normally derived from participation, the unworthy participant brings damnation on his own soul. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 he said "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." When Saints gather for the Lord's supper, there should be a time for personal examination.

WE SHOULD REMEMBER: The Lord's Supper is a time when we remember with all seriousness, what Christ through his death and resurrection, accomplished for us. Each time we share in the Lord's Supper we called to remember our lives before we came to the cross. We should remember the sins we embraced without apology. Most importantly we should remember that it is through Christ blood that we now have hope. We were sinners condemned to die because the payment for sin is "death."

(Romans 6:23) Yet, Christ made himself the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity." He was chastised for our faults and failures and because of his sacrifice; we have a chance to the tree of life.

We should always remember that "freedom is not free." Someone always pays.

Someone had to pay all of our drinking and gambling!

Someone had to pay for all of our immoral acts!

Someone had to pay for our abuses and misuses!

Someone had to pay for our miscalculations and mistakes!

Who paid? The songwriter says, "Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe!" Sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow!"

Until I Return

Finally, brothers and sisters, it is interesting to note that while Jesus shared the last supper, he did not eat the last supper.

Jesus fellowshipped with his disciples but told them he could not actually sup with them until he comes back again.

While some are mystified as to why Christ would not eat or drink before going to Calvary, it's not a mystery if you think about it.

Jesus was getting ready to go to Calvary. He was about to have major surgery on behalf of the world. Sin had left a crimsoned stain for which death was the penalty and crucifixion was the cure.

Sin was a cancer, and he was about to undergo a procedure to have it removed.

Consider what a surgeon tells a patient who is getting ready for a surgical procedure. He's reminded not to eat or drink anything for eight to 12 hours before surgery.

You can't eat or drink anything because when they take you under, everything shuts down for a while and body is paralyzed. If eat or drink something that doesn't sit to well, you can't cough it up, spit it up or vomit it up. If you eat or drink something before the surgery and something goes down the wrong way, they will take you down, but they may not be able to bring you up!

I see Jesus looking over into the future and my mind's ear I hear him say, "I can't eat or drink with you brothers because I see in this cup that in a few hours they will whip me all night long, and if I drink with you right now, I won't be able to cough it up!

I can't eat or drink with you brothers because, because I see in this cup that they are going to put a crown of thorns on my head and spit in my face, and if I drink with you now, I won't be able to cough it up.

I can't eat or drink with you brothers because they are going to take me down, but I've got to be able to get up!

I can't drink with you now, because sin has to be forgiven!

I can't drink with you now, because mercy has to be extended!

I can't drink with you now, because grace has to be received!

I can't drink with you now, because blessings have to be bestowed!

I can't drink with you now, because assurances have to be guaranteed!

I can't drink with you now, because hope must be revived!

I'm reminded of the grandfather who was 100 years he called the family together and told them that the Lord was about to call him home. He asked his children to prepare his favorite meal of mustard greens, cornbread and a slice of Apple Pie. They brought him his favorites and watched him mash the cornbread into the greens and eat until it was all gone. Grandpa was never one to waste food, so one of the grandchildren brought him the slice of pie and said, "Grandpa, you didn't eat your pie!" Grandpa said, "I'm saving that for last, I'll get it on the other side."

I hear Jesus say, I can't eat with you now, I'll see you on the other side!

He picked up an old rugged cross and carried it up to Calvary!

They drove nails in his hands, but he didn't cough it up!

They stuck a spear in his side, but he didn't cough it up!

He died out on Calvary and they lowered him in the grave for three days and nights!

But early Sunday morning, Our God who rules the heaven and earth, brought him up!

He got up, with all power in his hands!

No. 9776- Memorial Day

Lift Him Up, then Lift Them Up!

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 28, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And I, if I, be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32

Introduction

Have you ever visited a site with memorial statues to the nation's heroes? In Washington D.C. there are scores of statues and memorials that salute the lives of those who were essential to the highest ideals of the nation and championed its cause. The statutes range from a massive statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial to a towering tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Nearly everywhere you walk in Washington, there is a memorial that marks an aspect of our history that should be both remembered and celebrated.

We should remember all of our histories, but we should celebrate only those parts of our history that represent our victories in pursuit of our highest ideals. That's why there is a national debate underway about the removal of Confederate Memorials in New Orleans and other places in the Old South. In New Orleans, the removal of four statues that celebrate Louisiana's participation in the Confederacy has sparked controversy. Mayor Mitch Landrieu led a push to remove statues of Robert E. Lee, General Beauregard, Jefferson Davis and a monument to the Battle of Liberty Place. All four statues are historically accurate but tend to celebrate philosophies that do not represent our highest ideals, so the City of New Orleans has removed them.

New Orleans removed the statues just as Germany removed everything associated with its Nazi past. The nation chiseled swastikas off buildings and monuments. Statues were torn down, and even the grave markers of Nazi leaders were removed. While there are several small busts of Adolph Hitler in Germany, there are no statues or monuments to his life. He does not represent ideas that Germany wants to celebrate. Neither does the country want to celebrate in any way the death of six million Jews and five million others at his hands.

Symbols, when held high, have a tendency to attract succeeding generations to follow the ideas and teachings presented. The young are encouraged to embrace the symbol and all it represents. That's why today, 152 years after the close of the Civil War, there is a new generation still embracing the Confederate flag and paying homage to fallen Confederate Leaders like Robert E. Lee.

On Memorial Day the nation remembers its fallen heroes and celebrates the ideas

that championed. We raise high the symbols of their cause, visit their monuments, and tell their stories.

On Memorial Day the nation gives its highest honors to those who have lost their lives in defense of our highest ideals and paid for our freedoms with their blood, sweat, and tears.

We lift them up in the same way and for the same purpose that Jesus had in mind when he said, "And I, If I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

As Christians, we lift up the names of our national heroes and military dead. We also lift up the cross of Christ because by doing so, we draw all men to him.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he points to his death and the symbol of his death as a power that should be memorialized and celebrated.

Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Kingdom of God and about his approaching sacrifice on Calvary. He said his death was necessary to complete the salvation of mankind.

When he finished these sayings, a generally ignored event happened. It is recorded in verse 28, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Jesus looked up to God and said, "Father, Glorify thy name!" Immediately after his request, a voice thundered from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Therefore, when Jesus spoke of being lifted up on the cross, his death would glorify God and do so repeatedly as those of every generation lift up the cross.

The cross represents God reconciling fallen man unto himself.

When Christians see the cross, we should see a symbol of hope that, in Jesus, we can be restored into good favor with God.

Just as the memorial of Christ reminds believers of his death and sacrifice, it also inspires hope that men and women of all walks of life will one day recognize the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man and live in peace in the kingdom of God.

Lift Them Up

There are several reasons we lift up our fallen heroes on Memorial Day:

THEY GLORIFIED GODLY IDEALS: When Christ spoke of his approaching sacrifice on Calvary, a voice from heaven thundered that his death would glorify God. In a similar sense, when we lift up the men and women who have died in defense of this nation and its Judeo-Christian ideals, a thunderous approval follows when they are lifted up. Sometimes we forget how many. American Revolution, 25,324; War of 1812, 2,260; Civil War, 863,153; Mexican War, 13, 283. World War I, 126, 200; World War II, 418,500; Korean War, 33,600; Vietnam War, 58,226 killed and 153,000 wounded; and the Iraqi War, 2464 dead with nearly 48,000 wounded; and deaths in and around Afghanistan, 2,227.

In towns and cities across America, there are memorial, statues and markers

memorializing the lives of these men and women because they promoted our best ideals and gave their lives in defense of them. There is a thunderous response to their sacrifice because they died to help bring freedom and equality to the world.

OUR FAMILY HEROES ARE LIFTED UP: Memorial Day is also a time for each family to consider its contribution to the lifeblood of the nation. Many families have sacrificed grandfathers and great grandfathers for the good of the country. Unless their story is told and lifted up in their own families, it will be forgotten. Many of them fought for our survival, often defending us against abuse, threats, and death and also fought for the country as well. Some came home wounded physically and mentally, yet they served their families until they died. Memorial Day is an appropriate time for families to place a flower on the grave of the old warriors of the family, especially those who fought for their families and their country as well.

To children, Memorial Day has little meaning until it is put in the context of our personal experience. When the story of their father or grandfather is told to children, Memorial Day becomes something personal. That's when the children of every family can appreciate the thunderous applause the nation gives its heroes, including the ones in their own family for their service and sacrifice.

OUR FAITH IS CONFIRMED: When we lift up the sacrifices of those who have paid the ultimate price for freedom, our own faith is confirmed and reaffirmed. When we see what others have done, we are inspired to pick up the banner and march forward. In the Movie "Glory" the character played by Denzel Washington was bitter throughout the recruitment and training of the 54th all Negro regiment, but when the battle was at its highest a soldier who carried the regiment's flag was slain, and the flag dropped to the ground. Washington's courage was invigorated along with others when the flag fell Washington's character picked up the flag and charged the hill with a vengeance. Their courage confirmed the faith of others and reaffirmed the nation's faith in the ability of Negro soldiers.

The purpose of memorials is to reaffirm our faith in the ideals represented. That's why memorials and monuments to men such as Robert E. Lee, General Beauregard and others should not be publicly displayed; they do not tell the story our quest for ideals that thunder with the appreciation and glory of God.

Joshua ordered 12 stones to be erected as a memorial. Every succeeding generation would ask, What mean these stones? At that time Joshua said the people should tell the story of how God brought us over on dry land?

Our family memorial tells the story of how we were down and out, and God picked us up and turned us around! It's the story of how God healed our sick and open the blind eyes of lost family members! It's the story of how he planted our feet on solid ground.

Each time we tell the story, our faith is confirmed, and another generation decides to pick up the banner of fallen heroes and join the army of the faithful.

Lift Him Up

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must continue to lift the Savior up, because he will draw all men unto himself.

As Christ spoke of his approaching death, there were many who misunderstood him. They were confused and did not understand.

In John 12:34 the people said, "We have heard that Christ will live forever. If that's the case what do you mean by being lifted up?"

They had no idea what being lifted up meant.

It meant that through his crucifixion and resurrection that all those who came to him in lowly states would be lifted up. It was a blessed assurance.

Today believes commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ by lifting him up because he has promised to lift us up.

We have no doubt that he will lift us up.

To be lifted up means to be raised up in honor and respect.

To be lifted up is to be picked up when you have been knocked down!

To be lifted up is to have doors opened when they have been closed in your face!

To be lifted up is to be set free when you have been a captive all of your life!

I hear the words of the songwriter who said, "How to reach the masses, men of every birth, For an answer, Jesus gave the key: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto Me."

Lift Him up, lift Him up; Still He speaks from eternity: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, Will draw all men unto me."

We must lift Him up because He saw a world filled with hatred and tried to bring love!

We must lift Him up because He saw a world filled with defeat and brought a message
of victory!

We must lift him up because He saw a world filled with weakness and brought a message of strength!

He saw a world filled with darkness and challenged it to walk in the light!

They called him Jesus; he made a world of difference!

Before he left, he told his disciples to stay ready because "I'm going to create another world! "That where I am ye may be also!"

In that world, every day will be Sunday, and the Sabbath will have no end!

In that world, it'll always be howdy and never goodbye!

In that world, hearse wheels will not roll!

No wonder the songwriter declares, "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory!"

In that world, we'll see Jesus, who died out on Calvary and arose early Sunday morning.

Until he comes back again.

Lift him up! Lift him up! Lift him up!

Vol 27-6530

No. 9777-Graduation

Fidgets, Fads & Faith

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

June 4, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself caught up in a fad? Fads, by definition, are intense, widely shared enthusiasm for something, someplace, or someone. The excitement usually doesn't last long and can never be restarted again. A fad is temporary, it has no real reason why it's popular, it comes and goes, but there is one thing that is guaranteed; it won't last long.

What fad caught your imagination? A few years ago there was a game called "Angry Birds" that every child wanted to play. There was also a really crazy television show filmed in West Monroe, La. called, "Duck Dynasty" that was a craze across the country. Do you remember "Honey Boo Boo" about the family of a crazy six-year-old beauty contestant?

There are some here old enough to remember the "Gold Grill" fad which was a custom made removable mouthpiece made of gold that was made famous by rapper Nelly. Some remember when the website "Myspace" was the site for the in-crowd. There are some who can remember the Budweiser Beer commercial that had everyone answering their phones saying, "Wassssssuuup!" The whole nation went crazy over a toy called "Tickle Me Elmo" that giggled "Oh boy that tickles," if it's belly was touched.

Thinking back even further, there are some who can remember Cabbage Patch dolls, Care Bears and when everyone wanted to play Nintendo. Remember the stupid fad that had everyone saying "Psyche!" when they wanted to say, "I'm just kidding." Do you remember the Rubik Cube, the Smurfs and those "Baby on Board" signs?

There are still others that can go back far enough to remember 8 track tape players, Streaking and Disco Music.

One of the biggest crazes of all time happened in 1975 When Gary Dahl started selling an easy to care for a pet he called a pet rock. It was just a rock in a box, with holes in it so it could breathe. It didn't bark, chew the furniture or need a potty box. He sold the rock for $10 along with a manual that included tips on how to handle an excited rock and how to teach it tricks, like rolling over. In one year he made $10 million

selling rocks.

The latest fad for 2017 is the Fidget Spinner. The Fidget Spinner is like the old fashion Top, but it spins in your hand rather than on the surface of something. There is no explanation for why it is so popular, but millions are being sold for as low as $5 and as high as $5,000 for the diamond studded designer editions. All it does is spin, but some are reporting that it helps people who are nervous to calm down. Those who bite their nails, have chronic leg shaking, happen to be ADHD or the classroom headache child are said to be more relaxed and more controllable when they spin the fidget. It's getting to be a problem in classrooms because some teachers are taking the toys from students and causing even more disruption because the little gadgets get addicting; some kids can't behave without them.

Although millions of Fidget Spinners are selling like hotcakes today; the Fidget is a fad. It won't last long. That's why every graduate should understand the importance of reaching for those things in life that have meaning and will withstand the test of time.

When confronted with the wild trends of today's time, we should remember the words of the songwriter:

You may build great cathedrals large or small,
you can build skyscrapers grand and tall,
you may conquer all the failures of the past,
but only what you do for Christ will last.

As Christians, we see fads come and go, but we know our God is the same today, yesterday and forever. We have decided to keep holding his hand.

Exposition

In this text, Jesus speaks to his disciples about their commitment to building the kingdom that should have been foremost on their collective mind.

Jesus preached to and taught his disciples for three years. During that time, He showed them the mysteries of heaven to come and the kingdom of God on earth. He urged them to stay focused on their immediate mission and to place less attention on the things that attract the attention of the world.

Verse 33 refers to setting priorities. They too were individuals who had to balance their secular needs and desires with their desire to advance the kingdom of God. Jesus made it very simple but still challenging. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

In essence, Jesus said put the things of God at the top of your list, and all of the other concerns you have will come in due time. The challenge he posed was one that put serving God above every other consideration.

It was also a subtle warning not to be sidetracked by fads and trends that would get them off the track. The fads and trends may not be sinful, but they are a distraction and should not be a priority.

Why Fidget

Those who fidget are generally restless, bored or nervous, which may account for why many youths or attracted to the Fidget Spinner.

NERVOUSNESS MAKES US FIDGET: At graduation, many youth step across the threshold of young adulthood that often makes them nervous. Even though they have been waiting for the moment all of their lives, reality sets in and that causes some to fidget.

At some point, a Christian graduate asks, what does God want me to do with my life? At this juncture, the Christian graduate starts considering ways to capitalize on this new stage of life and the choices often make them nervous. They will be exposed to many popular ideas, trends, and fads which will attempt to claim their attention. They also have to decide whether to continue to serve God with their talent and abilities as they were raised to do in their youth or whether they will drift away in pursuit the flash and flair that the world offers. Some, torn by the choice, fidget.

Jesus has promised that if we make contributing to the kingdom of God our highest priority, all of the other things will be added.

There is no need to be nervous about college, career training or other steps that must be taken as long as your life is centered in Christ.

There is no reason to fidget because you are anxious about tomorrow, just remember that you may not know what tomorrow will bring, you can be confident because you know who holds tomorrow in his hands.

BOREDOM MAKES US FIDGET: Many who are bored tend to fidget. People are bored because they have a tremendous amount of energy that is waiting to be used, but they can't find an outlet. The room they are sitting in, the sermon they are listening to, the class they are attending or even their room at home doesn't let them plug in and boredom results. Sometimes boredom results in daydreaming or just getting sleepy. To deal with boredom many people fidget.

A youth who decides to use his life to build the kingdom of God rarely has a boring day. He'll have plenty of tiring days, but very few boring days.

There is so much Kingdom work to be done that there isn't time to be bored. A young man who decides that he wants to help the sick finds ways to volunteer and use his energy. A girl who wants to help people in need will look for the means to help feed the hungry, house the homeless and help the poor. Those who have decided to help build the kingdom will never get bored.

Youth who work to build the kingdom will pursue a dream, but they will rarely find themselves day dreaming because they have made pleasing God their goal, with the full knowledge that all the other things in life will come; if we please God first.

Pleasing God is the main thing. The challenge is to keep the main thing, the main thing by devoting all of your energy toward building the kingdom using your gift. If we keep the main thing, the main thing, we'll never have a boring day. There will be no need to fidget.

ANXIOUSNESS MAKES US FIDGET: We fidget when we worry or get anxious over situations. This happens to believers who lose their faith.

When you get worried, you fidget.

When you lose faith, you fidget.

However, those who walk by faith fidget less than others.

The definition of faith is in Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen."

To live by faith is to always believe that godly goals can be achieved even though, at present, there is no evidence to support the belief.

If God gives you a direction pursue it with all of our passion, all of your resources, all of your knowledge and skill with the full faith that if it the path you take is in God's will he will make it happen. In any case, you will never be the loser because he will work all things so that they work for your good.

You don't have time to fidget even though you are about to start a journey on a road that makes many nervous.

Life after graduation is a nervous road.

Life after graduation is an anxious road.

Life after graduation is a challenging road.

But there is no need to fidget. Each young believer is encouraged to live by faith.

In the years ahead you will enter an arena of life where things will happen outside of your control, that's when we walk by faith that the Lord will make a way.

When tuition is due, and there seems to be no way, despite your best efforts, that's when you live by faith that the Lord will make a way.

Don't fidget; Faith it!

If doors are closed in your face, Don't fidget, faith it! God will make a way!

If enemies surround you on every side, don't fidget, faith it! God will make a way!

If you fall down each time you try to stand up; don't fidget, faith it! God will make a way!

Make Heaven your home

Finally, brothers and sisters, the fidget spinner in your hand turns but goes nowhere, but your life in God's hands can go anywhere!

That is why Jesus told his disciples to seek the kingdom of God first with all other things being secondary. Secondary does not mean that they will not come, but it means that they are not a believer's top priority.

As you seek first the kingdom of God, don't fidget.

Don't be nervous.

Don't be bored.

Don't be anxious.

Don't fidget, but stay focused.

In all thy ways "Acknowledge Him, " and he will direct your path.

Acknowledging God means more than just saying Lord help me get my diploma.

It means in everything you do, ask whether what you do is true to the will of God.

If you submit yourself to the will of God, it does not matter what anyone else says or thinks, he will direct your path.

In all thy ways, that means college and technical school!

In all thy ways, that means climbing the career ladder and pursuing a family!

In all thy ways, acknowledge him, and he shall direct your path.

Follow your faith, and you can do the impossible!

Don't Fidget, Follow!

If you follow your faith, you can reach the unreachable!

If you follow your faith, you can achieve the impossible dream!

That faith has been secured for you by a God who loves you. I know it's true because John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Don't fidget, stay Fired Up with a faith that assures you that God will not leave you alone

Don't fidget, look for Favor from the one who promised you that no weapon formed against you shall prosper as long as you stay in the will of God.

Don't fidget go forward in the name of Jesus.

Jesus who has guaranteed our faith on an old rugged cross on Calvary's Hill!

Jesus who has assured our faith with nail scarred hands, a wounded side and a bowed down head!

It was proven Early Sunday morning when he arose from the grave!

Don't fidget, rejoice because early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

9778-Pastor Installation

The Stars in His hands

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Installation of Robby D. Williams
St. Rest Baptist Church
Minden, La.

July 2, 2017

SCRIPTURE: And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. Revelation 1:16; "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." Revelation 1:20

Introduction

Have you ever considered how fortunate the church is to be in the hand of God? It is certainly a blessing to know that included in the vast universe are thousands of planets and billions of stars, but God knows each one by name and has set a purpose for each one.

Isn't it amazing to know that while there is one universe, there are more than 500 billion Galaxies in the universe, and each of these galaxies contains over 100 billion stars formed in clusters called solar systems? It's even more astonishing to know that inside of each Solar System are billions of stars that can be seen with the eye. Yet, despite the vastness of his creation, God is mindful of the needs of every creature in his universe to the extent that he cares and provides for each one.

When the Psalmist looked at the vastness of the universe and considered how vast it was, and how the creator devotes attention to the needs of each one of his creatures he asked in Psalm 8:4 "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

What is man that considering our seemingly insignificant position in the universe that God would give us special attention, concern, and guidance? Who are we that the God we serve would select us from among billions of specimens in his creation for individual nurture, protection, and care?

Believers are children of the king, and as such he provides special care for us and has selected specially authorized emissaries to help us, guide us, encourage us and lead us through the maze of rising and fallings that we call life until we return to him the glory of his majesty.

Those he has selected we call pastors, who are tiny stars, selected from the galaxies of stars, to shine a light for his people and show them the way home.

We are grateful for pastors because we know God has selected them and holds them in his hands. We follow them freely as they reveal the path that God has chartered for our life's journey. We praise them and respect them, and lift them up high, for through them God shows us how to position ourselves to recognize and receive God's grace and mercy.

As Christians, we are proud to know that God has our pastors in his hand. We know that as long as all of us are guided by the hand of God, we will all make it to heaven one day.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Revelation of Jesus Christ as shown to John on the Isle of Patmos in which particular messages are given to the churches of Asia Minor.

The Revelation is divided into three parts: Chapters 1-3 provides specific messages to the churches in Asia. Chapters 4-20 concerns events that will occur in the future during the last seven years of time. The last chapters:21-22 paint the glorious picture of the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom of Heaven and to wipe all of our tears away.

In this text, Jesus reveals that the seven churches are shepherded by seven men that he holds in his hand. The pastors are referred to as stars or angels in his right hand. Through them, said Christ, he will speak words that will come as a double-edged sword, sometimes cutting with warning and condemnation and sometimes encouraging, consoling and inspiring.

The stars or angels were suited for each church which had its own unique circumstances: One was lukewarm, another was too wealthy for its own good. One was losing its passion for God while still another was being bombarded with false teaching, and one was encouraged to stay on the right track. Each pastor was installed by God's own hand to accomplish a specific purpose and to respond to a particular need.

The fact that the stars were in God's hand sends a message to all believers, pastors are in God's hands, and they answer to him for the mission he charged them to accomplish.

Purpose of Stars

There are several thoughts to consider about pastors as stars in God's hands.

PASTORS ARE INSTALLED TO FILL BLACK HOLES: In the universe, science tells us that stars don't live forever, that they decline and finally no longer exist. When stars fade away the aftermath of their demise creates a hole in the solar system, things don't work right, there is uncertainty. However, scientists also report that on the other side of every black hole there is another rising star that fills the black hole. When the church faces the possibility of a black hole, God raises up another star or angel to serve

each congregation. As Paul saw himself declining, he began to mentor Timothy and taught him through precept and example, always requiring him to "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that neededth not be ashamed." This is the meaning of John 3:30 which notes, "He must increase and I must decrease" John said those words of Christ, so that men would know that there would never be a void in the divine dispensations; we all step to the side bow to the win of God.

STARS ARE NOT CELEBRITIES: It is each to confuse the symbolism of the stars and make celebrities of the pastors installed to serve the congregation. The greatest pastors are those who serve, not those who are served.

The stars in God's hand are not ROCK STARS. Who are larger than life superheroes who attract large crowds, push the line on morality or cross it and often promote and live lives that are irreverent.

The stars in God's hand are not Reality Stars. A reality TV stars appear on television in usually unscripted episodes showing real people, in real situations that may seem odd and strange to the general public. There is a genre of reality star pastors, who gain a reputation for keeping it real. To keep it real they often use foul language, promote loose living, and push the envelope when it comes to interpretation of scripture in modern times. They become cult heroes among those seeking a relaxation of biblical standards.

The stars in God's hand are not shooting stars, meteors that flash across the stage for a minute make a great flash, leave a fiery trail and then disappear.

The stars in God's hand are not twinkling stars, who wink at sin, but twinkle at prosperity.

In fact, the stars in God's hand are not stars in the celebrity sense of the word. They are servants, who obey the will of God and move at his commands. They shine light because they reflect the perfect will of God.

The pastor can't be the star because the church already has a star. I hear Jesus say, "I am the rose of Sharon, the Bright and Morning Star."

EACH STAR IN GOD'S HAND HAS A PURPOSE. Scientists remind us that there are millions of stars in the universe and each is different from the other. Many of them have been assigned names, but they have their own purpose. Likewise, each pastor has his own purpose.

Each pastor is placed with a congregation for a particular purpose and for a specific length of time. The goal is to achieve God's purpose. Understanding the mysterious ways of God has been a puzzle to many over the centuries. We are no exception. We often wonder why God selected us, out of all of his creation, and placed us in the unique spot that we occupy in the world today. It is humbling when we consider that God could have chosen anyone, but He did not want just anyone He chose this pastor for this work. God knew the kind of people he would encounter and selected him because of his unique qualities, then put it on the hearts of the people to accept His chosen one.

Unseen by the hand of man, God has exalted Godly leaders to a station and position that would promote the building of his kingdom and provide spiritual help for those who follow him.

Often we cannot see God's hand, but there is no doubt that God's hand is in the plan. Everything that happens has a reason and purpose, according to God's divine plan. When a Godly leader is sanctified, selected and placed in a position, it is not accidental. God is in the plan.

When a man or woman of God is given a gavel or pulpit, it is not a coincidence of nature. God is in the plan.

In God's hands

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that just as the pastor is in God's hands so should every member know that there is no limit to what can be done when we are in God's hands.

A humble pastor knows that he is not the star of God's show. Through his service, without thought of being paid or praised, he demonstrates another final truth, that "You don't have to be a star to be in God's show."

You don't have to be our front, as long as you are in God's hands.

You don't have to be a star, but you do have to be in God's hands.

We are installing this minister in the pastor's seat, but God has already installed him in his hands.

And not the pastor alone, every believer who walks by faith can shine his light, in God's hand!

In God's hands, our lives may seem to drift on the rivers of life, but God will see to it that we fall into the right port.

In God's hands, we will be safe, and our destinies will be secure.

God's hands are the same hands that hollowed out the valleys and bulged the mountains up.

God's hands are the same hands that clap and make the thunder roll; that wave and cause the rain to trickle down from the clouds.

God's hands are the same hands that heal us when we are sick, lift us up when we are down and push us to move when we have come to a complete stop.

God's hands are the same hands that wake us in the morning and tuck us in at night.

It's these hands that David wrote about when he said, In thee oh Lord do I put my trust.

These are the hands that we reach up to when we sing, Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go.

These are the same hands that wrapped themselves around an old rugged cross one day and were stretched out wide in victory!

These are the same hands that were pierced with nails and bruised for our iniquities.

These are the same hands that rolled the stone away to arise, lifted and glorified, Early one Sunday morning.

It is into these hands we place our trust!

No. 9779-Inspiration

The land of the Free and the Home of the Saved

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 2, 2017

SCRIPTURE: Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! Ephesians 1:7

Introduction

When the nation celebrates its birth on July 4th, it does so with plenty of fanfare, parades, family celebrations, and rallies. We sometimes get a feeling of unparalleled patriotism when we hear the words of the Star Spangled Banner:

> And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
> Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
> O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
> O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The Fourth of July is a national day of celebration of freedom that ironically is still not free for millions of its citizens. Being free has meant different things to this nation at various times. Once it meant being free from England, but not giving freedom to slaves or women. When African-Americans thought of being free, it meant the end of slavery. We couldn't understand how the nation celebrated freedom on one hand and held us slaves on the other.

That's when men like Frederick Douglass traveled the country questioning whether or not our celebration of independence was real. In 1852 Douglass asked this pointed question,

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your

shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages."

Whatever liberties we share as Americans, frail and tattered as they may be, they were bought with a price.

Freedom means the ability to exercise certain rights inalienable from the human spirit: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This is the spirit that Paul talked about when he wrote in Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Spiritually, Jesus came to set us free from bondage, but just like American Independence, it did not come without a price.

The price of our spiritual independence was paid by Christ on Calvary. Salvation is available without a charge, but spiritual freedom was not free, it was bought with a price, which was paid by Jesus Christ himself.

As Christians, we celebrate whatever level of liberty we enjoy, with the full knowledge that we are not truly free until all men acknowledge the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and, through Christ, we all step foot on the land of the free and the home of the saved.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, emphasizing that believers are truly free because of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

Often when Paul preached about the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, he characterized it as a faith that sets believers free from the bondage imposed on them by the Mosaic Law. It was a list of rules, rituals and rigid codes that enslaved them to the letters of the written words of their law, rather than the spirit of the law that exists in the hearts of man.

Paul emphasized that those who are faithful to Christ are those who actually know the meaning of real freedom. However, it noted that it is a freedom that has been purchased at the cost of Christ's blood "poured out on the altar of the cross."

It was the freedom from sacrificial lambs and scapegoats. It was freedom from guilt and stain by association with or even touching a person who happened to be a "sinner." It was freedom from the condemnation of family members and society in general.

The sacrifice of Christ made every believer answerable to God for himself, his sins have been redeemed by Christ on Calvary.

This freedom makes every believer a citizen in the kingdom of God, a land of the free and the home of the saved.

What it means to live in the land of the free

What does it mean to live in the land of the free? We have come to know what it's like to live in the United States where we are generally protected by a constitution that guarantees us certain rights, but what is it like to live in the land of the spiritually free? What will it be like to live in the land of the free and the home of the saved?

THERE WILL BE PEACE AND CONTENTMENT: In the land of the free and the home of the saved, there will be peace and happiness. Wouldn't that be great to have now? Yet, that is what we have been promised in scripture, that in the kingdom of God the lamb and the lion will lay down together and we shall study war no more.

We strive for peace and contentment. It's the kind of inner peace and contentment that comes from loving God and obeying his commandments!
It's the kind of freedom that would make our ancestors sing "You can have this whole world, just give me Jesus!"

To some that might sound illogical, but to those who know him Jesus is the real meaning of liberty, peace, and happiness. They have found that there is no:

—Pain that afflicts us that Jesus cannot ease;
—Weakness that envelopes us that Jesus cannot strengthen;
—Fear that surrounds us that Jesus cannot calm;
—Loneliness that invades us that Jesus cannot comfort;
—Burden that encumbers us that Jesus cannot lift;

WE WILL LOVE HEAVEN BECAUSE OF WHAT'S NOT THERE: While the physical description of the Land of the Free is occupied with what IS there, the abstract description is best described by what is NOT there. If fact, it's what's not there that makes the entire experience heavenly.

What won't be in the land of the free and the home of the saved? There won't be tears,pain, jails, police, discrimination, wild forest fires, serial killers, rapists, terrorists, murderers, raging hurricanes, floods, epidemic diseases, infant deaths, starvation, cheating, stealing, hating, backbiting, grief or sorrow. There will be no funeral homes, ambulances, drug stores or emergency clinics. There will be no dialysis centers, cancer treatments, ICU units; because all of these things will be conquered.

The land of the free and the home of the saved is a place created by the hand of God, an existence that is ordered by the will of God. In this land, everything is done according to God's will. Everyone lives according to God's will, and everything works out according to God's will.

We want to get to the land of the free, and the home of the saved because it's a land where every day will be Sunday, and it's always howdy and never goodbye!

I don't know about you, but what I will like about this land will be what is there, but I will most definitely enjoy what is not there!

Freedom isn't Free

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must all remember, that while we celebrate

independence and freedom, that freedom is not free, somebody paid the price.

That's a reality that everyone must acknowledge about the world in which we live.

As the nation celebrates, we must remember the hundreds of thousands of men and women who gave their lives in pursuit of that freedom. Freedom isn't free.

Our national anthem may speak of the land of the free, but in reality there a few things that appear to be free, but there are always unseen costs that appear free to a recipient, but someone somewhere, paid the price.

Every meal that is served to a homeless person may appear to be free, but some one paid the price.

Every time you look at your paycheck, there is a section in which your federal income tax is deducted.

That's the place where the free lunch is paid for. That's also where the free federal interstate highway system is paid for.

Anything that is free has a price, hidden or otherwise.

Somebody has to pay the price.

There is also a land on a far away strand, the beautiful homeland of the soul. It is the land of the free and the home of the saved.-It too was bought with a price. I like to call it the land of "No More."

In the land of the free and home of the saved there will be "No more," pain and sorrow.

In the land of the free and the home of the saved, there will be no more sadness, but only gladness throughout all of eternity.

Methuselah walked with God and walked right into the land of the free and the home of the saved.

Elijah caught a fiery chariot and step right into the land of the free and home of the saved!

It's the place called heaven, but it is better described to those who mourn as the land of "No more."

In that land there will be no more:

-WARS because there is only peace, in the land of the free and home of the saved!

-HATRED, because there is only love in the land of the free and home of the saved!

-WEAKNESS, because there is only strength in the land of the free and home of the saved!

-DEATH, because there is only life in the land of the free and home of the saved!

The land of the free and home of the saved is the place the song writer described as a land where we will never grow old.

But even the land of the free and home of the saved had a price to be saved, because we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. Somebody had to pay the price for us to get to the land of the free and home of the saved!

Consider the young man who lived a wild life and always disobeyed his mother.

One night he took a gun and left home. His mother was concerned about him and started walking the streets looking for him. When she walked into a local convenience store she was horrified as she saw her son standing over the body of man her son killed

in a robbery. The mother took the gun from her son's hand and pushed him out of the door. She pressed her finger on the trigger and fired one shot into the floor and stood over the body with tears running down her face. When the police arrived, they found the mother standing over a dead man, holding a fired pistol in her hand. When asked to make a statements she said, "A crime was committed, a price has to be paid." When the son found out that his mother was going to jail. He tried to tell everyone that he was the guilty party, but no one would listen. She was sentenced to life in prison because all she would say, is "A crime has been committed, a price has to be paid."

The son came to visit her in prison and asked why she did it. She said, "Son, you took a man's life and a price had to be paid. I'm paying the price for you to give you one more chance at freedom. Every time you think about doing something wrong, remember your freedom has been bought with a price! Every day that you waste in idle living, remember that day of freedom was bought with price!"
Brothers and Sisters, That's what Jesus did for us! He paid the price for our salvation.

Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow!

He died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

He paid it all!

He paid it all!

All to him I owe!

No. 9780-Inspiration

He's Sitting High but Looking Low

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

July 24, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Isaiah 6:1 (KJV)

Introduction

One of the pitfalls of sitting high is that we are forced to look low if we want to see the world beneath us.

There is a tongue and cheek phrase we use to describe people who are elevated to high positions then condescendingly respond to others; we say they are acting "high and mighty." It is expected that those who have reached lofty heights would empathize with the less fortunate below.

We are not very pleased with those who treat us with less than civility after they get up; especially if they try to keep us down.

The great thing about God is that although he does sit high and look low, he does so with empathy for all of those he sees and moves to help and protect them within his will. We look up to him glorifying in his greatness, but he never looks down on us with a condescending attitude; his glory is our salvation and redemption.

As Christians, we are always happy to know that our Savior is watching over us.

He keeps us in his view and will always respond in our hour of need.

Exposition

This text focuses on the vision of Isaiah that depicted the kingdom of God and the glory and majesty of God at the same time.

Isaiah, in his vision, saw God sitting high. The essence of what he saw was that God reigned high. He was seated on a throne and the throne upon which he sat not only was above the others, but it transcended all other thrones, and he commanded all other thrones.

The vision painstakingly notes that in the year Uzziah died the vision was given. Uzziah was an influential and popular leader of Israel who was seen by many as the consummate protector and provider for Israel. Uzziah is generally supposed to have died in 739 B.C. It was after Uzziah died that many in the kingdom once again saw the glory and power of God.

When Uzziah died Isaiah, and the whole nation once again saw the essence of God's being.

He saw God high and lifted up. He is in control of his world's events with all of his power and glory.

God's throne was a throne of glory, government, and grace, it is high and lifted up above all controversies.

Accentuating how the magnanimity of God compares to the creations of man or the earth itself the vision portrays God as being so big that the skirts of his robe filled the temple. God's majesty reminds us that the world is his temple and the earth is his footstool. The word translated "train" elsewhere (and probably here) refers to the hem. It is the richly decorated and distinctive border around the high priestly robe. The hem was used as a mark of identity for people of rank such as priests and kings. The edge of the cloth was embroidered, and a fringe of three- or four-inch-long tassels trimmed the skirt by the ankles.

While God is high, he is not so high that he cannot and will not hear, empathize and respond to the needs of the people. He is not so distant that he will not forgive when a sinner asks. Although he sits high, he is also looking low.

High, but not so high

It is good for every believer to be aware of the awesome nature of God, while at the same time not losing focus on the fact that while God sits high, he never loses sight of each believer and the concerns of our hearts.

NOT TOO HIGH TO BLESS US DAILY: Every morning God has new blessings in store for us! The signs of God's daily mercy are all around us. He feeds the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea and critters on the ground. In spite of all of his greatness, he is aware of the needs of every person, every day. He does not lose track of us. We don't have to worry. If he blessed you with a place to lay your head yesterday, he knows your need for today. If you made it through yesterday with his help, he knows you need his help to make it through today.

Lamentations 3:22-23 puts it this way, ""It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

The Lord sits high but not too high to be concerned about us.

There is no:

—Valley that's too wide for him to cross, to reach out to us!

—Road that's too rough for him to walk, to lend us a helping hand!

—Burden that's so heavy that he can't help us to bear!

—Storm that's too mighty for him to control, and see us through!

We should not ever become discouraged to the point of believing that God is busy taking care of the universe, and is not concerned about each of his creations.

Yes, he sits high, and his train fills the temple, but he still cares.

When nobody else:

—Cares, that the Lord is concerned about me
—Forgives me, that the Lord is willing to forget
—Accepts me, that the Lord receives me with arms wide open
—Wants me, that the Lord accepts me as a child of the King

This is the message for every believer, that God knows and he cares. This should be a reason for hope for every believer because we know that our individual situation is not unnoticed by the Savior. Therefore, the songwriter asks, Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion. A constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me

NOT TOO HIGH TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS: Our God sits high and is mighty in a million ways, but he is not so high that he does not hear our prayers. He knows who we are and hears us. When Jimmy Carter was running for president of the United States in 1976, he often slept in the homes of many people who opened their doors to him as he campaigned in their state. He promised to remember them when he became president and to invite them to spend a night in the White House. Once elected, he sent invitations to each of those persons, and one night at a time they spent a night in the White House. He was President, but he knew each one and greeted them when they came for their night. Over the years, believers have come to know that the Lord we serve knows our names and hears our prayers. We know the Lord knows us because he has answered our prayers on so many different occasions.

The beauty of being among the faithful is that we are not required to be a person of prominence or position to speak to God. Anyone can approach him. In fact, Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." You don't need a special position or place. Daniel prayed in a Lion's Den; The Hebrew Boys were in a fiery furnace, Jesus prayed in a garden; the place or the position doesn't matter. You can pray standing up, sitting down, laying down, on your knees or on your feet. If you pray, God will hear.

What makes prayer powerful is not the words, but the fact that the words are being heard by God himself. That's the power of prayer. That's why prayer changes things.

Prayer can take a defeated spirit and show it the victory!

Prayer can take sadness and turn it into a gladness!

Prayer can take sorrow and turn it into joy!

Prayer can take a bowed down head and lift it up high!

The Lord sits high, and his train fills the temple, but he is not so high that he can't or won't hear our prayers.

NOT SO HIGH HE CAN'T SEE OUR SINS: God sits high, but he is not so high that he can't see our actions. He knows everything about us including our strengths and weaknesses. Often we try to hide our weaknesses and sins thinking that God either does not see them or he does not care. Despite his lofty abide in the universe, God knows.

Adam and Eve discovered this truth in the Garden of Eden. They had broken God's law and eaten of the forbidden fruit, and they hid their nakedness behind fig leaves

and tried to hide behind the trees. However, their fig leaves were transparent. They hid their nakedness from each other, but God came to visit one day he saw their sin.

There is nothing about us that God does not see. If we cheat, steal, lie or misrepresent ourselves, we may successfully fool others, but God is not so busy or so high up that it gets by him. It's like those times we thought our parents were busy, but they caught us doing something wrong even though they didn't appear to be looking. That's when we learned about the proverbial "I've got eyes in the back of my head" nature of good parents.

Jesus said in Luke 12:2, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. The title of Tyler Perry's stage play said it all, "What's Done in the dark, will come to light." It will come to light because God sees our weaknesses.

Unlike our enemies, while God sees our faults, he loves us anyway. He does not condone our sins. He does not endorse our sins. He does not bless us in our sins, but he loves us. God hates the sin, but he loves the sinner. Unlike our enemies, he looks beyond our faults and weaknesses and sees our need. He forgives us, we repent. He gives us another chance because he sees us in our weakness.

God sits high, and his train fills the temple, but he knows all about us.

Open Door Policy

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that although God is the creator of the universe when it comes to each of us, he has an open door policy.

Many in government claim to have an open door policy. It usually means that visitors can see a government leader, if they could get on their calendar for a visit.

The best open door policy for officials, can't compete with God's open door policy. Because any believer has 24-hour access to him, and they carry his private, three digit number "1-1-1" with them everywhere they go.

Abraham used his access to get so close to God that he grew in spiritual strength and material wealth.

Enoch used his access to God that when it came time to die, he was just scooped up and "was not."

When the nation of Israel got close to God, it survived the wilderness and made it to the promised land.

When Moses got close to God, he watched with amazement as God rolled back the waters of the Red Sea.

When Isaiah got close to God, he answered the call to serve by said "If the Lord needs somebody; here I am, send me."

When David got close to God, he watched as God made his enemies his footstool.

God sits high, but he also looks low. If we draw close to him, we can have access to his storehouse of blessing.!

No wonder the songwriter declared "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed

Lord to the cross where thou hast died. Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to thy precious bleeding side."

We want to draw near to benefit from his grace.

His grace is sufficient for:

—The poor, no matter how pathetic their poverty.

—The tired, no matter how feeble their steps.

—The burdened, no matter how exhausted their body

—The lonely, no matter how pitiful their situation.

—The wretched, no matter how despairing their circumstance.

—The sick, no matter how painful their diseases.

We can all talk to God, but there is a little catch. You got to go through somebody.

You can call him in your prayer room, but you got to go through somebody.

You can call him while you are driving your car, but you have to go through someone.

God will hear us individually, but you got to go through Jesus.

For the word teaches us that "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5)

Access to God is possible because of Jesus.

Jesus, who somebody called the Prince of Peace!

Jesus, who somebody called the Wonder of Wonders!

Jesus, who somebody called the Lamb of God, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, The King of Kings, The Lord of Lords!

He may be sitting at the right hand of God, but Jesus cares!

That's why the songwriter wrote, "Whether in a mansion made of stone or in a shanty all alone, God cares about you. He'll come down from the sky and wipe the tears from your eye because God cares about you."

He cared enough to come into this sinful world and to bear an old rugged cross!

He cared enough to allow nails to be driven in His hands!

He cared enough to allow a spear to be stuck in His side!

He cared enough to let them put a crown of thorns on His head!

He cared enough to die for the sins of the world!

But, Early Sunday morning.

He arose from the grave, with all power in his hands!

9781-Inspiration

All Tied Up in Knots

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 5, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "O God, look at the trouble I'm in! My stomach in knots, my heart wrecked by a life of rebellion. Massacres in the streets, starvation in the houses." Lamentation 1:20

Introduction

Have you ever felt tangled in a web of circumstances that afforded you no escape? When this happens, any way that you turn seems to provide you with yet another brick wall. It gets so tangled up that you just can't seem to find a way out. That's when it seems that life has tied your hands to your side and stopped you from making any progress toward solving the problem.

It's not hard to get tied up in knots. It happens when we have more bills than we have money to pay them. We have robbed Peter to pay Paul so much that Paul is trying to rob Silas. The light bill is due. The rent is due. The car notes, insurance, food and everything else that is due keeps you tied up.

The knots get tighter when we get laid off from work, lose a business contract or a source of income. It gets even tighter when our credit and debit cards decline, and things break and we have no money to repair them.

To make matters worse, we now have health issues: sugar, high blood pressure, migraine headaches, back aches, dimming eye sights, shortening of breath, and we have hurts in new places that have never hurt before. We now go to the eye doctor, dentist, ear doctor, foot doctor, heart doctor, and the surgeon.

The knots get even tighter when we add family issues to the mix: Marital problems, dating complications, cheating husbands, cheating wives, lost love, unattainable love, bad children, terrible parents, baby mama drama, baby daddy drama, in-laws, noisy neighbors and family dysfunction.

That's enough to really tie up any of us pretty well, but even more things tie us up: such as: enemies plotting on us, haters, detractors, critics, liars, the police, arrests, law suits, courts, judges, bail bondsmen, lawyers, fines, and probation.

What really makes the knots tighter is the fact that we worry and anguish over each knotty situation until we find ourselves making it through each day with the assistance of headache medicines, nerve pills, relaxers, and pep pills.

We are so worked up, stressed up, tied up and tangled up that we can't lay down without sleeping pills and can't wake up and get going without more pep pills,

gallons of caffeine and energy drinks.

It really gets complicated when we add our spiritual life to the mix: My church life is hit and miss; I don't understand the Bible and don't attend Bible study. I don't pray like I should, I'm not giving like I should; I have a talent to offer the church but I'm never available. Spiritually, I don't feel anything. I'm dried up. I don't know what to believe I study in church, but then I confuse myself watching TV preachers and going from church to church. I'm confused.

When all of this happens, that's when we know that we are truly tied up in knots.

In Romans 7, Paul found himself tied up in knots because he constantly did things or took actions that resulted in problems for himself, even when he did not want to do them. He asked at Romans 7:24, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Then he answered his own question in verse 25: "Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As Christians, we are grateful to know that even as life tries to tie and entangled us that we have a deliverer in Christ Jesus.

Exposition

This text focuses on Jeremiah has he complains about the terrible conditions of the people, caused by their sin, but has him tied up in knots worrying about it.

The Jews were held captive in Babylon for many years. They had become the vassals of the Babylonian Empire. They were in a strange land in which they could not rejoice or find any hope. Their hope was lost, spiritual life was lost, their enemies had them tied up to the point that they could not even sing happy songs.

They were so tied up the only song they could sing was the blues.

The name, Lamentations, means "Laments" but it could very easily be described as Jeremiah's pity party about the difficulty of the nation's situation.

Lamentations consists of five separate chapters or poems. In chapter 1 the prophet dwells on the manifold miseries oppressed by which the city sits as a solitary widow weeping sorely. In chapter 2 these miseries are described in connection with the national sins that had caused them. Chapter 3 speaks of hope for the people of God. The chastisement would only be for their good; a better day would dawn for them. Chapter 4 laments the ruin and desolation that had come upon the city and temple, but traces it only to the people's sins. Chapter 5 is a prayer and an expectation that Zion's reproach will be taken away in the repentance and recovery of the people.

It ends with a prayer of hope, "Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. Lamentations 5:21

We Tie Knots, God Unties Knots

In the course of our lives we get entangled with life issues that tie us up in knots. There are three truths that we should remember.

DON'T FEAR, GOD CAN UNTIE YOU: Think of what ties you up? Generally it is fear. We fear the unknown and the thought of what could happen often makes us afraid and ties us up in knots. "What if I mess up?" What if I get a disease? What if I die? What if I get in financial trouble?

We wrestled with is many of our fears. Some are bringing old fears into the present. What does it mean to have "No fear?" Some people even have phobias.
Acrophobia, the fear of high places; Claustrophobia, the fear of tight close places; Agoraphobia, the fear of open places, Ergophobia, the fear of work

There are many who are tied up in knots because of fear, but I'm reminded of the words of David who said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

If the world has you tied up in knots, the Word of God has a "Not" for you. God's "Not" will help you untie your fear knot.

2 Timothy 1:7 – "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

YOU CAN'T UNTIE THE KNOTS; YOUR HANDS ARE TIED: It is logical and even practical for each believer to prayerfully try to resolve issues. However, there are times when your knowledge is insufficient. There are times when we need to reach out and possess what God has in store for us but wecan't reach it because our hands our tied. To fully possess and be blessed, we must let God reach what we can't reach, let God do what we can't do, and trust him to do exactly what he says he will do. Look at all of the times that God prepared to deliver Israel, but before he could act they were tied up in knots. He delivered them from Egypt, but they were tied up with knots at the Red Sea. He pointed them through the Wilderness to the Promised Land, but they were tied up in knots because there was no water. He brought to the edge of the land of promise, but they were tied in knots because the Jordan was too wide. He brought them into the promised land and they were tied up in knots because the walls of Jericho were too high. In each instance, they could not resolve their situation; their hands were. Their knowledge, power and understanding were insufficient.

Yet God moved on their behalf. He rolled back the Red Sea. He gave them water in the wilderness, rolled back the Jordan and made the walls of Jericho come tumbling down.

To possess, what God has for you, you must trust God completely. Whether it is a new career, business opportunity, educational pursuit, or a change in lifestyle, we cannot possess it without trusting in God.

When you reach a point where your hands are tied and all your efforts have failed, the Word of God has a "Not" for you that will help untie your knots.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

THERE ARE KNOTS YOU CAN'T SEE, BUT GOD CAN: There are many situations in life that we deal with that tie us up in knots. One type is the unknown. Planning for the unknown can tie you up in knots because you are dealing with the unseen. Planning for floods, fire or sickness can tie you in knots. What ties you in knots

is wondering whether you have covered everything. When you leave your home for a vacation, you go through a checklist in your mind to be sure that everything is done. However, while you are on the road you are still checking the list, trying to see if there was something you left undone. It ties you up in knots.

The unseen dangers tie us up in knots, until you remember that there many things that are happening in the spiritual realm that you do not see. God is taking care of it for you. God has protected us from unseen danger. The unseen danger is the worn out tire-rod end on your car that was about to break, so you had a flat and while repairing it discovered the danger. The unseen danger is the batch of bad meat that you decided not to buy in the store. The unseen danger is the side road you took instead of crossing the bridge that collapsed just about the time you would have crossed.

If a list is prepared of all of the unseen dangers that God has saved us from this week, every believer would be shouting, "Hallelujah!" We HAVE SEEN what God has been doing for us. We celebrate what we can see and what we cannot see.

The confidence of knowing that God is our rock in a weary land; our shelter in the time of storm; our way out of noway, helps us we face the unseen.

When you reach a point where you are tied up in knots about the unseen, the Word of God has a "Not" for you that will help untie your knots.

2 Corinthians 4: 18 – "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary]; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Build your hopes on things eternal and hold to God's unchanging hands.

Free from Sin

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is one other thing that ties us up in knots, it is the burden of sin. It is a knot that can only be untied by the blood of Christ.

There are many of us that are tied to a life of sin, but we have tried to reform ourselves, but we are still tied up.

We tried changing people, places and things, but we found out that we are still tied up, because we go back to the same people, same places and the same things.

We tried 12 step programs, mentoring programs and scared straight programs, but we were still tied up. When it came to living for God, we were still tied up.

There are some who are like Lazarus, they are completely dead to God.

The good news is that you don't have to stay tied up. When Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus he called his name and he came forth, but he was still tied up in dead clothes. But Jesus said, "Loose that man and let him go!"

Lazarus was able to live again because of Jesus.

We'll be able to be totally free, because of Jesus!.

I don't know about you but I'm glad that Jesus took the penalty for my sins out on Calvary. Sin gave me a:

—Burden but I'm glad that Jesus gave me a blessing!

—Rain but I'm glad that Jesus gave me sunshine!
—Weakness but I'm glad that Jesus gave me strength!
—Miseries but Jesus gave me Miracles
—Foolishness but Jesus gave me Wisdom
—Darkness but Jesus gave me the Light
—Cares but Jesus gave me comfort
—Losses but Jesus gave me the victory
—Sadness but Jesus gave me unspeakable joy
When Jesus died on Calvary he took our:
—Failures and untied them!
—Short comings and untied them!
—Mistakes and untied them!
—Misunderstandings and untied them
—Bad judgments and untied them!

I heard Isaiah say he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace is upon him.

After loosing us from the grip of our sins, I heard Jesus' voice ring across the heavens' "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me!"

He died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose.
Satan had me bound but Jesus lifted me!
I'm glad!
I'm glad!
I'm glad that Jesus lifted me!

9783-Inspiration

Dig Your Own Well

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 13, 2017

SCRIPTURE: And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. Genesis 26:19; "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well." Proverbs 5:15

Introduction

Have you ever seen a water well? There are many who have fond memories of living in or visiting the rural areas that are part of your family's past, looking at the homestead of your grandparents or great grandparents is an awe inspiring experience because we wonder how they were able to survive. Three things stand out in those memories: The wood burning stove, the outhouse, and the water well. These three were essential facilities of the rural household. They are also essential today, even though we call them by different names and operate with new technology.

After slavery, the quest of nearly every former slave was to become independent. For most of them that meant owning a piece of land, tilling their own soul and depending on no one outside of the good Lord for their existence. Owning land was of no value if there was no well, river, creek or pond on the land. Wells were essential, so nearly every farm owner learned how and where to dig a well.

Wells, by nature, are holes in the ground that tap into aquifers or water sources beneath the surface. They are usually deep, so without machinery they can require tremendous man power. They must be secured from collapse and contamination. They must be round and not square; if they are square they will have weak spots at the center of the edges and will collapse.

A man who planned to have a family had to learn how to dig his own well; his knowledge and skill increased the value of his land and provided an independent resource for his family. Every man wanted his own well, he didn't want to borrow his neighbor's well or be dependent on his family's well. To be truly free, he needed his own land and he needed his own well.

Today a prospective buyer inspects the land to be purchased on the surface, but special care is given to find out what's under the surface. The land is extremely valuable if it has water underneath, and even more value if there is oil there too. Often buyers purchase land that does not appeal to the eye because it's landscape is not picturesque, but they buy it because they have learned that there is oil, water or other

natural resources below that cannot be seen with the naked eye.

The Bible makes frequent reference to wells as a symbol or type of the benevolent and saving grace of God. Jesus met the woman at the well and she ran through the streets telling all that she met to "Come see a man, who told me all I've ever done." Isaac found a wife at the well. Moses met his bride's family defending a well. Proverbs 10:11 says a righteous man's mouth is like a wel,l speaking wisdom from God, but an unrighteous man's mouth covers wells and results in violence. Isaiah 12:3 refers to the Godly life as one that joyously draws daily from the "Well of Salvation." Those who try to find happiness without God by living lives of sin are described in 2 Peter 2:17 as "Wells without water" -The sinful life offers the promise of happiness, but delivers empty promises.

As Christians, we know the importance of wells of faith. Each of us must dig our own faith well; and, in times of difficulty, if it seems to run dry dig deeper to let the cooling waters flow.

Exposition

These text focus on one singular truth: It is important for each believer to dig his/her own faith well to realize the full blessings of God.

The central character of Genesis 26:19 is Isaac, the son of Abraham. It takes place as Isaac
and his family lived in the land of the Philistines. The Philistines watched Isaac closely and it seemed that he had been blessed: his crops flourished, his people were at peace and there seemed to be a spirit of happiness and joy in his camp.

Isaac's prosperity was based on his daddy's work. Abraham had dug wells in dry parts of land that kept his flocks fed and his fields fertile. He didn't dig any new wells, he used only the wells his father dug. When enemies envious of his blessing, filled all of his water wells with dirt.
Isaac moved to another section of the land and reopened old wells his father once dug and God blessed him more. The Philistines in every section he moved to, filled up his wells with dirt.

Isaac also repeated his father's weakness. Abraham married a pretty young thing named Sera. When times were tough he lived among the Philistines. The king noticed Sera and wanted her for his wife. He asked Abraham was she his wife and Abraham said she was his sister. (He lied because he thought the king would kill him then marry Sera) The king almost married her, but discovered Abraham lied and sent them away. About 40 years later, Isaac moved to Gerar in a drought and passed off his wife Rebekah (cousin) as his sister to the same king.

He was driven away by the Philistines afterward, repented of his cowardice and returned to digging his father's wells. He was blessed in his efforts, but he soon learned that he would be truly blessed when he dug his own wells.

The text points to a turning point in his life, when Isaac dug his own well in the valley. Until then he had been living on his father's faith, work and even his father's mistakes.

Soon his enemies noticed that the more they harassed Isaac, the more God blessed him. When he dug his own wells his enemies soon acknowledged that "Thou art now blessed of the Lord."

Solomon underscores the importance of finding your own faith well from which you draw strength and inspiration. In Proverbs 5:15 he said, ""Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well."

For Isaac, digging his own well, required a faith walk. It required him to let God lead him; it also required him to be prepared to make his own mistakes. The end result for Isaac and for all believers is a life blessed by the Lord.

Life Choices

When we choose a life path for ourselves, there are several truths we must consider.

BUILD ON FOUNDATIONS, DON'T LIVE ON THEM: Isaac spent a good part of his life living on the foundations built by his father, Abraham. He didn't venture far away from what his family did; he maintained the same course. He even copied his father's mistakes. He didn't start to really live on his own until he dug a faith well and built on the family foundation instead of trying to live on the foundation. Paul, writing to the Christians at Corinth said, ".. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1Corinthians 3:9-11. This remains true for every believer. We are challenged to build on the foundations that have been laid for us by our parents and grandparents. We can't live on them, we must build on them. That means we must stand on their shoulders and climb higher. If they were people of faith, then we should become even stronger people of faith. We want to build on what they gave us, not simply live on it. If we live on them there is a good chance we will enjoy a level of success, but also run the danger of making the same mistakes. We must build on them, but live on the foundations laid for us. If they left you a rental property, inheritance, or gifts, build on what they gave you. If you noticed that they developed weaknesses in pursuit of the foundation they laid, avoid those weaknesses; don't live in their failures. Isaac found that while he lived a prosperous life living on the wells his father dug, he did even better when he learned to dig his own well.

KNOW THE BEST TIME TO DIG YOUR WELL: When is the best time to dig your well? For Isaac, the best time was after all of his daddy's wells had been filled by enemies. He dug new wells that were filled with fresh water. Geologist tells us that it is best to dig a well when the water level is low. That seems just the opposite of reasoning, which suggests that the best time should be when the water is high and easy to reach. If a well is dug when the water is low we dig deep to reach an untapped aquifer, otherwise is high water seasons we don't dig deep enough to survive the next low water. That's a great faith lesson. The greatest faith comes not when things are

going well and life is easy; the greatest and deepest faith comes in the aftermath of hard times, difficulty and drought. Those were times that we had to dig deep to survive. Without resources or assistance many found they had to dig deep to tap into the faith reservoirs they needed to live through hard times.

A good time to dig deep is after you have fallen or failed. That's when you go to the well of faith and it is dry. Proverbs 24:16 says, " For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." That makes it abundantly clear that even good people will fall, slip, make mistakes, or make wrong turns in life. The fact that you have fallen does not mean that you are "bad people" it means that you are human. When we fall, that's when we dig deep into our spiritual reservoir and muster the courage necessary to stand up one more time. When things are tough, it means it's time to dig your own well and dig it deep.

KNOW WHERE TO DIG YOUR WELL: When Isaac decided to dig his own well he did not return to the places where his father dug wells, but verse 22 says he went to another place where there was no chance of strife and dug his well. Those who dig wells know that wells must be dug on the high slope of the land, uphill from the outhouse. The outhouse is a well too, but it has a different purpose; it doesn't give life, but is filled with mess. The parallel for believers should be clear; we must dig our well as far away from mess as possible. Farmers report that the well has to be uphill from the barn, chicken yard or any place that has contaminants because they sink into the water table and contaminate your well. Believers who want to build a life of faith must live uphill from mess caused by Sin. Sin will bring mess into the family room, bed room, and will seep into your office, work station, or even the classroom.

There many who try to go to God's house on Sunday after going to the outhouse on Friday and Saturday night. We may try to hide it by changing our dress, but believers can tell where you've been because, you always bring mess!

If you want to build a faith well, you must seek to build it on higher ground. Youmust think higher, look higher, dream higher and never return to the low ground.

David declared: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made the heaven and the earth." We should seek higher ground. Perhaps that's what Johnson Oatman had in mind when he wrote these words of a great hymn: "My heart has no desire to stay, where doubts arise and fears dismay; thou some may dwell where these abound, my prayer, my aim is higher ground. Lord lift me up and let me stand on heaven's table land; a higher plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

If most of us tell the truth, there was a time when our lives were influenced by the low ground. But now that we know the joy of the high ground, we don't ever want to go back. Our testimony is the same as that of the song writer who said: "Look where he brought me from...He brought me out of darkness into the marvelous light, look where he brought me from!"

Know God for Yourself

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must recognize what Isaac had to learn; it's good to have parents who know the Lord, but you must know God for yourself.

Isaac spent most of his life imitating what he saw his father do.

If his father dug a well, he redug the same well.

If his father told a lie, he told the same lie.

He walked in Abraham's footsteps, and built altars where Abraham prayed, but in the final analysis, he learned that you got to know God for yourself.

There is no substitute for having your own connection with God. That connection is maintained through the life we live, the way we worship and the way we give. There is nothing like knowing God for yourself.

You have to dig your own well!

When you dig your own faith well, that's when you start to know the Lord for

Yourself, you know that when you are:

—Sick, He will be a Doctor in your sickroom!

—In Trouble, He will be a Lawyer in your courtroom!

—Lost and confused, He will make a way out of no way!

—Hungry and thirsty, He will feed you with bread on high.

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will pick you up when you are stumbling!

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will plant your feet on solid ground!

When you know the Lord for yourself, you know He will give you a new song to sing, a new walk to walk and a new talk to talk!

No wonder the song writer says, "You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself!"

You got to know Jesus, you don't need nobody else!

Every saint should be grateful that daddy dug a faith well!

Every saint should be happy that mama and grandpa had a faith well

But the happiest moment in a saint's life should be when he can declare, "I have dug my own well, and I know the Lord for myself!

I don't know what happened, but I kept going down in prayer!

I don't know what happened, but I kept digging in his word!

I don't know what happened, but I kept throwing out the dirt and going down deeper.

I don't know what happened, but all I know is that when I got deep enough, I felt the blood of Jesus covering my soul. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name!"

I don't know what happened, but one day I hit the solid rock. The song writer said, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!"

"You got to know Jesus, know God for yourself. If you know Jesus you don't need nobody else."

Dig, until you find Jesus!
Dig, until you find the man who lived on this Earth for 33 long years!
Dig, until you find Jesus who bore an old rugged cross!
Dig, until you find Jesus who died out on Calvary!
Dig, until you find Jesus who arose early Sunday morning.
You got to know Jesus, you got to know God for yourself!

9784-Inspiration

Somebody's Knocking At Your Door

A Sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

August 26, 2017

Scripture: "And he said unto them which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him at midnight, and say unto him friend, lend me three loaves for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Luke 11:5-6,9

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why so many ask the church for help? Why do people in need call the preacher, deacon or look to the nearest church for help?

A hermit sat in his little cabin at the top of a hill during a drought one summer. His barrel of water was running low, but he always found enough water to sustain him day by day. Each day travelers came by his hut and asked him for water, and he told them he had only enough for himself and sent them away. After many days the hermit asked one of the travelers just who was directing so many to come to him for water. The last traveler responded that there was a gentleman in the general store who pointed them in his direction. Upset, the hermit mounted his donkey and came into town and met the gentleman in the store. "Why are you telling people to come to me for water, when I barely have enough for myself?" The gentleman responded: "I tell each person to come see you, not because you have water, but because you know the way to the well."

There are many across the country who are surprised to hear that many ministries of the Salvation Army are closing or cutting back services to the poor through its shelters or thrift stores. The news hit the internet before it hit the evening news as word of closings and cutbacks came from Mobley Missouri, Jackson, Newark, Lytton Springs, Kankee, Illinois, Monroe, La and other places. Many wondered how this could happen? Where will the homeless go? Surprisingly, the people who ask that question belong to churches, who wonder why the Salvation Army, which is a church denomination, is cutting back? Many never considered the option of stepping up to do more themselves. They definitely didn't think to ask the question, "Are we doing our fair share to respond to the general needs of our community?"

Many think the poor and distressed should go somewhere or anywhere, as long as

they don't knock on their door. Each person thinks it's someone else's responsibility.

There is old Negro Spiritual whose words say, "Somebody's knocking at your door, oh Sinner, why don't you answer? Somebody's knocking at your door!"

Today many people are knocking on the door of the faithful, looking for a response to the need of the masses for help in troubling times.

They come to the church because they heard somewhere that the church may not have plenty of what they need, but the church "knows the way to the well." The hungry, homeless, helpless and hopeless all look to the church for answers and for a response.

On occasion, some church members get irritated at the constant pleas of the world, respond: "Why come to us, do we look as if we have enough money to house the homeless or feed the poor masses of the nation? Does it appear that we have the resources to solve the plethora of social ills that plague us?" The response of the masses is simply that it comes to the church becomes it "knows the way to the well."

We may not have the material resources at our finger tips, but as children of the king, we have a father who is rich in houses and in land and holds the wealth of the world in hands. We may not have it, but we know where to get it; therefore it becomes our responsibility to respond to need not in proportion to what we have but in proportion to what we can get through initiative, imagination, and industry from the treasures of heaven.

As Christians, we should always remember that the world looks to us for a response because it recognizes that in its spiritual thirst, it is the Saints of God, who know the way to the well.

Exposition

This text focuses on Christ as he makes an illustration of the importance of prayer. It begins with teaching the disciples the model prayer, known today as the Lord's Prayer, and then concludes by emphasizing the importance of importunity with the parable of the helpless helper.

A man was awakened in the middle of the night by a friend who came to him asking for lodging. The man was helpless. He did not have anything to serve his visitor, but he knew where to get it from. In the middle of the night, he beat on the door of his next door neighbor until he got his attention and begged him for three loaves of bread. The neighbor was reluctant to give at first, but because his neighbor was so persistent, he went to his pantry and gave him, not just three loaves of bread, but whatever he needed.

Jesus gave the parable to illustrate that sometimes we have not because we ask not. He encouraged all to "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Midnight on the Social Order

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a famous sermon, called, "The knocks at midnight." In it he described how America was experiencing midnight in the social order.

Even today, it is still midnight. Crime is rising morals are declining, people are hungry for food, and shelter even though abundance is all around. Jails are overcrowded, as murder, rape, incest and other social ills continue to plague us. As people are plagued by their troubles, their first response is to look for help. In the midnight, they come to the institution that has promoted itself as the friend of the downtrodden and knock feverishly on our door.

If churches have no response to the rising crime other than talking about it in Sunday School classes, then we turn a deaf ear. If we do not present a structured response to shifting the moral climate of our community, then we are turning a deaf ear to the crime problem knocking on our door. Instead, we continue with our anniversaries, love offerings for each other, pastor anniversaries, socials and teas, and the culture and crime and murder grows.

If the jails are filling with thousands of African-American men, what is our response? Do we shake our heads and say they should have known better, while the incarceration rate of young black males increases and continues to wait for an answer? If the rate of recidivism is making jail a revolving door for youth, what is our response? If our children are making A's in school, but failing in life, what is our response? When a student knows how to balance an equation, but can't make change out of a $100 bill or figure the interest on a mortgage, there is something wrong with the educational system. When a child makes A's writing, but can read a sing paragraph written in long hand cursive, What is our response?

We are Expected to Respond

Why are we expected to have a response? Why do people look to the church for answers?

They come to the church because each church sports a lifted up cross which is a sign of salvation and hope. When traveling on the highway, a hungry pilgrim looks for a clean, reliable place to eat where he will be treated fairly and fed at a reasonable cost. When he sees the golden arches, he goes there expecting certain service because that's what the arches symbolize. So it is with people who see the cross; they come to the church for help because Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy burden, and I will give you rest." They come to the church because he said, "I come to give you life and to give it more abundantly." They come because Jesus said "and I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me."

In the midnight of these times abused women are knocking at our door. Orphan children are knocking at our door. Teenaged boys and girls who need leadership and direction are knocking at our door. The alcoholic and drug addict is knocking at our door. Troubled husbands and wives and the homeless and hungry are knocking at our door. What shall be our response?

Many churches have forgotten that their mission is to reach the masses. Many have concluded that they are helpless against the social evils of our times and so they redefine their mission. To some, the mission is no longer, "Go ye therefore" but "stay

ye right here." Their mission has become to "build fine buildings, polish their Sunday ritual and fill their discussion groups with genteel talks about what they should do." While it is desirable to build fine buildings and enjoy the luxuries they afford, the church should never once consider constructing buildings as its mission. Reaching the lost, confused, hungry masses with the word of Salvation is the mission of the church.

The problems we know won't go away, no matter how we try to ignore them. They keep coming to our front door because the world knows that the church "knows the way to the well!"

Alone, we can do absolutely nothing. But the beauty of the church is that "I may not be able to help you, but I have a father who can!"

The song writer said, "I cannot take the lightning and flash it across the land, but I have a father who can! I cannot take a piece of clay and shape it into a man, but I have a father who can!"

It is that testimony that brings the world to our doorstep! We may not have water, but we know the way to the well!

Passion to Structure

Finally, we must consider that in the parable the helpless neighbor went where he knew there was bread and through persistence ended up with more than he needed. His neighbor had it, he knew it was there, and he would not give up until he found a way to help his friend!

The storehouses of God are full of everything that the church needs to solve the social problems we experience. But gaining access to those storehouses requires pietism and activism from the church. The pietist is the praying man who will fervently ask God for blessings. This is the "Ask" that Jesus spoke of in his formula for answered prayers. But pietism is only one-third of the formula. The other two-thirds requires activism: Seeking and Knocking. After asking God for the resources we need to help others, then we must actively seek and knock until we find that unlocked door into the "vaults" of heaven. The power of prayer unlocks doors, but it is the energy of activity that helps us capitalize on the open door.

We must expand our approaches from just the passionate response and move toward the structured response. The passionate response feeds a homeless person and then pushes him out of the door to sleep in the street until he comes back for you to feed him again. The structured response puts a system in place that tries to address the reason why we have to feed him every week. Is it a job? Training? Mental health support? Without a structured response, he will be asking for food the rest of his life.

Believers, somebody's knocking at your door! Why don't you answer? Are we dying because we talk more than we do? Could we do more than we are actually doing? Why don't you answer? Have you begun to tap the storehouses of heaven? Is construction of housing for the homeless, counseling for battered women and orphan children on your agenda? Is the establishment of programs to provide food, clothing, shelter, and education to the downtrodden masses in your plans for the next few years

or is that someone else's job?

Churches of America, somebody's knocking at your door! Why don't you answer? We may not have much, but we know the way to the storehouse, and we know how to gain access to the treasures of heaven.

The saved must save

Every now and then we should all be reminded that as we were saved, we are expected to save others! We don't have the luxury of ignoring the knocks at the door. We can't go back to sleep and pretend not to hear them. We have been saved ourselves, and we have a responsibility to save others.

If we have experienced

—Christ, then we should share Christ with others!

—Hope, then we should offer hope to others!

—Courage, then we should inspire courage in others!

—Love, then we should show love to others.

—Blessings, then we should bless others.

—Help, then we should be willing to help somebody!

We should be willing through our example to tell someone that Jesus saves!

We should be willing to tell the world that Jesus came, died and arose from the dead to give them a chance to everlasting life.

When we give them Jesus in a loving, structured response, we help them find the way to the well!

I heard the song writer declare:

If I can help somebody, as I pass along.
If I can cheer somebody, with a word or song,
If I can show somebody, He is traveling wrong
Then my living shall not be in vain
Then my living shall not be in vain—
Then my living shall not be in vain
If I can help somebody, as I pass along
Then my living shall not be in vain.

No. 9785-Building

Shouting over the foundation

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 2017

SCRIPTURE "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid." Ezra 3:11

Introduction

What happens to a building if its foundation is not sure? It will first lean then finally fall.

Many of us have heard of the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. People travel around the world to see it, some with cameras in hand hoping to be there at the precise moment that the tower stops leaning and finally falls.

On August 9, 1173. The builders, contractors, engineers, and architects laid the foundation for a 177-foot tall tower that they thought would stand straight and perpendicular forever, but they didn't check the foundation well enough to predict its ability to stand for centuries. After centuries it began to lean because the combined weight of all the marble stones built into Pisa's pride pressed bottom ward onto and into the soft, silted soils, squeezing water from clay underneath, bulging into the dense sand beneath. Over 800 years all 32 million pounds of marble were always on the verge of collapse. Its 5.3-degree tilt is startling, even shocking - a full 15 feet out of plumb.

Engineers are trying to keep the building from falling, but it will never stand straight again because it stands on a weak foundation.

When the church builds an edifice for the worship of the Lord, both the building and church itself should stand on a true foundation.

The only real foundation we have is Jesus. He has reminded us that those who hear his words and do them are like a man who builds his house on a rock, a true foundation, that unlike the Tower of Pisa will be able to stand all of the storms of life.

Therefore, when a church lays the foundation, it is shouting time. A foundation that is solidly constructed will stand, just as the church will stand until the Lord himself returns.

As Christians, we rejoice when the foundations of the kingdom are strong. We rejoice that they are both secure and reliable, held up by the goodness, strength, and mercy of the Lord.

Exposition

This text focuses on Israel as it prepared to celebrate the laying of the foundation of the temple.

The laying of the foundation came at the close of a long exile in a foreign land which ended when they were allowed to return and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and its fabulous temple.

The temple had been constructed by Solomon at considerable cost but was destroyed by invading armies. Under Ezra, the people followed the commands of the King to reestablish themselves, but they followed the command of God with whom they were in covenant. Scholars at the Dallas Seminary note that as the foundation... was laid the people were careful to follow the traditions of their forefathers who had been rightly related to God under the Mosaic Covenant. As the priests... and the Levites led the dedication service for the temple's foundations, they did the things that were prescribed by David. The order was also similar to the time when the ark was brought to the temple in Solomon's day (2 Chron. 5:12-13) when Asaph and others played cymbals, harps, and lyres; and the priests blew trumpets. In this rebuilding service, the priests and Levites sang, He is good; His love to Israel endures forever, words almost identical to the song of praise in 2 Chronicles 5:13 (cf. Ps. 136:1). This song of praise is highly significant for by it the religious leaders were acknowledging that Yahweh had again established His loving protection over the nation. The word "love" (h?esed?) is God's covenantal loyal love which exists forever with His people Israel. Now that the temple worship was being reestablished, the people again recognized the commitment of God's unending covenantal love.

The people celebrated by praising God. The priests with the trumpets appointed by Moses, and the Levites with the cymbals appointed by David, made up a concert of music, not to please the ear, but to assist the singing of that everlasting hymn which will never be out of date, and to which our tongues should never be out of tune, God is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, the burden of Psa. 136. Let all the streams of mercy be traced up to the fountain.

It was the goodness of God that they celebrated because they recognized that their celebration would not have been had it not been for the providence of God.

At the celebration, the people gave offering, adding these to the gifts from the king who also provided materials to rebuild the temple.

The youth in the group shouted because they had seen an evidence of God's power. The elders wept because they once again saw God's handiwork although they lamented that the reconstructed temple was not as awesome as the old one.

Combined, the people sang, shouted, cried, gave offerings and praised God for helping them reach the foundation milestone.

Shouting and Celebrating

When the church reaches a milestone that marks a victory, it shouts for many reasons. It shouts because of the goodness of God as he keeps his promises and prospect of continued mercies in the years ahead.

WE SHOUT BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD: This journey is a shouting situation because it is more evidence that God is good. In the church's journey, believers have come to know that whatever our condition is and no matter high the mountains we face, God remains the same; a good God. This milestone today is evidence that many things in the world may fail, but his mercy does not fail. We shout with intensity because not only does his mercy endure for ever, but his kindness toward us a people of faith, struggling to do his will is also good. We are pleased to testify that he is good! We are pleased to raise our voice and proclaim that our interests and goals are God's interests and goals. When they seem dead, as this project did at one time, they continue through God's mercy and grace.

WE SHOUT ABOUT OUR JOURNEY: We are rallying in celebration of this achievement, but we also celebrate each step that we have personally made toward living the life of faith. Every day we celebrate our journey as believers, we rejoice. We rejoice because Jesus gave us the grand opportunity to live God centered lives here and even beyond this life. We rejoice because He gave himself as a ransom for our souls! That's enough reason to celebrate. Its also enough reason to rally ourselves and give thanks to God for His goodness, mercy and loving kindness. How do we celebrate this kindness from God? We celebrate differently than those of the world. We must give him praise, give him our resources and we must give him our contrite spirit. As Christians, we must let the world know what God has done for us. As we celebrate, we should also bring our gifts and humble spirit before the one who gave himself as a ransom for our souls. Today, we celebrate the goodness of God in ways that will be acceptable to him.

Know how you got where you are: We need to know the road we've traveled: Anyone who is attempting to move forward in life should be aware of the ground that has already been covered. That's why we lift our hands to him in praise.

WE CELEBRATE THE 12 FOUNDATIONS: Like the Holy City Jerusalem, the church is built on a strong foundation. Jesus told us that if we are not building on a strong foundation that we would be like a man who built his house on the sand that had a great fall when the storms came. The church is built upon 12 foundations which stand high among all of its fundamental beliefs they are: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, obedience, hope, and trust.

When the church stands on the word of God which is the embodiment of these beliefs, it is invincible. It becomes a city built by God. It becomes a City which hath foundation. We have seen cities in history that were grand and noble but had no foundation. Despite their splendor, these great cities have risen but have fallen into ruins. Their fall brings greater meaning to the five words of this text, a city which hath foundations. We are on a journey toward the Canaan Land. Each believer plays an essential part in the ultimate sanctuary of God. Each is a beam, brick or floor board in the heavenly kingdom. God is building a heavenly kingdom, in which each saint is a living stone and a living sacrifice. Therefore we celebrate his goodness and the foundations of hope upon which we stand.

We celebrate the assurance of our foundation

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we commemorate, rededicate and celebrate, we must tell the world that we have a great assurance that is only enjoyed by those who know that the church is built on Christ, and that is a sure foundation.

There is a reason why we are happy today!

There is a reason why we are celebrating today!

There is a reason for our joy today!

That reason is based on our knowledge that when we build anything with Jesus as its foundation, winds may blow and storms may rise, but our work will stand because Christ is our foundation.

We are just as sure of our foundation today as the ancients were of the foundation of the first temple.

That Tabernacle was built on a foundation made of the silver sacrifices of 600,000 men.

There has never been a record of the Tabernacle falling down.

It withstood windstorms, sandstorms, and rain!

For all of the years of Israel's journey, it never fell once, because it was pitched on a sure foundation.

The Church today is built upon an even stronger foundation, Jesus Christ, The solid rock.

Because of this foundation, we are able to:

—stay CALM in the midst of crises

—have PEACE in the midst of problems

—enjoy GLADNESS in the midst of sorrow

—receive ASSURANCE in the midst of afflictions!

—press on in the midst of pain.

—be FRUITFUL in a time of famine! This foundation is the solid rock! It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side!

If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

Moses saw the promised land from the top of Mt. Nebo, but I know a man, who is the foundation of our faith.

His name is Jesus! He's someone to shout about!

He is a sure foundation! He's someone to shout about!

He will never fail! He's someone to shout about!

No wonder the songwriter wrote: "In times like these you need a savior. In times like these, you need an anchor. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

This Rock is Jesus, yes he's the one! Be very sure. Be very sure! Your anchor holds

and grips the solid rock!”

The true foundation is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Jesus, who gave himself as a sacrifice for our salvation!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Jesus. He is the foundation of our faith.

No. 9786-Service

I'm Not Tired Yet

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 3, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Galatians 6:9

Introduction

Have you ever completed a day's work and returned home completely ex hausted? Those who have had this experience know what it means to come home and sit in your favorite chair and immediately drop off to sleep. You know the lure of a warm bath or hot shower after a long day. Some days are completely exhausting, yet for some those days are not tiring; it depends on the expected outcomes.

A person who works to further a personal goal or objective may be tired at the end of the day, but not weary. Being tired implies that our labor is perceived to be pointless, monotonous, and meaningless. A person who works to achieve a dream or a goal may often tire, but seldom gets weary. Self-employed individuals work longer hours than those who are laborers. Often a self-employed person is the bookkeeper, manager, worker, supervisor, consultant, technician and receptionist all rolled up into one person. They leave work and then bring work home with them. It's not unusual for some small business owners to even work on the weekends and after hours. Yet, with all that work, they are not weary of it all because they have a goal in mind that each day's work brings them closer to fruition.

A person who takes a job, but does not share in the job's ultimate vision and goal goes to fulfill someone else's dream or vision. After a hard day at work, they come home tired. Soon they become weary. They get weary because no matter how hard they labor they are no closer to their personal goal. A retail cashier can service a thousand customers in a business day, but their paycheck will be the same at the end of the week. They have the joy of a paycheck, but unless their goal is to be a retail cashier for the rest of their lives, they soon get weary and wish for days with fewer customers.

Believers who work for the Lord, often tired, but seldom weary because we have a goal. We are trying to advance the kingdom of God. Many have been serving in kingdom building ministries for years, but in spite of all of their years of service and sacrifice they get a little worn out, but they are still not weary. For decades they have worked in the company of the faithful trying to do God's will. They began their great work many years ago and have pledged not to stop working until the master calls them

home. As the years have passed, occasionally some get glimpses of the kingdom of God as clear as day. That momentary vision is enough to keep us going, and we work even harder, without getting weary.

Faith in God and hope for a better life in the kingdom of God kept African-American slaves from being weary although they were tired of being tired. Many labored in someone else's field and built the dreams of their masters, but they also saw living the life of faith, even in slavery as preparing them for the kingdom of God. They were tired, frustrated, and exhausted, but not spiritually weary. In the darkness of the night they stole away and sang:

O,Walk together children
Don't you get weary
Walk together children
Don't you get weary
Walk together children
Don't you get weary
There's a great camp meeting in the Promised Land
Going to shout and never tire
Shout and never tire
Shout and never tire
There's a great camp meeting in the Promised Land

As Christians, we have pledged ourselves to keep working to build the kingdom of God. We have given it our best, but at the end of every day, each saint declares, "I'm working for the kingdom, and I'm not tired yet."

Exposition

This text focuses on words of encouragement given by the Apostle Paul to believers who may be tiring of their service to the kingdom.

The Book of Galatians is part of a set of Epistles written by Paul that address the idea of "Christ in you" or daily living with the spirit of Christ in your life.
Galatians is not a letter written to a single church but is addressed to a number of churches. These were churches begun by Paul when he was on his very first missionary journey, traveling with Barnabas into the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra.

In spite of his persecutions, he continued to promote the kingdom without discouragement. His words of encouragement to the Galatians were similar to the same words of encouragement that were given to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:58) whom he urged to "Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Paul encouraged believers to focus on the reward, not the immediate response they receive from those they are trying to help. The real reward is in heaven, not from the thanks or gratitude of those being served. This should be the driving force of Christian

service.

This encouragement was necessary because there is a tendency to get tired of working in the kingdom, serving thankless masses. Those who tire often fall from their service because it offers few rewards. Matthew Henry notes that we should watch and guard against these feelings of spiritual fatigue; "because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not, where he assures us that there is a recompense of reward in reserve for all who sincerely employ themselves in well doing; that this reward will certainly be bestowed on us in the proper season…."

Believers are encouraged to hold out and keep working in the kingdom, with their eyes on the prize, because God sees their work and will reward them with renewed strength and a crown of glory.

Why We Are Not Tired

Many have been on the battlefield for the Lord for many years, but they have not grown weary in their service. Every day is a day for us to labor in the kingdom, to do our part to insure that it comes to fruition. There are several ways that we should say, "I'm not tired yet."

I'M NOT TIRED OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: Many began the Christian walk with Jesus, but they grew weary of the journey or lost faith and dropped away. Jesus said many followed him out of curiosity, but were not really faithful, soon the faith hearted grew weary and disappeared. John 6:66 says, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Today, there are many who started the Christian life as children and were faithful. They worshipped, sang, learned the Bible and enjoyed "the life" but somewhere after high school graduation they tired of the life. They wanted their Sundays for rest and the Fridays and Saturday nights for clubbing and good times. They tired of the Wednesday Bible studies, and constant church related ministries that consumed their time. Like a slow drip, they gradually disappeared from worship. The held on by a thread, they prayed when they were in trouble or gave an offering occasionally, but they tired of all of the rest.

There are others who have not tired of living the Christian life. These are those who say in the words of the Mississippi Mass Choir, "I've been working for Jesus a long time, and I'm not tired yet. I've been singing for Jesus a long time, and I'm not tired yet."

I've been reading my Bible a long time, and I'm not tired yet!

I've been working in the ministries of the church, and I'm not tired yet!

I've been praying for the sick and the shut-ins for years, and I'm not tired yet!

Our feet may ache, sometimes our backs, knees, and eyes may ache, but we keep working in the kingdom while it is day because when night comes, no man can work. We keep running for Jesus saying, "I'm not tired yet."

I'M NOT TIRED BECAUSE HE NEVER TIRES: The faithful never get tired of working in the kingdom because God never gets tired of blessing us. We know that is true because throughout his word we are told that 24 hours a day seven days a week

Godi is watching over us. Psalm 121:3-4 says, “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,” That means 24 hours a day God is blessing us. Lamentations 3:22-23 goes even further. It says, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” -God never gets tired of protecting, watching over us and providing for us.

Believers don’t get tired of praising him because he never gets tired of making a way for us. In Psalm 66, David looked back over all that God had done for him and said, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.”

Today,we keep running for Jesus without being weary because it is our way of saying thank you for being so good to us!

When we think about how he muzzled the mouths of lions that came to devour us, we resolve to keep on running, “I’m not tired yet.”

When we think about how he quenched the flames of fires meant to destroy us, we resolve to keep on serving,”I’m not tired yet.”

When we think about how he conquered enemies that came to destroy us, we resolve to keep on believing, “I’m not tired yet.

I don’t know about you brothers and sisters but God has been doing a great work in my life, and I’m not tired yet!

I’M NOT TIRED BECAUSE I DON’T WALK ALONE: The old Negro Spiritual said: “Walk together children, don’t get weary.” There is strength in numbers. That’s why the Word of God warns believers not to try to live the Christian life outside of the Christian fellowship. We draw strength from each other. When we see God move in the life of another saint, we are inspired. When we see prayers answered, we are motivated. When we see how to respond when God’s answer is not our answer, we are spiritually strengthened. When we hear the choir sing a song of faith, we are lifted.

Outside of the church, it is easy to get tired. That’s why Hebrews 10:25 warns us not to forsake the regular assembly or being in the company of the church. With the church, we are always reminded of God’s promise in John 14:8 “I will not leave you alone.”

When we realize that we are not alone that’s when we can sing with James Cleveland, “I don’t feel no ways tired, I don’t believe he brought me this far to leave me.”

There is work to be done

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must continue in our labor for the kingdom because their much work to be done!

The church should not be weary in its mission. We are doing a great work for the Lord, we should not get weary.

The church that shows sympathy to the homeless and the helpless should say, “I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

The church that teaches and reaches the masses with the word of God should

say, “I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet,”

The church that feels the pain of the poor and wounded and responds with love should say, ““I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

The church that embraces children and the elderly through programs that promote and protect them should say,“I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

All of the Patriarchs before us have done great works, like them we should not get tired.

Noah’s Great work was to build the ark. Though critics assailed him, he kept on working. I can almost hear him say, “I’m 600 years old, but I’m not tired yet.”

Moses’ lead the children of Israel to freedom. Though many doubted him and wanted to return to Egypt, he would not stop. I can almost hear him saying, “I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

David’s worked to secure the kingdom of Israel. He was tempted on every hand to hang up his sword and shield, but he lifted up his eyes to the hills where his help came from and mused in his heart, “I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

Solomon worked to build the temple. Though discouraged at the complexity of the task and the complaints of the people, he resolved, “I’m working for the Lord, and I’m not tired yet.”

We should be able to say the same,

I’m not tired because If am:

—Sad, the Lord will be my fountain of joy!

—At Fault, the Lord will be a stronghold of forgiveness!

—Weak, the Lord will be my pillar of strength

—Discouraged, the Lord will be my pool of inspiration!

—Defeated, the Lord will be my crown of victory!

—Darkness, the Lord will be my light!.

—Lonely, the Lord will be my friend

—Helpless, the Lord will be my help.

I know he will be my help because I saw the testimony of the cross.

I am not tired because he wasn’t tired yet!

They rebuked Jesus and called him everything, but the son of God, but I can hear him say, “I’m not tired yet.”

They whipped him all night long. Put an old rugged cross on his shoulder, Nailed his hands and feet, but he did not come down from the cross. “I’m not tired yet.”

He died on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

That’s we every believer should say, I’ve been running for Jesus a long time, “I’m not tired yet!”

No. 9787-Grandparents

With His Arms Around Us

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the New Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

September 10, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Mark 10:16

Introduction

What is your fondest memory of your grandparents? One of them might be the times when you were young and they allowed you to climb in their laps and hugged you. In fact, many of your memories probably include a grandparent putting their arms around you and giving you a big hug. As you grew in life, you probably noticed increasingly that your grandparents arms were around you in other ways. They became your financial backers, counselors, defenders, constructive critics, parents, bail bondsmen, and cheerleaders. In many ways, we felt the arms of grandparents around us more than we did our parents.

The story is told about a grandson who was taken to a piano concert of his grandfather who was a world renowned pianist. She carried him to the concert because she hoped it would inspire her son to follow in the steps of his famous grandfather. As they waited for the sitting in their seats waiting for the concert to begin, she told her son how famous her grandfather was as a pianist. She pointed to all of the people in the audience and said: "All of these people" came to hear him play. You can do that, too." As she waited, she was temporarily distracted. When she looked around her son was no longer there. She began to panic because her son was missing. She went up and down the isles asking, "Have you seen my son?"

As the show was just about to begin, she looked up at the stage, and there on the stage was her son. Somehow he had made his way on the stage and was walking toward the grand piano.The little boy walked up to the piano and sat down and started to playing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on the grand piano.

The mother was embarrassed and horrified, as she heard giggles coming from the audience.

The grandfather heard the boy playing the piano. Without introduction walked out behind his grandson, reached his right hand around him and began to fill in the notes. He took his left hand and reached around and began to play with the little boy playing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." The next thing you know, there was the beautiful sound

of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” played by the master pianist with his arms around his grandson. The auditorium was filled with applause as the audience rose with a thunderous standing ovation.

The little boy didn’t grow up to be a concert pianist, but he always remembered the night he played the big piano with his grandpa’s arms around him.

That’s what grandparents do. In so many ways, they keep their children and grandchildren in the arms. Grandparents have the challenge of blessing their grandchildren and offspring with fruits of the family legacy of God, family, and country. This represents the sum total of every grandparent’s charge which is to leave an inspiring legacy that will live in the hearts of their grandchildren. Grandparents should not consider their work done until they are satisfied that their grandchildren are on the right track or at least know their way to the right track. Until that happens, each one should continue to extend open understanding, forgiving, supporting, correcting and encouraging arms around their offspring.

In the same way that grandparents put their arms around their grandchildren and give them a place of solace and support, God does the same for us. With his arms around us, we too get support, correction, love, and encouragement. That’s why we like the words of the hymn that say we are “leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms...leaning on the ever lasting arms.

As Christians, our goal is to lean securely on the arms of God. We salute our grandparents because their open arms represent the love and grace also given to us by our heavenly Father.

Exposition

This text focuses on an instance in which crowds of people brought little children asking Jesus to bless them, and he did.

All three of the Synoptic Gospels referred to this instance. Combined, they record how Jesus was besieged by people who wanted him to take their children in his arms and bless them. The disciples were angry that the Messiah should be bothered with such small tasks when he had the whole task of kingdom building in front of him. He had been answering questions about marriage, divorce, adultery and other doctrinal issues and the disciples felt the requests of the parents was an interruption.

Jesus did not see their requests as an interruption. He rebuked them and then put his arms around them. In Luke 18:17 noted that anyone who can’t come into the kingdom of God with the innocence will be forbidden.

Then Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them.

The theologians, dignitaries, and others who saw his action saw more than just the image of little children in his arms. More importantly, they saw the Son of God with his arms around all believers, blessing them as children and loving them throughout their lives.

Grandparent's image

The image of Christ with his arms around the little children is perpetuated in mind of millions who have the same image of their grandparents. Those who embrace them, love them, correct them and provide for them.

IN THEIR ARMS THERE IS ENCOURAGEMENT: Grandparents are probably the best sources of encouragement in the family. In the arms of a grandparent a piece of paper that only has a few lines of chicken scratch becomes one of the great art pieces of the world, worthy of framing and showing to the world. To the ears of a grandparent, the cute little tuneless song on the lips of a grandchild is actually the voice of an undiscovered diva. Grandparents are perpetual encouragers of their grandchildren.

Others may laugh at their silly dreams or think that they cannot succeed for one reason or another, but their dreams are safe in their grandparent's arms.

Jacob, had his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh brought to him for his final blessing. Ephraim, who was the youngest of Joseph's son always stood in his brother's shadow and would because he was the younger brother never hope to achieve acclaim. When Jacob blessed them, he put his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on his older brother's head. When Joseph tried to correct him, Jacob did not change. He blessed them both, but by the mere switching of his hands encouraged Ephraim that he would achieve as well.

In the same way grandparents today bless and love all of their grandchildren, but pay special attention to those in the shadows of family expectations and encourage them.

IN THEIR ARMS WE ARE CONNECTED TO OUR HERITAGE: One of the roles of grandparents is to facilitate the transmission of the elements of culture, heritage, and values from one generation to next. Good parents and grandparents are burdened with the responsibility of teaching the young to know the path the family has trod and equip them to make the remainder of the journey on their own. In Grandparent's arms, a grandchild learns what God has called the family to be and what talents he has historically showered on its family members.

Each family member has a story and a legacy. There are families of educators. The gift of knowledge seems to run in the family. There are families of athletes; for generations, these families have had men and women who were athletically inclined to one level or another. There are families of artists, builders, tinkerers, preachers, politicians, healers, and craftsmen. It's in the family's genes. It is the way God organized the social order.

Family members need to know the history of its members. We need to know about our family successes and what we did when we succeeded. Those times when we failed, what did we do? When we suffered, how did we overcome? What mistakes have we made as a family? Does our family history show us that we could have done better if we had avoided certain paths? As a family, what have we learned from our mistakes? When families explore their history and dissect their strengths and weaknesses, it brings great strength and a sense of purpose to young lives when they from whence

they came.

IN THEIR ARMS WE LEARNED DEMONSTRATED FAITH: One of the most vivid memories we have of our grandparents is their demonstrated faith in difficult times. However, the faith for their experience was not developed instantly, but over the course of years. For example, Daniel had faith for the lion's den, but it was a faith that began when he was a teenager and practiced at every stage of his life. Abraham had faith in his senior years, but it was a faith developed over a lifetime. Every grandparent who shares the faith of their life's experience with the next generation leaves a legacy and imprint on the life of grandchildren that will endure for generations.

The young are impressed with the wisdom of their grandparents and often seek guidance from them because they always seem to know what to say and do when faced with life's issues.

We never out grow grandma's arms

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that we never outgrow grandma's arms.

The encouragement of grandparents extends from childhood into adulthood. Even after they have gone to be with the Lord we never outgrow grandma's arms.

A poem by Michelle Reeves put it this way:

Grandma,
A baby cradled in your arms..
Teaching me your gentle charms
Growing up with you by my side..
Learning from you never to lie.
To understand and not judge too..
Love and kindness I also learned from you.
Through the years you watched me grow…
Teaching me everything I'd need to know
Listening to every word I've said..
And every word I wrote you've read.
You've been there for me to the end…
I love you with all my heart
Thank you for being there from the start

When we think about grandma's arms, we can't help but think about the safety we feel in the arms of God.

In the arms of God we have:

—Serenity in the midst of our storms;
—Assurance in the midst of our afflictions;
—Courage in the midst of our challenges;
—Boldness in the midst of our battles;

—Encouragement in the time of our difficulties;
—Composure in the midst of our calamities;
—Support in the midst of our suffering

Storms may rise, winds may blow, but I'm glad that the God we serve is better than "Allstate" for when you're with Jesus "You're in good hands!"

No wonder the song writer wrote, "Safe in the arms of Jesus. Safe on his gentle breast. There by his loved over shadowed, sweetly my soul shall rest. I'm safe in the arms of God."

In the arms of God there is:
—Strength to make the journey!
—Endurance to make it to the end!
—Courage to face impossible odds!
—Wisdom to deal with great challenges!

When we lean upon the Lord will find that the:
—Burden will seem much lighter
—The climb will seem much easier!
—Night will seem much brighter!
—Storm will seem less frightening!

When we lean on the everlasting arms of God we see the world with a new insight. That's why the song writer declared "Oh bright the path grows from day to day. Leaning on the everlasting arms! Leaning! Leaning! Safe and secure from all alarms!

Leaning!
Leaning!
Leaning on the everlasting arms!
Arms that wrapped around an old rugged cross!
Arms that stretched out wide on Calvary!
He died, but arose from the dead!
But early, Sunday morning he arose the dead, with arms wide open!

No. 9788-Inspiration

When God Does the Incredible

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

September 17, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Acts 26:8
Introduction

Have you ever thought of all of the incredible things God has done? When something is incredible, it is extremely out of the ordinary realm of expectation. It is often viewed as absurd or unthinkable. Yet in spite of how incredible or unbelievable it sounds, we have actually seen the incredible in our lifetimes.

We see incredible things around us all of the time. When I was a child, I saw my first television set. It was a box that sat on the floor with a tube in it. When they turned it on, I saw people moving in it, and I was amazed. I looked all around the box trying to see how the people got in and out. I thought the television set was incredible. I thought a watch that did not need a winding stem was incredible. I also thought a radio that could fit inside your pocket with transistors, cars with air conditioners and automatic windows in cars, a bible that could fit in our cell phone, and instant replay in football were all incredible. Unthinkable.

On late night TV we often see advertisements for gadgets that do the incredible: Knives that never need sharpening; glue so strong it can be used to pull a train, gadgets that slice and dice vegetables in one sweep, flashlights that throw beams for a mile, skillets that don't stick and all of them available for $19.99, and if a viewer as soon as they see the commercial they'll get two for the price of one.

We've seen dare devils walk across Niagra Falls on a wire, and shoot themselves out of canons, we saw the saints win the Superbowl, a black man elected President of the United States with a majority vote, and a TV star win the same office even though he lost by three million votes.

When we saw all of that we said: "That's Incredible!"

Even when we read the Bible, we read of miraculous things and say, "That's incredible."

When the prophet Balaam took a journey to place a curse on Israel for money, God made his donkey talk to him. That's incredible.

When Lot's wife and family were moved out of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah she was told not to look back at the destruction, but she did, and she turned into a pillar of salt. That's incredible.

When Jonah tried to run away from God to avoid preaching to the people of Ninevah he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a whale. He survived inside the whale for three days and nights and lived. That's incredible.

When Sara was told she would have a baby at 100 years old, she laughed, but a year later she gave birth to a healthy boy. That's Incredible.

When Israel found themselves at the Red Sea being pursued by Pharoah's army, God opened up a path for them to cross the Red Sea on dry ground and then closed it back when the last person was safe. That's incredible.

When Jesus came to meet the disciples walking on water, that was incredible.

We've seen God do the impossible and the incredible so many times that we have grown to expect them in our lives. That's why the Clark Sisters wrote a song that says, "I'm looking for a miracle. I expect the impossible, I feel the intangible, I see the invisible. The sky is the limit to what I can have. Believe it and receive it, God can perform it today.

As Christians, we are firm in our faith that our God is able to do anything. He can do the incredible and the impossible, that's why we have resolved to hold on to our faith in his mercy, power, and plan for our lives.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he addressed Agrippa about the resurrection of Christ as a real event.

With his life on the line, Paul reasoned that those who doubted the resurrection of Christ had undoubtedly forgotten the power of God Almighty. There were some who believed in the eventual resurrection of the dead and others who doubted it completely. However, most did not believe in the literal resurrection of the dead. Paul argued that it should not be a surprise to anyone that God can raise the dead especially since he created life from nothing.

He asked, why should anything that God does, be considered incredible? Since God is all powerful and created the earth as a result of his own contemplation and whim, why is it incredible to believe that he can raise the dead. Dr. Barnes notes: "The resurrection is no more incredible than the original creation of the human body, and it is attended with no greater difficulties. And as the perfections of God will be illustrated by his raising up the dead; as the future state is necessary to the purposes of justice in vindicating the just, and punishing the unjust; and as God is a righteous moral Governor, it should not be regarded as an absurdity that he will raise up those who have died, and bring them to judgment."

The issue that Paul addressed raised other questions. Is there anything too hard for God to do? If the resurrection is impossible, then what about heaven? What about our promised eternal life? What about God's ability to answer prayers?

Paul ended his discourse before Agrippa by reaffirming that theresurrection of Christ was real and that his resurrection is the firstfruits of the general resurrection of mankind; the other, the spiritual resurrection, after his resurrection, return and crowning.

Believers like Paul see nothing incredible about the resurrection because they know they serve an awesome God, who can do anything.

God is able

The overriding truth that supports our faith in God is tied up in three words: "God is able." Since we believe God is all-powerful, present everywhere at the same time and all-knowing, nothing is beyond his power and ability. When he does what he does, it is not incredible, but it is Fantastic, wonderful, miraculous and awe-inspiring!

God is able to create something out of nothing: When Jesus was about to be Baptized his critics followed and criticized him saying that he claimed the sonship of God. They said they were the descendants of Abraham and Father Abraham was their father. The Jesus said that was no big deal because God can make descendants of stones if he wanted to? God is able from these stones to raise up children. Matthew 3:9.

The fact that God can make something out of nothing is not incredible, it's wonderful. When he created the world, he made something out of nothing. If we compose something, we bring elements together. If we build something, we construct objects in a systematic way. However, to create something, we have to deal with things that do not exist and then put them together. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." That's amazing, but it's not incredible. In our own experiences, we have seen God make something out of hopeless situations. We have seen God make something out of impossible situations. We have seen wells of hope in deserts of opportunity. When he does it, it is not incredible. It is Excellent!

God is able to make all grace abound to you: Those who do not know God, think its incredible that we can believe that God will shower us with his grace that will lead to abundance in our lives. It is not incredible, it is awe Inspiring. It is not outside of God's ability to work situations and events so that they eventually work in your favor. Listen to what the word says, "God is able to make all grace abound to you… having all-sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8. It means that at all times God is running ahead of you, doing things, changing minds, creating opportunities for you to "abound in every good work." He's not working to get you a bigger car or to make you a millionaire, but he is working to put you in a place where you can do even more good than you have done. That's not incredible, that's wonderful!

God is able to deliver: The fact that God often delivers believers from the traps and tricks of the devil is a fact that many believers can attest to. Millions of believers have faced awkward situations in which God has walked them right past their accusers, unscathed by their accusations. When the Three Hebrew Boys were about to be thrown into the fiery furnace they were asked would God deliver them from the flames, they said they didn't know if he would or not, but what they did know is that the "God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand… Daniel 3:17. Think of all of the tight spots you've been in. "God is faithful,

and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it… 1 Corinthians 10:13. The fact that you survived them is not incredible it's miraculous!

God is able to save: Every day believers look in the mirror and give thanks to God for having mercy on the man/woman in the mirror. To non-believers it's incredible how God takes the twisted lives of the crooked, deceitful and corrupt and saves them from themselves and then saves them from the grip of sin. It is not incredible, it is what the Holy Spirit does. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, " And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." That verse means he cleaned us up. He wiped out the sins of our past, and put us in good standing with God. He is best able to save us if we stay close to him because he is always pleading our case before God. Listen to what the word teaches, "

He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them… Hebrews 7:25. The fact that Christ is always looking for ways to save us is not incredible, it's remarkable!

It's not Incredible

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that when we are DOWN to nothing.... God is UP to something! That's not incredible, it's just who he is and what he does.

Faith sees the invisible, believes the
incredible and receives the impossible! God is great, and He is greatly to be praised!

There are those who think its incredible that we believe in an unseen God, but we don't think it's incredible because we have seen what God can do.

Some think it is incredibly foolish for us to make our weekly pilgrimage to worship and be in his presence, but we don't think its incredible or absurd because we know what God can do.

The world thinks its incredible that we live a life of faith, but we are not moved by their doubt because we know we believe in a living God who can do anything except fail.

The skeptics think its incredible that we are drenched in the word of God, and we are dripping with faith. It is a faith that despite the obstacles before us that the Lord will make a way!

It's not incredible, it is a matter of faith that we continue to trust Christ in spite of the difficulty of our times. Our testimony is consistent with the songwriter who said,"

"The road is rough and the going is tough, and hills are hard to climb, but I started out a long time ago, and there is no doubt in my mind, I've decided to make Jesus my choice!"

When God prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies, we don't think that's incredible because we've seen him do it so many times.

We have had a Red Sea in front of us, and enemies behind us. We have seemed

trapped with nowhere to go, but God made a way out of no way.

Whenever God does a miracle in our lives, we don't think its incredible because we have seen him do miracles before.

Is it incredible that those who are sick are healed? Only those who have forgotten how God healed their sicknesses and lifted them from their sick beds are amazed at his healing power!

Is it incredible that those who have failed have been given second chances? Only those who have forgotten how they repeatedly failed in life but have been restored over and over again are amazed at his spirit of forgiveness.

Is it incredible that the lost find their way again? Only those who have forgotten how they took the wrong paths in life, only to be placed on the right road again are amazed at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

When God does what he does best, it's not incredible, but it is memorable.

When we tempted to doubt him, just remember what he did yesterday.

Somebody remembers that when they were:

WEAK he provided them strength

DOWN he picked them up!

DEFEATED he gave them the victory!

DISCOURAGED he restored their hope!

LONELY, he gave them comfort!

TROUBLED he gave them peace of mind!

Somebody remembers how he came to a little town called Bethlehem.

That he died on an old rugged cross!

Somebody remembers that Early Sunday morning, he arose from the grave!

That's not incredible, that's the wonder-working power of God!

No. 9789-Marriage

The Ten Commandments of Marriage

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

May 1976

SCRIPTURE: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh-Genesis 2:24

Introduction

Do marriages have rules? Is there a guidebook that couples can follow that will lead to a successful marriage? There are rules for nearly everything in the world: rules for driving a car, rules for eating at a table, rules for building a house, so there logically should be a set of rules that govern a marriage relationship.

The Word of God lays out a set of rules for those who want to succeed in marriage. It begins and ends with love. 1 Corinthians 13 spells out how love operates in a marriage. Love is the key ingredient to a successful marriage. It is the glue that makes it work.

What we call falling in love has to do with an attraction that is based on the quality and number of the love ingredients. Around this person I feel safe, I can be myself without pretense. Around this person, I feel protected because my name, reputation, and person will be defended. I feel understood because this person knows the real me while others may only know the superficial. This person makes me feel like I am a King or Queen and my every act or deed is appreciated. I feel supported in my successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses.

When we have all of that, we are loved! It takes your breath away!

Did you know that God loves us that way? His love for us is unconditional. He knows us, understands us, appreciates us, protects and supports us. He has tried to tell us that in many ways.

Therefore, those who want to succeed in marriage should consider how God loves us and draw from it the elements we need to make a checklist to use for our own relationships.

As Christians, we know that the church is the bride of Christ. His love for the church and the church's response should provide us with sufficient rules to follow in creating a successful marriage relationship of our own.

Exposition

This text focuses on God's creation of the institution of marriage.

Genesis chapters one and two give us an overview, then a detailed, slow motion, view of the first marriage. In Genesis, the Father, the son, and Holy Ghost discussed the creation of man. In Genesis 1:26 they said, "Let us make man." In the next verse In Genesis it reads, " So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Chapter 2 starts to rewind the tape a little and shows us how God created "them" by giving us a step by step version of how the man was placed in a deep sleep and woman was formed from a rib from his side. In Genesis 2:23 it is written, "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

The institution of marriage was spoken into place when God said in Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. "

Genesis Chapter 3 details how the perfect marriage started having problems when the devil interfered in the relations of the perfect family. First, he appealed to Eve's vanity and convinced her to disobey God and ignore her husband's leadership concerning the forbidden fruit. That decision brought trouble in the perfect marriage. Their two sons who had been living perfectly together, developed problems and one killed the other. The remaining son had to leave out on his own, and the entire family had to move out of the garden into less than comfortable conditions.

The creation story gives clear evidence of what happens when a married couple breaks the rules and lets the devil get mixed up in their business.

The Commandments

For marriages to succeed they should follow ten simple commandments.

1. Thou shalt understand what marriage is: Marriage is a union between a male and a female for the purpose of love and procreation. It is a godly order first mentioned in the Bible when it is noted that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh. While marriage involves a written contract, it is more than a piece of paper. It is a commitment, witnessed before others, that establishes a blessed relationship. People who united for love, with no possibility of procreation because of sexual orientation, cannot be married in the truest sense of the word because God intended marriage for procreation.

2. Thou shalt accept each other for what each is: Those who marry should not have expectations that hinge on changing the other person. If you marry a "dog", don't be surprised if 10 years later he is still a dog. If she was a "skank" when you married her, she'll probably stay the same unless God intervenes. Don't believe that you have the power to change a person, you can't anyone, God has to do that. We are warned not to be unevenly yoked. If you are a believer and your spouse is not, you are unevenly

yoked. One of you will influence the other. Enter a marriage with your eyes wide open, whatever you have will probably be all that you will have, accept each other and lot God do the changing.

3. Thou shalt talk things through: A common flaw of many marriages is the failure to talk things through. Husbands assume that when they tell their wives they are going to buy a new truck, that means they have talked about it. Talking things through means to express the thought and to prayerfully consider the pros and cons of decisions without argument of finger-pointing. That means we discuss whether the new truck fits into our goal as a family? Will it require sacrifices for the family? Is it an essential or toy? Answering questions similar to these indicate talking things through, regardless of the subject matter.

4. Thou shalt trust one another: If you don't trust your life with the person you marry don't marry that person. Trust is the one element of marriage that is the most difficult to replace. It's like Humpty Dumpty. Once it is lost, "All the king's horses and all the king's men can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again." Without trust, there are millions of questions: "Where were you?" "Who were you talking to?" "Who is she and what is she to you?" Trust is based on love and love "thinketh no evil" and always hopes for the best.

5. Thou shalt forgive one another: The ability to say, "I'm sorry" and mean it has saved millions of marriages from falling apart. When a partner has admitted a mistake and asks forgiveness, it should be forgiven. Forgiving does not mean that it is erased from your mind, but it does mean that the error is never brought up again. Since each partner will make hundreds of mistakes over the years, each should be willing to forgive the other.

6. Thou shalt develop a sense of humor: It's a dull relationship that never learns to laugh at a situation. If fact, many marriages have survived because of the abilities of partners to laugh at themselves and to laugh at the situation. A storm that blows away a house and leaves nothing standing but the toilet and a roll of tissue, ought to bring a laugh, even if the loss of the house brings a tear. Stupid things that we are angry about today will be the subject of family jokes as the years pass. Why not laugh about them now?

7. Thou shalt be loyal: Spouses who love each other are faithful to each other. Initially, some think loyalty refers only to sexual matters. However, it also means to be supportive of each other's dreams, goals, and aspiration. Those who are loyal don't trash talk their spouse's dream to others or trample them in private conversations and acts. Love grows when a spouse is loyal both to the dreams and their relationship.

8. Thou shalt be positive: There is nothing more threatening to a marriage that a home that is filled with negativity. Home because hell when all of the conversation is pessimistic, demeaning and fatalistic. Couples should express hope in each other and in the ultimate success of the family. Being positive means to view every situation with the full knowledge that God will flip it to our advantage.

9. Thou shalt be romantic: It is easy to let the fire go out of a marriage. Couples need time together, to enjoy each other's company, aside from all of the troubles of the world,

they need alone time. To talk, love, and enjoy each other. At least once or twice each year the couple should plan romantic getaways. Although married they should go out to dinner, enjoy a movie, and or just watch the sunset together. As time passes they should also remember that there "may be snow on the roof, but should still be fire in the stove"- Sex is always appropriate for the married, regardless of their age.

10. Thou shalt not forget the Lord thy God: The old saying is: "The family that prays together, stays together." It is true that a couple that worships God at home and in public develop a sense of Godly purpose and unity before God. Together they also serve God in ministry. Hand in hand they work in the church, serving, witnessing and testifying to the goodness of the Lord. They do not forget God and he does not forget them.

Loving Relationships need God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that the essential element of any relationship is love. That means you need God because God is love.

While there are a few "Thou Shalt" and "Thou Shalt Nots" that every couple can use as a guide to building better relationships, there is no "Thou Shalt" for inviting the presence of God into a relationship. Inviting God into our lives is not a commandment as it was in Old Testament times, it is an invitation.

Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." That means he will not command us to let him in, but he waits to be invited.

When the Love of God comes into a relationship, it's like a teaspoon of sugar in a cup of tea. The more sugar you put in the mix, the sweeter it gets.

The love of God is a powerful sweetener that helps bind broken hearts, heal wounds, and restore lost joy.

Real love is what sweetens the flakes during the years of discovery!

Real love is what makes the tough to swallow experiences in which partners often feel like shredded wheat bearable!

Real love is what makes oatmeal sweet! All snap, crackle, and pop is alright, but we still need a little something sweet!

That's where love comes in! Real love has been demonstrated to us by our Savior himself. He loved us so much that he came and demonstrated that no greater love can a man show than his willingness to lay down his life for his friends.

It's love that transcends time! It doesn't matter whether it's been 30 years or fifty years or a thousand years, he still loves us!

We know he loved us because John said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

It's a love that was demonstrated on Calvary!

It's a love that proven on an old rugged cross! It's a love renewed when arose from the grave!

No wonder the songwriter wrote, Oh How I love Jesus...because he first loved me!

No.9790-Inspiration

When the world takes a knee

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 1, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:11; "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" Philippians 2:10

Introduction

Have you ever had to get on your knees for anything? There are a variety of reasons that we get on our knees to look for something we have lost. A soldier takes one knee at the graveside of a fallen comrade to show respect. A man takes a knee when he proposes to his bride. A quarterback in a huddle takes a knee to outline a play for the team. Catholics take a knee or Genuflect when they approach the altar. A quarterback will take a knee at the end of a game to stop a play but run out the clock. A punt returner may give a fair catch signal and take a knee rather than try to run back an opening kickoff or punt.

Taking a knee means different things to different people in different situations.

In recent weeks, there has been considerable concern about taking a knee as America watched scores of football players take a knee or refuse to come out of the locker room as the National Anthem was played in protest of President Donald Trump's call for the firing of any athletes who protest the flag or national anthem.

The controversy began last year when San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began taking a knee during the National Anthem to protest the American disrespect for people of color, especially as it relates to Police Brutality. It became a national controversy when the President called for firing players who protest while disrespecting the flag or the anthem at the same time.

We've seen protests such as these before. In World War I, it was used to oppose the draft. In 1963, the Jehovah's Witnesses went to Court and won the right not to stand or say the pledge of allegiance. In the early 1960's the anti-war movement led by Jane Fonda refused to stand. In1969, two Black Olympic Medalists stood silently with raised fists during the playing of the anthem.

Even in the Bible, we've seen Prophets like Daniel who was thrown into a den of lions for taking two knees every day. The three Hebrew Boys were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to take a knee if it meant accepting the wrongful decrees of the king.

The most unique protest of executive abuse of power was the battle between The

Roman Emperor Domitian and the Apostle John. Domitian was tremendously egotistical, was known for firing or killing those around him who did not tell him how great he was. He liked to build buildings and shocked the world of his time by putting his name on everything. He even built a tower and put his name on it. He had a fascination with his hair and was rumored to wear a wig. He often imposed his personal beliefs on the people in daily edicts (tweets) and made threats to anyone who did not share his belief. Domitian even built a 25-foot statue of himself and had it placed in the temple and called himself a god. When John preached against Emperor worship and championed the cause, Domitian began the second great persecution of Christians, remembering what Nero did 12 years earlier and he promised to make Rome Great Again.

Though Domitian boiled him in oil and exiled him to the Isle of Patmos, John refused to bow to Domitian, but instead joined the other Gospel Writers who declared that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

As Christians, we are committed to humble ourselves before our Lord and Savior. We humbly bow before him and dedicate our lives to his service.

Exposition

These texts reflect on two passages in which the Apostle Paul gave instruction about bowing before the eminence of God.

The two texts seem to repeat the same truth until we look at them closely.

In Philippians 2:10 Paul says, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." The active word in this text is "should." It lays out the probability that when it comes to accepting Christ and his teachings about righteousness, repentance, and Judgment to come, every living thing on earth, above the earth or below the earth should take a knee and acknowledge God first and foremost.

If Jesus says, "Thou shall" then the rest of the world should take a knee and obey.

If Jesus says, "Thou shalt not" then the rest of the world should take a knee in obedience.

The word "should" indicates that in this life there will always be those who choose to rebel against Christ and defy him. This is the same "should" that is used in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The operative phrase, "Should not" implies that there will be many who will hear the gospel message and see the glorious works of God and refuse to take a knee for him.

In Romans 14:11, the operative word is not should but "shall." Here, Paul makes a projection or prophecy about the coming world order in which the Word of God and the Eminence of the Savior will be respected by all. It says, "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

The word "shall" leaves no room for deviation. It means that Christ's rule as Lord of Lords and King of Kings will be respected by all. That will be the day that the whole

world takes a knee and bows to the sovereignty of God.

That will be the day that the wicked will cease from troubling and the weary will truly be at rest!

When to take a knee

In scripture, there are at least types of situations in which believers are expected to take a knee. Each "take a knee" situation has a different meaning and a different expected outcome.

GOD'S JUDGMENT CAN FORCE US TO TAKE A KNEE: There are times when we stray so far, that God has to pull us aside and force us to take a knee. The Prophet Amos delivered God's judgment to Israel because 1)The country was becoming less Godly and had forgotten him(2:10); 2. Had begun to oppress and neglect the poor while enriching the greedy (2:6;5:11); 3. The system of justice was corrupt, twisted and depraved (5:10;12-15);4. They were dishonest in their business dealings (8:5-6); and 5. Their worship was superficial and empty. Amos told Israel that it would be brought to its knees as a nation until it repented for its sinful ways. He projected that God would restore righteousness and a day would surely come when "justice will run down like waters and righteousness, like a mighty stream."

Today, many of the conditions that existed in Amos' day still exist. God's judgment remains the same, if we do not repent, he will bring us to our knees. The challenge is for more believers to speak up and break their silence against injustices. Using whatever venues that are available we should: Take a knee to rape, murder, violence, lawlessness, and black on black crime. There will be those who ridicule and ostracize you for doing so, but you have to do what you must do.

Just as he did in biblical times, God has chosen ordinary people to make his pronouncements. No one really knew them before they challenged the injustices, but when a young pastor in Alabama challenged the system and told of his dream, he was catapulted into the public eye. When a backup quarterback, not the star of the team, decided enough was enough, God raised his voice until now millions are focused on the injustices.

Those who take-a-knee in defiance of injustice, don't expect to be popular, know they will suffer and don't ask for any pity. When Amos told the kings of Israel to take a knee, he was tortured to death by the king, but his defiance could not be silenced. Dr. King was assassinated, but his dream lives on. The football player sacrificed his career, but the world is paying attention. If you choose to take a knee, expect pushback, and receive it without apology.

WE MAY BE ASKED TO STAND UP WHEN OTHERS BOW DOWN: There are times when believers may be called upon to stand when others are bowing down and accepting things as they are. The Three Hebrew Boys were among thousands of men who had been brought to Babylon and were being taught to reject the teachings of God. They were being retrained to be leaders in government. Their names were changed from Hananiah—The grace of the Lord; Mishael—He that is the strong God;

Azariah—The Lord is a help; to Shadrach—The inspiration of the sun, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach—Of the goddess Shach, under which name Venus was worshipped; Abed-nego, The servant of the shining fire, which they worshipped also." They did not accept the new names, the food that was given them from the king's table, or their religion. When the king built a golden image, a symbol of his nation, and commanded all of his subjects to bow and pay tribute to it, the Three Hebrew Boys refused because God's second commandment forbids pledging allegiance to anyone other than God himself. Their defiance meant they would face the fiery furnace. Although all others, by the thousands took a knee and bowed, they chose not to follow suit. They were thrown into the fiery furnace, and God showed up to protect them.

Even today, believers must be willing to stand up for what's right, even though all of those around us are taking a knee. Everyone else may steal, cheat, lie or engage in lawlessness, but we should say, not our family. Everyone else may say it's acceptable to live loosely, have sex without marriage or to engage in homosexual or lesbian activity, but not our family. Everyone else may allow the society to change our names from lady and Ma'am to H's and B's, from gentlemen and men to dogs and N's, but not our family. We will not bow to the growing trends no matter how popular. We will either stand for something, or we will fall for anything. In this respect, we will not take a knee.

Take-Two Knees

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is one other time when we should take a knee, that's when we kneel before the almighty God.

This is a situation when we don't take "a" knee, but we come before God on two knees.

When drug abuse is growing out of control, and nothing seems to stop its growth, that's a two-knee situation.

When murders are becoming so commonplace that we become immune to its effect, that's a two-knee situation

When black-on-black crime is ignored while police-on-black abuses are elevated, that's a two-knee situation.

When Daniel looked around and saw the tragic conditions of the people, he instantly recognized it was a two-knee situation. Every day Daniel prayed to the only power that could address the problem. Even as he prayed, there were many who wanted him dead because he prayed. He was thrown into a Lion's Den, but God showed up and showed out.

There is power in prayer, and there is power in the name of Jesus. The word teaches that there is no other name whereby we must be saved, it's the name of Jesus!

There are many who changed their names and became great names in the world, but we don't bow to them, because there is a name…

Curtis Jackson became, 50 cent; but we don't bow to his name.

Terrie Bolea became, Hulk Hogan, but we don't bow to his name.

Norma Baker became, Marilyn Monroe, but we don't bow to her name

Annie Mae Bullock became, Tina Turner, but we don't bow to her name

Caryn Johnson became, Whoopi Goldberg; but we don't bow to her name

Eldrick Woods became, Tiger Woods, but we don't bow to his name

Chad Butler became, Pimp C; but we don't bow to his name

Micheal King, became Martin Luther King, but we don't bow to his name

Calvin Brodaus became, Snoop Dog, but we don't bow to his name

His name may be on towers and hotels around the world, but we don't bow to the name of Donald J. Trump.

But there is a name before which we should bow....

There is a name that reaches beyond the narrow confines of my loneliness and brings me comfort!

There is a name that reaches below my deepest failure and guides me to success!

There is a name that transcends my weakness and brings me strength.

It's the name of Jesus!

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow!

At the name of Jesus, every tongue shall confess

No wonder the song writer declared, "There is a name I love to hear. I love to sing its worth. It sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth. Oh how I love Jesus. Oh, How I love Jesus. Because he first loved me."

He loved me so much that He hung out on Calvary!

He loved me so much that died for my sins!

But early Sunday morning, He arose from the grave with all power!

All power in His hands!

No.9791-Men

A Man of Understanding

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 9, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;" Ezra 8:18

Introduction

Have you ever met a person who was hard to understand things? It's really frustrating to try to explain a situation to a person who is not capable of grasping the gravity of the moment. This is the individual with limited personal experience and only sees life through the prism of the moment. As you try to speak to him about what is happening to the forest, he cannot understand something that grand because he only sees the trees.

Understanding is a great virtue. Unfortunately, everyone doesn't have understanding; they can't see the whole picture.

While there are some who don't understand and others who can't understand, there are also those who don't want to understand, because we are not interested. Consider the man whose wife is continuously irritated because he forgets important things. He forgot her birthday. He forgot their wedding anniversary. He forgot Valentines. He forgot Mother's Day. Frustrated at him she yelled, "You remember the names and stats of dozens of football players', you remember the telephone number of your first girlfriend, you remember the vehicle identification numbers of every car you've ever own owned, you remember safe combinations, security codes, lottery numbers, and a dozen online passwords, it makes me feel bad that you can't remember things that should be important to us!"- The man, who never looked up from his favorite television program, said, "You just gave the answer, and you don't understand, yet" -She didn't get the point, what was important to her was not important to him.

When a man understands, he knows what is important and what is not.

A Godly man knows the importance of having a God-centered life. A man who understands the quality of life is a gem. In God's hands, he can do miraculous things.

As Christians, we desire to understand God's purpose for our lives. When we know that purpose we strive to live true to its meaning and divine calling. A woman who finds a man of understanding finds a Godly husband and a father for her children.

Exposition

This text focuses on the prophet Ezra's effort to recruit men to serve God at the restored temple in Jerusalem.

The people of Judah spent many years in exile in Babylon. After decades, Nehemiah was allowed to return to rebuild the walls, and it later fell upon Ezra to return to Jerusalem with soldiers and resources to restore the worship of God in their traditional way.

Ezra met with leaders of the families and made an appeal for each tribe to send people home with him to help restore the temple operations. Ezra needed laborers and people of all walks of life to help in this work. He required laborers, singers, porters, artisans and many others to assist in the formidable task of rebuilding the Jewish nation and restoring true worship in the temple.

Ezra and the three special family heads were able to recruit a large number of people from the 12 major families. In all, 1,511 men made the commitment to return to Jerusalem. Adding in Ezra and the three special family heads brought the total number of men recruited to 1,515. When the women and children were added to the list, there were probably about 5,000 exiles returning with Ezra. This was a much smaller number than the 50,000 who had returned about 80 years earlier under Zerubbabel's leadership.

When the final reports came in, there were men from 11 of the tribes, but there were no men from the tribe of Levi. In essence, in a Christian comparison, there were no preachers, deacons, stewards or others from the ecclesiastical circles. Despite the appeal, it appeared that many Jews had become comfortable in their routine in Babylon. They attended the Sabbath meetings in meeting places, probably synagogues and enjoyed the comfort of their regular routine. Returning to Jerusalem meant sacrifices, and it meant stepping out of their comfort zones. Most of the Levites refused to come to perform their ancestral duties.

The call went out again to seek volunteers among the Nethinims or ancestral helpers around the temple. Although they were not Levites, several among these men came forth. They secured 38 Levites from two families—18 from Sherebiah's family and 20 from Jeshaiah's relatives—as well as 220... temple servants. Only then was Ezra ready to start on the critical journey. Without the Levite teachers of the Law and people to serve at the temple all would be lost and the trip futile.

The men who came forth were described as men of understanding. Although not officially ordained for the service by birth, 220 servants with great understanding stepped forth to help.

Ezra needed men to serve the temple, and a small number of men of understanding came forth. This small number, in the hands of God, was sufficient for the work.

Is there a man who understands?

Like Ezra's call for men to come forth, today the church needs men of understanding to come forth.

A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH: As men diminish

in service in church congregations, there is still a need for men who understand the work of the church; they may not come from the traditional ranks, but they understand the work. They understand the formidable task of the church. No greater mission exists than the one assigned to the church, that of taking the gospel of salvation to the world and of meeting the needs of people. People are lost and without hope, for they are separated from God. They do not know that salvation comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ, that no person can approach and become acceptable to God except through His Son.

The men who come forth don't need any credentials, college degrees or certificates. However, they do need to know the Lord and understand the mission of the church. They don't need a Bachelor of Arts Degree, but they will need at B.A. -They need to be born again.

If they are born again, they will understand the need to reach out to the lost, and the hurting who are in desperate need. If they have an understanding, they will feel compelled to assist the suffering our people. They will understand our trials, feel the burden of our hardships, and the overwhelming attraction of our temptations.

Is there a man in the sound of my voice who understands this need? You may not be a school teacher, doctor, lawyer or preacher, but you understand the work of the Lord. If so, will you answer like the prophet Isaiah, who was a simple man with no unique gifts, but responded to his understanding of the great work by saying, "Here am I Lord, send me."

A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS THE LANGUAGE: Ezra selected the ordinary synagogue workers to come forth and help with the work, but they had to understand the language of God. Many people may not be scholars, but they know how to talk to God, and they understand what he says to them. They also know the language of of ordinary people. They how to understand how they speak with their mouths and in other ways.

Among African-American church folks there is a body language that must be understood, especially in the church. A pastor may make a recommendation that is unpopular and receives no opposition in the congregation. Not one soul will speak against the idea, but the smart man watches for the unspoken language, the one they communicate in the hallways and bathrooms, spoken privately to each other. The other language shown but rarely spoken is the one that is reflected in the offering plate. A man of understanding knows that people show their approval of an action through the offering plate. It speaks loudly.

That's why the church needs men who understand the language of the congregation, the pastor, and most of all understand how to listen to God and understand what he says. Just as we understand the body language of our parents, who speak with a frowning eye that can pin a child to his seat or a raised finger or a tilt of the head, a man who understands, can know when God is pleased or displeased with our actions.

Is there a man in the sound of my voice who understands the language of God, pastor, and the people? You may not be a man of high position in the community, in fact, you may be a regular laborer, but you clearly understand God, and you understand

people. If so when you hear the call will you respond, “Here am I Lord, send me?”

A MAN UNDERSTANDS HOW TO TRUST GOD: The men Ezra selected were not the smartest men in the nation, but they were men who understood the importance of trusting God. Men who believe God are free of anxiousness. Philippians 4: 6-7 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. Then the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Those who understand how to trust God are given something greater than their understanding itself, it is peace with God. The church needs men who can trust God and act fearlessly for him. Those who do not trust God are constantly uneasy because they worry about the outcome of situations.

What if? becomes their constant worry.

What if it doesn’t go as planned?

What if an obstacle gets in our way?

What if we fail?

The church needs men who do not worry about people will say if the church does not instantly succeed in a specific program. They understand how to trust and do not fear a possible negative result. Those who distrust God worry about the outcome of a situation, those who trust him know that regardless of the outcome, it will be for church’s good and according to the will of God. They understand that the word teaches us that All things work for the good of them who love the Lord and are following his purpose in life. Millions of believers have experienced this truth. God works out the situations that are entrusted to him for our advantage.

Men who understand how to trust God live by the general rule: “If you are going to worry, don’t ask for Gods help. If you ask for Gods help, don’t worry.”

Is there a man within the sound of my voice who understands what it means to completely trust God? You may not come from a family known for producing leaders or be the product of training academies, but you are willing to learn what you need to know as you act on the one thing you do know, and that’s how to trust God. If so, can you answer, “Here am I send me?”

Men who know God

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must not forget that if ever there was a time when our community needs Black men to understand and know God that time is now!

Men are desperately needed. Even today, many listening to the sound of my voice should know that they are needed now. Some among us right now need to make a commitment to the Lord, surrendering our lives to become laborers for Christ. As never before, we need to bear strong witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ and to reach out in compassion to those who are in desperate need.

The word of God has made the appeal:

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt.4:19).

“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers

are few; Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Mt.9:37-38).

The Lord needs men who understand his word and his mission.

The Lord needs men trust him and know the work of the church.

No man should become so comfortable in the pursuit of his career that he has little time or interest in the things of God.

A man in business for himself, soon finds that he can't succeed in the business world unless God sends the customers!

A man climbing the corporate ladder, soon finds that he can't maintain his upward climb without the Blessings of the Lord!

A man striving to lead a family soon finds that his job is made much easier when he and the Lord are on good terms! It doesn't matter whether you are male or female, everyone needs a blessing every now and then!

When we need a blessing, it is good to know the voice of God! When we know the voice of God, we hear him ask, Where art thou?

But if we listen closely we can also hear him ask: Do you need anything? That's when we answer, The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want!

Sometimes the question may be: Adam, are you afraid? And we answer is, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"

Godly man, why are you looking down? And we answer, "I'll lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!"

Godly man, why are you sad because you don't have all the resources you want? That's when he remembers, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Godly man, why are you worried? That's when the men of our generation rise to sing, "Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? For Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he! His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me!"

The first Adam was in the garden hiding behind a tree, but the last Adam stretched out wide on a tree!

The first Adam was hiding from God, but the last Adam was raised up high for all men to see!

The first Adam disobeyed God, but the last Adam said, not my will but thy will be done!

He died out on Calvary! But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

Man of Understanding, where art thou?

Where art thou?

No.9792-Revival

Fake News, Real News and the Good News

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 8, 2017

SCRIPTURE: How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger bringing good news, Breaking the news that all's well, proclaiming good times, announcing salvation, telling Zion, "Your God reigns!" Isaiah 52:7

Introduction

Have you ever read a really eye-popping news story only to learn later that it wasn't true? Have you seen a video of a newscast on social media that revealed facts that were never reported before, only to learn that the so-called facts were not facts at all? If you have, then you have been exposed to what has been generously called, "Fake News."

"Fake News" is all over the news, especially on Facebook and Twitter. In September, Mark Zuckerburg, CEO of Facebook reported that persons connected with the Russian government bought $100,000 worth of ads on Facebook supporting Donald Trump and opposing Hilliary Clinton's candidacy for president. Some of the ads cited statistics or information that was fake, but it was delivered in a way that sounded true. On the heels of the Facebook announcement, Twitter announced that thousands of "Fake News" tweets were sent to 12 states that ultimately voted for President Donald Trump and may have contributed to his election.

"Fake News" is often hard to detect because it looks real. There is a new website called "ifaketextmessages.com" that allows you to create fake text messages between you and a person of your choice, using their name, and photo information. You can then screenshot it and save it to your phone to prove to others that you had a text conversation with someone. It's fake, but most people won't know it.

The only way that anyone can avoid being duped by Fake News is to consider the source of information. Is it from sources known to exercise reasonable judgment before releasing a news account? If it's a national news account is it being reported by any of the well-known news agencies; there are hundreds of them? Have the claims been fact checked?

Every news media has a slant, but most adhere to some level of credibility in their

reporting. CNN and MSNBC are known to be liberal news agencies. Their reports of the facts will always have a left-leaning slant. Fox News is a known conservative news outlet. It reports the same news, but with a conservative slant.

It's generally not a good idea to depend on one source alone for your news information, compare all accounts and somewhere in between lies the truth.

If we are not careful, the devil can hack into your life and make you change your direction, with fake news. If someone tells you that you don't need education or training to be a success, you know that's fake news, but thousands drop out of school every year. If someone says that poor children can't learn or achieve because of their background, that's obviously fake news, but thousands give up on their dreams because they believe the news. It is fake news that you cannot succeed or be happy in these tough times.

The good news, which is real news, is that Jesus Christ came and died and rose again after three days and nights to pay the price for our mistakes

There is nothing fake about it.

As Christians, we rejoice in the good news that Jesus loved the world so much that he gave up his life to give us one more chance. That's not fake news, its good news; and it's real.

Exposition

This text focuses on the Prophet Isaiah as he announces that Israel's fate is not entirely lost, but can be restored.

The people of God had strayed away from him, not individually, but as a nation. Little by little, they abandoned the truths of Godliness and appropriated the beliefs or non-beliefs of those around them. When the prophets announced that God was angry and would punish the nation for its sins, the skeptics declared it was fake news. God would never destroy a country he had so carefully guarded, protected, and blessed.

When the original prophecies were given, all of the things people did not want to hear were dismissed as fake news, but every single prophecy about the destruction of both Israel and Judah came true.

Beginning at chapter 40 however, the pronouncements took a different tone, the idea of revival, renewal, and restoration was preached, in which the people were told that despite their punishment for sin, God would help them find restoration.

In Isaiah 61:1 the prophet announced that bringing this "good news" was his mission, "Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" It is the same text the Jesus read in the temple when he announced the beginning of his ministry.

In the New Testament the word for "good news" is "Gospel." The Gospel is the good news God is merciful and that despite our sinful ways he has sent his son to lead us back to a oneness with him.

The Good News is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

That's good news.

The Daily News

Today we must be ever vigilant because we are surrounded by fake news, especially when it comes to matters of faith.

IT IS FAKE NEWS TO EXPECT HEAVEN WHEN YOU LIVE AN UNREPENTANT HELLISH LIFE: Many believe they can live a hellish life, without God, and still make it to heaven. They think God is such a loving God that when it comes to the final judgment that he will show them mercy, even if they don't repent, straighten up and fly right. That's fake news. It is true that your past can be forgiven, but without repentance and redemption, it is impossible to be saved. Hell is a real place, that is not fake news. It is reserved for Satan and all of his followers.

Those who waste the lives outside of Christ usually put themselves through living hell. Jesus said those who involve themselves in activities that are destructive, counter the goals of the kingdom of God. They are wasteful, of no use and will plunge believers into living hell. If a person rejects the good news of Jesus it means as far as the kingdom of God is concerned, his whole life is wasted, a total loss.He may have won the approval of men,. He may have lived very comfortably, but at the end, his life is a wipe-out, a total loss, good only to be thrown on the garbage heap for eternity.

It's fake news if you believe you can shack up without marriage, and still please God.

It's fake news if you believe you can live a wild life with every Tom, Dick, Harry and Mary and God will understand and give you a place in heaven.

It's fake news if you believe you can sell and use illegal drugs, traffic in stolen goods and live a life that continuously breaks the law and God will smile on you.

It's fake news if you believe you can steal, murder, and rape and God will look the other way.

It's fake news if you believe that you can beat your wife or girlfriend and God will understand that you have anger issues.

Many are living hellish lives who would like to believe that God loves the sinner and their sins. That's fake news. The real news is that God loves the sinner, but he hates the sin. It's like going to Big Mama's House, you are welcome, but all that stuff you doing must stay outside.

Romans 6:23 is the real truth, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IT IS FAKE NEWS IF YOU BELIEVE IT IS TOO LATE: Many believe their lives are so broken that they are beyond repair. They think that they have done so many wrong things, associated with so many evil people, frequented so many places of disrepute that God will never receive them into his presence. They believe their list of sins is so long that they can never be saved - That's fake news.

It is fake news if you believe you have fallen so many times that you can't rise again. You were in the church, but you fell into sin, there is no reason that you can't get back on your feet. The real news is in Proverbs 24:16 that says, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Even members of the church fall, but they can rise again.

It is fake news if you believe all church members have records of always living the Christian life. The truth is every member of the church from the preacher to usher at the front door has a history, and when it is told, you'll learn that they have not always tried to do right.

Here's the real news; it's in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

IT IS FAKE NEWS IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN BE SAVED WITHOUT REPENTANCE: Many believe they can make it to heaven if they merely start coming to church and cut back on a few of their sins. So instead of getting nasty drunk and driving home, the get nasty drunk and call Uber. That's better, but it's not repentance. So instead of cheating on your wife with three women, you start going to church with her and only cheat with two women, that's better, but it's not repentance. It's like deciding to lose weight and joining a fitness club, but still eat five pounds of fat and cholesterol every day; joining the club is great, but is not repentance.

When it comes to sin, the only way to sincerely repent is to look at the life you've been living and say to yourself in the words of the prodigal son who looked at his miserable state and said, in Luke 15:18 "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." True repentance comes not when you try to reform yourself or say "I'm going to start coming to church" it comes when you decide that the life you are trying to live is not really carrying you where you want to go and turn from it completely and turn yourself over to God.

To repent you must take the devil out, but most importantly you must put the spirit of God in its place. You can't just stop doing bad things, you have to replace it with a Godly passion for doing right things. Here's what the word of God says, in Matthew 12:43-45 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

The real news is that the only way to be saved is to repent. When you repent, your blackboard is erased. Your hard drive and your system is reset without the bugs, flaws, hacks, and viruses that caused you to crash. The Bible puts it this way, in Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the

times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

There is Good news

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is a whole lot of good news, that news is God loves us, and no matter what we have done, he will give us a second chance.

The Gospel message is that God is a merciful God and will show mercy to all who will turn to him and abandon their wicked ways.

The good news is that God says in 2 Chronicles 7:14 " If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The good news brothers and sisters is that Jesus died and rose from the dead that we may have life and have it more abundantly!

The good news is that when we trust in the Lord, we don't worry about the frustrating turns that the road of life offers! We walk by faith knowing that the Lord will make a way!

The good news is that you might face temptations, but the Lord will deliver you from all evil

The good news is that you might face:

—A Desert, but God will provide an Oasis in the wilderness!

—Hunger, but God will provide a table in the presence of our enemies!

—Unbelievable odds, but God will help us to achieve the impossible

Sometimes the goodness of God seems like fake news to those who doubt.

When Sara heard the good news that she would have a baby although she was 90 years old, it was too good to be true, she thought it was fake news.

When Naaman heard the good news that he would be healed of leprosy if he took seven baths in muddy water, it was too ridiculous to be true, he thought it was fake news

When Isaiah heard the good news that his unclean lips would be used to prophesy for the Lord, he thought it was unthinkable, he dismissed it as fake news then said, "Here am I send me."

When we think about how God has taken our own sinful lives and given us new chances, we say like Isaiah 53:1 "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"

The good news is that Christ has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

It's the same good news that Phillip told the Ethiopian in the chariot and he asked, "What hinders me from being baptized."

It's the same good news Jesus told the woman at the well, and she ran through the streets saying, "Come see a man who told me all I've ever done!"

We are living in tough dangerous times, but thank God there is good news!

The good news is Jesus! Do you know him?

He was born in a manger!
He died on an old rugged cross!
He arose after three days and nights!
In tough times like these, we need Jesus!
No wonder the songwriter declared: “In times like these, we need a savior. In times like these, we need an anchor. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!
This rock is Jesus, yes he’s the one!
This rock is Jesus, the only one!
Be very sure! Be very sure!
Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!

No.9793-Building Fund

It is done, let us rejoice

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2017

SCRIPTURE:"And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy," Ezra 6:16

Introduction

When you have completed a great work what do you do? If you had recently purchased a home you would have a house warming and invite friends from far and near to see your home and ask the faithful to offer prayers for your home.

If you had completed the building of a ship you would have a launch celebration and christen the new ship by breaking a bottle of champaign on its bow.

If you had finally opened a new facility you would have a ribbon cutting ceremony.

A new business has a grand opening celebration and sale.

When believers have worked hard to completed the hard task of building for the Lord we celebrate as well.

In reality, every day we celebrate our journey as believers, we rejoice. We rejoice because Jesus gave us the grand opportunity to live God centered lives here and even beyond this life. We rejoice because He gave himself as a ransom for our souls!

That's enough reason to celebrate. Its also enough reason to rally ourselves and give thanks to God for His goodness, mercy and loving kindness.

How do we celebrate this kindness from God? We celebrate differently than those of the world.

When believers celebrate important days we must do it the right way. We must celebrate Gods way. We must give him praise, give him our resources and we must give him our contrite spirit.

As Christians, we must let the world know what God has done for us. As we celebrate we should also bring our gifts and repentant spirit before the one who gave himself as a ransom for our souls. Today, let us celebrate the completion of this great work. It is done, let us rejoice.

Exposition

This text focused on the dedication of the temple by Israelites reunited after the exile.

For years ten of the tribes of Israel had been separated from their homeland, taken away about the Assyrians. Once they were able to return home, they were repatriated and restored to their lost fellowship when the temple was restored and dedicated.

Solomon had built a lavish temple in his time that could not be equaled, but it was none-the-less sacred and important. Solomon's temple was dedicated with 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. The new temple was redicated with only 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 male lambs and just 12 male goats for the sin offering. Scholars conclude that the 12 goats show that the postexilic community still envisioned a unified Israel consisting of all 12 tribes even though only 2 had survived with any strength.

The dedication consisted of demonstrations of the liveliest joy. The aged who had wept at the laying of the foundation were most, if not all of them, now dead; and all rejoiced at the completion of this national undertaking.

They celebrated because the building was an act of unity. The persons employed in this service were not only the priests and Levites who officiated, but the children of Israel, some of each of the twelve tribes, though Judah and Benjamin were the chief, and the rest of the children of the captivity or transportation.

The dedication was joyful because they were all glad to see the temple completed. Whatever we dedicate to God, let it be done with joy that he will please to accept of it.

Just as the returned exiles joyed and rejoiced in the Lord, so we are to joy and rejoice in Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

Why we are rejoicing

There are many reasons we are rejoicing today! There are many reasons our hearts are on fire with praise. We rejoicing because:

GOD NEVER LEFT US: The struggle to complete this task has been great, we have made it this far because God was with us all the way. That's we are rejoicing because God has never left us. The undeniable truth about God is that while conditions changed along the way God did not change. He did not change then and he is the same today. We are rejoicing because He is still God.

In all our frustrations making it to this point he was there for us, lifting us, encouraging us and pushing us to go further.

And better yet, no matter where we turn today, he's still there!

Look at the stars they're still there! There is still a sense of order and purpose in God's creation!

Look at the moon it is still there! There is a still a calm sense of God's watchful eye over us at night!

Look at the sky, it is still there! It still forms a canopy over us to protect us, shower us and provide a thin veil through which we occasionally glimpse the heavens!

That's why we rejoice and lift our hands in praise because through it all, through every trial and test God was there for us.

The scripture says, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness,

and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

He never left us alone and we are rejoicing about it today.

HE ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS: We are rejoicing because God not only answered our prayers he granted our prayer request. We know that God always answers prayers, with a yes or a no or a wait a while. But it is so exciting when he answers our prayers with a "Yes." We can't hold our peace when he gives our work his divine blessing and begins to shovel away the opposition.

God has been faithful in his promise to open doors for us and to make opportunities for the abundant life available to true believers. As we celebrate today we bear witness that his promise is true.

As we reflect upon this milestone we see that God has given us exactly what we prayed for. He has kept his word. Like Jabez, we have experienced expanded their boundaries to the point that over joyed at God's benevolence.

As God blessed us he not only made this task possible, but he also blessed us personally along the way. While undertaking this task there are many who have experienced stronger family relationships, personal increase and stronger faith.

We are rejoicing today because God has truly answered our prayers.

WE REJOICE OVER THIS MILESTONE, BUT WE REJOICE OVER TRUE FOUNDATION: Today we are happy because we have completed this work, but the work founded on our faith in Jesus Christ. He is the foundation of our hope and dreams. He is our reason for doing all that we do. What we celebrate is not our work, but his work through us because he is our true foundation.

We should also celebrate our journey and give thanks to God for his mercy.

The Israelite's celebrated their journey by the giving of special offerings and renewing their pledges of faithfulness to God. We should do the same.

They celebrated their journey by giving thanks. We should do the same.

Let our celebration today be filled with thanksgiving!

Let our celebration today give thanks to God for the seen and the unseen.

Let's thank for a few personal thing too! We are going to eat and fellowship today, so let's thank him.

Thank him for the greens and butter beans, and for being able to sleep soundly at night.

Thank him for turkey and dressing, and for dressing our souls with his grace.

Thank him for fried chicken, rice and a little gravy, and for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, In everything, give thanks, for Jesus is the true foundation and source of our blessing.

There is no way we could have made this journey without the help the Lord has given us.

Rejoice about Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we commemorate, rededicate and celebrate, we must

tell the world that this part of the work may be done, but in the midst of these fearful times, there still much more to do.

We shall go forward confident that the church is built on Christ, a sure foundation; he is the chief cornerstone

The Tabernacle of the Old Testament was built on a foundation made of the silver sacrifices of 600,000 men.

There has never been a record of the Tabernacle falling down.

It withstood windstorms, sandstorms and rain!

For all of the years of Israels journey it never fell once, because it was pitched on a sure foundation.

We rejoice that this work is done, but we are getting reading for the next great work because God is building his kingdom.

God is building a heavenly kingdom, in which each saint is a living stone and a living sacrifice. The kingdom of God, though built with living stones, must have a cornerstone.

The cornerstone is the foundation upon which the kingdom is built.

The corner piece of the kingdom of God is the same stone that the builders rejected!

The corner stone of our hope is not made of bricks or mortar.

The corner stone of our trust cannot be affixed to the edge of a building!

The corner stone of our faith is the substance of our hope!

I don't know what the tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past. I know what God is doing right now!

I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as the Lord is on our side! If the Lord is on our side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

The Lord is the justification for my faith!

The Lord is the chief corner stone of my hope!

I heard the song writer declare The only hope we have is in Christ Jesus. Confusion is great in the world today. Persecution my come with such a heavy weight but we have this hope and it's in Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morning star!

Who said to his father, there is work to be done!

He came through 42 generations and went up to Calvary

Hanging on the cross, he said to his father

It is finished!

It is done, salvation has been secued!

It is done, reconciliation has been achieved
He died on Calary, but Early Sunday morning he arose
With all power in his hands,
It is done, let us rejoice!

No. 9795-Anniversary

He has shown us the way
Let us move forward in faith

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 15, 2017

Scripture: "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." Psalm 86:11 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6-7

Introduction

When the church steps out on the word of God, is there any limit to its possibilities?When those who believe in the power of God ban together as one solid unit that is rooted in Him, sustained by Him and directed by Him, there is no limit to its potential.
When the church is on one accord, it can move mountains of frustration and achieve what others think is impossible.

A praying church can do more than anyone suspects. Consider the church that conducted a two-month prayer vigil in which each member was asked to pray without ceasing for two months for something they really wanted in God's will. A little boy in the church decided to pray that he would have a baby brother. When he told his dad, his father took his cue from the church's prayer vigil and said, "Son, if you pray every day for two months, I guarantee God will give you a baby brother." Excited, the boy began his prayer vigil, asking God for a baby brother. After a month had passed, he heard other boys talking and learned that no one has ever been able to get a baby brother in two months. So, with only a few days left in his two-month prayer vigil, the boy stopped praying. On the last day of the second month, the boy's mother was rushed to the hospital. When the father and son entered her hospital room, the mother was in bed with a bundle lying next to her. When the boy pulled back the blanket, he found not one little boy but three boys! The father looked at his son and said, "Aren't glad you prayed?" But looked the babies and counted them, then said,"Yeah, but aren't you glad that I stopped praying when I did?"

Wonderful things happen when the church decides to prayerfully move forward with the vision of Christ beaming in the horizon.

We must hold on just as our fore parents held on. We must march forward, just as

those before us marched. If we feel weak along the way, we must remember that "help is on the way."

The world asks a penetrating question about this little community that has been witnessing for this many years. It begs the same question asked in the biblical record, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

We answer by saying that for all these years this church has brought forth God-fearing men and women who have made a difference.

Look at the miraculous things that we have done with little or no resources. Whether it is the brick and mortar building in which we worship or the ministries that we do in the community, God has done mighty things among the people through this congregation.

This is the community from whose womb many great minds have come forth. As we celebrate the history of this church, in a greater sense we also celebrate the victory of every believer around the world.

As Christians, we are determined to walk in love and in unity of purpose. The God we serve will never forsake us, and we will never forsake Him as we boldly move into each new horizon of ministry.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul as he writes to the Christians at Colossae to continue their unified walk in Christ.

The church at Colossae was one that reflected many of the struggles of the Gentile believers. The gentile world was surrounded by many philosophical ideas that kept them meandering in and out of the faith. In one instance the church dealt with mystery cults, and in another it was mysticism. From Gnosticism to Qumran style Judaism, the church at Colossae found itself debating how all of these beliefs related to its own experience.

Paul wrote to the Colossians as the elder statesman of the church, but he had never visited them or seen them personally. His word of encouragement to them was simple: keep focused on the main reason you became Christians, faith in Christ. He urged them to walk in Christ, remain rooted and built up in Him and to maintain the faith.

Moreover, Paul encouraged believers to continue their faith walk with the same commitment and determination they showed when they first came to Christ. Colossians 2:6 says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:" Simply put Paul encouraged the Colossians not to turn away from Christ, or to dream of going beyond him." Their power and effectiveness would come from keeping a clear vision of Christ in front of them.

Moving Forward

Today believers should apply three principles to our current circumstance. We should move forward in Christ in three areas:

MOVE FORWARD WITH VISION OF CHRIST: The church must remain unified in its knowledge and understanding of Christ and his vision of the world. The vision of the church united and glorified must be crystal clear in the mind of each member as the church marches forward. Sharing the same vision is important, just as it is important for a man and wife to share the same vision, it is also important for believers to share Christ's vision for the church. It is that vision that helps us march forward in confidence. We don't know the way, but we constantly have God to show us the way.

Every now and then we ask the Lord....show me the way. Doctor Watts put it this way "Guide me o thou great Jehovah, pilgrim in this barren land, I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me in thou powerful hand."

The church is the instrument that God has used to bring forth "HIS" blessing to God's people.

The church is not a building, but an assembly of baptized believers in Christ. Yet, God has used the assembly of believers in ways that have brought forth his favor.

Our people have been blessed because of the church, the Old Ship of Zion.

We have worshipped under brush arbors and abandoned sawmills.

We have lifted our voices to God in empty barns with sawdust floors.

We have praised Him in the chill of winter with logs burning in huge heated stoves.

We have sweltered, without air conditioning, in the humid and scorching heat of a thousand summers.

Yet, God has used our feeble assembly, worship and praise experiences to bring forth His "water" in a thirsty land.

Through the church God has shown us the wisdom of Christ and that wisdom has deepened our trust and faith in Him.

Through the church, God has raised our bowed down heads and lifted our broken spirits.

No wonder the songwriter thought of the church and declared, "Tis the old, Ship of Zion. She has landed many a thousand. King Jesus is the captain. Get on board. Get on Board."

MOVE FORWARD IN KINGDOM WORK: Paul urged the church to continue to move forward with their efforts to build the kingdom. That same command must be received by the church today. The church must move forward to pursue the work of Christ which is saving souls and reaching out to the world with a hand of compassion. There are great needs to be addressed. There is a growing epidemic of violence in our neighborhoods. We must address that violence, certainly through prayer, but also through a structure response. The church must teach parenting skills to young parents so that they will come to see how violence starts. Violent video games, television shows and movies teach children how to shoot, kill, rob and steal. We have the work of teaching non-violence, first at home, then in the community.

We must be about the work of responding to unemployment by the creation of business opportunities and teaching investment skills. We must respond to homelessness, domestic abuse and voter ignorance in our communities. We can't keep looking back, we must move forward. We seek to save souls because we

ourselves have been saved. Today, many believers are ministers, deacons, deaconesses, and prominent church personalities. That has not always been the case. There have been changes. That's why 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And such were some of you:, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." That's a result of the forgiveness of Christ. Even more have been touched by the mercy and compassion of Christ as the church reaches out to help the less fortunate and to respond with love and compassion to the needs of people.

MOVE FORWARD IN THE WORSHIP OF CHRIST: We must resist all temptations to detour to other paths and remain firm in our worship of Christ. We cannot afford the luxury of jumping from one denomination or another, here and there, hit and miss. We must not fall for religious pimps who are hustling us out of our money, property and faith in the name of God. God does not want you to by a Rolls Royce for the preacher! He doesn't want you to pay for diamonds around his wife's neck, he wants you to "sell all you have, pick up your cross and follow me." He wants you to invest heavily in kingdom building, saving souls and preparing for his return.

Real worship is about praising God for who he is. When we worship we ring a bell that resonates throughout the community and declares that our God is king. When we worship we testify to the importance of God in our lives. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that sits on a hill that cannot be hidden." When we worship we let our lights shine. When we worship God, we agree with Johann Neethling and, "declare the truth about God's worth, God's honor, God's greatness, and God's love. We declare it to Him, we declare it to host of heaven, and we declare it to all creation."

When we assemble on Sundays each believer says to the world, God is a good God, and we believe it!

As we move, tell the story

Finally, brothers and sisters, as we review where we have been and see the challenges ahead, we must prepare to move forward telling the story of our journey as we go.

Who will march forward into the future telling the story of our past as we hold up the blood-stained banner?

Who will tell the story of how God brought us a mighty long way?

Who will tell the story of our march through hardship and trouble into this present day?

Who will be willing to face tomorrow with confidence and say like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

The church at Colossae was encouraged to stay unified in the wisdom of Christ, to walk together as one unit to perform the work of Christ and to maintain its worship of Christ.

Today, the church must do the same. We must go forward committed to telling the world about our risen savior.

We must tell the world of our determination to go forward into the unknown.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know what God has done in the past.

I know what God is doing right now!

"I do not know how long it will be or what the future holds for me, but this I know, if Jesus leads me, I will get home someday!

It doesn't matter what the future brings as long as we are on the Lord's side! If we move forward on the Lord's side there will never be a:

—CROSS that we won't be able to bear; MOUNTAIN that we won't be able to climb!

—ENEMY that we won't be able to defeat; BATTLE we won't be able to win!

—DARKNESS so dark that we won't be able to see the light!

—TRIAL that we can't make it through; TEST that we won't be able to pass!

As we move forward, we should keep the vision of the He who has saved clear in our mind.

His name is Jesus!

Jesus, somebody here today knows him!

Jesus, the Lily of the valley!

Jesus, the Bright and Morningstar!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose up early Sunday morning!

Move forward in unity and never lose hope. Sing together the words of the old hymn,

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name. On Christ the solid rock I stand...

All other Ground!

All other Ground is sinking sand!

No. 9795-Men

When a Godly Man Speaks

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Acts 4:16-20

Introduction

Suppose you could find a man who had all of the desirable qualities found in the Bible, would that be a great find? This man would live by the 12 points of the scout law: Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave clean and reverent. If you could find a man like that wouldn't that be great? Suppose this man also lived by all the tenets of the Bible, wouldn't that be even better?

How tall would he be? What color would you make his eyes? How old would he be? Would he have six-pack abs, bulging biceps, and a barrel size chest? Would he have dazzling bedroom eyes, luscious lips, and a deep, romantic voice?

What about his personality? If he had all of the above but had no money would he be acceptable? Desirable? Loveable?

It seems that every man has something missing from the list. If he has pleasing looks, he doesn't have a job. If he has a job and looks good, he doesn't have a body. If he has a body, job, youth, looks and dazzling eyes, he's not romantic. If he's romantic, he's too short. If he's tall, he can't dance. If he has the perfect package of looks, body, job, attitude, and romance, you might find out that he's gay. There will always be something too long or too short in our search for the perfect man.

The Marine Corps advertises that it is looking for a few good men. But suppose the Marine Corps advertising also said it was looking for Biblical Men, would there be any inductees?

Experience has taught that the measure of a man is not by his shoe size, shirt size and the width of his belt. Neither is it determined by the depth of his wallet or the muscles in his arms. There are characteristics about a real man that often do not appeal to the eye but are evident in his character.

Real men are strong, courageous, loving, sound thinking and god fearing. All of the other attributes are extras that make him even more appealing.

There are not any perfect men in the world, but there are many men who try to live their lives by God's order. He is the man that is described in the Bible as the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly or sits in the seat of the scornful. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and he meditates on it day and night

As Christians, we are pleased to know that there are millions of men who are trying to do God's will every day of their lives. They are not perfect men in height, statue, looks or by any external measure, but they are indeed men who love the Lord and strive to do his will.

Exposition

This text focuses on Peter and John testifying about what to expect from Godly Men.

The disciples of Christ preached about his life death and resurrection to all who would hear them. Often they were met with persecution and called to task for performing miracles and doing great works in the name of Jesus. That is the situation in this text.

The religious leaders were afraid that if they continued performing miracles and preaching about Christ that the people would be disturbed to their detriment. They were advised that they should stop witnessing for God. They were told that it would be in their best interest not to be the voice of God among the people. They were also ordered not to teach about Jesus, speak about Jesus or do any work in Jesus' name.

That was a tall order, especially since Jesus himself called men away from their personal pursuits and challenged them to dedicate themselves to the cause of building God's kingdom on earth. As he traveled, he met men of different walks, perspectives, and expectations. He challenged each to follow Him and prepare to change the world. Christ challenged all man he came in contact with to use their secular skills for the glory of God. He used the phrase, "I will make you fishers of men." To do that, men would have to do great works, teach and preach.

Peter and John, responding to the demand for their silence rose to let their voices be heard. They explained why their voices had to speak about the goodness, majesty, and power of God. They said it is impossible for these men or any men who have been witness to the power of God to keep silent.

They said, such men can't help it; they must bear witness to the works of God.

Is there a voice?

In the arena of moral social and economic indifference, is there a voice that is willing

to speak truth to power? Is there a man who is immersed in Biblical truth and is bold enough to speak to the crises of our times?

IS THERE A VOICE FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE? The Biblical man is one who understands that Biblical truths command us to use the talents that we have, invest in their growth and show a benefit. That's why Christ told the parable of the talents. Today, when jobs are scarce, and money is little to nothing, where do Godly men stand? Some have the notion that a man should do anything to feed himself and his family. This is true if by anything it is meant any moral and just thing; that's the path that is chosen by the man who follows God's word.

Too many men are selling drugs, bootlegging movies, compact discs, and stolen merchandise, while involving themselves in a variety of unlawful activities all under the guise of economics. They brush off the illegality of their actions by saying, A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do.

In spite of hard times, the man who orders his life by the teachings of Christ does not defend crime as an economic necessity. We have lived through wars, slavery, floods, and depressions, but, for the most part, the god-fearing men of our families have refused to steal or involve themselves in wrongdoing in the name of doing what we gotta do.

Godly men don't steal to get money.

Godly men make tough choices to build economic security.

A young boy who claims he's a man but can't force himself to study or complete his education may wear a man's pants, but he's still not a man.

The man who throws his money away gambling, drinking and living large, may have fun, but he's living loosely like a boy and is a far cry from the man he wants to be.

The Godly man knows that the Bible teaches that if we don't work, we don't eat.

Biblical men are bold because we have seen men with little or no resources rise high in the world of business, finance, and economics because they had faith in God, courage and a willingness to work hard.

Is there a voice in this generation that will speak of Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith?

Is there a voice that can demonstrate great works for the youth of this generation, just as Peter and Paul did in our text, that is, in ways that cannot be denied?

This generation needs to hear the economic voice of the Godly man.

IS THERE A VOICE FOR SOUND THINKING?: Today, we are surrounded by a growing number of men whose thinking is unsound. Whether it is the thoughtless tweets of the President or the outrageous threats of the Supreme Leader of North Korea, there are too many who do not listen to our savior. Jesus warns us to be wise and subtle in our actions and to count the cost before we make a commitment. This is the instruction of the man whose life is guided by Biblical teaching.

The Bible encourages men to seek an understanding. It also urges us to seek direction from God. "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path" is a guiding principle of the Biblical man. Without sound thinking we make hasty decisions or react out of an impulse that drives them to destruction in the years to come.

The Greek word in the 2 Timothy 1:7 that is used for sound mind refers to moderation and self-control. It denotes a man of prudence, discretion, and balance. The Biblical man has an element of stability in his life. It stabilizes him and insulates him from making knee-jerk decisions without praying about them. A sound mind is a praying mind that is disciplined in the art of listening to God. Men are not born with sound minds, but as they mature in the faith, God remakes and reshapes their thinking to the point that they no longer act brashly or on impulse without thinking through their decisions. A sober thinking man comes when men focus on pleasing God in all of their actions.

Is there a voice among men that calls for us to reason together? If so, that voice is probably the voice of the Godly man.

IS THERE A MAN WHO WILL BE A ROLE MODEL? A man who lives a life that is exemplary before his wife and children commands their respect because his life is based on the Biblical example.

Abraham became a role model for his family because he sought to do the things that were right and just in the eyesight of God. Because this was his standard, his children and associates came to respect him for the moral tone of his life. Likewise, the man who obeys the law, works hard and lives a clean cut, ordered life, is a commanding presence.

Those who refuse to involve themselves in illegal activities, public drunkenness, and wild, uncontrolled actions command the respect of their children, who know the real deal. His children take note. His mate takes note. The community takes note. When he is in the presence of his family, he is welcomed not frowned upon.

When he is in the presence of his wife or even his former mate, she treats him with respect because he is always the gentleman and refuses to stoop lower than the standards he purports. When a man does this he is more than just a human who wears pants, he is viewed as a real man.

There is a call for more role models. These are men who say don't just do what I say, but watch what I do. They speak with the voice of men who have been dipped in the word of God, and the world should hear what they have to say because their voices are those of Biblical men.

We hear his voice

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that there is only one thing better than a good man and that is a Godly man in Godly hands.

The unique thing about the Biblical man is that he himself has heard the voice of God.

On the morning of the resurrection, Mary heard the savior call her name. She heard His voice asking, "Woman why weepest thou?" but it was when the savior called her name that she was filled with hope and encouragement. He called many men in the same way. Some were fishing. One was collecting taxes. All heard his voice.

He calls every man's name one by one. He speaks to our souls in an instant and reminds us that "a charge to keep I have and a God to glorify.

That's why the songwriter wrote, "I come to the garden alone. While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am his own. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other, has ever, known."

Hearing the voice of God, each Godly man is charged to exercise leadership in the family, church, and community.

To do that we must follow the example of the Biblical men in the word of God.

Elijah was a good man. He was strong, independent and courageous. But what made Elijah more appealing is the same quality that made many of the strong men of the bible great; they were faithful, Godly men in Godly hands.

Abraham was a Godly man, but when he put his trust in God and moved at his command, he was a good man in Godly hands.

Jacob was a Godly man. He prospered with material wealth and became respected as a man with a head for business. But one night he wrestled with the Lord and refused to let him go. From that night forward, he became a better man, because he demonstrated that he was a committed man in Godly hands!

David was a Godly man. He was a great leader and military strategist. But one day he realized his own vulnerability and said, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew in me a right spirit." He was great because he was a spirited man in Godly hands.

A Godly man in Godly hands is a powerful man because God uses him!

A Godly man in Godly hands is an influential man because God controls him!

A Godly man in Godly hands is an effective man because God directs him!

Where do Biblical men stand?

They stand on the side of the Lord!

That is why Joshua told those who chose differently, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

As men go forward in the world, they should always remember to take the Lord with them!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest enemies can be conquered!

If you take the Lord with you, your greatest obstacles can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your gravest doubts can be overcome!

If you take the Lord with you, your heaviest burdens can be lifted!

If you take the Lord with you, your highest mountains can be scaled!

If you want to make this journey, you've got to stand on the Lord' side; you got to walk with the King!

Storms may rise, but you got to walk!

Winds may blow, but you got to walk!

All along this tedious journey, tell the world, I've got to walk with the King!

Who died out on Calvary!

Who arose Early Sunday morning!

Rise up oh Biblical man, let the world hear your voice, and walk with the King!

No. 9796-Anniversary Pastor

These are the Sheep God Gave Me

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 2017

SCRIPTURE:"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28

Introduction

Have you ever thought about what the congregation of a church looks like to a pastor? He sits high in the pulpit on Sundays and scans the congregation. He knows every face, understands every family story and thinks deeply about the charge that God has given him.

The late Reverend C.V. Rodgers, the pastor of the Zion Traveler Baptist Church in Monroe, Louisiana, was a powerful preacher. On one occasion a neighboring congregation was without a pastor and had asked Rev. Rodgers to carry on for them until they found a new pastor. Each Sunday, he preached a full sermon at Zion Traveler and then went to the other congregation. Soon the other congregation noticed the support and love that he generated among their members and the deacons approached him about leaving Zion Traveler and becoming their pastor. They offered him nearly three times what Zion Traveler paid him with a long list of other perks if he made the move. He was tempted until one Sunday as he sat at Zion and looked out across the congregation and realized that he was not the pastor of the church as a whole, but he had been watching over each member of the congregation for decades. He performed their marriages, prayed with them in hospitals, settled their disputes and buried their dead. There, sitting in the pulpit looking out over his flock, he made his decision, "These are the sheep that God gave me, I must watch over my flock," he said. He turned down the lucrative offer and pastored Zion Traveler until the Lord took him home.

Moses was called to lead Israel to the promised land. His life was divided into three equal segments of 40 years. The first 40 years he spent in Pharaoh's court learning to lead, build, organize, and how to read and write. The second 40 years he spent as a lowly shepherd where he learned to be humble. The last 40 years he spent leading a flock of people who sometimes rebelled and sometimes strayed away. In the process he discovered this truth: He spent 40 years thinking he was somebody. He spent a second 40 years realizing that he was nobody. He spent the final 40 years realizing that God can take a nobody and make him somebody. In the closing years of his life, he

stood high on a mountain and looked out over Israel and probably breathed the same words as The Reverend Rodgers, “These are the sheep that God gave me.”

A pastor who has been given the opportunity to serve several generations of the same church has been truly blessed. It is also a great responsibility because he must continue to teach, feed and oversee each generation with the same passion that was shared with the first. It is a charge that remains the same without consideration of age; remember Moses was 40 years old when he began life as a shepherd of sheep, but he was 80 years old when he began serving as the shepherd of Israel, showing them the way to the promised land.

Anniversaries such as the one we note today are milestones. They are points along the way where we pause to evaluate the journey.

They are also times when we think about the person who has been leading us along the journey, what has been taught and how well we have followed.

Anniversaries tell us how far we have come and they help us measure how far we have to go.

When we celebrate the anniversary of the pastorate, we reflect upon our journey toward perfection under the leadership of the shepherd of the flock.

After traveling 30 years in his earthly journey, Jesus reached a point of decision and reflection. The devil offered him a chance to satisfy himself, to retire into a life of popularity and safety, but he refused to walk after the flesh but chose to follow the spirit. In essence, he told the devil, “These are the sheep God gave me.I must watch over my flock.”

As Christians, let us also salute the pastor the Lord has given us to guide us along the way. Today, think about the years your pastor has served as your spiritual leader. He has led you, fed you and guided you as Christ has led him. Speak a word for him in your prayers today. Ask God to give him strength.

Exposition

This text focuses on instructions given to ministers for the care and nurture of the church.

Paul encouraged ministers to pay attention to the flocks over which they have been placed giving their care and spiritual maintenance his utmost attention.

He urged ministers to:

Take Heed: The various ministers in the church were instructed to “Take heed to the flock” to see to it no part of it is neglected. The pastor must minister to the women and the men, the single and married, the young and the old. His message and ministry must be relevant to each generation. “Taking heed” also means that pastors are often called to sacrificial service. Ministers are charged to look beyond their own households as they minister to the souls of those who are under their charge. Just as shepherds oversee their sheep, the pastor must take heed that they receive no damage.

Holy Ghost: The flock that a pastor of a church oversees has been given to him by God through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost in this text is referred

to as a person of the Godhead, that we know as the Trinity: The Father, The Son, and the Holy Ghost. This indicates that God has placed the pastor in his position. God has breathed his blessing upon his ministry, and God has given him the authority to act and move. He made have been officially voted into a position by natural means, but the fact that they settled on him was inspired by God himself. The congregation became his flock.

Overseer: In this text, the Greek word "Episkopos" means overseer. An overseer is a preaching elder to a little flock, not an administrator and leader of many flocks. Acts 14:23 refers to elders in the same way. Thus, the terms overseer or elder both refer to the local pastor and are used interchangeably according to the tradition of the local congregation.

Feed the flock: Ministers must spiritually feed the church by performing all of the parts of the shepherd's office. The choice of words in this text narrows the focus of the pastor to a single congregation rather than a large conglomerate of congregations. The Greek term "Poimnion is used for "flock." It means, little flock. It indicates that pastors should focus ministries upon the flocks that they have been given to shepherd. They are charged to the sheep to green pastures, lay meat before them, do what they can to heal those not inclined to eat, provide a wholesome doctrine, and see that nothing is wanting that is necessary.

How Is the Flock Fed?

The pastor has been given a flock to feed and lead through the dangerous times in which we live. We are living in a time of mass murders, great fires that are sweeping away the West Coast, Hurricanes that are sweeping the South and Eastern Coast, and we stand on the brink of another World War as two off the chain leaders place itching fingers on buttons that can launch nuclear weapons

If ever there was a time for a seasoned pastor to shepherd the flock it is now. Sociologists are reporting that more than 60 percent of Black families are headed by women, and there are more Black men in prison than in college. Crime is rising. Violence is everywhere.

These are dangerous times.

PASTORS MUST FEED US TO LIFT US: Those who pastor our churches must continue to raise a standard for our people and to lift our families. This is why God reaches down into the ranks of the people and finds men of character and strength and places them over flocks. They have the mission of speaking to our generation in the name of the Lord. Pastors are placed over flocks for a purpose. The pastor must keep raising the consciousness of those around us to lift our families. He must feed them the Word of God for every situation. He must feed them hope that no circumstance is beyond God's control. He who leads must keep telling the dispirited masses that despite hurricanes, earthquakes and rising tides, that God is still on the throne!

PASTORS SHOW US HOW TO WALK WITH GOD: Just as a shepherd must

show sheep where to pastor, the pastor of a congregation has the important but delicate job of teaching believers how and where to walk. The Christian faith is not a long list of Thou Shall Nots. However, it is a simple list of How-tos. The Christian faith does not say, Keep Off The Grass. It is a faith that says, Walk on the Sidewalk.

The Christian walk requires balance and rhythm. This is where the pastor comes in. He helps every believer develop a regular routine that promotes the Christian walk.

He continually encourages regular Bible reading at a set time each day to establish a rhythm, a pattern and a routine that regularly feeds the soul. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

The pastor feeds the congregation through preaching and teaching, but he also encourages personal Bible study because it should be an integral part of a believer's walk.

The pastor shows the congregation the value of walking with God.

In storms, they are reminded that God can speak to the wind and waves!

In turbulence, they are reminded that God is our shelter and our cleft in the Rock.

In Times of Frustration, they are reminded that God will make a way out of no way.

The old warriors sang, "Walk with me Lord, Walk with me. I want Jesus to walk with me."

That's the message of hope that the Pastor gives to his flock that, "The Lord will make a way somehow!"

THE PASTOR MUST EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR SERVICE: The pastor must train the congregation for the service of God. The pastor of any congregation is challenged to reemphasize the importance of preparation, training and kingdom building. Simply sitting comfortably, neither hot nor cold, does not please God.

Look at what this pastor has done.

He has hosted classes and workshops to help equip every member to at least have basic bible skills; to know that Genesis is in the front of the Bible and not the back!

He has arranged for every member to know the history, heritage, and program of the church and how the church program is reflected in the Word of God.

He has preached to us about the importance of preparing ourselves through attitude and aptitude, to serve in the church.

He has helped us see Jesus in every walk of life, and to know that he stands at the door of the future waiting for an opportunity to enter.

We salute him today, but our greatest salute comes when we respond to what he has taught by saying, "If the Lord needs somebody, Here am I, send me."

The Pastor takes the flock to Jesus

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider what happens when pastors properly watch over the sheep: they are both fed and led to live the abundant life.

The pastor who shepherds his flock also serves as the congregation's watchman. When there is a watchman on the wall, the church is warned against impending danger. In a time of peril, the question is asked, "Watchman, what of the night?"

When the pastor watches over the church, we will hear the gospel declared, and our faith will be strengthened. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:14-15

When the pastor watches over the church, Jesus is lifted up.

If we lift Jesus up, mighty things begin to happen!

If we lift Jesus up, the wicked will cease from troubling!

If we lift Jesus up, the weary will be at rest!

If we lift Jesus up, no matter how dark the hour, we will remember that joy comes in the morning!

If we lift Jesus up, no cloud will overshadow our sky!

If we lift Jesus up, the sinner can find salvation!

If we lift Jesus up, the despairing man can find hope!

If we lift Jesus up, the world will come to know him for he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

As long as the pastor watches over the church, there will always be a way to hear a word from the Lord!

When there is a word from the Lord:

—We can see victory in the midst of defeat; Triumph in the midst of tragedy.

—We can enjoy peace in the midst of confusion; Joy in the midst of sadness.

Because the pastor feeds the flock, we have somebody who can tell us the old story!

Because the pastor feeds the flock, he can tell us about Jesus!

Jesus, the lighthouse in the stormy sea!

Jesus, the leaning post in a trying time!

Jesus, the river of water in a dry thirsty land!

Jesus, who died out on Calvary and rose after three days!

As long as the pastor watches, he can keep reminding us that one of these old days,

Jesus is coming back again!

He's coming!

He's coming back again!

No. 9797-Revival

Fatal Distractions

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

October 22, 2017

SCRIPTURE: And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. 1 Corinthians 7:35

Introduction

Have you ever known people whose lives are completely off course? These are people whose lives are so far off course that unless they have a course correction, they will be destroyed.

Getting off course just a little can alter your destination. Author Benjamin Hardy cites what happened to an off-course airliner in 1979 as an example. In 1979, a passenger jet with 257 people onboard left New Zealand for a sightseeing flight to Antarctica and back. However, the pilots were unaware that in a distracted moment the flight coordinates for the trip had been altered by a measly two degrees, putting them 28 miles east of where they assumed to be. Approaching Antarctica, the pilots descended to give the passengers a view of the brilliant landscapes. However, because of the incorrect coordinates, a snow and the clouds above, the pilots were deceived into thinking they were flying into flat ground, but instead were placed directly in the path of the active volcano, Mount Erebus. When the instruments sounded a warning of the quickly rising ground, it was too late. The plane crashed into the volcano, and everyone onboard died. It was a fatal distraction.

Distractions can steer all of us off course. At the time it seems like a small distraction, not life altering because we are still traveling in the same general direction. A course change of just a few degrees can alter our lives forever and change destinies.

A distracted athlete cannot give his best on the playing field and misses the championship ring.

A leader besieged with personal problems cannot entirely focus on the issues of those who follow him.

A student's academic performance drops once he or she is distracted. A person driving an automobile can cause a serious, life-threatening accident if he is distracted. Distractions have a way of slowing progress at the least, and totally derailing activity at the most. Thus, it becomes extremely important for those who are trying to succeed in life to avoid distractions because even the smallest distraction can steer them off the course.

Distractions affect: Time, relationships, finances, health, and spirituality. At first, the altered course seems insignificant, but the distraction takes away valuable time needed to associate with people, go to places and focus on the things that will get you to your destination. Things that distract you to the point that you miss opportunities are fatal distractions.

Distractions also affect your finances. It could be something as simple as the distraction of buying a lottery ticket that turns fatal as we increasingly spend more on lotteries, gambling, bingo and other fruitless uses of our finances until the distraction becomes so disastrous that our income is ruined and bankruptcy results.

Distractions can alter relationships. Many marriages have been destroyed and otherwise blossoming relationships never matured because one party or the other fail to focus on making his/her relationship work because he/she was distracted with another. For the relationship, it became a fatal distraction.

Many have had their health destroyed by fatal distractions, and addictions. They became so distracted that they did not eat at all or ate too much. They became sickly and approached death.

Millions have been spiritually distracted to the point that they no longer have a vibrant faith, their prayer life has vanished, their worship is occasional, and their focus on kingdom building activity is blurred. To miss heaven because of a distraction is a fatal distraction.

Among the Biblical patriots, there were many who were distracted along the way such as Abraham, David, Jacob, and Elijah. However, at some point, they corrected their course, changed their thinking and returned to their life's purpose. That's where the mercy of God comes in. God says in 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." A Distraction does not have to be fatal, God shows us the way back.

As Christians, we know that it is easy to get off track, distracted by the circumstances of life, but it is good to know that God gives us a way to atone and self-correct if we will turn to the Savior and let him put our lives back on track.

Exposition

This text focuses on Paul's advice concerning staying focused on the work of the kingdom.

The immediate context of this letter to the Corinthians addressed the subject of celibacy as it related to the ministry. Since there was no specific command from Christ concerning the issue, in verse 25, he begins in this manner, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, v. 25. I have no express and universal law delivered by the Lord himself concerning celibacy; but I give my judgment, as one who hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful," namely, in the apostleship. He said in the succeeding verses that he thought it best for a person to pursue the kingdom with distractions. He considered being married and having a family as a distraction, but not

a sin.

He advised those who could remain celibate to do so, but rather than burn with passion, he also advised that it was OK for them to be married.

Marriage and romantic relationships were not frowned on, but they were seen as distractions that could have fatal consequences. At the beginning of the church, Christians were grievously persecuted. It was dangerous to be a Christian because they had accumulated a large number of enemies who wanted to treat them cruelly. They were continually facing prosecution and persecution. That's why he did not think it was wise or advisable for Christians that were single to change conditions. Marriage brought with it private concerns for the safety and welfare of a family and would be a vulnerability to the apostles considering their persecution.

He emphasizes that the apostle's duty must be to God.

While the text speaks specifically about celibacy, it also expands to pronounce that believers are expected to become indifferent about the things of the world to the point of focusing wholly on the kingdom without the distractions of worldly pursuits.

He encouraged followers not to be too closely tied to worldly enjoyments, comforts, pass times, sorrows or celebration because they would ultimately become distractions. Even business concerns are not should be approached with an attitude that they will not supplant, replace or take top priority over the kingdom of God. Jesus gave a parable of the great feast invitation that was turned down by many who had worldly priorities, they had purchased land, oxen or married and therefore could not attend the wedding. Distractions, whether they are related to marriage or worldly pursuits, can become fatal if they stand in the way of the will of God.

Focus on the Essential

The ultimate goal of every Christian is to please God and make it to heaven one day. To please God requires us to avoid the distractions of the world and remain focused on what really counts.

ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE MAIN FOCUS IS A DISTRACTION: One great myth of the present generation is the idea of multi-tasking; the ability to do more than one thing at the same time and efficiently focus on all of them. Social Scientists have proven that multi-tasking is a myth because what really happens is the brain shifts from one activity to another quickly, leaving one on pause for a few seconds and switching back. We have learned to change focus, but not maintain focus on several items at the same time. A great example is the difficulty of composing an email or report while talking to someone on the phone at the same time. What really happens we switch from one to the other, but do not entertain both at the same time.

Daniel Goldman, author of the book "Emotional Intelligence" indicates that there are different levels of attention that require a balance to succeed. He described the levels as "inner, outer, and other." There are many youth who claim the ability to focus on their school work, listen to music, and talk on the phone at the same time. While it is possible to do all three of these at the same time, it is impossible to give all three

elements complete and total focus. If one item is more important than the others, then the other two effectively serve as distractions. Change the scenario to: Making the honor roll, Making the team, succeeding at a relationship. If one of these items is more important than the other, then the other two are distractions.

What happens if we talk to God and text message our friends at the same time? Is it possible to worship and read the latest posts on Facebook at the same time?

The Bible says in Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Godly prayer, worship or study God's word while multitasking. The other items are distractions that have spiritually fatal consequences.

WITHOUT INNER FOCUS WE ARE EASILY DISTRACTED: Inner focus is the time we spend reading, studying the Bible, and listening to God's word. Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Inner focus keeps us on track with the course God would have us to take. There are many who are pursuing careers and great undertakings who have substituted studying for the Bar Exam, ACT, Medical School Admissions or Exit Exams for their focus on inner strength. There is no substitute for personal prayer and reflection. On occasion, everyone needs to withdraw and reflect. Jesus often pulled away into the mountainside and took refuge in the garden. Inner focus moments are those when you ask yourself, is this path one that God would approve? Am I on course or slightly off course? Inner focus is where you ask God to be your life coach. No player tries to entertain a game without a coach. No boxer steps into the ring without a trainer. In the same context, a Christian who attempts to step into life without the constant instruction and guidance that comes from the word can easily lose inner focus and get off track. They are in the boat of life, but they have no rudder. They are moving, but quickly drift off course.

WITHOUT OUTER FOCUS WE LOSE THE CAPACITY TO FELLOWSHIP: Outer Focus relates to the attention given those outside of yourself. When this begins to happen, we show little interest or concern about the experiences of others. This is a case where the ambulance races down the street and fire truck sirens are blasting while you are focused on your favorite TV program. When you finally look out the window, you have no idea why so many people are crying, sitting on your grass and the air is filled with smoke. When we focus only on ourselves and tune out others, we are clueless about the cause and effect of human success or failure. Galatians 6:2 says we should bear the burdens of others.1 Thessalonians 5:11 says we should encourage one another and build up one another. To do that may require fellowship. Fellowship means to be in the company of others, even if you are not the focus of attention of the assembly, for the purpose of supporting and encouraging others. Many are seriously flawed in this area. Ironically, it is that outer focus that helps keeps on target with our spiritual goal

WITHOUT OTHER FOCUS, WE CAN BE BLINDSIDED: Another focus relates to the attention given to events and conditions in the world around you. The spiritually minded person pays close attention to the world around them and compares world events to the word of God. The spiritually inclined person watches the news and hears

accounts about the war in Afghanistan, the threat of war in Iran, and rumors of impending war with North Korea and is concerned but does not panic. Why? Matthew 24:6 "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." We watch further and hear of fires in California that are destroying hundreds of homes, hurricanes that are decimating who cities in Texas and Florida, and here of earthquakes in Lospalos, Indonesia, and Montana, then we read Matthew 24:7 "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." The focus on the world around us helps us to be ready and not be blindsided.

Our God is focused on us

Finally, it is important that we note that while at times we are distracted in our service to our Lord, he was never distracted, his mind was focused on us!

Though tempted in many ways, he was never distracted because he had salvation on his mind!

In the wilderness, Satan offered him self-appeasement and challenged him to turn stones into bread. However, Jesus refused saying, "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!" He couldn't be distracted because his mind was focused on us!

Satan dangled fame and glory in front of him, but could not get him off track, "Get thee behind me Satan" was his response. His mind was focused on us!

Every child of God should draw strength from knowing that you are always on his mind!

When we are right, his mind is focused on us!

When we are wrong, his mind is focused on us!

When we are enjoying success, wallowing in failure, relishing strength, pondering weakness, we are always on his mind!

Even when we are asleep at night his mind was focused on us!! I know it's true because Psalm 121 says "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers or sleeps, he will not suffer the sun to smite you by day or the moon by night!" We are always on his mind!

When Jesus left the garden, he planned to obey his father's will, which was to provide a means of salvation for every believer. He was never distracted, his mind stayed on the purpose of God!

I am so glad that Jesus kept his mind on me!

Though they judged him in midnight trials, his mind was on me! Though whipped and ridiculed, his mind was on me!

When he died out on Calvary, his mind was on me!

But early Sunday morning arose, with all power in his hand!

No wonder the songwriter wrote: "I woke up this morning with my mind, stayed on Jesus! Walking and Talking with my mind stayed on Jesus! Singing and shouting

with my mind stayed on Jesus!”
Everywhere I go, I’m going keep my mind ...
Stayed on Jesus!

No. 9798-Revival

Tales from the Crypt (Testimonies of the Walking Dead)

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

October 29, 2017

SCRIPTURE:"For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Colossians 3:3-4

Introduction

Have you ever lived a life other than the one you are living now? If so, it's possible that anyone who had not followed you through your other life probably wouldn't recognize you now. Between 1953-1956 there was a regular television broadcast called, "I led three lives." It was about a man who led one life as a white-collar worker in a corporation, another life as a communist spy, and third life as an FBI agent hired to root out communist spies." It was a popular broadcast during the time because the nation was fixed on trying to root out anyone who was a communist; there were 117 episodes of the program.

How many lives do we live today? Some of us are known by the live that we live today. We work every day or have retired. We obey the law, pay our taxes, drink coffee, tea, soft drinks or lemonade, love our families, cut our grass, go to church on Sundays and enjoy wholesome fellowship and friends. That's the life that we see today. But there are some who have lived one or two other lives, in which we would not be recognizable if anyone from our present life saw us in one of our other lives.

Yet, there is still another life some of us lead; it's the life that is on the down-low. It's the life of clubs on the weekend and the life that shows up at the church on Sunday. It's the life where we gamble heavy, but give a tithe on our winnings. It's a life where we fornicate, kill, murder, steal, get drunk and live loosely, but never always claim to love God post a scripture on Facebook or Twitter.

Those who live their lives outside of God's will are described as "dead" to salvation of the Lord. They are not in a casket, but they are dead to the Lord. They are walking around every day, but they are dead. They don't look like the Zombies in the television series the "Walking Dead," because they dress, walk and talk like normal human beings. On the television series, it's easy to spot the "Walking Dead" because they look ugly and walk like mummies. But the walking dead that we see every day, dress well, look good

and definitely don't walk like Zombies.

Between 1989-1996 there was an HBO television series entitled "Tales from the Crypt." Wikipedia describes it this way, "Each episode begins with a tracking shot leading to the front door of the Crypt Keeper's decrepit mansion. Once inside, the camera pans down hallways and stairways and finally descends into the basement. The Crypt Keeper, then pops out from his coffin, cackling wildly; finally, green slime pours down over the screen as the main title appears."

What if there was a weekly broadcast with you as the Crypt Keeper telling tales from your personal crypt; from the time when one of your three lives was lived in a world distant from God or when you tried to merge the two on the down low? Would it be a hit?

The Crypt Keeper narrates the world of darkness in which we lived before we knew Christ. It was a world populated by those who draw the wages of sin which is death. We lived in a world of the dead described in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as a world of " fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuality, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners."

In the television series, the Crypt Keeper tells only the story of our death, but in our spiritual journey from a life of darkness, Jesus stands not as Crypt Keeper to keep telling the tales of the Crypt, but as one who stands at the door of the abundant life. He says, " John 14:6 , "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

As Christians, our testimony or tale from the Crypt is that we were once in darkness, but thanks to the wonderful grace of Jesus, we now lead one life as walk out of darkness into the marvelous light.

Exposition

This text explains how a Christian is dead to sin and is hidden with Christ in God.

Paul, writing to the church in Colossae explained how a believer dies to the things of the world, and his new life is hidden or buried in Christ.

An easy way to read this passage is, " As far as this world is concerned, you are already dead, and your true life is a hidden one in God, through Christ… "

Our understanding of this passage is clearer when we consider two words in the text: "dead" and "hidden."

Barnes's Notes on the New Testament says, "To be dead to a thing is a strong expression denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. He is insensible to sounds, and tastes, and pleasures; to the hum of business, to the voice of friendship, and to all the scenes of commerce, gaiety, and ambition. When it is said, therefore, that a Christian is dead to sin, the sense is, that it has lost its influence over him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life."

A person in the world is dead to the things of God; he is totally unaffected and could care less. A person who is dead to the world has been released from its influence; it

has no power over him.

The Greek word Paul uses for "hidden" is krypto. It's the same word that gives us "Crypt," another word for "tomb where a corpse is meant to remain hidden, until that day when all are raised to new life with Christ.

To hide something away is, literally, to encrypt it. There are special locking algorithms that can lock the contents of a computer and protect it from view.

With this understanding, the text reads, "For you have died, and your life is encrypted with Christ in God." Until Christ comes to raise us in glory.

The text gives a picture of two episodes of the same life: One in the world, in which we were dead in Christ and things of God; in the crypt. The other episode is a new life that is hidden or "encrypted" with Christ in God.

If we give any testimony of our lives, one would be a tale of our lives in a world of the walking dead, and the other would be about our "encrypted" life that is hidden in Christ.

A tale of two lives

Charles Dickens wrote a novel called, "A Tale of Two Cities" and it began this way:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way."

In a way, Dickens tale is the tale of our lives. We've seen the best of times and the worst of times. We have seen times when we were wise and times when we lived foolishly. We've also seen times when we were on our way to heaven, and we've seen times when we the other way. These times are best reflected in two lives many of us have lead.

FIRST LIFE: LIVING AMONG THE WALKING DEAD: There are many people who are the walking dead. They are alive, but they are not living. They are moving, but they are going nowhere. They have no purpose other than to eat, sleep, party, have sex and start all over again. They are like the Zombies in the TV series. The zombies have only one purpose, and that's to find human brains for dinner. They won't achieve anything, do anything important or accomplish anything of significance.

The tragedy about the walking dead is that they are alive but they have no real dreams other than being ghetto fabulous: Who can wear the most jewelry. Who has the best tattoo. Who has most pairs of Jordans. They work or hustle every day, but their labor is not toward a greater good. - If that's your life, you are among the walking dead.

Whenever you are doing things, just to be doing them, and it really doesn't matter, it means you have lost your passion for it. If you ever lose your passion you join the walking dead. Your passion is the energy, enthusiasm, and excitement that you bring to your life's work. Your passion is what makes you rise early and stay up late doing

what you enjoy doing. Without your passion you drag to work every day. Without Passion, you come home to a beautiful wife or a handsome husband and look at them with a blank stare with no desire to do anything. You are among the walking dead.

You are really among the walking dead when God speaks to you, but there is no response. You are dead when God calls your name, but there is no reply. You are dead when God commands you, but there is no obedience. You are surely dead when God shows his love for you, but he receives no affection in return.

For all practical purposes that soul is dead to God.

What we love about Christ is that he called us out of the darkness into the marvelous life. He gave us the opportunity to walk away from the Crypt and its tales of failure, wasted time, wasted opportunity and step into the light.

Colossians 2:13-14 says, "And you, being dead in your sins ...hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Jesus is calling for those who have turned a deaf ear to the things of God to come out from among the dead and leave them behind.

His call is simple. It's in Matthew 8:22 "... Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."

NEW LIFE: WALKING IN THE LIGHT: Our old life is a tale of walking in darkness. Our new life in Christ is just the opposite it is a tale of a brand new person who allows the spirit of God to live within him/her. When we accept Christ, he raises us to another level of experience. The first thing you notice is that you are not an improved version of your old self, but you are brand new. You don't stop drinking cheap wine but drink a better wine instead. You don't turn away from $20 prostitutes, but choose $1,000 a night hookers instead. Your new life is not one where you stop looking at porn on magazine racks and move up to subscribing to X-Rated television channels. Our new life in Christ is not one that is reformed, cleaned up, but an entirely new life born out of Christ. The man who is living in you now is a heavenly man. He was not here before. When Christ lives in us, we are dead to the world. We do not respond to the call of the club, the whiskey bottle, the opportunity for fornication, or any ungodliness because we are no longer in that world. It is dead to us.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The main thing that happens when you let Christ live in you and you live in Christ is that you get a new walk. There is a difference between the way a Zombie walks and the way a non-Zombie walks. A believer has given his life to Christ and stepped out of the crypt. He has dropped the symbols of the time when we walked with the dead. For some, it might mean changing clothing styles. For others, it might mean, changing the places where we go to hangout or even some of the dead people, places and things we associated with in the past.

Because we have stepped out of the darkness with Christ, we are no longer among the walking dead!

If we are to reach for the abundant life, we must not surround ourselves with people who want to feed off others rather than really live!

The second thing that happens is that we bury ourselves in Christ. We are hidden in him. We are a mystery to those who knew us in our first life. What a change! Our walk, our talk, and our destination changes.

The Greatest Testimony

Finally, brothers and sisters, there is no greater testimony than the person who tells the story of how God spoke to his situation.

When we talk about how God lifted us and saved us, it's a tale from the crypt, a testimony of the walking dead.

When Paul talked about meeting God on the Damascus Road and turning his life around, it was a tale from the crypt, a testimony of the walking dead.

When the woman at the well talked about meeting a man who told her all she ever did, it was a tale of the crypt, a testimony of the walking dead.

When the lunatic man who ran through the graveyard talked about how God ran evil spirits out of his life, it was a tale from the crypt, the testimony of the living dead.

We don't have to go that far we can look at our own lives.

There was a time when we filled the gambling casinos, bingo parlors, and midnight crap shoots. We were among the walking dead.

There was a time, when we engaged in countless secret encounters in cheap hotels, in back seats of cars, kissing three frogs trying to find one prince. We were among the walking dead.

There was a time when our best friends were not Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John but they had names like Hennessey, Jack Daniels, Seagrams and Johnny Walker Red. We were among the walking dead.

But when the Lord spoke to our situation we were changed and given a new life. We were washed in the blood of the lamb!

Those who have been saved have a new testimony. It's not a tale of the crypt, but the tale of the encrypted, those who are saved by the grace of God.

Our testimony is that God is able to bring us out of darkness into the marvelous light Not only that, God is able to take our:

BURDENS and lighten our load; PROBLEMS and help us find the answers!

DARKNESS and turn it into light; WEAKNESSES and turn them into strengths!

SETBACKS and turn them into come backs; STUMBLING BLOCKS and turn them into stepping stones!

I've got a new life, and it's no longer among the walking dead!

I've got a new walk, and it's no longer among the walking dead!

I'm glad that He is a wonder-working God!

I'm glad that He is a favor giving God!

I'm glad that He is a soul-saving God!

I’m glad that one day he decided to pick up an old rugged cross!
I’m glad that He carried it to Golgotha’s hill!
He died on Calvary, and they buried in the crypt!
Early Sunday morning…he arose from the grave with a new tale from the crypt
He arose with all power in his hands!

No. 9799-Revival

Help, I've Fallen, and I Can't Get up

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

November 12, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Proverbs 24:16

Introduction

Have you had a fall, but couldn't get up without a little help? It could have been in your home, climbing a step, or a quick, unexpected turn that landed you on the floor. Babies often fall, especially when they are just learning to walk and get their balance. After our infant years, most falls are accidental. After the fall the baby sits on the floor and cries until someone helps him/her up.

Adults fall accidently by tripping over items, missing a step on a stairway or while trying to balance themselves on high heels. Depending on the fall, some need a little help to get up.

Some falls are intentional, such as the falls of Hollywood stuntmen, rodeo riders, or skydivers, even then there are times when they need a little help getting up.

Seniors are at risk of falling; they know how to walk, but physical factors relating to health often cause falls such as failing eyesight and hearing. Senior reflexes might not be as sharp as they once were. Health problems such as Diabetes, heart disease, or problems with your thyroid, nerves, feet, or blood vessels can affect your balance as well. They can result in a fall, that might require assistance to get up.

Do you remember the medic alert commercial? It featured an elderly woman who had fallen on the floor, who pressed a button on her necklace and said, "Help, I've fallen, and I can't get up!" The necklace is electronically connected to a health center that is monitored 24 hours a day. If the button is pressed, someone would be alerted and help you get on your feet again. That's important because a person who has fallen may be on a bathroom floor or somewhere out of the reach of a phone and may not be discovered for days, depending on how often they are contacted by family members. The Medic Alert necklace reduces the wait time for help.

Often in life, there are times when we lose our balance and fall, not physically, but we fall out of sync with what we know should be the right path. We're in balance when there is not too much of one thing and too little of another. Believers strive to achieve

the balanced life. When we are balanced, we can walk without stumbling. When we are out of balance, we fall.

We know we are out of balance when we can't ever seem to be satisfied and we are continually reaching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Consider the man who was unsatisfied with his vehicle and kept messing up his life trying to keep up with a man who owned something he didn't have. It began one day when a Hooptie stopped at a red traffic light and was waiting for it to change when a small hooptie pulled up beside a limo. The brother in the Limo rolled down the window and started bragging that his car was the best car that money could buy. "It has ABS, airbags for all passengers, automatic climate control, onboard computer control system, photochromatic glass, mini bar, a television with satellite dish and hydraulic shocks. It drives and parks itself."

At this point, the Hooptie owner rolled down his window and pointed, "But do you have a video in there?" The brother in the Limo had been dissed. He immediate bought a Big Screen video for his limo. A few days passed by, and again the limo was at a traffic light when the limo brother spotted the Volkswagen again. He bragged about his limo and showed his layaway bed.

"But does it have self-guided GPS synced to your cell phone that gets you to your destination even if you don't know the address?" asked the Volkswagen owner as he drove off. Upset the limo owner hurriedly had an updated GPS system installed. He laughed a few days later when he saw the little Volkswagen pulled to the side of the road with its windows all steamed up. Steam was even coming from the windows and water was dripping on the ground.

The limo brother knocked on the window and said, "I got a GPS system now!"

The Volkswagen owner said, "You got me out of my morning shower to tell me that?"

There are many who have no balance in their lives. They are constantly trying to get more and keep up with their neighbors or outdo someone else. It's throwing the finances, relationships and family peace out of balance; and they fall.

We drink too much. We fall.

We stay away from home too much. We fall.

We spend too much. We fall

Sometimes we fall, and we are like the woman in the commercial, "Help I've fallen, and I can't get up!"

Wouldn't it be cool if we could have a life alert necklace for non-physical falls and failures? When we fall, when we think we can't get up, we could just press it, tell the control center about the situation and we get help! When we think about it, every believer has a spiritual alert mechanism. It's not a necklace, but it is connected to a 24 heavenly control center. That mechanism is called prayer, the person that answers is God himself. He responds, and when we tell him that we are down, we have fallen and we are overwhelmed, and he'll help us get up again.

As Christians, we are happy to know that we serve a God that is only a prayer away. When we lose our balance and fall for whatever reason, he'll respond if we tell him "Help I've fallen, and I can't get up!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the spiritual elements that can cause a person to fall, and how recovery can be restored.

The Proverbs of Solomon are short statements that sum up life truths in ways that are easy to understand. The text refers to a man or woman who is trying to follow God's law and to act wisely. It maintains that such a person may error seven times, but will always get back up again.

The companion verse that is associated with verse sixteen is Proverbs 9:1 which says, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:" Both verses contain the number seven which is a number of completeness in the Bible.

A man or woman who builds a balanced life builds it on seven principles of wisdom that helps it to stand. This wise man or woman is described as a "just" man or woman in the text: someone who is trying to do things according to God's will, wisely and with prudence.

Proverbs 9:1 does not detail the principles, but James 3:17 says: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

1. Always act with a pure intent, never with an ulterior motive.
2. The goal of anything you do is to peaceably achieve an objective.
3. The manner of our relationship is gentle and diplomatic.
4. To avoid unreasonable responses and open to reasonable alternatives
5. To consider the needs of others and be willing to be helpful
6. To do what you do for God's glory, not for personal gain showing partiality.
7. To be sincere in our faith, service, and relationships without hypocrisy.

The text indicates that a just man is a wise man whose life is founded upon and supported by these seven basic principles. Such a house will never completely fall.

Why doesn't a life based on seven principles of wisdom ultimately fall? Because it's based on seven supports. If we fail in one or even three of them at one time, the other four will uphold us until all are restored.

Thus a life of genuine wisdom is a life founded upon the fear of the Lord and the seven principles of wisdom. A person who experiences a weakness in one of the seven principles does not ultimately fail, but gets back up again on the strength of the remaining pillars.

A stupid man tries to build his life on principles that will not stand. The text says they will lead to mischief:

1. Do unto others before they do unto you.
2. Steal, but don't be foolish enough to get caught
3. It's OK to do the crime if you are willing to do the time
4. Punch, shoot or kill anyone who disagrees with you.
5. Destroy your enemies
6. To get ahead cheat if necessary, just don't get caught

7. Get the hookups you need, by appearing at the right places and dropping the right names whether it's the church you attend or people you know. Use them or be used.

The wicked man cannot be held up if one of his guiding principles fails because all of them are based on weak foundations. Jesus said he is like a man who builds his house on the sand and is washed away when the storm comes.

The just man may fall, but his overriding principle of faith will always cause him to rise again.

Falling Down

The text gives us several thoughts for consideration when we have fallen. It doesn't matter whether we have been pushed down, stumbled down, pressed down, knocked down, or we have slipped down, these truths must apply:

THE DEVIL IS BEHIND MOST LIFE FALLS: If we fall or act unwisely, the believer knows that the devil has found a way into our lives. His goal is to make us fall. Satan is constantly looking for ways to destroy children of God.1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" In the presence of our enemies, God prepares a table for believers. He blesses us with comfort, peace, and joy despite the fact that we have not participated in the world, yielded to the flesh, or been discouraged by people influenced by Satan's bad spirit.

When the devil sees how we are able to stand even though he keeps messing with us, he is defeated. He keeps knocking us down, and we keep getting back up again again.

Satan is frustrated when he sees how good God is to you.

He tries to defeat you, but then he sees God's hand working out victories for you!

He knocks you down, but then he sees God lifting you up when I have fallen down!

He makes you sad, but then he hears you sing, "Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come, when Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me!

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL: It's expected that there will instances when we will fall; do something unwise or spiritually out of whack. The key for is to know what do to do in case of a fall. In the building there are signs that say "In case of fire do not use the elevator." So if you fall, don't try to quick or easy way up. Take the steps. What are the steps? Acknowledge that you have fallen: "Help, I have fallen." The prodigal son was able to get back on his feet again when he took the first step: 1) Acknowledge that he has made a mistake, not anyone else, 2) Return to his father 3)Ask forgiveness. If you fall, take the steps.

In a theatre, there are lights on the floor that will lead you to the way out. In an emergency, you may be knocked to the floor and can't see, but you can follow the lights. Jesus said he is the light of the world. If we follow Jesus, he will show us the way out; how to get on our feet again.

If you fall into fiery situations, be like the three Hebrew Boys, who read the spiritual

warning on the side of the furnace, "In case of fire, call on the Lord" because he's able!

IF YOU HAVE FALLEN IN SIN, ARISE: Even the best person can fall into sin, but we can't get up alone. We are like the woman in the Life Alert commercial, who cries out, "Help I have fallen, and I can't get up!" –Once she bought a Life-Alert device, she could get help at the push of a button. The key to answering the command to rise is to ask God to help you. If we want to climb out of the black hole we are in, we should allow the power of God to lift us and help us stand. Can those who are dead in their sins rise and shine? Can people who are absorbed in themselves rise above their narcissism? Can the thief rise above his kleptomania? Not alone! But there is a redeemer who is willing to help you climb out. Yes, if we ask for God's help. Maybe that's what the song writer had in mind when he wrote, "Ask the savior to help you, comfort strengthen and keep you. He is willing to aid you. He will carry you through."

Another Chance

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider no matter how low we have fallen, he gives us another chance.

The songwriter is correct when he says, "We fall down, but we get up!" We are able to do so because Christ lifts the fallen spirit within us and stands us up again.
When the demonic man fell at Jesus' feet after spending years wandering among the tombs, he was told to rise. When the lame man who had not walked for 38 years met the Lord beside the pool, he was told to rise, "Take thy bed and walk."
No matter how dark our situation may seem, the God we serve is able to lift us up, turn us around and plant our feet on Solid ground!

One thing we have learned about that little life alert button is that when you push the button, someone gets on the line. They tell you everything will be alright. Then they start calling your core responders. They may call your husband or wife, son or daughter, police or emergency responders and say someone you love has fallen and they can't get up.

When we have fallen we lift up our hands and say, "Father I stretch my hands too thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, whither shall I go?" I've fallen, and I can't get up.

That call goes to the father, son and the Holy Ghost saying, someone, you love has fallen, and they can't get up. I know you love them because the word says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten so that whosoever believeth on them should not perish but have everlasting life."

Even after you push the life alert button, someone at the control center stays on the line and never leave you alone!

Jesus is on the mainline, and he promised never to leave me, never leave me alone.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find myself slipping down the mountain of life, and I have to cry out to Lord, "Take my hand! Hold me in your everlasting arms!"

Lord, take my hand when I can't see my way!

Lord, take my hand when I can't turn to the right or the left!

Lord, take my hand when I have fallen and help me up again!
When you find yourself falling and you can't get up, call on the name of Jesus!
Jesus, a strong hand that will not let you down!
Jesus, a mother to the motherless!
Jesus, a shelter in a time of storm!
Call on Jesus, who reaches out to us with nail-scarred hands!
Call on Jesus, who died out on Calvary, but Early Sunday morning arose from the grave!

No. 9800 -Inspiration

What Things?

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La
November 19, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:" Luke 24:19

Introduction

Have you ever taken an inventory of the things God has done for you? What about an inventory of things that you do that are bringing you closer to God? When we finish our inventory, will we find that the things God have done for us appreciated or depreciated in their value to us? Is there a depreciation factor in the things we do for God or have they increased in value to him?

An inventory lets us know how many things we had at the start and how many things we had at the end, and whether or not the total value of those things has appreciated or depreciated. What is depreciated value or appreciated value? A 2013 Ford Taurus was worth $25,000 in 2013, but four years later it is only worth $11,000 even though it's in perfect condition. It depreciated or lost value. An ounce of gold sold for $272 in 2000, but was worth $1,200 in 2017; it appreciated or gained value.

When God blesses us, he blesses us with physical things, tangibles or many things that we cannot see; i.e., intangibles. What things has God given us that are tangible? A car, an apartment, clothes, fishing boat, rifle, big screen television, cell phone. All of these are tangible things; they are things we can touch. We thank God for physical blessings, but also know that they are tangible; they depreciate in value. We were excited when we received our first 8 track tape, it was a blessing, but it depreciated. When we opened the box on our new iPhone 4 we knew we were blessed, but it depreciated every year.

Our real praise to God is for the intangibles because they do not depreciate, but they appreciate in value. When Christ saved our soul from hellfire and damnation, it is was an intangible gift that increases in value as we get closer to judgment. What other intangible things has God bless us with? The blessing of knowing what it is to love and be loved is a blessing that increases in value. Peace, Joy, forgiveness, optimism, dependability, faith, and hope, all of these are blessings that God gives us that we can't put our finger on, but they appreciate in value.

Has our relationship with God appreciated in value or depreciated? We should know God better today than we did a few years ago; if so, our relationship is

appreciating in value because we are trusting him more and loving him more. We should know about God's word than we did a few years ago, we should find studying his word refreshing and find ourselves meditating on it more; if so then it has appreciated in value. You should desire to please God more than you did in the past and find more satisfaction in doing things that please God than those connected with worldly pursuits. If you find yourself trying to follow the spirit more and prioritizing your time to be of service to the kingdom more now than you have done in the past, then your relationship with God is appreciating in value. If you find yourself enjoying worship, singing and praying more than you did in the past, then your relationship with God is appreciating in value. Conversely, if you are trusting him less and enjoying your Christian walk less, then it's possible that your relationship with God has depreciated in value.

When we actually reflect on our present blessing, it will amaze us what God is doing for us right now. In fact it only takes a minute to see the gift of life itself, the warmth of friendships, the riches of good health, the power of love, the glory of a sunrise, the privilege of prayer, the joys of music, the satisfaction of work, the treasures of books, the beauty of art, the warmth of summer, and the grace of God. All of these are indications that God is blessing us right now!

That may be what the songwriter had in mind when he penned these words:

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God hath done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done

As Christians, we give God thanks for visible and the invisible, for the tangible and the intangible. For everything, we give thanks.

Exposition

This text focuses on a dialogue between Christ and two men after the resurrection of Christ as they discussed events, scripture and their testimony about the ministry of Christ in the world.

While crucifixions were regular spectacles in the Roman Empire, the ministry and crucifixion of Christ was the subject of considerable discussion because of the resurrection. On the day of the resurrection, two men were traveling the road to Emmaus discussing the events leading up to the resurrection. While they walked and talked about what they had seen and heard, Jesus appeared in their midst, but they did not immediately recognize him. When Jesus asked what events could cause them to be so depressed, they were dumbfounded and wanted to how the traveler could have been in Jerusalem for the last week and not be aware of the series of tragic events in the city involving Christ.

In verse 18 of the text, the disciples discussed all of the events that had occurred

in recent days. They did not give any specifics the only referred to "the things" he had done. The text of the verse says, "And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

In verse 19 Jesus asked for clarity and asked a two-word question: "What things?" They described his acts which were similar to those of the prophets of old. He challenged the government leaders, the same as Elijah challenged Ahab and Jezebel. He pointed out the hypocrisy of the money changers, just as Nathan challenged the hypocrisy of David who tried to cover him his sin with Bathsheba. They said he, "Was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:" (v24).

The people saw the physical things: the feeding of the 5,000, the healings, the restoration of the sight to the blind, but they did not see these things as evidence of God's providence and mercy being shown. So in verse 27, Jesus started with Moses and showed the men that every miraculous act of the scripture was a sign or a type of what would come in the coming kingdom of God. The blessing was not in the things, the blessings were in what the things represented, they pointed to a merciful and benevolent savior.

All this time they did not know who Christ was until he broke bread with them. When he took the cup and said, "This is my body which was given for you." When he took the cup and said "This is my blood which is shed for the remission of sin," then they recognized that focus was not on the bread, the wine, the healings, or even the food that fed thousands but on the sacrifice of the Savior on Mt. Calvary.

When they recognized this truth, their eyes were opened, and Christ disappeared in the tangible sense but remained present in spirit. They said, "Did not our hearts burn within as he talked with us along the way?"

In verse 35 when their eyes were open the went and told the disciples and everybody that was with them "What things were done along the way."

What Things has God Done?

Often we are so busy with our daily tasks that we seldom stop to consider just what the Lord has done for us? Even a cursory inventory would reveal that God has smiled on us.

HE HAS MADE A WAY: When someone asks, what things has God done for you, one of our first testimonies would be, that he has created opportunities for us to succeed and alternatives to complete failure. When we think of the many ways that God has blessed us, we won't be able to count the ways. How many times has God made a way out of no way? How many prayers has he answered for us? How many rivers has he helped us to cross? How many battles has he helped us to win? If we count them, we can only conclude that God has been good to us in a "great" way. Psalm 40:5 says, "Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." No wonder

the songwriter would declare, count your many blessing and it may surprise you what the Lord has done. Since we know our detractors are watching, let them see the many ways God has blessed our faithfulness with his favor.

HE HAS WALKED WITH ME: Every believer should remember that God is always by his or her side! There is no circumstance that befalls me, and God is not there! There is no place I can go, and God is not there! Psalm 139:8-10 "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. That's why David declared "Yea thou I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!"

I heard the songwriter declare "I want Jesus to walk with me...:

While I'm on this tedious journey, Lord I want Jesus to walk with me!

When the Lord walks with me, my mountains turn into molehills!

When the Lord walks with me, my midnights turn in sunshiny days!

When the Lord walks with me, my weakness turns into strength!

When the Lord walks with me, my sadness turns into joy!

HE HAS BLESSED ME WITH A LOT OF LITTLE THINGS: There are many who look for big things that God has done for them, but when we think about it, we have received a multitude of little things that add up to one big thing, "I've been blessed."

When we answer the question, What things? We have to say, " I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me little things that I have.

I may not be in the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise! A may be a little thing to you, but it's a big thing to me.

If I can drink a cup of coffee and enjoy a moment of peaceful meditation, I count that as a blessing. It may be a little thing to you, but it's a big thing to me.

I Praise him for waking me up this morning, It may be a little thing to you, but it's a big thing to me.

I Praise him for clothing me in my right mind!

I Praise him for giving me health and strength!

It may all sound like a little thing to you, but it's a big thing to me.

Saving my soul

Finally, brothers and sisters, the biggest thing God did for me was to send his son to save my soul.

I f we tell the truth about it, we can testify how the Lord open doors for you to get a new house or apartment, but that's not the biggest thing.

We can testify about:

—Our new automobile or truck, but that's not the biggest thing

—Our new phone, computer or technological gadget, but that's not the biggest thing

—Our new dress, or suit of clothes, but that's not the biggest things.

The greatest thing that God has done for us is to save our souls and give us a chance to everlasting life.

The testimony of the faithful is that "He has done great things for me. He picked me up and turned me around and told me to run on."

If you ask me to tell you what things, I'd have to answer, "If I had ten thousand tongues" I wouldn't be able to tell it all.

Every day God is doing a new thing to bless my life. Jeremiah said, "Morning by morning new mercies I see."

There was an old man who had farmed all of his life and never finished school. At the age of 75, he decided to go back to school to get his high school diploma. One day in his English class the teacher told him about punctuations marks: question marks, commas, periods and exclamation points. To help the old man understand she said, you write an exclamation point wherever there is something to shout about! She said the Exclamation point goes at the end of the sentence. She noticed that each time the old man started writing a sentence, it was filled with Exclamation points even before the sentence ended!

The old Man said, "You said I'm supposed to put an Exclamation point when I gets to something to shout about. I got plenty to shout about. I see the sun rising in the morning and going down in the evening; that's something to shout about!

"I wrote about my dinner, you see I had a few neck bones in a bowl, a slice of piping hot cornbread with a mess of freshly picked greens and that gave me something to shout about!

"I wrote about riding in my car, you see When I turned the ignition of my brand new
truck I started clapping my hands and praising God! It may not seem like a big thing to some people, but the man who's had nothing but old jalopies that never started gets excited when he finally gets a car that starts! It's something to shout about!

"I knows I'm supposed to put the exclamation points at the end, but it don't seem that the Lord ever stops blessing me, I ain't gon' ever finish a sentence, because the Lord don't ever stop giving me something to shout about!

When you know the Lord, you can sing, "You don't know like I know, what the Lord has done for me! You don't know, you "wasn't" there, you don't know when and you don't know where. You don't know what the Lord has done for me!

Let me tell you what things:

In the midst of my:

—Burdens, He's shown me His benefits
—Hardships, He's given me His helping hand
—Midnights, He's given men a song to sing
—Challenges, He's given me the confidence to go on
—Infirmities, He's given me inspiration
—Sorrow, He's given me comfort
—Dangers, He's given me the safety of His everlasting arms.

Jesus healed 10 lepers who asked the Lord for a healing.

After receiving their healing all of them turned to walk away, but one of them thought about the source of that blessing and returned and told the Lord, “Thank you” for the blessing of healing.

Every true child of God is like that grateful leper. We don’t need a holiday! We don’t need a presidential proclamation! We don’t need to wait until the last Thursday in November, but every day of our lives we tell the Savior: Thank you, Lord!

Thank you, Lord, for waking me up every day!

Thank you, Lord, for clothing me in my right mind!

Thank you, Lord, for mountains and thank you for my valleys!

I want to thank you for picking up an old rugged cross and dying for me out on Calvary!

Thank you for rising up in my soul!

Thank you, Lord!

I just want to thank you, Lord!

No. 9801-Thanks

The Grateful Soul

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 23, 2017

SCRIPTURE: Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Psalm 106:1-2

Introduction

Do you have a reason to be thankful? Has the Lord blessed you in a special way? Are you grateful because of his blessing?

The writer Germany Kent said, ""It's a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack." That makes sense because if we started to list all of the things we are grateful for we really don't have time to count all the things we don't have. Most of our lives have been winning seasons, although we have lost a few games.

Thanksgiving requires a spirit of humility; it's giving thanks for wins and losses. Each person who gives thanks is keenly aware that all accomplishment is achieved apart from his/her works or deeds. No one can successfully give thanks if he/she secretly believes that there is nothing for which they owe a debt gratitude. Thanks, by its very nature, recognizes the fallibility of human effort without godly assistance.

Years ago there was a popular television program called Captain Kangaroo. The Captain always taught the children who watched the show about the value of saying please and thank you, which the Captain called ''Magic words.'' Even though it was a children's show, the truth about thankfulness is nevertheless true. Having a spirit of gratitude every day is good.

As Christians, we are not ashamed to tell those that we know about the goodness of the Lord. We see what he has done for us and in us. Whenever we get the chance, we let the love of God shine on us. It shines brightly on us every day showing the world that we are a set of people with grateful souls.

Exposition

This text focuses on David as he recounts the ways that God blessed Israel, In spite of themselves, prompting him to conclude that God is deserving of thanks and praise.

Generally, the 106th Psalm is a historical narrative of the many ways that God blessed Israel despite their own stubbornness and tendency toward unfaithfulness and sin. It recounts God's blessings from the point of their liberation from Egypt to their arrival in the Promised Land. As their national history is recounted, their own flawed experience

is revealed, and God's charity and mercy are seen clearly.

Beginning at verse 7 David started his recollections. He noted how God blessed Israel in Egypt, even though the people did not clearly understand the various ways that God was dealing with them in their experience.

He looked at God's actions, looking at each one slowly and meticulously, revealed what the people could not understand and did not remember. It showed that in moments when they felt God had forsaken or abandoned them, God was actually blessing them. Even as they wandered in the wilderness, they couldn't see how that was a blessing, until they looked at again. When they looked at it the second time, they realized that God was preparing them as a nation for a greater blessing that was to come.

When they had no food, they complained that God had forsaken them. After the recount, they remembered how God provided both bread and meat for them in the midst of their wilderness experience.

When they looked even closer, they saw some things they didn't like about themselves, which increased the importance of God's blessings in their own sight.

He reached his conclusion in verse 48, David declared, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people said Amen. Praise the Lord!"
Reasons for Gratefulness

When we thank God, we thank him for the entire plate he has put in front of us.

When we offer grace over a meal, we don't say "Thank you, Lord, for the dressing, turkey, mac, and cheese, and peas, but not the cranberry sauce, because I'm allergic to cranberry sauce." We ask blessing for the entire table, even though it might contain some items that others may enjoy, but we might find difficult to swallow.

That's why the children's grace says, "God is great, God is good, God we thank you for our food. Amen."

Psalm 23 says, "Thou preparest a table before me." We thank him for whatever is on that table because everything on it comes from a great and good God.

The fact that God is good is not an issue with believers.

We know that to be a fact.

We trust that if it's on my plate and God prepared it, then it's ultimately going to be good for me, even if it does not taste good to me.

Psalm 107:9 says, For he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

What is on your plate that you do not like? A lost job? A defeat? An illness?

When you see items on your plate today, look beyond the meal you will share with friends and see the table that God has prepared for your life; it may include some things you don't particularly care for, but they will ultimately work out to your good. -All the time!

Every day is a day of praise, thanks, and testimony

Those who are working in the kingdom know the importance of giving thanks to God every day. That is what was unique about Jesus'' practice. He offered thanks

every time He broke bread. We, who follow His footsteps, do precisely the same thing. We thank God every day for every blessing we have received from Him. While Thanksgiving is noted as a special day of thanks and reflection, those who know the Lord see it as a continuation of their own personal tradition.

We Give Thanks For Blessings: We thank God for blessings. Certainly, not all that we have achieved and attained was because of our deserving character. We thank Him for blessing us, despite the fact that we do not deserve such blessings. We recognize some of the ways that we have been blessed immediately. We see material evidence such as homes, cars, and a reasonable portion of health and strength. We thank Him for those. However, there are blessings we have received that are unseen. We have been protected from unseen dangers and miraculously steered around them. We have no way of knowing all of the unseen dangers that we have been spared from, just this day alone. Every day we give God thanks for blessing us!

We Give God Thanks for Burdens: Not only do we give God thanks for blessings, but we also give Him thanks for our burdens. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. The word everything includes our burdens and problems. We thank God for everything because we know that all things work for our good if we are in Christ Jesus. Thus, we thank Him for everything. We Give God thanks for everything, even if it appears there is nothing for which to be thankful, thank Him anyway!

Thank God for the bill collector! Thank God for the dentist! Thank God for your enemies! In everything, give thanks!

We thank God for his mercy on the journey

We should also celebrate our journey and give thanks to God for his mercy.

The Israelite's celebrated their journey by the giving of special offerings and renewing their pledges of faithfulness to God

They celebrated their journey by giving thanks.

Should we do less?

Every believer's celebration is filled with thanksgiving

We give God thanks for the seen and the unseen.

We thank him for the greens and butter beans, but we also thank him for being able to sleep soundly at night.

We thank him for turkey and dressing, but we also thank him for dressing our souls with his grace.

We thank him for fried chicken, rice, and a little gravy, but we should also thank him for spiritual gravy: Joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

We thank him for cars, houses and color T.V. but we should also thank him for coloring our lives with faith and hope because they help us to see the world in a different light.

In essence, we should keep the admonition in mind, In everything, give thanks.

When we consider our journey we can't help but give thanks for the help the Lord has given us.

When God blesses us, we should be thankful

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember this truth, that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Today, millions of families bow their heads, and they give thanks. Many will offer thanks over a table of food. It doesn't matter whether there is turkey, duck, baked hens or Peanut Butter sandwiches, we will all give thanks for a crust of bread, and a corner sleep in. But we will also give thanks to God for sending a little bread from heaven to bless our lives.

If God gave you a car, but it was not a Lexus, then drive your little Volkswagen all over town and say, Thank you Lord!

If God gives you a house, but it is not a mansion, then walk through your little house and say thank you Lord for the Living room! Thank you Lord for the bedroom! Thank you Lord for the closets!

If God gives you food, but it's not Filet Mignon, then praise the Lord for the mustard greens, rice and gravy, cornbread and fried chicken!

Whatever blessings have come your way..receive and be pleased!

Today, many families will sit down to family meals all over the nation. Although the menu will change from one house to another, there is one thing that will be common on nearly every table, and that will be dressing, because there seems to be blessing in the dressing.

You can buy dressing mix and make it with Jiffy Mix, but any experienced cook will tell you, that's not real dressing.

Real dressing, is like the grateful soul, it's been through something.

It didn't come out of the box, with a little sugar added and made in a Jiffy; that's why there is blessing in the dressing.

Real dressing is made from cornbread that is whipped, mixed and baked from scratch. Somebody knows about putting your life together, one that's made from scratch, when you didn't have much, but you made it work. That's why there is a blessing in the dressing.

Real dressing looks good on the plate, but there is something that holds it together. A good cook will put in an egg or two to keep it together. Today, as your family sits at the table, the grateful soul remembers there is something that has kept your family together, it's called faith. "Now faith is the substance of the things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." -In hard times and difficult days, it's your faith that the Lord would make a way, that has held your family together. That's why there is a blessing in the dressing.

Real dressing, like our lives, has seasonings. A little thyme, chopped celery, salt, and sage liven up its taste. The grateful soul has experienced the joy of marriage, family

celebrations, the birth of children and grandchildren that have given flavor to your life. That's when you sing the words, "I've had some good days. I've had some hills to climb..but when I look around and think things over, all of my good days, out-weigh by bad days. I won't complain." That's when you realized that there is blessing is in the dressing.

Real blessing, like the grateful family, has constitution. If you see dressing that is watery and drips off the spoon that means the cook put it in the pan, but she didn't put it in the stove. Good dressing has to be baked and hardened in the heat of the oven. When your family gathers you'll be looking at a family that's been through something. You'll see a family that has seen death and sickness, failure, loss, and tears; it has been tried in the fire. Instead of falling apart, the family came together. If you could hold your family on a spoon it would be thick because it has constitution, it doesn't run in the face of adversity and trouble. That's why the blessing is in the dressing.

At the core of any good dressing is good bread, just like the core of the Christian family is faith in the Lord.

Jesus said in John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

For the grateful soul, the core of our thanks today is the living bread that came down from heaven.

No wonder the songwriter declared, Bread of heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more!

This bread is Jesus, the son of God!

This bread died for the remission of our sins!

But Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave all power in his hands!

Bread of Heaven!

Feed me!

...Till I want no more!

No. 9802-Inspiration

While He Was Yet Speaking

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

November 26, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Job 1:16. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isa 65:24

Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation where you were dealing with a problem, but before you finished dealing with it, another one occurred? There are times when you receive messages containing troubling information, but another message comes before you finished hearing the first one. On a really challenging day, it's possible to get three or more things to happen at the same time.

How does that work? Somebody wrote you a bad check and made your check bounce. You get in the car to go to the bank, but the car won't start because it's out of gas. You try to call for assistance, but the battery on your cell phone is dead. It's beginning to be a bad day so you have to sit still because your blood pressure is going up and your pills are out. You went inside to wash your face and found out you have nothing but cold water because the gas is off. While staring in the mirror in disgust, the toilet overflows and the hot water tank bursts. Dealing with all this, you finally get some gas and rush to get a prescription refilled, but the doctor wants you to come in for a visit first. So you rush to work but get a speeding ticket on the way only to learn that you have been fired. You drive slow on the way home only to find the landlord tacking an eviction notice on your door for past due payments and the repo man repossessing your car. It's one of those days that makes you want to scream!

When days similar to this come, even the best personal manager has difficulty keeping everything in control. We start to panic. We see the worst that can happen actually occurring, and we attempt to prevent that situation. When we panic there is disorder, disunity, distrust, and chaos. Even faith gets challenged.

Experience has taught us that God has an amazing way of making a way out of no way. He has carved pathways through seas and brought us over many mountains. While we are frustrated dealing with one problem or another, we have learned that he has already set things motion that change your situation to fit his will for you.

As Christians, we know the devil often tries our faith and gives us one problem after

another, but we know that as fast as one problem appears, God will give us the strength to deal with them and arise undefeated.

Exposition

These two texts present us with rapidly recurring problems and God's rapid response to each of them.

The first text focuses on Job as he struggles to analyze the circumstances surrounding his sudden rise and fall. Satan, traveled throughout the land looking for mortals that could be tested. When he came upon Job, Satan was given the opportunity to test the faith of this God-fearing man, who was described as perfect. He challenged God to take away his possessions and Job's position would be different. God gave Satan permission to afflict Job's body and to create havoc in his life. All of the great things God gave him, including his large family, cattle, immense wealth and health, were taken away from him.

In a moment, they were all gone as carrier after carrier ran to Job to report that his children had been killed and his cattle had been stolen by enemies. Each of the instances came "While he was yet speaking."

The tragic events that happened to Job came before he had a chance to adequately respond to any of them.

Job was frustrated, but resolved, "all of the days of my appointed time, I'll wait until my change comes."

Through it all, he learned. Because of his experience, he was now able to stand any test, and weather any storm, even more confident that God would provide.

The text from Isaiah finds God frustrated because the people would not call upon him when they faced difficulties. Even as they suffered one problem after another, the people built altars, sacrificed to idols and complained constantly, but would not call on him or let him speak to their situations. In Isaiah 50:2, God asked Israel to give a reason it did not answer his calls. Here he said, "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?

When I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened and hath no power to deliver thee?"

God challenged the faithful to remember that when their prayer requests are within his will he will respond while they are still asking. The future of the obedient will be less stressful because they trust him. He painted a picture of the worry free life that didn't worry about troubles. Isaiah 65:20-25 he said such a life would be peaceful, where each person receives the hits and knocks of life in stride to the point that the effects of aging will past them by; a child who dies could be like a hundred years old and a senior citizen sinners, will still be doing sinful acts at 100 years old. People will build houses and live in them (v21)

One of the most promising aspects of this worry-free life is in verse 24 because it says when problem come, and they call on the Lord, that he will answer while they are "Yet Speaking."

Trouble just keeps coming

Trouble doesn't take a vacation and does not come at a convenient time. Trouble doesn't stop looking for ways to taunt and destroy us just because there is a new year. Yet, despite the presence of troubling situations, we should remember that God responds to every situation. We should expect to have times of trouble in our lives. God's promise to respond to each of our situations should ease our anxiety. The knowledge that this too shall pass should be reassuring. However, we should remember that God makes a way for us to be free from troubled hearts but not from troubled times.

This assurance should inspire confidence. Confidence like that only comes when we are sure of the outcome. That's where the believer has the edge. The word of God teaches that when a believer is operating in the will of God, no weapon formed against me shall prosper. When we are moving in the path that God wants to go, no obstacle, enemy or trouble will be able to slow our march toward fulfillment because God himself will clear a path and make way for us out of no way.

We don't expect trouble-free days, weeks or years. We don't expect our enemies to disappear or problems to vanish, but we are confident that when trouble comes, God will make a way.

That's we like the song that says, "Victory is mine! Victory is mine! Victory today is mind. I told Satan to get thee behind, Victory today is mine!"

Trouble will sidetrack you if you let it

When troubles come, it is easy for us to get sidetracked. It's difficult to focus when the tire is on a flat, the school calls about a child's behavior, and your bank account is overdrawn. Dealing with troubles can quickly get us off task. When problems come repetitively, it is hard to get it together. If we spend our lives responding to trouble, when do we get on track? Think of all the things we respond to: bills, family problems, marriage problems, school problems, parents, children, bosses, losses, gains, and pains all spell trouble. We tell ourselves that when we get through dealing with our troubles then we will get back to our primary focus. We even say that to the Lord.

Instead of waiting until our troubles are over, the bible says when trouble comes that's one of the times we should look for the Lord, not afterward. Psalm 27:5 says, For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. While trouble is rising, we get it together, then. We should not try to wait until trouble is over to get ourselves together because we need to be together to deal with the trouble. Those who know the Lord agree with the songwriter B. Chase Williams who said, "Trouble in my way. I have to cry sometimes. Lay awake at night, but that's alright. Jesus will fix it, afterwhile."

Don't wait until your troubles end to start getting your life together; do it now. What are you waiting for? What's taking you so long?

Despite our difficulties, don't lose your joy

Since we know that trouble will come, don't let trouble, steal your joy. It's very easy to get so mired down by troubles that come one after that other that we cannot make it. That's when we say in all honesty, The devil is a liar, he will not take away my praise.

We are able to do that because we are able to peer beyond the dark and murky cloud created by our trouble and say, I've seen troubles in the past, and I've endured, it's good to be here, Praise ye the Lord!

This may not be the best of days, but I thank the Lord for giving me the positive attitude to deal with it, Praise ye the Lord.

I may not be of the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But that's not going to steal my joy. I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise!

The man with only one arm says I don't know about you, but I came to lift my other hand and shout, "I don't know what you came to do, but I came to praise the Lord."

The woman with only one eye, I don't know about you, but even though I only have one eye, I plan to look around and see what the Lord has done for me!

Praise him for waking me up this morning!

Praise him for clothing me in my right mind!

Praise him for giving me health and strength!

I heard the songwriter say I may not have done all that I wanted to do, but Lord it has been a mighty good day!

When trouble comes, stand still

Finally, brothers and Sisters, we must remember that when troubles come, feed on your faith rather than fan your fears!

Moses told Israel to stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord!

Stand still was a command to pause and reevaluate!

In Numbers 9:8 the people were about to panic because some of them had touched dead bodies and were unclean. As they began to panic, Moses said, Stand still let me talk to God about it!

If trouble erupts in your home, one after another, it is a good idea to pause, take a deep breath and talk to God about it!

If there is a question whose answer seems to evade you...Stand still and talk to God about it!

When you find yourself standing on the edge of night, dealing with a secret storm, caused by all my children, facing scandal or sicknesses that can run you to the general hospital have a little talk with Jesus and watch God give you the peace to deal with every situation.

That's the peace we get when we remember Isaiah said in 40:31 "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles;

they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint."

The voice of despair said, Lie down and quit, but the voice of God says, keep going because you talked to me about and while you were yet speaking, I started opening doors for you. If you just want to lie down, then Lie down, lie down, thy weary one thy head upon my breast and I will give you rest!

The voice of frustration says, Give it up! but the voice of God says, I heard your prayer, and while you were yet speaking, I started turning things around. Don't give up! Don't give up, just look up!

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth!

The voice of frustration says fold your hands in frustration. But the voice of God says, in your frustration, you said, "Father I stretch my hands to thee no other help I know, if thou withdraw thyself from me, whether shall I go!" While you were yet, speaking, I started making things right.

When trouble is all around you, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Lord because when you prayed, God heard. While you were yet speaking, he worked it out.

When your worries overwhelm you, remember God will take care of you! Through every day over all the way, he will take care of you!

God will take care of you!

Think about the goodness of the Lord!

Think about how he died out on Calvary!

Think about how he arose Early Sunday morning!

Think about how he has brought you a mighty long way!

When you feel like giving up, stand still and say, I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me!

While you are 'Yet speaking" God is working it out.

No. 9803-Inspiration

Celebrating Miracles

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 3, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

Introduction

Do you believe in miracles? People who believe in miracles fall into three distinct categories. Some use the term miracle to describe an amazing product or achievement. To this group a miracle is an outstanding example of technology and genius. The telephone, television, The artificial heart, Microwave, Desktop Computer and the iPad were considered examples of miraculous invention and innovation. This definition is usually followed by words such as phenomenal, wonderful, and marvelous. To this group, miracle is a technological breakthrough.

Another group of people describes any improbable or extraordinary development or accomplishment as a miracle. When Chesley Sullenberger, an American Airlines pilot, successfully crash-landed his jet in the Hudson River and saved 155 lives, the fact that no one was killed was described as a miracle. When a train or plane crashes, and only a few people are injured the general report is "It's a miracle that more people were not injured." If it's improbable or unlikely and it happens with a pleasing end, this group calls it a miracle.

The final group are those who describe an event that occurred when it was needed, after it was requested and it can't be explained by any scientific law or natural occurrence. The source of these unscientific and unnatural events is the intervention of God himself. In 2015 a mother in Utah lost control of her car and plunged upside down in a nearly frozen river, killing the mother on impact. Searchers and first responders miles away say they were led to the scene 14 hours later by a voice that spoke to all of them. They found the mother dead, but the baby dangled in a car seat just inches from freezing water. They couldn't explain the voice. Believers knew it was the voice of God. In 2014 in Boca Rotan, a 40-year-old woman suddenly fell unconscious from a rare disease, but doctors could not revive her, and she was pronounced dead. Forty-Five minutes later the family assembled in the hospital room for prayer. After the prayer, her started heart beating on its own and she survived without any brain damage or side effects. Doctors said defied all scientific laws and could not be explained, but believers called it a miracle in answer to a prayer.

The world laughs at the idea of miracles, but we have lived long enough to know that God has performed many miracles in our lifetime. We celebrate miracles of healings, restorations, and changed lives.

Very soon the world is going to celebrate another miracle that happened in a little town called Bethlehem. It is an absolutely astounding miracle—that a virgin would give birth to the Son of God. It's astounding because it defies all scientific logic and the natural order of things, yet the virginal conception of Jesus Christ within the womb of Mary is a great miracle that is celebrated even after 2000 years.

As Christians, we still don't understand how God performs miracles, we are happy to know that what we needed to happen,occurred when we needed it to occur, after we asked. The world asked God for a way to be saved from its sins, he answered us with a miracle in Bethlehem.

Exposition

This text focuses on a prophecy recited in Matthew that Christ would be born of a virgin mother and whose birth would come to signify that God had come to live among men. It would be a miraculous birth.

The original prophecy of the virgin birth was given 740 years before this text. Matthew referred to the prophecy given by the prophet Isaiah who in Isaiah 7:14 said, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Matthew in writing this text said what Isaiah referred to 740 years earlier was no less than the miraculous, unexplainable, immaculate conception.

The birth of Christ was miraculous. Matthew 1:18 indicates that his birth was caused by the Spirit of God himself. The birth of Christ required a special explanation to all involved. Matthew 1:20 shows how an angel appeared to Joseph to explain that his bride would be used by God to introduce Christ into the world. Isaiah 7:14 indicates that the birth of Christ as the fulfillment of a prophecy seven centuries earlier.

Immanuel, means "God with us." It states that the baby Jesus was actually God being born into this world. As a human, he would face the same milk and butter issues as any other human. Yet, the fact that he came to the world would be a source of hope.

The text notes that the child would be called Immanuel. That would not be his name, but he would be referred to as "God with us." The text does not indicate that "Immanuel" would be his official name, but only that "Immanuel" would describe his presence and work on earth.

That God would take on the form of a human and select a teenage girl to serve as his surrogate to bring him into the world, is nothing less than a miracle.

It would be the first of many miracles associated with the savior.

We Believe in Miracles

After two thousand years, we are no closer to understanding the Incarnation than we were when it happened. We know what the Bible says, but we can't explain God becoming a man any more than we can explain the creation of the universe ex nihilo, out of nothing. You either believe it, or you don't, but your belief doesn't rest on your ability to "explain" how God could become a man.

The Christian faith is filled with miracles. Take the miraculous out of our faith, and there is nothing left. In particular, we believe that the earthly life of Christ was followed by two more utterly astounding miracles totally:

A Miraculous birth
A life of Miraculous deeds
A Miraculous resurrection

Belief in all three of these are the basis of our faith, and they are tied together; you can't believe one without believing the other.

The birth Christ in Bethlehem is significant and miraculous. That miraculous birth, in a greater sense, indicates the potential for God to work miracles in any life, even those born into lowly situations.

There have been many people in life who have testified that they would have given up on their dreams and aspirations, but the power of God within them miraculously encouraged them to arise and begin again.

When Jesus comes into our lives he performs a miracle inside of us. He gives us an entirely new way of looking at life, the future and our potential. When our hope had literally died, he miraculously gave us the courage that we needed to tackle tough situations and difficult times. All of that happens when Jesus comes.

In the middle of adverse circumstances, she gave birth; it was a miracle!

In the middle of tough times and bad living arrangements, she gave birth; it was a miracle!

In the middle of their poverty, she gave birth to a miracle.

We know of Miracles

We believe Christ can perform miracles in our lives. We never give up hope. That's why we pray to God in Jesus' name because we have read of his miraculous deeds on earth and seen evidence in the lives of witnesses in our own lifetime.

When the storms of life rage, we pray to God for a miracle. It's not an idle prayer because we know that he has miraculously spoken to storms and they have ceased with only the words, "Peace be still."

When we are sick, pray to God for healings. It's not an idle prayer because we know that in the three years that he ministered publicly he performed all manner of miracles that ranged from restoring sight, healing paralysis, curing insanity and even raising the

dead. We know he is a miracle worker and has the power to heal.

When we are troubled by evil spirits disturbing our soul, we know that he can speak to the demons that trouble us, just as he miraculously spoke to a man with legions of demons in him and ran them away. We are confident that he can miraculously remove demons out of our lives.

When our resources have run completely out, and all doors are shut, we know God can work miracles. We know he fed 5,000 with two little fishes and five loaves of bread. We saw him solve tax problems by miraculously producing enough to pay taxes with a coin found in a fish's mouth. What does all of this say? It says that even our daily bread and butter issues are not beyond his miraculous power.

The New Testament gives witness to the fact that miracles occurred after Christ ascended and returned to heaven. There were miracles performed by the Apostles: the sick were healed, sight was restored, and even the dead were raised.

God is a miracle worker.

God Still Works Miracles

Finally, The great truth for every believer to remember is that God has not retired from the miracle business. He is still answering prayers and still working miracles today.

In our own time, we have seen so many examples of the miraculous intervention of our Savior that we are convinced that no power could have made it happen except the power of God.

Sometimes we succumb to the apparent impossibility of circumstances that surround us, and we conclude that it cannot be done. It is times such as these that we forget who is in control of things. We forget about God's miracle-working ability.

When faith seems to falter, we need to remind ourselves that although it looks dark and defeat appears imminent God is still on the throne. Every child of God believes in a miraculous God.

We should continuously remind ourselves that no matter how frustrating the situation might seem it never reaches a point of complication beyond the miraculous power of God.

The songwriter said God is still on the throne, within your bosom you have the phone. Your miracle is just a prayer away, God is on the line.

Another songwriter said Jesus is on the mainline, tell him what you want. If you're sick and you want to get well, tell him what you want.

The true story is told of a little girl who was worried over the sickness of her brother. She prayed and ask God what to do. She heard her parents say that her brother had something bad growing in his head. They had been to the local doctors, and they said only a miracle could save him.

One morning she poured out the contents of her savings, kept in a jelly jar and counted it. She had $1.11. She ran to the local pharmacy and asked the attendant which isle could she find miracles.

"How much does a miracle cost?" the little girl asked as she explained that her little

brother had something bad growing in his head and she needed to buy a miracle. She said all she had was $1.11, but if it cost more, she could get it. As she talked tears ran down her face. A man standing behind her wearing a very fine suit he saw the cashier push the girl to the side and was moved to console the little girl. He bent down and asked, "What kind of miracle does your brother need?" She said it was in his head and it will cost a lot of money to save him.

The man asked, "How much do you have?" she answered, "$1.11" The man said it just so happens that is the right price for miracles for little brothers. He went to the girl's home and met the parents. In a short time they learned that the man was famed Neuro Surgeon Dr. Carlton Armstrong. He performed the surgery and save the little boy's life.

Week's afterward they received an envelope with a bill from the surgeon with several pages of costs. When they reached the last page the total bill was $1.11. Handwritten across the bottom, paid in full.

Are you stricken with an illness? How much does a miracle cost?

Are you at a low point in your life and can't seem to get back on your feet? How much does a miracle cost?

Are you worried about your misdirected children and lost dreams? How much does a miracle cost?

Miracles cost more than we can pay, but we have the assurance that "Jesus paid it all: That's why the songwriter declared, "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow."

Before anyone loses hope, we should remember that we serve an awesome God who reigns and paid the cost of our miracle

It's a miracle that the those who are sick are healed.

It's a miracle that those who have failed have been given second chances

It's a miracle that the lost have found their way again.

God is still in the miracle-working business. We know it's a miracle because he touched the lives of the:

WEAK and he provided them strength
DOWNED and he picked them up!
DEFEATED and he gave them the victory
DISCOURAGED and he restored their hope!
LONELY and he gave them comfort
TROUBLED and he gave them peace of mind
It all began with miracle in a little town called Bethlehem
He died on an old rugged cross!
But Early Sunday morning, there was another miracle, he arose from the dead
We're celebrating his miracles every day!
Hallelujah!

No. 9804-Christmas

A Pondering Mary and a Pondering Lord

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 17, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" Luke 2:19. "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Luke 22:42

Introduction

Have you ever given serious thought to how your experiences this year have been interconnected? If so, have been able to understand how one thing leads to another. Could you see those experiences, whether good or bad, as part of God's big picture for your life or family?

There are a set of children's art books that have been on the market for many years in which a child is presented with a page full of dots and told that all of the dots form a picture. The challenge is to see the image and then draw a line from one dot to the next connecting them in a way that ends with a clearly defined image. As easy as that seems there are many people who have trouble drawing the picture. The main reason is that they cannot see the overall picture. Without the ability to see the full picture then we may spend our time connecting dots, but the final result is much different than it should be.

As the end of a year approaches, many people take inventory of the past year and consider the events and experiences of the year. Each experience is a lot like a dot on their life's big picture. Our goal this year was to connect the dots to help draw the picture of the life ahead of us.

Connecting the dots requires three things. First, it requires us to see that the final result of our actions will produce the picture God has for our life. Secondly, the challenge is not just to make a connection with any dot, but to connect the dots that will draw the picture God wants. Thirdly, just because a dot is in your picture, it won't get you to your final result unless you connect by the numbers or the prescribed order.

That has a particular significance for believers because it is essential for each of us to see God's purpose for our lives, that's the picture inside of the dots. Then we must connect all of the events of our lives and see how they help form the big picture. The

point where we consider whether our connections have been according to God's big picture for us is what we can call our "Pondering Point."

The word "pondered" goes deeper than "wondering." It means to take the events as you have laid them out in your memory and then to go beneath the surface to try to understand what it all means and why it happened the way it did. To wonder is to look at who, what and where there is a possibility of making a connection. Those who wonder only want to hook up to a dot, especially if the dot looks like it's going up.

To ponder is to look deep into the here and now to understand the why and how. Why and how am I being saved and blessed in the here and now. Why and how are the events I have encountered fit into God's big picture for me

To Ponder is to study our connections to understand how they are a part of the bigger picture that God has for us. To wonder ignores the big picture but focuses on making the next hookup.

To Ponder is to look deeper into every experience we have shared looking for the why it mattered to the overall scheme that God has laid out for us.

The word "treasured" indicates that we have counted each connection and rejoice at the knowledge that regardless to whether our pattern has carried us up or down to the left or to the right, it is all a part of God's purpose for our lives.

As Christians, we rejoice in the knowledge that God has a purpose for our lives and every event or experience, no matter how unexplained they may be.

Exposition

The two texts today give two examples of Pondering: one by Mary after the birth of Jesus and one by Jesus himself just before going to Calvary.

In Luke, an angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the son of God. Shepherds came to acknowledge his birth, and Holy angels confirmed his deity. It was an announcement that seemed unbelievable, but highly possible, with God.

Mary had plenty to ponder. She had much to reflect upon. When she considered the series of events that brought her to Bethlehem, the very place where Angels were preparing to announce the birth of the Christ. Her meditations have a greater meaning once it is considered that she brought forth this son, despite the suspecting eyes and wagging tongues of the people in her hometown who were taken aback by the fact that she was pregnant before she was married to Joseph. Secondly, her meditations had to focus on her good fortune to have a successful childbirth, despite the circumstances. Despite her long journey, most of which was on foot, there were no complications. Her child would be the Son of God, the promised Messiah. She pondered these things.

The text from Luke focuses on Jesus as he prayed in the Garden. He rehashed his entire ministry, the decision made by the father to send him to earth, his birth, his three-year ministry, his reception among the people and rejection by the leaders. He pondered the dots already connected, but also saw the next dot in the pattern which was Calvary, death, burial and finally resurrection. In a moment of human weakness, he asked that he could skip a dot or two and go to the resurrection morning. However, when he

pondered the full purpose of his life, which was to provide salvation for millions who would follow, he had to connect all of the dots, in the right order.

Mary pondered and saw a cross in the cradle. Jesus pondered and saw an empty tomb and a saved generation.

Connecting the Dots

As we consider our life journey, like Mary, we must ponder our circumstances, experiences, and situations and see God working in our lives. Things to Ponder

PONDER THE DOTS ALREADY CONNECTED: We were born with a life purpose and each year we experience events and situations that lead us from one dot to the next. As the final days of the year wind down, we should take a look at the dots we've connected this year. A marriage, a divorce, a celebration, a death, an advancement, a defeat, a victory, a sickness, a recovery, bad news, good news, a job lost, a job found, loneliness, new friends, etc. Now "Ponder" the dots. To ponder your dots, ask God to show you what patterns are at work. What is God teaching you? What lessons seem to come up repeatedly? What have you learned about yourself, good or bad, from the experience. Look at how each pondering point was a springboard to the next and God is slowly bringing you to what you should be. As the years go by, you begin to see a picture developing of a man or woman who is living a life of faith. That's why 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith and not by sight." It means we are moving from dot to dot trusting that each connection is building the life God wants us to have. The songwriter said, "Step by Step, we'll make this journey, but we must put our trust in God." Remember Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

MISCONNECTED DOTS MAKE AN UGLY PICTURE: Mary had much to ponder. She had to consider how each step in the process led to the completion of prophecies made nearly a thousand years earlier. They lived in Bethlehem, but God causes Caesar to order a census to move them to Bethlehem to make the next connection. In a similar sense, God moves us from one situation to another to be ready for the next connection. Sometimes dots make a loop and carry you back to the same point and then to a different direction. However, if Mary and Joseph had chosen to stay in Nazareth, they would have had a misconnection. The star would have shown over Bethlehem, but there would have been no child. The Shepherds would have come to the stable, but the manger would have been empty. Most importantly, the prophecy of God that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem would have been unfulfilled.

If we fail to make the connections we should not make or take shortcuts or the wrong directions, we get an ugly picture. There is a prescribed order for every step we take, in the beginning, they make little sense, but bye and bye we understand. When we are following the order that God gives, it may seem frustrating, and we may fall while trying to follow it, but God will hold us up. Psalm 37:23-24 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly

cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."

PONDER FOR THE NEXT DOT: Pondering for Mary not only meant looking at the events that led up the birth of Christ, but it also meant listening to God make the next connection. Logically, Mary and Joseph should have said, "We've registered for the tax, you have delivered the baby, let's go back to Nazareth." That appeared to be the next step. Yet, God led them to the next dot, which was a long ways from Nazareth; they went to Egypt. It was not logical or practical. They were poor, with no means of transportation, a baby to feed and no known connections in Egypt. They went to where God led them and by doing so avoided death because Herod was looking for them.

As the last few days of this year winds down, like Mary, we will ponder our next dot. If we wonder, we will make our own plans. If we ponder, however, we will plan our next moves after prayer and listening to the voice of God. To do that we must ask God for his guidance and be willing to follow his will. Psalm 27:11 says, "Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, ….."

Pondering his goodness

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider that while pondering involves looking at our past and present, Pondering is also about following the will of God.

Just as Mary and Joseph made it to the right place by no plan or design of their own, God is fixing a few things for every family this Christmas, especially those families that are trying to follow his will.

Mary and Joseph made it to Bethlehem, following his will.

They survived threats of death from Herod, following his will.

To connect the dots, God fixes things. As Christmas approaches watch how God fixes things in your family.

To connect the dots, there will be some schedules that will be rearranged.

To connect the dots, in spite of meager resources there will be enough food for your family and enough to share with visitors.

God is lining things up, one after another, he is connecting the dots.

We are not worried about tomorrow because we know that our God will show us how to connect the dots.

God started connecting the dots from the moment he said, "let us make man." He began connecting dots that would one day lead to the salvation of men.

In the Garden, Jesus pondered his situation.

Father, you decided that mankind needed a way to be saved and you laid out a plan that looked like a series of unconnected dots.

Father, you prepared that was so simple all men would have to do is connect the dots, believe and receive because Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

When the world was rocking and reeling in despair, the cry went out through time and eternity...the Lord needs somebody to show wayward mankind how to

connect the dots and reap the joy of salvation. Lord needs somebody, who shall I send?

Abraham couldn't go; he had to deal with the lamb in the bush!

Moses couldn't go; he had to administer the ten commandments!

Elijah couldn't go; he had to wrestle with the prophets of Baal!

Ezekiel couldn't go; he had to envision the dry bones in the valley!

Daniel couldn't go; he had to spend the night in the Lion's Den!

Malachi couldn't go; he was possessed by people that were robbing God!

John the Baptist couldn't go, because he wasn't worthy to untie his shoes!

In the Garden, Jesus pondered, and he answered, "here am I send me."

In the Garden, Jesus pondered all of the connected dots. The blind could see, the lame could walk and the dead had been raised.

In the Garden, Jesus pondered the next step. He didn't like the next dot, "if there was a way to provide salvation for mankind, short of Calvary he wanted God to excuse him from the cross."

He could see the final dot, but he wasn't allowed to skip a dot.

He could see Sunday morning, but he couldn't skip Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday night.

He could see the victory of the empty tomb, but he couldn't skip the nails on the cross. He had to connect the dots.

He told his father, if that's the way you want me to go, "not my will but thy will be done."

The dots had connected.

Down the halls of time, he came saying "prepare me a body."

He came to a prepared body and made a connection.

He died on a prepared cross and made a connection.

He was buried in a prepared tomb and made a connection

Early Sunday morning he made a connection, because arose from the dead.

One of these old days he's coming back again to connect the final dot.

That's when we will be caught up!

Caught up!

To meet him in the air!

No. 9805-Christmas

A Blue Christmas

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La

December 2017

SCRIPTURE:"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Luke 2:29-32

Introduction

What do you think of when you think of the color blue? Majesty? It is associated with stability, loyalty, wisdom, faith, and truth. To many people blue also represents hopelessness.

That's why blue is an odd color at Christmas time. If you hadn't noticed, it's not on trees or in decorations, but it is the way many people feel unless they can see the shadow of the cross falling on the crib.

Unless we can see the shadow of the cross on the crib, all we will see is tragedy and sadness. Diane Hicks of Arlington, Virginia wrote that without hope this is what a hopeless person will see at Christmas time:

For the hopeless, it is the story of a teenage girl, pregnant with a child that is not her husband's.

It is the story of a child born in a dirty animal stall.

It is the story of innocent boys being killed by King Herod because Herod feared one of them might be the rival king the Wise Men spoke of.

It is the story of someone - sent into the world in peace - who was condemned to death.

It is the story of a light sent to shine in the darkness, and the world snuffed it out.

It is the story of God's never-ending, self-giving mercy which was rejected and condemned."

If that's all that anyone sees, then indeed Christmas would definitely be blue. If all you looked at were the things that were wrong about the birth of Jesus, that's all you'd see – a blue, blue Christmas which offered no words of hope or joy.

Simeon didn't look at it that way. He gave a prophecy that was filled with "bad news," but he also had some uplifting words to say as well.

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-

In the blue, he saw the light.

In the difficulties surrounding the people, he saw a reason for hope, "My eyes have seen your salvation."

In blue situations it's hard to see the light.

Mary and Martha questioned why Christ did not come to aide Lazarus when he was ill. They chided him saying, "If you would have been here, my brother would not have died." In a way, they questioned the advantage of personally knowing the savior, but could not benefit from the relationship. They saw the blue, but Jesus helped them see the light.

Even Christ himself questioned his father when He was hanging on the cross. He cried out, "Father, why hast thou forsaken me." For a moment he saw the blue, but regained focus on the marvelous light and announced, "Forgive them for they know not what they do."

It's odd, but we usually see "blue" when we are hurting. We rarely see blue when things are going right or when God is blessing us. We rarely ask God, "Why are you blessing me like this? Why are you answering my prayers?"

The answer to our frustration is that we may see blue, but in every situation, there is always a reason for hope because God is always with us.

As Christians, our goal should be to face any debilitating circumstance with a spirit of optimism that is boyoued by our faith that as long as we have King Jesus, there is no reason for us to be sad or blue.

Exposition

This text focuses on how Simeon saw the salvation of the Lord in a gloomy situation.

What Simeon saw was the same hope that Joseph and Mary saw, despite the frustration of a pregnancy before a formal marriage. Matthew Henry notes that Joseph and Mary marveled at the things which were spoken of this Child. Simeon shows them likewise, what reason they had to rejoice with trembling. And Jesus, his doctrine, and people are still spoken against; his truth and holiness are still denied and blasphemed; his preached word is still the touchstone of men's characters. The secret good affections in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing Christ; the secret corruptions of others will be revealed by their enmity to Christ. Men will be judged by the thoughts of their hearts concerning Christ. He shall be a suffering Jesus; his mother shall suffer with him, because of the nearness of her relation and affection.

Simeon's words are often called the "Nunc dimittis" from the two words with which the Latin translation of it begins. Simeon sees death approaching, but he is not dismayed because he understood the purpose for which God kept him alive and he rejoiced in approaching death because he could see the salvation of the Lord.

In a sense, Simeon represents a person who can see the break of the morning after the blackness of night. He knows that promised revelations are coming and that his weary waiting is at an end.

Why was he able to find hope in his dying days? “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” He could only say those words because he had seen Christ. That truth rings true to believers today because only those who have experienced the Lord for themselves will be satisfied.

Scripture teaches that those who experience Christ are the richer and those who have not are the real losers, regardless of how it appears to others. To gain Christ and lose the world is considered gain Phil 1:21.

The initial state of Simeon’s condition was that he was old and dying. It was definitely a “blue” moment. However, because his eyes saw the Christ he experienced the joy of the Lord which gave him hope, not so much for himself, but for the world that would follow after him.

A Patch of Blue

Between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the new was a period of darkness. That darkness would not subside until the coming of “Shiloh” the word of hope that would be brought to earth from God. The name Shiloh has many meanings, one of them is Message from God. That is what the world sought, a message from God. When the New Testament opened 490 years had passed without hearing a word from God. There were no prophets. There were pronouncements. No encouragements or condemnations. There were 490 years of silence. It was a frustrating period. However, when the message came from John that the savior was coming, the people saw a patch of blue that could change their situation forever.

Shiloh came, the silence was broken. Jesus was both the message and the messenger. John said, “In the beginning, was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God.” When the word became flesh, the message became the messenger.

As believers struggle to deal with the “Every day blues” that trouble them, they want to hear a word because they know that When Shiloh comes; when they hear a word from God they will have direction!

When Shiloh comes, they can be sure about their decisions!

When Shiloh comes, their doubts can be resolved!

When Shiloh comes, God will move on the altar of their spirit and motivate them in a way that no other can!

When Shiloh comes, though they are surrounded by darkness, they will see the break of day and a patch of blue that brings hope.

For those with the blues, Christ brings hope

Many people approach the Christmas season with the blues, but they have found hope that the world and their own situation is not a total loss when they focus on the birth of God’s son into the world.

In Bethlehem Mary delivered the baby Jesus in a stable. The fact that she “brought

forth" is significant to us because in a greater sense when Jesus comes in any life he inspires, motivates and pushes us to bring forth.

There have been many people in life who have testified that they would have given up on their dreams and aspirations, but the power of God within them encouraged them to bring forth. The only reason we would need to bring forth something is because it is hidden and latent. We bring forth that which is within us already but has not been realized. We bring forth potential.

`When Jesus comes into our lives, he helps us to bring forth our potential. He brings forth the courage that we need to tackle tough situations and difficult times. Hebrews 13:6 says, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." When Jesus comes, there is a spirit of boldness that envelops every believer. We know that it can be done. We start to believe that all things are possible and the defeat leaves us. All of that happens when Jesus comes.

In the middle of the blues of adverse circumstances, a child was born.

In the middle of the blues brought on by tough times and bad living arrangements, a baby in a manger brought hope!

In the middle of the blues caused by whispers and stares from those who were turned off by their relationship, a baby's cry inspired us!

In the middle of the blues caused by their impoverished condition, down in Bethlehem the world found a source of joy!

Jesus turns blues situations into situations for hope.

In the Blackest night God, God shows us the dawn

We have the blues, but God shows us the blue. There is a difference. The Blues sees only the darkness, but when God shows us the blue, he shows us that despite the darkness he is working to bring us to the light. That's why scripture teaches that "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The noted theologian H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. reminds us that God works all day, but he works especially well at night.

In the night, when the warmth of day subsides, and a chill falls over the earth, God is working to show you the blue.

In the night, when the birds hush their singing, and the crickets compose a nocturnal symphony, God is working to show you the blue.

In the night, when the moon has made its majestic march to its appointed throne, gleaming against the Black curtain of creation, God is working to show you the blue.

In the night, those who are sick, seem to get sicker, but God is working to show you the blue.

In the night, the unsure become afraid, and the doubtful lose hope, but God is working to show you the blue.

In the silence and insecurity of the night the Shepherds heard a word from heaven: Unto us, a savior is born, which is Christ the Lord.

A blue Christmas means glad tidings

If blue represents hope and inspiration, then the birth of the Christ child was a glad tiding. It was a sign of hope.

This was glad tidings for Israel that was enduring a long and unbearable night. They were second-class citizens at best and little more than chattel at worse. They were generally poor and what little they managed to save was taken in taxes and tributes. Their feeble efforts to find freedom and peace of mind and soul were often covered by a blanket of darkness which hovered over them like an endless night which would never see the break of day. There was silence as they waited for the fulfillment of the promises of God.

The birth of Christ was a sign that the night was about to break.

They were able to see beyond the darkness and peer into the marvelous light.

Every child of God ought to be able to peer beyond the dark and murky cloud that veils the glistening rays of a new day begun and resolve in his mind despite the hard times I've seen and troubles I've endured, it's good to be here, Praise ye the Lord!

I may not have all that my heart desires, but I thank the Lord for giving me what little I have, Praise ye the Lord.

I may not be in the best of health. My steps may be getting slow. My eyesight may be getting dim. But I thank the Lord for sparing my life and allowing me to see another sunrise!

I can see the "blue" of Christmas so, praise him for waking me up this morning!

I can see the "blue" of Christmas so, praise him for clothing me in my right mind!

I can see the "blue" of Christmas so, praise him for giving me health and strength!

I heard the songwriter say, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King!"

Because of the king, I can see the "blue" without the blues this Christmas

Renewed hope

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must consider the reason the world celebrates the birth of the Christ child. It's because this child is a sign of renewed hope that weeping endures but a night, but joy comes in the morning.

The birth of this child takes away our blues and gives us a new reason to sing, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always!"

God has given the world a sign. He says, "This child shall be my sign!"

—When darkness covers the land, that I am able to turn darkness into light! So look for a blue Christmas

—That although war is talked about in every corner, there will be peace on earth and goodwill toward all men! So look for a blue Christmas.

—That although problems make life difficult, that God will make a way somehow! So look for a blue Christmas.

This child is a special child, for Isaiah said in 9:6 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; And the government shall be on his shoulder; his name shall be called:

—Wonderful. Counselor. The Mighty God. Everlasting father. Prince of Peace!”

This child is a sign of God’s unending love. I heard John 3:16 say, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

One evening out on Calvary, the world saw the sign of God’s abiding love.

For he died out on Calvary, but early Sunday morning he arose from the grave!

The empty tomb was a sign that he had risen from the grave!

I don’t need to sing with B.B. King, “Every day I have the blues,” because I have a new song to sing, its “Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before” And every now and then I feel a sign that he is alive for I feel him in my soul!

I don’t have the blues, but I have hope!

I can see the blue!

No. 9806-Christmas

Joy to the World

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 24, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10

Introduction

Can anything steal your joy? In September, it was announced that Mega-Store ToysRUs will be filing for bankruptcy. The huge toy store that sells millions of toys around the world is $5 billion in debt and can hardly keep its head above water. It is seeking bankruptcy protection while it reorganizes itself to pay off its creditors. It lasted through this season, but doubt lingers whether it will be around much longer.

The announcement of the ToysRUs bankruptcy was depressing news for many because an entire generation of believers grew up getting their toys from the Mega Store. For many people, the meaning of Christmas was a trip to ToysRUs. For them, that was a real joy. It's not just a store, it's a superstore; it is big! More than that, it operates all year round! When Millennials heard the news that the symbol of their childhood Christmas joy might be closing there was a universal disappointment. Where will I get my toy all year round?

If the super toy store closes, it won't have an impact on believers. Our joys do not come from toys so the closure of a year-round toy store won't dampen our joy because 365 days a year we have a source of joy that does not depend on a store.

The source of our joy comes from the love of God, nothing the world can do can steal that joy, even news about the bankruptcy of our favorite toy store. Dr. Suess, the fabled children's writer wrote a classic children's poem called "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The cute little rhyme, complete with funny caricature styled pictures tells the story of an ugly old Grinch who was upset because the people of the town of Whoville had so much joy at Christmas time. He couldn't stand the noise and the happiness and the celebration. The Grinch figured that the secret to their joy was in the toys. So he decided to steal the toys to take away the joys of Christmas. After stealing their toys, The Grinch waited to see their response. Without toys and gifts, the Grinch thought Christmas would not come, and there would be no joy. On Christmas morning, even without toys, the Grinch found:

"Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,
Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?
It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"
And he puzzled three hours, 'till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.
"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"

The Grinch learned what we already know that the joy of Christmas is heightened by the exchange of gifts, but the gifts are not the source of the joy.

Even as we celebrate Christmas, millions are still recovering from Hurricanes Harvey, and Maria, and tropical storms Nate and Irma. Thousands in Puerto Rico sill have no power, clean water or resources to survive. Yet, this Christmas they have huddled in whatever shelter or homes they could find and found a reason for joy. When they sing "Joy to the World" the skeptics wonder, what do they have to sing about? They have seen the power of God move in the winds, but they have seen the mercy of God help them survive the winds and rebuild their lives, and that gives them joy.

As Christians, we are the embodiment of joy. It doesn't come from ToysRUs, Walmart or Amazon, it comes from within.The songwriter is right, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it, and the world can't take it away!"

Exposition

This text focuses on the good news brought by the angels to shepherds watching their fields. It was news that would bring them "great joy."

The announcement of Christ's birth was not an ordinary announcement. It was highly unusual primarily because it was announced by Angels themselves.

The angels told them not to fear because they were bringing news of "great joy."

The Greek word for "great" is Megas, which means big, enormous, colossal. It's the word we get the English word "Mega." When mega precedes something, it is going to be super big.

The angel announce news that brought "mega joy." It would be a mega joy for all of Israel.

It would be a mega joy for the shepherds. It would be mega joys for every believer; that means mega joys for us.

The good news, of course, was the birth of Christ. That is the same good news that lifts our spirits today. The reality that God is with us should lift our spirits and give us reason to be hopeful, cheerful and excited about life and all it offers.

Sources of Joy

As the world celebrates this season, you will hear many salutations that include:

Happy Holidays, Seasons Greeting, Happy Kwanza, and Happy Hanukkah. For believers, there is only one salutation that is appropriate, and that is: Merry Christmas because Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. For us, Jesus is the reason for the season.

There are several sources of our joy:

JOY COMES FROM FAMILY: Mary was traveling with Joseph from their hometown of Nazareth to Bethlehem. They had to do this because of a census that Caesar had ordered. Joseph's family line was linked to Bethlehem, so all of the family was to meet there. It was like a family reunion for all. This family reunion would be a chance to meet family members who they had not seen in a long time or perhaps had never seen. So amidst the travel, it was a chance to be together with family.

One of the joys of Christmas is the reunion of family or friends. Obviously, they can't bring gifts for everyone, but just that presence or phone call brings joy. We value the importance of family and nothing brings more joy into the family circle than seeing the joy on grandma's face or the toothless smile of a newborn. Families that have bonded in the love of God are especially excited to see many of their loved ones under one roof, even if it's only for a day. It's a joy that can't be bought in a store or wrapped in a package.

JOY COMES FROM RENEWED HOPE: Mary and Joseph had survived rough times in their relationship because Joseph was engaged to a girl who was carrying a child that was not his. God intervened, and they worked through their issues in faith. They were excited about being parents. but were poor, spent the night in a stable, and survived a challenging situation. The birth of Christ was a sign of renewed hope.

Today, as we celebrate Christmas, it is still a sign of renewed hope. Many families will be celebrating because they are working out their issues. Family issues have strained their ties, but they are working them out, overcoming, forgiving, working together, and they can see the light at the end of the tunnel; they have turned the corner. With God's help these families, and yours may be one of them, can see changes in their attitudes, health, finances, and expectations. This brings joy. It's a joy that can't be bought in stores and won't be under the Christmas tree.

JOY COMES FROM SHARING LOVE: When Christ was born in Bethlehem it was such an historic event that it could not be kept; it had to be shared. The angels shared the good news with the Shepherds. The shepherds left rejoicing and shared it with other shepherds. When God has given us a victory, an answered prayer, a miraculous healing, an unexpected reunion and spiritual renewal, it is happy moment that is enjoyed best when shared.

In the Movie "Mahagony" Diana Ross played an aspiring model who moved from rags to riches, but in the process dumped the one man she loved played by Billy Dee Williams. At the top of her career, enjoying all of the success of the world she found herself famous but without the man she loved. Billy Dee delivered the one classic line from the movie that said, "Success is nothing without someone you love to share it with."

That's why people come home for Christmas. The fact that you graduated from college, got a job, married the love of your life, started a business, had a baby, or found success in one area or another, means nothing to you unless you have people that you

love to share it with. It's the sharing of that good news with loved ones that brings joy.

It's great news shared in the family circle that brings, "Great Joy!"

The World's Joy

Finally, brothers and sisters, we receive joy from our family, when we celebrate renewed hope, and when we share our good news, but our greatest joy comes in knowing that no matter what the future holds God is with us.

Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

The mega Joy of every believer is that no matter how deep the valley or dark the alley, there is always hope because God is with us.

The word of God constantly reminds us that we are not alone. God is with us.

Christmas reminds us of God's promise to be with us to support us, defend us, and protect us, according to his will.

I hear Jesus say "lo, I am with you!"

That means if you hear bad news about the economy and the downsizing of your income, just keep the faith and remember God is with us.

That's the joy that Christ brings to the world.

When God is with us

-It doesn't matter how dark the night because he can take darkness and turn it into the light!

-It doesn't matter how much rain falls because, after every rain, he makes the sun shine!

-It doesn't matter how many ditches your enemies dig for you, he can take your enemies and make them your footstools

-It doesn't matter if you don't have a dime in your pocket if you take the Lord with you.

When we wake up in the morning, we have joy because God is with us.

At the noon day, we have joy because God is with us.

At the midnight hour, we have joy because God is with us.

We have joy because we know:

If we stumble and trust in the Lord, he'll help us to stand!

If we are discouraged but trust in the Lord, he'll give us new inspiration!

If we get weak and trust in the Lord, he'll make us strong!

If we get lost and trust in the Lord, he'll help us find our way!

If we find ourselves in the valleys and alleys of despair, he's able to deliver us!

We ought to be singing "Joy to the world" because Jesus gave his blood for us on Calvary.

We ought to be singing "Joy to the World" because he was buried in a borrowed tomb.

We ought to be singing, "Joy to the world" because early Sunday morning he arose

from the grave, with all power in his hands!
Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Joy to the world, let earth receive her king!

No. 9807-Revival

All we like sheep

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 2017

SCRIPTURE: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6

Introduction

Have you ever strayed away from the right path? These were the times when you flirted with temptation and peeked into its forbidden zones. It could have included those times when you knew you should not have gone or participated in activities that your heart told you were wrong. Despite our best intentions, all of us have dabbled in one area or another that has brought us dangerously close to sin. All of us, like sheep have strayed.

The Bible often compares believers to sheep because there are so many striking similarities between ourselves and sheep. Sheep are vulnerable and need protection. Consider the day that the Lion decided there should be peace in the forest. He said the forest should be a place where all of the animals should be able to exist together. Following the order of the king, a banquet table was set in the middle of the forest. Special seats were arranged for all of the animals. Much to the surprise of the sheep, the wolves were invited to the dinner. They were uneasy about accepting the invitation at first, until they noticed that the shepherd was sitting next to them at the table and the wolves were on the other side. The Lion called upon each guest to give a salute to another guest of their own choosing. Each gave a salute in their own turn, to the applause of the others. An old sheep watched the proceedings with caution. When the wolves made their tribute they praised the Lion for bringing them together at the same table. As they sat they licked their lips. The Shepherd rose to make his toast. He raised many eyebrows when he began to salute the wolves. "They are the most dynamic and awe-inspiring creatures in the forest. They are often misunderstood, but only do what comes naturally." As the shepherd sat down the old sheep excused himself from the table. When asked why, he responded that liked the idea for the banquet, but whenever the shepherd has nothing but praise for the wolves, then the sheep are in trouble!

As Christians, we acknowledge that in many ways we are similar to sheep. That's why we lean so heavily on the good shepherd to lead us and guide us every day. It is His guiding hand that keeps us free of entanglements caused by sin and his loving

hand that guides us safely home when we stray.

Exposition

This text focuses on the sinful nature of man and the redemptive nature of Christ who reclaims all who have strayed away.

This passage was written by Isaiah, under the inspiration of God, several hundred years before the actions it depicts happened. It paints a prophetic picture of sinful, straying mankind, and a suffering Christ who submits himself to be wounded for sheep life followers who have strayed away.

This text paints two pictures. One picture shows the faithful as mindless sheep who stray away from God's will and purpose for our lives. The second is a picture of Christ suffering for our sins. Although it does
not mention Christ by name, there is no other person in history that so fully met the requirements of this prophecy from its very beginning at verse one with a suggestion that he would grow up among men as a tender plant in dry ground (v1) to its conclusion at verse 12 with his crucifixion on the cross between two
thieves. (v12) It continues with the notation that he was despised and rejected among men who were ashamed to own him. (v3)

The reasons for his suffering are listed beginning at verse 4. The people of God have strayed; to help us find the way back to God, He was afflicted for our: grief, sorrow, transgressions, and iniquities. The words "grief" and "sorrow" might suggest to some that Christ was crucified because of our sadness. But the Hebrew term for griefs,"choliy" (Khal-ee), also means bodily pain. In the same sense the Hebrew term for sorrows is "makobah" (mak-obaw) means both sadness of spirit and physical pain.

The text uses the word transgressions and iniquities to summarize the ways that we have strayed; they both refer to the sins of mankind.

Those who stray away from God are compared to sheep because sheep are very foolish creatures. Ray Stedman says sheep, "Can find a hole in the fence and get out, but they cannot find it to get back in. Someone must go and get them every time. How true are the words, "We have turned every one to his own way." There is a constant conflict between our way and God's way, much like the Frank Sinatra lyrics "I did it my way."

The text presents Christ as the good shepherd who is trying to lead the sheep forward, but many stray away from his forward guidance. He bears the penalty for our sins and seeks to redeem us and make us right with God again.

To bring us back the Lord assumed the iniquity of us all and was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity and the chastisement of our peace was absorb by him through Crucifixion.

When we stray

THERE IS LONELINESS WHEN WE STRAY: A sheep finds comfort in the herd, but there is only loneliness when a sheep strays from the safety of the herd and the guidance and protection of the shepherd. It is just as lonely when we stray away from God. Some, like the Prodigal, have drifted into the far country and found themselves lonely. Just as beautiful houses don't make happy homes, neither do the trappings of success guarantee us the feeling of fulfillment and happiness that comes from doing God's will. Outside of God the finest house, the shiniest car, and the most prestigious job, still leaves a feeling of loneliness, insecurity and emptiness. Conversely, those who are at peace with God find comfort, security and joy in even the smallest things. Paul explained this peace in this way in Philippians 4:11-13 ".. for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and
in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

LIFE AWAY FROM THE FOLD IS DIFFICULT: A sheep who strays outside of the protective rod of God finds difficulty dealing with life's issues. There is a degree of confidence that we, like sheep, feel when we are in God's care, but when we are outside of that care are left to find our own green pasture, which seems great in the beginning, but soon learn it is not a desirable way.

It is difficult for the sheep outside of the fold because outside of God there is no:
—Comfort in times of sorrow; or Encouragement from the Word of God;
—Strength gained from worship; or Assurance received after prayer;
—Satisfaction from your church; and No relief from despair;

When we are outside of God we may be home, but we may as well be home alone because we have shut out the one person that gives us assurance, Jesus, the Son of God.

When King David found himself deep in sin, outside of the fold, he prayed to God for restoration and forgiveness saying, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

If you have strayed outside of the fold, David's prayer should be your prayer.

MANY HAVE STRAYED INTO DANGEROUSLY DIFFERENT PASTURES: Not all of the pasture land in Palestine was perfect for the sheep. Everything green was not edible and some herbs and grasses were deadly. The shepherd guided his sheep to safe green pastures. Some stray away from the fold chasing after what appears to be greener pastures and fall into deadly grasses.

Straying into the wrong pasture is like driving an automobile and falling asleep at the wheel. Many have awakened suddenly to find themselves in a completely different lane, set for a crash. When we wake up that's when you start to ask, "What am I doing? Where am I going? What is this all about anyway?" When we stop to think about our actions, many find that we have strayed away from the will of God for our lives, living in a fantasy land in which we hear the accolades of our peers giving us awards, plaques, trophies and headlines. We relish the dream of personal glory,

triumph and success. It consumes us and it becomes a lullaby that puts us to sleep. Yet, God has a purpose for us and from time to time he shakes us. Sometimes he shakes but we are so sound asleep that we can't hear him. So he shakes our checkbook. He shakes our happy home. He shakes our health. He shakes our career or business. It's the only thing he can do to get our attention; to get us to ask, 'Lord what do you want me to do? Whatever it is, I'll do it for you." It is time for us to wake up, realized that we have strayed, and find our way back to God

We need a shepherd

Finally, brothers and sisters, we need to remember that when God looks at us, he sees sheep that have strayed and need a shepherd.

The difficulty with straying is that we never know if we have strayed until there is something to measure ourselves against. There is a mark, goal and ending point that lets us know when we are on course, there are boundaries that let us know when we are going too far to the left or to the right.

For the sheep, the shepherd constantly guides them to their goal and his rod stirs them back to their course if they stray.

Although we are believers, none of us from the pulpit to the front door, can say that we have never strayed, never doubted and have never experienced temptation. Even the best of us have a little bad in us somewhere. When God looks at us we are so naïve that we believe that God only sees our good; we know he sees our weaknesses too. But while he sees our weaknesses, he also looks at our humility before him and repentant spirit.

2 Chronicles 12:7 says, and "When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves" he decided not to destroy them but to give the people one more chance.

We are like sheep that have gone astray, God looks at us and realizes that we need a shepherd.

So David wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want."

He looks after us like a shepherd and leads us beside the still waters.

He looks over us like a shepherd and prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies.

He looks at us and anoints our head with oil until our cups run over!

When God looks at us he focuses all of the infinite resources of creation on our situation!

When God looks at us he summons the legions of heaven to the edges of glory so they can watch as he pays close attention to the whispered prayer of the least of the saints.

When God looks at us he prepares the angels of the third heaven to harness the powers of time and eternity as he prepares to wave his majestic hands.

We, the straying sheep of the fold are grateful for a God who can take our stumbling blocks

and turn them into stepping stones!

We, the straying sheep of the fold are grateful for a God who can turn our handicaps into
handrails.

We, the straying sheep of the fold are grateful for a God who takes our troubles and turns them into triumphs!

We, the straying sheep of the fold are grateful for a God who can take our inabilities and turn them into initiatives.

We, the straying sheep of the fold are thankful that God guides us continuously. That's why we sing, "Guide me oh Thou Great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land. I am weak but thou art mighty, hold me with thou powerful hand."

We are poor little sheep trying to find our way, who are looking up to Jesus to be our shepherd and show us the way.

Lift up your heads on ye gates and the King of Glory shall come in!

Lift up your heads, and keep your eyes on Jesus;

He will dispel your doubts and renew your faith!

He will ignite your passions and restore your hope!

He will take away your despair and give you joy!

I heard the songwriter declare, "Lead me, guide me along the way. Lord if you lead me I will not stray. Lord let me walk each day with thee. Lead me oh Lord lead me."

Lead me to Calvary!

Lead me to your bloodstained side!

Lead me to the empty tomb because there you secured my salvation Early Sunday morning when you arose from the grave!

Lead me Lord, and I will not stray.

No. 9808-Christmas

It doesn't have to end

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
For the Tabernacle Baptist Church
Monroe, La.

December 31, 2017

SCRIPTURE: "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" Luke 2:20

Introduction

Now that the Christmas season is over, there is a question that lingers: Does it have to end? For several weeks leading up to Christmas we were bombarded with news stories, Facebook Posts, letters, cards and acts of kindness that demonstrated that it was truly a season of peace, joy and happiness. It was if kindness, rudeness, and hatred took a vacation. It was a time when anyone who was mean-spirited and cruel was labeled a Grinch and anyone who was miserly and unfeeling was tagged a Scrooge.

For a few weeks, television programs focused on stories of family love and joy. In October nearly every broadcast was filled with death, blood and the walking dead, however during the Christmas season there were no monster movies released from Hollywood and neither were there any releases of movies that focused on heinous murders or death. To Hollywood's surprise they made millions of dollars on goodwill. The Hallmark Channel aired marathon broadcasts of people showing goodwill and love. The nightly news, with a few exceptions, found ways to show people around the country loving each other.

Think of the Christmas cards you received in the mail? They were kind notes from friends who tried to wish you well with a little note and maybe a photo to bring a smile. There were phone calls, cell phone texts and Facebook posts showing families assembling to laugh and talk and fellowship together. Many families worshipped together and still others sat in their living rooms and read the Christmas story from the Bible. The poor and less fortunate found people who were willing to make sacrifices to see that all children had a toy and hungry families had meals.

Without a doubt the few weeks that precede Christmas is a time when the world seemed to put aside its differences and celebrate a sense of oneness.

After we opened the presents, saw the gifts, ate the meal and fellowshipped for Christmas Day, the question still lingers: Does it have to end? When Christmas ends does the goodwill have to end? Do we have to return to our focus on violence, death, and tragedy? Should our concern for the poor, helpless and homeless end after

Christmas? Christmas Day marks the day God gave the world a gift. Many people have heard the good news and received the gift, but that gift was not intended for only one day.

As Christians, we are grateful for the spirit of goodwill we enjoyed as we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ. We revel in the memory of that excitement and joy. Now, after the season has ended, our joy and goodwill will not end, but will continue into the new year.

Exposition

This text focuses on the actions of the shepherds after they participated in the manger experience.

Shepherds, who were grazing their flocks, were interrupted to participate in the manger experience in Bethlehem. Their normal routine consisted of a rather dreary cycle of watching flocks by day and night. However, whenever the flocks were left unattended for long periods of time the possibility of losing some of their sheep always existed because either thieves or wolves were present. While they were inspired and strengthened by observing the manger experience in Bethlehem they returned to their fields still under the glow and charisma that came as a result of being in the presence of God.

Even though they went back to the fields, the excitement of what they experienced in Bethlehem never ended. It simply continued indefinitely. They returned, glorifying God. The Greek word for glorifying in this text is dox-ad-zo which means to cause the dignity and worth of a person or thing to be recognized or acknowledged. Thus, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to participate in the manger experience and they returned with an exciting testimony about what they had experienced themselves. Their testimony recognized and acknowledged God in such a way that his respect and reverence among the people was uplifted.

The joy of that night in front of the manger did not end in Bethlehem. Their business as usual routine had been changed forever as their conversation and relationship was changed for their own betterment. Their return was not the end of the manger experience but it was the beginning of a lifetime of praise and glorifying that would never end.

Spirit of Christmas does not have to end

When the shepherds stood in the presence of the Christ child they gloried in the power of the Lord. They were filled with enthusiasm and confidence because they had seen evidence of God keeping his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the fulfillment of the scripture. They glorified God on that day, but they continued to glorify him. The text says they "returned" to where they had been. They returned to their jobs, isolated in the hillside, caring for sheep. They went back to where the angel found them

in the first place. It was time to go back to work.

Christmas doesn't last forever. Some still have Christmas decorations on their houses, and trees in their homes, but eventually, they will take down the tree, pack away the ornaments, and in a few days the children will go back to school and life will return to normal.

While the decorations come down and festivities end, does the spirit of Christmas have to end? For the shepherds, life would never be the same. Their jobs wouldn't change, but they went back to the hillsides with a new zeal, new joy, and new love for God in their hearts.

To keep the spirit of Christmas going we must emulate the shepherds, then we must go back to our workplaces, housework, classroom, or place of responsibility and daily routine and continue to glorify God and praise him. Go back to what you were doing before and take the memory of Christmas with you. Glorify God and praise him as you go about your routine and you will find your days filled with joy that will never end.

Family Fellowship does not have to end

Although Christmas has ended, the spirit of family unity, peace and joy does not have to end. The sense of unity and support we enjoy from members of our family should not be a "Christmas thing." Families create memories all year long, even for those who are away.

During the Christmas season family members visited, called home, and shared snippets about their life, accomplishments dreams and future plans. There was plenty of fellowship, food and friends as families celebrated the joy of God's renewed blessing.

That does not have to end. We can still contact each other, come home to visit without it being a holiday or a funeral. Christmas is over, but the spirit of family enjoyed at Christmas does not have to end.

The spirit of compassion does not have to end

During the Christmas season, many people were moved to go the extra mile to help families have a merry Christmas. We gave money to charities to buy gifts for children, feed the hungry, and gave warm blankets and clothing to the homeless. Our hearts poured out love and compassion for those who were burdened with life's concerns. We talked, listened and worked to resolve differences.

During Christmas we sang songs that were full of hope and inspiration and we shared that hope with others. Do hope and compassion have to end?

Should our concern for the poor end because Christmas has ended? Should our willingness to volunteer or give of ourselves to help others lessen until next Christmas?

Should we continue to inspire hope in those who have given up on themselves?

The spirit of compassion and hope does not have to end because although the celebration has ended, the Christ Child still lives in us.

When Jesus comes into our lives he helps us to bring forth our potential. He brings

forth the courage that we need to tackle tough situations and difficult times. That courage does not have to end.

When Jesus comes there is a spirit of boldness that envelops every believer. We know that it can be done. We start to believe that all things are possible, and the defeat leaves us. That spirit of boldness does not have to end.

God's Power Never Ends

Finally, brothers and sisters, we must remember that the power of the Lord never ends; he abides with us every day!

Someone who is unfamiliar with the way the Lord works and how believers think, may ask why is the church still decorated for Christmas? Don't they know that Christmas is over?

Those who asked these questions, mistakenly think that the spirit of Christmas ends at the close of one day on the calendar. Those who know the Lord know that the beauty of the believer's life is never over. Once we have been in the presence of the Lord it's never over because we relive it again and again.

The shepherds returned from the stable, but the glory of that moment never ended. It's the same continuous feeling that the songwriter mentioned when he wrote, "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Once we have experienced the joy of the Lord, it never ends.

We may have taken the lights down, but we are still singing, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."

We have stopped singing, "Joy to the world," but the presence of that joy gives another song to sing, "This joy I have, the world didn't give it, and the world can't take it away!"

Christmas has ended, but, like the shepherds, things are not the same. We know it's not over because we'll never be the same. I heard the songwriter declare, "Since I met the blessed savior. Since he washed and made me whole; since the hand of Jesus touched me; now I am no longer the same!"

Somebody thinks it has ended because everyone has stopped talking about the wise men who followed a star. But we know it hasn't ended because there are some wise men and women today who are still seeking him every day!

Somebody thinks it has ended because choirs are no longer singing, "Hark the Herald Angels sing!" But we know it hasn't ended because we are singing with angelic voices, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down."

Some have concluded that the season of talking about peace has passed. But we know it's not over because every day of our lives we praise him for being the prince of peace and Lord of Lords.

Somebody thinks it has ended because all the fine Christmas food is gone. But we know it's not over because in the wilderness of our life experience all through the year

the Lord still feeds us. That's why we say, "Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, Feed me till I want no more!"

Somebody thinks it's over because all of the sweet pies and cakes have been put away. But it hasn't ended because, "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before." We know it's not over because, "I've found a savior and he's sweet I know!"

There may be some who feel that because angelic voices are no longer singing Go tell it on the mountain that there is nothing else to tell but they are wrong, because we have a story to tell.

We still have to tell somebody that he was born in Bethlehem!

We still have to tell somebody that he died on Calvary!

We still have to tell somebody that Early Sunday morning he arose from the grave with all power in his hands!

No. 9809-Inspiration

Times change but God does not change

A sermon by Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
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Monroe, La.

January 2018

SCRIPTURE: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Malachi 3:6

Introduction

Have you noticed how fast things seem to change? Before we can get accustomed to one thing, it changes into something else. We became adjusted to Polaroid cameras, then came Kodak. Just as soon as we were adjusted to Kodak then came digital photos on phones. One day its 33 rpm records, and then it's eight-track tape. Before that sinks in good, then there are VHS and cassette tapes followed by compact disks. Now that we have a large collection of albums, disks and VHS tapes everything is now being downloaded and streamed from the cloud.

Sometimes the world seems like a giant merry-go-round, and we are all struggling to find a place to jump on or off, but it goes too fast.

While the world changes, it's good to know that God does not change.

The late Gardner Taylor said, "God still frowns on deceit and trickery as much as he did the day that Jacob was driven from home by his plot against Esau. God still despises envy as much as he did when he turned his back on Saul or, rather, Saul turned his back on God. He despises our adulteries as much as he did when David let Bathsheba's beauty lead him to stain his honor. Yes, people may change what they call right and wrong, but God's truth abides. Jesus underscores this when he says, "For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all is accomplished." He makes the scroll of the skies and the rolling hills and level plains the surety, the bond for the abidingness of God's word."

It's very clear; times may change, but God is still the same.

As Christians, we should rejoice that our God is a constant presence. We know that he is the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow, and that's good because that means his love for us will not change either.

Exposition

The text focuses on a statement of truth by the prophet Malachi that God does not change.

The Children of Israel had experienced many changes in the centuries since God promised Abraham the land of Canaan. They changed localities as a nomad tribe that constantly moved from one place to another. They also moved to Egypt and endured 400 years of enslavement. Their conditions changed when they crossed the Jordan and began to inhabit the land. They adopted the religious practices of others and changed their allegiances to God.

All while the people change, God did not change. He did not try to adapt himself to the changing times and situations. He was the one constant in the lives of the people.

The fact that God has not and will not change is underwritten in scripture. The preponderance of the scripture seemed to say: Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. This statement indicates that God's ethical standards will not be altered by time or circumstance.

Malachi 3:6 indicates that God is unchanging and eternal it indicates that he will be faithful to all generations.

This unchanging nature of God extends to his purposes and promises, which is extremely different from that of his people who seem to change with every trend and change in the national mood or circumstance. James indicates that the assurance we have that God does not change is also a guarantee of future blessings because there is in God "no variation or shadow cast by turning."

God's mercy does not change.

God's goodness does not change.

God's patience does not change.

It is all summed up in the text, "For I, the LORD, do not change" (Mal. 3: 6).

Happy he does not change

There are many reasons why we have confidence that God will not change.

HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAITHFUL: We are confident that God will not change because when we look back, we see that he has a steady track record of being faithful to us. He has always shown up for us; just when we needed him. We have never found a time when God promised something that he did not deliver, even if we became impatient while waiting. We have learned that God operates in his own time frame, therefore we should not give up hope. If our condition troubles us, we know God will respond to it, therefore we never give up hope. That's why we like the lyrics to that old Sam Cooke song:

"It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die
Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will."

Like Cooke, we don't know the time schedule up there beyond the sky, but we believe a change is gonna come.

We were able to endure slavery and the difficulties of reconstruction because we knew that a change was going to come.

We were able to withstand the savage venom of racism and segregation because we knew a change was gonna come.

We were able to stand the frustrations of second-class citizenship and powerlessness because we knew a change was going to come.

Often the blessing we seek seems to take forever getting to us, but we have remained confident that if we keep the faith and never lose hope that God will bring about the changes we need, in his own time and in his own way.

That has been his track record.

He has always been faithful.

HE HAS NEVER BEEN LATE: In our life experience, we have never known God's blessing to come too late. He is unchanging, so we can expect that of him in the future as well. When it appears to us that God is slow to respond to our needs, we learned that he is not subject to the limitations of time. God simply doesn't calculate the time the way we do. We figure time in ways that we can understand. We calculate the years by the seasons, the months by the moons, the days by the rising and setting of the sun. To God, all of these are inconsequential. Psalm 90 tells us that a thousand years to us is but a few hours to Him or a watch in the night. Therefore, we should not feel God has neglected us in any way because he appears not to have responded to our situation. He is not dragging his feet. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. "

Thousands of years in the sight of humankind are but passing days or even seconds with God. It was two thousand years before God fulfilled his promise to Abraham that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through his family.

In the thousands of years that have passed since the dawn of recorded history, believers have concluded that God is not forgetful, and he is not slothful, he will deliver us from evil in the days ahead, just as he has in the past because he is an unchanging God.

HIS PROMISES ARE SURE AND HAVE NOT CHANGED: One of the greatest aspects of our love for God is that in the past he has always kept his promises and that has not changed. Even today, the promises of God are real and sure. Anything that God promises he can deliver; that has not changed.

Many cannot bring themselves to trust God because men have failed them. Their employers have failed them. Their co-workers have failed them. These are the individuals who find themselves doubting God.

Like Sarah, they find it amusing when God makes a promise that seems impossible in light of the circumstances.

Like Pharaoh, they believe that faith in Gods promises are the folly of the ignorant and whatever signs we see are cheap magician's tricks and illusions.

Like King Saul, they believe they should follow their own mind because Gods will should only be trusted when his will mirrors our will.

Believers are anxiously excited about this time of the year because it reminds us that despite the changing times in which we live our God remains the same.

He will deliver what he promises

Finally, brothers and sisters, we should remember that the reason we have survived so far is because the God we serve delivers on his promises.

Malachi told the people that they survived because of the mercies of God. Those mercies, blessings, and promises were first given to Abraham and continued through Isaac and Jacob. Through all of those generations, God did not change. What he promised, whether it was a blessing or punishment, he always delivered.

Times changed, but God did not change.

God spoke this world into existence with both a purpose and a plan, from the beginning of time, God has not changed.

God proved himself when he told Pharaoh that plagues would come to Egypt, and though it seemed impossible, it was done.

God proved himself when he told Joshua to cross the river Jordan, and the waters would roll back, it was done!

God proved himself when the children of Israel marched around Jericho seven times, it seemed a foolish thing, but God said it, and the walls came tumbling down!

God proved himself when he told Abraham and Sarai that they would have a child in their senior years; he promised it, and it was done!

God proved himself when he told Jezebel and Ahab that the skies would not see rain; they laughed, but God said it, and he delivered on his promise.

We don't have to look back too far because God has made us promises and he delivered what he promised.

When God says it, it may seem illogical. It may seem improbable, but it will be done!

Those who are obedient to God's word should get ready for a blessing because God has promised it.

Two little boys were on their way to the Black Heritage parade. One little boy had a little small paper bag, and the other had a huge shopping bag. Someone asked why they brought along bags of different sizes; the first boy said he knew he was little and expected only to get a few pieces of candy. The second boy said he heard that every float would be throwing out candy. He felt because he was little he would get a lot, so he brought along a shopping bag.

Brothers and sisters when God promises a blessing because you are a child of God bring your shopping bag!

God has sent his word of:

—ENDURANCE in the midst of adversity and he has not changed!

—PATIENCE in the midst of problems and he has not changed!

—SUPPORT in the midst of suffering, and he has not changed!

—HOPE in the midst of hardships, and he has not changed!
—COMFORT in the midst of confusion and he has not changed!
—RELIEF in the midst of our misery and he has not changed!

No wonder the songwriter wrote:

Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

As the book of Malachi closed the Children of Israel looked for a redeemer to save them from their sins!

God promised a redeemer would come, born in the house of Jacob in the tribe of Judah.

God gave his word and set events in motion to send a redeemer.

In John 1:14, he sent the word to dwell with men.

God sent his son to deliver on his promise that, "Whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"

God sent his son to show me the way!

God promised to provide his people a way to salvation!

God promised the world a way for it to atone for its sins!

God promised to lay a true foundation for our faith

When Jesus picked up the cross, that was God keeping his promise!

When Jesus died on Calvary, that was God keeping his promise!

When Jesus stayed in the grave three days and nights, that was God keeping his promise!

And Early Sunday morning, when Jesus arose from the dead, that was God keeping his promise!

God has not changed, he's still keeping his promise today!

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